

## **Colonel Jean-Pierre BISSEY (SUSSEX Team KLEBER)**

**16 December 1917 – 12 July 2015**



Jean-Pierre BISSEY was born in BORDEAUX on 16 December 1917.

### **On the border of Germany and Luxembourg, next on the Aisne river front (1939-1940) and then in Algeria (1940-1943).**

Son of an officer of the Legion killed in action in Morocco in 1933, the second lieutenant Jean-Pierre BISSEY, Saint-Cyrien of the 124<sup>th</sup> promotion named MARNE and VERDUN (1937-39), joined the 57th Infantry Regiment (RI) of Bordeaux.

He was committed as platoon leader on the Franco-German-Luxembourg border. In October 1939 he was first mentioned in dispatches to the brigade for bold action in the German lines.

In May 1940, his division, which had been placed in reserve in Champagne, moved towards the Aisne river near Vouziers (Ardennes). On 16 May, the platoon of second lieutenant BISSEY was taken under the fire from German bombers. He alone returned fire shots at the aircrafts and Jean-Pierre BISSEY had a machine-gun destroyed in his hands. Wounded and mentioned in dispatches to the regiment's order, he was evacuated to the south of France.

He asked to join North Africa, and was finally assigned to the Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action (BCRA) of ALGER on 8 December 1943.

### **Leader of the SUSSEX intelligence team KLEBER parachuted into occupied France on the night of 4 August 1944**

Transiting through Casablanca, Jean-Pierre BISSEY sailed to England where he disembarked at Liverpool on January 21, 1944.

After passing at the Patriotic School in London, he was assigned to the BCRA of London on January 29, 1944 with administrative file No. 1081.

Volunteer to perform special missions in occupied France, he was subject to six month training as an intelligence officer at Praewood House, the SUSSEX training centre in Saint-Albans (Hertfordshire). He received his parachutist badge n°4635 at Ringway and was qualified in July 1944,

Leader of the intelligence KLEBER team, he was parachuted about 6 km south of Orbais-l'Abbaye (Marne), under the pseudonym Charles Even badge n°86, with his radio-operator, Georges Peutat pseudo Paul Breguet badge n°87, at the same time as three other SUSSEX teams during the night of 4 August 1944 during Operation MEXICO (RAF 161 Squadron - Halifax of F/Lt Johnston).

The purpose of his mission was to provide the Allies after the Normandy D Day with permanent, independent and reliable information about the German armoured units moving through the Reims region. He constituted an intelligence network, in particular on the residual capacity of the V1 rocket assembly and storage plant installed since March 1944 in the Rilly-la-Montagne rail tunnel under the mountain south of Reims (Feldmulag n° 1116) which had just undergone two massive bombings on 17 and 31 July 1944.

His action earned him the Military Cross, third highest British distinction (There were only 2000 awarded to the Allies during the Second World War as an act of bravery in enemy territory), and two mentions in dispatches by the government of General de Gaulle, one at the order of division, the other at the order of the army corps.

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### **Captain at the 2nd Armoured Division (DB) in France and Germany in 1945, then at the 25th Airborne Division (DAP) in Morocco from 1946 to 1948**

In September 1944, he returned to London and joined the 2nd DB on 26 October 1944.

In January 1945, he was assigned to the Régiment de Marche du Tchad (RMT) which was the Mechanized Infantry Regiment of the 2nd DB. He participated in the campaign of Alsace, the liberation of Royan and the ride to Berchtesgaden. He then commanded the 3rd company of the 1st battalion of the RMT before its dissolution.

This parachutist of the first hour, then, integrated the Airborne Group n°2 of the 25th DAP in Marrakech. In April 1947, he commanded the 5th company of the 2nd Bataillon Parachutiste de Choc (BPC) in Agadir and the parachute training center of his brigade group.

His battalion dissolved, he was from July to November 1948 commanding the 4th company of the Bataillon Parachutiste de Choc (BPCP) in Ouezzane.

Despite a jump accident that stopped his parachute activities a few months, he carried out 57 jumps of which 9 with controlled opening.

In 1948, after his four mentions in dispatches, the Cross of the Legion of Honour rewarded his actions of war and exceptional services.

### **Captain of the Indigenous Affairs in Morocco (1948-56) and head of Battalions of Chasseurs Alpins (BCA) in Algeria (1958-1960)**

Jean-Pierre BISSEY served in Morocco for another eight years under the blue kepi of the Indigenous Affairs, mainly in the High Atlas region. He was made an officer of Alawite Ouissam in 1954.

After a stay at the training centre of Granville (Manche) from 1956 to 1958, Jean-Pierre BISSEY was promoted Major in 1957 and joined Algeria in October 1958. He spent two years in the region of La Calle and of Blandan on the Tunisian border, as second in command of the 25th BCA, then battalion commander of the 12th BCA, mountain battalions committed against rebel Algerian infiltrations from Tunisia.

In each of his positions, he will show a lot of teeth. His action will be rewarded by two mentions in dispatches to the order of the division and the army corps on his cross of the Military Value.

### **Battalion Commander of cadets at the Special Military Combined Arms Cadet School of Saint-Cyr in Coëtquidan (1960-1961)**

Joining the Special Military Combined Arms Cadet School of Saint-Cyr (ESMIA) at the beginning of September 1960, he took command of the 3rd battalion of cadets (First year cadets) which received the name Promotion VERCORS.

The upheavals of the events of Algeria had repercussions within the school of Saint-Cyr. Jean-Pierre BISSEY was transferred out of school in the spring of 1961 after the putsch of the generals for having courageously endorsed alone the responsibility of facts that he did not approve.

### **Several assignments in the Sahara and in Algeria from 1961 to 1963**

After a short stay in the Training Centre of the 41st Regiment of Infantry in Rennes, Jean-Pierre BISSEY was assigned to Touggourt in October 1961 as commanding officer of the Groupement Saharien Mixte de l'Oued R'HIR (GSMIOR) in charge of Intelligence and Security missions in an area comparable to a quarter of France, near tunisian and lybian border junction.

The agreements of Évian of March 19, 1962 and the proximity of the Algeria independence which intervened in July 1962 led to the reorganization of the GSMIOR with the Europeans only before the dissolution of this Unit in July 1962.

After two short assignments near Algiers, first at the 6th RI in Médéa and then at the staff of the 32nd Brigade in Blida, he returned to France in March 1963 for a position on the Rennes subdivision.

In 1962 the rosette of officer of the Legion of Honour crowned his services on African soil: 10 years in Morocco and 4 in Algeria.

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### **Second-in-command of the 10th Engineer Regiment in Vieux-Brisach (1964-1967), transfer to Rennes (1967-68), Departmental Military Delegate (DMD) to Alençon (1969-1972)**

Within the framework of changes of army branches linked to his return from Algeria, in 1964 Lieutenant-Colonel BISSEY newly promoted was transferred to the Engineer Branch. He joined the French Forces in Germany at Vieux-Brisach (Bade-Wurtemberg) where he became second in command of the 10th Engineer Regiment specialised for Rhine crossing. He stayed there for three years.

Returning to France, he joined Rennes where he was a garrison major and then posted to the regional headquarters where he was promoted to the rank of colonel in April 1969.

He was appointed Departmental Military Delegate of Orne in Alençon (Normandy). This was the last stage of his activity which ends in 1972.

### **Retirement in the Mesnil-Villeman (Manche), then in Villedieu-les-Poêles (Manche) (2002 - 2015)**

Colonel Jean-Pierre BISSEY retired with his wife Jacqueline to their manor house bought in the 1960s. He devoted his time to their eight children who lived an eventful life at the mercy of mutations and to his passion for mosaics. He realized large dimension mosaics for the ground of the rooms of his manor. This won him a Grand Prix at the Salon des Artistes des Armées in 1973.

Of rare modesty, he kept only contacts with the association of former SUSSEX members and presided over a certain time the local veterans association.

After the death of his wife, Jean-Pierre BISSEY moved to Villedieu-les-Poêles in 2002, where he died on 12 July 2015.

Colonel BISSEY published in 2011 a book of Evangelical Contes "La Randonnée de Noël", published by Labruyère.

### **Colonel Jean-Pierre BISSEY held the following awards and honors:**

Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1962, knight since 1948 for exceptional services

Croix de Guerre 1939-45 with 4 mentions in dispatches (Corps, division, brigade and regiment),

Cross of the Military Value (Algeria) with 2 mentions in dispatches (Army corps and division),

Commemorative medal of the operations of maintenance of order (staple Algeria),

Military Cross (United Kingdom),

Officer of the Alawite Ouissam (Morocco).

### **Historical Service of the Defense Archives (SHD Vincennes)**

Jean-Pierre BISSEY SHD files GR 28 P 4 168-1 & GR 16 P 61518

Operations and activities records of units to which he has been assigned

### **Administrative center of military personnel (CAPM Pau)**

Officer career record folder of J-P BISSEY