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By JOSE RODRIGUEZ (/authors/jose-rodriguez)

AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Glider pilots, WWII ADT come together for D-Day event

Local veterans recalled their service days Saturday during the fly-in of the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team.

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Austin Steen Jr. signs his name inside the World War II C-47 troop transport plane at the Silent Wings Museum Saturday. The crew allows visitors who jumped out of the same type of plane in WWII to sign their name and post a photo inside. Steen said he jumped out of the C-47 type plane three times during the war.


Other than being the day after D-Day, June 7, 1944, carries an abundance of meaning for Mel Pliner, a former World War II glider pilot.

That day, Pliner embarked on his first mission as a pilot, one of five he receives credit for throughout his career.

Toward the end of the war, Pliner suffered a wound — a permanent reminder of the dangers he faced and overcame as a pilot.

“Twenty-fourth of March, 1945, I was 200 feet high coming in for a landing when some (German) was shooting ... See the scar there? That’s where (the bullet) came out,” Pliner said, pointing at his right forearm.

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Pliner received medical treatment in England when the war ended and left service in October 1945. Of Pliner's numerous encounters with enemies during the war, his brush with a German bullet, he says, arguably is his most memorable.

Pliner and others recalled their service days Saturday at the Silent Wings Museum during the fly-in of the WW II Airborne Demonstration Team.

About two years before the conclusion of Pliner's services, Doug Flynn graduated from Texas Tech and began flight school and instruction.

The two never worked together as glider pilots.

Flynn, the chairman of the National WWII Glider Pilots Association, spent most of his career as a pilot in Texas, pursuing his studies and instructing in cities such as Lubbock and Austin.

When not instructing in Texas, work in combat training sent Flynn to states such as California and Kentucky, though his travels did not extend much farther.

Flynn's passion for flying remains a constant, but he admits, however, certain obstacles make it difficult for him to enjoy flying as regularly as he used to.

"See, I like to fly, but the airplanes I like to fly cost too much to rent," Flynn said, with a laugh.

One of the many "priced" planes Flynn has experience maneuvering is the C-47, a military airplane used primarily for transporting troops and goods during WWII.

The C-47, Flynn said, is one of his planes of choice when instructing, considering it stores room for about 27 people. Flynn's flying abilities expand to the C-46, a larger version of the C-47.

The demonstration, headlined by the use of a C-47 named 'Boogie Baby,' was executed by the ADT.

Silent Wings Museum's 68th Commemoration Anniversary of D-Day, a

three-day event ending today.


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Historical marker dedicated

 While visitors were taking in the shows and displays put on by the World War II Airborne Demonstration Team on Saturday, the Lubbock County Historical Commission hosted a ceremony to dedicate a historical marker to W.G. McMillan Construction, Inc.

 The ceremony took place at 11 a.m. Saturday outside of the Silent Wings Museum.

 Tony Privett, a chairperson for the Lubbock County Historical Commission, welcomed the audience to the ceremony with assistance from commission member Don Abbe.

 W.G. McMillian spent a few minutes giving remarks to the crowd before unveiling the marker alongside Privett and Abbe.

 McMillan's company is responsible for the preservation of several historical buildings in Texas, along with other artifacts and documents.



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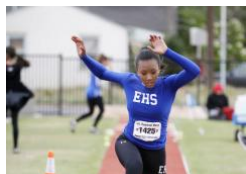
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