

André de Baillencourt

1892-1978

BREGUET TEST PILOT

copyrighted excerpt from THE BREGUET CHRONICLES

by William Wylam

André was born at Douai, Pas de Calais Nord, in north France, on 26 July 1892. His full baptismal name was André Henri Marie Joachim de Baillencourt dit Courcol. He was 86 when he died on 12 May 1978, at Monastier-sur-Gazeille, Haute Loire, in south France. He was buried at the cathedral grounds of Le Puy en Velay, Haute Loire. André and Simone Pitavy were married on 7 January 1919 at Espaly-St Marcal, Haute Loire. She died on 7 September 1984. They had no children.

Before 1907 he was educated at Saint Jean College, Douai, and from 1907 to 1910 attended Florennes College. In July 1911 he finished his education at the Catholic Faculty of Lille.

Employment history: Started in August 1911 as an apprentice mechanic on Lorraine-Dietrich automobiles at Reims. Met Louis Breguet who was participating in the 1911 military aviation competition at Betheny-les-Reims. André had his first flight, at Betheny, in a Hanriot, piloted by Bieloviccic. His aviation career was as follows:

March 1913: Hired by Louis Breguet as an aircraft engine mechanic and with this connection, André was hopeful of becoming a military aviator. He received pilot licence number 1406 at Villacoublay on 4 July.

17 July 1913: First solo flight in a Breguet-Renault, one hour, at altitude over 500 metres (1640 feet) around Douai and La Brayelle. Shortly afterward, André flew from Douai to Villacoublay to study the assembly procedure of Breguet-Renault airplanes for the South American governments.

24 August 1913: Louis Breguet sent André to Buenos Aires, Argentina to supervise the assembly and to flight test the Breguet-Renault aircraft.

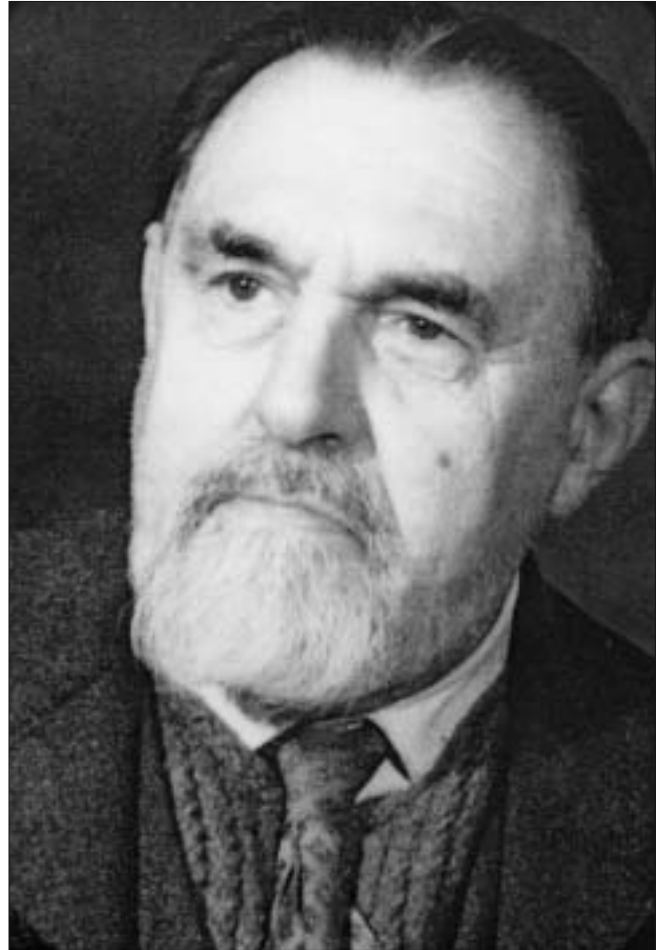
24 September 1913: The Argentine machine was damaged during the original flight test. After the repairs were completed, it was flight tested at the El Palomar Aerodrome outside Buenos Aires. André started to fly with designated Argentine military personnel. On one flight the South American altitude record was broken. Another noteworthy incident was a flight with two passengers, at an altitude of 1760 metres (5873 feet), on a round trip from Buenos Aires to La Plata, Argentina, which broke the South American records for distance and altitude.

16 October 1913: André travelled to Santiago, Chile by the Transandin Railroad and arrived in Santiago on 25 October. He was escorted to La Espejo Aerodrome on the outskirts of the city, where he started to assemble the three Breguet-Renault machines that were still in the shipment crates.

23 January 1914: The fourth Breguet-Renault arrived at Santiago for assembly and flight test. This shipment included crates of French built Bathiat-Sanchez-Besa aircraft which unfortunately did not include instructions or diagrams. Sanchez-Besa was a native of Chile, a folk hero, and an experienced flier. Leon Bathiat was a French engineer and test pilot.

24 March 1914: André left Valparaiso, Chile on a passenger ship bound for Rio de Janeiro where he boarded a ship for passage to Lisbon, Portugal. From Lisbon he took a train to Paris, then to Douai, arriving home on 12 April 1914.

3 May 1914: Louis Breguet requested André's service on the Indochina and Japan hydroplane orders. With imminent war on the horizon, Breguet agreed to delay the departure until late August. At that time there was an extreme shortage of military pilots and Louis Breguet was forced to



André de Baillencourt

hire civilian pilots for the ferry service. After he delivered several Breguet aircraft for the military service, André was inducted into the French Army aviation corps. He was assigned to the BR 17 escadrille.

3 September 1914: André received his certificate, number 584, as a military aviator. Later, he was assigned to the escadrilles at Le Bourget for the protection of Paris.

18 September 1914: André delivered a new Breguet pusher to Le Bourget and later another pilot damaged it during a rough landing. After it was repaired, André decided to flight test the machine. On take-off, the entire landing gear came off but he made a safe landing with minor damage. He was then promoted to Corporal and assigned a Br 53 which was a prototype pusher with a 160hp Renault engine. Later he was assigned a Br 54, a similar prototype but with the 200hp Salmson Canton-Unné engine.

26 January 1915: André flew the Br 54 for 400km (248 miles) at an airspeed of 100kph (62mph) for the Michelin Commission.

15 February 1915: The Br 54 was approved for production at the Michelin plant in Clermont-Ferrand, south central France. The Michelin Brothers donated 100 aircraft of this production to France. The Br 54 was then flown to Avord for examination by the flight instructors. While there, André