FO John Willard Thompson J/38084 RCAF



John, known as Tommy, was born on 4 February 1924 in Bowden, Alberta, Canada, the son of John William Thompson and Isabel Bearisto Thompson nee McNeill.

Educated at Buffalo Creek School and Innisfail High School, Alberta, John was employed on the family farm when, in January 1942, he volunteered for service in the RCAF.

Called up in July 1942, John completed his pilot training in November 1943 with the award of his Wings and was granted a commission.

Following training at No.1 General Reconnaissance School, Summerside, Prince Edward Island, John was sent to 111 (Coastal) OTU Nassau, Bahamas, for Liberator conversion. In June 1944 John embarked for the UK and in August 1944 he was posted to 223 Sqn when it reformed at RAF Oulton, Norfolk.

On 20/21 February 1945 Bomber Command made four major attacks on the Ruhr and North of the Ruhr, the targets being Dortmund, Gravenhorst, Reisholz and Mannheim. Eleven 223 Sqn Liberators were tasked with “Jostle” and “Window” sorties, John’s crew was tasked with a “Window” op (dropping chaff), on a northern patrol area.

At 22:36 on 20 February John and his crew departed RAF Oulton in Liberator VI TS520 (6G-J).

At 01:25 on 21 February, approximately 30 miles SE of Dortmund, Ronald’s aircraft was intercepted by Oblt Kurt Matzak of Stab I./NJG1 flying a Ju88. The aircraft was raked from nose to tail and began an out-of-control dive with flames and smoke in the tunnel leading to the Navigator’s department. John gave the order to abandon the aircraft, and six crew members were able to bale out.

The aircraft crashed at Dornheim, Schmallenberg, 5 miles north of Bad Fredeburg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, killing five of the eleven-man crew who remained in the aircraft. Of the six crew that baled out, five were taken as POW.

Also killed: FS Desmond Bryant (WOp/AG); FS John Henry Kendall (Pilot); FS Ronald Mark Wood RCAF (AG); Sgt Edwin Eric Whittaker (AG); Sgt Ronald Wynn (FE)

Originally buried in the Catholic Cemetery Kirchbach, Germany, John was first moved to the American War Cemetery, Margraten, Netherlands, and then in March 1947 to Venray War Cemetery, Limburg, Netherlands.

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 253

Photo Source: findagrave