

Ruocco, Victor Silvio

Age: 27

Nationality: Canadian

Rank: Flight/Lieutenant

Unit: No. 32 OTU

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: J/9204

Birth: 10 March 1917
Vancouver, BC,
Canada

Home Town: Brentwood, BC,
Canada

Death: 12 April 1944

Crash of Beechcraft Expeditor HB124
Whidbey Island, WA, USA

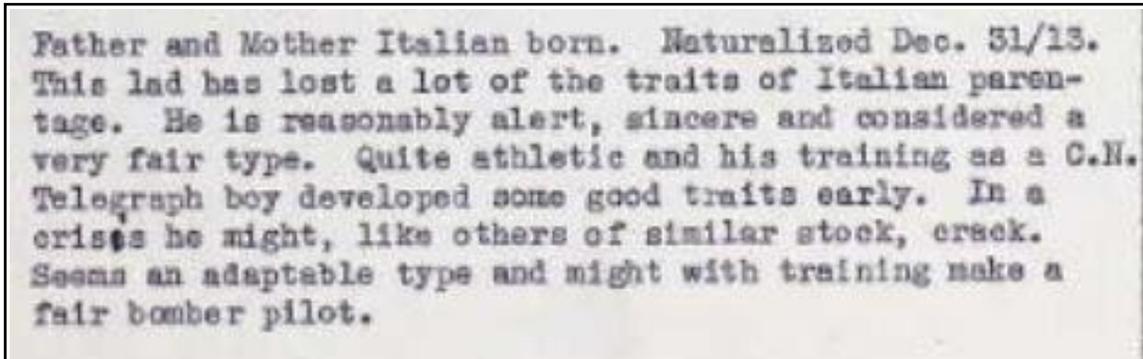
Burial: Mountain View Cemetery,
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Others: Mr. J. L. Blenkiron, factory rep; P/O George Walls, Navigator;
LAC Samuel Hemphill, second passenger.



Biography

Victor Silvio Ruocco's father was born in Naples and was naturalized Canadian in 1913. He was a barber and 22 years of age. His mother, Lucia Teto was born in Nanaimo, BC, Canada. Victor had the typical build and colouring of an Italian. Attitudes toward Italian/Canadians in the 1940's are reflected in the comment made on Victor's initial RCAF interview report:



Father and Mother Italian born. Naturalized Dec. 31/13. This lad has lost a lot of the traits of Italian parentage. He is reasonably alert, sincere and considered a very fair type. Quite athletic and his training as a C.N. Telegraph boy developed some good traits early. In a crisis he might, like others of similar stock, crack. Seems an adaptable type and might with training make a fair bomber pilot.

While on call for the RCAF, Victor spent a month training with the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Fusiliers. His application to the Air Force, in 1941, was for flying duties, preferably a pilot. His medical examination shows him as physically fit, which would be expected from his keen interest in cycling. He is described by the Medical Officer as '*rather a poor type*' which may also reflect a prejudice since he is ultimately accepted as suitable for a bomber pilot and for a commission.

Victor spent June to July 1941 at Initial Training School in Alberta. He was a good average candidate, responsible, alert and lively. He had been described as a superb athlete on one of his personal references and was active in both team and individual sports while training.

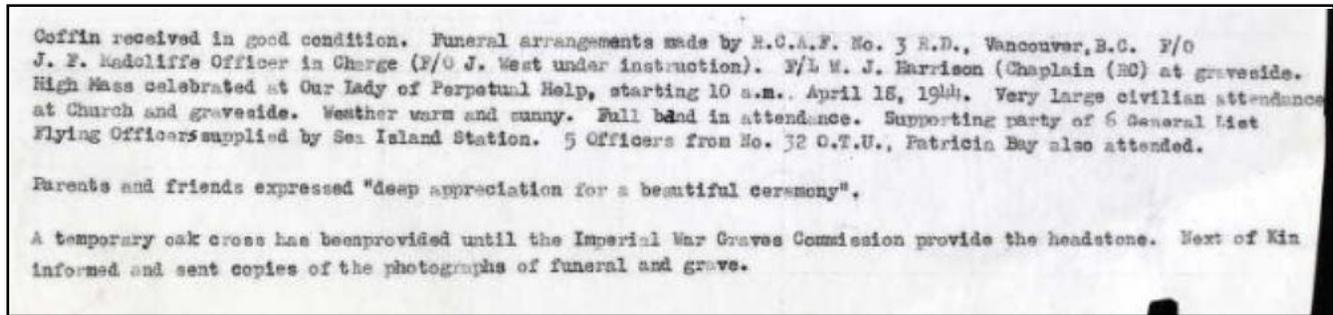
Elementary Flying School at Sea Island in BC followed, lasting until September. His conduct was excellent and he showed average ability in both classwork and flying. Well liked and conscientious, he was again passed as suitable for a commission.

The remainder of 1941 was spent at Service Flying School in Calgary where he earned his wings and his commission on December 5th, with the rather lukewarm appraisal of '*an average pilot with no outstanding faults*'.

In January 1942, Victor was in England where he attended a Flying Instructor's course at RAF Church Lawford being ranked category 'Q'. He was repatriated and sent to No. 32 Operational Training Unit in Patricia Bay, BC in August 1942, and was promoted to Flight/Officer in October. In September 1943 Victor qualified as a flying instructor category 'A2' with a glowing recommendation as "keen, cooperative and above average". He was considered the best instructor at the station and was promoted to Flight/Lieutenant in December 1943.

On 12 April 1944, Victor was the pilot of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124 when it crashed.

His body was recovered and he was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver BC, where his parents were living.



Coffin received in good condition. Funeral arrangements made by R.C.A.F. No. 3 R.D., Vancouver, B.C. F/O J. F. Madoliffe Officer in Charge (F/O J. West under instruction). F/L M. J. Harrison (Chaplain (RC) at graveside. High Mass celebrated at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, starting 10 a.m. April 18, 1944. Very large civilian attendance at Church and graveside. Weather warm and sunny. Full band in attendance. Supporting party of 6 General List Flying Officers supplied by Sea Island Station. 5 Officers from No. 32 O.T.U., Patricia Bay also attended.

Parents and friends expressed "deep appreciation for a beautiful ceremony".

A temporary oak cross has been provided until the Imperial War Graves Commission provide the headstone. Next of Kin informed and sent copies of the photographs of funeral and grave.

Victor Luocco was born on 10 March 1917, in Vancouver BC, to Pietro (Peter) Luocco and Lucia Teto. He had a brother Silvio Angelo, one year younger. In 1941, Victor married Mary Elizabeth MacPherson in Vancouver and they had one son, Edward Victor, born on 22 June 1942. In August 1944, Victor's son died; aged two. Victor's wife later remarried and became Mary Elizabeth Young.

Details of Crash

The flight of Beechcraft C-45 Expeditor HB124, on 12 April 1944, was arranged to transport Mr. J. L. Blenkiron, a factory representative of the Douglas Aircraft Company, to Sand Point, Seattle, Washington, in order to obtain aircraft spare parts. No. 32 Squadron at Pat Bay was in the process of converting to Douglas C-47 Dakotas. The Expeditor carried three other men:

F/L Victor Ruocco	Pilot
P/O George Walls	Navigator
LAC Samuel Hemphill	A second passenger

F/L Ruocco was an experienced and exceptionally capable pilot and flying instructor. He was also a qualified radio range instructor.

The aircraft took off from Patricia Bay station at 2:00 pm and the estimated time for the flight was 50 minutes. At about 3:00 pm, civilian witnesses at Langley, Whidbey Island, WA, saw the aircraft crash to the ground, explode and burn. Evidence suggests that the aircraft went out of control in or above the overcast since it came into sight in a dive of from 30° to 45° and recovered level flight at a low altitude. Due to either a high speed stall or to it clipping the top of trees, the aircraft rolled about its longitudinal axis and crashed, more or less inverted, in a densely wooded area of 75 ft fir trees. All of the occupants were killed instantaneously and the aircraft was totally destroyed. Weather conditions at Sand Point, Bellingham and Patricia Bay permitted contact (visual) flying for the entire flight and any local, unfavourable weather could have been avoided. There was no radio contact during the flight.

When the site of the crash was examined it appeared that the aircraft had plunged vertically into the ground. Only one tree was clipped off and the wreckage was scattered about as if a great explosion had occurred. One body was recovered from 15 ft up in a tree. It was impossible to find any part of the aircraft that would give any indication as to the cause of the crash. The crash site was near the U.S. Naval Air Station and, after the bodies were recovered, it was left to the discretion of the U.S. Naval authorities to decide what to do with the remains.



