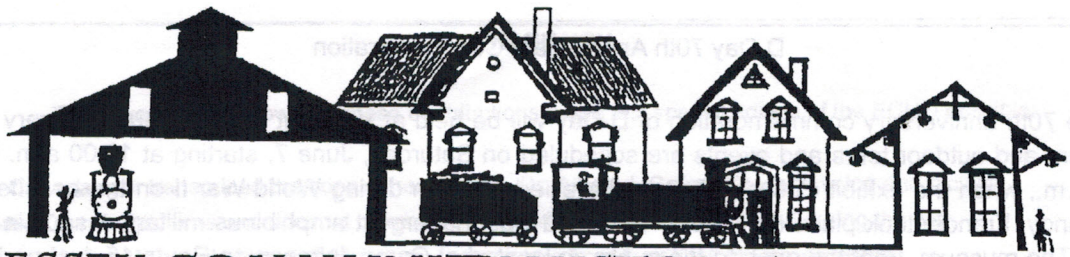


ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESSEX TOWN-EST.1763 ESSEX JCT.-EST1892 ESSEX COMM. HISTORICAL SOCIETY-EST.1991

CONTENTS:

THE ECHO

The Newsletter of the
Essex Community Historical Society
Essex and Essex Junction, Vermont
Published twice a year, spring and fall.
June Special Edition 2014
Edited by Mildred "Molly" Brown
Essex Community Historical Society
P. O. Box 8388
Essex, VT 05451

E-mail address:
essexcommunityhistoricalsociety@myfairpoint.net

REMEMBERING WWII VETERANS

We are proud to bring you this special ECHO edition focusing on World War II in Essex. As a state representative, I've had the good fortune to know many of our local WWII veterans; sadly, there are not many left alive who fought in this world-changing conflict. What they all have in common is that they don't consider themselves heroes, but we certainly do. Some of their stories are in this ECHO.

I often think of Lieutenant William Hunter. I had seen his grave marker in Essex Junction's village cemetery, but didn't know his story until our historical society was contacted by a man in Waterbury who was researching his life, looking for information. Lt. Hunter, Dr. Mathew Hunter's son, was killed in battle in a plane crash over Amsterdam in 1945 at the very end of the war. He is buried overseas. There was no notice in the Suburban List at the time. It turns out Lt. Hunter had enlisted in California. Without diligent research, we would have nothing but a stone marker to know he existed and died for his country. Hopefully, by telling stories, we will keep alive the memory of these common soldiers who were part of America's "greatest generation."

We hope you enjoy the ECHO, and we hope to see many of you at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum this summer and fall!

Tim Jerman, Co-President

D-Day 70th Anniversary Commemoration

The 70th anniversary commemoration of D-Day will be held at Vermont National Guard Library and Museum and outdoor tours and events are scheduled on Saturday, June 7, starting at 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., when the exhibit closes. "D-Day, the allied invasion during World War II on the beaches of Normandy, France, took place on June 6, 1944 and was the largest amphibious military assault in history." The museum, free and open to the public, is located at Camp Johnson on Route 15, just north of St. Michael's College. View the memorabilia from war displays since 1812 and the new Wall of Heroes. Share the D-Day commemorative ceremony. The museum is open Tuesday—Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, call (802) 338-3360.

The WWII Memorial at the Five Corners: "We remember all those who served: the men who came back to Essex and their families to continue with their lives, and those who gave their lives." Barbara Chapin

****

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2013-2014

Eva Clough, Co-President (14)
879-0849
clough42@myfairpoint.net

Paula DeMichele, Vice President (16)
somethinglikeastar@yahoo.com

Denise Groll (16)
879-6841
deejay832000@yahoo.com

Tim Jerman, Co-President (15)
878-2972
vrunner56@msn.com

Laurie Jordan, Secretary (16)
879-6467
jjordan263@aol.com

Jan Kilmer (14)
878-2026
ajctb@aol.com

Thad Wolosinski (15)
879-0282
afcollector@rocketmail.com

Ann Gray, Treasurer (14)
878-4088
grayann8@aol.com

Barb Chapin (14)
922-1230
ebomalcolm@hotmail.com

Polly McEwing (15)
879-6862
pollywmce@aol.com

Claude Buell Chapin—Essex Farm Boy

By Barbara Chapin

In 1932 in Essex Town only 5 or 6 students graduated from high school (then called Essex Classical Institute). Claude Buell Chapin (who was Claude, Junior and thus became known as "June") was one of them. June's younger brother, William, had a passion for playing with radios and later became a nationally known engineer at General Electric, a prominent leader in the development of the radar system in the 1950s. June and his older brother, Graton, (the author's father) loved all aspects of the Vermont farming life and planned to have a two-brother farm: making maple syrup from the substantial grove of sugar maples; logging the woods to generate lumber for building and heating, and keeping the forest healthy; managing (and milking 2x/day 365 days a year) the dairy herd; growing corn for feed and for the local cannery; breeding, raising, and training Morgan horses; and planting and maintaining 8—10 acres of apple trees (a few which are still alive today as part of the Chapin Apple Orchard). For recreation, June enjoyed hiking in the area hills, appreciating the remarkable scenic views afforded from the high points.

On December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor was attacked. Two months later, on February 6, 1942, June volunteered to fight the increasingly rampant evil overseas. (At that time, farmers were not drafted, as they were critical players in the production of food to feed their local communities.)

Private First Class Claude Buell Chapin of the 550th Airborne Infantry Battalion never returned to his beloved hills of Essex, Vermont. He was killed in action on January 4, 1945 in the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne, Belgium- - the battle which took the lives of 9,000 soldiers. June's family received the Purple Heart (donated to the museum) for his service. The community received the apple orchard. Our country received the promise and reality of all the rights and freedoms we enjoy, for which June and others gave their lives.

June is buried (along with 7,991 others) in the Henri-Chapelle Cemetery in Antwerp, Belgium; June's remains are in section E, row 13, #20.

Excerpts from a letter to older brother Graton, "Anchorage, Alaska, 18 Feb, 1960," sent 16

after June's death, written by Jerome W. Moore, a war comrade of June's:

"I first got to know Claude at Laurinburg-Maxton Air Base in North Carolina. We enjoyed many a good long talk—we seemed to have so much in common and yet worlds apart in background. I ate some of the maple sugar that was made there on your farm and you probably remember sending the sugar to him. I talked with him of the dairy cattle—the apple orchard, the raising of sweet corn for the cannery—the carrying of the cobs back to use for cow feed.

...If you all understood the feelings that a combat man has in the face of danger then I'm sure you'd never worry about were we ready to go—in death, that is. God has a wonderful way of preparing each and every one of us for the task at hand—even to dying."

It is great consolation to the author that Jerome went on: "*...he never had any indication that death was near. There was no suffering.*

An artillery shell took his head off instantly. We were driving the Germans back—trying to cut off their escape from out of the Lowlands. They had fallen back all day—Jan. 4, 1945, and that night they staged a savage counter attack and a battle of battles went into progress. Claude's machine gun was hot from use—he died at his job—may his soul rest in peace in its just reward.

We had 600 men in the 550th Airborne when we went in the AM and 299 when a headcount was taken the next morning. Two companies B and C were almost all dead or prisoners. I sometimes find it hard to think a slaughter like this has ever been justified…"

To this day, June's "Chapin Apple Orchard" has survived and flourished, appreciated annually in the fall by thousands of visitors.

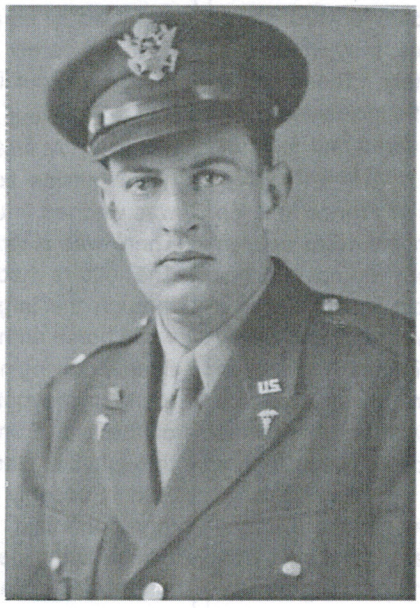
Claude appreciating the fruits of his labor in pie form!

Claude serving his country in uniform.

Major Albert J Crandall's D Day Log

By Dr. Albert J. Crandall

Transcribed by his daughter, Mary Crandall Cavanaugh



The following is an excerpt from Dr. Albert Crandall's wartime log. He was a major in the 101st Airborne and participated in three campaigns during WWII: D Day, Holland, and the Battle of the Bulge. This is his entry about D Day as he went by glider into France before the troops arrived. His mission was to establish the first ever airborne surgical hospital, much like MASH, in France. His hospitals required him to be on the frontlines so that he could save more lives right after his patients were wounded.

In his own words, he starts: Fifty gliders CG4As made up the initial wave. The take-off was smooth, single tour C47s acting as tow ships. One glider was forced down by a broken towrope landing near Kentbury within 30 minutes following take-off. The formation was in effect at an altitude of about 1500 feet and planes staggered in groups of three. Red and green signal lights on the wing tips were used. The dome of the C47 had signal lights, amber for "alert" and red for "cut loose."

The course was varied in a zigzag, circling in an S manner to baffle enemy radar. The ground was studded with beacon and check lights. My position was on left of the plane just to the rear of the trailer. A large window allowed perfect observation from the side and forward of the cockpit. Looking down upon England, it was difficult to imagine that this was to be the great assault of the Hitler's Atlantic wall. We passed over the blacked-out outskirts of London. The buildings loomed in outline form below and I wondered just how many people observing this spectacle realized our mission. It required about an hour's time for our flight to reach the channel. Then we left England behind. As I looked back, it seemed to me that we were leaving, perhaps forever, the garden spot of the world.

The sea was choppy. White tops rolled and were anything but inviting in appearance. Stirring about with flak suit, Mae West, gas clothing and all equipment, I realized that a landing in that channel wedged in the plane as we were would be just about hopeless. Well, this was it and what we had asked for, so it would not help one to think of such affairs. Here and there were shadows

of the many vessels in the channel. They knew the picture and were cheering us on. Their turn would come in the morning and their success depended on the thousands of airborne troops preparing the way. The big show was underway, at last. The boys slept with some snoring and some heads bent forward, some leaning on others shoulders. At times, they would stir, look about, and fall asleep immediately. Those eighty minutes went slowly. Thoughts of little incidents, unimportant, but of great clearness now, came and went as quickly, a flight of ideas. But always, what lies ahead?

About 30 minutes from the coast of France fires on the shore could be seen. Our bombers were over in force today according to BBC (but they did not concentrate to the point of giving away the big attack). Then a fighter plane roar was heard just overhead and a few spurts of machine gun fire, enemy fighters had broken through. Two attacks and they were driven away. It was so dark that you couldn't see what had happened to the formation. At least, our tow plane, other than a drop in altitude and changed course, was okay. The fun had started and it was for keeps now. In the distance one could see bursting flak everywhere in the sky. The parachutists were in there by now and catching no little Hell. It would be worse for us with Jerry alerted we crossed the tip of land then cut south and a little west, still well away from the shore line but gradually approaching it. Then we turned southwest and were headed due inland for the base of the peninsula. Twenty to thirty minutes to go. My watch showed 02:50 AM.

Suddenly the whole sky was filled with bursting shells. The glider bounced about like a cork on rough water. All the men were awake moving in their seats, but not speaking. I told them to get ready. We were over France. Everywhere on the ground below there were spurts of flame. Bullets shrieked through the glider. Fabric was torn on the left wing. The fuselage was opened near the tail. Jerry was giving us all he had and it was plenty. Certainly we could not ride this through and I was sweating plenty. Tracers floated up and curved into the glider. If that trailer got a big one, at least, we would know what had hit us. A burst penetrated the Plexiglas of the cockpit and tore through the glider roof scattering pieces of glass through the plane.

Below I could see the inundated area, the first recognizable sign from my study of the aerial photographs we went south of it and part of the formation north. How in the Hell could anyone recognize a filed down there? We were at about 700 feet, but all below looked the same, a wall of fire everywhere. The Krauts seemed to be in there with thousands and thousands waiting for us. Suddenly there was a terrific jounce that seemed almost surely to be a direct hit, followed by a smooth glide. We were free from the tow plane. Why, I don't know? I did know that that was not the selected point. Nevertheless, to get down would be a great relief. We actually drove downward. Then the shock of the spoilers and trees loomed ahead. He had overshot the field and it would be a crash at terrific speed. Up came the nose we barely cleared and crashed into the adjoining field. I was out like a light.

My blackout could not have lasted for more than seconds. At first, it seemed like a dream, but the terrific noise outside soon returned one to reality. My body was wedged in under the trailer against the pilot's seat. There was a thumping just outside the wrecked plane. The others had gone somewhere, probably looking through the large gap just above me. I could see a white horse running in the field and some distance away figures moving near the hedge rows. By groping about I found my helmet and first aid bag, and then crawled out of the glider onto the ground. Tracers were ripping through the plane and in many directions across the field. Suddenly a C47 burst into flames overhead lighting up the field. It crashed about 1/4 mile away. Many planes and gliders were passing overhead. At frequent intervals a distant terrific crash could be heard as the gliders landed. It didn't seem possible that anyone could survive such a crash. I crawled to a nearby ditch and removed the flak suit as well as the Mae West, took bearings on compass and started northeast using inundated areas for the last bearing. It was a difficult journey...enemy troops, vehicles, and tanks were seen frequently. The cricket was very useful for identification and I am certain that the distance could not have been more than a mile, but it seemed many more.

By sheer luck I came upon our planned rendezvous and found Van, Saul, and three of the technicians at about 4:30 AM. It was still dark. We worked here until about 7:00 AM. Our glider containing the medical and surgical supplies had crash landed into trees at the end of the field. The ship was badly damaged and the men severely mauled, but none injured to the extent that they were disabled. Another glider had crashed into this one later. It was not more than 15 yards from a road intersection. A station was established here and about 125 patients treated, many being returned to duty. At about 7:00 AM Jerry shelled the site with mortar fire, but fortunately the only hit proved to be a dud.

At 7:30 AM I borrowed a jeep from an artillery company and set out for Hiesville across fields. The jeep hauled our trailers of supply. At about 8:00 AM we reached the chateau at Hiesville and started to set up the station. The jeep returned for Van, Saul, technicians, and wounded. Sergeants Roy and Muska had accompanied me. They set up the operating room and before 9:00 AM we were operating the first surgical

hospital of the invasion. The chateau proved to be ideal for our purpose. Located in Hiesville, Normandy and built in 1554 it was a large stone structure with spacious rooms, three stories in height with a stone cellar. The chateau until a few hours before our arrival had been used as a German garrison. In front of the chateau was a paved courtyard about 50 yards square. On the opposite side of the courtyard and facing the chateau were stone stables of great size. On the east of the courtyard there were several small buildings, a vegetable storage space, and an enclosed well and pump. In back of there an orchard and wooded area extended to the rear of the chateau also. The entrance was on the west of the courtyard at the end of a short lane of about 25 yards. The chateau, its adjoining buildings and considerable of its west front were walled from the highway by a stone wall about six feet in height. At the entrance from the highway there was a stone archway and walls running out toward the highway and walls running out towards the highway for about 10 yards.

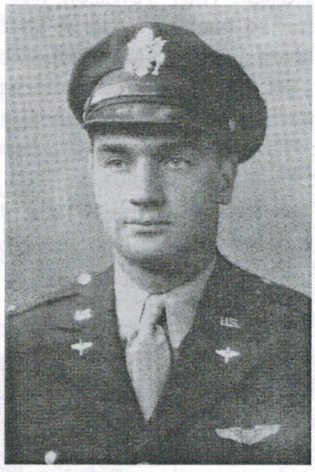
Casualties poured into the hospital area rapidly. Every conceivable type of transportation was in evidence. We had captured many vehicles, our own few vehicles, horse drawn carts and wagons, improvised litters, and ambulatory cases. With each conveyance liaison was established with each unit. Prisoners were used for cleaning the chateau and site. Combatants assisted in many ways. All available parachutes were collected and used in place of blankets. Litters were used for cots and bunks were built. Our technicians supervised much of this and worked very efficiently. It was at once evident that every one of these men lacked nothing in initiative, training, and ability to carry out his duties to the greatest possible degree of efficiency. During this entire period we were under fire from enemy small arms, snipers, and mortar shells at intervals. Enemy snipers were located in the stable across from our chateau and several men were wounded caring for casualties in the courtyard. Paratroopers neutralized this fire, however, later in the afternoon. All that day two and at times three operating tables worked continuously. We were assisted by two regimental surgeons who had been unable to set up their stations. Jack Rodda, Curt Yearie, and Margoles arrived at the station just before noon. Their landing had been made near Vierville and the entire territory was still in enemy hands, though their forces had been thrown into panic and disorganized by the airborne troops.

At approximately 9:00 PM the medical company arrived following a sea landing. They had broken through a narrow corridor established by airborne troops. About 9:30 PM the second echelon of airborne medics arrived, but the enemy killed and captured many as well as taking much equipment though we did receive resupply. On the following day resupply from our seaborne element began to filter through. Major James Whitselt, chief of the surgical team attached to the 82nd Airborne Division, had come in by glider with their first wave arriving at about 4:30 AM. He was alone and isolated form that division, but found us on the morning of D Day plus 1. He worked with us that day ad rejoined his unit on the morning of D Day plus 2. His team was committed in the second wave and did not function until D Day plus 2. Thus the first airborne surgical team was that of the 101st and it was the only one committed in the assault wave before H hour. This team was the first of its kind in the history of modern warfare.

Major Crandall is acknowledged on the Vermonters' Wall of Heroes/The Greatest Generation display at the Vermont National Guard Library and Museum at Camp Johnson.

A Pilot's Story

By Noah C. Thompson

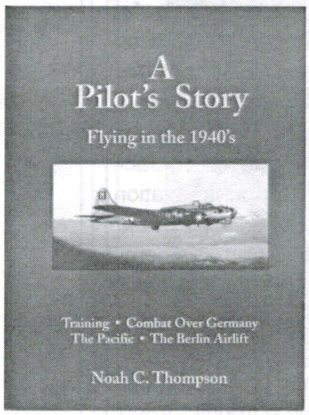


I personally have attended reunions, met old friends and crew members, relived the events and spent a lot of time composing and writing this narrative.

My recollection of those long ago years is still amazingly vivid, however, many of the details are substantiated through military records and notes that I have kept, and letters written by me to my parents that fortunately were saved and returned to me years later. Records include my Individual Pilot's Flight Log, and most of the military orders that involved my assignments. I have also acquired various historical books written about Air Force activities which have helped to verify the dates, missions and important facts.

These memoirs are an accurate account of the sequence of events that I thought of enough importance to be preserved as a family record to be passed on to the generations that follow. It includes thoughts, learning experiences, fate, happenings and assignments that directed and affected my life during those years.

Nothing here is fictional. It all happened the way I have told it. I feel proud to have had the opportunity of this experience and, I believe, to have successfully carried out my assignments. I consider myself lucky to have been placed on earth at the right time to be of the right age to coincide as a participant in one of the most important periods in our history.*



- From *A Pilot's Story* by Noah C. Thompson, printed by Academy Books, 1995.

THANK YOU

Thank you to the following, whose contributions made this special edition of the ECHO possible:

Mary Cavanaugh: transcribed the copy of her father's, Dr. Albert J. Crandall's wartime log and picture.
Barbara Chapin: pictures and account of her uncle, Claude B. Chapin, before and during the war.
Vermont National Guard Library & Museum, Inc.: picture from their Wall of Heroes display.

THANK YOU!!!!!!

****

We are currently developing an e-mail distribution list to use for event notification. If you would like to be included in this list and have not already done so, please send your e-mail address to:
essexcommunityhistoricalsociety@myfairpoint.net,
or check the "yes" on the membership form . Also, please indicate if you would like to receive the ECHO via e-mail.

We hope to see you at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum this summer! Summer hours are as follows: Sundays, June 1st to October 12th, 1—4 p.m. and Thursdays from June 5th to August 31st, 6—7:30 p.m.

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please print

Name:_____

Mailing address:_____

City/Town_____State_____Zip_____

Phone _____

E-Mail address: _____

___ Yes! I would like to be added to an e-mail distribution list for event notification.

____Yes! I would like to receive the ECHO via e-mail.

Circle relevant Annual Membership Category or Lifetime:

Individual $10 Family $15 Senior (60 and older) $5

Lifetime (individual, married, civil union) $100

_____Yes! I would like to volunteer at the museum or other event.

Make checks payable to: Essex Community Historical Society, P.O. Box 8388, Essex, Vermont 05451

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Essex Town-Est. 1763 Essex Jct.-Est. 1892 Essex Comm.Historical Society-Est. 1991

P.O. Box 8388
Essex, VT 05451

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Vermont History Expo: June 21st and June 22nd at Tunbridge Fairgrounds. 10:00—5:00

Ancestors & Architecture: W. C. Sawyer Photographs of 1900 Essex: Wednesday, July 9th at 7:00 p.m. Presented by Tim Jerman at Memorial Hall.

Block Party: Saturday, July 19th 5 p.m. - 10 p.m. ECHS booth will be on Railroad Ave in Essex Junction