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313TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP
GLIDER PILOTS IN COMBAT

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HISTORIAN'S NOTE: The following chronicle is, word for word, the story of the Glider Pilots, 313th Troop Carrier Group, who played their first major role in combat on the 18th of September, 1944. The Landing Zone referred to below was located near Nijmegen, Holland. The 'Group Leader', occasionally mentioned, is Captain Elgin D. Andross, who compiled the facts shown. And though very little has been said of the courage and the skill with which the entire mission was accomplished, it may be recorded here that the Glider Pilots of this Group undertook a dangerous and difficult task, and performed it in a manner reflecting the highest credit. Here, then, is the story:

"Following is the story of the actions of the glider pilots of the 313th Troop Carrier Group who flew in Serials A38 and A48 on D plus 1 in the operation "Market".

"On D plus 1 the 313th Troop Carrier Group took off from Station 484, assembled in echelon to the right, two squadrons abreast; making a formation of four columns echeloned to the right, 29th on left, 49th on right in A38; 48th on left, 47th on right in A48, and flew to the LZ "N". As the approach was made, the two columns split so that both squadrons on cutting could make left hand approaches. On arrival, the number one glider out and began a 360° approach. The panel "T" and green marker were not visible until the downwind leg was made. Then it was observed that the flight path of the formation was directly over said aids. Three fields in line, with a small field adjoining on the windward side were picked as the landing area of the Group. The number one glider in A38 overshot so as to land in the small field and establish a normal flight path for the remainder of formation A38. The remainder of the formation with one or two exceptions landed in the three fields into the wind, fanning out in two semi-circles as had been practiced.

"Formation A48 arrived a few minutes later. The pattern was made so as to land in fields approximately one-half mile away from landing area of A38. The approach was made for a 90° pattern in order to land into the wind, however, some gliders did not follow the leader and landed downwind, but the field picked was one of the longest in the LZ. In the whole formation only two gliders were observed to land with excess speed resulting in bad accidents with one pilot being injured. No airborne were injured in either of these accidents.

Only a few gliders were damaged in landing and all during the landings on D plus 1 the LZ was under heavy artillery fire, mortar and small arms fire. Only one Glider pilot was killed by this fire, 2nd Lt. John (NMI) Van Sicklen, of Headquarters. A few were wounded, and the airborne had some casualties.

From the time of landing until D plus 3, when the Group was



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finally assembled, most of the pilots were picking up supplies, guarding prisoners of war, directing traffic and helping out in any way possible. (The order for assembling as a Group was not given out until late on D plus 2). Strafing by ME 109's and FW 190's became so common that many asked where the Allied Air Force was.

"At 2000 hours, the Group Leader was alerted to assemble at the CP with the other Group Leaders. They were told then that they were the division reserves and that they were to take positions East of Mook on DZ "N" with the 506th paratroopers. They assembled and hiked five miles to be in position by 0300 hours, as an attack was expected in the area at dawn. Reading from left to right; "I" Company, "C" company, "313th T. C. Gp.", "B" Company and "A" Company with their CP in Mook. The Group was lined from left to right; 49th Squadron, 48th Squadron, 29th Squadron, 47th Squadron. (Contact was never made with the airborne on the right flank). Enemy patrols and snipers were continually infiltrating through the woods on our right flank. Shelling with overhead bursts, mortar and small arms fire was continual. The 313th position was even fired upon by flak guns. One flak gun pinned down the 47th outpost for one whole day until dark, when contact was made. Rocket guns, called "Screaming Mimis", were brought to bear at one period. The morning of D plus 4 the Group was again alerted for an expected attack. A continuous shelling of their position took place on D plus 5 from 0001 until 0900, giving the impression of an impending attack. It must be noted that they dug in so well that no casualties resulted from this experience. On D plus 6, at 1400 hours, they were relieved by other Glider Pilots from the 50th and 53rd Wings. The enemy noted this movement and shelled the area accordingly. During this stay in the front lines, the 61st Group had 27 men at this Group's immediate reserve. In their rear, that is. On D plus 5 several of these men were used to fill in gaps in the lines. All moved out on D plus 6.

"The Glider Pilots moved back to a German barracks area two miles in rear of the lines, and stayed there for the night of D plus 6: the 71 members of the 313th, 27 of the 61st, approximately 30 members of the 316th, and stray Glider Pilots from the 50th and 53rd Wings.

"On D plus 7 a British convoy picked this Group up and moved them nearer the Corps Headquarters. Here an American convoy of 17 SQM vehicles picked them up and they started for Brussels.

"South of Veghel on D plus 7, the convoy was ambushed by the Germans. A British convoy of 22 vehicles and several motorbikes were completely destroyed with heavy casualties to their personnel. The QM personnel took cover in the ditches and abandoned their vehicles. Upon seeing the British trucks in flames and knowing that the sparks and flames would jump to the U. S. convoy, members of the 313th Group made a gap between the convoys. When three tanks that were sent up to drive the enemy back were destroyed, and upon noting the complete chaos that reigned, the Group CO decided to try to save the convoy.



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Glider Pilots unhooked all the trailers and pushed them into the ditches. (This was necessary as the road was narrow and deep drainage ditches were on both sides). Next, the trucks had to be turned around and then driven out. All this was going on under heavy small arms fire. Three trucks were destroyed later and all had some bullet holes in them. As one Glider Pilot put it, "I never drove a truck before, but I can certainly learn". He did. An interesting sidelight on how heavy the enemy fire was is this statement, "The leaves were falling off the trees like a bright Autumn day, and it wasn't fall yet". After the trucks were moved, the Group started to move slowly back to the town of Veghel. Rear guard action was maintained.

"At all times during this action several Glider Pilots distinguished themselves by their devotion to duty and complete disregard to their own personal safety in order to save government equipment and protect the other members present. Some of these men were unable to withdraw until after dark.

"F/O William A. Crehan, 29th Squadron, and F/O Kenneth L. Frank, 29th Squadron were missing, and several wounded were the casualties from this engagement; very light in view of the enemy strength and the complete surprise advantage they had. Why the Group didn't have more than 50% casualties will never be known or understood. The enemy was at all times less than 100 yards away and were completely covered by the hedge-rows. As official statements show, the enemy had some of their best troops in this operation.

"The Group moved back to the town of Veghel where quarters were fixed up in a barn. Some of the boys were so tired that they moved into a pig-shed to lie on the straw and said "Move over, sow; I'm going to bed". Another Glider Pilot, after a horse had eaten part of his straw pillow, shouted, "Get the hell out of here, this is my pillow". The town was under artillery fire, and as the road was still blocked, the Group moved back to the town of Uden on D plus 8. The Group was put up by the Dutch underground here for one night. The next day, late in the afternoon, on D plus 9, the road was opened but still under artillery fire. It was passable so the Group proceeded to the town of Bourg Leopold where they stayed the night in a British camp. Here they had the first two hot meals of their stay in Holland. On the way out, three churchill tanks and one German tank were in mortal combat on the left side of the road less than 50 yards away as the convoy passed. Traffic had to keep on the move.

"On D plus 10, because of the lack of transportation, the Group was broken up into small units and told to proceed to Brussels and get a plane for the home base; they arrived late in the afternoon.

"Out of the 82 men who took off to fly the first mission, one F/O Thomas W. Browlee, 47th Squadron, was cut loose by the Airborne over England, a second F/O Joseph D. Randolph, 49th Squadron, had his tug plane shot down, one plane joined the wrong formation and landed at LZ "W", F/O James B. Hopkins; the rest made the LZ. One man was killed immediately after landing, three were wounded, four men were cut off after landing by the enemy and reported back to the home base early. The remaining 71 reported to CP and did a highly commendable job. At the road block, two became missing and two more wounded.



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"On this, the first combat mission for the 313th Glider Pilots, the Group, with the 27 members of the 61st Group supporting, were the first American Glider Pilots to be used in the front lines in the history of the United States Army; the first Group ever to organize as a team on the ground; and to function as an Infantry Company. The officers in charge were as follows:

Captain Elgin D. Andross	Commanding	313th T. C. Gp.
2nd Lt. William A. Crehan	Adjutant	
F/O Clarence D. Bean	Runner	
F/O Charles W. Konopa	Runner	
2nd Lt. Clinton L. Corwin	1st Platoon CO,	29th Sq.
1st Lt. William A. Ralston	Executive Officer & 2nd Platoon	CO, 47th Sq.
1st Lt. Matthew E. Harty	3rd Platoon CO,	48th Sq.
1st Lt. Max (NMI) Becker	4th Platoon Co,	49th Sq.

"Thus ends a commendable chapter of Troop Carrier".



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