



Airshow



CAF French Wing

Monthly Newsletter - Bulletin Mensuel

Volume 9 - N° 3 - March 2004

EDITORIAL

Every month that goes by brings its load of happiness and dramas. February was not different, and the terrible news of the sudden death of Herb Wilson will shock our members and friends who stayed along with him in Toulouse and Midland. In addition to the pain that everyone will feel, this death hits, once more, our Unit, already saddened by the loss of too many friends and members during the past year.

February also brought us a lot of intense joy. As you will read in the excellent report that colonel Barbara Hair sent us, our Unit received an Award for the acquisition of the "Spirit of Lewis", as well as many compliments. Our dear friend Lewis Bateman can be satisfied. We carry on the path that he had started with us.

The prints made from Roy Grinnell's paintings of the Corsair and Piper Cub are simply superb and of great quality. They are available and I hope that many of you will order them because they are a very pleasant mean of helping our Piper Cub.

The latter needs more new Sponsors if we want to ensure that its future remains cloudless. I wish to thank our members who supported this project until now, and ask them to continue to do so with the same enthusiasm. The purchase of this plane is only the start of this project, and it requires your permanent help.

I thank in advance those of you who will soon become Sponsors and will allow our aircraft to carry on flying as it did for the first time, some 58 years ago!...

Bernard

2004 CAF WINTER STAFF CONFERENCE

THE FRENCH WING RECEIVES THE AIRCRAFT ACQUISITION AWARD 2003 FOR THE SUCCESS OF ITS "L BIRD" PROJECT!

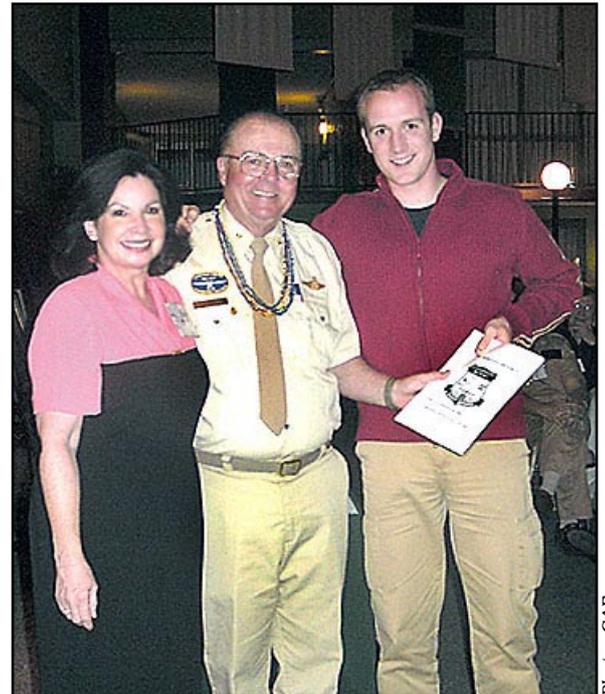
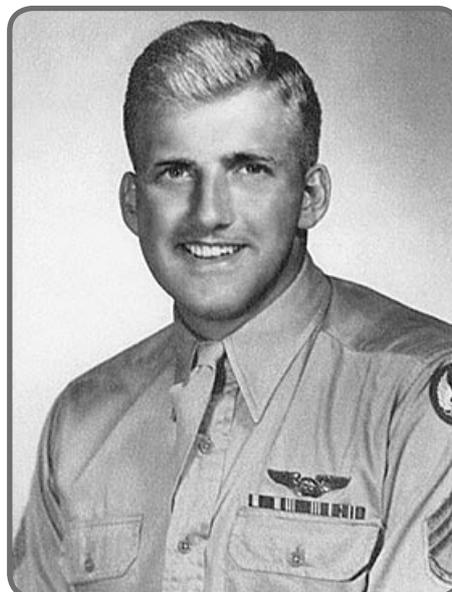


Photo: CAF

READ THE COMPLETE REPORT OF THIS EVENT (PAGES 2, 3, &

4) BY OUR SPECIAL REPORTER, COLONEL BARBARA HAIR.

HERB WILSON, HERO OF "MISSION 441", HAS GONE WEST.



THIS TERRIBLE NEWS BADLY HITS THE CAF, THE FRENCH WING, AND EVERYONE WHO KNEW HIM AND WAS HONORED BY HIS FRIENDSHIP, ESPECIALLY DURING HIS VISIT TO FRANCE FOR "MISSION 441".

2004 WING STAFF CONFERENCE

MIDLAND - 20, 21, & 22 FEBRUARY 2004

This year again, colonel Barbara Hair, helped by her husband, colonel Aubrey Hair, represented the CAF French Unit during the 2004 Winter Staff Conference in Midland. Barbara was our Newsletter reporter there, and she accomplished this difficult task with an amazing level of professionalism. Barbara did not limit herself to this job, since she acted, throughout this very important meeting, as a true Ambassador of our Unit, with the CAF authorities and every person present. As you will read in the excellent report that she sent us, this week-end was full of good surprises, starting with the unexpected encounter with colonel Nicolas Libis. As the cover photograph shows, Barbara and Nicolas received, from colonel Bob Thompson's hands, the CAF Aircraft Acquisition Award 2003, given to our Unit for the L Bird project. But let us read Barbara's report...

Thursday morning dawned clear and bright as Aubrey and I began the drive from the Dallas area to Midland. We really enjoy the change of scenery as we head west, from rolling hills to stark plateaus and big sky.

As we approached Midland Thursday afternoon, an ominous reddish-pink curtain sat on the horizon ahead. Soon, we were enveloped in an swirling ochre curtain of dust - a ferocious West-Texas dust storm!

As we picked our way cautiously along, the wind rose from the Northwest to 45 Knots. Huge dry tumbleweeds as large as tables blew across the highway. At times the dust was so thick that we could not see the car ahead. We arrived at the Holiday Inn with great relief. Texas is a big state and has big weather!

Friday morning, the skies had cleared and those who flew in were able to arrive. Various specialty committee meetings were held this day with the most important session being the General Staff Meeting. Of interest to the French Wing, it was here that the proclamation



Photo: Barbara Hair

Above: The CAF General Staff meeting.

was read by Keith Lawrence officially changing our name from The FSS to the **French Wing**. This was a momentous occasion and many congratulations were offered to us by Headquarters and General Staff.

Excitement rose on Saturday morning as a record number of Colonels registered for the Conference with near 300 present. The General Assembly began promptly at 0800 with a Call to Order and a military color guard who posted the Colors.

During the administrative announcements Bob Thompson, Chief of Staff,

Below: On the left, Sharon McKay, assistant of the CAF Executive Director, Bob Rice, on the right.



Photo: Barbara Hair

presented the theme of AIRSHO 2004: "A Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of D-Day" occurring October 2-3. Numerous activities and events will honor those who fought in this turning point of WWII.

Though plans are still being formulated, honored guests will include all veterans who participated in this momentous undertaking. These veterans will be highly visible and honored at the various ceremonies and meetings during the weekend.

A list of non-CAF aircraft invited is not available at this time but aircraft fitting the theme of D-Day are especially sought



Photo: Barbara Hair

The Safety Committee: Left to right, Ray Kinney, Eric VanHoff, Doug Jeanes (Also chief of Maintenance and Operations of the Cavanaugh Museum), and Aubrey Hair (Also Chief Pilot of the Cavanaugh Museum).



Photo: Barbara Hair

The Awards Dinner with col. Bob Thompson at the microphone (On the right is col. George Lodge, member of the French Wing, and member of the CAF General Staff).

Cols. Sandy Sansing (Left) and Nicolas Libis (Right), proudly display the Award granted to our Unit.



Photo: Barbara Hair

this year. CAF aircraft expected include the B-29 Superfortress, B-17 Flying Fortress, F6F Hellcat, A-26 Invader and SB2C Helldiver. Col Thompson admonished all aircraft sponsors whose CAF aircraft are in flying condition at show time to bring these aircraft to AIRSHO for the enjoyment of all.

In addition to aircraft, there will be a contingent of ground re-enactors and military vehicles of the era. While no military formation demonstration team was available this year, the acts accepting invitations to perform this year include the U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team, Jan Collmer and his Fina Extra 300L, Julie Clark performing an aerial ballet in her T-34, Jimmy Franklin in his jet-powered WACO biplane and a number of other acts celebrating speed and thrills.

The Unit Roll Call is always an entertaining highlight of General Assembly. The larger groups compete in a friendly way with each other to see who can answer

the roll call in an amusing and unusual way. Sharon McKay, Bob Rice's able assistant keeps everything moving in a witty way.

When the French Wing was called, to my surprise, my answer of "here" was joined by another voice, that of Col Nicolas Libis! He was a guest of our member Col Sandy Sansing and had travelled with him to the meeting.

After the session we introduced ourselves to each other and had many good chats and experiences. He is a fine young man and is a credit to the French Wing, and soon to be a pilot in the French Air Force!

During "State of the CAF" Col Thompson

...Col Thompson stated that we had accomplished recruiting 16 new members the hard way as an overseas unit...

announced to all that we were now "The French Wing" and commented on what a marvelous job of recruiting we had done under Code Name BRAVO. He stated that we had accomplished recruiting 16 new members the hard way as an overseas unit and commented that we were a great example of what could be done when the membership of a unit applies itself wholeheartedly to the task at hand. Of the new members made this past year, the French Wing made 15% of the total!

Another subject discussed was the need for all Colonels to wear the CAF uniform at meetings, air shows and other appropriate times. The uniform serves as a distinctive recruiting and retention tool. While there is a change of color from gray to khaki, the gray ones are still suitable to wear until worn-out.

The Safety briefing was the core issue of the General Assembly. Safety is Job#1 for the CAF from now on. Safety is our own personal responsibility and begins and ends with you and me. Changes must be made in

the way we fly and think and will involve a cultural change in our organization. Safety will begin with leadership from the top and will culminate with responsibility from each individual member. Statistics were cited showing a high accident-rate in the entire Warbird community. Last year, there were 11 accidents from loss of directional control, 11 ground or taxi



Photo: Barbara Hair

Our friend Sam Francis selling the new uniforms (Wearing the uniform, as it was emphasized during the conference, is an important way of attracting the public).

accidents, 4 stall-spin accidents (all fatal), 3 accidents involving mechanical problems, 3 storm damaged aircraft and 2 accidents caused by fuel starvation. While the CAF is only responsible for a small number of these, it is clear what we must do.

Some plans include recurring safety meetings in all areas of our units, a poster campaign, staffing analyses, an improved safety reporting and feedback system and a safety culture which includes risk assessment which involves every member looking seriously at what we do and how we do it. All systems must be designed with integrity and accountability. It was noted that the insurance companies have demanded change in the Warbird community while reducing benefits, increasing costs and putting our



Photo: Barbara Hair

Keith Lawrence, CAF Director of Administration.

assets at risk.

The General Staff has recommended that each unit have regular safety meetings and a reporting system from which we can learn from mistakes and share our knowledge with all units.

Safety is a choice which demands a sea change in attitudes amongst our peers and ourselves. Communication is key and carelessness and over-confidence are the biggest risks.

We will all be hearing much more on this subject and we are all encouraged to search out new ways in our area of participation and share them will all.

The afternoon Breakout meetings began with each of us selecting the areas important to us. I attended a phenomenal discussion on hangar and ramp safety

which included a thorough discussion by an expert of the many types of fire extinguishers on the market.

Use of the wrong extinguisher in the wrong situation can instantly change a bad situation into a catastrophe.

This would make a good presentation by a local expert at the unit level to inform all members who must know this information before they need it! Careful marshalling of aircraft, crowd control around aircraft, even accidents that can occur around a PX were covered.

When the sessions closed in the late afternoon, we attended a huge Awards and Honors Dinner with all seats filled.

To my surprise, during the awards, the delegation from the French Wing was called to the stage where we were presented a most impressive engraved plaque honoring us for the acquisition of the Piper J-3 Cub "The Spirit of Lewis"!

Colonel Libis and I accepted this award on behalf of the French Wing and Col. Libis will bring it to you personally in early March. The plaque was accompanied by a lengthy written commendation which recognizes the extreme dedication of our members in the noble goal of acquiring this fine example of an historical aircraft.

This filled me with great pride for your efforts in attaining such a goal this last year. All evening, we were congratulated on our accomplishments.

Sunday morning there were Breakout meeting reports from all areas given by attendees. These are always interesting because it tells in a Colonel's own words what he learned in a session. There was a brief question and answer session and closing remarks by Col Thompson and we were dismissed to take our knowledge and enthusiasm back to our units.



Photo: Barbara Hair

On the right, a great friend of the French Wing, responsible for the CAF membership, Donna Blalack.

These Conferences truly serve to rally the troops and allow us to compare our processes and ideas to other units as we can all learn something from others.

It is so easy to represent the French Wing because our members are recognized as doing what they say they will do, accomplishing monumental goals, and representing the CAF with dignity and integrity in

France, Europe and in the U.S.

How happy I am to get to be a part of it!

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Colonel Barbara Hair

...Our members are recognized as doing what they say they will do, accomplishing monumental goals...



Photo: Barbara Hair

Sharon McKay, Bob Rice's charming and welcoming Assistant.

JOHN HERB WILSON HAS GONE WEST ON FEBRUARY 9, 2004

"We're at 7000 meters altitude, and I'm seating in the compartment directly behind the bomb bay. The bomb bay doors are open and the bombs are dropped.

One 230 kilos bomb is stuck in the bay. As I move forward to get it loose, I notice that the upper turret gunner is at the front of the bomb bay, trying to do the same thing.

At that moment, there is a terrible explosion in number 3 engine nacelle. I have the impression that the number 2 engine is also hit, but less seriously.

I can see an oxygen fire starting at the front part of the fuselage, and the pilot seems to start descending to an altitude that would allow us to bail out without any risk of losing consciousness because of the lack of oxygen.



Photo: Bernard Delfino

few efforts, I manage to free him and lift him out of the turret from the shoulders.

Somewhat dizzy, he tries to escape towards the front of the plane, which is the wrong direction because of the fire in the fuselage.

I grab him and pull him to the rear exit which, fortunately, is already open.

There is no one else in the rear fuselage. I push him out and jump behind him.

A few moments later, the alarm bell starts ringing: Jump! Jump! Jump!...

I start walking towards the rear emergency exit, and, as I move over the ball turret, I can see the gunner trying desperately to get out of the it.

He cannot undo his safety belt and he's in a state of panic. I lean over and, after a

I believe I'm the last one to leave the plane. From this moment on, I never saw our aircraft again, but I count 8 parachutes. One is missing. I don't know which one.

As I landed, German soldiers are quickly on the site, and what happen after this is another story..."

Such was John Herb Wilson: A hero who managed to keep calm in the worst conditions, and who did not hesitate to risk his life to save other people's life.

Like all men of great moral value, Herb Did not admit he was a hero, and pretended that all he did was his duty. But the facts are there, evident, and irrefutable.

The CAF French Wing is proud to have honored this man and all the crew members of this Boeing B-17 *Flying Fortress* shot down over Cornebarrieu,



Photo: Bernard Delfino

during the attack of the airfield of Francazal, in June 1944.

The rest of the story printed above was told to us all by Herb verbally, with his deep sense of humour which turned to a joke the months of privation in a prisoners camp where he and his fellow aviators shared everything, their misery, the bad treatments, the disease, and even the fleas!...

But this humour was the true demonstration of a modesty that only men like Herb are capable of. Like him, several hundred thousands accomplished the most dangerous missions, discreetly, almost anonymously. You will not read about their exploits in any book, because they carried out "routine" raids. "Business as usual" as one might say...

The CAF French Wing sends his widow, June, and all his family members, its members' sincere condolences. Herb will

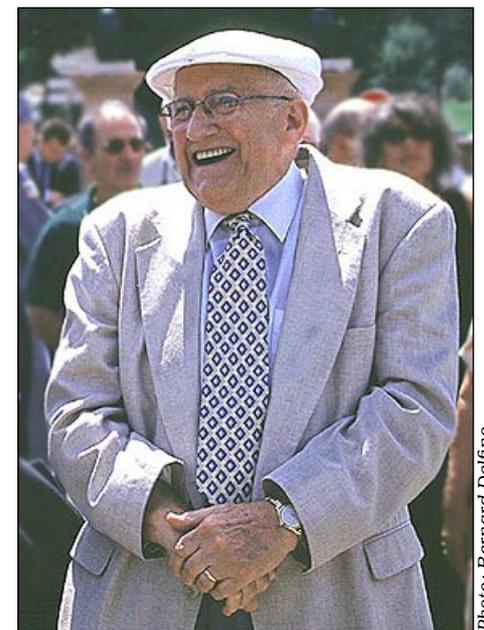


Photo: Bernard Delfino

leave in our mind, for ever, the picture of a good man, generous, and able to laugh about anything. He honored us with his friendship, and we thank him sincerely for that. Au revoir Herb!

32nd LA FERTÉ ALAIS AIR SHOW - 29 & 30 MAY 2004

The CAF French Wing will participate in this great aeronautical event, as it did for the past 7 years.

Thanks to the generosity of Editions Larivière, our booth will, again, be welcomed free of any charges, without which we would not be able to attend this event.

The members who wish to volunteer to help our Unit will need to be available, on the airfield, from Friday 28 May at noon, until Sunday evening inclusive.

The other members will need to buy their tickets in the usual places (Carrefour, FNAC, etc...), and it is recommended that they purchase tickets which are valid for the two days and are much less expensive.

VOLUNTEERS

Like the previous years, only these members who will volunteer to help setting up our tent from Friday afternoon, to help looking after our booth during the week-end, and help us pack up on Sunday evening, will be able to buy reduced price tickets.

We ask all these volunteers to send us, as soon as possible, a cheque of the amount of 30 Euros per person, drawn up to the CAF FRENCH WING.

We do not know exactly the cost of these access badges and parking spaces, but their total should be near or around 30 Euros per person and vehicle for the entire week-end. All adjustments will be made once we know these costs more precisely.



Photo: Bernard Delfino

craft's participation to this great event, either as part of the air display or the static display. We will keep you informed on these discussions and the particularities required by this participation.

If this participation is confirmed, we will need pilots to ferry the plane from Persan-Beaumont to La Ferté Alais, no later than Friday morning, and Sunday afternoon, or Monday morning, for the flight back to Persan-Beaumont.

We will also require a few mechanics to look after the Piper Cub when it leaves Persan and at its time of arrival at La Ferté.

Please note that if several members can use only one vehicle, the car park will only need to be paid once, for this vehicle alone, which is a lot more advantageous.

SATURDAY DINER

Our favourite cook will not be available this year. Therefore, we are looking for a volunteer who can take the responsibility for organizing this Saturday diner.

This member will be totally responsible for this organization, and he - or she - will need to prepare the food for all participants, according to a simple, but high quality menu.

A maximum cost of 12 Euros per guest will be the limit that should not be exceeded.

This meal may be based on a Barbecue or on cold courses.

PIPER CUB

We have just started the discussions that will allow our air-

Whether the aircraft is presented in flight or not, we will need to take advantage of the time it's displayed in the static area to present it to the public and increase our popularity, while trying to recruit more new members who will, of course, enjoy the Code Name Bravo prices, an operation still valid until July 17, 2004.

HOTEL ROOMS RESERVATIONS

Those of our members who will not camp on the airfield ought to book some hotel room today. Colonel Christophe Bastide has booked two rooms, of which one is still available. Please contact him at 05 49 55 14 31, or at 06 09 62 34 93, or via email at: <bastide16@aol.com>. Christophe will give you all the necessary information.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Everyone of us has a camera, and we suggest that you all participate in a modest competition whose theme will be Humour during the La Ferté-Alais Airshow, exclusively.

This type of picture does not call for any special equipment at all, and everyone will be able to participate. Humorous occasions are legion during this event. Open your eyes and press the trigger!



Photo: Bernard Delfino



Photo : Dominique Deudon

GROB G102 ASTIR

Following the article published in our last month Newsletter, introducing new col. Dominique Deudon, several of our members asked what a Grob G102 Astir looked like. Here is a photo of this lovely and streamlined glider.

PIPER CLUB FRANCE G.A.

The Piper Club France General Assembly will take place on April 03, on the airfield of Nangis, in the restaurant Le Pélican, at 10:30 sharp, and will be followed by a lunch.

If you wish to participate, please call the French Wing as soon as possible.

NAME CHANGE FROM "CAF FRENCH SUPPORTER SQUADRON" TO "CAF FRENCH WING"

Our Unit's name change has been officially accepted and endorsed by the Prefecture authorities in Le Raincy on February 6, 2004.

The announcement of this change will be made in the government's official newspaper, Le Journal Officiel. This now allows us to proceed with the same change in our bank and insurance companies.

As it has already been said in these pages, those of our members who use the name of our Unit in their letter-heads, envelopes, or business cards must stop using the French Supporter Squadron name, and must adopt the new one in the following format :

Col. DUPOND
CAF French Wing
12 Rue Dupont
0007 Paris

If you feel like it, you may use the picture of the CAF wings, either classic or new, resulting in a simple but pleasant format.

We thank you for not deviating from this design.

In addition, from now on, all the cheques that you will draw for our Unit, must be drawn to the "CAF French Wing".

FRENCH CORSAIR PRINTS BASED ON ROY GRINNELL'S PAINTING

Together with the prints of the Piper Cub arrived those of the Corsair F4U7, of the same great quality. All we need now is to manufacture the wooden transport cases (Bernard will do that soon), to get 200 of these prints signed by veterans of the French Corsair (Residing either in Paris or the south of France), and to send them to the subscribers. This series of signed prints will be limited to 200, of which 25 copies conventionally go to the author.

The number of subscribers was not high enough, and colonels Claude Requi and Bernard Delfino financed two thirds of this printing.

The overall size of these prints is 50 x 65 cm (20 x 26 in.), with a picture size of 36 x 60 cm (15 x 24 in.), a size smaller than the previous prints, and therefore easier to display by those who have a limited space. The members of the French Wing

can still purchase this print at the price of 30 Euros (Unsigned), and 45 Euros (Signed by Corsair veterans of the Aéro-navale). Hurry up because this offer will not last long!...



Peinture : Roy Grinnell

CORSAIR F4U-7 & AU-1



The book published by Editions d'Along about the French Corsair is available from the French Wing PX at a price of 17.00 Euros + 3 Euros P & P for our members, instead of the normal



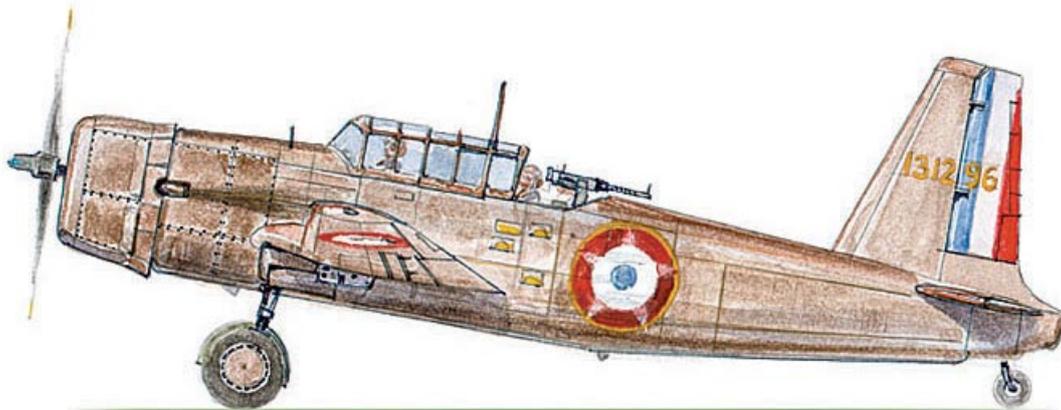
shop price of 22 Euros + P & P.

Quantities are limited, so please hurry if you wish to buy it at this very special price!



VULTEE V-72, A-31, A-35 VENGEANCE

BY Colonels John P. Roeder and Michel Perrin - Painting by Jean Bellis



Development of the Vultec V-72 was triggered by the French. After the appearance of the German Junkers Ju 87 "Stuka" in the Spanish Civil War and its successes in Poland, the Armée de l'Air was urgently seeking a dive-bomber for land-warfare, that could outperform the Stuka.

The V-72 project appeared to provide an answer, and French interest led Vultec to launch design in early 1940 on the basis of an Armée de l'Air specification. An order was to be placed for 300 of the dive bombers with deliveries beginning in October 1940. Due to the collapse of France in June 1940 however a formal contract was never signed.

Thus the British Purchasing Commission fell upon the V-72 with relief during its

search for a dive bomber as a weapon to oppose a possible German invasion of England. A first contract was signed in July 1940.

The Vengeance, as it was named by the RAF, was however a complex machine in which many new ideas had been incorporated, such as for instance an internal bomb bay, then a first in dive bomber design. Development thus turned into a nightmare. Even after its much delayed first flight in July 1941,



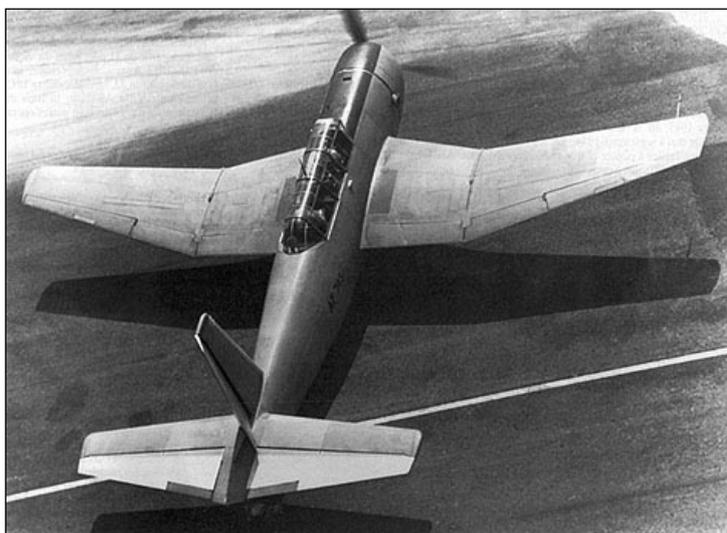
A French A-35B flying over Morocco.

favourable, but the airplane became a horrible experience for the ground crews.

Also with a German invasion of England being off the agenda in 1942, the RAF could no longer find an operational use for a dive bomber in the European Theatre of operations.

With procurement being in full swing an alternate use had to be envisaged, and this was found in the Far East. Relatively small but generally important jungle targets, as experience had shown, could not be effectively hit by horizontal precision bombing from no matter what altitude. Dive bombing appeared as a promising answer.

In the US, the army had given no consideration of dive bombing, until the overwhelming successes of the German Stuka also over France, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Russia could no longer be overlooked. In a rush



Photograph of the Vengeance showing the special shape of the wings and the empennage.

persisting technical problems required major modifications, so that the first production aircraft did not fly until June 1942.

Pilot's reports on the Vengeance performance and suitability to carry out the mission for which it had been designed were generally

action 168 Douglas SBDs were diverted from the Navy and delivered as A-24s to the Army from June 1941. As the Army found them too slow, too short of range and unsuited for continued operation from primitive advanced land bases, the Vultee became an interesting option.

This rapidly turned into a pressing need after Pearl Harbor, and instantly some 300 Vengeances intended for the RAF were veered to the US Army.

Fully equipped to US Army standards, the type was redesignated A-35A. 99 of these were built, followed by 831 A-35Bs with improved and more powerful engines.

Procurement of the Vultee caused much controversy within the USAAF. The Army in fact had never issued a requirement for a specialized dive bomber, and such was not fitting into its Air War Plan in which strategic bombing had top priority.

Finally because of the many mechanical problems encountered the type was considered as unsuitable for combat. Thus the Vultees were condemned to side-roles for those that were not put into storage.

The British were to get 1,660 Vengeances of various models. 799 were built to British contracts, and 861 supplied through Lend-Lease as A-31s.

From 1942 the RAF stubbornly followed up its plan to use the Vengeance in South-East Asia against targets in the jungles in particular those in Burma and New Guinea. Shipments were consequently diverted to India and Australia.

Australia was to receive 734 aircraft out of the British contingent. Four RAF, two Indian Air Force and five RAAF squadrons were to be formed but overcoming the many teething problems, the lack of spare parts as well as developing dive bombing techniques was a long and painful process.

Accidents were frequent, but serviceability could be gradually improved, although

it never reached a high standard. In operations however the Vengeance was to prove exceptionally effective, and it was taking very few losses in

combat. It was a tough aircraft with good speed and unique diving characteristics, including 90 degree zero lift dives.

Vengeances first went into action over Burma in March 1943, five months after the arrival of the first aircraft in India.

Australian Vengeances were operational from June 1943. The type was finally withdrawn from first-line service in July 1944 following a command decision. As the Allied counter offensive gained momentum in the South Pacific, with



large numbers of heavy-, medium- and fighter-bombers involved, the dive bomber had become a hindrance to the smooth unwinding of air combat operations.

In 1943 when British, Indian and Australian Vengeances went into action in the Far East, the French finally got their chance to take delivery of the aircraft that they had conceived in 1939/1940.

With the developing liberation of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the newly reconstructed Air Arm of Free France in North Africa began to plan the formation of three dive bomber squadrons.

In March of 1943 in fact 67 A-35s had been earmarked for delivery to the French through Lend-Lease. While these were anxious to get these airplanes, the



*Nice line of Vultee Vengeance 6A-35B on the airfield of Marrakech
The aircraft in the foreground still wears the American insignia.*

Americans who had no real use for the dive bombers, must have been content to dispose of them.

An initial shipment arrived at Casablanca in April or May. In June, while the aircraft were still in US hands, French crews were familiarized with the type on the ground and in flight.

In July 1943 a batch of 23 A-35 were handed over to the Armée de l'Air in being in North Africa. When a second batch followed in December, the French

were however already thoroughly fed up with the dive bomber.

Not ending mechanical defects, an unacceptably high oil consumption (up to 9.25 gals or 35 l per hour) by a moreover unreliable engine, and the sensitivity of the landing gear to the rough North African landing strips was

more than the French could take.

Already in September Vultee had made a poor quality maintenance work, and a lack of spare parts was also responsible for the disaster.

At that time 17 aircraft were listed as suffering from various defects, but it was to become worse.

During October, due to landing gear problems, all A-35As had to be grounded and handed over to Vultee technicians for repair.

By then the French military authorities had already begun to abandon the idea of using its A-35s in combat operations.

In mid-November in fact bombardment group GBI/32 Bourgogne as an example



Rare color photo of a Vultee Vengeance

had only six flyable aircraft available out of an establishment of 24.

Deliveries however continued through the winter of 1943-44 to keep up with write-offs and so did the problems.

At the end of January 1944 of the 60 aircraft available 34 were under repair. In 18 cases they were waiting for engines and in 17 cases for landing gear accessories.

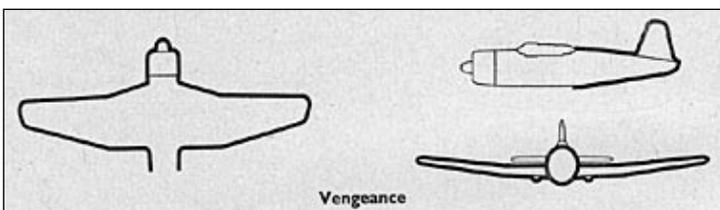


In February the French requested the replacement of 18 A-35s to be delivered in the first quarter of 1944 by Douglas A-24 Dauntless dive bombers.

Days later the US announced a supplementary allocation of 36 A-35Bs, which was promptly rejected.

An offer for 100 more led to a strong protest by the French Air Mission in Washington.

With a serviceability rate down to 13,5 % the type was meanwhile also considered as unsatisfactory for secondary tasks.



Silhouette of a Vultee Vengeance found in a German aircraft recognition manual.

As a consequence the French envisaged the grounding of all A-35As and A-35Bs in March 1944.

Finally neither of the supplementary batches were delivered, but the A-24s were.

To sum up: 66 A-35s of the original contingent of 67 were actually supplied. Due to replacement orders for write-offs the total number handed over appears however to have been larger.

The question whether the career of the A-35 would have been different if the French ground personnel had made the same efforts than their British and Australian colleagues has been asked.

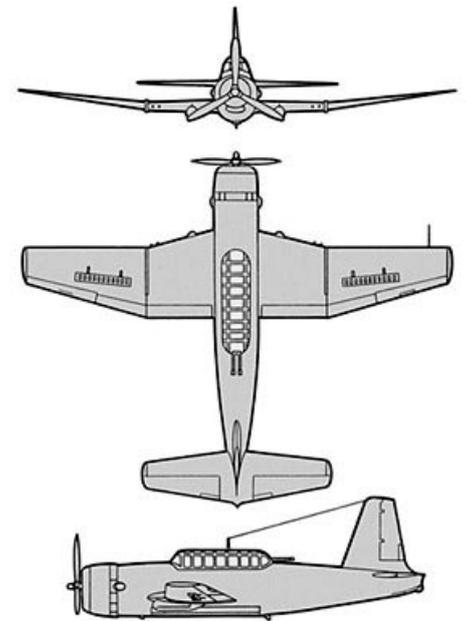
The facts were, that it was never given the time to learn how to service this complex machine, that the available maintenance facilities were still in poor shape and that spare parts supply was never sufficient.

It is also to be noted that the North African fighting in which the dive bomber could have played a role, had ended in May 1943, two months before the first A-35s had been handed over to the French.

More fundamental was however that already prior to the American and British landings in Italy in September 1943 Allied high command had decided that in the framework of combined offensive air operations there was no room for using classical land-based dive bombers.

This was the last step in confirming the fighter-bomber with its capability to effectively defend itself in case of need, as the sole instrument for close air support over European battle fields.

From September 1943, the French A-35s when not grounded, were



mainly used for gunnery training and from 1944 as target tugs.

By early 1945 the remaining aircraft had been handed back to the Americans, except for a few that were retained for test purposes and for ground crew instruction.

This may appear as too long an article on an airplane that may not have deserved to exist. Reporting on failures is however just as important as dealing with successes for everyone who is interested in understanding the history of aviation.



Data Table

VULTEE A-35B VENGEANCE

Description: Two seat dive bomber.

Propulsion:

1 1700 HP Wright R-2600-13

Wing span: 14,64 m (48 ft)

Maximum weight: 7439 kg (16400 lb)

Maximum speed: 446 km/h (279 mph)

Cruise speed: 370 km/h (230 mph)

Range: 3700 km (2300 mls)

Service ceiling: 6797 m (22300 ft)

Armament: 6 fixed .50 cal. guns

Bombload: 907 kg (2000 lb)

SPIRIT OF LEWIS.....

WANTED : SPONSORS FOR THE SPIRIT OF LEWIS!

Our Spirit of Lewis needs a few more sponsors in order to operate normally as we all expect this season.

The goal we need to reach is the sum of 3900 Euros to cover all the fixed costs for a year's operation. At the moment, we are 775 Euros short, which could be reached either by 3 new Flying Sponsors, or 6 Restoration Sponsors, or 16 Supporting Sponsors, or any combination of these three levels totalling 775 Euros. The current Sponsors are :

FLYING SPONSORS

Gilles Avenel
Hervé Cherry
Bernard Delfino
Claude Gascon
Jean-Claude Miniggo
Patrick Pierre-Pierre
Claude Requi
Sandy Sansing

RESTORATION SPONSORS

Didier Cardinal
Roger Gouzon
Cédric Malhaire

SUPPORTING SPONSORS

Bunty Bateman
Christophe Bastide
Henri Bourrassier
Michel Cahiez
William Davies
Fumiko Delfino
Louis-Jean Gioux
Patrick Gremez
Barbara Hair
Aubrey Hair
Elzéard Ligneul
Guy Perrin
John Røeder
Marcel Ruppert
Jean-Jacques Vaucher

We ask all our members who showed, since the very beginning, a definite interest for this project, for this legendary airplane, and for our Unit, to become Sponsors and help us annihilate this problem.

As everyone knows, Sponsors can fly at a reduced rate, and they receive the brand new print of Roy Grinnell's "Spirit of Lewis" painting, as described on the right.

THE PRINTS OF THE SPIRIT OF LEWIS PAINTING BY ROY GRINNELL HAVE ARRIVED!

The prints made from Roy Grinnell's painting of the Piper Cub J-3 "Spirit of Lewis" have arrived, fresh from the press, superb, and of a very good quality.

As promised, each one of the Sponsors of our aircraft, will soon receive one of these superb prints whose overall size is 34 x 42 cm, and a picture size of 24 x 34 cm. This small size will allow all these members who could not purchase the prints of the Bretagne and Neuneu due to a lack of space to display them, to buy this one

and show our aircraft with pride to all their friends. The other (non-sponsors) members can order this print for the amount of 25 Euros (P & P inclusive) or 20 Euros if you care to come and collect it at the French Wing head office. Thanks for drawing up your cheques to the CAF French Wing.

(Note: In order to avoid drawing too much money from our bank account, Bernard and Fumiko Delfino have decided to finance the entire cost of this printing themselves. They will, of course, be reimbursed as we sell these prints. We hope that this nice picture will be very popular among our members and the public).



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

SPIRIT OF LEWIS 2004 AIRSHOWS

Our Piper Cub should take part in three airshows this 2004 season. This rather light programme will allow us to progressively get some experience in this type of activity, and to learn all the particularities linked to it.

No participation has been confirmed as yet, but we hope our Piper Cub will be accepted at La Ferté-Alais, Falaise, and Rennes, either for air display or static display. The Montélimar event gives us the problem of the great distance to

cover (At least 8 hours to get there, and return!), a problem which is common to many other events that take place in the most remote provinces, which require at least three days of ferry flights and the costs that go with them invariably.

The airshows of La Ferté-Alais, Falaise, and Rennes, will take place, respectively, on 29 and 30 May 2004, 22 August 2004, and 11 September 2004.

The date for the Montélimar event is not known yet and the Operation Officer will find out and finalise all these objectives.

To be continued...

The FSS P.X.

The following articles are available against a payment by cheque to the **CAF French Wing**. (Note: **Postage is extra** unless stated otherwise).

- Official Wing patch: € 9,20.
- "Gioux" type patch: € 6,10.
- Pins epoxy, various: € 5,50.
- Pins cloisonné, various: € 7,60.
- Painting "Lloyd's Dream" 50x76cm: € 40,00.
- Painting "Lloyd's Dream" 50x76cm. framed: € 55,00.
- 100 sheets of paper with your letter head: € 8,00.
- Color Photos (B17, B25, etc...) 30x45cm: € 9,00.
- T shirt Piper CUB, 170 grams, L or XL: € 16,00.
- T shirt cartoon P40, 170 grams, L or XL: € 16,00.
- T shirts: Other sizes available on order.
- T shirts illustrated with the picture of your choice (Maximum size A5): Send in your picture and we will make the Tshirt of your dreams (Warning! Only send pictures that are totally free from any copyrights): € 12,00.
- Color aircraft profiles 15 x 20 cm. pre-framed: *Various*: € 4,00 each.
- Warbird cards by painter Jean Bellis: € 4,00 each.
- Video cassette of sequences filmed in Midland (55mn) VHS PAL: € 16,00 ©
- Large format paintings by Col. Eric Besançon: F4U Corsair and Messerschmitt 262 night fighter: € 31,00 ©
- Poster of 36 WWII airplanes painted by Jean Bellis, 61x81cm: € 9,00 (Members) € 10,00 (Non Membres) ©
- Prints of the Roy Grinnell paintings - Normandie Niemen, Corsair F4U7, and B26 Marauder - Unsigned: € 40,00 + P&P € 10,00. Signed by veterans: € 60,00 + P&P € 10,00. ©
- Post Cards based on the same paintings (B26 Marauder, Corsair, and Neuneu): € 0,50 each ©
- CD Rom of 36 FSS Newsletters since January 2000, French and English, compatible PC and Macintosh, <.pdf> format readable with Adobe Acrobat Reader: € 10,00 P & P inclusive ©
- CD Rom of 200 warbird photos taken during Airsho in Midland, by B. Delfino: € 10,00 P & P inclusive ©.

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SAFETY.....



EJECT! EJECT! EJECT!

This amazing photo of a Thunderbirds F-16 was taken on the air base of Mountain Home (Idaho), 0,8 second before the aircraft crashed in an area which was clear of any spectator. The pilot, obviously in one of his bad days, had miscalculated the local atmospheric pressure, and had started a "Split S" from an altitude of 1670 feet, instead of the necessary 2500.

Realizing that something was wrong, he pulled hard on the stick, pointed the plane towards an unpopulated area, and waited till the last moment. He ejected safely at a height of 140 feet (42 metres). The losses were limited to the pilot's

pride, and the cost of the airplane, around 20,4 millions Dollars... (Thanks to colonel Regis Urschler for such a very special report).

FOR SALE: "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" LEATHER JACKET



Above is the splendid leather jacket and its painting made by col. Hervé Cherry.

This jacket is still available at a price of 160,00 Euros.

The money produced by this sale will go directly into our L Bird project budget, and this excellent buy will be a nice way to help our Piper Cub.

BE A SPONSOR OF THE "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" !

Our Piper J-3 Cub needs some more Sponsors to allow us to close this year's budget.

Our members who always showed so much interest in this aircraft, can now become Sponsors with a choice of three available levels, which will combine pleasure and usefulness.

Here is the list of these levels and the sponsorship costs for each one of them :

- **FLYING SPONSOR**: 250 Euros per year and 25 Euros per flight hour.
- **RESTORATION SPONSOR**: 125 Euros per year and 40 Euros per flight hour.
- **SUPPORTING SPONSOR**: 50 Euros per year and 55 Euros per flight hour.

Non-Sponsor members will still be able to fly our plane for a unique rate of 80 Euros per flight hour.