



# Airshow



CAF French Wing

Monthly Newsletter - Bulletin Mensuel

Volume 10 - N° 5 - May 2005

## EDITORIAL

*That's it! The season has started! There is a lot of work to do and many members who volunteered to turn our current project into a success have started getting busy. The list of these tasks is long, very long, but don't worry, we will get there: Roy Grinnell's art show at the Aéroclub de France, Roy's visit to the show, then the 50th anniversary of the Navy base at Dugny-Le Bourget, the La Ferté-Alais air show, Sandy Sansing and Jim Lux' visit, the feast at Puiseux en Retz, all these with millions of details to look after. The members concerned have changed into busy bees, and, when necessary, they call for the help of parents or friends like, for example, Eric Ducreau's father who manufactured for us six perfect frames at very high speed! A big thank you to all these people, and the others, because, in addition, we have to make sure that life goes on as normal like the publication of our Newsletter, the mail, the accounts, the collection of the annual dues (By the way, there are still a few members who are late paying these dues...), the Spirit of Lewis, and many more...*

*The amount of news is such that this month, again, I had to refuse, or, rather, delay some articles for some time. I hope that our readers will be happy by the contents of this issue because it represents an enormous amount of work from our writers and illustrators.*

*You guessed it, I am very happy to see such an animation which shows how active our Unit is. And if you want to help, you will all be welcome. Many thanks!*

Bernard



## A TIGER



# IN THE FRENCH WING!



Photo: Jim Lux

**TEX HILL, MEMBER OF THE AVG (AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP IN CHINA), BETTER KNOWN AS THE "FLYING TIGERS", HAS ACCEPTED TO BECOME A HONORARY MEMBER OF OUR UNIT!**

**THE FRENCH WING IS HAPPY TO EXPRESS ITS PROFOUND AND SINCERE**



**GRATITUDE TO THIS EXCEPTIONAL MAN WHOSE EXPLOITS ARE PART OF THE STORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR FOR EVER.**

# DAVID LEE "TEX" HILL

## HONORARY MEMBER OF THE FRENCH WING

To welcome in the French Wing a representative of the famous group of American volunteers, the "Flying Tigers", like David Lee "Tex" Hill, is an immense honor that our Unit could only dream about until now. This hero who refuses to admit that he is one and prefers to put forward his combat comrades, shows such a modesty that he is an example for us all. Today, he joins our group of Unit veterans, and his acceptance is a proof of the sympathy he has for our Association.



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

Tex Hill was born on July 13, 1915, in Kwangju, Korea, where his parents were Presbyterian missionaries for many years. The Hill family returned to Texas when he was 6 years old.

After school, Tex got a commission in the US Navy and was posted to a Torpedo Squadron (VT-3) on board the USS Saratoga, then to a Dive Bomber unit (VB-41) on board USS Ranger. In 1941, he decided to join the AVG (American Volunteer Group) for whom Claire Lee Chennault was recruiting volunteers to form a unit that would support China, then led by Chang Kai Shek. There, he quickly obtained numerous victories and became Flight Leader, then Squadron Leader.

He shot down his first two enemy planes on January 3, 1942, during an attack on Tak Thailand, two Ki-27 Nate. On the 23rd, he got two more, and he became an Ace on the 24th, when he shot down a bomber and a fighter over Rangoon.

On May 7th, 1942, as the Japanese troops started an offensive on eastern China, thanks to the pontoon they had build over river Salween to get troops and military equipment across, Tex Hill led a group of four new P40-E's. For four days, they bombed, strafed, and destroyed the Japanese troops so ef-



Photo: B. Delfino

ficiently that the latter backed off and changed their plans! Later, Claire Chennault declared quite rightly that it was at Salween that the fall of China was avoided.

In July 1942, the AVG were integrated in the regular American forces. Tex was one of five who decided to stay on this combat theatre. He thus became a member of the 23rd Fighter Group of the USAAF, obtained the grade of Major and commanded the 75th Fighter Squadron. Later, he commanded the 23rd Fighter Group.

Before returning to the USA, at the end of 1944, Tex shot down six more planes and reached the total of 18,25 aircraft. It is thought that he was the first American fighter pilot to shoot down a zero while flying a Mustang.



Photo: Jim Lux

His war exploits are innumerable. Amongst them is the example of the attack of the airfield of Shimchiku, Formosa, where the Japanese had 100 fighters and 100 bombers stationed. Tex led the attack of a group of 12 B-25, ten P-38, and eight P-51. They attacked as the enemy bombers were landing. Seven Japanese fighters took off, but they were soon shot down, as well as many other airplanes. In total, 42 planes were confirmed destroyed, and twelve others probably destroyed, without a single loss to the group led by Tex!



Photo: Tex Hill

*Top: First victories for Tex, an event immortalized by the talent of col. Roy Grinnell.*

*Above: Tex before his Mustang (Photo taken after the integration of the AVG in the USAAF).*

*Left: Tex during the ceremony of his DSC.*

*Below left: Quite an event in the life of our Leader, with his wife Fumiko, when he first met Tex Hill in 1994, his AVG hero since the age of 10. A photo that Bernard is very proud of!...*

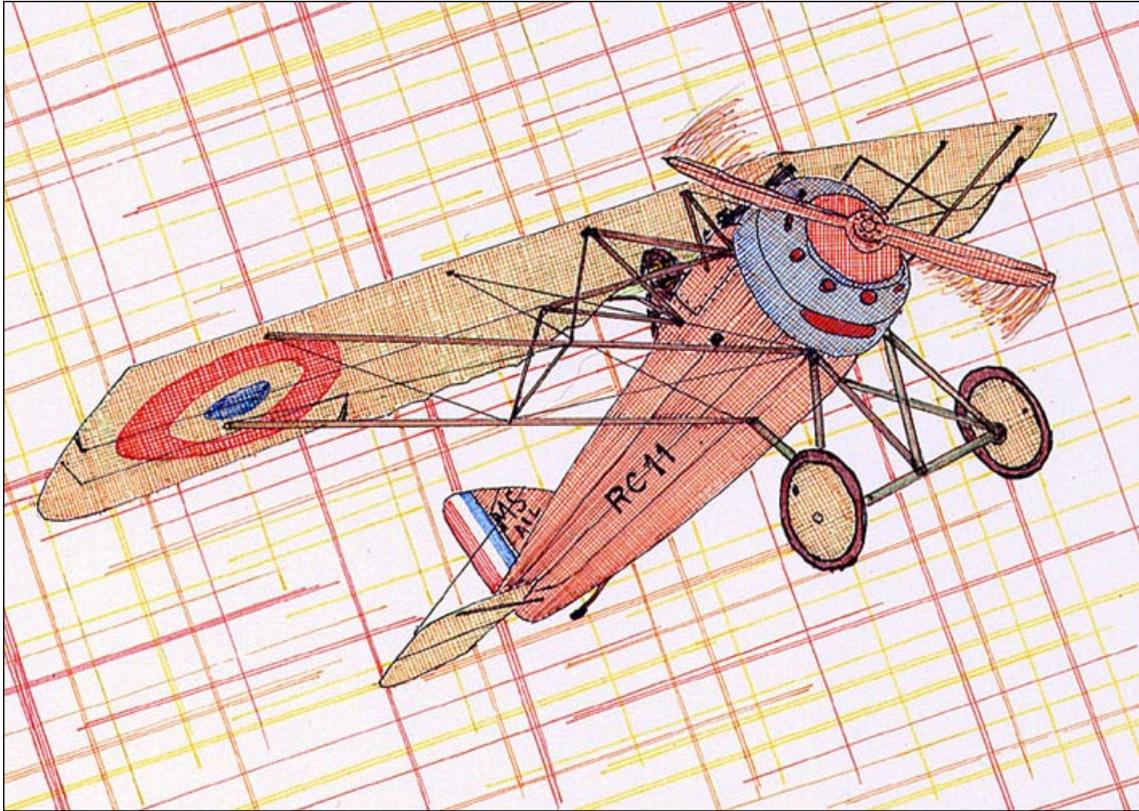
Tex ended his career as the commander of the 412th Fighter Group, the very first Unit equipped with the Bell P-59 Airacomet. In 1946 he left the USAF, joined the Air National Guard where he became the youngest Brigadier General of all times!

Tex became a CAF Honorary Member in 1978 (#581), and many have had the good luck of meeting him every year at Airsho in Midland. We wish that all our members could do this too. They would be amazed by his way of welcoming people with extreme kindness. Tex is always surprised to hear and see that he has so many fans in far away France, where, by the way, we hope to be able to welcome him one day, in order to thank him for his braveness, his exploits, and the role he played in the defence of Freedom. Merci Tex!!!



# Morane-Saulnier AIL

Article and painting by col. Louis-Jean Gioux



The Morane-Saulnier AIL did not enjoy a dazzling career, although it was built in great numbers.



Photo: B. Delfino

AIL only stayed on the front line a few months because they were considered too fragile and under-powered. They were then relegated to training schools.

Types "LA" and "P" replaced them. With a more powerful engine, and better armament, they were more adapted to aerial combat missions.



Photo: B. Delfino

Designed by Robert and Léon Morane, with Raymond Saulnier, who had founded the *Société Anonyme des Aéroplanes Morane et Saulnier* (Later absorbed by the Potez company), the MS AIL was a monoplane with a high wing known as "parasol", which was very modern, thanks to its rounded fuselage.

It was produced in three different versions which varied according to their armament and the power of their respective engine. The Morane-Saulnier

The AI was fitted with a 150 HP Gnome rotating engine which allowed it to reach

the speed of 120 km/h (65 mph). Its wing span was 8,50 m (28 ft), its length 5,63 m (18 ft), and its height 2,41 m (8 ft).

Its take-off weight was 650 kg (1400 lbs), its service ceiling 7000 m (22000 ft), and its range was 2,5 hours.

Its armament was made of one or two machine-guns. Its main missions were fighting and reconnaissance.



# SPIRIT OF LEWIS.....

## SPRING CLEANING

The Spirit of Lewis has just gone through the expert hands of our mechanics and assistant-mechanics, and it is ready for the on-coming season.

The amount of work that was required by this annual maintenance asked for no less than four hundred man-hours that were given by the following members: Didier Cardinal, Bernard and Fumiko Delfino, Philippe Duflot, Eric Ducreau, Roger Gouzon, Cédric Malhaire, Guy Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, Frédéric Pollicella, and Semaan Soueid.

Aubrey Hair during Airsho last year. These have drastically changed the aspect of our little warbird as one can see on the printed photos. The only problem being that wearing sun-glasses is now recommended, if not a must!...

The passenger seat has been repaired by Roger Gouzon



It shines! These new rocker arm boxes give our Spirit of Lewis' Continental engine a very special look. Sun-glasses are now a must!

Photo: Bernard Delfino



Above: From left to right, our friends Didier Cardinal, Frédéric Pollicella, Cédric Malhaire, and Philippe Duflot.

Below: Didier runs the engine for a leak check.

Photo: Bernard Delfino

because there was a crack in one of its four legs, the axles of the pilot brake pedals rocker arms have been replaced, as well as the air filter, the spark plugs, and the tyre tube valves.

Finally, some of the thread in the cylinder heads have been renewed by the fitting of helicoils by our friend Guy Perrin (Note: For those who don't know, an helicoil is a kind of spring with a four points diamond cross section which is screwed into place after enlarging the damaged thread to the upper size. The resulting thread after this insertion is the same as the original size).

All this work did not represent any particular difficulty, but it required time and know-how.

Fortunately, we have, in the CAF French Wing, several members who are professional mechanics with an experience and a



Above: Guy Perrin in the process of replacing the air filter.

Below: Roger and Fumiko dress the passenger seat after the repair to its broken leg and painting.

Photo: Bernard Delfino



Photo: Bernard Delfino

knowledge that are irreplaceable. They will be able to give their very best when we own our hangar, because they are capable of carrying out jobs that are a lot more complex than this one, like, for example, the complete restoration of an airplane.

A big thank you to all our friends for the success of this mandatory maintenance that will allow us to get the renewal of the plane's Certificate of Airworthiness for year 2005-2006. We are now waiting for the nice weather to enjoy it!...



Photo: Bernard Delfino

# BACK FROM THE FRONT.....

## FROM OUR LEADER

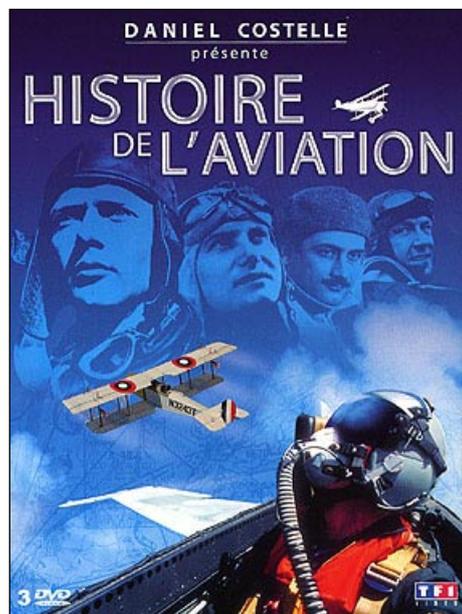
BERNARD DELFINO

### THE STORY OF AVIATION BY COL. DANIEL COSTELLE

Around Christmas was announce the distribution of a set of DVD's and VHS video cassettes of the 7 TV sessions re-tracing the history of aviation by Daniel Costelle. I was unable to find them until the end of March when, during a visit to the FNAC shop in Paris, on the Champs Élysées, in Paris, I was, at long last, able to buy what I consider as one of the best series of all times telling the story of this vast subject.

Made about thirty years after the end of WWII, at a time when many of the great names of aviation were still alive, these broadcasts include rare documents and interviews, which gives them a very precious value. The pictures and the comments are perfect, and the whole lot is simply fascinating!

The bill will be just over 50 Euros, which gives it an excellent quality to cost ratio, with a duration of over 7 hours of fantastic images, and a third DVD that includes an interview of Daniel Costelle himself, as well as Michel Bénichou of the magazine *Le Fana de l'Aviation*, both very interesting to listen to. Therefore, it is without any restriction that I can advise our readers to purchase this set of DVD's or cassettes from their favorite record shop.



## MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Administration held its monthly meeting on April 8, in Aulnay sous Bois. The following points were on the agenda:

- New members: The Board unanimously and very heartily welcomed the acceptance to become a honorary member of the French Wing by Tex Hill who thus shows his fondness for our Unit. Welcome aboard Tex!!!

The arrival of Serge Séguret, a new colonel and a pilot of the *Spirit of Lewis*, duly approved by our Insurance Company, is another excellent news for the French Wing.

- The group of members residing in the South-West of France held a meeting on April 2, and made a few interesting propositions concerning its local activities: With the exception of a few practical details, they were all accepted by the Board. Our members who do not live in this area will, of course, be able to take part in these activities if they wish to do so. They will need to contact cols. Michel Perrin or John Roeder after the publication of these projects in our Newsletter.

- Visit of Sandy Sansing and Jim Lux: The visit to Puiseux will be the occasion to get a maximum number of members, and will replace the extraordinary general assembly that was planned. To this date, about 20 members have declared that they will participate in this great feast.

- Piper Cub "*Spirit of Lewis*": After its annual maintenance, the plane is ready for the on-coming season.

- Ceremony of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the naval base of Dugny: The preparation is going fine. A dozen members will take part in the ceremony on June 4, in Dugny.

- Hangar/Stearman project: a few of our members have suggested that these two projects should be split because, together, they may represent a target too difficult to reach. The AG last November, and the articles printed in our Newsletter always clearly showed that the acquisition of a hangar will always take precedence over the one of the Stearman. The Board has accepted this suggestion and will concentrate its efforts on the purchase of a hangar since, logically, the increase in the number of our aircraft depends on the hangar space availability.

In addition, the spare parking spaces will be rented to other aircraft owners, which will help this project in being self-sustaining as much as possible.

## FROM OUR FINANCE OFFICER

PHILIPPE DUFLLOT

### ANNUAL DUES 2005/2006

About one third of our members haven't paid their dues to the French Wing. I ask them to hurry and send their cheque (or cash) to the French Wing at:

**Col. Philippe DUFLLOT**

**8 Rue Fernand Segouin**

**95400 - ARNOUVILLE - FRANCE**

#### Members living in Europe:

Colonels: 50,00 Euros.

Associate Members: 50,00 Euros.

Cadets 20,00 Euros.

Friends of the French Wing: 40,00 Euros

#### Members living in the USA:

Colonels: \$ 50,00 cash.

Friends of the French Wing: \$ 40,00 cash

### MEMBERS WHO HAVE ALREADY PAID THEIR ANNUAL DUES TO THE FRENCH WING FOR YEAR 2005/2006

Gilles Avenel, Bob Ayars, Lilian Ayars, Paul Barland, Bunty Bateman, Guy Bortolus, Henri Bourrassier, Claude Cardinal, Didier Cardinal, Ernest Cartigny, Jean Chatel, William Davies, Jean-Christophe Debuissou, Dominique Deudon, Bernard Delfino, Fumiko Delfino, Yves Donjon, Stéphane Duchemin, Philippe Duflot, Eric Ducreau, John Francis, Marcel Francisci, Christian Frézard, Guillaume Frézard, Claude Gascon, Louis-Jean Gioux, Patrick Gremez, Roy Grinnell, Irène Grinnell, Aubrey Hair, Barbara Hair, Yves Houssin, Rick Hudlow, Louise Hudlow, William Katsones, Jacques Leroux, George Lodge, Jim Lux, Georges Marcellin, Jean-Claude Miniggio, Guy Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, David Price, Guy Robert, John P. Roeder, Sandy Sansing, Serge Séguret, Haruo Tanaka, Alphonse Thiry, Christian Tournemine, Gilles Troussart, Roger Vaucamp, Orlan Wichman, Stella Wilkes.

If your name is not on that list, thanks you for doing what's necessary.

## WELCOME SERGE SÉGURET

This month we are happy to announce the arrival of a new colonel: Serge Séguret,



crazy about airplanes, to such a point that he has built a very nice 3/4 scale Mustang based on a Jurca structure! Today, Serge is the

co-owner of this plane with colonel Gilles Avenel who injected the CAF virus to Serge, but, frankly speaking, he did not have to threaten him. When we asked Serge to write a short article to introduce himself to our members, he did it so well, with so much talent, that we decided to print it as is...

mechanic, in Mont de Marsan. A brief period, I admit (Later I fell in love with mathematics) which nevertheless allowed me to collect a lot of parachute jumps since I was a member of the Armée de l'Air demo team, called the "Circaètes" (The Eagle-Falcons). Our speciality was the wing contact that we introduced in Europe, and I'm quite proud of the European record, at the time, that we established with 9 people getting down attached together with the parachutes opened ! Quite exciting! Now that I think about it, from a safety point of view, we really had to be a bit crazy... Before the Armée de l'Air, there was... the



What else can I say about me... Oh, yes, books. If you look closely at the second photograph, you will note that, under the canopy, where normally used to be the cursed crosses, are some crossed rectangles. These are novels that I "shot down" for Fleuve Noir and Oxalis, some "unlimited" Science Fiction... I would say. OK... Engineering, flying, air force, books, maths on a daily basis. I believe that this is it... I will not talk about Romane, my three months old daughter, Valentin, my 13 years old boy, or Cathy, my charming wife. OK. I said enough. The rest we will discover it together, conversely, and probably in front of a good glass of red wine. There is nothing like a good Beaune to make people talk, isn't that right Gilles?...



I wish to thank you all for the combat that you all fight. This Duty of Memory, our era needs it badly, and I do believe that the spirit that lives within the association has extended far beyond the initial goal. It is an example for the young generations which are a bit lost today. I am happy to be able to join this effort.

"Dear friends, Bernard, our President, and Gilles (Avenel) my godfather, have asked me to take the opportunity of my CAF commission to introduce myself. I will try, but it's not easy... How about talking about this first photograph? Inside, it's me, around me, the plane that I partly built during 10 years, a 3/4 scale replica of a beast that I'm sure you will all recognize. My love for aeronautical engineering must have started when I stayed with the Armée de l'Air where I worked as a Mirage IV

Armée de l'Air. Daddy being a fireman, I followed him everywhere he went (Friedrichaffen in Germany, Colomb-Béchar in Algeria, Marrakech...) and when we lived in France, it was, again, on an air force base (Metz-Frescaty). I won't tell you how noisy an engine run can be on a T-6 (Air base of Marrakech)! So much noise that, one night, when we experienced our first earthquake, I thought that it was a night engine run! A day of ramadan as well! Well, I was only 10, and the readers will forgive me.

See you up there or over there, walking, flying, or riding a bike (Hey, I forgot to tell you about the bikes that I restore).

Scramble !  
Serge".

Col. Serge SÉGURET  
69 Domaine de Fontaine  
77760 ACHERES LA FORET  
France  
Tel : 01 64 24 43 07  
Mobile : 06 67 02 82 93  
Email : serge.seguret@ensmp.fr

## **SAFETY: THE PHENOMENON OF ENGINE SURGE**

Here is a splendid photograph of a Boeing 777 which demonstrates the spectacular and less than pleasant visual effects of this phenomenon "reserved" to the jets.

To explain it as simply as possible, one may say that it is caused by an excess of air which creates a back and forth movement of the gas flow within the jet engine. This is also made evident acoustically by violent explosions. The cause can be a poor operation of the air regulation system, a strong cross wind, or other reasons too complex to be explained here. One only needs to know that it is never good for the engine, the airplane, or its passengers, especially during take-off since it can lead to the complete destruction of the engine. Another secondary effect often noted after the return to the airport terminal is the greenish color of the passengers' face as they disembark the plane... Don't worry, our dear Piper Cub and its 65 HP Continental engine, will never be the victim of this phenomenon! And, if, by any chance, you too also come off our Piper Cub with the same pretty green color, it will be for other reasons that we won't describe in this too short article...



## **SPONSORS OF THE SPIRIT OF LEWIS - YEAR 2005**

### **FLYING SPONSORS**

Gilles Avenel (Pilot)  
Bernard Delfino  
Fumiko Delfino  
Marcel Francisci  
Claude Gascon (Pilot)  
Roger Gouzon  
Irene Grinnell  
Roy Grinnell  
Alain Jimenez  
Jean-Claude Miniggio (Pilot)  
Patrick Pierre-Pierre (Pilot)  
Sandy Sansing  
Serge Séguret (Pilot)  
Société SKY RUNNER  
Regis Urschler

### **RESTORATION SPONSORS**

Didier Cardinal  
Georges Marcelin

### **SUPPORTING SPONSORS**

"Sierra Hotel" A-26 Group  
Bunty Bateman  
Henri Bourrassier  
William Davies  
Jean-Christophe Debuissou  
Dominique Deudon  
Claude De Marco  
Stéphane Duchemin  
Louis-Jean Gioux  
Patrick Gremez  
Barbara Hair  
Aubrey Hair  
Yves Houssin  
Elzéard Ligneul  
George Lodge  
Cédric Malhaire  
Guy Perrin  
John Roeder

If you add all the premiums of these sponsorship of the Spirit of Lewis, you will note that we are not far from the target that we are aiming at.

As everyone knows, these Sponsorship are used to cover the fixed annual costs of our plane. These amount to 4995 Euros and include the renting of a hangar space, the insurance, the renewal of the Certificate of Airworthiness, and the radio licence.

The total of the premiums paid so far is 4850 Euros, with a deficit of 145 Euros which will be annihilated when the promises of payment will all be done. Therefore we can see the season come with confidence, and all we have to do now is fly the 50 hours which are the basis of this financial plan.

## **NEW POSTAL ADDRESS FOR COL. DAMIEN BOURGAUX**

Thanks for making a note of col. Damien Bourgaux's new address:

Damien BOURGAUX  
Clos des Lilas  
57155 MARLY  
FRANCE

## **NO APRIL FOOL'S JOKES!**

No, it won't be this year! We apologize to the readers who desperately looked for an April fool's joke, because they simply wasted their time.

The articles that told the story of the two commemorative ceremonies gave our last issue a very dramatic accent, and we thought that a joke would have been out of place. We will try better next year...

## **COL. J-C. DEBUISSON IS LOOKING FOR: "HELL'S ANGELS"**

Jean-Christophe is looking for a copy of Howard Hughes' movie "Hell's Angels". Should one of our members have this film in his own collection, and could make a copy for Jean-Christophe, he would make him a happy man!

## **THANKS!**

Col. Paul Barland wishes to warmly thank col. Henri Bourrassier, col. Jacques Leroux, and mister Jacques Noble for their actions which was reported in the articles published last month, about the Colombier/Saugnieu and Andryes/Ferrières ceremonies.

These two articles also had a great success in the USA where several members expressed their satisfaction. Lee Watson who was the hero of the Ferrières ceremony even phoned our Leader directly to express his emotion after reading the article that told the story of his B-24 crew members. Him and his friends who travelled all the way from the USA were amazed and extremely moved by the dimension given to this event which proved that the Franco-American fraternity is alive and well!

## ROY GRINNELL ART SHOW

### "Grinnell, avec deux ailes"

Such is the name that's been given to this art display of dozens of paintings by colonel Roy Grinnell, organized in the restaurant of the Aéro-Club de France from April 27 till May 26, 2005.



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

We invite all our members to visit this art show that we arranged with the help of the Aéro-Club de France. They will need to have a meal which will satisfy even the most delicate ones, and that will add pleasure to pleasure.

We advise you to reserve your seats because this restaurant is very popular. It opens at mid-day only from Monday to Friday inclusive.

**6 Rue Galilée  
PARIS - 75116**

**Tel. et reservations: 01 47 20 88 04**

We wish to warmly thank Roy and Irene Grinnell for their generosity because they decided that this art show would be for the benefit of the French Wing and its projects.

The printing of the great majority of the displayed art was done especially for this show, and at their own expense!

We also thank colonels Eric Ducreau, Philippe Dufлот, and Bernard and Fumiko Delfino who were the artisans of this show, on this side of the Atlantic. Together, they produced a perfect team-



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

work which includes the prospecting, the purchase of the material, the framing, the packing, the transportation, and the setting of the litographs and the original painting (Normandie-Niemen).

Note: We advise our members who would like to purchase some of the prints displayed in the AÉCF restaurant, to contact us directly.



Peinture: Roy Grinnell

### PROJECT OF A TOUR: THE MAGINOT LINE & THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Like we do every year, the French Wing intends to organize a 3 to 4 days visit of a historical area, like the ones that have already been organized in Verdun and Normandy these past two years.

Col. John Roeder and our members in the South West, have suggested a project of a visit of the Maginot Line and the Battle of the Bulge, with the following main steps:

1. The grand Ouvrage of "Fermont" (France).
2. The "B-17 Museum" in Perlé (Luxembourg), half-way on the road from Arlon to Bastogne, which was the main advance road of the US third army which cracked the Bastogne encirclement.
3. The US Mardasson monument, and the "Battle of the Bulge" Museum in Bastogne (Belgium).
4. Via Wiltz and Clerf with their monuments, along the main german attack road, to the Dasburg bridge where three Panzer divisions crossed the border river between Germany and Luxemburg.
5. Down South the Skydrive (The major counter-attack route followed by the 5th

U.S. Infantry) to Diekirch/Ettelbrück with the visit of the Bataille des Ardennes Museum and the Patton Memorial (Luxemburg).

6. City of Luxemburg: Visit of the American and German cemeteries on the outskirts of the city (Luxemburg).

A reception would be offered by the Amicale des Vieilles Tiges de l'Aviation Luxembourgeoise (AVTAL) in a location which is still to be determined during the preparation of this project. This Association will also help us organize the part of the tour which will be located in Belgium and Luxemburg.

All the points of interest are located in a 30 x 60 kilometres rectangle, with good quality roads.

The date of this tour is still to be determined. Therefore, we need to find out the name of the members who would like to take part in it, the number of persons that would travel with them (And, consequently, the number and type of hotel rooms they will require), and, finally, the period of the year when they would like this tour to take place.

We ask our members and friends to make themselves known as soon as possible, giving us the above information. The latter will be analysed, and a date will be chosen to try and satisfy as many people as possible.

### CODE NAME BRAVO: NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

As you may have read in Contrails, operation Code Name Bravo has been changed to allow individual recruiters to be rewarded for their good work.

You can still recruit new colonels, in the name of the French Wing, at the exceptionally low price of \$100.00 the first year, instead of the usual \$200.00.

Today, you can also recruit 5 new colonels at the normal rate of \$200.00 (\$160.00 the following years), and obtain a free year of membership for yourself.

With 10 new colonels recruited, you will be able to purchase a life membership for \$1500,00, with 20 recruits you will only pay \$1000,00, with 30, \$500,00, with 39 you will become a Life Member for free, and with 40 and more, you will also get a plaque. Let's recruit!...



# GRUMMAN F-6F HELLCAT

*By Colonels John P. Roeder & Michel Perrin - Painting by Jean Bellis - Photos Grumman & Marine Nationale*



In early 1941 Grumman began work on a potential replacement for its F4F Wildcat. Although originally launched as a private venture, the Navy ordered two prototypes in June of the year.

more ammunition was carried and armor plating had been considerably augmented. A wide landing gear significantly improved carrier-handling characteristics and a high placed

Besides the F6F-3 there was only the F6F-5 as a major production model. This was first flown in April 1944. It had essentially a strengthened empennage, a spring tab system to fix aileron

One month before the first of these made its first flight in June 1942, large orders had already been placed for what was to become the F6F-3.



heaviness, and reinforced armor installed behind the pilot.

The F6F-5 could carry two 1,000 lb (454 kg) bombs under the center section of the wing and there were provisions for accommodating

The first production aircraft made its initial flight in July of 1942. 13 months later Hellcats of USS Yorktown participated in an attack on Marcus Island in the Central Pacific.

roomy and well laid out cockpit gave pilots a field of vision and a comfort out of all recognition.

six 5-inch rocket projectiles under the outer wings. On late articles two 20 mm cannon usually replaced the .50 cal guns.

From then it became rapidly clear that the Hellcat would become a great success as a carrier-based fighter. This had not only to do with Grumman's previous experience with the Wildcat. Their engineering staff had carefully studied information available from air fighting in Europe and it had closely cooperated with US Navy pilots with experience of carrier operations in the Pacific.

The Hellcat was however a big airplane with a large wing, and if there were complaints they were mainly related to aileron heaviness of the aircraft.

Production of the Hellcat ceased in November 1945, after 12,275 had been built as follows: 4,423 F3F-3s, plus 205 F6F-3N night fighters, and 6,434 F6F-5s, plus 1,189 F6F-5Ns; the balance being minor versions.



At its peak, production reached more than 600 aircraft per month.

The Hellcat had 1.2 times the speed, 1.5 times the rate of climb and 1.2 times the range of the Wildcat. Armament remained the same, but with 400 rounds per gun substantially

The fact that during its life the Hellcat was one of the least modified airplanes produced during the war is an indication for the soundness of the basic design.

The Hellcat was not only a rugged machine with fine flight characteristics. It was also easy to produce and to maintain. There were few planes that were more popular with those who flew them as well as those who serviced them.



The great achievement of the F6F was that it won the naval air war in the Pacific. Hellcats were credited with shooting down 5,156 Japanese aircraft for the loss of only 270 of their own in air combat. Also its deck-landing accident rate was lower than that of any contemporary naval aircraft.

After WWII Hellcats remained in service with US Navy active and reserve squadrons for several years.

In contrast to the Corsair it played however hardly any role in the Korean conflict. A number of F6Fs, laden with explosives and remotely controlled by AD Skyraiders, were however used to destroy selected special targets.

A major user of the Hellcat was also the British Royal Navy which received 1,182 under Lend-Lease. The type entered service with the Fleet Air Arm in July of 1943. It was much used during anti-shiping operations off the coast of Norway and provided fighter



cover for the strikes against the German battleship "Tirpitz" in April and August of 1944. From the end of 1944 FAA Hellcats mainly served with the British Pacific Fleet until VJ-Day. By August 1946 the survivors, except for a few, had been

returned to the USA.

Other users of the Hellcat in combat operations were the French Armée de l'Air as well as the Aéronavale. This was however five and more years after the end of WWII, and the theater of operations was French Indo-China.

From 1946 France had been opposing the communist led Viêt-minh (*Front de l'indépendance du Viêt Nam*) which was fighting to establish an independent republic, while the French were defending their colonial interests. To find a political solution France made far going concessions under the condition that the territory should become part of a so-called "French Union". When this was rejected by the Viêt-minh, a military conflict became inevitable.

How fight a war however in far away Indo-China at a time when France had still not recovered from WWII, and when the developing Soviet threat to Western Europe demanded increased efforts for the defence of the homeland?

France badly needed help, and this could only come from the US. With the Washington administration being traditionally hostile to colonialism there was however not much chance of success. This changed when Mao Tse-tung came to power in China in 1949 and the communist aggression in Korea the year after.

Stopping communist expansion in East Asia had now become a key element of US foreign policy. Very



rapidly then a military assistance program was launched to help France in Indo-China, but discrepancies between French visions and American possibilities led to considerable friction between the authorities of both countries. Among others the French requested eight C-54s and significant numbers of P-47s, P-51s, F-86s and B-26s as well as spare parts for two full groups of P-63s. The US however had no longer any P-47s available, and all other types were urgently needed in Korea.

As fighter-bombers they offered surplus F6F Hellcats from Navy stocks, which strangely for the Americans, the French did not want. At the end, however, they had no choice and they accepted the aircraft among others under the condition that at no cost they receive 2,5 million rounds of .50 cal (12,7 mm) ammunition and 300 000 37mm shells for their P-63s.

In October 1950 the French carrier "Dixmude" sailed from San Francisco to Indo-China with 40 F6F-5s aboard. These were to go to the Armée de l'Air where they replaced the P-63 Kingcobras.



Armée de l'Air squadrons II/6 Normandie-Niemen and I/6 Corse which were based at Bach Mai used them in a ground-attack role for stopping a Viêt-minh offensive in mid-January 1951 aimed at taking Hanoi from the North-West. Guided by Morane "Criquets", the French version of the old German Fieseler Storch, they strafed and bombed the attackers with for the first time making use of napalm in the conflict.

In March the Viêt-minh launched a second offensive against Hanoi, this time from the North-East. Again it failed. In some 300 missions the Hellcats with their 20-mm-guns, rockets and in particular napalm caused terrible havoc among the enemy. A single Hellcat was lost in these operations.

Events repeated themselves in early June when two Viêt-minh divisions in an all-out effort tried to force a decision at Nam Dinh on the Day. It became their third major defeat in 1951.

Armée de l'Air Hellcats together with Invaders flew no less than 1110 sorties during the month, playing a key role in enabling a French victory.

Thereafter the Viêts, who had learned their lesson, avoided major attacks in daylight and in open country, while the

French were consolidating their positions by establishing resistance pockets, out of which the enemy advance was to be contained. This turned out as a not all too successful concept, as the operations around Hoa Binh were to show.

For the air component of the French expeditionary corps besides direct ground support, interdiction raids or so called independent missions to isolate Viêt-minh combat forces now became an additional important task.

From an overall perspective 1951 was the year of the Hellcat for the Armée de l'Air, even though its pilots were initially not enchanted to fly a navy plane. During the year Armée de l'Air Hellcats flew some 15,000 sorties for the loss of eight aircraft and six pilots. Without the Hellcats and napalm, Hanoi would probably have been lost.

In 1952 the Armée de l'Air Hellcats were gradually replaced by the even more effective F8F Bearcats.

The French navy however used the Hellcat until the end of the conflict. In total the US supplied 124 F6F-5s and 15 F6F-5N night fighters between 1950 and 1953 to France for its Aéronavale. A first shipment of 30 aircraft which were ferried by the carrier Arromanches served to equip Aéronavale Flotilla 1F.

This began operations jointly with the Armée de l'Air in supporting the army

in the fighting for the Hoa Binh pocket, some 60 km (40 mls) to the West of Hanoi. Subsequently the flotilla was engaged in operations in the Annam and Cochinchina sectors until May 1952.

Flotillas 9F and 12F flew Hellcats from 1952 to 1953 in support of French ground forces fighting in Laos, Annam and the Tonkin.

Flotilla 1F which meanwhile had become 11F was back for a second



tour in Indochina from October 1953 to the end of the conflict in 1954. It was heavily engaged in the final battle at Dien Bien Phu, where it lost four aircraft.



After the Indo-China war, surviving Hellcats were transferred to North African bases where they were used by several Aéronavale training units. The last of these aircraft was phased out in 1960.

#### DATA TABLE

#### **GRUMMAN F-6F5 HELLCAT**

Description: Single-seat shipboard and land-based fighter-bomber.  
 Propulsion: 1 x 2000 HP Pratt & Whitney R-2800.  
 Span: 13,10 m (42 ft 10 in)  
 Gross weight : 6990 kg (15413 lb)  
 Maximum speed : 611 km/h (380 mph)  
 Cruise speed: 270 km/h (168 mph)  
 Range: 1520 km (945 mls)  
 Service ceiling : 11370 m (37300 ft)  
 Armament: Six .50 cal. or two 20 mm guns + four .50 cal guns.  
 Bomb load: Two 454 kg (1000 lb) bombs, or 6 x 5 inch rockets.



## The FW 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 (55mm) VHS PAL: € 16,00 ©
- Large format paintings by Col. Eric Besançon: F4U Corsair and Messerschmitt 262 night fighter: € 31,00 ©
- Poster N°1 of WWII airplanes and N°2 of post-war era, painted by artist Jean Bellis, 61x81cm: € 9,00 (Members) € 10,00 (Non Members) ©
- 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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# HANGAR

## PATRON COMPANIES SUPPORTING THE HANGAR PROJECT

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DIFFUSION SERVICE

## GIFTS TO THE HANGAR ACQUISITION PROJECT

This month, we thank the following members for their generous donations to this great project:

**Aviation Club de France (Col. Marcel Francisci), Buntly Bateman, col. John Roeder, col. George Lodge, and col. Haruo Tanaka.**

Thanks to these gifts, the funds collected for this project have exceeded 2500,00 Euros!

This will, no doubt, remind all our members the start of the L Bird Project, which is a good sign since, as we all know, patience and hard work, we managed to purchase the *Spirit of Lewis* after 4,5 years, which seemed impossible then.

It will soon be the same for our hangar which will become the center of our activities, whether they are linked to the operation of our Piper Cub or not.

This building will shelter our Museum, our PX, our booth and its furniture, our van, our tools, our technical library, the aircraft spare parts, a dormitory that every member will be able to use for a small fee, a meeting room, a kitchen, a wash-room, a shower, and it will also be used for celebrations and General Assemblies.

