

CHRONICLE
of
OPERATION ELMIRA

They have gotten on with their lives.

We are speaking of the 435th, 436th, 437th and 438th Troop Carrier Groups and their respective Squadrons. Then and now are a life time apart, yet for those who were there memories, faded as they may be, linger on.

D-Day 6 June 1944, the airborne assault on German held Fortress Europe.

They were first in, first to fight, first to die. Right along with the Paratroopers and Glider Assault Troops they carried.

It was called operation NEPTUNE and under its umbrella were many specific responsibilities, each coded by the name of a city in America.

This article focuses on the specific one coded ELMIRA and events as they transpired, recorded and seen thru the eyes of some of the remaining veterans war and time have spared.

Compiled
by
Adelbert H. (Del) Sahlberg
6 June 1998

Elmira, N.Y.

To learn more about the full extent of Airborne Operations during World War 2 one can obtain a copy of the book GREEN LIGHT written by Martin Wolfe of Haverford, Pa. His book had been reprinted by

The Center for Air Force History
C A F H / D R
Bolling AFB, DC 20332-1111
Jacob Newfield, Director

"Marty" was a radio operator on a C-47 that partook in the ELMIRA MISSION as well as others. While GREEN LIGHT is one of a number of excellent books on the subject it does enjoy international acceptance as one of the paramount documations of that period.

I quote from a letter by Mr. Donald Summers, Secretary of The Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group of Oxfordshire, England. "And as for Marty Wolfe's book GREEN LIGHT, it is regarded among people like us as THE authentic history of Airborne Operations."

Logo History



A USAAF C47 of the 90th Squadron, 438th Troop Carrier Group lifts off the Greenham Common runway with a Horsa Glider in tow. The date, D-Day 6th June, and was part of the Elmira Supply Mission. (Photo via Bill King)

The above illustration may prove to be familiar. Yes, it was the idea for our logo. At an early meeting Bill King happened to be showing someone this photograph and it occurred to me the newly formed group could do with an identity, and what better than to incorporate something local and historical in the format. To me the attitude of the aircraft and glider would be easy to modify, for we are in glider country, and 'Dak' country as well and there has always been a USAF connection with the area. A bit of jiggery pokery as they say and I worked up the logo which was eagerly accepted by our pioneering members and has now become our 'house' identity together with the simpler 'Dak only' version.

Remembering the discussion at our first meeting about exactly what was to be our name and how it had to reflect all interests of the people present, I did prepare a justification for the adoption of the logo even if I just thought it looked pretty good to me. The aviation interest is obvious and choosing a Dak associates with our American allies. For those interested in uniforms, then just look at the fully kitted out paratroopers in the glider as well as the pilots gear. And what about all those military vehicles stored in the T2 Hanger? Colin Alexander's pill box defence line is sited just behind those trees just to the right of the local ROC post. The Downs rising in the distance carry the famous Ridgeway Path and the farmer toils on his land still using his WW2 equipment. They are singing some pretty ribald songs at the "Woodhouse Arms" just outside the perimeter fence where the Glenn Miller Band bus has just drawn up ready for tonight's concert and Roger Tucker is passing time with the local Home Guard P.C. Bovington-Cox has just told that bearded ARP man to stub out that cigarette! Hold on, is that the crackle of a Merlin I hear, no it is Merlins, as the Mossie makes a high speed low pass across the airfield, the pilot showing off his graduation from the local Training Centre with royal associations (do you know I have just twigged why it is called Monarch Training). Here, that control tower would make a good museum

Now you know all this, you must have some more of our woven badges. Royal blue with black detail these will be collectors items soon and now you can tell the full story behind the badge to anyone who asks. Splendid on your coat, baseball caps, or anywhere you like, just buy 'em from Murray Maclean at £5 a pair. Yeah, get them when you visit his museum or you could just wait till the next club night.

George Rance

My sincere appreciation to the following, without whose cooperation and contributions this chronicle on OPERATION ELMIRA would not have been possible.

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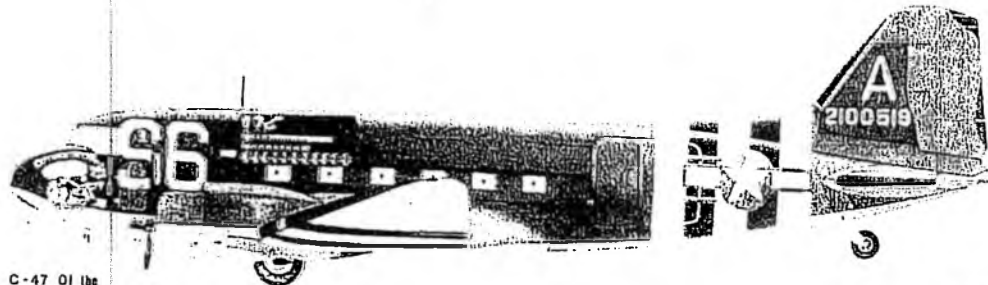
James H. Hardt
Baldwin, Mo.

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Barrington, RI.

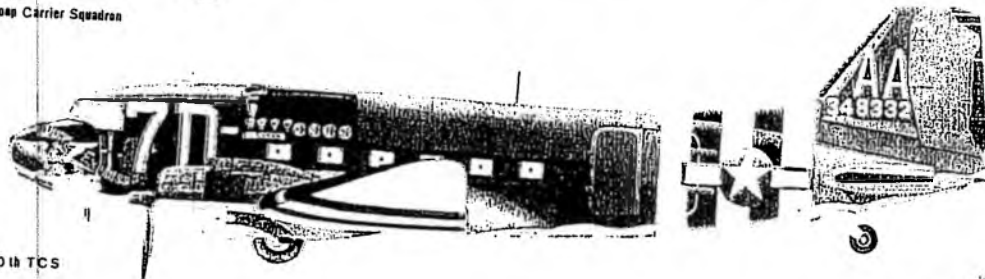
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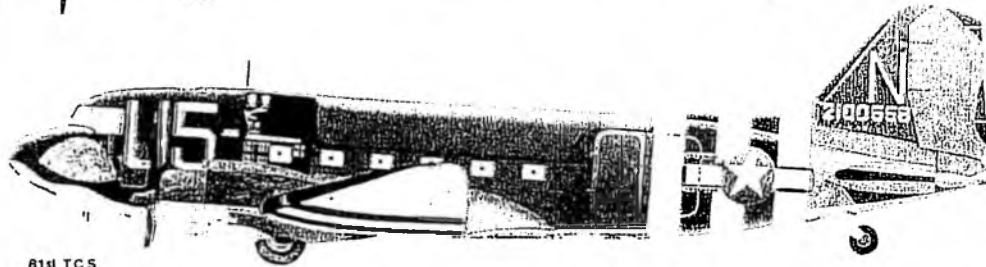
Doctor James J. DiPietro
Tuscon, Az.



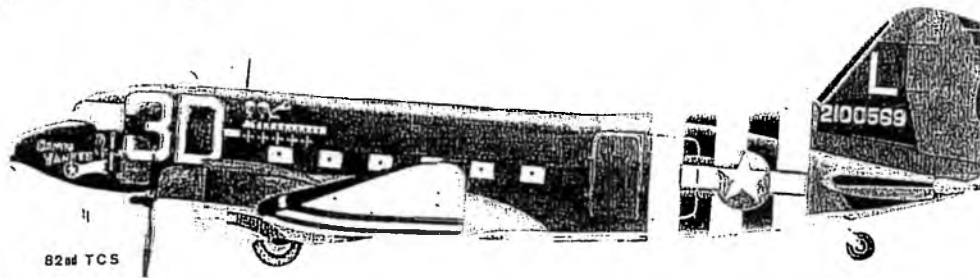
C-47 D1 Ibe
79th Troop Carrier Squadron



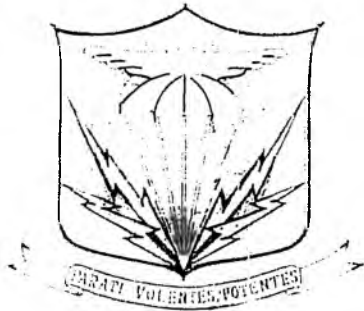
80th TCS



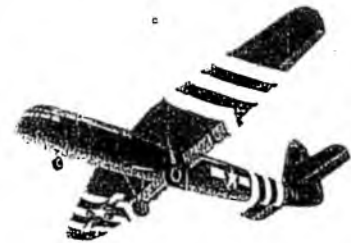
81st TCS



82nd TCS



CG-4A WACO



BRITISH HORSAs



WACO 1930-1947

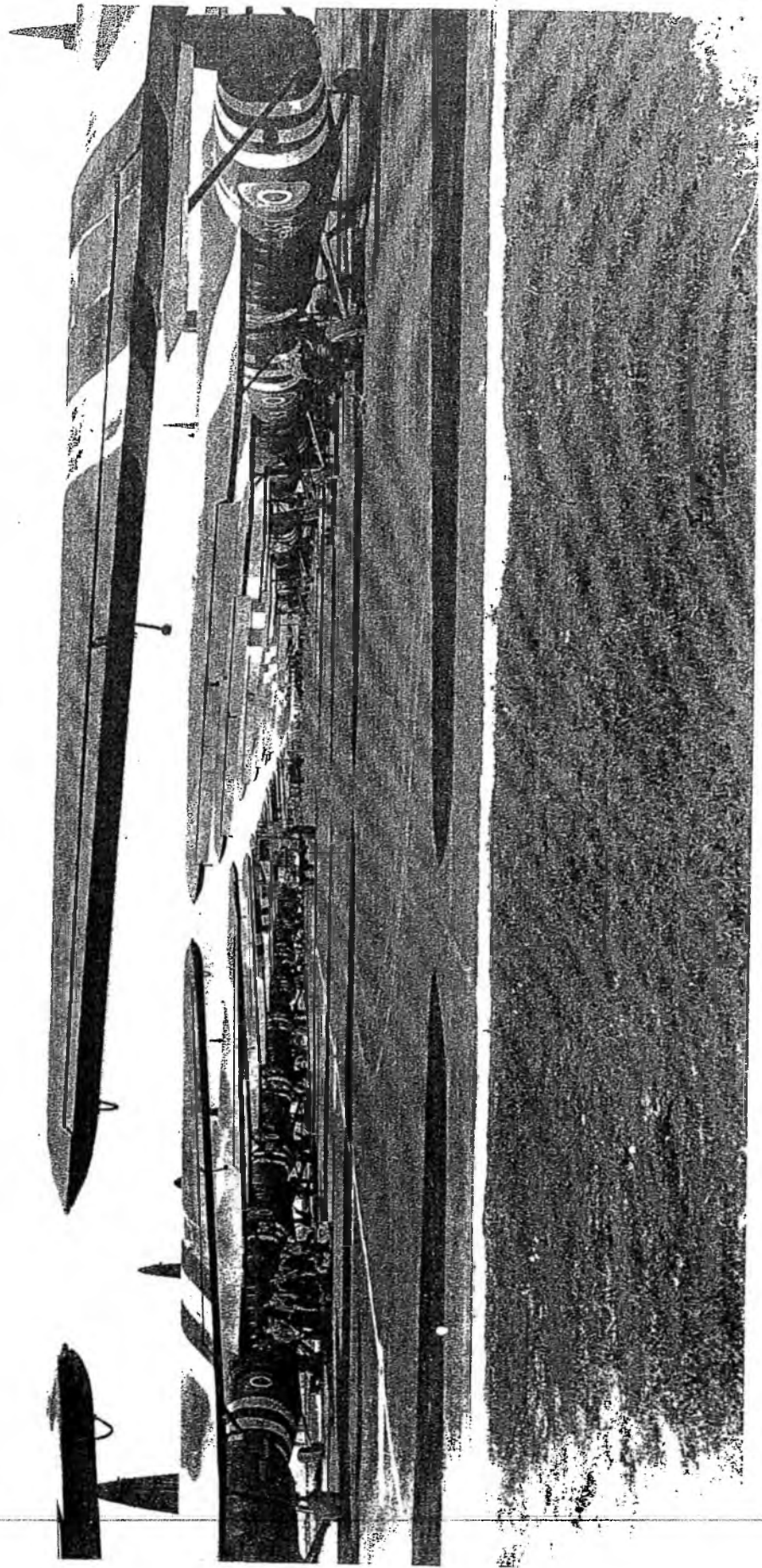


NORMANDY
ROME-ARNO
SOUTHERN FRANCE
NORTHERN FRANCE
HOLLAND
ARDENNES
RHINELAND
CENTRAL EUROPE



ARTWORK ... Brandon White ©1947





122628 AC

Subject: ENGLAND: GLIDERS

Troops preparing to board British Horsa type gliders at
Manston Air Base, England.

*gfh, CAFH
Nov. 1994*

Box No. 57

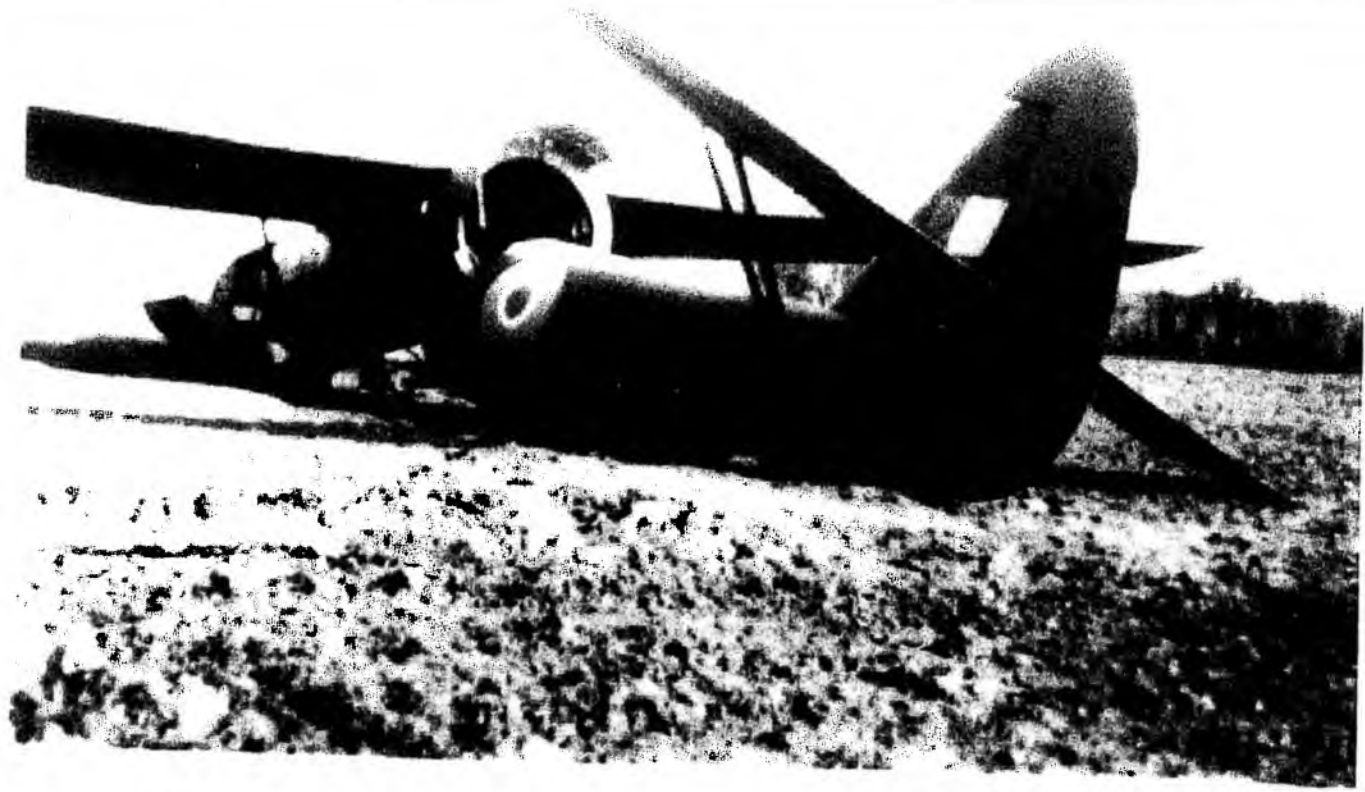
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PH 8.5

122628



Horsa Glider was rigged with small charges embedded in its fuselage to split the glider in two on landing and facilitate quick exit for the troopers.

Same as S. 19?

Line-up for the D-Day
glider mission

122627 AC

Subject: ENGLAND: GLIDERS

Men of an American airborne division are seen unloading from giant "Horsa" type British-made gliders. The photo was made during exercises of the 9th Air Force Troop Carrier Command in England.

Box No. 57

Disc/Side/Frame 3A-13214

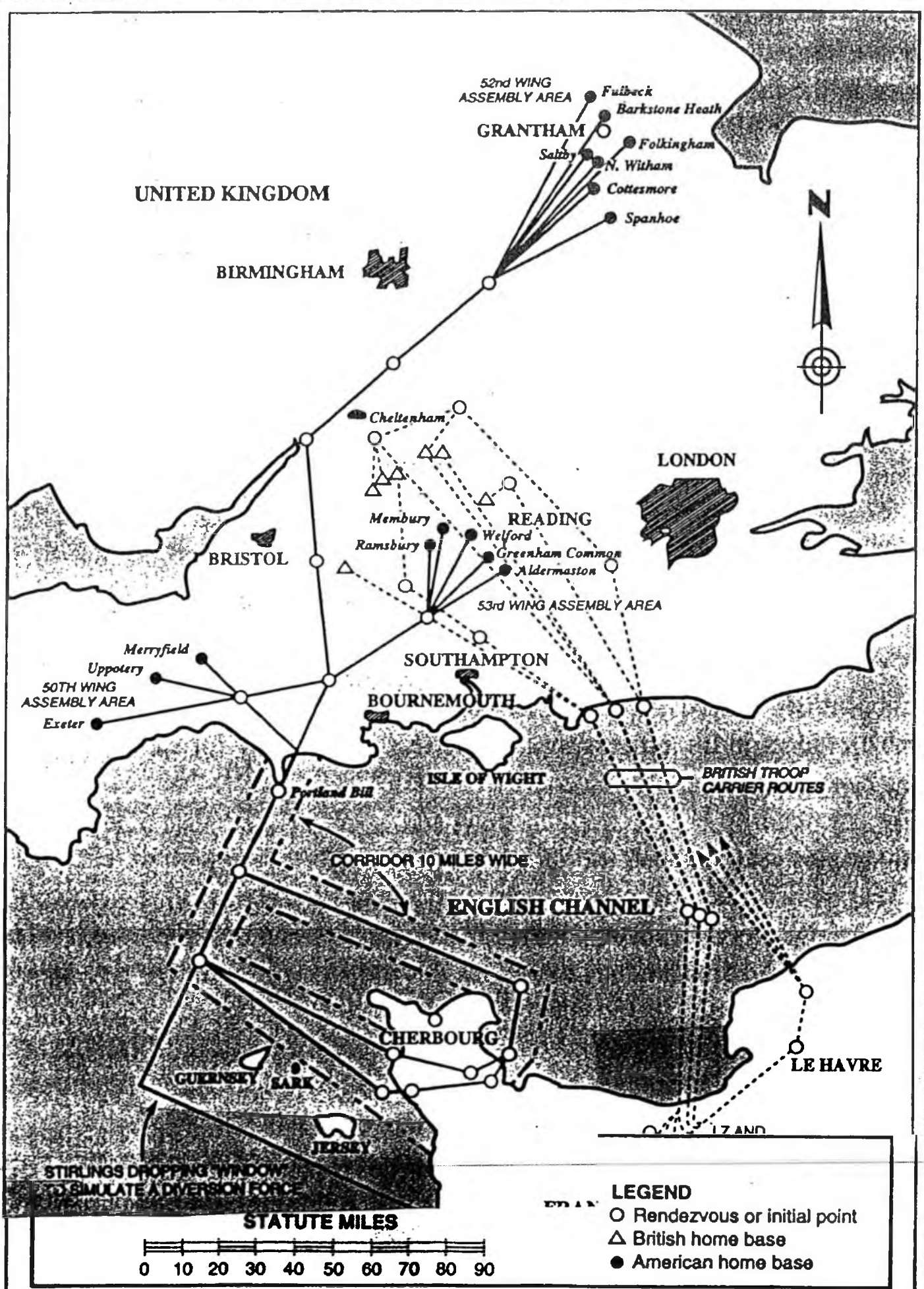
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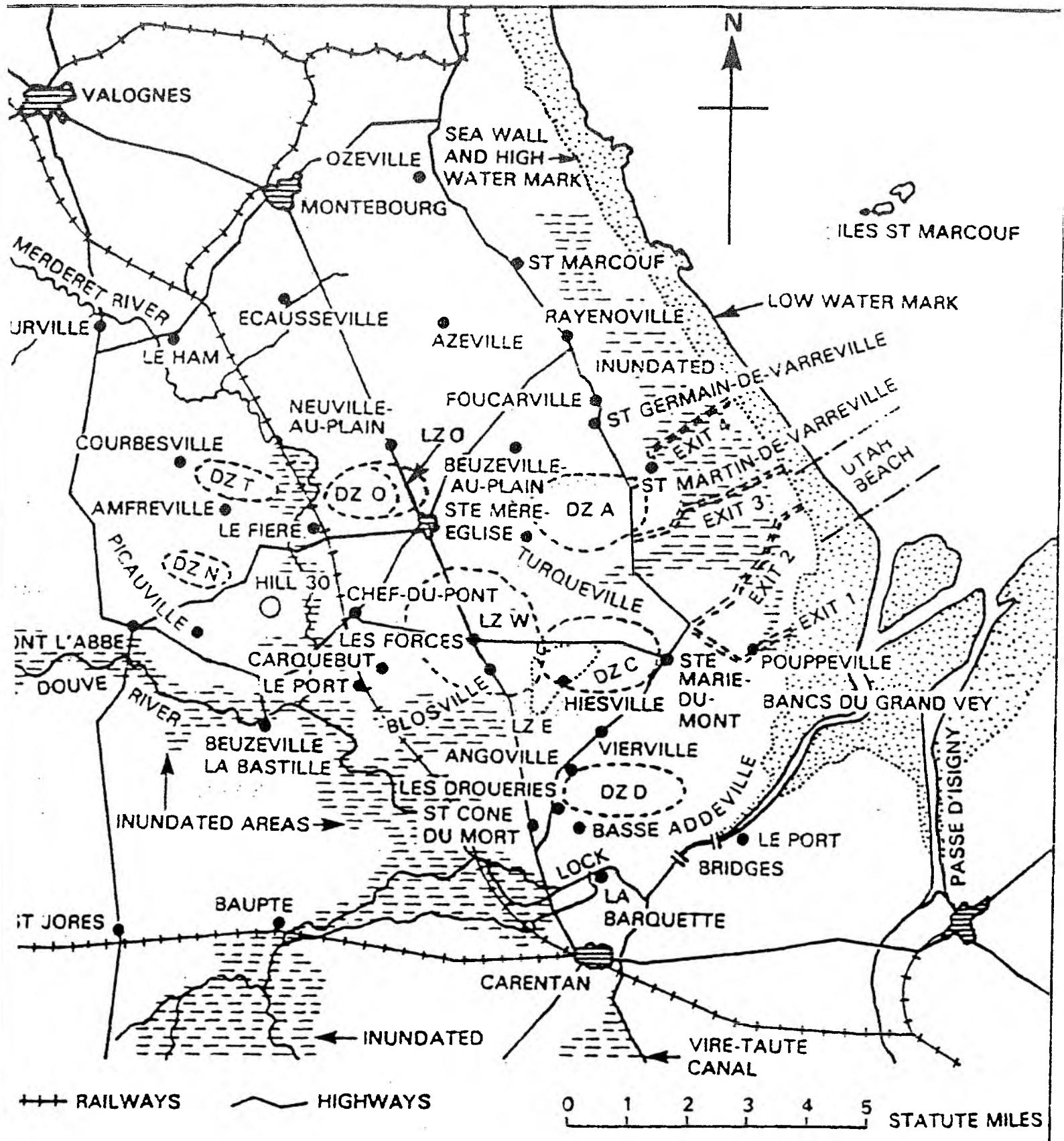
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JH CASH

NOV. 1994





Operation Neptune Assault Area (US 101st Airborne Division)

A second historically accurate account of United States Military Glider Forces Operations is the book HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S GLIDER FORCES by Patrick Stephens Ltd. Wellingborough, England.

Thus begins operation ELMIRA.

The 82nd Airborne Division's second glider mission on the evening of D-Day carrying reinforcements to the division in 76 Horsa and Waco gliders.

Owing to the number of gliders involved the operation had to be divided into two waves each of two serials. The first serial of the first wave would consist of eighteen Horsa and eight Waco CG-4A gliders, towed by C-47s of the 437th Troop Carrier Group out of Ramsbury, Wiltshire. The second serial of the first wave was thirty-six Horsa and fourteen Waco CG-4A gliders towed off from Greenham Common by C-47s of the 438th Troop Carrier Group. The two serials would carry 437 troops, 64 vehicles, 13 anti-tank guns and 24½ tons of supplies to LZ 'W', an oval shaped LZ 2,800 yards long from north to south and 2,000 yards wide, a mile south of St Mère Eglise.

At 19:07 the first of the combinations took off from Ramsbury, followed at intervals by the remainder till at 19:21 all twenty-six were airborne. The Horsas and Wacos flew in different formations to keep the two different glider types separate.

The second serial of thirty-six Horsa and fourteen Wacos had been towed off from Greenham Common between 18:48 and 19:16. As in the first serial the Horsas and Wacos were segregated. Flying at first in high gusting winds the formations headed for Portland on the English Channel coast. There they were greeted with a swarm of US fighters which escorted them across the Channel. Crossing the sea without incident, the glider stream came in over 'Utah' beach and made for the release point of LZ 'W' some six miles from the coast. As they came over, the Germans began to open fire on them with rifle and machine-gun fire.

Unknown to the aircrews the northern part of the LZ was still under German fire although the southern part was held by US troops. For this reason the LZ markers were not placed on LZ 'W' but two miles north-west of it. The 'Keokuk' LZ 'E' markers of green smoke and 'T' were two miles east of Les Forges and in operation. Assisted by radar and map reading, the 437th Troop Carrier Command flew direct to LZ 'W' and cast off their gliders, the first of which began to descend at 21:04. Only two gliders of the first serial managed to land on the LZ but twelve landed within a mile and most within two miles of it.

In the second serial, thirteen Wacos, towed by the 88th Troop Carrier Squadron, landed on or near the LZ. Nine Horsas landed on the zone and six within a mile of it. Another twelve Horsas landed on LZ 'E' and four landed three miles away. Three Wacos and twenty-one Horsas were destroyed mostly by German fire; five glider pilots were killed, seventeen had been injured or wounded and four were missing. Most of the troopers and equipment carried in the gliders that had landed on US held ground were unloaded within a few hours and assembled at the 82nd's Command Post on the north side of Les Forges, and were soon operational.

'Elmira's' second wave consisted of two serials of fifty gliders each. The first serial comprised forty-eight Horsas and two Waco CG-4As towed by the 436th Troop Carrier Group from Membury, carrying 418 troops, mostly of the 319th Airborne Field Artillery, together with 31 jeeps, 26 tons of ammunition and 25 tons of supplies. The second serial of thirty-eight Horsas and twelve Wacos was towed by the 435th Troop Carrier Group from Welford, carrying 319 troops of the 320th Airborne Field Artillery, twelve 105-mm howitzers, 28 jeeps, 33 tons of ammunition and 23 tons of supplies. Each of the Wacos carried one howitzer.

The first combinations of the first serial took off from Membury at 20:37 and that of the second serial at 20:40 from Welford with the aircrews unaware that LZ 'O' was being marked instead of the intended landing zone LZ 'W'. Both serials formed in columns of four with the Horsas and Wacos segregated. One Horsa broke its tow rope and one C-47 had to return to base with electrical trouble; the remaining formation of ninety-eight flew on to the east coast of the Cherbourg Peninsula without incident.

As the glider streams flew over 'Utah' beach the sun began to set causing long shadows on the ground. On the fields below the 82nd had set up a Eureka beacon and landing markers near LZ 'O', as the northern part of LZ 'W' was within range of German guns. As the glider streams approached the landing areas, they came under heavy enemy fire as they passed over German positions. The first serial began releasing its gliders at 22:55 and the second serial at 23:05. Most of the first serial cast off their gliders a mile short of LZ 'O' and six gliders cast off five miles east of the LZ. The bulk of the second serial landed within a mile of LZ 'O' but five landed on LZ 'W'. Two gliders landed north-east of St. Mère Eglise.

Most of the gliders made heavy landings; fifty-six out of eighty-four Horsas were destroyed; only thirteen were undamaged. All the fourteen Wacos were badly damaged with eight of them being destroyed. However, in spite of the damage most of the loads carried survived; forty-two of the fifty-nine jeeps were serviceable and were off-loaded after night fall when darkness gave cover from enemy fire. Ten glider pilots were killed out of 196 engaged, twenty-nine were injured and seven went missing.

Operation 'Elmira' had been successful, in spite of confusion over the LZ caused by lack of radio links between the forces battling on the ground and higher command in England.

We presented these ideas to General Marshall, and he in turn asked us to send our planning team to Europe to sell the proposal to General Eisenhower and his staff. We sent them, but we didn't sell the idea to the SHAEF Staff. We felt one of the advantages of these operations would be that the troops would drop in localities where there was no assembly of enemy reserves. We knew that every time we dropped airborne troops directly in the rear of the German lines, the paratroopers came down right in the midst of the reserve German divisions, and the landings of our airborne and glider troops following them in had to be made under the most difficult conditions. The Germans, anticipating this close-in drop, usually set up stakes and wires in the open fields.

General Marshall stated in his letter to General Eisenhower, of 10th February, 1944, that if he (Marshall) were in command of operation Overlord, this was exactly the sort of thing (dropping near Paris) he would do. The minds of General Eisenhower and his staff, however, were fixed on the necessity of obtaining the port of Cherbourg as quickly as possible; moreover airborne commanders were apprehensive about an armoured counter-attack against an airhead. To the first objection it could be replied that a port would have been less necessary if supplies were going in by air.

82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION GLIDER MOVEMENT TABLE

Serial	Airborne Unit	Carrier Unit	No. C-47s	CG 4A	Hor- sa	Takeoff Airfield	LZ	LZ Time
<i>Mission 'Detroit' (D-Day)</i>								
28	Btys A & B 80							
	Abn AA Bn	437 Gp	52	42		Ramsbury	O	0400
	Hq 82 Abn Div (-)			6				
	ASP (Glider)			1				
	82 Abn Div Arty			1				
	82 Abn Sig Co			2				
<i>Mission 'Elmira' (D-Day)</i>								
30	Bty C 80 Abn							
	AA Bn	437 Gp	26	13		Ramsbury	W	2100
	Hq 82 Abn Div			4				
	Cmd Veh, Div Hq			3				
	82 Abn Sig Co			1				
	ASP (Glider)			1				
	82 Abn Div Arty			1				
	Hq 80 Abn AA Bn			2				
31	307 Abn Med Co	438 Gp	50	18		Greenham	W	2120
	82 Ron Plat			11		Common		
	82 Abn Sig Co			1				
	Hq 82 Abn Div			9				
	ASP Vehicles (Prcht)			2				

Serial	Airborne Unit	Carrier Unit	No. C-47s	CG 4A	Hors sa	Takeoff Airfield	LZ	LZ Time
32	319 Gli FA Bn 320 Gli FA Bn 82 Abn Div Arty 307 Abn Med Co Co A 307 Abn Engr Bn (-)	436 Gp	50		40 4 1 1 1	Membury	W	2300
33	320 Gli FA Bn <i>Mission 'Galveston' (D-Plus-One)</i>	435 Gp	50	12	38	Welford	W	2310
34	1 Bn 325 Gli Inf Co A 307 Abn Engr Bn	437 Gp	50	28	15 4 3	Ramsbury	W	0700
35	Hq & Hq Co 325 Gli Inf 82 Abn Div Arty Co A 307 Abn Engr Bn 82 Abn Ron Plat Cmd Veh 508 Prcht Inf	434 Gp	50	40	5 2 2 1	Aldermaston	W	0710
	<i>Mission 'Hackensack' (D-Plus-One)</i>							
56	2 Bn 325 Gli Inf 2 Bn 401 Gli Inf	439 Gp	50	10	15 10 15	Uppottery	W	0900
37	2 Bn 325 Gli Inf Sply 2 Bn 401 Gli Inf Sply Serv Co 325 Gli Inf Cmd Veh 505, 507, 508 Prcht Infs	441 Gp	50	18	18 3 11			0910
	Totals		428	240	188			

Equipment Damaged in Landings

Daylight

	Jeeps		Trailers		Guns				
	No.	%	No. carried	No.	%	No. carried			
Horsas	5	12.1	41	3	9.3	32	2	25	8
CG-4A	14	20	70	5	20	25	2	22.2	9
	<i>Darkness</i>								
Horsas	19	31.6	60	11	28	39	7	58	12
CG-4A	11	47.8	23	1	20	5	7	25	28

This item was mailed to me by Wayne Peerce.
He flew the same mission, his "Horsa" not far behind
mine. He was both flying, not
From Wayne Peerce heavy.

415 N. Hannah Avenue
Mount Morris, Ill. 61054
Tel. 1-815-734-4441

member of the 325th Reg. of the 82nd Airborne, who
flew the same mission "Salveston", June 7, 1944.
His glider was about three behind me flying in
to Normandy. He was a Lieutenant at the time.

325th Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Capt. Dave Stokely Company Commander of "C" Compa
He and twenty two of his men plus a load of lan
mines comprised my "Horsa" glider load on mission
"Salveston" leaving at 4:37 AM June 7th 1944 from
Ramsbury, England and landing at 07:00 A.M.
in Ste Marie Du Mont in France, in Normandy.

Supplied to Del Sahlberg
by
Bob Casey

STATISTICS ! Without them we would never have a clear picture of the effort nor of the cost of that effort in men and material. But what about individuals that made up that effort ? The Big Picture never tells what they went thru. What they saw. What they felt. The book GREEN LIGHT does just this. The following lets the men who participated in OPERATION ELMIRA tell you THEIR stories as they lived them and recorded them for history to recall.

OPERATION ELMIRA continues up front and personal.

Fortunately for us in the 81st, we were assigned to operation ELMIRA, for which Leigh-Mallory had made the grudging concession that we could arrive over Normandy just before nightfall. He thought the gathering darkness would give glider pilots and their passengers at least some protection from the Germans. At the same time, presumably, there would still be enough light for the glider pilots to pick the least harmful landing sites.

One welcome change was that in ELMIRA, instead of flying over the Cotentin peninsula from west to east, as we had on the paratrooper mission ALBANY, we were ordered to come in over the LZs from the east coast, directly over the UTAH beaches, in order to fly the shortest distance over German defenses. Both the 435th and the 436th Groups participated in ELMIRA; we in the 81st Squadron contributed eleven planes and fourteen gliders to the operation. ELMIRA was carrying the 82nd Division's 319th and 320th Field Artillery Battalions, including thirty-one jeeps, fifty tons of ammunition and other supplies, and two 75mm guns.

My co-pilot James J. DiPietro and I went to the flight line to meet our load of glider troops. Our "bird" was a giant glider, the British Horsa. We loaded up thirty troopers and their gear, plus boxes of anti-tank mines which were lashed to the floor in the aisle. I glanced back down the aisle into the blackened faces of the airborne troops, all looking so competent and confident, and I breathed a silent prayer, I made a last minute check of my controls, and just as we started to roll, J.J. (DiPietro) gave me the "thumbs up" sign. As we reached proper air speed I could feel the positive responses. Picking up speed the rushing wind sounds increased. I eased back the yoke raising the nose wheel off the runway, and held it steady until reaching the ninety miles per hour take-off speed.

Additional back-pressure of the yoke lifted the glider and we were airborne, but the tow plane was still running on the ground. We assumed our position behind and above him and at one hundred miles per hour he lifted off and began a slow climb. At five thousand feet we joined in line with the stream of other aircraft and headed for the English Channel.
(Ben Ward, glider pilot)

As soon as we in the 81st TCS planes in ELMIRA passed over the English coast and headed south over the Channel, we were presented with a sight that was almost too stunning to take in. Ships and ships and ships crowding in toward the beach; as far as the eye could see, ships. Of every sort, size, and shape. The bigger ships were blinking furiously to each other with signal lamps. Before we could catch our breath, it seemed, it was 2250 hours (10:50 p.m. Double British Summer time), and we turned to the right toward our gliders' landing zone in back of the invasion beaches.

As we cut in to the Normandy coast, the Navy guns opened up--big puffs of blinding orange, followed by gushes of red on the land. LSTs (landing ships for tanks) were working on the beach. Big fires, houses burning--flashes of artillery fire along the beaches, long streams of tracers, apparently coming from a mile or so in back of the beach, arcing up into the darkening sky--and, in the distance, the green-lit "T" that was set up as the center of our LZ.

We were only 500 feet above the beach coming in; it was easy to see individual trucks and jeeps dashing about. Smoky black bursts of flak now seemed to be filling the sky. Practically uninterrupted arcs of tracers, red and yellow, came up toward us with fascinating deliberation and then fell away in graceful curves.

We were in echelons of four to the right, and our plane was an element leader. It was part of my job to signal back to the gliders with a red light four minutes out, and a green light over the LZ, where they would cut off. I climbed on the wooden stool in the companionway and poked my head into the plexiglass astrodome. To our right was the French coast coming up --still plenty visible in the gathering dark. Stretched out in front of me was an unbelievable panorama--hundreds and hundreds of ships crowding in toward the beach. Right then I wouldn't have given up my place in the astrodome for anything. Over Normandy, while the rational part of my mind was trying to take it all in, the emotional side was telling me that men were dying down there.

"Red Light!" I beamed the Aldis lamp back at my element and turned front again. I was mesmerized by the fire coming up at our planes--couldn't take my eyes off it. I could see the bullets finding the range of the leading elements. I felt right then that in a few moments I would be dead. No panic: just the mind-filling recognition of what had to be. I stood there rubbing my head with the Aldis lamp and hoping it would come painlessly

and wondering how Dotty would take the news. One consolation: it seemed to me that most of the gliders from the leading elements were going to make it down near the LZ.

"Green Light!" and in that very instant I could hear bullets hitting the ship, a rather dry sound like peas being dropped into a pot. Our plane lurched forward on being released from the glider, and we banked sharply down and to the right, under the arcs of tracers. With the realization that we were still flying, I began to get really scared. Now that we had a chance for life I was afraid we wouldn't make it. But after that few minutes in the thick of battle all we had facing us was an uneventful, practically routine flight home.

No yelling, no rejoicing this time when we touched down at Membury. Just a quiet, heavy sensation: "Well, that's two out of the way." We went outside with flashlights to check on holes in our planes. I counted four in my plane and guessed that daylight would show more; we had one mean-looking hole in the faring about ten inches from our right gas tank.

Another critique at the Group theater: all gliders, we are told, "landed successfully," all the Group's planes back, though 31 of the 50 planes had been shot up, some badly. Fifteen minutes in the thick of battle--followed by a relatively safe, uneventful, practically routine flight home. 4 (Marty Wolfe, radio operator, written June 15, 1944)

Over LZ "W"--and on it

In ELMIRA, in spite of the fact that most of the tug planes in our serial were hit, only two crew members were wounded. For our glider pilots, ELMIRA was a different story. When they cut off from us and started downward, their war was just beginning.

When ELMIRA plans had been drawn up, it had been assumed that by the time the gliders got there, LZs "W" and "O," which straddled Ste-Mère-Eglise to the north and south, about two miles behind the UTAH beaches, would be firmly in the hands of 82nd Division troops. This was far from being the case, and the 82nd was unable to get word of its predicament back to England. In relatively small but desperate engagements, the Germans had pushed back into this zone, and they were only partially driven out again when the first gliders released their tow ropes and began, in the gathering dusk, to search out a good field for landing. In fact the gliders were descending into a no man's land. Americans on the ground tried to warn the gliders, but none of the signals they used were the pre-arranged warning signs, and the glider pilots ignored them.

As the gliders came in the Germans, who had been holding their fire, opened up with everything they had. Enemy fire was so deadly that the glider pilots broke out of their normal landing patterns and began to dive at excessive speeds into the dubious protection of the fields below.

I finally found three beautiful-looking fields side by side that seemed perfect for a 270-degree approach. I was all ready to cut--even had my hand on the release--when out of one corner of one of these very fields a lot of flak and machine gun stuff started coming up at us! If I had cut loose then I would have taken all of us right down into the middle of it.

By this time it began to look hopeless. But at last--a fair field. I cut, made one turn, slowed the glider, made my final turn, and headed into the field. Damn it! There was another glider cutting in front of me! I made a fast turn out of his way, another turn, and landed into the next field. All this happened very fast; and it happened at about only 400 feet up. Somehow on that pattern I had remembered to put down half flaps; but when I dodged the glider and headed for my alternate field I forgot to put my flaps all the way down so my air speed would be where it belonged. On this last approach I saw that the field had a line of trees that must have been fifty feet high on both ends, and in the middle a stump that looked as though it was forty feet high, plus a small pole that looked to be about a foot in diameter and twenty feet tall. Naturally, I opted for the small pole; I took it with my right wing while still in the air but it didn't hurt our landing in any way.

Wheels touched; put on the brakes; started praying. We did stop--with about fifty feet to spare. Through a kind of a daze I could hear my co-pilot saying: "I could kiss you for getting us down OK." (Darlye Watters, Squadron Glider Officer)

For the glider pilots, coming to land on their LZ, it was every man for himself. Some gliders came down nearer to LZ "O" than to "W." As they slammed into the ground many of the gliders splintered apart; jeeps and artillery in some gliders were knocked loose, crushing some of the glider troops. Survivors had to chop their way out and jump for any ditch or other protection, while German bullets screamed over their heads. There was no possibility whatever of unloading cargoes until the field was covered in darkness. Fortunately, when night came the Germans pulled back.

Ben Ward remembers how his heart pounded while he was over his LZ, wondering where he could have a fair chance of a safe landing.

When the green signal light from the C-47 astrodome began flashing, I glanced down at the quilted patchwork of postage-stamp sized fields lined by hedgerows all around.

I had only sixty seconds to decide and to cut off the tow line before I was cut off by the tow plane. If this occurred I would then have 300 feet of tow rope rushing back at us. If it missed me the rope would be dangling crazily beneath us and dragging dangerously through the trees and brush of the hedgerows below. So, taking a deep breath and thinking "Here goes," I reached up and hit the release mechanism with my right hand and the tow plane started to pull away.

Looking down upon the obvious hazards of landing on an obstacle course at ninety miles per hour with a cargo of thirty men, I wondered just how many invisible pitfalls awaited below. Were the hedgerows concealing Nazi soldiers? How about German machine gun nests? Tanks? Mines? No time to think now. Just hold the pattern, maintain my speed and rate of descent constant, and fly my ground pattern.

Just as our wheels touched down, our left wing dropped and hit the ground. This caused the glider to turn to the left, and we were now on a collision course for the trees. Now what? I am half out of field and haven't even started to slow down. I aim at the longest part of the field and set the brakes. Nothing happens. No brakes! Instant panic. Try the brakes again. I was not aware of any enemy fire; but during landing we had been hit several times by small arms fire that was probably responsible for the loss of brakes. Too late now to worry about anything except surviving.

J.J. (DiPietro), in the co-pilot's seat, looked across at me knowingly, no doubt saying his prayers. Here we were, fifty yards from the end of our field, moving at ninety and just slowing slightly. Trees looming ahead and nowhere to go but straight forward.

The glider pilot knows that in an emergency you land straight ahead. Don't attempt to turn suddenly. Just ride it out and try to miss anything in your path. This was that time. Was I ready for it? Just seconds remain. Two huge trees ahead maybe thirty or forty feet apart. Stick the nose right between them. As we slid into the open space, seemingly in slow motion, J.J. released his safety belt and pressed over beside me. Then we smashed through a hedgerow sideways, the sound of shattered plywood and crunching plexiglass filled my ears...then silence.

I was dazed by the impact. I groggily released my seat belt and staggered to my feet, wondering if I was still in one piece. The glider was a mass of wreckage. There seemed to be nothing left whole except my seat and my safety belt. Faintly I heard someone calling my name. Gradually, through the fog, I realized that it was J.J. asking if I was OK.

When we counted noses we found that we were short one man. It was a Greek soldier who had been telling J.J. how much he was going to do to the Germans for what they had done to his family. He was killed by the large tree that smashed through the fuselage just behind the co-pilot's seat.
(Ben Ward, glider pilot)

The glider split open and rolled over the top of the trees and most of us landed in the next field. I had been thrown from the glider and when I quit rolling, about twenty-five yards from the impact, I noticed that my seat bottom was still attached to me. Much to my surprise I was not hurt, just a couple of scratches on my forehead caused by my helmet when I hit my head. Besides my seat remaining attached to me and my helmet, what prevented me from more serious injury was that the Mae West I wore under my flak suit inflated on impact and acted as a cushion when I landed and rolled on the ground.

After assuring myself that I was all in one piece, I surveyed the damage. Ben Ward was walking around in a daze, he must have hit his head; but he came to when I yelled at him. The team of medics took care of a few broken bones and other minor injuries, and the rest of us assembled on a nearby country road and proceeded toward Ste-Mère-Eglise, which was between us and the command post. (J.J. DiPietro, glider pilot)

Ten glider pilots (none from the 81st) in ELMIRA were killed by the landing impact or very soon afterward; seven others were later found to be missing. Survivors thought it a miracle so many of them were still alive. Two of our glider pilots, Henry Brewer and Clifford Fearn, had a bad scare: they were made prisoner by Germans--but not for long.

In our Horsa we had a doctor, some medics, and one of their trailers. After we landed that night a German infantry outfit came up so fast you couldn't say they captured us; they just sort of swept us up.

While we were prisoners we had to help lug German ammunition. Those shells were in metal canisters about two and a half feet high. We were forced to run with these cans over to a German half-track with a heavy gun. This half-track would go from one German artillery point to another and supply them with shells.

But not long afterward three American tanks coming up off the beach got behind those Germans that had sandbagged us, and started knocking them off fast.

While we were prisoners, I had been talking to one of the German boys. Now I walked him over to the American tanks to help the Germans surrender. I got the attention of the American tankers by handing this German soldier's P-38 pistol to the American tankers. It was a good souvenir. Later those tankers told me that previously they usually hadn't taken any prisoners until they killed off quit a few Germans with their hands up--that made the rest of them more ready to surrender.
(Cliff Fearn, glider pilot)

Those glider pilots who could still function began to add to their already formidable reputation for guts, improvisation, and cantankerous independence. Besides helping unload the crashed gliders, they functioned as guards of German prisoners and even joined in establishing perimeter defense lines. Some of them, against orders, went along with paratroopers going on patrol.

When we finally began our march toward the command post, the lieutenant in charge wasn't sure we were going in the right direction. I saw a farmer milking a cow in a nearby field. I went over to him and in my high-school French asked him if Ste-Mère-Eglise was in that direction as I pointed where we were headed. He said yes and volunteered the information that about an hour previously some German paratroopers had landed on a hill up ahead. I relayed the information to the lieutenant in charge, and he ordered the troops to spread out and be on the alert. There were about two hundred of us in all.

As we approached the hill we were fired on by burp guns. We hit the deck and looked around but couldn't see anyone. The firing ceased and we continued on. A short time later we heard the rumble of tanks. A bazooka team was dispatched to scout the tanks and we started to dig in. The bazooka team returned with the news that the tanks were American and that they had told the tank drivers about the German paratroopers on the hill. Soon we heard the tanks open up with their machine guns and they rumbled on. Under scattered sniper fire we finally arrived at the command post without casualties.
(J.J. DiPietro, glider pilot)

We and the 82nd boys started to try to find our units. We ended up wandering around like chickens with our heads cut off. At the same time there were gliders crashing all around us, and the Germans were lobbing mortar shells in the field directly next to ours. I went down the road a bit to see if I could find somebody who knew where we were; but just at that time machine gun bullets, including tracers, cut through the hedge just in front of me. You can believe that I hit the ditch on the side of the road mighty fast. When the firing stopped I could hear Germans talking, and I figured it was only a question of time before one of them ran a bayonet through me.

I lay there quiet as could be; and every time I moved my head the steel helmet would rub up against the stiff grass there--to me the noise it made sounded like thunder. I stayed there until it was daylight; and boy, it was a great sight to spot only our attack bombers and fighter planes above me. Suddenly a paratrooper captain came by, walking down that road as if nothing special was going on. He looked down at me in disgust; but then he kindly took me back where some airborne troops and glider pilots were assembling, and told us to dig in. That was easier said than done.

I dug away for about an hour and only got down about six inches.
(Thaver Bonecutter, glider pilot)

The glider pilots' overriding responsibility now was to get the hell back to England and to Membury whatever way they could. For this they were given priority on cross-Channel transport second only to our wounded, since additional glider missions would have been needed if the battle had gone badly. Some got back on landing craft, some on bigger ships. We had six of them back in Membury on June 10; in a few days after that all the 81st glider pilots were back or accounted for; four of them were still hospitalized. On June 7, our glider pilot Joseph Graves, in a forward hospital recovering from his injuries, was killed when the Germans shelled the building.

Late that afternoon (June 7) the major in charge gave us the bad news. He said that Ste-Mère-Eglise had been recaptured by the Germans. He gave us three options: (1) advance with the airborne troopers; (2) dig in where we stood and take a chance that the Panzer Division moving in our direction would pass us by; or (3) head back toward the beach for evacuation back to England, if we could fight our way back through Ste-Mère-Eglise, which was between us and the beach. We all opted to head for the beach!

The wounded were placed in jeeps and trucks and were at the head of the column; and the rest of us, about 100 pilots, followed on foot. It was about 5:00 p.m. We marched with full pack, carrying our guns and ammunition which we never had a chance to fire. As we started our march, a German plane flew overhead at a low altitude; but it did not have a chance to open fire, because a P-51 was on its tail. We continued our march, and we could hear German 88 shells whizzing over our heads; one landed at the head of the column, putting a jeep out of commission. Apparently the Germans had zeroed in on the road with the intention of shelling it all night.

As we approached the beach we encountered some GIs who had disembarked from landing craft; some had had to swim because their boat ran into some mines. They were wet and had lost their guns and ammunition. We handed them our equipment as they marched by; they were very grateful. Upon arriving at the beach and waiting to board a boat we were strafed by a couple of German night fighters. Now it was close to midnight. When I finally got on a boat I was so tired that I put on a life jacket and lay down on the wet deck and fell asleep. The next thing I knew we were back in England getting off the boat and waiting for transport back to Membury.
(J.J. DiPietro, glider pilot)

Sixteen of our 81st TCS glider pilots who had not flown on D-Day were detached to fly June 7 with other squadrons in Operation GALVESTON, which flew the 82nd Division's 325th Glider Infantry Regiment to an LZ near Ste-Mère-Eglise. We were still on call; and some planes from the 436th Group did make six more re-supply glider missions between June 10 and June 13. But ELMIRA just about ended the 81st Squadron's combat experiences as a unit in Normandy.

NOTE

4. The Luftwaffe did shoot down one C-47 on the previous CHICAGO operation. On ELMIRA, in other squadrons, two planes were brought down by ground fire, but the pilots managed to crash land safely.

April 25, 1998

Dear Del Sahlberg,

Please excuse me for waiting so long to answer your letter. I am enclosing a copy of a page from a book that was sent to me some time ago listing the 82nd Airborne Division Glider Movement in June of 1944. I did not participate in mission "Eureka" (D-Day). Although a member of the 436th T.C. Gp. at the time I was sent to Ramberg about ten days prior to the big day with about nine other men from my squadron the 82nd not knowing for what reason. It didn't take too long since we were placed in tents and then surrounded by barbed wire and later march to and from the mess hall so no outsiders could talk to us. At one point early on we returned to Mombury where we were stationed in order to pick up our field equipment and rifles. I carried the M1. I was assigned mission "Halveston" D-Day plus one. Lt. Gordon Chamberlain and I flew Horse #13 on that mission with twenty two men of the 325th Reg. incl. Capt. Dave Stokely and quite a few boxes of mines to be used on there mission.

Even though we were carrying men of the 82nd Division we were sent into an area designated for the 101st Division, since the Germans still held the area we were suppose to be landing on.

Capt. Stokely survived the war and I had the pleasure to speak to him when I arrived back from

the 50th Anniversary of D-Day. Unfortunately Lt. Gordon Chamberlain was killed in action landing in Germany at Nezel March 24, 1945 our last mission.

My buddies who flew mission "Elmira" as you can see from the chart I enclosed were landing quite late 2300 hrs which could have been a detriment. Most of the guys from my outfit the 436th, 82nd Sq. who flew this mission were killed or wounded. I had heard that enemy resistance was difficult in that area and it could have been beefed up since the American forces in that area could not secure the landing site which forced the powers to be, to move our landing site near St Marie Dumon where the 101st was.

Our orders were to deliver our loads to the landing zone, do whatever you could to be of assistance once there and break off as soon as possible and return as soon as possible to your base in England in the event you are needed for further resupply missions. I was able to leave the beach at Utah and board an LCI with a handful of Hitler Pkts and 216 German POW's. We were taken to an L.S.T. where we spent the night. On June 9 our ship had gotten us to Portsmouth where a truck convoy picked us up and returned us to Membury at 19:30 P.M. I'll enclose a copy of my notes from this mission taken from my diary written during the war.

Best wishes to you and yours,

Bob Casey

D-Day
Tuesday, June 6, 1944

This morning as we were getting out of bed the C-47 aircraft of the 437th Group were just arriving back from France having completed their first combat mission. All the aircraft successfully made it back although some had been badly damaged by flack. One aircraft came in on one engine. Watching these aircraft gave me a good idea of how difficult the mission had been and gave me an idea of what to expect on our mission later today.

We started our day attending a briefing for all flight leaders. Since our gliders will be leading six gliders including ours on this mission. 2nd Lt. Gordon C. Chamberlain and I will be flying together. He will be carrying the company commander of company "C" of the 325th Regiment and his men, all of the 82nd Airborne Division. Our take off time will be 04:37 AM June 7 and will arrive at our L.Z. (Landing zone) at 07:10 AM. followed by the 434th Group. There will be a total of four hundred gliders landing in France this day June 7.

* NOTE: There were four missions each consisting of fifty gliders arriving this day, we were the lead group. Our mission was known as "Salveston".

DIARY OF ROBERT C. CASEY

SOUTHOLD, NY

436th Troop Carrier Group

Wednesday, June 7, 1944

This morning at 04:37 AM we took off as part of operation "Galveston" headed for Normandy in France. Our glider #13 was loaded with 7500 lbs including men and material which consisted of land mines. We estimated we were 600 lbs overloaded. The weather consisted of low clouds and intermittent rain in spots. As we crossed the channel we saw hundreds of aircraft in the air fighter planes as well as Troop Carrier C-47. Daylight was just arriving and one could see thousands of ships in the water below it was unbelievable. We flew around the peninsula of Cherbourg which was heavily fortified. We flew out of their firing range and around the coast as we let down to an altitude of 400 feet. When we arrived at Utah beach we made a 90° turn to the right, climbing to an altitude of 600 feet, where we waited for our tow plane to signal our arrival at the L.Z. (Landing zone) and then cut loose of our tow plane. We made a left turn upon cut off and another left turn onto our approach to our landing field which was about 900 ft long. We came to rest with our nose into a heathrow. Two other gliders landed in the same field, unfortunately the last one crashed into the first one down causing some casualties. To Barney Howard was one of the casualties having sustained a broken pelvis. In all we had fourteen injured in our field and we placed them in a dug near a heathrow and kept them as comfortable as possible.

Wednesday, June 7, 1944 Continued - Page II

As soon as we landed our glider born troopers assembled and went off on their mission which was on the main causeway from Caen to Cherbourg.

In landing our Goksa we found our glider was nose heavy as we entered our approach to landing. To the point where we were headed in at a 45° angle with no way to raise the nose of the aircraft without deploying full flaps and then releasing them just before landing which would bring the nose back up to landing position. Unfortunately this caused our aircraft to land heavily on the nose wheel which caused it to collapse. We slid across the field and found ourselves nose first into the hedgerow on the far side of the field. As a result we sustained a few injured men on our glider.

Due to our difficult landing my M1 rifle had gotten jammed with dirt in the muzzle to the point where I had to immediately strip and clean it if I expected to make use of it. What a way to start a war. While I was in the process of doing this job and my rifle was all apart we began to receive what we considered hostile fire directed in our direction. I quickly scooped up all the parts of my rifle and plumped into the nearby hedgerow in order to take cover and find out where the fire was coming. Fortunately we had a first sergeant with a pair of binoculars who was able to identify where

Wednesday, June 7, 1944 Continued - Page 111

the hostile fire was coming from. Fortunately, it came from troopers from the 101st Airborne Div. who were in the area. One of our people threw a orange smoke grenade indicating we were friendly troops. All firing ceased immediately.

At one point while in this field a frenchman walked down the road holding a rope leading a cow. Since I had knowledge of the french language and we still did not know our exact location, I ran out to where the farmer was in order to determine our location. I did not learn too much from him except that we were near Ste Marie Dev-Mont.

At another point while we waited for some first aid to arrive at our location in order to take the wounded back to the nearest aid station, three enemy fighter planes came overhead at high speed being chased by several R.A.F. spitfires and other friendly aircraft. The german aircraft probably strafed the coast at Omaha beach and were now being pursued and shot down. One was trailing smoke as they passed overhead.

Some time later in the day a group of glider pilots who landed on our field and who went for help for our wounded, arrived with trucks to transport the men to an aid station and then had a 2 1/2 ton or six by six truck take us back to the beach at Utah. There we talked to the beach commander

Wednesday, June 7, 1944 Continued - Page IV

who directed us to an LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) and told us to get on board if we wished! It was like a scene in a movie I had seen in the past where a British officer was leaving on a similar beach and unfortunately stepped on a mine and was killed after fighting many battles and was yet so close to safety and home.

I didn't have time to dwell on this, I just followed my fellow glider pilots and waded out in order to get on board. Once on board we found ourselves on board a craft carrying 218 German prisoners of war out to another ship in order to interrogate them and send them back to England. The first thing I did was put my bayonet on my M1 since we were now standing not far from our former enemies who had been trained to kill us. On board this boat was also one of the pilots of the Luftwaffe who had been shot down earlier as he passed over us.

This LCI brought us out to an LST which is a much larger vessel where we could finally rest and relax. While standing on the deck and speaking to one of the crew I was told that a ship in our vicinity had struck a mine which were dropped from aircraft at night and sank within three minutes. With this news and being exhausted from my day activities I found a comfortable place on deck and fell asleep, it was now quite late at night. The date was still June 7, 1944.

Thursday, June 8, 1944

As we were leaving France yesterday, heavy equipment was beginning to arrive such as 155 howitzers and Tanks. It was good to see this support arriving along with more troops. I personally felt quite proud of having been among the first to land in the invasion of the continent. I felt this way especially since my grand parents were living in France under the domination of Adolph Hitler and his German armies.

While I was sleeping our ship the LST was underway and heading for Portsmouth, England. While on board the ship a group of us glider pilots were able to get together and tell of our latest adventures.

NOTE:

Our mission as glider pilots was to transport our glider troopers to our designated landing area, do whatever was necessary to insure they were able to accomplish their mission and then at the earliest possible time disengage and return to our base in order to be able to return with a resupply mission if deemed necessary.

Friday, June 9, 1944

When I had awakened I found our ship had landed in port at 06:00 A.M. and were awaiting orders to dock. We finally landed at about 10:00 P.M. and we glider pilots were taken to what they called a porting center where we rested enjoyed whatever food was available and waited for transportation to take us back to our respective organizations.

At about 14:00 we finally had a truck convoy take all the men attached to the 13th Wing back to their home base. We arrived at Membury at 19:30 from Portsmouth where we were welcomed back by our Colonel Williams and a group of others. Later we were each interrogated or debriefed by our intelligence people. After this was completed our squadron flight surgeon or doctor checked us when we arrived back at our squadron area, after which we went to bed in our own beds for a good nights sleep.

Our squadron flight surgeon was Dr. Ed. Mack. He is still with us and living on the west coast.

When we arrived back at our base, Membury Col. Williams our group C.O. said he was going to put us glider pilots in for the "Distinguished Flying Cross." He later referred the "Air Medal." I can understand their thinking. We later received the "Air Medal" on each important mission we flew.

Saturday, June 10, 1944

This morning since there was nothing on our agenda I slept as late as I wanted. I was among the first group to arrive back from Normandie and I was feeling thankful still to be alive after my latest experience. When I finally got up the boys all wanted to see us, shake our hands and ask us questions about our experiences during the invasion. Only about fifteen of us glider pilots have gotten back so far and were still sweating the rest out. Even the enlisted men were there to greet us back and say hello.

The Colonel informed us we had won the D.F.C. (Distinguished Flying Cross) Later I went to Welford Park to talk to Dugan at the 435th T. C. Group about business after which I went to Ramsbury from where we had taken off to go to Normandie. I'm sure I was there to pick up any clothing and any other gear I might have left.

When we returned to Wembury our regular base we were informed that we could get a seven day leave as soon as possible. Later I enjoyed our usual Saturday night party at the Officers club. I certainly had a great time seeing all the other pilots from our group as well as the others.

Note:

The term sweating out in army talk those days meant writing while showing concern.

Sunday, June 11, 1944

Last night another group of glider pilots arrived back from Normandie. We still have quite a few of our guys missing from our squadron. F/O Tom Atkinson 2nd Lt. Ben Hicks F/O Vernon Jensen and 2nd Lt Adam Bone were all confirmed killed. The wounded are 1st Lt. Charles Bass F/O James (Jim) Jones, F/O Barney Howard or (Be Ray) who landed in the same field with me in Normandie, and also F/O Vinton Hartz. Jones and Hartz were all new men that had just joined us a short time ago. Adam Bone was married and had a son, Jensen was married and had no children. The rest of of those killed had no children. Many others were killed and wounded that I knew.

Our commanding officer Colonel Williams is giving us all a seven day leave beginning tomorrow they say, and I hope.

Well, I enclose a page out of my
log book which shows my D-Day
flight. I assure you that it will
show most of our training was
done in day-light, but our first
combat mission was at night. That
was due to the fact that Geyser-Mallory,
His advisor predicted 60% to 70%
of the gliders would be shot out
of the sky before we got near the
landing zone. He thought that putting
us over the landing zone at dusk
would be safer for us - Not so!
Holland and the Rhine crossings were
both done in daylight with much
better results.

If you use the picture of the Horse
in any publication please give credit
to Dr. Martin Wolfe & his book Green Light
where it was published - Same for Col
Williams and the D-Day map.

Gale Zimmerman

If you publish any of these I'd
appreciate a copy.

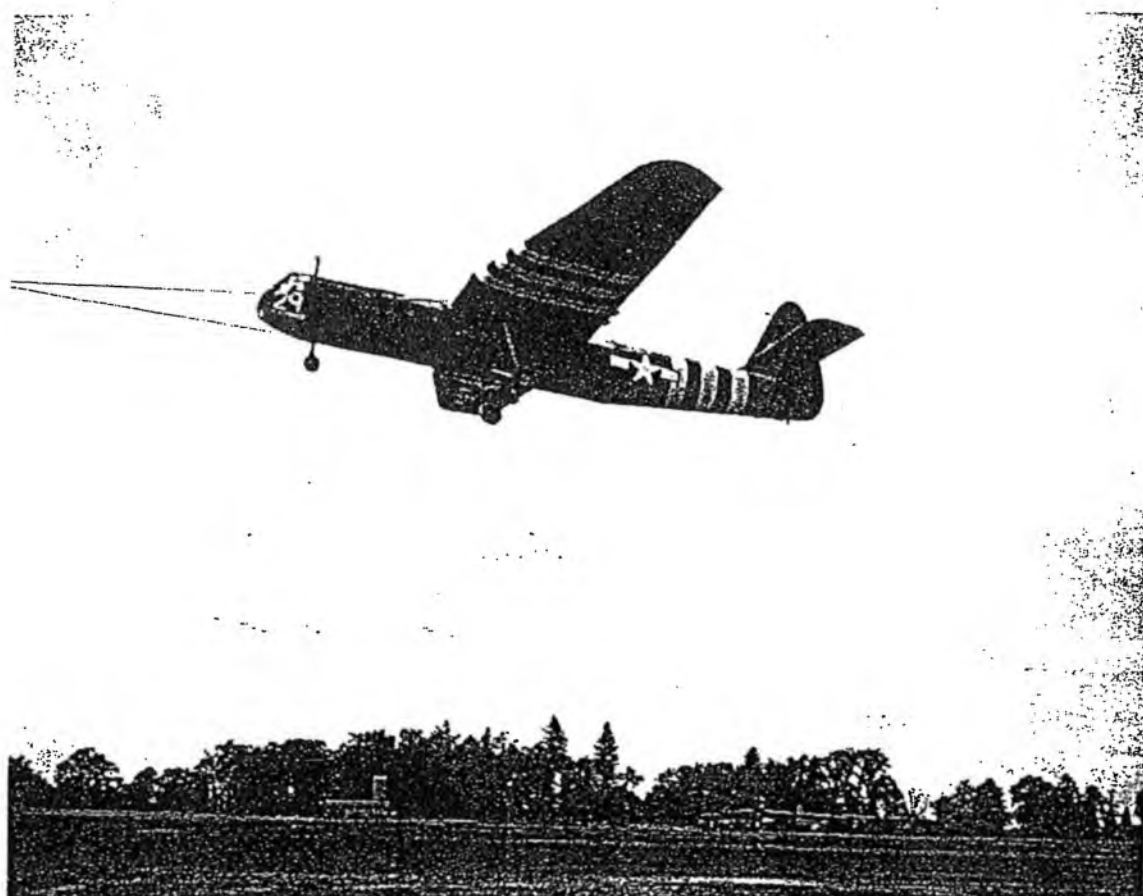
Sincerely,
Gale

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN					CROSS COUNTRY		REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	NATURE OF TOW	TOW SHIP	MARKING	NO. OF FLIGHTS	FROM	TO	
6-6-44	Hot 52	Single	C-47A		2	STA. 400 ENGLAND	FRANCE	FLAP BRAKE FAILURE CRASH LANDING.
6-23-44	CG-4A	Double	C-47A		1			Combat Mission.
6-29-44	CG-4A	"	C-47A		1			Double Tow Experience
6-30-44	CG-4A	Single	C-47A		2	Baptist STA. 3	STA. 400	Wing HQ. Over Flight H-500-BS.
7-17-44	CG-4A	Double	C-47A		3			
7-22-44	CG-4A	"	C-47A		2			
7-29-44	CG-4A	Single	C-47A		2			
7-26-44	CG-4A	"	C-47A		1			Carried A 4250LB
7-26-44	CG-4A	Double	C-47A		1			Bull dozer & 1 Airker
7-28-44	"	Single	"		2			"
7-27-44	"	Double	"		2			"

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

J. R. [Signature] 13-5-420661

INSTRUMENT RADIO OR BOOB	TIME								DAILY TOTAL TIME	
	DUAL (D-Pilot)				SOLO Pilot					
	AS INSTRUCTOR		AS STUDENT		DAY		NIGHT			
Hot 5025									02:10	02:10
									00:25	02:55
										00:30
										02:30
									02:00	03:00
									02:00	03:00
									02:05	02:05
									01:10	01:10
										00:30
									01:00	02:00
									00:25	00:30
TOTAL									04:55	16:50
ABOUT FORWARD									41:60	139:10
TOTAL TO DATE									46:55	156:00



The huge British Horsa, the glider we flew to Normandy on our second mission (June 6, 1944); note the Y-shaped harness. (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution)



"You made it!" Adriel Williams, our 436th Group CO, greets the first glider pilots to return from Normandy.

FOR MR. DEL SAHLBURG
35 GLIDER CIRCLE
ELMIRA, NEW YORK 14903-7939
from
GALE R. AMMERMAN

210 QUAIL TRAIL
ALICEVILLE, AL. 35442

OPERATION ELMIRA OR MY LONGEST DAY

Operation Elmira was the 81st Troop Carrier Squadron/436th Troop Carrier Groups small part of D-Day Or Overlord. I flew the giant plywood British Horsa glider with a wing-span of 88 feet and a payload of some 7000 to 7500 pounds. I carried 7,200 pounds of artillery shells that day.

The 81st C-47's with gliders attached took off from Membury Airbase about 60 miles west of London. The 81st contributed eleven planes and fourteen gliders which means that some 81st pilots were towed by C-47's from other squadrons. The entire Elmira mission carried the 82nd Airborne Divisions 319th and 320th Field Artillery Battalions. The cargo was made-up of thirty-one jeeps, fifty tons of ammunition, two 75 mm guns plus other supplies.

We departed Membury Airbase at about 8:40 Double British Saving time which put us over the coast of Normandy just at dusk at about 11:00 p.m. D.B.T. It was planned for us to arrive over the landing zone just at dusk with the idea we would be able to see our fields, but the Germans would have trouble seeing the C-47' and gliders--Wrong!! The really large and heavy Horsa gliders put a strain on the C-47's, the flame dampeners were white-hot making really beautiful targets against the darkening sky.

We departed from Membury on a heading of about 185 degrees or just slightly west of due-south. Some 20 miles south we joined up with planes from other airfields and turned to a heading of about 225 degrees which carried us out over the channel some ten miles west of Bournemouth. West of Bournemouth we turned once again to a slightly more southerly heading which we held for about 50 miles out over the English Channel. We turned back East on a heading of about 100 degrees so as to stay some five miles north of the heavy

gunfire over Cherbourg. When well clear of the Brittany peninsula we turned to 190 degrees to Utah Beach where we turned west to the 82nd landing zone astride the Merderet river some two miles west of St. Mere Eglise.

When we turned out over the English Channel a sight met our eyes unlike any sight seen by man before and probably never to be seen again. Ambrose* reported there were 2,727 ships, including battleships, transports and landing craft that went across the channel under their own power and another 2,606 landing crafts carried across on larger ships. The ships were packed in so tightly it appeared that one could almost walk across to Normandy on ship decks. Signal lamps flashed, smoke poured out, and as we got close to Utah /Beach it looked like each and every ship was firing some sort of weapon. All of this was just a preview of what we were to see after turning inland over the beach!

Over the coast of Normandy at 400 to 500 feet above the ground and 200 miles per hour, sitting in the left-set of a British Horsa glider I had a million dollar seat for one hell of a show, but right at the time I would have sold it for a lot less!! Tracer bullets arched up toward the aircraft, curved over and fell away. We were soldiers enough to know that between each and every tracer there were five or six other equally lethal bullets. It was a sight that caused one's balls to retreat up into the body cavity and the spincter muscles to cut leather grommets out of the seats.

After what seemed like an eternity we got a green-light from the C-47 tow suggesting we were over or at least coming-up on the landing zone. I spotted what appeared to be an adequate field, reached up and hit the tow rope release. We established a so-called normal glide which really isn't so normal when a glider is carrying 7,200 pounds of artillery ammunition, but the old Horsa handled well enough. We flew down-wind to the selected field, turned left on base-leg, then left again on the final approach. At this point I was some three hundred feet above what might be considered the right altitude. This was no accident or error as I had learned long ago that a little extra altitude could be gotten rid of very easily with the barn-door like flaps (spoilers) on the Horsa.

As I turned on approach I asked Billy Hart (my co-pilot) to give me 20degree flaps. Billy pushed the control lever to the 20 degree setting and absolutely nothing happened! We looked ot each other both fully aware of the fact that in an aircraft with flaps and brakes actuated by air pressure, if one had no flaps he likely had

* STEPHEN E. AMBROSE, JUNE 6, 1944, D-DAY, THE CLIMACTIC BATTLE OF WORLD WAR II, A. #170 SIMON & SCHUSTER, NEW YORK

no brakes either. We both knew we were in a heap of trouble.

I immediately thought of a 360 degree circle but knew it was too risky. I initiated as violent a forward slip as could be done in a Horsa, but that 88 foot wing-span aircraft just didn't slip real good. That's why it had flaps like barn doors.

We came in far too high and way too fast. The wheels touched down about 60% of the way down the field. Billy and I knew our only hope was to get the fuselage between the biggest trees in what the briefing officer had called the hedge rows. We were able to do that, the wings were wiped off, the fuselage ground along forward scooping up soil and brush, and finally came to a shuddering stop half way through the hedge-row into the next field.

I was knocked out for a short time and recovered consciousness only to learn that Billy had a broken leg along with a lot of other bruises and lacerations. I got him away from the glider and into a ditch where we hid until daylight. Billy got back OK as did I and he recovered nicely in Scotland.

The artillery ammunition was not damaged and was collected by 82nd Airborne Division glider troopers next day. The ammunition and the guns carried into Normandy in the gliders was heartily welcomed by the 82nd glider troopers and put to good use.

Billy was taken away by medics and I made my way to the Glider Pilot assembly area not far from Ste Mere Eglise. My Longest Day was about over although we did guard prisoners and take prisoners back to Utah Beach. Our orders were to get back to Membury as fast as we could in case more glider missions were needed. I lucked out at the beach. I crawled on a DUCK which dropped me off on a British hospital ship. God love the British doctor who greeted me and handed me a great water glass of rum. I chug-a -lugged the rum, got in a lovely bed and knew nothing more until we were in beautiful old England!

Elmira was a costly mission but by most estimates a successful one. Ten glider pilots were killed going into the Normandy hedge-rows with seven more missing and ~~the~~ only one lost in the 81st squadron, Clint Graves, was killed by artillery shells on D-Day plus 1 in Ste Mere Eglise where he had been taken after being severely wounded in the landing.

I was back in Membury and was flying practice missions on June 23, getting ready for the Holland Bridge Too Far but that's another story.

REC 5/16/98

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Mr. Scheberg

5-14-98

I didn't ~~mean~~ ^{mean} to ignore
your letter (I REPLACED it)

I was glider pilot on the
initial invasion of France.
Flying a Horsa glider - built in
England. Member of 81ST Sqr -
C/36 T.C. Group. (Landed near St. Mere ~~EGLESE~~)
Carried in 7 medics - a jeep and
a trailer - all loaded with supplies.
Landed safely. Co-pilot was Cliff Fern.
Captured by German next day and was
then re-captured by American infantry. No
one was killed. Germans only held us
about 8 hours.

Flew more missions throughout war.

Call if I can help. My phone

850/526-4016 (office)

20/482-2679 - home

Yours Truly,

Henry Brandon Brewer

A, Sahlberg
35 Glider Circle
Elmira, NY 14903-7939

Dear Del?:

10 APRIL 1998

The code name "Elmira" was not well known, e.g., was Market Garden, and I was unaware of the name when we flew the mission. Your interest appears to relate to the name of your city. It is described in detail in a British book "History of the World's Glider Forces", and I am inclosing a copy of the article. We flew the mission in the late hours of D-Day after we had dropped paratroops in the very early morning. I remember the following about the mission:

1. It was almost dark, German ground troops were firing multiple rocket launchers at GI's on the ground. There was less tracer fire coming up at us as we had seen that morning.
2. I was apprehensive on the flight out of getting fire from our Navy ships as we had that morning. I saw no AA from the ships, but had there been any, I was prepared to drop the tow rope on them.
3. This was the only mission that the Group carried 82nd AB personnel. On other operations we were teamed with the 101st ABN.

Hope this helps your endeavor.

Regards,

Larry Camp

Larry Camp

APRIL

MAY 20, 1998

DEAR DEL,

I WAS THE RADIO OPERATOR ON THE "SOILED DOVE" THAT PARTICIPATED IN OPERATION "ELMIRA". THE CREW CONSISTED OF THEN CAPTAIN 'PETE' ENGLISH, OPERATIONS MANAGER OF THE 82CND SQUADRON, CO-PILOT WARREN BROWN (1ST LIEUT.), TECH SGT. AND CREW CHIEF GEORGE POWELL, 1ST LT. ERNIE GELSTEIN, NAVIGATOR AND MYSELF, S/SGT LOREN HERRICK.

MY RECOLLECTION IS RATHER DIM BUT I THINK THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY TIME THAT THE 82CND TOWED HORSIA GLIDERS ON A COMBAT MISSION. OUR RE-LEASE ZONE AS I REMEMBER WAS JUST ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE RAIL ROAD LEADING INTO ST. MERE AND THE GERMANS WERE HIGHLY P-----OFF AT THE AUDACITY OF TROOP CARRIER FOR TRYING TO PULL OFF THIS MISSION RIGHT ABOUT THE TIME THAT THEY WOULD BE WRITING LETTERS TO THEIR FAMILIES AT HOME. THEY LET US KNOW IT BY A REAL DISPLAY OF AERIAL FIREWORKS.

I ALSO WAS WITH THE CREW OF ENGLISH, ETC.. THAT MADE THE FIRST LANDING ON FRENCH SOIL AFTER THE INVASION. MAJOR BOB JOHNS, SQUADRON COMMANDER, CAPT ENGLISH, AND CAPTAIN CHARLIE HASTINGS WERE THE PILOTS OF THIS MISSION.

I THINK THAT ALL THREE PILOTS ARE DECEASED AND OTHER THAN GEORGE POWELL WHO IS STILL ALIVE AND KICKING I KNOW OF ~~ANY~~ BODY ELSE.

L. J. No one
LOREN HERRICK
5332 N. MICHIGAN
K C MO 64118

20 RULES OF COMBAT

1. If the enemy is in range, so are you.
2. Of it's stupid, but works, it ain't stupid.
3. You are not Superman.
4. Never draw fire; it irritates everyone around you.
5. When in doubt, empty the magazine.
6. Never share a foxhole with someone braver than you.
7. Your weapon was made by the lowest bidder.
8. If you can't remember, the Claymore is pointed toward you.
9. All five-second grenade fuses are three seconds.
10. The enemy diversion you are ignoring is the main attack.
11. If you're short on everything except enemy, you're in combat.
12. Incoming has the right of way.
13. No combat-ready unit ever passed inspection.
14. No inspection-ready unit ever passed combat.
15. Teamwork is essential. It gives them more people to shoot at.
16. Tracers work both ways.
17. The only thing more accurate than incoming fire is incoming friendly fire.
18. Try to look unimportant, they may be low on ammo.
19. Radios will fail as soon as you need fire support.
20. Close only counts in horseshoes, grenades and nukes.

- Courtesy of the L-4 Grasshopper Wing

Subj: **Check this out!**
 Date: 4/10/2003 5:18:38 PM Eastern Daylight Time
 From: donald@summers7.freerve.co.uk
 To: delsahlber@aol.com
 Sent from the Internet ([Details](#))

Dear Scandi & Shuff,

What terrific news from the Middle East! The sight of the ordinary Iraqi folk waving and cheering the troops was marvellous to see. No doubt the pictures will be sent all around the world and will shut the doubters' whining. Let's hope that the evil swine at the centre of things was indeed killed in the restaurant attack, along with his associates.

In recent weeks there has been plenty of coverage of the various anti-war protests all around. It was rather nice to see a few exiles being given the chance to have their say. There was one young man whose family lived close to that Baghdad market where an explosion took place recently. He announced very clearly that in spite of his great concerns for the safety of his relatives, even if they had been killed, it was worth it to see the end of the regime. I guess like many exiles, he'll soon feel confident enough to return to Iraq and help that unhappy nation to rebuild itself in a more civilise way.

Did you see anything of that official spokesman for Saddam? Even with tanks in the background, he still tried to pretend that the regime was winning and that the coalition forces were retreating in disarray. Boy, there are some individuals that would make terrific car salesmen.

However, I have to confess that I have very little patience with the media people. Although I was one of those glued to the constant coverage, and I deeply regret the loss of innocent lives, these people are simply stupid. Whilst admiring their courage in being close to the action, I can't go along with the inference that they have a God-given right to do as they please.

The troops in Baghdad had heard of suicide bombings, and were subject to frequent sniping from small arms and RPG's, etc. So, whether or not there had been sniping from the hotel, it was (shall we say) ill-advised to direct an optical device, especially one with a large tube attached, towards a tank, for the man in the tank also had an optical device. Only his device causes death and destruction when he presses the button. If the cameraman wasn't aware of that fact, then he had no business being there at all. And all the indignation on Earth will not disguise the fact that the cameraman contributed to his own demise. If the rest of the media people take a salutary lesson from that, then maybe the guy didn't die in vain.

Similarly, although there may also have been an error of judgement by the aircrew, it is facile to complain that a group of irregular Kurds (and reporters) were wrongly attacked. They called in an airstrike against an Iraqi tank, and then congregated around - - - a knocked-out Iraqi tank! Now call me a know-all if you like, but I don't think I'd have done that. A plane flying at over 300 yds a second does not allow a lot of time for the occupants to distinguish between a live tank and a dead one. Rule one, if you call in an airstrike, make damn sure that you're not likely to be mistaken for the target! It ain't rocket science!

Anyway, to proceed to more agreeable topics. Yesterday at Welford, I got talking with a police dog-handler from Aldermaston. He wanted to see the museum during his lunchbreak and I was happy to oblige. It transpired that he has done a lot of research into the history of that former Troop Carrier base, and has attended several reunions in the USA. We have been prevented from researching Aldermaston as the place is now a secure research facility, and I was delighted that he offered to send me some of his work, together with some photos. Now what will particularly interest your good self is the attachment herewith. He happened to have a copy on him and I was going to send it snail-mail, but I thought I had teased you rather hard recently, so I wouldn't make you wait for this stuff. I have copied it word for word.

When the Chips are Down
 By George "Pete" Buckley
 74th Troop Carrier Sqn USAAF Historian

Rollin Booth Fowler, from Bethany, Connecticut was a member of the 435th TCG based at Welford Park AAF Stn 474. On D-Day, 6th June 1944, the 435th's C-47's took 12 Waco CG-4A and 38 English Horsa gliders across the Channel carrying men and equipment of the 82nd American Airborne Div. The second wave mission was code-named Elmira, and its destination was LZ-O, five miles behind enemy lines near St Mere Eglise on the Normandy peninsular.

Fowler, after flying through enemy flak and ground fire, crash-landed his glider in one of the small Normandy fields approximately 5 miles inland from Utah Beach, which, unknown to him, had not been secured by the paratroopers that had jumped earlier. As soon as he and the glidermen piled out of the glider, the Germans, dug in around the field, charged the wreckage firing small arms and throwing grenades. Fowler, not wanting to be captured, threw one of his grenades that killed five of the enemy as they were advancing towards the crashed glider, and then managed to kill four or more with his

own weapon before he was knocked unconscious from a German potato masher grenade that landed close by. When he came to, he was lying on his back. Standing over him was a German soldier pointing a machine pistol at him. With the only two other survivors from the glider, he was marched to a German Regimental HQ for interrogation. Fowler, not wanting to be a POW, had managed to hide a one of his grenades in his clothing for an escape attempt, if he got the chance. During the interrogation the building was strafed by Allied planes and shelled by American artillery. Ammunition wagons parked close to the building caught fire and started to explode in all directions. In the excitement, his guards were not watching him closely so he ran out of the building and crouched behind a stone wall in the courtyard, where a German motorcycle was parked.

About this time, a German staff car drove into the courtyard with a colonel and driver, and stopped close to where Fowler was. Realising that this was perhaps his last chance for escape, he took out the grenade, pulled the pin, stood up and threw it into the staff car. As he ducked down again behind the wall the grenade exploded, killing the colonel and his driver. Fowler then climbed over the wall, took the colonel's binoculars from around his neck and the driver's carbine.

Knowing he had no chance of escaping on foot, he ran to the motorcycle, started it up and took off in a hail of bullets from his former guards, who were coming out of the building. After a wild ride through enemy lines, Fowler eventually found his way back through Allied lines and was transported back to England. When his story was made known, a reporter from the army newspaper Stars and Stripes interviewed him and a condensed article was published in the 12th June 1944 issue. Many other glider pilots had harrowing stories to tell of their experiences during D-Day missions, but that for Rollin Fowler, the young volunteer glider pilot from Bethany, stands alone. Glider pilots generally, when the chips were down, proved that despite their bad reputation as undisciplined mavericks, entered into active combat.

This sounds just a little bit "pat" to me, but stranger things have happened and I would not dream of calling any of it into question. I hope you enjoyed reading it.

But it's Thursday and we all know what happens on Thursday evenings. So I sound the IBOLE recording once more and bid you cheerio.

Take care of yourselves

Our best as ever

The Grove Coves

Ann & Don

Residents in the Elmira area face the prospect of rolling power blackouts this summer.

The problem is a major electric transformer in the Elmira area is out of service and won't be replaced until sometime next year, said Clay Ellis, manager of corporate communica-

increase demand for electricity to run air conditioners and fans and put even more strain on the system, Ellis said.

NYSEG officials and others are urging customers to conserve energy wherever they can. The possibility of rolling blackouts is remote, but it is there, Ellis said.

stats at 78 or above.

■ Turn off air conditioners when

"It's our last option," he said. "The challenge we have is the absence of that transformer adds stress to the system."

Customers can help by cut-

pool equipment.

■ During the hottest parts of the

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ting back as much as possible this week. They should turn off lights and equipment not in use and avoid extra draws of electricity, Ellis said.

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D-DAY ANNIVERSARY June 6, 2008

'Elmira' had last attack



JASON WHONG/Star-Gazette

Robert Clemm of Camp Hill, Pa., looks at a Waco CG-4A glider at the National Soaring Museum in Big Flats on Saturday. The CG-4A was the most widely used troop and cargo glider in World War II. It could carry 13 troops and their equipment.

■ Troops and cargo came by glider to offer relief at Utah Beach.

By Kirk House
Special to the Star-Gazette

The pre-dawn airborne attacks on Normandy and the early-morning seaside assault were only the start for the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944.

The Allies poured in troops all day, by land and sea, and the final attack of the day was by glider in Mission Elmira.

A whole series of glider operations had been named alphabetically for U.S. cities. Elmira was one of two locations where the military began glider training in 1941, even before Pearl Harbor. In their second stage of training, fledgling pilots used two-place, or

two-seat, Schweizer sailplanes made in Elmira.

So christening the "E" mission for Elmira made sense.

"Elmira" flew troopers of the 82nd Airborne Division to the front line where their comrades had already been fighting behind Utah Beach for 18 hours. Two hours before sundown on D-Day, tow planes lifted 76 cargo/troop gliders from English airfields and headed across the Channel for Utah Beach and the heavily fought-over village of Ste. Mere-Eglise.

Paratroopers and glider troopers had the job of securing the invasion's flank and fending off German counter-

attacks aimed at the beaches. By hard fighting they had accomplished their task so far. Mission Elmira carried in the medical teams, vehicles and artillery that the 82nd would need to make it stick.

By flying over the ocean and the invasion beachhead, the column of gliders, tow planes, and protective fighters spared themselves anti-aircraft fire until the last moment. But it came. Two tow planes were shot down, and half of the remainder were damaged.

Glider pilots depended on tow pilots to get them into position. As they approached

Elmira to get the 'boot' to parking sco

■ City plans amnesty, then will immobilize vehicles with three or more unpaid fines.

By Ray Finger
rfinger@stargazette.com
Star-Gazette

Elmira officials plan to get tough on scofflaws with a new approach they hope will improve efforts to collect unpaid parking fines that total more than \$350,000.

After a two-week amnesty period that would start next week, motorists with three or more unpaid parking tickets would have their vehicles immobilized with a "boot" attached to a wheel that would only be removed after the fines are paid.

"Obviously, the city could genuinely use that revenue," Kimberlee Balok Middaugh, deputy city manager of operations, said during her presentation on the parking proposal to Elmira City Council at Thursday's workshop.

The council will vote Monday on making changes to city ordinances to permit the temporary amnesty program and update towing regulations to include vehicle booting. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. on the second floor of Elmira City Hall at 317 E. Church St.

If approved, the amnesty program would run from Tuesday to June 24, Middaugh said.

During that period, overdue parking tickets could be paid at face value without any penalties that have accrued. If violators fail to pay their tickets before the amnesty is over, vehicles that have three or more violations would have a

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ELMIRA'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

anding zone, pilots had to maintain formation under fire, their tow lines, then come forth (without power) dodging tow planes, dangling lines, and gliders, and enemy fire. They dove for a landing site they had never seen except in black-and-white photos.

Do you wonder many gliders ended up in the wrong place? The problem compounded by the fact that ground troops set up their guiding signals in the wrong spots, and other mistakes had signals in place for their own landing zones.

On the Mission Elmira pilots landed in the wrong place. They were the lucky ones. German troops were dug in on the northern part of the designated landing zone, and pilots landed — over tall trees, onto fields, at 100 mph — in the crossfire of an ongoing battle. Ground troops had already learned a vital lesson: a stopped glider makes an excellent target. German men charged out of the trees as soon as it came to a

halt, dove for cover and then sized things up before starting to unload.

The second stage of the Elmira mission (100 gliders carrying howitzers, Jeeps, engineers, 60 tons of ammunition, and more) actually came in under fire after sunset ... after running into even heavier flak than the first wave had.

Glider pilots led a rough life, and often a short one. Fourteen of them died on Mission Elmira, at least 46 suffered wounds or injuries, and 11 just disappeared. Glider troops also suffered with 46 dead and well over 100 wounded — most from the second wave. Tow-plane crews suffered casualties as well.

Despite anti-aircraft fire, rough landings, landings on the wrong spots and deplaning right into combat, the mission was successful enough to justify the concept of glider insertion. Nearly everyone was close enough to the target to be useful.

Most of the deliveries arrived intact, and most of the units brought in by glider were gathered, organized and func-

tional very quickly. Medical detachments set up shop immediately. Headquarters and signal echelons set about their missions. Infantrymen beefed up their comrades' lines. Artillery units were soon blazing away. Pilots pulled sentry duty or guarded prisoners.

Most of this equipment could not have been delivered by parachute, and personnel arriving by parachute would have been scattered.

Glider pilots got supplies where they were needed, and when they were scheduled.

"Elmira," the last mission of D-Day, carried 1,174 men (plus 352 pilots), 123 vehicles, 37 artillery pieces, 59 tons of ammunition, and 72 tons of other equipment and supplies.

And this was only one mission on one day for an arm of the service that had not existed three years earlier — and that got much of its start in Elmira.

Kirk W. House is the former director/curator of the Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport. He is a professional writer who has penned 11 books and numerous articles for periodicals.

Father's Day

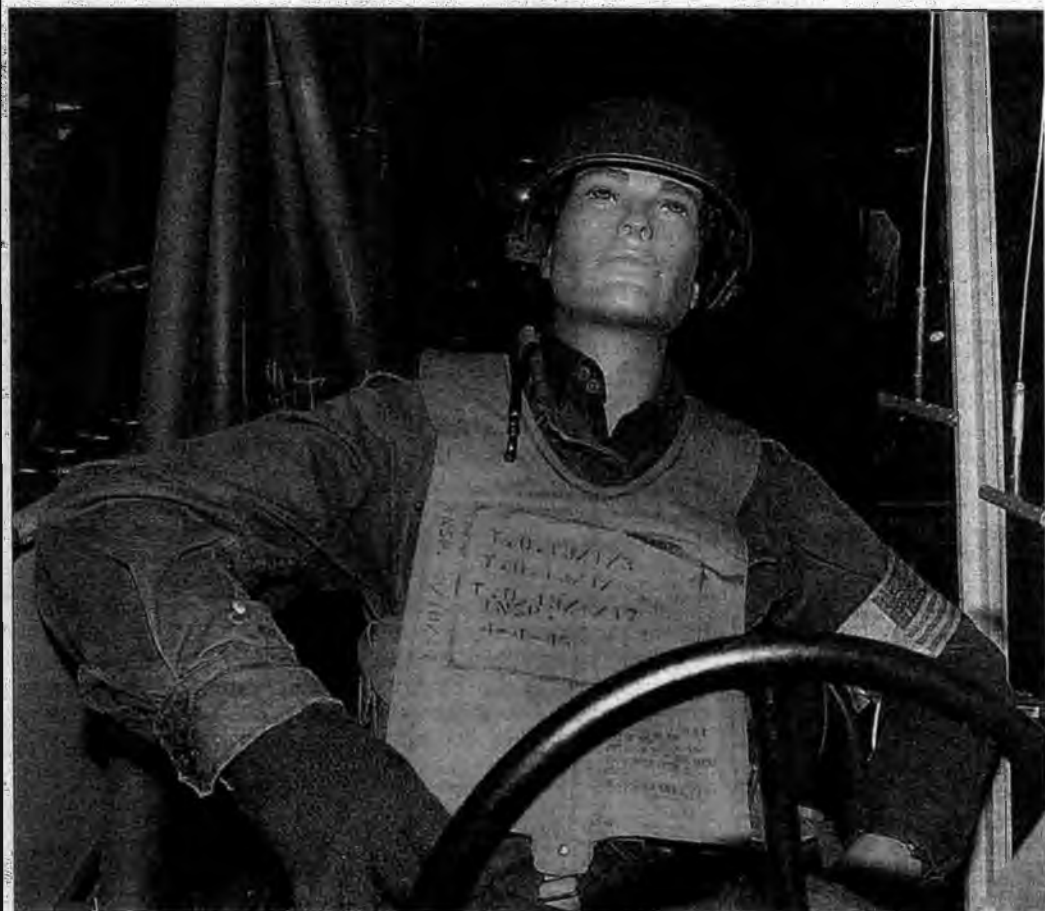
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3 DAYS



JASON WHONG/Star-Gaze

The mannequin inside the Waco CG-4A glider at the National Soaring Museum in Big Flats is dressed like a World War II-era glider pilot. Like the real glider pilots of World War II, the mannequin wears no parachute.

TWIN TIERS SUNDAY

WITH Julie Browers





OCTOBER 1944

PHOTOGRAPH BY:

J. PETIT

9 RUE du PALIS-de JUSTICE, 9

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COST-600 FRANCS

ADELBERT H. SAHLBERG

AGE: 20 YEARS

S/N 32852946



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