



*I believe that the Army of today has a much keener appreciation for the value of observation aircraft than did most of our commanders in World War II. I used light planes frequently in both training and combat situations in World War II because they permitted me to observe in a few minutes what it would have taken days to observe by any other means. I found invaluable the panorama of the terrain and the dispositions of forces that I could quickly fix in my mind when I could observe from the air. Then when I later studied the situation on a map, I could envision much more*

# The Army Aviation Story

RICHARD K. TERNEY



*clearly the exact lay of the land. This was tremendously helpful in the overall direction of the Fifth Army and it was of particular value in evaluating terrain and its influence on the courses of action I selected.*

*General Mark W. Clark*

Army Aviation hung by a thin thread in the fall of 1942. Within the Army Ground Forces only a small group of Artillery officers, located primarily at Fort Sill, knew of or believed in Army Aviation. Ranking members of the Army Air Forces, located primarily in Washington, also were aware of the existence of Army Aviation, but did not feel that aircraft should be organic to ground forces.

Often the Army's liaison pilots had good reason to be discouraged. For example, when Lt O. Glenn Goodhand (now Brig Gen) completed training in Pilot Class No. 3, he was assigned to the 35th Field Artil-

THE WAR YEARS

PART VI

NORTH AFRICA, SICILY, ITALY

lery Regiment at Camp Shelby, Miss. Upon arrival in December 1942, he found that the officers in charge did not expect him and knew nothing about liaison pilots. Shortly thereafter Lieutenant Goodhand was joined by Staff Sergeant pilots Ray Smith, Leonard Dennis, and James G. Frye.

This group was faced with a typical problem encountered by other liaison pilots joining units throughout the Army. They had to prove the worth of the light airplane to the artillery commander and to make *him* realize that it was an indispensable addition to the ground combat team. This was accomplished, thanks to the dedicated efforts of those who conducted the Army's aviation training program and to the esprit de corps and ingenuity of the liaison pilots who flew the light planes into combat.

The first liaison pilots reporting to combat units in World War II did not always get a hospitable reception. But none received a more disappointing or hostile reception than the first four Army Aviators who entered the combat zone.

The story of Army Aviation's initial entry into combat actually began on 10 October 1942 at Fort Sill, Okla., when Capt Ford E. (Ace) Allcorn (now Colonel, retired, and with the McDonnell Aircraft Corp.) was ordered to report to the 3d Infantry Division at Camp Pickett, Va.

A group of liaison pilots had been assembled at Pickett. Captain Allcorn was directed to pick three aviators from the group and report to the 3d Infantry divarty commander who was at Hampton Roads, Va. Captain Allcorn selected Capt Brenton A. Devol, Jr., and Lts John R. Shell and William H. Butler. (Lieutenant Shell was later killed

near Mateur, Tunisia, by a German 88 round. At the time, he was the aviation officer of the 1st Armored Division. Lieutenant Butler is now a civilian.)

At Hampton Roads the group was briefed on the forthcoming invasion of North Africa. They were told that three Army Air Force YO-59s (L-4s) were aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Ranger* and that they were to fly them ashore during the invasion.

After receiving the necessary maps of the beachheads in the invasion area, Captain Allcorn and his group boarded the destroyer *USS Dallas* and were carried to Bermuda where they

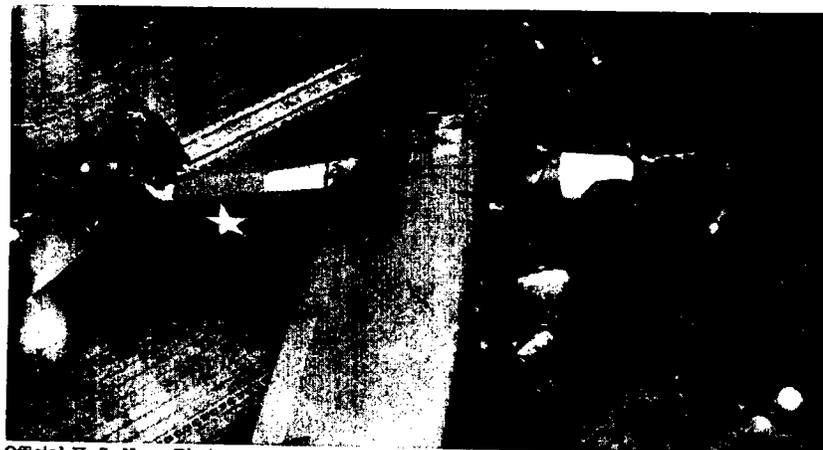
transferred to the *Ranger*.

The four liaison pilots soon discovered that the Cubs on the *Ranger* were in bad condition. It was necessary for the group to spend the greater part of the trip from Bermuda to North Africa working on the aircraft. Since they expected to be directing artillery fire during the invasion, the Army Aviators installed SCR 609 radio sets in the Cubs.

When the invasion began on 8 November the Army Aviators were placed on alert. News of the happenings ashore was anything but cheerful: several of the *Ranger's* planes had been shot down by inexperienced



Above, curious sailors watch Capt Ford Allcorn check his L-4 aboard the *USS Ranger* heading for the North African invasion. Below, an L-4 is brought to the *Ranger's* flight deck



Official U. S. Navy Photos



Above, Capt Ford Allcorn flies his L-4 from the USS Ranger during the North African invasion. Below, Lt William Butler (front seat) and Capt Brenton Devol prepare to take off in their L-4

Official U. S. Navy Photos



American troops on the beach.

On the 9th the Army Aviators got the word to take off. A request that the units ashore be informed that the Cubs would be approaching from the sea was denied by the *Ranger's* skipper, who refused to break radio silence.

The seas were moderate but the *Ranger* had been under torpedo attack and was running at full speed of about 25 knots. Consequently, the aviators had to take off in a 35-knot headwind about 60 miles at sea. "Taking off was no chore," Colonel Allcorn recalls. "Some of the crew held the plane back while I gunned it. I was in the air almost as soon as they let go." Captain Allcorn took off first

(in Cub No. 204) and made a 360 before the join-up with the other two aircraft.

The Cubs proceeded toward the beach in an echelon right formation at about 2,000 feet. The plan was to fly to Fedala, where a racetrack had been selected for use as a landing strip. About 3 miles from shore and near the *USS Brooklyn*, it was decided, for no apparent reason, to switch to an echelon left formation. Within seconds after this had been accomplished, Captain Allcorn noticed a gun flash aboard the *Brooklyn*. Almost instantly a round exploded in the position Lieutenant Shell's aircraft had occupied. The three aircraft dived for the surface.

Captain Allcorn passed directly over the bow of a destroyer at about 100 feet and received no fire. However, as he headed toward shore, almost all of the 200 ships in the convoy opened fire on the Cubs with 20 mm guns, despite the fact that they were painted with invasion markings.

Lieutenant Butler piloting one Cub (with Captain Devol riding as observer) and Lieutenant Shell flying the other headed north and away from the invasion site. Later they landed near a French fort and were captured and held prisoners for a brief time.

Meanwhile, Captain Allcorn skipped the waves and headed for the beach. About 100 yards out he turned and headed parallel to the coast for Fedala, receiving fire from shore installations most of the way.

He flew about 3 or 4 miles between the swells until he was off Fedala. When he pulled up to head inland, units of the 2d Armored Division riddled his Cub with .30 caliber machinegun fire. Colonel Allcorn remembers his windshield disintegrating and portions of the cockpit being shot away. He recalls, "I stayed as low as possible and as I got farther inland I realized I was not going to get to the racetrack and that I was getting ahead of the Allied advance."

Suddenly Captain Allcorn was hit in the right leg by a burst from a machinegun. The Cub's engine was also hit, and it burst into flames. He slipped the aircraft into the ground in a controlled crash, then crawled from the cockpit and dragged himself about 50 feet across the ground. He sat up and watched the Cub explode and burn to the ground.

Shortly thereafter, Captain Allcorn was found and taken to

an American first aid station by friendly civilians. He had been hit in the leg five times by Vichy French machinegun fire. Today, he still carries the bullets in his leg, and X rays indicate that they are .25 caliber slugs.

In addition to sharing the honor of being the first Army Aviator in combat, Colonel Allcorn was the first man to fly a Cub from an aircraft carrier, the first Army Aviator to be wounded in combat, and the first to be shot down—which in this case is somewhat of a distinction.



Col Ford E. Allcorn led Army Aviation into combat

In later years Col Robert R. Williams (now Brig Gen and Commandant of the U. S. Army Aviation School) met one of the Navy gunnery officers who had worked the Cubs over. Colonel Williams asked him why they had shot at the Cub. The gunnery officer replied that they had looked through the silhouette charts and didn't see anything that looked like the three aircraft. He admitted that his assistant had said the planes looked like Cubs. But the gunnery officer asked Colonel Williams, "Now, what would you have

done in my place? If you were 60 miles at sea and saw a Cub putting by, would you believe it?"

In the following months Army Aviators took their light aircraft into every imaginable combat situation in all theaters of war. They performed admirably and by the spring of 1945 commanders of all the Army's fighting arms were demanding their own light aircraft. This was a complete about face from the situation in November 1942. How did this happen?

This question cannot be justifiably answered in a sentence or a paragraph. It is necessary to view the accomplishments of these Army Aviators step by step in the context of their happenings. One must see reports from the combat areas and watch Army Aviation's seemingly insignificant "feats" become vitally important as they doubled and tripled in number. Then it can be understood why Army Aviation grew into an indispensable ground support force.

#### REPORT FROM NORTH AFRICA

Besides the four aviators who flew from the *Ranger*, others from the first three pilot classes were in the same convoy that participated in the invasion of North Africa. These included Lt John W. Oswald (now Col and 3d Army Avn Officer), Lt Bob Ely (who later became the first Army helicopter pilot), Lt Eugene P. Gillespie (who became the first man to fly Gen Mark Clark under combat conditions), and Lt Robert Johnson (who was killed in Tunisia). More Army Aviators continued to arrive over the next two weeks on follow-up troop ships with Cubs that had been dismantled and crated. The planes were taken to Casablanca where they were reassembled and assigned to Army liaison pilots.

During late November and early December 1942, the Army Aviators began joining units of the 1st and 2d Armored Divisions and the 3d, 9th and 34th Infantry Divisions. Actual fighting at that time was to the east in Tunisia where British troops were located to the north and south of the German Africa Corps. American forces were being committed only on a "piecemeal" basis to the west and the Army's liaison pilots did not see much action. Consequently, a number of Army Aviators joined the 651st British Squadron of the British 5th Corps in Tunisia. They were to gain combat experience flying British Taylorcraft planes and forward information back to the Department of Air Training at Fort Sill. It was sometime during this period that 1st Lt Paul A. Dewitt became the first Army Aviator to fly an artillery mission in a Grasshopper in World War II.

#### AIR OP SCHOOL

The II Corps Air Observation Post School holds a significant place in a recount of Army Aviation's role in the North African campaign. Its origins go back to 28 October 1942, when the War Department directed the Field Artillery School to send 10 pilots and 10 mechanics to the 13th Field Artillery Brigade in England. Commanded by Capt Joseph M. Watson, Jr., this was the first group the school of-

A II Corps Air OP School student lands his L-4 in England



ficially sent to tactical units. (See box).

**PILOTS**

Capt Joseph M. Watson, Jr.  
 Capt J. Elmore Swenson  
 1/Lt Stanley A. Williamson  
 1/Lt Thomas L. Hendrix, Jr.  
 1/Lt Delbert L. Bristol  
 2/Lt William D. Stephens  
 2/Lt Gus M. Albert  
 S/Sgt Claude B. Allen, Jr.  
 S/Sgt James S. Rengers  
 S/Sgt Walton C. Schoonover

**MECHANICS**

S/Sgt William T. Roulston, Jr.  
 T/4 Cecil L. Tyner  
 T/4 Paul F. Leathers  
 Cpl Walter H. Hasty  
 T/5 Hugh M. Blair  
 T/5 Whitney N. Frost  
 PFC John A. Wagner  
 Pvt George G. Rogers  
 Pvt Constantine L. Ryseff  
 One mechanic unknown

Upon arrival in England the group was mistakenly placed into an infantry replacement battalion. However, Col Francis Bacon, commander of the 34th Infantry Division Artillery, agreed to organize a provisional field artillery battery. It seemed there was no chance that they would see duty as field artillery pilots or mechanics.

However, they had one more hope. Colonel W. W. Ford, Director of the Department of Air Training at Fort Sill, had instructed Lt Delbert L. Bristol to contact Brig Gen A. M. Gruenther if anything went wrong. When General Gruenther, Chief of Staff, Hq II Corps, heard Lieutenant Bristol's report he immediately had the group transferred to the 13th Field Artillery Brigade. Upon arrival the group reported to Gen J. A. Crane and learned that they were to become the flight instructor nucleus of the II Corps

Air Observation Post School. Students were already on hand and the new "faculty" hurriedly prepared POIs, obtained training aids, textbooks, mechanics from motorized units with little or no experience in maintaining light planes, and ten L-4s which had been earmarked for the 1st Infantry Division.

In late November 1942 Captain Watson was ordered to move the advance echelon of the school to North Africa with the brigade. After arrival at Oran by ship convoy, the school was ordered to establish a forward instructional flying field and charged with the mission of training pilots and mechanics for both I and II Corps. (The rear echelon of the school, under the command of Lt Col John Salmon, did not arrive until about 15 February 1943.)

The advance echelon set up shop on a strip of grass along the edge of an olive grove at Sidi-bel-Abbes. The faculty and students lived in wooden crates in which their planes had been shipped. A little paint and "backyard" carpentry made the crates liveable. Overall morale was quite high. The school had an "official" mascot, a goat named Billy the Kid, and in the evenings a group could usually

be found around a campfire singing the Battle Hymn of the Grasshopper.

The school was essential to fill combat needs, but its graduates were not placed on flying status. In accordance with War Department policy, only graduates of the Department of Air Training at Fort Sill were eligible for flight status. As a compromise the War Department placed the "overseas" graduates on a nonrated flying status and allowed them \$60 a month hazardous duty pay.

In January 1943, the first Air Observation Post sections were formed within American tactical units in North Africa. Lieutenant Oswalt organized the 1st Armored Division Air Section with the assistance of Lts John R. Bannister, III, and Edgar Alexander. The 1st Infantry Division Air OP Section was organized by Lt Jesse Overall, III, (now Lt Col and comptroller at the Army Aviation School, Fort Rucker). Lieutenant Overall was assisted by Lts William H. Butler, Bryant and Rich, and Staff Sergeant pilots Clifton R. Wamsley, Cole and Harper. (First names not available for Bryant, Rich, Cole and Harper.)

Captain Delbert Bristol (now Colonel) organized within the II U. S. Army Corps a senior tactical headquarters to control employment of the division Air OP sections. Besides keeping up with tactical employment, Captain Bristol as II Corps air officer also made aviator assignments, handled flight records and other administrative matters, and established the first parts supply system in the combat zone for the Artillery's planes. This was a function of the Army Air Forces, but the responsibility had been overlooked while stocking overseas maintenance support units.

*An L-4 passes the flag at the Air OP School in Algeria*



In June 1943 Major Bristol made another significant contribution to the Army's light aviation program when he inaugurated night flight training at the II Corps Air OP School. The L-4B was used as a trainer and since few instruments were available, most of the precision in night flying depended on the pilot's skill.

Originally it was believed that the Artillery pilot's flights would last only about 7 minutes. They would fly out, adjust the artillery fire, and return to the landing strip before the enemy could knock them down. However, the liaison pilots in North Africa soon learned it was possible to stay in the air for lengthy periods. Reasons for this included the Cubs' low level maneuverability; fewer attacks by enemy fighter planes as air superiority was won by the Allies; the effective protection afforded the Cubs by friendly anti-aircraft batteries; and the fact that the enemy was becoming increasingly aware that when he was spotted by an Artillery pilot there soon followed a deadly artillery barrage.

With the Cubs spending more time in the air, the liaison pilots found more and more missions they could readily accomplish in support of the ground troops. The original mission, adjustment of artillery fire, was being improved from lessons learned in combat. For example, the pilots found that flashes from artillery guns were easiest to see at dusk. They also quickly learned to memorize the positions of friendly anti-aircraft batteries, since enemy fighter plane pilots would not knowingly chase them into areas around these islands of safety. Such reports were continually forwarded to the Department of Air Training where the curriculum was fre-

quently revised to better prepare the students for the combat awaiting them.

Adjustment of artillery fire and counterbattery fire became more effective as the African campaign continued. At El Guettar the liaison pilots did an outstanding job. In March 1943 Air OPs of the 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions uncovered a major thrust being launched by the German 10th Panzer Division. A withering artillery barrage directed from the air helped stop the assault, and a penetration of the Allied lines was averted.

During the Tunisian Campaign two grasshopper pilots turned normal flying missions into a first for Army Aviation. Staff Sergeant liaison pilot Frank A. Perkins and Lieutenant Bollard (first name not available) are credited with capturing six German prisoners of war. This is the first case on record of prisoners being captured by airplane pilots in World War II.

The incident occurred along the Mediterranean coast between Carthage and Bizerte. Sergeant Perkins observed another grasshopper, flown by Bollard, circling six German soldiers on the beach. The two liaison pilots landed and captured the Germans with their .45 caliber pistols. Sergeant Perkins and a Signal Corps photographer who had accompanied him on the mission remained on the beach to guard the prisoners while Lieutenant Bollard flew to headquarters for help.

General Mark W. Clark, who had made several flights in Cubs during the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941, used them extensively during World War II. He flew thousands of miles to pay official visits and to supervise training. Early in the war he secured an L-4 Cub which was piloted, ac-

ording to General Clark, "by Captain Eugene P. Gillespie, a fine lad and an expert who could set the craft down almost anywhere, and usually did. I know one day when we sighted some soldiers playing baseball, the captain put our puddle jumper (L-4) down alongside the diamond and the GI's let me get my daily exercise by playing first base for a couple of innings."

General Clark had his L-4 equipped with a loudspeaker, which was used primarily to shout instructions from the air to ground troops engaged in exercises. However, occasionally the speaker was used for less serious purposes. General Clark relates, "When we landed in Africa, each soldier was given a card on which were written words and phrases in French and Arabic for use in his contacts with the natives. I carried the card in my pocket, and one day when we flew low over a little Arab village I got it out and tried the phrases over the loudspeaker. The people rushed out of their houses and stared in amazement into the sky from which came the booming Arabic words that might well have been their idea of the voice of Allah.

"On another occasion, when I was returning to Oudjda, we flew over my headquarters and I shouted over the loudspeaker for a car to meet me at the airport. There was a fine flurry of activity around our offices, and by the time I got to the airfield there were three cars there to meet me. Three different officers within the range of the loudspeaker, which was considerable, had each decided the order was for him."

Army Aviation entered combat in North Africa without a firm plan of organization or

tactical employment. In fact, many Artillery commanders didn't even want to be bothered with the light planes or the Artillery pilots. Frequently, they failed to make provisions for feeding air section personnel and many a night an entire artillery unit would move and leave its air section somewhere back in the desert. Had it not been for the ingenuity of the liaison pilots, Army Aviation may well have died on these deserts.

The Artillery pilots encountered many unanticipated



*A Free French officer in Algeria finds the L-4 useful in combat*

problems in administration, supply, maintenance, and tactical employment. They did not have manuals and SOPs in which answers were spelled out. They solved their problems by improvising, and they learned their lessons from experience. By the time the North African campaign ended, a pattern for the employment of Army Aviation had been fairly well formed and commanders began to see the value of the light airplane in combat. The liaison pilots were ready for the next campaign.

#### REPORT FROM SICILY

The ingenuity of the people associated with Army Aviation was directly responsible for the success and growth of the program. Captain Brenton A. Devol, Jr., who had flown from the deck of the *Ranger*, demonstrat-

ed such ingenuity by constructing a flight deck on an LST (Landing Ship Tank) and making the first flights from it in experiments at Lake Bizerte and then in the invasion of Sicily. This was the first tactical use of an LST as an aircraft carrier in combat, but the idea proved feasible and the system was later used at Anzio and in Southern France. Captain Devol was awarded the Legion of Merit for his work.

The LST was converted in 36 hours. A runway 12 feet wide by 70 yards long was constructed of timbers and topped with metal landing strip mesh.

Four Cubs took off from the LST in the Sicilian landings. The runway on the LST was given a slight downhill tilt by placing ballast in the forward tanks. During the takeoff the pilot kept his brakes on and the tail high so he could see the white guide line painted on the ship. The Cubs attained flight speed in about three-fourths of the run while the ship maintained 9 knots into about a 10 mph wind. The LST carried 8 light planes—two on the flight deck, two on the main deck and four disassembled.

Since Sicily is extremely mountainous, new tactical flight techniques were demanded. Pilots had to fly higher and learn to cope with the turbulence of mountain air currents.

There were few flat areas, and many landing strips (such as the 1st Infantry Division strip near Torina) were located on a steep mountainside. Pilots had to learn to land using higher power in stall approaches and let the aircraft roll only a few feet. Takeoffs were usually accomplished by hand turning the tail around and rolling downhill with full power.

The Sicilian Campaign saw

increased use of massed artillery fire directed on one target area from Air OPs. The enemy began to take note of the effectiveness of the Cubs and would silence all guns and personnel, both artillery and infantry when he wished to escape detection. Later in the campaign it was noted that the mere presence of the observation aircraft often silenced the enemy batteries.

The enemy did step up his attacks on the Cubs with rifle, machinegun, and antiaircraft fire, and with ME 109, FW 190, HE 111 and JU 87 aircraft. Enemy fighters usually attacked the Cubs in pairs. Many liaison pilots countered this by also going out in pairs, with one flying below as a lookout and giving radio warning. Proof that the

*Cub flies off LST during Mediterranean invasion rehearsal*



enemy was showing increased concern over the Cubs was reflected in a statement made by Maj Gen John P. Lucas that several intercepted German radio missions directed that "the next day the primary mission of their fighters would be against our Cubs."

The Cubs did an outstanding job as artillery spotters in Sicily and soon ground commanders found they could accomplish many other vital missions. In North Africa many commanders had ignored the pilots and their light planes, but in Sicily they began filing reports like these:

... Cubs were used extensively on Naval gunfire missions. One Cub was credited with nine Naval gunfire missions.

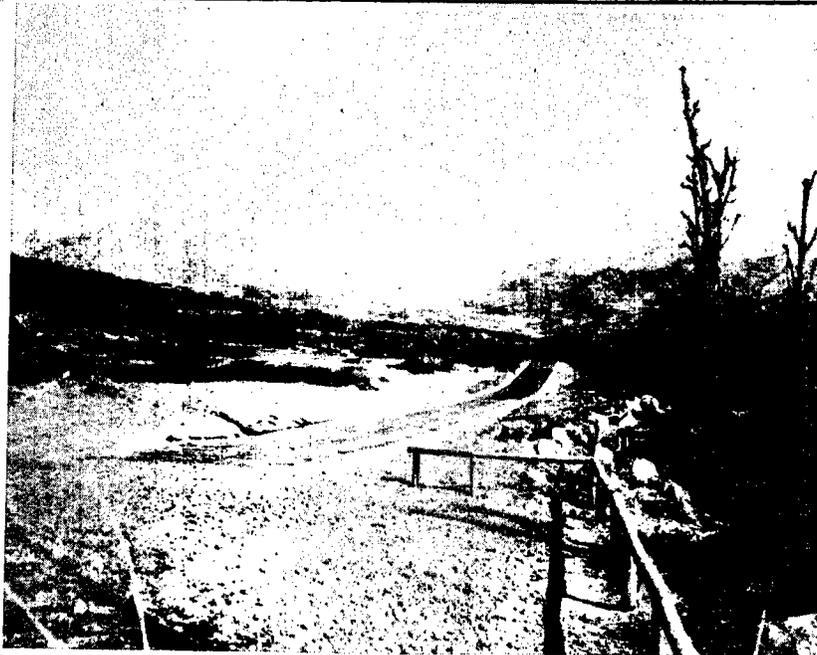
... Artillery observation aircraft were attacked on nine occasions by several enemy aircraft, but none were shot down; standard evasive tactics of rapid descent, contour flying and weaving have been successful. Ground fire and antiaircraft fire caused minor damage, but no aircraft were lost.

... When friendly bombers came over, our Air OPs would trail along behind them at a distance and as enemy ack-ack opened up they would adjust artillery fire on them.

... (from General Lucas) I have flown more in a Cub than in anything else. I flew back and forth across Sicily and when you go over the mountains you feel like you are perched on a pencil.

... Landing strips were few and uneven terrain caused serious turbulence. Liaison pilots learned to fly out to sea beyond the range of gunfire, parallel the coast, and look up the valleys to see what the enemy was doing.

... One observer flew on 20 different days between 11 October and 17 November (1943).



*The Fifth Army's "Ski Jump" airstrip was built at Futa Pass, Italy, in 1944. Its steep grade loomed as a challenge to the liaison pilots*

Longest time in the air for an observer was 5 hours, during which time he flew four missions. Average mission takes 1¼ hours.

... One observation post engineer devised a parachute drop gadget, so observation planes could supply troops marooned on a mountain. Water cans weighing 90 pounds and 65-pound rations packets were dropped with parachutes made of O. D. blankets, which were also useful.

Hard work, long hours, ingenuity and effective employment in the Sicilian Campaign made ground commanders sit up and take notice of the liaison pilots and their light planes. The Italian Campaign loomed and Army Aviation was ready to play a major role in the liberation of Italy.

#### REPORT FROM ITALY

"We call them 'hell raisers,'" the captured German officer was saying, "after our unter offizier von Dienst — the duty officer who inspects our barracks every day and always raises hell when he sees something that displeases him." The German officer was speaking of the Artillery's light airplanes, which

proved invaluable to ground commanders in the Italian Campaign.

Again it must be stressed that Army Aviators often had to improvise to get the job done. But improvise they did, and toward the end of the Italian Campaign their potential and value was well known to both Allied and enemy troops alike.

An example of the field expediency demonstrated by the Artillery pilots is seen in the story of the Futa Pass "Ski-Jump." During the fall and winter of 1944 the Fifth Army was located north of the Arno River and in the mountains south of the Po Valley. General Mark W. Clark had moved up to the 15th Army Group and was succeeded as Fifth Army Commander by Gen Lucius K. Truscott. Due to treacherous mountain country it was difficult for General Truscott to visit units under his command. It was treacherous to travel by jeep in the mountainous country and too time consuming to be practical. The general would use a Cub whenever possible. In the Futa Pass area it was particularly difficult for General Truscott to get to the nearest air-

strip. It involved a 30-minute jeep ride down out of the mountains, and then he had no assurance that a river running through the valley wouldn't be too high to cross.

Consequently, General Truscott pressed Capt Jack Marinelli, the Fifth Army Air Officer (now Colonel, retired), to get an airstrip built near the CP, "and the closer the better."

After much reconnaissance and map studying Captain Marinelli and an Army Engineer decided the only place to put the strip was on a mountainside. Within a few days a good strip covered with coco matting and pierced steel planks was completed. The only trouble was that the strip was so situated that a pilot had to land uphill and take off downhill.



*An L-4 mounted with a K-24 camera takes off from Anzio*

It had the appearance of a ski jump—being 735 feet long, and 30 feet wide with a 20 percent grade. The upper end of the strip was 97 feet higher than the lower part, which ended abruptly with a sheer 2,000-foot drop-off to the valley below.

"The interesting feature," according to Colonel Marinelli, "was that we had to use full throttle to taxi to the top of the strip after landing. But you could also take off down the strip without power."

General Truscott made good use of the Cubs in Italy and had

confidence in them. During the Volturno offensive he had the entire Fifth Army massed for an attack. However, bad weather had grounded the regular photo reconnaissance planes and for several days the entire Fifth Army was held up for want of photo reconnaissance.

Finally General Truscott sent up a G-2 artillery spotting Cub. It flew straight up the valley, snapping pictures as it went, and on the basis of those pictures the assault began. Cubs were used extensively by G-2 in Italy and other theaters of war to obtain information when other aircraft were grounded because of weather.

General Clark continued to find new uses for the "puddle jumper" (as he referred to the light planes) in the Italian Campaign. On 4 October 1943 he found himself unable to reach Naples by jeep because of a traffic jam. Since he had an important conference scheduled, he jumped into his "puddle jumper" and told his pilot, Capt Eugene P. Gillespie, to fly him to Naples. Arriving over the city they found that the regular airport had not yet been cleared of mines. Consequently, Captain Gillespie astounded the Neopolitans by landing on the Boulevard Carragiola, which runs along the edge of the Bay of Naples in the heart of the city. It was necessary for General Clark to commandeer a jeep, but he made the conference and later he and Captain Gillespie took off from the street.

On the Anzio and Cassino fronts, General Clark flew back and forth to coordinate the fighting. On 25 January 1944 Maj John T. Walker flew him to Anzio where they observed that the unloading was proceeding well. General Clark relates that he also observed German resist-

ance building rapidly against the bridgehead troops at Anzio, while on the other hand satisfactory progress was being made in the advance toward the town of Cisterna. General Clark consequently alerted the 180th Regimental Combat Team of the 45th Infantry Division and the Special Service Force for movement to the Anzio sector to help out.

It was during the time of the fighting in the Anzio-Cassino sector that General Clark experienced one of his most memorable flights. With Lieutenant Colonel Walker flying, the pair were proceeding on a flight from the mouth of the Volturno over their usual route about 20 miles at sea to Anzio. General Clark relates, "We usually flew only half-a-dozen feet above the waves in order to escape detection by enemy planes, and at Anzio, where the landing field was regularly under artillery attack, we often landed on the water. Walker had constructed pontoons for the Cub, and we would land close to the beach, jump out and use ropes to pull the craft up on the sand.

*Gen Mark Clark (center), Lt Col J. T. Walker ready to depart in L-4; Lt M. J. Strok at left*



"On our return journey this day, the waves were a bit high when we left Anzio, and after getting several soldiers to give us a push we bounced roughly out to sea. It was necessary for Walker to bounce the plane from wave to wave in order to get it airborne, and the water whammed against the pontoons with every bounce. We hit one wave with a terrific thud, but a moment later were in the air and on our way. A few minutes later, Jack said, 'You see what happened?'"

"I looked over the side of the plane and saw that both pontoons had been broken off and were hanging to the craft by a single wire.

"I see,' I replied.

"What,' Jack asked, 'do you want to do now?'"

"Hell, you're the pilot,' I said. 'Don't ask me.'

"The only reason,' he said, 'that I asked the question, sir, is that it is merely a matter of where the hell would you prefer to crash.'

"In that event, make it Sorrento. It's a pretty place.'

"Okay. It's Sorrento.'

"We flew for about two hours down the coast to the beach adjacent to the Albergo Vittoria, a hotel that had been made into a recreation and rest center for Fifth Army officers. There is a breakwater below the hotel, which stands on a high bluff with its spacious balconies facing the sea. The balconies were crowded with people, and as we circled unhappily over the beach they saw that the pontoons were broken and that we were in trouble. A crowd quickly collected at a point we indicated on the beach. Jack turned out to sea and then came in low over the water and as close to the beach as he could figure it. He put her down hard in about four

feet of water and both of us got out as fast as possible. It was a good landing from my viewpoint, but as we waded to shore we could see that the plane was fit only for the salvage heap."

Night adjustment of artillery fire began being used more frequently below Cassino and at Anzio. Often aerial fire adjustment at Anzio amounted to guns of all calibers, with many volleys per battery. On one particular



*An L-4 lands on an Anzio airstrip 50 yards from the front*

target over 370 guns were fired on TOT (time on target) adjusted by Capt John W. Oswalt, air officer of the 1st Armored Division. This included Naval gunfire from three cruisers offshore — the *USS Brooklyn*, the

*HMS Dido* and the *HMS Orion*.

Lieutenant Frank A. Perkins flew as a pilot for an observer who directed fire on Littoria and Adria on the Anzio beachhead. The towns literally crumbled under combined fire from Allied artillery and British and American ships.

During the fighting at the Anzio beachhead Allied troops were taking heavy casualties. An urgent need for whole blood arose and Fifth Army arranged to send 50 pints of blood in two Cubs. Lieutenants Paynee O. Lysne and Richard W. Blake flew the blood in to the beachhead under extremely hazardous conditions. In less than 24 hours after the request had been made, the blood was being administered.

Brigadier General J. I. Martin, Army Surgeon, officially extended his "sincere appreciation to these liaison pilots for the splendid assistance they rendered. Their willing cooperation undoubtedly was instrumental in saving the lives of Fifth Army soldiers."

Another report from the Anzio beachhead stated that the



*Mechanics check an L-4 under an olive tree on the Anzio beachhead*

Air OP planes suffered frequent attack by German fighter planes. To retaliate the radar observers would immediately warn antiaircraft batteries and any airborne Cubs whenever enemy planes approached. The liaison pilot would immediately head for the nearest antiaircraft battery and with any luck the enemy planes would follow him in and be shot down.

In the assault on Rome, Capt John Oswalt landed his Cub on a racetrack on the outskirts of the city on 3 June 1944 to contact lead tanks and armored cars entering the city. Within a few minutes Capt Bill Holden and Capt Bill McKay landed at the racetrack. It was beginning to look like Army liaison pilots were holding a reunion in Rome even before the city fell.

On 4 June General Clark had traveled by jeep to a point 5 miles from Rome. There he learned that some elements of the Special Service Force were already on the western edge of Rome and that other flying spearheads were entering the city. All were receiving resistance.

General Clark had told his pilot, Major Walker, to fly along Route No. 6 and try to locate his party in event a landing could be made and the Cub could be used. Major Walker located the general's party in the outskirts of Rome. There was no place to land, so Major Walker picked a school yard. He brought the Cub down inside a courtyard formed by the school buildings and an 8-foot brick fence. "It was a good spot for protection from the occasional shells falling in the area," General Clark recalls, "but not what I would call an ideal landing field. It definitely was short on runway space."

After the landing, General

Clark and Major Walker went to the foot of a hill leading up to the gates of the city. They could see a large sign labeled ROMA.

Later, after heavy firing had died down, General Clark was joined by Brig Gen Robert T. Frederick. They decided to go up and take a closer look at the sign, and as they crawled along a ditch they were joined by Maj Gen Geoffrey Keyes.

At the top things seemed safe, so the group stood up. "Some of the newspaper photographers had followed us," General Clark related, "and they asked us to move over beside the ROMA sign because it would make a good news picture. We did, and they quickly snapped the camera shutters, just as a German sniper cut loose at us. The first bullet went through the sign with a bang. I doubt that anybody ever saw so many generals duck so rapidly. We crawled back down the ditch to safer ground, but later Frederick had someone get the sign and eventually brought it to me as a souvenir. [This sign is now in General Clark's backyard at The Citadel.]

"Jack Walker and I waited around the school buildings for several hours until it became definite that I could not feasibly drive into Rome until the next day. With some hesitation, I got into the Cub plane while Jack figured out whether he had runway enough to clear the schoolyard fence. I was inclined to doubt it. He argued that he had enough room. As it turned out, he was right by a margin of three inches. We flew back to my command post."

After Rome fell the L-4 liaison pilots continued surveillance of the retreating German army. Since the German Air Force was being pressed in France, Army

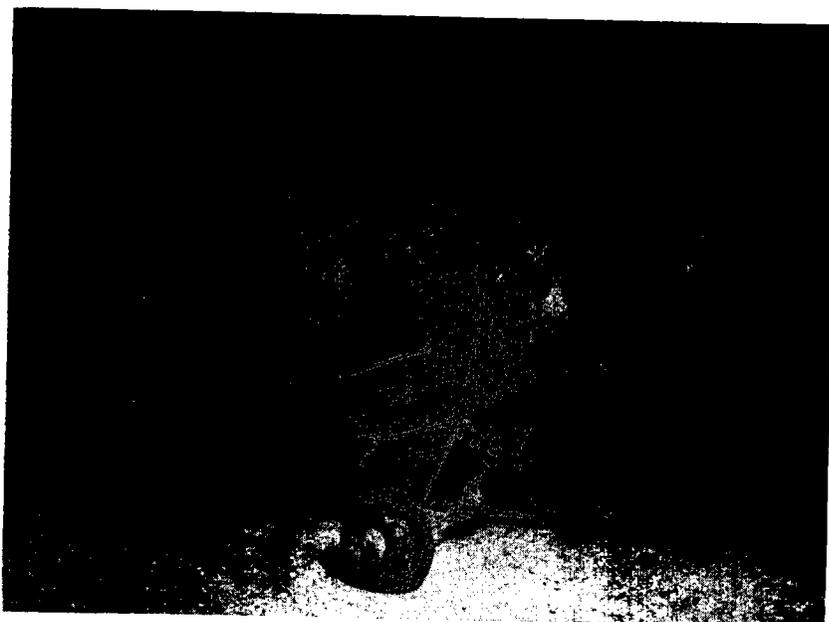
Aviators were able to fly deep into enemy territory without too much danger. However, in the North Apennines the Germans established the Gothic Line and antiaircraft fire became intense enough to drive the Cubs to higher altitudes.

During the pursuit of the German Army to the Gothic Line, the first L-5s (heavier type liaison planes) were employed in increasing numbers by the Fifth Army. It was during this period that the "Horsefly" mission was developed.

Actually "Horsefly" grew out of a system known as "Rover Joe," which was developed by the XII Air Support Command. It amounted to having an air force officer go to the front to talk fighter planes onto targets. This system was widely used in the Fifth Army. On 29 June an experiment was made using 1st Armored Division L-5s to direct fighter plane attacks. The controllers were air officers who flew in four L-5s, each painted a different color for identification (Horsefly Yellow, Horsefly Blue, etc.). The experiment was not considered a complete success, but did prove the idea was practical.

Further work with "Horsefly" missions by IV and VI Corps was more successful. The VI Corps (in Southern France) used one Army L-5 and one Air Force L-5. The L-5s were piloted by Air Force fighter pilots from the supporting squadron and crewed by Army observers. Radio contact with the fighter planes was maintained.

Target information was radioed to the Army observers in the "Horsefly" planes. The Army observer and fighter pilot in the L-5 then located the target and directed the fighter planes on their runs—frequently dropping clusters of smoke grenades near



*Lts M. J. Strok (right) and R. W. Blake leave on a night flight*

the targets. This was essentially the same system the Fifth Army developed in Italy.

During the Italian Campaign extensive pioneer work was done in night direction of artillery fire from the Air OPs.

Captain Marinelli, the II Corps aviation officer, organized and conducted numerous night flights on the Cassino front with L-4s and L-5s. The L-5s were more desirable for night flying since they contained instrument panel lights (a flashlight was needed in the L-4).

During operations on the west coast near Gaeta, Captain Marinelli directed night operations from a small airstrip behind a ridge of mountains which offered protection from enemy gunfire. At night, the liaison pilots would fly well out to sea and then sneak in behind German lines and call in artillery. Naval gunfire also was directed during these operations. An Army liaison officer would take a 610 FM radio to the ship off-

shore. He would communicate with the Air OP pilot and relay target information to the Navy gunners. "You could see the ships when they would fire," Colonel Marinelli recalls. "It was a really impressive sight when they'd fire a salvo—the whole ocean would light up."

On one occasion ground fog moved in and hid the airstrip while Captain Marinelli was out on a night mission. "It was a bright moonlit night," Colonel Marinelli recalls, "and it was easy enough to find the airstrip because the mountains stuck up above the fog."

"We didn't have any homing devices, so when I got into the area I contacted S/Sgt Charles Biggsby and Sgt Charles Hair who were on the ground listening over the FM radio in our jeep.

"They'd listen for the motor and fire flares and tell me when I was right over the strip. I could barely make out the glow of the flares. They kept this up

and talked me down until I broke out at about 300 feet and saw the jeep lights. Actually it wasn't as bad as it may sound," Colonel Marinelli adds, "I knew the altitude of the field and the heading of the strip, but on the other hand we didn't make a habit out of flying in the fog."

Captain O. G. Goodhand also conducted numerous night flying missions during the Italian Campaign. While assigned to the 35th Field Artillery Group he developed a feasible method of night adjustment of long range artillery fire that is either impossible or extremely hazardous in the daytime.

By the time Rome fell General Clark had more time in "puddle jumpers" than many liaison pilots did. He also had his share of unusual flights, such as one made during the pursuit to the Arno River: "When the Germans were driven beyond Civitavecchia, I had Jack Walker pilot me there on June 9 in a new L-5, which was a little larger and a little faster than the type of Piper Cub we had been using. I wanted to survey the port from the air to determine how much it had been damaged by the Germans before their withdrawal. It looked pretty bad as we came over the port, so I told Jack to start circling and just keep on circling until I told him to stop.

"As a result of this order, not only was I looking down at the water, but Jack was looking down, too, and neither of us saw an American barrage balloon that had just been run up as protection against a German air attack. There was a sudden grinding crash and the wing of our plane hit the barrage-balloon cable, which extended down to a truck at the edge of the harbor. The cable slid along the wing and caught on the airspeed in-

dicator [pitot tube]. . . .By the time I realized what had happened, gas was leaking from the wing tank and we were swinging wildly in a circle. My first thought was to bail out, but I remembered I had no parachute.

"Jack pulled the throttle wide open as we swung in a kind of spiral, and we went around the cable in merry-go-round fashion several times, spinning toward the water. Then, happily, the cable broke while Jack could still straighten out the plane into a glide. Gas was all over the place by then, so he shut off the engine and drifted toward land. Neither of us ever figured out just how we escaped that time, and the men handling the balloon later said that it had seemed impossible that Jack ever could pull the plane out of it. In addition there was a bomb attached to the balloon that was supposed to slide down the cable and explode when anything struck the cable. The only reason we could imagine that it had not was because we were going at very slow speed in a light airplane.

"Jack picked out a field not far from the water and set the plane down on it as tenderly as possible. When we crawled out, both of us were still shaking.

"'Sir, you have just witnessed a miracle,' Jack said, and it wasn't exactly a joke. 'I really thought it was all over.'"

The addition of the L-5 brought many varied comments from the front. Many thought the L-5 was too heavy and should not be considered. Others felt the L-4 was underpowered and preferred the L-5.

Both aircraft had their good points. The L-4 was extremely maneuverable and able to get in and out of many more confined areas than the L-5. However, the L-5 carried more of a pay-

load and had a few instruments.

At least one liaison pilot cast his vote for the L-4 because it was easy to fly and maneuverable. The unknown pilot wrote of his encounter with a German ME 109 fighter plane: "I was waiting on a TOT when I was startled by what seemed to be a lot of Roman candles shooting past my L-4. I rolled on my back and dove immediately. As I descended I noticed the German lowering his gear to slow down. About then ground fire opened up on the 109 and drove him off.

"It was then I noticed the dive had broken the airspeed indicator and the ribs on the wing were buckled. The L-4 was tops. If we had used any other aircraft with the experience level of our pilots we would have lost a lot more people."

However, the L-5 was superior to the L-4 in the performance of such missions as aerial wire laying. The L-4 could carry only one-half mile of wire at a time and was used infrequently for this purpose in combat. The only reported incident was when an L-4 laid wire to establish the first communications across the Volturno River. The L-5 was capable of laying up to

5 miles of wire on a single run. Wire laying missions increased in the European and the Pacific theaters of war after incorporation of the L-5.

As in Sicily, reports of the accomplishments of the Air OPs flowed in from commanders:

. . . Troops moving forward to the front had to pass through a bottleneck which the Germans had under observation and were shelling. Seven Cub planes were sent up and the German artillery fire stopped. The Cubs were kept up and the troops passed through without receiving any more fire.

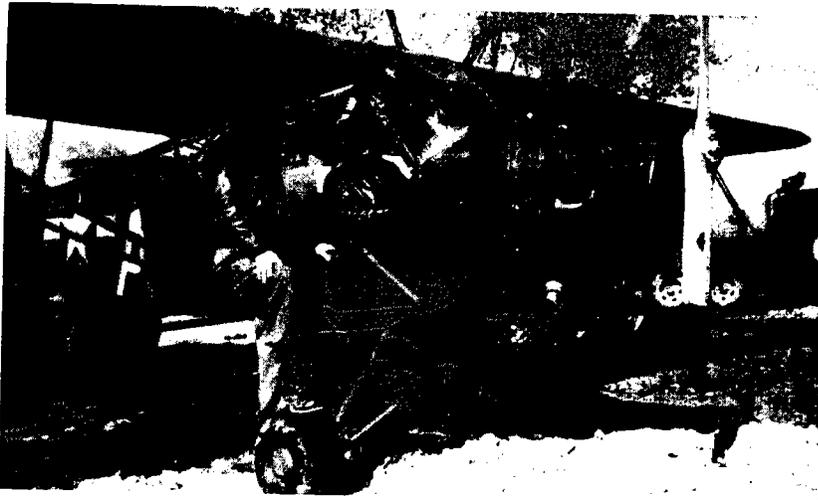
. . . The Germans experienced great difficulty shooting down our Cubs, but one did the job by cutting off the Cub's wing with his own wing.

. . . In the last offensive (in Italy) Cub planes were used in at least one instance to drop pigeons by parachute to forward elements of infantry. The Cubs were of great value to our G-3 in reporting locations of various units when contact was lost with our own troops.

. . . The two most abundant sources of information of enemy locations and units came from PW interrogations and the ob-

*An L-4 pilot on patrol looks over a house in Italy in 1944*





*Brig Gen. Thomas E. Lewis (left) chats with his pilot, Lt M. J. Strok*

servations of the Cub pilots.

... One morning a Cub flying over the mountains spotted one of our mule pack trains proceeding to the front over a mountain trail. Two or three miles beyond, the Cub was fired on by rifles. Upon further investigation the pilot discovered a bypassed group of about 20 to 30 men with machineguns who appeared to have set up an ambush on the same trail our pack train was using. The pilot immediately flew back and dropped a warning message. Thus the ambush was averted.

... The Air OP boys tangle with 88s and ME 109s—risk their necks to take infantry officers on air reconnaissance and are feared by German artillery to such an extent that they quit giving us hell every time a division plane takes to the air.

... Once, only a few minutes after one of the observation planes appeared, ... a moving German convoy was destroyed by American gunfire. On another occasion, a concentration of Nazi troops and material was broken up after one of the feared little planes slipped from behind a mountain and detected it.

... Nothing seems quite so in-

congruous as to see a puny, impudent little plane weaving its way through a valley where heavy guns are blasting the enemy. Their actions constantly amaze ground troops and the pilots of fighter planes and bombers.

... Combat pilots [American] in their 2,000-horsepower planes delight in chastising the saucy "Hell Raisers" by diving at the light plane. When caught in the speedy fighter's backwash, it invariably turned the light plane upside down. It's good clean fun and both pilots enjoy it. [? — Editor's note]

... Lt [Robert S.] Feinburg recently watched guns, men and material destroyed by artillery fire called in by an Air OP. He reported, "It may sound ridiculous, but those Germans actually left their foxholes and started climbing trees."

... Someone had to spot the German gun positions in the mountains and our air observation planes did just that.

... A Cub made a low pass over the patrol and out tumbled food, ammunition, and the paper. The Cub had delivered copies of a special 4-color holiday edition of the "45th Division

News" to the troops' doorstep.

During the last few days of the war in Italy, German and Italian prisoners began streaming down out of the mountains to surrender. General Truscott got Captain Marinelli to fly him up and down the Po Valley to see the enemy troops coming in. They spotted a large number of German tanks, trucks and troops milling around the square of one small town.

General Truscott and Captain Marinelli decided to fly in low over the German troops in sort of a peace-making gesture. However, as they got right over the square, every German in town opened up on the L-5 in what seemed like a last minute attempt to shoot up all their ammunition before the war ended. Despite having their plane riddled with bullets, the pair managed to escape unharmed. They continued their flight, but at a more discreet altitude and at a considerable distance from the little town full of angry Germans.

After the war in Europe was over, General Truscott encountered Captain Marinelli and informed him, "I just wanted you to know that the last time I was shot at in the war was when I was riding in your airplane."

Army Aviation's stock was soaring by the end of the Italian Campaign and the advocates of organic aviation were jubilant. But their missions were not accomplished without tragic and painful moments. General Clark deeply felt the loss of his pilot and friend, Lt Col John T. Walker, who was killed in a crash on a flight to England. All Army Aviators who fought in World War II and Korea recall similar tragedies and the names of comrades who paid the great price for victory. Army Aviation has not forgotten them. 