Alvin Wilbert REIMER (1921 – 1942)





R/61467 Flight Sergeant

A.W.REIMER

Pilot

Royal Canadian Air Force

12th January 1942

Age 21

138 Squadron





Alvin Wilbert Reimer was born at Tate, Saskatchewan on 9 November 1920 the son of Diedrich Reimer and his wife Mary May nee Neufeldt of Tate, Fort Qu'Appelle, Canada. He was the youngest of their three children, having older sisters, Mary Edna and Myrtle Irene.

His father (right) had been born in Turner, South Dakota, USA in 1892 and his mother (far right) in Waldheim, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1894.



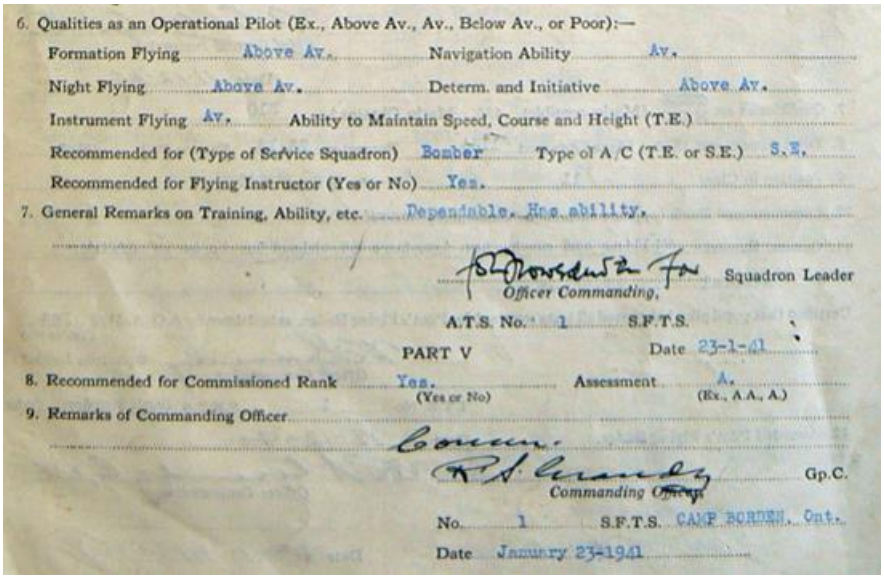


Alvin's ancestral family roots lie in Molotschna, South Russia (now Ukraine). This was a Mennonite colony established when members of this pacifist religious group moved from West Prussia (now Poland) to escape the

restrictions imposed by King Frederick William III. These restrictions were making it difficult for them to acquire land, because of their refusal to serve in the military due to their beliefs. In the late 19th century, hundreds of people left this colony to settle in North America. His great grandparents immigrated to the USA, living in Minnesota, Indiana and South Dakota before some members of the family settled in Saskatchewan where Alvin was born.

In 1921 Alvin's family were living at Gate, Last Mountain, Saskatchewan. Alvin was apparently educated at Pleasant Forks, South Dakota, so perhaps he was staying with members of his extended family who were still in the USA.

Alvin enlisted at Regina, Saskatchewan joining the RCAF in early 1940 as a Pupil Pilot. Reports from his Initial Training in July 1940 describe him as being a good athlete, having lots of nerve, being very good at mathematics and having done a lot of rifle shooting for pleasure. It states that he should make a good observer and considered he was most valuable as a pilot.



6. Qualities as an Operational Pilot (Ex., Above Av., Av., Below Av., or Poor):—
Formation Flying Above Av. Navigation Ability Av.
Night Flying Above Av. Determ. and Initiative Above Av.
Instrument Flying Av. Ability to Maintain Speed, Course and Height (T.E.)
Recommended for (Type of Service Squadron) Bomber Type of A/C (T.E. or S.E.) S.E.
Recommended for Flying Instructor (Yes or No) Yes.
7. General Remarks on Training, Ability, etc. Dependable. Has ability.
Officer Commanding, Squadron Leader
A.T.S. No. 1 S.F.T.S.
PART V Date 23-1-41
8. Recommended for Commissioned Rank Yes. (Yes or No) Assessment A. (Ex., A.A., A.)
9. Remarks of Commanding Officer
Commanding Officer Gp.C.
No. 1 S.F.T.S. CAMP BORDEN, Ont.
Date January 23-1941

After completing Part IV of his Advanced Training in January 1941, the trainers clearly felt that Alvin was very competent for they recommended him for a Bomber Squadron as well as assessing him to be suitable for becoming a flying instructor and gaining a commissioned rank.

After completing his training he was posted to England where he joined 51 Squadron based at RAF Dishforth Yorkshire. No 51 Squadron lost a Halifax on 22 June 1941 and Alvin was posted missing. Two days later, he was found safe, eight miles off Scarborough.

Alvin was later posted to the clandestine 138 Squadron based, at the time, at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk.

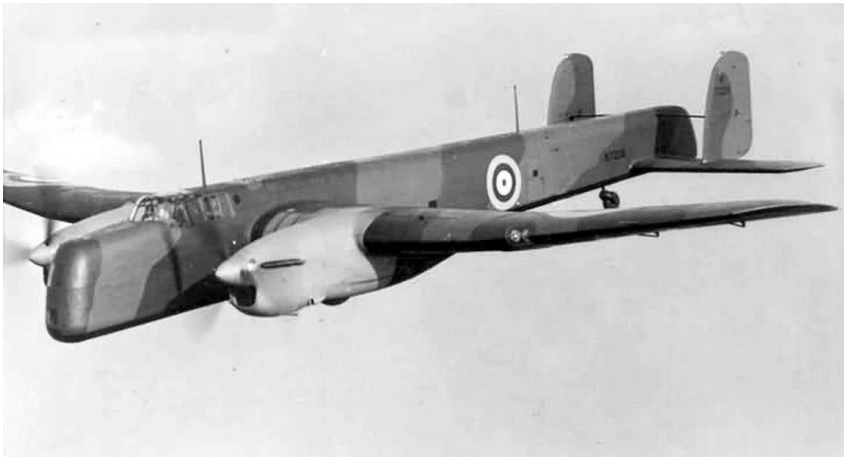
Reformed in 1941, No 318 was the first squadron of the Royal Air Force Special Duty Service initially based at RAF Stradishall before moving to RAF Tempsford in Bedfordshire. The Royal Air Force Special Duties Service provided air transport to support the resistance movement in enemy controlled territories. Planes from the 138 Squadron were involved in top-secret missions to the heart of the war-torn Continent.

The squadron dropped supplies and agents for the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service) and the SOE (Special Operations Executive). The service helped develop and support the resistance by bringing in agents, wireless operators and supplies. They had to fly low and without lights in order to identify drop zones and deliver the supplies and secret agents that would help the resistance forces liberate Europe. Parachute drop was the primary method by which the Special Duties units delivered supplies and agents to the occupied countries. They also developed an air taxi service to pick up agents, political leaders and special communications from occupied Europe and bring them to England. They flew to target fields in Vichy and Occupied France, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece.

On Saturday, 27 December 1941, some aircraft of the 138 squadron, took off from RAF Stradishall for a mission to the Netherlands. Flight Sergeant A W Reimer, RCAF flew an Armstrong Whitworth Whitley (type V, with serial no Z9385 and code NF-). This Operation Pickaxe II mission was planned for Sunday, 28 December 1941.

What was Operation Pickaxe? Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Churchill and Stalin secretly agreed that Britain would infiltrate Soviet agents into occupied Western Europe. Thirty-four men and women arrived in Scotland. To stop people finding out that Britain was helping the

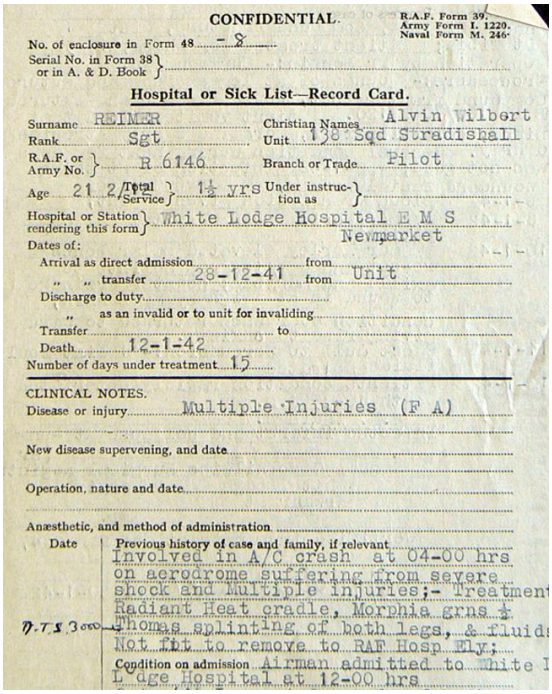
Communists, the agents were given false identities and provided with accommodation and training at remote country houses in southern England, including Beaulieu. Codenamed PICKAXES, they were sent for parachute practice at Ringway aerodrome, provided with documents, cover stories and wireless sets and sent on clandestine missions into France, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Germany and Italy.



Armstrong Whitworth Whitley V (Z9385 NF-) on its mission to Netherlands on 27/28 December 1941.

The Whitley had a crew of five: a pilot, co-pilot/navigator, a bomb aimer, a wireless operator and a rear gunner. The pilot and second pilot/navigator sat side by side in the cockpit, with the wireless operator further back. The crew members for this flight were F/Sgt Alvin Wilbert Reimer RCAF (Pilot), F/Sgt John Russell Petts RCAF (co-pilot/navigator), Sgt George Russell Stewart Gordon RAFVR (Observer), Sgt Herbert Andrew Pickering RAFVR and also an unknown rear gunner.

The detail of their flight is not known but on their return home in bad weather it is thought the aircraft was damaged when they engaged with a German ME 110 night fighter and that while attempting to land they collided with another Whitley over the airfield. The Rear Gunner and one other crewmember are reported to have baled out before the plane crashed at 0400hrs.



CONFIDENTIAL

R.A.F. Form 39
Army Form I. 1220.
Naval Form M. 246

No. of enclosure in Form 48 - 8

Serial No. in Form 38 or in A. & D. Book

Hospital or Sick List—Record Card.

Surname REIMER — Christian Names Alvin Wilbert
Rank Sgt — Unit 138 Sqd Stradishall
R.A.F. or Army No. R 6146 — Branch or Trade Pilot
Age 21 2/ — Total Service 1½ yrs — Under instruction as
Hospital or Station rendering this form White Lodge Hospital E M S Newmarket
Dates of:
Arrival as direct admission — from
" " transfer 28-12-41 — from Unit
Discharge to duty
" as an invalid or to unit for invaliding
Transfer — to
Death 12-1-42
Number of days under treatment 15

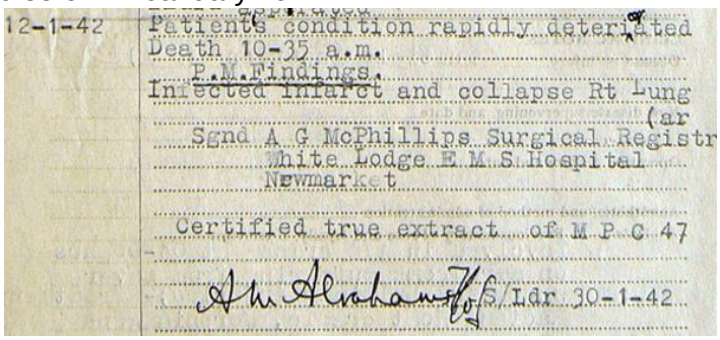
CLINICAL NOTES.
Disease or injury Multiple Injuries (F A)
New disease supervening, and date
Operation, nature and date
Anæsthetic, and method of administration

Date	Previous history of case and family, if relevant
	Involved in A/C crash at 04-00 hrs on aerodrome suffering from severe shock and multiple injuries;- Treatment Radiant Heat cradle, Morphia grns ½ Thomas splinting of both legs, & fluids Not fit to remove to RAF Hosp Ely;

Condition on admission Airman admitted to White Lodge Hospital at 12-00 hrs

Sgt Gordon, F/Sgt Petts and Sgt Pickering were killed. F/Sgt Reimer suffered severe shock and multiple injuries and was not fit enough to be taken to the RAF Hospital at Ely so was admitted to White Lodge Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Hospital, Exning Road, Newmarket. (Now known as Newmarket General Hospital.)

Despite efforts to treat him succumbed to his injuries, dying at 10.35 on 12 January 1942.



12-1-42 Patients condition rapidly deteriorated
Death 10-35 a.m.
P.M. Findings.
Infected infarct and collapse Rt Lung
Sgnd A G McPhillips Surgical Registr
White Lodge E.M.S. Hospital
Newmarket

Certified true extract of M P C 47

S/Ldr 30-1-42

Alvin Wilbert Reimer was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 140, section U.

Alvin's death was reported in Canada.

Previously Reported Seriously Injured, Now Reported Killed on Active Service.

Reimer, Alvin Wilbert, Sergeant, R61467, killed. Mrs. M. M. Reimer (mother), Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask.

FLT.-SGT. ALVIN WILBERT REIMER

was born at Tate, Sask., on November 9th, 1920, and was reported on January 15th, 1942, as "previously reported seriously injured and now reported killed on active service overseas." He entered the service of the R.C.A.F. at Regina, Sask., and was educated at Pleasant Forks, S.D., U.S.A. His home was Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask., and is survived by his family who reside there. Sgt. Reimer was unmarried.

Sgt Gordon was also buried at Haverhill Cemetery, UK F/Sgt Petts was buried at Chalk (St Mary) Churchyard, Gravesend and UK Sgt Pickering was buried at Saffron Walden Cemetery.



Memorial – Flight Sergeant Alvin Wilbert Reimer is also commemorated on the Bomber Command Memorial Wall in Nanton, Alberta (photo courtesy of Marg Liessens)

The Saskatchewan Geo Memorial Project named Lake Reimer, Saskatchewan in his memory.

