



*“I didn’t take the traditional, well-thought-out route during my pilot training days in WW II like most of the cadets. At the time I guess I was considered a nonconformist by some of the military brass. In fact, I had my wings clipped, changed and rearranged several times throughout my military career. As I look back on it now, even though I wasn’t an ace or led a 1,000 plane bomber raid, I did have some unusual experiences flying the Stinson L-5 in combat that the average guy didn’t have. But then again, there was nothing average about some of the misfits I flew with in the South Pacific. Frankly, I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way!” —J.D. White*

# GENERAL DELIVERY

FROM GLIDERS TO THE GUINEA SHORT LINES

BY 1ST LT. JAMES D. WHITE, 25TH LIAISON SQUADRON, USAAC (RET.)  
AS TOLD TO AND WRITTEN BY JAMES P. BUSH



The original L-5s, the B/C models, were mostly observation airplanes with the rear of the fuselage cut down with Plexiglas all around. The E/G models, as pictured here, had a full-length door down the left side to load litters. The Gs were optimized for short-field work, and their ailerons could be cranked down like flaps. (Photo courtesy of Bill Crump)

When I was a senior in high school in 1942, I took advantage of the Civilian Pilot Training Program and earned my pilots license flying Waco UPF-7s and PT-17s off a red dusty Oklahoma airfield near my hometown. As I waited to be called to active duty, I continued to build flying time and eventually earned my civilian instructor rating. With my chest puffed out proudly and my head held high, I was sent to Lakeland, Florida, as a civilian to instruct Army Primary in PT-17s.

The good times in sunny Florida didn't last very long due to a little personality difference I had with an Army major. Actually, it was more of a head-on clash of strong wills and stubbornness—I just couldn't keep my big mouth shut! It was obvious that one of us had to go, and I quickly found out the meaning of "rank has its privileges"; I drew the short straw and was shipped north to Tennessee. My new assignment consisted of giving 10 hours of dual instruction to new students in a J-5 Cub—not my dream job in the war effort! Eventually, I was granted a reprieve and called up for active duty.

I decided I wanted to try something a little different when it came to flying, so I signed up for the glider program. They

welcomed me with open arms and great jubilation, and I was whisked away quickly before I had a chance to change my mind. I was intrigued with the thoughts of soaring through the air on lifting thermals and envisioned being sent to some far-off exotic training base. My dream was quickly shattered when I was sent to the back hills of Kentucky because some brilliant higher-up had decided that glider pilots should be more like commandos. For the next two months I endured a living hell as I learned to shoot everything from a .45-caliber pistol to a large field artillery piece. Day after day I was taught how to defuse live booby traps, kill with my bare hands and dig in the dirt for my next meal. Sixty days later with all 10 toes and fingers in their proper places, I was deemed physically fit to learn the finer points of glider flying.

### Deadstick school

Before I was even allowed to set foot inside a transport glider, I was sent to "deadstick school" and practiced gliding maneuvers in a Taylorcraft L-2M. The L-2 was a tandem two-seat Grasshopper, similar to the L-4 Cub. The one thing the L-2 had over its contemporaries, though, was a set of wing spoilers, which allowed for very steep approaches into very small fields. Our training consisted of climbing up to altitude, shutting the 65hp engine off and making approaches into fields and pastures. And just like it would be in a larger glider, you had to be dead-on with your speed and



J.D. White at the controls of an L-5. (Photo courtesy of author)

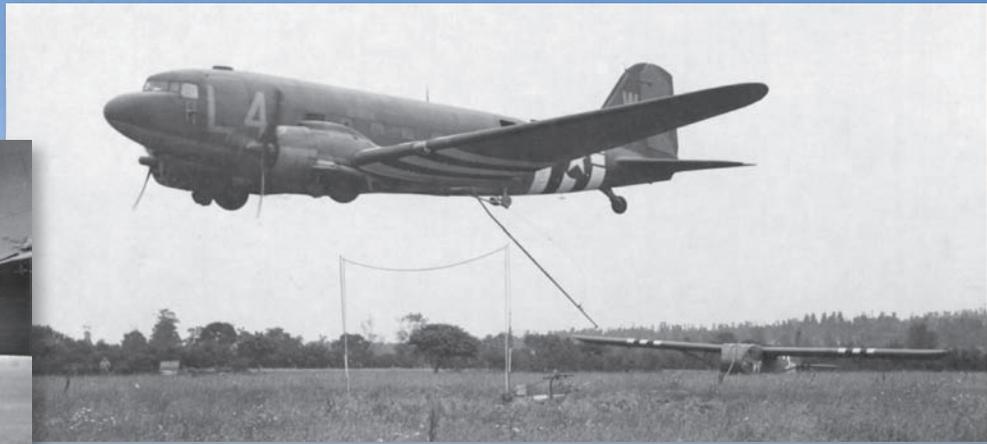
## WACO CG-4A SPECS

**Length:** 48 ft. 4 in.  
**Wingspan:** 83 ft. 8 in.  
**Wing chord:** 10 ft. 6 in.  
**Height:** 12 ft. 7 in.  
**Empty weight:** 3,750 lb.  
**Max weight:** 7,500 lb.  
**Max speed:** 150mph  
**Rate of sink:** 400 feet/minute  
**Crew:** 2 pilots  
**Payload:** 13 fully equipped troops  
           1 Jeep  
           1 75mm Howitzer  
**Numbers built:** Over 13,000



altitude because there was no going around for another try. Deadstick school was a lot of fun, but things became serious when we flew the "big boy" gliders.

My final destination was South Plains Army Airfield, Lubbock, Texas. There I was introduced to one of the most God-awful-looking, ugly gliders the Army ever produced—the Waco CG-4A. It may have been an ugly duckling on the ground, but in the air it had its own graceful attributes as long as you flew it within its limits. At more than 48 feet long and with a wingspan of just under 84 feet, the CG-4A was a monster. It stalled around 55mph and cruised at 120. Made of mostly doped fabric, metal tubing and wood, the Waco tipped the scales at 3,750 pounds empty weight. Its gross weight of over 7,500 pounds meant it could carry just about its own weight in men and supplies. The loading and off-loading of supplies was through the hinged nose, just where my pilot seat was located. For the next two months, I learned the ins and outs of flying this glider and really began to enjoy my time being towed skyward behind



Left: A 9th AF C-47A crewman attaches the towline from a Waco CG-4 glider to the Skytrain's towhook in England June 5, 1944. (Photo courtesy of Jack Cook)  
 Above: A 9th AF C-47A Skytrain about to hook the towline and return a CG-4 glider back to England from France in June 1944. (Photo courtesy of Jack Cook)  
 Below: A handful of CG-4As were supplied to British and Canadian Commonwealth Forces for training as Hadrian Mk.1 and IIs as represented by this example photographed at Gander, Newfoundland by S. Sgt. John Meyer in 1944. (Photo courtesy of Stan Piet)



C-47s, C-46s and occasionally a war-weary B-17. The real excitement occurred when we were sent to Fort Bragg to work with the 82nd Airborne as we practiced "snatch and grabs." The purpose of this maneuver was to show us that these big gliders didn't need a long wide runway to take off on. With our tow rope attached to two poles stuck in the ground, a low-flying C-47 would dangle a hook to catch our rope and jerk us off the ground. Man, it felt like riding a rocket as we zoomed skyward at over a 120mph in seven seconds!

With my training complete along with a commission of flight officer and a set of silver wings with a big "G" in the center, I was ready to do my part for the war effort. But my proudest thing about being a glider pilot was the fact that no one who wore these wings ever got put in for a good conduct medal! I felt right at home with these guys.

### Combat bound

We all thought we were headed to Europe, especially since D-Day was only a month old.

We thought we would be a part of the next wave of gliders being towed across the English Channel to slug it out with the Germans; we thought wrong. We were ordered to about-face and were sent to the South Pacific arriving in New Guinea in late 1944 as part of the 403rd Troop Carrier Group, 13th AF. Now, I have never been accused of being the smartest fellow in the bunch, but as I looked around and saw nothing but jungles, swamps and more jungles, I wondered what our mission was going to be. Most of us figured we were destined for bigger and not necessarily better things—the airborne invasion of Japan.

To keep us current, while we waited for the island-hopping campaign to secure a large enough rock as close to Japan as possible from which to launch a glider, we were towed around the island of Biak

Although simplistic in form, the Waco-designed glider was a marvel of practicality and utility. Incorporating over 17,000 parts, they were constructed by 16 separate contractors building 13,900 examples from 1942-1945. With a swing-up hinged nose, they were capable of hauling up to 13 fully armed troops or cargo loads up to 4,200 pounds including a standard ¼-ton jeep or 75mm howitzer and ammunition. (Photo courtesy of Stan Piet)

to get some fresh air under our wings and practice our landings. The fresh air was also a welcomed relief from the hot and humid conditions on the ground; most of us contracted malaria and dengue fever in the first month. The glider flying was as rare as a warm bath, and the life of a Pacific glider pilot was actually kind of boring. Some of the brass



25th Liaison "Guinea Short Lines" billboard. (Photo courtesy of author)

A Philippine-based L-5 Sentinel is loaded with a wounded GI and is soon to deliver him to a rear area hospital for treatment. (Photo courtesy of Jack Cook)

began to take notice of our wild and woolly bunch of officers wearing wings with a G on them wandering around the Pacific, occasionally getting into mischief. As glider pilots we had been qualified to act as copilots on powered aircraft of up to 650 horsepower. As the tactics and plans of war changed, so, too, did our role, and I was reassigned to the 25th Liaison Squadron in April 1945. At least these guys had the same demeanor as a glider pilot—never a dull moment!

### Hopping around with the Guinea Short Lines

The Guinea Short Lines had been in combat since 1943. At first they were considered useless and the butt of a lot of fighter and bomber pilot jokes; that was until they started rescuing these hotshots

from the jungles of New Guinea. Flying Stinson L-5s, these sergeant pilots really made a name for themselves and were revered as angels of mercy for finding and rescuing many downed airmen who would have never been able to walk out of the jungle alive. By the time I joined the squadron, the initial cadre of pilots had been sent home for a well-deserved rest, but their war-weary L-5s remained behind to soldier on. The L-5 was the biggest of all the tandem-seat Grasshoppers and was designed and built specially for getting in and out of tight places. With a wingspan of 34 feet and a length of 24 feet, the L-5 had an empty weight of 1,550 pounds and a gross weight of 2,200 pounds. The airplane was definitely a flying Jeep, and some of the models had litters installed in the back fuselage area to carry wounded.

When I joined up with them on the Philippines island of Mindanao, General MacArthur was in the thick of it, liberating the Japanese-held islands. In fact, just before I had arrived, one of the 25th Liaison Squadron's major achievements was delivering an entire field hospital behind enemy lines in support of the 11th Airborne Division that had been cut off on Leyte Island. More than 396,000 pounds of supplies, including operating tables, mess equipment along with rifles, bazookas, grenades and ammunition were delivered to the besieged unit.





The “fabulous four” (right to left: L-2, L-3, L-4 and a white-tailed L-5) gather on a Wisconsin field.

The L-5's front office. (Photos by James P. Busha)

## L-BIRDS EXPLAINED BY JAMES P. BUSHA

During WW II, the Allies utilized a handful of different liaison aircraft in a “jack of all trades” role

By far, the biggest and ugliest “Grasshopper” was the behemoth **Stinson L-1 Vigilant**. You don’t have to look very far to see that the L-1 was heavily influenced by the German Fieseler Storch. From its full-span wing slats to the drooping ailerons and flaps and 295hp Lycoming engine, the L-1 reeked of STOL (short takeoff and landing) capabilities. With its more than 50-foot wingspan and 3,400-pound gross weight limit, the L-1 could still manage a jaw-dropping 1,100-foot-a-minute climbout. L-1s were flown on all fronts with a few of them even strapping on a pair of Edo floats for air-sea rescue missions. A total of 324 was built.

The U.S. Army knew it had to “downsize” the requirements for Observation/ Liaison aircraft after it found that the L-1 could not fit very well into

confined spaces, like small pastures and forest clearings. The big three light aircraft manufacturers at the time, Taylorcraft, Aeronca and Piper, were pressed into service to build the next generation of “War bugs.”

The Taylorcraft Corporation came up with a tandem two seat L-bird with a sawed-off turtle deck of Plexiglas strapped to the rear fuselage. They called it the **L-2** and even installed spoilers on its 35-foot 5-inch wings (on later models) to help train future glider pilots. The Army liked it so much that it ended up ordering 1,800 of the 65hp speedsters. The L-2 drew the short straw when it came to combat time, though, and stayed behind in the States to teach Army pilots how to fly and spot artillery.

If the L-1 was considered the “Goliath” of the bunch then

the **Aeronca L-3** is certainly the “David” among the group. With a 35-foot wingspan and a cockpit/observer area covered in Plexiglas, the 65hp L-3 was certainly well suited as an observer’s platform. Although it served in both the European and Pacific theaters, its numbers in combat were limited due to the overabundance of Piper L-4s and Stinson L-5s on the playing field. A total of over 1,400 was built.

Probably the best known of the group is the cute “little yellow J-3 Cub” that turned into a killing machine when it wore a coat of olive drab. The **L-4** in military uniform sported a full acre of greenhouse glass, a 65hp engine, and in some cases, a handful of bazookas strapped to its wing struts. More than 5,500 L-4s served in a variety of roles during WW II, some even launching from the

decks of aircraft carriers.

The last Grasshopper of the group was more like a “flying Jeep” than a small insect. Unlike the L-3 and L-4, which were basically civilian designs turned into military fliers, the **Stinson L-5 Sentinel** was purposely built as a true liaison aircraft. With a powerful 185hp Lycoming engine, the L-5 didn’t pay much attention to its gross weight of 2,200 pounds—exceeding that number more often than not. From dropping grenades on enemy strongholds to carrying a wounded soldier on a stretcher in its fuselage, the L-5 served valiantly on all fronts. A total of over 3,800 Sentinels was built.



## STINSON L-5 SPECS

**Length:** 24 ft. 1 in.  
**Wingspan:** 34 ft.  
**Height:** 7 ft. 11 in.  
**Empty weight:** 1,550 lb.  
**Gross weight:** 2,200 lb.  
**Max speed:** 130mph  
**Engine:** Lycoming O-435 at 185hp  
**Crew:** 2; pilot (front) observer (rear)  
**Range:** 420 miles

**Sam Taber shows off his Guinea Short Line painted L-5. (Photo by Jim Raeder)**

We were stationed at Del Monte Airfield, part of the Del Monte Corporation plantation that had been in Japanese hands since the middle of 1942. Our main role was to provide reconnaissance for the Army troops on the ground and to act as a flying ambulance by flying the wounded out of harm's way. We also carried supplies such as blood, food, ammunition, personnel and other essentials to the front lines, all while dodging Japanese small-arms and light antiaircraft fire from below. Some of us became frustrated fighter pilots and returned the favor to the Japanese as we dropped hand grenades and shot at them from our open windows with our .45-caliber pistols or carbines.

But one of our best attributes of the L-5 was to come in low over a known Japanese base or stronghold, looking for enemy soldiers hidden by jungle foliage and spider holes and drop a smoke grenade right in the middle of them. As soon as the smoke drifted upwards, our dive-bombers would pounce on it turning the jungle into a roaring inferno. The L-5 was a tough old bird and

at home scouring the jungle canopy for trouble below. Just to show you how much punishment an L-5 could take, we had one pilot who took off from Del Monte and forgot to pull up enough to clear a ridge line. The impact should have knocked his teeth out, but the L-5 kept on flying minus one gear leg sheared off at the fuselage attachment point.

A couple of pilots stood on the ground and watched as the legless L-5 circled above. The pilot was either too scared to land or too embarrassed to face his fellow pilots. As his fuel tanks ran dry, he came in for what was actually a marvelous job of balancing the Stinson on one leg. Unfortunately, when he pulled the power, his left wing slowly came down, sliding along on the grass strip before spinning around. No worse for wear, both the pilot and L-5 were up flying again a few days later. Day in and day out, we flew countless missions in support of retaking the Philippines, but none was more memorable than one of my last ones.

## General delivery

My CO at the time was Major George Wilson, and unlike the major back in Lakeland, Florida, Maj. Wilson was well liked and respected. He had been with the group for a long time and turned a blind eye to our periodic liquid celebrations; it was one of the few things that helped calm our nerves. When the fighting stopped at last and we received word of the use of a super bomb on Japan, we of course celebrated in usual fashion. On September 8, 1945, for whatever reason, probably because I was the soberest pilot still standing, Maj. Wilson asked me to fly an L-5 to Davao on the southernmost point of Mindanao and pick up a VIP. I had hoped that VIP meant "very important package"—more booze!

When I arrived at the airfield near Davao, I was directed to taxi near a group of soldiers who were guarding a Japanese officer. This, however, was not just some run-of-the-mill Japanese officer, but it was General Gyosaku Morozumi, and up until a few battles ago, commander of some 43,000 Japanese troops. Gen. Morozumi was requested to report to Del Monte and surrender his troops to the commanding general of the U.S. Army's 31st Infantry Division. Needless to say, I was a little nervous stuffing him in the backseat, unattended, while I flew the L-5 all the way back home. During the war, we had been briefed over and over again about the Japanese soldier's psyche of death before dishonor, the kamikaze and Banzi charges, and so on. It was very unnerving having the enemy sitting a few feet in back of my head.

I was 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighed a little over 200 pounds; the general, on the other hand, was half a foot shorter and 50 pounds lighter than me. I had one trump card up my sleeve as I strapped the general in the back of the L-5. When I taxied out and got to the end of the runway, I pulled out my .45-caliber pistol, turned around, cocked the hammer and began to wave it around in front of his nose. His eyes got as big as propeller arcs, and I think he thought I was going to shoot him! I pointed to the stick, the throttle and a few other items he wasn't allowed to touch and shook my head and smiled holding up my pistol. I turned around and laid the pistol on the dash panel in front of me. The long flight back home was uneventful, and each time I turned around to check on my passenger, his eyes were locked on my gun as he sat as still as a church mouse. After we landed, the general even obliged to have his photograph taken with me before he signed the surrender papers.

TO: Brigadier General Joseph C. Hutchinson  
Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, United States Army

### CAPITULATION

I, Lieutenant General Gyosaku Morozumi Acting Commanding General of the 35th Army and Commanding General of the 30th Division, hereby unconditionally surrender on this day all the officers and men, and all arms, military equipment, records and supplies under my command to the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, United States Army.

I agree faithfully henceforth to obey the orders of the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, and to direct all members of my command to do so.

I will use all means that I possess to secure as early as possible the assembly of all troops under my command within Reception Centers established by the United States Army, and will take action as directed by you to establish a liaison with units and individuals who have not yet surrendered.

I will report all known locations of explosives and mines, both land and water, where presence is a hazard to life and property.

Signed,  
Gyosaku Morozumi  
Lieutenant General,  
Imperial Japanese Army,  
Commanding  
8 September 1945



The end of the line for Gen. Morozumi with J.D. White's L-5 in the background. (Photo courtesy of author)

Ironically, many years later, I had correspondence with a fellow who had spoken with a WW II L-5 pilot, who had claimed, before his death, that he was the one who had flown General Morozumi to the surrender ceremony. He even went so far as to proclaim that during the flight, the General grabbed a hold of his silk scarf and tried to strangle the poor L-5 pilot. The "brave" L-5 pilot was not only able to keep his L-5 straight and level with one hand, but he was also able to fend off his attacker and subdue him high above the Philippines. I am all for listening to a good war story, but this one is the stuff of legends—even Hollywood couldn't come up with this BS! I guess that's why a photo is worth a 1,000 words, and it helps to keep history from becoming lost, or even worse, twisted around. Besides, glider pilots never lie! †