

Procter, Richard Campbell

Age: 29

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Squadron Leader

Unit: No. 120 BR

Occupation: Command Armaments Officer

Service No: C180

Birth: 11 April 1911
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



Home Town: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Death: 14 Aug 1940
Crash of Northrop Delta 670
Seymour Narrows, Discovery Passage, BC

Burial: Commemorated on Ottawa Air Force Memorial.

Others: Cpl. Robert George Brown; F/O Hugh Lockart Gordon;
F/O Joseph Georges Hector Desbiens; Cptn. John Henry
Bourne

Biography

Richard Campbell Procter was raised in Edmonton and educated at Gannean Public School, Edmonton Technical School and at Brentwood College in Victoria. He graduated from the University of Alberta with a B.Sc. in mining in 1934, and worked in the mining industry while studying and after graduating. Tall and slim, he was an enthusiastic sportsman excelling at rugby and sailing. Prior to applying to the RCAF he served as a reserve in the Canadian Officers Training Corps. and Edmonton Fusiliers, reaching the rank of Captain.

It was Richards's ambition to join the RCAF early in 1933, when he expected to graduate from university. In preparation he attended the Provisional Pilot Officers (PPO) course at Camp Borden during the summers of 1930 and 1931. In 1932, during the Depression, he was unable to find summer work. He could not afford to return to university that year and his graduation was delayed until 1934. He applied to take the last part of his PPO training in the winter 32/33

Eventually, in July 1935, Richard applied for a commission in the RCAF. The Interviewing Officer described him as "*A very promising type, keen and intelligent with plenty of character and a pleasing personality. He is strongly recommended to a commission in the RCAF*".

Between 1935 and 1939, Richard was in Ontario and England. He received his Pilot Wings on 25 May 1936. In England, with the RAF, he worked on armament issues pertaining to Bristol Blenheim, Supermarine Stranraer and Hawker Hurricane aircraft. He took special turret courses, torpedo training and courses in the servicing of armament equipment at coastal stations.

On Richard's return to Canada in 1939, the training he had plus his BC Metalliferous Blaster's certificate, and experience with explosives in the mining industry, led him to be posted to Eastern Air Command as Command Armaments officer. He was at this time a Flight Lieutenant. He applied for active service on 22 November 1939, and in 1940 came to BC, where he was promoted to Squadron Leader on June 15th of that year. Two months later he died in the crash of Northrop Delta 670

Richard was born on 11 April 1911 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Dr. Richard Procter, a radiologist, and his wife Katherine Allison. A younger brother, Robert Lanning, was born in 1914. Robert served with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and died after an accidental fall from a window in 1944. Richard never married and has no known children. In his will, Robert is his sole beneficiary.

Details of Crash



On 10 August 1941, the Commanding Officer of No. 120 squadron was asked to supply a Delta Aircraft for transportation to Alliford Bay and back. F/O Desbiens was detailed to take the trip. The flight was attempted, but had to be abandoned when the weather deteriorated, and postponed until the following day. The aircraft reached Alliford Bay and made the return trip on August 14th.

The aircraft was carrying five men:

Cptn. John Henry Bourne	Passenger	RCOC seconded to RCAF
Cpl. Robert George Brown	AEM	
F/O Joseph Georges Hector Desbiens	Pilot	
F/O Hugh Lockart Gordon	Passenger	
S/L Richard Campbell Procter	Passenger	

Captain Bourne and S/L Procter were on an annual inspection of explosives at all bases and F/L Gordon was carrying out an audit of accounts prior to the arrival of the Inspector-General.

The Delta reached Bella Bella from Alliford Bay for refuelling and took off again at 1:34 pm, heading to Patricia Bay.

On 9 August 1940, a message had been received at Western Air Command Headquarters from the Commanding Officer Pacific Coast requesting that an aircraft be detailed to keep the "Southern Cross", a yacht anchored at that time at Vancouver, under surveillance when it departed for Campbell River. This had been done on August 13th, however, S/L Proctor was aware of the arrangements prior to leaving for Alliford Bay. On the return flight a vessel that appeared to be the "Southern Cross" was seen in the vicinity of Seymour Narrows, and the Delta circled it to confirm identification.

There were several witnesses to the resulting accident, both on the "Southern Cross" and on a nearby Japanese fishing boat, the "Arashiko". At about 3:00 pm the Aircraft descended and made 1½ right hand circuits round the yacht, decreasing altitude from 1500 feet to 100 feet, and then headed towards Campbell River. There was a burst of power and the aircraft dropped straight down, with no faltering or nose dive, striking the water with the starboard wing, bounced, and struck the water again sending up 60 feet of spray. The tail rose up and the aircraft turned over and sank leaving the pontoons floating on the surface.

The "Southern Cross" sounded an alarm and the Japanese fishing boat headed towards the floating pontoons. One pontoon sank but they roped the other one and the Commander on the "Southern Cross" asked them to take it aboard and carry it to Vancouver. En route for Vancouver they were stopped by the police and directed to take the pontoon to Campbell River, which they did.

According to the witnesses it was a bright, sunny day with strong gusts of wind.

The Duty Air Staff Officer in Victoria received a message at 3:45 that an aircraft had crashed at Seymour Narrows, where it was estimated Delta 670 should be, given the time it left Bella Bella. At 5:45 a report was received that a pontoon model 75 serial No.4298 had been picked up by a fishing boat. It was confirmed that the pontoon belonged to Delta 670.

Subsequent examination of the pontoon indicated that the aircraft landed port wing down, the port pontoon failed and struck the starboard pontoon causing severe damage.

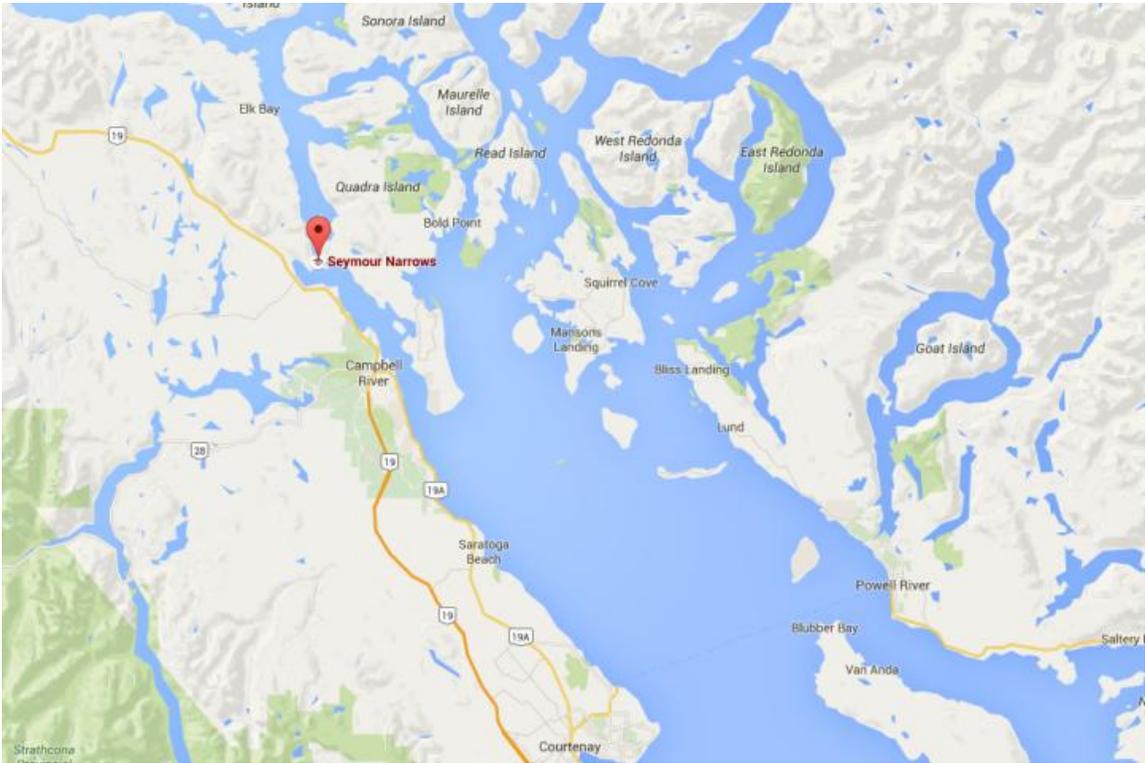
Evidence was given at the accident inquiry on the stalling characteristics of Delta Northrup aircraft.

“The Northrop Delta aircraft on floats without flaps extended stalls at approximately 72 miles per hour. Between 90 mph and 72 mph the deceleration is very rapid. That is to say, after falling below a speed of 90 mph the stalling point is reached very quickly. When below 90 mph, an application of engine power does not produce marked acceleration unless the airscrew is in low pitch. The aircraft will spin from a turn if the speed is dropped near the stalling point, and no decisive airframe warning characteristics are felt during the period immediately before the stall or spin has developed. The aircraft will then flick over from the inner side of the turn, and spin will develop in the opposite direction from the turn. During this period the reactions of the cabin controls are violent. A measure of elevator control remains after rudder and aileron control are lost. As the spin is developing, recovery can be effected by a quick application of full engine power, at the same time putting on bottom rudder and moving the control column forward. At least 500 feet would be lost in the recovery dive. The outstanding characteristics of a spin in a Delta are the violence with which the spin is entered, and the violent reaction of cabin controls. This necessitates the pilot keeping a firm grip of the controls during this manoeuvre.”

Dragging and diving operations took place for a week and nothing was found but two life jackets picked up by fishermen four days after the crash. The strong current of the area and the depth of the water were given as reasons not to pursue the salvage operations. The cause of the accident was recorded as “*obscure*” and the recommendation of the court of inquiry was that all units flying this aircraft be supplied with all the data available on its characteristics.

The plane had crashed at Seymour Narrows, Discovery Passage, between Quadra Island and Vancouver Island, in an area of dangerous currents near the notorious Ripple Rock that was blasted in 1958.

These were Pat Bay’s first casualties of the war. The bodies of the five men were never recovered and remain in the waters of Discovery Passage. They are all recorded on the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario.



SEYMOUR NARROWS

Treacherous currents, swirling eddies, and turbulent tide-rips still harass vessels, despite the blasting away in 1958 of the twin peaks of Ripple Rock. Charted in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver, the Narrows has claimed numerous ships and lives and is considered by many seamen the worst hazard to marine navigation on the British Columbia coast.

Additional Detail

Cariboo Gold Quartz Mining
Wells, B.C.,
7-2-35.

RECEIVED
173 14 1935

332 153 26

The Director,
Royal Canadian Air Force,
Department of National Defence,
Ottawa, Ont.

Sir;

I have the honour to apply for a commission in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

I am 28 years of age, single, and at the time of my last medical examination received an A1 category. I have completed the necessary subjects leading to the granting of a degree in Applied Science from the University of Alberta.

During the summers of 1930 and 1931, I attended the Provisional Pilot Officers' Course at Camp Borden, and completed the first and second years training. Due to the fact that the course was not held during the summer of 1932, I was unable to complete my Ab Initio Flying Training.

I was granted a commission in the Edmonton Fusiliers, in 1929 with the rank of Prov.-Lieut. and transferred to the 10th Alta. Cont. C.O.T.C. in Sept. 1930. I am now in possession of "A" and "B" Inf. and qualified for my "A" Wing Instructor at the Canadian Small Arms School at Camp Borden in 1931. I am on leave from my unit with the rank of Capt. I have been appointed to hold the appointment of A.D.C. to the Lieut.-Governor.

At present I am employed by the Cariboo Gold Quartz Mining at Wells, B.C., and my address is care of this company.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
R.C.P.
(in C. Wharton)


Canadian Officers Training Corps
University of Alberta Contingent
Edmonton, Canada

11015-82 Ave.,
Edmonton, Alta.,
June 25, 1935.
NATIONAL DEFENCE
JUL - 2 1935
CANADA

Officer i/o Training,
Royal Canadian Air Force,
Dept. of National Defence,
Ottawa.

Sir:-
I beg to acknowledge receipt of your 332-153-26 of May 26th, 1935.

I have attended the first two years of the F.P.O. Course and had hoped to complete the course this summer. Upon receiving my degree in the Spring of 1933 I had intended to apply for a permanent commission in the R.C.A.F.

The cancellation of the course and the resultant lack of employment this summer have affected my finances so that my return to University is very improbable. I will be able to obtain a position with a mining company in the north next summer. Would it be possible, therefore, to attend the Flying Training Course this winter and complete my University work for my degree during 1935-36 and apply for a Commission in the spring of 1936?

I want very much to go in the Air Force but at present I can not see any possible way of doing it other than I have stated.

I remain, Sir,
your obedient servant,
31
R.C.P.

MEMORANDUM

TRENTON, Ont. September 9th, 1939.

To: Officer Commanding,
Air Armament School,
TRENTON, Ontario.

Subject: Active Service Abroad.

1. In the event that personnel of the Permanent Active Air Force will be permitted to volunteer for active service abroad, it is requested that my application for this service be forwarded.

2. I have only recently returned from attending a SPECIALIST ARMAMENT OFFICERS' COURSE in the Royal Air Force. It is suggested therefore, that the experience I gained there during that course and during my attachment to the various types of Royal Air Force Squadrons will qualify me to be included as a Specialist Armament Officer in any expeditionary force which may be sent abroad.

3. Submitted for forwarding action please.

R.C. Procter
(R.C. Procter)
Flight Lieutenant,
Adj. Air Armament School,
R.C.A.F. Station, TRENTON, Ontario.

at
28

School.

MEMORANDUM

332-153-26,
July 17, 1939.

A.P.S.C.

Posting - Flight Lieutenant R.C. Procter

1. Early in May, 1939, the above mentioned officer was notified that he was posted to the position of Command Armament Officer at Eastern Air Command. On the strength of this, Flight Lieutenant Procter made immediate arrangements through the C.L.O. to have his attachments altered to suit the new post. As a result, for the past two months, this officer has concerned himself almost entirely with armament problems pertaining to Blenheim, Stinson and Hurricane Squadrons, special turret courses, torpedo training and servicing, maintenance of armament equipment at coastal stations with particular reference to the corrosive effects of problems introduced by salt water operations, etc.
2. Upon the arrival of this officer at this Headquarters today, he was informed that his posting to Eastern Air Command is cancelled and that this position is to be filled by Flight Lieutenant W.A. Jones, effective September 1st.
3. The Armament Adviser states that it is of utmost importance that the Armament Officer be posted to Eastern Air Command at once. The construction of the air firing and bombing range and the 25-yard range at Dartmouth has been delayed for some time in anticipation of the arrival of a Command Armament Officer during July. This construction will now be seriously held up, if it must await the arrival of Flight Lieutenant Jones in September.
4. In view of the special training of Flight Lieutenant Procter, and in consideration of the important constructional work now awaiting the arrival of the Command Armament Officer, it is strongly recommended that the present postings be altered and that arrangements be made for Flight Lieutenant Procter to proceed to Eastern Air Command immediately upon the completion of his present attachment at Air Headquarters.

194
S.V. Walsh
Wing Commander,
A.P.S.C.

*APSO:
Sensory if you
can arrange for
me to report to EAC
early in Sept.
1939*

*It is not
proposed to make
any change in
this respect in view
of the critical nature
of the situation
at the moment.
7.7.39*

*See appropriate
instructions under
posting to
EAC*