

Switzer, Stuart Allan

Age: 21

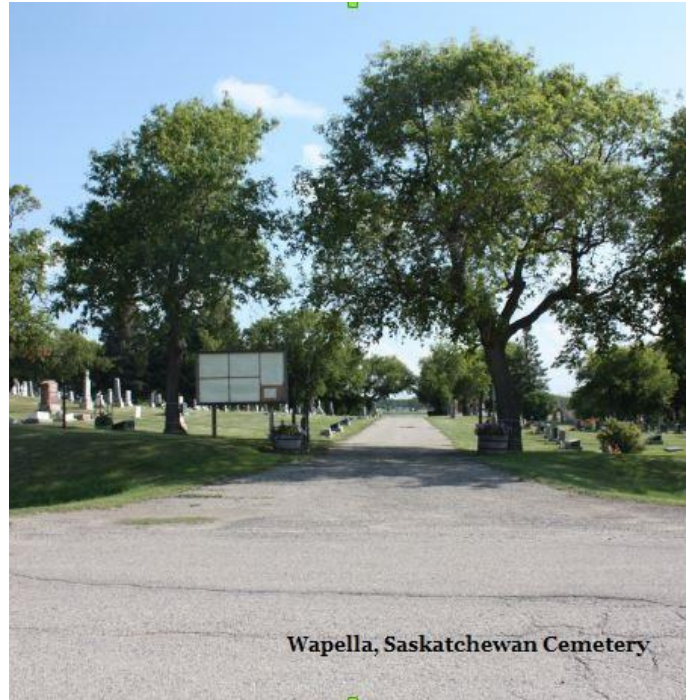
Nationality: Canadian

Rank: W/O II

Unit: No. 122 Squadron

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: R/85480



Birth: Woodleigh,
Saskatchewan, Canada

Home Town: Wapella, Saskatchewan,
Canada

Death: 16 March 1943

Crash of Bristol Bolingbroke 9084
Mill Bay B.C., Canada

Burial: Wapella Cemetery, Saskatchewan
Canada

Others: Flight Sergeant W.L. Dion, Pilot;
WO 1, R.A. Seaker, Observer.

Biography

Stuart Switzer was a quiet, reliable farm boy who worked on his father's farm for the two years before he enlisted in the RCAF. He was average height and described as muscular and stocky, although he only weighed just over 130 lbs. He professed to have no hobbies, but played the typical sports of a Canadian boy, hockey, baseball, and football. He had completed grade ten when he left school in 1939.

Stuart applied for the RCAF in August 1940, and was enlisted in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1941. He wanted to be aircrew, specifically a wireless operator/air gunner.

Stuart was physically fit and was described by his interviewing officer as having fair intelligence, being clean, neat and confident and with the rather obscure comment of being '*borderline clever type*'. He was accepted for training in wireless and gunnery.

Stuart passed through training making little impression on his instructors. He received his wireless operator's badge in November 1941 with no comment at all on his performance. When he received his air gunner's badge in December 1941, the only comment was '*a quiet, reliable type of student*'. In his air training he passed with 65.9% ; 20th out of 22 students. When he earned his air gunner's badge, Stuart was promoted to sergeant. Six months later he was promoted to Flight Sergeant and in December 1942 recommended for further promotion.

Following training, Stuart was first posted to Patricia Bay and then moved around the bases in British Columbia, ending up in No. 122 squadron in Patricia Bay at the end of November 1942.

On 16 March 1943, just before his 20th birthday, Stuart was wireless operator on Bristol Bolingbroke 9084 when it crashed into Mill Bay in a snow storm. His was the only body recovered.

Stuart was born on 23 March 1923, in Woodleigh, Saskatchewan, a place known now only as a former school district. His parents were Howard Leslie Switzer and Florence McFadyen. He was the oldest of five children, having three younger sisters and one brother, the youngest.

After his death, Stuart's parents received the following letter:

OTTAWA, Canada, 12th October, 1944.

Mr. H.L. Switzer,
Wapella,
Saskatchewan.

Dear Mr. Switzer:

I am directed to advise you that your son, Stuart Allan Switzer, has been promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Second Class with effect from December 8th, 1942.

This promotion is based on a policy inaugurated by the Royal Canadian Air Force, whereby aircrew members of the service who had been recommended previously by their Commanding Officer for the next higher rank and who would have received the promotion but for the intervention of untimely death, are promoted to that rank effective six months from the date of their last promotion.

It is my sincere hope that you may find sustaining comfort in the knowledge that the qualities of your gallant son are thus recognized, and it is regretted that this information could not be passed to you at an earlier date but the delay in notifying you was unavoidable.

May I express to you and the members of your family my profound sympathy.

Yours sincerely,

(T.K. McDougall) G/C,
R.C.A.F. Records Officer,
for Chief of the Air Staff.

/WK

Details of Crash

On 16 March 1943, at 11:35 am, Bristol Bolingbroke Mk IV 9084 took off from Patricia Bay on a test flight with a crew of three:

Flight Sergeant	W.L. Dion	Pilot
Flight Sergeant	S.A. Switzer	Wireless Operator
WO 1	R.A. Seaker	Observer

F/S Dion had 370 hours of flying time including almost 15 hours on Bolingbrokes. He had no instrument flying in the previous six months, but did have 4:30 hours on Link Trainers.

The first part of the test consisted of checking the calibration of the stations. Four points were selected: Active Pass, Duncan, Otter Point and James Island; all in B.C. The aircraft was to fly at 4,000ft., subject to the pilot's discretion.

The calibration was checked at the first two points, a constant R/T contact being maintained. The pilot then set course for Otter Point and 16 minutes later reported that he was running into a snow storm, after which R/T contact was lost. W/T was tried with no success on the same frequency several times. The last R/T communication was at 12:08, the exact message being "In snow storm, looking for clear spot to continue exercise, will you plot us."

The acting Captain of a Torpedo Retriever and the Medical Officer gave the following evidence at the Court of Inquiry.

"On March 16, 1943, I was acting Captain aboard the M-11 Torpedo Retriever, named the Nicola. At 1209 hours I was proceeding to position on torpedo retrieving in position of Mill Bay off Saanich Inlet, and sighted apparent plane crash, the water rising from the surface and falling back. The radio operator immediately advised the station that a crash had occurred. We immediately proceeded to location of the disturbance. Arriving at the scene of disturbance, I found one body and debris floating on the surface and one life raft partly inflated, under-carriage assembly and small wreckage. I took the body aboard and shortly after, was transferred to the care of the Medical Officer on board the crash boat.

"I am C4961 Flight Lieutenant Donald Spencer Munroe, employed as Medical Officer, at R.C.A.F. Station, Patricia Bay, B.C.

"On March 16th, 1943, at about 1230 hours I was notified of an accident which occurred in the sea in the vicinity of Mill Bay.

"I was taken to the scene of the accident in a crash boat where I found a body which I identified to be Flight Sergeant S.A. Switzer. The identification was made by means of official identification discs and personal papers found in the clothing.

"The injuries were extensive. He was decapitated and showed multiple fractures. Death beyond any doubt was instantaneous.

The scene of the accident was visited at 3:30 pm on March 17th when oil was still visibility rising to the surface. The depth of water at the site was approximately 60 fathoms and the bodies of the other two crew members were never recovered.

The conclusion of the Court of Inquiry was that the cause of the accident was obscure but there might have been icing conditions. Owing to the nature of the accident it was impossible to make any suggestions as to how it could have been avoided or how future accidents of the same type could be prevented.

The following communication is included in the Court of Inquiry records

① D/A.M.A.S. (Br. Ops.)

Court of Inquiry - Accident to Bolingbroke 9084 from No. 122 Squadron, on 16th March, 1943.

1. There appears to be a serious lack of training in this squadron for which the Squadron Commander should be held responsible. In the C.T.E. there is a regulation that all staff pilots and instructors shall do at least two hours instrument flying per month. It might be desirable to apply this regulation to Home War.

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plus

J.W. Wilson



Bolingbroke Mk IV

