

# ‘Gooney Bird’ pilot towed gliders to France

Byron “Coke” Myers flew paratroopers into combat, towing their defenseless gliders across the English Channel during the D-Day invasion, on into France and eventually across the Rhine into Germany itself.

Piloting a lumbering C-47 “Gooney Bird” transport, Myers made five combat missions hauling paratroopers.

The list reads like a roll call of major battles in Europe: Normandy, Holland, the Bulge and

the assault across the Rhine.

The transports and gliders were a constant target of German antiaircraft fire said Myers.

Although enemy fighters were a threat, he said they had pretty good cover from allied fighters.

Myers, a lifelong Goodland resident, served in the Air Air Corps from September 1942 to September 1946, leaving the service with the rank of cap-

tain.

Myers trained as a C-47 transport pilot at Brooks Army Air Field near San Antonio, Texas.

The C-47 was the Army’s version of the DC-3, a two-engined general purpose transport plane first built to serve the airline industry in 1936.

In Texas, Myers trained to tow gliders and drop paratroopers. Later, he was assigned to the 93rd Squadron of the 439th Troop Carrier Group, and he served with the unit until discharged.

He said his outfit spent 18 months overseas, nine in England and nine

in France.

Myers said three of the glider pilots in his squadron got their pre-glider training with the 229th Glider Training Detachment in Goodland. Myers said he participated in five missions towing gliders. The first was on D-Day, when he towed a British-made Horsa glider.

Myers said he made two missions into Holland during “Operation Market Garden” and one to Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. In that mission, the glider he towed was flown by a pilot named Andex who was one of three trained

in Goodland. Myers said 26 of the 50 gliders going into Bastogne were shot down, but Andex’s was not one of them.

Myers said his last glider mission was the airborne crossing of the Rhine River near Wesel, Germany. He towed two gliders at one time for that mission. He said between the five glider missions, he flew in support of all three airborne divisions in the European Theater of Operations: the 101st, 82nd and 17th.

Myers said when his unit was not performing glider missions, they mostly flew resupply and medical

evacuations missions for the Third Army.

Another coincidence Myers experienced relating to the training detachment in Goodland was that the commanding officer at Brooks Field was Col. Stanton T. Smith Sr., whose son commanded the 229th for a short time.

Myers said the colonel occasionally asked him about Goodland.

Myers is a member of the Goodland post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. — Greg Stover

## matters of record

Goodland Police  
The following crimes have been reported to the Goodland Police Department:

**April 13** — Gloria S. Smith reported the theft of a bicycle, valued at \$120, taken from 825 W. Hwy. 24. Brian K. Scott was arrested at 528 E. 14th St. on a bench warrant for failure to comply. He was charged in municipal court.

**April 14** — Ronald R. Thompson reported the theft of prescription medication, valued at \$7, from a mailbox at 921 Main Ave.

**April 17** — Douglas A. Bauman, of Topeka, was arrested at Exit 17 on I-70 for driving with a suspended license, driving while a habitual violator and speeding. He was charged in municipal court.

**April 18** — Truman Coffman reported \$120 in criminal damage to a tire at 1612 Center Ave.

Steve M. Schmidt, of Hays, reported an estimated \$160 in criminal damage to a tire at 1512 Center Ave.

Brenda Dilka, of Akron, Colo., reported an estimated \$120 in criminal damage to a tire at 1512 Center Ave.

Jason D. Peterson reported the theft of a 1997 Mitsubishi from 1526 Cherry Ave. The vehicle was later recovered.

Ashleigh Flodin reported the theft of a skateboard ramp, valued at \$25, from the yard at 1104 Center Ave.

Lisa L. Carson reported battery at 910 W. 17th St. Billy H. Carson was arrested; charges are pending in municipal court.

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### GLIDERS, from Page 1

went to work for First National Bank. Richard died in 1987.

Spencer said she and her friends used to and watch the gliders land in the fields around Goodland. Later, she went to California to work for Lockheed Aircraft as an office clerk then returned to Goodland when the war ended.

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Special color souvenir pins featuring the giant Vincent van Gogh sunflower painting on the big easel in Goodland are now on sale.

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Pins are on sale at both Sinclair stations, Knott Just Books, Goodland Regional Medical Center Hospital Auxiliary gift shop, KOA Kampground, Bowmans Heating and Air Conditioning and at The Total Look beauty shop.

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