

# WWII GLIDER PILOT'S BRIEFING

NATIONAL WWII GLIDER PILOTS COMMITTEE OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE  
SILENT WINGS MUSEUM FOUNDATION

Legacy of the World War II Glider Pilots Association

## **“BATTLE FOR BLUMENKAMP”**

The glider pilots and artillerymen that would be going into Blumenkamp would be on their own and Axis Sally was thoughtful enough to remind everyone on the evening of 23 March.

*“We know you’re coming tomorrow and we know where you’re coming – at Wesel. So don’t worry about your landing; flak will be so thick you can walk down from the sky.”*



## **INSIDE:**

COUNCIL REPORTS  
FINAL FLIGHT  
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY  
OUR BARBARA  
HONORING OUR VETERANS  
OPERATIONS  
MISSIONS  
TROOP CARRIER MOVEMENT

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spring 2021 General Order #2



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Thanking those families who have  
made requests during this quarter.  
Educating one family at a time.

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. To stop receiving publications contact Claudia Coggin at claudia.coggin@gmail.com

## NATIONAL CHAIR

I received many favorable comments on our new quarterly *Briefing* and promptly relayed them to our editor. I think our second volume, General Order #2, also upholds the new standard.

It is always great to have an article by a veteran. Researchers can compile the information and (hopefully) present it well, but there is no substitute for a story written by the person who was there. Marshall Williams has provided us with an excellent account of the processing of Aerial Reconnaissance Photos during the war. In doing so, he also reminds us that, for every soldier on the front, and every pilot in the sky, there are hundreds of support personnel that provide the logistical and intelligence support that make it possible for the front line troops to be successful. Thank you, Marshall!

I have taken some of my own advice and have written an article for this issue. It actually ties in with Marshall's work as much of my research that resulted in this article was spent finding and pouring over aerial photos. I came across this information while in the process of helping my wife, Patricia, research her father, F/O Lee Whitmire. Patricia had just about exhausted all her potential Troop Carrier resources, so I started researching the 'load'. What I discovered added a whole new dimension to our base of knowledge and I found it so compelling that I thought it needed to be shared.

Hans den Brok's article is from a little different perspective than we are used to seeing and adds valuable context about the effects of the war on both the troops and civilian populations.

And finally, a special thanks to Lt Colonel Chad "Sloth" Davis for his write up on Flight Simulation Program at the 94<sup>th</sup> FTS.

The more I learn, the more I am amazed. The Executive Council has been meeting monthly over Zoom for some time now and we are finding that when we meet more regularly, we can accomplish more.

Pursuant to input by the council we have begun taking minutes of our meetings, are establishing Operating Procedures for our organization and have taken the first steps in developing a Long Range Plan. We will keep you updated.

R Bruce Overman,  
National Chair

## NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT FOR YEAR 2020

Our bank balance as of 12/31/2020 was \$36,020.15. This is an increase of \$6,865.63 from our bank balance of \$29,154.52 at the end of 2019. Thus the Committee has a healthy financial reserve. Due to COVID 19 there was no reunion in 2020 so expenses were minimal.

We did pay \$5,035 to Silent Wings Museum for dues as per our agreement with them at \$25/member. We also paid \$2,212.5 to Silent Wings Museum Foundation as donations made by members to the Foundation by payments to the Committee.

We can now accept credit card and debit cards for payment.

Chuck Hobbs,  
National Treasurer

50TH ANNUAL REUNION  
WILL BE HELD IN LUBBOCK, TX

Dates are October 7,8,9, and 10, 2021  
The hotel has been confirmed  
MCM Eleganté Hotel & Suites  
Lubbock, TX

We are still on track for the 2021 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. I have reserved the MCM Eleganté Hotel in Lubbock for October.

Updates may be found at: [ww2gp.org/reunion](http://ww2gp.org/reunion) or on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WW2GliderPilots/>

Mary Roemer, National Reunion Chair

NATIONAL SECRETARY

We are mailing out 2020 “everlasting” Membership cards along with your dues notification. You will then use your unique membership Identification Number that is on your card, to renew on-line. As some of you have no doubt discovered, the postal system has been experiencing some problems, so using our on-line payment system is not only more secure, it saves a lot of time for our volunteer work staff.

**It is critical that your email and your home address are both correct in our system. If you have had a change in either home address or email, please send updates to me. Please put ADDRESS CHANGE in the subject line.**

Much of our communication is now through email. Since this goes out through mailChimp

(a mass mailing email system) it is important that you make sure that the address [nwwiigpa@gmail.com](mailto:nwwiigpa@gmail.com) and my address [claudia.coggin@gmail.com](mailto:claudia.coggin@gmail.com) and any of the other email addresses you use for contacting the council or the Silent Wings Museum are listed in your contacts. Many of the service providers are sending mass emails into spam. Please check your spam regularly to make sure that you have not missed a message from us.

We will still continue to mail to our veterans and members without email a printed copy of the newsletter. I would like to thank those neighbors and family members who have sent us their email addresses so they can receive the Briefing to print for their WWII Veteran friend or family member. I really appreciate the added help.

Claudia Coggin, National Secretary

## FROM THE NATIONAL WING COMMANDER'S DESK

Thank you Mr. James Winnie for the great write up on your history. That will make an excellent Briefing article! What a treasure of information.

\*\*\*\*\*

Kudos to Barbara Woods who recently found two more Bronze Star Medal Families. This is really hard work and it's like finding a needle in a haystack. All the easy ones we found early on but Barbara is not letting that stop her. After she locates the family the research team makes sure the record is updated and sends the historical details. We are very happy to see these families discover the war history of their WWII related veteran. As usual, with the Greatest Generation often not talking about the war, the family members usually know nothing about their involvement in the Battle of Burp Gun Corner.

\*\*\*\*\*

The highlight for me this quarter was having the opportunity to talk with Marshall Williams who was so gracious and generous to share his story and photos. I found this fascinating because of the research that both Bruce and I have done over the years and how aerial photography plays such a big part in WWII research.



In 2015 Bruce and I needed to research aerial photographs of the Wesel area. I contacted the archivist in the cartographic

department and found out that we needed to order the aerial film canisters from Kansas, where they are stored.

This photo shows the large “light box” with a reel at each end. You put the film on the



holding reel and carefully move it to the yellow handled take-up reel then roll to each frame. When we went back in 2018 the cartography department had added a high resolution large format scanner.

Thank you Mr. Williams for tying this all together for me.

\*\*\*\*\*

I also had the privilege this quarter of talking to Glider Pilot Mr Roger Smith's neighbor, Zach Cromley. Roger flew a glider into Southern France, 8<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 62<sup>nd</sup> Troop Carrier Group. Roger has lots of information for us and Zach will be documenting Roger's story. Wow! This is great! Watch for a future article.

\*\*\*\*\*

Laurinburg Maxton Airport is requesting

WWII history (photos and docs) about Laurinburg Maxton Army Air Field when it was a training field. I am working on sending Seth Hatchell, Historian at Laurinburg Maxton Airport, copies of my LM files. If you have anything for them contact Mr. Seth Hatchell, [shatchell@lmairport.com](mailto:shatchell@lmairport.com) , 910 844 5081. Please share with both LM and our research team.

Stay safe!

Patricia Overman, NWC

## LEON B SPENCER RESEARCH TEAM

REPORT JAN 31, 2021

The Research Team has started off the year with a bang. Since January 1st we have seventeen (17) requests from outside our organization for information on glider pilots. The requests came in from sons, daughters, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nephews and even a next-door neighbor of a glider pilot. We have also received requests for information from the Laurinburg-Maxton Historian and an independent researcher.

Internal to our team there has been significant work done by Patricia with numerous batch loads updating our database as well as responding to all of our requests. The amount of work Patricia does on the database is nothing short of incredible. In addition, Tom Martin continues his invaluable work searching for Draft Registration and Enlistment Records as well as Find-A-Grave and Ancestry.com information on almost every request we receive. Tom updates the on-line individual bio files with the information he locates. Tom found a record of 17 glider pilots who found their way back to the U.S. on a refrigerated cargo ship, MV Shooting Star, the story of which is worthy of a future article in the next Quarterly Briefing.

I want to thank Mark Vlahos as he continues to find missing glider pilots and information on known glider pilots as he continues his work on his next book. Also, thanks to Hans den Brok for continuing to monitor our email traffic daily and jumping in to offer much needed expertise and information on real-time searches we are involved. And Charlie Day, what can I say, so much detail information that he shares it is simply amazing.

The Research Team is active 7 days a week as families want to know about these incredible Glider Pilots we are devoted to. [Bless Them All](#)

Gary Stripling, LBSRT Project Manager



## OPERATIONS FOR THE 94<sup>TH</sup> FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON (94 FTS)

Happy New Year from Colorado!

For this quarter's update, I was asked to give a brief history of our glider simulator program and provide United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) cadets' perspectives of the squadron's simulator-related efforts. My hope is you are as motivated as I am by our glider simulator technologies and the feedback we have received. There is a little history and a few terms you need to know before we hear from the cadets. While the squadron possessed desktop computers with glider flight software, joysticks, and rudimentary electronic rudder pedals since 2004; these early training tools were inadequate for properly preparing students and instructors for live flight and motivating large numbers of people on the all-too-common weather days. However, this all changed when the 94 FTS procured its first version of a cockpit-

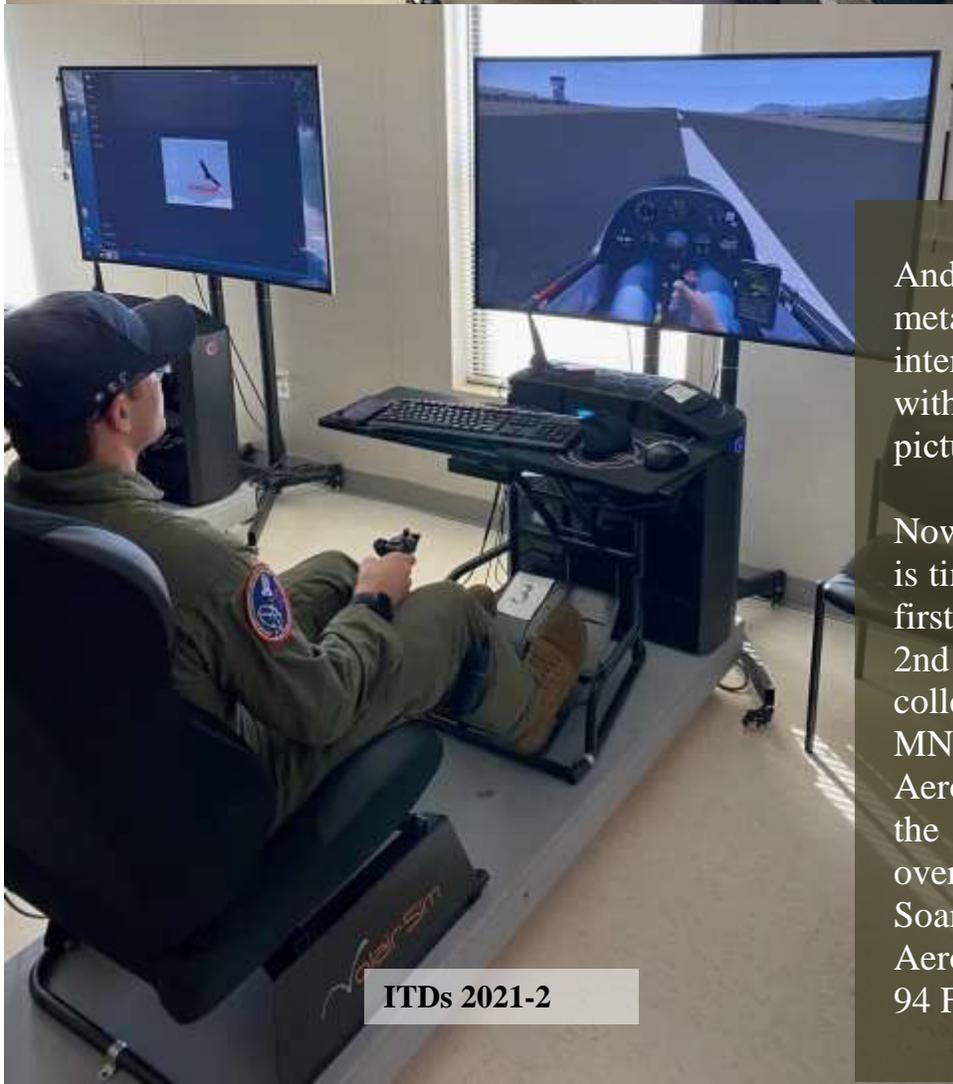
based simulator in 2017. This first simulator was referred to as an Enhanced Training Device, or ETD. The ETD's cockpit setup included a PVC frame, fixed rudder pedals and seat, more realistic control stick, and switches and other controls that better replicated the cockpit than a computer keyboard. The improvements continued into 2018; please see picture "ETDs 2018." Excited by the ETDs' immediate and positive impacts on training, the 94 FTS aggressively purchased commercial and homemade modifications over the next three years in attempts to create near live-flight-like experiences for our students and instructors.

Today, the squadron's glider simulators are referred to as Immersive Training Devices, or ITDs. These significantly more sophisticated devices rely on powerful computers, incredibly realistic glider flight software, and high-resolution graphics. Students and instructors are able to utilize large, wrap-around screens or virtual reality (VR) goggles as display options; please picture "VR Goggles" and World War II Glider Pilot's Briefing, Winter, Dec 2020, General Order #1 for a description of how VR goggles work.





ITDs 2021-1



ITDs 2021-2

And finally, the robustness of the ITDs' metal frame, high-end controls, and cockpit interfaces allow for significant utilization without major breakdowns. Please see pictures "ITDs 2021-1/2."

Now that I have provided a brief history, it is time for you to hear from the cadets. Our first perspective comes from USAFA Cadet 2nd Class (C2C, equivalent to a Junior in college) Maria Norman from Lakeville, MN. Maria is a member of the 94 FTS Aerobatics & Demonstration Team and is the Cadet Director of soaring. She oversees the Cadet 94 FTS Advanced Soaring Programs (includes 94 FTS Aerobatics and Demonstration Team and 94 FTS Sailplane Racing Team).

*“I’ve used the ITDs in every training upgrade I’ve completed in the 94th - whether it was learning to fly aerotow during the pre-solo phase of training or practicing aerobatic routines before competitions. The ITDs have allowed me to learn from mistakes while operating at ground speed zero. The devices have been incredibly useful for me as an instructor because I’m able to observe students from “outside the plane” and give them the opportunity to practice specific phases of flight multiple times in a row. Since I’ve been with the 94th, the ITD program has improved significantly. I have been particularly impressed with the new simulator training profiles involving emergency situations; these events have been incredibly eye opening as they allow IPs to visualize and repeatedly practice emergency procedures, rather than simply talking through them. For example, the inadvertent flight into IMC made me realize just how dangerous and disorienting that situation could be in a glider.”*

- C2C Maria Norman

Our second perspective comes from USAFA C2C Blake Harrison from Tucson, Arizona. Blake is our CIC of the ITDs.

*“The ITDs have improved drastically since I first flew them almost two years ago. Among the many improvements since then have been the enhanced digital imaging and mapping of USAFA, rearranging the digital cockpit to resemble that of our TG-16 glider, improving the layout of the cockpits, adding control stick*

*Extenders to make the simulator stick heights mirror the aircraft, and incorporating simulator flights into our training syllabi. Perhaps the most important changes in the simulators relate to the cadets’ attitudes towards them. More cadets go to the simulator building to practice flying than a year ago. As the ITDs have become better instruments for learning to fly, more and more cadets acknowledge them as being good tools for learning. So far, we have had overwhelmingly positive feedback about the simulators from our students. As these students become instructors, we will eventually have a corps of instructors who have trained on them and know just how useful they are...and at times, better than the instructors! One of the most useful things we can do with our simulators is pick something and practice it over and over again without using any flights. This is especially important for those things we can only do once per flight, like takeoffs and landings. If a student struggles with landings while on the flight line, he or she may have to fly a half a dozen flights in which the instructor may need to take the controls for every landing. In the ITDs, the student may begin a flight while on final approach to land and practice flying all of the way to the landing, over and over again, in a shorter amount of time, without using up any of their allotted live flights for training. While the simulators may not and never be a perfect approximation of live flying, they are a marvelous tool for introducing people to flying and instructing students.”*

C2C Blake Harrison

Our third and final perspective comes from USAFA C2C Garrett Dean from Colorado Springs, CO. Garrett is a member of the 94 FTS Sailplane Racing Team and has the record in our current facility for the longest ITD flight flown; he was able to thermal, race, and stay airborne for 2.5 hours in a simulated TG-16A glider aircraft.

*“Over the last year and a half, the ITDs have proven to be extremely beneficial in developing students’ soaring abilities. After only a few simulator flights, many students clearly understand the basic concepts associated with flying. I myself learned to fly aerotow as a student through an hour and a half of simulator training with an instructor. As an instructor, the recent improvements made to the simulators have only furthered our abilities to teach and learn. The VR goggles and improved stick and throttle controls provide a far more immersive and realistic experience than ever before.*

*Although the plastic simulators of the past were effective, they never replicated the feel of the real plane in the way the current ones do, and weren’t as effective as a result. Because of the improved realism, we have now started to integrate ITD training directly into the flight training syllabi for our students.*

*Additionally, instructors use the ITDs to hone their skills during periods of bad weather; they often practice and repeat emergency procedures in the simulators to ensure they’re always prepared for any*

*situation that could arise. And the ITDs are useful for far more than just the instruction of basic techniques. Members of the 94 FTS Aerobatic and Demonstration and Sailplane Racing Teams use the ITDs to learn and practice advanced maneuvers and techniques necessary for their competitions and demonstrations. While the Aerobatic and Demonstration Team uses them primarily to introduce and practice new maneuvers, the Sailplane Racing Team spends extensive time practicing cross-country soaring techniques (e.g., thermalling and ridge crossings) to prepare for their summer competitions. All in all, the simulators have proven to be an extremely valuable resource for the 94 FTS, with their recent upgrades only increasing their potential as training devices. I enjoy using them, and look forward to seeing how these and future changes impact student learning.”*

- C2C Garrett Dean

Although I could bring this update to a close, having accomplished what I was tasked to do, I would be remiss to not acknowledge some of the many impactful contributions our squadron team members have made regarding the evolution of our glider simulator program. In particular, I would like to specifically acknowledge the efforts of Major Ben Rushing, Captain Steve St. John, Lt Sam Spangler and Lt Jake Wilbers, who were instrumental in mapping USAFA’s property for VR goggle use, increasing the resolution of the software

graphics, building and modifying 15 simulator systems, and saving the U.S. government hundreds of thousands of dollars through their creativity, initiative, and leadership. And to our team of USAFA cadets, who are waiting to go to pilot training, thank you for taking ownership over the simulator program and its future; your leadership, drive, and efforts have and will continue to provide transformative experiences for those who follow you.



ETDs 2018

In closing, I just want to say I hope this update finds you healthy and surrounded by family and friends. We are truly thankful for all of those who have come before us and hope you are navigating today's challenges in the same manners you have so honorably demonstrated in the past.

Respectfully,  
Sloth

CHAD M. DAVIES, Lt Col, USAF  
Chief of Simulator Operations  
94 FTS, USAFA, CO



## NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S

Dear Friends,

The start of the new year 2021 was magical for me. It snowed in Texas!! ALL DAY LONG! It was so beautiful, peaceful and rare I could hardly believe it. I took about a million pictures of our six-inch snow fall. And to top it off it was my birthday! It was a glorious reminder of how beautiful our world is. Check out the pictures. Of course after



winter storm Uri hit, the snow was a reminder of the destructive power of nature.

The other ray of hope is the possibility of getting the vaccine for COVID sometime this spring. So far, the distribution is scattered, information on sites and availability of appointments is hard to find. But we are on several wait lists and trying to be patient. I am glad that here in Texas first responders and medical workers seem to be getting their vaccines easily. Teachers are also being vaccinated.

The executive committee is moving forward with plans for our reunion in October with confidence. It is exciting to have the reunion to look forward to after our disappointment of cancelation last year. It will be especially joyful to meet again after our enforced break.

I am really looking forward to spring this year. We have tomato plants coming up in trays under grow lights in the garage. We will get the garden plots ready soon after the last frost this month. As I prune the roses and crepe myrtles so that there will be new growth, it reminds me that I need to do some pruning in my life too. Blooms on these plants will only form on new wood. Where do I need to cut back so there is energy for new growth? Where do I want to grow? Some thoughts for meditation in spring.



Please keep those in long term care facilities in your prayers, their loneliness will continue until we can safely visit. Those whose jobs have been lost due to the virus continue to struggle to make ends meet. Give as generously as you can to your local food banks.

I think of our members often and know that you are in my prayers. Stay safe and blessings in this new year.

Susan Pinter  
Chaplain for the WWII Glider Pilot Committee

# FINAL FLIGHT



Danon JUDEVINE

8 March 1920 - 22 December 2020

ENTERED SERVICE: July 1, 1941  
TRAINING: SPAAF, Class 43-17, 11-26-43  
ETO -PARENT UNIT 84<sup>th</sup> TC Sqd. 437<sup>th</sup> TC Group  
COMBAT MISSIONS:  
SOUTHERN FRANCE (Dragoon, 15 Aug 1944)  
HOLLAND (16333, 18 September 1944)



*Take off time 12:37 Monday. Very good tow, arrived approximately 16:00. Good landing. Reported to Major Evans at C.P. Remained there two days. Guarded prisoners Wednesday Night. Thursday started for Brussels for evacuation. Saw two gliders cut over channel. Saw five C-47s shot down on our landing zone. Arrived here directly from Brussels.*

[MORE](#)

[OBITUARY](#)



George "Pete" BUCKLEY

April 17, 1925 - December 10, 2020

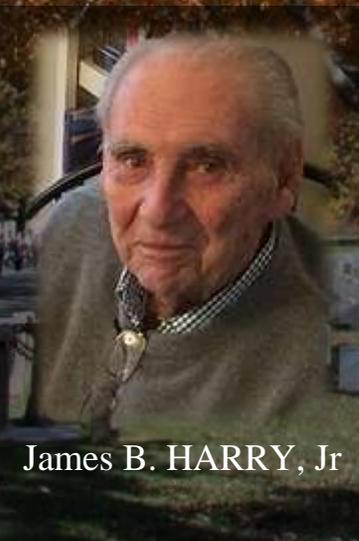
ENTERED SERVICE: December 10, 1941  
TRAINING; Fort Sumner, NM, Class 43-06, 04-17-43  
ETO -PARENT UNIT (Normandy, Holland) 74<sup>TH</sup> TC Sqd, 434<sup>th</sup> TC Group  
Detached Service UNIT (Rhine Crossing) 79<sup>th</sup> TC Sqd, 436<sup>th</sup> TC Group  
COMBAT MISSIONS:

NORMANDY (Chicago 6 June 1944)  
HOLLAND - (Market 19 September 1944) *lone pilot*  
RHINE CROSSING (Varsity 24 march 1945)

*I enlisted at age sixteen, on December 10, 1941 without telling my mother. All hell broke loose when she found out. But by then it was too late. I had to report to Fort Devens on the 24th of December.*

[MORE](#)

[OBITUARY](#)



James B. HARRY, Jr

October 29, 1920 - May 26, 2019

ENTERED SERVICE: 31 Mar 1942  
TRAINING; South Plains Army Air Field, Class 44-07, 06-15-44  
ETO -PARENT UNIT 99<sup>th</sup> TC Sqd, 441<sup>st</sup> TC Group Assigned to the 99<sup>th</sup> on Sept. 21, 1944.  
Early December sent to Dreux, France, to help prepare the troop movement of the 441<sup>st</sup> to the Continent.  
Began the process to return to the US with the 441<sup>st</sup> Group on June 24, 1945

[OBITUARY](#)

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November 9, 1919 - January 24, 2021

ENTERED SERVICE: June 26, 1942

TRAINING; South Plains Army Air Field, Class 44-07, 06-15-44

PARENT UNIT 92<sup>nd</sup> Squadron 439th Group 11/26/1943 to 2/25/44

Instructor TG-2 TG-6 29 Palms CA

Instructor TG-4 at Bergstrom field 807 ABU

AF reserve 10/13/1945 to 4/3/1962

Every once and awhile it is mentioned in a glider pilot's combat report to the Intelligence Officer, after having just returned from the landing zone, the importance of what he was taught in glider flight school. These comments referencing the glider flight instructors are always in conjunction with a lifesaving maneuver on landing under fire. *"Had my instructor not hammered into me the ability to do a slip, I would be dead today."* The training of going over and under electrical wires and landing within so many feet of an obstacle was a critical lifesaving training. All of these were taught by the AAF instructors. Many Pilot Instructors were valued and not sent into battle, however, they were in the cockpit with their imparted knowledge.

### OBITUARY

December 22, 1922 - June 4, 2020

ENTERED SERVICE: December 10, 1941

TRAINING; Dalhart Army Airfield, Dalhart, Texas, Class 43-3, 02-08-43

ETO -PARENT UNIT (Normandy, Holland) 73<sup>TH</sup> TC Sqd, 434<sup>th</sup> TC Group

Detached Service UNIT (Rhine Crossing) 78<sup>th</sup> TC Sqd, 435<sup>th</sup> TC Group

COMBAT MISSIONS:

NORMANDY (Chicago 6 June 1944)

HOLLAND - (Market 19 September 1944) *lone pilot*

RHINE CROSSING (Varsity 24 march 1945)

NORMANDY: F/O Treichak flew as Horsa glider pilot on the Keokuk Mission to Normandy, with F/O Doelger acting as co-pilot. Together they flew Horsa LF-894. Flying with chalk number 23. they carried a jeep with a 37mm gun and 40 rounds of ammunition, and six troopers of the 101st Airborne Division. The Keokuk mission was flown in the evening of June 6, and the gliders landed at 21.00 hours.

HOLLAND (September 1944)

The 434th flew gliders to Holland on the 18th and 19th and Flight Officer Treichak flew on 19 September, most likely in Serial A-72. Fourteen out of the 41 gliders in this serial failed to reach the landing zone. F/O Treichak was among those who made it to the LZ.

RHINE CROSSING (Varsity, 24 March 1945),

The flight was a double glider tow. Both glider, F/O Treichak and the glider flying near him, had to abort and landed in France



Richard J. ZAPP



Michael A. TREICHAK





John F GULBIN

May 7, 1921 - January 6, 2021

**ENTERED SERVICE:**

**TRAINING:** South Plains Army Air Field, Lubbock, Texas, Class 44-1, 02-01-1944

**ETO -PARENT UNIT:** (Holland) 47th TC Sqd, 313<sup>th</sup> TC Group

**COMBAT MISSIONS:**

**HOLLAND** - (23 September 1944) lone pilot

*Routine Flight from station 484 [Folkingham, England] until 12 minutes from LZ-O on course at which time enemy flak was observed coming out of woods to left of course. Nine minutes from LZ-O, Over Volkel tow rope was cut and windshield of glider shattered by enemy fire. A fragment of shell or glass caused a flesh wound in pilot's nose. Made right turn off course to avoid enemy gun positions on left. Flew southeast, made 180 degree turn landed in field near British tanks and three abandoned gliders. The nose of glider was ripped loose from main part of fuselage because of softness of ground. Two Airborne men and part of equipment spilled out of glider as nose flew up. PIC Pruett was injured when nose came down on his thigh, apparently breaking his leg. Picked up by British Lorry at Volkel and driven to Grave. 13 Airborne and myself proceeded to march to 325th Regiment Headquarters east of Groesbeek. Airborne men became attached to their organization stayed there the night and was told to make my way back by Reg. On Sunday Sept. 24, hitch hiked back to Brussels. Reported to local airport (B-56), took off but returned due to bad weather. Returned by C-47 from Brussels to Station 484 on Monday Sept. 25th.*

[OBITUARY](#)



Guy Joseph DeGENARO

November 20, 1921 - February 13, 2021

**TRAINING:** Victorville Army Air Field, Victorville CA, Class 43-4, 04-06-1943

**ETO -PARENT UNIT:** (Normandy, Holland) 90<sup>TH</sup> TC Sqd, 438<sup>th</sup> TC Group

**Detached Service UNIT:** (Rhine Crossing) 84<sup>th</sup> TC Sqd, 437<sup>th</sup> TC Group

**COMBAT MISSIONS:**

**NORMANDY** (Elmira 6 June 1944)

**HOLLAND** - (Market probably 18 September 1944) lone pilot

**RHINE CROSSING** (Varsity 24 march 1945)

**He flew troop-carrying gliders in three major airborne assault landings: Normandy on D-Day with the 82nd Airborne Division, Holland with the 101st Airborne Division and the Rhine River Crossing into Germany with the 17th Airborne Division.**

[MORE](#)

[OBITUARY](#)

Condolences to all the families for the loss of their loved ones and high flight from your brothers who soared with you through WWII

# FROM OUR GLIDER PILOTS

## MAIL CALL, MARCH 1976, SILENT WINGS Submitted by Richard S Kennedy in 1976

Dear Sir:

Have been looking at pictures from my album of the Wesel drop.

Would be nice to meet up with some of the old gang again. Has been a lot of years. My clippings from the Stars and Stripes of the Rhine crossings and the Flying Pipeline have certainly turned yellow with age and have about deteriorated away. Louisville, Lubbock, Laurinburg-Maxton, England, France, Holland, Germany seem like yesterday instead of thirty years ago.

Sincerely,  
Karl F Harold  
Poulsbo, Washington 1976

Karl included this Letter of Commendation written by his CO:

HEADQUARTERS  
44ST TROOP CARRIER GROUP  
APO 133, U. S. ARMY

SUBJECT: Commendation of Glider Pilots  
TO: All Members 441<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Group

I want all member of this Group to know and remember the story of the heroic contribution made by our Glider Pilots to the crossing of the Rhine River by the First Allied Airborne Army.

As we flew over the landing zone where our gliders released it was obvious to us in the cockpit of the lead "tug" that our gliders were going down through dense smoke and flaming farm buildings to land in too small and too crowded fields straight into the face of enemy machine gun and rifle fire. My feeling was that only by superb flying and great courage would our Glider Pilots ever land safely and be able to escape that hell hole.

Except for the four who were killed, two who are missing in action, and six who were wounded, all our Glider pilots have returned. Their reports show that all but one glider are known to have landed safely although no glider escaped damage from enemy fire. They fought with the airborne troops that day and night and helped escort 2,400 German prisoners to the Rhine River the following day.

These Glider Pilots proved themselves under the severest possible conditions to be the very finest pilots and soldiers. They have contributed a great page to the history of the 441<sup>st</sup> Group. Knowing this story I am certain that every man throughout the Group is as proud of our Glider Pilots as I am.

William H. Park Hill  
Lt. Col Air Corps  
Commanding

# PROCESSING THE AERIAL PHOTOS

BY: MARSHALL WILLIAMS



S/Sgt. Marshall Williams

## AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY DEVELOPMENT

High Altitude Aerial Reconnaissance was used extensively in WWII for pre mission planning and post mission damage assessment. Today, researchers use it extensively to augment understanding gleaned from files and firsthand accounts.

I started in the glider outfit. I wanted to fly and could not get into the power plane group so I transferred into the glider group and first learned to fly a power plane. Then I transferred into the glider outfit. I flew gliders but on a test flight I messed up a spin and that was not good so they invited me out. This was in 1943.



Photo courtesy of the Lowry Foundation

At the Lowry photography school, during its 57-year span, military personnel acquired technical skills to sustain Air Force operations through World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War and Vietnam.<sup>1</sup>



*Marshall W. Williams, U.S. Army, Photo School,  
Lowry Field, Denver, Colo. 1943*

That was when I went to the Lowry School of Photography in Denver, Colorado. The school provided instruction in still, motion, and aerial photography as well as film development. After graduating I wound up in England. I worked in the photo lab, where I developed the film that pilots took while flying over Europe.

We had four squadrons on the base, located 10 miles south of Oxford England.

I was assigned to:

14<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Squadron,  
7<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Group,  
8<sup>th</sup> Air force.

Our Group consisted of four Squadrons. Three squadrons, used P-38s. They took the guns out and put cameras in the cells where the guns had been. My

Squadron, however, used the British Spitfire.

The advantage of using the Spitfire was that the British cameras took twice as many photos as the American cameras. So a lot more photos were taken during a mission flying the Spitfire. When the plane landed from a reconnaissance mission the film was taken off the P-38s or the Spitfire immediately.

Due to the high altitude that the planes flew, 23,000 feet was the altitude for the high aerial photos, and the fact that the pilots had no heaters, the film became extremely cold and was difficult to handle. I developed the film just as it came out of the plane.

I would immediately take the film into the lab and put the film in water which warmed it up. The reason for the water bath was to unify the developing. The water on the film would facilitate the distribution of the chemicals so they flowed evenly over the film and no portion of the film would be developed more in one place than another. So, we just ran it through water first thing.

However, the first time we went to develop the film from the Spitfire we discovered the film did not fit on our tank reels. The film was too long and as it was wound onto the reel we eventually ran out of reel. So we had to cut the film in two, at some point in the strip of film. The British had 360 exposures whereas the P-38 had 180 exposures. Each exposure was 10 inches by 10 inches. We had a machine with a motor with a digital counter that we could hook the British film up to and run off so many feet until the count indicated 180 exposures then it would be cut. All of this was done in total

darkness and all the handling was in total darkness. So when we cut it we had no idea what exposure we were cutting into and inevitably we would cut a good photo. We had four side-by-side tanks used to process the film.

1. Water bath,
2. Developer to bring out the image,
3. Short stop, which stopped the development but did not fix the image.
4. Fixer that would permanently fix the image.

It wasn't until the film was put in the fixer tank where the last sodium thiosulphate and other chemicals would be dissolved that the film could be exposed to light. After fixing, it was taken out of the darkroom in the light and then run through water on the same reel. At this point, the film went to the dryer room where they used electric dryers to dry the film and where the film left my control. After it left our care it was taken to the intelligence HQ, which I am pretty sure was 8th Air Force Headquarters for the Intelligence Groups.

The film was printed as contact prints and a code indicating the film information was printed at the bottom of the print.

Headquarters was located in London.

Working with the British film was hazardous because, unlike the American film, the British film was nitrate based instead of acetate which the Americans used. The nitrate based film was highly flammable but the acetate was not. We had to make sure we were careful.

A Mark XI Spitfire of the 14th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, tail number PA944 assigned to Mount Farm, England, circa 1944. The Mark XI was a Mark IX Spitfire that had been modified for speed and loiter time. The Mark XI had its guns and armor removed and replaced with a more powerful engine and larger fuel tank. Pilots of the Mark XI took to the skies of war-torn Europe without weapons in order to take strategic photographs of German targets. These photographs allowed allied bombers to strike the most valuable enemy assets. (U.S. Air Force Photo)



*They took the guns out and put cameras in the cells where the guns had been. This training Photo shows film canisters for night reconnaissance*

Photo courtesy of the Lowry Foundation



Marshall Williams - England 1944

Each Air Force only had one photo reconnaissance group, the ninth had their own. I did develop film that showed gliders on the ground during Normandy and the discovery of Rommel's Asparagus [wooden pole obstacles emplaced to damage and injure gliders and airborne personnel].

It varied as to how often we developed film. I remember on D-day all the planes were gone and we worked all that day and all that night in the photo lab. They must have taken millions of exposures during that operation and we worked that entire time.

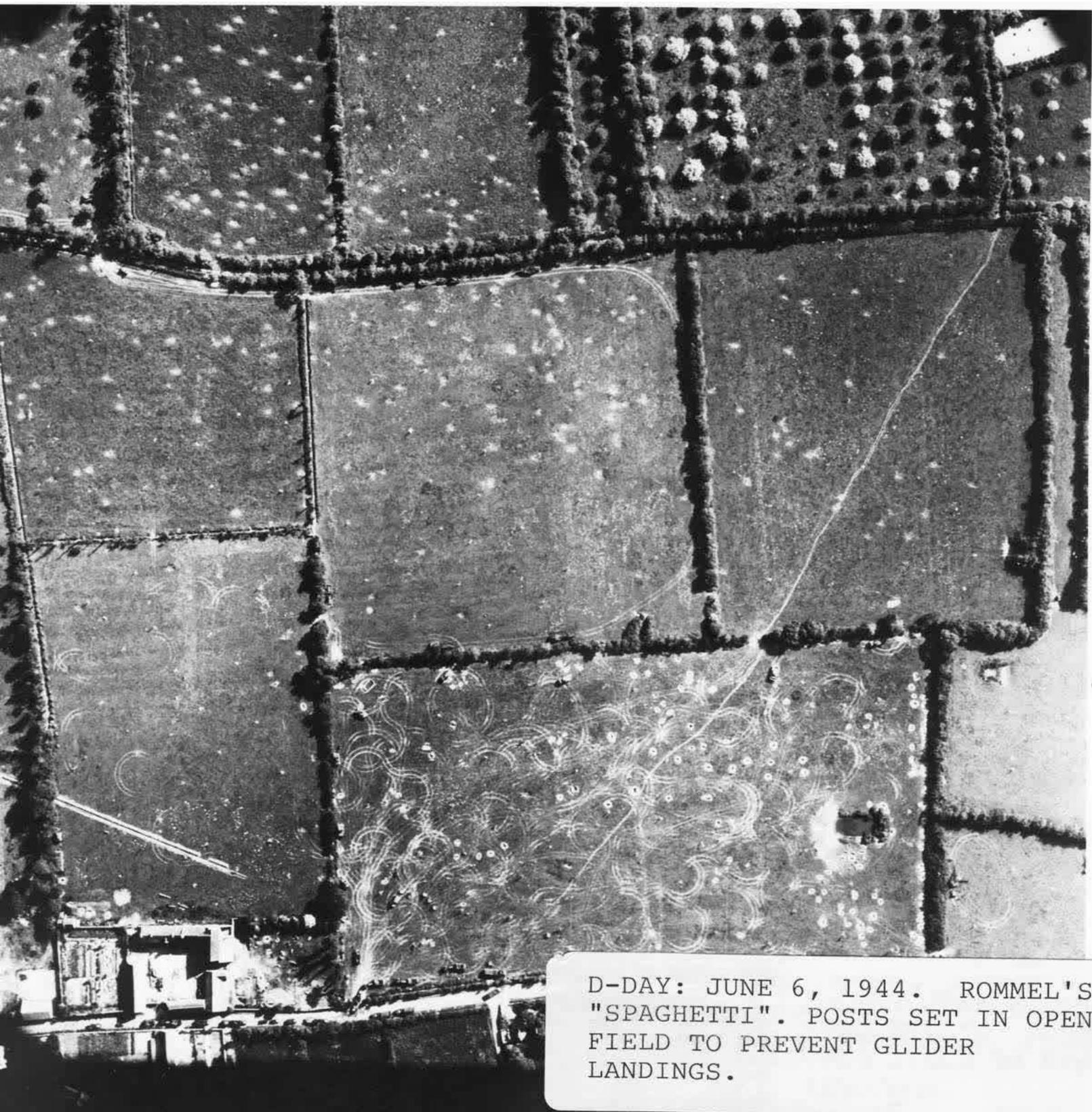
Normally, we ran three shifts to cover all hours. With the exception of D-Day, I usually only had to work one shift a day.

Our squadron lost pilots and planes. It was a hazardous job with no weapons to protect them. We lost about 60 pilots and planes in our photo Group from both ground and air enemy action. The planes went out on missions usually by themselves; one plane, one photo mission. Around Christmas, 1944, the Germans became so intent on shooting down our photo planes that we had to get help and it was the P-51 that they brought in to do the job. They flew above and alongside our planes. They were armed with machine guns to chase off enemy aircraft or shoot them down and eliminate the ground fire. The P-51 was our guardian angel.



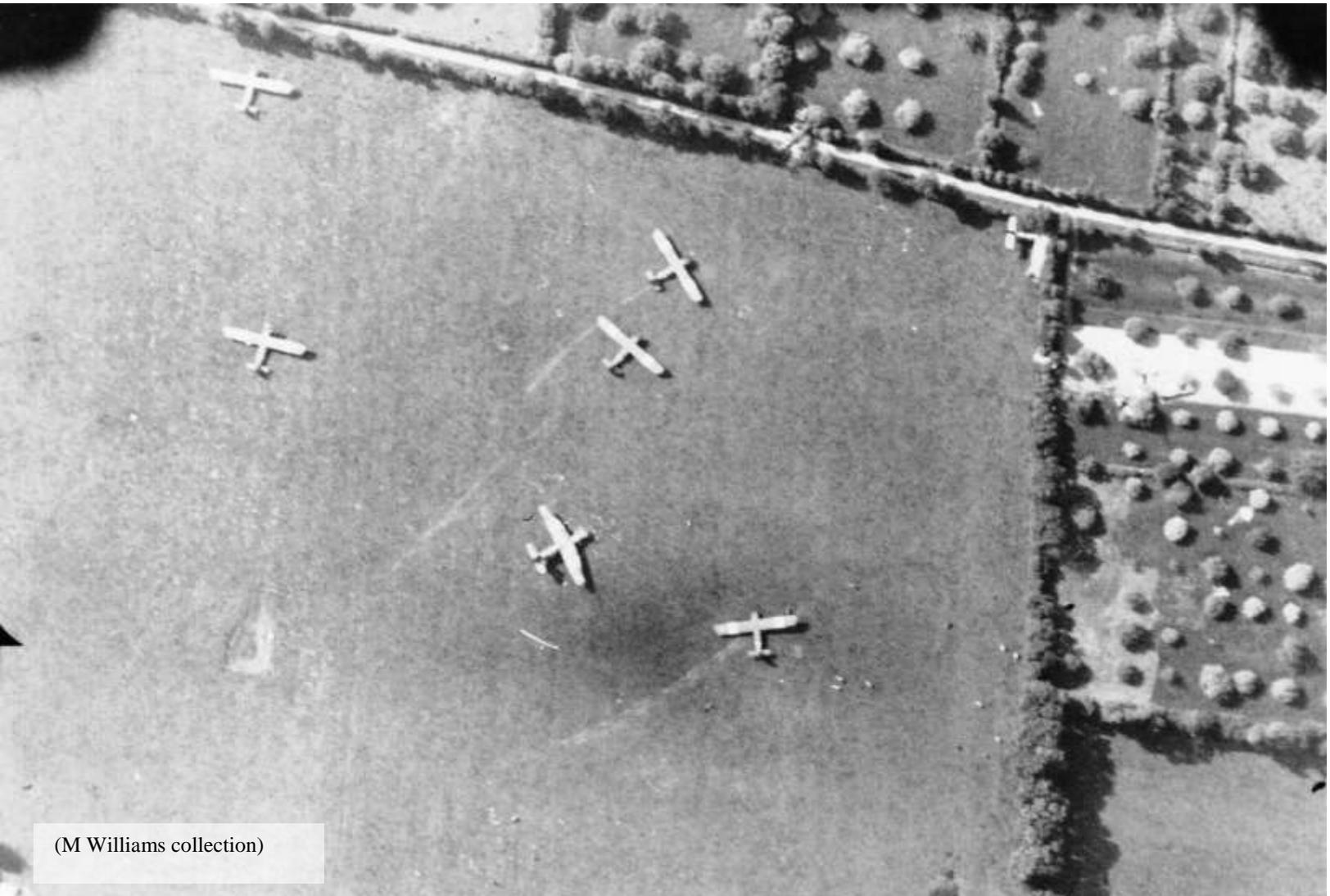
For the Normandy invasion the Seventh Reconnaissance Group received the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation.

Contact print from developed film strip, 7<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Group, 8<sup>th</sup> Air force.



D-DAY: JUNE 6, 1944. ROMMEL'S "SPAGHETTI". POSTS SET IN OPEN FIELD TO PREVENT GLIDER LANDINGS.

(M Williams collection)



(M Williams collection)

This is a photo from Marshall Williams' collection for the Normandy Operation. There are three items in this photo that would only be found together in LZ-E (CG-4As, Horsas, and parachutes (Can you find the parachute?). This particular field is located southeast of [Boutteville](#) the road at the top of the photo is the D464. The gliders are the 434<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group's gliders. They were the first gliders to land in Normandy flying the CG-4A gliders. They landed at 0400 hours carrying the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division glider infantry. In the second serial of the 434<sup>th</sup> TCG they again landed in LZ-E flying the Horsa gliders, and again carrying the 101<sup>st</sup> AB.

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# THE BATTLE FOR BLUMENKAMP

BY R. BRUCE OVERMAN

Early morning, March 24, 1945, 439<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group ready for take-off for the invasion of Germany. C-47s and CG-4A gliders, are marshalled for double tow. This serial in the photo is the 91<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron. Air Field # A-39, Chateaudun, France.

--USAF Photo -National Archives



Various aspects of Operation VARSITY, March 24, 1945, the last airborne operation of WWII, have been covered in previous newsletters, documented on our website, and have been the subject of several presentations at our reunions. There was another action in that same operation, however, that has not received much notice. That action was the struggle to overcome and secure the area in the extreme northwest corner of Landing Zone S (LZ-S) near a train station in an area known as Blumenkamp, a few miles north of the city of Wesel, Germany.

The main load for LZ-S was the 194<sup>th</sup> Combat Team (CT) of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. It consisted of the three battalions of the 194<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment (GIR),

the 681st Glider Field Artillery Battalion (GFAB) and elements of the 155th Airborne Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Tank (AAA) Battalion. Their objective was to secure three bridges over the Issel canal and hold them until the arrival of the forces crossing the Rhine River. The 194th CT would be delivered by gliders assigned to the 435th, 436th, and 437th Troop Carrier Groups (TCG), all under the command of the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing (TCW).

Gliders from the 439th TCG would also land in the northwest corner of LZ-S. This Group was part of the 50th TCW but for VARSITY they were temporarily placed under the operational control of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Wing. Unlike the three other groups that had landed in LZ-

S, they had no direct liaison with their nearest infantry support, the 194th CT. Once the 439<sup>th</sup> had delivered their load, their orders were to proceed to the center of LZ-S and provide perimeter security to the 681<sup>st</sup> GFAB. Those plans would change.

The load of the 439<sup>th</sup> was the 680th GFAB and they, too, were somewhat of an orphaned unit. They were listed as ‘General Support’ in the order of battle and remained under the operational command of Division Artillery, slated to land several miles to the north in LZ-N. On paper, they were also tasked to provide support to the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) and the 139th Airborne Engineers Battalion (AEB), both of which would also drop several miles to their north.

In essence, the glider pilots and artillerymen that would be going into Blumenkamp would be on their own.

Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery had been the architect of the successful Normandy invasion (as well as the failed Holland Operation, Market/Garden). He had massed his forces on the west bank of the Rhine just across from the city of Wesel in plain view. The Germans could see what was coming and were preparing to meet Montgomery’s troops with as much opposing force as they could muster. And lest there be any doubt that the German Army knew what was about to happen, Axis Sally was thoughtful enough to remind everyone on the evening of 23 March. *“We know you’re coming tomorrow and we know*

*know where you’re coming – at Wesel. So don’t worry about your landing; flak will be so thick you can walk down from the sky.”*

The airborne component of VARSITY would not be a stealth attack under the cover of darkness, nor would it be a quick and decisive surgical strike. VARSITY would be the military equivalent of hitting the objective with a blunt instrument. Multiple bombing missions, including one on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, had reduced Wesel to rubble. The British forces would generate smoke to partially cover their crossing of the Rhine, but its success was predicated entirely on simply overwhelming the enemy with superior numbers. Montgomery’s plan for utilizing the British 6th Airborne and American 17th Airborne Divisions was much the same.

Unlike every previous airborne operation in the European Theater, paratroopers would not float from the sky the night before to secure landing zones for gliders the following morning. Everything; paratroopers, glider riders, their support field artillery, medical facilities, signal corps, engineers, military police, would all land in broad daylight beginning at 1000 hours on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945. To Montgomery’s staff this might have all seemed very consistent with the overall plan. To the Airborne Troopers and the Troop Carrier crews that would be delivering them, it might have looked more like suicide.

As soon as the 439<sup>th</sup> gliders crossed the Rhine, they were hit with heavy Anti-

Aircraft fire. True to Axis Sally's promise, the flak was the heaviest any pilot had yet experienced. Several gliders were hit as they released from their tows and were destroyed before they landed. Other gliders were followed to the ground by fire from 20mm flak guns, machine guns and small arms. Not a single glider would land without being hit, many with devastating wounds to pilots and the artillery men they were carrying.

There was no 'front line'. The gliders were landing in the midst of farmhouses and a

series of trenches dug into the fields that all contained enemy soldiers. They were taking fire from every direction. The only saving grace was that, with more gliders landing all around them, the German forces were also thrown off balance.

At 1130 hours, Flight Officer (F/O) Noel Addy and 2nd Lt John Tolton piloted one of the first gliders into Blumenkamp. In his post mission report, Addy stated, 'Before I stopped rolling [I] started getting small arms fire from four or five houses surrounding [the] field.' One of the artillerymen in his



Wesel Germany, after bombing campaign in preparation for the invasion of Germany. USAF photo. U.S. National Archives

glider was critically wounded and another glider that landed immediately after his was also taking fire, killing three artillerymen and severely wounding the pilot. Addy knew that there would be more casualties if he didn't act. He and one of the artillerymen returned fire at the nearest house then rushed it, taking thirteen Volkssturm prisoners. Addy and Tolton then took two more regular German Army prisoners from another house.

As more gliders began to land, the German anti-aircraft batteries lowered their guns and began to target the now stationary gliders themselves. A little north of the train station at Blumenkamp, F/O Claude (Chuck) Berry and F/O Carroll Ray had touched down and were bringing their

glider to a stop. As they did so, F/O Berry noticed the barrel of a German artillery piece swinging their direction. "Boys," he said, looking over his shoulder at the artillerymen in the jeep behind him, "I'm not your C/O, but I suggest you get out of this glider NOW!" The instant they cleared, a round smashed into the glider, destroying it and the jeep.

The German gun batteries were wreaking considerable havoc, but as more gliders continued to land, 680th gun crews were scrambling to free their M3 105mm howitzers from the gliders and get them loaded, all while under withering small arms, machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. Normally used to lob their rounds in an arc, the artillery pieces were lowered and



Chuck Berry's Glider Peachie Pet 22.  
L4 is the squadron code for the 91<sup>st</sup> TC Sqd.  
(LTC Claude A Berry Family Collection)

began to take the German batteries under direct fire at intimately close range.

The glider transporting Major Dantes York was hit by a German artillery round as it was being unloaded, badly injuring two men. After attending to the wounded, Major York spotted Lt Albert Zimmerman who was readying his gun to take on the German battery. In what could only be described as a shootout with artillery pieces, the two sides began firing at each other. Lt Zimmerman's gun fired three rounds at the enemy position until a muzzle burst injured every man in his crew. Before the gun could be cleared it was destroyed by a direct hit from the German battery.

Remember Flight Officer Berry? He and his load were heading south to their respective assembly points when they came upon Lt Zimmerman's destroyed howitzer. The German battery was now being engaged by another 680th crew, commanded by Lt. Charles Price. The German battery was now

taking fire in their flank by another 680<sup>th</sup> crew. Meanwhile, a determined Major York was assembling men for a direct assault on the German position. One volunteer was eager to go but had no weapon.

*"Here,"* F/O Berry said, taking his 45 caliber pistol from his holster. *"Take this!"*

Minutes later, the entire twenty five man crew serving the German battery were either killed or captured and all guns destroyed.

Under conditions that might well have resulted in mass confusion, the men of the 680th, supported by the glider pilots that had landed them, quickly but deliberately went to work. The Commander of the 680th, Lt Colonel Paul Oswald, ignoring the enemy fire, urgently began directing jeeps to howitzers and trailers; knowing that to delay was to die.

Most pilots and loads were pinned down for some amount of time after they landed. But



680th GFAB firing mission, Operation Varsity  
(National Archives)



Perimeter Security at the 439th TCG Command Post.  
(Melvin Kammen collection.)

as various strong points began to be silenced, men that had been pinned down were now able to join the effort to clear additional houses, silencing even more enemy fire. Even so, men were continuing to be killed or wounded as they attempted to unload the gliders.

While the artillerymen were assembling their pieces in firing position, Captain Henry Hobbs, Glider Officer of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Squadron/439<sup>th</sup> TCG, began organizing glider pilots to begin some semblance of security around the immediate area selected for the Command Posts, Artillery Batteries and Aid Station. At 1630 the Group Glider Officer, Major Bernard Parks, arrived at the CP and took command of the pilots.

A 435th TCG glider piloted by Flight

Officers Otis Cook and Lee Whitmire had been delayed by a mishap shortly after takeoff and barely made it into the northwest corner of LZ-S, landing right in the midst of the action. They and their load immediately came under heavy small arms and machine gun fire from a nearby farm house and quickly evacuated the glider. PFC Harold Snyder, who had been sitting in the driver's seat of a jeep, bailed out of the emergency exit next to him and found himself between the source of the fire (farmhouse) and the object of fire (glider). With nothing to use for cover, he remembered trying to make himself as flat against the plowed ground as he could.

The farmhouse mentioned above just happened to be the one that had been selected as the Command Post (CP) for the

680<sup>th</sup> GFAB. Captain Thomas Magnier had a jeep and howitzer ready to go and Colonel Oswald directed him to take his future CP under fire. Several rounds of High Explosive (HE) later, white flags appeared in all the windows and the house was readied for new occupants

Meanwhile, a little to the north and west of the (now) 680th CP, another German stronghold was preventing Captain John Featherstone from moving his Battery A into position. Captain Featherstone maneuvered a howitzer to within 15 yards of the farmhouse and reduced it to the point that it could be overwhelmed by his artillerymen. Just as the strongpoint was quieted, a single shot was heard and Captain Featherstone fell to the ground. The sniper that had killed him was said to have been a 14 year old boy.

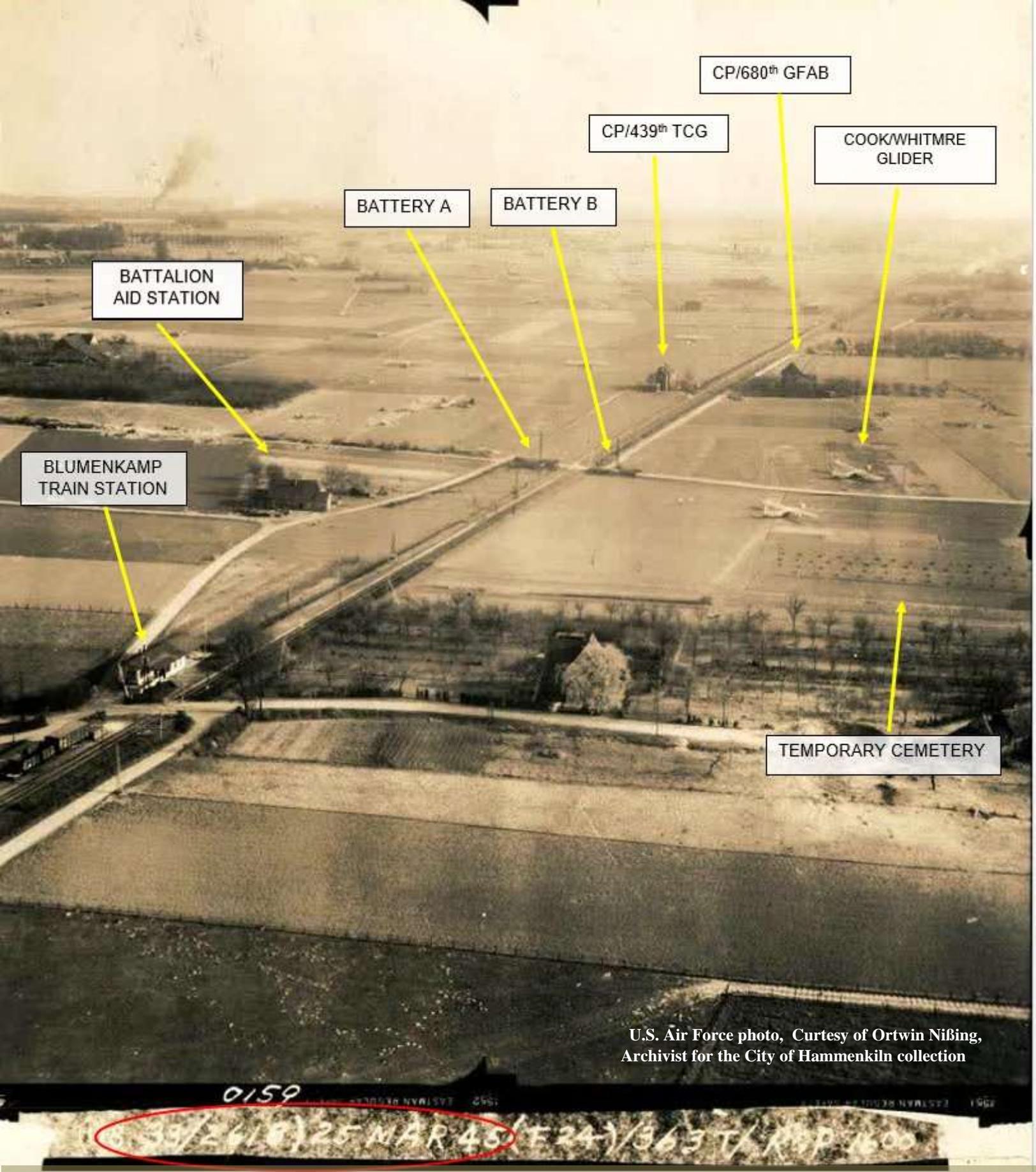
One by one the enemy strongholds were reduced but not without cost. Battery B's commander, Captain Jacob Stahl, was also killed while leading a team to clear houses of enemy soldiers.

The fighting had been intense, but by 1300, both the Command Post of the 680th and that of the 439th were operational. The Aid Station was manned and treating the wounded and Batteries A and B were in position with three guns each. Glider pilots formed the perimeter security.

Outside that small area, however, it was still a no man's land. Glider pilots and loads were still being held down by enemy fire

where they landed or being sniped at as they moved. Captain Edward Geiger, who would replace Captain Featherstone as the commander of Battery A, along with his two pilots and three other enlisted men, were attempting to transit from their landing location to the assembly area when they were approached by three German soldiers. A brief firefight ensued and, while they had solved the immediate problem of the three German soldiers, they now found themselves the object of more unwanted attention. They spent the entire night evading what Captain Geiger estimated to be a company sized force, before finally reaching the secure 680th perimeter early the next morning.

One other group of men also had an extended unplanned diversion. The glider piloted by F/O Cook and F/O Whitmire that had been taken under fire from the house that became the 680<sup>th</sup> CP had an important load. The commander of the 681<sup>st</sup> GFAB, Lt. Colonel Joseph Keating and his Operations Officer (S-3), Major Rex Light, had landed two miles north of their battalion's location. Around 1300 hours, when the smoke had cleared in the farmhouse, the Colonel, the Major and the two pilots contacted the 680<sup>th</sup> command to get their bearings. There they were joined by several more 681<sup>st</sup> artillerymen, and the entire group set out on foot for their destination. The group was immediately stopped by an MP who informed them that they could not proceed because their destination was not yet secure. Colonel Keating's response was direct.



CP/680<sup>th</sup> GFAB

CP/439<sup>th</sup> TCG

COOK/WHITMRE  
GLIDER

BATTERY A

BATTERY B

BATTALION  
AID STATION

BLUMENKAMP  
TRAIN STATION

TEMPORARY CEMETERY

U.S. Air Force photo, Courtesy of Ortwin Nißing,  
Archivist for the City of Hammenkiln collection

0159

639/2418) 25 MAR 45 (F24)/363 T/R/P 1600

[GOOGLE MAP](#)

[GOOGLE SATILLITE MAP](#)

*“That is where my battalion is, that is where I am going. Try and stop me!”*

The MP chose not to press the issue but, unfortunately, the German forces in the area saw things differently. Armed only with light shoulder weapons and service pistols when contact was made, the Americans opened fire. They were heavily outnumbered, however, and in short order, after expending all their ammunition, the entire group was taken prisoner.

By 1600 hours, 1st Battalion of the 194th had made contact with 680th and the area between the 680th and 681st GFABs was now secure. Nonetheless, Colonel Keating and Major Light would not make it to their CP until 1930 hours, six and a half hours after they had set out and three and a half hours after the area they had attempted to traverse had been cleared. When asked how they had escaped, F/O Whitmire replied that the German's had become so intent on avoiding the advancing Americans that they stopped paying attention to their prisoners and they were able to slip away. (Flight Officers Cook and Whitmire arrived at their CP and dug in just in time for the Battle of Burp Gun Corner.)

There were a few attempts by the enemy to penetrate the 439th perimeter that night, but they were all repelled. The following day saw sporadic sniper activity, as mop up actions continued. On the 26th of March the 680th 'land train', support forces that had crossed the Rhine by bridge, arrived and the 439th TCG was evacuated across the Rhine to return to their base. The day after that, the 680th was tasked to reinforce the 464th

Parachute Field Artillery Battalion (PFAB) as part of 'Group Brannigan' as the 17th A/B began its advance into the German heartland.

The battle at Blumenkamp had been brief but bloody. Nineteen artillerymen and ten glider pilots were killed in action on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. More would die later of wounds received on that day. Through it all, the glider pilots and artillerymen had demonstrated unswerving coolness under fire. Lt. Colonel Oswald, commander of the 680<sup>th</sup>, was awarded the Silver Star Medal for his actions that day. Captains Featherstone and Stahl were given the same award, posthumously.

After the close of the war, the 680th Glider Field Artillery Battalion received a Distinguished Unit Citation for "... extraordinary heroism, efficiency and achievement in action against the enemy during the assault crossing of the Rhine river near WESEL, GERMANY, on 24 March, 1945." Col Oswald was adamant that this citation applied to every person attached to that unit during the airborne assault phase, including the glider pilots. He said: *“They flew us into combat and participated in... clearing the enemy from the landing area, and augmenting our ground security. We looked to them to help us with the peripheral coverage for our gun positions until they could return to their units...”*

Two things stand out about this action. First is the fact that the American forces were considerably outnumbered as they began to land. Yet, instance after instance, small groups or even pairs of men engaged vastly superior numbers of the enemy and, in

almost every case, were successful. This might be partly attributed to the German forces knowing that the war was lost and no longer having the heart to fight. I believe, however, that it is more a reflection of training, leadership and determination that every man present found the courage to exhibit that day.

The second standout is that the above was accomplished not by battle seasoned infantrymen who might have considered this a typical day at the office. Rather, it was accomplished by artillerymen and glider

pilots previously untested in house to house fighting, and whose normal duties were usually conducted in a somewhat more secure environment.

The action around the train station at Blumenkamp on March 24th, 1945, is not recorded in history books. It is documented only in boxes of crumbling files at the National Archives. But to the men who fought there that day, and survived, it would never be forgotten.



Burned out glider, 439th TCG CP in background. ( Ortwin Nißing Collection )

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INDEX Photo Schmitthauskamp 28, Wesel, Germany, the former CP of the 439th TCG today. Photo by R B Overman

# OUR BARBARA

BY HANS DEN BROK



*Our  
Barbara*

**77<sup>th</sup>  
TROOP  
CARRIER  
SQUADRON**



FRANCIS & TAYLOR & CO., LTD., PRINTERS, NEWBURY.

April 18, 1945 the 77<sup>th</sup> TCS Public Relations section received booklets describing their visit with Barbara and her brother. These were put on sale for 15 French franc per copy. Profits were sent to Barbara.

During my 20 years of research I have seen a lot of names in files, and seen a lot of photos. Sometimes the names of people in a photo are unknown. In other cases, the details of what is in the photo is known. Or, we think these are known. A lot of times I wondered about the details. Who were these men in the photos? One particular person I was interested in was a war orphan who was adopted by the 77<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron. Her name was Barbara and the 77<sup>th</sup> sure made some publicity in adopting her. I wanted to learn more. I wondered what had happened to her, her brother, and their parents, and what became of her and her brother after she was adopted in February 1945 by the 77<sup>th</sup> TCS.

**From the book *A History Of The 77Th Troop Carrier Squadron 435Th TCG In WWII* by Pappy Rawlins:**

*February 1945 was highlighted by three very special occasions for the Squadron. In early February, the officers and men of the 77th Squadron adopted a British War Orphan under the auspices of the Stars & Stripes Orphan Fund and the American Red Cross. Members of the squadron contributed 100 Pounds Sterling toward a 5-year Trust Fund for the orphan, who turned out to be Barbara P, a pretty blue-eyed blonde of seven.*

*On the 13th of February, Barbara, in company with her 9 year old brother, Ronald, visited the squadron at Welford Park. She was royally entertained, even to receiving a taxi ride around the perimeter by Captain MacDonald and crews. To the absence of Major Rawlins, host honors were done by Major Blaisdell. Barbara ate the*

*noon meal in the enlisted men's mess hall, with the section chiefs sitting at the head table.*

*Prior to the war, Mr. P— was attached to the RAF in a civilian capacity and his earnings were sufficient to provide for his wife and children with a comfortable living. During an enemy raid on 20 February, 1944, Mr. and Mrs. P— were killed when their house received a direct bomb hit. In dying, Mr. and Mrs. P— gave their lives to protect Barbara and Ronald with their bodies. After the death of the parents, Barbara and Ronald were sent to live with relatives. Six months after the first raid, the children were both seriously injured when the home in which they were staying received a direct hit from a buzz bomb*

*Their injuries kept both children in the hospital for a period of six months. Barbara is an attractive child with blonde hair and blue eyes. She is described as a "tom-boy" and mixes well with her fellow school mates. She attends school regularly now that she has recovered. Barbara is a natural child, liking toys and books. She is small for her age, and on the chubby side. Her birthday is 10 August.*

*The children are now living with their grandmother, two aunts and five cousins in a 3-room flat behind a shop—in High Wycombe, England.*

*Very soon after the visit, the squadron received a letter of thanks, penned in childish hand by Ronald on behalf of both himself and his sister.*



One of the photos that became 'official' and being used in the booklet that was printed after the visit. Left is Capt John Lobingier, who was the intelligence officer of the 77<sup>th</sup> TCS, 1st Lt Theron Anglemyer, Barbara and Capt. John Kelly. (N. Jones collection)

To find more about Barbara and her brother Ronald, I began with the following points:

- The surname starts with a P.
- The parents were killed on 20 February 1944.
- The father was attached to RAF.

With the above details, a search was made to find information on what happened, the full names of the children and who the parents were.

### **Searching for the background details of the children**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission ([CWGC](#)) has a website with the names of civilian casualties of World War Two. This website is searchable. With the date of 20 February (the

death date mentioned by Rawlings), and the last name starting with the letter P, I searched a list of Ps and found eight names that gave good details of where each person lived and where they died.

This list of civilian casualties gives the immediate family connections and how they are related. There were many names beginning with P. I logically ruled out most based on age such as an example I had PARKER, WILLIAM GEORG, father (56 years old) and his son, PARKER, LESLIE KENNEDY TIMEWELL (31 years old) do not match for the case of Barbara and Ronald. The Perrie family seemed to fit, PERRIE, WINIFRED MAY was married to an RAF Warrant Officer Alfred Perrie, however, her husband, Alfred Perrie, was not listed in the CWGC. So, I ruled out this

family as being Barbara's as well. Further, Mr. and Mrs. Perrie had a son named PERRIE, RONALD WALTER who was listed in the CWGC. Two sons named Ronald would be out of the question.

My question now was, is the information about the date (20 February) incorrect? Or is the surname beginning with a P incorrect? To find out, I looked at the website again, but this time for the days near 20 February, thus looking at 21 and 19 February 1945. The list of casualties, which should reveal the names of Barbara and Ronald their parents got a bit longer now to fourteen names of details.

This further research paid off and I found a match. I was now focusing on two names: Doris Penning (32 years) and Henry Penning (39 years):

**PENNING, HENRY**

Died 20/02/1944

Aged 39

Civilian War Dead

of 138 Coningham Road. Son of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Penning, of 8 Henchman Street; husband of Doris Louisa Penning. Died at 138 Coningham Road.

**PENNING, DORIS LOUISA**

Died 21/02/1944

Aged 32

Civilian War Dead

of 138 Coningham Road. Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Rew, of 57 Totteridge Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire; wife of Henry Penning. Injured 20 February 1944, at 138 Coningham Road; died at Hammersmith Hospital.



The information of Doris' parents living in **High Wycombe** matches the information from the 77<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron. With this, I was very happy as the full names of Barbara and Ronald were now known, Ronald Penning and Barbara Penning.

With the names of the parents known, and thus the full name of the children, it is also interesting to find more about what happened on February 20, 1944

### **The Baby Blitz – Operation Steinbock**

Operation Steinbock (German: Unternehmen Steinbock), sometimes called the Baby Blitz, was a strategic bombing campaign

by the German air force (the Luftwaffe) during the Second World War. It targeted southern England and lasted from January to May 1944. This was the last strategic air offensive by the German bomber arm during the conflict.

In late 1943, the Allied Combined Bomber Offensive was gathering momentum against Germany. The Allied air forces were conducting a strategic bombing campaign day and night against German industrial cities. In retaliation, Adolf Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to prepare a bombing operation against the United Kingdom. The bombing offensive also served as propaganda value for the German public and domestic consumption.

The Luftwaffe assembled 474 bomber aircraft for the offensive. The attacks were mainly aimed at and around the Greater London area. In Britain, it was known as the Baby Blitz due to the much smaller scale of operations compared to The Blitz, the campaign against the United Kingdom in 1940–1941. The operation began in January and ended in May 1944. It achieved very little, and the German force suffered a loss of some 329 machines during the five months of operations—an average of 77 per month—before it was abandoned.

## Night of 20-21 February 1944<sup>1</sup>

On 20/21 February the sixth Steinbock attack began.

Twelve German bomber groups with 165 aircraft participated in the raid. Included in the armada were 15 Fw 190s from SKG 10. I./KG 100 operated from the Rheine and II./KG 54 from Varrelbusch. I./KG 54 and II./KG 2 began the operation from Münster and Handorf, although Juvincourt, Coulommiers and Soesterberg were used by these formations during Steinbock.

II./KG 54, I./KG 100, I./KG 54, I. and II./KG 2 rendezvoused over the Dutch coast at the Funkfeuer at Noordwijk. The force numbered from 90 to 100 bombers. Landfall was made on the Essex coast near the Thames Estuary. The crews had no pathfinders and relied on dead reckoning. The crews were briefed to fly from the north then bank left and carry out a bomb-run from west to east across the city, according to crews captured on the night.

I./KG 100 and 54 were in the vanguard of the assault; KG 2 presumably followed up the attack or to participate in one mass bombing run. KG 100 operated between 10 and 13 He 177s. The bombers were believed to have carried four SC1000 Hermanns but apart from several SC500s loaded on to II./KG 54 Ju 88s the other bombers released AB1000 and or AB500 incendiary canisters including phosphorus types. The attack was carried out between 13,000 and 16,000 ft.

The German crews abandoned the target-marking methods of Leuchtpfad and Ablauflinie in favour of a simple pattern laid over the target zone. The colour of the flare denoted the area of the target zone. The abandonment of more precise target-identification suggested a German appreciation of the more practical tactic of area bombing. Another change in procedure was the incorrect positioning of any flare patterns. They were to be ignored and following crews were ordered to drop a greater concentration of flares over correctly aligned areas. With this principle applied in sequence, it was hoped crews would not be distracted by faulty target-marking.

The bombers streamed in loose formation between Harwich, Essex and Hythe, Kent. Barely 20 flares exploded over the capital at 21:30 in a scattered manner. They fell along the line of the Thames and Chiswick. Apart from this meagre effort by I./KG 66, most of the 80 bombers identified by British radar reached the capital. The attack started more than 600 fires, caused by a mixture of incendiaries and SC-type bombs ranging from 500 to 1000. Fulham, Putney and Chiswick bore the brunt and most of the 216 fatalities occurred in those boroughs. Had more of the bombers got through, they may have created a firestorm. Aside from the dead, another 417 people were seriously injured.

Kensington was badly damaged, and St Mary Abbots suffered fire damage. Lancaster Gate and Paddington were hit and

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<sup>1</sup> The information on this German operation comes from various websites. Not being an expert on German Luftwaffe, and without further research, I do not have more details as is given here, nor knowledge about the numbering and naming of German elements.

the Great Western Hotel was severely damaged. Fires broke out in Gloucester Gardens, Porchester Mews, Highgate, Hatton Garden, Clerkenwell and Gloucester Terrace. Fulham alone was subjected to 20,000 incendiary bombs causing, according to one source, 642 fires, 82 of which required the attention of fire services. 76 people were killed in Fulham and 194 were injured. Over 2,500 properties sustained damage or outright destruction. SC1800 Hermann bombs were used over Hammersmith and the damage made 1,200 people homeless. Westminster received four SC500 bombs in the government quarter. One fell on Whitehall damaging the Treasury and killing four people on the corner of 10 Downing Street. Horse Guards Parade, St. James's Park, the Admiralty, the War Office were also damaged and had windows blown out. One of six bombs to hit The Grange at South Mimms, narrowly missed Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands' residence but killed two of her staff.

The Luftwaffe lost nine bombers—one to a 25 Squadron Mosquito and two anti-aircraft fire: three from KG 2, four from KG 54, one from KG 66 and KG 6. German propaganda quoted a high figure for participating crews (200), and credited 171 with hitting the target. Before day-break, V./KG 2 sent 21 Me 410s which were supported by 13 SKG 10 Fw 190s. The attackers released incendiaries and SC500 bombs with little effect. One Fw 190 was lost. A second attack was carried out by 11 Fw 190s without effect or loss. Twenty-two German airmen were killed, seven captured and seven wounded. Fighter Command claimed

one destroyed, one probably destroyed and two damaged.

### **The search for the involved**

As the 77th Troop Carrier Squadron history wrote the following narrative:

*Barbara was royally entertained, even to receiving a taxi ride around the perimeter by Captain MacDonald and crews. Host honors were done by Major Frank P. Blaisdell. Barbara ate the noon meal in the enlisted men's mess hall, with the section chiefs sitting at the head table.*

I found photos that showed the interaction between the 77th members (who were at the base at the time of the visit) and the children. A lady from the Red Cross accompanied the children.

Today, sadly, no living veteran who remembered this visit could be found. Relatives of veterans who were there could add little to the entire story. Some candid photos showed up, beside the official photos that were used in the booklet that was printed when the squadron was already in France.

The best part of the search was trying to find an answer at the question stated in the introduction. What had happened to Barbara and Ronald after their visit to the base? The search in England was not easy. The leads to High Wycomb came up with nothing. Nothing on the two children nor their grandparents. A researcher helped and she found some interesting things, most stunning was that Barbara was still living (late 2019).

Her brother, Ronald, passed away in 2016. He had worked as an aircraft engineer. When Ronald wed, his sister was one of the two witnesses. I did get in touch with the son of Ronald. He wrote me that his father had done some research on what had happened in 1944. He sent the following information<sup>1</sup>:

*During one of the raid's a bomb hit the block of flats that the family were living in, causing the building to collapse. My grandfather, Henry, was standing in the stairwell and almost certainly died immediately, whilst Dorothy, Barbara and Ron*



This cropped photo of Maj. Blaisdell and Ronald clearly shows the special cap Ronald is wearing as protection of his head injury. (N. Jones collection)



Ronald Penning about a year before he passed away.

*were trapped for some time in the collapsed building. Dad recalled that Barbara's hand was possibly exposed in the rubble, and that my Grandmother encouraged her to wave and for them to call out.*

*They were eventually rescued and taken to hospital. Sadly, my grandmother died some days later and Dad was left with a hole in his skull which was eventually covered with a metal plate. Barbara and Ron were taken in and bought up by their Grandfather (I believe also named Henry, but can check this) in High Wycombe, Bucks. It is during this time that I think Barbara was adopted by an American unit and they were able to visit the airbase. I also understand that after the war Dad had a number of holidays with a family in Belgium.*

<sup>1</sup> March 2020

*They remained in High Wycombe after the war, with Ron attending college and starting a career as Aeronautical Engineer. Barbara met and fell in love with one of his classmates, Idris, who she later married.*

*Ron stayed in the High Wycombe area and married my mother, Joan in 1962, who he met through a shared interest in ballroom dancing. I was born in 1967 and my sister, Janet in 1969, and we have both gone on to have families and children of our own.*

*Dad had a successful career as an aeronautical engineer working on such projects as the Fairey Rotodyne, the Hawker Siddeley/de Havilland Trident and the Hawker Siddeley HS. 748, as well as sitting on many aerospace committees with such organizations as NASA. He also had a very strong interest in history and particularly in Second World War aircraft, frequently attending air displays and visiting air museums across the country.*



Barbara and Ronald visiting the base. Standing next to Barbara, with his gloves in his hands, is Capt. George Johnson, 77th TCS Glider Officer. (George Johnson collection)

Author's note: This research is done in the slipstream of the A Breathtaking Spectacle book project. The books will tell in words and images about the Troop Carrier men and units in England during WW2. Currently we, Adam Berry and I, are working on Volume 2, about the 53<sup>rd</sup> Troop Carrier Wing. When that is finished, a final book on the 50<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing will be written. If you feel you can contribute with stories, photos and such, please contact me at [marketc47@gmail.com](mailto:marketc47@gmail.com).



**An un-official photo taken of Capt. John L. Lobingier Jr., Capt. Theron L. Anglemyer and Maj. John W. Kelly with Barbara. (Floyd Hand collection)**

## GREAT GRANDCHILDREN HONORING THEIR GREAT GRAND WWII VETERAN

### Taylor Barthule

In January Taylor Barthule contacted the LBS Research Team wanting help finding information about her Great Grandfather, Alexander Barthule, 14<sup>th</sup> TC Squadron, 61<sup>st</sup> TC Group. When asked about her research she said,

*“I’m just super interested in family history, ancestry, and all that stuff. It’s something I feel pretty passionately about, especially because a lot of the stories from wartime never got told, or were able to be passed down. I knew that my grandpa and great-grandpa were fascinating people and so I’ve been scouring the internet to find anything I can about what part they played in the world’s history. “*



### Jonah Anestis



Jonah is a familiar face in our Briefings. Jonah attends the reunions and is very active in talking with our WWII Veterans. His Great Grandfather, Van Rensselaer HATCHER, flew with the 87<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 438<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group.



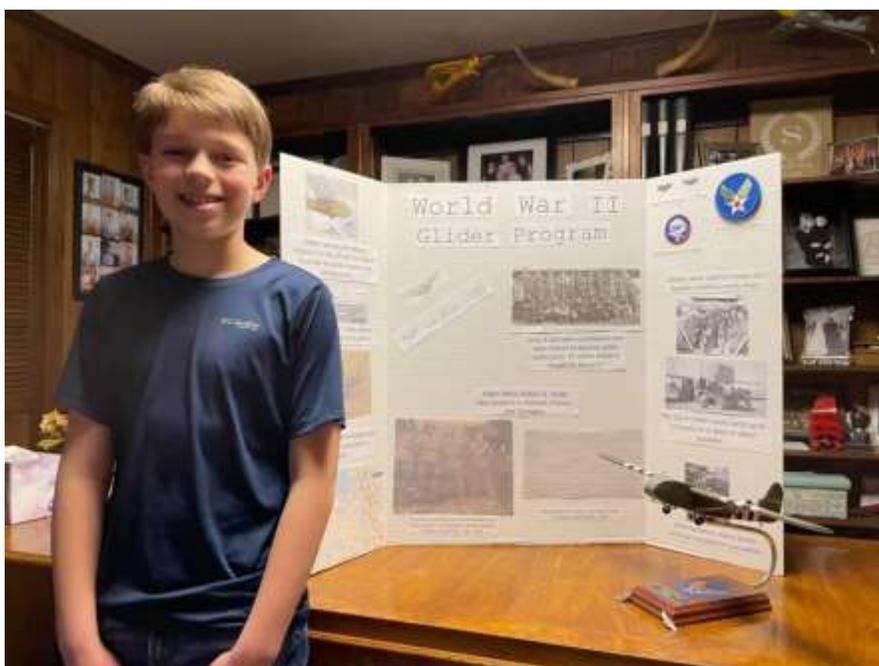
## Molly Ann Stripling



In 2014 when Molly was 8 years old she gave a presentation on her great grandfather, Claude ‘Chuck’ A. BERRY, who flew with the 91<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 439<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group. Now in 2020 Molly has written a report on her Great Grandfather after interviewing her grandmother, Beth Stripling, to get her prospective on her father. Chuck died in 2016 and Molly and her brother, Michael, visit his grave on special days to honor him.

## Graeson Smith

After learning his great-granddad was a glider pilot in World War 2, Graeson began doing research on the WW2 Glider Program for a school project. His project became a storyboard about his Great Grandfather, F/O Robert A. Smith, who flew with the 306<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 442<sup>nd</sup> Troop Carrier Group.



**KUDOS TO ALL THE GRAND CHILDREN WHO ARE EDUCATING ABOUT THIS LITTLE KNOWN GROUP OF MEN AND THE THEIR UNIQUE WWII HISTORY**  
Contact the Committee if you know of any children giving presentations on a WWII veteran relative.

# HONORING OUR TROOP CARRIER MEMBERS

GERALD C BERRY  
FRANK T BRANDON  
PETE BUCKLEY  
CURTIS R. CAMERON  
BILL S CHEOLAS  
ERNEST E DUTCHER  
RICHARD T FORD  
JOHN H GEIST  
MYRON GUISEWITE  
JAMES O HAMMERSMITH

PHILIP R HOWLAND  
RAYMOND J HUGHES JR  
GEORGE M JOHNSON (RET)  
FRANK KOLOGY  
JOHN LAMM  
FRANK LAWLER  
GEORGE W LOCKLIN  
FRED H LUNDE  
EUGENE E MENKING  
JAMES W MAGEE  
JOHN JOSEPH MASON

JUDSON W. PITTAM  
ERLING L SEVERSON \*  
LAWRENCE ALDEN SIDLER  
ROGER W SMITH \*  
JACK W TEMPLIN  
ROGER D THORSON  
JOSEPH J. TURECKY  
MARSHALL W. WILLIAMS  
WILLIAM WEAVER  
JAMES R WINNIE

\* Flew pilot and copilot together in glider # 42-79160, Chalk #32 in combat Operation codenamed Dagoon, mission codename DOVE, invasion of southern France

## 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 LAST QUARTER.

Compiled by: Austin L Perkins II, son of Flight Officer Austin L PERKINS  
A-2 Section Jason Smith, grandson of Flight Officer Robert Abraham SMITH, Jr.  
Hq, 53rd TC John Jay Hoag, cousin of 1st Lt. Daryl Edward DRUMMOND, 53rd TC Wg.  
391 Zack Cromley, friend and neighbor of Flight Officer Roger William SMITH \*  
Seth Hatchell, Assistant Director and Historian of Laurinburg-Maxton Airport  
Andrew Gramlich, son of Andrew John GRAMLICH  
Nancy Crawley, daughter of Howard Danford SINCLAIR  
Pilot: Jan Samuel Ostrovsky, cousin of Theodore Irving KIZINSKI 1954.  
A. GENERAL INFORMATION  
Donald B. Taylor, grandchild of Alexander BARTHULE  
Greg Aigner, nephew of CPT Norman L AIGNER 84633  
Kevin King, researcher of Robert Nye CAMPBELL, Woodrow Wilbur HOLLEMAN  
David Saidel, researcher / archivist / US Army Air Corps Museum, Paul L HURNEY  
P.O.No. 5 J. C. Nathan, researcher / William Dulty SMITH Q735 hrs  
Time over Heather Rose, great granddaughter of Flight Officer Alton Bert COLSTON  
Sally Bartz, daughter of 2nd Lt Daniel L NEENHAM  
B. SUMMARY  
Pat Wheatley, nephew of Flight Officer David Putnam MORESE, Sr  
Richard O'Brien, nephew of Flight Officer Frank M. O'BRIEN  
1. Type of attack (air, naval, land): plan and small arms fire  
2. Enemy A/C \*  
\*Member of the National WWII Glider Pilots Committee

[INDEX](#)

Course

Speed

Type

# TROOP CARRIER MOVEMENT

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CARRIER AND COMBAT GLIDER HISTORY

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### 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

Part of the success in glider snatch pickups is the ground to plane teamwork. Here, a Douglas C-47 of the 9th Troop Carrier Command, is shown flying low over a glider it will snatch from the ground. The jeep in the fore-ground, equipped with radio, relays instructions to the plane pilot throughout take off and glider snatch. 17 April 1945. USAF Photo, National Archives.



82465AC  
82463

COVER PHOTO: This photo was taken of the Blumenkamp area on 25 March 1945 by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Photo Reconnaissance Squadron of the 363 Tactical Reconnaissance Group. This is Mission PR 29/25/01, Sortie 33/2618 flown by Major Trimble and taken between Hamminkeln and Wesel, Germany. U.S. Air Force photo. Courtesy of Ortwin Nißing, Archivist for the City of Hamminkeln collection

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