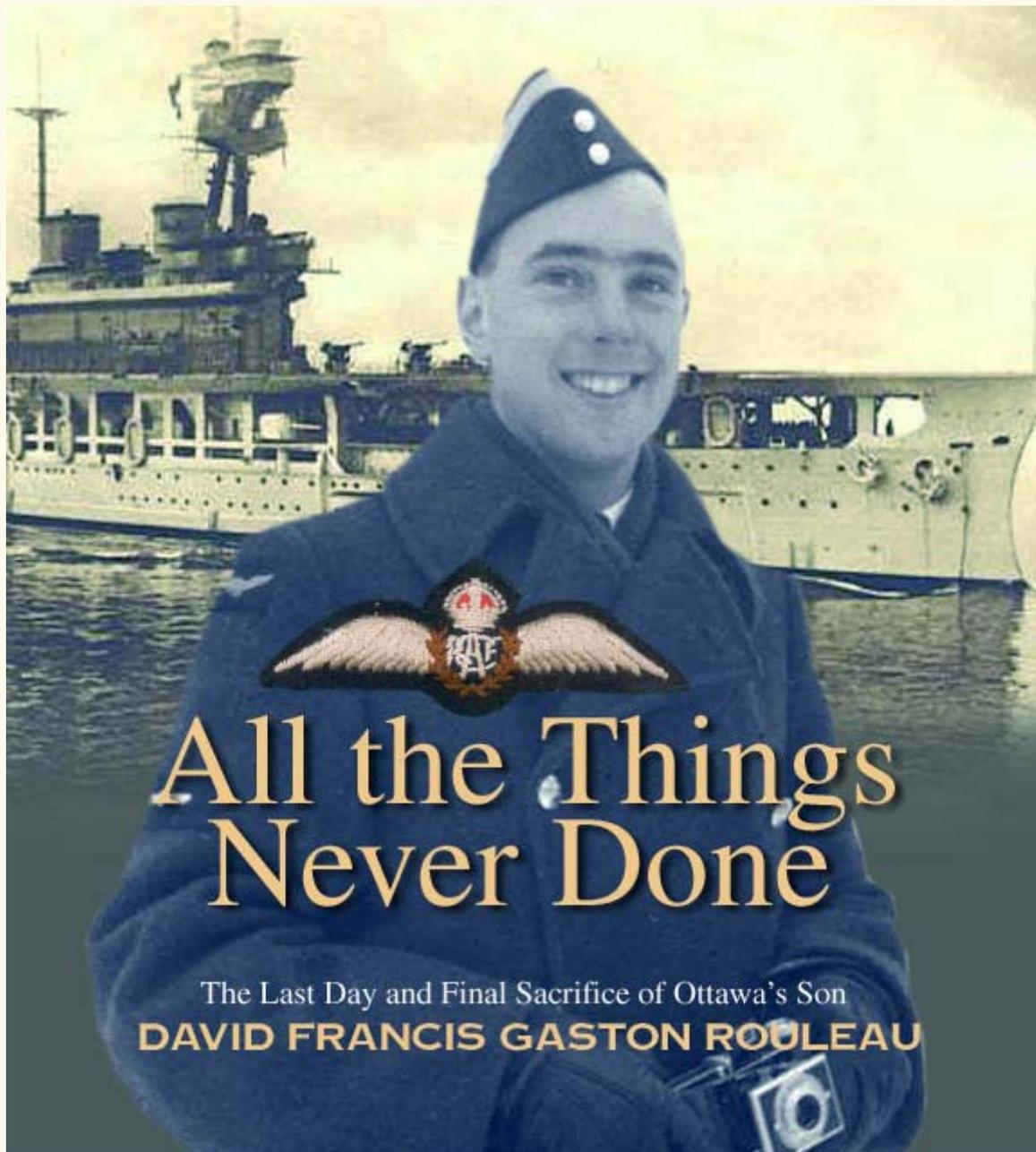


All the Things Never Done - the last day of David Rouleau's Life



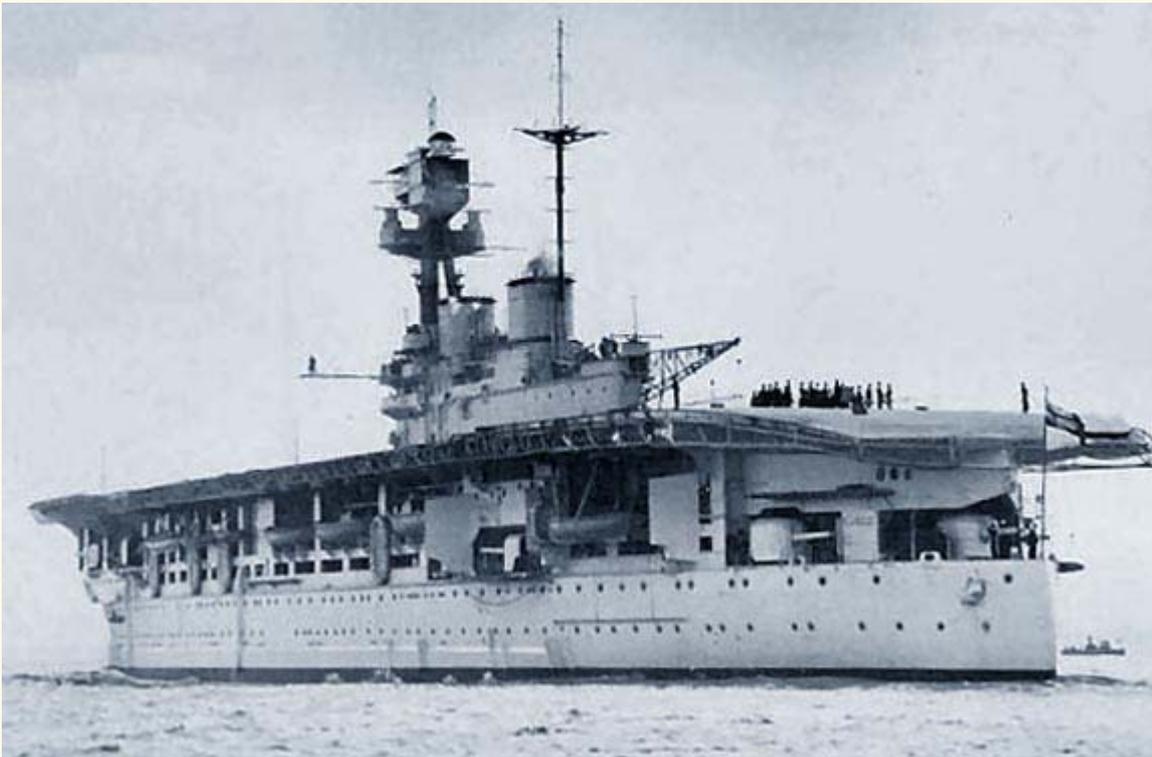
Somewhere far off the unseen coast of North Africa, far to the east of Gibraltar, upon the open sea, David Rouleau was seeing his world in unbearable clarity. Everything he looked at held such sharpness and detail, that he felt as though he looked at them for the first time – the coil of leather tape wrapping the spade grip of his Spitfire's control column, the lazy floating of the compass, the salt specks on his windshield, the green-grey hue of zinc chromate paint. He stared, perhaps for only three seconds, but it seemed forever, at the blue wool of his battle dress trousers. Outside his cockpit, the white shirt and shoulder boards of a Royal Navy lieutenant stood sharp and hard against the light grey side of HMS *Eagle*'s island superstructure as the officer leaned out as if to signal something to Flying Officer Johnny Plagis in the lead Spitfire.

Everything he smelled was sharp and potent. With his oxygen mask swaying as it hung to one side, he took short, sharp breaths from a colourless cloud of air, high-octane fuel, glycol and oil. Behind this stench of combustible vapours he detected notes of bakelite, wool, shoe polish, salt air, metal warming in the sun, leather and *Eagle*'s foul smoke. The whiff of sweat rose from his helmet and mask. He marvelled at all this, while running through all the checks and actions

needed to get his Spitfire ready to do something he and it had never done before.

His throat was dry and he longed for water. Everything he tasted was sharp and biting. He could taste the metal in the air around him, his breakfast of hot tea, eggs and rashers, the salt of the Mediterranean, the cigarette he had just crushed out on the round down behind his Spitfire. He could taste his own fear rising up in his throat. It was difficult to swallow.

Everything he heard was muffled and distant. All sound seemed to come to him as if through the dark depths of the Mediterranean that ran in deadly shadow beneath him, four decks down. The runaway tumult of the Rolls Royce Merlin was felt as much as heard. The vibration shook his eyeballs, made the needles quiver in all the dials before him, masked his own shaking and yet made him feel powerful that all this was set in motion by his own hand. The crazed harmonies of the Spitfire did not mask all other vibrations. Two other rhythms found their way into his consciousness despite the howl around him. Up through the tires, the oleos, the wing spar, his seat, his chute and his spine came the heavy steel thrum of *Eagle's* screws coupled with a gentle rise and fall of the ship's grey bulk. Perhaps he was just imagining the vibrations, but the slow yo-yo of the horizon combined with the smell of fuel was starting to make him nauseous. And then there was his heart. It pounded out doubt and fear and excitement and glory. He felt it rushing in his ears, felt his heart push his blood beneath the tightness of his shoulder straps. The blood he would soon shed.



HMS *Eagle* showing her unique high foremast with gun spotting platform (two of her six inch guns can be seen in turrets beneath the flight deck) and long round down at her stern where the Navy ensign waves proudly. Built on a hull originally destined to float a battle cruiser for the Chilean navy, *Eagle* was in many respects, a one-off.

David had not slept the night before, at least not very well. He'd lain in his cot on the hangar deck chain smoking Senior Service cigarettes, butting them out in a coffee can filled with sand. He had only smoked a few cigs before the war, but now he needed them to calm his hands. Everyone needed them. Around him Royal Air Force "erks" and Royal Navy ratings laboured together beneath harsh light all through the night to uncrate and ready the rest of the 31 Spitfires for the morning's launch. The pilots and Spitfires had sailed from England in a convoy the previous week. He dozed now and then only to jump awake beneath his grey wool blanket at the sound of a dropped wrench, an explosive blast of compressed air or the pounding of a hammer. Around him lay the other pilots he'd met on the freighter *Empire Conrad*.

He could tell by the glow of their cigarettes in the shadows that they too were restless. He'd been chatting past midnight with Flight Sergeant Hugh MacPherson, a fellow Canadian who had come down from Wales with him and who now sat in the Spitfire ahead of him. Nine of the 28 pilots on *Empire Conrad* had been Canadian and it comforted David to travel with them. Two other Canadians who were in this group on *Eagle*, Flight Sergeant Bob Middlemiss and Pilot Officer Henry Wallace MacLeod would become icons in the Royal Canadian Air Force – MacLeod as the RCAF's highest scoring ace of the Second World War and Middlemiss as an ace and future great of the Sabre years.

What they all had to do when the sun came up had kept them from the sleep that young men who may die tomorrow deserve. Except Johnny Plagis – The Rhodesian's steady breathing could be observed even in the shadows where they lay. Plagis had not been with them as they sailed from Wales, meeting up with them instead on Gibraltar the day before yesterday. He along with "old" Malta hands, Squadron Leader Barton and Flight Lieutenant Peck, had flown in on a Hudson from Malta to help guide the 28 men of "Operation Style" from *Eagle* across the sea and into Takali airfield. In all the aircraft delivery operations to Malta, this was to be the one and only time that pilots would be guided by experienced Malta veterans. The young Sergeant pilots and Pilot Officers hung on Plagis' every word.



The Greek-Rhodesian Flight Lieutenant Johnny Plagis was already an old Malta hand when he met David Rouleau in Gibraltar. He would go on to claim 11 victories in Maltese skies. This would be the first time that pilots from a Malta-based squadron would be employed to guide replacement pilots and their Spitfires into Malta. It would also be the only time that they were intercepted, leading some to speculate foreknowledge.



HMS *Eagle* under full steam on a choppy sea. Photo via Howard Cook

HMS *Eagle* had left the busy naval order and the comforting shadow of Gib just yesterday, June 2nd, 1942, slipping smoothly from her moorings in the company of the cruiser HMS *Charybdis* and the destroyers *Ithuriel*, *Partridge*, *Antelope*, *Wishart* and *Westcott*. Once out to sea, *Eagle* and her escort worked up to her maximum speed and made steady revolutions through the Alboran Sea following far off the coast of Africa throughout the remainder of the day and into the darkness. His fitful passage through the night was marked by a half waking-half dreaming state, that offered up ghostly images from his past life and flitting unshaped images from his uncertain future. He saw his mother clearly, a pinched worried look on her face. He was the widow Gertrude Rouleau's only child and she shrank from the possibility of the awful sacrifice her son David had asked her to make. At his Wings Parade at No. 2 Service Flying Training School, Uplands in Ottawa she had stood on the reviewing stand, happy for his achievement but sick for the enormity of the action that her son had set in motion when he told her he was going to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force. As David lay awake at 3 AM on the 3rd, three thousand miles away his mother was getting ready to retire early on that late spring evening along the Rideau Canal. Her fear had not abated and her worry for him was like being underwater. She prayed a little and watched the sun setting from the bedroom window at the back of her father's house - the same sun that would rise over the middle sea in a few short hours. By the time it would come back to her, her only child would be dead, though she would not know it.

Now David could feel the list of *Eagle* as her captain brought her around into the wind, he could feel the speed come up. He watched the shadows of the island and its ugly crow's nest-like foremast sweep across the deck and over the backs of ratings forward of the island. He watched as the shadows at the edges of his instruments thinned out and as the sun dazzled from their glass faces. The sun, crossing over the previously invisible discs of the propellers ahead, made them flash like saw blades. It signalled the beginning. He took a deep breath to steady himself.

Of the 31 Spits to launch today, only the nine of Plagis' group were left. David was in one of the two Spitfires at the stern of *Eagle*'s flight deck. Both were so far back on the massive round down at the stern that their tail wheels were well below their mains. It felt as if they were already climbing for the sky. From his left he watched ratings ahead scampering away

with chocks. He was conscious of keeping the power up so as not to roll backwards down the considerable slope when the chocks were pulled away.



A very boyish David Rouleau poses in a winter flight suit before he makes his first flight in a Fleet Finch at No. 13 Elementary Flying Training School at St. Eugene, Ontario, just 60 miles due east of his home in Ottawa. The pure joy and excitement can be seen on his young face. Many made the same first flight and many thousands paid for this joy with the supreme sacrifice. Photo via Peg Christie



A group photo of Rouleau's Course Mates taken at Ottawa's No. 2 SFTS. David Rouleau is fifth from the left in the second last row. Some of his course mates became well known aces and individuals in the RCAF: Wally Conrad, George Keefer, Ian Ormston, Frank Sutton (an American who was killed Dec. 7, 1941, the U.S. named an airfield after Frank 'Stuffy' Sutton, in North Carolina), Stu Buchanan (whose father was a Wing Commander in Ottawa when these boys were training in various parts of Quebec, Ontario, etc.), also Joe Crichton, Don Edy and Creighton Lowther.

Pilot Officers Don Edy, Don Lush and Creighton 'Crabby' Lowther, all in this photo, all served together with RAF No 33 Squadron as Hurricane fighter pilots. Don Edy, Don Lush and Joe Crichton also all became PoW, prisoners of war, together at the infamous Stalag Luft III, in Sagan, Germany, during the era of the Great Escape. Don Lush passed away in 2005, Scarborough, ON. Joe Crichton died in 2011 and had served in the desert in 112 Sqn, and was also PoW at Stalag Luft III. As of January 2012, Don Edy, 94, survives. Photo via Barb Edy



David Rouleau receives his wings indoors at No. 2 Service Flying Training School, at Uplands where today Ottawa's International Airport lays. Rouleau had the unique good fortune to do both his Elementary Flying Training on Fleet Finches and his Service Flying Training on Harvards just a short drive from his Ottawa home. David's mother Gertrude and his grandfather Dr. Francis Gisborne were most likely in attendance. Photo via Peg Christie



— R C A F. Photo.

Ottawans, members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, are playing a big part in the defence of Great Britain, and the above are only a few who are active in the air over the heart of the Empire. Left to right: Sgt. Pilot H. I. Wolf, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Wolf, 345 Daly avenue; Sgt. Pilot David Rouleau, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Rouleau, 114 Driveway; Sgt. Pilot Noel J. "Buzz" Ogilvie, 20, son of Noel J. Ogilvie, international boundary commissioner and chief of the geodetic survey, and Mrs. Ogilvie, of 96 Carling avenue; Sgt. Pilot Cyril Hall, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Hall, of 39 Heney street, and Sgt. Observer G. H. Smith, of 18 McEwen avenue, Smiths Falls.

A couple of years after righting this story, I came across this story in an online copy of the July 11th, 1941 copy of the *Ottawa Citizen*. Rouleau would spend the next year as a front line fighter pilot based in England

Looking over the long oil-stained nose of his Spitfire, he could not see Plagis roll down the deck. Despite the creeping fear of rolling back, he was happy for the extra length of deck afforded by being almost last. *Eagle's* deck was only 660 feet long and in order to get into the air, the Spitfires required take-off flaps. Spitfires unfortunately had none and only one setting for landing flaps and that was 90 degrees. The solution was to insert a wooden wedge between the flap and the wing, locking them halfway down. The technique was to lower the flaps fully after take-off allowing the wedges to drop into the sea, after which the flaps were retracted fully. David worried whether those wedges would fall out as advertised. He worried about the fact that he had never flown a "Trop" before. Over his nose he caught a glimpse of Plagis rising above the horizon, banking to port and clawing for altitude over the sunny and choppy, blue Mediterranean. He watched his dials, watched his gloved hand shaking on the brake. His legs began to shake.

He saw the colour of snapping signal flags, saw the deck hand run beneath him and appear again dragging his chocks. He walked his throttle up a few steps. He could see his temperature gauges running close to the red, but the fear of rolling back won out over fear of overheat. One by one, five Spitfires rose into view before him to follow Plagis. Then he saw MacPherson's aircraft to his left lean forward against its brakes; saw the speed come up on the propeller. Next to it, a rating leaned into the wind and after only a few short seconds it lurched forward, the tail lifting smoothly a few seconds later. It was lost behind David's Merlin for an eternity, but eventually rose over his spinner. This was it.

David had practiced this in England in the few short weeks after he left 131 Squadron for his assignment with the RAF in the Mediterranean. But he always had runway ahead if he needed it. Now he would take off from an aircraft carrier in a Spitfire without the aid of catapult or experience. In just a few hundred feet he would have to have enough air flowing over and under his wings to support the weight of a loaded Spitfire. If he didn't, he would sink down to the sea, ditching his fighter with the 22,600 tons of *Eagle* bearing down on him - a steel island pushed at flank speed by four ghastly bronze propellers thrashing the sea into a white foam. David was by nature a quiet, shy man, but he was about to do a very bold thing. Looking to his right he saw the rating hold up the chocks and turn to look down the deck. He then looked back at David signaling him to



go.

A Spitfire launches from the deck of HMS *Eagle* during a similar operation two months earlier. At the rear Spitfires have their tails resting well below the masts on the long round down. Photo via Howard Cook

David walked his throttle as far forward as he dared while his hand gripped the brake handle ever harder. He wanted the Merlin to be putting out as much horsepower as possible when he released his brakes but he had to be careful not to use so much throttle that when he released the brakes the torque from the propeller sent him curving immediately to the left. He didn't want to screw up again. Back in Wales in late October of the previous year he had landed too hard and damaged his Spitfire II at Wrexham. It was his third attempt to land the Spit in a strong crosswind. He had bounced, drifted and caught a wing tip, shearing the landing gear. The board of enquiry called it an "Error of Judgement" and it stung him deeply. This time he would do his job to perfection. He managed to keep the tail down but the temps were in the red and it was time to depart.

No more thought now. Just do as he was trained to do. Off came the brake while the throttle was opened smoothly and the Spit surged forward, everything screaming including himself. In seconds he pushed the stick forward gently to bring the tail up half way. He looked only forward along the left side but sensed the high twin stacks of *Eagle* flash by his right shoulder, sensed the eyes of the crew watching him on either side. The roll was like all the others he had done in Canada during the winter of 1940-41 and throughout his Operational Training at 61 and 53 OTU at RAF Heston and with 131 Squadron, only there was no land around him, no trees or buildings, nowhere to land but the endless sea. He kept

the Spitfire running down the deck for as long as there was deck.

In less time than it takes to say so, David Rouleau reached the end of the steel island that was *Eagle*. He felt as though he had jettisoned the carrier, feeling the immediate lift from the bow wave. His elation lasted but a second when the Spitfire seemed to sag beneath him. He shoved the throttle hard against its stop and resisted the urge to pull hard back on the stick. The Spitfire Mk V Trop (fitted out for hot and dusty tropical climates) serial number BR 358 rose as she was designed to do and David Rouleau found his senses returning to him as he settled down to fly the aeroplane he loved so much to fly. Now in his element he banked to the left, lowering his flaps and looked over his left shoulder to check that the wedges had dropped. He could also see back to the fast receding deck of *Eagle*. He caught sight of the last Spitfire starting its take off roll, saw the long wake marking *Eagle*'s journey into danger. Going back was not an option. In 30 seconds *Eagle* would make her turn to a course that would bring her and her escort back to Gibraltar. Within two months, HMS *Eagle* would be sunk by 4 torpedoes during another ferry mission.



If you needed proof that *Eagle* and her gallant crew were sailing into extreme danger on these operations, witness *Eagle* sinking two months later on "Operation Pedestal". Here her forward stack bleeds white steam as her port catwalks dip below the sea.

David climbed as instructed to form up with the gaggle led by Plagis who circled to the east with the others closing up well. It was a little after 8:30 in the morning.

Nearly a year of flying Spitfires with the Royal Air Force's 131 "County of Kent" Squadron had given David Rouleau the confidence to relax in the cockpit and that's just what he did. With the terror of the carrier launch behind him, it was just another flight, albeit over an ancient sea that had claimed thousands of airmen before him. But David had crossed big water many times before on fighter sweeps and rhubarbs over the Channel, shooting at whatever they could find in France that looked worthy of lead. He'd flown escort to small convoys moving through the Irish Sea to Wales and felt

less stressed about flying over water than he had been the first time. So long as his Merlin ran smoothly, he had no concern. And she was brand new. Within ten minutes David had closed the distance with the loose gaggle of fighter aircraft as they headed east and then southeast to Takali airfield on Malta. The sun was not in an advantageous position and the German airfield at Pantaleria lay in their path.

Looking around him he was elated by the sight of the beautiful Spits in the sunlight with scattered puffs of cloud well below. The shadows of the clouds rode over a hard, blue sea specked with white for as far as he could see in any direction. The light at altitude is like nothing on the surface. Its brilliance and clarity is like spring water is to tap water, like fresh snow is to week old snow. David felt immense joy – the kind that comes from surviving risk, blended with the kind that comes from doing something he was proud of and doing it well. David had flown plenty of ops over the past 10 months – so much so that he was working on his second logbook. He only wished his neighbourhood friends Blake, Ike, Bill, John and Ashley, his university chums from Trinity College and all the girls he ever had crushes on could see him now, flying over the sea like an avenging wraith in a Spitfire, the most charismatic aircraft of all time, bound for the rescue of the stalwart and good people of Malta from the terror of fascist bombs. For a Spitfire pilot who had missed out on the Battle of Britain, Malta was it – an even bigger battle where, unlike the myth of the Battle of Britain, the odds were well and truly stacked against the RAF.

Every pilot in this grouping of nine had stories like David's - young, emboldened, in love with flying, old beyond their years, restless to show their mettle and very, very far from home. David Francis Gaston Rouleau was an Ottawa boy, raised by his mother and grandfather after his father's death in 1929. They lived along the last half-mile of the Rideau Canal as it makes one final lazy turn to the Ottawa Locks at Parliament Hill. He attended Lisgar Collegiate around the corner, played hockey on the frozen canal, spent his summers on the Quebec side at Wakefield and Kirk's Ferry, golfed at Larrimac, sailed on the Gatineau River and displayed a quiet open dignity. David was rated at his Elementary Flying Training School at St Eugene as "Exceptionally good type. Commission material. Methodical and steady". But to his family, especially his cousin Peggy Gisborne, he was simply kind and wide-eyed. To his grandfather, he was everything.

It had been a long time since his first flight in a bright yellow Fleet Finch on a bright white day in December of 1940. His wings parade on April 1st coincided with the 17th birthday of the RCAF. Three of his class mates, George Keefer, Ian Ormston, and Walter Conrad would become aces. Those early days flying around his beloved Ottawa Valley were now so distant in his heart. He was less wide-eyed. He squinted more. His face had lost its roundness, replaced by the hardened edge that made all men at war so handsome. He needed a rest. They all did.

There was no talking on the radio. There was a report at breakfast that a Hawker Sea Hurricane patrolling from *Eagle* had chased off a JU-88 reconnaissance aircraft after sunrise. Strict radio silence was the order. Every man was alone with his machine and his thoughts. David was cold. They were at 20,000 feet and he wished he had the beautiful leather flying jacket that he left behind with the 131 Squadron stores johnny. They travelled on as the sun rose.

Around 1045 hours, 12 Messerschmitt Bf-109 fighter aircraft rose from the dust and heat of the island of Pantelleria which lay in the path of Plagis and his men. They were the "Pic-A"s (Aces of Spades) – a band of highly experienced pilots from II Gruppen of Jagdgeschwader 53 and led that day by Oberleutnant Gerhard Milchalski, one of the great German Experten of the Second World War. Milchalski would become the highest scoring ace in the Malta campaign on either side. They rose steadily into the sky climbing for altitude and advantage. They climbed with certainty.



A Messerschmitt Bf-109 of 11/JG 53 sits in the sun on Sicily a few months before the attack on Rouleau's flight. "Yellow 2" as it would have been called also sports the "Pic-A"'s Ace of Spades emblem on its snout. When David looked over his shoulder in his final moments he would have seen an aircraft like Yellow 2. Photo via Howard Cook



The great Malta ace Gerhard Milchalski offers up a few nuggets of his experience to the rapt attention of his fellow pilots. Some of his experience was gained at the expense of David Rouleau's life. Photo via Howard Cook

At 1050 hrs, as they passed Pantellaria, David Rouleau and everyone else in his group spotted distant specks in the sky above and to the south of them. His throat was now dry as dust, and his heart started to race. Low on fuel, they all flew on not really knowing what to do. They watched as the specks altered course as if circling and watching. Sharks sizing up a school of fish. They watched as the specks turned toward them and grew into 109s. They flew on.

Then someone recalled a pilot in a Spitfire with the letter code "T" shouting over the radio "They're attacking!" Immediately, Johnny Plagis did what any experienced Malta hand with these odds would do. He rolled over and dove for the sea. He left the others on their own and without his experience. The fast moving 109s swung round from behind and shot "T" right out of the sky. His Spitfire caught fire, pulled up and then rolled over, spiraling to the sea. A surviving pilot witnessed the man falling forward in his cockpit. At this, it was every man for himself and all the others rolled and made for the sea. There was a running gun battle past the island and all the way to Gozo, the island north west of Malta. Spitfires were being chased everywhere, zig-zagging over the surface of the sea, German lead slicing past, ripping up

the sea. But not all their rounds found just the sea. After "T"'s death, three more Spitfires were shot down. One of the pilots (an NCO according to Malta ace Flying Officer Daddo-Langois) was seen floating on the sea near Gozo. "Daddy-Longlegs", as he was called by his friends, spotted him in the water after the battle was over and circled for an hour overhead, but no help came. Later they would find an empty dinghy.

Of the 31 pilots, only 27 would make it to Malta. By all accounts, the 9 of Plagis' group bore the brunt of the attack. It seems that the four shot down were in that last group. David's group. His new found friend Hugh MacPherson was also lost. I cannot begin to recreate the last minutes of that day and what happened to David Rouleau, but he was indeed one of the four who did not land at Takali or Hal Far. He was one of the four that were never seen again.

I cannot tell you what happened to him. I cannot write a factual or fictional account of his last moments. Of this I have learned nothing, nor would I be able to imagine it. If the man in the dinghy was an NCO, and one can't imagine how Daddo-Langois knew this, then he was not David who was a Pilot Officer. So in the death of "T", we may have witnessed David's last moment. A one in three chance. If it was him, then David Francis Gaston Rouleau died at 1056 on July 3rd, 1942 in his 24th year. If it was him, then David was shot down by Unteroffizier Heinrich Sedlmeier 60-65 km southeast of Pantellaria. It was Sedlmeier's first aircraft shot down. He also shot another down 10 minutes later. He might have been so unfortunate as to run into the greatest Malta ace of them all - Milchalski. He might have spent his last hour in a small rubber dinghy in a rough sea being circled by Daddo-Langois - another ace. We will never know.

Did he prove his mettle? Yes. Did he put up a fight? Most likely. Did he give some back to the Germans? Possibly. All of this disappeared into the swirling white water around his Spitfire and followed him to the silty bottom. In many ways, David Rouleau's story seemed to have died with him. He was an only child. There were no siblings to tell his tale. After the war, his mother married an architect named Harris, changed her name and took her son's story with her. We do know that for the rest of the war she fought a desperate and poignant battle with the RCAF to have her son's effects returned. She received them at the end of the war from storage in Egypt, was denied his pension and was left with her broken heart. According to the granite memorial to David's father at Beechwood Cemetery she died in 1984 at the age of 99.

Her agony at her beautiful boy's death, her life without him, her pain and David's personal effects including a journal, two logbooks and a camera have gone into the mists. The story of an ordinary Ottawa boy who gave everything he had, who accomplished the greatness of simply being a fighting Spitfire pilot, who died without having seen his mother or beloved Ottawa again, was lost. Until one day last year, a man named Jim Cobley gave us something of David's from across the sea and ray of light shone out of the depths.

David's beautiful leather flying jacket, the one he didn't wear on that flight, was returned to Ottawa to remain in the care of Vintage Wings. How this jacket came to Jim Cobley and how it lived for the past 66 years will be reported in "The Jacket - Part II of the David Rouleau Story" and will be appearing on our website in the weeks ahead.

There is no doubt that the story just told is factual as far I can tell. I have made up a fictional account of what David might have done on the ship, what he felt and what he saw. Perhaps he will understand if I try to bring life to a story never told before – even to his mother. If it's not right, it's certainly not wrong.

David Rouleau's story is extraordinary in its ordinariness. He was not an ace nor a braggart or a self-promoter. His was one of many, many thousands of stories never told - one of the great majority whose escapades and skits will never make the textbooks, websites (until now) and memoirs. He is the Royal Canadian Air Force of the Second World War.

When thinking of David Rouleau and all the young airmen like him from this generation I was constantly reminded of the words of Frederick Forsythe in his hauntingly simple ghost story of an airman facing death - *"It's a bad thing to die at twenty years of age with your life un-lived and the worst thing is not the fact of dying, but the fact of all the things never done"*.

Dave O'Malley

FORM 6122

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Full-Rate Message	
Day Letter	D L
Night Message	N M
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a full-rate message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAM

(52)

D. E. GALLOWAY, ASSISTANT VICE-PRESIDENT, TORONTO, ONT.

Exclusive Connection with WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH CO. Cable Service to all the World Money Transferred by Telegraph

STANDARD TIME

1942 JUN 6 PM 6 55

GOF 54/53 2 EXTRA GB=OTTAWA ONT 6 644P

MRS G ROULEAU= 798 ;
(REPORT DELIVERY) 114 DRIVEWAY OTTAWA ONT=

P645 REGRET TO INFORM YOU ADVICE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIRFORCE CASUALTIES OFFICER OVERSEAS THAT YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER DAVID FRANCIS GASTON ROULEAU CAN J ONE FIVE THREE FOUR EIGHT IS REPORTED MISSING AS THE RESULT OF AIR OPERATIONS ON JUNE THIRD NINETEEN FORTY TWO STOP LETTER FOLLOWS=

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF.

The actual telegram that a stunned Gertrude Rouleau held in her shaking hands two weeks later. Now a gift to the collection of Vintage Wings of Canada from Peg Christie

Intelligent, clean cut type - officer calibre - A type
to fit in as member of air crew. Should prove up well
with training as pilot or observer.

third day of June, 1942, as the result

AIRCRAFT MISSING BETWEEN PANTELLDRIA AND MALTA

It is my painful duty to confirm the

On that day your son set out from Gibraltar in a
pitfire aircraft and failed to arrive at his destination
you dated June 10th 1942

You may rest assured that every possible
effort is being made to trace your son and upon any
news being obtained you will be informed immediately.

In view of the lapse of time, it is
felt that there can now be little hope of
his being alive, but action to presume that

PRESUMED TO HAVE DIED ON JUN

letter of Dec 4th I have as yet
had no news of my son

I realize there is little which
may be said or done to lessen your sorrow, but it is

David L. Rouleau

Signature of Recruit

When reading, photographing and assessing the myriad of documents in Rouleau's service file, there was a formalized bureaucratic litany of Gertrude's despair in the form letters from the RCAF. Certain words jumped from the pages - here are but a few that tell the story. Details from Rouleau's files courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

The author would like to thank the following people for their help in making David Rouleau come to life - Judith Burns, Howard Cook, Ken Cowan, Tim Dubé, Steve Fochuk, Norma Geggie, Helen Gillespie, Hugh Halliday, Graham Hughes, Carolynne Irvin, Ted Latham, Pat MacAdam, Andrew Pentland, Mike Potter, Harold Pretty, Carl Vincent, Chris Terry and above all **Jim Cobley, Pat Hall and Peg Christie.**