S/L Phillip Leslie Irving Archer J/3508 DFC RCAF



Phillip, known as Phil, was born on 10 February 1917 in Bridgetown, Barbados, BWI, the only son of Frederick Leslie Archer and Millicent Beryl Archer nee Phillips. Educated at Lodge School, St John, Barbados, in 1936 Phillip travelled to Canada and enrolled at Macdonald College, McGill University to study Agricultural Science. After graduating with a BSc, in April 1940 Phillip applied for service with the RCAF and enlisted in June.

Phillip completed his aircrew training in Canada in December 1940 with the award of his Wings, was commissioned in January 1941 and embarked for the UK the following month. Following advanced training at 57 OTU RAF Hawarden, Flintshire, Wales, in May 1941 Phillip was posted to 92 Sqn at RAF Biggin Hill, Kent. In November 1941 Phillip was posted to 412 Sqn, operating at RAF Wellingore and RAF Digby, Lincolnshire. In March 1942 Phillip was posted to 416 Sqn as "A" Flt Cdr, RAF Dyce, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

In August 1942 Phillip was awarded the DFC. His citation read:
"This officer has completed sorties over enemy territory and has destroyed at least four enemy aircraft. On one occasion, although wounded in the leg, Flight Lieutenant Archer flew his badly damaged aircraft back to the base where he executed a skilful landing. He is a most efficient leader".

In December 1942 Phillip was posted to RAF Kenley as Wing Gunnery Instructor. Designated as Commanding Officer of 402 Sqn, in June 1943 Phillip was attached to 421 Sqn for a few days to get back to operational standards. This changed on 17 June 1943 when he assumed command of 421 Sqn on the posting of its Commanding Officer. That same day, he led the squadron for the first, and only time.

On 17 June 1943, 403 Sqn and 421 Sqn were tasked with "Rodeo 231". The plan was for the Canadian Wing to sweep Gravelines, Ypres, Thielt and Ostend, ten minutes after the Northolt Wing had carried out a similar operation. At 15:02 Phillip departed RAF Kenley in Spitfire IX LZ996 (AU-N) as "Black 2".

The Wing crossed Dover at 15:20 at 15,000 ft, entering France over Gravelines at 15:30 at 24,000 ft, then on to the west of Ypres where enemy aircraft flying NW had been reported by the Controller. The Wing orbited at 24,000 feet waiting for these enemy aircraft which proved to be more than 30 Fw190's climbing from 15,000 ft. Whilst 403 Sqn maintained top cover, Wg Cdr Johnson led 421 Sqn down to attack the Fw190's below, selecting the last four enemy aircraft which were flying line abreast and, with Black section, made a diving turn to starboard onto the enemy aircraft. A huge, confusing dogfight involving Fw190s of JG26 and 24 Spitfires from the Wing ensued. The Wing then reformed and headed for the coast between Gris Nez and Gravelines, harried on both sides by many Fw190s. When NW of St. Omer, Phillip was identified by his aircraft letters - AU-N - as 2 FW190s were closing in on him. A few minutes later a voice called out over the R/T saying "baleing out", but no call sign was given. It is believed that this was Phillip and that during combat he collided with a Fw190 flown by Oblt Horst Sternberg, crashing at Alquines, Hauts-de-France, France.

Phillip is buried in Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

Phillip is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: veterans.gc.ca