

Forgotten Squared

Canadian Aircrew in Southeast Asia, 1942-1945

Atholl Sutherland Brown

The battles of World War II in Southeast Asia started with a saga of repeated defeats and retreats by the Allies. Then in 1944, after they re-grouped during a stalemate in 1942-43, the Allies decisively defeated the Imperial Forces of Japan in the jungles of the Chin Hills, leading to a victorious advance down the plains to Rangoon. These campaigns included the greatest land battles and the soundest defeat of the Japanese armies during the war. They were engineered by the combination of sound Allied tactics and resolute jungle fighting that was facilitated by a most intensive and innovative use of airpower. In spite of Winston Churchill's statement that the attack against Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by a Japanese naval task force in 1942 represented the most dangerous moment of the war, these campaigns have been slighted in subsequent general histories of the World War, as they were by the media of the time.¹

During the campaigns most of the Allied troops felt that their efforts and sacrifices were unrecognized and largely forgotten in the panorama of the war. They believed that they were poorly supported - they knew they were assigned inferior equipment in deficient quantity - and they suspected they were short-changed by remote leadership and inadequate strategic planning. Those feelings arose in 1941-42 during the defeats and retreats from Malaya, Singapore, the East Indies and Burma, and they hardened during the stalemate after the monsoon of 1942 when the 14th Army dubbed itself the "Forgotten Army."²

Nevertheless, the forces in India and Burma understood the Allied policy of first defeating Nazi Germany with significant concurrent American

involvement in a Pacific war. What rankled with them was not only their remoteness and the appalling conditions under which they fought, but also the clear inferiority of materiel assigned to Southeast Asia Command, the apparent reluctance or inability to upgrade it and the slight recognition of their accomplishments achieved in the face of these impoverishments. The western world apparently did not know or greatly care about the nature and scale of the battles in Southeast Asia. Nor did it really comprehend the savageness of the Japanese in combat,³ their brutally harsh and degrading treatment of Allied PoWs⁴ and their stigmatization of downed aircrew as war criminals.⁵

Recent histories have not changed earlier judgments and treatment of the war in southeastern Asia.⁶ Historians concerned with the broad canvas of the World War have almost all given scant space to the war in the Far East. Specialized histories of these conflicts are not rare but their messages have largely been swamped or screened out because of unfamiliarity with the events, doubts of their significance or possibly ennui. Reflecting this is the most recent history of the Allied air war in the Far East. Written by the former head of the Air Ministry's Air Historical Branch it is titled, *The Forgotten Air Force*.⁷

What then are we to think of the lack of recognition accorded the large force of Canadian airmen who fought in those battles in Southeast Asia along with their British and Commonwealth colleagues?⁸ General histories pay little attention to the battles in Southeast Asia.⁹ British accounts of the air war in that theatre do not acknowledge Canadian participation,¹⁰ nor, even more

surprisingly, do Canadian accounts.¹¹ The Canadian aircrew who served their country in Burma and beyond are, therefore, "Forgotten Squared."

Canadians in Burma and the Far East

The number of Canadian aircrew, ground crew or radar technicians in Burma or the Far East can only be estimated because there is no comprehensive list in Canadian or British archives.¹² Nor can the number of decorations awarded to Canadians be determined without a search through all the RAF Squadron Operational Record Books, and even then, unless the recipient is identified as a Canadian or his number is given, one cannot tell.¹³

The authors of the third volume of the RCAF's official history, *The Crucible of War, 1939-1945*, clearly state they are only dealing with the 40 percent of Canadian personnel who served with RCAF squadrons.¹⁴ Thus the majority of RCAF serving overseas were orphans! Moreover, they were treated by the RAF as no different from British crews, but too often superciliously, as ill-disciplined colonials and flak fodder to fill the ranks.¹⁵ The Royal Canadian Air Force and the Government of Canada lost control of Canadian aircrews' futures, postings and organization. They also lost recognition at home, and in the whole Western World, of the scale of Canada's true contribution to the air war. This outcome resulted from the ill-considered conditions agreed to by Canada for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). Attempts to regain control suffered because of the outright opposition and intransigence of the Air Council and the Air Ministry. Differences of opinion within the senior Canadian staff, and a lack of feedback from the Chief of the Air Staff and the Minister to the Canadian cabinet further compounded the problem.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the RCAF was delinquent in not insisting on keeping track of Canadians attached to the RAF or even having significant records of them. The RCAF really did not know who was in South East Asia Command (SEAC) or what they were doing. Only late in the war was a liaison office opened in Calcutta to try to compensate for previous neglect of Canadians in front line squadrons.

Melnyk's *Canadian Flying Operations in South East Asia, 1941 -45* is the only book that attempts to cover operations by Canadians in RAF squadrons as well as the three RCAF squadrons in SEAC. He gives a sequence of estimates of the numbers of RCAF personnel in that theatre on different dates. Several of his estimates are just over 3,000 but he does state that most Canadians were aircrew on operational squadrons. Other categories include Canadian ground crew on the three RCAF squadrons and a significant number of radar personnel in the theatre. Melnyk continues by stating that 5,537 Burma Stars were issued to Canadians, and estimates that probably some 20 percent of this number were not claimed. In addition, aircrew including many Canadians with General Reconnaissance squadrons that flew over the Indian Ocean are not entitled to wear the Burma Star. Melnyk concludes that as many as 7,500 Canadian airmen served in Southeast Asia - a significant force indeed!¹⁷

Canadian strength on RAF Squadrons varied considerably in time and place. Even in the retreat phase in Malaya, Singapore and the East Indies, RCAF aircrew and radar personnel were present as well as an unknown number of Canadians serving in the RAF. Melnyk states there were 35 RCAF aircrew in January 1942 and 83 by April. Forty-two became PoWs. At this stage RCAF radar personnel outnumbered aircrew for there were 347 of them.¹⁸ This phase of the air war was particularly desperate with aircrew flying inferior aircraft from airfields under constant attack by Japanese Zeros and Oscars. Disrupted supply and maintenance compounded the general chaos. Much remains opaque about this period but undoubtedly there were tales of heroism other than that of RCAF Hurricane pilots, W/Os H.P. Low and R.C. Smith (see later).

The growing number and percentage of Canadian aircrew in the theatre made them a very significant part of the total force. Canadians were especially well represented in the Liberator squadrons. This was likely because the only Commonwealth Heavy Conversion Unit was in Canada at Boundary Bay, BC.¹⁹ Of the two units of 231 Group of the Strategic Air Force, SEAC, 99 Squadron had a total of 682 all ranks and 62 crews in which there were 28 Canadian aircrew. No.356 Squadron had many more Canadians -

of 614 personnel, Canadian aircrew totalled 154.²⁰

RAF Dakota Squadrons also had large numbers of Canadians and, in addition, Troop Carrier Command was bolstered in the beginning of 1945 by 435 and 436 RCAF Squadrons.²¹ The three RAF squadrons of 177 Wing, namely 62, 117, and 194, had 60 aircraft and 161 aircrew of which 22, mostly pilots, were RCAF, 20 were Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), five Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) and one South African Air Force (SAAF).

The fighter, fighter-bomber and ground attack squadrons also had similar numbers of Canadians but figures have not been easily retrieved. For example, Norman Frank's *The Air Battle of Imphal* only contains occasional references to country of origin of the many pilots of the nine Hurricane and three Spitfire squadrons based in the valley.²² Robert Bracken's *Spitfire, The Canadians* has only one article concerning the many Canadian Spitfire pilots in Burma. The article, "Lost Legion" is written by Paul Ostrander, a pilot in 155 Squadron RAF, whose operations appear to post date the Battle of Imphal.²³ Precise information is available for 177 Squadron which was operational in SEAC from September 1943 to June of 1945.²⁴ This Beaufighter squadron had a total of 160 aircrew on strength during its operational life; 77 of these were pilots of which 14 were RCAF, eight RAAF and two RNZAF. There were no Canadian or Commonwealth observers. Fifty-four aircrew on this Squadron were missing or killed in action, of which five were Canadian pilots.

Although there are no authoritative data it would appear that to the end of the war, Canadian pilots in SEAC made up one quarter of the total. If this is correct it represents a major Canadian contribution to the air war in the Far East.

Canadian casualties

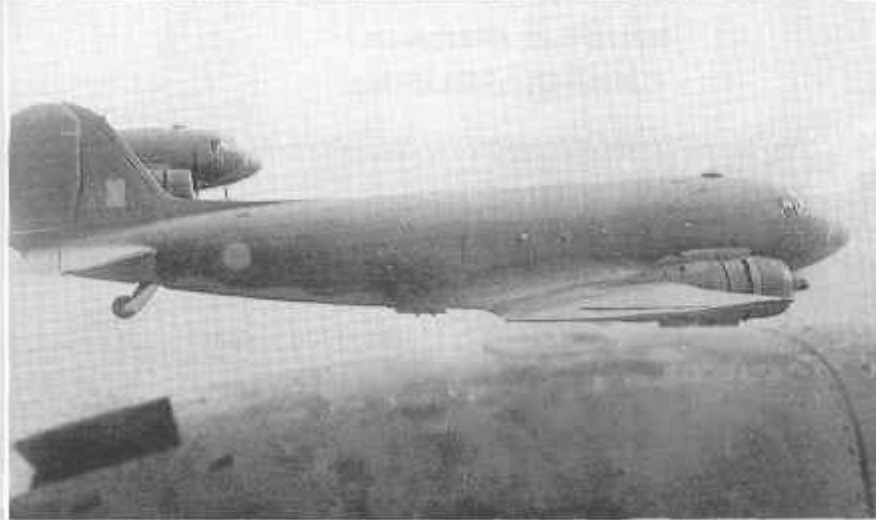
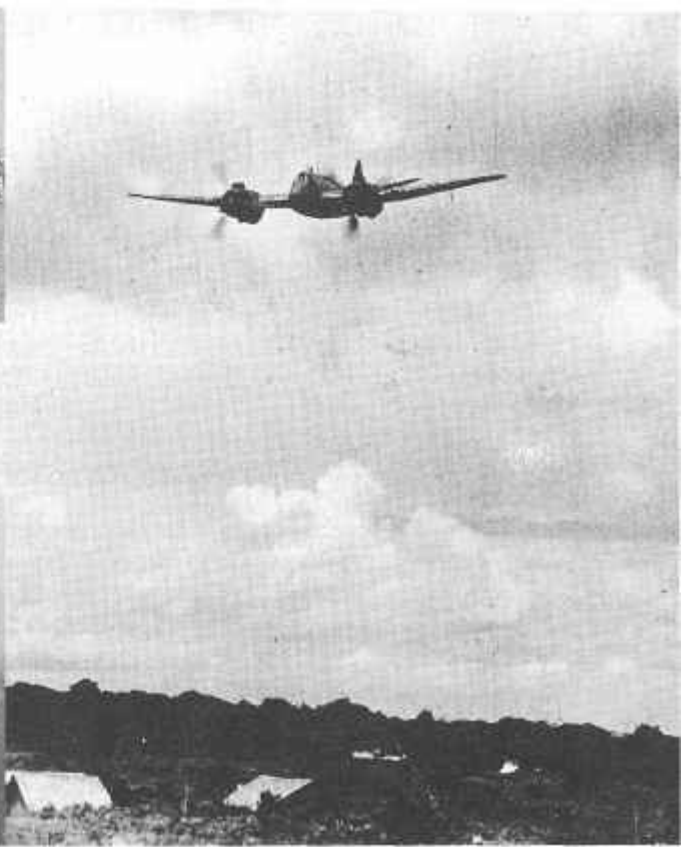
A more precise record of Canadian aircrew involvement in the Far East can be gathered from the records of casualties diligently assembled by Allison and Heyward in *They Shall Not Grow Old*.²⁵ Canadians who died in the campaigns in the Far East total 431. Because of the great distances many of the aircraft travelled, much over sparsely-populated jungle or the sea, the number missing compared with other categories is very high, as is the number with no known grave - 195 or 45 percent. Two hundred and twenty-five were killed in action, 124 went missing, 55 were killed in flying accidents on duty, 12 died of natural causes, 11 as PoWs (of which two were known to be shot) three were killed in non-flying accidents, and one was assassinated in a train during a communal riot in India.

Much can be learned about the Canadian aircrew in SEAC from an analysis of the casualties - what they did and how they were distributed as confirmed by aircraft types flown, their age and other details. Almost all the casualties were aircrew, and nearly half (207) were pilots. The most common aircraft they flew in Burma were Liberators, Hurricanes, Dakotas, Beaufighters, Spitfires, and Catalinas followed in number by Vengences, Wellingtons and, at the



Officers of 177 RAF Beaufighter Squadron in October 1944 showing a fairly typical distribution of Commonwealth personnel. Six Canadian pilots are as follows: 1. F/O A.C. MacDonald, 2. F/O K.S. Waldie, 3. F/O S. Sinibaldi, 4. F/L R.D. Newcombe, formerly a Chindit, 5. F/O F.M. Macintosh and 6. F/L A Sutherland Brown, DFC. Also in the group is a New Zealand pilot, an Australian adjutant and an Indian signals officer; the rest are British.

A. Sutherland Brown



A sample of some of the aircraft flown by Canadians in Southeast Asia (clockwise from top left): A row of P-47 Thunderbolts on a Burmese airfield (CFPU PL41220); a Bristol Beaufighter VI of 224 Group over Arakan (Burma) in 1943 (A. Sutherland Brown); and a flight of 436 Squadron RCAF Dakota's over Burma (Harold Olafson).

end of the war, Thunderbolts and Mosquitoes. Canadian casualties on Liberators numbered 44 pilots and 112 other aircrew; on Dakotas, 22 pilots and 39 others; on Hurricanes, 47 pilots; on Beaufighters, 22 pilots and 4 observers. Fewer numbers were lost on the other aircraft types: Catalinas, 13 pilots, 6 others; Blenheims, 13 pilots, 3 others; Spitfires, 10 pilots; Hudsons, 8 pilots, 10 others; Vengeance, 7 pilots, 1 other, Mosquitoes, 7 pilots; Wellingtons, 6 pilots, 6 others, Thunderbolts, 6 pilots; Vildebeast, 1 pilot; Barracuda, 1 pilot; Warwick, Sunderland and glider one each.

The aircrew were all young men but may have been marginally older than averages in Europe because being placed in operations in the Far East commonly took up to six months. The most common age was 21 and the median age was 22.

Forgotten Heroes and Yeomen of the Air

Canadian heroes may well have been numerous in the Far East. Yet Canadians know little or nothing of their courage. At least the "Saviour of Ceylon," F/L L.J. Birchall, DFC,

OBE, is well remembered in Sri Lanka where, as a now-retired Air Commodore, he was honoured in 1998 at that country's Silver Jubilee independence celebration. The story of Lieutenant R.H.Grey, VC, DSC is similarly known because his VC was the last of the war, and the only one awarded to an RCN Fleet Air Arm pilot. Other heroes from the chaotic days of the fall of Singapore, W/Os H.P. Low and R.C. Smith, are almost completely unknown, and they were not recognized for their brave exploits.

Standing behind the heroes were a host of yeomen of the air; volunteers like the Cromwellian cavalry, resolute airmen who acquitted themselves with great skill, courage and leadership. Their performances influenced the conduct of their squadrons and the air war at large. With time, money and effort scores of names could be retrieved from the RAF squadron Operations Record Books or from the announcements of awards.²⁶ At present we do not even have a list of Canadians who won DSOs or DFCs in the Far East. Stories of a few of these unknown heroes will serve as examples.

Two RCAF fighter pilots are known to be aces in the Far East, a more difficult feat there than

in Europe for four reasons. First, the Zeros and Oscars were nimbler in combat than all the RAF aircraft they encountered until they met Spitfire VIIIs. Second, victories during the chaos of the retreat were rarely confirmed. Third, most of the "fighter" squadrons in the last two years of the war were actually tasked with ground attack duties, flying aircraft such as Hurricane IICs and IVs armed with cannons, rockets and bombs. These were in fact the artillery of the XTVth Army. Finally, late in the campaign, enemy aircraft were relatively scarce. Sergeant (later F/L) D.F Barrick, DFM, completed two tours on Hurricanes with 17 Squadron, starting during the retreat in Burma and continuing until the advance in 1944. He shot down five enemy fighters in this interval, not easy to do in a Hurricane.²⁷ F/L R.W. (Bob) Day, DFC, later S/L, of Vancouver was sequestered in Training Command from early in the war until late 1943 when he finally became operational in Burma on 81 Squadron flying Spitfires VIIIs. He shot down four Oscars and a Dinah in the air battles at Imphal, over the rough Chindit airfield behind the lines that was called Broadway and at Akyab in the Arakan.²⁸ As a result of his prowess he was promoted to command 67 Spitfire Squadron, a rarity for Canadians on RAF squadrons.

Another Hurricane pilot, W/O R.W. Bates, was escorting Blenheims in the retreat phase when he was flipped over in a cumulo-nimbus cloud. When he recovered and emerged he recognized that he was over the Salween River, and that he was so low on fuel that he could not get back to an Allied field. Consequently he flew north and, upon running out of fuel, crash-landed on the steep banks of the river, destroying his aircraft. He traversed north in the mountainous jungle avoiding Japanese patrols until he made contact with Chinese forces. He was eventually returned to his unit and flew with it until March 1944, completing two tours.²⁹

Thirteen Canadian pilots volunteered to act as liaison officers to General Wingate's second Long Range Penetration Force (Chindits) and were flown in gliders to the jungle airstrips deep in Japanese-held terrain. One pilot, F/L R.A.S.Lasser, was killed in a crash. The remainder were severely tested while they acted as direct air support controllers (visual control post) in the jungle redoubts directing supply drops and air-to-ground attacks. When the campaign was abandoned they were either evacuated by air or walked out. They then rejoined their squadrons to complete their tours. One of them, F/L R.D. Newcombe of Vancouver,

Hurricane at Palel airstrip during the siege of Imphal, 1944. Note living quarters and slit trenches adjacent, guard and arming of aircraft within range of Japanese artillery.



S/L Geoff May, DFC



Dakotas at war (clockwise from top left): Ground crew pose in front of a 435 Squadron Dak and fuel truck (CFPU 60548); Paratroopers prepare for a jump on board a 436 Squadron Dakota (CFPU PL60632); Troops board a 435 Squadron Dakota in Burma, December 1944 (CFPU PL 60111).

returned to 177 Beaufighter Squadron and flew 20 trips to finish his tour.³⁰

The Dakota transports in Burma usually flew to the front lines and to the jungle enclaves in enemy terrain without fighter escort. There were too few fighters and ground attack was their priority. In January 1945, five Dakotas of 435 RCAF Squadron were dropping supplies near Shwebo at the front in central Burma when they were jumped by a Sentai (Squadron) of Oscars. F/L Herb Coons, DFC and Bar, of Morrisburg Ontario was in command. He had previously done a tour as a navigator on Sunderlands in Europe and then remustered to pilot, eventually coming to Burma. He was the first to spot the attack and broadcast a warning. By resorting to extreme evasive tactics at low level he and two others avoided being shot down. In the course of these manouevers Coons lost four feet of wingtip to a palm tree while evading five attacks, yet returned to base at Imphal with only one of his crew injured. Two Daks were shot down of which one, with a load of ammunition, crash landed so skilfully it did not explode or burn and only one

of the crew was killed. The other plane lost all but one crew member who was thrown clear in the crash.³¹

The Liberator squadrons had many Canadian crews and one had two Canadian COs in close succession.³² W/C Hugo Beall, DSO, a Canadian in the RAF, was the first CO of 356 Squadron when it started operations in 1943. Under his leadership in the early raids this squadron developed techniques for low-level bombing of the dispersed and relatively small targets in Burma and Siam. After one intermediary, Beall was succeeded by W/C G.N.B. Sparks, DSO, RCAF, who led the Squadron until almost the end of the war with comparable skill and professionalism. Unfortunately, Sparks developed polio in June 1945 and died within days.

The Beaufighter, a heavily-armed, twin-engined fighter, flew night and day sorties lasting up to seven hours from bases in the Arakan on the Burma frontier. They created havoc with the enemy's lines of transportation, remote airfields and oil resources in Burma. One of the stalwart Canadian pilots was F/L J.C. Van Nes, DFC, of Flin Flon, Manitoba. His tour began with the start of operations of 177 Squadron, a new Beaufighter unit, in September 1943, and finished a year later. He achieved spectacular results because not only was he a skilful pilot but also a superb shot. He was involved in the first successful night

attack against the heavily-defended tank farm of the Yenangyaung oil fields as well as strikes against Magwe and Mingaladon (Rangoon) airfields. At the latter on his sweep across the field he destroyed a heavy truck but then spotted an Oscar in an adjacent revetment so, contrary to briefing, he made a second attack and destroyed it. He was famous among his colleagues for driving a Japanese despatch rider over a cliff but all his attacks were devastating against transport, having damaged 28 locomotives and destroyed 43 motor transports. His most frightening sortie was to the Bangkok railway where, with four others, they encountered 11 locomotives at the marshalling yard at Tadein

which was defended by intense light flak. His plane was hit many times but when his pilots' lower hatch flew open he broke off and turned toward home 600 miles away. Attempts by his observer to close the hatch were unsuccessful even when Van Nes flew close to stalling speed. They had been attacking at extreme range, and the increased drag meant they would run out of fuel well short of base, and have to ditch. With the hatch open, there was little chance of success. Nevertheless, upon encountering a three-masted schooner in the Gulf of Martaban they attacked it en passant. Then Van Nes nursed his aircraft successfully to Ramu, the nearest fighter strip at the south of the Arakan.³³

Below left: FIL J.C. Van Nes, DFC, RCAF and his observer, FIL J.T. Matthews, DFC, RAF; F/LA.P. Wills, DFC RAF and observer F/S J.H. Gibson on their return from the first successful night attack on the Yenangyaung oil tank farm in November 1943 (A. Sutherland Brown); **Below right:** FIL L.T. Birchall, DFC, OBE, RCAF at the controls of his Catalina (CFPU PL 7405); **Bottom:** A 413 Squadron RCAF Catalina parked on the beach in Ceylon (CFPU PL18412).





Personnel of 413 Squadron RCAF arrive in Colombo, Ceylon.

F/L Birchall, DFC, OBE of St. Catharines, Ontario has remained modest in the face of his accomplishments. His unit, 413 Squadron RCAF, was posted to Ceylon to bolster general reconnaissance capability over the Indian Ocean in the wake of the disasters in the Far East.³⁴ He flew his Catalina from the Shetland Islands, arriving only two days before his momentous sortie on 4 April 1942. Late in the afternoon of his long patrol he thought he saw a smudge on the southeast horizon and flew towards it. It was soon apparent that it was not the Royal Navy but an Imperial Japanese Naval task force. Close approach was needed to confirm its numbers, course and speed. It comprised five aircraft carriers, four new battleships, attendant cruisers and destroyers, virtually the same fleet that a few months before had launched the attack on Pearl Harbour. Zeros rose from the carriers and severely shot up the Catalina which lumbered along in clear skies at 2,000 feet. However, Birchall's crew managed to send two complete coded signals to Colombo describing the fleet before the radio was destroyed and the aircraft badly damaged. Birchall was able to crash land the Catalina with the crew abroad; they were too

low to parachute. Several of the severely wounded were fitted with life jackets to keep them afloat while the others swam. Unfortunately, this led to the wounded being killed because the Zeros continued to fire at them in the water and those with jackets could not dive to escape. Eventually they were picked up by a Japanese destroyer and were savagely treated and interrogated to see if they had been able to dispatch a warning to Ceylon. During all these events Birchall encouraged and defended his crew who did not reveal that the signals were sent. The wounded survivors were held in a small paint locker with room only for one to lie down, two to sit and one had to stand. They received no medical attention and scarcely any food. Eventually they were transferred to a carrier and taken to Japan where they suffered the fate typical of aircrew in Japanese hands. For most of the three years as a PoW Birchall was the senior officer present. His courage standing up to his captors and objecting to the flagrant treatment of his men earned him frequent punishment but also, after release, the OBE.

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, VC, DSC of Nelson, BC was a brave, determined and skilful

pilot of the RCN attached to the Fleet Air Arm on the carrier *Formidable*.³⁵ In Europe Gray had flown in attacks against the *Tirpitz* in the Altenfjord, Norway so he was no stranger to flak when he sailed with three other British carriers to take part in the final offensive against Japan. Five days before the Japanese surrender he was briefed to lead a raid against a Japanese airfield, but this was changed at the last moment to an attack against merchantmen and warships sheltering in Onagawa Bay of northwestern Honshu. As he led his flight of Corsairs to attack at low level they came under intense flak which detached one of his bombs and set his plane on fire. He signalled he would take a destroyer and promptly skip-bombed it amidships. As the ship exploded and capsized he turned for the carrier but, with his plane on fire, he rolled over and hit the sea.

W/Os Howard Pilmore Low of Vancouver and Russell Charles Smith of Kamsack, Saskatchewan may have been among about 16 or so RCAF Hurricane pilots who arrived in Singapore in January 1942, together with their crated fighters.³⁶ They both served on 607 Squadron. The first we know of Low was that he was captured by the Japanese on 10 February at Palembang, Sumatra, while leading an irregular detachment of RAF airmen defending their airfield. Smith, we know, was shot down somewhere in Singapore or the Indies and captured. The two re-met at a PoW camp at Boei Glodock, Batavia (Jakarta). Together they escaped and attempted to steal a Japanese aircraft from the adjacent Kamarjam aerodrome. They managed to get one engine started before they were re-captured. Two days later they were summarily executed. While the details are sketchy the facts as known confirm that they were like so many others - unknown heroes.

Notes

This article is based almost entirely on secondary sources because of the difficulties of reviewing the voluminous primary sources from the west coast of Canada.

1. In response to a question by Lester Pearson to Churchill after the war as to when he felt the greatest alarm about the course of the war, he said it was when he received news of the approach of the Imperial Japanese naval task force to Ceylon while the Germans were at the

- gates of Cairo; Michael Tomlison, *The Most Dangerous Moment* (London: William Kimber, 1976), p. 18
2. Sir William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell & Co., 1956). On pp.181-182 Field Marshal Slim explains the origin of the sobriquet.
3. George MacDonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here, a recollection of the War in Burma* (London: Harvill, 1992). Literate private soldiers are a rarity. Fraser was a rifleman with the 14th Army as it advanced down the plains to Rangoon and gives a vivid account of what it was like to fight the Japanese. He has since become famous for his Flashman books.
4. E.E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop* (Penguin Books, 1990). Written by the senior Allied medical officer present, his is the most detailed of many books on the conditions and health of PoWs who were forced to build the Burma railway.
5. Lionel Hudson, *The Rats of Rangoon* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987). An account of the perilous period following capture of downed aircrew by the Japanese and the harsh and degrading conditions that followed in the Rangoon prison written by the senior aircrew officer present.
6. Two of the best general histories of the World War give scant attention to the war in the Far East; B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, (London: Cassell 1970) has 22 of 713 text pages about the Far East campaigns; John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989). Out of 595 pages of text, Keegan devotes three pages to the retreat through Burma and two more to the battles in the Chin Hills, one to the politics of the Burmese government and nothing about the advance to Rangoon.
7. Henry Probert, *The Forgotten Air Force* (London: Brassey's, 1995); a good general history of the conflict in the Far East from the point of view of the Air Force, but with no reflection of the Canadian contribution.
8. T.W. Melnyk, *Canadian Flying Operations in South East Asia, 1941 -1945* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1976). While this book is concerned mainly with three RCAF squadrons in Ceylon and Burma, the author attempts to document the contribution of Canadians on RAF squadrons. He estimates the force of Canadians at different times and by different means at between 3,100 and 7,500, almost all of whom were aircrew and about half were pilots. Unfortunately the book has no index.
9. Liddell Hart's 22 pages concerning the war in the Far East give little indication of its relative importance and John Keegan has devoted even less to that theatre. The space allotted to these campaigns suggests they both regarded them as a side show. R.J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1980), pp.109-124 devotes 16 of 211 pages to the air war in the "Far East," of which all but about a half a page are actually about the war in the Pacific or in China. His history, as he says, is not a "blood and guts" book but one concerned more with theory, strategy, practice and analysis. He pays little attention to the air war in Burma neglecting the application in this theatre of the most intensive and successful use of air to ground attack in lieu of artillery prior to Desert Storm, as well as virtually the complete aerial supply of a whole army and the transportation to the front by air of reserves in Division strength.
10. Hilary St.G. Saunders, *The Fight is Won*, Vol.III Royal Air Force, (London: HMSO, 1954). A good history of

- the end of the air war with much about Burma but including many errors and important omissions including little about the contribution of Commonwealth airmen. *Wings of the Phoenix, Official History of the Air War in Burma* (London: HMSO, 1949). An interesting book published soon after the war but with many gaps, no index, no discussion of Ceylon, little about specific squadrons and less about the Commonwealth contribution.
11. B.Greenhous, S.J. Harris, W.C Johnston and W.G.R Rawling, *The Crucible of War, Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, Vol. III, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 1994). This is a thorough history of the Canadian squadrons during the war but it totally ignores the 60 percent of RCAF aircrew that served in RAF squadrons inferring that such a history is intractable. Spencer Dunmore, *Above and Beyond, the Canadians War in the Air, 1939-45* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1996). Nothing here about the Canadian contribution to the air war in the Far East except five and a half pages about the Japanese attack against Ceylon and S/L L.J. Birchall's role in the alert, and three pages about the Burma air war. Larry Milberry and Hugh A. Halliday, *The Royal Canadian Air Force 1939-1945* (Toronto: CANAV Books, 1990). This is a good photographic record, but it deals primarily with the RCAF squadrons. It attempts to cover the Far East conflicts with 22 of its 451 pages of which seven are about 413, 435 and 436 RCAF Squadrons and the remainder some individual narratives.
 12. Dr. S.J. Harris of the Directorate of History and Heritage in a letter to the author states, "You will not find here, or anywhere, for that matter, a comprehensive list of Canadians serving on other than RCAF squadrons throughout the war, in SE Asia or elsewhere, because the files aren't kept that way." 6 February 1998
 13. Mr. Sebastian Cox of the British Air Historical Branch states in a letter to the author "The only way to establish whether a Canadian was serving with a particular unit would be to look at the subject unit's Operations Record Book and hope the nationality of the Canadian is recorded. Even this would be a hit or miss affair. The Air Ministry announcements of awards do indicate the place of origin of the award winners, so in theory it would be possible to plough through all the announcements and separate out the Canadians.. This would require an immense amount of time..." 4 March 1998
 14. Greenhous *et al*, pp.xxiii.
 15. The myth still continues. The Times of London in an obituary on 1 December 1998 for G/C Ken Gatward, DSO, DFC and Bar, the Beaufighter pilot who in June 1942 flew alone to Paris to drop a Tricolor on the Arc de Triomphe and then shot up the Kreigsmarine offices. The obituary included the following statement: "...he was back on operations with 404 [Beaufighter] Squadron, a tough [RCAF] unit. When its CO was shot down, Gatward was given command, a daunting assignment given the Canadians' legendary unruliness and insubordination to British superiors."
 16. Greenhous *etal*, pp. 16-105.
 17. Melnyk, pp.166.
 18. Melnyk, pp.9.
 19. Reg Jordan, DFC, AFC, *To Burma Skys and Beyond* (London: Janus Publishing Company, 1995). In referring to 356 Squadron he states, "by the time I left the squadron the majority of the aircrews were RCAF." pp.75.
 20. John R.W. Gwynne-Timothy, *Burma Liberators* (Toronto: Two Volumes, Next level Press, 1991).
 21. Arthur Percy, *Dakota at War* (London: Ian Allen, 1982).
 22. Norman Franks, *The Air Battle of Imphal* (London: William Kimber, 1985).
 23. Robert Bracken, *Spitfire, The Canadians* (North York, ON: Stoddard, 1994), pp. 138-140.
 24. Atholl Sutherland Brown, *Silently Into the Midst of Things* (Lewes, East Sussex, UK: The Book Guild, 1997), pp.xiv, 28, 75.
 25. Les Allison and Harry Hayward, *They Shall Not Grow Old, a Book of Remembrance* (Brandon, MB: The Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum, 1991). In this mammoth work they record briefly the circumstances of all Canadian aircrew casualties in the World War in all theatres. The book consists of short histories of Canadian casualties, reporting their rank, service number, point of origin, age, squadron, aircraft identification if known, type of operation, details of the sortie in which they were killed in action, in an accident or went missing. The site of burial is given, or alternatively, the memorial location for those with no known graves. The book records alphabetically by surname all known Canadian airmen, whether RCAF or serving in the RAF, known to be casualties during the war.
 26. Letter, Cox to Brown, 4 March 1998.
 27. Melnyk, pp.84, 92.
 28. Franks, pp.31, 96; Melnyk, pp.97, 120, 182.
 29. Melnyk, pp.84-85.
 30. Melnyk, pp.96; Brown, pp. 168-169.
 31. Greenhous *et al*, pp.898; Dunmore, pp.340.
 32. Jordan, pp.76, 114, 117.
 33. Brown, pp. 110-111.
 34. Tomlinson; Greenhous *et al*, pp.386-387.
 35. Dunmore, pp.341-343.
 36. Melnyk, pp.15, 17; Allison & Hayward, pp.709-710.
- Atholl Sutherland Brown flew Beaufighters with 177 Squadron in Burma and is the author of a history of that unit, *Silently into the Midst of Things: 177 Squadron Royal Air Force in Burma, 1943-1945, History and Personal Narratives* (Sussex, England: The Book Guild Ltd., 1997).