

## 309, 310 and 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Abn at Arnhem, 21 Sep 1944

(Extract from *Market Flight*, Vol. 5: 315<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group, by Hans Den Brok)

**Background:** The original drop of the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Airborne Brigade was scheduled for 19 Sep 44, but due to bad weather in England, it was postponed to 21 Sep. The weather was still bad and only the 309<sup>th</sup> and 310<sup>th</sup> were able to takeoff, form up, and proceed to the DZ for the Arnhem bridge assault at Driel, Holland, southwest of their objective.



Polish paratroopers wait to board the planes. (Authors collection)

### Serial A-85

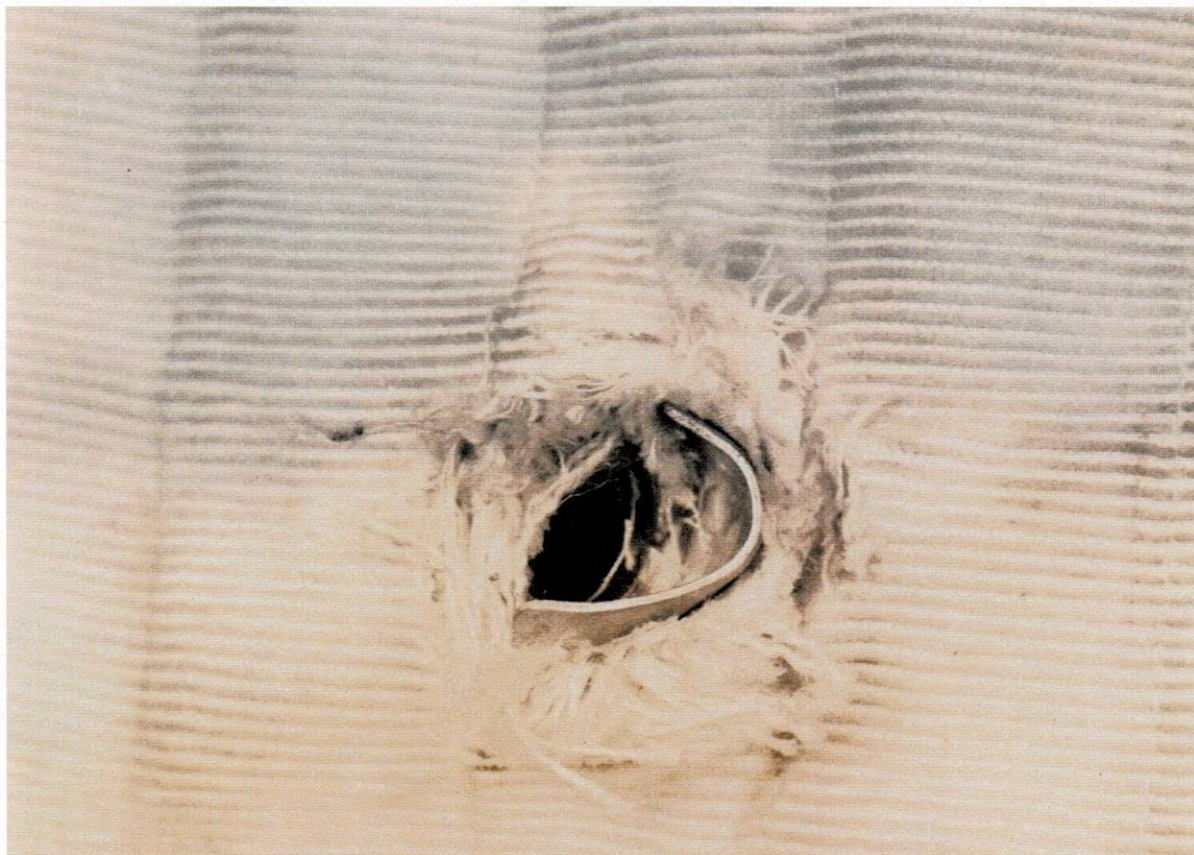
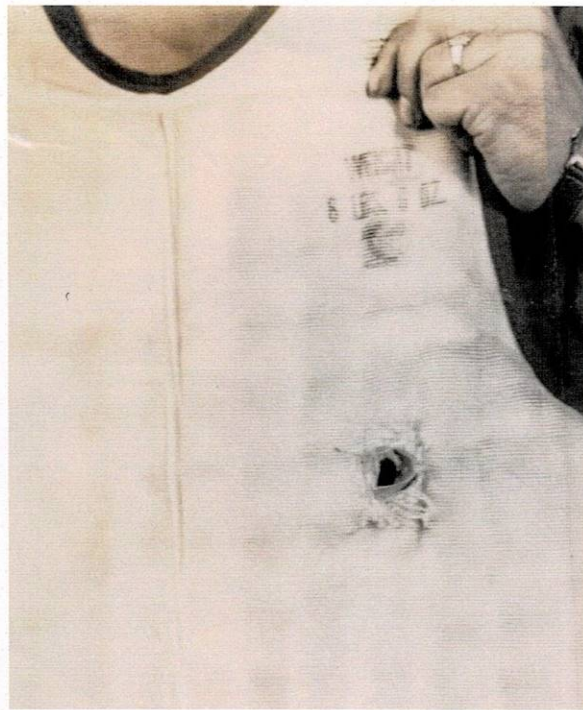
309 <sup>th</sup> & 310 <sup>th</sup> TCS	Elms 1 <sup>st</sup> Bn Polish 1 <sup>st</sup> Para Bgd.; Elms 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bn Polish 1 <sup>st</sup> Para Bgd	17.08 hours
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### 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

This day's activities saw the ending of the Squadron's lucky streak. The 309th lost two airplanes in action. Only one full crew has returned. Therefore, five men were listed as "missing in action". In addition, the commanding officer, Lt. Col. Smylie M. Stark, was wounded by a piece of "flak" which crashed through the plane and dug itself into his "flak suit". Had it not been for this flak suit, the injury might have been a severe one.

<sup>25</sup> The Flying Sergeant – W. Harper





**These three photos show the flak suite worn by Lt.-Col. Stark with the damage and piece of metal clearly visible. A life saver. (AFHRA)**

Several of the ships were hit by flak and small arms. Captain Onila was the only pilot who brought back his plane on the day of the mission. His ship had several .30 and .50 caliber bullet holes and was hit in the left elevator, the rudder and tail wheel by 20mm flak. Capt.

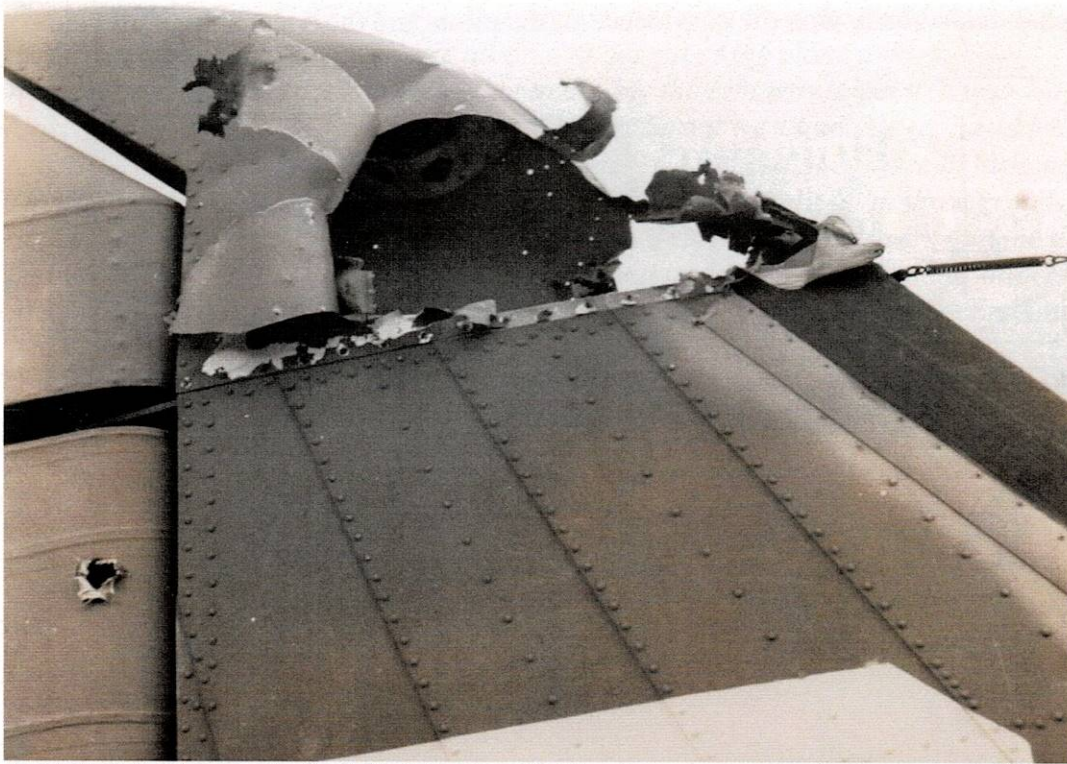


Onila brought his ship in at night after the weather had closed in to no ceiling and no visibility and made a perfect landing.

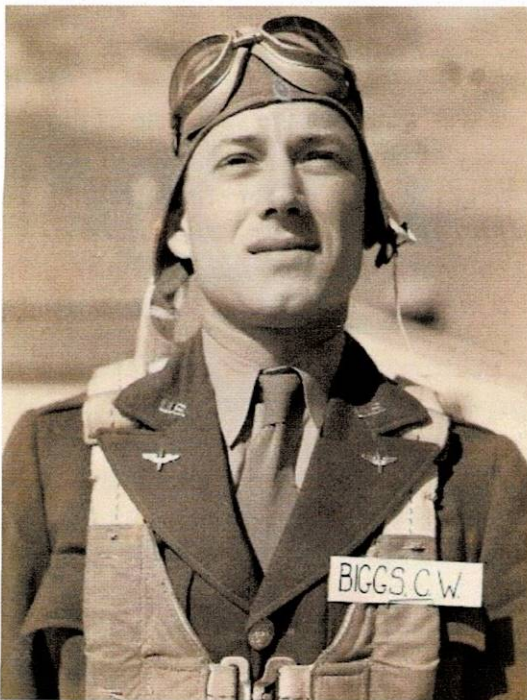


The crew that returned, left to right: Capt. John Onila, T/Sgt. Arnold G. Turner (CC), S/Sgt. Charles E. Patterson (RO) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Otto Molden. (AFHRA)





A detail of the damage to Capt. Onila's aircraft. The plane was eventually destroyed in 1998. (AFHRA)



Left: Cecil Biggs during his training days. (J. Bos)

Lt. Biggs was not so fortunate. He, after dropping his troopers on the DZ, was hit badly while in his turn away from the DZ. Crew chief Arnold Turner witnessed that the right engine was on fire and that the plane crashed without seeing one of the crew bail out.<sup>26</sup>

The plane, C-47 # 42-93029, caught on fire and went into the ground, bounced quite hard, hit again and exploded. It is thought that all crew members were killed. The crew of this plane was:

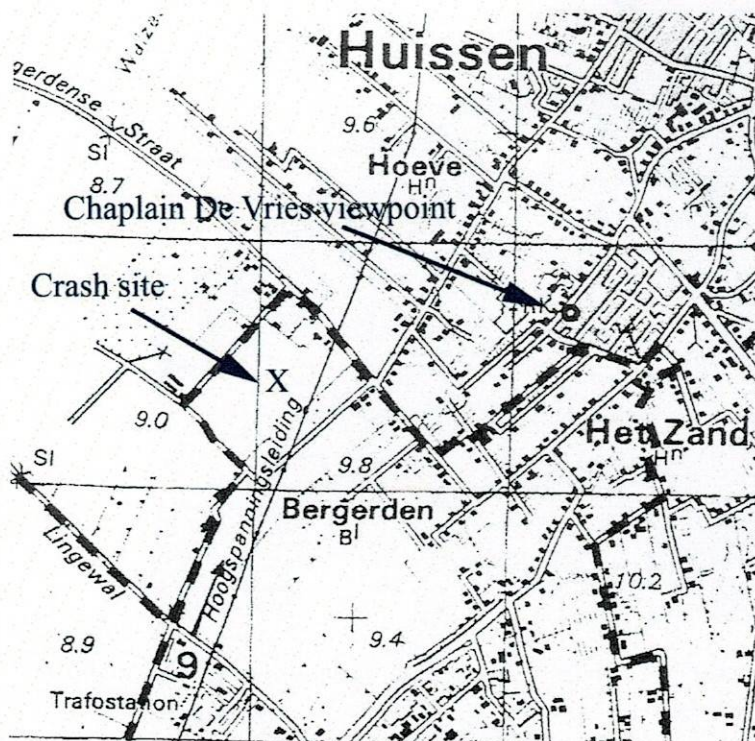
1<sup>st</sup> Lt Cecil W. Biggs (P)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William L. Pearce (CP)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Thomas R. Yenner (N)  
 S/Sgt. George G. Herbst (RO)  
 T/Sgt. Russel W. Abendschoen (CC)

Lt. Biggs and Lt. Pearce were well liked among the Squadron's enlisted men as well as officers. Lt. Pearce came to the 309<sup>th</sup> TCS from the 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron of the same Group. He joined the Group some 18 months ago. Lt. Biggs was more of a newcomer so were both the radio operator and the crew chief, Sgts. Herbst and Abendschoen. Both enlisted men were very popular and capable men. The navigator, Lt. Yenner, was the newest comer of them all and, although he was a quiet,

<sup>26</sup> MACR / Luchtbrug Market Garden – B. Rijnhoud en B. van der Klaauw



unassuming lad, had already won the confidence of the pilots and the friendship of all who knew him.



**Top: Thomas R. Jenner (DFR)**

**Left: The crash location near Bergerden and the viewpoint of Chaplain De Vries at Huissen-Het Zand.**

**In the mid 90s more remains were found at the crash site and send to the USA where, after investigations, the**

**remains were identified and buried in 2007.**

Like so many Dutch spectators, Chaplain M. H. de Vries was watching the spectacle of the airborne landings as well. From their location at the rectory of Huissen he had a view of the drop of the Polish paratroopers. *Suddenly we noticed one of the big planes on fire, heading directly toward us. We panicked and ran to the church for cover. Just after we entered the church we heard the impact. We noticed a huge smoke column rising from the Wienholst farm and thought the farm was hit and burning. But we heard the plane had crashed approximately 200 meters from the farm.*<sup>27</sup>

The second plane of the 309th that crashed was C-47 # 42-93064. It had the following crew:

Capt. Frederick K. Stephenson (P)  
 Lt. Paul B. Garber Jr. (CP)  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Edwin E. Arnold (N)  
 T/Sgt. James V. Berotti (CC)  
 S/Sgt. Eugene S. Maxwell (RO)

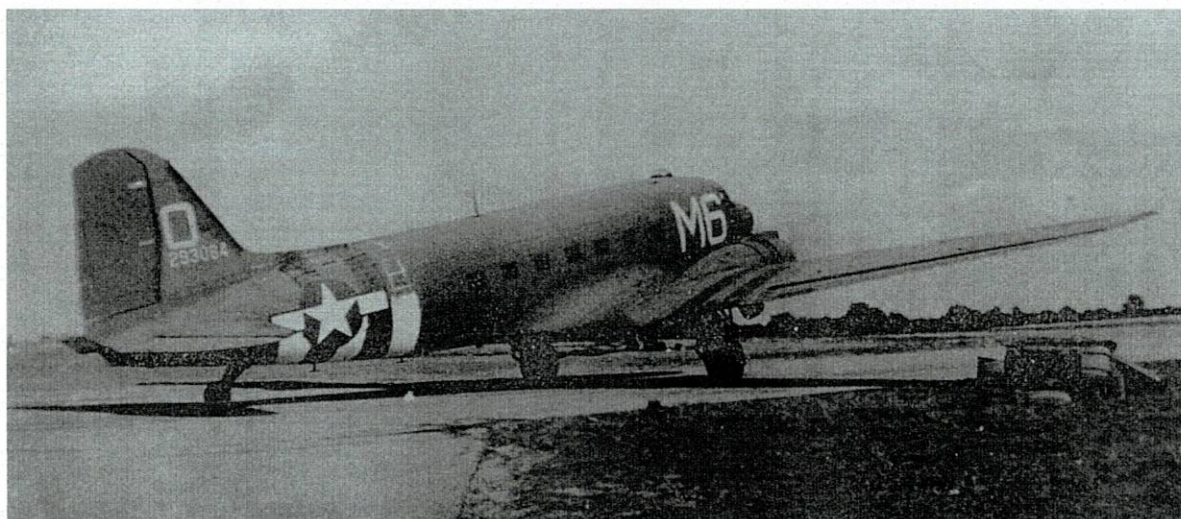
Capt. Stephenson wrote:

*After the paratroopers had left the plane, we definitely started to get Flak and Garber and Berotti said our right engine was on fire. Since we were probably no more than 200 to 300 feet above the ground, my only thought was to land. At this point we were over some relatively low trees, I think it was an apple orchard. So, I got the airspeed down as much as possible, as I was continually getting closer to the ground. Finally, the plane stalled and dropped to the ground, landing on his belly.*

<sup>27</sup> From diary Chaplain M.H. de Vries, via Mr. Ton van Bon, 2005



*The big wings of the C-47 plus the resistance to the drop from the fruit trees made for a perfectly safe landing and we were all able to get out of the plane unhurt. We grouped together, not knowing what to do. My thought was to get to a wooded area that looked good. But, as we were discussing whether or not we should do that, suddenly a tank appeared, and then another. As they came closer, we realized they were British, not German. They took us out of the danger area close to Mol. We were split up in three groups, the two lieutenants, the two enlisted men and me. On our way, one of the drivers told me that if we had walked into the woods, we would have walked into a group of German snipers. After the night, we headed for an airfield where we took a ride back to the England.<sup>28</sup>*



**The C-47 photographed in late summer 1944. The plane was named *Dorothy I*. (J. Berotti)**

T/Sgt. Berotti wrote about his experiences:

*Weather was still bad for the mission. There was an order for all ships to return to base, but during the confusion of our two squadrons taking off, we never received the word. As every aircraft was returning, we continued to mosey on down across the channel. We had to climb higher than usual to be above the clouds and got pretty cold up there.*

*As we approached the drop-zone the weather improved tremendously and the formation began descending to our drop altitude.*

*As we flew within the range of the Germans, they opened up with everything they had. The troopers began jumping prematurely, with our blessings, otherwise they would have gotten hit inside the plane. I reported to Capt. Stephenson when the last trooper had left the aircraft. I tried to pull in the static lines but could not do it because the airplane was flying kind of wild, with the pilots doing evasive actions to dodge the bullet. I cut the static lines with my knife.*

*As I struggled forward I observed a good size red streak come out of the rear of the right engine, left a large hole there and commenced smoking. I could hear shells going through the fuselage all around me. Some sounded like 'ping-ping', some metal tearing and one big red swoosh, from the floor of the aircraft through the ceiling. That one scared me. I knew we were in trouble.*

*I made my way to the cockpit with the thought of assisting the pilot in assessing the damage and figuring out what lay ahead but the navigator, Lt. Arnold, planted himself between the pilot and co-pilot, obstructing my view of the instrument panel. I stuck my head over his left shoulder, looked at the pilot and forward through the windshield. We seemed to be about 40 or 50 feet off the ground which was clear and a good size of forest in front of us, looked like*

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<sup>28</sup> E-mail from Frederick Stephenson dated 13 August 2003



tall pine trees. At this point, Capt. Stephenson remarked out loud, "I ain't setting her down here, we are going too fast, I'm going to pull up". It didn't take long to figure out what was going on and after two seconds of deliberation I went back to the cabin to see what I could do to brace myself for when the crash came. I decided to lay down by the cabin door to the crew compartment bulkhead, body and head to the floor, my two feet against the bulkhead, one each side of the door with knees bent to absorb shock and waited for the crash. And waited and waited.



**Left: T/Sgt. James Berotti. (J. Berotti) Right: Lt. Paul Barber, the co-pilot. (P. Garber)**

*At once the door opened and S/Sgt. Gene Maxwell, our radio operator, jumped over me and said, "We are on the ground, Jim, I'm getting out of here", and he left. I looked out of the window and sure enough there were big pine trees all around the aircraft. All I could see were trunks of the tall pines. Now the navigator walked over me and left. He didn't say a word. Next came Lt. Garber, he also went without saying a word. I noticed smoke coming from the right engine so I too decided to leave before it blew up. When I looked back I saw Capt. Stephenson struggling to open the top hatch. I yelled to him to come to the rear door. He would not come so I walked to the front and grabbed his arm and pulled him and convinced him to come with me. It took us a couple of minutes to catch up with the others and kept walking the same direction the plane was going. Soon after we were picked up by British tanks.<sup>29</sup>*

Capt. Stephenson managed to crash land two miles north of Mol in Belgium. With little time to look for a field and so just more or less laid his plane down on the tree-tops. Capt. Stephenson had the tank commander fire some incendiary shells into the wrecked plane. The tank took the men to Moll and then to Brussels.

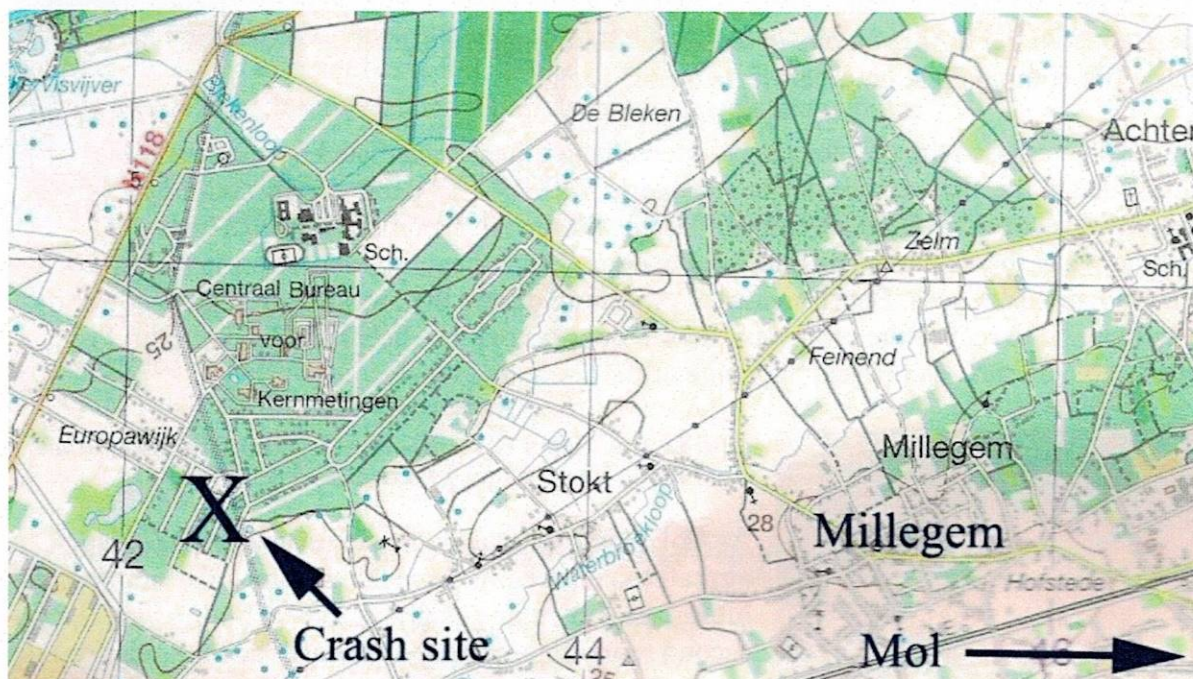
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<sup>29</sup> A Little War Story by J. Berotti, received from him in 2005



Just north of the town of Mol lays the hamlet Stokt. The Vancraenendonck family who lived there were evacuated at the time of the crash. Jos, who was 12 years old at that time, remembered a plane lying on the tree tops after they returned.

*We always went playing in those woods. For a long time, one could see where the plane had crashed as the trees were damaged. The British had picked up the pilots. At that time, this was a dangerous area, a kind of 'no-man's land', with Germans and British patrols crossing the area.*<sup>30</sup>



The location as given by the Vancraenendonck brothers. Reports give the crash location as 2 miles north of Mol, and the stories match. This is likely the location where Capt. Stephenson put the plane down.

### 310<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron

On the 19th, congratulatory messages were received from Generals Clark and Williams, and the para-drop scheduled for that day, with Polish troopers, was scratched due to weather. The 20th, with clearing weather, promised to be another good day, and the planes were loaded with Polish paratroopers. Fourteen planes of the 310th Squadron would participate in the mission. With all aircraft loaded and engines running, the mission was again scratched to the intense disappointment of the Polish troopers, one of whom shot himself while standing next to one of the Squadron's planes. On the same date, a detachment of British Mountain Airborne troops came on the field, and did some practice glider loading while waiting their turn to go over.

The 21st of September will be a day long-remembered by the Squadron. The day began with the weather about the same as the prior day. However, apparently, reserves were terribly needed by the men who had been dropped four and three days earlier, and so it was ordered that the Group go. With 14 aircraft of the 310<sup>th</sup> flying, Colonel Hamby was to lead the second serial of 27 planes. There was a mess-up at the start, and the first serial took-off an hour early. The weather was miserable. Finally, in the afternoon, about 1430 hours (actually 1437), the second serial took off . . . into an overcast. Lt-Col. Hamby, in the lead ship, instructed each succeeding aircraft to climb at 500 feet per minute, making a left turn every 1,000 feet until they broke out of the clouds. He would be on top flying a box pattern until all had joined the

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Jos and Peter Vancraenendonck, date July 24th, 2003



formation. One by one, the aircraft took off and one by one they broke out and joined the formation. The 310th finally departed for Holland with the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade.

It was a costly operation; several of the Squadron's planes had to land elsewhere in England, due to damage to the aircraft; five were missing that evening: those commanded by Colonel Hamby, Lt. Dawkins, Lt. Boon, Lt. Wakley, and Lt. O.J. Smith. Only two returned to the base: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert H. Sutton made his drop and came back; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Bernard Berman became separated from the formation due to weather, flew alone, and ended up over the Ruhr, with intense fire coming up at him, before he turned back.

As the 310th crossed the DZ, they encountered heavy flak exacerbated by the steady loss of altitude due to the slow exit of the paratroopers. Normally, 18 paratroopers could exit a C-47 in about 18 seconds. The Polish troopers of this drop were encumbered with a heavy equipment bag that had to be pushed out the door ahead of each trooper resulting in an exit time of up to 45 seconds. Because normal procedure during the drop was to reduce power on the left engine to reduce the prop wash on the troopers exiting the aircraft, the aircraft lost considerable altitude and closed the range of the German gunners.



**Left: Lt. Col. Henry G. Hamby Jr. Commanding Officer of the 310<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron. (M. Hamby)**

As Col. Hamby started a turn to escape the DZ, his aircraft took three hits from 20mm fire -- the first round hitting the left engine stopping it from hitting him, the second round impacting the fuselage, and the third round exploding inside the cargo compartment and seriously wounding his crew chief S/Sgt. Albert G. Combetty who was retrieving the static lines. M/Sgt. Douglas E. Harrod, the radio operator, was wounded as well.

The rudder controls were shot away and he landed at Brussels. The next day he returned to Spanhoe in another plane. Colonel Hamby's ship had 150 holes in it. Lt. Col. Hamby wrote:

*We headed for Holland. The weather was under cast until we got to the east coast of England. Then it was fine, good visibility over the channel and Holland. After we got to Nijmegen we dropped down to about 1200 ft. and headed for the DZ. Our paratroopers were Polish and each had not only their weapons but a fully packed duffle bag (about waist high and 10 inches in diameter) that they would drag to the door and jump holding the bag.*

*It took them more than a minute to get out and because I had my left engine cut way back so they would not get the prop blast, I was losing altitude. After the last Pole got out, I was down to about 300 ft. above the ground. It was then that I took four 20mm shells on my side. It knocked out my left engine controls and wounded all my crew. The co-pilot, navigator, radio operator and crew chief, the last being the most serious wounded with half of his buttocks shot off.*

*The closest airfield in allied hands was Eindhoven. But since it had just been captured I knew it would not have medical help. I broke radio silence and told all the airplanes following if they were OK to go back to England and, if not, to go to Brussels, which was what I did.*



*On my downwind I had the co-pilot fire a red flare so when we got on the ground an ambulance would meet us and take our wounded off. Three other C-47s followed me to Brussels.*<sup>31</sup>

The night of the 21st was a wretched one for those of the men who had to stay at the base: with no word from so many planes, with the story of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert H. Sutton about the extreme difficulty of the operation and the intense enemy reaction, and the report of planes going down in flames, that was not a pleasant evening. The next day, however, some good news came through; word was received from the 310th plane crews which had made emergency landed at other bases in England.

All the aircraft which returned had much flak damage, and many holes.

Three aircraft were shot down over Holland.

C-47 42-15612, named 'Sea Ration', was one of the aircraft that failed to return. It was crewed by:

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Kenneth H. Wakley (P)

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Bruce W. Borth (CP)

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Milan C. Beerman (N)

S/Sgt. Carl L. Javorsky (RO)

T/Sgt. Magnus R. Ludvikson (CC)

The plane was shot down after dropping the Polish paratroopers. None of the crew survived the crash.

F/O Francis B. Rossi, a glider pilot of the 439<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group, made a statement: *In reference to the C-47 type of aircraft which F/O Reed and myself found at co-ordinates 692-684, two of the names were taken from the dog tags on the persons. There were five bodies close to the plane. I am absolutely positive that they were all in the plane and that they were all flying personnel. The bodies were buried and Grave Registration has been notified.*

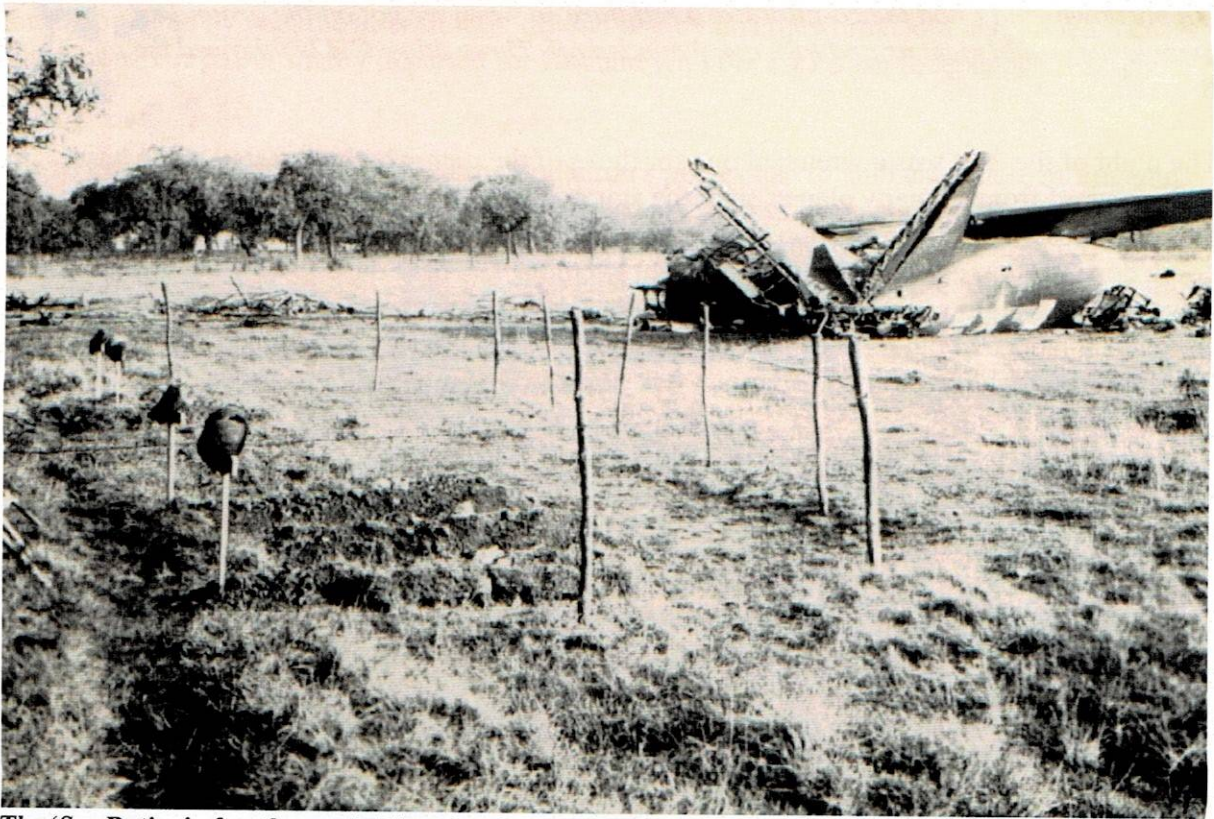
It looks like the two glider pilots crossed the Waal River, seeking some kind of adventure. The given co-ordinates show that the plane crashed at Reeth on the Island.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> E-mail H. Hamby to author dd. 16 August 2001

<sup>32</sup> Information obtained through Mr. Philip Reinders and Kadaster.





The 'Sea Ration' after the crash. There has been debate on the location, as some sources give it as Reek. That is a village west of Grave. Locally there is no knowledge of a C-47 crash there. As it is likely that the photo was taken by a 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne trooper, it is more likely to be on the Island where the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was for a longer period. With Reek only as village passed by. Note the gravesites to the left.  
(Heemkundekring Son)



The crash site at the hamlet Reeth, south of Elst. The A15 highway and the Betuwe railway line pass just south of the crash site. (Google Earth)





*Sea Ration*, C-47 42-15612. (G. Ulrich)



Another shot down C-47 # 42-92895 was crewed by:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Jacob Boon Jr.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William H. Borneman (CP)

Sgt. Irvin J. Chambers (RO)

T/Sgt. Dodson C. Couch (CC)

Bill Borneman related after the war:

*Very light Flak was encountered en route. The weather cleared as we approached the DZ and formations were quite solid. Then the problem arose when the green Go light was turned on. The Polish were slow in bailing out. We were ordered to turn south well before Arnhem and avoid the city, but instead we were forced right over the main routes of the city. We encountered heavy machine gun fire and flak bursts from 88s as well as 20mm stuff from the Germans along the route and I saw many planes in trouble at the very low level.*

*Our plane took multiple hits and the right engine caught fire. As co-pilot, I energized the single fire extinguisher to the right engine but then the left started to show fire.*

*We shut down the right and flew on with the left but losing power rapidly.*

*Looking for a place to land, with no hope of gaining altitude to jump, we spied a long strip just outside a small village.*

*Hydraulics were shot out and the landing gear sagged but we made it. A tree line separated us from another plane going down (either Lt. Wakley's plane near Reeth or Lt. Dawkins)*

*We left our plane and escaped to a drained canal bordering the village. Along came some inquisitive Dutch men who, after some tense moments, would become our rescuers.<sup>33</sup>*

Jacob Boon:

*Both engines were hit and on fire. My co-pilot was shot through his leg, the crew chief badly hit with flak. The radio operator and I were hit with flak, but were mobile.<sup>34</sup> The co-pilot and I went out of the escape hatch while the radio operator and crew chief went out of the cargo door. We took the co-pilot and radio operator to an orchard and worked on them with our only first aid kit for about fifteen minutes.*

*A little later a farmer's wife brought out a suitcase of dressings and we worked on the wounded for about 20 minutes.<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> E-mail from Mr. W. Borneman date July 21st, 2003 to author

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Mr. J. Boon of August 6th, 2003

<sup>35</sup> E&E report Jacob Boon





Men of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division pass the wreckage of Lt. Boon's C-47. The plane stopped just in time before hitting the orchard. Two of the airborne troopers give a look at the aircraft, probably wondering about what happened to the crew. (P. Hendrickx)

The plane crash landed north of the Oosterhoutsestraat near Slijk Ewijk.

The aforementioned woman with the suitcase was Nelly den Hartog. She was a 25 year young lady who had married Mathijs den Hartog some months before, and was part of the air-attack protection. After the C-47 had crashed, she went over to it.

*I went to the plane and could see that there were some wounded. I asked if the plane was a bomber, careful for the danger of unexploded bombs. The crew answered that it was safe and that I should come over to help. Near the wreckage I found William Borneman who was wounded above his knee. He had placed a tourniquet himself. The four crewmembers were taken to the village. The wounded were carried on special ladders used for harvesting the fruits.<sup>36</sup>*

Jacob Boon:

*The crew chief and co-pilot were housed in a schoolhouse. The radio operator and I were kept at a farm.<sup>37</sup>*

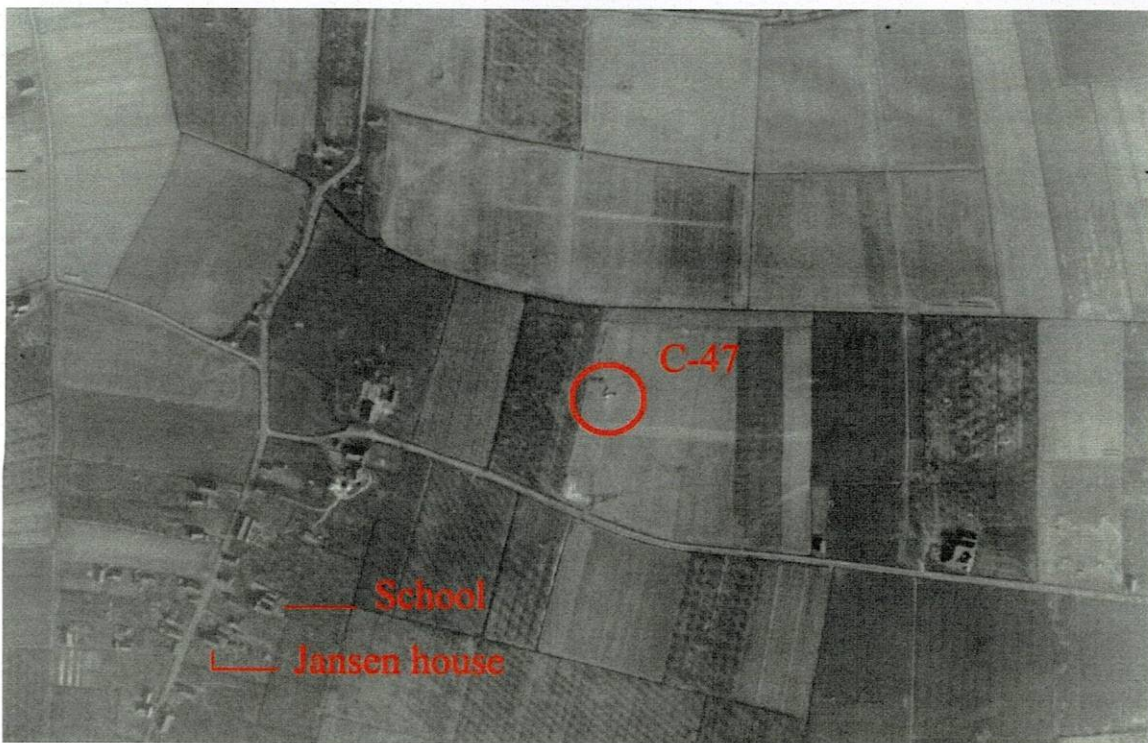
*We were fed very well and sat talking in the dining room for three or four hours. We went to bed about 24.00 or 1.00h.<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mrs. N. den Hartog date July 31, 2003

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Mr. J. Boon of August 6th, 2003

<sup>38</sup> E&E report Jacob Boon





The crash location and hiding locations at Dorpstraat marked on the nice aerial photo of Slijk Ewijk.

Nelly den Hartog:

*The two wounded men were taken to the village school. This was done with help of Henk Immerzeel, son of the school teacher. The other two ended up in the farm of Henk and Ida Jansen. This was at the Dorpstraat #22. I lived there as well with my husband. They were picked up by British troops the day after they had landed.<sup>39</sup>*

Jacob Boon:

*Early next morning I got a note from ship 339 (Lt. Dawkins) of our squadron which stated that everything was alright with them, but that they were minus one. I wrote a note back to them. About 8.30, while we were eating breakfast, a British tank came through. The Dutch went out and stopped it and told the crew that they had us. The tank crew radioed back for an ambulance which arrived about 9.00h. We all got into the ambulance and headed back to Nijmegen.<sup>40</sup>*

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mrs. N. den Hartog date July 31, 2003

<sup>40</sup> E&E report Jacob Boon

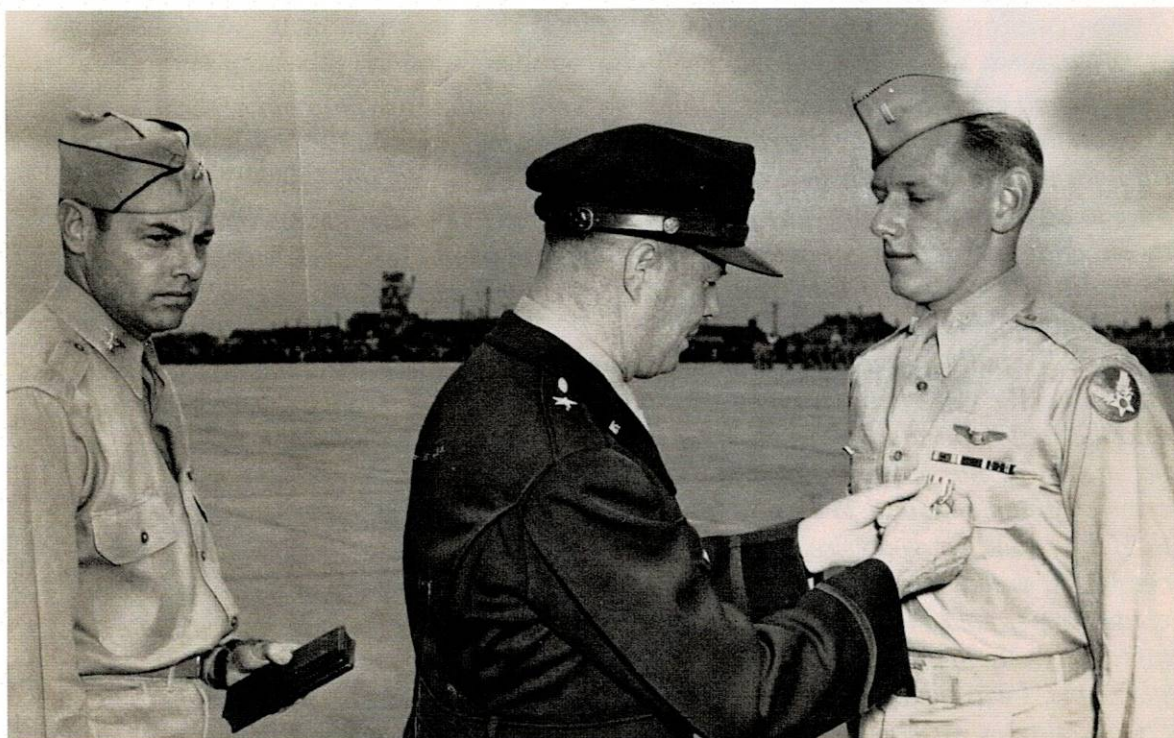




**Left: Mr. Henk Jansen and his wife Ida housed two of the airmen. Right: the Jansen house at Slijk Ewijk where Lt. Boon and Sgt. Chambers were sheltered. (Jansen family)**

**Bill Borneman:**

*Two of us who had been wounded were taken to the schoolhouse. Jacob Boon and the radio operator took off the next day. For Couch and myself, we were primarily cared for by Nelly den Hartog and her husband. I can safely say that Nelly saved both our lives. Sgt. Couch was the most serious wounded, being out of consciousness most of the time. I had something passing through my right thigh, just above the knee and a small wound in the back, probably from a bit of fuselage flying about the cockpit.<sup>41</sup>*



**Lt. Boon receives his Silver Star for his actions on September 21, 1944. (A. Boon)**

The co-pilot and crew chief stayed at Nijmegen at the hospital before being moved back to England. The pilot and radio operator moved through the corridor and got in the fighting for

<sup>41</sup> E-mail from Mr. W. Borneman date July 21st, 2003 to author



the corridor over there. Eventually they managed to get back to England where they arrived on the 24th.

Another C-47 that crashed in Holland was 43-15339 was crewed by:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Cecil B. Dawkins (P)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Cleon M. Worley Jr. (CP)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James R. Wilson (N)  
S/Sgt. John Ludwig (RO)  
T/Sgt. William O. Witte (CC)

The plane was hit before reaching DZ-K and Lt. Dawkins got wounded in the head and face by the hit. The left wing and engine were shot on fire. Lt. Dawkins ordered the crew to bail out. Lt. Worley was wounded and helped by T/Sgt. Witte.

Meanwhile, Lt. Dawkins turned away from the Germans, and the rest of his squadron, making a left-hand turn. The crew was able to exit the crippled plane. The plane crashed in a marshy area and Lt. Dawkins was knocked unconscious. He was picked up out of the water by a German tank crew. On the way back, Lt. Dawkins was moved on the back of a tank, he tried to make an escape as some P-47s showed up. Some Dutch people wanted to take care of the Lt. and tried to convince him, without success, that he wasn't capable of movement. Later on, Lt. Dawkins made another attempt to escape from the Germans, but the area was too crowded and he ended up in a German POW camp.<sup>42</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wilson:

*We came in and everything was quiet. I think we were number two ship out of the nine ships. We were on the right flank, by the railroad line, the second nine ship element. We were all in beautiful formation and ready to drop. We came on in and everything erupted. We were to do a ninety [degree turn] after the troopers were out. It looked like everything went well, and the troopers got out of the nine planes in front of us, and then we completed the drop. All the Gooney Birds in front made a hard right, it looked like they all were hit. I was standing behind the pilot like I always did. We hit the deck and did a 180 on instruments. We pulled up a little bit and there was a road off to our right, and everybody was shooting at us. We were being hit. The pilot turned and said, 'Get out!'. I went to the back and told the radio operator and crew chief to get out. Then the co-pilot came and told us to get out, that the controls were shot away. The crew chief jumped first. The radio operator told me to go first, and I ran through the length of the cabin. I saw no fire, but there were many holes all over the plane. We must have been at 300 ft. and as I tumbled through the air, I saw curving tracers everywhere. The chute popped and I landed hard in a dry canal bed, some five feet deep. The chute collapsed perfectly in the canal. Then I saw the radio operator running across the field straight at me. I was afraid that if anyone would see him, he would lead them right to me. After a few minutes we started walking along the canal bed. After a short distance, we came to a 'T' with a large, water filled canal. There were some fox holes beside the canal. Then we heard a lot of sloshing water, and I pulled my .45. It was our crew chief. We crawled through the fields when some Germans arrived on a bicycle. They stopped. One was armed with a rifle, the other with a Schmeisser machine gun. They lit a cigarette and started smoking.*

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<sup>42</sup> Into the Valley – Col. Charles H. Young



*We had a discussion what to do next. Here I was, a 19 year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. Finally, I started waving a white hanky. First the Germans didn't notice, but when I raised a little, they saw me. They jumped on their bicycles and took off. We went back to the canal and moved on until a small bridge. It was dark by then, and we heard whistling from time to time, and it was getting closer. All of a sudden, a man drops into the canal. It was a young Dutchman with a bottle of wine, bread and a hunk of cheese. The radio operator could speak German, so I told him to talk to the Dutchman. The Dutchman told us to wait there and that he would come back.<sup>43</sup>*

This was likely Mr. Henny W. Vink. He lived nearby and did see the crew in the air hanging on their parachutes coming down.

*After a while he returned and led us to a nearby farmhouse. We went in, it was dark, but we could see a woman sitting there, and then I saw a man in uniform with a shiny visor looking straight at me. My first thought was "the SOB turned us in". But it turned out to be our co-pilot, 'Moose' Worley.<sup>44</sup>*

After their return in England the crew told:

*.. among the family living there was a big heavy old lady who was half crazy. She rocked interminably in a chair, snorting and sniffing and fingering a flat iron which she kept constantly in her hands.<sup>45</sup>*

This woman was Mrs. Gijsbers who lived at the 'Hoogebrug' farm.<sup>46</sup>

*In the middle of the night they took us to another farm, and told us to forget these people's names. We were hidden in the barn for three days before Allied tanks came through.<sup>47</sup>*

This was at the farm of the Vink family. They lived nearby the Gijsbers family and the head of the family, Mr. Henny W. Vink, had found the three crewmembers in the ditch. His wife cooked for the Americans and they taught the children some English.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Airborne Troop Carrier three-One-five Group – William L. Brinson and the voices of the 315th Troop Carrier Group

<sup>44</sup> Airborne Troop Carrier three-One-five Group – William L. Brinson and the voices of the 315th Troop Carrier Group

<sup>45</sup> E&E report # 2302 (Worely) and # 2305 (Ludwig)

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Mrs. D. Janssen van Doorn date 9 March 2004

<sup>47</sup> E&E report # 2302 (Worely) and # 2305 (Ludwig)

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mrs. D. Janssen van Doorn date 9 March 2004





A map where the places are marked of where the crew stayed. The Vink farm is gone today and was situated about where the A15 highway runs through today. The Gijsbers farm has turned into a camping ground today.

On the second day Lt. Worley went out with Mr. Vink in an attempt to find some allied troops. They returned after four hours. Sgt. Ludwig also went out together with one of the families' sons, most probably the 21 year-old Wim. They also returned. But they did get the news that Lt. Boon and his crew was evacuated from nearby Slijk Ewijk village. Both Americans were dressed as civilians on these trips. The crew stayed in the hayloft of the farm until 19.00 hours before they set of towards Nijmegen.<sup>49</sup> Before departing, the crew wrote down their names and the fate of their parachutes on a note-bloc of the family Vink.

*We were taken to Nijmegen and after a few more days back to Spanhoe. Then we were sent to London to be debriefed and shipped out of the theater.*<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> E&E report # 2302 (Worely) and # 2305 (Ludwig)

<sup>50</sup> Airborne Troop Carrier three-One-five Group – William L. Brinson and the voices of the 315th Troop Carrier Group



22-9-44

Parachute was unservice-  
able due to enemy fire and  
from catching on barbed  
fence.

Cleon M. Worley, Jr.  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. A.C. 0-660854

9-22-44

Parachute unserviceable due  
to enemy fire + cutting of  
shroud lines by myself.

James B. Wilson  
0-2956516  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. A.C.



9-22-44

I hid the parachute in  
a marsh and couldn't  
find it afterwards.

T/Sgt Wm O. Witte  
696 2620

22 - 9 - 44

Parachute was un-  
serviceable after landing  
in tree.

S/Sgt. Johnny Ludwig  
15377538

All four crewmembers wrote a note declaring that their parachute was not serviceable. It is not known if these were written on request by the Vink family who might have used the silk to make clothes (very common to be done). Or if they were written as statement in case they were accountable for the loss of their parachute. Whatever the reason, it is very remarkable that all four of them wrote a note giving a reason for the loss of their lifesaver. (Vink family)

One C-47 did not make it to Brussels. This was C-47 with tail number 42-23609. The plane had the following crew:

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Oliver J. Smith (P)

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Richard T. Ford (CP)



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Sanford S. Provin (N)  
Sgt. Ralph E. James (RO)  
Cpl. Clyde W. Doan (CC)

Richard Ford wrote:

*Nearing the target area, we observed three smoke columns visually establishing front line positions and feeling this would be a 'milk run'. The first sign of enemy action was abrupt and intense with large areas of closely patterned white puffs exploding at altitude. As our formation approached the target area in a fast slow-down and altitude loss, the barrage of small arms and anti-aircraft fire shifted to our planes. The green light was given and the troops jumped.*

*After the jump we applied power and began a gradual turn to the right. Other planes of our formation were passing beneath us and we were unable to fly close to the ground, being a higher and visible target to the Germans. The plane was hit several times and when it was clear to hit the deck, a shell exploded near the tail. For seconds the control of the ship was gone. While flying on the deck between tree rows, Smitty asked if Lt. Provin was alright. Positioned behind and between us at the front of the companionway, the navigator was uninjured. We were surprised because we couldn't believe anyone else was alive on the plane. Smitty then asked about the radio operator and crew chief. Lt. Provin advised they were both seriously wounded, so Smitty told me to help them.*

*Lt. Provin was having trouble trying to improvise a tourniquet on the right leg of the crew chief over his pant leg. I tried to help and cut the pant to reveal a large blood loss. I retrieved the first aid kit from the back of the plane but couldn't find a tourniquet, so we adapted my handkerchief. I took of my flak suit so the navigator had something to use to tighten out makeshift tourniquet. I returned to the cockpit and advised the pilot about the crew. I returned to the wounded men and advised Cpl. Doan to put his hand above his head. His second finger was almost off at the first knuckle. Flak was imbedded above his right ear with three entry holes visible and possible six wounds showing on his right leg. His leg was broken as well. We tried to make it comfortable for Cpl. Doan who suffered from the loss of blood. Smitty suggested to land on the glider LZ of Best that we had seen on the way in. I preferred a landing on Eindhoven airfield. On the way in we had seen equipment working to fill in the bomb craters. The field seemed to be in allied hands and probably had medical services for Cpl. Doan.*

*As we neared Eindhoven, I rejoined Smitty in the cockpit. Equipment was still working on the runway and the workmen shot red flares during a low fly-by to advise the airstrip wasn't usable. Smitty ignored the wave off. After landing the workers told that a half hour before the holes weren't filled and landing would have been impossible. We requested a doctor and*





**Left to right: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Richard T. Ford, Lt. Murray Baroody, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wesley H. Englund and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Bill Borneman. (D. Ford)**

*ambulance and within five minutes a British doctor with five aides and ambulance arrived. The wounded were treated and evacuated to Eindhoven. We inspected the plane and noted: no left rudder; all trims out; all cables frayed; VHF radio out; propellers and engines hit by flak and gunfire; left auxiliary fuel tank hit and pierced at mid-level; right wing fairing at fuselage ripped apart by a direct 20mm burst; rear toilet/storage area door riveted shut by shrapnel fragments and bullets; and over 600 holes and tears throughout the plane from nose to tail and wingtip to wingtip. Smitty's flying skill not only saved the plane, but our lives as well.*

*Cpl. Doan's life was saved by the treatment in flight.<sup>51</sup>*

Though the objective bridge could not be taken, the insertion of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade was pivotal in securing the withdrawal of Allies who had been cutoff. For his action in leading the serial into the drop, Maj. Hamby was presented the Polish Cross of Merit in Exile (see A Decorated Unit).