

Cholette, Joseph Henri Jacques
Pilot Officer
Royal Canadian Air Force
425 Squadron
J/16502



Je te plumerai- 'I shall pluck you'

Joseph Henri 'Jacques' Cholette was born in Montréal, Quebec, Canada on Wednesday March 8, 1922. He was the eldest son of Jean Paul Cholette and Marguerite Olivier Doré-Cholette. They got married in Église Sainte-Madeleine d'Outremont, a church building in Montréal, Québec, Canada on September 14, 1920. The family also consisted of youngest son Pierre Cholette. The family were members of the Roman-Catholic Church and lived at 734 Outremont Avenue, Apartment 5, in Montréal, Quebec. Apart from English, they also spoke French. Father Jean Paul worked with the Aluminium Company of Canada.



Jacques went to College Notre Dame in Montréal, Quebec for eight years and on to Catholic High School, Montréal, Quebec in 1938.

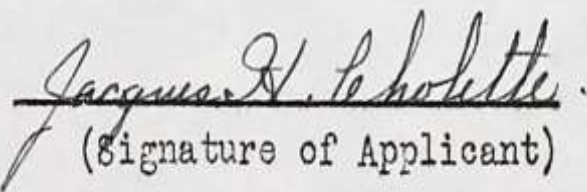
Source :
<https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/>

He chose the fields of Commercial and Matriculation. The classes he most enjoyed were English and French whereas mathematics was the subject he liked least.

He had dark hair and brown eyes, was 6 ft tall and weighed 150 lbs. At the age of six he had an operation on both big toes, because he had ingrown toenails, which resulted in an extra school year for him.

At the age of 11 Jacques was laid up for three weeks because he had got sunstroke. He smoked fifteen cigarettes a day and did not drink any alcohol. He practised tennis, badminton, rugby, baseball and basketball. In his spare time he loved building model planes and enjoyed driving in his car. He also owned a motor boat and loved to go skiing after school time.

After obtaining his diplomas at school and reaching the age of 18, Jacques signed up with the Royal Canadian Air Force on July 15, 1940 and wanted to become a pilot. He had been interested in aviation for two years and had flown from Montréal to New York as a passenger.



(Signature of Applicant)

He was deemed fit to become a member of Pilot of Air Crew and on July 22, 1940 he was assigned to No 1 Manning Depot in Toronto. This is where his military career started, where he

learned how to bathe, shave, polish his boots, brush his buttons, maintain his uniforms and behave in an otherwise orderly fashion. Every day they had two hours of physical education and instruction in marching, rifle drills, saluting and other routines. Jacques was given the rank of Air Craftsman 2nd Class. On August 16, 1940 he took further training at Camp Borden, Ontario, the home base of the largest training wing of the Canadian armed forces.

Canadian Force Base Borden Camp was run by the Canadian Forces Support Training Group (CFSTG).

On October 23 he was assigned to No 2 Initial Training School in Regina, Saskatchewan. Candidates to become pilots and air observers started their twenty-six to twenty-eight week training programme off with four weeks at an Initial Training School (ITS). They studied



theoretical subjects and were subjected to various tests. Theoretical studies comprised navigation, flight theory, meteorology, officer's tasks, air force administration, algebra and trigonometry.

Tests also included an interview with a psychiatrist, a four-hour M2 medical examination, a session in a decompression chamber and a 'test flight' in a Link Trainer.



From February 5 until February 19, 1940 Jacques was allowed to go on leave and signed up with No 2 Manning Depot in Brandon, Manitoba.

On March 17 he was given the rank of Leading Air Craftsman (LAC). He took further training at No 3 Wireless School in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is where candidates were trained in operating radio systems on board and on the ground. On completing their training they were stationed at the Bombing and Gunnery Schools to be trained as Air Gunners. On August 4, 1941 he took the training to become an Air Gunner at No 7 Bombing & Gunnery School in Paulson, Manitoba. On September 1, 1941 he was given the rank of Sergeant. The following day, September 2, 1941, he went to No 1 Y Depot in Halifax to prepare for his voyage overseas. On October 7, he made the crossing to England, where he set foot ashore in Bournemouth, in the County of Dorset on October 19.

This coastal town welcomed thousands of air crew and was the home base of No 3 Personnel Reception Centre. On December 9, 1941 Jacques took a training at No 1 Signals School in Cranwell, Lincolnshire, England, after which he was assigned to No 23 Operational Training Unit in Pershore, Worcestershire on May 5, 1942.



No 23 Operational Training Unit, Royal Air Force, was established at Royal Air Force Base in Pershore in April 1941 as part of No 6 Group Royal Air Force Bomber Command in order to train night bomber crews using Vickers Wellington bombers. Royal Air Force Base Pershore was situated at approx. 8 miles south-east of Worcester, Worcestershire. This city boasts one of the United Kingdom's largest cathedrals, Worcester Cathedral.

On July 23, 1942 Jacques was assigned to 425 Squadron, the first French-Canadian squadron, which was set up at Royal Air Force Base Dishforth in Yorkshire, England on June 22, 1942. Its emblem was derived from the squadron's nickname 'Alouette', its motto came from the refrain of the French-Canadian folk song. The lark was shown in a hovering position, indicative of a bomber over the target about to strike the enemy. The squadron was also called The Flying Forteresse. On August 16, 1942 Joseph Henri Jacques earned his 'Wings' and was given the rank of Pilot Officer-Wireless Operator/Airgunner.

At about 17.53 hours on Sunday December 20, 1942 a Vickers-Wellington III medium-heavy bomber, registration number Z1729 and code KW-T, took off from Royal Air Force Base Dishforth, North Yorkshire, England. The plane left to carry out a bombing flight on the German town of Duisburg together with 231 other bombers. The aircraft was piloted by Flight Sergeant Lesley Frank Causley together with five more crew members, among whom Wireless Operator/Airgunner Joseph Henri Jacques Cholette.



After bombing Duisburg the Vickers Wellington with two English and four Canadian crew on board was hit and damaged, probably by a FLAK , Flugabwehrkanone, as a result of which the bomb hatches remained open. Flight Sergeant Lesley Frank Causley, the pilot, ordered his crew to open up their parachutes, for it was not clear for how long he would be able to keep the aircraft in the air. The damaged aircraft was later attacked by a German Night Hunter aircraft, piloted by Hauptmann Werner Streib of I./Nachtjagdgeschwader 1. The Vickers Wellington was hit by canon fire and dived straightaway. Pilot Causley did everything he could to make the aircraft gain altitude again, however to no avail.

As soon as the aircraft was losing more altitude, the Night Hunter struck again in the vicinity over Volkel. During this action the port engine and wing were hit and both caught fire.

Attempts to control the fire proved unsuccessful. Sergeant (bomb aimer) Harold Mohin crawled to the front to assist and fell out of the plane through the opened bomb hatch.

Flight Log 425th Squadron
RCAF; flight 20 Dec 1942 -
5:53 pm: Missing.

Due to the smoke in the aircraft he had not been able to see that the hatch was open. Fortunately, he was wearing his parachute and managed to land safely on the ground. Pilot Causley ordered his crew to prepare for a parachute jump. The Vickers Wellington started to overturn and Causley was thrown out of the aircraft. During his fall he pulled himself together and succeeded in opening his parachute in time. He landed in Boekel with a wounded knee and was later made prisoner of war.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK									
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT									
By 425 (B.G.A.V.) Squadron									
SECRET									
For the Month of December, 1942.									
Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time		Details of Sortie or Flight	References	Remarks	
				Up	Down				
17/18 Dec/42	Wellington III (Ditch)	L 3803	Sgt. Davidson, W.C. Sgt. Alkins, L. Sgt. Debuty, J.H.	Gaslighting	17:00	23:25	Visibility very poor. Target not identified. Misses brought back. Unsuccessful trip. Landed at Triffels.	A-119	
"	"	"	"	"	17:05	22:54	Very bad visibility. Cloud base from 800 to 1400 feet. Misses brought back. Target not identified. Landed from 200 feet but not identified. Visibility brought back miss.	A-120	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-121	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-122	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-123	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-124	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-125	
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	A-126	

A little later the aircraft exploded in the air and large burning debris landed on the ground in Boekel at around 20.13 hours. One wing of the Wellington crashed into a house and a henhouse. Debris lay scattered over a large territory on a plot of farmland situated in Boekel. The terrain was guarded and the German occupiers were warned.

During the crash four soldiers died, all from Canada. Initially, they were all buried at the Algemene Begraafplaats in Eindhoven (Woensel) and on November 19, 1945 reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery:

- Navigator, Pilot Officer, Pierre Augustine Guy Martel from Montréal, Quebec, 21 years old, grave reference XVI. D. 16.
- Air Gunner, Warrant Officer, Class II, Jean Paul Alban Raymond, 21 years old, from Saint John's, Quebec, grave reference XVI. F. 5.
- Air Gunner, Warrant Officer, Class II, Charles William Horley Roy, from Quebec, 22 years old, grave reference XVI. F. 4.
- Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Pilot Officer, Joseph Henri Jacques Cholette, from Montréal, Quebec, 20 years old, grave reference XVI. F. 3.

The two survivors of the crash were:

- Flight Sergeant, Pilot, Lesley Frank Causley, from England. He was made prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 3 Sagan & Belaria, south-east of Berlin. He

survived the war and died in 1956, four years after visiting the site of the crash in Boekel.

- Sergeant (bomb aimer) Harold Mohin from England was also captured and made prisoner of war in Stalag 344 Lamsdorf, in the south-east of Poland, not far from the Czech border.

At 20.13 hours on December 20, 2017, exactly 75 years after this tragic event took place, a plaque was erected and revealed at the site of the crash, now Erpseweg 16 in Boekel.



Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, Pilot Officer, Joseph Henri Jacques Cholette, from Montréal, Quebec, Canada. Royal Canadian Air Force, 20 years was initially buried at the Algemene Begraafplaats in Eindhoven (Woensel), on November 19, 1945 and later reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XVI. F. 3.**

On his headstone the following words
are inscribed:

EN PLEINE GLOIRE
DANS LA PAIX DU CHRIST ET
DE MARIE POUR CEUX QU'IL A AIMES



Photo: <http://lestweforget1945.org/>



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Gijs Krist - Research Team Faces To Graves

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

Library and Archives Canada

WWW. Aircrewremembered.com

Joop van Lankvelt

Kees van Ginneke

Heemkunde Boekel

* If you should have a photograph of this soldier or any additional information, please contact info@facestograves.nl



Seventy-six years after the crash a dial of one of the two tachometers of the aircraft engines was found on the site of the crash in Boekel.



A photo with part of the crew : Seated from left to right: B. Tremblay, P. Bedard, D. Girouard, L. Causley, G. Martel. from left to right: J. Raymond, H. Roy, J. Cholette, M. Seguin, F. Bauer.

Gemeente-Politie te Boekel.
 Pro Justitia. Nr. 84.
 Onderwerp:
 Neergestort Engelsch vliegtuig.

PROCES-VERBAAL.

Ondergeteeskende, PETRUS CORNELIUS VAN DE LELGRAAF, gemeente-
 tevens onbezoldigd rijksveldwachter te Boekel, verklaart op ambts-
 eed, afgelegd bij de aanvaarding zijner bediening, het navolgende:

"Op 20 December 1942 omstreeks 20.20 uur stortte na een voor-
 af waargenomen luchtgevecht een vliegtuig brandend neer op een per-
 ceel bouwland gelegen te Boekel kadastraal bekend gemeente Boekel
 Sectie H 1527, toebehoorende aan de stichting van den H. Vincentius
 a Paulo te Boekel. Dit vliegtuig bleek later een Engelsch vlieg-
 tuig te zijn van het Wellington-type. Zoo spoedig mogelijk werd het
 terrein, waarop het vliegtuig lag, onder bewaking genomen door twee
 manschappen van den Post Marechaussee te Boekel en door mij relatant
 Den betrokken instantie's werd onverwijld telefonisch melding ge-
 daan. Intusschen werd waargenomen dat er een geopende parachute
 lag op het erf van den landbouwer M. Hoevenaars, wonende A 136 te
 Boekel en op betrekkelijk korten afstand hiervandaan werd een En-
 gelsch militair aangetroffen die vermoedelijk tot de bemanning van
 bedoeld neergestort vliegtuig had behoord. Deze militair is onmid-
 dellijk aangehouden en overgebracht naar het raadhuis te Boekel al-
 waar hij later aan Duitsche militairen is overgegeven. In wijden
 kring om het vliegtuig werden groote stukken hiervan gevonden, o.a.
 de vleugels, de motoren, enz. Deze stukken werden onder bewaking
 gesteld van manschappen van den luchtbeschermingsdienst. Na eeni-
 gen tijd kwamen ter plaatse de Ortscommandant en eenige manschappen
 der Feldgendarmerie uit 's-Hertogenbosch en even later vijf Duitsche
 militairen uit Eindhoven, welke laatsten de bewaking van ons over-
 namen, nadat zij door ons met de ligging van het vliegtuig en de
 gevonden stukken daarvan in kennis waren gesteld. Bij een verder is
 gesteld onderzoek werden op het erf van den landbouwer Th. van Lith
 wonende A 135 te Boekel, twee lijken gevonden van Canadeesche mili-
 tairen en nog twee gedeeltelijk verkoolde lijken van militairen onder
 de wrakstukken van het vliegtuig, eveneens van Canadeesche nationa-
 liteit. De bemanning van bedoeld vliegtuig had dus in totaal besta-
 uit vijf koppen. Het bergingswerk der lijken van het vliegtuig werd
 door de Duitsche instantie verzorgd.

Aan de woning van Theodorus van Lith voornoemd, werd, tenge-
 volge het daarop vallen van een der manschappen van het vliegtuig,
 beschadigd. Vernield werden: 23 dakpannen a / 0.10 per stuk = / 2.30;
 15 steenen a / 0.03 per stuk = / 0.45; voorts een paar latte die
 met inbegrip van het werkloon voor herstel van genoemde schade en
 de te gebruiken specie nog werden geschat op / 5.--, zoodat de to-
 tale schade aan de woning van Van Lith voornoemd, / 7.75 bedraagt.

Aan de woning en het kippenhok toebehoorende aan Cornelia van
 Dooren, weduwe van W. van Berlo, wonende B 93 te Boekel, werden
 tengevolge van het neerstorten van een vleugel van bedoeld vlieg-
 tuig vernield: 200 dakpannen a / 0.10 is / 20.--; 12 glasruiten a
 / 1.-- is / 12.--, en voorts werden muren van het gebouw gescheurd
 waarvan de schade met inbegrip van arbeidsloon voor geheel de sch-
 de werd geschat op / 28.--, zoodat de totale schade aan de eigen-
 dommen van C. van Dooren voornoemd, is geschat op / 60.--."

Waarvan dit proces-verbaal is opgemaakt op 22 December 1942,

De Veldwachter voornoemd,

Gezien op 23 December 1942.
 De Burgemeester van Boekel,

P. de Lelgraaf

Missing, Believed Killed



Sgt. J. H. Cholette



Sgt. Guy Martel

Reported missing and believed killed, Sergeant Cholette is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Cholette, of 734 Outremont avenue, Outremont. He is a veteran of many aerial raids over enemy territory. He was born in Montreal, enlisting in the R.C.A.F. in July, 1940. He received his wing at Paulson, Man., following training at Brandon and Winnipeg, Man.

Sergeant Martel, also reported missing and believed killed, is an observer who left for overseas almost immediately after receiving his wing. He is the only son of Mr. and Mrs. A. Martel of 2360 Park Garneau, Ville Emard. He received his education at Plateau Academy and was an assistant scoutmaster of St. Albans' Church troop.