

WILLIAM GERALD SCHROEDER 1918-1945

William Gerald Schroeder was the first born in the family of William Wesley Schroeder and Edith L. (Anderson) Schroeder. The first member of the family, that would eventually swell to nine brothers and one sister, was born on February 7, 1918 on a farm a few miles northwest of the village of Clandeboye ON. A few years later the growing family moved to a farm north of the village of CREDITON, in Stephen Township, Huron County. Gerald first attended school in the village of CREDITON. In 1926 Gerald and the family moved to a farm at Lot 10 Concession 2 Stephen Township east of the village of CREDITON. It is interesting to note that this is the same farm that Joseph Anderson purchased as virgin land from the Canada Land Company in 1854. Joseph Anderson was the grandfather of Edith Schroeder. The farm is currently (1998) operated by Reginald Schroeder, a son of William and Edith , and a brother to Gerald. Gerald easily assumed the responsibility of the Big Brother in the growing family, escorting younger family members to the Fairfield Public School. Gerald was respected by his siblings for his fair, quiet and methodical manner which helped the family during the Depression years. Gerald was the chief buggy driver when transportation to the Exeter High School started. Old Tom, a black horse, with the family since the marriage of William and Edith, required a firm hand because of his desire to race with any passing horse. Gerald applied the firm hand and safely transported the family to Centralia, CREDITON and Exeter as required. During the so called "Dirty Thirties" Gerald worked on the home farm, and yet found time to provide major assistance to a neighbour who was hospitalised with "consumption" or TB as it is known today. Social activities included jack rabbit drives, and activities at the CREDITON United Church , such as Young Peoples, picnics and the famous "Fowl Suppers" of that day. The young man, who a few years later would navigate half way round the world, found he could not navigate the barn runway with a full load of hay. This created much laughter among his younger brothers, which quickly turned to groans when they realised they would have to help reload the wagon. Gerald joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on August 4, 1941. His actual flying career started on January 6' 1942 when he climbed into Tiger Moth No. 5888 for a familiarisation flight. Mr English a civilian pilot took Gerald up for that flight from No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School at Malton ON. Gerald was on Course No 45 and he now became just one of the many thousands to participate in the famous British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Elementary flying training extended from January 6, 1942 until February 27, 1942, when he had completed more than 34 hours of solo Flying on the Tiger Moth. Gerald now moved to No. 5 Service Flying Training School at Brantford ON, moving up to the Anson, a twin engined aircraft. Gerald commenced flying Ansons on March 19, 1942, and completed this phase of his training on June 29, 1942. A few days later at Graduation ceremonies on July 2, 1942, Gerald received his "Wings" from the renowned ace of World War 1, Billy Bishop, now an Air Commodore in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Gerald also received his Commission as a Pilot Officer with service number J12468 in the Royal Canadian Air Force. After a short leave Gerald reported to No. 31 General Reconnaissance School at Charlottetown PEI as a staff pilot for the period August 16 to August 26 and then moved to No.1 General Reconnaissance School at Summerside PEI taking more advanced training as a staff pilot. Gerald remained at No. 1 GRS from August 31, 1942 until May 9, 1944, adding almost 1000

flying hours to his log book. Training included night flying, instrument flying and flights to many parts of the Maritimes. While at Summerside Gerald was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer. It is recalled that some 10 sheep made the supreme sacrifice to slow Gerald's Anson during a forced landing in a farmer's field. Anson No. 45 had a very furry undercarriage. Flying Officer W. Leroy Schroeder joined Gerald as a Passenger in his Anson for a couple of flights in October 1943. A happy reunion for the brothers. On March 10, 1944 Flying Officer Gerald Schroeder reported to No.2 Air Navigation School at Charlottetown PEI, completing this part of the training on May 9, 1944 when he landed Anson No. 11685 at the Charlottetown field. After a period of leave, Gerald reported to No. 5 Operations Training Unit at Boundary Bay BC and flew his first familiarization flight in a Mitchell aircraft on May 29, 1944. This training continued until August 16, 1944. Training included bombing exercises, night circuits and formation flying. Gerald's flight on August 14 was a night flight and a combination of fog and radio failure resulted in Gerald landing his Mitchell at Spokane WA. Gerald was introduced to the Liberator aircraft on August 19, 1944 when he reported to No. 5 Operations Training Unit at Abbotsford BC. Training at Abbotsford was completed on September 18, 1944, and Gerald relaxed on leave back in Ontario, awaiting his overseas posting. This came late in October when he reported to No. 45 Atlantic Transport Group Dorval QC, to prepare for a flight to India. Gerald was second pilot to Captain R.E. Adams when Liberator KH364 lifted off from Dorval QC on November 4, 1944 heading east. The Liberator landed at Gander NF; Lagen, in the Azores; Rabat, French Morocco; Castel Benito, Tripoli; Cairo West, Egypt; Ramat David, Palestine; Bahrein Island then Karachi India arriving on November 11, 1944. Flying time 42 hours. After leave Gerald was briefly posted to No.6 R.F.U. at Royal Air Force Kolar India for a refresher course on night and low level flying of Liberators, before being posted to No. 159 Squadron Royal Air Force for active service. Gerald's first operational flight took place on January 8, 1945 when his Squadron bombed Moulmein. Operations continued almost on a daily basis with bombing, mine laying, to such locations as Bangkok river, Penang and other targets along the Burmese coast.

On February 9, 1945, Liberator KH255 with F/L W.G. Schroeder, F/O N. Zakow, F/O R. Talbot, F/O R.L. McMillan, F/O K.G. Johnson, P/O F.J. Conway, Sgt. Burton, and Sgt. Bright took off on a group raid. The official extract from Royal Canadian Air Force records reads "Killed in Action February 9, 1945 age 27, No. 159 Squadron (Quo Non Quando Non) Target Khal-Hua-Gang. The crew of the aircraft were engaged in a bombing operation when their aircraft caught fire in mid – air. The aircraft crashed and the bombs exploded on impact south of Moulmein Burma. F/L Schroeder is buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, Rangoon, Burma. His name is also inscribed on the Singapore War Memorial, Malaya. In addition a stone marker for Gerald is installed at the grave site of his parents William and Edith in the Cemetery at Exeter ON.