



Name:	CARTER, Gordon Henry Francis, DFC & bar, POW
Nationality:	Canadian
Regiment/ Service:	Royal Canadian Air Force
Rank:	Squadron Leader
Service No.:	J/11213
Unit Text:	No.35 Squadron
Date of Birth:	1 June 1923 - Paris, France

CARTER, F/O Gordon Henry Francis (J11213) - **Distinguished Flying Cross** - No.35 Squadron - Award effective 6 July 1943 as per *London Gazette* dated 6 July 1943 and AFRO 1724/43 dated 27 August 1943. Born in Paris, France, 1 June 1923; home in Bronxville, New York (but listed as a British subject); enlisted Montreal, 8 July 1941 and posted to No.4A Manning Depot. To No.3 ITS, 1 September 1941; graduated and promoted LAC, 7 October 1941; to No.10 AOS, 10 October 1941; to No.4 BGS, 16 January 1942; graduated and promoted Sergeant, 28 February 1942 when posted to No.2 ANS; graduated and commissioned 13 April 1942. To "Y" Depot, 14 April 1942; to RAF overseas, 8 May 1942. Promoted Flying Officer, 13 October 1942. Shot down and evaded capture, 12/13 February 1943 (see below). Promoted Flight Lieutenant, 3 June 1943. Invested with award by King George VI 23 November 1943. Having completed his "Home Run" and returned to flying operations; promoted Squadron Leader, 7 December 1943. Survived a crash caused by an exploding Target Indicator on 21 December 1943 (Halifax HX328). Subsequently shot down and made POW, 19/20 February 1944 with No.10 Squadron and this time taken prisoner. Repatriated 8 July 1945. Retired 20 August 1945. NOTE: The citation refers to Sergeant H.L. McBeath, DFM (RCAF), but McBeath was a member of No.7 Squadron. The citation thus covers two men in two entirely different units. The common thread was that both were navigators and both had evaded capture.

In air operations Flying Officer Carter and Sergeant McBeath have displayed courage, initiative and fortitude in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Air Force.

Public Record Office WO 208/3312 has his MI.9 report based on interview of 10 April 1943. He had arrived in the UK on 9 April 1943.

I was navigator of an aircraft which took off from Graveley (Huntingdonshire) about 1830 hours on 13 February 1943 to bomb Lorient. Our aircraft was hit by flak over the target and we baled out about 2045 hours. The other members of the crew were:-

F/O Thomas (Pilot)

Sergeant Martin (Bomb Aimer)

Flight Sergeant Turner (Wireless Operator)

Sergeant Young (Flight Engineer)

Flight Sergeant Barry (Mid-Upper Gunner), and

F/O Freeman (killed)

All landed safely, except F/O Freeman, whose parachute stuck as he was leaving the aircraft. He struck the ground and died 20 minutes later. The rest of us came down within 500 yards of one another in the region of Spezet, about ten miles southwest of Carhaix (Brittany) (Europe road map 1:200,000, sheet 58).

Flight Sergeant Barry and I joined up almost immediately and the other survivors gathered in a separate group. I fell in a field, about 15 yards from a house (at Koerlescouat) into which Flight Sergeant Barry was brought. Flight Sergeant Barry was given civilian clothes. I was already wearing civilian clothes under my battle dress with the idea (my own) of facilitating evasion. The people in the house kept our uniforms, parachutes and Mae Wests. Barry and I both speak fluent French, and we discussed our plans with our helpers. It was decided we could go through Gourin (southwest of Spezet) as there were no Germans there. We stayed at the farm until 0500 hours next day (14 February).

We then walked on secondary roads through Gourin to a farm at Pont Rouge near Priziac. I had with me my own map of France, and we used this and the maps from our escape aids "purse". We had also studied a map on the back of the telephone directory at the farm at Kerlescouat. We spent the night at the farm house at Pont Rouge.

At 0700 hours next day (15 February) we started walking to Guemene-sur-Scorff (to the east of Priziac) whence we got a bus to Pontivy. The bus was crowded, but I told the conductor we were Canadians escaping, and he pushed us on. A man on the bus heard us talking to the conductor, and at Pontivy he took us to a café, where we stayed a night and two days. Here we got in touch with an organization, and eventually my journey to the United Kingdom was arranged for me.

Public Record Office Air 2/4974 has recommendation for DFC drafted 4 June 1943, noting he had flown 17 sorties (90 operational hours). Sortie list and submission as follows:

15 October 1942 - Cologne	23 January 1943 - Lorient
24 October 1942 - Milano	26 January 1943 - Lorient
8 November 1942 - GARDENING	3 February 1943 - Hamburg
9 November 1942 - Hamburg	4 February 1943 - Torino
20 November 1942 - Torino	13 February 1943 - Lorient (shot down)
22 November 1942 - Stuttgart	23 May 1943 - Dortmund
8 December 1942 - Torino	25 May 1943 - Dusseldorf
11 December 1942 - Torino	29 May 1943 - Wuppertal
20 December 1942 - Duisburg	

Flying Officer Carter was navigator of an aircraft detailed to attack Lorient on the night of the 12th February 1943. Just after the bombs had been released the aircraft was severely hit by anti-aircraft fire and in a short time fire broke out, and as a result the crew were forced to abandon the aircraft. Flying Officer Carter made a safe landing by parachute and immediately began planning to evade capture. He had previously made a study of escaping and was carrying with him several special aids he had equipped himself with, including simple civilian clothes which he wore underneath his uniform. His efforts were so successful that he finally returned to this country on 9 April 1943.

For the thoroughness with which he prepared for the contingency, and the tenacity he showed in avoiding capture and returning to this country, Flying Officer Carter is recommended for the immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

CARTER, F/L Gordon Henry Francis, DFC (J11213) - **Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross** - No.35 Squadron - Award effective 10 January 1944 as per *London Gazette* dated 18 January 1944 and AFRO 410/44 dated 25 February 1944. Invested with award by King George VI 29 June 1945.

This officer is a most determined and reliable navigator. Since being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross he has performed his duties with exceptional accuracy, resulting in the successful completion of many missions. He has continued to display outstanding enthusiasm for operational flying with marked ability and great devotion to duty.

NOTE: In January 1997 the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society (Canadian Branch) presented to the National Aviation Museum a "dossier" (actually more like an album) with extended autobiographical notes on members (catalogued in the museum as D.805 C3 L96 1995 NMM). This included much information on Carter. His first operation with No.35 Squadron was on 13 September 1943. He had completed 13 sorties when he was shot down by flak on the night of 13 February 1943 attacking Lorient:

Landed in field in young farmer's arms. Made way from Nap Barry towards Pontivy, where stayed at Grand Cafe (I was fluent in French). Picked up there by Guy Lenfant, London-based French agent. Spent a fortnight accompanying him on a rms transports (by bike). Rendezvous with Royal Navy sub off north coast having failed, Lenfant entrusted us to Timadeuc Trappist monastery at Rohan. A week later George Jouanjean convoyed us to Paris only to find that Gestapo had bust the Pat O'Leary line. Back to Brittany to meet George's sister, Janine, my wife-to-be. Sailed on 7 April in derelict fishing boat with 16 Frenchmen from Treboul harbour (near Douarnenez) and reached the Lizard (Cornwall) three days later.

Returned to squadron on 26 April. Completed 51 Pathfinder Force operations. Baled out over airfield on 20 December 1943. Shot down en route to Leipzig on 19 February 1944 (78 aircraft lost). POW at Stalag Luft III (Sagan, Silesia). Liberated near Lubeck. Returned to Britain, then France to marry Janine (on compassionate leave!). To Canada on *Ile de France*. Demobbed in Montreal in August 1945.

See also John A. Neal, *Bless You, Brother Irvin* (General Store Publishing, 2005) for an account of his escapes by parachute.

The website "Lost Bombers: has the following relating to him:

13/14 February 1943: Halifax W7885 of No.35 Squadron (RL-B)m target Lorient. This aircraft was initially issued to No.35 Squadron was transferred to No.405 Squadron for a period before returning to No.35 Squadron. Airborne at 1820 hours, 13 February 1943 from Graveley. Hit by Flak over the target and subsequently abandoned near Carhaix (Finistre), France. The crew had survived a crash-landing ten days prior on W7923. Crew consisted of F/O J.C.Thomas, RCAF (evaded), Sergeant D.C.Young (POW), F/O G.H.F.Carter, RCAF (evaded), Sergeant R.Martin (evaded), Sergeant E.R.R.Terraine, RCAF (evaded), Sergeant J.H.Barry, RCAF (evaded), F/O J.W.Freeman, RCAF (killed).

19/20 February 1944: Halifax HX325 (TL-J), of No.10 Squadron, target Leipzig. This was one of four Halifaxes lost on those operation; the others were HX296, HX311 and HX357. Airborne at 2351 hours.19 February 1944 from Graveley. Outbound at 20,000 feet, shot down by a Ju88, whose fire set alight to the rear overload tank. Partially abandoned and crash-landed 0250 some 100 metres S of Beedenbostel, 4 km NNE of Lachendorf. Crew consisted of the following: S/L D.J. Sale, RCAF, DSO, DFC (died of wounds); S/L G/H.F. Carter, DFC, RCAF (Squadron Navigation Officer, POW), Warrant Officer G.H.Cross, DFC, DFM (POW), F/L B.O.Bodnar, DFC , RCAF (POW), F/L H.J.Rogers, DFC (POW), F/L R.L.Lamb (POW), Flight Sergeant K. K.Knight (killed).

SOURCE: Air Force Association of Canada website & Hugh Halliday (July 30, 2010).

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