



315th Newsletter

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IT'S RESERVATION TIME FOR THE 315TH SEPTEMBER GATHERING IN SAN DIEGO.

September 18-22 is the dates for the 315th Troop Carrier Group Association to gather once again, this time in San Diego, California. In late May Armed Forces Reunions (AFR) reported that reservations are already arriving. As with the latest reunions, attendance will likely include increasing numbers of members' daughters, sons, siblings, grandchildren, relatives and guests.

They come to share a brief sojourn in the past with those of the "greatest generation," their travails and sorrows, but mostly their remembrances of comradeship, dedication and commitment.

San Diego's attractions are many. On Thursday a City Tour/Seaport village visit is offered. Friday a Cruise/Old Town visit and Saturday a trip to the famed San Diego Zoo. On Sunday it's Tijuana, Mexico. Temperatures in September vary from 77 to 65 and days are typically sunny and mild with low humidity.

Arriving by ground the city is reached by Interstate 5 up from Mexico and extending north along the California coast. Interstate 15 feeds from the north and Interstate 8 from the east. Arriving by air all major carriers serve the San Diego International Airport.

This Newsletter includes sign up forms for the reunion, related tours and hotel registration. After August 16th AFR will only accept registrations on a space available basis. The same cut-off date applies for reduced hotel rates. Refunds will be on a case-by-case basis up to September 13th. Granting a refund depends on whether tickets can be resold to another attendee. When contacting the Handlery Hotel be sure to state "315th Troop Carrier Group Association" to obtain the reduced rate. Be aware there are penalties for late cancellation of hotel reservations or changes in departure dates after check in.

Sign up **NOW**

for San Diego

Sept 18-22

Each reunion is a biennial opportunity for families to gather. Special hotel rates are available, tours can be selected, the traditional banquet shared. At each reunion first timers appear, old friendships can be renewed, new stories told (*some believable*). If you are unable or unwilling to travel on your own, sign up an offspring or a friend to come along.

315th TROOP CARRIER GROUP ASSOCIATION

Olmsted, Florence, Aldermaston, Blida, Spanhoe, Amiens

OFFICIAL NOTICE BOARD

Message from the President:

“California, here I come!”

That familiar song should be a rallying cry for those of us still able to remember “the good old days” - if that’s what they were, considering some war memories. Today everything moves faster (excluding us) and the days whiz by, while our minds and bodies coast along at a different pace. Personally, I don’t try to keep up; I just try to keep going. And that brings up a reminder, “Have you made your reservations yet?”

Here’s a personal challenge to our California gang! There are 25 Association members living in your area, another 25 in Central California. How about it?

Besides greeting old friends and renewing experiences, there are a variety of activities and special places to visit in the San Diego area. Also, the hospitality room will have a collection of WW II material and memorabilia and hopefully the first copies of the expanded edition of Bill Brinson’s book, *Three One Five Group*, available for purchase. Also, we’ll hear from Dr. Bill Oldson, who heads up a depository of WW II personal experiences.

We also have a couple of business issues that require member action. Of course, there’s the election, but also there’s the future of our association with an aging membership and continued publication of our *Newsletter*. Chip Hamby does a superb job with the web site and provides a great wealth of information and communication. However, not everyone has computer access.

Frankly, I’m probably being nostalgic, but I’ll be in San Diego or wherever we go because the friendships, like the experiences we share, are indelible, but fragile.

Have you made your reservations yet?

Richard T. Ford
President

*American Theater *Naples-Foggia *Sicily *Normandy *Northern France *Central Europe *Rhineland

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This is the fourth welcome appearance by Association President Dick Ford. After WWII he returned to civilian life and a career as a fire fighter in California's Division of Forestry. He was recalled during the Korean conflict, then back to civilian status but to remain in the Air Force reserves and retire as a Lt. Colonel in 1972. He stays active today as a consultant and advisor on fire and arson matters

THE LAST FLIGHT

by Dick Ford

A straggling, war-weary C-47, made airworthy at Waller Field, Trinidad for one final mission, and I departed Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico on September 27, 1945 into a cloudless day destined for Augusta, Georgia for the last flight of our WW II service. It turned out to be a possible final flight for both of us.

Flying over the network of keys that dotted our course, I reveled in the panorama of endless white sandy beaches and the blue Caribbean Sea, make fast passage of this routine leg to Miami. Upon approaching the Florida mainland, that first sight of "home" which had brought tears of joy to cabin loads of war-hardened GI passengers, struck me too, realizing that the war was finally over for me, too.

I soon began thinking about getting home and my wife and an 8-month-old daughter whom I knew only from photos. As we droned on through Florida, afternoon clouds rapidly began to thicken and develop into mushroom formations, creating a solid wall ahead of us. Nearing the Florida border, already on short instrument intervals, increasing turbulence forced me to a lower altitude and heavy rain began pelting the aircraft like a car wash. At high speed, windshield wipers created only a ribbon of forward vision to confirm the dark, solid cloud deck ahead.

Lowering the seat for extended instrument flying, I rechecked the gauges and confirmed the flight panel was fully operational. Storm conditions continued unabated as the clouds thickened and turbulence increased. By now, rain was hitting the windshield like a wall of water.

About five minutes into instrument flight, the oil pressure reading on the right engine began to fall. A couple of minute later with a rising cylinder head

temperature, oil pressure dropped to zero, requiring the engine to be shut down and feathered. We were now in the middle of a raging, widespread thunderstorm.

A check of the radio facility chart showed Savannah to be the nearest airfield, so I declared a single engine emergency and requested a DF heading. The tower provide the flight heading and cleared other air traffic for the emergency landing, warning that the field was open, but expected to be closed shortly by the approaching storm. I related we were about 50 miles away flying on instruments and reported the nasty flying conditions. By now I was concerned by the extended, heavy demand upon the left engine but, except for a minor rise in engine temperature, it continued to perform normally.

Several minutes later the tower operator advised emergency equipment was standing by, that I was cleared for a straight-in approach and reported a lowering 500 foot ceiling with one to two miles visibility.

I broke out of the clouds about two miles from the airfield directly in line with the runway and reported "field in sight" to the tower. As I lined up with the runway for my approach I had to crab sharply to counteract a sever crosswind. With dead engine on the lee side of the plane I kept a fast final approach and dropped the landing gear when the runway was reachable. I eased away from the crab angle and finally had to drop the left wing parallel with the ground because of the severe crosswind landing without flaps. Only later, the tower advised the wind velocity was 40-50 miles an hour. That was probably the best landing I ever made despite the adverse conditions. Neither tire squealed even so slightly on touchdown. However, during the landing roll I had to fight to hold the plane on the runway and couldn't even get the tail wheel unlocked with power to turn on the upwind taxiway. So that's where it was left to be towed away.

About noon the next day another C-47 ferry stopped off and we deadheaded to the scheduled destination to await transportation to a deactivation center

This is Jake Sternoff's first Newsletter appearance. He enhances each Reunion with his singing, taking us on a nostalgic trip with songs of the past. Jake was immensely proud of his Russian born, hard working father. (see the end of this article.)

REMINISCING

by Jake Sternoff

I had to register for the draft in October 1940, and, would you believe, I was drafted that December. I was granted two, three month deferments because of the family business until June 1941. On the way to my induction I said, "Pa, do you remember when you wouldn't let me join the Boy Scouts?" (*He had feared it would make me more service eligible.*) He replied, "yes, my son, I remember" and started to cry.

Although unhappy at the time with his decision, I could understand his feelings. In his Russia, army life was much different from my tour of duty. I loved my father very much, and admired his skill at iron working. He was equally proud of me when I got my pilot's wings.

After a six-month stay at Stockton Air Base, California, as a \$21 a month private, I advanced to assistant mess sergeant for \$54 a month. I had a few days off each month and augmented my pay by an additional fifty to sixty dollars a month, singing for dinners, luncheons and funerals, plus helping a local auto wrecker prepare scrap for sale. Man, was I rich!

Shortly after Pearl Harbor I was accepted for the Air Cadets and should have graduated in Class 42-K, but due to a long waiting period and a badly fractured ankle, did not make it until 43-K, a year later. I was not excused from any of the obstacle courses or physical training. I still carry the metal pins in my ankle. And I am certain that if I'd graduated with my original class I might very well not be here to write this story. Who knows? It was basically a matter of luck, wasn't it? I wanted to be a fighter pilot, but getting assigned to the "Flying Truck Drivers", read Troop Carrier Command, probably spared my life. I missed the Sicily and Anzio drops because of the delay. Sicily was where the U. S. Navy mistook the C-47s for German Junker bombers, and suffered a friendly fire attack. Most of us flew

our missions in Normandy, Holland, Battle of the Bulge and the Rhine drop. One more time: it was still a matter of luck, wasn't it?

The last of nine children I am now the lone survivor, age 83, and do not expect to outlast one brother who died at age 96.

With the 315th I was the 309th's special service officer and served on the Group's Council. Making the "champagne run" to Rheims and Epernay was fun, as was the "beer run" by truck to Burton-on-Trent. The summer of 1944 brought a beer shortage, and I could not get the few small barrels I'd been able to scrounge from the pubs in Corby, Waldon and Waverly, all near Spanhoe. But you should know in the 309th our non-com clubs had plenty of beer. Others were on ration. We did spread our bounty to the other squadrons, all for one! Another part of the job was flying training films and newsreels to British and American air field. Sometime the weather changes seemed as dangerous as flying combat.

One memorable and amusing incident occurred in late August 1944. Returning from a re-supply mission to Brussels, I flew left wing position to Bert Petersen. For the life of me, neither of us can remember who flew on his right wing. We hadn't reached the Channel when I heard on British Armed Forces radio that Paris had been freed. I called Pete to find out if he had heard. He said no. After a few moments I asked, "Whaddya think we should do? Go to Paree?". It took Pete about three seconds to call back, "Ah Paree!" We peeled off and headed for Le Bourget where Lindberg had landed seventeen years earlier. The Germans had bombed the runway and it was a little dicey getting on the ground.. Pete vaguely remembers asking his crew chief after we landed "What does the right engine sound like to you?" The chief replied, "About three days in Paris!" Well then, there was no question: we had an oil pressure problem. Yeah-sure! And we had a crew chief co-conspirator to back us up. Imagine our surprise when we saw that Dinah Shore, the entertainer, had beat us there by twenty minutes - legitimately.

Technically, and correctly, one might say we were AWOL. I asked Pete what excuse we were going to give at our Courts Martial, which was

inevitable. He replied: "Low oil pressure, of course." We subsisted for three days on the 10-in-one rations stored under the fuselage floor. I sent perfume home to my three sisters and bought Dom Perignon brandy for "sustenance" on the return trip. Fast forward to our return and hearing. The Courts Martial officers listened to our sad tale, and practically laughed us out of the hearing room with only a reprimand. I knew they were jealous of our guts! We had hoped they might have, at least sent us back to Paris for a short stay at the Bastille. That would have been better than our mandatory visit to Southport for "battle fatigue."

After VE Day (1945) our Group was sent to Trinidad to fly the final legs of the Green Project, carrying veterans back from Europe. The start point was Marseille, then Oran, Marrakech, Dakar, Liberia, Ascension Island, Natal, Belem, Atkinson, Trinidad, Puerto Rico and Miami. Remember how some of you had your wives meet you in Miami? Most of us settled for the first glass of fresh milk in two years.

In July of that year I faced a situation almost as scary as our war time flights. Flying from Trinidad to Atkinson, about a two-and-half-hour flight, with me was co-pilot Richard Ireland from Kokomo, Indiana, a great guy who made his first reunion in Dayton and who passed away this past September. At about the half waypoint the left engine started spewing fire through the cowl flaps. Reluctant to flood the engine with foam I had to decide whether to go on to Trinidad or head to a landing strip off the coast of British Guiana - named Shell Beach. The problem was that once landing on Shell Beach you had to wait at least two or three days for rescue, or have the problem fixed, whichever. As I looked back into the fuselage I saw veterans with five or six hash marks on their sleeves. Many of them were bent forward, looking towards the cockpit - they had seen the fire. I made up my mind, no treetop jungle or beach landing. My decision was: On to Trinidad.

We were at about six thousand feet---and after three or four attempts of trying to put out the flame with a series of quick dives, alternately closing and opening the cowl flaps, which scared me as well as my passengers --- it worked! Don't ask why, it just did. After another twenty minutes the fire broke out

again. After putting it out a second time, I opted to feather the prop, praying the fire remained under control. Calling ahead I received May Day landing priority; meanwhile losing very little altitude. At Trinidad the veterans, almost to a man, told me, "Sir, I was just about as scared when that engine caught fire as anytime I spent in combat. We want to thank you. " Imagine, they wanted to thank me. With tears in my eyes, I thanked them for the sacrifices they had made, for the months of foxhole living and under fire of all sorts. They were the real heroes - the men on the ground. And let's not forget the glider pilots, with no engines to bring them home. They couldn't buy a round trip ticket. Never did think that they got enough recognition.

As thousands of others, I look back at my war years as "the best years of my life" and my wife will probably hit me with a frying pan when she reads this - claiming that my best years were the ones I spent with her. And after more than fifty two years of marriage, she could be right.

I cherish the friends I made in the Air Corps, and have kept to this day. There were many Troop Carrier Groups in the various theaters and they all have their own stories of the excitement, laughs, and mishaps--just as we do ours. Our ranks are thinning, and with the passage of time I wish we could meet more often, before taking that final flight. And, if I remember correctly, I'll keep the flaps up except for a short field takeoff. With lots of love for my "Band of Brothers."

(Jake Sternoff's father was born in 1871 on a Ukraine farm. His mechanical skills were honed as an apprentice blacksmith. At age 21 he joined the Army and among other duties served as a Kremlin guard. Jake visited Moscow in 1965 and as he says, "walked in my father's footsteps." His father, after marrying the "most beautiful girl in town," worked as a blacksmith in the Caspian Sea area oil fields. Later it was helping build the southern branch of the Trans-Siberia railroad. With two children when the Russian Japanese war broke out in 1904, and fearing recall into an anti-Semitic army, he made his way to German to work for Krupp industries. Then in 1905 he emigrated to Sioux City, Iowa and with an older brother worked for the Soo Line RR. He was employed for various railroad companies and shipyards until opening his own company, Superior Forging and Tool Works, during World War One.)

*(Navy stuff but feelings any aircrew member can relate to.
From Daedalus Flyer, Spring 2002)*

The Gospel According to Fresnel

Author Unknown

In the beginning the Lord God hath created the heavens, and the aircraft carrier, and the seas upon which to float it, and yet there was complete darkness upon the face of the Earth.

And as I traveled there came to me, as a voice out of the darkness, an angel of the lord saying, "On centerline, on glideslope, three quarters of a mile, call the ball." I reflected upon these words, for I was engulfed in darkness, and I raised my voice saying "Clara."

And God hath spoke to me, and he said, "You're low. Power."

As the Lord sayeth, so shall it be; and I added power and lo! The ball riseth up onto the bottom of the mirror. But it was tainted with a red glow and surely indicated Satan's own influence.

And God spoke to me again, saying "Power! Power! Fly the ball!" And Lo! the ball riseth off the top of the mirror and darkness was upon me.

And the voice of the angel came to me again saying, "When comfortable, twelve hundred feet, turn down wind."

Whereupon I wandered in the darkness without direction, for surely the ship's radar was beset by demons, and a great confusion was cast upon CATCC. Even my TACAN needle spinneth from time to time like a crazy monkey and I fell into despair.

And Lo! There was great chaos, and a great turmoil within my cockpit, for a multitude of serpents had crept therein and I smiteth them.

And though I wandered, as if by providence I found myself within the holy corridor, at twelve hundred feet, among my brethren seeking refuge.

And the voice of the angel of the lord came to me again, asking about my needles, and I raised up my voice saying, "Up and centered" and the voice of the angel answered, "Report coupled."

I reflected upon these words, and I raised my voice in prayer, for though both of my gyros indicated it is not so, surely my aircraft hath been turned upside down.

Whereupon I laid my hand upon that holiest of devices, and moved the switch, and Lo! The spirit of the lord did fill my aircraft, for it seemed to take a life of its own, and guideth me onto a centered glide though I toucheth not the controls myself. And God spake to me saying, "Roger ball, coupled."

And though the ball began to riseth at the in-close position, miraculously the jet stoppeth upon the flight deck, for it hath caught the four wire which God in his infinite wisdom hath placed thirty feet farther down the deck than the three wire. And thus bathed in the golden radiance from above, my pilgrimage was at an end, and my spirit rejoiced and was truly reborn.

ZIGGY FINDS A SPEED BRAKE

by "Ziggy" Zartman

I was shooting "touch-and-go" landings and take-offs at Spanhoe with four glider pilots aboard. In turn, I would let each glider pilot make three to five landings and take offs. I had just cleared the runway when the tower called....a friend of Fred Drysdale, the crew chief, wanted to come aboard and visit with Fred. I landed and taxied to the meeting place where a jeep had dropped him off. I was flying as an IP from the right (co-pilots) seat. Fred had introduced me to his friend so after exchanging greetings I taxied back on the runway and began a rolling takeoff with the tower's clearance. We had just lifted off when the tower called. Our removable steps were still extending from the side of the aircraft. Fred had forgotten to remove them. Fortunately, they remained in place and I was able to land with mishap.

NEW EDITOR

Family circumstances require that this issue be the final Newsletter under the current editor. Arrangements are being made for a replacement

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Alaska resident "Jake" Wilson has appeared a number of times in past Newsletters. He has spent a career in his beloved Alaska as a well known bush pilot and registered guide. He has authored two books on his experiences there.

CLOAK AND DAGGER STUFF

by "Jake" Wilson

Good jobs were easy to come by in 1943 and I had a good one. I was in command of a C-47 Troop Carrier transport and had been invited to the war in North Africa, to be followed up by more war in Sicily and Southern Italy. It was a good job for a young, adventurous guy like me. We were stationed near Algiers in French Morocco.

The main part of the job was to haul airborne infantry (paratroopers) and drop them behind enemy lines, but we didn't do much of that. Not in those particular wars. Primarily, we flew priority freight to the front lines and evacuated wounded. That was fine and we didn't get shot at much, but it was sometimes dull and boring. We adventurous souls were always seeking an "exotic" trip, the kind handed out on a one-to-one basis, in other words, take your turn.

Mine finally came. The Operations Officer called me to his office, and said, "Jake, I think I have one here you will like. This calls for a guy with plenty of night flying experience and you qualify. You go here (on his map he pointed to a well-known dirt airstrip not too far away). You are to get your load there," he said.

"And do what with it," I said.

"Damned if I know," he said. "That's all they would tell me."

"One of those things," I said, "but it sounds interesting. I'll take it and thanks, Sig." Those secret trips were always a challenge even if a bit scary.

So we prepared for the trip. A full crew would be chosen which meant five men, a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, crew chief and radio operator. The navigator would be the most important member. He was the guy who would get us to an unknown destination in the dark. We all as crew members worked well as a team, together

When it was time to go we flew to the isolated airstrip as instructed, then waited to see what would

happen. In awhile we saw a small convoy approaching. British Lorries. They drove up and a bunch of guys jumped out, dressed in British paratroopers uniforms, complete with parachutes and duffel bags. But they were funny looking guys and the co-pilot said, "Who the hell are those people?"

"Damned if I know," I said, "but they sure as hell are not British paratroopers." They were mostly little bandy-legged guys with dark complexions, not necessarily Italians, but something else. We had no idea what. A British captain told us not to try talking to them since they would not understand us anyway.

A major showed up with some rolled up maps and took my navigator with him and give him a briefing in a nearby old building. I thought it funny that I, as pilot, was not included in the briefing but that is the way the "Limeys" seemed to do things.

After that, the navigator had the maps and told me he would tell me where we were going as soon as we were airborne. So be it, gotta keep this secrecy up till the last minute!

We loaded the men up, the full dozen of them, and began to get an inkling that they were, in fact, spies. The fact they were wearing British uniforms bore that out pretty well. Dressed as such, they would be treated as POWs if captured by the enemy and be protected under the rules of the Geneva Convention. A plausible explanation. What were we getting into here????

Airborne, we headed north and while climbing out to altitude, the navigator showed me where we were going. Italy! Our forces were battling the Germans there and working their very slow way up through the Italian Mountains. They had not reached Rome yet, but would someday. We were to go into a place north of Rome and drop these guys in a large valley, apparently an isolated part of the country. The plot thickened! And the knowledge was scary. It looked as if we would probably get the hell shot out of us, but we has asked for it so, so be it! The place we were headed was miles behind the enemy lines. Very dangerous country, you betcha!

Darkness was approaching as we passed over the island of Sicily and the navigator could correct his course by map reading as we passed over the island.

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We could see the mainland, a mountainous country, on our right. We proceeded on a northerly course.

The navigator said, "I was told that when we near the Anzio Beachhead, they would put on a show for us while we pass over the shore." A diversion tactic to distract the German anti-aircraft batteries they have in place on the shoreward mountains."

I hope it works, I thought. And it did. When we got opposite the beachhead, they sky lit up like a roman candle. Every ship in the harbor, every gunner on shore, started shooting. There were star shells, parachute flares, flak, smoke and fire. A noise even heard above the sound of our engines. The damndest fire show we ever hoped to see. We passed right over the first high ridge in Italy and as far as I know we did not receive any hostile fire. Instead of eyeballing the sky they were all watching the beachhead show and did not even hear us. We were on our way into a hostile country, so far so good.

We proceeded on, in the starlight. There was a half moon just coming up over the horizon and the sky was perfectly clear. We could be able to see well enough to proceed easily by map reading. We remained at altitude to cross another mountain range. The old adrenalin kept pumping as we sat there with our flak suits on and steel helmets donned on our heads. A small protection, to be sure, but welcome.

Beyond that second high ridge there was a wide, long valley and the navigator told me to go ahead and let down. With power reduced we eased downward and it became almost quiet enough in the cockpit to talk in normal voices. So far so good! Leveling off at about 750 feet AGL, we could see roads, railroads, rivers, darkened villages and farmer fields, well enough to get us to our destination, which would be very soon.

A white church steeple in a village ahead was pointed out by the navigator. This was our initial point where we turned toward the drop zone. Then, there it was, directly ahead, a flashlight on the ground sending its signal to us in Morse Code. It seemed to say, "here is the place. This is the drop zone." Everything was falling into place. Things did not always work out quite that way, but this time it seemed everything was in its rightful sequence.

I told the copilot to flash the red light. This signaled the paratrooper cloak and dagger men to "stand up and hook up" to an overhead steel static line, standard procedure to pull their rip cords just after they jump.

Then, green light now on and right over the flashlit drop zone, we could feel the men jump and lighten our load. They were gone! Gone to whatever their fate would be in the enemy country. Ta, Ta, brave men whatever you are doing; hope you live!

When our crew chief hollered they were clear, I turned left and eased the engines up to METO power and we skedaddled the hell and gone out of there. We had received no small arms fire whatsoever, not so far anyway. We gave that old C-47 all it had and it responded beautifully as those fine old airplanes always did and got us on our way home.

Then back over the mountains and out over a darkened Mediterranean Sea, a southerly heading toward North Africa and home. We were nearly out of danger now unless the Germans had night fighters patrolling the sky, which was not too likely.

Then home to our Blida base snoozing in the late night. We felt good, and safe once more. My bedmates grumbled as I entered the barracks and told me to be quiet and quit clowning around. I hollered for them to get up and greet their great hero who had just returned from Italy. All I got was a grumbled response.

And that was it. The end. Nothing more was ever said about that secret night mission where we had hauled an even dozen cloak and dagger men to their destination and whatever their fate was to be. We did not receive credit for a combat mission, nothing.

In fact our flying time was never logged either, absolutely nothing was ever heard about that mission again. I have no proof that the flight ever occurred.

Well, after almost sixty years it don't matter anyway. No one cares nor should they. To me, however, the memory is vivid on that night mission when we prowled the skies and flew into enemy territory on a secret mission. I won't forget it ever!

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This article initially appeared in Air Force magazine dated January 1945. It describes an Arnhem re-supply mission in which the 315th was a participant. President Dick Ford provided the article.

SPECIAL DELIVERY TO NO MAN'S LAND

*by First Lt. Joseph D. Guess
Air Force Staff*

When the full story of the "miracle" of supply is finally written, one of the most absorbing chapters will begin in the operations office of a Wing of the 9th Troop Carrier Command, at its base in England.

The date was September 29, 1944. I had been nine days since the first paratroops and glider-borne fighters had dropped into Holland at the beginning of the greatest airborne operation in history - the attempt to turn the German Line at Cleve.

The Wing, commanded by Brig. Gen Harold L. Clark, had carried its share of those fighters to Holland. It had ferried across the First British Airborne, a Polish brigade and three-fourths of the U. S. 82nd.

But men must have supplies to continue fighting. Food and ammunition and guns. Blood plasma. For two days that need had been acute. But the English fog had held the Wing's planes firmly to the ground.

Today, at last, the fog was lifting and the sun was showing.

At 0800, it was decided to run the mission. Soon the motors of more than 200 C-47s would be making the ground throb beneath them at the Wing's bases. General Clark looked at his overall plan. One of his officers pointed out that the plan called for landing at three bases in Holland. They looked at their map of the day.

"The enemy isn't cleared from three fields in this area," the officer said. "The situation is confusing there. At this moment we have no fields to land on." With his finger he indicated a point on the map two miles north of Grave and eight miles southwest of Nijmegen. "There's a small German fighter field there that may be cleared by this afternoon. But that's only one field."

"Give us three hours," Said General Clark, "and one field and we'll land and unload all planes." The C-47s were loaded.

By 1100 the German fighter field - with 1,000 yard by 1,400 yards - had been cleared. The Germans had been pushed from one to two miles away. Whether they could be held there was an open question.

At 1115 the first of the C-47s, its seams bulging with tightly-packed cargo, lumbered down the runway and took off for a field in Holland that might - and the again might not - be cleared of the enemy when it came time to land.

Meanwhile, a force of 8th Air Force and RAF fighters was readying for take-off to the same area. Obviously the Luftwaffe would challenge fiercely such a mass landing of supplies as this.

Probably the longest aerial supply train that ever headed for a front line nosed its way over the enemy coast before 1300. The sky wasn't too clear, and the sky train went in at low altitude.

Beneath it, a furiously speeding fighter escort plane occasionally would turn sharply upon a Dutch haystack or a lone farmhouse, spraying lead into a hidden flak gun that was trying to get the range.

Some of the fighter escorts went ahead to set up a ring of protection around the small field at Grave.

At 1350 the first C-47 set its wheels on the dirt landing strip. Three hours - 180 minutes - to land, unload and dispatch more than 200 large planes.

It was a task that might have unnerved the traffic control officers at the largest and best equipped airfield in England - or the U.S. But there was no control tower at this field. There were no traffic control officers. There was sharp, vicious fighting a mile and a half away. There were squadrons of desperate Luftwaffe fighter pilots trying to penetrate the Allied fighter ring. In the offing, the 8th AF and RAF fighters were mixed with the Germans in a great swirling dogfight.

The first C-47s to land carried English anti-aircraft personnel and equipment, including big Bofors guns. The ordinary unload time for this cargo was three to four hours. They did it in 44 minutes. A

see "Special Delivery" page 11

Thanks to the research efforts of Bill Bruce, following is an analysis of the participation and battle damage of the 34th TC Sq in Operation Varsity. The information is from the Historical Record, 34th TC Sq on file at the Maxwell AFB Library. Battle damage comes from the Missing Aircraft Record (WW II) also on file at Maxwell. The extent of battle damage is typical of all the 315th Squadrons. The Group launched 81 aircraft of which 19 were either destroyed or beyond repair, and 36 others received varying degrees of damage. As Bill Brinson wrote in Three One Five Group, "VARSITY was by far the most costly single mission in which the 315th participated."

MORE ON OPERATION VARSITY

March 1945 was a very active month for the 34th Sq. Several missions involved freight and glider missions to the continent as well as training drops of para's at Netheravon. Why were there so many volunteers for the missions to carry freight to Germany? Maybe bragging rights.

This is about Operation Varsity. I will have a trivia item about Netheravon soon. Now "Varsity". On the 21st, twenty-two aircraft of the Sq. and twenty-three crews were sent to Boreham. Twenty-one planes and crews took part in the mission. This was the para drop across the Rhine. Troops of the 12th Para-Battalion and the 225th Para-field Ambulance of the British 6th Airborne Division were dropped on DZ "B". The aircraft carried 332 paratroopers and 83 panniers (para-racks-British type), one bicycle and 13 two hundred-pound bundles. The takeoff was at 0720A hours and nineteen aircraft returned to Spanhoe by 1235A hours. Two aircraft were missing. Hq 52 Troop Carrier Wing message stated: The magnificent performance of your (315 T C Group) mission in the face of hostile fire was in the true tradition of the 52nd Wing. By the accuracy of your drop the Airborne Troops were enabled to seize their objectives and accomplish their mission within a very few hours. My heartiest and heartfelt congratulations. Clark.

One of the missing aircraft was C47A # 42-93719 with the following crew members:

- 1st Lt. Joseph W. Gajecky O-696935 Pilot
- 2nd Lt Robert R. Kendrick O-2011400 Co-pilot
- S/Sgt Verle A. Pratt 39682235 Radio Operator
- Cpl. Thomas E. Curtis 34731467 Crew Chief

The other missing aircraft C47A #43-30650 was hit several times by enemy small arms fire upon approaching the drop-zone, but it was able to drop its load of 12 paratroopers and 4 panniers (para-racks) on the DZ. After leaving the DZ, their aircraft suffered numerous hits by enemy 20mm ground fire which eventually disabled both engines and caused them to crash-land near Weeze, Germany (friendly territory). The crew praised the performance of the pilot, 1st Lt Richard L. Adams for crash-landing the aircraft. The other crew members were Lt's Riechman, Mussel, Sgt's Bellmund, and Trau. The crash landing was photographed by the British News Reel and close-ups taken. The crew chief and radio operator were interviewed.

All but 4 of the paratroopers jumped at the DZ and returned to Spanhoe. The enemy damaged sixteen aircraft. See below details of the damage:

A/C #	Damage
42-92682	1 1/2' hole (40mm), 20mm in left aileron & leading edge, left wing-30cal. in left horizontal stabilizer.
42-93697	Hit oil line-left engine, left tire, left cowling, left fuselage, & right wing
43-15321	30 cal., in main door, left elevator.
42-93719	Shot down
42-92736	two 30 cal. left wing- One 30 cal. right aileron, Flack hole 6" wide on top of fuselage, also 20mm flak in belly of fuselage near cargo door.
43-15058	One 30 cal. in elevator.
43-15188	Hole 5" Dia. left wing
42-24172	Left aileron -holed by small arms.
43-30650	Shot down
43-16023	Holes in rt. side of fuselage small arms.
43-15293	Holes in tail, stabilizer, left elevator, & rudder.
43-15509	Holes both wings, left elevator trim- 20mm flack & small arms.
43-15206	Hole thru navigators table,(navigator not on board) 20mm left wing

42-24174 Holes top of rt. wing inboard of engine.
42-93031 Hole left elevator-1" & middle of left center of fuselage.
Note all damage repaired within 48 hours, missing aircraft excepted.

On March 24 the crew of A/C 43-30650 returned to Spanhoe at 2100A hours (A designates daylight saving time and B designates double daylight saving time according to my recollection). This accounts for one crew sans A/C for "Varsity". The crew of A/C 42-93719 was still unaccounted for, but more news later on this. The crew of A/C 650 reported that the right engine, fuselage, wings, both stabilizers, the fuel line and fuel pump of the left engine were badly damaged by enemy fire. Both props were bent, flaps were crushed, pitot tubes and antennae were smashed and the left tire was flat as a result of the crash landing. I have always been told that any landing you could walk away from was a good landing. This one must meet that criteria. A jeep from the 33rd Armoured Brigade (British) came out and picked up the crew (in the middle of a mine field).

2nd Lt (recently promoted) Robert R. Kendrick, O-2011400 and Sergeant Verle A. Pratt, 39682235, co-pilot and radio operator, respectively of A/C 42-93719 were reported as "wounded in action" 24 March 1945 in vicinity of Wesel, Germany. Both were transferred to various Detachment of Patients. Lt Kendrick was slightly wounded in right leg (Purple Heart). Also, Sgt Verle A. Pratt was awarded a Purple Heart. The rest of the crew for A/C 42-93719, 1st Lt Joseph W. Gajecy and Corporal Thomas E. Curtis are still "Missing in Action".

"Special Delivery"

one time there were more than 100 C-47s on the field - 100 closely parked, defenseless sky freight wagons. The men who were hurrying with the unloading knew they would be duck soup if even a half-dozen enemy planes could get close enough to strafe them.

Above the field the traffic pattern was jammed with a long orderly line of cargo planes ready to land. One dirt landing strip was cluttered with those that had landed. Another strip was jammed with aircraft ready to take-off. And all traffic directions were coming by radio from one parked C-47 on the ground.

Yet there was not one moment of confusion.

The supplies rolled out on the field: 132 jeeps, 73 jeep quarter-ton trailers; 31 motorcycles; 3,374 gallons of gas for vehicles; 38,700 pounds of ammunition; 60,730 pounds of rations. In all, 657,995 pounds of combat equipment and 882 fighting men were unloaded on a field 1,000 by 1,400 yards. While the Wing was making this great supply delivery - without which the unprecedented airborne

operation would have failed - it also was loading many of the glider personnel that had been stranded in no-man's land, taking them back to England so that they could fly again against the Hun.

Planes that were loading these essential men dropped out of the line that was squirming from the unloading area down a dirt strip to the take-off line; then, when ready, they edged their way back into the procession.

The Luftwaffe was going crazy trying to get in close enough to shoot up the C-47s. One force of 50 Luftwaffe fighters headed toward the field. Within a few blazing minutes the 8th AF had shot down 32 of the Germans, probably shot down another and damaged eight. The remaining Huns scattered.

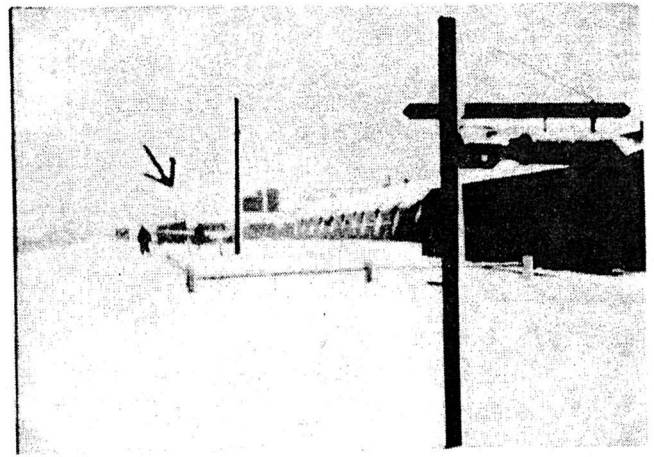
At 1650 - three hours to the minute - the last of the C-47s took off. The job had been done.

Back to England they went and landed. Not a single cargo plane had been lost in the most dangerous re-supply mission ever undertaken by air to the front battle lines.

TIME TO MAKE YOUR SAN DIEGO RESERVATIONS



Upper left, top row, left to right: Charles McCoy, Kenneth Wier, H. A. Moore, Arthur Pishal, William McGriff. Bottom row, left to right: John Laselle, Joseph Ciskowski, William Bruce



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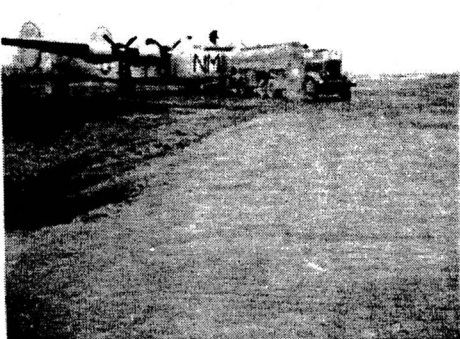
Upper right: Yes, it snowed. Photo of 34th Sq mess (arrow) during winter of 1944-1945 at Spanhoe.



Right: John McClain, William Bruce, Raymond Weinberg, Earl Perry

Photos courtesy of Bill Bruce

THE WAY WE WERE



We also flew C-109s (left), rode our bicycles, and flew C-46s (right).

OFF THE GRAPEVINE

(AND OTHER QUESTIONABLE SOURCES)

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FROM a 62nd TCSq NEWSLETTER

Things pilots should know: Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory, plus there are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

CELEBRITY QUOTES

- If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there is a man on base. *Dave Barry*
- I think Chicago got started when a bunch of people in New York said, "Gee, I'm enjoying the crime and the poverty, but it just isn't cold enough. Let's go west." *Richard Jeni*
- If life was fair, Elvis would be alive and all the impersonators would be dead. *Johnny Carson*
- My parents didn't want to move to Florida, but they turned sixty, and that's the law. *Jerry Seinfeld*
- You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'My God, you're right! I never would've thought of that.'" *Dave Barry*

FROM THE 8th AF NEWS, MARCH 2002

- The only time an aircraft has too much fuel on board is when it is on fire.....*Sir Charles Kingsford Smith*
- You've never been lost until you've been lost at Mach 3.....*Paul Crickmore*
- Never fly the "A" model of anything....*Ed Thompson*
- There is no reason to fly through a thunderstorm in peacetime....Sign over Squadron Ops desk at Davis-Monthan AFB
- When a flight is proceeding incredibly well, something was forgotten.....*Robert Livingston*

SENIOR PERSONALS

(thanks to Bill Trau)

- LONG TERM COMMITMENT: Recent widow who has just buried fourth husband looking for someone to round out a six-unit plot. Dizziness, fainting, shortness of breath not a problem
- SERENITY NOW: I am into solitude, long walks, sunrises, the ocean, yoga and meditation. If you are the silent type, let's get together, take our hearing aids out and enjoy quiet times.
- MEMORIES: I can usually remember Monday through Thursday. If you can remember Friday, Saturday and Sunday, let's put our two heads together.
- FOXY LADY: Sexy, fashion-conscious blue-haired beauty, 80s, slim 5'-4" (used to be 5'-6") searching for sharp-looking, sharp-dressing companion. Matching white shoes and belt a plus.

BASIC PHILOSOPHY

--"The Gambler"

Kenny Rogers

You've got to know when to hold 'em,
know when to fold 'em,
know when to walk away,
know when to run.
You never count your money,
while you're sittin' at the table,
There'll be time enough for
countin' when the dealin's done.

MAGIC

An Amish boy and his father were visiting a mall. They were amazed by almost everything they saw, but especially the two shiny, silver walls that would move apart and back together again.

The boy asked, "What is this, Father?"

The father, never having seen an elevator responded: "Son, I have never seen anything like this in my life. I don't know what it is."

While the two were watching, an old lady in a wheel chair rolled up to the moving walls and pressed a button. The walls opened and she rolled between them into a small room. The walls closed. The boy and his father watched the small circular numbers above the walls light up sequentially until it reached the last number; then, the numbers began to light in a reverse order. The walls opened again and a beautiful 24-year-old woman stepped out. The father, never taking his eyes off her said quietly, "Son, go get your Mother."

OERS

(from Fortune 7-1-97)

- Since my last report this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig.
- When she opens her mouth it seems that this is only to change the foot that was there.
- He set low personal standards and consistently fails to achieve them.
- His men would follow him anywhere but only out of morbid curiosity.
- This associate is really not so much of a has-been but more of definitely won't be.
- A photographic memory with the lens cover on.
- Takes him 1 1/2 hours to watch "60 minutes".

The Place: San Diego

The Time: Sept 18-22

See you there!!!

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NOTAMS

(Notices to Airmen)

NOMINATIONS: President Ford has appointed Ray Schwartz to chair a nomination committee with Bill Perkins and Doc Riechman as members. The Association is seeking nominations for Vice President, Corresponding Secretary and two Board members. Candidates will be presented at the General Meeting on Saturday morning in San Diego. If you are interested in serving please contact a committee member. If you wish to nominate a candidate, first receive their approval.

ONE MORE TIME - CAPS: "Cap-man" Sandy Friedman says wear your 315th cap at reunion sign-in to identify you as one of the good guys. If you still haven't got yours, or need more, get the order into him soon either for mail delivery or pick up at the reunion (see "Where to Send Stuff" p. 2) New and also available is an attractive C-47 lapel pin which Sandy says "looks great" on the cap. Pin: \$5. Cap: \$15. Mailing included.

WHERE GOEST WE: If you have thoughts comments, suggestions on how the Association should plan for the future, now is the time to let someone know. Call, write or e-mail President Dick Ford, P.O. Box 4399, Sun River, OR 97707-1399, e-mail <dickford/fire@aol.com>, ph:541.593.6310; or Vice President Bernie Brown, 10501 Lagrima de Oro, NE#280, Albuquerque, NM 87111, ph: 505.291.3280, e-mail <bbar3@yahoo.com>, or Recording Secretary Bob "Doc" Cloer, 1417 Valley View Dr., Yuba City, CA 95993, ph: 530.674.3681, e.mail <rlcloer@syix.com>.

CHAPPIE' HONORED ON BEHALF FLIGHT NURSES: The 315th's 'Chappie' Kowalchuk has been busy representing the contributions of WW II flight nurses. She was recently interviewed by National Geographic reporter, Mike Meek, for what will be a voice Web TV portion as well as an article in the June 2002 National Geographic magazine. The article will focus on D-Day with emphasis on the Navy's role. Included will be a photo of 'Chappie' holding a WW II poster recruiting nurses and a separate photo of her taken in 1942. She was also interviewed by Susan Mason from the Library of Congress, to provide a record of Flight Nurse contributions. Further, the

Government of France will award 'Chappie' the Legion of Honor as a representative of all the nurses who participated in the Normandy invasion. The presentation will be in October at a date to be announced..

WILDEST DREAMS! A Pilot's Story: The late O.J. Smith, a 310th pilot, has his memoirs published in WILDEST DREAMS. After retiring from the Air Force, O.J. moved to Alaska and opened a bush pilot and hunting guide service. The book covers all phases of his life and includes input from other 310th members, Dick Ford and Ziggy Zartman. Lavishly illustrated the book has been published in a small press run and is available for \$45 (Postpaid). Contact: Elly Smith, PO Box 55196, North Pole, AK 99705.

D-DAY AIRBORNE ARMADA: The D-Day Airborne Armada Committee is inviting past and present members of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 8th and 9th Air Forces and especially the 9th Air Force Troop Carrier Command to join an historic remembrance trip to Normandy during May 10-17, 2003. They will sail on the QE 2 sail from New York to Cherbourg. Included is a visit to the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach with time to visit grave sites of friends and relatives, a visit to St. Mere Eglise and the Airborne Museum, then back to the QE 2 for an evening ball while the ship crosses to Southampton. There will be opportunity for personal visits in England. Return will be by British Airways. If interested fill out the coupon below to receive a color brochure of the trip.

YES - I AM INTERESTED IN JOINING THE D-DAY AIRBORNE ARMADA'S "RETURN TO GLORY" TRIP ABOARD QE2.	
PLEASE SEND ME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:	
NAME:	_____
ADDRESS:	_____
CITY:	STATE: ZIPCODE:
DAYTIME PHONE: () _____	EVENING PHONE: () _____
E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE SEND ME INFORMATION ON THE OPTIONAL "EXTENDED STAY" TOURS	
MILITARY UNIT:	_____
SERVED FROM:	SERVED TO: _____
RETURN IN ENVELOPE TO: D-DAY AIRBORNE ARMADA P.O. Box 572 - NEW YORK, NY 10156-0601	

PROGRESS REPORTED on THREE-ONE-FIVE REVISION

The much-anticipated augmented version of Bill Brinson's *Three-One-Five Group*, under the editorship of author George Cholszczynski, has advanced to the point where negotiations with printers are now underway.

The goal remains to have the book ready for release in time for the San Diego Reunion. Author Cholszczynski, who has devoted the past several months to the revision, plans to be present to sign copies. In the revision, after each of the original chapters will be extracts from past *Newsletters*, new material gained from interviews and submissions along with multiple photos. Commercial sales are anticipated.

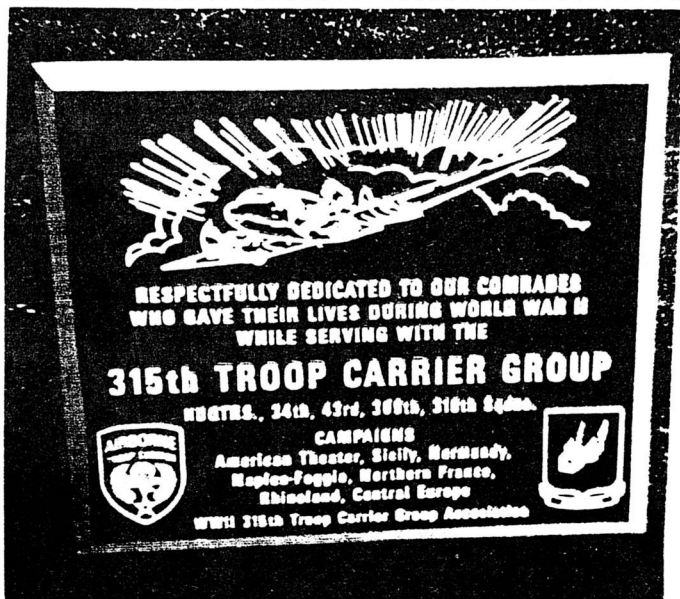
TAPS

WITH DEEP REGRET THE ASSOCIATION RECORDS THE LOSS OF THESE COMRADES AND EXTENDS OUR SINCERE SYMPATHY TO THEIR LOVED ONES

(If you were close friends a letter to their family would be truly welcomed.)

George W. Armstrong	34th Sq	Oct 1998	Carl L Persson	43rd Sq	Aug 2001
Ralph E. Jones	34th Sq	Sep 1999	Lee G. Hampson	309th Sq	Feb 20
George P. Moore, Jr.	34th Sq	Oct 2001	Robert R. Jensen	309th Sq	Apr 2002
Hillis L. Stoll	34th Sq	May 2002	Francis A. Nagle	309th Sq	Feb 2002
Liolin T. Brush	43rd Sq	Dec 2001	Michael P. Cavalieri	310th Sq	unk
John J. Concannon	43rd Sq	1994	Lawrence J. Genzel	43rd Sq	Dec 2001
John E. Dieterle	310th Sq	Feb 2002	L. E. Martin		July 1999
John R. Hickman	43rd Sq	Sep 2001	Betty Conquest	Hqs	Mar 2001
Ralph E. Roe	43rd Sq	Mar 2001			

DONATIONS: The Association gratefully accept donations whether in memory of former comrades or in support of the Association. Families are notified when appropriate. Donations have been received (since publication of the *March Newsletter*) from the following: Anna Persson, Bernie Pleasant, Sandy Friedman. Given in memory of Carl Persson, those for whom taps have sounded and general use.



The above photo is of the 315th Plaque honoring our comrades who give their lives during WW II. The plaque was approved by the membership during the Dayton reunion and is located in the Memorial Gardens of the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson AFB. For anyone looking for the plaque a stop is suggested at the Museum information desk, that can provide a map of its location. Sandy Friedman provided the photo.



The late Carl Persson is at the left of the photo above. Shot down during Operation Varsity, he was copilot on H. B. Lyon's lead aircraft. The photo was taken during the Association's Chicago reunion and was the first time the crew (complete except for the radio operator) had been together since the shoot down. With Lyon's wounded, Persson had taken over the controls only to lose a portion of his left hand as the throttle quadrant was blown away. The entire crew bailed out of the burning plane after their paratroopers had been dropped. All were taken prisoner, Persson and the other wounded treated by German doctors, and were liberated a war's end.

J. S. Smith, editor
WW II 315th Troop Carrier Group Assoc.
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St. Petersburg, FL 33703

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George Cholewczynski
P.O. Box 56307
New Orleans, LA 70156-6307

See You at

San Diego Sept 18-22

Be There !!



YEARS AFTER WW II . . .

Ole Father Time

Sketch by George Doll