



The undamaged Ludendorff Brücke at Remagen played an important role in the attacks across the Rhine River.

Glider pick-up at Remagen

American forces succeeded in capturing the Ludendorff Brücke (Bridge) at Remagen in Germany. They could establish a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Rhine River. All bridges over the Rhine River were destroyed by the retreating German troops. The railroad

bridge at Remagen was the only bridge that was captured by the American (although damaged) intact. The German army was on the run, but was still a formidable force, fighting heavily.

American forces suffered heavily. The Germans were fighting on the own territory. They fired on everything they saw, including ambulances, marked with the Red Cross. Higher command was looking for a fast way to evacuate wounded from the battlefield around Remagen. The bridge could not be used anymore, when it collapsed on 17 March 1945. Many engineers working on the bridge, were killed or drowned in the river when the bridge plunged into the river.



Interior of a CG-4A Waco glider with litters

1st Lieutenant Gerald "Bud" Berry was a pilot of a C-47 with the 91st Troop Carrier Squadron, 439th Troop Carrier Group. He remembers his glider pick-up mission at Remagen.

Litter patients taken on board of a glider



"It was on a Sunday in March 1945. Our base was established at Chateaudun in France. I received order to fly my C-47, tail number 43-15213 to a forward airstrip near Reims. The C-47 was equipped with a special device to pick up gliders (see also Dakota Magazine 2005 # 5). I had some experiences of glider pick up. At the end of June 1944 I picked up CG-4A Waco gliders from the landing zones in Normandy. When I touched down on the airstrip I noticed several high ranking American officers of the US Medical Corps. They wanted to see a glider pick-

up. Then several officers boarded my airplane. I started the engines and took off, with the officers on board. I returned to the runway, flying at a speed of about 90 mph. Flying over the

runway, I picked up the Waco glider. Just prior to the pick-up I gave full throttles. In a split second the glider was "airborne". On board of the glider were twelve "wounded" on stretchers. We flew back to the runway and the glider pilot released the glider from my airplane. I dropped the towrope and landed. The officers on board of my airplane became the new litter patients and were now on board of the glider. I took off, while the glider was prepared for pick-up. The glider pick-up method was rehearsed several times, until the officers were satisfied and agreed that a glider pick-up with wounded could be done.



Evacuation of wounded by glider

It was 22 March 1945, when I received orders to fly a Waco glider to a forward airstrip just outside and north of Remagen, Germany. The crew members in my C-47 were Robert D. Neu (copilot), Albert L. Furr (crew chief) and Joseph D. O'Donnell (radio operator). The glider pilots of my glider were Major Howard H. Cloud Jr (9th Troop Carrier Command) and 1st Lieutenant Walter A. Barker. On board of the glider were Captain Albert D. Haug (surgeon 816th Medical Evacuation Squadron [MAES]) and a Flight Nurse. The

glider was filled with medical supplies and a glider pick-up system.

Another loaded glider was towed by 1st Lieutenant John E. Clippard (302nd Troop Carrier squadron, 441st Troop Carrier Group). John flew with his C-47 and glider behind my combination. His glider was flown by Lieutenant Colonel Louis "Skid" Magid and 1st Lieutenant Howard Voorhees. On board of the second glider was Flight Nurse 1st Lieutenant Suella V. Bernard [816th MAES], 26 years old. She was asked if she could fly the med-evac mission from Remagen.



Flight Nurse Suella Bernhard oversees the loading of litter patients into a Waco glider

The flight was about one hour. Both combinations passed the Rhine River at some 600 feet altitude. The landing strip was prepared the same morning for the evacuation. I unhooked my glider and noticed that the glider landed perfectly. When the glider came to a stop, I noticed four ambulances pulling up near the glider. I circled my airplane over friendly territory and waited for the signal to pick up the glider. In the meantime the supplies were unloaded and twelve litter patients were loaded into the glider. The glider was prepared for the pick-up. A towrope was attached to the nose of the glider, while the other end was laid over two red-white stakes of some 12 feet high. A yellow flag near the glider mentioned that the glider was ready for the pick-up.

I flew the glider in the direction of the strip, while Albert Furr unrolled the nylon cable with the wooden hook from the drum, inside the fuselage of the C-47. Again I gave full throttle and the glider with the wounded was on its way to the hospital. On board of my C-47 were a number of Army photographers, making the necessary pictures. Just as I cleared the airstrip, the second glider landed. I remember that one or more severely wounded Germans were among the litter patients for the second glider. The glider was picked up by Lieutenant Clippard and we were escorted by P-51 Mustang fighter plane.

Flight Nurse Suella Bernhard [816th MAES] talks with the wounded (courtesy James Fenelin, Austin, Texas, via Silent Wings Museum)

Colonel Ansbacker (head surgeon of the 1st Army Corps) acted as glider copilot for Major Cloud. The formation flew back to France. The flight was about half an hour. The ride per ambulance would take some 4 to 5 hours. The gliders landed on a grassy strip, next to a big tent of the 44th Evacuation Hospital. During landing, the second glider lost a wheel and came to a halt in a fence. Ambulances stopped at the glider and took the patients to the tent.



We dropped our tow ropes and landed to retrieve the ropes, then we took off again and returned to our base in Chateaudun”.

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