

Caverley, Leon John (Jack)

Age: 24

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: LAC

Unit: Patricia Bay
RCAF Station

Occupation: General Duties

Service No: R/60180

Birth: 22 February 1918
Whitney, Ontario,
Canada

Home Town: Garson Mines, Ontario,
Canada

Death: 30 September 1942

St. Joseph's Hospital, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada
Injuries sustained in pedestrian/car accident

Burial: Good Shepherd Cemetery, Garson, Ontario, Canada



Biography

When 22 year old Jack Caverley enlisted in the RCAF in September 1940, he was described as a good 'clean-cut' type, neat and well dressed. With a grade eight education and work experience as a labourer on road construction he was not qualified for any specific occupation, but was accepted for 'General Duties'. By the end of the year he was reported as being of very good character and superior in his performance of his duties.

Jack seems to have had a cavalier attitude to service discipline and was confined to barracks several times for being absent without leave and more severely punished for transgressions of behaviour, including impersonating a corporal, giving a false name, and being intoxicated. However, he must have been diligent in his work as he was steadily promoted to LAC and never demoted as a result of his lapses.

In September 1940 Jack was posted to Saskatoon. While in hospital there he met a young nurse, Ferne, whom he married in September 1941. He did not inform the RAF of his marriage and his mother was listed as next of kin when he died. At the end of 1941, Jack was posted to Patricia Bay, BC, and was there when his daughter, Esther, was born in Saskatchewan in August of 1942.

Jack took his annual leave in 1942 from September 21st to October 4th. He planned to travel to Sudbury, Ontario, for a family wedding. From Sudbury he would take the train to Saskatoon to see his wife and to meet his six- week old daughter for the first time. She was to be christened while he was there. The Monday following the wedding, at about 8:30 pm, Jack, along with five family members, was walking towards a bus stop when a truck and a car approached in opposite directions. The truck and car collided and Jack was struck by the truck as it rebounded from the accident. He suffered multiple injuries including a fractured skull and died in St. Joseph's Hospital the following Wednesday.

Jack was buried at the Good Shepherd cemetery, in Garson Mines, Ontario, the following Saturday with full military honours. It was the first such burial to take place at the cemetery. Ferne travelled by bus to Ontario with her small daughter to attend the funeral and met Jack's family for the first time. For a few years she sent photos of the baby but once she remarried communication was lost and Esther grew up knowing virtually nothing of her father or his family. More than 60 years later one of Jack's nieces became involved in researching family history

and searched for the baby an older cousin remembered Jack having. She eventually succeeded and brought her to Garson Mines to see her father's grave and be welcomed into the large family she had never known.

Leon John Caverley was born on 22 February 1918 in Whitney, Ontario, to Cecil Caverley and Rachel Burton. He had one older sister and a twin brother, Serge, who served in the army and survived the war. His parents divorced when he was young and both remarried. His mother had a further three sons and two daughters including twins who died as infants. His father had one more daughter. On his attestation papers for the RCAF, Jack's birthdate is shown as March 1919; he omits his older sister and twin brother and claims to have only three younger siblings and to be the only child old enough to support his widowed mother. On his death Jack was still described as 'single' and his mother received his Memorial Cross.

He married Ferne Robina Drake in Malaval, Saskatchewan, on 2 September 1941. They had one daughter, Esther, in August 1942.



Jack Caverley's Aunt, Wife, Ferne and Mother
at his graveside



MILITARY HONORS BESTOWED ON AIRMAN KILLED BY TRUCK

Largely Attended Funeral Held at Garson on Saturday

Full military honors were observed at the funeral Saturday afternoon of L.Ac. Leon John Caverley, accident victim, who died Wednesday of injuries received when he was struck earlier last week by a truck on the new Coniston road. The airman, whose home is in Garson, was on leave from the R.C.A.F. station at Patricia Bay, B.C., when the accident occurred. Rev. C. Large, of Capreol, conducted the funeral services Saturday from the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd at Garson.

Seven R.C.A.F. men from North Bay acted as pallbearers. Under the command of Flt. Sgt. Sinclair, they included Cpl. Carey, Cpl. Roffey, Cpl. Dorian, L.Ac. Levert,

L.Ac. Kelley and Cpl. Tackaberry. A large number of friends and relatives of the late airman were in attendance.

The Sudbury branch of the Canadian Legion was in charge of rites at the graveside and Albert Collier, bugler, sounded Last Post and Reveille after the casket had been committed to the ground. Four members of the army recruiting staff in Sudbury, Sgts. A. R. C. Skelton and B. Nichols, and Cpls. E. C. Fleming and E. W. Bussell, were present.

Relatives of the deceased from out of town at the funeral services included Truman Caverley, an uncle, from Ottawa; Pte. George Caverley, an uncle, of Kingston; Mrs. Skelly, an aunt, of Ottawa; Mrs. J. B. Caverley, an aunt, of Sudbury, and Bert Richardson. Mr. and Mrs. May, and Mrs. Donald Lesalle, cousins, all of Capreol. L.Ac. Caverley's wife came from her home in Malaval, Sask., to attend the funeral.

Sudbury Star Oct. 5, 1942



In September 1942, Leon J. Caverley came home to Skead on leave from the Royal Canadian Air Force. He was planning to attend a family wedding and then head out to Saskatchewan to his wife and the six-week-old daughter he had never seen.

He never made it.

He died Sept. 30 of that year, killed by a truck as he walked across the street near Coniston.

His daughter, Esther Knapp, never knew her father. Nor did she know of the extended family she had in the Sudbury area.

This weekend, she got to meet that family.

It all came about after she happened to find her picture on a website on the Internet.

Her cousin, Judy Holbrook, was working on the family tree, explained another cousin, Jenny Rollins. But when the research came to Esther, the family knew of her, but didn't know where she was or how to reach her.

"I said we can't do the family tree unless we find her," explained Rollins.

Knapp's mother brought her to Sudbury for the funeral 68 years ago, but that was her last visit to the city.

Afterward, "the mother sent us pictures for about four years and then she remarried and after that, we didn't know anything about her, where she was or anything," said Rollins.

IN MEMORIAM

CAVERLEY — In loving memory
of my darling son, L.Ac. R69180
Jack Caverley, who died Septem-
ber 30, 1942.

Sad and sudden was the call
Of our dear son, loved by all;
Do not ask if we miss him.
Oh, there is such a vacant place;
Sometimes we think we hear his
 footsteps,
Oh, we see his smiling face:
When days are dark and friends
 are few,
Our dear son, we long for you.
To those who have a son,
Cherish him with care,
For there will never be another
To fill his vacant chair.

—Ever remembered and sadly
missed by Mother, Alida and Ber-
nard.

IN MEMORIAM

CAVERLEY — In loving memory
of our darling brother and uncle,
L.Ac. R69180 Jack Caverley, who
passed away September 30, 1942.

When evening shades are falling,
And we sit in quiet alone,
To our hearts there comes a
 longing
If he only could come home.
Friends may think we have for-
gotten
When at times they see us smile,
But they little know the heartache
Our smiles hide all the while.

—Ever remembered by sisters,
Jean and Myrtle, and brothers,
Fred and Pat, and children.