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“EDWARD ANTOINE BELLANDE (1897-1976)

Edward Antoine Bellande was born on Jackson Avenue in Ocean Springs, Mississippi on December 19, 1897. He was the sole child of Captain Antoine Victor Bellande (1829-1918) and Mary Catchot (1860-1931). Captain Bellande was 68 years of age at the time of Edward's birth. At the time, he was very active as a bar pilot at Ship Island and Biloxi. *The Pascagoula Democrat-Star*, announced his nativity as, “***On December 19th, a fine bouncing baby boy arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Bellande.***”(*The Pascagoula Democrat-Star*, January 7, 1898, p. 3.

Edward was known to all as Eddie. He was a sickly child, and in a letter dated December 21, 1908, his father wrote, “***he (Eddie) is always sick. He cannot go to school like any other boy***”. Eddie suffered from asthma in his youth. By age forty, Eddie had grown to a height of five-feet six inches and weighed close to one hundred and eight pounds. He began balding as a young man and was totally bald by middle age.

As a lad, he developed a strong interest in the new field of aviation. Ruth Bellande Ragusin and Emmett Bellande, Jr. have both commented on the many model airplanes that Eddie built and exhibited in the Bellande home on Jackson Avenue in Ocean Springs.

In 1915, after completing his high school education at Ocean Springs, Eddie went to Buffalo, New York and spent three months at the Curtiss Exhibition Company where he began the course in aviation. It was owned by Glenn H. Curtiss (1878-1930), the famous aircraft manufacturer, who built the popular JN-4 or Jenny. Young Bellande then went to the Atlantic Coast Aeroplane Station at Newport News, Virginia. He was the youngest member of the graduating class and received his license (No. 639) from the Aero Club of America, which was affiliated with the French Federation Aeronautique Internationale, when he was eighteen years old. (*The Jackson County Times*, September 21, 1918). Eddie Bellande returned to Ocean Springs in late December of 1916. His picture appeared on the front page of *The New Orleans Times Picayune* of December 2, 1916.

Biloxi visit

In early July 1917, Eddie Bellande took the L&N from Ocean Springs for a day visit at Biloxi. He was interviewed or went by the office of *The Daily Herald*, as they related that, “***Mr. Bellande has been flying for eight months and qualified for a commission at 19 years. He says that he could be flying for the government service but his age prevents him. He is anxious to go across to Europe. Mr. Bellande has an altitude of***

2000 feet and has traveled at the rate of 125 miles an hour. He use a Curtis (sic) military machine during his flights.”(*The Daily Herald*, July 7, 1917, p. 5)

Flight Instructor

In September 1917, he left Ocean Springs and went to Georgia School of Technology at Atlanta where he was an instructor in motors and planes at the government ground aviation school. Later during the First World War, he served in the United States Marine Corps as a naval reserves aviator from August 18, 1918 until February 24, 1919. His initial assignment was at the Naval Training Center in Charleston, South Carolina. Later he was a naval flight instructor at the Pensacola Naval Air Station. It is known that he attended his father's funeral in Ocean Springs in June 1918, and was awaiting orders to report for flying duty in regards World War I. (*The Jackson County Times*, August 24, 1918 and September 21, 1918).

After the Great War, in May 1920, Eddie Bellande was employed with Curtiss Aircraft at Buffalo, New York in the motor department. On weekends he flew passengers over Niagara Falls. Robert E. Morris (1902-1970) of Ocean Springs joined the company in June 1920. (*The Jackson County Times*, May 29, 1920, p. 5).

In October 1920, Eddie relocated to Cleveland, Ohio where he worked for the Logan Aviation Company. (*The Jackson County Times*, October 2, 1920, p. 3). In May 1921, Eddie Bellande, as a member of the Aero Club, performed aerial stunts at the 1921 opening of the aviation season at Curtiss Field in Buffalo, New York. He was accompanied in the air by E.M. Ronne and Roland Rohlfs (*The Jackson County Times*, May 28, 1921, p. 3).



(l-r) unknown, **Edward A. Bellande (1897-1978)**, **Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974)**, unknown
(photo from E.A. Bellande)

Southern California

In early June 1921, Bellande returned to Ocean Springs from Buffalo to visit with his mother. He departed Ocean Springs in early July 1921, for Southern California where he expected to be employed by one of the large movie companies as an aviator.

He flew as a test pilot for Lockheed in 1926, piloting the first Lockheed Vega. He checked out Wiley Post in the famed "Winnie Mae", and co-piloted Charles Lindbergh on

the first TWA transcontinental run in 1929. His career in aviation nearly equaled the history of the industry as it is known today. He was a Navy pilot (World War I), barnstormer, skywriter, crop duster, movie stunt artist, and an airline pilot. While working in the fledgling Hollywood movie industry, he flew for movie moguls, Jack L. Warner and Darryl F. Zanuck. Old family photographs show Eddie with Al Jolson and Rin Tin Tin, the movie dog.



(l-r) **Rin Tin Tin and Edward A. Bellande (1897-1978) on movie set-Los Angeles, circa 1925.**
(photo from E.A. Bellande)

Rin Tin Tin

Rin Tin Tin (often billed as Rin-Tin-Tin in the 1920s and 1930s) was the name given to several German Shepherds of film and television. The first of the line (c. September 5, 1918 – August 10, 1932) was a shell-shocked pup found by American serviceman Lee Duncan in a bombed-out dog kennel in Lorraine, France less than two months before the end of World War I. Named for a puppet called Rintintin that French children gave to the American soldiers for good luck, at war's end Duncan took the dog back to his home in Los Angeles, California.

Nicknamed "Rinty" by his owner, the dog was taught tricks and could leap more than 13 feet. He was seen performing at a dog show by film producer Darryl F. Zanuck, who paid Lee Duncan to film him. Duncan became convinced that Rin Tin Tin could become the next Strongheart. The dog's big break came when he stepped in for a recalcitrant wolf in *The Man From Hell's River* (1922). Rin Tin Tin would be cast as a wolf or wolf-hybrid many times in his career, despite looking little to nothing like one. His first starring role, 1923's *Where the North Begins*, was a huge success often credited with saving Warner Brothers from bankruptcy. It was followed by *Shadows of the North* (1923), *Clash of the Wolves* (1925), *A Dog of the Regiment* (1927), *Tiger Rose* (1929), and *The Lightning Warrior* (1931). The dog also had his own radio show in 1930 called *The Wonder Dog*, on which he did his own sound effects. True to his French birthright, to the sounds of classical music being played, the dog dined each day on a choice cut of tenderloin steak specially prepared by a private chef.

Following Rin Tin Tin's death in 1932 in Los Angeles, California, (in the arms of actress Jean Harlow, according to Hollywood legend) his owner arranged to have the dog

returned to his country of birth for burial in the Cimetière des Chiens, the renowned pet cemetery in the Parisian suburb of Asnières-sur-Seine.

Mothers visit

As early as May 1930, Mrs. Bellande was living with Eddie in Los Angeles. She came home in May 1930 to visit with Mrs. A.J. Catchot. (*The Daily Herald*, May 31, 1930, p. 5). Mary Catchot Bellande (b. 1860) expired in California on May 26, 1931. Her remains were interred in the Evergreen Cemetery at Ocean Springs, Mississippi. (*The Daily Herald*, May 28, 1931, p. 2).

Air Mail Medal of Honor

Among his many honors as a pilot is the Congressional Air Mail Medal of Honor presented to him by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1935. It was awarded to Eddie Bellande for an act of heroism following his only crash at Bakersfield, California. He safely landed a Transcontinental and Western Air trimotor aircraft, which was in flames and helped all of his passengers to reach safety before the plane was totally destroyed by the fire (see *The Los Angeles Times*, ?).

As one of the pioneers of the aerospace industry, Eddie Bellande was one of the original organizers and board members of the Northrop Aircraft Company. He served as vice-president and director of the Houston Company and H.W. Houston Company. Eddie helped organize Maddux Air Lines, which later evolved into TWA [it is one of his flights for Maddux that brought him to Tucson in November 1928].

At the time of his retirement from TWA in January 1943, he was the Number 2 pilot in seniority. Eddie had logged more than 23,000 flying hours and flew 3,100,000 miles without injury to passengers or mail cargo. He joined the Garrett Corporation in 1943, as an assistant to the President, was elected to the Board in 1948, and named Chairman of the Board in July 1963. His first challenge as leader of Garrett was to fight a takeover attempt by Curtiss-Wright, which was seeking to buy 47% of Garrett's stock. During his tenure at Garrett, the pressurization of production aircraft developed (the B-29 Superfortress), and after World War II, the corporation turned its talents to high-flying civilian transports and spacecraft. In December 1965, he retired, but served as a consultant with Garrett.

Edward Bellande belonged to approximately 30 civic and fraternal organizations including humanistic groups as well as aerospace-oriented ones. In the field of aviation, they include: International Club of Washington; Sky Club, New York; Wings Club, New York; Aviation Hall of Fame, Dayton; National Defense Transportation Association; OX5 Club; Quiet Birdmen; Early Birds of Aviation, and honorary fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. He served as general chairman of the Hope Chest Campaign in 1964, was a member of the President's Council of Loyola University in Los Angeles, and was on the board of the Bates Foundation in support of Harvey Mudd College.

Mary Bellande went to Los Angeles in January 1925, and considered living there with Eddie.

Pacific fleet photos 1924

In September 1924, Eddie flew from Roger's Airport at Los Angeles in strong headwinds and heavy fog to Crissy Field in San Francisco. His plane had been chartered by Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr., proprietor of *The Illustrated Daily Herald* to fly Gus Thornrose, his staff photographer, to photograph the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet as it was arriving in San Francisco (*The Jackson County Times*, September 20, 1924, p. 1).

Aviation record

In 1925, Eddie Bellande flew more than 50,000 miles in 797 hours, which was considered a record for its time. Most of his flights were to bring breaking news events to California newspapers readers. Bellande flew images of the Santa Barbara tremor to Los Angeles and San Francisco soon after the natural disaster. He took aerial photographs of the large Tijuana, Mexico conflagration from his aircraft early in the morning as the fire raced through the resort border community (*The Daily Herald*, January 20, 1926, p. 1).

Mae West and the 1935 Kansas City article

In 1935, a newspaper article appeared in a Kansas City journal titled "***A Mistake When He Moved Next Door To Mae West***". Because of its human interest and biographical nature as pertaining to Eddie Bellande, I will submit it as copied from *The Jackson County Times* of March 2, 1935. Virginia T. Lee reprinted it in her column, appropriately named "The Column".

"It's the little personal touch that counts!" commented the man as he accepted a loan from a friend. So, if such things count for anything, permit the application of a personal touch or two of the chunky form of Eddie Bellande, who has been flying airplanes since 1915; part of whose airline flying now is carried on a Kansas City, and who, in his more than 10,000 hours of aviating, has made one great mistake. Bellande's mistake was when he moved into a Hollywood apartment house and found he was living next to Mae West! This is why it was a mistake.

A 10,000-Hour MAN

His own individuality, which once was adequate, not to say copious, now has been lost. Because today he is referred to, not as one of air transport's few 10,000-hour men, but invariably and simply as "the guy who lives next door to Mae West." No matter how long and honorable his flying record, and it is plenty of each, it all is submerged beneath the sea of whatever it is that causes him to be referred to thus:

"Oh, yes! Eddie Bellande; I've heard of him! He's the guy who lives next door to Mae West!"

Only a few days ago at the Kansas City Airport, a stranger stopped the veteran airline pilot as he was leaving the restaurant. "Excuse me!" the stranger apologized. "Will you let me have your autograph?" "What for?" "Well, I understand you're the pilot who lives next door--."

"Aw, nerts!" was Bellande's interrupting comment as he walked away. Now if you ask him about that incident he probably would deny it. He's that retiring. Many persons are like that, regardless of whom they live next door to. For instance, there was the fellow who lived next door to poverty. He never admitted he had so much as a dime!

This story was corroborated by Marion Illing Moran (1901-1993) of Ocean Springs who remembered Eddie Bellande as a young man in Ocean Springs. They were good friends at school, and she visited him in Los Angeles circa 1937. She told me that at that time Eddie lived on the second floor of an apartment house a few doors down from Mae West, the great movie star (*Marion Illing Moran, October 1991*).

Marriage

On March 30, 1937, Eddie married Molly Lamont (1911-2000) (*The Daily Herald, March 30, 1937, p. 3*). Eddie and Molly Bellande resided at 361 Fordyce Road in the affluent Los Angeles suburb of Bel Air. He could boast of having Joan Fontaine, the actress, as his neighbor. Eddie was a bachelor for more than half of his life. Bellande was a senior pilot flying for Transcontinental-Western at the time.



"Molly Lamont, the movie actress, took her first airplane ride with newlywed hubby, Eddie Bellande, senior Transcontinental-Western airline pilot. Eddie was making his regular flight and Molly took the ride rather than be parted from him soon after their wedding. Photo shows Eddie making his bride comfortable."

(The Times Picayune, April 3, 1937)

1939

Flights and Flyers - (documentary; Blackhawk Films, 30m) Three newsreel shorts about Jimmy Walker, Corrigan, **Costa & Bellande**, Earhart, Hughes, the Mollisons, Post & Gatty, Rickenbacker, et al.

Biloxi visit

During Mardi Gras of 1950, Eddie and Molly came to Biloxi from Los Angeles and visited with Esther Catchot Chamblee who resided at 438 Delauney Street. He was

with Air Research Aviation at the time. They flew to Biloxi (*The Daily Herald, February 20, 1950, p. 8*) .

Molly Lamont

Molly Lamont (1911-2000) was born at Scottburgh or Boksburg, Natal, South Africa, on May 22, 1911. In 1930, she was a dance teacher in Natal and won the Outspan Film Candidate Competition. The prize was a holiday in England and a screen test with the Elstree Studios. It launched her into an international movie career in which she made more than fifty films (*The Sunday Times, June 21, 1998*). The list of films and the character that she played follow: **“The Wife’s Family”** (1931)-Sally; **“What a Night!”**-Nora Livingstone (1931); **“Uneasy Virtue”** (1931)-Ada; **“Shadows”**(1931)- Jill Dexter; **“The House Opposite”** (1931)- Doris; **“Strictly Business”** (1932)-Maureen; **“The Strangler”**-Frances Marsden-(1932); **“Old Soldiers Never Die”** (1932)-Ada; **“Lucky Girl”** (1932)-Lady Moira-(1932); **“Lord Camber’s Ladies”** (1932)-Actress; **“The Last Coupon”** (1932)-Betty Carter; **“Josser on the River”** (1932)-Julia Kaye; **“His Wife’s Mother”** (1932)-Cynthia; **“Brothr Alfred”** (1932)-Stella; **“Paris Plane”** (1933); **“Letting in the Sunshine”** (1933)- Lady Anne; **“Leave It to Me”** (1933)-Eve Halliday; **“Norah O’Neale”** (1934)-Nurse Otway, **“White Ensign”** (1934)-Consul’s Daughter; **“The Third Clue”** (1934)-Helen Arnold; **“No Escape”** (1934)-Helen Arnold; **Murder at Monte Carlo”** (1934)-Margaret Becker; **“Another Face aka Two Faces”** (1935)-Mary McCall; **“Rolling Home”** (1935)-Ann; **“Oh, What a Night”** (1935)-Pat; **“Jalna”** (1935)-Pheasant, **“Handle With Care”** (1935)-Patricia; **“Alibi Inn”** (1935)-Mary Talbot; **“Muss ‘Em Up”** (1936)-Nancy Harding; **“Mary of Scotland”** (1936)-Mary Livingstone; **“The Jungle Princess”** (1936)-Ava; **“A Woman Rebels”** (1936)-Young Girl; **“Doctor’s Diary”** (1937)-Mrs. Fielding; **“Fury and the Woman”** (1937)-June McCrae; **“The Awful Truth”** (1937)-Barbara Vance; **“Somewhere I’ll Find You”** (1942)-Nurse Winifred; **“The Moon and Sixpence”** (1942)-Mrs. Amy Strickland; **“A Gentle Gangster”** (1943)-Ann Hallit; **“Thumbs Up”** (1943)-Welfare Supervisor; **“Follow the Boys aka Three Cheers for the Boys”** (1944)- Miss Hartford, secretary; **“White Cliffs of Dover”** (1944)-Helen; **“Mr. Skeffington”** (1944)-Miss Morris, a secretary; **“The Suspect”** (1944)-Edith Simmons; **“Minstrel Man”** (1944)-Caroline (mother), **“Devil Bat’s Daughter”** (1946)-Ellen; , **“So Goes My Love”** (1946)-Cousin Garnet, **“The Dark Corner”** (1946)-Lucy Wilding; **“Scared to Death”** (1947)-Laura Van Ee; **“Christmas Eve aka Sinners Holiday”** (1947)-Harriett, **“Ivy”** (1947)-Bella Crail; **“South Sea Sinner aka East of Java”** (1949)-Kay Williams; and **“The First Legion”** (1951)-Mrs. Gilmartin.

Many of these films can be seen on television and VHS tape. Eddie and Molly had no children. The Bellande's enjoyed many visits to Ocean Springs and the Mississippi Gulf Coast to visit Eddie's mother who lived until 1931. She sold her residence on Jackson Avenue to Frederick C. Gay in December 1924, and moved in with her relatives at Biloxi. Mrs. Bellande expected to relocate to Los Angeles to reside with Eddie Bellande. Mary Catchot Bellande expired in California on May 22, 1931. Her corporal remains were interred in the Catchot family area of the Evergreen Cemetery on Old Fort Bayou at Ocean Springs (*The Jackson County Times, December 11, 1924, p. 5 and May 28, 1931, p. 2*).

Eddie Bellande died in the Century City Hospital on November 17, 1976, at the age of 78 years. He had a remarkable life and contributed greatly in the development of American aviation and aerospace technology. It is notable that the lives of Edward and Captain Antoine Bellande, his father, spanned 147 years of time, of which much was filled with adventure and discovery. Molly Lamont expired at Los Angeles on July 7, 2001.

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