



Dampness now pervades the crypt and has even affected the plaza to the rear of the memorial.

The Escadrille Foundation is painfully aware of these problems and has taken the basic steps to find solutions. A recent estimate compiled in 1983 indicates the cost to bring the memorial back to first-class condition exceeds 1.2 million francs (about \$145,000 US). This is far beyond their present resources, in spite of the determined efforts of its board members who have raised about \$35,000 in recent years. Little, if any, financial assistance can be expected from the French government who has its own financial problems of late. Nor has aid from U.S. Government sources come forth.

The solution therefore seems to fall squarely on the shoulders of Americans, and perhaps more specifically on those American aviators

CRISIS IN THE FOREST OF ST. CLOUD

RICHARD L. UPPSTROM Colonel, USAF Director, United States Air Force Museum

A short distance from the center of Paris, midway to Versailles and wrapped in the quiet of the forest of St. Cloud is the monument of the Lafayette Escadrille and the Lafayette Flying Corps. It stands in silent tribute to the small band of American aviators of those two organizations who served with the French Army in the skies over Europe during World War I. In addition to the 269 flyers memorialized there, it shelters the remains of 67 aviators who gave their lives for the French cause. In the sanctuary of the memorial are those names both familiar and obscure . . . some known only to the most avid aviation historians. All have been moved from graves scattered across Belgium, France and Italy to meet in final and perpetual rest in the forest of St. Cloud.

In the spring of 1983, I was at last able to visit this impressive memorial, there to stand for a few moments to reflect on the dedication and daring of young Americans who had given their lives in the defense of a land not their own. Impressive as its triumphal arch may be to even the casual visitor, the structure now faces problems of time and nature which must soon be corrected. Without attention it will be too late to save the memorial from irreversible destruction by the elements.

Let's look back a moment to the origin of the memorial and its later history. On the fourth of July 1928, the memorial of the Escadrille Lafayette was dedicated in joint Franco-American ceremonies on land provided by the French government. The construction was funded by an association of the memorial of the Lafayette Escadrille, and in 1930 a foundation was formed for assuring the perpetual upkeep of the memorial. The intent was also to keep alive the spirit of the volunteers from America and to provide for suitable religious observances while educating the youth of France, America and other nations in the history of each other's country.

For decades these goals have been met with the financial support of the foundation. The bulk of the funds came from earned income from the capital collected by the foundation years ago. In more recent years, however, the rising costs of day-to-day maintenance, devaluation and the accelerated deterioration of the structure have forced the foundation to spend a portion of its capital assets. One of the major problems, according to the foundation, is the fact that changes in the drainage of the surrounding forest and park areas caused by recent roadway construction has created water seepage into the structure. These problems were all too obvious to me and undoubtedly noticeable to others who come to pay their respects to these fallen Americans. Still impressive, even in a country of impressive structures, the memorial itself contrasts sharply with its well-tended grounds because of its deterioration. Stained by the atmosphere and plagued by dampness, it shows signs of age and lack of comprehensive care. The once-bright mosaic of the fierce Sioux Indian insignia that had been so boisterously carried on the sides of the Escadrille aircraft is chipped and faded in the rotunda floor.

who best remember and understand the motivations and sacrifices of their fellow airmen in a war long ago. Not only must funding be found for the immediate problems, but a capital fund must be rebuilt to about \$240,000 US to ensure that current interest and investment returns will again guarantee adequate and perpetual care.

My purpose is to make known the plight of the Memorial de l'Escadrille Lafayette to American airmen and all others who are devoted to the memory of this gallant group of World War I flyers, and to solicit help to ensure the repair and future upkeep of the memorial. The foundation has been determined to be a nonprofit and tax-exempt organization under the laws of both the United States and France, and all contributions are therefore tax deductible. Contributions should be sent to either of these addresses:

**Memorial de l'Escadrille Lafayette
c/o Porter and Durham, Attorneys at Law
261 Rue Saint-Honore
75001 Paris France**

**Memorial of the Lafayette Escadrille
c/o Morgan Guarantee Trust Company of New York
30 West Broadway
New York, New York 10019
(Attn: Corporate Accounts)**



While federal funding assistance would, of course, be welcome, it is far more fitting that the challenge be accepted and met by the flying brotherhood itself. I can assure all readers that the project merits your immediate attention, and invite all to visit the memorial at Villeneuve l'Etang. You will come away with the same enthusiasm to see this task through to a successful completion as I did.