



A SALUTE TO NORMANDY

In this issue, we salute the glider pilots who made the first landings in France, on D-Day 6 June 1944. You paved the way for all of us!

Silent Wings

THE DEADLINE BLUES !

We regret that we did not receive the report on the E/C meeting in OKC in April in time to be included in this issue.

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D-DAY, 6 JUNE 1944 - THE GIANT STEP TO VICTORY



HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH — An official U. S. photo issued through the O.W.I. shortly after D-Day, June 6, 1944. The official caption reads:

"These glider pilots, among the first to strike their boots on enemy held soil, fought their way back through German held territory, reached the beachhead, caught the first available evacuation boat back to England and returned to fly another (mission). They are (left to right): Lt. Charles B. Ellington, High Point, NC; Flight Officer Joe Gilreath, Fort Worth, TX; and Flight Officer Kenneth Ensor, Plano, IL.

Forty-six years ago this month the entire world learned that the Allied forces had taken the first step toward the complete liberation of occupied Europe when it was announced that landings on the European continent had begun in Normandy, France. It was hailed as the move that would result in final victory in WWII. OVERLORD was the code name of the vast operation and many sub operations within OVERLORD carried varied code titles. The airborne phase of the invasion was known as NEPTUNE, and each individual operation within NEPTUNE had its own sub-name.

Every major operation in World War II had its "D-Day" and "H-Hour." But say "D-Day" to anyone from the WWII generation and immediately the vision that comes to mind is the invasion of the Normandy coast that took place 6 June 1944. "D-Day" will always remain synonymous with that date and with that event!

Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written about the Normandy invasion. Many writers have said it all, in much greater detail and in more depth than we can do. It is not intended that we present a rehash of that information. But we would like to honor those in our glider pilot ranks who played an important part in this historic event and who were there "first" — taking those initial, cautious steps on the road that could and did lead to victory.

The earlier use of gliders in Sicily and in Burma had resulted in some degree of success — but also disturbing casualties. Both of those operations had been undertaken in darkness. Confusion in finding proper landing areas and even in locating the proposed objectives was the order of the day. The Normandy landings by glider were to be the largest yet planned insofar as the number of aircraft committed but again, the planners insisted on a night operation in spite of the objections of both airborne and troop carrier personnel. In addition, the first wave of glider landings were to be made in the British Horsa, flown by American pilots. At the last moment the planners heeded the advice of airborne and troop carrier brass and allowed the substitution of the American CG4A Waco glider instead of the heavier and less maneuverable Horsa. This concession was made just two days before the missions were to be flown and caused a revision of loading plans and a reduction in the amount of troops and equipment.

Eight glider missions for the Normandy operation were originally planned. The first two would be CHICAGO and DETROIT on D-Day, early hours, followed by KEOKUK

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and ELMIRA in the late afternoon. GALVESTON AND HACKENSACK were scheduled for D-Day plus one, with INDIANAPOLIS and JACKSON slated as the final glider flights. These last two missions were not required and were cancelled.

Both CHICAGO and DETROIT would send gliders into the areas just back of the landing beaches shortly after the paratroopers had made the first enemy contacts. These landings would be in total darkness. The loads for both missions would be primarily artillery equipment and personnel.

CHICAGO began shortly after 0100 on D-Day, 6 June, 1944 when 52 C-47s of the 434th Troop Carrier Group lifted off from Aldermaston, each towing a CG4A glider. Forty-four of the 52 gliders carried Batteries A and B of the 82nd A/B division. The other eight gliders were loaded with medics, engineers, signal men, and staff personnel including Brig. Gen. Don F. Pratt, the assistant commander of the 101st A/B. A total of 155 airborne troops. In the cargo were 16 six-pounder antitank guns, 25 vehicles, including one small bulldozer, 2½ tons of ammo and 11 tons of miscellaneous equipment.

Shortly after takeoff one glider had to abort the mission and there was not enough time to replace it. Thus 51 gliders of the 434th, flown by 102 glider pilots, headed for Normandy and their "date" with destiny and history.

WHO WAS FIRST?

Who among our glider pilot members were flying those gliders? With the assistance of Victor B. Warriner, of Fort Worth, Texas, former 72nd TC Squadron and later 434th Group Glider Operations Officer, we have been able to secure those names. All squadrons of the 434th were represented. Two pilots came from Troop Carrier Command headquarters, and one glider pilot from the 434th Group. The first glider touched down on LZ "E" at 0354 hours 6 June 1944. Chalk numbers and pilot assignments on this first serial were as follows, with pilot being listed first, and co-pilot second:

No. 1 — Michael C. Murphy, John M. Butler, 9th TC Command.

From the 72nd Squadron

No. 2 — Victor B. Warriner, Robert B. Kaufman.

No. 3 — Jack L. Willoughby (434th Group), Albert H. Alder.

No. 4 — Arthur H. Vogel, Miles C. Wagner.

No. 5 — (Forced landing, not replaced).

No. 6 — James J. Malloy, Gordon W. Mohr.

No. 7 — Arthur W. Hopper, Charles W. Walker.

No. 8 — John A. Gorman, Norman Beck.

No. 9 — Paul J. Murray, Thomas J. Barnhart.

No. 10 — Leo J. LaPlante, Robert H. Montgomery.

No. 11 — Roy C. Lovingood, William R. Boehm.

No. 12 — Charles H. English, Joseph J. Miller.

From the 71st TC Squadron

No. 13 — William Snyder, Oscar T. Raines.

No. 14 — Stanley A. Hidecavage, E. C. Falwell.

No. 15 — Keck R. Dawson, James Ragona.



PEACEFUL NORMANDY SCENE ? — These contented dairy cows pay scant attention as a photographer records this array of wrecked Horsa gliders, shortly following the D-Day landings. These gliders were brought up short by the famed "hedgerows" of the area. Their height was somewhat of a surprise to the American pilots who flew these large British aircraft. The combat landing patterns were often stopped abruptly by the towering trees that surrounded the small farming pastures. All of the above Horsas have had the tail sections removed in order to unload the equipment carried. Few, if any, of these aircraft were salvaged for further use in subsequent operations.

No. 16 — Henry J. Rinkowski, Mark A. Ronan.

No. 17 — Jack Phillips, Gerald L. Belding.

No. 18 — Lloyd Bennett, Joseph Mendes.

No. 19 — Arthur C. Ruberti, Grant W. Robertson.

No. 20 — Wyatt H. Dodd, Samuel Derr.

No. 21 — David R. Allen, Harrison M. Bauman.

No. 22 — John Balaska, William R. Cannon.

No. 23 — Forrest D. Hicks, Worth E. Baker.

No. 24 — Hans E. Lieman, Louis P. Hodge.
From the 73rd Squadron

No. 25 — John P. Otte, S. Robert Winer.

No. 26 — Harvey L. Seiple, Willard P. Selleck.

No. 27 — Harold S. Bunch, George J. Walters.

No. 28 — Adam H. Putz, Jack L. Brandt.

No. 29 — Tommie A. Biggs, William H. Brown.

No. 30 — Edwin L. Blanche, LeRoy F. Brobat.

No. 31 — Byron A. Seward, Levi F. Anderson.

No. 32 — Manning M. Bogue, Henry L. Lysek.

No. 33 — Thomas W. Gregory, Norman C. Lancaster.

No. 34 — Earl W. Rischel, Charles O. Brown.

No. 35 — John E. Howard, Thomas C. Davis.

No. 36 — Hance A. Lunday, Marvin Bryant.
From the 74th Squadron

No. 37 — David J. Kull, Orville J. Landers.

No. 38 — James G. McGee, Edward N. Bupp.

No. 39 — Leslie L. VanPelt, Earl W. West.

No. 40 — Lee T. Stull, Clinton Griffin.

No. 41 — Thomas R. Geisinger, Arnold Dreer.

No. 42 — Irwin J. Morales, Thomas O. Ahmad.

No. 43 — Richard S. Batlan, Thomas E. Parker.

No. 44 — Ronald M. Stoner, George F. Hohmann.

No. 45 — Robert Butler, Everard H. Hohmann.

No. 46 — Lenard B. Hewson, Gordon F. Sweeney.

No. 47 — Roy B. Meyers, Herbert V. Callahan.

No. 48 — James R. Durden, William S. Nash.

No. 49 — George E. Buckley, William G. Bruner.

No. 50 — Torello H. Calvani, William F. Ryan.

No. 51 — Robert J. Kile, Richard DelaGarza.

No. 52 — Len C. Green, Floyd H. Mosley.

To recap, there were 19 glider pilots from the 72nd squadron, 24 from the 71st, 24 from the 73rd, and 32 from the 74th. Two from IX TCC and one from the 434th Group made up the total of 102 pilots on the listing.

Normally, the gliders would have landed in the order shown above but normal was not the word for the operation. Due to a quirk of fate, it is believed that glider No. 2 was actually the first glider to land in or near the LZ. Colonel Murphy's glider crashed on landing, resulting in the death of General Pratt, and the co-pilot 2nd Lt. John M. Butler. The emblem from Vic Warriner's No. 2 glider was removed and preserved by Dr. Charles O. Van Gorder, who rendered medical assistance to Col. Murphy who had broken two legs in the crash. It is felt that Vic's glider No. 2 touched down shortly before Col. Murphy. The emblem saved by Dr.

Gordon from glider No. 2 was presented to the GP museum where it is now on display. Unfortunately, Captain Jack L. Willoughby, 434th Group, pilot of glider No. 3, was killed. Several others of this group of glider pilots were either reported hospitalized or missing in action.

The CHICAGO mission was followed shortly by DETROIT. It was flown by the 437th TC Group from Ramsbury. They encountered much more difficulty than did the 434th gliders. Here again the number of gliders involved were 52, all CG4As, and all with two-member flight crews. At this time, the pilot assignments for this mission have not been learned, but those reaching the LZ

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were only some 10 minutes behind the leading 434th serial. Encountering a cloudbank near the coast, seven gliders broke loose, were released, or were cut loose by enemy fire. Two of this number were later located in western Normandy but the others were unaccounted for a month later. Seven more gliders were lost before reaching the LZ area. Some 37 pilots survived all difficulties and did reach the designated LZ area between 0401 and 0410 hours.

FIRST DAYLIGHT MISSION!

The remaining D-Day glider missions were KEOKUK and ELMIRA. KEOKUK was noted as being the FIRST daylight combat glider mission. It was also flown by the 434th from Aldermaston for the 101st AB division. It consisted of 32 Horsa gliders.

The KEOKUK gliders were over the landing areas at 2053 hours, about two hours before sunset. They were followed in about 10 minutes later by the ELMIRA gliders.

The ELMIRA mission was made up of two echelons, two serials in each echelon. The first serial of the first echelon was made up of 26 gliders from the 437th flying from Ramsbury. It consisted of eight CG4As and 18 Horsas. The second serial of this echelon was comprised of 14 CG4As and 36 Horsas from the 438th TC Group departing from Greenham Common. They were landing in Normandy at about 2100 hours D-Day.

The second echelon of ELMIRA was made up of 100 gliders. Two CG4As and 48 Horsas by the 436th TC Group from Membury made up the first serial. The second was from the 435th TC Group from Welford Park flying 12 CG4As and 38 Horsas. Landing time for this echelon in Normandy was about 2300 hours D-Day, or about sunset. These glider missions wound up the glider commitment for 6 June 1944.

The fifth glider mission into Normandy was code named GALVESTON and was flown on D-Day plus one. The first serial was flown by the 437th from Ramsbury, with 32 CG4As and 18 Horsas. They were over the target and landing at 0655 hours. The second serial was flown by the 434th from Aldermaston and consisted of 50 CG4As. Also attached to this serial was two gliders (Horsas) from the 435th at Welford which had aborted in ELMIRA.

All of the foregoing glider missions into Normandy were flown by elements of the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing.

The final glider mission into Normandy was HACKENSACK, flown by units of the 50th Troop Carrier Wing. The lead serial was from the 439th TC Group at Upottery, with 30 Horsas and 20 CG4As. The second serial was comprised of 50 Wacos flown in by the 441st TC Group from Merryfield. The lead serial was releasing gliders over the designated LZ at 0851 hours while the second serial followed shortly after at 0859 hours, D-Day plus one.

A total of 512 gliders, both Horsas and CG4As, were released in the Normandy invasion by IX Troop Carrier Command. A total of 1034 glider pilots were involved in the various missions. Of those, 57 were reported dead or missing. The exact number of

wounded and injured is not known at this time.

It has been reported that some glider pilots of the 53rd Wing were able to fly more than one mission into Normandy. If you did so, we would like to document your story so let us hear from you. We would like to record this act in our glider history.

There are hundreds of stories yet to be told about the glider missions into Normandy. Some are known, some are not known. If you have one to tell, let us hear from you. In future issues of SILENT WINGS we will carry as many such stories as possible. Don't forget — it's your history.

We regret that space and time does not permit further details into the actions and events surrounding the Normandy landings by glider. We hope to do so in the future.

For now, those of you who made this pioneer step into glider combat history are to be commended — and we salute you for what you did and the manner in which you did it.