

Michel Bellon – Freemasonry & the French Resistance

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## Michel Bellon – Freemasonry & the French Resistance

**Brother Michel Henry Bellon was born in Paris, France on December 19, 1926 and he died at the age of on August 6, 2014. As for his Masonic Record, he was initiated, passed and raised in Amity Lodge, Massachusetts: EA 11/4/77, FC 12/9/77, MM 1/17/78. He would later affiliate with Fredericksburg Lodge #4 on 5/8/98. He was a hero of World War II and a good Masonic Brother.**

*Decision no. 297*

*SECRETARY OF STATE TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE  
CITE  
THE ORDER OF THE BRIGADE*

*Michel Henry Bellon*

*"In August 1943, as a Liaison Officer of the Aster Network sector of the France Fighting Force (FFC) Nestle. Voluntarily committed at seventeen years of age to the army of the Vercors and took part in the French regions of Rousset, Romans, Vasmieux, Thains and Lyon. He showed great courage and military qualities by successfully destroying at the peril of his own life, a German ammunition depot. After the Liberation he joined the 2nd Airborne Infantry Regiment 4th Battalion of Foot. This quote includes the award of the Military Cross with Bronze Star."*

On November 16, 2007, Brother Michel gave a presentation<sup>1</sup> on his life as a 14-year old boy within the French Resistance of Nazi-Occupied France<sup>2</sup> and the Masonic leadership that had helped organized these French patriots. France surrendered to Germany on 22 June 1940, and those who resented Germany occupation and the Vichy government formed cells that were collectively named the French Resistance. His father was a Freemason as was his stepfather, who was one of these underground leaders and Michel was a boy who was invaluable to the Vercors's efforts simply because he spoke English and would become the translator for three American OSS agents who were sent into enemy territory to train them on the use of weapons and ordinance.

At the time of the occupation, France was divided into two zones; the Occupied Zone, which was directly controlled by the Nazis, and the Free Zone, which was the new French Vichy Government who supported the Axis powers. The German Gestapo, or the German secret police

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<sup>1</sup> (Chandler, Bro. Michel Bellon - French Resistance & WWII Veteran 2007)

<sup>2</sup> (Desbois 2019)

controlled the internal operations of the Occupied Zone, while the Milice française, or “French militia” (also known as the Miliciens) a paramilitary force trained by the Gestapo who controlled internal operations within the Free Zone. On October 13, 1940, once the Milicien was established and trained, the government of the Vichy Free Zone immediately decreed that all Freemasons were to be arrested and many of our brethren went to concentration camps<sup>3</sup>.

As Brother Michel reported, following this, the Freemasons within the Occupied Zone came together to discuss the idea of the first active-passive Resistance force and left the meeting agreeing to three active participants per Lodge in this resistance. As a result, of this meeting, the natural network of 211 French Masonic Lodges<sup>4</sup> became the core foundation of the newly established French Resistance, the Maquis de Vercors. The agreement of three members was so that if any of the three were caught, the rest would be protected, and none would know which others took their place. It was further agreed that many of the Masons were to join the various military groups with the intention of returning home to teach others what martial skills they learned.

The decision was made that the Resistance should gather intelligence, rescue downed allied pilots, to assist escaping Jews and to support allied espionage infiltration. It was also later recognized that some of these Masons would freely volunteer to work within the Vichy and German governments in order to collect information to be sent to London. Michel’s stepfather, Roger Bellon, was a leader of one of these Masonic Lodges and was one of the three selected from his Lodge and would go on to become a Commander of the Andromeda sector of the Resistance. On June 17, 1941, this group formed the Provisional Council of French Masonry working out of an apartment in Paris and communicating with London; this would be the decision-making committee of action until 1944.

Brother Michel tells of a story of Brother Levant, who for a time headed this Provisional Council. He was arrested, sentenced and then sent before some elderly German gentleman of great authority, who repeatedly asked him for his “birthdates”. Shortly thereafter, Brother Levant realized that his interrogator was a German Freemason who was attempting to learn of his “Masonic birthdates” and once he established that Brother Levant was indeed a French Mason,

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<sup>3</sup> (Lunden 1941)

<sup>4</sup> (Grande Loge Nationale Française 1913)

the German Brother not only let him go, but gave him the name of the informer who turned him in; a French Mason who happened to be part of the resistance himself.

While many Freemasons were captured, tortured and killed by the enemy, of those captured, few were imprisoned but most were sent to Germany to be interred into concentration camps. Brother Michel's father was one of those Masons who suffered this fate and after much abuse he would lay down his working tools at Auschwitz. Likewise, Michel's stepfather was eventually captured and sent to Buchenwald, but was later freed by Patton's army on April 11, 1945. Brother Michel himself also had his own part to play in this resistance movement. Initially, he was sent to the Free Zone, where he collected information and delivered documents and reports to people going back to England.

Brother Michel notes that as a kid, he befriended an Italian officer who hated the Germans and Mussolini so much that he would divulge information to him on what the Germans were doing and young Michel would get this information "to the right people". Because of this, his stepfather eventually had to come for him and informed him that his name was on the German's capture list and they were coming to arrest him. So, he was taken to a school where he would be safe, and which happened to be a central and major part of the French resistance regarding activity and Michel joined as a soldier of Aster sector<sup>5</sup>.

Brother Michel reported that when he first got to the school, the British would drop night deliveries of basic need items to them twice a week. But shortly after the Americans joined the fight, the Americans took over and begin to drop clothes, ammunition, rifles, machine guns, mortars, explosives nightly at an unprecedented rate<sup>6</sup>. Then one night, three Americans dropped from the sky and informed them that they were agents sent there to train them in the use of these items. So, they trained in the use of these equipment and worked together to clear the field below the school for incoming gliders and paratroopers.

Over time, they received word back that someone reported to the Nazis of strangers in the area and it was decided that it was time for the Americans to leave. The head of the school informed the Americans that they would need to escape but someone would have to be their

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<sup>5</sup> (Forgotten Weapons 2018)

<sup>6</sup> (Shaver, III 1979)

interpreter in their travels. Since Brother Michel spoke English, he was assigned the duty of getting them out of France. Brother Michel laughed as he told us that his first assignment in this duty was to get normal French clothes for these Americans to wear, which was difficult because most Frenchmen stood 5'8" to 5'10" and the shortest American was 6'3". He eventually found them proper attire and the four of them begun their five-day journey to the Spanish border.

He informed the Americans that if they were discovered during this journey or if anyone attempted to talk to them, he would excuse them as deaf and dumb and would use sign language. It was during this journey that Michel would see many atrocities done to the people whose bodies were left for others to see by the Germans. Brother Michel reported that seeing the bodies of rape victims and children was something that he would remember forever and always made him very angry to recall it. They would eventually make it to the American Embassy in Spain and sent immediately to London where the Americans were separated from him to be officially debriefed.

Before leaving France, his stepfather, Roger Bellon, directed Michel to seek out his godfather in London, who was a French General. Michel was not able to find him, so the British persuaded him to join the British Army SAS or paratroopers. He made his five required jumps and received his wings before his Godfather found him and used his influence in order to process Michel out of the British Army. Michel was then sent to Morocco to recertify as a pilot because Michel was known to have flown planes since he was 12 years of age. While training as a French pilot in Marrakech, he received his pilot's license and was selected as one of ten French men to enter a US Army Air Corps program to train French pilots on American fighter planes<sup>7</sup>.

Initially he flew a transport plane while in Marrakech, but the American flying program had him relocate to Casablanca, Morocco, where he was given the opportunity to fly American planes such as the P-51 mustang, P-47 Thunderbolt and B-17 Flying Fortress and as a completion of this program, Brother Michel would likewise fly four combat missions as a bomber pilot. It was here that he would meet with the Pasha Thami El Glaoui, Lord of the Atlas<sup>8</sup>,

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<sup>7</sup> (Dupont 2004)

<sup>8</sup> (Babas 2018)

who was a friend of the Bellon family and gifted Michel with a pair of fighting knives for his bravery during his time in the French Resistance.

When the war ended, Brother Michel was 21 years old and for his service in the resistance he received the Croix de Guerre, or Military Cross, which outside of the Legion of Honor is the highest military citation that any military personnel could receive for acts of bravery and heroism. He received this award at 17 years old for destroying a Nazi fuel and munitions depot. Americans who received this medal are George Patton, Audie Murphy, Dwight Eisenhower and Jimmy Stewart. But one of his favorite memories was when he finally came to the United States in 1951 to become an American citizen, he found that his paper work was already processed and three of his American OSS friends from the war were present to be with him when took upon himself the oath of citizenship.

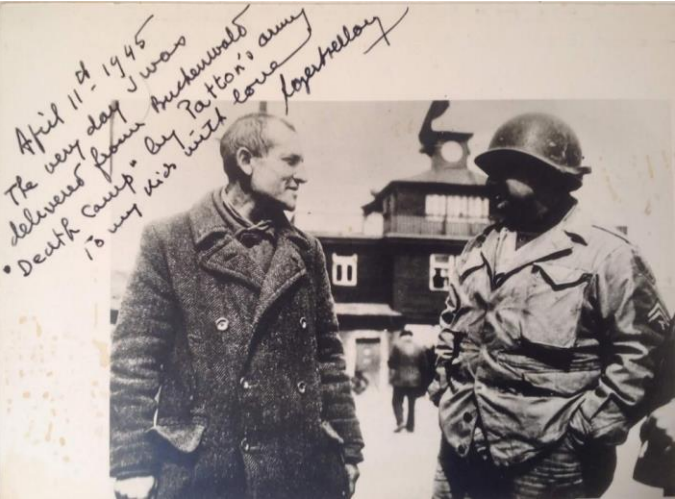
Brother Michel would go on to become a model American citizen, flying as a pilot for Air France and he would meet his second wife, Rita and remain with her till his death. He loved being a Freemason and a member of Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4<sup>9</sup> and he served as its Tiler from 2004 to 2008 and Masonic Home Ambassador from 2004 to 2010, until his health begun to deteriorate. In later years, he was often reported to say that he would miss his time away from his brethren and he enjoyed those moments they would visit him. Brothers would share similar feelings that he was an exemplary Freemason who cared for people and enjoyed the best in each individual and distinguished himself with modesty, humility and curtesy.

As for those of us who called him friend and Brother, it is our lot to honor the courage and love of a good brother and to remind others of his accomplishments which has greatly contributed to the accolades and honor to the whole of our Masonic legacy. Let those who never met him learn from the story of his life that the sacrifices of those before us will never be in vain. Through Brother Michel, let us recognize the Masonic ideas and virtues that we promise to inculcate and to renew ourselves to our obligations. Let us remember Brother Michel Bellon<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> (Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4, A.F. & A.M. 2014)

<sup>10</sup> (Decker, et al. 2018)



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