Chapter 11

AIRFIELD IN FRANCE

— BRINSON'S HISTORY —

After more than one year at Spanhoe, the Group received orders in early April to move to France. Four groups in the 52nd Wing were to be situated in the Picardy area - The 61st at Abbeville-Drucat, the 313th at Chiet, the 314th at Poix, and the 315th at Amiens-Glisy. The fifth group in the 52nd Wing, the 316th, was scheduled to return to the U.S. from its base at Cottesmore in the U.K.

Sixteen officers and 121 enlisted men were transferred to the ZI bound 316th. Many of those transferred had come overseas in 1942 with the Group or with the 60th and 62nd Groups and joined the 315th in 1944. Some were air crewmembers; some ground support personnel - maintenance, communications, transportation, medical, and administrative. Among those departing were Majors Fry, West and Coker; Captains Alexander, Sterling, Roust, and DuBois; Sergeants Amos, Boyland, McClain, Witherington, Smoke, Minor, Tyson, White, Rice, and Weinberg. Assigned to the 315th in turn were 65 officers and 122 enlisted men who were recent arrivals in the theater.

Spanhoe became "home" for the 315th, for the Group had remained there longer than any location. The towns of Kettering, Leicester, and Nottingham had become quite familiar to "regulars" on the nightly convoys so there were not a few who packed for the next destination with reluctance. Many of the officers and men had met and married English girls from the vicinity. The last Anglo-American" wedding before the Group departed was that of Lieutenant «Chapman to Miss Kessler in Oakham on 7 April.

Advance parties of the squadrons left for Amiens-Glisy on 6 April, and the remainder of the Group moved between 7-11 April. Everything that could be transported by air went by plane or glider. A motor convoy, under the command of Major W.L Parker, the Group Personnel Officer, crossed the Channel on LSTs. By 13 April, operations were underway at the new location.

Amiens-Glisy (Airfield B-48) was four miles east of the city of Amiens,and 60 miles north of Paris. Since 1940, the airfield had been used by the French, Germans, and British. Extensive damage to the field and the buildings had occurred during the course of the war as a result of bombing attacks. As a result of the damage, there were few permanent buildings in any state of usable condition. A few Nissen hurts were available, bur the majority of the offices were set up under canvas. Each squadron, plus the 477th Air Service Group, which accompanied the 315th from Spanhoe, was assigned an area, and within two days after the unit arrived, "tent cities" covered part of the landscape. Glider packing cases proved to be invaluable, supplementing the tents as working and living quarters. Group Headquarters officers were billeted at 15 rue Edmond Lebel in Amiens. The house had been taken over from the owner, Lucien Gueudet, by the Germans, used by the Gestapo while Amiens was under German rule, liberated by the British, and turned over to the 315th.

Chilly mornings followed by bright sunshine and mild temperatures was the weather most days in northern France that spring. The amount of hours flown increased accordingly. Flights went farther and farther into Germany as airfields near Frankfurt, Celle, Gotha, Fritzlar, and Stuttgart became almost daily destinations. There were many flights westbound to Britain as the occupants of German POW were freed and returned home. Many crew members reported heartwarming and moving scenes as many of the men set foot in their homeland for the first time in several years.

There were rumors, as always, of future airborne missions which were "just around the corner." It was later learned that the First Allied Airborne Army did, in fact, have plans to place paratroopers in the city of Berlin - the 82nd Airborne Division at Tempelhof Airfield, the 101 st Airborne Division at Gatow Airfield, and a British airborne brigade at Oranienburg Airfield, northwest of the city center. Other airborne troop carrier missions considered were a drop on the naval base at Kiel, a series of drops on various prisoner-of-war camps, and an airborne envelopment of Hitler's supposed mountain redoubt in Bavaria.

None of these missions went beyond the planning stages, even though the last day of April the 315th sent a large formation back to Spanhoe to participate in a practice mission. The actual mission was never ordered. By early May it was evident to almost everyone that the war in Europe would soon be over. The Stars and Stripes newspaper and the Armed Forces Radio reported a widespread collapse of the German forces, and bets were made on what date the war would be

over. The big question was: "What is planned. For the 315th when it's over, over here?" Some of the group returning to the U. S. others had the 315th being retained in Europe to be part of the Army of Occupation, while a third group recommended that khaki uniforms be pulled out of barracks bags for the 315th was Pacific bound.

When the word was received on 8 May of the German surrender, there was excitement, but not as much as expected. The news had been much diluted by false communiques during the preceding days. Nevertheless numerous bottles of champagne were consumed; all the flares the Group possessed were used up overnight; and those who could, visited the restaurants, hotels, and bistros of Amiens, where the festivities were at a higher peak than at the airfield.

The month that it was over in Europe was the month that the 315th Troop Carrier Group was probably at its greatest strength than any order month during the war. Assigned to the unit on 1 May were 657 officer (including flight and warrant officers) and 1,430 enlisted men, a total of 2,087 U.S. Army Air Force servicemen - 250 over authorized strength. On the sane day, the 315th possessed 81 C-47 aircraft, 4 C-46 aircraft, 6 C-109 aircraft and 59 CG-4A gliders.

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AIRFIELD IN FRANCE
— CHOLEWCZYNSKI'S VOICES —

Technical Sergeant Bernard C. Brown
Crew Chief 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

We had packed all of our belongings, and knowing that we would be living in tents, we needed to pack the necessary materials. You can imagine what we loaded on the planes - ladders, cots, tents, you name it. The move took not one trip, but several.

We GIs did pretty well. We tried to keep four men to a tent, and as our "city" grew, we prevailed. The tents weren't too bad, only a bit damp at times It may have been the first time that some of our people have had to sleep in a tent.

I do remember that the wine flowed pretty freely in town. Those two and-a-half ton trucks were really something to ride in, especially when the men had to get rid of what they drank in town.

Captain Jack E. Wilson
Pilot, 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

In Amiens, we had to live in tents, and it was muddy. We didn't have to much to do with the civilians. I don't remember a great deal about them. Of course we looked for the pretty girls, but I don't remember what the outcome: was. Luckily, I've forgotten that.

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier

We arrived at a German air base that our guys had bombed the heck on o£ Everything was a mess. We had to put up our own tents of course, and string wire for communication, One of the things that I have to say is that I was proud about the energy and mechanical ability of Americans. They were kids who built hot rods, and knew how to weld and, seemingly, do. everything Joe Ciskowski putting a shower together out of 55 gallon drums and a heater

There was a river near there, and we would ride our bicycles there and peel our clothes off and go swimming. All of the residents would be out watching us, not because we were naked, but they would watch the young Americans swimming in the river having fun. We did that until the shower system was hooked up.

The only contact with the locals was when we were swimming in the river. 'I 'hey tried to talk to us. Few of them spoke enough English to communicate. But we were at Amiens such a short time, and we were so damn busy.

Sergeant William S. Nagle
Glider Engineering Section, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

In England they would have posters by the chow lines that said, "Eat all you want, eat all you take - 50 miles from here 500,000 Frenchmen are starving" When we got over to France, they were eating much better than the English. As much as I like the English, they could take a perfect good roast of beef, and make it taste like a wash rag.

Master Sergeant Lawrence Ison
Communications Chief, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

The day was Thursday, April 12, 1945, only a few

days after our arrival at Amiens-Glisy from Spanhoe. Early that morning I had been supervising the stringing of electrical wires through the rows of tents set up as our living quarters at a bombed out airbase in France. All of us in the 315th Troop Carrier Group had been using our spare between flying missions trying to make life more comfortable in a place where, without exception, no buildings or other ground facilities were usable. They all had been destroyed by shelling or bombing. We had some portable generators, and I was assigned the task, among other duties, of seeing that we had electric lights in our tents.

The project was well under way, but sometime around mid-morning I found that I didn't have enough light switches to complete the job. I had leaned of the existence of an electrical supply shop in Amiens, and decided to go to into town to buy the necessary switches. We had requisition forms available which enabled us to purchase material from local suppliers without using money.

I took the jeep assigned to the communications division and drove the four miles or so from the base to Amiens. The store was shabby, and rather dark and dingy inside. There was absolutely no display of anything for sale but there were shelves visible behind a long service counter that ran the length of the room. It was apparent that not much was available, other than assortment of rolls of wire and other electrical items which could be seen or the shelves. Of course, France was poor in those days after a long war and, harrowing German occupation.

A middle-aged woman approached the service counter from somewhere in the back. She was crying, and looked in real distress. Her eyes were puffy and she was dabbing at them with a handkerchief

In my poor French I said to her, "What's the matter madam? Is there anything I could do to help?" She shook her head, her eyes lowered and she murmured softly, "Le president est mort."

I was taken aback and confused. What could she mean. "The President is dead?" I then asked her, "whom do you mean, General DeGaulle?"

She answered" "Non, le President Roosevelt." pronouncing the name in the way the French do. She said that she had just heard the news on the radio.

I was stunned. For a moment I thought that I would join her in shedding tears. After all, she had just told me that we no longer had a Commander-in-Chief, and I felt as though the world was shaking.

I calmed down, as did the woman, and I purchased the light switches. By the time I had returned to base, everybody knew that President Roosevelt had died, and genuine sadness prevailed.

It is known that the French have not been admirers of Americans, particularly in the post-war period. Since that day in Amiens I have had many occasions to travel in France, and have frequently noted what I felt to be genuine anti-American bias expressed by some French people. Whenever I had experienced this, I always remembered the woman in Amiens who was crying because "Le President est mort. "

2nd Lieutenant Charles Voegelin
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

I was one of the first ships in to pick up US prisoners. We were always hungry, and in all of the airplanes we flew, the better the crew chief was, the better was the amount and quality of the goodies he'd have in back.

There must have been 25 liberated Americans. I felt so sorry for them that I told the crew chief to break out the food and give them what they wanted. We were flying to Camp Chesterfield, one of the "cigarette camps," and by the time I landed the whole back of the plane was covered with vomit. They told us not to feed them anymore.

Others that we took out were French prisoners. I flew them to Le Bourget, and they were so sentimental that they asked to let them know when we crossed the Rhine, which I did. When we landed in Paris they had a maroon carpet for them and a band.

Another day I had five British generals who had been taken prisoner in the desert fighting. I put them on the airplane, and headed to England. I called the tower to tell them who I had on board. They gave us the okay, and we landed. A vehicle came out to the hard stand and they told me over the radio "The officers are in time for high tea." Other than that, no ceremony.

Flight Officer David Trexler
Glider Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

We went into Stuttgart on a grass strip and picked up some French prisoners. When we landed back in France, there was this great roar. We were wondering

what it was, and it was all these Frenchmen in the back there who had been prisoners since 1940. They were the grungiest looking people you ever saw - filthy, needing hair cuts and you didn't want to get near them. They would not get off the airplane until the crew got off. Finally we figured out what they wanted, they wanted us to get off first. As we walked through them they were grabbing us, hugging us and kissing us. It was a strange moment. kissed the ground. It was very dramatic.

Technical Sergeant Bernard C. Brown
Crew Chief, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

We were scheduled to go to Liege and pick up British former POWs and; return them to Britain. They were tired and very weary, and carried burlap bags that held all their worldly belongings.

When it was time to board, everyone wanted to get on first because they were going home. Remember, these soldiers were captured after the fall of Dunkirk, and had been prisoners from 1940 until 1945.

The Gooney Bird had been designed to carry 27 passengers, but the men all wanted to get on the plane at the same time. I lost count, and 1floor and seats were packed with men and their humble belongings. We were I am afraid, a bit overloaded, so I checked with the pilot who said, "Let's go!"We were used to carrying everything, including jeeps and 75mm guns, which were heavier than this load of men. Having to take off from a dirt field didn't help, but with a little flap, we were soon airborne.

I talked with those nearest the cockpit door, and their only concern was going home. One of the men that I spoke with said he lived near the white cliffs of Dover. I knew that we would be flying over them after crossing the Channel, and I made it a point to bring him forward so maybe he could see where he lived. He became both very happy, and very emotional, and couldn't thank us enough.

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

It was something else when we started flying those POWs out. The Americans, some of them were beat up a little, but they were the best off by far. The British were a little worse off, but not that bad. The Russians and the Poles and the French, those guys had been through hell. The Russians they wouldn't let us fly them into Russia. We flew them to a certain place and then they took them from there.

We flew into some field to pick a bunch of prisoners of war, where I don't remember. I also can't remember who they were, Polish or French, but they looked like hell. They were dressed in all sorts of old overcoats and everything else. It would just about make you cry. They were out there when we were landing, all standing at attention and saluting us.

1st Lieutenant Arthur J. Knudsen
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

My crew and I were scheduled to deliver the not unusual load of jerry cans filled with gasoline to a destination in southern Germany. This was on a morning in May, 1945, and it might have been the last scheduled wartime mission flown by a 315th Group plane from the field at Amiens-Glisy.

Arriving over our destination, there was no sign of anyone on the ground who might be waiting for our cargo. Flying at an altitude of about 500 feet, I turned east above a good highway and heard a big boom from what appeared to be a German tank located in the woods below. I made a 180 degree turn and heard another boom from what looked to be an American tank firing at the German rank. After continuing west for about two miles I decided to land on the highway thinking that the American tank could possibly use the gasoline. After landing, we unloaded the gasoline cans in a neat stack about ten yards from our aircraft and alongside the highway.

We had just completed off-loading when a single engine German fighter appeared about one half mile north of us. He was in an obviously on a down- wind leg coming in for a landing.

We did not have time to climb aboard and start our aircraft, and it appeared that the German plane intended to blow up the gasoline that we had stacked alongside the highway.

I told the crew that we should get behind the wheels of our aircraft so if the fighter hit the stack of gas cans we would have some protection from the blast. The German continued on his base leg, and then turned on a final approach toward the cans. Nosing his plane down, the pilot opened fire from at least four guns and our crew observed shells hitting the ground for a least 20 yards, moving toward the stacked gas cans.

The pilot then seemed to panic and pulled the aircraft up sharply and flew toward German lines, which

were only two miles ahead. My crew scrambled aboard our C-47 and we took off from the highway. We headed west and flew into the nearest cloud we saw. We then headed home, arriving back after dark to a completely deserted base - even my tent was gone.

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

We had heard so many false reports that Germany had surrendered that nobody was going to celebrate. Some cognac was passed around, drink, and then the damned glider pilots started firing their Tommy guns and flares. Flares were landing on tents, it was a wonder that we didn't burn the whole place down. A foggy haze settled over the area from all of that stuff being shot off

Captain Jack E. Wilson
Pilot, 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

I celebrated V-E Day by dodging a lot of flares. It happened that I had a trip to London, and I found out there that the war had ended. I got into the airplane about 10:30 that night, the co-pilot was drunk, so me and the radio operator flew the airplane back to France. When we got to Glisy; everybody was celebrating an shooting flares into the air. I started on final approach, and they started shooting flares at me. All hell broke loose, but I finally landed and got that damned thing on the ground and into a revetment. Then I guess we all celebrated too, how, I can't remember. But they about shot me out of the sky with those damned flares. I was afraid that they were going burn us up. That's the way the war ended for me,

2nd Lieutenant Leonard S. Thomas
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

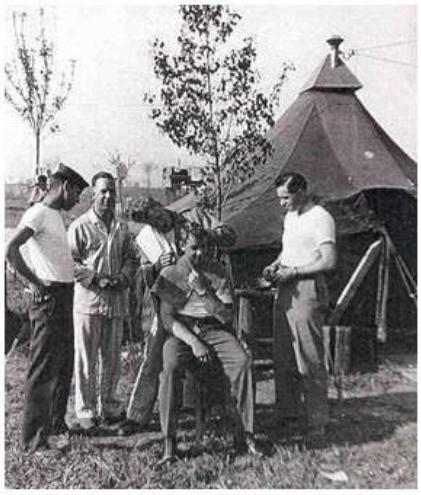
I was flying an aircraft from Amiens France, and taking it up to England for an engine change on V-E Day. It was around noon and I was flying over London. It was a beautiful clear day, and I was listening to BBC on what we called the "coffee grinder." The BBC announcer was mentioning that the crowds were going crazy and climbing the statue at Trafalgar Square, and that there was a beautiful blue sky and that there was a Dakota droning overhead I looked around, and there wasn't anything else in the sky but me, and if he's looking at me, I should give him a show. I rolled the C-47 around into a big chandelle, and continued on down.

The announcer was saying, "Oh, he's coming down, he's coming down, down, down, diving right down the Thames." I was, just east of London, and starting down the Thames going west. The announcer continued, "He is going past the Houses of Parliament. The blooming thing looks like it’s going to go under the London Bridge." Up to that time I hadn't even considered it. When he said that, it looked pretty good, so that's what I did, I went through the London bridge. [it was actually the Tower bridge, often mistaken for the London Bridge]. Just as I came out the other side the announcer said, "Oh, the photographers are having a heyday." I thought, "Uh-oh." and I pulled the plane up real high and went on my way.

— End of chapter—

(Above) Tent City at Amiens, France, 1945. “Oh, for the comforts of Spanhoe.” *Photo from https://315Group.org*

(Above) Dining, and bathing was 'al fresca'. *Photos from https://315Group.org*



(Above L) So were haircuts. *(Above R)* The “Quack shack’ medical tent. *Photos from https://315Group.org*

Chapter 12

LAST DAYS

— BRINSON'S HISTORY —

Several days before the German surrender there was talk that the 315th was scheduled to move again. This was confirmed on 7 May 45 when, at a meeting held in Amiens, Lieutenant Colonel Gibbons was informed by Headquarters, 52nd Troop Carrier Wing that 80 men would leave for Waller Field, British West Indies by C-54 aircraft within two days. Those who hoped that the next move would be to the U.S.A. expressed their disappointment, but there was little time for complaints since the ground echelon was scheduled to be at the port, ready to depart, on 13 May. Major Alfred Cromartie's 477th Air Service Group was ordered to move from Amiens along with the 315th.

Tents were pulled down; bags were packed; the six C-I09 tankers, the four remaining C-46s, the 59 CG-4A gliders, and 17 C-47s were tied down and transferred to other groups for later pickup. On 15 May, Amiens-Glisy became another memory to the men of the 315th. While most did not realize: it at the time, when the last plane took off from Amiens, the 315th's days, as a World War II troop carrier group were over forever.

Because of the two long over-water route segments across the South Atlantic, each aircraft was restricted to a crew of four (on some crews five); therefore, with the exception of the party flown out in advance on the 9th and 10th, all other personnel were scheduled to travel by ship. This group of 1,166 officers and enlisted men went first to Camp Lucky Strike, near Le Havre, and sailed to Trinidad on the U.S.S. General Gordon.

There were 64 aircraft in the air movement - 16 in each squadron. From the list of the 69 pilots who went to England in 1942 with the 315th, there were 21 remaining when the unit departed for the Caribbean: Lieutenant Colonels Gibbons (Group Commander), Mandt, Stark, J.S . Smith; Majors Brinson, Carnick, Pleasant, Rylance; Captains Adams, Hoff, Hurst, J. H. Petersen, R. Robertson, J. Wilson, Young; 1st Lieutenants Beagle, Halverson and Kithcart. Captain Jacob Mancinelli was the sole remaining navigator who had gone overseas with the Group.

Of the original 26 crew chiefs, 11 were still with the group - Master Sergeants Papp, an,! Church; Technical Sergeants Andrewlavage, Bingham, Blase, M. Brown, Ferko, Grasmick, Hranicky, Savage, and Van Meter - and 11 of the original radip operators - Master Sergeants Bundy, Cipolla, Harrod, Ison; Staff Sergeant& Carrell, Crowder, Eiden, Grigsby, Lemberg, Rogers and Vandernaalt, were still on the rosters when the Group headed for the Caribbean.

Majors Parker, Hedley, Mauger, Kimball; Captains Collison and McFarland, Warrant Officer J.G. Michaels; 1st Sergeants King, Fialkoff; Master Sergeant Stetson; Technical Sergeant Trotter, and Staff Sergeant Solomon were some of the "old timers" returning by ship. Except for the 64 crews on the planes- all aircrew members were passengers on the General Gordon.

The purpose of moving the 3I5th to Trinidad was for the personnel and planes to participate in GREEN PROJECT, an operation designed to airlift troops from Europe to U.S. across the South Atlantic air routes. Certain troop carrier and bombardment groups, among them the 3I5th, had been designated to be p,!rt of the structure that was responsible for the route segments between Natal, Brazil and Miami, Florida. Arriving in Trinidad, in addition to the 3I5th, were the 61st Troop Carrier Group from France; the 60th and 6th Troop Carrier Groups from Italy; large detachments form the 464th and 465th Bombardment Groups from Italy; and the 457th, 465th, 517th, 518th, 545th and 546th Air Service Groups. Between the end of May and mid-June, 11,318 men arrived in Trinidad to participate in the GREEN PROJECT.

The air route from Amiens to Trinidad required nine stops: Marseille, France; Marrakech. Morocco; Dakar, Senegal; Roberts Field, Liberia; Ascension Island; Nartal, Brazil; Belem, Brazil; Atkinson Field, British Guiana; and the destination, Waller Field, Trinidad.

The flight of the Group from Amiens was relatively free of problems, and most of the planes arrived at Waller Field between 23 and 25 May. It was learned a few days later that the 315th, and all other groups arriving from Europe, would be inactivated within a few weeks. All personnel were to be "pooled" in the local Army Air Force Base Unit, and subsequently assigned to the other units in Air Transport Command.

Most of the aircrews in the 3I5th were transferred to Borinquen Field Puerto Rico within ten days after they

arrived in Trinidad. Shortly thereafter they started flying trips between Miami and British Guiana on a 24 hour flying operation. Two who arrived in the ZI a few weeks earlier than most were Captain Joe Moss and Lieutenant Ken Vandera. These two went to Miami to be supervisors for the project there.

Crews from other troop carrier groups were assigned to fly the “run” between Natal and Atkinson Field. All C-47s were programmed to received major maintenance inspections at Waller, and planes were diverted through Waller Field when an inspection was due.

Some resentment toward Air Transport Command had developed among many of the troop carrier people. It began on the flights from Europe when the aircraft and crews were placed under operational control of ATC. Troop Carrier crew members disliked what they considered to be highhanded treatment from certain ATC supervisors. One pilot reported hearing an AT supervisor at Marrakech say, "Many of these war weary crates and unqualified, crews will never make it to their destination. They don't even have weight an balance books aboard!" Few troop carrier pilots had used a Weight and Balance book. Since leaving the U.S. they computed the weight and balance by, as was the common remark, "Just put in 5,000 pounds and make certain its not all in the tail."

The attitude of the troop carrier crews did not improve in Trinidad when- war trophies, pet animals, and souvenirs brought from Europe were seized by base authorities if "a certificate signed by a Supply Officer authorizing possession of this item" could not be produced. Souvenirs included revolvers: swords, flags, helmets, motorcycles and bicycles. The troop carrier people were convinced that confiscated items found a home with "ATC personnel who had never been east of the Caribbean," as one troop carrier NCO expressed it.

An additional irritant was a policy restricting the new arrivals to the confines of Waller Field and adjacent Fort Reed except for limited periods of "open post." The attitude that prevailed soon dissipated as personnel were transferred to various stations between the tip of Brazil and Florida.

Many of the members of the 315th had enough "points" for discharge from the military service, and during July and August, and especially after Japan capitulated, there were numerous transfers to various stations in the U.S. for processing and discharge. "Pinks" and "greens," khaki uniforms and olive drab ones, were soon discarded by many for a pinstripe suit with the "Ruptured Duck" pin of a discharged serviceman of World War II in the lapel. The C-4 7 s of the 315th, still recognizable by the British identification codes of"NM," "UA," "M6," and "4A" on their fuselages could be seen taking off and landing at bases in the Caribbean for several months to come.

At midnight, 31 July 1945, the USAAF's 315th Troop Carrier Group was inactivated at Waller Field, Trinidad. There were only five officers and four enlisted men assigned at the time.

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LAST DAYS

— CHLOEWCZYNSKI’S “VOICES” —

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, Green Project

The problems started before we ever left France. The guys in the head shed, always know more than the guys out in the field. I don't remember what the requirement was, but we couldn't take planes that had over a certain amount of hours on the engines. So a lot of our good planes that were still on their first set of engines, but had a lot of time on them were left sitting on the ramp at Amiens, and we got were some of the war-weary crates from other outfits, but they had new engines. I picked up an old, tired airplane at Burtonwood that had new engines.

We left there and went to southern France, and that's when we came under ATC's control, and the problems started. They wouldn't let us takeoff the next day if we didn't have weight and balance sheets made out. Hell, we didn't know how to make out the weight and balances, and besides, the airplanes had never been weighed. We had been loading our airplanes throughout the war without any problems.

Finally one of us got into a big fight with the ATC wheels, and they decided to get rid of us. I think that they sent a message ahead, "these war-weary aircraft and unqualified crews, you're lucky if you get half of them: there ... " or something to that effect.

We were on the way to Marrakech, and Major Brinson thought it would great if we stopped at Casablanca, and see some of his old stomping grounds We changed our flight plan, and they said, "No, you can't do that." We reported that we were low

on fuel, and have to go in. We landed at Casablanca, and they were on the ramp to meet us with fuel trucks. They made us fuel up and get right back in the air again.

We had a lot of problems, and were in no hurry to get anywhere. We took off for the next stop, and Brinson started having engine trouble ". We turned around, and came back. On the way to Ascension, the same thing happened,

we turned around and came back. They finally decided that they had put in the wrong spark plugs in the old airplane Major was flying, and a new set of the proper plugs took care of the problem.

It took quite a while to get to Trinidad. At our first stop in Brazil, ATC took our dogs away from us. Most of our planes had a dog flying with them. Then they took our motorcycle away from us. They took away all the stuff that we didn't have proof of ownership for. When we finally got to Trinidad, they grounded all of our crew chiefs. They all had served in combat, and their reward was having their flight pay taken away from them.

Captain Jack E. Wilson
Check Pilot, Green Project

Puerto Rico was nice. All those soldiers who had lived there during the war lived in real luxury. They gave us little houses to live in. Boy-oh-boy, it was luxurious. We had a whole house to live in, three or four of us with the rank of captain. It was really great.

We were by far the biggest airline in the world at the time. We had 46 scheduled trips a day from Trinidad to Miami. I was a line check-pilot during the Green Project. I would take a flight, go to Trinidad, and check the pilots on the way to Puerto Rico, and take another flight the next day and go to Miami, check the pilot out. On the return trips, I would give him instrument training. I was a pretty good instrument pilot. I flew all the time as a check pilot, never at the controls, but sitting on the jump seat, watching how these pilots handled their flights. Some of them were fairly new, but there were some of us old-timers who had been at it for 3-4 years. This is just like the FAA does check rides today.

But despite the fact that life was good, there was still the matter of ACT. They didn't think that we could fly airplanes at all, and that we were no damn good. They took away everything we had, the loot that we brought with us. We just hated them. Now we were a part of them, but we didn't like ATC at all. They had never seen combat.

1st Sergeant William S. Nagle
S-1 Section, Green Project

In Puerto Rico I was working for the personnel office interviewing the 315th and other troop carrier pilots as to whether they would accept regular commissions, and stay in the air force.

When we got into Puerto Rico, ATC treated us as if, "My God, theses warmongers are here." Those SOBs sat on their ass the entire war and lived like kings in the Carribean. We were not happy, no troop carrier man has any; time for ATC.

Puerto Rico wasn't that bad, and I didn't mind the heat. The First Sergeants had nothing to do, and all we did was sit around the NCO club That was why I got the job in personnel.

2nd Lieutenant Leonard S. Thomas
Pilot, Green Project

It was August, and we were in San Juan, at Borinquen Field, and I still had the same commander, Lieutenant Colonel George Rylance. He called me in I sat down. He says, "Where were you on V-E Day?" I said, "Gee, I don't know George." Then he threw a picture on the table. It was just a picture of a face looking out the window of something, with my shit-eating grin "Recognize that guy?

"Yeah, it looks like me, George."

Then Colonel Rylance threw another picture down, this one was backed off a little bit, and you could see the nose of the aircraft with the name, "Jeanne" on the nose of it. "Does that look familiar?"

Then he threw photo another one down, and that one showed the nose of the plane just coming out from under the London Bridge. He said, "What are we going to do about this? I have to court martial you, or fine you. Which would you rather do?"

I said that. a fine would be easier than a court martial. I paid five hundred dollars, and the whole thing was forgotten.

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, Green Project

Most of us went to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico. Maintenance was really terrible. We had engine

problems, and we had never had engine problems before (unless we wanted to RON somewhere like Paris or Brussels). Here, you would write the problems, and it was always, "ground check - OK," and they never flight tested them. I was one of the newer pilots, so I never got to go on the Miami run. My run was from Borinquen Field to Waller Field in Trinidad, then to Atkinson Field, British Guiana, and wait for another plane to go back the other way loaded.

Technical Sergeant Russell S. Lane
Aviation Mechanic, Green Project

We all went by ship, from Le Havre France to Trinidad. Then a bunch of the guys were split off Some did go to Puerto Rico, some sent back to Brazil. I stayed in Trinidad. The 315th was no longer in existence, and we were put under ATC command, which was a real slap in the face as far as we felt.

They had a number of noses docks. They closed off one runway and lined up these nose docks to work on the aircraft the full length of the runway. The assigned crews to each one, and I was assigned to the last one in line. Several of us reported to work. There usually had a master sergeant in charge, but we got there, there was no master sergeant. We sat down and waited, and we went back three, four, five days. They never did bring us an aircraft, and we got tired of sitting around and found our own places to go do some work.

1st Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, Green Project

One day I came into Waller Filed, and there was C-47s lined up from nose to tail, all around the perimeter strip. I landed, and the boys were having a little 'strike,' and nobody had ever heard of anything like that in the Air Force. The maintenance boys were all working, but they'd screw the bolts in, and then screw them out, and took a lot of time doing it.

They treated them like hell, they'd be out on the ramp inspecting to make sure that they had a tee-shirt on under their fatigues, and had their dog tags on, and all that kind of crap. They weren't allowed to eat at the same time as the permanent personnel, and we weren't either. There were certain hours when transit crews could eat, and places they could go. It was a different Air Force.

Technical Sergeant Russell S. Lane
Aviation Mechanic, Green Project

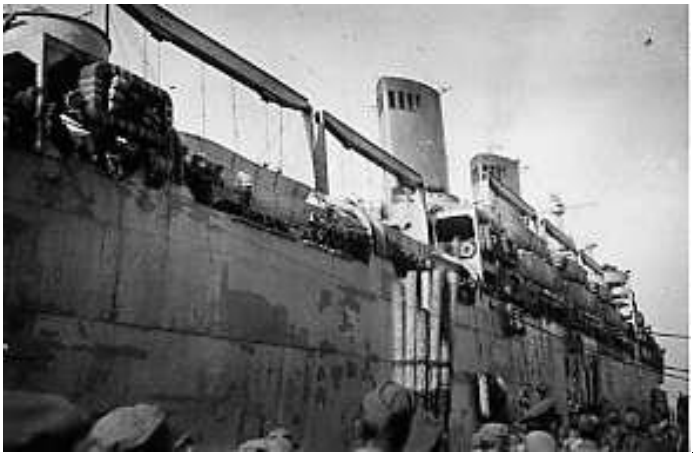
There has been mention that there was a strike. I wouldn't call it a strike that sounds a little harsh and undisciplined. We just paid more attention to our maintenance, and of course we didn't do anything except exactly by the book. We were supposed to get a hundred airplanes out a day, and we were down to fifty.

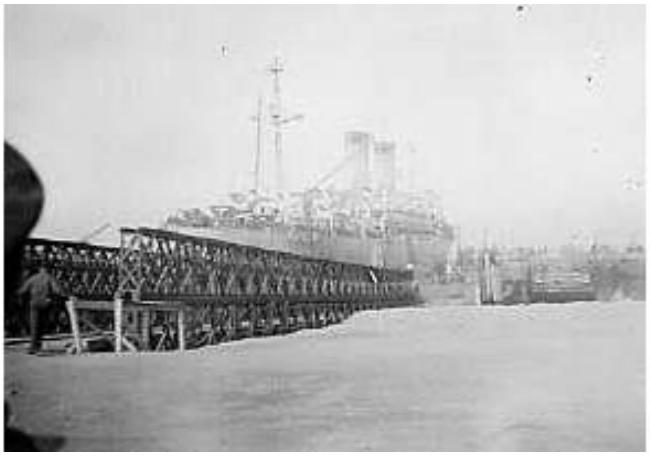
When I finally got back to the States, I was processed through in Miami A couple of guys came in to the hotel room that I was in. They had just come from Brazil and they heard that I had been in Trinidad. They asked about "that big storm we had up there." I said, "What storm? We didn't have any storm." "The storm that you couldn't get any airplanes out, and that was what delayed our coming back."

1st Sergeant William S. Nagle
S-1 Section, Green Project

Joe King, the old 1st sergeant of the 43rd, and I were in on leave in Miami Beach. They kept us up on the top four floors so you couldn't escape when- you were due to go back. We got the plane and arrived in Puerto Rico about five in the evening. I went to the mess hall, got something to eat and went to the barracks, took a shower and crawled into the sack, About 7 o'clock some guy came in, raising hell. I asked "What the hell is going on?" "Get up, Serge, get up! The Japanese surrendered, and everybody's at the club having a party I said, "The hell with those bastards, they could have surrendered yesterday when I was in Florida." I turned over and went back to sleep.

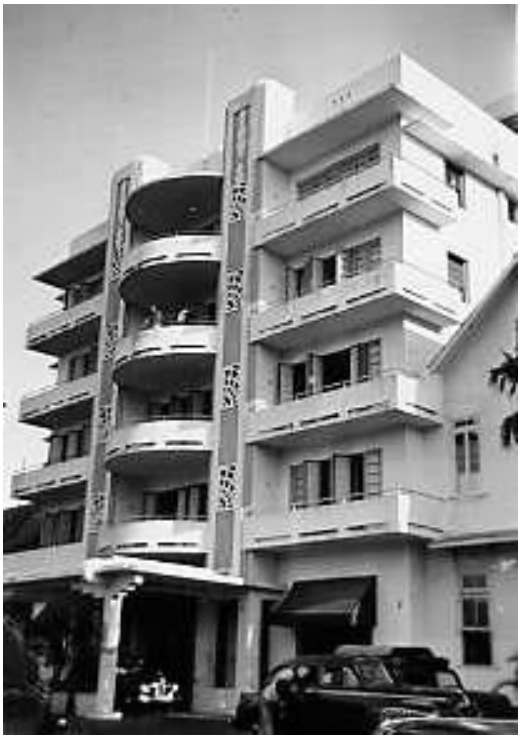
— End of Chapter—



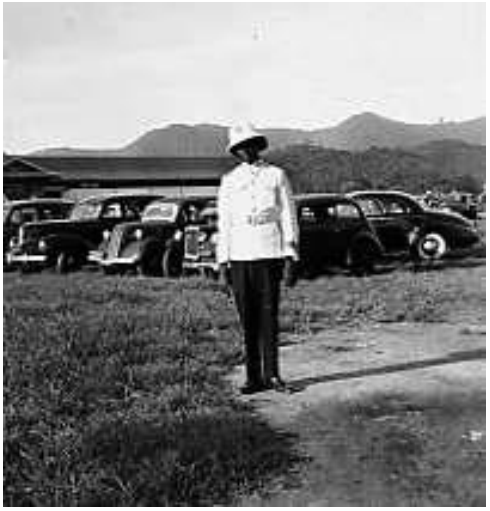


(Above L and R) Our transport home – USS General William H. Gordon loading 315th TCS personnel and equipment for Trinidad.
Photo courtesy of Knight collection

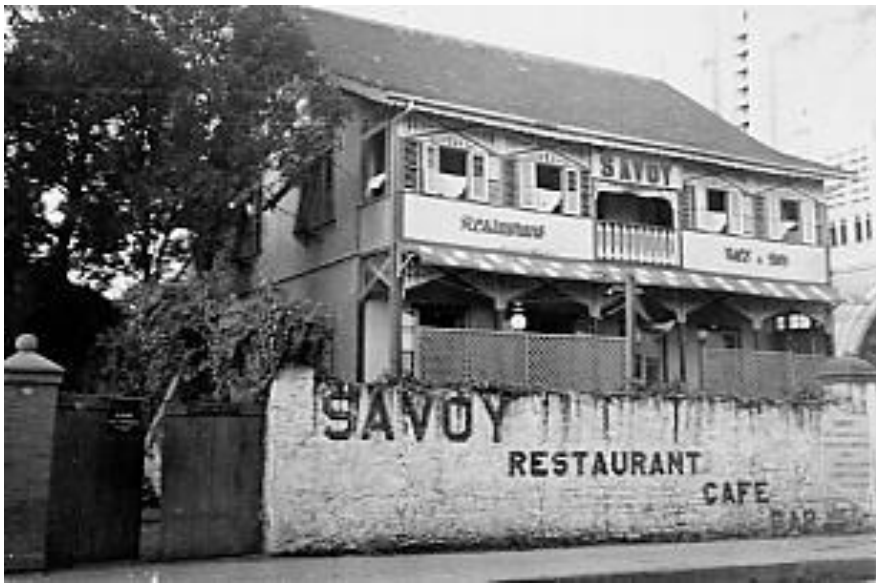
(Above) Trinidad as seen from the USS Gen. Gordon
Photos courtesy of Knight collection.



(Above) Local "watering hole" – Queen's Parks Hotel. Port of Spain
Photo courtesy of Knight collection

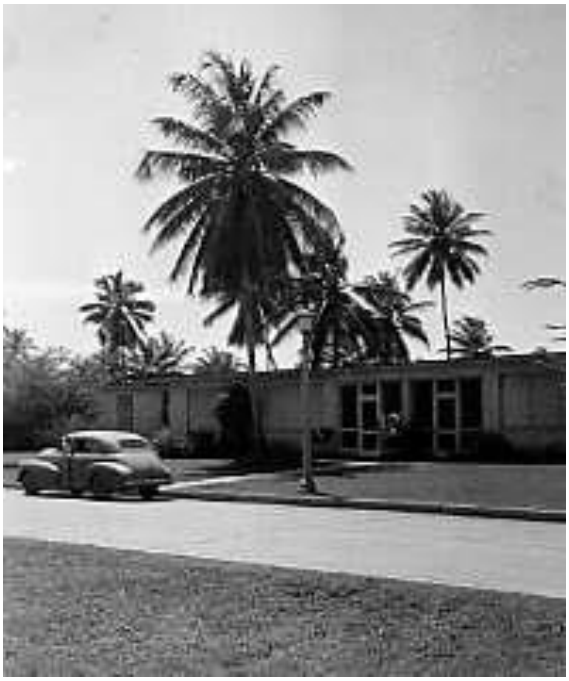


(Above) Indian "bobby" at Port of Spain, Trinidad.
Photo courtesy of Knight collection



(Above) Local "watering hole" on Port of Spain, Trinidad.
Photo courtesy of Knight collection

(Above) The beach at Port of Spain
Photo courtesy of Knight collection



(Above) Quarters at Borinqueen Field, Puerto Rico
Photo courtesy of Knight collection