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ORAL

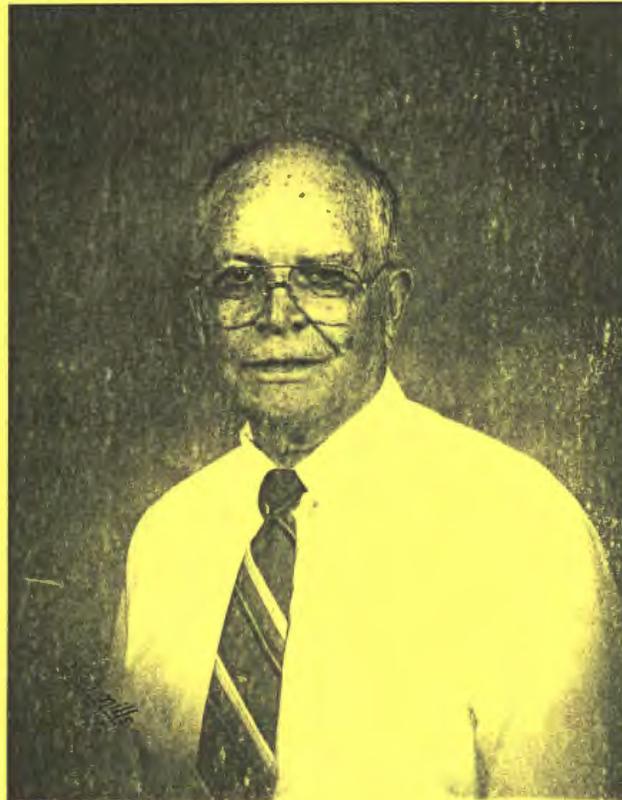
HISTORY

PROJECT



Capturing Memories from Edgecombe

Edgecombe County Genealogical Society



Louis Norman Gay, Jr.

June 21, 1923, Edgecombe County

Son Of

Norman Lewis Gay, and Edna Earl Bradley Gay

Married December 31, 1947

MinnieJo Fisher Gay

RELEASE

EDGECOMBE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

909 Main Street
Tarboro, N. C. 27886

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(Signature) Louis N. Gay Jr.

(Date) Aug. 8, 1998

(Researcher's Signature) Minnie Jo J. Gay

P O Box 325,
Whitakers, NC 27891

Date: August 5, 1997

Interviewee Information

Name: Louis Norman Gay, Jr

Address: [REDACTED]
Whitakers, NC [REDACTED]

Telephone [REDACTED]

Genealogical Information

Father: Norman Lewis Gay, Jr. Born October 31, 1900, Edgecombe Co., Whitakers,
Died: February 11, 1980 Nash Co., Rocky Mount, NC

Mother: Edna Bradley Gay Born: August 5, 1905, Halifax Co. Enfield, NC
Died: November 18, 1962

Siblings: Fannie Gladys Gay Born December 5, 1926, Edgecombe Co, Whitakers, NC
 Emma Louise Gay Born October 30, 1929, Edgecombe Co., Whitakers, NC
 Aaron Green Gay Born September 20, 1932, Edge Co., Whitakers, NC

Spouse Minnie Jo Fisher Born January 11, 1929, Nash County, Whitakers, NC
Father: John Thomas Fisher, Jr Born February 26, 1903, Nash Co. Battleboro, NC
 Died: June 7, 1973, Nash Co. Rocky Mount, NC

Mother: Virginia Seleta Turner Born March 19, 1904, Edgecombe Co, Tarboro, NC
 Died: June 12, 1981, Edgecombe County, Whitakers, NC

Siblings: Kenneth Thomas Fisher, born November 19, 1927 Died: June 1993
 Virginia Seleta Fisher, born November 5, 1932
 John Thomas Fisher, III, born May 13, 1934
 Donald Dudley Fisher, born July 18, 1936

NOTES

Louis Gay's Tribute to His Father
May 6, 1981

Experiences From World War II

Prepared for Dr. Karen Baldwin
East Carolina University

English 3570
Folklore

Folklore Ideas

This has significant value to me in that it represents to the reader the true type of person my father, Louis Norman Gay, Jr., is and some of his past accomplishments. This paper and the true stories contained within are basically the same type of stories that the Navajos tell around their family gatherings, with the exception that they are modern and true. These also represent the adventure tales, and in a way the migration tales. These stories relate to the stories the men would tell after returning from the hunt, war, or travels. They give our family a sense of pride that the family head went up against the odds and underwent the battle which my father did and behaved with the dedication to his country and the bravery that helped the United States and its allies win World War II. This paper also lets the reader know a great deal about the subject. By reading this you can tell how my father feels about such things as religion, responsibility, and the importance of the family life.

This paper comes from the memories that my father has from his experience. I have often heard these stories when he will get in the mood or more often when he or I just get his old scrapbook down and just look through it. As we look at the different photographs of him and his buddies, the stories start. I wish I could have brought the whole book and had the chance to go through it with the class, but it is too large and valuable.

Enclosed with the paper are some of the documents that he has at home such as his honorable discharge, the orders for the awarding of the Silver Star, the hospital orders, their theatre of action, and some copies of photographs.

ARMY EXPERIENCES

The following is my father's account of his tour of duty during World War II. It was written out by him once and some of it comes from my recall of how he told me the stories. The original pictures are at home in his army scrapbook, so I made copies of some of them to help show the various people and places covered in the stories. "After answering the draft call to military duty I reported to Fort Bragg, NC on January 29, 1943 for active duty. We remained at Fort Bragg for about five days during which time we were outfitted with uniforms, received our shots for tetanus and etc., and orientated. We were then put on the train and shipped to Fort Robinson, Arkansas for eight weeks of basic infantry training. At Fort Robinson we were really put 'through the mill'. It was strictly military all the way. We were taught how to dress, to march in formation, to do the manual arms, to salute, to use the 1903 Springfield Rifle, and all that goes with making a foot soldier. We were out on the drill field every day regardless of the weather preparing ourselves for the day when each of us would meet the 'Japs' or 'Jerries' face to face. We were constantly reminded to heed the advice of our drill sergeants and remember it for our lives would depend on it in a few months. We all must have had nightmares after all day bayonet drills. Finally graduation day and we graduated with full field inspection by the Commanding General with band and full dress. After basic training and in utmost secret, we were then dispersed to various camps as we were assigned to various parts of the Army. I was sent by train to Camp Van Dorn, Miss., where I joined a new company, the 490th Quarter Masters Company. I was at Camp Van Dorn for a period of two weeks when the First Sergeant asked for volunteers to attend a special training school at Fort Benning, Georgia. I stepped forward volunteering for the first time and regretted it because after we were shipped to Fort Benning the rest of the company was shipped back to Fort Bragg.

At Fort Benning we were sent to Parachute School to be taught how to repair damaged parachutes, the use of heavy duty sewing machines, how to pack both personnel and cargo parachutes, and how to load and lash cargo in gliders and cargo planes. This continued for about four weeks after which we were reunited with our company at Fort Bragg. After a week at Fort Bragg, we were again put on the train and sent to Camp Campbell, Ky. for nine weeks of maneuvers. We were in pup tents on an abandoned farm for the duration. While at Camp Campbell, we filled boxes, shell cases, and bags with dirt and attached parachutes to these to be dropped from the open doors of C-47s to the ground troops. Panels were laid out in design in open fields for use as targets. A dropmaster from our company was assigned to each plane. The dropmaster was responsible for the loading of the plane and the dropping of the supplies over the drop zone. The folks of Tennessee must have grown weary of our low flying over their homes and farms. dropping our dirt-laden parcels by parachute. I remember on one occasion missing the drop-zone and seeing our parachutes fall in the back yard of a lady hanging clothes out to dry and seeing her scampering for safety into the house.

Sometimes horses pulling plows would run trying to escape our lowflying monsters and we could see the farmer holding on with one hand and shaking a fist at us with the other. It was here that we survived a typical summer thunderstorm. During one in particular, the wind gusts combined with the heavy rain loosened our tent pegs, causing the tent to collapse on us, causing no damage, however, other than getting soaked along with all of our belongings. After nine weeks of pup tenting, low flying, and nausea from flying we were off again to Fort Bragg. At Camp Campbell all the men from North Carolina were given furloughs. We never could understand this, it took almost four days of our seven day leave to travel. The company commander, Captain Toler, knew we were going back to Fort Bragg. Once we were back at Fort Bragg, men from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois were given their furloughs to use their time traveling too! The 490th QM men never forgave Captain Toler for this deed.

From maneuvers it was back to Fort Bragg, where we spent mornings sorting old clothes and in the afternoon it was physical hardening for four hours. The sergeant would match up guys to box each other and this all went well until the First Sergeant broke sustained a broken nose. Most of the fellows in the company enjoyed our stay at Fort Bragg for it meant getting home on weekends. On Fridays or Saturdays we would hitch hike home and then on Sunday night about 12 o'clock it was a mad dash to catch the train in Rocky Mount for Fayetteville to be back in time for roll call on Monday mornings. I recall missing roll call one morning and the sergeant reported me absent, when I was confronted with this by the Lieutenant I told him my watch showed I was not late. He then checked and to my good fortune roll call had been five minutes early.

We were in Fort Bragg from August through part of October and then the news was received that we were ready for overseas shipment. Most everyone wanted European theatre instead of the Pacific. I was relieved when I learned we were on our way to New York for it seemed we were sure bound for Europe. We were boarded on the train and arrived at Camp Shanks, New York where we would be for two weeks. We were free to go into New York at night from 6 pm to 6 am, of which most of us took advantage. One boy from Tennessee went to Coney Island and got so drunk that he rode the subway from one side of town back and forth until he sobered up and could remember when to get off. Prior to leaving for New York the company commander spoke to the company in formation and congratulated us for not having one single case of V.D. since the company was formed. The next week a private in the company went on sick call with our first V.D. case. He reported he had been rewarded it by a fair maiden in the confines of the Carolina Hotel in Raleigh. We were briefed as to how it would be when we embarked for foreign soil; no bands, no fanfare, but under the cover of darkness. Well, this was partially true for we were alerted one night about 11 pm, boarded the train to a ferry, crossed the river, and began boarding a ship. There was a band playing war songs such as "Over There".

The Red Cross was there handing out coffee and doughnuts just before we went up the gang plank. We got settled in Room 20, B-deck, and had a good nights rest. The next morning we sailed down the Hudson River about mid-morning, past the Statue of Liberty and out into the Atlantic with no escort other than a blimp ahead of us. I learned we were on the QUEEN ELIZABETH and there were 22 thousand aboard. What an experience! I had K.P. duty and never could get over the tremendous size of the kitchens and dining halls on that ship. There were 20 of us in the compartment and we were luck in that we did not have to rotate. Many or most would sleep eight hours and then get out and let another group sleep. It was an eerie feeling to be without convoy, but we changed course every few minutes guarding against German U-boats. One night while at sea the engines were cut off to keep German radar from picking us up. We were all glad when we resumed our voyage with power. During the day it was nice to stand on deck and watch the sea although many GIs were involved in poker games constantly. Five days after departing New York, we landed in Glasgow, Scotland and it was by train from there to Bristol, England. In Bristol we were put up in bombed out houses, part of the house had been blown away and left a couple of good rooms standing. Here we worked in a QM depot in some old tobacco warehouses near the docks. I recall the first night in Bristol we could stand in front of our houses in the black-out and as we tried to meet the young ladies we would offer a cigarette; if they accepted, we could offer a light, While they lit up we could tell how pretty they were. If you like them, all right, but if you didn't, you simply blew out the match and got lost in the dark. In the evening, we would also go to local Fish & Chips Shop on the corner of the block for a piece of fish and some french fries (Chips). It was quite a change from hot dog and Pepsi Cola. A couple of days before Christmas, the captain informed us that the British had invited us for Christmas dinner. He wanted volunteers. Needless to say, not a one came forth, so we were assigned addresses and ordered to be in dress uniform. We were delivered to each home at the appointed hour. The British were most cordial, I spent an enjoyable day.

April 1944 Greenham Commons , Newberry, England

About the first of April 1944, we left Bristol and went to a big air base at Newberry. The base was called Greenham Common and we learned, at this time, that our company would be for sure an aerial re-supply company. We would supply the airborne divisions from the air after a jump until they could link up with the ground forces. We were the first Flying QM in the history of the Army. We were attached to the 437th Troop Carrier Squadron and the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. We suspected D-Day was not far off for from the day we reached Greenham Common, we packed cargo parachutes every day and packaged the bundles of supplies to be dropped when needed.

Since we were only forty miles west of London, anytime we got leave we took the hour train ride to London. Usually we could get off at Paddington Station and walk the short distance to the Marble Arch Red Cross Club. We soon discovered the beautiful Covent Gardens Opera House (converted to a dance hall for service personnel). It was the most beautiful place I had ever seen with plenty of young ladies to dance with and good music furnished by Stanley Black and his orchestra or Blanch Coleman's her all-girl orchestra. A fellow serviceman and I asked two young ladies if we could escort them home after one of our visits to Covent Gardens. They told us it was the last bus and we would have to walk back and they informed us it was a "jolly good walk", meaning a distance. Not to be out done we responded, "We don't mind the walk." Never again, for we wound up walking eight miles back to the Red Cross Club through London in the wee hours of the morning.



Supplies being loaded on C-47 Douglas Dakota Transport planes of the 435th Troop Carrier Squadron of the Ninth Air Force stationed at Greenham Common Air Force Base near Newbury, England.

June 3rd, 1944, D-Day Preparation

It was June 3rd, 1944 and we were restricted to the base. Guards were strengthened and black and white stripes were painted under the wings of our planes. Everything seemed in haste. On the evening of June 5th, the 82nd and 101st Airborne were gathering on the runways ready to load into the aircraft. As I stood upon the top of a mission hut about the distance of a city block away I saw General Eisenhower stop and talk to some of the airborne troops. At exactly 11 pm, June 5th the first C-47 roared down the blacktop runway straining its utmost to get airborne and the invasion was on. The planes started to return at 2 am from France and we immediately began to load them with our air drop supplies. At sunrise, we were over the English Channel heading for the French Coast. It was a sight I shall never forget, for never had anyone seen so many ships, aircraft, and blimps in the air at once. As we crossed the coastline of France, we could see the British battleship, Nelson, shelling the German strong holds on the shore. We flew in at tree top level, pulled up to 800 feet, to allow the parachutes time to open, dropped the supplies, and went right back down on the deck to avoid flak and enemy fighters. We lost a good many planes on this operation. Seventeen of our dropmasters were lost in this D-Day operation. I flew back to France a few days later when we had a call to air drop some Browning Automatic rifles to a company.



Cargo Chutes packed by the 490th QM Depot Company (Aerial Resupply) prior to D-Day. Sgt. Jake Hernandez and Cpl. Ray Kulp, shown here, and their company went to the hangar day after day and packed cargo chutes which were later attached to para-packs and dropped to troops behind enemy lines

Operation "Market Garden", September 1944

On September 16, 1944, operation "Market Garden" was organized. We went from Greenham Common by convoy to Norwich, England to a B-24 bomber base. We practiced air drops on Sunday to familiarize the crews of the B-24s with our type of operation. We were briefed on our operation very thoroughly. It was pointed out to us that we were to supply the airborne troops who were to drop at Lindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnheim, Holland to hold the bridges there so the Germans would not blow them when retreating. We were told we could expect heavy flak all the way in and out. We were using B-24s now because of their greater range, larger load capacity, and they were armed. This made us feel better. The belly turret had been removed and we had covered it with loose boards and placed supplies over it. The bomb bays were loaded with para-pack to be dropped and on the cat-walk in the bomb bays, we had set or placed rolls of wire for the Signal Corps. It was my assignment, once we reached the drop-zone, to pull the boards from beneath the bundles over the belly turret so they would drop and to enter the bomb bays and cut the rolls of wire from their holdings and to kick or push them off. I was skeptical about going in the bomb bays with the doors open and flying at such low altitude for it would be impossible almost to escape should we go down.

An incident occurred I have never forgotten. Sunday evening prior to the mission Mon., September 18, 1944, George Parrish and I went to chow across the base and when we returned to the trucks, where we slept, the officers had already assigned all plane numbers with the exception of ours. George suggested that I return our mess kits to the truck and he would go pick up the plane assignments. When he returned, he had the two numbers and randomly picked one and said, "Here is your number" and I accepted it. The next day during the mission George was in a plane just off to our right in formation when it was hit direct and went down in flames. It has caused me to wonder and feel that had I had that number would I have gone down or did the Lord have his hand on me that day protecting me? I was able to find comfort in this.



Eindhoven, Holland, Sept. 18, 1944. Sgt. Norman Gay was wounded in shoulder. Rueben Melhman also wounded. Killed were George Parrish, Al Runitsky, Pete Jasura, Jim Bolton.

ANOTHER DAY TO REMEMBER

As we crossed the channel on this beautiful fall day and hit the Dutch Coast, we were flying at about a thousand feet and could see the obstacles in the water along the coast. These were placed there by the Germans to prevent beach landings. We could see the Dutch countryside with its' many immaculate farms and windmills. It was a fine day for flying except for the heavy fire we encountered. It was just as we had been told, for from the time we hit the coast on the way in, until our return, we were raked with small arms and machine gun fire. I was looking out the side window in the midsection of the plane when suddenly I saw a windmill door fly open and a German started to fire, at what seemed almost point blank, at our plane. We were nearing our drop-zone, time for action. The captain had suggested I place myself between the two uprights in the center of the catwalk and remain there, but I chose to stay in the midsection of the plane. I'd be able to enter the bomb bays and cut the wires loose when the time came. Once we were airborne, I wondered if I had made the right decision and now that it is over I still don't know. Three minutes before we reached the drop-zone, we were hit by machine gun fire. I was standing to the right front of the belly turret when all of a sudden it felt like a crushing blow on my left shoulder and I spun half way around and my steel helmet and liner fell across my face. I was excited, scared, and shocked. Everything seemed to be happening at once. Blood was trickling down my arm and dropping off my finger tips, some kind of gas or fluid was blowing back in our faces through openings and we were at the drop-zone. I pulled the boards from the packs on the belly turret to release them, wrapped the static line around my left arm and walked out on the cat walk while the bomb bay doors were opened and carried out my assignment. I am sure that in this instance I had providential help for I could not have done this on my strength alone. Once the supplies were dropped we headed back to base, but we were in trouble. Our hydraulic

system was shot out and the landing gear would have to be manually cranked and two engines had to be feathered (cut off), for they caught on fire. This action caused us to have a hard time maintaining enough altitude, and once the pilot called back on the intercom and told us to prepare to ditch in the channel. When we did reach the base we were given landing priority for we had wounded aboard. The crew chief cranked the gear down, tied parachutes to the gun mounts on the side windows and we proceeded to hit the run way at about 125 miles per hour. The parachutes to the sides did not open as they should and we had no brakes, so the pilot veered off the runway between two other aircraft sheering parts of our wing away and when we finally came to a halt the nose wheel broke standing the airplane up with the nose to the ground. Someone yelled, "Get the hell out of here. The damn thing is going to catch on fire!", so we, in the back jumped through the camera hatch to the ground. There were burning planes and ammunition exploding all over the base it seemed. Later, in talking with some of the bomber crews that took us on this mission they related that they much preferred their regular bombing missions over the air-drop. This proved to be a very costly mission for the "Jerries" shot down 10 of the 20 planes in our squadron and the others barely made it back.



Sgts. Schlepp, Gay and Hernandez loading paratrooper pack and attaching to release shackle. It would hold six paratrooper.

237th Station Hospital in Norwich, England October 21, 1944

I was picked up by ambulance and carried to the 237th Station Hospital in Norwich, England and spent 33 days recovering from the bullet wound in the upper left arm and shoulder. I am so thankful for the steel helmet I was wearing when I was hit. The bullet went through my arm and out the top of my shoulder and struck the helmet just above my left ear, leaving a crease in the helmet just about large enough to lay your big finger in it. When I entered the hospital all my clothes and money were either misplaced or stolen and I had only the pajamas furnished by the hospital and no money. We had church services each Sunday and it was good to see all dressed alike, in clean pajamas. In the hospital the care was excellent and being in the ward with 40 others there were many war stories traded. Many fellows in there did not want to return to the front, so about the time they would be ready for discharge from the hospital, they would ask to have tonsils removed, to be circumcised, or anything to remain there. Recovery in the hospital was a little nerve racking at times for the Germans were sending their Buzz-bombs over and some came very close to us. One night it sounded like a big Mack truck hovering over us and we all jumped out of bed and got under the bed as we had been instructed, but the bomb crashed in a field about one half mile away. It gave us a big scare and almost rattled our windows out.

I received a call from Elsie Gardner, an English girl I had been dating saying she had gone to the Red Cross and put out a search for me since I had not returned from the mission and they located me for her. When I was discharged from the hospital, I went by to see her and her family before returning to camp. They invited me to stay in their home for a few days to finish my recovery, but since food was rationed and it would have been an imposition, I returned to camp. I was glad to leave the hospital and rejoin my old company. If I had to remain much longer I would have been put in the replacement pool and then I would have been assigned to any company that needed replacements.

November 29, 1944, Silver Star, Purple Heart, Air Medal

I was awarded the Silver Star, for gallantry in action, keeping on doing the job though wounded, the Purple Heart, for wounds received in action, and the Air Medal, for flying 5 combat missions, as a result of our experiences in the skies over Holland.

Upon returning to my company in late October, 1944 I was immediately put back on flight duty as we were hard pressed for drop-masters. I was not activated very long before it was on alert again and this time we flew to Liege, Belgium in early December, shortly after the Germans started their last offensive. When we landed there with our plane loaded with supplies the base had been abandoned and a young GI, in a Jeep, came hurrying up to us and told us to, "Get the hell out of here, the Germans are only seven miles down the road." We took off immediately and flew down to an air base at Dreux, France. We spent the night there and the next morning the fog was so thick you could barely see 50 yards ahead. In fact, we spent three miserable nights there waiting for the fog to lift. I say miserable because when we left England we had removed the door from the C-47s and I took no blankets at all because we were supposed to have returned the same afternoon. We slept in the aircraft in very cold damp weather and I thought surely I was going to freeze to death. A captain did share one of his blankets with me and I wrapped up in an engine cover, trying to get warm. Finally, on Saturday morning, the weather cleared, we picked up some wounded and returned to England. As soon as I get back to the base I went straight to bed where I stayed for three or four days with the flue.



R E S T R I C T E D
HEADQUARTERS
IX TROOP CARRIER COMMAND

G-4-1

APO 133, U.S. Army,
19 January 1945.

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 3)

E X T R A C T

* * * * *
SECTION I: AWARDS OF THE AIR MEDAL
* * * * *

SECTION I

3. By direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order Number 9158 (Bull 25, WD 1942), as amended by Executive Order Number 9242-A (Bull 49, WD 1942), and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, and pursuant to authority contained in letter, Headquarters, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, file 200.6, Subject: "Awards and Decorations", dated 8 September 1944, the following named enlisted men, 490th Quartermaster Depot Company, residences as indicated, are awarded the AIR MEDAL for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flights during the period 7 June 1944 to 27 December 1944. During the invasions of France and Holland and the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes salient these enlisted men served as dropmasters on unarmed and unarmored Troop Carrier aircraft delivering critically needed supplies and ammunition by air to troops holding isolated positions surrounded by hostile forces. In the face of intense enemy ground fire, doubly perilous because of the explosive cargoes carried, they worked precariously in the open doorways of the planes which swerved violently in evasive action, releasing the heavy packs to the eagerly waiting troops on the ground. The successful completion of their assignments contributed materially to the favorable outcome of the operations in which they participated and reflects the highest credit upon them and upon the armed forces of the United States:

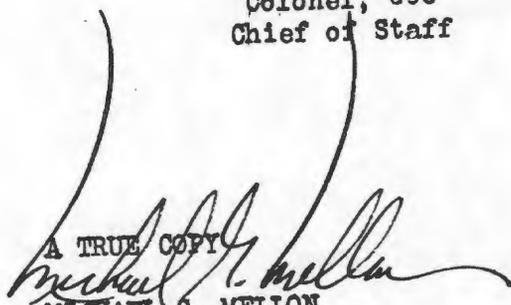
*	*	*	*
Louis N. Gay	34 663 632	Sgt	Witakers. N. C
*	*	*	*

By command of Major General WILLIAMS:

JAMES E DUKE, JR
Colonel, GSC
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

/s/t/ O W HOWLAND
Colonel, A G D
Adjutant General

A TRUE COPY

MICHAEL G. MELLON
2d Lt., QMC
Adjutant

HEADQUARTERS
490TH DE POT COMPANY

APO 139, US ARMY
5 January 1945

EXTRACT

HEADQUARTERS FIGHTER AIR FORCE
Office of the Commanding General
APO 694

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 500)

16 November 1944

1. Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Letter, Hq. USSTAF, AG 280.6, 9 April 1944, Subject: "Awards and Decorations", the Silver Star is awarded to the following named Officers and Enlisted Men.

LOUIS H. GAY, JR., 34663692, Sergeant, Army Air Force, United States Army. For Gallantry in action while serving as a dropmaster on an aircraft supplying airborne troops behind enemy lines, 16 September 1944. Approximately four (4) minutes before reaching the "drop zone", two 30 Caliber bullets hit Sergeant Gay in the left arm and shoulder. Although bleeding profusely and in great pain, he refused medical attention and courageously remained at his station. Arriving over the designated area, he manipulated the release with the use of only his right hand, dropping the vitally needed supplies as scheduled. Not until then did he allow his wounds to be treated. The fortitude and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Gay, reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.

By command of Lieutenant General DOOLITTLE:

JOHN S ALLARD
Brigadier General, U.S.A.
Chief of Staff.

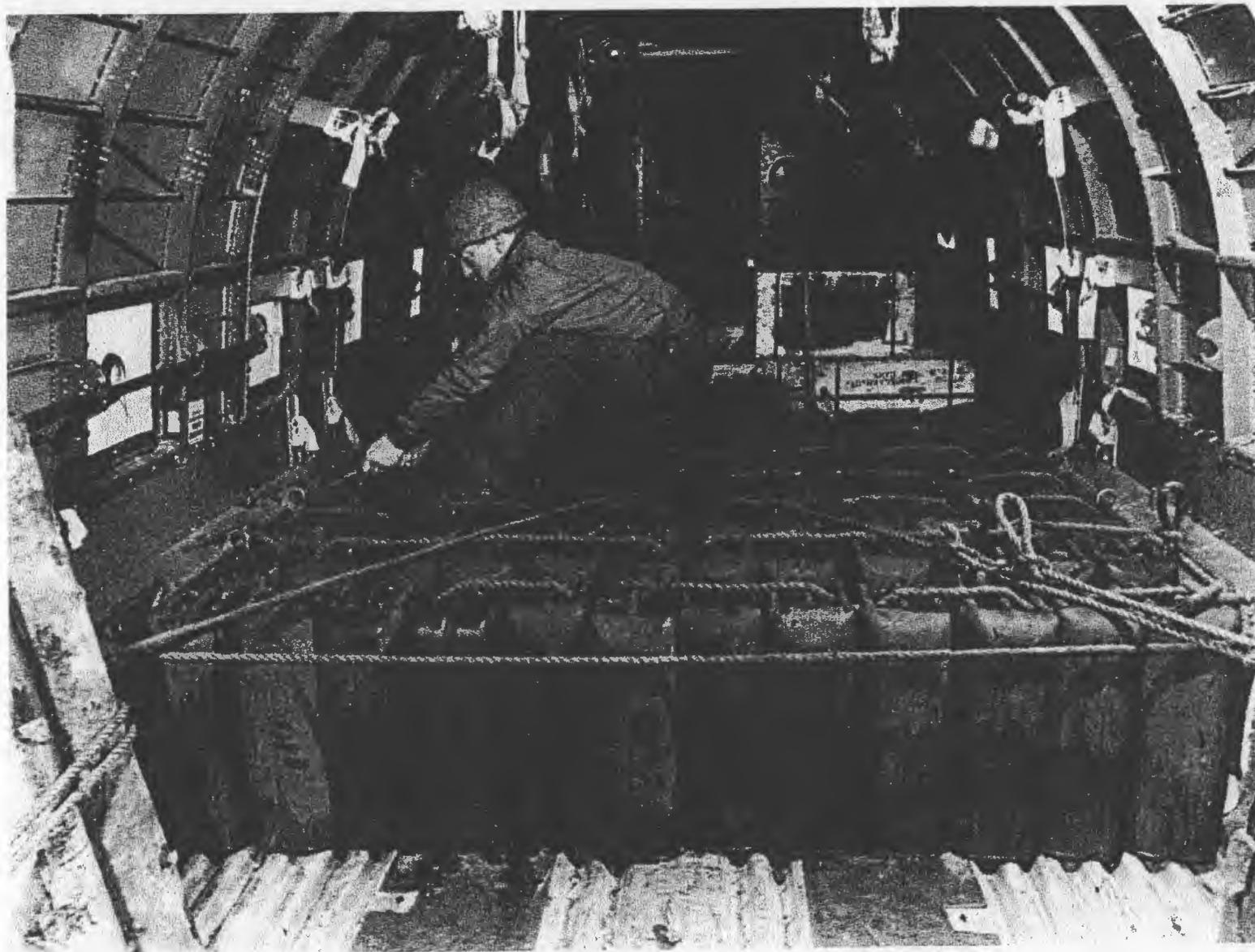
OFFICIALS

a/ LINDSEY L. BRAXTON
b/ LINDSEY L. BRAXTON
Colonel, A.G.D.
Adjutant General

DISTRIBUTION: F

A TRUE COPY


WILLIAM J. NORTON
1st Lt., GPO
Adjutant



This is Sgt. Brogan of 490th QM Depot Co, Aerial Resupply, lashing five gallon cans of gasoline in a C-47. When Gen. Patton's 3rd Army broke out and began its' drive towards Germany we were hard pressed to keep his tanks and other vehicles enough gas, often we would land on an unpaved

Supplies for Bastogne, December 23, 1944

About ten days later, December 23, 1944, we were alerted again and this time it was to supply the 101st Airborne Division, who was encircled by the Germans at Bastogne. Christmas Day, we flew there with our parcels marked "Merry Christmas" and dropped them. We could see from the aircraft the German tanks firing at us and see our fellows scrambling from their entrenchments to get the much needed supplies. It was a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky, and the ground covered with snow, but really cold. We dropped 1500 tons of supplies into the encircled troops at Bastogne in three days. The first flight, after being wounded and back in action, a 50 caliber bullet went through the floor of the aircraft about three feet from where I was standing near the door. I must admit it caused a little cold sweat.

When the Allied Armies started to roll across France, we were busy trying to keep gas to General Patton's Armored Divisions. They were moving so fast we would fly in, land in a cow pasture and unload our loads of five gallon containers of gas and fly straight back to England for more. Once we were to fly over into Germany for an air drip and it seems we got lost as we were above the overcast. Finally, we dropped down below the overcast into what seemed to be a valley, for there were mountains on both sides of us. We flew about for some time and never did locate our drop-zone, so we returned to base. Needless to say, it was nerve wrecking flying from England, for many times when we returned the fog had moved in and it was tough landing. We had an expression that carried a lot of truth; "We fly even when the birds are walking." On one occasion, barrels of fire were on either side of the runways. We could not see them until we were about 30-50 feet above the ground. I felt sure we were going to crash, but we had some of the world's best pilots flying those C-47s, some had been in the African campaign. They really could fly a C-47. I never cease to marvel at the toughness and the durability of the C-47. I saw them shot to pieces almost and still stay in the air and fly!

February 1945 from England to Paris, France

Our company moved from England to France in February 1945. We were stationed at an air base eighteen miles south of Paris. Many of us went to Paris often as we could catch the train a short distance from the base and there was no charge for servicemen. I enjoyed Paris a great deal. The city was beautiful and the language was as pretty as the mademoiselles. France reminded me a lot of my home state, North Carolina. From this base we flew a few missions, but not many air drops. It was while we stationed here, on May 5th, while lying in the floor of a C-47 on the way to Augsburg, Germany, listening through a headphone set to the BBC in London, that I heard Prime Minister Winston Churchill announce that the war in Europe was over. What a relief! Now it was finally finished. We continued on to Augsburg and picked up a load of English prisoners of war that had been captured in Africa. They were wet and when we got airborne, the heat along with the motion of the plane began to make them sick, so they started to pass the bucket up and down the line. It was one of the few times I almost succumbed to air sickness.

Rumors flew fast around camp and many speculated our outfit was going to Le Harve to Camp Lucky Strike to be returned home. We did move in June, but not where rumors had us going. We went by convey in June from our base south of Paris to Marseille. We took two days for the trip. We spent the night in a pasture beside the Rhone River, not very far from Lyons, France. IT was a beautiful night to sleep out in the open, under the stars and many of us went for a dip in the river. Once we got to Marseille, we were quartered in an old sugar refinery and worked as a regular QM company again. I worked on the night shift from 7 pm to 7 am. Marseille was not a good city for GIs. We were told not to go out unless we went in groups because several GIs had been murdered and robbed there. The rumors continued to circulate that our company was awaiting orders to be sent to the South Pacific from Marseille, but they never materialized; on August 5th the war in Japan ended.



490 QM Depot Co., Second Platoon, left to right, unknown, Joe Hudgins, Louis Gay, Sr., Al Schlepp (later changed to Al Pell), Mike Deroin, Jake Hernandez is standing facing men in the door of the plane holding a five gallon gas can. To his left in the plane is Tom Henderson. Four of the men are unidentified.

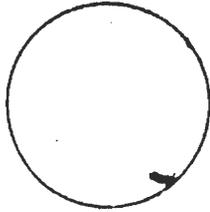
**Celebrating V-J Day - Marseille, France August 5, 1945
Seventeen of the 490th Drop Masters**



**Seventeen of the 490th Drop Masters
getting ready to hit the beach for a day of "ogging"**

On the Ground: Willis Wesler, Gobles, Michigan; Jack Moss, Charlotte, NC; Left to right: Emmet Werback, Elgin, Illinois; Bill Kobya, Rising City, Nebraska; Ken Nandel, Bayshore, NJ; Ernest Jonke, New York City, NY; Davis Drake, Greensborok NC; Joe Hudgins, Enfield, NC; Harry Kulp, Burlington, Iowa; Tom Henderson, Columbia, SC; Kenny Wilson Saginaw, Mich.; Fred Fleischoer, Dayton Ohio; Marion Harrell, San Antonio, Tex; Bob Middleton, Greenfield, Illinois; Mitchell DeRoin, Red Rock, Ok; Louis Norman Gay, Jr., Whitakers, NC; Bernard Dudal, Jamaica Plains, NY;

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

TO:

Mr. & Mrs. Norman Gay

Route 1, Box 226

Whitakers,

North Carolina.

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

FROM A.S.N. 94663632

Sgt. Louis N. Gay

490 G.M. Depot Co.

A.P.O. 133 c/o P.M.

New York, N.Y.
(Sender's complete address above)

Marseille - France

August 4, 1945

Dearest Mother, Dad, and Family,

I received your letter of July 1st yesterday and was very glad to hear from you as always. I also heard from Becky for the second day in a row. Gee it was swell hearing from all of you. Becky sent me some pictures she took not too long ago and they were good. It wasn't her fault that I hadn't heard from her in so long but it was the mail coming in so slow. I am doing as fine as can be, how are you? Yesterday I went up town sight seeing and we went to this church that stand way up on a hill right in the heart of town, from up there you can see all over the city and way out to sea also. While up there I bought some post cards and had a picture made. I will send them home soon. Well the papers today don't seem to bring we fellows here in Europe much to look forward to as it favors the guys in the Pacific. It does say that we guys with eighty five points will be discharged in the next ten months. I am not sure what is going to become of me but I am hoping to be one of those discharged. I didn't work last night as it was my night off so I just stayed around the barracks and listened to the radio. Gee it would be so nice if I could get home by Christmas but I'm afraid to think of it as it would be too good to be true. I am just taking it easy and hoping for the best. Aunt Leona wants me to send her a souvenir but I searched high and low and can't find anything very good so I bought the best I could find, an ash tray with Souvenir Of Marseille written in the bottom.

I hope you have the refrigidare fixed by now as I know you miss it something terrible. I remember what a time we had with the ice situation before we got it. Well I hope you will excuse the punctuation and write soon, I miss you all and hope to see you soon. Love

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE
ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY

V...-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE
ADDRESS AT TOP?

Point Discharge System, September 1945

Very Shortly after the war ended in Japan the Army came up with a point discharge system. We received so many points for each month of service, for each month of overseas service, and for each decoration and award. I was lucky in that I was among the first to leave our company as I had accumulated the required points. In early September, I was transferred to a Railway Transportation Company to return to the states with them. We moved to a camp outside of Marseille and stayed there for a period of two weeks. Finally, we were loaded on trucks and taken to the harbor and boarded ship. We had just sat our bags down when the public address barked out that the ship had one company too many on board and that we were to remove ourselves from the ship. We returned to camp and I have never heard the griping as brought forth that day concerning the efficiency of the Army. The next day, we were again put aboard ship and this time we set sail through the smooth Mediterranean and out into the choppy Atlantic for ten days. Three days before reaching New York, we hit bad weather and that converted Navy Freighter tossed and turned in every way possible without going under. We were already crowded and with the heat, and motion, and upchucking, I was forced to survive on crackers and cheese until we hit New York. We docked up the Hudson River and we were back again at Camp Shanks. Our first night there the Army served us all steak and salad, along with plenty of ice cream. It was the best meal I had in my entire time in the Army. From Camp Shanks, we went by train to Fort Bragg to be discharged later. I received my discharge at two am and took a cab to Greensboro to catch a Trailways Bus home, on September 25th, 1945.

Having never left home, having suffered so much homesickness, it was good to be back."

SUMMARY

In reviewing my Army experience, I must say that it was good for me to have gone through this at that specific time in my life. I am glad I served my country in time of need, that I was tested under fire to know my reaction to danger as I had often dreamed of failure in combat or being defeated in hand to hand combat, and that I have made the friendships that have both lasting and rewarding throughout the years. I saw, first hand, the horrors of war, and learned the agony and heartache of losing a fellow soldier in battle. I also learned to respect the people of war-torn England and France and to be thankful that we were fighting over there to protect our loved ones and our country instead of on our own soil. The people of England and France cannot be praised enough for their part in bringing the ultimate victory. I also feel very strongly that it was the tears and prayers of my dear mother and father that sustained me and returned me safely home. I feel my service life took five to ten years from my mother's life span due to her constant worry while I was in service, but if she were alive I think she would say it was worth it! Now that I have lived this far in the time past the war I can say "Had I fallen in combat for this country and my beloved family and friends, it would have been worth it!"

Wife's note - you would not have had to put up with us either!

**SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE**



TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE:

The task which we set ourselves is finished, and the time has come for me to relinquish Combined Command.

In the name of the United States and the British Commonwealth, from whom my authority is derived, I should like to convey to you the gratitude and admiration of our two nations for the manner in which you have responded to every demand that has been made upon you. At times, conditions have been hard and the tasks to be performed arduous. No praise is too high for the manner in which you have surmounted every obstacle.

I should like, also, to add my own personal word of thanks to each one of you for the part you have played, and the contribution you have made to our joint victory.

Now that you are about to pass to other spheres of activity, I say Good-bye to you and wish you Good Luck and God-Speed.

Dwight D. Eisenhower