

LIBERATOR "X" 11121

DATE: 13 July, 1945.

A/C #: LIBERATOR "X" 11121 SQUADRON: 11 BR BASE: Patricia Bay

ROUTE: Routine Cross Country No. 1

DEPARTED: 132343Z ETA: 140041Z

LAST CONTACT: W/T Contact at 2355Z.

<u>AIR SEARCH:</u>	TOTAL FLYING TIME (DAY)	315 hrs. 34 mins.
	TOTAL FLYING TIME (NIGHT)	24 hrs. 14 mins.

(TOTAL) 339 hrs. 48 mins.

	TOTAL SEARCH TIME (DAY)	223 hrs. 01 mins.
	TOTAL SEARCH TIME (NIGHT)	20 hrs. 26 mins.

(TOTAL) 243 hrs. 27 mins.

GROUND SEARCH:

- 5 men in RCAF Search Party
- 5 men in Base Camp Party
- 11 men in Army Search Party
- 3 Guides PCMR
- 4 men of # 9 C.M.U.
- 2 Padres and 7 men in Burial Party

SEA SEARCH:

- H.M.C.S. Miramichi and 3 Navy M.L.'s
- M.V. Montagnais
- Army Service Boat
- RCAF Landing Barge
- RCAF Cormorant
- RCAF Harlequin

POSITION OF CRASH: 4848N 12458¹/₂W (This position is approximately seven miles East South East of Bamfield, V.I.)

SUMMARY OF SEARCH FOR LIBERATOR "X" 11121

Liberator "X" 11121 departed Tofino at 2343Z on the 13th of July, 1945, on the last leg of Routine Cross Country Exercise No. 1. At 2355Z Liberator 11121 called WAC Signals control on Org. 1 with instructions to pass a position report to Patricia Bay. After the aircraft had passed the message, the control operator queried the text of the message to ensure that it was correct, as signals were not too good. There was no reply from the aircraft to this query, so the operator, being reasonably sure that he had the message correctly, gave the aircraft an "R" and accepted the message. The text of the last message read "4905N 12545W 2352Z ETA YJ 0041Z". There was no further word from the aircraft.

At 0120Z File and Filter Desk in WAC Flying Control reported to the D.F.C.O.

- 2 -

(LIBERATOR "X" 11121)

that Liberator 11121 was 30 minutes overdue on ETA at Patricia Bay. The aircraft was immediately called on Org. 1 and Command Guard, and Patricia Bay called on station frequency. A Canso, flight-planned from Tofino to Sea Island, was diverted to fly the direct route from Tofino to Patricia Bay. Patricia Bay's A/S/R Anson was despatched to fly the direct route from Patricia Bay to Tofino and return, and the A/S/R Hudson was despatched to coast crawl from Patricia Bay to Tofino and back to Patricia Bay. JOC was advised and they reported they would alert all their stations to call Liberator 11121. Three Cansos from Tofino flew a parallel track search, and continued on after dark in an attempt to sight possible signals or fires. The search aircraft reported that the weather was poor along the coast near Tofino, and that searching was most difficult because of smoke from forest fires. At 140605Z an announcement was made over the commercial radio stations regarding the overdue aircraft. Also an announcement was broadcast by the B.C. Telephone Co. to all ships, and inbound and outbound surface vessels were asked to keep a lookout for dinghies as well as a watch on 500 kcs. The Navy despatched a minesweeper to search the coast line from Tofino to Esquimalt, and three M.L.'s to search along the same coast line and Barkley Sound.

An intensive air and sea search was instituted and kept up as diligently as the weather permitted. Forest fire smoke was a great handicap during this time. The search was concentrated on the southern part of Vancouver Island, from Tofino and Nanaimo south to Cape Flattery and Whidbey Island.

At 0225Z on 18th July, Canso 11073 of 4 BR Squadron sighted wreckage at 4848N 12458 $\frac{1}{2}$ W. Pictures were taken and flown to WAC Operations. A ground search party was alerted at Tofino, and the leader of the party flown over the scene of the crash to check the best way in. As the wreckage had been spotted not far from Bamfield, the Army was asked to alert the Army unit at Bamfield and have them send in a search party from there. Both the Army and the Tofino search parties started in to the crash on the morning of 19th of July. The Army party did not reach the wreckage, but the RCAF party arrived at the scene of the crash on July 20th.

From identifications made it was definitely learned that the wreckage was that of Liberator "X" 11121. It had apparently hit straight in to the

- 3 -

(LIBERATOR "X" 11121)

mountain at about the 2800 foot level, and burned. There were definitely no survivors.

The AOC decided that the burial would take place at the scene of the crash, and that there would be two separate graves, one for airmen and one for airwomen. Arrangements were made for a burial party of 2 Padres and 7 men, and the party departed Ucluelet on July 22nd, 1945. They reached the scene of the crash and completed their task, on Wednesday, 25th of July. The burial party returned to Tofino on the 26th of July.

COPY OF THE CASUALTY SIGNAL - LIBERATOR "X" 11121

- (A) Presume Red
 (B) No. 11 BR Sqdn., Patricia Bay, B.C.
 (C) Routine Cross Country 13 July/45.
 (D) Liberator A/C B24L GR VI Registration No. 11121 Engines P&W R1830-65
 Number 1 CP329356, Number 2 CP329563 Number 3 CP329317, Number 4 CP329333.
 (E) Presume A.
 (F) Davies William Edward T/F/O J28139 Pilot Missing.
 (G) Martello, Robert Joseph T/F/O Pilot Missing J26660
 Popovich, Nicholas Maxwell T/F/O J47933 Navigator Missing
 Crosson, Victor Gilbert T/WO1 R151140 WOAG Missing
 Presse, Joseph Bertrand T/WO2 R90750 WOAG Missing
 Lowe, Harry Alexander T/F/O J47850 WOG Missing
 Hope, Donald William T/FS R59081 F/E Missing
 Johnson, Norman Marshall Cpl. R130808 Std. GD (RCAF Stn. Tofino) Missing
 Kitely, Raymond Vallentine LAC R255935 Std GE (RCAF Stn. Tofino) Missing
 Hrysko, William Cpl. R106466 AFM (4 Sqdn Tofino) Missing
 Bennett, Pamela Gladys Sgt. W316180 Dental Assistant (RCAF Stn. Comox) Missing.
 Johnston, Nora Cpl. W307410 Met. Observer (RCAF Stn. Comox) Missing
 Mann, Margaret, LAW W302037 (Chef RCAF Stn. Comox) Missing
 Tull, L.H. LAC R261574 AEM(RCAF Stn. Comox) Missing
 All personnel from RCAF Station Tofino 4 Sqdn. Tofino and RCAF Station Comox were flying as passengers.
 (H) NA
 (J) Mrs. Mollie Winifred Davies (Wife) 43 Oak Park Ave., Toronto, Ont.
 Mrs. R.J.Martello (Wife) Shoal Harbour, B.C.
 Mr. John Popovich (Father) P.O. Box 287, Ladysmith, B.C.
 Mrs. D.M.Crosson (Wife) Grevenhurst, Ont.
 Mrs. C. Sabourin (Great Aunt of WO2 Presse J.B.) 129 Ferguson Stn., North Bay, Ont.
 Mrs. Mary Acilia Lowe (Mother) Federal Ave., Eastdale P.O., Ont.
 Mrs. D.W.Hope (Wife) 26 McNab Ave., Eastern Passage, N.S.
 (K) Advised (Other than No. 11 Sqdn personnel advised by parent units)
 (L) Routine cross country No. 1
 (M) Not known
 (N) Cause of accident obscure
 (O) Not known.

SEARCH FOR LIBERATOR 11121 MISSING 13th JULY 1945

1. An extensive search was carried out by Western Air Command from July 13th until July 17th when the wreckage was sighted by an air-craft on the search from Tofino. Position of the crash is 4848 North, 12458 30 West.
2. On July 17th I flew over the scene of the crash. The Aircraft could not be identified then but a route to the wreckage was mapped out.
3. A search party was immediately organized and it proceeded to the scene of the crash early July 18th, reaching crash July 19th. Six bodies were identified as members and passengers of Liberator 11121. Propeller boss numbers "MF # NK 113459" compared with those of Liberator 11121. The search party then returned to Tofino.
4. A burial party was organized and is now on its way to the scene of the crash.

5. Comments on search

Again air familiarization with the area proved very helpful to the search party. The position of crash can also be checked for errors as it can very easily be given wrong or be wrong in the first place. A guide (not a licensed guide) was hired but was not very familiar with the area as it is now. He proved very useful in identifying land marks for about half way. It was left to the A.S.R.O. to actually find the way in and locate the crash. The R.C.A.F. crash boat based at Ucluelet provided first class transportation to the Logging camp at Poett Nooke. The wireless set-up from Poett Nooke to Tofino proved to work out very well but no contact was made with the search party because of the difference in frequency of P N 1 A and the Handy Talkies. Contact from search party to air-craft flying overhead was very good while the weather held out.

W.G. Skerik F/O

(W.G. SKERIK, DFC) F/O,
Officer i/c Search Party,
A.S.R.O. RCAF Stn.,
TOFINO, B.C.

SUMMARY OF SEARCH LIBERATOR 11121

I. At 1643 hours Pacific Time, 13 of July 1945, the captain of the Liberator X 11121, crew and passengers consisting of:

1 copy given to AOC
2 copies of this report
handed to SOPC -
1 copy AF110-ASRO-
8 Aug 45

F/O W.E. Davies	1st Pilot
F/O R.J. Martello	2nd Pilot
F/O N.M. Popovich -	Nav.
WO1 V.G. Crosson	W.O.A.G.
WO2 J.B. Preste	W.O.A.G.
F/O R.A. Lowe	W.O.G.
F/S D.W. Hope	Fit. Eng.
Cpl. N.W. Johnson (Tofino)	G.D.
LAC R.V. Kitley (Tofino)	G.D.
Cpl W. Hryako (Tofino)	Armament
WD Sgt. F.G. Bennett (Comox)	Dental Assistant
WD Cpl E. Johnston (Comox)	Met. Observer
WD LAW M. Mann (Comox)	Chef.
? LAW L.H. Tull (Comox)	A.E.M.

took off from Tofino on the last leg of a familiarization flight. The crew was from 11 B.R. Squadron stationed at Patricia Bay and the passengers from Comox and Tofino.

II. The crew was briefed to fly from Pat Bay to Abbotsford, Boundary Bay, Comox, Port Hardy - Tofino - to Pat Bay, stopping at Comox and Tofino. The purpose of the flight was to familiarize the crew with the fields at which they might have to land in an emergency. Take off was made from Patricia Bay at 0851 hrs. Pacific - landing at Abbotsford 0913 - departing Abbotsford 1033 - landed Boundary Bay at 1054 - departing 1055 and arrived Comox 1136.

At Comox another flight plan was filed - Comox to Pat Bay via Port Hardy with stopover at Tofino. A route weather forecast was as follows:

Forecast - Clear becoming hi broken with lower overcast base 800 tops 11000 becoming hi scattered with lower broken to scattered near Port Hardy becoming overcast with base 1000 tops 11,000 and finally becoming high broken near Pat Bay.

Take-off from Comox was made at 1349. The aircraft reported over Port Hardy at 1437 hours and arrived at Tofino at 1600. Take-off from Tofino was made at 1643 hours. Weather conditions at Tofino at that time were broken ceiling 2000 ft. Visibility 10 miles diminishing to one mile to the south due to fog bank.

III. At 1655 Lib. 11121 called W.A.C. on Org. 1 with instructions to pass a position report and R.T.A. to Patricia Bay. After the aircraft had passed the message, the control operator queried the text of the message to ensure that it was correct as signals were not too good. There was no reply from the aircraft to this query, so the operator, being reasonably sure that he had the message correctly, gave the aircraft an "R" and accepted the message. This message gave his position as 49 05 N, 125 45 W, 23528 MTA - Pat Bay 1741 Pacific. No further word was heard from aircraft.

IV. When the aircraft was reported as 30 mins. overdue at Pat Bay, it was immediately called on Command guard and Pat Bay station frequency. A Canoe, flight planned from Tofino to Sea Island, was diverted to fly direct from Tofino to Pat Bay. A.S.R. Anson flew from Pat Bay to Tofino direct. The A.S.R. Hudson did a coast crawl from Pat Bay to Tofino and back. U.S. authorities and commercial radios were alerted. Three Canoes from Tofino flew parallel search from Tofino and searched for fires at night. The Navy was alerted and they despatched three M.L.s to search the coast line from Esquimalt to Tofino.

- 2 -

V. An extensive air search was carried out for five days; 339 hours being flown. This search was hampered considerably by smoke and fog off the coast.

VI. On the 18th of July, Canso 11073 of 4 B.R. sighted wreckage 48° 48' N 124° 59' W at 2800 feet about 11 miles S.E. from Bamfield.

Both the Army unit at Bamfield and the Tofino ~~search parties~~ sent out search parties to the wreck. The former failed to find it, but the R.C.A.F. party in charge of F/O Skerik, A.S.R.O. at Tofino, reached the crash at 1600 hours July 20 and definitely identified the wreckage as being Liberator 11121.

VII. The fuselage was burned and wreckage was scattered for 100 yards up the mountain from point of impact. The bodies of the pilot, second pilot and navigator were thrown clear of the aircraft, all were badly burned and mutilated. Six bodies were identified and seven unidentified. One could not be definitely located, but it is believed that parts of it were found. Two bodies were definitely identified as being women. The search party made their report to W.A.C. 21 July.

VIII. The A.O.C. decided that burial would take place at the scene of the crash. F/L McAuley DFC, of the A.I.B., Western Air Command left Tofino with two padres and a burial party on 24 July and reached the wreck on the 25th. The bodies of the women were buried in one grave and the rest were placed in a larger one, except one which could not be named and was buried where it lay. The graves were beautified with cedar boughs and covered by the Union Jack. A cross bearing the names was placed at the head of each grave. A simple but impressive service was conducted by F/L McGarry (RC) and F/L Bonham (P). Photographs of the graves were taken so that they might be sent to the next of kin.

Having completed their mission, the party returned to Tofino July 26, 1945.

J.H. Blackburn JK
(J.H. Blackburn) F/L,
for A.O.C., W.A.C.