

Florennes, the 13th of April 2018

Dear Mayor,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First of all, on behalf of the municipality of Viroinval and in my personal name, I'd like to express heartfelt gratitude to the Authorities of Florennes for this second welcome reception, three years after the first one.

I'd like to thank the Council and the Board of Florennes, and you, dear Pierre - or "Peter" - for this evening, for this official reception.

Once again, we are grateful for the very positive partnership we have in this event and for your friendly initiative.

There are two reasons why we are here in Florennes to welcome our guests.

The first reason is the historical link between the military airport of Florennes, initially built by the Germans, and the Short Stirling BF 513...

And the second is the fact that the seven aviators are buried in the military cemetery here.

And that's why, earlier this evening, the families took some time to pay a visit to the cemetery for a quiet moment and remembrance in memory of their relatives.

2. Secondly, I want to wish a warm welcome now, to all our guests, from the United Kingdom and New Zealand as well as from The United States, Australia, and Ireland.

I'd like to thank you for making the effort of travelling half way round the world to attend this very special event. Thank you for joining us in this commemoration of the seven aviators.

Without you, our ceremonies would be meaningless!

We are truly honoured and moved by your presence with us this weekend.

The same commemoration without the families wouldn't have the similar impact/ value/or meaning.

Three years ago, we wondered whether the families would attend the ceremony or not.

At that time, we were very touched that thirty people decided to come.

This year, we are pleased to welcome some of you for the second time and others for the first.

3. This being said, allow me to repeat myself, none of this would have taken place without **the outstanding research work of one man.**

And all that we have prepared and organised for our guests stems from the work of our

"project assistant", Mister Guy Lapaille.

I wonder what the best words or adjectives are to describe our project assistant's work. I've got a few suggestions: **great, huge, phenomenal, massive, tremendous, etc.**

I leave the choice of words to you...

He worked tirelessly. Together with his wife, Michèle whose nickname is

“the assistant of the assistant”.

I guess that in the beginning, he wasn't aware of the real volume of work involved.

Three years ago, he produced a publication, an exhibition, lectures and a model of the Short Stirling. He also created and animated a Facebook page for the families and friends.

He now has cooked up something special for us :

A movie!

No more, no less...

I will call it:

“The icing on the cake”.

This forty minutes documentary will be shown on Sunday afternoon and will be the

“culmination point” of the weekend.

So, to conclude about Guy: He was our “project assistant”; “project investigator”; the brain behind the project; the maestro.

And now, on top of all this, he has become a

“film director and producer”.

So dear "Guy", in the name of all of us, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this possible a second time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For all these reasons, to our project assistant, to our honorary town Director, Mister Guy Lapaille and his wife Michèle; let's give them a big round of applause!

Oh, sorry, I remember : he asked me not to speak about him!

4. To be complete, our project assistant didn't work alone for the organisation of this weekend...

I also want to thank the whole team, all the civil servants and volunteers who have been working hard to prepare all these activities.

If I may, let's give them a big round of applause as well!

5. In conclusion, I'd like to express once again my deepest gratitude to our hosts and guests.

It is my pleasure to invite you all this Sunday to the official ceremony followed by the presentation of the movie.

Dear guests, I wish you a very pleasant evening.

Enjoy your stay in Belgium, especially in our region, and again thanks for coming!

Jean-Marc DELIZEE

Member of the Belgian federal Parliament

& Mayor of Viroinval