Merger of the Association and Auxiliary

As many already know, the membership voted to merge the memberships of the Association and the Auxiliary, effective May 30, 2014. Over eighty-eight percent of the Association members who voted in favor of the merger. On that date, Auxiliary members will become full-fledged members of the Association along with the troopers who served with the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team during World War II. We old timers welcome all those new members who have already proved themselves worthy by providing the invaluable assistance which has kept the Association alive and thriving while our 1943-1946 membership has thinned out.

The merger will allow the Association to continue its activities in the USA, Southern France and Belgium as long as there continues to be an interest in preserving the memory of the 517th men who fought valiantly through five major battles to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation.

The merger is timed for May 30 so that anyone desiring to make a donation to the Association before that date could deduct the donation as a charitable contribution on their 2014 individual tax returns. Donations after that date may not be deducted.

Joanne Barrett and Howard Hensleigh have informed the Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (where we are incorporated) of the merger and report that there should be a continuation of the Association’s nonprofit status.

Airborne all the way,

Kaare Allan Johnson
President, 517th PRCT Association
MailCall News

From Loïc 'Jack' Jankowiak via Facebook

Happy Easter to all! :D

This image is often used during Easter time, but who are these two men? Which unit they belong? These are the T/5 William E. Thomas and Pfc Joseph Jackson which are part of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion. A battalion which for many is unknown, because these are the all blacks and not whites, and yet, December 17, 1944, the battalion remained in history...

When the German offensive in the Ardennes is triggered, most of the available units are African-American. One of them is the 333rd FAB.

This battle emerged a multitude of heroes and... Monsre. If the Malmedy massacre trial is very well known, it is not the same for the forgotten massacre of 11 black Gunners from the army.

On 17 December, C Battery of the 333rd FAB is surprised by the German breakthrough in the Ardennes. Radios called for the infantry front to receive help from the artillery, the Germans seem to be everywhere. That day, chaos reigns and some escape through the woods, including 11 men. After a long walk through the woods, in the mud and fog, 11 Gunners asks for help and stop in the small village of Wereth near Sankt Vith where they are assisted by Mathias and Maria Langer.

Unfortunately for them, a German sympathizer informed on the presence of 11 blacks. Shortly after, a patrol of the 1st SS Panzer Division arrived in the village. The Gunners calmly surrendered without a fight.. The Germans brought them to a field and then it is the drama: the 11 men are tortured, beaten to death, shot and then completed.

In January, a patrol of the 99th Infantry Division discovered the massacre. What they saw was horrible: men's legs had been broken, many had received shots of bayonets in the head, skulls had been broken and many had cut fingers.

These 11 men are: Private Curtis Adams Corporal Mager Bradley Private George Davis Staff Sergeant Thomas Forte Tech Corporal Robert Green Private James Leatherwood Private Nathaniel Moss Tech Sergeant William Pritchett Tech Sergeant James Aubrey Private Due Turner Private George Molten the culprits have never been tried.

For my Belgian friends and others who would like to reach, May 17 has held a ceremony at the monument of the "Wereth 11". This monument erected in 2004, is the only one in Europe on army African-American http://www.wereth.org/index.php/wereth-11

eat too much chocolate! :D
As Easter Sunday is coming up in a few days I thought this little video would be appropriate to show. May everyone have a very blessed safe and Happy Easter.

Lory Curtis

BECAUSE OF HIM:  http://bcove.me/25ol2ef3

Whomever .... My dad, Fred Waites was a PFC in the Hqtr. Company. I have come across several WWII photos that he took in Europe, including a few of troopers who are identified. If you are interested in any of these photos, I am 99% sure that I can copy these and e-mail them.

Call me if you need to .... Fred Waites, Jr.

Here is another page from Col. Grave's files, recalling the death of Lt. Harry Allingham of C Company on Christmas day 1944:
I was just notified by the author that a new book about Operation Dragoon is being published and will be available around May.

I was contacted by the author years back to provide information on my grandfather, Joseph F. Van Ness, B/517th. He was able to find and reveal some info we did not know based off of his research and our documents and input.

JV+ (Jeff Van Ness)

**Operation Dragoon: Autopsy of a Battle: The Allied Liberation of the French Riviera August-September 1944** by Jean-Loup Gassend

On the night of August 14-15, 1944, the First Airborne Task Force, which included the U.S. 509th, 517th and 551st Parachute Infantry Regiments, jumped into enemy held territory spearheading Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France. Based on interviews from all combatant units, battlefield archaeology, period photos, letters and reports, this book provides an outstandingly detailed hour-by-hour account of the advance through southern France, as seen through the eyes of those who lived through it, bringing to light the tragic and gruesome realities of what was later to become known as the, Champagne Campaign.


Jean-Loup’s book will be available in May. It includes some previously untold stories from the 517th. This has been a huge, multi-year effort by Jean-Loup, with lots of meticulous research. The book is 560 pages!

The French version is also available soon:

[http://www.amazon.com/Op%C3%A9ration-Dragoon-combats-Riviera-a%C3%BBt-septembre/dp/284048353X/ref=la_B00J0JDI60_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1397747816&sr=1-2](http://www.amazon.com/Op%C3%A9ration-Dragoon-combats-Riviera-a%C3%BBt-septembre/dp/284048353X/ref=la_B00J0JDI60_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1397747816&sr=1-2)

This book recounts the Liberation of Côte d'Azur, from the landing in Provence on August 15 1944, until the arrival of Allied soldiers on the Italian border on September 7, 1944. This campaign is told primarily through the testimony of witnesses present at the time: American parachutists, resitants, civilians, and also several German soldiers. All the facts told by these witnesses were meticulously crosschecked with records and documents of the time, autopsy reports from exhumed bodies, and excavations in the field. The result is a very detailed and lively history about three weeks of fighting, illustrated by many period pictures, with equipment found on site, and excavated objects directly related to the events recounted in the book.

**Congratulations, Jean-Loup! – BB**
Subject: One of your vets

To whom it may Concern;
I would like to let you know that I have had the honor of meeting one of your comrades, he is living in the area and comes to visit me pretty regularly. His name is William McGary - 91 and getting around very well still, even with the shrapnel in his leg. I see that you are interested in stories of the 517th and I wanted you to know that he's here, as I do not see his name on your page. Currently we're having a friend of mine reconstruct a unit patch for him. He's such a dear and sweet man - please let me know how I can assist you in getting in contact with him for his story to be added to your wonderful website.

Dagmar Youngberg; VSO
NMDVS Office - Carlsbad
305 E. Fiesta Dr
Carlsbad, NM

Hello Dagmar,

You are correct – I cannot find any mention of William McGary on our website records, although these records are very incomplete. Do you know which Company of the 517th he fought with? There are still about 600 517th veterans and family members in communication with us, and I am sure they would love to hear any stories, and/or wartime photos of Mr. McGary. Where and how was he wounded? And a current photo.

Any info is greatly appreciated.

Thanks,

Bob Barrett

I'll check with him tomorrow. I just got him information about honor flights (had a women's vet conference over weekend and met a coordinator)- do any of the veterans from the site go that you know of? I believe Mr. McGary wants to go this year~ he said it sounded fun.

Dagmar Youngberg
Below is another sample from Mike Kane’s findings from Col. Grave’s files at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC) in Carlisle, PA. This is a program for a boxing match at Camp Toccoa between the 517th and the 326th Glider Infantry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boxing Program</th>
<th>517th Parachute Infantry vs 326th Glider Infantry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Bout</td>
<td>Clyde Chandler Pvt 170 lbs Louisville, Kentucky 517th vs Alfred Fisher PFC 170 lbs Hartline, Washington 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albert Sylvester PFC 150 lbs Detroit, Michigan 517th vs Bobby Cochran Pvt 150 lbs Cleve, Illinois 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Bout</td>
<td>Dennis Fogarty S/Sgt 160 lbs Dover, New Hampshire 517th vs James Freel PFC 160 lbs Chicago, Illinois 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norman Allen Cpl 155 lbs Chadron, Nebraska 517th vs Maurice Myers PFC 155 lbs Minier, Illinois 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Bout</td>
<td>Raymond King 460th Sgt 126 lbs Marl, Oklahoma 517th vs Tony Labrador PFC 126 lbs Los Angeles, California 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Bout</td>
<td>Daniel Smith PFC 144 lbs Baltimore, Maryland 517th vs William Murphy Pvt 144 lbs Brooklyn, New York 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Bout</td>
<td>Charles Wysoki Sjt 175 lbs Newark, New Jersey 517th vs Alex Solovol PFC 175 lbs Erie, Pennsylvania 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Bout</td>
<td>Leonard Aspinwall PFC 190 lbs Odum, Georgia 517th vs Joe Lewis Pvt 180 lbs Lackawanna, New York 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Bout</td>
<td>LeBlanc, Pele Pvt 165 lbs York, Pennsylvania 517th vs Earnest Brewer PFC 165 lbs 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Bout</td>
<td>Eugene Hailey PFC 140 lbs Tulsa, Oklahoma 517th vs William Miller PFC 140 lbs Lawton, Oklahoma 326th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth Bout</td>
<td>Jackie Conn vs Roman Alveraze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth Bout</td>
<td>Announcer Lt. Kerr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judges Lt. Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timer Lt. Bachus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referee Lt. Connors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was at the cemetery today cleaning up a few grave sites and one was my Uncle Robert Joseph Rock, 517 Parachute Inf. Reg., Co. C, Staff Sargent, US army. I used this information to find this web site and found out a lot about Uncle including that he received a Purple Heart. He was from Toronto, Ohio and served during World War II. He played football in high school and also was on a team in Nice, France that won a championship game. I was real close with him and sat many evenings and also in the farm fields talking and learning from him. He did not share any combat information with me or any of his other cousins but we knew he was proud to be in the U.S. Army. He wore his uniform often and I have a picture of him with me and 5 of my cousins in his sump boots and pants. He was a wonderful Uncle to us and we love and miss him and his strong character and leadership. God bless you Uncle and all of the great generation that fought for our freedom. Dick Smith

Added: April 18, 2014

Hi Dick,

Sgt. Rock is in a couple of pictures with that Company C football team. See: http://517prct.org/photos/miller2.htm

I would love to have any photos or stories of Sgt. Rock, if you have any.

Thanks,

Bob Barrett

“Camp Mackall was not much different from Toccoa but bigger, on level ground. Everyone was quartered in the same one-story, uninsulated "hutments" heated with coal stoves, and the same drab, all-male existence went on. Passes were allowed, but after a few visits to the local small towns most troopers decided they might just as well stay in camp. The 17th Airborne was big on athletics, and the 517th shook it up a little by fielding football and boxing teams that won the Division championships."
We are starting to get a little info on liberation celebrations in France and Belgium. No details yet, but we are hoping to have a good turnout of the 517th family and friends mid-August in France. There will be additional remembrances in Sospel in October, celebrating their liberation, as well as December/January in Belgium for the Battle of the Bulge.

Patou and Roland are busy working with the new mayor of Sospel to organize this summer's celebrations! Please see below - those of you who were in Sospel in 2009 will remember Isabelle, Patricia's best friend who did a guided tour of Sospel for us. The events in Sospel will be before 15 August in Draguinan/La Motte/Les Arcs/Le Muy, so please plan on coming for special time with special friends in Sospel. Please note that they are also planning October events, which we have never attended.

Claire Giblin

This is from Patou:

Could you tell to everybody (by next mail call) that we have 11 beds close our home at 30 € / night / person. Bedrooms to share for 3 or 4, and 2 bedrooms for two. There is one for 2 with private bathroom at 60 € for the room. So we can take the breakfast all together at our home. The mayor of Sospel ils now a young woman and Isabelle works with her... so you will have a beautiful welcome ... and Roland is in charge of organizing the 70th anniversary in October.

Here are some more details fo the invitation from Patricia and Roland Orengo in Sospel for the summer (August) festivities:

Our neighbour has a structure and offer for our "summer visitors" bedrooms:

- 1 bedroom with bathroom for 2 persons (1 bed), plus:
- 1 bedroom for 2 persons (1 bed)
- 1 bedroom with 4 beds for 1 person
- 1 bedroom with 3 beds for 1 person

These 3 bedrooms has 3 showers to share. It's very clean and nice and close to us. You can pay what you want, but I can recommend you 30 Euros each person for 1 night.

It will be nice because we can have breakfast on our terrace all together...
we would like welcome you in Sospel as we did in 2009 with a party. and the new mayor (a woman) can also welcome you.
Please, Send this message by mail call. We can book the bedrooms for you.

Friendly,
Patricia et Roland Orengo
I ran across this mention of Jean-Loup Gassend on Wikipedia:

**Villeneuve-Loubet mass grave**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Villeneuve-Loubet mass grave** is a grave site near the village of Villeneuve-Loubet, near Nice, in the Maritime Alps region of southern France. On October 18, 2006 the bodies of 14 German soldiers killed during World War II were exhumed at the site. The bodies were discovered by local medical student and World War II enthusiast Jean-Loup Gassend, and were subsequently exhumed by a team of local volunteers including an archaeologist and several medical students under the supervision of Mr Julien Hauser, representative of the Volksbund (German War Graves Commission) in France. The Villeneuve-Loubet grave was the largest mass grave of World War II German soldiers discovered in France since 2003, when 17 bodies of German prisoners executed by the French Resistance had been exhumed from a mass grave at St Julien de Crempse, in the Dordogne region.

The soldiers in the Villeneuve-Loubet grave were members of Reserve Division 148 who had been killed in battle against soldiers of the Second Regiment of the famous First Special Service Force, also known as the Devil's Brigade, on August 26, 1944, shortly after the Allies invaded southern France during Operation Dragoon on August 15, 1944. The bodies of the dead Germans were buried by local civilians in a specially dug trench after the battle, and forgotten about.

Jean-Loup Gassend managed to discover the location of the grave by interviewing some of the surviving locals. He and archaeologist Pascal Boucard made arrangements with the Volksbund in order to exhume the bodies in archaeological manner, which is only very rarely the case for German World War II era graves. The goal was not only to exhume and identify the bodies, but also to attempt to find the cause of death of each body and to try to extract a maximum amount of historical data from the grave. In this aspect, the work at Villeneuve-Loubet was innovative as battlefield archaeology usually concentrates on more ancient sites.

The bodies were rediscovered at a depth of approximately one metre, along with several helmets and large amounts of military equipment. Battle wounds caused by bullets or shrapnel fragments were found on several of the bodies. Seven identification tags (dog tags), including one that had been pierced by a bullet, were also discovered, leading to the identification of six of the bodies. Two more bodies were subsequently identified by cross checking information contained in the personal files of German soldiers reported as missing or killed in the Villeneuve-Loubet area in August 1944. The ages of the identified soldiers ranged from 17 to 35. One soldier in particular had been killed the day before his 18th birthday.

The exhumation team carefully analysed the artifacts found in the grave, which led to some interesting conclusions about the events surrounding the burial. For example only one of the fourteen bodies was still wearing his shoes, meaning that all the other pairs of shoes had been removed from the bodies by local civilians before the bodies were buried. Also, the only two canteens that were found had been pierced by shell fragments, rendering them useless, and it can be suspected that all the other canteens that should have been on the bodies were taken by the civilians. Several of the helmets that were recovered had been damaged by shrapnel or bullets, helping to establish the cause of death.

All the bodies were reburied in the German military cemetery in Berneuil, France, on June 23, 2007, in the presence of 60 German families, as well as many French and German officials.
Here is a copy of the form used to keep track of pay in the Army.

Merle McMorrow

Mr. Bob, hope all is well. Wishing you and your family a safe and Happy Easter, along with all of the 517th Family. I am still finding treasures from my father’s memories. This is a list of some men from the 517th that achieved medals. These memories are priceless, Heroes of Valor!!!!

Thanks and have a great day,

Tony Patin

The Family is worth it!!! The other e-mail I sent was a big file with a lot of info. If you turn to page 6 for the Bronze Star Award, you will see my father wrote, one of my boys - PFC Wahlstrom.

Tony Patin

See the entire document at: http://517prct.org/documents/1945_april_30_bronze_stars2.pdf
This document, a record of Silver and Bronze Stars authorized on April 30, 1945, includes the following medals:

**Bronze Star w. Oak Leaf Cluster:**
- 1st Lt. Worthington J. Thompson, 460th PFAB, B Battery, St. Jacques, Belgium

**Bronze Star:**
- Cpl. Joseph A. Della Fave, 517th PIR, I Company, 10-Jan-45 Hourt, Belgium
- PFC Sheldon L. Donovan, 517 PIR, H Company, Les Arcs, France, 16-Aug-44
- S/Sgt. Troy Eagans, 517th PIR, A Company, 25-Dec-44, Soy, Belgium
- Pvt. John J. Griffin, 517 PIR, E Company, 3-Jan-45, Monte de Fosse, Belgium
- S/Sgt. Harry J. Hewitt, 517 PIR, G Company, 17-Jan-45, Pateaux, Belgium
- 1st Lt. John M. Hill, 517 PIR, 3-Jan-45, Basse Bodeux, Belgium
- Sgt. Arnold P. Klingelhofer, 517 PIR, E Company, 3-Jan-45, Monte de Fosse, Belgium
- PFC Donald L. Knapp, 517 PIR, A Company, 23-Dec-44, Hotton, Belgium
- Pvt. Wilburn J. Lewis, 517 PIR, 3-Jan-45, Monte de Fosse, Belgium
- PFC Joseph F. Locke, 517 PIR, B Company, 1-Jan-45, Brume Belgium
- PFC William A. MacRae, 51 PIR, C Company, 24-Dec-1944, Soy, Belgium
- Sgt. Raymond E. Markley, 517 PIR, H Company, 28-Dec-44, Manhay, Belgium
- PFC James B. Nichols, 517 PIR, G Company, 17-Jan-45, Pateaux, Belgium
- 1st Lt. Thomas F. Patin, 517 PIR, 15-Aug-44, Le Muy, France
- Pvt. William A. Petryna, 517 PIR, E Company, 8-Feb-45, Bergstein, Germany
- PFC Ervin J. Yackmin, 517 PIR, A Company, 25-Dec-44, Hotton, Belgium
- 1st Lt. Robert J. Reber, 517 PIR, 10-Sep-44, Col de Braus, France
- Cpl. George A. Sullivan, 517 PIR, 18-Jan-45, Petit-Thiere, Belgium
- Sgt. Joseph W. Tylka, 517 PIR, H Company, 11-Sep-44, Col de Braus, France
- PFC Vincent L. Vendrzyk, 517 PIR, G Company, 17-Jan-45, Pateaux, Belgium
- PFC Per R. Wahlstrom, 517 PIR, 2nd Bn., 16-Aug-44, Les Arcs, France
- M Sgt. Douglas Emmons, 517 PIR, 22-Dec-44 to 9-Jan-45, Belgium and Germany
- 1st Lt. Robert T. Greene, 460th PFAB, 11-Aug-44 to 10-Feb-45

**Silver Star (posthumous):**
- Capt. Jame P. Birder, 517 PIR, I Company, 27-Dec-44, Manhay, Belgium
- Pvt. Richard L. Lyman, 517 PIR, H Company, 5-Jan-45

**Silver Star:**
- PFC Jack. C. Castiglione, 517 PIR, I Company, 17-Oct-44, Plera Cava, France
- Sgt. Norman S. Fry, 517 PIR, H Company, 13-Jan-45, Butay, Belgium
- PFC Clyde P. Guillott, 517 PIR, D Company, 3-Jan-45, Trois Ponts, Belgium
- Capt. Milton M. Kienlen, 517 PIR, A Company, 5-Jan-45, BERGEVAL, Belgium
- 2nd Lt. Cecil T. Lockhart, 517 PIR, C Company, 15-Jan-45, Coulee, Belgium
- 1st Lt. Russell F. Miller, 517 PIR, 15-Jan-45, Pateaux, Belgium
- Sgt. Glen H. Overmyer, 517 PIR, 1st Bn., 25-Dec-44, Soy, Belgium
- 1st Lt. Thomas F. Patin, 517 PIR, 3-Jan-45, Trois Ponts, Belgium
- PFC Walter Perkowski, 517 PIR, 10-Sep-45, LUCERAM-SASSEL, France
- PFC Carl E. Votti, 517 PIR, B Company, 12-Jan-45, Stavelot, Belgium
- 1st Lt. Paul P. May, 517 PIR I Company, 10-Jan-45, Hourt, Belgium
- 1st Lt John W. Weddle, 517 PIR, E Company, 8-Feb-45, Bergstein, Germany
- PFC Paul L. Westerman, 517 PIR, D Company, 3-Jan-45, Trois Ponts, Belgium
- Pvt. Leroy E. Wittner, 517 PIR, 3rd Bn, 27-Dec-44, Manhay, Belgium
- Pvt. Ogden A. Young, 517 PIR, E Company, 8-Feb-45, Bergstein, Germany

**Bronze Star (posthumous):**
- Pvt. Louis J. Barberra, 517 PIR, E Company, 3-Jan-45, Monte de Fosse, Belgium

**Bronze Star**
- PFC Robert E. Anderson, 596th PCEC, 26-Dec-44, Manhay, Belgium

**Bronze Star (posthumous):**
- 1st Lt. John W. Casselman, 517 PIR, 18-Aug-44, Luceram, France
Mr. Bob, these are letters of thanks from some high ranking men, I'm sure all men of the 517th received them, everyone deserves them. I just had to share them with the family.

Tony Patin
To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation’s finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Administrivia

- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at [http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/](http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/)
- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: 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 new Association Treasurer: Identify the purpose of any donation (Annual Donations, In Memory of… etc.) and make all checks payable to:

  517 PRCT Association, Inc.
  c/o Joanne Barrett
  70 Pleasant Street
  Cohasset, MA 02025

Army Life, as told by PFC William B. Houston (Part 3)

A few more pages from William Houston’s biography are on the following pages.

These pages continue his story of life at Camp Toccoa, started in MailCall 2209.

Next week: Fort Benning
anything special except that I got a pile of cards and letters from friends and relatives along with a birthday cake from home. Birthdays came and went and there was nothing to mark the event, save the birthday cake that might arrive in the mail. In such cases all those in the barracks pitched in to help consume the goodies.

July started with a gun drill in Area A in the morning. That was fine until it started to rain, then it became miserable. For an hour we drilled in the rain and when we finally started back to the barracks we were soaked to the skin. Right in front of our barracks door there was a puddle of muddy water about three inches deep, fifteen feet wide and twenty feet long that looked so inviting that one guy could not resist diving in. We were already wet so most of us flapped in. After changing to clean, dry clothes we went up to the day-room for our pay and then I returned to the barracks $23.25 richer. A short time later I turned out for guard duty and walked the post from 2000 to 2200 and from 0200 to 0400 in a light rain. It gets pretty lonesome on post especially when it is raining - for some reason it doesn't seem so bad when the stars fill the sky. At least it was cool that night with the light rain.

On the third of July it rained and with the rain went my chance to jump from the mock-up tower. In the evening we took in a movie, "Stage Door Canteen" which I thought was pretty good.

I spent the Fourth of July on K.P. wondering what all this talk about independence meant and to whom it applied. It was evident that it did not hold true in the mess-hall, that's for sure.

During July we were practicing tumbling in preparation for landing after a parachute jump. First we tried it on the flat ground, then off a four foot platform and finally off a six foot platform.

During the first week of July there was a jump scheduled for the officers and non-coms. Like everything else there were work details connected with it, my job was that of a spotter to watch and see if any of the jumpers landed in the woods. Other jobs included choppers to help, or if necessary, chop down those who landed in trees, to run out and meet each jumper as he landed. In case he had been hurt, another was to set out markers and still another detail was to build fires. Makes one wonder who will be there to meet us when we jump in combat and behind enemy lines.

To make life miserable for our sergeants we went through the process dividing up their money and clothes between us, assigned a "blotter detail" for those whose chute didn't open and we cut out paper crosses on which we lettered their names and placed on their bunks.

On the day the jump was scheduled it rained and the jump was was postponed. Oh well, it gave the sergeants a little more time to sweat the jump out.

The jump did take place on July 23rd and it proved to be a day long event. Over fifty men jumped but there was only one plane so it had to make two flights and two passes on each flight, dropping fourteen men on each pass. There were no injuries but two men landed in trees. It was fun to watch as it was our first chance to be on the spot for a jump and I was able to take some pictures.

In July our schedule called for a lecture and demonstration on what to do in case of a gas attack so on this particular morning Lt. Cooper marched us out to Area A to go through the gas chamber. His face was a little red when he found out that the tent had not been set up and there was no gas chamber to be found. He settled for a lecture and demonstration of how to use the gas mask. Several practice or "dry runs" followed.

Summer storms in North Carolina were a nuisance and frequently the lights went out as a result of these storms. This made letter writing difficult and often a letter went
unfinished for several days. I do not know if the interruptions were actually more frequent in camp than anywhere else but they seemed to be to me.

Our training on the mock-up towers continued and some of us platted to take pictures. Evidently this plan failed because, to this day I cannot recall seeing any pictures and there are none in my collection.

Also in July we were visited by General Marshall and General Gruard, a French general, it was a big deal and the day before the review, which was on a Sunday, we had to spend time cleaning and painting the field pieces. On the day of the review we marched to the airport and stood review. The actual review only took a few minutes as the generals rode past the ranks in a jeep. We then marched back to the battery area. Although it was only three and a half miles to the airport and another three and a half back we managed to cover eleven miles by marching to the airport, weaving across the airport and taking a round-about way back to our area. There are times when I am not happy to have visitors drop in, no matter how important they are.

The invasion of Sicily took place in July of 1943 and the parachute field artillery went into action for the first time. In Camp Mackall we watched the results with special interest because the success or failure of the two field artillery battalions of the 22nd Airborne Division forecast our future. If they proved successful we would continue on with our training as a field artillery battalion - if they were not effective we would probably be converted into an infantry outfit.

One day in July I became a carpenter by a cruel stroke of fate. Between each of the bunks there was a shelf above a clothes rack which was divided into two equal parts and shared by the men in the upper and lower bunk. Gallagar and I shared a shelf and rack which, for some reason, gave away. The result was that everything from toothbrushes to overcoats were dumped on the floor. However, he had taken it upon himself to go over the hill and I was stuck with the clean-up job. The least he could have done would have been to wait a week longer before going A.W.O.L. because last week was his turn to sweep the floor and I got stuck with that task too.

Fire guard was a soft job, all one did was sit around the barracks and pass the time by writing letters, or whatever you wanted to do, just so you stayed in the barracks and awake. The bad side of the detail was that you could not go anywhere in the evening even if the barracks was full of people.

Basic training actually started on July 19th. Until that time we were simply marking time until the battalion could be brought up to full strength so our regular training schedule could begin. A good share of the trouble was boredom. Almost all of the lectures had been given too or three times already and it was difficult to stay awake while sitting on the floor of a hot, stuffy barracks on a humid day. It was always a humid day because the lectures would be saved until a rainy day, when we could be inside.

It was a major crime to fall asleep, or even yawn, during a lecture. To do so meant that you would have to dig a 6 X 6 on your own time, that is after training hours. In this case, a 6 X 6 was a hole six feet square and six feet deep, to be dug that evening and as far into the night as necessary. This meant that you got little or no sleep that night. The same detail may result from removing your helmet.

Our basic training was cut from twelve to eight weeks because we had so much of the training left waiting for the battalion to fill up. The army seems to be a hurry up and wait deal. Especially during basic, rain had very little effect on our training. As an example, we went out one evening and by the time we got 300 yards from the gun park it was raining cats and dogs. This did not have any effect on the training schedule, we went anyhow and
practiced night firing of the guns—without ammunition. That is really stretching the definition of a "dry run. When we got back to the battery area there was coffee waiting for us in the mess-hall. This tasted good because of the rain and the standing order that we could not carry a canteen unless we were gone for at least one meal.

All of my equipment seemed to be falling apart at the same time. The point fail off my mechanical pencil and I lost the point, now the pencil is useless. The cable release on my camera, which was already in poor condition, broke completely off but the camera has a regular shutter release so it is still usable.

A new order just came down: "There will be no more jumping off the roofs of moving trucks".

Sgt. Schneider from Detroit was one of my favorite non-coms. He had a great sense of humor and kept our spirits up. We all had the feeling that he would do anything for us and I know that the guys would do anything for him.

There was the time when took us out on a detail to build a log bridge over a small stream in Area A. We rode all over the camp looking for suitable trees and averaged about a mile per log. While looking for logs Sgt. Schneider came up with the sensational idea that we were thirsty and should stop at the P.H. Where we downed a couple of bottles of pop, some cookies and a candy bar. While we were feeding our faces in the P.H. the sergeant saw a good-looking girl and decided that he needed some stationery. After a half hour of discussion with the clerk as to just what kind of paper he wanted, the rest of us made the decision for him. When we finished the bridge we tore it down and kept the parts for a demonstration at a later date. After the demonstration all of the guys that worked on the bridge were given a three-day pass so Jim Andersen and I took off for Raleigh, North Carolina. Lt. Saad gave us a ride to Fort Bragg on the twentieth of July where we caught a bus to Raleigh. It was 0145 when we arrived in Raleigh so we took the first hotel room we could find. It was one with two twin beds and cost 36.50 but we were so tired that we did not shop around for a better price. The beds were so soft that it was difficult to sleep in.

Saturday morning we started out on foot to see the city but it wasn't long before we found ourselves on a city bus with "Meredith College" on the destination board. It was an all girls' school about the size of West High school and a real disappointment since it was summer vacation time and there were only eight students left on campus. Back on the bus we went and to the State College with its roller rink and outdoor swimming pool. First we went skating, then swimming. I caught Andersen on the merry-go-round and he made me swear that I would keep the incident a secret. Later in the day he ducked out and went over to some girl's swimming pool for a chicken sandwich.

At the swimming pool my pity for a civilian caused me to strike up a conversation with a red-head, just to try to raise her morale. We had a long chat and she told me that she was from a little mistake on the map about 150 miles from Raleigh, goes to business college and lives in a boarding house. She would not make a date but suggested that the U.S.O. on Hillsborough might be a nice place to visit later in the evening. Andersen and I both went to the U.S.O. as per suggestion and had a good time. The U.S.O. was a Catholic one and only about three blocks from the hotel we were staying at. After the U.S.O. closed Bernice and I went to a midnight movie. This was against the U.S.O. rules in that the girls were not supposed to go out with the G.I.s after the U.S.O. closed, but we sure enjoyed the move.

Sunday morning Andersen and I split and went to our own church, he to the Mormon one and I to a pretty little Catholic one next to the U.S.O. There were only about twenty-five Mormons in Raleigh so the people in church noticed Jim. Mr. Henderson invited Jim, and myself, to a picnic that noon. It was a great picnic, the weather was perfect and the food
excellent. That afternoon I met "Red" and we tried to go bowling but the alley was closed so we settled for a peaceful rest in a park. In the evening Jim and I were back at the U.S.O. and we have never played so many games of ping-pong as we did that night. After leaving the U.S.O. Jim and I were walking down the street when a car pulled up and some of the girls, who had been at the dance, asked us if we wanted to ride around and see some of the city. Naturally we accepted. They dropped us off at the Henderson's where we had been invited to spend the night. In the morning we had breakfast, said, "Good-bye" and went back to the swimming pool. After a short swim we did a little shopping and took the 1400 bus back to camp.

While in Raleigh I weighed myself - I had gained fifteen pounds since joining the army but, at the same time, have lost a couple of inches around my waist.

Late in July I began to think how nice it would be to have my own radio in camp and mentioned the desire in letters to home, but did not actually ask Mom or Dad to send it. The radio was a portable, such as portables were at that time, and the batteries were large, heavy and expensive. During wartime the batteries were usually unavailable so I asked that a bottle of Valentine Hair Tonic be placed in the battery compartment instead of a battery. Anything to help me look beautiful!

Meanwhile, back at camp, I had another jeep driving session over an obstacle course. This course had mud holes to drive through, ditches to cross, sand to plow through, logs to dodge, trees to thread between and water to drive through. They also tried to teach me how to double-clutch a 2 1/2 ton truck - they must have failed that mission because I never became a truck driver.

The battalion just got back from a seven mile "conditioning march" but I was a road guide and only covered about two miles. My job was to stand at an intersection and direct portions of the battalion as they arrived at this point. I hardly worked up a sweat.

In the latter part of July we got a new battery commander by the name of Lt. Vogel who replaced Lt. Harding. In my opinion I felt that Lt. Vogel was too strict right from day one, rather self centered and therefore not very well liked. I noted that the other officers only associated with him while on duty or for official business and appeared to avoid him on other occasions. Early in August an incident occurred when, for a just reason, Vogel, now Capt. Vogel, busted a corporal. Because of this action a second corporal, Stanfill, turned his stripes in. The captain then marked the service record of both men as inefficient. Stanfill was one of the older men in the battery and did not want to go to jump school so he was shipped out to another outfit. After he is assigned to another outfit the poor record will make it difficult for him to earn any stripes again.

Sgt. Schneider and Capt. Vogel had a run in on the 24th of August. While out in the field Sgt. Schneider had removed his shirt and Capt. Vogel ordered him to put it back on. Schneider answered, "Yes sir" in no uncertain terms and put his shirt on. The following day Schneider was called into Vogel's office where the captain told him that he did not like Schneider or any of the other non-coms. Schneider invited Vogel to remove his bars and step outside. With that Vogel busted him, put him under arrest and now Schneider is in the guardhouse. All of C battery is in a bad mood because of the incident. In a test, given on the howitzer the following day, Lt. Payne added one final question which read, "Who is the most chicken-shit officer in the battery?". There was no contest, Vogel won the honor hands down. In contrast when Lt. Harding left the battery he complimented the non-coms by saying that they were the best he had ever worked with.

During the first week of August we went to Fort Bragg to fire our howitzers for the first time. I was the number two man on a gun crew and ended up with a sore hand. The
number two man loads the eighteen pound, 75mm shell into the breach then doubles up his fist and slams the shell home. The breach was then closed, the shell fired, then the breach was opened by other crew members and I had to grab the shell casing and toss it back and out of the way. It was hard, fast work and my right hand was pretty sore after loading and removing the shells even though we fired only ten rounds, plus several hours spent before hand doing dry runs. Each shell cost $18.75, or the price of one war bond. When the gun was fired it jumped into the air about six inches, the concussion snaps your head and the sound makes your ears ring.

Life on the artillery range was not always easy. There was one day when we started hiking toward Fort Bragg but only got twelve miles down the road before the trucks came along and picked us up. I suppose I should be thankful for the ride though, without it we would have had a forty mile hike. In spite of the lift it was after dark when we arrived at Fort Bragg and we had to pitch our tents in the dark. That in itself was a chore, but to make matters worse Ping and I chose a very poor location: we found this out when we tried to sleep, the tent had a ditch running through it. To make the night more miserable a battery of 155mm rifles opened up behind us at about midnight and those big shells made a tremendous noise as they roared overhead.

When morning came after that long and uncomfortable night Ping and I went up to the top of a hill to watch the shells land and explode. My thought was that it was much better to be on the firing end than on the receiving end.

This is getting a little ahead of the story but as the months passed and fall came we still made trips to the range and things only got worse for me. As a private I was always the one who had to go for the wood for the bonfire. The higher ranks enjoyed the warmth of the fire while I gathered still more wood. You would think that I was the only private in C battery.

Back to August. By the second week of August I had decided against asking that my radio be sent, at least until after we got back from jump school, which would be late in September.

On the 13th of August we went out to the rifle range to fire for record. I did not do very well although I qualified and earned a marksman medal. Only about half of the battery qualified, that is shot a score of 135, and there was only one who earned an expert medal. Those who did not qualify had to go back again (and maybe more than once) until they did qualify. Shooting, and trying to qualifying, was much better than "pullying targets" where you had to be in a pit below and ahead of the target. When someone shoots at the target it is your job to mark where his round hit. This was done by holding a three of four inch disk, attached to a stick, over the hole in the target so the shooter could see, and adjust for, his next shot. If there was a complete miss you waved a red flag, known as "Maggie's drawers" to indicate such. After each person fires his required number of rounds in the three required positions - prone, sitting and standing - the target was lowered and patches pasted over the holes. This was to prevent any mix-up between the shots of different men. To say the least it was very hard work and under poor conditions.

The term "lunch" was an insult. It consisted of a sandwich made early that morning, had dried out and was curdled up by lunch time. To go with the stale sandwich we were allowed one canteen of water, a quart which had to last us the whole day - a day spent in the hot sun. After one of the days on the range we were given the choice of riding back to the battery area or marching. As usual marching meant double-timing. Those who chose to march, of which I was one, were offered a week-end pass when we reached the battery area. If I recall correctly it was after marching back (on the double) that I went into the
Iatrine and drank over a gallon of water within five minutes. Four times I filled my canteen and then a little more and even the warm tap water tasted good!

During August we were issued our jump helmet liner, which looked like the regular G.I. helmet liner except that it had a chin saddle to secure it during a jump.

With tongue in cheek I wrote to Dad and complained about the nomenclature used in the army to identify anything and everything. As an example I used a thin whistle and, by sketching a cross section of it, I identified, named and assigned a number to each part.

At the same time I both praised and criticized our M1-R1 carbine. I did like the semi-automatic capability of the gun but did not like the low fire power or the sights. It was accurate up to about 200 yards but not very good beyond that range. The sights could not be adjusted for the 150 and 300 yard range and there was no way to adjust for the wind. It was no match for the German .31 caliber Mosuer or our .30 caliber Garand. In its favor was the light weight and folding stock which made it easy to jump with and carry. Late in the war the carbine was to come with a larger clip - thirty rather than fifteen shells and a fully automatic feature, but this was only on the solid stock model.

My next assignment was with the instrument section. A rather easy job when it came to moving because you did not have to pull the howitzer. In this capacity I ran surveys and set by a drafting board where I plotted the positions of the gun and target. This was done on an overlay on a map, then I decided the settings for the gun to get the desired effect. The first round could be anywhere but short just so you could see the impact. A short round spelled danger for your own troops so you always made sure that it was long enough. This served as a base round or marker and adjustments were made from that point. Commands were then telephoned or radios back to the gun crew.

Tumbling was an important part of our training and as a part of this training we learned how to do the high fall. To do it you place your right foot about a foot ahead of your left one, then bring your arms, with your elbows straight and your hands locked together, up to the right of your head. Now, at the same time, whip your hands down and kick your feet up and you flip over without touching the ground and land on your left side. Better than fifty years later I am still trying to evaluate just how valuable this maneuver has been for civilian life.

There was another side to military life, that of making up new words to popular songs of the day so as to adapt them to the military. There was an outstanding example in the paratroops and that was "The Paratroopers' Hymn" or as it is often called, "Blood Upon the Risers" which was sung to the tune of the "Battle Hymn Of The Republic". It must have been outstanding because it is still sung at paratrooper reunions. Another example was the song "Long Ago And Far Away" in which the words "----Chills run up and down my spine, Aaddin's lamp is mine----" became "----Shells run up and down my spine, a Purple Heart is mine ---" Of course there were others with words not suitable for print here or anywhere else.

As August slipped by there was talk of going to Fort Benning for jump school and furloughs which would follow.

We had a chance to go swimming on August 27th but it was not much fun because the lake had turned muddy, so on the following day, when I had another chance to go swimming I decided against it. We had spent the morning out in the field tumbling and studying the aiming circle which by now was old stuff, heard over and over again, but the mud in the lake did not appeal to me. Those who stayed behind had a good time playing ball. Later in the evening I went to a movie with another fellow and when we returned to the battery area at about 2230 we found a pillow fight in progress. D battery, was going at it with nearly a hundred men but when Headquarters battery joined in D battery forgot the inflighting,
joined forces and went after Headquarters. C battery pitched in to help D battery, members of A and B batteries joined in until nearly four hundred men were pounding away at each other. After about twenty minutes the Officer of the Guard, the guards and the M.P.s came upon the scene to break up the battle. They did not have to work very hard to stop the fight — about three seconds after the M.P.s arrived the area cleared as if by magic.

At one time during this period at Camp Mackall we were in formation out in Area A and I had a T-shirt on with paratrooper wings across the front and Lt. Roberts informed me that I was not to war it until I had qualified. Naturally I took the message to heart and put the T-shirt away until after jump school.

On August 30th at 1500 hours we left Camp Mackall for jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. We traveled by train, a real antique train of which the speed matched the appearance. The railroad cars looked like they were out of the 1860's and we figured that the termites had moved out in about 1903 to search for happier hunting grounds but we still rode in those cars. And the seats, if you could call them seats, looked like they had been woven from old, used straw brooms. What's more they felt like brick pikes with sticks in them. As for the speed of the train, it was on the slow side. It took us twenty-two hours to travel the four hundred miles from Rockingham, North Carolina to Fort Benning, Georgia.