

# Gen. Chapman Presents Medal for Heroism

## Honor Paid Ohio Soldier by Army Men Who Come Here From Washington for Ceremony

Although still suffering from bad burns, Sgt. Robert G. Lee of Columbus, Ohio, hero of the Army transport disaster Saturday night at Peru State Forest, responded with almost everything but a salute yesterday afternoon as Brig. Gen. Elbridge G. Chapman Jr., commanding general of the airborne command, pinned the Soldiers' Medal for extraordinary heroism on the soldier's fourth floor bed in the St. Luke's Hospital. Gen. Chapman and a staff of officers from the Army ground forces headquarters in Washington, D. C., flew to Westover Field, Chicopee, then motored to Pittsfield for the short but impressive ceremony, ordered by Lieut. Gen. Lesley T. McNair, commanding general of the Army ground forces.

"Thank You Sir"

With his platoon skipper, Lieut. John Hanlon, and his company buddy, Sgt. John Berry, in attendance, Sgt. Lee looked up at his distinguished guest with a "Thank you, sir. I hope that when I get back with the troops I can live up to this citation." Then turning to Sgt. Berry, the crash hero asked "about the boys." Before the patient could swing into too much of a conversation, the party withdrew from the room.

In delivering the citation, Gen. Chapman said he was conveying the sentiments of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Gen. George C. Marshall and Lieut. Gen. McNair. He added that he was looking forward to the time in the near future when he could bestow the rightful honors to Sgt. Lee at a formal review of the troops in the presence of the full command. The citation follows:

Sgt. Robert G. Lee, Company F, 502d parachute regiment, for heroism displayed on Aug. 15, 1942, near Pittsfield, Mass., in rescuing comrades from a plane burning after a crash. When the plane in which Sgt. Lee and 18 other officers and men were proceeding to Westover Field, Mass., crashed, Sgt. Lee, uninjured, was able to escape from the wreckage through a small door of the plane. Disregarding the danger of an explosion of the plane's gasoline supply, Sgt. Lee re-entered the burning plane repeatedly, removing seven persons to places of safety.

Sgt. Lee, though severely burned, then walked a distance of half a mile and firing his pistol, summoned aid. As a result of his efforts, the lives of two men were saved and Sgt. Lee himself suffered severe burns. Sgt. Lee's extraordinary heroism reflects great credit upon himself and the military service.

over Field by State Police Sgt. George H. Carter of the Northampton barracks.

Gen. Chapman, who, incidentally, was carrying out his first mission as a brigadier general (he was promoted from a colonelcy shortly before leaving Washington yesterday morning) and his party went to the House of Mercy Hospital to visit the other two survivors, Privates Alonzo Pearson of Windber, Pa., and James Fern of Abingden, Va.

According to some of the accompanying officers, three-starred Gen. McNair, upon learning of Sgt. Lee's heroism, had to use his high military rank to the fullest extent to secure the Soldier's Medal from the War Decorations Board at such a short notice. A firm believer in giving credit where credit is due without waiting several months, Gen. McNair started the citation ball rolling when he first heard of Sgt. Lee's deeds Monday night.

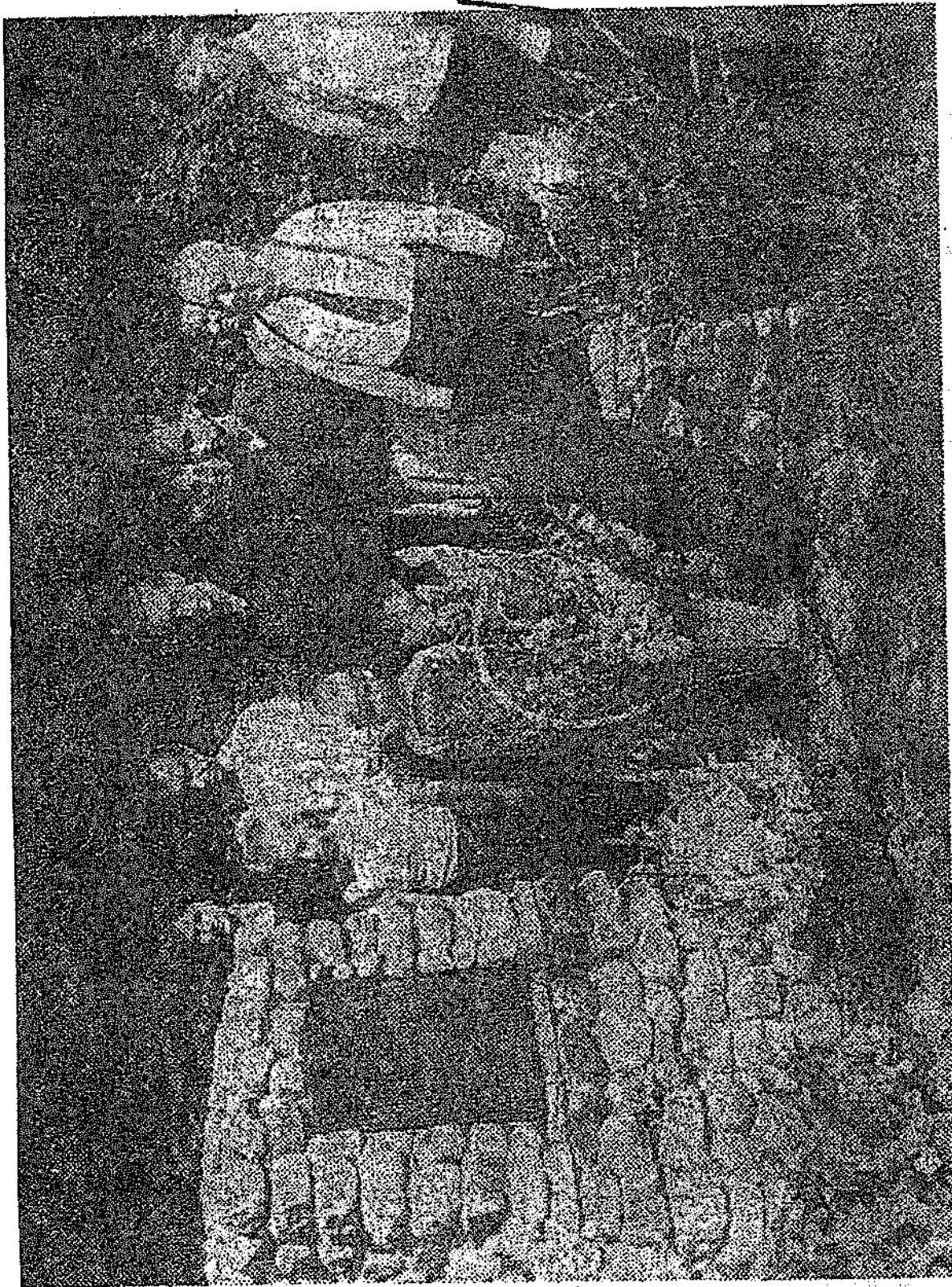
## Gen. Chapman Gets His New Stars At Westover Field

Before coming to Pittsfield yesterday afternoon to decorate Sgt. Robert G. Lee at St. Luke's Hospital, Brig. Gen. Gerry Chapman, commanding officer of the airborne command went through the ceremony of a promotion at Westover Field in Chicopee. He was elevated from a colonelcy before leaving Washington by plane. The oath was administered to him at Westover Field by Maj. George K. Geary, post adjutant. The general's new stars were pinned on his shoulder straps by Lieut. Col. G. F. Shugart, representing the troop carrier command.

"I'm proud to be identified with troops having that man's caliber," Gen. Chapman said as he left the patient's room. "I am no physician but judging from the way that boy kept his chin up after such a grievous experience, I'm sure he'll pull through."

### Flew to Westover

The party from Washington flew to Westover Field aboard Gen. McNair's personal plane, piloted by Lieut. Col. G. F. Shugart, representing the troop carrier command. Also in the retinue were Capt. George C. Mayo Jr. and Capt. F. W. Turney, staff officers of the Army ground force headquarters. They were escorted from West-



**PERU CRASH VICTIMS REMEMBERED:** Relatives of 2 of the 16 soldiers killed Aug. 15, 1942, in a plane crash on Garnet Peak gather around the fieldstone monument yesterday for annual memorial services. The memorial is located in a clearing deep in the woods at the crash site. The family at the left is Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Yuhas of Swoyerville, Pa., and their sons, Clement and Frank. Mrs. Yuhas is the sister of Frank A. Lastosky, one of the crash victims. Standing in the center are Joseph and Richard Lastosky, brothers of the victim. At the right are Dr. John C. Plain, father of Lieutenant Gardner V. Plain, another crash victim, and Corliss M. Plain, a brother of Lieutenant Plain, both of Ransomville, N.Y. At the extreme rear are Mr. and Mrs. William Clougston, of Lockport, N.Y. Mrs. Clougston is a cousin of Lieutenant Plain. Thirty townspeople and relatives attended service.

County Eagle, Pittsfield, Mass. Wednesday, October 13, 1943.

## Silver Plaque Given Observation Post



The First Fighter Command in behalf of the Columbia Broadcasting System Sunday presented the Dalton American Legion and Peru Observation Post with a silver plaque in recognition of the post's great work.







Peru

# Residents remember Garnet Peak victims

By Jack Hew

PERU — Nearly 60 years ago, a search party from this small hilltown headed into the dark woods, following through the heavy growth to reach survivors from an Army transport plane that had crashed into Garnet Peak.

Yesterday, under the bright morning sky, a different kind of search party made its way up a narrow logging road and into the thick woods of Peru's Garnet Peak, honoring the memories of those who died Aug. 12, 1942.

Memorial services were held at the town's cemetery, across the tree cover Memorial Day to place flags around the monument, a 5-foot-tall rectangular obelisk with a bronze plaque bearing the names of the fallen soldiers.

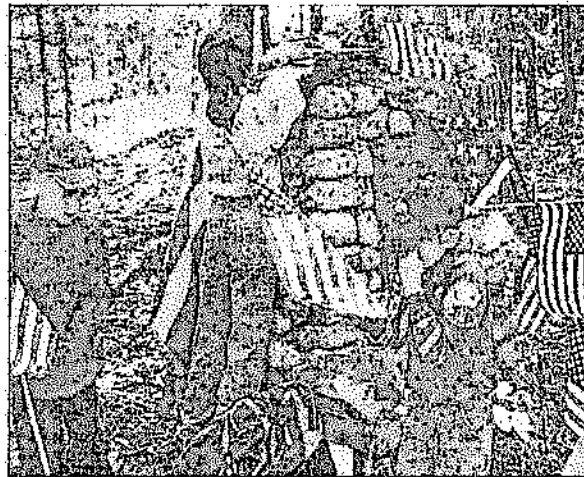
"It gives people occasion to think that happened then, during the war," Drucken said. "We don't have a connection in our town, the younger ones."

Trying to share that connection, a group of Peru residents organized yesterday's guided tour to the monument. In two pickup trucks and a sport utility vehicle, they



Logan Brooks, 16, a member of Peru's Boy Scout Troop 21, places a piece of wrapping from a 1942 plane crash on the Garnet Peak monument in Peru yesterday.

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Scouts from Peru's Boy Scout Troop 21 honor the victims of a 1942 plane crash yesterday at Garnet Peak.

## Residents honor Garnet Peak crash victims

MEMORIAL how B1

bumped up a narrow dirt and only the mud in a rut could keep them from falling. The trail then dodged the rocky tracks left by off-road vehicles and hopped a pair of streams to find the study clearing where the survivors of March

The Army transport plane was spotted off course, lost in a swampy bog. It skidded the top of the trees of the 2,200-foot mountain and went down. Of the 16 parachutes on board, only three floated.

Maize Bishop, a Peru, Ariz., resident, was the crash first to report in a sporting magazine, according to a report later issued by the United States Committee on Public Safety. Her sons organized a search party of town residents. As they headed into the woods, they heard a signal shot from the plane and responded with a shotgun blast into the air.

One of the soldiers was still able to walk when the rescuers arrived, and the three survivors were badly injured. The plane had been on a mission to drop supplies to the guerrillas in the area.

In the afternoon darkness, the searchers found that the plane had been hit by a single bullet, the wing of the plane and a fuselage section, which was enough to keep the plane from flying.

The spot was filled with trees and bushes, and the town's first fire department, which was called in, found the plane's wreckage. The town's fire department was called in, and the town's fire department was called in.

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### Garnet Peak memorial

The memorial to the soldiers killed in the crash stands at Garnet Peak.

This obelisk stands in the memory of the flying men who gave their lives here in a plane crash Aug. 12, 1942, while on the mission to drop supplies to the guerrillas in the area.

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A handful of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts from Troop 21 yesterday placed American flags around the monument. Some placed a few hundred pieces of metal — artifacts from the crash — on top of the monument. Led by Scoutmaster Steve Anger, the group gathered in a circle for a moment of silence and bowed their heads in prayer. Bishop read a brief prayer.

Joe Merges, a 19th-grade student at Wehman Regional High School, Peru, made a walk of the crash and left a message and bow

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