

Konrad F. Schreier Jr. recalls his liaison experiences in Burma: "...I got to Burma in early 1945. There were three types (of liaison planes) in use there: Piper L4's, Stinson L5's and a few venerable Stinson L1's. Due to the operational conditions of the British-Indian 14th Army I was assigned to, they were used for a wide number of situations ranging from scouting and patrolling and artillery spotting to medical evacuation. I vividly recall some Stinson L5's flown by the RAF. On several occasions I rode in them in connection with my duties.

One event I recall was during the offensive which ended in the recapture of Rangoon, however I do not recall when or where it happened. Things were very rushed and confusing during this operation, and sleep was a pure luxury.

What happened was we had just taken a village after a fire fight. An L5 was called in to evacuate a seriously wounded British officer. As the L5 approached its designated landing place, a straight stretch of road, a Japanese machine gun fired at it and a bullet hits its engine which died rather quickly. The L5 was making a 180 degree turn after bussing the landing place, and was over a heavily wooded area and quickly losing altitude of which it had very little. It ended up in the top of a huge banyan tree in a relative soft forced landing. A British "sapper" (engineer) went up the tree with a rope and evacuated the unhurt pilot.

The plane appeared to me to be relatively undamaged. A couple of days later I happened to go through the village again, and the L5 was gone. When our jeep stopped to be checked through the British Provost (MP) check point I asked what happened to it. I was told "some Yank flew in with a new engine, propeller and had the sappers get it out of the tree, it was repaired, and they flew it out". I remember thinking about the nerve of the evacuation pilot to fly a plane patched up with bailing wire and machine gun tape (a variety of what we call duct tape.)

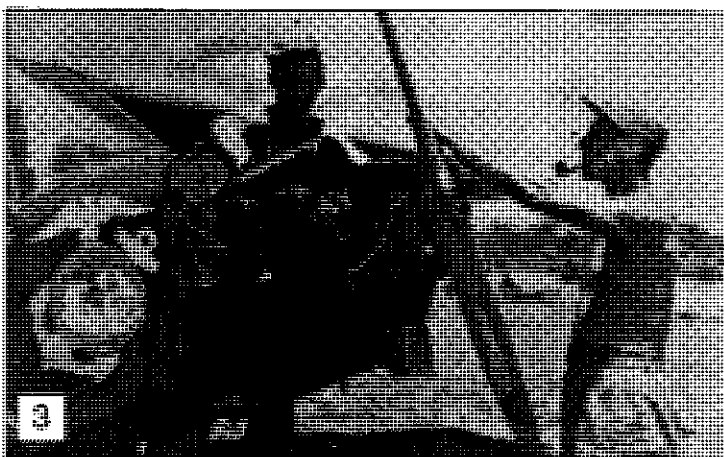
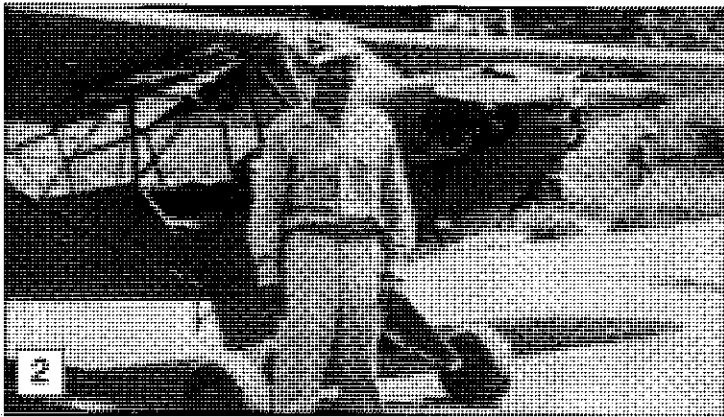
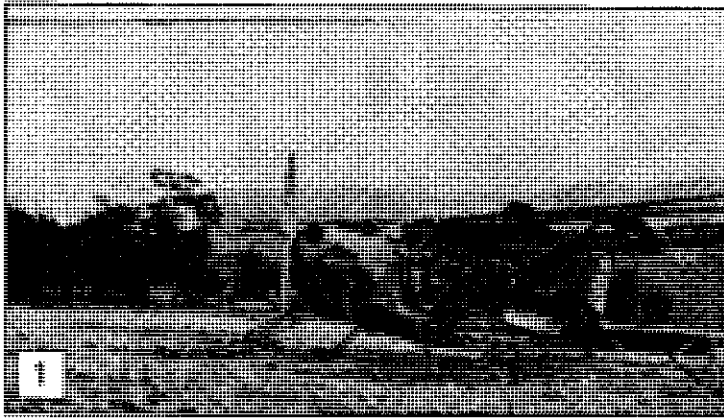
I had, as a ground soldier, tremendous respect for the liaison planes and their pilots, and for the great work they did."

The L-pilots were a brave but very weary bunch and the battles were taking their toll. Rangoon fell on May 2nd. But by that time the monsoons had put a stop to light plane operations. Capt. E. E. Davis, of Freer, Texas, who succeeded Major Ulery as the 165th's C. O., took his squadron back to India in late April. Capt. Beasley's 164th battle the rain for two weeks at Magwe, and Capt. Gooman's 166th pitched their last camp at Toungo. By May 10, all tents were torn down, all aircraft loaded with equipment and personnel, and the last L-squadron left the plains of central Burma.

In seven months, ninety enlisted pilots had carried out 50,000 sorties, evacuating 20,000 casualties, and flying to the front lines tow and one-half million pounds of cargo and one full division of reinforcements.

To the 1st Air Commando liaison pilots who dodged enemy ground fire from Imphal to Pego, dropped behind trees in the Kabaw Valles to escape Jap Zeroes, and skidded into the mud-soaked landing fields of early May, the drive to Rangoon was the home stretch. Instructed to follow close behind the Infantrymen's heel, they frequently darted beyond his large toe. The weary L-pilots were beginning to ask, "Where to after Rangoon?". They hoped the answer would be "Home".

Asian Jungle War



- 1 – A First Air Commando L-5 that has fallen victim to Japanese shell fire in the C.B.I. Theater –*L. Carroll*
- 2 – Capt Steve Harney and his L-4 in the New Guinea Theater of War area in 1944 –*S. Harney*
- 3 – Marine Capt. Pete Petras and his L-4 mechanic working on Pete's L-4 in the So. Pacific Theater area in 1944 –*P. Petras*
- 4 – L-Bird pilot John Newberry and friends in the C.B.I. in 1945 –*J. Newberry*

Chapter 5 —

Filipino Odyssey

The invasion of Leyte in the Philippine Islands - this was to be the master stroke that would be the answer to the people of the Islands. With the fall of Manila and Corregidor to the Japanese in 1942 and the Bataan Death March fresh in their memory, these people expected Gen. Douglas MacArthur to keep his promise when he told them he would return. Return he did - the first U.S. troops landed at Leyte on October 20, 1944. General MacArthur returned on October 23, 1944.

The following is the Proclamation from the General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area, Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Douglas MacArthur:

"I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God our forces stand again on Philippine soil - soil consecrated in the blood of our two peoples. We have come, dedicated and committed, to the task of destroying every vestige of enemy control over your daily lives, and of restoring, upon a foundation of indestructible strength, the liberties of your people.

At my side is your President, Sergio Osmena, worthy successor of that great patriot, Manuel Quazon, with members of his cabinet. The seat of your government is now therefore firmly re-established on Philippine soil.

The hour of your redemption is here. Your patriots have demonstrated an unswerving and resolute devotion to the principles of freedom that challenges the best that is written on the pages of human history. I now call upon your supreme effort that the enemy may know from the temper of an aroused and outraged people within that he has a force there to contend with no less violent that is the force committed from without.

Rally to me. Let the indomitable spirit of Bataan and Corregidor lead on. As the lines of battle roll forward to bring you within the zone of operations, rise and strike. Strike at every favorable opportunity for your homes and hearths, strike! For future generations of your sons and daughters, strike! In the name of your sacred dead, strike! Let no heart be faint. Let every arm be steeled. The guidance of divine God points the way. Follow in His Name to the Holy Grail of righteous victory!"

Such a large and ambitious military maneuver was, in the end, made up of very real people with very real and basic problems to deal with. Some first hand accounts follow.

Norman James describes his experiences, starting with the trip overseas. "The night before leaving San Francisco, the headlines in the newspaper read, 'Enemy Subs off the Coast of California'. We had 2500 men on board and it seemed they were all in our compartment. The second night out some of the men were falling out of their bunks; we were stacked 5 rows deep. The pots and pans could be heard falling on the floor in the galley. The ship rolled and creaked with each roll from side to side. We were told next morning that our ship was racing with an unidentified ship or sub who did not acknowledge the "Friend or Foe" signal.

Next stop was Finchaven and Hollandia, New Guinea. We were there three days and departed for Leyte, the Philippines. General MacArthur had made his invasion of the Philippines a short time earlier. In setting up camp, my outfit, the 159th Liaison Squadron along with the 157th and 160th, had many difficulties.

One of these were shortages of food. After days of eating our food from cracker boxes and everybody getting grumpier by the day, I decided along with S/Sgt Feray and S/Sgt Terminello, to do something about it. About 2 miles up the road was enough food to feed an Army. All the goodies were covered with huge tarps and had guards posted with carbines to discourage attempts at stealing. All this was waiting for the red tape to be untangled and the food distributed to the hungry troops. We decided to give it a try.

We needed transportation to haul the food back so we borrowed our CO's jeep. Lt Price, our CO, had traded his Colt 45 for this jeep; another No! No! in the military. When the guards went around back, we loaded the food until the rear of the jeep was touching sand. We hurried back and delivered the food to our

fat cook, who almost kissed us!

On another food run, our little L-5 came in very handy. Once I made a run to a small village and brought back some fresh eggs and avocados. This was the little village of Patang. While I was there I chatted with another fellow I didn't know. We had a lengthy conversation; I asked him if he would like some fresh eggs. He accepted with great delight and I went on my way. The next day, back in Malabang, Mindanao, posted on the bulletin board, was a large sign - 'There will be no more ducks, chickens, eggs or fruit riding in the L-5's'. It turned out that he was the new Commanding Officer, Captain Hutchison, who I had given the eggs to back in Parang. There has to be some humor in all of this I guess."

Bill Cartwright remembers "My flying started in Cadet Class 43B flying PT17's at Jackson, Tennessee. I did not survive the BT-13 so wound up at Waco, Texas almost anyone with 60 hours could become an L.P.. Most of us were "Washed Out" cadets or from CAP training.

I was rated Liaison Pilot 15 Dec '42 as a Private and sent to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for Field Artillery & Flight Training. The Main Base was a big grass field so we could land in any direction. Most of the training was at several small fields and we would come home in a swarm each evening

The former Air Corps Pilots at Ft. Sill had the option of going back to the Air Corps. Many of us gave up the possibility of commission in the Field artillery to go back to Waco for S/Sgt.

My next assignment was to fly Radio Student at Scott Field, Ill. Our only duty was to fly two students a day for 1 hour 45 minutes while they practiced code transmissions Air to Air and Air to Ground. We were supposed to fly no maneuver more radical than a 45 degree bank. This was monotonous so we simulated Dog Fights to give them better Combat Training. These flights were at the end of Radio School and often, the day after a celebration in town, so an empty 3 pound coffee can was required Flight Equipment. After 10 months the radio student flying was disbanded and we went to Cox Field at Paris, Texas and also to Brownwood, Texas for training in the L-5.

Near the end of the war I started a journey that was to take me around the world in ten months. In march 1945 we flew from Miami, Florida via Constellation and C47 across North Africa to Asansol, India and 1st Air Commando Group 165th Liaison Squadron. Col Cochran had departed and the L.P. part of the Burma Campaign was over.

Some of us replacements went to the 2nd Air Commando Group 127th Liaison Squadron at Kalakunda. We departed Calcutta by ship bound for Okinawa about August 5, 1945 and few days before the A bomb was dropped on Japan. After sailing around Australia we were docked at Hollandia, New Guinea when the Peace Treaty was signed in Tokyo Bay. After two weeks on Okinawa we rode C47's back to the Philippines and the 25th Liaison Squadron. We were stationed at several small detachments to fly mail and passengers throughout the islands. Our mail stops were at small detachments that had no real mission except to wait for the time to go home, so mail and movies were very important. Sometimes we used pastures for Caribou. We flew low down wind to clear away the animals, made 45 degree and 135 degree right and left turns to land in the cleared area. This turned out to be practice for my crop dusting career. On one mail run to Manila I was able to spend a weekend with a former neighbor from my home town and show him Manila from the L-5.

My most memorable flight started as a mail run from Lingayen Gulf to Manila. At a drop on the way I was given a full load of Christmas mail for Aparri, straight north over the mountains to the northern tip of Luzon. Our detachment mail was separated so at cruising altitude I read my own mail and found that my grandfather had died. For the first time as an adult I cried, alone over the mountains. About two hours later I made two low passes over the tents at a steep bank so the men could see the rear seat stuffed to the roof. By the time I taxied in most of the camp was at the strip. I enjoyed my only chance to be a minor hero. Once on Mindanao my cargo was a freshly killed deer that an officer had shot and was sending back to the mess hall.

On the same island we flew two Filipino nuns to a small town and landed on a narrow road. The L-5 almost got away from me on the road and I credit a quick prayer from the back seat for saving us that day. On Luzon I asked about a picture of a Sampan on an L-5. The story was that the passenger in the L-5 had sunk a Jap Sampan with hand grenades.

The landscape was beautiful from the air with rice paddys terraced up to about 8000 feet but no suitable place for a forced landing. We only had 'chutes for the pilot so I never put the straps on unless solo. Couldn't have left a passenger up there.

At the end of my L.P. time, 30 Dec '45, we had our New Year's party a day early because we were departing 31 Dec. An attractive Philippino girl sang 'Sentimental Journey' and we were off to new lives on the Bonhomme Richard, a floating airport with no aircraft and lots of pilots with clipped wings."

John Kenagy was with the 96th Infantry Division on Okinawa. "My army career began in June 1941 when I was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Artillery from Texas A&M University. I attended three Artillery schools at Ft. Sill Oklahoma; the training began in a horse drawn artillery unit for about a year. We were then sent to the 96th Infantry Division stationed in Oregon; after this more training up and down the West Coast. We were sent to Hawaii and then to our first combat on the island of Leyte. My duty was Liaison Officer supporting an Infantry Battalion so most of my duty was on the front lines. I flew in an L-5 as an observer and our landing strip was a dirt road lined with tall coconut trees on both sides. We clipped a wing on a communications pole on one landing. It caused very little damage and was easy to repair. We threw some hand grenades at the Japs we could see. After Leyte it was on to Okinawa but my observing on the L-bird came to a halt as fighting the Japs was all time consuming. The Japanese surrender found us on the high seas going to rest camp on the island of Mindoro. I was released to the United States and arrived at Ft. Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas on December 17, 1945."

Clayton "Cub" Nelson began his flight training in the 30's. "After finishing the master mechanics course at Curtis Wright Aeronautical University in Chicago I planned to get an A&E and then take up flying. At Curtis Wright Airport In Glenview Illinois I trained under Lou Gordon (Amelia Earhart's mechanic on her first Atlantic flight). Charles Lehr gave me flight instruction in a Command-Aire C3CA starting in 1932. The Great Depression took its toll about this time and my flying stopped until 1941.

On October 16, 1942, I finished CPT Flight Training at Raymond, Mississippi and was sent to Waco, Texas. Here I passed the Air Corps check ride on February 5, 1943 and was rated Liaison pilot. I trained at Ft. Sill Oklahoma in L-2s in class P-26 and graduated as a Staff Sgt on May 12, 1943. From here I was assigned to the 317th Field Artillery Battalion of the 81st Wildcat Division. Just before sailing for the South Pacific, the Army gave me a direct Commission. Our unit saw combat duty on Peleliu, Anguar and the Philippines.

While we were staging for the invasion of Japan we learned the atom bomb had been dropped. On V-J night all hell broke loose on Leyte Gulf. The celebration was something to behold. All the ships in the Gulf fired their guns, rocket and flares. Search light lit up the sky and tracers criss-crossed the heavens like the Fourth of July. Radios were playing "I'll Be Home For Christmas"; that tune is still a favorite of mine.

In late September we landed at Amori Japan for occupation duty. A freak accident sent me back to the USA aboard a C-54 hospital plane. My wife and 7 year old daughter and I had a warm reunion at the Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. My daughter did not know that the Purple Heart Medal was a medal and wanted to see my REAL Purple Heart."

There were many details involved in the invasion of the Philippines and planning was crucial to the success of such a vast undertaking. Some of MacArthur's best generals were part of the staff in these meetings. By now it was common for L-4 Cub artillery spotters to be part of the action. How were they best to be utilized in Leyte? What would be the best way to transport and launch planes? All available aircraft carriers would be busy with their own attack planes.

Someone suggested a baby carrier. Simply, build a small flight deck onto an LST (Navy tank landing ship). These runways were constructed of plywood; the actual runway was about 16 feet wide by 200 feet long, and about 6 feet above the LST's main deck. The 16 feet wide runway was more than enough for the Piper L-4's to take off into the head wind. However, it was intended for take-offs only. The aircraft would land on, and then operate from the beachhead, or road, or rice paddy, sandy beach or any other reasonable flat piece of ground a couple of hundred feet long. The rudders of the L-4's were on the side holding ramps of the LST and were removed to make a better clearance for the L-4 taking off on the plywood runway. The planes had to clear the planes below it, so as each L-4 was put on the runway, the rudder was installed. Because of the small spaces and the rolling and pitching of the LST, there were some real fancy rudder actions taking place!

About 10 Piper L-4's could be carried and operated off of the LST. These LST flight operations were used very successfully at Sicily, Anzio, Italy and in the southern France invasions. They were also used in the retaking of the Philippines.

The L-4's and L-5's were able to take off fairly easily. However, once airborne they could not land back

on the ships. This was not a comforting thought to the pilots and a remarkable apparatus was invented by Lt. James Brodie, U.S. Army Field Artillery. The Brodie Device, as it was known, could be utilized on a ship or on land. It consisted of a cable, 500 feet long, and strung between two masts. A "hook" mounted on top of the aircraft permitted the liaison aircraft to takeoff and land while suspended some fifty feet minimum above the ground or ocean surface.

To develop the idea, two rigs were erected at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and tested. Aside from broken propellers, there were no accidents. To show how simple and easy it was to operate, some top students from pilot graduating classes began to also train on the Brodie System. They soon became so adept at using the Brodie System, that boredom became a problem. One student flew over the rig at 1,000 feet, cut the engine to stop the propeller, and came around and hooked-up deadstick. Another student came over the rig, did a loop and hooked up out of the bottom of the loop. They were grounded for a week, but it illustrated how easy it was to do.

In September 1943, a ship version was installed on the cargo vessel City of Dalhart, and tested in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of New Orleans, Louisiana. U. S. Army Corps Staff Sergeant R. A. Gregory made a series of takeoffs and landings from the ship in his Stinson L-5. However, by that time, the German submarine menace was severely reduced because of the advent of sonar, long-range B-24 patrols, and U.S. Navy convoy escort ships. Therefore, the priority was reduced considerably.

But the possible usefulness of the U.S. Navy ship equipped with the Brodie System to support beach-head landings and the anticipated invasion of Japan, raised the priority again. The Office of Strategic Service (OSS - the forerunner of the CIA) was organized under Major General "Wild Bill" Donovan to conduct espionage, sabotage, guerilla warfare, psychological operations and escape and evasion behind enemy lines. The OSS assumed direction of the Brodie System development, and the OSS high priorities accelerated the project for OSS use also. The Brodie System was considered so top-secret that the operation was under the direction of the OSS.

After the system was perfected, OSS, Navy, and Army high ranking officers viewed the system, and approved continuance of the program. In June of 1944, the Navy authorize a Brodie System installation on LST-776, and Brodie, Sergeant Gregory, and staff proceeded to the Navy's Amphibious Training Base at Coronado, near San Diego, California. By September, they had trained Navy personnel on the LST how to use the system.

The ship-board system differed from the land system only in the fact that the runway was about 300 feet instead of 500 feet, and the runway cable was suspended by booms outboard of the LST. Landing techniques on the LST were similar to that of the land rig except the added thrill of handing the roll of the LST, which was notorious with its round bottom hull.

Ship operations were then begun using Piper L-4s and Stinson L-5s off of San Diego. The ship's forward motion directly into the prevailing wind reduced the need for a longer cable, because the 300 feet long cable on the LST was ample for take-off. The L-5 had a starter on the engine. However, the L-4 had to be "propped" - a little difficult 50 feet above the ocean. But thanks to the L-4s large side door opening, the pilot could climb out with one foot on the landing gear strut, and hand-start the engine.

In March of 1945, using U.S. Army Field Artillery pilots, LST-776 liaison aircraft flew fire-direct missions for twenty-four 155mm howitzers of Keisa Shima, eight miles from Okinawa. The artillery support made the initial beach-head landings at Okinawa a success.

During the summer of 1945, LST-776 was located in Manila Bay, training additional Army liaison pilots for the planned invasion of Japan.

Earlier in November 1944, some U.S. Army and OSS personnel went to India to erect a land-rig Brodie System and demonstrate its operation to the British. They erected it at RAF airbase at Jesoor, India. This RAF base supported several secret, clandestine activities. One example was dropping trained troops into portions of Japanese-occupied countries (like Burma). Once in these territories, where they directed guerilla activities.

The British liked the system - both land and ship versions. The ship version were planned to be installed on the sides of two British Hospital ships operating along the coast of Burma. This would permit seriously-wounded personnel to be transported by the British L-5s from forward combat airstrips in Burma directly to the hospital ships of the coast. In as much as the Japanese forces were by that time rapidly withdrawing from Burma, the plan was dropped.

However, in actual use, the system was used little, except at Okinawa from an LST that was Brodie equipped. Four other LSTs were being converted to the Brodie System for the invasion of Kyushu, Japan. The war ended before they were needed.

The Brodie System was not used in Europe, either for D-Day landings or subsequently. However, one Brodie rig sample was sent to England for evaluation by the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, but tests were not impressive for European use. They were, however, ideal for use by the British in Burma and India where airfields were rare and clear, level land for an airfield was even rarer. The Brodie System was sent to the British in India in early 1945, but by then the Burma Road was practically open and the Japanese were retreating; the Brodie System was used very little by the British for their operation in Burma.

The Brodie System was utilized successfully by the U.S. Army during the fight for Okinawa. Only Piper L-4s and Stinson L-5s were used.

Upon the Japanese surrender, all Brodie System programs were terminated. With the rapid advancement of the helicopter, the Brodie System was never used again by the U.S. military services.

Fred Martin gives us his first-hand look at his experiences on the LST 776, The "Brodie Ship", as well as his other missions during World War II. He also kept his flight log and those entries follow the narrative.

Fred Martin started his career at Curtis Steinberg airport E. St. Louis in 1939, soloed in 1940 and attended C.P.T. in St. Louis, Missouri in 1942.

"I was caught in the big push for Glider Pilots and was sent to Lubbock Army Air Base in Texas; there were 800 of us. We were later assigned to various bases all over the U. S. and I went to Denton, Texas for Pre-Glider Training where we used all makes of light aircraft. We learned to climb to altitude then dead-stick to landings. We were made Flying S/Sgt's and sent to Smyrna Air Base in Tennessee. From here we went to Stuttgart and finally to Waco Army Air Base. In Waco we were given an L-4 and an Air Corps Liaison pilot flight check and placed on orders to go to Ft Sill Army Field in Oklahoma where we thought we would be flying the Army Brass around in Stagger Wing Beechcraft.

Much to our chagrin we found ourselves in the Artillery and were instructed by Col. Ford and Lt. Col. Wolfe to "take those Gobblins (Air Corps Insignia) off our sleeves!". The next day we started intensified training flying the Artillery way and a mini OCS. I received my final check there from Capt. Steve Hatch - he was a tough one! (I later learned that Steve was killed in the ETO in 1944).

We were Class P-15 and graduated on 2/20/43 and went directly to the 1st Cav. Division at Ft. Bliss, Texas. In June 1943 we went overseas to Brisbane, Australia; here we were commissioned. From here to Buna, New Guinea in January 1944 and on to the Admiralty Island Campaign in March 1944.

On October 20, 1944 we made the invasion of the Philippine Islands landing on Leyte 90 minutes after "H" hour. We were the right flank and operated off Tacloban Air strip the next day. We operated mostly Aeronca L-3s and some Piper L-4s. In January 1945 we were pulled out of combat in Leyte and made the invasion of Luzon at Lingian Gulf and then on to the "Flying Column" into Manila. One was Manila was secured we pushed south. We eventually went to rest camp in Lucena.

Myself and two other 1st Cav. pilots flew off the Brodie in Manila Bay in August 1945 in preparation for the invasion of Japan. Lt. Montgomery rode one time around with me and from then on it was solo. At least then we had a bit more of a shot at it than you did being solo the first time. It was interesting and I enjoyed it, but I sure am glad we did not have go into the invasion of Japan on the LST!"

The following are the actual flight log entries of Captain Fred F. Martin, First Cavalry Division Artillery Hq. O-888706:

"We landed on Luzon at Lingayen Beach on 1/27/45 and assembled our aircraft on the beach. On 1/29/45 I flew the Stinson L-5 from the beach to a landing strip that the 158th Combat Team had prepared near San Fabian. That afternoon I picked up another Liaison Pilot (Lt. William Burchfield) at a road position near San Roquet and we made a reconnaissance of the area in search of a better landing area to operate from. We located an area near Guimba. The next morning (1/30/45) I flew my chief mechanic (Sgt Herbert Dupree) to the new landing area near Guimba for him to meet the rest of the ground crew who were coming by truck, and they were to set up operations there.

The next day (1/31/45) I flew a Capt. Fowler from Guimba to the 6th Army Hq. near Colasio and returned to Guimba. Later in the day I flew from Guimba to the 14th Corps. Hq. near Conception and picked up Col. Crothers and flew him to Guimba. In the afternoon I flew Col. Crothers to the 14th Corps. Hq. at

Conception and returned to Guimba with Col. S. K. Yarbrough (C.O. of the 61st FA Bn.). Late in the evening I flew from Guimba to the 14th Corps Hq. at Conception and picked up Col. Crothers and returned to Guimba.

"THE FLYING COLUMN"

2/1/45

— Flight #1 (2.1 Hours)

This first flight was very early in the morning with our Division Commander General Verne D. Mudge. We flew reconnaissance for the roads and rivers south of Guimba toward Manila. The Log indicates that we made a landing at "GHQ" for fuel (my log does not show where GHQ was located at that time). While I refueled the aircraft General Mudge was away, but soon returned.

— Flight #2 (1.5 Hours)

We departed GHQ and flew more reconnaissance (deeper into enemy held territory) and maintained surveillance of our troop movements. I flew the aircraft at General Mudge's instructions and maintained a listening watch on the Artillery radio, and General Mudge stayed on the Cavalry radio. Twice on the flight we made landings on the road in front of the lead elements and General Mudge conferred with the commanders of those units. We terminated this flight on a road near Cabanatuan and General Mudge went on by Jeep.

— Flight #3 (.5 Hours)

When General Mudge went on by Jeep I flew a Cavalry Major (I did not record his name) on a reconnaissance of the road to Santa Rosa and returned him to his outfit at a new position on the road where the Column had progressed to.

— Flight #4 (2.3 Hours)

In the afternoon I picked up General Mudge at a landing strip near Cabanatuan and we flew in surveillance of our troops and reconnoitered the road through Gapan and several other roads to the south, and also the area near Mount Arayat. We also flew at low altitudes down rivers and streams in the area and checked the terrain to the east and west of the road that ran south through Gapan. We terminated that flight at a point on the road near Cabanatuan where I had coordinated the arrival of my ground crew, so that we could refuel that aircraft. We serviced that aircraft but I did not fly again that evening. We secured the aircraft and I and my ground crew remained there overnight.

2/2/45 (2.0 Hours)

— Flight #1

In the early morning I flew General Mudge on reconnaissance again and he stayed in communication with the "Flying Column" as we checked roads and towns well in advance of the lead elements. We again made landings in front of the lead tanks and General Mudge held short conferences with Col. Conners. We returned to the road near Cabanatuan for fuel and I did not see General Mudge the rest of the day.

— Flight #2 (1.5 Hours)

This flight was from the same road location, and was for the purpose of an orientation flight for General Rex E. Chandler (1st Cav. DIVARTY C.O.). He was shown the situation and location of our troops and flown back to the same position on the road near Cabanatuan.

— Flight #3 (.3 Hours)

This was a short flight to re-position the aircraft and my mechanic (Sgt Herbert Dupree) at a new landing strip beside the road in closer support of our troops.

— Flight #4 (.5 Hours)

This was another short flight to a beach landing area northwest of Manila where Sgt Dupree and I spent the night.

2/3/45

— Flight #1 (1.3 Hours)

On this first flight of the day I picked up General Mudge (I failed to record where I picked him up) and we flew over Manila and were fired on by ground fire. I made a diving 180 degree turn and withdrew from

the area. In my hasty exit from the area I looked back at General Mudge and he was smiling and pointed at his shoulder holster and said "It's Ok Martin, I have my 45!". We then flew back to the north to Santa Maria, where he saw a skirmish in progress and he had me land and he joined up with them and advised me to go get some fuel and return. To get into the place where he wanted to land was not the best place in the world to land. There was a road that ran out of the town to the west and intersected a road that ran generally north/south and it ran parallel with a stream. The north/south road had some small trees that prevented us from landing on it, and the wind was from the east. The Japs were in the town at the east end of the road, so I suggested that I didn't think we could land there. But the General advised that yes I had landed in a lot worse place than that, so we did land. In fact he said that if I tore the airplane up he would see that I got a new one! To tell the rest of the story: I came in low and fast over the edge of the town in a steep turn and made a fast wheel landing down wind on the road, and at the end near the stream line I dropped the tail and locked the brakes and skid to a stop down in the edge of the stream. General Mudge then joined up with the troops and I recruited some help to get the airplane across to the north/south road and to cut enough of the small trees so that I could take-off on it.

— Flight #2 (.7 Hours)

I flew to the beach strip and had the aircraft refueled and returned to Santa Maria.

— Flight #3 (.5 Hours)

When I returned to pick up General Mudge, I flew Col Conners on a short reconnaissance of the road into Manila and then returned to Santa Maria.

— Flight #4 (1.9 Hours)

I picked up General Mudge again and we continued our surveillance of the tank column and our troops at other locations. The General stayed in communication by radio and we flew around the northeast edge of Manila and then across to the Grace Park area and on to the beach landing strip where I had the aircraft refueled.

— Flight #5 (.6 hours)

I then flew General Mudge to locate the tank column here he had me land on the road in front of them and he joined them. I flew back to Gapan and later on to Santa Maria where I spent the night.

THE NEXT DAY

2/4/45

— The "Flying Column" was in Manila. For a particular reason I mention that on this morning there was a very heavy early morning fog.*

There were many more interesting days ahead but on 2/28/45 General Mudge was wounded at Antipolo.

*I mention the fog because on this day I was sent to pick up General MacArthur but was unable to land at his location due to that fog."

Fred Martin also had some information about the invasion of Japan that, up until 1980 was TOP SECRET. The following is his explanation of "Operation Downfall":

"OPERATION DOWNFALL" was the code name for the scheduled invasion of Japan. The first operation was to be November 1, 1945 and was called "Operation Olympic" and would have been (14) American Combat Divisions and would have landed on the Japanese home island of Kyushu. This is the operation that I trained on for the LST, and was to go in and fly observation for the Naval bombardment and the troops landings. The First Cavalry Division accompanied by the 43rd Division and the Americal Division were to land on beaches inside Ariake Bay labeled "Desota", "Dusenbergh", "Essex", "Ford" and "Franklin". Their mission was to capture Shibushi and then push inland and take Kanoya and its airfield.

On March 1, 1946 the second invasion called "Operation Coronet" would have taken place with (22) Divisions that would have invaded Honshu.

Over 1.5 million combat troops with millions in reserve and in support would have been used (all told about 4.5 million men).

Casualties were expected to be high with approximately 1000 dying per hour in the early stage of the operation on both sides. The American losses were expected to be approximately 250,000 killed or wounded, and for the entire operation it was estimated that there would be "One Million American casualties by

the Fall of 1946".

Fortunately by August 6, 1945 the first "A" bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and on the 9th the second one on Nagasaki, and then in a matter of days the War had ended. The bombs killed many, but they also saved millions of lives on both sides."

In his book entitled "Operation Iceberg The Invasion and Conquering of Okinawa in World War II", Gerald Astor gives a more detailed look at working with the Brodie device. An excerpt from his book follows.

"The terrain of Kerama Retto denied even minimal landing strips for the 77th's air section, eleven Piper Cubs that spotted for the big guns. 'While on Leyte, we found out we were going to leave a week before the main task force for Okinawa,' recalls John Kriegsman, who headed the unit. 'About the same time we were issued two of the craziest looking hooks we had ever seen on any aircraft. Along with the hooks were instructions on how and where they were to be mounted on our Cubs. Mystery was the order of the day! We figured we were to hook something but we didn't know what!'

Word circulated that we were to operate off an LST ship. A naval commander was to arrive on a transport and explain how the hooks were to be used. He came and was extremely vague. He was unable to supply a photograph or even a sketch to show how the LST was fitted to handle a Cub. He did tell us that at Iwo Jima, an LST was used for the Marines' L-5 Stinson, a much heavier plane than ours. The Navy commander left without any further information.

The day before we were scheduled to depart, LST 776 with what was called a Brodie Device mounted on its deck showed up. Several of us from the air station, including Lieutenant Montgomery and myself, went on board. The crew explained how the device worked and what we would need to know to use it. The convoy got underway with our LST as a part of it. We had no chance to practice landings or takeoffs. But Lieutenant Montgomery and I were expected to put down on that ship which could only accommodate two Cubs.

With the convoy underway, we were the show of the day. All eyes and field glasses from nearby ships were on us as we gingerly flew around the LST, valiantly trying to hook the loop. Lieutenant Montgomery was the first to succeed after only three passes. I managed in five. Thanks be to God, we did not damage the precious-looking planes.

The Brodie Device gave LST 776 a strange look. Forward was a steel pole about thirty feet high. An arm protruded over the port side of the ship for about thirty feet in a ten-o'clock position. The same setup existed on aft part of the ship with that arm in an eight-o'clock position. From one arm to the other ran a wire like a trolley cable. Atop both ends of the arms was a sort of receiving platform for the crew to stand on and manipulate the trolley.

When a plane was to land, a nylon rectangle about three feet wide and four feet long would drop from the trolley device and roll aft. Meanwhile, the LST would turn into the wind a full speed, and since the vessel had little or no keel, it rolled gently. The arms sticking over the side described an arc of perhaps thirty feet. The pilot approached the loop in sort of a porpoise fashion, trying to get the rhythm of the ship as he came in so that when he hooked or, worse, missed the loop, the arm wouldn't come crashing down on him.

Perhaps the worse thing that could happen was to believe you were hooked when you weren't and jam the stick forward. Diving thirty feet straight down on the deck could make a big problem. The maneuvers required extreme concentration, particularly since we had no practice or formal instruction.

One of the pilots by the name of Vince Borgatti became anxious and pulled the release early and went into the drink. Immediately there were sailors in the water with tools and they took the hook off the aircraft and brought it on board with Vince. They then punched holes in the aircraft and let it sink! Their explanation was that the Pelican Hooks were more scarce than the aircraft!

Securely hooked, the trolley would roll along the cable. The ship's crew would halt it and at the forward end, the sailors would transfer the plane to a cable leading down to the deck.

For takeoff, they installed a twelve-inch loop in an eye atop the hook. Pilot, passenger and Cub would then be lifted, connected to the trolley and transferred to the larger cable. The crew would pull the trolley as far aft as possible. The plane would be held there while the LST headed at full power into the wind. The Cub pilot applied maximum rpms and then signal when ready. The crew would release him.

The length of the cable was about 250 feet. When the pilot figured he was about three quarters along, he pulled the 'chain', much like flushing an old-fashioned toilet with an overhead tank. The plane might still

not have enough airspeed to fly but it was free of the trolley; using the thirty feet of altitude, the pilot nosed down to pick up enough airspeed just before hitting the water. From there on, it was normal flying.

We didn't feel it was risky except we were concerned about our lack of opportunity to practice. We were the only two Cubs available for observing the initial Kerama Retto landings."

Corporal Lindsey J. Sammons was another of the men involved in the invasion of Leyte, and with the LST. According to Cpl. Sammons, "This was the only LST carrier that was built specifically for the L-4. The strip was built of plywood for the length of the ship-about 200 ft. Six L-4's were carried and those on each side had to have the rudders taken off so the wings of the plane that was taking off would clear them. They would hoist the L-4 upon the plywood runway and as the LST turned into the wind we would give it all she had and go as fast as it would go and off the end of the ship we would go.

"The 40th Division was making the invasion on Lingayen Gulf about 40 miles west of Baguio. On one of the spotting runs I made, a Japanese marksman got a pretty good bead on me and I caught a 9mm shell through my shin. It didn't hurt very much but it tore the leg of my one-piece fatigues. I stopped the bleeding with a piece of adhesive tape I always carried in my tool box, tape I usually used to patch holes in my plane.

"In the initial invasion, fighting on the beach was pretty rugged, but soon the Japanese withdrew into the hills. Then we had no problem finding a smooth part of the beach for landing our planes. We were primarily spotter, but at times, we carried an observer. Fuel and parts were brought ashore and we lived with our planes for a while. We were flying about five fire control missions a day with six L-4's. We never lost a plane or a man, but some of the planes got pretty well banged up.

"As the fighting moved inland, we began to use the roads and highways for strips. Most flights were at treetop to 300 ft. level. We were right up on the front lines and there were times when we could look right down the barrel of the Japanese guns. We patrolled about 10 miles, and were able to direct the fire of fifteen guns that were 90mm or 105mm. They were throwing a lot of steel at the Japanese.

"As far as the maintenance was concerned, I did most of my own. We had mechanics, but they were so busy we would check over our planes while the mechanic was putting in fuel and oil. While I was being trained, I flew L-3's, L-4's and L-5's, but I liked the L-4's the best.

"After the war was over, I was a radio operator on a small wooden ship sailing to Japan, where I flew L-4's again, mostly on trips to show VIP's around. Occasionally I delivered messages, but with then end of the war, we all relaxed and took life at a slower pace."

"Hell, I don't know where they are! They just sort of appear and disappear at whim. Even when they're here they don't check in with us. They take off and land where they damn well please! Just the other day one of them cut inside a C-54 on final, bluffed him out of the traffic pattern, and they got away with it! Try the caves at the end of the field," he said, waving his arms disgustedly toward some low hills at the south end of the field. "I don't know why the hell you want to write about them anyway-they're a crazy bunch of ———!"

Clark Field continued to be a presence long after the hostilities were over. Don Hansen remembers his experiences there in 1946-47 while his dad, Major Wallace F Hansen, was a maintenance squadron, non-military pilot.

"At Clark Field was a fraternity of L-bird enthusiasts, pilots and mechanics. Through the Philippine Foreign Liquidations Commission surplus liaison aircraft were offered for sale. Some of the planes available were: (1) Good flyable L-4's for \$800.00, (2) Poor but flyable L-4's for \$400.00, and (3) Bushel Basket L-4's for \$100.00.

My dad had purchased and learned to fly one of the \$800.00 types by the time my mom, sister and I arrived in August 1946. I commenced training under the able tutelage of 1st Lt Alfred M (Abe) Cowan. Abe was an L-5 courier pilot, with regular flights between Luzon military bases and facilities. After nine hours of dual instructions, I soloed off of Bam Bam grass strip, about ten miles from Clark.

The tower controllers were most cooperative and patient with us - the L Fraternity - coming and going between the B-29's, however only military pilots were allowed to land or take off from Clark. Hence the use of Bam Bam strip. Abe Cowan or any other military pilot would ferry the plane and passenger to Bam Bam."

"The Huks Stole It"

Philippine communists were called Huks, short for Hukbalahap, their official name, and they had

caused some trouble in the mountains. Raids were common in the area around Clark Field. The 25th Liaison Squadron was located then on the old pre-war part of Clark Field. The runway had been blasted and bombed and many of the buildings blown apart by typhoons and shell fire. The 25th often conducted aerial searches for the raiders.

The 25th was flying L-5's and a few L-4's. Parts were always difficult if not impossible to get. When a plane was grounded for a part it often had to sit several months and then it might or might not ever be fixed. One pilot was test flying an L-5 when he spotted an Army L-5 that had evidently made a forced landing. He made several low passes and realized the plane was intact and that no one was around it. All he could think of was parts for his outfit's grounded L-5. He returned to base as fast as he could and with the help of a crew chief, rounded up several enlisted men.

Tools in hand and riding a six-by-six truck, the group set out cross country to find its prize. Locating the L-5 posed no real problem because the pilot had spotted several landmarks.

Then came the fastest disassembly job ever seen. They had that L-5 loaded and covered with a tarp in record time. At home base, some of the men cleared out the planes so they could store their prize at the back of the rusted shop building.

The next day, an Army colonel came by and asked for an aerial search to locate one of his planes. In his words-"the damned Huks stole it." We searched for two days, but of course we never found it.

Several days later all the unit's planes were flying, thanks to the Army. The Army colonel drove by about a week later and realized all the unit's planes were flyable. He happened to look into the shop building and spotted the remains of an L-5. Biting his lip hard, all he said was "Aw Hell!" and walked away.

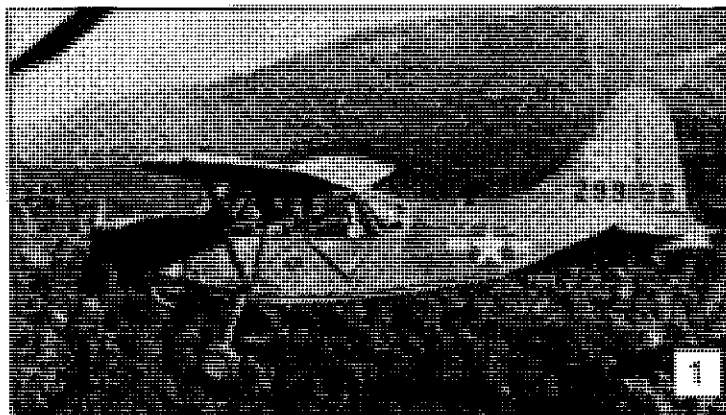
There was always some competition between the branches of service, but after all we were in this war to win it.



Filipino Odyssey

1 – First Air Commando Group L-5s on
Liaison mission in Burma 1944 –*B. Stratton*

2 – 25th Liaison Squadron pilot James
Norman and fellow L-Bird pilots in the
Philippine Theater of War 1945
–*N. James*



Chapter 6 —

To the Shores of Tripoli — L-Birds in Africa

"Operation Torch", the landings in North Africa, began on November 8, 1942. It was America's first combat test in the European theater. The troops were under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower. This pincer movement was designed to catch Field Marshall Erwin Rommel's combined German-Italian Army, including the elite Afrika Korps, between British General Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army and Anglo-American troops under General Eisenhower.

At 1:30 am November 8, Eisenhower's troops hit the beaches of Morocco and Algeria. By daybreak on November 9, three Piper L-4As took off from the U.S. aircraft carrier Ranger. Led by Captain Fred E. Allcorn, the planes set course for the Moroccan coast. The Ranger's skipper, launching the Grasshoppers 60 miles out at sea, refused to break radio silence to tell the Allied soldiers and the ships of the convoy that the planes were on their way. His ship had been under torpedo attack and was running at full speed of 25 knots. The Grasshoppers had to take off into a 35-knot headwind. As an aid to be recognized by friendly forces, the engine cowlings were painted bright yellow, with the white stars of the national insignia ringed by a circle using the same bright yellow.

The paint job was all in vain. The three aircraft came under intense anti-aircraft fire from Allied ships. As a result none of the Pipers reached Morocco. One was forced down near a Vichy French fort where the crew was taken prisoner. This was a short-term problem, because as the Allies pushed forward, they freed the men. It was a very inauspicious beginning for combat operation by the U.S. Army Aviation group.

Captain Allcorn was in Cub 204, with Lt. John R. Shell and Lt. William H. Butler following; Captain Breton A. Deval was riding as observer. In the stiff headwind, the planes were airborne almost instantly. Their orders were to fly to Fedala where a race track would serve as a landing strip. Three miles from shore, for no apparent reason, the formation switched to an echelon left, although they had started at 2000 feet and flown in an echelon right. Within seconds Allcorn saw a gun flash aboard the cruiser Brooklyn, which was standing inshore with the rest of the armada of 200 ships. Almost instantly a round exploded in the position where Lt. Shell had been flying. All three planes dove for the surface.

As Allcorn headed toward the shore almost all the ships in the convoy opened fire on the Cubs with 20mm guns, even though they had been painted with the U.S. insignia and invasion markings. Allcorn skipped the waves and headed toward the beach. About a hundred yards out he turned parallel to the beach to reach Fedala. Allied shore installations fired at him most of the way. When he pulled up to land inland, units of the 2nd Armored Division riddled his plane with machine gun fire. His windshield disintegrated and portions of the cockpit were blown away. Then the Vichy French opened up on him. He was hit in the right leg. His engine was hit and burst into flames. He slipped his plane into a controlled crash, crawled from the cockpit and dragged himself 50 feet when the Cub blew up.

Butler and Shell, seeing what was happening to Allcorn, decided to try to make an airport just north of Casablanca. This was a mistake! German planes had bombed and strafed the field only a few minutes earlier and nervous anti-aircraft gunners let go at the Cubs. They managed to put down near a Vichy French fort, were captured and briefly held prisoner.

Allcorn was found by friendly civilians and taken to an American first aid station. In a period of about an hour he had achieved some dubious distinctions: he had been the first Army Artillery aviator in combat; the first to fly a Cub from an aircraft carrier; the first Army Artillery aviator to be wounded in combat; and the first Army Artillery aviator to be shot down - and by his own men!

Years later, a Navy gunner officer was asked why he had worked the Cub over. "We looked through our silhouette charts," he explained, "and we didn't see anything that resembled those planes. If you were at sea and saw a Cub putt-putting by, would you believe it?"

Another spotter unit's troubles began long before the African Invasion. Late in October 1942, the War

Department had directed Ft Sill's Field Artillery School to send ten pilots and mechanics to the 13th Field Artillery Brigade in England. This was the first group that the School had sent to a tactical unit. In England, the outfit was put into an infantry replacement battalion. Lt. Delbert L. Bristol, commander of the group, breathed fire. Before leaving Sill, he had been told by Col. Wallace Ford to contact Brig. Gen. Alfred Gruenther, Chief of Staff Headquarters II Corps, if anything went wrong in England. Bristol spoke to Gruenther and the group was promptly transferred to the 13th Field Artillery Brigade. Here they became the flight instructor nucleus of the II Corps Air Observation Post School. The group arrived in North Africa by ship convoy late in November 1942. They set up on a strip of grass along the edge of an olive grove at Sidi-bel-abbes, Algeria.

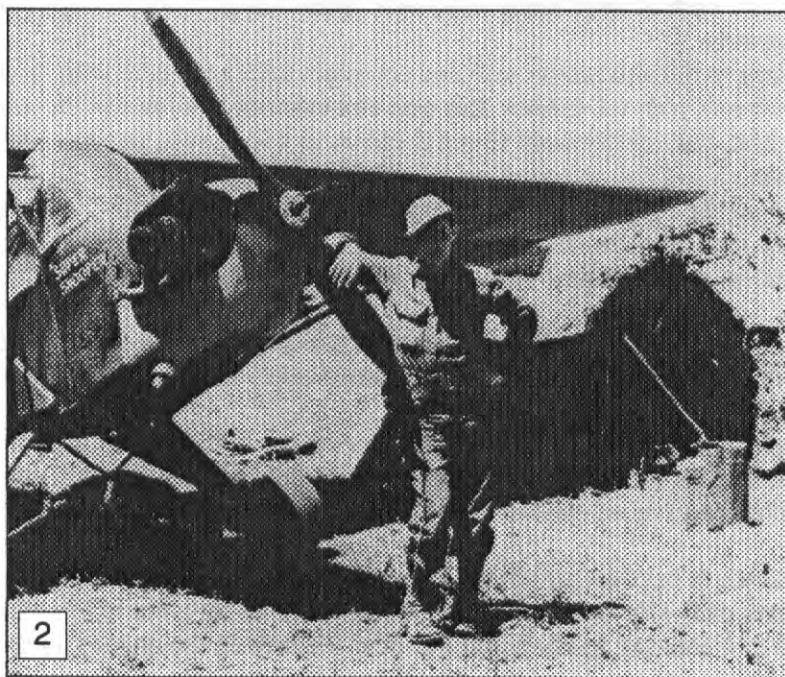
Attempting to thwart the mission of the artillery aviators appeared to be standard operating procedure for some commanding officers at that point in the war. As late as mid-1944, a few ground force officers, including artillerymen, violently opposed the use of light planes on the battlefield. They tiny planes embodied a new concept of command field performance, and it seem to frighten many old-time artillery officers. How could one pilot in one little plane influence the course of an artillery battle? It boggled and confused the military mind.

Few, if any, artillery commanders wanted to be bothered with the light planes or their pilots. The faculty and students at Sidi-bel-abbes were forced to live in the wooden boxes their airplanes had been shipped in. Often, commanders failed to provide meals for operational air section personnel and many nights an entire artillery unit would move, leaving its air section somewhere behind in the desert.

Of all the pilots involved in North Africa, Major John W. Oswalt distinguished himself in many areas. He was one of the first of ten "L" pilots sent to any combat zone in World War II. He landed in Morocco with General Patton's Western Task Force in November 1942. He remained overseas to the war's end and attained a record 1,103 hours combat time. He served as Aviation Officer, 1st Armored Division. He fought in the North African and Italian Campaigns, including Casino and Anzio. Part of his contribution to this theater was to provide combat-proven tactics and concepts to the Aviation School to aid in training. This also included deep aerial night adjustments of artillery fires and justifying the L-5's for mountainous terrain (1st advancement from Cubs).

Despite overt opposition and frustrations, the Grasshopper pilots were irrepressible. In March 1943, at El Guerrah, they uncovered a major thrust being launched by the German 10th Panzer Division. Calling down a withering artillery barrage that helped stop the assault, they "belled the cat and caged it too"; two Grasshopper pilots calmly landed on a beach between Carthage and Bizert and captured a half-dozen bewildered German soldiers.

To the Shores of Tripoli – L-Birds in Africa



1 – U.S. pilots on the left, turn over L-3s to the Free French pilots on the right in North Africa 1942 —*Gene Oshrin*

2 – S/Sgt Liaison Pilot Frank Perkins and his L-4 "Super Snooper" in Tunisia 1943 —*F. Perkins*

Chapter 7 —

Sunny Italy

A. W. "Dutch" Schultz wrote of his experiences in Italy in his book "Eye In The Sky". The following is an excerpt about his tour of duty in Palermo with his L-4 nicknamed "Janey".

"Two days after the fighting on Sicily ended, Captain Devol told me at morning briefing, 'Schultz, you are assigned temporary duty at Patton's headquarters in Palermo. I hope you don't forget us.'

I felt a great comradeship with the 3rd Division and our air section. Nobody doubted L-pilots any more. When we were in the air the Krauts hesitated to fire their big guns and mortars for fear of bringing our artillery down on themselves, which saved G.I. lives.

The front line troops had seen us chased by Me-109's, surrounded by black AA bursts, trailed by white tracers from German machine guns, with airplane part strewn over the ground; they knew what we were about.

General Patton's headquarters was located on an estate near the Palermo Airport. I could not use the airport there, but close by stood a walled race track already being used as a ration depot. It had a hard-surface parking area that made a great landing strip.

I reported daily at Patton's headquarters, in full and proper uniform, complete with a tie, and Army issue boots. I wore my .45 in a standard-issue web belt with G.I. holster. This gun belt was not comfortable or convenient in the close confines of Janey's cockpit, but I didn't want General Patton to think I was testing to see how far I could go with uniform modification.

I stayed in the junior officer's quarters on the estate and had the use of a headquarters motor pool jeep and driver. This gave Croal, my maintenance man, and the crew use of the 3/4 ton truck for fun and games in Palermo. Now and then days went by without a flight for I was never assigned flight for lesser rank than general.

General Patton was deeply concerned for the wounded and on several occasions I flew him to the evacuation airstrips. He would meet and talk with the wounded as they were loaded on C-47 transports headed for hospitals in Africa and then home.

On one of these flights, I approached an evacuation field, circled twice and got neither a red or green light from their tower. I observed that there were no fighter planes coming in, only some fighters taxiing toward the runway. As I landed Janey, a yellow jeep raced toward us with an Air Force Lieutenant waving his cap.

I knew this routine and seized the chance to set this guy up like he'd never been set up before. I pulled off the runway and started to taxi to the line of C-47's and slowed up a little to make sure the field officer caught up with us. He pulled along side and proceeded to chew me out over the roar of the engine. Patton leaned forward and shouted, 'Stop!'

I slowed Janey to a full stop. as the lieutenant approached the airplane, I cut the engine, fearful he would run into the propeller in his agitated state. He was shouting wildly and gesturing to get the hell out of there because it was a combat field. Just then, the flight of fighter planes roared past, giving us all a dust bath as they took off. General Patton slowly stepped out of the airplane and strode over to the yellow jeep, standing ramrod erect in full dress regalia.

I couldn't hear all the words said, but the lieutenant became subdued in a hurry. Patton rode off in the jeep to visit the evacuation hospital. The lieutenant, now without wheels, came over and helped me push Janey further off the runway without so much as another word. General Patton strolled leisurely down the line of stretchers, shaking hands and speaking with the soldiers being evacuated.

The next afternoon, I flew General Patton to an evacuation field in the western part of Sicily. I was careful not to raise the ire of the Air Force so I made several circles of the field, making certain there were no planes in motion as I landed near the line of C-47's marked with large white circles surrounding bright red

crosses. My landing caused little commotion as I parked beside the larger planes like a little chick beside a mother hen.

Dozens of C-47's were lined up and stretchers were being placed on board. Patton walked down the line, shaking hands with individual soldiers and exchanging a few words with them. As he came to the plane to start back to Palermo, he took a map from his pocket.

'Do you think we can make this German glider field and still have enough gas to get back to Palermo?', he asked. He wanted to stop and look at a few of the abandoned German gliders. He had heard that some of them were in nearly-flyable condition. I calculated the distance, flying time and fuel level.

'We have enough gas for the trip, but it's mid-afternoon', I explained. 'We'll have to limit our time at the glider field. It will be about 40 minutes flying time to the glider field, and 40 minutes back to Palermo, so we will have an hour and a half or two hours to explore the German gliders.'

'Let's go', he said. We took off and I flew west, toward Sicily.

These gliders were not like the throwaway gliders the Allies would later use in Market Garden. These were gliders the Germans had actually used to ferry troops, and had also been designated to bring back wounded. They were big enough to carry 30-40 shock troops to a battle and perhaps an equal number of wounded back.

We landed and, because there were no American troops on the field, I stood close by while General Patton went off by himself to look at the gliders. Sicily was pretty well secured by this time, and we didn't feel any threat from the few shepherd and sheep that were nearby. However, I didn't want to turn my back and discover that someone had stripped Janey of her tires and drained her gas tank.

The gliders were basically skeletons now and the fabric on them was ripped and cut up; there was nothing usable left. The Germans had presumably taken the instrument panels; the tires had either been salvaged by the Germans or stolen by the Sicilians. After looking at several gliders, Patton returned to Janey and instructed me to fly along the lake bed a little further to see if we could find any that were in better condition.

While we were up, I put in a radio check to his HQ and got no response. I cautioned him that we only had about sixty to ninety minutes worth of daylight left. He ordered me to land and went off to look at another cluster of gliders.

Again I stood by Janey, and when he returned, we took off again. I put in another radio check to his HQ. Again, no response. As we climbed again, he saw one more cluster of airplanes close to the woods and asked me to land.

'We don't have much time left', I told him as we landed. 'I can't get into Palermo and there is nowhere between here and Palermo to land.' Yet, he was determined to examine one more group of gliders.

'I'll be right back', he said as he walked away from the airplane. But I could see him going from plane to plane again and I began to worry. Even though it was still light out, there was no way we could safely land at Palermo by the time we would get there.

'General, there is no way we can make it back to Palermo', I said when he returned.

'We'll go up and radio back where we are and they'll send a car', he said confidently. So we made one more short flight. I didn't have what I considered enough gas to make Palermo in any event if we ran into a head wind. We climbed up to 2,500 feet, which is fairly high for an L-4B. Still, I could not establish radio contact and was increasingly concerned about saving gas, so I pointed down to suggest we land right where we were. He nodded.

The field seemed safe enough because it was completely abandoned. We landed, taxied over by the woods and parked close to a small road. He said he had told some of the staff that he might stop by this field, and perhaps they might drive by to look for him. Then we settled in for the night.

I did not have anything to eat on board, and he had no candy or snacks. We had a canteen full of water stashed in the plane, but having been trained from North Africa to Sicily, water discipline was no problem. We were not big water drinkers, so we would survive.

We decided to survive in some degree of comfort. I dug the knife out of Janey's first-aid kit and we cut a couple of swatches out of one of the gliders to make ground cloths, and a couple of swatches to make blankets. We folded up the fabric from the glider, and bedded down for the night. We were in a forested area, so it was easy to get comfortable on a mattress of dry leaves, and because it was the dry season, there weren't

many bugs.

We looked at the stars and talked about light plane flying. I knew he had been on of the big boosters of sport aviation, and he told me how proud he was of the way it had developed. Artillery aviation had come along much as he had anticipated, but he lamented the fact that it was so late in starting, and that a special-use plane had not been built that was equal to the German Fiesler Storch. He explained to me how tightness in appropriations had delayed the development of a small artillery-spotting and liaison plane. Nevertheless, he felt better that the L-4B was doing an admirable job.

At last, we dozed off. He went to sleep first. I felt duty-bound to guard him, even though I felt no threat from the local residents. I had my .45 and he had his ivory-handled Colt Peacemaker. I figured we could hold off a large number of sheep if we had to.

As I dozed off that night, I reflected on the General's equanimity over the overnight interlude. He had ignored my warning about the time. It was almost like he wanted to get stuck out here, away from HQ. Perhaps he needed a little vacation, or break, from being in charge of personnel, and from the momentous decisions a general officer must make. Was he playing old-fashioned hooky? If so, I couldn't blame him for wanting a respite.

At the first light of dawn, we were ready to return to Palermo. It was apparent that he knew how to fly a Cub just as well as I did. From his position in the observer's seat, he held the duplicate set of brakes and the throttle for me as I propped the airplane.

The dawn air was smooth and still as we took-off toward the sunrise. We flew directly toward Palermo; soon I had established radio contact. When we arrived, several staff cars were there waiting for him. I did not hear if they had been worried about his absence, but I have to imagine some of his staff had been ready to push any number of panic buttons.

About a week after our overnight, I flew General Patton to a war room. This war room, like many others, was just a couple of command tents in a barbed-wire enclosure that was usually made to look like a stockade for enemy POWs or an MP stockade for soldiers who had been arrested. Nobody would easily recognize it for what it was.

On this particular day, General Patton had me go into the war room with him. I was allowed to see the model of Salerno. Now I knew what was next. I told General Patton that Captain Devol was short several replacement pilots and wanted me to come back for the first few days of the invasion.

'Good Spirit', he said, 'Go on back.'

Devol had played his ace. He wanted my Janey back. I didn't want to give her up...so I went with her."

Dutch Schultz was a Division Air Officer when Fred Boucher was introduced to him. Mr. Boucher relates his story:

"I joined the 41st R. A. Bn. of the 3rd Inf. Div. on June 1, 1944 at Guillanelo, Italy just outside of the Anzio beachhead location. I was shortly after introduced to the Div. Air Officer, Dutch Schultz. Dutch evidently figured that the best way to learn the business was to fly over the front line - so, several minutes after I had stowed my gear away, Dutch flew us off to the battlefield. The first thing I remember is seeing a tank battle below us and Dutch pointing out where the attacks were taking place and where we were heading and what we were looking for (enemy activity we could drop fire upon). My log book shows that we were up for two hours and I remember very well that toward the end of the second hour we had anti-aircraft fire bursting around us (88's I believe). At this point, Dutch demonstrated a superb "down to the deck" dive and flew us back to our airstrip.

The following days until we took Rome were spent in getting back into flying L-4's after a two month lay-off. We were shot at a few times and eventually fell into Rome itself on June 6, 1944 landing at some soccer field called, naturally, "Stadio". This was also D-Day in Normandy.

After capturing Rome (virtually single-handed), we got orders to pull out of the combat zone and we spent the next few weeks training for an invasion we all felt would be in Southern France. Churchill thought that we should have invaded Yugoslavia but it eventually turned out that Southern France was our goal. Training for the invasion included my being given the opportunity of firing the Dd Edison (a destroyer) off the coast of Salerno on July 13, 1944. I never understood the reason, but did enjoy the experience.

On July 30, 1944 we went through exactly what we eventually would do in the real invasion. The Division Air Section flew from Capodichino Airfield outside of Naples to Dock 'H' in Naples harbor, loaded the

ships (including LST 906) which had been converted into a mini-aircraft carrier and invaded an area up the coast called 'Lago'. I was given the duty of being the first to take off from LST 906. All went well except one plane (don't know whose) caught a cross-wind and was blown into the anti-aircraft guns on the port side and had to ditch. The practice invasion was considered successful and spent the rest of the time till were to leave getting ourselves and equipment ready. My plane in particular had to be modified because Dutch told me that for the day of the invasion I would be on temporary duty with 6th Corps. This required that the radio frequencies had to be changed so that I could keep in touch with 6th Corps. It was also necessary to install a five gallon tank of fuel on the rear seat which was connected to a wobble-pump arrangement in front of the front seat. The idea was that, when I had been up a couple hours and the tank was getting empty, I would pump gasoline from the extra gas can to give me greater range.

My only contact with 6th Corps was a day or so before we sailed out when I was taken to 6th Corps War Room somewhere in Naples. I was told that the invasion would be on the coast of Southern France and that the 3rd Div. was to land on the beaches around St. Tropez. We were shown enlarged pictures of the landing areas and we could see how most open fields were planted with stakes to discourage aerial landings. Of course, there were paratroop drops in those areas. Anyway, we were not to discuss the actual landing sight until we were at sea.

On August 6, 1944 we repeated the flight from Capodichino Airfield to the famous Dock 'H' in the Naples harbor and prepared to load the planes aboard LST 906. Dutch had told me that I was to supervise this loading though the Navy personnel seemed to do a very efficient job as they had done at our practice invasion. Anyway, the loading went well and all L-4's were well battered down by the end of the day.

We remained on board while the rest of the ships were prepared and on August 11 (my birthday), I remember that a small boat sailed by and there on the top deck was Winston Churchill waving at us - a real thrill on my 23rd birthday! That was sailing day and, after passing Corsica we arrived at our invasion point. August 15, 1944 was D-Day and I took off from LST 906 at 0800.

That morning I remember quite well sitting on the runway which had been constructed on LST 906 facing a nine or ten knot wind plus the eight or nine knots from the ship. I remembered the instructions at the trial invasion to hold the brakes and rev the engine to full throttle. Then to push the nose of the L-4 down, release the brakes and run forward at full speed. Again, no difficulties and I took off after advising Corps that we had started.

My mission was to monitor what was happening on the beaches and to report to the Corps ship on what was happening. I was also equipped with a flare gun and some red flares. These were to be used to alert ground troops that they were to switch to a common channel where I could report to them if there was something unusual which I could see which they were unable to spot. On one of my passes along the beaches, I noted that near La Londe les Maures on the western portion of the beachhead, there was a road block around a bend on the road to the village. Some of our people were approaching this area so - with some trepidation since I had never fired a flare from a plane - I did so and reported what I had seen. Had no idea of the outcome since, by this time I had to pump some fuel from the spare tank into the main tank. About this time I had also noted some tracers heading toward me so I flew east away from there.

Very shortly thereafter this I stupidly ran into a barrage balloon cable. I hit the cable with the tip of my left wing and headed toward the ocean. Scared!! Anyway, the damage was apparently acceptable and I was able to pull out of the dive.

Shortly after this, my engine quit and I had the chance to make a water landing. After discussing this with some other pilots and mechanics, we decided that some dirt or water in the extra tank and wobble pump caused the problem since I seemed to have plenty of fuel after the five gallons had been pumped from the extra tank.

The invasion was deemed a success and we raced north up the Rhone Valley to meet with troops coming from the Normandy invasion. We were heading for the Belfort Gap and German soil. However, I made it as far as Besancon.

The end of my short combat flying career took place at Besancon, France. We reached the outskirts of the city on September 7 and received word that one of our two planes was to find a field close to our Battalion HQ the next morning. My observer, Paul Alpert, and I were to fly the first mission the next day. That evening a couple of us found a small cafe nearby and had a glass of wine. A bit later a local lady resident

came by and left us some food. And that is about it - I remember setting my alarm for 0700 the next morning and that is all I remember. The next real perception was standing in formation at what I later learned was 'appel' where we counted at least twice a day. The rest of the story is an entirely different life until the end of the war."

Paul Alpert was more fortunate and wrote a letter to Fred's dad telling him what he knew of their disastrous mission and what had happened to Fred. The following is the text of that letter dated March 2, 1945. It is interesting to note the last sentence of the letter:

Dear Mr. Boucher

My name is Paul Alpert. I have just received a post card from your son Fred. He is a prisoner of war in a German prison camp. He is well and asked me to sent the story along to you. I got your address from a copy of the orders which awarded the air medal to Fred and I.

I was the observer in the plane Fred piloted. Our mishap occurred on the outskirts of Becancon, France, (about 40 miles southwest of Belfort). On the night of Sept. 7, our infantry's mission was to take Besancon from 2 sides. Our artillery had their next position picked on the map. Fred and I were to pick our air field as near the artillery as possible. The attack was carried through, the artillery was moving up so on Sept. 8, Fred & I took off in the plane to reconnoiter the new air field. As we flew over the new area we received a radio message asking us if we could spot a German convoy leaving town on a road to the north. Fred cruised north a bit and began to pick up altitude to see if we could pick up enemy activity. We were at about 5000 feet when German anti aircraft 88mm bursts started closing in on us. Fred put the plane in a dive to get away from the ack ack. Just as he started to pull the plane out of the dive a hornets nest of small arms fire including 20 millimeters opened up on us. Fred was still fighting to escape the fire - banking and diving when something hit me and knocked me out. We were at about 150 feet at that time. I awoke in a French Cathedral - a priest taking care of me. I don't know how I got there. I could not find out what happened to Fred. We thought he was killed. I was very happy to hear from him. I spent 4 months in a hospital in Italy and was shipped here. I am now as good as new. The public relations officer has asked that this not be published.

Sincerely yours,

H. Paul Alpert

Enclosed is the card I received."

For the Sicilian operation, a flight deck 210 ft. long and 12 ft. wide was built on an LST under the supervision of Capt. B. A. Deval, Jr., one of the men who had taken off from the Ranger for the African invasion. The framework was timbers anchored to the deck by wires. The floor of the flight deck was steel matting. A slight rise in the runway began three-quarters of its length toward the bow. With ballast added to the ship's bow, a liaison pilot had a slight downgrade for takeoff for three-quarters of its run and a level deck for the rest of it. With a ship's speed of 10 knots into a 10-knot wind, the Grasshoppers were airborne in 150 ft. Once aloft, they headed out to sea several thousand yards, far enough to escape anti-aircraft and small arms fire, and paralleled the beach.

Among the lucrative targets in Sicily were German truck convoys. An L-4 Grasshopper named Fanny Rouge, putt-putting back and forth above its artillery battery, found just such an opportunity and called for fire. He radioed the range. The first burst was wide. "Five zero zero right, two zero zero over," advised Fanny Rouge. The second shell was closer. Again the artillery spotter radioed corrections. The third burst was on the nose. "Target, Target," Fanny Rouge shouted. "For effect, one more round." "On the way," replied the ground. "Mission accomplished," said the elated Fanny Rouge.

In less than five minutes (Time Magazine reported in its issue of September 16, 1943) an L-4 Grasshopper named "Fanny Rouge" had located and directed the destruction, with only 11 shells, of a target that would have demanded a flight of medium bombers, plus more than an hour of communications, preparations and operations.

The landings at Anzio for the assault on Italy proper spawned conditions tailor-made for the liaison planes. While the Fifth Army was still fighting to get off its beachhead, Capt. William H. McKay, of Arp, Texas, commander of a divisional Piper Cub section, discovered from his moving perch considerably more than he had been looking for.

"I nearly fell out of my plane," he recalled, "when I looked down. There were more than 2,000 (later confirmed at 2,400) German soldiers walking across a field toward our lines in parade formation with a lot

of equipment and tanks in support."

Five thousand artillery rounds were fired into the area under Capt. McKay's direction. A captured German officer said later that casualties had been more than 50 percent. The enemy was stunned by the accuracy and ferocity of the barrage. Their orders had been to split the beachhead in two by a drive to the sea.

A German gun position at Anzio had not only been dug in on the reverse face of a mountain, but was hidden in a tunnel as well. For firing it was wheeled out on tracks. An L-4 Grasshopper pilot and his observer spotted it and radioed a report. A gun from each of three U.S. battalions made a leisurely precision adjustment on the tunnel entrance and the Grasshopper flew off. The Germans waited about half an hour and concluded it was safe to roll out the gun. They got off just one round when three shells fired simultaneously, totally destroying their position.

When bad weather grounded regular photo reconnaissance planes during the Volturno offensive in the drive on Rome, the entire Fifth Army, massed for battle, was immobilized for days. Unable to wait any longer, yet unwilling to advance without intelligence, General Lucien Truscott sent up a Cub. The Grasshopper flew right up the Apennine Valley under the overcast snapping pictures as it went. The plane returned without a scratch and the assault began.

Many of the allied ground forces bestowed affectionate names on the L-4 Grasshoppers: J. C. Penney Pursuits, Maytag Messerschmitts, Mail Order Monoplane.

Mike Strok of Piper designed a parachute that could be used to supply troops marooned on mountains. The Air Force contributed release devices originally manufactured for light fragmentation bombs. These devices were welded beneath the Cubs. Two cans tied together supplied water. C Rations were chuted in fiber cases that originally had held 105mm shells. Drops were made from a height of under 400 feet. Many troops were saved by the drops.

In Sicily, liaison pilots began to encounter attacks from enemy fighters. A German document that fell into the hands of U.S. Army Intelligence offered Luftwaffe pilots points toward the award of decorations for downing Allied aircraft. Three points were given for downing an escorted four-engine bomber, two points for an escorted twin-engine bomber, one point for a fighter, and two for a liaison plane. Ground troops who brought down a Cub were rewarded with 15-day leaves. Numerous forays were made against the small planes by Messerschmitt Bf-109's and Focke-Wulf 190's, often in packs of six or more. The pilots' Fort Sill training paid off. Under fighter attack, the Grasshoppers simply dive for the deck. Enemy pilots could not fly that low or that slow and keep the L's in their sights.

The first kill of an enemy fighter credited to a Cub-and there were others-was made by Capt. V. J. McGrath, a Royal Artillery Officer flying for Fifth Army.

For several days, McGrath had been chased home by the same Me-109. He developed a sincere distaste for the German pilot, when, on one foray, his liaison plane got ventilated by several machine gun slugs.

"I'm sick of this game," McGrath told his mechanic. He then devised a trap, and on his next mission he flew in wide circles over the mountains. The German pilot took the bait and dove on him out of the sun. The Grasshopper swept low and scuttled into a ravine. McGrath knew the ravine-he had flown it before. Tracers from the Messerschmitt zinged past as the German, intent on his prey, followed. McGrath then banked hard vertically, reversed his direction, flying under the attacker. The ravine was a box canyon-a dead end. The German, unable to maneuver his speedy fighter, splattered himself and his airplane on the face of the cliff.

Some Grasshoppers did suffer casualties, though. The first fatally wounded pilot flew into a hail of enemy machine gun ground fire during the disastrous U.S. defeat at Kasserine Pass in Algeria. In Sicily, S/Sgt James Smith and his observer died when a Messerschmitt clipped off the wing of their L-bird.

Ernie Pyle, one of the best loved war correspondents, writing from Italy, reported: "The saddest story I've heard about an L-4 Cub happened here on the Fifth Army beachhead. A friendly Long Tom was the unwitting villain in this case. This certain gun fired only one shell that entire day, but that one shell, with all the sky to travel in, made a direct hit on one of our Cubs in the air and blew it to smithereens."

Eight doughty L-4 pilots in Italy carried out probably the most unsuccessful air raid in aviation history and returned without losses after encountering no enemy fighters and no anti-aircraft fire. A reconnaissance check revealed the damage they caused was confined to one fire in a small German-held tree.

The "mass" L-4 raid was conceived by a group of American liaison pilots who were bored with their role

in the war-artillery observation-and who decided to become a bombardment group for a day. Their "bomb tonnage" totaled 20 cans of gasoline and oil which they pushed out of their airplanes hoping that they would ignite on contact.

First Lt. Arley Wilson, Marshalltown, Iowa, who on previous occasions had strafed the enemy with a .45 caliber pistol from his L-4 or dropped notes, suggesting that the Germans surrender to his "superior airforce," was the driving spirit of the operation.

The night before the mission, all the L-4's were "bombed up" and the pilots briefed-big league style.

With all systems go, the attacking L-4's putt-putted up the green Ausente Valley in their usual lackadaisical manner, then suddenly they shifted direction and raced, with what was for them phenomenal speed, over the target area. Each pilot carried a five-gallon tin can of gasoline mixed with oil on his wing strut and at the precise moment, he shoved it off with his foot. Most of the "bombs" landed well outside the target area.

When the fire started in a tree, a few German soldiers showed casual concern for the proceedings by scattering rifle shots into the air. Someone reported German fighters approaching, so the raiders gathered and headed back home to assess the results.

"Somebody up above nearly hit me with one of those cans as bombs" said Lt. Joseph Holakavsky of Berwyn, Ill.

Staff Sgt. Ernest Kowalik, Uvalde, Texas, just returned from leave, had missed the briefing and took off with a damaged L-4 after the others had left, but his "bomb" did just as well as any of the others.

"We should all get Air Medals for this epic, colossal, history-making attack," opined Staff Sgt. Edward Cooper, Taylorsville, Mississippi. "It is the only air raid not made by mighty swarms of four-engined bombers. We failed to shoot down 120 enemy planes. We did not obliterate the target and despite the flak we did not start fires that were visible for eighty miles."

Not a single L-4 received any damage. The next day they were all back spotting artillery missions.

James R. Brice, T/Sgt. recalled his days with the 72nd Liaison Squadron before the invasion of Southern France:

"The 72nd was located at Caserta, north of Naples. The Special Services Forces under General Frederick was located south of Naples at Santa Maria de Castellabate. We had many flights between those two points carrying both personnel and mail. This trip carried us near several interesting points. When we carried a passenger we always carried them over Mount Vesuvius, then over across the Bay of Naples and around the Isle of Capri, then around Sorrento and on south across the bay of Salerno to Santa Maria.

I was alone returning from Santa Maria and I decided to fly around inside the outer crater (of Vesuvius). Clouds were forming around the top of Vesuvius but I didn't pay much attention to them. I went inside the crater through break in the rim. There was a pretty wide area between the outside crater and the main crater. However, there is not a great deal of room to maneuver. As I proceeded on my way, the clouds suddenly billowed inside the crater ahead of me. I was faced with the problem of turning around. With the clouds and all it was too tight a fit. I searched for a crack of any kind in the rim of the outer crater until I finally found one and I dove through it and got away!"

Some veterans rely on memory to recall their experiences in Italy. Robert A. Houze searched his World War II memorabilia and found a diary he had kept during the war. The following is his story:

"My tour of duty as a liaison observer in Italy during the latter stage of World War II began on 16 February 1945 when I was assigned to the Division Airstrip from Battery C, 604th Field Artillery Battalion, Tenth Mountain Division(light). The Division was poised on the Fifth Army front in the northern Apennines, preparing for a major offensive to take Mount Belvedere, a key mountain occupied by the Germans. This, along with other adjoining heights, represented the last obstacles to reaching Bologna and the rich Po Valley, the source of food for the German armies in Italy and northern Europe.

On 19 February the attack on Mt. Belvedere began. It followed the incredible night ascent of Riva Ridge on 18 February by units of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment of the Tenth. The ascent took the enemy completely by surprise. The ridge adjoining Mt. Belvedere had to be taken before the main assault could get underway. Belvedere was taken before dawn as were other objectives of the Tenth, and a few days later all the heights had been secured. The last mountain in the chain to be taken was Mount della Torracchia, and this was after bitter fighting and many casualties. These actions broke the German Gothic Line, leaving Bologna

and the rich Po Valley as the next objectives.

On 14 April the major offensive of the Fifth Army got underway, and on 21 April, the Tenth moved into the Po Valley, spearheading the drive northward, bridging the Po River and racing on to Verona and Lake Garda. Bologna was occupied by the 36th Division. The last resistance in Italy was in the Lake Garda area with heavy fighting along the tunnel road bordering the lake to Torbule and Riva. Mussolini had fled from his villa on Lake Garda and was captured by the Italian Partisans. He was then taken to Milan to be executed along with his mistress. I was in his villa shortly after and saw things in disarray. Although unconditional surrender was signed on 29 April at Caserta, it was not until 2 May at 1200 hours that all resistance in Italy ceased.

From the beginning of my liaison tour of duty on 16 February until the end of the war I was in the air almost every day. In the first six weeks I had completed fifty missions over enemy lines, and by war's end eighty three. Our missions ran continually, so that as soon as the aircraft could be refueled, we were back in the air again. Observation involved the use of maps (re-coded for each mission), radio operation and high powered binoculars. Enemy targets were located and artillery fire was called for. Much time was spent relaying radio messages as line of sight as poor in the mountains. Observations were made of enemy activities and buildups, and from time to time staff officers were flown over the front.

We were shot at many times in the air and on the ground as well. We flew at 7,500 feet, which was above the effective range of the German 88's. It was interesting seeing shells bursting beneath us, forming beautiful flower patterns. We lost just one aircraft, and that was due to its being caught in a downdraft after takeoff. The pilot suffered a broken ankle; the observer was unhurt. The rapidly changing front, especially in the latter phases of the war, made it necessary to move the airstrip ten times. It was shelled and strafed many times. Our lives were at stake both in the air and on the ground as we lived at the airstrip.

Perhaps a word needs to be said at this time about my military training and experience and how liaison observation fits into it. Following receipt of my commission as a Second Lieutenant at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma in November of 1943, I was assigned to Battery A, 604th Field Artillery Battalion, Tenth Mountain Division, located at Camp Hale, Colorado. Our training was with 75mm howitzers and mules. I had served earlier with the 602nd Battalion at Camp Hale before going to OCS, and upon my return to Hale, learned that the 602nd had been sent to Kiska and Attu in the Aleutians. So I spent another year with 75's, mules, skis and snowshoes, this time with the 604th.

In the summer of 1944, the Division moved to Camp Swift, Texas. It was here that we were introduced to liaison observation, as the Division received its first planes. As I recall, I had only one or possibly two flights in the L4's before the Division was shipped to Italy in late 1944. Therefore my training as an aerial observer was indeed in the heat of battle. For one who was trained with mules, pack artillery, skis and snowshoes for two years, the story of my logging 83 missions of liaison observation behind enemy lines and receiving the air medal with oak leaf cluster, is a most unusual story to say the least for a pack artilleryman. The story becomes even more incredible when it is pointed out that the Army Air Force, in the early part of the war, rejected me because of my eyesight.

The Italian Partisans on one occasion stopped our captured Italian Fiat automobile we were driving into San Giorgio, and pulled open our flight jackets to see our uniforms. When they saw we were Americans, the first to enter the town, they showered us with vino and flowers.

It is my conclusion and my firm belief, that liaison aircraft contributed significantly to bringing to a close World War II in Italy. I value highly my tour of duty as a liaison observer with the Tenth Mountain Division, and consider it a privilege to have been associated with these gallant men and their fallen comrades who made up this remarkable division of the U.S. Army."

Oliver K. Tyler recalled his time in Italy:

"The end of the war came quickly for us in Italy. After being bogged down during the late Fall and Winter (in melting snow and mud) of 1944-45, the American 5th and the British 8th Armies leapt out of the Apennines into the Po Valley and destroyed the Germans. A few of the men made it across the Po River, but not many, because the 12th and the 15th Air Forces used that landmark as the slaughter zone. All of the bridges were blown, most of the valley was flooded with only dyke-like roads protruding from the barren landscape. Ancient walled villages provided a dry foothold for a few of the SS fanatics but our armies either found them or they starved themselves out into the long lines of surrendered Wehrmacht, marching back by themselves to POW camps at Ravenna, Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Parma, Piacenza and a few other smaller

centers. (The few SS who escaped the river trap fled into the Alps and we used the L-4 with the loud speakers to talk them into surrendering.)

I had been looking (for what seemed like hours) for a particular HQ and flew over a communications van that had run off the dike and was being retrieved by a group of men using a span of white oxen as a towing medium. Circling, I landed on the dike in front of them and immediately discovered that they were Germans. Recovering from the initial shock, I went to full takeoff power and encountered a crowd of Italians running towards me waving white flags. Disregarding the appearance of having run away from a group of helpless Germans and having captured an Italian village, I got up flying speed (as the Italians dove and jumped off the dike) and circled away. Within a short time, I observed an Artillery L-4 parked on a dike and landed to see if he could advise me. He turned out to be an old friend I had known at Ft. Sill and he was acting very peculiarly. Smiling weakly, he pointed to his parachute harness, explaining that a enemy bullet had just split it less than an inch from his chest. However, he knew where I wanted to go and delivered the mail for me.

For our squadron, then end of the war was V-I (Italy) Day - and we remained in that country until going home in August of 1945. The only memory I have of leaving is of attending a concert at our port of embarkation, given by the Andrews Sister. The show was held in a huge Niessen Hut. While engrossed in the program, an announcement was made that the Japanese had surrendered. A soldier, who had been seated above us on a crossbeam, fainted and fell into the audience (dramatically expressing everyone's relief of not going home to be retrained for the Pacific).

Veteran news correspondent Hughes Rudd recalled his days as a spotter pilot in the October/November 1981 edition of American Heritage in an article entitled "When I Landed The War Was Over"; an excerpt from that article follows:

"Monte Cassino: the first time I saw it, from about twenty or thirty miles away, at three thousand feet, it was beautiful, a Disney dram of a mountain, rearing up from the floor of the Liri Valley almost as steeply as Yosemite's Half Dome. Not quite that steeply, of course; you could hardly make war on the face of Half Dome, but my God, how you could make war on Monte Cassino. It dominated the valley, which broadens at that point to a width of some thirty miles, maybe less. To the south, where the Americans, British and French were, the mountains were smaller, the valleys narrower. The Germans had fought bitterly to keep us from the broad Liri Valley, which leads to Rome; once arrived at the mouth of that valley, we found ourselves fixed in place, the fierce glare of German observers on that mountain making us as naked and vulnerable as the L-4s made the Germans.

It was truly a beautiful mountain, in the beginning. At the foot, the town of Cassino, a highway intersection, red-tiles roofs, a provincial life, farms on the outskirts, and a hotel called the Continental. I did not enter the Continental Hotel until 1967, and by that time it had changed its name and the Tiger tank was no longer in the lobby. For months in 1943 the Tiger was in the lobby, while Americans and Germans fought each other in the rooms upstairs, tossing grenades back and forth, machine-gunning each other on the staircases. A sort of Italian Stalingrad.

But of course as an L-4 pilot I was not obliged to take part in that. Our mission was primarily counter-battery fire: the Germans had amassed large amounts of artillery in the valley and we fired back and forth at each other, all day, every day, week after week, month after month, while our infantry tried to take the heights around Monte Cassino.

Much less has been written about the infantry battle, one of the worst for both sides during the whole war in the West, but from the air, it was episodic: rarely did I have any sense of planned campaign or even of massive effort. There were exceptions, of course: a regiment of the 36th Division crossed the Rapido River, which joins the Volturno at Cassino. A regiment was three battalions of infantry, roughly three thousand men. They crossed at night, on Treadway bridges, which were simple affairs, designed to carry trucks or tanks: two parallel strips of perforated steel planks. The regiment passed through the 93rd's area, which was just south of Monte Trocchio, the closest fold in the terrain to Cassino (that is, the closest large enough to shield 105-mm howitzers), and a battery of the 93rd was scheduled to cross at daylight to provide close support, but at daylight all hell broke loose. The Germans shelled and destroyed the Treadway bridges, and when I arrived above the river about 5:30am, that regiment of the 36th Division was flattened on the bare, naked, hostile ground on the wrong side of the Rapido. There was no cover, not even a bush, much less a ravine, and

German artillery and mortar fire was landing on the area incessantly. We fired at dozens of muzzle flashes, but the effect was negligible: the German stuff kept coming, 88s, 105s, 150s, even Nebelwerfers, the short-range heavy German Mortars that the infantry called "Screaming Meemies", because of the fierce howl the projectiles made as they came down. It was, for me, and God knows for the GI's on the ground, a horrible, helpless feeling. The German fire went on all day, and some of the infantrymen of the 36th broke and tried to swim the Rapido. I saw dozens plunge into the water of the river, which was only some fifty feet wide, but I saw none make it to the other bank. The Germans had, with superb military foresight, dumped coils of concertina barbed wire into the river to lie two or three feet below the surface, invisible from the banks. Military barbed wire, of course, is not like the barbed wire you see on an American farm; the barbs are three or four inches long, very numerous, and they seize a soldier's uniform like steel cactus. I flew back and forth over the Rapido, directing fire all over the Liri Valley, wherever I could spot German batteries in action, and watched those little brown figures jump into the river and disappear. I'm not certain now, but I believe I cried: I was, after all, only twenty-two years old, and the 36th Division was the Texas National Guard Division. I grew up in Texas, and I had childhood friends in that regiment. Three of them never got back across the Rapido.

After the war there was a great deal of argument about the abbey. The Vatican said no German soldiers were ever in or near it, and the Germans said the same thing. Well, that's bull: on several occasions I saw German Machine-gun tracers coming from its northeast corner. The gun was either inside the abbey itself or firing from a position built into the exterior wall. I called fire on the spot each time, and the 93rd responded each time. After months of infantry assaults that broke against the mountain and the town at its foot, the Allies decided they would bomb their way through Monte Cassino. Though rarely mentioned in historical accounts, the first bomb attacks were made by P-40s based at a field near Naples: they dived with five-hundred-pound bombs. I was at three thousand feet, to fire the 93rd at any German flak batteries that opened up on the P-40s, and I can still see the fighters diving, their .50-caliber machine-gun bullets sparking on the mountain as they zeroed in, then the steep pull-up, followed seconds later by the geyser of smoke, flame, and dirt of the bombs's explosion. As they pulled out and away, headed for home and a hot shower, they zoomed all around me in my seventy-five-mile-an-hour machine, so close their slip-stream rocked and jolted the L-4.

But that bomb attack didn't work: the P-40s had concentrated on the mountainside, avoiding the abbey and the town of Cassino itself. They hit fortified German positions on the slopes and provided the Americans with a flood of bomb-shocked German prisoners, driven out of the minds by concussion, but bombing the mountain did not open the way to Rome. When the next attempt came from the air, it was a disaster.

If I ever knew what the tactical thinking was behind the second attack, I've forgotten. In those days, we all thought that heavy bomb raids were demoralizing and so destructive that nothing could survive in the target area, so, somewhere up the chain of command, the decision was made to bomb Cassino town and the abbey with medium and heavy bombers - B-25s, B26s, and B-17s. I saw those types in the air: there may also have been B-24s, but they didn't cross my vision. What did cross my vision, floating over the abbey at three thousand feet - assignment: suppress heavy flak - was an oncoming and seemingly never-ending fleet of bombers, approaching from the south. The mediums were at about six or seven thousand feet; the heavies way up there, just silhouettes. The heavy German flak, mostly 88s, went mad: the floor of the Liri Valley was sprinkled with red orange muzzle flashes as the Germans threw everything they had at this incredible number of American Bombers, a number seen up to then only over the Heimat itself. It must have struck the German flak crews as a splendid chance to get even, but they needn't have bothered. I saw not one American airplane hit by flak. I did see American bombs exploding all around the compass, twenty miles beyond the target, twenty miles short of the target, twenty miles to the left, twenty miles to the right. A fair number even landed on Cassino town and the abbey, but most landed in Allied territory. To watch a bombing run of that magnitude, involving hundreds of aircraft, was an awesome thing, to put it mildly; those heavy bombs sent up volcanoes of dirt and fire, the air shook, you could see ripples running across the surface of the earth as though an earthquake were in progress, and you felt the concussion even at three thousand feet.

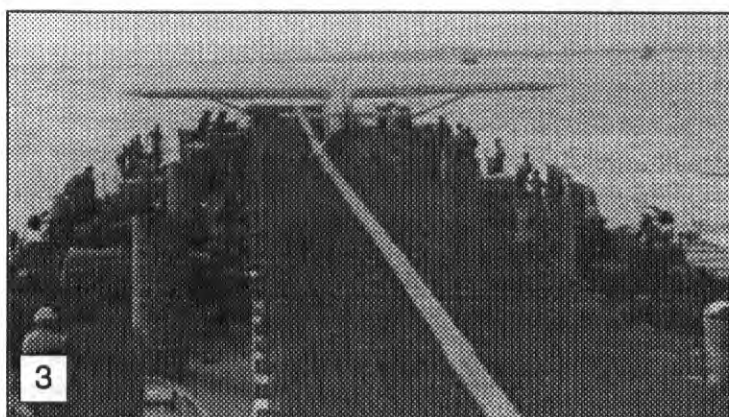
Sunny Italy



1 – Gen "Ike" Eisenhower in L-4 to visit the Italian front lines —*B. Stratton*

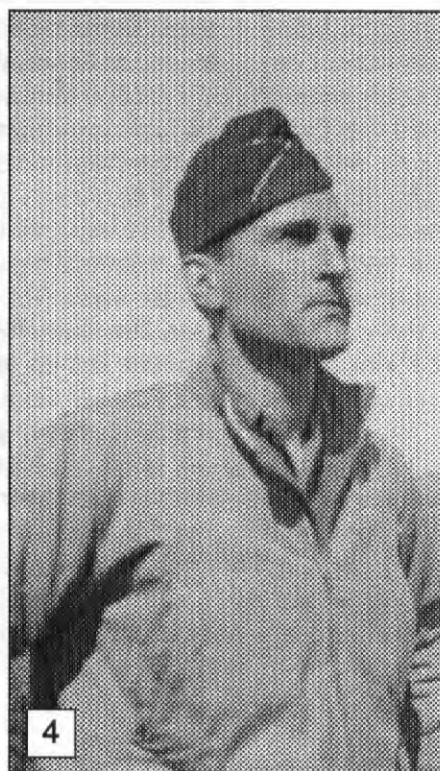


2 – Fourth Army Corps L-5 in Italy —*B. O'Hara*



3 – L-4 being launched from LST #386 to start the invasion of Italy at Sicily in 1943 —*Allen Pace*

4 – Capt Bob Houze, 10th Mountain Div. C.O. preparing to fly as an observer in the Italian Campaign in 1945 —*B. Houze*



Sunny Italy

- 1 – Dutch Schultz preparing his L-4, "Janey" for a fire control flight over Italy. Note Third Division ensignia on rudder. —A.W. Schultz
- 2 – Third Division "Air Section" pilots with their C.O. Dutch Schultz, top left in Italy 1943 —A.W. Schultz
- 3 – Third Division "Air Section" C.O. Capt A. W. Schultz, today —A.W. Schultz



— Chapter 8

The Mighty ETO

Thomas M. Stanton had a front row seat in the European Theater in World War II. The very interesting and detailed account of his time spent with the 153rd Field Artillery Group follows:

"A part of the Army of the United States during World War II, the 153rd Field Artillery Group ("the 153rd") was formed around early 1944 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Consisting of about 21 officers and about 150 enlisted men, the 153rd's mission was to supplement the artillery of one or more infantry divisions.

Two or more divisions comprised an army corps, and two or more corps, an army. The 153rd was to have control over two or more battalions of artillery which were not assigned to any division or other infantry unit. When a corps or army commander decided that he needed more artillery than his regular division artillery, he could call on a group, such as the 153rd. It, in turn had a Group Air Section; the Group Air Officer, a Captain, was in command of the pilots and other personnel of the air sections of the battalions under the Group, as well as the two other pilots and supporting personnel of the Group Air Section.

Note: The infantry division was the basic unit of armies. Each of its three or four regiments had a battalion of artillery. A regiment normally consisted of three companies of about 150 men each. A battalion of artillery normally had three batteries of about 120 men with four cannons - 105 millimeter howitzers were the standard weapon. Since the howitzers usually fired from some six or eight miles away from the target and were usually hidden behind hills or under cover, the gunners could not see their targets. An observer who could see the target would have to send directions to the howitzer crews; generally, the observer was a junior artillery officer because directing artillery fire required considerable skill and knowledge of how the artillery operated. Much or most of the time the observer was with advance elements of the infantry; the observer worked closely with the infantry officer in command of the infantry units. Since they were both at or near the front lines of battle, the observers job was dangerous - as dangerous as being in the infantry.

To be able to see where the artillery shells were landing, the observer tried to get on a hill; naturally, being there made the observer more likely to be seen by the enemy, and therefore in even greater danger than in a valley. Even on a hill the observer had difficulty in ascertaining where the shells were landing, especially as to how far in front of him they were. But from a light airplane, a thousand or so feet in the air, the battlefield could be clearly seen and down far from the front lines the shells were landing, easily determined. So superior was this method of adjusting artillery fire that early in World War II, each artillery battalion had two light airplanes assigned as part of its regular equipment. Two pilots, junior artillery officers who knew how to adjust fire (both from the ground and from the air) were assigned to fly the planes. It was unusual, however, for the pilot to adjust fire; he had to fly the plane, watch out for enemy aircraft and enemy ground fire, and keep the airplane in a position to observe the shells when they landed. Therefore, an observer who was a junior artillery officer, was in the plane to send commands to the howitzer batteries.

When I got my "wings" - the silver plated wings emblem with an "L" and the middle of the shield in the center; that is, when I graduated from advanced flight training at the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I was assigned to the 153rd. The time: early in 1944, perhaps in March.

In any organization, it is the people who determine what kind of organization it will be and whether it is a good or a bad organization. In my opinion, the 153rd was a very good organization, both from the standpoint of morale and from the standpoint of effectiveness. Throughout its history, Colonel John P. Eckert was the commanding officer; he deserves much of the credit for the relatively good performance of the Group. A veteran of World War I, Col. Eckert remained in the Regular Army between the Wars. He had a fine military bearing, standing straight; he was fairly tall, close to six feet, fair haired and of light complexion. Not a West Point graduate, he was a student of military matters and a professional soldier in every sense of the word. He must have instilled in his sons a liking for the military, for both graduated from West Point; unfortunately, both were killed in action in the War. Not until I became a parent years afterward did I realize how terrible those

deaths must have been for him and his lovely, ladylike wife.

Colonel Eckert was an excellent leader and manager, I can't recall ever having heard him give a direct peremptory command. He would ask us politely to do something or say that he would like us to do something. But we all knew that he must be obeyed and that he had the power to punish us severely for failing to carry out an order.

The next in command was the Executive Officer, a Lieutenant Colonel. In several ways he was the opposite of Col. Eckert. Lieutenant Colonel Salmon often gave orders directly, peremptorily and harshly. Not surprisingly, most of us liked Eckert very much and disliked LT. Col. Salmon. Then, and even to this day, I believe the two had agreed that Eckert would be the "good guy" and Salmon, the "bad guy", so that unpopular orders would seem to come from the second in command and resentment diverted from "the Old Man". In that way, we would not react against the Group itself. Whether it was by design or not, the result was achieved.

Captain John Bollard was the Group Air Officer. Of limited education, he came from a rural part of Wisconsin. He had flown Jennies, Wacos and Travelair biplanes before the War, then became a Liaison Pilot as a sergeant in the Air Corps around the very beginning of World War II. In the Campaign in North Africa, he so distinguished himself that he was given a battlefield command. He continued to see a lot of action for several years, then was returned to the States to be an instructor for a while before assignment to the 153rd.

John Bollard was one of a small handful of pilots I have known who were complete masters of their airplanes. It can truly be said that he flew an airplane as though he were part of it. Although our backgrounds were vastly different, (I had joined the artillery as a cadet in the reserve Officers Training Corps at Harvard and was an indifferent mechanic) we became fast friends with a close working relationship. One reason I am able to speak without fear of contradiction of Bollard's extraordinary abilities as a pilot is that he taught me to fly aerobatics in a Piper L-4 (military version of the Cub). I don't believe I was an inept student, but he showed me how to do things the airplane was not designed to do. We would do loops, one after the other, knowing we had done one well when we flew into the prop wash from the one before on the recovery; he showed me Cuban Eights (half a loop followed by half a roll on the down side, then repeating that the opposite way); the Immelman (half a loop with half a roll to right side up at the top) which the L-4 could hardly do because of little power; and amazingly, the snap roll: a little sloppy, granted, again because of too little power, but a snap roll.

Staff Sergeant John Alvey was crew chief for the Air section. He had been the senior mechanic, although only in his late twenties, at the Ford garage in a little town in Kentucky, was drafted, volunteered for airplane mechanics school in the artillery, and used his marvelous natural mechanical ability to keep our airplanes in top notch condition. His reputation was almost legendary; if a problem arose in the motor park which the mechanics there could not handle, Sgt. Alvey was called; he soon had the big GMC 6x6 gun truck or the Jeep running again. A friendly, burly man, he could and often did help not only mechanics, but others in the Group with various problems. It was tragically typical of the man that he was killed, a few years after the War, going to the aid of a stalled motorist. The radio antenna on his tow truck touched a high tension power line.

The other pilot was Ben Cadwalder from a wealthy Philadelphia family. He was a happy-go-lucky young man, also a good pilot; he got along well with everyone. The other two mechanics were characters. Both were a few years older than we pilots, except for Bollard who was in his late twenties or early thirties. Smith had been a pilot before the War, but was said to have lost his license for looping a Ford Tri-motor over Toronto early one Sunday morning, apparently while under the influence. The other was a jack-of-all-trades from the hills of West Virginia, independently minded. This incident tells much about the man: he cut hair for the Group while we were overseas, no regular barber being available. He did not like Col. Salmon: when that officer asked to have his hair cut, he was refused.

At the camp we were issued combat equipment, including heavy combat boots clearly unsuitable for flying. I had a pair of light cavalry boots which were excellent for the purpose. These I had resoled and they lasted (but only barely) until the end of the war.

Into New York, to the Hudson River Piers we went; we boarded the George Washington, a pre-war passenger vessel of pretty good size, about 20, 000 tons. I think we second lieutenants were towed to a small state-room. crowded, but not bad accommodations. It was a slow trip, we were in convoy so we could go only as fast as the slowest ship. A German sub sank one of the freighters when we were about two-thirds of the way across. We never found out what became of the crew; they could not have lasted long in the Atlantic in

January. It was rumored that the destroyer had sunk the sub.

We debarked at Le Havre at night; we cross the river and went up the coast about twenty miles to Fecamp, a town of a few thousand people on the coast of Normandy. In the town's small hotel, the officers were billeted. It was comfortable enough. In the morning, we came down to breakfast. The supply officer had provided the proprietor of the hotel, whose wife and a young woman were helping him, Army C rations. These were mostly canned foods of various kinds. The French could not speak English. We were appalled to find they had provided for breakfast, meatballs and spaghetti out of the cans as they came, in cylindrical form, cold. I forget what happened after that, but I think most of the food was edible.

For more than a week, we stayed at Fecamp with nothing to do; at last the word came that our planes were ready at Rouen, about eighty miles away. Air Force mechanics, apparently accustomed to working on big airplanes - fighters and bombers - had assembled them. The airstrip was a farmer's field; the west end was on top of a cliff dropping some fifty feet to the English Channel. For some reason I will never know, I decided to be very conservative in my approach; I flew a standard traffic pattern: a downwind leg, a base leg, and a final approach leg into the wind, which was from the west at about ten miles an hour. If I overshot, I would go over the cliff. But there was plenty of room to land an L-4.

The downwind leg was normal; I turned onto the base. Looking at the spot where I intended to land, I pulled the throttle back for the first time since I had left Rouen. The little 65 horsepower Continental engine stopped. The L-4 had no starter; to start, someone had to turn the propeller vigorously. If the engine stopped in the air, it was sometime possible, with plenty of altitude to dive and cause the prop to be turned by the relative wind enough to start; but often that didn't work; you simply had to land "dead stick". Diving wasn't an option for me that day because I was at only about 300 feet.

Now here was the situation: if I undershot, I would go into the trees at the east end of the field because I could not use power to get over them; if I overshot I could not use power to go around again; I would go over the cliff and into the ice-cold English Channel. Fortunately, the several weeks without flying had not impaired my judgement. I cleared the trees comfortably and was able to stop well before the end of the strip.

The mechanic who had assembled the airplane after its ocean voyage had failed to remove a bag of silica gel, a drying agent used to prevent rust in the salt air. The drying agent had been placed in the carburetor in such a way that gas could flow through the regular ports for relatively high speeds, but blocked the tiny idling port. The plane had also been rigged wrong. The wings had to be slightly twisted to counteract torque from the engine or it would be difficult to fly. The poor rigging was hardly noticeable in most latitudes, but when Sgt. Alvey and I took it up to test it further, it required full control pressures and three full turns to get it out of a spin to the left.

In only a day or so, the 153rd was ordered to the front lines on the Rhine River; I believe that was in early March 1945. We were to be in the Second Corps, Fifteenth Army. I loaded my bedroll into the back seat of the L-4. In the bedroll were all my clothes and other possessions; the bedroll itself consisted of a heavy canvas piece big enough to hold a sleeping bag, clothes and sundries. It had heavy canvas straps around it and, when loaded, must have weighed over a hundred pounds. The "walkie-talkie" radio, which weighed around forty pounds, was secured to the deck behind the rear seat, well aft of the center of gravity. Fortunately, the L-4 was tolerant of excess weight; from time to time we were astounded at how much it could carry and still fly. None of us ever tried to do a weight and balance calculation. I'm not sure we were ever taught how to do one.

It was a hazy spring day when I took off from Fecamp, France for Hilden, Germany. I couldn't help thinking of the day I got lost out of Fort Bragg. You may rest assured I was watching and tracking my compass. The charts we were issued had not been designed for aerial navigation; but they were accurate and reasonably detailed. Western Europe had been intensively mapped for hundreds of years for earlier wars.

Because of the haze and my unfamiliarity with the chart, I had difficulty orienting myself. After perhaps half an hour; I could not identify a checkpoint. Because of the haze, I could not see very far ahead or to the side; after a few minutes more, I could see two cities side by side in a river valley; the railroads leading in and out checked exactly. I now knew where I was - in southern Belgium. The names of the towns still ring like music in my ears: Liege and Namur. The risk in not being able to identify my position was that I might have

gone too far and gone over enemy held territory, where I of course would be vulnerable to ground fire; and eventually I would have had to land somewhere. It was, therefore, with considerable relief that I found my position.

The evening we arrived, John Bollard asked me if I would like to go up with him. I eagerly accepted, wanting to become familiar with the territory and perhaps learn the whereabouts of other units, ours and the Germans'. We flew an irregular course around the area just as dusk was beginning to come on, steadily climbing. After perhaps half an hour, we were at a little over seven thousand feet and about half a mile on the Germans' side of the River. Suddenly we saw a stream of tracers from a German machine gun of about fifty caliber. In the dusk the orange was bright and the arching of the bullets fascinating. They were well aimed at us, but fortunately, had not quite enough range to reach the airplane, curving about a hundred feet or so below us. Naturally we flew back to our side of the river as fast as we could, maintaining altitude.

We didn't discuss it, but I am sure that Bollard's extensive experience enabled him to determine how far we could go at what altitude, to be reasonably safe from effective ground fire. We now knew the approximate location of the machine guns. It was too late to do anything about them that same night, but next day Bollard sent the information to one of the battalions assigned to the Group. We never did hear whether the machine gun was destroyed. Probably it had been moved during the night or early the next day.

The mission of the Fifteenth Army was to close up a pocket, an area still held by the German Army east of the Rhine and south of the Duisberg industrial area. The bridge over the Rhine at Remagen south of Cologne had fortuitously earlier been captured; Allied troops then had poured across to secure the area south of the pocket. I do not remember the various units involved in the mission, but recall that one was the 182nd Airborne Division.

After the fighting stopped, the 153rd became the administrative unit for the repatriation of about 250,000 displaced persons in the general area. Our supply officer arranged for rations for the huge number of people who had been badly treated by the Germans; most were aching to get revenge. But they were largely confined by the Allies in camps, pending processing by their home governments and return to their homes from which they had been forcibly displaced by the Germans to work on the farms and in the factories, furthering the German War effort.

The work went on for several weeks; some of the people were pitifully emaciated; all were psychologically damaged. The Russians were afraid of the KGB secret police agents who screened them for having voluntarily assisted the Germans. I was appointed Assistant Adjutant and processed mountains of paperwork.

In a few weeks we learned that the 153rd had been ordered to return to the U.S. for thirty days leave; we then were to be shipped to the Pacific Theater. "Forty and eight" the old French railroad cars were called because in World War I, they had been used to haul forty men or eight horses. They were uncomfortable, but the trip to Camp Chicago took less than a day. Camp Chicago was in a field near Rheims, France, close to the champagne country. During the two weeks we were there, we drank a lot, not only of Champagne (1937 was a great year) but also a wonderful cherry brandy, and of course the army rations of Scotch whiskey.

Onto a Liberty ship (about 10,000 or 12,000 tons) we were loaded at Le Havre. The first lieutenants were in a forward hold in canvas bunks stretched over iron pipes, five deep. The enlisted men took turns sleeping on the decks. Card and dice games began before the ship sailed and did not end until it docked; that turned out to be over two weeks after we boarded. First, a boiler blew; it required a couple of days to repair it. Then a week or so out, we encountered a great storm, about the 23rd of July. In our bunks in the forward hold, we could hear and feel the bow lift out of the sea, to come down with a great crash. Many were seasick, but not the pilots; the pitching of the ship was like doing stalls in an airplane.

At the end of the most welcome thirty days at home, the 153rd reassembled, this time at Camp Jackson, near Columbia, South Carolina, but not to prepare for the Pacific Theater. The atomic bomb had been dropped and the war in the Pacific had ended. I was reassigned to the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill as a flight instructor for the last remaining wartime liaison pilot classes.

The 153rd Field Artillery Group was disbanded, sometime in late 1945. The 153rd was assembled late in the War. Its participation in combat was limited. Its record, while undistinguished, was respectable; it did what it was supposed to do."

The L-4 Grasshopper Wing Newsletter #51 from May/June 1995 carried a very interesting article about the Liaison pilots and their planes entitled 'The Spearhead's Stukas!'. The article follows:

"That's what the doughboys and tankers of the 3rd Armored Division called them. Actually it was a term of endearment, because the men of the 'Spearhead' knew and appreciated the worth of artillery liaison aircraft over the blazing front line.

It wasn't a spectacular job. The pilot sat up front and attended to the business of flying. Behind him, the observer, an experienced artilleryman, studied the ground and compared it with his 1/25,000 map. There was constant radio communication with Division Artillery, somewhere below and to the rear. Liaison pilots and observers were workman. There was little glory attached to the service - certainly none of the glitter and dash of pursuit or the Jove-like power of heavy bombardment. They didn't go home after completing a certain number of missions. Instead, they flew right out of one campaign and into another. Except for the complete adoration of ground forces, who had seen Cub observers direct withering counter-battery on enemy big guns, the reward was small.

Surveillance of scheduled shoots and the registration of counter-battery was the aerial observer's bread and butter, but quite often he was called upon to direct close support fire. In the bocage country of Normandy, where high ground was at a premium of blood, the Cubs were a God-send. Their appearance over the battle zone was a matter of vast satisfaction to allied ground troops and a constant source of irritation to the enemy. German soldiers knew that the cost of poor camouflage discipline was always detected by the Cubs and a subsequent rain of American high explosives. There was nothing that Jerry could do about it: when he counter-attacked the American line, the flying observers brought down a barrage of hot steel. When he attempted to knock Fortresses and Liberators out of formation, ever-present Cubs put the finger on one flak position after another - and 'the finger' meant an immediate counter-battery. Sometimes the enemy was goaded to a boiling rage and then he sent over a flight of precious fighter to neutralize the irritation. A Luftwaffe pilot who bailed out of a smashed Me-109 over Hastenrath, Germany admitted that his mission had been to strafe the landing strips of liaison aircraft. That day, seventeen enemy fighters were shot down by anti-aircraft while attempting to carry out like sorties.

There was plenty of danger in artillery flying. Flak and small arms was part of it: enemy lanes were big poison. When a Focke-Wulf 190 popped out of the clouds or zoomed from the deck in a vicious attack, your Cub pilot might only rely on a minimum of evasive action to keep his dog-tags together. In comparison with a fighter, light plane speed was a joke. There was no armor plate to deflect machine-gun slugs and cannon fire, no high speed to elude attack. Yet, in spite of all the occupational hazards, few of the numerous front-line liaison teams were knocked out of the sky. Cub pilots were probably more respectful of their own artillery arching through the air on the way to enemy positions than they were of flak or Nazi fighters. Captain Francis P. Farrel, Division Air Officer, and a famous 'Spearhead' pilot, was killed in action when his L-4 plane was destroyed by an American shell over Stolberg, Germany. Lt. Thomas Turner, a red-headed veteran of Africa and Sicily, as well as the western European campaign, barely escaped a like fate when a 105mm projectile passed completely through the stabilizer and rudder of his aircraft without detonating! These were the unfortunate accidents of war which were almost impossible to prevent under combat conditions.

Each artillery battalion of the 'Spearhead' Division, along with the headquarters commanded by Colonel Frederic J. Brown, operated a pair of these small, but indispensable airplanes. They kept a constant vigil on the front line, and there was very little 'incoming mail' when the 'Stukas' were flying."

Leo Bergeron was with the 3rd Army in Germany; "at the end of January, 1945, we moved with our Liaison Aircraft XX Corps into Germany and crossed the Rhine River at Mainz on our way to Kassel...We went as far east as Yena and Urfurt into what later became the East Zone, coming back to Bamberg, Amberg, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Munich and down to Braunau, Austria (Hitler's birthplace) at the end of the war in Europe on V-E Day. We later did prisoner-of-war camp duty and our missions then became administrative: flying messages and reports, taking officers to conferences, etc.

I was transferred to a group Headquarters at Auerbach, Germany the Kamp for Grofenwoker where I received orders to return to the United States due to my having acquired 'high points, receiving Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, etc'... I was enroute toward the departure airport staying in French Officers Quarters on the Maginot Line V-J Day...I departed Le Havre, France to New York on a Liberty Ship that took fourteen days to make the crossing. Then I was released from active duty to the reserves."

Ken Wakefield, author of "The Fighting Grasshoppers, US Liaison Aircraft Operations in Europe 1942-

1945", gives a detailed look D-Day and beyond. He vividly portrays the role the liaison planes played in this enormous maneuver. The following is an article by Mr. Wakefield entitled "Grasshoppers!", which appeared in the D-Day Special. Following the article are many first-hand accounts of the impressions of the men involved in D-Day and Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and many other large battles and small skirmishes which made up what has become known as the European Theater. Mr. Wakefield's article:

Operation Overlord, as the invasion was code named, was carried out by the 1st US and 2nd British Armies, supported by a large Canadian contingent and other Allied forces. The initial landings were made by roughly equal numbers of US and British troops, but the Americans soon became dominant, with five more armies eventually joining the 1st in Europe. Consequently, the number of American light aircraft in operational service greatly exceeded those of their Allies.

Following its arrival from New York in October 1943, Lt General Omar N Bradley's 1st US Army, with its HQ at Clifton College, Bristol, was made responsible for receiving, equipping, and training the many units assigned to it for Overlord. Among them were numerous battalions of the Field Artillery (FA), each of which contained an air section equipped with two Piper L-4 Grasshoppers for air observation post (Air OP) duties.

Little more than a slightly modified Piper J3 Cub, as it was known by its civilian name, rather than the official Grasshopper, that the L-4 was universally known in military service. Although almost certainly the lightest and slowest combat aircraft of World War Two, the 65hp (48kW) Cub was to become the scourge of the Germany Army.

With four or five FA battalions in each of its Infantry, Armored and Airborne Divisions, the 1st Army eventually possessed more than 300 Air OP Cubs. Others were used by the air sections of the Army HQ and its four subordinate Corps HQs, to which the various divisions were in turn assigned. In addition, the 153rd Liaison Squadron, a 9th US Air Force unit nominally equipped with 32 L-4s, was attached to the Army HQ for additional liaison and communications duties.

Something like 350 liaison aircraft - mainly L-4s, with a sprinkling of Stinson L-5 Sentinels - were to accompany the 1st Army when it landed on 'the far shore', as France was known to the Americans.

On March 13, the 153rd moved to Erlestoke, a picturesque little village on the northern edge of Salisbury Plain, where quarters were established in an old manor house. The unit's L-4s were based a few miles away at New Zealand Farm, a small grass airfield operated by the RAF. To meet an urgent demand for daily mail and courier runs, flights were detached for service with the Army HQ and the three Corps HQs serving it. Thus, Flight 'A' was attached to V Corps at Norton Manor, near Taunton, Somerset; Flight 'B' to VII Corps at Breamore House, near Salisbury; and Flight 'C' to XIX Corps at Knook Camp, near Warminster, Wiltshire; Headquarters Flight and Flight 'D' were to serve the Army HQ, operating from Bristol (Whitechurch) Airport.

From the outset, the 153rd's network of mail runs and courier flights was operated with almost clockwork precision. This was no mean feat, bearing in mind the vagaries of British weather and their performance and instrumentation limitations of the L-4. While ideal for short field operations, the Cub cruised at only 75mph (120km/h) and the arrival of more suitable aircraft in the shape of some L-5s was welcomed. With its greater range and a cruising speed of 115mph (185km/h), the L-5 was better suited for cross-country work and by the end of March outnumbered the L-4 and was fast becoming the unit's standard aircraft. Around this time a few L-5s were also made available to ground forces, two being allocated to each Army and Corps HQ.

The 1st Army, and the other US armies which later joined it in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), came under the jurisdiction of 1st (later 12th) Army Group. At this higher headquarters Captain Charles W 'Chuck' Lefever was appointed Group Air Officer and as such was charged with overseeing and co-ordinating all Air OP operations in the ETO. Much of Captain (later Lt Col) Lefever's time was devoted to logistics and the supply of personnel and aviation-related materials to the Field Artillery. Among other things he was required to estimate attrition factors and then provide for adequate numbers of replacement aircraft, pilots, mechanics, and spare parts.

Another of the many pre D-Day problems facing Lefever was how to move several hundred short-range, ill-equipped (in a navigation sense) L-4s from England to France when the time came. It was agreed with Captain Delbert L Bristol, the 1st Army's Artillery Air Officer, that some aircraft - preloaded on trucks with their wings removed - would accompany the leading assault units in tank land craft (LCTs), but clearly it was not possible to move large numbers in this way.

One possible solution was to transport them on an aircraft carrier, but as Chuck Lefever recalls: "The Navy balked at committing a 'baby' carrier in the already over-crowded English Channel. Further, the Navy was fully committed on deck space, which precluded disassembly of aircraft in the UK and reassembly in France. Instead, we believed it feasible to fly them in."

To confirm this belief, Lefever and another senior FA pilot, Captain Bryce Wilson, flew two separate trips to Northern Ireland through inclement weather to demonstrate, as Lefever says, "that it was a reasonable risk to dead reckon the 65-70 miles (104-112km) to Omaha Beach. The greatest advantage was the immediate availability of air observation to combat units arriving in France."

To increase their range, all L-4s due to be flown across the Channel were temporarily fitted with an additional 8 gallon (36 litre) fuel tank, fabricated from a standard aircraft oxygen bottle and installed above the rear seat. Thus equipped they could, if necessary, return to the UK should they be unable to land in Normandy because of bad weather or enemy action.

Other problems, including the supply of spares and other equipment, were equally well resolved by the experienced Captains Lefever and Bristol and with the exception of a few minor shortages of tools and maintenance supplies, all 1st Army FA air sections were fully equipped ready for their entry into combat. In addition, a 30% reserve of aircraft was on hand prior to D-Day, plus sufficient engines and maintenance supplies to support 30 days of combat operations.

In common with all tactical aircraft of the RAF and USAF, L-4s and L-5s of Army Aid and Ground Forces were to display black and white 'invasion stripes' before operating over Normandy. Applied to wings and fuselage at virtually the last moment - in accordance with Top Secret SHAEF Operations Memorandum No 23 of April 18 - the stripes were intended to indicate friendly aircraft to army and navy gunners renowned for quick trigger-fingers and a lack of expertise in aircraft recognition.

Many FA units applied the distinctive stripes themselves, together with newly-issued identification marking which took the form of a two-digit unit code followed by an individual aircraft letter. Other units flew to their South Coast 'jumping off' point via Grove, Berkshire, where invasion stripes were applied and auxiliary fuel tanks installed by personnel of 3 Tactical Air Depot, Ninth Air Force.

"Overlord" began in the small hours of June 6 with airborne landings on the right flank of the invasion beaches to isolate the Cotentin Peninsula, and on the left flank to hold the line of the River Orne. However, faulty navigation, cloudy conditions, and transport aircraft crews with little or no previous experience of flak were responsible for many troops of the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions landing wide of their designated drop zones.

Their subsequent assembly into fighting groups was further complicated by the swampy ground in which they had landed, but the general confusion on the American side created even more confusion for the Germans. Eventually, scattered groups formed up and the main objectives were finally achieved, aided in the later stages by Air OP-directed artillery fire.

On Utah beaches units of the US VII Corps went ashore at 06:30 hours and moved inland a short distance with negligible losses. Mine clearance and other specialized beach landing tanks brought the British and Canadians swiftly over Gold and Juno Beaches, and by the afternoon they were probing inland towards Bayeux and Caen. Sword Beach was also quickly crossed by other Allied forces, which pushed rapidly without serious casualties, but on Omaha Beach an absence of specialized armor allowed strong defenses to hold troops of the US V Corps on the beach and a dreadful slaughter ensued.

Faced with these problems the landing at Omaha was fast becoming a disaster. As they dragged themselves ashore through the pounding surf, troops who escaped the treacherous seas and the murderous hail of machine gun and artillery fire, were pinned down and took refuge where they could on a beach that was soon littered with the wreckage of tanks, trucks, and landing craft. And under such conditions air section personnel in the first waves were expected to drive ashore, unload their trucks, assemble their L-4s, and fly missions for artillery battalions as they came ashore.

One American artillery pilot on Omaha Beach that day was the late Thomas K Turner, then a lieutenant with the 58th Armored FA Battalion. A veteran of the North African and the Sicilian campaigns, Tom Turner arrived in England with his unit in November 1943. His battalion was attached to the 1st Infantry Division, and with the 62nd and 65th Armored FA Battalions, was to become part of the 5th Armored Field artillery

Group. For pre-invasion training the 58th was temporarily attached to the 29th Infantry Division and exercises were carried out on the South Devon coast at Slapton Sands and in the Bristol Channel area near Barnstaple.

In addition to Tom Turner, the 58th's air section consisted of another pilot, Lt Charles R Snyder, and enlisted men John Williams, William A Franklin (mechanics), and Henry K Holmes Jr (driver/assistant mechanic). In addition, two artillery officers, Lts Leroy C Stevens and Henry Shaddock, were permanently attached to the section to act as air observer.

Prior to embarking for Omaha on June 5, the 58th's two L-4s were prepared for the Channel crossing at Weymouth. Their wings were removed and mounted each side of the fuselage, where they were held in place by supports made by the ground crew. The aircraft could then be towed backwards on their own wheels, using a tow bar attached at one end to a trunnion on a Jeep and the other to the L-4's tailwheel.

Tom Turner recalled that the plan was "for us to land on the beach, uncouple our aeroplanes from the 1/4-ton vehicles, put the tailwheels and wings back on, and fly missions for our battalion, which was landing in support of the 116th Infantry Regiment. This was to be accomplished while under fire from German infantry, machine guns, mortars, and artillery, on a beach littered with barbed wire, mines, hedgehogs (beach obstacles, usually with mines attached), damaged landing craft and knocked out Jeeps, trucks, half-tracks, and tanks. Many of the vehicles were burning, causing ammunition and fuel tanks to explode, and there were hundreds of dead and dying lying on the beach.

"We all knew that our mission was doomed, even before we left England. I have spoken with many L-pilots, both before and after the invasion, and we agreed that the best method would have been to use a small aircraft carrier, just offshore, from which we could fly our missions and return for fuel and maintenance. It is my belief that by firing naval guns in addition to those of the Field Artillery, we could have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy."

Continuing his account of that fateful day, Tom Turner recalled: "Our two planes and the Jeeps towing them were loaded onto an LCT. There were nine other Jeeps on the craft, making 11 in all, and two L-4H aeroplanes. The skipper was to take us to the beach, lower the ramp and wait for us to disembark.

"As we approached Omaha Beach on the morning of D-Day there were hundreds of other landing craft going in on each side of us. Enemy air bursts were exploding overhead and steel was rattling down on the deck. We got a few holes in the wings and fuselage of the aircraft, but sustained no major damage. When we were about 75 or 100 yards from the beach our LCT dragged its bottom on sand and gravel and came to a halt.

"We assumed that it was shallow from here to the beach, so the skipper lowered the ramp and about a dozen of us on foot and five Jeeps charged off the ramp - and into about eight feet of water. The LCT had dragged its bottom on a reef. The skipper raised the ramp, moved on about a quarter of a mile and tried again. And more Jeeps were lost in deep water. After five attempts, ten Jeeps and one L-4 - Lt Snyder's 43-29687 - were at the bottom of the Channel.

"My aeroplane, 43-29618, made it to the beach through the efforts and quick thinking of my crew chief, Sgt John Williams. All the Jeeps had been waterproofed and would run while completely submerged, so long as they could draw air through a flexible tube extended above the surface of the water.

"The Channel was rough that morning and the Jeep towing my plane was under water. The driver was driving while standing, and to his right Williams was also standing. My plane was floating behind, being buoyed up by the wings. When a wave came, which would drown our the engine by pouring water down the breather tube, Williams would clamp his hand over the end of the hose. The Jeep would begin chugging from lack of air, and as the trough of the wave came through, he would remove his hand and let the motor 'breathe' again. By doing this repeatedly, they got my aeroplane to the beach where I was waiting, having crawled ashore like a drowned rat.

"We uncoupled my plane from the Jeep and the driver drove off westward down the beach. Before Williams and I could begin trying to assemble the little L-4, a German shell landed about 30 yards from us. We suspected that they were zeroing in on the aeroplane, so we crawled under the steel ramp of a knocked-out landing craft and watched as German artillery completely demolished it."

Although it was destroyed almost immediately, Tom Turner's L-4 earned the distinction of being the first American aircraft to arrive in Normandy on D-Day. However, it is impossible to determine the next aircraft to

arrive, or to say which was the first to actually operate over the beachhead, but certainly the 1st Infantry Division had aircraft operating over Omaha on the morning of D-Day +1 one. LT R S Harper had Sgt F E Donley, flying the division's first mission, were forced down when their L-4 was hit by heavy ground fire. Both survived, but Lt Harper was to lose his life about a month later. Air sections of the 29th Infantry Division also landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day, and it is known that Major J Elmore Swenson flew one of the division's first firing missions.

Another early Air OP mission is credited to the 4th Infantry Division and it is probable that one of this division's aircraft was the first to actually fly into Normandy. This was L-5 42-98593, flown in by Lt Dave Condon on D-Day +1.

During the planning stage Captain James B Gregorie, Division Artillery Air Officer, had selected the St Martin-d-Varreville area, close to Utah Beach, for a divisional airstrip. He was to accompany ground forces during the D-Day landings and proceed with them to this area to assess its suitability. When an acceptable site was found he was to radio this information to his assistant, Lt Condon, who would then fly the 4th Division's L-5 over from Bournemouth. The L-5 was to lead force of the division's L-4s, each of which had been fitted with the usual additional fuel tank. The division's other four Cubs had gone on ahead, truck-loaded and carried in landing craft.

As planned, Gregorie landed on D-Day and made his way the short distance inland to St Martin, but he found the intended airstrip area cratered and unusable. By next morning he had found an alternative site and at 07:00 hours made radio contact with Lt Condon in England. Approaching the French coast at about 13:00 hours, Condon called in on the division's artillery radio frequency and was given directions by Gregorie until the strip, which was marked with smoke grenades, was sighted. The six aircraft landed safely and shortly afterwards, without even stopping to refuel, Captain Gregorie and Lt Condon took off in the L-5 to register the first artillery fire on Utah Beach.

Initially General Bradley used a heavy cruiser, the USS Augusta to monitor the landings at Utah and Omaha while his staff, under General Hodges, functioned from the amphibious command ship USS Acxhemar. Both ships sailed from Plymouth, with the air section's three dismantled L-4s carried on the command ship. On June 8 an Army Command Post was established at the beach-head at Grandcamp and a few days later the Army HQ's two L-5s were flown in from Bristol.

American troops advancing from Utah were quick to make contact with elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and on June 9 Lt G Bill Roberts, a pilot with the 456th Parachute FA Battalion, reported to the 82nd's Command Post near St Mere-Eglise with his truck-loaded L-4. The aircraft was quickly assembled and out to good use the next day. A second L-4 also arrived by truck shortly afterwards, but on June 13 it crashed on take-off, killing Lt A W Brown. This again left the division with just one aircraft, but Lt Roberts was supported by a few L-4s of attached battalions and on the 16th five more division aircraft flew in from their UK base at Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire.

Bill Roberts survived the war and remained in the postwar US Army for many years thereafter. His duties took him to many parts of the world, but upon retirement he returned once more to England and now lives in Stratford-on-Avon with his English-born wife Pauline, whom he met while stationed in Leicestershire during World War Two. On a recent nostalgic return trip to St Mere-Eglise, Bill discovered that a hotel now stands on the site of his former airstrip.

By the end of D-Day 75,000 British and Canadian personnel and 57,500 Americans had landed and the beach-head was secure, but troops were still pinned down at Omaha where 1,000 of the 2,500 Allied soldiers killed on D-Day lost their lives. But before long an orderly pattern began to emerge. The five beaches were linked and a steady, if slow, inland push consolidated the foothold. Many thousands of men and all types of equipment then flooded into the landing area. Nine infantry divisions and an armored division had landed by the 14th, on which day the 79th Infantry unfortunately suffered an Air OP loss; on the division's first day in action an L-4 flown solo by Lt Lock G Chan failed to return from a mission.

On June 11 (D-Day +5) 'A' Flight of the 153rd LS departed Middle Wallop, Hampshire, for Vouilly in Normandy. One week later the flight was joined by the other aircraft of the squadron, followed by the unit's ground echelon of four officers and 74 men who came by truck and Jeep. After boarding the US Navy's LST 315 at Southampton they arrived on Omaha Beach on June 25 and the next morning joined the air echelon.

lon at Vouilly to resume operations in support of the 1st Army.

By the end of June there were 13 divisions and numerous separate or non-divisional FA units in Normandy, all equipped with L-4s. Among them was the 8th Infantry Division, whose ten L-4s left Northern Ireland on June 27, flying in an open line-astern formation, and routing via Scotland for the shortest water crossing, they flew the length of England to Igsley, near Bournemouth, which was then the main jumping-off airfield for liaison aircraft. From here, with auxiliary tanks fitted, the ten L-4s continued to an airstrip at Omaha, where they rejoined their division on July 4.

Bearing in mind the hazardous nature of their duties, Air OP losses in Normandy were not excessive. In the first month after D-Day they totalled about 14% of the available strength, but by no means were all the losses the result of enemy action. Typically, during the early morning of June 17 two aircraft were lost but one of them, flown by a pilot and observer from the 320th FA, crashed following engine failure on take-off, killing both officers. Ten days later another L-4 of the 320th was shot down near Vindefontaine, again killing both crew members, and that same day, June 27, a Cub of the 87th Armored FA crashed after it was hit by an American 81mm mortar shell.

By the end of June, the 1st Army had 261 liaison aircraft and 289 pilots operational in France. That month 36 aircraft were lost and 20 pilots were listed killed, missing in action, or seriously injured. More than 50% of the losses were attributed to accidents, but in July, when the hours flown rose to 9,851, losses were significantly reduced with only 13 aircraft and 14 pilots lost.

Very few non-combat losses could be traced to mechanical or structural failure, but in July three L-4s were lost on the ground as a result of carelessness by mechanics. Two more aircraft were lost when they were struck in flight by friendly mortar or artillery fire, confirming the existence of a hazard that was to increase to the point where changes in operating procedures were deemed desirable. Interestingly, although several aircraft had been lost in collisions with barrage balloon cables in the UK, no aircraft were so lost in the beach-head, despite the presence of many land and sea-based balloons.

Close behind the invading 1st US Army came supply, aircraft servicing, ground support, and airfield construction engineering units of the 9th Air Force. Among them was the 23rd Mobile Reclamation and Repair Squadron (MR&RS), which landed at Omaha Beach on June 23 (D-Day +17) to undertake aircraft maintenance, repair and aviation supply services to the 1st Army. Upon arrival the squadron took up residence on the strip at Cricqueville and within a week had picked up 28 liaison aircraft requiring repair after crash landings or battle damage. Of these, one L-5 and seven L-4s were returned to units by the end of June, at which time nine L-4s were still under repair. The remaining aircraft were salvaged, the serviceable parts being retained for future use as spares.

This high level of activity by the 23rd MR&RS was to be typical of the next nine months. Work was often carried out under primitive and hazardous conditions, with recovery crews sometimes coming under small arms and artillery fire as they collected damaged or crashed aircraft.

For the first seven weeks after D-Day inland progress from the beach-head was slow, but on July 26 General Bradley, now with his HQ at Haute Chemin, began an advance on St Lo that gained momentum in the days that followed. And, as had become apparent from the outset, the many liaison aircraft now in Normandy were sorely needed because of the difficult bocage country with its small fields and high-banked hedges.

As a 1st Army Report of Operations recorded: "The lack of dominating terrain limited terrestrial observation to little more than the distance between hedgerows. During this period air OPs were the only source of long-range observation or artillery fires. One corps commander assessed the Cub aeroplane as one of the three most important developments of this war. The testimony of prisoners of war appeared to substantiate this glowing tribute to the Air OP".

Meanwhile, back in Britain, two more American armies, the 3rd and the 9th, were preparing to enter the fray. The 3rd, led by the flamboyant General George S Patton, was to become operations in France on August 1, followed on September 5 by the 9th, commanded by General William H Simpson. With their two assigned liaison squadrons, the 14th and the 125th, they were to bring another 650 liaison aircraft into action in Northern France. And by November, with the 15th US Army also in the ETO and with the 7th US Army advancing from the South Coast of France, two more fleets of liaison aircraft were added to the total.

Before their introduction in 1942 many senior officers had been skeptical about the use of light aircraft.

To some extent their reservations were overcome during the North African campaign, but in Normandy any remaining doubts were removed and the value of light aircraft, both as liaison vehicles and as Air OPs, was universally acknowledged. Like the Taylorcraft Austers performing similar tasks for the British Army, the Cubs and Sentinels of the US Army went on to perform equally well in land battles yet to come and did much - much more than is generally recognized - to bring the war in Europe to a successful conclusion."

Captain Oscar Rich, an artillery observer for the 5th Field Artillery Battalion of the 1st Division, told of his experiences at Omaha Beach in Stephen E Ambrose article entitled "D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climatic Battle of World War II". Following are the impressions of Captain Rich while on board the transport Samuel Chase and after reaching Omaha Beach:

"It (the foam-rubber map of the Calvados coastline) was the most detailed thing that I had ever seen in my life. The trees were there, the trails, the roads, the houses, the beach obstacles - everything was there and I spent hours examine it....I could see my first airstrip, in an apple orchard just off the draw going up from Easy Red, Omaha Beach. Everything was to scale - it was actually like being in an airplane, about 500 feet above the beach and looking at the beach and seeing the whole thing in true perspective. It was uncanny how they had built this thing.' Finally he broke away from the map and joined a poker game. The players included Frank Capa, the famous Life magazine photographer, and correspondent Don Whitehead."

Mr. Ambrose article also portraits life for other troops on board: "....there was little to do except gamble, read, listen to the radio, or spread rumors. They groaned when Axis Sally told them to come on over, 'we are waiting for you'. They cheered when the fall of Rome was announced. Pvt Clair Galdonik found a softball and two gloves. He started playing catch with a buddy but made a bad throw and the ball went over the side. On his LCT, Walter Sidlowski of the 5th ESB discovered that the skipper had put the toilet off limits for Army personnel, so as to not put a strain on the facilities. Sidlowski and some buddies put their engineering skills to work and constructed hanging toilet seats, which gave some comic relief when all the seats were occupied just as an admiral's barge passed by."

Mr Ambrose gives a birds eye view of the first afternoon on Omaha Beach as seen through the eyes of Captain Rich:

"By early afternoon a majority of the German pillboxes on the beach and bluff had been put out of action by destroyers, tanks, and infantry, suppressing if not entirely eliminating the machine-gun fire on the beach. Sniper fire, however, continued. The Germans made use of the maze of communication trenches and tunnels to reoccupy positions earlier abandoned and resumed firing.

Worse, artillery from inland and flank positions kept up harassing fire on the beach flat, some of it haphazard, some of it called in by OPs on the bluff. Even the haphazard fire was effective, because the traffic jam remained - it was hardly possible for a shell or mortar fired on the beach flat to miss.

Capt. Oscar Rich was a spotter for the 5th Field Earthlier Battalion. He was on an LCT with his disassembled L-5 airplane (the wings folded back and the propeller put inside the plane). He came to Easy Red at 1300. 'I'd like to give you first my impression of the beach, say from a hundred yards out till the time we got on the beach.'

'Looking in both directions you could see trucks burning, tanks burning, piles of I don't know what burning. Ammunition had been unloaded on the beach. I saw one pile of five-gallon gasoline cans, maybe 500 in all. A round hit them. The whole thing just exploded and burned.

I've never seen so much just pure chaos in my life. But what I expected, yet didn't see, was anybody in hysterics. People on the beach were very calm. The Seabees were directing traffic and bringing people in and assigning them to areas and showing them which way to go. They were very matter-of-fact about the whole thing. They were directing traffic just like it was the 4th of July parade back home rather than where we were.'

While the LCT circled offshore, looking for a place to go in, a mortar round hit it in the bow. The skipper, an ensign, nevertheless saw a likely spot and moved in. The beachmaster waved him off. He had forgotten to drop his sea anchor so 'we had one heck of a time trying to get off the sandbar, but finally made it,' Rich said.

'I felt sorry for this ensign, who was really shook up after taking this round in the bow and forgetting to drop his sea anchor. And he asked me, 'Lieutenant, do you know anything about running ships?' and I said, 'Hell, man, I've been running boats all my life.' Actually, the biggest I'd ever run was skiff fishing in the river,

but he said, 'You want to run this?' and I said, 'I sure as hell do.'

'I got one of the sailors and told him, 'Son, you've got one job and one job only.' He said, 'What's that?' I said, 'When we get within 100 yards of the shore, you drop this sea anchor whether I tell you to or not.'

The LCT went in again. Somehow the sailors managed to drop the bow, even as the craft took another hit in the engine room. Two jeeps ran off. To Rich's dismay, 'They forgot to hook my airplane on and I didn't have a jeep.' A Seabee came over with a bulldozer, hooked a rope onto the tow bar for the L-5, pulled it onto the beach, unhooked the plane, told Rich he had other work to do, wished him luck, and drove off. 'So here I was with an airplane, no mechanic, no help, and no transportation.'

Rich saw the beachmaster. 'He couldn't have been over twenty-five years old. He had a nice handlebar moustache and he was sitting in a captain's chair on the beach, and he had a radio and a half dozen telephones and a bunch of men serving him as runners and he was just keeping everything going. People came up to him and wanted to know this, that, or the other. He never lost his temper. He never got excited. He would just tell them and they'd go away. He was only a lieutenant, but those Army colonels and generals would come up and demand this and demand that and he'd say, 'I'm sorry, I haven't got it. You'll just have to take what you've got and go on with it.' They would shake their heads and go off and leave him.

'When he'd spot an open space, why, he'd say, 'Let's get a craft in there. Let's get a boat in there. Let's get that one out of the way. Get a bulldozer over and shove that tank out of the way. Make room for somebody else to come in here.' He kept that beach moving. I have no idea who he was, but the Navy certainly should have been proud of him, because he did a tremendous job.'

Rich told the beachmaster he needed a jeep to pull his L-5 off the beach. 'He said, 'There's one over there. There's nobody in it. Go take it.'

Rich did, and wove his way through the congestion to the E-1 draw, his plane in tow. Then he drove up the draw. Rich was possibly the first to do so - it had just opened.

On top, Rich found the apple orchard outside St. Laurent where he was supposed to be and began to assemble his plane. With no mechanic to help, he was not making much progress. From time to time he would get some help from a GI who could no resist the temptation to tinker with a machine. Sooner or later a noncom or officer would yell at the soldier to get the hell back to the battle and Rich would be on his own again. Not until dark did he get his plane ready to fly.

Rich was lucky. German artillery and mortar fire concentrated on the exits; without spotter planes, the Navy could not locate the sources of the fire. As the afternoon wore on, the shelling got heavier. Adm. Charles Cooke and Maj. Gen. Tom Handy of the War Department, observing the action from the deck of Harding, decided they needed a closer look. They off-loaded onto an LCI, closed the beach, transferred to an LCM, and went in through a gap in the obstacle.

'The beach was strewn with wrecked landing craft, wrecked tanks, and various other vehicles,' Cooke recalled. 'It was also strewn with dead and wounded.'

Handy went to the right, Cooke to the left. Shells burst all around them, throwing sand in their faces, forcing them to hit the beach, in Cooke's case inflicting some slight shrapnel wounds. After a couple of hours, they rejoined, and decided to get out, because, as Cooke said, 'the shelling was getting very much heavier, increasing the casualty toll and it appeared highly desirable to leave.'

During Patton's Third Army's lightning thrust across France, Grasshoppers directed traffic for endless lines of supply trucks. No disabled vehicle clogged the road for long because the planes spotted it and radioed ordnance repair depots for wreckers.

Normandy farm fields posed a new hazard for the L-4's. The retreating Germans had liberally mined them. Grasshopper pilots suddenly found that landing in such fields could be highly hazardous to their health. Quickly, they learned to put down only in pastures where cows were grazing. The cows themselves might be a hazard, but at least they could not coexist with the mines.

Another bit of inventiveness involved two California lieutenants, Harley Merrick and Roy Carson. They were the first to mount rockets under each wing. A major with the 4th Armored Division, Charles Carpenter of Moline, Illinois, thought so well of the idea that he rigged six rockets on his struts, and was credited with knocking out five tanks. He thought nothing of attacking entrenched enemy infantry. Rocket firing L-4's supplemented their observation duties in the breakthrough at St. Lo.

At Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, a Cub pilot flew in a doctor to help tend the wounded

because the besieged garrison had radioed that they had more than 500 casualties needing first aid. Lt. Kenneth B. Schley, of Far Hills, N. H., defied darkness, enemy fire, and an order not to take off, to deliver a supply of penicillin to Bastogne. To circumvent any order to return while he was en route, he turned off his radio.

Beyond the Moselle River, five Cubs, in the absence of artillery, delivered dynamite to reduce an enemy strong point-Ft. Koensigmacher.

At one point on the Rhine, Lt. H. E. Watson of Laredo, Texas, a liaison pilot for the 8TH Armored Division, spotted a reconnaissance outfit held up by a blown bridge. Circling the area he found another crossing intact. Making a low pass, with the engine idling, he yelled at the troops "follow me". They did and crossed the Rhine.

Walter Bell remembers both V-E and V-J day very well. He kept a copy of a diary of the last days in Europe and a portion of that diary follows:

"May 8th. Took off for a 14th Squadron strip south of Passere, near St. Martin. Went over Linz, then followed the rail down the river and finally landed in an oat field at St. Florian.

As they crossed the bridge into Inns, the German soldiers were tossing their rifles and other gear into piles as they surrendered and then were herded into fields. A tank Major was out in the middle of the bridge trying to hurry the Germans across.

As we drove through the mob, some of the German soldiers took off their caps and bowed - it was hard to believe.

The Soviet Armored Column arrived at the bridge around midnight; there was much shooting and celebrating by both sides, but the Russians weren't allowed to cross the river. Heard peace was declared signed at 00:45 (ETO Time).

No sleep. Ate breakfast with the medico up in the morning - then left for Wiesbaden."

Walter Bell continues: "I was originally with the 47th Liaison Squadron (under General Bradley). After VE Day I started scouting around for a way to get to the CBI Theater, because I knew several pilots in that area. Also figured it would be a good way to go around the world after the Japanese surrender.

Learned that the 112th was 'supposed' to go that way, so I asked for a transfer. The 112th and I left for Rheims and then were to go to Marseilles - but when the bomb on Hiroshima fell, we went to Le Havre and on to Boston. Arrived Boston on September 2nd on the Brandon Victory - then was discharged December 7th."

Few combat veterans witnessed as many peculiar happenings or as much destruction as the liaison pilots. Their slow low-altitude flights made them peeping Toms at many incidents - some too horrible to recall.

Lt. Don Carrell describes one such occurrence: "Flying along on a routine mission, I notice a wheat field on my left. It was perhaps 800 yards long and at the end of it was a train track about a quarter of a mile long which had been built up about eight feet. Just as I registered the fact that the track was there, a train came out of the woods on the other side. Apparently the six British fighters which suddenly appeared beneath me flying right on the deck had been waiting for this particular train, since they came out of the sun and headed directly for the target. They turned everything loose: cannons, machine guns, and rockets. As the train just seemed to explode-it was blown completely off the tracks. After the first one, the fighters returned for a second pass to complete the destruction. The strafed anything that moved.

"The train had been carrying infantry, ammunition, weapons and supplies. This was total destruction; this was killing. And it was horrible and I just sat right over it watched it happen. As if I had a box seat."

Contemplate Lt. Carrell's remarks in this next incident: "I think one of the sights that I've never quite gotten over was the thousands upon thousands of displaced persons filling roads in every direction. The most pitiful sights were the women with children hanging on to their skirts and babies in arms; trying to protect what worldly possessions they had saved. They used any mode of transportation they had saved, from baby buggies piled high with pots and pans to oxen pulling carts, to old women pushing wheel barrows. They just seemed to be walking aimlessly-going anywhere to get out of the battle zones. There were times when the roads were choked with people and firing was going on around them. Many were killed and left where they fell.

"All the training in the world won't prepare you for the first time you actually realize you are a target-that someone is trying to kill you. I was cruising along on one of my first patrols when I saw a movement in

a tree. I put my glasses on it and got the shock of my life: I could see a German soldier (he needed a shave) with his rifle on a branch of the tree in a perfect rest position, and he was working that bolt right at me and it looked as if the barrel was pointed between my eyes. I did some quick evasive maneuvers that probably aren't in the book but I did manage to evade his fire. That is one experience I will never forget. Flying at 800 feet we did become accustomed to that sort of thing, but hunters have brought game down at that distance and even greater.

Periods of relaxation were necessary in order to relieve the strain and stress of that kind of flying. These periods took various forms, from drinking a cold beer to flying around a stage or movie actress. Lindsey Sammons tells of his first cold beer during the invasion of the Philippines: "The Japanese were pushed slowly inland. We flew our L-4's from the improvised deck of an LST and then had to find a place to land on the beach. We were flying five to seven fire control missions every day. I stayed with the 42nd Division and we headed south to Manila. At Tarlack on the road to Manila, the San Miguel Brewery is the largest in the Islands. Needless to say, being pretty dry in that part of the country and during those times, I was one of the first to get a cold glass of beer from the brewery. To get there, I landed right on the highway between truck convoys and moving equipment."

Don Carrell tells about a time when he played private plane pilot to a two-star general. "Quite often we were called upon to haul VIP's around, and one time a two-star general needed to go to Patton's headquarters and I drew the short straw. The headquarters was a huge U-shaped building that had been used to train SS troops, or some such group. There was a small landing strip in the back of the building and as we landed we were met by a group of officers and I was asked to stay for dinner.

"The dress was full uniform with all the trimmings. My uniform consisted of a dirty flight suit and a well worn flight jacket. I nevertheless accepted the invitation because it had been so long since I'd seen a table cloth or napkins or clean silverware. The dining room was huge, with one long table at which were seated the officers and several women, who seemed to be enjoying the attention being paid to them. There was one rather small person at the table who had on a wool cap that made it impossible to tell whether the wearer was a man or a woman. Imagine my surprise then later I was introduced to the "wool cap" and it turned out to be Marlene Dietrich! She smiled and said she had been in a tank, a B-24 and a B-17, but never had she ridden in an L-4, and would I be kind enough to take her for a ride? Over the objections of several officers, I told her I would consider it a pleasure.

"As we were walking to the plane I decided to really give her a ride, and as we took off I skimmed the L-4 just over the tree tops. Then dropped down through the countryside and never flew much higher than 3 or 4 feet above the ground. She giggled and squealed like a small girl. On the way back to headquarters I decided to make a real finish to the act and landed on the circled drive in front of the building. Miss Dietrich enjoyed the ride and remarked that she 'could see the expression on the faces of the cows'.

"We were met by a group of officers who took turns on me. After making me wish I had never been there, they allowed me to gather up my VIP charge and return to my area. The dinner and the flight with Marlene Dietrich made for a fun day in the life of a very weary L-4 pilot."

Richard J. H. Johnston was with the Third Army in Luxemburg when he reported..."Pilot in Cub Plane Destroys Nazi Tank."

"One of Hitler's vaunted Panther Royal tanks ended up ignominiously here yesterday. It was knocked out by an L-4 artillery spotter plane. The pilot designed his own bomb to totally destroy the formidable enemy machine."

While flying an artillery adjustment mission on the 35th Division front, Lt. Warren G. Telhorst of Pittsburgh, Pa., spotted the tank rumbling in the direction of the American lines. Lt. Telhorst dropped down to within 15 feet of the tank and then radioed back to his artillery the position of the enemy.

The artillery commander studied the map and decided the enemy tank was much too close to American troops in the area to risk any shelling. He relayed his decision to Lt. Telhorst.

Flying in circles around the tank, Lt. Telhorst was able to find a group of American reconnaissance vehicles nearby. He dropped a note to them telling the unit the location of the tank, but the wind carried it off. As a last resort, Lt. Telhorst decided to risk landing in a shell-cratered field close to the reconnaissance unit. He came down amidst bursts of enemy shell-fire which were probing the field at the time.

After consulting with the ground men, Lt. Telhorst was able to gather materials and construct a fire

bomb of his own design.

A five-gallon can of gasoline with a thermite bomb attached was loaded into the back seat of the L-4 and Lt. Telhorst took off with enemy shell-fire still raking the field. Airborne, once again he found the Nazi tank. As he approached the tank from the rear, swooping low, Lt. Telhorst reached into the back seat to reach his "bomb." Coming in very low and slow, he was able to hit the tank squarely in the center. As Lt. Telhorst banked to return to his unit he could see a black pall of smoke rising from the infamous German Panther.

The reconnaissance unit rolled up a short time later to find the smoldering ruins. The trees on each side of the road were scorched and tank parts were scattered several hundred feet in all directions.

Raymond E Johnson tells of his introduction to L-4's and eventual inclusion in Patton's 3rd Army:

"I was introduced to the newly acquired eyes of the Artillery, the L4 Piper Cub, by my battalion commander, Major Elmer C Blaha. Elmer decided that the Cub was too slow and transferred to the Army Air Corps. I thought flying the cub in combat was the way to go, and applied for Liaison Pilot training. I soon found myself transferred to the Army Air Corps contract flying school at Pittsburg, Kansas. after being worked over by some of the finest civilian flight instructors I have ever known, and getting to know the splendid students of the class, I moved with most of them to Fort Sill to learn to fly the Army way in Class P62.

Upon being graduated with that class on 31 March 1944, eleven of us were assigned to the 416th Fields Artillery Group at Camp Chaffee. There we learned to work together while training form employment in Europe. Before we finished, five of the group were selected for individual assignments in Europe. It is interesting to note that they must have been the very best because they had to learn combat operations while on the job. Every one of them flew extensively and had ample points for rotation before VE Day.

The 416th Group was assigned to Patton's 3rd Army and was in Passau on VE Day but was soon moved to Auerbach to run a center for the release of German military Personnel. Thinking that the Far East would be better than that, I requested reassignment to a Division scheduled for transfer to the Pacific Theater. I was selected to replace Grady Lilly in the 90th Infantry Division Artillery. By that time the L4s were largely replace by the L5. Although the L5 was much more desirable than the L4, it could not function so well in snow nor in mud. While with the 90th we built a practice range for the training of observers to adjust artillery fire from the air. We did this by marking a gridded range on the ground and detonating German smoke grenades were directed by the fire direction center.

John J Johnson remembers his time in the military and shares the following moments:

"I graduated from Field Artillery OCS Feb 3rd 1943. Several weeks before, a bulletin had been posted that the success of artillery spotting planes in North Africa had caused the army to expand the role and that more artillery officers were needed in the program. I applied and was assigned to a primary flight school in Denton, Texas, at the Women's College there; a pleasant prospect for any unmarried G.I.!

On arrival I, and many others, were told instead to report to a Liaison training detachment at Pittsburg, Kansas. We were the first class there, as only glider pilots had been previously training there and that activity had ceased. Among many other happenings, I had an engine failure on my first solo; no big deal, as it happened on base leg of my approach and scared my instructor more than me. I also was washed out of the course by a newly commissioned service pilot giving me my final check ride and who scared me by the way he jerked the airplane around trying to show me the right way to do acrobatic maneuvers.

My instructor blew up and went to the brass, telling then (as I heard later) that I was a dam good pilot and the S. Pilot didn't know his airplane from a hole in the ground. The civilian check pilot, then the school commandant each checked me out (K was up with the commandant only about 20 minutes) and I was back in. I heard later the Service pilot had been canned.

In mid-April I was assigned back to Ft Sill for the advanced pilot and air observation training. We had trained in Pittsburg in Aeronca L-3s and at Sill shifted to L-4's. Aside from the artillery air adjustment, not too different from tat of a forward observer, we practiced road landings, field selection from the air, short field landings and take-offs, and all the tricky stuff for operating in combat with no prepared landing strips.

In July I was assigned to the 22nd FA Brigade at Ft Bragg, North Carolina. Our field there was a short one limited by the base commander's edict that no trees could be cut down to provide a larger one. We had tall pines on the very ends of two runways and two-story barracks against the ends of the other two. We operated successfully there until the outfit was moved to Ft Jackson, South Carolina, and redesignated HQ and

HQ Battery XII Corps Artillery. Second Army Air Officers inspected the field at Bragg about the time we left and condemned it as being too short and unsafe. The trees were cut down and runway doubled in length.

Training had continued at Bragg and Jackson and we went on Tennessee Maneuvers in January (I think) 1944. From there to POM in Tullahoma, Tennessee; to New York in March; shipped to England on April 10, 1944.

We ferried our planes to France across 90 miles of Channel from north of the Isle of Wight to the center of the Cotentin Peninsula about July 24th. I remember we missed out on the invasion campaign ribbon by a couple of days because our outfits landed in France a few days after we did and their landing date was just after the deadline. A new mechanic thought I might need more oil in the engines (we had five extra gallons of gas) so overfilled it. We were to go across in groups of ten to fifteen, and after ten minutes of flying my windshield was so covered in oil leakage, so was left behind the others. I putted on alone, but they got lost and by the time their leader found themselves, I was able to be #2 to land at Briquereq!

In late autumn diversion of supplies to Montgomery's forces slowed our advances and we literally ran out of fuel. The liaison planes were assigned the task of trying to find by-passed German fuel stores, and so were the only fuel consumers not rationed on fuel. We went into static operations near Nancy, France and stayed there while Monty tried in vain to do what Patton had been doing so successfully.

In November we started to move again and entered the worst part of my service. The Germans had become organized and during this period most of our time was spent in patrolling and counter-battery work. As I remember, each day had at least one occasion when 88's would be firing at us. Like Willie and Joe, I began to feel I was fighting against the Law of Averages and would soon get mine. It wasn't exciting any more.

Flying to Luxembourg was interesting. We headed toward Metz then picked up a double-track railroad toward Luxembourg. The weather so bad that, following the railroad, every time we climbed to get over an over-track signal platform, we were in cloud. Luckily the weather improved into Lux.

Held the southern corner of the Bulge until started east again in January, up the Moselle then to Oppenheim on the Rhine. We participated in the first (and only) airborne Cub invasion in crossing the Rhine. Someone in Patton's HQ got the idea that to avoid boat sinkings and casualties in moving troops across the river, why not sneak a few soldiers across in small boats to set up a perimeter defence around a large pasture, then ferry soldiers, one at a time, across in liaison planes in a continuous stream (thirty seconds apart) to build a nucleus invasion force and follow with regular operations simultaneously. The operation started as planned, but so little opposition was met that the airplane ferries were quickly abandoned.

Then rapid advancement through Frankfurt-am-Main and to the northeastward to Erfurt then south-eastward and along the Czech border. We turned northeast again into Czechoslovakia and were some forty miles into that country (I'm not going to spell it again) when the war ended. Spent six months, mostly administrative flying, in Regensburg before coming back to the States. During this period was assigned an L-5 to ferry my General around. He disliked the AAF, and always well pleased that his planes could locate closer to HQ than an Air Corps liaison squadron when in combat. We could almost always get him somewhere before the Corps HQ staff when distant meetings were set up."

An interesting story is related by James R Bryce:

"I suppose you could call this incident a coincidence. In October 1944 the 72nd Liaison Squadron was in Epinal, France and I was detached to the little town of Arches in southeastern France. We were flying L-5s.

There seemed to be some question as to whether the Germans had been driven from St Die, which was near Arches, so an intelligence observer was sent down from Army to find out.

I was 'up' so I flew the observer to St Die. I approached the town at 3500 feet. We were told that the Germans couldn't 'cut' the fuses of their 88s short enough to explode at 3500 feet and we were above ground fire. This information had all the scientific authority of a horoscope.

The weather was perfect. We could easily observe St Die and the surround area but there seemed to be very little action on the ground.

As we approached the outskirts of St Die, I heard an explosion behind me that sounded exactly like the observer had shot a forty-five out the window. I looked around and there was the largest puff ball I'd ever seen not a hundred yards off my tail. I split-essed toward the ground just as another puff ball exploded in front of me.

So much for ballistic theories about the 88.

Bob Vroman gives some incite into his war time experiences:

"I was attending Michigan State University when Pearl Harbor happened.

At the time I was enrolled in the ROTC program in the Artillery. The Army at the time were looking to fill the ranks of much needed officers. My enrollment in ROTC allowed me to graduate in 1943.

At that time there was no summer camp attendance to get our direct commission. Therefore I attended Officer's Candidate Class of 90 at Ft Sill. We graduated in December of 1943. I was transferred to Ft Bragg to a training outfit. It didn't take me long to figure out I wasn't cut out to fill our morning reports. I signed up for flight training and sent to Pittsburg and then to Ft Sill. From there to Ft Bragg again and was assigned to the 538th FA Bn. Two weeks later I was sent overseas as a replacement with 186 logged hours under my belt.

I joined the 738th FA Bn at Nancy, France. Because I had a great observer who taught me quickly I am able to type this account now. 144 missions later the war was over in Europe, thanks to Harry Truman. After the war ended I joined the 12th Corp in Ragensburg, Germany.

There I flew for General Lintz, taking him wherever he wanted to go. Finally my 81 points got me back home in December of 1945, where I still have my MULTIENGINE INSTRUMENT RATINGS in tack.

Praise Harry Truman. He saved us all a trip to the East."

John Linn "was with the 44th Division Artillery in Tarrenz, Austria and for me the end of WWII came in stages, each eliciting a different response, which I've never considered before. I had spent 1/5 of the life, half of my adult life, in military serve, and I was not yet 25 years old. I had come in in '41 with the National Guard as a \$21.00 a month private and was now drawing \$750 per month as a major on flight pay.

By May of 1945 the 44th Division had fought through Eastern France, Bavaria and Austria. When we made contact with the 10th US Mountain Division, we ceased advancing where the borders of Austria, Switzerland and Italy met. Our infantry had over 50% replacements. The light aviation sections had replace three pilots our of the eleven and had lost an equal number of observers and totaled seven aircraft. We had been awarded 1 silver star, 29 air medals with 50 cluster and at least 7 purple hearts and a number of purple heart clusters. I personally had flown over 125 missions, been awarded the silver star, air medal and three clusters. My plane had been shot at many times, hit twice and one of my observers who had been twice before was hit while flying with me. I really had a guardian angel. Victory in Europe became a reality slowly as the war came to a halt. The good news - 'You (the 44th) have done so well, half your infantry is new, you're seasoned, your going home, for a month, before going to the South Pacific.' Did we have mixed emotions - you bet we did.

The second emotional event was when I got home on leave and met my old physics professor coming our the post office reading the headlines about dropping the first atomic bomb. He tried to explain the magnitude of this even in relation to mankind. I only understood it in relation to myself. If this ended the war, I wouldn't have to fight on the South Pacific. I went to church with my parents and thanked God. A few days later Japan surrendered.

Back at the separation center I was informed that I could soon be discharged because I had accumulated enough points. Points were based on time in service, time overseas, and decorations. I also had the option of applying for a permanent commission. I thought, here I am just 25, drawing \$750 per month pay. I don't know anything else. Where can I find a comparable job. (I didn't for another 10 years.) When my separation orders arrived, I was jubilant. I took an L-5 and gave the headquarters a buzz job like they never had before. I wasn't court martialed. Ten years later I saw my first patients in the private practice of OB-GYN.

After 35 years of not flying, I am flying again, every week!"

Lieutenant L Vance Hester, a pilot with the 742nd FA BAT, 416th FA GP, recalls the camaraderie between pilots, observers and ground crews, who functioned as a fully integrated, duty sharing team. There was always respect for rank, but officers and enlisted men usually lived in the same tent and shared most of the everyday tasks; all took their turn cooking, cleaning and washing dishes.

One of the most aggravating and frustrating problems in the field was the use of 80 octane aviation gasoline and motor vehicle fuel. The use of these fuels had for some time been giving maintenance problems to FA and 9th Air Forces users of liaison aircraft, whose low compression ratio engines ideally ran on 73 octane aviation fuel. Instead of overhauls every 125-150 hours, the use of incorrect fuel resulted in a need to over haul engines every 40-70 hours. This resulted in a shortage of replacement valves, rings and spark plugs,

and created a serious serviceability problem.

Ninth Air Force had found it desirable to use 73 octane for its L-4s and L-5s and made a special arrangement to purchase supplies for its own use from the British War Office. A local agreement to supply 50,000 gallons of 73 octane to the Ninth Army was made in error and was canceled.

Maj Lefever and Col Hopkins of the 12th Army Group negotiated for the proper fuel for the First and Ninth Armies. In February 1945 the first US Army received 55,000 gallons of 73 octane fuel and arrangements were made for stocks to be held at all Quartermaster Depots for issue to all liaison aircraft units. A sharp decrease in the number of engine defects and overhauls was immediately observed.

TSgt Anthony Villardi recalls that other than bad fuel his other major problem was lack of spare parts. At one time his inventory consisted of one propeller, a few spark plugs, rocker box cover gaskets, one tail-wheel and a small quantity of dope, fabric, safety wire and several landing gear bungee cords. During the Battle of the Bulge he received one pair of skis for the nine L-4s then in his Division. The cold weather routine of draining the engine oil when the temperature fell below 40 degrees Fahrenheit became commonplace.

Even with the ferocious weather, lack of spare parts, bad fuel and poor living conditions, between 1 Aug 1944 and Feb 1945, Air OP Sections of the First US Army flew more than 25,000 combat missions. These were accomplished with the average strength of 217 operational aircraft. Thirty six percent were adjustment of artillery fire, fifty four percent were reconnaissance and ten percent were other combat missions. Non-combat missions included 860 training sorties and 6,591 administrative flights. First Army aircraft lost through enemy action was only twenty percent of all losses. Not bad for the fighting grasshoppers."

In his autobiography, Earl F Nelson tells of his part in the War:

"I had been cleaning printing presses for Uarco Printing Co in Chicago on the awful day Dec 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. It wasn't until I was going home in the car when I heard of the attack on the car radio.

I worked in a defense plant building C-47 rear removable sections of the wing. The company was Pullman Standard Car Co formerly building railroad cars. You can guess how informed the company was on building wings - the first six we built wouldn't fit into the wing!

The first part of Oct 1942 I applied for Liaison pilot training in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. I was sent to White Bear Lake, Minnesota to North Aviation School of Aeronautics for sixty hours flight training in Cubs. After that I was sent to Lamesa, Texas for advanced pilot training. Here after 60 more hours I graduated in Class 43-L-4 May 1943 as a Staff Sgt.

I became part of the 121st Liaison Squadron at Raleigh, North Carolina where I flew as a pilot until Nov 1943. At that time I applied for Cadets after they lowered the requirement to high school grad and you could pass an Air Force IA test. After being accepted I was sent to Miami Beach, Florida for a rigorous run of psychmotive testing and the most stringent physical examination possible to determine if I was to become an Aviation Cadet. I was then sent in a group to Napier Field, Dalton Alabama for eight weeks of on the line training helping the mechanics service the Advance Flying School's AT-10 trainers. Normally you went to Pre-Flight then. But with the war winding down we were sent to two more stints of on the line training. One at Moody Field, Valdosta Georgia on the B-25s. Then on to Spence Field, Moultrie Georgia on the AT-6's each for another eight weeks.

Frank Malinek remembers his experiences in Europe: "I enrolled in the Glider Pilot training program in 1942 and attended pre-glider training in Monticello, Minnesota and later Ft Morgan, Colorado. While in glider pilot pool at Albuquerque, New Mexico, the glider program was discontinued. (It was reopened about eight months later.)

Some of our group was sent to the "repple-deeple" at Fresno, California for reassignment. Of their group, sixteen of us were shipped to Las Vegas, Nevada for aerial gunnery training. While at Vegas, the L-Pilot program was enlisting personnel with previous flying experience, so we all applied and were accepted. We were then sent to Waco, Texas for preliminary L-pilot training. From Waco our group went to Lamesa, Texas for eight weeks of L-Pilot training, graduating in the Class of 43-L-16.

After graduation, I was sent to the 115th Liaison Squadron at Brownwood, Texas; later to the 157th Liaison Squadron at Cox Field in Paris, Texas for transition training.

While at Cox Field, I pulled my TDY stint to Ft Leonard Wood, Missouri, and was called back to Paris,

Texas and from there was sent to the ETO.

My squadron, the 173rd Liaison Squadron, 9th AF, was activated overseas with headquarters at Orly Airfield, Paris, France. From Paris, Texas to Paris, France—what a change!!!!

Our "C" Flight was assigned to Temploux near Namur, Belgium flying for the Third and Seventh Armies. We operated out of a grassy field, with a tent for our operations and maintenance shack. For living quarters we were billeted on the upper two floors of a chateau nearby, while the Belgium family lived on the first floor.

From Temploux we went to Bonn, Germany on the Rhine River near the Remagen bridge. At this time the bridge was encircled with British barrage balloons for protection from air attacks. We operated out of a peach orchard and used a "liberated" bus as our operations and maintenance shop.

Later we moved to Fulda and used a pasture for our strip. While in Fulda, one of the fellows "liberated" an ME-108.

We flew observation, reconnaissance, photo, evacuation and courier missions. This brings to mind a flight I made in France, transporting a high-ranking officer to a conference in Dijon. The weather suddenly socked in and I got disoriented. I happened upon a pasture on which to make a landing. The pasture was hilly and terraced. The ground was rainsoaked and when I landed I hit a terrace. I bounced like a kangaroo and sank in the mud almost nosing up. After mapping my position, a French farmer hitched up four large broad-backed horses and pulled the plane to the top of the hill and drier ground. I had to take off down hill and down wind. With full flaps and aileron droop, I barely made it off the wet ground and over some high tension lines and trees. I flew the officer to his destination; however, he refused to make the return flight with me, taking a staff car instead.

The war ended while we were in Fulda. We shipped back to our squadron headquarters in Paris. From here we shipped to Camp Lucky Strike near Reims and then to Marseilles and finally shipped home and landed at Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Wilfred "Fred" Boucher tells of his involvement with this operation: "The Third Division Air Officer, Captain 'Dutch' Schultz took me aside and told me that I was the Acting Assistant Air Officer and that my new responsibilities were to co-ordinate with the Navy, to supervise the loading of our L-4 airplanes on board a modified LST (No. 906) at the dock and to take off immediately behind his plane 'Janey'. By his being first off he would give me an additional 20 feet of runway. He felt this would be needed since I was carrying extra weight. This was the plan both for the practice run and on the actual invasion.

For the Invasion Day (D-Day) I was to be on Temporary Duty with 6th Corps and my mission that day was to report by radio any and all activity taking place on the beaches. I was sent to the 6th Corps War Room in late July and was shown photos of the actual landing areas and what might be a landing field inland where my Air Section would probably set up.

My Cub, Sad Sack II had rigged a special radio which had both 6th Corps and 3d Division channels. I was to carry a flare gun with red rockets which I was to use if I noticed some peril to troops advancing toward enemy positions. If I noted any potential problem for our troops, I was to signal with a red flare and immediately report the problem to the ground troops on 3d Division Channel. I also had a 5 gallon GI gas can strapped to the rear seat of the Cub connected thru a 'wobble' pump to my fuel tank. This extra fuel would allow me 60 or 70 minutes of extra time to complete my observations for Corps and to locate our Division air strip.

On July 12, 1944 I was told to rendezvous with a destroyer, the DD 'Edison' on the following day near the port of Salerno. I was then to fire the guns of the Edison on the target in the area of Salerno. On July 13, 1944 the mission went well and we proved that we could use Naval gunfire, if necessary, during the invasion.

On July 30, 1944 we flew our L-4's to Dock 'H' in the Naples harbor and after the planes had all been loaded on LST 906 we sailed north to what shows in my Log Book as a location called 'Lago'. The next morning I followed 'Dutch' 's plane on the LST deck and with little difficulty was able to take off and head back to Capodichino Air Field outside of Naples. Training mission accomplished!

On August 6, 1944 we repeated the flight to Dock 'H' and again I supervised the loading of our ten planes on LST 906. LST 906 had four ramps along the air strip and a holding area at the base of the superstructure which held 6 nested L-4's. 'Janey' was first at the air strip with Sad Sack II immediately behind. Tow more L-4's were nested on each side of our first planes.

At H-Hour (0800) on D-Day (August 15, 1944), after checking all systems, we took off for what would prove to be an eventful day.

It was certainly interesting to watch the different areas of the beaches as troops and weapons were disgorged from their landing craft. I continually reported the situation through my 6th Corps channel and after about two hours I noticed that one of our columns was approaching a curve heading west which appeared to be heading into an enemy tank position just around a bend in the road. I put the stick between my knees, reached back across the rear seat and switched from Corps to Division channel. I righted the plane and fired my red flare toward the advancing 3d Division troops. Then I gave the message about the enemy position several times on the 3d Division channel. I never did know what the result of this activity was but hopefully our ground troops were alerted and took corrective action. Then I leaned back and returned the radio to the 6th Corps channel.

I returned to patrolling beaches. Fighting was sporadic and not too heavy. I had been flying for about two hours and a half hours so I was getting ready to switch my extra five gallon back seat tank through the wobble pump to replenish my main tank when my left wing hit a barrage balloon cable! The plane made a dive to the left and I saw that about a foot was missing from my left wing tip. I was scared. However, not much seemed to be bothering Sad Sack, so I right the Cub and continued my mission.

By now, I had pumped the extra 5 gallons into my main tank so I resumed my patrolling of the beaches. I was now getting ready to head inland and search for our Division Artillery landing strip when my engine sputtered a bit and stopped. There was still enough fuel available so something must have been in the extra 5 gallon GI can or in the wobble pump. In any event I headed for the Mediterranean about a mile off St Tropez. I was too low to be able to glide to the beaches so I made a fair landing on the water, flipped over and after straightening myself out a bit, I crawled out onto the wing. The upside down plane was floating well and after about 30 minutes I was picked up by a small Navy boat.

That was the end of Sad Sack II. About a month later Sad Sack III was shot down near Besancon, France. The plane was demolished and I spent the rest of the war (about 8 months) in German and Polish POW camps.

Stalag III-A in Luckenwalde ,Germany was liberated by Russian troops on April 21, 1945.

We were hoping that we would soon be on our way back to American lines. This did not happen , however, because of the conditions which were still going on with various bands of Nazi troops trying to get to Allied lines where they expected better treatment than they would get if they fell into Russian hands.

Nonetheless, many of our group of several thousand American troops did take off individually or in small groups heading west toward the Elbe River and American Ninth Army forces. Four of us did take off after about ten days. We got about two miles away from the camp when Russian soldiers starting shooting at us. We were a pretty sad looking bunch with our bedraggled uniforms and the Russians probably took us for German deserters. In any case, we did a 180 degree turn and headed back to our camp.

A few days later we did hear that a few G I trucks were heading for our camp to pick up some wounded and ill POW's to bring them to American lines for medical care. Several of us decided that we would find those trucks and get on them and get out of Stalag III-A. This we did.

We were only about 25 to 30 miles from the Elbe River near Dagdeburg where portions of the US Ninth Army was encamped. However, though we pulled out of Stalag III-A around 10:00 in the morning, because we had to pass through Russian lines and go through actual combat zones, it took us about three and a half hours to get to the 30th Infantry Division which was near the town of Barby. Here we crossed the Elbe and rejoined the American Army.

It had been a difficult day. We had been stopped by many Russian officers and often we had been sent off in the wrong direction. Anyway, after the American troops had taken our names and other necessary data, we were issued two blankets and directed to a room in what turned out to be a small manufacturing plant where there were cots set up. We were then directed to a mess hall where we had our first decent meal in many months - for some many years.

By now we knew that it was VE-Day - May 8, 1945."

VE-Day had different meaning to different men. Dr Bruce Stansbury, a pilot with the 125th Liaison, recalls his thoughts on VE-Day:

The news that our portion of the war had ended gave me a tremendous sense of relief and for the first

time in over three years I could think positively about getting back to school and preparing for a normal life. Of course it was another four months before I could really believe the fight had ended. There was plenty of time to think and plan because I arrived in the ETO late as a replacement, so my place on the rotation list was way down. I rotated back to the USA in April 1946."

Two members of the 112th Liaison Squadron recall their war time memories. First some notes from Charles L Arehart. Mr Arehart was in the 9th Air Force attached to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe.

"My short lived flying career began in Hays, Kansas in September, 1942. It ended when I was discharged from the service on November 12, 1945.

I was enrolled in the CPT program at the Municipal Airport at Hays. On September 22, 1942 I logged my first flight and January 13, 1943 was my last. My total flight time was 65/30.

I was inducted into the Air Force at Waco, Texas in April 1943. From here I was sent to Lamesa, Texas Flying School and logged flight time of 106/50.

From Texas I went to Salinas, California and spent the summer, fall and winter there and in Oregon. Thought I'd freeze to death at Bend Oregon that winter!

The 112th Liaison Squadron was activate on April 30, 1943 at the Salinas Army Air Base. we moved from Corvallis to Portland Army Air Base and then to Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia. From here to Fort Hamilton, New York on May 22, 1944. This was our Port of Embarkation and we boarded the HMT Louis Pasteur on May 29. We arrived in Liverpool Harbor on the evening of June 5, 1944 and spent D-Day aboard whip. From there we went to Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire and then to Heston Field, Middlesex on June 30.

July 6, 1944 a German Buzz Bomb (V-1) cut out and dropped on Heston Field. I was warming up my plane and immediately shut off the engine, climbed out of the L-5 and as my feet hit the ground the explosion also hit. My feet stung for about 20 minutes! I was lucky however because several other of the GI's were injured.

I flew to Southwick (Ike's Headquarters) and picked up Colonel Henry for what we thought would be a routine courier mission. The takeoff up grade was unsuccessful and the plane chewed the top out of a tall tree and landed upsidedown in the yard of a British Officer's mess hall. I had switched off the engine so there was no fire, but in these moments about half my life flashed thru my mind, a limb of the tree impaled my calf; Col Henry was dropped on his head while being taken from the upsidedown plane.

We were both taken to a field hospital: the roughest, most painful ride I can recall. Col Henry was released and I was sent on to a hospital in France, Bristol where I spent a month before rejoining the troops in Normandy.

On September 9, 1944 I flew from Holtz, France to "Buc Field" Versailles. From here to Reims and on to Frankfurt, Germany where we were stationed until our operations were terminated in the ETO on July 21, 1945.

Arthur J McKinty was also a member of the 112th Liaison Squadron. He recalls: "I learned to fly from the Hunter Flight Training School and Vic Russell Flight School located at the Sacramento Municipal Airport in 1935. After I soloed I changed over to the Browne Flight School.

I entered the service at the Presideo of Monterrey, California and from there was transferred to the US Army Air Corps at Moffit Field in March of 1941. While at Moffit Field a notice was put on the bulletin board announcing that if you had a private pilot's license or higher to give this information to the 1st Sgt in the orderly room. A couple of months later the qualifications for air support lifts came out. They needed three letters of recommendation, a flight check and a log book. I had to take my check ride in a BT-13; the plane had a 450hp engine. I told the instructor that I had never flown anything that large. He just told me to do my best and it did.

In 1942 I was told to report to the Waco Texas Liaison Pilot Pool. We had the usual exams: a 64 physical flying exam and another flight check, this time in a L-2.

I received my Liaison Pilot Rating #772, PO #35 on 2/11/43. I was with the 116th Observation Squadron for about two months and then sent to Corvallis, Oregon for flight training. Here I did a lot of cross country flights, cross wind takeoffs and landings, column control, blinker code, clay pigeon shooting, etc. It was then that the squadron was given its new name - the 112th Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd AF. It was ulti-