

Bellotti, Alphonse Michael

Age: 21

Nationality: American

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: R/132610

Birth: 21 April 1921
New York, New York,
USA



Home Town: New York, New York, USA

Death: 17 December 1942

Crash of Avro Anson R3431
North East of Salt Spring Island, BC

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Memorial

Others: Sgt. N. A. A. Bastick, Pilot, RAFVR; Sgt. K. J. Bowler,
1st Navigator, RAFVR; Sgt. S.J.Conlon, 1st WAG, RCAF;
Sgt. R. A. Maun, 2nd Navigator, RAFVR

Biography

Alphonse Michael Bellotti, from New York, New York, USA, had an Italian born father and a French born mother. He was bilingual English/French. Alphonse was a short, stocky young man who played semi-professional football and whose hobbies were painting and photography.

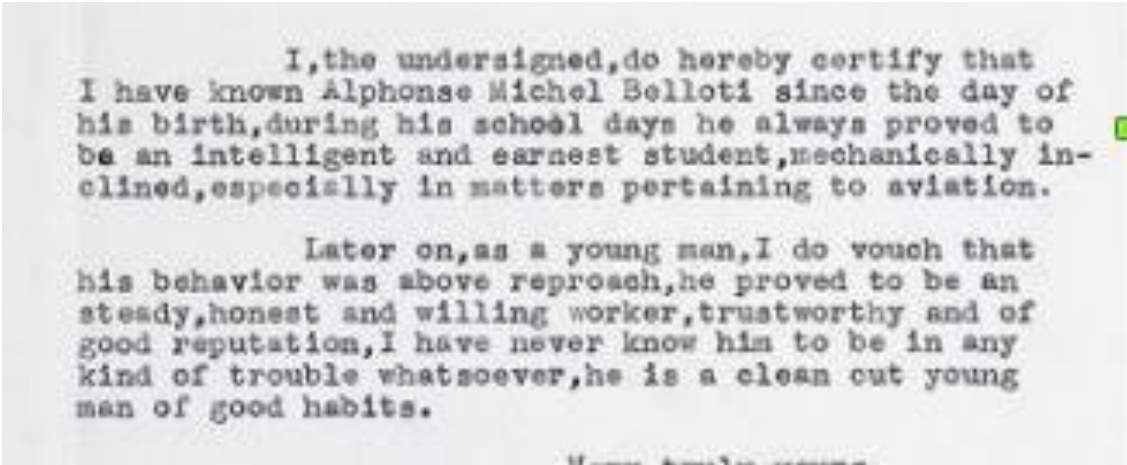
Alphonse left Manhattan Aviation High School when he was 15 and apprenticed with a manufacturer of cosmetics for over four years before enlisting in the RCAF, in September 1941, hoping for a position in aviation. At 5 ft.6 in. and 175lbs, he was judged 42 lbs overweight but carried little excess fat. His Interviewing Officer found him rugged, healthy and willing, but not over-bright. He was recommended for a wireless operator/air gunner (WAG).

At Gunnery School, Alphonse received a good report. He was neat, capable, willing to take on tasks and cheerful and efficient in performing them. He was a good marksman. Alphonse received his wireless operator's badge in September 1942 and his WAG badge on 28 October 1942, when he was promoted to sergeant.

On November 7th, Alphonse was posted to No. 32 OTU Patricia Bay. On December 17th he was second WAG on Anson R3431 when it joined in the search for Anson N9560, which had been reported missing the previous day. During the search, R3431 flew into the sea north east of Salt Spring Island, BC. It was not recovered and Alphonse was presumed drowned.

Alphonse Michael Bellotti was born 21 April 1921, in New York, USA, to Nicolas Antonio Bellotti and Lucienne Germaine Baldenberger. He had a sister two years older, Isabelle Marie. Alphonse's mother predeceased him in 1938. Nicolas arrived in USA in 1900 when he was 15. He became a US citizen in 1925.

The character reference on file for Alphonse reads:



I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I have known Alphonse Michel Bellotti since the day of his birth, during his school days he always proved to be an intelligent and earnest student, mechanically inclined, especially in matters pertaining to aviation.

Later on, as a young man, I do vouch that his behavior was above reproach, he proved to be an steady, honest and willing worker, trustworthy and of good reputation, I have never know him to be in any kind of trouble whatsoever, he is a clean cut young man of good habits.

Details of Crash

Avro Anson R3431 was one of several aircraft detailed to search for Anson N9560, which was reported missing during a reconnaissance exercise on 16 December 1942.

The aircraft carried a crew of five:

Sgt. N. A. A. Bastick	Pilot	RAFVR	English
Sgt. A. M. Bellotti	2 nd WAG	RCAF	American
Sgt. K. J. Bowler	1 st Navigator	RAFVR	English
Sgt. S.J.Conlon	1 st WAG	RCAF	Canadian
Sgt. R. A. Maun	2 nd Navigator	RAFVR	English

The Aircraft took off at 9:30 am on 17 December 1942 after sending a W/T “go” at 9:25 am. Nothing further was heard until word was received of the crash.

At about 10:00 am, two men, fishing off Montague Harbour, Galiano Island, saw the aircraft, about a mile away, flying just below the clouds at about 300 ft. According to one man, it was slowly descending; the other man thought it remained level. They heard it crash and then saw it sink about three minutes later. The fishermen recovered two bodies from the water, those of Sgt. Bastick and Sgt. Bowler. The bodies of the other occupants were not located. The medical officer who examined the bodies was of the opinion that they died instantaneously and that their condition indicated that the aircraft struck the water with considerable violence. After first seeing the aircraft the fishermen were occupied with their fishing lines and neither saw it enter the water. Nor did they notice any change in the sound of the engines during the period.

The crews were all briefed prior to the search. They were given a route: Base – Cassidy – Parksville – Blubber Bay – Powell River - Stillwater – Base; the same route as that given to the missing aircraft. They were told emphatically that they must not, under any circumstances, fly in cloud, or at any height below 500ft. It was repeatedly stressed that it was the pilot’s responsibility to return to base if the weather was unfit or if the wireless operator was unable to maintain W/T contact with base, and they must report position to base every 30 minutes.

The commanding officer stated that similar types of accidents had occurred in the past and that in his opinion contributing factors were: the inferior types of pilots posted for staff duties; the changeable weather in the area with liability to fog and low cloud; high hills; poor meteorological forecasts; and the lack of navigational aids.

The conclusions of the court of inquiry were that a staff pilot on a reconnaissance and search flight encountered bad weather, probably misjudged his height over the calm water surface and crashed into the sea.

