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AIRSHOW

CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 19 - N° 3 - March 2014

EDITORIAL

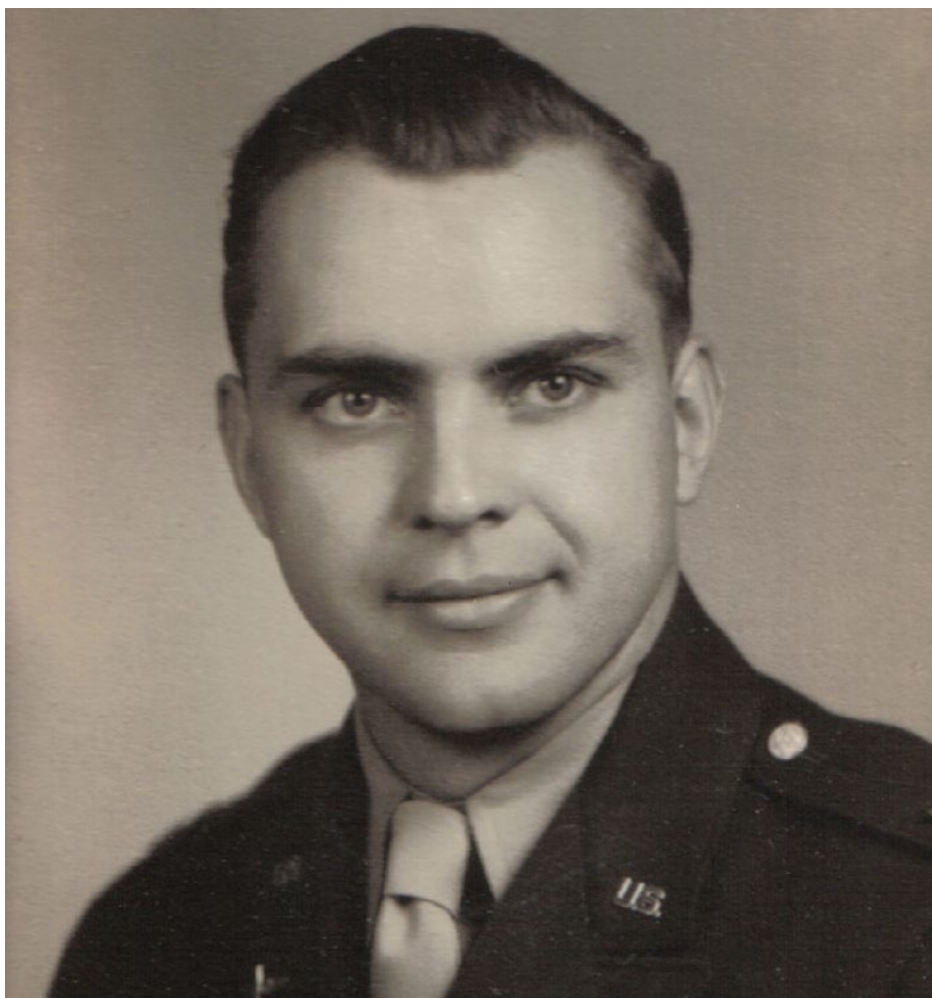
On March 1st, French Wing member Roger Robert joined the ranks of Commemorative Air Force Colonels. Congratulations, Roger!

He treats us in this issue of air show with a great article on the first transoceanic flight from Australia to South America. He is also preparing an article on our friends of the Rocky Mountain Wing in Grand Junction, which will be the first of a series of articles dedicated to the CAF units.

I would like to welcome our new member Patrice Laverdet, who maintains a remarkable website dedicated to the CFPNA, the French pilots sent to train in the United States in World War II, and who helped me find illustrations for the article on Eric Bellebon's grandfather.

As you will read in these pages, we have slightly modified the sponsorship system of our Piper Cub "Spirit of Lewis" in order to make it simpler and have more members fly on this remarkable aircraft. I would like to remind our members that "Spirit of Lewis" belongs to them, and that you can fly it even if you're not a pilot or live some distance from Le Plessis-Belleville.

Stéphane Duchemin



**CAPT. HENRY BAKKEN, 9TH AIR FORCE
P-47 THUNDERBOLT PILOT**



J-3 "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" SPONSORSHIPS



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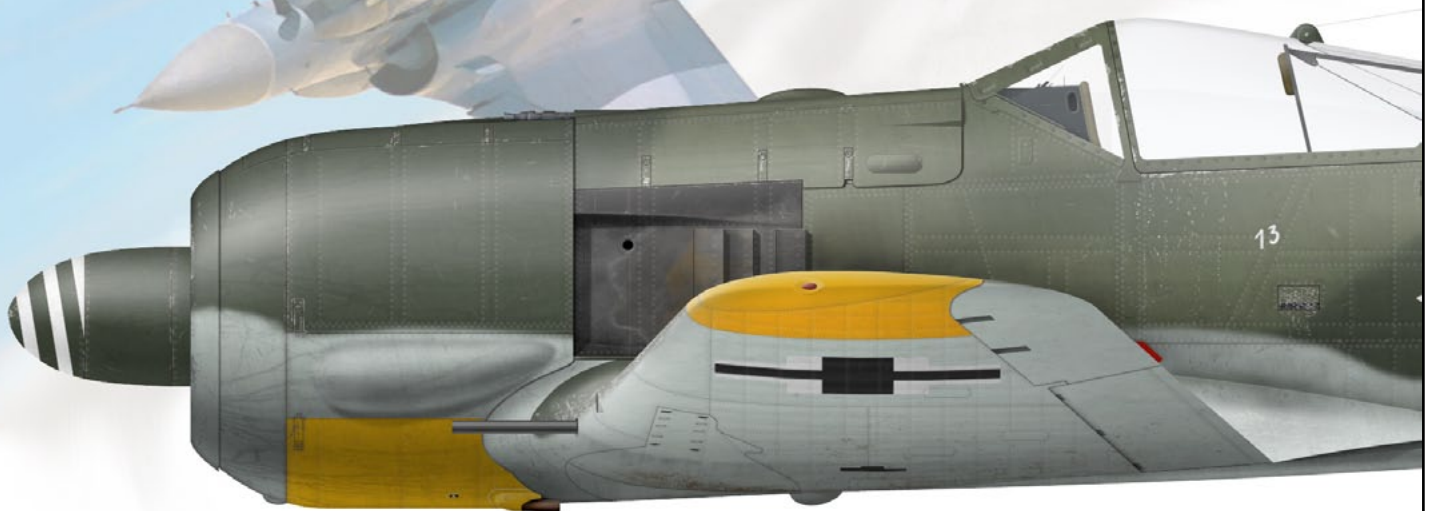


www.roygrinnell.com

Patrice Laverdet's website about the CFPNA (French pilots trained in the US during WW2:
<http://patrice.laverdet.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

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MARIE-FRANÇOISE LE CORNEC REACHES FOR THE STARS !

L'odyssée de l'espace de Marie-Françoise

Pour beaucoup, voler est un rêve. Mais pour Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, cette Bertrangeoise voulait aller encore plus loin.

À 75 ans, on pourrait préférer rester sur son canapé en regardant gentiment la télévision. Marie-Françoise Le Cornec n'est pas de cet avis. Elle ne l'aime plus que de piloter un Mirage III, un avion de chasse. Et en 2015, elle sera copilote dans un Lynx, une navette de la société SSC qui décollera de Curaçao, dans les Caraïbes.

De notre journaliste
Erwan Noët

Dans son appartement bertrangeois, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec jubile : plus les jours passent, et plus celui du départ pour l'espace approche. « C'est mon rêve, l'enthousiasme à l'ère, je ne me sens

multe part aussi bien que dans les airs, alors parfois l'espace... Le départ est prévu pour le début de l'année prochaine, ce qui fera de Marie-Françoise l'une des toutes premières personnes à prendre part à un vol commercial suborbital.

Cette expérience hors norme est pour elle tout sauf une folie. C'est l'aboutissement d'une passion dévorante et complètement assumée pour tous les engins volants possibles et imaginables. « Cela fait plus de cinquante ans que j'ai mes brevets pour voler », résume-t-elle dans une grande souriante.

Sa première expérience au-dessus du plancher des vaches, Marie-Françoise l'a connue à l'âge de 8 ans, en 1948, lors d'un vol qui a donné le ton à toute son existence. « Mon oncle était pilote de chasse et il m'avait proposé de faire mon baptême de l'air à bord d'un Beechcraft Bonanza, un magnifique petit avion avec un empennage en V. Évidemment, j'ai dit oui! »

Alors que le ciel s'assombrit et que, sur les conseils de sa grand-mère, elle a apporté des morceaux de sole pour protéger l'équipage de la foudre (« on m'avait dit que ça marchait et ça a bien fait rire mon oncle et le général qui nous accompagnait », les vols qui découlent pour un vol qui s'annonce sportif.

À 16 ans, elle prend des cours en cachette

« Nous sommes tombés dans une zone dangereuse, c'est à ce moment-là que je me suis promis d'être pilote et que je ne ferai jamais demi-tour... Ce qui était évidemment assez idiot ! J'ai quand même dû rebrousser chemin quelques fois depuis... »

Cette première expérience rockabologique ne fut en rien ses dernières. L'envie de voler ne la quitte plus ; elle décide de passer ses brevets de pilote. Or le premier qui l'a volé est tombé en panne de vol à volée. Si son prochain objectif est tout trouvé, il y a toujours un problème. La 1^{re} est de taille : le refus de son père qui voit d'un mauvais œil cette dangereuse passion.

Le casier de Marie-Françoise est toutefois suffisamment rempli pour ne pas s'arrêter à ce « petit-déjeuner ». Ni une ni deux, la voilà qui prend l'habitude de faire le mur pour se rendre à ses cours et à ses vols. « Évidemment », se souvient-elle, « j'étais dans une chambre, l'escalade du mur et j'allais au terrain d'aviation en chevronnant mon solex avec un jean enfilé sous ma jupe ! Ma passion

Hawker Hunter et Mirage III

C'est un événement tragique, le décès accidentel de son mari il y a sept ans, qui la convainc de réfléchir dans les nuages. « J'ai repris le vol à fond », c'est ce qu'il n'a permis de tenir le choc, avant d'être avec une voix empreinte de beaucoup d'émotion.

Des fois, c'est vers la Suisse qu'elle

italiens qu'elle maintenait en état. Voilà donc Marie-Françoise aux commandes d'un Hawker Hunter (un chasseur anglais) ou même d'un Mirage III (les armées suisses). Voler avec des réacteurs, c'est presque plus facile, puisque il n'y a que le manche et pas de palonnier, lance-t-elle comme elle compare la conduite entre deux autos disposant d'une boîte manuelle et d'une boîte automatique. Depuis 2009, elle a volé à 36 reprises sur ce Mirage, passé sa licence d'ULM, son brevet de pilote d'hélicoptère. En tout, elle pilote plus d'une quarantaine d'engins volants différents.

Et puis, un jour de l'année dernière, lorsqu'un ami pilote lui parle de la société néerlandaise SSC (Space Expedition Curaçao) qui s'apprête à lancer des navettes dans l'espace, ça fait tilt. « Je n'ai jamais vu de navette, c'est vraiment extraordinaire ! La discussion avait eu lieu un samedi et le lundi, j'étais déjà à Amsterdam pour me renseigner... Son objectif de l'espace venait de débiter... »

« Nous sommes montés à bord d'un Blouchnie 76, un très gros avion, très impressionnant, spécialement équipé. Pour la première parabolle, on s'installe tous à genoux et on se tient par les bras. Et lorsque l'avion décroche, on est tous montés en l'air, c'est très drôle! »

Le vol d'essai en L39

Ce test-là, Marie-Françoise ne l'a pas encore passé, il attendra cet automne. Mais on ne s'en fait pas pour elle, il y a peu de chances que cette expérience parfaite note future astronaute. Les L39 Albatros sont des jets d'entraînement biplices très performants. L'idée, à bord, c'est de manœuvrer pour simuler le démarrage vertical de la navette. 4,5 G, gonflé ! J'ai déjà volé dans un avion identique avec la parabolle Bretiling, ajoute Marie-Françoise, ça te fait bien voir ce que l'effet d'apexion se crée dans les phases descendantes. Il faut aussi, même s'il a fallu signer pas moins de trois pages

Le Cornec, 75 ans, tutoyer les nuages est tout ce qu'il y a de plus réel. C'est acté : début 2015, elle ira dans l'espace à bord d'une navette spatiale!



1. Le Lynx, la navette que va prendre Marie-Françoise Le Cornec. 2. Vol au-dessus de Montreux. 3. Découverte de l'apesantissement avec le vol anti-G. 4. La sortie de l'Alouette 76, après le vol anti-G.

Le Lynx, navette d'une nouvelle ère

Marie-Françoise Le Cornec volera à bord d'un Lynx Mark II, une navette en cours de construction dans le désert de Mojave.

Le Lynx est un engin spatial de petite taille (11,5 mètres de long, 7,1 mètres de largeur) qui est propulsé par quatre moteurs de fusée indépendants qui peuvent être allumés et éteints à volonté, ce qui est un élément de sécurité particulièrement appréciable. Il ne peut embarquer que deux personnes à bord, pilote compris. Sa particularité est qu'il décolle et atterrit horizontalement, par ses propres moyens, explique Marie-Françoise.

Contratée par la société Xcor dans le désert de Mojave, non loin de Los Angeles, son pilote sera un ancien astronaute de la NASA qui a notamment à son compte six sorties dans l'espace. Effectivement, après s'être élancé sur la piste, le Lynx décolle, se cabre et file droit vers le ciel à une vitesse impressionnante : il atteint Mach 3, sa vitesse maximale, après trois petites minutes de vol seulement.

Cent vingt secondes plus tard, le vol au sommet de sa parabolle, à 101 kilomètres de hauteur, c'est-

quent et il ne se rallumera qu'en cas d'absence de retour. Le retour se fait en effet à la manière d'un planeur.

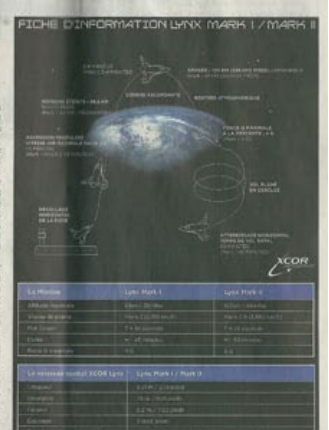
Pour Marie-Françoise, l'intérêt de ce voyage réside surtout en grande partie dans l'appareil utilisé : « J'ai hâte de découvrir les effets de l'accélération verticale juste après le décollage! Ça doit être quelque chose... » Pour elle, le plus important n'est presque pas la destination, mais le voyage en lui-même, aussi court soit-il.

C'est pour cette raison qu'elle a choisi de voler avec SSC plutôt qu'avec son très médiatique concurrent, Virgin Galactic, du milliardaire Richard Branson. « J'ai partiellement dans une navette accrochée à un gros porteur. Il n'y a donc pas d'effet de pointe, ce n'est jamais un gros avion. Je n'y vais pas grand intérêt... »

possession des Pays-Bas, située non loin de l'équateur, comme peuvent l'être les sites de cap Canaveral ou de Kourou.

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Avant le départ, une solide préparation

On ne s'envole pas pour l'espace comme cela, sur un coup de tête, la préparation et l'entraînement sont des étapes longues et indispensables. Voici les points de passage obligés.

Les tests médicaux
Tout d'abord, il y a une batterie de tests médicaux qualitatifs par Marie-Françoise de « croquis-globes ». Electrocardiogramme, test à l'effort, analyses en tout genre, rien n'est omis. « En tout, le dossier médical fait quatorze pages. Mais comme je dois passer une visite médicale tous les ans pour voler sur le Mirage, cela ne me faisait pas trop peur... »

L'âge, pourvu que l'on soit en bonne santé, n'est donc pas un problème.

La centrifugeuse
Incursion des G, ce n'est pas donné à tout le monde. Mais de voler dans des avions à réaction, c'est presque devenu une routine pour

grosse qu'elle a trouvée à Soesterberg (Pays-Bas), bien que l'appareil soit unique au monde, ne l'a pas franchement inquiété. Au contraire : « C'était magique! Pendant que le simulateur tourne, on voit le film d'un décollage dans l'espace. Il y a tout le dégradé de couleurs qui va du bleu clair qui s'assombrit jusqu'au noir profond de l'espace... C'était fantastique! Sur la vidéo du test, on voit d'ailleurs que j'ai la sonnerie jusqu'aux oreilles, mais ça débord jusqu'à la fin! Et les G? Parce que c'est quand même pour cela qu'on passe dans la machine... « Hum, ça sert un peu, mais ça n'est pas bien méchant, l'astuce, quoi. »

Cette fois, direction la Cité des étoiles, près de Moscou. Le vol zero-G, c'est un avion qui multiplie les paraboles pour que l'effet d'apesantissement se crée dans les phases descendantes. Il faut aussi, même s'il a fallu signer pas moins de trois pages

The least you can say about our friend Marie-Françoise Le Cornec is that she is passionate about anything that flies: she's flown everything from gliders to helicopters, as well as ultralights and jet fighters such as Soviet MiGs, Hawker Hunters and Mirage III. But next year, Marie-Françoise will go one step further: she is planning to travel... into space!

Having learned through a fellow pilot of the existence of the Dutch company Space Expedition Curaçao, Marie-

Françoise did not hesitate long before signing up for a flight on the Lynx suborbital aircraft. The flight is planned for early 2015, leaving from Curaçao in the Caribbean. Her pilot will be a former NASA astronaut who has already made six space sorties. Taking off as a traditional plane, the Lynx climbs at Mach 2.9 under rocket power. At an altitude of 58 kilometers, the rocket is shut off and the aircraft continues on a ballistic trajectory, reaching an altitude of approximately 100 km. After reentry in the atmosphere, the

Lynx pulls about 4G and then glides back to base. Flight time is approximately 30 minutes.

We wish Marie-Françoise a great flight. May she enjoy every minute of this formidable experience and bring us back a photo and some great stories to share! ■



THIS PAGE'S CONTENT IS FOR MEMBERS ONLY.

NEW EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CAF

Photo CAF Media Department



Adam Smith sitting in Seafire XV PR503 at Oshkosh in 2010.

PRESS RELEASE – The Commemorative Air Force has announced the addition of Adam Smith to its staff in the role of Executive Vice President for Strategic Development. Smith will oversee the execution of CAF’s “Airbase Strategy”, which will include leading the design, funding and construction of the CAF National Airbase, and ultimately the oversight of existing and future Airbases.

Smith comes to the CAF with extensive experience in aviation attractions and events, having worked at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) for the previous eleven years. During that tenure, Smith was responsible for the EAA AirVenture Museum, the Young Eagles and Chapter programs, Membership and ultimately, EAA AirVenture Oshkosh – “the World’s Greatest Aviation Celebration.” Prior to his work in the United States, Smith curated the Museum of Flight at East Fortune for the National Museums of Scotland.

Adam“Adam has a unique background and set of talents that

make him perfect for this important new position in fulfilling the educational mission of the CAF” said Stephan C. Brown, CAF President and CEO. “The planned CAF National Airbase will establish a world-class attraction in a major metropolitan area in Texas. It will help generations of Americans value the contribution of military aviation in assuring our nation’s freedom.”

“I bring a deep passion for the aircraft flown by the CAF and the important message they carry,” said Smith. “The CAF has been making great strides as an organization and is supported by a wonderful community of volunteers. I’m simply thrilled by this opportunity to help the organization move to the next level of success.” ■



**THIS FRAME'S
CONTENT IS FOR
MEMBERS ONLY**

Past times... March 13 to 26, 1951

By Col. Roger Robert

FIRST AUSTRALIA-SOUTH AMERICA (CHILE) FLIGHT



The "Frigate Bird II" Catalina in flight.

In 1950, Captain Patrick Gordon Taylor wanted to reconnoitre a route which would join Australia to Chile via the central Pacific. The project was supported by the Australian government. He chose a classic Catalina which was named "Frigate Bird II". The aircraft was fitted with extra fuel tanks and four JATO rockets, which allowed the aircraft to take off at maximum weight, even from a heavy sea.

In addition to Taylor, the flight crew included co-pilots/observers Jack Percival and G. H. Purvis, radioman Argus Allison and mechanic Eugène L'Huillier.

On March 13, 1951, the aircraft took off from Rose bay in Sydney, with a few bags of mail. Flying along the coast, they arrived in Grafton, halfway between Sydney and Brisbane, to check and calibrate their radio.

They then flew to Nouméa, Fidji, where the Royal Air Force made a final check of the aircraft. After that, the crew was on its own. The aircraft was loaded with spare parts, life rafts, water and food.

After spending a night in Samoa, they flew to Papeete then Mangareva, last stop before Easter Island.

They now overflew hundreds of

miles over small coral islands, the Tuamotu, which had never been overflown previously. There was no hope for help in case of an emergency! Finally, Captain Taylor made it to Easter Island and smoothly alighted the Frigate Bird II.

Having refuelled, they finally arrived in Valparaiso on March 26, after a flight of 8,450 miles. In Chile, Captain Taylor received the country's highest award and all crew members were made honorary officers of the Chilean Air Force.

The return flight began on April 4, taking the same route. Leaving Easter Island, the crew had to make use of the JATO rockets to take off from a very heavy sea..

They reached Mangareva to refuel, Tahiti, Aitutaki, Fidji, Nouméa, and finally Rose Bay on April 21, 1951. ■



Sir Patrick Gordon Taylor

(21 October 1896 - 15 December 1966)

This Australian pilot and author was one of the great names of aviation in the Pacific. He flew in France as a fighter pilot in the latter stages of World War I and served as an ATA ferry pilot during World War II. Taylor was made a knight in 1954.

- 1933: second pilot and navigator with Charles Kingsford Smith during the 1st crossing of the Tasmanian Sea (Australia-New-Zealand and back).
- 1933: navigator with Charles Ulm (Australia-Great Britain-Australie).
- 1934: with Charles Kingsford Smith, 1st Australia-USA flight, via Fiji and Hawaii.
- 1939: navigator with Richard Archbold during the first flight across the Indian Ocean (Australia-Kenya).
- 1944: 1st flight across the South Atlantic between Western Australia and Chile, via Tahiti and Easter Island. For this flight Taylor was awarded the Oswald Watt Gold Medal.



The Frigate Bird II crew in Rose Bay before the transoceanic flight. From left to right: Percival, Purvis, Taylor, Allison and L'Huillier.

MEETING AÉRIEN

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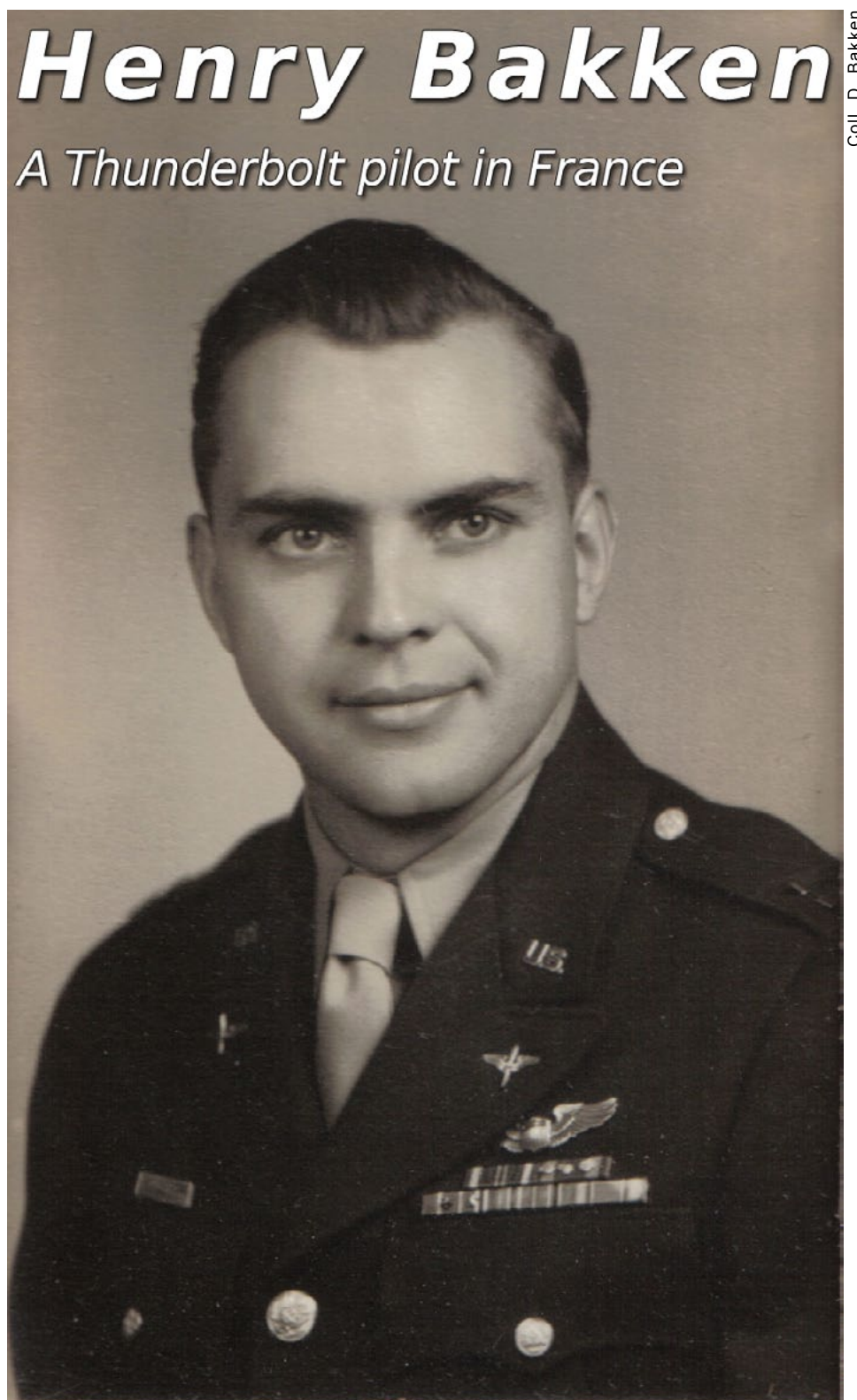
OUVERTURE 10H / DÉMONSTRATIONS 14H-17H30 / EXPOSITION DE VOITURES ANCIENNES



This article is based on a February 2004 interview by Daniel Bakkenet of his grand-father Henry Bakken, a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot of the 509th Fighter Squadron in World War II. Henry Bakken died on November 2, 2011 aged 91. The 509th Fighter Squadron was part of the 405th Fighter Group of the 9th Air Force, which gave Allied troops air support during the invasion of Europe in 1944 and 1945. This issue of Airshow is dedicated to the memory of Henry Bakken and to the Thunderbolt pilots and mechanics who fought to liberate France.

What was air travel like before the war? (planes, airports) Was it considered a luxury?

It was on a small scale. Planes were not fast, and the distance they flew wasn't great. A lot of people preferred to go by train, especially if the weather was bad. People just walked out to the airplane from a small building. All stewards had to be registered nurses to deal with airsickness because they flew so close to the ground, and there was lots of turbulence. Boeing built flying boats (4 engines) for Pan American that flew across the ocean- they were a safety feature to land if necessary on water. They flew from the US to Europe and Hawaii. My brother-in-law worked on the flying boats for Boeing in Seattle. He started in 1938 or 1939 making 15 cents an hour assembling the airplanes. After a plane was finished, they took it apart, taking the wings and tail off, and then floated the barge up the river to a naval base on Lake Washington where they flew them the first time. The Boeing M-280 was the next plane, and then the McDonnell Douglas DC-3, which were both propeller-driven and had about fifty seats. Boeing Field was the only airport other than the military bases. Airports had a small building and control tower, and a single runway. Wiley Post and Will Rogers were going to fly around the world. They took off



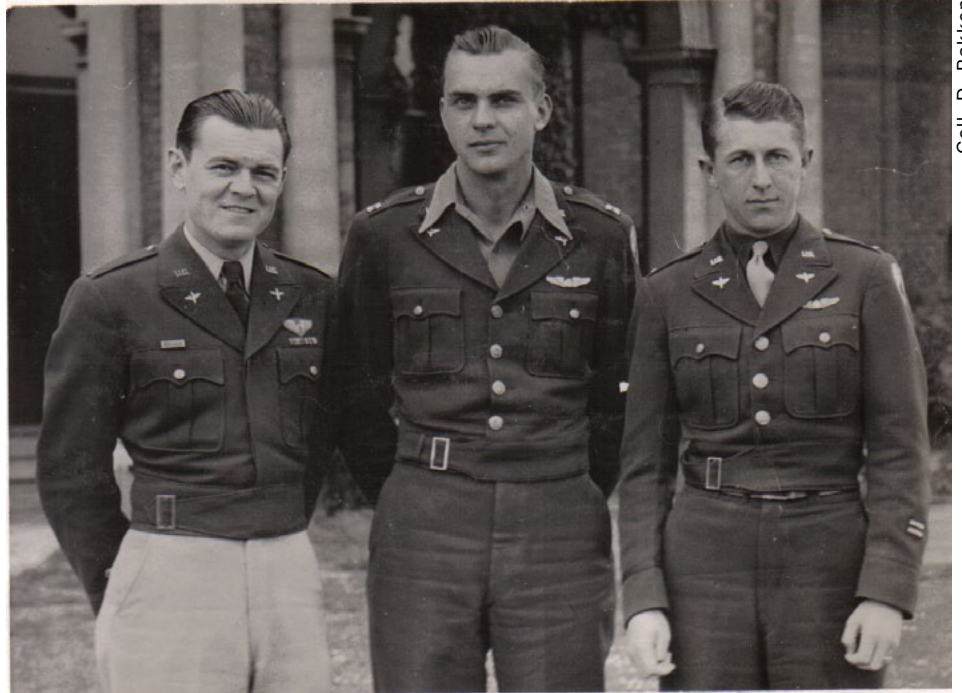
from Boeing field but crash landed on a beach in Alaska and died.

What physical and mental skills did you have to learn in order to fly?

I was a journeyman carpenter when I applied for flight training in the cadet program. I didn't have any college, so I didn't have a chance to apply until they ran out of college people. I had no special training. It was myself

and a fellow that had driven a beer truck- we were the only two that hadn't been to college. We took the same test as the college people [in downtown Seattle- and they had tests all around the country, anticipating the need for 1000's of gunners, bombardiers, etc], with no preparation. It lasted 3-4 hours, having to do with reasoning. I passed that, and the second day was a test of coordination. They had devices to test how steady you were. The

third day was a whole day of physical examination: eyes ears, nose, lungs, heart, and muscles. Then I passed and was accepted as a cadet. The beer truck driver made it, but about 10 of the college guys washed out. After I was sworn in, I went home on leave and found a draft notice in the mail, then went to the draft office and showed them the card. In those days there was no air force as a separate unit, it was the Army Air Corps. It became the Air Force in 1947. I was called up for service in January of 1943. We were supposed to go to Santa Ana, CA by railway. They had a scarlet fever epidemic raging there, and we sat in the train for a few days, then changed destinations to San Antonio, TX. We arrived at Texas in January, and they weren't expecting six hundred more cadets. Then we were classified by ability to be pilot, gunner, bombardier, navigator, or wash out. I was there nine weeks and passed



Henry Bakken, surrounded by two fellow pilots.

all the tests. About 20 percent washed out. One of them was the cyclomotor test- they test dexterity and ability to do two things at once. The best ones become pilots. Then we went to San Angelo for 9 weeks and another 50 percent washed out.

Advanced flight training was in McAllen (also 9 weeks).

What was the first plane you flew, and which plane did you fly in training?

Primary Trainer PT-19 Uvalde (Fairchild) no radios, they'd shoot a red flare if you were supposed to abort. (60 hours)

BT-13 (Vultee) had a radio in the cockpit, for talking to copilot and ground. (60 hours) 400 horsepower

Advanced trainer T-6 (North American) Mission/McAllen (60 hours) 600 horsepower had wing bombs- practiced dive-bombing and strafing with wing guns. That was on Matagorda island- gunnery school.

We spent a half of the day at ground school, starting with simple math, then algebra. The math instructor was from Harvard. He wrote formulas with his right hand and followed with the eraser in his left hand. I didn't even know what they were talking about. My friend Dick Barnes tutored me in math, and I would tutor him in keeping his uniform right and his shoes shined. They had an aircraft rec-



Relaxing on an improvised ride.



The P-47D-22-RE Thunderbolt flown by Henry Bakken with the 509th Fighter Squadron, named "Fat Cat".

ognition test with head on, tail, or side views of an airplane. You had to identify it in one-fifth of a second, from all types of English, Japanese, French, and American bombers and fighters. Theory of flight was another course- lift and aerodynamic principles. We woke at 5:30, then marched off to breakfast. Then ground school from 9:00-12:00. The classes included military and government. Flight school was after lunch. I'd never been in an airplane. The instructor took me up for a short ride, said "this is the stick, this is the rudder, this is the mixture control- now you take over." He'd say "a little bit more rudder, and bank a little more on the turn." There were about 200 airplanes in the air, so you had to look all directions, above and below, before turning. We usually lined up with a fence and flew along a line. After you'd done that for a few minutes, he'd say "put it in a dive, then pull up in a steep climb, then turn to the left, to the right, then dive down on the fence." We'd do that for half an hour. It's called flying by the seat of pants because you can tell if you're controlling the aircraft if you're sitting firmly in the seat. We learned to fly with instruments by having a hood placed over the trainee's cockpit. All the trainers had a front seat and back seat. They had

a funnel with a rubber tube for talking with the instructor.

P-40 (Curtiss) 1100 horsepower (10 hours) all fighter/bombers no weapons training, just flight. I flew a brand new one, called the "N" model. I was the first cadet to fly it. I took off from Brownsville, and then we had to practice stalls. I did one stall and the tower called; they had a code word for when the clouds moved up the Rio Grande and became solid at 500 feet. So all 15 of us in the air had to land on one runway, often 3 at a time. You had to lean out the side of the P-40 to see around the nose when landing, and you had a tendency to turn to the side- your depth perception has to be pretty good. After I landed safely, The instructor was ready to hug me- "You brought it back in one piece!"

I only had ½ hour in it, and had to come in for an emergency landing. Then a regular P-40 landed and broke off the wheels and propeller and turned into a smoking heap, but the pilot walked away. I had ten days break in Seattle, and then left on Christmas day. I rode the trains to Tallahassee for training in the P-47. Trains were the only way to get around long-distance. You could never depend on getting anyplace by plane. You'd have to stop 10 times to get from Seattle to Tallahassee.

Describe flying the P-47. (instruments, controls, airframe, weapons, visibility, etc.)

It was made by Republic and weighed 7 tons, or 14,000 pounds. It had a 1422 horsepower Pratt & Whitney radial engine with 18



Henry Bakken's Thunderbolt "Fat Cat", probably on a temporary airstrip in France.

cylinders in 2 banks of 9. There was a turbocharger under the airplane which diverted the exhaust on either side of the cockpit which ran a turbine. It was designed to be a high-altitude fighter. Above 18000 feet the atmosphere is thin and the turbocharger kicks in. I didn't fly much above 12000. For every 1000 feet you climb, the ground-speed increases 2 percent relative to the airspeed. The Hurricane the Spitfire and the Typhoon were used in Britain in 1943, and then the first P-47 group came over and wiped out almost the whole German air force in 3 years. There were lots of aces with 30 kills flying P-47's. Then the P-51 came along and had a vulnerable cooling system which was easily damaged. P-47's could absorb a lot of punishment; they could even run on 9 cylinders. We carried bombs and napalm and fragmentation bombs. You can just imagine the damage we could do when we chewed up a convoy or railroad. We would attack troop transports with 50 caliber bullets which were armor-piercing and attacked with a group of 12 airplanes. Often we came in with two 500-pound bombs on a tank or a bridge, a dug-in emplacement, or a train. We bombed factories and oil refineries. One time we were trying to knock a dam out with two 1000-pound bombs. We dropped them in the water with a delayed fuse and let the current carry them to the dam. The explosions made cracks in the dam but didn't destroy it. Our missions were all short. We were located as close to the front as we could be and still be safe. We were 5 minutes flying time from the front. We'd get briefed in the morning, take off with the fueled and armed aircraft, and then be over enemy in five minutes. My crew chief would often only get 2 hours of sleep. Gunners people had to clean the barrels and reload ammo while the crew chief would check the en-



This picture gives a clearer view of the aircraft's nose art. The very large size of the Thunderbolt's fuselage made it an ideal candidate for elaborate nose art.

gine. They slept when we were flying. Missions lasted not over 3 hours. We flew about 8000 feet above the 20mm antiaircraft guns, which had a range of 7000 feet. The 40 and 88 millimeter guns were effective up to 50,000 feet. If there was heavy fire we'd go down and take them out with our eight 50's; it was an awe-inspiring sight. German troops wore white in the winter and if they looked up, we saw their faces and strafed them. After the war Uncle Carl talked to a German in an ice cream shop. He said that all people who flew P-47's "should be put to death" because they inflicted such terrible casualties. American infantry wouldn't go anywhere unless they had air cover. We were in the tactical air force supporting Patton. The 17th Panzer Grenadiers were giving him a hard time, and he wanted them knocked out. He found out through army intelligence that all their officers gathered at noon and had a hot meal. He called our group and asked us to hit them with 12 airplanes right at 12 o'clock. We dropped our bombs with 10-second fuses and all the officers were in there. The entire tent and surrounding area, including the trees, went up in a huge fireball, and they were all killed. Patton wrote us a letter about the strike and said

it knocked the entire division out for 2 months. One time his troops uncovered warehouses full of German wine and he'd divvy it up, and we'd drink wine with our meal. He was a soldier's soldier.

England was the first base of operations. We operated in Christchurch and flew across the Channel on runs into France. On D-Day we flew over the troops landing and softened up targets inland. The battleships fired 16-inch shells at 4-foot thick concrete bunkers and knocked them on their sides. I later drove a motorcycle to Cherbourg and we could smell dead people in the rubble of the bunkers. When we flew, we went after targets of opportunity, like trains and convoys. After that we were based St. Mere Eglise and continued to drive the Germans back. We had an episode where Patton's army surrounded 400,000 German troops. They all surrendered and were herded to fields with no tents, no food, and just stood up because there wasn't room to sit down. They were contained by roads with barbed wire and jeeps patrolling with machine guns. They finally got some water and food and were moved out to camps in Allied countries. You could get all kinds of German weapons: rifles, pistols, and shotguns from the captured troops. In 1944 we



Henry Bakken standing in front of a "bubbletop" Thunderbolt with no camouflage or invasion stripes. Note the metallic lattice layed on the ground, to prevent the nearly 8 tons of the Thunderbolt from bogging down in mud on the hastily set up Advanced Landing Grounds

captured Paris. Our fighter group then moved to 40 miles southwest of Paris, to the town of St. Dizier, at an abandoned German airfield. Then the Bulge came in Belgium. The Germans attacked a green American division fresh from the States and overran the whole division, then they tried to close the port at Antwerp to stop reinforcements from coming. The weather was so bad that we couldn't fly. The army was trying to hold the Germans back without air support, and then the weather broke and all the German equipment and troops were out in the open. We crossed over Verdun and crossed into Luxembourg and shot convoys bringing fuel to the tanks. We shot one fuel truck, which exploded and caught the entire convoy up in flames. We made all our bombs count and radioed for more planes. We had 12 groups of 12 planes. We wiped them out. That ended the Bulge. We flew for 4 days, from morning to noon, and then we were off. We'd fly back and load up, have a cup of coffee, then head back out, often flying 6 missions in 5 hours. We wiped out so many ve-

hicles that all the German army had left was horse-drawn carriages.

I flew home in a B-24 from Prestwick, Scotland, stopping in Iceland and sleeping in the bomb bay. We landed in Newfoundland. It had a been on a bombing run in Germany, and then sheltered in Sweden. They added up our awards and time of service to calculate our points. If we had enough, we could go home instead of more fighting in the East. But we had to wait a long time, because the priority was given to planes going east, not west. We landed in Bangor and took the train to Fort Lewis, Washington. Then I took the bus home to Seattle.

What new technology and advances in design did the P-47 have? (engine, airframe, guns)

It seems like every 2 months they came out with a new model, new improvements. They all handled the same. First they had the razorback, then the bubble top. The P-47 was more powerful than the P-40. It had more firepower,

it turned sharper, and took more punishment. P-38's had two engines, but no torque (pulling to one side during takeoff) because the two propellers turning in opposite directions canceled each other out. P-47's had steel armor behind the seat, gas tanks in the wings, and behind the pilot. They also had water tanks for cooling the engine. Our instruments included manifold pressure, rpm, altimeter, needle and ball, artificial horizon, temperature, oil pressure, ammeter, and a radio with 4 channels. They had no ejection seat, but you did have a parachute pack on your seat, with a rubber dinghy. You could eject the canopy and stand up in the seat to be blown outside. You had an oxygen mask with a radio inside. One guy had a really long mustache. He would start to sweat, the sweat would drip down his mustache, and he would get shocked by the radio.

Was the P-47 superior to enemy planes you encountered?

They were pretty equal. I only saw German planes on maybe 10 missions, usually in groups of 2. We



Another moment of peace, here in France.

mostly flew in groups of 4: the element leader, the wingman, and the flight leaders. One time the flight leader was shot down by a tank because he was flying too slow. Then the element leader was shot down by anti-aircraft fire, and the pilot bailed out and ran into the woods to hide. I was the only one left. I had to find my way back home and I was alone. I climbed as fast as I could and 2 German ME109's jumped me. I fired a burst at them head-on, and they turned away. They didn't want to fly into those big eight 50's. I kept looking to see if they were going to jump me, but they hit the deck and stayed low. Then I got a heading from the controller after giving the password for the day. I forgot to turn on my IFF (friendly indicator beacon) and was shot at by my own ground forces. Once I turned it on, the ground fire stopped immediately. Then the other pilot returned, the one whose barrels had burnt out. He claimed that I had shot him down, but I told him that anyone would be able to see from my gun camera that I hadn't, and that he had been stupid enough to burn out his gun barrels. He just turned and walked away.

Did they have any problems or design flaws?

When they were fully loaded, they needed longer runways. I flew 90 missions, and it got me

back every time. One time the engine was hit by enemy fire. One of the magnetos quit and I only had 9 cylinders. My engine quit after landing, and I had to restart it and get off the runway because other planes were waiting with low fuel. When I started the plane, my exhaust shot out 50 feet behind me because the fuel going through half of the cylinders wasn't igniting until it hit the exhaust system. Then a captain came over and tried to start it, but more flames shot out and he gave up.

What other new types of planes were used in the war? (jet planes?) Were the planes different than before? How were designs influenced by the war?

The Germans had the ME262 jet fighter, and Bell had a jet. Boeing built the B-29 bomber, a 4-engine prop-driven plane. Boeing built the B-47 twin engine jet bomber, which is still at the museum. Then they built the B-52, a high altitude jet bomber, which is still in service. The English built a passenger airplane called the Comet. Then Boeing built the 707, the first passenger jetliner, then the 727, then the 747. McDonnell Douglas built lots

of passenger planes. The DC-4 was the last propeller driven passenger liner, then the DC-6 and the DC-10. Lockheed was still building passenger planes.

What was air travel after the war like?

The major airlines were Pan American, United, Northwest, Eastern, Continental, Western, Alaska, and Delta. One aircraft took off from Boeing field and landed on the hillside north of us. It crashed and burned, they were all students on vacation. Then there was another plane that crashed short of the runway. When I was practicing landings at Sea-Tac right after the war, there was just a tower there. I took off toward the northwest and flew right over my folks house and changed prop pitch over their house to make more noise, and on landing I flew over my sister's house in my BT-13. I had to get 4 hours a month flying time to get flight pay, which I did for a month before leaving for Texas. I stayed in service until 1947 at San Antonio. Then I came to Seattle and started being a carpenter again, although I was still in the reserves until 1953.

How did the Sea-Tac airport grow?

Sea-Tac was already in place when I returned from the war. It was called Bow Lake Airfield. I wanted to get some flying time, and they had some army trainers. The BT13 army trainer, called the Valiant, was the plane; it had a 2-speed prop. I took off and landed, practicing takeoffs and landings, around 1945. ■

The editor would like to thank M. Daniel Bakken for this interview and pictures.

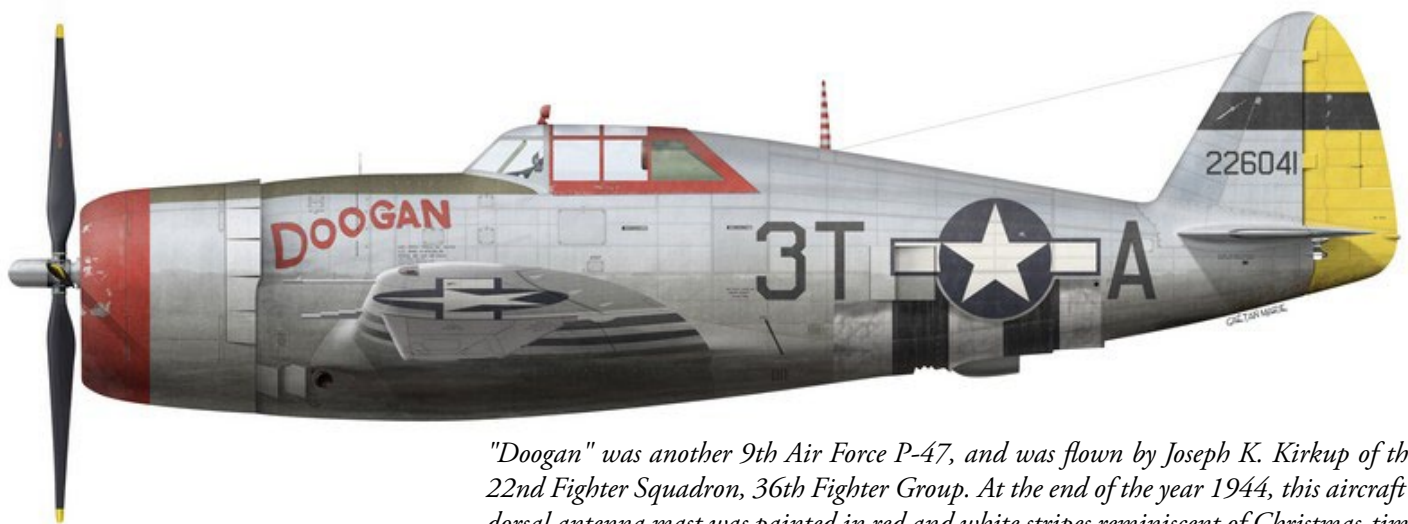
Battle colours: Republic P-47 Thunderbolt

Illustrations: Bertrand Brown (aka Gaëtan Marie)

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This P-47D-16-RE was assigned to Captain Charles Mohrle of the 510th Fighter Squadron, 405th Fighter Group, which supported advancing Allied troops in France in 1944. Prior to the invasion, this group was based in Christchurch alongside Henry Bakken's unit. Mohrle was a Texan, and adorned his mount with the appropriate nose art and name.



"Doogan" was another 9th Air Force P-47, and was flown by Joseph K. Kirkup of the 22nd Fighter Squadron, 36th Fighter Group. At the end of the year 1944, this aircraft's dorsal antenna mast was painted in red and white stripes reminiscent of Christmas-time "candy canes".



This "bubbletop" was not 9th Air Force, but was the personal aircraft of Major Francis "Gabby" Gabreski, the famous American ace of Polish origins who led the 56th Fighter Group and turned the P-47 into a fearsome fighter. Flying the P-47, Gabreski was credited with 28 aerial kills in Europe, and another 6.5 in Korea flying the F-86.



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