

Conlon, Sidney James

Age: 21

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Wireless Operator/
Air Gunner

Service No: R/115318

Birth: 14 April 1921
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Home Town: Toronto, Ontario, Canada



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. A. M. Bellotti,
2nd WAG, RCAF; Sgt. K. J. Bowler, 1st Navigator, RAFVR;
Sgt. R. A. Maun, 2nd Navigator, RAFVR.

Biography

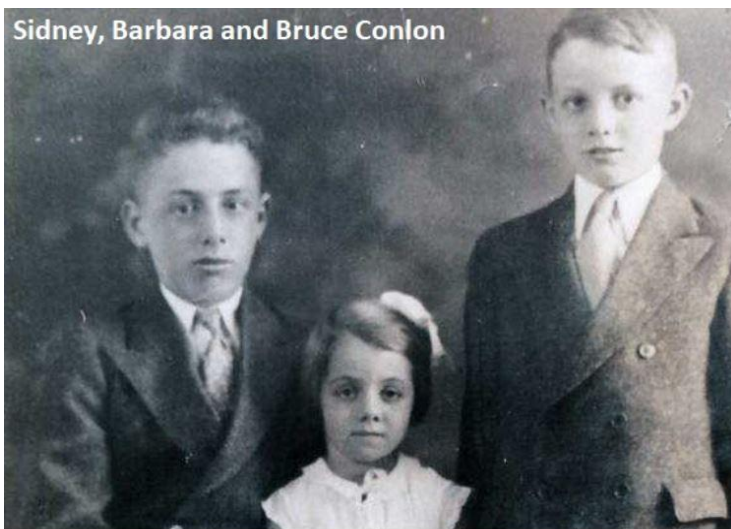
For Sidney Conlon, joining the RCAF was an opportunity to progress in life. He applied for Flying Duties and was keen to improve his education and eventually progress to a pilot. He had left high school after three years in the commercial program and had worked for three years in clerical positions progressing from message boy to purchasing agent. The skills he brought to the service were shorthand and typing.

When he enlisted in July 1941, he was recommended for training as a wireless operator/ air gunner (WAG). His education and background did not make him a candidate for a commission.

Sidney's performance at wireless school was average and he was reported as having a "good outlook on life". At gunnery school he was keen and alert and was expected to make good air crew. Here it was noted that he was eager to eventually qualify for pilot training. He earned his WAG badge on 26 October 1942, when he was promoted to sergeant, and was posted to Pat Bay on 7th November.

On December 17th, Sidney was 1st WAG on Avro Anson R3431 when it joined a search for Anson N9560, which had disappeared the previous day. R3431 flew into the sea north east of Salt Spring Island, BC, within half an hour of take off. Three of the crew of five, including Sidney, sank with the aircraft and their bodies were never recovered.

Sidney James Conlon was born 14 April 1921 to Hector Donald Conlon, a welder,



and Ethel Isabella Adelard, in Toronto, Ontario. There was already one son, Donald, aged about three, who died a year after Sidney was born. A third son, Bruce, was born in 1923; Bruce served in the RCA. A daughter, Barbara was born in 1928. After Sidney's death his father tried to locate a photograph he had of his fiancée. It could not be found and was assumed to have been with him on the aircraft.

SGT. S. CONLON

Wireless Air Gunner Was Lost in Pacific

Reported missing when his plane crashed into the sea off the Western Coast last December, Sgt. Sydney Conlon, 21, is now officially presumed dead, according to information received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. Conlon, Albany Avenue. A wireless air gunner, he was stationed at an air base on Vancouver Island. He enlisted with the R.C.A.F. in July, 1940.

Sgt. Conlon was formerly prominent in hockey, rugby and softball. He was a member of the Westsides when they won the Ontario football championship four years ago. A native of Toronto, he attended Palmerston Avenue School and Central High School of Commerce. At the time of his enlistment he was with Rapid Grip & Batten Limited. He received his bombing and gunnery wing at MacDonald, Man., and his "sparks" at Guelph.

He was a member of St. Cyprian's Anglican Church. His father, a veteran of the first Great War, served overseas with the Canadian Engineers. His brother, Bruce, 19, is a bombardier with the artillery, and a sister, Barbara, is at home.



CONLON, Sgt. Sydney James — "They that fight for freedom undertake the noblest cause mankind can have at stake". It is with great pride, deep sorrow and everlasting love, that we pay tribute to our dear brother, Sgt. Sydney James Conlon, W.A.G. R.C.A.F. R115318, whose plane crashed into the Juan de Fuca Strait, December 17, 1942, while on Coastal Patrol in British Columbia. He was never recovered.

He gave his last full measure of devotion,
And though, of course, his passing brought us
pain,
Still it brought us also surcease from our
sorrow,
To know his sacrifice was not in vain:
For he lives forever in our memory,
As one who died that mankind might be free
So he will long be honoured by his country
A hero in the cause of Liberty.

— On this, the 50th Anniversary of his death, his memory is cherished and he is lovingly remembered by sister Barbara (Clarke) of Pickering, Ontario and brother Bruce of Scarborough, Ontario and their families.

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 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 saw it sink about three minutes after the crash. 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 500 ft. 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.

