

Great State: Airborne Dreams in Frederick, OK

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FREDERICK, OKLAHOMA -- They come from all over the United States.

This year's airborne class includes guys from Australia and Belgium.

For 9 days they train to do the same thing WWII Airborne veterans did first more than 70 years ago.

David Brothers says, "I call it the fun army but there's a serious side to it."

Brothers flies 777's for a living but he came to Frederick, Oklahoma 10 years ago to learn how to jump out of another aircraft, a C-47 built at Tinker, AFB and used in the D-Day invasion of France in 1944.

Brothers jumped first, piloted second, but always came back for more.

"Lots of fun and we have some tremendous camaraderie," he says from the cockpit. "But it's definitely a sacred duty."

A new recruit to the WWII Airborne program is David Clemons.

We found him in what the demonstration team calls 'the pit of woe'.

It's basically a big sand box where trainees learn, over and over, how to jump properly.

Clemons was in the Army Airborne himself once.

His father served in the Airborne during WWII.

"My father was in Fox Company of the 506th. He jumped into Normandy and with Operation Market Garden into Holland. This is a chance to experience some of what he experienced."

The Airborne Demonstration Team started nearly 20 years ago as a unit designed to perform at air shows, to honor the legacy of the first Airborne veterans, and to serve them in any way possible.

Rodney Roycroft is another airline pilot who says men and women come here to get as close as possible to what the original Airborne was like.

"It's as close to being back in World War II as you can possibly get," he says.

They certify to jump at the Frederick Airport, living and training out of a hangar built in 1942.

The average age of trainees is mid-50's.

They jump from old airplanes from 1,500 feet, over the southern plains as opposed to the south of France.

They grew up hearing war stories.

Here they live them.

The WWII Airborne Demonstration Team has a full schedule of events set up for spring and summer including 3 trips to Europe to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of D-Day.

To learn more about the team and their history go to <http://www.wwiadt.org>