

Blenkiron, Joseph Lambert

Age: 25

Nationality: American

Rank: Civilian

Occupation: Factory Representative
Douglas Aircraft Company

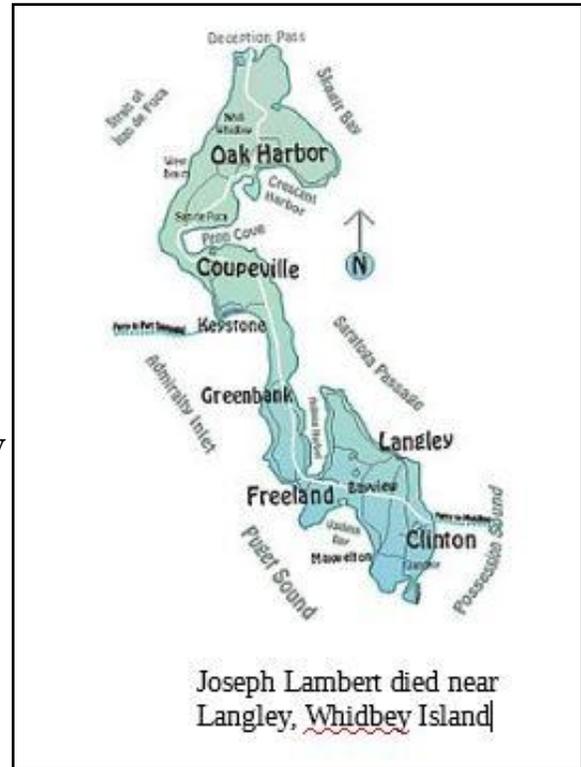
Birth: 25 May 1918
Fresno, CA
USA

Home Town: Los Angeles
CA, USA

Death: 12 April 1944
Crash of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124,
Whidbey Island, WA, USA

Burial: Cremated, probably in Washington, USA,
Ashes scattered.

Others: F/L Victor Ruocco, Pilot, RCAF; P/O George Walls,
Navigator, RCAF; LAC Samuel Hemphill, passenger, RCAF.



Biography

Joseph Blenkiron was a 25 year old American citizen, a factory representative of Douglas Aircraft Company. He was born in Fresno, California on 25 May 1918 to Joseph M. Blenkiron and Eva Lambert, both born in Nebraska. In 1920 he and his parents were still living in Fresno along with Eva's mother, Mary, who was born in Denmark. His father was a real estate salesman. A sister, Mary Cordelia, was born in 1921.

By 1940, the family had moved to Los Angeles and Joseph Lambert was working on assembly in an Aeroplane Factory, while his father described himself as simply a 'broker'.

On 12 April 1944, Joseph was working at RCAF Station Patricia Bay in British Columbia. As a representative of Douglas Aircraft, he was helping No. 32 OTU convert to Douglas DC-3 transport aircraft. He left the station, as a passenger in Expeditor HB124, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Victor Ruocco. The plane was making a trip to Sand Point, Seattle, WA in order to secure spare parts when it crashed on Whidbey Island, WA, killing all on board. At the inquiry into the crash of HB124, there was considerable discussion of the fact that Joseph, a civilian, had not signed a waiver, leaving the RCAF open to claims from his death.

1. The question of the waiver for the civilian passenger has already been covered in our letter 1038-Beech-124 (CSO), dated 1st May. However, further investigation elicits the fact that Mr. Blenkiron was insured by his Company for \$10,000.00, and this was considered to be sufficient in lieu of a waiver. Further, Mr. Blenkiron stated to the Station Commander that no waiver was required as long as he was flying in the course of his duties on the station. This is supported by correspondence between the Station Commander and the Douglas Aircraft Company and Insurance Company since the accident. To avoid any doubts in future instances of this kind, a blanket waiver is being drawn up to cover the whole period of attachment of such personnel to the unit.

Patricia Bay, OR 12th April 1944
1. *See* The question arises in this accident as to why Mr. Blenkiron the Douglas Aircraft Company was allowed to fly without signing a waiver. You will see in para. 1 of Western Air Command's letter that a blanket waiver is to be drawn up to cover the Douglas Company personnel. Do you consider any form of disciplinary action necessary in view of the fact that a waiver was not signed before the accident in question because even though the civilian concerned may have been insured the lack of a waiver still makes it possible for action against the Crown for damages.

Details of Crash

The flight of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124, on 12th April 1944, was arranged to transport Mr. J. L. Blenkiron, a factory representative of the Douglas Aircraft Company, to Sand Point, Seattle, Washington, in order to obtain aircraft spare parts. It carried three other men:

F/L Victor Ruocco	Pilot	RCAF
P/O George Walls	Navigator	RCAF
LAC Samuel Hemphill	A second passenger	RCAF

F/L Ruocco was an experienced and exceptionally capable pilot and flying instructor. He was also a qualified radio range instructor.

The aircraft took off from Patricia Bay station at 2:00 pm and the estimated time for the flight was 50 minutes. At about 3:00 pm, civilian witnesses at Langley, Whidbey Island, WA, saw the aircraft crash to the ground, explode and burn. Evidence suggests that the aircraft went out of control in or above the overcast since it came into sight in a dive of from 30° to 45° and recovered level flight at a low altitude. Due to either a high speed stall or to it clipping the top of trees the aircraft rolled about its longitudinal axis and crashed, more or less inverted, in a densely wooded area of 75 ft fir trees. All of the occupants were killed instantaneously and the aircraft was totally destroyed. Weather conditions at Sand Point, Bellingham and Patricia Bay permitted visual flying for the entire flight and any local, unfavourable weather could have been avoided. There was no radio contact during the flight.

When the site of the crash was examined it appeared that the aircraft had plunged vertically into the ground. Only one tree was clipped off and the wreckage was scattered about as if a great explosion had occurred. One body was recovered from 15 ft up in a tree. It was impossible to find any part of the aircraft that would give any indication as to the cause of the crash. The crash site was near the U.S. Naval Air Station and after the bodies were recovered it was left to the discretion of the U.S. Naval authorities to decide what to do with the remains.



Beechcraft Expeditor

