



# 315th Newsletter

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FEBRUARY 1995

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The march to Milwaukee in 1996 is underway. Start planning now on signing up.

Brochures obtained from the Chamber of Commerce promise alluring things await; far more than those of us briefly stationed there in '42 remember. Admittedly, our focus today may be somewhat changed!

As agreed by the membership at St. Louis, contact has been made with an organization specializing in arranging military reunions. They have offered a draft program which will be reviewed by the 1996 Reunion Committee (myself, Bill Brinson, Bob Cloer) appointed by Past President John Andrews.

But first, what do you want when we meet in '96? Ask your spouse/companion what they might want. Write, phone, whatever, but give us your suggestions. Of course not all can be accommodated, but each will be carefully considered.

J. S. Smith,

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

**Bill Brinson comes through again with a very interesting contribution to this issue of the Newsletter.**

## A C-47 NAMED 'EILEEN'

On D-Day plus 4 of OPERATION MARKET GARDEN the British First Airborne Division was still stubbornly defending its area outside the city of Arnhem, but desperately needed re-supplying and reinforcing. To assist in this undertaking, 114 C-47 aircraft of the USAAF's 314th and 315th Troop Carrier Groups were scheduled to drop paratroopers of the Polish Brigade on a nearby drop zone.

The weather that Thursday in the English Midlands where the troop carrier bases were located, was almost as bad as it had been the previous day when the mission had been postponed. The weather was scheduled to improve, however, and, according to official reports, the lead serial of 27 aircraft of the 315th Group began taking off from their base at Spanhoe at 1310. This formation assembled at a low altitude and started on course but soon ran into solid cloud. Twenty-five of these planes returned to the airbase, and the other two, after circling above the clouds for some time, sighted a later serial and tacked on to it.

The second serial of 27 planes from the 315th was instructed to take off in single file and they assembled at ten thousand feet on top of the cloud bank. Proceeding on course at this altitude, the formation headed toward the Belgian coast and slowly descended to an altitude of 1500 feet when the clouds thinned.

As the formation approached the designated drop zone in Holland, it began to encounter a considerable amount of light anti-aircraft and small arms fire. The time was around 1715.

At approximately 1720 on the afternoon of 21 September 1944, C-47 Nbr. 42-93029 (with the name "Eileen") belonging to the 309th Troop Carrier Squadron, after dropping its stick of paratroopers, crashed and exploded in an apple orchard near Bergerden, in the Commune of Huissen, Holland. It had evidently been struck by enemy fire a few minutes before it went down. Those aboard died in the crash.

In the spring of 1994, almost fifty years later, (the same length of time between the end of the

American Civil War and second year of World War I), a young Dutchman, Mr. Harry Van de Beld, who is interested in locating the site of crashed planes, came across a diary written by a Mrs. Gerda Knuiman of Huissen. An entry in the diary told of a "Dakota" aircraft that crashed in an apple orchard on a Thursday afternoon in September when Mrs. Knuiman was a young girl of thirteen.

Using this information and his metal detector, Mr. Van de Beld located the crash of C-47 #3029 in the new apple orchard of Mr. Kees Uitewaal. Subsequent excavation revealed numerous small metal fragments. Among the many items recovered with a "dog tag" that belonged to the Crew Chief (Tech/Sgt. Russell W. Abendschoen) who was aboard the aircraft, five British coins, and a metal fragment approximately three by four inches clearly marked "Dynamotor DM 33A, Western Electric."

The finding of these items and the crash site was brought to my attention first by a telephone call from an American, Mr. Robert Smyrl, of Cheltenham, PA who had learned of the discovery from a Dutch business acquaintance. Later, I received two telephone calls, in addition to letters and photographs (and a small piece of the aircraft) from Mr. Van de Beld, the discoverer of the crash site. Mr. Van de Beld told me that he had learned that the five aircrew members (Lt. Cecil W. Biggs, Pilot; 2nd Lt. William L. Pearce, CoPilot; 2nd Lt. Thomas R. Yenner, Navigator; Tech/Sgt. Russell W. Abendschoen, Crew Chief; Staff/Sgt. George G. Herbst, Radio Operator) were buried, first by the Germans next to the crash site. The bodies were later moved by the Dutch people to a local cemetery in Huissen, and later to a military cemetery in Neuville-Liege, Belgium. After the war, their remains were interred together at Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky.

Among the photographs Mr. Van de Beld enclosed in a letter is one of him kneeling beside a small marker erected by him in a row of apple trees. The marker has a World War II American steel helmet on top and an inscription written on a small

plaque beneath it. Mr. Van de Beld wrote "I erected a monument to remind us that the people who died here died for our freedom. They deserved to have a monument."

Who named "Eileen" and for whom was it named is unknown fifty years after it crashed. What is known, however, is that Mr. van de Beld, who was not yet born at the time of Operation Market Garden, and the people who live in the vicinity of Bergeden continue to honor the crew of "Eileen".....men who gave up their lives half a century ago. The Dutch have not forgotten.

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**Mr. Van de Beld would like to have a photograph of any of the crew of "Eileen". If any former member of the 309th Troop Carrier Squadron has one, and would like to send it to Holland, the address is:**

**Mr. Harry Van de Beld  
Klaphek No. 5, 6851 Huissen,  
The Netherlands**

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**Letter from H.B. Lyon about the book *Poles Apart* which we have mentioned in previous issues of the *Newsletter*.**

**Dear Ed:**

*POLES APART*, the Polish Airborne at the Battle of Arnhem written by George F. Cholewczynski is a well-researched account of the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade commanded by Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski before and during their participation with the Allies against the Germans in "Market Garden" in September, 1944. This was the largest airborne mission in military history although it did not succeed as planned and resulted in a disaster for the airborne forces. We speak in reverence for our own 315th Troop Carrier Group casualties of dead and wounded who gave their full measure of devotion to duty and country.

This book is a tribute to the valor and courage of the Polish paratroopers

who fought bravely with distinction during this battle, although from the beginning, all of the Poles were under the assumption that they were being organized and trained to parachute into their capitol city of Warsaw to liberate their countrymen from four years of oppression and slaughter by the Germans. It is a gripping account of the tough Polish paratroopers fighting, sometimes seeming to be alone, with pride and effectiveness against the enemy despite tremendous odds against them. Not previously told are actions of individuals and small groups which attest to the fighting abilities of the Polish Brigade. There are "human interest" stories of the alliance with the British Red Devils and especially with the Dutch citizens who gave them caring support providing medical care, food, shelter and assisting the soldiers in spite of their own casualties. The Dutch people still extend in spirit and actions the meaning of the slogan "Lest We Forget."

The haughty treatment of General Sosabowski and the Polish soldiers by the political and military leaders of the Allies will be a revelation to many and this is a story which should be told. Sosabowski was a brilliant, seasoned commander and his experiences could have contributed much to the cause and would have probably saved many lives if the mission planners, particularly Browning and Montgomery, had listened to his sound advice.

Included is a brief history of the Polish nation that has been fighting for their country and freedom as a constitutional monarchy since 1791. They are still fighting back and through their part in "Market Garden" have earned the respect which they so richly deserve. I recommend this book to our readers.

Sincerely, H.B. Lyon

**Here's an amusing incident experienced by J.S. Smith and his crew on a mission to the Italian island of Sardinia. As he says, "Recollections have been known to become jumbled, but what follows is reasonably close to the event."**

A few days after the Italian surrender, I and the crew departed beautiful Blida scheduled for a loading stop at Maison Blanche, then on to an airfield in southern Sardinia with a cargo of communications equipment. We cautiously inquired about the tactical situation there: such as who was now shooting at whom? The fuzzy assurances that all was in order left us doubtful. Someone did suggest it would be a splendid idea to buzz the runway and make sure it was clear of debris. Amongst ourselves we agreed it would be tough reading "Achtung Minein" signs at fifty feet. Off we went.

We arrived without incident at what we presumed was the correct airfield, did the runway look and landed. Some obviously extremely excited Italians came out (I learned later that is their natural state), a few in smoke-pouring vehicles, others running along the taxi way. Approximately thirty or so waved directions, all different. We slipped into a hard stand without crushing anyone, shut her down and opened the loading door. The crowd parted as a jeep-like vehicle drove up with a magnificently white-uniformed individual of obvious importance riding in the back. We de-planed and waited casually while he strode to a commanding position in front of us, made a short but impressive speech (in Italian) then shook hands with each of us. As I recall I asked if anyone in the crew spoke Italian. None did. I believe I then queried the welcoming group asking if anyone spoke English. None stepped forward. Probably a wise decision.

While part of the crew stayed to unload, two or three of us were motored off toward the cantonment area, our driver using his hands more to talk than to steer. Taken to the mess hall, a head table had been set on a dais. We had the places of honor. The room filled with chatter, completely unintelligible. Surprise! Spaghetti arrived. The white uniform rose to speak and all became quiet. About the time he opened his mouth the air raid sirens wailed. That took care of the speech and the spaghetti. We were rushed outside and pushed toward an air raid shelter. Flak guns started going off. A couple of British fighters screamed over the field followed by a lone British Dakota jinking madly. Somehow we convinced our hosts those were friendly folks and not their former German buddies. We all trooped down to the airstrip to greet the arrivals. A tall officer stepped forward and in his best Oxford accent asked, in effect, "what the hell are you bloody Yanks doing here." We replied rather crisply "delivering stuff." We failed to mention that by being on the ground we'd probably saved his British ass. He turned to our erstwhile host and addressed him in perfect Italian. Off they went, leaving us standing.

Turns out the British were the advanced element of an official Allied occupying party. Seems what the Italians had been trying to do was surrender the base to us.

Thinking back, if I'd signed up in college for that Italian language course, by now I might be the Governor of Sardinia..

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**Now that we have you chuckling, here's something found in an old issue of the British humor magazine *Punch* which, alas, is no longer published. Anyway, when *Punch* magazine noted that passengers on EI Al were being given a card with an appropriate prayer, its staff produced this additional prayer for air travelers:**

**A PRAYER FOR THE RESTORATION OF LOST BAGGAGE  
AND THE CORRECTION OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE**

*O Lord, our grips and hold-alls  
Have vanished once again.  
Our bags and trunks and hold-alls  
Are lost by wicked men.*

*Forgive not their transgressions  
Too hastily, O Lord,  
Restore us our possessions  
Then wield Thy flaming sword.*

**Ed Fulmer, a much-decorated Pilot who served with the 315th TCG told your editor at the St. Louis reunion that he would be sending me some things I might consider using in the *Newsletter*. The material arrived in due course and after reading what Ed had sent I *knew* it was going to go into the very next issue. Below are reproduced Ed's covering letter and "parts" of letters he had received from former British paras. Our thanks to Ed for the material.**

Dear Ed :

I am sending you parts of letters sent to me from England. Three of the paratroopers who were on our plane in the Market Garden operation on the 18th of Sept. '44. We have kept in touch with each other for quite a few years. Albert Spring, Jim Westbury, Fred Bramly. Fred has visited me three times and we expect him next month for our 50th wedding anniversary celebration that our children are putting on for us.

These three went to Holland for the 50th Anniversary of Market Garden. There were five days of celebration at Arnhem and I thought their account might be interesting enough for the *Newsletter*.

This is an account from Fred Bramly:

Dear Ed: At last I can put pen to paper to tell you about my trip to Holland to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Market Garden. I spent a week there and enjoyed myself immensely. I was hosted by a lady, who incidentally, was a widow and very nice too. She made me ever so welcome. At the service in the Arnhem cemetery, Prince Charles, who is Colonel-in-Chief of the Parachute Regiment, and Queen Beatrice were there. I spoke to the lovely lady and how charming she was! All the children put flowers on every grave. It has been done every year since the war. A very moving sight. Later we had a concert and reception at the Arnhem Sports & Leisure Center. About 2000 people were there. Afterwards, we had lunch and later were presented with a medal. On the face of it was inscribed "A Bridge of Arnhem and a Bridge to the Future." We were also entertained at Appeldoorn Barracks where they had the hospital for the wounded. They also gave us a plaque with details of the battle. I hope to show it to you some time in the future. Around 40,000 people lined the streets.

General Hackett spoke at length to us and how amusing he was. He spoke about the walking stick he always carried in action. Well, on his way down to Geinkle Heide DZ, he lost it. When he landed about 10 Germans surrendered to him and he refused to take them prisoners until his stick was found. With that, the Germans helped him to find the stick, and on doing so, he said "the war has now started, so you are now prisoners of war." What a man!

This is Albert Spring's account.

My son Philip and I went by night ferry from Harwick in England to the Hook of Holland --a seven hour trip. We docked at the Hook at 0700 hrs on Thursday the 15th. We drove to Amersfoort and had breakfast with Hans Vervoorn and his wife. Hans and his wife were our hosts throughout our stay in Holland. Hans, of course, was one of the Dutch Resistance at the time of our involvement with the incident of Aircraft 697. Right after breakfast we got smartened up a bit and drove to Oosterbeek. From there we went by bus to Appeldoorn where we were entertained very well indeed at the Barracks of the Dutch Military Police, and they looked very smart, were extremely well organized and looked after us very well indeed. This lasted from 10 o'clock in the morning until

6 o'clock in the evening. We were then taken back to Oosterbeek by bus and we drove back to Amersfoort. Friday the 16th, another day of parades and speeches and free meals; and it rained all the time -- entertaining, yes; enjoyable, no.

Saturday the 17th, we arrived at the Geinkle Heide, our dropping zone in 1944 if our plane had not gotten into trouble. [Editor's note: this last phrase is a marvelous example of British understatement! As we know, AC 697 was blasted out of the air by flak and Spring says "if our plane had not gotten into trouble."] It was still raining, but the drop by approximately 700 paratroops took place in spite of the wind and rain. There were very few mishaps. Just a few sprains and a broken leg or two. The estimated crowd was about 170,000. Later that day we had lunch and in the late afternoon we did another big parade. This did not finish until after 7 o'clock in the evening.

Sunday, of course, was the big day beginning with a service in the Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek for Arnhem veterans. Each veteran was allowed one member of his family or a friend, of course widows or a son or a daughter of the dead were allowed a ticket also. There were 600 local school children who carried bunches of red rose buds, and at the end of the service, they placed one rose on every grave. That was a little bit traumatic. I noticed a number of people shedding a tear; but Ed, there is no shame in shedding a tear for a friend. The estimated number in that cemetery was three thousand. There are 1764 Airborne buried in that cemetery. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands was there and, of course, our Prince Charles; and a tremendous number of lesser officials. Queen Beatrix was terrific! She spent almost an hour talking to the wheelchair veterans. It was obvious that she was enjoying what she was doing and not just looking on it as just doing her duty.

In the afternoon of this day we did a silent march from just outside Oosterbeek to the bridge at Arnhem. This took almost three hours. The column about a kilometer long and six abreast was terrific. We had all the children who had been at the cemetery with us; and how they loved it! They again had red rosebuds and they gave each veteran a rose bud on the march. Of course we wheeled our wheelchair cases with us. When we reached the bridge there was a terrific number of wreaths to be laid and then the bands played. At the end of it all, three buglers played. It sounded beautiful. The night was just beginning to fade; then 50 buses arrived to take us back to Oosterbeek.

Now Ed, this is not so easy; on the 19th we had a rest day so we visited Oosterbeek and Arnhem. We had taken wreaths with us and I laid a wreath on the grave of A.E. Penwill. He was the paratroop that was killed jumping out of aircraft 697. While we were in Arnhem, we were standing in the street; we were not wearing medals or anything like that while waiting for my son Philip to come out of a shop. An elderly Dutch lady stopped and looked at Jim Westbury and me and she said "Ah, you are English." I replied "Yes ma'am" and she just put her hand in her shopping bag and gave both of us a little present. She said, simply "For you." I said "Ma'am, what is this for? You know all we brought you was war." She looked at me and said "No, you brought a treasure. It is called 'hope'" and she was gone. When I looked at Jim there were tears running down his cheeks.

On the 20th, 21st and 22nd we traveled all around central and west Holland visiting the surviving members of the war-time resistance. We laid wreaths on the graves of all the **persons who had helped us in September, 1944.** On every wreath I had put the same words: *IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE FROM THE SURVIVORS OF 697.* So remember, Ed, you were one of them also.

On the morning of the 22nd we visited Nellie Zylstra. We were treated very kindly. She is a very nice and kind person and I delivered to her your message, of course. We had tea and coffee and cakes or biscuits. There was Hans Vervoorn, his wife, Wil, Jim Westbury, his daughter Rhona, my son Philip; and we all agreed that Nellie is a very extraordinary person. Of course, we had taken a little gift for her.

Nellie Zylstra was 17 when the Nazis almost put her father in a concentration camp. Her eight year old brother flirted with a firing squad by caring for me. Her home was destroyed as the Nazis fought British and American army units for Ophuesden. She was crippled at the age of 15 from after-effects of a polio attack. Today she is a Notary Public and lawyer appointed by the Queen. I have kept in touch with her through the years and visited her in 1990. A wonderful person to know.

Here is Ed Fulmer's closing paragraph:

Ed, I hope you can read this. The other papers (also enclosed) are a piece written by Jim Westbury for an English paper. Thought you might be interested in his view on that day we got hit. Hope this letter finds you and your wife in good health. We send our best wishes for the New Year.

As ever, Lucille & Ed

**Together with the letter excerpts reproduced above, Ed Fulmer enclosed a most interesting letter written by James E. Westbury, one of the Parachute Regiment troopers who was in Fulmer's plane on the "Market" mission. The letter, which we print in its entirety, was written, apparently to the *Letters* editor of an English newspaper which had carried a story about the Arnhem memorial ceremonies.**

126 Abbotsford Drive  
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To the Editor, Letters  
Arnhem Memories

Dear Sir:

After reading your story, *Sunday Express* 14 August regarding impostors, trying to gatecrash the 50th Anniversary of the Airborne Landings, I thought you might be interested in the following account of an episode that happened during the period of the Arnhem battle.

On the 18th September, 1944, I was among a party of 17 paras of "B" coy 10 Para Regt, commanded by the Platoon Sgt. in a Dakota aircraft chalk number 697, flown by the all American crew, Pilots Lt. Spurrier and Fulmer, Radio and Navigator Cpl Hollis and Crew Chief Russell M. Smith. We were part of 4 para Bdge bound for the dropping zones west of Arnhem at Geinkle Heide. At about 2 pm, we were hooked up, and in jumping positions on the final run to our destination when the aircraft was hit several times by Ack Ack fire and proceeded to fall apart. To add to our difficulties, the aircraft dropped like a stone, pitching everybody in untidy heaps.

However, by some means, the pilot regained some sort of control, and we were able, with help from the Crew Chief and some colorful American cursing, to regain our feet. On investigation, we found the chief pilot (Spurrier) was dead and the 2nd pilot, Lt. Ed Fulmer although wounded, was keeping the plane flying somehow. By this time the cockpit was ablaze, and the flames were creeping down the cabin towards yours truly, who began to feel the first pangs of apprehension. In his soft Tennessee drawl, Cpl Russell M. Smith ordered us to get the hell out of it, or words to that effect.

Encumbered by our body weight of equipment, guns, kit bags etc, we struggled toward the exit. There, helped by pushes, shoves and downright kicks from our gallant ally, we all exited the plane.

Eye witness accounts put the height of the plane at that time, at less than 200 feet. As this is 600 feet below the lowest official safe height, it was dicey to say the least. But as it was jump or burn, we had no choice. I know I hit the ground so hard I felt numb all over. Wondering if I was dead, I opened my eyes to find myself lying behind the machine gun, firing at someone disappearing in the middle distance. Who? I have no idea to this day. After our Sgt had rounded us up, we found we had two fatalities: Cpl Hollis the American radio man and one of our comrades, Albert Penwill. Both as a result of chute failures. Other casualties included the redoubtable Cpl Russell Smith and para Cpl R. Baker, both with broken legs. Others had broken fingers etc and the Sgt I'm sure had some busted ribs, although he denied this.

We could still see the planes passing overhead en-route to Arnhem, so we knew we were in the wrong place, but where? We took up the defensive positions best we could and awaited the expected German attack. Howsoever, our next visitors were three Dutchmen carrying a small Union Jack and singing "God Save the King." They quickly identified themselves as members of the Dutch resistance, and in good English, informed us that the Germans were already seeking us. They suggested that we "lit for the tall timber" as our American friends put it. A suggestion we heartily agreed with, so carrying our injured, we followed them to a farm house near the village of Kesteren, which we learned was 26kms from Arnhem, and far to the west and south of our target. Miraculously, they produced a doctor, who speedily bandaged and splinted up our casualties, then vanished, but not before placing in the window a quarantine notice warning of Diphtheria in the house and to stay clear. This clever ploy stood us in good stead a day or two later, when a German patrol approached the farm with the evident intention of searching it.

But, on seeing the notice, they decided against it, unwittingly saving their lives as we were prepared to fire if they had tried to force an entry. Our friends also brought in the news that our gallant pilot, who had landed the blazing plane a mile or two away, had survived, although suffering appalling injuries. He was taken to a doctor's house in the village of Opheusden. The Dutch resistance must have had a magic lamp to produce a doctor to order. There his wounds were treated as best possible, and hid in the cellar. The extent of his injuries can be judged by the doctor's report, a copy of which I have before me. "Severe burns to face, chest and back. Both ankles and wrists broken. A damaged spine and shrapnel wounds to both cheeks, resulting in the loss of several teeth." Other than that, concludes the report "he was in good shape and would, no doubt, survive." "A tough son of a bitch" as our American Cpl so quaintly put it.

It was now time to decide what to do and how. Try to reach Arnhem, or go south to reach our fellow American paratroopers, battling on the other side of the river Waal. However, the problem was quickly solved by the leader of our three underground friends. He was, I'm sure, an agent of S.O.E. [Editor's note: S.O.E. = Special Operations Executive, a secret British organization set up by order of Winston Churchill "to foment and sponsor resistance to Hitler's rule of occupied Europe.] This man's intelligence, as regards to the Arnhem battle, proved 100% correct. He and the Sgt had received word, how I don't know, that we must evade capture at all costs and to try and reach safety to the south. And so began a week of hide and seek. Each day our three friends, plus our intrepid Sgt in civilian clothes, armed with false identities, including passes showing them to be employed by the Germans on defense projects.

Mounted on bicycles, they head off in the direction of our next point of call. All German strong points, check points, etc. were carefully noted along the way, in preparation for that night's



move to a new safe house. Of course our Sgt was quite a renowned gamekeeper pre-war, and the smallest of our three friends was an equally renowned poacher. We had the experience of two experts to guide us through the darkest of nights to our new destination. We had, by this time, left our two cripples, Cpl Smith and Baker, both with broken legs of course, in the care of other underground members. They assured us they would see them to safety as soon as they were fit to travel. By God, they kept their word. Sometime in October, both men reached the allied lines safely. The icing on the cake was the safe return also of Lt. Ed Fulmer, carried out by these courageous Dutch people.

No escape story is complete without some treachery along the way. To our regret, we had it happen during our escapade. Someone informed the enemy where we were. Luckily we had already moved on when our safe house was raided. Highly frustrated, the Germans set up an ambush. Regrettably a number of unsuspecting resistance fell into the trap. The result was entirely predictable; a quick interrogation, then a bullet in the head. The episode left a nasty taste. The Dutch, for their own good reasons, no doubt, have always refused to discuss it with us. However, it has always made us uneasy that, however unwittingly, we were the cause of those men losing their lives.

The next day we reached the river Waal, 1/2 mile wide at this point. We hid up while resistance groups on both sides of the river planned our crossing. In the small hours of the morning we were transported across in small rowing boats. Using muffled oars and keeping as quiet as dormice. It reminded me, for some reason, of Washington crossing the Delaware. Once we heard enemy craft, patrolling the river, but succeeded in making it safely. Once again we resumed our mode of traveling and after a couple more days we finally made contact with a patrol from Guards Armoured Division. Our journey was over, bar the shouting. Our 3 friends who had accompanied us every foot of the journey, bade us farewell and Godspeed us as we said our good-byes. We were once more back in the army. We were swiftly whisked to Nijmegen, where we shortly met up with the few survivors of the Bn from the debacle that was Arnhem. Even with us, we numbered less than 40 men, out of the 500-plus that had been dropped with such high hopes, days ago.

On our return to England, our Sgt in his report, stressed the devotion to duty, gallantry of the American crew, but to our regret, although they were honored by both the Dutch and American governments, nothing was done by ours. Seemingly, awards for gallantry can only be recommended by an officer and a gentleman, so a Sgt hardly qualifies on that score. Any fool soldier knows that an army without them would quickly fall apart.

We are going to Holland this September, the Sgt and his son, my daughter and I, to stay with one of our old resistance friends in Amersfort. Of course he is now Hans Vervoorn, professor of medicine, a big cheese now, advisor to the Government on Tropical Diseases, but the same old friend.

We also have been invited to be guests of honour at the festivities in the districts these events took place.

The whole reason this letter has been written is that in case you publish the whole or condensed version, a copy could be forward to the enclosed address. It would be a fitting salute from us both, to a band of courageous people who will always have our deep respect and gratitude.

Yours sincerely,

James E. Westbury

Once more, gentle readers, we are favored with another of Ziggy Zartman's wonderfully detailed accounts of an experience he managed to survive. As usual, the text is sprinkled with pithy comments that add immeasurably to the pleasure of reading it.

## TWO Bridges too Many?

On February 1, 1995, the Rocky Mountain News (via a Deutsche Press release) reported "flooding" in Holland...around Nijmegen. 100,000 Dutch residents forced to leave low-lying areas -- THE LARGEST EVACUATION SINCE WWII! The headline prompted me to "remember" (50 plus years ago) when the 315th Troop Carrier Group aircrews flew some exciting sorties involving the bridges over those now-swollen rivers, a story the Deutsche Press, then, didn't know was unfolding. After some fierce Allied/Nazi combat, the final ACHTUNG was uttered in "occupied" Holland. I didn't hear it, but I'm glad that I was there (with you guys and our Allied friends) making it happen!

Our Group, wearing war-torn A-2 Flight Jackets; the other, battle scuffed jump boots...many, brave and reckless Troop Carrier and Airborne guys -- "troops" in Ike's (Supreme Commander Eisenhower) Allied forces fought their FINAL BATTLE during the action to liberate Holland. NONE OF THEM GOT TO READ author Cornelius Ryan's post-war book *A Bridge Too Far*, or to see graphic motion picture (showing actual WWII footage) based on the book. We survivors who did, agreed, I think, with Ryan's report that Monty's (Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery) strategy included ONE BRIDGE TOO MANY -- the heroically fought-for bridge over the lower Rhine River at Arnhem. But, now in our seventies (don't get too excited, guys, after all some sixteen thousand veterans of WWI are still on Uncle Sam's "cheque-list"....we, most of us, not even born when they fought)....anyhow, at least one of us, ME, now disputes Ryan's report. Yep! You can take Ziggy's word for it, there were actually TWO

bridges too many! With fifty plus years of hindsight, I've reckoned that the "Corpus Callosum" bridge on the "neuro" stream between Monty's cerebral data banks, also, went TOO FAR. A battle-proven strategist, yet Monty rejected, or gave little weight to many warning messages that crossed his bridge during the preliminary strategy sessions. "Traffic" on his neuro span included intercepted (decoded) Wehrmacht tactical information, recon photos showing Panzer forces near the DZs....Dutch on the scene (resistance forces) advisories concerning the battle zone. Unlike a sage old tree, Monty had not learned to bend with the breezes. Salient too, on Monty's bridge were neuro rumbles that "twin pistols George" (Patton) was fast becoming the legend of WWII. The immodest hero of the Sahara sand dunes battleground (North Africa) needed to do something about that! HE DID, and "they" called it MARKET GARDEN. The legendary General George Patton, unfortunately, started another reincarnation (his belief) after a fluky Jeep accident when the battlefield guns had been silenced. Another facet of the MADNESS "they" call WAR!

This war story, UNDERWAY somewhere around mid-day (maybe 1300 hrs) Sunday, 17 September 1994. As the minute hand on the cockpit panel clock jerked toward the ETA (arrival time at the turning point on our maps, now visible thru the windscreen. Twenty one hearts in the back end pulsed faster as the eager paratroopers (ten each on the facing folding metal bench seats) tensed, alerted by number 21, their jumpmaster!! Bob Sutton (maybe Jim Drummey?) leading our three plane Flight (310th Squadron) eased us into a gentle left bank,

turning away from the main formation (first Serial) which was heading for the DZ's (Groesbeek and Overasselt) located just south of nearby Nijmegen. A nine plane V of Vs (from the 315th's second Serial) would drop the rest of the small task force (a single Company of the 504th Parachute Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division) which was assigned to capture the west end of the crucial Grave bridge. The troopers, many veterans of the drop at St. Mere Eglise (D-Day, Normandy) again led by General Jimmy Gavin who jumped with the main group at the Overasselt DZ, were to link up at the bridge; the mission of the main force of the Battalion was to capture the east end of the bridge, thus, securing the long span over the Maas River intact.

We didn't know it at the time, but earlier, as our formation cruised toward the Continent (altitude around 1500 ft.) somewhere abeam of London heading for the Island coastline north of the Thames estuary; Commemorative services in Westminster Abbey for the Battle of Britain heroes (Spitfire and Hurricane crews) was interrupted (attendees left the Abbey and went into the streets gazing upward) by the drone of aircraft engines -- ours - and hundreds of other airborne forces, some aircraft towing gliders loaded with troops and equipment, others providing an airlift for veteran paratroopers, plus the roar of fighters providing cover and FLAK interdiction. MISSION---the capture, intact, of key bridges in Holland; Monty's battle plan.

Approaching Holland's North Sea coast, nearing the off-shore islands, puffs of gray/black smoke (close enough to hear the popping noises that came with each burst of Flak) prompted me to wonder if maybe I should be sitting on three folded flak jackets instead of just two. BUT, alas, why worry, the "brass" already had us scheduled to be back over these Kraut "shootzenplatzen" tomorrow, dropping the red-bereted veteran blokes of the British 4th Parachute Brigade at a DZ somewhere northwest of Arnhem. OBVIOUSLY, the "brass" knew something we

troops didn't! And, later, back safely at Spanhoe airbase, they proved to be right! Of the eight or ten 50 caliber holes and maybe one or two of the larger, jagged ones --20mm) puncturing old "622", none were of any consequence. Some, the Crew Chief, Fred Drysdale, patched; others he just left temporarily (time then a critical factor)to whistle in the slipstream. The crew (and "622) reported "ready for duty" at the early morning roll call on the 18th. The machine patched, swept clean, test-hopped, refueled and pre-flighted, the crew rested, freshly shaven, fed (probably heaping portions of SOS) and wearing clean underwear. BUT, I'm getting ahead of my story.

OOPS! Interestingly too, while all this was going on, Queen Wilhelmina, the active and revered Dutch monarch, was not in the castle. Despite German efforts to capture her, she escaped to London early in WWII and directed Dutch strategies from her vantage point across the Channel. Unless my cerebral cell loss is greater than the "envelope" of my age group, I'm certain that I read that Winston Churchill kept her briefed, and, that we were in her thoughts and prayers as our aircraft sped toward drop zones in the land of windmills, canals, wooden shoes and (during the war) wooden bicycle tires...sections of the land over which she reigned, recovered from the North Sea...prior battles won (and lost) with Nature.

Now FINALLY, back on course, just minutes from the DZ, both rows of troopers, already in "stand up and hook up", the rugged veteran 82nd jumpmaster and Fred (wearing a Limey style, quick release chest chute) standing near the open doorway, the hinges and any snag points pasted over with duct tape. Fred readied himself (GREENLIGHT ON...now jumpers rushing by) to pull in the flapping static lines; then quickly, to signal (yell) the jumpmaster, using the nearby jack and headset, had tossed it to Oakie McKim (RO) standing in the companionway....the message for the cockpit to HIT THE THROTTLES.....remember, we're LOW,

SLOW and VULNERABLE to ground fire when in a drop mode. Oakies' relay, by the time it reached me, had been changed somewhat to "Get the hell out of here".

Don Hyder, backup pilot, his right side vent (window) already open, readied the survival kit "burp" gun---extra clips in his lap, as I shoved the throttles forward and nosed down, diving, he thought, for the banks of the nearby Maas River. BUT, the bridge spanning my convoluted data banks (unlike Monty's) had not yet been "captured"...for, with no aforethought, I suddenly, impulsively, banked hard left, circling back to observe our troopers hit the ground on the "bullseye"...DOWN precisely where they wanted to be; mission accomplished! No sign yet of the other nine aircraft participating in the drop....no indications of enemy reactions, no flak, no ground fire...except for scurrying paratroopers, a quiet DZ...the superstructure of the long, multi-sectioned bridge clearly in sight, beams of sunshine piercing the scattered clouds shadowed some of the assembling paratroopers....then, banking steeper into a tight 180, rolling out, I nosed "her" on down and dragged the grassy DZ, wagging the wings while returning the wild waves (and unheard yells) of the special troopers (if you really know "jumpers", every last one of them DAMN GLAD to be out of the plane that gave them "the ride" as we roared by at 2200RPM, 33 HG, Full Rich on the control pedestal) now finally heading for the Maas River/Canal, our chosen westerly route to the North Sea. We didn't see the other two aircraft in our flight until back at Spanhoe. I had had the left wing slot, and, I believe that Fleetwood Guthrie had the right wing slot. Whoever picked the Grave DZ (the site, date and time) deserved a "high five" from everyone who was there.!

Low, directly over the Maas, with the Waal, Rhine and Mass Rivers all in the vicinity, I'm not 100% certain of the river...the events

being fast, furious and fifty years ago, sometimes banking jerkily to get a better look at a barge...some underway, most moored to canal docking walls, we soon learned as we observed the ever-present, kinda ragged laundry lines, that entire families lived aboard. Once, spotting a lone German soldier running across an adjacent field, his hands in the air, banking toward him (Don insists that he thought I was going to land and take him prisoner), but I blew the opportunity! Actually, my intention was to scare him just enough so that his JI (Jerry Issue) underwear (as he dove for the ground) was marked with something other than his serial number. FORTUNATELY, as we went between widely spaced trees at the end of the field, it was light, probably temporary field communications wires strung byk the embattled Krauts that suddenly appeared on the windscreen (too close to miss)...some sharp DINGING noises on the fuselage indicated that the props had chewed and spit out some pieces (some bits of which we later found on the inside of the engine cowl...the prop blades showing some wire insulation smudges). As we returned to the canal, we surprised a three-man machine gun squad sitting near their weapon atop an earthen dike. Don got in a hurried burst from the burp gun, but quickly, we zoomed by, now heading away from the canal. We elected to bypass the coastal port area--no doubt heavily fortified with AA sites. Open water beckoned...the confluence of the Waal, Maas and Rhine Rivers/Canals creating a great, island-sprinkled bay...the North Sea straight ahead. We stayed low until the shore line was out of sight -- well beyond the offshore islands, then climbed to maybe 3000 ft. reduced the power settings to a normal cruise, engaged GEORGE (auto pilot), relaxed, savoring the hot, cooked meal, warm shower and comfortable bed that awaited us at Spanhoe (wondering how the "poor bastards" back at the DZ WHO GOT NONE OF THE ABOVE were doing. C'est La Guerre!

With home base visible in the windscreen and the control tower reporting "no other traffic", hoping that none of the "brass" were watching, we dragged runway OB/26, curled back and landed. Tired, hungry and probably smelling kinda musky, we debriefed, then headed for the mess, shortly trekking toward our Quonset huts chomping on the fruit of the day...AWARE, that early tomorrow we'd be "up" getting ready to airlift the British 4th Parachute Brigade to a DZ just northwest of Arnhem....the "blokes"...the kind of fighters you want on your side. Why, though, do they refer to our beautiful Gooney Birds with that lackluster name "Dakotas"?

An interesting postscript: Don Hyder (after the Green Project) went home, got his Doctorate in Agriculture and Horticulture, then headed an "Ag" Research Center at Colorado State University. I know this, because recently while in Ft. Collins (CSU's campus), after almost fifty years, we met again and talked away several hours over two cups of gourmet coffee which Don, of course, bought. In the mid-fifties, he headed a U.S. delegation to an 'Ag' Conference in Helsinki, Finland. On the way back to the States, he toured Holland. Once, while riding a train, engaging in conversation with an old gent sitting next to him, unbelievably, when Don mentioned our exploits over the Dutch bridges during WWII, the Dutchman's eyes lit up. As a young man (then living near Grave) he had actually watched the paratroopers jump as our formations flew by, low and slow. Don also got to discuss with him the many problems...when first diking a section of the North Sea (as the Dutch do)...then pumping away the sea waters, coping with the seeped deposits of sodium chloride, the slow, long term process of regenerating the recovered polders until it was suitable farmland.

Gloria, me and the kids, too, got to meet the Dutch people "up close and on their bikes"

during a leave while stationed at Rhein Main AFB Germany. And, not to be forgotten, in 1728, my Great (plus more) Grandfather Alexander and his wife Katharina sailed a three master named ALBANY for the Colonies...landing in Philadelphia, having departed from Rotterdam. I keep telling you guys it's a small world.

Gotta go. It's time for Gloria and me to plan another trip...somewhere South. It'll be cold in Milwaukee next year at the reunion and I want to show up with a neat tan...be good for my image!

Ziggy

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**Here's a smile from Bill Brinson:**

PLANE TALK...a recent flight from Washington,DC was uneventful until the landing in Indianapolis was completed. The plane was taxiing to the terminal but suddenly came to a complete stop in the center of the airport. The passengers became restless after a while as the plane sat there with engines idling. The pilot finally made this announcement over the intercom that defused the tension: "Ladies and Gentlemen. I flew this multimillion-dollar aircraft all the way from Washington, D.C. in the darkness of night and found the airport on my first try. However, I now have to sit here and wait until a guy with a couple of 99-cent flashlights shows me where to park it."

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**NO MINI-REUNION IN RENO OR FT. WORTH THIS YEAR!** In the November Newsletter, Len Thomas offered to host a Mini-Reunion in Ft. Worth this year. Bob Cloer made the same offer for one to be held in Reno...in both cases, if there were indications of enough interest. There seems to be very little as Thomas received only 2a contacts and Cloer only 5. Both thank the individuals who showed an interest and also the ones who didn't. Saved them both a lot of work!!!

When we open our mail these days, we find some interesting letters.  
Here's one from our old friend Steve Bolling.

AN OPEN LETTER TO ZIGGY

Please let me reply to your great article "Command Pilots... Aces....or Asses" before Cog and I are swamped with nasty letters from all command pilots who read Ed's great *Newsletter*.

I always have, and always will...and I'm sure Cog concurs.... greatly admire Command Pilots and would love to have been one had I remained on active duty. However, I believe to this day they should "command" the plane...not fly it, surely in sticky situations. Let me quote you: "show me a line pilot with a CP rating (one whose principal duty was flying airplanes) and I'll....". Now if their principal duty was flying airplanes, then they were already in the left seat, and did not have to "command" it.

Later in your article you referred to Gen. Scott's book *God was my co-pilot*....note that he did not say "first Pilot". I was a Sgt. not a General, but I sure as hell would have given him any seat he wanted!!!

Keep up the writing, Ziggy. I love it!

Stephen Bolling NCP (Not Command Pilot)

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WITH DEEP REGRET WE RECORD  
THE DEATH OF THESE COMRADES:

Ernie Bellmund	Dec. 1993
Thornley C. Carey Jr.	Nov. 18, 1994
Jack R. Hamilton	June 30, 1994
Ralph E. Kornrumpf	Nov. 14, 1994
Andrew Kovalchick	Oct. 23, 1994
William Ludwig	Dec. 23, 1994
Samuel E. Peek	Aug. 9, 1994

**Bob Cloer remembers.....**

**CHRISTMAS EVE 1944**

I'm sure that last December many of you saw the same TV programs that I did as we came close to Christmas. Many programs showed our poor GIs 50 years ago freezing in the snow during the Battle of the Bulge. Do you remember where you were that Christmas eve? I don't know where I was but I can remember being so darn cold that I thought I was going to freeze and I hurt all over.

Like Bernie Pleasant says -- after all these years, it's hard to separate fact from fancy, so I dug out my old Pilot's Log Book and my Form 5. On the 18th of December, I logged 4:30 day and 2:30 night. That was the day that William (Little Perk) Perkins and I flew part of the Glen Miller band to Paris. After a long wait, we finally unloaded the band and equipment and were about to leave when we were stopped by some Army officer. He said that we were to haul a load of PWs back to England. After another long wait, we said to heck with it and started to leave. We had just started to taxi when this bus load of Army Nurses pulled up in front of us. This Sgt. came on board and said "here is your load." We said we were asked to haul a load of PWs back; he said "that's what you got -- pregnant women that we are sending back to the States." It had been a different day!

On the 24th of December, crews had been alerted to standby to take in replacements to the Battle of the Bulge. We had some new crew members in our hut. As I was not scheduled to fly, I gave one of them my sleeping bag and flying gear.

Later that afternoon they called for all the planes that were left to take in more replacements. My Form 5 shows that we logged 3:55 that day and we made two landings. That means we landed somewhere to pick up these troops. Does anyone remember where we loaded these troops or who they were or where we took them? My Log shows A68 wherever that is.

I remember that it was getting dark when we arrived at A68 and there was snow on the ground. After we unloaded our troops we were told that we could not leave and would have to spend the night there as there were too many

German fighters in the area. As I remember there was nobody there to pick up our troops and they just dug into the snow under the plane for the night. I think these were all fresh troops from the States. Does anyone remember what out it was?

Thank God the Germans were poor shots. Here we were, all these C-47s lined up nose to tail on the taxiway and the German fighters came over that night and strafed the field and I don't think they hit a single plane!

The crew slept in the plane and we darn near froze; think of those troops sleeping in the snow! The next morning the Crew Chief and I pulled the props through many times to get the oil loosened up a bit. We were sweating out getting those engines started in that cold weather just on the battery. MERRY CHRISTMAS! we got the engines started, made some coffee, warmed up the old Gooney Bird and logged 2:40 going home to Spanhoe. I guess they saved us some Christmas dinner -- can't remember much about that.

Do any of you remember where the first flight of the 315th went that day and who you took where? Who were the troops we took to A68; where did we load them and where is A68? Let's see how good your memory is!!

**ONE OF OUR MEMBERS FROM  
HOLLAND ASKS FOR HELP!!!**

**Jan Bos, our Honorary Member from Nijmegen, is doing research on the invasion of Sicily. During Husky II on 11/12 July, 1943, 23 C-47s and C-53s were shot down by the Navy. As members of the 60th and 62nd Troop Carrier Groups came up to form the 309th and 310th squadrons, Jan wants to know if any of you were involved.**

**Jan Bos and Father Thuring were two of the hard-working committee members who were back of all the work on the new Liberation Museum dedicated to the men who helped free Holland. The 315th is well represented at the Museum. Please help Jan if you can. His address: Dukaatstraat 5, 6532 RE Nijmegen, The Netherlands.**

**Aubrey Ross recommends a place to stay in London**

December 11, 1994

Dear Ed:

A couple of items for the Newsletter if you have some room in the next issue. First I would like to tell our members about a British Club in London that is open to all of us who served with the Allied Forces. **The Victory Services Club** is a 229 room hotel and club located a block away from Marble Arch and Hyde Park in the city's posh West Eng. The Club has two restaurants, a bar, library, and prices you would never imagine in London. Dues are ten pounds per year. I stayed there last September (1994) in a single room for twenty-two pounds per day; nothing fancy but adequate for a place to sleep. The address is Victory Services Club, 63-79 Seymour Street, London W2 2HF, or call them at 071-723-4474.

When I was in England I visited **Fulbeck Hall** near Grantham which is near Spanhoe; this was where a lot of the Airborne was quartered during the war. Mrs. Fry is collecting exhibits so I sent her a copy of *Three One Five Group*. Enclosed is a copy of the letter she sent me. All of those people around there treated me like a celebrity. I recommend a visit if any of our guys get near there. Address is Fulbeck Hall, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG32 3JW, United Kingdom.

It was great seeing you at the St. Louis reunion and I am looking forward to seeing the (reunion pictorial) book. Hope you and your family have a good holiday season.

Best regards, Aubrey

**Here is the text of the letter Aubrey refers to in his letter:**

Dear Mr. Ross:

Thank you so much for sending me "Three One Five Group" by W. L. Brinson and for going to the trouble of finding a copy for me. I am building up quite a library of books connected with Arnhem and I shall add this to it.

I wonder when you went to your reunion whether you met any others who may possibly have had memories of Fulbeck Airfield or of Arnhem. If you have any contacts I would be most interested to hear about them.

I do hope you come back to England again. If you do so and would like to come to Fulbeck Hall, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Mary Fry