

# Middleton, Charles Govan

**Age:** 23

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Rank:** Flying Officer

**Unit:** No. 133 Squadron

**Occupation:** Pilot

**Service No:** J/10788

**Birth:** 12 January 1922  
Shaunavon, SK,  
Canada

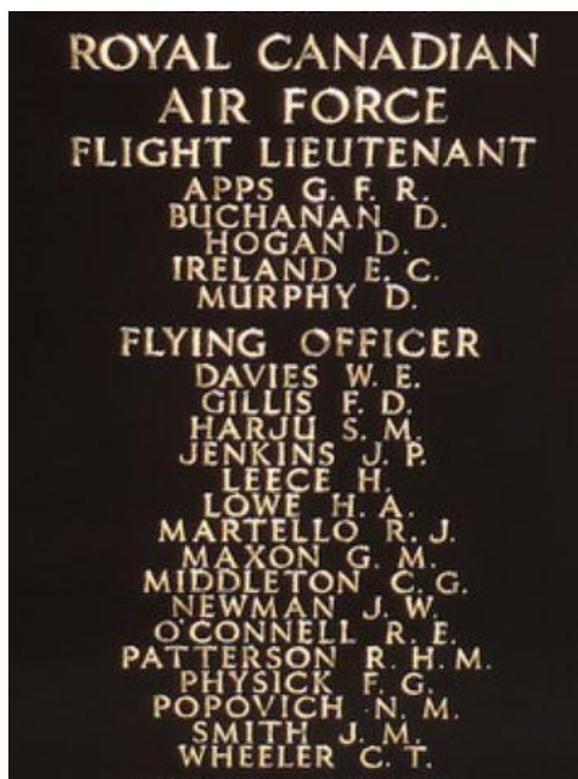
**Home Town:** New Westminster, BC,  
Canada

**Death:** 17 July 1945

de Havilland Mosquito KA109  
Crashed in Sabine Channel,  
BC, Canada

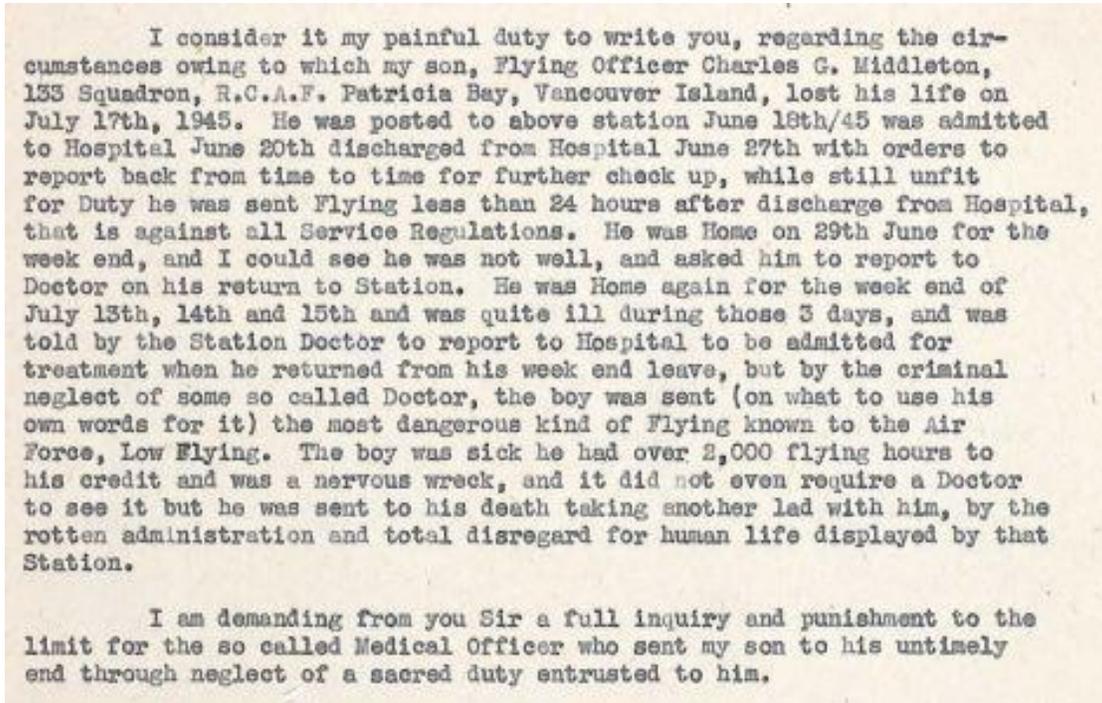
**Burial:** Commemorated Ottawa Memorial

**Others:** F/S William McIldowie Turnbull, Navigator, RCAF



# Biography

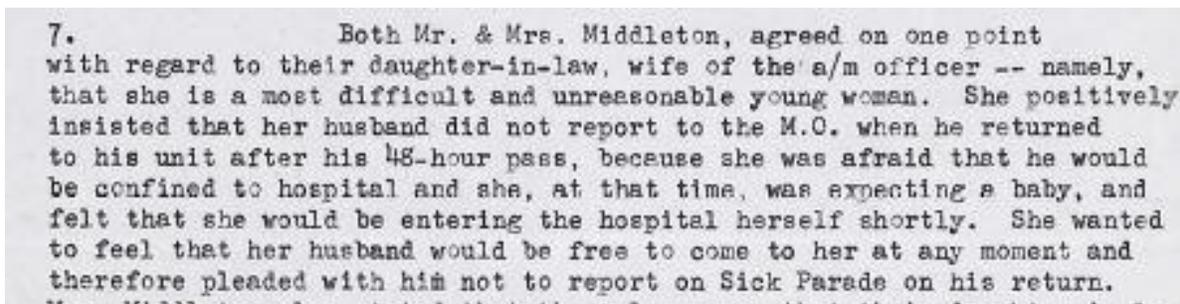
Charles Middleton died on 17 July 1945, just one month before the birth of his first child, a daughter, Charlene. Charles had been in the Patricia Bay station hospital for a week at the end of June 1945, and his father was very angry about his son's state of health at the time of his accident. He wrote a forceful letter to the RCAF in which he said:



I consider it my painful duty to write you, regarding the circumstances owing to which my son, Flying Officer Charles G. Middleton, 133 Squadron, R.C.A.F. Patricia Bay, Vancouver Island, lost his life on July 17th, 1945. He was posted to above station June 18th/45 was admitted to Hospital June 20th discharged from Hospital June 27th with orders to report back from time to time for further check up, while still unfit for Duty he was sent Flying less than 24 hours after discharge from Hospital, that is against all Service Regulations. He was Home on 29th June for the week end, and I could see he was not well, and asked him to report to Doctor on his return to Station. He was Home again for the week end of July 13th, 14th and 15th and was quite ill during those 3 days, and was told by the Station Doctor to report to Hospital to be admitted for treatment when he returned from his week end leave, but by the criminal neglect of some so called Doctor, the boy was sent (on what to use his own words for it) the most dangerous kind of Flying known to the Air Force, Low Flying. The boy was sick he had over 2,000 flying hours to his credit and was a nervous wreck, and it did not even require a Doctor to see it but he was sent to his death taking another lad with him, by the rotten administration and total disregard for human life displayed by that Station.

I am demanding from you Sir a full inquiry and punishment to the limit for the so called Medical Officer who sent my son to his untimely end through neglect of a sacred duty entrusted to him.

Charles had been in hospital for a bladder infection from which he had recovered. An Air Force chaplain visited the Middletons, primarily to talk to Charles' wife. She was not home and he spent some time with the parents. He gave a long report of the visit including:



7. Both Mr. & Mrs. Middleton, agreed on one point with regard to their daughter-in-law, wife of the a/m officer -- namely, that she is a most difficult and unreasonable young woman. She positively insisted that her husband did not report to the M.O. when he returned to his unit after his 48-hour pass, because she was afraid that he would be confined to hospital and she, at that time, was expecting a baby, and felt that she would be entering the hospital herself shortly. She wanted to feel that her husband would be free to come to her at any moment and therefore pleaded with him not to report on Sick Parade on his return.

When the chaplain arrived, Charles' father was openly hostile and incandescent with rage. The chaplain succeeded in placating him and the visit ended

amicably:

8. On leaving the house, Mr. & Mrs. Middleton, both thanked me most profusely for calling and helping to straighten out this accident in their minds. Mr. Middleton was most apologetic for being so extremely out-spoken, and it would appear that he was on the verge of tears. He emphasized over and over again that he hoped there would be no necessity for any further correspondence from Ottawa or from themselves.

Charles Middleton was an exceptional pilot and officer. He had enlisted in the RCAF on 12 May 1941, a 19 year old business student wanting flying duties. At a medical the previous March he was borderline fit, but by the time he enlisted the medical officer found him fully fit for ground or flying duties. At the Recruiting Centre, he had been well received:

*“seems to be a very smart lad. Anxious to get into RCAF. Observant and alert. Possesses intelligence, has a good record at school”.*

He was recommended for a pilot or alternatively an observer.

Charles went into training, starting with Initial Training School in Edmonton, AB, from June to October 1941. He was reported to be smart and alert with a good team spirit and very active in sports. Again, the first recommendation was as a pilot but the alternative at this time was an air gunner.

At Elementary Flying School at Boundary Bay, BC, October to December 1941, Charles was a good student who made good average progress and had no outstanding faults. He was *‘somewhat rebellious and quite touchy when aroused’* but expected to make a good service pilot.

Charles’ ability and skill really developed at Service Flying Training School in Claresholm, AB, which he attended from December 1941 to March 1942. He was an outstanding pupil in all respects, quite above average in confidence and assurance, quick and keen, and a very capable and above average pilot. He was awarded his pilot’s wings on 27th March 1942 and commissioned. His promotion to Flying Officer came in October 1942 and in February 1943 he received an assessment as an officer when he was described as very co-operative, very good at handling men – a promising officer who could accept responsibility.

For the next three years, Charles moved among RCAF stations in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta as a service pilot. In June 1943, he married Edythe Hilda Buchart in New Westminster, BC. On 18 June 1945 he was posted to No. 122 Squadron, Patricia Bay.

Charles was the older son of Charles Middleton, a farmer born in Aberdeen,

Scotland, and Agnes Maxwell, born in Ireland. He was born in Shaunavon, Saskatchewan on 12 January 1922 and the family moved to British Columbia in 1933. He had a brother about six years younger and there had been another son who died in infancy.

Charles attended high school from 1936 to 1940 and Duffus Business School from 1940 until he enlisted in the RCAF. He was an air cadet from 1939 to 1941. He was a keen sportsman, playing Lacrosse, Rugby, Ice Hockey and Canadian Football.

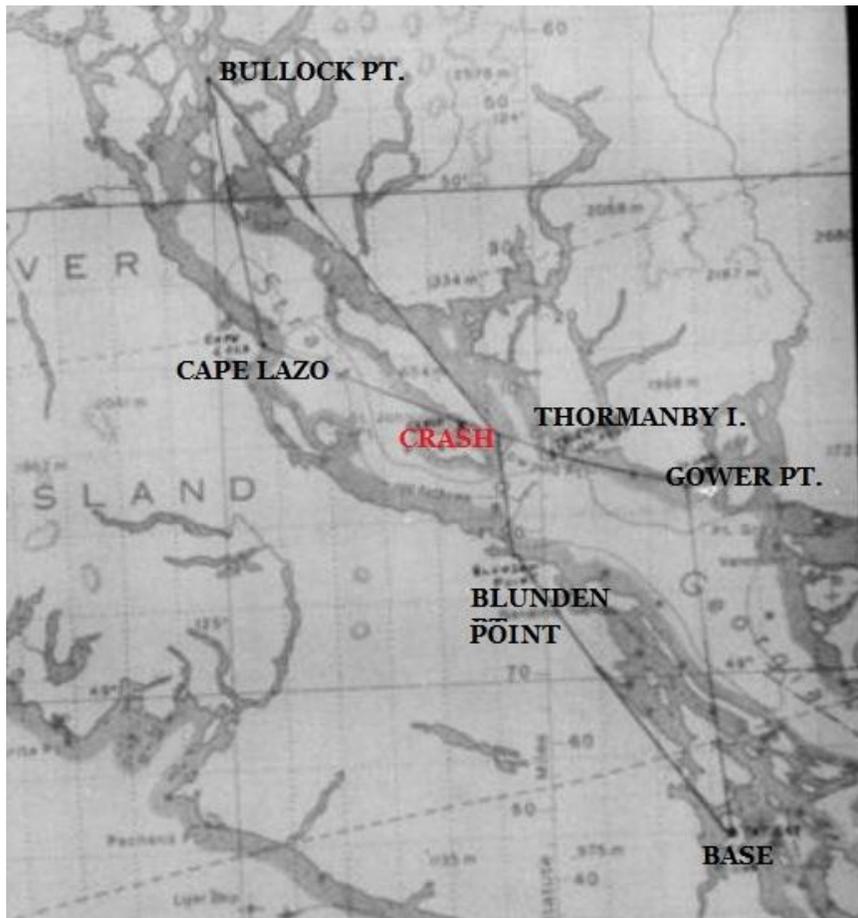
On 17 July 1945 Charles was killed when his de Havilland Mosquito KA109 sank into the Sabine Channel between Texada and Lasqueti Islands in British Columbia. The aircraft and the bodies of the two occupants were never recovered.



*Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

## Details of Crash

On 17 July 1945, three Mosquito aircraft took part in a “rhubarb” low navigation exercise. The third to take off, at 10:58, was KA109 with F/O Charles Govan Middleton as Pilot and F/S William McIldowie Turnbull as Navigator. The crews were permitted to chart their own course that was then approved by the officer responsible for the exercise. The course for KA109 was to be: Base to Gower Point to Thormanby Island to Cape Lazo to Bullock Bluff to Upwood Point to Blunden Point back to Base. For these exercises, the minimum flying height was 50 feet.



At about 11:30, the aircraft was seen by a fisherman in the Sabine Channel, between Texada and Lasqueti Islands, flying in a northwesterly direction along the west coast of Texada Island, about 15 feet off the water. According to his evidence at the Court of Inquiry, the machine seemed as if it was going to land and then the rear end of the plane seemed to hit the water and the aircraft appeared to climb at a steep angle to about 50 feet. The left wing dropped and

the pilot seemed to right it, then the right wing dropped and the aircraft dropped its nose and went into the water, which was very smooth. When the aircraft went into the water, there was smoke and fire.

The aircraft sank in 1,000 feet of water and the crew members were never found. When the site was examined later in the day, only a few pieces of plywood were found, one with the number "09". Since the only wooden aircraft at Patricia Bay was the Mosquito and KA 109 was the only aircraft missing, it is clear that this is where it crashed. Because of the concerns of Charles Middleton's father over the state of health of his son on this day, evidence was given to the Court of Inquiry by the Medical Officer:

The Witness, S/L G. MacKay, having been called states: I am S/L George MacKay, (C25666), employed as Station Medical Officer, R.C.A.F. Station, Patricia Bay, B.C.

F/O Middleton, R.G. - J.10788.

The above officer was in Station Hospital, Patricia Bay from 20th June, 1945 to 27th June, 1945.

He was under treatment for a minor bladder ailment. Investigation showed no pathology of a serious nature. He responded satisfactorily to symptomatic treatment. While in hospital, he had a complete medical check and was found in good health. He was discharged free of any complaint which he had prior to and on admission to hospital.

Subsequent examination of the above Flying Officer was made one week later. He felt quite well and medical check was satisfactory. This Officer according to our records has not attended any sick parades since the above check.

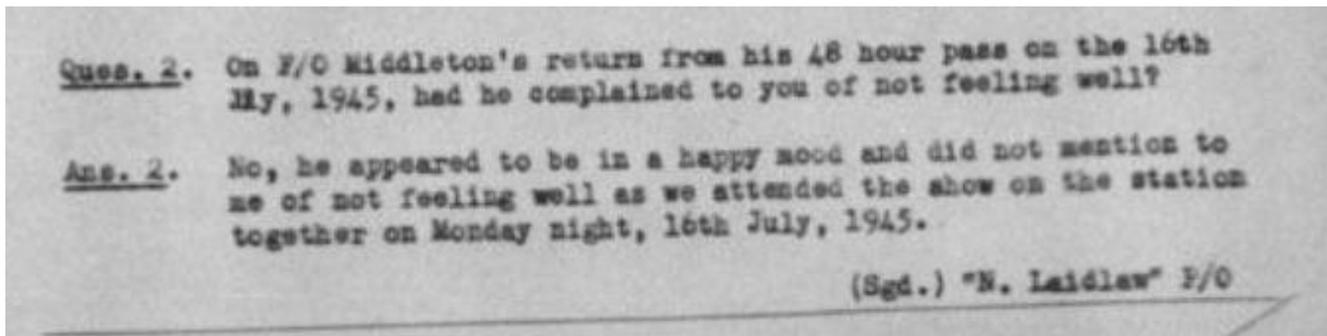
In addition the Flight Lieutenant who authorized the flight was questioned:

Ques. 1. What was the condition of F/O Middleton's health on 17th July, 1945, when you detailed him on this flight?

Ans. 1. F/O Middleton had returned from a 48 hour pass Monday 16th, July, 1945, about 17:30 hours and had flown back a Mosquito from Sea Island. On Tuesday 17th July, 1945, I detailed him at his own request to participate in a low level cross country. To the best of my knowledge, he was in perfect health at the time he took off as would appear to be proven by his requesting to go flying.

(Sgd.) "James R.F. Johnson" F/L

The pilot of one of the other Mosquito aircraft performing the exercise, a friend of Charles Middleton, was also questioned on Charles' health:



The conclusion of the Court of Inquiry was that the accident was due to pilot error in flying too low over a glassy surface and losing control, causing the aircraft to stall and crash.

The recommendation was that the minimum height of such exercises be raised to 100 feet.



