

DUTCH ORANGE LANYARD AWARD GIVEN TO HOLLAND MISSION GPs

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As was briefly reported in the last (June) issue of Silent Wings, George Brennan, our National Representative, received word on May 3, 1982 that the Dutch Ministry of Defence had advised that the Orange Lanyard Award had been officially presented to all American glider pilots of the 9th AF who participated in the Market-Garden mission and who actually landed on Dutch soil and took part in the liberation of Holland. George reviews the background of the long fight to secure this recognition for the glider pilots.

"It is almost eight years to the day I started the fight to have 9th AF glider pilots who took part in Operation Market Garden recognized along with the 82nd and 101st AB Divisions. These divisions, by a Dutch Ministerial Decree, were awarded the Order of William (Degree of the Knight) by the Queen of the Netherlands. The recipients of this award wear the Orange Lanyard around the left shoulder while in uniform. It is a high Dutch award for valor."

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"I was made aware of the award during a tour of civilian duty in the Office of the Secretary of Defense during my Pentagon days. An Army colonel friend of mine who had been a commander of a parachute infantry company in the 101st AB attended a meeting in my office wearing his decorations. I recognized them all except the Orange Lanyard. He explained that every member of the 82nd and 101st divisions and ATTACHED troops received this Dutch decoration for service during Market Garden. I asked if this included U. S. glider pilots. He said he didn't know but would research it and call me back."

"A day or so later he rather apologetically called and said he couldn't find any mention of glider pilots in the War Department General Order which authorized the two divisions to wear the lanyard."

"To make a long story short I started with the Dutch Embassy in D. C. and was fluffed off by everyone from the Ambassador down to the lowest ranking officer in the Military Attache's office. When I was told by the Dutch that they could not and would not do anything — that it was too late — so I started with the U. S. Army."

"I wrote Generals Ridgeway, Taylor and Gavin asking them how come U. S. glider pilots were omitted from their recommendations to the Dutch government on which troops were to be decorated."

"All three wrote back and apologized for leaving GPs out of the recommendations and each furnished me with an affidavit stating that U. S. glider pilots served courageously and well with both divisions during Market Garden."

"I tried using these on the Dutch but to no avail. I then switched and started beating on the U. S. Army to get them to amend the General Orders to include us. I was stalled until I produced the letters from the three generals. The Awards and Decorations Branch of the U. S. Army then started to move by sending a request to our Military Attache at the Hague asking him to try and get the Dutch Ministry of Defence to amend the Royal Decree that granted the original award."

"This was initiated but I was advised that it might not work, that it would take time, and that I would have to be patient."

"It took a hell of a lot of time and I was never blessed with a lot of patience. After cancer surgery I began to realize that glider jocks were not immortal and decided that more strenuous measures were needed."

"Jerry Devlin wrote that he was meeting with General Gavin on the Glider Pilot history and I quickly asked Jerry if the general could lend a hand in getting the Dutch and our Military Attache to move a little faster while there were still some Market Garden vets still alive."

"The general advised me to write our Ambassador to the Hague to request an appointment with the Queen so I could

personally plead our case. This I did, requesting a February 1982 appointment. Almost immediately I was advised by the Ambassador that the Dutch Ministry of Defence were recommending approval of the award for us."

"I think the thought of a rusty old glider pilot haranguing the Queen scared hell out of the Embassy and the Ministry and generated some action."

"After years of hasseling and 38 years of waiting we now have the Orange Lanyard. More importantly, history may now record that glider pilots were considered to be a courageous and integral component of those units that fought the good fight in those hectic September days and nights of 1944."

"I would like to thank Generals Ridgeway, Taylor, and Gavin for their help along with Jerry Devlin and Colonel Wilhelm, the Director of the Airborne Museum at Arnhem, and Professor Nicolaas J. Moolenijzer of the University of New Mexico and a wartime member of the Dutch underground who interceded with the Dutch government in our behalf."

That, then, is the story of the Orange Lanyard. A lesser warrior would have given up long ago. George finalizes his story with these remarks:

"Now, history will know, that the 82nd and 101st divisions did not go into Market Garden ALONE."

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Directorate-General of Personnel
Honours and Awards Section
No. : P. O. 82/010/1662

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

HAVING REGARD TO:

The orders of the then Minister of War dated 8 October 1945 (Sec. x 25) and 20 September 1946 (Sec. P 203), by which permission was granted to the per-

sonnel of the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions respectively to wear the Orange Lanyard;

CONSIDERING:

That it is also desirable that the glider pilots who took part in the airborne operations in the central and southern parts of the Netherlands should have a lasting memento of that glorious battle;

DECREES:

1. That the Glider Pilots of the IXth Army Air Force Troop Carrier Command who took part in the airborne operations and in the subsequent combat actions of the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions in the central and southern parts of the Netherlands in the period from 17 September to 28 November 1944, be permitted to wear the Orange Lanyard.

2. This Decree shall take effect on the date of the signature.

The Hague, 20 April 1982
(signed) H. van Mierlo
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

May 12, 1982

Mr. George Brennan
National Representative
The National WWII GP Association
9604 Admiral Dewey Avenue NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111

Dear Mr. Brennan:

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that on April 20, 1982, the Netherlands Minister of Defense signed a Decree awarding the Netherlands Orange Lanyard to glider pilots who participated in Operation Market Garden during World War II.

I know that you have been pursuing this matter for a long time, and I congratulate you on the successful outcome.

I have attached a copy of the English translation of the Decree signed by Minister of Defense H. van Mierlo.

Sincerely,
William J. Dyess
Ambassador

On May 9, 1982 the first presentation of the Orange Lanyard was made to nine veterans of the Holland mission who were on a tour of Holland at the time. The award was made by Secretary-general of Defense Dr. G. H. J. M. Peijenburg to glider pilots Bill Marks, Don McKinley, Connie Nanartonis, Bill Richey, T. V. Sampson, John Hauselt, Roy Barbata, Bill Edwards and John Hall.

Plans are presently underway for a representative of the Dutch government to be on hand at the Reno reunion for a presentation to all Holland mission GPs who are present. Wing and State Commanders are at this time trying to ascertain just how many veterans of the mission will be on hand. If you were "there" and plan on being in Reno, advise your State or Wing Commander.

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