

Paul Emile Victor's Biography

Born on June 28th in 1907, Paul Emile Victor spent his childhood in the Jura. Very young, he was attracted by the poles and dreamed of Polynesia and polar adventures. After studying at the "Ecole centrale" (a renowned school in Lyon), then at the merchant navy school in Marseille, he joined the Trocadéro museum of Ethnography, where he attended Marcel Mauss's and Lucien Levy-Bruhl's lessons. When he was 27 years old, he organized his first polar expedition: in 1934 commandant Charcot and his boat "Le Pourquoi Pas ?" dropped him with three expedition mates for one year among the Inuits - then called "Eskimos - from Amassalik, on the east coast of Greenland. In 1936 after travelling across the ice-desert of Greenland in dog sledges from west to east, he settled and lived in an Inuit family during fourteen months. In 1939, he travelled to Lapland, he studied ethnography with doctors Michel and Raymond Latarget. He was demobilized from the French navy after the armistice of 1940, he left for the USA in 1941 and he joined the US Air Force. Pilot and Parachutist, he became instructor at the polar training school, then squadron commander of search and rescue in Alaska and in Greenland. In 1946, he married Eliane who he will have 3 children with: Jean-Christophe, Daphné and Stéphane. In 1947, supported by the government, he created the EPF (French polar expeditions), which he managed until 1976. He led the EPF and drove a lot of expeditions to Greenland (Arctic) and in Adélie Land (Antarctica) where a French permanent scientific base was built. From 1962, he increased his activities around the protection of mankind and its environment and in 1974, with Alain Bombard and Jacques-Tazieff he created the Paul-Emile Victor group for the protection of mankind and its environment. In 1976 PEV - as his friends called him - settled with his second wife Colette and his son Téva on a small island of the Bora-Bora lagoon, in French Polynesia, called Motu Tane (Island of Man in Tahitian), where he painted, drew and wrote. When he was 80 years old, for the last time he went in Adélie Land and flew over the North Pole for the first time thanks to Hubert de Chavigny's and Nicolas Hulot's expedition « To the North Pole in Ultralight aviation ». On 7th March 1995, PEV died on his island and - as he had always wished- he was buried at sea off the coast of the Bora-Bora lagoon.