

FLYING WITH THE 71ST TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON, 434th TROOP CARRIER GROUP 1943-1945

(An Autobiography by Lt. Marvin Litke, C-47 Pilot)



"The many years that have passed since the following events took place have caused strange quirks in my memory. I have tried very hard to be as accurate as possible without making this offering a ponderous historical document. This was an adventure and is remembered with all of emotional impact that it generated. Writing from a great distance in years I apologize from any errors or missing data. My goal was to put together a personal accounting and a sketchy history of a grand Squadron and the fine young men and women who gave the unit, spirit, character and companionship while performing bigger than life deeds. I thank all of them for allowing me to enjoy their acceptance and share in those deeds." Marvin Litke

GETTING TO THE WAR

Before I graduated from Roosevelt High in Chicago, IL in January 1942, WW II had been going on since December 7, 1941. Just before graduation I happened to see an article in the newspaper that said the United States Army Air Corp was accepting men 18 years of age without college credits if they could pass the test given to those with at least two years of college, which was required up to that time. After graduating, I took the test along with what looked like grown men – I felt like a child. The test was very difficult for me but I made the required 70% with a few points to spare. I was posted to Kelly Field, TX (San Antonio) a place I had dreamed of as a small child wanting to fly for the Air Corp. The train ride to San Antonio was kind of wild for me - two cars of Marines, two cars of sailors, and two cars of aviation cadets. The train had stopped in Chicago for a period of time awaiting the aviation cadet cars to be hooked on. This offered a great chance for the Marines and Sailors to buy out the local liquor stores. The trip was a long, no holds barred riot with the sailors and marines giving a realistic demonstration of what hand to hand combat was all about. I was under a seat counting bodies as they hit the floor until every one fell asleep from exhaustion. I felt that I was now really in a war.

PREFLIGHT

My time at Kelly Field was mainly spent in a tent city while waiting to get into real training on "the hill." We were just across the road from the flight line where advanced pilots were training. The sound of engines being warmed up early in the morning was a thrill that lasted all through my flying days. Before going into the grind of study and tough physical training, my time was spent guarding the entrance to the road up to "the hill." There I found out cars also have rank, and to not salute one brought it to a screeching halt followed by a screeching officer. I managed to acquire 50 demerits with little effort, which meant that on

most weekends I was pacing the tour area working off one demerit by walking one hour with rifle. I did not learn much about flying, but I was a sharp looking cadet with my rifle, white gloves, and trying not to sweat in a Texas August.

TRYING THEM ON FOR SIZE

I was sent to a contract primary flight school, Cimarron Field, just outside Oklahoma City. It was a military facility with civilian instructors, but having a military base commander and military check pilots. We were assigned instructors by our size, as the instructor rode in the back seat of the Fairchild PT-19 open cockpit planes we flew, and he had to be able to see over us. The aircraft instruments consisted of airspeed, altimeter, compass, needle and ball, engine oil temperature gauge and RPM. Mr. Miller, a big softy, was my flight instructor and luckily he assumed we were all children that needed a little rope so as to grow. We took a lot of rope. I soloed in seven and one half hours and scraped by the military check at 25 hours. The airplane was a new toy to me and I felt it was truly a perfect fit. I tried to make it do everything but what it was made to do. A friend, James P. Leonard (later a member of the 74th Sq) and I got into trouble one day by each buzzing the farm of a girl we were both trying to impress. It so happened that her grandfather was trimming a tree in the front yard as one after another of us pulled up out of a gully and dragged our wheels through the tree he was trimming. He happened to be a big shot in the local community and a personal friend of the colonel in command of the field. I did a lot of tour walking in primary also. In another incident involving the same girl, I had found out that the engine plugs would foul up if the aircraft was flown upside down for an extended period. I planned to have the engine cut out over a field near her house and make a heroic forced landing. I got the plugs fouled, glided in and when on a base leg checked the engine to make sure it would not start. I tried it three times but all that happened was a few loud backfires and then start up. I finally quit and flew back to the field. When I landed the engine stopped on the landing roll. A mechanic told me later that I was lucky to have gotten back as he had never seen engine plugs so fouled up and still work. But, best of all, I had been given an airplane all to myself and fulfilled a child's dream of flying. We lost about 50% of class 43-D to "washouts" in primary for various reasons. The fear of washing out remained constant all during the flight-training period.

The next stop was Enid Army Air Corp Basic Flying School, Enid, OK, later called Vance. The transition from PT-19 to the BT-13, Vultee "Vibrator" was an enormous one for me. The size, sound and the multitude of instruments along with the sliding canopy gave me some concerns for the first time. Actually I had little trouble flying the plane, and really took to formation flying when we were introduced to it. Night flying was also a first and I had my first encounter with the pitfalls that go with driving airplanes. We were flying night practice off the salt flats north of Enid, OK. Burning flares were set out to designate the taxi strips and runway. I was standing on the wing of the instructor leading the exercise, listening to him give radio instructions to those making the take-offs and landings, commonly called "circuits and bumps". Suddenly he leaped out of the cockpit and over my head screaming, "jump". I did as instructed and a second after I cleared the wing a plane plowed into the one I had been standing on. The errant cadet's plane then flipped over and continued sliding down the field dropping off parts as it did so. He had mistakenly lined up on the taxi strip flare pots instead of the proposed runway. No one hurt but I was very impressed with the demonstration of the law of immovable force meeting an equal moving force.

Gathering and walking off my usual 50 tours I was sent on to Aloe AFB, Victoria, TX for single engine advanced training in AT-6s. I was in heaven because I thought that I was a sure thing for fighter aircraft on graduation. I did well, scored expert in ground and aerial at Matagorda Island gunnery school, and even rode back seat to help my instructor while he

tried to qualify in aerial gunnery. I was also chosen by my instructor for what was then the "Top Gun" challenge, or "My boy can beat your boy." Another hot shot and I were sent up to do a best-of-three dogfight. I pulled off three straight wins by getting on the other cadet's tail and staying there until he gave up. The one incident that I remember clearly was taking off in a six-plane formation and after getting in trail formation; my windscreen suddenly went black with oil. I could not see the projected gun sight so I peeled out of the formation and set off for the field; we were over water at the time. I informed the tower of my plans and they asked if I wanted to bail out. I could not think of any reason for doing so and replied in the negative. I had to sideslip the landing due to no forward vision. When I landed the crash crew and ambulance joined in behind me as I taxied in. I was rather embarrassed at all the fuss. I followed the hand signals from a ground crewman, parked on the ramp and cut the engine. As customary after a flight I began filling out the Form 1 when the ground crewman yelled "Get the hell out of there, it is going to blow up"; I complied as quickly as possible. It was only then that I found out that flames were shooting out of the oil cooler mounted under the ship so as not to be seen by me: I was too stupid to note the lowering of oil pressure and the rise in temperature. The whole bottom of the aluminum skin had burnt off. Someone had kicked off the wire seal on the oil dilution switch causing the gas to so dilute the oil that the oil seal failed allowing gas to ignite as it poured out of the oil cooler. Feeling sure that I was going to be posted to a fighter school I was devastated to be given a troop carrier assignment; "What the hell is Troop Carrier?" I later found out that I graduated just when the plans for D-day were being finalized and the planes and pilots for the airborne drop had top priority.

I CAN FLY THIS BEAST, BUT HOW DO YOU GET IT TO THE RAMP

I was sent to Bergstrom Field, Austin TX for transitional training in C-47s. As I remember, the course was sixty days long. We were taken up in groups of four and traded off flying the bird. It seemed enormous to me. The problem was that I got only one touch and go landing and take off. No one kept track of who had what and just before graduation I got my first chance at landing and taxiing it to the tarmac. It was with great shock and dismay that I found I did not know how to taxi a twin-engine airplane that did not have a steering system. Some one had to take my place and bring it to the ramp.

I was posted to the 434th Troop Carrier Group at Alliance, NB, a town of 17,000 civilians. There were two just forming Troop Carrier Groups, each with four squadrons and the 507th Airborne Regiment, (later called the 507th Provisional Regiment) of the 101st Airborne Division. There was also a regiment of glider infantry on the base. The town of Alliance was 60 miles from any place, making the town look like a military base on a Saturday night. While there I got my first chance at legal buzzing. The Standard Operating Procedure was to fly at 50 feet and then pull up to 700 feet for the drop at the last minute to drop the air speed to 115 knots which if exceeded tended to tear panels in the A-10 chute that were then being used. The base had not yet been brought up to full compliment; in fact the 434th Troop Carrier Group was nowhere near being a full unit. I was first placed in the 73rd Sq and reassigned to the 71st a short time after arriving. The four squadrons (71, 72, 73, 74) all had only about six aircraft each.

On the day that I arrived I was told to report to the flight line. When I entered the operations room those present asked my name as a way of introduction and as I gave them the information. A very angry voice cried out "Litke, Litke get to hell in here"; 'here' being a small room with tarpaper walls. A very angry Captain, who I later found out was the Operations Officer began to chew off pieces of my demeanor and spit them back in my face. It seems that I had been due in about a week before coming which was probably due to my

taking a detour to Chicago and getting wrapped up in the thrill of showing off my wings. Someone finally stuck his head in the door and pointed out that I was scheduled to fly in a formation. I had thus been scheduled for a week, but not being there made it sort of hard to comply. With that the Ops Officer got off of my back to brief the crews on what they were supposed to do. The hair on the back of my neck stood up as he ordered them to practice TURNING INTO AN ECHELON: Most of the pilots already in the squadron had graduated from multi-engine school. I had gone to single engine school where we frequently and easily formed various formation changes with very maneuverable aircraft. Even so, we were warned never, never, never turn into an echelon. When the pilot of the aircraft I was to fly co-pilot in started to lead me out, the Ops Officer yelled, "Litke stays, I have more to say to him." That episode had a tragic ending. As I had feared, the last two aircraft of a six-ship echelon stalled out crashed into each other while the flight was turning into an echelon. That maneuver makes the inside ship have to pull back to almost stalling speed while the outside ship is going full bore, numbers six and five collided. One of them was the plane I had been assigned to fly co-pilot. Two full crews were lost.

We did some interesting work while at Alliance attempting to gain expertise, and also to work the bugs out of the SOPs that were new. We flew formation at 50 feet and then climbed to 700 feet at a simulated drop zone. Later we maintained 1,200 feet and pulled back the left throttle to lower the air speed. It was always SOP to pull back on the left engine, as that was the side the jump door was on and prop wash would play havoc with the paratroopers as they jumped. No one really thought it was crazy, as none of us knew better. We brought large bunches of wheat and prairie grass back in our wheel wells while flying the 50 foot formations. The one thing that never changed was having to fly night formation off of hooded, blue "Blitz" lights and damped exhausts in V of Vs formation. The blitz lights could only be seen when in exact position in the formation. We were the only pilots who flew tight night formations in any air force in the world.

For recreation, we drove out to the "country club" where the beginning social intros started with something like "Were you the jockey who dropped us 3 miles from the DZ today?" followed by "You wouldn't know the right DZ if it dropped on you", followed by fisticuff demonstrations. My 126 pounds usually found a comfortable position under a table very early in the evening. In October 1943 we were ordered to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, IN that was the exit port for Army Air Corp units going to the European theater. The first three Squadrons of the 434th flew the northern route and the 74th flew the Southern route. When we started in October, I just had my 20th birthday and I was thrilled to be sight seeing Labrador, Newfoundland, Greenland and Iceland. The ground echelon came over on the Queen Mary. We were a full squadron about a two months later. The flight experiences I had so far in the C47 did not exactly show a great deal of promise. On one flight to Mobile, AL I flew co-pilot with a very large pilot. It was very warm and humid at the time so we taxied with the side cockpit windows slid back. On take off I assumed my most humble and eager to please attention to my pilot's orders. As he yelled "gear up" I reached down to unlatch and pull the gear lever up. As I did so, all of the maps flew out of the window on my side that I had neglected to shut. I looked up at my pilot with a pleading look. He stared at my look of horror and promptly hit me on the top of my head. We had no more interaction for the balance of the flight home.

KEEP 'A STIFF UPPER LIP'

We were supposed to land at Prestwick, Scotland, the entry airfield for flights over the northern route. However, it was weathered in so we diverted to Nutts Corner near Belfast, Ireland. Our first base in England was at Fulbeck in Lincolnshire. Since the support elements

did not arrive for some time, we were fed from an RAF unit. The English had developed a method of cooking food until it no longer could be identified as such. We longed for our squadron mess. Since we were also the assigned mess for group headquarters, we always had the best of food. Three things about England caught my attention immediately; a people who were literally still living with their past history; the beauty of the land; and the unusual slang wording of their language. To find out what time we wanted to be awakened we were asked, "When do you wish to be knocked up?" Another saying that got our attention was "Keep your pecker up" which was slang for keep a stiff upper lip. A cookie was a biscuit, but a "bum" was the center of ones sitting cushions. A napkin was a baby diaper. A horse race was run by the "galloping gee gees." However, as in all of my overseas postings I found the population to be generous and forthcoming, wanting to like and be liked. All in all, being a very heavy reader as a youngster, I was familiar with historical places and was thrilled to suddenly come upon them as I wandered about. I was young and I owned the world. Nothing could be greater then passing through the "looking glass" and finding things to be even more then I had ever fantasized. I was in London on my own the first week after landing. I arrived during the total blackout with out having any idea where I was going to stay or how to get there. I got to London every chance I could. (We were 60 miles away). I had the thrill of being saluted by the Buckingham Palace guards and got to stay one night at the Savoy. For a kid just out of the depression this was high living. I experienced both the V1 Buzz bomb and the V2 rocket attacks just being missed by one buzz bomb by the quick action of a London cabbie, and having another destroy the small hotel we often used.

SERIOUS PREPARATION

We started off with an attitude that youths need to prove that the boundaries for each us were less then for every one else. The squadron immediately lost two ships and their crews in a mid air collision stemming from "cutting it to close." The two pilots were the favorites in the unit and sobered every one up for a short time. Having flown in both peace time and war time I have never ceased to be amazed at how casual war time stupidity is accepted compared to the ever lasting investigations, boards, meetings, directives, etc that come out of minor incidents in peace time. It was wartime and every one got a little crazy. The glider pilots for want of something to break the boredom of waiting started a bicycle ski ramp, peddling their bikes at high speed off of a dirt ramp. A after a couple of broken bones and many sprains the flight surgeon put a stop to it. He also stopped the volley ball games as jumping high enough to have your head clear the net invited a fist in the face. But the business of flying got serious. We trained hard and often. Flying was a part of most nights and days.

THE FLYING CHRISTMAS TREES

We flew a heavy schedule: Lots of night formations, night paratroop and glider drops; also, lots of forming up a stream at night. This called for groups, usually with 52 aircraft each, hitting a mark to the minute in order to fall into place in the stream. There would be about 400 planes when the stream was formed. One night in the process of flying one of these I thought I saw shadows flitting across the night sky. At that point someone really saw something and flicked on his running lights and landing lights. The group that was to fall in behind us arrived early and was flying at 90 degrees through the middle of our formation. Everyone took evasive action and there were aircraft all over the place for about two minutes and then there was no one and I, and most everyone else, was alone. The gods of crazy people brought every one back safely. About 10 minutes after this incident, as I was trying to find my way back to our blacked out field I caught a flicker of light to my left and made an almost past the vertical right turn trying to dodge - a star.

Early in our preparation we would sometimes form up with the red and green running lights on until the formation was fully formed. Flying at the usual low altitude, looking at the formation coming at you looked much like a Christmas tree laying flat. The folks in the area we were flying in called us the Flying Christmas Tree. We had three pilots from somewhere in the group request being removed from flying status during this time. As I look back after many more flying hours I am still amazed that 19-24 year old kids with very little flying experience (Most had only about 200 hours of flying time, counting flight school) were doing the impossible and doing it well, with a minimum of mishaps.

Bad weather often got us into difficult situations. One evening the weather closed in as we were returning with a full group after a formation practice. The new group CO made us circle and land one squadron at a time. We could normally put 52 aircraft on the deck in 3 second intervals or shorter if needed. The way this was handled we only got one squadron down before the field socked in. There were no radio aids at that time and all facilities were completely blacked out except for perimeter lights, which could not be seen in the soup. We broke up and found fields on our own. I was fortunate enough to request and gained what I think was called "Fido". This process consisted of pipes with jets in them down each side of a runway that carried fuel and was lit up just long enough to burn off a few feet of fog so an aircraft could land. It was so expensive and a glaring breach of the blackout that it was only used when the result made the cost and chance worth it. As it was the RAF tower crew thought I was a formation so they allowed it. They were fairly put out when only one ship landed. A more usual method was to fly in a pattern and call "Darky" which was a signal for requesting help, usually a direction to the nearest field. Another signal was "May Day" called over the radio. It was an anglicized version of the French for "Help Me". The only problem was that the radios we were using were the new version of UHF which were great for line of sight but did not carry far so one had to be within range if in trouble. I had a great need for this service later on which I will describe when I get to that period.

THE WHISTLE BLOWS

After adjusting to the country and the intense training, I was settled in and feeling comfortable. On leave I envied the bomber types with the three waves under their class A jacket lapel indicating that they had bailed out and been plucked from the channel. And, the fighter types with the obligatory top button on the jacket always unbuttoned. I was also fascinated with the variety of uniforms from numerous organizations and countries. During one leave in London I became a reluctant ally to a drunken Polish infantryman who spoke no English. He pulled me along while demonstrating his strength by punching out every pane of glass in an English telephone booth, not wanting to be seen as another booth I trailed along until I could lose him in a bar.

As we entered the summer of '44 it became obvious that something big was not far off. On about June 3 we were suddenly briefed, placed behind guarded barbed wire and began to check the aircraft and figure loads. About one half of the 71st was sent to Greenham Commons, a nearby field to be tacked on to the 438th Troop Carrier Group. I have been unable to find any mention of this action in official records. Since I was one of the crews sent to Greenham Commons and because I blew a tire on landing, I remember it well. The only reasons that I can think of for augmenting the 438th was to drop a maximum number of paratroopers for the lead group, or to add some specialized unit to the drop. General Eisenhower drove onto the field just before the loading process started. He walked among the troopers and crews with a greeting or a question. At last I felt that we must be doing something important for him to show up.

After the troops were loaded, a printed message from Eisenhower was read to the troopers on board. I read the message. Although having disappeared from my papers, I have always remembered the starting sentence: "Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen, you are about to embark on a great crusade." I felt and treated this task with deep feeling. Due to the British double summer time it was just dusk as the pathfinder aircraft took off. It had become dark as we took off at about 11:30 pm. We had been given "bennies" by the flight surgeon as we had been up all day and would be flying another mission the next day. These were to keep us extra alert for the period needed. In my case they kept me awake and hyper for three days before I "crashed" and fell asleep.

As I remember that night, the takeoff was routine. The aircraft were carrying max loads and were a bit more sluggish than usual. However, we had plenty of runway and there were no problems. As far as the 71st was concerned there were no aborts. Although we had done this a hundred times and were pretty relaxed, the flight was one of the smoothest night formations that I had ever flown. The fact that this one was for real seemed to make every one extra sharp. Although we were the 'tail end Charlie,' there was practically no stacking and therefore, little or no prop wash to fight. The weather was clear with little wind and no natural conditions to worry about. As we passed the channel islands we could see flack coming up at something that was much closer than we were. The moon was bright and I could see the coastline from a good distance out. This caused a big problem when we hit the shoreline. There was a huge thermal cumulus cloudbank that started just below our altitude and extended much higher than I could see. The fact that, at a distance, we could see under the cloudbank made the sudden entry into the clouds something that we could not prepare for. One moment we saw the lead aircraft against the background of the clouds and then he disappeared and we were in the soup. We had an SOP for taking a formation through a cloud formation, but this was unexpected and unplanned for. The cloud was not very extensive and we broke through in about 45 seconds. The natural reflex to turn away from the flight direction to prevent mid-air collision caused the formation to break up.

Although Troop Carrier was later accused of not having the experience to carry out such a mission, the fact was that it was only through superior flying on the part of all of those involved that resulted in zero collisions and the dropping of all of the paratroopers, even if some were a great distance from their drop zones. When we broke out of the clouds I could see the moon reflected from a large area of water. This was further confusing as there was no such body of water on our briefing maps. It was later found that recon of the area was done during daylight hours and the water could not be seen through the thick growth that covered the area. Tragically, many troopers drowned when dropped into this area. The water was not very deep but the equipment that each trooper carried made it almost impossible to get to his feet after landing in the water. I am sure that I got beyond the flooded fields before giving the green light but I can never be sure exactly where I did drop.

The anti aircraft fire was pretty heavy after breaking into the clear. At night every tracer round looked like it was coming directly at you. We got back to the coast without being hit. I saw no other aircraft going back to Aldermaston. I did see large amounts of flack being fired from the channel islands at the serials coming in. We landed safely at our regular base and reported for briefing. The rest of the 434th Group was then in route with the group's first glider tow. We had not lost any aircraft from the element at Greenham Commons. The aircraft that I usually flew was equipped with a glider "snatch" system. This required a large housing for the winch just in front of the jump door so it could not carry troopers. For this reason I switched aircraft with another crew for the paratroop. This crew was shot down on the first glider tow mission. It seemed that all or most of the crew had bailed out and were

captured. It was reported later that they were killed by allied fighter-bombers as they were marched off to a prison camp.

I flew the second mission that afternoon, a glider tow. It was dusk when we dropped. The flack was very heavy and we made a tight turn and hit the deck. As we flew back across the coast I could see for the first time the mass of shipping with the big ships firing broadsides toward the shore. There were about five C-47 aircraft that had ditched near shore; the crews were standing on the wings waving at us as we flew over. I remember a pleading voice coming in over the radio asking for the aircraft to please not fly low over the beach as it caused the navy ships to have to hold up on firing missions. I remember being so elated (high) that I wanted to return to shore to see the grand event. For once better judgment was in gear.

On D Plus 3 we returned to a small strip carved out of the bluffs over Omaha beach. This time we were to pick up wounded and carried the flight nurses attached to us. We continued to fly in and out of this strip for a number of days. We began the lengthy attachment to the Third Army (Patton) that we kept until the end of the war in Europe. At first it was every sort of supply into prepared fields with the wounded as return cargo. Then after the breakout in Normandy, supplies gradually were limited to five gallon "Jerry" cans of gasoline which the fast moving third Army needed most of. I remember flying very low over the road that the Germans were trapped on at the breakthrough. I have flown over a number of fields and cities that had been demolished in the fighting, including the industrial Rhineland but I have never witnessed such a scene as thousands of burnt out vehicles, dead horses and piled up human corpses as that few miles of road revealed.

We began to really fly our tails off. It was common to fly over a hundred hours a month during June and July. We were flying two missions a day, from dawn to dark, often having the crews unload their own aircraft. Everyone started walking with what I called the "Jerry Can Stoop". Unloading 3000 lbs of jerry cans each mission soon altered the best of postures. As time went on we began to land in empty fields not sure if we in the right place. We just landed, tossed out the cans, and took off. Sometimes we were in advance of the army and at least once we landed in a field that the GI's were still receiving incoming cannon fire. We learned how to really fly during this time. We had no radio aids, often had to fly under low overcasts and depended on our own wits to get there and back. I remember flying the wing in a three ship formation coming out of France with ceilings of about 200 feet and flying through curtains of fog not knowing how extensive each curtain was. As we exited one curtain we were lower then the three hills that surrounded the valley that we had flown into. The lead made a sharp turn into me and I can still see my left wingtip seemingly inches from the ground making a perfect circle around a high bush. This sort of flying became the norm and I do not remember any flight crew dwelling on this as being dangerous. Again, the quality of the flying resulted in zero losses on re-supply missions.

The 71st did lose one aircraft to an accident. Once more I was flying wing in a three-ship formation. This time it was into one of those advanced strips. It had been raining and, as usual, there was no hard runway to land on. We dragged the field and the lead thought it looked OK. I was number two, so was right behind him as we peeled off to land. We usually landed at about 10 second intervals and were doing so this time. However, when the lead hit the ground he came to an immediate stop and went over onto the nose of the aircraft and then settled back. I had poured on the coal and was going around for a look see when he called and made the understatement of the war, "Watch out, it is muddy down here." He reported that the ground was in better shape on the side of the field so we landed there, picked up his crew and flew on back after unloading. The pilot of this crew was Herman

Fonseca, a resident of San Jose, California. Marshall Jones was the pilot of the third aircraft. We were on a mission to fly POWs back to relocation centers in France.

Another interesting adventure came my way during one of the supply missions. We were to land in another unprepared field near Gotha, Germany. One of our glider pilots (Hans Lieman, Kansas City, MO) came up to me and asked if he could go along as he was born and lived in Gotha until his early teens. He wanted to check on the family that still lived there. It sounded like fun to me so I said ok, he could log some flight time he needed for flight pay. I got to think about how much I might enjoy visiting a German town, so I asked if I might come into town with him, he said OK. We landed and I talked the co-pilot into flying the plane back with the crew chief as co-pilot. We were supposed to make two trips and he could pick me up on the return trip. We hitched a ride into town and located the main square, which was the landmark he needed to locate his old home.

After asking some directions from a civilian we located his home but it had been bombed out. Asking around he found out where his relatives had moved to and we proceeded there. An aunt answered our knock on the door of a very nice apartment in an obviously good part of town. After all of the histrionics we were invited to join the many relatives present to the dinner they had just begun. The food was good and plenty. The after dinner discussion turned sour as the family began complaining how bad things were, such as not being able to get white bread. And, how the slave laborers had taken over the town and acted like "savages". Hans was translating for me and I could see that he was getting angry. He finally requested we leave. When outside he stated that his anger was the result of his family's complaints about how bad things were when they appeared to us in better shape than we had seen in any of the countries that we had been in.

We were stopped by a bunch of slave labor folks from Russia. They were pushing a little car because they could not start it. They asked us if we wanted it, we did. With a push from them we got it started (An Opal) and drove off towards the field to be picked up. Unfortunately the second mission was cancelled due to weather and Hans and I spent a miserable, cold night trying to stay warm under a flock of pictures of Nazi bigwigs. The next day we caught a ride from another group that came in with supplies. We got the Opal back and evaded some serious troubles leaving only the memories of another unusual adventure. We kept the Opal for a short time until orders came down that all vehicles not GI issue were to be turned in.

One looked for any means to break up the supply run action. One day while flying over Paris just after it's liberation. I noted that Champs Elysees was like an arrow pointing to the Eiffel Tower. The temptation was too much - I decided to fly under the tower. I made three low level passes down the Champs Elysees, but the distance between the legs looked narrower each time. Fear overcoming stupidity, I flew on. I later found the actual distance between the tower legs would have allowed a successful passage. I was in Paris a short time after this incident. The crowds were still dancing in the streets. I visited George Carpentier's Nightclub where I became captured by a crowd and led into the dancing around the Arc de Triomphe. That and a visit to the Moulon Rouge made me feel that I had "seen the elephant".

THE WINTER OF 1944-45

The winter of 44-45 was one of the worst, winters in history. The powers that ran the war had figured that Germany was about finished and began shutting down the personnel pipeline as well as the equipment sources. Factories were being shut down, and the Air Corps was cutting its training output. Then came the *Battle of the Bulge*. There was

suddenly a great need for front line infantry bodies. Many areas were tapped to fill this need. There were some in pilot training and or technical schools who were suddenly snatched up and made infantrymen. The 71st had a young cook who was to say the least an independent thinker. He often supplied me with foodstuff to take home after I got married. Suddenly he turned up missing. For a while no one knew what had happened to him. Suddenly the truth came out. He and a number of other non-aircrew members had been grabbed with no warning and sent to the front. The cook in question had never even practiced with any sort of weapon. He lasted less than two weeks and was badly crippled in his first action. His story was only one of many who had this happen to them, with the same results. Little enough credit is given to those who had less glamorous tasks but were a vital part of the squadron. The test of that was what happened to our usually great mess after he left. I try like heck but I cannot remember his name and do not have a squadron roster. I remember him as a 6' youngster, slim, always laughing and always ready to make "deals" to get his needs met by helping others to get their needs met. The grab for bodies during this period and the reasons why have not been touched on much. It was a tragedy of war, probably not anyone's mistake, but a tragedy nevertheless. I had heard that the losses of these "Instant" foot soldiers were in the thousands.

A CHALLENGE TO PERSONAL INTEGRITY

War is surely an activity that places extreme stress on ones personal moral beliefs and self identified integrity. It is also a gross revelation of the nature of man. By the time the United States became involved in WW II, I had already developed intense emotional feelings about the happenings in Asia and in Europe. Although I was not placed in a position to do so, I felt then and now that I could kill if needed. However, a small voice of what was left of my rational self was forever interrupting the concept of gross blame. Now, fifty-eight years later I find myself struggling less with my self and turning more towards accepting that man is surely not the highest form of living creatures but does cruel, crazy, improbable and illogical things to make appear as if he were. As this thought was recently running through my mind, I remembered a test of my own values that happened during the late stages of WW II.

I was part of a supply run to Germany with critical needs to a forward sod field. Incoming artillery shells were falling near the field. Very nervous GIs involved in the action were gathering very nervous German combat troops on the fringes of the field. The field was also being used as a collection point for German POW's. Very nervous GI's guarding very nervous prisoners.

As we queued for take-off, I noticed a German soldier with a cardboard box hanging from a rope around his shoulders. A GI was beating him severely with what appeared to be a sawed off broom handle. I soon noted the beatings took place whenever an aircraft started up the engines and the prop wash blew the contents of the box out over the field. Evidently the prisoners were made to do a good deed by picking up items that might be sucked into the engines and cause damage. The beating of the prisoner continued for a situation he could do nothing about. Struggling with the fact that the GI's experiences may have attributed to the beatings he was giving, I finally lost it and left my aircraft, walked over to the GI and berated him for demonstrating behavior that seemed to be part of the reason we were supposed to be fighting to eliminate. I did not attempt to make a moral point to him, as I could not place my feelings as being of a higher truth than the reasons for his actions. I simply used the power of rank to tell him to knock it off. He appeared somewhat puzzled but did stop the beatings, at least while I was on the field. I half expected a .303 slug to take off the back of my head. My actions somehow caused me to feel a little more human and proud of holding on to a small, tattered but significant piece of the fabric that allows

one to face one's self in the mirror. This incident was significant enough for me to have retained a very clear memory of it to the present time.

My C-47 was a high time one and therefore was left behind when the group left for the states. The picture on the heading was actually the last time I saw the a/c. This was in France. Because I had no aircraft to fly home, I was sent to Antwerp to come home by ship. I took a temporary discharge in 1945 due to a sick wife. I flew out of Hamilton Field near San Francisco as a member of the active reserve for a short time until returning to active duty in the early 50's. I was discharged Jan 1958 and returned to San Francisco and San Francisco State College, later called University of California at San Francisco. Of my 15 years of service, five were spent overseas.

Flying the C-119G – Post WW II



This is an artist's painting from a B & W photograph of Author Marvin Litke at the controls of a C-119G; Ashiya, Japan, 1954.

I left the service for a short time in 1946 in an attempt to try to deal with the then emerging mental health issues that my wife was encountering. They seemed to have resolved themselves and I returned to the about-to-be U. S. Air Force. After a few non-descript jobs I returned to Troop Carrier with a 'just called up' reserve unit of the Tennessee Air National Guard stationed at the Memphis Municipal Airport. It was my first experience with a unit consisting of local folks who managed to blend the pecking order of civilian status with the rank status of the military. "Good Old" Sgt. Pete, the crew chief, was a civilian working buddy of, Major Smith, and the relationship continued in the military with

only a nominal nod at military decorum. The lack of stiff military protocol was fine with me, although a little unsettling in trying to figure out the politics of who was who.

Thus I began my experience with the C-119 aircraft. I was fascinated by the nimble finger work that went into syncing the props but admired the power and flight characteristics, especially in a single engine mode, which was to prove very handy a number of times in the future. The mission was the same as I had been used to in the C-47 unit I had served in; Airborne Operations (minus the gliders), combat cargo and general "you call we deliver" missions. The one big improvement other than power and capacity was the ability to drop heavy equipment. With the clam shell doors off we were able to drop anything up to and including a 6x6 truck. The ability to drop medium artillery along with a vehicle for towing would have been a real asset to airborne ops during WW II. The general symmetry of formation flying during airborne ops had not changed. A need for more accurate airdrop procedures led to the development of the CARP system (Calculated Air Release Point) to replace the old "eyeball system". It was moderately successful as long as there were no extremes in the weather. I remember many times flying in formation and being unable to keep an element from over running the leading element due to a change in wind velocity or direction, even when "stacking" was held to a minimum. Most of the Korean conflict was spent with this outfit, including a move to the more formal atmosphere of Ardmore. OK, a newly opened base. Once more I found myself in a town whose total population was not much more than the military presence. This made the social life of the base to be base centered, which in turn put one's personal life center stage.

The unit gradually reached a more proficient level of functioning after a change in the Squadron Commanding Officer, a rather neat individual who originally flew medium bombers. I was promoted to Captain due to an ER that was, to me a rather insightful document. Not being involved much into the base social life I was unaware that he had seen me as a person who did not complain and took any mission that came up. We were becoming very short on aircrews as the Korean affair was winding down and I was constantly coming in from a flight to find someone sitting on my front steps requesting that I take a flight out in an hour or so. This was fairly normal to my experiences in the past so that I did not see it as particularly heroic. One interesting flight that I took part in was flying the West Point Cadets on their summer tour of military bases to help them decide which branch of the service they wanted. Naturally they were treated royally wherever they went. One leg of our flight was between Fort Hood, TX and Eglin Field, Florida. I had a bad engine reading and aborted the take off. We fiddled around until it was finally decided it was the instrument and not the engine. We really should have refueled because of the two take-off demands on fuel but decided we could probably make it. About a third of the way there it dawned on me that we did not have enough fuel to make it and were hurting to make up time to meet the cadet's schedule.

I decided to cut across the Gulf of Mexico rather than continue to fly the flight clearance route. As I was sweating out the probable problem of explaining the reason for a planeload of wet cadets one of them came into the cockpit and asked me how many "moments" (A measure of the load carrying capacity on any one part of the aircraft) each of the tail sections had. I was in no mood for a cadet trying to impress me so I growled at him, "Kid, I just fly them, I don't build them". We landed at Eglin with internally dusty tanks.

I was given the position of Asst Ops Officer which included taking over the Personal Equipment section, where I encountered the two airmen who made up the section and who had bad reps. I found out that one was a booze hound, constantly going AWOL and being brought back drunk, the other was an "I don't give a crap" individual. During my initial

conversation with them the problem became very clear. They were suffering from being understaffed the same as the flight crews were. They were on duty 24/7 having to load and unload chutes from each flight before takeoff and after landing. It took two of them to do it. Neither had had a legal pass in months. I set a schedule that was to take place only if the two could make the section function as it should. I "ordered" the "booze hound" to remove himself from the base for 24 hours, during which he could drink as much as he wanted provided he stayed out of trouble. The other airman was promised a 24-hour pass, only if the first airman returned in proper shape. I would continue this on a bi-weekly basis as long as it went well. The two would have to develop a system for continued servicing of the aircraft, without fault. The plan worked like hot biscuits and gravy. In fact, the next ORI report judged my section to be one of the few on the base that was fully functional.

In 1953, I was posted to Japan in what was a bewildering change of assignments. Wings became Groups, Groups became Squadrons and Squadron sized units became Groups and then Wings. Flying out of Ashiya (Kyushu) Japan, the flight time put in during this period was the most challenging and educational period in my whole career. Mountain waves that thrust the aircraft up and down with little that the pilot could control; low jet streams of nearly 200 knots gave ground speeds of near zero. Having to make as many as 6-8 below minimums GCA approaches on a single courier run, up the Korean peninsula bases and back down bases in Japan from north to south were normal. Squall lines were common and often came across Japan from west to east causing one to have to deal with them longitudinally. Max loads, short runways, including the weed choked, grass strip on Cheju Island in the Cheju Straights, land up hill take off down hill... but sometimes the weeds had to be cut in order to get out. I was, by then, fully aware of the rather disconcerting habit of the 3350 engines to have valve guides wear rather quickly causing the valve stems to vibrate and break of. This resulted in the pieces of the stem being swallowed and sucked into the PRT (Power Recovery Turbines) which tore up the blades which in turn played hell with the engines plugs, causing a characteristic series of back fires, followed by engine failure and/or fire in very rapid order. I experienced five in-flight engine failures, three of them with fires. I had got so that I could react without thinking and have the engine feathered and cleaned up often before the second or third backfire. In one case the maintenance crew could not find any damage until one them finally noticed that the shaft on one of the turbines had been severed so cleanly that it was only noticed when it failed to turn. I ended up with five more engine failures due to the valve guides while in Japan.

There was noticeable difference in the attitude and performance of crews during this period. A lot of reservists had been called up and brought in the normal family and career concerns that had not been an issue much in WW2 due to the younger age of the rated personnel. Because of these concerns it was my personal belief that they suffered a certain degree proficiency; they had no good reason to push the envelope to discover the extent of their own and the aircraft's outside capabilities, always a dangerous situation. This was in contrast to the better and more thorough training they had received. I got to add to the airborne units that I had the honor of working with. I was involved in airborne ops with Japanese, Korean, and Thai units as well as American units. I remember one time landing at Kimpo Air Field and having a Korean officer come to the aircraft as the engines were being shut down. He requested that be dropped into the bay off shore. The request seemed rather strange and he was asked for some more details. It turned out that he was a member of a unit that was regularly dropped into N. Korea for intelligence gathering and he just wanted to keep his water jumps polished. He claimed there would be a boat to pick him up. We took him up and he jumped, as for the boat, I did not see one, but then paratroopers never seemed exactly straight. While in the Far East, two tragic events occurred that stick with me to this day. During a long and stressful flight to a good number of Korean airbases we landed at Chitose Air base on the Northern Island of Hokkaido just after dark. The "follow

me" jeep parked in front of the aircraft with his lights shining on the port engine. As per the age-old tradition the pins are inserted in the landing gear so that it will not collapse when the engine is turned off and the hydraulic pressure is relieved. This calls for the Crew Chief to exit the aircraft, climb into the wheel well and insert the pins. He is about four feet from the turning prop. In this case the Crew Chief put in the pin on the port side, turned jumped off the front of the tire he was standing on, right into the prop, there was a sickening sound of about three or four blades going through his body and all was still. It was thought that fatigue and the fact that the jeep's lights may have made the props invisible were probably the causal factors. The recommendation that flight crews had made for years that the pins not be inserted while the engines were running because THE DESIGN OF LANDING GEARS WERE SUCH THAT THE WEIGHT OF THE AIRCRAFT ON THE GEAR MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR IT TO COLLAPSE. A quiet, dedicated young Sgt. by the name of Negaroni (sp) was one of the many victims of this "Tradition".

The second incident involved pilots who had just past their aircraft and route checks and needed to rack up some first pilot time. I assigned them to the usual local flight pattern: Practice some ADF runs with the tower, shoot a few landings and make few turns around the local flight area. Both of the pilots were young and looked about the age of those of us who drove airplanes in WW II. They had been up for about 30 minutes when I got a call from the tower saying that a C-119 had been reported down at sea in our area. They had called all of the planes flying locally but had not gotten a reply from our plane. In a short time recovered wreckage identified the aircraft as ours. They had been buzzing that fishing fleet off shore (Buzzing, in spite of strict orders, has always been one of the first things most pilots do to demonstrate their refusal to recognize the law of gravity). They had struck the 15 foot mast of a fishing vessel, tearing off a wing and immediately plowing in. One of the pilots who was a tall, shy youngster did not fit the image of the "hot pilot". When his body was recovered papers in his wallet identified him as belonging to a Poet Society.

Another tragic crash into a mountain that rose to the east of the field was the result of fog and a poorly executed missed approach procedure off of a GCA. It took two days for the rescue crew to reach the wreckage and to their amazement they found a little old Japanese gentleman sitting in front of what was left of one engine striking what turned out to be the piston rods which were filled with magnesium for cooling purposes but would instantly burn with intense heat if exposed to air. He was in a junk man's heaven and it was all his, until the rescue crew found, and possibly rescued him.

We participated in the first SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) maneuvers in, I think, 1955. It was held in Bangkok, Thailand and was a grand affair. There was, of course, a fly-over by many of the air forces of the represented nations. This was followed by a banquet at the Royal Palace for the officers. The King, and most of the government leaders were also present. I was fascinated by the colorful dress uniforms that were present - from turbans to kilts. On the way back we were issued in-flight lunches of the usual ilk. Most of the crews had taken advantage of the cheap and rather good local beer and exotic food. We had augmented crews due to the lengthy flight time involved and I was sacked out on some chutes in the cabin when I was wakened by the sound of rushing air from an open cabin door. I looked up to find the Crew Chief dumping some in-flight lunch boxes out of one of the jump doors. He woke me three or four more times doing the same thing, we were flying over the Philippine Islands at the time. I finally asked him what he was doing. His reply was classic. He said that he had eaten well but not wisely in Bangkok and had compounded the problem with a goodly amount of beer. As a result he was suddenly afflicted with an urgent case of the "GI's" and because he did not want to be faced with cleaning out the toilet in the Aircraft, he was using the in-flight lunch boxes and then tossing them out. It occurred to me

at the time that some poor Philippine native was contemplating the vagaries of his Gods that would cause them to send him such packages from above.

One of the interesting and to me a positive factors that characterized my unit as struggling not to be sucked into the Air Forces "new respectability" was the fact that at one time we were barred from almost all of the Officers Clubs in the Far East. Some of the causal factors were; One of my pilots with a snoot full of alcohol phoning the base commander (Bird Colonel) and demanding that he come down and reopen the club that had just thrown him out in order to meet their closing time. During a party at Clark Field, Philippines for some probably minor reason some of the Squadron delinquents grabbed a terrified young lady in a beautiful evening gown and deposited her in the swimming pool. It would probably have been treated as a poor joke except the girl was the Commanding General's daughter. Most of the Squadron was also barred from the Royal Restaurant in Fukuoka, Kyushu, Japan and it became difficult to find "playgrounds" in any of a dozen islands, countries, or military basis.

During my tour in Japan I was in charge of the first C-119 simulator. I was very much impressed with its ability to simulate actual flying. I had pilots get airsick due to the motion and stress of the "emergencies". I had one pilot smoke through one half pack of cigarettes, lighting the cork end each time. We finally called the base fire dept thinking we had an electrical fire. We had to put in at least 16 hours a day of flight time on it. The flights were copies of regular runs and lasted about four hours. All were night, IFR, simulations. Icing, rough weather, fire, popped circuit breakers, communication loss, GCA missed approaches, and any sort of problem one could think of was were all available at the command of the simulator instructor pilot. I also reached "Green Card" status, Senior Pilot rating, Instructor Pilot, Operational Test Pilot and Instrument Check Pilot. I felt that I had pushed both the C-119G and myself to the extremes of our capabilities. I was comfortable that in buckling it to my butt we were a happy team, ready for anything.

At the time I had gotten my RIF orders I was doing some odd flights here and there and was letting out all of the stops in finishing off my flying career. I was on a stand-by with my crew at a Japanese airbase for what was to be a regular holiday: Aviation Day, in celebration of the formation of Japanese Airline and an internal airline that had just begun operation. They were flying a twin engine, small British aircraft. Part of the celebration and as a way to get the Japanese public back into commercial flight, they were taking up passengers for a short flight free of charge. The pilot of the Japanese aircraft and I were using crude pigeon English to talk about each of our planes. Since he was flying for an internal airline he did not have to be able to use the universal flight language-English. Since I had nothing to lose and was rather bored standing around, I offered him a flight on my C-119. He was happy to comply and I let him take off and climb out. He was pretty good at it. When we had enough height I offered to demonstrate what all pilots of twin-engine aircraft wanted to know; how does it perform on a single engine? I cut one engine and let him fly through a few modest turns. Then I put the ship into a 45-degree bank and had him take the controls to see how well the ship flew on one engine. He was very impressed. In fact, he was so impressed that he insisted that I fly his aircraft - with a full load of passengers. I took off, flew around for a while and landed, all the while he was graciously smiling and enjoying his hospitality, a big issue with the Japanese. He could probably have been canned and sent to some outlying island if he had been caught, as for me, they would probably have had to extend my service time by ten years in order to settle all of the Courts Martial charges. But it was a grand and glorious way to end a flying career.

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HEADQUARTERS
IX TROOP CARRIER COMMANDC
APO 133, US Army
9 July 1944.GENERAL ORDERS)
:
NO.44)

SECTION I: AWARDS OF THE AIR MEDAL.

* * * * *

1. By direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order No. 9158 (Bull 25, WD, 1942), as amended by Executive Order No. 9242-A (Bull 49, WD, 1942) and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, and pursuant to authority contained in paragraph 1, letter, file AG 200.6, Headquarters, Ninth Air Force, Subject: "Award of the Air Medal", addressed to the Commanding General, IX Troop Carrier Command, dated 26 June, 1944, the following named officers and enlisted men of the 434th Troop Carrier Group are awarded the Air Medal, in recognition of meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flights in the European Theatre of Operations during the period from 16 October 1943 to 1 July 1944.

As Troop Carrier combat crew members, these individuals meritoriously climaxed a most successful program of intensive, specialized training and joint maneuvers with airborne units in aerial flights by their superb performance in vital sorties flown during the initial Troop Carrier phases of the invasion of the European continent.

The magnificent spirit and enthusiasm displayed by these individuals, combined with skill, courage and devotion to duty is reflected in their brilliant operation of unarmed and unarmored Troop Carrier aircraft at minimum altitudes and air speeds, in unfavorable weather conditions, over water, and into the face of vigorous enemy opposition, with no possibility of employing evasive action, to spearhead the Allied invasion of the continent and to support Air and Ground Forces in the critical period which followed. Their respective duty assignments were performed in such an admirable manner as to produce exceptional results in the greatest and most successful airborne operation in the history of world aviation.

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71st Troop Carrier Squadron

GLENN E. W. MANN, JR.	0-396526	Major	Scotts Bluff, Neb.
MILTON K. EUSTON	0-665656	Capt.	Kansas City, Mo.
THOMAS C. RICKETTS, JR.	0-666821	Capt	Richmond, Va.
ROLAND BENSON	0-533602	1st Lt	Brooken, Okla.
WILLIAM H. CARLS	0-685526	1st Lt	Chicago, Ill.
EDWIN P. CARTER	0-678161	1st Lt	Colorado Springs, Col.
HERMAN R. FONSECA	0-678216	1st Lt	San Jose, Calif.
EDWARD J. HLAVA	0-807215	1st Lt	Cicero, Ill.
WILLIAM T. JONES	0-685632	1st Lt	Atlanta, Ga.
WALTER D. LOCKARD	0-802049	1st Lt	Monongah, W.Va.
JAMES MALOOLEY	0-673406	1st Lt	Terre Haute, Ind.
GEORGE K. McLEAN	0-737822	1st Lt	Gridley, Calif.
HERMAN T. MEINERSMANN	0-674509	1st Lt	Des Plains, Ill.
JOHN W. NELSON	0-740262	1st Lt	Lakeville, Ill.
ROBERT E. O'NEILL	0-807293	1st Lt	Brighton, Mass.
CLAY A. ORUM	0-466816	1st Lt	Carthage, Ill.
EDWARD R. PARRISH	0-672402	1st Lt	Jackson, Mich.
HENRY C. REAVIS	0-740919	1st Lt.	Sierra Madre, Calif.
WILLIAM E. THOMPSON	0-809448	1st Lt	Tokona Park, Md.
KENNY WILTS	0-669648	1st Lt	Holdenville, Okla.
MARIO R. BELLUSCIO	0-754459	2nd Lt.	Elizabeth, N. J.
ALPH D. FAY'S	0-798990	2nd Lt	Hyde Park, Mass.
WES D. BOWIS	0-811595	2nd Lt	Springfield, L.I., N.Y.

RUPERT D. GAMBLE	0-807232	2nd Lt.	Birmingham, Ala.
GLENN C. HAMILTON	0-702796	2nd Lt.	Rapid River, Mich.
JAMES W. HAMILTON	0-811375	2nd Lt.	Farwood, N. J.
WILLIAM J. HANKOWSKY	0-807199	2nd Lt.	Corapolis, Pa.
MARVIN LITKE	0-677948	2nd Lt.	Chicago, Ill.
JOHN H. MADDEN	0-677818	2nd Lt.	New Orleans, La.
KENNETH G. MARTIN	0-678295	2nd Lt.	Pueblo, Col.
JOE M. MATLOCK	0-677825	2nd Lt.	Fort Worth, Tex.
JOHN W. McMILLAN	0-678124	2nd Lt.	New Orleans, La.
RALPH L. MEIDALL	0-746391	2nd Lt.	Maldon, Mass.
JOYCE M. STOVER	0-806934	2nd Lt.	Greenville, Ohio
EDWARD ZETSCHOK	0-764559	2nd Lt.	Palo Alto, Calif.
FRANK T. BAYNE	T-61591	F/O	Simpsonville, S. C.
IRVING WALLACE	T-190809	F/O	Milwaukee, Wis.
CHARLES V. ZELDERS	T-62119	F/O	Millerstown, Pa.
Bob O. Eyerley	33188512	T/Sgt.	Lehighton, Pa.
Andrew J. Gurzenda	13084283	T/Sgt.	Quecreek, Pa.
Edward R. Jernagan	15330366	T/Sgt.	Galveston, Ind.
Jessie T. Johnson	38124027	T/Sgt.	Clovis, N. Mex.
Doyle S. Killgore	18025220	T/Sgt.	Augusta, Ga.
Charles W. Milne	32489560	T/Sgt.	Utica, N. Y.
George W. Myers	15043113	T/Sgt.	Connersville, Ind.
Harold E. Newsome	38283247	T/Sgt.	Gainsville, Tex.
Lawrence G. Thorpe	31100274	T/Sgt.	Bangor, Me.
Ruben C. Black	33249711	S/Sgt.	Edgewood, Md.
Douglas K. Blanchard	31228184	S/Sgt.	Natick, Mass.
Fred J. Bohnert	32558177	S/Sgt.	Wallington, N. J.
Russel R. Bricker	37438011	S/Sgt.	Earlham, Iowa
James W. Callahan	31129229	S/Sgt.	Sunderland, Mass.
Raymond W. Coburn	11068453	S/Sgt.	Portland, Me.
John B. Connors	31201753	S/Sgt.	Medford, Mass.
James G. Cordon	12142052	S/Sgt.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
George V. Egan	32418380	S/Sgt.	Long Island City, N.Y.
John D. Fitzgerald	33196456	S/Sgt.	Washington, D. C.
Joseph C. Follin	33206483	S/Sgt.	Washington, D. C.
John P. Gard	17002807	S/Sgt.	Salina, Kan.
John N. Johnson	33448724	S/Sgt.	Pontiac, Mich.
Clyde A. Mullins	18178325	S/Sgt.	Roswell, N. M.
Leeman R. Pegram	14072651	S/Sgt.	Rutherfordton, N. C.
Charles W. Stephens	37373978	S/Sgt.	Poplar Bluff, Mo.
Reino A. Wiik	31082247	S/Sgt.	Worcester, Mass.
Andrew Sipos	15320300	Sgt.	Cleveland, Ohio
Jospeh P. Williams	32604170	Sgt.	Bronx, N. Y.
RAYMOND C. HOWARD	0-740429	2nd Lt	2nd Lt. Howard is missing in action. Next of kin Mrs. Margaret E. Howard (Wife) 1501 S. 18th St., Phoenix, Ariz.
ESTON C. KUHN	0-683029	2nd Lt	2nd Lt. Kuhn is missing in action. Next of kin Mrs. Bertie M. Kuhn, (Wife) Elm, W. Va.
Marvin C. Boetcher	16132698	S/Sgt	S/Sgt. Boetcher is missing in action. Next of kin Mrs. Ida Boetcher, (Mother) 1222 14th Ave, Menomonie, Wis.
John W. Beckley	35397485	Sgt	Sgt. Beckley is missing in action. Next of kin Mrs. Sefrona P. Beckley, (Mother) McCready Ave., Cadiz, Ohio

* * * * *

By command of Brigadier General WILLIAMS:

OFFICIAL:

/s/ O W HOWLAND
/t/ O W HOWLAND
Colonel, A G D
Adjutant General

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

JAMES E DUKE, JR.
Colonel, GSC
Chief of Staff

ROBERT R. COLLINS,
1st Lt., Air Corps.



"Pop" Gordon: C-47 Pilot, Aldermaston, October 1944. This is probably the only time 'Pop' was seen without a cigar in his face.



Captain Hank Reavis, Flight Leader. Hank had a great capacity for fun, and was well liked.



Lt. James Guthrie, C-47 pilot. A prototype Texan, Jim was slow walking and talking, and a good pilot.



Jim Hamilton, C-47 pilot, was one of the replacement crews that joined the Squadron in England. The ribbons indicate Eisenhower personally pinned Air medals on those who participated in the D-Day missions. Jim gives an accurate picture how young most of us were.



Left: Pilots 'Smokie' Stover and Jim Hamilton in front of the Officer's quarters at Aldermaston, England, September 1944. 'Smokie' was always in good spirits and ready with a humorous remark when needed.

Right: Kneeling: (L) Pilot Clay Orum, (C) Pilot Garth Clark. His plane was shot down during the Holland drop and all were recovered. (r) Pilot Duane Lockard. Aircraft was shot up badly during the Holland drop and had to make a forced landing. Duane is probably the most distinguished 71st TCS member. He was a state Senator, Yale Professor, and chaired an investigation of J. Edgar Hoover.

Standing: (L to R) Pilot and Sq. Adjutant Kenny Houston; John 'Nelly' Nelson – aircraft shot down and full crew lost during one of the Bastogne relief missions, Dec 1944. Pilot Herman Fonseca, and Pilot Herman Miensman.



Left: (L to R) Pilot Marshall Jones, Navigator 'Skinny' Ennis, and Copilot Ralph Miedel.



Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England

March 23, 1944. This is a rather historic photo sequence. Churchill was reluctant to sign on for the airborne drop on D-Day. These photos were taken of a 'set up' practice drop in order to convince him. The day was perfect and the formation was uniform. This convinced Churchill the drop would have a good chance of success. This photo was used for the 434th TCG Christmas card in 1943.

101st Airborne paratroopers begin their jump. Key observers included **Winston Churchill**, British Prime Minister; **GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower**, Supreme Allied Commander; **LTG Omar N. Bradley**, U.S. First Army Commander; **MG Maxwell D. Taylor**, 101st Airborne Division Commander; **BG Don F. Pratt**, Assistant Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division (KIA D-Day); and **BG Anthony C. McAuliffe**, Deputy Commander of the 101st Airborne Division



The successful paradrop was made at Salisbury Plain, the 'West Point' of England. The 434th Troop Carrier Group and its four squadrons participated in the exercise



Left: 71st Troop Carrier Squadron mascots at Aldermaston, England. **CG-4** (left), the Chow, belonged to a glider pilot. **Susie**, the terrier, belonged to the author, Lt. Marvin Litke. Susie became MIA when taken by another crew to France.

Right: Lt. Marvin Litke after receiving the traditional 21st birthday dunk in the EWS (emergency water supply) tank.



Left: Lt. Marvin Litke (l) and John Madden ® at Aldermaston, October 1944.



Left: Mourmelon-le-Grand, France, 1945. This is Marvin Litke's aircraft, and was considered to be a lucky one. Note the mission symbols along the left side. They represent air evacuation, glider tows, paradrops, and supply sorties. Vardon "F" Fox (Vardon, the squadron call sign, and Fox was the phonetic call sign of the A/C). Marvin's C-47 was left in France following the end of the war because it had too many hours to fly back to the States. The 434th TCG moved to this airfield in February 1945.

Right: end of an evacuation mission to Preswick, Scotland shortly after D-Day. (l to r) Jae Rogers, copilot, ? Hlava, Navigator, and Marvin Litke, Pilot. Unable to name the evac nurses, but must pay them the highest of compliments for flying with the crazy under age pilots, and doing a great job.



Left: Two of the great flight nurses with the 71st TCS mascot 'Susie' shortly after D-Day.



Left: C-47 aircraft are parked on each side of an extended runway in preparation for a glider-tow. The gliders were towed to the center of the runway by a tug and the tow aircraft waved into place at the end of the towrope. Care was taken by the towing aircraft to gain speed without breaking the towline. The glider and tow plane maintained contact through an intercom line.

Right: Kenny Martin, Pilot. Kenny was quiet, but the center of 71st Squadron doings. Kenny recently contacted the author.



Left: (center) Kenny Houston, Pilot. To the left of Kenny is an unidentified glider pilot.



Left: 1st Lt. John M. Jones,
C-47 Pilot.



Right: 2nd Lt. Robert E.
Harr, C-47 Pilot.

Right: Kyushu, Japan, November 1956. Captain Marvin Litke and unidentified copilot were visiting Soni Airfield on Kyushu. Representing the 483rd Troop Carrier Group at Ashia, Japan, they traded rides with a Japanese civilian pilot. He flew the C-119 with Litke as the copilot, and Marvin flew a twin engine British aircraft with a cabin full of passengers. The Japanese pilot flew as Marvin's copilot.

