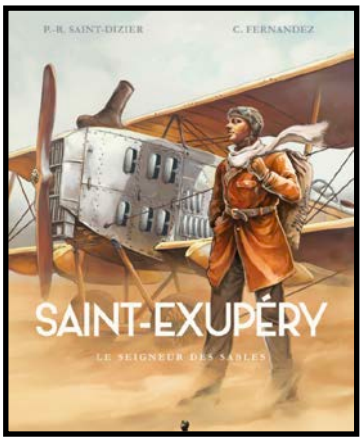
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (44). 1900 - 1944

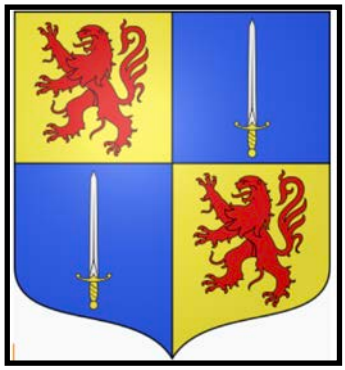


Pioneering aviator, writer, poet, watercolorist, journalist, eternal child … and French icon.

"Rarely have an author and his character been so intimately bound together as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and his Little Prince, "suffering dual fates ...those two remain tangled together, twin innocents who fell from the sky." *- Source: Biographer Stacy Schiff*

Enfant gaté … Enfant terrible … ou simplement *Enfant*

Saint-Exupéry was actually bestowed with a long list of names—Antoine Marie Jean-Baptiste Roger to be precise—and with the inherited title, not of "Prince" as his later literary creation, but as ***comte de Saint-Exupéry.*** The title "Count" in the French aristocracy derives from the Latin "*comes*", meaning "companion", and later "companion of the emperor, delegate of the emperor". His his father was a Viscount, his mother Marie, a Viscountess who was described as "beautiful, intelligent and caring".



Antoine was the third of five children born into this aristocratic catholic French family with roots tracing back to the fifth century's Bishop Saint Exuperius that even boasted its own familial coat of arms!

Although he lost his father before the age of four—and that will have left a vacuum—his mother, Marie, was abundantly present for all of her children—Antoine was her favorite—who grew up in French chateaux: either the Castle of Saint-Maurice-de-Remens, northeast of Lyons and surrounded by its enchanting gardens and woods, or Chateau XX close to the Mediterranean Sea. By all accounts, the children enjoyed a carefree life even after the death of their father.

However, after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Antoine and his younger brother, François, were sent to Switzerland where François contracted rheumatic fever and died at age 15. Then Antoine became the only remaining man in the family.

Growing up in "paradise" … but amidst two World Wars

As with Beethoven, the environment, both geographical and cultural, exerts an enormous, if often underrated, influence on a person's perceptions and life choices. Whereas Beethoven's 19th century German-Austrian life and work was infused with the new spirit of European romanticism, exacerbated by the

Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath, Saint-Exupéry's French-infused, short life nevertheless played out in 20th century Europe, encompassing two horrendous world wars; during the second, his belovéd France was even swallowed up by Hitler's Germany. He had to flee his own homeland. But first, he had begun to write …

At the impressionable age of twelve, Antoine experienced his first ride in a plane … and he was *hooked!* But it didn't happen overnight. A less-than-stellar student, he was often bored with academic subjects and countered his boredom by being unruly, dropping water-bombs from upper floors onto his

school comrades, etc., childhood habits he maintained into adulthood.

N'er do well to pioneer pilot

Meanwhile, young Antoine flubbed an entire spectrum of career possibilities, from the French Naval Academy to the School of Fine Arts' Faculty of Architecture, before finally enlisting in the military as a rank soldier and being posted to Strasbourg.

It was there that he began the flying lessons that opened the path for him to transfer from the French Army to its Air Force. After being posted to the 37th Fighter Regiment in Casablanca, Morocco, he was awarded his pilot's wings in 1922 and was thereafter re-assigned to the 34th Aviation Regiment at Le Bourget, a suburb of Paris.

In his mid-twenties, this is about the time in which Saint-Exupéry, the Icon, began to emerge with his aviation exploits in Africa and South America. Willful but valiant, he was emerging as one of "the great pioneers of

aviation—best known for his daring flights over the Sahara, the Pyrenees, and Patagonia— a hero of France, and most widely translated author in the French language". According to a website on aviation history, Antoine increasingly grew into a "Joseph Conrad of the skies", a real life hero who looked at adventure and danger with a poet's eyes—sometimes from the viewpoint of a child."

From Africa to Latin America: Death-defying Flying Exploits and Injuries
As we are told by *New Yorker* author, Selina Hastings, "nothing could have been better suited to the courageous, intransigent 'Saint-Ex' than the life of a pilot with Aéropostale. The work was dangerous and demanding, the discipline rigorous, and the solitude unbroken.

His descriptions of his hours alone in the cockpit are "intensely evocative" and, not to be forgotten, the Breguet 14 plane that he flew in those early years was little more than a matchbox with its "wooden propeller, open cockpit, and range of less than four hundred miles; it had no radio, no suspension, no sophisticated instruments, and *no brakes.*" No wonder that his early flying career was riddled with plane crashes! Still, after his latest one, by 1926, he was flying again.

Africa. Saint-Exupéry became one of the pioneers of international postal flight, flying for Aéropostale between Toulouse and Dakar, Senegal. He fell in love with the austere beauty of the Sahara and, obliquely, with the native tribes that peopled these sparsely settled regions. As manager of the Cape Juby airfield in the Spanish zone of South Morocco, part of his duties included negotiating the safe release of downed fliers taken hostage by Saharan tribes, "a perilous task that earned him his first Légion d'honneur from the French Government." (Wikipedia)

South America. In 1929, Saint-Exupéry was briefly transferred to Argentina, where he served as director of Aeroposta Argentina airline. He surveyed new air routes across South America, including Patagonia, negotiated agreements, and even occasionally flew the airmail, as well as search missions looking for downed fliers. In this context, he wrote the following tribute:

On Lasting Friendships

"When a pilot dies, … bit by bit, it comes over us that we shall never again hear the laughter of our friend…then begins our true and bitter mourning for old friends cannot be created out of hand. Nothing can match the treasure of common memories, of trials endured together, of quarrels and reconciliations and generous emotions. (Wind, Sand and Stars, p. 26-27)

"*Wind, Sand and Stars"* (1939): Beyond Resilience.

"Terre des hommes"—Humanity's Earth—was the original French title of Saint-Exupéry's memoire. Written in the build-up to a second devastating world war, largely on European soil, it was his call for the "*people of the earth to take responsibility and show solidarity".*

Saint Exupéry with Prevost and their Caudron C.630 Simoun, F-ANRY, 30 December 1935.

Resilience captured "on the fly".

In his memoire, Antoine related the incredible true story of his plane crash in the Libyan Desert. This was part of a much larger, much-publicized venture: a 1935 competitive long-distance flight—complete with praise and prize money—from Paris to Saigon, then capital of French Indonesia.

He had taken off from Paris' Le Bourget on 29 December 1935, together with his navigator/mechanic André Prévot, but as he wrote:

> ***"I had no notion that the sands were preparing for me their ultimate and culminating ordeal." (p. 121)***

The first flight legs—from Paris to Tunis, then on to Benghazi—went well, with Saint-Exupéry flying over 20 hours straight, stopping only to re-fuel. Then he set his course to fly *between* Alexandria and Cairo, Egypt and calculated three hours and twenty minutes to reach the Nile. Before him, 650 miles of empty desert. No moon, no wireless. Alone in the night. Even, as he himself wrote, "alone in the universe."

When did things start to go wrong? First, when he—in the black of a moon-less night—encountered cumulus cloud banks so thick that he couldn't make out major landmarks below. Then when the flying time stretched to over four hours with still neither city lights nor silver river-ribbon to be seen.

But, then, all at once, it went quickly! The crash!

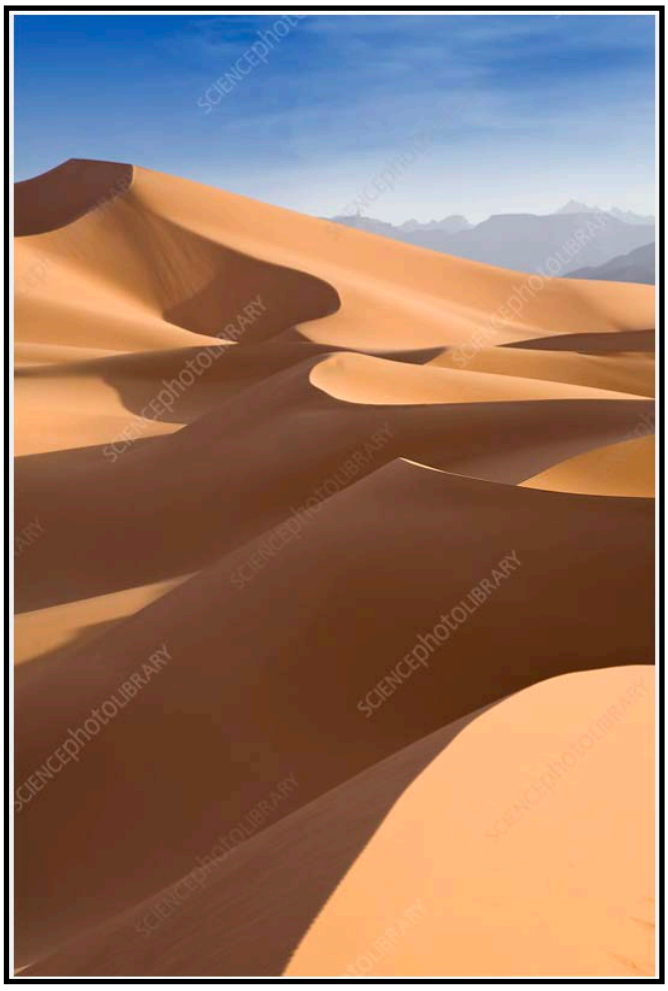
"A lighthouse!" Both of us spied it at the same moment, that winking decoy! What madness! … at that very instant … "Oh!" I am quite sure that this was all I said. I am quite sure that all I felt was a terrific crash that rocked our world to its foundations. We had crashed against the earth at 170 miles an hour. I am quite sure that in the split second that followed, all I expected was a great flash of ruddy light of the explosion in which Prévot and I were to be

blown up together… But there was a sort of earthquake … The blade thrown from a distance into a block seconds and the plane still quivered. Five seconds suddenly seized by a spinning motion … and then a frozen immobility. "Jump! Fire!" (pp.138-139)

Here it now begins: tracing the fine line between fact and fantasy, between survival and the mounting likelihood of dying of dehydration, between mere resilience and that defiance of the human spirit in the face of death that goes far beyond.

The facts:

- On 29 December 1935 Saint-Exupéry took off in his red and white Caudron C. 630 Simoun, F-ANRY, in a race to break the speed record from Paris, France to Saigon, French Indochina. He was intent upon winning the 150,000 French Francs prize money.
- But on 30 December 1935, at 2:45 AM, after only 19 hours and 44 minutes flight time, he and his mechanic-navigator André Prévot, crashed in the Libyan desert.



The deadly Libyan Desert (ca. 1,300,000 square kilometres and extending ca.1,100 km from east to west) is a geographical region filling the northeastern Sahara Desert, from eastern Libya to western Egypt to far northwestern Sudan. The desert, in its entirety, is **uninhabited,** as it is a large rocky plain called "Hamada" in addition to another part called "The Great Sand Sea". Source: https://libyaobserver.ly/culture/libyan-desert

Saint-Exupéry: In the **Libyan Desert,** *"life here evaporates like a vapor. Bedouins, explorers and colonial officers all tell us that a man may go nineteen hours without water. There-after, his eyes fill with light, and that marks the beginning of the end."* (p. 150, *"Sand, Wind and Stars"*)
"… beyond despair, I was filled with a sort of dumb fury" at the mirages (p. 163)

Resilience, good fortune … and bitter setbacks.

- The plane had not exploded upon impact … to the crew's incredulity! Why not? Because it had crashed "tangentially" into a gentle slope surfaced with "round black pebbles like ball-bearings" instead of sand or rock.
- The crew leapt to safety, stunned but still alive with scarcely a scratch.
- Provisions were scant: "the sand had drunk everything" of their water; what remained: a little coffee and wine, a few grapes and oranges, a madeleine.
- Prévot regretted that they didn't "crash properly and have it over with" (142) and was glad that they had a gun, but Antoine took a different tack.
- They would walk, marking their tracks so that they could return to the plane; this they did every day, the first day alone 20 miles in six hours… but they never saw a single sign of civilization, only more mirages.
- They would try to snare desert animals to eat, even drink their blood…but the traps remained empty.

Although Saint-Exupéry was only 35 at the time, the rule-of-thumb was that no one could survive for more than a day—19 hours to be exact—without water in the intense heat and low humidity of the Libyan Desert. They would have to survive ***four!*** Somewhere during the course of this invisible gauntlet, resilience transformed itself into what can only be described as unyielding ***spiritual defiance.***

Frankl's "Defiance of the Human Spirit" in the Face of Death

For starters: "in defiance of all reason" (p.143) Antoine had set a walk-out rescue-route direction of east-northeast. As it later turned out, any *other* direction would have been fatal. Now for some direct quotes from the English paperback edition of *"Wind, Sand and Stars"* that mesmerized me the first time I read them:

- "*A pilot's business is with the wind, with the stars, with night, with sand, with the sea. He strives to* ***outwit the forces of nature****."* (p. 166) No deal.
- "*Sand whose dazzling brightness seared our eyes … mirages, fortresses and minarets … captives of the curt dictatorship of thirst. (p. 145)*
- Day 2: "nearly *40 miles of wandering this day, almost without a drop to drink … no water left. A bonfire of the plane's left wing … a cry for help … begging for the communion of human society.* Nothing. Then tears.
- *"I should learn that nothing was really unbearable …* and yet there ***was*** *"something that (we) could not bear … that cry that would be sent up at home, that great wail of desolation." (147)*

- *"No sign that we were being sought (here) … to cover 2,000 miles of territory, it takes searchers a good two weeks to spot a plane in the desert from the sky." (p.149)*
- *"Holes of fennecs, long-eared, carnivorous sand foxes … Fox, my little fox, I'm done for, but that doesn't prevent me from taking an interest in your mood." (p. 151 Note:* The fennec later appeared in *The Little Prince*).

Here one notes that the pilot is **past hope** but somehow still aware. And he begins to shift his perspective, to re-align his "rules of thumb" for survival.

- *Day 3: "The human body cannot go **three** days without water" (p. 166)* but it DID! *"A man is able to adapt himself to anything." (p.151) …"I walked nearly fifty miles since yesterday." (p. 152). But then, …*
- *"Something in me began to change … Everything in the desert had grown animate. … An antediluvian forest … This forest that had rustled with birds and been filled with music was now struck by doom and frozen into salt. And all this was now hostile to me … perishable as I was. " (p. 152)*
- *"Dizziness … from my thirst or from the sun … talking to myself aloud. This world is a gigantic anvil upon which the sun beat down … I could feel the hammer-strokes … I told myself, 'Take it easy. You're delirious'." (p. 153)*
- *"After walking for two hours, I turned back …saw the flames of the bonfire that Prévot had sent up … and saw the 'two Arabs' who, it turned out, did not exist—'There are no Arabs here.'"(p. 156).*
- Yet he said, *"Here we are, condemned to death, and still the certainty of dying cannot compare with the pleasure I am feeling. This half an orange is one of the greatest joys I have ever known." (p. 157)*
- *A final attempt to distill drinking water out of dew deposited on chemically-prepared parachutes and poured into a magnesium-lined fuel tank proved disastrous. "This poisonous metal cut keener than thirst." They threw it up … but still, they carried on. They **didn't** give up.*
- *"East-northeast we tramped … hurrying desperately towards some finality." (p. 159)*
- *Day 4: "In three days I had covered one hundred miles, practically without water….I had simply turned to sand and was a being without mind." (p160)*
- *…A peace that was beyond all hope … part from your (i.e. his body's) suffering, I have no regrets. I have gambled and lost." (P.167)*
- *"Then a Bedouin appeared on a camel … the miracle had come to pass. He was walking towards us **over the sand like a god over the waves.**" (p.172)*

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This pivotal event occurred in the winter of 1936; the book was published only three years later. For it takes time to absorb and incorporate such events into one's world view. Meanwhile, life goes on, and during this imperative assimilation and writing time he spent in Paris, Antoine was intentionally not part of the local *literati.* Instead, he remained largely *within* himself, choosing to conduct both his working and his social life in cafés, starting the day at the Deux Magots, then moving on to the Brasserie Lipp. But, however convivial the preceding hours may have been, he usually finished the evening alone, as the author of his excellent biographer, Stacy Schiff has it, "a drink at his elbow, a cigarette in hand, doing silent battle with a sheet of paper."

Soon enough, the battle became all too actual.

World War II's Occupation of France and Antoine's Exile to New York. *"Wind, Sand and Stars"* was published in 1939, the year in which the Second World War was initiated with Germany's September 1st invasion of Poland. It was to last for over five long years, prime years for Saint-Exupéry who was exactly as old as the century. However, unable to see a role for himself in a fallen France, this became "the most miserable period of his life … isolated and ill … refusing to learn English and crippled by fever, suffering the results of years of physical flying injuries and neglect."

Now the pioneering postal aviation part of his career, which he had done in Africa and South America, was over. He had to flee his own much-belovéd homeland. Thus, after the fall of France to Germany in 1940, Saint-Exupéry left and spent the next 28 months in the America. NOT flying.

And yet, it is precisely during this interim that he wrote three of his most important works: *Flight to Arras (1942), Letter to a Hostage (1943)* and then what became his masterpiece, *The Little Prince (1943).* Against this bitter backdrop, is it any wonder then that his imagination led him back into a less spoiled childhood world?

Creating a fabled fantasy-world

Two facing images: his aquarelle o Le Petit Prince ; Antoine himself at seven

Antoine as a young boy

Was “The Little Prince” not in reality “The Little Count”, Saint-Exupéry’s actual title in the French aristocracy? Perhaps his re-creation of *himself* as a child? Would this not have been one way to engender inner resilience during a difficult phase of life when he was in exile from German-occupied France and living in New York. For that is where he wrote it, and it is poignant to note that this book came out in both French and English in America in 1943 but not in his native France until 1946 after both his mysterious death and the end of WWII. He never really got to bask in “The Little Prince”’s glory!

Let’s look at the voice and message of our “little prince”.
The plot line is quite simple, yet child-like imaginative, self-illustrated and drawn from the author’s own flying experiences and near-fatal crash in the Libyan Desert. The narrator as the pilot stranded in the desert who meets a young prince, also stranded, after he has fallen to Earth from a tiny asteroid.

How do these two apparent strangers interact with one another? That’s what makes this rather whimsical fable universally valid and this small novella one of the most frequently translated works in all of French literature.

The Little Prince’s most famous quote:

“On ne voit clairement qu’avec le cœur. L’essentiel est invisible aux yeux.”
It is only with the heart that one sees clearly.
The essential is invisible to the eye.

We are told that, although on the surface a children's book, "*The Little Prince* is a philosophical story, a parable, including societal criticism that remarks on the strangeness of the adult world." That it is, and HOW!

The voice is that of an innocent, curious child who asks non-stop questions:

- **Home**. He asks the pilot, "Which is your planet?" In this way, the little prince reveals that he might be from another, a different, planet.
- **Adults.** What are grownups mostly interested in? Mainly things that can be counted, like money and years of age.
- ~~**Sunsets.** What does the little prince love to watch? The sunset. He can do this 44 times each day since his asteroid is so small.~~
- **Fear.** On the fifth day that the pilot and the little prince are together, the secret of the latter's life is revealed. What is that secret? The little prince is afraid that his flower—in real life, the author's vain and petulant wife, Consuelo—could be devoured by the sheep.
- **Water.** The imagery of water is used in *The Little Prince* to represent the life-giving force, whether physical or spiritual. What then does this thirst-quenching source represent? Perhaps a mirage or the way we mistakenly feed our thirst with material things that do not give us life.

Challenges. We are told that, *"once we have a taste of the excitement of challenges and trying new things, our blindfold of the danger will fall from our eyes as we realize that our view of the 'scary' life from inside our comfort zone is just an illusion, all part of the comfort zone's master plan to waste our lives away without ever even experiencing a hell of a rollercoaster ride." (Source:* https://wehavekids.com/education/10-Life-Lessons-from-The-Little-Prince)

"Being out of our comfort zone, it goes without saying, we will be jerked around, we will fall, and we will fail, but I cannot think of a better teacher than obstacles. Stand up and get back on track; it is better than being stationary in a bubble of protection. Let's ***challenge our limits****. Try everything! Do the things that scare us. Be an explorer, not just a desk-bound geographer."*

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The Little Prince's message—and that of Saint-Exupéry himself—is truly universal and valid down unto this very day for all of us.

- The lonesome prince longs for **friends**, for communion with others. He gets his first taste of it when he encounters the fox, who actually invites himself to be "tamed", after which they will be bound together by this strange new experience called "friendship". Note: the episode with the fox requires a note on Saint-Exupéry's use of the verb "tame." In English, this word connotes domestication and subservience. But the French have two verbs that mean "to tame." One, "domestiquer," does, in fact, mean to make a wild animal subservient and submissive. *The Little Prince*, however, uses the verb "apprivoiser," which implies a more reciprocal and loving connection. The distinction between these two words is important, since the original French word does not have the connotations of mastery and domination that unfortunately accompany the English translation.

- A little prince with big **values:** In simple words, he treasures friendliness and humanity, trust and love, values that appeal to everyone, no matter their age or culture. Simultaneously, his child-like honesty indirectly criticizes an adult world in which such values have been rejected or submerged beneath the egoistic waves of power, money and materialism.
- Although all adults were once upon a time children, many have forgotten this state of innocence, honesty and questioning. Adults, he says, seem to think that they have "no time"; they have few geographic or psycho-logical roots; words and speech—never mind social media and artificial intelligence (AI)—are a huge source of interpersonal misunderstandings.
- In the end, our "little prince" allows himself to be fatally bitten by a poisonous snake. Why? Because he perhaps has ***not*** found the friends he had hoped for. Still, he does not see death as an end but rather as a transition and gives the pilot these prescient words: "It will *look* like I'm dead … but that will not be true."

Since none of us "normal mortals" really *knows* until we cross that threshold ourselves, we can only surmise about these overarching questions of life and death, philosophy and religion … and come to some persuasion of our own.

As for friendship and love, honesty and trust—these that seem to be **universal values for humanity,** may I say this? Today, at eighty, I live in a

“senior residence” in Vienna that looks nothing but noble on the *outside.* But, on the *inside,* I can honestly tell you, the reader, that this “residence” is a euphemism for a nursing home to collect those frail and demented elderly who have been largely cast off by their own families.

The few who “thrive” here are those whose families visit them regularly and take them out into a wider world for lunch or so. They show their *love* and *respect* and *gratitude* to these frail oldies, many of whom are *mothers* who brought their children into this world of ours. But these are in the minority.

These *very* old people, most of them over ninety, are now becoming as little children again—perhaps as Saint-Exupéry always remained—and they yearn for love and tenderness or, at the very least, to be *seen* as living souls, not just treated as objects. They long to be *heard* …and to be *hugged.* To be *loved* as they once were, as bright-eyed, exuberant children!

Saint-Exupéry never experienced this old age. He died, either by his own hand or someone else’s—at only 44 in 1944. Even his own dear mother outlived him. Nor did he ever live to bask in the adulation that “The Little Prince” brought him … *posthumously.* Questions to ponder: When to enter, when to exit upon this stage of life? That’s a big one.

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On a *second* personal note

I've recently rung in the New Year 2024 in what for me was most memorable company. *Not,* like many thrill-seekers, in the jostling midst of Manhattan to the tune of raucous-rowdy Times Square crowds and in-your-face fireworks but close to the contrary: on a Zen Buddhist BergZendo atop a high Austrian mountain plateau with sunrise views "to die for"!

SCREENSAVER IMAGE (Can't find it!)

I spent it, albeit vicariously, in the company of two Frenchmen, both of them staunchly chauvinistic as the French are wont to be. Of course, one was Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a pilot-loner who loathed crowds and, despite spending over two wartime years in and nearby that "city that never sleeps", adamantly *refused* to learn English! "I vow to die for the glory of France," he patriotically proclaimed and he did it, too, his plane going down mysteriously in the Mediterranean near Marseilles on 31 July 1944. No one knows *how.*

Antoine reminds me of my own special Frenchman, Yves, who insisted, *"I vill alvays be French!"* and who found crowds loud and "boring". Something of a "Renaissance man" but also innately solitary, Yves was a lawyer and former diplomat but also a solo sailor who would have entitled a similar memoire *Wind, **Sea** and Stars".* But Yves didn't write books; instead, he voraciously *read* them and painted nautical aquarelles of both Atlantic coasts that also became (decidedly lesser but still) well-known to Francophones.

Could it be that such a boldly extroverted America actually brought out the best in both such solitude-loving artistic introverts? Most certainly so in the case of Saint-Exupéry who, exiled from German-occupied France from 1940 to 1943, took refuge in his own imagination, creating his own world for that fabled character, "Le Petit Prince" who came from a far distant astroid. It's true. This most famous novella, "The Little Prince" was born in New York City and in Asharoken, just the other side of Long Island from where I was born.

Return to Europe and the French Resistance

Desperate to return to Europe after 28 months in exile in order to participate actively in the war, Saint Exupéry finally managed to leave America in April of 1943 to join up with a Free French squadron in Algeria. He was described in a 1994 New Yorker article as having been the squadron's "most experienced—and most obstreperous—member". His fellow-pilots felt honored to have him in their midst, but he was decidedly difficult to deal with.

He was also “over the hill” in terms of age (43) and far from fit—“only good for card tricks,” his critics claimed. Drinking to excess to try to dull the pain of old flight injuries (e.g. a fractured skull, spinal injuries from a crash in Guatemala from which he never fully recovered), “Saint-Ex” as he had been dubbed, was a physical basket case. Because his back was so stiff that he couldn’t bend over, “his boots had to be laced for him and he had to be fitted into and extracted from his plane’s cockpit.” Nevertheless, he *insisted* on being allowed to fly missions, although he was granted only five more of them.

“He was done for … and he *knew i*t”

Details—especially motives—surrounding the demise of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry remain a mystery to this day. Regarding the actual crash, Aviation safety (https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/75477) registered the following narrative from 31 July 1944:

“The unarmed Lockheed F-5B took off from its base at Borgo-Porreta on Corsica to carry out a photo-reconnaissance flight over German forces in the Alps and the Rhone Valley. The pilot was the notable French airman and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery. At 44 years old Saint-Exupery was known to be suffering pain from injuries received in flying accidents earlier in his career and from depression. He never returned from this flight, and several days later an unidentifiable body, in French uniform, was found at the shore of Carqueiranne (east of Toulon). The body was probably that of Saint-Exupéry. In the year 2000 disintegrated wreckage, identified as Lightning 42-68223, was found at a depth 40 — 85 metres in the sea south of Marseille, France.”

They found parts of his plane, even his ID bracelet, in the seabed near Marseilles … but they still don’t know: was he shot down or did he do it himself? “He knew he was done for”, another pilot had said, and had explicitly expressed that he “wanted to die for France” in 1944 before the war was out. I picture him in that flimsy unarmed plane, out there over the Mediterranean, far off his intended course and talking in whisper tones to himself like the Little Prince. In any case, his mysterious From the website https://wehavekids.com/education/10-Life-Lessons-from-The-Little-Prince, especially his writings, made him a French national—and international—hero.

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Notable Works: “Wind, Sand and Stars”, “Flight to Arras” “Letter to a Hostage” “Night Flight” “Southern Mail” “The Little Prince” “The Wisdom of the Sands” Interactive Workbook Questions based on Saint-Exupéry

1. Were you once a child? Can you remember it and re-enter that magical world? What did you love absolutely ***most***? Name five things/happenings right off the top of your head. Spontaneous!

2. As a child, did you have family around you? Were they loving? … or not? (Nobody’s going to automatically see this answer but *you* … so be honest).

3. Saint-Exupéry was a pioneer in the field of early aviation. He was daring! Is there some field in which you might be/have been pioneering? Or that captured your energy and aspirations as a child or young adult? Outcomes?

4. Our “little prince” also had a real-life wife, Consuelo, who was intentionally ***not*** mentioned in this biographical portrait. Why? Because she was his vain and petulant “rose” who was more obsessed with *herself* than anything else. Might you also have had a partner who either supports—or disparages—your aspirations? What to do with an “addiction” to such a person?

5. Re “world wars” ~~(and as we may have another one coming)~~, if you had the choice—and we all ***do***—in the face of life’s adversities, would you choose to “stay calm and carry on” as the British did (to their great honor!) in WWII? Or would you take your own very *personal* decision—as it seems Saint-Exupéry may have done—as to how your life should end? Why or why not?

6. Saint-Exupéry died youngest of all the historical figures featured in this book—at only 44. Viktor Frankl, the psychological bedrock of my premise that “life must have meaning” died only at 92, after surviving four Nazi concentration camps in the same war that Saint-Exupéry evaded by fleeing to America. So do you agree—or disagree—with Viktor Frankl that aging has

intrinsic value … if we have the curiosity and courage to extract it? (For a boost, see this book's Epilogue *Frankl Interview;* then say what you think.)