Aleda Ester Lutz was born on November 9, 1915 in Freeland, Michigan. Aleda E. Lutz, a graduate of the Saginaw General Nursing School, enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) in November 1941. She was stationed as a general duty nurse at Station Hospital at Selfridge Field, Michigan. She later transferred to the 802nd Medical Air Evacuation Transportation Squadron and was promoted on December 17, 1943 to Lieutenant, Army Nurse Corps. Her last assignment was General Duty Nurse, 802nd Maets.

Lieutenant Lutz gave much comfort and aid to wounded troops that were being evacuated from the battle front. She came into many combat zones while evacuating wounded troops. While overseas, she was active in European, African, and Italian battlefields. Several times she helped to evacuate wounded soldiers from the Anzio Beachhead, which was under fire from the German Army.

Lieutenant Lutz was involved in 196 missions and had accumulated 814 hours in the air, more than any other army nurse. On the tragic day of her death, November 1, 1944, Lieutenant Lutz was transporting 15 wounded soldiers from Lyon, France to a hospital in Italy in a C-47 when a violent storm was encountered. The pilot lost control of the plane and it crashed into the side of a mountain in St. Chaumon, France. There were no survivors. Lieutenant Lutz was buried with full military honors in an American Cemetery in France.

Lieutenant Lutz, known as "Lutzy" to all who knew her, was 28 years old when she was killed; she is thought to be the first female killed in action in World War II.

Lieutenant Lutz received the Distinguished Flying Cross. This was the first award of its kind ever given to an Army Nurse in World War II. The citation read:

"For outstanding proficiency and selfless devotion to duty."

Lieutenant Lutz had five battle stars: Tunisia, Sicily, South Italy, Central Italy, and South France; she also received an Air Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters.

The Aleda E. Lutz Veterans Affairs Medical Center was dedicated in her memory in 1950 and was rededicated in her name on October 12, 1990.
Aleda E. Lutz Honored in Draguignan France

Our Medical Center’s namesake, Lieutenant Aleda E. Lutz, was involved in 196 missions and had accumulated 814 hours in the air, more than any other army nurse. On the tragic day of her death, November 1, 1944, Lt. Lutz was transporting 15 wounded soldiers from Lyon, France to a hospital in Italy in a C-47 when a violent storm was encountered. The pilot lost control of the plane and it crashed into the side of a mountain in St. Chaumon, France. There were no survivors. Lt. Lutz was buried with full military honors in an American Cemetery in France. Lt. Lutz was from Freeland, Michigan.

Most recently, a couple from Fort Gratiot, Michigan, visited Draguignan France’s Rhone Military Cemetery. They were astounded to learn that the most decorated woman soldier, Lt. Aleda E. Lutz was buried there.

A group in France, the Souvenir Fracno Americain, has existed since 1968, and has as it’s only purpose the honoring of the American War Dead who are buried there. Their motto is “we must never forget what the Americans did to lead the liberation of France”.

On August 16, 2009, the director of the Souvenir Franco Americain, M. Maurice Dreclerc, will be giving a speech in honor of Lt. Lutz and her heroism, in celebration of the liberation of Draguignan, which occurred August 16, 1944.

It is with honor that we now serve as employees of the “Aleda E. Lutz Veterans Affairs Medical Center” as Lt. Lutz remains a true war hero and a noble and worthy defender; not only of our freedom, but in the care and rescue of her fellow comrades under very volatile and dangerous conditions.

May you rest in peace Lieutenant Lutz.
Aleda During a Flight Mission

C-47 Cargo Plane Converted to Ambulance Duty in North Africa. The attending nurse is 2d Lt. Aleda E. Lutz, one of eight U.S. nurses killed in action in the MTO.
A Series of Airplane Crash Reports Provide Interesting Detail to The Causation...

Permission Granted from Air Force Historical Research Agency to publish these military documents. They are public record and releasable.

-Carrie Seward, PAO
le C47 s'écrase - 1er Novembre 1944 PILAT

Crash Site...

Les Chiras se souviennent, mais l'Homme aussi.
Ici, une gerbe pense, de ceux qui ont tenté de nous soutenir.
This is an excerpt from an e-mail that was sent to the individual who is sharing Aleda’s history with us. His brother, Roger Phillips, was also killed in the crash. He has been receiving these documents and photos from an individual in France. There is an annual ceremony held on a date in September to honor the soldiers that died in the crash.

“A few years ago, the inhabitants of the region and Associations wanted these soldiers to not be forgotten. September 7, 2002 a Stele (memorial) was installed right where Aleda died.

Since 2002, every year there is an official ceremony in the month of September to honor the soldiers.

No American family has attended. I believe that there is an address of nurse Aleda LUTZ in a document, but it dates 1944.

A small detailed book has been written on history and photos have been taken by the inhabitants.”
Dear friends and veterans,

We are again together to celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of our city. On this occasion, I would like to stress on a particular point you may ignore.

Here, in this magnificent cemetery, lie not only men, but also a woman. She was the first woman who was killed in operation during World War Two. She was a nurse, a first lieutenant flight nurse in the US Army Air Forces. Her ambulance was a C-47 plane transformed into a flying hospital, on which she flew eight hundreds and sixty hours and participated in one hundred and ninety six missions, evacuating three thousands and five hundreds men.

On November 1st 1944, her C-47 took off from Luxeuil, North Eastern France, southbound to Montelimar with 4 crew members and 15 wounded soldiers both Us and Germans on board. While flying over Mount Pilat, near Lyon, France, the plane crashed because of terrible meteorological conditions killing all the passengers.

On December 28th 1944, our hero was awarded posthumously the Distinguished Flying Cross. She was the first woman to receive that decoration as a military. During her career, she earned she earned six Battles Stars and was also awarded the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Cluster, the Red Cross Medal and tre Purpel Heart. These honors make Aleda E. LUTZ, so is her name, one of the highest decorated woman in the history of the United States of America.

She is resting close to us, here at RHÔNE AMERICAN CEMETARY AND MEMORIAL. A hospital ship of the US Navy as well as a Collector C-47 airplane has been named after her.

The Veterans’ affair Medical Center in her home town of SAGINAW, MICHIGAN, was also given her name. It is the only one in the USA to be named for a female veteran.

On this Remembrance Day, let us have our deepest thoughts and love for her.

God bless you
God bless the United States of America.

(Maurice DRECLERC, Pdt of Souvenir Franco Americain Draguignan, with kind help of Scott DESJARDIN, Superintendent of American Cemetery Rhône and his staff.
Thank you very much)
DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

On investigation of aircraft No. 42-92700, it was found to have crashed at 1430 hours, 1 November 1944, 10 miles east of St. Chamond, France, approximately 300 feet below top of a 4500 foot hill, on a 45 degree slope covered with trees and rocks. Complete destruction of aircraft occurred, catching on fire at time of impact. All personnel aboard aircraft, consisting of four (4) crew members, one (1) air evacuation nurse, six (6) patients which were P.C.M.'s, and nine (9) patients, American ground force personnel, were killed instantly. Right wing of aircraft was torn off at first impact with trees 300 yards from spot of accident. Cockpit was doubled back under fuselage of aircraft. All of fuselage burned with exception of both wings and tail section. All radio and secret equipment destroyed.

It is believed that pilot was flying on instruments due to necessity as weather at the time was zero, also icing conditions were present and loss of power occurred.

It was stated by French civilians, living in the area of the accident, that aircraft past over top of ridge at an altitude of 50 feet, with engines cutting out. Plane then turned around and attempted to return but never made it.

All personnel involved in above aircraft accident were turned over to the 48th A.M. Graves Registration Company of Montelimar, France. Thirteen (13) of the bodies were removed by the French P.F.I., the other seven (7) were removed from beneath aircraft by 48th A.M. Graves Registration Company.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Under the circumstances there are no recommendations to prevent repetition.

FRANCIS G. ROSEMAN,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Aircraft Accident Officer.

EUGENE H. HALE,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Aircraft Accident Officer.

ROGER D. CICERO,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Aircraft Accident Officer.

Date: 13 Nov. 1944
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**Passengers on Aircraft:***

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HEADQUARTERS AREA COMMAND 4TH
DEUTSCHLAND SECTION
Office of the Surgeon
APO 772

EXTRACT OF AN INCIDENT REPORT

Time 1530 Hours 2 November 1944.

Lt. Johnson, of A.F.C., called this station and informed Lt. Sinclair that there was an airplane crash in the town of Saint Chamond. 41 passengers were dead. Lt. Sinclair contacted the 182nd M.P. Co., in Vienna and informed them of the accident and advised them to investigate the accident and take whatever action is necessary.

This station also received a message from M. V., near Plaisance, which read as follows: "We have the honor to inform you that on the night of the 1st or 2nd November, American planes have been discovered at Aziat Pilat (Loire) 11 dead have been recovered and are in the hospital of Saint-Chamond."

At 1730 hours, this office received a call from the Regimental Commanding Officer of the N.F.I., who informed us that 11 burnt bodies were recovered and that there were possibly five or six more planes underneath the plane. A hoist or wrecker would be needed to raise the plane in order to remove the bodies. This station was also asked if there would be any religious ceremonies and burials to be held at the place of the plane crash. To locate the wrecked plane, this station was informed to contact the St-Chamond Hospital along the route to St-Etienne, Route 299, and someone there would direct the party with the hoist, to the scene of the accident. At 1747 hours, this M.P. Station contacted the 182nd M.P. Co. of Vienna who were investigating this plane crash and informed Capt. Myers of that Company, of the message this Station had received at 1730 hours. Capt. Myers informed this station that his Company had a wrecker and would take care of the situation.

At 2145 hours, this Station contacted Sgt. Higgins of the 182nd M.P. Co. and asked if a wrecker had been sent to the plane crash and also if there were any more information pertaining to the accident. Sgt. Higgins informed us that a wrecker had been sent about 1930 hours, but as yet, no information had been received. As soon as more details could be had, this Station would be contacted.

At 0015 hours, 11-3-44, S/Sgt. Warren Ralph, 182nd M.P. Co., called this M.P. Station and gave the following information: "11 dead bodies were found 3 of whom are still in the plane. The radio is destroyed and was filled on fire. The number of the plane is 2927/00 and it is a big passenger plane. Transport. The scene of the accident is Le Mont Pilat, and the only place close to it is a farm house about 2 miles away. The plane had hit the side of the mountain and being far from any inhabited spot, no guards were placed on the plane. S/Sgt Ralph said he would contact this station at 0030 hours, 11-3-44 and let us know if there was any more information. At 0100 hours, 11-3-44, Lt. Johnson, A.F.C., called this M.P. Station and asked if we received a call from the 182nd M.P. Co. He was informed that we had received the call. Lt. Johnson informed us that he would take care of this case.
Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame

FREELAND — In 1942, a woman from Freeland enlisted with the U.S. Army to care for wounded American, British and French soldiers, and the occasional wounded German or Italian prisoner of war. A graduate of Arthur Hill High School and the Saginaw General Hospital School of Nursing, Aleda E. Lutz was an aerial nurse in World War II, caring for America’s boys on hospital transport planes as they hurried their cargoes back to bases from the front lines and from the battlefields. She died at 28, on her 196th mission, when the airplane that was carrying her and 15 wounded soldiers crashed in a storm between Lyons, France and Italy on Nov. 1, 1944.

Saturday, Lutz will join former military members, women Air Force service pilots and other aviation figures with Michigan ties when she receives a place of honor at the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame in Kalamazoo.

Lutz has several living nieces and nephews, many still in the Freeland area. Her nephew and current Tittabawassee Township Trustee Paul Vasold, 77, will travel to Kalamazoo on Saturday to accept the award in Lutz’s honor.

“She died serving her country,” he said. “Any time we can honor those kinds of people, we should do that.”

Lutz’s decision to serve in the 802nd Airborne Medical Air Evacuation Squadron would take her far from her roots, her family and her home to the far-away countries of Tunisia in Africa, Italy and France. Her decision would ensure the care and evacuation of more than 3,500 patients, all while she logged more than 814 hours in the air.

“Transporting by air the wounded from battle areas to base hospitals is the work that we do here,” Lutz wrote in January 1944, shortly after she was promoted from second to first lieutenant. Vasold remembers his aunt as an outgoing, funny person who once sent him a whole coconut through the mail, addressed by the postcard stapled to the shell.

“Shell and all, she mailed it to me from Florida while she was in training,” he said.

After her death, Lutz was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with Four Oak Leaf Clusters. Lutz’s story, one of a pioneer and a patriot, was used by the Army to recruit more nurses for the service.

“She could well have been the most highly experienced flight nurse in the entire Army Air Corps at the time of her death,” said Ron Thurlow, a former Freeland resident who has extensively studied Lutz’s history.

Thurlow said he has found Lutz to be one of only a handful of flight nurses awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross during World War II. Lutz was the leading flight nurse in the 802nd in terms of evacuations flown, number of flight hours and the number of patients evacuated, he said. Her work and her courage would later lead the naming of a hospital ship and Aleda E. Lutz Veterans Affairs Medical Center, 1500 Weiss in Saginaw, in her honor.

Lutz also is a member of the Saginaw and Michigan Women’s Halls of Fame.

“We are proud to have her as a part of our community,” said Lynne Olson, president of the Tittabawassee Township Historical Society, the group that nominated Lutz for the aviation hall’s induction. “We are so proud of what she has done for aviation and for women, especially.”
Aleda E. Lutz
(1915 - 1944)
*Inducted: 1994*
*Era: Historical*

_Area(s) of Achievement: Aviation, Medicine/Health Care, Military_

"For outstanding proficiency and selfless devotion to duty," reads the citation accompanying the Distinguished Flying Cross presented in December of 1944 to First Lieutenant Aleda Lutz of Freeland. She had volunteered for duty with the 802nd Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, the first of its kind. Lutz had recorded 814 hours in the air when the C47 hospital plane evacuating 15 wounded soldiers from the battlefront near Lyons in Italy crashed killing all aboard.

Aleda E. Lutz is one of the most celebrated women war heroes of World War II. As a First Lieutenant Army Flight Nurse she flew 196 missions evacuating over 3500 men. She also logged the most flight hours of any flight nurse. She earned six battle stars before her death, and she was recorded as the first military woman to die in a combat zone in World War II. Lutz was awarded the Air Medal four times, the Oak Leaf Cluster, the Red Cross Medal, and the Purple Heart. She was also the first woman awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in a World War, our nation's second highest military honor.

A Veteran's Medical facility located in her hometown of Saginaw, has been named after her by Congressional Decree. The congressional resolution was first offered in 1949, but died in committee, mainly because she was a woman. Though the building was completed in 1950, it was not until August 15, 1990, that it was officially named. The United States Army Hospital Ship and a C-47 plane have also been named in her honor. With the exception of the Civil War Era Doctor Mary Walker, these honors make Aleda E. Lutz the highest decorated woman in the history of the United States of America.
Aleda’s Presence...