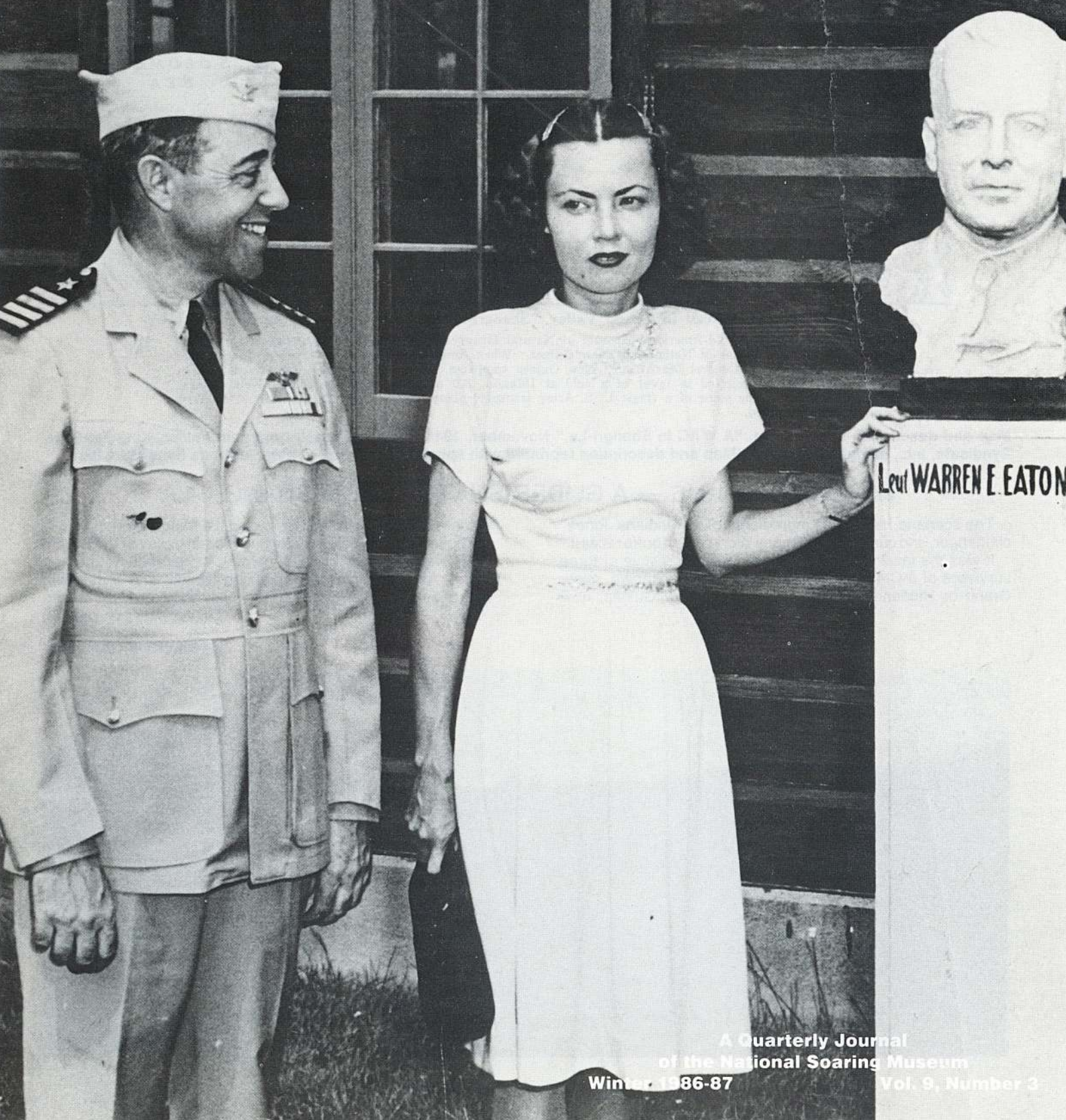




LEUT. WARREN E. EATON



High Mountains Wall in Grand Valley, "Shangri-la" to U. S. Flyers in the Pacific

The Richard Archbold-American Museum of Natural History Expedition of 1938 discovered the valley in the Oranje Mountains of Netherlands New Guinea. When American airmen were searching for possible landing strips during General MacArthur's New Guinea campaign, the valley floor was considered a likely site. Later it was rejected in favor of a field at Ifitamin, 200 miles away in North-East New Guinea. Grand Valley was the scene of a tragic U. S. Army transport plane crash in May, 1945, when 21 military personnel were killed.

Map and description above: from, "A WAC In Shangri-La," November, 1945 Readers Digest. Copyright holder, King Features Syndicate, Inc., all rights reserved. (Map and description reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate, Inc.)

NEW GUINEA 1945 — A GLIDER SNATCH FROM SHANGRI-LA

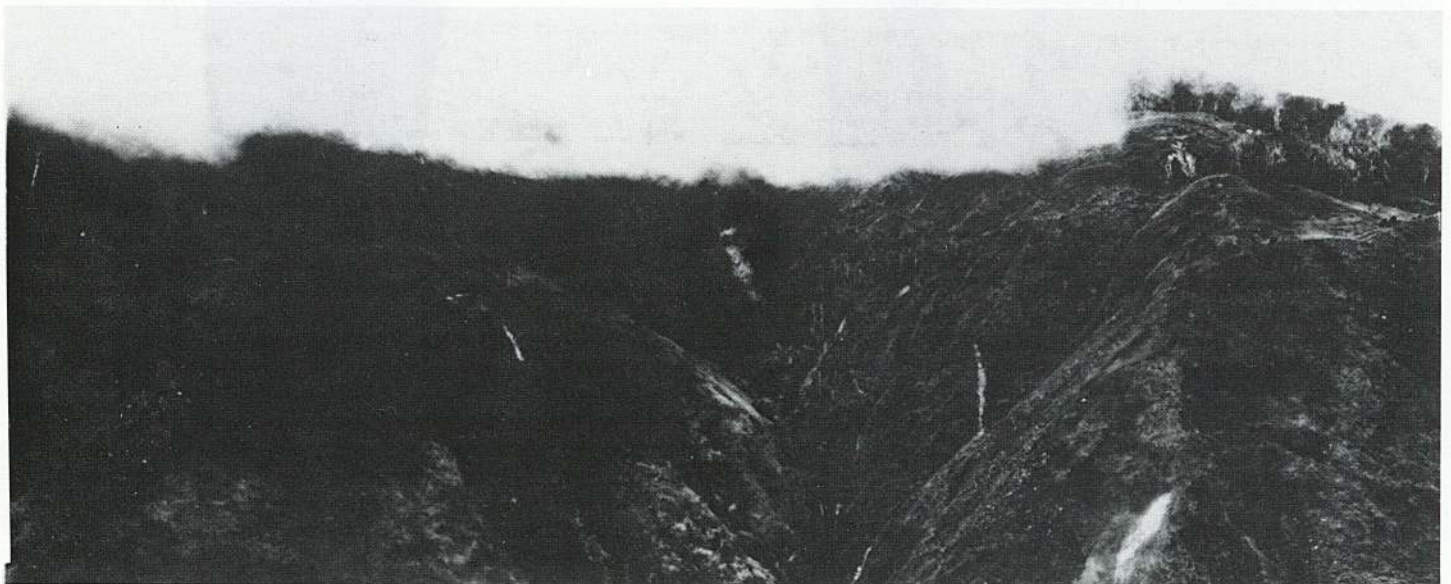
The scenario had all the ingredients of an "Indiana Jones" cliffhanger, and curiously, not many World War II buffs recall it.

It was the fascinating June 28, 1945 glider rescue of three survivors of a C-47 plane crash deep in the unknown, misty Grand or Hidden Valley of Netherlands, New Guinea, now

Indonesian West Irian. G. I.'s called it Shangri-La.

Those maps that did include this Hidden Valley of the Beliem River were completely blank, with "Unexplored" notated on them. At that time according to Dutch and Australian authorities, few, if any, Westerners had penetrated that far into
(Continued on page 3)

Terrain of the crash site.





The Survivors: Cpl. Margaret Hastings, above; Lt. John McCollom, left; T/Sgt. Kenneth Decker, right. Twenty-one others, including McCollom's brother, perished in the crash of the C-47.

(Continued from page 2)

the Oranje Mountains or Hidden Valley's jungles, which the mountains surrounded. While only 130 air miles southeast of Hollandia, which is on the northern coast of New Guinea, rumor had it that the Valley was inhabited by fierce seven foot head hunters, or was the site of a lost civilization.

American pilots who conducted earlier air surveys, nicknamed the Valley, Shangri-La, after the locale of James Hilton's popular novel, "Lost Horizon". Some pilots even reported having spears hurled at them as they dropped down and buzzed the Valley.

The weather over the 11,000-foot Oranje Mountains was almost invariably closed in by noon. Treacherous down drafts around the cloud shrouded peaks, some estimated as high as 16,000 feet, made flying in these forbidding elements very risky ... and exciting. Sight-seeing tours over Shangri-La were common, and on Sunday, May 13th, just such a junket took off from Sentani Air Strip, Hollandia. Aboard the Douglas C-47 were 24 U.S. service personnel, including nine WAC's (Women's Army Corps) and a five-man crew.

Passenger Cpl. Margaret Hastings recalled what happened

next in her November 1945 Reader's Digest Story, "A WAC in Shangri-La" (Copyright holder, King Features, all rights reserved). "Fifty-five minutes into Hidden Valley, the plane descended rapidly until we were not more than 300 feet above rich, well cultivated fields and clusters of huts."

"Suddenly I felt another passenger, Lieut. John McCollom who was sharing a window seat with me, give a violent start. I looked down. The big plane was shearing the tops of the tall jungle trees. 'Give her the gun and let's get out of here,' he shouted."

Hastings thought he was joking.

"It never occurred to me that we were going to crash until the plane hit the side of the mountain. Suddenly, I was bouncing, bouncing, bouncing. The air was filled with explosions, like gunfire. Someone had wrapped his arms around my waist. Already, fire was scorching my face and hair. Although I weigh only 100 pounds, I managed to break that vise-like grip and started to crawl on my hands and knees; anything to get away from the flames." She continued, "My God, Hastings!,

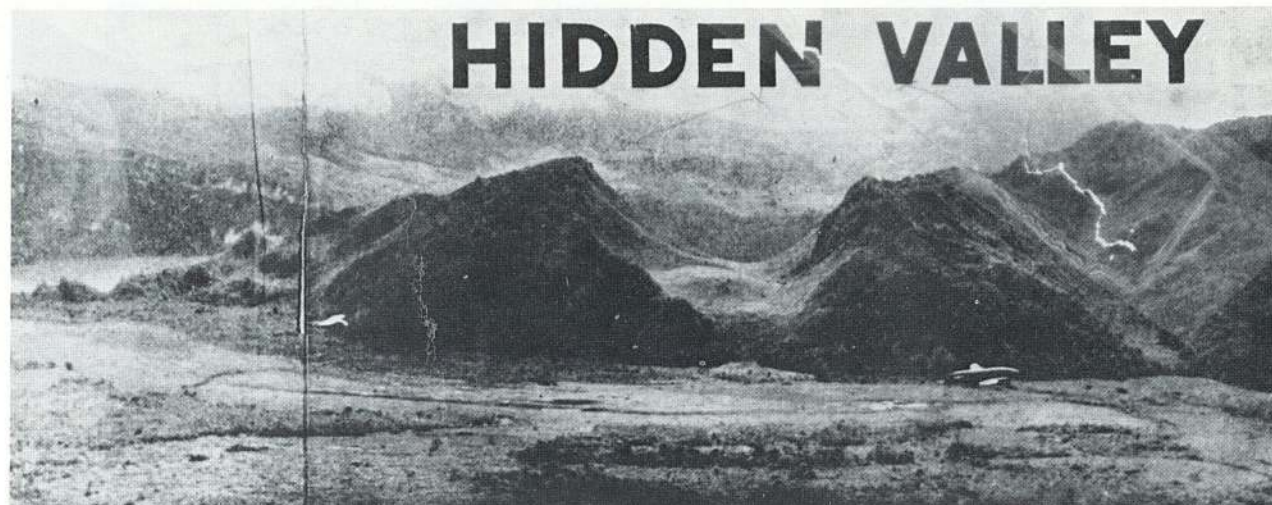
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Left side, aft section of the C-47's fuselage at the crash site.



Hastings, left, visits native compound near rescue area.





(Continued from page 3)

someone cried as I stood up. It was John McCollom, apparently without a scratch on him. The fact that we were in the tail of the plane, which had broken away from the rest of the fuselage, saved our lives."

McCollom went back in and dragged two WAC's from the inferno.

"Then a man came staggering around the right side of the wreckage," Hastings said, "A hideous gash on his forehead had laid his skull bare. It was T/Sgt Kenneth Decker, and his hair was matted against his head. He stood up swaying on his feet, muttering repeatedly, 'Helluva way to spend your birthday!' He was 36 on the 13th."

Hastings mentioned that she didn't have any shoes on and that her right foot was badly cut and bleeding. "My lips were burned, much of my hair was burned off, and the left side of my face was blistered. But, neither Decker nor I felt any pain until our burns became infected."

The two other WAC's survived the crash but were so badly injured that they were dead by the following morning. McCollom's twin brother, Robert, had also died in the crash. At least Hastings now had shoes.

"We crashed at 9,000 feet; the chilling rain of the New Guinea mountains began to fall and our soaked clothes added to our miseries," she said. McCollom had managed to get some emergency ditching equipment, a supply of hard candies and 13 canteens of water out of the wreckage.

The survivors had no food, little equipment and were 130 miles into the earth's most inhospitable and inaccessible terrain.

Sgt. Ozzie St. George, staff correspondent for YANK, the Army weekly, reported what happened next. His story was reprinted in the September 1974, "Silent Wings", the publication of the National World War II Glider Pilots Association.

"That night, for the first time, they heard the natives, who were calling each other. 'Their talk,' said McCollom, "sounded like dogs barking.' The three remembered that the natives of Hidden Valley were believed to be headhunters."

After another raw, rainy night, they decided that their best hope of rescue would be to struggle off the mountain and find a clearing where they could be spotted by air. Nearly exhausted, the trio reached an open area two and one-half miles away.

Some of the natives now began to come out in the open. If they were headhunters, they seemed like friendly headhunters, and they appeared frightened of the injured trio. The mutually unintelligible palaver finally reverted to sign language, by which means, some common ground was realized.

To mark the occasion, the natives who were neither 7 feet tall nor warlike, built a fire by rubbing sticks together and started to cook bananas and sweet potatoes. Unfortunately a torrential rain ended the meeting and the hosts disappeared into the jungle.

Above: Capt. George Allen and Lt. Henry Palmer in rescue glider on down wind leg for landing to evacuate three survivors of C-47 that crashed behind these mountain peaks.

Right: Rescue party and the three survivors immediately after landing at Sentani airstrip, Hollandia, New Guinea. Survivors McCollom (#5), Hastings (#7) and Decker (#9) in foreground. Glider pilots Palmer (#3), and Allen (#12) flew first two pick-up missions. Kimler (#14) flew co-pilot to Allen on third flight. FANLESS FAGGOT is in background. Other personnel pictured are crew members of the pick-up C-47 and the C-46 tow-in plane. Filipino paratrooper at left was of group dropped into the Valley to protect survivors from possibly hostile natives.



On Wednesday, three days after the crash, the survivors spread emergency life raft tarps and were quickly spotted by a B-17, one of the 24 planes searching for the missing C-47. When the weather cleared, succeeding missions para-dropped food and equipment. On Saturday, May 18th, two Filipino paramedics, S/Sgt. Benjamin C. Bulatao and Cpl. Camilo Ramirez, joined the group. Now came the ultimate problem: how to get the three crash victims, plus support personnel, back to civilization safely. The possibility of a 130 mile walkout would have been extremely hazardous and painful for the survivors, even if they had been in condition. WWII helicopters could not operate successfully at those altitudes and at that distance from its base. Similar problems also precluded the use of the versatile Stinson L-5 or of an autogyro.

The only seemingly feasible method was one suggested by Lieut. Henry E. Palmer, and it sent terminal shudders up and down the chain of command . . . a glider snatch. So many things could go wrong. It had never been tried with a Waco CG-4A cargo glider at this altitude, 5,500 - 6,000 feet above sea level; there were a limited number of trained personnel; the weight of the glider; and on and on . . . But, after all considerations, it was still the only way.

On May 20th Capt. Cecil E. Walters and eight other paratroopers jumped into the main valley near the mouth of the canyon into which the C-47 had crashed. He left three men there to set up a base camp and to start laying out a glider runway.

Walters and the other five, took three days to hack their way

through the jungle to the survivors. The Captain and his men attended to the burial of the 21 crash victims. A funeral service was held aboard a circling C-47 and radioed to the burial site by three Army chaplains, one Protestant, one Catholic and one Jewish.

Under the best of circumstances, a glider snatch was thought to be a tricky maneuver by those not familiar with it. In the C-47 towplane, a winch is fitted with about 1,000 feet of steel cable that has a hook on the end of it. The cable is paid out inside a tube that goes through the side of the towplane. In this manner, a hook can be lowered at the end of a wooden pole far enough to snag a nylon loop suspended from a goalpost-like arrangement on the ground. A 300 foot nylon towrope is connected from this loop to the waiting glider. Ozzie St. George explained it, "As the towplane races in at 130 mph, 20 feet above the ground, the hook makes contact, jerking the loop from the poles which fall away and the plane's braked winch unreels the cable, similar to a casting line on a fishing pole". This maneuver dampens the shuddering shock to the glider, and it is smoothly snatched off the ground with less than 1g acceleration.

On June 17th Alex Cann, a 220 pound news cameraman, was para-dropped into the Valley. He planned to shoot a documentary film for the Netherlands East Indies Government. Cann had one half hour instruction in parachuting before his jump!

By this time, back in Hidden Valley, Walter's paratroopers had established a friendly relationship with the natives. There

were exchanges of gifts and conversation in a sort of corrupted Malayan language. The whole local village helped move the rescue group down the valley floor to where a 400 yard glider strip was burned off and marked, sometimes, with toilet paper.

Capt. George Reynolds Allen, commanding officer of the glider crew, described the strip as running generally east and west, with the eastern approach being fairly clear. A mountain about 1,000 yards off the west end, however, closed up that side. Landing would be to the west and take off to the east.

There were several delays in the operation due to engine malfunction and badly rusted snatching equipment, some of which hadn't been used in a year.

At the Hollandia base, in the first practice snatch the towplane came in too low, and its underside radio compass was torn off. A cable break marred the second trial and the crew worked through the night installing a new winch. The next day the weather closed in . . . Another try, another parted cable and two bruised crewmen. Finally, on June 26th, two successful practice pick-ups had been completed.

The weather was reported clear over Hidden Valley on June 28th and the CG-4A rescue glider christened, "Fanless Faggot", with a C-46 towing, snaked their way over the Oranje Mountains towards their objective. "Fanless" landed safely on the makeshift strip. Two sections of perforated steel matting were inserted under the glider's wheels to avoid its bogging down during the initial snatch surge.

Overhead the designated C-47 pick-up was circling at a few hundred feet with a weather ship circling above it. Col.

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Elsmore, who previously air surveyed Hidden Valley, was above the weather ship at 6,000 in a B-25 Mitchell, with photographers and correspondents aboard. Then, lingering at 10,000 was the C-46 that towed the glider in.

Scattered clouds were reported and fear was growing that the exit pass would be closing in. The traffic pattern was widened to give Maj. William Samuels, pilot of the pick-up C-47, nicknamed "Leaking Louise", more room. "There was very little space for us to turn before hitting the pick-up loop," he later said.

Cpl. Hastings, in the waiting glider described it this way: "I wondered whether we had survived a hideous plane crash and so much illness, hardship and pain, only to be killed when rescue was so near. The C-47 roared down on us. I froze to my rosary and a glider brace. There was a sudden jolt . . . then we began to slide down the strip. Now we were off the ground and beginning to climb. We grazed a tree and I instinctively leaned back in horror. I did not know until later how desperately near we came to being spilled into the jungle a second time."

During the snatch, "Louise" was slowed to 105 mph, which, at that altitude was perilously close to stalling speed, but Samuels managed to keep the combination in the air, a feat for which he was later recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross. "I wouldn't do it again for a dozen of them," he later commented, adding, "It was a very near thing."

"Fanless" was lurching up at about 200 feet per minute, when Pilot Allen discovered that one of the glider's wheels had become immeshed in a parachute that had served as a runway marker. The chute's shroud lines were hanging and tearing against the glider, peeling off most of the lower fuselage fabric. It didn't seem to affect the controls on the way back according to Allen. The tug and tow's pilots sweated, coaxed and churned their way up to 9,500 feet, squeezed through the only usable, mountain pass, then slid back down to Hollandia. The flight took about one and a half hours.

After 47 days in Hidden Valley's Shangri-La on a flight that was only supposed to take a few carefree hours, the survivors wants were simple. As reported by Ozzie St. George, McCollom wanted a shave, Decker, a shower, and Hastings, a perm.

To retrieve the rest of the party, Allen said that they switched kites and retired "Fanless". The remaining 10 rescuers were snatched out in two subsequent missions, June 29th and July 1st.

After a typhoon caused a scheduled 1948 body recovery mission to be cancelled, an Army Search and Recovery Team in 1958, retrieved the remains of the crash victims. They are interred at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri, and the Punchbowl Cemetery, Honolulu, Hawaii.

CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location
1987		
March 21	Safety Seminar-SSA Region III Meeting. Banquet, Doug Jacobs former 15 meter World Champion, Speaker	NSM/Harris Hill
May 18	International Museum Day	NSM
May 23, 24, 25	Vintage Sailplane Regatta	NSM/Harris Hill
May 29, 30, 31	1987 Exhibit Opening United States Soaring Hall of Fame National Soaring Museum Trustees Meeting	NSM
June 1-7	National Soaring Week	NSM/Harris Hill
June 2-4	NASA Aerovan	NSM
June 16	Dedication of Harris Hill Soaring Corporation Visitor Center	Harris Hill
June 30 - July 9	U.S. National Sports Class Sailplane Championship (Soaring Society of America sanctioned)	NSM/Harris Hill
July (date to come)	Dedication of Route 17 Soaring Capitol of America Monument	Southern Tier Economic Growth
Aug. 13	Twin Tier Pilots Hangarfest Outing	Harris Hill Outing Center
Sept. 5-6-7	Labor Day Weekend Informal Sailplane Regatta	NSM/Harris Hill
Oct. 3-4, 10-11	Harris Hill Soaring Corporation Fall Foliage Weekends	NSM/Harris Hill
Oct. 10	National Soaring Museum Kite Fly	NSM
Nov. 27-28	44th Annual Snowbird Sailplane Regatta and Banquet	NSM/Harris Hill
Dec. 20	NSM Luncheon honoring the Community Soaring Committee Volunteers	NSM



Horace Wright, in front of the National Soaring Museum's reproduction of the Wright Glider #5. Last October 24th marked the 75th anniversary of his famous uncle, Orville's record breaking flight of 9 minutes and 45 seconds. Horace was with his father, Lorin at the 1911 Kitty Hawk, NC expedition. Photo: Matt Wascavage, The Leader, Corning, NY.

ORVILLE, WILBUR AND THE WRIGHT 1911 KITTY HAWK EXPEDITION RECOLLECTIONS OF MR. AND MRS. HORACE WRIGHT

"Well, as I remember it," Horace said in clipped heartland accents, "we went down there in the middle of October, and the first three or four days we went fishing. No plane there yet. We were going across the (Roanoke) Sound to Manteo (NC) and we were getting all tied up with weeds in the propeller. They didn't make propellers the same shapes that they make them now. We saw a great big boat over a ways, and we yelled, 'Where's the Channel?' Fellow on the boat yelled back, 'I don't know . . . but I know where it ain't.'"

For a delightful half hour, Horace and his wife, Susan, regaled the NSM's Community Room audience with anecdotes of the famous inventor brothers.

The occasion was the 75th anniversary of Orville Wright's record-setting 9-minute and 45-second soaring flight at Kitty Hawk, NC, October 24th, 1911.

Horace, ten years old at the time, could not recall whether he actually witnessed the record flight, but he was aware of the presence of several reporters.

"We saw people with field glasses off on the hills that surrounded camp trying to observe what we were doing. Well, one day Orville met (D. Bruce) Salley, one of the observers, in Manteo. He was with the Norfolk (Landmark) paper, and Uncle Orv invited them over. So for the next several days there were four or five reporters at the camp. They were determined that Orville and the rest of the group (Horace's father Lorin, and Alexander Ogilvie, a British aviation enthusiast), were trying to do something secret; a notion that Orville didn't seem to discourage. Frankly, I kind of doubt it; I think that he was just playing. He enjoyed gliding and running a plane without the vibrations and noise of a motor."

"Most of the glides were very short; they were learning to fly." Horace continued, "They had very few accidents considering the number of flights and the conditions under

which they flew . . . And that was one thing they always tried to do, go at it very slowly."

Horace related a target shooting incident at the camp, where he was plinking at tin cans and constantly missing. "Finally Mr. Ogilvie said that there was a quarter in it for me, if I could hit the center of the can. Well I hit it smack in the center on the next shot and Uncle Orv said, "'Bus" (Horace's nickname was Buster), you're a money player."

Describing the inaccessibility of Kitty Hawk at the time, Horace said that they took a train from Dayton (OH) to Norfolk (VA), stayed overnight there, then took another train to Elizabeth City (NC). There, they took a boat across Albemarle Sound to Manteo. From Manteo, Orville rented a boat to Kitty Hawk, and kept the boat for their use while at camp.

From the audience Paul Schweizer asked Horace why Orville had gone there in 1911, referring to newspaper accounts at that time, stating that the purpose, ostensibly, was to run tests on a new automatic stabilizing device. "Yet the records of events show that no tests were ever run, so the primary purpose was not accomplished," Schweizer said. He continued, "I think, that as you (Horace) said, it was because they loved to glide."

Horace replied, "Well, my opinion is that Orville had that idea in his mind for years, and it seems to me that he finally did invent something so that he could take his hands off the controls, but at that time I don't think that was in his mind. I think that the newspaper reporters thought that it was. The reporters descriptions read like it was the automatic stabilizer that originally got the flights off . . . I think there was no connection between the automatic stabilizer and what they did, and the newspaper reports indicated that there was."

In response to another audience query concerning Orville's
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involvement with (J.M.) Jacobs co-inventing split flaps, Horace replied that there was a patent taken out in Jacob's and Wright's name for split flaps some time after World War I, in the 1920's. It was Horace's feeling that after Wilbur's death (in 1912) Orville wanted to get out of the business.

What finally happened to the Number Five Glider? Horace had no recollection, other than it was left at Kitty Hawk when they broke camp. (The following is from The Papers of Wilbur and Orville Wright, Volume Two, 1906-1948, by Marvin W. McFarland.) "In 1911 Mr. A. D. Etheridge of the Kill Devil Life Saving Station gave the glider to Zenas Crane, who transported it to Pittsfield, MA, where it was mutilated in a well-meaning attempt to turn it into an authentic museum piece." — Orville Wright to Z. Marshall Crane, July 21, 1928)

Someone asked Horace if he helped launch the 1911 glider. He said that he didn't and that at first there were only two launchers. Then Orville put some of the newspapermen to work on launchings.

Stories of Orville's practical jokes sent ripples of laughter through the audience. "It was at a Thanksgiving Day dinner," Horace recalled, "and of course all us children were there, and we all liked dark meat on the turkey. Uncle Orv kept serving up plate after plate of dark meat and we were wondering what kind of turkey was this with all that dark meat on it. Finally somebody got curious about it. Uncle Orv had a duck placed behind the turkey and he was slicing off the duck. . . ."

Everyone in the Wright family knew that Horace like mashed potatoes, especially the way Carrie, Orville's housekeeper, prepared them. Horace chuckled as he told how one time at dinner, Orville remarked, "Isn't it odd how Bus's plate always goes to the mashed potatoes?", and with that, Horace's plate began to mysteriously move across the table to where Orville was serving. Everyone was amazed. What the family didn't know was that Orville was moving the plate with an almost invisible thread that operated from beneath the table.

Although Susan had known Horace since grammar school, it wasn't until they were at Miami (OH) University that they started to date. Susan said they were down at the train station and Horace told her that he was going East that year, and she asked him "Look me up when you get home, Christmas, . . . and He did!" They were married in 1928 and Susan described the wild ride leaving the wedding party with Uncle Orv in his Franklin. The wedding was on Dayton's North side and Orville zoomed down a dead-end street with the rest of the wedding party behind tooting their horns. Orville jumped the curb, ripped across an open field to the next street. He sprinted down Main Street toward where he lived on the other side of Dayton. "His house was a colonial," Susan said, "with an open door on one side of it, and another just like it on the opposite side, with a drive that went down the hill. Well, Uncle Orv drove straight through that house and down the other side with horn tooting all the way!"

Someone in the audience wanted to know why Horace's sister Ivonette flew with Orville and he didn't. Horace responded that Ivonette had written to her uncle saying that she wanted to be the first child to go up in a plane in this country. "So one day Orville called them up," Horace smiled, "and they all went out there and he took all three of them up, my two sisters, and a cousin who was visiting at the time. Let's see, I'd be about 10 years old at the time, but I wasn't interested . . . He'd have taken me if I wanted to though."

As to which brother flew most of the time, Horace answered that he remembered Wilbur flying more than Orville, but would have to check the records on it. "I think that they were constantly training themselves or something . . . They were like that," Horace commented. He continued, "Orville was the better flyer of the two. Wilbur was a very accurate flyer; he knew where to shift when certain conditions came up . . . Orville didn't have to think, he just did it naturally. To the question of whether the brothers kept log books of all their flights, Horace said that there were some books, and notes

taken, but that their letters home were the best records.

Someone said that they had heard that Orville was a good cook to which Horace responded that he was, and that the amazing part of it was that the family had an excellent housekeeper. "But Orville, when he tasted something, could tell what was wrong and HE would correct it until SHE got it perfect . . . and she was the best."

Orville died in 1948.

For too short a time that October Saturday afternoon, the audience experienced the warmth and camaraderie that existed in the Wright Family, and the unfettered exuberance of those times. In the same room that evening Paul E. Garber, Historian Emeritus of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum delivered the 13th Annual Ralph S. Barnaby Lecture. His Slide/Lecture was on the Wright Brothers and their contributions to Aviation.

ON THE COVER:

A Fred T. Loomis photo of Capt. Ralph S. Barnaby with New Guinea "Shangri-La" survivor, Margaret Hastings, at the Thirteenth Annual Soaring Contest, August 1946, at Elmira, NY.

The September/October 1946 Soaring Magazine said of this contest, "Participation of the Army and Navy was a welcome addition, and the daily pick-ups of the CG-15 by the C-47 was an education to all. The consistent performance of Lt. Gannon with the CG-15 in the spot landing contest made him a difficult man to beat."

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