US AIR FORCE P47 crash 22nd June 1944 in the vicinity of Géfosse-Fontenay (Normandy - FRANCE)

Background

On June 22nd, 1944 sixteen P47 of 506th Fighter Squadron from 404th Fighter Group, staged in four flights of four aircraft, take off from their home base, Winkton "Air Station 414" in the Hampshire on south coast of England. The mission is CAP (Combat Air Patrol) over "D-Day" landing battlefield.



506th Fighter Squadron

major Harold G. SHOOK, commander of the complete squadron, flies as n°1 of "WHITE flight", including P47 of Capitaine Theodore P. WELGOSS, Capitaine George Mc LAUGHLIN and 2nd Lieutenant Charles E. LABNO.

Pilot	A/C serial number	A/C registration	Radio call sign
Major Harold G. SHOOK	42-26465	4K-R	Tuba White One
Capt. Theodore P. WELGOSS	42-25314	4K-L	Tuba White Two
Capt. George McLAUGHLIN	42-25316	4K-M	Tuba White Three
2 nd Lt. Charles E. LABNO	42-75098	4K-G	Tuba White Four



Major Harold G. SHOOK



Capt. Theodore P. WELGOSS



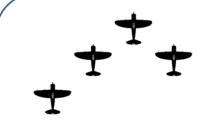
Capt. George McLAUGHLIN



2nd Lt. Charles E. LABNO

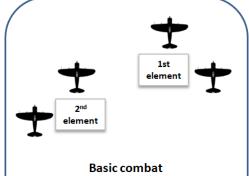
At the end of the mission the squadron claims no victory upon ennemy, but unfortunately one of its aircraft is missing. It is reported as destroyed and his pilot, at the moment, is MIA (Missing In Action).

Formation flying

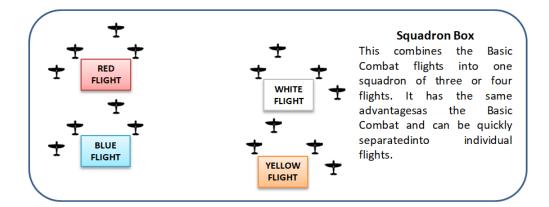


Instrument (or show)

When going through an overcast, the leader flies on instruments and the other planes! fly by visual reference to him. This formation requires full concentration and reliance on the leader. It is also used for show or pass in review

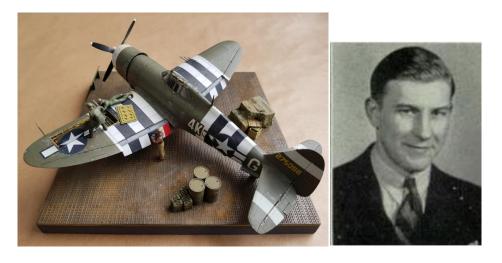


This is a loose formation that provides excellent visibility and mutual tail cover. It is simple, fluid and can be adaptated to any combat grouping.



The pilot and his plane

Mising aircraft is **P47D-10-RE s/n 42-75098**, registered "**4K-G**", and its pilot is **2nd Lt. Charles E. LABNO**, from **Chicago (Illinois)**, **22 years old**, who will not come back from his 9th combat mission.



According to its wingmens testimony as per reported in the Missing Air Crew Report n°6111 06/23/1944, Charles E. LABNO suffered an engine failure while flying about 4 Miles (6,5 km) west from Grandcamp and at altitude of 10,000 Feet (3000 m).

Known and reported facts

MACR n° 6111, Major SHOOK testimony:

"On (Thursday) 22 June 1944 at 0527 (UTC) while leading squadron on patrol mission, White 4 (2nd Lt. LABNO) called (radio) and said that is engine was running rough. I gave him course and told him to return to field (Winkton). Within one minute Pilot called and said his engine had frozen⁽¹⁾. I told him to bail out. After giving Kingsley (ground controler) a fix I let down and located plane in mud flats approximately four miles (6,5 km) west of Grandcamp".

MACR n° 6111, Capt. Mc LAUGHLIN testimony:

"On 22 June 1944 at 0527 I was leading the second element of White Flight⁽²⁾ with 2nd Lt. LABNO as my wingman. Lt. LABNO called out that his engine was missing. He was told by Maj. SHOOK who was leading the flight to return to the field. In about twenty seconds he (2nd Lt. LABNO) called out that his engine had quit. Maj. SHOOK told him to jump. I turned to see where he was but could not locate him. Lt. LABNO called and said that his engine had frozen⁽³⁾ and I told him to get out of the plane before he lost altitude. I did not see or hear from Lt. LABNO again".

- (1) One can wonder about the precise meaning of "frozen" word used here about engine failure. As it to be understood as "seized", meaning mechanically locked, or in the original meaning related to a potential carburettor icing? This question should be better adressed by technical specialist (P47 mech or pilot), but I elect to understand it as "seized" (mechanically blocked), in a more probable technical explanation.
- (2) Refer to above schematic for "flight" and "element" operational definition.
- (3) One can notice a potential time inconcistency between Major SHOOK and Capitaine Mc LAUGHLIN testimony. In fact, Major SHOOK reports LABNO message about "frozen engine" before its "bail out" instruction, while Capitaine Mc LAUGHLIN reverse these two events.

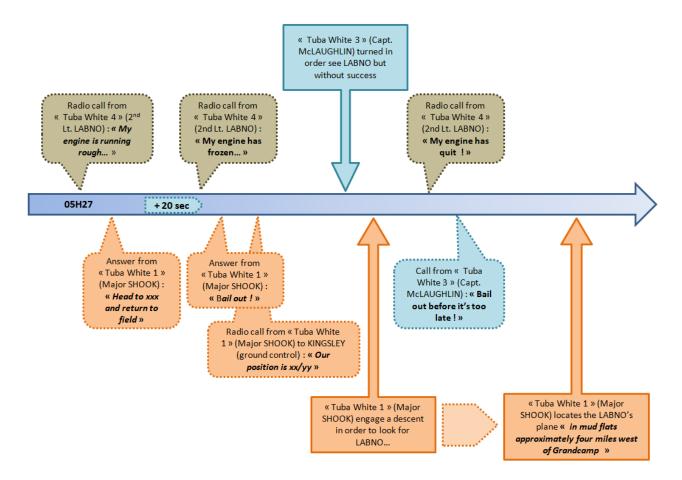
An other document delivers more information about potential crash location of Charles E. LABNO aircarft. It is the **OPSFLASH n°1 dated 22**nd **June, 1944.**

"2nd Lt. Charles E. LABNO ASN O-811930 (military registration number), (believed to have) (complementary information later added in original typed text) bailed out over coast at Grandcamp or in the vicinity of (T-5294) (4) time 0527. Plane was observed embedded in marsh along coast 1/2 miles (800 m) from land".

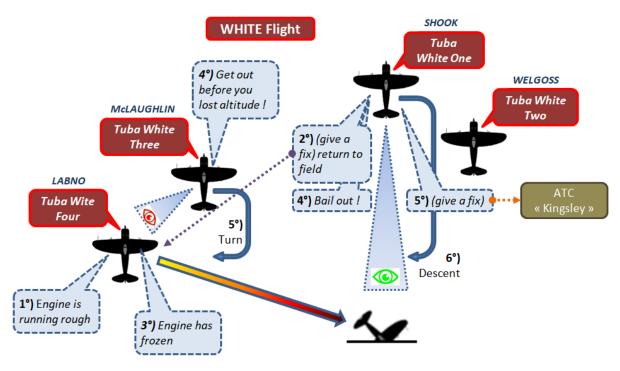
(4) T5294 is referring to geographical coordinates in the "French LAMBERT" system, in common use at this time, and points approximately 49° 23' 44" N, 1° 04' 50" W correspondingmore or less to Grandcamp-Maisy (14450 - Normandy - FRANCE).

This document OPSFLASH also mentions "flak" (AAA) shots during mission: "Moderate light in accurate flak in vicinity of Canrsy (T-4458)".

"Canrsy" is actually CANISY (confirmed by French LAMBERT coordinates, corresponding to a geographical point at 7 km S-O of St LO town).



Events timeline as per MACR n° 6111



Schematic representation of events as per MACR n° 6111



Usual flight plan of P47 from Winkton "Air Station 414" during a Combat Air Patrol over D-Day landing beaches area

The pilot recovery (MIA > KIA)

If a MACR is established at the end of the mission, this is due to the fact that at time Charles E. LABNO is still reported Missing In Action (not yet Killed In Action). Did he manage to bail out from his plane, or even to evacuate once on ground? Would he be recovered, wounded, alive, by friends troops already in domination of this part of the battlefield at this time? In fact we have to admit that Charles probably didn't succeeded to bail out from his plane and was killed during crash. A hand written note on the MACR says "KIA 8/1/..." (unreadable). This "KIA" status is confirmed in a War department note dated August 3rd, 1944: "The individual named in this report of death is held by the war Department to have been in a missing in action status from 22 June 1944 until such absence was terminated on 27 July 1944, when evidence considered sufficient to establish the fact of death was received by the Secretary of war from the Commander in the European Area". As a consequence of military administration slowness Charles is officially declared dead precisely 1 month after its burial. Pilot's body has thus been recovered in conditions unknown to us at this step of our investigation. The official military document REPORT OF BURIAL indicates that Charles E. LABNO has been buried at provisional military cimetery of LA CAMBE on 27th June, 1944 (at 13h20), that is to say 5 days after is fatal crash.

Accurate crash location

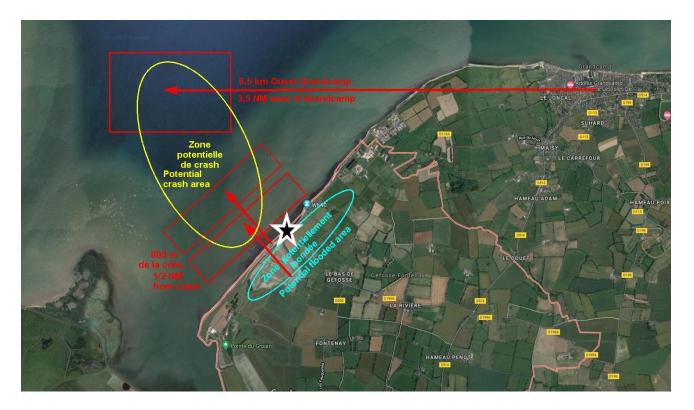
According to only actual indications from MACR and OPSFLASH, we may **assume a crash location** of Charles E. LABNO:

- about 4 miles (6,5 km) west of Grandcamp
- in marsh along coast 1/2 miles (800 m) from land

This description is provided by american pilots, based in the UK, coming back from their mission, at dawn, and thus with an appreciation of places and related distances to be considered with caution.

On 22nd June, 1944, at **05h30 tide** was **low** (LT 04:39 UTC coef.80) in The VEYS bay and provided an aerial view similar to "wide marsh".

In this area one has to consider actual inland marsh, along the seashore. Was it (voluntarily or not) flooded on this 22nd June, 1944, morning? This undefined situation may lead us to question the reported facts: "...in marsh along coast 1/2 miles (800 m) from land...". How do we have to understand "land"? As the actual coast line or as the border of the flooded area (thus may be 330 to 430 Yards - 300 to 400m - inland)?



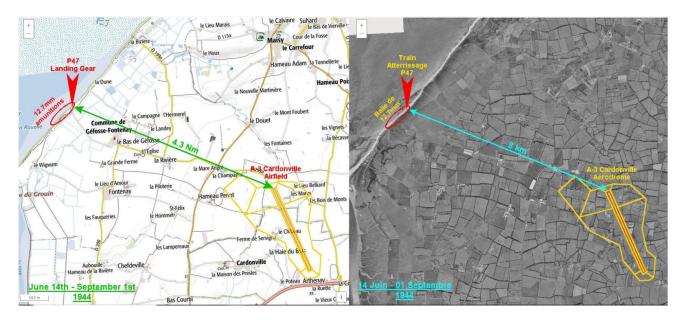
Estimate of Charles E. LABNO potential crash area

However what can be today located very precisely is the place where P47 wrecks have been collected since May 2019, on the beach of Géfosse-Fontenay (see dedicated chapter at the end of document):



Advanced Landing Ground A3 - CARDONVILLE

One should note that at precise time 2nd Lieutenant Charles E. LABNO crashes on seashore of Géfosse-Fontenay this 22nd June, 1944, a provisional US airfield - ALG A3 of Cardonville - is on operational duty since one week, located 4,3 Nm (8 km) south-east. It is the home base of other aircraft than those of 404 FG, operating from UK, however if its engine had given him a chance Charles could have attempted an emergency landing there. At 160 Knots (300 km/h) it requires only 1'30" to travel this distance of 4,3 Nm... As we know Charles E. LABNO was flying at an altitude of about 10,000 Feet (3000 m). Missing the actual gliding ratio of a P47 it is not clear which altitude margin was required for Charles to possibly reach this terrain with engine out. A P47 pilot reported "...the Jug as gliding performance of an anvil..."



The brief operational time of Charles E. LABNO:

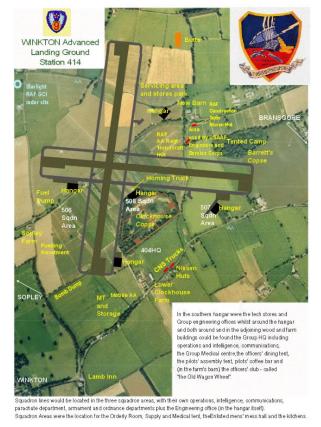
We know that Charles **joined USAF on 30 August, 1943**, however it was probably not member of first 506th FS pilots batch traveling to Liverpool (UK) on 22nd March, 1944, onboard british liner RMMV "Sterling Castle". His "Physical Examination for Flying" file, dated 1st of July, 1943, reports its enlistment at this time in **406th FB Group - 514th FB Squadron.**



RMMV "Striling Castle" on arrival at Liverpool, 3rd April 1944 (http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page4363.html)

First evidence of Charles E. LABNO **enlistement** in **404th FG - 506th FS** can be seen in operational missions reports, that allow us to build a time line of the **9 operational missions** Charles performed from the british airbase of **Winkton - Air Station 414** - an Advanced Landing Ground of RAF located in south of England (known as Hampshire in 1944, Dorset nowdays) about **75 N.m** (**135 km**) **south-west of London.**





Air Station 414 Winkton localisation and layout

A picture of historical first batch of 506th FS pilots, dated 10th May, 1944, doesn't include Charles. he probably **joined** the Squadron with others young pilots about **mid-May 1944**, transferred from 406th FB Group - 514th FB Squadron.



2^{na} row, from L to R: HUSE, JUSTICE, LEAKE, ALLEN, PARSONS, SIMPSON, WHITE, FISHER, BEALLE, ADAMS 1st row, from L to R: McLAUGHLIN, BAKER, JONES, PARKER, NICHOLS, DUNSMORE, SHOOK, STOVALL, ELLEDGE, VINSON, HOCHADEL, BATES, WESTERINEN

Before achieving operational war missions, Charles E. LABNO suffered two aircrashes at controls of a P47, during its training flights in USA:

- 5th January, 1944: accident on P-47G-5-CU (serial 42-25009), at Wampee Landing Strip (South Carolina, USA). Plane probably took off from Congaree Army Airport (Richland County, South Carolina, USA) wich was the base of 406th FB Group from 18th September, 1943, and 18th March, 1944. Ground loop at landing...
- **18 Janvier 1944**: accident on P-47G-5-CU (serial 42-25022), near Gibonsville (North Carolina, USA). Plane probably took off from Congaree Army Airport (Richland County, South Carolina, USA). Forced landing due to duel shortage...

Once enrolled in 506th FS, Charles performed nine war missions:

Mission - Date	Plane code	Radio call sign	Target
1 st mission – May 28 th 1944	4K-L	Tuba Blue 2	Bombers escort on their way to Germany
2nd mission – May, 29 th 1944	4K-P	Tuba Blue 4	Bombers escort on their way to Germany (FrankfurtTBC)
3rd mission – June, 6 th 1944	4K-G	Tuba Blue 4	Combat air patrol (over Normandy, D-Day landing zonesTBC?)
4th mission - June, 7 th 1944	4K-G	Tuba Red 2	Combat air patrol over D-Day bridgehead (Normandy). 4 missions were flown these day but no evidence that Charles attended more than one. One should note that it was during the 4 th that Joseph H. VIVIAN was reported missing (MIA).
5th mission – June, 8t ^h 1944	?	?	?
6 th mission – June, 11 th 1944	?	?	?
7th mission – June, 12 th 1944	4K-Z	Tuba Red 2	Armed reconnaissance over Cotentin peninsule (Normandy, south of Cherbourg and south of Bayeux)
8 th mission – June, 18 th 1944	4K-G	Tuba Yellow 2	Dive bombing on marshalling yard of Rennes (France, Britany)
9 th mission – June, 22 nd 1944 †	4K-G	Tuba White 4	Combat air patrol over D-Day bridgehead (Normandy). Engine failure and crash somewhere in bay of Veys, in front of Géfosse-Fontenay village

Charles E. LABNO's family environment:

Charles is the son of **Antonia LABNO** (born BOBKA - 01/27(13?)/1889 - 05/?/1971) and **John LABNO** (1886/1928), parents from polish origin, emigrated to USA in the years 1920-1930. I don't have identified neither precise path of LABNO family from Poland and date of arrival in USA, nor family composition at this time. I just have indication that Antonia was naturalized American in 1927.

Antonia and John get married in 1909, but John died in 1928 (at age of 42).

Antonia and John had together 5 children:

- Ann(e) (07/26/1912(10?) 12/18/2002), wife of Ervin WALLENBERG (1910 ?), mother of :
 - Jacqueline
 - o Ervin Jr.
- Raymond (1913 01/2000), husband of Flavia (born SALVI 01/07/1920 08/2005), father of :
 - Janice (James) Kraack
 - Charles (Margaret)
 - Scott
- Joséphine (1920 -02/2006), wife of Chester MASLANSKA
- Charles (10/27/1921 06/22/1944)
- John (02/01/1926 01/22/2016), husband of Frances Louise HAERLE (1920 2005), father of :
 - o John Charles
 - o Karen

Charles E. LABNO's family tree Antonia BOBKA 01/27/1889 John LABNO 05/08/1887 00/00/1928 (02/13/1889 05/04/1971 1909 Anna Eva LABNO 07/26/1912 Ervin WALLENBERG Chester MASLANKA Frances Louise Josephine LABNO 12/08/1919 HAERLE 00/00/1913 01/07/1920 10/27/1921 01/02/1926 08/26/1909 08/00/1984 00/00/0000 07/01**/1920** 00**/08/2005** 01/00/2000 08/18/2005 02/15/2006 06/22/1944 12/18/2002 0000 0000 0000 (husb. James KRAACK) (wif.. Margaret) ?

All Charles' sisters and brothers are now dead, however we can expect that some of his nieces and nephews are still alive and can possibly be contacted.

The official US census of 1940 gives the following description of Charles' family distribution. Antonialives with her three sons, whereas Josephine lives with her sister Ann and her family. Both homes are roughly located 2700 yards away each other.



[1] Located 2634 West Fifteenth Place, Chicago, Cook [2] Located 2011 West 19th street, Chicago, Cook county, Illinois (USA):

- Antonia LABNO (aged 50)
 - o Raymond (aged 27)
 - Charles (aged 18)
 - John (aged 14)



county, Illinois (USA):

- Ervin WALLENBERG (aged 29)
- Ann (born LABNO aged 28)
 - o Ervin Jr. (aged 2)
 - Jacqueline (aged 5)
- Josephine LABNO (aged 20), Ann's sister



In 1944 Raymond LABNO, now husband of Flavia SALVI, lives 1600 yards awy from his mother, on the other side of Douglass Park: [3] 1436 South Kedzie avenue, Chicago 23, Cook county, Illinois (USA)

From 1945 to 1947 Antonia LABNO moves at least three times, but still remaining in the same area (about 200 yards between her two first locations, and 380 yards between the 2nd and the 3rd):

[4] 1945: 2612 West 21st Street, Chicago, Cook county, Illinois (USA)

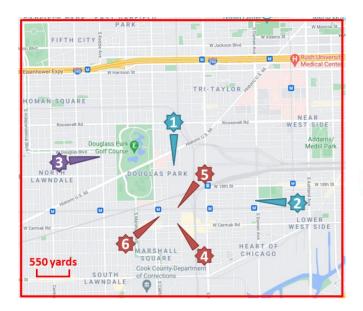


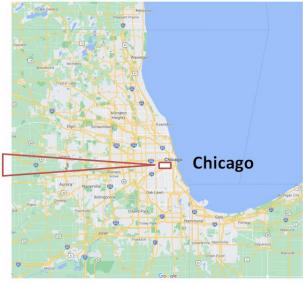
[**5**] September 1945 : 2615 West Cullerton Street, Chicago, Cook county, Illinois (USA)



[6] 1947 : 2102 South Fairfield avenue, Chicago, Cook county, Illinois (USA)







Events after Charles E. LABNO death:

The **Individual Deceased Personnel File** from Charles E. LABNO, received from National Archives at St. Louis (Missouri), allowed me to elaborate two parallel timelines. The first one is related to long trip of Charles remains from Normandy (France) to Chicago (USA). The second one is more focused on various attempts from US Air Force to send back Charles' personal belongings to his mother.

It is noticeable that if Charles is first burried on June, 27th 1944 (in LA CAMBE - France), US Air Force will be in situation to tell his family about grave location only six months later. The repatriation of the body in US homelands, on request of the family, is initiated about three years and a half (1947 November) after death, and reached conclusion four years, later to the day, following this fateful day . For his last trip Charles remains will travel successively by:

- road, from LA CAMBE to CHERBOURG via St. LAURENT-SUR-MER,
- sea, onboard USS LAWRENCE Victory Ship from CHERBOURG to NEW YORK,
- railroad, from NewYork to Chicago,
- road, again, from CHICAGO funeral home to graveyard.

One should note that onboard USS LAWRENCE Victory Ship, Charles is not "traveling alone"... 5305 other american soldiers remains will be disembarked on arrival in New York harbor, June 7th 1948.





Documents enclosed in the Charles IDPF alow us some intrusion into the young pilot private life. Its **Physical Examination For Flying certificate** teaches us that Charles was submitted to tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy at age of eight, suffered a dislocated elbow at age of 19 ("...with no sequels..." as written).

The **Report of Burial** dated June 27th, 1944 gives us information, some of them somewhat confusing:

- Charles body, at time of burial, was not fitting with identification plate ("Dog tag"). Pilot's identity was testified thanks to personal papers, including ID cards, and wear markings.
- reported date and place of death are erroneous: OMAHA BEACH, June 7th, 1944...
- personal belongings, attached to the body:
 - o a lighter
 - o wings (pilot insigna ?)
 - o a pen

- o a "souvenir penny"
- US money (12\$) and english (4£ and 2 Schillings).

List only Personal Effects Found on Body and disposition of same:

Lighter

Pen -

Souvenir Penny

Wings

At last, one confusing element of this documents is the Cause of Death which is reported as "MG Wound Chest". What does it mean exactly? First, and may be too easily, it appears obvious to read "MG" as acronym for "Machine Gun". Was Charles body affected by bullets (MG's) impacts on chest? This doesn't sound compliant to what we know about its crash circumstances. Should we have to consider some erratic and uncommanded firing of onboard four cal.50 machine guns, under crash impact, resulting in some shots aimed at the cockpit? Other potential explanation, once crashed was Charles submitted to some shots from ground (not sure that on June 22th, 1944, the crash area was still occupied by german troops, even isolated elements). May be we have to consider, with more confidence, another signification of "MG", but which?

Labn Last Na		Charles First*	E. Ipitial	Ra	Lt.	0-13-44 0-811930 Serial No.	
Air	Corp	40	4 FTR		SE Organization		- 3
Omaha B			7 June 19			nd Chest	
Place of			Date of Death			ause of Death	_
1320 hr		19/1/1	La Cambe Ce	an .	La Ca	mbe, F.	
Time and Date of	Burial		Name of Cemete	ery	Name or	Coordinates of Location	71-9
86 Grave Number	Row Number		Plot N	vumber	_8	talce Type of Marker	4.1
isposition of Identific	ation Tags: Bu	ried with body	Yes 🗆 No 🗔	Attached to Ma	rker Yes	No 🔼	
No Identification How were rem	Tags ains identified?						

\$12.00

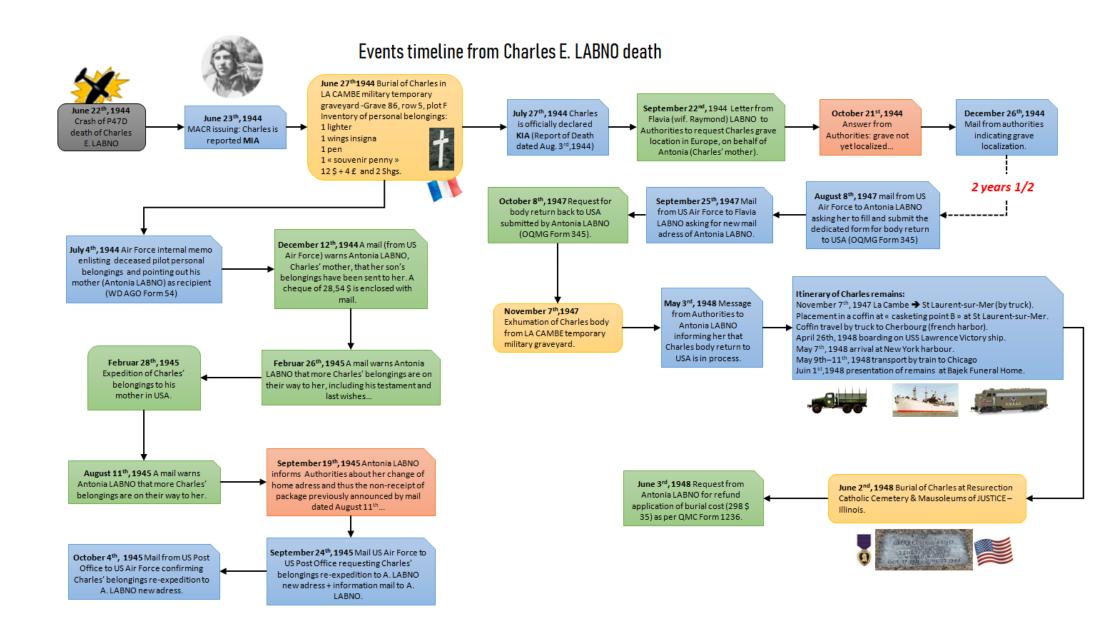
4 Pounds

2 Shillings

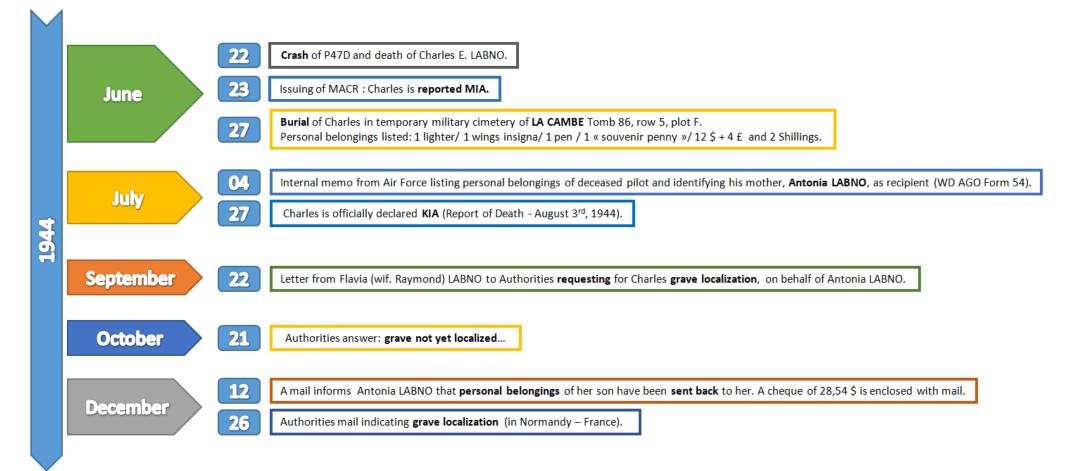
Letter from Flavia LABNO, sister-in-law of Charles, adressed to US Military Authorities on behalf of Charles' mother, Antonia, as a request of being infrmed of remains location in European ground.

Sept, 22, 1944. Quartermaster General, Washing ton 25, S. C. Rej 12 and St. Charles & Labors, 0-8/1930 a & PC- 9-201 In a letter received from Major Tempal J. a. alio, we were Imparmed that your office has junsdiction over matters justaining to the busial of melitary personnel who die oversea and that we could inquire as to the exation of the grave. It. Charles & Lalins is my brother -in - law and has been reported bulled in action near Grand camp France on June 22, 1944. BR. 7 C.B. File allaches

His mathey the survivas. has asked me to write to you to see if you could give us the location of the grave and if, after the war, his body could be brought back here. I would appreciate your assistance in this matter and following address, Mrs. Raymond Lalins 1436 So. Kedzie ave. Chicago 23, Ill. Sincerely yours (Mrs.) Plavia Lalino

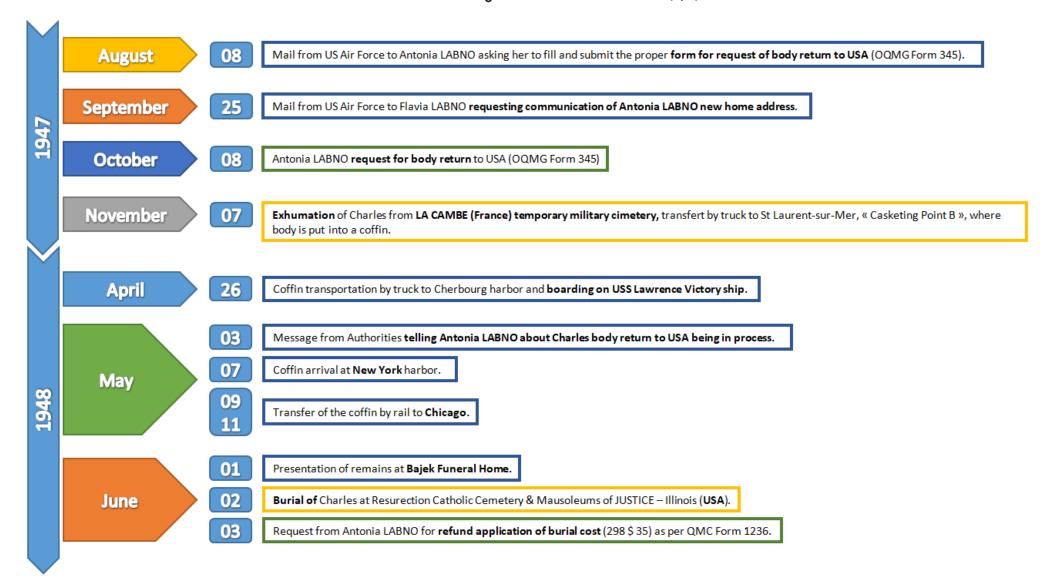


Events timeline following Charles E. LABNO death (1/3)



	Februar	A mail to Antonia LABNO informs her that others personal belongings of Charles have been sent back to her, including his testament and last wishes.
		Sending of Charles' personal belongings to her mother in USA.
£3	August	1,1 A mail to Antonia LABNO informs her that others personal belongings of Charles have been sent back to her.
194		
Ä	September	Antonia LABNO informs Authorities about her home address change and thus that she didn't receive the belongings announced by mail of August 11 th .
	September	Mail from US Air Force to US Post Office to request new expedition of package to proper Antonia address + information to Antonia LABNO.
	October	Mail from US Post Office to US Air Force to confirm that package has been sent again to new adresse of A. LABNO.

Events timeline following Charles E. LABNO death (3/3)

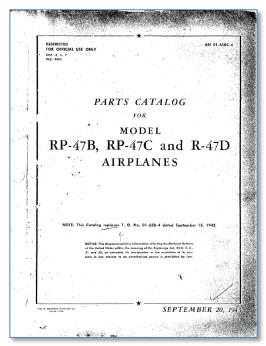


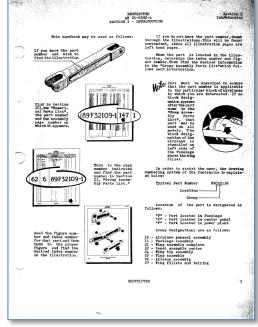
Aircraft parts collected since 2018:

Since summer 2018 Géfosse-Fontenay beach delivered to me some metalic parts, from various size, that I was able to link with no doubt to a P47 fighter-bomber, refering to original Illustrated Parts Catalog, including precise parts number identification (engraved on found wrecks). Unfortunately non of these parts has a serial number which would have allowed me to point with 100% confidence level to the P47D-10-RE s/n 42-75098 of Charles E. LABNO. One should keep in mind that the only aircraft parts with serial numbers included in MACR (and that would identify perfectly origin of wrecks) are:

Airplane part	Serial Number
Airplane fuselage (P47D-10-RE registered "4K-G")	42-75098
Engine (Pratt & Whitney R2800-63)	42-6493
Machine Guns (Browning M2 Cal.50 / 12.7mm)	917565 917733 918049 917515 709256 709283 709546 709551

Important: without one of these serial number, belonging of these relics collected on Géfosse-Fontenay beach to Charles E. LABNO's aircraft still remains a working assumption and is not, for sure, a verified evidence of truth. Nevertheless, we can rely on enough converging clues to grant this working assumption a high level of confidence.

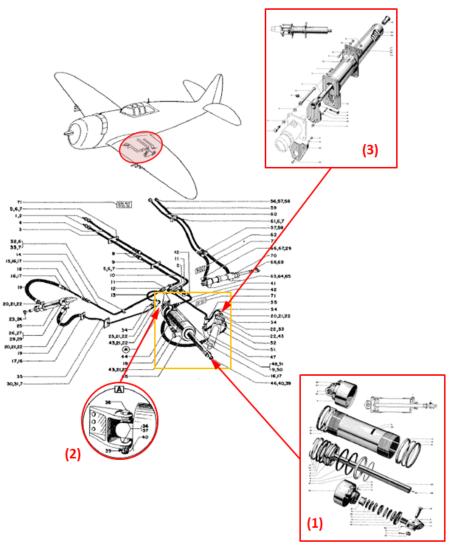




Original illustrated parts catalog used for collected wrecks identification

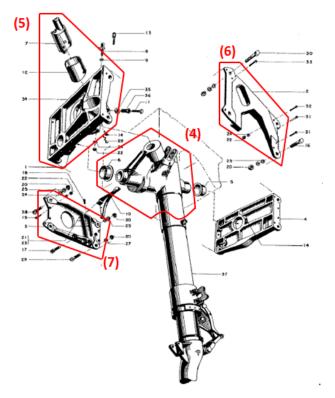
1 - LH Main Landing Gear:

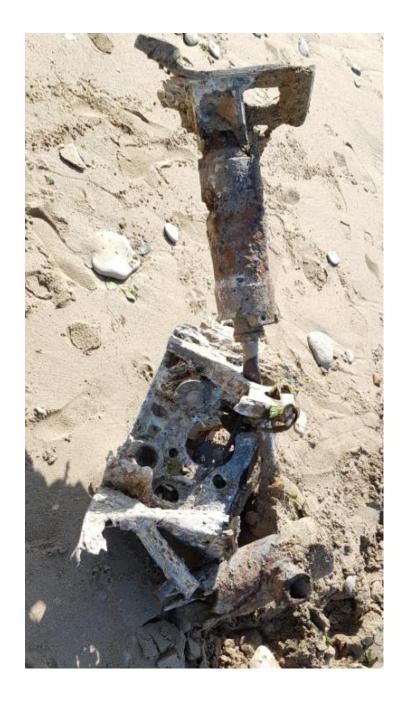
May 2019

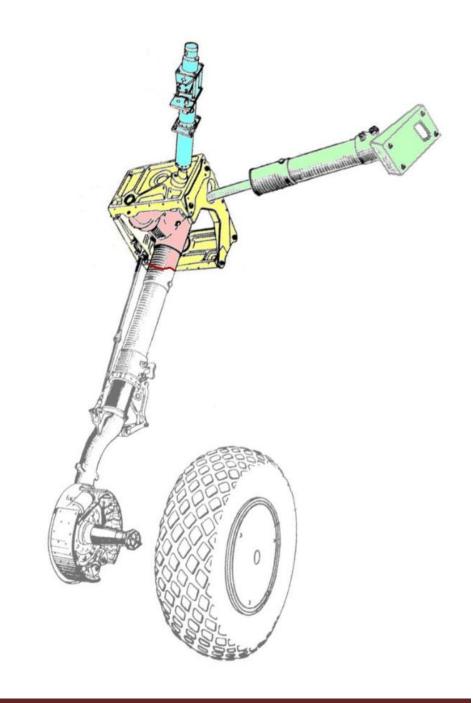


Parts from LH Main Landing Gear including:

- ✓ Manœuvre actuator (1) p/n 89C38200
 - Attaching hinge (2)
- ✓ Gear lock-down mechanism (3) p/n 89L41123
- ✓ Upper part of shock absorber body (4) p/n 8123A
- ✓ Plate Auxiliary rib (5) p/n 89L41146
- ✓ Plate Rib 86 (6) p/n 89L41147
- ✓ Plate Rib 104 (7) p/n 89L41148















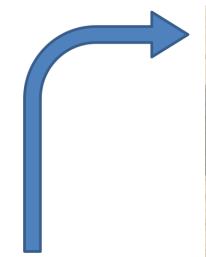


Left hand and right hand main landing gear are built in a symetrical way. Thus it is easy to identify found parts as belonging to a left hand main landing gear.



On P-47 the shock-strut scissor is located on the front of main landing gear leg, and the wheel is facing toward aircraft center line.





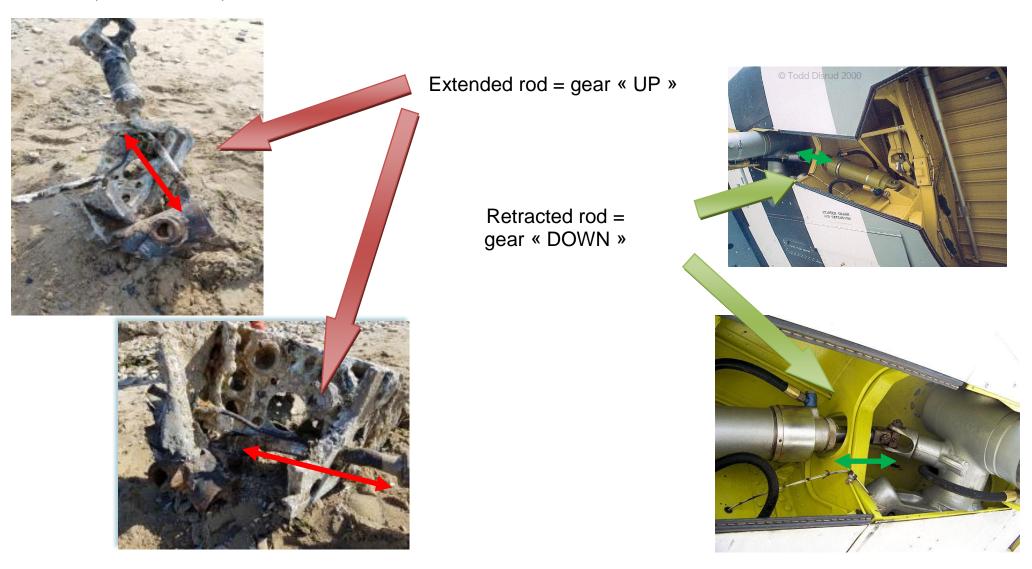




On found parts, layout of main landing gear upper part is fully compliant with a left hand one. (direction of manœuvre actuator attaching compared to front ball bearing trunion).



On P-47, to extend the main landing gear, manoeuver actuator rod has to retract. On found wreckages the rod is clearly fully extended and twisted, thus giving strong indication that **main landing gear** (left hand one) **was UP** (not extended) **at time of the crash**.







Small fishing net pieces matted with wreckages point out that they are not burried here since 1944 but, either have been dropped here from sea or had already emerged from sand in the past...

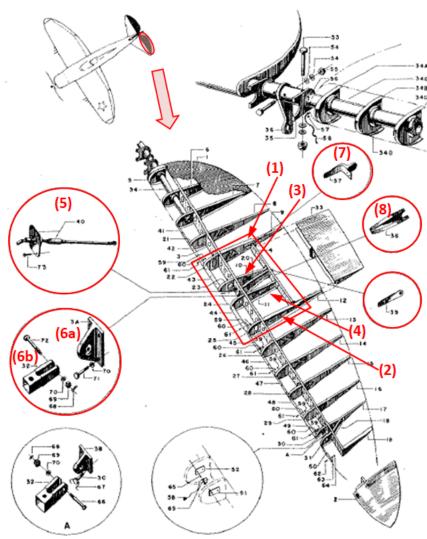




Small part (≈ 12 in.) initially attached but later separated

2 - Parts of Horizontal Tail control surface:

July - August 2019



Parts of horizontal tail control surface, including:

- ✓ Rib 30 (1) p/n 93G53514
- ✓ Rib 47-3/4 (2) p/n 93G53517
- ✓ Rib 36-13/16 (3) p/n 93G53515
- ✓ Rib 41-5/16 (4) p/n 93G53516
- √ Trim flap rod (5) p/n 93G53577
- ✓ Middle fitting (6a) p/n 93G53563-1
- ✓ Hinge (6b) p/n 93G53546
- ✓ Trim flap fitting attachment (7) p/n 93G53569-2
- ✓ Trim flap rod fairing (8) p/n 93G53574
- ✓ Trim flap middle hinge attachment (7) p/n 93G53570





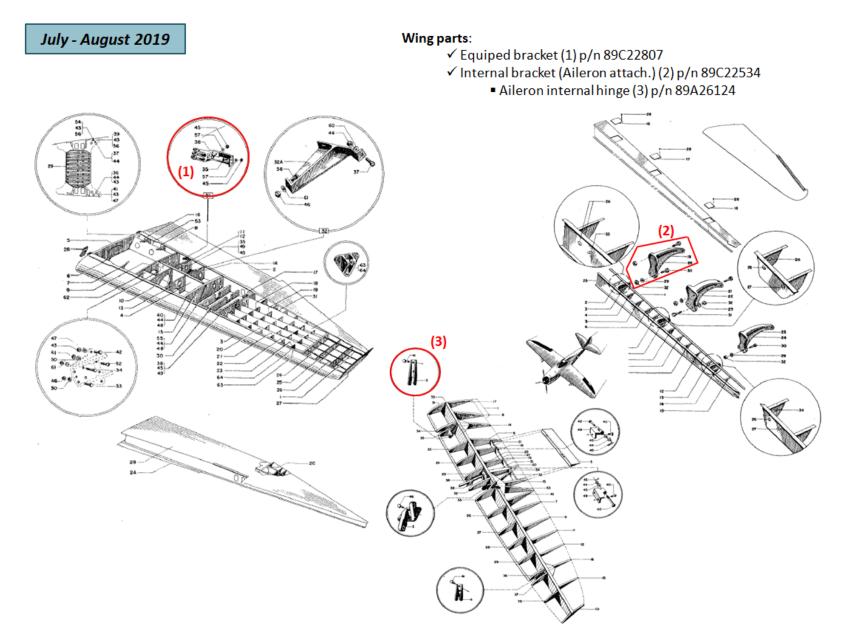






Horizontal tail control surface leading edge balancing loads

3 - Wing parts:







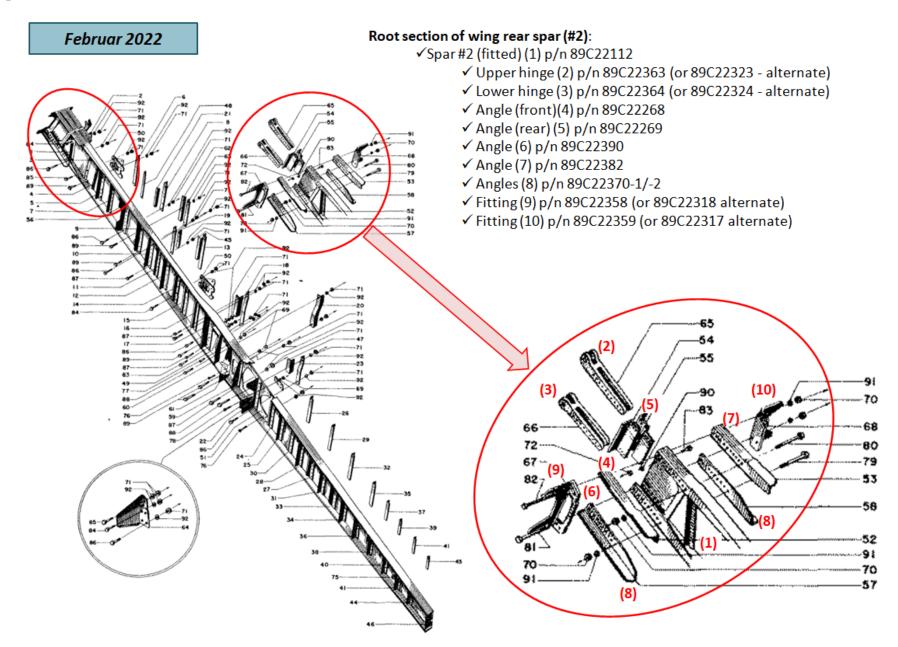








4 - Wing parts:





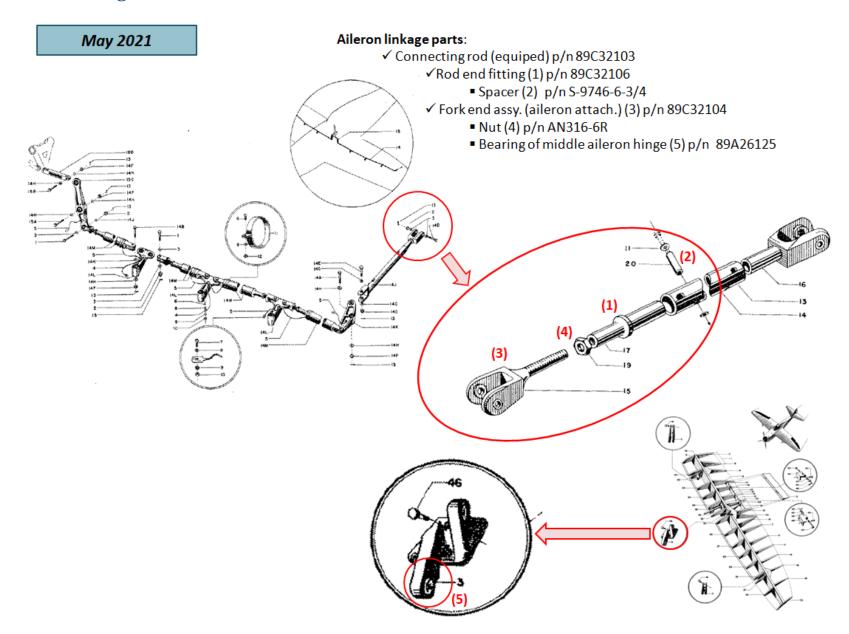








5 - Parts of aileron linkage:

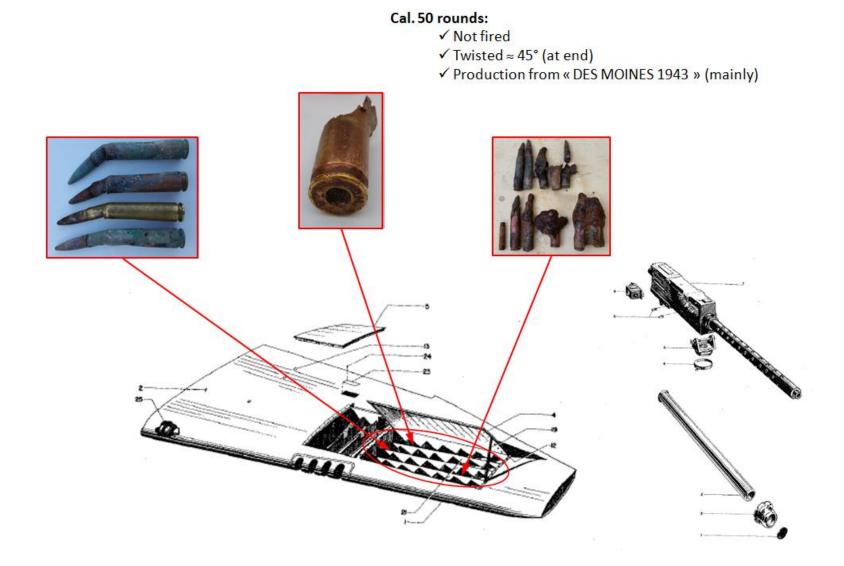






6 - Cal. 50 rounds:

From July - August 2018...



Overview of found parts location on aircraft

