

= Hubert Brooks =

Hubert Brooks MC ( December 29 , 1921 ? February 1 , 1984 ) was a Canadian RCAF officer and ice hockey player who won a gold medal at the 1948 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz . He joined the RCAF in 1940 and served during World War II , being shot down during his second mission over Germany in 1942 . He was taken as a prisoner of war to Stalag VIII @-@ B , from where he tried several unsuccessful escape attempts prior to making it to occupied Poland and joining the Polish Underground State as a guerrilla . He rose through the ranks of the rebel force , undertaking raids and assassinations against the Nazi occupation until the end of the conflict . He was one of only five RCAF members to receive the Military Cross for his actions and his award carried the longest citation of them all .

Brooks returned to Canada by way of Russia in 1945 , and worked for the Missing Research and Enquiry Service for two years . He was then selected to join the Ottawa RCAF Flyers , who represented Canada at the 1948 Winter Olympics and captured the gold medal in the ice hockey tournament . After a series of exhibition games in Europe , he returned to Canada and entered military intelligence , serving at various posts until 1971 , at which point he retired to take up an administrative position at the University of Ottawa . He died in 1984 and one of the student dorms , the Brooks Residence , is named in his honour .

= = Early life = =

Brooks was born on December 29 , 1921 in Bluesky , Alberta . During the Great Depression his family moved out of the prairie provinces to Ottawa and Montreal , where he received an education in French and first learned to play ice hockey . In July 1940 , he applied to join the Royal Canadian Air Force and was accepted that August into the special reserve at the rank of Air Craftsman 2 . The " special reserve " was created at the onset of World War II as a section whose members could be terminated at any time , so that the force could easily return to its pre @-@ conflict size at the end of hostilities .

Brooks trained in Brandon , Manitoba through October prior to being sent to a Winnipeg equipment depot to serve as a guard . He then undertook several training phases across the country in Regina , Saskatchewan , London , Toronto , Malton , and Fingal , Ontario , and finally Rivers , Manitoba , prior to graduating in August 1941 as a Navigator - Bomb Aimer . Arriving in Britain at the end of September , he was sent to RAF Kinloss the following month and trained there until February 1942 , when he joined the 419 Tactical Fighter Training Squadron . On April 8 ? 9 , during only his second mission , he was shot down during a bombing raid and landed near Oldenburg , Germany , where he was quickly taken as a prisoner of war and sent to Dulag Luft .

= = Activities in Germany and Poland = =

Brooks arrived in Stalag VIII @-@ B in April 1942 , and switched identities with a New Zealand army private , Frederick Cole , so that he would be available to be placed on work detail ( members of the air force were not permitted to be part of working parties ) . In June he was able to escape from a coal @-@ mining work camp with an Irish soldier , and fled to occupied Poland , but was soon captured in Kraków and returned to Stalag VIII @-@ B by the end of the month . He was sentenced to two weeks of solitary confinement , but retained his secret identity .

By September Brooks was back at a work camp , this time in Svitavy in the Sudetenland . He escaped that month with five other men , this time making it to Lüneburg inside a coal train prior to his recapture . Sent to a prisoner of war camp near Wiener Neustadt , he once more tried to escape but failed , suffered a severe beating at the hands of the Germans , and was again sent back to Stalag VIII @-@ B for two weeks of solitary confinement . Working as a truck helper from a saw mill in Toszek , he slowly acquired maps of Europe and the surrounding region as well as contact information for the Polish Underground State . Having escaped twice already , he risked transfer to a special punishment camp if caught again but , nevertheless , he fled his detention once more , this

time with a Scottish soldier by the name of John Duncan , in May 1943 .

The duo was eventually smuggled into occupied Poland where they contacted the Polish Underground in Cz?stochowa and joined the guerrilla movement Armia Krajowa . Posing as a Polish laborer working in a jam factory , he served on patrols , raided food convoys , and assassinated members of the Gestapo during a probationary period . After the camp was attacked in December , which not only killed several resistance members but also caused a split in the group , the reduced force continued its operations until February 1944 , when retaliation for a raid on a police garrison lowered their membership to a critical point .

By March , however , Brooks ' unit had grown to 110 men and he was promoted to Second Lieutenant and put in charge of a band of 40 soldiers , including Duncan . His guerrilla activities expanded to include larger raids , reprisal attacks , and the assassination of more important members of the Nazi regime . He would later earn the Polish Cross of Valor for helping lead over 100 of his men out of a German encirclement to safety without a single casualty . He made his way to the Russian front line in January 1945 , and was eventually transferred from Lviv to Odessa , Port Said , Cairo , and finally London , where he arrived in March 1945 .

Promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer during his tenure as a prisoner of war , Brooks was informed upon his arrival that his father had died in May of the previous year . He returned to Canada in June . He was awarded the Military Cross for his actions during the conflict , as well several other campaign and achievement medals such as the 1967 Canadian Centennial Medal and the silver Polish Cross of Merit with Swords . He was one of only five RCAF members to receive the Military Cross during World War II ( as it is primarily granted to soldiers serving in Army units ) and his citation was the longest .

= = MRES and 1948 Winter Olympics = =

Eventually promoted to Temporary Flying Officer , Brooks began working for the Missing Research and Enquiry Service ( MRES ) , which was an initiative to locate individuals from the Commonwealth of Nations who were missing or killed in action during World War II over hostile territory . He worked with the service for nearly two years , from November 1945 through July 1947 , as a Search Officer in Denmark , Norway , and as a Section Leader in the American Zone of Germany . Brooks and a colleague sailed a fishing smack around Cape Nordkinn in the Arctic Circle , the most northerly coastal point of the mainland of Europe , in the search for missing airmen . It was during his tenure with MRES that he met his wife Birthe . He also played ice hockey during his downtime in Scandinavia with the U.S. Army Allstars , and was selected to be a member of Canada 's national delegation to the 1948 Winter Olympics . This squad , known as the Ottawa RCAF Flyers , consisted entirely of members of the Royal Canadian Air Force .

The team 's first exhibition game , a 7 @-@ 0 defeat for the Flyers against the McGill Redmen , led to calls for the squad being scrapped and replaced with collegiate players . After a subsequent 6 @-@ 2 loss against the Army , several players from the Ottawa New Edinburghs were added to the lineup and , by the time that the team was set to depart for St. Moritz , ten of the original eighteen members had been replaced , although Brooks remained .

In the end the Canadians captured the gold medal at the Olympic tournament . Although Brooks remained a reserve player and did not see any time on the ice , he did receive a gold medal and was selected to be his nation 's flag bearer during the opening ceremonies . On February 9 , the day after the final , he was finally afforded the opportunity to marry his fiancée Birthe in a ceremony that included Barbara Ann Scott , a Canadian Olympic gold medalist in figure skating , as a bridesmaid . He then joined the rest of the squad on an exhibition series across Europe , winning thirty @-@ four and drawing five of forty @-@ four games prior to returning to Canada in April . Brooks , along with the rest of the Flyers , was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 2008 .

= = Later life = =

Following the Olympics , Brooks returned to the RCAF to work in the field of military intelligence .

He was first posted in the Maritimes in 1954 , and stayed there for several years until heading to Paris , France to be a staff officer at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe ( SHAPE ) . He then returned to Canada to work at an RCAF station in Moisie , Quebec from 1965 through 1967 , as the first fully bilingual RCAF officer . From there he served at the Canadian Armed Forces Headquarters in Ottawa from 1967 through 1971 , during which time he was sent to assess the severity of Quebec 's 1970 October Crisis . Following his 1971 retirement from the Armed Forces , he took up a position as an administrator at the University of Ottawa , eventually rising to the position of Housing Director . Brooks died on February 1 , 1984 of a heart attack while sitting at his desk . Four years later , the university named one of the student residences in his honour .