FO John Edward West J/35957 RCAF



John was born on 11 September 1917 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, the son of Welsford Alexander West and Mary Frances West nee Grant.

Educated at Hopewell Primary and High Schools and New Glasgow College, Nova Scotia, John was employed as a clerk by the Brookfield Construction Company, Nova Scotia when, in July 1941, he enlisted in the RCAF.

John completed his pilot training in Canada in June 1942 with the award of his Wings, and was posted to 125 Sqn at RCAF Sydney, Nova Scotia, as part of RCAF Eastern Air Command. Commissioned in July 1943, in February 1944 the squadron transferred to the UK and was renamed 441 Sqn, based at RAF Digby, Lincolnshire. John moved to the UK with the squadron.

On 12 June 1944 441 Sqn, operating from RAF Ford, Sussex, on four separate occasions during the day was tasked with providing low cover over the Eastern Assault Area for "Operation Neptune", the naval component of "Operation Overlord", the broader Allied plan to invade NW Europe and establish a foothold in Nazi-occupied France.

At 15:40 John, as White 4 in a section of four, departed RAF Ford in Spitfire IX MH447, together with 11 other squadron aircraft. This was the 3rd op of the day for the squadron.

On returning over the channel from the patrol, John was seen to fall behind and begin to lose altitude. No R/T communication was made before, at 17:30 and 10 miles south of Littlehampton, Sussex, John tried to bale out at 1000 ft; however, the top of his parachute caught on the aircraft, and he was pulled into the water behind the Spitfire. Despite a search, there was no further sign of John or his aircraft.

John is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

John is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: www.veterans.gc.ca