



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2353

April 16, 2017

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

72 Years Ago with the 517th

S, WATSEKA, ILL., MONDAY, APRIL 16, 1945

Page Seven

not unlikely that Byrnes will become Secretary of State.

On the train coming back from Hyde Park yesterday afternoon, Byrnes helped Mr. Truman revise today's address to Congress. A first draft had been put together from Mr. Truman's rough notes by George Allen, former commissioner of the District of Columbia and long a prominent figure in the Democratic national organization.

Watseka Sergeant 1 Of 4 Left Of 14 Paratroopers

With the 517th Parachute Combat Team on the Western Front—A bull session was going on in one of the rooms of the barracks the other night, and four of the battle-weary veterans were having a talk of their own. They were glad the outfit was relieved after heavy and bitter fighting in Belgium and Germany.

They seemed to be reminiscing, too. Of the fourteen cadre which helped form this parachute company of the 517th Parachute Combat team, they were the only ones left. Four out of fourteen. They called themselves the "Four Leftovers." They are Sergeant Willard Nichols, Sparta, North Carolina; Sergeant Nello Arterburn of Watseka, Illinois, and Thompsonville, Kentucky; Sergeant Orville L. Donaldson of Haleyville, Ala-

bama; and Corporal Albert P. Deshayes of West Lincoln, Nebraska.

These "Four Leftovers" were in the same class at the Parachute School at Fort Benning, Georgia. They were in the old original 513th Parachute Infantry and received their wings at the same time in December 1942, class 44. They went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, shortly after, and on March 15, 1943, they left for Toccoa, Georgia, to form the original members of the 3rd Battalion, 517th Parachute Combat team. They trained their own squads and helped them with words of encouragement when the going was toughest.

Since coming overseas in May of 1944, they have fought in Italy, jumped in the invasion of Southern France, have fought in Belgium and Germany. The going has been rough, as seen by their "fruit salad." They have all been decorated at least once. They take pride in pointing out the men they helped train who have received awards, promotions, and responsible positions.

Just before the jump into Southern France on August 15, they vowed not to shave until relieved. On D plus 15 they thought they had better shave. They thought the paratroopers were to be relieved on D plus 5. Finally, on D plus 94, they were relieved after having chased the enemy from France through the Maritime Alps

and into Italy. They didn't have a beard—only a 12-day growth of whiskers.

Cpl. Deshayes was unable to join his outfit after the jump, so he joined forces with the French Maquis and led them on patrols, disrupting communications, and was instrumental in the surrender of La Roche Fortress at Fayance, France. From this fortress 174 Germans were captured with numerous small arms and field pieces. For this action he received the DSC. He was also awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received when an enemy mortar shell hit near him.

Sgt. Nichols single-handedly wiped out a machine gun nest which had pinned down his platoon. For this action he was awarded the Silver Star Medal. He has the Purple Heart as the result of an enemy shell which hit nearby and wounded him.

Sgt. Donaldson was shot in the leg by a sniper, and for his wounds he has received the Purple Heart.

Sgt. Arterburn has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroic action against the enemy.

The armadillo kills snakes by rolling them and cutting them to pieces with its jagged, sawtooth armor.

The sun is losing weight at the rate of 300,000,000 tons a minute, merely by shining.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

MailCall News

Someone has just signed your guestbook!

Submitted by	Comments:
Name: Christopher Hal Abercrombie From: Toccoa, Georgia E-mail: abercrombie99@windstream.net	My Great-Uncle William A Abercrombie was with the 517th and I wanted to check out your page. Added: April 12, 2017

William Abercrombie was with HQ Company, 1st Battalion.

Can you tell me if Alan Bonsell , son in law of Thomas Blymire A Co.was in the 517th pir? He was also in the 193 glider infantry regiment.

Thank you

Alan Bonsell, son in law of **Thomas Blymire A Co.**

Hi Alan,

I don't think there was a Winfred Bolin, at least not in my records or the '43 roster.

We do have an **Eldon "Bill" Bolin** of C Company: [A Night Near Bergeval by E.W. "Bill" Bolin](#)

Bob Barrett

RE: 517th MailCall - April 9, 2017 - **LTG Richard Seitz**

I am proud to say I have personally known this man and great American.

Merle McMorrow

Great MailCall. Lots of sad news, but time marches on. Don't know if you follow eBay for the 517th, but there are 2 items for sale. So sad to see these things not with family. Of course, sometimes family is the one selling. Take care.

Heather Cowan Riley
Daughter of **Pvt. Ian Cowan**



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Bob, Claire and Didier,

this is a little answer about what was the platoon of **Pappy Jones**. Pappy was part of the **2nd Platoon** of the 596th Airborne Engineer Company when he was killed. Generally, each platoon were attached to each battalion, so it place the 2nd Platoon with the 2/517th PIR.

I'm also very interested by the story of Pappy Jones. Here a picture of Pappy Jones prior to Operation Dragoon (from Michel de Trez book)

Best regards,

Loïc J



14 Août 1944, aérodrome de Canino, Italie. Des parachutistes du Mortar Platoon de l'Hq. Company, 1st Battalion, devant le C-47 qui les emmènera dans le Sud de la France. Debout, de gauche à droite : 1st Sgt. John Forrest, Pvt. Francis X. Steggert, Pvt. Carl G. Larsen, Pvt. Marvin J. Connors, Pvt. Glen E. Bice, Pvt. Robert A. Morrow Jr., T/4 Thomas E. Hunter, Pfc. William L. Finley. Agenouillés, de gauche à droite : Pfc. Joseph H. Anderson, Pfc. Walter S. Duzinski, Pvt. Joe E. Hausen, Pvt. Daniel Knoechelman, Pfc. Charles A. Lytton, Cpl. George Jones.

August 14th, 1944 at Canino airfield, Italy. The men belong to Mortar Platoon, Hq. Company, 1st Battalion, in front of the C-47 that will take them to Southern France. Standing left to right : 1st Sgt. John Forrest, Pvt. Francis X. Steggert, Pvt. Carl G. Larsen, Pvt. Marvin J. Connors, Pvt. Glen E. Bice, Pvt. Robert A. Morrow Jr., T/4 Thomas E. Hunter, Pfc. William L. Finley. Front row, left to right: Pfc. Joseph H. Anderson, Pfc. Walter S. Duzinski, Pvt. Joe E. Hausen, Pvt. Daniel Knoechelman, Pfc. Charles A. Lytton, Cpl. George Jones.

Allan had heard of Pop Jones but didn't know him. So glad that the mystery of which platoon has been solved, because that means that local friends like Didier already know the area.

Claire Giblin



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

And there is the story of Pappy Jones as reported by **Don Saunders** in the book "Battling Buzzards" by Gerald Astor:

Cheered by the news that the 75th Division would now relieve some sectors held by the 82nd Airborne and its affiliated units, a bunch of 596th engineers under Lt. Ray Hild stripped to their shorts, plunged into the icy Salm River and, undeterred by an occasional mortar, constructed a trestle-style bridge across the stream to a bridgehead secured by members of the 3rd Battalion.

Other members of the engineering company busied themselves sanitizing roads and field infested with mines. Don Saunders was among a party of engineers combing out the devices. "We happened upon a large house and found it full of German soldiers. We captured all of them without a shot and I carried a wounded radio operator out of the cellar. A little further down the road, we saw movement in a field. We all dove for cover and a burp gun fired at us. Several of us shot back and wounded the German. Cpl. 'Pappy' Jones and I went into the field and captured three more Germans. "We were marching them back when a bullet from behind hit Pappy and he fell to the ground. I called for a medic and held him in my arms as he died. I carried him off the field to our group of guys. It was my worst experience of the war."

Best Shot With A 45 Caliber Pistol

Owen John Baggett was born in 1920 in Graham, Texas. By 1941 he graduated from college and went on to work on Wall Street, but by the following year, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps (now USAF) when the United States entered the war.

A studious man, he graduated from pilot training in just five months and was sent to Burma, flying a B-24 Liberator.

On March 31, 1943, while stationed in British India, Baggett's squadron was ordered to destroy a bridge at Pyinmana, Burma. Before reaching their target, the B-24 bombers were intercepted by Japanese fighter planes. Baggett's plane was severely damaged and was set on fire by several hits to the fuel tanks, and the crew was forced to bail out. The aircrew escaped the crippled B-24 merely seconds before the bomber exploded. Japanese pilots then attacked U.S. airmen as they parachuted to earth. Two of Baggett's crew members were killed. Baggett, though wounded, played dead, hoping the Japanese would ignore him. One Zero approached within several feet of Baggett. The pilot then nosed up, almost stalling, and opened his canopy. Baggett drew his pistol and fired four shots at the pilot. Baggett watched as the plane stalled and plunged to the earth, and Baggett became legendary as the only person to shoot down a Japanese airplane with an M1911 pistol. He survived and was captured by the Japanese.

He remained a prisoner for the rest of the war. Baggett and 37 other POWs were liberated at the war's end by eight OSS agents who parachuted into Singapore.

Baggett was recognized as the only person during the war to shoot down a Zero with a pistol.



Owen J. Baggett became legendary as the only person to have downed a Japanese aircraft with a M1911 pistol hitting the pilot in the head while he was parachuting.



517th 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
- 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

Website	www.517prct.org
Send MailCall news to	MailCall@517prct.org
MailCall Archives	www.517prct.org/archives
2016 Roster (updated!)	www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
Thunderbolt Archives	www.517prct.org/archives

