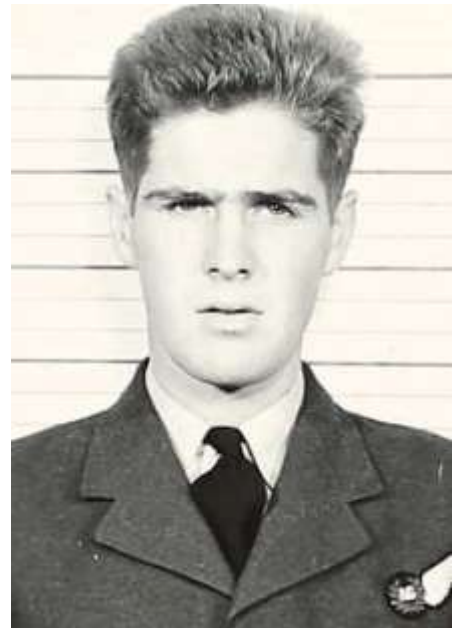


Wood, Keith Robertson

**Flight Sergeant air gunner/Royal
Canadian Air Force**

R/91595



Keith was born on the 19th of September 1921 in Vancouver. He was the adopted son of Reverend William Robertson Wood and Mrs. Margaret M. Wood (family name: Workman) of Stony Mountain. The family was member of the United Church.

Father William, born in Veira Orkney, Scotland, came to Canada in 1887. He served as Secretary of the United Farmers of Manitoba, resigning in 1925 to become Chairman and Director of the Manitoba Prohibition Alliance. William was also a politician and served in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 1915-1920. He was the chaplain for the Stony Mountain Penitentiary from 1943 till 1946. William died tragically after a fall in 1947.

Mother Margaret was born in Rothsay, Ontario. In Keith's birthyear, 1921, William and Margaret were living in Winnipeg, starting from 1928 they lived in Vancouver.

Keith and his father were very close and had many good talks, as his mother Margaret wrote in letters to family members.

William and Margaret Wood also had a daughter, Rhoda Marguerita. She was born in 1906 in Dunbarton Ontario. Rhoda was a teacher at different high schools; following a year's war service in Ottawa she returned to Winnipeg. Rhoda was not married and passed away in 1947.

Keith and his family would return to Rothsay, Ontario, on a regular basis to visit family. This is the area where mother Margaret grew up.



Keith as young boy with Clifford his cousin. Picture taken in the garden of Keith's aunt Phoebe in Rothsay Ontario. Date unknown. Courtesy of Lorelei Fisher



Keith posing in front of the house in Rothsay, in 1937. Courtesy of Lorelei Fisher

Keith did his matriculation at the Gordon Bell Highschool in Winnipeg Manitoba and followed different art classes. He has done a course of metal work and mechanical drawing at the Kelvin Technical High School for a year. A course which he never completed because he decided to enlist for military service.

He was also attending a course in airplane mechanics at a Dominion-Provincial training school, to prepare for his enlistment at the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Future plans Keith had were: farming and he wanted to start medicine studies. The fact that Keith was eager to improve himself and being active both in social as sportive way is made clear from all the activities he mentioned during his enlistment.

Keith was engaged in baseball and tennis and he had competed in several sport competitions: basketball (with high school or Church clubs), curling (with Thistle curling club Winnipeg) and swimming (at camp and at school).

Other hobbies he liked were photography and making things in the mechanics shop. Outdoor activities Keith liked were camping, hiking and scout work.

Prior to his enlistment, Keith worked as part time help at Mc. Knights Drugstore in Winnipeg for several years, as clerk and delivery boy. According to the reference letter in his service records, written by the manager in charge in absence of Mc.Knight, Keith has proved to be honest and dependable. He was anxious to learn and was willing to put-forth the effort needed to improve himself. He left his job at Mc. Knights to prepare for his school exams.

In the summer season Keith did some farm work at farms in the area as well. Furthermore, Keith was member of Manitoba boys parliament and /TUXIS. He was also president and secretary of TUXIS boy club.

Keith enlisted for the Royal Canadian Air Force at the R.C.A.F recruiting center in Winnipeg on the 21st of January 1941.

During his enlistment, Keith was a single man. He had brown hair and blue eyes, and with his 1.80m and 67kg he was a slim build healthy young man. On his forehead he had an irregular scar.



Source: Service records Library and Archives Canada
Date unknown.



Source: L. Fisher
Date unknown.

Observations and findings by the president of board the 9th of September 1941: "a pleasant, cheerful well-adjusted youngster. Appears alert, intelligent and sensible".

On March the 6th of 1942 Keith starts his training at the Initial Training School no.7 in Saskatoon. This training will end on the 8th of May 1942. He continued his training at the Elementary Flying Training School & No. 6 Prince Albert in Saskatchewan. This training starts on the 22nd of May 1942 and lasts till 14th of August that year. After 11:35 training hours of flying a Tiger Moth plane it revealed Keith's flying ability being below average, so he doesn't become a pilot. Despite the fact his behavior at school was evaluated as very good. After this news, Keith desired to be re-elected for air bomber. Keith is being recommended for air bomber course by A.T. Chesson , Sqn.Ldr and Chief Supervisory Officer van E.T.S. no. 6. Keith is going to the Bombing and Gunnery school Nr. 3 MacDonald in Manitoba.

Before being send to England, Keith is added to the Nr. 1 Y Depot Halifax on the 26th of September 1942. After graduating from their trainings, airmen are added to the Depot in Halifax for administrative purpose. They may be physically located elsewhere.

On the 25th of September 1942 Keith is promoted to Flight Sergeant. And on the 5th of November 1942 Keith is embarked to England and added to the No. 88 Squadron in Oulton, which was a "medium bomber squadron": No. 2 group with the task to attack German targets in occupied Europe.

On the 16th of May 1943 Keith is being transferred to the No.51 Squadron. During the war this squadron was mainly operational as "standard night bomber squadron".



On the 25th of June 1943, around 23:40h the Halifax plane with identification JD261 with Keith and the rest of his crew on board, leaves from the Royal Air Force base in Snaith, Yorkshire (United Kingdom). The objective for their mission was the German city of Gelsenkirchen. From the approximately 460 bombers taking part in this mission, 30 would not return to their home base in Snaith.

After completion of their mission, on their way back to Snaith, the Halifax II was shot down in the night between the 25th and 26th of June after an air battle with German Major Gunther Radusch of Stab I./NJG.I. The location where the plane was shot down was about 1km from the village of Wanroij in the Netherlands. It crashed around 01:58h on the 26th of June 1943.

On the 26th of June 1943 the crew was reported as "missing, believed to be killed". And on the 29th of November 1943 they were reported "presumed dead" for official purposes.

3 Manitobans Air Casualties

Three Manitoba airmen were named in the latest R.C.A.F. casualty list from Ottawa, Monday night.

Reported missing were: PO. Robert Andrew Livingstone, whose father resides at Rosebank, Man. and Sgt. Keith Robertson Wood, whose family lives at Stoney Mountain.

Sgt. William John Mollard, Stonewall, previously listed missing, is now for official purposes presumed dead.

The Winnipeg Evening Tribune,
August 3, 1943 (Page 11)

All crew members were killed. Keith managed to bail out, but fell with closed parachute through a roof of a house on the Hapseweg, Broekkant. Keith was the only Canadian team member, the rest of the crew was British and they are buried at the CWGC cemetery of Woensel, the Netherlands.

The British crewmembers:

F/O D.H.V.Davis

Sgt J.Roberts

Sgt A.H.Hawes

F/O D.G.Howse

Sgt A.D.McFarlane

Sgt a.W.Fairmaner



A part of the crew, with Keith as second from left and D.G.Howse on the far right. Rest of the crew is not identified. Date unknown.

Source: Aircrewremembered and L. Fisher



The crash site at Wanroij, the Netherlands. Source: Planehunters. The Planehunters Recovery Team has researched the crash site and recovered some parts of the plane.



Source: L. Fisher
Date unknown

For his service, Keith was awarded:

1939-45 star.

A/C Eur star.

Defence medal.

War medal.

CVSM medal and clasp.

His mother received his operational wings and certificate on the 4th of March 1946.

Wood Creek which flows southeast into Lewis Creek, was named after Keith Robertson Wood in 1995.

Keith died on the 26th of June 1943, at the age of 21 years old. He is buried first in Eindhoven, later reburied in Groesbeek, with grave number **XV. F. 5.**

Keith's father wrote his epitaph:

"For, back within those nights of battle dread

Amidst the blackness of that evil time

There opened for them a quiet door

And love received them to a world of Peace"



Kim Huvenaars, Research Team Faces To Graves

Source(s):

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

Lorelei Fisher

Catherine Precourt & Stonewall Municipal Heritage Committee

D. Toews, Manitoba Historical Society

Planehunters Recovery Team

Aircrew Remembered