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"Sittin' Pretty" by artist Sam Lyons - See B-Section



Chuck Suma
Pushing Ahead at New Piper
See Page 2-B



Harry Combs
Spoiled for Anything Else
See Page 25-B



Kermit Weeks
The Fantasy of Flight
See Page 3-C

French Pilot/Engineer Emmanuelle Richard

By Fred "Crash" Blechman

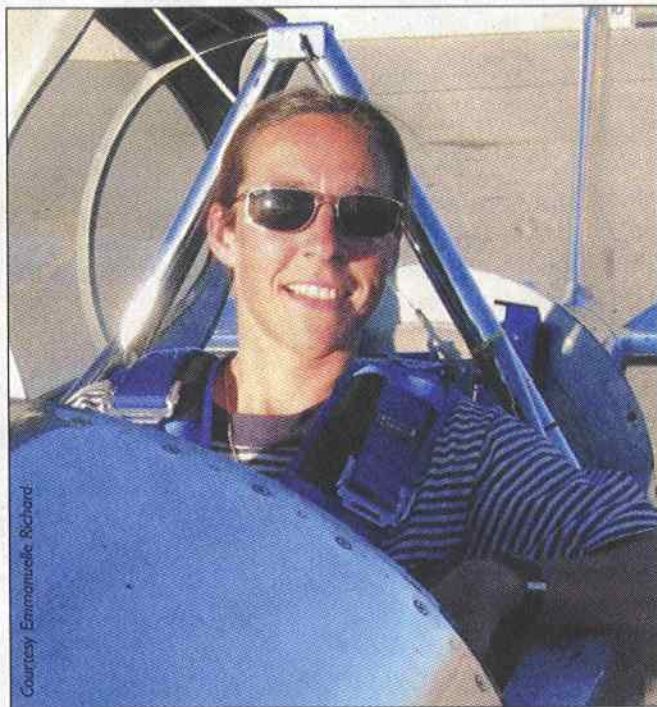
They say the best things come in small packages. Such is the case with 5'5" Emmanuelle "Manue" Richard (pronounced Reeshar).

Richard, 30 is a commercial single, multiengine, and seaplane instrument-rated pilot who has an A & P and first-class medical, and can fly formation and aerobatics. She's also passed the ATP and flight engineer written exams.

She has a total of nearly 1,400 flight hours, with 200 multiengine and 800 tail-wheel. Her flying jobs have included jump-plane, glider-tow and banner-tow pilot, skywriting and skytyping, and Part 135 air taxi. A member of the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association and the Experimental Aircraft Association, she was also a member of the "Rare Bear" Air Racing Crew, and is also the first woman to have built and test-flown a Vans RV-4 single-engine experimental airplane.

Besides her native French, Richard speaks English and German. She's computer literate in PC and specialized programs. She's also an avid surfer. All this didn't come easy to Richard, whose story is one of overcoming obstacles.

"I guess I've just been trying to survive and keep moving forward at the same time," she said. "When you have to support yourself at 100 per-



Manue Richard in the Vans RV-4 she built from a kit, returning from the first air-to-air photograph session in March 2003.

cent, plus pay for your studies, and battle the huge disadvantage of being a foreigner here, I was expecting it to be pretty hard. I had to put a lot of effort into things I didn't want to do, just because they were a stepping-stone to reach the next level."

She earned a Master of Science degree in aeronautical engineering and a Bachelor of Science in mathematics and physics while still in France, then interned for the French Navy, a British airline and TWA here

in the United States. She then contracted with Boeing and General Electric on propulsion systems, avionics and electrical.

The French Connection

Richard was born in Paris, France, on April 5, 1973, and developed an interest in airplanes at an early age.

"I remember having a Mirage 4 fighter model airplane and a model aircraft carrier when I was about 7," she recalled. "We

lived in the south of France then, close to Istres, our main flight test center, and I would be watching the Concorde flying overhead. Every summer we would be in Toulon, which is our San Diego on the Mediterranean. We grew up with the navy in our backyard and attraction to naval aviation."

As a teen, she had airplane pictures and models all over her room.

"We lived in the middle of a small town," Richard said. "I had the room

with the skylight on the third floor. That was a good view on the approach entry point for the military base on the plateau, and I'd climb on the roof to watch the formations in the distance. My English teacher at junior high flew the Jaguars during his conscription year so he got us a tour of that base. He also took me to the annual air show there. He studied in the U.S. for a year, so that gave me some ideas."

It was that same year, when she was 13, that she got her first ride in a general aviation airplane. She participated in a Christmas contest organized by the French Air Force, which asked 150 questions covering aviation history, weather, airplanes, aerodynamics, etc.

"I did a lot of research to find the answers and ended up winning a gift certificate for an airplane flight," she said. "They also had half a dozen jet simulators there in the mall and we'd spend a lot of time in line to fly them. They would steer you through acrobatic maneuvers while there was a small white command square on the screen that would move on its own. There was also a cross that would move when you moved the stick. You had to keep the cross on the square as best as possible and that would show you how to do loops and other maneuvers. Then

Emmanuelle Richard cont. on page 18

Emmanuelle Richard cont. from pg. 17

you would be scored against the other players there."

She won a gift certificate for a flight.

"Going to actually redeem that gift certificate was quite an adventure," she recalled. "I lived 20 miles away from the airport. First there was a 45-minute train ride to the next town. Then I rode the bus, and then my skateboard to the airport, which was on the outskirts of the town—maybe a couple of hours!"

Richard said the plane was a low-wing type, and the instructor gave her some stick time.

"It was pretty short, 15 to 20 minutes or so," she said. "I would have liked to take some lessons, but it was very expensive and the airport was far away. You have to realize that the society works differently there. You can't drive until you're 18, and then very few are the kids who have a car. There were no jobs available either for kids. I lived in a small town through high school; there was no airport close by, and I didn't know one person who was a pilot."

Richard said that the last year she was in high school she went with some friends to the Paris Air Show.

"Over there, people don't drive as much, so that was a big adventure, like driving from Los Angeles to New York," she said. "It was really exiting."

Richard's family wasn't rich, and she didn't get a lot of encouragement to become a pilot.

"When I was at high school, I had good grades, especially in sciences, and I was doing a lot of sports," she said. "I was more a field person than a desk person. I wanted to become a pilot for a career anyway, and signs were that I would be good at it. Fortunately, I was selected at an aeronautical school located on Bordeaux International Airport, across the street from Dassault and Aerospatiale."

All work and no play can be dull, but not for Richard. All through school, in addition to the physical education class, she played the highly popular soccer and tennis (some competition as well) and did a lot of sailing and skateboarding, which she said was "an exotic sport there." She also shot guns with her younger brother at the local range.

At college, she was close to the ocean and would go surfing a lot. In fact, she said that some of her friends say she picked that particular school just to go surfing. Richard was one

license.

"Flight lessons were super expensive back then, so I was entertaining the idea of going to the United States to get my license," she said. "There were four of us in the same boat. Back then, most people didn't have personal computers and there was no Internet, no email. Going to the U.S. seemed as far as going to the moon."

Coming to America

Every year while attending school in France, Richard had to spend a



By Cameron Kraig

In the Apple Valley area, spring 2003, Manue Richard's RV-4 gleams from her polishing efforts.

of the few students that didn't have enough of an allowance to live on, and needed to work to pay for her car and other expenses, as well as trying to save some money for flight training. So she tutored mathematics for four years, and had several temporary jobs.

Aviation-wise, most people in her school were pilots, which was inspiring. She remembers going to air shows, and one year she worked for a small company on the airport and got a couple of flights as payment. She also studied and passed the written test for the French private pilot

significant amount of time looking for a summer job. That's how she ended up doing ground runs on F-8 Crusaders for the French Navy, a commuter airline in England, then TWA, and finally Boeing in the United States.

"In England, I had applied for an engineering internship," she said. "So it was quite a surprise when I arrived there in a dress suit to be handed a pair of coveralls and sent to the hangar. It turned out to be a good thing; lots of English language practice, and I learned about piston airplanes. Also there was a lot of good

surfing in the English Channel."

The next year, she applied to more companies in the United Kingdom and some in the U.S. She had a call from Continental Airlines to work in flight operations in Indonesia, and from TWA to work in the U.S. Starting in May 1996, she began working a summer job for TWA in Kansas City as an engineering intern. She'd go on the 747 flight tests, and got to fly the 767 simulator in Saint Louis.

In 1997, while in her last year at the University of Bordeaux, she lined up a job with Boeing in Seattle.

"I asked to have the two summer months off and start work in September 1997, which was approved," she said. "I went back to France, passed the finals, and earned the aeronautical engineering diploma."

She returned to Seattle but the Washington shores were very chilly, so she pushed on for a warmer climate and ended up in Los Angeles. A BBQ at Van Nuys Airport led her to volunteering on the team for the "Rare Bear" racing plane.

"As it turned out, I went to the air races in Reno with the rest of the team and obtained a private pilot certificate a few months later," she said. "I also ran out of money, so I had to live in my car and on various sofas for the better part of six months, which was not a real pleasant experience."

Working for Boeing turned out to be quite a saga, she said.

"When Boeing hired me, they made it clear they wanted me to work for them for at least three years," she said. "But the commercial airplane industry started reductions four months later. I ended up getting laid off, and went to work for General Electric at a Boeing 737 jet completion center until they shut down operations. At that time, I was ready to get commercial airplane ratings."

Flying experience

Richard completed the requirements for a private pilot's license at Van Nuys Airport at the end of 1997; she lived in Florida in 1999 and 2000, where she obtained her commercial single/multiengine, IFR and seaplane ratings.

Returning from Florida, she applied for first officer jobs, but only had 400 hours total time.

"I was so used to jet systems from Boeing, it didn't seem I was overdoing it," she said. "In Europe you can get in an A320 with 300 hours. A few operators told me to come back when I had 1,000 hours. Another one offered to let me attend his CE-500 ground school for free and said that if they needed a copilot, I might be considered. So I did learn all about the Citation, and got to fly in the jump seat a few times. If I hadn't been out of money, I would have the type rating. A couple weeks after, in June, Boeing called and I went back to Seattle and stayed until another downturn in November 2001."

After leaving Boeing, she flew skydivers for a year, and then got a Part 135 letter and flew sightseeing trips around Lake Mead in Cessna 172s, 206s and 207s.

"At the same time I was volunteering once again on the highly-modified Grumman F8F 'Rare Bear' racing plane," she said. "I went on the team full time, and spent a few months building the engine with another fellow. After the season was over, I took a job towing gliders.

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Manue Richard relaxes at Van Nuys Airport after returning from an aerobatic session.

Then I was hired as a banner-tow pilot on the recommendation from my aerobatic instructor. I started on the SuperCub, and then moved to a souped-up L-19 Birddog, and finally to a 600-horsepower AgCat. Our biggest project was a seven-airplane formation, towing seven banners."

Vans RV-4 fever

When she was at Boeing in 1998, Richard met a group of retired military/airline captains with 20,000 to 30,000 hours who were flying formation in little Vans RV-4s everyday it wasn't raining. This is a sleek low-wing, single-engine, two-seat tandem, fighter-like, home-built experimental airplane with a fixed tail-dragger gear. At the time, she didn't have an airplane, but did get a lot of backseat time. Marty Foy gave Richard her first ride in an RV-4.

"And what a ride!" she said. "I learned a lot from observation, and they would give me a lot of stick time and instruction as well. I owe a lot to a few of those highly experienced guys. They taught me good practices in formation flying as well as good judgment. There are things you have more or less ability for. It seems with excellent hand-eye coordination and smoothness, I was not the worst student."

Richard said she couldn't say the same about her landings at that time.

"They helped out a lot, too, by sharing information when I was building my RV-4," she said. "I spent a lot of time peeking under the cowlings of their planes and bombarding them with questions. On one of my first flights in the RV-4, I ended up leading a four-ship formation! They were also joking that they should remove one of the blades on my propeller to even out performance. I also did a lot of acrobatics with the same bunch and attended an acrobatic class at Santa Paula Airport."

Building the RV-4

In 1998, Richard had a good job with Boeing and decided to purchase a small tail-dragger to have some fun and build up some time. But the Cubs and such were antiques and quite pricey for the limited performance.

Her rides in RV-4s convinced her it was the perfect airplane—a little

fighter, fast and capable of acrobatics. So she started looking for a used one, but they were beginning to be fairly popular and in high demand. She traveled the country and didn't find one that was either cheap enough or well-built enough to satisfy her.

While in Florida, she stumbled upon a kit already started.

"I figured it was a good deal, and if I didn't take that one, I'd never have an air-

plane," she said. "In short, we trucked it back to Seattle and got it flying within a two-year period. I estimate a good 2,000 to 3,000 hours went into this. Since I was working full time, plus lots of overtime and flying as well, it made for a very, very busy schedule. I largely underestimated how much work and money it was going to take. If I had realized, I would not have submitted myself to this! Then it took another year to get rid of the duct tape, finish it up, and polish it.

"Performance wise, this one has a big engine, a big prop and is light. It is rated +6/-3g, capable of all the gentleman acrobatics, cruises at 200 mph true, climbs at 2,500 feet per minute, jumps off the runway in 250 feet, and has over 3.5 hours endurance. The outside visibility is fantastic; the controls are very light and crisp. It's a pilot's airplane—really enjoyable."

Present and future

Currently, Richard is flying line formation in five-plane skytyping flights, working at Boeing as a senior documentation engineer, and anticipating Learjet 35 training. She flies her RV-4 as much as possible; every week she practices her precision formation flying, and she performs at various events with the Southern California RV Team.

She's still in the market for a job as a flight officer on a jet. For the long-term future, she's looking forward to flying large transports or air cargo. She also would be interested in becoming a flight test pilot to make some use of her engineering background and broad spectrum industry experience.

Asked about hobbies, she replied, "I'd like to be on the starting line at Reno one of these days. I was initially planning on attending pylon racing school at Reno, but have decided to hold off for now and give priority to my career. I nearly bought a Formula V race plane two years ago, but they don't have a circuit going right now and the speeds are pretty low. Plus having two airplanes to take care of is a bit premature."

You'll find more information about Manue Richard at www.frenchflyer.com.

Amelia Earhart Returns!

By Fred "Crash" Blechman

Amelia Earhart, the most famous female pilot of the 20th century, vanished flying over the Pacific Ocean in 1937 while attempting an around-the-world flight. At the time of her disappearance, she and her publisher husband, George Putnam, resided in Toluca Lake. Amelia recently returned to nearby North Hollywood and she can be seen there anytime, day or night!

Well, you won't actually see Amelia Earhart, but you will find an eight-foot-tall 630-pound bronze statue on a five-foot high pedestal, surrounded by 10 Lockheed airplane propeller blades, on the northwest corner of Tujunga Avenue and Magnolia Boulevard in North Hollywood Park, Calif., next to the Amelia Earhart Branch Library.

Amelia Earhart was born in Atchison, Kansas, on July 24,

1898. Learning to fly in California, she took up flying as a hobby. She was the first woman passenger on a transatlantic flight, and after a series of record flights, was the first woman to make a solo flight across the Atlantic

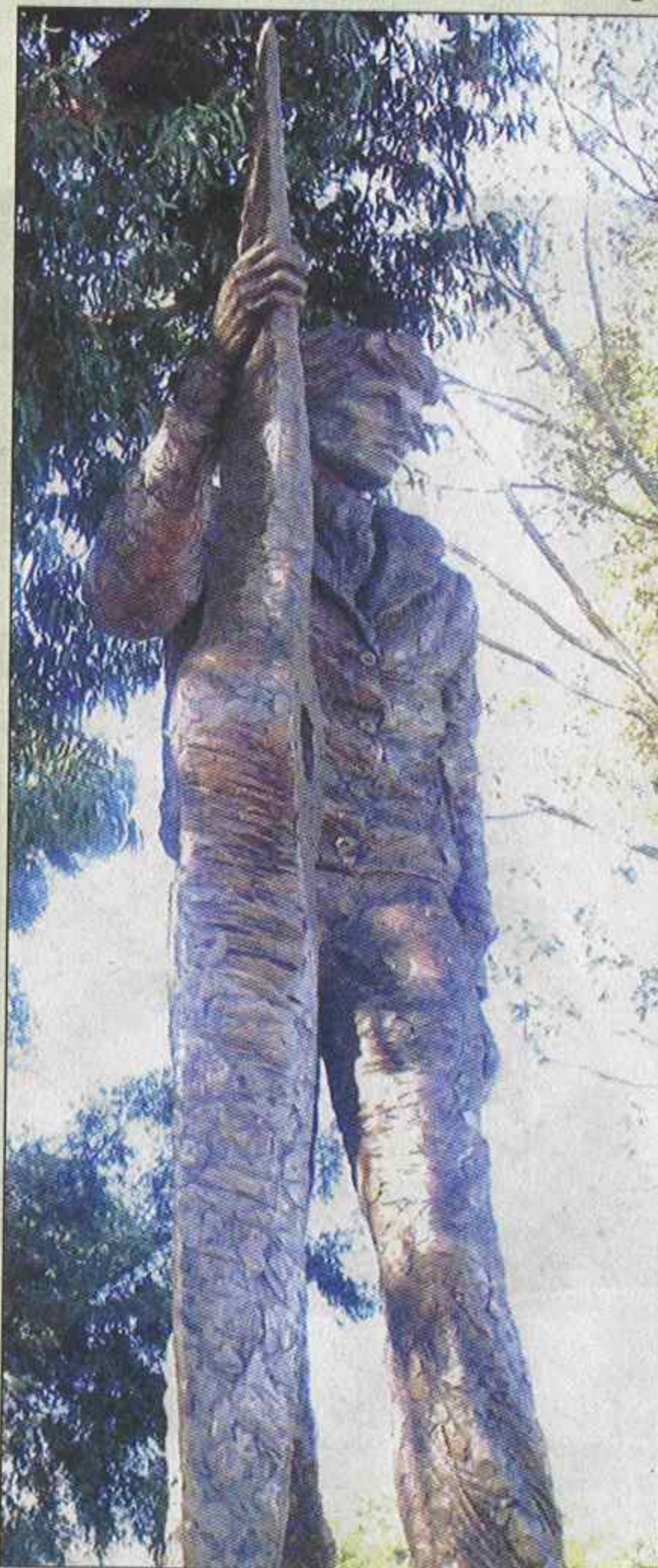


Actress and hotel owner Beverly Garland.

Ocean from Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, to Ireland in 1932. In 1935, she flew the first solo from Hawaii to the American mainland.

In June 1937, Earhart flew east from Miami, Fla., in her twin-engine Lockheed Electra with navigator Fred Noonan, attempting the first around-the-world flight near the equator. With only two flight legs left to cross the Pacific Ocean, they took off from New Guinea on July 1 for Howland Island. They never made it to the island, and a vast naval search failed to locate them. To this day, mystery surrounds their disappearance, with no final resolution after many searches of several Pacific islands, and various theories of their final flight.

This is not the first time her statue has been placed here. On Jan. 21, 1971, the Amelia Earhart Memorial Statue, a steel and fiberglass statue, was erected in this garden-like atmosphere. Intended as only a temporary statue, for over 30 years Amelia valiantly weathered the elements, with a refurbishment in 1989. Although the 23K gold-plated statue of Amelia Earhart holding a large airplane propeller seemed to be rugged, the polyester-resin statue with a galvanized steel structure was dete-



By Fred Blechman

The new eight-foot tall bronze statue of Amelia Earhart holding a large propeller is at North Hollywood Park.

Amelia cont. on pg. 20