

Hank

When I was told I had to write this essay I was delighted. I have been wanting to do this for some time. My great grandfather was born in rural Nova Scotia, Blockhouse, near Lunenburg on July 23 1921 and died at the age of 95 on September 14, 2016, and he was the sixth child out of ten. He was a smart kid and always loved planes, according to his sister. So when the war came it was obvious he was going to go into the air force. He joined the military when he was 20, so in 1941 he signed up. During his time in the air force he did missions with 420 RCAF as a tail gunner in Wellington bombers and that is where he got his nickname *Crash*, even though we never called him that; I always thought it was not a nice thing to say, and maybe it would bring up bad memories.

Crash. The reason they called him *Crash*. was when my great grandfather was doing missions with 420 RCAF as a tail gunner in 1942, three years before the war ended, he was sent on a mission to drop a bomb on a German submarine base off the French coast at Lorient. They left in the early afternoon from Middleton, St George. The weather was poor that afternoon but they made the trip anyway; as my grandfather said it was 'one trip closer to going home.' As they made their way to the French coast, they were ready to drop their 4000 pound bomb. When they pressed the release button to drop the bomb, nothing happened; the bomb did not drop and it was definitely active. They tried everything to get rid of that bomb. They went into a dive and lifted up but nothing changed and they were running out of fuel. So the crew made the decision that they were going to jump out over the coast and let the plane crash into the ocean. But as they were going, they flew through a no fly zone to get to the place they planned to crash, which was into British territory. They ended up getting shot at by British artillery and they managed to survive that. When they were about to jump they felt the aircraft rise; it lifted up. They knew the 4000 pound bomb fell, and it ended up dropping over Britain, but it landed harmlessly in farmland. So they were now going to land the plane, but they were running out of fuel, and too far from an airfield, so they had to land somewhere. They knew there was a landing strip in a field at Exeter, but the weather was still bad. When they ended up coming into Exeter, the fog was down at 500 feet and there were hills at 700 so they had to be careful. They thought they saw a landing strip but it was not, so they crashed-landed in Exeter. My great grandfather was pulled out of the crash with one other crew member, but sadly the four other crew members passed away. Hank and his other crew mate were taken to the Queen Victoria hospital.

Guinea Pig Club. When he was taken to the hospital my grandfather was severely burned all over his hands and face, and he had to have plastic surgery which was new in the medical field during World War II. That's why they were called guinea pigs. Luckily his operation was very successful. He got feeling back in his hands and the nerve damage went away very quickly. Unfortunately that was not the case for many. To this day the surviving guinea pig members still get together every year.

The reason I wrote this biography about my great grandfather is not because I was happy to write this story, no, I wrote this story because I wanted to tell one of the horrifying stories of the world wars and the stuff young people have to go through. There were many younger than he was in battle.

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Grade 10

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678 words