

DAY, Louis Oswald

Age: 21
Nationality: Canadian
Rank: Flying/Officer
Unit: No. 3 OTU
Occupation: Pilot
Service No: J/43966
Birth: 15 October 1923
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada



Home Town: Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Death: 2 December 1944

Crash of Consolidated Canso 11086,
near Ucluelet, BC

Burial: Commemorated Ottawa Memorial
Buried at site of crash.

Others: Sgt. Robert Davidson, F/E; P/O John Mahoney, WO;
(All RCAF) F/O Robert Nash, 1st Pilot; Sgt. Joseph Patenaude, WAG;
P/O Frank Porter, F/E; F/L. George Ramsay, Nav. Instructor;
P/O Alonzo Staples, Navigator; Sgt. Joseph Trudel, WAG.

Biography

Louis Day had been married less than seven months when he died on 2 December 1944. He would have been unaware that a son, Douglas Louis, would be born eight months after his death, or that he was due to be promoted to Flying Officer effective the previous October.

Louis was born on 15 October 1923 in Toronto, Ontario, to John Thomas Day and Nina Jones, both originally from Newfoundland. John and Nina already had one son, Leonard Frederick, about a year old. Leonard was serving overseas when Louis died.

When he enlisted for flying duties in November 1942, Louis, who had a grade XI education, had been working in a draughting office for Coleman Light and Stove for ten months. He did not plan to return to that work after the war but instead hoped to return to school and qualify as an engineer. His father, a carpenter, had died when Louis was eight and Louis provided partial support for his mother. At this time he was still single.

After Initial Training, Louis was sent to No. 7 Elementary Flying Training School on 6 September 1943. He stayed there until 29 October 1943 when he was assessed as a "*neat reliable student. Good discipline and comportment*". At this point he was thought to be moderately suitable for a bomber pilot or a flying instructor and definitely suitable for a fighter pilot.

November 1943 to April 1944 was spent at No. 16 Service Flying Training School where Louis was a "*good conscientious type with good service attitude*". His skills were re-assessed and he was reported to be unsuitable as a fighter pilot, moderately suitable as an Instructor, definitely suitable for flying boats or as a bomber pilot and extremely suitable for reconnaissance. Louis earned his pilots' wings and commission on 7 April 1944. Just over a month later, he was married to Lorraine Charlotte Strong in Truro, Nova Scotia.

Louis' training continued at Reconnaissance School in Summerside, PEI. He performed well there and his Instructor reported him as "*applied himself diligently throughout the course in obtaining above average results. He is quiet and dependable and should prove a capable GR captain with experience*".

In September 1944, Louis was posted to No. 3 OTU at Patricia Bay. His wife

moved to Vancouver Island with him and lived in Sidney.

Less than three months later, Louis was second pilot on Consolidated Canso 11086 when it was reported missing on a training flight. In May 1945 a letter was sent to his wife confirming that searches for the aircraft had been unsuccessful and the crew was now officially presumed dead, but the letter was sent to the Sidney address and Lorraine, who had returned to Toronto, never received it. She wrote to the RCAF in June 1945 asking for information. The aircraft was located a month later and Louis was buried with the rest of the crew next to the crashed plane. On 31 August 1945 a letter finally confirming that Louis had died was sent to his relatives.

(Above this line is for Signals use only)

R.C.A.F. MESSAGE

R.C.A.F. S. 1
REV. PAGE 02
NO. 4-11(200)
M.C. 88-1-1
R.C. 88-2

NO. OF GROUPS *1/2* WING/YM FILE

TO* WAC REPEAT 30TU OFFICE DATE STAMP & SERIAL NUMBER

FROM* AFHQ

ORIGINATOR'S NUMBER DATE MY REFERENCE AND DATE YOUR

1950 19 JULY MY YOUR

Use Double Space Typing!
RESTRICTED

YOUR SIGNAL A483 JULY 5 REPORTED QUOTE CANSO 11086 MISSING FROM 30TU DEC 3/44 LOCATED ON MOUNTAIN TOP EAST OF KENNEDY LAKE GROUND PARTY HAVE REACHED SCENE AND VERIFIED IDENTIFICATION UNQUOTE STOP NOTHING FURTHER REPORTED HERE STOP BETTER COMPLAINS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY KIN MINISTER THAT NO INFORMATION HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY NEXTKIN OF F/O RL WASH J27069 UP TO JULY 11 ALTHOUGH NEWS PAPERS CARRIED ITEMS TO THE SAME EFFECT AS YOUR SIGNAL STOP ALSO TORONTO STAR JULY 9 STATES THAT ON INTERVIEWING NEXTKIN WIFE OF F/L G B N RAMSAY J7200 THEY WERE INFORMED THAT MRS RAMSAYS ONLY ADVICE WAS A NEWS BROADCAST ON RADIO AND THAT SHE HAD IMMEDIATELY TELEPHONED TO A/V/W HEAKES WHO HAD CONFIRMED THE NEWS BROADCAST STOP IT IS REQUESTED THAT THESE HEADQUARTERS BE IMMEDIATELY ADVISED BY SIGNAL IF NEXT OF KIN WERE ADVISED AND THE DATE THE ADVICE CONVEYED TO THEM STOP IF NEXTKIN WERE NOT REPEAT NOT INFORMED AND EXPLANATION IS REQUESTED STOP AND EXPLANATION IS ALSO REQUESTED WHY THIS INFORMATION WAS RELEASED TO PRESS AND RADIO BEFORE NEXTKIN WERE INFORMED

This message must be sent AS WRITTEN and may be sent by W/T. Signature *[Signature]* R-4

This message must be sent IN CYPHER and may be sent by W/T. Signature

Originator's Instructions* Degree of Priority* IMMEDIATE

TIME OF ORIGIN 1510 M.T.

T.O.R.

T.H.I.

Signature to insert "NDI" if message is not to go by W/T over any part of the route. (Below this line is for Signals use only)

TYPE IN	TIME IN	READER	SENDER	SYSTEM USE	TIME OUT	READER	SENDER	SYSTEM USE	TIME OUT	READER	SENDER
					11 13/19		ND				

*The Signal Department is responsible that these details are transposed to the appropriate portion of the message form and that all possibility of compromising distinguishing signals, etc., by ceasing to remove their significance from the address, etc., is avoided. Before delivery of the message these details are to be re-inserted in P.V.T.

Details of Crash

On 2 December 1944, the crew of Consolidated Canso 11086 were briefed for a night navigation exercise to begin at 4:30 pm. The crew members were:

Sergeant Robert Davidson	Flight Engineer
Flying Officer Louis Day	2 nd Pilot
Pilot Officer John Mahoney	Wireless Operator
Flying Officer Robert Nash	Captain, 1 st Pilot
Sergeant Joseph Patenaude	WAG
Pilot Officer Frank Porter	Flight Engineer
Flight Lt. George Ramsay	Navigation Instructor
Pilot Officer Alonzo Staples	Navigator
Sergeant Joseph Trudel	WAG

Pigeon #43 RCAF 1064

Sole survivor

Three of the crew were French speaking and had chosen to be together. The aircraft had been intended for an earlier exercise but this was prevented by wireless problems.

Crews of six Canso aircraft were fully briefed for the exercise, which entailed flying from base to the southern tip of Vancouver Island, out to sea for about two hours and then back along the same route to base. Two of the aircraft were found not to be serviceable so only four actually became airborne to begin the exercise. One aircraft returned after about two hours due to wireless problems, and an hour later two more aircraft returned to base due to deteriorating weather. On their return they reported encountering very poor weather in the Juan de Fuca Strait

Signals at No. 3 OTU contacted Canso 11086 and instructed the aircraft to return to base. 11086 acknowledged the signal at 6:55 pm. An aircraft tracking system in Victoria maintained a plot on an incoming aircraft, which was assumed to be 11086, from 7:24 to 7:51 pm but lost this plot when the aircraft entered Juan de Fuca Strait.

W/T contact was maintained with 11086 until 8:00 pm, although difficulty was encountered in making contact, probably because of the low altitude the pilot

was forced to fly at in the Juan de Fuca Strait due to the poor weather. No further contact was made and at 8:50 pm, overdue action was taken.

The search for 11086 started on December 2nd and continued until December 11th. The search entailed 742 hours of daytime flying and 46 hours at night. A further 250 hours of searching started on December 15th after flares were discovered, which were believed to be connected to 11086. No trace was found of the aircraft or crew.

At 5:00 pm on December 6th, a bedraggled carrier pigeon, No. 43 RCAF 1064, returned to its loft at Patricia Bay. The pigeon had been issued to Flight Officer Nash on December 2nd and belonged to Canso 11086. It was exhausted, but showed no sign of having been in a crash. The droppings present on its upper tail feathers suggested that it had remained inside its box until the morning after the aircraft went missing.

The message capsule was missing from the pigeon's leg, giving rise to speculation that it had been handled.

Around 4:00 pm on 5th December a civilian walking on Long Beach near Tofino found a capped beer bottle containing a message. He smashed the bottle to get at the note on which he could read "SOS" and a location. He took the note home, dried it out and contacted the RCAF at Tofino.

At the Tofino Station the smudged note was deciphered as well as could be done and it was decided to turn the note over to the Intelligence Officer at Western Command. The Commanding Officer at Tofino thought it most unlikely that an aircrew in a dinghy would have sent a note in a beer bottle, and the date on the note appeared to be in September. Although instructed to send the message immediately, he did not send it until the next plane left on December 9th.

It was ultimately decided that the note was a hoax. However, the Commanding Officer at Tofino was severely reprimanded since, had the note been from Canso 11086, his delay would have impacted the area searched and possibly the survival chances of the crew.

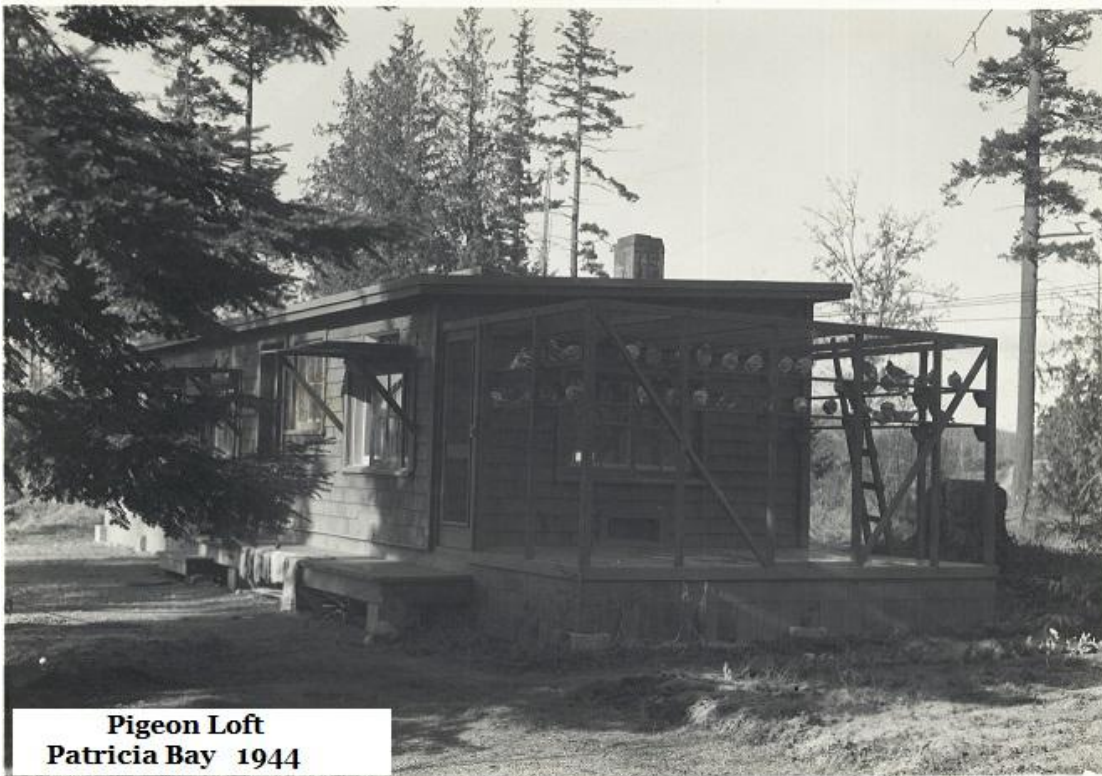
On 1 July 1945 the wreckage of an aircraft was located from the air by a DC-3 flying into Tofino. The wreckage was located 30 miles east of Tofino, Vancouver Island, on the S.E. slope of a mountain at about 3,000 feet and appeared to have been heading north-west. The front of the aircraft was completely burnt out but

it was determined that both engines were under power at the time of the crash. The plane was identified as Canso 11086 by the number on the fuselage.

A watch was found that had stopped at 8:27, which is presumed to be the time of the crash. The pigeon box catch was found to have been sprung by the crash, so the pigeon could have escaped by exerting a little pressure. The pigeon log was also found with no pages missing. Every effort was made to identify the occupants, who were buried in a common grave at the site, and a funeral conducted by the Protestant and Catholic padres who were present. The burial cairn was covered with a Union Jack and a white cross with the name and number of each man was erected.

The investigation into the crash was re-opened and it concluded that the cause of the crash was the failure of the pilot to reach a safe height while flying in bad weather in a mountainous area. On 24 August 1986, after three years of planning, a new cairn had been built at the site, with a memorial plaque, and a formal dedication service was given for the lost airmen.





The RCAF operated homing pigeons for more than 25 years. They were carried aboard military aircraft for emergency use, as the birds were more reliable and lighter than the tube based radios of the time. The purpose was to use them to send a message back to the base if a plane was downed.

In 1920 Jericho Beach Station in Vancouver became the first station to establish a Pigeon Division. By 1944 there were 30 pigeon lofts in Canada; 16 on the west coast and 14 on the east coast. At its peak the Pigeon Division had one officer and over 300 enlisted men. Pigeons also served in Europe with Bomber and Coastal Command,

Special lofts for the birds were constructed, and airmen of the Pigeon Division were instructed in the raising and caring of homing pigeons. Pigeons were used throughout the war at Patricia Bay Station, where, for exercise, the birds were regularly released in Victoria and left to fly home.

On patrols it was a common practise to load two pigeons in special boxes onto the aircraft, which were then removed on its return and the pigeons returned to the loft. The accident described here is the only one out of Patricia Bay in which a pigeon returned to base after a crash. There is no record of whether the aircraft carried a second pigeon that failed to survive.