

La Chronique

50th anniversary of the Alouette II

France, March 12, 2005. Today marks the 50th anniversary of the first flight of the Alouette II, the first worldwide turbine powered helicopter to be produced in serie.

As a matter of fact, test-pilot Jean Boulet acomplished a 10 minute hover with prototype No. 01 at Le Buc airfield, close to Paris, on March 12, 1955. As no particular problem was noticed, Jean Boulet took the air again on March 13 and 14, 1955, to accomplish climbs and level flights during which a speed of about 55 knots was reached.

During the next weeks, a lot of flights were completed without any incident. Henri Petit assisted Jean Boulet as experimenter-copilot and on March 25, 1955, a second test-pilot, Gerard Henry, joined the team. It is not less than 78 flights that were accomplished during the two next months. This record would never be beaten by any other helicopter prototype.

The Alouette II is the fruit of work done by an extraordinary team of engineers like Charles Marchetti and Rene Mouille, of technicians and of test-pilots. This helicopter as well as the Caravelle airliner (which accomplished its first flight on May 27, 1955, ... the same days as Alouette II prototype No. 02 !), put French aviation industry among those of other most important nations.

It is also sure that the Alouette II would not have been the Alouette II without its Turbomeca Artouste II engine that was designed by Joseph Szydowski's team.

The Alouette II gave then birth to the Alouette III and the Lama which became technological successes as well. All these three helicopters broke a lot of records in a row.

Today, the Alouette II still makes a lot of private owners and small companies happy 50 years after its first flight. And if Eurocopter is currently World's largest helicopter manufacturer, it is certainly because the Alouette II has existed one day.

Pierre GILLARD, with the support of Jean BOULET, Rene MOUILLE and Henri PETIT.