

Stapleton, Donald Leslie

Age: 20

Nationality: Canadian

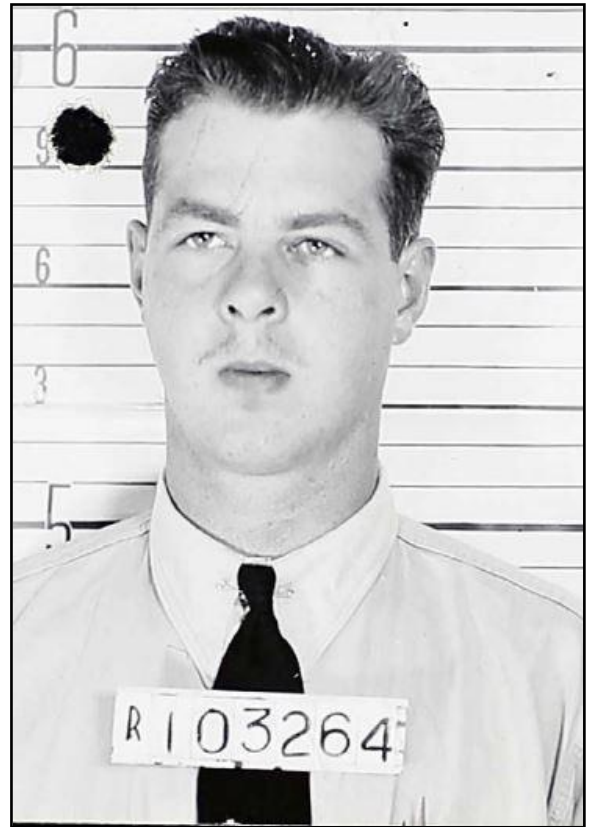
Rank: Sergeant

Unit: No. 111 squadron

Occupation: Pilot

Service No: R/103264

Birth: 27 December 1921
Welland, Ontario,
Canada



Home Town: Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Death: 19 April 1942

Crash of P-40 Kittyhawk AL212
Off Galiano Island, B.C., Canada

Burial: Commemorated on the Ottawa Memorial

Biography

Everything written about Donald Stapleton indicates a sensible, dependable young man. Although only 19 when he applied to the RCAF, he had 2 years working experience, one year as a Dye house labourer and a second as a laboratory assistant for International Harvester. He was not highly educated, having left high school, after four years of technical subjects, with only partial matriculation.

When he applied to the service, March 1941, in Hamilton, Ontario, his choices of occupation were, in order, pilot, observer or gunner. He presented himself well and after his medical was pronounced an exceptionally steady and fit candidate. He was rated a '*good average*' and accepted for training as a pilot.

Donald's initial training took place at Brantford and Belleville, both in Ontario. From there, he was sent to London, Ontario for Elementary Flying Training School. He was not outstanding but did well enough and was reported as '*a reliable sort who applies himself to the task in hand*'; and: -

'The lad is a fairly good pilot. Good on instruments, but requires more practice on aerobatics. He is very respectful and should make a good service pilot.'

He passed elementary level and was sent off for Service Flying Training School in Aylmer, Ontario. Here he was thought to be a bit slow to learn, but thorough and of good appearance. On Ground training he was average and did not work as hard as he might. In his flying training he was reported: -

'Confident pilot but has a good deal to learn about flying. Made full flap turns at very low air speed on test. Instrument flying satisfactory. Should be suitable as a fighter pilot.'

Donald passed on 3 March 1942 and was granted his pilot's wings and his promotion to sergeant. He was transferred to Patricia Bay on March 20th to No. 115 squadron, which flew Bristol Bolingbrokes. Shortly thereafter he must have been moved to No. 111, which was a fighter squadron flying Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawks.

A month later Donald was carrying out air to ground firing exercises in P-40 Kittyhawk AL212 off Galiano Island, when his plane crashed into the sea. Dragging operations were carried out but neither the pilot nor the aircraft were ever recovered.

Donald was born on 27 December 1921 in Welland, Ontario, the eldest of four children of Frank Leslie Stapleton and Mary Ethel Clement. He had two brothers and a sister.

Details of Crash

On 19 April 1942, Donald Stapleton took off in Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk AL212 for exercises in air to ground firing at No. 1 Air Firing Range, Galiano Island.

A witness described what he saw:

“The aircraft pulled out of a banking dive sharply at about 200 ft. The aircraft was then noticed to be possibly out of control as wing tips were wobbling and the aircraft was gaining very little altitude. The aircraft proceeded in an erratic manner for a few hundred yards and then nosed over and crashed into the sea from about 200 ft, at the approximate angle of 45 degrees”

A tender was sent immediately to the crash site and could see nothing on the surface but an oil slick and flakes of paint. Attempts were made to retrieve the aircraft and the body but they proved to be too deep for recovery.

The conclusions of the court of inquiry was :

“The pilot while reducing height at low engine revs attempted unsuccessfully to release an aluminum sea marker, and/or became confused on approaching a glassy water surface, pulled up sharply, stalled the aircraft and crashed”.

The recommendations from the court were:

1. That the carrying of sea markers or other pyrotechnics in a single-seater aircraft not equipped with an authorized releasing chute be prohibited.
2. That all land plane pilots be warned of the danger of flying low over glassy water conditions.
3. That pilots be required to have a minimum of 7.5 hours familiarization in any type of aircraft before being permitted to carry out air firing exercises.

Stapleton had fewer than five hours solo in a Kittyhawk.



Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawks



DRAGGING CONTINUED FOR AIRMAN'S BODY AFTER SUNDAY CRASH

Dragging operations were proceeding late yesterday to recover the body of Sgt.-Pilot H. Stapleton, of Hamilton, Ont., who was lost when his R.C.A.F. aircraft plunged into the sea off Galiano Island at 9:30 a.m. Sunday.


Pilot Stapleton was a member of the fighter squadron recently given the unofficial name of the "Thunderbird Squadron."

Wreckage of the plane was also being sought yesterday.

Additional Detail

Photographs posted by Donald's sister, Jean, with no labels




Westdale Secondary School
 THE TECHNICAL SECTION
 Hamilton, Ontario

H. L. SIMPSON, M.A.
PRINCIPAL

Mar 10/41

*To the Officer in Charge
R.C.A.F. Hamilton*

Dear Sir,

*I am once again recommending a former
high school student of this school.*

*This is to certify that the bearer Douglas Stapleton
has been under my direction for the past few years
both as Form Master and associate.*

*I find him a very worthy young gentleman, honest,
energetic, dependable, quiet but sociable, and in
my opinion one of the best. I think he will fit
in fine with that hard picked body of men, our
Magnificent Air Force.*

*It gives me pleasure to recommend him to you
for your kindest consideration.*

*Yours truly
H. L. Simpson*

R.C.A.F. Records Office	
Rec'd	JUN 23 1941
O. K.	6-18
R. C.	N. E.
S. L.	P. S.

