



# MILE HIGH VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE MILE HIGH WING,  
COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE (CAF)

*Keep 'Em Flying!*

*September 2006*

## **Normandy, A Debt We Owe**

*By Col Stan Peterson*

The mission started with a considerable amount of planning and coordination from our logistics department – Anne Fjestad Peterson. She had set the itinerary, confirmed the lodging, and arranged the travel reservations. I was responsible for the in-country transport, which would be a new type of conveyance. Although Anne and I have traveled thousands of miles together on a conventional tandem bicycle, we had yet to ride a tandem that came in two Samsonite suitcases. After its arrival, we spent several miles shaking down the many peculiarities. Seems the basic concept of a big bike that would pass as normal luggage was sound; however, the quality control as well as some of the design features left something to be desired. Once the bugs were worked out, we were impressed with how normal this unusual design handled.

We arrived in Paris and took the train to Vernon, Monet's home town., where we assembled the bike. The next day we continued to bike through the many narrow roads lined with hedge-rows. It took very little imagination to see just how difficult and dangerous it must have been to attempt an advance of troops over this type of terrain and obstacles. Furthermore, it took even less imagination to seek out the many possible hiding places for snipers upon entering the various villages we biked through.

We visited Omaha Beach, the German gun emplacements, and the American cemetery, where almost 10,000 are buried. An unusually strong feeling of peace and quiet surrounds the area now. A lot of the young men buried here were from the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and the Army's 1st Divisions. I had spent four years with the 82<sup>nd</sup> prior to going to flight school and

took my basic training with the 1<sup>st</sup> division, which gave me a feeling of camaraderie and pride to be somehow connected to these soldiers (although a generation later) who had displayed so much courage and made the supreme sacrifice for the freedoms we all enjoy today.

Later that day we spent a night in Ste. Mere Eglise, one of the first towns liberated. Even today the town's people seem to worship the American paratroopers. The church, which had some of its windows destroyed during the liberation, has had one window replaced with stained glass depicting the airborne assault made on the town. A parachute and mannequin hang from one of the churches spires, as did paratrooper John Steele during the invasion. I think perhaps the town has more WWII memorabilia for sale than any other place on this planet. We also visited the excellent airborne museum.

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**Mannequin at Mere Eglise**



### Normandy, A Debt We Owe *(From pg 1)*

Just a few clicks outside the town is a bronze statue of a paratrooper. It is located just above a creek and a large open marsh area. The one road across the creek and marsh contains a small bridge that was never destroyed by either the Germans or the Allied forces, due to its critical importance for the transport of troops and equipment. Because of this importance, a major battle was staged and fought there. One of the troopers who lost his life in the battle was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Our vacation continued on to Avranches where we put the bike on the train and returned to Paris for one more day of biking, which totaled more than 340 miles in all. Somehow the biking seemed easier in Normandy, where we reflected on the great sacrifices and challenges of our troops more than sixty years prior.

KEEP 'EM FLYING →



*Editor's note: taken from The ABMC website:  
<http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/no.php>*

The WW II Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial is situated on a cliff overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel in Colleville-sur Mer, France. It is just east of St. Laurent-sur-Mer and northwest of Bayeux about 170 mi west of Paris. The cemetery is located on the site of the temporary American St. Laurent Cemetery, established by the U.S. First Army on June 8, 1944, the first American cemetery on European soil in WW II. The cemetery is at the north end of its .5 mile access road and covers one hundred and seventy-two acres. It contains the graves of 9,387 American military Dead, most of whom gave their lives during the landings and ensuing operations of WWII.



**Col Stan Peterson at Normandy**



## Calendar of Events

**Sept 2, 2006** – Aircraft work day:  
10:00 a.m. at Platte Valley Airport

**Sept 9, 2006** – 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Radial  
Engine Convention at Akron Airport.

**Sept 16, 2006** – Wing meeting:  
10:00 a.m. at Platte Valley Airport

**Oct 7-8, 2006** – Fina-CAF AirShow  
2006 at Midland, TX

**Oct 16, 2006** – Wing meeting:  
10:00 a.m. at Platte Valley Airport

### Directions to Platte Valley Airport

Platte Valley Airport is 3 miles  
northwest of Hudson, Colorado:

- Take I-76 north to Hudson  
and exit west on Highway 52.
- At CR 41, turn right (north).
- At CR 18, turn left (west).

At the Platte Valley Airpark sign, turn  
left again.

Wing meetings are normally held on  
the 3rd Saturday of the month at  
10:00 a.m.

Printable color Mile High View can be found at:  
<http://www.contrails.us/~milehighwing/Newsletter.htm>

Newsletter articles needed; please send  
to: [rdelsloo@msn.com](mailto:rdelsloo@msn.com)



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