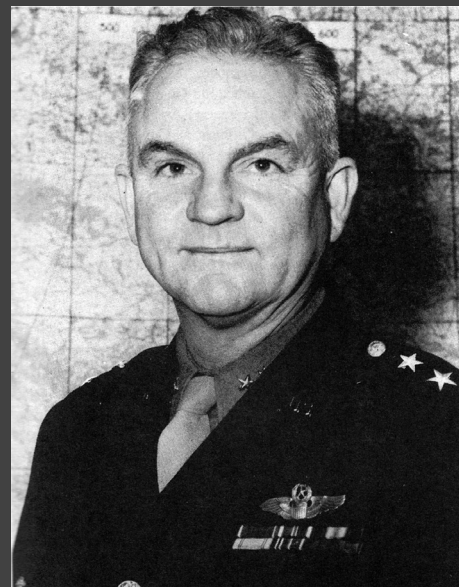
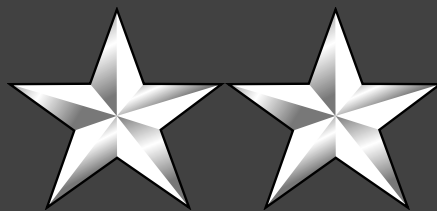


Voices of War Life Story

Paul Langdon Williams
1894 - 1968





Name: Paul Langdon Williams

Other names/aliases:

Date of birth: 16 April 1894

Place of birth: Detroit, Michigan, USA

Nationality: American

Date of death: 3 March 1968

Place of death: USA

Service No:

Unit Commands: Tenth Air Force; Second Air Force; Ninth Air Force; Third Air Force; IX Troop Carrier Command; 51st Troop Carrier Wing; XII Air Support Command; 27th Bombardment Group; 3rd Bombardment Group; 90th Attack Squadron

Rank: Major General

Burial: Riverside, California

Memorials: Medals and awards: Distinguished Service Medal; Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross (2); Air Medal; Légion d'honneur (France); Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (UK)

Education & Employment: Stamford University

Life Story

Major General Paul Langdon Williams (1894–1968) was a distinguished United States Army Air Forces and United States Air Force officer, renowned for his pivotal role in developing and leading airborne operations during World War II.

Early Life and Education

Born on April 16, 1894, in Detroit, Michigan, Williams moved to Los Angeles during his childhood. He graduated from Stanford University in 1917 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Later that year, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Infantry Reserve. In October 1917, he enlisted as an aviation cadet in the Aviation Section of the Signal Enlisted Reserve Corps, receiving his wings and a second lieutenant's commission in February 1918.

Military Career

After completing flight training, Williams served at various U.S. Air Service bases, including Carlstrom Field, Gerstner Field, and Calexico, California. In July 1920, he received a regular commission as a second lieutenant in the Air Service and was promoted to first lieutenant the same day. He served in multiple roles, including post transportation officer at Mather Field and operations officer for the 96th Bombardment Squadron at Langley Field. Williams also served as a flying instructor and held several positions at the Air Corps Primary Flying School at Brooks Field and Randolph Field in Texas.

Williams's impact on World War II was defined by his command of the Ninth Troop Carrier Command (IX TCC), a force that became the backbone of Allied airborne operations in the European theater. As its commanding general, he was responsible for the airlift of the 17th, 82nd, and 101st Airborne Divisions, playing a critical role in some of the war's most famous campaigns.

His experience with airborne operations began earlier in the war. He was involved in organizing the air transport squadrons for Operation Torch,

the invasion of North Africa in November 1942. For this campaign, he personally led a mission of C-47s carrying paratroops of the British 2nd Parachute Battalion. While the drop was successful, the ground forces faced heavy fighting. He later commanded the 51st Troop Carrier Wing and played a key role in the airborne portion of the invasion of Sicily in July 1943.

.

In February 1944, Williams was appointed commanding general of the Ninth Troop Carrier Command. From his headquarters in England, he oversaw the training and preparation for the massive airborne assault in Normandy. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he directed a colossal air armada of over 1,000 C-47 transport aircraft and 900 gliders, delivering paratroopers and equipment to support the Allied landings. His leadership was crucial to the success of this complex and dangerous operation, which involved flying at low altitudes through enemy fire.

Williams's command was also vital in other major operations, including:

- **Operation Dragoon (August 1944):** The airborne operations preceding the Allied landings in southern France.
- **Operation Market Garden (September 1944):** The largest daylight airborne operation of the war, aimed at securing bridges in the Netherlands. The IX TCC flew some 1,200 aircraft and gliders to transport the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.
- **The Battle of the Bulge (December 1944):** The Ninth Troop Carrier Command shifted over 13,000 soldiers and thousands of tons of supplies to the front in just four days, providing crucial relief to isolated units, including the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne.
- **Operation Varsity (March 1945):** This was the largest single-day airborne drop in history, where Williams directed an operation involving approximately 1,600 transport aircraft and 1,348 gliders to cross the Rhine River, dropping over 16,000 soldiers and their equipment directly into the midst of German defenses.

In addition to these major assaults, Williams's forces were instrumental in supplying General Patton's Third Army during its rapid advance across Europe. His tactical innovations in air transport laid the groundwork for modern theater airlift operations.

Post-War

After the war ended, Williams held several key positions, including commanding general of the Third Air Force, Ninth Air Force, and Second Air Force. In 1948, he became commander of the Tenth Air Force, responsible for the Midwest's defense. He retired from the Air Force on April 30, 1950, as a major general.

Throughout his career, Williams received numerous awards, including:

- Army Distinguished Service Medal
- Legion of Merit
- Distinguished Flying Cross (two awards)
- Air Medal
- Légion d'Honneur (France)
- Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (United Kingdom)

Legacy

Major General Paul L. Williams is remembered as a pioneer in troop carrier aviation and a key figure in the success of airborne operations during World War II. His leadership and tactical innovations significantly contributed to the Allied victories in Europe. He passed away on March 3, 1968, and is interred at Riverside, California

**To add to this story or add your own family history,
click the logo button below and
complete an upload form.**

