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# AIRSHOW

CAF FRENCH WING - BULLETIN MENSUEL - MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 16 - N° 9 - September 2011

## EDITORIAL

Even though I have been a CAF member since 1994, and traveled to Midland each year since 1991 until 2009 inclusive, I was totally unaware of the story about the New Zealand Wing's Beechcraft C-45. It's completely by chance that I heard about it during an exchange of emails with Joe Cowan who is part of the members so unfairly banned from the CAF last year.

The multitude of obstacles that all participants in that project have overcome thanks to their hard work, their generosity, their willpower, and their dedication to the CAF and the New Zealand Wing, only add more value to its success.

You will probably wonder why we should resurrect a story which is 25 years old? First of all, to emphasize the formidable technical and human exploit that it represents, but also, and especially, to show all our members and friends what a group of men and women, united around one noble and ambitious project, can do together. A project that would have failed if just one of them, in the USA or in New Zealand, did not give his very best.

So here is this beautiful story which, I'm convinced, will fascinate you as much as I was when I discovered it. An adventure so incredible, so significant, so extraordinary, and so well in line with the goals of the CAF, the real one, that all these actors would deserve to see their names added to the list of those already part of the CAF Hall of Fame!

I wish to warmly thank all those who helped this edition and its illustration. Thanks to them, it only took a few exchanges of emails and a few days so that I had the texts and photographs necessary to do this issue of our Newsletter. This too is the famous CAF *Esprit de Corps*!

Bernard

## “WICHITA WENCH”



© Trevor Davies

**IN DECEMBER 1986 TWO CAF MEMBERS EMBARKED ON A MORE THAN 9000 MILES LONG ADVENTURE IN ORDER TO DELIVER A BEECHCRAFT C-45 “EXPEDITOR” TO THE NEW ZEALAND WING**



**THIS EXTRAORDINARY - BUT TOO LITTLE KNOWN - ADVENTURE IS PUBLISHED IN ITS ENTIRETY IN THIS SUMMER 2011 SPECIAL ISSUE**

**CAF COLONELS, IF YOU ARE UP TO DATE WITH YOUR CAF ANNUAL DUES, TAKE PART IN THE 2011 ELECTIONS FOR THE THREE VACANT POSITIONS! (Procedure on page 3)**

**THE FRENCH WING GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL TAKE PLACE ON OCTOBER 29, 2011, IN ERMENONVILLE**

## 2011 FRENCH WING GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 2011 French Wing General Assembly will take place on October 29, 2011, at Roger Gouzon's home in Ermenonville, from 14:00 until 18:00.

### AGENDA

The meeting will follow the usual scheme:

- Summary of the past year.
- Wing's moral report.
- Administrative report.
- Financial report.
- Projects achieved or failed.
- Current projects.
- Projects for next year.
- Piper Cub operation.
- Piper Cub finances.
- Aircraft of our members
- Elections.
- Oral questions (Off the record)
- Awards for 2011.

If you are a member of the French Wing and wish to add other subjects to this agenda, please write to the French Wing's home address before September 30, 2011, using mail, fax, or email.

### 2011 ELECTION

These elections are for the position of **President** and, exceptionally, of **Adjutant**, following the cooptation of Noël Barange earlier this year. This Adjutant will be elected for a period of one year, until the 2012 elections which will concern the very same position but this time for 3 years, until 2015.

Should you wish to apply for one of these two positions, please send your written application by mail only, and before October 14, 2011.

## ANNUAL DINNER

This meeting will be followed by a drink and a dinner which we will cook ourselves like we do every year.

If you feel like a "Chef" and wish to volunteer for the cooking of this meal, please advise our President as soon as possible.

The individual price of this dinner will be 15 euros. You may invite who you want as long as you send us a check of the correct amount before October 14, 2011, specifying if your guest(s) will attend the General Assembly.

### ACCOMODATION

The rooms that our member Roger Gouzon graciously makes available for those who travel over long distances are already booked, a fact that Roger will confirm if you call him on 03 44 60 11 47.

Unless someone cancels his participation, you will need to book hotel rooms in the various hotels of the area at a reasonable price.

## 2011 PONTOISE AIR SHOW

We need at least four members on September 3: Two will fly the Piper Cub to Pontoise, and two will drive the PX van. Together they will setup the booth and will tie down the Piper Cub and put it to bed next to the booth.

The following day, after the air show, we will need 4 members to pack up the PX and the equipment, and load the van which will be driven to Roger's home to unload the PX.

Should you be available, please make yourself known as soon as possible!

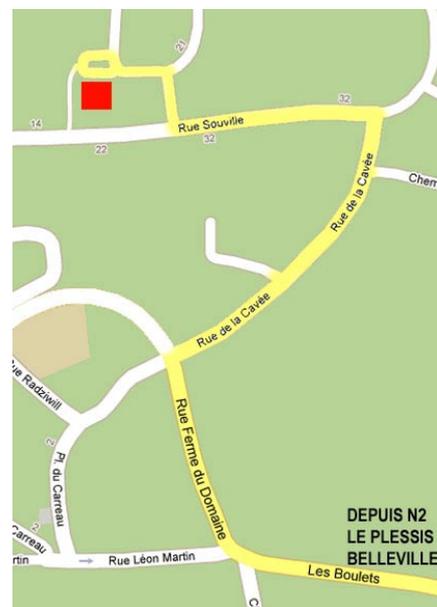
## 2011 FRENCH WING EVENTS

- Pontoise air show on September 4th.
- Aéropuces du Musée de l'Air in Le Bourget on October 22 and 23, 2011.
- French Wing General Assembly on October 29, 2011. It will take place in Roger Gouzon's house as usual, that is to say in Ermenonville.

## 2011 PIPER CLUB FRANCE EVENTS

- Escapade in Nuits Saint Georges on September 24 & 25.

*Note: The Annual Gathering in 2012 will take place in Chambéry on June 15, 16, & 17.*



Here is Roger's full address to get to the French Wing general assembly:

**Roger Gouzon - 2 La Prairie**

**Souville - 60950 - Ermenonville**

Coming from Le Plessis-Belleville and/or the N2, follow the yellow path. The red square represents Roger's house.

## 2011 CAF GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND GENERAL STAFF ELECTIONS

**The CAF General Assembly will take place in Midland on October 7, 2011, from 15:00.**

The elections which will take place during this meeting are for 3 positions:

- The one vacated by Neils Agather who is reaching the end of his term in December 2011. Neils Agather will apply for another term.
- The one vacated by Mark Novak who, last July, chose to become a paid employee of the CAF Headquarters with the paid job of *Chief pilot, aircraft operations and fleet management*. He was temporarily replaced by Kim Pardon nominated at this position by the General Staff until the next General Assembly. Kim Pardon will apply for this position.
- The one vacated by Ollie Crawford who was elected last year for one year to replace Clay Lacy who had resigned. Ollie Crawford will not apply for another term.

Those of our members who are colonels and up to date with their annual dues, will be able to choose from the candidates presented by the election committee, i.e.: Larry Turner, Neils Agather, and Kim Pardon, and the candidates from the floor whose names will be known on the day of the General Assembly.

Those who will be in Midland for this General Assembly will vote there physically, and those who won't be there must request an Absentee Ballot. Even if you intend to go to Midland, we advise you to request a Ballot, because should something happen that would

stop you from attending this meeting, you will still be able to vote with this "emergency" Ballot.

You must ask for your Ballot before October 3, 2011, by fax (432 563 8046), or by email (klawrence@cafhq.org), or by mail addressed to Keith Lawrence, Vice-President of Administration.

It is only after the candidates from the floor have applied during the CAF General Assembly that we will know their names. Therefore, the Ballots will be sent to you soon after, together with the list of all candidates. You will then need to fill the Ballot correctly and mail it so that it gets to Midland no later than November 8, 2011.

The result of these elections will be announced on November 16, 2011.

Here is the message we suggest you use for requesting your Ballot:

***From: Col. Name and first name  
# Your CAF Regular ID number (Even if you are a Life Member !)***

***Dear Keith Lawrence,  
Please send me an absentee ballot for the 2011 General Staff Elections.***

***Please acknowledge this email*** (If you request your Ballot via email).

Keith Lawrence will send you an email confirming he received your request message.

**Even if you don't know the candidates, do ask for a Ballot!**

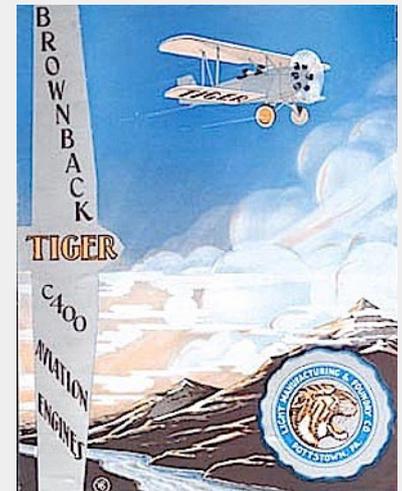
Once all candidates are known, we will be able to give you the necessary information and details so that you can choose three names objectively from the list.

## CUB QUIZ



**Q: Why, how, and who gave William Piper and Gilbert Taylor's little airplane the name "Cub"?**

A: The first aircraft designed and manufactured by Gilbert Taylor had an engine named **Brownback Tiger Kitten** of just 20 HP.



Inspired by the name of this engine, the company's accountant, **Gilbert Hadrel** suggested the name of "Cub" which was adopted and retained.

The first flight of this plane was on September 12, 1930, but it wasn't really a success since the plane never climbed more than 5 feet. Another engine, made by Continental, giving 37 HP, was chosen for the first airplane named Cub: The **Taylor E-2 Cub**.



# FROM “DEAD COW” TO “DAIRY FLAT”

*We very warmly thank for their priceless assistance the following people: The author of this text: Ailene Lewis, Joe Cowan and Earl long actors of this memorable raid ([www.beechbaby.com](http://www.beechbaby.com)), David Atchinson of the New Zealand Wing, and the photographers Trevor Davies, Philip Treweek, and Colin Hunter. Page layout and graphics: Bernard Delfino.*

Airborne island-hopping from Monterey USA to Auckland New Zealand, can make the Pacific Ocean seem a vast no man's land to the pilot of any small plane. Recently, a small two-engined, C-45 Beech Expeditor must have looked like a lonely gnat in the sky to the pilot of any passing jet.

This particular 33 year old World War II Beech made her way eventually from Wichita to Monterey, from Monterey to Hilo in Hawaii, from Hilo to Christmas Island, from Christmas Island to Pago Pago, and from Pago Pago to Auckland.

There was only a slim chance that any commercial pilot would have known that the little Beech was on her second try to fly safely to the Confederate Air Force New Zealand Base at Dairy Flat on Auckland's North Shore. Not many people in New Zealand knew much about the two American pilots either, as they embarked on a modern-day adventure just for the hell of it, and in the process of doing it, they happened to make a little bit of



history in a world where most adventures have been played out, and history mostly belongs in books.

Earl Long is the owner of the Westport “Dead Cow” International Airport at Wichita, and Joe Cowan is in computers. Both are experienced pilots with interests on the same wave-length as the New Zealanders, whom Joe had met at Harlingen, Texas at the World

War II air shows. Earl met his first “KIWI” under the wing of the C-45 at an auction in Plains, Kansas in October of 1985. Neither of them had any idea that their early meetings with New Zealanders was the first step towards the greatest adventure of their lives.

Wing Leader Allen Rowell and Joe Cowan, who lives in Wichita, Kansas and is a member of the New Zealand Wing of the Confederate Air Force, had been in on the plan from the beginning, as they had heard that a plane was up for auction at Plains, Kansas, west of Wichita. The plane was in fairly good condition, and it seemed to meet the criteria for the New Zealand Wing's restoration program.



*In flight, the Beechcraft C-45/D18S (N1182F) bought by Earl Long for the New Zealand Wing during an auction in Plains (Kansas), in October 1985.*

© Joe Cowan

The New Zealand Wing had a Piper Cub in operation already, and a Harvard World War II plane almost overhauled for active service. By this time, plans for a 583 square metre hangar at Dairy Flat were underway, and it was completed by the middle of 1986, with its spare space rented out as hangarage for several privately-owned planes. If an American plane could be acquired, it had a ready-made home.

There were several reasons why this particular Beech was considered a suitable acquisition. One reason was that many RNZAF personnel had trained on C-45s at Winnipeg in Canada with the Empire Air Training scheme during World War II (photo reconnaissance, navigational training, conversion to multi-engined aircraft, etc, and as well the more luxuriously fitted C-45s were used for VIP transport).

This “Beech” at Plains, Kansas, had all the trimmings, forest green leather upholstery, with a shade of carpet to match, and even a chemical toilet!



*Joe Cowan and Earl Long pose before the “Wichita Wench”*

© Joe Cowan

Secondly, one C-45 had been assembled at Hobsonville, Auckland, for the use of the American Legation, during the latter part of the war and was based at Paraparaumu. That particular aircraft, together with several DC-3's, had been a familiar sight on VIP transport jobs throughout New Zealand. After the war, it was dismantled and returned to the USA, so that it was lost to us forever.

And now came the news that a replacement C-45 Expeditor was coming up for auction by private owner near Wichita in Kansas and possibly at a price that even the “Kiwi Dollar” could afford!

The aim of the CAF, whether in New Zealand, Australia, USA, Britain or any other country, is to acquire and maintain World War II aircraft and to keep them up to flying standard, not just as a museum piece but as members of a collection of operational aircraft of flight and historical significance.

Year by year, the chance of acquiring and maintaining these aircraft is diminishing, so that each single aircraft saved from extinction is a notable milestone. The CAF members and their families, who watch each drama of acquisition unfold, are the people closest to the planning, efforts, hopes, and fears which go into the final achievement of keeping one more aircraft.

So the C-45 Beech, later to be named the “Wichita Wench”, was to evoke more excitement and interest during the next two years within the CAF and travel further than most other aircraft of her size and vintage.

Most World War II planes of this type were to remain at American bases, or were to be scrapped, but the “Wichita Wench” was destined to attempt a *rendez-vous* on the other side of the world. However, with an economical flying speed of only 145 mph, she was going to take a little longer to get where she was going, and there was the question of who was going to fly her to New Zealand along with all her problems of long-range flying.

Allen Rowel learned of the upcoming auction about five days before its scheduled date on October 3, 1985. In a moment, the decision was made to fly directly from Auckland to Wichita, then to Plains, Kansas to inspect the airplane. The plane was exactly what the New Zealand Wing needed, but now the most important question arose: How to “buy” her as the auction required immediate cash payment, and at this point, the financing was not in place. Furthermore, there



*The cockpit of the C-45 as it is today*

© Colin Hunter



© Joe Cowan

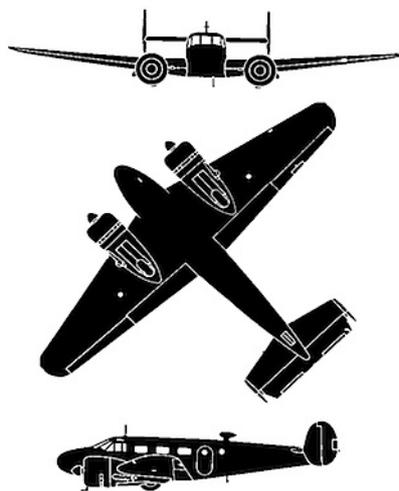
*Earl Long and Joe Cowan searching for spare parts*

appeared to be some stiff bidding competition from another person who was inspecting the airplane while Allen and Joe were sitting under the wing. After a very long and sleepless night, a plan was formed to approach our newly met competitor, Earl Long, and have him buy the airplane on behalf of the New Zealand Wing. After very persuasive conversations (Earl states “Con Job”), Earl Long agreed to purchase the airplane. This critical bit of faith by Earl was the start of the long journey of the “Wichita Wench” to New Zealand. Earl Long’s bid for the plane was successful by proxy for the New Zealand CAF wing at Dairy Flat, and CAF Headquarters pulled out all the stops to help or this story would never have been written.

The New Zealand Wing learned that the plane had led a fairly cosseted life, although it had had four previous owners. In 1966 it served for one year, leased to the state of Florida or flying its governor around. It was considered in pretty good order for its 33 years, and nobody wanted to see it cannibalized for spare parts. So it was a happy solution when it was agreed that it should go to a group of men who would care for it in the manner to which it had grown accustomed.

The four New Zealand Wing members who had actually seen the C-45 at Wichita returned home, leaving her behind on the tarmac, not knowing when, or if, they would ever see her again. It was rather a sad “*au revoir*”. She had been flown over from Plains to Wichita, and was destined to

sit there for about seven months waiting for funds to become available to proceed with the necessary work. Earl and Joe began to feel an empathy with the aircraft by this time, as they ran her high-time engines every 30 days to keep them from deteriorating. By now, a Wichita aircraft buff and also a member of the New Zealand Wing, Jim Hefley, had joined in the crusade to get the “Wichita Wench” into air-worthy condition.



Despite every care and attention, a master-rod bearing froze up on one of the high-time engines just before the major work began and Allen Rowell, the New Zealand Wing Leader, went over to Wichita to look for a replacement. He stayed in Kansas for about 30 days until he had procured a suitable engine from Denton, Texas,

which was subsequently checked out in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Allen Rowell, Joe Cowan, Earl Long and Jim Hefley removed the faulty engine and replaced it with the newly tested one. This was a dirty time-consuming job, but this was the engine which was to save two lives.

In the meantime, the general maintenance and reconditioning of the aircraft went on. Roland Hosteler of the Westport Airport staff was specifically assigned to it, while Richard Long, Ricky Clark and Greg Downing also worked on it. During this period, all external control surfaces were checked and re-covered with Ceconite, and general cleaning, replacement, and repair tasks were completed.

By the time the Harlingen Air Show came around in October 1986, the aircraft had a current “Certificate of Air Worthiness” and was ready for a long-range trial flight to Texas. Allen Rowell and Gerry Franklin from the New Zealand Wing flew it down with Joe Cowan and Earl Long sporting the Kiwi Logo on each side of the rear fuselage. This trip was the first step in the long-term flight plans and was a great success.

Thousands of people from all over the world saw the Beech at Harlingen, while it was parked in an advantageous position up between the impressive newsworthy planes at the display. Headquarters was doing its best for a small country with a small exhibit and gave the New Zealand Wing the chance it was looking for, for considerable newspaper exposure. New Zealand’s smaller plane could easily have been overlooked and outclassed by the many major projects handled by the US CAF, but it was lucky enough to make quite a stir.

Many onlookers thought that the “Wichita Wench” was setting out on its journey to the other side of the world straight after the air show, but

in actual fact it returned to Wichita for the long-range adjustments to be made. But Earl and Joe had proved that all the months of hard work had been worthwhile.

Now that the Beech C-45 had proved that she could perform, it was time to update the avionics to more modern standards to acquire suitable navigation equipment and to start planning for the trip across the Pacific.

It was becoming a “now or never” situation, to beat the hurricane season, and avoid a stand over of another year before conditions would be as good again. The seats were removed to be freighted later, and the firms associated with Westport Airport who were accustomed to supplying and installing fuel tanks for long range ferry flights got busy. An oil-transfer system was installed, along with the radio equipment, while the auxiliary fuel tanks were being prepared for mounting in the fuselage.

The “Wichita Wench” was ready in the surprisingly short time of two weeks without any hitches. The “Certificate of Airworthiness” had already been signed, and now the ferry flight authorization was complete.

It had seemed a long 14 months to the members of the New Zealand Wing as they waited for the all-important flight to be underway, but in fact the work and the testing had only taken 5 months.

It seemed that destiny was working out just who was to fly the plane to New Zealand. Earl Long had settled for the copilot’s seat when the first New Zealand pilot opted out, and then when it became clear that the second New Zealand pilot couldn’t make it either,



*Inside the cabin of Wichita Wench after its arrival in New Zealand, once the extra fuel tanks were removed and the seats were put back in*

© Philip Traueck

he agreed to take the pilot’s position. When Joe Cowan learned about the turn of events, he asked Earl: “*Who’s going to be your copilot?*”, presenting his usual teasing grin.

Earl agreed that Joe could make the trip, as long as he himself was in the left-hand seat and “boss of the outfit”. The proper order of priorities had to be decided. Joe - the copilot - at twenty-one stone, outweighed his pilot by 150 lbs! Later in the saga, this inequality was to call for some swift trim-control adjustment whenever the copilot moved up and down the aisle.

The flight plan was hard to follow from the New Zealand end, as it was relayed bit by bit, but weather was the



© B. Delfino

problem, and Joe and Earl were worried that they might not, in fact, be able to clear Wichita at all. The aircraft was flown from Wichita to Denver, Colorado at about noon on a Tuesday in November. A friend piloted the C-45 with Earl and Joe as passengers since the weather was marginal and neither of our pilots were instrument rated. That evening the two men and the

C-45 headed around the weather to Flagstaff Arizona, and stayed the night there. The next morning, at the Flagstaff Airport, when Joe and Earl went to check out the plane, they found an oil leak in the right hand engine, and they had to spend some time correcting this fault.

While at Flagstaff, Earl suddenly realized that during a luggage mix-up, a helicopter pilot had picked up his briefcase from the tarmac, and the helicopter was heading north instead of west. A frantic message or two later, the two pilots agreed to meet halfway at Grand Canyon City, Arizona. This they did, and retrieved the briefcase.

Unfortunately, Earl and Joe realized at the same time, that they were still plagued by the oil leak. So they spent the remainder of that day at Grand Canyon City isolating the leak and trying to find an oil screen gasket. In the end they stayed the night. This diversion meant that the flight path became more and more incomprehensible to the people waiting anxiously in New Zealand, as they didn’t know exactly what was happening or where.

It was in Grand Canyon City that Joe Cowan became known as the “beggar”. Other airport staff had been watching as Earl worked on the plane, sending Joe to fetch and carry tools and nuts and bolts at his bidding. Every aircraft had to have

a “boss” and a “beggar” so the two of them were informed by the on-lookers and it was pretty obvious to them just who was playing which role. It must have looked like a sitcom situation, Joe and all his twenty-one stone, scurrying about in search of the correct tools, and begging or borrowing the necessary components!

An oil gasket could not be found, so with a temporary patch, Joe and Earl took off for Santa Paula, California. They had talked to people there already about their proposed flight, picking up information, but at Santa Paula they talked to pilots from Southern Cross aviation, a ferry service involved in delivery flights. This was merely a 2 hour stop-over, but it revealed some very helpful information. Also during these two hours Joe, with assistance from CAF Colonel Bob Van Arsdale, located the correct oil gasket and fixed the leaky screen. In the meantime, Earl worked on their navigation flight plans, and checked their emergency equipment, including the rubber life raft. This raft was stowed between the fuel tanks lengthways, and had to be negotiated every time one of them squeezed through the narrow passageway between the tanks to the rear of the fuselage. Joe must have felt rather like an elephant negotiating the aisle of a bus.

That same evening, Earl and Joe left Santa Paula and landed in Monterey,

their official jumping-off point. They spent the next day getting ready for the great adventure over-seas. They fueled up, checked and filed the flight plan, and made contact with the people who be supporting the flight. It took a while, as they were not familiar with the routine. Next time, Earl says, it could be a piece of cake or they could offer others free advice!



### THE FLIGHT BEGINS

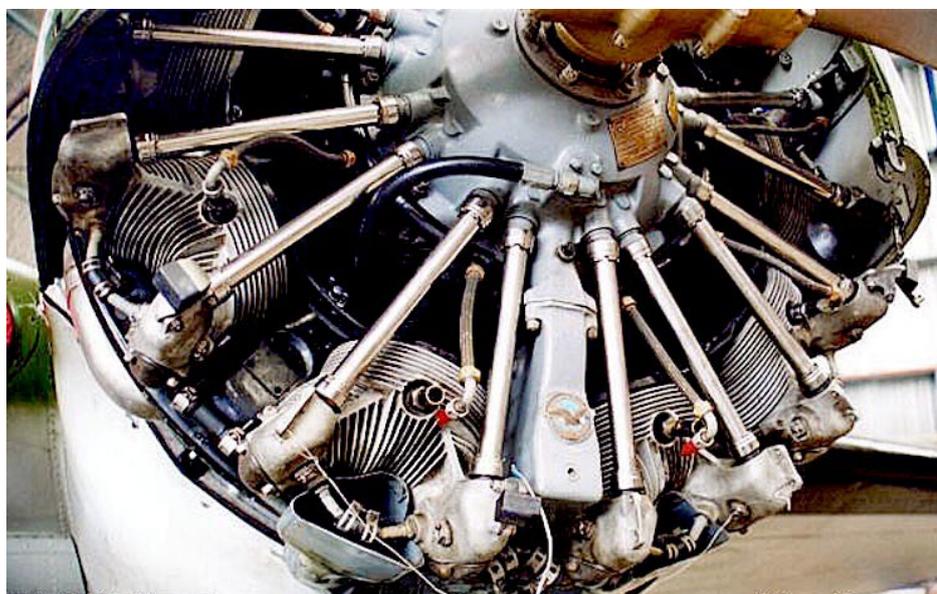
Fossicking around a map of the Pacific, it takes a while sometimes to pinpoint individual islands, which are known by name but not by position. Getting out of bed at 1:30 in the morning for breakfast, and a pre-flight check, and to face the vastness of the Pacific alone, can give a pilot an uncertain feeling in the pit of the stomach. The dark tarmac and the thought of the distance between Monterey and Hilo, Hawaii in a small plane, would be enough to send most of us scurrying back to a warm bed.

But Joe and Earl had made up their minds, and they were airborne out of Monterey by 4:30 a.m. at an altitude of 2,500 feet and 30 percent over gross. It was still dark, with only in-

struments and stars for reference until there were signs of the sun rising behind them by 6:30.

Two and a half hours out from Monterey, 30 minutes after sunup, the left engine showed signs of missing. Joe was flying at the time, and Earl was in the cabin section of the C-45 giving a position report on the HF radio. After a magneto check and bringing the mixture to full rich position, the engine continued to miss. Earl's hope was that would turn out to be a chip under a valve, and crossed his fingers that it was nothing more serious, but when he stuck his head into the cockpit and looked out at the engine, suddenly he saw a cloud of blue smoke under the wing and a great gush of oil over the cowling. He told Joe to shut the engine down “*Tout de suite*” and to turn back to shore. At this point, the aircraft was still at 2,500 feet.

It was obvious that they were in real trouble with the full load of fuel and no way of dumping it. So Earl put a call out on the emergency frequency, and a United Airlines Flight answered and offered to relay messages to San Francisco. San Francisco dispatched the Coast Guard to meet the C-45 coming in. It must have been a heart-stopping moment when they slowed down to 105 mph, the best single-engine speed and were losing altitude at 150 feet per minute. At the time they reached an altitude of 75 feet, Joe said: “*Earl, take this thing and where's the life vest?*” After all, the manual states that the pilot in command makes the final ditching decision and this appeared to be less than 30 seconds away at that moment. Earl was the more experienced pilot at low level flying, so they changed control of the aircraft pretty smartly at this point. San Francisco then radioed for another position report before the final moment. Joe climbed into the cabin section while strapping on his life vest to answer their call.



© Philip Treweek

As the plane descended to within 10 feet from the water it was practically skimming the wave tops, but by some miracle, or “ground effect”, the aircraft remained airborne, and stabilized at between 8-10 feet all the way to Monterey. It was a long, slow flight because of the weight of fuel. It must have seemed a never-ending 2 1/2 hour flight just to make it back to the coast. At one time the feathered propeller was slicing the tips of the waves. An hour after the turnaround, a Coast Guard C-130 and later a Helicopter flew alongside, very comforting companions.

When Earl and Joe reached Monterey, they still had too much fuel remaining on board to climb high enough to land at the Monterey Airport which is 240 feet above sea level. They spent another 2 hours circling to burn off enough fuel to climb high enough to land. Their replacement engine was working overtime. The engine was past red lines on both prop speed and manifold pressure for over four hours. When they landed, with the airport on alert, the left hand cowling, the wing, fuselage, rudder and the horizontal stabilizer were covered with oil.

The expected, but still shattering conclusion when they landed, was that a connecting rod had broken. Joe and Earl decided that the damaged high-time engine was in such bad condition that it could not be rebuilt, and they started shopping around for a replacement. With their knowledge of local sources, a suitable engine was located in two days, but the familiar problem of finance was still there. The engine would cost \$10,000 US dollars to replace. But their luck still held as a CAF

member Ed Messick who lived near Monterey offered to loan the New Zealand Wing the money to procure and change the engine. In hindsight, it seemed that the “Wichita Wench” was destined to make it to New Zealand, one way or another.



Photo: USCG

While the new engine was made ready, and this took ten days, Joe and Earl went back to Wichita, and as well during that time, Earl went on out to New Zealand via a commercial flight for a few days. During this spell, he met more people in-and-around flight services in Auckland, who were familiar with the Pacific and its flight problems for small aircraft.

Only five days after they had landed with the damaged engine, Joe went back to Monterey, to join four other fellows from the Pacific Wing - Ed Vasser, Ray Squires, Hank Silliman and Dale “Moose” Warne - in removing the now useless engine. As soon as Earl arrived back from New Zealand, he met up with Joe at Monterey, and they started on the rest of it. They removed the oil tank, oil lines, valves and fittings, and started cleaning metal chips out of everything. The new engine was finished and delivered to Monterey by van from Tulsa.

For business reasons, Joe had to return to Wichita for three days, and he left Earl, Ed Vasser and “Moose” to move the accessories to the new engine. Earl continued work cleaning up all the

contaminated oil lines and tank. Hank Silliman spent his Thanksgiving weekend with Earl checking the remaining good engine and found it to be still in top condition despite its ordeal of 4 1/2 hours at maximum power. By Tuesday, the 5th of December, the aircraft was pushed out to run up the replacement engine. This pace had been a real team effort.

The next day was the 6th of December and time was pressing. So the Beech was taken on a four hour test flight to satisfy Earl and Joe that it was ready to go again on the flight from Monterey to Hilo. The trial run was up to Fortuna, California and back, and she performed well. Also, more fuel burn rate versus air speed data was collected to support the fuel burn calculations for the leg to Hilo.

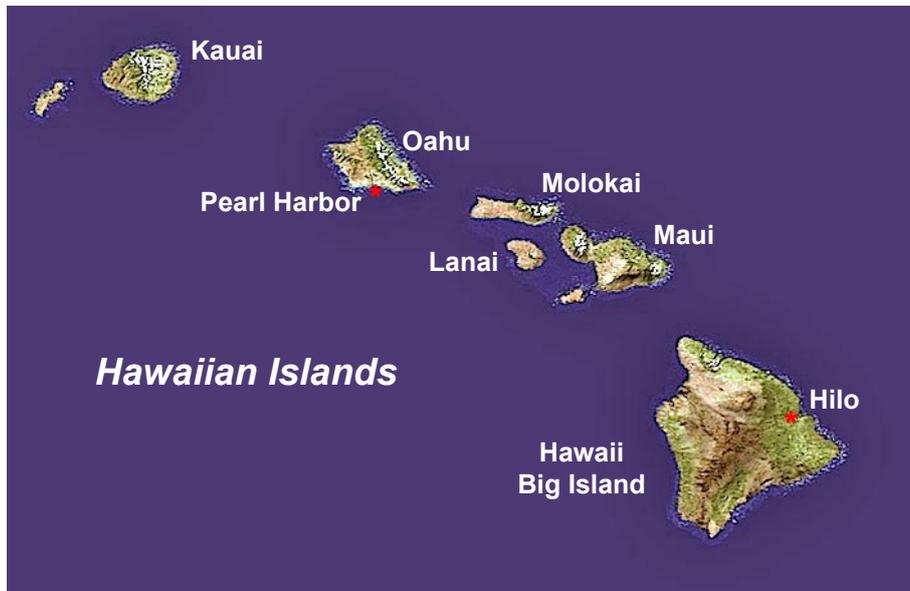


## SECOND DEPARTURE

On the 9th of December, Joe and Earl took off at 3:30 in the morning, and they moved up to an altitude of 2,500 feet. Then the aircraft was able to cruise at 4,500 feet after four hours and remained at that altitude until it was approaching Hilo. The trip took 14 hours 14 minutes according to the flight log. Hilo time was 4:30 p.m. when they landed. In the main, the flight was blessedly uneventful as Earl and Joe transferred fuel and pumped oil as required, and made position reports every hour.

There was a slight hitch as Earl forgot to change a way-point in the Loran, which caused them to wander 35 miles north off course. They overcor-

rected and ended up making a big S-turn in the middle of the Pacific. There was an irrepressible relief that the loneliest stretch of the journey was over, and that the rest of the possible anchor points were nearer. Psychologically it was a positive feeling.



The next possible problem was the elusive beacon at Christmas Island. They had plugged what they thought was every possible loophole in the chain of communications, but alas, there was one more unforeseeable gap which nearly caused disaster: Arrangements had been made with Tarawa, the capital of Kiribati, that the Christmas Island radio beacon be turned on to guide their arrival. They had set up a backup system to notify Christmas Island to turn on the beacon as well-the once a week commercial flight to the island. Earl and Joe had requested the pilot on the commercial airline to advise the island that they were on the way. The pilot did his part.

Earl and Joe refueled the C-45 at Hilo, requested the weather forecast, and semi-confident that they had covered every eventuality, left for Christmas Island at 9:45 on Wednesday morning.

The weather looked reasonable, with scattered clouds and light winds. This leg of the journey was planned as a 7 1/2 hour flight over 1082 Nautical miles, which they felt was not too long a flight, considering they were still tired from the flight the previous day.

At 3:00 p. m. local time, they started to pick up the Christmas Island beacon. Both pilots had had their own private worries about whether their messages had got through, and whether the beacon would show up at all. But they felt a surge of relief for there it was. It was a shock 1 1/2 hours later to find that the beacon just shut down for no known reason, and they were on their own again. This came right after they had set up a 15 degree wind correction angle as they realized that they had a significant cross wind. The question im-

mediately arose: Had they corrected enough or had they over corrected? They attempted to contact Honolulu on the HF again, although they had been unsuccessful throughout the day. As luck would have it, they did raise a response from San Francisco. They relayed the phone number of the chief of aviation at Tarawa and also a message for Allen Rowell of the New Zealand CAF in New Zealand, advising them that there was no beacon signal, and asking them to do something about getting it turned on again -pronto. Although the beacon signal had disappeared, Earl and Joe were still receiving faint Loran signals. The aircraft was under scattered cloud bases, and visibility was hazy, within a five mile limit. With this limited visibility in mind, Joe studied the profile of Christmas Island. The radio transmitter was located on the west side of the island. The airport was located about 12 miles east of the transmitter. Therefore, they only had five miles to miss the island on the West and 17 miles to miss it to the East. They then turned left another 20 degrees and

flew out the remaining time of 30 minutes, still not knowing what they would find when time ran out.

San Francisco advised that they were trying to make contact about the beacon. The flight continued for another 20 minutes after the last contact with San Francisco, and Earl's mind was considering what kind



*The C-45 parked near the international terminal - Above, the board which welcomes visitors*

© Joe Cowan

of a grid to set up, and how much fuel they had left if they had to return to Hilo. The 20 minutes ran out. Joe, figuring that they may have overcompensated, turned back right to the original course. After another 30 minutes, fate intervened when Earl suggested that they watch above the clouds for any signs of land-forms. They were not sure just what they were looking for.

It was Joe, watching through a cloud 4 miles in front who caught a glimpse of a shadow underneath it, and what could be a broader form of a shoreline. It would have been so easy to bypass with no beacon to guide them, and to end up even a fraction off course, back out in the vastness of the Pacific.

Immediately, Earl relayed a message to San Francisco to tell them that Christmas Island was underneath, and please advise Allen Rowell in New Zealand that they had found this isolated spot in the Pacific. Once the aircraft had landed on Christmas Island, there would be no way to communicate with New Zealand. Afterwards they realized that the first message about their predicament probably made it safely, but they had doubts about the second message. Their guess was right; the second message didn't get through.



### THE STORY OF THE BEACON

Joe and Earl took some time to unwind the mystery of the beacon operation, as there was a language barrier as far as general conversation on Christmas Island was concerned. But as they became friendly with one or two people, and emptied a few brownies, it all became clear... well as clear as it ever would. The reason that the beacon was on at all, was because it was an island holiday



*Kiritimati - Christmas Island*

and the operator had clean forgotten to turn it off. Otherwise they would not have had it as long as they did to check their flight path. This particular Wednesday, the operator had hurried away after the commercial flight departed at 9:00 a.m. to join his friends in a holiday mood, and did not turn the beacon off until 4:50 local time, when he returned. He did not know anything about the flight of the C-45, and none of the appropriate messages had reached him. It was hard to believe that this could happen.

As Earl and Joe found out -it could easily happen. The telex sent from Tarawa had been addressed to the Tower Operator, who is actually 15 miles away from the beacon operator on Christmas Island. There is no message service between the two. There are no phones on the island, no official vehicles, not even an official motorcycle. Officialdom expresses its concern about the handling of such modern devices by the local employees, so they take the simplest way around the problem, and don't supply any.



*Captain Cook Hotel on Christmas Island*

The beacon operator, in fact, lives across the street from the main Community Building, where the Director of Civil Aviation in Tarawa had properly addressed their message about the beacon. But the message was not addressed the beacon operator personally. Nevertheless, the message was relayed to the island and when Earl and Joe asked the beacon operator why someone had not at least read the message while it was awaiting delivery to the airport, the beacon operator spiritedly replied: "*We do not read other people's mail*".

So the pre-flight messages, so carefully thought out had arrived on the island safely, but still did not accomplish anything (A trap for new players). With the help of Providence, the C-45 had found her own way to Christmas Island. They had landed at 5:50 p.m. local time and remained there for one rest day. Then it took all of a day to get the fuel TO and IN the aircraft... island style.



### CHRISTMAS ISLAND

If you wanted to get away from it all, Joe and Earl agreed that this was the place. There was no hurry, there was always tomorrow, and let's face it, you are a long, long way from anywhere. It could be that idyllic Pacific Island that everyone dreams about. On an enlarged map it looks rather like the silhouette of a crab's claw, with a series of bays enclosed in the pinchers. Here,

Joe and Earl found a beautiful seashore of white coral sand with waves breaking, and the sunshine seemed to shine eternally. No Wichita winter intruded here.

The two pilots may just as well have abandoned the idea of looking for hill tops at the end of their flight path the day before... there weren't any. The island was

flat and covered with coconut trees. It was only 15 miles wide and 20 miles long, with the most relaxed life-style in the world. If you fancied crab meat for your supper, then you would find it easily, even on the roads, and Earl and Joe discovered how easy it was to run over the land crabs from the driver's seat of a rental pickup.

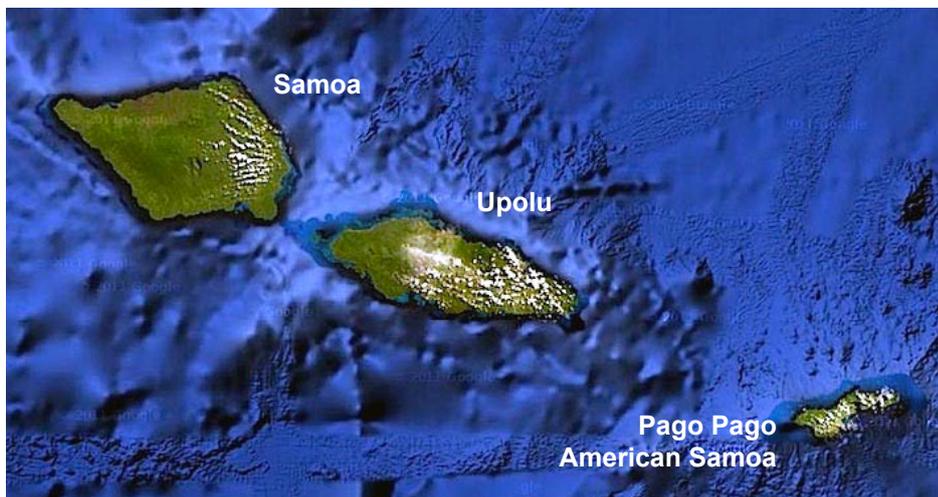
There are three satellite antennas on the island, and the technicians and engineers working on them lived at the one hotel, the Captain Cook. Apart from these workers, the island is populated by the local Polynesians, who live mainly on fish and coconuts. All other foodstuffs are imported by plane, or the occasional boat. If you fly in, you stay a week, until the next plane arrives. If you fly your own plane, you are expected to time your flight to arrive with the commercial flight, once a week. Then the beacon will be operating. Otherwise, take your chances that the Beacon will be on. Christmas Island boasts four main villages: London, Paris, Poland, and Banana. As you learn this fact, you keep a straight face!

Joe and Earl slept in one of the tourist huts close to the Captain Cook Hotel for two nights, and had no way of telling the rest of the world that they were alive.



### PAGO PAGO

They left Christmas Island on December the 12th at 8:31 a.m, airborne for the 8 hour 45 minute flight to Pago Pago. Before long, Earl and Joe found themselves concerned about the bad weather at Pago Pago, and the possibility of having to divert. The small aircraft was once again their prime consideration. During the second-to-last position report, the radio operator asked for their ETA at Auckland



Airport. This query made it clear to Earl and Joe that the fellows waiting at Dairy Flat had found out where they were, some way or another. They knew that everyone would be full of relief that they had not gotten lost somewhere in the Pacific.

About 200 miles from Pago Pago, they ran into scattered thunderstorms. They flew around the storm clouds with due respect, fearing the worst, but their apprehension only lasted for 45 minutes. Over the last 80 miles into Pago Pago, the weather cleared.

To their surprise, Earl and Joe were asked by customs at Pago Pago for a general declaration from their last port of call. They were rather at a loss, because they had seen no sign of immigration or customs at Christmas Island. Apparently they should have had a clearance from Hilo anyway, and here they were without one from Christmas Island either, so officialdom had slipped up somewhere and it

took a good two hours to clear this up at Pago Pago. Meantime the aircraft was fueled up for the last night into Auckland.



### LAST LEG

They left Pago Pago the next morning at 6:38 a.m. local time for the 11 hour 15 minute flight to Mangere Airport. Both pilots felt pretty exhausted by this time, and looking forward to the end of this last leg. Most of the flight had kept them pretty busy with endless things to check, relay, plan, while they took turns piloting. Now they felt that they were running out of things to do except look out at the good weather and light winds. It had, at last, become routine when they were almost there.



*Wichita Wench repainted to the colors of Vice-Admiral Gromley's airplane*

© Philip Treweek

Their minds turned inevitably to food at times like this. Naturally, Joe's 20 stone outline needed sustaining.

They had had refueling stops for both plane and pilots, but needed in-between snacks to keep soul and body together. They took weenie sausages, cheese and bread rolls with them, and for absolute emergencies, sardines. Gatorade and fruit drinks were easy to carry and drink, but cigarettes were a no-no!

When they were a couple of hours out from Auckland, they were down to the sardines, which they had kept until last. At Auckland, for their celebration dinner, the host of the restaurant, who was in the know, served them sardines on a biscuit for an entree!



East Coast Bays on Auckland's North Shore is pretty used to a moderate, but constant flow of small air traffic, but many people heard the typical whine of the two Harvards going over on their way to meet the Beech. Then the Dominie and the Cub flew overhead, and people wondered where all the veteran planes were going. There hadn't been much publicity until the last moment. As Joe and Earl listened to Auckland Control, they realized that at the rate they were coming in, it looked as if the greeting planes would not make it in time, so they did another seep to allow them to "catch up. There must have been many people at Mangere who did not know that the C-45 had come all

clearly that they could hear Dairy Flat talking to Auckland, back and forth.

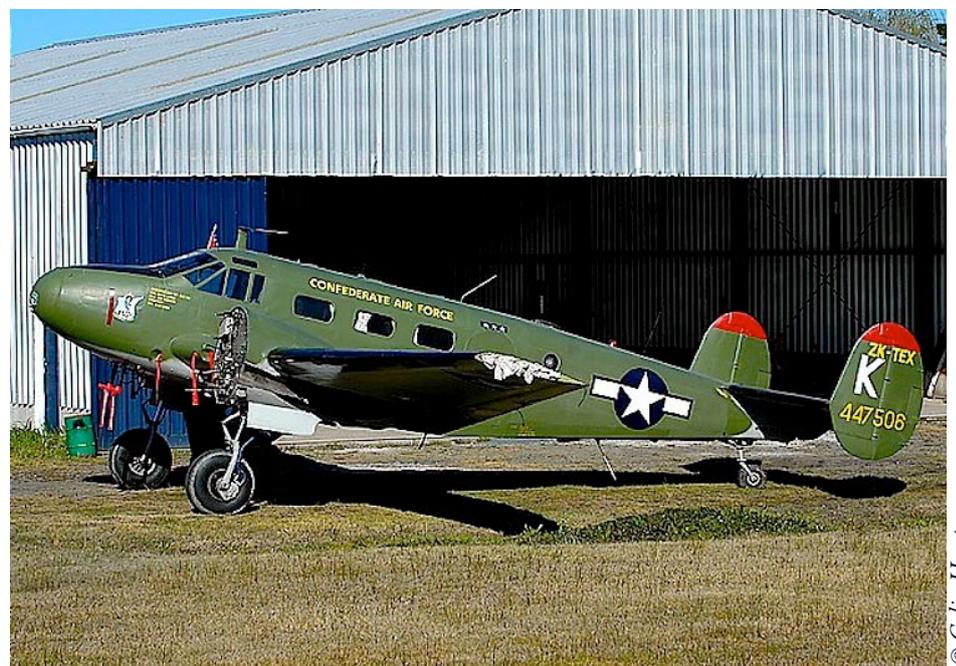
the way from Wichita, although the flurry of all the veteran planes around caused quite a stir.

All the excitement was caused by the fact that Dairy Flat knew already that the C-45 was close to Mangere Airport, and nine planes were preparing to leave Dairy Flat to escort her in.

After landing at Mangere International Airport to be cleared by Customs, Earl and Joe moved over to the light plane domestic area where everyone was waiting to greet them. It was De-



The first sign Joe and Earl had of New Zealand was the outer Gulf Islands, and they found that they were slightly north west. There was some difficulty locating Auckland on VHF, because it was overshadowed. But a change to Auckland Control found it coming in so



© Colin Hunter

ember the 14th, 4:30 p.m. New Zealand time, and the historic flight was ended for the two pilots from America's heartland.

That is, except for the fly over to Dairy Flat Airport, where quite a crowd of people were waiting to greet the very weary, but elated pilots. They had made it safely to the other side of the world, so to show how clever they had been, they made a fast low-level pass over the tiny airstrip.



The members of the New Zealand Wing who had planned for such an event two years before, could now stop thinking about the possible hazards facing the small plane, and get to know the World War II plane and her personality. She had a place in their hearts already. To a few people who patted her with quiet satisfaction, she was a modern-day international adventuress.

Before they returned home, Earl Long and Joe Cowan spent some time training New Zealand pilots to fly the C-45. Several times it has been flown from the CAF base at Dairy Flat, North Shore to Ardmore on the other side of Auckland City where there is more room to maneuver during the training sessions. One of the four New Zealand pilots trained during the American pilot's stopover, is I-farry Norton, who was impressed by their professional attitude. Colonel Long has a "laid back", un-flustered approach, which made him a good tutor. Mr. Norton, an ex-airline pilot for NACB and Air New Zealand, had flown everything from DC-3, Vicounts, 747s, DC-8's and DC-10, to Mustangs and Harvards, so he was really looking forward to piloting the Beech C-45.

The men who will fly the Beech in New Zealand have been practicing circuits, landings, stalling and single engine flying. The C-45 is different from most modern twin-engined craft, mainly because of its weight (6,000 lbs empty). It cruises at 160 mph and each Pratt and Whitney engine has 450 horsepower capability. North Shore residents will learn to spot it in the skies above, as time goes by.

*Right, various pictures of the C-45 with and without its engines. The paint scheme with the three stars above the door represents Vice-Admiral Gromley's aircraft during WWII when he commanded the south-west Pacific forces .*



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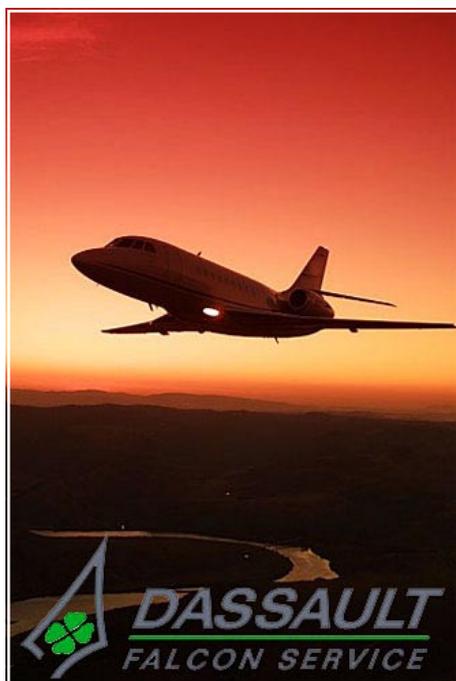
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