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## Lufbery, 'American Ace' Writes of His Pleasure Flying for Gen. Pershing

Gervais Raoul Lufbery

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# LUFBERY, 'AMERICAN ACE,' WRITES OF HIS PLEASURE FLYING FOR GEN. PERSHING

First Published Letter Since Leaving Lafayette Escadrille Full of Human Interest  
—How Wanderlust Led Him to Aviation in Indo-China

The "American Ace," bored by the monotony of bringing down Hun aviators, somewhere in France, wishes he could go fishing down in Plymouth, Mass.

Major Gervais Raoul Lufbery, formerly of the Lafayette Escadrille, but now with the "Sam-mies," expressed that wish in a letter received in Boston.

This is the first word to come direct from Lufbery, although the cables have been busy telling of his exploits.

Here is the letter, written to a friend:

Escadrille No. 124 S. P.

I was very glad to get your nice long letter. Was also pleased to hear that you enjoyed yourself at Plymouth. Yes, it's too bad I was not there. Well! next year perhaps, if the war is over, I might have the pleasure of going fishing with you. Of course, you will have to give me some lessons, for I am rather awkward in that kind of game.

#### Glad to Be With Americans

This morning I was told that my transfer to American aviation corps was accepted and that a commission of major was given to me. The grade of major is equivalent to the stripes of a French commandant. Of course, I do not have to tell you that I was awfully pleased.

I have now 14 Germans officially brought down. (He got three more since the letter was written.) As you see, I am pretty busy with the Boches, and do not waste my time. Unfortunately, I do not think I shall be able to keep it up this winter, for the cold disagrees with me and I am always afraid of getting my old rheumatism back again.

Poor old Whisky! (Whisky was a lion cub, pet of the escadrille.) The poor fellow has left the front and he is now at the zoo in Paris. I must say that it was a bad trick they played on him, for he never asked to be sent to the rear, anyway. I felt very sorry to see him leave.

R. LUFBERY.

Escadrille Lafayette, Secteur 18L.

Gervais Raoul Lufbery, the "Ace" of the American escadrille, has looked into about as many odd corners of the globe as any other living man of his age. Since his early days Lufbery's career has been continuously one of excitement and adventure and his story is one of the most interesting of any American in the allied service.

Fifteen years ago Lufbery set out to see the world. First he went to France, visiting Paris, Bourges, Marseilles and other cities. From Marseilles he set sail for northern Africa and passed some time in Algeria, Tunis and Egypt, then went to Constantinople.

Leaving Turkey, Lufbery went through the Balkan States to Germany, where, from Hamburg, he sailed for South America. There he decided to pay the home folks a visit, and in 1906 returned to Wallingford, Conn., where his father lived.

#### Enlisted in U. S. Army

In 1907 Lufbery, tired of the quiet Connecticut life, went to New Orleans and enlisted in the United States army and was sent to the Philippine Islands, where he remained for over two years. When he was a soldier in the United States army he won and held the Marksmanship medal of his regiment.

Leaving the Philippines, he visited Japan and China, exploring these countries thoroughly. Then he went to Bombay in India. From there he went to Indo-China. At Laigon, Cochin-China, he met Marc Pourpe, a young French aviator, who was giving flying exhibitions in Asia. He went with him and that was the beginning of a fine friendship between the two young men.

They gave flying exhibitions all over the French provinces in Indo-China with great success. The King of Cambodia was so pleased that he decorated both with a medal which entitled them to a guard of honor whenever they appeared in the streets of any town in Cambodia.

In the summer of 1914 the two comrades went to France to get a new aeroplane. Then war was declared and Pourpe at once volunteered as an aviator. Lufbery wished to enlist with him, but when he presented himself at a recruiting bureau he was told that, not being a French citizen, he must enter the Foreign Legion if he wished to fight for France. And he did!

#### Joined to Avenge Death

Pourpe was shot to death during one of his wonderful air feats, and wishing to avenge the death of his friend, Lufbery asked to take his place. His request was granted, and in the summer of 1916 he went to the front as a member of the famous American Escadrille. It was on Aug. 4 of that year that he brought down his third enemy plane, and soon afterward was decorated with the Military Medal and the French War Cross, with the following citations:



Major Raoul Lufbery, the "American Ace," who has 17 German planes to his credit. Photo (C) Underwood & Underwood, New York.

"Lufbery, Raoul, sergeant with the Escadrille No. 124, a model of skill, sang froid and courage, has distinguished himself by numerous long-

distance bombardments and by the dally combat which he delivers to enemy airplanes. On July 31 he attacked at short range a group of four German airplanes. He shot one of them down near our lines. On Aug. 4, 1916, he succeeded in bringing down a second one."

Two or more combats a day in the air came to be a common occurrence with Lufbery, and many times he returned to the base with his machine full of holes and his clothing cut by German bullets.

When Lufbery heard of the death of Kiffin Rockwell, he ordered his gasoline tank refilled and soared into the sky in the hope of avenging the death of his comrade. Unfortunately, no enemy machine was to be found.

During the bombardment of the Mauser factories on Oct. 12, 1916, the intrepid aviator brought down a three-manned aviatik. This was counted as his fifth official victory and gained him additional honors. It was during this raid that Norman Prince was mortally wounded. After the Escadrille had moved to the Somme battlefield, Lufbery, on Nov. 9 and 10, brought down two more German planes.

#### Machine Often Riddled

On Dec. 27, 1916, he nearly lost his life in bringing down his sixth flier. Four bullets riddled his machine close to his body. For this victory he received the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

In March, 1917, he was officially credited with bringing down his seventh German machine. Ten others have been sent hurtling to the earth at different times since then.

Lufbery is a quiet, level-headed man. His particular friend in the Lafayette Escadrille of American fliers was Sergeant Paul Pavelka, now killed, who also hailed from Connecticut.

Lufbery has his own special methods of attacking enemy airplanes. He is cool, cautious and brave and an exceptionally fine shot. He has been cited in army orders several times since August 1916.

Major Raoul Lufbery has the largest score of any American who has flown in France. His total is now 17 enemy planes. He is wearing the French War Cross with four palms, the British Military Medal, the French Military Medal and the French Cross of the Legion of Honor, all awarded him for valor.

## How Lufbery Met Death.

The Chicago Daily Tribune published, a few days ago, the following interesting account of Major Lufbery's last air fight. It was written by the Tribune's correspondent, Edwin L. James:

Early in the morning a giant plane appeared over the American airdromes, moving slowly. Four Americans started up and found themselves face to face with a German plane driven by armored engines, and carrying a pilot and two gunners who were heavily armored, each manning heavy machine guns from protected positions. The Americans sent streams of bullets in vain against the enemy. One American got in close, and sent three hundred bullets sweeping against the flying tank with absolutely no effect, on it as it loafed along in the air.

When one of the Americans landed, out of ammunition, and told of his inability to do damage to the German plane, Lufbery asked, and received permission to try. He mounted up above the German machine, got his machine gun going well and swept head first at the monster. When part of the way had been traversed he swerved off, supposedly because his machine gun jammed. But in a few minutes he was back at the boche machine again, and dashed by with his machine gun going, but produced no effect on the enemy plane.

He was seen to turn and start up at the enemy again, when suddenly he swerved and a thin line of flame shot from his machine, which seemed to hang still for a moment and then dart down. This all took place at an altitude of about 2,200 and when his machine was about 1,500 yards from the ground, the American ace was seen to arise and leap in midair. From long experience he knew that to stay in his seat meant to be burned to death horribly.

His body fell like a plummet, landing in the midst of a flower garden, back of a residence in the village of Maron. His machine fell in flames half a kilometer away and was burned to ashes. His fellows rushed from the American aviation field to the spot where their comrade had fallen, but before they reached there some French people had straightened out the body in their garden and almost covered it with the flowers in the midst of which he fell.

The only wound on Major Lufbery's body was a bullet wound on his right hand. This showed that the incendiary bullet which had set his petrol tank on fire had passed through the hand which held the control lever, a few inches from the tank.

As soon as the news of Lufbery's death spread, Americans went up looking for vengeance on planes for which their machines were a match. Lieut. Douglas Campbell of California was successful. Spotting a German observation plane, he drove for it with his machine gun going full blast. The German machine came down three kilometers behind the Americans lines. The pilot had two bullets through his brain and the observer had six in various parts of his body. Both were dead.

Major Lufbery never missed an opportunity to knock down an enemy plane, frequently taking desperate chances to add to his victories. Only the day before his death he remarked jokingly to his comrades: "You fellows can't get all the easy pickings. I heard how you were knocking them down and decided to hurry back and get some myself. Let 'em all come, the more the merrier."