

Bures, Paul (Pavel)

Age: 40

Nationality: Czech/Canadian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 149 BR

Occupation: Air Engine Mechanic

Service No: R/51774

Birth: 9 June 1902
Rohatec, Hodonin,
Czechoslovakia

Home Town: Kirkland Lake, Ontario,
Canada

Death: 4 December 1942

Crash of Bristol Beaufort N1005
Pat Bay, BC, Canada

Burial: Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC, Canada



Biography

Pavel Bures arrived in St. John, N.B., Canada via Antwerp, Belgium, on the Minnedosa on 9th April 1927. The blonde, blue-eyed Czech became a naturalized citizen in January 1934, by which time he was calling himself 'Paul'.

Pavel had been educated in Czechoslovakia including a two year apprenticeship as steam and gas mechanic. He had also served in the Czech Air Force for two years where he was qualified as an Air Gunner. In Canada, Paul found work as a mechanic at various companies until, by 1935, he found himself part of the Czech community in Kirkland Lake, Ontario. He worked as a steam locomotive operator for a mining company until he enlisted in the RCAF, in January 1940, at the age of 37. Despite his preference to be an air gunner he was accepted as an air machine mechanic class 'C' and after initial training in Toronto was posted to AEM Training in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Paul was well regarded. When he was posted to Western Air Command he was reported as proficient at engine repairing, prompt and obedient, outstanding in air gunnery, and it was recommended that he be given a chance as an air gunner. There is no evidence that this recommendation was followed; at the time of his death he was still an air engine mechanic.

On 4 December 1942, Paul was one of the crew of Bristol Beaufort N1005 when it crashed on take-off from Patricia Bay and caught fire. Paul died of severe burns, a station fireman AC1 N. Tucker was seriously injured, with first and second degree burns, the pilot and other crew member incurred minor injuries.

Pavel was born on 9 June 1902 in Rohatec, Hodonin, Czechoslovakia to a farmer, Jan Bures and his wife Barbara. There are no records to indicate whether or not he had any siblings. His parents continued to live in Czechoslovakia after he came to Canada and did not learn of his death until the war ended in 1945. As next of kin on his service papers, Paul had named a fellow Czech from Kirkland Lake, Martin Pavik. Paul never married and had no known children.

Details of Crash

In December 1942, Bristol Beaufort N1005 had been recently taken over by No. 149 squadron. On December 4th at 10:30 it was taken for a flight to test the aircraft and the engine. The pilot was S/L J. T. Wilson, commanding officer of the squadron. Also on board were Sergeant Paul Bures - air engine mechanic, and Sergeant J. Luty - airframe mechanic, who was in the co-pilot's seat.

S/L Wilson had 1120 hours experience flying other types of aircraft. He had received one instructional flight of 50 minutes in the Beaufort on 25 November 1942. During the 50 minutes he had a total of ten minutes control in the air. He had not taken-off or landed the type. According to the officer in charge, the 50 minute flight was a test of the aircraft, not of S/L Wilson's ability to fly it. However, S/L Wilson considered himself capable of going solo.

S/L Wilson aborted his first attempt at take-off. On the second attempt the plane took-off with some difficulty and attained a height of about 20 ft. According to eye-witnesses, both engines appeared to be functioning satisfactorily but the pilot stated that the starboard engine seemed to fail. The aircraft bounced, caught fire, hit again and rolled and came to rest against the foundations of an old house, totally damaged. The pilot and Sergeant Luty were slightly injured, Paul Bures was killed and AC1 C. N. Tucker, a fireman at the scene, was seriously injured with first and second degree burns. Later examination of the aircraft showed both engines to be functioning normally at the time of the crash.

The Court of Inquiry after the crash determined that the pilot did not have adequate experience to fly this type of aircraft solo.

The recommendation of the Court was that occupants of an aircraft be forbidden to operate the controls other than when required by their normal duties. The pilot was put on charge under Section 39A of the Air Force Act.

The Accident Investigation Branch found the cause of the crash to be poor airmanship. The pilot was inexperienced on the type of aircraft and was not checked out by a qualified Beaufort pilot. In addition, the pilot had not signed the authorization of flight form.



BRISTOL BEAUFORT