

Handley Page Halifax JB931

'EQ-O'

May 13th / 14th 1943



CREW EQ-O May 13th, 1943

1st PO **RCAF** #87059- Squadron Leader Hanlon Donald Richard Leroy **CAMPBELL** (DFC) -from Regina, Saskatchewan. CANADA

2nd PO **RAAF** #AUS402461) -Albert Elliott **HORNE** (DFM)-from Hurlstone Park, New South Wales, AUSTRALIA

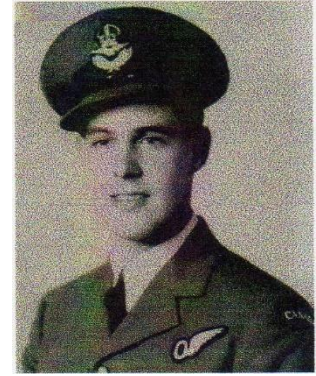
Nav/Bomber/PO **RCAF** #J12987- Flight Lieutenant Albert William **THOMPSON** (DSM) from London, Ontario CANADA

Flight Engineer/ Air Gunner **RCAF** #R70275- Sargent John McLaren **HARRISON** from Midland, Ontario. CANADA

WirelessOP/Bomber **RAF** #130409- Sargent Maurice Henry Joseph **HAMMILL** – from England UK

Air Gunner/PO **RCAF** #J17695 -Sargent Lloyd Albert **STINSON** -from Melita, Manitoba. CANADA

Air Gunner/WirelessOP **RAF** #938849 Sargent Arthur Costan **ROSS**- from England, UK



Flight Lieutenant Albert William (BILL) THOMPSON

J12987 - RCAF 405/408 Squadrons

Call sign nickname "Tommie"

1941-1945

Albert William THOMPSON (**AWT**) was born in 1921 at Stratford, Ontario to Albert Thomas Thompson and Ethelwyn Smith. Shortly after Bill's birth the family including 2 younger brothers and one younger sister moved to London, Ontario. In London Bill's father, Albert Thomas THOMPSON was a carpenter for the Grand Truck Railway.

*Albert Thomas THOMPSON (**ATT**) was a veteran of World War 1 having served as a Sargent in the Canadian Army's 71st Expeditionary Force from 1914 through 1918 in Arras, Somme and Vimy.

Upon enlistment on July 11th, 1941 to the Royal Canadian Air Force at London, Ontario AWT commenced his air training as a Pilot and Observer. Observer could do 3 roles as Navigator, Bomber and 2nd seat Pilot. Training centers he attended for these roles within Canada before deployed overseas were in Toronto, Ontario, Edmonton, Alberta, Regina and Mossbank, Saskatchewan, Rivers and Brandon Manitoba, Dorval, Quebec and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

AWT received his commission in August 1942 and within a week proceeded overseas. After operational briefings in England UK, AWT served as one of 7 crewmen in Handley Page Halifax aircraft in 6th Group Bomber Command first with 405 Squadron (LQ-B,LQ-H, LQ-L, LQ-R), then later in 408 Squadron (EQ-O).

He engaged in night bombing raids from UK Bases in Linton, Topcliffe, Pocklington and Leeming.



AWT with crewmates had already undertaken several raids over Berlin in addition to targets in the RUHR valley including Stutgard, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen and Bochum.

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On the 13th of May, 1943 which was their 13th Mission, they were airborne from LEEMING in formation at 13 minutes before midnight now departing along with hundreds of other allied aircraft from other bases. AWT as Navigator in Halifax JB931 “EQ-O” was coordinating their flight towards their assigned target at Bochum, Germany.

* (May 14th 1943 Air Command Report to air command ref # A-1643 from Leeming)

*“JB931 up 23:47hrs – reported mia 05:04 hrs did not return to Leeming”.
“Radio transmission reported. No cloud, visibility good apart from haze over target was reported by the crew. Approach to target made by red /green T.I markers; clear bends in the Rhine were also seen. Clusters of red and green T.I markers were in bomb sights and release was made at 0213 hrs from altitude of 20,000 feet on heading 208 degrees north. Load release 2 x 1000 mc, 56 x 30lb, 510 x 4lb, 30 x 6lb incds.*

Result of bombing target not directly observed. Many fires which joined up with each other were seen in the south of T.I markers.

One big explosion seen at 0217 hrs and another also seen from the Dutch coast at 0303 hrs. Glow of fires still seen by crew 40-50 miles after almost crossing Dutch coast. Crew also reports, considered very successful raid and further attacks should not be necessary."

JB931 was suddenly hit by anti-aircraft flak and under Germany night fighters 5km east of Breskers, province of Zeeland near Flanders and then shot down in flames off the coast of Holland.

*Research has shown the 2 / NJG 1- German night fighter that shot down JB931 was a German pilot and Luftwaffe Ace named Ltn Heinz Struning.



Struning had 56 confirmed aircraft kills which not only included JB931, a second Halifax as well as a Wellington aircraft that same night on the 13th/14th of May, 1943.

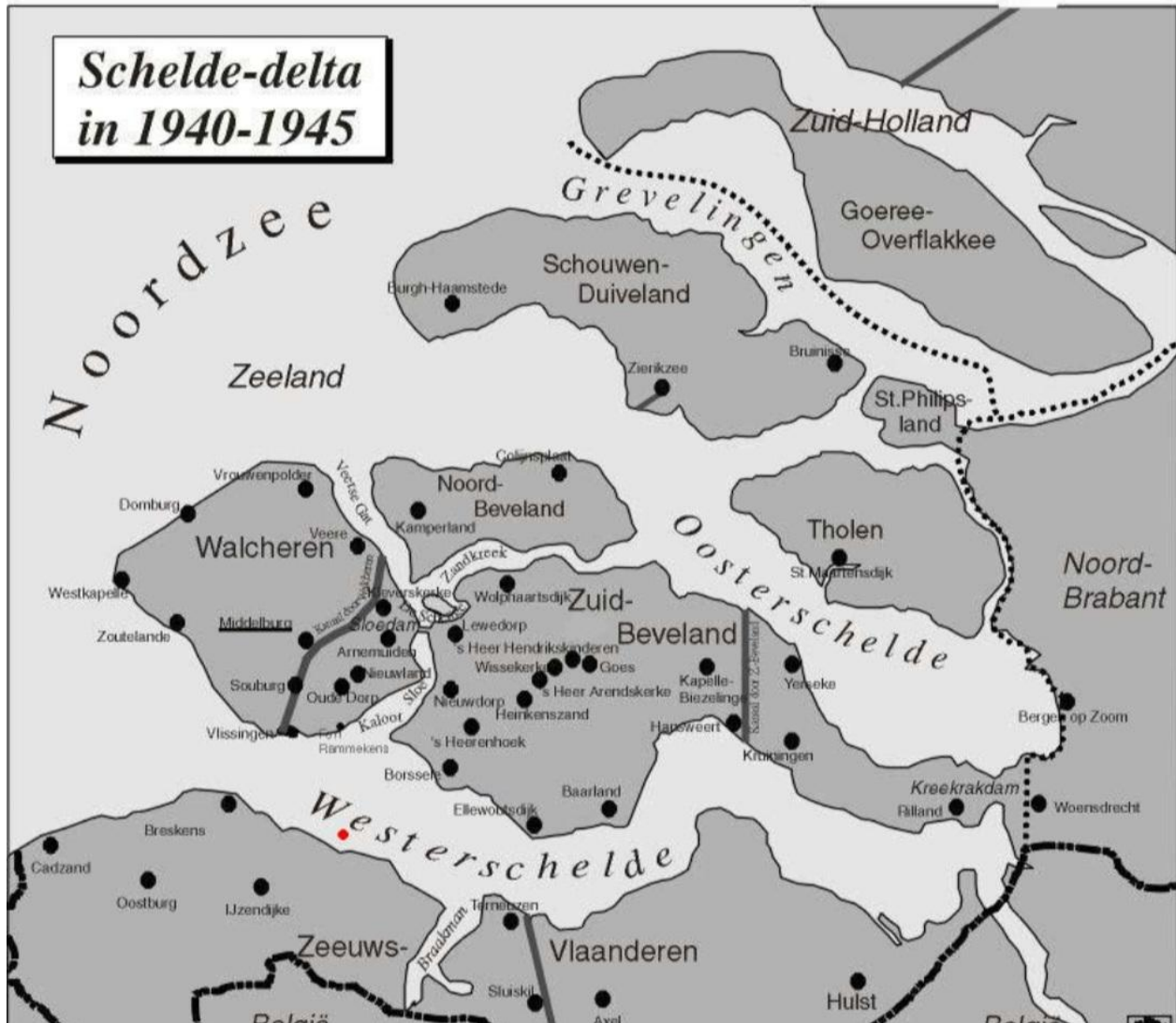
Struning was shot down on his 280th mission and was killed on Dec 24th, 1943 by a 10 kill aircraft Ace from the RAF.

<https://www.worldnavalships.com/directory/aircrewprofile.php?AircrewID=381>

<https://prabook.com/web/heinz.struning/2338853>

JB931 -Two of the aircrew CAMPBELL & HORNE were killed in action and then two others of the crew (STINSON and MCLAREN) were suspected to have died of hypothermia in the cold waters of the North Atlantic.

It was THOMPSON and two others, ROSS and HAMMILL who survived their bailout from JB931, parachuting into the cold waters of the North Sea. The three were rescued by separate German Patrol boats before hypothermia set in. THOMPSON, ROSS and HAMMILL were taken to Vlissingen, Holland as Prisoner's of war.



- Note the **RED dot** where JB931 was shot down

AWT was treated for his wounds in Vlissingen and later Den Hagg. After intense interrogation by German SS, he was transported to Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan, Poland. AWT reunited with JB931 crewmate HAMMILL there near Belaria and both would remain there for 2 years.

*HAMMILL POW # 1328 Stalag Luft 3

*THOMPSON POW # 1336 Stalag Luft 3.

*RAF's Sgt Arthur Coston ROSS who survived also was reportedly taken to Stalag 357 Kopernikus as POW# 240 there.

The other crew who did not survive were interned in Flushing-Vlissingen cemetery in the Commonwealth War graves section.

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/54231/flushing-vlissingen-northern-cemetery/>



CAMPBELL D-31

HORNE D-32

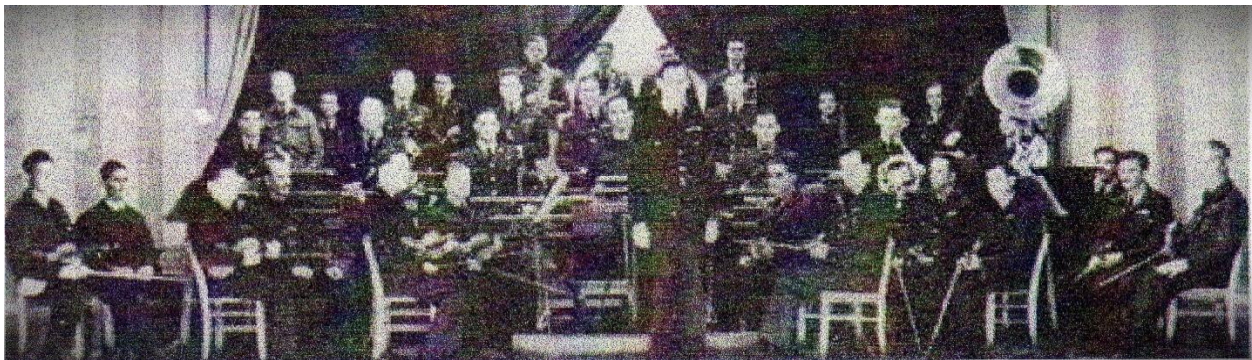
McLAREN E-1

STINSON E-2

*The writer who is the son of AWT, has visited the war graves of the crew of JB931 in September of 2001 when working as the National Police representative from Canada at Europol in Den Hagg and recently again in August of 2022 while on vacation in Europe.

STALAG Luft 3 was a large prisoner of war camp near Sagan Poland for RAF/ RCAF and other Allied pilot officers, operated by the German Luftwaffe.

AWT was assigned to the north compound where he spent time often with crewmate HAMMILL. **AWT** and many others, as history would record played many roles in escape attempts in addition to the most famous "GREAT ESCAPE". **AWT** also was part of the North Camp orchestra where he learned and played the trombone instrument.



*RCAF Officer Art CREIGHTON and the Stalag Luft 3 -North Compound Band (**AWT** Back row R)*

AWT was formerly a financial bank officer before the war and his keen penmanship, writing skills and calligraphy hobby made him an excellent forger creating hundreds of false documents in preparation for escaping prisoners.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205402300>

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/classroom/fact-sheets/pow>

In preparation himself for the planned escape, **AWT** turned his WW2 RCAF blue uniform shirt and converted it into a small double strapped pack-sac. The shirt, when folded properly on a shelf in his bunkhouse appeared perfect and normal, however when shaken the long sleeves became shoulder straps and the body of the shirt could hold food, water containers and a small amount of clothing.

AWT brought this shirt home after being liberated near Lubeck Germany in June of 1945. The family donated it to the RCAF memorial museum in at CFB Trenton, in Trenton Ontario Canada as they had a large "Great Escape" memorial exhibit there, for the 50 Stalag Luft 3 prisoners shot by the German SS after the failed escape attempt.

See artifact # 2001-418-1 RCAF memorial museum in at CFB Trenton, in Trenton Ontario Canada

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STORY

Dedication ensures Canadians don't forget

By Henry Bury
Belleville Intelligencer



CFB TRENTON ? Peter and John Thompson came here Saturday from different parts of Ontario to honour their late father and witness his name live on in perpetuity.

The name of Albert William Thompson, also known as Tommie, was on one of the 600 new stones dedicated to the AD ASTRA stone program during a moving ceremony before hundreds of guests at 8 Wing's Royal Canadian Airforce Museum.

Saturday's 6th annual dedication ceremony now brings the total to 5,261 former and current RCAF members whose names are engraved on stones in beds that line the walkway around the museum grounds ? names like W.A. "Billy" Bishop.

Thompson was a flight lieutenant with the 405 and 408 Squadrons with the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War.

He was also a prisoner of war for almost two years in Stalag Luft 111 near Sagan in eastern Germany. While there, he assisted in his own "support role" in the Great Escape, the famous bid for freedom when a couple of hundred PoWs dug their way out. Many were later captured and executed.

He was eventually liberated in May of 1945.

Thompson returned to London, Ont. and eventually moved to Belleville where he retired in the late 1970s from the Bank of Montreal. He died in

<http://www.canada.com/belleville/story.asp?id={9F7C7B7F-78DF-474F-BBB3-1610F0BB9138>

Belleville in 1990, at the age of 69.

Peter Thompson wore his RCMP uniform during the ceremony and said afterwards he's proud of his dad for serving with the airforce and fighting for the freedom people now enjoy.

"I'm here to pay tribute to dad and the other members of the Bomber squadron that he served with," said the detachment inspector from Ottawa.

Thompson also brought some of his father's memorabilia from the war effort and afterwards donated it to the museum "so that others can understand and appreciate what he did for this country."

His brother, John, from Kitchener, said with everything that is going on the world currently, "these ceremonies have become much more significant.

"It's something important for us to celebrate. And it's also important to honour these people and understand their valour and dedication and never forget what they did for freedom," he said.

The AD ASTRA stone program started in 1996 as a vehicle for personal participation in the RCAF Museum. The term "AD ASTRA" is taken from the air force motto "Per Ardua ad Astra" ? which means "To The Stars."

Ret. Col. Ken Kee, RCAF Museum board chairman, told the audience he never imagined that the program would reach the stars as much as it has, with 5,261 stones in six short years.

"It's extremely important that everyone with a stone in our park is part of our heritage," he said.

Jeff Jeffery, president of the Halifax Aircraft Association, said his stone is among those lining the walkway "and I'm still here. But one day we will all be gone and this will be a true memorial, a perpetual reminder of the great heritage of the air force."

The AD ASTRA success story wasn't lost on Paul Hayes, president of the Air Force Association of Canada.

"Your stones serve as a tangible marker for the posterity of those who served the air force...whether they are gone or are still alive. And there is no more fitting place for something like this than on this historic base," said the retired brigadier-general.

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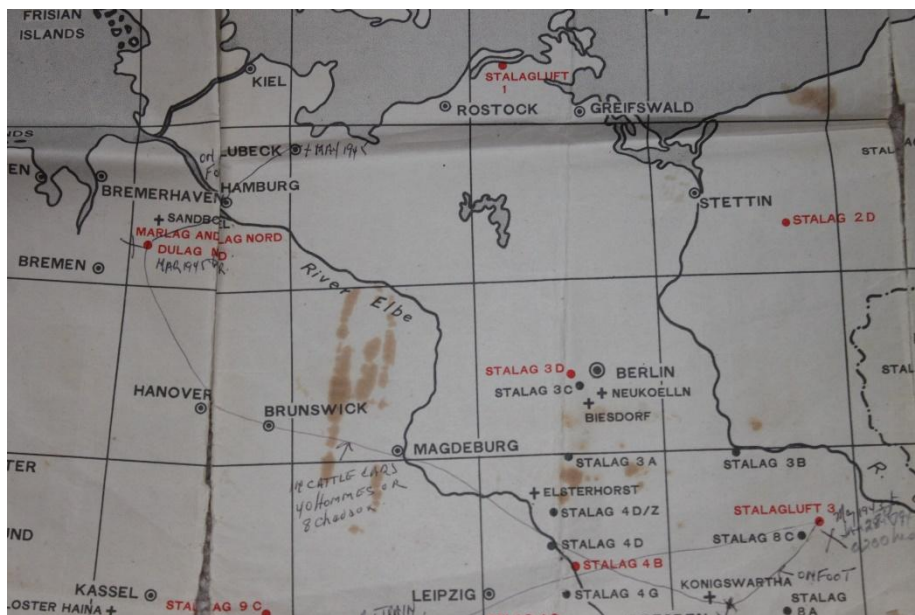
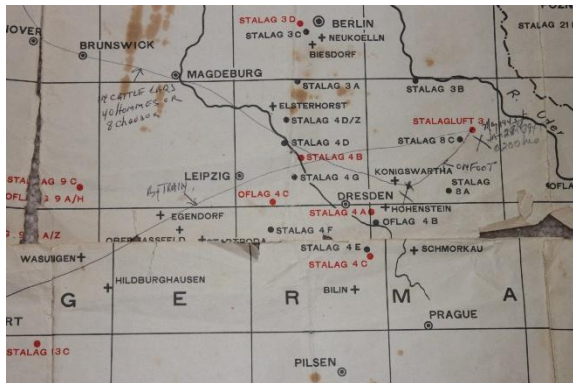
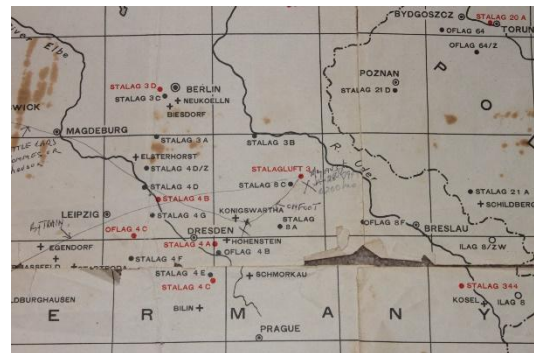
AWT remained at Stalag Luft 3 until February of 1945 when Hitler and Himmler ordered all POW camps to commence the prisoners in a "FORCED MARCH" in order to avoid their liberation by the Russian Army who were closing in on many fronts in Poland. Germans would shield themselves and supply depots using the prisoners. On these LONG WALKS, which were forced marches, many prisoners died of harsh winter conditions (hypothermia) with little clothing and boots and near no food. Only what they could grab along the way such as rats, farmers cats cattle chickens sustained few. Dysentery, disease occupied all. Many were shot for not marching or attempting to escape these forced marches.

The Long March was during the final months of the Second World War in Europe. **About 30,000 Allied PoWs were force-marched westward across Poland and Germany in appalling winter conditions, lasting about four months from January to April 1945.**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_March_\(1945\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_March_(1945))

<https://ww2escapelines.co.uk/article/long-march>



AWT's Handwritten notes on on this section map of his two year journey from the North Sea on 14th of May, 1943 through to his transport to Stalag Luft 3 and then in February 1945, on the forced marches in western Germany until May 3rd, 1945.



It was early May of 1945 when **AWT's** POW column was liberated by the Russian Army near Lubeck, Germany. By the 9th of May 1945, **AWT** was safely back in the UK getting medical treatment.

On June 7th, 1945 he arrived back in Canada on a ship to Halifax, Nova Scotia and shortly there after home to his parents in London, Ontario after two years as a POW.

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MRS A T THOMPSON, **PHONED**
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REPATRIATED TO ENGLAND MY ADDRESS IS LIBERATED POW RCAF OVERSEAS
AM WELL AND FIT ALL MY LOVE.

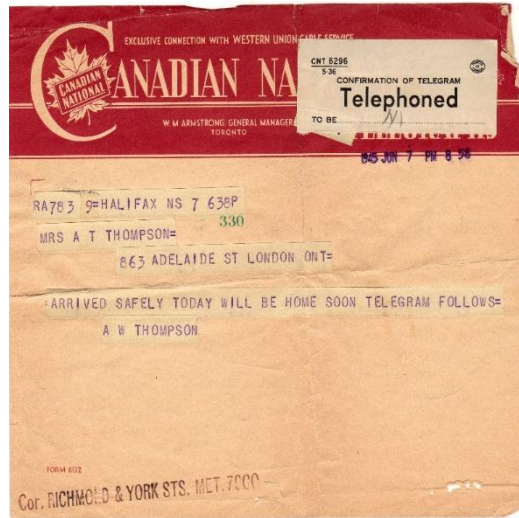
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615P17TH.



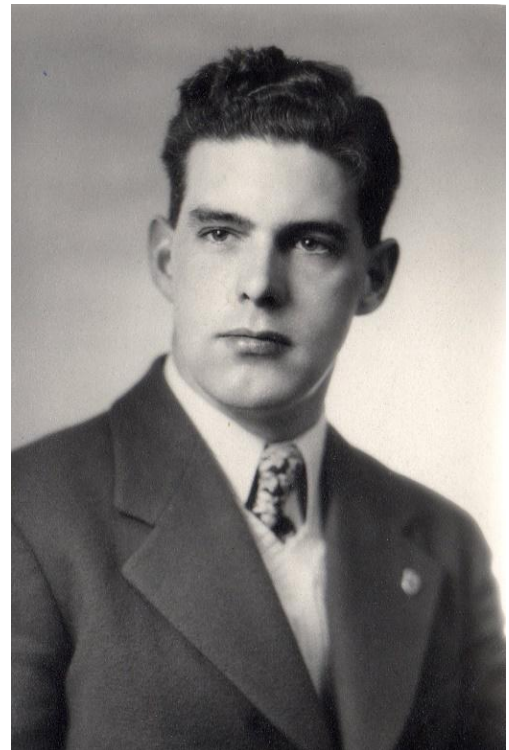
HAPPY HOMECOMING: More than 1,000 R.C.A.F. officers and airmen released from German prison camps, the largest homeward movement of former prisoners, reached Halifax on the troopship Louis Pasteur on Thursday, June 7. The picture shows part of the cheerful throng as they gathered on the sports deck to listen to Air Vice-Marshal A. L. Morfee, C.B.E., commander-in-chief, Eastern Air Command, bid them welcome to Canada. The air

vice-marshal got his biggest cheer when he told the men that everything possible would be done to get them to their homes as quickly as possible. Many of the men—some of them spent as much as three years in prison camps—had stories to tell of their suffering and privation, but anticipation of arrival home blotted ugly memories from their minds temporarily at least. (R.C.A. Photo.)



AWT returned to his duties as a Bank officer for the Bank of Montreal in London. Showing respect for the brave men of the RCAF and for **AWT**'s contributions and sacrifices, the Bank of Montreal had held his job open when he enlisted in 1941 and welcomed him back in 1945.

Through his employment he later met and married Marjorie Gertrude LAWR of Woodstock, Ontario. On April 19th, 1949 they were married.



They had three children – John William THOMPSON of Kitchener Ontario, Peter Jeffrey THOMPSON of Oliver, British Columbia and Karen Jane THOMPSON formerly of Toronto, Ontario. (see contact info).



AWT



Married for only 33 years and predeceased by his wife Marjorie on the 09th of November, 1982 AWT lived in Mississauga, Ontario then Brampton, Ontario and later Belleville, Ontario. AWT Died on June 14th, 1990 at Belleville General Hospital of long-term heart illnesses directly diagnosed to cigarette smoking that he started (because of hunger, stress and fear) when he became a POW and endured in Germany.

*RCAF Flight Lieutenant (Ret) J12987 Albert William (Bill) THOMPSON and his wife Marjorie both are resting together at the Glen Oakes cemetery (Ninth line at Dundas Street /highway# 5) in Oakville, Ontario. CANADA

AWT family contacts for further information /questions/ comments or documents-photos;

- John THOMPSON – johnthompson7120@gmail.com
- Peter THOMPSON- *writer - pjsusan@telus.net
- Karen THOMPSON- c/o nephew, Mr Kyle THOMPSON - kyle.offshore@gmail.com

*Original : 2001-07-15 (school research project by **AWT's** grandson Kyle Robert THOMPSON)

Updated: 10JAN2023

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~~30-DEC-2003~~

***Further information on THOMPSON Family of Service to CANADA**



Inspector Peter J. THOMPSON

Age 20

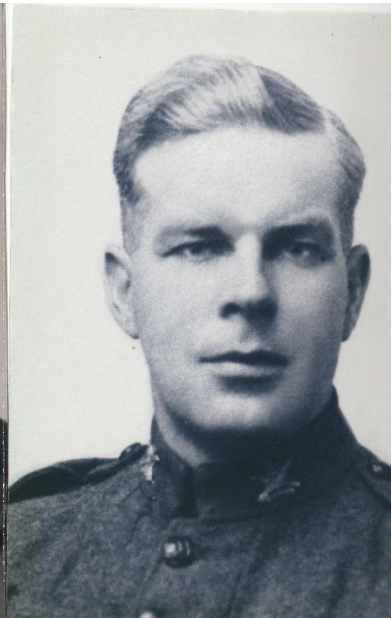
Royal Canadian Mounted Police



Flight Lt Albert William THOMPSON

Age 20

Royal Canadian Air Force



Sergeant Albert Thomas THOMPSON

Age 20

71st Battalion

*Yukon, British Columbia, Ontario
USA, Netherlands, Colombia, Korea
Afghanistan, Jordan, & Iraq*

1976-2003/2010

*6th Bomber Group UK
405 & 408 Squadrons*

WW2 – 1941-1943

*Canadian Expeditionary Force
Arras, Somme, Givenchy-
en-Gohelle*

WW1 – 1914 -1918