

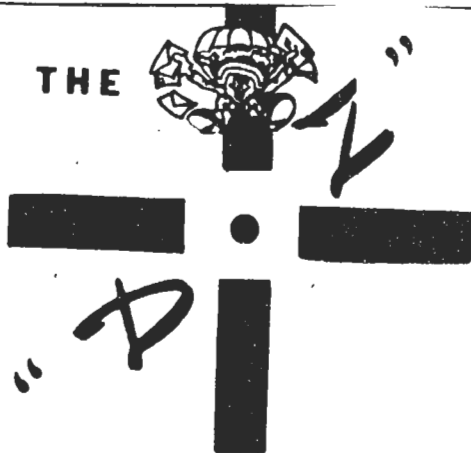


596 Parachute Engineer Company



JULY --- 1982

The Editor's Drop Zone



Edited by Dr. Charles E. Pugh



**If you have changed your
address
please notify the Editor**

Greetings to Mr. and Mrs. 596-----
First, I must thank all of you who have written me letters and sent me photographs and called me on the phone and sent me money for the expenses of this Newsletter and roster. Your expressions of appreciation, your interest, and your active participation make this publication possible and worth the effort. Everyone at the Reunion in Orlando was most generous in helping to share the expenses of our Hospitality Suite and the food and drink. Since then, several of you have seen fit to send checks that ranged from \$10 to \$100. This help is greatly appreciated and the least I can do is list the names of those men who have been so thoughtful and generous----Jim Benson, Al Goodman, James Rogers, Jim Nolan, Bob Dalrymple, Roy Herren, Don Saunders, Geo. Shull, Herb Larson, Earl Dillard, Bill Winterling, Ray Sampson, Judge Harrell, Joe Senter, and Ed McKinley. And talk about a surprise! Cameron Gauthier of the 460 and the immediate Past-President of the 517 Combat Team sent us \$20 to help with our Newsletter expenses. Thanks again to all of you.

I have been in touch with almost all the members of the company during this past year either by letter or phone and it looks as if we will surpass our attendance in Orlando when we count noses in San Mateo in August of 1983. The 1983 Reunion will be the 40th Anniversary of the formation of the 596, 517, and 460 in April 1943 at Camp Toccoa, GA. Who can forget Mount Currahee, even after 40 years!

The cover artwork on this issue is taken from the plaque designed and given to me in Orlando by Art Starck.

If you are not receiving the Combat Team publication, Thunderbolt, please write the Editor, Bill Lewis. You can find his address on the inside cover of the 596 Roster which is enclosed with this mailing of the Newsletter.

At the conclusion of the banquet in Orlando, the 596 guide-on that was a part of the wall decorations was mysteriously missing. Happily, it was found several weeks later by a hotel employee and returned to Frank Grbinich. There was widespread speculation that a sticky-fingered 596er had purloined it and everyone is surprised to learn it isn't so. The 596 had a well earned and deserved reputation for scrounging, confiscating and borrowing but we humbly admit we learned most of our tricks from the infantry and artillery components who set us examples that were difficult to live up to.

You can promise your wife that at the San Mateo Reunion we will have 596 Hospitality Room activities that will let us all get to know one another much better and have some real fun in the process.



The Mail Chute



Harry Riddle's letter that I took out of the "Static Line" says it about as well as it can be said in so few words. I hope those of you who have not yet been to a reunion will make the next one so that you too can experience the very special emotional swell of joy and love. And I can say from personal experience that each reunion builds on the one before and the pleasures and emotional highs increase.

If I could write like David Halberstam, I would express it like this-----

"We were the kind of men the Army loves in wartime and fears in peacetime---irreverent, fun-loving, unorthodox and resistant to garrison regimentation. We were respectful of authority but not fearful of it. In those days of combat, we lived on the very edge of life and death, and that heightened every experience. Nothing was ordinary. Those days produced a rare camaraderie--that of men who have been in battle together---and the intensity of that camaraderie, these many years later, still defies any rational explanation. It is a bond so strong, so immediate, that it wipes away, at least momentarily, all the normal barriers of class, politics and race. Nothing in terms of friendship need predece it, nothing need follow it. It exists of itself, nothing more asked, nothing more required."

"I'm sure any psychologist would be fascinated, for it is something short of sexual, oddly pure and spiritual. In those moments, everything is so intense, every thing is so completely shared, and everyone is so dependent upon everyone else, that it defies all other relationships. Marriage has its own special bonds, but

Don-

I cannot describe my feelings upon attending the Reunion in Orlando. It was my first. I hadn't seen any of the men of the incomparable 517th in 35 years. I believe my emotions ran the gamut from sheer delight to a feeling of great discovery of camaraderie and closeness we shared; as do all veterans of combats in its own way a form of love. It's a very special feeling that is difficult to put into words, a feeling we cannot share with someone who wasn't there -- not even with our own families.

For those of you who have never attended a reunion -- please do so; time is running out for all of us. The feelings you will find and rekindle will create a glow that will last you the rest of your life.

HARRY E. RIDDLE, MAJ
USAR (RET)
(F 517)
34 School House Dr.
Medford, NJ 08055



they are bonds of love and family, set (with any luck) for a long time at a gentle plateau; in contrast, combat is primal, and it is about one thing and one thing alone---the desire to live one more day."

You still have one year in which to make your plans to attend the August 1983 Reunion in San Mateo, CA. The reunion will last for three days and the dates will be around

the 15th of August. The exact dates will be sent to you later on along with all the details. Don't fail to set aside the time and the money for this EVENT. These Reunions come around only every two years, so if you miss this one it will be 1985 before you will have another chance. The next one will probably be in some city in the central part of the U.S..

In this issue you will see a few photos made at Ft. Benning and at the Airborne Awards Festival in Atlanta in April. This was my first visit back there since our jump school days. That was so many years ago that we could find no member of the Jump School Staff who had ever heard of the "frying pan". There were representatives from all Airborne organizations---both past and present. There were many men there who are truly legends in their own time. The 517th PRCT was well represented by Pres. Tex Lowe, Clark Archer, Ed McKillop, Monty Schroeder, Houston Roberson, and myself.

I met a large number of fine men; made some new friends; and listened to a never ending stream of war stories---most of which had not onl

(continued)

grown since the war but did so noticeably between the first and third day of the Festival. In addition, there were interesting speeches, lectures, briefings, demonstrations, banquets, lotteries, and free drinks at all times. The 517 PRCT representatives were active participants in every phase of the proceedings. When we ran into people whose war stories were more fantastic and outrageous than our own (only because they told theirs after we told ours) we resorted to consuming excessive amounts of alcoholic beverages to prove how macho we still were. We suffered a lot for you guys who weren't there to uphold the good name of the 517.

Mike and Catherine Bulino came to Dallas in March to visit his brother, Andy, who was recovering from surgery. Ann and I spirited them away to Ft. Worth for dinner one evening and we also got together with Joe Senter for a few drinks.

Hank and Marian Simpson visited with a son in Houston in March and then drove down into Mexico and up through Phoenix and many other places. They called and talked about possibly coming through Ft. Worth on their way back home but it didn't work out. Ann and I were disappointed.

Thanks to all of you who sent information about the European exploits of the 596 to Clark Archer for his historical research on the Combat Team. He has done a monumental work and it should be ready to distribute to all members by the San Mateo Reunion in 1983. You will be amazed at what he has put together and it will be something you will cherish in your store of memorabilia.

Ann and I get together from time to time with Joe and Pat Senter for dinner or sometimes just Joe and I play golf.

Bernie Lyon is an orthodontist in Detroit. He and his wife have six children. They hope to make the next Reunion.

Tex and Betty Lowe came up from their home in San Antonio a few weeks ago for dinner and an enjoyable evening. Tex and I talk often on the phone about plans for the 517 PRCT. He is doing a splendid job as President and will be a very tough act for me to follow.

Bill Lewis, our Sectry-Treas. and Editor, is putting out a Roster of the entire 517 PRCT membership soon. There are about 1000 members so you can see what a job it is for Bill to type it all. Thanks Bill.

Al Goodman says that I call him so often on the phone that he has bought some AT & T stock.

Jim Nolan visited in Arizona in January and played some golf with Bob Dalrymple.

Arlan Spillman (517) of Hoxie, Kansas and his friend, Don Prickett, visited with me during the week of the Colonial Golf Tournament in May and we had an enjoyable time at home in the evenings playing pool and telling war stories. Arlan is coming back in July to play the Colonial course with Joe Senter and me. Arlan is a great fellow to be with and he even acts as if he really appreciated what the 596 did for the 517 in Europe, so long as I kept mixing the drinks regularly.

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Don Saunders plans to retire from teaching in 1983. He and Marian plan to hookup the Airstream in July 1983 for the trip to the Reunion and then back home by a southern circuitous route. Don continues to give tireless service and effort to the 596.

Bob Wilkerson retired last year from Virginia Chemicals. Now he has more time for his chess club activities. He also does some radio and TV repair when in the mood. Betty says it is nice to have him home more and it has been like a long vacation. Betty, daughter Mollie and her friend Jeanne, and Bob enjoyed the Reunion in Orlando and plan to be in San Mateo in 1983.

Jim Nolan wrote to express his thanks for a lot of fond memories after receiving the last Newsletter. Only the air controller strike kept him from the last reunion and he plans to make the next one.

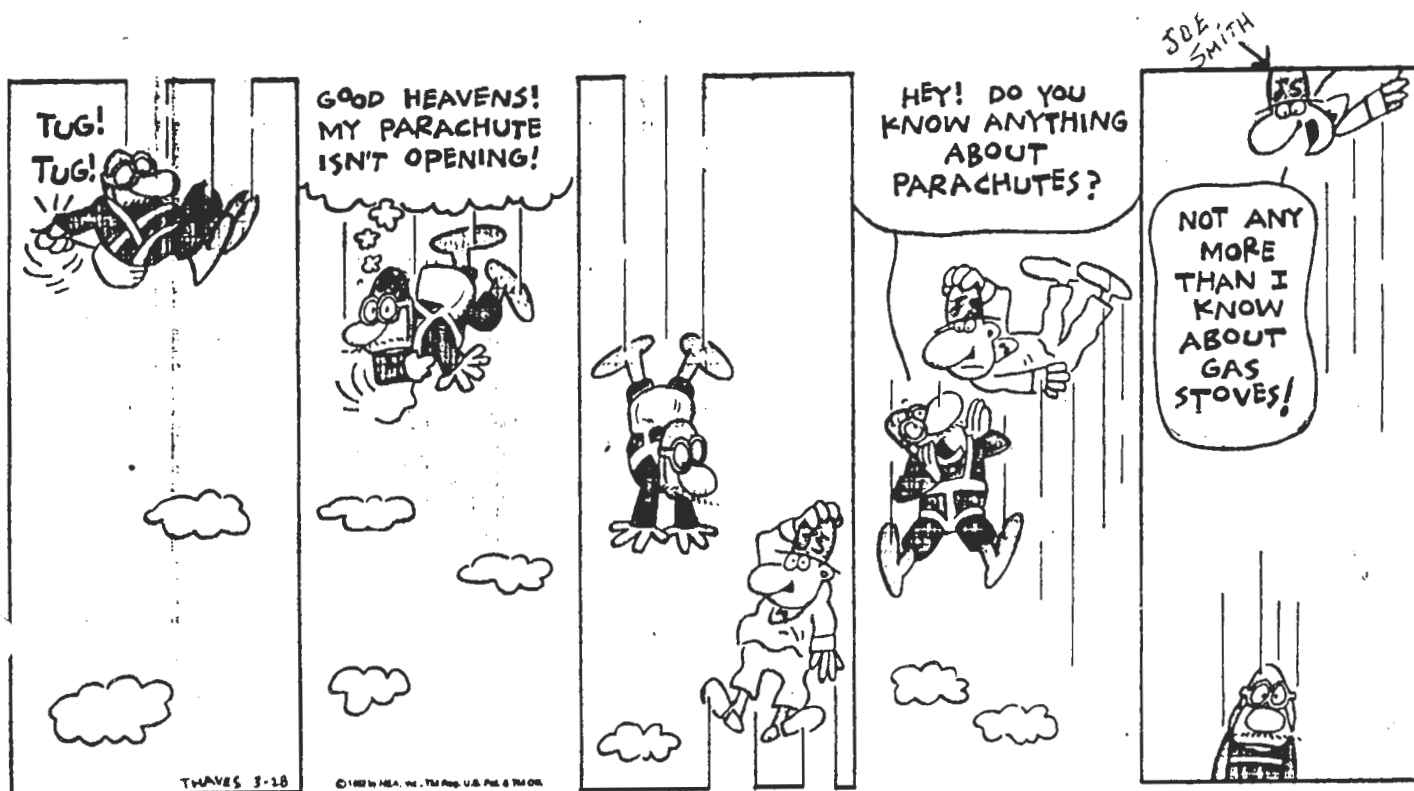
Brooks Moses, Pop Spencer and Jim Greenwood got together a few months back for a three day bird hunt on a private game preserve in South Carolina. Pop and Mose made Jim write me a letter about this get-together because he was the "kid" of the trio, his being the host and the President of the Southern Railroad notwithstanding.

Brooks Moses sends me some of those Toombes County, GA famous uniquely sweet onions each year. He has a fantastic memory of people and events of the 596 years and nobody loves the 596 more than he.

Herb Larson is another whose memory of 596 days is astoundingly sharp. He also has a real talent for writing. He remembers taking several of our men in to Charlotte in his green Packard for their week-end passes. Many Sunday nights the pick-up and return to camp was delayed by the search for Sgt. Morgan. It was routine for Morgan to become a Private on Monday mornings and by Friday be a Staff Sergeant again. The Larsons are planning to be at the next Reunion and only family obligations kept them from the last one.

Glenn and Agnes Spangler plan to be in San Mateo. He is especially looking forward to because Bay Meadows Race Track is there and that is where Glenn, on 9 Nov. 1934, won his first race as a jockey on the horse,, Canny Scot. He paid \$168 for \$2 bet. They have 3 sons, 1 daughter and 9 grandchildren. Glenn had his own structural steel fabrication and erection business for many years. In 1969, Glenn had a heart attack and in 1974 had double by-pass heart surgery.

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GREETINGS FROM GOODMAN

Charley Pugh asked me to write a column for this Newsletter. It is hard to start recording memories of our days in the 596 because the first things that come to mind that are funny are also censorable since I am sure Alice will read this as will most of the brides. Oh what the hell, we weren't that bad and we certainly had the excuse of being young---and sometimes foolish. As I told Charley, writing is not my forté but somehow he got Alice after me to do it also---I have experienced his organizational genius before and I don't understand how he avoided getting more promotions in the Army---I really believe his name is Bilco, not Pugh.

The experience I had with the look on Ann Pugh's face when I recounted the "Baseball Diamond Wedding Story" was enough to discourage me from telling any more stories-----Charley had never told her that story. There is also some risk since I am sure vulnerable to the distorted memories of the rest of you old fogies. Among the horror stories was listening to Sgt. Gibbon (early on, when we still thought our cadremen were supermen) tell about the diseases of the South Pacific. I also remember the 8 ft. by 8 ft. by 8 ft. hole I dug after hiding out from the cold rainy exercise in pontoon bridge building. The only compensation was that Howie Jaynes had to dig one also. We dug for 24 straight hours and never did finish it---the guard (Sgt. Mills I think) just got tired and had us fill it in. Do you know how much clay is under that Carolina sand? Capt. Dalrymple didn't know what to do since we were both "fair haired boys" slated for promotion to Sergeant--Squad Leaders.

I remember going in to Wadesboro with Bogan (who lived there), Jaynes, Gibbon and myself all on one motorcycle. We hollered like hell every mile or two when someone was falling off and would stop and rearrange the stack. Bogan's Dad let us taste his private stock "white lightening" which I recall was as good as any bonded bourbon I have tasted since.

I remember trying to teach Glen Spangler to march. He had spent so much time on a horse that he walked with the same cadence as he posted in the saddle. It turned out that marching in step wasn't all that important and he knew it all along.

Lyle Madison and I got some attention in Orlando last August when we were hospitality room hopping by telling our host in one of the 517 company rooms that in the Toccoa interviews they assigned the smart ones to the Engineers, the clever ones to the Artillery, and the rest to the Infantry. From the reaction, I guarantee this is an attention getter in a room full of the 517---we were just lucky that the windows wouldn't open wide enough for them to throw us out.

Somebody that I think is special is Ludlow Gibbons. I believe he commanded I Company of the 517. He introduced himself to Alice and me on the plane on the way to the Minneapolis Reunion in 1979. He just came up to me and said, "You look like an ex-paratrooper. Are you on the way to a reunion?" For a guy that's 30 pounds overweight and almost bald that really set me up. Since then, I have noticed that he really moves around and spreads cheer at the reunions. He tells a hero story about an Engineer Sgt. of the 596 on the hill the last night in Bergstein. Since I was the only one out that night, I think he should turn me in for a Congressional Medal of Honor---but maybe it was Dave Pierce for he had half the squad and it sounds more like him.

SO LONG FOR THIS TIME AND SOFT LANDINGS FOR ALL --- AL



(continued)

Bernie and Thelma Barnes are planning to make the next Reunion. His health is better than it was last year. He sent me a 1944 roster of the 596 that has everyone's serial number. This should be a great help in locating some more of our fellows through the Veteran's Administration regional offices.

Ernie Kosan's work in Taipei, Taiwan, ended last December. Judy spent a month there with him near the end of the job. They are now at home in the U.S. and wrote to say what a fantastic time they had in Orlando. They plan to be at the next reunion. Ernie has been very helpful to Clark Archer in his efforts to get as much information as possible about the 596.

Manuel and LaVerne Ventoza will of course be at the San Mateo Reunion and he will no doubt still be able to wear his 1944 jumpsuit----if I sound envious, I am. Manny is a Past Worshipful Master of the White Center Masonic Lodge and still very active in their activities. LaVerne is equally active and involved with the Eastern Star.

Andrée and Al Schornberg enjoyed the Orlando Reunion and are getting ready for San Mateo. Al's arthritis gives him a lot of trouble. He is with a large electrical company and would like to work another 8 years.

Earl Dillard wrote to identify, as Bill Fisher, the third Lieutenant in the photo with him and Hild in the last Newsletter. He writes, "Bill Fisher joined us in Stavelot and stayed with us until the unit was disbanded. He was one of the nicest fellows I ever met. He was not a qualified jumper but was always looking for some way to get his qualifying training. He intended to jump with us anyway on the mission into Germany that was cancelled. His wife divorced him while we were in Chablis. When he was discharged, he went back to Yakima, WA, remarried and joined the Yakima police force. Ten or twelve years ago, Hild and I received a letter from his widow saying that he had an operation for an eye problem, developed a blood clot and died suddenly." Earl is enjoying his retirement and getting in some fishing and some "Honey-do" time also.

I haven't had a commitment yet from them but I am hoping Earl and Edith will make it to San Mateo with us.



Hal and Jeanne Roberts plan to be at the next reunion. Only the accident that almost severed his thumb kept them from the last one.

Ray Hild had to have some surgery recently on an ankle but at last report he was recovering nicely and his mobility should be unimpaired.

He and Mary definitely plan to make it to San Mateo. Ray has sent me boxes of WW2 memorabilia of

all kinds---books, clippings, photos, uniforms, etc----- a treasure trove indeed for this amateur airborne history buff. I plan to donate some of the items in the name of Ray and the 596/517 to one of the Airborne Museums.

Our only recent find of a new member was Corey Gibbon. He has been in the textile industry for the past 37 years. He retired from the Army Reserves in April, 1982. He still has fond memories of the days at Camp Mackall. He and wife, Annie, have two children. Annie is very eager to visit San Francisco so the chances are good that they will also be in San Mateo in 1983.

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East German Mine Field Found by Airborne Units

News story from
"Stars & Stripes"
Jan. 1945
(Edited)

WITH 82ND AIRBORNE DIV. NEAR BERGSTEIN, GERMANY --- Paratroops of the 82nd have discovered a mine field that " extends as far as you can see, " according to the 596 Paratroop Combat Engineers. It is worse than anything they have ever seen or heard about.

Discovered by the 517th Parachute Combat Team, the field is intricately criss-crossed with booby traps and anti-personel mines - and is perhaps the most elaborate encountered by our forces during the entire war.

A. Company advanced down a mud-bound road and hit six dug-in pillboxes which covered the roadway with a curtain of cross-fire. The company called for artillery.

B. Company armed with information passed on by the 517th Parachute-Combat Team reconnaissance and led by 596 Paratroop Engineers set out to pass directly through the mined field under cover of darkness, exploding charges as it went.

They encountered Schu mines with charges in small wooden boxes, designed to blow the feet off advancing soldiers. There were " potatoe mashers " , " egg grenades " and rockets fastened to trip wires. " S " mines were set to spring into the air when stepped on, spraying shot for yards around. There were other cylindrical concrete mines filled with shrapnel and armed with trip wires.

Despite such intricacy, the darkness, and German fire, the engineers cleared a path through this huge minefield for B. Company of the 517. Aided by 155 mms., A. Company pushed the Germans from the pillboxes. The two companies swept aside the German paratroop infantry opposition, converged, and took their objective.



POPS

PARATROOPERS OVER PHIPHTY SOCIETY



YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLD

When----It takes you longer to get over sex than it did to have it.
When----You need a smaller house with a bigger medicine cabinet.
When----You have to sit down to brush your teeth.
When----Your little black book has only names ending in M.D..
When----You get winded playing checkers.
When----The best part of your day is over when the alarm clock goes off.
When----You look forward to a dull evening at home.
When----Almost everything hurts and what doesn't hurt, doesn't work.
When----You get worn out dialing long distance.
When----You just can't get around to procrastinating.
When----You try to straighten the wrinkles in your socks and discover you are barefoot.
When----You regret all those times you resisted temptation.

Betty Zavattero wrote to thank the 596 Para Engr Co. members for the beautiful wreath at Fred's funeral service. She said that some of the happiest days of his life were those at the Minneapolis Reunion in 1979. The men of the 596 and his military service with them are memories that he cherished and spoke of often to his family. She and son, Jeff, plan to move back to California for his senior year in high school. She is hoping to be at the San Mateo Reunion. There are three other Zavattero sons who live in California.

James Rogers has called me several times to reminisce about the old days. He plans to be at the next Reunion. He represented the 596/517 in the Memorial Day Parade in Denver.

Several of you have not sent me any information, or photograph for our Newsletter. There are a lot of your friends who read this rag and are truly interested in learning more about YOU. How about it?

Gene and Jo Hyman wrote a long interesting letter and sent some photos of Camp Mackall as of September 1981 or I should say the piney woods that once was Camp Mackall. Gene wrote of the Orlando Reunion, "This truly was an emotional, moving experience. We are anxiously looking forward to many more reunions. In the meantime, I shall contact as many as possible who did not attend Orlando in an effort to inspire them to be with us in San Mateo----I haven't been a sales executive for over 30 years for nothing. The Hymans plan to get together in June in Michigan with Wes and Gladys Williams and with Al and Andree Schornberg. The Hymans have 2 sons, 2 daughters and 5 grandchildren. He has been with the Courier Journal Newspaper for over 30 years. They are two supernice people.

Dave and Olga Pierce wrote to say how much they enjoyed seeing the gang in Orlando and that they plan to make the next Reunion also.

Bob and Garnet Dalrymple do a lot of traveling for pleasure and to visit friends and relatives. On 1 June they were scheduled to take off on a long auto trek to their summer home in Montana by way of St. Louis and other points but Bob came down with Herpes Zoster which is a very painful affliction and they had to delay their departure until he is feeling better. Garnet wrote that Bob is still in shock over the reception he received at the Orlando Reunion. Bob, we all hope you have a speedy recovery and get to break in that new Oldsmobile. Bob and Garnet plan to be in San Mateo so this time all of you can meet his better half-----we all always hoped he had a better half somewhere.

A little boy wanted \$100.00 very badly and his mother told him to pray to God for it. He prayed and prayed for two weeks, but nothing turned up. Then he decided perhaps he should write God a letter requesting the \$100.00. When the Postal authorities received the letter addressed to God, they opened it and decided to send it to the President. The President was so impressed, touched and amused that he instructed his secretary to send the little boy a check for \$5.00. They thought it would appear to be a lot of money to a little boy. The little boy was delighted with the \$5.00 and sat down to write a thank you letter to God which read as follows:

Dear God:

Thank you very much for sending me the money. I noticed you had to send it through Washington. As usual, those bastards deducted \$95.00.

PLEASE READ ===Between now and next January 1983, please write or call and tell me whether or not you are planning to attend the August 1983 Reunion in San Mateo, CA (30 miles south of San Francisco). If you are now reasonably certain one way or the other, please let me know right away before you put it in the back of your mind and forget to let me know at all. Your failure to spend a few cents for a stamp or phone call to tell me this will cost me a great deal of unnecessary time and money for mailings and phone calls to all 119 of you if I must. Your cooperation in this matter will be much appreciated and will let us make plans that will be geared to the number of people expected.

PAST REUNION SITES OF 517 PRCT Assn.

1964---Raleigh, NC
 1967---Anaheim, CA
 1970---Colorado Springs, CO
 1973---New Orleans, LA
 1975---Fayetteville, NC
 1977---San Diego, CA
 1979---Minneapolis, MN
 1981---Orlando, FL
 1983---San Mateo, CA
 1985---???????????????

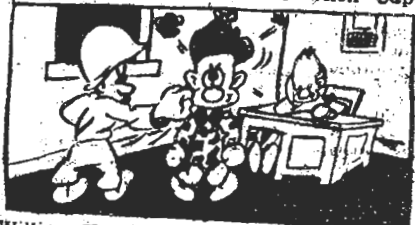
There were Reunions prior to 1964 but I don't have the information about where and when.

GENERAL OFFICERS

For a period of a couple of years there were four Generals on active duty who had served with the 517 PRCT---a 1 star, a 2 star, a 3 star, and a 4 star. There have been seven men achieve General Officer rank who served with the Combat Team. That may or may not qualify for a place in the Guinness Book of World Records but it certainly noteworthy and speaks loudly about the quality of leadership we had in our outfit. On the other hand, it may point up what luck they had early on in their career to be attached to such an outstanding military unit that could and did make them look so good.

Brigadier General Richard Eaton---1st Bn.
 Major General Dave Grange---2nd Bn.-----Still on active duty.
 Brigadier General John Kinzer---460 FA Bn.
 Major General Mickey Marx---1st Bn.
 Major General John H. Neiler---3rd Bn.
 Lieutenant General Dick Seitz---2nd Bn.
 General Melvin Zais---3rd Bn.

* * *
INTENT on taking an American paratrooper, a German shoved a burp-gun into the shoulder blades of Pfc Carl E. Votti, of the 517th Parachute Combat Team. The Yank whirled on him, knocked his weapon to the ground, took him prisoner. Still smoldering from this defeat, Jerry continued to look for a chance to even things up. Later when Capt.



William H. Young, Provost Marshal, turned his back on him, Jerry leaped to his feet and showered the captain with hay-makers. Young handed his pistol to one of the guards and bounced the Nazi off the four walls. Seems that Young used to climb through the ropes under the ring name of Billy Ryan on the West Coast--that's how he made his living.

* * *
THREE MEN of Co. I, 517th Parachute Combat Team, were attacked by a German burp-gunner in Grand-Halleaux. One was wounded and the other two darted into a nearby basement. They started back to pick up their wounded



comrade and on the way out they could hear him shouting, «Surrender, dammit, surrender!» They emerged just in time to see the bewildered Jerry hand the wounded man his weapon and burst into tears!



Airborne Redlegs

A Special Breed of Men

A TRIBUTE

The Static Line

Ludendorf, the great German General of his time, once said that, "the Infantry must never be deprived of powerful artillery support." The American Field Artilleryman should be justly proud that this has been done by the U. S. Field Artillery beyond Ludendorf's highest imagination. No matter where our doughboys venture, the U. S. Field Artillery will find the way to follow and support. More than a responsibility, for this it is, more than a sacred obligation, for this it must be, it has been the Field Artillery's noble privilege to provide this support.

Now bring the laurel wreath and place it with the Airborne Field Artillery. Airborne pioneers recognized early on that artillery support was essential to Airborne infantry. The 75mm pack Howitzer already on the scene was ingeniously converted to Airborne use. The backbone of any unit is the men that compose it. It makes the Airborne Field Artillery work, men were required who were physically and mentally extraordinary, and thus, there was born Airborne Redlegs, a special breed of men.

The physical demands of a World War II Airborne Field Artilleryman are almost incomprehensible. A typical Airborne assault required first of all breaking down and packaging the 75mm Howitzer into seven loads. In addition two ammunition loads were rigged. Of the nine loads, six were suspended from the belly of the C-47 transport. The remaining three composed the door load. Technical expertise and great care was necessary in the rigging. A malfunction of any one of the Howitzer loads would result in an inoperable gun in the objective area.

Then, like all World War II troopers, there was the excruciating experience of chuting-up in the old T-5 and remaining trussed almost immobile until the green light. But physically this marked only the beginning for the Airborne Field Artilleryman. An awesome labor that taxed the very limit of endurance was required once the nine loads were delivered to the drop zone. Obviously, rapid

assembly of the Howitzer was of paramount importance. The front trail assembly at 230 pounds, the bottom sleigh and recoil mechanism at 217 pounds, the tube at 221 pounds. The remaining six loads that included two ammunition loads amounted to an additional 1200 pounds for a total that came to nearly a ton. Once assembled, the Howitzers were towed by sheer manpower to initial firing positions and assigned sectors of fire until the drop zone was consolidated and secure. Now came the real guts of the operation, the *raison d'être*, the follow and support of the Airborne Infantry. The limited range of the 75mm pack (max range 9,000 yards with charge 4) required frequent displacement forward, and how those Airborne Infantrymen could advance. No matter that strength was drained, no matter of enemy action, the follow and support was essential — essential because based upon the knowledge that the artillery was always there, there was built the confidence that better enabled our Airborne troopers to take objectives and survive the battle.

This tribute to the Airborne Redleg in no way is meant to detract from the accomplishments of the other Airborne branches. They have, in their own right, written an eloquent and proud history. But this is about Airborne Field Artillerymen. The esprit that has characterized the field artillery is legendary, but no Redleg ever typified this esprit more than did the Airborne Redleg of World War II, truly a special breed of men.

ART LOMBARDI

533 Georgetown Rd.

Clarksville, TN 37040

ED NOTE: ART LOMBARDI is a retired Colonel. He started his military career as a Private in an Airborne Field Artillery Battery. Later on he became a 1st Sgt. and on Luzon he received a Battlefield Commission. He subsequently commanded Field Artillery units at the Battery, Battalion and Corps Artillery levels. — D. L.

THE MAIL CHUTE---continued

Bill Conger returned to Indianapolis in 1945 and married his high school sweetheart, Marjorie. They have three daughters. He was in the dry cleaning business for 23 years with four shops and also operated his own Recreational Vehicle Business. For the past seven years, he and Marge have their own Dairy Supreme which is like a Dairy Queen in Eureka Springs, AR. They close the business at the end of the tourist season in October and spend the winter in Pharr, TX in the Rio Grande Valley. The Dillards visited with them in Pharr this past February. Bill hasn't committed himself on the next Reunion but I still have a year to work on him.

Bob and Avis Anderson visited with the Schornbergs while vacationing in Michigan last August right after our Florida Reunion. Bob works for Nebraska Power Electric Utility. He has a managers job in Big Springs and has been with them since 1946. They have 3 sons, one daughter and 2 granddaughters.

George and Winston Shull plan to be in California in 1983 with us. Winston has been having some problems with a pinched nerve in a leg. They sent along some excellent suggestions for making our next reunion more interesting and more fun for our wives.

I had a nice letter from Barney and Zel Freiberg from their winter home in Naples, FL just before they migrated north in April. They are both charming and delightful people.

F.Y.I.



NE PLUS ULTRA



These men were among those carefully selected volunteers who made up the few elite military combat groups of WW2. Their combat assignments always involved the highest order of difficulty and hazard. They fought with extraordinary courage and valor. They fought victoriously but paid a high price in dead and wounded comrades. They distinguished themselves as a military unit and as individuals.

THEIR CHAPTER IN HISTORY IS SHORT,
THEIR DEEDS WILL LIVE FOREVER.....



596 PARACHUTE COMBAT
ENGINEER COMPANY

Copy of an original letter to Ann Landers

Dear Ann Landers:

I need help - my husband is a sex
maniac. He won't leave me alone long
enough to do the dishes or the ironing,
he won't even let me write a
letter P.S. please excuse this
jerky writing

This letter from Gene Markle is so interesting that I'm printing it in its' entirety.

Dear Chas,

5 November 1981

It was quite a surprise to receive your initial package in the mail from the Army Locator Section, and then to find the two booklets about the 596 Parachute Engineer Company inside, it really was overwhelming. It brought back a flood of memories that has not stopped since the day I received them. I was really surprised at how successful you and your helpers were in locating so many of the old outfit. You all are to be commended for the super job and the high rate of success in this monumental task.

You asked if I would bring you up to date on my life since I left the 596th after the War. Well, here goes. I took my discharge, like everyone else, and headed home to Rochester, New York and the job at Eastman Kodak Co. that I had left behind to enter service. During the next twelve months I met personally, for the first time a pretty little girl that I had been corresponding with during the War and married her..... got my fill of the job I left behind.....and re-entered the Military service. During that brief period of civilian life, I had seen Al Kunzer who lived not far from Rochester and tried to contact Bob Verde, without success, who was living in Buffalo at the time.

Naturally, upon re-enlistment, I was anxious to get back in the best unit, so I requested the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg North Carolina, and more specifically, Company B, 307th Engineer Battalion. If my memory serves me correctly, this is the unit the 596th became when we joined the 82d for the occupation of Berlin right after the War. My rank of Private First Class was still good upon re-entry, thank goodness, because the wife and I barely made it as it was, even with the big \$50 for jump pay. Then too, there was the anticipated arrival of our first off-spring to give me incentive to get out of that low pay category. One of my first encounters with members of the old outfit, was when I first joined the 307th and met Bill Wickersham. He had stayed in, as best I can remember and was there to greet me when I arrived. Shortly after my arrival, I was surprised to see John Whalen show up. We had some good times together, including a couple of trips up to his home in Brooklyn. We were both Sergeants when I was sent to G-3 Schools on special duty to teach there. We kept in touch off and on during this period while I was instructing jump school, jump-master school and Air Transportability Training for the Division. Bill Wickersham had transferred to the Infantry because he thought there was more opportunity for advancement for him. I lost track of him at that point.

The Korean War broke out about this time, and John, for sure, and Bill, I was told, were assigned to the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment and went off to war again. It was my good fortune to apply for, and get a direct commission in the Corps of Engineers at that time. After a short orientation course at Fort Belvoir, Va., I was assigned to 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion, in the 11th Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky. It was only a short stay there, also, because the war in Korea was still in need of attention and I was selected to go over there and see what was going on. This was my first ever, assignment to a unit other than Airborne. It took some getting used to, but we had some fine men in the Third Division AND WE HELPED end that one. Of course we had a lot of NCO's from the Airborne Divisions to get the job done. My tour of duty was up when the war ended, and I was anxious to get home to the family that then stood at three.

I again requested an Airborne assignment upon return, and was assigned back to the 82d again. There were a few people around that I knew upon return, but most of them were new faces. I was assigned to command Company B of the 307th.

(continued)

I had come full circle, back to the unit I had served in as a PFC to command it as a lieutenant. It was a proud moment for me. During my time in this position, I heard from some of the NCO's that had served with John Whalen in Korea, that he had been killed in action. I had also heard that about Bill Wickersham, but I was never as sure of it as I was about John. The source seemed more reliable. After a two year tour there, I was assigned to an Engineer unit at Fort Ord, California that was getting ready to transfer to Germany.

This was my first encounter with west coast living and my end to Airborne assignments. I fell in love with the west coast and in particular, the Monterey Bay area, as you can see by my address. My family had increased to four, with a wife and three kids by the time we reached California and we had great fun trying to keep track of them on the boat on the way to Germany. We didn't get a chance to go back to Berlin, although we managed to see most of the rest of Europe except England during the four years we were there. Another child was added to the Markle clan in Germany and we enjoyed this tour of duty more than any other because we were together as a family more. We hated to see it come to an end.

Back in the States, I had a number of assignments on the east coast before getting assigned back to Korea for what would be my final tour of duty. Our last offspring was born during that Stateside assignment, giving us a total of four boys and a girl. I was assigned to Ford Ord after Korea for the few remaining months of active duty. It was convenient because I had brought the family out to the west coast to stay while I was in Korea to see how they would like it. All agreed that it would be the place for my retirement. Retirement, huh,.... there was not retirement money to keep that tribe going, so I had to get out and really go to work.

Good fortune was still with me when I got out, because I went to work for an Educational Supply firm that had as it's home office, my home town of Rochester, New York. I made a respectable living, and was able to get back and visit the relatives periodically at Company expense. It was good while it lasted (about fifteen years) but the bottom fell out of the market with the end of the "baby boom" years and the cutback in educational funding at both the State and Federal level. The Company in an economy move decided to close it's west coast branch, so it was either going back to the east coast or looking for new work. Naturally, I was too well entrenched out here to go back, so Real Estate became my new line.

I could have picked a more lucrative field because the market here has not been that great since I started, but that is true everywhere so I understand. With all the kids up and grown now there is not much reason to put up with the steady grind, so I'm content to work only when it doesn't interfere with my golf, and other more important matters. It has been a very good life for me to this point, and I only hope that the rest of the 596ers have been as happy as I've been.

Just a quick rundown on the family..... the oldest, a son, is a research chemist with FMC Corp. in the San Francisco area. The only girl is married to a dentist, and currently residing in our home town of Rochester. The next boy is married to a nurse, attends the University of San Diego when not working in the insurance business. The third lad is going to school under the GI bill and working for GTE Corp when not going to school or doing home work. The youngest is also married, works for ATARI the video game people, and is going to school too. The two oldest boys, with the help of their wives, have blessed us with four grandchildren so far, and my daughter has just announced that she is expecting after the first of the year.... Yes the Markle clan is mushrooming.

You asked if I would send some pictures of myself and my wife, and I must admit that there are very few of those around, especially, recent ones. So, I'm enclosing a picture of me (the most recent one taken) from our local paper when I was honored to be chosen the president of our local Kiwanis Club. The other picture is one that was taken a few years ago of Elaine and I during one of our visits back in Rochester at lilac time. (the most beautiful time of the year there) I've added a couple of pounds and a few gray hairs since then, but that is about it. I have a bunch of pictures of the 596 guys that I wish I could have brought to the convention (sorry--reunion) I'm sure they would have brought back some memories for a few of us. Hopefully, I'll have them there at the next get-to-gether.

Chas, you were right in your observation about the 596 being the unit with the highest esprit-de-corps of any outfit I served with during my Army career. It was probably that, more than anything else, that prompted me to go back into the service again. I kept looking for that type of unit but it had no match. The Airborne units are the cream of the crop and the 596 sits on top of that elite group, in my estimation.

I hope all went well at the reunion, and I'm sure that all who attended enjoyed it immensely. Wish I could have been there. Give my regards to any of the old gang you happen to run into, and ask them to stop by, if they happen to be in my area. I'd love to see any of them, have a few beers, and talk over old times again. I'm sure, that with the list of home addresses you sent I'll be contacting some of the guys when I get close to them, as I'm sure I've been many times without knowing it. I wish you would keep me posted of any changes in that list that you become aware of so that I can keep track of these old friends.

I guess I've rambled on long enough, but thirty-five years is a lot of catching up to do. I hope this finds you and your family in the best of health and enjoying life. Drop me a line and let me know how you are getting along. You have been so busy trying to get the reunion lined up that you told me very little about how things were going with you and what you have been up to, lo these many years. I know Dentist play a lot of golf, so maybe one of these days we can tee it up to-gether. That is if you're not under a ten handicap. I wouldn't want to embarrass you with my high "bowling type" score.



**Gene Markle is
Kiwanis president**

Warmest and best regards,


E.C. Markle



This letter is so warm and so well written that it is difficult to excerpt.

Dear Charlie:

January 18, 1982

My best intentions to write and express my pleasure and gratitude for the opportunity of attending the reunion at Orlando, up to now, have been aborted by time. The thrill of seeing all of the "596" Comrades is something that I shall cherish forever. My wife, "Deen," was astounded by the love and affection so clearly obvious among those who were there. She was so happy for all of us and is already planning for San Matio in '83.

I want to, especially, thank Don Saunders and you for the efforts made in locating me and for making Orlando possible. I realize the effort expended by each of you, in both time and money, was gigantic, so accept our sincere appreciation for a job well done.

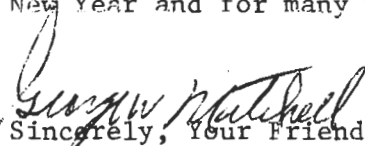
As a follow up to Orlando, Deen and I were fortunate enough to have Joe and Pat Senter as our house guests from Christmas Eve until New Years Eve. It was just a tremendous joyful week from our standpoint and I sincerely hope that Pat and Joe will agree that we were more hospitable to them than Texas was to Alabama in the Cotton Bowl.

In Orlando, I believe that I told you about my employment with the U.S. Army Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal, AL. In my position, I have had the good fortune to travel extensively and have made two trips to Europe during the past two years. On each of the trips, I was able to take leave and via a rental car, visited almost all of the places in Germany, Belgium, and France that we saw during the war. Sometime this year, I expect to revisit Italy.

Thanks to the addresses and telephone list published by you, I have been able to see or contract by phone several of the members while on duty travel in the U.S.A.

In your next publication, please extend on my behalf an open welcome to any member visiting in my area to drop by for a get-together.

In closing, Deen and I wish to extend our best wishes to you, your lovely and most gracious wife for the New Year and for many years to come.


Sincerely, Your Friend
George W. Mitchell

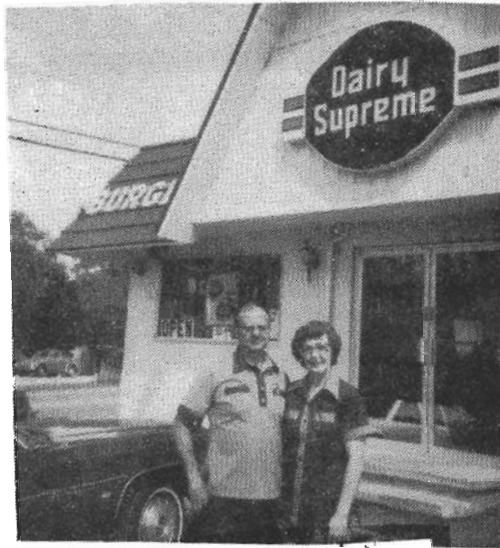
P.S. Keep up the good work.

Dec. 24, 1944—"Battle of the Bulge"—An entire U.S. armored division was retreating from the Germans in the Ardennes forest when a sergeant in a tank destroyer spotted an American digging a foxhole. The GI, PFC Vernon L. Haight, 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, looked up and asked, "Are you looking for a safe place?"

"Yeah," answered the tanker. "Well, buddy," he drawled, just pull your vehicle behind me....



M.B. (Monk) Johnson



Bill & Marge Conger



James Rogers (circa 1943)



The floating & traveling home of Ruth & Skipper Glenn Gainer



Elaine & Gene Markle



Elaine & Gene Markle

Why didn't you send me your picture for this space????
 Why don't you send me your picture for the next Newsletter?????
 No, don't put it off, go get one now. O.K. then, how about
 a photo of your wife? Your child? Your auto? A WW2 photo? Your dog?

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

The Battle of the Bulge was the greatest battle fought by the United States Army. It involved two field armies -- the First and Third; two tactical air commands; six corps; three airborne divisions, eight armored divisions and eighteen infantry divisions, a total of twenty-nine divisions. Including men of supporting units, there were more than 600,000 involved, more than fought on both sides at Gettysburg. Total German strength was probably 350,000.

Casualties on both sides were about the same: around 100,000. American casualties numbered specifically, 105,102. Of those, 16,001 were killed in action; 3,058 were missing in action and later declared dead; 23,554 were captured, of who 187 died in captivity; and 62,489 were wounded. Thus the total American deaths were 19,246. There were in addition, as a result of the brief British commitment at the tip of the bulge, 1,400 British casualties.

In the end for lack of resources, the German effort was doomed to failure; yet that is not to say that it could not have achieved some spectacular results even if falling short of Hitler's grand end-the-war objective. That it failed to achieve more than it did is attributable to the stand of the American soldier, who afforded his commanders -- their intelligence failure -- time to bring their mobility, reserve power, and air power to bear. The American soldier in the Ardennes made the outcome a certainty by his valor and pertinacity at Elsborn Ridge, St. Vith, Echternach, Clervaux, Wiltz, Stavelot, Stoumont, Bastogne, Marche, Hotton, and countless other places.

In the end, all Hitler achieved was to waste irreplaceable manpower and equipment in a manner that speeded the end of the war and Hitler's own demise.

"The Bulge Bugle"

Jan. 1982

More than one million troops were engaged in that battle and about one in five were casualties. Many of our comrades never made it back; many still bear physical and mental reminders of the epic struggle, a spectacular victory that was the greatest battle ever fought by the U.S. Army.

U.S. Army Bulge Divisions Listed
Infantry--1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 9th, 16th,
28th, 30th, 35th, 75th, 76th,
78th, 80th, 83rd, 84th, 87th, 90th, 94th
99th
Armored--2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th,
9th, 10th, 11th
Airborne--17th, 82nd, 101st
and 517th Para. Reg't Combat Team.



BIRTH OF THE AIRBORNE

by Lemuel T. Pitts

member, Pcht Test Plat; "E" 511th; also 501, 502, 503, and 505 PIR.

On 25 June 1940 when the 29th Inf Regt returned from a field exercise in Louisiana, everyone was looking forward to a few days rest and a couple of cold beers. The news got out that a group of men from the 29th Infantry would be asked to volunteer for the Parachute Test Platoon.

We were screened and accepted and on July 1st, 1940 Special Order #127 was cut naming the officers and E.M. for this platoon. Sgt. Hobart B. Wade was appointed Acting First Sergeant. Wade was a true soldier in all meaning of the word. We got our tents set up and started training on July 11th.

A young Lt. William T. Ryder had convinced and won the support of Col. William C. (Bill) Lee (later known as the father of the Airborne) that parachute troops were feasible in time of war in the American Army. The Germans had used them in the Low-Lands and were very successful in their operations. The Germans at that time only used one chute. In those days Gen. Lynch, Chief of Infantry, agreed with the idea of parachutists and had asked for volunteers from the 29th for this project.

This group would consist of two officers, six Sergeants, and 42 privates. I was one of the lucky ones to be accepted and get in on the ground floor of what in the future was to be a great fighting team and figured and played a major role in World War II. It was a great honor to be associated with the greatest and finest group of men that the Army could produce. The papers named us "THE SUICIDE SQUAD".

These men were selected by a panel of officers detailed by BG Acie L. Singleton (to my knowledge the last BG to command Fort Benning). After being selected we were housed in tents on Lawson Field with tight restrictions being put on our movement.

Each man underwent a very rigid physical examination. This was given to us by a team of Flight Surgeons from Maxwell Field, Alabama. It was almost like the one our modern-day astronauts are given today. This lasted for about two weeks in the building that now houses the QM Sales Store.

Some-one had to be found who could properly teach us the art of packing, maintenance, position and landing technique. No finer man could have been selected than WO Harry (Tug) Wilson. Sgts. Harris, Wallace, and Kercherside were from the Air Corps at Chanute and Wright-Patterson Fields.

A proper training program had to be formulated. We went to Ft. Dix, NJ and took training on the 125 foot towers at Hightstown, NJ. The Navy gave us our PT and carried us through a very thorough period of what we could look forward to in the future which consisted of running five miles a day, dropping off the towers in controlled hoops, free falls still in hoops, proper guiding of the chute, and landing. After this we came back to Benning to make our first six jumps, first 1500 feet, then 750 feet. Twenty-five of us were sent to Chanute Field, Illinois, to go to their Air Corps Technical School for a course in rigging, sewing, maintenance, and general up-keep of the chutes on which we would rely to get safely to the ground and ready for combat. We were later to train the 501st and other units that made up the Airborne fighting teams.

(continued)



In those days we had a couple of close calls. One was when Sgt Finley jumped and his chute caught on the tail of the plane. We tried every means to get him free all to no avail. After about fifteen minutes he pulled his reserve and luckily it pulled him sideways and off the tail. He was later killed in a motorcycle accident in Montgomery, Alabama. The second one, Red King jumped and somehow the static line back-lashed and wrapped around his neck. We tried to pull him back in the plane. He started to climb the static line and was able to get it over his head, and dropped and made a great landing. Ryder was the first man to jump, but what left eleven other men shocked and stunned - the first enlisted man to walk to the door refused !!

I would like at this time to clear up how the battle cry "Geronimo" got started. The day before our first jump we all went to the movies and saw "Geronimo". Aubrel Eberhardt, who stood just short of seven foot, and his buddy John Werd were discussing who would be afraid. Eberhardt told Ward that if he was not scared he would yell out "Germonimo" when he left the plane. We heard him loud and clear from 1500 feet above.

Our first Jump Pay was \$50.00 per month for officers and \$30.00 per month for EM. Later, after Secretary of War Stimson General Marshall, and President Roosevelt watched us jump, and two men landed on a hangar, it was raised to one hundred dollars for officers and fifty for Enlisted Men.

Jump Pay Increased

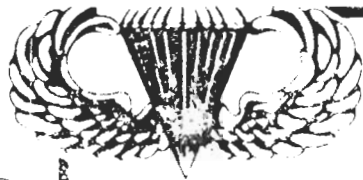
As of Sept. 30, 1980 there were 24,172 enlisted soldiers on Jump Status in the United States Army.

As of Oct. 1, the hazard pay for those on Jump Status was increased from \$55 per month to \$83 per month. Officers will continue to receive \$110 per month.

This is the first increase in Jump Pay in some 30 years.



"That soldier's here, Sir, about a new paratrooper uniform to deceive the enemy."



AIRBORNE!

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

"Soldiers" June 1980
Sgt. Maj. Bruce N. Bant

Anyone who has ever attended the Army's Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., is familiar with the 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry, the "Pioneers." Soldiers from that unit make up the demonstration teams at the school. Except for time out for World War II, a brief tour in Okinawa and the Korean War, they have been doing that job since 1919.

The 29th Infantry's motto, "We Lead The Way" is demonstrated almost daily in the battalion's support to Officer Candidate School, the Infantry Officers Basic Course, NCO Leadership courses and airborne and ranger instruction.

It was also demonstrated 40 years ago when men from that unit became members of this country's first airborne unit.

On June 26, 1940 it was announced at reveille formations throughout the 29th that volunteers were needed to test a new concept called "airborne." Some 200 "Pio-

neers" volunteered. Two officers and 49 enlisted men were selected.

Under the leadership of Maj. William Lee, the test platoon was ordered to test and experiment with ways of delivering men to the battlefield from aircraft.

From Fort Benning, Lee went to New York to the site of the 1939 World's Fair to observe the fair's parachute tower.

Lee then took his platoon to Heightstown, N.J. where they trained on similar towers built by the Safe Parachute Company to train aircrews in parachuting. When they returned to Fort Benning they built replicas of one of the towers and began more serious testing.

The test platoon quickly mastered tower jumping and made its first jump from a Douglas B-18 on August 16, 1940. The tests were so successful that two weeks later, on August 29, the test platoon made its first mass jump.

On October 1, the platoon was used to form the nucleus of the 501st Parachute Battalion, the Army's first airborne unit.

Volunteers for the new unit were plentiful but training was slowed by a shortage of aircraft and parachutes. The latter was caused by the War Department's insistence that all paratroopers carry a spare chute on their chest.

Interest in the airborne concept increased in May 1941 following the successful airborne assault in Greece and Crete by German paratroopers.

U.S. Army airborne units were increased and in August 1942, the first-division-sized organizations were introduced. On that date existing parachute units were combined with elements of the 82d and 101st Infantry Divisions and reorganized to form the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions. Thus the U.S. Army Airborne was begun. □



How the Parachute Badge was Developed

"The Static Line"

Although it is not my custom to write "Letters to the Editor," sometimes in the interest of accuracy and in order to keep future historians on the right track, I do so. In this case, I refer to your story on page 24 of the June, 1977 STATIC LINE. It contains a number of errors which seem to indicate rather superficial research on the part of its author (writing for the BAYONET?).

To begin with, the parachutists qualification badge was not developed in order to "identify the members of this unique organization," it was to signify qualification in the art of military parachuting. The device which identified the 501st Parachute Battalion was an Ojibway Thunderbird on a silver shield with the motto "GERONIMO." I designed that distinctive insignia. Its history is filed with the heraldry element of DCSPers in the Pentagon. I had hoped that every parachute unit of the American Army might have an American Indian thunderbird of different design as the basis for its distinctive insignia and toward that end, I had done considerable research which had brought to light dozens of colorful thunderbird designs—all appropriate, I thought, to American Heraldry and traditions.

As to the parachute wings it is incorrect to state that "The Chief of Infantry suggested a design on a light blue background similar in appearance to the badge of the Air Corps pilots." The one most firm requirement placed by the Army on any design of a parachute qualification badge was that it IN NO WAY resemble the pilots wings of the Air Corps.

The parachute qualification badge as we know it came into being as a result of LT. COL. WILLIAM M. MILEY'S initiative. As Commander of the 501st Parachute Battalion, he ordered me to Washington in early 1941, telling me not to come back to Ft. Benning until I had an approved qualification badge in my hands.

He had (quite properly) rejected several badge concepts supplied by the Heraldry Branch of G-1. They were both unimaginative and in our view, even "recessive" instead of "aggressive." One consisted of a deployed parachute around which wings were folded in an almost funeral attitude.

Arriving at the War Department, I set to work to produce a design which fitted the parameters supplied by the bureaucrats.

After at least 50 tries, I came up with the design we now have. It seemed to me that the suggestion that the wing tips were supporting the chute canopy was symbolic of the powered flight which always preceded the parapod. Furthermore, the prohibition against extended wings of any kind (imposed by the Heraldry branch) had to be accepted.

I walked the approved design in and out of every office which had a piece of the action in the War Department. I would wait doggedly until each action type got to it in his "In" basket, then take it to the next one. When a contract was finally let with Bailey Banks and Biddle of Philadelphia, I camped on their doorstep until I was able to walk away with 350 sterling wings. These I carried triumphantly back to COL. MILEY at Benning. All of these first wings bear BB&B on the back and they are collector's items.

Feeling that the wings needed a little color and that perhaps they were on the small side, I designed the first felt backgrounds. For the 501st the background was Infantry Blue with Artillery Red superimposed so as to leave a narrow blue border.

I am enclosing a copy of my Patent on the "Wings." I took the Patent out in order to protect the design from wrongful exploitation, and to keep the quality high. I never obtained a single penny from sale of the wings nor from any commercial use—this was not my objective.

LT. GEN. WILLIAM P. YARBOROUGH
U.S.A. (Ret.)

A Trooper's Decision

By Charles Smith

We reported that day, recruits; brash and raw,
With eyes agog at what we saw.
Lofty towers, nightmares of webbing and steel,
Ranks of instructors, who's wrath we would feel.
But we learned, slow and sure,
That for every mistake, there was a cure.
We were treated worse than dogs, and then
We were told to brace up, to act like men.
PT and drill, sweating under the hot summer sun
Little did we know, our torture had just begun.
Day after day, we swore we'd quit, we'd drop, we'd die,
But something gave us the strength for just one more try.
Push ups we mastered, with vigor and vim,
We did a thousand at an instructors whim.
We'd try on our chutes for a practice rig
Then came, "drop soldier, that's a gig."
Finally one day, with breaths abated,
We heard the news, long awaited.
Remember what you were taught, without it your'e sunk,
Monday morning you're going to jump.
Somehow our new found courage faded away
When we awakend that fatal day.
No one was boisterous or jolly as before,
Countenances were grim and sour.
We arrived at the flight line, timid and shy,
Feeling we might not make it, but we surely would try.
Then before we had a chance to lose our nerve,
We were strapped into a T-ten and reserve.
Then toward the plane, we filed down the ramp
Walking with leaden feet and foreheads damp.
Before a few more minutes went by,
We were strapped in and ready to fly.
The engines began to rev, the wheels began to roll
And we devoted our thoughts to the status of our souls.
We started remembering every tiny sin,
Feeling glum, but still trying to grin.
Then we were off, the terrain grew small
And we devoted our thoughts to the status of our souls.
Would it open? We really didn't know,
And if it didn't, where would we go?
The command "get ready" we heard loud and clear,
Stand up and hook up, tight and secure.
Check your equipment and let it be known,
That you've checked your buddy's as well as your own.
The check points we've passed, the DZs below,
The green light is on and out we go.
We try to count, but only a gasp
Was torn from our throats, in a tortured rasp.
Soon a sharp tug and then a soft plop
Told all was well on our first drop.
We had lost our fear which was all about,
We'd do it again without a doubt.
For we were Airborne, we'd live up to the name,
Bringing it glory, honor, and fame.
And now it's over, we're proud of our decision,
To become troopers of the 17th Airborne Division.

YES SIR!



HOW OLD ARE YOU

H. S. Fritsch

Age is a quality of mind.
If you have left your dreams behind,
If hope is cold,
If you no longer look ahead,
If your ambitions' fires are dead--
Then you are old.
But if from life you take the best,
If in life you keep the jest,
If love you hold;
No matter how the years go by,
No matter how the birthdays fly--
You are not old.





Static Line

Your Airborne "Lifeline"

STATIC LINE MASTHEAD INSIGNIA

LINE NO. 1

1. 75th Inf. Rgt (Ranger) 2. Special Forces/Command & Control-South (Vietnam) 3. 7th Ranger Bn. (Korea) 4. 1st Bn/509th Abn. Inf/SETAF (Southern European Task Force) 5. Para-Glider (late-war Airborne) overseas cap insig. 6. 327th Abn. Inf. Rgt. 7. 36th Abn. Bde (TX-NG) 8. US Army Parachutist (WW II) overseas cap insig. 9. 319th Field Arty Bn. 10. 907th Abn. F. A. Bn (Glider) (101st Abn. Div '42) 11. 1st and 2nd Bns/509th Abn. Inf. Rgt. 12. Abn. Troop Carrier Cmd. 13. 2nd Abn. Bde (WW II) 14. 1st Special Service Force (WW II).

LINE NO. 2

1. 501st PIR (AIR) 2. 502nd PIR (AIR) 3. 503rd PIR (AIR) 4. 504th PIR (AIR) 5. 187th Parachute-Glider Inf. (PGI) 6. 542nd P. Inf. Bn. 7. 327th AIR (Recon Plt) 8. 596th Abn. Engr. 9. US Army Pathfinder 10. US Army Special Forces 11. Airborne Cmd (when worn with gold on black tab) (555th AIB when worn with white on red tab) 12. 1st Cav. Div. (Abn) 13. 1st Cav. Div. (Abn-Vietnam) 14. 551st Para. Inf. Rgt.

LINE NO. 3

1. 550th P.I.R. 2. 173rd Abn. Bde. 3. 187th Abn. RCT 4. 325th Glider Inf. Rgt. (AIR) 5. 456 Abn. F. A. Bn (82nd Abn '43) 6. 376th Abn. F. A. Bn. 7. 377th Abn. F. A. Bn. 8. 457th Abn. F. A. Bn (11th Abn. '42 to '45) 9. 460th Para. F. A. Bn. 10. 462nd Para. F. A. Bn. 11. 464th Para. F. A. Bn. (Abn Cmd '42-'45, then 17th Abn. Div) 12. 466th Para. F. A. Bn. (17th Abn. Div. '42-'45) 13. 674th Abn. F. A. Bn. (11th Abn. Div '42, then 101st Abn. Div., 1956) 14. 127th Abn. Engrs. 15. 307th Abn. Engrs.

LINE NO. 4

1. 501st AIR 2. 502nd AIR 3. 503rd AIR 4. 504th AIR 5. 505th AIR 6. 506th AIR 7. 507th AIR 8. 508th AIR 9. 509th AIR 10. 511th AIR 11. 513th AIR 12. 515th PIR 13. 517th AIR 14. 541st PIR.

101st Abn. Div, 82nd Avn Div, US ARMY, Rigger Badge, 1st Polish Para Bde, WW II (wreath signifies combat jumps), 1st Allied Abn. Army, 13th Abn Div.

17th Abn Div, 11th Abn Div, XVIIIth Abn Corps.

The two aircraft pictured are (on the left) the CG-4A "Waco" Glider and (on the right) the C-47 Skytrain.

This is for those of you who get the monthly, "Static Line", and have been trying to identify all the Masthead insignia. If you are not a subscriber yet, send \$20 to Don Lassen, Editor,



Current European Airborne Units

In an effort to keep our members informed, we are always interested in information from the airborne world. Thanks to Don Strobaugh, we are able to report on current European airborne units.

Bulgaria - This communistic country does have airborne troops. It appears that they are part of the Air Force as the officer observed was wearing Air Force cap badges as well as the standard greenish brown uniform worn by eastern bloc countries.

Czechoslovakia - The Airborne wears a red beret with a regular Czech Army cap badge. They no longer wear the bright yellow/black-brown camo being sold in America at this time.

East Germany - Information from here, as from all eastern bloc countries is difficult to obtain. It is known that they have airborne forces and wear an orange beret with a small round cloth crest. The uniform collar has a distinctive parachute emblem.

Hungary - They have a Free Fall badge that requires 1500 jumps to obtain. The troops wear the same cap and cap badge as the regular army for dress wear. In combat, they wear a camouflage beret with an airborne beret badge in gold for officers, silver for NCO's and brown for other ranks. The badge is a winged chute.

Poland - Army airborne troopers wear a maroon beret with a regular army cap badge on the left side. An airborne patch is worn on the left upper arm of a brown blouse and trousers with a brown leather belt with the trousers tucked into brown 10" boots. Different color airborne badge backgrounds signify different units. There are at least 16 background colors so it is assumed there must be 16 or more active units. Naturally their size and mission are unknown.

Rumania - They also possess airborne units and may wear light blue berets with a small Army gold cap badge. It appears that they have four classes of airborne awards. What is known is that they are using a novel parachute. They jump the BG-7m parachute which is static-line initiated but manually deployed. Operational jumps are made from 3,300 feet at 210 mph with the static line deploying a 3 foot stabilization chute which slows the trooper to 115 feet per second. At 1500 feet, the trooper hand-deploys his main chute and lands at about 12 feet per second. As a safety, the chute has an altimeter which will deploy the chute at 1400 feet if the trooper has not already deployed it. The trooper also carries a small, plastic boat in case of a water landing. As you may be aware, this system, if correctly reported, is very complicated. We wonder about their injury statistics.

USSR - Enlisted troopers wear greenish brown uniforms with light blue berets. They currently have 10 airborne divisions.

Yugoslavia - Their Basic badge requires 10 jumps. The uniform is the same as the regular army with the exception of an OD beret with a metal/enamel beret badge worn on the left side. They also wear shoulder patches.

Belgium - Naturally it is easier to obtain information on the good guys. The airborne Regiment is composed of three battalions. The 1st and 3rd Battalions wear the maroon beret and the 2nd battalion/commando wears the green beret. (Of additional interest is the fact that the two WWII SAS veterans still serve with the regiment.) Their basic airborne school lasts two weeks and consists of 5 jumps, 4 from their training balloon and 1 from an aircraft.

Germany - Airborne troops wear the maroon beret with the metal airborne beret badge (the diving eagle). The para wings are worn above the right pocket. Of interest is the fact that metal jump wings are not authorized, however they may be purchased by foreigners who prefer metal to cloth. There are three qualification levels and the airborne school is now testing the TF-3 parachute, static line deployed with three small quick-opening canopies designed to allow troopers to jump from 200 feet with no reserve.

Netherlands - They have airborne forces. Among them are Army Commandos and Naval Marines.

France - Besides Army troopers who wear the maroon beret there is the famous 2nd R.E.P. (Regiment Etranger Parachutiste) which made the last combat jump of any size in history by its actions 19-20 May 1978 in Zaire. The 2nd R.E.P., a Foreign Legion regiment is currently assigned to the 11th Parachute Division which also contains regular army units. In addition to this division, there is the 1st R.H.P. which operates under army control in a role similar to the British SAS. The Air Force has the Fusiliers Commandos of Intervention, the Navy has the 1st and 3rd UDT groups as well as a separate Naval Commando. Many men of the Marine Commando units are also airborne qualified. (Of additional interest is the fact that the foreign legion airborne wears the green beret. French berets have the metal badges on the right side.)

England - Besides the Airborne Regiment which invented the maroon beret, English airborne forces consist of the SAS and the Royal Marines. The Royal Marines wear the commando green beret and have taken over the duties of the World War II commando role. The SAS regiments are under the control of SAS Group and consist of one regular regiment, namely 22 SAS and two territorial regiments, 21 and 23 SAS. A territorial unit is a reserve unit. SAS troopers wear the beige beret with a cloth winged-dagger on the left side.

This article is not meant to be the last word on the subject but is meant to keep you up to date on what we know about the airborne world. If you have additional information or comments, please write us.

"The Maroon Beret" Jan. 1982

**We need YOUR News, Views,
Photos**

TEX LOWE

Pres. 517 PRCT Assn.

Tex has another and real first name but very few people know it and even fewer use it. Tex is the archtypical and stereotypical Texan with a capital T. If you were asked to draw a picture and describe a typical Texas male you would probably come up with something close to Tex Lowe---voice, drawl, boots, hat, belt buckle and all. Tex knows a lot of people in the Airborne world and better still even more know Tex and like Tex. He does a wonderful PR job for the 517 and we can all be proud of him for his leadership ability and his devotion to our Association. Betty, his charming and gracious wife, is just as interested in the 517 as is Tex and, as is the case with so many of us, she deserves much of the credit for the man Tex is today.

Prior to WW2, Tex worked in construction and the Texas oilfields. In 1942, at age 27, he went into the service and into the 506 PIR. He received his wings in Dec. 1942, injured his foot and was sent to Camp Toccoa as cadre supply sergeant in H Co., 3rd Bn., 517. From there he transferred to Service Co. and then C Co. of 517. After his discharge in Nov. 1945, Tex went back into construction and then went into labor as organizer from 1957 to 1965. He then went with the U.S. Dept. of Labor. He retired in Oct. 1981 and now raises integrated goats (white nannies and black billies, and Shetland ponies. He and Betty have 2 daughters, one son and 5 grandchildren.

In Memory — of Someone Else

We were saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our chapter's most valuable members, Someone Else. Someone's passing created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. Else has been with us for many years. Someone did far more than a normal person's share of work. Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results. "Someone Else can work with that group." Whenever there was a job to do, a committee to chair, or meeting to attend, one name was on everyone's list — "Let Someone Else do it."

Someone Else was a wonderful person — sometimes appearing superhuman, but a person can do only so much. Were the truth known, everyone expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone. We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did?

When you have a chance to participate in your Chapter remember — we can't depend on Someone Else any more.

Yesterday

Yesterday, when we were young, and oh, so clever
Yesterday, when we were young, and life was forever
Yesterday we dreamed wonderful, imaginative dreams
Fished in overflowing rivers and streams
Painted skies of clearest, brightest blues
Mountains of green and yellow and red hues

Today, we are much older and wiser, too
There're still so many things we want to do
Yet our dreams have all gone astray
And we think, so often, of yesterday
Yesterday, when we were so very young
And our hearts were filled with song

But today, no adventures do we seek
For we find that life is too fleet
Calmly we keep trying to do our best
Taking some peace, quiet and rest
Do the most we now are able
For time-unending is a fable
And yesterdays when we were young are past
And now we know, tomorrows never last.

PENNY BELLACK

St. Petersburg

CRYSTAL CITY
MARRIOTT
WN DC

LT GEN W. P. YARBOROUGH

ADDRESS TO 551ST PCHT BN ASSN 4 AUG '79

I want to talk tonight about some things that are not political, not controversial, things that we have shared together, some of the history that we know about, a lot of us first-hand, some of the experiences, of course, that the people in this room have felt and those types at home waiting, wondering about what was happening on the fighting front. Our children and our grandchildren wonder whether it really was the way Dad (or Granddad) said it was or not. I don't know whether I can clear all of that up, but I'll try to do some of it.

As time goes by, many of the details begin to get a little fuzzy around the edges but by the same token, the big picture begins to get more clear.

One thing, for instance: why did the indigenous people in the areas where we dropped in by parachute not resent our coming because certainly numbers of ripoffs took place when we landed? We were usually without transportation and therefore would requisition bicycles and cars. As a matter of fact, I at one time got the vehicle that Charlie Chaplin had owned--it was a Cord frontwheel drive and miraculously, with jeep wheels on, it worked.

Some of you will remember the CID following our outfits in the field to find out where all that transport went which we had taken-- (we needed it really.) But the people still liked to see us arrive and one of the reasons seemed to have been that in the hands of a good seamstress, a parachute canopy made out of fine silk could provide no less than 540 sets of women's underwear. Today's camouflaged nylon chute doesn't have that sex appeal at all. Our old T-4's were alot better.

I want also to clear up the question of whether or not I'm legitimate with the 551st. In the first place, we're all members of the same family in the Airborne racket and some of us in the Intelligence racket have a double kind of rapport. It's the same with Forces. We're bred and cross-bred in a way that would make us liable for incest if this weren't really, you know, an honorable kind of thing.

Now let's see where we start here. I served with the 501st Parachute Battalion (and I've got a diagram here to sort this out). My wife can do this very easily. If you ask what the relationship was of a cousin whose daughter was married to a second cousin and they had a child, she could

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tell you immediately; her computer mind would clear that up. For me, it's a little more difficult but let's begin this way.

The 501st Parachute Battalion, as you recall, sent it's Company C to Panama. I had commanded Company C and I was left at Fort Benning when it departed. Captain Shinberger went along with Company C and in due course the entire 501st went to Panama. It's mission was to drop on Martinique. The Island of Martinique was at that time French and under Vichy French influence. It was rumored that German submarines were getting some help out of Martinique. Therefore, the 501st Parachute Battalion had the mission of going in there and clearing that up. The 501st was merged subsequently with the 503d-it became part of the 503d Regiment. The 503d Regiment less its 2nd Battalion was shipped off to Australia. This 2nd Battalion of the 503d had been sent to Europe and became the 509th Parachute Battalion. I'll pick up that story a little later. I hope you all are following this because there's going to be a short pop quiz at the end of it.

The 551st was then shipped to Panama to take the place of the 501st which had gone to the 503d and then to Australia, but in due course, along the line, the 551st came back to Naples and to Sicily and then ended up in Ostia, Lida di Roma where the Airborne Task Force was being gathered together. Now Wood Joerg who was Commander of the 551st was a member of the Class of 1937 at the Military Academy; I knew him well but I knew his brother even better, Bob Joerg. Bob Joerg and I had been enlisted men together trying to get into West Point. Bob, of course, went in a different direction but I always felt warmly toward him and his gallant brother who was killed, as you recall, while commanding the 551st during the Battle of the Bulge.

In any case, if I haven't established my bona fides, I'd better stop trying at this point.

I want to talk a little bit now about the beginning of the invasion of Southern France. The operation was called " Dragoon " because, according to some of the dopesters, Churchill named it as a protest for having been " dragooned " into the change of emphasis from the Balkans where he wanted to invade, into the Southern France area. Churchill wanted the Balkans for political reasons and any of us who believe in the logic of Von Clausewitz feel that political reasons are usually the only valid reasons to go to war. On the other hand, Eisenhower had an equally powerful argument. The Invasion in Normandy had taken place and the Allied Armies were engaged in getting to the heart of the German problem. Eisenhower felt that the thrust into the South of France would protect the right flank of the Allied operation; furthermore, there were alot of Frenchmen in North Africa and in Italy who wanted to get into the fight, wanted to get back into their

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Gen. Yarborough Address (continued)

own country and at that time the most promising way to go in was through Southern France.

The Airborne Operation into the South of France was a very logical kind of a strategic and tactical move to make because the defenses along the coast were pretty heavy. It is true that there were a great many divisions in the South of France, but they were not first-class divisions. Some of them were from the Balkans; some of them were Russian PW's- who had defected to the Germans. But it was still a considerable force. And it seemed logical that if an Airborne force could be landed to the rear of these sites, then this great Allied Invasion Army, the Seventh Army, would have a much easier job of getting ashore and doing their job.

But as I said, there was no Airborne division available. So they decided to make up an Airborne division out of the bits and pieces of parachute and glider people who could be found in various places. The 551st was at Camp Mackall at that time; the 550th Glider Regiment was at Camp Mackall. The 517th Regiment was fairly newly formed. That Regiment was sent into the line with the Fifth Army for about 10 days to get a little combat action but they gave the 551st no combat training at that time; therefore they were going to have a harder time as a result.

The 509th and the 463d Parachute Field Artillery were in the line at Anzio and it was at Anzio that I first reported to General Bob Frederick who then commanded the first Special Service Forces a Canadian-American outfit. He had been designated Commander of what was to be this Provisional Airborne Division.

I rather resented that outfit (the 1st Special Service Force) at that time because they had a lot of new equipment, while we didn't have and they were Johnny-come-latelys in the Anzio scene. We were very snobbish because we were the guys who had come all the way from North Africa " up the boot. " We subsequently learned to respect them very deeply and especially their Commander, Bob Frederick who, as you know, had seven Purple Hearts--he'd have gotten a dozen if we'd let him do everything he wanted to do.

So he was the designated Commander. The outfit was ordered to assemble at Ostia, Lida di Roma outside Rome and it began to gather. Bob Frederick didn't like the name Provisional Airborne Division; he wanted it to be called the First Airborne Task Force, and that it became. The headquarters units for this outfit were drawn from the 13th Airborne Division at Camp Mackall. There were no Airborne planners of any stature in the Theatre at all.

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The First Airborne Task Force consisted of the British Parachute Brigade, the 517th Parachute Regiment, the 509th Parachute Battalion, the 551st Parachute Battalion, the 550th Glider Battalion, 463d Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, 602d Field Artillery Battalion, the Anti-Tank Company of the 442d Infantry -- (these were the Japanese-American gallant guys who would do anything you told them.) They found that their anti-tank weapons which were 57 mm wouldn't fit into the Waco Gliders so they equipped them with the British 6 powder anti-tank weapon -- they said "so what?" They were fantastic soldiers.

In addition, there were the 887th Engineer Company, 2 Chemical Battalions which weren't really Chemical Battalions at all, they had the 4.2 mortar which was our close-accompanying artillery- couldn't have lived without it; the 512th Airborne Signal Company and the 676th Medical Collecting Company which alot of you guys got to know fairly well at close range.

This Airborne Task Force was not a small affair -- it needed 450 troop carrier airplanes, and 350 fighters for escort. In those days, you could put a requisition on the War Department and this stuff arrived. The gliders came in on D-10, 10 days before they were needed, were put together and assembled. 600,000 pounds of specialized equipment on special requisition came in by D-4 together with 700 glider pilots. We needed 2 glider pilots for each glider. They were also gallant guys as I will indicate to you a little later. We had one troop carrier group in the Theatre and we needed 2 more which were whistled in from England--the 50th and 53d--and we then established two Airborne bases, at Ciampino and Lida di Roma. By the 17th of July 1944, just about 35 years ago, all these forces were assembled and getting ready to do their bit.

The plan for initial elements of this Force was to drop before dawn around the town of Le Muy. Le Muy was one drop zone but there were a number of others North and West of Le Muy. The objective was to prevent German movement toward the coastal landing areas where the Seventh Army would come ashore. This was not a small operation, it involved 2,500 ships and 145,000 men in the forces that were to come across the beaches we were to protect by our Airborne landings.

The First Special Service Force I talked about was to go ashore in an amphibious landing to take out some of the coastal batteries on a couple of islands at Port Cros and L'vonne before dawn. That they did.

Our pathfinders which were the outfits that went in prior to an Airborne operation were to parachute in and put up the

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guidance devices to guide our airplanes into the target area where we were to drop at 3:23 in the morning. After the pathfinders the next outfit was the one that I commanded--the 509th. With it was the 463d Field Artillery. We were scheduled to land at 4:12 in the morning; the 517th Airborne Regiment at 9 minutes after 5:00 and the gliders were to begin coming in in great numbers at 8:22 a little after daylight. The 551st was supposed to come in at 1800 hours that same day, 6:00 in the afternoon, followed by 335 glider loads of various types, artillery and all kinds of material.

We had 10 take-off airfields stretched down the coast of Italy for 150 miles and the gliders were moved in to satellite airfields off the main ones. All the airplanes were deadlined to make sure that every one would work. This was no small job in a theatre of operations where, unlike peacetime where you can do all these things under lights and out in the open, there was enemy air around and all this had to be done surreptitiously, the stuff camouflaged and the movement to the airplanes under cover and so on.

We had rehearsed this operation a number of times but we couldn't do it in great force because packing that many parachutes is a big job so we'd send out pathfinders and put two or three men in an airplane, vector the airplane in on the signals and try to do a small exercise that way. With the terrible tragedy that we had experienced in Sicily--(you recall we had our airplanes shot down in great numbers by our own Navy)--we'd learned our lesson or somebody'd learned their lessons, and so we had copious briefings with the Navy and alot of markings along the way into the route. The route went from Italy to the Island of Elba and then around the North tip of Corsica. The landfall in France was in the Frejus area--Freejus we called it, "Freejus on the Framus." We put radio beacons--the "Eureka" that we had used first in North Africa, on Elba and North Corsica, we also had three marker ships along the way with lights and radio signals. We also had a diversion planned where we would drop dummy parachutists with devices on them that sounded like rifle fire. These were to be dropped in a number of areas to confuse the enemies' defenses and they did.

Our airplanes were to scatter stuff called "window" which would confuse enemy radar, make the outlines of the formations fuzzy and make them look like something other than what they were.

When all preparations had been made we sat down to wait for the weather. You see, the invasion itself couldn't be held off on account of flying weather. The invasion didn't depend on the parachutists. If we could go, why we would go, if we couldn't the invaders would have to go without us.

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So we prayed for good weather, we hoped for good visibility to look at the hill masses as we came into the coast of France but the night after we'd moved to those ten airfields and loaded all of our stuff on the airplanes we found that a dense fogbank had descended over the entire target area and it was going to remain there. There wasn't anything we could do about that. The winds were beginning to shift by something like 90 degrees and after the airplanes got in flight and the navigators would have a tough time because the checkpoints would be difficult to see or couldn't be seen at all.

Nonetheless, shortly after midnight on the night of the 15th of August 35 years ago, the airplane motors began turning over on ten airfields scattered along the Italian boot.

The pathfinders got on their way and then the main airlift of 396 airplanes in 9 serials began to move out. They lifted off the runways in total darkness and circled around to try to get into formation with just the little wingtip lights visible--a very difficult job for pilots who normally flew missions to supply airfields and logistics missions, to fly tight formations at night. But they did it.

On the takeoff 3 airplanes were damaged rolling along these dark runways; 1 airplane was demolished completely shortly after takeoff but the rest of them got underway somehow.

The pathfinders which had preceded us, (and mind you, it was pitch dark and foggy) got to France and made 3 passes over where their drop zones were supposed to be : they couldn't see anything. Finally the pilot said "the hell with it, let's let 'em out here" and they bailed out. They were 15 miles from the proper area but they had sense enough not to use their electronic guidance devices to pull everything else in on top of them. There would have been a great temptation if you were out there by yourself in a hostile area to call in an airborne division to help you; but they didn't.

Some of you recall that Danny Deleo had been a pathfinder before. He had been dropped in the wrong place, first at El Djem in North Africa, then at Avellino. Now here he was doing it again. As he came down in his parachute, --a piece of descending anti-aircraft shell hit him on the head and knocked him unconscious. He was hanging in a tree for something like-- I guess--3/4's of an hour before they got him down. It reminded me of the British officer who dropped at Bone in North Africa when the 2d Paratroop Brigade went in there. He hit his head so hard upon landing that he was unconscious for 4 days. They took him into a house not far from the airfield where he was put on a bed with fine brass knobs on four corners. They said he was heard to murmur every now and then, "I'll have a little more of that caviar, waiter," for four days.

There isn't any record of what Danny Deleo said but I have heard from a good source that it was four letter words that he

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repeated over and over again. It was the third time that an airborne snafu had happened to him.

Well, the 509th came over the DZ on schedule; we had to make a very sharp dogleg turn and then hit the Drop Zone on the top of a hill in a burned-off area. All of us in that serial reached the right place, coming down through burned-out trees and not seeing the ground until we hit it.

We dropped at exceptionally high altitudes because of the terrain. We normally in combat dropped around 750 feet-- here we were up to 1,500 and 2,000 feet.

Part of the 509, dropped at San Tropez where it wasn't supposed to--this was down on the coast but it was a good thing they did land there because they joined forces with the French Underground and when our sea-landing forces came ashore the next morning, they had people there, friendly types, to greet them.

San Tropez was the home of Brigitte Bardot, you know, but she wasn't there at that point, otherwise, these guys would have found her, there's no question about it.

One airplane load of the 509th got the green light at the wrong place, went out over the ocean and was never heard from again. Lieutenant Miller was Company Commander who dropped with that outfit and there was never a trace. The Air Corps could not explain it except that maybe there had been a malfunction of the signal light, but jump signal lights have no real tendency to malfunction unless somebody malfunctions them with a thumb.

The 517th and the British Brigade dropped 15 miles from their DZ near Faince before daylight. The gliders which took off for the 8:00 landing as I indicated to you were coming in great numbers found that the fog was very heavy and they circled for an hour and came in an hour later--9:00.

I saw the magnificent sight of those gliders coming in. I was sitting on the top of the hill mass at Le Muy, having dropped there before dawn. Wave after wave of gliders came in. There had been anti-glider obstacles placed on some of the areas where they were going to land, but the French who were operating under German direction didn't install them firmly; they weren't seated in the ground too well and the wings of the gliders knocked them down.

Almost every third glider would go tail over teacup and would spill people out on the ground. They'd get up, brush themselves off--they were tough soldiers and they figured that's

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the way a glider landing was supposed to be.

As each succeeding glider came in, the space to land became less and less so that the guys who were at the tail of the glider operations had little choice. Very few of those gliders were salvageable but most of the people walked away and it was absolutely a miracle. I had nothing but admiration for people who would ride in those things.

The 551st was Serial #16 as you recall, it came in on schedule, dropped beautifully in the proper Drop Zone and after them the glider serials came in in huge numbers with material and people and the Germans knew that something really bad had happened in the middle of their defensive area at that time.

On the way in, 9 of those gliders landed in the water, but most of the people were picked up by the Navy which, at that time, were on the ball a little more than they had been in Sicily. One glider disintegrated in the air--wings came off and everybody spilled out of it and they were killed. That was the only one that that happened to, thank God.

The following day, the 517th and the 551st took Avignon which was the headquarters of the German Corps; it was a very fine action.

Then the 551st made contact with the 36th and 45th Divisions which were part of General Patton's Force going North to seek Germans in the northern area of France.

The 509th, of course, was in action at Le Muy and down at San Tropez.

All in all, this was the most successful parachute operation that was done during the War. It came off just about the way it was planned with the results that were planned--the German Mobile Reserves were disrupted, the Allied landing was facilitated, within the first couple of days, we had taken more than 2,000 German prisoners. We had 434 people killed, captured and missing, 292 in the hospital. The British had 52 killed, 181 missing and 130 in the hospital.

The jump injuries were very few in number considering the lousy terrain that we dropped in. We had 283 jump or crash injuries, (that is guys from the gliders and our people). And as I said, only about 50 gliders were salvageable and for the reason that I gave you earlier, practically no parachutes ever found their way back to the packing sheds.

By the 18th of August, we were reorganized near Le Muy and we began to move up the coast to the Italian border and up into the Maritime Alps. The First Special Force came in to

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replace the British Parachute Brigade which, in response to political needs had moved out into Greece where they got into that action that was going on there.

In closing I want to remind you that really, in our lifetime, we have been part of an extraordinary fraternity of people. We don't need to envy the guys that marched with Caesar's Legions or went across the Alps with Hannibal.

We were among the first in the history of the world that ever went into battle the way we did from topside in the interests of our nation.

A lot of you, if you think back and you can remember the sights and the sounds and the smells of battle and you remember that queasy feeling that you wouldn't admit to anybody but yourself, when the red light was on at the door and the green light was about to come on and you knew that you were going into an unknown area, not only as far as getting through the air was concerned, but what you were going to meet on the ground.

And all of these things we share and I've been privileged to share them with you this evening.

Gen. Bill Yarborough's talk was so interesting to me that I asked him to send me a copy so I could share it with all of you. Bill is a low-keyed but brilliant man, a legendary and pioneer paratrooper and military leader, an excellent cook, a spellbinding raconteur and an all-round good fellow.



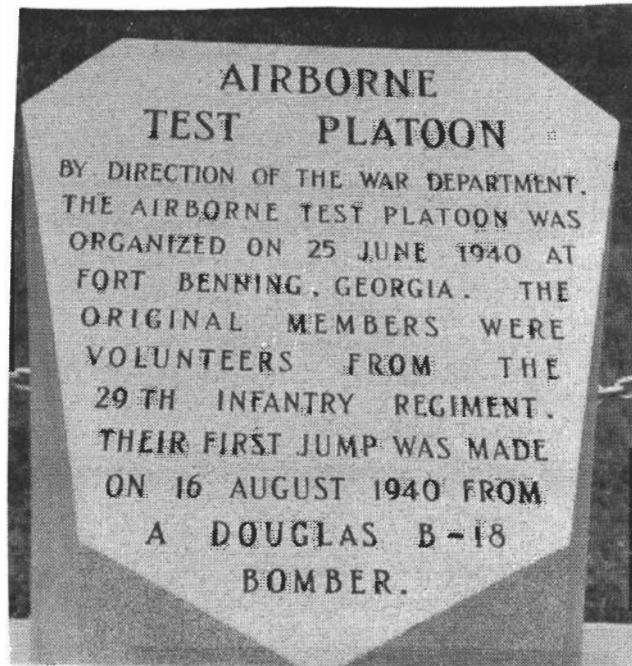
General James Lindsay, CO of the 82nd Airborne Division, gave an excellent talk at the Atlanta Awards Banquet about the state of the Division and other matters relating to our defense posture. One of the interesting things he said was that the 82nd Abn. Div. with its 16,000 men and modern weapons is a superior fighting force to all 6 Airborne Divisions of WW2 combined. Presently, 91% of all personnel in the Division have a high school education or more. Almost all training jumps are now night jumps. The General is quite a man---he jumps at least once weekly with different elements of the Division. He also regularly takes physical training evaluation tests with different units and all men who can do better than he get a three day pass. He said a few do beat him but not many---how about that! In recent years, there has been one death per 100,000 jumps. Every man in 82nd is a paratrooper.

You might be interested to know that the present Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., is an ex-paratrooper and that the current Chief-of-Staff of the Army, General Edward C. Meyer, is also a paratrooper.



Four Congressional Medal of Honor Recipients

L to R-Charles MacGillivray, Leonard Funk, Col. Lew Millett, and Rudy Hernandez.



Marker in front of the Infantry and Airborne Museum at Ft. Benning, GA.

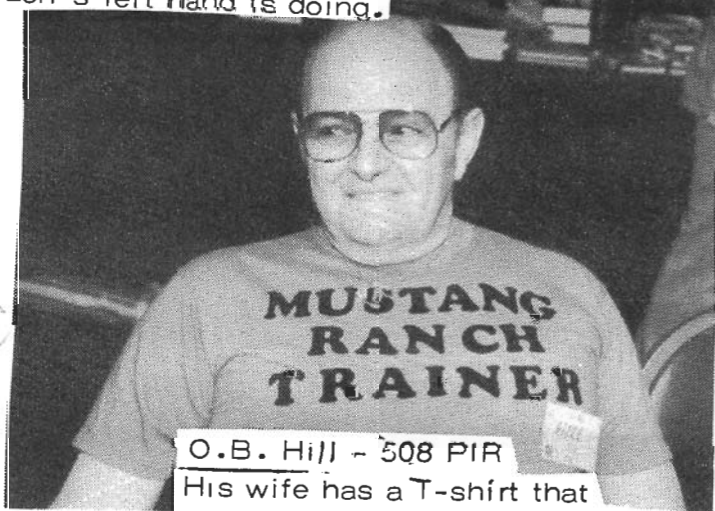


I never thought I'd see two paratroopers kissing each other. The kissee is the only female in this jump school graduating class of 150. The kisser is Len Funk CMOH. He wasn't as enthusiastic with any of the others as he pinned on their wings. I'm not sure what Len's left hand is doing.



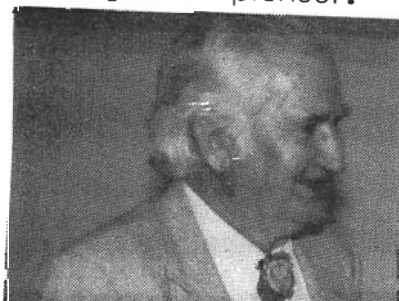
Lem Pitts

First man to jump as a U.S. paratrooper. Test Platoon Member A genuine pioneer.



O.B. Hill - 508 PIR

His wife has a T-shirt that says " Mustang Ranch Trainee "



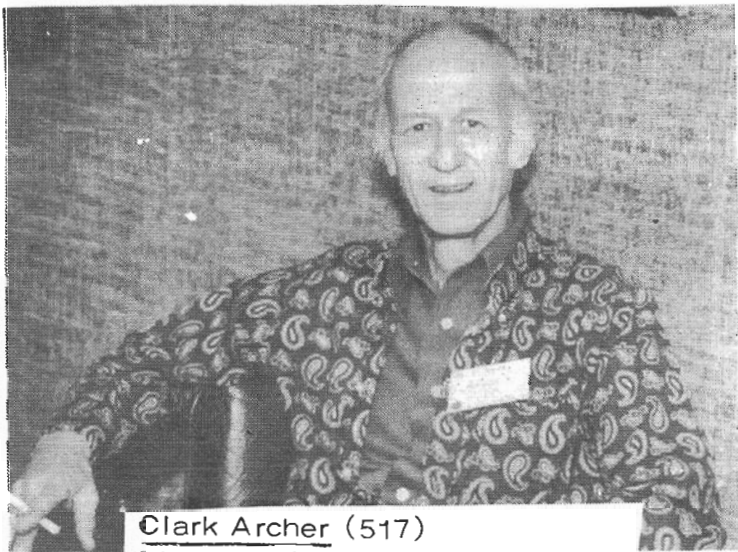
"Tex" Lowe without his hat.



Betty & Tex Lowe--Marilyn & Monty Schroeder(517)



Can you believe 4 combat jumps!!!!
Chaplain George Wood-82nd Abn. Div



Clark Archer (517)

Military historian par excellent



Leonard Funk-CMOH*

Charlie Pugh-GCM*

Two highly decorated WWII veterans

* Congressional Medal of Honor * Good Conduct Medal



Don Lassen

Editor & Publisher "Static-Line"
Organizer of Airborne Awards Festival



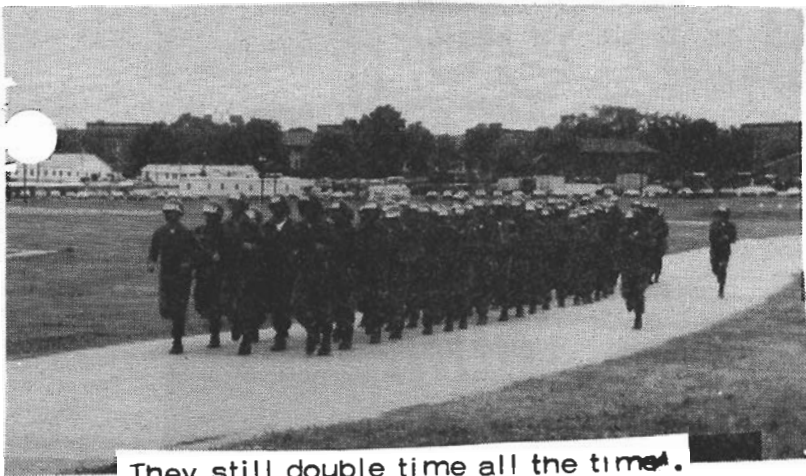
There really was a 555 Para. Inf. Bn.
Here are 3 former members of the "Triple Nickel."



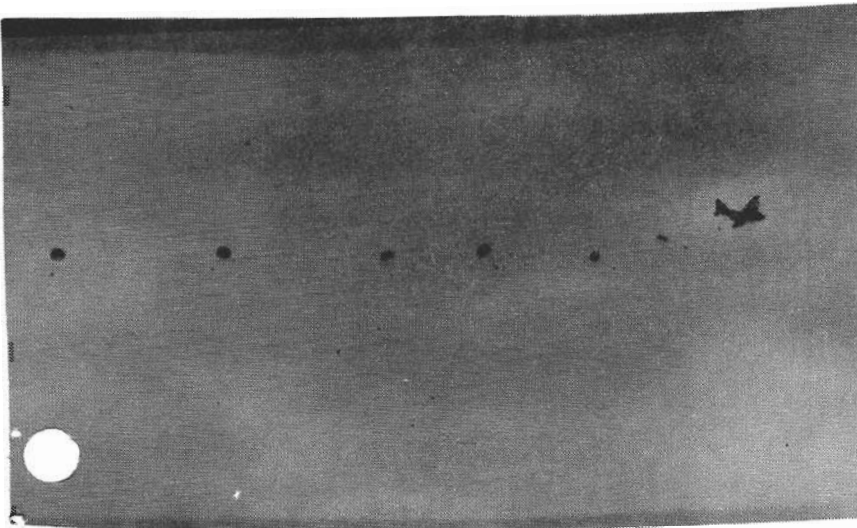
One of three 250 ft. jump towers



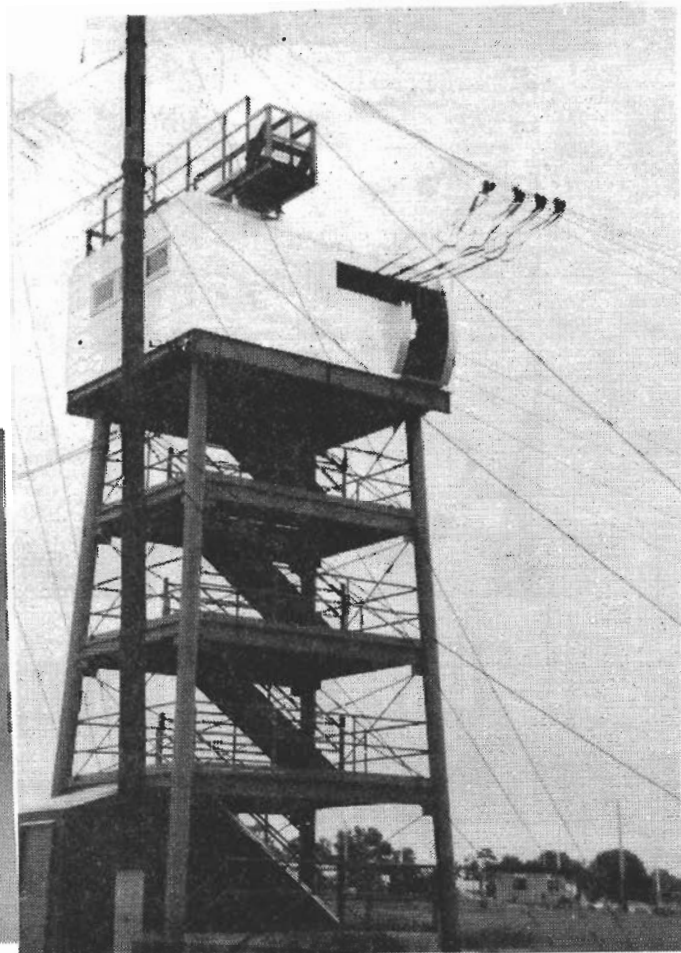
PLF (parachute landing fall) training shed



They still double time all the time.



The planes used now are the C-123, C-130 and C-141
The Parachutes are the much more controllable
MC1-1B.



34 ft. mock door tower



Poster by Mike Mangiameli

**U.S. paratroopers provide the enemy
with the maximum opportunity to
give his life for his country.**

