

NEWS and Comment from our MEMBERS



(L to R) Lieut. Bayley, Capt. Lemaitre, Lieut. Henderson, and Capt. d'Oisy.

LIBERTY RACE, 1925

Claude A. J. Breguet, Paris, France

I am very pleased to send you a short note about the Liberty Race I attended in your country fifty years ago. I was a teenager in 1925 when I accompanied my Uncle Louis Breguet and my father, Jacques Breguet to the United States to participate in the race at Mitchell Field, Long Island. They brought with them two Breguet 19 biplanes. The one with a Renault 500 HP engine would be flown by Captain Henry Lemaitre, and the other with a Lorraine 450 HP engine would be flown by Captain Pelletier d'Oisy. The race would be run on the 8th of October.

Captain Lemaitre was well known at that time for a record non-stop flight, and Captain Pelletier d'Oisy was known for his flight from Paris to Tokyo in 1924.

The Breguet 19 was developed in 1922 and approximately 4000 were built. Not only was the French air force equipped with the Breguet 19, but such European countries as Spain, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece and also in South America: Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil.

The Liberty Race was a test of observation planes (no pursuit planes permitted). The race course consisted of fifteen turns, each about 19 km (12 miles). The total distance was 288 km (180 miles). Featured in the race were the two Breguets with numbers 63 and 64, a Douglas powered by a Packard 600 HP engine, two Boeings, and eleven DeHavillands. The DeHavillands were modified for the race; prominent parts were smoothed off, the attack angle of the wings reduced, and the engines boosted to maximum output.

Delayed by customs, the two Breguets were late arriving at Mitchell Field, thus the mechanics had little time for assembly. There was no time for smoothing off; even the wheels, equipped with square cross section tires raced without fabric covering. The propeller of Lemaitre's plane was discovered to have been damaged, and with a bad mounting, the plane had a tendency to lean to portside and vibrate.

At the beginning Pelletier d'Oisy led the race, but on the ninth lap Lemaitre, feeling that he was outdistanced by Lieut. G. R. Henderson, gave full open throttle, and forged ahead of all other planes, and managed to lap his opponents. The race results are as follows: 1st – Captain Lemaitre with average speed of 206 km; 2nd – Lieut. E. B. Bayley, U.S. Army, flying 600 HP Douglas with speed 204 km; 3rd – Lieut. G. R. Henderson, U.S. Navy flying 600 HP Boeing with speed 203 km; 4th – Captain d'Oisy with speed of 202 km; 5th – Lieut Mac Reynolds, U.S. Army flying 500 HP DeHavilland with speed 201 km, and 6th – Lieut. R. H. Clark, U.S. Army also in 500 HP DeHavilland with speed of 200 km.