

PER

AIR FORCE

and **SPACE DIGEST**

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Fuzzy Images of a Long-Ago War

And where were you twenty years ago?
It was all over, in Europe at least,
on May 8, 1945. VE-Day . . . Remember?
Some classic shots from an AAF album . . .

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Hands across the world. We had one thing in common with the Russians—an enemy



Meanwhile, wholesomely back at the



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In the spring of 1940, the French radio announced the armistice, but for many of the combatants and others among the youth of France, the war was not considered terminated. Many volunteered to reenter combat. The allies offered this opportunity, but the volunteers were required to depart from France on their own initiative. The route through Spain was the principal path of escape, but capture usually meant a long prison term or internment in a concentration camp. Many went directly from Spain to England, or onward to Canada. Others who crossed to North Africa were sent to the United States for training.

For most aviators, this reentry into service involved an extensive training program. More than 5,000 men profited from the wartime training courses sponsored by the US Air Force between 1943 and 1945. During this period, 1,202 Frenchmen were awarded American pilot wings (657 were assigned to fighters and 545 to bombers), sixty-two graduated as navigators, 221 as bombardiers, and 2,371 received diplomas as radio operators, gunners, or mechanics. About eighty trainees were lost as the result of stateside training accidents.

After the war and up to 1954, an additional 2,310 Frenchmen were sent to the United States as student pilots, and 1,427 were commissioned.

Today, all those who were welcomed into the United States for USAF training hold fond memories of their stay on the other side of the Atlantic. This opportunity offered them experience in the American way of life, the chance to receive valuable technical training, and the establishment of a close working relationship with their American comrades-in-arms.

To keep in touch after their return home, the French veterans immediately established an association known as "Veterans of C.F.P.N.A." (Centre

de Formation du Personnel Navigant Formé en Amerique). Unfortunately, the original organization, perhaps premature, lasted only a few months. Finally, in 1961, Roland Willaume decided to revive the association. His dynamic presidency resulted in today's active 200-man organization, now known as the "Association du Personnel Navigant Francais Formé aux Etats-Unis."

The objective of this association is not only to maintain the ties of friendship among former trainees for mutual aid, but also to revive the bonds of friendship with their American friends who yesterday were their instructors or brothers-in-arms. They also wish to promote, by all possible means, the relationship between France and the United States in the field of aeronautics, and for that reason their French group retains close ties with the US Air Force Association.

More than 500 active-duty officers of today's French Air Force have received training in the United States; in fact, one-quarter of all current French Air Force pilots have received American wings.

All the members of the association of French trainees desire to maintain a close liaison with their American friends and stand ready to provide a current knowledge of the activities of France's Air Force, her aviation industry, and her aeronautical technology.

Depending upon the specific interests of the readers of AIR FORCE/SPACE DIGEST, the French vets are prepared to communicate with their former comrades-in-arms through the pages of this magazine.

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(Translated from the French by J. J. Driscoll.)