



Volume 14 - N° 12 - December 2009

EDITORIAL

The end of this year is full of various events, as you will read in this issue of our Newsletter.

The best news is the recruitment of our friend Bertrand, an accomplished artist who did not wait to be part of our Unit to help it. Recruiting is still our Association's prime target because the current economical crisis has had, like everywhere else, a detrimental effect during this past year. Yet, I believe that the French Wing is relatively better than others, which proves the importance that our members give to the fundamental goals of the CAF and the French Wing. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all recruiters and all recruited members because not only the number of these recruits is quite good, but their technical and human qualities are of the highest level. I rely on everyone's good work to carry on with this recruiting effort, and, if I believe what the rumor says, it's not over yet!

Other topics concern our General Assembly, the problems that the decision by the Headquarters to change the date of Airshow are creating for our members, the brand new prints we just made from the painting by Roy Grinnell of our J-3, the superb profiles of our airplane, and others, drawn by Bertrand, the creation of a committee for the Fly-in on June 5 and 6, but also the passing of two of our friends.

2009 will soon give way to a new year which promises to be full of very pleasant events. This will call for the best possible participation of our members for the maintenance of our planes, the running of the PX, the organization of the Fly-in at Le Plessis-Belleville, and an excursion based on an aviation event during the nice season. A lot of work for whoever wants to help our Association.

Therefore, it is with a heart full of hope that I wish everyone of you the very best for the Xmas and New Year celebrations.

A Merry Xmas to all of you!

Bernard

14th ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FRENCH WING



Photo : B. Delfino

**SPONSORS OF THE "SPIRIT OF LEWIS":
IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR SUPPORT
TO THIS AIRPLANE! (See Page 12)**

PORTRAIT OF A FIGHTER PILOT: COLONEL CLAUDE DE MARCO



**ANOTHER NEW RECRUIT
FOR THE CAF AND THE
FRENCH WING:
BERTRAND BROWN**



NEW DATE FOR AIRSHO (Continued)

Following the article published last month in these pages, and following the French Wing General Assembly, our Unit Leader wrote to **Steve Brown** to give him the result of our discussions on this particular point about the **new date for AIRSHO decided by the CAF Headquarters: The second week-end of October each year.**

Since the result of these discussions clearly shows a general wish to see this date brought forward in the season, our Leader told Steve Brown about it, but his reply was that this date will remain on the second weekend of October for several reasons:

- Better participation of modern aircraft..
- Conflict with the Reno Air Races which take place in September.
- Existence of several local events in the Midland and Odessa area, which would also conflict with AIRSHO.

Even if the statistics show that the weather in October is dryer in Midland than during September, it remains an important variable and unpredictable factor, not only for Midland, but also for the rest of the USA, with the end result that, in case of general bad weather, it would stop many CAF or Members' owned airplanes from coming to Midland, like it happened this year. It is also time that the organizers realize that the public and the CAF members come to Midland to see Warbirds rather than modern jets, even if they are beautiful.

It's now, more than ever, up to our members to decide individually if they will go to Midland or not next year and the following ones.

TRAGIC DEATH OF OUR FORMER MEMBER WILLIAM DAVIES

It's via an email received by our Unit Leader from the mother of our former member William Davies that we heard about her son's premature death.

William had been jobless for several years, and, living in a remote area of the South West of France, all his efforts to find a job had been fruitless so far.

Having to face many financial problems, William had to quit the CAF and the French Wing last May. This decision has been a real nightmare for him who sincerely loved these two organizations. He was hoping to re-join when his situation would improve.



He did not have time for that... He is now flying with those who profoundly loved aviation and flying.

Au revoir William!

LÉON MANOUKIANS HAS GONE WEST



Our dear friend Léon passed away on December 2, after serious complications of his health which deteriorated a lot these past months.

This is why he had quit the CAF and the French Wing, with great regrets of all his friends. He had many of these friends among the Wing and the CAF. His enthusiasm for aviation was outstanding! During his visits to Midland, one had to see him around these airplanes. He was like a kid opening his presents on Xmas day. It was a real pleasure to watch him!

His knowledge of the Pacific War - his favorite - was immense. He had become a real historian that one could refer to endlessly. He knew all the answers to these questions, even the most arduous ones. He wanted to write articles for our monthly bulletin, but his health had deteriorated so much that he never had the time nor the force for it, unfortunately.

Our dear Léon is now up there, flying aboard an SBD Dauntless, seating on the gunner's seat, like he did in Midand. If one night you see a star which shines more than the others, it may well be Léon gliding in the aviators' heaven, looking over all his friends...

Au revoir Léon!

NEWS

BERTRAND BROWN NEW MEMBER

Our readers will surely remember that we met **Bertrand Brown** during the fly-in in Compiègne. He instantly showed a great interest for the CAF and the French Wing. This attraction immediately materialized as admirable aircraft profiles of these two entities. One of these profiles is printed here below.

Thanks to this good-will, Bertrand was designated as our Guest of Honor for our General Assembly, because he did not wait to become a member to act and help our Wing.

Therefore, it was with an immense pleasure that we received, soon after, his request to become a member at the Supporting Member level, which is now a fact.

Bertrand is also known under his pen-name of **Gaëtan Marie**. He is 28 years old and studied to get his Baccalaureate "S" (Specialized in mathematics), then a History Licence at the Sorbonne University, followed by one year of Master 1 classes specialized in Ancient History.

After various temporary jobs and interims for three years, Bertrand became, in 2002, Headmaster in the Pierre d'Ailly High School in Compiègne where he performs several tasks like looking after pupils, various administrative duties, phone reception, and organization of Baccalaureate exams.

Since January 2009, Bertrand has been a self-employed Entrepre-



neur and designs and sells aircraft profiles, provides various services (Translation English-French, IT Assistance, and web site creation and maintenance). All these occupations allow him to elegantly put



into practice his technical and artistic abilities, the latter also including music because he is a violinist and he was a member of the *Petit Chanteur à la Croix de Bois* choir from 1989 till 1996. A reference in music matters!

But let us see what Bertrand has to tell us...

"As far as I can remember, I've always been fascinated by airplanes. As a child, I dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot until I had to wear glasses, which effectively killed that hope."

I then moved on to other aviation-related activities. I began painting with water colors at the age of ten and continued for many years. Some five years

ago, I discovered computer graphics and Photoshop and greatly enjoyed them. Ever since, I've been creating and selling airplane "profiles" under the pen-name "Gaëtan Marie". This has progressively become a second job and is of great interest to me.

I'm also an amateur journalist, having published a few aviation-related articles both in French and English. I also run several aviation-related web sites, which attract some 2,000 visitors weekly.

I can help the French Wing with my graphics skills, but also by writing or translating articles and helping out on various tasks.

I have very little skills in mechanics but I am eager to work and learn. I also have a growing network of clients and friends who could eventually benefit the French Wing."

Let us also add that Bertrand has a double nationality, French and American, that he is not related to the CAF CEO Steve Brown, and that his favorite Warbird is the P-51 Mustang, but, actually, he loves them all. The quality of his works proves it easily!

Welcome aboard Bertrand!

Bertrand Brown
30 Rue Charles Neudorff
60320 Béthisy Saint Martin
France

Tél: 06 16 97 55 06
Email: webmaster@gaelanmarie.com
Web Site: bravobravoaviation.com

NEWS

THE PRINTS MADE FROM THE PAINTING OF OUR PIPER CUB "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" BY ROY GRINNELL ARE AVAILABLE!

This is what this print looks like. The high quality, non-acid, 300 grams paper sheet measures exactly 30 x 40 cm (approximately 11,81" x 15,75"), which allows European members to use an easy-to-find standard frame.

The price of this lithograph is 10 euros for the members of the French Wing (+ 6€ P&P), and 15 euros for the public (+ 6€ P&P).

Our members who reside in the USA can order prints from Irene & Roy Grinnell who will get the print made locally, with the size you wish, in order to avoid excessive transport costs. Please contact them at < buyrbonds@aol.com >.

Beware! A limited special offer for our members residing in France, will allow the first 30 orders to receive 2 prints for the price of one (P&P will be the same). Order yours from the French Wing by sending a cheque for the amount of your order (You may order as many as you like).



Piper Cub N-5105 "Spirit of Lewis"
French Wing - Le Plessis-Belleville

Artist
Roy Grinnell

"Symphony in yellow"

NEW POSTAL ADDRESS FOR COL GAËL DARQUET

Please make a note of col Gaël Darquet's new postal address:

Gaël Darquet
41 rue de Moulinon
77410 Messy
France
Tel: 06 19 56 77 79
Email: darquet.gael@yahoo.fr

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR COL MICHEL FLEURY

Please also note this email address:

shetlandsilver@gmail.com

Thanks for amending your copy of the phone-book till the next edition.

CREATION OF A COMMITTEE FOR THE LE PLESSIS-BELLEVILLE FLY-IN

As you will read in our General Assembly report, the French Wing intends to organize a Fly-in of antique aircraft at Le Plessis-Belleville on June 5 and 6, 2010. We expect many aircraft which reside on the airfield, but also planes that belong to friends who live in the area.

Our Operations Officer, col Patrick Pierre-Pierre will be the main coordinator, but for an event of this size, we must insure a perfect preparation that only a team of 6 responsible members, dedicated to this goal, can reach.

This team will be in charge of the numerous aspects of such an organization: Liaise with the airfield managers and with the owner of the hangar to get the necessary au-



thorizations and fully respect the local rules, get free landings for our guests, organize the aircraft parking area, strictly apply all safety rules (Especially if children are present), organize the lodging of our guests, rent *porta-potties*, organize a competition for the best looking aircraft with Awards, organize the manning of the PX shop, etc... Ideally, this committee will need to include two pilots, two mechanics, and two administrators. It will work together with the Board of Administration whose members cannot be part of this committee.

So, here is an excellent occasion for all our members to help obtaining the complete success of an ambitious project. We plan on everyone's goodwill!

2009 GA

Article & photos: B. Delfino

It's on November 14 that about 20 members and friends got together at Roger Gouzon's home for our Annual General Assembly.

This arrangement immediately proved to be a lot more efficient and friendly than a restaurant room. In addition, Roger kindly hosted those who, usually book a hotel room.

Were present: Cédric Chanu, Jacqueline Clerc, Gaël Darquet, Claude De Marco, Jean-Christophe Debuisson, Bernard Delfino, Fumiko Delfino, Claude Gascon, Maurice Girard, Roger Gouzon, Joël Hardy, Émilie Hochet, Eric Janssonne, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, Cédric Malhaire, Michel Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, Hervé Quefféléant, as well as Bertrand Brown, guest of honor, and Aurélien, a friend of Joël and Gaël (A guest with a great interest for our Association).

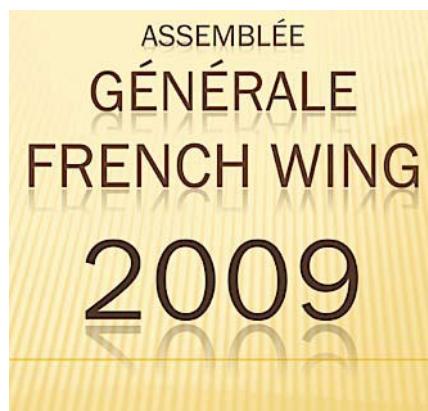
a video presentation had been prepared by our Leader, in order to enlighten facts and figures which are always too austere.

This presentation started at about 3 PM with a few photos taken during Airsho 2009, then everyone introduced himself briefly.

Going straight to the first item on the agenda, Bernard told the assembly about the latest news related to the CAF, and, particularly, the change of date for Airsho to the second week-end of October, decided by the leaders of our organization. Bernard quoted the statements made by the CAF Director Steve Brown, and the reasons which led him to choose this new date. Everyone gave his or her personal opinion, which resulted in an unanimous disagreement with this decision. Bernard made a note of

this conclusion and promised to tell the CAF Headquarters about it (*Ed: Which was done, as described on page 2 of this issue*).

Other aspects of the French Wing visit to Midland were also discussed, some underlining the various problems met during this event, the most surprising one being the way the General Assembly was ran, since, as opposed to what one can see in any Association's General Assembly, this one did not include any annual report, be it moral, financial, operational, or technical. Let us hope that this will soon be corrected, either by mail or on the Members' only web site...



MESSAGES FROM ABSENT MEMBERS

Our Leader carried on by quoting the messages sent by those who could not make this meeting, then, by the various traditional reports, specific to the au French Wing.

MORAL REPORT

Bernard told the assembly about the moral situation of the French Wing since the last General Assembly. He expressed his satisfaction about practically all activities of our Unit:

- Good participation during the air shows, although they were rath-

er rare in that difficult year (La Ferté-Alais, Compiègne, Meaux, Le Plessis-Belleville).

- Good participation to the historical activities (Commemorations in Haudainville, Saint Aignan, Le Bourget, and Marnes la Coquette).

- Good participation to administrative tasks (Winter Staff Conference in Midland thanks to colonel Barbara Hair, grand opening of Roy Grinnell's Art Gallery in Midland with Roy and Irene, start of the French Wing web site which receives an average of 3000 visitors every month, and articles and illustrations for our Newsletter).

- Good work by everyone in the hangar, the general cleanliness, and the sorting out of all the equipment.

- Excellent efforts for the recruitment of new members which, for a great part, compensated the loss of 8 members who quit for health or economical reasons. This recruitment is up to 5 new members (*Ed: To whom one must add Bertrand Brown*), including a pilot who has already been approved on the Piper Cub.

On the day of the General Assembly, the number of members was:

64 Colonels
4 Supporting Members
2 Cadets
9 Friends of the French Wing
9 Honorary Members
88 members in total

The recruiters of these 5 new members are Patrick Pierre-Pierre, Gaël Darquet, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, and Bernard Delfino.

FINANCE REPORT

Col Claude Gascon took over to present the French Wing finances which are excellent since the figures show a positive global figure of more than 11,000 euros, 4/5 of which are the result of important donations received during the past year. (*Ed: Col Claude Gascon will send the exact figures of our accounts, to any member who will request them.*)

Claude then presented the good results of the PX gift shop managed by col Fumiko Delfino, with a profit of more than 2,000 euros despite the small amount of air shows this year, a lack compensated by the sales made on our web site.

The painting of our Piper Cub "Spirit of Lewis" made by Roy Grinnell, who donated it to our Unit, was largely applauded, and Bernard declared that it would be reproduced as prints, size 30 x 40 cm, and that it would be available during the week following the General Assembly (*Ed: See the article on page 4 of this issue.*)



OPERATIONS REPORT

It was then the turn of col Patrick Pierre-Pierre to present his report about the operations in 2009.

He listed the various air shows which were planned for the year:

- La Ferté-Alais

- Quiberon (Piper Club de France)
- Cambrai-Niergnies
- Meaux
- Compiègne
- Lens ou Pontoise
- Le Plessis-Belleville

A program which suffered several cancellations by their organizers (Lens), a refusal to welcome our planes because too many had been planned (Cambrai-Niergnies and Pontoise), or a lack of participants (Quiberon).

Patrick presented a draft program for next year, which will be refined as the dates are confirmed officially by their organizers:

- Compiègne (20 May)
- La Ferté-Alais (21 - 23 May)
- Le Plessis-Belleville (5 & 6 June)
- Château-Thierry (4 July)
- Coulommiers (5 September)
- Lens (10 September)
- Rennes (25 & 26 September)

One should note that the Fly-in in Le Plessis-Belleville on June 5 and 6, will be organized by the French Wing itself. We hope to see many airplanes turn up. In addition to the French Wing aircraft, many reside on this airfield (MS 317, T-6, Cessna 195, MS 733, Me 208, Yak 52, Yak 18, etc), and we can also expect airplanes from the airfields in the area. For this event, an exemplary participation will be requested to all our members. A committee will be formed and put in charge of this organization (*Ed: Volunteers are requested to make themselves known as soon as possible.*)

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Bernard took over to present the maintenance report for the airplanes of the French Wing and those belonging to some of its members.

- **Piper Cub**: No problem met, except the cold weather in the hangar during the annual check.



Bernard presented the financing of this plane for 2009 which reflects a lack of flight time limited to 20h50' at the date of this General Assembly (*Ed: The plane, since that day, flew another hour.*). This lack of flight time had little effect on the plane's budget which is slightly negative, but will probably be made even before the end of the year with the few hours that are missing.

• **NC 856**: Minor problems were met: Lack of lubricant in the elevator trim (*Solved*), and some seepage on the extra fuel tank (*Solved*). The vacuum pump was repaired, thanks to the good work of col Michel Perrin, and the aileron cables in the cabin were replaced by new ones. The artificial horizon is still inoperative but it will be sent for repair soon.

• **MS 733**: Replacement of a micro-switch on the right hand main gear, and replacement of an engine gasket which was the cause of an oil leak.

• **MS 315**: Engine in major overhaul.

• **Yak 18**: Lubrication of a sequence valve in the port main gear.

• **Jurca Sirocco**: Still being repaired. Its arrival at Le Plessis-Belleville is imminent.

• **Rearwin Sportster**: As part of the maintenance report, colonel Cédric Malhaire presented his report about

the engine's health, a key factor in the progress of this restoration.

Cédric started the dismantling of the engine in his freshly completed private workshop. The engine does not suffer from any corrosion, and the internal elements are sound. Cédric believes that he will push on his investigations and he will give us another report, which he is confident will be positive, in about 6 months. It's at this time that we will decide or not to carry on with this project.

COMPLETED PROJECT

This year again, numerous projects have been successfully completed:

- **Newsletter:** Numerous articles written by members like Barbara Hair, Jacqueline Clerc, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, Louis-Jean Gioux, Jacques Leroux, Gilles Avenel, Gaël Darquet, Georges Marcellin, Christian Tournemine, Antoine Roels, Roy & Irene Grinnell, and Bernard Delfino.



- **French Wing Web Site:** Launch, fine tuning, and monitoring by the Moderators. One must note that the Web Master, Eva Bancel, has been through a period of test and exams for several months because she started her career in the Air Force. She will get back on this job as soon as her situation has stabilized.

- **CAF Winter Staff Conference:** Colonel Barbara Hair efficiently represented the French Wing and wrote an instructive and complete report of it.

• **Aviation events:** As mentioned above; the French Wing was present on various events and commemorations, as well as on several air shows. Our Leader warmly thanked colonel Jacqueline Clerc whose excellent work with *Amicale Jean-Baptiste Salis* which allowed us to display the NC 856 next to her "Carré d'As".

CURRENT PROJETS

- **Newsletter:** A Permanent project which permanently requires new articles.

• **Maintenance of hangar equipment:** Some work is required on the painting of the equipment as well as sorting it out. Our Leader emphasized the fact that our members must adopt a strict personal discipline, and must act without delay, if only for safety reasons and to respect other members. Cleaning and order are the two important key factors of safety.

- **Prints of the J-3 painting by Roy Grinnell:** The printing of these was planned with the printer for the Wednesday following the General Assembly (*Ed: Project completed. See page 4 of this issue*).

FUTURE PROJECTS

- **Steve Brown visit in 2010:** As he announced it during the CAF General Assembly in Midland last month, Steve Brown intends to visit the French Wing and the Swiss Wing. The exact date hasn't been decided yet, but it will probably be during Spring. Our Leader is expecting more information from Steve Brown, but asks all our members to be present during the Extraordinary General Assembly that will be organized for that occasion. It will be, for everyone, an occasion to ask all the questions they wish, and to show the efficiency of our Unit which has been working hard for the good reputation of the CAF in France and in Europe.

• **Air Shows:** See the operations report.

• **Fly-in in Le Plessis-Belleville:** This event, organized by our Association will take place on June 5 and 6, 2010.

Patrick and the Board of Administration will soon start the practical organization of this event for which we expect the participation of many classic airplanes.

ELECTION OF THE NEW ADJUTANT OFFICER

The Assembly then voted for this election, a relatively easy task thanks to the only candidate, colonel Gaël Darquet.

Sending the ballots to the absent members took place during the next few days which followed this General Assembly.

CAF AWARDS

Our Leader quoted the list of members who received a CAF Award and gave the plaques to those members who were not in Midland.

Silver Magnolia Blossom Award

Col Gaël Darquet
Col. Marcel Francisci
Col Aubrey Hair

Unit Service Award

Col. Jacqueline Clerc

Individual Maintenance Award

Col Bernard Delfino
Col Roger Gouzon
Col Michel Perrin

CAF Letter of Commendation

Cadet Eva Bancel
Cadet Julien Lepelletier

Non-Member Letter of Commendation

Ms. Émilie Hochet

FRENCH WING AWARDS

Then came the French Wing Awards which were given to the members and non-members who performed a particular job with the utmost efficiency for the French Wing, hence, for the CAF during 2009:

- **Marie-Françoise Le Cornec:** For her recruiting efforts, for her generosity, and for her permanent help to our Association.
- **Barbara Hair:** For her efficient work during the CAF Winter Staff Conference in Midland, and the comprehensive report she made of it, and for her excellent work as the official representative of the French Wing in the USA during the past year.
- **Cédric Chanu:** For his kindness, his obligingness, and his generosity when he put his Morane 733 at the service of the French Wing, as a taxi plane, during various air shows.
- **Joël Hardy:** For his perspicacity and his professionalism during a pre-flight check, which avoided a problem on the Piper Cub.
- **Sandy Sansing:** For his permanent support of our Unit, either morale or financial, and to have travelled over 500 Miles just to participate in the French Wing dinner in Midland.
- **Roy & Irene Grinnell:** For their generosity and their permanent support of the French Wing, and for the gift of the J-3 painting done by Roy to our Association.
- **Miss Émilie Hochet (Non-member):** For having carried out, with efficiency, multiple hard and dirty tasks in the hangar at Le Plessis-Belleville.

It was on this pleasant note that the French Wing General Assembly



came to an end. A drink was then served to all the participants, followed by a dinner organized by colonel Gaël Darquet.

This meal was probably the very best we ever enjoyed on a General Assembly. Quality and quantity were both there to please all our guests.

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER

Since the weather was rather dull, the "survivors" decided not to fly, and to get together again at the Le Bourget Air & Space Museum for the morning.

We were able to visit the new World War One gallery. In spite of the rather restricted space, and the shape of the building, the people of the museum have managed to create a first class display which includes some real authentic treasures.

After this pleasant visit during which we did spend some time around Jacqueline's aircraft "Carré d'As", we decided to test the new museum's restaurant: "L'Hélice" (*The propeller*).

Our fears vanished as soon as we walked in, thanks to the courtesy of its employees. The menus and "à la carte" provide a wide enough choice to the customers, and the prices are really reasonable (Menus at 11€, 15€ or 19€). The service is quick and the food quality is irreproachable. At long last, here is a museum with a

restaurant which deserves its reputation. We wholeheartedly recommend it. You w o n ' t regret it!

T h i s l u n c h was a nice final touch to a pleasant administrative and friendly weekend. A big Thank You to all participants, especially to those who travelled over great distances to be part of it!



BORN TO FLY

Article : Claude De Marco - Photos : Claude De Marco & B.Delfino

“Born to fly”. Gene Wink used that title for his book, and it’s with a sense of modesty that I declare myself one of his wing men.

Born on December 30, 1937, I expressed my intentions with the following statement: “*Get in the Air Force to obtain a nice cap like the German officers*”.

What can I say about watching fighter planes? I remember precisely, among other things, watching a “dog fight” between a P-47 and a Vampire. In 1949, before I was 12 years old, I had my first flight in a C800, a two-seat glider. Then, as I was 17, I soloed in a J-3, like ours.

My second place at the Second Military Certificate made my Second in Command crazy: “*You got there behind some ground personnel over 50 candidates!*”. To become an O.R.S.A. (Active Reserve Officer), the Second Military Certificate was mandatory, as well as the Patrol Officer qualification. So, with this Second Military Certificate, I reached the end of my training for the S/S CP licence, of which I had already passed the navigation part. My intention was



to start a military career. I had also prepared a file to get in the Military Air School. Being a Flight Sergeant since 1962, I was promoted while I was in the *Val de Grâce* hospital. Had my accident happened just a month later, I would have been an officer... With some “if”...

I started at the Flight School early in October 1956, on Air Base 112, Reims-Coursy, and I was sent, 3 days later, to School Base 745 Aulnat, near Clermont-Ferrand (The name “School Base” was still used in 1956).

Our building had two characters, T and 6 ! Strange coincidence... There was 6 of us per room, and the beds were large ones. There I followed the Military training 1 and 2.

In 5 years, less 4 days, I was a guard only once, with a rifle MAS 36. I remember this quite clearly because it was so cold! No surprise! Clermont-Ferrand area in December 1956, one of the coldest of the century!

On December 20, I was sent to the School Base 707 Marrakech, despite the fact that my knowledge of the English language should have allowed me to go to Canada...



The alphabetical order designated me as the bedroom officer. There are better rewarding positions! The Second in Command of the Military Instruction Division, whom we nicknamed the “Rabbit with Braces” walked all the corridors every morning and opened doors at random, probably according to the needs for man power because there was constant work carried out on the base. Those who were caught hiding, were punished with these drudgeries, but



also their bedroom officer. The Captain also did a daily inspection of the bedrooms, as well as a detailed inspection on a weekly basis, with sheets and blankets folded at the foot of each bed.

Everyone knows that, in any group of people, there is at least one black sheep. One of those had his bed next to mine. Prior to one of these detailed inspections, this guy had left some model airplane (What else?) accessories in a table drawer. I put these things away in his locker. On a subsequent check, he had put them back in the drawer, so I put them on his bed. We were on the sports ground when he was called. When he came

back, he hit me in the face, opening one of my eye arcades. Since I practiced Judo, I threw him on the floor. As the sport instructor had seen it all, the guy ended up in jail. Small punishments were dealt with drudgeries, and serious ones with jail.

Early in January 1958, we happily got on the train to go to School Base 708 Meknès,

where the Tbird T-33 was waiting for us. In addition to the proximity of making a dream come true, FIGHTERS, our life on the base was totally different. One considered us, almost, like adults. I was 20...

My first single seater fighter was the Vampire. I remember clearly my first flight with emotion, more especially as a buddy of mine, who was quite nervous, took off, stalled, and crashed on the GCA (Ground Control Approach) hut. Seven people died. May God welcome them!

On October 3, 1958, it was the war plane pilot licence, with the granting of the famous pilot Wings, with two of them (The student pilot insignia only had one wing). At long last we



had got these wings that we had been dreaming of for so long.

My classification allowed me to be posted to Base 141 in La Séria, close to Oran, which I reached with the qualification of student wing man.

29 OCTOBER 1958 FIRST FLIGHT AS A FIGHTER PILOT!

To do the job I always wanted to do: Fighter pilot. And on top of it, to fly the Mistral (Vampire), a plane which was very manoeuvrable, equipped with canons, rockets, and bombs, which we could use at any time, and we were 20... What a thrill!



Photo: B. Delfino

Five Flights of three Squadrons were on permanent alert to keep the Mistral's ready on the base of Télergma, South of Constantine.

During operations at Télergma, a pilot officer and me were instructors for reserve native officers. With HF radio equipment, we communicated with ground troops, with a T-6, which, in turn, relayed to the Mistral's using VHF. The practice field was located on the side of mount Téoualt, near the base of Télergma.

The T-6 having alerted the flight of Mistral's, the Leader decided to take care of the target using rockets. We were stunned to see him start a roll (!), which, for a fraction of a second did not surprize me since this excellent pilot, an Indochina veteran who had flown under a bridge in the valley of the Rumel, the river that flows across Constantine. A moment later, the plane became a fireball. The Mistral had stalled at high speed!...

In July 1959, I was posted to the BAO 128 Frescaty near Metz, with the qualification of Confirmed Wing Man, I had the pleasure to fly the 84F, my first modern fighter, with a spacious cockpit (*Like most American Planes*), but with a host of instruments and various sophisticated circuits that one had to know in depth... On July 27, 1959, I qualified on the 84F. I took off flapping my wings "like everyone else", because of the hydraulically powered controls.

Early in January 1960, I went to Algeria, B.A.O. Blida to familiarize



Photo : B. Delfino

on propeller airplanes, where I flew with the Squadron Second in Command, an officer who was from a village next to the one where my parents lived. With the T-6 well in hands, I went to Télergma where we flew a lot. There was a detachment base in Philippeville, a city on the coast where I was lucky to spend most of my time.

My Squadron, III/9 Numidie, was the first one to fly the Fennec, an armed version of the American T-2. What a difference with the T-6! Tri-cycle gear, a bit bigger, a lot more powerful, but, in addition, something quite pleasant in the Algerian summer, air conditioning! One just had to turn a knob to get snow in the cockpit.

Also, after training on the Fennec, we swapped with the III/4 based in Bône, another city on the coast. *"I can't tell you the long face on the people of the III/4!..."*

Having been promoted Section Leader of light aviation, I had the

great pleasure to train one of my Meknés instructors... During a mission to evaluate the flak north of the "duck beak", a Tunisian territory wedge deep into Algeria, formed by mountains covered with cork oak, my wing man and me were flying the mission when I felt two impacts on the plane.

As we flew back to base, I asked my wing man to check my plane. He noticed a trail of black smoke. After using the suitable landing procedures, we noticed that one bullet had hit the bottom part of the oil tank, and another had crushed a flap electric motor. Thanks God, the field was not far. The pilot who replaced me got killed a few months later. He was my best friend.

Back to France, in January 1961, I started again training on the 84F and I was part of the Air Force National Team of Pentathlon. All this until August 29, 1961... At 11:45, as I was coming back from an attack training mission, my plane stalled during the landing, at an altitude of 300 feet, as I selected "full flaps", probably because of a probable inversion of a hydraulic valve.

Result: 1356 hours and 45 minutes flight time, followed by 27 months and 1 day in hospital...



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We thank you for sending your participation, at the level of your choice, before the end of December.

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