

## CAPTAIN NORMAN K. ARVIDSON (1917-2002)

*A Featured Veteran from Parkers Prairie and Little Falls, Minnesota*

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Captain Norman Arvidson is one of only a handful of pilots to have participated in every major airborne assault and supply operation in the European Theater, from D-Day to the end of the war.

**Beginnings.** Arvidson was born and raised in Parkers Prairie, Minnesota. Following his graduation from Deer Creek High School in 1936, he went to work for Cargill in Minneapolis. In 1942 he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and attended flight school near San Antonio Texas, becoming a C-47 transport pilot. On January 1, 1944, he took delivery of his C-47 and flew it to England via Ft. Wayne Indiana, Miami, Puerto Rico, British Guiana, Belem Brazil, Natal Brazil, Ascension Islands, Liberia, Marrakech and, finally, Greenham Commons Air Base in England. There he became part of the 87<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 438<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group.



The C-47 transport plane.

**Missions.** Just after midnight on June 6, 1944, Arvidson flew one of the first planes to cross the English Channel as part of the invasion of Normandy, dropping paratroopers behind enemy lines. Later the same day, he towed a glider that put more American troops on the ground. In mid-August, operating out of Italy, he participated in the invasion of Southern France (Operation Dragoon), which forced German forces to withdraw from that

region. In September 1944 he participated in Operation Market Garden, the airborne assault into Holland, to capture the Rhine bridges. During the Battle of the Bulge on Christmas Day 1944, he dropped supplies to the 101st Airborne Division surrounded in Bastogne, Belgium. In March 1945 he participated in Operation Varsity, the assault across the Rhine River.

In total he flew 214 missions, towing gliders, dropping paratroopers, delivering supplies, and transporting wounded soldiers and concentration camp survivors. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism and four Air Medals.

**After the War.** When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, Arvidson expected to transfer to the Pacific and the war against Japan, but was ordered instead to return to the U.S. He flew his battle-scarred plane back to the United States from Europe via Iceland, Labrador, and Connecticut—turning his old friend in at Langer Field in Boston. After the war, he was discharged at Camp McCoy, WI, returned to Minnesota, married Shirley Farrow, and settled in Little Falls where he owned a car dealership and raised three children.



Arvidson in training.

Capt. Arvidson passed away in April 2002 at the age of 84 and is buried at the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, north of Little Falls.