

**2nd Lt Maurice Albert Lepage O-2044990 US
Army OSS Purple Heart
AKA - Maurice Lanis; Maurice Lanois
Field Name - Colin**

Maurice was born on 27 November 1912 in Sainte-Colombe, Seine-et-Marne, France, the son of Albert Eugene and Cecile Marguerite Noel Lepage, step-son of Maurice Gage. In 1942 he married Juliette Lepage in New York, USA. Raised and educated in Paris, Maurice was employed as a chef in the city and with the CGT shipping line working the trans-Atlantic route. Completing National Service in France, on the outbreak of war Maurice was called up for active service and served until the fall of France. Maurice escaped to the USA, via Morocco, arriving in December 1941, and settled in Scarsdale, Westchester Co., New York.



In December 1942 Maurice was drafted into the US Army and was posted to the HQ of the 398th Infantry Regiment of the 100th Infantry Division based at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. In May 1943 Maurice became a naturalised citizen and was transferred to the Special Ops Branch of the OSS, transferring to the UK in November 1943.

With family still resident in France, Maurice commenced special ops training under the alias of "Maurice Lanis". Training was completed at Arisaig, Inverness, Beaulieu, Hampshire, and Howbury Hall, Bedford, and Maurice was identified as a natural leader. Promoted to 2nd Lt, Maurice was appointed to head the 3 man "Liontamer" Group, a new circuit to be established in the Valenciennes area in preparation for D-Day, and to support the "Archdeacon" circuit which had radioed arrangements for the drop and reception, and the "Musician" circuit which was to provide the reception party.

At 20:51 on 2 March 1944 Maurice and his team departed RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in 138 Sqn Halifax V LL251 NF-N. Successfully dropped at a site near Saint-Quentin, the Gestapo were waiting. The operation and reception on the drop zone had been arranged by the Germans as part of their "*Funkspiel*", using the captured radio set and codes of the "Archdeacon" and "Musician" circuits.

The Agents were arrested immediately on landing and taken to Gestapo HQ at 84 Avenue Foch, Paris for interrogation. After interrogation, Maurice was imprisoned at Fresnes Prison, Val-de-Marne, Paris until he was transferred to Rawitsch Prison, Poland, in June 1944.

In the period 24 June to 4 September 1944, after orders were received from Berlin for the execution of the SOE agents at Rawitsch, they were taken by SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Wilhelm Scharpwinkel, head of the Breslau Gestapo, from the prison to the KZ Gross-Rosen concentration camp, 100 km SW in German Silesia. Maurice was executed and his body cremated.

Also killed : Lt David Haughton Finlayson (SOE); 2nd Lt Edmond Louis Fernand Lesout (US Army)

Maurice has no known grave and is commemorated on the Tablets of the Missing, Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium

Maurice is commemorated on Wall Panel (NYE)

Photo Source: Findagrave