

WW II Military Service With The 71st Troop Carrier Squadron

An Autobiography by Lt. John Marshall Jones

December 1942 – September 18, 1945



The only C-47B (#349009) assigned to the 71st TCS was flown regularly in 1945 by the flight crew of Lt. J.M. Jones (Pilot), Lt. R. E. Harr (Co-Pilot), and maintained by T/Sgt. Elden L. Loden (Crew Chief). The 'B' model had supercharged engines, Loraine radar system with belly scope, radio altimeter, and self-sealing wing fuel tanks. "Little Della Mae" was the crew chief's wife's name. Graphics painted on the fuselage indicate one paratrooper drop, fourteen medical or evacuation missions, and forty-four supply missions. Many more graphics were added after this photo was taken. 'CJ' is the squadron code for the 71st Troop Carrier Squadron of the 434th Troop Carrier Group. Many more photographs appear at the end.

World War II started on December 7, 1941, after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. On that day, Sunday, Bea (my wife) and I were at Nadine and Erv Lehr's home on 19th Street just South of Broadway. While Erv was working on his car, I believe it was a Nash, Bea and I were outside with him. Nadine came to the front porch and said that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. That changed the lives of many, many people. In a matter of moments President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war. In short order, mass production of Navy ships, freighters, bombers, all classes of aircraft, all types of vehicles such as Jeeps, 6 x 6's etc were established. I signed up for the National Draft as did millions of men.

Sign-up with the U. S. Army Air Corps

As time went on Bea and I discussed my being conscripted (drafted) into the regular Army, which we didn't really want. For some reason I wanted to try for the Army Air Corp. In late 1942 I applied for the Army Air Corp for pilot training. In short order I had to complete a tough physical, which I passed except I had high blood pressure. The medics had me lie down for about an hour and then retook the blood pressure test, which I did pass. I believe it was in December 1942 that I had to go down to Oakland and again go through some additional testing and interviewing. This included physiological tests as to why I wanted to be a pilot, my ability to take and give orders, and a lot of personal questions. My record with the Sacramento High School Jr. ROTC and graduating as a Major certainly helped, as well as being an Eagle Scout. I found out that Clayton Johnson, who was in Sacramento High School Jr. ROTC with me and also an Officer (Lt.) had also signed up for pilot training.

Off to Buckley Army Air Field and Santa Ana Army Base

On February 16, 1943, Clayton and I left Sacramento by Southern Pacific train to Buckley Army Field, near Denver, CO. Our reporting date was February 19, 1943. In Denver it was cold, as it had been snowing and we were dressed for Sacramento weather. Unfortunately Buckley Army Field was not ready for us, as were all basic induction bases with enough clothing for everyone. Eventually we received our

Army clothing and sent our civilian clothing home. I do not recall how long we stayed at Buckley however I guess it was less than a month, and then we were sent to the Santa Ana Army base in California where we became full fledged Army Air Cadets. We were again issued new Air Cadet style uniforms. We had military drill training, as well as various school classes. Also there was plenty of physical education, running, sit-ups, chin-ups, push-ups, etc., and I do mean etc.

In two months Clayton and I left Santa Ana and shipped to Logan, Utah for additional schooling. It was an experimental class and our military class was known as 44Bx. We were stationed at the Logan College and the rooms that we occupied were former girls Sorority dorms. We had to GI (clean up) the rooms leaving no signs of being occupied by girls. We found plenty of lipstick smears on the walls.

At Logan all the military instructors were enlisted men with most of them so called washed out former Air Cadets. They were tough. There were also some Military Officers: Lieutenants, Captains, and a Major. The school class instructors were civilian teachers. We stayed at Logan for two months and had schooling in Math, Geography, Trigonometry, Calculus, Physics, etc. On May 10, 1943 we started 10 hours training in Piper Cubs, which continued until May 25th. We did not have to solo in the Piper Cub aircraft. At that point a few Cadets were washed out, not able to accept flying. Clayton was still with me in the same classification of training, 44B Class, meaning that if we succeeded in all the training, we would graduate as a pilot and a 2nd Lt. in February 1944. Unfortunately Clayton became quite ill and was held over at Logan for one Month, putting him in the 44C Class. Clayton ended up flying P-38 fighter planes in the South pacific.

Primary Training; Hancock Field, Santa Maria, CA

At the end of two months, July 1943, I was sent to Santa Maria, California. It was a civilian airfield, with Army officers and civilian flight instructors. My instructor was a former crop duster pilot, Joseph P. Raffarin, and in my mind a very good instructor. The Air Field was known as Hancock Field and still has that same name. That training was known as Primary Pilot training and we flew Stearman PT-17's, a two wing aircraft. The instructor had the rear seat and the trainees were in the forward seat, open cockpit. The engine was started by hand crank method, no electric starters. Instead of an electric fuel gauge there was a float attached to a wire or rod through the cowl in front of the front seat. The landing gear, wheels, were close together which made it quite easy to spin out when landing. During the two months we learned how to fly, take-offs, landings, barrel roles, loops, stalls etc. The Air Field did not have concrete runways, it was a large grass field, probably about 5 acres by 5 acres. In due course of time we had to solo (no instructor) and again practice take-off, landings etc. It was August 23 when I first soloed, with 14 hours of flying with the instructor. The Stearman had a habit of leaking oil onto the windshield. In the afternoons and coming in for landings, usually to the West with the sun in your eyes, trying to see through the oily windshield was quite a job. While at Santa Maria, Bea drove down and we had a weekend together. At that time the highways were just single lane roads, not like our current four lane interstate highways. I completed the primary flight training on September 26th after two months.

Basic Training; Marana Air Base, Marana, AZ

I was then sent to Marana Air Field, Marana, AZ in early October 1943 for Basic training. Arriving by train and at the Rail Depot, on the platform we saw three caskets. The word was that those Cadets each had stalled out and spun in on their final approach turn. We flew the Vultee BT-13, which had an enclosed canopy, single low wing and fixed landing gear. The plane was known for stalling fairly easy and we were told when turning on the final approach from the base leg, we were to have some engine power. The instructor always was in the rear seat. My instructor was a short stubby individual, 2nd Lt. R. A. McDougall who really wanted to be a pursuit pilot and was rather put out in being assigned as an instructor. I soloed, in 3 hrs and 35 minutes, however whenever he was with me, he would tend to relax and I think he would snooze. One afternoon flight I was flying along when I noticed a P-38 diving down on us from the rear. I pushed the nose down rather hard and I heard the instructor bounce off the canopy, apparently he did not have the seat belt tight. He started to yell at me and all I did was point to the P-38 at

which point he took over and started to chase it. Naturally we couldn't keep up with it. On another day one of our planes did not return to base, so there was an all out search by all the instructors. A few days later the plane was found in Mexico, with everything OK except it was out of gas. We never did hear if they found the Cadet. Rumor was that he wasn't doing very well and wanted out. He would have been considered a deserter and probably got a free room and board in some prison.

Advanced Training; Pecos, TX

At the end of November we again transferred, this time to Pecos, TX for advance training. At this field we started flying two engine planes, the UC-78. It also had a fixed landing gear, but was a good plane and was well equipped with instruments. One day my class of Cadets was in the ready room waiting the arrival of our new instructors, 2nd Lt's. When they came in I thought I recognized one of the instructors and my thought was "I hope I get him", and I did, 2nd Lt. Wiley G. Mansfield. He was from the Sacramento area but we never figured out where we had crossed trails. He was a very calm person and really liked to fly instruments and he did a great job of training his six student Cadets. I liked instruments and he was a great teacher. Later on having this training I was able to handle flying on instruments for hours at a time. While at Pecos, Bea came to be with me although she had to stay at a hotel, Hotel Pecos. While she was there I would get some of the weekends off from duty, which was really nice. At Christmas time, which I did have off, Bea and Lorene Gallarda got a small Turkey, stuffed it and had it baked at the local bakery. When Cadet Bill (William Jess Gallarda) and I got to the Hotel the girls had the Turkey in a small pan, legs up in the air, sitting on the room hot water heater, to keep it warm. I do not remember the entire Christmas dinner menu, but it was good. Many of the Cadet wives worked in the Officer's mess hall. Again all the details are vague, but one weekend, the Cadets were confined to base. On hearing this all the wives serving in the Officers mess threatened to quite unless the Cadets could get time off. The wives won out. At Pecos there were three "Jones"; Warren, Jack and myself. Jack and I flew together as Pilot and Co Pilot, switching back and forth. One night Jack was acting Pilot and headed back to base, and on landing he leveled off about 50 ft too high, stalling out. We dropped the 50 ft and landed very hard. A couple of seconds prior to hitting the ground Jack applied full throttle so the hit wasn't as rough as it could have been. Fortunately, we didn't damage the plane. Pecos, TX, was the final training base and all the Cadets who passed were graduated as a 2nd Lt. and as a multi engine Pilot. Later in the evening several of us partied and it was about the first time for me to imbibe. The date was February 8, 1944. My officer serial number was 0766901.

After graduation we were given two weeks off, so Bea and I traveled by Greyhound Bus back to Sacramento. We had about one week before leaving. I had travel orders to report to the Air Field in Grenada, MS. for transition training. I was able to obtain gas rations to drive to Granada, so Bea and I drove there. In our routing we had to go through Texas, and when we entered the State the car horn started to blow. I had to disconnect the wiring.

We arrived in Granada the day before I had to report, and found the only Motel that had a vacancy. It only cost \$1.00 per night, but wasn't even worth that. The sheets were old sewn up floor sacks, the floors filthy. I told Bea not to touch anything. The next day I reported to base with my orders and was told that I should not have been assigned there. Later in the day I was given new orders to report to Sedalia, MO. I was given only about three days to accomplish this and was again given gas rations.

C-47 Flight Training for the Troop Carrier Command

It was the last part of February 1944 when I reported to Sedalia Army Air Base in Sedalia, MO, and my first flight in the C-47 was March 1st. Sedalia was a training base for Troop Carrier Command. I found out later and after my assignment in England to the 434th Troop Carrier Group, that the Group had earlier been based at Alliance AFB, Nebraska. At Sedalia we received training in Douglas C-47 the military version of the DC-3. Some of the planes that we flew were DC-3's formally used by various commercial airlines. A few were quite old and one that I flew on occasions had an old model steam heating system. One day when I was assigned to fly it, and while taking off, the heater blew up and in short order the

whole cockpit area was filled with steam. I had to open the side window and finished taking off while still looking out the side window. Naturally we landed and got assigned to another plane.

My assigned instructor was a real character. He was a 2nd Lt. and for some reason I can't find his name in any of my records. Again each instructor was assigned six students, and the first flight we had with him was a night session. He naturally flew the first hour and got up to about 10,000 feet. His remark was to watch how good the C-47's were. He put it into a steep dive and said watch the air speed (gauge). The needle went around it once and around another 10 to 20 MPH. before he began leveling out. He had us gasping. On another day flight he wanted to stop at a small farm, but as it had been raining he thought it best to try out the hardness of the dirt field first. So he flew down and just touched the ground. He decided it was too soft.

As a married officer I was able to live off base and received off base living funds for both Bea and myself. In Sedalia Bea and I found a home which had two bedrooms, and a small kitchen that we shared with another Student Pilot and his wife. Her name was Ann and his was 2nd Lt. Arthur Stewart Hill (076694). We didn't have the same instructor, so once in a while we flew at different times, which meant that he and I were home at different times. At the base I met 2nd Lt. Lanthus B. Romney (Hank) (1766073). We didn't have the same instructor, but usually flew at the same times and we became very close friends. His wife, Eleanor was also with him and their two children; Barry, three and Pam, one year old. Eventually the four of us got together. We became very good friends, remaining close friends for many, many years. Hank passed away in 2000 and Eleanor in 2001. When Hank and I were flying, Bea and Eleanor spent most of their time together and many times would have lunch or dinner ready when we would get home, normally at Hank and Eleanor's home. The four of us would go on picnics, driving around the State of Missouri and one time went into St Louis for the weekend.

We eventually soloed in the C-47 and as our instructor had showed us on our first flight, the C-47 was a very rugged and reliable plane. We did quite a bit of instrument flying and a lot of formation flying. Formations are three planes in an inverted V (^), two planes on each side of a leader, and slightly behind. Actually the pilot's cabin at each side of the leader was even with tail of the leaders plane. Eventually we would have several groups of three planes following a lead group of three. Sometimes there would be 27 planes in the big formation. We also had training in towing Waco gliders. The power planes, C-47's, would have a stretch cable attached to a release hook at the bottom rear of the C-47, with the other end attached to the glider, which also had a release. There wasn't any radio communication between the C-47 and Glider. The pilot of each could release, however it was a standard rule that the pilot of the glider would release when he felt he could do so and land. The gliders, when cut-off, would go down pretty fast, no floating around as the present day gliders do.

One day, half of the C-47 student pilots had to act as Co-Pilots in the gliders, and the other half were first pilots in the C-47s. My glider pilot had just returned from flying gliders in Africa, and else where, and was very good. This day we had to be towed to an auxiliary field, release and land. After a glider releases the power plane would fly around and release the tow cable along side the landing runway. While on the ground we had a short class while the glider was being again attached to the power plane. On take off, the power plane towing my glider, lost power in its right engine. We were only about 200 feet off the ground, with orchard trees surrounding the airfield. It was up to the power plane to try and get us around the airfield so we could land. We kept losing altitude and finally my glider pilot could see the C-47 could not make it all the way around and get us over the fence to the landing strip. He pulled the release about 200 ft short of the fence and the runway. As we were still about 20 feet in the air, he bounced on the ground and over the fence. Wow! The two of us from the glider and the crew from the C-47 got into the main instructors plane and returned to Sedalia Air Base. While we had been flying a big lighting storm came up and it was in the path of the returning flight routing of all the other C-47s and the gliders that they were towing. On our return to our operations office, we checked to see how all the others were doing. The word wasn't very good. As Hank was in that group and in a Glider, I drove back to Sedalia and picked up Bea and Eleanor and returned to the base. When we got back to the base I found out that several Gliders, because of the storm, had cut loose from their tow planes and were landing all over the

area, mainly in farmer's fields. Hank finally checked in and was going to stay where he was for the night as many of the others did.

Another evening Hank and I had an assignment to fly a round robin course, meaning to fly to a designated city, then to another and another and another, four different locations and then back to our Air Base. We each flew in a different plane with our Co-Pilots and the airplane's assigned Crew Chief and Radio Operator. We were in a two-plane formation and I was leading. We hit a lightning storm, the radios were barely working and we didn't know where we really were. Finally over Wichita City we got into a big up draft. I radioed to Hank to pull away from me and turn south while I kept going for a minute or two, and then I turned south. While in the up draft I had my plane heading down at a good angle, however it was gaining altitude quite fast. Finally we got out of the up draft and continued on to our next City of contact. Hank and I could talk together as we were close, but we were not receiving the normal radio signals or see the ground beacon lights. We ended up doing the best we could and then headed back to Base, still not knowing where we, or the Base was. Things finally quieted down and by radio beacon we got back OK

Some of us had been previously assigned to becoming a First Pilot, which meant six months of training at Sedalia while others were only getting three months training and would become Co-Pilots. Robert E. Harr (Bob) was assigned to be my Co-Pilot and we had training together the last month of our training at Sedalia. Hank was also a First Pilot and he was assigned a Co-Pilot. The last few days at Sedalia, my crew was fully assigned, Co-Pilot 2nd. Lt. Robert E Harr (0720484), Crew Chief Cpl. George R. Fleming (34651903), and Radio Operator Cpl. Joseph M. Faust (33605658). Hank's crew were Co-Pilot 2nd Lt Henry L. Gross, Jr (0720482), Crew Chief Cpl. Arvin H. Hogdahl (37280657) and Radio Operator Cpl. William D. McNeilly (15133116). I find in my records that 1st Lt Mark M. Thall (0766119) was at Sedalia, MO with us for transition training and was also reporting to Baer Field. He also was assigned to the 71st TCS and unfortunately was KIA during the Rhein Para Drop. All crews had a few flights together before graduation and then two weeks leave to go home. We had to report to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, IN and be there by August 14, 1944. There were 66 crews assigned to transfer from Sedalia to Baer Air Field, and then over seas.

Two Weeks Leave Before Overseas Duty

As Bea and I had our car in Sedalia we again obtained gas rations to drive to Sacramento. At that time the whole country was on a mandated maximum speed limit of 35 MPH. As we had about 2000 miles to do, we slightly exceeded the speed limit. Someplace in Utah we had a MP car pass us going the other way and he turned around to stop us. He was cautious as he approached the car as my Officer's hat was on the back window ledge, so he didn't know my rank. We told him how far we had to go and how much time we had, so he gave me a caution citation, which I still have in my files.

Bea was pregnant with our son Stephen, and it was a very hot ride as it was in July 1944. One night in late evening I was driving and all of a sudden I skidded to a stop, and when Bea asked what was wrong I told her the bridge was turning, like Sacramento's Eye Street bridge does. As there wasn't any bridge there, needless to say at the next Motel we stopped for the night. We did a lot of family visiting for the few days that I had at home as I was slated to go over seas, where I really did not know. Bea was with my Mother, as well as others, when I went out to the City Air Port as I had a flight ticket on United Airlines to fly to Fort Wayne, Ind. Shortly after take off the Stewardess came down the isle and asked me if the car keys were in my pocket, which they were. United Air sent them back to Bea in Sacramento on the next return flight.

Transfer to Baer Field, Ft. Wayne, IN

Arriving at Baer Air Base, I got together with Bob Harr and in short order we found Hank and his Co-Pilot 2nd Lt. Henry Gross. Our wooden footlockers were also at the field and of course we had our Barracks Bags. We still didn't know where we would be going, the Pacific or to Europe, so we didn't know what

clothing to carry with us in our Barracks Bag and what to put in the foot locker which we probably would not see for several days. During the two or three days that we had at Baer Air Field, Bob and I along with Hank and his Co-Pilot ironed our summer kaki uniforms for use in the Pacific. A couple of days prior to leaving we were told to wear winter style clothing, so we packed our kaki uniforms in our footlocker. Finally on the day of leaving my crew and I were introduced to the new C-47A, (#43-48259) call sign "S", that we would be flying. It was then that 2nd Lt Harold E. Ford (0809345) was also assigned to my crew as an ATC Navigator, who would be with us flying to England only. Each plane had a Navigator assigned for the overseas flight.

Flight to England

On August 24, 1944 we eventually received our flight course, from Bear Air Field to Bangor, Maine, (Dow Air Base), for the first leg of flight. There were eight C-47s flying together, but not in formation. We each had about a two-minute take off spacing. This was a day flight so we stayed in Dow Air Base overnight. From Bangor we flew to Gander, (Goose Bay Air Base) Newfoundland, again a day flight. By this time several other C-47s, B-25s, B-26s, and Mosquitoes joined us at Goose Bay Air Base. On the 27th we left Gander for Iceland, (Meeks Field Air Base) flying over Greenland. This was a night flight, again about two or three minute spacing, but at different altitudes. We were told that in no event were we to try to land at Greenland. Greenland had a tricky approach pattern winding around mountain peaks. The night was clear and we could see the lights at Greenland when we passed over. Shortly after we passed over we received weather reports from Iceland that were not good. Eventually we received radio orders to return to Goose Bay Air Base. The whole group of planes all flew back to Gander plus the planes from the States coming up to Gander. It was a full airfield. After sleeping until early afternoon and getting up, we heard a large explosion. Running outside we saw some large objects dropping out of the sky, landing wheels, engines etc. Eventually we saw two Pilots coming down in their parachutes, one hanging upside down. Fortunately several men on the ground caught him. The pilots had been flight- testing their airplane, a Mosquito that was going over to the British Air Force. The next night, the 28th we again took off for Iceland. We were told that the weather was good, which turned to be incorrect, as I logged 6 hours instruments out of a total flying time of 8 hours and 20 minutes. After we had flown past the point of "no-return", we received coded weather reports that Iceland was closed and the landing conditions were bad. In checking our fuel supply we could only get to Iceland, could not make it back to Gander and could not make it to England. The next weather report, 15 minutes later, indicated that Iceland was clearing up somewhat. We made it OK. Again as it had been a night flight we slept most of the day. The next leg of the flight was to England (Nutts Corner Air Base), which we made without any trouble. At Nutts Corner we checked in our C-47A including our Parachutes, Mae West, Mail and Binoculars. There will be a later story about our Parachutes.

Upon landing we were handed a piece of paper instructing us to gather our gear and get into 6 x 6 trucks that took us to a train depot. I do not remember where we got off the train as it was late in the night or early morning, however we again got on a 6 x 6 which took us onto an Army Air Base where we arrived about 5:00 AM tired and hungry. At this point there were 4 crews of us, 16 men, and Hank was no longer with us. Our four crews were to have been sent to a Troop Carrier base. Hank, his crew and four or five other crews had been assigned to an Air Transport Group, (ATG). That Group was similar to Air Transport Command, (ATC) the elite Group. Hank was in the Group that did the rougher type of work, each flying solo missions, carrying freight, mail etc. We found the Mess Hall and talked the cooks into feeding us. As we were eating the regular base officers came in for their breakfast. The Officer in charge wanted to know what we were doing there as the base had supposedly been in a "closed down" condition. It turned out that it was a Path Finder outfit and they were getting ready for a secret mission, and that was why the base was closed.

Arrival at Aldermaston, England

Our four crews had been taken to the wrong base, so after breakfast we were driven to our correct base, which was Aldermaston Air Base, (A80), Code name "Drummond", and the home of the 434th Troop

Carrier Group. My crew was assigned to the 71st Squadron and the other crews assigned to the 72nd, 73rd, and 74th Squadrons. After Bob and I were assigned to our Quonset Hut Barracks and we selected our bunks, Bob the lower one and I got the upper bunk. After that we dressed up in our Class A uniforms and reported to the Base Commander, Colonel Ben A. Garland. This was a formal requirement. Major Thomas C. Ricketts, Jr. was the 71st TCS Operations Officer, and Captain Henry C. Reavis was Assistant Squadron Operations Officer.

Being new in the ETO (European Theater of Operations), both Bob and I were assigned as Co-Pilots, flying with other crews, myself normally with Captains and 1st Lt. flight leaders. My first flight with the 71st TCS was September 6, 1944, a 3 hr 30 min flight in which my log book shows all the time charged as Co-Pilot. I next flew on September 8th thru the 13th, totaling 41 hours, in which the time was split 50/50 Pilot and Co-Pilot. This was the normal way that our flying time was recorded.

Operation 'Market', September 17, 1944

On September 17th MARKET operation began with a Paratrooper drop and on the 18th a Glider Tow. Another Glider Tow was made on the 19th with a supply mission on the 25th. The weather was not good on the 19th and although our Squadron completed the mission, many other Squadrons and Groups did not. While crossing the Channel we all had to fly at a very low altitude just above the water because of weather and some of the Gliders behind our flight got up into the fog with several of them cutting loose and ditching into the water. Our 434th TCG lost seven C-47s during the MARKET missions, however thankfully, the 71st TCS did not lose any. I believe it was also on the 19th just after the gliders released and we were on the way out that I saw a P-38 diving down to blast out a gun emplacement that had been shooting at all of us. After the P-38 completed his dive and pulled up, I saw the Pilot bail out. Apparently his plane had received a hit. We all hoped that the Pilot survived. Our Squadron did make a supply mission on the 20th. For some reason I was not assigned any supply flights to Bastogne on December 23, 24, and 26th. I flew on a combat supply mission to St. Vith on February 14th. Between the MARKET and St. Vith missions we flew many cargo supply missions, mainly gas to the 3rd Army to supply General George Patton. I do not remember exactly, but I think that our gasoline loads were 100 (5 gal) Jerry cans that made 500 gals per load. The Crew Chief and Radio Operator would carry the Jerry cans to the cargo door and Bob and I would then lift the cans out and carry them to an area just beyond our left wing tip. This is the way all the crews would work. Other loads consisted of K rations and other food, new uniforms, ammunition, medicine etc.

One day our Group of 4 Squadrons had a training mission with a British Airborne paratroopers Division. We flew a round robin course to a pre designated drop zone. Included on my plane was a Clergyman and a German Police dog. They were members of the British Division and jumped with the men.

Finally about the first of October 1944, I was assigned as Pilot with Bob again as my Co-Pilot. As all our Troop Carrier flights were always in formation, I usually flew right wing position to our flight leader, the position that I really liked.

One day I was assigned to fly as Co-Pilot with Captain Henry C. Reavis, Assistant Operations Officer. We were to fly into Belgium and our main passenger was a Lt. General. He was an Engineer and we had to take him to a forward base where he was to be in charge of an engineering project of some sort. Anyway, Captain Reavis apparently had a rough night before and wasn't too steady. The General was standing between Reavis and myself, talking and watching what was going on. Not too long into the flight Reavis told me to fly, maintain a certain heading and altitude. As we were not on autopilot, I was sure on my toes keeping the variation of altitude and heading at a real minimum. Captain Reavis and the General kept talking all the time while I was sweating. Afterwards Capt. Reavis said I did a good job.

In reviewing my logbook, I find that I logged 1 hour of link (instrument) training on November 17th, 1944, the day that our Son, Stephen Marshall Jones was born. On November 18th I had a 3 hr 20 min. flight and when I returned to my barracks all the other Pilots quieted down as there was a Western Union message laying on top of my bunk. It was an announcement that our Son had been born. It was naturally, a great

day for me. November 25th, Thanksgiving, I had a 50 min. flight. On December 25, Christmas, we did not fly because of weather. We had been scheduled to assist with supplies for Bastonge. Again on January 1st we did not fly.

While in England 2nd Lt Bob Harr and I did get a weekend pass and visited London. I do not remember too much about the places we visited, however we did visit Piccadilly Square.

I mentioned earlier that the paper order that I received and kept upon arriving at Nutts Corner, England proved to be quite valuable. One day our Squadron Finance Officer came into our Quonset hut and advised me that if I could not produce the parachute that I had when flying from the USA to England, I was going to be charged \$125.00. Rather frantically I dug through the various papers looking for that order. In looking it over he agreed that I didn't owe anything. I told him the order affected my entire crew on that flight, and the other crews who had been assigned to the 72nd, 73rd and 74th Squadrons.

Promotion to 1st Lieutenant, February 1, 1945

On February 1st, while still at Aldermaston, I was promoted to the rank of 1st.Lieutenant. Others in our Squadron who were promoted to 1st Lts. were Frank T. Bayne (0887305), Jack C. Guthrie (0678857), James M. Hamilton (0822375), Fred A Lindemann (0696785) and Mark M. Thall (0766119). 1st Lt Joyce M. Stover (Smokie) (0806934) had his bunk across from Bob's and mine and I had flown as Co-Pilot with him once in a while, and we had become friends. Upon receiving my promotion he gave me my first set of Silver Lt. bars.

Other flying personnel of the 71st TCS were 2nd Lt Frank J. Cerotsky (0774538), 1st Lt Saunders L. Maulsby (079928), 2nd Lt William B. Shirley (074987), 1st Lt Marvin Litke (9677948), 2nd Lt Joseph B. King (02058828), 1st Lt Jack C. Guthrie (0678857), 2nd Lt Ralph W. Roel (0573150), Capt Ralph D. Eames (0798990) and 1st Lt Thomas F. Clark (0769391). There were many more however I do not have their names.

One day several Groups and Squadrons of Troop Carrier had the assignment of flying loads of gasoline in 5 gal Jerry cans. Our Group and our 71st Squadron had the lead on this mission, which was to Brussels, Belgium. When we approached Brussels our lead plane started the usual single plane line up to final approach. As we lowered our landing gear we saw red flares being shot off on the ground. As we were not to use radios between our planes and the ground control, our lead plane retracted his landing gear so we all did and continued a low altitude circle. In the mean time other Groups and Squadrons of Troop Carrier planes were arriving and all got in line behind our Group. As our lead plane again began his landing approach with his gear down, again we got the red flares not to land signal. In our circling the airport we had noted a single plane making his landing. We thought he had an emergency and also noted that it was a British plane. The Brussels Air Port was under the British control. So again we continued our circle, (I was number 5 in line) and of course by that time there must have been close to 500 C-47s all trailing behind us. After our second wave off we saw a British Cargo plane land and it did not look to be in trouble. On our third approach our lead plane radioed to us that we would land even if red flared off. Again we had red flares, but our lead plane advised us all to stay in line and not allow anyone else to land between us. So all 500 of us landed. Our Operations Officer piloted our lead plane and we heard that he really chewed out the British field control officers. When we unloaded we all took off, still in tight order.

It was a general rule that all Troop Carrier Squadrons had to leave the Continent and cross over the Channel prior to darkness. Later, our Squadron had another late in the day gas haul to Brussels, and could not leave because it was getting dark. None of us were too sorry as we wanted to go into Brussels. At one of their bars we had to try some of the Belgium Beer. Everyone said it was supposed to be so good. I didn't think so. That night we slept in our airplanes.

One day returning from the Continent we had to cross the Channel after dark. The airfield where we had unloaded our cargo was expecting a German bombing. Our Squadron was in its usual formation. On arriving over the Channel close to the English Coast, we got mixed up with a bunch of British bombers,

Sterling's I believe, out bound for their night bombing. The British seldom flew in formation, so we had all these single airplanes coming at us, above and below.

Our Aldermaston air base (A80) had one of the few lead-in light approaches on its main landing runway. It was lights extending from the landing runway outbound in an inverted funnel, each side extending as a lead in circle of lights. All we had to do at night was to find a line of lights and follow it down the funnel to the runway. Because of this, during foggy conditions in our part of England our base would have planes, not able to land at their own base, come into ours. One night a large group of B-17s tried to get into our base. It was very foggy and several of us had gone down to the airfield itself to watch. At times two or three B17s could be spotted heading in on their final approach, with all but one having to go around. They all had their lights on plus their emergency hand held red dome lights. I don't know how many landed, but all our unused runways and taxi strips were loaded with the B-17s.

Another night under similar conditions, Lt. Hank Romney, my close friend who had been assigned to the ATG, had to land at our base and stayed overnight with us. His home base was at Grove, England, not too many miles from Aldermaston.

Another day while still based in Aldermaston, England, we had a flight into Paris, France. I had a passenger on board, a fighter pilot returning to his base after some leave time in England. He apparently had been celebrating and was trying to sleep. We had flown into some thick clouds, which meant we were flying in locked in formation (tight) so we wouldn't lose our leader. The fighter pilot woke up to see us just about touching our lead plane, ran up to the cockpit and said he thought that his fighter planes flew close to each other but not like we were doing. To us this was common when in clouds or fog. Sometime in February I was taken off flight duty and sent to the hospital with a good case of the flu. Three or four days later I again was put on flying status.

Flying the C-47B

Further review of my logbook, I note that on March 11th 1945, I was given a supply run to Liverpool to pick up some parts for our Group's Jeeps. This was a single plane mission and I found that I had been assigned to a new plane that our Squadron had just obtained. It was a C-47B model, which meant that the engines had superchargers or blowers, giving the plane the ability to fly somewhat faster and definitely able to fly at a higher altitude. The plane was our Squadron's "H" plane. They were originally built for flying supplies over the hump in China. It also had a special radar system referred to as "Lorraine" radar. The sweep unit was attached to the bottom of the plane with the round shield about 3 ft. x 3 ft. in size. One of our Squadron's planes, "S-sugar", had a similar system and it was considered a slow plane. On the new plane someone had safety wired the supercharger selector switches into one position. As my crew and I had some C-47B training back at Sedalia, MO and had been cautioned to always clear the supercharger system by changing or switching the control switches prior to take off, and every hour of flight and prior to landing. With my Crew's Chief OK, I cut the safety wires prior to take off. I reported this action to our Squadron's Operation Officer when we returned. As a result of that, my crew and I was assigned as permanent crew to that C-47B. I found out later the other three squadrons who had also received new C-47Bs, did not cut the wires. Later they had to have their engines reworked because of supercharger malfunction.

Even though my classification was first pilot and Bob as a Co-Pilot, we had to share our flight time with other spare Pilots and Co-Pilots. By that time our Squadron over had 26 planes and about 40 Pilots and Co-Pilots crews. One day one of the extra Pilots flying my plane, over ran a landing strip and one of the props chewed up a wooden marker pole, which put a dent in one of the prop blades. My Crew Chief requested of me, THAT pilot not be reassigned to fly our plane. I passed on this request to our Squadron Commander, he agreed. Whenever Bob and I were assigned to fly, we usually flew our plane. Our Squadron letters on the airplanes were 'CJ'. These letters were painted just below and behind the cab windows. Each plane in the Squadron was given a letter and my plane was H (how), and this was painted on both sides of the rudder. The rest of the planes were lettered A thru Z. The 71st Squadron's radio code name was "Vardon" and the airfield was known as "Drummond". All this meant that when returning to our

field I would radio “Drummond” this is “Vardon” H “How”, requesting landing permission. Most all of the Air Corp planes had some artwork on the nose of the plane just below the front windows. Some of the artwork was pictures or names of the wives. As my Crew Chief was permanently assigned to our plane, keeping up the maintenance current and having the plane ready to fly at all times, I suggested he assign a name and letter it on. “LITTLE DELLA MAE”. It was his wife’s name. All four of my crewmembers had our names lettered just below our windows.

434th Moves from England to Mourmelon-le-Grand, France (Y80) March 1945

Records from other sources note that the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing was slated to move from England to the Continent, and our 434th TCG and four Squadrons began this move the latter part of February 1945. As it apparently took some time to prepare the new facilities our aircraft didn’t make the move until the middle of March, probably about the 15th. We were located at Mourmelon-le-Grand, France (Y80), a few miles South East of Rheims and a few hundred miles East of Paris. Instead of concrete runways, the one runway, all taxi strips and parking ramps were perforated steel matting. Eventually our base included a POW facility, an airborne camp and a hospital. We understood that one day our field exceeded the amount of inbound and outbound air traffic of Chicago’s airport. I only recall one flight to Y80 and that was the last flight for our move. While many of us continued to make various cargo flights in support of the 3rd Army, others apparently had made flights with equipment and people during the early part of the move. The loading of the planes was not done with too much consideration for distribution of equipment pertaining to weight and our plane proved to be loaded too nose heavy which made taking off and landing a little precarious. At Y80 I shared a room with Bob and John Montel, another Pilot. The single story building had a few other rooms, ours being a corner room. The room was a little crowded but we made out OK. We had single bunks.

‘Varsity’ Mission: Crossing the Rhein River

The VARSITY mission, crossing the Rhein, March 24, 1945, was a Paratrooper Drop for the 434th TCG and the 71st TCS. I flew in it along with my “H” crew, and as I recall my flight position was right wing of our Squadron leader’s plane. Our Group Commander was leading the whole mission and just behind his “V” of three planes on the right side was our Squadron leader with his 3-plane “V”. There was another three plane “V” on the left of the Group Commanders “V”. The rest of our Squadron, Group and all the other various Groups were in a similar formation, a giant formation of nine planes in V’s, all behind us. There were several hundred Troop Carrier planes on this mission. It was after this flight that we found a small arms bullet hole through the rudder. It was also on this flight that our Squadron lost one of its C-47’s, piloted by Lt Nelson and Co-Pilot Lt. Mark Thall. They had just dropped all their troopers. If my memory is correct Nelly had a 5-man crew including a Navigator, and all 5 men were married. My records show that Lt. Mark Thall had been in the same training group at Sedalia and probably flew across to England on the same nights as we did.

This was the second time that the plane I was in was hit. Earlier the first time was when I was Co-Pilot and on a glider tow or supply mission, we got a shell hit coming thru the bottom and out the top, between my seat and the Radio Operators table behind me. The hole was about 1” in size. No one was hurt.

Shortly after the Rhine drop and supply missions, three of our Squadron planes had an assignment to fly to a landing field close to the Rhine area and pick up about 60 GI’s and fly them down to the Riviera for their R & R. One of the GI’s had been on our plane earlier as he recognized my Crew Chief and Radio Operator. He had parachuted out of our plane on the Rhine drop. When I talked with him he said all the paratroopers had gotten out and on the ground OK. We were always concerned whether our drop or glider tow got the men to the proper location. I did not have any flights for the Bastogne, Belgium missions.

April 1945, A Record Flying Month

Records indicate that the month of April 1945 was the busiest for our 434th TCG. My log book shows that I flew 63 hours 30 minutes during the month, with 3 days over 8 hours each. One of these flights was to go into Germany, pick up some released French POW's and return them to an air base near Paris. Upon landing and letting the French men off the plane, the French military had a small 3 or 4 piece band meeting them playing the French National Anthem. After the returning POWs got off, Bob and I went back to the door to relax a bit while our lead plane was still unloading. When we got to the door, I guess we looked about as tired and dirty as the French had looked; anyway the French band looked at us and again started to play their National Anthem.

On April 9th, Bea's birthday, I had a 6 hr. and 5 min. flight, which I will mention later, however it was combat flight, a re-supply mission. On May 12th, my Mothers birthday, I had a 1-hour instrument check ride, with a notation that I passed. On June 8th, my birthday, I did not fly. I was credited with 21 combat missions, Para-drop, Glider Tow, and Re-Supply missions. These were flights to Holland, St. Vith, Wessel and Germany. One of the Para-Trooper drops was in the crossing of the Rhine with several subsequent supply missions.

My log book shows that I had 15 combat missions into Germany from March 31 to April 16th; the last four were two flights each day. The second one each day was to bring back released POW's. I believe that it was April 9th (Bea's birthday), that I flew 6 hours and 40 minutes (flying time). It was a flight into Germany with supplies and then we picked up three planeloads of released British soldiers. They had been POW's for up to seven years, and had been force-marched, about two weeks time, from within sound of the Russian guns west to where the Allies over ran the Germans. My plane had 26 British Military Personnel. The Americans had fed these POW's some K rations, which was too rich for these men. Fortunately for the POW's, we had to fly back to our base and refuel. While there, these poor men were all suffering with the GI runs so they were allowed to get off, onto the fields. After reloading we flew them over to England. On my plane I was told that we had a British Colonel, John W. Owen. I let him sit in Bob's seat for the rest of the flight. He had been a POW for 6 or 7 years and looked like he was in his 60's. Other men took turns coming forward to view France, the English Channel and finally England. There was complete silence and they were all in tears. When our 3 planes landed those men on our plane would not get off until I went back to shake their hands as they had already done with the rest of my crew, as their thanks for bringing them home. They also would not get into the 6 x 6 trucks until we started up our engines and began moving, at that time they gave our plane a Military salute. The elderly Colonel must have really pulled rank.

Another day I recall that we had a couple of long flights and upon returning to our Y-80 base in Mourmelon-le-Grand, I was running low on fuel. The "H" C-47B had resealing fuel tanks which was a thick wall of rubber or resealing material so bullet holes would reseal which also meant the fuel capacity was not as much as the metal tanks. Anyway running low on fuel I got an OK from our lead plane to make a straight in landing and not go around in the normal formation circle. Upon checking after landing my Crew Chief said we didn't have too many gallons left.

Another flight, three of us were in tight formation, taking in supplies. We were in low clouds or fog, real tight, when our leader advised the two of us on his wings to break left and right 180 degrees and climb up through the stuff and then find each other, which we did. Our leader, having a Navigator, didn't know for sure where and how high the mountains were. We tried another route to our destination and made it OK

The War in Europe Winds Down

From late April until June 24th we continued to fly into Germany with supplies, bring out released POW's, have our instrument check flights, and various other missions. One instrument check flight was to Paris, with one Pilot flying his check flight. I was then to fly from Paris back to our base for my check flight. The instructor was a Captain who I knew pretty well. He asked if I wanted to take off while under the hood, only on instruments and not seeing the runway or the ground, I said sure. He was in the Co-Pilot's seat and could have taken control at any moment. All the way back to our base I was under the hood, and had

planned to also land on instruments. As there was a stiff crosswind the hood was removed when we were about 20 ft. from the ground.

On VE day and late in the afternoon one our Group's C-47's was returning from some mission. On his final approach to landing, the paratroopers, located at our base in celebration, starting shooting their guns making a tracer arch over the incoming landing runway. The C-47 went around and finally landed without any further greetings.

Final Flight With the 71st and 434th

My final flight in the ETO with the 434th Troop Carrier Group was on June 24th, 1945. The Squadron's allotment of planes and the original personnel were getting ready to return to the good old USA. All of us who had joined the 434th in England, as my crew did, were to return via other means, mainly by ship.

While waiting for travel orders, a bunch of us were playing touch football on a rough concrete parking area. Unfortunately I twisted my ankle, which caused me to hobble around. I was also somewhat sick which caused me to begin throwing up and acquiring the GI's, which was a rough way to end my overseas service. I knew if I turned myself in to the Medics I would have to go to the Hospital, which I certainly did not want to do.

Fortunately our Squadron had three extra C-47s that were good enough to also return to the USA, as spare aircraft. I was assigned to fly one as Pilot, with 1st Lt. Frank T. Bayne (0887305) as Co-Pilot, Crew Chief T/Sgt Elden L. Loden (34426769) (my Crew Chief on my "H" air plane) and Radio Operator S/Sgt Joseph M. Faust (33605658) (my radio operator from the USA to England flight). Our plane had been equipped with two (2) spare cabin fuel tanks that held 200 gallons of gas each, giving us a total of 1,200 gallons. We also had six passengers, Weather Personnel, also returning to the U.S. The planes serial number was 43-15112.

On July 1st we left A-48, a French base, and flew to Marseilles, France, a 3:35 hour flight, for refueling and then on to Marrakech, Morocco, which took 7:05 hours, a total of 10:40 hour flight time. On the 2nd we flew to Dakar, Senegal, taking 7:45 hours. From Dakar we flew to Roberts Field, in Africa, only a 5:30 hour flight.

Prior to our leaving France one of the many rumors was that a plane had blown up, supposedly having cabin fuel tanks, and they figured that some one had lit a cigarette. As I indicated, it was a rumor, however I acquired everyone's matches or cigarette lighter before each takeoff. We would be flying the Southern route back to the USA. On one day of our flight I let 1st Lt. Bayne fly as pilot. Our three planes were in a real loose formation, within sight of each other. Some clouds started to form up so we radioed each other to get together. For a while we could not see the other two, however Frank finally spotted them, down below us, so he started to drop down. As we had not started to use the cabin fuel, the gas started to pour out into the cabin. Frank quickly leveled out and we opened all the windows to air the plane out. Good thing no one was smoking.

On July 4th we flew to Ascension Island, a 6:25 hour flight. This is a small Island out in the middle of the Atlantic. The approach to the landing runway called for a high approach as the runway was on a mountain with a high bluff, which could cause a down draft if the approach was too low. The runway had a hump and after landing it climbed upward so I could not see its end. Also after landing the control tower advised to take the first off ramp to the right and taxi a winding taxi strip to the main parking area. Just like driving in the mountains. The next day we flew to Natal, Brazil, an 8:00 hour flight. From there on to Belem, Brazil, 6:25 hours, and then onto Atkinson, 4:50 hours, where we refueled and then on to Borinquen and a total of 10:05 hours of flying time on the 7th. On that flight we were flying at 12,000 ft. As we were not carrying oxygen equipment, I looked around the plane and realized that all the crew and passengers were asleep. As I also was quite sleepy we reduced the altitude to 10,000 ft. On July 8th we left Borinquen and flew to Hunter Air Base in Georgia, and good old USA. That was an 8:00 hour flight, where Frank and I "signed off" the airplane, said good by to our Crew Chief, Radio Operator and our Weathermen

passengers. Lt Frank Bayne and I reported for the Officers debriefing and assigned to sleeping quarters for the night. The weather was hot and muggy and even after a long cool shower we still continued to sweat. The next day I was given travel orders to Beale Air Base in Marysville, California and taken to the train station.

The train I was assigned was a non-air-conditioned one. Being July, the many days of travel were not too pleasant however; I was headed home, about 48 days short of one year of overseas duty. I arrived at Beale Air Base July 20, (Bea and my 4th wedding anniversary) and was given 30 days leave.

I traveled to Sacramento via Bus. At that time Bea was living with my Mother. However I first went to Bea's parents home, thinking that she might be there. I found out that she was at my Mother's home so I started walking there, as the two homes were only 5 blocks apart. Bea had started walking to meet me and we finally got together. It was a very great and glorious meeting. The hug made up for the eleven plus months apart. We then walked to Mother's home where Bea introduced me to our Son, Stephen Marshall Jones. He was our dream, and of course as cute and handsome as any little boy could be. Bea had done a perfect job in producing our son.

V-J Day: the End of WW II

While on my 30-day leave time the Japanese war ended, which was encouraging. I had been given information that I would be assigned to the Pacific area. When the 30 days were over I reported back to Beale Air Force Base. At that time, with so many other flying personnel, a young non-com lady interviewed me. She gave me three options, do I wish to stay in the Air Corps and be promoted to Captain, do I wish to remain in the reserve, or do I wish to be discharged? As I could not be reassigned to the 71st TCS, my answer was, I WANT OUT, thank you. I was released later in the day. The date was September 18, 1945.

71st TCS members can contact Marshall at 916-978-7938, or bjnmj@midtown.net.



Close-up of C-47B #43-49003 flown regularly by the author, John M. Jones. "Little Della Mae" was Crew Chief Tsgt. Elden Loden's wife's name.

More photographs on the following pages.



71st TCS on a day cargo supply mission, possible flight of 9 to 18 C-47s. I was flying Co-Pilot with either Capt. Reeves or Lt. Stover as Pilot in lead plane of an element, so it was probably a flight from England to France. I do not know who was flying "C" Charlie, as various pilots and co-pilots flew all of the squadron's planes, except when the assigned pilot/co-pilot flew their own plane. The squadron had about twice the number of pilots/co-pilots than planes.



T/Sgt Elden L. Loden, Crew chief of "H". Note the perforated steel mat on the ground – our parking area. Our airfield at Mourmelon-le-Grand, France had the steel matting on the landing runway, taxi strips, and all the dispersal parking areas.



This is a football game at Aldermaston, probably between two of the squadrons of the 434th TCG.



Lt. Johnson (left) and Lt. John M. Jones on a misty day in England, probably watching the football game.



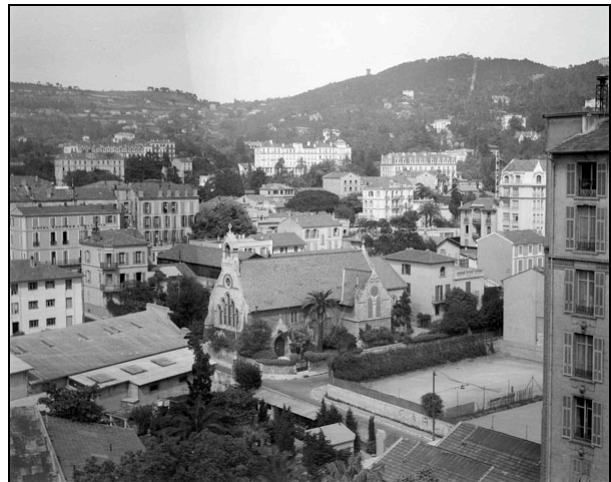
Captain Roland Benson acquired this car from some airfield in France, and hauled it back to the base at Mourmelon-le-Grand in his plane.



After unloading our cargo of gasoline in Jerry cans, we walked around this French airfield, which was pretty beat up. Captain Henry (Hank) Reeves inspects a damaged German aircraft.



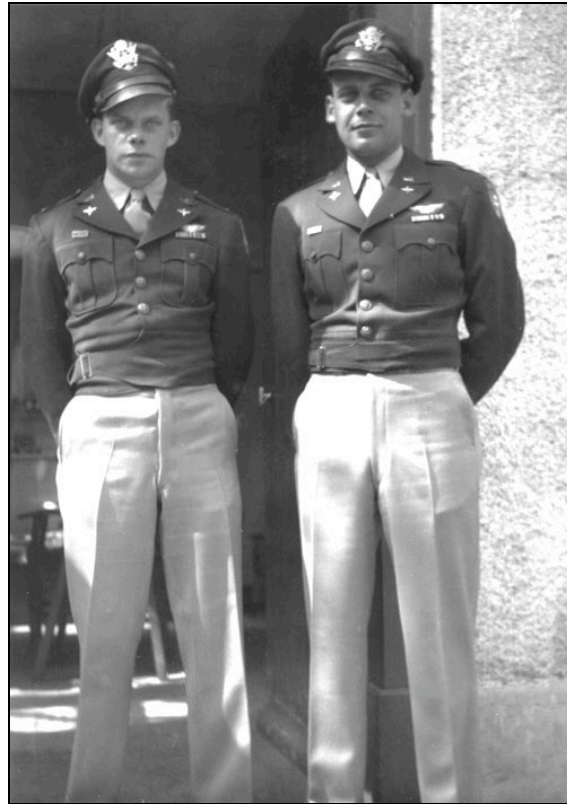
This photo was taken on a supply mission flying over a small French city at an altitude of about 500 feet.



Same mission, another French city. The building on the right appears to be about 8-10 stories high, so the aircraft altitude is about 150 feet.



This was the corner room occupied by Lt. John M. Jones, Lt. Robert E. Harr, and Lt. John Montel, all pilots/co-pilots with the 71st TCS.



Lt. Robert E. Harr (L), and Lt. John M. Jones



Captain Roland Benson (L), Lt. John M. Jones (M), and Lt. Robert E. Harr (R).



Two unidentified pilots with the 71st TCS in their Class A uniforms.



Another low pass over a French city while on a supply mission.



This photo was taken at Mourmelon-le-Grand, France, home of the 434th TCG until the end of WW II. The man on the left is unidentified, and the man on the right is Lt. Edward J. Hlava a 71st navigator.



We made a few flights to the Riviera in southern France flying paratroopers and other Army personnel for their R & R. We stayed over night a couple of times when one of our planes had to have some minor repairs (ahem??). This may have been one of those flights. All are officers of the 71st. The second officer from the right is Lt. Robert E. Harr. The others are not identified.

All photographs provided by the author, 1st Lt. John M. Jones, Pilot, 71st Troop Carrier Squadron.

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