

# “KNEES IN THE BREEZE”



## “Airborne All The Way”



2019 Liberty Jump Team

Basic Airborne and  
Refresher Course Dates  
Stay tuned to Facebook!

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Once again our Vice  
President and Director of  
Training Karl Johnson has  
a full schedule set up and  
raring to go for us.

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Interested in being a  
paratrooper with the  
Liberty Jump Team and  
never jumped out of a not  
so perfectly good airplane?  
Check out our website for  
more info.

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What if you’ve been  
through another teams  
basic course, haven’t  
jumped with the Liberty  
Jump Team in a while, or  
you have completed the  
U.S. Army Airborne School  
and want to jump with our  
historic team? Again  
check out our website for  
contact info.

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### “An Experience Unlike Anything”

More than six months ago, I met Liberty Jump Team at an air show in Dallas, TX. I stood and watched in awe as they packed parachutes for 2 hours, then I came back to watch them don their gear, and then watched them jump from a vintage C-47. I fell in love in an instant. I knew I had just as much love for history, just as deep a desire to honor our veterans because I had two grandfathers who were WWII veterans, and that I was absolutely crazy enough to jump out of a perfectly good airplane. I had to join.

In March, I did. On March 18th, I drove to Dennison, Texas, with hand-me-down, thrifted army gear, barely broken in WWII reproduction jump boots, and a whole lot of fighting spirit. I knew going in that I’d be the only woman in the group, and I was ready to throw down and give it my all.

My first night, I had dinner with several of the guys. I look back on that dinner and laugh, because I knew so little about how much these guys would come to mean to me and how close we would become. That first night, Butch pulled me aside and said, “Please tell me this isn’t just a ‘bucket list’ thing.” I responded, “I can tell you that, but you may not believe me. I’ll just have to prove it to you.” He laughed, but I meant it. The next day I showed up to the hangar with a lot of nervousness and excitement. I was ready.

On March 18th, I went to my week of airborne jump training. It was everything I had hoped and more. I pushed myself harder and farther than I ever had and was black and blue, stiff and sore, and wonderfully beat



up from head to toe. Whenever I felt like I couldn't take another step or pack another chute, I thought of all my heroes jumping into Normandy, and it may seem silly, but they inspired in me the will to press on.

Experiencing even a fraction of what our WWII veterans went through was incredibly emotional. Even the mental aspects of the week challenged me in ways like never before. A constant barrage of new things, like learning the intricacies of packing my own parachute, preparing to jump, exiting the plane, the rules of the air, executing a solid PLF, all the gear and get-up, and simply facing the reality of jumping out of a plane.

Everything I had learned was put to test that Tuesday evening where, under a clear Texas sky with the setting sun on the horizon, I made my first jump. As my Jumpmaster yelled, "GO!" there was no hesitation out of the plane - I was out over the drop zone into the coolness of the void, and in an instant my static line jerked and my canopy deployed, a perfect jump.

I had four jumps total by Friday; and on Saturday, to earn my wings, a fifth. But this jump was from a C-47, not too dissimilar from the first I saw the team jump from when we met those many months before; a perfectly good airplane. And when the green light lit, we rushed from the door and filled the sky with deployed canopies. A perfect jump.

The week was one of the most empowering weeks of my life. These wings represent so much to me, and through me they represent the veterans who rained down from the sky into the unknown to protect our freedoms against insurmountable odds.



These are my wings.

Callie Pruett



## From our Senior Rigger – Jim Micko

A requirement for membership in the Liberty Jump Team - that is, those who have a jumping role- is an ability to pack the main parachute. Like any other complex task, the more one does it, the more one excels at it.

However, since few members have access to packing tables apart from events, the skills tend to fade. Yet, the requirement still exists.

Based on observation and analysis of the packing situation over the past year, and a desire to foster a climate of continuous improvement and professionalism, it has been decided that one step to improve overall team parachute packing performance will be to have, easily available, the requisite packing instructions. Beginning in October, it will be the responsibility of each jumper attending a LJT event, to have, on his or her person, a *working* copy of the packing instructions for the individuals specific parachute.

As to *working copy*, this means having the instructions printed out on paper that can be folded and placed in the cargo pocket. Not the entire manual, just the portion that refers to the actual pack-up, with a suggestion to print the instructions on both sides of the paper. This will make three documents you need to have before arriving at an LJT event 1) "Triage card" (your individual specifics as to blood type,



insurance, next of kin, etc needed in case you are injured on the DZ) 2) Printed copy of the Op Order to include event schedule / timeline, and 3) a *working* copy of the packing instructions.

The specific reasons for implementing the packing instruction are two-fold: (1) The individual packer, if not clear on how next to proceed, will have the proper instructions available to refer to at all times, and (2) any dispute over "this way or that way" will be rectified by pulling out the instructions and identifying the procedure. Notes can then be made notes to help future pack-ups.

LJT policy has always been to pack the parachute per the manufacturer's instructions or the requisite military manual. Most main chutes are SF-10A, SET-10, and MC1-1D. Currently, the

Manufacturer's instructions for SF-10A and SET-10 are on the LJT website (Members section), along with the Army Tech Manual (TM) for the MC1-1D. Sometime in the near future, we will include the Army TM for the MC-6 parachute (canopy is the same as the SF-10A) and the LJT MC1-1D Training School manual.

The ultimate goal here is to make the individual packer proficient in preparing his own parachute for the jump. In closing, it's just a good idea.

As always, feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions [mickojim@yahoo.com](mailto:mickojim@yahoo.com)

## Veteran Affairs

Last month in Normandy France, the French people held a week-long commemoration to celebrate the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day invasion (Operation Overlord). Thousands of people gathered from around the world to honor the WWII heroes that liberated their country in 1944.

Liberty Jump Team Veterans Affairs Director Peter Plank and his wife Linda escorted three of the Greatest Generation veterans (and their family members) back to France to participate in those events. It was the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that Peter and the LJT have taken the WWII heroes back to the villages they liberated in Europe. This year, the veterans that participated included: Frank Parkinson (B-24 bomber machine gunner), Wes Athey (35<sup>th</sup> Inf Div rifleman) and Jack Hamlin (USCG Rescue Flotilla One).

WWII veterans Frank Parkinson, Wes Athey & Jack Hamlin at Omaha Beach Normandy France



After months of planning, preparations and securing ceremony invitations/passes, the 8-day adventure began. The group arrived after 10 hours flying on commercial airlines, 2 hours getting thru the Paris airport and a 4-hour drive to the Normandy area. There were several French host families that opened up their hearts and their homes to the veterans so that they would not have to stay in hotels. It is an honor for these host families to have a WWII hero live with them for a few days.

Planning for the Veterans Affairs side of the LJT involved participating in an event each morning, lunch, afternoon rest and an evening event. With two veterans being 95 years old and one that is 97 years old, it was important to pick and choose events that would allow much needed rest each day.

Events included a visit to the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach to visit fallen comrades. There are over 9,400 soldiers buried on 172 acres of peaceful grounds overlooking the invasion beach. French schoolchildren from the area walked with the veterans at these hallowed grounds. It was heartwarming to see the veterans place flowers and pray at their fallen comrades final resting place.



WWII veterans Wes Athey & Jack Hamlin honoring a fallen comrade at the American Cemetery in Normandy France

There were several official ceremonies throughout the trip in the villages of Carentan, Sainte Mere Eglise, Amfreville, Ravenoville and Angoville-au-Plain. Each village has a monument dedicated to the Allied unit or division that was closely responsible for their liberation. One of the ceremonies included a formal presentation of the French Legion of Honor to the veterans.

Several parachute jumps were planned onto historical drop zones to commemorate the airborne drops that occurred prior to the beach landings. The Liberty Jump Team parachuted from a vintage C47 aircraft that led the way of a mass parachute jump of over 600 active duty paratroopers jumping from C17 and C130 aircraft. This mass jump occurred at the famous La Fiere drop zone outside of Sainte Mere Eglise where over 10,000 spectators were present to see the jumps.

A parade thru the streets of the village of Sainte Mere Eglise highlighted the trip where the WWII veterans rode in fully restored WWII jeeps, tanks & halftracks. Thousands of people lined the street

to cheer for their heroes. They were treated like rock stars everywhere they went, signing hundreds of autographs and posing for countless photos.

MHC Board member Peter Plank with WWII paratrooper Ray Wallace in Normandy France.



The trip was concluded with a visit to Omaha Beach where the US Forces landed. Each of the three WWII veterans had a significant role in the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. Frank Parkinson flew two missions over the beach as a machine gunner on a B24 bomber aircraft. Wes Athey came onto the beach in the 3rd wave as a rifleman with the 35th Infantry Division. Jack Hamlin with the US Coast Guard saved lives of wounded soldiers floating in the waters off of the beach.

Some big thanks go out to the Liberty Jump Team donors, sponsors and to all of the host families who give generously so that there is no cost for the WWII veterans to go on this 'trip of a lifetime'. Preparations are already being made for France next year, which will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day Invasion. Before that, the Veterans Affairs program will be taking Battle of the Bulge veterans to Belgium this December. If you know of a WWII veteran who served in Europe and wants to make the trip to these commemorations, please contact the Liberty Jump Team for further information.

WWII veteran Frank Parkinson receiving the French Legion of Honor medal in Carentan, France.





**We wanted to send out a very special thanks to our anonymous sponsors for our Veteran Affairs Program financial donations, once again.**

**Without you and your support and love of World War II veterans we could not do what we do. You are to be commended!**

**THANK YOU!**

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