

## Nurses from Springfield school first in after the D-Day landing

**Marijean Brown Phillips and Suella Bernard Delp were featured in Air Force exhibit last month.**

By Tom Stafford  
Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD — The first two nurses to land in Normandy after the D-Day invasion met long before they boarded the Army Air Force transport plane and lifted off from England.

In the fall of 1938, Marijean Brown and Suella Bernard both enrolled as members of the Springfield City Hospital School of Nursing Class of 1940.

This past March, the two were honored by being featured in the exhibit "The Winged Angels: U.S. Army Air Forces Flight Nurses in World War II."

The permanent display can be seen at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

"We went in on D-Day plus four," Marijean Brown Phillips said in a telephone interview from her home in Burlington, Vt., "and it was quite an experience."

Phillips, who grew up in Columbus, said she came to what later was known as the Community Hospital School of Nursing and what is now the Springfield Regional Medical Center School of Nursing because of family ties.

"My mother graduated from there and my sister graduated from there," said Phillips. Suella Bernard Delp, who died in 2002, originally was from Waynesville.

"We lived in the nurses' home, which was right beside the hospital," Phillips said, "and we went through the tunnel to get on duty."

Brown and Bernard, who were single then, went on to Wilson Memorial Hospital in Sidney and were working there when war broke out.

"Both of our brothers were in the Navy, and my older sister was in the Army," Phillips said. "We said, 'We've got to join up.'"

They went into Army Air Force because it offered their quickest route in.

### Kentucky and beyond

Training for the nurses was at Bowman Field, Ky.

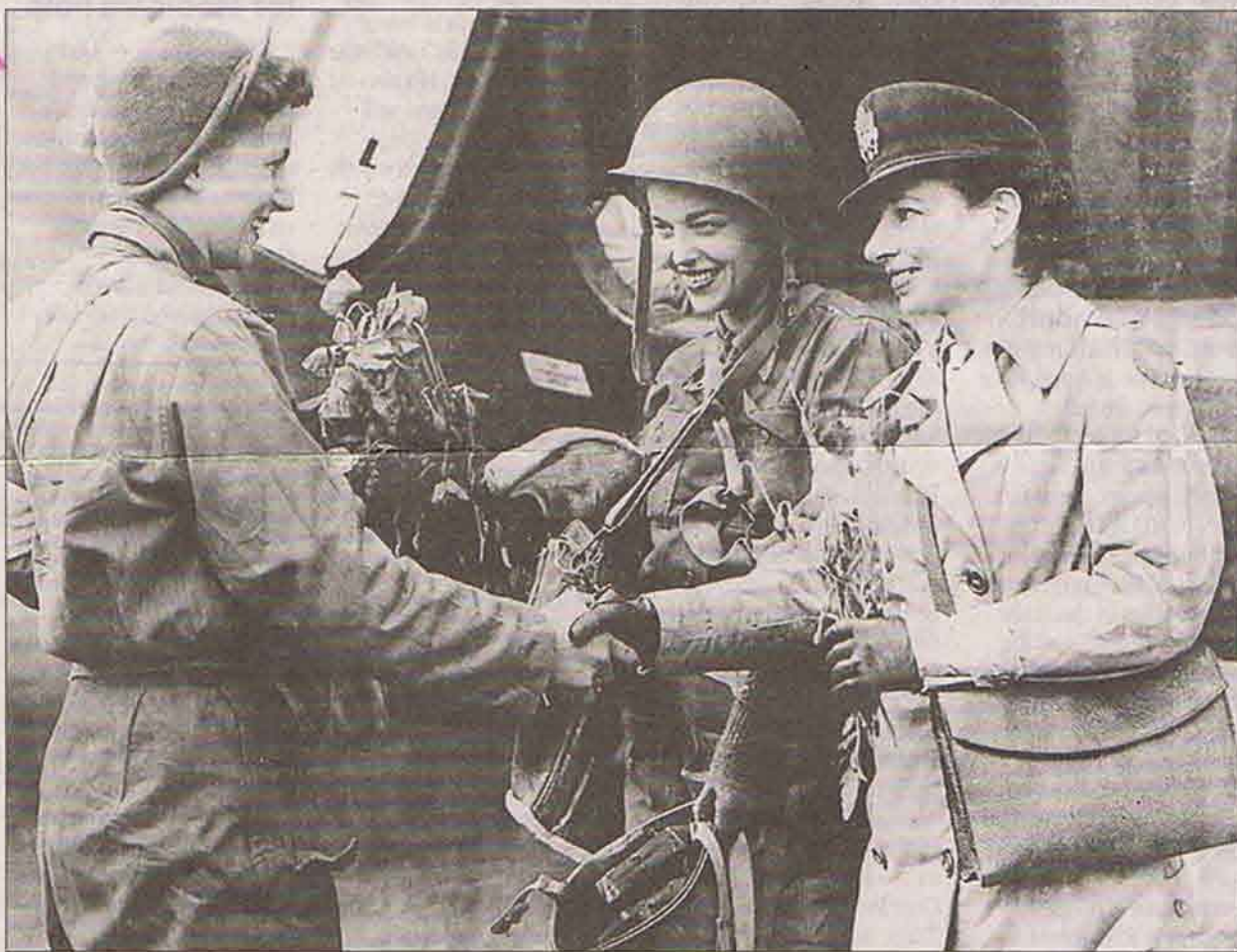
"We learned to ditch (into the ocean) and just take care of patients in the plane," Phillips said. "It was not too intensive."

The flight nurse program was, however, part of what Jeffrey S. Underwood, a Ph.D. and a historian at the National Museum of the United States Air Force, suggests was the United States' first real attempt to think globally.

"One of the reasons (medical evacuation) works is the U.S. Army Air Forces created an airlift system around the world," he explained.

Before the war, there was no international air traffic system to speak of, he said. But just as the ocean floor was first fully mapped for purposes of naval warfare, the system of air routes was established to deliver troops and supplies to battlefields worldwide.

Air evacuation was added as an element of airlift essentially by running



Lt. Suella Bernard (Delp) (left) and Lt. Marijean Brown (Phillips) (center) are congratulated by their unit's head nurse after returning from the first Ninth Air Force air evacuation mission to Normandy following the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion. The poppies were picked from a mined field near the landing site in France. Photos courtesy of National Museum of the United States Air Force



This exhibit about Springfield City School of Nursing Graduate and Waynesville native Suella Bernard Delp is part of the permanent exhibit about flight nurses at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

the system in reverse. The transport planes that took men and munitions abroad had empty space on return flights, room in which injured soldiers could be brought home.

Still, necessity turned out to be the mother of the swiftness of its invention. Responding to Allied casualties in Operation Torch in North Africa, Underwood said, generals cut flight nurses' training short "and sent them over without graduating."

Although the less severely injured might be able to survive the weeks-to-months-long sea voyages to hospitals in the United States, the critically injured needed faster transport.

That launched a kind of ad-hoc, fly-by-day-and-night approach to transporting the wounded.

By the time Phillips and Delp found themselves caring for those injured in the land war in Europe, the basics of that system were in place.

### Two links

Phillips split her Army nursing days in two essential links in that system. One was at an air field in

Scotland.

"We picked up patients and brought them back to New York," she said.

The flights were on a C-54 "which we thought was a huge plane," she added, estimating she made six or seven such flights.

"We only lost one doctor and the crew, when they were coming back from New York," Phillips said. "We never heard from them. We just supposed they were shot down."

Her other regular route was the first leg of the journey for soldiers injured on the continent. Loading planes at field hospitals in France, "we would take them back to England to the general hospitals," she said.

Some then went on to the United States on trans-Atlantic flights. But, as the war went on, more were treated at hospitals in England, eventually without fear of German air raids.

Amid those duties came the trip to Normandy for Phillips and Delp.

### D-Day plus four

"There were six of us that went" on June 10, 1944, Phillips said.

After the captain landed their plane and went in search of the field hospital, "We thought, well, we'll pick some poppies," she said. "Of course, there was a dead German there, and that scared of us to death."

After the captain returned and saw Phillips, Delp and others holding poppies, it was his turn to scare them to death.

The poppy field, he told them, was mined. "He really read us the riot act," Phillips recalled.

Remarks both made after the flight are preserved in the transcript of an interview NBC correspondent Ed Haaker did with them the next day.

After Phillips told Haaker the injured they'd flown back included six German soldiers, a Japanese man raised in Germany and American soldiers, Haaker asked how the nurses felt about transporting enemy wounded back for aid.

"I, for one, didn't think much about it," Delp told him.

"No, they were our patients," Phillips added.

"And it was our job to see they were as comfortable as possible," Delp said, adding "for the most part, they seemed very happy about getting out of the combat zone."

The wounded on both sides were given cigarettes and cookies, and nurses said they never felt in danger during the flight.

"We had excellent flight cover," Delp told Haaker. The flight also gave them a bird's eye view of evidence of the largest amphibious invasion in history.

Said Phillips: "As far as we could see, the Channel seemed to be clogged with ships of all descriptions ... battleships, PTs, landing barges, and a lot more."

Delp told Haaker that on the Channel side of the French airfield, she saw abandoned boats destroyed in the invasion and added that inland "the scene was the one you'd see in England ... farms under cultivation. The only thing, most of houses were demolished. Enemy snipers had been using them and apparently our forces had been forced to lay them low."

Telling Haaker they'd

been given a 24-hour pass to go to London for the interview, Phillips said "that means tomorrow or the next day ... we'll be off to France again to bring back the wounded from the fields of battle."

It was Delp's first trip into Germany that would earn her place in flight nurse history.

### Glider mission

The Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen holds a special place in World War II history. The German failure to destroy it in retreat enraged Adolph Hitler and allowed Allied Forces to quickly establish a formidable presence on the German side, making the advance much easier.

Those things contributed to the story being made into a motion picture, a 1969 release that starred, among others, George Segal and E.G. Marshall.

The role Delp played at the bridge was the result of Allied generals' decision in the hours and days after the bridge's capture to make the traffic one-way into Germany so as to pour in as many men and as much materiel as possible.

One consequence was that no roads were available to bring wounded U.S. troops back into France, leading to the rare use of gliders to transport the wounded.

On March 24, 1945, Delp, serving with the 816th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, was on the second of two CG-4A gliders that landed near the bridge to pick up the wounded. Because there was no airstrip, the gliders, after being filled with a dozen patients each, were towed into the air by C-47 transport planes, trailing wires to snatch them.

In a story on the episode in Mobility Heritage and Heroes magazine, author Murdoch Moore said the system required only 100 feet of clear ground for the glider to take flight.

Moore reports that four of the most seriously injured on Delp's glider were German soldiers, something that led to bitter complaints from U.S. wounded.

The 30-minute flight

back to the 44th evacuations hospital in France went wasn't altogether smooth.

Writes Moore: "One of the nylon straps supporting the litters was pulled loose from its tie-down.... Nurse Bernard (Delp), who happened to be near the strap when it gave way, repaired it before it could cause any further injury to the patients."

In her own account in the same magazine, Delp said "there was quite a jolt on takeoff" that caused the strap to give way and that, on landing, "one of the wheels collapsed .... and we came to rest against a fence (but) had a smooth landing in spite of it."

### Two air medals

Delp also said in the story that the glider system "could have become a successful ongoing operation" but was rendered unnecessary once traffic went both ways across the Rhine and trucks and ambulances could transport patients to usable air fields.

In his story, Moore quotes her as saying that what she had done wasn't at all heroic. Phillips also recalls her friend saying the trip "wasn't too bad."

"But then, she didn't think anything was too bad," Phillips said.

As the only nurse to make a glider rescue in a combat zone during the war, Delp was awarded an Air Medal to go with the one she earned for flying 50 air evacuation flights.

Underwood said flight nurses' medals were well-deserved.

"These women were in harm's way a lot more than they were supposed to be," he said. "These were aircraft flying into a combat zone," and because they typically brought munitions and equipment in with them, then took patients back, they were fair game as targets.

Moore notes that "glider crew members in a combat zone had roughly a 20 percent lethality rate per mission. This was roughly the attrition rate of B-17 crew members flying unescorted missions over Germany in 1943."

### Return to Normandy

The two nurses were stationed in the French coastal city of Marseille awaiting orders to be transferred to the Caribbean, when the war ended.

By then, Marijean Brown had been married to Capt. Tom L. Phillips in a ceremony held outside Paris.

Months later, Suella Bernard became Suella Bernard Delp at a wedding in Carlisle, Pa.

"I used to see her there, but not frequently," said Phillips, who raised two sons with her physician husband, starting in Louisville, then in Paducah, Ky.

Phillips said her friend died in 2002 but was very much on her mind when she returned to Normandy with a fellow flight nurse last year.

"It was very moving," she said, particularly the visits to the cemeteries — and to the place where she and another graduate of Springfield City of Hospital School of Nursing made their own historic landing more than 65 years ago.

Contact this reporter at (937) 328-0368 or tstafford@coxohio.com.



Mobility  
**HERITAGE & HEROES**

1st Lt. Suella Bernard  
**A Constant  
Courage**

by Murdoch Moore

When First Lieutenant **Suella V. Bernard** of the 816th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, U.S. Army Air Force, learned of an impending glider flight into the Remagen bridgehead to evacuate casualties she immediately volunteered for the mission...

SLOAN



Suella Bernard was a part of what has been called "America's Greatest Generation." She grew up in Waynesville, Ohio (south of Dayton) during the Depression, a time of uncertainty for the future and institutions. The year 1940 saw her graduating from the Springfield (Ohio) City Hospital School of Nursing. While some of her classmates headed for the big city lights and multi-storied hospital wards of Chicago, Cincinnati and Kansas City, Suella sought a higher calling – that of a U.S. Army Air Force flight nurse. Her ward, a 18 stretcher-capable C-47 flying the unfriendly skies of wartime Western Europe.

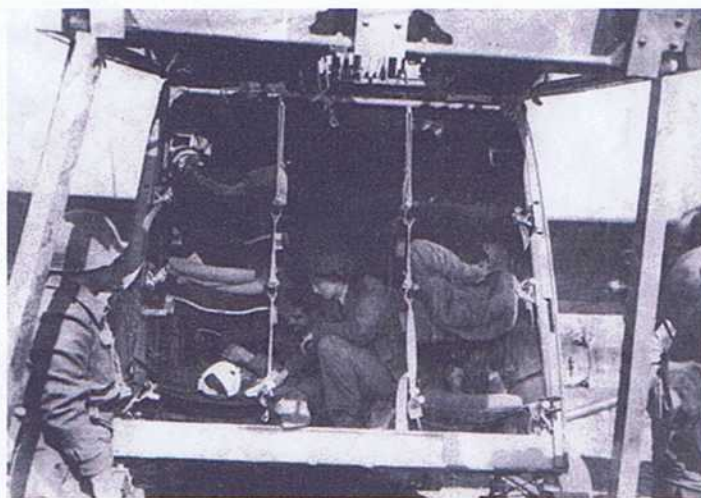
First Lieutenant Bernard's trade route was among the newly carved out landing strips and recently captured German airfields. These held casualty evacuation stations. She provided transitory medical care for the wounded as they were flown to rear area receiving hospitals in France and the United Kingdom. Her C-47 was not marked with red crosses – per the "Rules of War" to do so would make them ineligible for hauling troops, fuel, and cargo into those forward airfields. American flight nurses, dead-heading out, adapted to the functional ways of war – snuggling into the empty deck spaces, they talked, read, relaxed or took cat naps. This was the quiet time, the time before the doors opened and the work with broken bodies and resultant worries began.

Worries before the door opened were left to the guys in the pointy end of the aircraft. The flight nurses let them worry about flight irritants such as muddy runways, no navigation aids, a fluid war front, Luftwaffe fighter sweeps and the occasional pot-shot fired from by-passed German forces.

On March 22nd, 1945, Suella did things a little differently. All of the above duties and hazards were still present, but her air ambulance now lacked engines. She alone among six available flight nurses volunteered to fly across the Rhine River to the Remagen bridgehead to pick up wounded in a Waco CG-4 cargo glider. Her return, if it worked, would be via an aerial snap tow\* from a C-47.

A faulty German demolition job and a few courageous infantrymen and tankers enabled the 1st U. S. Army to gain the Rhine River's east bank. While British General Bernard Montgomery urged no

advance beyond the bank bridgehead pocket – to stay the course for his planned, big, elaborate waterborne/airborne leap to the north (Operation VARSITY) [See "The Other Rhein Crossing" – Page 20] – Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower and his American generals saw it differently. High command orders came down. There was literally only "one-way" traffic allowed on the Remagen Bridge - eastward. When supporting pontoon and treadway (walking) bridges spanned the Rhine they were also designated "one way." It was a tough and absolutely correct order. It was especially tough if you were among the American wounded on the Rhine River's east bank.



In this rare photograph of an individual earning the Air Medal, First Lieutenant Suella V. Bernard (kneeling center) comforts a wounded soldier just before the modified Waco GC-4 cargo glider they were aboard was "snatched" aloft by a C-47 and heading for a hospital in France. (Photo courtesy of Silent Wings Museum, Lubbock, Texas)

Due to the intensity of the German counter attack (from frogmen to V-2 rockets) American wounded piled up on the Rhine's east bank. Occasionally an idle or west bank returning Army combat engineer boat would back haul wounded, but it was not enough. As there was not enough available land for an airstrip, a staff officer suggested using gliders to haul out the more critically wounded – an aerial snagged glider needing only 100 yards to take off. A medevac glider experiment had been tried in rear area France and was found practical. The order went out - "Send in Medevac Gliders!"

I now revert to Gerard Devlin's excellent SILENT WINGS (St Martins Press /1985) for his description of the mission:

Orders to fly the medevac mission were issued on March 22nd by the IX Troop Carrier Command. The mission order directed the 402nd Squadron to fly its two modified gliders (twelve stretcher mounts/two triple stacked per side) across the Rhine and release them for a landing beside the 1st Army's main medical clearing station near the

city of Remagen. As soon as the gliders had been filled with wounded soldiers, the tow planes were to return to the LZ, make an aerial pickup, and deliver them to the 44th Evacuation Hospital, located 50 miles to the rear of the American front lines in France. There the gliders would be met by teams of medics who were to rush the wounded directly into surgery. If this worked it would be first time that any of the combatants in Europe had used gliders to evacuate battle casualties.

It was nearing noon on the twenty second when the two flying ambulances were hauled into the sky on the first leg

of their flight to the Remagen bridgehead. The combinations flew in single file, one directly behind the other. The leading glider had Lieutenant Colonel Louis "Skid" Magid and Lieutenant Howard Voorhees at its controls. The second glider's chief pilot was Lieutenant Walter A. Barker. His copilot was Major Howard H. Cloud, who had just recovered from a severe leg wound sustained five months before while landing a glider near the city of Groesbeck, Holland (Operation MARKET GARDEN). Also on board the second glider was an army nurse, Lieutenant Suella V. Bernard, who had volunteered to go along on the mission to care inflight for the more seriously wounded soldiers.

Bernard was a member of the 816th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron. She had flown a number of similar missions aboard powered airplanes, but this was the first time she had ever been in a glider.

Less than an hour after departure the glider-tug combinations crossed the Rhine at an altitude of 600 feet. Barely visible in the distance were eight P-51 Mustang fighters escorting them. The leading glider cast off first and made a good landing beside waiting field ambulances which held 24 soldiers, most of whom had been seriously wounded that morning. Fifteen minutes after it touched down, the first glider was snatched out and on its way to France.

The second glider came in, and teams of medics quickly loaded the remaining 12 patients on board while other soldiers assisted a ground crew that was preparing the glider for pickup. During this loading period Lieutenant Bernard discovered that the



four most seriously wounded patients in her glider were German. Some of the American patients complained bitterly to Bernard about the presence of the Germans, saying they should be left behind. She eventually quieted their protests, reminding them that the Geneva Convention obliged the U.S. Army to provide full and impartial medical treatment to both German and American battle casualties.

Four members of the ground crew lowered the gliders upraised nose section immediately after the last casualty had been loaded. Major Cloud and Lieutenant Baker then climbed aboard, strapped themselves into their seats, and then went through a series of safety checks in preparation for pickup. A bare two minutes after the pilots made the final safety check their tow-plane swooped down, snatched the glider, and lifted it smoothly into flight. One of the nylon straps supporting the litters was pulled loose from its tiedown, but Nurse Bernard, who happened to be near the strap when it gave way, repaired it before it could cause any further injury to the patients.

Some 30 minutes after they were snatched from the Remagen bridgehead, both of the flying ambulances landed in a cleared field beside the 44th Evacuation Hospital in France. The evacuation had been a complete success. Both pilots and Nurse Bernard were awarded an Air Medal for the part they played in (the evacuation).

Also receiving Air Medals for the evacuation were the other CG-4 and C-47 crew members, plus, Captain Albert D. Haug, Chief Surgeon of the 816th MAES,

(acting as flight surgeon on one of the gliders – which one is historically unclear). Lieutenant Bernard would later receive a second Air Medal for flying fifty air evac missions.

\*Pick-ups of gliders from the battlefield by the “snatch” method had been in



WW II flight nurses, including 1st Lt Suella Bernard (leaning center) take a much deserved rest during an all too brief break in their daily routine of caring for wounded soldiers. (Photo courtesy of the Delp family).

practice and used by troop carrier units in the European Theater since Normandy, when the technique was employed to recover serviceable gliders where C-47s could not land. A ground crew set up a pick-up station for the glider, and a low flying C-47 specially equipped with the pick-up unit would swoop in low trailing an arm

with a hook. The hook was connected to a steel cable that passed through the arm and wound around a drum inside the pick-up mechanism mounted in the aircraft. Pay out of the cable was controlled by a multiple disc brake in the drum unit. As the hook connected with a glider tow loop suspended from the pick-up station, shock to the glider was controlled through the pick-up mechanism brake and the glider became airborne as the cable played out.

The following is the personal, aft of the center of gravity, view of the mission by Suella (Sue) Bernard Delp –

## Glider Pick-Up At Remagen

“Several persons in recent months have asked me about the glider pick-up with patients at Remagen, Germany and across the Rhine River during WWII when all the bridges were temporarily out. This happened forty five years ago - on March 22nd, 1945 - and this is some of what I remember.

“First the planning had all been done when I came upon the scene and the gliders already (had been) made into hospital ships for transporting patients.

“I remember this was not a completely new operation, since it had been previously been done over mountainous territory in the China-Burma-India theatre, although reportedly not with nurses. At any rate, it was not heroic on my part - Major Haug (our CO) had asked me to go on this flight just after my return from one of our routine flights with patients on a C-47. I was told I would care for patients in flight, the same as on other trips, and I

Another rare photograph taken on March 22, 1945. This panoramic view shows one of the Waco CG-4A gliders being loaded with American and German wounded less than a half hour before it was snatched into flight by a C-47 and flown to a hospital in France. (U.S. Army photo).





readily agreed to do so.

"I remember our landing at the pick-up point – a field – was smooth and uneventful. However, patients were not there and ready to be loaded as anticipated. I later heard that



The first glider on the historic Remagen med evac mission landing in a field near an orchard just outside Rheinbreitbach, Germany, on 23 March 1945. (Photo courtesy of the Delp family).

some had been ready the day before and we did not make the flight because of bad weather. There were several army ground personnel milling around, but no patients.

"I remember we waited what seemed like quite a long time and became concerned that the C-47 circling over-head would run out of gas and have to leave without us. I did not see and do not remember anything about the second glider.

"I remember the patients did finally arrive, were loaded in the glider, and the C-47 picked us up. There was quite a jolt on take-off and one of the thongs by which the litters were suspended broke – thus dangling at one corner. Someone riding with me helped me to re-attach it. My one completely unconscious patient happened to be in this group. And I remember worrying a great deal about him.

"I don't know how long the flight lasted but one of the wheels collapsed on landing and we came to rest against a fence and had a smooth landing in spite of it. The patients

were removed from the glider and taken by army ambulance to a hospital.

"This probably could have become a successful on-going operation, but, since transportation across the Rhine was reestablished shortly thereafter, there was no longer any need for any similar air evac missions."

While Lieutenant Bernard might have played down the mission and her fortitude, it was not quite an ordinary medevac mission. Glider crew members in a combat zone had roughly a 20% lethality rate per mission. This was roughly the attrition (killed, wounded, captured) rate of B-17 crewmembers flying unescorted missions over Germany in 1943. While the B-17 had ten fifty caliber machine guns to defend itself, the crew defense system on the CG-4 was passive – its canvas skin.



Preparing a CG-4 for patient on-loading during the Remagen med evac mission. The gliders were modified to carry up to 12 patients each. (Photo courtesy of the Delp family).

Lieutenant Suella Bernard is the only known nurse. Allied or Axis, to have flown on a combat glider mission in World War II or thereafter. Combat gliders were a stop gap, short field, insertion method quickly superceded by the helicopter, her claim to fame is not likely to ever be challenged.

After helping to assure the continuance of western civilization, 1st Lieutenant Suella Bernard, like the rest of her World War II generation, returned to America to restart their lives. Marriage, family, and hospital



Loading patients aboard the glider for transport to a hospital in France. (Photo courtesy Delp family).

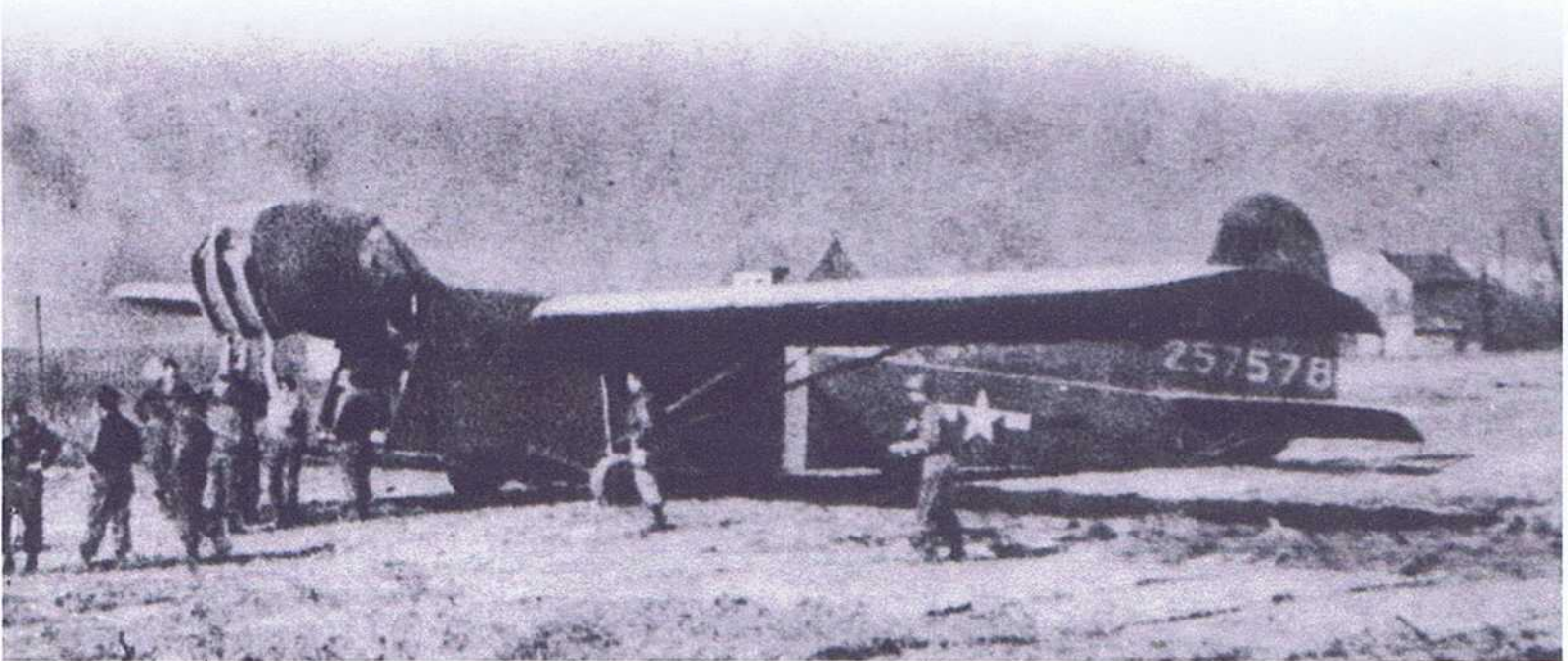
nursing followed. Her retirement years found her doing volunteer pre-admittance nursing. When she passed away in April, 2002, the air mobility community lost an unheralded hero and pioneer, or as she would, no doubt, have seen it, an Air Force flight nurse simply doing her job.

#### Sources:

I would like to thank son John Delp; nieces Anrdea Bernard Stubbs and Rhonda Bernard; and, nephew Paul Bernard, for their help in acquiring information concerning Suella Bernard Delp. Additional help was provided by Fred McDougle, Waco Museum, Troy, Ohio; Eddy Grigsby, The Silent Wings (Glider) Museum, Lubbock, Texas; and, the Museum of the United States Air Force, Dayton, Ohio.

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## THE OTHER RHINE CROSSING by Murdoch Moore

### World War II's Operation VARSITY?

It had none of the first usage novelty of North Africa (capture the airfield for immediate use by your jump plane), the friendly fire incident of Sicily (23 C-47s shot down), the poor air navigation of Normandy (paratroops landing 25 miles from their DZ), or the unexpected armor of Amhem (10,095 airborne troops in, 2,163 came out) so, perhaps that's why, Operation VARSITY, the single-largest airborne movement in history (21,700 airborne troops leaping the Rhine River) remains largely unknown. Sadly, even the divisions carried, the American 17th Airborne and the British 6th Airborne, are now largely forgotten.

An air armada of 1,696 transports and 1,348 gliders carried those two divisions. (Numerical discrepancy explanation: An empty C-47 would usually tow two 15 passenger American Waco CG-4s. The heavier British 25 trooper Horsa and tank carrying Hamilcar (22,000lb capable) were single towed by RAF heavy and medium bombers).

The Rhine crossing was advanced planned and choreographed. For a tactical twist, the airborne assault would follow a night river crossing by British and U.S. Armies (U.S. Navy landing craft were trucked overland for the crossing). In fact, staging was so complete a VIP observation platform was built, allowing Generals Eisenhower, Montgomery, Ridgeway and British Prime Minister Churchill front row center seats.

The Germans were not unaware of the west bank build up – 710 light and 115 heavy anti-aircraft guns were added to the Wesel, Germany area. Many of those guns were manned by experienced, long serving Luftwaffe personnel. In sharp contrast, the local Wehrmacht was a "scratch" army – its under-strength, pulverized divisions back-filled with homeguard adolescents and pensioners.

As scheduled on March 23, after an intense artillery bombardment, Navy and Army aweighed to the far shore. Before the first air transport crossed over the Rhine the Wehrmacht was in retreat, but covering that retreat were those 825 anti-aircraft guns. As noted the German anti-aircraft gunners were air-battle hardened and not conditioned to retreating. Those guns would eventually down 53 aircraft and badly damage another 440 – a near 25% transport aircraft casualty rate

The British glider tugs high-towed and released at 2,500 feet. This reduced RAF aircrew casualties from small arms fire, but allowed the German AAA time to line up and sight in on the steady-course-holding, slow moving gliders. RAF casualties were light. Not so among the pilots of the British Army's Glider Pilot Regiment (27% killed) and those seated behind them.



From a vantage point on the west bank of the Rhine, Prime Minister Churchill (seated), General Eisenhower (center) and Field Marshal Montgomery observe Allied glider and parachute assault landings taking place across the river near Wesel, Germany, on M24 March 1945. (U.S. Army Photo)

The Americans low-towed at 600 feet, just enough time for glider release, a steep banking turn, and rollout into the LZ. Jumping at 600 feet the American paratroop hang time was a few seconds, their 2,500 feet jumping British counterparts hung for a minute or more.

An unfortunate by-product of the American low altitude drop was an increase of small arm/light AA hits on the Curtiss C-46. This was the first usage of the C-46 in a major airborne operation. It seemed a good idea –the C-46 could carry thirty paratroops, compared to the C-47's twenty, and unlike the C-47, the C-46 had exit doors on both sides of the fuselage, allowing a quicker exit and a tighter "stick" ground pattern. Unfortunately the C-46 did not have self-sealing tanks. One hit would allow high octane fuel to stream in to and accumulate beneath the cargo deck. An ignition source, be it engine spark, tracer or hot round, would turn the C-46 into a cauldron. Of the 53 aircraft lost in Operation Varsity thirty four were C-46s. General Ridgeway, a multi combat jump veteran, immediately issued an order barring C-46s from further paratroop transport duty.

Allied casualties, mostly air related, were roughly 2,500 (506 killed). The German killed, wounded and/or captured numbered roughly 2,000 lost. A link up was made at noon.

General Montgomery got his "showboat" crossing of the Rhine. (He was actually third over – his arch nemesis, General George Patton, had crossed two days before). Less than two months later the Germans surrendered unconditionally.

History judges Operation Varsity as anti-climactic. It kept the Nazis off balance, but was in no way decisive. Yet lessons hard-learned by the airborne team earlier in the war enabled two second string airborne divisions to come in and play at varsity level.







# Suella Virginia Bernard Delp



## A Quiet Angel on Silent Wings Her Story, Her Legacy, Our History

Lieutenant Suella V. Bernard  
816<sup>th</sup> Medical Air  
Evacuation Squadron  
U.S. Army Air Force



The only nurse from any of  
the combatant nations to  
participate in a glider  
mission during World War II.



Waynesville High School Class of 1937



Springfield City Hospital School of Nursing  
Class of 1940



Oath of Office

Army of the United States of America



407<sup>th</sup> Air Support Group  
816<sup>th</sup> Medical Air Evac Squadron

The C-47 Skytrain aka "Gooney Bird"



Five Yank Nurses  
Fly Out Wounded

These poppies grew amid land mines near an emergency airstrip on the Cherbourg Peninsula. These Air Force flight nurses, among the first to land on the beachhead, brought back brittle casualties and fresh poppies in C-47s.

Morning World-Herald  
Omaha, June 12, 1944

American Nurses Back From the Invasion



The first two U.S. Army nurses on a Ninth Air Force evacuation mission to France return to England with wounded (and poppies).

From left to right: Suella Bernard, Marjorie Brown, and Lieutenant Foster

Ludendorff Bridge, Remagen, Germany  
over the Rhine (Rhein) River



WACO CG-4A Glider



The Remagen Rescue Mission



Remagen, Germany. 22 Mar 45 (two days before Operation VARSITY). Photograph taken thirty minutes before the CG-4A glider bearing American and German wounded is "snatched" into

The Remagen Rescue Mission







The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force recently used the photograph in a new exhibit on flight nurses. This is the caption that went with the photograph:

"AC 52020 - Poppies from France"

2nd Lt Suella Bernard smiles and shakes hands with 2nd Lt June Foster, head nurse, while 2nd Lt Mary Jane Brown of Columbus, Ohio, looks on. Nurse Brown brought poppies together with wounded from a beach head in Normandy. They are two of the nurses first to go on this Ninth Air Force evacuation mission and first to return with wounded to England."