

WWII U.S. GLIDER PILOT'S BRIEFING

NATIONAL WWII GLIDER PILOTS COMMITTEE
OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE

SILENT WINGS MUSEUM FOUNDATION
Legacy of the World War II Glider Pilots Association



WHERE WAS THAT BEAUTIFUL FORMATION?



“... about fifty miles from LZ “N” where we were to release our gliders I observed C-46 type aircraft straggling in groups of twos and threes – and sometimes singly – away from the battle zone. At this time, I started to ‘Sweat;’ gathering from the manner in which these aircraft straggled out that they must have caught hell.” 2nd Lt. Wesley M Kolbe, 314th T.C. Group

ALSO INSIDE:

TROOP CARRIER EARLY TRAINING

DONATING TO THE SWM

TOURING SOUTHERN FRANCE'S LANDING ZONES

SEE:

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HONORING OUR VETERANS - OPERATIONS -
MISSIONS - TROOP CARRIER MOVEMENT -
REUNION PLANS - EDITOR'S MESSAGE

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You have received this quarterly briefing because you are a paid member of the National World War II Glider Pilot Committee which is a component of the Silent Wings Museum Foundation. The Foundation is an independent 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization incorporated to support the Silent Wings Museum, and is not otherwise connected with the City of Lubbock, TX. The briefing content is created by our members who are not compensated for their research and writing. This content provides you with glider and other troop carrier stories, information, images, and history usually obtained directly from U.S. Military archives and other sources not in common circulation.

Editor's Note

It is my pleasure to continue to edit this publication. I want thank all of our contributors once more for their excellent research and dedication to ensuring our members receive high-quality information with each new edition.

Congratulations to those Air Force cadets named as recipients of their G-Wings, they carry on an important legacy.

I was particularly touched while reading the fantastic article by Patricia and Richard on the implementation of the C-46 during Operation Varsity. Please do take the time to examine the various logs entered in the article regarding individual aircraft returning from their difficult mission. It was sobering and chilling to read the cool descriptions of aircraft engulfed in flames, the picture of young lieutenants strapping on parachutes and making the decision to bail out, or of crew chiefs giving final accounts of watching their own flaming plane make a hard landing. Descriptions and logs such as these are invaluable from the perspective of putting readers and researchers “on the x” at these times in history.

I invite all our readers to submit your own thoughts and opinions about the articles we publish—whether from the current edition, or any of the past iterations, we want to hear from you.

Please reach out to us at the below email address so that we can share your insights with the rest of the membership in the following quarter's issue.

briefingeditor.nwwiigpc@gmail.com

Please keep the body of your responses to 150 words or less and please share your city/state so that members can see how wide-spread our publication is! If selected, your letter will appear in the next Quarter's *Letters* section as:

Letter,

About an article.

*Signed Trevor S.
Oceanside, CA*

We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Best,

Trevor Shimulunas

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CHAIR

Sometimes the best thing we can do to move forward is to look backwards. For those of you who may not know, we have on our website the written summaries of the previous [49 Reunions](#). Until recently, these were published annually in our hard copy Membership Rosters that were produced and mailed out to new or renewing members.

I found it fascinating to read these early summaries from 50 years ago and want to share with you some of what I found interesting from the first 10 reunions. Keep in mind most of the glider pilots were now in their late 40's or early 50's when the first Reunion was held.

Gary Stripling, Chair,

#1 Dallas, Texas 1971, AUG 15, Adolphus Hotel,

65 glider pilots attended.

(First) General Rules of Conduct adopted.

(First) Permanent Steering Committee included:

National Flight Commander,
Senior Flight Commander,
Junior Flight Commander,
Adjutant,
Chaplin.

All Glider Pilots attending were considered Charter Members.

#2 Las Vegas, Nevada 1972, NOV 2-5, Hilton Hotel,

63 members attended.

Expanded rules of procedure adopted,

(First) Executive Secretary position established.

(First) Regional Wings organized,

(First) Wing Commanders appointed.

(First) Historian, Photographer and Liaison Officer appointed

#3 Louisville, Kentucky 1973, SEPT 27-29, Holiday Inn East,

"Marked the beginning of the Big Reunion" era.

Two additional Wing Commanders named.

(First) Emblem for organization approved.

(First) Executive Council formed to replace Steering Committee

(First) Official Reunion Chair named.

#4 Petersburg, Florida

1974, OCT 24-26, Don Ce Sur Hotel, St.

Over 300 members in attendance.

(First) Articles of Association and By-Laws adopted.

Highlight was bringing together for first time since 1945, the three survivors of the Shangri-La C-47 crash and rescue in Dutch New Guinea. They met two of three glider pilots who handled the glider snatch pick up.

(First) time the Silent Wings War Room went on display.

(First) time the Executive Council was elected by the members.

#5 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1975, SEPT 25-27, Ramada Inn Airport,

(Fifth) National Wing Commander elected

Almost 500 in attendance.

Membership more than 1000.

(First time) official Flag of the association displayed.

War Room and War Room Curator

(First) Glider Pilot Tour of Europe left after Reunion.

The CG4A Restoration Project got underway.

#6 San Francisco, California

1976, AUG 19-21, Hyatt House,

More than 500 in attendance.

Membership nearing 1200.

Newly restored CG4A cockpit on display in War Room.

(First time) large delegation of British Glider Pilots attended.

Dayton Air Force Museum dedicated their fully restored CG4A Glider.

#7 Albuquerque, New Mexico,

1977, SEP 22-24

NATIONAL WING COMMANDER

More than 600 total attendees.

Astronaut Donald “Deke” Slayton featured speaker.

{First} Bick Ellington award.

(First) Glider Pilot Reunion Golf Tournament

#8 Springfield, Massachusetts, 1978, OCT 5-7 Marriott,

“another Large attendance.”

Large Scale Horsa Glider model presented by three British Glider Pilots

#9 Dallas, Texas 1979, SEP 21-23, Anatole Hotel,

844 in attendance.

Association’s fully restored CG4A Glider completed by the CG-4A Project Committee and on display at local hangar

#10 Atlanta, Georgia 1980, OCT 9-11, Biltmore Hotel,

Over 530 in attendance.

Nine British glider pilots attended.

Rex Shama’s magnificent one-inch = one-foot CG4A Glider Model (approx. 7 foot wingspan)

Military Glider Pilot Association formed to establish a National Glider Pilot Museum.

\$50,000 Pledged to start construction in Terrell, TX



LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN LUBBOCK FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WWII GLIDER PILOTS' REUNION. October, 6th, 7th and 8th. Hosted by the Silent Wings Museum and the Lubbock Women's Club.

I often wonder why people do not contact our organization before putting information in stone. The 17th Airborne Scions recently erected a very nice Monument in remembrance of the 17th Airborne Division's actions in the Rhine Crossing operation codenamed, VARSITY, with landing zones (S and N) around Wesel and Hamminkelin, Germany. LZ-S is the same landing zone where the 435th Glider Pilot Infantry Company (Provisional) took a defensive position on the line with the 17th Airborne at the crossroads of Hassenweg and Holzweg; where the famous glider pilots' battle, Burp Gun Corner occurred. This is also the same mission in which the Troop Carrier planners assigned the Glider Pilots an infantry role with the 17th Airborne for the first time in the history of the war (Market was the first but it was impromptu due to the weather keeping the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment grounded in England). The 439th gave great infantry support to the 680th Glider Field Artillery Battalion. A letter of commendation was sent afterwards with great praise from the 680th Commander as their regular infantry support did not materialize until approximately eight hours after landing. General Miley praised the glider pilots for all that they did and mentioned the “hand to hand” referencing the 435th Glider Pilot infantry company.

The memorial is beautiful. The monument lists all the units at their higher level, i.e., 194th Glider Infantry Regiment, 513 Paratrooper Infantry Regiment, etc. but then in the end the terms “glider pilots” and “power crews” are the

only words used. In my opinion, they should have kept the protocol set prior and, for Troop Carrier units, used:

IX Troop Carrier Command
53rd Troop Carrier Wing



I want to thank Al Bender for bringing to our attention that a vender was printing our seal on t-shirts and selling them for a profit. Mary and Henry Roemer, whose law business includes trademark violations, said that even though we do not “own a registered trademark” we still have “common law trademark rights.”



Henry wrote a cease and desist

letter and the company hosting the sales took down the site. Henry and Mary took their time to do this with out cost to the organization. A big thank you to Mary and Henry.

In the article under Operations about Cindy Bryant’s visit to southern France, I would like to thank my cousin, Philippe Arakelian, for driving them around in his WWII Military Jeep. He is the best and has helped me and our organization many times.

See you at the reunion! Patricia A Overman

50th WWII Glider Pilots Reunion

October 6 through October 8

Hosted by Silent Wings Museum and
the
Lubbock Women’s Club

Hotel information:
MCM ELEGANTÉ HOTEL & SUITES
Lubbock, Texas, 79401

801 AVENUE Q

855-516-1090

[Hotel Link](#)

The rate is \$95 per night plus tax, etc.

We have sent out the packets for the 50th Reunion so keep an eye on your mailboxes. All updated information will be posted on our website <https://ww2gp.org/reunion> and we will be sending out information to your email from our mail service so check those spam folders.

—Mary Roemer, Reunion Chair

International Director

I guess that everyone now has heard about the news in Europe. A new war on the continent. One where a country invades another country.

We had the Balkan war in the 1990s, which was a civil war, resulting in new countries and the end of Yugoslavia. When WW2 ended, wheels were put in motion to prevent a new world war. Like the United Nations. A good thing, although I fear the organization fails because a handful of countries can give a veto.

Sadly, since WW2 there have been many wars, and geopolitics play a role. So we all watch and see what the leaders of different countries do. Meanwhile, WW2 has not been forgotten. A group of the 17th Airborne Division families visited Europe. They visited the Ardennes and the Wesel area in Germany. It was there that they unveiled a new monument which includes the Troop Carrier and Glider Pilots. A second monument in that area to commemorate the efforts of these men.

I am writing this on May 6. Yesterday it was Liberation Day here in Holland. A day with festivities to commemorate the surrender of the German forces in the Netherlands in 1945, the day of the official liberation of the entire country. The day before, May 4, is the day we remember the casualties. This used to be those of WW2, but as years went by, it was changed into commemorating the casualties of all armed conflicts. At 20.00 hours, there is a two minute silence in honor of those who died. With official ceremonies in each and every

town.

Sadly, not all seem to know about the sacrifices paid for freedom. The Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Jonkersbos, Nijmegen, became vandalized. Anti-Putin slogans, the Ukrainian flag and swastikas were added....clearly by people who truly have no clue. Those buried there fought against Nazi-Germany, against the regime that abused the swastika (India still uses the swastika today, but not in the context where the Nazis put it in the 1920s).

In June, Normandy will be the scene of ceremonies. I assume a lot of people will keep an eye out to the east, to what happens in Ukraine. Freedom is a precious thing, and most of us living in western countries experience the best of freedom there is.

—Hans den Brok

In the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, swastika means "well-being". The symbol has been used by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains for millennia and is commonly assumed to be an Indian sign.

Early Western travelers to Asia were inspired by its positive and ancient associations and started using it back home. —[How the world loved the swastika until Hitler stole it.](#) Photo Steven Heller Collection



Chaplain

Dear Friends,

Spring just rushed into Summer it seems here in Texas. It is only May but we have already had several 100-degree days! I guess looking on the bright side, the pool water is almost warm enough for swimming. Looking out my kitchen window I see a beautiful vista of fully leafed out oak trees, green grass, vitex and crepe myrtle bushes almost ready to bloom and a glistening aqua blue pool. What beauty to enjoy every day! The deer visit most every morning and late evening. There should be some new fawns soon coming by with their mommas.

I like to sit on the back porch in the early morning coolness when I do my meditation and prayer. It is easy to feel the presence of the creator in nature. Do you have a favorite place for contemplation? Our world is so busy and noisy it is hard to find either time or place to just be quiet. Just a few minutes each day can make such a difference in our health-mental, physical and spiritual. Experiment with what works the best for you – time of day, in or outside, quiet music or silence, stillness or

movement. We each have a unique way to experience God.

Hard to believe but our Glider Pilot Reunion/Symposium is only four and a half months away. The planning is almost complete and the registration will be out soon. The executive council has been hard at work getting speakers and meals arranged for each day. We are all excited to be gathering in person after our two-year break. I know I will be delighted to see old friends and new in Lubbock this October.

As we remember and honor the glider pilots and troop carrier members of World War II, please keep in your prayers the people of Ukraine who are suffering the reality of war today.

"Most loving God who has created us in your own image, grant us grace to fearlessly contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations. Amen."

Blessings,

Susan Pinter

Chaplain

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Hans DEN BROK, Netherland

Richard CHANCELLOR, United Kingdom

Charles DAY Committee Historian

Chuck HOBBS

Fred LUNDE, Glider Pilot, Advisor

Tom MARTIN

Sharon MCCULLAR, Curator SWM

Jeff MCGOVERN

Patricia OVERMAN

Capt. Trevor SHIMULUNAS, USMC

Jean Michel SOLDI, France

Gary STRIPLING, Project Manager

Keith THOMS

Col. Mark VLAHOS, USAF Ret

AVIATION CADET DETACHMENT
Merced Army Air Field

Merced, California.
14 December 1943.

Mr. Claude G. Berry
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Berry

Received your letter today with the enclosed papers for your son's car. Your son recently left this station, in fact, it was last week and was sent to Louisville, Kentucky as a Glider Pilot. He'll be there a short time and will be transferred to Texas.

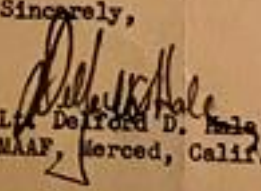
The car was left with me to sell and his instructions were to send him the money. When the car is sold, I will send you the money and inform him of all the happenings later.

It has been a privilege to have your son under my command. He is a swell boy, very capable, honest, and up-right. It was very disappointing to have to lose him from this command. He will certainly be a big morale builder wherever he goes.

I hope to sell the car real soon and you will hear from me as soon as I do.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,


Lt. Delford D. Hale
MAAF, Merced, Calif.

DDH/mkd

HACK

An old letter arrived recently from a family member dated 14 December 1943 from the Aviation Cadet Detachment at Merced Army Airfield. It was addressed to Mr. Claude G. (George) Berry who was the father of Claude A. "Chuck" Berry. The letter was in reference to a car left at Merced Army Airfield by Chuck.

From the letter you can see that Chuck had left the car for a Lt Hale to sell and to send him the money. Well, Lt Hale says that when the car is sold, he will send the money to his father and will let his son know what happened.

The car was a 1939 Ford that Chuck had driven to each of his training locations from October 1942 until October, 1943. He had nicknamed the car

“Hack” which was a reference to a taxi in the 40’s indicating that Claude was likely picking up and dropping off other soldiers with him along the way.

These locations included:

Pre-Glider Training School in Plainview, TX

Primary Glider Training at Ft. Sumner, NM.

Round trip from Ft. Sumner to San Antonio for a one week leave (a distance today of 550 miles at 8 ½ hrs, one way).

Roswell Army Airfield, NM

Santa Anna, CA for pre-Flight School (Power Pilot)

29 Palms CA for Primary Flight School (Power Pilot)

Merced, CA for basic Flight School (Power Pilot)

It was From Merced that he was shipped off to Bowman, Field, KY leaving his beloved “Hack” behind. He never told us how much money he got for Hack but he always talked fondly of it and would say “I wish I had it now.”

The last paragraph of the letter described Chuck perfectly. “He is a swell boy, very capable, honest, and upright. He will certainly be a big morale builder wherever he goes.

Gary Stripling,
Project Manager



Mr. Claude G (George) Berry



“HACK”

OPERATIONS FOR THE
94TH FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON (94 FTS)



Air Force Academy
G-Wings (Soaring) Ceremony
To a Great Summer from Colorado!



Gary Stripling and Brodie Henderson represented the National WWII Glider Pilots Committee at the 94th Flying Training Squadron's 2022 G-Wings Ceremony where the next soaring instructors received their G-Wings and many received awards highly deserved. The guest speaker was Col. (Ret) Leonard "Lucky" Ekman, Class of 1963. Col. Ekman gave a speech about his service in Vietnam. He advised cadets to take their roles as soaring instructors very seriously. After his speech, groups of cadets approached Col. Ekman with questions. Col. Ekman stayed to chat with cadets and offered them further advice.

The NWWII Glider Pilots Committee awards a cadet for innovation. This year's "G" is for Guts" Award went to Cadet First Class Garrett Dean. Unfortunately C1C Dean was on TDY and not in attendance so the award was presented to the cadet host on his behalf.

There were a total of 50 Cadets who received their instructor pilot G-Wings. Congratulations to:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Ethan Augustin | Hector Natividad |
| Blake Bautch | Svetoslav Nikolov |
| David Calvo | Lydia Pinsenschaum |
| Miguel Connell | Jack Schulz |
| Holtman Dunham | Christian Seiber |
| Gregory Estes | Samuel Smith |
| Mihiri Fernando | Timothy Smith |
| Kelly Graham | Ryan Torres |
| Daniel Hayase | Ayushi Bansal |
| Zachary Holder | Sung Choi |
| Karsen Holm | Elizabeth Deards |
| Cade Isley | Rachel Eberhardt |
| Gretchen Knox | Maximus Fan |
| Michael Laub | Matthew Flores |
| Samuel Mathis | Jack Foster |
| Jacob Mohnacs | Owen Graham |
| Kelly Murphy | William Hochmeister |
| Hector Natividad | Lucas Jones |

Jaden Kim	Nina Prince
Karen Kosinski	Andrew Ratcliff
Nolan Lindroth	Joshua Richards
Addison Lutz	Emmett Rosenzweig
James Matchette	Ethan Smith
Joseph Moore	Avery Taylor
Ezra Paul	Brennan Thompson
	Alexis Wade

Brodie Henderson has been back and forth to Colorado with the Wings Over the Rockies Museum and her Air Force Reserve duty with US Northern Command. On 19 May, her schedule fortuitously lined up to attend the 94 FTS G-Wings Ceremony with Gary Stripling where they got to see 50 of the Air Force's newest and youngest instructor pilots earn their G-Wings (in the same hangar where Colin earned his in May 2000). Brodie really enjoyed meeting the new cadet instructors and established some great connections with several to motivate them to pursue applying their military qualifications toward obtaining civilian FAA glider licenses. The instructional skills that they have honed in just one academic semester to earn their G-Wings can take years to develop outside of the military, giving them the potential to make a very positive impact on training in the civilian glider community, while carrying on the legacy of those who proudly wore G-Wings before them.

Gary Stripling also had the opportunity to meet with Lt Col. Chad "Sloth" Davies. Col. Davies took command of the 94th in May just before the G-Wings ceremony. Col. Davies joined our organization and is now a member of the Committee. Glad to have you on board!



Gary Stripling giving an impromptu description of the 94th Troop Carrier Squadron. Below Gary is presenting the G-is for Guts award.



THE SIX THOUSAND MAN GLIDER PILOT PROGRAM

May 8, 1942

Extracted from the Glider Pilot Training Program USAAF Historical Studies.

National WWII Glider Pilot Committee Historian Charles Day

First phase was to be 3,000 glider pilots. By September 1, 1942 the USAAF training centers were to establish Preliminary Light Airplane Gliding Schools. The schools were to be in operation by June 1, 1942. This date was met by the opening of 18 contract Preliminary schools. The jurisdiction for these schools fell under the Southeast, Gulf Coast and West Coast Training Commands. In addition to these contract schools, an Advanced Army school was operating at 29 Palms and the Elmira Area Soaring Corp. was operating an Advanced contract school at Mobile, AL. Also authorized and opened by July 6, 1942 were contract schools at Lamesa, TX and Wickenburg, AZ. Additional AAF Elementary-Advanced schools were opened by July 6 at Amarillo and Waco, TX, Lockbourne, Ohio and Fort Sumner, NM.

The 18 contract Preliminary Schools (student capacity in parentheses)

Southeast Training Center:

Jolly Flying Service, Grand Forks, ND (212)

L. Miller-Wittig, Crookston, MN (80)

Fontana School of Aeronautics, Rochester, MN (112)

Hinck Flying Service, Inc., Monticello, MN (112)

North Aviation Co., Stillwater, MN (112)

Morey Airplane Co., Janesville, WI (112)

Anderson Air Activities, Antigo, WI (140)

Gulf Coast Training Center:

McFarland Flying Service, Pittsburg, KS (120)

Ong Aircraft Corp., Goodland, KS (240)

Hunter Flying Service, Spencer, IA (160)

Sooner Air Training Corp., Okmulgee, OK (160)

Harte Flying Service, Hays, KS (160)

Anderson & Brennan Flying Service, Aberdeen, SD (160)

Kenneth Starnes Flying Service, Loanoke, AR (80)

West Coast Training Center:

Plains Airways, Fort Morgan, CO (184)

Cutter-Carr Flying Service, Clovis, NM (184)

Big Spring Flying Service, Big Spring, TX (80)

Clint Breedlove Aerial Service, Plainview, TX (152)

These schools were to run a four week class of instruction in light airplane gliding with students becoming proficient in making all landings with the ignition off, both night and day. Glider Pilots refer to this as their "Dead Stick" training. July 17, 1942 all Southeast Preliminary Schools and three of the seven Gulf Coast schools were closed for lack of

equipment which had caused a decreased flow of students. At this time the West Coast schools were to reduce student entry rate to 148 per week.

A letter from Jerome Schelley to his mother while in between training schools.

9/9/42
Randolph Field,
Texas

Dear Mom & Dad

Well, this afternoon we were told that we would all be out of here by the end of the week and all of the boys are so happy that you can't imagine it.

Our buddies in Alabama are pretty well advanced in their glider training and we hope to be, soon.

We have received several letters from them and in one today they said one boy landed a glider in the woods but he didn't get hurt. I guess it must be a lot of fun. I can hardly wait until I start flying them.

I've been chumming around with the other kid from our class in Grand Forks, who made instructor with me. We used to fly together up there, evenings.

His home is just 300 miles from here. In Grand Forks, he had a picture of his girl that I had seen several times. He told me she was going to meet the train at Ft. Worth on our way down here so he was watching through the right hand window for her when we pulled into the Ft. Worth station. I happened to glance through a window on the other side and saw a girl's face. I hollered "Simp, there's your girl or I'm a monkey's uncle." Sure enough it was her and I saved the day for them. Imagine, I had only seen her picture 5 or 6 times and I recognized her. Gosh, she sure is beautiful and really swell. She has a personality just like Clara's. Have you heard from him since he got married? I wish he would write to me. Darn him anyway.

I hope Dad gets my sax or \$75.00 because I would like to get rid of it.

Dear Mom & Dad-

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I hope dad gets my sax or \$75.00 because I would like to get rid of it.

...Do you know today marks the 18th month since I left home to go in the Army. It doesn't seem that long though. It must be because I've known so many nice people and had such nice places like Grand Forks to stay in.

So Josen thinks he will get a furlough. I certainly hope he does. I guess I've been so busy and had such a good time at Grand Forks that I haven't had a chance to get home sick. Just being close to home felt good I guess. Of course I was home May 4th and that was so long ago. Just 4 months ago. Do you realize that today marks the 18th month since I left home to go in the Army. It doesn't seem that long though. It must be because I've known so many nice people and had such nice places like Camp Grant to stay in.

Well, Mom + Dad perhaps I'll get a furlough to after I've completed my Advanced Glider training. I think there is a very good chance that I will. It will very probably come as a last chance to see home before going across the big water but I think

that is looking a long way into the future as I think they will carry on extensive maneuvers with gliders before taking them into combat. I guess it might take 6 or 9 mos. yet before I'll get a chance to get into the main scrap. One can never be too sure though because we might go to England for combat glider training. Even there we would learn to fly gliders larger than any airplane you or Dad have ever even seen. I do want to see England. I think that would be wonderful.

I got my glider ring (22.75) and it is a honey. Solid gold and massive in design. In enclosing a laborious sketch of it.

I haven't heard from Bud Krueger. Where is he?

We haven't been paid for last month yet but I still have 60⁰⁰ left. I still have about 100⁰⁰ coming in back pay and subsistence. I guess we will be getting ~~the~~ 60⁰⁰ a month flying pay according to war dept. bulletins. That will give me 33⁰⁰ more this month and 156⁰⁰ instead of 144⁰⁰ as a Staff Sgt. Gosh, that's pretty good dough.

There is just a chance that we will be sent to 29 Palms, California Glider School.

I think I'll send my films home if I can find a box. My clarinet to.

Well it is 9 o'clock and I'm tired so goodbye + keep your fingers crossed that I don't wash out.

Yours,

Jerome.

P.S. How is Grandma? I hope she is all well now. Give her my love J.

Well mom and dad perhaps I'll get a furlough after I've completed my Advanced Glider Training. I think there is a very good chance that I will. I will very probably come as a last chance to see home before going across the big water but I think that's looking a long way into the future as I think they will carry on extensive maneuvers with gliders before taking them into combat. I guess it might take 6 or 9 mos. yet before I'll get a chance to get into the main scrap. One can never be sure though because we might go to England for combat glider training. Over there we would learn to fly gliders larger than any airplane you or Dad have ever even seen. I do want to see England. I think that would be wonderful. I got my Glider ring (22.75) and it is a honey. Solid gold and massive in design. I'm enclosing a laborious sketch of it. ...We haven't been paid for last month yet but I still have 60.00 left. I still have about 100.00 coming in back pay and subsistence. I guess we will be getting 60.00 a month flying pay according to war dept. bulletins. That will give me 33.00 more this month and 156.00 instead of 144.00 as a Staff Sgt. Gosh, that's pretty good dough.

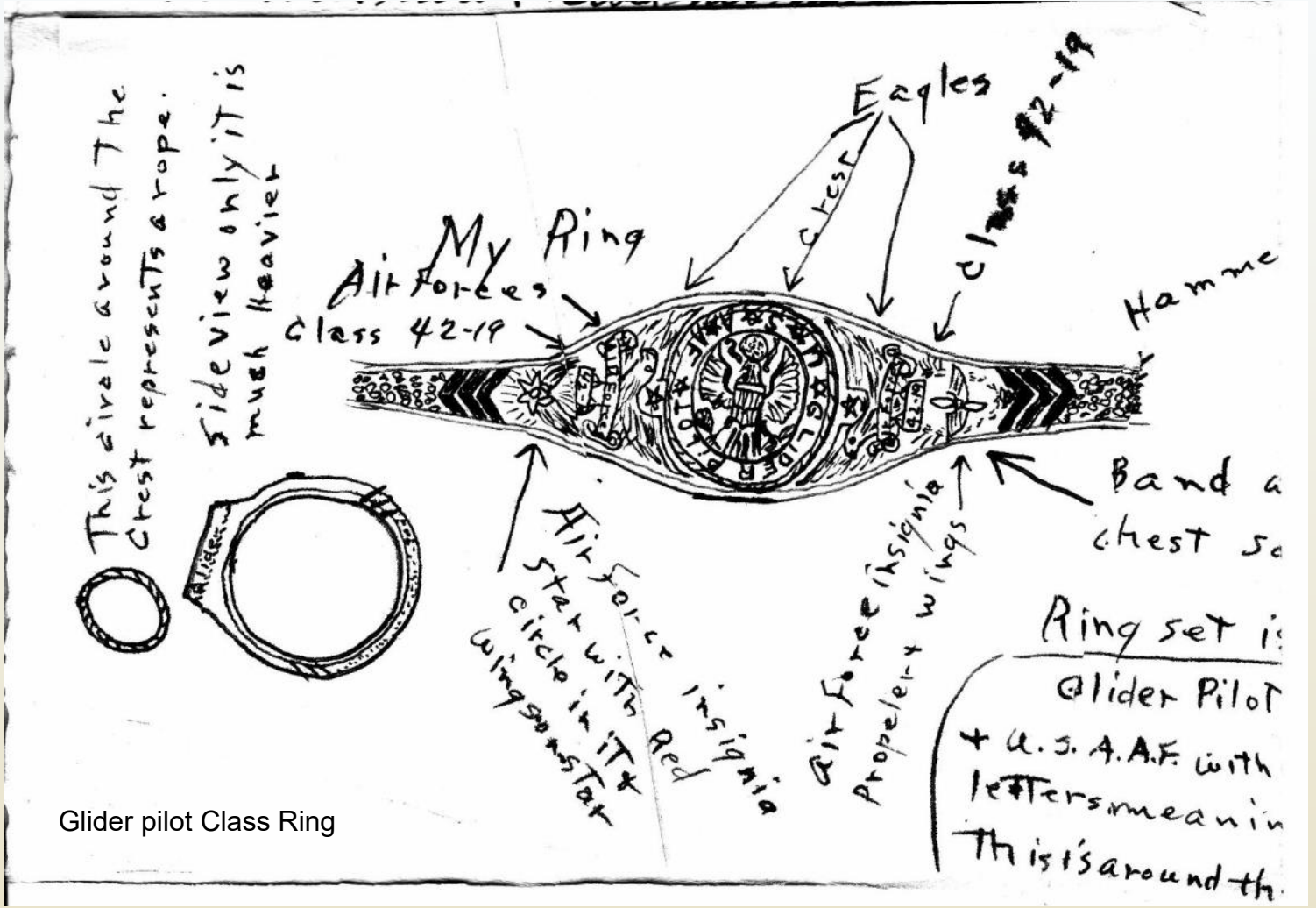
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Love, Jerome

P.S. How is Grandma? I hope she is all well now. Give her my love J.



THE JOURNEY TO DONATE MEMORABILIA TO THE SILENT WINGS MUSEUM

BY CLAUDIA COGGIN

My journey leading to the donation of my father's WWII items to the Silent Wings Museum started in 1987. During the last year of my dad's life, I asked him to please put together his ribbons and awards in a shadow box frame. He started the project, but never completed it due to his illness. Upon his



death, I gathered all the items from the dining table where he had been working and put them in a large box together with many more items (letters, photographs, trinkets etc.) from his WWII days to keep at my house. At that time all I knew about his service was that he was a glider pilot in the 87th Squadron of the 438th Troop Carrier Group in the Army Air Corps. I also knew, my dad earned these awards and they were so important to him that he kept them over 50 years. My children urged me to keep them, organize them, and to start researching his service as a glider pilot. At the time I was busy with my own career and

left the items in the box for another day. I share the following story because it may be similar to yours if you inherited a box of WWII memories. In 2012 a letter from a member of the WWIGPA Leon B. Spencer Research Team, Hans den Brok, was forwarded to me. He was researching the members of 87th Troop Carrier Squadron who flew to Holland and he found my dad's name in a list of glider pilots. He wanted to know what information I could give him about my father's experiences and service. That letter started me on a journey to find out more about my dad's military service

and eventually led me to the Silent Wings Museum (SWM) and the WWII Glider Pilots Association (WWIIGPA).

My son and I attended our first WWIIGPA reunion in San Antonio in 2012 and we have attended the reunions ever since that time. At that event, I met many new friends with the same interest in preserving the history of the WWII Glider Pilot program and the legacy of the many men who flew the CG-4 glider. This host of new friends has assisted and guided me with the research of my father's WWII glider pilot service in the Army Air Corps. While I was familiar with scientific research, I found that historical research is quite different and throughout this journey I have needed a great deal of help.

About the time COVID came into our lives in 2019, I realized it had been more than 25 years after my dad's death, and I still had a large box full of his WWII items and I now had time to focus on this project. What to do with his WWII memorabilia? I really had no desire to put them on eBay to sell nor would my children let me. In addition, I realized that I did not need to keep these items in my home (after all I live in Texas tornado country) or they might be lost which would be devastating to my family. I knew I really needed to find a "home" for

the letters, pictures, orders, etc. that would be available to assist a WWII researcher/author. The Silent Wings Museum in Lubbock, Texas was the perfect place since it "promotes the history of the World War II military glider program by creating an environment of collecting, documenting, interpreting and exhibiting artifacts and information for public education and enjoyment." My dad trained at South Plains Army Airfield prior to being shipped to Europe and it seemed logical to me that some of his items were to be returned to the location where his glider story began.

I contacted the SWM curator, Sharon McCullar, and explained that I had inventoried the memorabilia that I had and I thought there might be items which she would be interested in. She explained an inventory list of the items would be helpful to her as a first step in the process. She reviewed the list and I learned what she could use to expand the collection and which items, or similar items are already in the collection.

Steps to Donate to the SWM

Review information related to museum donations on the website

<https://ci.lubbock.tx.us/departments/silent-wings-museum/exhibits-and-collection>

Contact the SWM curator, Sharon McCullar to express your interest in donating items related to WWII Glider Pilots

(806) 775-3334 or smccullar@mylubbock.us

*Inventory all items you have in your possession
Send that inventory to the curator for review and she will let you know what items she is most interested in from your list to expand the collection of the museum.*

Pictures that have people, places, and location identified are best, but others may be helpful

If possible, scan all pictures, papers and keep a copy for yourself. You can also give a copy of the scanned documents to SWM which will help them to process your donation

Contact the [Leon B. Spencer Research Team](#). Give a copy of all the scanned items to the WWIIGP Committee for their archives. Your information may save them a trip to SWM if there is information in your collection they can use to write articles for the WWIIGPC quarterly Briefing.

If you want to begin your own research of your family member, contact a member of the research team. They can give you names of resources to begin the search.

Important Lessons Learned

Remember the items you are emotionally attached to may not be as important to the museum collection because they already have the same or similar items. Don't take it personally. The truth is that they have limited storage space and staff.

Don't just drop off a bunch of pictures or other "stuff" at the front desk of SWM. There is a donation process and an official document to be signed. (What happens to "stuff" that is just dropped off is a sad story--The museum cannot accept items without the proper completed paper work--It ends up in a City of Lubbock auction then who knows where it goes.)

Always make an appointment with the curator when you take your donations. A little known fact is that it takes an average of approximately 4 hours of staff time from the initial communication to process each artifact into the collection. Each artifact is cataloged (both digital and paper), scanned/photographed, put in an acid free box/bag then stored in the storage area that is temperature controlled to avoid any deterioration of the artifacts.

The SWM does not have unlimited space to store historical items because storage is expensive due special containers, humidity control, etc.

Be mindful of the curator and staff members' time. They are very busy people planning, developing and setting up the wonderful exhibits that make the SWM a great place to visit. In addition there are often researchers in the building for whom they must retrieve items for their review and educational tours for groups. Always thank them for their hard work and making the museum such a joy to visit.

Currently I'm in the midst of the research for a presentation at the WWIIGPC reunion in October, but the further I get into the process, the more questions I have about the resources to use to find more information about my dad's service. Of course, it would have been so much easier too if he were still here to answer the many questions about his service activities and missions he flew. I am fortunate to have letters he wrote to his parents which offers me a primary and personal resource, but there are still gaps to fill in his story. My journey continues.



FROM THE FILES

The 315th never flew a glider mission during the war, however, they had glider pilots. The men listed here were Horsa glider trained and were transferred from their parent TC Group, the 315th, to other TC Groups to fly the British Horsa glider for the AAF glider missions on June 6th and 7th 1944.

HEADQUARTERS
315TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP
APO 133, U. S. ARMY

G-F-3

1 June 1944.

SPECIAL ORDERS)
NUMBER.....97)

E X T R A C T

1. The fol named .O , are rold fr dy and asgmt with orgns indicated, are trfd, WP Hq, 53rd Tr Carr Wg, USAAF Sta 486. TDN by MT, mil acft or rail. 60-136 P 432-02 A 212/40425. Auth: Ltr, Hq. IX Tr Carr Comd, subj: "Transfer of Qualified Horsa Glider Pilots," dtd 30 May 1944, file 210.3; Ltr, Hq, 52nd Tr Carr Wg, subj: "Transfer of Qualified Horsa Glider Pilots," dtd 31 May 1944, file 210.3.

34th TC Sq:

F/O WALTER W WINANS	T-1282 AC
F/O ARTHUR P STONE	T-1258 AC
F/O HENRY R RIGGERS	T-1228 AC
F/O FRANK C PETERSON	T-120555 AC
F/O GEORGE L PEAVEY	T-121470 AC
F/O PATRICK F McMORROW	T-12125 AC
F/O SIGMUND L GRANACKI	T-120719 AC
F/O CHALON E CORSON JR	T-1155 AC
F/O CLARENCE B CLARK	T-121310 AC
F/O CAMERON W BYRD	T-60860 AC

309th TC Sq:

F/O KENNETH W ARNOLD	T-1288
F/O JOHN J CONCANNON	T-1306
F/O EARL O DAILEY	T-120525
F/O JOHN S HUGGINS	T-121338
F/O JOHN P McELREATH	T-121360
F/O CHARLES L MOCK	T-1200
F/O JOHN W REYER	T-121458
F/O CHARLES W STANFORD	T-1254
F/O ROBERT W RAUSCH	T-60835
2D LT BYRON J SHARP	0-461876

43rd TC Sq:

F/O IVAN W BIRDZELL	T-1301
F/O SHANNON L BOOTHE	T-121118
F/O PAUL H BROWN	T-120518
F/O HARRY W BUTLER JR	T-1108
F/O RAYMOND F CHAMBERS	T-1307
F/O ROBERT F CLARK	T-1121
F/O FERDINAND L EDER	T-1134
F/O EMILIO A GARZA	T-1143
F/O NELSON J LAGENDYK	T-121348
F/O HENRY L LYSEK	T-121548
F/O GEORGE L PRIEST	T-1220

310th TC Sq:

1ST LT BARTLEY D REINHARDT	0-339348
F/O WILLIAM H BOWERS	T-1099
F/O LLOYD C BEAN	T-60704
F/O THORNLEY C CARY JR	T-121125
F/O PETER A COLA	T-1305
F/O ROBERT R FEUERSTEIN	T-121144
F/O LUMON H HICKS	T-1161
F/O JOHN A LAVERTY	T-1065
F/O HAROLD A MOORE	T-120547
F/O LILLIARD L NOLAND	T-1208
F/O DAVID R REESE	T-121457

* * * * *

By order of Colonel McLELLAND:

OFFICIAL:

Wilfred W. Fry
WILFRED W. FRY,
1st Lt, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

WILFRED W. FRY,
1st Lt, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

WHERE WAS THAT BEAUTIFUL FORMATION?

The C-46's debut into combat.

By Patricia Overman

Research by Patricia Overman and Richard Chancellor

At 1106 hours, the first C-46 circled the field, alone, to land, and a little later there were other ships. The beautiful formations of planes with which the 313th Troop Carrier Group traditionally returned from a mission, where were they? The flak-holes in the wings—no 'milk-run' mission this!



Note the para-packs under the belly of the plane. This photo is of a C-46 "Curtiss Commando" flying a para-pack test hop days before the VARSITY mission. The engineering department is testing the rigged para-packs for stability. According to the back caption this is the lead C-46. Captain Robert F Scott after being hit continued to the Drop Zone. Heroism was not scarce with the 313th Crews.

—2n Lt. GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum



These 313th Troop Carrier Group C-47s sporting the Market Garden Operation dress. 5X is the Squadron code for the 29th Troop Carrier Squadron. The engineering department kept these planes in top shape and was a well honed operation. — 2nd Lt. GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum

The C-47 nearest had the nickname "The Slerf" -R Chancellor

On 24 March 1945, the 313th Troop Carrier Group made history when at 0800 hours flight crews from the 29th, 47th, 48th, and the 49th Squadrons, took off flying 72 C-46 Troop Carrier planes from advanced landing ground (ALG) B-54, Achiet, France. Flying to drop zone "X," two and a half miles North of Wesel, Germany, on the east side of the Rhine River, they would drop the 513th Paratroop Infantry Regiment, known as the Thirteeners (Fenelon), of the 17th Airborne Division. The Thirteeners were the only airborne unit in history to be dropped in combat from the C-46, known as the Curtiss Commando, and this was the only combat mission the C-46 would ever fly. Why?

The Engineers of the 313th had maintained and operated the C-47 type aircraft for

31 months and had a good process and understanding of this aircraft so that maintenance was conducted in a smooth and timely manner. In December 1944, the 313th, stationed at #484, Folkingham, England, received word that their C-47s would be replaced by a larger, more powerful, and far more elaborate airplane. They were ordered to be prepared to receive the new "Curtiss Commando," the ultimate in twin engine transport aircraft built by the Curtiss Aircraft Company. This new airplane's designation was C-46. It was bigger in every way than the C-47. Its engines were P&W R2800, each producing 2000hp, whereas the C-47 had to make do with P&W R1830 which only produced 1100hp. The C-46 had a wingspan bigger than a B-17 and towered over a B-24 Liberator due to its huge size and height.

Earlier in the war, this aircraft made its reputation in the Asiatic Theater, not in combat, but as a transport over "The Hump" in the Pacific Campaign. Luckily, some of the engineers knew about its advantages because some 313th engineers had attended the Curtiss-Wright School in Buffalo, New York prior to transfer overseas.

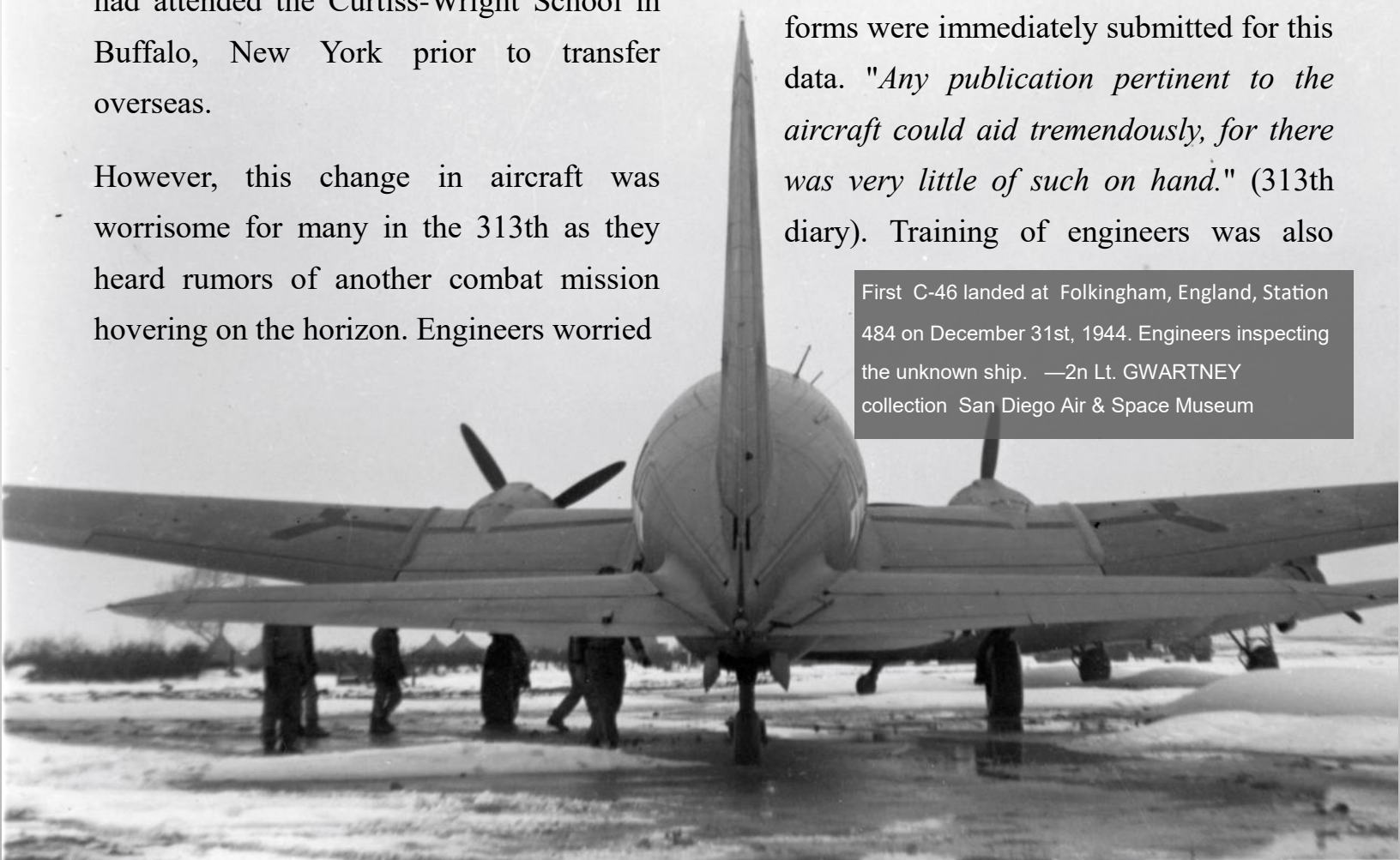
However, this change in aircraft was worrisome for many in the 313th as they heard rumors of another combat mission hovering on the horizon. Engineers worried

"How much time and what facilities would be necessary for maintenance crews to be efficiently trained?"

WHERE IS THE MANUAL?

Much information was needed; foremost was the need for technical data. Requisition forms were immediately submitted for this data. *"Any publication pertinent to the aircraft could aid tremendously, for there was very little of such on hand."* (313th diary). Training of engineers was also

First C-46 landed at Folkingham, England, Station 484 on December 31st, 1944. Engineers inspecting the unknown ship. —2n Lt. GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum



about the disruption to a well-honed maintenance program with the C-47 and what disorder this would cause. They had questions:

"Would the maintenance methods of the C-46 require more men than for a C-47?"

"What new equipment would be needed?"

necessary and training classes within the group was imperative. However, ready or not, the first C-46 landed at ALG B-54 on December 31st, 1944.

The arrival of the C-46 proved how little time they had been given to prepare. On January 1st, Staff Sergeant J. T. Swinford of the Group Engineering Office was sent to

the 21st School of Technical Training¹ to attend a two-week course on the Pratt-Whitney R-2800 engine. One week later, Chief Warrant Officer Rogers R. Pijaaowski followed, and on the succeeding week, Tech. Sergeant Charles E. McHugh attended the class.

There was one modern technology that was part of the C-46, which was seen as a mystery by the engineers: the Curtiss Electric Propellor. Three technical representatives, Norman Benson, John Manard, and Fred Trend, from the Curtiss-Wright factory arrived at Folkingham on January 24th to educate the engineering department on this new feature. Classes immediately began and *"...for the first time this grand stranger, the C-46, was becoming known to us, systematically and thoroughly. When the actual work started on the line the Representatives toured the line discussing problems with the crews and explaining and demonstrating functions and repair of systems and assemblies."* (313th diary)

The engineering personnel now felt that they could manage receiving more C-46s and on the 29th of January three more C-46s arrived. By February 6th the number of C-46 aircraft in the 313th Troop Carrier Group's fleet had risen to thirty-one and they kept coming. By the first of March, the 313th had their full

complement of 90 C-46s.

The first loss amongst the Group's C-46's occurred on March 5th when one plane was flying over the Channel coast and was shot down by friendly ack-ack barrages. It was, after all, a new aircraft and perhaps the identity was not yet known.

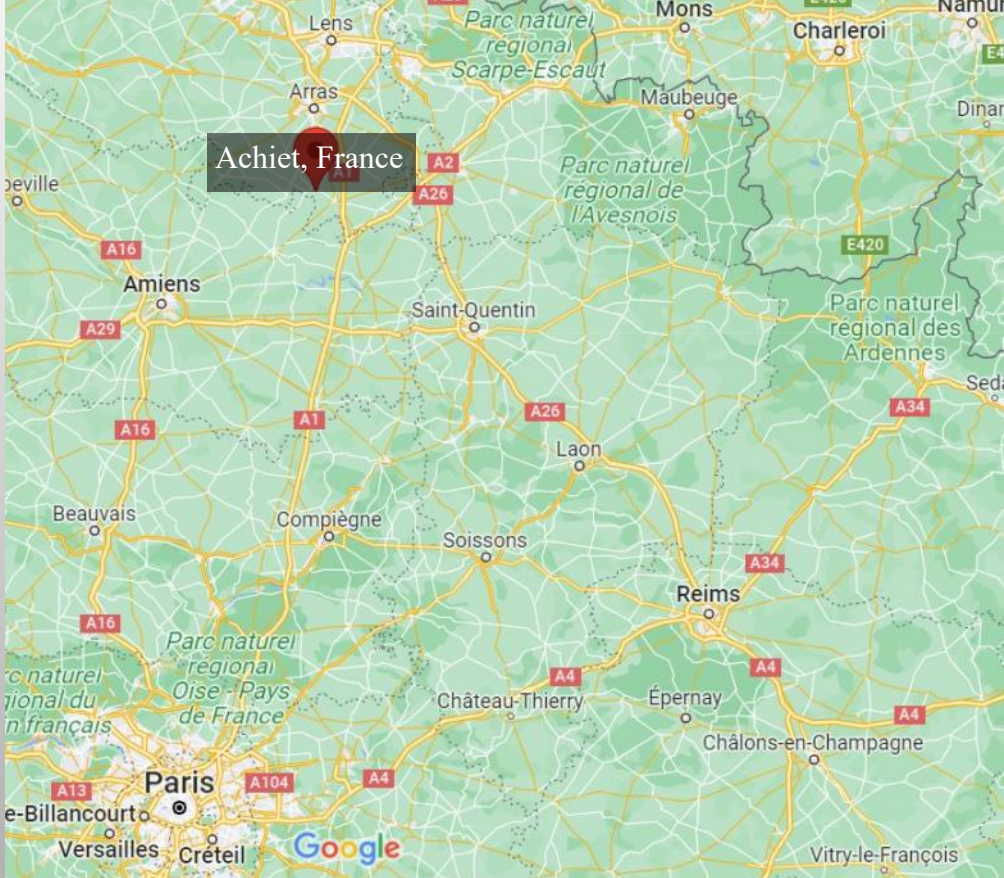
As the engineers and flight crews worked with this aircraft, they began finding problems. The complicated hydraulic system was the principal culprit in the troubles. Leaks in the system were known to occur and had to be checked frequently, but the most common and serious issue was raising or extending the landing gear in flight. The problem was that one gear would stay in the down position and one in the up position. When this occurred, the gear had to be hand pumped into position. On February 27th the first accident was recorded. A gear collapsed during a landing, resulting in damage to the right propellor, engine, and wing tip. This incident gained high priority in the attention of the engineers. They meticulously investigated the system.

During all of this work the Group operations still moved forward and now the Group was ordered to conduct a troop movement to the continent. They were to move their entire Group from Folkingham,

England, to Achiet, France. Occurring at the end of February, this scheduled movement of planes and communications disrupted the engineers' work

“Radar Stations; all were removed and relocated at the new base. There were countless modifications required in connection with commercial and field power facilities; a Code Room was established for cryptographic work; power and telephone cables were laid, some to Amiens [30 miles southeast of Achiet] and other towns where complementive (sic) or higher echelons of command were established. The task was enormous, but it was done.” (313th diary)

Having relocated all the aircraft without any mishaps, the training and scheduling



that had been interrupted began again in full. Now it was time to ready the aircraft for combat. Testing for combat resulted in modifications on loading and releasing of para-pack bundles. Major Jacob J Myers, Jr., the Group Engineering Officer with his engineers conducted countless tests to determine the needed solutions. Hoods were designed for the formation lights to limit their range

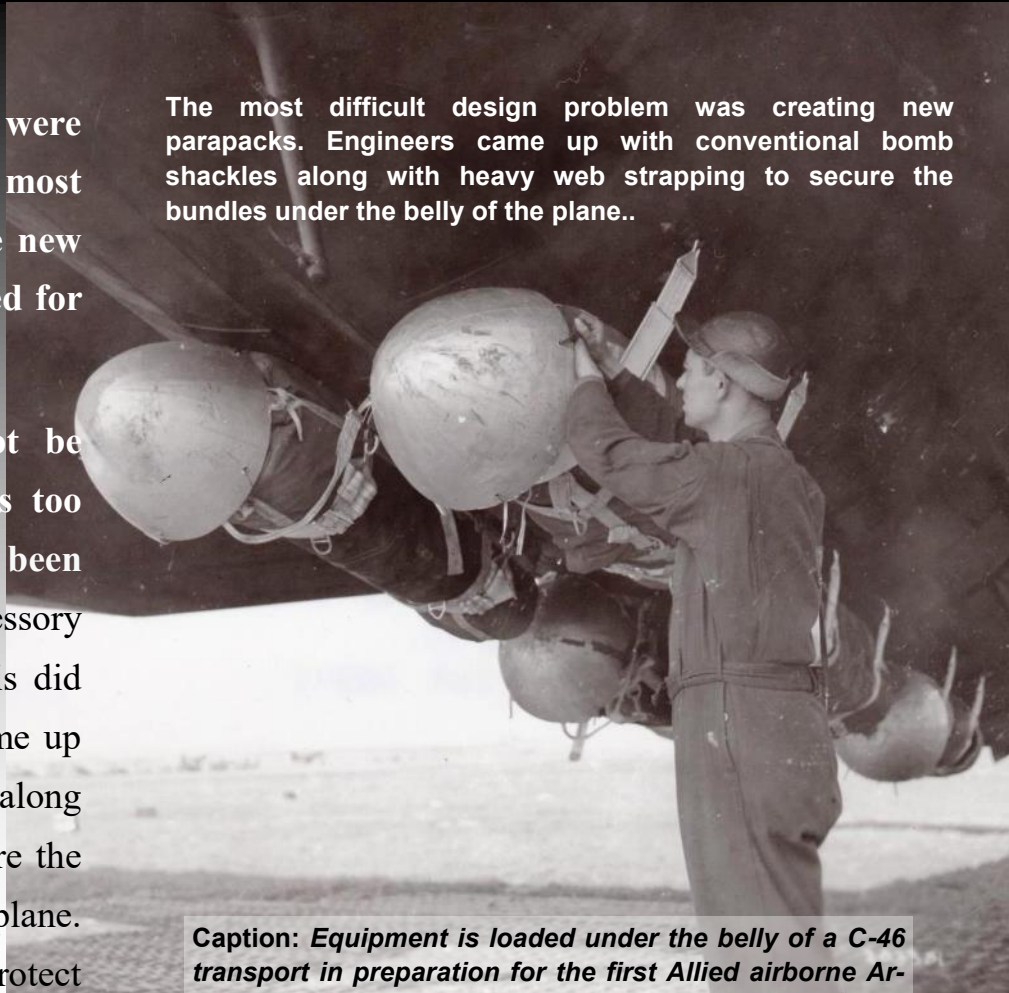
The 513th Paratroop Infantry Regiment of the 17th Airborne are relaxing at the home of the 313th Troop Carrier Group, Achiet, France. Their first combat jump will be on 24th March 1945 as they invade the German homeland. The 513th will be the only unit to jump from the new C-46 Aircraft in combat. —National Archives Photo



of visibility. Cabin dome lights were also modified. However, the most difficult design problem was the new type of para-pack adapter needed for the C-46.

The C-47 para-pack could not be mounted on the C-46 as it was too cumbersome. No para-packs had been supplied with the C-46 (an accessory overlooked when ordering?). This did not deter the engineers. They came up with conventional bomb shackles along with heavy web strapping to secure the bundles under the belly of the plane. They needed front noses to help protect and streamline the bundles, so noses were cut from fighter plane belly fuel tanks. These bundle guards also

The most difficult design problem was creating new parapacks. Engineers came up with conventional bomb shackles along with heavy web strapping to secure the bundles under the belly of the plane..



Caption: *Equipment is loaded under the belly of a C-46 transport in preparation for the first Allied airborne Army crossing of the Rhine and landing near Wesel, Germany. France 3/24/45. Restricted Signal Corps Photo. Photographer is T/5 M. K. Harris Location: Achiet, France — National Archives*

C-46 "Curtiss Commando" flying a para-pack test hop. Here the para-packs are released successfully. The work of the 313th Engineers was well done. The para-pack photos are from the National Archives and the caption says they are flying to Wesel but there is no flak and this plane is not on fire so we know for sure these were taken during the testing of the para-packs. — Glider Pilot,

2nd Lt. Carl GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum





streamlined the housing for the para-pack parachute. With such unconventional materials it was necessary to start in-light testing for correct release of the bundles.

“Many hours were required in the development of a dependable method of loading and dropping para-pack bundles, and when the tests were completed, the evolved practice was taught to each crew chief in the Group so as to insure correct loading and the ultimate satisfactory release of all bundles.” (313th Diary)

The radar department was also working as fast and thoroughly as they could to add the

navigational equipment needed inside the aircraft for all types of flights and under every condition. The need for haste was by an order from the 52nd Wing to install equipment that gave an indicator VARSITY was imminent. Equipment included, “GEE” sets, radar equipment, inter-ship communication sets, radio compasses, etc., all combat navigational and communicative equipment. In readying a plane for combat nothing could be overlooked. If it wasn’t essential and not needed for the safety or comfort of the crew it was removed from the plane. No extra unnecessary weight could be kept on the aircraft. The

maintenance condition of each plane had to be perfect, especially for the engines.

“When a particular type of aircraft is due to make its debut in combat, as was our C-46, unnumerable tasks must supplement the standard procedures, which in themselves must be emphasized in their prosecution. Those additional concerns are made necessary by the novelty-in-combat of that aircraft. Our C-46’s received this care and these services prior to their participation in the airborne breach of the Rhine River on the 24 March, 1945.

“From prop dome to tailwheel there was nothing left unchecked. Parachutes and flak suits were inspected and placed on the planes. As no appreciable space of water was to be traversed, all pneumatic air-sea rescue equipment was taken off the aircraft. Also not needed on the mission, and thus removed, were mechanic’s tool kits, T. O. files, landing ramps, extra duty cargo flooring, mooring and loading kits, and other incidentals. Alcohol de-icer tanks were drained and removed due to their fire hazard characteristics. Having accomplished the necessary work in these standard categories of preparatory processing, concerted attention was turned to the correct loading of para-pack bundles...So vital to the ultimate purpose of

the mission was this feature that Major Myers personally made a circuit of the line, carefully inspecting the loading of bundles on each individual airplane.

“And then our C-46’s were ready for VARSITY.”

After time no malfunctions occurred and confidence in the plane was solidified. The readiness of the C-46 and the move to the continent was all done under the Group Commanding Officer, Colonel James Roberts, Jr.

READYING THE MEN FOR VARSITY:

By the 6th of March the intelligence department was ready for business. A briefing was attended on March 19th at the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing Headquarters. In the Varsity Operation the 50th (comprised of the 439th, 440th, 441st, and 442nd TC Groups) and the 52nd Wings (comprised of the 61st, 313th, 314th, 315th and 316th TC Groups) were on detached Service to the 53rd Wing (whose groups were 434th, 435th, 436th 437th, and 438th). Everything was conducted through the 53rd Wing. Brigadier General Harold L Clark, Commander of the 52nd Wing, gave Troop Carrier Commanders the comprehensive planning information for the mission detailed in Field Order #5 that would, for the first time, have Troop Carrier fly into

the German motherland for an invasion designed to destroy the Ruhr industrial area. The mission was codenamed VARSITY. Their landing and drop zones would be in the Wesel and Hamminkelin areas. The invasion was scheduled to occur on 24 March 1945. To prepare for the Airborne assault, those areas were heavily bombed days prior to the mission. However, there was no way of keeping the Germans from knowing that an invasion was imminent. Axis Sally knew and taunted the boys. The only thing not known to the German intelligence was the day and time of the invasion.

Colonel Brice P. Disque Jr., the 52nd Wing S-2 intelligence officer was next to be briefed and given the Field Order, maps, reconnaissance photos and all other intelligence needed to prepare for a successful mission. No details were left out. The intelligence department studied the photos to determine German strong holds and the best routes to fly with limited enemy flak positions and all was plotted on large briefing maps. The next step was to determine the terrain for least obstructions for landing and drop zones. Overlays to the maps were reproduce for each Group's briefings and attached to the field order.

Intelligence officers gave special lectures to

members of air crews, the latest prisoner of war information, escape and evasion procedures, as well as recognition of German uniforms in case of capture.

On the 21st of March heavy security was implemented by cooperation with the Group Intelligence Office, Counter-Intelligence Personnel, and the Military Police. Enlisted personnel and Officers not on orders were restricted to the base and civilian personnel could only enter the base with specific authority. Extra guards were placed around the C-46s and all other aircraft on the field.

On the 22nd of March, all four 313th TC Group Squadron Commanders were briefed in the Group Intelligence Office on the mission's details. Those attending were Group Operations and Intelligence Officers; Colonel Coutts, Commander of the 513th Parachute Regiment, 17th Airborne Division; Captain Ivy, 313th S-2 Officer; and Colonel William A. Filer, who had become Group Commander of the 313th on 18 March, (replacing Colonel Roberts who was called to the Zone of the Interior (U.S.) for special duty). The next day, on the 23rd, all pilots and navigators were briefed by Group Officers responsible for the various phases of the mission. Both the Intelligence officer of the 513th PIR and the 52nd Wing A-2 Officer were keeping the Group up to

date with the latest intelligence.

VARSIITY IS A GO

Early morning on 24 March 1945, 72 C-46s already loaded with para-packs were now being loaded with paratroops of the 315th PIR who would be dropped over DZ X.

- Chalk 1-21 carried 2nd Bn 513 PIR
- Chalk 22-36 carried 3rd Bn 513th PIR
- Chalk 37-42 carried Co H 513th PIR
- Chalk 43-51 carried Regt HQ & Service Co 513th PIR
- Chalk 52-72 carried 1stBn 513th PIR

The overall VARSITY plan was to drop and land everything at the same time on the

German enemy in overwhelming numbers. At ALGs throughout France, Troop Carrier Groups were taking off at specific times to rendezvous at the Initial Point (IP) making a skytrain that, if standing on the ground watching, would take over two hours and forty-five minutes to pass. This was the largest single lift of the war and the 313th TCG was proud to be debuting the “Curtiss Commando” and confident of a successful mission.

Pilot, Major George A Smith (49th TC Squadron) and Co-pilot, Group Commander Colonel Filer, were in the lead plane, both veterans of Sicily, Italy, Normandy, and



C-46 “Curtiss Commando” Practice Jump with the 513th PIR, 17th Airborne. — Glider Pilot, 2n Lt. Carl GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum



3rd Battalion of Company H, 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne, loading into their C-46 "Curtiss Commando" chalk number 35, tail number 44-787604. Aircraft was hit by small arms fire that ripped into the left elevator, bullets went through the skin—top and bottom. All Airborne jumped on drop zone. — Glider Pilot, 2n Lt. Carl GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum

Holland. Although the weather was sunny, there was a 45 degree, 12 miles per hour wind across their only uphill air strip. The 2000 horse powered Pratt and Whitney engines on the C-46s laden with more than their maximum 50,000 pounds of men and equipment would be stressed to the limit and the pilots' expertise would be needed to make a good take off. The first twelve took off but it was evident to the ground crews that there was difficulty in handling these planes in the cross wind. Practices were never done with over loaded aircraft, on a



513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne, loading into their C-46 "Curtiss Commando". — Glider Pilot, 2n Lt. Carl GWARTNEY collection San Diego Air & Space Museum

crowded runway, under windy conditions. The first accident occurred when the overloaded aircraft with 513th paratroopers began to drift toward the hundreds of men on the side of the field watching the take-off. Unable to move the ship back to the line the well skilled pilot jettisoned the para-packs, which contained high explosives, onto the runway before

crashing through parked vehicles. This incident did not keep the others from taking off and by 0930 all aircraft had gotten into formation and headed towards the Rhine River. Between 1008 hours and 1022 hours, with the majority dropped at 1015 hours, the hundreds of 513th GIR was dropped on or adjacent to Drop Zone "X."²



Caption: 24 MAR 1945 Credit – U.S. Army Signal Corps. U. S. Army Para-troops are shown jumping from two doors in the new C-46 “Commando” over the British 2nd Army Front, in what was perhaps the greatest airborne operation in the history of the war. The Commando was used for the first time in this theater of operations and carries thirty six men, fully equipped. – Photo from the National Archives

Aircraft was piloted by Major William C Oliver CO of the 48thTCS, C-46 tail number was 44-77563

The drop altitude ranged from 600’ to 1,000’ and at 90-110 mph indicated air speed. There were no refusals, yet twenty paratroopers did not jump. Twelve from one plane who were unable to get out due to a bundle jamming the door, and nearly all the remainder because they were shot from enemy ground fire before reaching the DZ.

Almost immediately after crossing the Rhine trouble started. The lead plane was receiving

Full crew list for Chalk #1 44-77472 U:

Pilot Major George A Smith
Co pilot Lt Col William A Filer
Navigator 1st Lt William V Sussner
Radio Op S/Sgt William L Magruder
Crew Chief T/Sgt Alvin E Rehse
Radar Op Seymour Greenstein
War Correspondent Robert Wilson

flak before they reached the DZ. The Crew Chief, T/Sgt. Alvin E REHSE, from Chalk 1 reported: *“The flight was without incident until we hit enemy fire. I did not notice the sharp jabs which we experienced in the C-47 when there was near miss but it was rather the sort of sensation experienced with hitting an updraft or a dull explosion sound as if there was an explosion immediately below.”*

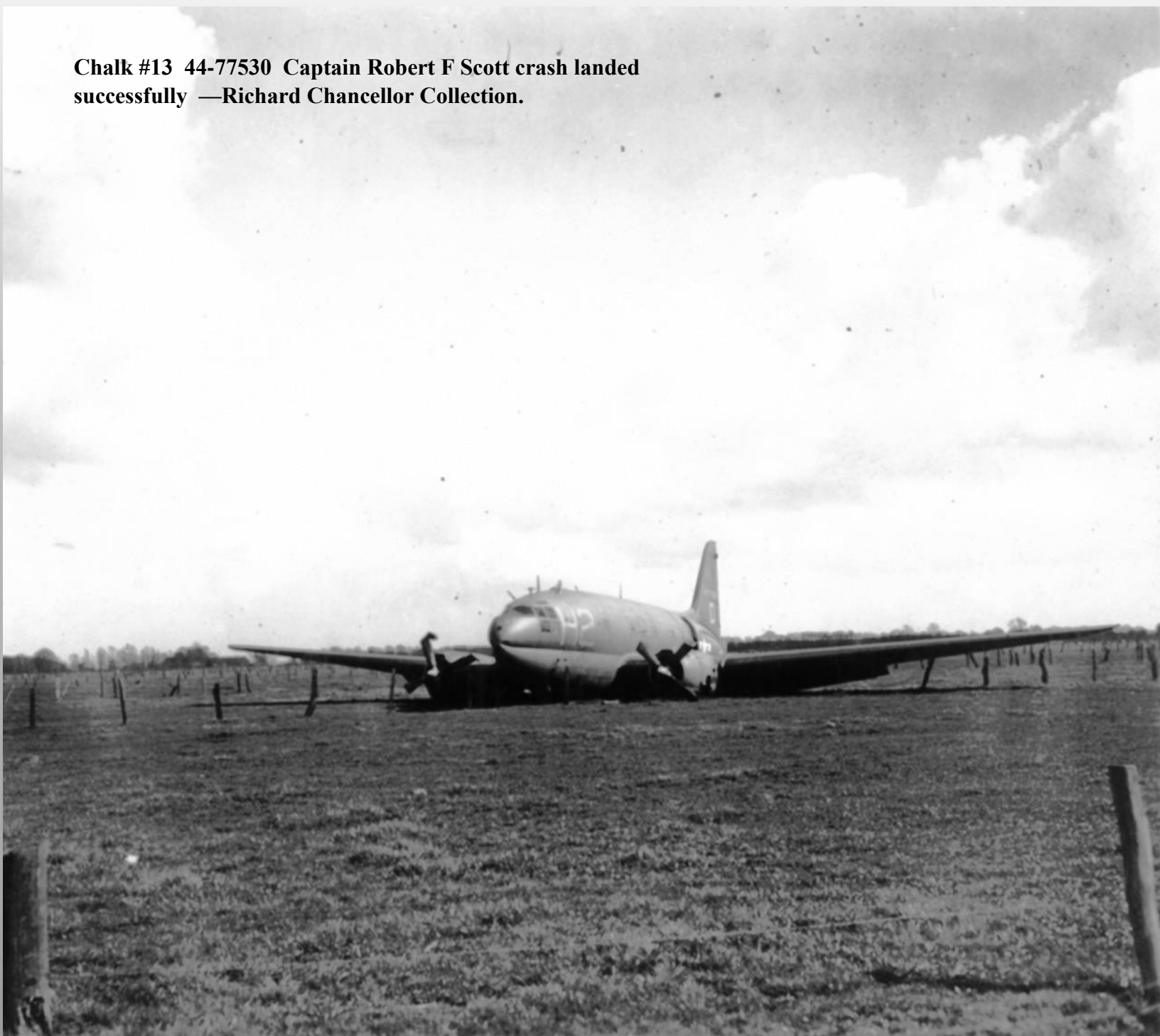
They continued to the DZ, and dropped their troops. Then made a left turn. *“I was at the left door pulling in the static line when I noticed a sensation of explosion of flak. I saw no shell particles ripping through the plane or heard like the sound of spent flak rattling on the surfaces. I ran forward and got the radio operator and radar operator to help me pull in the static lines. I had hooked my arm around the static lines hanging on the right hand door of the ship and had just turned around to start forward when I saw fire pouring back over the wing from the nacelle of the left engine. ... I had no sooner noticed the left engine on fire when there came a heavy acrid smoke sweeping into the cabin. ... started to go forward again with static lines when I saw the right engine on fire and the smoke getting very dense in the cabin. Realizing all these fumes were liable to explode and that a parachute jump would*

be very feasible as we still had altitude. I am reasonably sure that it was smoke from burning hydraulic fluid. I am sure it was not fumes from burning oil or gasoline as I am familiar with those odors...” Colonel Filer gave orders for the crew to jump. They did. Last reports indicated that Filer’s C-46, now entirely engulfed in flame, crash-landed. Colonel Filer, Major Smith and navigator Lt. Sussner were all reported missing. This was just the beginning of many C-46s that went down from enemy fire.

Pilot Captain Robert F. Scott in Chalk #13 (44-77530) was the last to arrive at the DZ but could not drop his troopers due to another group arriving at the same time. He made two attempts to cross the DZ in heavy enemy fire. At the request of the Paratroopers including those hit by flak and bullets, they were dropped immediately west of the Rhine and just east of the DZ. Scott, his plane hit and out of control, made a successful crash landing.

There were two factors that made this mission difficult. First, was the smoke from Montgomery’s Rhine infantry crossing limiting the crews’ visibility to half a mile and making it difficult to read landmarks. Second, the minute they

Chalk #13 44-77530 Captain Robert F Scott crash landed successfully —Richard Chancellor Collection.



crossed the Rhine and were out of friendly hands they began receiving enemy fire. Intense and accurate enemy fire was coming from the north, east, and south of the DZ, especially from an area just east of the Issel Canal. For details see the status of each ship and the fact that despite their situation they kept to the DZ and dropped the “Thirteeners.”

EACH AIRCRAFT STATUS REPORTED BY THE 313TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP

49TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

Chalk 1-18 carried 2nd Bn 513 PIR

Chalk 1 44-77472 *Ship missing. Last sighted with both engines and fuselage on fire, hit ground and continued to burn*

Chalk 2 44-77525 *Ship Destroyed. Last seen with left wing and fuselage in flares and losing altitude, the crew chief stated he saw plane crash and explode.*

Chalk 3 44-77516 *Ship missing. As yet no clues have been uncovered to give us even the slightest indication as to just what did happen to this A/C.*

Chalk 4 44-77471 *Undamaged*

Chalk 5 44-77590 *Unable to land at B-54 due to battle damage, crew bailed out near B-54 and ship crashed and was salvaged*

Chalk 6 44-77627 *Small hole right side of fuselage*

Chalk 7 44-77650 *Large hole right side fuselage, small hole in belly, holes top fuselage under belly*

Chalk 8 44-77569 *Large flak hole right forward fuselage*

Chalk 9 44-77509 *Landed at A-87 Engine out.*

Chalk 10 44-77548 *Undamaged*

Chalk 11 44-77574 *Small hole left horizontal stabilizer*

Chalk 12 44-7523 *32 hydraulic lines out—2 aileron cable out—small hole in belly*

Chalk 13 44-77530 (Replaced Chalk #13 this is spare #1) *Crash landed. Replaced A/C No 44-77556, made two passes at DZ, Paratroopers could jump due to gliders and smoke. Four jumped west of Rhine, one passed out and another wounded didn't jump. NOTE UNDER UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE: Unusual courage and devotion to*

duty was shown by Cpt. Scott when he made two passes to try to get his troops on the DZ.

Chalk 13 44-77556 *Crashed on takeoff—replaced by A.C No, 44-77530—Spare No. 1 also flown by Cpt. Scott.*

Chalk 14 44-77528 *Large hole right side of fuselage*

Chalk 15 44-77473 *Small hole right wing*

Chalk 16 44-77473 *Undamaged*

Chalk 17 44-77562 *Small hole—left side rear fuselage.*

Chalk 18 44-77584 *Undamaged*

29TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

Chalk 19-36 carrier 3rd Bn Co H 513th PIR

Chalk 19 44-77542 *Ship hit by flak on leaving DZ, setting fuel tank on fire and thereby causing wing to burst into flames, this making it necessary for crew to bail out. all but pilot, Major Laird, were uninjured, Major Laird being wounded by small arms fire after landing.*

Chalk 20 44-77609 *Undamaged*

Chalk 21 44-77470 *Large hole top vertical stabilizer, left of left jump door, and in nose—hydraulic lines in nose out.*

Chalk 22 44-77582 *Ship missing. Last seen with it's engine on fire. this ship was struck by flack after dropping paratroopers on DZ. crew bailed out except for Capt. Krainer of whom it is not known definitely whether he jumped or not. Three members of the crew were taken prisoner, and in return captured their captors. Radio Operator is in the hospital.*

Chalk 23 44-77308 *Small hole right wing, rib and spar.*

Chalk 24 44-77511 *Undamaged*

Chalk 25 44-77514 *Undamaged*

Chalk 26 44-77532 *Undamaged*

Chalk 27 44-77551 *No 2 Bomb shackle lever broken and shackle lost*

Chalk 28 44-77506 Large hole left side fuselage, small holes-flaps, stabilizer, elevator fuselage. Two paratroopers returned to base, both having been wounded before jump by flak, one in head and one in hand (the former apparently was a correspondent of some sort), navigator, wounded by flak.

Chalk 29 44-77565 Small holes right front fuselage, right inboard flap and left center.

Chalk 30 44-77579 Small hole right horizontal stabilizer damaging rib.

Chalk 31 44-77591 Undamaged

Chalk 32 44-77588 Small hole right flap and tip of aileron.

Chalk 33 44-77592 Small arms dent in right prop.

Chalk 34 44-77594 Undamaged

Chalk 35 44-77604 Small arms rip in left elevator, skin—top and bottom

Chalk 36 44-77661 Flak hit cockpit of A/C and shattered windows. this ship was hit by flak after dropping paratroopers on the DZ. With pilot Lt. Dunn being injured in eye, Lt. Harmmy, Co-pilot landed ship at Y-52.

48TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

Chalk 37-42 carried Co H 513th PIR

Chalk 37 44-77563 2 holes right fuselage— 2 holes rear cargo door-hole right inboard wing-flap needs replacing.

Chalk 38 44-77648 Hole in nose-left nacelle-hydraulic line. 12 paratroopers returned. No refusals. bundle jammed in door and troopers could not jump.

Chalk 39 44-77545 Hole in nose-left nacelle-hydraulic line shot up pretty badly— many holes. One paratrooper returned. Not a refusal. Injured before jump.

Chalk 40 44-77585 Hole in left elevator— right flap wings shot up and fuselage.

Chalk 41 44-77589 Returned engine trouble. Replaced by 44-77583

Chalk Spare No. 1 (41) 44-77583 Replaced 4477589 which returned to B-54. Engine trouble. Ship destroyed. Pilot received Abrasions severe, left arm and left anterior chest. LIA. Copilot fracture, compression fist lumbar vertebra SIA Plane was burning before crashing

Chalk 42 44-77598 Hole in left elevator-rear bulkhead-rudder trim tab-right wing shot up.

Chalk 43 44-77510 Small hole back of tail wheel.

Chalk 44 44-77645 Ship Destroyed. Made run in with both gas tanks on fire and dropped troops. Caught fire from enemy ground fire. Crew bailed out. Ship blew up when it struck ground. Radio Operator SIA. 1 paratrooper refusal. Reason unknown.

Chalk 45 44-77637 Ship Destroyed. Crash landed. Plane burning before crashing. Left wing struck ground and a/c exploded. Crew Chief received slight lacerations and contusions. SWA. Three bodies found in crashed plane.

Chalk 46 44-77518 Ship Destroyed. Belly and both wings caught fire from antiaircraft fire. Navigator wounded in right shin bone hit by small arms fire LWA. Made run over the DZ was plane was burning.

Chalk 47 44-77474 Ship destroyed. Plane crashed after drop. Burning before crash. Crew Chief wounded in leg. LWA.

Chalk 48 44-77529 Right wing rib, inboard flap -left door, right landing gear, left wing-hole near tip. Numerous flak holes.

Chalk 49 44-77612 Ship destroyed. Hit by anti-aircraft fire. Belly of ship caught fire. right wing blew off just before hitting ground. Pilot fracture, fibula, LIA. Navigator crashed with ship. Pilot and radio operator were wounded. Crew all jumped except navigator. Paratrooper (refusal) also jumped. Shot in right arm descending in chute.

Chalk 50 44-77512 Ship Destroyed. Right wing on fire when last seen. Crashed.

Chalk 51 44-77575 Right landing gear door left elevator and horizontal stabilizer damaged, many holes in fuselage. Flaps out, etc. Flew from rendezvous and over DZ while only able to get 12 inches on left engine. Hydraulic system, booster, and trim tabs shot out. But got safely back.

Chalk 52 44-77602 Ship destroyed. Crash landed and burned. Crew Chief thrown clear of a/c when crash landed. (partially out of escape hatch) Other believed perished in burning a/c..

Chalk 53 44-77521 Left engine hit—right wing near tip fuselage, bottom of rudder hit. One paratrooper returned. Not a refusal. Wounded before jump.

Chalk 54 44-77638 20mm. Pilots window. Overhead electric panel. Fuselage skin. Pilot wounded in left upper arm hit. LWA.

47TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

**Chalk 43-51 carried Regt HQ & Service Co
513th PIR**

Chalk 55 44-77541 Undamaged

Chalk 56 44-77527 Missing Ship—A/C 1st seen heading SW toward Rhine SW of DZ at 1016 hours, 24 March '45. Right wing and gas tanks afire, flames lapping into starboard jump door. Co-pilot bailed out SW of DZ. returned to B-54, 26 Mar '45; Navigator Bailed out SW DB. Returned to B-54, 26 Mar '45; Crew Chief, bailed out over Hamminkein (sic). Returned B-54, 26 Mar '45. Radio Operator Sgt. Hyry bailed out shortly after troops were dropped, followed by Sgt. Morris. Lt. LeVan bailed out after right turn had been made, followed by Capt. Ketchum. Lt. Sarrett was coming through cockpit by Navigators table enroute to jump door when Capt Ketchum jumped. One



This is C-46 # 44-77530, Chalk number 13 on its way to Germany to drop paratroopers of the 513th Airborne Regiment of the 17th Airborne.. "She started out as a spare aircraft but replaced A/C No 44-77556, The pilot, Capt. Scott, made two passes at DZ but Paratroopers could not jump due to too many gliders in the air and smoke. Four jumped west of Rhine, one passed out and another wounded didn't jump. NOTE UNDER UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE: Unusual courage and devotion to duty was shown by Cpt. Scott when he made two passes to try to get his troops on the DZ"

The following tabulation provides a resume of the battle damage as a Result of "VARSITY" Operations:

	<u>61st</u>	<u>313th</u>	<u>314th</u>	<u>315th</u>	<u>316th</u>
Type A/C	C-47	C-46	C-47	C-47	C-47
No. of A/C participating	80	72	80	81	81
No. of A/C lost	1	20	1	13	4
No. of A/C damaged	28	37	12	42	45
No. of A/C Inoperational after mission	17	28	6	31	39
No. of A/C operational after mission	62	24	73	37	38
No. of A/C turned over to Service Group for repairs	2	16	4	17	26

paratrooper, believed to be dead, was reported still in aircraft when Capt Ketchum and Lt. LeVan Jumped.

Chalk Spare No. 57 44-77517 Small arms hole in right Cargo Compartment up thru cockpit.

Chalk 58 44-77653 Two small arms holes; right wheel nacelle door; right wing nacelle fairing. Replaced 44-77597 after blowing tire during taxiing into position at station B-54.

Chalk 59 44-77519 Left engine out and right engine in trouble. Crash landed in open field after left engine shot out and right engine failed. Landed near Blerich. Plane had suffered over 200 small arms hits; large flak hole fuselage of right jump door; flak hole left side; flak hole front of vertical stabilizer. Right engine, hit in

Chalk 62 44-77595 Ship destroyed. Wreckage of A/C reported found in DZ Area by Wing Investigators with bodies of paratroopers and crew aboard. Plane observed to power dive short of DZ, exploded on contact. Unconfirmed reports by investigators say plane wreckage identified with bodies of paratroopers and crew aboard. Eleven of the 36th paratroopers were able to jump before the aircraft crashed.

induction system, was pulling only 30 inches before failing. Crew picked up 25 March '45 by Major Keller and returned to base from Y-55. .

Chalk 60 44-77603 Many holes —small arms fire. Left aileron control severed by small arms fire; wheel ineffective when turned to right. Small arms hits right rear tank; right center section between nacelle and fuselage. Trailing edge left nacelle, right elevator trim tab and rudder; light flak hit right nacelle door. Plane brought back to B-54 and landed by use of excess left aileron trim tab. Hydraulic system out and aircraft could not be taxied after landing.

Chalk 61 44-77576 Small hole near left wing tip.

"The information now available discloses that your son was aboard an aircraft (C-46) which was hit by flak over enemy territory near Wesel, Germany. The plane received three direct hits and on the third time went into a nose dive. On one side the passengers were jumbled around and unable to maintain any control of themselves, and as a result blocked the door and were unable to jump. Only a few were actually able to clear the plane and consequently survive."

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSONNEL WERE PASSENGERS ABOARD C-46 #44-77595, OF THE 513th PARATROOPER INFANTRY REGIMENT, 17th A/B DIVISION

Total Number Passengers: 35
Total Number Casualties: 24
Total Number Survivors: 11

Quote from the Individual Deceased Personnel File for T/Sgt Homer Lundine, crew chief on 44-77959

Chalk 63 44-77656 Front window shattered by small arms fire; flak hit in hydraulic system under cockpit.; hit in vertical stabilizer; shell thru jump door, exploded in roof; elevator trim tabs inoperative. One hole in vertical stabilizer 3 feet by one; 15 inch flak hole in nose between para-packs. Left wing flaps punctured by small arms fire. Landed near Y-32. Landed without brakes; gear cranked down by hand.

Chalk 64 44-77580 Three holes in right inboard flap, and small arms hole in vertical stabilizer.

Chalk 65 44-77540 Undamaged.

Chalk 66 44-77571 Undamaged

Chalk 67 44-77572 Undamaged

Chalk 68 44-77544 *Two small arms hole in right wing. Replaced C-46 D, 44-77535, after cowl flaps cylinder blew out and developed hydraulic leak prior to takeoff.*

Chalk 69 44-77539 *One small arms hole thru left wing gas tank near gas cap.*

Chalk 70 44-77566 *Undamaged.*

Chalk 71 44-77600 *Two flak holes in left wing, one hole 5 ft. by 3 ft., another 1 foot in diameter hit in left propeller blade. Small arms fire left gas tank; foot hole horizontal stabilizer; one in tail wheel nacelle. Plane in Category AC. Radio Operator wounded, shrapnel wound in left thigh LWA. Sgt Raidy wounded over DZ by exploding flak. No 1 paratrooper hit in stomach prior to jump but pushed over board. Pilot landed A/C at A-92 because of gas leakage and general instability of A/C. Crew returned to Station B-54, 25 Mar '45. Sgt Raidy hospitalized in Belgium (St. Trond) released from hospital and returned to base 7 April '45.*

Chalk 72 44-77581 *Ship destroyed. A/C disabled by enemy ground fire—Flaps stuck between 1/2 to 1/4 down. A/C apparently hit in nose, flames observed in pilots compartment.*

Crew missing in Action except Sgt. Gardner who returned to B-54, 28 Mar '45. He reported bailing out east of Rhine SW of DZ. When he jumped, Lt. Weiser and Sgt. Wolfe were leaving front section of plane and heading toward the jump door. Lt. Higgins who had not been wearing a parachute, was fastening one on. Lt Blendinger was still in cockpit and apparently setting A/C on automatic pilot. Sgt Gardner saw nothing of plane after he had jumped.

Summary: Out of seventy-two aircraft 48 returned to the home airfield. Five aircraft made emergency landings at other airfields. 20 aircraft crashed due to enemy ground fire and 14 of these crashes are attributed to gasoline or hydraulic fires. Of the 48 that returned to the home field, 33 suffered battle damage. 21 paratroopers and nine para-bundles were returned, three para-bundles were lost enroute to DZ.

Lt. Col Filer's C-47 on take-off for the invasion of Germany. Note the men standing on the side of the runway.

—Richard Chancellor Collection





WHERE IS THAT BEAUTIFUL FORMATION?

On the 24 March 1945 the Group's S-2 Officer wrote the following:

...During the long wait for the returning C-46's, personnel were almost jubilant; every indication pointed to a completely successful mission; for it had been skillfully planned, and all indications pointed toward what might be called a 'milk run' mission, without losses and with perfect results.

At 1106 hours, the first C-46 circled the field alone, to land, and a little later there were other ships. The beautiful formations of planes with which the 313th Troop Carrier Group traditionally returned from a mission, where were they? The flak-holes in the wings—no 'milk run' mission this!

During the afternoon the grim story began to unfold. From a tactical standpoint the mission was the most successful ever flown by this Group. But the rest—is tragic.

Used for the first time in combat, the C-46 is magnificent for dropping troops and supplies. It is also a splendid target! Flying at a low altitude and at almost stalling speed, the C-46s, with their maze of intricate hydraulic lines, and great flat gas tanks in the wings, were targets impossible to miss. Many of our C-46s were aflame before they ever reached the Drop Zone. YET, THEY FLEW IN AND DROPPED THEIR TROOPS!

The final score: Twenty C-46s of seventy-three were completely destroyed, and of the remaining aircraft there were only fifteen that returned undamaged.

Personnel: Lieutenant Colonel FILER, Commanding Officer is missing believed to have been killed when his flaming C-46 crash landed. One officer, a navigator, is known to have been killed, twenty-nine personnel are missing, and seventeen have been wounded. And so "VARSITY" ended."

The following revealing post combat report was given by pilot, 2nd Lt. Wesley M Kolbe, 61st T. C. Squadron, 314th T.C. Group. Flying C-47 radio call letter "J" call sign "Jig", further brought home the point that once a Serial has left a Drop or Landing Zone they return as a Group, but not for the C-46s:

"At a position between two of our check points 'VEGA' and 'KINGSTON' about fifty miles from LZ "N" where we were to release our gliders I observed C-46 type aircraft straggling in groups of twos and threes – and sometimes singly – away from the battle zone. At this time, I started to 'Sweat;' gathering from the manner in which these aircraft straggled out that they must have caught hell."

"VARSITY" for the 313th TCG was considered a success. The success of a mission was determined by completing the objective and in this case they did just that. Acts of heroism were not lacking when crew after crew, having their planes hit,

continued to the DZ to drop the Thirteeners. Nineteen of the seventy-two C-46s were downed by enemy fire. As many as 43 crew members bailed out and 29 to 30 were listed as missing in action by the end of the day.

The after action reports also revealed that although the 313th was supposed to drop on DZ X the smoke and confusion of the battle caused the 313th to drop the 513th on LZ-N. This mistake did have a fortuitous outcome as the 513th were able to clear LZ-N of enemy ground troops as gliders stated to come in otherwise the glider may well have had a hotter reception on landing.

The 52nd TC Wing report had this to say of the disproportionate loss of the C-46 when compared to the C-47:

There is evidence that the comparatively high losses in C-46 aircraft can be directly attributed to the design and construction of the wing tank installations. Leaks in the wing tanks result in fuel travelling along the inside of the wing toward the fuselage. The possibility of fire spreading is therefore considerably increased. It is definitely known that of the twenty ships that were lost, 14 of them were destroyed by fire originating in the gas tanks. (B0985 1520)



After review of the VARSITY operation the IX Troop Carrier Command mandated that the C-46 was not to ever again be used in combat. According to the IX Troop Carrier Command report on Varsity the final tabulation disclosed the highly disproportionate loss suffered by the C-46's of the 313th TCG. It was determined to be a design fault whereas the hydraulic and oil lines ran on the outside under the belly of the plane as well as the flat gas tanks in the wings causing it to be vulnerable in flak and small arms fire more so than its counterpart, the C-47. Ironically, this Group of C-46 aircraft dropped 2,049 paratroops,

almost as many as the entire 53rd Wing, and 125,764 pounds of equipment and supplies, almost half the quantity hauled by each of the 52nd and 53rd Wings combined. Their delivery of supplies and paratroopers was due to the determination of the pilots and crew of the 313th. This Groups' ground and air crews did the impossible; receiving a new aircraft, readied this aircraft for combat, trained the men to fly her, and moved the entire Group to the continent all within two months. The Group received the, well-deserved, Presidential Unit Citation in April 1945.

¹ No 21 School of Technical Training, RAF Burtonwood was known as Base Air Depot 1 and was probably the biggest USAAF base in the UK and is where some of the 313th men were sent for training on the P&W R2800 engines

²The prescribed time would have resulted in the last load of paratroopers being dropped at 1021 hour. Three aircraft that had either engine, tire or hydraulic issues had their loads transferred at the last minute to stand-by aircraft.

Sources:

Air Force Historical Research Agency B0233

Air Force Historical Research Agency B0223

Air Force Historical Research Agency (B0285 page 1520)

Fenelon, James. *Four Hours of Fury: The Untold Story of World War II's Largest Airborne Invasion and the Final Push into Nazi Germany*. 1st ed., New York, Scribner, 2019.

313th Headquarters, Letter. 22 Apr; r 45. Chancellor's collection

Rehse A. E. After Action Report. U. S. Army Air Force. National Archives. Chancellor's collection

U. S. National Archives. Individual Deceased Personnel File for T/Sgt Homer Lundine. Chancellor collection.



Gwartney, Carl, Glider Pilot. Photo Collection of Army Signal Corps and Army Air Corp Photos. Collection now resides at the San Diego Air & Space Museum. Lt. Gwartney was in the 29th Troop Carrier Squadron, 313th TC Group, 52nd TC Wing. On Sept. 18th Flew a glider into Holland and was on the line with the 82nd Airborne until the 23rd of September.

OPERATIONS

Memorial Day 2022 [Burial locations](#) link

The Cemetery list for the Glider Pilots and Troop Carrier men in our database was sent out on our Facebook page for those visiting their locale cemeteries. Thank you to those who sent photos on memorial day through our Facebook page:

Marcia Ehorn visited
Fort Snelling National Cemetery
Hennepin, MN.

Honored Vernon B. JENSEN,
(1912 - 1944) KIA Normandy,
82nd Troop Carrier Squadron,
436th TC Group.



Chris Jella
visited
Northern
Nevada
Veterans
Memorial
Cemetery,
Reno, NV.
Honored



Keith Eames JONES, (1915-2005) 29th
Troop Carrier Squadron, 313th TC Group



Bob Arnold I honor this WW11
glider pilot today and every
day,
FO Robert W. Arnold, my Dad.
87 TC Squadron/438th TC

JOAN ABRAHAMSEN Gives Commendation

Greene County honors 'a true American hero'

May 22, 2022 Andrea Macko/Porcupine Soup



CATSKILL—Local veterans and dignitaries joined members of the Phillips family at the Historic Catskill Point on Saturday to salute a true American hero.

United States Army Air Force Staff Sergeant Rudolph Phillips of East Durham was posthumously honored at this year's Greene County Honor a Vet Memorial Ceremony. The event is held annually on Armed Forces Day.

A WWII veteran, Phillips spent more than a year in one of Nazi Germany's most notorious prisoner-of-war camps...

Joan Abrahamson, vice chair of the National WWII Glider Pilot Committee, and Maureen Murphy, secretary of Greene County NY Region 13 Blue Star Mothers, gave special presentations, as did Judge Malone of the Northeast USA Vietnam Veterans Reunion Association.

Joan printed a commendation in memory of Staff Sergeant Phillips and framed it to present to the family along with the challenge coin. Joan said, "It was one of the largest memorial ceremonies I have attended."
Excellent work, Joan!

TWO EVENTS COLLIDING WITH HISTORY

Jean Michel Soldi's work with families and his continuing promotion of the Glider Pilot History

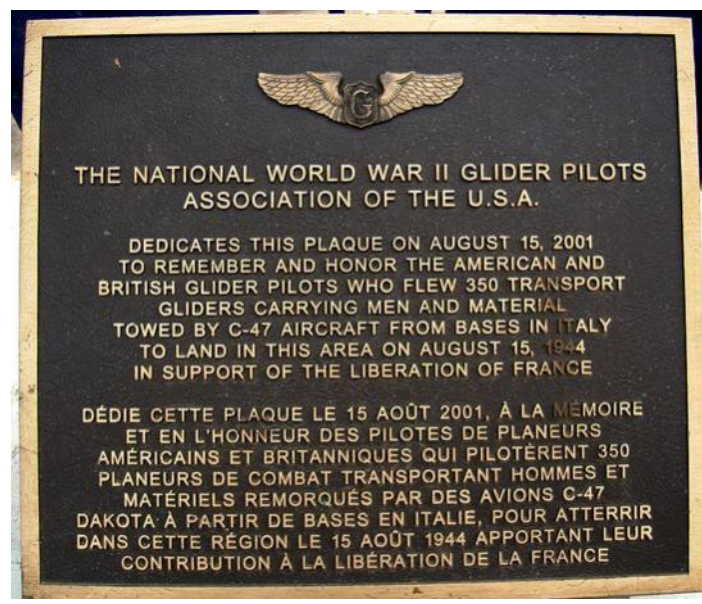
The glider pilots' association has for years been gifted with members from Europe who honor our history. Three of our European members, however, go further than just honoring our veterans. Each one, Hans den Brok (Netherlands), Philippe Esvelin (France), and Jean Michel Soldi (France), take their personal time out of work to meet with our visiting U.S. families of our veteran members. They drive them all over the Landing zones showing them Command posts, aid stations, prisoner cages etc. On the 23rd of May, Jean Michel met with Cindy Merrick, whose father, Jack Merrick, flew a glider in the invasion/liberation of Southern France. A tour had been arranged. However, we are ahead of our story. There are two facets to this story that coalesce into one event. So to tell the story we need to go back to September 2021 when Jean Michel discovered Franck Dugas from Les Arcs, a 12th century hill town city near landing zone O. Mr. Dugas was creating a CG-4A Glider model on the scale of 1/10. For Franck this was recovery therapy from cancer. JM posted photos on our Facebook page of Franck's progress on the glider from September through the end of April. Many of you followed and

gave encouraging comments on Franck's progress. As time went on Franck decided he would gift the Glider to the City of Les Arcs sometime in mid May 2022, when the city honors the end of WWII.

You may remember back in the [Spring, 2019](#), when JM wrote an article about finding Jack Merrick's helmet in an old barn. *"It was originally found in August 1944 when Pierrot, a young 12 year old French boy from a little village of southern France, was playing after school in the gliders that had landed in vineyards for Operation Dragoon on the 15th of August. ... playing like a real glider pilot; it would be best to have a helmet and that's what the 12 year old boy found in one of these gliders."*

After the article came out JM made contact with Jack's daughter, Cindy Bryant.

Go forward to May 2022, Cindy and her husband George were traveling to Southern France to follow in her father's War history. With his vast knowledge of the Southern France invasion JM offered to meet with and tour the war area with Cindy, her husband George and two of their traveling friends. He would be able to show Cindy



the Zone her father, Jack, landed and the places Jack would have traveled.

JM picked the group up at 9 AM. A good friend, Philippe Arakelian, surprised them by arriving with his WWII military jeep and volunteered to drive them on the tour. Of course, not all would fit so JM followed with his own car. The first stop was to a high point east of Landing Zone “O” and east of the city of LaMotte. From this point they could see landing and drop zones, as well as the landing beaches. Then they had a stop on the way back to Le Mitran Memorial. In 2001 this plaque, on the high position, dedicating the remembrance and honor of the American and British Glider Pilots was placed by the National WWII Glider pilots Association. They also visited the Airborne division Headquarters Command Post of General Robert Frederick, who commanded the 1st Special Service Force of the 1st Allied Airborne Task Force, and the



Germany Prisoners POW area. Black and White photo Hans den Brok Collection. Color photo taken by Jean Michel Soldi

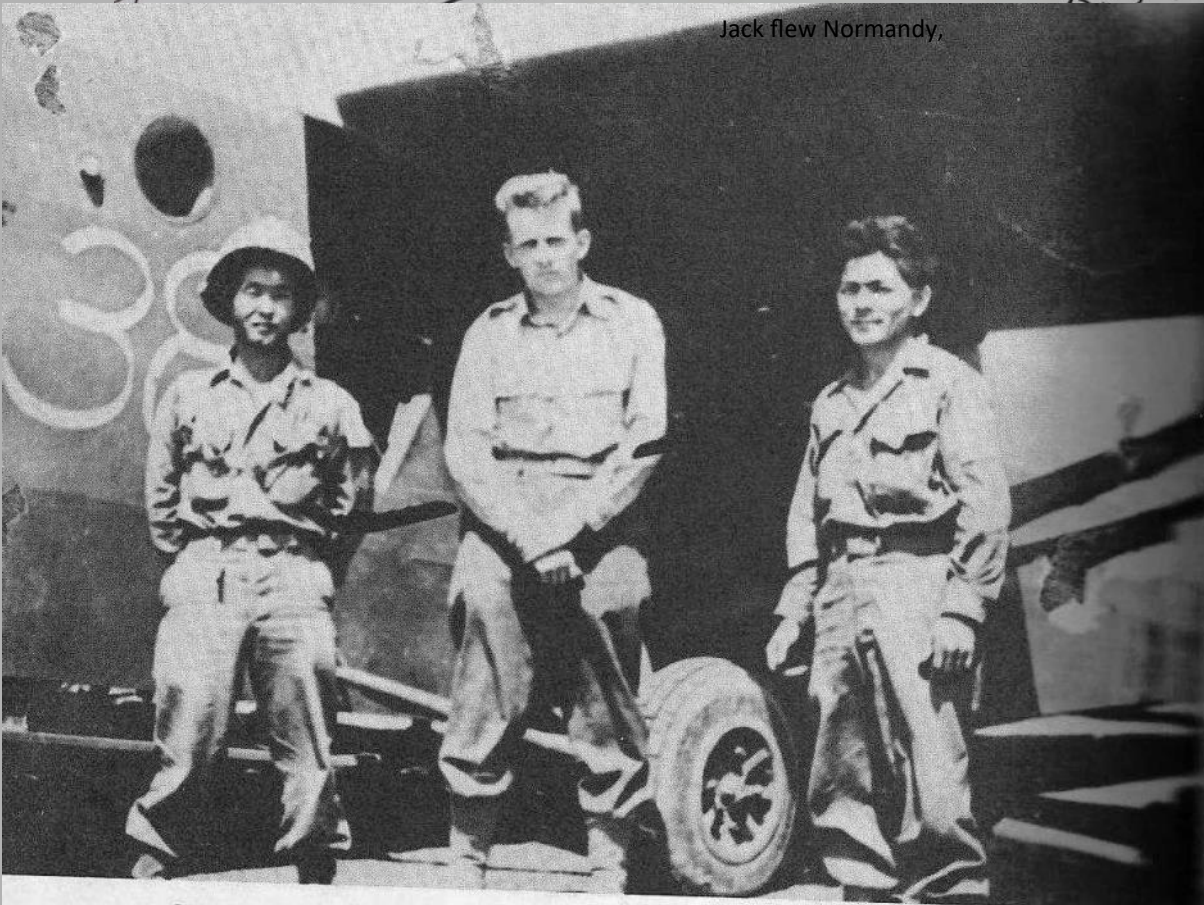
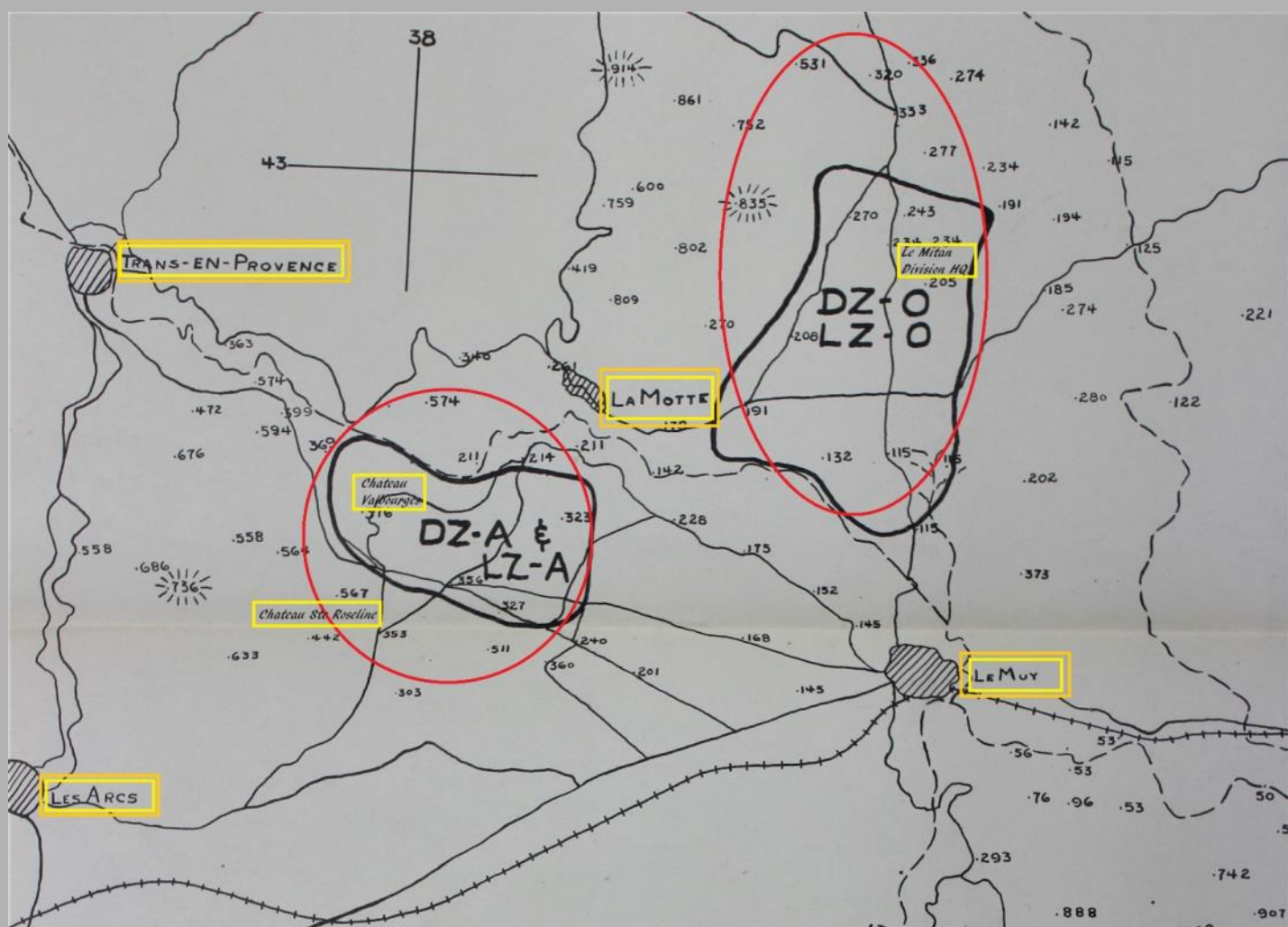
45th Infantry Division. They received a warm welcome for the local people here.

From here the tour went to the area where the Germany Prisoners were held, the POW cage. They had lunch; very good hamburgers.

They drove to Landing Zone A. Where Jack landed and where the young boy found Jack's flak helmet. After Landing Zone "A," they stopped at Château Valbourges,

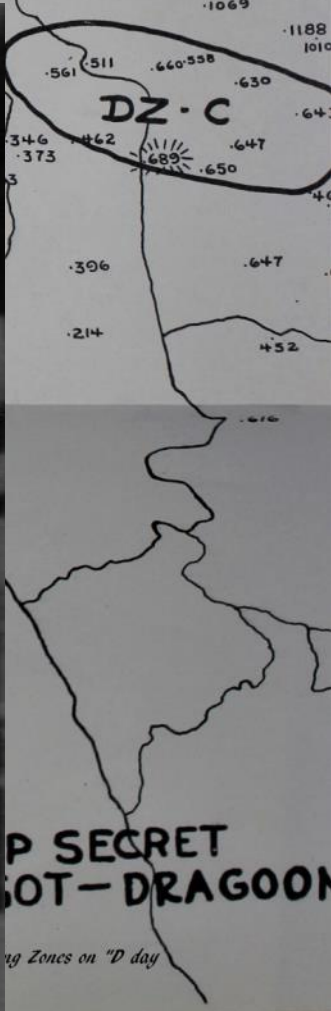


Jerome Schelley Collection



Jack flew Normandy,

Grosetto, Italy, August 14, 1944. F.O. Jack R. Merrick (centre) with two members of the famed 442nd (Japanese-American) Infantry Regiment that were his passengers on D-Day of Operation Dragoon. Jack R. Merrick



TOP SECRET
NOT-DRAGON

Landing Zones on "D day"

Above: Visiting the winery at Château Sainte Roseline. This was the 517th parachute regiment Headquarters. The church across the street was the field hospital for Glider Pilots and glider riders. Many were injured in landing.

**Back, George, Tommy and Kay Bryant
Front: Cindy Bryant and Philippe Arakelian**

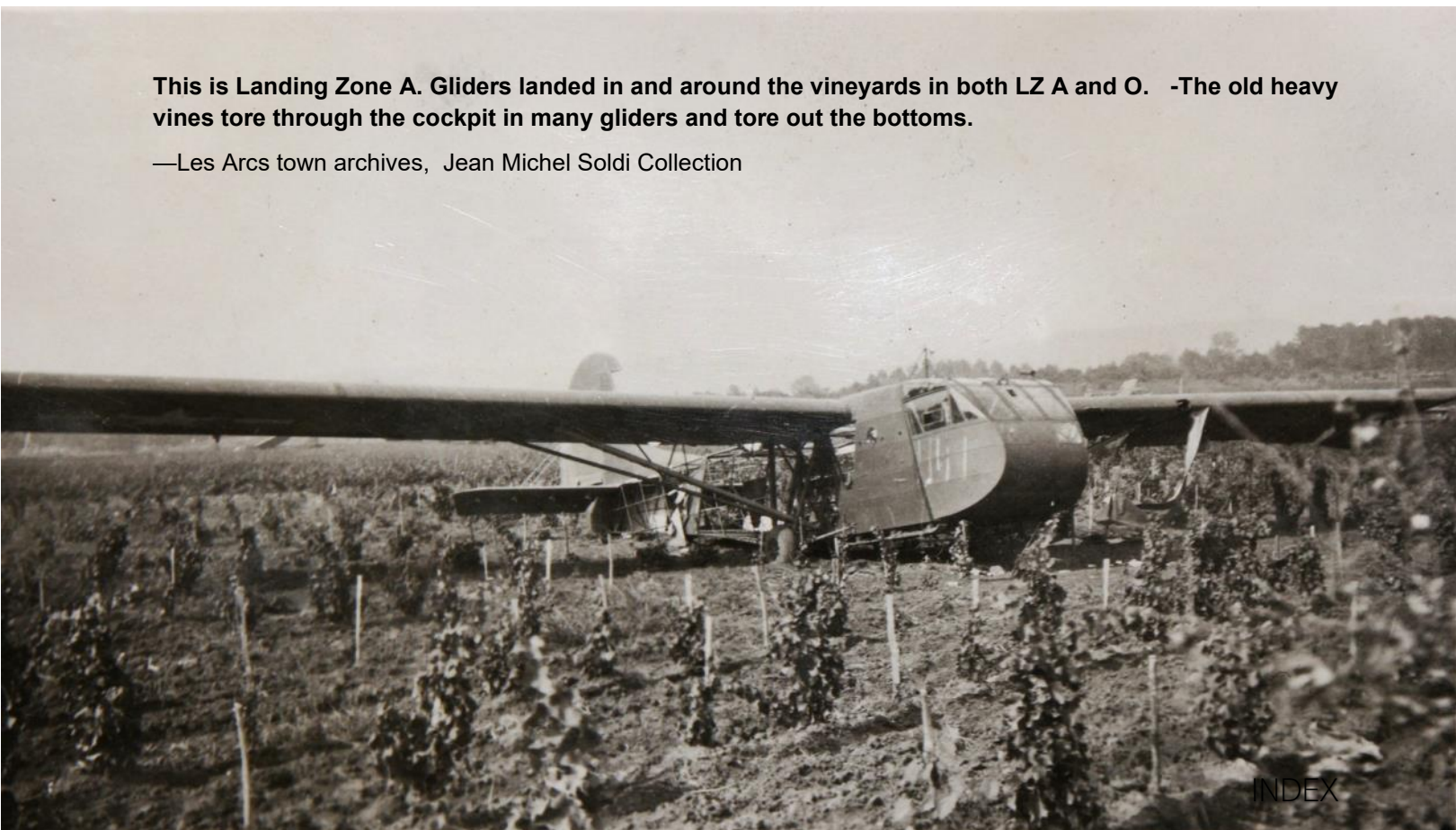


and then château Ste Roseline in Les Arcs. These two châteaux had vineyards and the only area large enough to land the number of gliders needed in the invasion for that area. This is where many of the gliders were damaged upon landing. It was not understood

that old vines were very strong and would tear open the glider as it landed. Most avoided the actual vines but the LZ was crowded and some had to result in landing within the vines.

This is Landing Zone A. Gliders landed in and around the vineyards in both LZ A and O. -The old heavy vines tore through the cockpit in many gliders and tore out the bottoms.

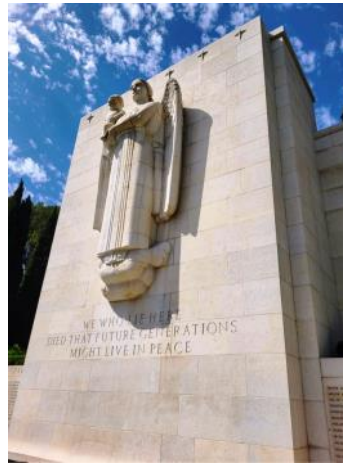
—Les Arcs town archives, Jean Michel Soldi Collection



The last stop of the invasion of Southern France tour was at the Rhone American Cemetery where flags were placed.

The entourage then went to meet the mayor of Les Arcs, Nathalie Gonzales, at town hall. Cindy was surprised by a display of her fathers helmet and Franck Dugas's model of the CG4A. At this time Jean Michel Soldi, representing the Committee, presented a Plaque to Mr. Franck Dugas as a commemoration from our National WWII Glider Pilots Committee for his model and his honoring of the American Glider Pilots of WWII. JM asked Cindy to give our Challenge Coin with our seal to the Mayor.

A very special connection was made between Mr. Dugas and Cindy as they found that not only did Franck build models but that Jack Merrick as a child built model airplanes that he entered into the local fair.





Franck Dugas' glider is on display along with a display of Jack Merrick's helmet, photo and flack jacket. Franck is proudly standing by the Glider he built and Cindy is holding her father's helmet. .



From left to right:
Adrian Soldi, Jean Michele Soldi, Cindy and George Bryant, Mr. and Mrs. Franck Dugas and Philippe Arakelian.

HONORING OUR TROOP CARRIER MEMBERS

FRANK T BRANDON

CURTIS R. CAMERON

BILL S CHEOLAS

ERNEST E DUTCHER

JOHN H GEIST

JAMES O HAMMERSMITH

PHILIP R HOWLAND

FRED H LUNDE

JAMES W MAGEE

JOHN JOSEPH MASON

EUGENE E MENKING

JUDSON W. PITTAM

LAWRENCE ALDEN SIDLER

ROGER W SMITH

JACK W TEMPLIN

WILLIAM WEAVER

MARSHALL W. WILLIAMS

JAMES R WINNIE

MISSIONS

THANK YOU TO THOSE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE CONTACTED THE LBS RESEARCH TEAM TO PARTNER ON RESEARCHING WWII TROOP CARRIER HISTORY DURING THIS QUARTER.



Cody Lange, grandson, 2ND LT DAN W HOFFPAUIR

Steve Jesus, son, JOSEPH PETER JESUS / DE JESUS

Amanda Strickfaden, Cemetery Tour Volunteer, 2ND LT DOUGLAS C BLOOMFIELD

George Marshall, grandson, F/O JACK W LIPSCOMBE

Larynn Whitaker Meyers , granddaughter, F/O LELAND L WHITAKER

Brad Tibby Wilcox Gold, daughter, F/O RALPH IRVIN WILCOX

Cullen Lutz Truman Speights, was grandmother's nephew, of F/O TRUMAN DEROME SPEIGHTS

Marilyn Gahm, daughter-in-law, of 2nd Lt CLARENCE CLIFTON GAHM

Laurie Froemke, great-niece of F/O HOWARD LANGDON PFEFFER

Randall Muncy Lt. Col USAF (Ret) 94 FTS Commander 1995

Joan de Lorenzi, niece of F/O JOHN ALBERT DE LORENZI

Terry Hirsch researcher of F/O KENNETH B HENKEL

Susan Gibson researcher- British Glider Pilot Regiment, 2nd Lt EDWARD JAMES HAMEL

Rev. Jefferson Halet, researcher F/O JAMES PERCY REMINGTON, JR.

Thomas DePaul, grandson, F/O JAMES WOODWARD BARNES

Dave Atilla, son-in-law 2nd Lt EDWARD JAMES HAMEL

Jim Calams, nephew F/O CHRIST KALAMATAS

TROOP CARRIER MOVEMENT

JOIN OUR COMMITTEE AND HELP PRESERVE TROOP CARRIER
AND COMBAT GLIDER HISTORY



DONATE TO THE SILENT WINGS MUSEUM FOUNDATION

ON THE CALENDAR

Upcoming missions:

NORMANDY

June 6-7, 1944

LA LONDE

June 10-13, 1944

LUZON

June 23, 1945

SICILY

July 9 & 13, 1943

SOUTHERN FRANCE

July 15, 1944

HOLLAND

Sept 17 - 26, 1944

BASTOGNE

December 23-27, 1944

BURMA

March 5, 1944

REMAGEN

March 22, 45

RHINE CROSSING

March 24, 1945



Caption: *Francis Parks and paratrooper, southern France.* Glider pilot Jerome Schelley who took this photo was nine gliders ahead of Flight Officer Francis Parks and Parks' copilot Calvin Simpson. He took the photo shortly after their landing. —Jerome Schelley Photo.

Note the damage done to the nose by the vines.

COVER PHOTO: C-46 testing parapack flight. Photo taken before the 24th or March. - National Archives Photo