

MYSTERY PLANE FOUND IN NEW BRUNSWICK

LOST FOR 19 YEARS

*The First RCAF
Casualties of WWII*



R. J. Cogle

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This monograph is dedicated to the men
and women of the Royal Canadian Air
Force who served in the cause of liberty.



W.O. II James Edgerton Doan
(Ted)



Cpl. David Alexander Rennie

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All mistakes are mine.
Jim Cogle
Fredericton, July 4th, 2004

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I Training For The Skies

The summer of 1939 was a time of tension throughout most of the world. All but the sycophants could see that war clouds were gathering. Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Britain, had done his best to accommodate Adolf Hitler's imperialistic ambitions, but there was no evidence that he would be successful. His slogan "peace in our time" had a hollow ring. History would show that his groveling actually encouraged Hitler to be more aggressive.

In early August the Canadian government began to appreciate the gravity of the situation. They decided that it might be wise to think about mobilizing the armed forces. In typical Canadian fashion they had let these forces decline dramatically since the end of the previous war in 1918. Thus when the call to arms went out on August 25th there was not a lot to mobilize. The Royal Canadian Air Force, once the pride of the country, was in virtual disarray. The air force had no bombers and no modern fighters.

The most up-to-date aircraft in Canada in 1939 was the Northrop Delta, manufactured under licence from the United States by Canadian Vickers in Montreal. A large (about the size of an Otter) single-engine, low wing monoplane, it was very fast and very powerful. Equipped with a Wright Cyclone 1820 engine it could develop 735 horsepower. Although extremely noisy, and allegedly nose heavy, the Delta was a versatile plane for photographic work, and pilots generally spoke well of them. They could be fitted with floats, skis or wheels depending on the season and the task. The Delta's major distinction is that it was the first all-metal aircraft to be built in Canada. The first of the 20 that were to be built was delivered to the R.C.A.F. on September 1st, 1936. Two more arrived later that fall, and the

three began photographic survey work in the spring of 1937. For the next two years the Delta was the main aeroplane used for photographic work. However, to counter the menace from German submarines off the East coast in the fall of 1939, the R.C.A.F. was forced to recall the Deltas from photographic duty and convert them to reconnaissance patrol aircraft. This is how officers Ted Doan and Dave Rennie got involved in the war preparations.¹

Flt. Sgt. James Edgerton (Ted) Doan had been flying aerial photography planes in northern Canada for several years with No. 7 and then No. 8 General Purpose Squadron. This group would become No. 8 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron in September 1939. Cpl. Dave Rennie was an aero engine mechanic with No. 1 Aircraft Depot in Ottawa. He was transferred to No. 8 (GP) Squadron effective August 27th, 1939 – the day the squadron left for Nova Scotia.² He and Ted Doan had never met before.

David Alexander Rennie joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 1st, 1937. He had considered a career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but chose the R.C.A.F. because he was told that opportunities for advancement were better there. His acceptance to the R.C.M.P. arrived the day he was leaving for R.C.A.F. station Camp Borden. Cpl. Rennie's father was a Mountie stationed in Ottawa.

At Ottawa Technical School the future R.C.A.F. Corporal won a proficiency medal in the field of motor mechanics. It was therefore natural that he should pursue this talent in the Air Force. David began as a Standard Apprentice Fitter in the No. 2 Technical Training School and progressed to Aircraftsman and then to Lead Aircraftsman. His promotion to Corporal became effective September 9th, 1939. Five days before he disappeared.³

Dave Rennie, known as a “nice guy” around Ottawa, was well liked by his friends. He was active in sports and active in his church youth group. The other young people that he associated with included twenty year old Lillian Watterson. A pleasant, out-going person Dave Rennie was attracted to her and she became his girlfriend in 1937. According to Lillian, they “went bowling and dancing, attended parties and went on nice walks” prior to David’s departure.⁴

In Air Force circles young Dave Rennie was known as a man that you could count on. His unit commander wrote that he “tries hard ... is a good worker” in a proficiency report dated May 16, 1938. Another report submitted in July of 1939 lists Dave Rennie’s character as “good,” and under a section titled Outstanding Features he is assessed as a “very hard worker.”⁵

Ted Doan was also an outstanding member of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He too began his career as a “Fitter Apprentice” at Camp Borden, Ontario. Flt. Sgt. Doan actually grew up in Vancouver and joined the Air Force in that city. He was posted to the Ontario base on March 12th, 1927 when Canada’s Air Force was still in its infancy.⁶ The aeroplane itself, first flown in 1903, had only been in existence for twenty-four years. Ted Doan was just twenty-two years old when he joined the air force.

In 1927 the field of aero engine technology was developing rapidly and good mechanics were in demand. Ted Doan, who had three years of mechanical experience before joining the R.C.A.F., attended classes and worked in ever ascending positions until 1930 when he became a pilot. Even after becoming a pilot Ted continued to take aero engine courses and was considered very proficient at this trade. The president of Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Co. in a letter to the Commanding

Officer of Camp Borden dated April 17th, 1929 writes as follows concerning L.A.C. J. E. Doan and two of his fellow airmen.

We would like to report that it was a great pleasure to have these three men in our shop. They were diligent and attended strictly to their duties and to our shop rules and regulations, and were anxious to learn all they could....⁷

Although Ted Doan actually began flying in 1929, it was not until 1932 that he logged many hours. And these were not without difficulty. In June of 1931, one year after receiving his wings and being promoted to sergeant, he was grounded for a month. The reason he received this punishment was for "...losing his way so badly in attempting to return to Camp Borden by air."⁸ This was not an uncommon problem in those days. According to Billy Gould, a decorated WW II pilot who fought in the Battle of Britain, pilots had serious navigational problems during the early years: "We were lost much of the time; that was half of the fun."⁹ Getting lost had a profound effect on Ted Doan's flying career – he later became extremely proficient with map and compass. Never again would he suffer the indignity of being grounded because he got lost.

It often happens that those who eventually achieve greatness begin in adversity. Sgt. Doan knew all about it. In March of 1933 he was sent on an "Instrument Flying and Air Pilotage Course." The results were not good. A letter to the Secretary of the Department of National Defense in Ottawa from the Commandant at R.C.A.F. Station, Camp Borden concluded as follows:

The above N.C.O. is regarded as barely average in open flying. His instrument flying in all its phases is below the average, as is also his Air Pilotage Flying. It is suggested that he be given a further flying test at

the end of three months, and if it is considered that no improvement has been made since the date of this report, that his flying duties should be discontinued.¹⁰

The primary reason for this devastating assessment is probably because the Sergeant was spending more time fixing engines than he was flying. His actual trade classification was “pilot (Fitter A.E.)” A dual responsibility position.

Ted Doan’s flying improved dramatically over the next few years. In 1936 he scored 75 out of a possible 100 on an “Advanced Photographic Course.” He got 80% on the “Indexing and Gap-Map” section, but only 66% on the “Practical-Line Flying Test.” The instructor’s remarks said that Sergeant Doan “Flies steadily and maintains a good platform. A hard worker. Capable of average results with practice.”¹¹ Ted Doan did practice. He flew hundreds of hours in many different types of aircraft and was rewarded for his effort. In January 1937 Sgt. Doan’s performance had improved so much that he was promoted to Flight Sergeant.

The full extent of Flt. Sgt. Doan’s ascendancy was evident in a December 1938 assessment. Forms signed by W. W. Brown, Squadron Leader of No. 8 (G.P.) Squadron, R.C.A.F. Station, Ottawa gave the pilot/mechanic an excellent recommendation. Ted Doan’s character was assessed as “Exemplary” and his trade proficiency as “Superior.” Under the section “Outstanding features of airman’s work” the following comments were recorded: “This airman’s work has been superior throughout the photographic season with No. 7 (G.P.) Detachment. He is industrious, conscientious and a capable administrator and supervisor.”¹² Most importantly it should be noted that Flt. Sgt. Doan’s flying abilities are now considered “above average” by the commanding officer. His total flying hours are listed as 1399:55 and 76:00 with dual instruction.

What is really incredible is the different types of aircraft on which Ted Doan was considered proficient.

Moth 60M, Avro 504-N, Fairchild 51, Fairchild 71, Bellanca Pacemaker, Puss Moth, Tomtit, Courier, Avro Avian, Ford Trimotor, Avro Tutor, Vedette Flying Boat, Vancouver, Fairchild FC2, Reid Rambler, Fleet, Dragon Moth, Tiger Moth, Northrop Delta, Norseman, Fairchild Super 71/P ¹³

This means that Flt. Sgt. Doan had flown most of the aircraft types available in Canada at that time. Some of those listed are among the most famous planes in the history of aviation. The report concludes with Remarks by Commanding Officer: “A very reliable pilot who is proficient in aerial photography.”¹⁴

Ted Doan’s last assessment, which resulted in him being promoted to Warrant Officer 2 – Technical was very impressive. Ranking number five in seniority Ted Doan was considered by his superiors to be of “very good” character with the past three trade assessments rated as “superior.” W.W. Brown, Squadron Leader and officer commanding, No. 8 (G.P.) Squadron concluded his report to the Air Vice-Marshal by stating that Flt. Sgt. J. E. Doan is “a reliable pilot. A conscientious N.C.O. is satisfactorily executing duties involving considerable responsibility.”¹⁵ The recommendation for promotion was approved the day Ted Doan died.

On August 26th, 1939 just in from Camp Borden, Ted Doan and Dave Rennie were in fine shape. Young, well trained and ready to serve the cause of liberty. Unfortunately, their service would be brief. The tragedy of how these men became the first two North American casualties of the Second World War is about to unfold over the following pages. This is their story.

II A Wounded War Bird

Late summer in Ottawa can be either hot and dry or very warm and humid. The latter was the case in 1939. It was actually raining on the night of August 26th when Lillian Watterson drove her boyfriend David to Rockcliffe Air Force Station. Along with them was her sister, Edna and David's sister Ella. Although he was not certain, Cpl. Rennie said he was quite sure they were headed for Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. All David really knew was that he would be the crewman in one of the big Delta float planes and that they were headed east. Cpl. Rennie had just been transferred to No. 8 (GP) Squadron effective August 27th. Just in time to leave for Sydney. He was supposed to be in another plane and Cpl. Guy LaRamee was apparently slated to fly in Delta 673 with Ted Doan. However, in the confusion of war preparations the two men got switched.¹⁶ The exact destination of their flight next day was not revealed until the six planes were ready to leave. War was about to start and already secrecy was being practiced.

Just before saying their goodbyes Ella asked a little favour from her only brother. She gave him two letters and asked that he deliver them when he arrived in Dartmouth. One letter was from Ella to her boyfriend Walter Bateson (now husband of 63 years) and the other letter was from her friend Eleanor to her boyfriend. David said that he would hand deliver the letters if their destination was Dartmouth and if not he would mail them. Ella's letter contained a picture of herself. It would never arrive.

Flt. Sgt. J. E. (Ted) Doan lived in Ottawa with his wife and two little boys - Charles (four) and Lionel (two). He

reported early on the morning of August 27th for briefing and final preparations before departure. The six pilots were informed by Flt. Sgt. R. I. (Bob) Thomas, who was in charge of the group, that their final destination was to be Sydney, Cape Breton. Here they were to spend their tour of duty as No. 8, Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. In this capacity their main responsibility would be searching for enemy submarines off the northeast coast of Nova Scotia.

The pilots were also instructed regarding the flight plan. They were to fly across Maine and New Brunswick to land at the Shediac sea plane base for refueling and then on to Sydney. A distance of 950 miles or about 6 ½ hours flying time. The six planes would maintain a cruise speed of 150 mph at an altitude of three thousand feet. This would allow them to reach Sydney in time for supper.

The weather cleared over night so when the planes taxied out into the river at 8:30 a.m. the sun was shining. Cpl. Guy LaRamee (now retired in Cape Breton) was crewman in Delta 671. The pilot was Flt. Sgt. W. C. Pate. Guy still remembers the planes flying off together east from Ottawa toward the rising sun. He also vividly remembers a major incident that occurred along the way.

The six planes were just a few miles past Millinocket, Maine when Delta 673, Ted Doan's plane, dropped out of the group and began descending to the forest below. In a letter to his young wife Flt. Sgt. Doan later wrote that "...on the way down I was forced down, the old grinder (engine) just quit so it [Salmon Stream Lake] was the nearest lake for me."¹⁷ This would seem to imply a sudden emergency which stopped the engine completely, but "just quit" was possibly a figure of speech. Guy LaRamee seems to remember that 673 had at least some power during the forced landing. The plane did not have to be towed.

It was apparently able, at some point, to taxi to shore under its own power.

The Northrop Delta, especially with floats, was, according to Mr. LaRamee, very difficult to land safely without engine power. They were apparently “nose heavy” and “dropped like a stone” when the engine quit. John Gomany, who has been flying heavy aircraft for over forty years, and is also an experienced test pilot, says that “the engine may well have just stopped.” However, “with enough altitude a good pilot could get the nose down to collect air speed and then by pulling up at the right time could bring the plane in for a safe landing.”¹⁸ A Delta without floats had a landing (touch down) speed of only 62 mph fully loaded. This would seem to imply that the big bird coasted in quite softly for such a large airframe. Kevin Dorcas, another experienced commercial pilot, said this would indicate a glide speed of about 85-90 mph. Below this speed there would be limited control and the downward speed would at least equal the forward speed. Not a favourable condition. Certainly it would take a serious situation, such as a major engine problem, to cause such an immediate forced landing. Most experts doubt that the engine actually quit completely in the air as a result of overheating. Such an event would imply an engine seizure (or at least permanent damage) which would mean that the plane could not fly again without an engine change. This was not the case. Delta 673 flew again after only a change of one cylinder.

Officers Pate and LaRamee, in Delta 671, saw what was happening to Delta 673 (Delta 673 had no radio) and followed the disabled plane down to the lake. Ted Doan did not seem to have any problem bringing his plane in for a safe landing. This could imply that he may have had at least limited power. Once 673 stopped, 671 landed and taxied up beside him. All four men were trained and experienced aircraft mechanics (or ‘fitters’ as they were called at that time). After checking the engine over

and having a tete-a-tete the men decided that one cylinder would have to be replaced at Salmon Stream Lake before the men could fly the plane over to the sea plane base at Norcross, seventeen miles away. They also agreed that the entire engine should be replaced as soon as possible. Since neither plane had a spare cylinder one had to be flown in from Sydney.¹⁹

The new cylinder arrived on August 29th according to the squadron records. "Delta aircraft 676 Flight Sgt. Thomas arrived from Shediac collected cylinder and equipment for 673 and departed for Norcross, Maine."²⁰ This is not completely accurate. The cylinder was actually flown to Salmon Stream Lake. In the previously cited letter from Ted Doan to his wife Vera dated August 30th, 1939 written at Norcross, Maine he makes the following statement: "Bob Thomas came in [to Salmon Stream Lake] with a new cylinder and piston...."²¹ The new cylinder had been installed by mid afternoon on August 30th. Having had enough isolation the men threw their sleeping bags and gear into the plane and flew to Norcross sea plane base about seventeen miles south. Here the accommodations were better and the officers were treated to a home cooked meal. The Norcross Hotel was used to catering to tired and hungry flyers.

Salmon Stream Lake is a pretty little lake situated next to present day Interstate 95 about eight miles north of Exit 56 at Medway. The lake is only two miles long and about half a mile wide. Back in 1939 there was a hunting camp on a little island there and this is where the men were forced to stay. According to Flt. Sgt. Doan the accommodations were adequate. "We had a nice camp but it was three miles by water and also four miles of a car drive to get to the nearest burg so we got some grub and the key to the cottage."²² The first night Bill Pate and Guy LaRamee stayed with Ted Doan and Dave Rennie and then flew to Shediac the next day. Before leaving, the crew of Delta 671 left their engine tool kit with the crew at Delta 673. In the

confusion of departure Ted Doan was forced to leave Ottawa without one.

Norcross is where we get the first tangible evidence regarding the mystery that is about to unfold. It was from here that Flt. Sgt. Doan submitted a standard air force 'L.3' form to the operations manager at R.C.A.F. Station Rockcliffe. On this form he stated that the reason he was forced to land at Salmon Stream Lake was an overheated engine. He blamed the overheating on a "faulty muff installation."²³ The pilot stated this same conclusion in a letter to the Squadron Technical Warrant Officer, Andrew Haldsworth. An engine that was overheating would have been obvious, because the plane had a temperature gauge and an oil pressure gauge. When the temperature went up the oil pressure would drop. Comparing these two indicators helps to rule out one of the gauges as a possible source of the problem. This was not a gauge problem – Delta 673 had an engine situation that was serious enough to necessitate an emergency landing on a tiny lake in the wilderness. So serious that Ted Doan could not risk flying the additional seventeen miles (7 minutes at the speed they were flying) over to the big lake with a sea plane base, and a hotel.

This being the case, why then did they replace a cylinder and not the muff heater? If there was a genuine concern why not replace the cylinder and the muff.²⁴

At Salmon Stream Lake four aircraft mechanics determined that one cylinder had to be replaced immediately and the entire engine as soon as possible. Ted Doan, the pilot, agreed with this assessment but also believed that his real problem was with a "faulty muff installation" as previously mentioned. Yet he had no immediate intention of replacing it. He said he would install a new engine and "if the engine continues to overheat" he would also have to "replace the muff."²⁵ This is difficult to

understand. Why just change the engine? It would be like saying that you suspect the exhaust system on your car is causing the engine to overheat and destroy itself. However, instead of replacing the exhaust system and the engine you decide to install a new engine and leave the old exhaust to see if the condition persists. While this seems less than wise there may be an explanation regarding Delta 673. A clue may be found in the wording. The pilot said he suspected that the “muff installation” was faulty – not the muff.

The muff heater on a Wright Cyclone 1820 engine is a fairly simple heat exchanger. The system employed on the R1820-F52 engine used in the Delta had a “muff-type heat exchanger.” This device uses the heat from the exhaust to pre-heat the air going to the carburetor. This is done to prevent carburetor icing – a potentially serious condition. The muff heater can also direct heat to the cabin.

While a relatively simple device (essentially a collection of baffles and sheet metal surrounding the engine exhaust pipes) the muff heater is none-the-less a very important part of the power plant assembly. *The Airframe and Power Plant Mechanics Power Plant Handbook* makes this very clear.

Any exhaust system failure should be regarded as a severe hazard. Depending on the location and type of failure, an exhaust system failure can result in carbon monoxide poisoning of crew and passengers, partial or complete loss of engine power, or an aircraft fire. Exhaust system failures generally reach a maximum rate of occurrence at 100 to 200 hours of aircraft operating time. More than 50% of all exhaust system failures occur within 400 hours.²⁴

In other words these types of problems make their appearance well after installation and/or maintenance. The

“faulty muff installation” could have originated right at the factory. Worth noting is that the severity of a heater/exhaust problem can be amplified by altitude, temperature and humidity.

The Power Plant Handbook under the heading Muffler and Heat Exchanger Failures states that: “Approximately half of all muffler and heat exchanger failures can be traced to cracks or ruptures in the heat exchanger surfaces used for cabin and carburetor heat sources. ... These failures, in most cases, are caused by thermal and vibration fatigue cracking in areas of stress concentration. ... In addition to a carbon monoxide hazard, failure of heat exchanger surfaces can permit exhaust gases to be drawn into the engine induction system, causing engine overheating and power loss.”²⁵

This seems to describe exactly what was happening to Delta 673: Power loss due to overheating.

The two men waited at Norcross to hear from Squadron Leader Bob Brown as to where they should go for an engine change. Ottawa or Dartmouth. They hoped for Ottawa and got their wish. Ted missed Vera and his little boys. From Norcross he wrote: “Be sure to give Skip and Sonny a big kiss from me and also all kinds for you.” Dave Rennie wanted to see his girlfriend, Lillian Watterson.

The orders came late in the day. Delta 673 was to proceed via Lake Megantic, a Canadian sea plane base, to Ottawa to receive a new engine. Early next morning (August 31, 1939) filled with visions of their loved ones, the men set off for home; R.C.A.F. Station Rockcliffe at Ottawa. They were delighted. But not for long. No sooner had they taken off after refueling at Lake Megantic when the engine failed again. In the same previously quoted letter Flt. Sgt. Doan relates the situation to his wife.

We started out for Ottawa dear and got as far as Megantic and after refuel my engine gave way again after take off. We are changing our engine here so address your mail to the address on the envelope.”²⁶

Ted XXX

The address was the Hotel Lake View which advertised “rooms with a bath, excellent cuisine, beer and wine, garages – ideal rest center.”

Our flyers would have very little rest. Changing an engine away from the shop is a big job. In a letter from Megantic dated September 4th, 1939 Ted tells Vera “I was up at 6:15 this a.m. and worked until about 6:45 (p.m.) And an hour for lunch....” The men would work from morning until night for two weeks.

There was a little reprieve for Dave Rennie when his girlfriend Lillian came to visit. Ted Doan tells about this rendezvous in a letter to his wife.

My crewman had his girlfriend down for the weekend and it made me feel worse and as soon as we get through with supper I sit around for awhile....lay down for a while wake up around 11 o'clock then go to bed right but I am up early and have to pull him up....²⁷

Young lovers are the same in any period of history. The mating ritual is a wonderful time in the life of human beings. What a pity that it has such a short duration.

Once again Ted Doan had managed to bring the big monoplane back down safely on the lake. But this engine failure had the potential to be far more serious than last time. Engine failure just after take off is a worse case scenario for a pilot.

Should the engine quit completely at this precarious time the result is often death to all on board. At this point the plane has neither enough lift nor enough altitude to recover from the resulting wing stall. (Aeroplane wings are said to stall – cease to fly – when there is not enough air flowing over them to lift the weight of the aircraft.) The aircraft becomes uncontrollable and literally falls out of the sky – usually nose first and often inverted.

Post take off engine failure resulted in the death of two well known flyers from Maine this past summer. According to the Bangor Daily News, on the morning of June 12, 2003 Charles “Charlie” Brantner and Ronald Curtis were practicing “patterns” or landings and take offs when during one of the take offs the plane’s engine appeared to quit. Herb Whitley, who was working nearby, witnessed the tragedy. “I was standing here, watching the plane, and it had gotten just about tree level....when the engine sputtered.” Mr. Whitley said the pilot...turned the plane around to land when the engine quit. “The plane just spiraled down, right into the ground...nose first, bursting into flame on impact.”²⁸

The two young officers were very fortunate at Lake Megantic. They could just as easily have found themselves at the bottom of the lake or in a heap of burning wreckage on the shore. Engine failure is a serious matter under the best of circumstances – critical when it involves a big heavy float plane just after take off.

The first question that one must address at this point is whether or not the second engine failure was due to overheating. The plane had just flown from Norcross to Lake Megantic with seemingly no problem. The distance between these two points is about 100 miles which is approximately 40 minutes in a Delta. Why wouldn’t the engine have overheated on the way up? Was the problem sporadic and unpredictable? One would think that if the muff was malfunctioning at Salmon Stream Lake that it

would have remained that way. Altitude and temperature may have intervened. The plane flew from Salmon Stream Lake to Norcross at low altitude and short duration. The pilot then followed the CPR railway tracks from Norcross to Megantic, presumably not very high and probably quite early in the morning. The men were anxious to get home. (At the inquiry an expert will testify that altitude and temperature may have been contributing factors later on the last leg of the journey.) The engine failure at Lake Megantic was seemingly different from the earlier one at Salmon Stream Lake. The pilot did not mention (at least there is nothing on record) that overheating was the cause. Whatever the cause, the problem seems to have developed soon after takeoff and was serious enough to necessitate another emergency landing. The engine obviously displayed some very dangerous symptoms. If this second engine failure was not directly caused by overheating then it probably resulted from internal damage sustained during the earlier incident. Damage that was obviously more extensive than the men realized.

The crew of Delta 673 were very disappointed to be stranded at Lake Megantic even though it was paradise compared to Salmon Stream Lake. At Megantic the officers were at least able to stay at a nice motel and have their meals prepared for them. They settled in. Ted Doan sent a telegram to his squadron leader in Sydney informing him of the situation and asked that a new engine be sent to Megantic. Squadron Leader W. W. Brown sent a message back to officers Doan and Rennie that an engine would be flown in from Ottawa as soon as possible. Next day, September 1st, 1939, the two men began removing the old engine. Still there was no indication that the muff heater would be replaced, nor had one been requisitioned with the new engine.

The first evening at Lake Megantic was a bit frustrating for Ted Doan. He tried several times to reach his wife by phone but was not able to connect with her. This being the situation he

decided to finish the letter that he had begun four days earlier at Norcross, Maine.

While Flt. Sgt. Doan was finishing his letter Cpl. Rennie was on the phone to his girlfriend. As previously noted she accepted his invitation to come down for the weekend. After calling his girlfriend the Corporal called his parents in Ottawa. According to recollections by his sister, Ella, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Her brother expressed no apprehensions or premonitions. This may have changed. Sometime later during his stay at the lake David wrote a letter to his mother. In the letter he made a strange statement: "Tell Ella that the letters have not been delivered, and who knows maybe they never will."²⁹

In retrospect these are haunting words. Should they have been spoken one could possibly regard them as a flippant remark from a brash young man. But David Rennie was known for maturity – not brashness. Air Force personnel records refer to him as a man with "good" character and "a very hard worker." Considering these statements and the fact that the words were written, not spoken, they deserve some consideration.

Did Dave Rennie have some premonition regarding the fate of Delta 673? If he did there is no evidence to support such a possibility. Lillian Francais (Watterson), his girlfriend who visited at Lake Megantic and took pictures of the airmen, can not recall David or Ted being the least bit apprehensive about their departure for Nova Scotia. Ted Doan did not mention any misgivings in letters to his wife, nor in communications with his squadron leader. This is where one should detect any apprehension. Neither man would tell his woman such things for fear that she might worry. Concerns would be communicated to the Squadron Leader or the Technical Officer.

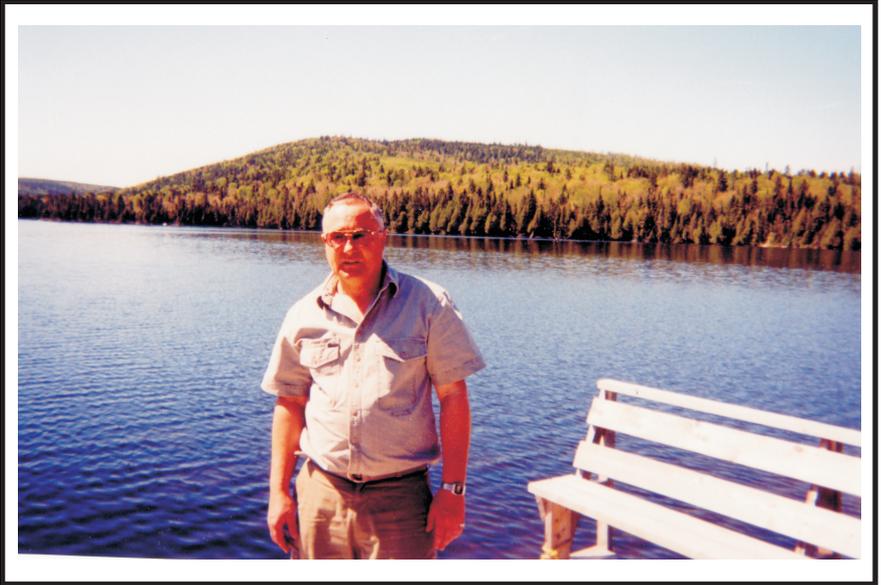
The issue of the muff heater continues to linger. If Ted Doan was really concerned he would surely have changed the muff when he changed the engine. Wouldn't he? There was seemingly no pressure on him to leave Lake Megantic until he was satisfied that the plane was safe to fly. Nor would he have done otherwise. Ted Doan was a mature and conscientious pilot with a good flying record. He also had a lovely young wife and two cute little boys whom he loved and desperately wanted to see again. He would never knowingly jeopardize his future with them by flying in a plane that was not safe. Flying at this time in history was routinely dangerous, but pilots did not push the envelope for no good reason. The pilot must have been convinced that the heater problem was not as serious as previously believed, or that he and Dave had fixed it. As noted earlier, the muff heater is a fairly unsophisticated device. Another possibility is that because the plane did not overheat on the way to Megantic, the men may have developed a false confidence in the integrity of the muff. This in turn may have caused them to doubt their original diagnosis that this device was in fact the cause of the overheating. Under no circumstances would Delta 673 leave Megantic until Flt. Sgt. Doan was sure that it was ready for the trip to Cape Breton.

This became a reality on September 13th, 1939. On that day the men were satisfied with their work and began testing the new engine. At first they started the big radial and let it idle for a bit to see how it sounded. Adjustments were made and when everything met with their approval Ted Doan began taxiing the big plane around the lake. Once this was satisfactory he brought the engine up to full throttle and took to the air. A wonderful sensation. After flying around the lake for what should have been an appropriate amount of time the pilot landed, checked for fluid leaks and then began preparations for leaving the next morning. He sent a telegram to the squadron leader in Cape Breton informing him that the new engine was serviceable and no

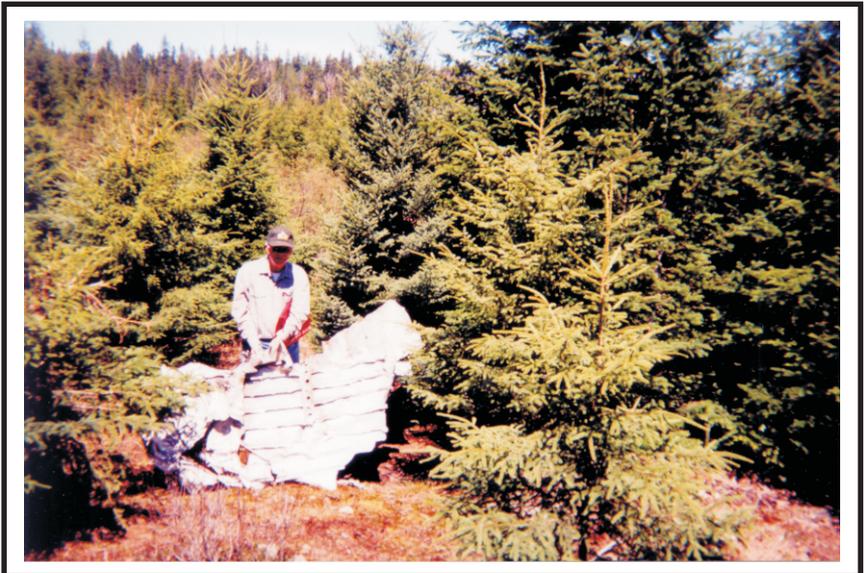
more overheating had occurred. The squadron leader instructed Flt. Sgt. Doan to proceed to Riviere-Du-Loup then head southeast to Grand Lake in New Brunswick. He was to turn at the big lake and proceed to Shediac for refueling and then on to Cape Breton.



Flight of Delta 673



**The author at Beaverbrook Lake.
Crash site is in valley at left.**



Lewis Stone at crash site - 2002



Salmon Stream Lake, Maine



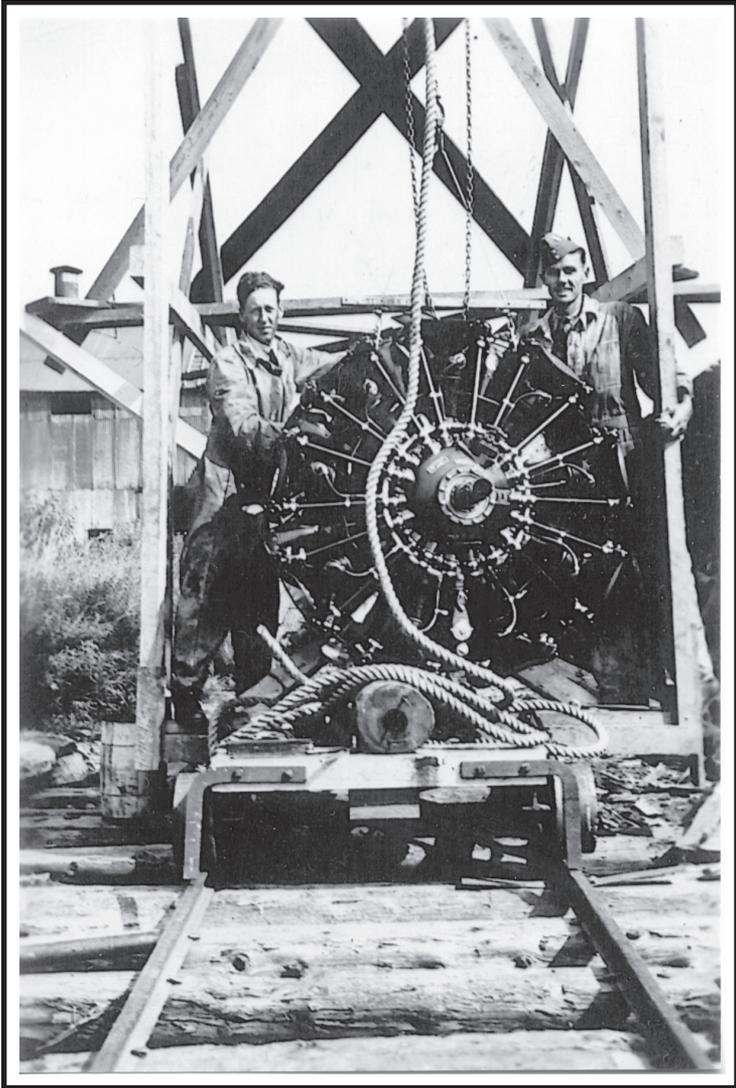
Lionel and Claudia Doan with their family - 2003



Charlie and Marg Doan with their family - 2003



Walter and Ella (Rennie) Bateson with their family



Changing the engine.



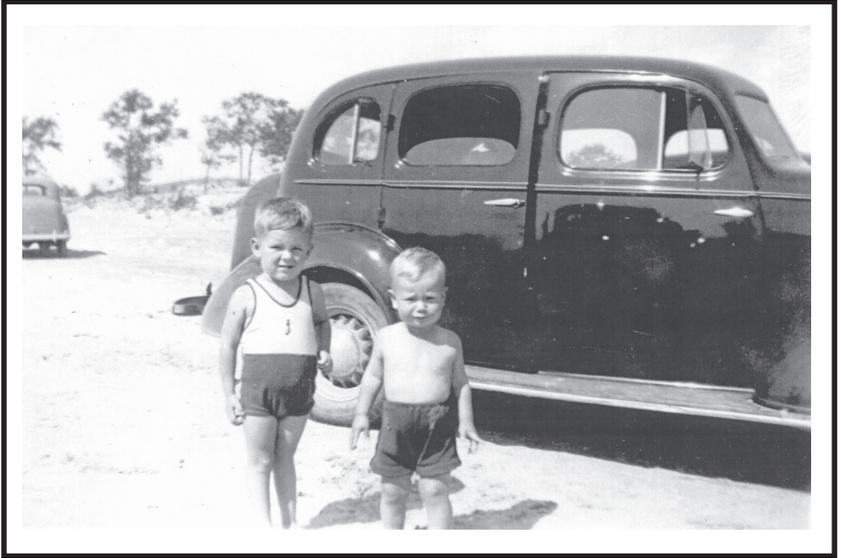
David Rennie with his father.



Ted and Vera's Wedding, September 15, 1934.



Ted and Vera Doan leaving for their honeymoon.



Charles and Lionel Doan c. 1939.



David Rennie and Lillian Watterson c. 1939.



Removing the engine at Lake Megantic.



Help arrives.



Plane parts showing the result of impact.



Articles from the crash site.

Crash Site Photos



Crash Site Photos





Note direction of propeller blades



Camp Borden c.1938

R.C.M.P. Begin Hunt For Flyers

Will Take Some
Time to Locate
Ottawa Aviators
Lost in Maritimes

FREDERICTON, Sept. 20.—(C.P.)—Royal Canadian Mounted Police awaited word here tonight on results of a search for a plane reported forced down in wilderness 25 miles north of Edmundston, N.B., and believed possibly to be a missing Royal Canadian Air Force plane carrying a two-man crew.

R.C.M.P. headquarters announced men had been sent to check on the unconfirmed report of a woodsman, who told of seeing a plane fall in the Green River district, after National Defence headquarters at Ottawa announced the disappearance of a plane which left Lake Megantic, Que., Sept. 14 for a Maritime province station.

The Defence Department said the missing R.C.A.F. plane was carrying Pilot Sgt. J. E. Doan and Leading Aircraftsman D. A. Rennie, both of Ottawa. Their ship was supplied with emergency rations and other equipment in the event of a forced landing in an isolated region.

R.C.M.P. officers here said it might be some time before word of the search in the Green River

district was received, because it was necessary to travel by canoe and foot to reach the spot. Officers were accompanied by the woodsman, who reported seeing the plane forced down.

Meanwhile, an investigation also is continuing into reports that a plane came down in Kent County, far from the Edmundston district.

Awaiting News.

While the search for the missing plane was being advanced in New Brunswick, families of the two flyers here were anxiously awaiting news Wednesday night. They had only the official statement from the Department of National Defence that the plane had been missing since September 14. Officials of the department told The Journal no further word had been received.

Pilot Sergeant Doan lives with his wife and child at 870 Chapel street, while Leading Aircraftsman Rennie made his home with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. David Rennie, 58 Ella street.

Radish flowers are pink when the plants grow in rich soil, but white if the soil is poor.

1939 Newspaper Article

	<h1>CANADIAN PACIFIC TELEGRAPHS</h1>		<small>C.D. IX This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless otherwise indicated by symbol in the check or in the address.</small>	
	<small>DIRECT CONNECTION WITH POSTAL TELEGRAPH-CABLE CO. COMMERCIAL CABLES - - IMPERIAL CABLES</small>		<small>W. D. NEIL, General Manager of COMMUNICATIONS, MONTREAL.</small>	
STANDARD TIME				
B14RA MA 40 NL				
SYDNEY NS 18				
D RENNIE				
711				
58 ELLA ST OTTAWA				
REGRET TO STATE YOUR SON DAVID ALEXANDER RENNIE DEPARTED FROM				
MEGANTIC PQ ON FOURTEENTH INSTANT IN DELTA AIRCRAFT SIX SEVEN				
THREE FOR SYDNEY NOVASCOTIA AND HAS NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE				
FIVE AIRCRAFT OF THIS UNIT EMPLOYED ON SEARCH OF AIRCRAFT				
O C NO 8 G P SQUADRON				
138AM				

Telegram

III Flight Into History

There was a good reason why Wing Commander Bill Brown instructed 673 to proceed to Sydney by way of Riviere-du-Loup instead of taking the shorter route across the state of Maine. Canada had declared war against Germany on September 10th, but the United States remained neutral. This would remain the case until the attack on Pearl Harbour which occurred on December 7th, 1941. Ted Doan was concerned about crossing too much wilderness without water on which to land. In a letter to his wife written at Lake Megantic he states that from the lake to Montreal “is a mighty dry hop” and for this reason “it is better it [the engine] played out where it did.”³⁰ The pilot was definitely concerned about having an engine failure over a waterless terrain. This is why in all likelihood he flew north from Lake Megantic to intercept the St. Lawrence River just below Quebec City. From here he flew down along the river to Riviere-du-Loup. It would have been shorter to fly directly to Riviere-du-Loup, but it would also have increased risk.

The first person known to have seen Delta 673 after it left Lake Megantic was Cpl. Arsenault of the Riviere-du-Loup R.C.M.P. detachment. He told Air Force investigators that he saw Delta 673 “circle the waterfront and town at 1200 hrs. then head toward Edmundston, New Brunswick. The roundels and the numbers on the plane were “clearly visible,” he said.³¹ Probably the reason that no one else reported seeing the plane after it left Megantic is that between the big lake and Riviere-du-Loup the terrain was mostly wilderness even along the St. Lawrence River.

Time of arrival in Riviere-du-Loup is somewhat problematic. The distance between the two points is only about 230 miles by way of the river. This means the plane was only

flying at about 115 mph. It would normally cruise at about 150 or 160 mph.

The two hour flight time could be partially attributable to the weather; poor visibility would slow them down, or they may have been forced to stop for a minor adjustment. The latter is unlikely because the plane would have been well tested before heading out. New radial engines, according to Guy LaRamee, did not require an extended break-in period so this would rule out reduced power flying on account of the engine. Weather was undoubtedly the culprit. Cpl. Arsenault told investigators that “it had been raining” just prior to his sighting the plane. Weather recordings indicate that the whole of eastern Quebec was partly overcast with occasional showers on September 14th, 1939. The pilot would fly lower and slower under these conditions. This is further substantiated by the knowledge that the 180 miles from Riviere-du-Loup to the crash site was covered in approximately one hour and ten minutes. This translates into a cruising speed of about 155 mph. The weather was improving, and the plane was now flying at a normal speed.

Probably weather was also the reason why Delta 673 was seemingly lower than normal when it arrived over Riviere-du-Loup. Although how much lower is debatable. Planes flew relatively low (2,000-4,000 feet) at this time because few pilots had instrument flight rating. The majority flew by visual flight rules (VFR) which relied on the use of maps, compass and topological references. Planes were also not usually equipped with the sophisticated instrumentation necessary for IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) navigation. 673 was quite likely somewhat lower than normal because of the cloud cover but possibly also seemed lower against the grey background. Another factor in the perception of lower flight may have been the large (three feet) black numbers under the wings. Against the silver colour of the Delta these numbers would possibly be

clearly visible up to 800 feet and possibly higher. Cpl. Arsenault said that the “roundels, number and the colour of the aircraft were clearly seen” as previously mentioned. Clarity of numerals and the circling pattern of flight could have put the plane under 1000 feet.

Inclement weather is probably a valid explanation for why the plane was flying slower and lower than would normally have been the case. It may also explain why the big float plane did not leave Lake Megantic until 9:55, when one would have expected a departure time closer to 8:30. (We will later see that leaving late and flying slowly played an integral part in the demise of Delta 673.) But why did the plane circle the waterfront and town at Riviere-du-Loup and not land?

There may be a good explanation. The R.C.M.P. Corporal said he saw the plane “circle.” He did not say the plane was circling. The wording may provide the answer to the question. At Riviere-du-Loup the plane was required, according to the flight plan, to make a major change in direction. A shift of about 90° to the southeast was necessary to go from the St. Lawrence River to Edmundston, New Brunswick. To accomplish this dramatic change in direction the plane would have to bank in a fairly wide circle over the town and the waterfront.

The next reliable sighting of Delta 673 was by Mr. Atkinson, a “woods engineer” for Fraser Company. He “was a mile or so east of Green River between 12:00 and 1:00 o’clock” on September 14th and saw the plane heading southeast. This is congruent with where the plane should have been given its speed and the fact that New Brunswick time is one hour ahead of that in Quebec. Mr. Atkinson told investigators that the “weather was not bad and the plane was fairly high.” He added that “...it rained later in the day.”³² The plane may have been flying “fairly high”

because of the high hills in the Green River area. An altitude of 2500-3500 feet would seem reasonable.

Ralph Harris, a forest ranger at Green River Lookout, related that he and his helper were at Halfway Depot in the Green River area when they saw Delta 673 pass overhead. "I was at Halfway Depot at between 12:30 and one o'clock....it was a beautiful day to quit the tower...[there] were clouds only."³³ Tower operators had been instructed to record ..."the markings of passing planes whenever possible." These instructions combined with the fact there were not many planes in that area of New Brunswick (or anywhere else for that matter) in 1939 would certainly prompt woods people to notice any aircraft that came close to them.

Weather observations seem consistent all along the route. George Dunbar, a mill engineer at Cabano, said the weather was "...a broken overcast between four and five thousand feet when 673 passed over him at between 12:15 and 12:20."³⁴

One of the last people to see Delta 673 were the Ogilvie brothers of Plaster Rock. John Ogilvie claimed that "on September 14th I was with my brothers at our lodge just below the junction of the Tobique and Gulguac rivers. At between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. I saw a plane pass over heading southeast almost in the direction heading up the Gulguac River. I could not tell the colour of the plane. The weather was nice and sunny but it clouded over that evening. I remember these details, because it was the day before the salmon fishing closed, and I went fishing that evening."³⁵

All sightings are consistent with the southeasterly direction the plane would take to arrive at Grand Lake. Times are consistent and so are the weather observations. Michel Dejardins at the Fredericton Weather Office was kind enough to check the

available weather data for September 14, 1939 and concluded that the weather was warm and partly cloudy along the flight path of Delta 673. The wind was from a westerly direction. This is typical early fall weather for New Brunswick. High cloud cover with sunny periods is very normal for this time of year.

From Plaster Rock 673 proceeded toward Grand Lake, which is situated in beautiful Queens County, south central New Brunswick. A distance of about 120 miles. The pilot planned to turn the plane over the big lake and head almost due east to Shediac on the coast. During the 1930's Shediac, because of its big calm bay, was a base for transoceanic flying boats. The Air Force often used the refueling and mooring facilities at this location for their aircraft. Delta No. 673 would never arrive.

At the inquiry into the disappearance of the plane and its crew an officer pointed out that Flt. Sgt. Doan “was not unfamiliar with the route and country over which he was to fly.”³⁶ Ted Doan had flown over New Brunswick several times and was, according to squadron leader Bill Brown, “a very reliable pilot.” The first witness at the said inquiry was Flt. Sgt. R. I. (Bob) Thomas who told those assembled that Ted Doan “...made a practice of always pin-pointing his progress on his map whenever engaged in cross-country flights.” The pilot knew exactly where he was. He had entered into a forty mile “dry” zone. Meaning that for the next forty miles after leaving Plaster Rock there was almost no body of water large enough to facilitate a safe landing. In actual fact there was really only one such place – Beaverbrook Lake. Small as lakes go (about 7000 feet in length), but large enough to accommodate a big Delta on floats.

The lake is located on the northern boundary line that divides Carleton County from York County. About eighteen miles by road north of Juniper, which is the last outpost of civilization in that part of central New Brunswick. After the

village of Juniper there is nothing but a vast tract of wilderness. The entire area, including Beaverbrook Lake, is owned by J. D. Irving Limited, New Brunswick's largest forest company. Just a little over a mile in length and only about 1500 feet wide Beaverbrook Lake lies in a slight depression that runs laterally in an east-west direction. On the north side of the lake is a fairly significant hill. Leading up to the lake from the west side is a valley about two miles long.

It was above this little valley that Warrant Officer J. E. Doan (his promotion became effective on this day) was preparing to make a forced landing shortly after 2:00 p.m. on September 14th, 1939. Just one day before the fifth anniversary of his marriage to Vera Gertrude Foster – the love of his life.

There had been no sign of trouble since the men left Lake Megantic. If there had been Ted would have put the plane down immediately on one of the many lakes that he had available along the flight path. All had been well until some type of serious problem caused the engine to quit in a “dry zone” east of Plaster Rock in north central New Brunswick.

It is entirely possible that the engine was losing power for a time before it actually quit. Overheating, especially from a heater/carburetor problem, would make the engine ‘miss’ or ‘sputter’ along all the while losing power, and thus altitude. Flt. Sgt. Doan was probably nursing the plane toward the lake for several miles before the engine actually quit. Therefore the descent to the crash site would have been quite gradual up until the time the propeller came to a complete stop. The plane would then have plummeted out of control rather quickly if it was already near the stall speed.

Ted Doan had only two options when the engine quit. The first option was a controlled crash landing. In this case the

pilot would wait until the plane was almost touching the trees and then pull back on the steering yoke. This would allow Delta 673 to enter the forest canopy bottom first with the nose up. The trees, which were not large at the time, would have provided a cushioning effect which would have reduced the severity of the impact. The pilot's other option was to stretch the glide and try to land on the lake. He chose the latter option believing the big Delta had enough speed and altitude to cover the required distance.

Unfortunately this time was different. Too many things were against the seasoned pilot. He was forced to land with the wind and not into it; always the preferred position. Landing into the wind would allow for a lower, and possibly a more survivable, landing speed. He also lost some altitude when he had to shift the plane around to line up with the lake. Delta 673 was flying north to south, Beaverbrook Lake lies east to west. By the time Ted had the plane set up for a landing he was probably only about a thousand feet above the trees and two miles from the lake. The plane was sinking fast from loss of power. Too fast. But he did his best to stretch the glide.

The two men could see the little lake clearly through the windshield as they glided silently toward the safety of its surface. They seemed to be only a few minutes from hearing the splash and feeling the slight jolt of a water landing. It was not to be. Almost exactly one mile from the western end of Beaverbrook Lake, and probably several hundred feet above the forest, Delta 673 slowed to stall speed. A pilot's worst nightmare. The plane was now flying so slow that there was no more control. Unless Ted Doan took remedial action immediately the plane would literally fall from the sky. At this point one of two things happened. It was either too late and nothing could be done in which case the big plane flipped on its back and plunged inverted and virtually straight down into the trees; or Ted took the only

action available. He pushed the yoke forward to push the nose down and thus gain air speed. But, by this time the yoke was sloppy in his hands with little response. When he did finally get the nose down it was too late to then pull it back. The plane went right on into the trees.

From the time the plane reached stall speed until it hit the ground probably no more than four seconds had passed. Not even enough time for the men to say goodbye to each other.

The impact of the 6000 pound plane hitting the earth was devastating. It blew the doors off, broke all of the windows, severed the wings, tore the engine completely off the fuselage and flattened the cockpit. From the engine to the front seats there was nothing but a jumble of crumpled, jagged metal. It was this aspect of the crash that killed the pilot and his crewman instantly and in all likelihood ejected their bodies from the plane. The force of the impact went right through the cockpit stopping only at the Delta's heavily reinforced center section.

All evidence at the site points to a low altitude, relatively low speed stall induced crash. There was no crater, no fire and no debris field. Although broken up the plane was all in one place in several large identifiable pieces. The propeller blades were bent backward in such a manner as to clearly indicate that the plane came in with a dead engine. Crashes that involve a high speed impact usually leave a large crater and relatively small size fragments of the wings and fuselage. Often there is a fire. Delta 673 came in nose first and almost perpendicular. It did break the top off one tree but nothing that would greatly alter the angle of descent and impact. Trees in the area of the crash were not very large in 1939. There was no debris trail or swath of trees mowed down as is often the case when planes come in for a controlled crash landing. The big float plane dropped right out of the sky and into its final resting place.

Eric Bradley, Chief Pilot with Forest Protection Limited, provides a professional perspective regarding the crash scenario.

The engine failure causes the aircraft to descend. The pilot causes the aircraft to slow down, approach the stall and eventually causes the stall in the crash flight. A controlled landing from a glide into the forest would have almost certainly been survivable, especially if flying into the wind which reduces the ground speed at touchdown and therefore reduces significantly the crash and impact forces (doubling the ground speed equals 4 times the crash force). A controlled touchdown with an airspeed of 62 mph into a 20 mph headwind would result in an impact speed of 42 mph. Surely survivable with airframe, floats and harnesses to absorb in impact. With no suitable lake within gliding distance, the best outcome would have been achieved by turning into the wind and gliding to a touchdown at minimum airspeed into the forest. By maneuvering toward the lake, the pilot required judgement to end his glide within the confines of the lake at the proper speed and altitude. He could control the airspeed but maneuvering and positioning for the final approach obviously put him in a position of approaching from the upwind side of the lake at an altitude insufficient to make his target before the glide altitude was used up. Even if he were directly over the lake at the time of the power loss with lots of altitude, considerable judgement would have been required to end the glide successfully in the lake. All pilots are trained to conduct this series of maneuvers but in the heat of the moment errors (costly errors) can be made resulting in missed targets or at worse, stalls at low altitude.³⁷

The exact cause of the engine failure, and subsequently the crash, can not with certainty be determined. However, it is

quite safe to conclude that it was related to a muff heater/carburetor problem.

From the beginning Flt. Sgt. Doan believed that the problem stemmed from a malfunctioning muff installation. As previously noted, he submitted R.C.A.F. form L.3, Unit Serial No. 3 dated September 9th, 1939. This deficiency form was sent from Lake Megantic and describes the engine problem that caused the forced landing at Salmon Stream Lake in Maine. In this report pilot Doan blames an unsuitable “muff installation” as the cause for the engine overheating. At the same time he also stated in a letter to the Technical Warrant Officer of his squadron that it was his intention to put the old muff on the new engine and if the overheating continued he “would discard” the old muff.

This seemingly bizarre paradigm was brought out during the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry held at North Sydney, Nova Scotia on December 15th, 1939. When the presiding officer, Flight Lieutenant S. S. Blanchard called W.O. I. A. Holdsworth, the Squadron Technical Officer, to testify the following exchange took place:

Question: Have you any reason to believe that the new engine installed in Delta ‘673’ by No. 240 W.O. II Doan, J. E., and No. 2258 Corporal Rennie, D.A., at Megantic, P.Q., might have failed during the subsequent flight to Sydney, N.S.?

Answer: The muff installation as installed on the old engine was prone to overheating, and if this was transferred to the new engine, the possibilities are greater that overheating, due to the newness of the engine would occur.

Question: Did you receive any communication from W.O. II Doan in which he gave information which might throw some light in the subsequent loss of the aircraft and crew?

Answer: Yes, I received a letter from him in which he stated in his opinion the muff was the cause of his old engine failing, due to overheating and it was his intention to try it out on the new engine and if he experienced the same trouble he would discard it. The possibilities are that he tested his new engine and during the test no particular overheating occurred, but on his subsequent flight to Sydney he may have had to fly at a low altitude owing to unfavourable weather when overheating would occur.

Question: Is there any record which would show that W.O. II Doan considered the muff installation to be unsuitable and liable to cause overheating?

Answer: Yes. W.O. II Doan submitted form R.C.A.F. L.3, Unit Serial No. 3 dated 9-9-39, which deals with the failure of the first engine at Salmon Springs Pond [Lake], Maine.³⁸

From this vantage point one can not say with certainty that overheating caused the crash that killed the crew of Delta 673. There are other possibilities that may have caused the engine failure and these will be discussed momentarily. Before we go on however, we must try once more to answer the obvious question. Why did two men who were well trained in aircraft engine technology and had just experienced two forced landings put an old (and potentially defective) muff on a brand new engine?

This is not an easy question to answer. One explanation could be that the men simply had too much confidence in their own abilities. One must remember that Ted had just landed the plane safely at least twice when it developed engine problems. He and Dave had also just changed their own engine (no small feat) and trusted their own workmanship enough to flight test the engine. When they did there was no more overheating. Would this not indicate that they had solved the problem? Sure. To most people it would. The second engine failure had occurred just after take off; now they had flown the plane for a significant test period and no more overheating. This should have been a clear indication that they had solved the problem.

Another explanation could be that the men examined the muff installation and could find nothing wrong with it. If they did find some maladjustment maybe they corrected it to their satisfaction. Frank Spatz Jr., who owns the last remaining Delta in the world, stated in an e-mail to the author dated August 27, 2003 (the 64th anniversary of the departure of the ill fated flight) that oil cooling problems were also common in early aircraft.

...almost all the early aircraft had some type of cooling problems either cylinder head or oil or both. Designers of early aircraft up until the early 40's had not figured out proper baffling and cowling design to properly cool the engines. Also oil coolers were not used or properly installed if at all on early engine installations. After your call I thought about our Delta's engine installation, even though its basically a DC-2 engine installation we had to do some modification to the oil cooler to get proper oil cooling.³⁹

This summary provides firsthand knowledge regarding some of the mechanical challenges faced by early aviators. The

oil cooler was different from the muff heater, but this quotation serves to illustrate that all aspects of aviation were still in the developmental stages in 1939.

John Sarty, an aircraft mechanic at Forest Protection Ltd. in Fredericton takes a similar position. Mr. Sarty is an authority on radial engines having worked on the big Wright Cyclone engines in Grumman Avengers for many years. He says that normally only a fuel problem or an ignition problem will shut a radial engine down immediately. But, he added, “ignition problems are rare.” If the engine on 673 shut down in the air it was “most likely a fuel problem.”⁴⁰ This could have been either no fuel, bad fuel or a carburetor problem. Mr. Sarty points out that sometimes pilots have switched to the wrong tank (“blew a tank” in aviation jargon) (the Delta had six fuel tanks) or not switched tanks in time thus shutting down the engine. If this happens on a heavy plane like the Delta, which allegedly did not glide well, it may be too late to restart the engine before hitting the ground. Should this have been the case with Delta 673 it would almost certainly have crashed more directly along the flight path and in a different manner.

John Gomany wisely suggested that bad fuel should not be ruled out as a possible cause, or contributing factor in the crash of Delta 673. (The malfunction characteristics would have been similar – cylinders misfiring and loss of engine power.) This possibility was considered, but there is no evidence to suggest that bad fuel was involved. Overheating resulting from a muff heater problem remains the most likely cause of the crash.

Is it possible that 673 landed on Beaverbrook Lake and then crashed on take-off? Extremely unlikely. If Ted Doan had an engine problem serious enough to cause another forced landing he would have remained on the lake. He stayed at Salmon Stream Lake and at Lake Megantic. His flight path was

known at squadron headquarters so they would have sent out search planes the next day. The pilot knew this so would have moored the plane and made camp.

Mr. Sarty told me during our interview that “a radial engine will run hot for a long time. I never heard of overheating crashing a plane.”⁴² He pointed out that this is somewhat the result of pilots always looking for a safe place to land should they experience difficulties.

Therein lies the problem; Delta 673 was equipped with floats. The only safe place to land was on water and the only suitable water for a safe landing after Plaster Rock was Beaverbrook Lake. It was a “dry hop.” So dry that there is only one pond (Beaver Lake) near the flight path that is large enough to handle a big float plane – even for a controlled crash landing. It has much less than 2000 feet of landing distance.

After all of the available data are considered the most likely crash scenario is the one outlined over the preceding pages. The engine failed due to some type of serious problem that began a few miles west of Beaverbrook Lake in north central New Brunswick. Delta 673 was probably flying at about 3-4000 feet at a speed of 150 mph when the situation occurred. Whatever the problem was it developed at least eight miles past Plaster Rock which also put the plane fifteen miles (6 minutes) from Beaverbrook Lake. Should 673 have developed the problem prior to this point the pilot would have taken the plane out to the St. John River which was only 15 miles (6 minutes) from Plaster Rock. Beaverbrook Lake was still 23 miles (9.2 minutes) away. Flt. Sgt. Doan may also have chosen Trousers Lake at this point. A large lake only 21 miles (8.4 minutes) from Plaster Rock. Having flown over this area before, the pilot would probably know that the river can be extremely low in September so would have chosen Trousers Lake.

The pilot either thought that he could make it safely to Beaverbrook Lake, or that he was closer to this lake than any other. Whichever was the case timing was everything. The young officers died about one minute short of reaching Beaverbrook Lake.

Sadly. Had the men been able to fly across Maine, and not around it, all things being equal, the engine problem would have occurred over the lakes region near Fredericton. This safety net may well have preserved their lives.

IV Searching The Wilderness

Squadron leader Bill Brown was definitely concerned when Delta 673 failed to arrive in Cape Breton. The last entry in the daily diary for No. 8 (BR) Squadron on September 14, 1939 at 2000 hrs (8:00 p.m.) reads as follows: "Delta aircraft 673 unreported. Telegram sent to Pan American Airways, Shediac, Imperial Oil Co. at Campbellton, Rimouski, Riviere du Loup, Fredericton inquiring of information of 673."⁴³ Having already suffered two forced landings and a complete engine change there was certainly ample grounds for concern.

Next day, when all reports came back negative, a search was organized, but there was no immediate panic. The crew of 673 had weathered two forced landings and survived, plus Ted Doan was one of the most experienced pilots in the R.C.A.F. The two men had plenty of survival gear, the weather was warm, and it was assumed that there was plenty of good landing places along the flight path. (As previously mentioned this was true for most of the route, but not for the area in which the engine problem occurred.)

Thursday, September 15th was warm and sunny all over Eastern Canada. A glorious late summer day. It was the day after Mrs. Rennie's birthday and the fifth wedding anniversary for Ted and Vera Doan. The present that arrived for the two women, one a mother – the other a wife, was of the worst kind. Vera Doan had just finished baking cookies when a delivery boy from Canadian Pacific Telegraphs arrived at her door. The brief telegram that he handed to her stated simply that her husband was missing on a flight from Megantic to Sydney. No details were provided.

Sydney NS

Regret to state that your husband departed from Megantic PQ in Delta aircraft six seven three on fourteenth – for Sydney Nova Scotia and has not been seen since. Five aircraft of this squadron employed on search of aircraft

OC No 8 GP Squadron

Mrs. Rennie had just finished telling a neighbour that she had not heard from her son David on her birthday. This she found very unusual because he always called or sent a card each year. No sooner were the words out of her mouth when a telegram delivery boy brought her the reason that she had not heard from her son. The two woman called each other for consolation, but no amount of companionship could placate the fear of losing their loved ones.

Vera Doan had just sent Ted a letter on September 10th. It was addressed to him in Sydney, instead of Lake Megantic, because she thought that the men may have already left. This was the last letter that Vera was ever to write to her beloved husband. It arrived in Sydney the day that he disappeared. Following are a few excerpts from that letter.

Trenton, Ontario (where Vera was visiting)
Saturday, September 9th, 1939

Our dear Daddy and Husband,

Received your second letter this afternoon and I trust by now you will have received some of mine.

I am hoping and praying that you won't have to cross the ocean, Dear. But I'm sure everything will turn out alright and we'll soon be together again.

Lionel has passed his second milestone. Wish you could have seen how proud he looked when he blew out the second candle. Then each of them [Charles 4 and Lionel 2] had to have their turn. They have raised the roof this afternoon.

I'm hoping to receive a letter from you tomorrow saying what I should do with the house. I feel I should keep a house in Ottawa in case you should come back for a few days and we want to spend every minute together we can.

Well – my Dear I'm going to take a chance on sending this to Sydney. Skip (Charles) has enclosed his letter with hugs on it and a ticket for you, but he didn't say what to do with it.

Hope you are feeling good and have arrived safely at your destination. I am anxiously waiting for news.

Good Night
Your loving wife and sons
Vera, Skip and Lionel

X X X 44

The first few days of the search were mostly spent tracing the route flown by Delta 673 and visiting various agencies to investigate “reports and rumours.” These agencies were primarily Eastern Air Command locations, the New Brunswick Forest Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was from this latter agency that the first, and most significant, false report was received. Wilfred Levesque, a woodsman and farmer from Saint Joseph, reported to the Edmundston R.C.M.P.

detachment that he saw a silver monoplane flying over the Green River Lakes in Northern Madawaska County, New Brunswick. Mr. Levesque said he thought the plane, which was “flying at a fairly low altitude,” was emitting “sputtering noises” from the engine, and this led him to conclude that the plane was experiencing engine trouble.⁴⁵

The report prompted Cpl. Aubrey Faulds and Cst. Belanger to solicit the help of William Dubé, an area guide, who took the two Mounties and Mr. Levesque back into the wilderness. There were apparently few roads in the Green River country at that time so much of the search would have to be conducted on foot and by canoe. The Telegraph Journal on September 21st rightfully concluded that “...it is evident that the plane did not come down on one of the lakes of the region, otherwise it would have been found by now.”⁴⁶ True. The men would have moored their plane in clear sight and then lit a large fire. Once the flight route had been flown a few times and all of the lakes and ponds checked, it was obvious to all concerned that the plane crashed in the woods. Mr. Levesque undoubtedly did see the plane fly over this area, but at this point it had not yet developed a problem.

Although Mr. Levesque’s report turned out to be false in its conclusion, there is another similar report that warrants some discussion. The main difference with this other report is the number of people involved.

A report by the railway agent and other residents of Plaster Rock indicate that 673 flew over that vicinity and no mention was made of the engine missing. Yet Mr. Costigan and a party of surveyors 15 miles east of Plaster Rock state that the engine was missing badly. Again it is inconceivable that the pilot, who, but a short time

previously had made two forced landings with an unserviceable engine, would continue across country when a successful forced landing could be made, if the engine was not running properly. (R.C.A.F. Report Dec. 1939)⁴⁷

The commonality in these two reports is the sound of the engine. Both Mr. Levesque and the survey party stated that they could hear abnormal sounds from the engine. Certainly one man's assessment can be dismissed as possibly just hearing things, but a survey party at that time had six or eight men. Could this number of people be mistaken? The Air Force thought so. They completely dismissed this report. But, were they correct? Delta 673 crashed only 12 miles (about 5 minutes) after being seen by the survey party. Is it possible that 673 had just developed the critical engine problem and these men happened to hear it? Certainly. At this point, 15 miles from Plaster Rock, Beaverbrook Lake was the closest body of water for a safe landing – 673 had to continue in that direction. Beaver Lake, a large pond, was a bit closer but, as noted, it was too small to afford a safe landing.

Worth considering is that if the survey party did in fact hear the “engine missing” then the plane was fairly low. This could be a clear indication that the engine was running, but losing power. There is strong evidence to suggest that the pilot was nursing the big radial along believing it would keep going until they reached the lake.

Had the Air Force not so quickly dismissed the surveyors' report they may have found Delta 673. Search planes flew over the crash site several times. If the searchers had listened to the surveyors they would have known that the plane went down in the 12 mile stretch between the last sighting and Beaverbrook Lake. They didn't listen and the plane remained undiscovered for

19 years. In fairness of course one can understand the logic used by the Air Force. Ted Doan would not normally have kept going with a defective engine. The R.C.A.F.'s only real mistake may have been not to consider the distance between the various points mentioned in the preceding analysis.

Four and sometimes five planes kept searching for weeks. Flight Officer G. E. McMurtrie was in charge of two aircraft and Flt. Lieut. H.R.C. Rutledge of two more. A fifth plane was a Waco flown by Stewart Graham from the Department of Transport. Irving Oil Ltd. also sent their Stinson Reliant for a time. The pilot of the Irving plane, Jim Wade, was said to have "rendered valuable assistance." All of the search crews maintained close liaison with the Mounties and the Forest Service.

Until October 10th the effectiveness of the search was greatly reduced by heavy foliage. Once the leaves fell visibility improved greatly and the searchers could see log piles, trappers' cabins, etc. They could possibly have spotted the downed plane under normal circumstances, but in this case 673 crashed into a mostly coniferous area where there was no foliage to drop and the canopy was fairly dense. Downed planes can be very difficult to locate under the best of conditions; in dense softwoods they are almost impossible to see from the air, or the ground. Another complicating factor in the disappearance of Delta 673 was the fact that the crash site was very compact. The wings, tail and pontoons broke off and lay near the fuselage thus limiting the square footage of exposed surface. There was also no debris trail and no swath of flattened trees.

At the end of October the search for Delta 673 was terminated. After seven weeks and 400 flying hours the Air Force decided that the plane had either gone down in dense bush and could not be seen, or it had crashed in the ocean and sank.

Throughout the search period the families kept in contact with the Air Force. The earliest written communication that has survived is a letter from Ted Doan's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Doan of Vancouver dated September 27, 1939 addressed to the Squadron Leader.

Dear Sir,

We are anxiously waiting for news of our dear son J. E. Doan who was reported missing on plane 673 from Megantic Quebec on the 14th of September. According to newspaper reports the Police have given up search. We wonder if that is correct. Would you kindly inform us if the search is being continued, as parents we are very anxious for news of our dear son.⁴⁸

Yours Respectfully,

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Doan

One does not have to read between the lines to hear the heartache.

Air Vice Marshal, G. M. Croil responded to the letter sent to him by Mr. and Mrs. Doan on October 18th but no copy of this letter could be found. The earliest letter from Air Marshal Croil is dated October 26th, 1939. In this letter he advises the family that the search has still "met with no success" and goes on to give an overview of the search procedure up until that time. In paragraph four the Air Marshal states that the last authentic report of the plane's position was "over the lower Miramichi River in the vicinity of Upper Blackville...." This erroneous report, submitted by Mr. Wade, the Irving pilot, and based on interviews with people in the area, led G. M. Croil to conclude that the plane may have headed out to sea.

"...it is....my painful duty to point out to you the possibility that they may have flown out over the sea where, if they were forced to alight, the

aeroplane would probably sink under the conditions of heavy sea which are reported on the day in question.”⁴⁹

The Air Vice Marshal offered his “sincere sympathy” and assured the Doans that the search would continue and that there was still hope that their son and his companion would be found.

Delta 673 may possibly have been found in 1939 if the Air Force had not summarily dismissed the report from the survey party near Plaster Rock, and if they had not given so much credence to the report from Mr. Wade. Low, concentrated flights between where the survey party saw the plane and Beaverbrook Lake would probably at some point have yielded results. However, without too much difficulty it is possible to understand how the Air Force could make such an error of judgement. Under normal circumstances it is unbelievable that an aeroplane would continue on its course with an engine that was “missing badly.” It would also be difficult not to believe people who claimed to see 673 “in the vicinity of Upper Blackville” even though the Upper Blackville sightings would have been 45 miles east of the original flight plan.

The people interviewed at Upper Blackville and Doaktown were considered to be very reliable. Aircraft seldom fly over that locality and their statements that the time was shortly after noon and the day “about the middle of the month before all the aeroplanes started flying around here” indicates fairly conclusively that Delta 673 crossed over the Miramichi River.⁵⁰

Not impossible, but highly improbable. To those who knew him Ted Doan was not the type of pilot to dramatically alter his flight plan without advising someone.

Alas it was not to be. In a letter dated November 21st, 1939 and addressed to Mr. Doan (a letter was also sent to Vera Doan, the pilot's wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Rennie) Air Vice-Marshall Croil announced that the search had been terminated. He told the bereaved family that if the plane went down over land that it may yet be found. Once again, however, he reiterated that "...should they have....flown out to sea there is very little likelihood that they will ever be reported." Following this somber pronouncement the Air Vice-Marshall continued in his usual kind and sympathetic tone.

As you will appreciate, it is only with the greatest reluctance that I am, of necessity, compelled to send you this information, and I wish to extend to you, on behalf of myself and the Service, my heartfelt sympathy in your loss which, in view of the uncertainty which accompanies it, is made more difficult to bear.

Your son was a valued member of the Service who, would undoubtedly have risen high in his chosen career, in fact he was promoted recently to the rank of Warrant Officer, Class II. You may, however, derive some consolation from the fact that his loss was occasioned in the line of duty on Active Service in defence of his Country.

There is always, of course, the possibility of further reports being received, in which event the investigation will be renewed with all vigor and you will be promptly notified of the results.⁵¹

Yours sincerely,
(G.M. Croil)
Air Vice-Marshall, Chief of the Air Staff

The Doans responded to Air Vice-Marshal Croil's letter on November 29th, 1939. They had several questions: How far were they off course to reach the sea? Why did they not land when they were off course? Is it possible that the enemy picked them up? Are his wife and children being cared for? The letter was written by Mrs. Doan, the pilot's mother, and two of her statements in the letter express the pain of his parents hearts. "We had lived in hopes their bodies would be found..." "The uncertainty is very hard to bear."⁵²

One could never remotely comprehend the agony of losing a son or a daughter unless they experienced it. Especially true if there was no body to mourn.

The last surviving piece of correspondence between the Air Force and the Doans is the Air Vice-Marshal's letter answering the questions raised in the Doan's letter of November 29th, 1939. He states that "the most probable conclusion" is that the two men "were lost at sea." If the men flew across the open water from Shediac to Sydney, he said that a deviation....of as little as fifty miles would place the aeroplane over open water North of Prince Edward Island." He somewhat contradicts himself when he says that: "The fact that your son did not land en route seems to indicate that he was not lost..." He dismisses the possibility that the men were captured by the enemy because "...no enemy submarines or surface raiders have been operating so close to the shores of Canada." Air Vice-Marshal Croil concludes the letter by stating that their son's wife has been kept informed regarding the search for her husband and that she has been receiving his usual monthly pay cheque.⁵³

It will be pointed out later that the Air Force was not very wise to think that Delta 673 would fly from Megantic to Sydney and not stop at Shediac. The men would need rest and the plane would almost certainly need fuel.

There can be no doubt, however, that the Royal Canadian Air Force made a gargantuan effort to find Delta 673. Almost 400 flying hours representing over half a million miles were expended on the search effort. Along with the air search there was also an extensive ground search. Mounties and forest rangers checked out hundreds of leads, including an aviation note found in Kingston, and contacted every person known to be in the woods at that time. Still they failed to locate Delta 673. Consequently for the next 19 years the plane and her crew would lay in the wilderness one mile from their safe haven.

The Court of Enquiry under the direction of Air Commodore N. R. Anderson that convened on December 15, 1939 failed to provide much new information regarding the disappearance of Delta 673. Flt. Sgt. R. I. (Bob) Thomas reiterated his belief that it was unlikely that Ted Doan “would have become lost.” That sufficient, but not complete, emergency gear was on board 673 was established by Flt. Sgt. W. C. (Bill) Pate who, along with Cpl. Guy LaRamee, stayed with the crew of 673 at Salmon Stream Lake. The third witness, W.O. I. A. Holdsworth, Technical Warrant Officer for No. 8 (B.R.) Squadron gave his opinion regarding the engine problem. (This was cited earlier, but is worth repeating here). When asked if he had any reason to believe that the new engine might have failed during flight he gave a detailed answer.

The muff installation as installed on the old engine was prone to overheating, and if this was transferred to the new engine, the possibilities are greater that overheating, due to the newness of the engine would occur.

The possibilities are that he [Flt. Sgt. Doan] tested his new engine and during the test no particular overheating occurred, but on his subsequent flight

to Sydney he may have had to fly at a low altitude owing to unfavourable weather when overheating would occur.⁵⁴

The first sentence in this quotation is cause for concern. It would seem as if the engine on Delta 673 had experienced problems prior to leaving for Nova Scotia on August 27th. When the squadron Technical Warrant Officer uses the phrase “was prone to” it is a clear indication that he had prior knowledge of an existing problem. That was certainly the rumour in Air Force circles. Some officers told around the Ottawa base that 673 was in fact having problems with overheating prior to the August departure. This rumour reached both the Doans and the Rennies in the fall of 1939, but could not be substantiated. It still can't. No existing documentation will give definite support to the assertion that Delta 673 was experiencing engine problems prior to its final departure from Rockcliffe Air Station. Some of the necessary items seem to be missing from the files. This does not mean to imply that they are absent by design; not all papers were kept at that time. The documents may actually exist, but simply can not be found.

Should the papers ever appear they may show that Ted Doan was not the regular pilot of 673. He therefore may not have known about, or fully appreciated, the nature of the problem(s) that plagued this aircraft. Documentation could show that the overheating problem was assumed to have been corrected by air force mechanics before the plane was cleared to leave. It is also possible that Flt. Sgt. Doan may have just been assigned to 673 the day of the flight. War preparations were done in a hurry and a general state of confusion prevailed. (As it would today. Successive Canadian governments have decimated our armed forces - a terrible disgrace.)

Another assertion at the time may also point to a last minute reassignment of Delta 673. Apparently the plane had just come in “from out west” – Ted Doan was stationed in the east. This does not however, preclude the possibility that he had been working in western Canada prior to being called in for the wartime assignment in Cape Breton.

The Court concluded the inquiry by stating that they “...consider it reasonable to suppose that Delta 673 either crashed in the bush or at sea between the coast of New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island on September 14th, 1939, and that W.O. II Doan and Corporal Rennie are now dead.”⁵⁵ The report was sent to Ottawa and the tragic episode was put to rest. More urgent matters were now at hand; Canada had a war to fight. Although Ted Doan and Dave Rennie were the first casualties they were far from being the last. Thousands of young men and women from North America served in the cause of liberty. May time never diminish the memory of their sacrifice.

V The Brutal Discovery

Time went by and many changes took place. The forest around Beaverbrook Lake, which had not been harvested since about 1920, came into the possession of J. D. Irving Ltd. in 1955. By 1958 this forest products company was making ready to upgrade the old logging roads to modern, graveled haul roads. Clearcutting and replanting were planned for the future in the surrounding woodlands.

Nineteen fifty-eight was a good year for Ted Doan's family. Vera Doan won \$140,000 in the Irish Sweepstakes (the equivalent of about 1.5 million in today's dollars). Charlie Doan married his girlfriend Marg Skitch and Lionel Doan met Claudia Bessey, the pretty girl whom he married in 1961.

It was also a good year in New Brunswick. The economy was in a surplus position thanks to the good government of Premier Hugh John Flemming. The lumber business was booming and McCain Foods Ltd. were expanding their frozen food plant in Florenceville. Stuart Cogle, the local forest ranger, got a new Austin car and his oldest son James (Jim) got a new CCM bicycle. Cpl. Ron Rippin was the young officer in charge of the Florenceville R.C.M.P detachment.

July of 1958 came in hot and humid as it often does in central New Brunswick. Gardens grow quickly, everything blooms, fragrant air and fun at the swimming hole. Summer through the eyes of a boy. For men it was different – they had to work – heat or no heat. That was true for the J. D. Irving Ltd. road location men on July 10th of that year. Frank Barkhouse and Charlie Grey were laying out the route for the new road that would run from Deersdale, near Juniper, to Beaverbrook Lake

and beyond. One of the Irving planes was helping out by flying the proposed route to advise the crew of any serious obstacles. It was while working in this capacity that the pilot noticed something shining through the trees. He circled around and at a certain angle he saw the reflection again. He flew lower but could not tell what it was. Eighteen miles back in the wilderness the pilot knew that whatever it was it should not be there. He radioed his concern to Barkhouse and Grey. They responded to his call and were guided through the dense woods to the source of the shining.

Much to their disbelief, in among a stand of softwood trees was the wreckage of a vintage aeroplane. Eighteen years, nine months and twenty-six days later the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Delta 673 was solved. The two men spent some time pawing around the site. They found no bones but according to Frank Barkhouse did find “the impressions of two bodies in the topsoil.”⁵⁶ Mr. Barkhouse is the only one to mention this discovery and there is some reason to believe that he was mistaken. It is not mentioned in the R.C.M.P. report, the R.C.A.F. report or the ranger’s report. (Frank Barkhouse was allegedly known to add a bit of non-factual information to his observations.) After a brief sojourn the men headed for Juniper where they called the R.C.M.P. and the Forest Service.

Early on the morning of July 11, 1958 R.C.M.P. Cpl. Ron Rippin and ranger Stuart Cogle took the Forest Service jeep and headed to Juniper. Ten year old James Cogle was informed, over much protestation, that his presence would not be required. The two men picked up Messers Grey and Barkhouse and headed back 18 miles to the crash site. Once there a more methodical search was conducted.

The four men found “several pieces of equipment and rotted clothing aboard, but no bodies.” Around the plane they

located the remains of a briefcase with the top part of an Ottawa newspaper dated September 13, 1939.⁵⁷ Cpl. Rippin recalls that “The left side door of the body of the plane was wide open and there was abundant evidence of porcupine intrusion – anything wooden (except a treated wooden box that held a bombsight) had their teeth marks on them.” The little creatures even ate the bristles of an R.C.M.P. tooth brush that Mr. Rennie had given to his son David. The four men also found belt buckles, a wallet containing only a calendar, brass buttons, parachute harness buckles, a camera and unopened rations. They also found the top part of a suitcase bearing the initials D.A.R. All of the contents were decomposed. In the back compartment of the fuselage they found a complete unopened first aid kit.⁵⁸ Grey and Barkhouse had picked up a few items as souvenirs the day before. Among these items were a razor, a flashlight, a bayonet and some coins. These were later returned to the Rennie family.

Only Frank Barkhouse mentions one particular item found at the site; “a tattered picture of a girl.”⁵⁹

Unfortunately the news media got the story regarding the discovery of Delta 673 before the families were officially notified by the R.C.A.F. It was through the medium of the national radio news that the families first learned of the discovery. Ella Bateson, Dave Rennie’s sister, remembers the day the story broke. “We had planned a family picnic that day. We were going on a campout but I had a funny feeling that bothered me so much. I couldn’t go with the others although I had planned to but I just didn’t feel right about it.” Ella stayed at home that day and while listening to the radio heard of the discovery of the R.C.A.F. plane in the wilderness of New Brunswick. She knew immediately that it was the plane that took her brother to his death. She informed her ailing mother once she confirmed that it was Delta 673. Both were glad to finally know what happened to David nineteen years earlier.

The story was similar for the Doans. It was the second Saturday in July and Vera Doan was at home in Toronto listening to the radio. During a mid-morning newscast she learned that an old aeroplane had been located in the woods of New Brunswick. Upon hearing this news she simply stated to her son Charles: "This is Ted's plane." She just knew.

Vera Doan called the R.C.A.F. and was informed that the Air Force was almost certain the plane found in New Brunswick was her husband's plane but were waiting for official confirmation. A search party was getting ready to leave for the crash site and the families would be advised as soon as the investigators reported back to their commanders at C.F.B. Greenwood. In a very kind gesture the R.C.A.F. offered to fly Mrs. Doan and her two sons to the crash site. They declined this generous offer, however, since Vera Doan was happy just to know that her "Ted" had been found.

The R.C.A.F. sent a ground party of four men to the crash site within days of the report. On July 14th Cpl. William Armstrong, Sgt. Robert Crebo and Cpl. J. R. Lemieux left Base Greenwood in Nova Scotia along with F.O.M.G. (Gus) Cloutier who was in charge of the ground search. Gen. Gus Cloutier is currently the Sergeant-at-Arms in the House of Commons. F.O.P.H. (Pat) Donaghy was pilot of the aeroplane that would transport the crew to and from the site. Coincidentally the registration number of the big Otter float plane used was 3-673.

The men spent several days searching the site, but in the end added very little to what was already known. Air-Vice Marchal, J. G. Kerr summarized the official Air Force position in a letter to Vera Doan dated July 30th, 1958. He also attached a list of items found at the site.

Ottawa, Ontario,
July 30th, 1958

Dear Mrs. Doan:

It is desired to confirm the reports already conveyed to you that your husband's aircraft, Northrop Delta numbered 673, missing since 14 September, 1939, has been located approximately 25 miles east of Juniper, N.B., and 40 miles north of Fredericton, N.B.

The wreckage was sighted by a civilian operated aircraft on 9 July and reported to R.C.A.F. authorities by the R.C.M.P. at Fredericton, N.B.

A ground search party from R.C.A.F. Station Greenwood located the aircraft and a thorough search of the aircraft and surrounding area revealed a watch belonging to your husband's crewman, Corporal Rennie, and other articles which could not be individually identified. The articles found would indicate that it was very unlikely that either your husband or his crewman left their aircraft or survived the initial impact, as survival equipment and medical supplies were found intact.

The search failed to reveal any trace of the remains of the crew and I can only regrettably and respectfully suggest that lapse of time and elements have precluded their recovery.

F/O Cloutier (Searchmaster Greenwood) advises
a/c located in inverted position - rear door open -
articles located -

sun glasses
wallet
piece of shorts
piece of Air Force shirt
buckles from parachute
razor
newspaper
watch belonging to Rennie
stopped at 1310 hrs. also
a/c watch stopped at same time
rubber mitts with Doan's name
anchor rope
a/c emergency ration unopened and well
preserved₆₀

The next person to visit the crash site after the Air Force personnel left was Dr. John Lockhart, a well known physician from Bath. He flew to Beaverbrook Lake in his Republic Seabee and walked to the crash site. The good doctor discovered what the others had missed – bone fragments. Inside the cabin he found fragments of “temporal (skull) bones.”⁶¹ Exactly what one would expect from an impact that virtually obliterated the cabin. Evidence suggests that both men were killed on impact from massive head injuries.

An obvious question at this point would be; “what happened to the other bones?” In the forest bones disappear over a period of time and are absorbed into the ecosystem.

From 1958 to 1969 the wreck of Delta 673 remained quietly secluded back in the wilderness far away from

civilization. Then in 1969 the Royal Canadian Air Force got the idea that, because 673 was the first aircraft lost after the declaration of war, it should be preserved in the Canada Aviation Museum at Rockcliffe in Ottawa.⁶² (Ironically this is where the big plane began its journey thirty years before.) The other reasons given to preserve the plane is that it is the only surviving example of “the first stressed-skin, all-metal aircraft built in Canada.” All of the other nineteen were cut up for scrap – a well established Canadian tradition.

Based on the above reasoning the R.C.A.F. dispatched a crew to remove Delta 673 from what would have been her final resting place to the bright lights of Ottawa. Well not that bright. Only the fuselage arrived and it has been stored from then until now in a warehouse about a mile below the museum. No one knows what to do with it. The other parts of the plane were lost, and not a clue regarding their whereabouts is known. The engine was supposed to have been sent to some laboratory in Ottawa to possibly determine the cause of the crash but again it disappeared without a trace. Welcome to the Canadian military. How that much material could get irretrievably lost between Beaverbrook Lake and Juniper is amazing. A Labrador helicopter made two trips to the crash site. First the ground crew hooked on the fuselage and it was taken to Irving’s Juniper airstrip. They then put the other material in a big sling and off it went. No one seems to know if the parts went to Juniper or to Chatham Air Force Base. All that can be said for certain is that it left the crash site. The fuselage arrived at the museum by flatbed truck – the rest went AWOL.

Today the crash site is again peaceful. The timber has been harvested and the site planted in Norway spruce. All that remains to remind a visitor of the terrible tragedy that occurred 65 years ago are a few pieces of crumpled metal. Gone are the plane, the men and the war. There are no doves soaring in the

sky. No poppies and no monuments. Just the quiet song of the forest. But, if one sits patiently for a while they will appear. Softly, magnificently they wisp in as if from nowhere. Suddenly they surround you with a cheerful welcome to their wilderness home. The old timers used to say that each Grey Jay (Gorby) embodies the soul of a departed lumberjack. Today the big grey birds are custodians of one of Canada's most important war graves.

VI Epilogue

Far from the sylvan tomb of their loved ones were those left outside. Left to journey through the years without a husband, a father or a lover. Years of not knowing, years of missing, years of needing, years of wondering what might have been.

This is what war is all about. Horrible, devastating, and final. It leaves a void that can never be adequately filled.

Yet beyond the loss, the loneliness and the misery there is life. Vera Doan was only 28 when Ted died. She never remarried. She worked hard to raise her two little boys as a single parent. She eventually did very well. But Vera was alone. Alone for 57 years.

After the shock of Ted's disappearance numbed a bit, Vera Doan began teaching again. She really had no choice. The Air Force widow's pension was miserly at best. Fortunately Mrs. Doan had a profession that could be depended on to provide a reasonable income. She was a good teacher and a valuable resource person according to the Scarborough School Library Newsletter of May-June 1973. Vera Doan's exemplary 35 years was outlined in a special edition titled: *A Tribute to a Fine Person in Honour of Her Retirement*.

The pilot's widow had begun her career teaching at the Rainy River Indian School in Northern Ontario. This is where she met the dashing young bush pilot who later became her husband. Mrs. Doan taught in several other northern communities before moving to Ottawa with Ted. After Ted's disappearance she moved back to the Foster family farm and from here continued her teaching career. Following a number of years of teaching she moved to Courcellette School in

Scarborough. After five more years in the classroom her career took a somewhat different direction. In 1954 Vera was asked to formalize the district library program. A challenge she gladly accepted since she had a great passion for school libraries. Vera and 500 home and school mothers set up a uniform school library program in Scarborough. Possibly the first in Canada.

Throughout the late forties and early fifties Vera Doan had been attending the University of Toronto at night and during summer sessions. Often studying until four or five o'clock in the morning. Her efforts paid off. In 1953 she received her Bachelor of Arts degree and in 1955 her Bachelor of Education. Mrs. Doan then went to Columbia University in New York where she received her M. Sc. in Library Science in 1956. An outstanding achievement. Still wanting more education she received her Master of Education degree from the University of Toronto in 1962.

It was in this year that Vera Doan reached the pinnacle of her career and calling. She set up and administered the first Library Department courses in Canada.

After leaving her education career in 1973 Mrs. Doan spent the next twenty-three years in happy retirement. A cozy summer home on Balsam Lake, a loving family, caring friends and enough money. The only thing she did not have was the husband she lost so long ago.

Cpl. Rennie's girlfriend, Lillian Watterson, was single for eleven years. When the crash occurred Lillian was working in the Bank of Montreal. She pursued this career until 1950 when she married William C. Francis who worked for the same bank. After her marriage Lillian become a homemaker. She and William moved around from bank to bank until finally settling in Ottawa where Mrs. Francis still resides. William died in 1982

therefore Lillian has been alone for the past twenty-two years. At eighty-six her health is not as good as it could be, but her spirits are great. On the phone she does not sound a day over thirty.

For the Rennies the loss was essentially the same. Neither Mr. or Mrs. Rennie were ever the same again. Losing their son forever shaped their lives. Mr. Rennie aged rapidly and died prematurely. Mrs. Rennie never fully recovered from the loss of her only son. In her final hours she missed him. Ella Bateson (Rennie) now aged 85, has never forgotten her brother. She came to Fredericton last fall to help with this project and bring closure to the dreadful episode. A wonderful husband and three lovely children have helped to ease the loss of her brother and fill the void of his abiding absence, but to this day she still misses him. Time has not dulled her memory of the handsome twenty-five year old brother who disappeared 65 years ago this fall.

The pilot's boys have done well and so have his grandchildren. Charles Doan, the oldest son, is retired after enjoying a successful career with Northern Telecom and thirty-five years with Mond Industries. He lives with his wife Marg in a lovely home about ten minutes from Pearson International Airport. Lionel Doan and his wife Claudia live on Long Point, Balsam Lake in Northeastern Ontario. Lionel is retired from a thirty-four year career with Bell Canada. Claudia is an accomplished artist with water colours. Lionel and Claudia converted his mother's summer home into a beautiful year-round dwelling in among the trees on the lake shore.

Like his children Warrant Officer Doan's grandchildren are also industrious. Charlie and Marg's son Wilson is employed with Canada Border Service. His wife Anne is employed with Canada Revenue Agency. They have one son; Chandler who is nine. Bruce Doan is a fire fighter with the Brampton Fire

Department. His wife Sonia is employed with Revlon Canada Inc. in marketing. Sonia's son, Normand, is in high school. Marg and Charlie's youngest son Paul is self-employed in his own company, Complete Coverage Ltd. His wife Kristin is a marketing professional.

Lionel and Claudia Doan have three children and six grandchildren. Jim, the eldest, owns and operates Doan's Overhead Doors. His wife Wanda is a hair dresser and a part owner of Lifestyle 2000 Day Spa in Lindsay, Ontario. She and Jim have three children; James, Sarah and Aubrey. The Doan's second child, Laura is a healthcare worker. Her husband Tom is a glass and mirror installer. They have two children; Robyn and Stephanie. Lionel and Claudia Doan's youngest child, Steve, is operational manager for Miller Waste Co. - Markham Division. His wife Sharon is a Financial Analyst with the Bank of Nova Scotia. They have one child; a son named Lionel after his grandfather.

Ted Doan's greatest legacy to Canada is a family of which any man would be proud.

Cpl. Rennie's legacy is that of a man who proudly served his country and the cause of liberty. Because he did not have children one must look to his sister and her husband to view the Rennie line today.

Ella Rennie married Walter Bateson, one of David's Air Force friends, in 1941. They met through David bringing Walter to the Rennie home in the late 1930s. Walter remained in the R.C.A.F. and retired after 35 years. Ella has been a homemaker for the 63 years that she and Walter have been married. They have enjoyed a long life, a comfortable retirement and a loving family.

The Batesons have been blessed with three children. The oldest daughter, Shirley is a psycho therapist and lives in Hamilton. Walter is a partsman. He and his wife Audrey live in Saskatoon. They have two children; Sharon and Kyle. Ella and Walter's third child, Lynda, lives with her husband Jack in Blind Bay, British Columbia. They have raised four children; Shauna, Mark, Quinn and Janelle.

Sixty-five years later life has moved on. Many of those directly connected with the demise of the two young airmen have themselves passed away. Lillian Francis, Dave Rennie's former girlfriend, his sister Ella Bateson and her husband, Walter are all that remain of those most closely associated with the 1939 incident. Guy LaRamee, one of those who stopped to help the stricken aircrew in 1939 is also still alive and well in Cape Breton. All of those named are now in their mid-eighties.

The Doan boys, Charlie and Lionel do not remember their father. They are familiar with him only through pictures, letters and stories passed on by their mother. This is of course true for their children. Likewise the nieces and nephew of Dave Rennie are acquainted with him only through pictures and stories told to them by their mother and their grandparents. We trust that the story of Delta 673 will continue to be passed from generation to generation in the two families directly involved and hopefully to a wider audience.

If this brief monograph has helped to preserve the saga of the first two Canadians killed following the declaration of the Second World War it will have achieved its purpose. The sacrifice made by Warrant Officer J. E. (Ted) Doan and Cpl. David A. Rennie in the cause of liberty will forever be part of Canada's military heritage. They were first on the Roll of Honour.

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