



Army Air Forces Photo

The Maxton Tactical Demonstration of Gliders

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ON AUGUST 3rd, 4th and 5th, a demonstration of tactical possibilities of Army gliders and glider pilots was put on for General H. H. Arnold, Chief of the U. S. Army Air Forces and for representatives of the country's press and news reels. The show was very impressive. This article will be preceded by a great deal of national publicity, but the writer was a participant in the show and may, therefore, be able to give members of the Soaring Society a few touches not known to the reporters.

A group of pilots came down here to Maxton, N. C., in June to experiment with the CG-4A with the purpose of discovering the maximums for tactical usage and of establishing a standard operating procedure for tactical training.

What we learned was put to use in a series of problems which made up the demonstration above mentioned.

On the night of the 3rd, six gliders landed on a rough field, away from the airport. They landed with the benefit of four or five very, very dim lights, showing in only one direction. All street lights were off, etc. The gliders were landed up against woods, each glider in a specific spot, according to instructions. Troops and equipment were unloaded in silence, and 100 yards away a listening enemy would not have been able to intercept the landings nor discover the fact that death was awaiting nearby.

Spectators had been requested to maintain silence and to refrain from lighting even a match. There came a time when all six gliders were simultaneously in free flight somewhere over their heads. All at once a soft swishing sound was detected by some, then others. Overhead, then gone. Then, still later, a slight crunching

noise was heard as the glider's wheels touched the ground, then slight rumbling as the ship taxied to position within 50 feet of the large group.

Every three minutes this was repeated, till the last glider was overhead. Suddenly a full brass band blared out the Air Corps song—from overhead in that glider. There was not a dry eye in the house. You cannot imagine the sensation it gives you to know a large aircraft, full of men, is within a few hundred feet of you, yet you cannot see it, cannot hear it. There was no moon. It was strictly weird.

At precisely 1300 next day, sixteen gliders behind as many DC-3's were taken off to perform a mission in a field near the airport. Each glider had a specific spot to put his equipment in, as on the previous night's mission. More than half the gliders had to land downwind.

At precisely 1330, the first glider cut loose from 200'. Every three seconds thereafter another glider cut, till all were down.

All the pilots had tough assignments. I can give you mine as an example. I was carrying a goodly number of men plus a lot of lethal equipment, such as machine guns, carbines, ammunition, etc. I had to put this load into a little cut in the woods 200' long, 100' wide. The cut was dog-legged, you had to turn once in it. The mouth was blocked by a few small trees and thick bushes. The sides and end were blocked by large pines. The approach was tailwind, 12-15 mph. Remember that the glider has a span of over 80', and that men and equipment weigh quite a bit. To cap the climax, two other gliders had to come into the same cut behind me. P. S. All three gliders got in.

Some gliders landed on skids, some on wheels. Some had vehicles, some had large guns. Some had rifle