The Saga of Ada Red

By William Garvin

Guest writer

Even though it was more than 70 years ago, Margaret Ray vividly remembers the last time she saw her brother, Philip. "I was taking a tennis lesson. He came by the court to say good-bye." That day in 1942, Lt. Philip Sarrett left his hometown of Ada, Okla., to serve in World War II. But like so many young men of that generation, he would not return.

Now, at 92 years old, Margaret stands on an abandoned runway in Vichy, Mo., looking at a derelict Douglas C-47 transport plane. But this is not just any plane: It is the aircraft that Philip flew on June 6, 1944, as he piloted a group of 16 82nd Airborne paratroopers to their drop zone in Normandy.

"He Wanted to Fly"

Margaret remembers Philip as a popular person, a well-rounded young man with many interests. They both attended East Central State College in Ada.

"He was in a fraternity and I was in a sorority, she says. "We had a lot of dances together."

While at East Central State, Philip was able to pursue a new passion.

"He wanted to fly," recalls Margaret.

East Central State offered classes through the Civilian Pilot Training Program, a government initiative designed to increase the country's pool of aviators. Philip signed up for ground school and basic flying lessons. He eventually took an advanced flying class in Texas over the summer.

On several occasions, Margaret went flying with her brother.

"I'd go up with him to practice his landings," she

Sometimes, Philip would turn off the engine to perform a "dead-stick" landing. She laughs and shakes her head. "I was scared to death!" But Philip, she remembers, was always calm.

Then came that fateful Sunday in December of 1941. "We got out of church, and we heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor," Margaret recalls. "And Mother said, 'Philip, you know what that means.' And he said, 'Yeah, I sure do.'

D-Day

Philip entered the Army Air Corps and was eventually assigned to the 313th Troop Carrier Group. He participated in Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, and probably flew in support of the invasion of Italy. In May of 1944, his unit was transferred to England.

Once in England, Philip's unit was assigned to the airbase at Folkingham. The aircraft he was assigned was C-47D 42-32827, which he chris-



This photo of Lt. Philip Sarrett was taken by an Ada photographer, N.B. Stall, before Sarrett was shipped to Europe during World War II. (Photo courtesy of the family of Philip Sarrett)

tened Ada Red in honor of his hometown.

Early on the morning of D-Day, Philip flew Ada Red into the skies over Normandy in Mission Boston, Serial 22, as Chalk 27. The 16 paratroopers he ferried were from the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and they jumped into Drop Zone "N" near Etienville and Beauzeville-la-Bashe flew a number of missions, mainly to resupply troops on the ground.

One Last Mission

Late in the war, plans were made for Operation Varsity, the last airborne push into the heart of

tille. Philip's plane was hit by flak and small arms fire, but he managed to fly Ada Red back to base. In the following months,

Hitler's Germany. By this time, Philip had flown enough missions and could have sat out this final operation.

"He had been real homesick," says Margaret. "But they asked volunteers, for and he volunteered for it."

So on March 24, 1945, Philip flew a new Curtiss C-46 cargo plane to a drop zone just over the Rhine River near Wesel, Germany. Seconds after the

last paratrooper jumped, Philip's plane was hit by flak and caught fire. He attempted to turn the plane, but flames began to spread over the right wing. Philip ordered the crew to bail out. One by one, they exited the burning aircraft until only Philip and the navigator, Capt. Richard Ketchum, remained.

As Ketchum prepared to bail out, he turned and saw Sarrett come out of the cockpit and pass the radio operator's station. Relieved that Sarrett was right behind him, Ketchum jumped and pulled his ripcord. Philip, however, never got out. In an afteraction report, the pilot of a nearby plane described how he watched Philip's big C-46 as it "nosed into a clearing and exploded." Philip Sarrett was only 23 years old. Forty-five days

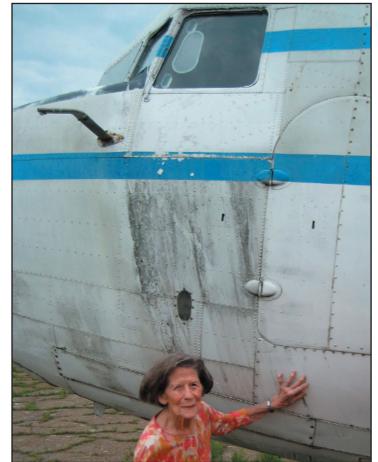


Photo by William Garvin

Margaret Ray stands next to the plane that her brother, Lt. Philip Sarrett flew on D-Day.

> later, the war in Europe ended.

Ada Red Comes Home

After the war, the plane Philip flew on D-Day, C-47D 42-32827, was sold as surplus. It went through a number of civilian owners, working as an airliner in Minnesota, an executive plane for the Champion Spark Plug Company and a cargo plane in Manitoba. Finally, in 1979, it was

purchased by Baron Aviation Services of Vichy.

At Baron Aviation, owners Lee Maples and Ed Schmidt flew 42-32827 to haul cargo for Federal Express.

"I put in a lot of hours in that plane," recalls Maples. As he speaks, you can hear a nostalgic fondness in his voice. "It was a real pleasure to

See ADA RED, Pg. 13A



Answer to Previous Puzzle

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PREVIOUS SOLUTION

Difficulty: 4 (of 5)

2	5				6		3	
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		1		8		6		
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	TREVIOUS SOLUTION								
	1	6	5	4	3	9	7	2	8
HOW TO PLAY:	3	2	4	1	7	8	6	9	5
Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 box-	9	7	8	2	6	5	1	3	4
es must contain the numbers 1 through 9	2	3	7	9	5	4	8	1	6
without repetition.	5	8	9	3	1	6	4	7	2
	6	4	1	8	2	7	9	5	3
	7	1	6	5	8	3	2	4	9
	4	5	2	6	9	1	3	8	7
	8	9	3	7	4	2	5	6	1

CELEBRITY CIPHER

by Luis Campos

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

VAYLXF (ED) HAEWH AW . . .

LEKY E W K F MYRC

ABBRDEAWRGGF DWE

GYWHLM." — UAMW RDMPYXF

Previous Solution: "If my critics saw me walking over the Thames they would say it was because I couldn't swim." - Margaret Thatcher

> TODAY'S CLUE: 8 spenbe d © 2013 by NEA, Inc., dist. by Universal Uclick 5-25

ACROSS

- 1 Slick
- 4 Owl's query 7 Bridge bldr.
- 11 Old French
- coin 12 Adjust the
- drapes
- 13 Burglar's
- "key" 14 A fortune
- 16 Candy shapes
- 17 Banquet
- 18 Eye makeup 19 Feminine
- pronoun
- 20 Bow wood 21 Strong suit
- 24 Striped
- animals 27 Suffix for
- forfeit
- 28 Dance move 30 Radio part
- 32 "Hud" star
- 34 Pay

32

48

5-25

- attention to
- 36 Deception

37 Repugnant 39 Bakery buys

- 41 Zig's opposite
- 45 Blatant

- 52 Coasted
- 53 Rambles

- - 56 911 responder
- 57 West Coast

- 2 Hairstyle

- paper
- rogue

12

28 29

38

49 50

53

15

33

41

44

6 Pained sounds

- 42 Watch pocket
- 43 Listen up
- 48 Happy rumble

- 49 Stray (2 wds.)

- 54 "Simpsons"
- bartender
- 55 Genres

DOWN

- 1 Tenet
- 3 Festive log
- 4 Put pen to
- - 5 "Star Wars"

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20

42

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12 Plates

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REA

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- 8 Wordy
- Webster

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- 9 Female child
- 10 Hwys.
 - cookie 23 Skimmed
 - through

15 Endure

18 Beer barrel

20 Holy cow!

21 Pleasure

22 Nabisco

24 Jeans

G|E|M

O|N

- partners 25 Small brook
- 26 Leave the dock
- 29 Mugger 31 Paul or Brown
- 33 Chameleons
- 35 Herds of
- cattle 38 Rower's need
- 40 Comply
- 42 Goes out of business
- 43 Seed covering
- 44 Mr. Estrada 46 Mounties' org.
- 47 Town near Santa Fe

48 Air pump

- meas. 49 Birthday
- count 50 Hasty escape
- 51 Lunar new
- year
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Ada Red

Continued from pg. 12A

In 1991, Baron Aviation replaced the old plane with a newer turboprop model. 42-32827 was parked on an abandoned runway along with several other C-47s owned by the company.

Then, in January of 2008, a tornado came through the area and severely damaged the aircraft. The winds caused landing gear on each plane to collapse, and other structural damage made the planes unserviceable. As he recalls the aftermath of the storm, Ed Schmidt shakes his head sadly. "It was a real shame," he says. Ada Red and the other C-47s have sat there ever since.

A Re-Discovered History

Last summer, I received a call from a friend in Springfield, Mo.

'You like World War II aircraft, right? I know where some old C-47s are. Do you want to take a road trip and have a

So in July 2012, we drove up to Vichy to see them.

During our visit, I wrote down tail numbers and took lots of pictures. When I returned home, I did basic research on each of the three planes. Two had relatively unremarkable histories, but I found that the third, C-47D 42-32827, possessed a distinguished combat record. During the war, it had moved from Algeria to Sicily and to England. And then I discovered that the aircraft was a D-Day veteran. For that mission, the pilot listed was a Lt. Richard Philip Sarrett of Ada, Okla.

Further research led me to the Pontotoc Coun-Historical Society,

which provided me with old newspaper articles describing Lt. Sarrett's service and death. Finally, an obituary for another member of Philip's family led me to a Margaret Ray in Sulphur, Okla. I called her number, and after some explaining, told her that I was looking for the family of Richard Sarrett. "Yes," she said, "He was my brother."

Later, in an e-mail exchange with a member of Margaret's family, I was told that if it were at all possible, Margaret wanted to come up to Missouri one day and see

her brother's plane.

A Reunion of Sorts That day was May 16,

Margaret Ray's daughter, Marsha Funk, drove her mother from Oklahoma to Missouri. When they arrived that afternoon, Ed Schmidt and I met them at the door to his hangar. Margaret looked frail and moved very slowly, but she was sharp and alert. We walked into Ed's office, where he showed her pictures of the plane when he flew it. We talked for some time about Philip, his service,

and his loss. Finally, Ed said, "Well, shall we go take a look at the plane?"

We drove across the airstrip, which had recently been resurfaced, to a disused runway where the C-47s sat. The asphalt of the old runway was cracked, and weeds and bushes had grown up around the planes. Philip's aircraft sat with its left wing tilted up, as if it were banking into an easy turn to the right. Although the plane had a rather forlorn appearance, it still seemed to have a stoic dignity about it.

We stepped out of the car and walked up to the plane. "This is it?" Margaret asked. "Yes," said Ed. "No doubt about it. This is the plane that Philip flew on D-Day."

She stood for a moment and looked at the aircraft, taking it all in. It was large but appeared even larger next to her tiny frame.

Guided by her daughter, Margaret walked closer and stood below the cockpit. "It looks a bit sad," she said. Then, she reached up and placed her hand on the side of plane.

moment, one that spoke of loss, but also of faithfulness to the memory of her brother. For a few seconds, we watched quietly.

It was a poignant

The moment passed and we started to mill about the plane again, talking quietly and snapping pictures. Finally, we decided that it was time to go.

As we started toward the car, Ed turned to Margaret and said, "Well, Philip would be proud." She smiled and said, "Yes, I believe he would be." Then she paused and looked back up to the cockpit window where her brother sat so many years ago. "He was a good

person." William Garvin is a special collections librarian and university archivist at F.W. Olin Library on the campus of Drury University at Springfield,

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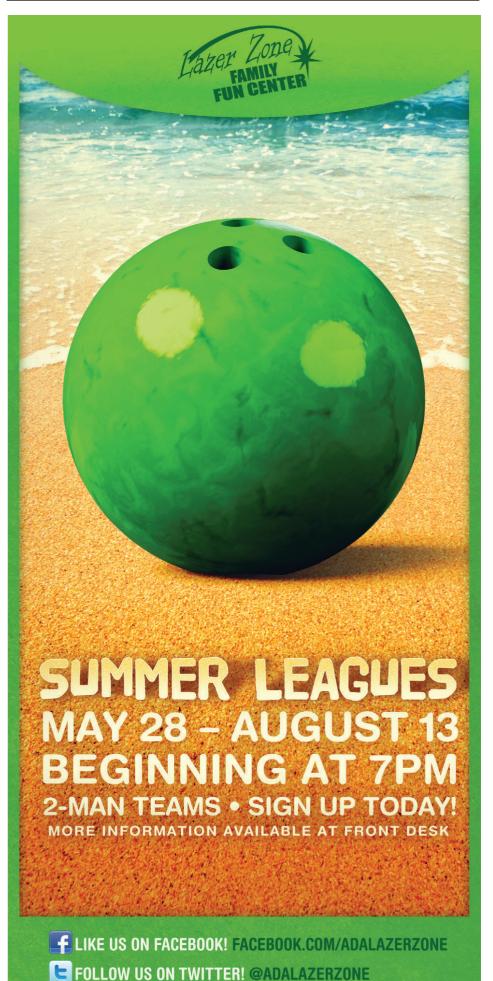
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