

McQueen, Howard John
Sergeant Flight Engineer
Royal Canadian Airforce
405 Squadron
R 10748



Ducimus ("We Lead")



Howard John McQueen was born on Saturday 14 January 1922 in Montreal, the largest city in the province of Quebec, Canada, the only son of Andrew Toward McQueen and Agnes McQueen (Simpson). They were married in the Saint George Church in Montreal on 22 April 1908. Howard had two older sisters, Dorothy and Helen. One sister serves in South Africa with the Canadian Army Nursing Service and the other sister travels with her husband where he is assigned to the Canadian Army. Howard spent his free time swimming and sailing; he also played tennis and built scale models.

The family is Protestant and lives at 2341 Melrose Avenue in Montreal. In addition to English, Howard also speaks a little French.

He went to the Herbert Symonds school in Quebec and then to the West Hill High School for two years. After he left school he worked in the theatre.

On April 20, 1939, Howard enlisted in the Air Force in Montreal at the age of 17. On 25 September 1939 Howard was sworn into the Royal Canadian Air Force.

SIGNATURE.....*Howard J. McQueen*.....

He has green eyes and blond hair, weighs 132 pounds and has a height of 5 feet 7 1/2 inches.

His basic training took place in Canada and then he was sent to England in March 1941. Here, he followed a flight engineer's course on Halifax bombers and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

He was posted to the 405 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force which operated from Leeming in Yorkshire. They flew Handley Page Halifax B Mk II, a four-engine heavy bomber. The squadron was part of Coastal Command and carried out anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay and anti-shipping actions against German coastal shipping as well as bombings on Germany.

On February 1, 1943, Howard requests repatriation due to the poor health of his father, who has become almost blind due to illness and can no longer work to earn money. Howard doesn't get an answer to this.

At 7:58 p.m. local time on the evening of April 3, 1943, the Halifax Mk.II (DT808, LQ-V) took off from Leeming Airfield in the County of Yorkshire. The heavy bomber of the Canadian 405 (Vancouver) Squadron was one of one hundred and thirteen Halifax aircraft, which, together with two hundred and twenty-five Avro Lancasters and ten Mosquitos, set off for a



bombing raid on the German city of Essen.

A Halifax II of the 405 squadron is supplied with 500 lbs of bombs.

The Canadian crew of the Halifax Mk. II DT808, LQ-V consisted of:

- Pilot, Warrant Officer II, William James McAlpine
- Flight Engineer, Sergeant, Howard John McQueen
- Navigator, Warrant Officer Class II, John Day White
- Bomb Aimer, Flight Lieutenant, Floyd Edward Luxford
- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Warrant Officer, Joseph Walter Halikowski
- Air Gunner, Pilot Officer, Ernest Bradley
- Air Gunner, Flight Lieutenant, Wilfried Lawrence Murphy
- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Warrant Officer Joseph Walter Halikowski R/95419.



Halifax

Before its target was reached, the Halifax was intercepted over the Peel area, at an altitude of 15,000 ft, by Major Werner Streib, the Commander of I./Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (NJG 1). He was flying in a Messerschmitt BF 110 G4 and had taken off from Venlo.

When intercepting, Streib made use of his 'Schräge Musik', firing two 20 mm cannons forwards and upwards in a slanting position into the back of his night fighter. The Halifax was hit in its wing tanks and crashed in flames at 23.20 hours at a height of one hundred metres south of Overloonseweg, the road between Vierlingsbeek and Overloon, not far from De Lijnbraak farm and Vierlingsbeek station.

The wreckage with the bomb load still on board was close to the same farm and not far from Vierlingsbeek station at the edge of a wood. Approximately seventy incendiary bombs also came down next to the railway track. Only two crew members managed to save themselves by parachute.

Flight Lieutenant Wilfried Lawrence Murphy landed at Merselo in the municipality of Venray. With the local Van Schijndel family he left a note with his personal details. From there he was taken to a farm in Ysselsteyn. He also stayed at farm De Zwarte Plak, owned by the Poels family, near the village of America in the Province of Limburg for some time.

Two inspectors from the crisis control service, Bob Bouwman and H. Lahey, transferred him from De Zwarte Plak to Neer van de Vin in the village of Neeritter. He ended up in Belgium through the regional resistance. Once in Brussels, he was caught by betrayal and made a prisoner of war after all. The Germans then moved him to Paris, where he remained in the infamous Fresnes prison before transferring him to the POW camp Stalag Luft III near Saga. This is now Polish town of Żagań.

The other survivor, Sergeant Ernest Bradley, was taken prisoner shortly after landing and ended up in POW camp Stalag 357 in Fallingbommel in Lower Saxony, Germany. Six percent of the attack force got lost; twelve Halifax aircraft and nine AVRO Lancasters. Two more Halifax planes crashed in England.

At 23.20 the Halifax was flying at a height of 5000 metres, over the Netherlands, when it was attacked by Major Werner Streib, commander of the Nachtjagdgeschwader 1. Major Streib fired his two 20m cannons obliquely upwards and hit the plane's fuel tanks. The Halifax crashed in flames at the village of Vierlingsbeek, North Brabant. The wreck, with the bomb load still on board, lay on the edge of a wood, close to Vierlingsbeek station; around 70 bombs lay close to the railway line.

Two of the crew were able to save their lives by parachuting from the plane. Fl. Lt. Wilfried Lawrence Murphy landed near Merselo in the municipality of Venray. With the help of the local resistance group, he was taken to Belgium. When he reached Brussels, he was betrayed and became a prisoner of war. The Germans took him to Paris where he was placed in the notorious Fresnes prison before going on to Stalag Luft III, a prisoner of war camp at Sagan, Lower Silesia.

Sergeant W. Bradley, the other survivor, was made a prisoner of war shortly after landing and taken to Stalag 357 POW camp at Toruń, in Poland.

The other members of the crew did not survive, they were first buried in Woensel, Eindhoven.

Sergeant Howard John McQueen, Flight Engineer, then 21 years old, was killed in the crash on 3 April and buried in Woensel cemetery, Eindhoven.



SGT. FLT. ENG. HOWARD JOHN McQUEEN, R.C.A.F., previously reported missing and now presumed killed according to word received by the International Red Cross via the German radio which stated he had been killed. Sgt. McQueen is the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. T. McQueen of 2341 Melrose avenue. He was born in Montreal and educated at the Herbert Symonds School, enlisting in the permanent force of the R.C.A.F. a week after the outbreak of war at the age of 17. He proceeded overseas in March, 1941, as a leading aircraftman and member of the ground crew force. He was re-mustered a year ago and took a course as a flight engineer for Halifax bombers, graduating in the first such class. Sgt. McQueen has a sister, a war nurse in South Africa, and another sister married to a captain in the Canadian army. He is an only son.

On 21 November 1945, he was reburied in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. F. 7.**

The inscription on his tombstone reads:

REST IN PEACE



The grave in those first days; in 1954 the crosses were replaced by tombstones. The family could add a personal tekst.



photo: www.lestweforget1945.org

His comrades are buried close to him:

Warrant Officer William James MacAlpine, joint grave XVI. F. 9-10.

Warrant Officer John Day White, joint grave XVI. F. 10.

Flight Lieutenant Floyd Edward Luxford XVI. F. 13.

Warrant Officer Joseph Walter Halikowski XVI. F. 8.



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Theo van der Velden – Research Team Faces To Graves and Gijs Krist additional information.

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Archives and Library Canada

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2232080>

Information with thanks to Ruud Wildekamp and his group 'Vliegtuigcrashes en noodlandingen WO II'.



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May 2020 - photo Alice van Bekkum