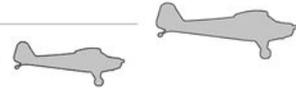




# AIRSHOW



CAF FRENCH WING - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - BULLETIN MENSUEL

Volume 13 - N° 3 - March 2008

## EDITORIAL

Each month has its own lot of surprises, good or less good, which give its pace to our Association. This issue doesn't escape this rule. I hope you like it!

Here is a scoop which is part of the Very good news category and will please everyone with no exception: **Danielle Duflot**, widow of our dear Philippe, has decided to join the CAF as a full colonel! To continue the work started by Philippe is the best decision she could make in order to live among sincere friends, and taking an active part in the French Wing activities can only be beneficial to her. Another good news is that not only is she a member today, but she insisted, together with her **Sky Runner** associate, col. **Gilles Troussard**, that their company carries on the help to our Wing that Philippe had started as soon as he joined. Welcome aboard Danielle! The French Wing is honored by your arrival.

There are any ways to help the CAF and the French Wing, and the best one is to recruit new members. This month we also have the pleasure to welcome col. **David Ledrich** who was recruited by col. **Marie-Françoise Le Cornec**. Although she lives in Luxemburg, Marie-Françoise recruits but she's also doing a fantastic work for the preparation of our visit to Luxemburg. Well done Marie-Françoise!

One generally doesn't realize the amount of work that is required to maintain our airplanes, even though they are modest ones. I sincerely hope that many of you will come and help us accomplish this task during the next two months. We will be at the hangar practically each week day. All you need to do is to call us and tell us that you're coming.

Don't forget to check the list of events which the French Wing will be part of this season (page 11), nor to tell us the ones you want to attend, be it to fly aboard the Piper Cub or to help with the setting of the PX tent, and the PX shop itself. Thanks in advance!

Bernard

## TWO NEW COLONELS FOR THE CAF AND THE FRENCH WING!



**DANIELLE DUFLOT**



**DAVID LEDRICH**

### JUST ONE PLEASE...

**19 JANUARY 1954: A VERY... SPECIAL DECK LANDING ON THE ARROMANCHES!** (Pages 6 & 7)



### THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

**SECOND PART OF THIS AMAZING FACT OF WAR, OBJECT OF THE FRENCH WING TOUR NEXT MAY** (Pages 8, 9, & 10)



Photo: C. Barricker

### WHEN MARY MEETS MARIE...

**ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND TOUCHING STORIES OF AIRSHO 2007** (Page 3)

**COL. BILL COOMBS HAS BEEN ELECTED CAF CHIEF OF STAFF TO REPLACE COL. GORDON STEVENSON** (Page 3)



**YESTERDAY SPONSORS (AND BEYOND!...) THE "SPIRIT OF LEWIS" NEEDS YOU!** (Page 11)

## NEW CAF AND FRENCH WING MEMBERS

January, like December, was excellent for recruitment. With two new members, the French Wing reached the figure of 100 members, all levels considered.

### DANIELLE DUFLOT

The surprize will be big for many of our members, a very pleasant surprize since we welcome colonel **Danielle Dufлот**, wife of our dear Philippe. Danielle, whom we can see below in the French Wing PX with one of her three daughters, Jennifer, and col. Fumiko Delfino, wanted to take over and continue what Philippe had started.



Photo: F. Delfino

Although she pretends that she's not an expert in aviation, Danielle lived in it ever since she was born. Her father was an aircraft mechanic in the Armée de l'Air for twenty years, then she worked for the airline British Caledonian Airways for several years. Meeting and marrying Philippe amplified a life which was already very "aeronautical".

Travelling with their friends, col. **Gilles Troussard** and his wife **Véronique**, allowed them to attend many air shows, and, together, they created a courier company **Sky Runner** which actively support our Wing and its airplanes. Therefore, becoming a CAF colonel is a nice conclusion and a new door opening on a new aspect of aviation...

When Philippe and Gilles became CAF and French Wing members, Danielle liked helping with the Wing's PX during air shows like La Ferté-Alais, Cambrai, and many other events. But it is also for the friendly feeling that prevails within our Unit that Danielle decided to join our organization and Wing and

continue the help that Sky Runner gave to the French Wing and its aircraft.

The great satisfaction expressed by the few members who were told before hand here and there, revealed how popular Danielle is among our members and friends.

Welcome to the CAF and the French Wing Danielle!

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### DAVID LEDRICH

Colonel **David Ledrich** was recruited by col. **Marie-Françoise Le Cornec**. As you will discover in the letter he sent us, David is another excellent recruit. Please read on...

"Hello everyone!

*I'm the latest recruit in the Association, and I'd like to introduce myself: **David Ledrich**, 37 years old. I'm and active military officer. More precisely, I'm the liaison officer within NAMSА, the NATO logistic agency in Capellen, in Luxembourg. This posting moved me close to my origins since I was born in Thionville (Moselle). I have, for this area, an evident passion! I established myself in a small Luxembourg village, along river Moselle, facing Germany.*

*After some literary preparatory studies and the Special Military School in Saint Cyr, I chose to serve in the hardware department. My competence in aviation is near to... zero. On the other hand, I'm fond of aviation history, and more particularly, in the 1942-1945 period.*

*Very busy with my job, I still find some time for my pastimes. I have been interested in war games using figurines, which is illustrated with the two photos on the right representing an attack by soviet tanks, and street fighting during WWII.*

*I like literature and cinema. If I had to quote one of my favorite book, my current disposition would lead me to quote "The corrections" by Jonathan Franzen, the latest contemporary novel which really impressed me. A favorite movie? I would quote "Duellists" by Ridley Scott, adapted from Conrad's "Duel".*

*I did the Rennes night school for Arts and I like drawing and painting, not too often these days, but with always a great pleasure. I carry on painting lead historical medieval-Fantastic figurines.*

*Of course I practise some sports, including jogging, cycling, swimming, and hiking, to finish filling my agenda.*

*I practise the English and German language on a daily basis (Which will make me useful for some translator and interpreter tasks). I could say a lot more, but I will take the opportunity of the tour in Luxemburg next May to complete this introduction!"*

Welcome to the CAF and the French Wing David!

**Col. David LEDRICH**  
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Photos: D. Ledrich

## NEW CAF CHIEF OF STAFF : COL. BILL COOMBES

The CAF General Staff has elected col. **Bill Coombes** as the new Chief of Staff. He takes over from col. **Gordon Stevenson**.



Bill Coombes was born in Los Angeles (California), but he has been living in Texas since 1957. With a career as an educator, he is currently the college counsellor at Trinity School in Midland.

Bill has been a CAF member since 1980, the year when his family and him bought an SNJ (T-6). He served in a variety of staff positions within the **Desert Squadron** and the **High Sky Wing**. He is qualified for formation flying, and he is current on the SNJ, PT-19, and Fairchild F-24/J2K. He served for the past 11 years as the CAF AIRSHO chairman, and he is the Director of the Commemorative Center committee.

## GA OF PONT DU CHÂTEAU

A CD Rom which contains 129 photos taken during the 2007 General Assembly in Pont du Château is now available at a price of **5 euros (P&P included)**. Please order it from the French Wing by sending a cheque for this amount. These pictures were taken by cols. **Christophe Bastide**, **Bernard Delfino**, **Roger Gouzon**, and **Christian Tournemine**. They are an excellent souvenir for all participants.

## LA FERTÉ-ALAIS 2008

Éditions Larivière have, once again, decided to allow our Association to have its booth there, free of charge, during the air show.

We will never thank the leaders of this company enough. They make us save a very important amount of money, so large that our budget could not afford it, even if our PX made some exceptional business! This help to our Association is a true annual manna that we always welcome with great satisfaction.

You have all received the professional registration form for this air show (Badges, parking, and meal).

**We remind you that you must send it back filled in, together with a cheque for your reservation of badges, car park, and meal** (This meal will take place, like every year, in the French Wing tent, on Saturday evening).

**The limit date for these forms was March 3rd, 2008. If you're late, hurry up !!!**

## THANK YOU!

A big thank you to col. **Didier Cardinal** who renewed his *Restoration Sponsorship* and paid his 2008/2009 annual dues!

Another big thank you to col. **Jean-Claude Miniggio** who renewed his *Flying Sponsorship* for 2008!

And the big surprize of this month: **AVIATION CLUB DE FRANCE**, thanks to col. **Marcel Francisci**, has made a donation of 2000 € (\$ 2,800.00) which will be very useful for all our projects. A very big thank you to Marcel and the ACF who have significantly helped our Unit and the CAF for many years!

## AIRSHO 2008 PARTICIPANTS

The list of participants is as follows, in alphabetical order, and by hotel room:

- Hugh & Carolyn Alexander.
- Bernard & Fumiko Delfino.
- Claude De Marco.
- Aubrey & Barbara Hair.
- Maurice Girard et Roger Gouzon.
- Roy & Irene Grinnell.
- Marie-Françoise Le Cornec.
- Léon Manoukians & Claude Gascon.
- Patrick Pierre-Pierre & David Ledrich.
- Antoine & Patricia Roels.
- Sandy Sansing & Jim Lux.

## NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES

Col. **Hugh Alexander III** has a new email address: < [youthone@att.net](mailto:youthone@att.net) >

Col. **Bernard Delfino** has a new email address: < [bdelfino26@free.fr](mailto:bdelfino26@free.fr) >

## MARY & MARIE...

Col. **Marie-Françoise Le Cornec** had not told us about the fact that she made a woman happy during AIRSHO 2007, and it's not until the publication of the CAF magazine, **The Dispatch**, that we heard about this piece of news that should please our members and friends...

Marie-Françoise flew on several CAF planes during AIRSHO. As she was enquiring about a seat aboard the C-47 *Black Sparrow*, she met **Mary Helen Foster** who was there with her son. She said that she used to be a C-47 pilot, and 11 other military aircraft types, during World War Two.



Photo: C. Burcher

Being also a pilot, Marie-Françoise instantly found in Mary Helen a new friend. The **Great Lakes Wings** wanted to offer Mary Helen Foster a flight aboard the C-47, but her son insisted that he should pay for the ride. That was without considering Marie-Françoise who knows what she wants, to such a point that she won the friendly fight and paid for Mary Helen's ride aboard the C-47, a plane that she had not flown in 60 years! This is how Marie and Mary enjoyed a memorable flight.

This proof of sympathy for a former **WASP** allowed Marie-Françoise to show her respect and affection for these 1078 american women pilots who served their country and risked their life while flying technical or delivery flights, often piloting very sophisticated aircraft. Thank you Marie-Françoise!



Photo: C. Burcher

## INCREASE OF THE CAF ANNUAL DUES

Every member of the CAF has received the DVD sent by our new Director, Steve Brown, and we hope that the letter sent by the French Wing to its members will have helped those who do not fully master the English language to understand its main topics.

So far, the great majority of our members have responded positively to the announcement of this \$ 40.00 rise, and those who commented it were positive and constructive. We thank them for their understanding because the current and future changes are made to ensure the well being of the CAF in the future.

This rise, over a year, does not represent more than a few minor purchases that we can all do without.

A useful aspect: When getting a CAF commission, new members used to pay \$ 160.00 + a \$ 40.00 fee. The latter will disappear from March 1<sup>st</sup>, so that the amount to pay will remain at \$ 200.00 the first year.

We will learn a lot more about all these changes during the Winter Staff Conference. They will include the general CAF policy, its public exposition, the change in uniform for a more modern one, the presence of CAF airplanes during the biggest air shows in the USA (Sun'n Fun, Oshkosh, etc...), the encouragements to recruit new members, etc.

## PARTICIPANTS TO THE TOUR IN LUXEMBURG

The list of participants to this tour in Luxembourg is now as follows:

Claude De Marco, Bernard & Fumiko Delfino, Danielle Dufлот together with Audrey, Isabelle, & Christophe, Claude Gascon, Maurice Girard, Roger Gouzon, Marie-Françoise Le Cornec, David Ledrich, Jean-Claude & Julien Miniggio, Michel & Régine Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, and John & Anne Roeder.

This tour will take place from May 2 till May 5, 2008. All participants will meet at the hotel at about noon.

## RESULT OF THE 2008 FRENCH WING SURVEY

To this day, we have received 35 forms duly filled by these members. Of these answers, we noted that:

- 11 members want to take part to the French Wing fly-in this summer.
- 12 members wish to take part in the maintenance of our planes, and 10 of them wish to help on the NC 856 maintenance.
- 16 members want to write or illustrate articles for our Newsletter.
- 16 wish to fly locally with our Piper Cub, and 4 of them want to do long range flights.
- 11 want to be part of the tour in Luxembourg (as well as some members of their families).
- 10 want to attend AIRSHO 2008 (Plus some members of their families), and 4 have the intention to visit some aeronautical point of interest in the USA after AIRSHO.

We thank those who spent a few minutes to fill in this survey form. As for the others, they can still do it. Their answers will always be welcome!

## AN Me 208 TAKES TO THE AIR AGAIN IN LE PLESSIS-BELLEVILLE

On February 18, 2008, at 15:27, the Me208 that has been restored by mister **Pierre Cavassilas** in Le Plessis-Belleville, took off again, 30 areas after its last flight. This restoration lasted 10 years! Ten years made of hard work, good time and less good time, which added to the emotion of this first flight after its restoration.



Photo: B. Delfino

Very few minor problems were met during the flight that all spectators applauded massively when the plane returned to the hangar. Our sincere congratulations to **Pierre Cavassilas** for such a well deserved success!



Photo: R. Gouzon

## JIM CAVANAUGH COMES TO THE RESCUE OF THE B-29 "FIFI"

**Jim Cavanaugh**, owner of the fabulous **Cavanaugh Flight Museum** located a few miles away from Dallas and North of it, more precisely in **Addison**, has made a gift of \$ 1,200,000.00 to help the re-engine project of *Fifi* (As Steve Brown stated in his video, the promise of a gift of \$ 2,000,000.00 made by Mr. Jamieson hasn't materialized to this date...). Since the Star of the CAF cannot stay indefinitely as it is now, the joined efforts of Steve Brown and Jim Cavanaugh will make sure, together with the sale of the Me109 Buchon - and probably some other planes - that it takes to the air again during AIRSHO 2009.



Photo: B. Delfino



Photo: B. Delfino

In exchange of this help, the B-29 and the B-24 will be based in Addison where Jim Cavanaugh has bought a big hangar. Once in service, the B-29 and the B-24, will be visible to the visitors of the **Cavanaugh Flight Museum** during the 6 months winter period, the summer period being dedicated to the annual tour of the USA that these planes have been doing for many years.

# NEW YORK! NEW YORK!

Article and photos: Col. Hervé Quefféléant.

During the annual raffle of the 2007 French Wing General Assembly, col. Hervé Quefféléant had won a return ticket Paris - New York for two, thanks to Philippe Dufлот and Swiss International. His wife and him decided to travel in January. Here is a report of their trip...

On Saturday 12 January, we took-off from Roissy CDG for New-York, aboard a **Swiss International** flight, and we arrived in New-York at 16:30 local. We were charmed by the quality of the on-board service and the kindness and obligingness of the stewardesses, to which one must add the high quality of the meals served.

We chose a comfortable hotel, the **Doubletree** on Lexington avenue (*Right*), very close to the Waldorf Astoria, a very lively area.



The day after our arrival, we walked our way to **East Village**, and had lunch in an Argentinian restaurant, the **Buenos Aires**: Very good meat but a little noisy. In the afternoon, we visited **Greenwich Village** which has a real charm of its own, thanks to the nice florid houses.

On Monday, we went to **Saint Patrick** cathedral before we visited the Modern Art Museum where are displayed paintings, sculptures, and photographs of the artistic movement of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. We were very interested by the hall dedicated to Matisse and Monet.



On Tuesday, we climbed to the 86<sup>th</sup> story of the **Empire State Building** (320 meters high) which lets



one discover the panorama over the entire town. This skyscraper has become the highest of the city since the dramatic attack and collapse of the towers of the World Trade Center. On that day, we had lunch in a French restaurant, the **Méli-Mélo**.

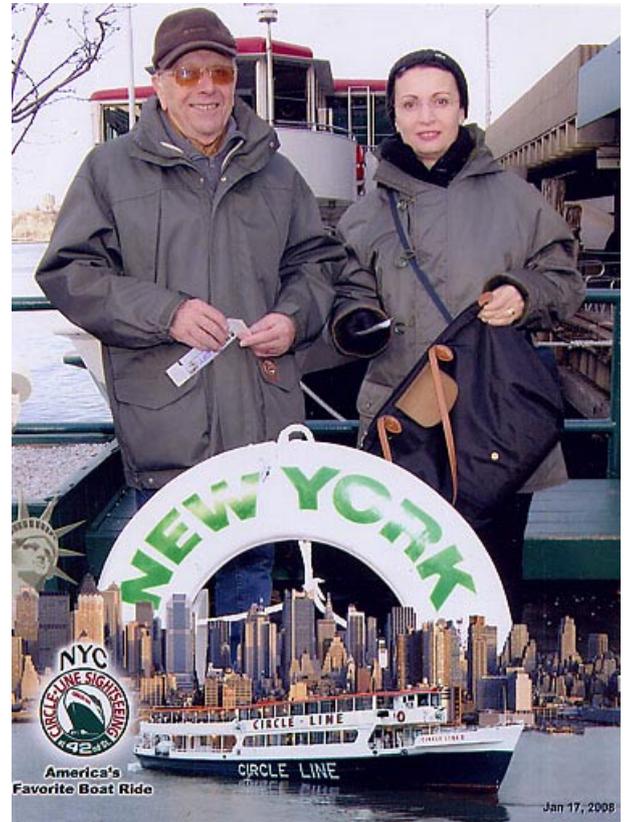
We enjoyed a boat ride around Manhattan with the **Circle Line** (*Right*). Departure at pier 83 and a turn around next to the building of the **United Nations**. Then we visited the **Natural Science Museum**.

On the last day, we went to the **Metropolitan Museum**, an extraordinary building which is one of the main world museums. One would normally require two days to admire the antiquities that range from the pre-columbian art to Cézanne and Monet, a show which is both didactic and sumptuous.

We moved around exclusively by bus and underground, thanks to a seven-day card. A very practical system!

The **Intrepid Sea-Air Museum** displays ships of the US Navy, including the aircraft-carrier Intrepid, and a collection of airplanes which I had seen in 2005. Unfortunately, it is closed at the moment for a complete restoration, but it will be open again by the end of this year.

In conclusion, discovering New-York, is like forgetting the references of the "old word". This city never stops. It's a city which never sleeps and which, despite the juxtaposition of the various origins of its inhabitants, remains friendly and warm-hearted.



My wife and I wish to thank the **CAF French Wing** and **Swiss International** for letting us enjoy such a nice trip, with a special thought for our friend **Philippe Dufлот** who left us too soon, and thanks to whom we were able to do this tour in excellent conditions.



Above: The Flat Iron Building, one of the first skyscrapers whose shape reminds one of an iron. With 22 stories, it was built in 1902. Note that this picture is not distorted by the camera lens!

# JUST ONE PLEASE...

Article and photos: Capitaine de Vaisseau Michel Couthures

On this January 19, 1954, aircraft-carrier *Arromanches* cruises in the Gulf of Tonkin, Flotillas 3.F with its Helldiver, and 11.F and its Hellcat, are about to land.

Just three or four planes had remained on board for maintenance or repair, the biggest part of the two units being based on land to save some time over the operation zones. Had they operated from the carrier, one would have had to calculate and ensure thirty minutes of fuel so that, in case there was an accident on the deck, the planes could turn back and land on the base of Cat-Bi, near Hai-Phong. Of course, this reduced the time the planes could fly over a sensitive zone like the one that would become dramatically famous, the "basin" of Dien-Bien-Phu.

The 3.F had been posted on the Air Force base of Bach-Mai near the capital Hanoi, when the 11.F was based on Cat-Bi, father away from Dien but closer to the *Arromanches*.

In the south of the Annam, near Nha-Trang, the Legion, in contact with two Viet regiments, requested the support of aviation. It's far away from Tonkin and from the bases which have the necessary means. Since the carrier is a moving base, it can get its planes closer to the combat zone: This is why it "turns around" in the water while waiting for its two flotillas and go south. Being closer, the 11.F will land first, its commander, Lieutenant de Vaisseau **De Castelbajac** (*Ulysse* in operation) leading its group of twelve planes. The 3.F follows a few minutes behind, led by its commander, Lieutenant de Vaisseau **Andrieux**.

The sea is calm, the wind seems to be just strong enough to avoid using full power on the boat's engines and ensure the 33 knots which make deck landings easy. To make sure that the interval between the planes is



*Hellcat 11.F3 awaiting the order to taxi to the take-off area.*

long enough to allow them to land, to be parked at the front, and to raise the barriers, the 12 aircraft of the 11.F split in groups of four. After having flown along the ship's starboard side each group leader took some distance ahead of the carrier and left his group with a large left turn and flew parallel to the ship, the others following a short moment later after its predecessor.

Being n°2, I follow the commander, keeping an eye on him so that I don't complete my approach too close or too far from him. I'm flying the 11.F-3. As I get to the rear of the carrier, I start the turn that will take me to the point where the batman (Landing officer) will take over and guide me with his bats. But I see my predecessor turn left and get some height again: Landing refused! I can see the batman lifting his bats and keeping them in the guiding position. I follow the bats indications scrupulously and, arriving in a perfect position for landing, I get the "cut" signal which authorizes me to land. I immediately follow the procedure: I reduce the



*Normal landing (One can see the retractable support frames that lift the cables about 8 inches)*

power fully and quickly get the nose down to appreciate my position along the axis of the deck, and pull the nose up to get the plane in an attitude which gets the plane down onto the deck for a three point landing as far as possible.

I have the impression that I'm correctly positioned... I contact the deck, but a violent shock slows down the plane brutally. Suddenly the latter accelerates again! What's going on?... The first barrier is coming towards me fast! My head, with its mass increased by the helmet, is thrown forward. I fear for my vertebrae! I'm groggy but I realize that something serious is going on. I want to switch off the power. My left hand manages to reach the magneto switch and turn it, while my right one misses the small battery lever. And it's the second great shock! The plane hits the first barrier with the right wing and the engine getting entangled in the cables while the left one hits the port supporting beam! The latter cuts the wing across its entire cord, but the first beam is cut right off and the second one folded over 180°!

My feet which had slipped from the rudder pedals on the first shock because I could not control them, slip underneath the pedals and my shinbones hit them hard. I may be saved from a fracture by the large bottom pockets of my flight suit. The left one contains a first aid package, and the right one my sun glasses case which takes the shape of the pedal, as well as a small Donald Duck that my parents had sent me for Christmas! It lost its voice in the accident! (Later, I regretted that these large pockets were not at the front of the legs).

I'm stupefied for a few seconds but I realize that I must get out of there: I unbuckle the seat and the parachute, unplug the radio cord, and, since the left wing lies flat on the canopy, I exit the cockpit from the

right side and jump on the deck. The doctor asks me to follow him and gets me in the flotillas alert room located at deck level and has a port hole which faces the plane. He gives me a cigarette and says: "I forbid you to look this way!" while pointing at the port hole. He stands right before it to stop me looking at the plane. I then realize that my suitcase and the navigation plate are still in the plane. I put out my cigarette, and, discreetly, I exit the room and walk to the plane where I get my maps and navigation plate while a mechanic gets my suitcase.

Later, one confirmed that pieces of the propeller flew over the island where the ship commander's room is, as well as other department's rooms, that the cut off wing stood up for a while and started falling on the cockpit where I was sitting, but it finally fell flat on it. I was very lucky! I never noticed it. One lucky fact is that there was no fire. The fuel drop tank was still attached to the plane and had been completely crushed by the fuselage.



Above: The two beams which are raised during landings. Below: The same ones after the shock...



Below: The torn off left wing fortunately pivoted before it ended up flat on the cockpit!...



The damage caused when hitting the barrier beams was huge. The propeller is over the water, and the photographer had to climb on the radio antenna which is lowered for take off.

Not only did the deck become unusable for a long time, but due to the fact that the first crash barrier was inoperative, the aircraft carrier was out of service. All the planes that were about to land had to turn back and land in Cat-Bi to refuel and take off again to fly to Nha-Trang, with a stop at Touran so that they could fly the support mission for the Legion. One hour later I was sitting in another Hellcat, ready to rejoin the flotilla with two or three other airplanes that had stayed on board. Will you believe it?... They left without me! My plane suffered a complete electrical system failure. I had no instrument...

In the afternoon, I met two of the ship's doctors who were discussing together. As I realized that I would probably need to be checked, I approached them. One asked me: "Do you have any problem?", I replied: "No, but I'm expecting a check". He said: "No need for it, one can see that



As many spares as possible (And the author's suitcase!) were removed before throwing the Hellcat into the sea.



*you have your feet firmly on the ground!"*

It's very unpleasant not to be able to fly after an accident. I had to wait several days before I could have a chance to do that, and to see the Arromanches back in full service. The spare part was in Saïgon, it required trucks, a Dakota, and a barge to transport it to the Bay of Along where the aircraft carrier was anchored.

I was told that this type of event on a carrier is rather rare. If it was common to see an aircraft take to cables, it was exceptional to see the arrester hook sheared off! It seems that it happened once in 5 millions! And of course, it had to fall on me!...

### THE CAUSES OF THE ACCIDENT

Nothing was kept against the Batman whose indications were justified and obeyed by the pilot, nor against the latter. The plane alignment, its height above the deck, its speed, and its good attitude, could only lead to a good and safe landing.

It came out of the enquiry conclusions that it was a very unfortunate conjunction of details, normally not important, which resulted in this accident:

- A slight misalignment to the left of the deck axis caused a traction of the tail to the right, normally with no bad consequence, but very brutal **when a second cable was caught** and conflicted with the first one, leading to such a sudden and powerful braking effect that all parameters became excessive and caused the rupture of the hook attachment block.
- The plane was then free to move forward and still had so much kinetic energy that it carried on along the deck, but in the direction of the left hand barrier beam that it hit with the left wing, the engine and right wing getting entangled in the barrier.
- One worsening cause was taken into consideration: the fact that the two cables were linked to the same hydraulic damper which slows down the plane when it catches a cable).

# THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE (2)

Article: Col. John P. Roeder.

This is the second of a three-part account of the events that had a major impact on Hitler's last great offensive. It is essentially the story of how it was stopped by the Allies and deals with the Air War over the battlefield and the adjacent German territory.

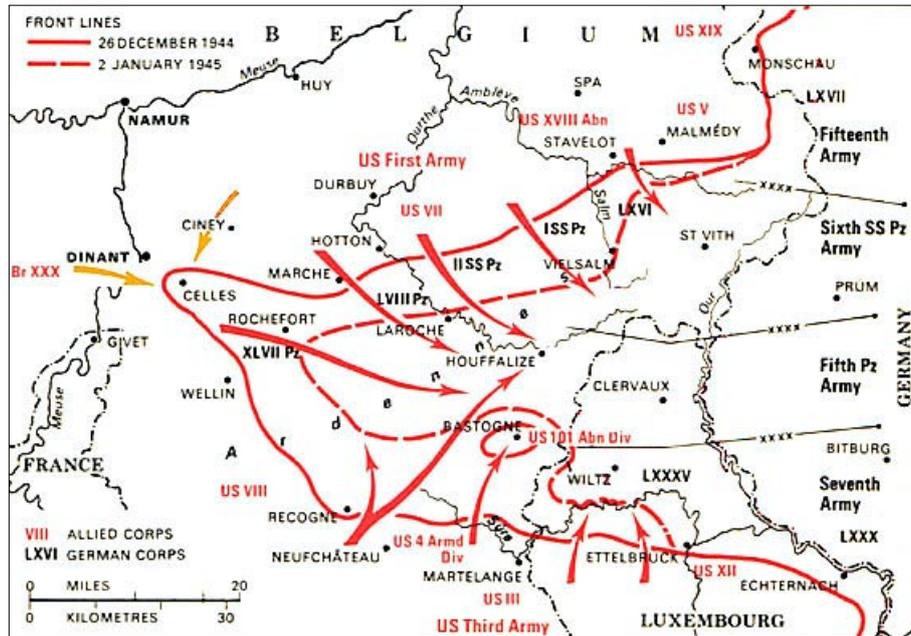
On the third day after the beginning of the German offensive Clervaux (L) was in the hands of the Wehrmacht. The day after, on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, Wiltz (L) – 16 km E of Bastogne – was encircled and Houffalize (B) – 18 km to its N – was reached. On the SE shoulder of the salient Diekirch (L) fell on the 20<sup>th</sup> and Ettelbrück (L) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

On Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> General McAuliffe, commanding the US 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Div. at Bastogne rejected a German request to surrender. His oneword answer became famous: "Nuts" (Go to Hell). The bad news of the day for the Allies was that encircled St. Vith (B), an important communications center far back behind the front (only 20 km from Germany) despite being desperately defended by the US 7 Armored Div. fell. The good news was that Gen. Patton's counter-attack from the Arlon-Luxembourg city area had jumped off before dawn. He had swung the mass of his Third Army through 90 degrees and moved it in four days from the Saar front to a 55 km long line facing north from around Neufchateau (B) to Echternach (L). His first priority was to relieve Bastogne which was the task of the US 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Div.

By then the German Panzer Lehr Div. which had been by-passing, encircled Bastogne in the south was converging with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer Div. that had contoured the besieged town in the north. The latter's spearhead, with fuel tanks nearly empty, reached the heights 9 km east of the Meuse



German self-propelled 10,5 cm assault guns on the move to Stavelot.



river at Dinant (90 km SSE of Antwerp) on Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup>, where it halted to wait for the promised fuel and some reinforcements. None ever came.

What came however were the Allied fighter-bombers. The weather had finally begun to clear over the Ardennes. No soldier, American or German, and no civilian, Belgian or Luxembourg, who saw what happened that Saturday, will ever forget the sight.

This was particularly true for the GIs in besieged Bastogne. They had resisted the most violent German attacks to break through the perimeter, and just before Saturday's dawn Luftwaffe bombers had dropped their loads on Bastogne – an ominous sign for yet another forthcoming attack, which the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne repulsed.

Meanwhile the defenders were however short of everything and close to exhaustion.

Then, from about noon that day, flight after flight of an armada of 241 C-47 transports (8 being downed by flak) for about 4 hours were dropping 1446 bundles of ammunition and supplies to the

hard fighting men of the 101<sup>st</sup>. This and the support of the fighter bombers of the US Ninth Air Force which they now could witness, gave them the courage and the strength to further resist.

A new attempt to capture Bastogne came in the very early morning hours on Christmas, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>. After a massive artillery bombardment followed by a heavy Luftwaffe bombing the town was to be

seized by 9:00 am – before the American fighter-bombers would arrive. Again however the attempt failed. On that day in spite of difficulties caused by the weather, also 11 US gliders got through, bringing in much needed equipment and in particular medical supplies.



GIs watching aerial combats over the Ardennes

When Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> dawned with "visibility unlimited" 289 C-47s came in for another major air drop, while fighter-bombers added their bombs and rockets to a tremendous weight of shells Patton's artillery were now pouring from the south on the Germans' positions. Later that day, an armoured battle group of his 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Div. broke through the German ring from SW. Bastogne was saved, but the Wehrmacht was far from giving up its efforts to capture the town.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> one more airlift was flown into Bastogne. Of the 14 C-47s coming in straight and low German flak shown down nine.



*US fighter-bombers caught this locomotive on a bridge across the Moselle*

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer before Dinant, the 23<sup>rd</sup> was to become a critical pause. A large practically unoccupied gap in the north of the salient between Herbeumont (18 km W of Stavelot) and Dinant had meanwhile gradually been filled by troops of the US First Army (Hodges).

Part of its 3rd Armoured Div. had reached Hotton already on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Elements of the 84th Infantry Div. were at Marche since the 21<sup>st</sup>. Finally the 2nd Armored Div. had come up to the region of Ciney, 3-5 km to the north of the right flank of the German 2nd Panzer Div. behind its westernmost spearhead.

Recognizing the danger the Germans vigorously attacked the US positions in the Manhay, Hotton and Marche sectors involving the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer, the 116th Panzer, the 560<sup>th</sup> Volksgrenadier Div. and the Führer Begleit Brigade. The American front held.

Finally Christmas Day was to become fatal for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer. The US 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Div. attacked its westernmost flank from the north, while the British 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Tank Regt. moved from Dinant eastward, hitting its peak.

The advanced force of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer Div. was wiped out at Celles, and a relief column of Panzer Lehr in its SE was subsequently ordered to withdraw. During the night of Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer Div. tanks started moving back as well.

Together with the German failure to beat the US forces in the Marche, Hotton and Manhay areas, the relieve of Bastogne and the deployment of Allied air power over the battlefield and the adjacent German territory, this marked the beginning of the end for the Battle of the Bulge. Faced with increasing Allied pressure all around its perimeter, Hitler agreed to call for a halt on Thursday, Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> – but he would neither hear of a withdrawal nor of abandoning his attacks for capturing Bastogne.

Meanwhile Allied airpower however had thrown its full weight into the battle, while the German grenadiers asked themselves in anger: Where remains the Luftwaffe?

### THE AIR BATTLE OVER THE ARDENNES

*In support of the Ardennes offensive the Germans under a specially established command had assembled 2292 aircraft among which 1492 were fighters (Me 109 G-6/G-10/G-14/K-4, Fw 190 A-8/A-9/D-9), 91 fighter-bombers (Fw 190 F-8) and 171 were bombers. On Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> 60 % of these were operational. Also a number of the revolutionary Me 262 jets were occasionally brought into action.*

*The primary task of the German fighter force was to protect the panzer spearheads, advance roads and troop concentrations from air attack. Direct ground support was a side role. Raids against communication centers, the rail and road networks were if weather permitted to be carried out only by night.*

*On the Allied side there stood the US Ninth AF with its 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Commands (P-38s, P-47s, P-51s, P-61 night intruders) and the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command (A-20s, A-26s, B-26s) plus the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force (Spitfires, Typhoons, Tempests). Their primary task was direct ground or proximity support of Allied forces from their nearby bases in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition the US Eight AF (B-17s, B-24s) based in England would lay an interdiction line essentially over the Rhine zone from Cologne in the north to the Frankfurt/Mainz area in the south.*

*Altogether the Allies could mobilize more than 5000 aircraft, among which 3170 fighters/fighter-bombers and medium/light bombers of the Ninth AF*

*The above already shows:*

- *the Luftwaffe from the beginning of the battle due to its quantitative and other shortcomings (e.g. lack of sufficiently trained pilots) had been restricted essentially to a passive protection role for the ground forces.*
- *the Allies on their side concentrated on close air support for their combat troops by direct cooperation of air and ground forces and isolating the battle area.*

*This explains the German Grenadiers angrily asked question: where remains the Luftwaffe?*

*The Luftwaffe was however there. While it was battling enemy aircraft high over the ground however, Allied fighter bombers were permanently harassing the forces of the Wehrmacht on the deck, attacking moving troops, hitting defended positions, destroying communication centers, and forcing supply columns to move by night.*

*Now: the operational history of the Air Battle for the Ardennes in all its aspects cannot be discussed in any detail here. The following therefore concentrates on a number of selected events that illustrate its course.*

*It has already been pointed out, that because of bad weather the air battle began in all seriousness only on Dec. 23d. This does not mean however that during the previous seven days the skies over the battlefield and the adjacent German Eifel territory were empty.*

*Except on the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup>, when weather cancelled all operations, the Ninth AFs fighters and fighter-bombers flew daily close air support to the US ground forces. Targets in four areas incl. Saint Vith (B) and Clervaux (L) were attacked and panzer spearheads, gun positions and bridges were hit. From Belgium to the Rhine ground transportation, troop movements and targets*



*Airdrop into the Bastogne perimeter*

*of opportunity were aimed at, and armed reconnaissance and night intruder sorties troubled the Wehrmacht. All these missions were however of a small scale, without any impact on ground operations.*

*As to the Ninth AFs bombers the only day that weather did not ground them in this period was Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>. On that Monday some 160 of its B-26s, A-20s and A-26s although the weather was marginal, hit five German positions in the frontier region just east of Monschau (D).*

*Also on that day the Eight AF began with interdiction raids in the German hinterland*

in particular the Rhine zone. Over 350 of its heavy bombers (some 500 had to abort due to weather) partly through cloud cover hit marshalling yards at Cologne, Kaiserslautern and Mainz as well as other targets in the Koblenz, Lutzel and Bonn areas. On the 19<sup>th</sup>



Contrails making visible the air battle over the Ardennes

300 HBs bombed the Ehrang and Koblenz marshalling yards and eight rail and road junctions and other transportation targets in the German hinterland.

It was however only from the 23d of Dec. that, as all other operations, interdiction became a real factor in the battle.

After the 23d, when skies began to clear, the basic objectives for the air forces involved did not change. The difference lay in the widening and the magnitude of the air battle.

The first days of the surging activities have already been referred to in the preceding text. The magnitude of the operation became apparent on the 24<sup>th</sup>, when American and British planes flew some 6000 sorties which were opposed by 700 – 800 Luftwaffe fighters. Admittedly this was an exceptional day.

Until the end of the year the Ninth AF's fighters/fighter-bombers were however massively in action, except on the 28<sup>th</sup>, when weather prevented all operations excluding night intruder missions. Its medium and light bombers, except on 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, on seven consecutive days bombed rail and road bridges and junctions, communication centers, villages numerous casual targets in the Eifel sector and the breakthrough area in the Ardennes involving up to 650 aircraft. Protected by masses of escort fighters the Eight AFs B-17s and B-24s from their bases in

England, flew daily interdiction raids with in average about 850 (on three days 1000+) bombers. Their main targets were marshalling yards, rail junctions and bridges, communication centers, city areas and airfields in the German hinterland, in particular the Rhine zone.

Losses which will be discussed later, were heavy on both sides. It should be noted here however, that Luftwaffe units involved in the battle from Dec. 23d to 31<sup>st</sup> lost at least 263 pilots (killed or missing). In addition 78 were wounded and thus in the immediate not available for action.

After the Wehrmacht's westward drive ended short of the Meuse river and Allied air could unfold its full power from the 23d, the Germans resupply situation rapidly changed from scanty to critical. Everything that the Wehrmacht needed had to be moved from its logistic bases in the Reich all the way through the Eifel into the rugged Ardennes with its narrow and winding, by then ice-coated and snow-covered roads. In addition the uninterrupted threat by the Allies' fighter-bombers confined supply columns to move only by night.

The disruption of communication did most to halt the Ardennes offensive and shortage of fuel was the most important factor.

After not reaching the huge fuel dump near Stavelot the Wehrmacht also failed in getting to the 3,5 million liters stored at Bastogne. Nevertheless it was never completely out of fuel, but there was no longer enough for a major panzer push.



Mighty German 45 t "Panther" tanks waiting for fuel

The Luftwaffe's fighters were unable to keep the supply-routes open and prevent the Allies' fighter bombers to harass the Wehrmacht's forces on the ground by attacking advancing troops, hitting defended positions, destroying command posts etc. etc.

The Luftwaffe was however there, and its pilots fought courageously, but there was little that they could do against the massive strength of the Allies. Almost all were engaged before they reached the battle area and so they were not seen by the German soldiers at its forward edge.

It was already pointed out that to avoid high losses the Luftwaffe's policy was to indirectly support the Wehrmacht's ground troops by intercepting the Allies planes in the air. The orders were to face the fighter-bombers over the battlefield and the bombers with their escorts preferably before they reached the Reich territory.

This being said, a few interesting occurrences should be mentioned.

- There is evidence that Me 262 fighter-bombers were committed against Allied troop concentrations and supply centers in the area around Liège. The Allies countered by mounting numerous standing fighter patrols over the region.
- Gen. Patton reported: While we were with the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored on the way to Bastogne two German aircraft strafed and bombed us, but without success.
- This author witnessed an attack by two German fighter-bombers on a US vehicle pool in Luxembourg-City, which remained without success due to US-anti-aircraft fire.

These were however events behind the front-line which had nothing to do with direct close air support for battling troops.

While the Eifel sector remained the main arena for bomber interception and dog fighting for the rest of the year, contrails over eastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg were a clear indication that a lot of it was going on there as well. Perhaps the most violent air fighting took place on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Day, over the Ettelbrück-Esch s.Sûre – Hoscheid triangle (L).

To conclude this second part of the story of the Battle of the Ardennes it should be mentioned that in the December period the Luftwaffe in average flew some 500 sorties per day, while the Allies average exceeded 3000 sorties. Two days later the Germans were unable to have more than 70 to 80 airplanes available for action. This was the result of operation "Bodenplatte", on January 1<sup>st</sup>, which will be analyzed in the next issue of Airshow.



In spite of very bad weather until Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>, the sky was not empty before above the Ardennes

# OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

## OPERATIONS 2008

The list of air shows and events the French Wing will attend this year has been established as follows:

- **La Ferté-Alais 5 April:** General Assembly of the Piper Club France (Patrick Pierre-Pierre and Roger Gouzon, and, by car Bernard Delfino, and, by car, any other volunteer).
- **La Ferté-Alais 30 May to 01 June:** Annual air show (With the PX).
- **Le Mans 7 & 8 June:** Air show (With the PX).
- **Moret sur Loing 13 au 15 Juin:** Weekend Piper Club France (Local flights La Ferté-Alais, Moret sur Loing, Nangis, Moret sur Loing). No PX.
- **Cambrai Niergnies 20 to 22 June:** Fly-in of Piper Cub airplanes (With mini PX).
- **Le Plessis-Belleville, during July:** Fly-in of the French Wing (With the PX).
- **Avord 12 & 13 Juillet:** National air show (With the PX).
- **Raid to Toulouse with the Piper Cub 19 to 28 August:** Le Plessis-Belleville - Toulouse and back, and local flights in the Toulouse area.
- **Saint Quentin 5 & 6 September:** Air show (With the PX).
- **Meaux 13 & 14 September:** Fly-in and static show (With a mini PX).

**Pilots and passengers for all these flights must make themselves known as soon as possible by contacting cols. Patrick Pierre-Pierre and Bernard Delfino, giving their preferences for dates and flights.**

## AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE

### PIPER CUB "SPIRIT OF LEWIS"

The Piper Cub annual check is progressing and should be completed by the end of February or the beginning of March.

A few problems were found like, for example:

- The elevator trim which had a tendency to slip, and whose index had the bad habit of disappearing from its guide.
- The tail wheel assembly bolt whose thread had almost completely disappeared was replaced.

- New eyebrow baffles fitted to the cylinders, a task that required some work, plenty of time, and some know-how



Photo: B. Delfino

(Photo below).

- A cracked engine oil reservoir along a welding, which caused a minimal but permanent oil leak was repaired.
- Brake flexible hoses replaced for new ones.
- Etc...

A big Thank You to cols. **Jean-Yves Cercy, Jean-Christophe Debuissou, Fumiko & Bernard Delfino, and Roger Gouzon** for their excellent work which was accomplished by ambient temperatures which rarely exceeded 3°C (37F) inside the hangar!...

### NC 856 "NORVIGIE"

The annual check of the 250 hours type is a tough one. It will require two months and as much participation as possible. We thank all the volunteers who will be able to help this important task.

To give our members an idea of this importance, let us say that only the wings will not be dismantled!... The tasks that will come on top of this annual check will include the overhaul of some of the instruments and the replacement of the oil, fuel, and air, flexible hoses and their connectors.

### REARWIN "SPORTSTER"

The Rearwin Sportster restoration will follow the annual check of the Norvigie. There again, volunteers are very welcome.

The sanding of the fuselage structure, the repair of one of the tubes, and the sanding of the flying controls structure, will be the biggest part of this work which will take place in Villepinte, Monday to Friday, in col. Roger Gouzon's workshop, as soon as the annual checks have been completed. Do we need to say that volunteers will be

## THE FRENCH WING PIPER CUB SPONSORING SYSTEM

The annual premiums and cost per hour are split as follows:

- **Flying Sponsors:** 250 Euros per year and 25 Euros per hour (Average cost per hour, over 10 hours: 50,00 €).
- **Restoration Sponsors:** 125 Euros and 40 Euros per hour (Average cost per hour, over 10 hours: 52,50 €).
- **Supporting Sponsors:** 50 Euros and 55 Euros per hour (Average cost per hour, over 10 hours: 60,00 €).
- **Non-Sponsors:** No annual premium and 80 Euros per hour.

This system, which is based on 50 flight hours for the whole year, asks for a sufficient number of Sponsors to cover the annual fixed costs of \$6800.00.

**QUESTION:** Can you buy your own Piper Cub and pay all the expenses related to such an ownership?... No?... Well, for a modest amount of money, you can have the pleasure to fly as much as you want on a legendary J-3, without the worries inherent to such an ownership. How?...

## BECOME A SPONSOR!



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

## 2008 SPONSORS

The list of sponsors of the Piper Cub for 2008 is not, unfortunately long enough. At the time of printing we need to collect another 600 euros to cover the fixed costs. **If all Sponsors of year 2007 renew their support to this airplane, we will be able to operate without any problem.** We sincerely thank them for the help they can give to the *Spirit of Lewis!*

## 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.
- Norvige patch: € 6,00.
- French Wing pin: € 10,00.
- 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 ©.
- Poster N°1 Avions de la seconde guerre mondiale peint by Jean Bellis, 61x81cm: € 9,00 (FW Members), € 10,00 (Non Members) © + P & P.
- Greeting cards with Jean Bellis' profiles: € 4,00 each (P & P according to quantity) ©.
- 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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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17419,91</b>

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.