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CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 - N° 12 - December 2010

EDITORIAL

The delay brought to the publication of this Newsletter is due to the stealing of my computer which was coming back after repair. The lorry was the subject of a hold-up with the two drivers taken as hostages!... The shop where I had taken the computer gave me a new equivalent one, despite the age of mine. This process took four weeks, which explains the unusual delay of this publication.

It will soon be 15 years since we officially created the French Wing, but the most senior members will remember that the preparation for this creation started about two years before but they were delayed by numerous administrative and human difficulties on this side of the Atlantic. This difficult start helped us appreciate the various successes which since punctuated the existence of the French Wing.

The celebration of this 15th Anniversary of our Unit will be very special and I hope all our members will take part in this Fly-In/Anniversary on June 4th 2011, in Le Plessis-Belleville. I ask each one of you to book this date for this event, even if it means asking for one or two leave days to ensure your presence. We need volunteers for the organization and the smooth running of this Fly-in (Safety, meals, drinks, logistics, animations, etc). Please contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss how you can help this event. A big Thank You to all of you in advance!

The end of the year coincides with the payment of the Piper Cub "Spirit of Lewis" sponsorships. As you will read in the following pages, our airplane can only fly if the number of its sponsors is sufficient. I thank you for your support.

I wish to all our members and their loved ones a very Merry Xmas, and I hope that 2011 will soon give us back the CAF we love!

Bernard

MERRY XMAS EVERYONE!

2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Photo: B. Dufino

2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Jacqueline Clerc, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, Claude De Marco, and Henri Bourrassier before the Musée de l'Air B-26 Marauder

BERTRAND BROWN AND CLAUDE GASCON ELECTED WITH 100% OF THE VOTES AS EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND FINANCZE OFFICER RESPECTIVELY!

(ELIGIBLE: 95, EXPRESSED: 43, ABSTENTIONS: 52)

SURPRISE IN NEW GUINEA

THE FRENCH WING FLY-IN ON JUNE 4 WILL INCLUDE OUR ASSOCIATION'S 15th ANNIVERSARY

CALLING ALL PIPER CUB "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" SPONSORS: PLEASE HELP THIS AIRPLANE IN 2011 LIKE YOU DID IN 2010!

SEASON'S OFFER

The French Wing is offering for sale some greeting cards which represent the profiles drawn by Bertrand Brown.

Bertrand had prepared fifty of these for the French Wing GA and they were almost sold out, which proves that their quality is faultless.

Their size is A5 folded in two, and you can select the aircraft profiles you like most. For that you simply need to visit Bertrand's web site:

<http://www.bravobravoaviation.com>

There, you will see the major types of airplanes of all periods like the Mustang, Spitfire, P-40, etc, and, of course, the French Wing Piper Cub whose success was such that the 20 cards we had printed were purchased within a few minutes!



Their price is 2 euros per card for our members (3 euros for the public) + package and postage depending on the quantity ordered (2€ for 1 to 10 cards, 3 euros for 11 to 20 cards).

Xmas and the New Year are approaching fast so don't delay it! Place your order by writing to the French Wing and sending a cheque of the appropriate amount for your order, written to the CAF French Wing, specifying the exact type of the profile(s) you want and their quantity, and the address you wish the cards to be sent to. You will receive them within a few days.

BLOG "L'ÉCHARPE BLANCHE" BE A CONTRIBUTOR !



If you haven't tried the "Écharpe Blanche", do not hesitate any longer! Go to the following address:

<http://lecharpeblanche.wordpress.com/>

As you know, you will find there the latest news about classic aviation in France. But you can do even better!

You can give it your contribution by telling Bertrand about the news you happen to have available. He will sort them out and add them as they come in.

One of the contributors will be randomly chosen each month, and he will win an A5 profile drawn by Bertrand.

In November, it was **Bernard Delfino** who won a superb P-40 profile, and in December, it was **Gaël Darquet** who was picked up. He will receive the profile of his choice.

2011 EVENTS

During our General Assembly, on November 27, it was decided that the French Wing would participate in 5 events during the 2011 season, as well as Aéroputes in Le Bourget.

This should facilitate our members' participation... Some of these events have already been decided. Therefore, please do book these dates for the French Wing!

- Fly-in and anniversary of the French Wing on June 4th, 2011 (As well as the 5th for the "survivors").

- Air show in La Ferté-Alais on June 11 & 12.

- Annual Gathering of the **Piper Club France** in Nancy on June 17, 18, and 19.

- Aéroputes of the Air Museum in Le Bourget in October 2011.



EVENTS OF THE PIPER CLUB

FRANCE IN 2011

- 20.000 Fathoms in the Air, in Amiens on April 8, 9, & 10.

- Piper Club France Annual General Assembly in Angers on April 15 & 16.

- Annual gathering of the Piper Club France in Nancy on June 17, 18, & 19.

- Escapade in Nuits Saint Georges on September 24 & 25.

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

All our members may take part in these events. All they need to do is to advise the President Guy Fourdrain well in advance.

FRENCH WING FLY-IN

The date of the 2011 French Wing Fly-in has been set to June 4 & 5, 2011.

The 4th will be the main day of our Unit's big event. The planes will arrive at the time they want (Those coming from very far will arrive the day before).

The program will include a presentation of the airplanes by their owners, a contest of the best looking airplanes, meals and drinks, and various other surprises.

The 5th will be spent saying good bye to those who came from far away, and looking after the "survivors" who will "finish the left-overs".

A Committee will be formed in January 2011, including the following positions:

- Safety of the airplanes and the people (Hangar spaces for the planes arriving the day before).
- Food for the two days (Purchase of the food and cooking of the BBQ, drinks).
- PX (Preparation, installation, sale, and arrangement).
- Lodging of the guests, booking of hotel rooms, transportation.
- Logistics (Tables, chairs, fridges, toilets, etc).
- Contest of the most beautiful planes with rewards (Several categories: Training, liaison, aerobatics, fighters, bombers... according to the type of airplanes present ☺).

15th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH WING

This important festivity will also celebrate the French Wing 15th Anniversary. An event that cannot be missed!

Among the planned preparations and animations, here are a few which should draw the attention of more than one...

• Design of an A4 size poster to announce this event within the French Wing and its friends. Those interested can start working on a poster which will need to be presented to the French Wing Board of Administration no later than April 30, 2011.

• The French Wing Board of Administration will grant some very special Awards to the 5 members who have produced the most important tasks and projects for our Unit and/or for the CAF during the past 15 years, or since the arrival of the members if they do not have such a seniority.

• A contest of photos taken during this event, between the 3rd and the 5th will also be open to everyone. The pictures will be judged on their artistic level, their originality, their humor, and the best pictures will be rewarded.

They will need to be sent to the French Wing no later than June 12, on paper (Format 13 x 18 cm minimum), or as an electronic JPEG file via email or on a CD. In this case, they will need to have a resolution of at least 150 DPI (A higher resolution may be asked for if required).

Each participant will be able to send up to 5 pictures in each of the categories (Static planes, planes in flight, people, or others that will be specified later).

• A contest of the most beautiful classic airplanes in various categories (Note: The aircraft owner's dressing according to the period of their planes will be a bonus which will be taken into account).

• And other surprises which will be revealed in these pages as we progress through the organization of this Fly-in Anniversary event.

THE MASTER WORD OF THE SUCCESS OF THIS FESTIVAL WILL BE "PARTICIPATION"

This is why we expect all of you, members of the French Wing, to dedicate a good part of your time and energy to this organization.

This festivity will be YOURS, and, to take part in it actively, will be for each one of you the best possible reward!

YOUR IDEAS ARE WELCOME

The members of the soon to be created team, as well as the members of the Board of Administration, are ready to receive all your ideas and suggestions which could make this event an even better one.

We are already specifically looking for presents which will be given to the winners of the various contests and to the 5 most meritorious members for the past 15 years.

Ask your friends, your employers, the shops that you know, and anyone who could help us materially. Many can do that and they will be very happy to help us by donating these presents which could be some objects or vouchers, or anything else. All you need to do is ask them with tact and discretion.

But you too can help by acquiring some presents and donating them to the French Wing team who is organizing this event.

Do not delay it! Send us your suggestions as soon as possible because time flies!

DIANE FENNER REWARDED FOR HER CAF SAVING ACTIONS

The Board of Administration took the opportunity of its annual General Assembly to express its gratitude to Diane Fenner who plays a major role in the saving of the CAF. Very touched by this decision which she highly appreciates, she wrote the following letter to all our members...

"11-29-10

Dear Bernard and all the French Wing members,

I am humbled and so deeply honored to receive this most precious Certificate of Appreciation for my efforts to shed the light on the CAF.

So wrong it is for long serving outstanding Colonels, collectively 120 years worth of service, to be defaced, dishonored, and dismissed simply for doing the right thing, and doing the best job they knew how to protect and preserve that which is greater than any of us – the National Treasure known as the American Airpower Heritage Museum.

So wrong it is to dismiss quality, excellence and time of service like it has no value. So wrong it is to not honor and respect one's professional expertise. Such

is the treatment of Tami O'Bannion and the board who stood behind her and the values she stood for.

Unreported news from HQ, in 8 short months since Tami's departure, all the Tami trained professional museum staff is gone. Emily Broome was the last to leave a month ago. Jeff is the only one left. Jeff is allotted one staff. How is he expected to run a world class museum with one support staff. Tami had a staff of 9. It is all about the mindset of values. I would say if the museum was costing the CAF too much (their reason for taking control of it) why didn't they cut the monetary support off from Tami and the museum? Or reduce it? She would have struggled but she could have done it, and still maintained her same standard of quality and excellence. Don't you think it strange that was never discussed as an option? I do. The only thing discussed was total control which meant Tami gone.

"Stealing the museum away from the members !!!" It is so wrong for it all to be reported to the members in such a manner that is so far from the intent of those removed from the ranks.

Despite the collective years of dedication of those removed, all is done at the hand of one who we hardly know, one who possesses the silver tongue of spin to convince the leadership and the members

it is all well and good to eat our own young to change our values or chose our values for us.

Everything is done because of money. Money is the excuse for the actions taken on everything - taking control of the museum, selling our aircraft, raising our ANUAC, taking over FiFi. If money is the established benchmark, and quality, hard work, honor and people take the back seat, then I would encourage every single member to follow the money. I would ask not about the balanced budget but the bottom line of debt and if money and salaries are moved around from one entity to another to create the illusion of "a near balanced budget". I would ask not how glowing this year's Airsho seemed according to the president's blog, but to see the Airsho expense report. We were promised that the need to sell off our aircraft was to fund the restoration of others. I would ask if that money is secure for that purpose, or has it been spent.

I thank you all for this precious honor. It is simply not right for a member's owned organization to not have total transparency, whatever the issues, whatever the problems. In that light, I have tried to inform, and be the voice of those who could not.

With my greatest gratitude,

Diane Fenner"



Copyright Lucasfilms

FUTURE WARBIRDS...

We will probably need to wait a few more years before these spacecraft become warbirds...

This superb painting is another master piece by Roy Grinnell, titled: "Anakin in the Battle of Naboo".

It was a special order and it will be found in the book (Limited Edition of 500 copies), together with another of Roy's painting which we will print later.

2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Article: B. Delfino - Photos: B. Delfino

No less than 22 members participated in this 15th General Assembly of our Association, and 5 guests joined us for the annual dinner which was huge.

The meeting started at 14:30 as planned, and the President began with a few photos taken during the past year's air shows. He then read out the Agenda and its major points, and each participant introduced himself briefly.

The President then introduced our guest of honor, **Henri Bourrassier** who flew the B-26 Marauder with the Groupe Bretagne during WWII. Associated to him was also **Louis-Jean Gioux** who was also a pilot in the same group. Louis-Jean could not join us but he was very present in our thoughts. It was the same for **Jean Barbaud** who had a serious scuba diving accident during his holidays in Nouméa. The latest news we received are, fortunately, excellent.

The video presentation prepared by the President was beautifully illustrated with numerous profiles drawn by **Bertrand Brown**.

SITUATION OF THE CAF

The meeting started with a presentation of the actual state of the Commemorative Air Force who, as our readers know, is led in a way which is inadmissible and ashamed by its director and the General Staff, that is to say, totally opposed to the CAF goals.

A recap of the actions of our leaders since the beginning of the year impressed the assembly which was only informed during the past months thanks to those who refuse this organized misinformation: Firing of two honorable members of the General Staff, banning of five members who dared to contradict these leaders, pressure

on the members of the AAHM so that they could only resign and the director could take control of the museum, refusal to put the promised forum on line as part of the members' only web site, stoppage of the publications of letters from the members in the

can expect some violent actions of revenge against those who dared to contradict the current CAF leaders. The firing of Ollie Crawford and Ken Fields at the same time as the result of the elections were announced was the first sign. Others will follow unfortunately...



Our members are literally fascinated by Henri's story

Dispatch magazine, adoption of a one way only communication system, CAF budget not published and totally blurred, inconsiderate sale of several CAF planes, total failure of the Chalets during Airsho, candidates from the floor victimized during the pre-election period, and, last but not least: Cols **Ollie Crawford** and **Ken Fields** were fired from their co-director positions in the ACAHOF, another useless victimization so unpopular that many members have already expressed their discontent.

The result of the CAF elections was presented, and, if only **Ollie Crawford** was elected, the number of members in favor of the opponents to the CAF director has reached an honorable score of 41% of the 1136 members who voted. 4% did not vote, and the votes in favor of S. Brown were 55%. As usual, one

To conclude the subject the President declared that which ever the actions against our Unit, they won't have any influence on the future of the French Wing which will carry on, totally faithful to the true CAF goals.

FRENCH WING

MORAL REPORT

The French Wing is healthy and the number of its members is now of 95: 71 colonels and Supporting Members, 2 Cadets, and 22 Benefactors.

Our Association suffered the loss of two members during the past year: **Léon Manoukians** and **Ernest Cartigny**, and the quitting of 4 members, largely compensated by the recruitment of 14 new members since the last General Assembly.

The points which call for some improvement and those which are satisfactory were then discussed.

Concerning the first ones (only a few fortunately) :

- Several members have suffered, or still suffer, from serious illness which limited their participation in the life of the French Wing.

- The Rearwin project had to be put on stand-by temporarily due to the lack of a real work-shop, and to the lack of volunteers.

- The hangar equipment maintenance needs a much better participation, **which concerns all our members** since it does not require any qualification. Anyone can help with these tasks which are not uninteresting (Cleaning, painting, stock checking, etc).

- Too many events attended in 2010 (8 air shows + Aéropuces in Le Bourget Air Museum).

- **The President asked all our members to never make any promises that they are not certain to be able to fulfil because this is the worst that could happen to an Association whose actions, by definition, can only be based on the goodwill of its members. Therefore, it requires a clear and firm involvement of the latter.**

Many more positive points were raised, as reflected by the non-exhaustive list below :

- Good participation during all air shows.

- Good participation of the owners of airplanes who put them at the service of the French Wing on several occasions.

- Exceptional performance of the PX whose results have broken all records. This success is due, for one third of the revenues, to the sale of various instruments and aeronautical equipment found by **Gaël Darquet**.

- Excellent cohesion and resistance to the unacceptable actions of the CAF leaders in Midland. It is worth noting that a number of our members have not renewed their CAF membership, but the number of remaining colonels is large enough to ensure a perfect continuity of our Unit qualification, as dictated by the CAF rules and by-laws, like the minimum figure of 15 full colonel members.

- Following the actions of the CAF leaders, the French Wing has decided to cancel the restriction that had been established to limit the number of Benefactors to 10% of our total membership. This decision allowed us to welcome 14 new members during the past year (The French Wing Internal Rules document will soon be amended to include this change).

- Very high quality of the articles published in our Newsletter, thanks to various members.

- The French Wing popularity among all CAF members is still very strong.

- The French Wing finances are very healthy thanks to the good management of its assets, the strict and permanent control of the expenses, the high number of donations made to our Unit, and the excellent results of the PXX in 2010.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Finance Officer **Claude Gascon** gave us a presentation of the exact situation of the French Wing finances, thanks to various tables that were projected onto the screen. They clearly showed that our finances are healthy and positive. We owe that to the excellent work performed by Claude, to the limitation of our expenses to a minimum, to the donations made to our Wing by various people and companies, and to the exceptional results of the PX gift shop (Note: The details of this finance report

would be too big to publish it in these pages. Therefore, members who would like a copy can contact Claude who will be too happy to send it them).

PROJECTS ACCOMPLISHED IN 2010

With the exception of the Rearwin Sportster restoration which has been put on stand-by because of the lack of a proper work-shop and volunteers, all the planned projects adopted for 2010 have been accomplished :

- Participation to 8 air shows + Aéropuces in Le Bourget Air Museum.

- Best profit made by the PX ever.

- Good performance during the Aéropuces.

- Annual checks and renewal of the Certificate of Airworthiness.

- Superb and friendly Fly-in in Le Plessis-Belleville.

- Piper Cub "*Spirit of Lewis*" budget closed with no profit and no loss of money.

- Good cohesion during the CAF elections.

- Arrival of the Association **Piper Club France** thanks to the recruiting of its President **Guy Fourdrain**.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND PERMANENT PROJECTS

- Recruitment.
- Aircraft maintenance.
- Equipment maintenance.
- French Wing web site.
- Safety, air and ground.
- Articles for our Newsletter.

PROJECTS FOR 2011

- Purchase of a hangar by a group of our members: This project is taking shape thanks to the sale of a hangar in a near future, which will allow us to shelter 3 airplanes, with

the possibility to build a mezzanine which will include a storage room for spare parts, an office, and a club house. This hangar will be large enough for 3 planes of a normal size, and it will also be large enough to shelter the Association van.

- Five events are scheduled for 2011 (The high workload of 8 events in 2010 was really excessive):
 - Fly-in and 15th Anniversary of the French Wing.
 - La Ferté-Alais on June 11 & 12.
 - Annual gathering of the Piper Club France in Nancy on June 17, 18, & 19.
 - Two other air shows need to be selected.
 - Aéropuces in the Le Bourget Air Museum.
- Improvement and translation of the French Wing web site.
- Moving in the hangar and building of the mezzanine.
- Restoration of the Rearwin Sportster.
- Visit to Midland for Airsho 2011 if certain conditions have been fulfilled by that date...

Other long term projects were commented by the President, but they are still too vague to list them here.

TECHNICAL REPORT

It was an easy task for our President since the annual result was described with three letters: NTR! (Nothing to report). The Piper Cub is very healthy and runs like a clock-work. Bravo for the mechanics who took part in its maintenance during the whole year!

PIPER CUB BUDGET

The President refreshed everyone's memory about the budget system adopted for this airplane:

It is based on three levels of Sponsorships paid at the end of each year (Flying Sponsor costs 250€, Restoration Sponsor costs 125€, and Supporting Sponsor is at 50€). This money is used to pay the fixed costs. The others, variable, are paid for by

the aircraft occupants for a modest participation which is, respectively of, 25€, 45€, and 55€ according to each sponsor level. The non-Sponsors pay a constant 80€ per hour.

So, for a total of, for example, 10 flight hours per year, the average amount paid by each sponsor, fixed and variable costs combined, is 50€/hour, 57,50€/hour, and 60€/hour respectively.

Without such an equitable system, we would have to increase the price per hour about three times more! This is why it is indispensable that enough members adopt a sponsorship of this plane in 2011.

In 2010, the number of Sponsors was:

- 15 Flying Sponsors
- 5 Restoration Sponsors
- 14 Supporting Sponsors

With the thirty hours flown during the year, this allowed us to close this self-sustaining budget with no loss and no profit.

The President reminded everyone that the support to this airplane by the maximum number of members is indispensable, and that the sponsorships must be paid before the end of the year.

It must be noted that it is thanks to this system that we have been able to limit the French Wing annual dues to 50€, an amount that hasn't been raised since year 2000! This allows the members who can, to show their support to this aircraft which materializes the goals that our Unit adopted when it was founded.

FRENCH WING SUBORDINATE POSITIONS

As already announced in our Newsletter, our Association needs volunteers for various important, and even vital tasks. The list of tasks and positions appeared on the screen with the names of those who have already volunteered for some of them:

• Public Relations (Including the Newsletter): **Bernard Delfino & Bertrand Brown.**

• Operations: **Patrick Pierre-Pierre & ???**

• PX Gift Shop: **Fumiko Delfino & ???**

• Maintenance: **Bernard Delfino & Gaël Darquet** (Airframe & Engine), and **Noël Barange** (Instruments).

• Safety: **Michel Baloché & ???**

• Fly-in and Anniversary Committee: **Gaël Darquet (BBQ), Patrick Pierre-Pierre (Operations), Michel Baloché (Safety) & 5 other members ???**

• Historian: **Jacques Leroux & ???**

• Translation: **Bertrand Brown & Noël Barange.**

• Web site: **Eva Bancel, Stéphane Duchemin, & Bertrand Brown.**

We thank all volunteers to these empty positions to contact us before January 15, 2011. Should no volunteer come forward, the Board of Administration will call members personally, or will simply cancel the concerned activities all together.

FRENCH WING 2010 ELECTIONS

The two candidates for these annual elections are **Bertrand Brown to the position of Executive Officer, and Claude Gascon to the Finance Officer one.**

Note: Since no other candidate applied for this job, Claude was kind enough to carry on for another three years. However, this doesn't stop any member able to fulfil the position and willing to apply for it, to do so, even before the end of those three years. Should this happen, we would proceed by co-optation as it is described in our Statutes).

The members who attended this meeting voted and the President said

that he would send out the ballots within the next few days which followed the General Assembly.

2010 FRENCH WING AWARDS

To conclude this General Assembly, the annual French Wing Awards were given to the most meritorious of our members :

- **Barbara Hair**: For her extraordinary help to the defense of the CAF so that it keeps its well known dignity and continues to honor the veterans of WWII, and for the amount of work she accomplished during the passed year for the French Wing.
- **Marie-Françoise Le Cornec**: For her permanent help to the good reputation of the French Wing, and for her generosity towards our Association.
- **Michel Baloche, Didier Blouzard, & Cédric Chanu**: For putting their own airplanes at the service of the French Wing during numerous air shows.



Marie-Françoise and Henri discussing the B-26 Marauder

- **Noël Barange**: For his frequent help to the PX gift shop, and to the French Wing aircraft maintenance or those of our members, even before he became a member.
- **Bertrand Brown**: For his constant help to our Unit, his great dedication to the goals of the French Wing and the CAF, and for his artistic accomplishments.
- **Michel Perrin**: For his technical achievements and his permanent help to the French Wing despite the

distance between his home and our Association.

- In addition, the Board of Administration decided to honor one non-member for her multiple and positive actions to defend the CAF and its noble goals : **Diane Fenner** who re-established a true communication system between the members of the CAF, and denounced with good reason the unworthy and ill-considered dealings of the members of the General Staff for the passed three years, and especially the passed year.

END OF THE MEETING

It was on this always pleasant handing over of Awards that the meeting ended. It was followed by a drink and by our annual dinner.

The following day, Jacqueline joined us for the traditional visit of the Le Bourget Air Museum, followed by a lunch in the museum's restaurant.



Henri tells us about his WWII, a story to which he insisted in associating Louis-Jean Gioux who could not be with us unfortunately

SURPRISE OVER GONA

Article: Bertrand Brown

The summer of 1942 saw heavy fighting in Papua and New Guinea between Japanese forces driving south towards Australia and Allied forces trying to slow them down as much as possible. Japanese troops actually arrived within sight of Port Moresby before being ordered to retreat north for lack of supplies and reinforcement. For the first time in the Pacific War, the conquering Japanese army was not only prevented from seizing a strategic point but also went from an offensive to a defensive posture.

The Japanese had established beachheads near the villages of Buna, Gona and Sanananda. Desperately in need of a victory at this stage of the war and relying on poor intelligence,



The Wirraway A20-103 in flight

Supreme Commander MacArthur ordered an attack on those positions, hoping for an easy victory. The attack began on November 16, 1942. The Allies were met with formidable opposition. What Allied intelligence had believed to be “hasty field entrenchments” proved to be anything but that. The Japanese had dug in, building bunkers and establishing superb defensive positions.



The situation did not improve over the next days. Most of the troops on both sides were sick with dysentery, dengue fever, malaria or other illnesses. The Allies lacked naval and tank support and advanced slowly at the cost of murderous losses.

Air support was provided but proved almost useless.

Nothing was visible under the jungle canopy, and in the absence of adequate maps, what little air support occurred was often wasted on empty jungle space or, worse, resulted in

friendly fire.

Among the units supporting Allied infantry was No 4 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force flying the CAC Wirraway, an Australian-built derivative of the North American NA-16 trainer aircraft. In the

opening stages of the war, Wirraways were used as makeshift attack aircraft, armed with two .30 calibre machine guns and bomb racks capable of carrying up to two 500 lb bombs. If air support proved of only limited value during the Battle of Buna-Gona, a No 4 Squadron crew made the headlines for a remarkable achievement.



The Wirraway A20-103 in flight

On December 26, 1942, Pilot Officer **John Sims Archer** and his observer Sergeant **Leslie James Coulson** were flying a reconnaissance flight in the Buna-Gona area in Wirraway A20-103. As they overflew the area, Archer decided to check out the wreckage of



Wirraway A20-103 from # 4 Squadron, RAAF, parked on the ground at the Berry (Bomana) airfield.



Archer and Coulson in their aircraft

the Ayatosan Maru, a 10,000-ton Japanese transport ship sunk in such shallow waters near Gona that it looked as if still afloat.

Approaching the Gona wreck, Archer noticed an airplane 1,000 feet lower and flying in the same direction as him. Spotting the red Hinomaru roundels on its wings, he recognized the aircraft as a “Zero”, Japan’s infamous naval fighter.

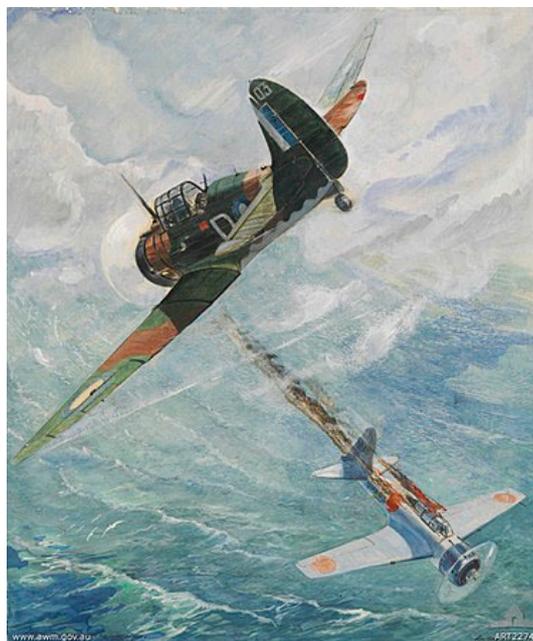
The Wirraway was completely outclassed by all Japanese fighters and stood no chance of surviving such an encounter. Fortunately the Japanese fighter kept flying on, its pilot completely oblivious of the presence of such easy prey. Given the odds, one would have expected Archer to decide discretion was the better part of valor and depart the area whilst still undetected. However he was in a perfect attack position, flying above and behind an enemy

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One of the reports which confirmed Archer's victory over the sea off Gona

who hadn't spotted him. With its two .30 calibre guns, the Wirraway did not pack much firepower but Japanese aircraft were not capable of absorbing much punishment and would go down easily if hit in the right spot.

Deciding to take the shot, Archer pushed his aircraft into a dive, screaming towards the Japanese fighter. Closing the distance in a power



“Extraordinary Incident” by Roy Hodgkinson (1943), depicting the shooting down of a Japanese “Zero” by pilot officer John Archer, December 1942.

dive, he fired a long burst which hit the fighter’s cockpit, probably killing its pilot instantly. The Zero went down. As he pulled out of his dive, Archer saw it hit the sea 200 yards from the shore.

Landing back in Popondetta airstrip, an exhilarated Archer jumped out of the aircraft before it came to a complete halt and ran to the control tent: “Sir, sir, I think I’ve shot down a Zero!”... “Don’t be silly, Archer, Wirraways can’t shoot down Zeros”

replied Captain Watson, the control officer. Archer went on: “Well, sir, I went in to look at the wreck off Gona and I saw this thing in front of me and it had red spots on it, so I gave it a burst and it appeared to fall into the sea.”

Despite the officer’s skepticism, Archer’s story was soon confirmed by several reports from ground units that had witnessed the Zero’s fate. Postwar examination of records show Archer’s victim was not an A6M “Zero” but a Ki-43 “Oscar” of the 11th Sentai. The confusion is hardly surprising as nearly all Japanese fighters were labelled “Zeroes” in Australian and American combat reports.

The Battle of Gona-Buna eventually shifted in favour of the Allies when they received the tanks and artillery needed to defeat the Japanese defences. On 22 January 1943, the last shots were fired and the battle ended. Both sides had suffered massive losses. The Allied casualty rate was 3 times greater than during the battle for Guadalcanal, and similar to the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War.

For his achievement, John Archer received the American Silver Star from B/Gen Whitehead,



John Archer in the cockpit of his Wirraway A20-103

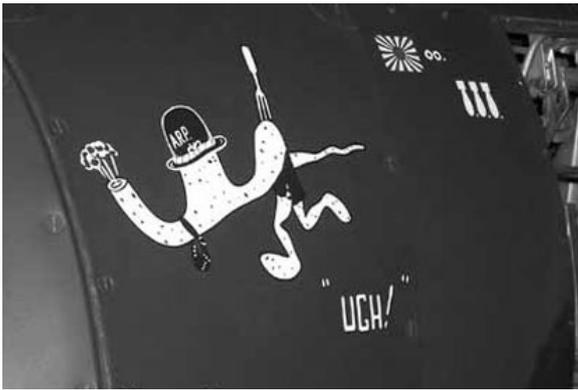


Wirraway A20-103 flying inverted

Commanding General of Allied Air Forces in New Guinea. He later stated that he acted on impulse and was lucky to get a hit. John Archer survived the war and passed away on April 3, 2009. His aircraft remained in RAAF service for many years and is now preserved in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



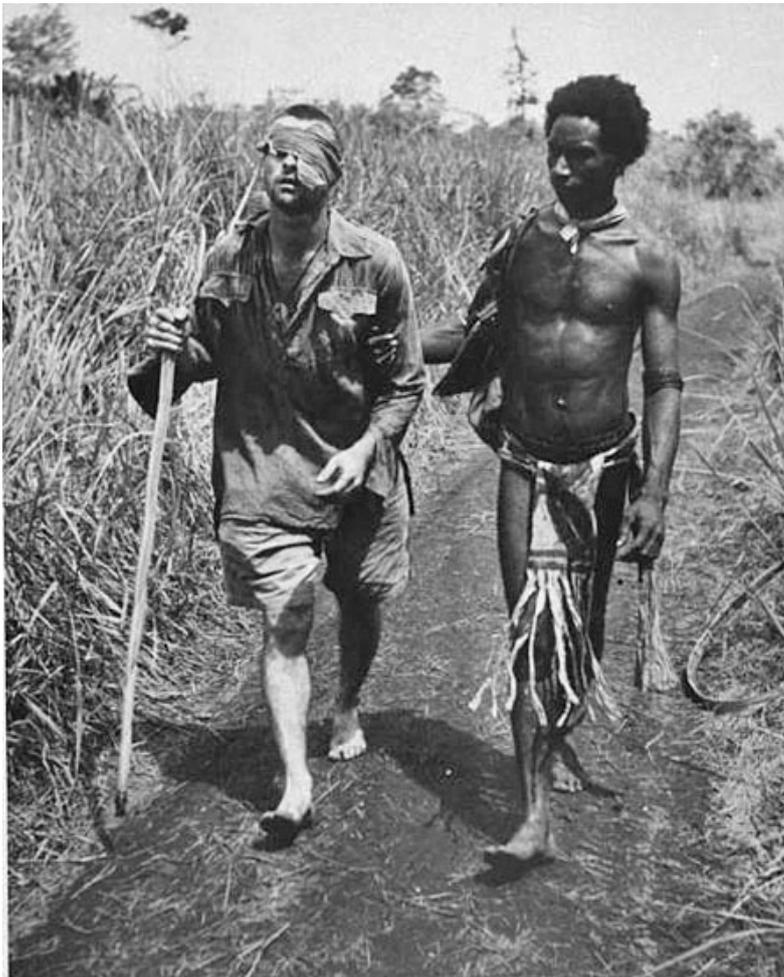
Archer and Coulson in front of their Wirraway



Detail of John Archer's plane nose art



Members of # 4 Squadron show the kill marking on Wirraway A20-103. Note the three bomb markings and the nose art.



George Silk's classic photograph showing an Australian soldier assisted by a Papuan orderly on Christmas Day, 1942. The conditions during the battle of Buna-Gona were among the worst of all World War Two battles



Archer receives the Silver Star from the hands of B/Gen Ennis Whitehead.



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FRENCH WING PX



Print of the Spirit of Lewis flying over Le Plessis-Belleville, from the painting made by Roy Grinnell.

300 grammes, non-acid, high quality paper, size 30 x 40 cm.

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

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