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Summary of the Military experience extracted from Book I
Memoirs of Alvin E. Robinson L/C USAF (ret)
"Crossroads of a Life"

Prologue

I spent four years in the Navy and 14 months in the Hawaiian Area aboard the heavy cruiser Astoria. I then joined the Army Air Cadet program. After graduating from Lubbock Army Air Field and further training in the DC-3 aircraft I was assigned to the 435th Troop Carrier Group stationed at Bowman Field near Louisville, KY. The 435th was moved to Sedalia, MO to prepare for further training in night and day precision formation flying. I was then reassigned to the 434th TC GP at Alliance, Nebraska. Here we finished our training in preparation to going into combat. We then went to our final base at Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana for outfitting in preparation to the long trip to the European Theater of Operations.

(Continued from Book 1) Chapter 2

Now it was September 1943 and time to start on our overseas journey to England. Our staging area was at Fort Wayne Ind. The airfield was Baer Field. The move was made by flying the entire personnel and equipment by air, so we had to make a number of trips back and forth from Alliance to Baer Field. Beryl left to go to Fort Wayne and got a room at a hotel there along with other wives of the pilots. At this time Major 'Ace' Parker, the former Airline Captain, got sick and he was removed from command. Captain Ralph Strean was assigned CO and I was assigned the duty of Operations Officer. I didn't want this assignment, but figured I'd get out of it sooner or later.

On the first trip back to Alliance our Squadron ran into a strong frontal system that extended from Canada all the way to Texas. When we got to the storm front all the other pilots, but stupid me, landed to wait for the front to go by. I went through it and it was STRONG. I hit the front at 5000 feet and up drafts carried us up to 17,000 feet even though I had the wheels down and power off. It was a rocky ride, but a lot of fun with the lightning all around and hail on the windshield.

We were at Baer Field, Fort Wayne Indiana from Sept 5th until Sept 28th. We spent our time in getting the aircraft in top shape for the trip and getting our gear that was necessary for the overseas assignment. I remember an incident in the barracks where I was staying. I had my knife (Bowie type) and I was practicing throwing it into the door while sitting in a chair across the room. Well, the door opened up and our new CO Capt. Strean came in and asked what in hell was I doing. I said well we are going to war and I had to be ready. He said, "With a knife??"--What young people will do!!!

Beryl stayed in the Hotel and I would come up there when I could. She had a chance to be with the other wives and I hope she enjoyed it. Well, on the 28th of September 1943 at about 0830 we took off on our big journey. I had bought a bicycle to take with me but they said I couldn't take it, because our ship was loaded with supplies up to the limit. I hid my Bike at the end of the runway. When we taxied out to take off I had my crew chief T/SGT Leslie M. Wiser (Bud for short) hopped out and put it in the airplane as he was checking for rudder locks.

The Personnel aboard our ship #42-24065 was:

1st Lt. Alvin E. Robinson 0-672431 Pilot

2nd Lt. George Kluchka 0:677526 Co-Pilot

2nd Lt. Walter M. Lamb 0-807248 Navigator

T/Sgt. Leslie S. WISER JR 18193421 Crew Chief

Cpl. Earl L. Fisher 37438822 Radio Operator & Maintenance
Sgt. Walter T. Golden 19162981 Pax
M/Sgt. Harry C. Warren 15013542 Pax
S/Sgt. Maurice L. Loring 36431122 Pax

Chapter Three

The first leg of our journey on the 28th Sept 1943 was a 7 hour and 45 minute flight to our port of embarkation down in West Palm Beach, Florida. We had thirteen C-47s on the flight and the only eventful thing that happened was on the landing. We were landing in tandem out of a formation. I was behind Lt. Lum and he slowed down his airplane so slow that when we landed on the runway I had to land on one side of him and passed him on the runway. I then had to go all the way to the end before turning off, so I would not get hit by the plane behind me. I looked back on the runway and there were six airplanes on the runway at the same time. Later I was in the operations office and I heard some one say, "Did you see that airplane pass the other on the runway? Wasn't that close?". Well, we always alternated each side of the runway to land so we knew what we were doing, but I couldn't slow down enough with the heavy load to stay behind Lum.

At the POE (Port of Embarkation) in Florida one of our ships, flown by Ty Robinson, had a mechanical problem and the crew had to stay over. We took off October 30th on a 7 hour 48 min flight to Puerto Rico. The now 12 ships landed at what is now called Ramey AFB but was Barenquen AAF. We stayed all night and took off the next day for Georgetown British, New Guiana landing at Atkinson Airfield. The mosquitoes here were terrific and we had to have mosquito netting to sleep and it was HOT. Walt saw a 6" worm that night with "running lights" down his back, and that was before anyone had a drink. The next day, Oct. 2nd, we took off on a 6 hour and 48 minute flight for Belem, Brazil. This was another hot humid place and I was glad we didn't have to stay over but for one night. We then left next day on the 3rd Oct. for Natal Brazil, which is on the eastern bulge of the South American Continent. Here it was drier and not so bad a place to stay over night. We didn't get a chance at any of these places to get off the

airbase, so we didn't see much. Here someone was selling yellow boots and all the crews bought a pair. They were nice with a soft top to them.

On the 5th of Oct we took off for the longest leg of the journey so far. It took 10 hours to arrive at the small island of Ascension in the South Atlantic (latitude 5 degrees south and about 14 degrees East). We were hoping the homer beacon at the island would not go out as it was a hard place to find in the old C-47. My Navigator Walt Lamb, was keeping track of our progress by astral navigation just in case the lead Navigator in Capt. Strean's ship had trouble. We had cabin tanks with 1200 gallons of gas, which with our load, gave us about 12 plus hours flying time. It was a fine sight to see the island come into view. The runway was a most peculiar one with a sharp drop at each end and high in the middle. The Tower call was "Wide Awake": named after the birds that lived on the island there, and who had priority for A.M. take-off and for evening landings! The ground was all volcanic and we slept in tents with no floor. They grew their vegetables HYDROPONICALLY. There were no Wacs on the Island. The Commanding Officer said that he had been offered a couple to come over, but he said unless they could send enough for all the men not to bother.

The next day, on the 6th, we got our usual briefing on the weather for our next stop at Accra, South Africa and took off on a 8 hour and eighteen minute flight. Briefings always included pictures of the next airfield at which we would be landing. Upon arriving in the vicinity of Robert Field there was one of those tremendous tropical thunderstorms. It was like a sheet of rain pulled down and we had to go to our alternate field up the coast; which I think was in what is now Liberia on the Gold Coast. The runway was metal planking laid in the grass and no hangars or ground crews. The nearest military was a British Radio Station and Rescue Unit near by.

The natives turned out to see us and us to see them. It was interesting to walk a jungle trail and see the many kinds of trees and grasses. That night the natives threw a 'party' for the crews. I didn't go as I surely was not going to drink any of their brew. I did get a kick out of visiting the village and watching them work. There was one girl about 18 that was beating up corn or something in what looked like a churn with a long stick. I went over and looked into it, but that was not what I was looking at as she didn't have on anything but a grass skirt.

The next stop took 4 hours and 20 minutes on the 7th Oct. up the coast to Dakar, West Africa. This was about as filthy a place as I had ever been at that time (later Laos was worse). The heat was around 120 degrees and flies and human manure all over the streets made it a sad place. It was desert-like also and we stayed in square 20' by 20' houses raised off the ground with screens to keep the mosquitoes out. I went down to the town of Dakar this time with some of the pilots and to a place called Madam Tusseus(?). This was some place, as it was a prostitute house, but had drinks and a floor show that was horrible.

We then took off on a 10 hour plus flight time from Dakar, with no fond farewell, for the city of Marrakech in Morocco. On the flight we flew over lots of desert and saw some small walled villages with narrow streets hidden in the foot hills. It was hard to believe they could find food out there to live on. Here at Marrakech John Ramsey and Ty Robinson, when they arrived at this stop, made a name for themselves by shooting flies off the ceiling with their 45 automatics. The only trouble was that an officer and his wife living in the apartment up above him???!! (This was told to me and verified by John.) The airfield was interesting as there was a number of old aircraft of the oddest sizes and structure I had ever seen. Some of the wheels were about 6 feet tall.

Chapter 4

Our squadrons (and other airplanes) were flying up to England by going around Spain, as France was occupied by the Germans, and then cutting in to England after passing France. We had to take off at night and at intervals of about two minutes and went up different longitude lines. We took off on the night of Oct. 11th 1943. If my memory serves me right my ship went north on the 15W longitude. It was a long 9 hour flight. We took off with our crew- Co-Pilot George Klutcka; Crew Chief Leslie M. Wiser; Radio Op Earl Fisher; and my navigator Walter M. Lamb. Additional Passengers were Sgt. Walter T. Golden, M/Sgt. Harry C. Warren and S/Sgt. Maurice L. Loring. We had 1200 gallons of gas aboard giving us 12 hours flying time. On the way up we could see the lights of Spain in the distance and they looked closer than they were. All went well, but we couldn't get a decent weather report, as there was no way to receive the

changes that could happen in nine hours. Walt said, "It was a horrible night for me. I got a couple of star fixes before the storm hit, but resulting positions showed us right on course and making faster ground speed than predicted by Weather Briefing in Africa. In spite of course corrections we stayed right on course. Along the way we picked up a high overcast and then a lower undercast so we were flying on dead reckoning alone. Of course we didn't want to cut into England too early and thus go into France and become Prisoners Of War before we even got a chance to get started. So, as we got close to our time turning point, I tuned the ADF (automatic direction finder) down to 178 Kcs. I then tried to call into Newquay, England in Cornwall on 4495 kcs for a QDM (inbound direction from their direction finder). This turned out to be impossible to accomplish as all the other airplanes were also lost in the clouds we had gotten into. The frequency was just jammed and the ground station could not get a fix on any aircraft. Walt said he couldn't tell me where we were as he had no way of getting a fix. I turned my Automatic Direction Finder on and when the station at Newquay would answer the other ships calling in I would take a direction on the ground station. In this way I found I was probably over Ireland. So I started down to get through the clouds as there was no alternative to going down anyway. We broke out over the Irish Sea at about 400 feet and then I homed into the Newquay transmissions and was the second ship to arrive, even though I had taken off about twenty-first. This day (October 12th 1943) we found that our squadron was mostly all at Newquay although we, and other squadrons, had ships scattered all over England and Scotland. It took us 18 days for the trip, which was about 10 days longer than we had predicted due to weather hold ups.

Chapter 5

Newquay was the terminal of the Great Western Railroad from London. The city being blacked out totally was a new experience for us. We were put up in a nice hotel called the Great Western Hotel. We now had a chance to walk around the streets. It was interesting to go through a blanket to get into a PUB and see dart boards on the walls. They served hot beer instead of the cold beer we were used to. I also enjoyed the different way the English ate. There were six meals during the day if you call the

"tea" times meals. With the tea they served small sandwiches and cookies. We stayed five days and had a good chance to rest up and enjoy a taste of England

We wanted to fly directly to our base at Fullbeck, which was in the Midlands of England just south of Lincoln and East of Nottingham. The English said we would have to be led there by a British pilot that knew the way (as if we couldn't find our way after all the flying and training we had had). Anyway we got our airplanes in the air and headed for Fullbeck and arrived all OK on the 18th Oct. We had to park away out from the operations building and now my bicycle came in real handy. When I wasn't using it "Bud" Wiser used it to service the aircraft.

The base was still under construction and of course muddy and very crude living conditions, although metal buildings were there. There were Irish workers being used to do the labor. The laborers would take time off for their "tea time" twice a day in addition to their meal times. They didn't seem to be in much of a hurry.

We called Fullbeck (Army Air Forces Base Number 488) our Pneumonia Valley as it was so cold and damp. In the mornings it would be solid fog and visibility about 20 feet and the ground would have Hoar Frost about 6 inches thick. There was only a peck of coke (burned out coal) to use for our heaters for a week. I know the farmers are still mad at us for burning up their fences for heat. I would sleep in my clothes and fur-lined flying suit and about 5 blankets and still be cold. The only time we got warm was when we took a bath in some bath tubs with hot water. The only trouble was that the building where the hot water and tubs were located had no roof and it was odd to be in a tub and looking at the sky at the same time. When I got out of the tub I was chilled by the frigid air.

Our operation building had 'carved' aircraft of all kinds hanging from the ceiling, so that we could learn to identify them fast on sight.

We didn't have a regular cook so we had to assign different crew members to cook for us. We would have powdered eggs for breakfast and they tasted terrible as of course our mechanics didn't know how to cook them. I was fortunate as I had the "K" rations off our ship under my bed and I would eat off them.

We got in some training here but the weather was so bad it prevented our activities in that area to a great extent.

Chapter 6

On the 11th of November we moved to Welford Park, England so that we could work with the 101st Airborne Division on practice parachute jumps and glider tows. At this time I again told Major Strean that I didn't want to be Operations Officer and I suggested Kaminiski, whom the pilots liked and really considered the leader. So after scheduling myself on different trips like one to Edinburgh Scotland, I got back and Ralph called me in and said I was relieved from being Operations Officer and back to being a flight leader. I thanked him profusely and he was apparently surprised that I really meant it. Somehow I knew this was a crossroads and not the road for me in my life.

The next two months were spent there at Welford Park until January 5, 1944. Then we moved back to Fullbeck where we did a lot of flying during January and February when the weather would allow.

Several interesting things happened at Fullbeck this time. The weather was so bad most of the time I decided to do something about it so I could get in some flying time. I contacted Marion (Radar) Huggett as he was our officer that handled the maintenance on the Eureka and Rebecca Sets that we used to drop paratroops at night. The set had a radar scope at the navigator's position. When homing into the beacon on the ground there was a blip that could be centered and it showed the distance. When the aircraft got over the beacon it of course showed zero mileage. I wanted a parallel scope put up in the cockpit where there was room just to the left of the instruments on the pilot's side. We had to get the machine shop to cut a five inch hole in the panel and then we installed the parallel scope. It worked fine, although it did throw the scope in the navigator's compartment off to the left a little.

The weather was still very bad with almost no ceiling and visibility. I told Huggett to get a man with a Eureka set and put it out on the end of the runway and put one a mile out in line with the runway. He did as I was to try some night landings using the system that night. I had drawn out a system of flying a square around the outer set and letting

down to 500 feet and then homing into the one at the end of the runway letting down to field elevation so I could land. I just hoped the equipment would not fail in flight. Well, I had a time getting someone to fly with me. My co-pilot would not do it and my navigator said no. I finally got another pilot as crazy as me by the name of David A. Whitmore (the one who had flown formation with the airliner in Nebraska).

We went out to the aircraft and got it running and took off into the night fog. I made four landings using my system and it worked just like I had predicted. So, I taxied in and parked in front of the operations building and who was there but the CO of the Group. (I can't remember his name at this time. That CO was later replaced by Col. Wm. Whitacre.) The CO asked how in hell was I flying under those conditions, as he was really confused. I had to show him what I had done to my airplane and I thought I had had it now. Well, he looked at me and said, "I have been looking for a pilot to be the pathfinder to lead the group in on D-Day and now I have found him." I was told to then get ready to leave soon for pathfinder training. So, I had to turn my plane over to another pilot and go to pathfinder school at Cottesmore just south of Fullbeck. The Squadron moved to Aldermaston near Reading on March 5, 1944. I never found out what happened to my "invention" I had put in my airplane.

While at Fullbeck, another interesting thing happened to me. I was towing gliders for practice along with the rest of the squadron. We would pick up a glider and take off and then cut him loose at about 2000 feet and he would fly back to the runway and land. I was in David Whitmore's aircraft as my aircraft was in inspection. As I took off this time and was towing the glider, the airplane started doing funny things and felt real odd. I didn't know until later that the Colonel of the base was flying the glider and that he had a British General with him. He was showing him how it felt to go up and down through the prop wash. Well, anyway I cut the glider loose and then went up to about 6000 feet to check out the plane before I went back to get another glider. The plane flew fine and I had it going at about 170 miles per hour to see if anything was wrong when a Spitfire aircraft buzzed me off the left wing missing me about a foot. In the past they would do this for practice. I decided to play with him a bit and when he chandelled off to the left I turned into a chandelle myself and turned inside of him to show him the C-47 could turn sharper than even a Spitfire. This would have been fine except there

were two Spitfires and they were making a double pass and I got between them. The first I knew about it was a spat through my left wing and the Spitfire going off in a spin without his rudder and elevators. It took off about 15 feet of my left wing and cut his aircraft in half. He did bail out but broke both of his legs. He was a Turk training with the RAF.

My Co-pilot at this time had been changed from Klutcha to Otis McLendon. As I was trying to get the airplane back in a level flying condition to scan my damage Mac got hold of the wheel and tried to turn it over so he could see the Spit go down.

He said, "Rack it over so I can see him go down," and I said, "if you don't watch it we will be with him."

About this time the Navigator Walter Lamb came running up to the cockpit.

"Our wing is coming off and it is peeling off up to the engine!", Walt cried!

I said, "Yes, I know that and I am trying to get it back to the airfield."

Walt said, "I am leaving this airplane" and took off for the back end. In just a few seconds he was back up front and said there wasn't a parachute on the plane (it was David's plane) so I told him he had better stay aboard then. I called the airport for a direct landing and told them the emergency and had no trouble making the 10 miles to airport. It flew a little lopsided, but the big old rudder held it fine. After landing and I alighting from the plane I had my first feelings about the incident when I went out and looked at the damage. I suddenly got weak-kneed. The base CO came up about that time and looked at the damage and said, "What have you been doing, Buzzing?" I was in no mood for criticism so I said, "Yes Sir, backward." As any fool could see the metal was all pushed up forward. He then asked what happened and I told him a Spitfire had hit me and he said that I surely couldn't catch a Spitfire so he turned and walked away. I never told him all the details, and when they had an inquest I sent Mac to handle it as I said I was too busy.

Another interesting thing happened here in Fullbeck. We were putting on a show for the British Generals. Our Squadron was to make a low pass over the runway at the end of the show and I was leading the third flight. We were tucked in real tight, the lead ship about 3 feet off the runway; and I was only about 10 feet off the runway. So here were nine ships coming down the runway and all of a sudden the wing men of the front flight

of three peeled off. The right aircraft climbed to the right and the left wing man climbed to the left. The wing men of the other two flight also followed the first and it left just the three leaders flying in trail down the runway. I told Mac that I must have been asleep in the briefing because I didn't remember this maneuver. Later when I landed they told us that the lead flight had hit a flock of teals (birds).One had gone through the windshield of the right ship and hit the pilot in the face and another bird had gone through the windshield of the left wing man and hit the co-pilot in the face. Outside of some cuts and coverings of blood and guts they came out OK.

PART VI

CHAPTER 1

I didn't stay long at Cottesmore Airfield, just long enough to get a new aircraft that had a radar on board. It was called the PPI-717 I believe. The antenna was on a large barrel like object on the belly of the C-47. It gave a drag and could not go as fast as the other ships, nor could it pull two gliders. I wish I knew more of the other pilots' names at the pathfinder's school, but I have forgotten them as they were just in passing. I do remember one incident when a couple of pilots took their aircraft for the first time. They were practicing instrument and had a black hood over the pilot and the co-pilot had to watch for aircraft. One of the engines quit and the pilot checked the gas gauges and

they read OK so he went and feathered the engine (stopped the engine by turning the blades of the prop into the wind). He thought that the other pilot had given him a practice single engine. Then the other engine quit and he came out of the hood but it was too late and they had to belly land in a field. The co-pilot thought that the pilot was giving himself a single engine for practice. The gauges of the four tanks were turned upside down. .The full ones read empty and the empty ones read full. It was a stupid mistake all around and it washed out one of our brand new aircraft.

Shortly after that we were transferred to the newly activated Pathfinder Unit at North Witham. I was assigned a new navigator name of Lt. Don Caldwell. So with my crew of McLendon, Caldwell, Fisher, and Wiser we started to train for our D-Day activity. Col. Couch was the Squadron CO. We made many flights using the radar and Rebecca and Eureka sets and also very intensive training for night flights on seeing (wearing red glasses all day so we would have good night vision). I got to see a lot of England from the air as well as Wales, the Isle of Man and the Wash, as it was called. We would have games of trying to see who would come the closest to a Eureka set that was on the ground in the middle of the night by dropping a bag of something on it.

I remember one training mission very vividly that occurred at this time. Several of our ships were to go to Lands End (which is the far western part of the British Isles) and then out over the chain of islands to get practice for the navigator on his radar. It would be similar to going in on D-Day.

I flew down to Aldermaston where our group was now getting ready for the invasion. I went in to get my weather briefing to go to the Lands End airport. The weather there was terrible. Although it was about 1000 feet at Aldermaston the ceiling at Lands End was very low. The weather man would not clear me and I should have let it go at that. I wanted to make the flight even though it was bad as I figured that I could always let down over the water and come in with our radar to hit the airfield. So, I went to the Group Commanding Officer Col. Bill Whitacre and asked him to clear me. He said he would be glad to do so and if I could not get in then he didn't want me to be leading his group on D-Day. So we took off into the lowering clouds. I had my crew (co-pilot and navigator) trained real well on reading a map at low altitude. I had drawn a line the way

I wanted to go and had checked the route for any known obstacles. The further we went the worse the weather got until the clouds were occasionally hitting the ground. At this time we had the radar altimeter that had three lights that could indicate when we hit a certain altitude over the ground. I had set the green light for 400 feet and the yellow one for 200 feet and the red one at 50 feet as near as I can recall. So when we ran into a cloud that was on the ground I would pull up real sharply to 200 feet and wait to break out in a couple of seconds. This only worked because we knew exactly where we were all the time almost to the foot. The maps were excellent, even showing the houses and forests. One time as I pulled up sharply the three lights all came on right down to the 50 foot red light. We must have come real close to someone's house.

When we arrived at the airport at Lands End it was raining and visibility about one half mile. We hit the airport right on the head and I started to circle with my wing staying inside the airfield all the time so I would not lose sight of it. I finally found a runway and got the gear down and came in on a turning approach. I got my wheels on the wet runway and really rode the brakes and stopped just short of the end of the runway, as we were landing down wind. At the end we looked down and 400 feet down was the Atlantic ocean. Well, we taxied in and when I went into the operations office the weather man came over and said, "I say Ole Chap, do you know what the weather is?" I said no but it was sure bad. He said, "Yes, it is measured 50 foot ceiling and one half mile in rain."

"Yes, I can believe it because I was in the soup all the time while he was turning around the airfield," Mac my co-pilot stated.

Well, as you can imagine we were the only ones to arrive at the meeting place at Lands End Airfield. We spent five days at the British Officer's Club in a big home overlooking the ocean. It had been taken over for the duration of the war. It was real nice for visiting officers as well as staff officers stationed there and in the morning I would be awakened by a "Bat" girl with hot coffee in bed at 6 A.M. Then we had breakfast and around 9 A.M. we would have tea and crumpets and Lunch at noon and again tea in the afternoon; then Dinner at 5 PM; and then another snack at around 9 P.M. It was so foggy we couldn't see across the street so we just stayed in

and rested. Well, we never did get to do the practice over the islands west of Lands End, and I headed back to Aldermaston.

CHAPTER 2

Time went by rapidly as we were very busy and then my crew and I was sent back to the 434 Troop Carrier Group to lead them in on D-Day. I didn't know until I arrived that we were to be the lead group of the whole glider formation.

During these days I got a chance to go to London on several occasions and visited the Princess Garden Club. I remember coming into London on the train and we stopped at Paddington Station. I learned of a small restaurant back behind the Station that was primarily for workers and they served one egg and a glass of milk. I would go there ever time I went into London and get a breakfast there.

The first time I went into London I got off the train and went to the Underground (subway) and got instruction on how to get to the Princess Garden Club. When I got off the train I went up and it was so foggy that I got lost as it was not possible to see more than about five feet. I finally wandered around and ran into water and other things until I came to a gate with a Bobby (police officer) standing guard there. He asked me how I had gotten into Hyde Park as all the gates were guarded and of course I couldn't tell him. He got me a cab and the cab driver had to hold a flash light out his door on the curb to drive and we finally got to where I was going.

In London there were times when I was in a movie and they would flash on the screen a warning of an air attack. We would hear the V-1 and V-2 types of bombs go off and shake the building, but no one did anything so we kept on watching the movie.

Back at the base we did a lot of work practicing leading the group on practice drops in all types of weather. There are a lot of little incidents that happened such as dropping Polish paratroops and their system of wicker baskets on a rail they would put down on the floor of the C-47. They would all be up toward the front until they got ready to dump them out and then they would push them to the rear and all go back there to jump out. This would throw the airplane into a stall due to the fact we were already at low speed and in the propwash of other airplanes. I noticed that Col. Whitacre flew with me as much as he could but I didn't know why (not knowing he had planned to fly with

me on D-Day). He had me do my "Sunday Best" short field landing and I really gave him a good one.

Col. Whitacre called me in one day and said I was to pick up a ship at one of the other groups and fly as Copilot to a Col.B----. I had to also go to another base and get a navigator. I was to fly down to North Africa and Gibraltar to see about setting up some details regarding the coming invasion.

On the trip down we were flying the 15 W longitude and the navigator was giving us position reports by using the sextant on the stars. The Colonel kept telling the navigator he was wrong and that his star shots were not accurately taken. The Colonel said that he could see the Spanish Coast and it was a lot closer than 50 miles. (actually the navigator was right as the lights always looked closer than they were as we were flying at 13000 feet.) The Navigator got mad and threw his sextant down on the floor. He told the Colonel that if his positions was wrong it was because the sextant was broken and if it was broken it was because of the lousy landings the Col. had been making. The navigator then went back and went to sleep in the rear of the aircraft and that was the last we heard from him. I had been using a large scale map as a reference and had our course mapped on it, so I navigated us on in to Marrakech. We stayed in a nice hotel that had one floor and was California style.

After a couple of days we flew up to Gibraltar and landed. The airport there was on the Spanish side of the Island and had two wind socks (one at each end of the runway). The wind socks were each pointed in opposite directions. The wind whips around the 'ROCK' and makes it hard to land. I had the opportunity to go over the bridge to Spain and bought some perfumes and such and sent them back to Beryl.

The trip back was made using my 1:500,000 map and the navigator just stayed in the back of the aircraft the entire time. I don't think anything happened to him.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

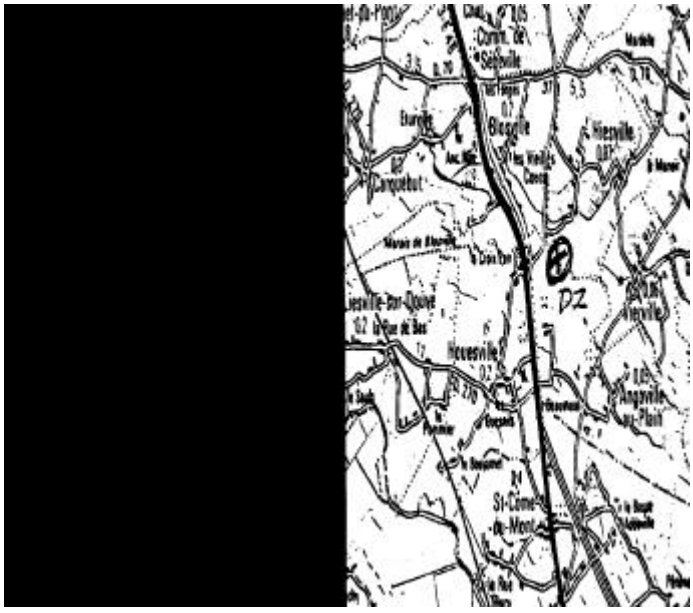
D-Day had been set to be the 5th of June 1944 but it got pushed backward by Gen. Ike. We then got set up for the 6th of June. Everyone was ready to get on with the job and we had all been confined to the base for some time. (Incidentally, I got my first real close sighting of the V-1 Buzz Bomb one night as it came over our head around midnight at about 200 feet making the damnedest noise I had ever heard. We were hoping it would find another place to land rather than on us.)

Col. Whitacre called me in and said to get McLendon another ship to fly in as he was going on the invasion drop with me. I objected (mildly of course) explaining that I had Mac trained to work with me and I needed him. He said, "I will fly it and you just tell me where to go and I will go there and I know you can do it fine." Well, there wasn't anything else to do but go along with that. So at midnight on the night and morning of the 5th and 6th we got our crew all lined up and got our final briefing of the weather that was not good at all. The ceiling over France being reported to be around 500 feet overcast and raining. The fields we were to drop our gliders in still seemed to be clear of the posts that the Germans were busy putting in to stop the gliders.

At 2 A.M. on the 6th of June our ship being the lead ship started our roll on the runway. We were towing one glider and the rest of the Group took off after us. We were towing a CG 4-A glider that is lighter than the Horsa British gliders or double tow CG4-A's that the other ships towed on daylight flights, as our radar limited us to this. Our Group began to gather into a formation and when all together we headed for the Isle of Wight. We departed England at St. Catherine's Point on a southern heading that took us between the Islands off the west coast of Cherbourg Peninsula. We then took an eastern heading to interdict the coast near Barnesville, France.

Aboard our ship was also the Wing commander of the 53rd Wing. His name was Brig. General Beach. In the glider (supposedly the "Falcon" donated by the Greenville Schools of Greenville, Michigan but substituted just before the trip by another glider after pictures were taken of it), was General Pratt, the Deputy Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Troops, Lt. Col. "Mike" Murphy the pilot, and Lt. Butler the co-pilot.

As we approached the coast we could see the Germans clearing their guns as the tracers went up into the air like the tails of rockets. It was a pretty sight to behold if you didn't think of the fact there were bullets in those tracers. The Navigator (Cauldwell) called on interfone and said we had a wrong heading as his Rebecca screen showed the Eureka set to be off to the left. I told him to keep watching but that I had the ground in sight. I had my map marked off in two minute intervals so I could check off the check points I had picked out by which to guide myself. I knew something was wrong with the radar returns as they were not conforming to our position and heading on the ground. Col.Whitacre was holding the wheel and he got to watching



the tracers and exploding 20 MM shells around us and I looked up and he was 30 degrees off course to the left. I told him to get back on course or I was going to take it away from him (laughing in my voice of course). He said he just could not see the instruments in the dark (he was 51 years old at that time). He reached over and turned on the blue lights on the instrument panel and I quickly had to stick my head into the window as it nearly cost me my night vision. By now the shells were bursting all around us and as we were the lead ship they didn't have our speed down and didn't realize we were only making about 110 miles per hour. I asked Mike in the glider how they were doing and he said they were getting the hell shot out of them as they were missing us and going into the glider. Beach said on the interfone that the back end of our C-47 was also getting hit real hard. Later I found out it was just the concussions of the explosions that were making it sound like we were getting hit. Any way I had put my flak suit on the floor and had my feet on it rather than wear it. I knew they would be shooting from the ground and not from the air, so I squeezed my legs closer together just in case. The weather got worse and worse as we approached the drop zone. We were down to about 300 feet so the rest of the Group could stay under the clouds. As we crossed the last marker on my map that was a railroad just south west of St. Mere Eglese I told Mike that there was his field and if he had it in sight. He said he did, and cut loose from the tow rope. Col. Whitacre then opened the throttles up full bore and started the ship into a shallow dive. I watched the radar altimeter and when it hit 50 feet I took hold of the wheel and pulled it back and said that was as low as I was going to go. We went sailing out over the coast and there were a whole fleet of ships there. We were below the tops of some of them and so had to pull up and head back to England.

We felt for the troops and glider pilots we left down there in the dark.

****

So wondering what was going on down there, I will at this time insert a clip from the World War II Memoirs of Flight Officer George E. (Pete) Buckley, a glider pilot of one of the gliders we had just dropped at the DZ. (Authorized by Pete)

"**We settled down on tow**, holding our position behind the C-47 by keeping the faint blue formation lights on the top of the plane centered up in line between the faint glow from the tow planes engine flame dampers. This is not the easiest job in the world at night: the longer you stare at them, the more your eyes start to play tricks on you. I turned the controls over to (co-pilot)

Bruner, occasionally so I could look away and get my eyes refocused again. The added problem we faced was the extreme turbulence in the air from the prop-wash of the 48 planes ahead of us.

Shortly after we crossed the coast of France, small arms fire and heavier flak started coming up at the planes at the front of the formation, and intensified the closer we got to our LZ (landing Zone). It looked like fluid streams of tracers zigzagging and hosing across the sky, mixed in with the heavier explosions of flak; you wondered how anything could fly through that and come out in one piece. After the front of the formation had passed over the Kraut positions and woke them all up, we at the tail end of the line began to get hit by a heavier volume of small arms fire which sounded like corn popping, or typewriter keys banging on loose paper as it went through our glider. I tried to pull my head down into my chest to make myself as small as possible; I tucked my elbows in close to my body, pulled my knees together to protect the vital parts of my manhood and was even tempted to take my feet off the rudder pedals so they wouldn't stick out so far. At that point in time I really started to sweat it out.

A few minutes after we had crossed the coast, and before we reached our glider release point near Heisville, the group ran into some low lying clouds and fog banks. All the planes in the formation started to spread out to avoid collisions. This caused many of us to land wide, short and beyond our objective when we reached the cutoff point. In a very short time- to soon for me - the moment that I was dreading arrived: the green light came on in the astrodome of the tow plane, indicating that we were over the LZ and that it was time to cut off.

At that moment I had a very strong urge not to cut loose. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who felt that way on that night. It was dark, everything but the kitchen sink was coming up at us from the Germans below, and that tow rope, as long as it was hooked up, was my umbilical cord. The steady pull from the tow plane signified safety, and a nice ride back to England out of this mess, if I hung on. I quickly put this thought out of my mind, and waited about ten seconds before I released the tow rope. It was a good thing I did, because I still landed about one half mile short of the LZ. If I had cut loose at the first signal from the tow lane, I would have landed in the area that had been flooded by the Germans. Many paratroopers drowned in this swampy area that night.,

As soon as the rope disconnected from our glider, I started a 160 degree turn to the left, feeling my way down into the darkness holding the glider as close to stalling speed as I could. It

was almost impossible to describe one's feelings in a situation like this. You know the ground is down there, but you can't see it; you don't know if you're going to hit trees, ditches, barns, houses or what, and all this time the flak and tracers are still coming up all around you. The only thing you know for sure is that the krauts are shooting up at you and they are going to be right there waiting for you when you climb out of your glider. You hope you will wake up and discover you're having a bad dream. They say fear has no bounds, and at this point in time I was in full agreement. We still couldn't see a thing and I knew that we were about to run out of altitude. Finally, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a faint light patch that looked like an open field outlined by trees. It was. By this time we were so low that we had no choice in the matter, there would be no chance for a go-around. With a prayer on my lips - and a very tight pucker string - I straightened out my glide path and headed in, with Bruner holding on full spoilers. We flared out for a landing just above the stalling speed, and touched down as smooth as glass. I couldn't believe it. How lucky can you get? But just when we thought we had it made, there was a tremendous bone jarring crash; we had hit one of those damn ditches that the Germans had dug across the fields. Their main purpose was to prevent glider from landing in one piece, and it sure worked with us. We plunged down into the ditch and when the nose slammed into the other side, the gliders back broke as it slid up over the opposite bank. The floor split open and we skidded to a halt in the field on the other side. That ditch was ten to twelve feet across by five to six feet deep, with water in the bottom. For a split second we sat in stunned silence and I breathed a sigh of relief because none of us seemed to be injured. We then bailed out fast because there was rifle and machine fun fire going off in the fields around us. Fortunately none seemed to be aimed at our field at the moment. It took us almost thirty minutes to dig the nose of the glider out of the dirt so we could open it up and roll out the anti-tank gun. Midway through this task the Germans set off a flare right over our heads, and lo and behold, we saw glider #50 piloted by Flight Officer Calvani and Ryan, sitting on the other side of the ditch without a scratch on it. They were carrying the jeep to tow our anti-tank gun. Calvani must have stuck right on my tail in the dark to have landed so close. I don't know how he managed to do it.

We now had the job of digging a ramp down into and out of the ditch to get the jeep over to us. While all this was going on the naval bombardment started on the invasion beaches, and even though it was five miles away, the ground shook under our feet and noise was unbelievable. I think we all said a few prayers for the kids who would be storming ashore, and hoped they would be successful: our own lives were at stake if they failed. We finally got the jeep across the

ditch, and the gun hooked up. I left the group, and started off on foot to find the 101st Division CP at Heisville, and the gun crew took off towing the gun to find their unit, the 81st AAA Bn.

On my way through the hedge-rows I stopped a jeep driven by a paratrooper who was headed in what we hoped was the right direction to the CP. I hopped on the hood, and we started up a narrow path between the hedge-rows. About five minutes later, some Krauts opened up on us with machine pistol and rifle fire. I fell off the hood, and the jeep almost ran over me. That was enough. I got up and started off on my own again. A short later, while walking up this same narrow lane, I glanced to my left and saw a rectangular opening at about waist height; a rifle barrel was sticking out pointed right at me, I froze in mid-step waiting for the bullet that I thought had my name on it. Nothing happened; the gun didn't move. By now I was curious; I crawled over the hedge and looked in: it was a complete German bunker, large enough for five or six soldiers. Its sole occupant was a dead German, his rifle was poking through the slot, Thank God for the paratroopers who had taken care of him earlier and probably left him in this position to scare some of their buddies. They succeeded; it scared the hell out of me. It also made me much more cautious, and I started to walk in a crouch, and kept my head on a swivel. The next German I saw was lying at a road junction in a pool of blood. He had just been hit by a mortar or shell fragment and was still alive. His gut was ripped wide open spilling his intestines out on the road. I felt horrible while I stood there watching him die knowing there was nothing I could do for him. I still had not developed the hate for the enemy that came to me as the day progressed and I saw and heard of what they had done to some of out airborne men. This German, lying in front of me, was a young kid, and sure didn't look like a Nazi Superman.

Something happened shortly after that which brought roars of laughter from my fellow Glider Pilots when I told them about it. As I passed an opening in a hedge-row and looked through it, I saw a paratrooper out in the center of a large meadow standing alone. Being a little on the lonesome side by now, and a little curious as to why he was out there by himself, I walked out to see what the scoop was. As I approached him, I noticed that he was wearing an air force flak vest. I introduced myself to him and he thanked me for coming out to help him, but suggested I go find a flak vest to wear. Being a little naive, or just plain stupid, I asked him why, and he told me that there were German snipers in the woods on the edge of the field, and he was trying to draw their fire so his buddies could nail them. At that moment something went buzzing by my head, and I dropped to the ground. He remarked, While still standing straight up, "There's the

son of a bitch now." Needless to say I wished him luck, picked myself up and beat a hasty retreat in search of a flak vest. I had no luck in finding one from the wreckage of the gliders in the area; the paratroopers had grabbed them all for their own protection. I began to realize now that by waking around alone, I was just asking to be knocked off by a sniper. At this point in time I still had not found the CP, or seen any other glider pilots.

By late afternoon, after a few more encounters from sniper fire along the way, I arrived at the Division CP (101st) in Heisville and was assigned with other glider pilots to guard the perimeter, in case the Germans tried to infiltrate back into what we thought was a secure area. We didn't know it at the time, but they were all through the area playing possum,. Some of the snipers were still in trees around the area.

While resting in a courtyard in Heisville center, I heard and then saw a wagon coming down the lane being pulled by two paratroopers of the 101st. In the wagon, laying on top of a load of live German mines and ammo was what looked like the body of another trooper. He wasn't dead or wounded, just zonked out from exhaustion; he had picked a hell of a bed to take a nap on. One mortar shell or rifle round in that wagon would have blown all three of then to hell and back. By this time we had all been awake 36 hours or longer, and the pep pills we had been taking to keep awake started to turn some of us into walking zombies. A few of the guys were out o their feet and nothing could wake them up.

At 8:30 that evening, still on the 6th, some of us were asked to go back out into the fields to meet, and cover the landing of the second serial of gliders. A large group of Horsa Gliders were expected to arrive at 9:00 PM, towed again by my group, the 434th, from Aldermaston. They arrived right on time and all hell broke loose. The Germans in the fields around us who had been playing possum, opened up on them with everything they had. Their heavy AA guns outside the perimeters were firing airbursts over and into the fields while the gliders were landing. The fields in this area around Heisville were much too small for these large British Gliders and those that weren't shot down crashed head on into the hedgerows. Some were fortunate and made it down in one piece;

others came under heavy enemy small arms fire after they had landed, and many of the glidermen and pilots were killed or captured while climbing out of their gliders. For an hour or so it was a god-awful mess, and the casualties in men and equipment were heavy before the situation stabilized.

After the gliders were unloaded and the casualties from the wrecks were taken care of, things settled down and I went back to the CP. to dig in for the night in an apple orchard behind a stable. While curled up in my foxhole trying to get some sleep, I suddenly recalled my boyhood days when I would get together with other kids in the neighborhood to play war. It was always the yanks and the Huns, and here I was in 1944 in person, doing it for real, playing for keeps. It's funny how your thoughts go ack in time comparing then and now.

Shortly after dark, rumors started to spread between fox holes that there was a possibility that the Germans were going to drop their own paratroopers in on us. This did nothing for our morale, and for the rest of the night we were spooked at the slightest sound, especially when we heard some planes go over quite low. Anyone that got out of his foxhole that night was taking his life in his own hands.

We got through the night, and in mid morning of the next day, a call went out for volunteers to take over five hundred German prisoners down to the beach for transport back to England. The airborne men had captured so many of them that they were getting under foot and required too many people to guard them. Smart ass that I was, I asked the question, "Is the road to the beach open?" No one answered, so I volunteered anyway. With some of the other Glider Pilots, many from my squadron, we lined the PWs up on the road and waited for the OK to take off. The Krauts were more anxious to get out than we were. The war was over for them and they wanted to get as far away from it as possible.

At this stage of the game most of us had just about reached the limits of our endurance, so we gave the PWs most of our equipment to carry. One Glider Pilot was tempted to give them his Thompson Sub Machine Gun to carry, but on second thought decided it wouldn't look so good to the soldiers that we would pass coming up from Utah Beach. On the march out, we kept going slower, and slower, and the PWs kept getting further ahead of us. Only by our making threats to

shoot them did they slow down. The road to the beach was open and by the time we got there, our butts were really dragging. It felt like we had walked twenty five miles rather than five.

The sight on Utah Beach was beyond belief: as far as the eye could see, to the left and to the right, were men, trucks, tanks, vehicles of all types, and piles of equipment as high as houses. From the shore and out across the channel was an endless line of merchant and war ships of all sizes. The navy ships were shelling targets inland around the clock. The saddest part was the long rows of wounded and dead laid out in rows on the sand, waiting to be loaded on ships.

The Navy Beach Master told us we would be going aboard LST 400 shortly and would be going back to England the following day. I immediately laid down in the sand and went sound asleep in spite of all the noise. ----------……..

The ship finally got us back to England, and eventually we arrived back at our home base of Alderrmaston where they rolled out the red carpet for us. ……After interrogation by the base intelligence officer, and after we had pin pointed on aerial photos our landing spots, we were all given three day passes. ,,,,,, I remember almost everything about this "Normandy Mission" in great detail: from the takeoff, and everything in between, to the time I boarded the LST off the coast of France for the return trip to England. After that, from the moment the anchor was pulled up on the LST and we started back to England, my mind is an absolute blank. For the life of me I can't remember crossing the channel, where we landed, or how I got from the channel port back to the 434th Group at my home base at Aldermaston……"End of Pete's account of his 'Senior Trip'. (Thanks Pete)

1p THE STARS AND STRIPES 1p

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces in the European Theater of Operations

Vol. 1, No. 150. New York, N.Y., Belfast, Northern Ireland. Tuesday, June 6, 1944.

INVASION!

Allies Chase Nazis Across River Tiber In Italy Advance

King Transfers Royal Powers To Crown Prince Umberto

ALLIES LAND IN FRANCE

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force announced this morning that Allied naval forces, supported by Allied air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France.

The official communique states—

Lt. Col. Michael "Mike" C. Murphy (center), a pre-WWII stunt pilot who later directed the AAF glider pilot training program. He developed new tow techniques, assisted in the planning for the D-Day invasion of France, and led the gliders into Normandy. Here, while preparing for medical evacuation to the U.S., he receives the Purple Heart for injuries suffered in the crash of the glider during the Normandy Invasion

Later I found out that General Pratt had been killed with 20 MM gun fire as we towed him in and when Mike landed the Glider he landed down wind. I had told him that the wind had changed but he couldn't change directions as all the other gliders had to land behind him. When he landed the grass being wet from the rain he couldn't stop and plowed into a tree and the jeep broke loose and ran out the front of the glider. This forced open the front of the glider and it chopped off the Generals head and broke both of Mikes legs and Lt. Butler, the copilot was killed. Col. Whitacre and I picked Col. Mike Murphy up on the beach in about 3 days and took him to Preswick, Scotland for return to USA. He was the first one to be returned from the invasion. Colonel Murphy said that General Pratt had been killed by 20 mm cannon before he got to the ground. I asked Col. Mike to call Beryl when he got to the States and gave him her address but he never did.

Tyson Robinson (the one who screwed up in Africa) was in the tail end of our squadron and he got up into the clouds and couldn't get back into formation. He flew around France for about two and one half hours trying to find a place to drop the glider. He said he was going to just cut the glider loose but couldn't as

the glider crew said they had their machine guns trained on him. The glider crew said that if he did they would shoot him down- (they had communications on the phone line wrapped around the tow rope). Well, he did finally find the coast line at Omaha Beach and dropped the glider. His ship was shot up pretty bad but the Germans were reporting gliders all over North France and it probably confused them a lot.

Well, we headed back to England to prepare for the next tow. The next day on another trip I had a different Colonel at the wheel and we had to go in from the East Coast this time. Col. Whitacre went along for the ride and stood up between us in the companionway. Col. J.G. had been in the invasion of Sicily and those C-47s were shot up real bad by our own Navy and he was real skittish. He would keep asking me if I knew where I was, and was I sure I wasn't over enemy lines. Of course there was enemy fire but in the daytime it is hard to see the tracers even when the "other fellow" is seen pointing his machine gun right at you. I kept trying to reassure him I had us pinned down on the map real good, but to no avail. Finally as we got within about one mile of the drop zone I pointed it out to him as being just ahead of us. The minute I did this he did a split-S back under the Group which of course were following towing gliders. I had to reach up and cut our glider loose rather than get him caught in the tow rope. We were only at 500 feet altitude and with the engines wide open making a sharp diving curve back it surely did look funny. I got to laughing and couldn't help it. Col. Whitacre started to yell "Take it easy J---, take it easy J---, they are not going to shoot us!". Later the glider pilot looked me up and was raising hell with me. I told him what had happened. He said he just barely had altitude to make the field straight in.

So, for the next couple of months I flew a lot of re-supply flights over to France most of the time with Col. Whitacre. On one of the flights into Carentan, France, where we had a metal strip airfield, five of our ships took in a load of 105 MM ammunition. While unloading the ammo Col. Whitacre and I were standing at the nose of the airplane. Someone was taking our pictures when a sharp explosion occurred right in the middle of our five airplanes. I turned and then another one happened. I told Col. Whitacre that I thought it was shelling (although I had never seen it before) and sure enough it was. A German 88 had opened up on us and some P-47s took off to try to stop it. Well, I ran to the door of the aircraft to help get the ammo out and I found all the colored soldiers that

were unloading it had left for their slit trenches. So Wiser and I began to throw the heavy 105s out the door. They are about one and a half foot long and about three or four inches in diameter. As soon as we had thrown them all out I headed for the cockpit and had the engines started immediately. I called to Col. Whitacre to climb into the co-pilots seat as I wasn't waiting on him. I took off down wind right from where we were parked and I was glad to get out of there. I then looked to see if all the crew were aboard and all but one passenger, a Lieutenant, was aboard. I found out later he had run with the workers and had dived into a trench but it was not a slit trench but a "service trench" and he stayed there to get cleaned up.

Chapter 3

Sometime during the next two months after D-Day, Col. Whitacre was made Commanding Officer of the 53rd wing and left the Group. One day he called me up and said, "Robby, I have a new job for you." I asked what it was and he told me to go to Burtonwood England and pick up an aircraft fixed up for General Omar Bradley. I was to fly it to Le Mans, France to fly General Bradley. I was to report to the Generals Aide, Major Chet Hansen for directions. I was not too pleased to be moved but he said that if I didn't like it he would bring me back in a few weeks. Well, I did like it and stayed with Gen. B. for ten years. When I got to Burtonwood I found my new airplane with a new jeep in the tail. The front half had been fixed up with a divan and desk on the port side with two chairs on the starboard side. I checked it out and flew it around and it flew fine. I was surprised as I thought the jeep would make it tail heavy, but it didn't.

I had picked a new Co-Pilot, Herbert M. Barnum. He had recently arrived from the States, although some of the older pilots wanted to go with me.

On August 8th 1944 we arrived at Le Mans airport and General Bradley's Aide Chet Hansen met us and took Herb and me to see the General. He was in a trailer with camouflage netting over it. Inside it was fixed up real nice with a large map on the side that covered the area where the troops were fighting. The General introduced himself and proceeded to make us comfortable. He was so nice that I felt I had really come home at last. He then proceeded to show us the troops on the map and what he intended to do on surrounding the Germans that were caught in the Falaise trap. I, of course, didn't try to follow him as I was still a little up tight. Well, anyway we left and went back to the airplane.

Chapter 4

My crew and I didn't stay long at Le Mans as the battle raged on. Many of the Germans escaped from the Falaise Gap as General Montgomery was too slow in closing his end of the trap. My next move was to Chartres about 70 miles ENE of Le Mans.

We made several trips to the West area, one to Rennes and one to St.James south of Avarnches where Gen. Bradley had Lt.Gen. Simpson, Brig Gen. Sibert and Maj. Gen. Allen met us there and they studied war maps under the nose of the plane regarding taking the ports to the West (Brest, etc.).

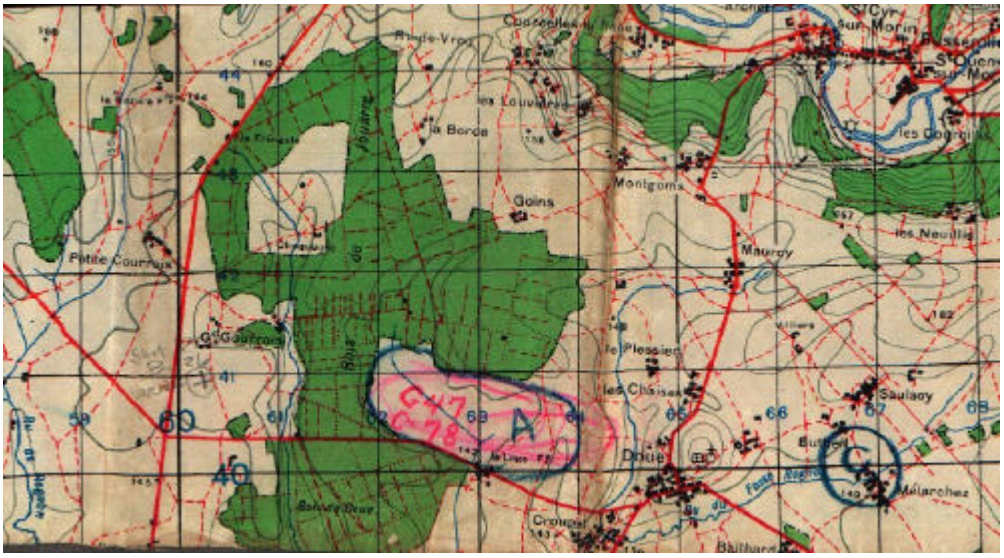
At Chartres I slept in the plane on the couch that was down hill, as the plane had

a tail wheel and sloped. The rest of the crew pitched a small tent and slept in it. We ate C rations and heated them right there at the plane.

General Eisenhower flew into the Chartres airfield in a B-25 flown by his pilot, whose name I believe was Capt. Larry Hansen. Gen. Ike visited with Gen. Bradley and when he returned they took off and while going around the field the ship blew the exhaust stacks on one engine. The Pilot returned to the airfield. I waited a little while to see what they were going to do. I then went up to the General and said that I had General Bradley's plane there and could I be of any assistance. He said, "You sure can if you will take me back to St. James I would appreciate it and I know Gen. Bradley won't mind." So we flew him back and dropped him off and he took a small aircraft that met us there. As a follow up I had an opportunity to fly the General a few days later and he said, "Robby you know when you flew me the other day I hurt my leg". I said no I didn't, and asked how did it happen. He said, "The little plane I took got lost and we landed on a beach and got stuck. I hurt my leg, the one I had hurt in West Point. I was helping the pilot push the plane loose from the sand".

A short time later we moved on to Paris (as it had fallen by now) and landed at the airport of Villa Coublay. It was a fairly nice field but nothing to brag about. The one runway ran east and west and was about 3500 feet long. While at this airport I had occasion to have General Vandenburg traveling with General Bradley. I gave him a real short field landing using a three point landing that I like on small fields. He came up and said, "I just want to compliment you on using as little of the field as possible to land. The most danger is pilots overrun the runway on these short fields." I thanked him for it, not knowing that much later I would be seeing him in the Pentagon for a favor.

In due course we (Eagle Tac) moved to Doue, France that is about 50 miles east of Paris. We scouted for an airfield and finally located a small grass field nearby about 1700 feet long and moved our plane to that location. There was an old house in the woods that surrounded the now 'airstrip' so the crew took it over to stay in while we were there. We were now used to K rations and C rations, but when we could we would trade some to the local people for a couple of eggs or a little milk. Of course we never got any bargains. While at this airfield Gen. Bradley sent me over to Villa Coublay to pick up Dinah Shore, who was entertaining the troops in the area. When she came on board she came up to the cockpit and said, "Captain I would like to have your autograph on my short snorter." (That is a piece of paper currency such as a Frank note that we got signatures on.) I said, "You don't want my



autograph but I want yours." She said, "I surely do want your autograph and I will be glad to give you mine also." So I have her autograph on a French fifty Frank note (war time currency). She was one of the nicest persons.

The next location of Eagle Tac was at Verdun, a very famous place from World War I. For the first time since I had arrived in France I had a roof over my head in an old French barracks. The airfield was a very small one along side of the Muese river. This area was part of the Maginot Line fortifications. I remember going down into the fortification about 4 stories. It was dark and I found a big storage of cannon powder.

The grains of powder were about 10 inches long and about a quarter of an inch in diameter. There was a hole down the middle of the grains. I took a handful up with me and lit one with a match and it took off like a rocket burning at the one end. Believing that I might have some fun, I went into the barracks and lit one and threw it on the floor and you should have seen the excitement I caused with the troops. I don't think they really liked that much.

We made many flights out of this makeshift 2000 foot airfield while here as the war had slowed down as far as moving over new territory. The airfield got muddy from rains that now were coming. The field was along side of the river with the wet ground very soft. I had to put large planks under the wheels when we parked to be able to get out again. There was now also a flight of L-5 aircraft attached to the headquarters flying out of this field. The pilots would get really peeved because we cut the field up so badly with the large C-47 aircraft.

Our stay in Verdun was nice and I got a chance to fly over to England and see my old squadron. I made several trips back to get gas and oil for the aircraft and also to get a hot bath and sleep in a good bed. I talked to my old navigator and he indicated he would like to join me on Gen. Bradley's ship. When I returned to Eagle Tac I talked to the General about it and he said, "Robby you don't need a navigator, but if you want him then tell Chet to send him over."

Walter M. Lamb my old navigator arrived September 25, 1945 to join us here in Verdun. Walt had just finished taking part in the Market- Garden Holland invasion, and I think he was surprised that I had requested him. He didn't seem too pleased at first as I guess he had adjusted to the squadron but it wasn't long before he became a willing, valuable part of the crew.

One evening Chet Hansen called me and asked me to get the plane ready to fly General Bradley and some other generals over to Einhoven, Belgium the next morning. I got the maps out and by now I had asked for and got transferred to our ship my old navigator Walter Lamb. We sat down and worked out the maps with Walt and my co-pilot Herb Barnum. It was not a long flight, but I had learned to always plan even the shortest flight with the greatest of pains. It didn't take much of an error to get over the German lines and get into trouble. Particularly on this flight we would be landing within a mile and a half of the active combat lines. So when we flew I had Walt between us in the cockpit and also Herb in the right seat both reading the maps so to stay exactly on the planned course. Chet said that they were going to have some P-47s escorting us on this trip and they would arrive over the airfield at 8 AM. on Oct. 8th, 1944 and I would contact them on channel B (126.18 Mcs) then take off and they would cover us.

Well, the next morning the generals arrived and they were the top brass in the ETO. General Marshall, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander; General Omar Bradley, Commander 12th Army Group; General Patton, 3rd Army Commander; General Simpson, 9th Army Commander; General Hodges, 1st Army Commander; also a number of other generals from Eagle Tac and other Commands.

I taxied out to the end of the runway and waited with my engines running for the fighters to show up. Well, they showed up but did not get on "B" channel so I could contact them. They broke off in echelon and started an approach on our small field. Well, the first three got down OK and turned off and taxied in behind me. The fourth got stuck in the mud and the ground crews couldn't pull him out so I elected to just take off over him not thinking that the P-47s would try to follow. They did take off behind me and the first one hit the tail of the P-47 on the runway with his wing. The plane still got off into the air and headed back to his home base with part of the tail still stuck on his wing. The other two got off the runway and down through the trees and finally up above

us. I was busy getting us on course and didn't pay any further attention to them. I did see that they were flying above our head doing S turns to stay with us as our speed and theirs didn't match. The weather was good but there was a very thick haze layer that went up to about 200 feet and we could only see straight down, so we had to be very careful navigating. I was flying about 300 feet above the ground to stay as low as possible for protection.

Finally the Cathedral at Einhoven came into view and all we could see was the steeple sticking out of the thick haze. I made a turn around it and took up a heading to the field and came directly over the field. I couldn't see it until I was directly over it. I made a circle to locate the runway that was not bombed out and then made an attempt to land but couldn't get down to landing altitude in time due to the poor visibility. The second attempt as I approached, someone on the ground shot up a red flare to let me know the location of the end of the runway. He didn't shoot it up until I was already over the end of the runway so I had to go around again. General Bradley came up to the cockpit and said if it was this bad then perhaps we should go back to Verdun. I told him I would make one more try. This time I made a low visibility approach by coming down the runway the wrong way and then a 45 degree turn to the right for 45 seconds then a standard turn to the left until I had the heading of the runway and at the same time descended down to 50 feet and this time I broke out at the end of the runway. If those fighter pilots had done what they were supposed to do by being on the proper frequency I would have been able to use their eyes to tell me when I was approaching the end of the runway. Instead they just flew around and around up above me not being able to give me directions to the runway.

I landed three points as usual and taxied up and Wiser opened the rear door for the Generals and I went on back to see if everything was OK. I heard the Generals talking about the approach and landing and General Patton said loudly, "There is too damn much Brass on this aircraft and I am going back by jeep." I really had to agree with him as we had the top brass that was fighting the war on this one aircraft. I had never seen so many stars since the nights in Texas. The British held the airfield and the Germans were only a mile or so away. It would have been a disaster to the war effort if anything had happened to us. About this time, as the Generals were leaving in their cars, the P-

47s decided to come in and land also. The leader started to make passes at the field, but couldn't get lined up (I don't know why the other pilot didn't help him by lining him up from up above him). Finally after about 5 passes he got partially lined up and tried to side slip the plane into the runway. Well, he stalled it out and cartwheel wing over wing down the field missing our plane about 50 feet coming to a stop upside down with the engine on fire. The cockpit was level with the ground and we couldn't see the pilot much less help him. Finally the British ground crew found a small hoist and hooked it to the tail of the P-47 and pulled it up. We of course had given up on the pilot being alive, but he crawled out with his face red from the fire. He was in a state of shock and was cussing us out for leaving him in there. He kept saying, "I called and called and you bastards just stood around." I expect he was in the cockpit for about 30 minutes. So finally the other pilot in the air got enough sense to take off and go back to his base probably to tell the miserable tale of how they had guarded the general's airplane. So out of four airplanes we ended up with one and he went home.

We waited until the Generals got through touring the combat zone and talking to Gen. Montgomery and General Hodges about their problems. They came back to the airplane and sure enough Gen. Patton left to go back by staff car. I taxied out and took off into the haze with the rest of the passengers back to Verdun. On the way back we took the 2nd Lt. that was flying the P-47 fighter. He was seated by General Marshal and Chet said that he was crying about losing his airplane. General Marshall said, "Son don't you worry I will give you another plane for you to fly, I have lots of them."

PART VII

Chapter 1

In the close vicinity of Verdun is the trench of Bayonets. This is a trench from World War I where a line of soldiers was covered up by shell fire and all that was left was their bayonets sticking out of the ground. They have left it that way for a memorial.

On October 14th (1944) Eagle Tac moved to Luxembourg about 50 miles to the northeast. This was a real nice city and our crew bunked in the Hotel De Paris, a real swell place. Here we had maid service and a good bed just like any other hotel. They

had something in the rooms I hadn't seen before. It was a bowl like a toilet but was not shaped like one and had water squirting from the bottom. I asked the maid (a young girl) and she said "Feets washing." Of course I know now what it was for. We stationed our C-47on a single 2500' grass runway airfield just east of town. The city has a deep canyon running through it with a river at the bottom. It is a lovely city area. Here we found ice cream for the first time available. It was kind of weak, but tasted good.

While in Luxembourg, I many times would have to come in just at dusk and I would fly over the city and then to the airport so I wouldn't miss it. As we flew over at about 200 feet I could see the anti-aircraft guns pointed at us. I would bank the aircraft so the gunners could see the four stars on the tail of the plane and not shoot at us. The airfield was numbered A-97. Each airfield was given a number as we got them into operation after the landings in Cherbourg.

On December 11, 1944, which was my 29th birthday, I flew General Bradley up to Spa to see General Hodges. On December 16, 1944 Gen. Bradley had driven to Paris as the Weather was so bad and the ground icy. Here he got word that the Enemy had counter attacked though the Ardennes Forest. I flew our plane, the Mary Q (named after the General's wife), down to Etain. Chet had called me and said for me to get the plane out of A-97, as the Germans would probably take over Luxembourg City and we would have to move out. Driving back at night to Luxembourg, which was about 40 miles, I didn't know if my clothes and such would still be there when I arrived. Fortunately, the Germans didn't intend to take the city and by-passed it to the north. So, the General stayed in the Hotel Alfa and I stayed in our hotel.

December 20, 1944 the city of Luxembourg was deafened by Patton's tanks grinding through the streets toward the front. He was to relieve the 101st Airborne troops holding out at Bastogne. I watched them go through the streets from my hotel window over the great bridge that stood over the great canyon or gorge.

The next day a big snow fall started and the grinding became muffled as the tanks continued to cross over. I went down to Etain airfield to see if the airplane was all OK. On the way I was stopped many times by guards and had to tell them who I was and

what I was doing. I had to identify myself by answering crazy questions as there were some Germans running around in American uniforms. The airplane had a guard stationed on it in Etain so it would not be booby trapped.

The Fourth Division of the VIII Corps was guarding the way to Luxembourg and they didn't fail although they took a beating. Much later while flying out of Bolling Airfield in Washington, DC I was talking to a Sergeant Cook that was in this Fourth Division. He told me that he and three others captured five Germans and they told him to take them to the back lines, but he didn't have any way to do it.

More details of this area of fighting can be found in General Bradley's books "A Soldiers Story" and "A General's Life."

Chapter 2

On Christmas Eve Chet Hansen called me and said for me to get the airplane at Etain and fly it up to A-97 there at Luxembourg the morning of the 25th (Christmas day) and pick up General Bradley and fly him up to General Hodge's Headquarters at St.Trond. So early in the Morning before daybreak I started out to Etain by jeep with my crew chief Bud Wiser. I told the rest of the crew including my co- pilot Herb Barnum to meet me at A-97 as it was not necessary for all of us to go down to Etain just to get an airplane. Well, while we were warming up the engines General Bradley and Chet Hansen drove up in their car saying that General Sibert had vetoed the idea of him leaving from A-97. I had little choice but to put Chet in the co-pilots seat. We took off at low altitude (50 to 100 feet) to go around the Bulge with him holding the maps while I navigated by glancing at the maps as I flew. We made it fine and Gen. Bradley commented that he was staring up at the smokestacks all the way. When we got ready to take off from St.Trond the control unit said that it was getting too dark for a trip back. I said we would be OK and took off into the dusk and it was dark when we got to Etain. I landed OK and then parked the airplane and got our jeep and drove back to Luxembourg.

On getting back to The Hotel Paris I found that everyone was gone and there was no food or anything. So Bud Wiser and I played Gin Rummy and he had a bottle of Schnapps and I had a bottle of Champagne. We nipped on the drinks until about midnight. I said I was going to bed and got up and promptly fell on my face as I was paralyzed from being tired and drinking the Champagne on an empty stomach. Bud laughed and laughed until he tried to stand up and did the same. I dragged myself off to bed. This was my first time to drink and I said it was the last (until I got snookered into taking some Vodka and orange juice while flying the Rolling Stones in the 1960's).

Chapter 3

Our ship, the Mary Q, serial number 42-93809, was now based at Etain but the crew stayed in Luxembourg as the Battle of the Bulge raged on. The 101st Airborne and Gen. McAuliffe at Bastogne was finally relieved by Patton's tanks and infantry. My old Troop Carrier Squadron and the other squadrons came in on the 26th of December 1944 and dropped supplies to the well known 101st Airborne. (We had flown them many times in the past.) I was assigned to fly Gen. McAuliffe back to General Eisenhower's headquarters and I got him to sign my French bill.

Chateau De Namur
Gen, Bradley's Headquarters during the Battle of the Bulge

On January 27th, 1945 Eagle Tac was moved to Namur, Belgium, a citadel city on the bend of the Meuse river. General Bradley took over Chateau de Namur overlooking the city. Our crew was housed inside the city in some fairly nice barracks. I remember wandering around the city with Walt and Herb singing in the middle of the night "Hey Hey Hey don't pull that stuff on me cause I'm just a country boy as dumb as I can be--". So we enjoyed our time as best we could. The airfield at Namur was small and covered with snow. One time on a trip to General Eisenhower's headquarters at A-80 Rheims the weather was so bad that for once I wasn't able to get back into Namur and had to turn back to Rheims. I had been flying at very low altitude (50 feet) and just

barely staying under the deck of lowering clouds. Finally the clouds closed into the ground and I had to pull up to 1500 feet and head back. I went back in the aircraft and told General Bradley that I had to take him back as I had gone as far as I could under the conditions. He said, "Robby I would have turned back 15 minutes earlier if it had been me, so don't feel bad." I told him that I would be able to get him to Namur in a couple of hours if he would wait but he decided to drive back in a sedan. I did get back in to Namur before he did and he said later that it was a really rough drive over the icy roads.

While at Namur I landed once at a nearby Air Base to get fuel. The next morning I found that my radio had been taken out of the airplane. It wasn't the radio of the plane itself; but one I had acquired and changed to AC operation. It came out of a crashed C-47 and was a BC 348-R. I had left a guard on the airplane and when I found out the radio was gone I went to the base commander and told him. He had all the barracks searched and he found it in one of the barracks playing. The guard had taken it out. I never knew what happened to him.

We stayed in Namur for about two months and one day General Bradley called me up to his office and said, "Get Walt and meet me at the airplane and don't tell any one else." So Walt Lamb and I went to the aircraft and waited for the General. When he got there he said that General Ike had told him that he had to take a couple days R and R or he, Ike, would come down and take over the 12th Army Group. So we were to head for Cherbourg. When we arrived at Cherbourg Airfield a two Red Cross ladies met us. The General got in a car with one and left the other one to guide us in. Well, we secured the aircraft and got a guard for it and then got in her jeep and headed into the city. We were supposed to meet the General at a Hotel for lunch. We were walking down the street about a block from the hotel when around the corner came a jeep with two GIs in it. I was on the outside with the Red Cross girl between Walt And me. I had my shoulder bag on and had my left hand on my left pocket keeping it from hitting me in the rear as I walked. Well, the GIs saluted me and I saluted them back. Right behind the jeep was a staff car and it pulled up abruptly along side of me and out jumped a Colonel. This Colonel yelled at me, "Major!!" and I stopped walking and turned and

said, "Yes Sir?". He said, "Major stand at attention!". I was at attention and I said so. He said, "I mean to get those heels together!". I got my heels together and having already saluted him stood at attention. He now said, "What are you doing here anyway and don't you know how to salute with out your hand in your pocket? What are you anyway?-- a visiting fireman?".

By now my ire was up and I guess I was getting red in the face. I said, "Colonel, I don't know what a visiting fireman is but I don't think I fall into that category." The Colonel said, "Then what is your category and what are you doing running around over here?" I said to him, "Colonel I am General Omar Bradley's Pilot and I just flew him into Cherbourg. and he is waiting for me around the corner if you would like to ask him I am sure he will tell you why I am here."

Well, you never saw a person change colors so fast. He turned to the Red Cross lady and said, "Are you taking care of them OK? "She said in return, "I was Colonel C---- until you showed up." Well, that Colonel got back in his sedan and took off like the devil was after him. I wasn't going to say anything about it as I had cooled off before we got to the hotel, but at dinner the Red Cross girl said, "General you missed something real good you should have been with us". The General asked what it was and she told him exactly what had happened. The General turned red with anger and said, "No damn wonder we can't get supplies up front with C----- pulling stuff like that.!" Well, we went ahead and had a fine chicken dinner and when the fried chicken was served we all waited to see how General Bradley was going to eat it. He picked up a piece with his fingers and said, "There is only one way to eat fried chicken and that is with your fingers." So we just plowed in and had a fine meal.

The General told me where he would be staying during the night and about dark I went by and checked on the place. I noticed that there were no guards and I got worried as the Germans would sometimes leave the Islands nearby and raid Cherbourg. So I went to the MP station and talked to the Captain in charge and told him that I wanted a good guard assigned to guard the door. When the guard arrived I told him what to guard and left. The next morning at Breakfast General Bradley said loudly, "Robby, the damnedest thing happened this morning." I asked what it was. He said, "I came down out of my apartment and what do you think I found? I had a guard at my

doorstep. I wonder how he got there?" I didn't say a word as I knew he knew how the guard had arrived there.

On the return trip to Namur the General told Walt and me to come up to the Chateau and have lunch with him. So we closed up the ship and rode up with him to the Chateau. At the dinner table the General seated me to his right and Walt to my right and there were about a dozen others including a lot of Generals around this long table. About half way through the dinner the General said, "I have a story to tell you about Robby." He proceeded to tell all about how I was put at attention by Col. C----. Well, I wonder what ever happened to Col. C---.

As an aftermath to this incident General Bradley told Chet Hansen to have orders cut making me an Aide De Camp and gave me a shield with four stars to wear on my lapels. He, the General, told me when he gave them to me, "These represent me. When you go and ask for something that is the same as me asking for it. Now we won't have any more things like what happened at Cherbourg."

My Crew Chief Bud Wiser got into a little trouble here in Namur. He fell in love with a Belgium girl and although he was married he wanted to just stay there. He couldn't talk French and she couldn't speak English. He still seemed to be able to communicate somehow. I never talked him out of it and when we moved back to Luxembourg I got another crew chief named White. I never knew what happened to Bud after the war.

PART VIII

Chapter 1

While we were at Namur a Russian Ambassador visited the Eagle Tac Headquarters to give some decorations for the Invasion in Normandy. His name was Bogomolov and I got him to sign my Snorts Snorter while flying him and the General and his entourage back to Paris.

At this time the American Armies were in bitter combat to clear the Germans out of the territory west of the Rhine River. I won't go into this as it is documented well in

General Bradley's books. I, mostly, was an observer as I flew the different transport missions as assigned by Chet Hansen. While we were here in Namur the American forces captured the Remagen Bridge and this changed the plan of the war away from Montgomery and to the 12th Army Group as the main push. On the 23rd of March 1945 I flew the General and his staff down to Metz on a trip. General Bradley, General Patton, and General Devers had discussions regarding cleaning up the Siegfried Line in that area. At this time I had an opportunity to talk to a Major that was General Patton's Aide De Camp when he had the slapping incident in Sicily. He explained that Patton had not hit the GI; but got on him pretty hard and the GI jumped and his helmet fell off and he ran under the bed after it. The Doctors just didn't like this going on in their domain.

The Battle of the Bulge was soon over with many losses on both sides and then the friction between the British Montgomery and General Bradley came to a head. They had had many disagreements but the news releases of Montgomery really set off the staff at Eagle Tac. Churchhill made a speech that helped quiet the turmoil but if you will read Gen. Bradley's "A Soldier Story" this is covered in greater detail.

The war had moved on past the Rhine river and on April 2,1945 we moved Eagle Tac back to Luxembourg. I was glad to be back in our Hotel. When the Ruhr Industrial area was surrounded and over 300,000 German troops were made prisoners, General Ridgeway presented a large Mibock-Zeppelin car to General Bradley. It was a convertible and the sides were as tall as I was. It had 10 forward and 10 reverse speeds. It was made of aluminum and had belonged to a German Field Marshall Model, who was in charge of the Ruhr until it was overrun. I looked enviously at the car, but there was no way even General Bradley could keep it. I often wondered what ever happened to it.

Chapter 2

Our stay in Luxembourg was of short duration because when Patton had captured Wiesbaden I was sent over to check on the airfield so as to move our C-47 over to it. On the 8th of April I flew over in the L-5 I used to fly General Bradley up to the front lines when he visited there. The airfield had a large paved road around a grass field. It was in fair condition and I saw I could operate there fine. In the base operations

building there was a beautiful map on the wall. It was a relief type of map of the general area. I wish I could have kept it and had it taken home. I guess it got destroyed when the field was modified later. So I guess I was about the first to land in the Wiesbaden Airfield.

I went back to Luxembourg and had the crew pack up and on the 9th we moved to Wiesbaden. Walt Lamb, Herb Barnum, and I were stationed in the Rose Hotel. It was nice. We didn't have enough transportation with only the jeep (as it was necessary for the crew chief to have it to go to the airfield and maintain the aircraft). Wiser and Fisher found an MP and asked him how he could get another car. The MP said just wait a moment. So in a few minutes an Opel car came down the road with a German driving it and the MP pulled him over and told him to get out. The MP turned to Earl and said, "Here is your car Sergeant!" So, as I had a Harley Davidson Motorcycle for my own transport to the airfield we were in pretty good shape. I believe that Walt Lamb ended up with the Opel.

During the stay at Wiesbaden Eagle Tac had acquired some Red Cross people and also some entertainers to go to the different Army units to entertain and do what Red Cross people do. We also had Marlene Dietrich, who was a good friend of General Bradley. Marlene went along with the other women and helped entertain. I was called to go to a base in Germany where they were working and pick up the troops along with Marlene Dietrich. When I got there at the airfield only the Regular entertainers were there waiting for me. I asked them where Marlene was and the leader said that she didn't want to ride with us plain entertainers and to come back and pick her up when she got ready to go. Well, I took the group back to Wiesbaden and instead of taking General Bradley's plush C-47, I sent Capt. Ecklund with the bucket seat C- 47 to pick up Marlene. Ecklund had joined us to fly Gen. Allen, the chief of staff of Eagle Tac. Incidentally, she didn't like it one bit and complained to General Bradley. I had pulled my ship out of service for some minor maintenance and when questioned I so spoke.

My brother, Major A.J.Robinson, was in the Artillery and I found out he was in Cologne so I flew up there in the L-5. I picked him up and flew over to his outfit and then dropped him off. It was nice to see him and know he was safe.

By now we had assigned to us a UC-78 (AT-17) transport that I let Herb Barnum fly a lot while I was flying the C-47 or L-5. Mickey Rooney joined us and Herb would fly him around to the different places where he entertained. Mickey was a Private at that time in the Army.

The next thing I remember about this area and time was that Belsen Concentration Camp had just been captured by the British and Marlene Dietrich's Mother (or sister) had been in the camp. Marlene wanted to go up there and see her and I was elected to fly her up. We landed at a British held airfield near the camp and got the jeep out of the C-47 and I drove her over to the camp which was about 15 miles. On the way over we went across a pontoon bridge that was a one way bridge. The next bridge going the other way was about 5 miles below this crossing. While Marlene visited her kin, I talked to a Czech girl that had been confined there. Her teeth were mostly all rotted out even though she was a nice looking girl and not over 30. I asked her why she had not been done away with like so many of the others and she said she learned to get along with the guards and to do what they wished. I dropped it at that.

On the way back Marlene and I got to the one way bridge against our path and I told her I guess we had better go on down to the other bridge as the guard would stop us. She said "No I'll show you how to get across." Whereupon she dangled her leg outside the jeep and pulled her dress up to her waist and the guards just looked blank as I drove rapidly across the bridge. When we got back to the airfield the British had a nice picnic set up for us under the wing of the aircraft.

Our next move on the 29 April was to the town of Bad Wildungen, a resort town near Kassel. I went up first in the L-5 and looked over a grass field nearby to see if it was suitable to operate the C-47 in and out. I was finally able to measure off 1600 feet with planks at each end. I went back to Wiesbaden in the L-5 I had flown up there and we packed all our belongings in the C-47 and filled up with gas. I flew up and three pointed

it in and used about 1/2 of the field to get in; we were real heavy, about 32,000 lbs. Ecklund flew his aircraft in and landed wheel landing and used up all the 1600 feet before he got stopped. In fact, he broke both planks at each end. This pointed out how a three point landing in a C-47 is shorter than a tail up wheel landing.

We stayed in a nice hotel there in Bad Wildungen. I don't remember much of the town as I seemed to always be busy flying somewhere and only using the place to sleep. I do remember we had a movie there one night at the Officers Club and it was featuring Mickey Rooney. Mickey asked me to take him in as a guest as he was not an officer. I agreed to do so, as he said he never had had a chance to see the movie since he had helped make it. The name of the movie was National Velvet. After I took him in he promptly left me and went up to where General Bradley was seated and that was the last I saw of him.

It wasn't long after we were settled in Bad Wildungen that the American and Russian forces met at a place called Torgau on the 25th of April 1945. The General and Eagle Tac were invited to a banquet on the Russian side of the Elbe River. Chet Hansen sent Capt. Ecklund to England with his C-47 to pick up a brand new Jeep at Burtonwood to give to the Russian Marshal Konev. So when I flew the General and his staff over to Leipzig out of the airfield near Fritzlar. Our airfield at Bad Wildungen, due to the weather, was too short to operate out of, so far as the VIP's were concerned. The jeep was there to give to General Konev.

When we landed and were met by the Russians there was a lot of trading of souvenirs and the Russian Marshal wanted my Emblem off my flighter hat. I told the translator that I could not give it up, it was the only one I had and no way to get another. The Marshal acted angry about it, but I didn't give a damn about him. General Bradley got a 20 year old stallion in return for the Jeep.

PART IX

The war ended at midnight, May 8-9,1945. It was sort of a letdown as we felt cheated in having to give back a lot of the land that we had taken and let it go under the control of the Russians. I was told that the Russians had shot down five of our P-51s over the territory that we had just given back to the Russians. This gave a foreboding of what was to come in our relations with the Russians.

(The picture shows General Patton checking his watch after leaving the victory meeting - Chet Hanson in the middle)

On the 1st of June 1945 Eagle Tac now moved back to Wiesbaden to the Main Headquarters and so "ET" (Eagle Tac) was no more. Our crew was assigned to a large three story house on Beethoven Strasse. We had to evict the German that owned it. We gave him 15 minutes to get all that he could carry away with him and then we moved in. He kept coming back for odds and ends but we didn't have much sympathy for the Germans at that time. He gave us a sad story of how he had lost two other houses to bombing and this was the only one he had left. There were lots of DPs (Displaced Persons) in the camps that were liberated from the Germans and many were Russians. We were assigned three women to take care of our house while they were being housed by the Army. All their teeth were in bad shape. We could not speak Russian and they could not speak English, but we got our ideas across.

On the 30th of June we flew General Bradley and his aides up to Oslo, Norway. There we were met by Sonya Heinie. She was real nice and posed with us for some pictures. We stayed in a hotel in town and then went to a social meeting with the King of Norway. They closed the doors and no one could leave until he left. I saw Gen. Bradley slip out the side door.

If you have never been that far north, then it is a surprise to see bicycles running all around town at midnight. They make up for their long winters during summer.

I had my first and only accident with my Harley Davidson motorcycle at the airfield while waiting to fly Brig. General Joseph (Red) O'Hare to Paris. I had ridden around the airfield to the other side and while I was there I saw the General arriving so I rode back to the airplane. I got within about 50 feet of the aircraft and I hit an oil slick. As I was in a turn the bike skidded out from under me and I ended up in front of the General's feet and the bike went in another direction racing its motor. Bud Wiser killed the engine of the bike and the General looked down at me.

He said, "Robby, do you always arrive in this fashion?"

I replied, No, General only for you."

I got up and checked myself and found the only damage was a torn pair of pants and a skinned knee. So off we went to Paris. I say this was the only accident I ever had on the bike because after this I discarded it permanently for better transportation. I decided that it was not a very safe method of locomotion.

We made a flight to Berlin on July the 4th, 1945 and landed in the airfield there. It had no runways and the field was covered with two feet of tall grass.

General Bradley called me in to his office and we talked a while and he said President Truman had told him that he now was to head the Veterans Administration. The General had wanted to go to the Pacific Theater and command with Gen. MacArthur. The President said that Gen. Bradley had the confidence of the GIs and so wanted him to head one of the biggest operations so far when the boys came home from the war. (The General knew about the A-Bomb from President Roosevelt but never said anything about it. He didn't know how close it was to being used.) General

Bradley said he would agree to do so if President Truman would let him take his airplane the Mary Q and his crew with him to fly on the many trips he would have to take in setting up the administration to handle the influx of troops that would be getting out at war's end. I told him that I was pleased that he would have me to continue to fly him in his new job.

So, on the 21 of July 1945 my crew of Capt. Herbert Barnum, Co-pilot: Capt. Walter Lamb, Navigator: T/Sgt. Larry White, Crew Chief (replacement for Bud Wiser): and S/Sgt. Earl Fisher, Radio Op prepared to abandon our house in Wiesbaden. We loaded the airplane up with a lot of personal souvenirs as the airplane was to be sealed, because of carrying the records of the 12th Army Group's Operation in the Field. Thus, we were able to take back to the States some things that might not have arrived back otherwise. Other things were stored on the airplane in boxes and I had no way of knowing what was in them. The airplane was up to maximum gross weight when I filled the main tanks full. We took off from Wiesbaden, but I had forgotten something I wanted to take back with me so I turned around and landed and picked it up, even though the aircraft was supposed to be too heavy to land without burning off some of the gas. We, besides the 800 gallons in the main tanks, had installed at Burtonwood, England a pair of wing tanks in the space we usually carried the jeep and had frames built over them to hold a single bed mattress. This gave us an additional 400 gallons of gas that I wanted to have available for the over water flights. The front of the aircraft still had the plush interior of a desk and seat and a divan and two chairs opposite the divan.

Chapter 2

Our first stop enroute home was Preswick, Scotland. We refueled and got ready to take off the next morning. Sgt. Larry White said the Weight and Balance Officer there ordered the plane not to be refueled in the Cabin Tanks as we would be much over weight for take off. I told Larry to go ahead and fill them up anyway. I much preferred the risk of being over weight at take off to being out of gas over that cold, cold North Atlantic.

We took off bright and early next morning for Iceland and landed there without any difficulty on the 22 July. The ground control people at Iceland told us to just go on and go to sleep and they would tell us when to take off again. I told them that I was not in their ferry command and I had to get back to Washington right away. I finally had to go to the Commanding Officer to get permission to refuel and take off.

After a hot meal and the plane refueled we took off on our next leg that was a little different. As usual, on all these overseas flights we had to go to a briefing for the next leg and they showed us movies and slides of the approaches and landing strips and warned us of the different things for which to watch. This was to orient us for our arrival at Bluie West One, Greenland. The approach is up a Fiord with a sunken ship in the channel about two or three miles inland. There are three Fiords that come together at the mouth of a bay that becomes the Atlantic Ocean. If you get into the wrong one it becomes too narrow to turn around in and dead ends in a cliff. There is a homer beacon on a rock or small island just outside the entrance. This is used to let down and to line up to come in the Fiord. The runway is further down the channel and as you make the last turn you are lined up with it. It is uphill and dead ends into a glacier that goes on up to around 10,000 feet. The mountains surrounding the airfield go up to 12 or 14 thousand feet and there are still some of our planes buried in the snow at the top. One story told to me while I was there was about a four engine C-54 that the pilot decided he could climb fast enough to get over the mountains and save going around. He thought he was over them and suddenly found himself sitting in the snow in a soft landing at 12,000 feet. They were rescued; but the plane is still there. I guess some civilization will discover it in the distant future.

To get back to my story, we took off for Greenland and Walt took LORAN fixes to keep us on course. We had traded our British GEE set in for the LORAN set as it was for long range navigation and the GEE set was for short range in Europe. Our Radios became useless after we left Iceland as the Northern Lights lit up the sky and all reception was ended. Thus, we were not able to get any weather reports as to how the terminal weather at Bluie West One was doing. We did pass over a ship we were supposed to check in with and Fisher, our radio operator, said they didn't have any reports either. I was now glad we had the extra fuel so that if we couldn't get into Greenland we could go on to Goose Bay on the Mainland. The weather was very bad

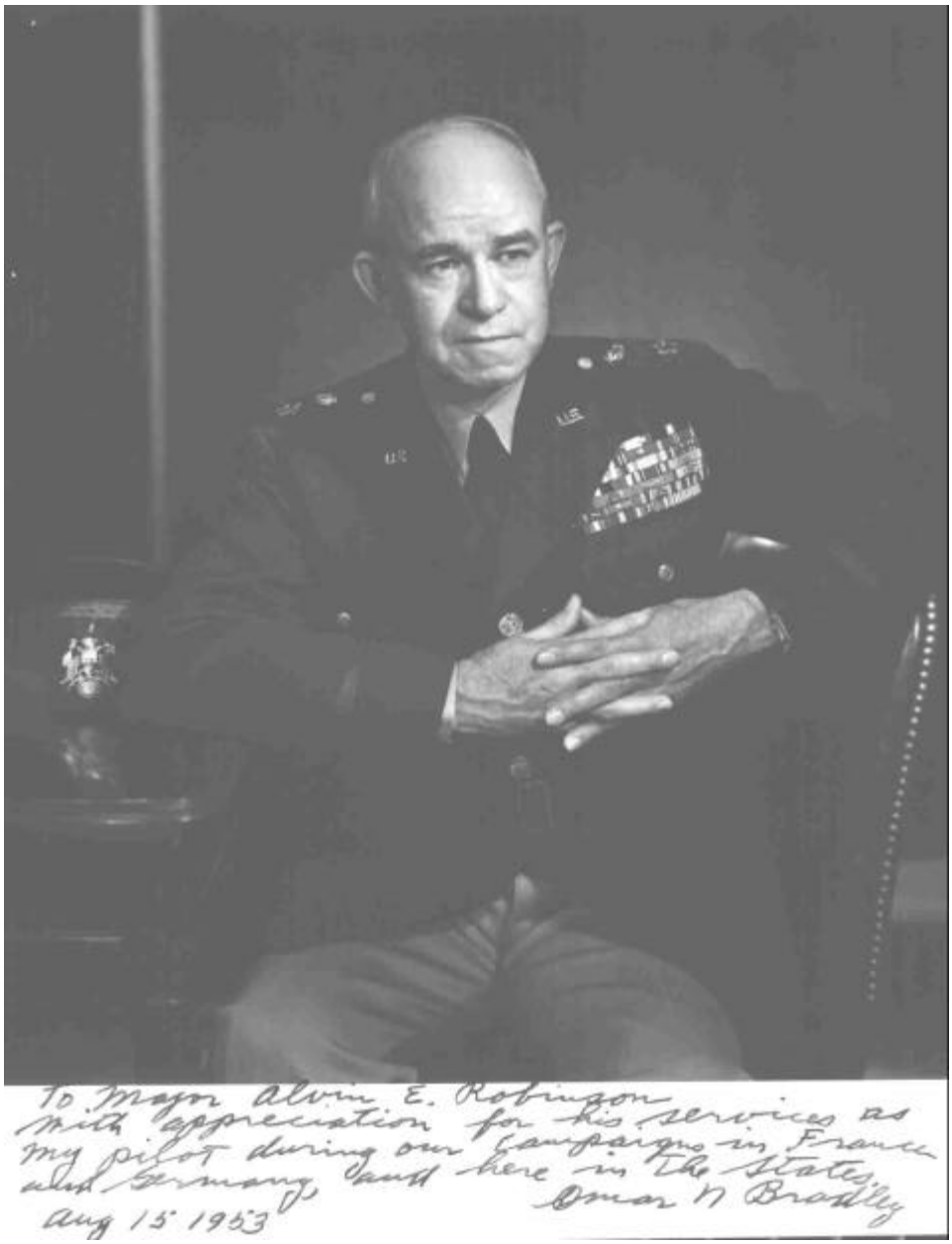
beneath us but we were flying above it. When we finally got close to Greenland the beacon started to come in and we homed in on it. When I got over it I started a spiral down around the beacon using my ADF to keep us close and we broke out at about 250 feet using our radar altimeter. We then headed for the entrance and the whole crew was standing over my back watching for the sunken ship to be assured that I had made the right decision when I picked the Fiord. When we saw the masts of the sunken ship the crew yelled out with relief. I flew in, and following the winding water way until the end of the runway showed up, landed and taxied in on the snowy runway to operations on the 23rd of July.

After getting a good meal and having the airplane refueled again, we took off into the west for Goose Bay airfield on the Labrador Coast. The trip was made without incident, the engines purred smoothly and our C-47 slid on through the dwindling light to settle gently down at Goose Bay. This time of year the daylight hours were much longer than I was accustomed to, as we were so much farther north, which made them longer still. At this stop we got refueled and with some box lunches aboard we headed out for Washington, DC

GENERAL OMAR N. BRADLEY

GENERAL BRADLEY'S CAREER SINCE ARRIVING IN ENGLAND TO PLAN THE INVASION OF EUROPE HAS BEEN THE HISTORY OF THE VICTORIOUS AMERICAN ARMIES.

Initially, in Britain, he commanded both the First United States Army and the First



United States Army Group. Thus, he was able to carry out the detailed planning for the European landings and at the same time keep his finger on the preparations for Third Army's campaigns and for the later arrival on the Continent of the other armies to be under his command.

This dual command loaned itself also to the cover plan which saw General Bradley looming larger and larger in the eyes of the German command. This alone served to give the German High Command many sleepless nights, as Von Rundstedt has since testified.

Finally, with all preparations complete, D-Day arrived and on the morning of June 6, 1944 the Assault Corps of the First Army swarmed ashore. The two Corps participating under General Bradley's on the scene direction--he was in his command ship just off shore-- were the Seventh and Fifth Corps under Major General Joseph Lawton Collins and Major General Leonard T. Gerow. General Gerow later commanded the Fifteenth Army.

General Bradley landed on D-plus-one. With General Courtney Hodges as, as his deputy commander, he planned the entire Normandy campaign climaxing in July with the breakthrough at St. Lo.

Following the breakthrough, General Bradley assumed command of the Twelfth United States Army Group--which had become the operational successor of the First United States Army Group, which was kept as a skeleton organization in England to further confuse the issue for German Intelligence. General Hodges took command of First Army.

General Bradley dispatched his Third Army under Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., through the gap smashed into the German line. Third Army further ripped the enemy defenses by crashing out of the Cotentin Peninsula at Avranches into Central France and the Breast Peninsula.

In the early days of August the German High Command ordered a counter attack in the region of Mortain to cut Patton's supply corridor. This counter attack General Bradley staved off, while at the same time turning Gen. Patton's forces to the North and the great debacle of Falaise took place as Patton's armor closed the jaws of the trap from the south to meet Montgomery's forces coming down from the north toward Argentan. The German Seventh Army was destroyed.

Renes fell. So did Laval, LeMans, Chartres, and finally Paris.

In Paris, as a city went wild with joy, the 28th Division--the famous Pennsylvania Keystone Division--swung down the Champs Elysees in what, on the face of it, appeared to be a demonstration parade. Instead, it was a parade into battle. The French authorities had asked for a demonstration of force to overawe the German sympathizers in the city and Gen. Bradley's answer was an approach march through the city by the division. Even while Paris still cheered, elements of the Division were going into position near Le Bourget for their attack, which was to carry them to Belgium.

But Paris was only and interlude. The First Army crashed on through Northern France and finally wound up on the Siegfried Line on the Belgian-German border--short of supplies. Patton too had moved tremendous distances and reached the Moselle Valley before he too was immobilized by lack of supplies.

Thus wound up one of the most startling campaigns in history. But more was to come.

Ninth Army under Lieut. General William H. Simpson arrived on the continent and while the First and Third Armies were crashing across France, the Ninth policed the southern flank, capturing some twenty thousand Germans in one bag on the Loire.

Supplies came forward and in November Gen. Bradley was ready to move again. Gen. Patton's forces kicked off in the start of a campaign that wound up with the capture of Aachen- first sizable German city captured by American rms. The Ninth Army switched from Southern France in secrecy and went into action to the north. The Roer River--with controlled floods forcing the Armies to wait-- became a major obstacle and the offensive had to halt until the dams controlling the water level in the river could be captured.

Von Rundstedt took his fatal gamble and December launched his few remaining tank and infantry reserves into the abortive Battle of the Ardennes. As the battle

progressed to its critical stages, General Bradley predicted the distance Von Rundstedt could penetrate and shifted troops in the kaleidoscope fashion to meet and canalize the thrust. Eventually the German attack faltered and reeled back--having achieved within a mile of the depth of penetration predicted by General Bradley.

Third Army under General Patton swung north and the Germans were thrown back from the "bulge".

Shortly thereafter the assault began that destroyed the German Army west of the Rhine. This attack in three phases saw the Canadian Army jump off to the North. Then Gen. Simpson's Ninth Army took up the battle striking toward Dusseldorf. The First Army was assigned the initial mission of covering the south flank of Ninth Army.

As the Ninth reached the Rhine, the First Army swung into the second phase of the operation-- this maneuver being blended into the closing phases of the action to the North. The Rhine was reached, Cologne captured and a bridgehead seized at Remagen.

As this phase of the operation drew toward a close General Patton's Army which had co-operated in the second phase swung into action over the Moselle River in the third phase of the attack. Co-ordinated with the troops of the Sixth Army Group under General Devers, this thrust was designed to finish the job.

Again the speed of maneuver caught the Germans off guard and General Patton's forces wiped out the remnants of the once powerful German Army in the west in a lightning campaign. As part of that movement General Patton seized a crossing of the Rhine near Mainz as a spot selected months before by General Bradley and General Patton. It was selected because the crossing was free of high ground where enemy observation would interfere.

There was a pause. The German Army felt they had time to re-organize. But General Bradley held otherwise. In an infrequent press interview, he said:

"We can cross the Rhine anytime and anywhere we choose."

The next day the big battle began. Ninth Army crossed the Rhine near Wesel. First Army broke out of the Remagen bridgehead in a smashing attack that penetrated deep into the German defenses. Patton's Fourth Armored Division struck out and captured Darmstadt.

Simpson and Hodges joined forces near Paderborn to complete General Bradley's concept. The Ruhr, Germany's industrial heart was encircled and cut off. General Bradley resumed command of the Ninth Army which had been operating under Field Marshal Montgomery and the Ruhr was liquidated. But, while this all important operation was being carried to a conclusion, another drive was being made into the depths of the "Nazi Heartland."

The end was near. The onrushing Third Armored Division by-passed the Harz Mountains and another pocket was created and mopped up. Finally, the Wehrmacht faltering backwards toward their capital made a last ditch stand on the Elbe. The Russian drive at Berlin got under way and a few days later at Torgau, the forces under General Bradley's Twelfth Army Group linked up with Marshal Koniev's First Ukrainian Army Group.

The linkup climaxed a campaign launched in winter and brought to its knees one of the great military powers of history.

The Germans were not yet finished. General Patton swung to the south. Racing along the fringe of Czechoslovakia he drove into Austria. Finally, beaten unconditionally the German armies capitulated.

But, even as the German nation ceased to fight another shift in tactics had begun. General Bradley had already deployed the Fifteenth Army to begin he tremendous task of governing conquered Germany. This task was carried out by the Twelfth Army Group including the Seventh Army, which came under General Bradley's control.

Alvin E. Robinson Lt./Col. USAF retiring 30 September 1958