



## *517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team*



**MailCall No. 2034**

**January 16, 2011**

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion  
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

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### ***Greetings from the Kissimmee Reunion!***

Good morning,

Here we are in Finally Sunny Florida, where I hear it's been cold for the last few days. No matter. The 517 East Coast Mini is in full swing down here in Kissimmee. Everyone looks fabulous and it is great to see everyone. We got in yesterday and it feels like we didn't miss a beat - we just fell right into the fun. Brenda Verbeck Mortenson and Helen Beddow have done an incredible job here, getting everything organized and provisioned!

Leo Dean did a skydive yesterday - #145. Dick Seitz always expresses concern about this habit of the Treasurer, but .... we all know Leo.

Merle and Mardy McMorro got in yesterday and they look fantastic. Hunter MacDonald is here with Emmi and Keith; Gene Frice made it and has evidently been having adventures abroad - some things never change.

I sat next to George Spears and his lovely wife Juliette last night at dinner, and across from Jack Collins and his family. It's wonderful to see everyone again.

We'll put a full list of attendees in the next Mail Call. For now - make your plans not only for Palm Springs in April but also for Atlanta starting July 13!

Atlanta could well be the last national reunion, and it promises to be a special one. We will have details in the next Thunderbolt and on the website and MailCall sooner, but I know that we are returning to where all of it began for many of you - Camp Toccoa and Fort Benning. Now, granted, these will be long day trips, but they will be worthwhile and exciting, and Lory Curtis and Mike Wells are doing an incredible job with Armed Forces Reunions. I hear there might be a facebook component - stay tuned. For now, put aside July 13-18 in Atlanta, Georgia, and plan on being there!

Bulletins as they occur -  
**Claire Giblin**



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### *Can Anyone Name These Troopers? (From MailCall #2033)*



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From: **DONALD G. SPEARS** -- Sent: Thursday, **January 13, 2011 4:03 PM**

Gary Davis and Gene Frice

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From: **jerry wofford** -- Sent: Thursday, **January 13, 2011 2:09 AM (2:09 AM???)**

Hmmmmmm...Let me make a wild guess. Left is Gary Davis and that would be Gene Frice On the right. Do I win a prize???

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*And the winner (first correct guess to arrive) is...*

From: **Melanie Hanson** -- Sent: Wednesday, **January 12, 2011 9:38 PM**

YES! I can name those troops! on the left is my beloved Dad -- Gary Davis, F Co -- and on the right is his great friend Gene Frice also F Co.

WHAT A GREAT LOOKING COUPLE OF SOLDIERS, ESPECIALLY THE ONE ON THE LEFT :)

miss you Dad!

Mel



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### *In Memorium*

I am once again saddened to hear of the passing of our 517th troopers. My heart goes out to these families of **J.B. Walton**, and **Johnnie Bland**, both of F Company. My Dad started out in F Company and probably knew these men. I am sure they are on the other side of the veil of life swapping war stories. All of these men are truly the Greatest Generation, the best that America could offer in the most horrific time of the world. Keep their legacy alive!

**Lory Curtis**, son of Bud Curtis, HQ, 1st Bn

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The email on **J.B. Walton's** passing saddens my heart and also brings back memories of our time in F Co. My deepest sympathy to Orene and the rest of the Walton family.

**Don Spears**, F Co.

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### *Dick Seitz at SouthCom*

Dear Bob: Dad and I just finished reading your last two Mail Calls (#s 2032 & 2033). You do such a fine job. Thank you for carrying on the tradition of your Dad.

It has been such a treat to have my Dad visiting. He told me you were going to be at the Florida Mini this coming weekend. I wish I could be there with you all. Unfortunately, longtime ago I committed to perform the wedding ceremony for the daughter of very dear friends (I've known the daughter since she was born), so I can only be with you all in spirit.

All blessings of the New Year to you and all the members of the 517th and their families. Last Friday, I was with Dad when he spoke with the officers and enlisted personnel at SouthCom about leadership and about his two tours in Brazil in the mid-50's and late 60's (which is part of SouthCom). [\[See article on the next page.\]](#) During the Q &A, two of the questions from the audience of combat veterans elicited answers that brought home all the more vividly for me, who has never been in combat, the significant, searing issues the members of the 517th had to deal with and that they did so selflessly so that we could live in freedom. Dad was asked how does a leader cope himself and help his men deal with the loss of many of their comrades and yet effectively keep going; the second question was what was Dad's worst day. His immediate answer was January 3, 1945, and he recounted in such detail that each of us could visualize the battle and what lead up to it; he ended his answer saying that he constantly replays it in his mind, even going back to walk the battlefield a couple of times to see if he could have done things differently so as not to have suffered the number of casualties that they did. I was with him the last time that he walked that field, and I flashed back to that visit. Suddenly, I understood why Dad walked off by himself without saying a word and why his face was so troubled yet his mind was obviously so far away. It was a powerful moment for me.

I am very jealous that I cannot be with you all.

All the best. Pat



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United States  
**Southern Command**



### **Retired WWII paratrooper visits SOUTHCOM, recalls tours in Brazil**

Posted On: Jan 10 2011 4:38PM

By Jose Ruiz, U.S. Southern Command Public Affairs

MIAMI -- The men and women of U.S. Southern Command welcomed a veteran of World War II and a pioneer of the command's early partnership-building efforts with Brazil to their new headquarters Jan. 7.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Richard J. Seitz, who served as one of the youngest infantry battalion commanders during WWII and helped the U.S. forge a strong military partnership with Brazil during two tours in the South American country, visited SOUTHCOM to share his personal experiences and perspectives with command personnel and learn about their present-day mission.

U.S. Air Force Gen. Douglas Fraser, SOUTHCOM commander, and U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Ken Keen, SOUTHCOM deputy commander, personally greeted and escorted Seitz during the visit, which included a tour of the command's recently-inaugurated facilities.



Retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Richard J. Seitz speaks to members of U.S. Southern Command during a visit to the command's headquarters Jan. 7.

Seitz' distinguished military career included a tour as one of the youngest infantry battalion commanders during WWII and two tours in Brazil. The general spoke to the SOUTHCOM staff about his 35-year career as a Soldier, experiences leading troops in battle more than six decades ago, work with military partners in Brazil, and his views on the importance of military leadership.

Seitz was assigned twice to the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility, first as a member of the U.S. Military Assistance Group, Brazil, and later as chairman of the U.S. delegation participating in a Joint U.S.-Brazil Military Commission.

(Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Jason Edwards)

At the command's Conference Center of the Americas, military and civilian men and women from SOUTHCOM gathered to hear from Seitz about his 35-year military career, experiences leading troops in battle during a global conflict more than six decades ago, work with military partners in Brazil in the 50s and 60s, and his views on the importance of military leadership.

Keen introduced Seitz to attendees. Keen underscored Seitz' American contemporaries have come to be known as the "greatest generation," not just because of their significant impact to the outcome of the war, but also their role in shaping the future of America and influence on world events afterward.





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"Today, we strive to live up to the standards set by that generation," Keen said fondly, before describing some of Seitz' noteworthy accomplishments during his distinguished military career.

Seitz began his comments by expressing pride in the work U.S. military men and women conduct at SOUTHCOM and around the world.

Reflecting on his personal experiences while serving in SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility, Seitz recalled arriving in Brazil in 1954, where he worked with Brazil's first infantry airborne unit as a member of the U.S. Military Assistance Group. He noted Brazil's Army fought alongside American Soldiers in Northern Italy during WWII, an experience that forged a bond between our militaries that he worked to further strengthen during his first tour in the country and more than a decade later when he returned as the chairman of the U.S. delegation participating in a Joint Brazil-U.S. military commission.

Seitz also described forging lifelong friendships with many of his Brazilian military counterparts, even asking two of those friends to be grandparents to two of his children, twins born in Brazil during his first tour there.

He remembered how he and many of his colleagues saw Brazil as a "sleeping giant with a great future" during their tours in the 50s and 60s. "I think that future has arrived," he said, commenting on Brazil's present status as one of the leading nations in the Americas, respected in the international community.

Describing his views on individual leadership, Seitz underscored why he believes our military has spent more time studying leadership than any other profession. "We put people in harm's way," he explained, underscoring the important role leaders play in guiding and motivating troops during some of the most challenging experiences of their lives.

The retired general spoke of leadership principles, adding he considers character, vision, responsibility, attitude and example to be on the top of his list.

During a question-and-answer session with attendees, he was asked about his approach to leadership after his unit faced heavy casualties against stiff German resistance in the European theater.

Seitz recalled the grief he felt for the Soldiers under his command, many of whom he had come to know personally. He stressed the importance of remaining focused despite the losses.

Seitz called Jan. 3, 1945 the "most difficult day" of his life as he described leading his unit on a counter-offensive against a German position that turned out to be better equipped and adapted to conditions than described in earlier reconnaissance reports. He described being as close as 300 yards from the enemy, under such intense enemy fire, his unit suffered 101 casualties in a single day.

"I had to carry on," he said. "You can't let it affect your mission decisions. You've got to continue to carry on."



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Despite incredible odds, Seitz and his surviving Soldiers continued to pursue their advance on the enemy, finally persevering despite an experience that has become so engraved in the general's memory, he still reflects on the leadership decisions he made that day.

Seitz took time to personally greet and talk to attendees before he toured the command's facilities which he called "a monument to the great job (they're) doing."

For many of the men and women in attendance, the chance to hear from someone who played such a key role during an important period in our nation's history and in forging one of SOUTHCOM's most important regional partnerships was a unique opportunity they could not pass up. Seitz' visit offered not only a chance for SOUTHCOM to host a member of the "greatest generation" but also an opportunity to welcome back one of its own.

From <http://www.southcom.mil/appssc/news.php?storyId=2530>

### *Administrivia*

- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>
- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: [MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our treasurer:

Leo Dean  
14 Stonehenge Lane  
Albany, NY 12203

#### **Annual 517th Reunion (Probably the Last)**

July 13-18, 2011, Atlanta, GA

with visits to

Camp Toccoa and Fort Benning



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM