

## Ladder to the Lancaster

We've passed exams and read the books  
Half poi<sup>s</sup>oned by the trainee cooks;  
We've done our bit on Tiger Moth  
With Oxfords then to finish off;  
Three crisp new stripes and virgin wings  
(Some brighter bods had thin blue rings)  
To win the war we then were sent  
To justify the money spent.

All ready now for bigger game  
The "Wimpy" was the next to tame;  
A massive beast, all patched and torn  
The instructors, too, were badly worn.  
Between these two I did my stint  
In left hand seat, with red eyed squint,  
Trying not to watch how near  
That sweeping prop was to my ear.

I had by now obtained a crew  
By methods which I had no clue;  
I hadn't known, to sort us out  
We had to do a "Walk About" ...  
To find some chaps with warlike lusts  
With whom you had to place your trust;  
To get a bunch who also knew  
They had to place their trust in you!

First, I really ought to have  
A clued up, expert, brilliant Nav.,  
And then I'd need a first rate WOP  
Who'd passed his courses near the top.  
A keen-eyed Gunner then I'd claim ...  
I'm still not sure just who chose who  
But win or lose, we formed a crew.

Day and night we thumped around  
Both in the air and on the ground.  
The "Canvas Queen", fog<sup>f</sup>giving heap,  
Strained every stitch to earn her keep;  
She knew that each time, when she lands  
There were other twitching, sweaty hands  
To use, abuse her creaking flanks,  
To pave their way to cherished Lancs.

The codeword "Nickel" in my log  
Denotes a milestone in our slog  
To gain a foothold in the ranks  
For those for posting onto Lancs.  
We'd done our time at O.T.U.  
Our boobs, so far, were very few;  
The time now came to pack our gear  
And make our way to Lincolnshire.

With mud and wind to chill our joys  
We met our multi-engined toys.  
Trown in with these , for extra cheer  
A Gunner and an Engineer;  
These extra bods we had to get  
As five plus two made up the set.  
Complete with fully paid up crew  
We started work at H.C.U.

Perhaps I now should let you know  
Our ego's suffered quite a blow...;  
Wehad to start on station hacks  
But not a Lanc - a Halifax!  
These hefty kites we quickly found

Were strong enough to bash around,  
The Avro "Queens", would suffer less,  
Preserved, till last, at L.F.S.

Once again we did our chore  
The same routine we'd had before.  
Day and night, there and back.  
Log book entries, red and black.  
In spite of what we heard them say  
We lived to fly another day.  
And now our 'easy' time is through  
We've got the sticky part to do...

These lines relate in sketchy rhyme,  
How we and others at that time,  
Of tender age and lowly ranks  
Clamped eager hands on costly Lancs.  
A privilege, we hoped we earned  
To put to use the things we'd learned  
And trust, with luck, to stay intact  
To bring their gross investment back.

- REX POLENDINE



OUR FILE 22-29 (RW).....  
REF. YOUR.....  
DATED.....

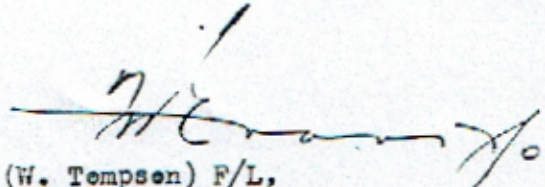
ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

Toronto, Ont., 27th Sept., 1945.

S/L G.W. Bennett, (J9180),  
281 Heath St. E.,  
TORONTO, Ontario.

Honours and Awards  
Distinguished Flying Cross

1. You are hereby advised that you have been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, effective 8th September and are entitled to wear the authorized ribbon, authority No. 2 Air Command signal, P1508 dated 24th September.

  
(W. Tempson) F/L,  
For Commanding Officer,  
No. 4 Release Centre,  
TORONTO, Ontario.

DECORATION REQUEST FOR PRESS RELEASE

NO J9180 NAME BEHNETT, Gordon Wellington

RANK A/7/L TRADE Pilot G.L.

DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH 23-3-19 Toronto, Ont. NATIONALITY Canadian

PARENTS Mr. and Mrs. H.F. Bennett

ADDRESS Box 56, Spencerville, Ont.

WIFE Mrs. G.W. Bennett

CHILDREN John Fraser

ADDRESS 232 Heath St., E., Toronto, Ont.

DATE & PLACE OF ENLISTMENT 11-3-41 Winnipeg, Man.

UNIT Co. 405 Squadron (now retired)



STRENGTH CLASSIFICATION P.C.I.F. Overseas

CLASS OF AWARD Gallantry-Operational-Flying-in conflict

DECORATION D.F.C. DATE 5-9-45

CITATION "This officer has completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which he has invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty."

DATE & PLACE OF GRADUATION: I.T.S. 12 9-7-41 E.F.T.S. 14 13-9-41

S.P.T.S. 11 1-12-41 A.N.S. \_\_\_\_\_ A.C.S. \_\_\_\_\_

B. & G. \_\_\_\_\_ W.S. \_\_\_\_\_ P.S.S. \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION BACKGROUND (Schools attended, etc.) Algonquin Public School  
Brockville Collegiate Institute Ottawa Normal school

LAST EMPLOYER St. Anthony Mine, Farent Lake, Ont. Teacher

...ourage and devotion to duty."

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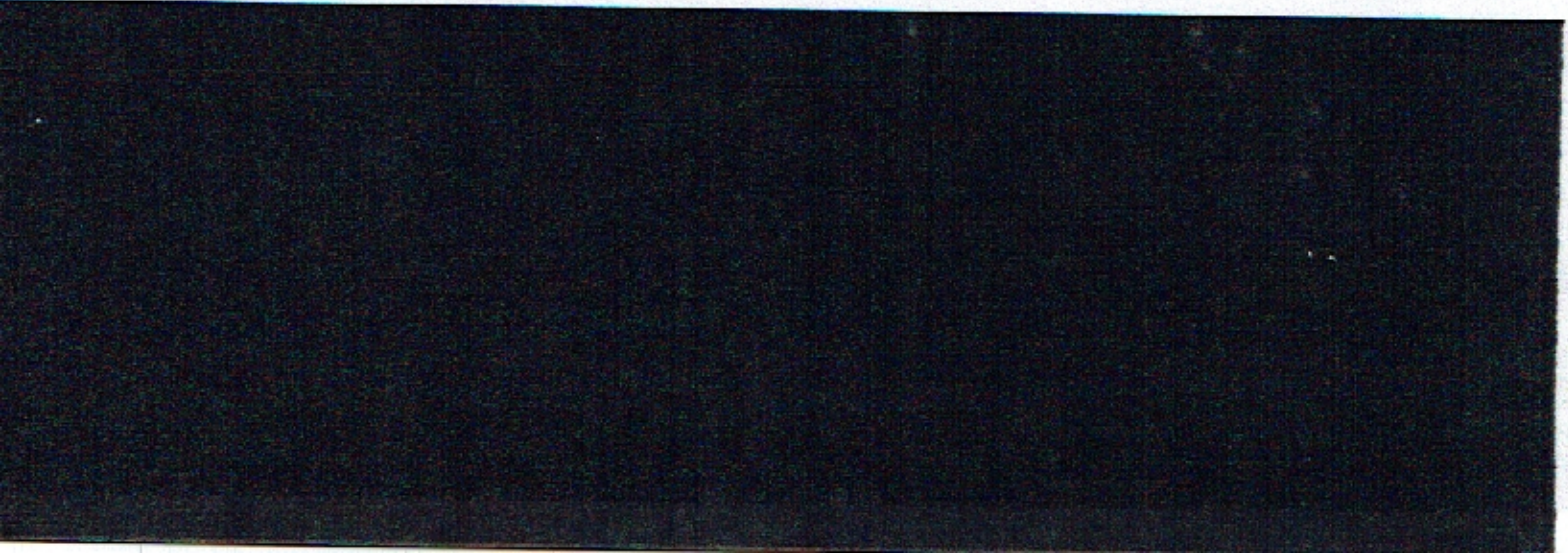
DATE & PLACE OF GRADUATION: J.T.S. 12 9-7-41 E.F.T.S. 14 13-5-41  
S.P.T.S. 11 5-12-41 A.H.S. \_\_\_\_\_ A.O.S. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. & G. \_\_\_\_\_ W.S. \_\_\_\_\_ P.B.S. \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION BACKGROUND (Schools attended, etc.) Algonquin Public School  
Brookville Collegiate Institute Ottawa Normal School

LAST EMPLOYER St. Anthony Mine, Kawant Lake, Ont. Teacher

GENERAL BACKGROUND (Outstanding Achievements, etc.) Pilot's Flying Badge  
5-12-41 Operational Wings C.V.S.S. & Group

AUTHORITY FOR DECORATION London Gazette 2/11-9-45





**STATEMENT OF SERVICE**  
in the  
**CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

**Name:** Gordon Wellington BENNETT

**Service Rank or Number:** J-9180

**Branch of Service:** Royal Canadian Air Force

**Date and Place of Birth:** 29 March 1919 Toronto, Ont.

**Date and Place of Appointment,  
Enlistment or Enrolment:** 11 March 1941 Winnipeg, Man.

**Theatres of Service:** Canada and Overseas

**Date and Place of Retirement  
or Discharge:** 10 September 1945 Trenton, Ont.

**Type of Retirement or Discharge:** Honourable

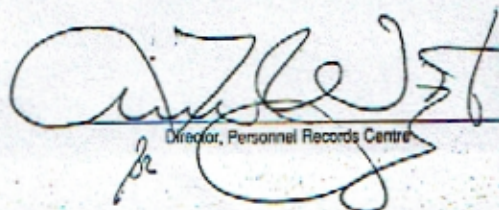
**Rank on Retirement or Discharge:** Squadron Leader

**Medals and Decorations:** Distinguished Flying Cross, 1939-45 Star,  
France and Germany Star, Defence Medal,  
Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp  
and War Medal 1939-45

**Remarks:** Was awarded Pilot's Flying Badge and  
Operational Wings

12 April 1989

Date



Director, Personnel Records Centre

