315th Newsletter

Published by
WORLD WAR II TROOP CARRIER GROUP ASSOCIATION

IN THIS ISSUE:

\+ + + + + + + + +

Enclosed with this issue are the following forms:
.Reunion Registration
.Hotel reservation

READERS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO SUBMIT MATERIAL FOR THE *NEWSLETTER*. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL SUBMISSIONS TO THE UNDERSIGNED:

Edward M. Papp, Editor
315th Newsletter
200 Bryant Avenue
Glen Ellyn IL 60137

APRIL 1994

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I have found in my life -- superannuated as it has become -- that there are three very difficult things to do. One is to climb a fence leaning toward you. Two is to kiss a girl leaning away from you. Three is to write a meaningful President's Letter.

With regard to the first, being a farm boy, I mastered this at an early age. Concerning the second, the dichotomy of time and circumstance have each taken their toll. The third presents an ever-growing challenge, which I address with caution and humility, hopefully knowing full well where the priorities are concerned.

The priorities at this time are basically twofold: Make your plans now to attend the reunion in St. Louis and get your registration fee in early -- as well as your reservation at the Airport Radisson. Reunion registration and hotel reservation forms are included with this *Newsletter.* WHY NOT DO IT TODAY?

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

One of God's greatest miracles is to enable ordinary people to do extraordinary things.
(Case in point: WWII 315th TCG Association)

John F. Andrews

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS.....OCTOBER 5 -- 9, 1994

Have you registered for the 1994 Reunion yet? TIME IS RUNNING SHORT!!!!! Memories and friendship -- very special commodities we should not waste. At any time in life "too late comes too early". Be sure to join us and sip one more toast with those who enjoy the 1940's proud memories. Please take a moment now, complete the two forms we have enclosed and mail them today.

The HOSPITALITY ROOM at the RADISSON is just behind the base of the 8-story waterfall to the left, the large indoor pool; and, as you look up, the 8-story glass enclosed atrium. Want to exercise or use the cycle equipment? Next the pool. Breakfast, lunch? Just outside the hospitality room. Want to visit the 150 store Mall, snack bars and restaurants? The shuttle is ready to drive you right across the freeway. And, to host and welcome you to the hospitality room will be Bette and Bernie Brown, our most gracious hosts in Albuquerque.

In the last *NEWSLETTER* we informed you of the optional activities. Following is a brief of the activities INCLUDED in the $78.00 Reunion Registration fee:

l. St. Louis 'HIGHLIGHTS'. Visit the fabulous FOREST PARK, 1904 World's Fair site, Art, History & Science Museum, the Muny, Zoo, etc. Visit the beautiful Cathedral with its mosaics-covered interior. Stop at renovated UNION STATION -- the Grand Hall with its marble, fresco ceilings, stained glass, art works, etc. Drive through the restored Lafayette Square and Anheuser-Busch Brewery.
LUNCH (included) at the 19th Century ABBEY. Then on to the Historic Levees -- the sternwheelers and showboats; Laclede Landing; visit the old Cathedral and the Old Court, scene of the historic Dred Scott Trial. Then on to the world-famous GATEWAY ARCH and a breathtaking ride to the top

ST, LOUIS HIGHLIGHTS TOUR: FRIDAY OCT. 7 FROM 9:30 TO 4:00 PM

2. HISTORIC ST. CHARLES. Spouses/Guests Tour. Oldest city on the Missouri River; first capitol of Missouri; and an early non-indian town. Visit the restored downtown. Search out the antique treasures, specialty shops, gift shops, 19th cntury-style buildings and 19th century costumed guides to conduct you through the FIRST STATE CAPITOL.

TOUR: SATURDAY OCT. 8 FROM 10:00 AM TO 2:00 PM.

3. The BIG SATURDAY BANQUET in the Radisson Banquet Hall. Starting with the no-host cocktail hour and Squadron picture-taking by Ed Papp and then to the banquet hall to enjoy a delicious dinner and friendship. We also hope to have a small band so the "younger" folks may liven up the evening.

There is so much to see in America's crossroads city that it would take seversl visits to enjoy it all. This is a wonderful opportunity to see some of the exciting history, old and new. The Radisson will be a wonderful new place to be; ride the monorail, America's newest local high speed rail system and see the rejuvenation of old St. Louis.

COME AND JOIN US. HELP MAKE THE REUNION A WONDERFUL MEMORY FOR EVERYONE!!!

We are indebted to Joe Krysakowski for the following account of an interesting tour made by Joe and other members of the WWII 315th TCG Association last September. We know our readers will be interested in Joe's account.

Nine members of the WWII 315th Troop Carrier Group Association met at Gatwick Airport near London on September 8, 1993 to commence a 12 day tour of locations in England, France, Holland and Germany -- places connected with the 315th Group's activities almost a half century earlier.

The Association members who went on the trip sponsored by Battlefield Tours, Inc. consisted of former pilots (4), navigators (2), crew chiefs (1), radio operators (1) and eight wives , a couple who were friends of one of the members and two men (background unknown) who identified themselves as World War II 'buffs".

Group members and wives included:

Bill and Alice Brinson
Carl and Margaret Fittkau
Joseph and Helen Krysakowski
Charles Lovett
Harold and Esther Slack
Walter and Glendore Stout
Bill and Ruth Trau
Roy and Dottie Watkins
J.S. and Isabelle Way

After meeting our tour guide, a young Scotsman named Dennis Ross, the group proceeded by motor coach to our hotel, the Swallow International. All rooms were with private bath and the accommodations were quite adequate and comfortable. The rest of the day was spent at leisure and a number of the group went out on their own to tour the local area of London.

We assembled for dinner at about 7:00 PM where there were more formal greetings by members of Tours International representing Battlefield Tours, Inc. Mr. Roger Freeman, a British citizen who is an 8th Air Force Historian, was the guest speaker and he entertained us with wartime comments, stories and anecdotes. The dinner was one of conviviality and entertaining repartee. Each member of the group was asked to introduce himself and his wife and name the Squadron to which he was assigned and tell what his particular assignment was in the Group.

The next morning we were taken on a tour of the city of London. We viewed Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, drove through Piccadilly and then had a walking tour of the Churchill War Rooms which were the hub of international communications and British wartime decisions. The tour of this underground headquarters included seeing the operational center as it was occupied, lived in and operated during the war by Winston Churchill and his staff, especially during the "blitz" of London.

Our tour then continued along the river Thames and to St. Paul's Cathedral, culminating in a lengthy visit to the Imperial War Museum. The tour also included Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch, Oxford and Regent Streets and Piccadilly Circus.

That evening another group dinner was held. This one with informal discussions of what we would do and see in the next few days. Here we were joined by Dave Benfield, our "Ambassador" at Spanhoe. He advised that on the next day we would arrive at Spanhoe about noon and there would be a wreath-laying ceremony at the foot of the Monument erected at Spanhoe in memory of our comrades who lost their lives over Holland and Germany.

On Friday we departed London and proceeded through the London traffic to Spanhoe, first stopping for a short visit at Hendon Airdrome from which the 315th Group flew 8th Air Force Ferry Transport missions throughout England and into Ireland. No runways exist now and the RAF Museum buildings cover most of the area.

Shortly after noon we arrived in the vicinity of Spanhoe, drove through the little hamlet of Layton and as we approached the crossroad between the old housing areas and the operational flying area, a fair number of motor vehicles were parked on the sides of the road and at the junction of the roads where the monument was set, there were gathered some 65 or 70 people -- local residents and residents of Stamford (England) which was a short distance away. Dave Benfield had spread the word that we were coming and he met and greeted us as we offloaded from our coach. Despite overcast skies and a slight drizzle, an informal reception line of the locals was formed and we greeted and shook hands with each one.

After greetings and conversation, Bill Brinson and two local residents (one a former paratrooper) were handed wreaths. They stood at the front of the Monument as one of the British men intoned a prayer, ending with "We will remember. We

will remember." The three men then stepped forward and laid the wreaths at the foot of the Monument. A solemn and heart-wrenching moment. After a minute or two of silent prayer, Brinson responded with thanks and appreciation for this tribute and then spoke of the happier times we all shared at Spanhoe.

After the ceremony and conversations, we all walked up to the flight line to the small Nissen hut hangar located on the flight line. There were no runways and only the Nissen hut and the taxi strip remains. The Nissen hut had been enlarged and someone remarked that this was the Post Office during the tenure of the 315th at Spanhoe. The only activity at Spanhoe is a small aircraft repair service operated by a Mr. and Mrs. Carl Tyers which is called Windmill Aviation. Mrs. Tyers invited everyone to their operations office for tea, coffee and biscuits. A number of local citizens stayed on to visit with us and we all talked about Spanhoe and what had occurred since our departure. We toured the area and viewed seer of the aircraft in for repair.

A Stearman 450 HP airplane did a flyover for us and included aerobatics. After the plane landed we were invited to fly it. Several of our group did so including J.W.Way, Charles Lovett and Bill Brinson. Another small aircraft was put into operation and several of our group went up to view the area from above. Others of the 315th group were invited to view the base in a Jeep. Several did so.

At about 1:30 the gathering began to break up and the group, led by Dave Benfield, departed the old base for Harlingworth for a Pub lunch at the White Swan. The merriment and conversation continued and after lunch, we looked with interest at the memorabilia of the 315th which covered the Pub walls.

After nostalgic farewells, the 315th party departed Harlingworth and proceeded through Layton to Stamford, stopping at "East on the Hill" to view the monument dedicated to the Polish Paratroopers who perished in the mid-air collision on July 8, 19944. After a brief sight-seeing visit in Stamford the party proceeded to the church at Tinwell to view the plaque in the church dedicated to the crews and Polish Paratroopers who died in the crash. On departing the vicinity of Stamford, we stopped briefly at the point where the aircraft in the collision fell to the ground. Thence the ride to Leicester for dinner and RON at a comfortable motel/hotel.

Dave Benfield did a tremendous job in planning and executing the delayed dedication of the monument at Spanhoe and the reception by the local citizenry. He prepared and executed the plans for this tribute to our crews who were lost overseas. Dave is to be congratulated for his interest and work and deserves an accolade for the execution of the plan for the memorable day honoring the 315th Troop Carrier Group.

Departure from Leicester came the next day and we headed for Portsmouth on the south coast. We made a brief stop for a short Act of Remembrance at the Maddingly American Military Cemetery and Memorial which was established in December 1943 on 30.5 acres of land donated by the University of Cambridge. From the foot of the flagpole at the entrance to the cemetery, the headstones are aligned like the spokes of a wheel. From this point the Great Wall and Reflecting Pools stretch eastward to the Memorial Building. The Wall of the Missing stretches along the Mall 472 feet on which are recorded the names and records of 5,125 of the missing who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. On the Memorial Building north wall are five pylons, each recalling the five years from 1941 through 1945 in which the United States participated in the war. The mosaic ceiling of the Memorial is dedicated to those who gave their lives while serving in the United States Army Air Corps.

Of the 3,182 American War Dead buried in Maddingly, there are four members of the 315th Troop Carrier Group:

Oren H. Kelley, Sgt., 43rd TCS
Robert W. Masling, 2nd Lt., 43rd TCS
William F. Patterson, Sgt. 43rd TCS
Charles V. Smith, 2nd Lt., 43rd TCS

The graves of each of the men were found and in honor of our visit, an American flag was placed and flew on each of the graves.

After this visit, we continued on our route to Portsmouth, first stopping at Aldershot for a Pub lunch and visit to the British Airborne Museum where Major Jack Watson, MC, our host and guide, who was with the 6th Airborne Division that dropped into Normandy and during the Rhine crossing, met and gave us a tour of the Museum.

On Sunday, September 12 after an RON at the Innlodge in Portsmouth, we visited Southwick House , the headquarters of General Eisenhower when he made the final decision on the D-Day invasion of Europe. Also visited the museum which houses the D-Day embroidery which tells the story of the Normandy landings.

At noon we sailed from England across the English Channel to France. We experienced a stormy channel crossing but all survived and we arrived in Cherbourg driving directly to Bayeaux and our hotel.

On Monday we toured the U.S. sector of the Normandy Landing Beaches including Bloody Omaha Beach. Thence on to Pointe du Hoc which was stormed by U.S. Rangers who had to scale unbelievably steep cliffs. Of 225 Rangers, 90 survived the assault. 135 were killed. Thence on to St. Mere Eglise and the vicinity where the 315th dropped members of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division on June 6th. We visited the U.S. Airborne Museum which houses a C-47 aircraft and a glider. Here we found a photograph of the Pathfinder crews and in the front row of the picture stood Sam Suttle, Jim Alwood, Frank Hayden, Morris Brown and the radio operator (name unknown). Here, also on display, was Dave Benfield's poster depicting the aircraft from the four squadrons of the 315th Troop Carrier Group.

Here, on D-Day, one of the 505th Paratrooper's chute caught on the steeple of the church as he was coming down and he hung helplessly from the steeple by the chute's shroud lines. Fortunately, he survived with but a leg wound when shot by a German. But until today, there hangs from the church steeple a parachute with a replica of a paratrooper which we viewed with awe on a rainy, windy day.

We also visited the cemetery at LaCambe where over 20,000 German troops killed in the war are buried.

Then back to Bayeux and a visit to the museum to view the Bayeux tapestry, an embroidery which chronicles the Norman conquest of England in 1066. It is worked on coarse linen, 230 feet by 20 inches.

On Tuesday, September 14th we followed part of the route of Operation "Cobra", visited the Abbey at Mount St. Michel near Avranches and then on to Chartres to visit the magnificent cathedral. Arrived in Paris in the early evening.

The following day was spent touring Paris: the Champs Elysees, Arc de Triomphe, Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and Notre Dame. After dinner there was a night tour of "The City of Lights"--Paris illuminated. We viewed this fabulous panorama of Paris illuminated from the Trocadero and from the heights of Sacre Coeur. Then a slow ridge through Pigalle before returning to our hotel.

We departed Paris on Thursday and after a coach ride through the French countdryside we arrived at Aeroport D'Amiens-Glisy. This was the base to which the 315th moved to get closer to the action in France. Here we were met by a French delegation headed by Monsieur Michel Demarquet. This was a group of members of the local aero club. The delegation greeted us warmly and provided champagne, wine, spirits and snacks as we conversed in fractured French and they in broken English. After an hour or so of spirited conversation, we bade adieu to our hosts and drove to Margraten Cemetery. Here Joe Krysakowski and Carl Fittkau placed a wreath on the altar of the chapel in memory of those who were buried there. Seven of the 315th Troop Carrier Group who perished in France are buried in Margraten. The graves of all were found. They included:

M.C. Berman, 2nd Lt., 310th Sq.
B. W. Borth, 2nd Lt., 310th Sq.
A.B. Epperson, S/Sgt. 34th Sq.
W.T. Hollis, Cpl., 43rd Sq.
H.R. Ludvikson, T/Sgt. 43rd Sq.
M.P. O'Hara, S/Sgt. 43rd Sq.
J.H. Spurrier, 1st Lt. 43rd Sq.

Leaving Margraten we drove to Mastricht and spent the night at Hotel Born. That evening we were privileged to hear a talk by William C. Cavanaugh with color slides of incidents connected with the liberation of this area of Holland. Though he was but a youngster during the war, he was extremely knowledgeable about happenings and events and we enjoyed him and his wife's company at dinner.

On Friday, September 17th, we drove through Market Garden battlefields and along the corridor to Nijmegen through which the British Guards Armored Division drove to link up with the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. We visited the Dzs for the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment which the 315th dropped on this date (Sept. 17th) in 1944.

In Nijmegen we visited the Airborne Museum which houses an outstanding handmade table model exhibit of the operation which took place this area. Here, Father Thuring, a friend of the 315th met the group for a brief visit in the Museum. That evening we stayed at the Altea Hotel in Nijmegen.

On Saturday we toured the British Airborne cemetery at Engesbeck and the Polish Parachute Brigade DZ which was the 315th objective on D+4. At Ginkel Heath (near Ede) we were treated to and witnessed a fairly large British Parachute drop and then drove into Wesel, Germany, as well as to the drop zone where the 315th on 24 March 1945 suffered its greatest one day losses during the war. The drop zone is now a large corn field.

That afternoon we returned to Driel for a ceremony at the monument dedicated to the Polish Paratroops. Then on to Amsterdam and RON at the Galaxy Hotel.

On Sunday, September 19th, we visited Volendam and Markem and witnessed how famous Dutch cheese was made and saw an exhibition of the making by hand of Dutch wooden shoes. That afternoon a drive into the center of Amsterdam and a visit to a diamond market with a closeup look at

various kinds of diamonds and settings. The ladies were enthralled.

That evening a farewell dinner at the Galaxy Hotel.

Monday, September 20 was Get-a-Way Day. But, first a visit to the Dutch Flower Auction with its famous display of acres of fresh flowers which were being sold and flown immediately to various parts of the world.

At 1414 we departed Amsterdam for the flight home. We were exhausted but elated and departing with many great memories of a nostalgic and educational trip.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

Because many of us spent a good bit of time in Greenland on our way to the ETO, the story of Pat Epps and his Greenland Expedition Society is of more than passing interest. In the November, 1991 issue we ran a short piece about The Greenland Expedition Society which was established by Pat Epps and others for the purpose of salvaging some of the P-38s which were buried in the Greenland ice cap. At the time, we promised to provide more information on the effort when it became available. A recent issue of *FORBES* magazine carried a long article by Terence Monmaney who went to the spot on the icecap where the aircraft had been located to gather material for his article. Beginning in this issue we will print parts of Monmaney's article.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + +

The place was a glacier in southern Greenland, fifty miles outside the Arctic Circle; the time, summer. We stood in a big yellow vinyl tent shaped like a Quonset hut. Pat Epps put on a yellow slicker suit, placed a hard hat with a miner's lamp on his head, and strapped himself into a bosun's chair. Epps and his crew of tinkerers and yahoos had spent two months sinking a great shaft into the ice sheet and he was about to inspect the work in progress. A chain connected his bosun's chair to a winch that was lashed to a steel beam over his head. He stepped off the plywood ledge and swung out over the hole. For a moment, he just dangled there, twirling like a mobile over the abyss. Looking down, all he could see were layers of white and blue and green ice —and then black. He could not see the bottom. "Weird place, huh?"?" he shouted over the thrum of gas-powered generators. Then he nodded to the guy running the winch and with a grinding of gears and a rattling of chain length he began his slow descent into the glacier.

It was Epps' seventh trip to this frozen desert in the last decade, and by now the outfit he'd co-founded, the Greenland Expedition Society, had spent nearly a million-and-a-half dollars conducting what may be the world's kookiest treasure hunt. The expeditioners were trying to salvage a P-38 Lightning fighter plane that was imbedded in the glacier like a bug in amber. That plane, five other P-38s, and two B-17 Flying Fortresses had been headed for Great Britain to join the Allied Forces in 1942 when, trapped by bad weather and running out of fuel, they belly-flopped onto the ice sheet. The 25 pilots and crew members were eventually rescued—the largest rescue of ditched aviators in American military history—but the aircraft were left behind, and over the years, as the snow mounted and the great river of ice flowed to the sea, interest in the abandoned warbirds grew, as did their value, until a number of adventurers and speculators set out to find and perhaps even to fly the now legendary aircraft of the Lost Squadron.

Epps began his quest for the abandoned aircraft in the summer of 1981. He and three others, including his friend Richard Taylor, an architect, hired a ski plane on the Greenland coast and flew to where the airmen had supposedly landed. "Now you is no-vere." said the charter pilot, a Dane, as he left them to camp on the snowy expanse. Their thinking was that the planes were perhaps five to forty feet below the surface, and Epps half-seriously planned to shovel 'em out, gas 'em up, and fly'em away For days, he and Taylor sscanned the area using a high-powered metal detector—a couple of guys walking around atop a vast glacier like beachcombers looking for dropped change. They found nothing and went home. Later that year, Epps and Taylor returned to Greenland but ground blizzards kept them from reaching the ice sheet. Without having lifted a shovelful of snow, the G.E.S. was many thousand dollars in the hole.

The next time Epps and friends returned to the ice sheet, in 1986, he brought along a geophysicist, who used a ground-penetrating radar device to scan the landing area. They found nothing. Then in 1988, seven years after he'd embarked on his "big adventure" Epps and his crew scanned an even larger area—and pinpointed all eight aircraft. Over 45 years, the glacier had borne them a mile downstream. Even more incredible, the radar revealed that

the aircraft lay in solid ice 240 feet below the surface.

That discovery instantly transformed these merry Ice Capades into a sobering undertaking of what might be called pure engineering; that is, an attempt to solve a monstrous technical problem that no one knew existed. It's not as though you can look it up in a manual: "glaciers, extracting airplanes from." To be sure, Epps has consulted an array of experts over the years-----glaciologists, geophysicists---but by now "experts" is a word he cannot utter without shaking his head, as if recalling a tragedy. "We go to them with a direct question: 'Can we do this?' They answer like an economist: 'Maybe yes, maybe no.'

Mostly what Epps heard is "No, you cannot sink a huge shaft into an ice sheet---it will collapse. No, you cannot work at the bottom of such a shaft---there will be no air, for one thing, and it will surely fill up with water (very cold water). No, an airplane that has been inside a lurching continental glacier for 50 years will not be salvageable and it will certainly never fly again---except perhaps as a flying saucer. Queried by Epps, who knew not the first thing about the Arctic's unforgiving ways, the experts must have shaken their heads, as if confronted by a madman.

But is obsession madness? Is dauntlessness? Epps, among other things, is a stunt pilot, a man who delights people by defying their expectations of the possible. And the motto of Epps Aviation is, come to think of it, probably a telling one: "From Anywhere, to Any Place, At Any Time." When talking with Epps, the word "go" turns up a lot. "Let's go." "Gotta go." "Time to go." Having worked around airports and airplanes his whole life, Epps, who is 60, seems to enjoy nothing so much as going. He displays little patience for theories or even explanations; they amount to dallying. In conversation he rarely bothers to finish a thought---he launches it, then shuts up, squints, gives a get-my-drift nod.

When he emerged from the hole that summer evening, he stepp;ed out of the bosun's chair and doffed his slickers. As we trudged to the mess hall for a Scotch and snow, he offered up one of the few complete sentences I'd heard from him in a while. Of the various experts he'd turned to over the years he said, "They're just not thinkin' positive."

It was in the tenth century that the Norse outlaw Erik the Red committed history's most notorious real estate scam when he tried to lure settlers to an almost entirely barren place by describing it as a verdant wonder and naming it Graenaland. Few places are as ungreen. The world's largest island, Greenland is more than 80% ice-covered. The ice sheet is about the size of Alaska and California combined. At its thickest, near the island's center, the ice is 9,000 feet thick---so heavy that terra firma sags below sea level.

Greenland is as close as I'll probably get to visiting another planet. I arrived on a commercial flight from Reykjavik, flying over the glacier-sharpened, snow-draped mountains of Greenland's east coast. The fjords stretched as far as I could make out, and that was really far, because of the extraordinary clarity of the air---the absence of moisture and smoke. This seeming boundlessness was the first reason for Greenland's other-worldliness. The second reason was that the landscape looked so inhospitable. Not a daub of that most vital color, green.

We slipped through a mountain pass and dropped onto the gravelly runway at Kulusk---"the worst airport in the world," the well-traveled manager of a local hotel told me. A wooden shed served as the terminal/waiting room/snack bar/customs office. There, I met up with Ice Man, a pilot hauling cargo for the G.E.S. He's called Ice Man because he's Icelandic and his last name is Frostason and his first name, Fafnir, is not something that most G.E.S. guys could say with a straight face.

The G.E.S.'s camp was a hundred miles inland, and Ice Man gave me a lift there in a twin-engine ski-equipped Dornier. We landed on a packed-snow runway marked off by black flags. Parked nearby was a 1942 DC-3 outfitted with giant skis, painted red and yellow, with "Greenland Expedition Society" in black lettering; a tail-wheeler, it sat there proudly, its nose up, waiting, you would think, for some retro-minded ad man to feature it in a spread for expensive luggage. It was ten o'clock in the evening, and the sun was still well above the horizon. It set after eleven, and rose a few hours later. The night was pure melon---a cantaloupe dusk that dissolved into watermelon dawn. For the two weeks of my visit, darkness never fell. My first few nights, I had to blindfold myself with a bandanna in order to sleep.

To be continued in the next issue. We'll tell how they managed to produce a deep shaft to reach the first of the P-38s. Fantastic story.!

Jake Wilson, during an exchange of letters with your editor, happened to mention that he had written a piece about Crew Chiefs some time ago and, having been one in time long gone, your editor implored him to search his files and if he came upon a copy of the piece, to please send it to me. Recently, the piece arrived in the mail and after reading it a couple of times, the editorial board of the *Newsletter* (yours truly) voted to share it with our readers. Here, then, is how Jake viewed us wrench turners.

THE CREW CHIEFS OF WORLD WAR II

Very little has ever been said about our Crew Chiefs who took care of our airplanes during that war long ago. Yet we had a Crew Chief who was responsible for each and every airplane.

Consider that when the United States entered that war it was soon decided that we must build the biggest air force the world had ever seen. And we did just that very thing and our air forces contributed more to the winning of that conflict than any other thing. We built thousands of airplanes and each and every one of them had to be manned by a responsible individual to keep it ready to fly. Those men were called Crew Chiefs. They helped very much in winning that war.

Crew Chiefs were chosen, not "picked". In other words, a commanding officer did not just line his men up and say "You and you and you will become Crew Chiefs." Instead, he and the Operations Officer and the Line Chief would get their heads together and choose the man or men they needed.

A Crew Chief had to have certain qualifications. He had to have a clean record which meant no time lost under AWOL, no time spent in the guard house and no raps for insubordination. He had to have completed an Air Mechanics course so he was qualified to work on aircraft. And he had to have shown, in the ranks that he had leadership ability. This would become important later.

Once a Crew Chief was chosen for the job he was assigned an airplane on a more or less permanent basis. It then became "his" airplane for most intents and purposes. He was in complete charge of it when it was on the ground and he knew what was expected of him. And that meant that it was his duty to see to it that the aircraft was ready to go, airworthy at all times and topped off with fuel. He had to have it ready to fly at any time during the day or night on short notice. Crew Chiefs grew very possessive over their airplanes and guarded them with their life. It was not unusual to see a Crew Chief at his airplane at daylight in the morning and often he was seen there well after dark also. Crew Chiefs did not have any just plain usual hours.

When there was need for maintenance or any kind of repair on the airplane, the Crew Chief was always in charge to see that the men knew how to handle the vital job of working on it. There could be no "misfits" working on or near the aircraft. The Crew Chiefs' only bosses were the Line Chief and his commanding officer.

Crew Chiefs were generally excused from any extra duty in the outfit, somewhat to the chagrin of First Sergeants and Adjutants who liked to detail men for extra duty. He had to be at or near that airplane at all times.

When a pilot stepped aboard his airplane the Crew Chief turned over command to him and the pilot remained in command until the flight was completed. Upon completion, the pilot left the craft and it once more came under the Crew Chief's command. With fighters which were single place aircraft, the Crew Chief had to remain on home base while his airplane was flying and "sweat it out" until it returned. In our case, we had C-47 transports and there was ample room to ride along. Thus, the Crew Chief could, and did, ride along on each flight as a helpful crew member. They fussed over the airplane and often as not it was the Crew Chief who would first spot trouble if any came up. Generally there was very little trouble because the aircraft were so well maintained. Very few flights were

aborted with our airplanes due to mechanical problems.

A good Crew Chief would beg, borrow or steal anything he could get his hands on to keep his airplane flying. The only stipulation was that he must not steal from anyone in his own outfit. Anyone else was fair game.

They flew with their airplanes and were always along whenever possible. The Crew Chiefs of World War II should certainly be remembered. Believe me, they were there, and I, for one, was very thankful we had such devoted, competent men to do the job.

Otherwise I, as a pilot, would have been out there working on the damned airplane myself!

+ + + + + + + + + + + + +

As a former Crew Chief, your editor wishes to thank Jake for his kind words in the piece and to say that he is absolutely right when he says we Crew Chiefs considered the airplane assigned to us as our "personal" property and woe be the guy who did anything to harm it! He is also correct when he writes that we would beg, borrow, or (more usually) steal anything like a generator, starter, exhaust stack or anything else we might be able to use <u>provided it wasn't stolen from anyone in our own outfit.</u> Sometimes, this "moonlight requisitioning" tended to get us into trouble.
Which reminds your editor of a true story that happened when the air echelon was in North Africa at the Blida airbase. The story goes like this:

During the course of our trips around North Africa, we Crew Chiefs often had the opportunity to check over the stocks maintained in the Tech Supply and warehouses maintained by other outfits in the North African theatre. And, if we came upon items we might find useful some time, we appropriated them without going to the trouble of making out any paper work. So, at any given time, most of us had aircraft parts and supplies locked in the latrine located at the rear of the aircraft.

Many times, there would be trade-offs between one Crew Chief and another. For example, if my airplane required a generator and the 43rd Tech Supply was temporarily out of stock and another Crew Chief just *happened* to have one he had liberated from somewhere, we would work out a trade—— his generator for, maybe a starter or something like that.

One day, an Air Inspector and his staff appeared at Blida to give our two squadrons the once-over. As I understood it, everything about the operation of the unit was examined to determine if everything was up to the standard mandated by the U.S. Army Air Corps. During the inspection, the Air Inspector or someone on his staff would select at random, the aircraft which would be flown and checked for air-worthiness.

It happened that "my" airplane was one of those chosen to be flown and in due time, the pilot, (I think he was a Lt. Colonel), arrived at the aircraft, together with his co-pilot. I was in DEEP TROUBLE because, locked in the latrine on 502 (tail number of my airplane) was enough stuff to get me thrown into Leavenworth for life:. As I recall, there were about 200 brand new spark plugs, a carburetor, two starters, maybe a half-dozen assorted engine instruments and a few other things. I had no opportunity to unload the stuff not realizing my airplane would be inspected.

Anyway, the pilots came aboard, checked the engineering form 1A and fired up the engines. Meanwhile, I'm wondering what in hell I'm going to do if the Inspector wants to check the latrine and its equipment. We took off, flew for about 10 minutes and came back to the field, got landing instructions and the Lt. Col. who was flying the airplane landed it with just two bounces. (Not anywhere as good as any of *our* pilots!)

I jumped out, put in the landing gear pins, control surface locks, and pitot tube covers all the while wondering what to do if the Air Inspector asked to have the padlock securing the latrine door closed removed so he could look inside. I was **really** scared, I can tell you.

Meanwhile, the pilots were writing up the flight in the Form 1A and I was standing on the ground near the steps of the aircraft. As the pilots came down the aisle of the plane, inspiration struck! I pulled the

ladder out of its slots in the doorway and banged the steps against the side of 502.

That made a bit of noise and the Air Inspector, being on the ball, came quickly to the door and wanted to know what the problem with the stairs was. I told him they didn't fit very well and to be very careful as he climbed out of the airplane otherwise he might fall and get hurt.

He said "Well, Sergeant, I won't write up the steps, but be sure you get them fixed so they work properly, hear!"

I said "Thanks very much Sir, I surely will get these things squared away so they fit properly."

Whereupon, the Air Inspector and his co-pilot carefully climbed down the steps and forgot all about looking in the latrine!

That was the only time I ever had an Air Inspector on my airplane, so I could continue maintaining a clandestine stock of parts and equipment until the end of the war.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

Bits and pieces about the C-47 gleaned from the publication *FIFTY GLORIOUS YEARS*, A Pictorial Tribute to the Douglas C-47 by Arthur Pearcy.

The C-47A model was an improved Basic C-47 with a 24-volt electrical system. The C-47B was intended for use over the Hump to China with the gross weight increased to 30,000 lbs and the two radial air-cooled engines centrifugally supercharged to obtain extra power. The C-47C was the amphibian model. The C-47D was an improved version of the C-47B except that the engines were not supercharged. A version, the AC-47, called the "Spooky" gunship was used in Vietnam.

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

The US ferry route to Russia during the war was known as ALSIB—Alaska Siberia. It went from Great Falls Montana to Anchorage Alaska. More than 700 Douglas C-47 transports were transferred to the Soviet Union at Anchorage on the Lend-Lease program. The Soviets later made a copy of the C-47, the Lisunov Li-2, NATO named "Cab." The majority of these copies were serving with the Chinese forces. These aircraft were powered by 1000 HP Ash-621 radials.

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

The longest ferry flight involving a C-47 and a CG-4A (called "Hadrian" by the British) was when the glider, which was fully laden with vaccine for the USSR plus urgent radio, aircraft and motor parts, was towed across the Atlantic by a Dakota of RAF Transport Command in. June, 1943. The flight from Dorval, Montreal to Prestwick, Scotland was done as an experimental flight, the first of its kind, and no special emphasis was laid on the accomplishment.

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

TWA, along with other major US airlines was quick to see the commercial possibilities of the DC-3. One of the requirements set up by TWA for the new aircraft was that it should be able to fly out of any airport the airline serviced. One airport was at Albuquerque, NM (altitude 4,954 feet) with summer temperatures often exceeding 95 deg. F. Coupled with this was TWA's insistence that the aircraft be able to take off from any TWA airfield with one engine out. Then, TWA's technical advisor, Charles Lindbergh, made it even tougher; the new airliner had to be capable of climbing and maintaining level flight on a single engine over the highest mountain along the TWA route!

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

WITH DEEP REGRET WE RECORD THE DEATH OF THESE COMRADES:

Richard Hatch	November 23, 1993
George Timney	March, 1993
Willet M. Messenger	November 20, 1993

Frank S. Kennedy, Jr. sent the following story which appeared in the *AIR FORCE*, August 1944 issue to your editor last year and we're glad to be running it in this issue of the *Newsletter* because it's very appropriate (time-wise) to the events recounted in the story. Frank was a Control Tower Operator at Spanhoe (309th Station Complement Sqdn.) and was later transferred to the 310th Squadron. He lives in Meridian, MS. Our thanks to Frank for the story.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

H-HOUR MINUS FOUR AND A HALF

The 9th Troop Carrier Command made history by carrying out the largest airborne operation ever attempted -- and by doing it with maximum efficiency, minimum loss.

TROOP CARRIER has done it all. All the great promises of Troop Carrier, all the hopes which its champions have for it, have been richly, triumphantly fulfilled. If this sounds like intemperate praise, look at the record. In the cold darkness before H-hour, 9th Troop Carrier Command dropped behind the enemy's forward defenses two Airborne Infantry Divisions, the 101st and the 82nd -- dropped them in the area they were supposed to have been dropped -- and did it with a total aircraft loss of less than two-and-a-half-percent. In four hours, two aggressive divisions with essential equipment were where the enemy wanted them least. Compare, if you want to, our aerial loss with the Germans' at Crete when more than twenty percent of participating planes and gliders were destroyed. Troop Carrier is taking a lot of curtain calls today, thanks to the near perfection with which 9th Troop Carrier Command did its job.

THE PLAN

To understand how well the operation was carried out, you should know the plan: "to begin about four hours and thirty minutes prior to Civil Twilight (the pre-dawn) to assist in the initial assault.." That was the assignment of the 101st Airborne Division while the 82nd was "to land to the immediate west of the 101st to prevent movement of enemy reserves to east and west."

Timed with our vertical landings were British operations involving one airborne division. Using Albemarles, C-47s (the British call them Dakotas), Sterlings, and Horsa gliders, the British equivalent of 9th Troop Carrier established protection for the left flank of the British beach by dropping its airborne load just where it was supposed to, at the set time and with aircraft losses actually slightly less than ours. For both nations, Troop Carrier made its mark.

THE OPERATION

On 5 June 1944 at 2154 hours, Lieut. Col. Joel L. Crouch, commanding officer of a 9th Troop Carrier Command pathfinder unit, reported his C-47 airborne. . *For the historically minded that's the time the first plane was up -- the tactical beginning of the liberation of Europe.* (Italics ours. Ed.) Crouch and the two planes he led crossed the enemy coast, on the west shore of the Cherbourg Peninsula, at 0006 6 June -- D-Day. At 0016 hours Crouch dropped a stick of paratroops. He thinks, unhappily, that he was 400 or 500 yards off dead center.

There were six drop zones and there were six Pathfinder formations to mark them, each consisting of one flight. The specially trained crews of airborne infantry carried by these planes established certain radio navigational aids on the drop zones and showed marker lights for the guidance of pilots of the main column.

Starting with Colonel Crouch the operation proceeded through 26 separate formations (called "serials" by Troop Carrier personnel) of paratroop-carrying planes, totaling 821 aircraft. After them came serials 27 and 28 totaling 103 more

planes each of which towed one CG-4A glider. The paratroop-carrying planes transported payloads of 5,850 pounds including containers, supplies, equipment and troops. Once over the sea they conscientiously gave the Navy every recognition signal they could think of. Despite the fact that our navies were all over the channel there was no repetition of the Sicilian error in which the Allied navy shot down Troop Carrier planes.

As special equipment, our C-47s had flame dampers on exhaust outlets, the best navigational equipment that could be devised and flak suits for the crew. There was no other armor or armament, and not one ship had a self-sealing gasoline tank.

Aircrews were up for between three-and-a-half and four hours during which time they, without exception, flew magnificent formation, navigated so well that there was not a single case of seriously mistaken drop, and they maintained radio silence assiduously. There were no lights in any of the planes, aircrews were dark-adapted, and the only noise, aside from that of the engines, came from the paratroops, most of whom sang all the way out. There were no aborts or turnbacks short of target, although one pilot made two passes and still couldn't find a DZ, so he brought his cargo home. Not more than a dozen other paratroops were brought back to base – all of them who had been wounded by flak or small arms fire.

The last paratroop serial, No. 26, dropped at 0244 hours, while the first paratroops of the main column (as distinguished from pathfinder crews) dropped at 0050 hours. The split-second timing in between was based on an airspeed of 150 miles per hour except at drop. Naturally, glider tows made their approach considerably slower, although they carried no interior loads. Their CG-4As had payloads of 3,750 pounds, composed of troops, vehicles and equipment.

Weather varied throughout the operation, but in the main it was favorable. Early planes reported ceiling down to about 1,000 feet despite the fact that forecast had been for a 3,000 foot ceiling Later crews found ceiling going down as low as 500 feet – necessitating blind drops – while others found it up to 3,000 or 4,000 with moonlight breaking through. Wind was fresh but not strong; visibility good.

Earlier that evening the entire area had been prepared by as heavy an aerial bombardment as could be dared without giving the whole show away. Tactical surprise was counted on – and achieved. All planes reported flak and two or three were seen to go down in flames, but the concentration of fire which the enemy could have mustered had he known what was coming was definitely not there.

Fighter cover – not escort, but high cover – was maintained over the entire area and a small force of Mosquitoes hung around, bombing, dive-bombing and shooting at flak emplacements and searchlights. They rambled all over the coast and caused a few C-47 pilots to report enemy night fighters. They kept a lot of German heads down.

As for enemy ground interference, there was some worry about things called air landing obstructions which Jerry had placed all over the Cherbourg Peninsula. These are posts about ten or twelve feet high planted in likely landing zones. Some are pointed at the top and they frequently have barbed wire stretched between them. However, we know of no case in which our airborne loads were dumped on these obstructions.

The gliders worried the command most because they came last of all – when presumably the enemy would be alerted – and because they had to fly so slow. However, only one tow plane was lost and only four gliders were prematurely or improperly released. Their job was finished at 0408 hours, and Troop Carrier was through for a while.

Began then what will always be remembered by a lot of us as the great sweating-out. There was for a long time no way to know what was happening to the men we'd dropped. The only signal received from the airborne troops was a panel marker placed at the appointed place and the appointed time indicating where they wanted resupply and reinforcement.

This operation, which had been decided on as part of the original plan,

began before dusk on D-Day. Two hundred and eight C-47s towing 172 Horsa gliders of British manufacture (carrying 6,900 pounds) and 36 American CG-4As crossed the Channel between 2110 hours and 2310 hours. The gliders carried additional elements of the airborne divisions already landed as well as items of resupply -- ammunition, food -- and some heavy equipment to our waiting troops. The following morning, D-Plus-1, 48 Horsas and 150 CG-4As were released over the same spot; 249 other C-47s dropped supplies. Thus the air phase of the airborne operations to "assist in the initial assault and prevent enemy troop movements from east to west" ended at 0900 hours on D-Plus-1. The entire operation had involved 1,371 sorties by 9th Troop Carrier planes, plus 301 by gliders.

OPERATION BACKGROUND

Basically, the operation succeeded so brilliantly because 9th Troop Command received what every Troop Carrier outfit has been seeking since the beginning. For once, a troop carrying organization was permitted to devote itself to training for its combat assignment instead of indulging in freight-hauling right up to the moment of action. The 9th had its own equipment and was not forced -- as in the early Mediterranean operations -- to use mixed, tired and foreign aircraft. Moreover, the high command planning for the operation took into account the various special requirements -- adequate time in which to prepare for the particular operation as well as for operations as a team under varying conditions, a well-marked route to objective, fighter protection and bombardment diversion.

Coordination of the pre-invasion training and of the actual D-Day operations was achieved through the Allied Expeditionary Air Force Headquarters which controlled both 9th Troop Carrier Command and its RAF equivalent. The 9th remained under the 9th Air Force for administration and discipline, but this channel was by-passed for operations -- orders went straight from AEAF to 9th TC.

Troop Carrier, after years of being mistaken for the Air Transport Command (which properly has no part in carrying through and into actual combat -- Troop Carrier's job) and after suffering a great many lean days, made the grade -- with plenty of room to spare.

+ + + + + + + + + + +

We, who had the privilege of serving with the 315th Troop Carrier Group, always knew we had much to be proud of and it's good to read stories like the foregoing because they serve to corroborate our own personal feelings of pride in our Group and its accomplishments.

Keeping in mind that the story was written only a few weeks after the event occured and was based on after-action reports and comments from (presumably) a limited number of participants, one could, without seeming nit-picking, question some of the things said. For example, the line about paratroops "most of whom sang all the way out" *might* have been true of one or two guys who were understandably apprehensive, but for the most part, those paratroopers kept their thoughts pretty much to themselves and didn't waste too much breath singing.

Also, I'd guess that crews who flew the mission on that night would have different impressions and views of what was happening around their planes.

One final thought: It's ironic that the branch of the USAAF we served in -- Troop Carrier -- is no longer a part of the military picture. The development of helicopters and their troop-carrying capability, their ability to set troops down on or very, very near the exact spot required by the tactical situation has obviated the need for troop carrier as we knew it. But, it was great to be a part of Troop Carrier Command as it once was!

Your editor is indebted to Chuck Petsinger for the interesting article we print herewith. Chuck was one of the "Third Lieutenants" described in the article. He's now spending most of his time in Hines Veterans Hospital and some of our readers might like to send Chuck a card at his address there: Charles J. Petsinger, Hines VahECC1b152, Hines Illinois 60141.

The article appeared in *AIR FORCE* Magazine / March 1990

The Third Lieutenants

By J. H. MacWilliam and Bruce D. Callander

The military caste system was alive and well in the early 1940s, but it was soon to clash head-on with the realities of rapid mobilization.

With war already under way in Europe and threatening in the Pacific, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the production of 50,000 military aircraft per year and aircrews to match. U.S. industry, already building planes for Britain, geared up to produce more. Training flyers to man them would be a bigger problem.

The Army Air Corps still required pilot trainees to be at least twenty-one years old and to have at least two years of college, because they were to be commissioned on graduation from the training program. If the Army were to meet the new training goals, something had to give. Gen. H.H. Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps, supported the idea of training enlisted men with high school diplomas and graduating them as sergeant pilots.

Some of General Arnold's staff officers and field commanders had reservations. Britain's Royal Air Force had been using enlisted pilots, and some had wound up commanding crews with commissioned officers acting as co-pilots and navigators. The Air Corps did not want to repeat that social *faux pas*, the officers said.

Still, the Air Corps needed to broaden its pool of potential pilots and there seemed to be little choice but to lower the age and education requirements. In June 1941, Congress authorized the training of enlisted "aviation students" to be graduated as staff sergeant pilots. The understanding was that they would tow targets, fly transports, instruct students, and do other odd jobs. Like the service pilots recruited directly from civilian life and the women in the ferry service auxiliary, they were to relieve officers for combat flying.

Then Came Pearl Harbor

When the United States entered the war, the Army still was woefully short of commissioned pilots, but it had graduated more than 400 men as sergeant pilots, and hundreds more were in the pipeline. The newly formed US Army Air Forces began to use the enlisted flyers wherever they were needed, including combat. Some did, in fact, command crews that included commissioned officers.

By then, the distinction between officer and enlisted pilots had blurred. As the pace of the buildup increased, USAAF lowered the entrance requirements for aviation cadets to admit eighteen-year-olds with high school diplomas. Now the criteria were essentially the same for the cadets who would be commissioned as for the aviation students who would become staff sergeants.

Logically, the solution might have been to commission the flying sergeants, but officials still had reservations. USAAF might find itself overpopulated with officers who couldn't have come within a country mile of prewar standards. In May 1942, USAAF asked Congress to create a new grade above the enlisted ranks but below that of second lieutenant. On July 8, the President signed Public Law 658, establishing the grade of flight officer (F/O), equal in status to that of warrant officer junior grade.

Three weeks later, Headquarters notified all commanders, "It is the desire of the Commanding General, AAF, that these new Flight Officers be accepted in the nature of "Third Lieutenants" by all personnel and that they be required to comply with, and in turn to be treated in accordance with , all the customs and

courtesies of the military service pertaining to commissioned officers."

That November, the first F/O appointments were made as pilot Class 42-J graduated from flight training. They were to wear colored bars like those of warrant officers except that the enameled portion would be blue instead of brown. With no such insignia available, the first graduates doctored officer bars with blue paint. Most pinned the makeshift insignia onto their enlisted uniforms, but a few managed to order the "pinks and greens" they were entitled to wear in officer status. among the first to wear the new rank was a cocky eighteen-year-old country boy from West Virginia. He had enlisted before the war, had become an aircraft mechanic, and had applied for the aviation student program. While he was still in training, the F/O law took effect, and he graduated with blue bars instead of staff sergeant stripes. A born flyer, he was assigned to fighters and became an ace. In the process, he received a battlefield commission. Later, Charles Yeager would become America's leading test pilot and retire as a general officer.

The law that created the F/O rank applied not only to aviation students such as Yeager, but also to aviation cadets. Those who entered after the date of enactment could be graduated either as second lieutenants or as flight officers. By the spring of 1943, graduating classes from pilot, navigator, and bombardier schools were sprinkled with blue bars. The aviation student program had lasted only fifteen months and was phased out. The fact that hundreds of pilots had flown as enlisted men would be all but ignored by aviation historians for many years.

Meanwhile, Back at the War

Though USAAF was creating no more staff sergeant pilots, it already had more than 2,000 of them in the field. By the time the F/O rank was created, at least three enlisted pilots had been killed in a troop carrier unit in the Pacific. Others were flying fighters in North Africa and New Guinea, commanding transports, or performing aerial reconnaissance. Bomber crews were being formed with sergeant pilots and commissioned bombardiers and navigators.

Headquarters gave commands authority to promote the enlisted pilots in their units, but it was a slow and confused process. Commanders debated whether the sergeants should be made flight officers or, since they already were senior to many of the newly graduated second lieutenants, given direct commissions. At one point, Headquarters said the sergeants should be moved through the flight officer rank before being made lieutenants. Two months later, it said they could be granted direct commissions.

At least six more sergeant pilots died in combat and another fifty-eight in training accidents before they were promoted to either grade. Those serving with the 82nd Fighter Group were promoted en masse to second lieutenant before moving overseas. Others made lieutenant or flight officer, depending on where they were and what local policies were in effect at the time. Ironically, those flying with Stateside training and defense outfits usually received their promotions first. It was well into 1943 before those in England, New Guinea, and North Africa received theirs. As late as March 1943, there still were more than 800 pilots flying in enlisted status.

Rapid wartime reassignments were part of the problem. Some enlisted pilots were recommended for promotion at one base but moved to another before their orders came through. In the confusion, some continued to serve for months as flying sergeants.

One of the more extreme cases was that of Robert L. Bryant. Graduated as a staff sergeant in September 1942, he was assigned to the 1st Air Force in the northeastern US, but then quickly transferred to 3rd Air Force in Florida, where he qualified in P-40s and P-39s. Both 1st and 3rd Air Forces issued orders appointing him a flight officer. They caught up to him in North Africa where he pinned on his blue bars and, six months later, received a direct commission from the 12th Air Force. Thirty-two years later, when he retired as an Air Force colonel, Bryant discovered that officially he had never been a flight officer. Both of his Stateside F/O orders had been revoked and, without

telling him, USAAF had revised his records to show that he had been a staff sergeant when he received his battlefield commission. Generously, however, the Air Force did not dock him for the months for which he had been overpaid.

Neither Fish Nor Fowl

If the flight officer program solved the problem of putting enlisted men in command of aircraft, it also created a new one. USAAF was never entirely comfortable with the status of its warranted but still non-commissioned officers. Although General Arnold had said they were to be treated as officers, socially they fell somewhere between the enlisted and commissioned ranks.

They were a particular trial to some of the commanders who had risen through the ranks of the pre-war Regular Army. In the explosive growth of the war, USAAF's numbers had swollen with teenagers commissioned in the temporarily large Army of the United States. The veterans of the "old" Army barely recognized these lieutenants as officers. They were even more reluctant to accept the newly contrived flying warrant officers as their peers.

There were fewer problems among flight crew members, most of whom were recently plucked from civilian life and had little feel for the subtleties of the ranking system. The F/Os who had been sergeant pilots had more experience than most of the newly commissioned officers had. The more recently graduated F/Os often were the classmates of the commissioned officers in their outfits. Their relative ranks weren't that important. If there was any resentment when an F/O was picked to lead a squadron or group, it was short-lived. Combat was not the place to debate one's social standing.

Financially, F/Os were actually a little better off than their commissioned counterparts. Their $150. per month in basic pay was the same as that of junior grade warrant officers and second lieutenants and, like other officers, they received another $75. (half their basic pay) as flight pay. But where the overseas allowance for commissioned officers was ten percent of their basic pay, that for warrant officers was twenty percent. Flight officers collected the warrant rate. Thus, a second lieutenant collected #240 in combat, while a flight officer drew at least $255 and often more because of his added time in service.

F/Os enjoyed another advantage over lieutenants. As the equivalent of warranted officers, they were not given the full responsibilities of commissioned officers. Whereas lieutenants were saddled with numerous additional duties when they were not flying, flight officers usually had their ground time to themselves.

Who Got the Pickle?

One question about the F/O status persisted through much of the war. When the Army had authority to award a flight training graduate either the gold bars of a second lieutenant or the "blue pickle" of a flight officer, how did it decide which he should receive?

Officially, the policy was to commission those with the best training records and leadership qualities and make the rest flight officers. However, there is no record to show that any of the aviation students in training when the F/O law took effect were commissioned on graduation, even though they legally could have been. When aviation cadets could have been granted either rank on graduation, some of the better students received blue bars, while some of those who had seemed on the verge of washing out became second lieutenants. At best, the decision of who qualified as "officer material" often appeared to rest with the subjective judgment of local flight school officials.

Another theory about the appointments was that the flight officer bars went to the men who had been the class mavericks, the cocky "hot pilots" who gave only a passing nod to military discipline. Though they often proved to be the best flyers in their outfits, F/Os had a reputation for being a wild bunch and some determined to act the part.

How many flight officers actually were appointed is uncertain. While the bulk of the blue bars went to pilots, bombardiers, and navigators, the rank was also worn by

and navigators, the rank was also worn by glider pilots, service pilots, flight engineers, gunnery control officers and others. As late as the summer of 1945, there still were more than 32,500 on active duty. By then, of course, many who had held the rank earlier had already been commissioned. A check of the service numbers blocked out for F/Os shows that more than 200,000 were available, and most appear to have been used.

Exactly when the last flight officers entered service is also unclear, but the law authorizing the grade was not repealed until July 1947, two months before the Air Force became a separate service. At the same time, flight officers who had served in time of war were made eligible to receive reserve commissions. The short, turbulent era of the "Third Lieutenant" was over.

+ + + + + + + + + +

Along with the above story, Chuck sent an amusing piece entitled "*Medical Dictionary Written by a Dumb Blond.* After a bit of judicious editing, we reproduce it herewith.

Artery	**Study of paintings**
Bacteria	**Back door of a cafeteria**
Barium	**What doctors do when a patient dies**
Bowel	**A letter like A,E,I,O, or U**
Cesarean Section	**Neighborhood in Rome**
Cat Scan	**Searching for kitty**
Cauterize	**Made eye contact with her**
Colic	**A sheep dog**
D & C	**Where Washington is**
Dilate	**To live long**
Enema	**Not a friend**
Fester	**Quicker**
Fibula	**A small lie**
Hangnail	**Coat hook**
Impotent	**Distinguished, well known**
Labor pain	**Getting hurt at work**
Medical staff	**A doctor's cane**
Morbid	**A higher offer**
Nitrates	**Cheaper than day rates**
Node	**Was aware of**
Outpatient	**A person who has fainted**
Pelvis	**A cousin of Elvis**
Post-operative	**Letter carrier**
Recovery room	**Place to do upholstery**
Rectum	**Dang near killed 'em**
Secretion	**Hiding someone**
Tablet	**A small table**
Terminal illness	**Contracted at airport**
Tumor	**More than one**
Urine	**Oposite of "you're out"**
Varicose	**Nearby**
Vein	**Conceited**

+ + + + + + + + + + + + +

Marty Dean sent the following story to the "editorial office" a few weeks ago and we thought our readers would be interested in seeing another news story about the Douglas DC-3. It appeared in the business section of the Chicago Tribune.

A veteran flies again at Midway

A mainstay of airline passenger service for more than 30 years, the DC-3 "Gooneybird" returned to Midway Airport. Introduced in 1936, the propeller plane became the most widely used airliner in history.

Capable of carrying 21 passengers, the DC-3 is a far cry from the jets that regularly haul 200 or more passengers across the country. Unlike many of its successors, it still is carrying passengers and cargo in many parts of the world.

Continental Airlines, which emerged from bankruptcy last year, used the vintage DC-3 to help inaugurate its resumption of service at the South Side airport. Continental will serve 19 cities from Midway with a discount fare program beginning Wednesday.

The new "Peanut Fares" are less than half the fares on the same routes 50 years ago, Continental said. A DC-3 flight 50 years ago from Midway to Jacksonville, Fla cost $436 adjusted for ilnflation compared with $199 using the new service.

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

A caption of the photo shot over the shoulder of the co-pilot and looking out the side window of the cockpit told of how the aircraft was restored by volunteers at the Continental Airlines Historical Society.

Ziggy Zartman is at it again! This time, he recalls an unofficial night "mission" on which he and Don Glover went joy(?) riding over the English countryside one night in an effort to dislodge the dust which had accumulated on the squadron's L-4 while learning what goes on at a 52nd Troop Carrier Wing social affair. It's a pity some reporter on the *Stars and Stripes or Yank* couldn't have gotten hold of stories like the following because they could have delighted a heck of a lot of us serving in the British Isles at the time. On second thought, maybe it's just as well events like the following *didn't* come out, otherwise our friend Ziggy would have spent a lot of time in the slammer or whatever they called the place crazy pilots were incarcerated. Again, hold on to your hats.

MERRY MEN FROM SPANHOE WOODS INFILTRATE COTTESMORE CITADEL

Maybe it was an anniversary celebration...FDR's birthday or, the General was elated that his C-47 had two good wheels again: whatever, the 52nd Troop Carrier Wing was hosting a soiree in the great-room of their fortress. All of the Squadron and Group "brass" received invitations. General Williams was having a Commander's "Call": the kind of wing-ding where, however reluctantly, field-graders "dolled-up" and showed up. The few Lieutenants and Captains invited would be generally from the Aero-Med units...mostly nurses (all female, then, I think)....skilled, cheerful, vibrant gals who would light up the pageant despite their odd hats (designed by FDR's lady.....good old "involved" Eleanor)? Two of the attendees (Flight Nurses Betty Dries (Conquest) and Janie Zurn) were also from the heart of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal regions...Shamokin: thus, counting me, it was the largest gathering of Keystone State hard coal miners' kids in the heartland of the British Isles since...well, for at least a week.

It could have been Nissen Hut Fever, for some reason I jumped at the opportunity...when Don "Pappy" Glover entered our billet and enticed me with "Ziggy, the L-4's gathering dust. Let's reconnoiter the party up at Wing." Less than an hour later, there we were, Northbound, following the moonlit section lines to Cottesmore...Pappy in the front seat "driving," me, scanning terrain below from the rear seat (map in hand)...DRing (dead reckoning) to the shindig.

On the ground, parked and shut down, the din from the "brass" "both the horns and the "wheels") made it easy to find the pinnacle of merriment! Although, we never did penetrate the "great ballroom", our stealth sorties got us close enough to the action to receive iced-liquid-handouts from the troops tending bar (one of whom was a generous 310th transferee to Wing Hqs.). Peering in envy at the cavorting veteran troop carrier elite, and wondering if I'd ever enjoy such perks, SUDDENLY, the pain in my head sent me a confidential message. I was the designated pilot (front seat guy) for the return flight. My cup, having already runneth over...and, with the merry Pappy feeling no pain, we mumbled garbled agreement that it was time to takeoff for our huts in the Spanhoe forest where other "merry men" in our band awaited the "report" of our encounter with the King's (dang!) the Wing's soldiers!

Airborne and pointed "southerly" we gibbered through the conversations of the over-imbibed for almost an HOUR, when Horatius, the visionary Roman bridge fighter (surely you remember "him" from high school Lit?) now manning the span between my cerebral data bases, sent me a TWX..."COTTESMORE TO SPANHOE WAS LESS THAN A HALF HOUR FLIGHT".

LOST, but blameless, we gleefully started a search pattern, criss-crossing the multi-shaded patches of the moonlit English countryside...undulating and weaving as we bracketed both altitude and heading. Swapping the stick, instinctively went off on wavy tangents from the "sites below that one of us recognized." After six or seven of

these spirited feats, Pappy yelled "Ziggy, we're ALMOST OUT OF GAS!" With that "factoid" our sobriety level improved significantly. Actually, south of Spanhoe there were so many Yank and Bloke bases, that if you had eyes that would focus, it was no big deal to spot one. We finally did.

Sneaking into the base at Molesworth without radio contact, our landing(s) were the kind that please you only after careening to a stop. Dismounting from the thirsty steed, the two "merry intruders' from Spanhoe forest decided that they had "taken enough from the rich" for one night...sprawled onto a patch of grass and succumbed to the muses in the land called Nod-ingham.

The sun was just nudging the horizon when a Crew Chief checking an engine on the nearby flight line made enough noise to wake us. Up to our feat, we finagled some fuel and headed home...undetected at Molesworth and unmissed at Spanhoe! It was a simple lesson in chemistry that two still-maturing flyboys did not soon forget. The newly learned formula: *throttles and bottles mix ONLY if the elapsed time between either is sufficient that a sober observer considers your behavior normal (for YOU, of course)!*

Not "unexpected" on the ETO GI campus, the news of our escapade got "up" to the "old man". Colonel Hamby called us both in for a "talk." Guess who was the only one assigned "additional duty"? Some time later, I was on ORDERS as the 310th Squadron's Soldier Voting Officer. The presidential election was looming in the ZI and the incumbent Democrat, NRA,CCC,WPA...FDR and First Lady Hillary (dang!) Eleanor, wanted every GI to have an Absentee Ballot. Remember? Dutiful, I immediately succumbed to the "additional responsibility"...returning to my hut and burning the midnight oil to devise and implement an effective plan to get the ballots to the 310th voters. BUT, the Colonel wasn't pleased when he found out that "622" and its eager, motivated crew were gone for almost a week *hand delivering ballots to the absentee electorate.....some on detached service, others enjoying R&R official and "basket" leaves.*

The routine RON messages from London, Blackpool, etc. seemed to upset him (I was told this by two reliable sources--the 310th's "First Soldier", Bill Nagle and Jim Kevan. Returning to Spanhoe on the seventh day, mission accomplished, I had only one more ballot to deliver. REPORTING TO THE COLONEL, I reminded him he had said "Zartman, HEAR ME GOOD: Captain Keven (Adjutant) has a box of Absentee Ballots. Take it and be absolutely certain that every member of the 310th Squadron gets one. UNDERSTAND? Grinning (no Mona Lisa smirk for this happy warrior) and expecting at least a "high five" I said "Mission accomplished, Sir! Here is your ballot."

Jumping up from his desk and yelling something like "get out of here before I have you court-martialed for using government property for personal gain" I ran for my bicycle which was parked just outside leaning against the vehicle in the COMMANDER ONLY parking space. Earlier designated the 310th's Physical Training Officer (WOW!)...an early morning jogger, I could outrun at least two members of the Squadron: the Colonel and one of the cooks.!

Regrettably, my gung-ho innocence, misunderstood again, got me another "memo" in my personnel folder.

Gotta go. I just remembered that Gloria and I are registered Republicans and we want to change that to "Independent".....just in case Hillary decides to go it alone in '96.

Ziggy

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

YOU'RE INVITED to send the editor material for the *Newsletter!* Surely, some of you must have an interesting story or memory to share with our readers. So, c'mon guys, sit down and put something onto paper. Just remember: we're a "family" paper and we must be sensitive to our readers' feelings. OK?

Robert M. Davis, Treasurer
WWII 315th Troop Carrier Group Association
7025 Wind Run Way
Stone Mountain GA 30087

Dear Bob:

Here's my check for $10.00.....1 year's dues to the Association
20.00.....2 year's dues

NAME.....SQUADRON.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....ZIP.....

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR REGISTRATION
Please print all information and send the form and your check to Bob Davis at the address given.