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FÉLICETTE, THE ONLY SPACE CAT

Abstract

On 22 February 1961 France became the third country to launch an animal in space, rat Hector, on Véronique AGI V24. This had been a rather elaborated experiment as, under the dynamic guidance of Professor Robert Grandpierre, founder of CERMA (Centre d'Etudes et Recherches de Médecine Aéronautique), the electrical activity of the brain and the muscles of Hector were measured. But in the midst of the space race, Grandpierre also quickly went for bigger animals, with the successful flight of cat Félicette on 18 October 1963, on Véronique AGI V47. This paper tells for the first time the full story of this flight, thanks to the actors themselves, including Chief Medical Doctor Gérard Chatelier. This paper is particularly opportune, as an impressive crowdfunding campaign was highly successfully concluded within a few weeks by British Matthew Guy, thus allowing the realization of a monument dedicated to what turned out to be the only space cat! It will conclude on an amusing feline coincidence.