

Memorial

During the years that followed the end of WWII, the Canadian North was still very much a frontier. Northern settlements depended heavily on resupply from the south via ships and aircraft. Flying large aircraft in the Canadian Arctic was still a novelty and few airmen had much experience with the challenges of Arctic flying.

In early 1950, the US Navy had begun planning a resupply mission called OP NANOOK 50. Two icebreakers with resupply ships were sent to resupply the Arctic weather stations at Resolute Bay, Alert and Eureka, as well as Thule Air Force Base in Greenland. Canada had tasked 405 "Eagle" Squadron from Greenwood NS to support OP NANOOK by providing two Lancaster aircraft and crews. One aircraft was to fly ice reconnaissance while the other was to be ready on the ground for search and rescue operations.

On July 31st 1950, Lancaster 965 of 405 Eagle Squadron in support of OP NANOOK was conducting a surveillance and resupply mission. In addition to monitoring and surveying the area the crew was responsible for air dropping vital supplies and mail to Alert, the most northerly permanently inhabited station in the world.

While performing the drop, one of the parachutes became caught in the aircraft controls, causing it to crash. Sadly, all nine crewmembers on board perished.



Today, on 30 July 2010, 60 years after the tragic crash of Lancaster 965, 405 Long Range Patrol Squadron is host to family members and friends of those who perished on 31 July 1950, with the dedication of a memorial stone. The stone joins others along the Memorial Walkway and offers a quiet place to contemplate and remember those that have been lost for the greater good of our great nation.



These photos show the gravesite on Cape Belknap of the 9 people who were killed on July 31, 1950 while attempting to make an airdrop of equipment into Alert. The parachute became tangled in the tail of the Lancaster aircraft, it plunged to the ground and exploded on impact just to the south of where the Station is located and to the west of the Weather Station. The plaque on the cairn reads as follows:

"In a supply mission to the Arctic Weather Station at Alert those aboard a Royal Canadian Air Force Lancaster were killed 31 July 1950. The task in which they gave their lives continues.

W/C D.T. French, DFC

Flight Lieutenant L.M. (Lorne) MacLean

Flight Lieutenant J.F.L. Swinton

Flying Officer J.R.G. Dubé

Flying Officer T.D. (Del) Martin

Flying Officer J.E. McCutcheon

Leading Aircraftman R.L. Sprange

Dr. D.W. Kirk

C.J. (Charles) Hubbard

Aircraft Captain

Navigator

Radio Officer

Navigator

Co-Pilot

Radio Officer

Flight Engineer

Dept of Mines and Surveys Colonel

US Weather Bureau



Erected in their memory by the
Arctic Institute of North America with the
support of Mrs. Hubbard and the RCAF."



Photo of Lancaster # 965 Crew taken July 1950. From left to right:: F/O Martin, LAC Noselski (not in crash), LAC Sprange, Dr. Kirk, F/O McCutcheon, F/O Dubé, F/L MacLean, F/L Swinton, W/C French.