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BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

ENLISTED PILOTS OF WORLD WAR II

The Enlisted Pilot is inferior. He must be led and an officer must initiate judgments and decisions that are required during war to effectively deploy the airborne weapons system. The World is at war and drastic measures must be taken; Enlisted Pilots will be trained to not only offset the critical pilot shortage, but to meet the needs of the Air Corps. Enlisted Pilots overcame numerous obstacles in their quest to fly and fight for their country. They not only had the stigma of being uneducated, therefore being inferior, but they also were up against tradition and elitism of the Officer pilot. I will establish the mind set of Congress and of the Air Corps in regards to Enlisted Pilots. At this point, a decision is made to tap the Nations additional resources for pilot training. From there, we will focus on the history of the 14th Liaison Squadron by defining the mission, the type of aircraft used to accomplish the mission, and by outlining a few of the enlisted pilots contributions during the time of March 2, 1942 through May of 1945.

The next seven paragraphs are dedicated to establishing the 1940's mind set of Congress and of the Air Corps and will take us up to the activation of the 14th Observation Squadron. Their attempt to determine the feasibility of using enlisted pilots was outlined in a War Department official memorandum, dated February 15, 1940, signed by the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps.

It is doubtful that a combat squadron with all enlisted pilots could ever reach the efficiency of

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a squadron with all officer pilots. This assumption is based on the premise that while under heavy fighting, pilot judgment and initiative are needed. Therefore, if an officer must be carried to direct an Enlisted Pilot, it would be more economical to just let the officer fly the airplane and exercise his judgment and initiative.(12:5) Now that its assumed that the enlisted pilot is incapable of making quality decisions and taking the initiative during war conditions, let's determine the scales of economy for training the enlisted pilot.

The cost of training an Army Flying Cadet, an officer candidate with two years of college, was approximately \$9,630.46 per graduate. The cost of training an enlisted pilot with inferior educational qualifications, a Non Commissioned Officer with a high school diploma, cost approximately \$11,116.57 per graduate. This equates to \$1,486.11 more per pilot. Using enlisted pilots would effect a savings of money in regard to respective rates of pay and allowances. However, the difference in cost for training an inferior potential pilot would far outweigh any savings realized through pay rate and allowances.(12:2) If the Government were to spend such a large sum of money to train a pilot, would it not be prudent to spend it on the type of personnel which is going to be the greatest asset? The small amount of money saved by using an inferior product which cannot render services required of it when required to develop its maximum efficiency, as in time of war, is counter productive.(12:6) We can now establish the mind set of Congress and possibly identify a hidden agenda within proposed legislation.

An Air Corps quota of 20% enlisted pilots for tactical units was inserted into law by the Act of July 2, 1926 to allow Reserve Officer pilots the opportunity to enlist upon termination of their active duty commitment. Congress proposed and passed a law, dated July 14, 1939, to create a flight group of officers within the Air Corps thereby ensuring all Air Corps enlisted pilots a

commission. As of February 15, 1940, all enlisted pilots in the Air Corps hold a Reserve Commission. Since the Reserve Officer has the initiative, judgment and qualities to demand and receive more remuneration in civil life, he will not willingly accept the status and social standing of an enlisted man. It seemed that Congress felt the same man in the status of an officer was more desirable than as an enlisted man and their action encouraged the enlisted man to accept a commission.(12:6-8) Couldn't the United States leadership take note of several foreign nations use of the enlisted pilot and break the stigma of elitism?

Foreign nations that used enlisted pilots also employed compulsory military service to place the entire male population at the military's disposal. It is logical to believe there would be great numbers of persons, who by birth, education and training, have qualifications more comparable to those demanded of the officer-class rather than to those required of the enlisted personnel as in a voluntary military service system such as in the United States Army.(12:9) In other words, it was not considered logical to use the example of a foreign nations success in effectively employing enlisted pilots since they had a larger pool of well educated men to choose from. With the World on the brink of war, a decision had to be made with the country's and the Air Corps best interest in mind.

The impending war and critical pilot shortages forced Congress to Act. The U. S. Army Air Forces was directed by the Aviation Student Act of 4 June 1941 to tap the additional sources of pilots(11:iii)-the high school graduate without a two year college degree(11:7). The Enlisted Pilot Program lasted less than two years. The first enlisted pilot training class started on the 23rd of August 1941. The program terminated on the 10th of November 1942. Over 2580 enlisted men were trained for combat flying duty and graduated as Staff Sergeant Pilots. The age old

controversy of the need for pilots versus the need for officers had temporarily been resolved.

(11:iii)

Even though the U. S. Army Air Forces terminated the Enlisted Pilot Program for training combat pilots, they continued to train limited duty pilots. "The limited duty pilots were the Glider or "G" pilots and the Liaison or "L" pilots."(11:iii) These special pilots did not receive the same six months of training as did the enlisted combat pilot. The "L" and "G" enlisted pilots were limited to the type of aircraft they could fly and only received six to sixteen weeks of training. Enlisted combat pilots wore the same wings as an officer with the basic pilot shield in the center. The Liaison and Glider pilots also wore wings but the letters of their specialty, L or G, were added to the center of the shield.(11:17) To narrow our focus, let's turn our attention to the best known of the enlisted pilots--the Liaison Pilots.(11:18)

From September 1942 until September 1945 the Army trained 4333 L pilots. Their training consisted of six to sixteen weeks of school with 40 hours of flying time and 194 hours of ground school. They graduated as Staff Sergeant Liaison Pilots and were limited to the L aircraft of the L-4 and L-5 type. This CESSNA like aircraft had a 60 horse power single engine with high wings and room for four passengers. Duties of the pilot included photo reconnaissance, courier duty, air rescue and artillery observation. When they were not flying, these pilots had one or more special duties of flight mechanic or photography.(11:18) The remainder of this research is dedicated to the men of the 14th Observation Squadron (L) and to her journeys from the 2nd of March, 1942 until the 23rd of May, 1945.

The 14th Observation Squadron (L) was activated at Fort Devens, Massachusetts on the 2nd of March in 1942. Thirty-four enlisted men were transferred on the 10th of March from the

152nd Observation Squadron, the parent organization, to form the nucleus from which the 14th was to be built. Nineteen (L-4) Cub aircraft were assigned to the newly established squadron some time during the month of April. From May the 20th to July the 9th, the squadron moved three times. The first move was to Hillsgrove, Rhode Island, the second move took them to the Naval Air Station at Quonset Point, Rhode Island with the third move taking them to Hyannis Airport, Hyannis, Massachusetts. Somewhere along their travels, the squadron secured six L-1 type aircraft and began flying a few tactical missions of inflight photography.(1:7) By the 15th of September, the squadron had secured three additional L-1 aircraft with the total enlisted force exactly tripling in strength. By the end of September, the squadron was moved to Gallatin, Tennessee to participate in maneuvers consisting of 5 training phases. Each phase of training consisted of eight problems, each problem lasting eight weeks.(1:9) The squadron's assigned mission for the remainder of the year was to participate in ground maneuvers. This training consisted of using the slow, lumbering and big L-1 type aircraft to simulated strafing and bombing and to conduct liaison missions. These training maneuvers would last until the squadrons final deployment to the war zone of Europe in March of 1944.(1:8) Before we turn our attention to the squadrons landing on the Cotentin peninsula of 1944, let's take a look at five significant events of the 14th Observation Squadron during 1943.

In my study of the events for 1943, five significant events stood out. The first was the redesignation of the 14th Observation Squadron to the 14th Liaison Squadron on the 16th of April. The second event was the restatement of the squadrons mission with the emphasis being placed on training for combat. The following is a scenario that depicts the typical training the squadron was conducting in May of 1943. Liaison flights were conducting photographic missions

flown by enlisted pilots in L-5 type aircraft with backseat Officers taking terrain and troop movement photos, using a K-20 camera. Courier services were used to carry administrative personnel to conduct official business and messages were dropped by air to save time and to prevent interception by ground forces. General observation missions involved carrying tactical organizational members to inspect camouflage, and dispersion of men and material in a simulated battle environment. These liaison aircraft were also used to develop tactical maneuvers by surveying all terrain features to determine the best routes for deploying ground forces.(1:9) The third event of the year was tragic and brought into focus the seriousness of our profession.

On May 17th, Staff Sergeant (S/Sgt) John T. Hartt died as a result of injuries he sustained after crashing his plane on the 13th of May at Camp McKall, North Carolina.(1:9) What struck my interest was not only the fact that this was the first flying fatality but that no other facts were listed about the circumstances surrounding the accident. In fact, very little information is available about many of the enlisted pilots accomplishments. Unit histories provide only sparse details that appear to be void of any emotional attachment. My point is quite clear when you consider that people are the key to success, and there are appropriate times to acknowledge the sacrifices of these people. We need to do more than just state the who, what, when, and where of their stories. My research, in this regard, has failed to uncover any data that reflects the squadron's pride in her men. The fourth significant event, occurring in 1943, is based on my values of importance and will now be addressed.

The military mission will always come first and the needs of that mission will be met. Twenty-four enlisted pilots were chosen for a secret Commando assignment. This special assignment required the enlisted men to be trained as combat pilots. After the training was complete, these

select few became a part of the Air Invasion of Burma.(1:10) Yes, the Army's needs for pilots was met but didn't each of those pilots accomplish much more? Each man succeeded--not only were they combat pilots, they were the uneducated and inferior resource that flew and fought as did the officer pilots. Is it asking too much of today's historian to acknowledge the deeds of our fellow enlisted members. Education and birth rights do not guarantee loyalty, nor do they guarantee success.

The last event of interest for 1943 was the squadrons participation in what I classify as airborne command and control procedures. Twenty-seven enlisted pilots flew airborne intercept missions to help orient newly acquired ground radar equipment and radar personnel. Procedures that were used during that time are similar to how the current Aerospace Control and Warning Systems Operators measure a ground radar station's system parameters. The L-5 pilots flew simulated bomber and intercept missions. The radar was used to track the bomber and would radio needed information to the fighter interceptor so that an intercept could be conducted and so that the ground crew could calibrate the radar.(1:11) Both of these tasks, radar calibration and control of airborne intercepts are conducted by the enlisted force within today's Air Force. However, only officer pilots fly the intercept missions. The events of 1943 draw to a close and the tempo of events escalate before America's invasion of Normandy.

Ten men were selected for glider pilot training, two planes were crashed without loss of life and ten enlisted pilots flew for the US Corps of Engineers during the month of January. Ten enlisted pilots of the 14th Liaison Squadron were sent to Glider Pilot Training on the 11th of January.(1:11) Other than the mentioning of this fact, no other details were available. However, it is common knowledge that enlisted pilots flew glider missions on the D-Day invasion of the

Cotentin Peninsula. The glider missions were one of the first waves of the airborne assault on the beaches of Normandy in the early morning hours of June the 6th, 1944.

The first plane crash in January, occurred when S/Sgt Charles W. Leipersock crash landed on a country road after experiencing engine difficulty. Here is what the official Historical Report revealed. Great skill on the part of the pilot resulted in negotiating a difficult landing that completely washed out the plane. The second crash occurred when S/Sgt Lloyd R. Rolan lost a wheel on takeoff. By "extremely skillful handling"(1:12) the L-5 was not damaged and no injuries to the pilot or passenger were recorded. The last event of January was the reassigning of 10 enlisted pilots to the US Corps of Engineers. This temporary reassignment was for the enlisted pilots to carry engineering students on flights so that they might observe camouflage work from above.(1:11-12)

February of 1944 registered 4 plane crashes with one fatality. The first resulted when S/Sgt Elbert Circle crashed his L-5 near Concord Georgia on the 12th of February. The plane was listed as completely demolished with only slight injuries to the pilot. On the 13th, Technical Sergeant (T/Sgt) Andrew L. King was killed when he crashed after a touch and go landing. T/Sgt King had been engaged in a night time training mission. Two additional crashes occurred and were attributed to collapsed landing gears. Neither S/Sgt Edgar Hendricks or S/Sgt Raph Roberts were injured.(1:14-15)

March of 1944 was the last month the 14th Liaison Squadron spent in the United States. This month marked the transition from extensive training in the states under peace time conditions to active combat in the war zones of Europe. Arms were issued to all men and each were qualified with their weapons prior to the end of the month. On the last day of the month, the men departed

from New York Harbor on a ship only known as NY 411 and docked at Liverpool, England on 8 April 1944.(1:16-17)

Sometime during the month of April the squadron was assigned to the Third United States Army which was commanded by Lt. General George S. Patton, Jr. The enlisted pilots were trained in accordance with British rules and flying regulations and started flying courier missions within England. While the D-Day invasion of Normandy took place the enlisted pilots of the 14th Liaison Squadron flew multiple missions in England several miles away from the front lines in France. Their minds were focused on not are we going to the shores of Normandy but when are we going. On D-Day plus 30, the 6th of July, the 14th Liaison Squadron landed on the coast of Normandy. They landed at Utah Beach near the town of St Marie-au-Mont. The air echelon landed on the Cotentin peninsula on the 11th of July with 26 L-5 and 2 C-78 aircraft.(1:17-20)

On the 18th of July, S/Sgt Edgar Hendricks piloted his L-5 with one of General Patton's aides as a passenger. It is not known whether the mission was a courier or a reconnaissance mission. Approximately two miles south of Sainteny the L-5 drew enemy ground machine gun fire. Analysis of the post flight debriefing revealed that the enemy had infiltrated the left flank of the 4th Armored Division while the 4th was moving into position. The Third Army was able to launch a counter offensive attack and wipe out the enemy force. The flight had resulted in providing General Patton's Third Army with crucial intelligence information about previously unknown enemy strengths and locations. This mission was the first of many combat successes for the 14th Liaison Squadron.(2:2)

The month of August was intense with activity. General Patton's Third Army was striking such lightning blows that the 14th had to constantly uproot and move. This was no small

accomplishment because each move required an advanced team to forward deploy and build a landing strip.(3:1) During this month, the squadron moved 9 different times for a total of 382 miles. The moves were as follows: from St. Marie-au-Mont (St. Saveur) to Le Repas on the 2nd, then to Beauchamps on the 4th, then to Poilly on the 7th, from Poilly to St Germaine on the 12th, then to La Bozage on the 15th, then to Dampierre on the 20th, from Dampierre to Courcy on the 25th with the final move of the month to St Maurice on August the 30th.(3:Cover page-3) The squadron flew 2084 missions averaging more than 67 flights a day for the month of August. Of the 2084 missions, 1206 were sorties which are flights involving or having a potential for encountering enemy aircraft or attack from the ground.(3:3)

T/Sgt Robert J. Lackner was a passenger and observer on a mission flown on the 7th of August. The plane was shot down over enemy held territory in close proximity to Brest. T/Sgt Lackner parachuted to safety and suffered minor burns. A French farmer witnessed the crash and administered first aid to Sgt Lackner and hid him from German troops until the French Second Armored Division could return him to his squadron. The pilot went on to land the burning plane. Both the pilot and passenger returned to the squadron four days after the crash.(3:2)

There were two additional items mentioned in the squadrons monthly report that I would like to mention. The first is that the L-5 aircraft engine was designed to burn 73 octane gasoline. The only available fuel source was 80 octane which caused a great number of burnt out intake valves. In addition to all of the flown missions by the enlisted pilots, they must have spent a great deal of time in the repair and upkeep of their aircraft--not to mention all of their movements. The second issue deserving mentioning was that the majority of the flights were flown by using road maps and navigating by roads. Many flights were conducted at tree top level following armored positions

into enemy held territory. Since the L series aircraft aren't armed, following ground troops over the road networks was deemed safest.(3:4)

September was no exception to the hectic pace of war; plenty of activity kept the 14th Liaison squadron busy. Two moves were made during the month of September, 1944. The first move was from St Maurice to Marson on the fourth and the second move was made from Marson to Gussainville on the fourteenth.(Sept:cover) Also on the 14th, S/Sgt Ralph E. Roberts was dispatched on a flying mission to find the Third and Seventh Armies. Because of continuous movements on the part of both armies, headquarters was unable to maintain communications or determine their locations. S/Sgt Roberts mission was successful in locating and in establishing contact with both Armies. It was on a similar mission that T/Sgt Robert A. Lackner, pilot, and Private (Pvt) George Burkholder, passenger, were shot down near Luneville on 22 September by enemy ground fire. Private Burkholder was listed as killed in action and T/Sgt Lackner was shown as a Prisoner of War.(4:1)

As previously stated, precious few details exist to fill in the gaps of what happened to the enlisted pilots and what their accomplishments were. Unit records for the month of September shed very little light but did offer the following award citations. On the fourth of September, the Air Medal was awarded to the following Non Commissioned Officers: T/Sgts Homer Bankston, Frank J. Facinoli, Francis J. Hall, Walter E. Lane, Richard P. Talbot, and Albert J. Zanutto; S/Sgts Alonzo E. Goodwin and Clinton A. Hatch. Orders dated 26 Sept awarded the Air Medal to Master Sergeant (M/Sgt) Leonard F. Hiller, to T/Sgts Austin N. Coulter, Charles W. Lipersock, George S. Long Jr. and Arthur D. Pass and to the following S/Sgts: John E. Nagle, Norbert Zabla and Harry M. Thompson.(4:1-2)

The 14th Liaison Squadron moved from Gussainville to St. Max, a suburb of Nancy just across the Meurthe river, on 12 October 1944. Extremely bad weather made flying conditions next to impossible. There were only two flights mentioned in the unit's monthly historical records. The first flight was flown by Sergeant (Sgt) Francis Bush with Major Parmelee as his passenger. While returning from First U. S. Army headquarters, enemy small arms fire struck Major Parmelee. Realizing that his passenger was seriously injured, Sgt Bush located a nearby Air Evacuation Hospital, landed the aircraft and secured medical treatment for his passenger.(4:cover page-1) The second recorded mission of the month was flown by S/Sgt Lionel Montagne on the 26th of October. He was attributed with the dubious distinction of having made the deepest penetration of enemy occupied territory in a non-tactical aircraft. S/Sgt Lionel Montagne had inaccurately computed the last leg of his flight back from an airstrip in Belgium. His original flight path was a cardinal heading of 15 degrees into Belgium. In preparation for his flight home, S/Sgt Montagne computed his flight path to be 165 degrees which resulted in an error of 30 degrees. Instead of adding 180 degrees to his original flight plan he subtracted 15 degrees from 180 degrees. To find his way home, S/Sgt Montagne landed his plane in enemy occupied territory and found a French girl to tell him where he was. He took off and eventually made his way back to the squadron.(5:1)

Orders dated the 11th of October, awarded the Air Medal to M/Sgt Joseph L. M. Maheux and S/Sgt Thomas E. Patterson. Orders dated 18 October awarded the Air Medal to T/Sgt Vincent J. Harrison and to S/Sgts Kenneth F. Gordon, Edgar A. Hendricks and Norman A. Noland. The same set of orders reflected the award of the First Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC) for S/Sgt Alonzo E. Goodwin who had originally been awarded the Air Medal on 4 Sept 1944. S/Sgt Robert Szabla

was also awarded the First OLC to the Air Medal on the same orders of 18 October 1944; his original Air Medal had been awarded by General Order No. 23 from Headquarters XX Corps--no known date. On the 25th of October, the following individuals were awarded the Air Medal: M/Sgts Bruce A. Butt and Aladar J. Zsarny and to S/Sgts Edwin J. Bergbauer, Weldon T. Duncan, Lionel J. Montagne, Paul J. Rein, Ralph F. Roberts and Harry M. Weeks.(4:1)

Air rescue of wounded and resupply of ground troops involved in the ground battle of Metz, France captured the headlines for November of 1944. An infantry battalion of the 95th Division was engaged in a bridgehead operation on the east bank of the Moselle River, north of Metz. Severe casualties had been suffered by the battalion. It was impossible to resupply or evacuate the wounded due to the loss of the only bridge, high flood waters, and enemy fire power within the area. All of the 130 enlisted pilots of the 14th Liaison Squadron volunteered for hazardous duty during the Metz Campaign of 13 and 14 November of 1944. Supplies were flown to the area and dropped by passengers. Enemy small arms fire increased in intensity against the liaison aircraft and even though these aircraft are not armored and carry no weapons, the pilots and passengers continued their assigned missions without regard to possible loss of life or capture. As a result of the airlift operation, the wounded were cared for, and the infantry battalion of the 95th Division were supplied so that they could continue defensive action until relieved. The following pilots and passengers participated in the Metz airlift operation. On the 13th of November, S/Sgt Alonzo E. Goodwin flew three missions with Pvt Charles W. Bosch, Jr. as crew member. Also on the 13th of November, S/Sgt John E. Nagle flew two missions with Corporal Charles E. Doyle, Jr as his crew member. The last rescue mission was flown on the 14th by S/Sgt Kenneth F. Gordon and Private Charles W. Bosch, Jr as crew member.(1:29-30)

It was a miracle that any mission was flown during the month of November--much less a successful airlift mission. The worst weather in some eighty odd years blanketed this area of the continent. Only two days of the month had been forecasted for flying. Besides the air campaign over Metz, the men of the 14th Liaison were able to fly a few training missions so that the Army Air Artillery (AAA) batteries in the local area could calibrate their radars. The squadron did not move during the month of November. On the seventh of the month T/Sgt Robert J. Lackner was awarded the Air Medal for his flight on August the 7th of 1944.(5:cover page-1)

A determined German counteroffensive bottled up a substantial number of U.S. Forces in Bastogne during the month of December 1944. The squadron's air rescue and resupply of the American Forces were flown by officer pilots. After successful completion of these missions, the participating pilots were awarded the Silver Star. It is not known if the enlisted pilots participated in the flying missions to resupply the trapped soldiers, but it would be a safe assumption to say they did. The only recorded mission flown by an enlisted pilot for this time period involved T/Sgt Charles W. Leipersock. T/Sgt Leipersock was on an operational mission with Major Rudolph M. Jordan of the 10th Armored Division , one of the known Armored Divisions bottled up in Bastogne, and was listed as not returning to the base, and considered as Missing In Action, as of 24 December. It is questionable as to whether or not the L-5 and her crew had taken off from a field in Luxembourg.(1:30-31) The official records and the unit history reveal conflicting reports about T/Sgt Leipersock's mission and from where he took off from.(1:30; 6:cover page) Unit records indicate that the Squadron moved only one time during December and that was from Nancy, France to Luxembourg City, Luxembourg on the thirty-first.(6:cover page)

Unit History entries were scant for January and February, 1945. Heavy snows and bitter winter conditions were possible key reasons why the 14th Liaison Squadron didn't move from Luxembourg during these two months. Orders dated 31 January, awarded the Air Medal OLC to T/Sgt Charles W. Leipersock for "having engaged in experimental combat control of fighter-bombers by L-5 aircraft".(7:2) Unit records revealed that T/Sgt Leipersock's plane disappeared while in action against the enemy counter-offensive in Luxembourg and that he was on an entirely new type of L-5 tactical operation.(7:2) T/Sgt Robert J. Lackner's family, in Cleveland Ohio, learned through Red Cross channels in February that their son had been shot through the foot while engaging the enemy on his flight of 22 September, 1944. It was not confirmed until February that T/Sgt Lackner was indeed a Prisoner of War.(8:2)

The month of March also revealed precious little information about the squadron's activities. However, it is known that the unit moved from Luxembourg City, Luxembourg to Oberstein, Germany on the 27th. It was also reported that T/Sgt Austin N. Coulter had died on the 28th. He was identified as being one of the finest pilots of the squadron, yet the only cited information was that he had been badly mangled in a plane crash on 26 March near Boppard, Germany.(9:cover page,3) The final entry to be noted for March was that S/Sgt Weldon T. Duncan, squadron pilot, had been shot in an ambush through the neck by a German soldier.(9:cover page) As a result of his wounds, S/Sgt Duncan was awarded the Purple Heart on 7 April 1945.(10:cover page)

With severe winter weather abating, the 14th Liaison Squadron flew many diversified missions for the month of April. We will take a quick look at the unit's forward deployed movements and identify an Air Medal recipient. We will then outline two missions that were flown in support of

General Patton's advancement into the heartland of Germany, and from there, we will talk about the squadron's participation in the convoy that secured the Nazi gold hoard.

The squadron moved from Oberstein, Germany to Berkersheim, Germany which is only four miles north of Frankfurt-am-Main, on the 3rd of April. From Berkersheim, on the 11th, the squadron moved to Hersfeld, and then on to Erlangen on the 22nd. Records also reflect that S/Sgt Paul J. Rein was awarded the bronze OLC(10:cover page) to his previously awarded Air Medal.(9:cover page,3) With General Patton's relentless drive into Germany, numerous opportunities were present for the enlisted pilots to fly support missions and deliver critical terrain and troop movement maps.

One such support mission was flown by M/Sgt Bruce A. Butt and T/Sgt Albert J. Zanutto on the 1st of April. Dropping maps by air to forward elements of General Patton's 11th Armored Division of the Third Army became established procedures on his long extended drives through France and Germany. After both pilots reached the last known position of the 11th's operational area, they found that the 11th Armored Division had already moved. In order to determine where the 11th had moved to, they found and followed an American column of advancing troops. In their attempt to land to ask where the General's Command Post (CP) had been relocated to, enemy tracer fire ripped through their L-5 aircraft. Unable to land, they took evasive action by diving to tree top levels and leaving the area. Finding an airstrip some six to eight miles from the last known CP location, they again encountered enemy fire and were forced to abandon any attempt to land or relocate the missing CP. Since night was rapidly approaching, they returned to homebase.(10:1-2)

On the 2nd, they again took off in search of the 11th Armored Division's Command Post. They located, and then landed at a Cub Artillery Liaison strip near Schlitz, Germany, and found where the CP was located. They took off again and found the CP but were unable to land due to high winds. They dropped the maps some twenty feet away from Command Post onlookers. With the mission complete, the pilots returned to home base and the 11th Armored Division was able to continue their surge into Germany.(10:1-2)

With thoughts still fresh in his mind of earning the dubious distinction of having made the deepest penetration of enemy occupied territory in a non-tactical aircraft, S/Sgt Lionel Montagne volunteered on the fourth of April to deliver maps to the advancing Third Army. While in route to the CP, S/Sgt Montagne encountered 2 FW-190's and one ME-109. These fighters made five confirmed passes in an attempt to shoot him down. Evasive maneuvers enabled him to escape the fighter pilots while enemy ground fire tore through the fuselage and wing panels of his L-5. The mission was successfully completed when he miraculously made it through German lines and air dropped the needed maps.(10:2-3)

On the 7th of April, T/Sgt Homer Bankston flew the unit's first medical evacuation flight where an L-5B, with attached litter beds, was used to remove a wounded prisoner of war. This medevac mission was flown at 0310 hours to Hammelburg, Germany, some 2 miles south of Pfaffenhausen, to remove General Patton's son-in-law, Lt Col Jake Waters, from captivity. Lt Col Waters' life may very well have been saved since he was seriously wounded in an earlier attempt to escape imprisonment.(10:3) It is feasible to summarize that had the unit been equipped with the L-5 litter bed ambulance during the Metz and Bastogne Campaigns, more lives could have been saved.

The last two recorded missions flown in April were by T/Sgt Zanutto and S/Sgt Noland. The unit was tasked to participate in a unique mission on the 15th of April. T/Sgt Albert Zanutto volunteered to escort a 120 vehicle convoy that was transporting a recovered Nazi gold hoard, valued in 1945 at over 2.5 billion dollars. The convoy escort would be flown from the Salt Mine at Merken, Germany to Frankfurt-am-Main. The assigned mission was to fly ahead of and over the convoy to search for potential enemy activity. Air to ground and ground to air communications were established between the patrolling L-5 and four P-51's and the convoy command vehicle. Potential dangers and enemy activity were constantly relayed to the mobile command centers.(10:4-5)

T/Sgt Zanutto reached the assembled convoy at 0700 hours, some twenty minutes after takeoff. He circled the convoy, from time of arrival until the convoy departed at 0830, looking for enemy positions and possible enemy movements. The convoy was moving at 20 miles per hour while T/Sgt Zanutto hugged the terrain from 100 to 300 foot above. After a 2.5 hour patrol, it was time to refuel. S/Sgt Noland flew relief until T/Sgt Zanutto returned to continue the usual patrol. Again, low on fuel, just west of Frankfurt-am-Main, TSgt Zanutto had to divert one more time for fuel. Within ten minutes, he was back on pattern as the convoy reached the Frankfurt and Bad Homburg road. With the convoy at its final destination, T/Sgt Zanutto had to continue patrolling the tall and imposing buildings of Frankfurt, near the Main River. After all the convoy vehicles had been dispersed throughout the city, the ten hour escort mission was complete. The final mission of the month was flown from Sorge to Frankfurt-am-Main on the 17th in support of the convoy that transported the remainder of the Nazi gold hoard.(10:4-5)

May 4, 1945 brought word by S/Sgt John Usinger, just returning from a flight to Landshut Germany, that T/Sgt Charles Leipersock had just been liberated from a Prisoner of War Camp. M/Sgt Joseph Maheux flew his L-5 to Landshut, Germany to bring T/Sgt Leipersock back to his squadron. Here is TSgt Leipersock's unedited version of what happened to him.

We had been well briefed before takeoff and understood the dangers of our flight. While in the vicinity of Ettelbrook, Luxembourg, we were shot down by flak and the plane was afire. I told my passenger to jump. My face was covered with blood and I couldn't tell if he did jump or not. I have never seen him since. A Mark III tank crew captured me immediately upon my parachuting to the ground. I was taken to Bitburg, Germany and in a couple of days to Nurnburg, thence to the Stalag Camp at Moosburg, Germany.
(1:40-41)

On May the 7th of 1945, a captain of the United States AAA gun battery, witnessed S/Sgt Warne L. Templin, flying his L-5, force down a German Storch Aircraft near Freising, Germany. Here are two paragraphs of a letter sent to the 14th Liaison Squadron by Captain H. K. Carrico, Commanding Officer of the Battery B 119th AAA Gun Bn, that witnessed the forced landing of the German aircraft on the seventh. The letter's subject was Confirmation of Enemy Aircraft Forced Down and was dated 19 May, 1945.

2. In the afternoon a German Peisler Storch was seen flying down a deep valley. It was followed by an American Liaison Plane, probably an L-5. The German aircraft endeavored to gain altitude and escape but the American aircraft continued forcing the enemy aircraft. The enemy aircraft was forced to land along the canal just to the east of the Village of Ober-Zolle. The pilot was a Captain in the Luftwaffe and the observer was a Lieutenant

in the Luftwaffe. Both was taken prisoners.

3. To those who witnessed the forcing down of the aircraft there was no doubt but what the capturing of the aircraft and personnel was due to the superior operation of his plane by the American Pilot. It must be admitted the German pilot did everything in his power to avert the necessity of landing and subsequent capture.(1:41-42)

The movements for May, 1945 were from Erlangen, Germany to Regensburg Germany on the 2nd and from Regensburg, Germany to Holzkirchen, Germany on the 23rd.(1:43)

The long journey of the 14th Liaison Squadron and of her men, from D-Day plus 30 to May of 1945, covered 1253 miles. The enlisted pilots, not inferior in skill nor short on patriotism, met the challenges of war . When the time came, these men volunteered to enlist as pilots and they served our country honorably. Some, as you have read, gave their lives for the freedoms we currently enjoy. If the time were to ever come again that our country needed the enlisted men and women to fly, fight and possibly die for their country, there is no doubt, that we would. It is unfortunate, that in 1994, we still face some of the same obstacles that the enlisted men faced in 1940, when they wanted to fly in service for their country.

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