John Goodwin

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 1944

The Sh

Lieut. J. P. Goodwin Has Plane Downed

Charlemont Man, Members of Crew Rescued From English Channel by PT Boat During Invasion.

Rescued from the English channel on the second day of the invasion, Lieut. John P. Goodwin has recovered satisfactorily and returned to active duty with the army air forces, according to a letter received today by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Carroll of Charlemont. He was reported wounded in action on June 7 by the War department which notified his wife by telegram at her home in Nebraska.

Lieut. Goodwin successfully completed his missions into France with paratroopers on D-day and was returning with supplies on the morning of the 7th when his plane was shot down just off the coast of France. The plane, almost completely demolished, with one engine knocked out and the other one smoking, exploded when it hit the water but the fire was extinguished by the surf. Lieut. Goodwin, his co-pilot and navigator, were immediately rescued by a PT boat and put aboard a cruiser. Three days later they were taken to a hospital and after a week transferred to a rest camp. Upon his return to his squadron a week later, he was given a new plane and is again ready for combat.

Lt. Goodwin Rescued from English Channel

CHARLEMONT — Rescued from the English channel on the second day of the invasion, Lt. John Good-

win is recovering satisfactorily at a hospital in England, according to a letter received yesterday by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Carroll of this place.

Lt. Goodwin was reported wounded in action on June 7 by the war department who notified his wife by telegram at her home in Nebraska. Yesterday's letter to his parents said he expected to return to active duty soon with the air forces. He said that the plane he was in was shot down over the channel and exploded just before striking the water. All of the crew was thrown clear and rescued by an English cruiser, he said.

Lt. Goodwin enlisted in the army air corps in May, 1942, the year he was graduated from the local high school. He was commissioned a lieutenant a year ago today at Bergstrom field, Tex., and was promoted to first lieutenant when he went overseas in February.

Charlemont Pilot Describes D-Day

CHARLEMONT — First Lt. John P. Goodwin, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Carroll, was one of the first ninth troop carrier command pilot to cross the invasion coast on D-day, his base announced recently.

Goodwin described the event "as the greatest experience of my life. I had a ringside seat at the world's greatest show. You could have easily walked from the coast of England to the beaches of France on the invasion barges and other vessels assembled in the channel and there seemed to be enough planes in the air to extend from England all the way back to the states".

He continued, "We were all on the beam that night and dropped our paratroopers right in the old bullseye. The mission was a complete success and my ship came back without a nick."

On the next day, however, Goodwin's plane was shot down over the channel and exploded before it reached the water. He was rescued almost immediately and is now recovering satisfactorily in an English hospital.

b. 1944

Word has been received of the birth of a son, John Raymond, on Nov. 4 at Scotts Bluff, Neb., to Lieut. and Mrs. John P. Goodwin. Lieut. Goodwin is stationed in France and Mrs. Goodwin is at Scotts Bluff. Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Fred Carroll of this place.

John Raymond Goodwin

Sept. 1945

John Goodwin

Capt. John Goodwin of Charlemont, a veteran of 18 months overseas service, has arrived in that town for a 30-day leave, which he will spend with his wife and son at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Carroll.

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Two Short Novels

Twelve Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

Except for articles and stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used it is a coincidence

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Southern France Landing

You have read Colonel Graves' story of the 517th Airborne landing. Here the Air Force job in the Southern France attack is vividly described.

by C. DONALD WIRE – John's Co-Pilot

Illustrated by W. H. Brooks

THE air was strange, that night of August 14th, 1944. It had an unfamiliar lack of movement, utterly devoid of the usual crisp breeze that swept in from the Tyrrhenian Sea. It spread crystal clear under winking stars, yet its quality was oppressive and sultry.

The land below, running a narrow finger out into the Mediterranean, was called the Boot. The Italy of the post-Mussolini era—quaint shops along the cluttered back streets of Naples, Broadway Bill's and the Red Cross in Rome, the rocky crags of Castellana, up north in the midst of its own unpredictable war, the battered city of Leghorn.

During this night it would be a land awake with the thunder of roaring aircraft.

The scene was set as the many airstrips carved out of the flat lands of the peninsula. High-shouldered, camouflaged C-47 transports marshaled on dirt runways. A quiet, attentive knot of paratroopers slumped down on the ground beside each one, inspecting equipment or listening to anecdotes born of Sicily and Anzio, and that aërial grand slam that surpassed all previous airborne operations, Normandy.

Then through the night the whine of gears and a cloud of dust as a jeep or weapons-carrier shrieked along the runway edge. The shouts that were many, the intense, crowded activity of ground personnel. The monotonous procession of six-by-six trucks clanking across the gutted road from the bivouac areas, headlights bobbing, hushed loads of paratroopers clutching at each other to keep from spilling out over dropped tail-gates.

And the silence, the giant C-47s tranquil to the point of gaining dignity. Now in repose, soon to roar with power given by the flick of a finger on a starter switch.

In two hours' time, Italy would be the springboard for the airborne invasion of Southern France. Troop Carrier units of the Mediterranean Command, augmented by the 50th Wing dispatched from Britain, would vault the meager defenses of Hitler's southern bastion and again assault the enemy with aërial invasion.

Italy was the Britain of the south, Southern France the second Normandy of Europe. A logical place for a diversionary attack, they all admitted that. Hitler needed reserves, and in a desperate effort to dam the flood of Allied might pouring inland, he had virtually ripped the defenses of the Riviera up out of the ground. Photo reconnaissance revealed almost non-existent naval defenses. As for the Luftwaffe, it was bowing to superior Allied air power and keeping pretty much to its own territory. Troops were observed in continuous movement away from the coast, taking with them all mobile armor and riding any vehicle that would provide transportation.

Goodwin tucked himself in close to Anderson's wing as they approached landfall on the coast of France.

The advantage of surprise, a factor that helped insure the success of Normandy, was in this case lost. Corsica, the staging area, was paid daily visits by German reconnaissance planes. It isn't with ease you hide an invading army and its supporting naval elements.

The Riviera offered a rugged coastline, broken only occasionally by stretches of beach suitable for an amphibious landing. Hills overlooking the sea provided excellent positions for hidden defenses. Whatever was there, whatever escaped the lens of the aërial camera, was a threat that only the actual landing itself would reveal.

The only component lacking in Italy for a major invasion was sufficient Troop Carrier units. Mediterranean Command groups had been bled for the invasion of Normandy, and after the success of Operation Neptune-Bigot, airborne became a prime requisite to cover landings along the southern coast.

On July 16th, the 50th Troop Carrier Wing left Great Britain in mass flight for Italy. The Wing moved south across the Bay of Biscay into Marrakech, Morocco, then flew northeast across the Mediterranean to various bases on the Italian Peninsula. July 18th found all personnel standing by awaiting further orders.

Official communiqués reported the flight as routine, with no interception by enemy aircraft. But official communiqués don't reveal the feelings or emotions of men. They failed to paint that vivid picture of weary hours in the air, plowing through a starless sky with a violent electrical storm ripping the night apart and blinding the tense crew members of the C-47s. The better to picture this historic flight, let us follow it from the viewpoint of one participant:

LIEUTENANT JOHN GOODWIN of the 95th Squadron was the boy in the Number Two slot off Colonel Irvin Anderson's right wing. Anderson was the squadron's skipper, and a good man to follow in a muggy sky like this.

Number Two was a familiar position for Goodwin. He'd flown it on D-night over Cherbourg, and on D-plus-one he'd hung onto that right wing until a cluster of fragmentation bombs blew him out of the sky. Miraculous rescue from a cold English Channel followed, and Goodwin came back again to take over as deputy leader of the 95th.

They called him a kid. Maybe he was, if you reckoned his age only on the basis of the twenty years he'd spent on earth. But if you looked a little closer into the blue eyes that were always tight in a squint, you saw additional years. Experience and responsibility can shatter the time element.

He was thin, and his color wasn't always good because he worked too hard. He was sensitive, and all of it drained into his fingertips. He was quick in the sky, edgy but sure of himself, capable of working himself into a sweat, but never making the same mistake twice.

That night over the Bay of Biscay he stayed with Irvin Anderson without once losing sight of Anderson's blue formation lights. Lightning flashed across the sky in a one-hundred-eighty-degree arc. At the instant of its flare, it illuminated billowing cloud masses and dread stacks of towering thunderheads rising into the sky to form layers of ice-crystals at forty thousand feet.

His eyes were half closed with fatigue, and pain filled the sockets as the first pastel wash of sunlight silhouetted the black clouds. He saw a ship miles to the left, hanging in the air as if it had been spawned by the rising sun. Anderson was ahead, weaving through the cloud hills, dropping down into valleys made by currents of air. . . .

Two days later, sprawled on the beach in his cotton undershorts with the blue Tyrrhenian Sea as placid and unruffled as a mountain lake, Goodwin looked back on that night. He'd packed a parachute bag, taken off in a drizzle of cold British rain, and twenty-eight hundred miles and twenty-two flying hours later was sprawled out under a warm sun clad in as close to nothing as he could manage and still remain "in uniform."

Life on the Ombrone airstrip, the 440th's assigned operational base, had proved a welcome change to Goodwin from the strict operational schedule

to the shortage of gasoline, flying was held to an absolute minimum. He made a few orientation tours of the surrounding territory. A few cargo "milk runs" to Corsica rounded out the 440th's air war the first three weeks. Goodwin was beginning to develop an inferiority complex in the presence of his airplane.

Chow ran heavily to C-rations, but there was one welcome addition that Britain couldn't offer. Ice-cream was on the menu two or three times a week. This plus combat rations and plenty of fresh vegetables from neighboring farms rounded out a food situation that at first looked rather glum.

THE first undercurrent of the impending operation came on August 6th. Goodwin took to the air in a simulated airborne invasion, run in full daylight. All Groups in the 50th Wing flew out to sea and turned back in to landfall south of Ombrone. No personnel were carried. Message-sticks, imprinted with the ship numbers, were dropped on the drop zone. Results were reported as good, and a few days later a night drop was made utilizing the same course. Marshaling the armada occurred without a hitch, and only one ship in the 440th wandered out of formation. The pilot followed a star in place of his lead ship. It happens.

In the next few days, Goodwin stacked up a few more hard flying hours and got the rust out of his joints. He towed CG4A combat gliders up from a depot in Naples. The 440th was committed for a tow as their second mission in the invasion. Assigned glider pilots of the Group were supplemented by additional pilots flown in from England by Air Transport Command.

That feeling got around. It's a peculiar one—it seems to be a blend of overworked imaginations, of speculation over what may happen. Goodwin was aware of one thing: The aircraft they flew, the Douglas C-47, was highly vulnerable to enemy interception in any form. Ground fire could cut them to ribbons at their night-drop altitude of seven hundred feet. At four hundred feet on the daylight glider tow, they were sitting ducks for marauding fighter craft. They'd all seen gas tanks blow. And with no self-sealing skin it only took a few incendiary bullets to do the job.

It would be Normandy again. The close, compact formations, airspeeds at 110 miles per hour, troopers surging through the door and dropping out into the night—

And the prop-wash from the lead squadrons, throwing you around like a cork in that vast ocean of air. Your fluttering wings, your wings that were feted with much more violence.

The Field Order covering Operation Dragoon was received on August 11th. On the 14th at 1500 hours, Group briefing was held in operations, a sprawling tent alongside the oiled runway.

It was hot that day. They poured across the sun-baked, dusty airstrip—pilots and co-pilots, navigators, crew chiefs and radio operators. They filled the tent and gave out with the small talk that was a long way from war. Goodwin was in his undershorts, smoking and adding to the blue haze that hung like a layer of stratus clouds. He made notes, but mostly he just listened to the talk, the endless talk, it seemed. . . .

But the briefing was short. There just wasn't much to say. The course was outlined. It consisted of two legs—flight westerly past the island of Elba to the northern tip of Corsica, then northeast to landfall just below Nice, and straight in to the drop zone at the small town of Le Muy. They were to drop 720 paratroopers of the 517th Parachute Infantry.

The weather was expected to hold good, although low clouds might be present over the coast of France. Flak emplacements were spotted. Everything was mobile, the stuff that could be moved quickly, making the most painstaking overlay useless. Ground batteries could be used to the best advantage, since course from landfall into Le Muy was through a narrow valley. The situation was confused because of rapid German troop movements. But this was no surprise invasion. They were expected.

Close to one thousand Troop Carrier C-47s made up the invading armada, Mediterranean Command bolstered by four groups of the 50th Wing. The northern tip of Corsica was the marshaling point. Each Group had its time of arrival figured to the split second.

Assigned altitude was fifteen hundred feet across the Tyrrhenian Sea, with let-down to seven hundred feet from landfall into Le Muy. After the drop, a right climbing turn would be made out of the target area, and course re-flown at three thousand feet. This was a departure from the Normandy tactics, when all ships went into the deck and came out as close to zero altitude as possible. Le Muy's position, at the stem of the valley and land-locked by high mountains, prevented any hedge-hopping or contour flying.

The 440th Group was committed to forty-five aircraft, eighteen from the 95th Squadron, nine from the 96th, and eighteen from the 97th.

Station time was 0200 hours on the morning of August 15th. . . .

He walked to the runway, in the stillness of that heavy, unmoving air. He thought about the take-off down a dirt strip that boasted only thirty-five hundred feet with its full length. Now the first third was taken up with marshaled aircraft. Eighteen troopers in each, their arms and ammunition and equipment. A normal crew of four, with flak helmets and vests. Six para-racks fastened under each flat belly, fully loaded, sticking out into the airstream and increasing drag tremendously. Plenty of weight to pull off the ground and clear that line of trees at the end of the runway. Plenty of weight, and the air that hung like molten lead—

At 0232 hours, Group Commander Frank Krebbs, leading the nine ships that made up Headquarters Squadron, released his brakes and rolled away. Krebbs blasted a cloud of oily dust into the air, and before he was halfway down the runway he was lost from sight.

Goodwin heard the bellowing engines, wide open, taking every available inch of mercury that could be put into them. Propellers thrummed as they were brought into synchronization. But there was still only sound, sound dwindling out as the dirt runway did before it.

Goodwin peered through the windscreens of his aircraft, staring into the black smudge that rolled like fog, praying for the sight of blue formation lights lifting into the night sky.

Like points of flame, unwinking and forming a neat "T" with six lights on the cross arm and three on the shaft, those formation lights rose out of the dust and staggered across the trees.

HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON followed the leader; visibility was reduced to a few yards; every pilot made an instrument take-off, holding the runway heading with gyro compass.

Goodwin tagged Anderson's lead C-47 down the field. Unable to see Anderson, he had allowed the required ten-second take-off interval. Now his eyes were glued to the gyro compass, holding his heading to the exact degree. He had everything firewalled, and the old bird was bumping herself silly in the gullies and shallow rain washes. He'd been on the ground too long, he knew that. There was too much runway behind him and not enough ahead.

He sucked the wheel back. The C-47 staggered. She wallowed for a moment in a gust of prop-wash from Anderson's lead ship. Then she bit the leaden air and dragged herself out away from the field.

Something scraped the transport's belly, and Goodwin pulled up a low left wing. The line of trees fell

entire 440th was in the air, those trees looked as if they had taken a direct hit by an H.E.

The Group assembled at fifteen hundred feet. She flew her customary assault formation of five squadrons, nine ships in each, each squadron flying a trio of three ship elements arranged in a V-of-Vs.

The course out to Command assembly point on Corsica was made without incident. Formations held tight with no stragglers. The island of Elba showed under bright moonlight, a mysterious, unyielding rock in a mirror of ocean, veiled in history and a reminder of a conqueror of a bygone age.

Goodwin tucked himself in close under Anderson's right wing as the Group approached landfall on the coast of France. Fog shrouded the shoreline, and huge fires dotted the beach, throwing a phosphorescent glow across the layers of drifting mist. The Navy was down there, pounding away in a softening-up process for the amphibious troops that would soon hit the beach.

Goodwin expected anything as they crossed the white coastline. Beneath lay fog, like a pallor of death. The blue raging fires, devastating yet as soundless as the night. The mountains on each side, humps of shadow, formless, concealing.

And not a line of tracer in the sky, not a single red splatter of 88-millimeter. . . .

If they had guns why didn't they use them? Was this another smart Heinie trick? That was it, Goodwin told himself. They were concentrating all their fire-power on the drop zone, waiting to get the massed formations as they quivered at seven hundred feet, airspeeds 110 miles per hour. You had to hand it to them. . . .

The descent to drop altitude began. Goodwin felt the moisture in his hands. The fog, the sky, the mountains. Couldn't they see? Were they down there, blind, hearing the roar of engines and helpless? Or were they waiting, just waiting—

Goodwin saw biscuit-guns wink green from Headquarters Squadron. A few seconds later, the green blazed from Anderson's astro-dome. Goodwin hit the *Go* toggle on his switch panel. He flipped the para-pack salvo release. His stick of troopers dropped through the cargo door, and he rode free and unweighted across the drop zone.

Automatically he bent his throttles forward and wheeled right with Colonel Anderson. In a few minutes water was beneath him again. The fog was there and the roaring fires. He tried to relax but found it impossible. He was unable to realize that

not one puff of flak, not one red, probing finger of 20- or 40-millimeter had lifted into the sky.

For the 440th Group the initial stage of the Southern France invasion had been successfully completed. Later reports showed that their drop on the target, through impenetrable fog that required pinpoint navigation and split-second timing, had been ninety-eight percent accurate. Abortive aircraft through mechanical failure were zero. Loss to enemy action was zero. One aircraft received minor damage. A stray .30-caliber bullet bored a neat hole through its vertical stabilizer.

The returning C-47s of the 440th had but choked out their last r.p.m. when refuelers swarmed into the dispersal area and began the serious business of checking gas and oil. Weary crew chiefs removed cowlings and delved into engine innards. Engineering personnel carefully went over tires and control surfaces.

All these things were of prime importance. An airplane taking off with a glider in tow is a temperamental, unpredictable machine that can quickly transform itself from an airborne giant into a flaming, fatal crash. With a CG4A combat glider on the end of three hundred feet of nylon rope, rudder control can be completely lost and elevators rendered useless by an unruly glider. Here, then, the pilot of a powered aircraft, always considered the master and control over his ship, finds it absolutely necessary to rely on the skill and extensive training of his glider pilot. Co-operation

Goodwin hit the Go toggle, and his troopers dropped through the door.

in air maneuvers, between individual aircraft or groups of aircraft, has never been developed to the degree existing between tow and tug pilot.

At 1610 hours on that same day of August 15th, General Chappell, Commanding 50th Wing and in this instance flying lead ship in the 440th Group, pulled the first glider off Ombrone airstrip. The dust rose, and even in the full daylight ships were lost from sight by the time they reached the end of the dirt strip.

Johnny Goodwin was again flying in his Number Two position as deputy leader of the 95th Squadron. Two other men were stepped off Goodwin's right wing, forming a four-ship echelon. This series of four-ship echelons in trail was standard operating procedure for executing a combat glider tow. The stepped-back aircraft gave the gliders in tow more freedom of lateral maneuver.

Intelligence had offered one warning at the briefing that afternoon. They had cautioned that the absence of ground fire on the previous night may have been due to the thick ground fog. With the fog dispersed by an unmasked sun, the 440th could expect its full share of opposition if fortifications existed.

IT is safe to say that if intense opposition had been encountered over the coast of Southern France on that afternoon in August of 1944, losses of Troop Carrier units under Mediterranean Command would have been staggering.

Holding fast off Anderson's right wing, a sight met the eyes of Goodwin that was almost beyond imagination. What he saw was a prediction of aviation's prophet with delayed honor, the late and greatly beloved General Billy Mitchell.

The entire sky, from horizon to horizon, was blanketed with aircraft. At the 1500-foot altitude, and in a gradual let-down from the coast to Le Muy, was an unending, vast umbrella of C-47 transports with their gliders in tow. At three thousand feet, ships that had released their gliders were beating a hasty retreat back out to sea. Interwoven at all flight levels, darting about like capricious sparrows, were supporting fighter craft. And at higher altitudes, light and heavy bombardment cleaved the air on their journeys to inland targets.

Over the landing zone was a tangle of ships going in all directions. Great clouds of battle smoke rose from burning hillsides. Goodwin fought with his aircraft to avoid mid-air collisions. Visibility closed in.

There were only seconds left until cut-off over the L.Z.

Then the 440th, still intact but in danger of stacking up because of loss of airspeed, swerved heavily to the left. At first Goodwin thought the lead ship had received a recall from the base. A hasty survey of the panorama of mingling CG4A gliders and C-47s revealed a swarm of tow ships coming out of the L.Z. at the same level as in-going traffic. The formation had failed to climb to the three-thousand-foot return level.

Goodwin swung with Anderson, out beyond the L.Z., beyond Le Muy, up into the stem of the valley. Close in to the mountains they turned 180 degrees for a second try at the landing zone.

It was like coming down out of a funnel. You were so low you could see grass rippling in the wash of disturbed air. You wondered about those fellows who flew at thirty thousand feet, and thought it would be nice to have that much air.

glider swinging brazenly away fron its tow ship. The second, third fourth. . . . Headquarters all out!

Goodwin held his breath. The in stant Anderson cut off, he pulled hi release. His C-47 leaped ahead as i he had thrown water injection int her carburetors. He heeled right wit Anderson, throttles forward and r.p.n at twenty-four hundred for swi climb. Below, the Waco kites joine the swarm blitzing into the L.Z. an added another chapter to airborn history.

Troop Carrier's part in the invasio of Southern France was finished. A though the Command stood by o twenty-four-hour alert for the ne week, no airborne re-supply missio were necessary. In the followin months, after the 50th Wing had r turned to Britain to prepare for th invasion of Holland, Mediterranea Command carried on with its airstr re-supply and its daring combat car sorties into Yugoslavia.

NO article on the airborne invasi of Southern France would complete without a few words— would take a whole book to do the justice—on the courageous perfor ance of the glider pilots.

Their target area was briefed as group of fields broken up by hed rows and low stone walls. Actua these fields were surrounded by ro of trees, rising to heights of forty a fifty feet. The fields, appearing the photo overlays as cleared land covered with wheat stubble, we filled with stakes and strung wi grapevines.

Adhering to combat training, t glider pilots had come in on l approach, "blitz" landings. Expecti to clear three-foot hedgerows, they h been obliged to "hurdle" 50-foot tre A good many just didn't make Those that did found their approa too high, overshot the next field a washed out in a farther row of tre Casualties were many, and very f gliders landed without crashing.

In spite of these obstacles, person and equipment were delivered wh they were wanted, and the town of Muy fell to the airborne on the n day.

After this invasion there were usual commendations from hig authority. Perhaps the most satisfy was a personal touch added by General Ira C. Eaker, commanding AAF in the Mediterranean Theate Operations. He summed it up qu simply with: "You Troop Carr people put up a grand show."

They were all to remember that their next major operation, the borne invasion of Holland—a ba that became as unpredictable as European weather.