

DISPERSALS

INTERIM NOTES

24 September 2012

LAST POST

'FRANKIE' FRANCIS • PILOT • 180 SQUADRON



Francis 'Frankie' Francis, in his 90th year, is at last flying free, after 12 years of confinement due to a stroke. He passed away on 20 July 2012 at the Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

Born 07 March 1923 in Llanelli, South Wales, Frank joined the Royal Air Force in 1941. After training in the UK and Canada, Frank was one of the earliest to join 180 Squadron at Foulsham, just 6 weeks after its formation; he was posted there from No. 17 OTU Upwood on 30 Oct 42 with crewmates Sgt J. Robinson (Nav/B) and Sgt H. Harris (WAG); Sgt T.E. Nelson (AG) joined them later. 180 Squadron was equipping with B-25 Mitchells and training continued until the first squadron operation, a 14 May 43 attack on Ijmuiden, Holland that was recalled by Fighter Wing.

Frankie and crew flew 6 Air Sea Rescue flights and 33 operations before the crew was broken up; Frankie and Robinson were posted to 2nd TAF Communications Squadron where they flew Ansons, Austers, Proctors and Vigilants for six months. On 06 Sep 44 they were once again posted to 180 Squadron; the new crew was P/O F. Francis (P), P/O F.R. Robinson (Nav/B), F/L R.M. Nielsen (WAG) and Sgt E.J. Colebrook (AG). Their first operation on this tour was an attack on enemy troop concentrations at



l-r: F/L R.M. Nielsen, F/O F.R. Robinson, F/O F. Francis, Sgt E.J. Colebrook. Melsbroek - 13 Feb 45.

Photo: Mrs Minna Nielsen via Russell Legross

Foret de la Crèche, a target marked with red smoke by allied artillery, as our troops were just 2,000 yards away. This tour, that included 2 raids on the heavily-defended Venlo bridge, was completed on 10 Mar 45 and Flying Officers Francis and Robinson were posted back to the UK.

Frank and Cora were married 22 Aug 45 in Llanelli; Frank left the RAF in 1946, with the rank of Squadron Leader, and used his war gratuity to open a Greengrocer/Restaurant in Llanelli in partnership with his brother and 2 sisters. The postwar years in the UK were economically trying so Frank and Cora moved with their two daughters to Toronto, Canada where Frank joined Trans Canada Airlines (now Air Canada); there he worked with Arthur 'Tug' Wilson (AG-98) with whom he had established a life-long friendship during the war. Frank was with TCA until his retirement. In 2000, just two years after he and Cora had moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Frank suffered an incapacitating stroke.

He is survived by Cora, his wife of 67 years, daughters Denise Joyce (Tony) of the UK and Yvonne Rahn (Ross) of Niagara-on-the-Lake, two granddaughters and two great granddaughters.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM