



Volume 10 - N° 5 - June 2005

EDITORIAL

The reactions to the arrival of Tex Hill in our group were quick, and many expressed their great satisfaction and pride to have such a hero in our Wing. Tex wrote to me to say that he considers as a great honor to be part of the French Wing, and that he will be too pleased to meet all of us in Midland during AIRSHO.

May 2005 has nearly gone, and it was the occasion of many events and lots of work. I personally thank those who dealt with the organization of Roy Grinnell's art show at the Aéro-club de France, and the airshow in La Ferté-Alais. As you will read in the following report, this event was, from many points of view, one of the most extraordinary that we have experienced so far!... The weather was execrable, and a sea of mud covered everything with a tenacious and sticky camisole. No warbird lover had seen anything like this before in La Ferté-Alais!... But the worst things always have a good side which you will discover by reading this article. Pure friendship was there!

June won't be any different: On June 4 will take place the 50th Anniversary of the Naval Base of Dugny where Roy, author of the splendid painting of the Morane "Paris" will be one of the stars of the show, as well as our Association, since, in the afternoon, the doors will be open to the public. Roy will return to Texas on June 8, but we will see him again with great pleasure, next Fall, in Midland, during Airsho. On June 18 will be the commemoration for Sandy Sansing, and, on June 19 the annual feast of the village of Puisieux en Retz where Sandy landed after bailing out of his stricken plane that had been hit by enemy flak. Sandy and Jim will return to Texas on June 25, too early as it always is, but, we hope, as satisfied and happy as all of us!

Bernard

LA FERTÉ-ALAIS 2005: AS NEVER SEEN BEFORE!



Photo: Bernard Delfino

THE BAD WEATHER ON SATURDAY 14 MAY WAS AT THE ORIGIN OF MANY CANCELLATIONS BY OWNERS OF PLANES THAT WERE IMPATIENTLY AWAITED, AND OF A SEA OF STICKY MUD WHICH STOPPED THE PUBLIC FROM ATTENDING THIS GREAT AIR SHOW.

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S T A N D U P**



Photo: Bernard Delfino

TO THE BAD WEATHER, AND WARMLY WELCOME THE COURAGEOUS VISITORS THROUGHOUT THIS MEMORABLE WEEK-END.

UNFORGETTABLE LA FERTÉ-ALAIS 2005!

By col. B. Delfino

Our members arrived at La Ferté early in the afternoon, on Friday 13 of May, with an acceptable weather and some sunshine, to help setting up our booth and all the equipment.

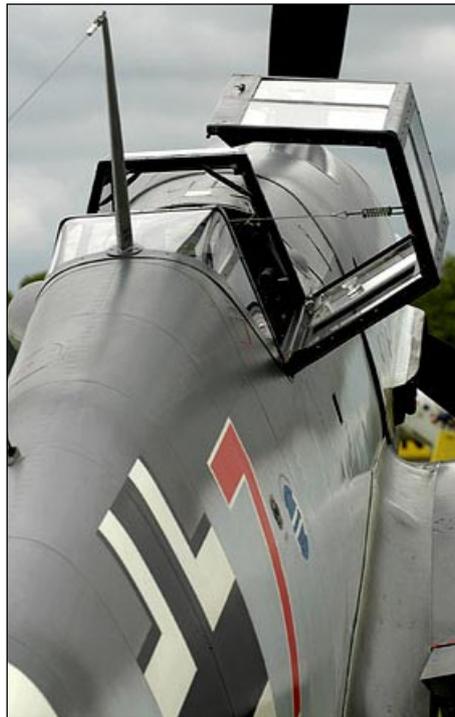
Unfortunately, it started raining late in the afternoon, but only once the tent had been assembled, which allowed those who had decided to sleep in it to stay dry and sleep well.

Early the next day, we were very disappointed to see that the weather had got worse. The most fanatic of the visitors were walking up and down the field, protected by umbrellas and wearing rain coats, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the planes that had been long announced as the stars of the show.

But as the day went on, they had to admit the evidence: The weather was so bad that the planes coming from England could not get through the weather and reach La Ferté. Even the "Crunchies", Wing Walking specialists, known for getting through any kind of weather, had called it quits!... Good bye Hawk 75, Hurricane, Spitfire MkV, Yak 3, and other warbirds, stars of La Ferté! Fortunately the Me109 G4 had managed to come from Germany, as well as the Morane 406, wearing its new french colors, from Switzerland.

Despite these noticeable absences, the show would be reasonably furnished, but, added to the general feeling, the drastic and useless security plan imposed by the Prefecture a few days before the event, had no other effect

than stopping the aircraft lovers to see them in good conditions. At the public announce, our friend, the famous commentator Bernard Chabert, was doing his best to help the public wait patiently, hanging on the wet fence, along a totally deserted runway, for a hypothetical weather improvement.



The beautiful Messerschmitt 109 G4 from Germany

Many were walking up and down the aisles between the booths, with their feet drenched in the unusual quantity of water that the saturated soil could not absorb any more.

This trampling soon started a phenomenon that no one had ever seen before in La Ferté-Alais: The creation, in just a few hours, of a real sea of mud in which many vehicles got stuck, and the public floundered. A mud



The Bernard Chabert owned Lockheed Electra polished metal had nothing to reflect but the gray of the sky. Black & white photos might have been enough?...

that stuck to shoes and trousers to such a point that walking a few steps became difficult, tiring, and even hazardous.

Those who weren't equipped for this kind of weather soon found a new use for the plastic bags that were given in all the shops. A clever and efficient to keep on walking without getting dirty...

The lack of aerial activity had a good side about it because the public came to our booth and allowed our PX to do some business that we were not expecting any more.

We met reporters, aircraft lovers, dreamers, collectors, model makers, Association representatives, in a word, everything that makes the usual world of aviation, and, above all, we met lots of friends who like and admire what the CAF does in the USA and what we do locally.

We arrived to the airfield a bit disappointed by the fact that we had not been allowed to fly in with our *Spirit of Lewis* because of the lack of parking space, but this bad weather made us change our opinion quite quickly and realize that our plane was a lot better in its dry and warm hangar rather than on this soaked airfield.

It was as late at 4 PM that the weather cleared and allowed several planes to take to the air and start their display as planned. The runway, well drained, did not present any particular difficulties, except for the heaviest aircraft.

This show started with the lighter planes and carried on with a few warbirds amongst which the Spitfire with contra-rotating propellers, the Me109 G-4, five Yak 11 representing the Nor-



One needed courage and abnegation to brave the sea of mud and visit all the booths in La Ferté-Alais. These spectators put to good use the plastic bags that were given oin the Dassault booth...

Photo: B. Delfino

Photo: B. Delfino

Photo: B. Delfino

mandie Niemen, the JU 52, the B-17 based in Orly, and several modern planes including a Mirage 2000 that produced a show that left many spectators breathless, and the L-39's of the Breitling aerobatic team, a show that ended around 6 PM, to give way, as far as we were concerned, to the best part of the day: Our Unit's traditional diner.

The number of French Wing members was the greatest satisfaction of this week-end. Were present: Gilles Avenel and his wife, Christophe Bastide, Henri Bourrassier and his son Didier, Didier Cardinal, Bernard and Fumiko Delfino, Eric Ducreau, Philippe Duflot and his wife Danielle, Michel Duflot, Yves Donjon, Christian Frézard and his girl friend Fabienne, Guillaume Frézard, Claude Gascon, Roger Gouzon, Julien Lepelletier, Cédric Malhaire and his companion Gaëlle, Georges Marcelin, Bernard Pieracci, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, David Price, Frédéric Pollicella, Serge Séguret, Christian Tournemine, and Gilles Troussart, 24 members in total, and many more if one includes the relatives and friends. Something never seen before in La Ferté-Alais!

The unusual adversity that created the bad weather had a very good effect on all these members often found together under our PX tent.

This increased their cohesion and allowed for long discussions which are usually rare or impossible when the nice weather prevails and when airplanes fill up the sky permanently.

During the diner that got 21 of us together under our



Photo: B. Delfino

From Saturday morning, the French Wing booth, and all the others, was surrounded by mud, which did not help its access. The 2005 La Ferté-Alais airshow will be remembered by everyone for ever...

tent, this solidarity, as we had to face the problems created by the heavy rain, was ideally described by colonel Henri Bourrassier:

"This evening that we are spending together, between friends, allows me to say, without any preparation, therefore, in the most spontaneous way, how deeply I can feel the extraordinary friendship that unites us all. This

friendship is pure and sincere, and it is the strength of our Association. It irresistibly reminds me of the evenings that we used to spend during the war, after dangerous missions, as we took advantage of the short periods of time when we could enjoy life. Many would not have this luck, we knew it. This is why we used these moments of rest to take refuge in a profound friendship that I rarely met during my life, like today, at this very moment, thanks to you. I wish to thank you all very sincerely for that".

Colonel Bourrassier carried on with some of his fascinating memories of the Groupe Bretagne during WWII, and the evening was concluded by many jokes, laughter, and a number of songs whose words were such that decency stops me from printing them in these pages...



Photo: C. Bastide



Photo: B. Delfino

Our Veterans, Georges Marcelin, mechanic on the Yak in the Normandie Niemen, and Henri Bourrassier, B-26 Marauder pilot of the Groupe Bretagne, had many occasions to talk about their experience, with the numerous visitors of our booth. On the left, Georges tells a sympathetic group of youngsters his memories of the Eastern front, and, on the right, Henri explains the reasons for his decorations to a visitor who took this opportunity to get their autographs (above).



Photo: B. Delfino



Photo: C. Bastide

Colonels Claude Gascon, Roger Gouzon, and Bernard and Fumiko Delfino spent the night on the field, two in the tent, and two in the French Wing van, to look after our equipment and PX items during the night.

Temperature was low, but the rain did not disturb their night. When they woke up, they realized that the weather was improving progressively.

The sun showed up many times during this Sunday, which allowed a normal airshow to take place. The one and only proof that remained from the previous day was the mud which dried too slowly and got more and more sticky under the sunshine.



Photo: B. Delfino

Christian Frézard and Fabienne check the pictures they took during the day.

The number of spectators increased but never reached the crowd that we experienced during these previous years, which had a bad effect on the results of our PX.

The general feeling was good though, and the occasions of meeting the public, many friends, and many warbird lovers were numerous.

Everyone of us had a chance to have a look at the other booths, some of which

were selling many rare books, patches of all sorts, prints, and plastic models which made more than one modeller happy.

The Sunday lunch was often the typical sausage and fries which smell good the airshows, and the afternoon allowed us to enjoy the air display that came as a true reward for the difficult and wet day that we had to endure on Saturday.

Airplanes filled the sky continuously. The most significant ones were the Morane-Saulnier 406 and its Battle



Photo: B. Delfino

of France colors, the Me109 G4, the Spitfire contra-rotating prop Spitfire, the Mustang P-51D, two very nice Beechcraft Staggerwings, one of which is based in Persan-Beaumont, two Morane-Saulnier 317, one Tiger moth, several Piper Cub, Bernard Chabert's Lockheed Electra, the B-17 Pink Lady, the Junkers 52, two C-47, and the usual ballet of the WWI aircraft, a specialty of the La Ferté-Alais and the Le Bourget based Memorial Flight workshops. Two Cor-



Photo: B. Delfino

Polikarpov for liaison and observation often used by women pilots who, by night, harassed the german troops by stopping them from sleeping.

sair concluded this classic airplanes display. They were followed by a Mirage 2000, and the Breitling team of L-39's which replaced the surprizingly absent *Patrouille de France*.

The public left the site as soon as the show was over, which allowed us to pack up around 7 PM.

Thanks to the numerous members who volunteered to



Photo: B. Delfino

help, everything was packed and sorted inside the van in less than an hour. A real performance that proves the experience we got during these many years of airshows!



Photo: B. Delfino

Driving back was uneventful, and the airshow was all over around midnight, when the occupants of the van were able to get a well-deserved rest, after a week-end that will be remembered for ever by its actors!

WELCOME MICHEL DUFLOT

It is with the help of his son, our Finance Officer, col. Philippe Duflot, that we first met Michel, when he took his first flight in our Piper Cub, last July.

Michel was immediately impressed by the good feeling that prevails within our Unit, and also by the flying qualities of our little Warbird. Michel took this opportunity to tell us about his fascinating memories of WWII. His mind is as young as it used to be then, a quality that is only equalled by his kindness. Last week-end, in La Ferté-Alais, he did not hesitate to help us very actively in the preparation of our dinner. Today, he is a Friend of the French Wing. An excellent new recruit. Welcome aboard Michel!



Photo: B. Delfino

PUISEUX EN RETZ JUNE 18 & 19 2005

The program of the festivities in Puiseux en Retz has practically been finalized:

- Sany Sansing, together with Jim Lux, will be honored on the Saturday. Participants are advised to get to the village at 9:30 AM. There will be a ceremony that will also introduce Sandy to the inhabitants. He will meet veterans and their children, and will re-enact the walk he did after he bailed out of his plane. At noon, a meal will be organized by the Mairie (A participation of about 15 Euros will be asked to everyone). In the afternoon will take place the search for the remains of Sandy's plane, and the day will be concluded by a dinner in an inn at Longpont, about 10 kilometres from Puiseux.

- On Sunday will be the village annual feast with various attractions (Merry-go-round, WWII vehicles, French Wing PX, etc...), and everyone will be invited to a giant barbecue in the village school

courtyard (A participation of 13 euros will be asked to every participant). The feast will carry on throughout the afternoon, with the participation of all the Mayors of the villages located around Puiseux, and other Resistance Veterans, some of whom actually met Sandy and actively protected him from the enemy during his stay in Puiseux.

BEWARE! We need to know precisely and as soon as possible the name of all members of the French Wing, their relatives, and their friends, who will take part in these festivities and meals. Please contact col. Eric Ducreau, the "master of the show", by phone, by mail, or by email, as soon as you read these lines!

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR GUILLAUME FRÉZARD

Our Cadet Guillaume Frézard just got a new email address:

< guillaumeurezard@yahoo.fr >

WEEK-END IN DIEPPE JULY 1, 2, & 3, 2005

Col. Gilles Avenel is organizing a week-end in Dieppe on July 1, 2, and 3, where he owns a respectable size house with ample sleeping facilities: 4 double-bed rooms, 2 twin-bed rooms, and one single bed room (Bring your own sheets and towels!). The program is as follows: Flights over the coast and the 1942 landing area, the cliffs, and the lovely area. Barbecue on the airfield at noon, and restaurant on the evening of Friday and Saturday.

With an arrival on Friday evening and a departure on Sunday evening, this should turn into an excellent week-end for each of the participants. Those who wish to only stay one day can arrive either Saturday or Sunday morning and leave in the evening (Paris is only two driving hours from Dieppe).

The Spirit of Lewis will leave from Persan on Friday afternoon and return there on Sunday afternoon. Are there any volunteers for these two 1 hour flights?...

Thanks for telling Gilles and Bernard as soon as you have read this Newsletter. Hurry because on May 20, there

was already two couples (Philippe and Danielle Duflot, and Bernard and Fumiko Delfino) and one individual (Roger Gouzon) booked!

OTHER SUMMER WEEK-ENDS

We would like, on the same model as suggested by col. Gilles Avenel, to organize another week-end in Blois, with flights over the castles of the Loire valley, on August 6 & 7, if these dates suit the majority. Thanks for letting us know if you are interested.

TOURS AIRSHOW - JUNE 25 & 26

Our Piper Cub will take part in the airshow in Tours at the above dates. Patrick and Philippe will ferry the plane there and back, and will represent the CAF French Wing during the week-end, helped by Christophe Bastide who will deal with a miniature PX.

If you are interested by a participation, thanks for telling Bernard as soon as possible.

MEMBERS UP TO DATE WITH THE FRENCH WING ANNUAL DUES

Gilles Avenel, Bob Ayars, Lilian Ayars, Paul Barland, Christophe Bastide, Bunty Bateman, Guy Bortolus, Damien Bourgaux, Henri Bourrassier, Bertrand Bousset, Claude Cardinal, Didier Cardinal, Ernest Cartigny, Jean Chatel, William Davies, Jean-Christophe Debuisson, Dominique Deudon, Bernard Delfino, Fumiko Delfino, Claude De Marco, Jacques Delorme, Yves Donjon, Stéphane Duchemin, Philippe Duflot, Eric Ducreau, John Francis, Marcel Francisci, Christian Frézard, Guillaume Frézard, Claude Gascon, Louis-Jean Gioux, Lucien Goubard, Roger Gouzon, Patrick Gremez, Roy Grinnell, Irène Grinnell, Aubrey Hair, Barbara Hair, Yves Houssin, Rick Hudlow, Louise Hudlow, Alain Jimenez, William Katsones, David Kelly, Julien Lepelletier, Jacques Leroux, George Lodge, Jim Lux, Cédric Malhaire, Georges Marcelin, Jean-Claude Miniggio, Guy Perrin, Michel Perrin, Patrick Pierre-Pierre, David Price, Hervé Quefféléant, Guy Robert, John P. Roeder, Sandy Sansing, Serge Séguret, Semaan Soueid, Haruo Tanaka, Alphonse Thiry, Christian Tournemine, Gilles Troussart, Roger Vaucamp, Bernard Violette, Orlan Wichman, Stella Wilkes.

WHAT'S J-3 FLYING?

Article by col. Gilles Avenel - Photos USAF and B. Delfino

One used to say it is easy to fly a J-3, but it is difficult to fly her *well*. Generally speaking, all that regards this mythical aircraft can be stated as easy, but actually demanding.

First step is to get on board the aircraft. It is not difficult in itself. But anyone who has attended the process would agree that it is not in everybody's capability to complete the exercise with style, especially if slightly over-weighted (I am not pointing at anybody...), or a bit dull because of age and responsibilities.

It is totally forbidden to step on the wing struts, even for a discreet help. You have to use a little step in welded steel tube on the fuselage, suitable for reaching the rear seat, but totally helpless for getting to the front seat. You may also climb on the right wheel, but this approach may prove unstable and restricted at a later stage. Anyway, do not be concerned if you feel clumsy when you find yourself wriggling to get there. I am yet to see somebody, but a few slender ladies, climbing in our "Spirit of Lewis" without some contortions that are not too dignified, and attract a smile on the face of those who have not yet attempted the manoeuvre. Keep calm, it will be their turn to be jeered at...

Now the passenger is seated in the front seat and you pilot are comfortably established in the rear seat. Not totally logical (try to do that in a car...), but due to the fact that you have to sit rear when flying solo, because of the centre of gravity. You feel good, there is enough room, although you will not



Painting: Roy Grinnell

be long to realise that feet position is not easy: rudder pedals are disposed in a narrow walkway on each side of the front seat, and your ankles rub against the seat sides. You will tell me that it is a matter of spreading your legs. Not really, otherwise your shoe soles edge will flex the fuselage fabric and crack the paint. In this regard, you pilots should avoid bulky footwear: consider rather ballet than ski shoes...

Now let's start the engine. Fuel open, throttle set, mags on, the prop can be swung. After priming a bit, the engine will go live easily. Let it warm up for a few minutes, then do your checks. There is no real need for a check-list, with all due respect for those who see themselves alike a 747 captain when they are in a Cessna 150: mag check, trim set, carb heat test, low revs test, and we are ready to go. We wave the chocks away, and taxi.

Whilst taxiing, a thought for the quantity of fuel (always useful), transceiver and transponder (frequencies, battery level), altimeter setting. There we are! J-3 idiosyncrasies catch you up: as pilot you are in the rear seat, when

all instruments are on the front panel, and the altimeter is consequently out of your reach. Either you are flying solo, and there is no alternative: you unfasten your belt, pull up your bottom and lean forward in order to reach the clock by the tip of your fingers, hoping that in the meantime the plane is not going to move, as you can no longer keep your feet on the brake. Or you have a passenger and you have choice: if it is a charming lady, you can follow the same process as if you were alone. This gives you the opportunity to put your head on her left shoulder, graze her right shoulder with your arm pretending you try to reach the altimeter, and whisper in a detached manner "so, ready?..." just as if she was going to meet the experience of her life... If it is a male passenger, I advise you against this, it can make him nervous. I rather suggest you ask him to set the altimeter on your behalf, what he will generally do quite readily with the satisfaction of being helpful.

Just a point when you taxi: get used to reach the brake pedals. Activated by the heels, they are quite small, more or less wedged under the front seat, so that you cannot reach them if your feet are naturally positioned. However, you will have to get to them right away when landing, in order to keep on a straight run even if there is some crosswind. If you fail to get there, it is a guaranteed ground loop when you are slowing down and rudder becomes less effective. Fortunately, at that speed, it looks more like an unexpected U-turn, but I can tell you, by personal experience, that your ego is damaged (better though than prop or wing tips).



Photo: B. Delfino

It is now time to line up. You go for full throttle and, as soon as the plane rolls, you push the stick forward. The tail raises quickly, generally with a slight swing to the left, that you are going to control at once with the rudder. This one is quite effective, without being over-powered, so that it is not too difficult to keep straight. You maintain the plane in a fly-off attitude (do not worry, you would really need to push hard for the propeller to grind the tips), you count slowly up to ten, and the J-3 takes off, though you can feel that the 65 hp deployed by the engine have to work hard to overcome weight and drag. Admittedly, the "Cub" does not leap to the sky!

Elevator is heavy to start with, but becomes lighter with speed, without ever turning to really light. If the runway surface is not as smooth as a billiard table, we are going to notice during the 200 yards of your take off run, that the undercarriage has a natural tendency to amplify even modest lumps and bumps, instead of absorbing them. Generally, you find yourself aloft after a last bounce when you come near to 45 mph. This makes you a bit wary, as it warns you about what may happen when landing. We will come back on that...

Because of modest engine power, you have to think a bit forward when flying low. When taking off, to start with. Colonels who attended the Montbéliard fly-in still remember a rather marginal take off, two on board and full of petrol by a hot afternoon, when they saw with anxiety "Spirit of Lewis" who appeared to be hardly flying by the end of the runway, passing under roof level of some nearby houses. This was fortunately an optical illusion, these houses being actually built on a higher ground by the side of the runway. However, being myself at the helm, I had to acknowledge that climb rate did not exceed 200 feet/minute, and it was taking a lot of time laboriously gaining height. Similarly, if you are flying low, do not get trapped by surroundings: even modest hills can turn into impassable obstacles if you have not prepared climbing well enough in advance. Finally when landing it is not recommended to let the "Cub" drop too much under the requested descent gra-

dient: you may have some difficulties to get back there, and it is not proper behaviour to touch earth before the runway, or to hook barbed wires lining the airfield.



Initial climb rate normally stabilises at about 500 feet/minute. Speed in that phase is not critical, but preferably around 60 mph.

First thing you notice is the fact that the passenger, just before you, is totally blocking the view of the instrument panel. You twist your neck on the left then on the right, trying to catch a glimpse of the speed indicator, or the altimeter, or the revs, or the compass. No way you can contemplate the four at once, as usual. Do not mind, you will soon be used to get your bearings from your feelings. By the ear, you will assess your speed, air flow noise will tell you about flight regime and, when you are cruising, you will quickly recognise engine rev speed to within 50 rpm.

Your steering? Well, when you are established, you should not vary from it, as you were taught at the flying school. Actually you have to come back to basics rather than rely on the constant and feverish checking of the multiplicity of dials, clockmeters and indicators that now adorn modern aircraft, although useless most of the time: I sometimes suspect their real purpose is to make the pilot feel important.

When waggling controls, you will feel that the J-3 has heavy ailerons, light rudder and average elevators. Anyway, they are all very efficient, so that it is possible to fly the aircraft in as big a space as a pocket handkerchief. Well, as long as you have strong muscles. Whilst you can fly the J-3 using the pressure of your fingers when weather is calm, controls may become rather

tiring when air is turbulent and you have to "whip the cream" to keep the plane on track: her light wing-loading makes her dancing like a cork when it is bumpy, and you will soon feel controls weight on your arms. You will quickly learn the trick: in these circumstances, let the aircraft fidget around without fighting against, knowing that she will naturally tend to come back to her original position and you will just have to accompany her gently back there.

The major weakness of the J-3 is her cruising speed. She is excruciatingly slow. With two on board, she will be lingering at 75 mph. A bit of head wind, and she will soon be struggling to reach 60 mph.

Avoid flying along a motorway, you will find it annoying to see all vehicles faster than you. Rather fly over the ocean, where it is unlikely that sailing boats overtake you... Short legs (1.45 hour of petrol, plus reserves), combined to this low speed, result in a very limited range of 130 miles. This is obviously an issue when "Spirit of Lewis" is invited to an airshow or a fly-in far from her home field.

It has to be acknowledged that the J-3 has not been designed for long hauls. The "Cub" offers unequalled observation facilities, which get on well with limited speed, in order to maximise them.

Do try a late flight by a glorious summer evening, when the air is so calm and smooth as silk, landscape gilded by sunset light and you can spot details only through contrasted shade. You fly with glass panel and door open (this is cleared in the pilot's manual), and you just feel as if you were seated in an armchair drifting slowly above surroundings. Most people you fly over in village streets, farm courtyards or fields do not even hold up their head when you pass above. Another J-3 major feature is her low level of noise when you are strolling lazily at 1,900 rpm and 60 mph. It even happened to me to hear from the plane the squeal of the swifts disturbed by the "Cub" flying across their tempestuous hunt.

The J-3 has no flaps, because she does not need it (that is a good reason). On

the one hand, this aircraft is not slippery, as those you need several minutes after closing the throttle to reach the requested approach speed. Ten seconds are enough with the "Cub"!

On the other hand this aircraft has the most impressive sideslip performance. If you are too high or too fast (it is eventually the same issue) compared to the ideal descent gradient, crab your approach and the J-3 will sink at a high rate, like suspended under a parachute.

I sometimes purposely turn the "Cub" in final with 200 feet excess height, for the fun of a good slideslip approach, curved if possible. Do not forget though to straighten up in due time, aileron in the wind, and round out. In a standard approach, the aircraft is pretty stable, provided you are properly established at 60 mph.

That is when you are going to ask your passenger a bit abruptly to stop wriggling on the left, then on the right, obstructing the view inevitably on the side where you need to look at the instrument: left for the speed indicator, right for the altimeter. This is particularly irritating if you are not well established on the appropriate parameters, and you have to contort yourself to access essential information needed to bring the aircraft back where she should be.

Admittedly, if you wander off the axis, you will not have to struggle too much to get back, thanks to the efficiency of controls and low speed. However, as above mentioned, be careful not to drop too much below normal descent gradient, especially if you are heavily loaded on a hot day. You could then have a bit of a fright in realising that your 65 hp do not manage to lift you up as quickly as it would be necessary. Do elect to be too high rather than too low: in the former case, a bit of slideslip and there you are. In the latter case...

Transition between descent, level off and round out is not too difficult: the

advantage of high wing aircraft with excellent visibility like the J-3 is to enable pilots to more easily judge height

air, comfortably enough to jump over the ditch and touch on the numbers!



Photo: USAF

when skimming the runway. Now if you get it wrong, and let your wheels touch ground whilst you are still too fast, you will be surprised by how high you can bounce up. This potentially embarrassing feature can be illustrated by the following story I was told by a flight instructor...

A bit drowsy after lunch in a warm summer early afternoon, feeling rather laid back as the student was supposed to be ready for his first solo flight, he realised lately that they were definitely too low in short final. Taking over, he banged on full throttle but could not catch up. It was now clear that they were going to undershoot the runway,



Photo: USAF

an especially worrying prospect as there was a drainage ditch cutting across ten yards from the runway threshold. The flight instructor had the bright idea to take benefit of the "Cub" inclination for high bouncing, that has humiliated so many pilots: hitting ground deliberately before the runway, the energy liberated by the tension on the bungee springs propelled the aircraft ten feet up in the

During the few seconds between rounding out and reaching stall speed (40 mph), you hold off, gently bringing the stick back, nose raises progressively, forward vision reduces. If everything goes well (it never happens), the stick will be fully aft at the very moment when the three wheels in the same time "kiss" the ground and... surprise, the "Cub" will however be gently skipping, as if she was reluctant quitting flying.

What happens when things are not going so well (rounding out when still too high, sticking back too early, a bit too fast, a gust of weather-cocking crosswind, and so forth...)?

Simply there will be a spell of hops, but admittedly these can be of variable amplitude, from just a bit frustrating to really concerning. In fact, the trick is: do as if you were not affected. If bounces are not to the point of questioning safety (and you would need to seriously apply yourself to get there), you just have to keep stick back, and await calmly until she gently settles, with just a little burst of power to put it right if needed.

Actually, the J-3 is a joker. If she realises you are humourless, she will push you for the sake of proving you are not the top-gun you think you are. If you take it easy, calm and smiling, she will soon stop kidding, and will respect you as you respect her.

Landing is the proof of the axiom I had started with: it is not difficult to bring a J-3 back to earth in reasonable safety conditions, whereas it is hard (read very hard), to land her *well*. And that is one of the big assets of this plane: you will always enjoy flying her, because even if you have quite a number of hours under your belt, focus and attention are always requested. Failing to, you will have to face a hefty bar bill from a flock of (always) thirsty colonels...



VOUGHT F-4U/AU-1 CORSAIR



By Colonels John P. Roeder and Michel Perrin - Painting by Jean Bellis - Photos B. Delfino & Marine Nationale



Was the Corsair or the Mustang the best American fighter of WWII? Was the Corsair or the Hellcat the best US Navy fighter of WWII? These questions have often been discussed, but a conclusive answer never emanated. Clearly these three aircraft were among the six or seven best fighters produced by friend and foe during WWII. Each of these three excelled though in a specific basic task. The Mustang was surely the best long range escort fighter of the war, the Hellcat gained its reputation as a carrier based fighter, and the Corsair distinguished itself in the low level ground attack role operating mainly from US-marine Pacific airstrips.

In one way the Corsair was however unbeaten. It was in production for 10 years. That is longer than any other WWII fighter. In total 11,418 were built during, and another 1,153 after the war until production ceased in December 1952. Thus it also was the last piston engine fighter in production in the U.S.

Until VJ-Day Corsairs flew 64,051 missions, of which only 9,581 were from carriers. The reason for this will be understood by further reading of this essay. During the war Corsairs were credited with 2,140 aerial victories for a loss of

only 189 of their own, which gives a kill-to-loss ratio of 11,3 to 1. This is not as good as the Hellcat, but it must be taken into account that the Corsair was used predominantly in a ground attack role.

The Corsair was a heavy aircraft of formidable proportions for a machine designed as a fighter. Its outstanding external features were its enormous nose, a gigantic propeller and a massive inverted gull wing. The latter allowed to keep the landing gear short and the outer wings to be folded upwards while still clearing the roof of the hangar decks of the available or planned carriers at the time.



Photo: B. Delfino

Much advanced thinking had gone into the Corsair's aerodynamic and structural design. Innovations were the use of spot welding in the skin to reduce drag, a backward retracting landing gear and a hydraulic system serving for folding the wings, lowering the deck arrester hook

and loading the guns. The initial fitting of the new 1,850 hp Pratt & Whitney XR-2800 Double Wasp was another quantum jump.

All of the above were however risk factors which made snags and delays in the development phase inevitable. Also because of its complex airframe, in particular due to the complicated wing the aircraft was costly to manufacture.

The contract for building a single prototype of the new fighter was placed by the Navy in June of 1938. As XF4U-1 it first flew in May 1940. Before the end of the year it reached a speed of 404 mph (650 km/h), which was faster than any US fighter then in the air. In June 1941 the Navy ordered a first batch of 584 F4U-1s, and it was then that the fighter was named the Corsair.

Deliveries began in July of 1942. The production aircraft had their armament increased from one .30 cal and three .50 cal guns to finally six .50 caliber weapons all in the wings. It also had self-sealing fuel tanks and improved armor protection. To restore the fuel lost in the wing due to the reinforced armament, and to further increase the fuel capacity a large tank was installed close to the

center of gravity directly ahead of the cockpit. This required the fuselage to be stretched forward and the cockpit to be moved back, which left the pilot with over 12 feet (3,7 m) of nose, blocking his forward visibility on the ground and at landing to an extent that the Navy considered the aircraft as unsuited for carrier operation.

Consequently the F4U-1s were initially issued almost exclusively to the Marine Corps, which took them into action from advanced airstrips in the Pacific islands in February of 1943.

By August eight Marine Corps squadrons, but also one land-based Navy squadron were operating the type. Very rapidly now the Corsair established not only a high reputation as a most effective ground attack weapon, but its superiority over Japanese fighters also became apparent.

To improve forward vision the cockpit was finally raised by seven inches (17,8 cm), and the height of the tailwheel leg increased. Also a frameless clear-view type canopy was fitted to improve side and, to an extent, rearward vision. Furthermore to correct a pronounced wing drop on final approach a small spoiler was added to the starboard wing. Another shortcoming of the aircraft was its tendency to bounce badly on touchdown. This was cured by a redesigned oleo strut with long stroke and low rebound.

With the above modifications, which were introduced with aircraft S/N 689, the Navy finally cleared the Corsair for carrier operation in April 1944 as F4U-1A. From then the aircraft did a great job also as a shipboard fighter, although the Hellcat remained the Navy's workhorse in this category until the end of WWII.



The major early production version of the Corsair was the F4U-1 (4,678 articles incl. the -1A and -1D of 1944), the very similar F3A-1 built by Brewster (735) and the FG-1, FG-1A (1,694) and FG-1D (2,458) all manufactured by Good Year.

The final wartime production model was the F4U-4 (2,350) powered by the 2,100 hp R-2800-18W which also had provisions for carrying a 1,000 lb (454 kg) bomb or four HVAR rockets under each wing. A total of 1,912 of the latter had been built by VJ-Day, but relatively few saw operational service.

It should be noted that during the war 2,012 Corsairs of various models had been supplied to Britain's Royal Navy under Lend-Lease. Another 370 went to the RNZAF.

After the end of the war an additional 438 F4U-4s were built. New postwar models of the Corsair were the F4U-5 fighter bomber (223) with a 2,300 hp R-2800-32W and four 20-mm wing guns, the F4U-5N night fighter (314) with a radom below the starboard wing and other

specialized variants such as the low altitude AU-1 (111) with increased armor and doubled bombload capability.

US Navy and Marine Corps Corsairs of above mentioned versions served with distinction in a close air support as well as an interdiction

role throughout the Korean war until the armistice was signed in July 1953.

The French Aéronavale had begun to show interest for the Corsair in 1951 with the objective of re-equipping its carrier squadrons. By then the aircraft had not only demonstrated its effectiveness in a close air support role in Korea, but its capability to operate from relatively

small escort carriers and the fact that it was still in production made it particularly attractive for the French.

At the time these were in the midst of their **Indo-China** war, which to an extent was comparable to the Korean conflict at least as far as the use of fighter-bombers was concerned.



In the framework of the Military Aid Program for France the US agreed rapidly so supply 94 F4U-7s, a variant specifically adapted to French needs, plus 69 AU-1s taken from American stocks. At the end of 1952 the first 45 F4U-7s were shipped to Indo-China aboard the light carrier La Fayette (ex. USS Langley).

The newly formed Aéronavale squadron 14F received the aircraft just in time to use them against the Viêt-minh, when these were on their way to march into Laos from Western Tonkin. From Hanoi-Bach-Mai the Aéronavale operated its Corsairs intensively in a close air support as well as an interdiction role until the end of the conflict. Only two aircraft appear to have been lost in operations, before 14F was transferred back to France after the armistice had become effective on 1 August 1954.

With the armistice however the French did not leave Indo-China at once. They were granted a two year transition period for ending their military and administra-





tive presence in their former colony. Aboard the La Fayette which remained in Indo-Chinese waters, Corsair squadron 12F took the place of 14F until the carrier was ordered back to France in May 1955.

It was replaced by the Bois-Belleau (ex USS Belleau Wood), which with 12F aboard returned to France at the end of the year. A second tour of the La Fayette, now with Corsair squadron 15F aboard ended in June 1956, one month before the transition period came to an end.

In June 1956 also news came through that Egypt's President Nasser had nationalized the Anglo-French owned **Suez Canal**. An ultimatum by Britain and France to Nasser in October requesting him to withdraw for 10 mls (16 km) on each side of the Canal or it would be occupied, was rejected by the Egyptian.

By then Anglo-French plans for a joint amphibious attack in coordination with the Israelis who were to start a land offensive across the Sinai had been well elaborated. On 29 October the Israelis launched their attack. Although Armée de l'Air F-84Fs supported them



Painture: Roy Grinnell

effectively, the air war to prepare the Anglo-French landings began in all earnest only on 1 November.

In the morning R.A.F, Armée de l'Air and Fleet Air Arm squadrons went simultaneously into action, with Aéronavale F4U-7s following

later in the day. The French Navy had dispatched its carriers La Fayette and Arromanches (ex British Colossus) to the eastern Mediterranean into a position some 100 mls (160 km) north of the Egyptian coast-line. Arromanches had 12 Corsairs of squadron 14F plus 10 Grumman ASW TBMs of 9F aboard, and



La Fayette 18 Corsairs of 15F and six of 14F. The number of Corsairs aboard the Arromanches had been kept at a minimum since the 25 knot speed of the carrier was insufficient for catapult launching of this aircraft at zero wind.

Both squadrons participated in the preparation and the support of the airborne landings of 5 November and the amphibious assault on the 6th, until under U.S. and Soviet pressure a ceasefire was ordered for the night.

Aéronavale Corsairs were also used in the **Algerian conflict** as the following selected examples will illustrate.

When in early February 1958 Invaders massively bombed the Tunisian town of Sakiet as an answer to the Tunisians

shooting at French Aircraft patrolling over the border-line, Aéronavale Corsairs were active in suppressing the Tunisian anti-aircraft guns.

As most of the supplies needed by the FLN were smuggled by caravans into Algeria from Tunisia the French had erected a 200 miles (320 km) long electrified fence along the border. This however did not prevent guerillas to infiltrate in Algeria from Tunisia.

A climax was reached when at the end of April some 820 of them succeeded in crossing the fence near Souk-Arras. They were immediately pinned down by French troops flown in by helicopters.

For nearly a week Corsairs together with other aircraft pounded FLN reception camps in the area, and 620 of the guerillas were killed or captured. There were no further major attempts to cross the border.

In the last major showdown of the war, which took place in October 1961, Corsairs together with T-28s massively provided close air support to the French ground troops. Therewith ended the extraordinary combat career of an aircraft that had fought in five wars.

Corsairs however lingered on in service with the Aéronavale for a few more years, until the last were phased out in 1964.

DATA TABLE

CORSAIR AU-1

Description: Single seat fighter-bomber.
 Propulsion: 1 x 2300 HP Pratt & Whitney R-2800-83W de CV
 Span: 12,50 m (41 ft)
 Gross weight: 9799 kg (19398 lb)
 Max speed*: 383 km/h (238 mph)
 Cruise speed: 295 km/h (183 mph)
 Range: 800 km (497 mls)
 Service ceiling: 6035 m (19800 ft)
 Armament: four 20 mm canons, 4 x 454 kg (1000 lb) bombs, or 10 HVAR rockets.
 * at 3000 m (9800 ft).

Note: There were significant differences between the characteristics of the low altitude AU-1 and the F4U models. The F4U-7 for example had a max. gross weight of 14,670 lb (6,654 kg), a max. speed at the altitude of 446 mph (718 km/h), range was 1,005 mls (1,617 km) and service ceiling 41,500 ft (12,650 m). Armament consisted of six .50 cal (12.7 mm) guns, and drop load was half of that of the AU-1.

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

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GIFTS TO THE HANGAR ACQUISITION PROJECT

We wish to thank the following members and friends for their generosity and the help they have given to the hangar acquisition project this month. Most of these gifts are the result of selling items they donated to the French Wing PX, and the others are straight donations:

Christophe Bastide, Bunty Bateman, Bernard Delfino, Fumiko Delfino, Claude De Marco, Yves Donjon, Michel Duflot, Christian Falentin, Marcel Francisci, Claude Gascon, Roy Grinnell, Barbara et Aubrey Hair, and Eric Jansonne.

The substantial amount collected this month has made this project jump forward significantly since, today, it exceeds 5800 Euros!

Following the recent decision to keep the priority to this hangar project, we have changed the scale value of this "hangarometer" to represent that project alone.

IMPORTANT

We wish to reiterate our offer to pay your French Wing annual dues in blocks of 10 years, just like we did for the L Bird project. Those who are interested simply have to send a cheque of 10 x 50 = 500 Euros to our Finance Officer, col. Philippe Duflot.

