**St. Clair Shores**

Published September 17, 2014

**Museum remembers Operation Market Garden**

**By Brian Louwers** **brianlouwers@candgnews.com**[Home](http://www.candgnews.com/)

|  |
| --- |
| » click to enlarge « Museum remembers Operation Market-Garden**John Lind, director of the Detroit Arsenal of Democracy Museum, and Arno Whitbread, 94, of Clinton Township, who served with the 101st Airborne Division in World War II, discuss Whitbread’s experiences in Holland during Operation Market-Garden. (Photo by Brian Louwers)**http://www.candgnews.com/sites/default/files/images/global/stories/cache/Detroit-Arsenal-of-Democracy-Museum_0-inline-300x1024.jpg**John Lind, director of the Detroit Arsenal of Democracy Museum, and Arno Whitbread, 94, of Clinton Township, who served with the 101st Airborne Division in World War II, discuss Whitbread’s experiences in Holland during Operation Market-Garden. (Photo by Brian Louwers)** |

ST. CLAIR SHORES — Operation Market-Garden was a bold plan to hasten the end of World War II in Europe. Historians now remember it as a high-risk operation that failed.

The Detroit Arsenal of Democracy Museum in St. Clair Shores will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the daring assault that targeted a series of bridges over rivers and canals leading from Holland into northern Germany with a special program from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Sept. 20.

“It was an operation by (British) Field Marshal Montgomery. Essentially, he was trying to end the war by Christmas 1944,” said John Lind, the museum’s director. “It was the largest airborne operation ever attempted, and it was planned in seven days.”

Launched three months after Allied forces had secured the beaches and fields of northern France on D-Day, Market-Garden began with a massive airborne assault (code-named “Market”) on Sept. 17, 1944. Three Allied airborne divisions — more than 30,000 men — landed behind enemy lines to establish a road corridor and secure a series of bridges leading into northern Germany. Shortly after the airborne drop, an allied ground assault (code-named “Garden”) was sent through the corridor, later known as “hell’s highway,” across bridges secured by the American 82nd and 101st airborne divisions, to Arnhem — the strategic prize targeted by the British 1st Airborne Corps, supported by paratroopers of the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade.

However, faulty Allied intelligence grossly underestimated the German troop strength and condition in the battle zone. The situation was exacerbated by the presence, unbeknownst to the Allies, of two German SS Panzer Divisions refitting in occupied Holland.

The end result was fierce fighting for the targeted bridges, especially at Arnhem, where the British and Polish Paratroopers suffered terrible casualties after the ground assault became a protracted, violent slog against German defenders.

Arno Whitbread, 94, of Clinton Township, formerly of St. Clair Shores, served with the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division and was one of 13,500 glider troops, along with 20,000 paratroopers, who landed during the daylight hours on Sept. 17 to secure bridges behind enemy lines.

Whitbread, who also landed in France on D-Day, recalled the fighting around the corridor, near Son, in Holland.

“We were there three months,” Whitbread said. “We had to get the bridges open. Of course, we lost men. It gets pretty hairy.”

Lind said the program at the museum Sept. 20 would feature separate discussions focusing on the details of Operation Market-Garden at 11:30 a.m. and on the making of the 1977 World War II epic film “A Bridge Too Far” at 1:30 p.m.

“A Bridge Too Far,” based on the book by Cornelius Ryan, was produced by Joseph Levine and directed by Richard Attenborough. The cast features a list of Hollywood talent including, Anthony Hopkins, James Caan, Robert Redford, Gene Hackman, Ryan O’Neal, Elliott Gould, Sean Connery, Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine.

Admission to the Operation Market-Garden program at the Arsenal of Democracy Museum is a $5 donation. Veterans are free.

The museum is located at 22960 Industrial Drive West in St. Clair Shores.

For more information, call (586) 776-1976.