



315th Newsletter

Published by
WORLD WAR II 315th TROOP CARRIER GROUP ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER, 1993

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Our 1994 Reunion is about one year away. It is not too early to start making plans, arrange schedules, etc. Jim and Audrey Fidler have planned a full program of interesting activities, but there will still be plenty of time for socializing, to reminisce and, hopefully, to renew acquaintances with some members who had not had the pleasure of attending former reunions.

I would like to strongly suggest that you give some consideration to the possibility of having your children and/or grandchildren attend with you. It could well be time that we share, first hand, our cherished memories with "the next generation(s)".

Personally, I want to thank all who contribute articles, anecdotes and memories to make the *Newsletter* the interesting and informative chronicle it is of WWII 315th activities – both then and now. Ed Papp does a tremendous job in compiling all of the articles, and I'm certain he shares my thanks and appreciation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

"Life is not always the way it is supposed to be. It is the way it is. How you cope with it is what makes the difference."

John F. Andrews

THIS IS OUR "NEW LOOK"..... Since we began publishing a few years ago, the *Newsletter* has looked pretty much the same. In an effort to add more eye-appeal, we're trying a new "face" to see how we (all you readers) like it.

But, as is the case with any print publication, what's important is its content and we hope you will enjoy what we have for you in this issue. If you have any strong feelings about our new look -- one way or the other -- we'd like to know about them.

Thanks, and write:
Edward M. Papp, Editor
WWII 315th NEWSLETTER
200 Bryant Avenue
Glen Ellyn IL 60137

IN THIS ISSUE:

The President's Letter (right) has some thoughtful suggestions we should seriously consider. You will be interested, we think, in Jim Alwood's account of two missions he flew and his subsequent capture and life in a German prison camp...a gripping story, indeed. Bill Brinson sends an amusing tale of how a C-47 got dunked in the ocean near Puerto Rico and Ziggy Zartman's story of a trip to the Holy Land makes fascinating reading. Finally, we call your attention to Jack Mancinelli's memo about the 1994 Reunion in St. Louis.

Always interested in obtaining editorial material for our readers, your editor, after hearing bits and pieces about the wartime service of one of our 315th comrades, undertook to get Jim ("Seaweed") Alwood to give us an account of his experiences in combat operations.

It took some dogged persistence to get a copy of an audio tape Jim had made for his children and grandchildren because, as he put it "Heck, nobody would be interested in what happened to me!" Your editor disagreed with him and continued to press Jim for his story.

Then, one day, I received a couple of cassette tapes in the mail and listened to them. To say the accounts of Jim's experiences were interesting and exciting would be selling them short. Because many of us know Jim, the excerpts from his tapes we publish below will be all the more immediate and inspiring. We begin with the D-Day mission on June 6, 1944.

But first, a brief outline of Jim Alwood's military career:

- Enlisted in the Army Air Corps September 9, 1940.
- Sent to Ft. Lewis for basic training
- Ordered to Moffat Field where he studied aircraft and engine maintenance.
Received his A/E License and was promoted Corporal
- Worked on the line on BT-13 aircraft. After one year promoted Sergeant
- In the Fall of 1941, having the required high school education and 6 credits of mathematics, applied for flight training
- Sent to Kelly Field in December, 1941 from where he was transferred to Cuero TX for Primary Flight Training by civilian instructors
- Completing Primary, sent to Basic and then to Kelly Field for Advanced Training in AT-6s. Graduated as Sgt. Pilot and given two week's leave before next assignment. After one day's leave, recalled and ordered to Stout Field, Indiana for multi-engine transition training in DC-3 aircraft under United Airline Pilot instruction.
- Successfully completed 30 hours transition and ordered to join 315th Troop Carrier Group at Florence, SC
- Flew overseas with 315th TCG and participated in its missions in UK and North Africa. Returned with Group to UK•
Promoted• to Flight Officer, later commissioned 2nd Lt.
- Volunteered for Pathfinder Group, flew D-Day Pathfinder mission
- Discharged from the service as 1st Lieutenant

Here follows the excerpts from the tapes:

As D-Day approached, the base was "sealed"---if you were off the base, you couldn't get back on, and if you were on the base, you couldn't get off. There was not outgoing mail, no telephone calls.....no contact with the outside world.

On the night of the invasion...or, rather on the night before the invasion, we took off in flights of three and dropped the Pathfinder troops who were to set up Tees, Lights and other navigational aids around St. Mere Eglise in France to guide the main groups of aircraft to their assigned drop zones and after doing that, they were supposed to go out in the area and do as much sabotage as possible.

We dropped our people a little after midnight. I was the co-pilot flying the airplane from the right seat, due to the particular formation. As we were crossing the Channel, we could see the tracers and anti-aircraft fire coming up from the ground and it looked like a solid wall. And Sam (Suttle, the Pilot in command) and I were looking at each other wondering how we could get through it. When we got to the shoreline, it sort of quit, except for a few tracers and whatnot. As we continued in, letting down to our drop altitude of 800 feet, we saw an aircraft that was hit and on fire.

It bounced off the ground about three times and finally it just exploded. The plane was not from our Group. While we were going in to drop our troops, we could hear the gunfire from the ground. Frank (Hayden, the Navigator) couldn't see out, but he could hear it; and suddenly, over the intercom, we heard "Say, sounds like

there's a war going on some place." (That was Frank: real cool under fire.

We dropped our troops and as we were going out, I noticed that the lead ship, for some reason, was slower than usual. We were on the outside of the turn I had to throttle back to keep from over-running him. I wondered how the guy on the inside kept from stalling. But we got out of there and into a cloud layer and back to England. None of our planes were knocked down, but we took a lot of hits. After that, we flew about 2-3 days without much sleep, flying freight into France. They gave us some pills to keep us awake, but most of us didn't take them because we were afraid they would interfere with our judgment and mechanical skills and we thought we'd rather be a little sleepy and tired. I didn't know anyone who used them.

After things settled down for awhile, we flew missions into Holland where we went into fields just a couple of miles from enemy lines. We flew in a lot of troops and munitions.....and it was kind of nerve-wracking too, because you could get shot on take-off, but fortunately nobody was shot down

Then there was the Holland drop (Market-Garden) that turned out to be such a fiasco....the one described in the book "A Bridge Too Far"....where our Intelligence didn't know that the Germans had two Panzer Divisions on rest leave, in the area. (I was on RR stateside and arrived back the day of the drop, so I lucked out; I didn't have to go.) The story went that the Dutch Underground tried to tell our people the Germans were in there, but they

didn't believe them. So we dropped troops right in the middle of them and I guess we lost more men--- Americans, British and Polish---than were lost in the invasion on D-Day. We lost a lot of aircraft and men in our outfit as did many other Groups.

After Market-Garden, we returned to our "normal" duties, hauling freight and passengers and trying to keep up with Patton who was going so fast that by the time we got the fuel up to where he was supposed to be, he was gone and he had to stop and wait for fuel.

Then, along came the Battle of the Bulge. The troops trapped in and near Bastogne were running out of food and ammunition and were surrounded by German troops. We were going to re-supply them, but the weather wasn't co-operating because it made flying impossible. Finally, after three days of waiting for the weather to clear...I think around the 19th or 20th (of December) they said you've got to go even if the weather and fog is lousy, and if you're on instruments, drop at 1000 feet and if you're in the clear, go down to 200 feet because you'll have a 40 mile an hour headwind over the target and you don't want the stuff to fall into the hands of the Germans.

Finally, we went and were hoping the weather would be such that we'd be on instruments because we knew we'd be shot at. As it turned out, we got shot at a lot. Intelligence didn't have everything quite right and we had our initial point laid out so it was on a road and a railroad about 10 miles from the target. As it turned out, it

was clear as a bell, so we had to go down to the lower altitude (200 feet) . The road and railroad (which we thought was our territory) was held by the Germans, so they really worked us over going in. It sounded like hail hitting the airplane. Frank (Hayden, the Navigator) called up to us and said " Say, would you mind helping me cross-check some of these checkpoints ?" I answered " Frank, I can't see anything but tracers coming up" because there were a lot of them . Then he reassured me, "Don't worry about it, we're on target." To drop the stuff, we had to slow down to about 120 MPH; and with the head wind we faced, we were slowed down to about 70 MPH ground speed.)We were kind of like "sitting ducks.") As we were dropping, we lost one engine. We could see the Germans who were shooting at us, because we were only a couple of hundred feet high and I was looking right at three of them---I could almost see the color of their eyes. It was a helpless feeling, knowing that we couldn't return their fire. After diving a little to gain some speed, we leveled off, and then the other engine went.

Before we had taken off from England, Sam (Suttle, the Pilot) and I had flipped to see who would fly the airplane . Sam won, so I was sitting in the right seat. Sitting there with nothing much to do, seeing all that stuff coming at you, can be worse than if you're the one flying it; so when Sam couldn't get his chest belt fastened, and gave me the airplane I was thankful to get it,

When we lost the last engine, I picked up the mike and said "Frank, we're

going down --we've lost the last one." He had a cigar in his mouth and was plotting our return course and I distinctly heard "Oh, s_ _ t." (He was cool as always--more disgusted than anything else.) He got up, went to the back end and braced himself. And I began picking out a field below. The snow on the ground, kind of destroys your depth perception making it hard to judge the heights. But, finally, I picked out a spot and I really thought it was going to be a "piece of cake." I leveled off about 10 feet above the ground and I was down to about 60 miles an hour and prepared to "grease it right in." I had the gear up, but suddenly, there wasn't anything in front of me. There was a valley, kind of a canyon, and I thought "Holy cow", if I have to land it now, I'm gonna go down that hill and if I can't slow us down, surely everyone on board is going to get hurt or killed. But, I was able to hold it off and hold it off, thank God, until we were almost touching the ground, but still in the air. The last I remember, the airspeed said 60 and we weren't really supposed to be flying, but I got her over the edge and started down the hill. I started building up speed and got it up to 140 miles an hour. There was a row of trees at the bottom and I kept looking at it wondering if I could get over it completely without stalling; or if I should go through the tops, maybe, which I elected to do.

We went through the tops and started up the other side of the valley and I picked out a spot--a little knoll up ahead of me. I had it all squared away and I was getting ready to land. I was down to that critical point where your

5

air speed was gone and I was committed. Suddenly, I heard a loud voice shout "PULL UP" and, of course, I reacted to the urgency of the words, with no time to reason why? at that crucial stage.

I thought Sam had gone to the back end (when he couldn't get his seat belt fastened), but instead, he was standing directly behind the pilot's compartment, perhaps to help, if possible. From his vantage point, of course, standing up and looking down through the cockpit window, it looked to him as if I was closer to the ground than I really was. So I pulled up...just pulled back on the yoke and it quit flying; we just "plopped" into the ground. Both engines peeled off; fortunately, we didn't catch fire; one engine was "putting" all the way to the ground. I turned everything off except that engine; I hoped to get it started, but it was no go.

We decided the best way to get out was through the top hatch of the cockpit. I was a bit dazed; in spite of my chest belt, flak vest and steel helmet, I had hit my head on the edge of the instrument panel. So, I was trying to get unbuckled and what not. Sam popped the hatch and was half-way out the top. Then he quickly dropped back down and went to the back. I wondered "what's the matter with him.....that's the way to get out of here". Then, by golly, I looked up and saw a machine gun up there....a German machine gun, and he started firing at us. The bullets were coming right through the windshield and I understood why Sam had changed his mind. I jumped up and ripped half of my pants off on the throttle quadrant

5

and went back to the back end and lay down and tried to figure out what to do.

We had a total of 8 people on board....3 of them were extras because we had to have extra people to push cargo out the door. One of them got hit by a piece of metal shot off the airplane by a bullet and he was running back and forth and up and down the airplane hollering "I'm hit....I'm hit"...he wasn't hit very bad, a little blood running down off his head. Strange thing about it, every time he went by or turned around, the bullets would seem to follow him. Finally, one time when he went by Frank, Frank tripped him and said "You'd better get down here or you're gonna get hit." So we all lay there for a minute or so. The Crew Chief was back by the door. Someone said "Hey, Sarge, go out there and tell 'em we give up." I thought "Oh oh, don't think he'll do that". I was right. He said "No sir, don't think I'll go out there--- they'll kill me." I thought that was pretty smart thinking. I don't know where the bamboo pole, about 10 feet long, came from, but the Crew Chief stuck his handkerchief---it happened to be white, not a G.I. issue---and stuck it out the door. They stopped shooting and then a German corporal came to the door. He said "Hands oop---Raus" ...meaning get out, so we got out.

They lined us up by the tail assembly and started searching us.

Then our infantry started shooting, but they hit everything but the Germans, our airplane included. The Germans
shouted

6

"Down....down....down" so we got down in the snow until the firing stopped. They took us out of their real fast; but not before they looted the airplane of cartons of cigarettes which I had passed out to the crew before taking off on the mission.

I forgot to mention that this mission was a fiasco right from the beginning: the field we had taken off from wasn't our own field---it was about 100 miles south. Several outfits were taking off from the same one. We were weathered in, so Sam and I flew back to our own field to pick up flak vests, cigarettes, candy bars and so forth that we always took with us on a mission in case we were forced down someplace. We also got the crew list and so on. We stayed there that night and loaded everything in a weapons carrier so we could drive back to the field early the next morning. We got up in the morning and the weapons carrier was gone! (We learned later that a couple of paratroopers had celebrated a little too much the night before and "borrowed" it. We finally found it in a ditch. With this delay, a couple hours had gone by, so we took off, driving down to the field. By the time we got there, everyone else was taking off, so we passed out the cigarettes and the crew list and told everyone who they were flying with. We had a quick briefing, and jumped into the airplane. I had a crew list which I stuffed into my pocket along with a little book in which I had put information about the ranges we used to fly when the Germans weren't jamming them and we could home in on them. So, when we were shot down and before they searched us, I got rid

of the little black book with the range information in it. (I hadn't wanted to take any chances with my other "little black book", so I had left it back at the base.) But I forgot about the crew list. When they took that from me, I was really worried because I figured they'd check on it and I'd really be in trouble when we got to the prison camp.

They took us back to what they called their "control point" to begin with. That's where they began their interrogation. They were talking to Sam who had injured his back and (we thought) possibly broken his knee, so we had to carry him out of the airplane. The Germans parked him in a barn on a hay pile and that's the last I saw of him until after the war. The next time I saw him was about 40 years later in the lobby of a hotel in New Orleans at my first 315th TCG Reunion. What a reunion!

In the meantime, we were held in a building. Our artillery was starting to fire at it and shells were landing around the house. Frank was sitting on a little table reading a magazine (surprise, surprise). There was a window behind him and a shell landed close by. It blew in the window and Frank said "I guess I better get down on the floor" (just like it was an every day deal.) When it was over, the Germans took us out and down the road. As we walked, we saw what must have been 30 or 40 German soldiers piled up like cordwood. It was below freezing, so they weren't going to deteriorate. I'll always remember that sight. War is war.

7

They took us here and there, always going back. Sometimes there were quite a few of us and other times only a few. One time, there were 3 or 400 hundred of us marching along this road. Most of these were guys who'd been trapped in the Bulge...infantry and artillery guys who were in pretty bad shape because of the cold; some had frozen feet and so on.

Another time, we were marching along...it was cold and snowing, and we came to a fork in the road. One road went to the right, the other continued on. We walked a little distance, and finally someone hollered "Hey! Where is everybody?" It was just like the "Keystone Cops": the majority of the line had turned to the right, and the rest of us had marched straight ahead. Would you believe that we actually ran to catch up with our captors? We had talked to enlisted men who had been captured during the Battle of the Bulge and we knew our chances of getting back to our lines in the cold and snow were slim.

Once, we were going down this hill toward a bridge on which German tanks were crossing because the front was only 15 miles away. We had to wait until they got by and then we went across and started up the other hill. We got about half-way up this hill and our fighters spotted the German tanks....the fighters were P-38s and P47s....and they started working over the tanks. We had quite a ringside view of this. When they finished, they left....all but three P47s. They began to circle us. There were seven or eight officers in the column....the rest were enlisted men. We were the only Air Corps officers in the bunch, so the

8

infantry and artillery officers kept asking us "do you think they know who we are...do you think they know we're not the enemy"? What could we answer but "I don't know...? Pretty soon they left and I could see they were dropping down behind the hill and lining up with the column so I knew what they had in mind. They didn't recognize us as Americans as they came on, line astern, and popped up over the hill and started firing. Everybody took off. We just happened to be at a curve in the road and the first plane made one pass and quit firing. The other two didn't fire at all, no doubt recognizing that we were prisoners of war. In the meantime, we were scattered all over. (.50 caliber bullets sure take a big hunk of asphalt out of a road!) When the Germans finally got us all rounded up again, a German guard said "For every guard that's killed, I'll kill an officer". I don't know whether an artillery guy was making a joke or not, but he pointed at us and said "Air Corps...Air Corps." That didn't make us feel any too good. But none of the guards were killed, so that was one threat we could put behind us.

We were on the road from here to there. We'd get something to eat, but not very much at any one time. It was cold and we were always hungry. We slept in barns... with no blankets or any covering. Thank God I wore my GI boots that day instead of the oxfords we usually wore. Frank had a parka, but they took that away from him when they got us out of the plane, and all we had to wear was what we had on at the time. We kept going through Germany---

sometimes we'd be on a train, sometimes on a bus....but mostly, we walked. Most of the bridges were blown out, so consequently when we were on a train or bus, we didn't go very far. One night they parked us in a place that was kind of pie-shaped--- railroad on one side, road on the other. There were only 10 or 15 of us at that time. Some Mosquito bombers were flying around trying to get someone to fire at them so they could bomb them back. Then a bunch of German tanks came rumbling by the building. They were so close we could practically reach out and touch them. A Mosquito spotted them and began to machine-gun them and began dropping bombs and he hit the building we were in. Splinters were flying everywhere. Of course, we got down on the floor but that didn't help much because there wasn't anything to get under. Finally, he left; I don't know whether he destroyed any tanks or not. One night, they parked 300 or 400 of us in a church with a prison attached. It had a big high ceiling. They locked us in and just left. And then, the B-17s came to bomb the area. They started dropping them. None hit the church, but some were close and they shook up the place pretty good. They shook everybody up and the poor GIs who had been having a rough time with frozen limbs and other wounds were running around the place looking like cornered rats, they were so scared. Frank and I got down under one of the pews, figuring that it might break the fall of whatever fell off the ceiling, but nothing happened.

Finally, we got to Frankfurt where they began interrogating us again.

8

They put you in solitary confinement after delousing us and taking our picture. The cells were small rooms, eight feet long, four or five feet wide with a little window up high on the wall at the end. The door was solid, except for the guard's peephole. They took everything away from us so we couldn't doodle or pass the time. Then they took us out in the middle of the night--one at a time--and across the street where the interrogations were carried out.

The first thing my interrogator said I had to do was prove I wasn't a spy by telling him whatever he wanted to know. Of course, all I told him was my name, rank and serial number. That's all I was supposed to tell. He kept saying "you have to prove you're not a spy. We know the letters on your airplane and if you tell us and they're the same we'll know you're not a spy." Well, I perked up when I heard that because there were no letters on our plane as it was a replacement plane. (Ours was out for mechanical work.) So I thought I'd see how far I can go with this and he'd get mad and say "Go back to your cell and rot!" Then they'd pull me out the next night and start asking questions all over.

One day he brought out a book on the 315th Troop Carrier which he thought I was in. It was as thick as a Sears-Roebuck catalog. He said "See. how much information we have?"...he started off by telling me where I lived, where I went to flying school, the missions I'd flown, where I'd been in the service...and I thought "my gosh"...but when you consider how much of that (not all) could have been obtained from a newspaper, I guess I

9

shouldn't have been so surprised. But it was kind of astounding how they did it. He had all the names of our officers and most of the enlisted men. He said because there were more enlisted men than officers, it took a little longer to get those. He told me what frequencies we used on certain missions and once I said "Well, you know more about it than I do." Then he'd get back to the letters on our airplane and I would say "I can't tell you that."

He didn't know I was in Pathfinder. I let him keep thinking I was in the 315th; I was also worried about the crew list they took away from me when we were shot down. I still thought it might show up and I'd really be in trouble, but it never did; I don't know what happened to it.

Sometimes we'd get to talking about other things and once in a while he'd give me a German cigarette. He wasn't such a bad guy.....and he spoke perfect King's English. I asked him what he did before the war and he said he'd been selling machinery in England. I said "What are you going to do after the war?" and he kind of grinned and said "I hope I'll be selling machinery in England". I asked him who would win the war and he said "Oh, you're going to win. Probably in six months it will be over". He was right on both counts. He kept asking "Would you like to go to the main (prison) camp with your Navigator?" And I said "that'd be real nice." He said it would be possible if I gave him the information he was asking for and I said "Well, I guess I'll have to stay here for a while." As it turned out, I was

10

there eight days They'd let Frank go about the second or third day he was there. But I finally caught up with him at the prison camp.

We had a lot of bombing from our own bombers and strafing from our own fighters on the way there--all of which scared the heck out of us. Once, we had a couple of old Viennese guys guarding us--there were only about five or ten of us at that time. They put us on a bus and said "If the people come after you, jump out the windows and we'll come pick you up afterwards." They also said they didn't like doing this (guard work) but their families were being held hostage in Vienna. I felt kind of sorry for them. One night they parked us in a boxcar near Berlin and that night the British bombers came over and bombed the area which scared the daylights out of us. They had locked the boxcars and took off for the shelters near the rail yard. The bombing nearly turned that box car over, but again we weren't hit. After all this, we finally got to the main prison camp (Stalag Luft I) located at Barth, Germany on the Baltic Sea. We hoped we would be getting better food there, but it wasn't much better.

There were about 10,000 prisoners in the camp--mostly airmen, because they were the only troops captured at the beginning.

As we had gone through Germany, we noticed signs with big red lettering that said "Escape is no longer a sport!" and we didn't know what that meant until we asked at the prison camp. They told us the Germans had at first made a sort of sport out of escape

attempts; if you managed to get outside the camp fence before they caught you, they figured that was one on them. But if they caught you inside the fence, they put you in solitary confinement for a week. But when the war began going against Germany, they decided escape was no longer a sport and they'd shoot anyone trying to get out. There were many attempts made, but, we were told, only one person ever got out of that camp and he was a British airman.

The guy who dreamed up the TV show "Hogan's Heroes" must have been a prisoner in a Stalag Luft, because ours was pretty much the same. It wasn't quite as comical, however. (We had no Colonel Klink) The barracks were almost an exact replica of the ones seen in the show. They had dogs running around at night, underneath the barracks, growling and snarling. But they weren't as friendly as the ones on the show.

Our food consisted of one small loaf of black bread for seven men and a thin, watery soup. A lucky one might find an occasional piece of horse meat in theirs, but such "prizes" were few and far between. It was usually just a bit of rutabaga and potato....very thin. It wasn't much, but when we got our Red Cross parcels once a week they helped a lot, even though the Germans insisted that four men share each parcel....instead of a parcel to each man as the protocol dictated. The parcels helped, but for about a month, we didn't get any Red Cross parcels. We had to live off the German fare and that got pretty tough; a lot of the guys were falling over at the line-up for the

count in the morning and evening because of malnutrition. They told us the parcels weren't coming through because our bombers and fighters were shooting up the roads--which they probably were, but we found out after we were liberated that there were 15,000 parcels in a storage area near the the camp. But, in the meantime, we tried to keep in good physical shape just in case a chance to make a break ever came,

One day, the COs came around and wanted to identify the biggest, strongest volunteers in each barracks (naturally, I stood in line) so that when the time came, they would organize a rush to each guard tower and try to over-power them because ,we learned afterward, that Hitler thought if they'd cremate all of us and send us home in cans, the bombing might stop. Supposedly, Goering was the one who stopped that idea from being carried out.

We made it through there, but it was kind of tough. They gave us seven lumps of coal per day per barracks which was supposed to be both for heat and cooking. They didn't last very long . Everything was divided up among the 21 men in our barracks; once we had a can of Spam . It was divided

up 21 ways with everyone looking over the shoulder of the guy doing the cutting

to make sure they would all be equal. The guy cutting was on the spot! There was one fellow....I think he was a bomber pilot who was wounded when he was shot down. They put a steel plate in his head which caused him to

be just a little mentally unbalanced. When he'd get his ration, he wouldn't eat it, until the other 20 guys had eaten theirs. Then he'd eat his and 20 guys who were still hungry would be sitting there watching him eat his portion. But no one interfered with him because we all felt sorry for him.

The Germans would spring a surprise search on a barracks, looking for something specific.....and if there were things we shouldn't have had, but if it wasn't what they were specifically looking for, they'd ignore it! All they seemed to care about was just what they had on their minds at the time.

We didn't have too many showers. (I only remember getting one and that was a cold one) . They turned the cold water on just long enough for us to get wet; Then they turned it off while we soaped down (at least they called it soap) then they turned the water back on for one minute so we could rinse. (It's surprising how long a minute really is). One night, Frank and I used a barrel outside the barracks that had water in it so we could get a little grime off ourselves and we learned that was a really tough way to take a bath in the middle of February.

After a while, we found out the Russians were getting closer. Someone in the camp had a radio . I don't know who it was, but they'd send around a slip of paper with news written on it....where the front lines were and so on, and if you were caught with it, you were supposed to swallow it.

Then one day, we noticed a lot of traffic going to the West...cars people,

bicycles and so on. This went on for a couple of days and we knew something

was up. Then, one morning, we woke up, and all the Germans were gone! No Germans or guards at all. We were free, as far as being guarded, so we went out of the camp that day to see what was around us. Next day the Russians arrived. But on the day we went out of the camp—it was right near the Baltic Sea....we saw on the shore two women and three young children....almost babies. It looked as if they'd had a picnic on the beach. But they were dead. Apparently they had committed suicide.

The German people were deathly afraid of the Russians and some of them asked us to come and live with them, hoping, of course, that when the Russians saw that, they'd leave the civilians alone. They knew the Russians would rob and rape, just like many of the Germans did when they were going through Russia. But there wasn't anything we could do to help them.

Sure enough, the Russians came in the next day. It was May 1st....May Day to them was like Christmas and they were all celebrating. They were all drunk. We thought the guy leading the tanks was a Colonel, but it turned out

he was a Corporal and he was mad at us for not ripping up the camp. But we had been told not to because it was going to be used for displaced people; so we didn't do anything. So the Russian said we could Go! Go where? Our Colonel

12
talked to him, and he said he didn't care said he didn't care where we went...we

had two hours to get out. So the Colonel told us to pack what we had which wasn't anything to speak of and standby....he'd keep talking to the Corporal. In the meantime, he told us to rip down the guard towers and fences. About six hour later, he sobered up and decided we could stay, which we did.

These troops were Mongolians—the spearhead of the Russians...on bicycles;

carrying machine guns; some in tanks and so on. You didn't mess with them!

They were nuts for watches. They'd ask you what time it was and instinctively

you'd look at your watch, that is, if you had managed, somehow, to keep it during captivity, and they'd put a gun in your ribs and take the watch. Those were our Allies?

Then the next day, the "white" Russians came through and took over. They brought in a bunch of potatoes and of course we were hungry as heck so we over-ate. I ate a bowl full of boiled potatoes and they came up as soon as I got them down....wasn't used to so much good food at one time.

On the radio someone had in camp, we heard the BBC say that as soon as we Americans (and presumably, British) were liberated, aircraft would be provided to come in and take us out. But we sat there 15 days! In the meantime, some of the guys took off and somehow got in touch with our

17

people to tell them where we were. We were talking to a General one day, waiting for the B-17s to come in and get us and he told us he'd been up the last couple of days and nights getting the airlift organized because, as he said, "We didn't know you people were here." Someone finally got the message and got us out of there and took us to the Lucky Strike camp in France, where we had physicals, proper food, and were given uniforms. From there, we got on a boat and returned to the States.

We were sent to Santa Monica which was set up to receive all prisoners of war.

We were there for two months --- what a holiday! Everything we could wish for was provided during the two months we were there.

Then Frank and I began driving home in my Dad's Dodge Coupe. We started out from Los Angeles in the middle of the night. When we got away from the city, out in the middle of nowhere, we came to a stoplight---a red one. There was no one within miles of the intersection, so I coasted through at about 5 miles an hour. Pretty soon, a police car came up beside us, lights flashing! They pulled us over, and a couple of cops got out and came alongside---and we talked about going through that red light. (I know you kids have been waiting 30 years to hear something like this!) They had us get out, went through all our stuff, and kind of gave us a hard time. We had our uniforms on, and they mentioned that they had been enlisted men. And they really must've gotten a

"bum rap" from some officers in the service somewhere along the way, because they seemed to be a little "bitter about officers." (They definitely didn't have the "spirit" of our own 315th Troop Carrier guys!) They kept threatening to take us

back to Los Angeles, which was about 60 miles. We didn't make any fuss, choosing to let them run their course, which they finally did. Then they let us go on our way. But, it just goes to show: you're never home till you get home!

We drove night and day, taking turns driving, and came home to civilian life. And, that was the end of the war for me.....

Looking back at that time in my life, some things stand out as being especially memorable: One day, we were sent to a British field for about a week to run load tests on our C-47. While we were there, they told us the King of England was coming to inspect the field, which was a base for bombers and Horsa Gliders. So, wanting to be sure that everything was just right, I told the crew they'd better get into Class A Uniforms if they wanted to watch the review. We were asked to take our aircraft down to the end of the field, so it would be out of the way. After awhile, I saw an old-fashioned Rolls-Royce coming down the line, looking like it was 100 years old, but all spit and polish, the King, inspecting the troops and aircraft. It got down to the end of the line, and someone pointed down to the end of the field at us --- and here they came!

I told my guys to get out of the aircraft and line up in front of it. General Candy came up and said "Introduce yourself and your crew to the King of England." Well,....for a young kid, that was pretty "heady" stuff. My knees were knocking and I was sort of speechless (not the best of circumstances under which to introduce anyone). The King got out of the car, shook my hand and I performed the introductions. (As I recall, I stuttered a little.) He stood there for a few minutes, chatting with us. Then he got back into his car and left. General Eaker stayed behind and talked, and I really enjoyed that. He was really a nice guys....sort of like a grandpa.. I'd like to meet him again.

I had a chance to meet a lot of other interesting people during the war that I didn't mention (on this tape), but maybe I'll do another tape someday. I had a lot of good times; some bad times; and there's some of it I wouldn't want to do over again, but, I wouldn't take a million dollars for it, either. I had a lot of fun. Sometimes I wish I'd stayed in the Service: you don't get a chance to do that kind of flying anywhere else. But, that's looking back.

Now, all you kids, when you listen to this look forward. Make up your mind what you want to do. Set your sights on your goal and stick with it! That's all for now. 'Bye.

Love, Dad

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

WARBIRD TRIVIA

1. Of all the American-made bombers which flew in World War II, which one had the greatest survival rate?
2. Who was the leading American fighter ace of World War II -- and what type of aircraft did he fly?
3. What was the largest fighter aircraft produced by the U.S. for World War II?
4. Japanese forces on Okinawa called this plane "Whistling Death" while American land forces in the same battle called her "Angel of Okinawa." Can you name this Navy aircraft?

ANSWERS

1. *The B-25 Mitchell bomber. More than 10,000 B-25s were built for World War II yet only 380 were lost as a result of combat. The B-25 was also the plane flown by Gen. James Doolittle in his famous "Raid on Tokyo"*
2. *Dick Bong of the USAAF, was America's leading ace -- yet he flew one of the USAAF's older-designed planes, a P-38.*
3. *The Northrop P-61 Black Widow. Not only was the P-61 the same size and weight as a typical medium bomber (nearly 30,000 lbs! and a wing span of 66") it was also the USAAF's principal night fighter, featuring advanced radar and remote controlled gun turrets.*
4. *The Chance Vought F4U Corsair, flown by Navy and Marine aces such as "Pappy" Boyington, was one of the fastest, most versatile Navy fighters of the war. Used as a carrier fighter, a ground-attack bomber and an island-based bomber, the Corsair was the only piston-driven Navy plane to match the P-51 in speed.*

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
 Reprinted from the June, 1933 edition of
American Air Museum News.

(While the following incident occurred after the 315th Troop Carrier Group was inactivated at Waller Field, Trinidad in July 1945 because a former 315th aircraft and crew were involved, it might interest some of our readers.)

"LIEUTENANT, MY FEET ARE GETTING WET"

As all who were there at the time should remember, most of the pilots, navigators, and radio operators who were in the four squadrons of the 315th Troop Carrier Group were transferred to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico within a week or so after the air echelon arrived at Waller Field, Trinidad. The organization to which they were assigned was an Army Air Forces Base Unit—one of those with a four digit number in front of it. Most units of any size in the Air Transport Command seemed to be numbered this way.

The purpose of this movement was for the crews to participate in an operation called "Green Project". Army troops were to be moved across the South Atlantic by air to the USA as rapidly as possible for further deployment to the Pacific Theater of Operations. The segment of the air route to be flown by the former 315th crews at Borinquen (plus some additional air crews) was between Atkinson Field, British Guiana and Miami. As soon as air crews could be set up, flights began going both south to Atkinson and north to Miami.

One night in July or August, sometime between midnight and dawn, an air crew returning to Borinquen from Miami, with no one aboard but the crew, had an unusual experience as learned from later conversations with the crew members, and from reading the accident report. In summary, it went something like this: "Borinquen Tower, this is aircraft 567 approaching Borinquen from the north. Estimate to be over the field in five minutes at 1500 feet. "Roger, 567," replied Borinquen Tower. "Report when over the field and again on

downwind leg when wheels are down and locked."

After receiving landing instructions and the latest altimeter setting, the pilot of 567 reported over the airfield and turned on the downwind leg which, in this case, happened to be over the ocean a half mile or more off shore. (Borinquen Field, later named Ramey Air Force Base, is located on a relatively high piece of ground on the northwest corner of the island of Puerto Rico.

Several minutes passed with no further transmissions received by the control tower from the aircraft. The tower operator then attempted to contact the aircraft on various radio frequencies, but received no replies. The tower people were certain that the aircraft had not landed with an inoperable transmitter, because there was limited traffic at that early hour and there had been no sign of landing lights on the approach. Following Standing Operating Procedure, the proper authorities were notified of the situation. The base air-sea rescue unit was one of the first agencies informed, and they alerted both their air crews and boat crews to commence searching for "567."

Shortly after dawn which was an hour or so after the alert was called, a yellow life raft with three people aboard was sighted less than a half mile off shore. (Someone later commented that had an occupant of one of the houses on the cliff facing the ocean been looking out of the window at daylight, he might very well have spotted the raft.) After the crew was brought safely to shore, and later questioned, this was the pilot's story:

"Everything appeared to be normal. We descended from 1500 feet to 1000 feet while turning from over the airfield on to the downwind leg. The landing gear was lowered and just prior to turning on the base leg, while continuing the descent, I felt a sharp jolt, and all motion seemed to have stopped. A second or two later when the radio operator shouted 'Lieutenant, my feet are getting wet!' I realized that we were in the ocean. We opened the hatch, got the life raft out, climbed out after it, and got aboard as soon as it was properly inflated. The sea was almost calm

and as no one appeared to be hurt, we paddled away from the aircraft which sank a few minutes later."

The Investigation Report eventually determined that somehow both the pilot and the co-pilot mis-read the altimeter and when on the downwind leg they were flying at an altitude of one hundred feet when they thought they were at one thousand feet! A continued descent put them in the ocean. No other explanation was forthcoming.

The pilot is reported to have remarked that if he had attempted to "ditch" the C-47 in broad daylight with the wheels up, it probably could not have been a better water landing.

Within a few days or a week, the war with Japan ended, and shortly thereafter, so did the "Green Project". This unusual accident went into the files along with other accidents and was probably soon forgotten...except by the participants.

The above item came from Bill Brinson, our No. 1 correspondent and the man your editor can always rely on to produce an interesting contribution to make each issue of our NEWSLETTER more interesting. Would that we had a few more guys like Bill to help keep this effort rolling along!

While we're on the subject, gentle readers, we'd like to reiterate our invitation to you to send your editor material for inclusion in the NEWSLETTER. If it were not for fellows like Bill, Bob Cloer and a few others who have generously given their time and thought to the subject of material for our publication, it wouldn't be worth mailing out. The only thing we ask is that the material you send be related to the 315th Group and that it would be "suitable for a family-oriented publication". That's all the limitation we have; your submission can be hand-written or typed. We'll put it in

the form required for publication. So, c'mon, guys, GIVE!

PART II: PREPARATIONS FOR THE 'VARSITY' MISSION. We reproduced the first part of Marlin T. Lively's letter which was an account of some of the background activity preceding the "Varsity" mission. Following is the conclusion of Marlin's letter.

Training schedules were issued to the Wings by TWX on 17 February by Major William Morgan. The 52nd Wing breakdown called for the 313th Group to continue transition training in C-46 Aircraft and to include paradrop technique. A second priority for the C-46s consisted in double tow of the CG-4A and single tow of the CG13. American parachute work was designated for the 316th Group and British paradrop technique for the 61st, 314th and 315th.

At a Pre-Varsity conference on 26 February at Chateau De Prunay, Lt. Col N.J.L. Field of the 1st British Airborne Corps stated that he needed 275 Aircraft while a total of 425 Gliders, including 398 Horsas and 27 Hamilcars, would be the maximum towed. The minimum acceptable Glider figure would be 383 Horsas and 23 Hamilcars. General Williams stated that it was unlikely that additional IX TCC Aircraft would be allotted for British Glider Tows.

The IX TCC contribution to the 6th British Airborne Division was listed as 243 Aircraft. 46 Group (RAF) contributed 100 to 110 Planes making a total of 340 to 350 Planes, short of the 383 desired.

38 Group (RAF) operating from UK Airfields at Great Dunmow, Earls Colne, Shepherd's Grove, Rivenhall and possibly Woodbridge (for Hamilcars). (Total 240 Planes.)

46 Group (RAF) operating from Matching and either Gosfield or Weatherfield. (100 to 110 Planes)

Brig. General Harold L. Clark, Commander of 52nd Wing, stipulated that upon

17

completion of the British 6th Lift, his three Groups, the 61st, 315th and 316th would return to Abbeville-Drucat (B-92). Amiens-Glisy (B-48) and Vitry-En-Artois (B-50) in France for future operations.

The 17th U.S. Airborne Division requested 370 Paratroop Aircraft and 680 Gliders.

The discussion of the proposed employment of C46 Aircraft on the Operation revealed that 72 of the C46s on the paratroop would be capable of furnishing the equivalent of 144 C-47 loads.

The tentative plan of operation for the 17th Airborne Division was then outlined. For Paratroops, 72 C46 Aircraft would be committed by the 313th Group from Achiet (B-54); 162 C47s by the 434th and 438th from Prosnès (A-79) and Mourmelon Le Grand (A-80); 90 C-47s by the 441st and 442nd from St. Andre De L'Eure (B-24) and Dreux (A-41).

The Glider schedule called for single tow by 80 of the 314th from Poix (B-44); single tow of 80 by the 436th from Melun (A-55); Double tow of 144 by the 437th from Coulommiers (A-58); single tow of 48 by the 441st from Dreux (A-41); single tow of 90 by the 439th from Chateaudun (A-39); single tow of 90 by the 440th from Bricy (A-50).

Operation Bull-Fight dry run for Varsity.

Operation Token dress rehearsal for Varsity 16 March 45.

Payload maximums for Token 5000 lbs. for C-47s, 9000 lbs. for C46s, 3750 lbs. for the CG-4A Waco Glider.

W/T Radio Station established at HQ, IXTCC (FWD) on 5915 Kilocycles and using the call sign K69 was to be employed primarily for recall of planes whenever necessary.

General Williams declared the practice mission (Token) successful. There were no aborts and no accidents. General Breerton, FAAA, was satisfied with communications and command post operation.

Of the 52nd's three Groups staging in the United Kingdom, the 61st would start from Chipping Ongar Airfield but would return to B-92 upon completion of the mission, while the 315th and 316th Groups WOULD EXECUTE THEIR PARADROPS AND RETURN TO ENGLAND. Following the operation, the three Groups would be relieved from operation duty with the 38 Group (RAF) and would revert back to the control of the Commanding General, 52nd Wing.

Payload ceilings for Varsity, 5850 lbs for C-47 parachute Aircraft, 10,500 lbs for C46s, 3750 lbs for CG-4A Gliders and no weight lift of any type for planes tugging gliders.

C-47 and C46 Parachute Planes to proceed to the Initial Point at respective speeds of 140 and 165 MPH, then cutting down to 120 MPH on the approach to DZs, slowing to 110 MPH for the Drops. Swinging toward home, C-47s would step up their airspeeds to 150 and C46s to 180 MPH. Glider towing planes would slide over LZs at 110 MPH, then whip up to 150 MPH on the homeward stretch.

Crews were instructed in Troop Carrier Policy which did not permit paratroops or Gliders to be returned to friendly territory. In the event that DZs or LZs were not located on the first pass, combat troops were to be dropped or released as near as possible to the assault area.

Between the IP and DZ-LZ area, a taboo was placed on evasive action. A steady course would be pursued regardless of enemy action.

Designated as Emergency Landing Fields were Eindhoven (B-78) and Helmond (B-86) and Villeneuve/Vertus (A-63).

The Fortress which carried Richard C. Hottelet, Columbia Broadcasting System Correspondent and 11 military personnel, including cameramen, public relations, and other staff members, was shot down by anti-aircraft and all passengers except the pilot, Lt. Col. Benton R. Baldwin, forced to bail out. Col. Baldwin escaped injury when he

made a successful belly-landing with his left wing on fire. T/Sgt Clarence A. Pearce, Command public relations correspondent was killed when his parachute failed to open properly. He was a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, IX Toop Carrier Command.

Guards were place on the rope drop area and around the Gliders since Clocks, Compasses, etc. had been stolen in previous drops.

In a period of 10 days, a total of 148 Gliders were successfully snatched out of the Emmerich-Wesel area by low flying C-47s employing a dangling cable. The Gliders were towed to Grimberghen (B-60) to be turned over to tactical units. In addition to those successfully snatched from LZs, a total of 744 Gliders were salvaged and the structural remains turned over to the British.

The month of April saw 46,313 patients flown away from battle areas by Troop Carrier. On 4 April, the medical evacuee total climbed to an all-time single day peak of 4,348, most of whom were conveyed in Troop Carrier Aircraft and the remainder in planes of 302nd Transport Wing under direction of IXTCC. Inclusion of Transport Wing totals raised the number evacuated under Troop Carrier supervision during April to 82,006. By 10 May this figure had climbed to 101,400.

This concludes the material so kindly supplied by Marlin T. Lively to our Recording Secretary, Bob Cloer.

+ + + + +

Memo from Jack Mancinelli:

"MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS....
October 5 - 9, 1994

Nearly a year has already gone by since our last meeting and, only one year away from celebrating the 50th ANNIVERSARY of the 315th participation in historical missions 'OVERLORD' and 'MARKET GARDEN'. One could find no better friends with whom to reflect on these great moments than fellow squadron members who were a part of those

moments and in memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice and who cannot be there in person to celebrate with us.

The officers and board members selected St. Louis for this milestone occasion in order to make it convenient for most of the members to attend by car, bus, train or via air. The RADISSON Hotel is the finest hotel we have ever been able to obtain at such a reasonable rate. We hope that all of you will participate in this very special reunion. If you have never attended a reunion, make this a special, very special anniversary for all of us by meeting in St. Louis.

John Andrews and I are visiting St. Louis in October and meeting with Jim and Audrey Fidler to review the planned program and complete our schedule with RADISSON Hotel. We plan to make a quick tour of the places of interest Jim and Audrey have planned for the 50th ANNIVERSARY reunion and give you a report in the next issue of the Newsletter.

REMINDERS:

- . St. Louis is in EASY DRIVING distance for the majority of our members.
- . FREE RV parking for those registered at the RADISSON hotel.
- . LESS THAN 3 hours by air for 90% of the members. Plan early for the lowest rate.
- . ONLY \$66.00 daily hotel rate for 2 persons; \$10./additional person.
- . Bring family members; they are most welcome and will be proud that you played a part in WWII, one of our finer moments in history.
- . BE THERE and show your pride in having participated in the 315th.

...jem 8/22/93
1-510 471-3528

15

JERUSALEM:
PRAY today! PREY tomorrow?

With the truce in Korea signed at Panmunjom in the summer of '53, an assignment to the war-zone that featured the first aerial combat between jets became less of a possibility....also, I didn't qualify in the "JP-4 guzzlers" until Class 59-H at Randolph AFB, TX. A seven-year Captain, it would be ANOTHER seven years before my OER moved high enough in the stack for a promotion board to find it.

Thus, in the Fall of '53, sad and gloomy.....against my military savvy, I smiled and "volunteered." This war story begins when I (like the Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Turks and British before me) proffered my services for a mission to the Promised Land....the only place on this planet where the white flag of truce has FOREVER meant "*we need time to bury the dead; re-arm....then fight again!*"

Quietly, Father (Lt. Colonel) Joseph Walsch, Catholic Chaplain at Rhein Main AFB, Germany, had finessed USAFE Hqs. into approving an "R&R" pilgrimage to Jerusalem for some of the Base faithful. Within the ancient/modern Holy City, the Arabs, behind the old walls, controlled the East section; while in the Western section, heavily armed Israelis

patrolled the ramparts. Daily skirmishes between the two armed camps kept tensions high. The city of three Sabbaths...Moslem (Friday), Jew (Saturday) and Christian (Sunday): the tenets of their Holy Books enforced with GUNS!

Into this armed bastion of theism twenty-one civilian-garbed "pilgrims from Rhein Main" (60th TC Wing).....me, a co-pilot, crew chief, radio operator and seventeen passengers. In addition to the chief pilgrim, Father Walsch, the roster included two Flight Nurses, a JAG Colonel, the Base Weather Officer, two Company Graders from the ABG, a herd of "Zebra" NCOs, one "GS" Civilian and a Jewish Corporal from the Chaplain's office. A somewhat motley band to start, our image improved....read on. The Corporal was to "cloak" his Jewishness....because our guide within the old city was an Arab, and Jews were not yet allowed to visit Mt. Moriah...site of Solomon's destroyed Temple. This would change during the Suez crisis, later.

At Spanhoe, I was kinda "low" on the totem pole. At Rhein-Main, for this mission, it was just the opposite. I felt like Armand Hammer, or maybe J. Paul Getty. Civilian-suited (no uniforms allowed on plane), driving my own transport (Air-Evac C-47)....military purchase orders in sufficient quantity to pay for refueling, parking fees, etc..."power" to choose the RON sites (Rome, Athens, Nicosia)..."free" to extend any

STOP an extra day or two....generally, I'd say, permitting me to be rather charitable with Uncle Sam's money and equipment!! TAKEOFF Day was CAVU, a beautiful, field-grade day to fly; but we took off anyway!

Enroute, the two days (three nights) in Rome enabled us to dine on linguini Alfredo (served by Alfredo himself)...gape at Michelangelo's paintings and sculptures, awed by his genius....visit the Basilicas (wisps of smoke from a Vatican chimney had no other meaning than "a nip in the air.")...and, toss three Pfennigs in the Trevi fountain...while sipping real "dago red" (that's a Shamokinese for Chianti) when we relaxed.

In Athens, two nights and one full day, was just enough to trek the grounds of the Acropolis taking pictures of the Parthenon...count the sixteen remaining columns of the Temple of Zeus....smile with the white kilted, red-slippered Evzones who guard the Greek Tomb of the Unknown Soldier...and, for me, to tag along with some of the devout to a small, stone-framed church with dirt floors and rough-hewn pews and altar, with enough sandboxed candles burning to excite any Stateside Fire Marshall. That quiet, humbling and solemn special moment would be the most spiritual for me on the entire pilgrimage...and I didn't even genuflect or light a candle!

At the Nicosia airport (Cyprus), we stayed only long enough to refuel, grab a warm Coke and cookie, and (for the men) take turns using the single, available mens' room not

adorned with an OUT OF ORDER sign. The gals lucked out...all systems "go". The island capital city was strictly a refueling stop, so we would have enough gasoline to get into and out of Jerusalem (without service)...just in case the airport manager thought we looked suspicious. A month earlier on an Embassy-arranged, emergency air- evac mission to Belgrade (Titoland), the crew and I were briefly "held" under armed guard while our "papers" were "reviewed!" Still a little nervous, it didn't ease the tension knowing that the Greek Cypriots sought union with the mother country, while the Turkish islanders wanted ties with their mainland...and, both thought the issue worth fighting over!

It was late afternoon when the airport north of Jerusalem took shape in the windscreen...tower contact (in Middle East-accented English) was "5-Square"...no other traffic." Requesting a straight-in approach, we were cleared to land. All strapped in, we headed down the Final at a steady 120 IAS. The other pilot, who had made all three prior landings from the left seat, had skipped slightly on each of the touchdowns...thus, "driving" from the co-pilot's seat, it was time for me, the IP, to demonstrate just how smooth a landing can be after you've logged several thousand hours in the C-47.

Even in this land of miracles, a right seat "grease job" should not have required the "touch" of the "Chief Pilot" who wears the white A-2 jacket. As we "flared" for the screeching

three-point touchdown, a strange phenomena ensued...danged if the runway wasn't lenticular; instead of being flat, it featured a bad dip...sooo, the "Gooney" floated, floated....finally, bouncing (three times), forcing me to combine a left-handed power burst with a HEAVY right-handed push on the yoke (ALL 315th aircrews know the procedure) to keep it on the ground after the final bounce...SOMEWHAT DISTURBING the "pilgrims" in the rear end. Parked and Shut Down, when I entered the passenger compartment, grinning sheepishly, there was Father Walsch (smirking) half sprawled on the cargo deck, half on his bucket seat...kinda hinting that the landing was "not exactly smooth." BUT, I was ready...reminding him, that in this town it was not uncommon for the "pilgrims" to come riding in on (domesticated) asses. He got up and deplaned without saying a word! Good friends, I shortly broke the ice and apologized. Now, my concern for the Jewish Corporal peaked...his hair seemed to mat where his yarmulke oft rested; yet, some Christians too, wear skull caps, so why get excited?

The next morning we met the ARAB guide at the Damascus Gate of the walled, old city...beginning our tour in the Arab-held section. We would spend three full days (four nights) visiting the places for which humankind has been embattled at least since "man" first learned to scratch and scribe symbols to record our doings. Almost immediately, a barking bazaar merchant proved his mastery of the "deal", enticing all of us to over-pay (we just didn't deal) for

headdresses (kerchiefs and cords) so that we could meander unnoticed among the natives. With the possible exception of the Corporal...despite our Kodak bags, PX sunglasses, shiny shoes and clicking cameras, we were obviously Bedouins in town looking for camel saddle bargains and tent patching hides. Thus, we traipsed behind our guide as he headed for the Herodian Temple Mount.

The cobblestone, worn, medieval lane led us across the Via Dolorosa where Christ dragged the heavy timbered cruciform to which He would be spiked (by Roman Procurator decree) on Calvary Hill. Later we would walk the entire route. Often referred to as the most beautiful building in Jerusalem, the Moslem-golden roofed, ornately tiled Dome Of The Rock, was the first shrine we visited. Inside...shoeless, we softly circled "the rock" on worn, red Persian rugs as our guide explained that Mohammed rose to Heaven here; and too, that the ancient Hebrew, Abraham, here prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Onward we strolled to the southwest corner of the Mount area, stopping at the remnant wall of Solomon's Temple (built to hold the sacred Ark of the Covenant), where, we were told, according to ancient custom, Jewish men and women prayed separately. Skillfully bypassing "bizaare" merchants, we trekked, intrigued by the conflicting sounds and many smells, toward the deteriorating Church of the Holy Sepulcher (then reinforced with steel buttresses) the Christian shrine erected at the end (some add the Ascension Station) of the Via Dolorosa

(on Golgotha), the site where our guide said, the young Nazarene Carpenter/Prophet was crucified...and, Christianity was born. Cameras re-loaded, we continued to capture "Kodak moments" but, essentially, that was Day One of our "pilgrimage."

Day Two started when we boarded a bus to our meeting place outside the old wall on the Jericho road where it passed near Herod's Gate (then closed). First stop...the Garden of Gethsemane where ancient, withered and gnarled trees still yielded olives to privileged pickers. I briefly interrupted one brown-robed Monk's solitary walk to find out (he spoke English and was born in the States) wholly content now, with his vows of poverty and obedience. Departing the Garden, we rode to the top of Mt. Olivet (actually a hill) to see the small Church of the Ascension where we were told, Christ ascended into Heaven. Thence, we wound through the Kidron Valley southward to hillside Bethlehem, then a Jordanian town...Christ's birthplace. Here, we had to bend over in the doorways, partially walled up, our guide said, to prevent the Crusading Knights from riding their giant Ardennes horses inside.

The Church of the Nativity, erected on the site of the caravansary where Joseph and Mary sought lodging, but when confronted with a "No Vacancy" edict, retreated to the stables, where, that same night, "drei Konigs" found the newborn, for whom they brought gifts, lying in a manger. Carrying our latest bargains (small olive wood

carved camels and donkeys), we boarded the bus for the hotel...headaddresses fluttering in the breeze as our transport bounced toward Jerusalem.

The Final Day found us (again) on the road to Jericho, this time heading for the namesake town located near the Northern edge of the Dead Sea...just West of the Jordan River where it flows into the Sea. There, we crawled over old ruins and partially uncovered Tells (large mounds or hills) taking pictures of the excavated outlines of ancient rooms and apprising some of the artifacts recently found--Roman coins among them. Even as we explored, not far away, archaeologists searched the caves for more of the ancient Palestinian manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some of us waded into the Jordan river and, later, a few of us, me included, swam near the Dead Sea's northern shore...floating high on the salty water, over 1300 feet below mean-sea-level. Hungry and "pooped", we were all glad to see our base camp (hotel). That night, we marveled for the last time at the Middle-Eastern sky where myriad "suns" especially sparkled in the cool, dry, clear desert air over this dim lit ancient city.

Our early morning TAKEOFF, with me in the right seat, for one fleeting moment, caught me in "the old 310th mood".....wanting to push the nose down and head for the Dead Sea visible in the distance...longing, this time, to "buzz" at the lowest altitude possible on Planet Earth. BUT, an "old" Captain, bucking for a gold leaf

(with a wife and five kids all wanting more spending money), I grimaced and watched as the co-pilot continued the shallow climbing turn, heading West toward Athens. Our memorable "haj" nearing its finis, I sat back wondering..."Why didn't I buy a Fez?"

Gotta go! I apologize if I've offended any of you old buddies. Out in the Vast, Dark Beyond, I believe our Souls will find Enlightenment-Broader-Scope....unaware that "the departed beings" were Moslem, Jew, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist...the list is long: the many millennia of religious wars, fought, oblivious to life's "higher realities". (My mother wanted me to be a preacher, but, actually, I spent much of my time listening to sermons...from the "Brass"!

.....ZIGGY

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

REMEMBER THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"?

Bob Cloer, our busy Recording Secretary sent your editor a copy of the "315th Poop Sheet", a long newsletter he mailed out in July, 1950. It was a newsy, chatty piece with a tremendous amont of news Bob had gathered over a six month (or so) period.

We thought it might amuse our readers to reproduce a short portion of that 1950 letter in which Bob discusses the Hotel Phillips in Kansas City MO where a previous 315th bash had happened and it was also to be the site of another reunion planned for that year (1950).

We pick up in about the middle of the letter:
"To answer a couple of questions some of you are probably asking. Why did we pick KC? At the last reunion the fellows all wanted it held there again because it is right in the

center of the U.S. And because they were so good to us at the Hotel Phillips. Not a word said and God knows that some of us should be in the klink before it was over. Now the date: the only dates open at the first of the year for this year were the date we have and one in December. Felt that Sept. 29--Oct. 1 would be the best.

Now as to the cost. All rooms at the Hotel Phillips are with bath. Singles are from \$3.50 up and doubles \$5.00 and up. There will be one big dinner on Saturday night to get everybody together that will probably run about \$2.75 and a registration fee of from \$1.00 to \$1.50 to cover cost of printing of name tags, cost of a meeting room if any, hire a woman to keep a bulletin board up on where to meet who, what's doing and etc. That will be about all of the expenses.

Those were the good old days, right?

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

Your editor received a ZIGGYGRAM----one of those profusely illustrated communications from our contributor Ziggy Zartman a few weeks ago with the news that our comrade Bill Messenger had attained the age-of **94** on August 22 of this year. Congratulations, Bill. We hope you're feeling OK and enjoying life. You old friends of Bill might send him a card to wish him many more happy returns . Address him at:

Willet M. Messenger
1402 Hospital Plaza Dr.
Apartment 228
Wilmington NC 28401

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