



# A SWEET MEMORY

## Four Decades Later, GPO Reconnects with French Baker Who Made the Agency's 125th Anniversary Cake

**Top:** Jean-Claude Goubet spent five days just making the sugar for GPO's 125th anniversary cake. The entire cake, including the flowers and flag, were edible.

**Bottom:** Jean-Claude Goubet (wearing a pastry chef outfit on the far right) helps deliver the decorative spun-sugar cake, a replica of the GPO red brick building, that Roger's French Bakery donated to GPO for its 125th anniversary in 1986.

Jean-Claude Goubet says he could feel his cheeks turn red as a cheering crowd of GPO teammates eagerly awaited the Agency's 125th red brick building anniversary cake. Goubet built the cake, a replica of the GPO building, while working as a young man at Roger's French Bakery. He remembers carefully maneuvering the cart that held the cake around cables of video cameras set up to capture the event.

"I was very timid in front of the large crowd at GPO, but it's a fun memory I keep vividly in my mind," said Goubet of delivering the cake in 1986. "It was a nice ambiance."

Earlier in the day, Goubet had transported the cake from Roger's French Bakery in Richmond, Virginia to the GPO Headquarters on North Capitol Street. During the commute, the cake suffered a bit of damage.

"I went into the kitchen of GPO to repair the cake on the day of the anniversary," remembers Goubet. "The people in the kitchen were very friendly."

Goubet says every part of the cake, made of spun sugar, was edible. He used a postcard with an image of the GPO building on it as an example to help him design the cake. He spent five days creating just the sugar.

"It's a very long job," says Goubet. "You need to be patient to make this kind of cake, and it takes a lot of special tools. It took longer to bake it in the oven than it did to assemble it."

Goubet, just 25 years old at the time, spent one month working at Roger's French Bakery while on vacation in America. His great uncle Roger Grison owned the bakery and offered him a job.

*"Seeing the photos at GPO brought me to tears," said Goubet. "I have very fond memories of that time. I wish I had had a camera."*

Goubet got his start as a baker at just 11 years old in France. "I needed money for a bike," said Goubet of his 11-year-old self. "I walked into a bakery and that was my very first job – pastry chef."

Goubet spent seven years of his life working as a pastry chef, first at bakeries in France, and then at Bury Sync Edmunds, the home of Saint Edmund, the original patron Saint of England. The home is known as Suffolk's Foodie Capital and offers award-winning fine dining. He also worked at restaurant called Priory in England.

Though no longer a pastry chef, Goubet says he still bakes cakes for his family.

"I don't make cakes that look like big buildings anymore," chuckles Goubet. "But I can still make pretty good cakes."

Goubet now lives with his family in Cherbourg, a town in northwest France. Roger Grison lived in the United States until his passing. His body rests in Virginia.



An article from "The New Typeline" in 1986 said of the anniversary party "the anniversary celebrations brought together GPO employees from throughout the Office, visiting retirees, and distinguished guests. Nostalgia and official greetings, mingled with colorful balloons and anniversary cake, created the perfect mix of dignity and frivolity for such a once-in-the-life of an agency event."



Roger Grison, owner of Roger's Bakery, looks on as GPO Public Printer Ralph E. Kennickell admires the cake.



From left to right: Baker Jean-Claude Goubet, Co-Owner Roger's Baker Lily Tran, Co-Owner Roger's Bakery Roger Grison, and Toon Tran, son of Lily Tran, deliver the anniversary cake.



Jean-Claude Goubet (right) says he pushed the cart shown above before a large crowd of cheering employees at GPO's 125th anniversary celebration.