



315th Newsletter

Published by
WORLD WAR II 315th TROOP CARRIER GROUP ASSOCIATION

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315th Newsletter
200 Bryant Avenue
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NOVEMBER, 1993

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The time has come to direct our attention to the 1944 Reunion to be held in St. Louis. With that in mind, Jack Mancinelli and I met with our Reunion Coordinator, Jim Fidler, in St. Louis in mid-October. First, let me say that the Airport Radisson is a class hotel with all of the amenities any group could hope for --- and at very affordable rates. Their staff is dedicated and concern for our comfort and convenience is their top priority.

While there are a lot of loose ends to be taken care of, the main schedule of events is pretty much in place. It looks like this is ONE Reunion you won't want to miss. St. Louis is a city on the move, and its central location makes it accessible to all. Start making your plans now. It promises to be a good one!!! More later.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

*Results are what you expect.
Consequences are what you get.*

John F. Andrews

REPORT FROM YOUR RECORDING SECRETARY:

Have talked with a couple of our fellows who were on the tour to England and Europe – sounds like they had a great tour. Kind of wish I had gone now! Received a phone call from Frank Paine the other day from England. (Frank is one of my old British Paratrooper friends who was on the bridge at Arnhem). He said that he had run into Bill Brinson out at the Ginkel Heath DZ and wanted to know where the rest of us were. He wanted to know if we were coming over for the big "DO" next year. I told him we felt there would be too many people there and that was why the tour went this year.

Have just finished reading a book "POLES APART" by our good friend, George Cholewczynski. While the book covers the Polish Airborne at the Battle of Arnhem (where the 315th dropped at Driel) I found most interesting the Polish involvement in WWII long before the U.S. ever got involved. This is an interesting and easy to read book that took years of research. A version of it was published in 1990 in the Netherlands and it has now been published in both the U.S. and England. See if your library has it. If they don't, see if they will get a copy for you. You can get a copy from: Sarpedon Publishers, Inc. 166 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10010. Hardcover of 318 pages, \$21.95.

George is now working on the WWII role the Troop Carrier played in the ETO, MTO, CBI & PACIFIC. He started his research before our 1990 reunion in Norfolk and has another year or two to go. If it turns out half as good as *Poles Apart*, it should be a best-seller!

Received a book from England a while back that was written by A.E. Spring about his life since WWII. Albert Spring was the British Sgt. in charge of the stick that was on the plane with Ed Fulmer and Russel Smith (Lt. Spurrier and Cpl. Hollis were killed). I met Albert at Spanhoe in '89 and found him to be a very interesting gentleman who had been a Gamekeeper at Hamerton for many years. I understand that he was at Spanhoe to meet members of the 315th on the tour this year.

Letter from George E. Koskimaki, 1222 Charleston Court, Northville, MI 48167, Phone number, 313/348-1037. George is trying to locate the Group that flew C-47 #41-18542 into Normandy on D-Day. If any of our old Crew Chiefs had this plane, please drop a note or call George.

THERE IS LESS THAN A YEAR before our St. Louis Reunion. I know that we all have old friends in our Squadrons who have never made one of our reunions. Get out your latest Roster--drop him a note, give him a call! Encourage the widows to come; they are part of the 315th family! It's a sad fact --- this will be the last one for some, so let's make it the biggest!!!

I still have a few of those great 315th Posters Dave Benfield had made for us. Only \$10.00 postpaid.

ALL THE BEST,
Robert L. "DOC" Cloer

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, OCTOBER 5 -- 9, 1993

With the 50th ANNIVERSARY REUNION less than a year away, you may be spending more time thinking about your 315th comrades during those exciting years. Any anniversary is special; but the 50th is a milestone for any event. **THIS IS YOUR SPECIAL MOMENT OF REFLECTION**; sort of our last big hurrah; one more time to meet our long-time friends -- notice, not "old" friends -- for one more "report" on the memorable '40s.

And, thanks to Jim and Audrey Fidler, we are all ready to go with the big event in St. Louis in spite of the flood. John Andrews, your president, met in St. Louis with Jim and me to review the activities and details and offer his stamp of approval to what will be a very exciting reunion.

Early in 1994 you will be receiving the Radisson Hotel details and reservations form. The hotel is new and state of the art. Also, the *Newsletter* will outline the schedule of events for the reunion and contain information relating to the four day program and general registration for all other activities.

Start getting prepared for a very fun-filled and entertaining visit to St. Louis....from the river boat dining, the exciting Saturday ladies' day shopping trip to the thrill of viewing the St. Louis area from atop the 600' Arch.

Call your comrades to be sure they will all be there for our 50th ANNIVERSARY REUNION!!!

Jack Mancinelli 11/9/93

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On the following pages we bring you Bernard Coggins' dramatic story of what happened to the lead airplane and the crew that led the 315th Troop Carrier Group on the **VARSIITY** mission on March 24, 1944. This is one of the most vivid first-person stories of combat operations we have ever read and we're grateful to "Cog" for taking the time and making the effort to write it.

That story is followed by excerpts from Steve Bolling's book *Memoirs of a Troop Carrier Pilot* which we think will amuse you and we conclude this issue with the story of Ziggy Zartman's very interesting military career.

Here is Cog's account of what proved to be the most costly mission the 315th flew during the war.

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After reading Ziggy's most enjoyable war story from the tail end of the 315th Varsity Mission, I thought I might write my memories of how things went on the front end of the mission.

I, along with John Burroughs, was to navigate this particular mission. We were on the lead plane along with Col. Lyon, the Pilot, Capt. Persson, the Co-Pilot and T/Sgt. Charles Jones, Crew Chief and S/Sgt. James Zender. Radio Operator.

We were to depart Boreham, east of London, on Saturday, March 24, 1945. The 315th had a total of 81 planes on this mission. We were to drop British Paratroopers. As I was Lead Navigator, I remember Colonel Mandt asking me what time we would return to Spanhoe. I told him to expect us around 13:15 hours, the drop was scheduled for about 10:00 o'clock that morning.

Varsity: TOUGHEST MISSION

Varsity was an all-out effort to cross the last major obstacle between the Allies and Germany---the Rhine River. General Montgomery and his British army was to cross the Rhine near Wesel, Germany. Paratroopers were to drop east of the Rhine to assist in the crossing.

Without going into detail about the flight to the drop zone, I'll begin my story as we approached the

Rhine. The sky was filled with Allied airplanes of every description. To our right, a group flying C-46s were in trouble. Several were on fire and I remember telling Carl and Col. Lyon that I was sure glad we weren't in that area.

As we neared the Rhine we ran into another problem. A smoke screen had been laid across the Rhine River to provide cover for Montgomery's army and it was drifting in the direction of our drop zone. Being in the lead plane, our drop would determine where 80 other planes would drop.

As I remember it there was a power line crossing the approach end of the drop zone and it was there that the jump would begin. Here we got a break. The smoke screen began to break up and the power line appeared. We were at jump altitude and the green light was flashed. The plane was just above stalling speed and the left engine was throttled back to reduce the wind speed where the paratroopers exited the ship. Everything was on "Go". If you remember, British paratroopers took a bit longer to exit than American paratroopers, so by the time the parapacks were released and all the troopers were out, we were approaching an autobahn under construction.

As the final trooper cleared the plane, Col. Lyon nosed the plane down, pushed the throttles to the firewall and we were headed for the Rhine River. There were two major reasons for hitting the deck: to get our speed up and to get below air

bursts of the German 88mm gun. It was some kind of weapon and if you never saw an airburst in your vicinity, you don't know what cold sweat is. As we approached the deck, I turned toward the cabin intending to tell John Burroughs to take us home. I believe that Jones and Zender were disposing of the jump lines at this time. I had been under a lot of strain and planned to get a cot from the wall and take a nap. So much for that!

I heard a grating sound and Col. Lyon gave out an audible grunt. A bullet had penetrated the plane, gone through Col. Lyon's foot and exited through the roof. I immediately returned to the cockpit and realizing the Colonel had been hit, asked if he needed some first aid. He replied "Yes" and turned the controls over to Capt. Persson. I began to assist the Colonel. We were now on the deck and flying at maximum speed. You will recall that the inside arm of the pilot and co-pilot's seats were on a pivot to make it easier to get in and out of the seats. I turned the arm of the pilot's seat, pulled the tabs on his flak suit and, placing my arms under his legs and across his back, lifted him from the pilot's seat. (The Colonel was not a big person physically and I weighed in at about 190 and was in good shape physically). As I turned to go to the cabin, there was a tremendous explosion. The entire cockpit area turned red and the Colonel was blown from my arms. I was blown up in the air and my first thought was this was the way you felt when being killed.

I wound up in the radio operator's seat and my next thought was to get to the cockpit. We were on the deck and I could just visualize Capt. Persson slumped over the controls and the plane going straight in. I pulled myself up, took a step and hit the floor. Not realizing that I had a problem, I again pulled myself up and tried another step. I found my problem: my left leg was shattered between the knee and ankle. I again pulled myself up, grasped the static line and made it to the cockpit. The entire nose was gone, the throttle quadrant was shot out and the left side of the cockpit was a mess. The only thing left of the control stick on that side was the stick; the steering mechanism was gone. Capt. Persson was slumped forward in a semi-stunned position. I firmly believe that Capt. Persson, being a conservative sort of person, saved us by being so. He had both his seat and chest belt fastened and the chest belt was holding him off the controls. Looking out the gaping hole, all I could see was ground. As I mentioned above, the control stick was still there. I reached over and grasped it and pulled it sharply back. The C-47 responded immediately and we began a steep climb. I don't know how long I held the plane in this position, but when it began to quiver, I pushed the stick forward and leveled it off. Looking over at Carl, I realized he was reviving. A portion of his left hand, the one on the controls, was shot away. (His left hand was later amputated.) Carl asked me what I thought we should do and I said I was going to bail out. (Remember, the throttle quadrant was shot away and we couldn't

throttle the engines back.) There was a fire in the area behind the cockpit. I was told later that it was the hydraulic fluid burning, but to me a fire is a fire.

Carl told me to get a parachute and when he felt me jump, he would come back and jump. With a chest chute harness you had to remove your flak suit before you could hook your chute to the harness. Dropping to the floor, I crawled under the flames and back to the cabin. Finding a chest chute, I removed my flak suit and attempted to hook the rings on the chute to the harness I was wearing. Unable to hook both snaps at the same time, I dropped one end of the chute and hooked the rings one at a time. I then rolled over and crawled to the open door. The Crew Chief and Radio Operator had already jumped and John Burroughs was in the door. I hollered for him to jump and after he cleared the door I prepared to jump. Never having jumped before, I didn't know just what to expect but what I got was vastly different from what I expected.

I sort of pulled myself over to the door and grabbed the bottom edge and out I went. I counted to five in about one second, pulled the ripcord and there was absolutely no tension. I thought that they had failed to hook the ripcord to the chute, so I reached up with my hands to tryk and pull the chute open. For some reason I glanced up and there was the prettiest white umbrella I had ever seen! I was going straight down, no swinging or anything. I don't know exactly how high we were

when I jumped, but I would guess 1200 to 1500 feet. I was drifting backward with the wind blowing in my face. The quiet was unbelievable. All at once I began to hear sounds like bees buzzing past me. Suddenly my right leg flew up over my head and I realized I had been shot from the ground. My first thought was that after all the trouble getting off the plane, I was going to be killed before reaching the ground. I had never jumped before, but I had seen movies where the jumper reached and pulled the jump lines on one shoulder and spilled the air from the chute. I reached up, pulled the jump lines and down I went. There being no air in the chute, I was free-falling. I didn't hear any more bees but the ground was coming up at a rapid rate. Knowing that my left leg was broken and not knowing the condition of my right leg, I looked for something to break my fall. I realized that I was falling towards some woods. I released the jump lines I was holding and the chute opened out and slowed my fall. (I was later told that often when you slip a chute, it will not re-open. Thank goodness I didn't have that happen.) The trees were coming up real fast now and I prepared to try and hang up in them. I made one major miscalculation. The trees weren't tall enough to break my fall and down I went. The trees did collapse my chute and I hit the ground on my right leg and my butt. After a couple of back flips I was on my back and thoroughly entangled in the jump lines. At last I was on the ground and I was alive. Realizing that my right leg wasn't broken by the bullet that had hit me on the way

down, I decided to see just where I was.

The sky above me was filled with planes, all ours, looking for ground targets. All of a sudden, I had become a target. I was on the wrong side of the river. Pushing myself up on my elbows to say I was surprised, is putting it mildly. Not over 50 feet from where I lay was a German anti-aircraft position with umpteen Germans. They were firing up at the planes overhead and were making such a racket they didn't hear me land in behind them. All kinds of thoughts ran through my mind. I had my .45 on my hip but even if I used it and got a German with every shot, I would run out of ammunition long before I ran out of Germans. I couldn't hit with the darn thing anyway. I then considered covering myself with leaf mold and trying to hide until the British forces arrived. As all this was happening, I felt myself getting weaker. Looking down at my leg I saw a stream of blood pumping out. My choices were immediately limited to two: lay there and bleed to death or call to the Germans and see what happened. I can't spell it but I shouted out what I had been told was the German word for surrender. One of them jumped about two feet in the air and came running over to where I lay and put the business end of his rifle right between my eyes. Afraid that he might be as scared as I was, I eased one hand up to my forehead and gently pushed the rifle barrel to one side. All the while I was asking for a German officer. A German Leutnant came over and I immediately tried to tell him I was a Navigator. (I never

saw a German officer who couldn't speak a few words of English.) He couldn't get the word "navigator" so I began to move my arms in a flying motion. He immediately said "Pilot...Pilot" and I nodded my head in agreement that I was a pilot. I surely didn't want him to think I was a paratrooper, they weren't taken as prisoners all that often. While all this was going on a German aid man was applying a compress to the wound on my left leg to control the bleeding.

While this was going on, Allied planes were flying over the area looking for targets. There was a big Lancaster stooging around with its bomb bay doors open, flying so low that I could see the bombs. The group that had me were firing and using tracers and I was afraid he would see us. Fortunately he spotted tracers coming from a wooded area not too far from us and over he went. As he went over the target, he didn't drop just one bomb...he salvoed the entire load. When the smoke and dust cleared, even the trees were gone. The group that had me got the message. They packed their guns, got a stretcher from somewhere, loaded me on it and away we went. We finally came to a road running through the woods that I would call a fire lane and in a short time, a wagon and team appeared. The wagon had small side boards across the sides and front. A German was on the seat driving and another sat on the rear of the wagon with a Red Cross flag in his hands. [Editor's note: See John Burroughs' account of this incident in the March, 1992 issue of the *Newsletter*.] As I remember it, there

were three wounded persons on the wagon. Two were Germans and the third was John Burroughs. He had broken his leg on landing and had been picked up by the Germans. Room was made for me and as we moved down the road, we could see some of the results of the Allied air attacks. Most of the trees had the tops shot out and there were dead Germans lying everywhere. As we would pass some of them, the German on the rear of the wagon would look at John and me and make a throat cutting motion. All at once, bullets began to ricochet by, making a screaming noise in passing. The German with the flag left the wagon and hid behind a tree. Looking down the road, I saw a plane, a Spitfire, I think, coming at us with all guns blazing. To this day I don't know if he saw us lying in the wagon, or if he ran out of ammunition, but he pulled up and away and left John and me wondering.

The flag-holding German returned to the wagon and as he took his seat I reached up, tapping him on the shoulder, and as he turned, I relieved him of the flag. If he was going to run, I would take care of the flag waving.

Eventually we arrived at a German aid station. It was a converted barn and they laid us out on the ground near it. I must have been in shock until this time, for all at once, the pain in my left leg became intense. Looking down I realized that my leg had swollen to about twice its normal size. I still had my escape kit with the morphine syrette to be used in emergencies.

Removing the cover that protected the needle, I proceeded to stick it in my right thigh. The nearby Germans began hollering "Nein, Nein" which I think meant "No". I think they thought I was trying to end it all. Hearing them shouting, a young German who I assumed to be a doctor, came running over and seeing what I was doing, assured them that it was OK. Later we were moved into the barn and the entire area was filled with wounded...both Germans and Allies.

It's still hard to believe that all of the above had happened and it was still Saturday. As night fell, we could hear the British 25-Pounders firing and could hear the shells whistling overhead. Colonel Lyon, John Burroughs were in the barn. I don't remember Carl Perssons being there but I am pretty sure that he was.

Early Sunday the Germans made plans to move us out. The British were getting closer all the time. Some of the higher ranking officers tried to get the Germans to leave us to be picked up by the Allies later. The German in command over-ruled this idea and ambulances were brought up to move us back.

I was loaded on the floor of one of the ambulances along with a wounded German. All the others on my ambulance were Germans and we began the most miserable 90 mile ride of my entire life. Our driver stayed lost most of the time. It took the entire day to reach a country estate that had been turned into a hospital near Munster, Germany. Again the sky was filled with planes,

all ours, looking for anything to shoot at. I wondered if ambulances were ever strafed and looking up at the ceiling of the ambulance, my wonder was answered. There were plugged holes over the entire roof. Right out in the middle of wide open country, my ambulance had a flat tire and the driver had to stop and repair it. The rear door of the ambulance was opened to provide us with fresh air and I could see out fairly well. The British had a plane called the Typhoon and it was a rocket-firing thing. All at once, I saw one coming. I didn't know it just then, but he spotted a German anti-aircraft position near us and he fired his rockets in that direction. They came over the ambulance with a swoosh and for a moment I thought we were the target. Thank the Lord we weren't.

The flat tire was finally repaired and we again began our tour of that part of Germany. Finally, about 8 P.M. that evening, we arrived at our destination. The ambulances unloaded us on a grassy area outside the buildings and departed the scene. You have heard of soldiers kissing the ground when they returned from overseas because they were so happy. I didn't wait that long. I turned over and kissed the ground then and there and vowed that if they moved me again, I would be dead.

Some time later they moved us into the buildings and I was placed in a loft that had served as a gym. There were all sorts of exercise equipment there. There were also plenty of German wounded, most of them members of Hitler Youth, a group we

had been advised to steer clear of if the opportunity arose. Not knowing what to expect, I went to sleep with a bar bell in my hand---just in case. It didn't take me long to realize that being wounded sort of took the desire to kill away from you.

In the early morning hours I was taken to the room where two doctors were performing surgery on German and wounded Allies. By this time my leg had swelled beyond belief. Having very little to work with, the doctors were using a sponge and liquid ether to put patients to sleep. As I neared the operating table, I noticed how the patient struggled during surgery. It looked as if he was feeling whatever was being done. Having never been put to sleep before, I asked the German doctor what he planned to do. He told me that he would lance my leg to relieve the pressure and I asked how long it would take. He said he would take just a few seconds. Pushing the sponge away, I told him to have at it. For just a moment there was a sharp pain, but the immediate relief of the swelling more than made up for the pain. After dressing the wound, I was moved to another section of the hospital, one filled with wounded prisoners. They were mostly British, Canadians and Australians, but at least I was among my own.

Later in the day, a Dutch Padre came in to talk with us. He asked me if I was an officer and I told him I was. He asked how he could tell, and pointing to the miniature Captain bars on my shirt collar, I said I was a Captain. A Canadian lying next to

me verified my rank. The Padre immediately informed me that I was in the wrong place. I told him I was a prisoner of war and would stay where they put me. (I was to find before the day was out that there was a much greater distinction between an officer and an enlisted man in the German army than there was in the American army.) The Padre said he would speak to the commandant about it. Sure enough, before long, in came the commandant and finding out for himself that I was an officer, he bent over backwards to correct the error. He summoned a couple of orderlies, placed me on a stretcher, and moved me to the officers' ward. I was placed in a 2-person room with a severely wounded German in the other bed.

Before I had settled in, here came the commandant to ask if there was anything else he could do. I smoked in those days and somewhere along the way, my cigarettes had vanished. I asked if I could get any cigarettes. No sooner said than done: an orderly brought me two packs of German cigarettes. Not much to them, but at least I could smoke. I'll have to mention the nurse on duty. Even in my shot-up condition, I could tell that she was a beauty. (More later.)

I knew that Col. Lyon was across the ward from me in another room, but we couldn't communicate because neither of us could walk. I also knew that Capt. Perssons was somewhere in the hospital and he had nothing wrong with his legs. Before the day ended, the commandant again came by to check

on me and see if I need anything else. I figured that I had nothing to lose, so I asked that the German wounded be moved to another room and Capt. Perssons given his bed. Again the commandant did as I asked. Carl was moved into the room with me and now he and I and Col. Lyon could communicate.

Back to the nurse. There was a picture of Adolph on the inside of the door leading into our room. As soon as she came into the room and realized the German was no longer there, Adolph's picture disappeared, never to be seen there again. The next morning she brought a map hidden among her things and she would try to brief us each day on just where the Allies had reached. She had us surrounded two or three days before they arrived. Rumors were rampant every day, but on Friday morning, the rumors became fact. Elements of the same paratroopers we had dropped captured the hospital. Arrangements were made for the seriously wounded to be evacuated and ambulances were brought in to move us. With one or two armies going in one direction and an ambulance loaded with wounded trying to go in the other, the ride was rather hectic. Somewhere along the way, we stopped at an aid station to spend the night. During the night, my temperature got out of control and I had my introduction to Penicillin. I don't know how much they put in my hip but it was two hours before I could straighten my leg back out. I didn't know it at the time, but Penicillin was to be a constant

companion over the next several months. (The fever did break.)

The next day, Saturday, we were carried to a British General Hospital somewhere in Belgium. On Sunday, arrangements were made to transport us to England and because of the condition of my leg, I needed to be put in a traveling cast. I was taken to the operating room and again I was introduced to a substance I would meet on several occasions in the future. A sedative called Sodium Pentothal (truth serum) was used to put me to sleep. Counting to five was impossible once the injection began. It sure beat ether by a long shot. Later that day, April 1, 1945, Col. Lyon and I, along with other wounded, were placed on a plane and flown to the 192nd General Hospital in Southwest England. Shortly after we arrived, Col. Lyon arranged to call the base to let them know we were alive. To date, we had been listed as MIA. As it was Sunday, Col. Lyon was having difficulty getting an answer anywhere. I knew Col. Mandt's telephone number in his quarters and suggested calling there.

Even after all these years, I still remember that conversation. Col. Mandt answered and said "Hello, Col. Mandt speaking." Just as if nothing had ever happened, Col. Lyon answered with "Hello, Red, this is Col. Lyon." I don't know just what Red did, but the phone made a terrific noise and I think Red must have turned something over. After Red recovered, Col. Lyon informed him of our location and told him I was with him.

Early Monday, a planeload of people from Spanhoe visited us and this continued for several days. In the meantime, R.M. Perkins and Wes Harper were brought to the 192nd. Both had been wounded on the Varsity mission. Wes Harper informed us of Major Matson's death. They were on the same plane.

I won't go into detail about our stay in the 192nd, but while there, the President died and in early May the war in Europe ended. Perkins slipped out and went to London for the celebration. It must have been some blowout. With the ending of the war, everyone couldn't wait to get orders to go home. I don't recall the order in which we left, I do know that Col. Lyon left several days, maybe weeks before I did. In early June, I got orders to return and after a train trip to Prestwick, I was flown back to the States. Having been a prisoner of war, I had my choice of hospitals and I chose Kennedy General in Memphis because it was nearest home.

You will have to read Bill Brinson's book to follow the activities of the 315th after we were shot down. I remember that while I was at Kennedy, some of the Group was in Florida and they had to disburse because of a hurricane warning. Several of them flew all the way to Memphis and dropped in to visit with me while there.

I remained in Kennedy until the Fall of 1945 at which time I was transferred to Northington General because I was in need of plastic surgery not available at the Kennedy

General. (I failed to mention that I had gotten a bone infection either before I left Germany or while in the 192nd in England. Known as osteomyelitis, it was to be a constant companion in the months ahead. Northington General was located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Northington was closed in the Spring of 1946 and I was transferred to Cushing General in Framingham, Massachusetts so that the plastic surgeon working on me could continue his work. I remained in Cushing General and don't remember the exact date it closed, but when it did, I was transferred to Valley Forge General in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. During all this time, the bone infection was there and my leg was no better than the day I was shot down. There was no union of any kind.

While at Valley Forge, I was sent to the orthopedic dressing room to have the dressing on my leg changed. I saw a familiar looking figure on the dressing table and on closer examination, it turned out to be Col. Lyon! I had last seen him in the 192nd hospital in England. He and his wife, Mary Jane, were living near Valley Forge and he had come in for a dressing change. This began a wonderful relationship that has continued until this day.

I could go on and on with this tale, but it has to end somewhere. Finally, in late 1947, the infection was brought under control and my leg began to knit. By early March 1948, my leg was strong enough that with a brace, I was again mobile. I was discharged in early March and

returned to my home in Mississippi. I lacked approximately 2 weeks of having been in the hospital for 3 years.

I have already mentioned my contact with Col. Lyon. In March of 1948, I met up with Red Dean in Jackson MS (another story). Jack Alexander and I had maintained contact over the years. I think it was through Col. Lyon that my contact with Bill Brinson was established. Bill had written a long resume of the 315th while on duty, I believe, in Africa. This later became the source for much of his great book. Bill and I had kicked around the idea of a reunion in phone conversations over the years and finally in 1977, during a phone conversation I said "Bill, if we are going to have a reunion in this world, we had better get started." His reply was "Let's do it." He asked what I thought about Savannah, GA as a site and I said any place suited me. Bill agreed to set it up and did a remarkable job. We immediately began trying to contact old buddies and two early finds were Duncan McRae, our former Intelligence Officer who now owned Melton Truck Lines in Shreveport, LA. I'll take personal credit for the other find. If you are reading this Newsletter, you know who I mean. If ever a man was sitting on "ready", Ed Papp was. I just turned on the switch. The reunions over the past 16 years are the result.

As Paul Harvey would say, "Now you know the rest of the story."

God bless,

"MEMOIRS OF A TROOP CARRIER PILOT"

Though the cover of the book lists the author's name as Stephen Cook Bolling, Sr. those of us who flew with him during WWII instantly knew the author was none other than the young Steve Bolling we knew and enjoyed flying with during those long-gone days of yore. Some years ago, Steve decided to commit some wartime memories and experiences to paper and publish them in a nicely turned-out book illustrated with photographs taken at the time. His purpose in producing *Memoirs of a Troop Carrier Pilot* was to leave a printed record of his thoughts and experiences for his children and their children. After reading it, Steve's descendants probably thought "Is the crazy guy telling this story *really* my father or grandpa?" because, though it deals with many serious, and at times, unhappy incidents, the general tone of the book is lighthearted, irreverent and often very funny.

We print three excerpts from the book with the hope they may provide as many laughs and as much entertainment as they did for your editor.

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FLIGHT IN A P-39:

One day, not scheduled to fly, I was coming from the mess hall when I saw a P-39 in the landing pattern. It was a plane I was crazy about, but had never seen one up close, so I headed for the flight line. I asked who flew it in and a Line Chief said it was a Lt. Colonel and the CO met him and they took off in a Jeep. Lord! There it sat! I said does anybody know how to start this thing? One guy said he could; he used to work on them. I said if you'll crank it up, I'll fly it..and he did. I got in, buckled on the chute ABOUT AN UNAUTHORIZED and straps and taxied out to the runway, ran it up and got permission to take off. We had a 9000' runway and I used every inch, coaxing it into the air at the end, which should have told me something. Fighters take off like a scared rabbit, but I had never flown a fighter in my life. I fiddled around looking at gauges and finding handles, and got up to about 11,000 feet and decided to do an Immelmann (start a loop and do a half roll at the top...you are then flying straight and level in the opposite direction) and it stalled out! What is

this: 1350 HP, a speed of nearly 400MPH and it won't even complete a loop? My love! Six machine guns and a 37mm cannon in the nose...I was sick and disappointed., but tried another one. Same thing, and then I noticed the cockpit was filling with smoke. Hell, I was on fire. I started to roll it over, open the door and bail out and then thought of that Lt. Colonel back there waiting for his plane, so I told the Tower of my problem and please clear me for a landing and dove straight for the field. I came in hot as a firecracker, bounced it down and stopped as soon as I could as the fire trucks came out to meet me—along with half the base, it seemed. But that suited me fine, for I got out, mingled with the crowd and disappeared.

I was never caught, but years later, at a reunion, my old CO said "Bolling, that was you in the P-39, wasn't it?" "Yes, Sir! No further comment was ever made. I was damn lucky to get by with it and would not repeat, or want anyone else to do something like that: know your airplane! You see, this one had an electric prop, as opposed to the hydraulic type I was

accustomed to, and I did not turn it on, which kept it in a low RPM position, causing the low speed and little acceleration, and without power from the battery, it overloaded and caught on fire. It actually melted and dripped out on the runway. Well, that Lt.Colonel got a couple of extra days stay.

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COMMAND PILOTS:.....

One of the most dangerous things about flying the "airline" was a mite unusual: COMMAND PILOTS. These are the gukys with stars and haloes over their wings. Mostly Colonels or Generals, their flying had been done in good old peacetime USA with normal fields and good weather to contend with.....not England. Furthermore, few were current or did much flying any more, all having administrative jobs. BUT when they stepped into a plane, if they so desired, they could take over right or left seat and have at it. Coggins always flew in a nervous state, but when we had a Command Pilot take over, he nearly had a fit. Most of them were bad: bouncing 8 or 10 feet in the air on landing and scaring all of us. Cog would lay in the aisle with one foot braced against each seat while I saw in the right seat and hoped the General would not notice and get mad.

One day we were returning to Hendon and a General had taken my left seat while was occupying the right seat. Cog was beside himself. Here was his running commentary made in a very loud voice, clearly heard by the General: "Well, Steve, going to be touch and go getting in there today; less than half mile visibility and the balloons are only 3 seconds from the other end of the

runway. Can't execute a missed approach. Lord, I dread landing here in good weather, dropping down over that embankment at the end of the runway, but I know you have to with such a short, short runway. Must be the most dangerous airfield in England." and, without exception, the General or Colonel would say "Sergeant, why don't you take it on in since you land here a lot! Upon hearing this, Cog gave the thumbs up sign, returned to his seat, mission accomplished.

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TAXIING TOO SLOW TO SUIT A FOLLOW ME' JEEP....

The English told us they had a new idea to bring them (bombers returning from a raid in socked-in weather conditions) and wanted us to test it. I was given the assignment. We were to fly down, try it out and work with them, RON and return the next day.

Dr. Freiheit, one of our Flight Surgeons, hitched a ride (he was nuts about flying). We came in routinely and were taxiing in, following a Jeep with a big 'FOLLOW ME' sign which was to show us where to park. I was a bit slow, I guess, for the Crew Chief said "Look, Steve, she's waving for you to speed it up." Well, doggie, she sure was. Now, I don't want to hold that sweet little thing up, so I added throttle to pick up speed. She looked back at us smugly and took off. So did I. She looked back somewhat annoyed and pulled away from us, but I continued to accelerate rate, getting to about 75 MPH and the tail came up. She was obviously going all out, but we were right on her rear end and she was looking back eyes wide open....the plane right on your tail with those big props spinning can be a terrifying

sight. She roared in white-faced and I guess the Tower told folks what was happening as a good crowd met us at the ramp, and from the applause, we gathered she was not overly popular. The new blind landing system worked fine...as long as you could see...so we soon gave up and took off for home. Doc Freiheit was flying the right seat with Cog in the jump seat between us. As we cleared the field, I knew I had to leave my trademark: *Buzz the Tower* so I headed toward it. Then I saw Doc watching me. I said "Hey, Doc, let's fly through that hanger and shake them up a bit!" He said "Hell, Steve, that thing is way too small. You'll lose both wings." "Nah, I can do it. Watch" and I roared right at the open doors. "Hang on Doc" Cog said, "the sonofabitch is gonna do it!" Of course, at the last second, I pulled up and skimmed over the roof. Doc shook his head and said "God, now I know what air combat must be like. You scared me to death."

Then the Tower came on the air with "GOOD SHOW!"

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To jog a few memories, we reproduce a few paragraphs from a document your editor fell heir to some years ago. The following is taken from a "semi-official" account of three days during the air echelon's time in North Africa in 1943. We do not know who wrote the following account, but are grateful for his clear and concise writing. And for the "memory jog."

Tuesday, November 23, 1943—The first answer to the cold weather snap which we've run into this month came with a supply of wood stoves for the offices on the field today. Most of the day has been spent in putting them up and now there is a general search for wood and other combustibles for fuel. Some oil stoves are being used in the barracks for heating. What weather records there are, indicate this has been the coldest winter in North Africa in years. Rumors about our return to England keep buzzing about, with the most general one predicting a return between Jan. 1 and Jan. 15. It is predicated on an order giving us certain supply priorities. Roughly, the plan is to put four tanks in each plane and send them back just manned by crews. The remainder of the echelon is expected to return by boat.

Thursday, November 25, 1943—This is Thanksgiving, but it was business as usual except for the big turkey dinner served at the evening meal. The turkey was supplemented by soup, salad, mashed potatoes, peas, hot biscuits, pie and coffee and for once, everyone was satisfied.

Friday, November 26, 1943 — The new shower system has been put into effect and it is one of the biggest improvements on the field since we've been in Africa. By using oil heat on a big storage tank, hot showers are available most of the day. For some of the men, it's the first hot shower they have had since we've been in Africa and a real must with the cold weather setting in. Cold showers were getting to be just too cold.

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With deep regret, we record the death of these comrades:

James A. Bancroft May 14, 1993

William F. Mandt III 1993*

*Exact date unknown due to incomplete information

With the possible exception of General Williams, 52nd TC Wing, Cottesmore (missing a wheel, remember, on a mission to Liege, Belgium), no one is interested in my "career," yet, these days it's *deja vu* (maybe not) if you're not into "ego systems." To slip it by our Editor, I called this a war story.

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13047435.....that's the serial number "they" assigned to this coal miner's son at New Cumberland Barracks, PA, just weeks after a radar operator in Hawaii disbelieved all those blips appearing on his scope that quiet Sunday, December, 1941. The change from corduroy knickers to olive drab long pants was very macho. After matching odd-shaped holes with selected pegs, seeing "numbers" on coded cards which the color blind could not encode, and filling the first of many "lab" bottles handed to me by medics, Uncle Sam pointed his finger and said "Gotcha" (or was it cough?) "They" gave me a pair of dogtags citing a wrong blood type, assignment ORDERS, and shipped me out to Jefferson Barracks, MO.

At "JB" they issued me brown GI boots, a new mop and an old rifle, teaching me that the left foot always hit the ground when the base drum went "wham"....that the mop properly manipulated in the latrine would graduate me to the kitchen (KP)...and, that you didn't jerk the gun's trigger: you gently squeezed it. Shortly, I was an expert at two of the three...my left foot not yet "Sousa"- trained. Then, "they" put me on a train to Keesler Field, Biloxi MS, a "Northern" recruit about to get his first MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) and an introduction to SBE (separate, but equal).

Between classes, studies and guard duty, I applied for pilot training. Sun-tanned and wearing khakis, I departed for the Gulf Coast with a Kennedy Kit (tool box), a Good Conduct Medal, an airplane mechanic's diploma and, a vision of Tracy & Hepburn in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*." Reared by a Quaker mother, I knew only that George Washington Carver was in the peanut business before Jimmy Carter....that Joe Louis, the "Brown Bomber" who demolished my choice, Maxi Baer, was the World Champion heavyweight boxer....and that Satchel Paige was "big-league" but, like the early "X" Series test pilots, couldn't get through the "barrier."

Assigned to DeRidder Field, LA near Lake Charles, I began tinkering with the Observation Squadron's O-52s and O-47s. Shortly, they put me in the rear seat of an O-52 and flew me to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, TX....reassigned. Surviving the boot camp hassle at SAACC.....later, I thought I had soloed in a Fairchild PT-19 at Hicks Field, (Ft. Worth); but, during "the war" I learned that the "Chief Pilot in the White A-2 jacket" never let me go up alone. With me and time both flying, "they" rapidly checked me out in BT-13s, BC-1s, AT-6s and UC78s....finally, handing me a set of new gold bars and a pair of Pilot's wings at Brooks Field, TX. With the set of 2nd Lieutenant's bars came a new serial number.

AO-687177: "they" issued me a B-4 bag, an A-2 jacket, a white scarf, two pairs of gloves, a watch with a radium-coated dial and an E6B DR Calculator. Then, eager and ready to fly, "they" mostly gave me train tickets, shipping me (by choo-choo), successively to Dunellon Field FL, Bergstrom Field TX, Lawson Field GA, and Baer Field IN. I

did get in just enough flying to know that the DC-3 would take all the punishment I could dole out! At Baer, awaiting crew assignment, "they" issued me heavy winter flying gear, long johns, a parachute and a "polar guide" (via Greenland and Iceland, ETO here I come)....then mysteriously "they" gave me new ORDERS and put me in a crispy-sheeted Pullman berth enroute to Norfolk VA where I was hurried aboard the USS Anderson, a 30 knot-plus armed transport which, on this, its MAIDEN voyage, would prove that ships could cross the Atlantic unescorted...out-running and out-maneuvering the German submarines (gulp!).

My assignment was a "focsl" watch with binoculars and a whistle. We zig-zagged a lot and sometimes during daylight hours----in between numerous lifeboat drills----the crew would improve their marksmanship by shooting at bright colored buoys launched to port and starboard. "They" did get closer, but never had a hit (gulp!) Also, we did have some sort of rotating electronic gear which, I assumed, could detect subs. After about a week at sea, a dark mass loomed on the horizon. "They" told us it was North Africa and we would be docking at Casablanca in the morning. I went below to re-check my Arctic gear. I'd read that the Sahara desert got cold at night!

Finally, "they" would put me in the wild blue yonder over Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia at first, then Sicily, Italy and ultimately, Europe proper. After "doing time" with the 315th TCG (best years of my life), I finally was promoted, Col. Hamby congratulating me while slipping silver bars into my other hand.

VE Day climaxed my flying days in the ETO and the GREEN PROJECT over, my "happy hours" with the 315th

ended. Then, reassigned, when the 4th Ferry Command, Memphis TN ran out of "final" mission warplanes for delivery to the Air Corps sacred burial grounds at Davis-Monthan, "they" promoted me to Captain (Reserve) and pointed me toward Shamokin, separation papers and a GI Bill pamphlet in hand.

With a salt-eaten 41 Buick Coupe, \$1200. in the bank, a 21ft Elcar house trailer, a fourteen month old son, and numerous pairs of "pinks" and "greens" for campus wear, Gloria and I took Uncle Sam's \$90.00 per month (not unlike many of you readers) and went to college (Bucknell) at Lewisburg PA where, if you'll go by 100 N. 4th St., the small two bedroom ranch style house we built still stands---Gloria doing much of the digging and nail-pounding while I attended classes. Three years later, after some 22hr semesters and two summer schools, now with two daughters added to the food-chain, almost broke, three or four dozen cloth diapers in various stages of "wash"...a beat-up Model A for "wheels", both of us now wearing my "surplus olive drab GI undershorts (Gloria saved by the drawstrings), we graduated. I got my BS.

Cold-rolling steel in Sinking Springs PA, I bided time awaiting ORDERS. Back in uniform, a Captain, "they" based me at Westover Field MA, mostly flying C-97 missions into Thule, the DEW Line base in Greenland. Once, (a la Doc Cloer) I too, gave the legendary Arctic explorer Bernt Balchen C-54 rides to Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island and ALERT (Ellesmere Island). This time, Gloria and I elected to go for at least "20", so I applied for REGULAR Air Force status, and, of course, got another serial number.

FR52463A...kinda RIF free, "they" sent me to Rhein Main AFB, Germany. The Berlin Airlift, just ending, I was assigned as OIC of the Aero-Medical Evac. fleet with additional duty as the Wing Flying Safety Officer (you heard right!)...later upgraded to Base Operations Officer. Len (Tom) Thomas was OPS Officer at Wiesbaden AFB at the same time, so we often touched base. I don't recall any significant official business between us, but I do remember one cold Fall day when, Tom, lathered and wet (in the midst of a shower) heard Jeanne SCREEEEAM....and, responding, he caught a glimpse of an intruder departing via the apartment window. Giving chase, he lost his towel-wrap in the first twenty feet, ran out of his clogs on the fire escape and caught the crook on a lawn just around the corner.

By the time Jeanne showed up with a robe, most of the gathering onlookers (male and female) observed that the shivering Tom's Hungarian parents had probably, ya know, not been Jewish.

Meanwhile, I borrowed "2K" from "Fort Sam" to book Gloria and the kids passage on the converted Swedish hospital ship, the Gripsholm. Base housing not yet available, Gloria wasn't exactly fond of the temporary housing I had arranged...a German family's fixed-up garage located in Morfelden, a village off limits to US troops, but close to the field. I tossed her a German language primer and took off on a three day evac mission to Trieste. Back, I knew things weren't going smoothly when she greeted me with "Das Gelt ist nix gering" (close enough, I understood she was broke!)

Three years zipped by: a daughter, Lincha, was born with a choice: YANK or KRAUT? One of our air evac planes was fired on by a Russian MIG...caught

outside the south corridor to Berlin. I talked with Air Force Chief of Staff General Hoyt Vandenberg (telecon) when his son bailed out of an F-86 (3-plane formation) attempting a socked-in landing at Rhein Main. And, during a massive flyby for a retiring 3 or 4 star Army General, an unannounced altitude change by a formation of fighter aircraft resulted in a collision between a formation of C-119s/C82s (from our Wing) and the fighters....nine or ten planes going down (my neighbor among those that I identified in the morgue.) General Gibbons was with USAFE HQS. working on his second star at the time and no doubt remembers all three incidents.

From the pandemonium of Rhein Main "they" sent us to a battlefield where the cannons were silent: Gettysburg PA. An Associate Professor of Air Science, flying out of Olmsted Field (birthplace of the 315th TCG) I oriented AFROTC cadets at Gettysburg College on low altitude scenic tours of the battlefield and Ike's farm...UNTIL, he (the President) objected and made it (the farm) an Air Defense Identification Zone.

I was an observer on the grounds where "Pickett charged" when "they" erected a memorial to the last Civil War Union soldier (mid-fifties)----a blue-suiter named Woolsom. And, I became "expert" enough on the Civil War to suspect that if General "Stonewall" Jackson had not been killed (shot by mistake in the dark by his own troops) in the battle for Chancellorsville, LEE might have departed Gettysburg with the Confederate Army heading for Washington, not Appomattox! I left the Gettysburg campus wondering why a long tenure, full Professor, albeit egg on his tie, made less money than an AF

Captain? "They" decided to jet qualify me at Randolph AFB TX (JQC) where I traded my soft helmet for a hard-hat; then, on to Fairchild AFB WA, where I earned my flying pay on "parts" missions for Curtis LeMay's B-52/C-135 (SAC) guys. When "they" urgently needed a part not in stock, I strapped on a T-Bird flew to the designated depot, secured the "whatever" on the back seat and delivered it.

Time up, "they" sent me to my dreamed of ((Bermuda, Hawaii) "Island" assignment:

Keflavik, Iceland. Mt. Heckla greeted us with an eruption, and I soon learned about the "big lie"---that the lonely, well groomed tree on this NATO base was NOT the only one around. Heck, nearby Reykjavic's Central Square had some trees and, up around Akureyri there were good-sized forests! One of the most northernmost DEW line sites that we supplied required landing near a lake, crossing on a barge or sled, then, being pulled on skids/sleds by bulldozer to the high-up site. You guys who opted out of a military career sure missed out on some fun!

Gloria, with our five kids in harness, decided to get paid for "sitting" and accepted the YOUTH CENTER DIRECTOR's job. Mysteriously, "they" promoted both of us (me to Major, Gloria to GS-3), then curtailed our tour, sending us to Michigan State University for an MBA via the Armed Forces Institute of Technology...flying out of Selfridge AFB, named after the first Army Signal Corps aviator to be killed in a plane crash (I think). About then, the Department of Defense decided to eliminate serial numbers and use Social Security IDs: thus, I got a new number!

187-12-2821...with my MBA noted in the fine print on my OER, "they" assigned me to the Auditor General's Pentagon Office (Tempo-D, downtown across the street from the Smithsonian) and promoted me to Lt.Col...later transferring me to the old York Street Air Force Accounting & Finance Office in Denver CO----UNEXPECTEDLY, my final assignment. During leaves and weekends, Gloria and I self-built our white fir log "Chalet Bergsteiger" at the 10,000 ft level near Mt. Elbert (14,431 ft) overlooking Twin Lakes Co. We both lost weight and showed signs of new muscles. The Lowry AFB Flight Surgeon sent me to Fitzsimon's Army Medical Center because he didn't like the looks of one new muscle (egg shaped) in my neck. So, while I was "sleeping" a Doc performed a full thyroidectomy, removed a handful of lymph nodes, wrote me a lifetime prescription for thyroxin and ended my days as a blip on a radar screen! Oncologists kinda get your attention, so Gloria and I retired to the "chalet".

After twenty-two years (go ahead, call me lucky) high in the Sawatch Range of the Rocky Mountains, we had to move (to a lower altitude) one more time. We're bivouacked now, on a mesa called "Battlement" near Parachute CO, finally convinced that "they" would never add hazard pay to my retirement stipend just because we had lived at an altitude which, during the old flying days, required you to go on oxygen!!!

Gotta go. Must track down "they" to find out who's been pushing us around all these years!

Ziggy

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DUES PAYMENT....DUES PAYMENT....DUES PAYMENT....DUES PAYMENT

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

Dear Bob:

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

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

ADDRESS.....

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

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