D-Day Report: A Man Who Flew Gliders

Description

Note: Our wounded service members need some helpâ€¦see details on Valour-IT funding laptops with voice recognition software here.

Thanks for your considertaion of this great project!

See D-Day Remembered on Black Five for more stories commemorating this day in history.

Part I,Part II and Part III of the Adventures of Jim, Sr

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Jim Hellinger in Flight Jacket

Jim Helinger, Sr, USAAF

I canâ€™t say this post is full of D-Day info, for Jim Helinger, Sr, Glider Pilot, USAAF, doesnâ€™t talk about combat much. He says there are plenty of other things to talk about, and he is right. I choose to take a few words to highlight Jimâ€™s service in this battle , as well as the others.



CG-4A WACO Glider Info

The links at the top of the post take you to the story Jim told to me over dinner last year. He was one of those men in the gliders on D-Day, being towed over the English Channel in order to get supplies and troops on the ground, and then return to fly again. As a part of the 442nd Troop Carrying Group, he hauled some of the 82nd Airborne Division into battle on this day, 62 years ago.

Jim also had other duties beside flying. He was tasked to determine airworthiness of the gliders on the ground. He said he guessed he always made a good guess. Ever wonder how they got the glider pilots

back? How about you find a glider that looks sound after itâ€™s landing, tell the surviving pilots to get in and strap in, you set up a pair of goal posts, stretch a line between them, attach a tow line (nylon) to the line across, then shoot a flare for the orbiting C-47 to see. That signals the C-47 to come do a low altitude pass, dangling an arresting hook like arrangement, that snagged the glider back into the air and ultimately home.



Jim in the pilotâ€™s seat â€“ taken by his co-pilot

He also flew at least 40 other combat glider missions, and ended up doing a little defensive work on the ground at the Battle of the Bulge. Jim said not all the pilots took the ride home from D-Day. Besides being pilots, they also had to dismount and fight with the troops until the area was secure. He siad a few of the pilots fought on the ground all the way to Germany, and at the end of the war, they finally met back up with their units.

The glider crews donâ€™t get a lot of pages of print, nor combat artwork, for the most part. The C-47, and a fine airplane it is, gets the lionâ€™s share of the credit for hauling lots and lots of paratroopers, as it did. It also hauled the WACO and HORSA gliders, too. JIm said they mostly only saw the C-47 pilots when they were briefing for a mission, but they pretty much stayed apart during normal working

routine. The glider pilots were at least qualified as Co-Pilots in the C-47, in case they needed extra hands.

Tow Plane from the Glider Cockpit

A glider pilots view of the tow plane

D-Day was a phenomenal efforts, and many parts and pieces went into making the battle plan function. Jim Helinger, Sr, was one of those men who did his part that day.

Thanks to BlackFive for the D-Day Blogburst!

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Date Created
June 6, 2006
Author
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