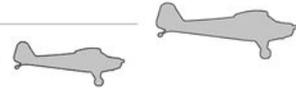




AIRSHOW



CAF FRENCH WING - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - BULLETIN MENSUEL

Volume 13 - N° 2 - February 2008

EDITORIAL

What is nice about the end of the year celebrations is the resolutions that we all make! The very first one, and the most popular, is to eliminate those few hundred grams (kilos?) that we put on during these celebrations, but how can we do that?... Do not worry any longer, the French Wing has the right remedy: The work that is required on the Piper Cub, the NC 856, and the Rearwin Sportster and its engine restoration. I can guarantee the effectiveness of this diet that won't cost you a cent! And, as a premium, you will get the camaraderie and good time. So, what are you waiting for?...

There are occasions when one would like to tell it all, even though one is under the seal of secrecy. One of these occasions arose early last month when one of our members decided to make a very important gift to our Unit, with the condition that the name of this member be kept secret. This clause stops us from fully and clearly thanking this person, but it doesn't take away the sincerity of our gratitude. I hope that each member of the French Wing will realize how significant and beneficial this gift is for the future of our Unit. Words like "*dedication*", "*abnegation*", and "*generosity*" seem very modest compared to such an exceptional help to our projects. I believe I can be the spokesman of all our members to send this member our most sincere thanks and our gratitude.

By replying to the small survey published last month, the members who took the trouble to fill it in and send it back showed their great interest for our Wing. As for the late ones, they must hurry and send their copy as soon as they can. It's never too late to do it and I sincerely thank them in advance.

The year started well for the *Spirit of Lewis* whose number of Sponsors increases regularly. However, we are far from the number of Sponsors required, but several members 2007 and before Sponsors haven't reacted yet. I have no doubt that they will very shortly, which will solve this difficult problem. Thanks to all of you!

Bernard



CHARLES "CHUCK" ESTERLINE

VIETNAM HERO AND MEMBER OF THE FRENCH WING IN OUR HEARTS

"NOT SCHEDULED TO FLY"

27 NOVEMBER 1953: A VERY UNUSUAL WAR MISSION IN A HELLCAT OVER INDOCHINA (Pages 4 to 6)



Photo: M. Canchares

TWO NEW MEMBERS:



KIM M. PARDON

&

CHRISTIAN MONIER



THE TOUR TO LUXEMBOURG WILL TAKE PLACE FROM MAY 02 TILL MAY 05, 2008 - READ THE FIRST PART OF THE DRAMATIC STORY OF THIS BATTLE OF THE LAST CHANCE, ON PAGE 11!

"CHUCK" ESTERLINE

As we announced it last month, we were ready to welcome a hero of the Vietnam war in the French Wing. He had just sent his annual dues when he was the victim of aneurysm, which stopped us from this honor. Those of our members who attended the French Wing dinner had the pleasure to meet him, but it makes us even more sad. Let's honor this man whose career is exceptional.

Charles "Chuck" Esterline was born on July 22, 1933 in Kirksville (Missouri). After a brilliant school period, he got a commission in the *Marine Platoon Leader Class* in March 1952 and was promoted Second Lieutenant in May 1955. From June 1955 till January 1956 he had a basic course of Officer in Quantico (Virginia), then, he was transferred to Pensacola (Florida) where he learned to fly. From 1956 till 1957 he flew the T-34, T-28, SNJ, TV2, and F-9F2. He was accepted for a commission on June 18, 1957, and got the title of Naval Aviator two months later. He completed his training with gunnery and tactics in November, then joined VMF(AW)-542 in El Toro (California). There he flew the F-9F8T, F-3D, and F-4D.

He became a Landing Signal Officer in June 1959. In September, his Unit was re-assigned to Atsugi (Japan), where the



Chuck ready for action

primary duty was the defense of Tokyo. There he had several opportunities to fly night missions intercepting the soviet *Bears* which operated from Vladivostok. They broke off as soon as radar contact was made. Promoted to Assistant Air Group LSO, he had the opportunity to work for the aircraft-carriers Ranger CVA-61, Lexington CVA-16, Hancock CVA-19, Midway CVA-41, and Ticonderoga CVA-14, when they re-qualified after their port at Naval Station Yokosuka



In Midland last September: Chuck, Judy, Ron, Philip, and Kim.

(Japan). The experience he gained when he took part in the development of carrier-approach type landings on airfields with 3000 foot aluminium-covered runways and arresting gear. After this tour in the Far East, he returned to the USA, to the base of Chase Field, Beeville (Texas), where he acted as Instructor in gunnery and air tactics, flying the F-11F-1 (1000 accident free hours).

In August 1963, he became the Officer in Charge for the whole state of Ohio, then, in August 1965 he was sent to the Marine Corps amphibious Warfare School in Quantico (Virginia). This year school was reduced to 6 months because of the Vietnam conflict. He was ordered to Beaufort (South Carolina) for transition to the F4B Phantom. In November 1965 he was sent to VMFA 314 in Chu lai. There he served as Group NATOPS and Weapons employment Officer. He had the opportunity to fly with all the group squadrons VMFA 115, 542, 323, and 314, and he planned and coordinated all group special operations. In Chu lai, he took part in the building of a terminal for the troops in transit.



The F4B Phantom

There were 5 divisions there, and when the main runway was closed for repairs, he ran short field operations, with carrier approaches to aluminium-covered runways and arrestment gear that he had developed in 1960, without any incident!

On April 16, 1968 he resigned his commission and returned to Kirksville where he bought a Buick dealership. He developed it so well that he added the American Motors, Jeep, Cadillac, Pontiac, and Oldsmobile, brands. Chuck was Mayor of Kirksville for a year, and in 1982 he sold his dealership and moved to Kansas City and successfully created his

own water treatment business which he sold in 1992, when he became semi-retired. Chuck joined the CAF and the **Heart of America Wing** in 2003.

Chuck leaves a wife **Judy**, two sons, **Chris** and **Galeb**, and two grandchildren, **Nate** and **Rachel**, to whom we send our most sincere condolences.

Reading about this superb career makes us even more regret Chuck's untimely passing, but Chuck will remain in our hearts as a full French Wing member. For us all, it will be a revenge over life whose cruelty is sometimes very difficult to tolerate.



Chuck receives a distinction in the presence of Judy

KIM MARIE PARDON NEW MEMBER



Photo: Kim Pardon

It's col. **Ron Wright** who had the excellent idea to invite **Kim** and her husband **Philip** for our French Wing dinner, during AIRSHO last year, as well as **Chuck** and **Judy Esterline** (See previous page).

Seduced by the good ambiance that prevailed, it didn't take long for her to join our Unit, for which we thank her very much. Here's the letter she sent us:

*"My name is **Kim Pardon** and I am excited about becoming a member of the French Wing. I became interested in aviation about three years ago when my husband purchased a Consolidated Vultee BT-13 and joined the CAF Heart of America Wing.*

*One Saturday, while I was visiting the CAF hangar, Heart Of America Wing and French Wing member **Ron Wright** offered me a ride in the wing's PT-19. It was my first general aviation experience and I knew on that day flying was something I needed to learn to do. Shortly*



Photo: Kim Pardon

*after my airplane ride with **Ron**, I started taking flying lessons. I learned to fly in a Citabria from Certified Flight Instructor and fellow HOA wing member, **Gene Linder**. **Gene** proved to be an excellent instructor and also saved my life several months later.*

*I was flying his Citabria solo one evening and the elevator cable broke while I was flying. At that time I was a student with about 10 hours of solo time. I landed the airplane using power and trim. It was a terrifying experience and I was fortunate to be able to get **Gene** on the radio for advice. I ended up flipping the airplane because I landed on **Gene's** 2000' private grass field, surrounded by fences, and had to use the brakes....a big problem when there is no elevator to help pin the tail on the ground. Two days after that accident I was back in the air flying **Gene's** L-2.*

*At some point during this period it became clear to me that my husband **Philip** and I were going to need more than one airplane – one for him and one for me. We bought a Cessna 301D, L-19 Birddog (Below), a high wing airplane used for observation activities and forward air control. This particular airplane, N4763E, was built in Wichita, KS, USA in 1954 but was sold to the French military around 1961 and remained in the service of the French military until the 1980's, when it was returned to the United States.*

We have the log book from the airplane's service in France and Iraq and I would love to sit with someone who could interpret parts of it for me. I received my private pilot's license in August of this year



Photo via Internet

*A Citabria of the same type **Kim** was flying when she suffered an elevator cable failure.*

and my CFI checked me out in my L-19 shortly thereafter.

I joined the CAF two years ago and have never been involved in an organization with such fun, great people. I cannot imagine my life without aviation and all of my aviation friends.



Photo: Ron Wright

*Five good friends united during the ACAHOF banquet last year. **Kim Pardon** is in the center, with her husband **Philip** and **Ron** on her left, and, on her right, **Judy** and **Chuck Esterline** who passed away far too early.*

Thank you, French Wing members, for hosting the very enjoyable French Wing dinner at AIRSHO 2007. I enjoyed meeting many French Wing members and look forward to the next time we may all be together again."

Welcome to the French Wing **Kim**. We are honored by your arrival in our Unit!

Kim M. PARDON
2501 W R1 TERR
Westwood
KS 66205
USA
Tel: (00 1) 913 432 0868
Email: kmpardon@yahoo.com

CHRISTIAN MONIER NEW MEMBER

Col. **Christian Monier** works for Swiss International airline, therefore it's normal that, sooner or later, he would hear about the CAF and its French Wing, which was done thanks to our regretted **Philippe Duflo**. It was during last year air show in Angers that Christian met another friend retired from Swissair, col. **Michel Fleury**. The latter obviously had the required words since, today, he is Christian's Godfather.

Col. **Christian Monier** was born on September 15, 1949, in Paris where he lived until 1956 when the family moved to Allier district, in a small town near Vichy. Christian is the second of a line of five brothers and sisters. After his primary and secondary school, he spent two years in a pharmacy University. But it seems that



aviation was the strongest since he then started a long career with Swissair in Orly and Roissy Charles de Gaulle.



He worked in all departments, starting with Customer Services, then Operations, Load Planning, and Cargo, until 2002.

As everyone knows, it was that year that Swissair closed down and was replaced by **Swiss International**, the airline which graciously donated the Paris - New York airline ticket for the French Wing raffle. Christian's career carried on at the service of this airline, in the Cargo department where he has been working since.

To complement this portrait sketched too quickly, let's say that Christian drives a Citroën C4, that he loves traveling (USA, Canada, Thailand, Vietnam, Bali, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, and many other countries...), that he loves commercial aviation and in particular the B-747 400 (Since Concorde was withdrawn), that he likes music in general (Except Rapp), and Johan-Sebastian Bach in classic music, warbirds and especially the Mustang, the Auvergne area, rugby, and good wine, all good things, one must admit!

Welcome aboard Christian!

Col. **Christian MONIER**
6 Rue Baudin
94200 IVRY SUR SEINE
FRANCE

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Mobile: 06 27 32 81 75
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LA FERTÉ-ALAIS 2008 AIR SHOW

Col. **Jacqueline Clerc** has confirmed that this air show will take place on May 31 and June First, 2008. These dates, for which still existed some doubts, have been decided and confirmed during the **Amicale Jean-Paptiste Salis** General Assembly which took place on January 19. Therefore, our members may carry on with the preparation of this event, like, for example, the booking of their hotel rooms (*See the announcement made on page 5 of this issue*).

SINCERE THANKS

• A big thank you to col. **John Roeder** who has renewed his *Restoration Sponsorship*. He took this opportunity to add a gift of 75 euros to the Projects of the French Wing!

• Col. **Jean-Christophe Debuisson** has also paid his *Supporting Sponsorship*, his 2008/2009 annual dues, and donated a gift of 50 euros to the French Wing Projects. A big thank you Jean-Christophe!

• Col. **Gilles Avenel** has renewed his *Flying Sponsorship* for year 2008. Thank you Gilles!

• Col. **Hugh Alexander III** has also renewed his *Flying Sponsorship* for year 2008. Thanks Hugh!

• Col. **Georges Marcelin** has paid his 2008/2009 annual dues, renewed his *Restoration Sponsorship*, and made a gift of 25 euros to the French Wing Projects. A big thank you Georges!

• Col. **Jean-Yves Cercy** and renewed his *Flying Sponsorship* and paid his 2008/2009 annual dues. Thank you Jean-Yves!

• Col. **Maurice Girard** has renewed his *Restoration Sponsorship*. Thank you Maurice!

We kept the best for the end. Read on...

• **One of our members** who wishes to remain absolutely anonymous, has made a gift of 3000 euros to the French Wing Projects!... Yes, you read correctly!

The secret that this person has asked for is in no way an obstacle for the very warm thanks we wish to express.

This generosity is an invaluable help to the current projects (One is never protected from a big problem), and, especially, the restoration of the Rearwin Sportster. A very big **THANK YOU** to this dedicated member. Because of this gift, the "thermometer" on the last page, has made an extraordinary jump!

ABOUT THE MUSÉE DE L'AIR ET DE L'ESPACE FREE ENTRANCE

A visit to the Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace in Le Bourget on January 04, allowed us to test this new system:

- The access to the museum is totally free. All you need to do is get a pass at the counter. These passes are used to count the number of visitors.
- You need to pay for the visit of the Concorde and the Boeing 747.
- The museum car park is now paying and the price is 5 euros for each period of 3 hours. A coin/credit card machine has been placed outside the museum shop.

PIPER CLUB FRANCE ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This meeting will take place on April 05, 2008, in the offices of the Amicale Jean-Baptiste Salis in La Ferté-Alais. The French Wing will be there as usual. If you are interested, please contact us as soon as possible.

HOTEL ROOMS FOR LA FERTÉ-ALAIS 2008

Like he does every year, col. **Christophe Bastide** will book our members' hotel rooms. If you need his help, please contact him via email or phone him on 05 49 55 14 31, or on his cell phone: 06 09 62 34 93.

NEW CONTACT FOR GUY PERRIN

Our friend Guy Perrin has moved. Here is his new contact:

Guy Perrin
98 Rue du Docteur Bauer
93400 Saint Ouen
Tél: 01 40 12 92 15
Email: perringuy3175@neuf.fr

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR COL. CHRISTOPHE BASTIDE

Col. **Christophe Bastide** has changed his email address. The new one is:

< bastide16@free.fr >

T-6 F-AZYT ACCIDENT



Photo: Via Internet

Col. **Claude Requi**, co-owner and air show pilot of this airplane, a veteran of the war in Algeria, sent us the following message:

"T-6G (F-AZYT), crashed on December 6, 2007, near the village of Le Castellet (Var district). The two occupants were practising aerobatics when, for an unknown reason, the plane crashed into the ground at high speed. The two occupants were killed instantly. They were also co-owners of this aircraft."

"This terrible accident has taken away from us two very close friends and an airplane that was one of the nicest in France and one of the best in Europe".

LIST OF TRAVELLERS FOR AIRSHO 2008

Those of our members who intend to be present at AIRSHO 2008 and whose hotel rooms have been booked by Irene Grinnell are:

Hugh & Carolyn Alexander III
Bernard & Fumiko Delfino
Claude De Marco
Maurice Girard
Roger Gouzon
Roy & Irene Grinnell
Aubrey & Barbara Hair
Marie-Françoise Le Cornec
Léon Manoukians
Patrick Pierre-Pierre & Marie-Paule
Antoine & Patricia Roels
Sandy Sansing

FOR SALE: A SONY COM- BINED TV/ TAPE RECORDER

The French Wing is selling it SONY combined TV/Tape Recorder. The screen size is 15", it is a dual standards PAL and SE-CAM unit. The Wing has no more use for it for the PX. This machine is 10 years old but it was only used during air shows since

it was purchased. It can become an excellent second TV for a bedroom or a kitchen. The picture is the best one can find since it's the legendary SONY Trinitron that all cinema studios have adopted. The price of this unit is 150.00 euros for our members or friends. Thanks for advising us as soon as possible if you are interested.

WHITE LIGHTNING'S NEW LOOK

White Lightning, which suffered a fire in 2001 and was sold in 2005 to austrian company Red Bull, has been restored by Ezell Aviation in Breckenridge (Tx). The plane will arrive in Austria in April or May 2008.



PIPER CLUB FRANCE

The Piper Club France is organizing a sortie on June 13, 14, and 15, 2008. Col. **Patrick Pierre-Pierre** has already applied as a pilot. Patrick is looking for one or more passengers because the place is relatively close to Paris. Thanks for contacting us if you are interested. Here is the program:

13 June: Meeting of airplanes at La Ferté, with a visit of the museum and local flights (The area and its châteaux). Departure to Moret sur Loing where will take place the dinner, the hotel being in Moret or Fontainebleau.

14 June: Flight to Nangis with lunch in Le Pélican restaurant, then flight back to Moret, via Vaux-le-Vicomte, with the same conditions for the dinner and hotel rooms as the night before.

15 June: Departure from Moret with a possible barbecue before departure.

NOT SCHEDULED TO FLY...

Article: Capitaine de Vaisseau Michel Couthures

Somewhere in the Gulf of Tonkin, aboard aircraft carrier **Arromanches**? Between November 20 and 26, 1953, in 6 days, I flew 8 missions, including 2 on the 22nd. Therefore, they have "forgotten" me on this November 27 flight sheet.

Some correspondence, some reading, the morning drags along. I'm on my own at the end of the "Trabuc street", this dead end corridor named after one of the downtown streets of Toulon, ends on a sideway room, below the front part of the take off deck. It's in this "street" that officers, pilots of the 11F and 3F Flotillas live.

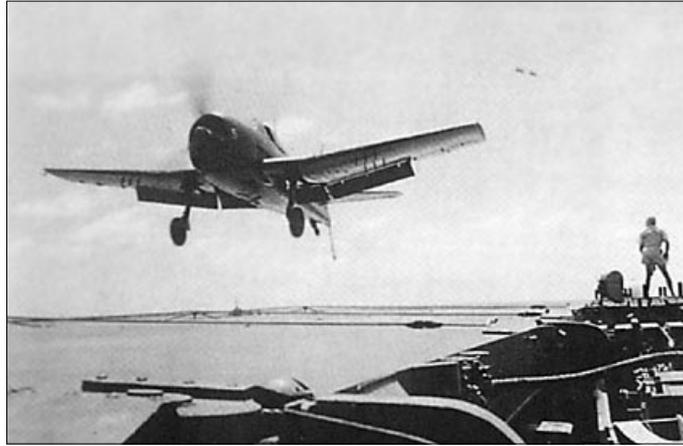
Two bed rooms with 6 occupants in each, and one, larger, for *premier-mâitre* **Lucas**, known as "Fifi", helicopter pilot, and *second-mâitre* **Goizet**, the most senior of all *second-mâitres* pilots of the 11F. One needs to know that our street has showers and bath tubs with sea water, and toilets! A luxury!



In one of the bedrooms, in "Trabuc street"

My five co-occupants are flying a mission. They will be back soon, unless they're re-routed to Bach-Maï (Hanoi) or Cat-Bi (Hải-Phong) to top up their fuel and ammunitions so that they can do an attack, if necessary, on a convoy or some objective, or any other urgent mission. Suddenly, an announcement to the entire carrier: "To your aviation positions! Pick up of 8 Hellcat in 10 minutes!" Instantly, life aboard the carrier accelerates: The deck teams run towards their positions: Directors with their small flags, chocks and cable people, "securitars" wearing their asbestos suit, and those with no particular occupation who will enjoy the "show" from the rare available positions at the top of the island, near the ship commander, which are rapidly over-crowded. I don't like to see other pilots land. I fear for accidents. I very much prefer to land myself. It's nearly noon, time for lunch. The menu

is... minute!... The planes are put back in flying conditions, so are the pilots! Just the time for a quick de-briefing and three



Hellcat landing on the Arromanches

mouthfuls and they ask for the same ones again for an urgency. What about me?... Régis, who just landed, is tired and asks to be replaced, and Daniel who had obtained the agreement to go to Saïgon where his sister lives, prefers not to take-off again.

In Trabuc street the phone rings. Being by myself, I pick it up. It's for me: "Take-off in 10 minutes! Take along enough to spend 5 days because you will land at Cat-Bi". Just the time to fill my light Valtex suitcase, to run to the rear of the ship to collect my rifle belt (With a Colt 45, a paratrooper knife, and a first aid kit), to put on my khaki overall, to grasp the set of 125 maps and the navigation plate, not forgetting my helmet, and I'm on the deck.

On the flight board it's number 14 that I will fly. This plane was badly damaged some time ago, and it was repaired. The plane chief, mechanic in charge of the aircraft, takes my Valtex to load it in the belly of the plane through an access hatch underneath the fuselage. I don't know why, I ask him to tie it down securely. You never know... The time to climb into the cockpit, to adjust my parachute straps, to attach the ones that tie me down to the seat, to adjust its position while I check the position of all switches, selectors, instruments, levers, and flight controls, not forgetting the Thompson machine-gun, 18 pounds of wood and steel.

The Chief-AVIA from his room at the top of the island, next to the commander's room, orders: "Start the engines!". It coughs a little and then it roars in a lovely

blue cloud. The engine's 2100 HP start singing. Warm up, RPM stabilized, one has to prime the fuel feed from the belly tank, the big "cigar" attached to the belly of the plane, an extra fuel tank which can be jettisoned and which provides an extra 45 minutes of flight in addition to the main internal fuel tanks. The red selector lever for these fuel tanks is located on the bottom left of the cockpit: The handle is turned horizontally. The normal positions for the two main tanks are selected easily as usual. Hey? The belly tank position is also very easy, as opposed to the other planes

which require some hard pressure for the selection. To make sure, I re-select the main ones and back to the extra tank: Same thing. Well, it seems OK to me, but for take-off I need to re-select the center tank. Engine run: Mag check, air-fuel mixture, flaps, radio. All planes are ready. The alignment begins, and since there is not enough deck length to do a normal take-off, the first four planes will be catapulted.

My patrol chief is **Jean Colonge**, and his call sign is "*Madeleine*". Mine is "*Minondas*".

Madeleine gone, the director signals me to taxi over the catapult. The cable is fitted, a servant shows me a board which lists the last checks I need to carry out, then the director signals me to apply full power with his flag. Maximum power applied, everything shakes hard. A quick glance at the instruments... Everything is OK! My head is stuck to the head-rest, military salute with the right hand, the green flag is lowered and... Here I go! Squeezed against the back of the seat! At the end of the deck, the cable is dropped, the plane drops a little towards the sea, gear up, the



The Arromanches in the Bay of Along

speed increases, and I start gaining some altitude, looking for the leader. During the launch I realized that if, in the rush, I took my life jacket, I forgot the uniform black tie, and also a new film for my camera. Too late. I think there is only one view available on the film which is loaded. That's a good start indeed!

900 feet on the altimeter, I join Madeleine who did a large turn to take a heading towards Dien Bien Phu. We select the belly tank. The lever works fine, like it did during the engine run. Our flight takes us over Tuan-Giao, an ill-famed place, and I can see why! I see my leader changing course frequently in a disordered way, and at the same time I can hear "Beware! There's some flak!". It's a fact that I can see a few flakes and some bullets that are aimed at us! To fool the snipers I make numerous and quick heading changes. As we leave the area, the sky becomes quiet again. The plain of Dien is in sight. The commander "Red Torri" sends us to the south where a Criquet (Morane 500 observation plane) will mark the target with some smoke. It flies around waiting



Photo: M. Couthures

The author at the controls of a Hellcat

for us, and as soon as we get close enough it drops its smoke marker to indicate where we need to bomb. The Morane gets close to the ground, marks the objective, and climbs up again quickly. A lovely white smoke is now coming up from the forest. Madeleine announces that he will start his first pass with two bombs. I follow him at some distance and I switch over to the main fuel tanks because the belly tank is almost empty. The lever is hard to move, very hard! As I just armed my first two bombs and started my dive, I stop the latter to gain some height and I drop the bombs while I try to select the tanks! The Criquet is disappointed: My bombs fell far away from the target. The fuel tank selector lever gives: The rod shears, and there must be just a few drops left in the belly tank... I take a heading towards Dien. I drop my other two bombs anywhere. The Criquet screams with satisfaction: The two bombs have hit the target!...

- Madeleine! Here is Minondas: I can't select the main tanks!

- Follow me! Follow me!
 - Here is Minondas: My fuel tank selector lever is not working!
 - Follow me!
 - I'm telling you that I'm going to run out of fuel!
 - What are you saying? Follow me!
 - I'm telling you that I'm going to crash!
 (I believe I distinctly told him something else...).

The fuel pressure is down to zero. The engine quits. I drop the belly tank, empty and useless. Now that I have some available time, I'm frightened. The crash!... There must be some Viets below, ready to welcome me with some nice attentions... I can feel the knots in my stomach, my eyes are wide open: The panic!

But, as I turn my head to the right, I can see the Criquet which tries to fly along with me and dive as much as he can! It's moving, reassuring, and amusing, all at the same time! And the panic goes away. It didn't last long. With no engine running, the Hellcat drops more than it glides. The ground will be there soon and I must get ready for a belly landing... Open the canopy! Hey? It's open! Lock it? It is locked! Switch off the magnetos! They are switched off. But not the battery so that I can use my 6 guns in case I see the reception committee: Strafing and crash into them, it's clear! Lost for lost!... Quick I arm my guns! Seat straps tight and locked.

The ground comes up faster and faster. Where can I land? A large field that appears to be flat, surrounded by a long and tall hedge. A layer of clouds stops any shadow and it's only when I get close that I realize that the field is a dry rice paddy! With many small dikes which are dry, and therefore hard... Not to be hit head on! And the hedge? Let's go there! But since I'm not too high, I realize that it hides a ditch, and the other side is a slope, and a high one... Full left rudder and stick to the left! Not the hedge but a splendid haystack of rice straw! Just enough room to turn a little bit and the plane hits the



Hellcat and Helldiver on the deck



Photo: M. Couthures

haystack with the right wing root. The time to see my whole life displayed before my eyes in a fraction of a second, the plane swivels enough to go over the dikes sideways with the wing dihedral. What a deafening noise despite the helmet and the earphones! And how it shakes! How many dikes over 600 feet?... Convinced that I was about to die, I kept my eyes open. Just to see what's going on! Then, suddenly, EVERYTHING stops: The noise and the shakes. A quiet silence which appears enormous! Am I dead? It doesn't hurt. As the dust settles, I can see a large piece of straw coming down quietly. I can see, so I'm alive!

There's no time to waste. The forest is at the bottom of the nearest hills, about 900 feet on the right. No one in sight (It's a fact that the presence of the Criquet and the other plane may be dissuading). On the left: Nothing, the hedge is quiet. Undo straps and buckles, out of the plane, one more glance around. Quiet everywhere!

The Thompson! It's tied against the seat, I use my knife to free it, quick, some ammunition! Arm it! Drat! The breech seems to be stuck... No, it's well in place but it armed itself during the shakes. It shows how powerful they were!

And here I am, walking to Dien Bien Phu that I had spotted during my descent. My life jacket is too visible. I throw it away while I'm walking. And my maps!... I turn back to the plane! I quickly get my bag and the 125 maps, as well as the navigation plate inserted in the dashboard. As for the suitcase, since the plane is on its belly, the access hatch is not accessible. Too bad! The sound of an aircraft engine! It's my leader who hand-signals me a friendly good-bye. He returns to the carrier. The Criquet flies very low to show me the

direction of the camp. I feel like setting fire to the plane. No matches but a brand new gasoline lighter, but it's... dry! Of the 250 gallons of gas which remain in the tanks I cannot even get a drop since the drains are under the wings! The Criquet flies over again and signals me to hurry. I run towards the hedge, my helmet still on my head, yellow and shiny. A nice target! I drop it. I get to the ditch... Nothing, and no one. Phew! I jump over the ditch which is dry. Having climbed the slope I quickly inspect the area, nothing special: Another rice paddy and beyond, at a distance of 300 feet: A grove. I walk across the rice paddy and I can see some silhouettes along the right edge of the grove... Are they Viets? I lay down on my belly between two dikes, with the maps and plate on the side, ready to shoot with the Thompson. On the left of the grove appear other silhouettes: European faces. Phew! As I stand up, confidently, the paratroopers arrive. One of them takes my gun and unload it. Their commander is *Commandant Bréchnignac*, commander of the 2nd Battalion of the First Regiment of paratroopers. His assistant is *sous-lieutenant Subrégis*. They belong to the same Regiment as a certain *Commandant Bigeard*!

It's in their good company that I come back to my plane. The paratroopers know the area very well since they were there some moments ago. The day before they met 200 Viets who occupied the hedge and the ditch. They confirm that there was some of them over there, at the edge of the forest. As I observe the paratroopers walking carefully along the track left by the aircraft, in the scattered straw, I ask them if they lost something. *Lieutenant Subrégis* asks me :

- *Wasn't there a haystack around here?*
- *Yes! I used it to slow me down!*
- *Was there a noise?*
- *Apart from the noise of the crash I didn't notice anything special, why?*
- *We had just mined it!*

When you're in luck!... As I wanted to bring back some equipment (Radio sets, weapons, ammunitions, instruments), I request that the paratroopers ask the Criquet to bring some tools. The Morane goes to the airfield of Dien and comes back a moment later to drop a few tools wrapped in some rags. Alas! The tools are metric ones, and the Hellcat is of American origin! My knife spring breaks. With the help of the paratroopers, a small pile of equipment starts to build up around my parachute: My helmet, my life-jacket, my maps, and my navigation plate, and of course my parachute and its dinghy. About my parachute: Having watched me

extract this equipment from the cockpit, one of the soldiers is surprized :

- *You had a parachute and you didn't jump?!* (It's a fact that paratroopers prefer to jump before the stop!). I explain that had I jumped, the wind would have made me drift towards the Viets. Problem! The radio sets and my suitcase are in the fuselage and the hatch is inaccessible. During the crash the fuselage was torn just behind the cockpit. The hole is slightly open, but not enough, even for a hand. One of the Vietnamese in the group has a splendid machete which he willingly lends me. This providential tool allows me to enlarge the hole and bend the skin enough to let me in. The Vietnamese are amazed and come and touch the edge of the skin. It's so thin! They were convinced that fuselages were made of one massive piece of metal! Since I wanted the plane to be burned down, the paratroopers promised me



The author after his forced landing.

Photo M. Couthures

that they would take care of it : "*With the 250 gallons remaining in the tanks, there shouldn't be a problem*". The plane, I was told a few days later, resisted to several rounds from a machine-gun, and it's some explosive that managed to break the self-sealing fuel tanks!

My suitcase and the two radio sets are out, and I try to find another delicate instrument, the IFF, which, thanks to a secret code, allows the aircraft to be identified on the radar screens. I can only find its base. In the shocks it was torn off and I can just see it in the rear part of the fuselage, inaccessible. Another problem: How can I carry all that lot?... A heavenly sound brings the answer: A helicopter! The Sikorski S-55 lands nearby. It comes from Muong-Sai, a place that is still held by our troops, north of Dien. It allows me not only to carry my equipment, but to carry on in flight, and to get my first flight in a helicopter!

On the airfield at Dien : I just have time to unload the equipment and a jeep arrives. Its driver asks me to come with him. Convinced that it's already about the administrative follow-up of the crash, I'm quite surprized to see the

jeep stop along a row of about ten officers. The "meeting committee" is quite sympathetic. The first one congratulates me for having so much luck. I can hardly find his rank which doesn't show on his shoulders, but I can see two stars pinned to a small square of fabric buttoned onto his jacket! He is *Général Gilles*, the big boss of the area. The young inferior officer that I am is very moved to be so nicely welcomed. The other officers, *colonels*, *lieutenant-colonels*, and battalion officers are all of the same type! Among them I notice the particular accent of an officer who will become famous. His name: *Bigeard*. Unfortunately I could not remember all the names. The entire Dien Bien Phu Headquarters were almost there. Those who are missing, like *Commandant Bréchnignac* are out in the area. All of a sudden, an enormous explosion! Everyone is surprized, except me! May be my emotions earlier in the day made me used to it. It's a 105 gun battery that opened fire to treat a target designed by a group on a mission.

Very kindly, *Général Gilles* offers me to stay a few days at the camp. His offer to live and stay with those whom we work with, but never see, is very tempting... But on the aircraft carrier, one is waiting for me already, surely for the report on my accident. Mechanically it's quite important since the incident of the fuel tank selector could happen to other planes. Regretfully I load my luggage on a Dakota which flies back to Hanoi with its crew and a load of parachutes. For me, it's another first: My first flight aboard a Dakota, famous airplane!

This adventure allows me to spend a few rest days which include revitalizing stops in good restaurants with colleagues of the 11F and the 3F, based on the Arromanches, but also with two friends of the La Rochelle aero-club who are in the air force, posted in Hanoi.

Back to the flat-top, I want to meet the mechanic in charge of number 14 and apologize for not bringing back the plane. He's the one who addresses me :

- *Do you know what you told me before you climbed aboard?*
- *Yes! To make sure that you'd tie down my suitcase securely!*
- *Yes! But you also added: Have a good look at your plane, you'll never see it again!*

Premonition?... I had completely forgotten. When I think that I wasn't scheduled to fly on November 27, 1953!...

V1 OVER TREMBLAY

Article: R. Gouzon and B. Delfino - Photos: Service Historique de Tremblay

As opposed to the general opinion, the V1 Flying Bombs were not just sent to England.

As the German troops were repulsed by the irresistible pressure of the allied troops since the landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944, they tried to harm our country as much as they possibly could before they left. This is how several V1's and V2's were launched with no great accuracy towards the Paris area, and without any precise strategic purpose.

On October 3, 1944, shortly before 11 A.M., a V1 fell on the town of Tremblay Vert-Galant, on the Pierre Curie Square, 150 feet from the nearest house, killing a young boy, injuring a dozen people, destroying a dozen houses, and seriously damaging another 150 around the area.

The young victim's name was **Jean-Claude Grivotet**. On that day, he was playing on the Pierre Curie Square because the school period, in his school, had been delayed about ten days. His body wasn't showing any open wounds, and he was probably killed by the shock-wave caused by the explosion. Young Jean-Claude Grivotet's mother never recovered from the loss of her son...



Young Jean-Claude Grivotet, victim of the V1

Fortunately, the flying bomb fell in soft ground, going deep into the soil before exploding, which limited the effect of the very powerful explosive it carried. The crater that could be seen was 24 feet diameter, and about 21 feet deep! This V1 launch was followed by four others the day after, October 4: The bombs fell all over the region. Then on October 5, two more V1's were launched, one of them falling in a field near Roissy.

Several witnesses allowed a very precise story of this event. A lady said "she could hear a sound like an old motor bike with no exhaust pipe, an encircling sound that no one could tell the source of". Ten minutes later she was able to see the damage done by this V1, and she realized

that the noise she heard was from this aircraft, the engine of which being a pulse-jet which does do the same sound as a motor bike.

Another lady had walked to the hairdresser on the Pierre Curie Square. She had left the shop and got to some distance from it when the explosion took place. She wasn't injured but she was terrorized because everything had been blown away. She saw some odd objects fly over her head like the stone of a sink! In another house, an entire wall had collapsed. One could see the bed ready to fall. The pole in the center of the square had disappeared. Some were prisoners under the debris of their house, and many roofs had been blown away. In a radius of 300 feet, not a single window had resisted.

This drama was not the first one for the town of Tremblay: In 1940, on June 13, as the enemy troops were moving towards Paris, they were stopped by soldiers of the 24th Alpine Regiment, who, with their precise and murderous shooting, stopped them from going across the bridge over the **Canal de l'Ourcq**. The Germans lost 9 men, including an officer. Furious, they took 15 civilians among the population, and shot them dead. A few hours later, the German troops were moving into Paris...

The drama of young **Jean-Claude Grivotet** is part of these innumerable facts of the air war that took place during WWII and went by almost unnoticed and forgotten far too soon. This is why we decided to honor this little boy Jean-Claude, an innocent victim like so many others.



Above and below, two views of the Pierre Curie Square showing the damages caused to the houses surrounding the Square. On the right, a view of the Pasteur street which starts from the square, with, on the right, the hardware store. The lady standing before the house in the foreground, was part of the witnesses and victims injured by the V1 explosion.



HISTORY

THE MYSTERIOUS B-24J IDENTIFIED

The new year wishes sent by col. **Maurice Girard** were very special since they came with 3 very interesting photos of a belly landed B-24J, found in the paper work of his son's grand-father on his mother's side, with no particular specification (*Photos on the right*).

An emergency call made to our Historian, col. **Jacques Leroux**, was immediately followed by several, short but precise answers: The plane was a B-24J-5-DT, registered W-YM, S/N 42-51305, belonging to the **93rd Bomb Group, 409th Bomb Squadron**, damaged during a belly landing on **February 27, 1945** near **Saint Omer**, on the territory of **Noordpeene**, on a place called "*The lost area*" near **Clairmarais**. This place is probably located between these two municipalities highlighted yellow on the map below, separated by a distance of about 0,6 mile. The raid scheduled for this airplane had for targets the roads and rail works of **Halle**, a german town located on the land of Saxe-Anhalt on the river Saale, in the eastern part of the country, between the hills of Harz and the german-polish plains. The aircraft, it was found, was salvaged on **March 20**.

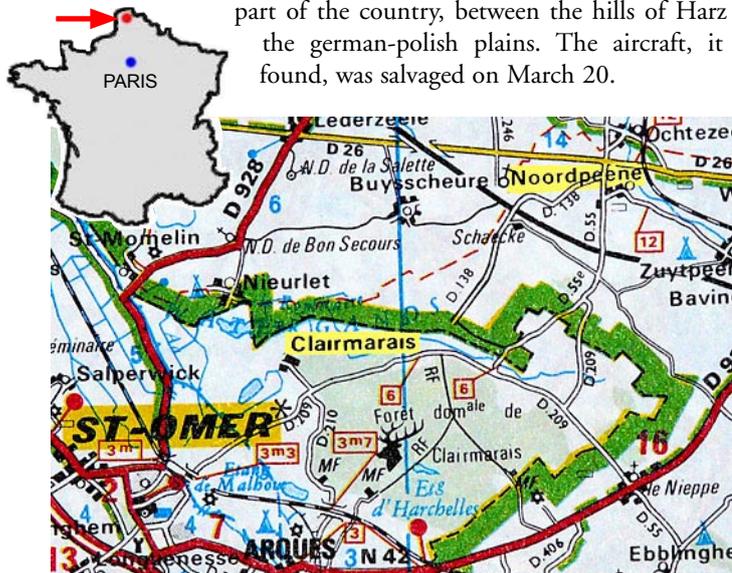


Photo: M. Girard

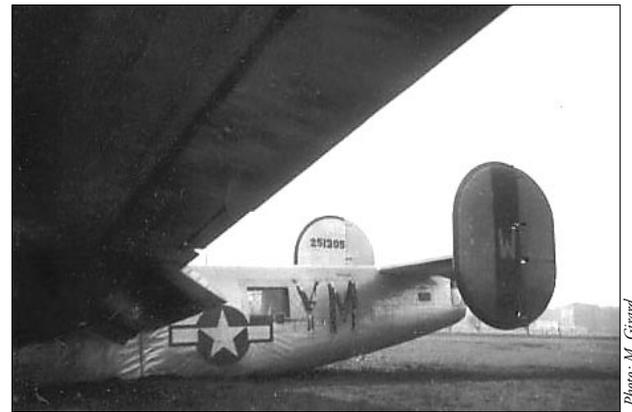


Photo: M. Girard



Photo: M. Girard

THE 93rd BOMB GROUP - "TED'S TRAVELLING CIRCUS"

The **93rd Bomb Group** was based at **Hardwick**, in **England** (*Photo below*).

It was formed in 1942 at **Barksdale Field** (**Louisiana**), then it was transferred to **Ft. Myers** (**Florida**) where, during a three months training, it flew observation missions over the **Gulf of Mexico**, and was credited with three sunk submarines. It then flew to **England** in **September 1942** and flew its first raid on **October 9** of the same year. In **November**, 3 squa-

drons were sent to **North Africa** to help **Operation Torch**. Back in **England**, the crew followed some low level training, and they were sent back to **North Africa** where, together with the **44th** and **389th Bomb Group**, and two others of the **9th Air Force**, they took part in the famous and dramatic raid over the oil refineries in **Ploesti, Romania**.

when, in **February 1943**, a **YANK** magazine correspondent was asked to write a story about the heavy bombers of the **8th Air Force**. Since, for security reasons, he could not write the exact name of the group, he identified the group with this nickname, *Ted* being the group commander, col. **Edward J Timberlake**, and *Travelling Circus* referring to the group's activities at the time.



409th BS



Photo: Via Internet

This raid was followed by other missions over **Italy** and **Austria**, and the group was sent back to **England** in **October 1943**. The **93rd Bomb Group** flew a total of **396** combat missions (43 of which from **North Africa**), the highest number of missions of all bomb groups in the **8th Air Force**.

The nickname of *Ted's Travelling Circus* was given to the **93rd Bomb Group**



In the foreground, the very same plane during a raid on **Ingolstadt**, in a much better shape!...

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE (1)

Article: Col. John P. Roeder.

In view of the French Wing's tour of the "Ardennes battle grounds" in early May, this is the first of a 3-part account of the events that had a major impact on the outcome of Hitler's last great offensive that in 6 weeks cost him more than 100 000 men, 700 tanks, innumerable other vehicles and 1600 planes.

On 16 December 1944 at 5:30 am, some 3400 German guns opened fire along a 110 km stretch along the West Front between Monschau, 20km south of Aachen and Echternach, 15 km north of Trier. Their targets were the thinly manned positions of the First US Army (Hodges) in the Belgian and Luxembourg Ardennes. It was the beginning of the Ardennes Battle, more popularly known as the Battle of the Bulge or the Rundstedt Offensive.

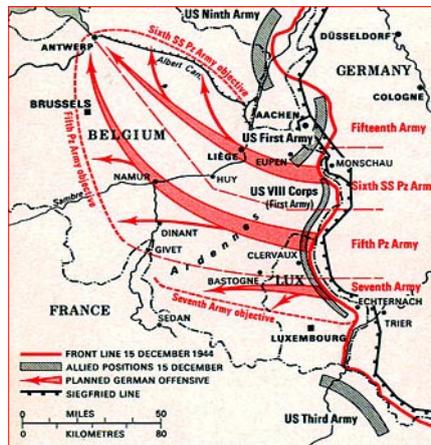
At dawn three German armies, the 6th SS Panzer, the 5th Panzer and the 7th Grenadiers (from north to south) with a total of some 240 000 men and about 800 tanks began moving west. They were faced by about 83 000 men with 242 tanks, 182 self propelled guns and 394 large artillery pieces of the First US Army (Hodges) which lay at



German soldier overlooking the Ardennes

rest or were refitting in this sector of relative calm in which nothing of importance was expected by the Allies to happen. US activities were concentrated in the Aachen area in the north, where the strong left wing of the First Army had begun penetrating into Germany and on the Lorraine sector - south of Luxembourg - where the Third US Army (Patton) was pushing to cross the German border in the Saar region.

Thus the German build up along the Ardennes Front which had been covered by ultimate secrecy remained virtually undiscovered by the Allies. For them the German offensive came as a complete strategic and tactical surprise and confusion up to the highest ranks at Supreme Headquarters SHAEF was total.



The German plan...

The offensive which had been devised by Hitler himself was imaginative and daring. The spot and time was ideal because of the weakness of the Allies in the Ardennes sector, and the fog and mist most likely at the time, would prevent Allied airpower to go into action. This actually was to become the case for 7 long days.

Hitler's first objective was to capture Antwerp, which since November was the paramount supply port for all Allied forces in the northern part of the West Front. This would also split the British, Canadian and US forces in Holland, north-eastern Belgium and the Aachen-Monschau salient from the US and French armies in Alsace-Lorraine. Thus time could be bought to prevent rapid breakthroughs deep into the Reich with the prospect to destroy or at least weaken the Allies particularly in the north to an extent, that they might join Germany in finally annihilating the Soviet Union.

Hitler's commanding Generals were deaf to such talk. They were doubtful that even Antwerp could be captured, due to the overall state of the Wehrmacht at the time. Hitler however bluntly rejected all their alternative proposals. So at the end they obeyed, and seen the circumstances they made a highly professional job.

- They knew that there was not enough fuel for such a gigantic move, but there were enormous US

dumps around Stavelot and at Bastogne.

- They realized that the overwhelming might of Allied air power whenever the weather permitted would be disastrous in effect to their combat troops and supply columns. Their answers were to provide plentiful "flak", insist on good camouflage and moving by night.
- Although reserves were available, they were aware that finally German resources for replacing losses in men and equipment compared to those of the Allies would be practically nil.

From the beginning of the assault on Sept. 16th by far not everything went to plan in particular on the northern and southern flanks of the offensive. In the center of the developing wedge however, in spite of stubborn resistance by scattered units of the First US Army in isolated positions, progress was impressive. On the night of Dec. 17th a German armoured group reached Stavelot, but they never got any of the 13,6 million liters of fuel stored in this area.

By the morning of Dec. 18th German panzers were 24 km from Bastogne, which the few GIs there were preparing to evacuate. As a major road junction it was the key to the defence of the Ardennes and the Meuse river behind. Anticipating the danger, Gen. Eisenhower had ordered the 101st Airborne Division which had been refitting at Reims to proceed on the evening of the 17th with full speed to Bastogne, some 160 km away. By 9:00 am on Tuesday the 19th it was in place, just ahead of the Germans who had lost the race. These proceeded in encircling the town, which gave them the difficulty of getting around it on their way to the Meuse.

To be followed...



First US Army Shermans preparing to stop the German advance probably in the Stavelot-Trois Ponts-La Gleize/Stoumont triangle.

FRENCH WING P.X.

The following articles are available with a payment by cheque to the CAF French Wing. (+ P & P).

- Wing patch: € 9,00.
- Norvigie patch: € 6,00.
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- Various pins "cloisonné": € 5,00.
- 100 A4 sheets with the Wing logo and your personal address: € 10,00.
- Warbirds photographs 30x45cm: € 10,00.
- T shirt Piper CUB, 170 grammes, Hanes, L or XL: € 15,00.
- T shirt cartoon P40, 170 grammes, Hanes, L or XL: € 15,00.
- T shirts other sizes on order.
- T shirt illustrated with the picture of your choice (Maximum size A5 - Warning! Only send pictures that are free from any copyrights!): € 15,00.
- Aircraft profiles 15 cm x 20 cm ready for framing: Various types: € 4,00 chaque.
- Vidéo filmed in Midland (55mn) VHS PAL: € 16,00 ©.
- Eric Besançon large size paintings: F4U Corsair and Messerschmitt 262 night fighter: € 30,00 P & P included ©.
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- Roy Grinnell prints - Normandie Niemen, F4U7, and B26 Marauder - Unsigned: € 30,00 + P & P € 10,00. Signed by veterans: € 50,00 + P & P € 10,00 ©.
- Roy Grinnell print of the Piper Cub: € 10 + P & P (FW Members), € 15 + P & P (Non members).
- Post Cards based on the same paintings (B26 Marauder and Neuneu): € 0,50 each (P & P according to quantity) ©.
- CD Rom of all FW Newsletters since January 2000, French and English, and 200 photos of warbirds taken during Airsho in Midland, by B. Delfino: € 10,00 P & P included ©.

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Activités French Wing	115,00
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TOTAL	15669,91

Note: These figures are the gifts made to the French Wing since the purchase of the Piper Cub in May 2003, and not the current status of our Unit's bank accounts.