

# *517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)*

*460th Parachute Field Artillery, 596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

# Thunderbolt

**Newsletter Date: Winter, 2013**



## **Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since 1943**

Don't Miss the Florida Mini Reunion, Ramada Hotel and Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL, January 18-21, 2013. Reunion registration form on page 25.

Also, mark your calendar for the Palm Springs Mini Reunion in May 2013, more information coming in Mailcall

This issue of the Thunderbolt available online at [517prct.org](http://517prct.org)

### **Packed in this Chute**

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## From the President

November, 2012

We weathered Hurricane Sandy here in New Jersey, and I am sure by the time the Thunderbolt goes to press, we will finally have electricity back.

At the business meeting in Kansas City, we voted not to have another national reunion at this time. This means that we also had to decide how to continue to conduct the business of the association, since our by-laws currently mandate that this occur at the national reunions. We will conduct business electronically when necessary, we decided.

As you will see from **Howard Hensleigh's** 517 update, we are once again dealing with our tax status. **Dick Miller**, former treasurer, has come to the rescue once again with **Howard**.

Please continue to forward your dues and contributions to **Joanne Barrett**, who is currently handling the mechanics of finances and making sure checks are being deposited.

I must also take this opportunity to thank **Helen Beddow** for her years of service in the Auxiliary and on the Thunderbolt. She has reluctantly given up the Thunderbolt (formerly published in Savannah, where we all had SUCH a great time in 2005), and on behalf of the Association, I thank her for her commitment and time and energy all these years.

I think the biggest news is the dedication of the **Seitz Elementary School at Fort Riley**. Those of us at the reunion can share that our own **Lt. General Richard "Call me Dick" Seitz** was and is thrilled about this school. What a tribute to Dick! Congratulations! We are proud to have served with you and applaud this latest honor!

In other news, we had a wonderful time at our spring and summer gatherings in 2012. Palm Springs was a wonderful gathering; **Karen and Robin Frice** assisted longtime organizers **Bill and Sophie Christian** in making sure we all had an excellent time. **Lory Curtis and Mike Wells**, in their third appearance as reunion co-chairs, made sure that everything was perfect in Kansas City. We were able to attend an advance screening of the new film, **Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed**. This is based on Bud Curtis's writings.

It was also a pleasure to be in Washington, DC at the annual Operation Dragoon event. In 2012, our own past president **Darrell Egner** received the Legion of Honor from a grateful French government.

I went to France this summer for the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Dragoon. I continue to be amazed at the multitude of observances and the gratitude of French citizens for the sacrifices of American youth so many years ago. Longtime friends to the 517 **Mickael Soldi and Eric Renoux** are still organizing observances and celebrations in new venues, building relationships and ensuring the legacy of those who served in Provence in 1944. The museum they founded together was almost totally destroyed in the legendary flood of 2010; they are still searching for a new home for the artifacts and other items in the museum's collection. I continue to be amazed by these two young men – many of us still call them "the kids from the museum" – and their commitment to the memory of 15 August, 1944.

We are looking forward to reunions in January in Kissimmee and May, I believe, in Palm Springs. For some reason, these reunions do not always attract new attendees. Please, come to one of these reunions for the first time in 2013, especially since we do not currently have a national reunion scheduled.

I continue to be grateful to the members of the Auxiliary, without whom we would probably be unable to continue to function. Thank you to **Brenda Verbeck Mortensen**, who is kindly hosting the Kissimmee reunion. Thank you to the **indefatigable Frice women Robin and Karen**, who are superb at the Palm Springs reunion. Thank you to **Bob Barrett**, who keeps us connected every week without fail. He maintains the best WWII website, hands down. It means more than he could possibly imagine. Thank you to **Joanne Barrett**, who has been extraordinary in her commitment and service to the 517 as she untangles the mire of the IRS with **Howard**. Thank you to **Howard and Dick Miller**, for service above and beyond.

Many other WWII outfits have had to close their doors; we have not, because of the commitment of our fantastic team.

Airborne ALL THE WAY!

## From your publishers

**Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin**

As is unfortunately the custom of late, this issue of the Thunderbolt has been way overdue, and we thank everyone for your patience. We have switched publishers and our mailing location. This

remains a large undertaking and our availability does not always coincide with either each other or publishing demands.

We must at this time thank Helen Beddow for her years of service on the Thunderbolt. It is a real wrench for Helen to give up the Thunderbolt, and she will remain involved, but has regretfully passed the main publishing duty to Lory Curtis, who is also our new photo editor.

We apologize for the delay and remind everyone that the Thunderbolt is never withheld due to lack of payment of a voluntary donation (formerly known as "dues")! The Thunderbolt is sent to anyone requesting it, at the Association's expense. If you are listed as a member of the Association, you are on the mailing list for the Thunderbolt. We just haven't been able to publish as many the last two years.

## 517 Status Update

**Howard Hensleigh**

**Dick Miller** is one of the 517th's unsung heroes. For many years while **Bill Lewis** was running the show and for years after, Dick took the records of the treasure, made sense out of them which sometimes was difficult, prepared the annual tax returns for the 517th Association, and sent them to the president for signature and filing with the IRS. In other words he kept the Association out of hot water for years. At the Savannah reunion when I was getting on the elevator, he handed me a batch of IRS forms which I signed. For all those years of work he never received credit or recognition, so as the president then, I made him assistant treasurer and put him on the 517th stationary letterhead. Apparently no one ever thought of Dick Miller after that until we were in deep trouble and had our IRS tax free status revoked for not filing annual income tax returns. Joanne Barrett and I brought Dick back to the rescue and he responded like the cavalry in the wild west movies. He helped take all of Joanne Barrett's hard work, of reviving treasury records for five years. Dick helped us put the figures onto forms the IRS would recognize. **Allan Johnson** has now signed them and sent them to our friends at the Internal Revenue Service. In due course we may have our tax free status retroactively restored. That is what Joanne and I asked for.

The 517th has many unsung heroes, but **Dick Miller** should be at the top of the list.

## Big News! Seitz Elementary School Opens at Fort Riley, Kansas!!

**Alan Greer and Patricia Seitz**

I'm forwarding several emails from my cousin John Seitz with pictures from the ribbon cutting ceremony of Seitz Elementary School. The last one I am forwarding has General Donald MacWillie's speech. It was a beautiful day from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who sang and did synchronized movements, to the brass band, the General's mounted patrol, the presence of Governor Brownback, US Senator Moran, the Under-Secretary of Defense, the Superintendent of the School District, the outstanding principal and faculty (all hand-picked, many with a military connection -- former army brat, served in the armed forces, etc). This was the first new school on Ft. Riley in 50 years. The facility is LEED certified and is a magnificent site for learning. Most of the nearly 700 plus kids have one parent deployed and a lot have both deployed, so a safe, healthy, positive school environment is the one critical stabilizing force. (The kids were absolutely amazing and adorable and their teachers so sharp and enthused.)

I'm scanning a copy of the newspaper article and will forward that to you as well. The first picture is of (L to R) Managing Director of Picerne Military Housing Mike Steiner, 1st Infantry Divisions and Fort Riley Senior Commander Brig. Gen Donald MacWillie, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback, Dad, US Senator Jerry Moran (Ks), Under-Secretary of Defense Dr. Joseph Westphal, and the Superintendent of Geary County Schools Ronald Walker).

**Here is the General's [Brig. Gen Donald MacWillie] speech.** All the speeches were beautiful and short!

Governor Brownback... Undersecretary Westphal... Senator Moran, distinguished guests... Students... Families.... Friends... Seitz Family and most importantly LTG Seitz... I bring greetings from America's 1st Infantry Division.

Today we dedicate our newest, most modern school in honor of a patriot—LTG Richard Seitz. That makes this a great day....a world class school...servicing world class students and world class families...taught by world class educators...dedicated to the values and principles of a Soldier...a Statesman....a Knightly Gentleman.

GEN Seitz it is nearly impossible to put into words what an honor it is to be a part of your

special day... Especially since many of us are familiar with your decorated military service.

Ladies and gentlemen we are blessed to have the rare breed of man... a decorated veteran... a war hero... a man of honor.... a man of character and a man of great humility... who knows first-hand the foundation for success in life starts with a good education.

Gen Seitz they don't make them like you anymore and that is why we are here to honor you today.

For those who don't know... GEN Seitz's life and military career read more like an epic drama that could have been directed by Cecil B. DeMille.... From the time he trained as a young officer and went to Europe... only to become the youngest Infantry Battalion Commander in World War II... where he led his troops during the Battle of the Bulge... To the leadership he demonstrated while commanding both the 82nd Airborne... the XVIII Airborne Corps and Ft. Bragg.... General Seitz has lived by the right values...demonstrated the keenest intellect...while bringing forward the same from all he touched.

GEN Seitz the medals you have earned... Silver Star... Distinguished Service Medal... and Purple Heart... the honors you have earned...all lead up to this day... And now it is our task to find the appropriate words to convey our appreciation to you for your courage... your leadership... your service... your honor... and your humanitarian spirit.

GEN Seitz... you have gone above and beyond what the military expected of you and more than our Nation could ever call a Soldier to do. But the part that touches our hearts so deeply about you... and what makes you so special to us is even with all of these incredible things you have done... you still take the time to get in the car... drive down to a school to read a book to a classroom of children.

So it is fitting we honor you today by naming an institution where we shape young minds and help form the character of the next Governor... Undersecretary of the Army... or even LTG.... that we stand and salute you and say... GEN Seitz... today is a good day... Because... today is your day.

So in your honor--in the sacred land of the Big Red One, I proudly say "All the Way, sir!" Thanks for being an All American—a Dragon---...A Soldier....a Statesman....A Knightly Gentleman.

May your school always produce students of high moral character just like you.

God bless you General thanks from all of us for who you are.

## **From Curahee!**

### **Brenda Carlin**

Please add Currahee Military Museum to your emails update/news list. We are working very hard to find the men and their families, to let them know that we are interested in their history in Toccoa, throughout the WWII war and their careers, civilian or military.

We have started a "Camp Toccoa Veteran Showcase," which we will have a Camp Toccoa man on display in the museum for 6 months and then rotate to another and so on. This is our way of helping to preserve and promote the men and their dedicated time in the service. We have a very nice 517th exhibit, but would like to make it more personal by adding stories and the history of more of the men, the showcase would allow us to do this for the men and their families.

I will send you more on this if you are interested in including in your mail call. Also, we are very interested in hosting the 517th men and their families in March 2013 for the 70th anniversary of activation at Camp Toccoa in 1943.

I have cc'ed this to Lory Curtis as he has been in touch with us over the years about the history of the 517th. Question, would you be willing to share your active list of members of the association? If not, which we understand it not, as we only give our information to related associations of Camp Toccoa and even then there may be restrictions.

Again, we would like to work with the group for the museum and the Camp Toccoa at Currahee project.

### **Lory Curtis**

I was just on the phone with **Brenda Carlin** who is the curator at the Stephens County Camp Toccoa Museum. Many of us got a chance to meet her when we were at Camp Toccoa in 2011. Attached is a picture of our then President **Merle McMorrow** giving her a certificate from the 517th. She informs me that most visitors do not know about the 517th until they get there, but she makes sure the 517th is represented in the museum with our regimental flag on display, and 517th pins, coins, and pens for sale in her gift shop.

Anyway, she has asked me to contact all of you for help with preserving Camp Toccoa. They have organized a committee to rebuild certain buildings at Camp Toccoa. They are trying to obtain monies to purchase land and buildings in Toccoa. First, I am asking if anyone can donate to their cause do so. Second, I am asking if anyone in our organization can serve on their committee to represent the 517th, and promote our regiment and the memory of the men who served in it. Living in Utah somewhat limits me from getting to their meetings, but someone living in the south hopefully can go and represent us.

Also, Brenda informs me that the 70th anniversary of the activation on the 517th occurred in March 1943. She is hoping that we are planning a trip to Toccoa to celebrate the 517th. I would like to hear on mail call if anyone would be interested in going to Toccoa, say the last weekend in March 2013, March 29, 30, and Easter Sunday 31st. If not then when could and would we want to go there to commemorate the activation of the 517th?

## **NEW FILM!!! SAINTS AND SOLDIERS: AIRBORNE CREED**

### **Lory Curtis**

KSL television and radio did an interview with Jasen Wade, who plays my Dad **Harland Bud Curtis** in the new movie Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed, about the 517th PRCT. Jasen is a fire fighter and actor. The movie producers used my book Letters Home A Paratrooper's Story for parts of the movie. **The movie will have a premier on August 15th at the Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia**, home of Airborne, and here in Sandy, Utah at the Jordan Commons theaters. The movie comes out in Utah on Friday August 17th. Not sure about the rest of the nation.

*Now available on BluRay and DVD!!*

As you know the Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Columbus, GA hosted a premier of Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed. Our own **Hal Beddow** traveled from Savannah, GA down to Fort Benning with his son. There Miller Robson a news reporter from Channel 38 put Hal on T.V. Miller informed me that there was standing room only at the movie premier; many WWII veterans were there, along with about 100 new Army paratroopers. One family drove all the way from Tallahassee, Florida to be

there. Many had to be turned away because there were no more seats.

In the theater Hal was asked to stand and be recognized. The audience gave him a big long round of applause for his service. After the movie Hal met with many of the people to answer questions, and had his picture taken with them. I personally want to thank **Hal Beddow** for making the long drive to Fort Benning to represent the 517th PRCT Association and all the troopers. Thank you so much. Also, a big thank you to Miller Robson from Channel 38 for sponsoring this event and bringing recognition and attention to the 517th PRCT.

### **Mark Landreth**

Just rolled in from Ft. Benning and the premiere. If you have a chance, go see it! I think people will be surprised that it's not your typical shoot 'em up action movie, through there's enough of that. For a limited budget, the crew of Go Films did a phenomenal job. It was apparent they worked really hard to get things right. I think the 'troopers of the 517th will be pleased with the result. Kudos to **Lory Curtis** for all his efforts in working with the producer, director, cast and crew, and in putting together the book of his dad's letters that formed the basis for the film.

### **Ponnie Lewis-Davis**

August 23, 2012

Thank you for recommending me to Eric Montgomery, Veterans' coordinator of the D-Day Invasion (Reenactments) in Conneaut, Ohio, on August 17-18. Conneaut is a 68-mile drive from Cleveland. (*Ponnie lives in Cleveland, OH*)

I was asked to be guest-speaker to announce the Airborne Creed movie, "*Saints and Soldiers*."

It was truly a weekend to remember, forever. There were 760 volunteers dressed in military uniforms, nurses, factory-workers, ladies in 1940's fashions, and a "Lana Turner" guest singer. The event was attended by 10,000 (or more) visitors.

There was a big parade for the raising of the flag ceremony. Squads were marking. There were a lot of military vehicles from WW II tanks, cars, and military equipment all over, including a German kitchen on wheels, automobiles, and bikes.

It looked like tent-city to me. There was an occupied French Axis camp, an English Allied camp, and a French Resistance camp.

There was constant warfare. The *La Fiere Stone Bridge Battle*, the *Foucarville Battle*, and the *Normandy Landing* were some of the reenactments. I counted 20 boats dropping off soldiers on our *Lake Erie* shore, 75 air flights, and constant gun fire.

When I was taken to the German camp and saw all of those soldiers in German uniforms, I actually felt frightened. I know I was frightened because my mood ring turned black. Probably was a throwback of memories of 1944 just thinking about my brothers. I guess it was the (German) uniforms.

There were golf carts and small buses transporting people from one battle field to another. There were a lot of educational talks and several veterans told their stories. There were many vendors selling all kinds of World War items.

I was so excited when I received the call (from Eric Montgomery) at 2:00 in the afternoon (a day or two before August 17). I drove to Perry, Ohio, so my son (David) would drive me there (Conneaut) for Thursday night's movie. Friday and Saturday I knew the way and didn't even get lost.

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

Since the movie premier here in Salt Lake City August 17th, I have really been super busy. I have been reading all of the Mail Calls, and I just have to say you do such a great job with this site. I look forward to seeing it every week. Thank you so much for your time and effort to keep it going. You are the Best!!!

During the premier here in Salt Lake **Hoyt Kelley** attended with is family. He was the S-2 NCO in 1st BN. And, much to my surprise a good friend who I met through Mail Call, **Alex Mendoza** (a paratrooper himself) drove all the way from Southern California with his two sons to attend the premier. Wow, I was just taken back by his dedication and interest in the 517th Association. His uncle was with my Dad in Headquarters, 1st BN, and so Alex and I have developed just a wonderful friendship. In fact in a recent email he told me this:

"I would like to thank you for writing " Letters Home: A paratrooper's Story" it brings the story of the 517TH to life. I mentioned to my Aunt a movie was made about the 517TH she stood quiet, I could tell emotions went through her mind. My uncle seldom mentioned what the 517th went through my aunt said it was bad. Unfortunately, my uncle is not alive to see his unit come to the big screen but, the legacy will live on."

**Alex Mendoza AIRBORNE!**

Finally, along the freeway here in Utah are billboards of the movie so it is getting much publicity here.

**Mark Russell**

son of **John D Russell**

**John D Russell, HQ/1st** (the same outfit as "Bud" Curtis), thoroughly enjoyed attending the showing of "Saints & Soldiers: Airborne Creed" in Twin Falls, Idaho recently. Theatre goers were impressed that a member of the 517th was there in attendance.

*Although the following message was specially for Memorial Day, it is important every day. As I type, we are approaching Veteran's Day – another good day to give thanks to our service members past and present.*

**Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

Reading the "Taps" section of Thunderbolt this Memorial Day weekend, I am reminded of so many who have given their all for our freedom and those who served with them preserving these precious rights. How blessed we are to have personally known some of the men of the 517th, to be touched by them and their stories.

In this warp speed time in which we live with what comes across as blaring discord rather than seeking to understand and work together for the common good, these men have been a beacon of selfless service to others and the common good. As we take time to reflect and say prayers of thanksgiving for the greatest generation, may we honor their service and continue what they gave everything for by humbly trying to emulate them in serving others before self.

To all the men of the 517th, words cannot begin to express our thank-you's for the freedoms we enjoy. May we endeavor to preserve, protect and defend as you have shown us to do.

## Reunion Reports

**Palm Springs, May 2012**

**Bob Dalrymple**

I'm writing to give you a brief report on our recent West Coast Mini Reunion of the 517th PRCT Assn. This event took place at the Riviera Hotel in Palm Springs from 14 to 18 May. We had an excellent turnout, about 35 in all including nine Troopers, 4 from the 596th Combat Parachute Engineer Company, and 5 from other units of the

517th. The rest were our friends and relatives. To me it was a very special reunion for several reasons.

First off, it was so superbly organized and carried out by **Karen Wallace and Robin**, daughters of **Gene Frice**. In addition, my wife, **Marya**, got to meet my venerable comrades of the 596th Engrs, those from other units of the Combat Team, and all those in attendance she has heard me talk about. Finally, it will probably be my last hurrah. I will turn 95 on 10 June, and starting with the national reunion at Orlando in 1981, I have been fortunate in being able to attend most of them since then.

Our base was the Riviera Hotel. A gorgeous layout. Large and beautiful pool plus extra pools in some of the areas. We were in No5 and had our own pool. Many of you will remember that we held our National Reunion there in 1997. Karen and Robin thought of everything: snacks, appetizers, meals, games, raffles, we even had the Champagne Lady of Lawrence Welk fame at our Banquet Night. I hope we get some feedback, especially from the 596ers we haven't heard from for some time.

Incidentally, Marya's son and daughter-in-law, who live just south of us at Tubac, AZ, drove us over and back, it is about 430 mi each way. And they stayed at our Hotel and had a great time with our group.

A/B all the way!

PS: Along the way I was asked the proper name for our group, and as you know, we are the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association (517th PRCT Assn). Hold the Fort!

### **Allan Johnson**

It was a most enjoyable reunion in Palm Springs last week. **Bill Christian and wife Sophia** have been involved there for many years. Bill and I came to Toccoa with four others from Camp Upton on Long Island in April of 1943. All of us made it into the 596 after being interviewed by then -**Captain Robert Dalrymple**. Also essential to this reunion were **the Frice ladies, Karen and Robin**. I am certain that others put effort into the reunion, and I beg their forgiveness for not mentioning their names. Various activities were available. For example, there was a trip up a mountain by some sort of suspended car. I bugged out; heights frighten me. There was also the Folies show featuring mature ladies in seductive costumes.

While the vets conducted a business meeting, the ladies conducted a facial session. This was quite a sight: all of them wearing head coverings and robes, faces coated in some sort of goo guaranteed to make the face smoother. Then came the turning of the tables when Robin announced that she needed several men secure in their manhood to volunteer for facials. Who can resist the Frice women? Four of us vets agreed to have our faces rejuvenated. There we were: complete with hairnets and robes, looking somewhat like mummies. However, I did think my face was considerably smoother afterward. The dinner was great. After dinner, an incredible number of articles were raffled off. I personally won five times. I think that was the record, but many others won as many as three times.

I am certain others will add their stories and insights about this wonderful gathering. A good time was had by all. I apologize for not making the first Mail Call after the trip. I was too tired.

Next year's West Coast reunion will be in March. Make your plans now for Kissimmee in January 2013 and Palm Springs in March 2013. Friends are waiting to see you and help you if you need it! Call me with any questions at 908 852 1424

### **Kansas City**

**July, 2012**

#### **Allan Johnson**

Greetings, all -The Kansas City reunion, which was held over last weekend at the KC Airport Hilton, was smaller than previous gatherings but nonetheless very enjoyable for all in attendance. I must first reiterate with regret that our dear friend **Al Sperry** died en route to the reunion. A regular national reunion attendee, we missed him terribly. We send condolences and prayers to his family, and we are touched by the fact that his final jump was made while on his way to see fellow troopers. Talk about airborne all way.

This reunion was truly well done, and many thanks to all who made it happen. **Lory Curtis**, unbelievably, has now hosted the last three reunions for the 517 -all after the death of his father, **Bud Curtis**. **Mike and Rhonda Wells**, as well as **Tim Curtis**, also contributed tons of time and effort. Armed Forces Reunions came through as always. The KC Airport Hilton is a gorgeous facility, and staffed with constantly helpful people. The shuttle bus driver even made an exception and drove us to Walmart to stock the Hospitality Suite. I may be the

last to know that barbecue is a Kansas City specialty, and the Hilton restaurant has posted the competition results for the last several years. They are always among competition leaders. Their barbecue is indeed very good. The food at the banquet was absolutely the best we've ever had. Notable highlights from the business meeting include the fact that **Dick Miller, Howard Hensleigh** and **Joanne Barrett** are attempting to reinstate our tax-exempt status. As such, we've been unable to move forward on last year's decision to combine the Auxiliary and the Association. Among the trips available was the trip to the National WWI Museum. Those who went said it was well worth seeing. The Truman Library and Museum presented a history of the period we lived through: the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, his decision to drop the bomb are all recorded. Also represented are the many disagreements over dropping the bomb. One display showed the profiles of General MacArthur and President Truman facing each other. When I remarked, "THERE was a battle (meaning Truman and MacArthur)," **Brenda Mortensen** said, unforgettably, "Sort of like Godzilla and King Kong." That still makes me chuckle and it's so true.

Our speaker at the banquet was **Lt. General William Troy**, a top-ranking Pentagon official. Among his many other accomplishments, he is a master parachutist. He spoke to an audience rapt in attention about the Army's past history and future. Particularly endearing to us was his assurance that we, as veterans of WWII, are still part of the greater Army family. As the evening closed, he presented his personal challenge coin to each veteran.

The next reunion dates are MLK weekend in Kissimmee, and springtime in Palm Springs. Although the veterans in attendance were split on whether to have another national reunion, the next generation, now friends in their own right, may investigate whether it's feasible to meet next summer. If they do, I am assured we can probably score an invitation. Reunions are the best. We gather to remember and honor those not present, and treasure the bonds forged over decades. It was great to see everyone who could make it.

Well, it has been just about a week since our National Reunion in Kansas City, and I am going through withdrawals from missing everyone. It surely was a FANTASTIC reunion, and it hurts my heart to think it just might be the very last National

Reunion for the 517th. I know some of us want to see them continue so who knows. Thank goodness we can still plan on the two mini reunions.

Some highlights of this National reunion for me was our first trip to Walmart to pick up supplies for the hospitality room. I think most heard the story that Walmart would not take my check for the amount purchased, then they wouldn't take my credit card, so **Mike Wells** stepped up and used his credit card. They wouldn't take his either. Just then the manager came over to find out what was going on and wanted their food back. Which would have been difficult because Claire had most of it on the shuttle bus that was there to pick us up. Thank goodness **Nancy Fraser Armand** came to our rescue and used her credit card. Walmart took it much to our surprise. Nancy said people don't mess with us from Chicago, we know people. Well, we had some great food and drinks in the room, and many thanks go out to **General Seitz** for paying for the alcohol and pop for the hospitality room.

I was speaking with the General after the reunion, and I told him even after their is a change of command ceremony and the commander is relieved of the duties, sometimes being the commander never stops, and I told him I felt that was the case with his battalion command of 2nd Battalion, 517th. I told him the men of the 517th loved him to this very day, and if asked they would fall back in ready to go to war under his leadership. **The General's response was -"I have served in every Airborne Unit the Army has, and there has never been finer men to put on a pair of Jump Boots than the men of the 517th, and I mean every word."** The general made those same comments at the banquet, and I was so impressed with his remarks. I was also impressed to think the highest echelons of the Army in times of our current wars and conflicts would take time to come to Kansas City to honor the 517th. I was taken back to think the Chief of Staff of the Army knows about the 517th and sent one of his most senior general, **LT General William Troy**, a master parachutist to pay tribute to the men of the 517th. Now that is class. It truly is a brotherhood of soldiers and after all of these many years, the Army still recognizes the contributions and sacrifices the men of the 517th made.

HOOAH!! Airborne All the Way!

**Lory Curtis**  
**Kansas City National Reunion chairman**



I was just talking with **Morris McDowell** on the phone about what a great reunion we had. Morris drove up from Tennessee, and he commented on how much effort it took to come to the reunion, and how much more challenging it must have been for our 517th paratroopers to get there. So I want to take the opportunity to thank each of them for making such a great effort to be at the Nation Reunion in Kansas City. They are **Bob Vaught, John Strojan, Hoyt Kelley, John Jonientz, Mel Dahlberg** (first person to register for the reunion), **Allan Johnson** (President 517th PRCT Association), **General Dick Seitz, Leo Dean, George Kennedy, Gene Frice, Darrell Egner** (just came out of surgery to be at the reunion), **Roger Goodsell, Hal Beddow, Richard Hammel, and Al Sperry** who died on the road coming to the reunion. Also a special thanks to **Babbie Boyle** who came and represented her husband **Colonel Bill Boyle**. Babbie brought the largest group of Boyle family members. Thank you so much for your support of the 517th and the National Reunion, I truly appreciate all of you who came.

I also want to thank the following for all of their help at the reunion -**Mimsey Boyle**, her sisters, and other family members for putting up all of the pictures and posters in the hospitality room. Many thanks to **Helen Beddow, Allan Johnson, Dick Seitz, Claire Giblin, Mike and Rhonda Wells, Morris McDowell, Nancy Fraser Armand, Wade Gilbert, Joanne Barrett, Bob Barrett**, and to all the others who I have forgotten to mention. You all are just the best!

### **Claire Giblin**

Well, as you know, the reunion in Kansas City was fantastic. Yes numbers were down from Atlanta in 2011, but we had such a good time getting together! From arrival on Wednesday through departure on Monday, it was a blast. The food was great, the hospitality suite rocking as usual, and it is always excellent to see my favorite veterans. There were pictures in Mail Call last week and I hope to send more for next week, especially of the banquet. Lt. General Troy came to honor the veterans, flying out from the Pentagon. His remarks were fantastic as he honored the veterans of the 517 and told us of the good work today's military is doing. He was really what they call in the media industry quite a "get" a really surprisingly impressive achievement to "get" this speaker for our reunion. Good job, Lory!

And now we look to Kissimmee in January and Palm Springs in springtime. Make your plans now!

**Ray Bunce's** proud daughter Chris and his grandson David.

My nephew David and I would like to express our appreciation for all the work that went into making the reunion a truly memorable experience. As someone who has organized events, I understand all the time, energy and commitment required. We want to express our great appreciation for all the members of the 517 who shared their funny, touching and sometime sad stories and memories with us. We have a much deeper and more profound understanding of **Ray Bunce** after hearing your stories about him and your own stories. I have taken many trips to some beautiful places but this was a trip with heart and soul much more beautiful than any landscape. If there is anyone who would like to keep in touch with us, please feel free to e-mail me at [cbunce88@comcast.net](mailto:cbunce88@comcast.net).

### **Bob Dalrymple**

I enjoyed the pics from the KC Reunion. I noted that there were 13 troopers able to "STAND UP AND HOOKUP " . We had nine at P Springs and 4 were 596ers! Have you received any pic from our mini at P Springs? Maybe I missed them.

### **Rick Sweet**

#### **Son of a Buzzard**

I am so sorry that I wasn't able to attend the Kansas city reunion. I have always had a great time just being with the 517th family and I've got some good memories and pictures. I'm sorry to hear that **Al Sperry** passed away. He was on his way to be with his unit in Kansas. That is remarkable and just like a 517th soldier. Loyal until the end. **And Mryle and Betty Traver** are in my prayers.. I will always be your friend, Mryle and Betty! The 517th people are strong and such good people. I am glad that I got to meet you and be with you. We had good conversations. I sat with Al Sperry and his wife at the dinner table at the Washington D.C. reunion while Dick Cheney spoke. **Lory and Tim Curtis** and their father, **Bud Curtis** were also at our table along with my wife Carolyn and daughter Jenna. I will always be grateful for the time spent with the 517th. I've made some good friends that will be my friends forever. My dad **Odas Sweet**, passed away

in 1959 and never got to attend the reunions but I know he would have enjoyed being with his friends from H company and the rest of you!

Lory, I am envious that you got to meet **Howard Hensleigh**. If I ever get to go out west, meeting Mr. Hensleigh would be on my to do list. It's always great to hear from my dad's Lt. His stories are my dad's stories that I never got to hear. Please stay in touch with me and each other.

**Clare Mitacek Erber**  
**Daughter of Richard Mitacek, H Co.**  
[cerber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cerber@sbcglobal.net)

The first week after the July 2012 reunion I was savoring it all, filing away all the names, faces, memories, laughs and pride in the generation of Great Men and their families. This second week after, I find myself missing you all. I want to thank you for keeping this family going until I could share. I would ask for anyone with pictures to email me.

### **Operation Dragoon Washington, DC**

**Roger Sullivan**  
son of **George A. Sullivan**, 517th 1st BN Company A

I was finally able to meet folks from the 517th in person, including **Col. Gene Frice, Marty Donahoo, Darrell Egner, and General Seitz**. You'll see them in the enclosed pictures. It was an honor and a thrill to talk to these folks!

The seminar was well attended, with representatives from many of the units who participated in Operation Dragoon. Gene Frice, Darrell Egner, and General Seitz all gave short talks on the 517th participation, making the 517th the best represented of all. Military historians gave detailed presentations on each unit's preparation, invasion, and progress after D-Day.

In addition, the contributions of our European colleagues (in particular, **Jean-Loup Gassend, Jean Mickael SOLDI, and Gilles Guignard**) were highlighted and fondly remembered by several of us.

Also present were retired Generals Jack Singlaub and Lloyd Ramsey. We were in very distinguished company indeed!

**Claire Giblin**

I haven't offloaded my camera yet, but I hope **Tom Copsey** sent you pictures. Dad and I, along

with my husband Jim, traveled to Washington DC yesterday for the ceremony wherein **Darrell Egner**, past president of the Association, received the Legion of Honor from France. We just went down for the day, but also in attendance for the weekend were Darrell's family, our own Lt. General **Dick Seitz**, his son Rick, **Tom Copsey, Gene Frice** and **Marty Donahoo**. Although the events are primarily 3rd Infantry Division, the 517 was well-represented. We went directly to Arlington National Cemetery, not realizing that the ceremony had been moved indoors due to weather. Though it meant that we still had to get to the hotel, it did give us the opportunity to get a private viewing of the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown, adjacent to the ceremony site. It is stirring to watch the guard doing his duty even when no one is watching, and to observe the ceremony when there is hardly anyone there.

As always, the ceremony observes the "Forgotten D-Day" that is Operation Dragoon. I believe that six men were honored yesterday, including a Canadian veteran and the family of a veteran who'd died recently. It was wonderful to be there to see Darrell recognized by the French ambassador's representative, and **it was also wonderful to hear that the French people are still appreciative of the service and sacrifice of so many. Congratulations, Darrell!**

### **Special from Draguinan**

My name is **Alison Libersa** and I am the Cemetery Associate and Interpretive Guide at the **Rhone American Cemetery**. Your address was kindly given to me by Claire, who suggested that it might like to subscribe to your weekly MailCall.

We have a big project here at the Rhone American Cemetery, indeed in all of our Cemeteries, to tell the story of each and every one of the people memorialized here –the way that we do this is to tell their story not just what happened to them in battle but more the story of who they were, if they were married, if they had children, brothers or sisters..... in this way we make sure that their memory lives forever and that they will never be forgotten.

I have an idea that I would like to run past you I would be willing and greatly honored to supply you with photos of the graves of the 517 PRCHT INF REGT (we have 3 people buried here), the 517 PRCHT INF RCT (33 people buried), the 460 PRCHT FA 517 PRCHT RCT (2 people buried) and

the 596 ENGR CO 517 PRCHT RCT (4 people buried).

I would love to be able to collaborate in piecing together information on these people buried here, and most importantly perhaps giving the Families and their Friends the possibility of having a photo of their Headstone.

Please do let me know your thoughts on this

Kindest regards

Alison Libersa

[libersaa@abmc.gov](mailto:libersaa@abmc.gov)

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

**Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed**

Saturday, March 31, 2012, at 4:30 pm local time here in Salt Lake City, our local T.V. station showed a 30 minute segment on the up-coming movie **Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed**. As I mentioned before I was interviewed about my Dad for the T.V. spot and our own **Hoyt Kelley** of the 517th was also interviewed. Hoyt served in the S-2 section of First Battalion.

In the interview he talked about the first day when all of you troopers were taken to the "jump Towers" that were part of an airplane fuselage. Hoyt said when it was your turn to jump a Sergeant would hit you on the leg as your signal to jump. He said one day as he was standing in line waiting to jump out on to the cable some soldier next in line was hit on the leg before he hooked up to the cable and jumped out. The soldier broke both his legs. Hoyt said the Sergeant stated, "Don't worry men. That only happens two or three times a day."

Anyway, I think everyone would have been very proud to have seen the segment about the 517th. The actors talked and talked about what a great unit the 517th was and how honored they were to portray men of this historic outfit.

#### **FOREIGN FRIENDS CORNER**

***Remember, sometimes the translations aren't exactly correct, but the warmth of our friends in Europe always comes through!***

Memorial Day Observances at the Rhone Cemetery  
**Eric RENOUX & Jean Michel SOLDI**

Airborne Museum Asso.

Bonjour Bob,

Just to inform you and all the 517th family that this year for the first time, the 517th and others US Units ( 509th - 551st - 45th - 36th - 3rd and perhaps 550th) will be represented in the American

Cemetery in Draguignan for the Memorial day the 27 of May... We will send you pictures of the celebration.

Memoires de Provence Asso. is leading this action, in partner with Airborne Museum Asso., FFM Asso. and MLD Asso. Everybody are working a lot to make the best for this great and very important celebration and honorate the memory of all the soldiers stayed here in South France... And others....

**S/Sgt Dominique Potier Belgium Army**

Dear Friends,

Like every year, European people are presents for the Memorial Day. Young, old, Girls and boy from Belgium, France, Holland, England and USA hundreds personnes spend thed this day together. Prayer and souvenir are the two words of this moment. Twice a year we have the opportunity to show to the USA that our heroes are not forgotten. They are still in our heart.

God Bless America

**Pascal Prickartz** <prickie@home.nl>

I was searching for information on the internet about the 517th Parachute Infanterie Regiment and found you're name at [www.517prct.org](http://www.517prct.org).

I live in Holland near Margraten and have adopted the grave of **PFC Leonard Dallas Stevens**, service number 35770181 at the American Cemetary Margraten.

I was searching for informatian about Mr. Stevens and would like to contact some relatives, so that I can provid them some pictures of the Cemetary. I read on the website that Mr. **Wayne Caudill** was searching for information. Maybe it's possible for me to get in contact with Mr. Caudill I hope that you can help me.

P.S. I would like to excuse me, if my English writing is not correct!

Hello **Pascal**,

Thank you for your interest in and your tribute to **Leonard Stevens**.

Unfortunately, I do not have the contact information for Wayne Caudill, who is the relative of Stevens and was looking for information in 2006. My Dad was running the MailCall back then, and he did not save that info. But I will post your request for info into the next weekly newsletter that I send out to

members, relatives and friends of the 517th. I will let you know if I hear anything back.

**Bob Barrett**

MailCall@517prct.org

PS: Another person that you might contact for info is **Stevin Oudshoorn**, who adopted the gravesite of Robert Woodhull in Margraten, and has done some research about those buried there.

**Dominique Potier**

S/Sgt Dominique Potier Belgium Army

Dear Veterans, dear friends,

Like every year I was in the US cemeteries last sept 20 for the grave adoptions ceremonies. This year around 500 adopters received their official award, and like every year they were old, young, boys and girls from Europe. Hope these ceremonies will show you how much the European people don't forgot and will never forget your buddies, father, grandfather, uncles.

They are our heroes and like all the heroes they are leaving in our heart forever. God Bless America

**Pascal Prickartz**

Last June I was able to get in contact with the family of Pfc. Leonard Stevens, whose grave I have adopted. I did get a lot of help from a Lady I have met on the site

[www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)

I get in contact with Mr. Larry Watson, who is a nephew of **Pfc. Leonard Stevens**. He was so kind to send me some information about the life of Pfc. Leonard Stevens and I also did get some pictures of Pfc. Leonard Stevens.

I would like to thank you for all your effort regarding my questions about Pfc. Leonard Stevens.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM MAIL CALL**

#2098 March 17, 2012-#2128 October 26, 2012

**Howard Hensleigh**

As you previously reported, **Lory Curtis** and his son paid me a visit a few weeks ago before the KC reunion. They left me several gifts one of which is the book, *"Letters Home, A Paratrooper's Story"*, which Lory authored with the central theme told by his father's (**Harland "Bud" Curtis**) letters to his father and mother. The central theme was the life of a 517th paratrooper from the induction center (where he almost joined the Navy) through Toccoa,

jump school, Tennessee maneuvers, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and back to the States with enough points to get out into civilian life.

There are many accounts of these events, but this one is unique in that it was written contemporaneously with the tragedies and triumphs of each day as we went through them. The letters home give the reader the anticipation of events before some that do happen and some that don't. Bud Curtis was a prolific letter writer who wanted his family, particularly his mother, to know what he was going through at each stage of his service life. Although he did not skimp on the details, he always told the family not to worry about him that he would make it home if his luck held out. He wanted his girlfriend Jill to be given gifts on birthdays and holidays so her letters would keep on coming to boost his morale and his family to keep on sending those care packages to supplement what frequently was a scanty batch of K rations.

If anyone really wants to know what it was like, read this book.

#### **Fan Mail**

Greetings Fellow Troopers,

Just a quick note to say how much we appreciate your newsletter both personally and as a chapter and kudos to the editor who does a fantastic job in putting together such a fine publication. Two thumbs up and wishing you all a very Happy St. Patrick's Day. All the Way! **Bob Slivatz** VP/PAO/Columnist James W. Etherton Detroit Chapter **82nd Abn Div Assn**

**Neil Peek**

Yes, he was my Uncle. **Nova [Bonaventura]** his wife just moved in with me, so that is why all the pics, metals, uniform, stories, papers have come to my attention. She kept all his War "stuff". He told me hours upon hours of stories that have been with me for 30+ years. I have done a great deal of research, looked at a lot of pictures, etc...

**Kenton Floyd Immerfall**

Nephew of **Floyd A. Stott, Co. "I", 517th PRCT**

Enjoyed the photos **Merle McMorro** posted from Nazi Germany. Wonder if he'd be interested in some German-language books I picked up a few years ago at a church rummage sale? Can hardly read a word in any of them but a German owner of a local restaurant was "amazed" that I had the books. She asked, "Where did you get these? We

were not allowed to read these in Germany!" One of the books was written about the wife (Carin) of Hermann Goring. There is even a page of his personal handwriting in 1926 as well as a photo of Hitler with his personal message in 1925. I enjoy all types of history but wished I could read German to learn what these books are all about. No, I am not a Nazi lover...just like to learn.

### **From *Paratrooper's Odyssey*:**

May 17, 1943: Left Newport News

In early May the RCT components staged through Camp Patrick Henry, near Newport News, Virginia. The troopers milled about more or less aimlessly for ten days, making the acquaintance of some lovely members of a W AC contingent and an unlovely shipment of Air Corps replacement officers who were to be their shipboard companions. Some raucous paratroopers tried to get one of the aviators to give them flying lessons from the second-floor balcony of a service club, without success.

On May 17th the troopers climbed the gangplanks for their great adventure. The 517th boarded the former Grace liner Santa Rosa\* with the WACs and aviators, while the 460th and 596th loaded onto the Panama Canal ship Cristobal. As the Santa Rosa pulled away from the dock Chief Warrant officer **Everett Schofield**, Regimental Personnel officer, was at the rail with a few others. Schofield, the oldest man in the regiment and a veteran of the First World War, found himself reenacting scenes that had taken place twenty-six years before. He must have had a sense of "deja vu." Indicating the troopers swarming all over the ship, the Chief said, "Take a good look. This outfit'll never be the same again."

\* By an extremely odd coincidence, the shrine of the actual Ste Roseline was going to become familiar to them all within a few months.

Some time ago, I had contacted you regarding **Joe D. Miller**. I took the article about the 517h PRCT and the following is the editor's remarks in his weekly column:

**Joe Miller** was a delightful visitor in our offices. Joe was **Edith Henningsgaard's** second husband. During World War II Joe served in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. Edith has shared with me a phenomenal story from Joe's Army brethren. In a nutshell, one of them made contact with the descendant of a German soldier

who he killed in 1944. Following the skirmish, the American soldier took wedding photos that were on the dead man. Now he has shared those photos with the German soldier's grandson. Their dialogue is startling and touching.

The German grandson, Georg Rjeck wrote: *"The war that Germany started was wrong. What you and your comrades risked to free Europe is invaluable. The losses from fathers, sons, and friends were painful and sad, no matter on which side. The fact that my father (and his generation) could grow up in peace as a free man and even my generation is owed to you and all Americans who brought down the Nazi regime".*

*The American responded: "That our governments have been seeking the same objectives for many years has contributed to a different and better world in which we can take an honest view of the past and discover the details that many wartime families must live without. To know the facts eliminates the agonizing mystery".*

I thought you might like to share this bit from The Daily Astorian newspaper of Astoria, Oregon.

Have a good gathering of the 517th—I always enjoyed attending with Joe and admired all of you for your courage in serving—

Best regards –

**Edith Henningsgaard Miller**

My interest in **Cpl McConville** stems from a group of medals and patches I bought in 2009. As a paratrooper myself, I sometimes pick up Airborne related items.

The medals came with a note that said they belonged to Clement McConville of the 517th PRCT. I researched the 517th and saw that the medals would be correct for someone who served with the 517th throughout the war. The jump wings with the group were post war and did not have a jump star. Initially, I wanted to determine if the medals were in fact McConville's or a put together group. As I learned more, I wanted to try and document his service.

Circumstantial evidence from various sources showed that Cpl McConville served in the 517th during the time it was in the US, Italy, France and the Ardennes. From your 517th website, I learned about his presence on the Christmas program and voyage back to the USA. A professional researcher said that his records were lost in the St Louis fire, but found some limited information. I purchased copies of the 517th General Orders from another

researcher and found the order awarding Cpl McConville the Purple Heart. A different professional researcher found morning report evidence that he served in the 517th for all his time in the Army. There is a three week temporary duty at FT Benning which I believe was for Jump school. What I would like to find is a copy of his DD214 discharge form which would list his campaigns and qualifications. I have verified the Purple Heart, but the rest is circumstantial.

Thank you,  
**Mike Moyer**

It sounds like everything you found in your research makes sense from all the timelines of the 517th: Fort Benning, Italy, the jump into France, into the Ardennes, and they probably walked into Germany. Back to Joigny France, then the return to the US. He was attached to H Company at the time of the Xmas 1944 roster. (My Dad was also in H Company.)

With your permission, I'd like to post your letter in the next weekly newsletter. The 517 troopers will be glad to know that their service is still appreciated.

Thanks,  
Bob Barrett

Sure you may publish my note.

I was in France a few years ago and went to look at the DZ's around Le Muy. The 517th was a tough, effective unit and part of important campaigns.

I believe I have the 517th General Orders electronically. I am willing to donate them to the web site if you like. Many are hard to read. I had to look carefully to find **Cpl McConville's** Purple Heart order. His name was unreadable on its own but his serial number and home of record were still readable.

regards,  
Mike

Mike,

Yes, I would love to have the General Orders, as well as any details you know about Cpl. McConville. We've been collecting as much as we can about the 517th on the website. Being an independent unit, not part of the 82nd or the 101st, and being dissolved in 1945, they have no official keeper of their history, so we are collecting as much as we can.

In your trip to Le Muy, did you happen to run across *the Musée de la libération Le Muy*? It is run by 2 good friends, **J. Michael Soldi** and **Eric Renoux** (and J. Michael's son **Adrien**). They also organize a great annual celebration every mid-August to commemorate the Liberation in 1944. It is a big and well-run event, and they do much to honor the American and British troops.

Regards,  
Bob Barrett

We visited a small museum in Le Muy which was inside an arch shaped door like an old firehouse or garage. The door was unlocked so we went in. A man was speaking with a couple and observed us but did not say anything. The displays were arranged in a horse shoe and were an incredible collection of Airborne artifacts. We thought afterwards that we had crashed a private tour of an otherwise closed museum. I believe that the people knew we were Americans and possibly heard me pointing out to my wife and daughter the uniforms and equipment that would have been used by my wife's late father. We stayed a short time, left a contribution and departed. It was an amazing place. I would like to go back for a guided tour of the area some time.

Mike

Yes, that museum you ran into is indeed **Eric and J. Michael's** museum. Unfortunately, the museum got flooded out after that, and they have been working for probably two years to restore the collections and to find a new location.

Thanks,  
Bob Barrett

**Dannie Perry, (E-5 SGT US ARMY)**

Son of **Cpl Floyd R. Perry**, 517 PRCT 2BN HQ Co. I did not find **Cpl Clement McConville** SVC Co/H Co, but maybe someone has a similar set of orders that does include him. My father is on the 44 Christmas Roster and these orders validated that he was with the unit at least 90 days prior

This is where I found the authentication for the CIB for my father, **Pvt Floyd R. Perry**, 517th PRCT INF HQ Co 2BN. I used this reference when filing a DD215 reconstruction request for reconstructed DD214 which in turn authorized the retroactive award of the Bronze Star Medal. This document also validated that my father had been with the 517th as an airborne paratrooper infantryman for no



less than 90 days (requirement for CIB) which put him with the unit during the 15 Aug 1944 Invasion/Airborne Assault of S. France in Operation Dragon for award of the Invasion Arrowhead.

My father died July 1961 when I was not quite 3 years old and my brother was born a month later and we knew very little about his service history. In the mid 70's we were told that his records had been destroyed in the '73 fire in St. Louis MO., 2 years ago we found a copy of his WD AGO 53-55 Enlisted Service Record Honorable Discharge. This document was found at the Indiana State Library Archives due to him having to produce a copy for the \$300 post discharge bonus and the Lifetime Hunting and Fishing Stamp. We had been searching for anything authenticating his award of the Purple Heart which would authorize my brother and I remission of fees for 124 college credits at any Indiana State College but because we couldn't find anything we were denied this benefit as dependents for over 30 years.

When we found his discharge documents it indicated that our father was injured twice in Belgium July 1945 while assigned to 517th PRCT HQ Co 2BN and discharged while assigned to 513th PIR HQ Co 2nd BN 17th Airborne DIV after having jumped in Operation Varsity while the 517th PRCT was back in France preparing to go to Japan. His Purple Heart w/1 oak leaf cluster led me to this website and discovery of his name on the 44 Christmas Roster and the CIB orders. Last year I attended the 517th PRCT Reunion in Atlanta for the 1st time and joined the Auxiliary in my father's stead. The last 2 years have been a redeeming historical journey and I share this with the intention of encouraging anyone still looking for info about other service member's history and documentation. Ben Barrett's 517prct.org website, the veterans and the auxiliary members have made a true labor of love and respect honoring these troopers and their history. Through this website and reunions I have recovered the lost history of my father's service with such an esteemed unit for my brother and sister, my 2 sons, my 3 grandsons and many nephews and nieces. I had previously sent about a year ago a biography of my father for inclusion in the section titled, "Meet The Troopers", complete with photos, copies of discharge papers, obituaries and family history, but have yet to see it included in that section of the website. It is possible that I sent it to the wrong e-mail address or it got overlooked or

lost. Please look for it and inform me if you need it resubmitted.

*We were all so sad to hear that Al Sperry died on his way to the Kansas City reunion. When I was going through the Mail Call reports, though, here was this delicious piece from Lory Curtis, summarizing a phone call at the end of May. It is too fantastic to leave out, and we thank Lory for sharing with Mail Call.*

**Lory Curtis – written the end of May, 2012.**

Much to my surprise I received a phone call from 517th trooper **Al Sperry** on Saturday. It was wonderful to hear from him and he brought back to my attention the picture of 517th troopers in camouflage uniforms. Al told me he wrote back in to mail call asking about the camouflage uniforms. In the picture of these 517th troopers the uniforms look like they as Al describes wearing camouflage printed uniforms. They look just like the ones I saw from WWII Marines. I can remember being in the Marines in the 60's and seeing some of this old camouflage gear in the supply rooms. I have attached a couple of Marine WW II pictures of Marines in camouflage uniforms and to me it looks just like the uniforms in the 517th picture, but I could be wrong. If you remember **Colonel Walsh** in 1942 went to observe Soldiers and Marines in combat in the Pacific. He brought back ideas on how he wanted to train his paratroopers. Could there be a chance he saw these uniforms and brought them back to be used by paratroopers??? I do know. If you look at my Dad's combat uniform you can tell the camouflage pattern was spray painted on (see photo), and I thought that everyone in the 517th had their uniforms spray painted for the combat jump. So I would sure like to hear from more people about this if anyone else knows.

**Lory Curtis**

It was great to see **General Seitz** leading the 4th of July Parade and it looked to me he was wearing a 517th hat!

I am so sorry to hear **Myrle** has lung cancer. Please give him my best, and let him know he is in my prayers, and I am going to put his name on the Salt Lake Temple Prayer roll starting today. In fact Betty, I have also put your name on the prayer roll. God bless you two.

On Thursday last week, July 5th, I taped a radio interview on KSL radio here in Salt Lake City about the movie, Saints and Soldiers Airborne

Creed. I talk about the unit and my Dad. If any one is interested they can go to ksl.com and in the upper left hand section of their web page you will see ksl newsradio. Click on this link and go to listen live broadcast. At 9:00 am you will see a show called Everyday life, everyday values. That is where the interview will be.

On Friday, July 6, 2012, I was in California, and met with **Howard Hensleigh**. It was so wonderful to finally meet this great man. On behalf of the 517th I gave him a 517th polo shirt with hat, lapel pin, and 517th ballpoint pens. I think he has enough stuff from the 517th to remind him every day we appreciate him and all he has done for the association. Howard, you are the best.

### Tim Curtis

Thanks for all your hard work keeping MailCall going. I sure look forward to it each week. I want to report what an honor I had last weekend seeing the premier of Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed in Phoenix. It was such a pleasure to sit beside and watch the movie with **Marshall "Mark" Baird** a member of 1st Battalion who lives in the Tucson area. Mark had not been to a movie in 30 years, but we sure enjoyed watching this tribute to the great men of the 517th together with our families. I can't thank my brother enough for all his hard work and dedication bringing this movie to fruition.

Mark's daughter Maggie shared with my wife at the local Home Depot a few days ago that Mark was locked out of his house recently. So of course, what does a 90 year old Paratrooper do but crawl through the window. Don't think Maggie was too happy about that, but of course we know what these guys are made of.

By the way, I'm back to work full time and feeling damn good since heart surgery. AATW

### GRASSE Q&A

Subject: inquiry Chaplains 517th

Dear **Howard Hensleigh**,

Sorry to bother you. I am the French historian trying to figure out which one of the chaplains of your regiment was in Grasse in 1944. Thank you very much for your answer which was forwarded to me by Bob.

To complete the picture would you mind answering a few questions?

1/ Which battalion were you in?

2/ Were you in Grasse yourself? If so do you remember that period (impressions, anecdotes, how you were welcomed etc...)

3/ Do you remember meeting or seeing the two chaplains?

4/ if so can you describe them to me? what were your impressions about them? Were they appreciated? did many men attend their services ? Any anecdotes concerning them? or the services in general

5/ Do you know any survivors who have been in Grasse (from the 2nd Battalion?) who may have been to the services in the English Chapelle in Grasse.

6/ I have details from an English Lady who lived in Grasse and was so relieved to see you guys when you liberated Grasse. She mentions several American soldiers who came to rest in Grasse after the end of the campaign in south of France and before the regiment left for Soissons. These soldiers came to mend the church or do some gardening. Do you have any details about that?

7/ do you have memories and anecdotes of your stay in South of France?

I hope I am not asking too much. I am so fortunate to be able to be in contact with you...

with all my best wishes

**Gilles Teulié**

Salon de Provence

Dear Gilles,

Here are my answers to your questions:

1. 3rd Bn. I was S2 Intelligence on Bn staff during the S. France campaign.

2. No. I was not in Grasse. We bypassed it pursuing the Germans who were retreating rapidly at this phase of the S. France campaign.

3. I met and saw both chaplains many times but not in Grasse.

4. **Brown** was the taller of the two and was probably better looking. Both were good men and appreciated by the troops. The Catholic chaplain held more services during combat operations and got around to the battalions more frequently to serve communion. He had helpers who assisted with mass. I think he is the only one whom the men called Padre.

**Chaplain Guinette** (sp?) played poker at the small regimental officers club at Camp Mackall, NC until **Col. Louis Walsh**, the regimental commanding officer, ordered him to stop. Walsh was replaced by **Rupert Graves** after Tennessee maneuvers shortly



before we embarked for Naples, Italy. Graves commanded the 517th until it was disbanded in 1946.

The most interesting anecdote is that **Father Guinette** once jumped out of the C47 aircraft on a training jump and his parachute harness got caught on the tail of the plane. He wasn't very heavy and the plane may have hit a down draft. The chute did not open or the prop blast would have pulled him free. The air corps flight crew fed a rope out to him which he tied to himself and his harness and they pulled him back into the plane. We used to joke that this greatly increased mass attendance.

Our men in the rifle companies joked about anyone who wasn't up there in the lines with them. When the chaplains came around they would say that it must be safe because the chaplain is here. They didn't mean that the chaplain's presence gave special protection from the Almighty.

5. No.

6. No.

7. I have many, but will limit myself to what I remember about the Grasse area. At this time we were moving rapidly as the Germans retreated. Grasse was well known to us as the perfume capital of the world. It was the job of the S2 section to know where the enemy was and that was hard to do in view of the rapid movement of both forces.

So, often we would be way out front in a black Fiat fourdoor we had "requisitioned". Just beyond Grasse we got too far out, were being surrounded and, after we turned around, chased by motorized German troops. **Rene Benoit**, my French Canadian driver, had the car wide open when we ran out of gas. We coasted into what I thought was a large farm complex to abandon the car. Benoit jumped out of the car and talked excitedly to a Frenchman who came out of a building. He ran back into the building and came out with a funnel and a bucket of liquid which they poured into the gas tank. We escaped. When there was time to talk I told Benoit that what had happened was impossible because the French had no gasoline. Benoit told me that it wasn't gas, but alcohol used to make perfume. After that the timing on the Fiat was a little off, but Benoit, who was also a good mechanic, fixed it.

Thank you for your interest.

**Howard Hensleigh**

Dear Gilles,

When I replied yesterday I failed to mention that I do recall being in Grasse after the S. France

campaign was over for us and we were waiting for transportation to the north. Although this account may not be helpful in rounding out your story on the church, it does provide a framework for its happening.

The 517th was on the lines without relief for 94 days. Mine was extended ten days as I was assigned to orient the armored infantry outfit that relieved us on the lines between Sospel and the Italian border. My time in the Nice area before boarding 40 and 8s for Soissons was very short. However, during that time we were provided the transportation for a daytime visit to Grasse. This was not a mass movement of the outfit and probably no more than one truckload of us went there each day. I think **Col. Graves** and his staff were looking for activities to keep the troops occupied in beneficial endeavors and out of the bars.

I visited a perfume making facility and saw how the abundant fields of flowers surrounding Grasse were converted into perfume. The perfume of course was for sale at the facility. I bought a large (for perfume) metal container four or five inches tall and stored it in my B bag (a duffel bag stored in the rear when we were in combat). This perfume made it back to the States as a homecoming gift for my mother.

So, it is quite plausible that one of our chaplains was on one or more of these trips and that he with some of the paratroopers did some things beneficial to the church in Grasse as related by the English lady.

I am sure this puts the story in context.

**Howard Hensleigh**

Thank you so much for both your mails and all the wonderful anecdotes that you gave me. All of them bring history to life for me and all the details you gave me will be valuable for my book as anecdotes give the feeling of what it was to be there. Which makes me think that I hope you have recorded your story in the war for posterity as some of you fellow GI's have (I read some accounts on the 517th Prct website)?

May I ask you just a few things ?

1/ Which state do you live in the USA?

2/ Was it really hot when you where in Southern France

3/ How were you welcomed in Grasse?

4/ Could it be possible for me to have a portrait of you in Uniform or a picture of you in combat gear, and your permission to reproduce it in my book ?

I saw some of your pictures on the web site, but I am not sure if I saw one of you.

Thank once again Howard for your kindness in sharing all that with me

Dear Gilles,

I will answer keyed to your questions:

1. I now live at a veteran's administration community living center in Menlo Park, California. However I still consider myself a country boy from Iowa where I spent most of my time growing up and attended the University of Iowa for undergraduate and law school degrees. As a lawyer I practiced in Iowa; after attending Columbia University for graduate law study, I served the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon as an international lawyer, including 2 years in Paris as legal advisor to the US Mission to NATO and then served as assistant general counsel for Raytheon Company for 25 years which included many trips to Paris to work on the legal framework for the European production of the HAWK missile system. I am now handicapped with a complete severance spinal cord injury and an amputated right leg, so my traveling days are over in a very good spot for a person of my age and disability.

2. I found the weather in Southern France to be delightful as well as the territory is scenic. An infantryman must endure all types of weather day and night. A hot day is usually followed by a cool night so it is best to be prepared for both as usually you sleep on the ground. I parachuted into France near Callian (about 20 miles from the intended drop zone) wearing an undershirt, a long sleeved undershirt, a wool shirt and a field jacket. During the daytime most of this came off and was tucked under my ammunition belt, then at night it all came in handy. Whether we considered Southern France hot or not depended on where we came from in the States. Since I worked in the fields of Iowa in the summertime where it is both hot and humid, I found the climate where we fought from the drop zone near le Muy to the Italian border to be quite agreeable.

3. Having endured Nazi occupation, the freedom loving people of Southern France greeted us along with their liberation with open arms. The man who put the alcohol, which was undoubtedly scarce, in our gas tank didn't even hesitate. On my visit to Grasse when we were out of the lines the people of Grasse were friendly, very gracious in demonstrating how perfume was made, and in

general showed us a good time. When members of the 517th and their families have returned to towns and villages we liberated it has been a cause for celebration. That still goes on today, as **Allan Johnson**, president of the 517th Association, is there today with his daughter.

4. Although I use the computer all the time, I am not up to sending you a picture. However there are many on the website and possibly Bob Barrett could assist you in this. You have my permission to use anything I have said or done in your book as the purpose of our 517th Association is to elucidate future generations on what the 517th did in hopes that such death and destructions never occurs again.

Highest regards,

**Howard Hensleigh**

## **Reenacting in the US**

### **Kent Immerfall**

In a recent Mail Call you had a fellow (can't find my notes right now -probably the same place that damn business card is) telling about a WW II thing he and others were doing last weekend in NE Ohio. The first person I thought of was Ponnie because she lives in Cleveland, just down the highway from Conneaut. I called the guy whose name and phone number you had in Mail Call. We had a great conversation as I told him that Ponnie would be an excellent representative of the 517th PRCT if she could get to his event.

I was in Iowa all weekend but when I got back Ponnie had left a phone message about the "wonderful" time she had at said event in Conneaut. Her son drove her there and Ponnie said she was "treated like royalty."

The reason I'm passing this information on to you now is that Ponnie doesn't "do the Internet." I think her experience, representing the 517th, is something of value to include in a future Mail Call. I'd like to visit with her and see if she can get her son or another family member to write down the experiences at Conneaut and transfer that information to Mail Call.

If you already know about this...fine.

## **Subject: Uniform**

### **Dear Mr. Hensleigh**

I saw in the mail call today that you mentioned the uniform you wore in southern France. You had told me before that you had kept

your jump jacket, but I didn't know it was the one you wore in southern France. In fact, are you sure the uniform you kept is the one you wore for the jump, as I remember seeing your American flag that was sewn to the shoulder of the jump suit is in your photo album; which gives me the impression you unsewed the patch at the time you threw away your jump suit.

In any case, if by any chance you do have the actual jump suit you wore for the jump into France, I would be very interested if you had the possibility of sending me a photo of it to include in my book.

Please tell me when you will receive my chapter about Montauroux, and if you like it I can send you some of the other chapters about the 517th.

Best regards

**Jean-Loup**

**Dear Jean Loup,**

The fact is that I didn't wear my jump suit on the S. France jump. I wore plain old fatigues and a field jacket. The fatigues were spray painted with camouflage paint as was the field jacket I wore over the fatigue jacket. As I recall, the 596th men whose photo Bob ran in Mail Call wore fatigues, not jump suits. The fatigues were made out of tough stuff and before the jump we were all issued brand new clothing, because we did not know how long we would wear it and supply with our dearth of vehicles did all it could to carry ammo, water and rations to us. A field soldier as well as seasoned campers realize that although hot in the daytime it gets cold at night. We had to be outfitted so we could sleep on the ground without getting too cold. So many of us wore a sleeveless undershirt, a "long john" long winter underwear shirt, the fatigue jacket and the field jacket on top. During daytime forced marches and fire fights most of this clothing came off and was tucked into our web belts. It came out as needed during the night.

I had only one jump suit and saved it. It is still in good condition. Our cloth officers' insignia was sowed underneath the collar of the jackets we jumped so it would not be visible to the enemy. My cross rifles (infantry insignia) are still sewed to the underneath side of my field jacket. I did the sewing so it is a lousy job, but after all these years is still there. Since I wore the field jacket after I was promoted in the Iowa National Guard, I removed the 2nd Lt. insignia. That field jacket and my jump suit

are in my old foot locker in my daughter's (Nancy) attic in Massachusetts so I can't get to it easily. The last I heard the footlocker was locked and Nancy didn't have the key. I told her to take it to a locksmith and he could unlock it easily, but I don't think she has done that. If you made a picture of it, it should be worn by someone to give you a decent picture.

I did unsew the American Flag from the field jacket and pasted it in the scrap book. There are pictures of it in MailCall.

I look forward to receiving your S. France package and will get back to you pronto when I receive it.

Highest airborne regards, HH

**From: Naome Young**

[mailto:[nomiyoung@gmail.com](mailto:nomiyoung@gmail.com)]

Good afternoon Mr Barrett

My name is **Naome Young** and my Father **William H. Young** was part of the 517th.

My mother and I have several pictures that my father had and saved and we would like to donate them. However, we don't know where to send them to. I would appreciate any information you could provide us in doing so.

Hi, **Naome**,

I'm not the official keeper of records and photos of the 517th. However, I have built the website as an unofficial historical archive. My intention is that the website will remain for many years (forever?) and it has become the de facto and most complete historical record for the unit. But I just post copies of the photos and records; I don't generally keep the originals myself. But I would love to have copies of the photos to post on the web site. Can you scan them?

As far as I know, there is no official record-keeper for the 517th. But I will ask around. There might be some museums in the US and Europe that have some 517 items and might like the photos in their collections, depending on where they were taken.

**Bob Barrett**

**Pat Seitz and Alan Grier**

Thanks to you and Darrell for the dues reminder. Have just put a stamp on the envelope with our check addressed to Joanne.

Please give our thanks to **Irma and Arnold Tarnion** for the pictures. The way they take care

of all visitors is beyond fabulous. What they did for Dad, Alan and me when we visited Belgium in 2005 was magnificent. I hope that **Theresa Pugh** has an opportunity to get up to Belgium in addition to visiting Le Muy **Eric and Michel** are incredible folks as well. So glad she is in contact with them. No words can do justice to describing our 2005 trip. I hope everyone has the opportunity to visit and see how faithfully dedicated to beautifully preserving the history of our "Band of Brothers" the wonderful folks in France and Belgium are.

Am so thrilled to see how well Saints and Soldiers is doing. Any chance that it might show in the Miami area?

The Seitz clan is heading to Kansas for the Friday naming of the new elementary school at Ft. Riley, Ks after Dad. Dad told us the ceremony would be low key, but we have just learned that former Defense Secretary Gates is coming as well as Kansas' U.S. Senators. Thus, Alan and I have promised to be on our best behavior unlike the "mischievous" paratroopers of the 517th PRCT.

## SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

**Gary Burris**

[Burris940@yahoo.com](mailto:Burris940@yahoo.com)

Just trying to learn as much as I can about my grandfather, **Ralph M. Loving, Sr.** He passed away 10-13-93.

**Hoyt Kelley**

Somehow I missed the 10/30/11 Mail Call (#2076) and did not see **Howard Hensleigh's** letter until today. I apologize for not getting back to Howard and hope you can pass this note on to him. I do remember **Lt. Emmons** and am glad to hear about his partial recovery. I had almost the same experience with **Col. Bill Boyle** who I was constantly with until he was shot in Belgium. We often played chess together, even at forward O.P.'s I last saw him when Sgt. Steele brought him in and he was shot through both arms and his chest. The building we were using as an O.P. was blown up at that time, and I left with others partially wounded. I assumed Wild Bill Boyle (who we all would have gone through hell for) was dead, and believed so until I got some news from the 517 in recent years. I also had the opportunity to correspond with Col. Boyle, and tell him of my respect for him.

We also discussed Bill Young, who Col. Boyle said was one of those mistakes you make in

selecting people you need to trust. (I'm not sure of his exact words). I told Col. Boyle that I had the privilege to serve with the finest officer in the Paratroops (Col. Boyle) and the worst (Bill Young). Col. Boyle often said we were part of the Irish Mafia, Boyle, Dugan, Brodie, Kelley, etc. etc.

**Robert Earley**

Subject: **Charles L. Kovacs** 517th Parachute Infantry Information

I am looking for some information about my grandfather whom I have never met and recently found out about. I have found some information that he was a private in the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment out of Ft Bragg. I am looking for some information about his service and life. I know he passed away in a train accident in 1976 and is from Fowlersville, MI. Please contact me if you have any additional information. Thanks.

**Bill Goswick**

My name is **Bill Goswick**, Nephew of **Jesse Goswick 517 PIR 3Batt, Co G**. I haven't written in a while and am still asking for any photos or information regarding my uncle. If you have any information or knows of anyone with info please contact me. HH, here is my new email [poppopgos@att.net](mailto:poppopgos@att.net).

**Eric M. Munshower, Capt, USAF**

I came across your website while researching my Great Uncle **Walter Duzinski**. I had very little information to go by so I plugged his name into Google and it directed me to your Mail Call No2069 from 19 Sept 2011 and I was shocked to find not only my uncle's name mentioned but his actual signature on the "short snorter" you have posted. It is very exciting to finally have a place to start in the search of my Uncles military history. Thank you so much for putting this website together to not only preserve the history of the 517th, but for also helping folks learn about the sacrifices of all of these great men!

I'm certain it is a long shot, but if you do have any additional info about my Uncle Walter it would be great to hear.

Very Respectfully,

**Eric M. Munshower, Capt, USAF**

Commander, 171st SFS

171st Air Refueling Wing

DSN: 294-7218 Comm: 412-776-7218

CELL: 412-418-9135

### John Matticks

I am looking for information on a **Ralph E Matticks**, who was a medic that served with the 517th during WW2. I don't know much about him but he wasn't on the 1944 Christmas roster. I do know that he received a Bronze star and served in Italy, France and during the Battle of the Bulge. I'd like to know what unit he was in and anyone I could contact that may have known him/ may have more information on his time during the war.

Thanks for the help.

### Joe Combest

Duncan, OK

[JoeCombest@yahoo.com](mailto:JoeCombest@yahoo.com)

My dad, Ben Combest, was in Co. G. He passed in September of 2010. I have never had the opportunity to speak with anyone who knew him from the 517<sup>th</sup>. If there is anyone out there who knew Ben Combest, I would love to hear from you!!!

### Tim Dahlstrom

My father, **Robert V. "Bob" Dahlstrom** was a radio operator in the Regimental Headquarters. I have attached some pictures for your website.

Also, you have some photos of **Elmer J. Anderson** sent in by **John Carrigan**. Elmer J. Anderson was a friend and platoon made of EJ Anderson's and was with him when he got killed. I would like John Carrigan's contact info/email because he notes there is some correspondence from friends and I wanted to find out if any was from my dad. Or, please have him call or email me.

### David Clark

My Uncle was **Corwin C. Clark of H Company**. I plan to write up his story as best as I can through v-mail letters and other accounts. I read Ben's story and the German shell that injured him in Bergeval killed my uncle Corwin. In his story, he includes the report showing that Corwin was KIA in that attack. I was wondering if you knew more about that day and the attack. My father who died a few years ago had always heard about the shelling, but never knew any more than that and it always seemed to be a mystery. If you know anything that could help me with this chapter, I'd greatly appreciate the help. This site and Ben's story have already helped me tremendously.

I was also wondering if you know if **Howard Hensleigh** is still alive. He is mentioned in one of

my uncle's v-mails back home to Iowa in response to a question about him from my grandmother. There's a chance he may have some information as well if he is still with us.

Thanks for your time. Ben's story and the info I gained from it was amazing. I can't believe I found it.

Thanks and best wishes.

### Response from Bob Barrett

I copied **Howard Hensleigh**, who is very much alive and well.

I probably do not know much more about Jan 5 1945 than you already know. Most of the info is in Ben's bio at: [http://517prct.org/bios/ben\\_barrett/barrett\\_b.htm](http://517prct.org/bios/ben_barrett/barrett_b.htm) I can't add too much more, except that the shelling was apparently from a German anti-tank "88". Ben said that when they started getting shelled, they all looked for cover, but there wasn't much there at the time, so he and some others ducked down into a shallow driveway, but that wasn't deep enough to serve as good cover.

When I visited Bergeval with Ben in 1999, we looked for the exact spot where Ben was wounded, and we found a likely location, although Ben wasn't 100% sure, since he didn't see the depression that he tried to cover in.

There are some stories about the liberation of Bergeval, but they do not mention the H Company casualties on Jan 5.

### And a response from Morris McDowell:

This message is for **David Clark** the relative of **Corwin Clark**. My Cousin **Layton Pippin** and Corwin were killed by the same shell. I have visited the area where they were killed. I would like to talk to David very much. My mail is [garandaddy@yahoo.com](mailto:garandaddy@yahoo.com).

### Robert R Cooper, Co D

Subject: **Homer Beaver**

I don't have any pictures of Homer. But I was in the same Platoon as Homer he was Good soldier. We had many conversations together. I understood he was an excellent Golfer. I have always thought about him another good friend of mine. **Floyd Polk** was in same house that blew in France. I am now 93 and on Oxygen. Cannot travel much bad back, and low red cells in my blood; still able to use computer.

AB/all the way



**Gilles Teulié**

[gilles.teulie@free.fr](mailto:gilles.teulie@free.fr)

Dear American friends,

I am a French historian working on the history of an English Church that was built in Grasse (French Riviera) in 1891.

During world War Two the Germans were expelled from Grasse by the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment who landed in Provence during operation Dragoon on 15 August 1944 and liberated Grasse on the 24th (I guess it was the second battalion but am not sure). The English Church in Grasse was used by the Germans and then by the American troops, as stated by a witness. That witness gave very few details except that being an English resident in Grasse she had feared the Germans, but of course was much relieved when the Americans arrived. She explains that the Americans had a church service in the English Church (St John the Evangelist) every evening as during the day, they and the "padre" as she called him, went to the front before coming back in the evening. She does not give the name of that "padre".

Could you be so kind as to help me to trace the chaplain she refers to? He might be the chaplain of the 517th PIR. On your web site I found references to a **Cpt Charles Lynn Brown**, Regimental Chaplain and **Cpt Alfred J. Guenett**, Catholic Chaplain. Can anybody confirm? Any photographs of those chaplains? Any photographs of American troops during service in Grasse and more particularly in that church which is easy to recognize as it is a Half timbered church (I can provide pictures of the church if anybody is interested). Any accounts of the soldiers presence in Grasse ?

Thank you for your help

With my best wishes

**Carol Roseberry Dreesen**

[Carol.dreesen@gmail.com](mailto:Carol.dreesen@gmail.com)

Please add me, my father **Lt. George Madison Roseberry of Service Company**. Love to read about his unit. He never talked about the war. I asked him where the pictures were taken and he told me he didn't remember. He had a good memory but wouldn't talk to me about them. Thank you.

**Randy Heber**

Merrill, MI

[dkheber@gmail.com](mailto:dkheber@gmail.com)

I'm the son of **Robert Heber**, who served with the 517<sup>th</sup> in France. He passed away January 13, 2010 at 88 years old. I had and have the greatest respect for him and the men of your generation. If anyone knew my father and would like to respond, please feel free. I think his nickname was "Cleaver" as people teased him about his little hometown paper from Harrison MI he received named the Clare County Cleaver.

**James Arterburn**

My father, **Nello R. Arterburn**, was a Sergeant and Staff Sergeant with Company G. He passed in 1985 from cancer.

I'm writing a biography on both my father and mother (Dorothy Arterburn), and am looking for anyone who has stories or recollections to share that I could reference.

Please let me know who I might be able to contact. Sincere thanks.

**John Doherty**

I was hoping you could help me.

I have recently come across documentation about my Grandfather -**James M McFadden**, who served in WWII. He died at the young age of 66 and I never had the chance to know him.

This is the beginning of my journey.

What I have been able to discover is that he was a member of the 596th Parachute Engineer Company of the 517 Parachute Infantry Regiment. He is on the Christmas list that was published on your site (page 7)

I have also attached 2 pictures of him as well. I have correspondences sent to my mother Joanne (McFadden) Doherty from a **Charles Pugh** of Ft Worth Texas, and a **Captain George B Eldridge**.

I did scan your website and was able to see his image in one of the unidentified photographs. I would like to know anything I can about him locations, friends, accounts anything that can give me a picture of who he was and what we did.

I know this might be a difficult research as the generation is sadly passing by but I want to share with his grand children the story of his courage and honor.

Can you help me?

I can be reached at this email address or by cell phone if need be. Please tell me which you would prefer

I just received this documentation and am thrilled to embark on this journey!

*Sadly, Melvin Jarman died after the following email was sent. However, we are sure his family would still appreciate any information.*

**Stephen L Jarman**

My Father, **Melvin Jarman**, was in the 3rd battalion [G Company] and we would love to hear about members of the 517th.

He is still living in Delaware and will be 90 years old in October 26th.

He is presently in a nursing home but this is temporary and he will come home again in several weeks.

Mel has 7 children and is a widower. Children are all living. Also 16 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren and 2 great great grandchildren

I will update as I can.

Thank you much.

**Matthew Marohn**

My grandfather recently passed away on 28 July. He was a glider rider with the 325th in the 82nd ABN. This is not an experience he spoke much about. As I myself later became a paratrooper with the 505th 82nd ABN, he opened up a little more about his experiences. The history of what paratroopers like my grandfather, great uncle, their brothers, and you did is vitally important.

My grandfather had a twin brother, **Calvin James "Jim" Marohn**, whom through the amazing job you've done with this site, and through things found in grandfather's possessions, I've come to learn served in Company C, 517th, and was wounded by a tree burst on 5 January, 1945 on the high ground surrounding Bergeval. I found the information on page 34 of the Company C history.

Among the items we found going through my grandfather's possessions were a medal awarded in Nice, France, to the 517th, his Purple Heart, as well as various awards etc. I've already began compiling information to request his DD214. While WIA and returned home, he eventually needed to have his leg amputated, and he died as a result of the wounds he suffered in I believe 1947 or 1948.

Would you like any pictures of these items? Is there anyone from C Co I could reach out to to see if he knew my Great Uncle?

Thank you so much for your time and the hard work you've put into this amazing site.

Airborne All The Way,

**Robert**

Columbus, OH

[aalock@wowway.com](mailto:aalock@wowway.com)

I am doing some family history and would like to hear from anyone who knew or served with **Sgt. Homer Beaver** from the 517. He died on November 4, 1944 and is buried at the Rhone. Any info about our uncle would be greatly appreciated.

**Wesley Miller**

My great uncle, **Frank Aloysius Croshal**, was a member of the 517th Combat Parachute Team. He passed away in 1998. I have more information but thought I'd start with this.

**Jill Johnson**

Park Rapids, Minnesota

I am researching **Pvt. Bertil Gustafson, 517th Parachute Infantry, Company E** who died January 3, 1945 in Werbomont, Belgium. Can you tell me what happened that day? What were the events that led up to that day?

Thanks for your help.

**Jon Ryckert**

[J\\_rykert@live.com](mailto:J_rykert@live.com)

I am the great grand nephew of Pvt. Ralph Rykert. I don't know much about my relative and so I checked out this website [and found] that he served with the 596.

**Edith Clayton Jones**

[Jonesec10@gmail.com](mailto:Jonesec10@gmail.com)

I am the daughter of **Benjamin Jackson Clayton**, who was a member of the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment in WWII. He was in the Battle of the Bulge. My dad died in 1997 at the age of 81. He was so proud of his service and the incredible men he served with.

## Updates

### Teresa Pugh's Trip

**Theresa Pugh**

Daughter of **Charles Pugh October, 2012**

[I have arranged for a plaque, which] will be given to Jean Michele and Eric on behalf of the 596

& 517. It is for the new Liberation Museum in Le Muy, France.

The actual size is about 20 inches wide and 14 inches deep. The message is in French and English. Many thanks to the Moses family for finding this handsome photo. This photo makes it look like a framed photo. It is all metal. The photo is of the men in Georgia before they departed in 1943. It is etched in aluminum and looks like pewter with a wood frame. This photo does not do it justice.

This will be given to the museum along with two flags flown over the US Capitol building.

A special thanks to **Steve Markle** for scanning about 900 photos, articles, memorabilia, and letters from the soldiers that will be given to the museum. That surely took Steve many weeks or even months to organize and scan. All are categorized by the soldier's name.

I will see Le Muy, the Chateaux Ste. Roseline abbey and some of the neighboring towns. I send greetings from my mom, **Ann Pugh**.

### **Southern France Report – August, 2012** **Claire Johnson Giblin**

Greetings -I have returned from France with Dad (**Allan Johnson, 596**) and **Leo Dean (Reg HQ)**. We also met up with **Ignatious "Joe" Bail**, whom we'd last seen in 2009 as he also received the Legion of Honor. I believe he was with the 460th, which would mean we had the 596, the 460th and the 517 all represented. Joe was there with his entire family including grandchildren. One other US vet, Dick Field of the 551, is also a regular at observances in Provence. Here is a fast summary and a few pics.

We began in Chablis. Dad and the 596 were in Chablis for about a month in spring of 1945, and this is our third visit to try to find where he'd been. We were helped by winery owners, who not only knew the history of the area but also knew of a local mechanic ("garagiste") who had worked on the Jeeps and the GMC trucks when the Americans were there. He still works, but only on the older vehicles, because he's old, he told us.

On to Geneva, where friend to the 517 **Gilles Guignard** lives. We had a fantastic time in Geneva, seeing all the sights and meeting his family. Gilles, as Mail Call regulars know, is passionate about WWII history, especially in France and especially about the 517. Our route from Geneva to Provence took us down storied National Route 7, which was miles of debris and death in 1944 and 1945. Gilles

was able to show us pictures taken of exactly where we were and show us how it looked in the aftermath of battles. We spent the night in Bollene, near Montelimar, and met local historians and an author there. Willie and Nathalie welcomed us into their home and had produced a dvd of footage both of the area and of the Allied invasion, including that famous clip of our own **Bill Boyle** getting ready to jump. We arrived to our usual place in Trans-en-Provence (note to 2013 travelers: they are renovating many of the bathrooms from shower over bathtub to a much easier walk-in style, so be sure to ask for *douche italienne* if you have those needs for next year).

This year was the second for events at Le Mittan and La Motte, including a great fete (street party) in La Motte, as well as a fantastic luncheon at Valbourges, where the glider unit landed and also, I think, HQ for the 551st. All of the American vets and their families were also honored to be invited to the annual British welcome luncheon at their hotel, which they describe as a gathering of friends. Les Arcs held a series of commemorations and wreath-layings, followed by a ball; Allan and Leo laid the wreath at the bridge in Les Arcs (Gilles tells me **Bill Boyle** had been right at Les Arcs with **Howard Hensleigh**). We attended a first-ever static line jump in Le Muy at sunset -beautiful, with a total of 21 jumpers. Finally, Salernes has been hosting impressive celebrations for the past few years, including a parade into town from their encampment, reenactment of the arrival of the Allies and the first meeting with local resistance, followed by a series of commemorations, dinner and a fete in town, all organized by Salernes' own **Bertrand Prud'hon**.

Friends to the 517 and co-founders of the now-closed Musee de la Liberation, (but searching for a new home since the devastating floods of 2010) Eric **Renoux** and **Jean Michel Soldi** are constantly building new connections and working with local organizations to achieve the goal of meaningful and personal commemorations. They are committed to the history of the August 15 Allied invasion, and they have been solid friends to the 517 since before they opened the museum in 1994. They are instrumental to the new La Motte and Le Mittan observances, and the huge luncheon at Valbourges are all their "babies," and they've also been supportive of other events in Les Arcs, Trans and Salernes -and others, I am sure. Each year, the most meaningful commemoration is the "unofficial"



event at the Rhone Cemetery, and this year was no exception. Organized by Jean Mi and Eric, there were probably 200 reenactors, and our British friends always attend. The Rhone, always beautiful, has been invigorated by its new superintendent Bruce Malone and associate Alison Libersa, whom we'd met last year. Alison has worked to increase attendance at the Rhone, reaching out to schools and conducting tours. Bruce, as well, knows and cherishes the stories of those buried there.

**If you have a friend or family member buried at the Rhone and would like his story shared, send a photo along with your story or remembrances to Alison at [libersaa@abmc.gov](mailto:libersaa@abmc.gov)**

We concluded our trip with good friends to the 517, **Patricia ("Patou") and Roland Orengo** in Sospel. Many of you remember Patou and Roland from the Savannah reunion in 2005, a trip they cherish. Patou and Roland have worked to preserve the memory of the 517's sacrifices in and around Sospel, the last French town liberated in late October, 1944 more than four months after June 6. They have built a memorial of the items found there on their property, reminding all that the war was literally in their backyard. We had a short service there, remembering not only the losses of 1944-45 but also the fact that **Don Fraser's** ashes were scattered here, as well as that incredible year of 2009, when they had an unbelievable seven veterans there in Sospel. [Bob -that video of this year's short service was on Patou's facebook page].

Each trip reminds us that the 517 PRCT has many good friends in Europe, that your sacrifice is still decades later appreciated and revered. I must have heard people say it to Leo and Allan 10 times, "Thank you. It is because of you that I speak French." They're humbled to represent the good men of the 517, the 460 and the 596. It is unbelievable to be in France during this time in August. August 15 in the states is rarely recognized; in Provence, it was the beginning of the end of years of hell and occupation. All the best to my favorite veterans with thanks

Welcome to Mail Call, **Mel Trenary** in Livingston, Texas! Mel from A Company had a beer on 15 August to celebrate the anniversary. His email is [mctrenary@me.com](mailto:mctrenary@me.com)

**Morgen N. Biehler**

My father, **John H. Neiler**, passed away Sunday, September 16, 2012. I am his oldest daughter, Morgen N. Biehler. I 'cracked' his yahoo

account about two weeks ago and discovered the wonderful MailCall emails. They are a link to my Dad's life that I knew almost nothing about. He rarely mentioned the war to his 3 children, so what we are discovering through the link is valuable to us.

Dad's obit is in The Oak Ridger (Oak Ridge, Tennessee) [www.oakridger.com](http://www.oakridger.com) today. I thought perhaps you would mention it in your next MailCall. Please continue to keep his name on the subscriber list, as we will follow it.

**Morris McDowell**

March 20th –I received a call from Kyle Ford the Son of **Herb Ford**, informing me of the passing of his Father. He had been in a nursing home for several years. Herb's service was at the Patterson Funeral Home in Atlanta on Thursday March 22nd.

Herb was a member of 1st Platoon, 'H' Company, 3rd Bn. 517 P.I.R. Herb will be greatly missed.

**Merle W. Mc Morrow**

It is with a great deal of sorrow that I report that **Martin Mertz**, 1st Sgt. of Battery C, 460th PFA Bn died on March 14, 2012. He was the first person I met when I reported for duty at Camp Mackall in March 1943. He was truly a soldier to be admired.

**Larry Greene**

[\[mailto:lkq498@msn.com\]](mailto:lkq498@msn.com)

702-614-5960

**Subject: My Dad, Matthew Bernard Greene**

My Dad was in the 517 unit. He died March 12, 2012, and his birthday was 11-24-21. He received several medals including the Silver Star. I have done quite a bit of research online, but have not been able to come up with a list of personnel that served in the 517. Is that available? I would appreciate any help you can provide. In the late 80's Dad was contacted by someone who was writing a book about the 517, and that man interviewed and corresponded with my Dad for information to include in the book. Dad was supposed to get a copy of the book for his help, but did not get one. My Mom does not remember that author's name. If you have any knowledge of this book or if it was completed, please send me his name. Thank you.

**Bob Barrett's response**

Larry,

Thank you for your note. I will include it in the next MailCall newsletter.

I did take a quick look through the obvious records that I have, including the December 1944 roster. Matt Greene is listed with Company G.

I do know that my Dad, Ben Barrett, did trade numerous emails with your Dad over the years, and it seems that he did attend a reunion or two. You can find those emails using the search function at <http://517prct.org/search.htm> and search for "Matt Greene".

There were a couple of books written about the 517th. The Paratroopers' Odyssey was written in 1985 and is on the website, but I don't see any mention of Matt Greene in that.

There was another book published by Turner Publishing in the 90's, where his name is listed, but no more info. [http://www.amazon.com/517th-Parachute-Regimental-Combat-Team/dp/1563114089/ref=sr\\_1\\_7?ie=UTF8&qid=1334538169&sr=8-7#\\_](http://www.amazon.com/517th-Parachute-Regimental-Combat-Team/dp/1563114089/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&qid=1334538169&sr=8-7#_)

There is one more book, "Battling Buzzards", but I don't see him in that either.

I am sorry for the loss of your dad. He was a member of a very elite fighting unit.

From **Bill Hudson, 596th**

I just heard from **Lyle Madison** of the 596th that **Jack Guthrie** died on 29 April in a retirement facility in Virginia Beach, VA (Lyle's sister-in-law lives in the same facility).

A memorial will be held there on Saturday, May 5.

As I understand it, Jack came into the 596th's third platoon with the cadre, and later transferred to the 517th's third battalion, where at Bergstein, he ran a mortar squad. He must have been in it from the beginning to the end.

His address was Westminster-Canterbury, 3100 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 24351

His son's address is: Scott Guthrie, 1343 Cornwall Place, Norfolk, VA 23508

**Donald E. Walker, B Company**, passed on August 23, 2012. He was 89. **Virginia (Ginger) Walker** has spoken to me about how much it meant to him to stay connected to the 517, once they could no longer travel to reunions, through The Thunderbolt, which she would read to him cover to cover each time it was received. Some of you in B Company may have some memories to share and

additionally, a number of you have enjoyed the Walkers at past reunions.

Virginia (Ginger) has asked for your prayers. This is of course a very difficult time for her. Donald was in a nursing home for the past several years and she rarely left his side. She does not receive email but would certainly appreciate cards and letters. Her address: 2209 Shepherd St., Wichita Falls, TX.

**Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

Bob: this Mail Call arrived quite nicely. Thanks for all your effort. Thank you also for the wonderful pictures of **George Spears**. He will be missed. His bride of 62 years and the rest of his family are in our thoughts and prayers. He was an example to us all. May he rest in peace at the Good Lord's right hand. He certainly was a faithful servant who ran a superb race.

**Betty Traver**

Please extend our condolences to **Julia Spears**. We always had a wonderful time talking to them at the reunions. Speaking of reunions, we will be unable to attend this year due to Myrle's health.

**J. Mickael Soldi & Eric Renoux**

15 Aout 1944 Airborne Task Force Museum Association, Southern France  
[anvil-dragon@hotmail.com](mailto:anvil-dragon@hotmail.com)

Please transmit to Juliette and all the Spears Family our deepest condolences. Georges will always host a special place in our hearts, and always be remembered here in France with all his brothers in arms of the great "F" company. Mickael & Eric.

**Jerry Wofford**

'Nephew Of A Buzzard'

It saddens me to read of **George Spears** passing. I recall meeting George at the Salt Lake City re-union and particularly how he made me feel welcomed even though I was not one of them. I was there because my Uncle **George Cavnar** was a 'Battlin Buzzard' and though he was no longer able to attend the re-unions due to being legally blind, I was his link to the 517th. I made sure that he got a copy of every Mail-Call sent out by **Ben Barrett** and now capably handled by his son Bob. Uncle George looked forward so much to those Mail-Calls and the fact that I was able to be a small part in that process made me feel very good indeed. **George Spears**

took time to explain to a novice like me, some of the things that went on back then that only they would know about. These guys were my heroes and here was this man sitting at a table with me who was one of them. He was willing to help me try to understand the history of this elite combat unit and how they felt toward each other after stepping into hell and living to tell of it. I never said thank you to George Spears. I can only hope that he saw the gratitude in my eyes.

To all the 517th soldiers that have made their final jump, 'Rest In Peace Brave Soldier, For Your Cause Was Just.'

### **Lory V. Curtis**

It is with true sadness that I read on mailcall of the passing of **Donald "George" Spears**. What a great man, and what an honor it was for me to meet and know him at our reunions. He will truly be missed. When I heard the news I immediately went to the pictures I took at the Atlanta Reunion. Looking over those pictures sure brought back some great memories and made me realize we are a family of friends and relatives of these great paratroopers. I hope George, and I am sure he did have a wonderful time at the reunions. I sure have. He was at every event - The band concert, trip to Fort Benning and Toccoa.

All my best and deepest sympathies to his family.

### **Chris Lindner**

I just wanted to let the gang know that **Darrell Egner** had his gallbladder removed about a week ago.

Darrell is now at home and he has rehab nurses coming in. He is getting better so he can be at the reunion in July.

I told Darrell I was going to let you know and also I told him I was going to tell you all he sounds just like himself "Crabby as usual", none of us would know Darrell any other way!!!! Haha

*Oh, Darrell was in great form both at the KC reunion and a few days later in Washington DC as he received the Legion of Honor!*

### **Angela Forrest-Burge**

[aeftburge@aol.com](mailto:aeftburge@aol.com)

My father was **2lt. John W. Forrest** who passed away on May 25, 2012 (Memorial Day weekend, fittingly). He always considered himself

a soldier even though he lost his leg in combat and was retired. He celebrated his association with the 517<sup>th</sup> and highly respected all the men he served with. The more I learn about them all, the more humbled I am by all of their sacrifices. For the families and veterans who read this, my admiration of what you gave for our freedom is boundless. Thank you is not enough.

### **Kenton Floyd Immerfall**

Nephew of Floyd A. Stott

1st Lt. "I" Co, 3rd Bat, 517th PRCT

This last Mail Call (#2122) was another "eye opener" for the 517th Family and this wonderful country that our "Greatest Generation" is leaving us sooner than later. I will miss visiting with Trooper **Marvin D. Moles** at Reunions because, like your Dad (Trooper **Benedict Barrett**), he told me exactly what war was like...and didn't pull any punches. I always felt I was closer to my Uncle **Floyd A. Stott** because of the conversations with other "I" Co. troopers. God Rest Marvin's soul as well as those of the other 517th Family members recently gone.

### **Myrle and Betty Traver**

I want to give you an update on Myrle. He had fifteen radiation treatments and then we played the waiting game for over six weeks. Finally the doctor ordered another cat-scan and Praise the Lord the cancer in his lung is dormant. She didn't say gone but it is dormant and he is feeling great. I want to thank everyone for the prayers. He will have to have a cat-scan every three months to keep a check on the cancer.

We missed the reunion because of this so now that he is able to travel again we are going on a cruise Nov. 10th and we will celebrate our 70th anniversary.

Also want to let Lory that we say Saints and Soldiers/Airborne Creed when it was here in Las Vegas. The movie was great and Myrle said that there were a few scenes that shook him up with memories. Myrle wants to know where the movie was filmed?

Our friend, Mark Easton just returned from Germany. He brought back many pictures of the Schmidt/Bergstein area. He found the fox hole that **Myrle, Guichi and Flynn** were in when they were captured. Also pictures of the mine field they crossed and all of the surrounding area. He talked to the villagers who were soldiers and fought our troops. He said they were very happy to take him on

a tour of the battlefield. They are still removing mines from the field. He gave us two dvd's of pictures including the German ex-soldiers. Mark was able to follow the map that Myrle had given him.

### FROM THE WEBMASTER

We're still waiting for more entries for the *Meet the Troopers* section of the Web site. **There were 2500 soldiers in the 517<sup>th</sup>, and we only have 63 bios on the site!** It is an important part of the 517<sup>th</sup> history. There's no time like the present to make a few notes about your life. Start simple. You can always add more info and more photos later. Where is **Leo Dean? Gene Frice? Lud Gibbons?** Families and friends, please get after your troopers to get their story in. Just get a few words down.

Material submitted is completely up to the soldier, or to their family and relatives. Take a look at the biographies already submitted -- Jesse Darden's bio is a great example. So is Merle's -- if he would send me some better pictures.

[http://www.517prct.org/bios/merle\\_mcmorrow/merle\\_mcmorrow.htm](http://www.517prct.org/bios/merle_mcmorrow/merle_mcmorrow.htm)

But feel free to be as creative as you like. It's your story. This information can be as long or as short as you like. We would like to see any or all of the following items:

- photos - then and now
- memories from 517th training and WWII
- biography - before and after the 517th
- comments, philosophy, opinions
- anything you want to say to your friends and relatives

### FROM YOUR PUBLISHERS

**Make your plans to come to Kissimmee in January 2013 and Palm Springs in April or May of 2013. Don't forget about the Operation Dragoon observance in Washington, DC in July, 2013! Your association needs you and your friends will be waiting!**

**The Next Reunion Looms!**

### TAPS

William Herbert "Herb" Ford, H Co.  
John W. Forrest  
Matthew Bernard Greene, G Co.  
Jack Guthrie, 596  
Melvin L. Jarman, G Co.  
Steven "Kopie" Kovach, HQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Bat  
Marvin Moles  
John Neiler  
Alex Seirra, D Co.  
Donald George Spears, F Co.  
Al Sperry  
Martin Mertz, 460<sup>th</sup>  
James "Art" Vesco  
Don Edwin Walker, Co. B  
.



















Dr. Al Sperry, O.D., was driving from his home in Texas to the Kansas City reunion. While stopping overnight in Oklahoma, Al passed away. He died with his boots on trying to get to the reunion so he could be with his brother paratroopers. Airborne all the Way Al Sperry!



## The Thunderbolt Newsletter

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**Editor: Claire Giblin**

## 517th PIR organized March 1943 at Camp Toccoa, Georgia



TOCCOA, GEM OF GEORGIA