

F/Sgt. Stefan Franchuk R/86255 RCAF

Stefan was born on 1 January 1911 in Kenora, Ontario, Canada, the son of Polish born parents Samuel Franchuk and Rosalia Franchuk (née Matioska). In February 1942 he married Agnes Sophie Tutkaluk in Canada.

Educated at Kenora High School, Stefan was employed as a clerk and truck despatcher for a local freight company when, in May 1940, he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RCAF.

Called up to train as an Air Gunner in December 1940, Stefan re-mustered as WOp/AG in May 1941 before reverting back to Air Gunner in January 1942. Stefan was awarded his Air Gunner's badge in February 1942.

In March 1942 Stefan was posted to the UK and, following advanced training, in September 1942 he was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Yorkshire, from 14 OTU at RAF Cottesmore, Rutland.

On the night of 6/7 December 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on vital railway sidings near Mannheim, Germany. Of a combined force of 272 aircraft, 101 Squadron contributed five crews. At 1739 hours on 6 December Stefan, a replacement Air Gunner for the crew due to sickness of the usual gunner, and the crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor in Lancaster I ED322 (SR-T).

Returning from the mission in the early hours of 7 December 1942, Stefan's aircraft was 300 miles off course from base over the Pembrokeshire Coast, Wales. Whilst attempting to land at RAF Carew Cheriton, 5 miles NW of Tenby, Pembrokeshire, the aircraft crashed into the sea in Camarthen Bay, off Tenby, killing all on board.

The raid was a dismal failure with the loss of 15 aircraft. The target area was completely covered in cloud and only 500 incendiary bombs and some leaflets were dropped. The only damage to the city was the destruction by fire of an old wooden building, whilst a local farmer lost 25 sheep, 4 lambs, some turnips and a hay barn. There were no casualties in Mannheim or the railway sidings but a total of 55 aircrew were killed, 3 were taken POW, and a further 10 injured.

Also Killed: P/O Howard Earl Dabbs DFC RCAF (Pilot); F/Sgt. Leonard Roy Anderson RCAF (Nav); F/Sgt. Robert John Middleton RCAF (WOp); F/Sgt. Robert Gordon Smith RCAF (AB); Sgt. James Hughes (FE); Sgt. William Thomas Warren (AG).

Stefan has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey.

Stefan is commemorated on Wall Panel 37.