



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2265**

**April 5, 2015**

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

### *Col. Gene Frice 2011 interview*

2011 Interview with **Gene Frice** for "A Cut Above" movie:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta\\_vmAcmoJU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta_vmAcmoJU)

### *517th PRCT 2015 Annual Reunion*



#### **2015 National Reunion**

New Orleans, LA

June 25-28, 2015

[Program](#)

[Registration Form](#)

New: [Online Registration](#)

**Registration Cut-off date:  
May 22**



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

## MailCall News

I am deeply moved by Gene's funeral photos. My heart goes out to his family, friends and comrades. What a beautiful tribute to a patriot!

Teresa Messina

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Thank you who found the Concert Valor on you tube. It was so close to home for me of my cousin's experience. It is a gem of a story!

Teresa Messina

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I am the daughter of **Ludlow Gibbons** who passed away 11/18/2011. I am looking for a plaque that has the 517th logo/insignia. Is there such a thing or must I have one custom ordered?

Thank you,

**Charlene Wilson**

PS. My Dad loved this newsletter.

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Hi Charlene,

First of all, I knew your Dad pretty well from seeing him at 517<sup>th</sup> reunions where he and my Dad, **Ben Barrett**, were the best of friends. Also, I traveled to Belgium and Southern France in 2009 with Ben, Lud and several others of the 517<sup>th</sup> family. Lud was generally the center of attention everywhere we traveled. What a wonderful man!

I will post your question in the next MailCall to see if anyone else has done such a plaque. I have seen many plaques and medal displays, but I don't know where they were made. Here's one that can work from a logo, so I'm sure there are many others. If you need a high quality logo let me know.

[http://www.plaquemaker.com/Catalog/full-color-plaques\\_2](http://www.plaquemaker.com/Catalog/full-color-plaques_2)

Bob Barrett

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Thank you Bob for the kind words about my Dad.

When you post the request please note that the plaque is for a niche and therefore is 5" X 3" in total size.

thank you again.....

**Charlene**



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

Greetings,

I am looking to obtain information on permission to use quotes from your website to be published in a WWII history book by McFarland & Company Publishers. I am interested in quoting **Eugene Brissey** and **Randolph Coleman** both of the 517th PRCT.

Thank you,

Joe Wilson, Jr.

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Hi Joe,

Technically, I do not have the ownership rights to those documents, but I wouldn't expect any issues with referencing them, as long as attribution is given to the author and the 517th website. Both of those troopers passed away in the last few years.

**Gene Brissey's** story is an unpublished manuscript that is only available on our website.

**Randolph Coleman's** interview is actually copied from a web site at the National Museum of the Pacific War <http://www.pacificwarmuseum.org/>, although I can no longer find that article on their web site.

Can you tell me more about this book that you are working on?

Bob Barrett

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Thank you Bob! I will make sure that proper credit is given.

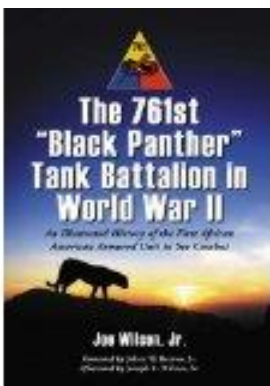
The book is on the 758th Tank Battalion. The tankers and paratroopers fought each other at the drop of a hat and at Camp Patrick Henry they had a big brawl. One person was killed. I will go to the NARA in the future for more information - I can share that with you if you like..

Thanks again.

Joe Wilson, Jr.

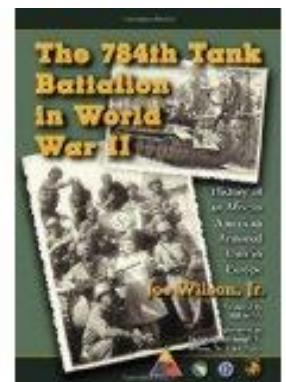
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Joe Wilson, Jr. is the author of two books:



<-- The 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion in World War II: An Illustrated History of the First African American Armored Unit to See Combat

The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe -->





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

Hi Joe,

I did a quick look and ran across a couple of references to the fight.

I didn't see a date for this incident in this book, but I did think for some reason that the incident happened after the 517th was shipped to Europe. I don't want to bury unpleasant events - the 517th troopers have always been very open about what really happened - good, bad, and ugly. And as you already know, the 517th were very proud and very tough and they were in plenty small fights and skirmishes, mostly one-on-one fights. You saw some examples in Randolph Coleman's stories. So I would be surprised to hear of a big brawl with any unit that hasn't been mentioned in any of the books or accounts of the 517th. Especially if someone was killed.

Bob B.

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Yes indeed Bob. They were tough and proud and honorable. It was so nice that they admitted to the fights. I think they are the only airborne unit that has.

Do you have any clues who they could have been? The men of the 758th think they were 101st replacements.

Have a nice day.

Joe

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Here is an account of one of the incidents of paratroopers versus the African-American Armored Unit at Camp Patrick Henry. For the record, this was NOT the 517<sup>th</sup>, who had been shipped overseas several months before this event.

Prior to shipping overseas, a racially charged incident occurred at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, between men of the 758th and white paratroopers. In the riot that ensued, one paratrooper was killed. However, no member of the 758th was charged as a result of the confrontation, and the unit joined the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy on schedule in late September 1944. Once in Italy, the 758th never fought as an entire battalion. Instead, the 758th's separate companies were attached to various units and task forces of the 92nd Infantry, usually providing indirect fire support from its tanks. The 758th's major combat test occurred less than a month before the war ended, on April 7-9, 1945. During over 70 hours of hard fighting, the unit lost four tanks, 11 men were killed, and 10 were wounded while supporting the 92nd's failed attempt to cross the Cinquale Canal in northern Italy.

However, such fights did occasionally occur between our 517<sup>th</sup> troopers and other units. In **Randolph Coleman's** story below, he tells on one incident where **John Lissner** took on 3 men by himself. And I did see this in **Merle McMorrow's** autobiography *From Breckenridge to Bastogne*:





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

Early in May 1944, we left Camp MacKall for Camp Patrick Henry near Newport News, Virginia...

Rumors flew that the air force replacements and the WACs were to be shipboard companions. For ten days, we milled around with nothing to do but make acquaintances of our next door neighbors.

A group from our outfit got in trouble with some blacks at the local PX Canteen. There was a knife fight, and a few got cut up. It was obvious that the sooner we got shipped out, the better. Then these fellows that really wanted to fight could put their energies toward something constructive against the enemy.

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Here is an excerpt from **Randolph Coleman's** 2004 interview:

Mr. Cox:            Now let me ask you, in your combat – this was your first time in real actual combat. Was it like you thought it would be?

Mr. Coleman:    Well, it was not as organized as I thought it would be in that particular area. I, for some reason, visualized them over there and us over here. And kind of some coordination to what we were both doing. But we had them so on the run that they weren't coordinated well. Consequently you couldn't fight them as an army. You'd be fighting six guys or six hundred. And you never knew which. It was really weird. And it wasn't really a system. You never saw the regular organized armored divisions coming down your throat and all that stuff at that point. So I guess we got kind of a false feeling of some security in that. But we all celebrated back at Frascati. We got our infantry combat badge which is the first thing you get for being under small arms fire. And they gave some awards for guys that deserved them for combat. And then we just trained some more; but not much, because we got to go into town a lot, into Rome, if you could get there. Well, I kind of hate to record some of this stuff, because, we didn't have any vehicles. We were ten miles from town. I think at the end of the first week I had three jeeps and a motorcycle. Three jeeps and a motorcycle. And I had them down in a caliche pit – an old gravel pit out there. Nobody knew I had them except a pretty close friend. I can't believe I did that way. In Rome the Air Force was the king. They stayed in all the great hotels. And they had all the plush stuff. And they knew how to take advantage of it and everything. You kind of had a chip on your shoulder watching those guys live. And I remember an MP pulling up on that motorcycle and one of my guys said, "Can you ride a motorcycle?" And I said, "Yup." And he said, "Can you ride that one?" And I said, "Yup." He said, "You wouldn't." I said, "I'll see you back at camp." And he went in and I hopped on there and took off and went back to Frascati on that motorcycle. Then I realized, "What the hell am I doing?" Well, I must not have been too impressed with doing something wrong because I later had three jeeps. And I used to rent those out to the guys. They all wanted to go to town. But that was a short-lived deal because they caught me. And I didn't have a requisition for that jeep, you know they'd stop a truck or a jeep and they say let me see your requisition. Where're you going? Well, I'd say I left it back at where I came from. And I wound up in a dungeon. I mean one of those old Roman dungeons down in the dark, you know, and you couldn't see from me to you. I swear to you. I was sitting in there, and I had been in there a couple of hours, and I thought how's my outfit going to know where I am. And how am I going to get out of here. And all of a sudden somebody says is there somebody else in here? And there was another guy. And he and I got to talking. And I said well do you know how long we're going to be here. And he said, hell, I don't know. Well, a couple of days later they pulled me out of there. Put me in a jeep and took me out down toward Frascati, down a



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

dirt road with one guy. We got out of the jeep and he took bob wire, or some sort of wire, and built a square pen on the side of this hill. And put me in – he said get in. And, of course, he had a gun, and I didn't, and I got in it. And he set there with me for two more days on the side of a hill, his jeep, me in that pen, and my outfit not knowing. Finally, I talked him into telling my outfit. Anyway he went and got them and they came over. And I thought I'll be shipped out of here, busted and everything else. And my company commander chewed me out pretty good and told me it was not a very good example I was setting. And if I expected to do well in this outfit I ought to change my ways. I'm standing there saying you better believe it. But I got along with my company commander so well, that we became lifelong friends. He was the guy I was telling you he was from Brooklyn.

Mr. Cox                      What was his name?

Mr. Coleman:    His name was **John Lissner**. He was 5 feet 6 and he weighed 160 pounds, and I've seen him whip 3 guys at one time over 200 pounds apiece, on the streets of Nice, France. And he wouldn't let me get in the fight. Ordered me out of it, and he whipped them. When he was a young man, he was the Diamond Gloves Champion of the state of New York, as a boxer in that weight. He was studying to be a priest. And came in the army. A little guy, I mean relatively speaking, 5'6". And tough as hell, and very sensitive. And he was our company commander. Somehow, he and I hit it off. And I believe I'm here today because of him. Maybe some little things he did that I was unaware of that kind of kept me out of the way of something that might have been worse than I was in. I don't know that, but we were very close. But it was real strange because here he is a captain and I'm a sergeant. And that didn't happen. I know anyway, I don't want to get ahead of myself, but we did fight as infantry for the 5<sup>th</sup> Army. We were relieved, and there we stayed until they finally set us up for the invasion of France. And then we studied sand tables of where we were going. It was particularly important for me because I was the guy with the maps. I was the guy had been over all the terrain situations, answer any questions, and all that kind of stuff for my company. And represent my company with the battalion headquarters when that was called for. So I had to be, pay more attention, maybe, than the next guy. So that was very interesting.

The full interview is at: [http://517prct.org/bios/randolph\\_coleman/randolph\\_coleman.htm](http://517prct.org/bios/randolph_coleman/randolph_coleman.htm)

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I had the pleasure of speaking to **Marshal "Mark" Baird** recently and sadly he informed me of the passing of **Edgar Von Chisum**. Edgar was in "A" company with Mark and spent his life after the war as a rancher also like Mark. I am hoping someone can share more information about Edgar in the days ahead.

**Tim Curtis**  
Son of **Harland "Bud" Curtis**

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

### *In Memorium – Edgar “Von” Chisum, A Company*

Lifelong Wallace County, Kansas resident **Edgar Von Chisum**, 92, died Friday, March 13, 2015.

He was born October 7, 1922, at Sharon Springs, Kansas, the son of Edna Faye (Abernathy) and Ira Edgar Chisum. He graduated from Wallace County Community High School in Sharon Springs. From November 6, 1942 through December 27, 1945, he served his country in the United States Army, enlisting with the Cavalry, and when it dissolved, he then became a paratrooper. His lifetime work was ranching, running a cow-calf operation for many years. When times were tough, he worked in the hard rock mine in Climax, Colorado, and on the bridge gang in Western Kansas. He returned to full-time ranching in the late 1950s. After retirement from cow-calf, he ran steers for Century Feeders, which he loved.

On May 31, 1947, he and Shirley D. Perry were married at Sharon Springs and they made their home in Wallace County. He was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars—Jerome Dechant Post 6844 and National Rifle Association.

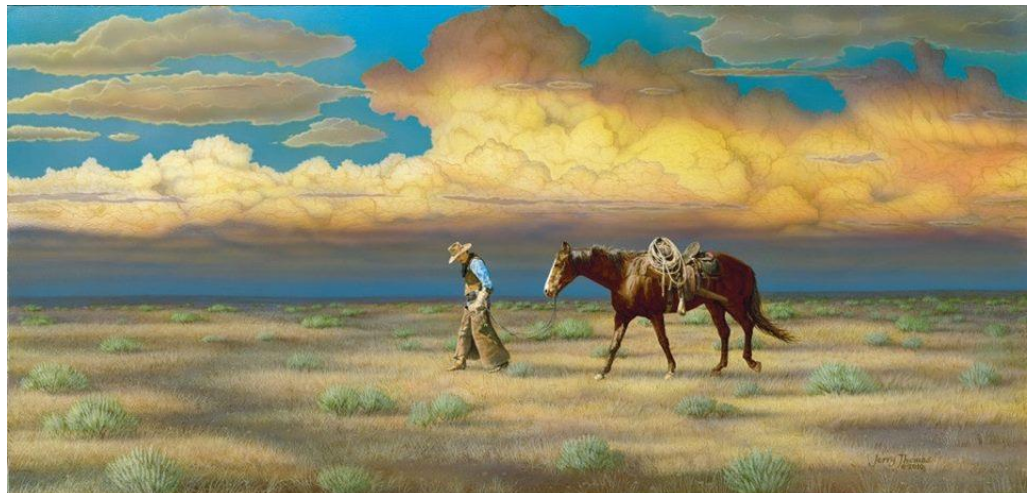
Preceding him in death were his parents and his wife Shirley Chisum, who died January 4, 2006.

Surviving family includes three daughters Cyndee Hoss and her husband Dewey of Sharon Springs; Becky Poe and her husband Kenn of Sharon Springs; Kriss Wahlmeier and her husband Jerry of Sharon Springs; one son Jeff Chisum of Sharon Springs; four grandchildren Heather Gerlits and her husband Ty; Tanner Poe and Kelly; Tanna Smith and her husband Stuart; Aften Gardner and her husband Beau; eight great-grandchildren Chisum Annie Goodwin, Ellie Dell Goodwin, Jessie Smith, Andrew Smith, Jay Smith, Zoey Gardner, Charlotte Gardner, and Savannah Poe.

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From [Jerry Thomas Art & Jerry Thomas Gallery and Collection](#) (on FaceBook)

My dear friend, **Von Chisum**, recently passed away. Will never forget the first time I met Von! A wonderful, hard working man who loved his family and many friends! He was always willing to share a funny saying or quote, and made you feel beyond special!! He was one of a kind!! A true legend!! He was a true cowboy and distant relation to those who started the Old West Cattle Trails. His grandfather acquired the first "brand" for branding cattle in 1886, in Western Kansas, simply the number "60"!! He was very proud of his heritage and his historic ranch! Von unveiled this painting for the Grand Opening of The Jerry Thomas Gallery and Collection in May of 2010!! He wore a shirt and jeans embroidered with "60". HAPPY TRAILS MY DEAR FRIEND!!





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

### *In Memorium – Robert E. “Bob” Rust, A Company*

I just found out that **Bob Rust** of A Company passed away in 2014.



**Robert (Bob) E. Rust** passed away peacefully in his sleep on April 24, 2014. Bob was born on July 22, 1924 in Cairo, IL to Otto and Geneva Rust. Bob was currently a resident of Spring, TX. While a native of Illinois, he lived in Louisiana for many years, including Shreveport, Lafayette and New Orleans.

Bob was a paratrooper in WWII, participating in five campaigns, including a night jump into southern France and The Battle of the Bulge. He received a Bronze Star and was wounded twice receiving a Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. In addition to WWII, he was called to duty as part of the Louisiana National Guard and served in the Korean War for which he received the Army Commendation Medal.

Bob attended Tulane University, receiving a Jurist Doctorate Degree. He spent his professional career in the oil business, and retired as an executive of the Taylor Energy Company in 1989.

Bob was a member of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in The Woodlands, TX. He also was a member for many years of St. Stevens Lutheran Church in New Orleans where he served as President of the Congregation, Chief Elder and Sunday School Superintendent. He regularly attended Sunday services held at the Village at Gleannloch Farms, the senior citizen community where he last resided.

Bob was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years, Catherine (Katie) Stewart Rust, as well as his sister and brother-in-laws, Hazel and Bill Burrichter and Jack Taylor. Bob is survived by his sons, James E. Rust and his wife, Susie, of Montgomery, TX and Robert L. Rust and his wife, Kathryn, of Baton Rouge, LA. He is also survived by eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, his sister, Frances Taylor, numerous nieces and nephews and his close friend and companion, Betty Stewart.

Bob enjoyed a variety of activities, including travel, reading and golf. However, his greatest interest was spending time with the family he so dearly loved. He was truly the patriarch of his family. His wisdom, integrity, Christian values and love of family will be his legacy.

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I also ran across this article about **Bob Rust**, from 2011, which I don't think I ever posted it in MailCall:

From: [http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/courier/news/wwii-army-paratrooper-recalls-battle-of-the-bulge/article\\_677c0796-97c9-5d50-961a-a9e440aabf23.html](http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/courier/news/wwii-army-paratrooper-recalls-battle-of-the-bulge/article_677c0796-97c9-5d50-961a-a9e440aabf23.html)

## **WWII Army paratrooper recalls Battle of the Bulge**

Posted: Monday, June 6, 2011 12:18 am | Updated: 1:46 pm, Mon Jun 6, 2011.  
By Catherine Dominguez

When Bob Rust was drafted by the U.S. Army in March 1943, the young soldier was worried he would get stuck behind a desk. Little did he know he would soon be part of an elite group of men that would make history.





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



"An officer came in and said they were accepting volunteers for the paratroops; it was \$50 a month extra," he said. "I looked at (my friend) and said let's do that because I'll do anything to keep from being put behind a desk."

Rust volunteered for the 517th Regimental Parachute Team and was accepted. The men of the 517th were tested for physical and mental toughness, Rust said. Following the rigorous testing, Rust was selected to be a part of the team.

"We were handpicked," he said. "Then we had to jump five times, packing our own chutes to win our wings."

Rust said they went through so much training that by the time they made their first real jump, he said they were more than ready.

"People would ask, 'How was that first jump?' And I would say it wasn't so bad because we didn't know what to expect," Rust said. "But that second jump was a booger."

Before war's end, the men would fight their way from the south of France through Italy, Belgium and finally into Germany. In all, they would see 94 straight days under fire and many of Rust's friends would never return. His unit is officially credited with five campaigns, but one event especially stands out in his memory.



A young Bob Rust relaxes during his tour in the United States Army in 1943.

In the winter of 1944, German troops made a surprise attack with every available man, tank and plane. That massive assault formed a huge bulge into Europe, later known as the Battle of the Bulge.

"That was our biggest accomplishment," Rust said. "Our organization was created with having stopped the German's advance."

Wounded twice during the Second World War, Rust now is considered technically disabled. However, a year ago, he moved to The Village at Gleannloch Farms on a bed but now "gets around" without any assistance and lives in the independent living part of the community.

Although the men from the 517th no longer hold reunions, Rust said he enjoys talking to other veterans there at his new home where "we're all like one big family."

Anyone who comes to his apartment can see his Bronze Star, Purple Heart with Oak Clusters — and many other medals. But only Rust still can see the faces of his young friends — frozen in time more than 65 years ago, because they never lived to age.

"They were very brave men, any of whom would have died for each other without hesitation," Rust said. "They moved forward with dedication and unflinching courage. I was very fortunate to serve with them."



Bob Rust, drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943, served for the 517th Regiment Parachute Team



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

### *More MailCall News*



Headquarters Battery 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion  
Captain Herbert G. Weinstein commander.  
Montaldo airfield, Italy  
August 1944.

From: <https://www.facebook.com/FirstAirborneTaskForceTheForgottenFront?fref=nf>

### **Paratroops in WW2**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_lu0Vu9Reo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_lu0Vu9Reo)





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

## *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, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- 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 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 Miriam Boyle Kelly  
19 Oriole Court  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



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2015 Roster (updated!)  
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

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