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AIRSHOW

CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 16 - N° 5 - May 2011

EDITORIAL

After two months of intense work for the Annual check of the Piper Cub and the NC 856, with several tricky problems to solve, the two planes have been accepted by the OSAC and have received their Certificate of Airworthiness! A big Thank You to all members who took part in this maintenance! Without them we would not have been able to achieve this.

As I type this text, 23 members haven't paid their annual dues to the French Wing for year 2011 - 2012. I ask them to send their participation as soon as possible if they wish to receive future issues of this monthly Newsletter. I understand that each one of you has some priorities and is unable to participate physically to our Unit's activities as much he or she would like to, but sending one's dues in due time is a true - and the first - participation that I do appreciate.

I'm asked many questions by our members about what is happening in Midland, and I would love to be able to give them some good news. Unfortunately, I can't do that. However, an extraordinary thing happened during the second biggest air show in the USA after Oshkosh, the *Sun'n Fun* which takes place in Florida every year: **Not a single CAF airplane was there!**...Of course, the economical situation is such that it doesn't help this kind of activity, but it's a sure fact that such a massive absence is a logical consequence of everything that we know.

Hal Fenner, husband of Diane Fenner, died in his sleep on April 27. As everyone knows, Hal, who was one of the artisans of the CAF for more than 40 years, as well as the AAHM museum, was banned for 5 years by the CAF director last year, simply for the reason that he had dared not to agree with him. Today, we all know how right Hal was! Diane, his wife, continues to defend the CAF and will do so until Hal and all other CAF members who were wrongfully sanctioned are cleared of such an insult, and that the CAF regains its dignity.

Bernard

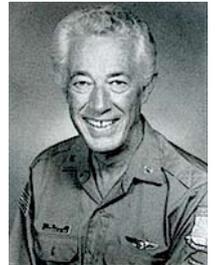
Mosquito...



Flies!

CHANGES TO THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION : NOËL BARANGE BECOMES ADJUTANT OFFICER AND GAËL DARQUET WILL ASSIST AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE.

HAL FENNER, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE AAHM MUSEUM, PASSED AWAY ON APRIL 27 - HIS PASSING LEAVES A GAP THAT THE CAF WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FILL.



**SPECIAL
JURCA
"SIROCCO"**

2011 - 2012 ANNUAL DUES: THIS ISSUE OF OUR NEWSLETTER WILL BE THE LAST ONE YOU RECEIVE IF YOU DON'T SEND YOUR ANNUAL DUES VERY SOON!

AU REVOIR HAL FENNER

It is with great sadness that we heard about the passing of Harold Allen Fenner Jr. at the age of 87, on April 27.

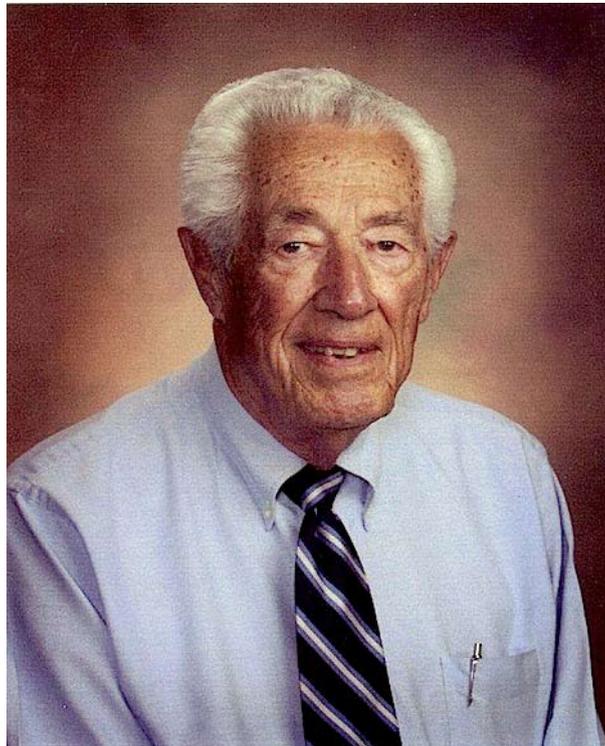
Husband of Diane Fenner, Hal was a member of the CAF for more than 40 years (# 835), He was Chief of Staff in 1988 and 1989. Finally, he was banned from the CAF last year, for 5 years, by its new director, for the simple reason that he didn't agree with his decisions and intentions !

Hal Fenner was a man with goals and did everything to reach them. Since his father was a doctor in a hospital where the family lived, Hal learned all about medicine very early, and at the age of 16, he was a true expert in X rays. It was at this age that he got his private pilot licence.

During WWII he served as a liaison pilot flying the Stinson L-5 from 1942 till 1947. After the war, he got a Medical Degree at the Nebraska University in 1948. He was called back in the US Air Force during the Korean war, in Lakland Air Force Base with orthopedics as a specialty. When he was discharged in 1951 Hal returned to his town of Hobbs where he started a 58 years career as an orthopedic surgeon at the **Lea Regional Medical Center** until the age of 85, as well as an FAA medical examiner. It is said that Dr. Fenner has treated a broken bone at one time or another on practically every family in Lea County!

Hal had a passion for adrenalin producing activities. He logged over 9500 hours flying warbirds and driving fast race cars. He owned and flew several types of aircraft like the

B-25, P-51 Mustang, Stinson L-5, T-6, and his Beechcraft T-34. He is considered as one of the fathers of the Confederate Air Force working decades promoting the goals and preserving the legacy of WWII aviation. He served on the General Staff for many years and was Chief of Staff in 1988 and 1989. He was instrumental creating the world class American Airpower Heritage Museum in Midland, Texas, having the foresight to preserve WWII artifacts for all time.



He was a professional race car driver in the 1960's driving road course races in his black Jag participating in Sebring and the Mexican Road Race with such racing legends as Carroll Shelby and Jim Hall, gentlemen who remained his lifelong friends.

Dr. Fenner was the president of the American Association of Automotive Medicine and was instrumental in developing the Abbreviated Injury Scale which standardized the

rating of injuries nationwide. He introduced legislation to insure that all automobiles sold in the United States were equipped with seat belts, and in the 1970's he was 30 years before his time working diligently on the idea of air bags in cars.

In 1973 Dr. Fenner wrote the JF73 Standard for football helmets and equipped the Hobbs Eagles with these helmets. For 5 years the Hobbs Eagles enjoyed being the safest High School football team in the nation. As recent as this year Dr. Fenner was working diligently with congressional leaders to re-introduce legislation to insure higher standards for child football head protection.

Dr. Fenner's contribution to leadership on various boards, committees, and membership in the field's of safely, aviation and medicine are too numerous to mention but it is safe to say that when he saw an opportunity to serve and lead he would grab it. He assumed the presidency of Snell in 1993, holding that position until 2010 and helped improve automotive racing protection for the *Federation Internationale de l'Automobile* (FIA) and NASCAR. This furthered the recognition of The Snell Memorial Foundation, Inc. as the premiere private crash helmet standards organization in the world.

At the age of 73 he revisited the passion of fatherhood with the birth of Smith and the two spent many precious days hanging out at the airport and flying their beloved T-34.

The entire French Wing membership sends his wife Diane, his son Smith, and all their loved ones, their sincere condolences.

FRENCH WING ANNUAL DUES 2011/2012

We remind you that your French Wing annual dues (\$50.00) must be paid before March 31 each year.

BEWARE!... IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR PARTICIPATION SOON, THIS NEWSLETTER WILL BE THE LAST ONE YOU RECEIVE UNTIL YOU PAY YOUR DUES.

Are up to date with their annual dues:

Jim Adams, Hugh Alexander III, Gilles Avenel, Noël Barange, Michel Baloche, Christophe Bastide, Jean Barbaud, Bunty Bateman, Eric Bellebon, François Bergeon, Henri Bourrassier, Bertrand Brown, Merrill Butikofer, Jean-Yves Cercy, Claude Cardinal, Didier Cardinal, Cédric Chanu, Jacqueline Clerc, Daniel Costelle, Jean-Christophe Debuissou, Bernard Delfino, Fumiko Delfino, Stéphane Duchemin, Danielle Duflot, Michel Fleury, Guy Fourdrain, Claude Gascon, Louis-Jean Gioux, Maurice Girard, Roger Gouzon, Irene Grinnell, Roy Grinnell, Catherine Gritte, Philippe Gritte, Barbara Hair, Aubrey Hair, Louise Hudlow, Rick Hudlow, Jean-Luc Jentel, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, Marcel Ledoux, Kevin Leonard-Keller, Jacques Leroux, Isabelle Lesser, Jim Lux, Georges Marcelin, Olivier Marque, Christine Melkonian, Sebastien Michel, Jean-Claude Miniggio, Camille Montaigu, Tadao Nomura, Philippe Nonat, Benoît Paquet, Guy Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, Hervé Quefféléant, Claude Requi, John Røeder, Marcel Ruppert, Sandy Sansing, Harlan Short, Haruo Tanaka, Leon Z. Thomas, Christian Tournemine, Regis Urschler, William Voltz, Ron Wright.

REORGANIZATION OF THE FRENCH WING BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

As it was announced during our General Assembly last November, **Gaël Darquet** resigned from his position as Adjutant to concentrate on aircraft maintenance. He has been replaced by cooptation of **Noël Barange** who has now more than the 6 month seniority required for this position. Noël will be Adjutant until the next General Assembly. During the latter will take place the scheduled election of the President, to which will be added the election of the Adjutant. Noël will then be able to apply for this job and complete the original contract which is due to last until the end of 2012.

The cycle of future elections is therefore modified as follows:

- 2011: President (+ *Adjutant*)
- 2012: Adjutant
- 2013: Executive Off. & Finance Off.
- 2014: President
- Etc...

FLASH INFO PIPER CLUB FRANCE

The good perception of our DGAC friends about our current difficulties to invite European Cub owners in our country has led to two exemptions applicable to our Nancy gathering from June 17 till June 19:

- 1) Exempt authorization for the "Permit to Fly".
- 2) Exempt authorization for the ELT, for aircraft which are not forced to have one in their own country.

To this day, 32 Cub are registered for Nancy, and of the 56 Cub's which were at Arcachon, 18 were registered outside France.

FRENCH WING EVENTS 2011

The season started well with the Carrefour de l'Air event in the Musée de l'Air at Le Bourget on March 26 & 27.

Here is a list of our planned events:

- **French Wing Fly-in in Le Plessis-Belleville on May 28, 2011.**
- **French Wing 15th Anniversary in Le Plessis-Belleville on June 4, 2011, with the band SHADDOGUY.**
- **Fête aérienne de La Ferté-Alais on June 11 & 12: The PX will be present and located near the Dakota, and the Piper Cub has been accepted and displayed next to our booth** (Thank you to Jacqueline Clerc who managed to get such an ideal arrangement!).
- **Gathering of the Piper Club France in Nancy on June 17, 18, & 19.**
- **Pontoise air show on September 4th.**
- **Aéropuces du Musée de l'Air in Le Bourget on October 22 and 23, 2011.**

PIPER CLUB FRANCE EVENTS 2011

- **Annual gathering of the Piper Club France in Nancy on June 17, 18, & 19.**
- **Escapade in Nuits Saint Georges on September 24 & 25.**

Note: The Annual Gathering in 2012 will take place in Chambéry on June 15, 16, & 17.

A NEW TOPIC IN THE FRENCH WING NEWSLETTER

We ask all our members to tell us about the most extraordinary experience about aviation that they had during their life, be it as a professional or as simple aviation lovers, with happy or dramatic conclusions.

Do not hesitate to send us your anecdotes. These can be dramatic or funny, with as many details as possible, and illustrations too. The length of the text may be as long as 2 pages or even more if necessary.

The very first member to do this is **Gilles Avenel** whose recent frightening experience is described in this issue with an excellent style. It will be extremely useful to those who fly airplanes or maintain them.

And if you can't think of any extensive anecdote but have several ones, group them in a single text that you will send to us together with some appropriate illustrations for each short story.

THE RRAA 3/4 SCALE MOSQUITO HAS FLOWN!

On April 23, the 3/4 scale Mosquito took to the air on two occasions, without its RAF livery that will be added once the test flights are completed, and without the propeller spinners.

Many flights and tests will be necessary before the aircraft can get its certification from the DGAC.

However, these two flights are a fantastic reward for the entire team who spent 16 years to conceive and build this airplane which required more than 30,000 man/hours of hard work!

THANK YOU TO THE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE PARTICIPANTS!

The annual checks of the Piper Cub "Spirit of Lewis" (Owned by the French Wing), and the NC 856 Norvigie (Owned by Jean-Yves Cercy, Bernard Delfino, Claude Gascon, Roger Gouzon, and Patrick Pierre-Pierre), have been completed during the past two months.

The amount of work accomplished by these participants is enormous because several important technical problems had to be solved on top of all routine inspections.

Therefore, we sincerely thank all these members who sacrificed several days of their personal time to accomplish these tasks which were concluded by the renewal of these two historical airplanes' **Certificate of Airworthiness**, delivered by the OSAC (Formerly GSAC).

To thank them for their efforts and sacrifices, these members will be rewarded as required.

OTHER TASKS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED VERY SOON

The preparation of our Fly -in and the Wing's 15th Anniversary will call for

the participation of as many members as possible so that these two events are a real success.

We first need to build a wooden stage 9' x 12' in size, a rather easy task if we have enough people to help.

We also need as many seats as possible. At the moment, we have 20 of them. Therefore, we ask all our members to lend us folding chairs or garden chairs, as well as tables, and to bring them to the hangar before May 28. They will get them back on June 4 or soon after that date. Please do tell us how many of these items you have available.

ANYONE FOR THE WEEK- END IN NANCY?

At the moment, only one member is interested to go to Nancy with the Piper Cub, from June 17 to June 19.

The costs involved are excessive unless another member can share them.

A total of 6 flight hours are planned which will be paid according to your level of sponsorship, or 80€ per hour if you're not a sponsor, as well as the registration cost, the meals, and the hotel rooms. Please contact us if you're interested.



A NEW BOOK BY FRANÇOIS BERGEON

If flying in the United States is a dream for many European pilots, the cultural or procedural differences which exist with our daily environment require some transition that is not always easy to prepare.

A professional pilot and instructor who's been living in the USA for more than 15 years, **François Bergeon** knows the aeronautical world in the USA very well. He taught American student pilots as well as foreign qualified visitors. The author's incomparable experience allows him to present a detailed formation which will allow any pilot to fly solo in this new environment.

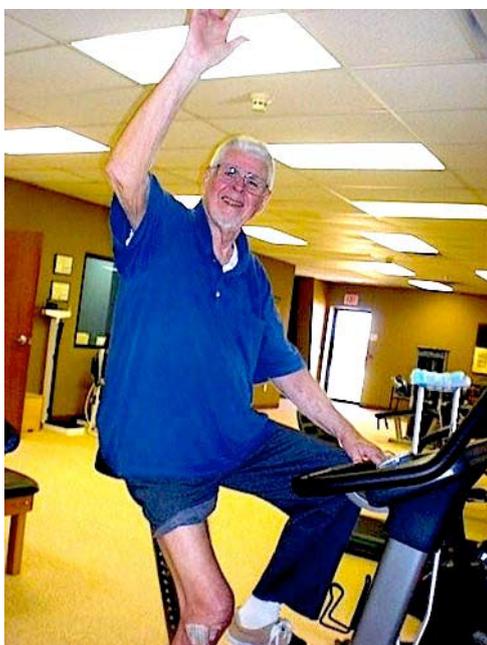
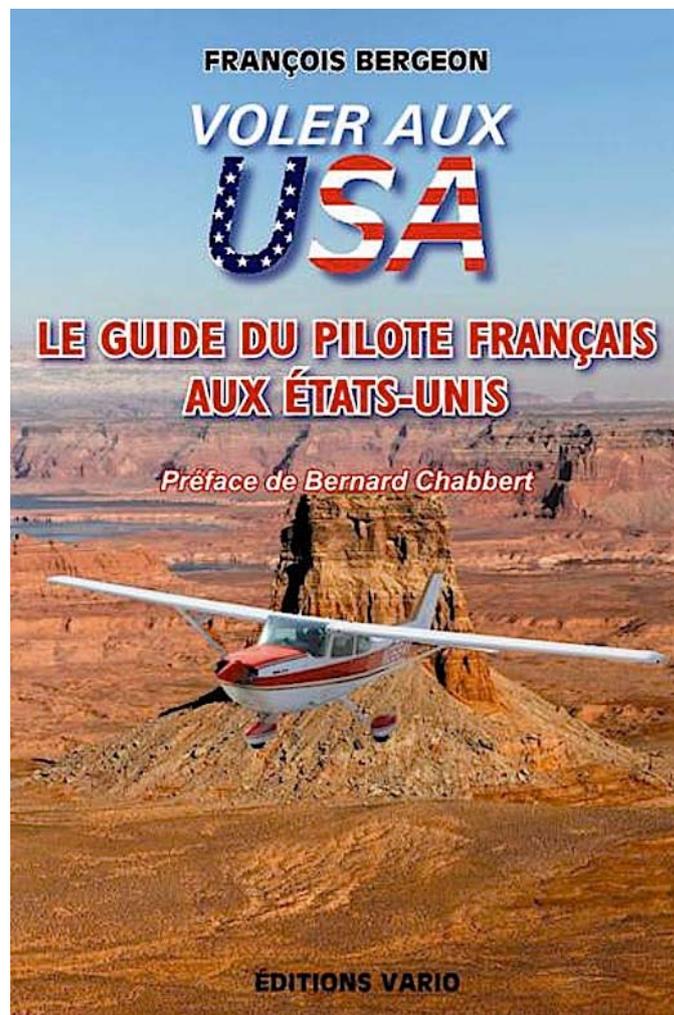
A former student of Jean Zilio, the Arizona aerobatics champion in 1999 and a former pilot of the Civil Air Patrol, François Bergeon is qualified on an extensive list of airplanes ranging from biplanes to WWII bombers. His articles are regularly published in French aviation magazine **Aviasport**.

This book, using practical examples of different rules, procedures, and cultural habits, illustrates what is required by any European aviator who wants to rent an airplane, and prepares him to the differences and subtleties that he will need to learn.

While reading this book, the reader will discover the pragmatism and common sense that we sometimes miss on this side of the Atlantic, which allow American pilots to fly with a degree of freedom unknown in our country. This same freedom that is accessible to any pilot wishing to fly in the USA.

B. Monjeaud

Size 15,5 x 24 cm - 236 pages - 92 pictures – ISBN : 2-913663-24-9 / Price: 30 €. ttc + P & P.



ROY GRINNELL IS GETTING BETTER!

Getting the trash out sometimes includes many more risks than one may think... It was while he accomplished this simple task that Roy fractured his right knee during last winter when he slipped over a thick layer of ice and snow.

This wound soon revealed itself as more important than one thought at first since it was necessary to operate and reinforce Roy's knee with a metal pin. Immobilized for several weeks, Roy was finally able to get some mobility thanks to some intense practice (Photo on the left).

Unfortunately, Roy's health will stop Roy and Irene from coming to France as they wished, to participate in our May and June events.

Let's hope that Roy will soon be able to start painting again, an occupation that he had to drop for such a long time.

SOME VERY SPECIAL CUB'S...



BIPLANE CUB

The bottom wing is all metal. This increased wing area and its enormous wheels turn this Cub into an ideal bush airplane.



THE SMALLEST AIRCRAFT CARRIER IN THE WORLD

Above: Making it smaller would really be difficult !... Take off and landing were no real problem though. Note the unusual position of the pilot at the front, probably dictated by the need of a perfect visibility.

CATERPIL-LAR CUB

Below: Demonstration of a Cub with Caterpillar type under-carriage rolling over some obstacles.

The story doesn't say if it was able to take off and land with these strange "shoes". These fruitless tests seemingly led to nowhere...



TWIN ENGINE OBSERVATION CUB

Above and right: This machine is really a Cub modified and fitted with two 115 HP Rotax 914 engines fitted as push-pull. Still under test, this Cub, renamed *DoubleEnder*, is safer and more pleasant to fly than the original plane, of which it keeps all the flying qualities. And what visibility !...



THIRD TIME LUCKY...

Article: Gilles Avenel - Photos: Jurca Air Force & B. Delfino

Or, “when everything goes wrong, it never rains but pours !”

There is no aircraft, as cherished as it may be, that cannot give you some bad surprises... Even a Jurca ! And further more, deliver them in rapid succession !

One !

On that early June afternoon, flying conditions were ideal for a short flight, after so many bad days. My faithful Sirocco F-PCPR « Lady Coco » had been obviously (at least obviously to me) waiting impatiently to feel the air over its wings. After a good pre-flight, I decided to fly a triangle Dieppe – Saint-Saens – Bernay and back, about a one hour flight, including a fly pass over some friends' house.

With my central tank half full (40 liters), I decided to fill each wing tank with 20 liters of gas. That would give me a two hour range, enough to get lost ! And it was indeed a very nice flight, using gas alternatively from the two wing tanks (I prefer to



too good to end it like this... What about a nice roll ? Great idea ! 1500 feet right over the runway, the EFIS agent agrees, here we go for a gentle barrel roll.

As soon as I start lifting the nose and bank, the fuel low pressure light comes red. This is normal as I have been airborne for 60 minutes, and the wing tanks are now both dry. By the way, I should have selected the central tank before I started to roll.

This qualifies as a lack of preparation. Well, it's only a simple barrel roll... Anyway, no problem, let's select the central tank. As I go through the roll, I

quickly select the central tank with my left hand. The red light is still on. I'm now upside down, slowly rolling around the horizon, and the engine

coughs. Normal, it needs a bit of time to take over. Back to straight and level flight. The red light is still on, even though the electric pump is on, and the engine still coughs. Two seconds... Three seconds... Still red... F...! I check the position of the selector. It is well on central tank. I try the other positions and come back to central. Strange ! It's loose. And the engine, after coughing so much, stops. Scary sound of silence...

OK, no panic, I'm still right over the runway. I stop playing with the selector which clearly has a problem, and prepare for a dead stick landing. This is when you're happy to have done some practice training occasionally.

The time to tell the ATC that I'm landing with a dead engine, using the calmest and very distinct voice (as much as I can...), I lower the gear (I better start now as it takes 37 seconds to extend and lock), I choose the grass runway and stay slightly above the normal glide path to compensate for the drag caused by the milling propeller and give my-



use those first). With no flatterring, it was a perfect navigation since I was back over Dieppe airport exactly 59 minutes after take-off. Now it's



self some leeway. Looking good, full flaps, and I land nicely in the first third of the runway. Well done !

Lucky me! It's difficult to do any better than to have the engine stopping whilst just over the runway. Retrospectively I say to myself I was indeed lucky that my navigation was precisely one hour long. Otherwise it would have been a forced landing in a field. And one knows that the short legs of the Sirocco don't like rough grounds, and its high wing loading does not allow much time for spotting the proper area....

The aircraft is pushed back to the hangar (it's exhausting to push an airplane on a grass runway over 600 yards, even with three people), and we check what could have gone wrong: very simple, the rod between the selector and the indicator had sheared. Small effects, big consequences !

Armed with the tools of the perfect aircraft homebuilder (a disguise, as far as I'm concerned...), we take the console off to repair the culprit. As it was illustrated by several photos in the latest issue of the Jurca Air Force newsletter, working with one's head down, the shoulders on the seat, and the legs pointing up outside is neither comfortable nor very nice (except for the ladies ?). After some efforts, the rod is changed, the console is put back on, and the selec-

tor's adjustment checked. Lady Coco is fit for flight again !

Two !

The idea of a nice trip from Dieppe to Avignon stays in my mind during the following days. Unfolding the 1/500,000 maps, drawing lines, calculating times, selecting alternative airports, noting frequencies, zones and NOTAMs, are all part of the pleasure of the so-called general aviation.

As usual, weather is average over the north-west part of France, but it's CAVOK after Clermont-Ferrand. And the METARs let me believe that it's OK en route. Here we go !

Rouen, the Paris area, Etampes, it's all right: 5/8 cumulus at 2000 feet. As I am now flying south of Orléans, it gets worse: ceiling gets lower, 1,500 feet, 800 feet,

I must now make a decision. I am considering landing in Giens. Looking above, I notice there are still some nice holes in the cloud layer. And what about climbing to see how high it is ? Climb power set, +1,500 feet per minute, the altimeter rolls up nicely. At 8,000 feet, I am on top. Let's level off at FL 85, and enjoy a nice sun bath in the magic murmur of the well adjusted Lycoming.

Progressively the gaps get more and more scarce, and at times the layer

is solid. But Paris Info confirms that it's all clear south of Clermont-Ferrand. The top of the layer is now at 9,000 feet, but Avord clears me to FL 105. Clermont Control confirms that the weather is glorious further south. Life is good !

Well now, after two hours, the wing tanks that I had alternatively switched since take off are going to be empty. I select the central tank. I now have two more hours available. I check that since my ground speed is about 270 km/h, I'm only 1 hour and 5 minutes from Avignon. I'm quite safe ! The layer starts breaking up and I'm soon in a CAVOK weather that is typical of south of France. Isn't that good ?

Two hours and twenty five minutes of flight, the amber "gas reserve" light starts flickering, which means I only have 30 to 35 minutes of gas available. Good Lord, what does that



mean ? I selected the center tank 25 minutes ago and it contains enough gas for 2 hours ! I'm sure I filled it up before take off, and the central tank gauge always showed full tank. A quick glance at the gauge which shows only 1/4 full. F...! It can only be a major gas leak. I hope I won't catch fire ! I need to land at once...

I advise Clermont about my problem. They offer me to divert either to Ambert or Le Puy-en-Velay, both about at the same distance. The

“emergency” function of my GPS confirms the option and I opt for Le Puy. The problem is that my GPS shows 11 minutes to get there. I start my stop watch. Well, it turns pretty bleak: as I have apparently used 60 liters in 20 minutes, and have consequently only 20 liters for 11 minutes, I just can’t make it... (I took me almost 30 seconds to do this calculation, thanks to the stress...).

What should I do ? Reduce power to save gas ? No ! Definitely not ! Since it can only be a leak, I must apply full power to get there as soon as possible. Fortunately, I’m still flying at 10,000 feet, so that going down at an ASI of 320 km/h (maximum performance at full thrust and - 1,000 feet per minute, well established in the amber sector of the air speed indicator), I should reduce the time down to 8 minutes. Needless to say, the final approach will be short !

After these anxious thoughts, I ask Clermont for Le Puy ATC frequency (it’s no time flicking through the Jeppesen !), and I switch off. As soon as I call him, Le Puy controller tells me that he knows about my emergency. Nice of the Clermont controllers, they have advised Le Puy of my sporty arrival by calling them.



Five minutes and thirty seconds, I’ve got visual on the runway. But it’s still quite far away, and the terrain is pretty hilly and rough all along to the airport. Auvergne is very nice, but it’s not the ideal place for landing in a field. I fine-tune my top speed, use the rudder to keep the ball right in the middle. I do-must-get-there... The reserve light is steadily on, the gauge is definitely down to zero. I anxiously expect the low fuel pressure red light to flash at any time now. Seven minutes and forty seconds, I’m over the airport at the safety altitude. Saved! Gear, flaps, alignment with an approximate half-sliding figure of eight ap-

proach, smooth flare, and I’m on the ground. A big thank you to Saint Christopher. That’s the second serious incident in a few days with no bad consequences. That deserves a little gratitude for our friends up there...

I clear the runway, and taxi to the gas station. Before I have time to action the mixture, the engine stops. I stop the stop watch : 9 minutes and 10 seconds. I have been on the ground for less than 30 seconds...

The firemen signal to me, the time to unbuckle my harness, and I’m out, rather shaky. I then see that gas flows out of my left tank through the air vent of the fuel cap. Several liters are already spilling on the tarmac. I climb up again and turn the gas off. The leak stops after a few seconds, as the firemen really started to get nervous. What does all this mean? I thought I had dry tanks, I was ready to land on the first field I would have spotted, and this b... plane now spits out fuel like an upside down bottle! Thanks to the local people who were drawn by my adventure, I discover that the fuel selector moved on its axle so that the central position was actually between left wing and central, therefore connecting the two tanks to-





gether. Then, by gravity, the fuel ran from the central tank to the left wing tank, and this transfer was unnoticed as I don't have any gauge in the wing tanks. All I saw was that the central tank was losing fuel and I never guessed it could actually be transferring into the left wing tank. I nearly ran out of fuel with a full tank! And when the left tank, which contains 40 liters, got full, the rest of the 80 liters of the central tank spilled overboard through the fuel cap, a leak that I could not see from inside the cockpit. But I must have left behind a nice trail of vaporized gasoline!

That makes two. Small effects, major cause... and I'm lucky it didn't happen when I was above the cloud layer. Looking for a suitable gap would have made this maneuver rather awkward, and would have ended, most certainly, with a wild emergency dive through the clouds, the nose on the horizon gyro. And to do that over a mountainous area... The time to fill up the tanks, to check that there is no leak at the various selector positions, now carefully located, to phone the Clermont controllers to tell them I'm OK and thank them, and "Lady Coco" takes off again. Thirty five minutes later, we're in Avignon. I fill up again the

tanks immediately to check the consumption: 23 liters, it's fine. Totally reassured, I treat myself with a well-deserved meal and some nice rosé wine at the airport restaurant, and we're ready for more adventures.

And three !

Following the principle that when one goes somewhere, one generally has to come back, my flight back from Avignon to Dieppe is planned for the day after. A departure at 16:30 should take me back to Dieppe at about 19:30, in time for dinner (yes, eating does have some importance to me). The time to remove the cover from the Sirocco, to do a good pre-flight, clearance to start, engine warm up, taxi, check list, ready for take-off. I tighten my harness, line up, reset the directional gyro, close the canopy, make a note of the time, and I open the throttle. The Sirocco's tail is raised and she takes off naturally. Climbing, I select the gear up position, it starts to retract and... all of the sudden, what's going on?... a lot

of vibrations, only 1,700 rpm instead of 2,500, considerable loss of power, no hesitation, I'm still over the runway, I land straight ahead. The only problem is that, on this plane, one cannot re-select the gear down until it's been fully retracted and locked first. That's it! No alternative, I'm going to land with the gear partly raised. The situation is not improved by the fact that since I was focusing on landing on the remaining portion of the runway, I overlooked disactivating the gear circuit breaker, at least to stop the gear from retracting further...

Fortunately, the runway in Avignon is 1,880 meters long. And I'm glad that I chose to start my take-off roll from the very end of runway 35. I must say that I did one of my best kiss-landings in my career (which does not include so many of them...). I touched gently in the last 300 meters of the runway, on a gear which is $\frac{3}{4}$ raised, in a typical noise produced by the side of my tyres, but not touching the propeller (which, despite my fuel off selection happily carried on spinning), nor the flaps, and not even the pitot tube or the VHF and XPDR antennas underneath the hull. Damage: none, except two tyres to change and the leg panels which have been a bit rubbed on the concrete runway. Here come the firemen in their big red van with flashing lights on and screaming siren. I am afraid I have been upsetting them a bit too often, they will end



up retaliating... For the moment, they're very friendly. They inform me the ATC has closed the airport, and five of us together undertake moving the plane out of the runway. But just try to move a 1,500 lbs aircraft almost on its belly. No way ! I asked: may be you have a crane, or at least some inflatable cushions which would help lifting the plane and allow me to get the gear down manually, and presto ! The runway would be clear? Nothing, they have nothing at all to address the problem... And during that time, my luck is running out, the Air France flight from Orly is holding, waiting for the runway to be cleared. I can hear from here the guys up there with their stripes on the shoulders, telling nasty things about these small aircrafts which belly land on airports which should be reserved for serious airplanes. After ten minutes of desperate efforts, Lady Coco hasn't moved an inch. And AF 1234 gets nervous: "If you don't remove that thing at once, we divert to Marseille !". Not good for the Chamber of Commerce which runs Avignon airport... The reaction soon comes: order is given to the firemen to tow Lady Coco outside the runway safety perimeter. OK, but how ? A tractor arrives. They roll a rope around the propeller and here they go ! They drag the aircraft over about 50 meters, scraping and screeching. I'm strangled with fury. If I were emotive I think would cry over it.

Problems begin: The Gendarmerie de l'Air turn up, they check the documents for the plane and the man, I am called up by the DGAC (French FAA), as so forth. I explain the incident ten times and still cannot understand the reason for the loss of power: the engine warm up phase, taxi and take-off were normal, engine and propeller checks before take-off didn't reveal any particular problem. I cannot understand but I do realize that if the loss of power had happened 5 seconds later, I would have ended up in

the car park of the commercial centre which is located a few hundred yards from the end of the runway, and the outcome could have been totally different... Churning sad thoughts I return to Paris by train, dwelling on the whole thing, and asking myself over and over again if I was right to abort the take-off. The answer I finally articulated was that... I shall never know for sure: may be the full power would have come back within a few seconds. But it's precisely this "may be" that leads me to conclude that there was no other option than stopping the take-off process. To carry on might have been the right choice, but it was like Russian roulette: lethal if you get it wrong.

That makes three ! Because the investigation demonstrated that the incident was linked to the two previous episodes. The carburetor when dismantled showed the presence in the float chamber of a whitish stuff of undetermined origin, which probably caused the loss of power. Some further enquiry showed that this paste probably came from the sealing compound used to seal off the integral wing fuel tanks, probably several years before (may be when the aircraft was built: I bought this Sirocco ten years ago and the wing tanks

always leaked a bit). This stuff had probably been waiting there quietly all this time, at the very bottom of the wing tank, until the contents of the central tank pouring into stirred it up, and sent the rubbish into the fuel line to the carburetor...

Lady Coco is now flying again. She even received the Restoration Cup of the year at the Jurca Air Force fly-in at Juvancourt in July 2010. You may think that since there was no real damage reported, this mishap didn't deserve such an coveted award. Don't be misled: the firemen took their revenge ! The careless dragging of my poor Sirocco caused a real disaster I won't detail about. What I can say is it triggered a several hundred hours of hefty wood and mechanical work... It is particularly annoying when I recall that all was originally needed was may be two dozen hours of work to get it back in flying condition, before they had touched that airplane...

The morality of this story : when things go wrong, take the time to test the repairs in flight, in a familiar environment where you can control the risks of fine adjustments. Otherwise, you may start a chain of events that will end up badly. I was very, very lucky three times in a row!



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