

# **F/L George Theodore Berg**

## **RCAF - J16782**

**February 24, 1916 - October 3, 1943**

**“..against the terrible arithmetic of survival” <sup>(1)</sup>**

**Written by John G. Berg, nephew**

**January 2012**

*This is the story of my uncle – George “Icy” Berg.*

*George was born in Saskatchewan in 1916 and lived in Weldon and then Saskatoon. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 1939 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. He worked for 3 years as an agricultural assistant at the Dominion Laboratory of Plant Pathology in Saskatoon and then a year (1940) at the INCO facilities in Sudbury as an Electrottype Processor.*

*He originally enlisted in 1939 but was discharged having failed his pilot’s flying test.*

*He re-enlisted in 1941 and received the Air Observers badge on December 6, 1941 qualified as a navigator, bomb aimer and astro-navigator.*

*From his Flight Log and Postings Sheet*

- April 1941 14 - EFTS – Portage la Prairie
- April 25, 1941 – first solo-Tiger Moth
- June 1941 11 - SFTS – Yorkton, Sask.
- August 1941 - 9 Air Observer School, St Johns, Quebec
- 25/10/41 qualified Observer Navigator, Astro-Navigator
- November 1941 – 6 B&G, Mountain View, Ontario (Bombing and Gunnery)
- December 1941 – 2 ANS, Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick
- 6/12/41 – inability general flying
- 6/12/41 qualified Observer, Bomb Aimer and Air Gunner
- 8/2/42 Depart to RAF Trainees pool
- 19/2/42 Disembarked UK
- March 1942 – 2 AFU RAF, Millom England
- May 1942 – 22 OTU Wellesbourne, Mountford
- June 1942 A flight Wellesbourne
- July 1943 419 Sqn, Mildenhall
- 7/11/42 419 Sqn to 427 Sqn Croft
- May 1943 1695 Conversion Unit – Topcliffe (Halifaxes)
- May 1943 427 Sqn - Leeming
- 15/6/43 427 Sqn to 434 Sqn as Bombing Leader - Tholthorpe
- 4/10/43 Missing aircraft
- 4/10/43 SOS from 434 Sqn to RAF
- **3/10/43 Presumed Dead**

## F/L George Theodore Berg, RCAF, J16872



## 419 RCAF Squadron

Joined 419 RCAF squadron at Mildenhall – B Flight in July 17, 1942. Operations:

1. July 23<sup>rd</sup> to Duisburg as Front Gunner – Bomb Aimer in Wellington PX 3752 with F/Sgt “Willy” Gasco as pilot
2. July 25 Duisburg
3. July 26 Hamburg
4. July 28 Hamburg – fired at Me 110
5. September 9 with Sgt Crewe as pilot to Bremen
6. Sept 19 F-BU886 to Saarbrucken, turned back shot-up
7. October 2 WX3390 to Krefeld with P/O “Alf” Hasty as pilot
8. October 6 PX 3752 to Osnabruck
9. October 15 UZ 1604 to Cologne

Transferred to 427 RCAF Squadron - November 2, 1942



RAF Vickers Wellington medium bombers flying in formation, circa 1940. National Archives of Canada, PA-128144



Left to right: unknown, F/O Hasty – pilot; F/Sgt Flanagan – Wop; F/Sgt Crossman – Nav; F/Sgt Whyte – A/G; F/Sgt Berg - BA

## 427 RCAF Squadron



The crew from 419 RCAF Squadron arrived at 427 RCAF Squadron – Croft without a pilot. Quoting from the book My Last Op by F/LT Geoffrey B. Whyte, DFC who was the crew's rear gunner:

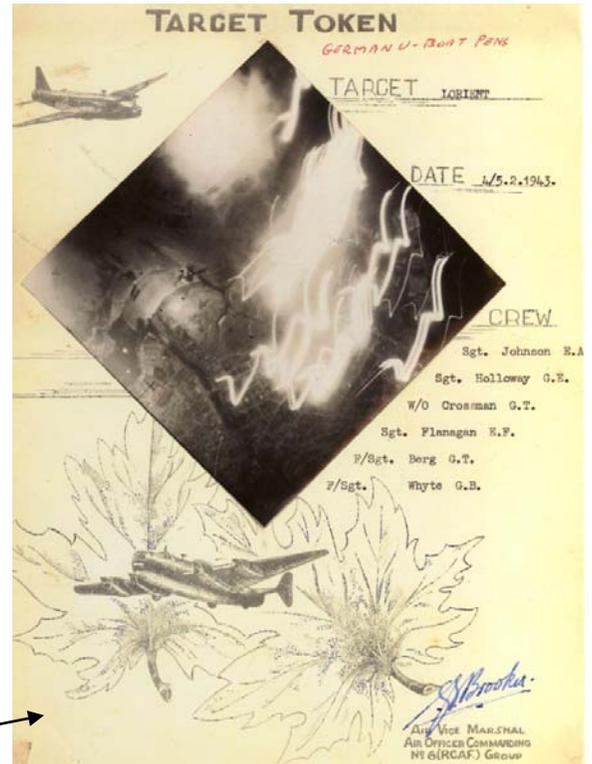
*“Sgt “Johnny” Johnson was our fifth pilot. This time no one came around and told us he was our new pilot and by chance there were two new unattached pilots on the squadron. We decided we would take matters into our own hands and pick the pilot we wanted. One was a Canadian Flt/Sgt. And the other an RAF Sgt. At first we thought the Canadian, but then had second thoughts – where had he been and what had he done – and we just did not like the look of him. We all agreed for all the unlikely reasons that the RAF type was our choice. He was RAF, he was very young, nineteen, just off a farm and in our considered opinion a bit of an innocent. We would take him in hand. He agreed to be our pilot.”*

Operations:

11. Jan 3, 1943 – RX3873 – Mining with Sgt Johnson as pilot
12. Jan 9<sup>th</sup> – Mining
13. Jan 26<sup>th</sup> – Y - X3553 - Lorient
14. Jan 29<sup>th</sup> Lorient
15. Feb 4<sup>th</sup> Lorient
16. Feb 13 – Z- BK558 - Lorient
17. Feb 16<sup>th</sup> Lorient
18. March 4<sup>th</sup> Y- X3553 – Hamburg

March 26<sup>th</sup> X- HE743 Duisberg - DNCO –port motor failed

19. April 10<sup>th</sup> –W - HE425 – Frankfurt
20. April 14<sup>th</sup> – Stuttgart
21. May 29<sup>th</sup> Z-DK140 – Wuppertal
22. June 11<sup>th</sup> – Dusseldorf
23. June 12<sup>th</sup> – L - DK186 – Bochum (see next page)



L to R: W/O2 G. Crossman RCAF, Navigator; Sgt E. A. Johnson, RAF, pilot; F/Sgt G. Berg RCAF, Bomb Aimer; and F/Sgt E. Flanagan RCAF, Wireless Op.  
Examining the Lorient target token (above)

## The naming of DK186 – “L” London

(FROM OFFICAL 427 RCAF SQUADRON LOG)

13/5/43

Two more aircraft tested today. One in particular "L" London has had an emblem painted on the side, depicting a winged lion dropping a bomb. It is quite apropos since we are officially now, the "LION SQUADRON". Normal routine went on through out the day. In the evening an Ensa concert took place on the station and the Cast were entertained in the Officer's Mess. 427 Squadron were very much in evidence, in looking after the female end of the cast.

24/5/43

Some local flying took place in the evening together with the usual ground instruction. In the afternoon the Squadron was formerly adopted by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Film Co. The whole Squadron assembled outside our hangar. Amongst those present were Mr. Echkmán, Manager Director of the M.G.M. Film Co. in Great Britain, Mr. MacPherson, Reel Director for M.G.M., Group Captain Slemon from 6 Group Headquarters, Wing Commander Carecallon- Station Commander, Flight Lieutenant Tim Road, Public Relations Bureau for R.C.A.F., Wing Commander Burnside, Officer Commanding No. 427 Squadron. The Adjutant of 427, F/Lt J. Chasoff opened the Ceremony by introducing Mr. Eckman, who in turn gave a speech of welcome to the Squadron on joining the ranks of M.G.M. as the Lion Squadron. He then presented W/Cmdr Burnside with a bronze Lion - eighteen century design with an inscription commemorating the occasion. At some future date, all members of the Squadron will be presented with Lion Medals, the holder of which will have certain privileges at any M.G.M. theatre. A draw took place as to which pilot gets Lana Turner's name for his aircraft. Seventeen names were drawn for names altogether. Sgt Johnson was the lucky pilot and amid an ovation from the Squadron he promptly chalked her name on his aircraft nearby.

Fox Movietown news and several still photographers plus one or two London News agency-reporters, photographed the whole afternoons proceedings.

The celebration culminated in a party in the Sgt's Mess for the whole Squadron together with the visitors.



Sgt. E.A. "Johnny" Johnson chalking the Lana Turner name on the DK 186 Halifax aircraft.

George Berg's June 12th flight with 427 Squadron and the Johnson crew was in this aircraft.

He was posted to 434 RCAF Squadron as Bombing Leader on June 15, 1943.

Lana Turner





L to R: W/O2 G. Crossman RCAF, Navigator; Sgt E. A. Johnson, RAF, pilot; F/Sgt E. Flanagan RCAF, Wireless Op.; F/Sgt G.B. Whyte RCAF, RAG

Kneeling: F/Sgt G. Berg RCAF, Bomb Aimer

427 Sqn – Leeming, 1943

## 434 RCAF Squadron

George Berg was posted to 434 RCAF Squadron as Bombing Leader on June 15, 1943.

He had attended No. 47 Bombing Leaders course in April 1942.

### Operations:



- 24. August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1943 - "A" to Munchen-Gladbach with F/O Carter as pilot
- 25. Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> "S" to Hanover with F/L Linnel as pilot

Oct 2nd LK638 WL-V mining with F/O German as pilot - DNCO

Oct 3rd - LK638 WL-V to Kassel with F/O German as pilot - **Missing**

### Extract of F/L Berg's flight log:

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (Including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Time carried forward—	
						Day	Night
30/8/43	23:45	"A"	F/O Carter	Operation	to München - Gladbach Total Flying August Total Flying 31/8/43	221:50	234:20
22/9/43		"S"	F/L Linnel	Operation	to Hanover - J.L. Hockey Flt C 71.011 w/c		5:40
2/10/43		"V"	F/O German	Operation	mining - Tura Beck, Duing.		5:40
3/10/43		"V"	F/O German	Operations	to Kassel MISSING		
TOTAL TIME...						221:50	245:40

11.20

DH Pappleton No forward flying leader  
Plt. Hockey 5/6  
O.C. 8<sup>th</sup> Flight  
O.C. basis w/c  
O.C. 434 Sqn

The F/O German Crew (27) piloting a Halifax B/Met MK V LK638 WL-V of 434 squadron, crashed in the night of the 3rd October, 1943, while on a raid to Kassel.

The 6 Bomber Command website operations for that night says:

"75 Halifaxes from 419, 427, 428, 429, 431, and 434 squadrons were ordered on an attack at Kassel. The crews were over the target at between 17,000 and 20,500 feet, releasing 136,000 lbs. of high explosives and 261,000 lbs. of incendiaries. According to reports, some important industrial buildings were destroyed."

"F/O H. German RCAF and crew, from 434 squadron flying Halifax V LK-638 coded WL-V, failed to return from this operation.

- F/O H.W. German, AFM, RCAF – pilot - **killed**
- Sgt F.G. Babington, RCAF – navigator - POW
- F/Lt G. Berg, RCAF- bombardier - **killed**



F/O H.W. German

- Sgt C.W. Dorey, RAF – wireless operator /gunner- POW
- Sgt W. Todd, RCAF – flight engineer - POW
- F/S E.V. Davidson, RCAF - rear gunner - **killed**
- Sgt R. Eaton – RAF – mid-upper gunner - POW

Three other planes also Failed To Return (FTR) of the 75 planes sent out that night

## The Crash

### A local German eyewitness account (Courtesy of Dirk Hartman)

After some days he called me back and told me that he had find an Eyewitness about the crash in Garbsen (near Hannover) The Person was Walter Probst and he was the Witness in that Night when Halifax went down. Mr. Probst had send me a letter with his observations that Night and also a Map with the Area which the Plane crashed. I attached the Letter in this Mail:

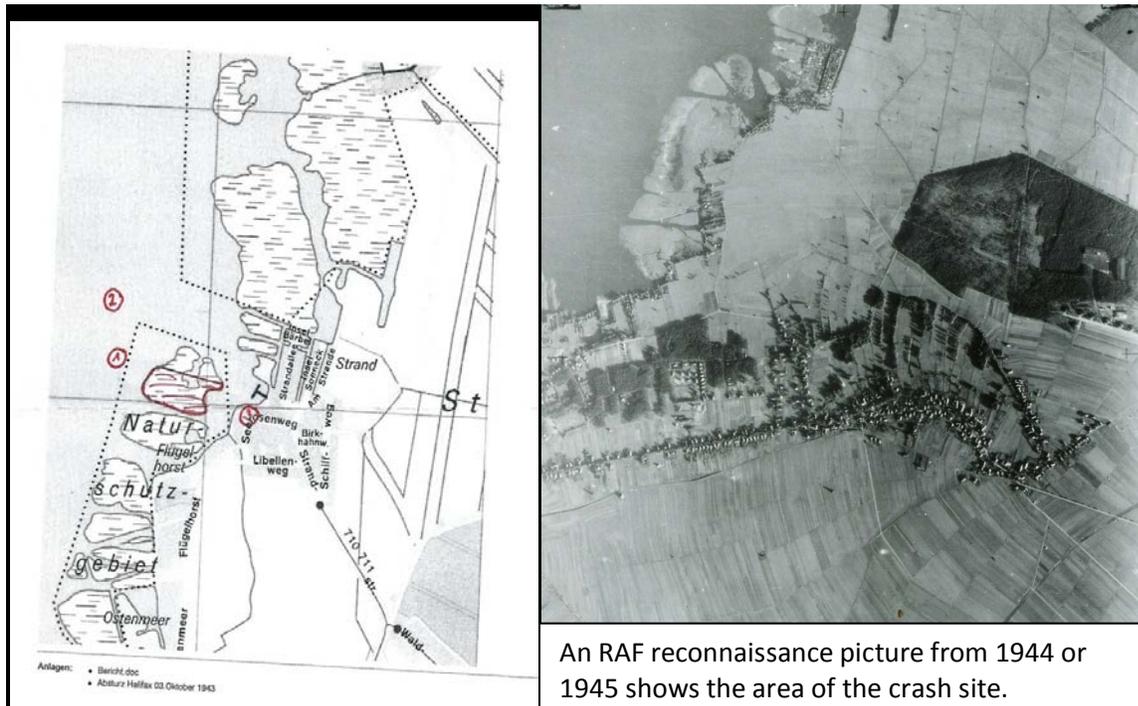
Translation Eyewitness Report Mr. Walter Probst Garbsen

The Report started with the Information about the Details in the Map from the crash site and Info's about the German Report about the Claim of a Halifax in Großenheidorn. Mr. Probst confirmed in the first Part the it was this Halifax which crashed in the Lake and that he was Eyewitness of the crash.

Further to the Attachments: (Ziff 1) on the Map was the Main crash place of the Halifax which were laying bigger Parts incl. the Fuselage of LK-638 until 1949 and also where the photo was taken.

(Ziff2) means also a bigger Part like a Piece of the Wing with an engine nacelle.

(Ziff3) was the Point of observe when the Halifax went down....



**The Report:**

“Since 1942 we were living in a small weekend cottage very close to the bank of the Lake Steinhuder Meer. Today the street is calling “Seerosenweg”.

In the evening of 03<sup>rd</sup> of October 1943 we, my Parents some Neighbours and myself were standing outside and observed what happened at the Night Sky above us.

The view that night was very clear so that we can see very well what happened. We had seen the Gunfire from the Bottom, also in the Air from the Night fighters and it was very noisy due to the Anti Aircraft Guns from Wunstorf and Hannover.

Suddenly we could see that a Plane was coming from western direction and it was burning. The flames getting bigger and bigger and then the whole fuselage was on Fire.

But the Bomber did not make any course corrections or turns nothing, he was still flying in eastern Direction and loose more and more of his Altitude. In this moment we were thinking and realising that he will fall in our settlement. Some of us were running away and other were jumping down with the face to the soil. I hadn't seen when the Halifax crashed in the Lake but just when I were laying down there was a terrible explosion and Parts from the Plane were spread over a wide Area. Many of them were burning and from time to time another explosion was.

Next Morning my friend Dieter and I rowed with a small Boot to the Crashplace where we see an Dead Flyer on the Part of the Fuselage. He was not mutilated or defaced, but I think that members of the German Airforce Recovering Team had found him maybe in the water and placed him there for the first time. Later we were send away by Soldiers due to the Fact that maybe Bombs were not exploded.

Years later when I was a young Man, we spend a lot of time with Ice skating on the Lake and than you can see many Parts of the Bomber laying on the Bottom of the Lake. The Water is not really deep there, so one Meter or two but not more and I remember very well for an bigger Aluminium Parts close to the area of Reed near the bank.

I cannot say in which time the Parts were taken out of the Steinhuder Meer, but my friend Mr. Schettlinger remember that until 1949 the Parts were laying in the Lake maybe also for longer time.

If I'm honest, I had forgotten the Plane crash all the last years .... until your question about it last week for Mr. Hartmann. I think that not many People knows something about the crash near Großenheidorn and there are fewer and fewer from year to year....

...Walter Probst

### Update on the crash site

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Today in the morning, I was in Großenheidorn and have made some Photo of the Area where the Halifax LK638 went down. Mr. Richter which is a Club Member of the Local Sailing Club in Großenheidorn organized an entrance for the Club Area and had also invited two older Persons from the village. Both were eye witnesses of the crash. They had told me the same as Mr. Probst. More Infos they knew about the Years after the crash. At the beginning of the Fifties most of the Wreckage were recovered by Private scrap metal collectors. But from year to year more and more were found in the Area. Mr. Frank told me that the last bigger Found was an Aluminium Part which has a dimension of 1,5 x1,5 Meter. He thinks it was in the Year of 2003 or 04. At the same time, a Person which was swimming in the Lake had found some ammunition and gave this Info to the water Police. After short time, the Team of the Police in Hannover which recovered old ammunition from WW II had searched the Water Area and found more bullets and two or three weapons of the Halifax. Greetings Dirk 2011

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A post-war picture of the main crash site



Current View of the Area



## **Reports from the surviving crew, from their POW Questionnaires taken upon their release in 1945**

### **F.G Babbington –navigator**

How many Ops. Had you done: 1

Narrative: “on taking off we did not notice but crews on ground subsequently shot down and captured report smoke trail from port engine. After 2 hours flying (approx. Hanover) port outer engine suddenly started to rev. Up to maximum revs. Then fall off then rev up again, fire broke out, spread to wing which became red hot. Pilot ordered bale out approx 2100 hrs. Last man to bale out, Sgt Todd blown out of A/C by explosion. Pilot was still in A/C. Pilot and engineer made every effort to get engine under control. Out of front hatch. Cover thrown in front of A/C.”

### **C.W. Dorey – wireless operator**

How many Ops. Had you done: 1

Narrative: Took off from 434 squadron Tholthorpe, new moon, vis. Good at 1900hrs. Near Hanover passed through flak barrage, after which I noticed A/C was vibrating. About to draw crew attention to this fact when port inner engine started racing. Constant speed unit probably damaged. Engine reached 4000 R.P.M., caught fire, unable to feather – fire spreading. Predicted flak opened up on us, as we were near a visible target. Ordered to abandon A/C given on intercom. Heard nav. answer and R/G. Answered myself and baled out of entrance hatch. Flak hitting aircraft. A/C afterwards blew up (information from Sgt Todd – flight engineer) who was blown out of A/C.) A/C exploded before hitting ground. Windowing at time.

### **R.W Eaton – mid-upper gunner**

How many Ops. had you done: nil

Narrative:

Base: Tholthorpe.

Weather and Vis: good –quarter moon.

Take off: Approx. 1900 hrs.

At take off P/O engine smoked badly but was OK as soon as airborne. Met light flak but not hit as known. P.O. engine caught fire and spread along wing to P.I. engine. Feathering engine was tried but unsuccessful. Incident occurred approx. 8 mins. Approaching turning point at Hanover. Ordered to bale out at approx. 2100 hrs. And was unconscious through lack of oxygen until just before hitting deck. Landed on bank of river next to Luftwaffe Drome near Hanover. Engine had smoked like this before, but not caught fire. No details known.

### **W. O. Todd – flight engineer**

How many Ops. had you done: 1

Narrative: Tholthorpe. White smoke observed from exhaust off port inner on take off reported to pilot, presumably internal glycol leak, caused as engine temperature reached normal. Had a bit of trouble climbing to height, over front, altitude 22,000' reached. Everything normal – 15 mins. From target I went back to change petrol tanks. Plugged into intercom. Proceeded to routine of tank change, revs. Hard to increase, thought if possible more power put on by pilot due to fighter or flak or weather. Went forward, port inner on fire. Revs. 4000 – 45000. Feathering attempted no good. Fire spreading to wing, flak bursting near kite, flak rattling though kite. Astra dome off. Pilot commences to bale out. I stepped back, put on chute took two steps to rear forced to floor, unable to get over the front spar, next thing I knew I was in air, pulled ripcord. Descended by one riser, landed easily about two miles from burning A/C. On meeting other members of crew was informed that order to bale out had been given and acknowledged by all but me. My intercom. Though plugged in was U/S because small part of Bakelite edge holding plug in had been knocked off during flight no intercom. With pilot from when I first plugged in rest position. Plug slightly out because of movement during tank change. Flak on C.S.U. added to glycol shortage causing increased revs., fire.

**My Summary:**

For George Berg this was his 26<sup>th</sup> Ops.

Given the circumstances and time from the event to the questionnaire, contradictions in the above reports are understandable.

These accounts would suggest the cause of the fire and explosion was mechanical and not due to flak or fighters.

We will never know the last few minutes as to how some survived and the others did not.

Lack of experience on part of the crew is another factor in the crash. The pilot was on his second Ops, with the first one DNCO. The other crew were on their first or second Ops.

434 Squadron had heavy losses which were higher than “normal” from its initiation in June 1943. Other reports refer to 434 squadron senior leadership flaws.

## Letters

### Letters from a "friend" in England

Excerpt October 14, 1943:

"one of George's friends rang me up last week. He said the two previous nights that George and crew had tried to take off. There had been engine troubles and the night they did manage to get off there was still trouble, but they were so mad to be done out-of another trip they decided to go anyway."

Excerpt November 3, 1943:

"in George's last letter dated October 1, 1943 he told me he had a bad cold."

Excerpt February 18, 1944:

"If only George had stayed with the boys (Johnson crew, 427 Sqn.) and finished his first tour, but at the time it seemed like a wonderful break (to be bombing Leader at 434 Sqn.)"

"heard from George Dion last week that he'd heard the Pilot had been reported killed but no news of George."

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### Letter from his good friend - George Dion,

*George Berg was to have been the best man at George Dion's wedding on Nov 6, 1943*

Excerpts October 6, 1943:

"I can't feel that he's really gone – his kind will always turn up"

"I feel sure that we'll hear before long that they've got him locked up with Louie and Bill..."

"he always said it was just a case of playing the percentages and if it happened to him, he'd want us to shrug and swear a bit at his bad luck, as he did for the other boys."

"He's the best friend we'll ever have."

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### George as quoted in the newspaper - May 1943:

"The only place we haven't been is Berlin, and from all accounts we are not too anxious to go there. Cologne too is a nasty place to visit while there are quieter places than Hamburg. Coming back from there we were chased by a Messerschmitt 110 but we escaped before he could do us any damage. At one time, too, we got a beating up with flak and a piece of shrapnel came through the glass of the front turret just above me as I was crouching over my bombing sights"

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George's own letters

Excerpts

February 27, 1943

*"I am on leave right now and on my birthday also which was spent in London as normal. Been very busy taking in shows, usually two a day – a very good way to pass the time"*

*" am getting rather fat so after the war is over I guess I will have to do some real hard labour – guess my farm will take care of that."*

*"this flying is all sitting down".*

September 23, 1943

*"you asked me what I am doing all the time. Practically the same as ever only not as often"*

*"I'll drift in someday without any warning – I still remember the address"*

*"P.S. I'll have to start visiting the dentist again – a job I hate –thank goodness it's free – feels like I should be paid to go to them"*

October 1, 1943

*"Just imagine another winter coming along – last Xmas I remember writing that I would be home for the next one. Probably be writing the same thing this year but this time it should be true. Seems like ages since I was last home"*

*"George Dion is getting married on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> & I am supposed to be best man. Don't think I will be able to make it though."*

*"writing this in bed as I turned in early tonight to shake off my cold – nothing to do but sleep anyway unless we happen to be working"*

*"maybe I can go to China when this side of the war is finished"*

*"Marlin Carson was over to see me this week. Came over on his bicycle from the next station. One of my old crew mates also dropped around and a guy that used to go to Varsity in "Stoon" was also over – Bert Holtby- don't think you knew him. Also had a letter from Louie Greenberg who is over here now – a lieutenant in the army."*

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*All for now*

*Love*

*George*

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**The News**

Form 6111

Exclusive Connection with <b>WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH CO.</b> Cable Service to all the World Money Transferred by Telegraph	<h1 style="margin: 0;">CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS</h1> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">D. E. GALLOWAY, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, TORONTO, ONT.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="2">CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED</th></tr> <tr><td>Full-Rate Message</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Day Letter</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Night Message</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Night Letter</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;">Patrons should mark an X opposite the class of service desired. OTHERWISE, THE MESSAGE WILL BE TRANSMITTED AS A FULL-RATE TELEGRAM</p>	CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED		Full-Rate Message		Day Letter		Night Message		Night Letter	
CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED												
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Night Letter												

RECEIVER'S No.	TIME FILED S H 9:52 AM	CHECK 33/32 1 X. GD Report delivery via Regina.
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Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

To: W H Berg, Valparaise Sask. RCAF. Ottawa ont Oct 5th. 553. 19\_\_

M-9956. Regret to advise that your son flight Lieutenant George Theodore Berg J-16782 is reported missing after air operations overseas October fourth step. letter follows.

R C A R Casualty officer.

ADDRESSEE'S REPLY TO: THE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR AIR, OTTAWA, ONTARIO.		OUR FILE: J16782 (R.O.) REF. YOUR DATED
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**ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE**

OTTAWA, Canada, 31st August, 1944.

S/L V.L. Berg,  
Air Force Headquarters,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Squadron Leader Berg:

It is with deep regret that I must inform you that advice received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, states that your brother, Flight Lieutenant George Theodore Berg, is now for official purposes presumed to have died on Active Service on October 3rd, 1943.

I realize that this letter will be a blow to the hopes you have entertained for so long, and in your added sorrow I offer you my deepest sympathy. May the same spirit which prompted your brother to offer his life give you renewed courage.

Yours sincerely,

(D.E. MacKell)  
Air Commodore,  
Acting Air Member for Personnel.

R.C.A.F. G. 328  
500M-1-44 (2778)  
H.Q. 885-G-328

**Resting Place: Limmer Cemetery, Hanover, Germany**



**Correction**

“sharing a joint grave with F/O German as individual identification could not be made. F/Sgt Davidson was laid to rest separately.” RCAF February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1947

“Exhumation report shows single grave contains the remains of F/O German, supported by identity disk J.10730 H.W. German, F/Os braid, RAF battledress tunic and RCAF pilot’s wings.

Exhumation from joint grave shows “remains of two bodies”. Assumed that the remains are of F/Lt Berg and F/Sgt Davidson.

The erected crosses have been amended.” RCAF May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1948

**Operational Wings**

*“This is to certify that flight Lieutenant G.T. Berg has been posthumously awarded the Operational Wings of the Royal Canadian Air Force in recognition of gallant service in action against the enemy”*

*Dated this Twentieth day of May, 1947*

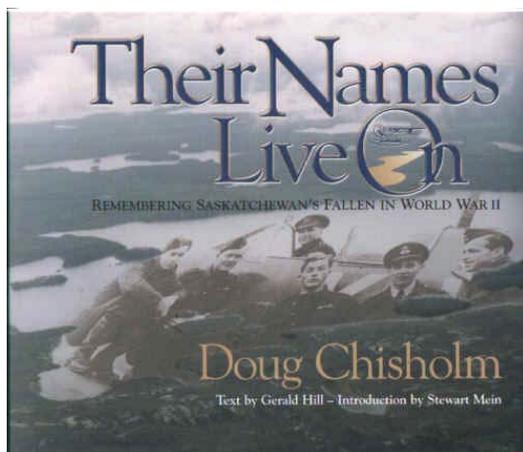
*Robert Leckie  
Air Marshall  
Chief of Air staff*

Operational wings were an award to personnel who had completed a tour of operations against the enemy or had been killed after having made one or more sorties against the enemy

George was on his 26<sup>th</sup> mission. Earlier in the war 25 sorties had been a complete tour of operations but this was raised later to 30 sorties. George's original crew all completed their first tour and survived "several pilots" and the war.

## **Memorial**

*The Names Live On* <http://www.woodlandaerialphoto.com/theirnamesliveon.htm>



"During the Second World War, over 91,000 men and women from Saskatchewan enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces, and served in the army, air force and navy. In active service for their country, over 3800 servicemen from Saskatchewan lost their lives. During the 1950's and 1960's the province of Saskatchewan, named geographic features in memory of these individuals, who made the supreme sacrifice.

The 3800 northern lakes, islands and bays named after the men who gave their lives in the war are a perpetual sign of our indebtedness to those who gave their lives in defense of democratic ideals."

Thus we now have: [Berg Lake](#)



55°33' N, 104°52' W

## Berg Lake

Named in Memory of

## George Theodore Berg

Weldon, Saskatchewan

Royal Canadian Air Force  
Flight Lieutenant, J16782

On Active Service To His Country

Killed in Action  
October 3, 1943

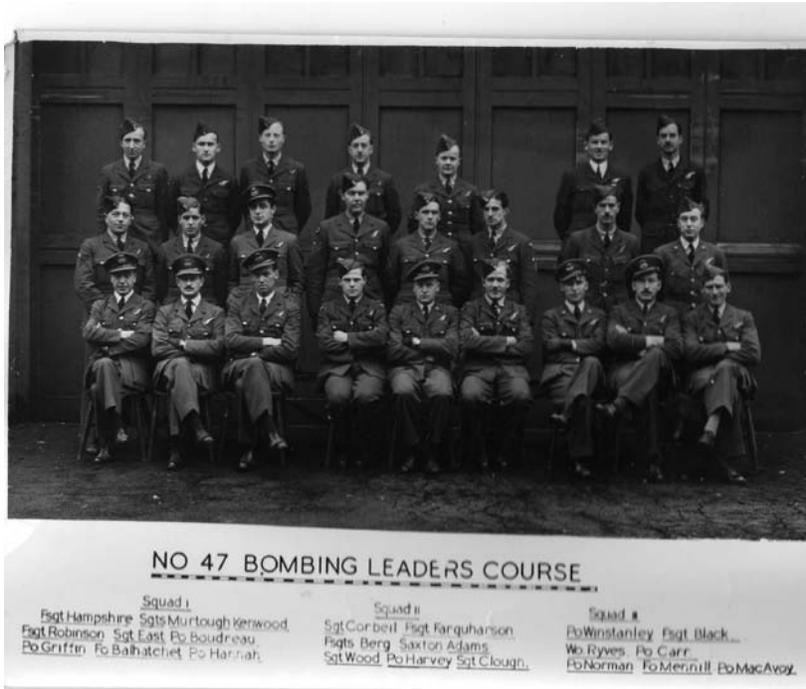
Age 27

Buried at  
Limmer British Cemetery  
Hanover, Germany



Other Pictures

April 1942: No. 47 Bombing Leaders Course



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**From George's RCAF files**

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First enlistment: RCAF Pilot Officer Sept 9, 1939 – 28<sup>th</sup> October 1939 – Discharged – failed flying test

Stoppage of pay to make good sum of \$6.75 damage to aircraft – May 13, 1941

**Family:**

Mother: Jalma Olsen, born Elbow Lake Minnesota

Father: William Halvor Berg, born Gol, Norway

Brother: V.L. Berg, born Weldon, Saskatchewan, 1914

Sister: Harriet Jesse Berg, born North Dakota, USA

George's parent's residence during war years – Valparaiso, Saskatchewan

Date of Birth: February 24, 1916

Religion: United Church

Sports: Golf, Bowling, Skating

Night Vision Test B'Mth: Below Average – Feb 24, 1942

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George at 19, Weldon, Saskatchewan



George's Graduation - Age 23, in 1939

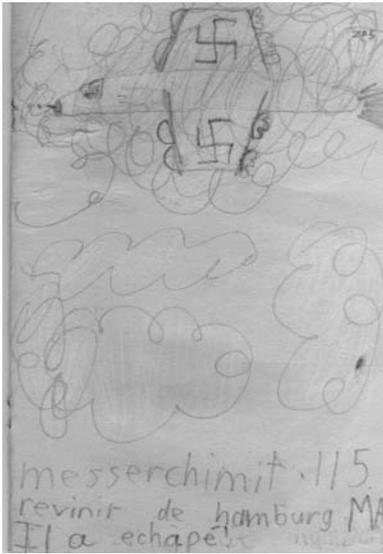
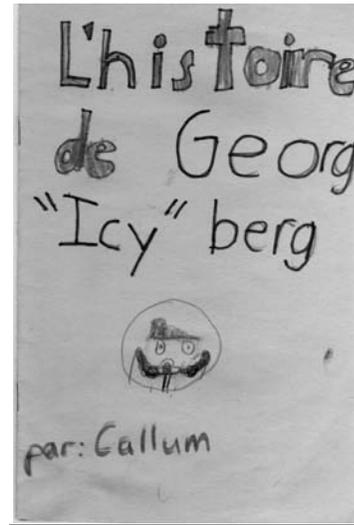


George (right) with Joe Torgalson in 1938.

Joe was with 149 Sqn RAF and died July 1940 while on a mission to Bremen to bomb naval installations, as a pilot in a Wellington.

**On-Going Memorial:**

Janet Beddoe teaches French Immersion to Grades 3 and 4 at a school in Oakville, ON and has told George's story in class each November. The students are then assigned the task of drawing and writing George's story as part of their Remembrance Day. Until this year we did not actually know what happened that night.



## **References: and great appreciation!**

### **Key Resources:**

**Dirk Hartman** of Hülse, Lower Saxony, Germany supplied all the German accounts and local pictures – a good friend. Dirk has made it his mission to research Allied aircraft crash sites in Germany and his work with Halifax V LK-638 coded WL-V is his 68<sup>th</sup> such project.

A special thanks as Dirk's posting on 434 Squadron website as it lead me to most of the information on George T. Berg's last Ops both from Dirk's efforts; but equally from Al Soderstrom who runs the 434 Sqn website.

**Al Soderstrom's** <http://www.rcaf434squadron.com/>

**Richard Koval's** <http://www.6groupcafc.com/>

**Doug Chisholm's** <http://www.woodlandaerialphoto.com/aboutus.htm>

**George T. Berg's** flight log and RCAF records

### **Self Published Books**

**F/LT Geoffrey B. Whyte, DFC** My Last Op

**Brent M. Hamre's** Just One of the Many – The Story of Flying Officer Chetwin Hamre  
Poplewell

### **Web Sites**

<http://www.telusplanet.net/public/dickieb/harry/correspondence/june23-1943nfb.html>

<http://airforce.ca/uploads/airforce/2009/07/ALPHA-WH.html>

<https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/copies/secure/005010-5100-e.php>

[http://www.dunrobincastle.com/Nose\\_Art/Londons\\_Revenge.htm](http://www.dunrobincastle.com/Nose_Art/Londons_Revenge.htm)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1499438/Group-Captain-Dudley-Burnside.html>

<http://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/wiki.php?id=21568>

### **Map References:**

[http://maps.google.ca/maps?q=Lake+Steinhuder+Meer&rls=com.microsoft:en-ca:IE-SearchBox&oe=&redir\\_esc=&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=en&sa=N&tab=wl](http://maps.google.ca/maps?q=Lake+Steinhuder+Meer&rls=com.microsoft:en-ca:IE-SearchBox&oe=&redir_esc=&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=en&sa=N&tab=wl)

[http://maps.google.ca/maps?q=berg+lake+saskatchewan&rls=com.microsoft:en-ca:IE-SearchBox&oe=&redir\\_esc=&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=en&sa=N&tab=wl](http://maps.google.ca/maps?q=berg+lake+saskatchewan&rls=com.microsoft:en-ca:IE-SearchBox&oe=&redir_esc=&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=en&sa=N&tab=wl)

**YouTube Videos:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDtE1QdwbPY&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY8OMDWqreo&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcHAGcCd6UA&feature=related>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGCi3U\\_mvgc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGCi3U_mvgc&feature=related)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=fvwp&NR=1&v=l-HVkv5nBpw>

**Good Books:**

Lifting the Silence – Sydney Percival Smith with David Scott Smith, Dundurn Press <sup>(1)</sup>

No Prouder Place – Canadians and the Bomber Command Experience 1939-1945 – David L. Bashow, Vanwell Publishing Limited

Amazing Airmen – Canadian Flyers in The Second World War – Ian Darling, Dundurn Press

Extraordinary Things, A Novel –Diana M. DeLuca, Director Halifax Aircraft Families Association – iUniverse Inc

**Errors and Omissions**

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