

THE AVENGER

"We live in the wind and sand . . . and our eyes are on the stars"

VOL. 1

AVENGER FIELD, SWEETWATER, TEXAS, MONDAY, JULY 26, 1943

NO. 3

Class 3 Achieves First Goal

Experts Check 'Chutes

DEFT SKILL A REQUISITE FOR REPACKING

By Betty Clements

The skillful fingers of a Texan, Mr. H. B. Stevens, have already assured the safety of two Fifinellas forced to "hit the silk," and these fingers provide for every one of us the daily reserve insurance of well-cared-for parachutes.

There is no margin for error in parachute rigging. Mr. Stevens, is the only licensed rigger on the field, is personally responsible for the packing of each chute. He was trained here at Avenger Field.

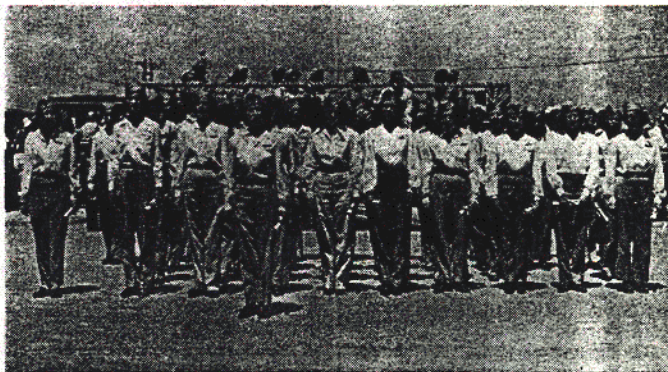
His former position as a sewer and salesman of all types of Singer sewing machines qualifies him particularly for work with parachute silk. The sewing machine which he uses here in the repair of chutes is a Singer, especially made for that purpose. Huge spools of silk thread stored in the rigging room supply the machine.

Only minor repairs are made here, however, as Avenger Field does not have the facilities necessary to make drop-tests of the chutes.

Chutes are made of high-grade silk or nylon. Silk, the material in our chutes, presents a very particular maintenance problem. You have undoubtedly noticed that the sides of silk stockings will stick together when they dry after being washed. The folds in parachute silk will do the same if they have been wet or have come into contact with grease or oil. When any of the folds stick together, the delicate arrangement of the canopy will not unfold properly and the parachute will fail to open completely. This particular defect is difficult to detect as the chute may have dried on the outside by the time it is returned to the parachute room, leaving no indication that the silk inside has been wet.

The greatest possible degree of care of parachutes is imperative, says Mr. Stevens. Improper fold-

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 3)



Class 43-W-3 in formation for the last time before spreading their wings in active service.

Links Fly 90 Hours A Week

REQUIRE REGULAR PRE-FLIGHT AND OVERHAUL

By Margaret Seip

In the luxury of their newly air-conditioned surroundings, the seventeen Link instructors continue to chant constantly, "Trainer Control to Army 236 requesting instrument check." It is their job to teach us the fundamentals of instrument flying and convince us that the Gremlins are not playing with airspeed.

Sergeant Hill, who is from the southern part of just what we're deep in the heart of, is the officer in charge of the department. The Links are painted in true army colors, blue and yellow, and it is Sergeant Hill's dream to someday have them all named, and Fifinellas painted on their noses. Sergeant Lewis is the dispatcher, and Sergeant Gillen is in charge of maintenance.

All of the instructors have had at least three months of training which consists of thirty hours of flying the Link, thirty hours of supervised instruction and many more hours of observing other students and instructors. They study also navigation, meteorology, C. A. R., radio range orientation and maintenance of the Trainer in ground school. Three of the instructors received their training at Brooks Field, seven at Kelly and seven at Randolph Field.

The regular schedule of the Link instructors is to teach about six hours a day, with an hour in between each student. At present the trainees fly the ten Links about ninety hours per day and to date have accumulated approximately 3,000 hours.

Sergeant Gillen, the maintenance supervisor, really has his hands full keeping the Links in operation. They are pre-flighted every morning, and given more thorough checks every fifty, hundred and five hundred hours. On the five hundred hour check the Link is completely torn down and given a thorough overhaul. His most difficult problem recently was to fix a Link which gained altitude with the nose pointing straight down, and lost altitude when it was supposed to be climbing.

Each trainee is given thirty hours in the Link. The first five hours of primary training consist of familiarization with the Link, learning standard rate turns, and coordination of the instruments.

In the basic training of fifteen hours the problems given in primary are repeated with rough air, and the trainee also becomes familiar with more instruments,

(Continued on Page 6, Col. 2)

Brig. Gen. Blackburn Presents Graduation Address

By Ann Baumgartner

Houston's "Lost Platoon"—the class that never got to be the top class at Houston and was just a stranger at Sweetwater—received its graduation wings and finally came into its own on Saturday, July 3.

The last of the small, guinea-pig classes to be trained at Houston, Class 43-W-3 arrived by BT at Avenger Field to finish two months of training before graduation. In those two months—though they speculated about bases and about being made instructors—the girls of the "Lost Platoon" never thought they'd really graduate.

But it happened, right on schedule.

In order to address the graduating class, Brig. Gen. T. W. Blackburn, commanding general of the 31st Flying Training Wing, flew in Saturday morning from his headquarters in Enid, Okla. Gen. Blackburn and his staff are responsible for coordinating the 318th training with the procedure endorsed by Hq., Gulf Coast Training Center, Randolph Field.

"All your life," Gen. Blackburn told the graduates, "you've been told nice things. I want to tell you some things that may disillusion you a bit." These things were the hard problems in their new job as ferry pilots, the strict discipline required, and the uncompromising competition from the men who also ferry planes.

"But we know your training here is hard," he said, "and that when you get through it, you are qualified as a competent ferry pilot."

Major Robert K. Urban, commanding officer, and Miss Cochran also addressed the class, before Miss Cochran presented each girl with her silver W-3 wings. Lt. P. B. McAnany introduced the speakers.

Led by Group Commander Mary Wiggins, Group Adjutant Virginia Harris and Assistant Group Commander Marjorie Sanford, undergraduate classes W-4, W-5, W-6 and W-7 marched in review, with the Stamford, Texas, AAF Primary Training Detach-

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Vol. 1

No. 3

Editorial

Tolerance is a kind of virtue that brings its own reward, but all too often we're inclined to scoff at any attempts to practice it.

We live in a world which is keyed to a very high pitch by its struggle and strife to rush to completion a job that takes time. No change in social order has ever been accomplished quickly, because, though it starts with the individual, it isn't discovered until it affects the mass—then any corrections the mass desires are of large proportions, because the errors seem tremendous. It's a bit like "over-controlling," and anyone who flies knows what this means.

Apply the principle to moments in our daily living and this is what we find. We make a remark, and "didn't mean a thing by it," but the person to whom it was said, realizing that it is our right to enjoy freedom of speech, quietly acquiesces. Dismayed at being understood, we loudly claim an insult, our feelings have been hurt, and we set up a defense to avenge ourselves. We now want to hurt the one who so thoroughly understood us, the one who "tolerated" our self expression.

We forgot to anticipate the effect of our careless words—we were lagging in our forethought—very much like our plane's instruments. Are we going to continue over-controlling with further remarks, or are we going to tolerate the other person's reciprocal right to choose a course of action toward us.

Let's get on the ball; plan ahead in our lives to make the easy corrections at the proper time and whenever it's necessary; use our intelligence and recognize our own relative position in life. Let's incorporate a little tolerance in our lives and enjoy the smoothness of a good pilot.



PERILS OF THE O. D.

EXPERTS CHECK 'CHUTES

(Continued from Page 1)

ing or carrying of the chute by trainees can cause a premature opening of the chute. This is extremely hazardous to the pilot and the plane. Distortion of the rip cord housing, twists in the harness, and breaks in the stitching may also occur. These shorten the life of the chute.

Parachutes are inspected every 10 days and packed every 60 days. Inspection takes note of soiled or damp spots, damage, and condition of the tacking. Packing involves hanging the chute by the tip of the canopy for 24 hours in the drying room, a high-ceilinged, narrow, temperature controlled room in Hangar Number One and the complete inspection of all parts. It includes repair work and the folding of the large expanse of silk into the small canvas pack. Packing a chute requires about 35 minutes.

Each parachute sent out by the manufacturer has been severely tested throughout the process of its completion. Each chute has a log book similar to that kept for aircraft. In this log is kept the record of the chute's final test, every inspection and packing it is given, any damage which it has received, and any repairs made.

Assisting Mr. Stevens in the work of the parachute room are Bettye Brown, Mamie Staton Brewer and Eva Brown of Sweetwater, and Charlene Dodson and Ernestine Harris of Roscoe. Most of these girls hope someday to be licensed to pack parachutes. One of them, Mrs. Mamie Staton Brewer, is ready to take her rigging test from the C. A. A. at Fort Worth. She was trained here at Avenger Field and will work with Mr. Stevens.

Before the war very few women were qualified to pack chutes. The skill necessary to earn a license is obtained only after a great deal of hard work and training, and a licensed rigger is regarded with the highest of respect by aviation people. At present a number of women are packing chutes, especially in England where much of that work is done by the W. A. A. F.

The parachute department offers the following suggestions for the most efficient handling of a parachute during an actual jump. Many jumpers draw up their legs as they leave the plane. This causes a "somersaulting" of the body before the parachute is released. Avoid this by letting the body remain straight.

The rip cord must never be pulled until the jumper is free of the plane. The rip cord should be pulled with a quick jerk in order to break the thread which seals it. A slow pull is not as effective.

As soon as the parachute opens, any twists in the suspension lines should be corrected. During the descent and upon landing the

jumper must face the direction of drift. If landing in a high wind, the parachute may be more easily collapsed if the jumper will run forward toward the canopy. This will prevent his being dragged.

When landing on ground, part of the landing shock should be absorbed by partly flexing the legs. If the jumper discovers he will land in water, the leg straps should be unfastened, then the chest strap. Three or four feet above the water, the jumper should slide his arms out of the harness and drop out of the chute.

Parachute accidents due to errors in packing are almost unknown. This record is a credit to packers, and shows definitely their skill and sense of responsibility.

Buy War Bonds
 Every Pay Day
 * * *
 Let's Double
 Our Quota



A LETTER HOME

By Margaret Hurlburt

Sunday Afternoon.

My Dear:

Two months have gone by and we're brown-skinned, crusty (that's a crust of sunburn and dust) Texans. They're pouring knowledge into us as if we belonged to the funnel gang—both in flying and in ground school.

You know the trouble I used to have with frontal areas! Well, at last I know what to do—land, return to base, or avoid the front by flying around it. All of 43-W-4 and 6 had a chance to practice this last weekend. (At least the group who went to Big Spring did.) We hadn't been there half an hour when a drunk front moved in. We knew right away there were only three things to do. Since returning to base was impractical and landing was impossible, we simply avoided it. (We did, too, so get that skeptical look off your face!)

We've also learned somebody's law, that "what goes up must come down!" and somebody else's, that "the higher the pressure, the lower the velocity." (Whether this applies to blood pressure or not we haven't been told—but we're watching it.) In navigation we've worked the Army Case one, two, and three problems; double drift; alternate airport; moving base; in fact, all kind of paper problems;—you'll never believe this—in the air we still get lost!

Physics—well—Physics— And Math too! Code is rapidly getting into this classification.

As I told you before, this place leads us to believe that the male of the species is rapidly becoming extinct. We hope that when we return to civilization (not too soon, please) we will find that this is not true.

Love,
Marge.

S. M. L.*

By Helen Dettweiler

The floor is fairly shining
And shelves are spick and span
(The windows gleam to even
Please an army man.)

My shoulder's almost paralyzed
From brushing shoes (but gee,
I even must admit myself
A fancy job he'll see.)

The bed is made—there's not a
crease
Or wrinkle on the cot;
The sheets are turned down perfectly
And measured to the dot.

The locker tops are dustless, and
The towel hangs just right;
The desks and chairs are perfect
too—
(This bay's a lovely sight!)

The Major has departed
And I am much the wiser
He slapped a gig on me, for I
Forgot to dust the riser.

* Saturday Morning Inspection.

WATERMELON PARTY

The watermelon party, held Friday evening, July 2, at the USO was a tremendous success. Poor weather and the prospect of thunderstorms did not diminish the attendance, and the trainees, accompanied by Miss Hayes, Mrs. Deaton, Miss Townsen. Capt. and Mrs. Ward, and Capt. and Mrs. Hunt, consumed 35 huge Texas Watermelons, 1,154 pounds of this juicy fruit.

Mr. E. H. Saulson, former director of the USO, and Mr. LeRoy Kellman, present director, made the girls feel welcome at once. Their hospitable assistants included John Pinson, John Perry, and Homer Bradford, who did the honors as carvers; and Mrs. Pinson, Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Bradford, Mrs. K. M. Camp, Mrs. A. A. Eberle, Mrs. Ed May, Mrs. Si Edwards, Mrs. George Stiles, and Mrs. C. C. Robinson were most gracious hostesses.

Besides watermelon, the girls took advantage of the many facilities which the USO offers. Ping-pong, chinese checkers, and cards were minor events compared to the high calibre jitter-bugging. But the best dancing of all, the highlight of the entertainment, was done by a Sweetwater Square Dance team, made up of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Broughton, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Bishop, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Brann, and Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Schooler. They have excited a good many enthusiasts who will be invited to take part in some square dance classes.

Towards the end of the evening, Virginia Broome's "Reminiscent of the best watermelon in Georgia" gave proof that the party had succeeded; as did Maggie Callahan's comment when she dived into her sixth piece: "Excuse me, I've gotta go."

Nancy Love Visits Avenger Field

First, I wish to say how much I am impressed at seeing this group of girls. You can all remember what a dog house we women were in a year ago and we were lucky to fly Cubs or anything—and thrilled with the whole thing.

You, no doubt are interested in specific information.

First, there are eight ferrying groups of which four have "WAFS."

They are:
Second Ferrying Division at Wilmington, Delaware.

Third Ferrying Division at Romulus Michigan, near Detroit.

Fifth Ferrying Division at Dallas, Texas.

Sixth Ferrying Division at Long Beach.

You are quartered on the field in B. O. Q. At present Wilmington and Romulus have them, but Long Beach and Dallas will have them in a very short time. You will have the same privileges as the officers. You will be entitled to use the Officer's Club, etc. It is a very military life.

Due to priorities we no longer have the drab gray uniform. We now have uniforms the same color and material as officers to which will be added after the War Department approves—an officer's blouse, skirt, as well as slacks and oversea's cap. The winter uniform will be the same cut as the summer, only it will be of wool. You will wear slacks 90 per cent of the time and skirts only for formal occasions.

When you are assigned and arrive for duty you will have indoctrination for about one week in order to learn the necessary paper work you must file when delivering an airplane.

You are on duty 7 days a week. When you return from a trip you are given a reasonable length of time off to take care of your personal affairs, and your laundry, which has proved to be quite a problem.

The trips are long, averaging about 1,000 miles. On the trip you are completely responsible for the ship assigned to you, including having a guard and sending an R. O. N. to your home base. This R. O. N. states where your ship is each night and why, so that your office may know where every ship is every day and every night.

The life is definitely a military life, and you live on a military post.

You will start on P. T.'s and B. T.'s. After you fly a P. T. 2,000 miles X-C without a radio you will learn a lot about navigation. Then you will go on to AT-6's and AT-17's. It is entirely up to you and your own hard work how fast you progress.

The "WAFS" started on Cubs and PT's, and 6 months later they



Nancy Harkness Love

had flown 10 types, and 17 different designs.

THE LOST PLATOON

(Continued from Page 1)

ment drum and bugle corps setting the cadence.

Class 43-W-3 won its nickname of "Lost Platoon" way back in the first month it settled down in the motor courts of Houston.

The W-3s began on cubs, had to keep in them for 25 hours and had army checks in them. Those army checks weren't to test how well they flew a cub but whether, judging from the way they handled cubs, they used enough rudder and were definite enough to fly a BT. Then they went cross country in those cubs too.

Then came W-4. W-3 watched them climb into the PTs before all their class had finished cubs. Then they watched W-4 fly the PTs away—all the way to Sweetwater.

Then they sat on the ground, waiting for W-1 to finish up their time on the BTs. Meanwhile word came that W-4 was starting on BTs too. So W-3 gritted its teeth and finished up ground school and continued with its calisthenics that had to be taken in the road as there was no other place available. Each night, the W-3s took the long bus ride back to the courts where they became civilians—two to a big bathroom, beds made, rooms cleaned, no lights out. But in the morning they had to shake off the civilian attitude and become an army cadet again.

When they arrived in Sweetwater, no one seemed to want them and they graduated before they really became a prt of the 318th. And then, they thought they wouldn't graduate at all, because their assignments to ferry bases didn't come through till the day before graduation.

But 43-W-3 is proud of being

NEW ARMY PERSONNEL IN COMMAND

By Gene Slack

Hundreds of women under the jurisdiction of one man! Not since the days of Solomon has such a situation occurred until Avenger Field, with Maj. Robert K. Urban as the modern Solomon.

That is a little the way Major Urban felt when he heard a few months ago that he was to be sent to Sweetwater to head the women trainees. He found, however, that the position entailed little more difficulty than did the training of cadets.

Major Urban came to Avenger from Ballinger Field. Not a native Texan, he has lived in Texas most of his life and received his training at Brooks and Kelly Fields in 1928 and 1929. He went into and remained on reserve status until April, 1942, when he came back on duty at Ballinger.

Assisting Major Urban is the Adjutant, Capt. J. C. Ward, former adjutant at Ballinger. Captain Ward has been in service since September, 1941. He received his training in R. O. T. C. at the University of Nebraska.

Other new personnel on the field and their former stations are as follows:

Lieut. James F. Blackburn, from Brady, Texas, now an assistant airforces supervisor (check pilot); **Capt. Robert H. Hunt**, Corsicana, Texas, assistant airforces supervisor; **Lieut. William H. La Rue**, San Marcos, Texas, athletic director; **Lieut. Fielding Clayton**, Stamford, Texas, assistant airforces supervisor; **Lieut. G. M. Craemer**, Pine Bluff, Ark., assistant airforces supervisor; **Lieut. Jerrell A. Shepperd**, Houston, Texas, assistant airforces supervisor; **Lieut. A. S. Warren**, Aviation Cadet Center, San Antonio, Texas, a medical officer; **Lieut. A. J. Pokorny**, Fort Stockton, Texas, assistant airforces supervisor; **Capt. Buster Rose**, Houston, Texas, Engineering office; **Lieut. Patrick B. McNany**, Pittsburgh, Kan., Intelligence Officer; **Capt. Jack P. Miller**, Fort Stockton, Texas, assistant airforces supervisor; **Lieut. Albert A. Harting**, LaJunta, Colo., Public Relations Officer; and **Capt. Sidney R. Haskins**, now sub-depot commandeer.

among the guinea-pigs. They feel they've helped Miss Cochran in shaping the school. And, though they respect the efficiency and title of the 318th, they'll always feel they belonged to the 319th in Houston.

"We are the Lost Platoon," is what they sing. "We could fly to the moon. We do inverted loops, without our parachutes. We peel off in a dive, some say that's suicide. Slap-happy though we seem, we're really on the beam."

What's Cooking for Open Post



Confined to Post on "Catfish Row"



Some sun bather



Joann Garrett burns her fingers while Catherine Jones and Elizabeth Carsey show no interest.



Tommy Taylor, Marge Nolan, Lucy Walker, and Ann Waldner dabble in Bay F's wading pool.



(Clockwise) Feeley, Scantland, Cusack, Timothy, Snyder, and Radziwon wait for Waldner to shower—that's Ann in the window.



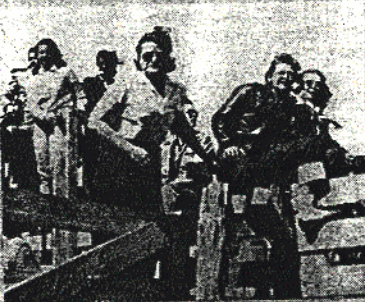
Taylor's (Tommy and Jean), Deb Truex, Blanche Osborn, Margaret Wendelin, Virginia Yates, and Lucy Walker picnic and swim.



Vae King goes boating.



Helen James, Win Wood, and Mickey Stevenson "hanger fly."



At a Rodeo, we find spectators Nancy Nesbett, Janet Zuchowski, Dwight Hildinger, Virginia Hill, and Ruth Underwood.



Lt. La Rue has a "busman's holiday" and does a trot around the field.



Lena Cusack found some hills and a good horse to ride.



Some visited ranches to see what the West is really like.



Didi Johnson even tried some roping—with assistance.



Sharon, Nesbett, Johnson, Bradshaw, Hildinger, Ellington show a little dissension along the lines of dress.



In real Western garb are Sharon Cook, and Ellington. But where do you hide the hats and boots during inspection?

On Post—But Happy



Amazing gymnasts—Johnson and Nesbett upheld by Ellington.



The complete team—Johnson, Sharon, Ellington, Hildinger, and Nesbett.



Maggie Callahan wants the folks at home to see what she can fly.



Velma Saunders about to shout "both mags."



No, that's not a winter gym suit. It's just Jane Bryan in her G.I.'s.



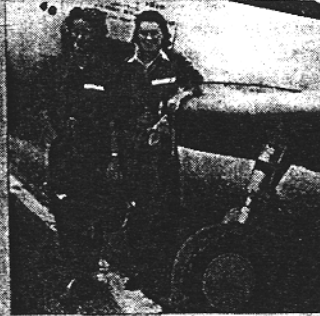
Grace Putnam seems to be having trouble with her Form I.



Ridiculous to sublime? Nancy Doherty, Helen Krouse, and Catherine Jones.



Stage-House Sallies—Jane Page, Ann Ross, Gene Smith, and Pat Sears.



Duke Caldwell and Anna Flynn with Primary behind them.



One way to get the sun—Margaret Case, Helen Krouse, and Catherine Jones.



Instructor and group—Vae King, Bethel Gibbons, Mr. Hubbard, Pat Bowser, Joann Garrett, and Anna Flynn.



Squeekie Meyer in her "Flight Line Snuggies."



A happy memory for these sultry days—Johnson, Hildinger, Nesbett, Bradshaw, Sharon, and Ellington.

Memo On Cross-Country

(Editor's Note: As long as we fly, we'll have cross-country (no doubt you've heard that ferrying includes a bit of this practice) but every now and then some one shows us a new angle. So, we just thought we'd let you in on a bit of info from one 43-W-5 who keeps her flight amused, come what may. Go ahead, "Florida.")

Always, I had just missed a real X-C. In CPT we hardly got out of sight of home; in PT's nothin' stopped that Air Corps but the weather; so in BT's, I was as excited as a child on Christmas at the prospect of a real X-C. As a result, mighty were my preparations. Hours I spent pouring over the dog-eared map choosing check points at minute intervals, worrying about finding same, and pitching pennies in the fountain for good weather.

Since I was scheduled for a dual trip, my feeble brain decided that if I'd design little gadgets to keep my instructor busy and happy, he'd do less barking when I strayed off course—so burning the midnight oil at the risk of countless demerits, I composed a series of aerial signposts. Each was to be flashed at appropriate intervals, like: "Ice Cold Coca-Cola. Wichita Falls—50 miles," and various other signs extolling the merits of long, tall drinks. I allowed as how he'd be drooling before we reached a point where he could indulge in even a long drink of H2O.

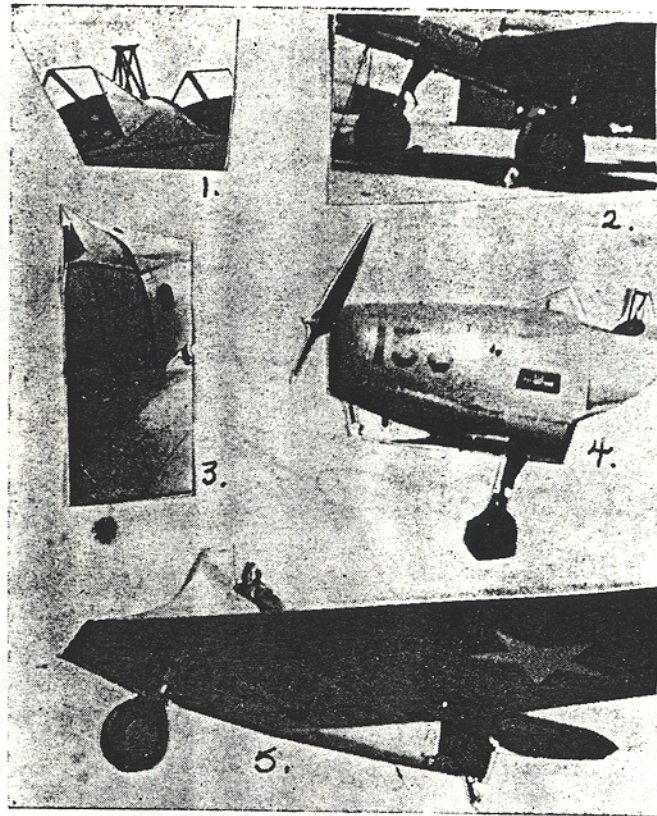
When I composed missiles containing quotes from said Instructor like: "Did you see that little grey check point? Which way did it go, George? Lost? No, just puzzled." (That's a take-off on his little grey rabbit story which delights us so often.)

Branching into poetry I delivered the little one about secretary spread:

"To civilians not wearable.
But this parachute paralysis
Is almost unbearable."

Anyway, I was well-armed when I took off, and in my childish ignorance, knew the trip would be one long tea party. Well, never again. I was so busy running my noggin out of the cockpit looking for those elusive check points, trying in vain to keep my altitude within 500 feet of my required height, and running endless instrument checks that I didn't trust myself to run my dirty hands in my pocket to flash the signs. So, I gave it up as a hopeless job, and handed them to him in a crumpled, sweaty heap when we landed.

We all read them, "yaked" ourselves into hysterics, and I made a mental memo concerning X-C's; namely, tend to your own knitting, 'cause a rolling BT gathers no spare moments on a cross-country.



LINK REQUIRES PRE-FLIGHT

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 3) including some radio work. In advanced Link instruction the student does mechanical beam bracketing, sound beam bracketing, radio range orientation, radio compass homing and instrument let downs and instrument landings. After most of the instrument landings the instructors usually call for the crash truck, as the student levels off fifty feet underground. The student also takes cross country trips in the Link without leaving the room.

The Link operators really are quite versatile gentlemen. Besides being instructors they act as weather men, control tower operators and radio range personnel, simulating all these personalities as the pilot calls in and asks for landing instructions, weather reports, etc., as she flies cross country. It seems unbelievable, but cross country flights can actually be simulated in the Link by flying from radio range to radio range.

The Link is run by a 3/4 H. P. motor which causes the vacuum to run all the instruments. The Trainer is set on four large bellows to make it bank, and a turning motor in the front of the Link makes it turn. The approximate cost of the Link is \$10,000 and an average price of an hour in the Link is from \$10 to \$20.

With a slight twitch of their eyebrows the instructors said they

enjoyed teaching the girl trainees although they added they are too apt to make excuses. If the trainees do a poor job they all too readily blame the Link or their instructors, rather than take the responsibility themselves.

OVER THE TOP FOR VICTORY
with
UNITED STATES WAR BONDS-STAMPS

A Talisman For Luck

By Meredith Rolfe

At the International Shrine of the Birdmen in 1940, Ruth Anderson, 43-W-5, received her St. Francis Medal with its poignant inscription:

"He giveth you your wings
To fly and breathe a purer air
on high,
And careth for you everywhere,
Who for yourselves so little care."

She and a girl friend could have purchased the medal in Seattle, but the girls preferred to fly to Riverside Mission in California to buy it, because the medal of St. Francis, the Patron Saint of the birds, was originated there. Unexpectedly, the girls were invited to attend a quiet ceremony taking place at the mission, while they were there. Major Umpstead, who had test-hopped the B-19, was being celebrated and his wings placed with those of other famous birdmen on the wall outside the room in the Mission that is called Aviators' Shrine.

Not so long ago, in Cairo, a fighter pilot who had lost his buddy and was feeling very blue wandered into a cafe wishing he had just one acquaintance in this Egyptian town with whom he could "shoot the bull." Leaning his elbows on the bar, his open collar disclosed a little jade buddha dangling on a chain. When another fighter pilot sitting alone and disconsolate at a nearby table saw the talisman he bounded over, and showed his own buddha shouting jubilantly, "You are one of Mom Chung's boys." And they proceeded to get drunk together.

Since the sons and daughters of Mom Chung's Club are scattered all over the world, it is not too surprising to find that one of the women pilot trainees at Avenger Field was adopted by this famous

(Continued on Page 8, Col. 1)



EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK

A Page Of Personalities

Nothing could have surprised the women pilot trainees at Sweetwater, Texas, much more than the entrance of Helen Richey as a trainee at Avenger Field.

Somebody said, as the news went from one to another in mess hall, "she's been ferrying Spitfires in England for the RAF. She went over with the first twenty-five girls over a year ago."

"What's she doing here?" Someone else expressed the general question, "why don't they waive her training here and just let her go on into the U. S. Ferrying Service?" But—it's a rule—no woman pilot may now enter the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command without receiving training by the Army at Avenger Field, because no other training is as highly specialized and thorough.

To the trainees at Avenger, ferrying Spitfires in England seemed the ultimate, and was incongruous with the fact that this ex-ATA pilot was to take training here.



Gene Slack

Helen Richey was the first woman to be a co-pilot on an air liner, and first to get an Instructor's rating from C. A. A. She was also co-pilot for Amelia Earhart in a Bendix race in the same plane Amelia flew on her last round-the-world flight. In 1933, she and Frances Marsalis set an endurance record for pilots, and the next year Helen won the National Airmeet for Women. It was after that that she was co-pilot on Central Airlines, until she was offered a job by the Bureau of Air Commerce in 1935 to do air marking. Later she set more records for light planes.

Helen herself thinks the training here will help her, and modestly claims "ferrying for the RAF was simply getting a plane from A to B." However, ferrying isn't so simple. Quite obviously radios could not be used. Navigation had to be worked out to the most minute details. Because of the barrage balloons and some mistake in navigation, some planes have had their wings sheared off. The weather was very change-

able. There were lone raiders who came out of nowhere. Also, flying fighter craft for the first time meant soloing without any dual transition, because they are single-seated craft. "Then," as they say in England, "you've had it."

When asked about the food over there Helen declined talking about it, but to a hundred other questions posed by the girls her response was engagingly genuine and enlightening.

The air raids were very terrifying. The American girls were not all at the same base, but were scattered a few here and there at posts all over England. They were billeted in private homes, and their comfort depended on luck. They did have a house in London donated by an English woman, which was kept open by the American Red Cross. They had plenty to do, and Helen found she had many American friends in London.

The theatres were like our own, and Helen had a chance to see many of our American movies. The legitimate stage gave its "late" show at 6 o'clock in the evening so that people could get home before blackout. They had a good season with *Blythe Spirite*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and *Big Top*. Also, a play about the RAF entitled *Flare Path*, excellently done, proved most entertaining.

The English took the American women pilots very matter-of-factly. After all, their own women had been ferrying planes for three years under the outstanding organization of Pauline Gower who has done an outstanding job for women in aviation.

Helen Richey and such women in England who pioneered in the field, have proved that fast fighter craft can be ferried safely by women, and their efforts are convincing the Army of the United States that these girls training at Avenger Field are needed in the tremendous job being done by the Air Forces.

There is a slender blonde girl in 43-W-4 to whose ability we all owe much. Early in March, 1943, somebody decided that we should have something published wherein we could record for all time the work and play in the lives of the women pilot trainees of the 318th AAFSTD.

A newspaper published monthly seemed the most logical answer.

To correct and improve the work of another is an easy accomplishment, but to create and establish a precedent is a difficult job at best. Nothing daunted, Gene Slack set out to do just that — start our newspaper, *The Avenger*.

She brought much valuable experience to her work, as she had

been a reporter for the Nashville Tennessean before coming to



Helen Richey

Avenger Field, and has had numerous writings published, among them a rather recent article in *Flying* magazine.

Gene has many other talents, but we shall remember her as the author of our motto: "We live in the wind and sand . . . and our eyes are on the stars."

Two trainees of 43-W-4 who have to their credit "difficult jobs well done" are Mary Wiggins and Virginia Harris, who are, respectively, Group Commander, and Group Adjutant.

From the cold days in February, when we were a part of a new venture for Avenger Field, these girls have been on the job night and day.

No question has been too trivial, no problem has been too small to merit their full attention. Especially during the first month or two when everything was foreign to us, we were very grateful for the constant attention they gave to their duties.

Mary, a Californian, was a Hollywood stunt star before plotting her course to Avenger Field. She has 32 parachute jumps behind her (and none ahead, we hope).

Also, Mary won the Florida State Champion Springboard Diving Title in 1926, and holds the world's undefeated Pro title for an 86-foot dive from Ocean Park Pier into six feet of water . . . quite a jump, that!

Coming to the 318th with a hard-earned Commercial license, Mary has kept up the good work.



Mary Wiggins, Group Commander

Then there's "Ginny" Harris, who in addition to being a most pleasant and helpful person, is also a very versatile one.

She had an excellent background for her executive position here at Avenger Field as she was Group Adjutant of the first all-girl Civil Air Patrol Squadron in America, which was organized in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1941.

When she went to Nashville, Tenn., in 1942, Virginia took over the duties of Second Lieutenant, Personal Officer, and Code Instructor for the Civil Air Patrol organized there. She began flying heavier aircraft, and received her higher horsepower rating in January, 1943. However, her interests have not been limited to flying, for while she was in Atlanta she played the violin in the Atlanta Philharmonic Orchestra.



Mary Wiggins Stunt Flyer



Virginia Harris, Group Adjutant

It is a well-recognized fact that no organization can succeed without good leaders, and we in 43-W-4 indeed feel fortunate in having had two such capable, cooperative and friendly officers.

SPORTS

By Pat Seares

During our first lap at Avenger Village we have encountered not only many H. P.'s but also H. D.'s, H. T.'s, and H. G.'s—you know divers, "tennisers," golfers, etc.

Incidentally have you seen Carolyn Culpepper strutting her spanking new swimming suit? Well, there is some discussion among the inmates as to whether those are Flamingo's on the front of it or just plain old T Birds! Course we aren't sure never having seen a T Bird. Do they come this far South?

We have certainly enjoyed watching Mary Wiggins do her inverted spins, snap rolls and what-have-you from the high board at the Sweetwater pool. After the W-3 and W-4 graduations we will find a definite shortage of swimming pool talent. Oh well, maybe 43-W-8 will pop up with another Gertrude Ederle or sumpin.

Guess you all know Avenger nosed out in front of the Sweetwater gals in the tennis tournament. Jean Morman played a grand game and won her match. Helen James and Sonny Avery fought a tough battle coming out on top with a 12-10 victory, and yours truly tried so hard for good "ole Alma Mammy" she actually broke a bra strap. After the fourth match the score was Avenger Field 2, Sweetwater 2. Lt. La Rue looked as if somebody had stolen the cup cakes out of his lunch basket—but we finally ended up with three matches to their two and then Lt. La Rue looked much happier.

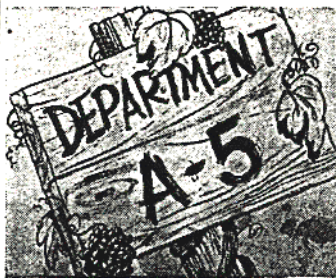
By the way, what about that obstacle course he is cooking up for us? Between that and Katy Landry's Judo practising on our more anemic victims we'll all be lucky if we don't have hair on our chests by winter.

LUCKY TALISMAN

(Continued from Page 6)

Chinese Physician who still practices in San Francisco. That favored daughter is Debbie Truax (43-W-6) who, through her work in fashions in Paris, New York and San Francisco, knew both Lily Pons and Madam Chung, and introduced them during an opera season in Frisco.

The beloved Chinese physician originated her club when she arranged finances to send the first two American pilots to China to fight the Japs, and gave them each a little jade buddha as a token. Many are the pilots whom Mom has befriended since then, but not all of her loved ones are



We have it from a usually reliable source that we (are, are not) going to be completely militarized.

It seems that the girls in the graduating class are to be: I. Instructors; II. Patrol pilots for the Mexican Government; III. Pilots for towing targets and gliders, instead of ferrying P-40's and B-26's.

It is solemnly alleged by various members of Squadron C that Peg (Madame La Farge) Helburn was knitting behind her back, while standing at parade rest during W-3's graduation ceremony.

We hear that we're to have competition for national interest and attention . . . the powers that be are contemplating the establishment of a war prison camp right here in Sweetwater.

aviators. Lily Pons, Andre Kostelantze, the De Marcos, Rear Admiral Smith, Ronnie Reagan and Tullulah Bankhead, are among the chosen members. They are all famous, but all, in Mom Chung's opinion, have made the world a better place in which to live, so Debbie Truax is rightly proud of her most prized talisman.

If winning the Western Open Golf Championship takes luck, being appointed field supervisor of cryptographic section of the Air Transport Command, which meant supervision of different fields when messages were decoded, is indicative of good fortune, or if being taken into women pilot training program is a stroke of black magic, then Helen Deitweiler (43-W-5) has a talisman WHAT AM! Luck or no, the talisman is interesting in its own right. Perhaps you've noticed the ring Helen wears on her little finger, and have pondered over the significance of that odd little symbol surmounted by the three crowns. It is the coat of arms of the King of Sweden, which was presented to Kit Klein, former Olympic skating champion, by the King, when Kit was appearing abroad. Some time later, when Helen was visiting Kit's home at Elizabethtown, Pa., during a golfing exhibition near there, Kit gave Helen the ring for good luck, and it seems to have worked like a charm. That, says Helen, should hold the gremlins too.

Cockpit Cackle

The Houston girls used cold cream on their door handles, during the late rains, to keep the metal from rusting.

"Charley" Niles is going to have pups! Father unknown!

Joann Garrett is now using Saddle Soap (recommended by her mother as care for all fine leathers) in place of cream for her face.

Late one warm afternoon last week—after a strenuous half-hour of drill—Lieutenant La Rue announced that everyone was to dog-trot down around the tennis nets. He took the lead, and one trainee, watching the file bobbling along, remarked, "Well, I never thought it would come to this—100 women running after 1 man."

We often wonder if the hour Connie Young of W-7 spent on top of her locker practising leveling off really has helped!

A few pointers the instructors learned on their last ride with 43-W-6:

Chandelles are best performed on take-offs. . . . To keep a person in suspense while telling a joke, give a forced landing in the middle of it. . . . Half rolls are always used for clearing turns. . . . If you fly from the Main Field, always land at Auxiliary No. 1. . . . Ann Waldner reports she had to give J. D. Alexander a pink slip because he didn't know which way was up in a slow roll. . . . Cuban Eights by W-6 are strictly for the birds. . . . Girls who scream their heads off in half rolls don't always fall out, instructor. . . . A certain Flight Commander is known to have picked moving pylons for his check on Pylon Eights. . . . Landings are always ended with a ground loop.

43-W-7 wants to know if it is required that you take a toothbrush along on cross-country. How about it, W-6? Or did you get your information straight from 43-W-5?

It must have been awfully important for G-6 to go all that way to Galveston just to bathe in the gulf. . . . What's new at Roswell, Friskie? Lee Leonard met the General and the Colonel at Concho Field on her weekend out, but not socially. . . . All that Debbie Truax can say about her weekend in Dallas is that she was definitely a city slicker? . . . To a Bombardier from Big Spring, a dry run doesn't mean the main drag of Sweetwater. . . . Coincidence? Cally Kurten met some fellows from the San Angelo Cadet school. Kurten had a forced landing—guess where. . . . A sign observed on Bobby Wakeham's red shirt in ground school, "Guess you know—pale pink." . . . Dear Mom, yes—the bluebonnets bloom in Texas, but they are out of bounds. Woman Pilot Trainee to any Trainee who rolls out at 0615, cocks one eye at

the weather, then proclaims, "Gosh, but it's tired out this morning!"

We quoteth this Trainee—it being the custom to quoteth in order to keep off the head of her list.

"So I'm tired—so I'm always tired. Twenty-six hours a day they heckle me. Yeah, that's right—we have two extra hours a day out here at Avenger. After all, nature demands a certain amount of attention.

"Did you ever do Pylon Eights around a bed post? That's me. I used to go to sleep with the buzz of traffic in my ear. Now it's the buzz of the P. T. 19A, the B. T. 15, the A. T.'s. I wake up in a cold sweat, clutching the sheets, showing my feet through the walls. Sister, that ain't no nightmare! That's a recovery from an accidental spin!

"In ground school I'm all hepped up about manifold pressure. I mull mixtures until I'm mad. I study controllable pitch props and learn the how and why better than my own name. Then I go out to the line and get into my ship. There ain't no manifold pressure gage, the mixture control is wired down so you can't use it, and the prop is a chunk of wild oak that's likely to turn over and bat your brains out if you get within three feet of it.

"But it's a nice day out at Avenger, and when you've finished it and you're lying awake restless with insomnia, you feel that you're just that much closer to the Tarnished Silver. We may be tired physically but we are not tired of living—in the manner we're used to. If our blouses fit tight across our chests, it's not because we are athletes. It's because we're a little proud—and a little aware of the game we're playing. But take it from us, we're out to win it."

Day ends with taps. . . . So—like the Arabs—we prefer to fold up our tents and silently steal away. It's been a long day but it's been a great day. We're a pretty happy bunch, but right now we'd like to get a little serious, so permit us to get a few things off our chest.

We enjoy our stay here—there isn't a Trainee here who won't look back and say the same thing. We have plenty of laughs and plenty of fun. But more important we're flying—we're learning how to fly. We've gone through checks and a lot of us have gone through a warm corner of hell—but we made it. In spots it has been a little tough—so is steak sometimes. But we've all gotten around those things, in a manner peculiar to trainees only.

So, as we turn our P. T.'s over to you, 43-W-8 here's a parting reminder, keep that nose down.—Goodnight—43-W-6.