

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)

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

Thunderbolt

Newsletter Date: Winter, January 2014



Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since March 1943

Men of the 517th gather together in Kissimme, Florida one more time January 18 - 20, 2014 to renew old friendships and discuss the important issues. And to remember their 517th soldiers and friends of so many years. See pictures and information in this issue.

Don't forget to attend the West Coast mini reunion in Palm Springs, California, March 10-14, 2014. See information and the registration form in this issue.

Again this year on Saturday May 31, 2014, the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum will be hosting a D-Day fun run up and down Mount Currahee on Saturday morning. (see <http://www.toccoahistory.com>). If you decide to go we recommend you stay at the Country Hearth Inn, 302 W Savannah St Toccoa, GA 30577 (706) 297-7799.

Packed in this Chute

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Greetings from the President

As I write, it is snowing yet again here in New Jersey. The winter has been one of the worst in memory, even worse than the one we went through when my daughter was an infant, all those years ago. I remember doing a lot of hunting that year.

The weather has been so bad that it was really a nice break to be in Kissimmee for a few days in January – though the weather was so bad in New York that it took us an extra day to get home! No matter – we had a really enjoyable extra day in Sunny Florida. Truly, we could be stuck many worse places.

As always, Kissimmee was great. We had 8 veterans again: **Ray Hess, Leo Dean, Bill Webb, Darrell Egner, Hal Beddow, Steve Armbruster, Phil McSpadden** and myself. We also had a large contingent of **Col Bill Boyle's** family, including **Babbie, Mimsey, Babsie** and into the next generation. **Major Don Fraser's** daughter **Nancy Fraser Armand** was there, and **Gene Frice's** daughter **Karen Frice Wallace** with her lovely **Wayne** made an appearance. We laughed a lot, ate and drank a lot, and swapped more stories than you'd think possible. As **Ben Barrett** used to say, we fought the war all over again. You'll be glad to know that we won again.

Helen Beddow and **Nancy Armand** arrived a day early and the Hospitality Suite was fully stocked when we opened on Friday. Lots of family and friends trickled in and out over the weekend – Darrell's family came to the banquet, as did Ray Hess's family and Bill Webb's son. This was all a good thing, because we needed every hand on deck to navigate the technical difficulties, which the team did so well I never even knew there was a problem until hours later!

We have already booked our return to Kissimmee for January, 2015. Plan on coming and enjoying Sunny Florida with us.

I have my flights booked for Palm Springs! I was going to pass this year, but Karen and her team have made it so much more affordable this year that I couldn't pass it up. We will be at a private lodge-style resort this year, with our own pool and very few stairs. Meals will be on site; trips out will be only as desired. We won't have to leave for

anything. Not too far to walk to eat or drink, and I hear they are bringing a chef? Or Karen's dear husband Wayne is a chef? I know we will all be well-cared for and we are looking forward to the opportunity to see old friends and new ones! Palm Springs is always a great time.

We are also looking ahead to France for this summer. Claire will have an entry on this subject further on in the Thunderbolt. For now, the most important thing is to make sure you have a valid passport! Find it, check it and renew or get your first one if necessary. As I tell anyone who will listen, I didn't need a passport when we first went there.

Finally, I must direct your attention to the vote that needs to be taken.

Only 517 veterans should vote.

You might have already voted online through Bob's Mail Call. Please do not vote twice.

Rather than restate the specifics here, please refer to your ballot here in the Thunderbolt. Those of you who attended the Kansas City reunion remember that we voted to merge with the Auxiliary so they could take over the work of the Association. We put a condition on that vote: that donations would continue to be tax deductible. Howard Hensleigh has worked extensively on this matter and has helped prepare the ballot enclosed. Your vote is necessary and it counts.

Please take a few moments to vote to secure the future of the Association.

Send back your ballot, make your travel plans and get on the phone to a friend. Troopers need to stick together.

See you in Palm Springs, in France in August, and in Kissimmee in January!

What do we think about New Orleans in 2015? Why not?

All the best –

Allan Johnson, 596

Election Notice!!

Finally, elections are coming up. Those who attended the Kansas City reunion will remember that it was voted that elections and other business may be conducted electronically, as we prepared for the years that reunions would not necessarily be every other year. If you are not able to access a computer, please let one of the officers or Bob Barrett know. The election, once organized, will be advertised in Mail Call. If you're not on Mail Call, we need to know so we can make it happen!

As always, it is an honor to be associated with the fine men of the 517th. Airborne all the way! And do not hesitate to call me!

908 852 1424

Or you can snail mail me at 215 Mission Road, Hackettstown, NJ 07840.

From Your Publishers

Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin

Do you have talents you can share with the Thunderbolt? We are looking for contributors! Photos are especially welcome!

Lory Curtis, 1st Vice President, 517th PRCT Association

I just called **Howard Hensleigh**. What a joy to speak with him on the phone. He told me he just recently celebrated another birthday, and he had a great visit with his sons and daughters. What a great memory he has, he still remembered things that I told him when I visited him two years ago. I hope my memory holds up as long as his has. I called him to ask him about our organization and what is in store for us in the future. Howard told me we the next generation are now in position to take over and keep the 517th PRCT Association going so the legacy of these great men will never die. He told me that the 517th was the largest paratrooper unit to be part of the 1st Allied Task Force that invaded Southern France, and that the French people then knew what unit the men of the 517th were from. He said the French in Southern France have never forgotten the 517th. That statement really

impressed me. I think we, the next generation now take over the demands of keeping the 517th PRCT Association alive. I am committed to preserving this great legacy, how about you? Please let us know through mailcall what you are willing to do. Thanks so much for the Troopers, their sons and daughters and other relatives who sponsor the mini reunions and all other tasks to keep this organization going. Many many thanks to you Bob for keeping the website going and mailcall, and Joanne for serving as our treasurer. And to the great members of our board, and Morris who serves as 2nd Vice President, and Robin Frice Homedew as our Secretary. And especially to Allan Johnson, who has gone above and beyond the call of duty serving as our president since 2011. Thank you Allan for your great leadership.

May we have many more years of associations with you great people.

From the webmaster

Bob Barrett

I know there is talk about getting to southern France next August for the 70th annual ceremonies for Operation Dragoon. The Le Muy and Nice events generally start just before August 14th and continue for several days. **Allan Johnson, with Claire, and Leo Dean** make that trip every year, and I expect that there will be many other people in 2014. Although most of the troopers are now finding it hard to travel and cannot plan too far in advance, I expect that a number of the 517th families and friends will also go. I will be trying to go myself, since this just could be the last big trip for these troopers, and the 70th anniversary is bound to be a big one for that reason. There will be plenty of celebrations, US and British and French troopers, and plenty of friends including **J. Michael and Eric and Adrien** of the museum, **Ronald and Patricia, Frederick Brega, Nicholas Arnulf, Gilles G.**, and many more.

I don't have a schedule yet, but I know there will be a big push starting in the spring to get us all there.

I'm sure there will also be events in Belgium in 2014 for the Battle of the Bulge anniversary.

Bob has been getting lots of kudos in Mail Call, justifiably. He has wrestled our email problems into submission, signed us up for a new mail delivery system, keeps us all in touch with each other and keeps the news coming. But even more than all that, he has become a relentless researcher, putting all the pieces of the puzzle together. He will get family members going on their searches, responding quickly with lots of great starter information they don't yet have. He corrects the Wikipedia entry and synthesizes a weekly mountain of information.

Thank you to Bob Barrett for your ongoing service to the 517!

Palm Springs Reunion

Jim Kraus

I haven't talked to you for quite some time. Hope all is well. Are either of you going to Palm Springs? I found a way to make it out there for a couple of days. The 10th and 11th to be exact. Where is everyone staying? I am still trying to persuade **Earl Boone** to come along but I don't think he can. He gets tired when I take him out to lunch so a four hour drive may be too much for him. I am looking forward to meeting and talking to his buddies. Hope to see you there.

Karen and Team Frice are planning quite a party! Join them and your friends in Palm Springs, March 10-14!

Kissimmee Reunion

In Mail Call, we had a lovely photo of a group of smiling veterans and two newcomers. It provoked a round of "Who the heck are they?"

Darrell Egner

The story! The Iowa couple have been renting a room in our Reunion Hotel for 30 days for a number of years. This year the Hotel screwed up and gave them the room next to the Hospitably Suite. After some negotiations they were kind enough to move to another room so we could have the room that always goes next to the Hospitably Suite. They were a wonderful couple that fit into our gang like they belonged, and they did.

The picture shows **Leo Dean** (155 Jumps), **Phil McSpadden** and me sitting in the

chair. I won the chair because at 90 years old I was the oldest one in the picture. Of course our Iowa friends joined us for the picture. They were a delightful couple and promised to join us for the Mini next year.

Claire with your memory I just know you can remember their names.

Claire Giblin

Yup. Dick and Jane. Literally. Dick and Jane. Fellow hotel guests. She is a retired IL state trooper. They enjoyed visiting with the troopers.

Although today is Getaway Day after the reunion, our flight into Newark Liberty was canceled! Evidently the northeast is getting hammered today and tonight. We are allegedly confirmed for tomorrow morning. Another day in Paradise -after I contacted work, extended the hotel, extended the rental car, and confirmed the flight.

Seriously, though -what a great time we had here in Kissimmee this year. We had 8 517 veterans with us: **Hal Beddow, Ray Hess, Bill Webb, Phil McSpadden, Leo Dean, Allan Johnson, Steve Armbruster, and Darrell Egner. Helen Beddow and Nancy Fraser Armand** put together a great time in the hospitality suite, and it really all fell into place. Families joined us as the weekend progressed, with young people moving in and out of the picture.

We had a surprise visit from **Karen Frice Wallace**, who joined us Sunday night with her husband Wayne. Since they live in Oregon, this was really a great surprise, and of course Karen used the time to drum up business for Palm Springs (I would absolutely do the same thing -if I went to Palm Springs, I would chirp about the Kissimmee reunion!). It sounds like it will be a great party this year, and less expensive than in years past -but I will let her tell that story. Darrell had has extended family join us for the banquet, as did the Hess family. **Tom Webb** joined us as well, and the **Boyle** clan was well-represented. **Earl Tingle**, who'd brought **Leroy Johnson** to his last reunion last year, came and enjoyed visiting with the troopers.

I enjoy the snippets of conversation overheard at reunions. Here is a random sampling:

"I see about nine different damn doctors and I just wish one of them knew what they hell they were doing."

"[My wife] is coming over after church tomorrow. By that time I should be dead drunk."

[In response]"Dead drunk is better than dead"

One trooper was regaling us with his tales of tickets and troopers. Our guest -a fellow hotel guest -said, "Sir, I'm a retired Illinois State Trooper and I don't want you to make any confessions against your interests."

We laughed and we laughed.

Reunions are the best. yes -there are the usual suspects at every reunion, but we always have some new faces as well. Please don't let something come between you and connecting with old friends and making new ones.

As I write, the guys and families are making their way home or the next destination. Darrell's son Chris is already in New Orleans, Darrell is at home, the Boyles have scattered, Steve is visiting his family and friends, and Leo is headed to make a skydive. Nancy is doing a Florida road trip to see friends. The Beddows are making their way back to Savannah, and the Hess family is plotting activities for next year's gathering.

Don't wait. Go to Palm Springs and think about joining us in France for your 70th.

Airborne all the way!

Claire

Whoops -almost forgot to thank my fabulous technical team! I was having technical difficulties in setting up the projection and it took a village of us to get it going. Special thanks to **Earl Tingle, Frank Boyle, Joe Boyle** and **Tom Webb**. It took a loaner computer to do the trick -Thank you all, gentlemen!

AND - **Leo Dean** did skydive #160 after the reunion!

Darrell Egner

Got back from a great Reunion on Tuesday. Just wanted to let all of you what a wonderful bunch of girls we Vets are lucky to have in the 517. **Helen Beddow** arrived on Thursday to open the Hospitably Room on Friday, **Claire Giblin** and her Dad came in late

Friday as well as **Nancy Armand**. They went right to work and the Food and Booze just kept rolling. A professional Catering outfit would take a back to them. Thanks very much Girls! We had 33 people at the Banquet and believe it or not 8 of us Vets were in attendance. Our entertainment was talking to each other and we watched two football games also. The food was excellent and every one had a good time. Sometimes, small (people wise) is better.

As most of you know I have been down in the back for most of 2013 but my son Chris took good care of me. He said this was pay back for taking care of him for 53 years. I won that one. I couldn't have made the Reunion without he and the three girls mentioned above pampering me. Today my Daughter took me to the Hospital for a CT scan so we start over again trying to fix 6 vertebrae.

Well folks I kind of got carried away, as the purpose of this message was to thank three wonderful girls for all their hard work. Fellow Vets we are so lucky to have the younger group taking over for us.

Public Service Announcement

Honor Flight Network recognizes American veterans for your sacrifices and achievements by flying you to Washington, D.C. to see YOUR memorial at no cost. Top priority is given to World War II and terminally ill veterans from all wars. Honor Flight Network has expanded to include Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. In order for Honor Flight Network to achieve this goal, guardians fly with the veterans on every flight providing assistance and helping veterans have a safe, memorable and rewarding experience.

For what you and your comrades have given to us, please consider this a small token of appreciation from all of us at Honor Flight Network.

It is truly Honor Flight Network's privilege to fly our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at the memorials built in their honor. Our highest priority is to the aging World War II veterans along with any veteran facing terminal illness. Other veterans such as the Korean War and Vietnam War Veterans are included in our

program and will be addressed in the near future. (Some hubs are already accepting

applications for Korean and Vietnam War Veterans.)

If you know of someone who is a World War II veteran or a veteran with a terminal illness, please fill out an application and send it in. Our goal for 2013 is to fly at least 20,000 veterans. And remember, every veteran flies free.

For further information, please contact us at 937-521-2400 or via email at

veteran-application@honorflight.org

Editor's note: Have you visited the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC yet? I know it is a long, long day from most parts of the country, but please, make it a point to get there if you are at all able to travel.

And here is an Honor Flight report:

Hi, Bob! Yes I got to go on the Lone Star honor flight on October the 3rd. It was sponsored by Montgomery, TX. & Conroe, TX. We met the buses at Target in Conroe TX. Had an escort of patriot motor bikes to the airport in Houston, TX. A large crowd was there to send us off. Everyone shook our hands. Fire trucks shot streams of water across the plane. It was wonderful.

The memorials were fantastic. We got to see all of them including the changing of the guard for the Unknown Soldier. The bus took us around Washington, DC before taking us back to the airport. They fed us on the bus & the airplane. It is something I'll never forget. Some of us meet every Wednesday morning for coffee & donuts at 105 storage in Conroe, TX.

Mel Trenary

Sent from my iPad

Foreign Friends Corner

The 517th is fortunate to have friends in Europe. These crucial people make sure that the history of the 517th is preserved and not forgotten. We are grateful to our European friends!

Patou Orengo

As every year, a mass will be celebrated for Saint Joseph in the Chapel at our home. Some of you visited this chapel in 2009 during your stay in Sospel. We had spent some very pleasant moments all together talking about

your time in 1944 in Sospel and you had wanted to know more about the life of its inhabitants. This moment was full of emotion, love and friendship -indestructible -and our friendship will endure through the generations.

During that visit, you had inaugurated our modest monument set up as your honor and at the end of the visit, **Nancy Fraser** had scattered ashes of her father **Major Fraser** around this monument. It was a moving and meaningful moment. We were moved by this mark of love for Sospel of Major Fraser. One month later we received his granddaughter **Vanessa Armand** who during her 2 years in France became our "daughter by heart", not a step daughter but a "heart daughter".

This year, the priest of Sospel, at our request, will bless this monument. We shall send you the pictures and maybe a movie.

We would also like to let you to know that we wish to receive you this year, the year of the 70th anniversary, here in Sospel, where we plan to make a big party. A date between 8 and 14 in August would suit us.

We remain at your disposal to organize this stay in Sospel.

Airborne ... all the way!

This is **John Krumm** in Stockholm, Wisconsin. I am wondering if you might be able to add **Claudy Winant** to the 517th Mail Call recipients. Claudy resides in Belgium and was a host for Edie and **Gene Brissey** as well as for my wife, Irene, and myself when we were there a few years ago.

He is very interested in World War II history and is very knowledgeable about it. One of his friends has an absolutely astounding collection of World War II memorabilia. It is probably better than what is in many small museums.

I know he would really appreciate receiving the Mail Calls. I have been forwarding the most recent ones to him, and he has been very grateful.

Thanks for anything you can do on this to include Claudy.

Hello, Mr. Barrett and Dear John,

I thank you Dear John for introducing me by the 517TH P.I.R. and to you Mr. Barrett for accepting me.

I'm really looking each time after your last published newsletter. Several years ago, I was also in touch a few years ago with **Colonel William Boyle** and as John wrote, with his friend **Eugene Brissey** from New Mexico. It's a pity that these soldiers left us, but that's life ! They were our hero's in the Ardennes (St-Vith and Bergstein). And helped the Belgian people to free from the German tyranny. Thank to all these men (veterans) from all the Belgian people who didn't forgot them.

God Bless America and his kind people,
Met vriendelijke groeten,
Best Regards,
Claudy

Hello Claudy,

I know how much the people of Belgium appreciate what these men did, as you say, to help free your people from the tyranny. We have never quite experienced that firsthand in this country, other than the rare and isolated terrorist attacks.

I traveled with my father, **Ben Barrett**, to Belgium in 2009 and I witnessed how much evidence of the battles was still visible, how many remembrances were made by the people of Belgium, and how the stories and tributes are passed down from generation to generation.

In 2009, we visited the area where Ben fought around Malmedy-Manhay-Stavelot area and made friends with many grateful people. So we thank you in return.

Regards,
Bob Barrett

Arnold and Irma TARNION, Trois-Ponts

As you can see the children take part and pay homage with us and the community authorities. In the morning, Father RADERMECKER celebrated a Holy Mass for the US and belgian heroes who suffered and died for our Liberty. We think of you and we send our Love to all of you. God Bless you.

For CADUSA (US Airborne Reception Committee)

Nicolas Arnulf

(Translated by Bing and RNB)

Last weekend our 'Battle-Braus' association organized a re-enactment in memory of 517 PRCT between I ' Escarène, the Col de Braus and Sospel (Alpes-Maritimes). This year emphasis was focused on the 3rd Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment so we conducted a commemorative 4-hour walk of in the footsteps of the "I" company departing from I ' Escarène-Touët station ending at the powder magazine of the Baisse du Pape and the I company assault on the head of the rockslide.

Paratroopers of the "I", cut off from the rest of their battalion located on the side of 'Braus' had to go down to fetch water at the bottom of the 'base camp'! (we also found photographs from time on the same premises). During this time the column of vehicles reenacted a historical journey throughout the area of the fighting. On Saturday evening the men prepared fox-holes to spend the night on the "Pas de l'Agree ". The next day 7 jeeps and trucks descended on Sospel by the strategic track because they were expected at Fort St Roch for the guided visit of the Maginot work (where the 517 were housed after the release of Sospel October 29, 1944).

We would like to thank all participants in this event as well as the President of association of Fort St Roch for the use of her home.

Thomas Bessems

I live in the Netherlands, nearby the American War Cemetery in Margraten. There it is possible to "adopt" a grave of a fallen soldier. I got the grave of **Thomas L. Rea**, and I visit this place (the cemetery) still frequently, always taking some flowers with me to thank "my soldier"... I adopted the grave when I was about 8, and I had it for 8 years now. When I needed to do a school project about something that always had a deep impact on you, I chose to do something with the Cemetery. Because of that I wanted to know more about "my soldier". It was like something was telling me that I could find more at his grave. There I saw that there was an abbreviation, which read 517 prcht fight. This was the only trail that I could really trace back to something. That is how I

ended up with this email-address. I only have one question. is it possible for me to get into contact with one of his old comrades, or somebody who is related to him? I would love to know something more about him, so he is not just a "random" name for me. I thank you for all the effort you will hopefully put into this.

Dieter Laes from Belgium

Dear friends of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team,

Having read Mailcall 2196, I would like to add a few comments to the article about the Soy-Hotton battle. For over seven years now I have been researching the events of the Battle of the Bulge in this particular region. Within this great passion, I had the honor of assisting Bob McDonald with the revision of his book, "**The Hotton Report**". I would highly recommend this book, as it is the most accurate résumé of these particular days. Today I am writing my own book about the Dec 44 and Jan 45 events, also covering the 517th PRCT, in this Ardennes region (Hotton-Erezee-Samree-LaRoche).

The actions of the first battalion in this region are unmistakably of a big importance on pushing back the German advance of the 116. Panzer-Division along with the 560. Volksgrenadier-Division. To achieve a most comprehensive image, I would like to put out a **request for information** to all members of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. Even the smallest detail in your remembrances, letters, reports, diaries... might be of vital importance to my research. Please feel free to contact me at dieter.laes@gmail.com

*My comments to the **Bill Boyle –Bud Curtis** letter:*

"This is to Lory Curtis, I Bill Boyle remember, but would change a few details. It was troops from a regiment of the 75th Infantry Division. Not the 106th Infantry Division. There Germans had not taken back Soy and Hotton, but **[parts of]** two battalion of this regiment (517th) **[290th Infantry Regiment]** were unable to take the hill, Laremoulier **[La Roumière]**. Colonel Howze of 3rd Armored Division ordered me to take the hill. At the time C Company was off on another mission. B Company was on a line from just south of Hotton to just south of

Quatre Bras. I gave A Company the job of going down a streambed to attack the hill from the flank **[25 Dec 1944, took off from Soy around 1430]**. One platoon of C Company that was not on that C Company mission was in reserve. A Company swept the hill although having been fired on by one battalion of the 75th Infantry Division troops **[part of F company 290th Inf. Reg.]**. Just before dark I was ordered to take command of all our troops in the area and organize for a defense. I gave A Company an area to defend and then placed elements of about seven companies in position. As daylight came I heard an observer incorrectly directing fire and tried to correct it. It came in directly on part of A Company. It turned out to be from the cannon company of the regiment of the 75th Infantry Division. Yes, I raised hell about that as well as with the only battalion commander of that unit that I could locate. Our versions vary somewhat, but after all it is almost 60 years ago, and we saw it from different viewpoints."

Thank you for your service, interest and devotion.

M DECHAMPS THIERRY. A few months ago adopted the grave of:

SERGEANT WISE, ALBERT R.
CALIFORNIA

517 PRCHT INF REGT company

sérial number :37343354

Died , friday , january 05/1945

Buried at Henri Chapel Américan Cemetery
Belgium

He recieved the Bronze star, Purple heart

By examing google saw the site of 517 I allow to write you to ask if it was possibility for you to have renseignements , reports , photography ,if he has to let il know that is forgotten, Wise albert or places or I can have this informations.

For me is important to know his history as he and his brothers weapons made our history and to offer us the most beautiful of present our freedom today is honor for me to decorate with flowers its grave.

Hoyt Kelley's Trip Report
Submitted by his son, Bryan

As we go to press in February, plans are underway for the 70th anniversary celebrations

and commemorations in Provence and elsewhere.

If you are interested and able, please join us. Everyone always wants to know the schedule, but the actual order of events is rarely known until we get there.

Carve out 9 August to 20 August, 2014. Plan to start in Sospel with good friends Patou (Patricia) and Roland Orengo, and then make your way down to the Draguinan area.

Hoyt's trip report should whet your appetite.

This was really a "once in a lifetime" kind of trip, and I wanted to share some comments with you as you watch the video. When Dad was invited last year to come to France and receive the French Medal of Honor, we frankly didn't quite know what to expect. Dad was certainly a good candidate for it, having survived a lot of heavy combat in Southern France and having received a number of medals and citations (most of which he never mentioned to us). My expectation was that we would meet in a room at Nice City Hall and he would be presented the medal. As you will see, it turned into much more than that.

When he received the Medal of Honor, France's Highest Award (not unlike England's tradition of Knighting), the service was a big event, with many hundreds of people and dignitaries attending and reported by all the papers. It was a big deal.

Paris

The first place that we visited was Paris, France. I believe the last time Dad was in Paris was in 1977 when he came there with Lois and jointed me for a month touring Europe. I don't think I've ever seen either of them happier than during that time, and for Lois Kelley, Paris was her kind of place. It was easier to still picture her there after so many years—the shops, sidewalk cafes, the restaurants—she loved it all. We spent 5 nights in Paris and played tourist while we were there.

Before going, I had been concerned that Dad at 90 years of age would be able to keep up. Oh my gosh, he walked us into the ground. I had a pedometer on my phone that kept track of how many steps we took.

On our first full day in Paris, we walked over 17,000 steps (6.5 miles). Throughout the trip, Dad would typically go like crazy for several

days, crash for a day, and then be right at it again.

Provence

On the next leg of the trip, we went to Provence and joined members and family of the 517th Regiment. Of the original 2,500 men that were part of the 517th, there are about 40 that are left -three of whom we had there, Dad, Ilan and Leo (all in their 90's). We also had several children of vets that made the trip as well. Allan Johnson's daughter, Claire, served as the grand organizer of events. She speaks French which was certainly helpful.

There were also two local Frenchman who founded the 517th Museum in Le Muy, Jean Michael Soldi and Eric Renoux—they were great. We stayed just outside of Trans-Arcs in a little motel with the other families and basically visited each town's commemoration services (which coincided with the day that they were liberated by the 517th. The 517th originally jumped close to the cities of La Motte and Le Muy, so the first commemoration service was there. My favorite visit in Provence was to the little town of Les Arcs. Shortly before the paratroopers arrived, the SS had rounded up a number of the leading citizens in Les Arcs and executed them as collaborators. One of the first engagements between the 517th and the Germans occurred on the rail road tracks leading into Les Arcs. The Germans had initially abandoned the town when the paratroopers arrived, but several days later sent a full battalion against the town to retake it. Rather than retreating, the 517th engaged the Germans at the entrance of the town, wiping out or capturing most of the Germans. This was 1st Battalion of the 517th (Dad's unit) led by **Captain "Wild Bill" Boyle**. The citizens of Les Arcs obviously have a tender spot in their hearts for the 517th. When they found out that Dad was not only part of the 1st Battalion, but had also been Captain Boyle's Staff Sergeant, they were ecstatic. The Mayor presented Dad the City Seal and gave quite the talk in his behalf. This was where the elderly woman I mentioned to you earlier, came up to Dad, grasped his hands, and said "Bravo, Monsieur, Bravo." It was really a fun day.

The National Cemetery is very close to Les Arcs, in a town called Drauginion. Every

year there is a memorial service for the fallen men buried at that cemetery (over 800 men), who lost their lives during Operation Dragoon. Very moving being there. We also attended memorial or commemoration services in La Motte, Trans-Arcs and Le Muy, but for me, Les Arcs was the best.

In the photos you will see other old veterans that were part of the commemoration services. If they have a bunch of medals pinned to their chest, you can be assured that they are British veterans, who also participated in Operation Dragoon. American vets are fairly reluctant to wear their medals –that is not the case with British or French vets. The more medals the better. One thing, however, that I did appreciate about the British, is that at all the services, the British would send a high-ranking officer to honor the British vets. With the exception of the U.S. Ambassador at the Rhone Cemetery, we sadly never saw any other representatives of the U.S. government – that is a pity (and an embarrassment).

One funny aside –during the various services, **Allan Johnson** and Dad had a running battle over the British Anthem “God Save the Queen.” Typically, the vets would salute as each country’s anthem was played. Dad refused to salute during “God Save the Queen,” saying something to the effect that: “It took us a revolution to get rid of those idiot royals in England, I’m not about to salute when they play their anthem.” Both Allan and Dad would salute during the U.S. and French Anthems –but I have classic memories of Allan frowning at Dad during “Good Save the Queen.” Obviously, once an Irishman, always an Irishman!

Lake Maggiore/Switzerland

Before the start of festivities down in the Riviera (Cannes and Nice), we snuck over to Northern Italy and visited the Lake District that borders the Swiss Alps. About 4 hours from Nice, the Lake District is absolutely gorgeous – Suzie and I had been there a few years earlier and we were dying to get back –particularly being that close. We spent 5 nights there, and also took one afternoon and drove through the Alps into Switzerland.

Cannes

I decided the parade in Cannes deserved its own separate chapter. Unlike the

other towns we had visited that had memorial services, Cannes, which is where the famous film festival is held every year, actually has a parade. We almost decided to pass on Cannes, not expecting it to be a big deal. Boy, we’re wrong. It is an annual parade that involves World War II re-enactors (sort of like our Confederate War re-enactors here, but in France, the re-enactors don American Trooper uniforms –by the way, nobody dresses up as Germans, just the good guys). Very funny to see these Yankee-looking guys wearing army fatigues and finding many did not speak a word of English.

The parade involved approximately 120 vintage vehicles from World War II–jeeps, troop carriers, transport trucks, and several Sherman tanks, plus hundreds of re-enactors. Dad and I rode in the command vehicle. There were several hundred thousand people attending the parade. The parade route was 2 miles long and lined with people almost the whole way. When people along the parade route were told that there was an actual American paratrooper that was riding in the parade, the American flags started waving and the people would clap and shout. It was great.

Which leads me to another comment -- We’ve all heard about how unfriendly and arrogant the French are and it is constantly reported by our media the disdain that the French have for Americans. We definitely did not find that to be the case in Provence. The people were warm and friendly and definitely have a great affection for America. For them, the biggest day in the calendar, is the day their town was liberated from the Nazis. They have not forgotten what America did for them.

Hill Country

In the backdrop of the French Riviera is the Maritime Alps, which rise up to 10,000 foot elevation or more (actually the Western leg of the Swiss Alps). Dad spent much of his time in this rugged country, routing out the Germans and cutting off their retreat. They marched roughly 200 miles through some unbelievable rough terrain. We spent one day in the company of Alain Fine, who heads of the Nice Historical Society and is also a real World War II History

buff. He took us up into the hills behind Nice and showed us areas in which the 517th had

been encamped and fought. We went to a ridge above Sospel (the last city retaken by the 517th), where they had fought a pitched battle with the Germans. It's amazing –you can still see vestiges of the troop's presence, the remains of trenches dug by the regiment, barbed wire that the strung, even shell casings and K-rations cans littering the ground. It was very sobering to stand on ground that Dad had fought on 69 years earlier. We visited the town of Pierre Cava –high up in the Alps where Dad's battalion

had been encamped –took the route down to Sospel (the last Provencal town held by the Germans). Visiting gun batteries from the famed Maginot Line. It was really interesting. The next day, we took off on our own and visited some old medieval-walled cities in the Hill Country –

Entrevoux was our favorite –finally ending up at the Gorges du Verdun (France's equivalent to Arizona's Grand Canyon).

Nice

At Nice, we attended our last parade – even bigger than the parade in Cannes in terms of vehicles and re-enactors. The World War II Memorial sits out on the end of the Point below Nice's ancient Citadel. One of the photos you will see is of a middle-aged Frenchman standing next to Dad who is sitting in the Command Car.

He approached us during the parade and explained that his father had been a French Freedom Fighter that had been rescued by the 517th. Apparently, his Dad was wounded and trapped in a cave outside a little village in the Hill Country and was surrounded by the Germans.

Just when he expected to die, the paratroopers arrived in the town and the Germans fled. Had it not been for the 517th, he said, "I would not be here today."

At the ceremony, there were a huge group of people attending –maybe 500 to 700. Military escorts, military bands, mayors, governors, etc. Dad was the only recipient of the Legion of Honor, which was presented by the Mayor of Nice. The poor guy stood at attention for at least an hour –thankfully in the shade, but still in nice warm Riviera weather. He is a tough old bird, and we are very proud of him.

After Nice, we returned to Paris and frankly crashed. We still attempted to be good tourists, but probably spent most of our time looking for a comfortable place to sit.

It was a great trip.

Brendan Monaghan's Trip Report

My wife and I travelled this past September to Tuscany.

We spent the better part of a day attempting to retrace the movements of the 517th on the day her Uncle, **Andrew "Bud" Murphy** was KIA.

We started in Istia D'Ambrone, outside of Grosseto looking for the "bridge". We later came to read that the bridge was constructed temporarily to allow troops to cross.

Once in Istia, we followed the field map (see below) and attempted to match up coordinates with my GPS on an iPad.

Heading north (approximately 1 KM), we believe we located the farm house where the German troops were laying fire on the 517th.

In all, it was a very moving experience for both of us. We felt humbled to be given the chance to visit Istia and honor a man we never met but whose memory can still evoke tears so many years after he gave his life in defense of his country.

Doug Dillard

The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association's membership represent all of these units. Many of the Division Associations are not active and the former members or those who would like to be associated with a unit that fought in the Bulge now have an active Association that honors and commemorates the Battle of the Bulge with an annual reunion, usually in September as well as the December commemoration held in the Washington DC area for three days where the memorials in Arlington National Cemetery and the WWII Memorial are conducted with wreath laying ceremonies. The Association publishes a quarterly publication the Bulge Bugle that contains soldiers' stories of their combat activities during the Bulge. During the December Commemoration we visit the Belgian and/or Luxembourg Embassies

where we are welcome every year with a lavish dinner, wine, beer and good cheer.

As mentioned in an earlier message we plan a visit to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge the week of Dec.16, 2014. We anticipate meetings with the Royal families of both countries as was done in 2004.

We would welcome anyone who reads this message to join the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association as an Associate Member for a fee of \$15.00 and you will receive the quarterly Bulge Bugle, as well as, should you have interest perhaps joining our group to visit Europe in December 2014. I do not know if the veterans of the 82d have a planned trip, I am sure the 101 Abn Div Association will have one planned, but we welcome anyone would like to join our group. Contact me via e mail or phone (301)262-2439 for additional information.

Airborne All the way.

Planning for France August 2014

Claire Giblin

Start planning now for the south of France in August. Figure on arriving say 9 or 10 August; it looks like things will start in Sospel and move over to Var/La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguignan/Le Muy for 15 and 16. We do not have any formal notices of events yet, but that is usually the last of the details to fall into place. For those that are thinking about joining us -start here:

1. Do you have a current, valid passport? Please check. Find it and look at the expiration date. Renew if necessary; sometimes you need to get a new one even if the old one is good for another 6 months.

2. Flights -Nice is the most convenient airport. Dates: arrive by about 9 August for Sospel events; about 13 August for La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguignan. Depart: not before 18 or 19 August. Adjust this as you wish for you and your family. You might want a side trip -it's a long trip not to!

3. Hotels -usually our friends in Sospel (**Patou and Roland Orenge**) and in the Var (**Jean Michel Soldi and Eric Renoux**) make the hotel arrangements for us after we ask them; the websites often don't work internationally. But maybe you'd like to rent a home or stay

elsewhere. Whatever -but make sure that someone is making the arrangements.

4. Rent a car -or make sure you've got a seat in someone else's car.

Please let's start compiling a Jump List in Mail Call. I know that the following are planning on going:

- **Leo Dean**
- **Team Frice**, including **Gene Frice and Karen** at a minimum
- **Allan Johnson** plus family
- **Phil McSpadden** and I think his daughter Maya
- **Hoyt Kelley** might return as well; I hope he does.
- **Gary Davis's** daughter **Melanie Hanson**, husband **Scott** and daughter **Megan**.

Who else?

Airborne all the way.

Highlights from Mail Call

September 29, 2013-February 16, 2014

Mail Calls 2179-2201

Elizabeth "Libby" Smith

90 years young!

I am the widow of **Rossa Smith, Jr.** of Company B, 1st Battalion.

His papers state that he was an Ammo Sergeant.

The Thunderbolt is such a pleasure for me to receive - so many nice letters and history to read.

I note that your reunions are held in Florida and other cities the exception being the recent "Sentimental Journey" to Camp Toccoa in Georgia. My intent herein is to ask your trip planners to come here to New Orleans to visit your museum - built and dedicated to honor World War II veterans.

We have it all - hotels, renowned food, and this WWII exceptional campus. Our buildings encompass both sides of Andrew Higgins Drive.

I have given our address to our Group Sales Manager to send information to you. We opened on June 6, 2000 and I've been a Volunteer there ever since. You will have an unforgettable experience so please come.

My husband was enormously proud of his service in the 517th.

One of **Bob Cooper's** stories:

Subj: Battle of Bergstein

Date: 4/5/2003

From:

RCooper663

Ben:

I am not as articulate or have the command of the English language as Gene Brissey or Howard Hensleigh but I remember the night of Battle of Bergstein. I don't remember dates, but I will never forget that night. That slippery muddy climb and the flares every few feet trying to stay in side of the markers that the sappers had marked trying to be as quite as possible.

Just before daylight the word came back along the line Lt. Cooper can you lead us back. The first squad of the 3rd Platoon of D Company was near the rear of that line - what was left of us.

The only problem was that Lt. Cooper was wounded the day before. So I being the only Cooper around said to my self I am not Lt. Cooper but I can lead us back.

So Cpl. R. Cooper lead the way and we got off that slippery muddy hill or mountain.
Bob Cooper

The Landreth-Barrett exchange

Mark Landreth, Son of **Roy Landreth**, E Company

I saw in the last MailCall the photo of E Company taken in Joigny in, I think, June '45. I have a copy of it, as well as a copy of a photo taken at Camp Toccoa. In the former, there are about 45-50 troopers, in the latter about 150-160. A before and after shot like that needs to be on the wall of every congressional office and all over the Pentagon.

It really underscore the seriousness of war and that to survive you need not only to be well trained but lucky, too.

Hi Mark,

I always have the same thought when I see that picture of the E Company survivors. It looks like a lot of men, but then I realized how many were missing. When I searched for Gene Brissey, he wasn't there.

I went back to his biography and read that he was wounded in the last battle of the 517th in Germany, so he was hospitalized in England and did not make it back to Joigny.

These really are the survivors, and every one of them has lost some buddies. I remember when we had the DC reunion in 2007. I was talking to some of the security team, all ex-military, and they had done some prep research on the 517th. That was the thing that stood out most to them –that of about 2,500 troopers in the 517th, there were 254 killed (10%) and 1,576 purple hearts –a 63% casualty rate!

By the way, I do know that some of the troopers were wounded multiple times. The records are incomplete, but as one example I see that Clark Archer of B Company was wounded three times, in three different countries – Italy, France and Germany. Each time he returned to duty.

Bob Barrett

Bob -

You make lots of good points in your response. I think of guys like **Gene Brissey** who was probably 20 -21 when he was wounded and spent, I think, nearly six months in the hospital. For someone that age six months probably seemed like a life time. As to the number of wounded, my dad earned two Purple Hearts. I suspect a majority of the men, especially those in the rifle companies, earned at least one.

596 Corner

Bill and Gloria Hudson

Santa Cruz, CA

We lost two 596ers in August, **Al Kunzer** and **Bill Christian**, both of the first platoon. Both were born in New York state, Al upstate and Bill in Brooklyn. Later, in a telephone call to Illinois, I learned from his wife, JoAnn that her husband, the 596's Dr. **James Lyons** passed away on January 2012. He was one of three comrades who later became dentists.

One of the Lyon's hobbies was the raising of buffalo and red deer. I remember Jim telling me that one had to be careful handling buffalo. He and JoAnn attended the St. Louis

reunion some years ago, which Gloria and I missed.

His son is now a dentist in Savannah, Georgia.

As I understand, Al Kunzer was a longtime specialist for a major upstate New York utility. Looking back to 1943, Al said that our training after being drafted was relatively easy for him, because in his prior civilian life he was working over 60 hours a week, owing to the needs of the country at war.

After WWII, Bill Christian graduated from Dayton University, where he starred on the football team with Chick Noll (later head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers). In the 1960's Bill and Sophia moved to Southern California. For many years he was a manager for the PBS television outlet in Hollywood, CA, which, because of its close association with the movie and television industry in the area, is one of the nation's two major PBS outlets (the other, New York).

Over many years, **Bill Christian** dedicated extensive effective effort work for the 517th Association. Years ago, Bill and **Carl Kiefer** ran the national 517th reunion in Palm Springs. Beyond this, for many years, he and his wife Sophia, ran the West Coast minis held in PS each spring. Don't forget that he was preceded in this by Jack Smothers (the originator) and Carl Kiefer. In the last few years the Gene Frice family has succeeded Bill, and is now carrying the West Coast minis ahead.

Over the years many other 596ers did much for the 517th, including Bob Dalrymple, Al Goodman, Joe Miller, Charlie Pugh (our great organizer), and our current leader, Allan Johnson. **THEY DID THE JOB.**

As I see it, there are currently eleven 596 vets:

Bob Anderson (Nebraska),
Bob Dalrymple (Arizona),
Lyle Madison (North Carolina),
Ed Phillips (Maine),
Vince Podransky (Pennsylvania),
Herb Reichwald (Wisconsin),
Hal Roberts (Washington),
and **Manny Ventosa** (Washington).

[According to our current Thunderbolt roster, we have at least a few more

596ers still around, including **Bill Conger**, **Harold Eddy**, and **Don Saunders**. And, of course, **Allan Johnson**.—BB]

Tim Curtis, son of HL "Bud" Curtis

It is my pleasure to report that I had the honor of attending **Marshall "Mark" Baird's** French Legion of Honor Ceremony in Tucson, AZ. I will never forget when my father received the honor in Paris on the 60th anniversary of D-Day. I am so pleased the French Government is now bestowing the honor closer to home for many WWII vets. To be eligible you must complete an application which can be found on line. I found one quite easily on the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge website.

Mark was in 1st Battalion and looking great in his jumpsuit for the ceremony. It was also an honor to see **Joe Clark** another 517th trooper from Tucson at the ceremony. Joe was HQ 1st Battalion. I have sent along a few pics from the ceremony of these great men of the 517th. Long live the legacy of the 517th!

Pat Seitz and Alan Grier

Bob: thank you for **Howard's** contact info. We had a wonderful visit with him. He is such an outstanding, delightful human being.

We felt like you, your Dad and my Dad were with us as we talk about the 517th and what your family had done to preserve the close bonds of brotherhood and promote the history of the outfit.

Howard is a fabulous raconteur and he shared a story about my parents' wedding that we hadn't heard about one of the men getting on the back bumper of their honeymoon car and holding on for 40 or 60 kilometers! Thank you again for this opportunity.

Darrell Egner

Bob, your Mail Calls keep getting better and more newsworthy with age. Thanks for doing this great service for us old timers and our families and friends.

Happy Birthday Howard! I just had one two weeks ago, 90 big ones. You must be younger than me as your memory is great. I forget what I did yesterday.

By the way your answers to Bob about his questions about Pathfinders was right on. As you remember we jumped at night and it was foggy. Sargent Western and I were the last two to leave the plane and a bit late as we had to buckle up as we both took our life jackets off once we were over land. We landed together in a Grape Vineyard and nowhere near the rest of the stick. We crawled along to a road just in time to see a German messenger on a motorcycle get cut down by machine gun fire so we first knew we were near American troops.

About the same time a Pathfinder joined us and said he was dumped miles from the DZ and he was mad as hell because he couldn't do his job. I don't remember his name or anything else about him.

Our stick landed 20 miles from the DZ. Frankly this was good as the Germans had the DZ covered with Machine Guns. One of the heartwarming stories in the Mail was Pat Seitz and Alan Greer spending time with Howard and sending the pictures. Thank goodness the apple didn't fall far from the tree as Pat's DNA took over after her Dad passed on. She has been doing a great job keeping us up on the news regarding the Seitz family and other things. And her Brother Rick is on our Board of Directors. Because we all love our General it's good to have the Seitz continue to be as active as Dick was.

Oh yes, thanks Pat and Alan for your donation to the Currahee WWII Foundation. This was the first I heard about this Foundation. It will be fun to go back and see how we lived and trained in Toccoa.

OK I am almost finished as it's almost toddy time. At reunions Gen. Seitz and I would go to the bar and have our Martinis. He would go up and go to bed and I would go looking for trouble.

Just kidding about the trouble.

[editor's note: hmmm....]

History Lesson

***Winter always brings memories of the
Battle of the Bulge***

**The 2nd Battalion, 517th Parachute
Infantry Regiment, and the Bulge**

Interview with: **Major David H. Armstrong**, executive officer and Lieutenant W. G. Irwin, S-3.

Lieutenant **Colonel Richard J Seitz** is Commander.

By Captain Robert C. Healey

Information & History Service

The 2nd Battalion was in regimental rest area at Soissons (France) when the breakthrough came. All weapons were taken from the Battalion and given to the 82nd Airborne Division. On December 18, 1944, regiment was alerted to move on two hours notice. On the afternoon of the 21st the still-weaponless Battalion was ordered to move with regiment to Namur (Belgium). New weapons were issued at 2025 hours and the Battalion entrucked at 2130 hours, riding all night and all day to one-half mile south of Aywaille. The 517th Regimental Combat Team was attached to the 30th Division on the 23rd December. In accordance with 30th Division orders the Regimental Combat Team moved by truck 50 miles to an assembly area two miles east of Xhoffraix. The next day, the 24th, the companies left the area and set up defensive positions in the vicinity of Chodes. Christmas Day they moved another 50 miles to Ferrieres and set up further defensive positions. During this time and through the next six days there was no contact with the enemy. On the 28th December the 2nd Battalion entrucked after dark for a forward assembly area one and one-half miles north of Manhay, where it bivouacked for the next three days. New Year's several rounds of heavy artillery fire fell in the vicinity of the Battalion CP. There was one direct hit on the CP, killing one and wounded eight. That night the 2nd Battalion entrucked again for another forward assembly area one and one-half miles northwest of Haute Bodeux.

For the attack –coordinated attack – which started at dawn January 3, 1945, the Battalion was operating on the extreme left flank of the 82nd Airborne Division, which had the mission of clearing the right bank of the Salm River and occupying the high ground along the river. The 30th Infantry Division on the left flank was to keep pace along the left bank. Battalion objectives were Trois-Ponts (that part of the town lying along the right flank

of the river) and the high ground at Mont de Fosse. Companies "D" and "E" were abreast for the attack, Company "D" moving in the left to Trois-Ponts, Company "E" on the right to Mont de Fosse. Company "F" was in reserve. The two companies met stiff resistance on the outskirts of Trois-Ponts. The enemy had good observation from across the river and from Mont de Fosse. Company "E" called for artillery support but could get only a battery –three rounds. Company "F" was committed at 0930 hours. It started to move around left behind Company "D" but was pulled back at 1430 hours to set up defensive positions along the road into Trois-Ponts covering Company "E" which was in difficulty from heavy mortar and machine guns fire from the high ground at Mont de Fosse. Company "D" took Trois-Ponts during the afternoon with losses of 12 enlisted men and two officers killed in action and 88 enlisted men and five officers wounded. It was relieved by a company from the 3rd Battalion.

During the night Company "E" withdrew under the cover of Company "F" and took up Company "F"s positions on the road. Company "F" reassembled and went on a wide sweep around the right flank and took the high ground at (666966), thus outflanking the troublesome resistance on Mont de Fosse. Companies "E" and "D" followed, at daybreak. Company "E" moved in on Mont de Fosse, capturing 137 prisoners with little resistance and moved into Trois-Ponts to relieve the 3rd Battalion's company.

For the next three days the positions were consolidated. There was much sniper fire in the area and the enemy still had plenty of good observation for fire from across the river. On the 4th January Company "F" lost six men and one officer killed. Company "E" took over cleaning out the town on the 5th January and lost two men by sniper fire. Companies "D" and "F" were in defensive positions north of Bergeval. Company "E" lost an officer killed by a sniper in Trois-Ponts.

On the 11th January 1945 the Battalion entrucked at 2230 hours and role all night to one mile west of Stavelot. The next day it was attached to the 7th Armored Division and bivouacked at Neuville.

From the 13th to 18th January, Battalion was on 1-hour alert to pass through 1st

Division on attack plan which had to be called off because of foul weather.

On the 19th January trucked to Walk. The companies went into a forward assembly area north of Am Kreuz (864982). On the 20th command post was set up at Deidenberg (865955). Company "F" sent out a night patrol to reconnoiter the wood "Auf der Hard", south of Deidenberg.

For this position the Battalion was working with the CCA of the 7th Armored Division and had Company "B" of 17th Armored Infantry under Lieutenant Hardin to form Task Force Seitz. On the right flank CCB was to take Born and on the left the 1st Division would take Ambleve and work down toward Wallerode (880900). From a line of departure at Deidenberg Task Force Seitz would clear out woods at An der Hand and continue down to clear out resistance in the In der Eidt woods. Companies "D" and "E" led off the assault with Company "F" in reserve. They meet intense artillery and nebelwerfer fire throughout the attacks. It was snowing and the weather was wretched. Resistance from enemy infantry was moderate. They were on their first objective setting up defensive positions by nightfall with loss of six men killed and 30 wounded. There, they were relieved by the 508th Parachute Regiment and prepared to continue the Battalion attack to the south and southwest. Pushing out at midnight they secured the edge of the In der Eidt woods.

The Armored Infantry support was called into play for the continuation of the attack. Early in the morning orders came to move down through the woods and attack Hunnange (845899). One company was to mount on medium tanks, the next on half-tracks. Mounting was to be in position.

At 0900 hours the 23rd January they started moving through the woods. There was no bridge over the railroad running into St Vith. The half-tracks couldn't get across the railroad and the infantry had to continue afoot. The tanks, however, got over. They reached the edge of the woods on the southwest. On their right flank Nieder Emmels (839908) which had been reported as taken by 30th Division still showed signs of resistance and four assault guns and 100 prisoners were cleaned out. Task Force Wimple (CCA 7th Armored) was

supposed to have taken high ground to south of Hunnange, but two assault guns remained in the town. By 2100 hours defensive positions had been set up around Nieder Emmels and Hunnange.

The morning of the 25th January 1945, Battalion received orders to move to assembly area northeast corner of In der Eidt. The 106th Infantry (424th Regiment) was jumping off from the Auf der Hand woods at 0705 hours to take Medell (883923) while Task Forces Griffith and Rhea took Wallerode. When both were taken – schedule called for 1000 hours –Battalion to take high ground between them. The Battalion jumped off at 1000 hours, was held up for a time by machine guns and small arms fire but was on the objective at 1130 hours. The 106th (424th Regiment) on the left and Task Forces Rhea and Griffith were contacted on the right. Defensive positions set up. Relieved on the 26th January by the 424th Regiment and withdrawn to Stavelot.

Source:Combat Interview from NARA: National Archives = 1945

The Bulge, continued

Wayne Cross

I saw the description **Dave Armstrong** gave of the 2nd Battalion action in the Bulge. Dad was one of those wounded in the artillery strikes Dave described on the Battalion CP on January 1st. Dad was recovering in Paris from an injury sustained in the August 16th drop near La Motte when the Bulge broke out. He and a couple other troopers on limited duty got a jeep and made their way to Belgium. Dad first found the 18th Airborne Corps HQ and met his childhood friend Don Faith who was on Gen. Ridgeway's staff. Don asked if Dad would be interested staying on and taking a staff position on the Corp staff, but Dad thanked Don and told him he wanted to get back to the 517th.

With directions from Major Faith, Dad found the 2nd Battalion at the farmhouse Dave Armstrong describes near Manhay. Dad checked in with General Seitz and General Seitz had some mail from my Mother that had not caught up with my Dad. Dad described having a brief chance to catch up on some of the personnel correspondence before being ordered to lead a patrol to scout the line of

departure and terrain for an attack planned for the next day. Dad assembled the men assigned for this task in the courtyard of the Battalion HQ when they were hit by the Artillery strike described by Dave. The trooper who was killed in this attack was **Sgt. Archie Brown**. He was a fine man and an excellent soldier. He had just handed my father a map case when a shell hit very close to both men. It is a miracle that more men were not killed, it was a delayed fuse round that hit the roof of the CP, came out a wall and hit within yards of my father and Sgt. Brown. Everyone else in the Courtyard was wounded. My father had the helmet cut off his head and took shrapnel to the chest and legs. Dad told me in retrospect the Germans had probably bracketed the House earlier in the day as it was on a raised location and had smoke coming out of the chimney. He felt the Germans probably shut down and waited for enough activity to make it worth their while.

If you look at the casualty reports from late December to mid January 1945, the 517th lost a tremendous number of men, there were very few that were untouched. One of the most amazing statistics of the 517th is the number of casualties as a percent of those who served but also the number of those that returned after having been wounded, many multiple times. This attests to the loyalty and brotherhood of these men and why after all these years they remain so close.

Pat Seitz

Thank you for the link to the interview with **Lt. Armstrong** about the 2nd Battalion. It meant a lot to see the picture of Dad, Armstrong and **Tom Cross**. It was a special blessing to have had the opportunity to walk the Monte Fosse battlefield with Dad 61 years after the battle. To read the report underscores the valor of the men of the 517th. Their selfless acts in the Bulge continue to amaze and inspire gratitude that I cannot adequately express.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

Was thinking of the Battle of the Bulge, thus, your recount of the history of the 517 during this week 69 years ago, was a real gift. Thank you.

Next week on Christmas Eve, as the **Dick Seitz** clan gathers for the first time without Dad, we will recall Dad's story of his Christmas Eve during the Battle of the Bulge. It was a memory that he carried for the rest of his life, it had such an impact on him. He and his command post were in a barn next to a farm house, and just before midnight, the farmer invited them into the house to toast Our Lord's birth. Dad said the farmer did not speak English and Dad did not speak the farmer's language but they were able to communicate somewhat. Dad noticed on the mantle the pictures of two young men in German military uniforms. The farmer didn't say anything about the young men and Dad didn't ask. He said the farmer's gesture that evening symbolized for him the message of the Prince of Peace.

Alan and I wish all the members of the 517th and their families the fullest joy and peace of this holy season. May it continue through the new year blessing everyone's 2014 in every way.

Howard Hensleigh, in a regularly recurring feature, "History with Howard."

Howard is an avid follower of weekly Mail Calls, and a frequent contributor as well.

Subject: What is a pathfinder?

Hi Howard,
How are you?

I put those pictures of you and Pat Seitz and Alan in the last MailCall. All three of you look great!

I have a dumb question:

One of our European friends, **Loïc Jankowiak**, asked me to send him some photos recently.

Loïc is the Webmaster for First Airborne Task Force : the Forgotten Paratroopers. He was looking for stories about the "pathfinders" of the 517th, and I sent him a story and some bios from the Turner Publishing book about the 517th just pulling out any of the bios that mentioned "Pathfinder". But I don't

want to look stupid –What exactly is a pathfinder and what did they do? It sounds like they were the early arrivers in the Dragoon drop, and had responsibilities to prepare the area.I do know from Paratrooper's Odyssey that "Pathfinder teams of one officer and nine men from each battalion were sent to

Marcigliana for training by Air Force experts and OVERLORD veterans." Did they get special training? What prep did they do at the drop zones?

Is a Pathfinder a special rank or unit or award or badge?

As far as I can tell they were not a separate unit, each one I see are assigned to one of the Companies.E.g. **Gene Frice** was a pathfinder with F Co. Not important. I'm just curious.

Regards,

Bob Barrett

PS: Here is what Wikipedia says about Pathfinders in Southern France:

Southern France

The invasion of the South of France took place on August 15, 1944, in the form of Operation Dragoon (Rottman, p.80). The 509th PIB, the 517th PIR, and the 1st Battalion of the 551st PIB formed the American airborne contingent of the invasion, dropping into the French Riviera in the early hours of the morning. [9]

As had been the problem with previous night drops, such as Normandy, the pathfinders here were misdropped when the planes carrying them got lost. [11] Further delays were encountered when these men had to find each other on the ground, work their way through a heavily wooded area near the town of Le Muy, and fight off German soldiers in the process. [11]

Due to the ineffective placement of the pathfinders, the follow-up waves of paratroopers were not dropped in the right place either. This was further exacerbated by pilot error, as many of the pilots opted to drop their paratroopers at too high an altitude; the result was that these men were widely scattered. [11]

Much like the paratroopers in Normandy, however, the overall operation was a success as the paratroopers still managed to accomplish their missions and capture their objectives in conjunction with the seaborne landing forces.[1]

Howard Hensleigh

The pathfinders were pulled out of the units (I think exclusively the infantry units) to jump into the jump zones a few hours ahead of

the main body. Their job was limited to guiding the Air Corps pilots transporting the troops into the proper drop zone. Like an intelligence/information patrol, I presume they were told to fight only if they had to and to avoid it in order to concentrate on their guidance mission.

In Dragoon, as may have been the case in other operations, the pathfinders could not complete their missions. Some were dropped in the wrong place; some were dropped in the right place surrounded by defending German troops; some dropped wherever could not find their equipment bundles with the radar guidance packages, or found only part of it in the dark.

I think all who acted as pathfinders were pulled out of our training/bivouac areas near Frascati, Italy for special training. My guess is that the training did not prepare them for the confusing job they found when they hit the ground in France.

Website Visitors SPYRO VANGELLOW

To all the 517th veterans,

I had the most spectacular encounter with one of your heroes, **Nolan Powell**, and spent a couple hours speaking with him, and hearing his stories. A truly remarkable man, and even at 90 years old, his memories of his exploits during WW2 were amazing, and held me in awe to be in the company of one of our countries National Treasures. Our WW2 veterans. He showed me his medals, of course the DSC, and Purple Heart, and the book, "The Battling Buzzards", which I quickly found a hardback edition, and read quickly. I am looking forward to seeing him over the holidays, and asking him to sign my book.

To Mr. Powell, and all the other veterans, both living and those taken from our proud nation, thank you. Thank you for being a part of the Greatest Generation, and for SAVING THE WORLD. God Bless you all.

Respectfully, and Sincerely,
Spyro

Saints and Soldiers – The Void Film Update

April 1945. On a fateful mission through the Harz Mountains of Germany, a M18 Hellcat crew is ambushed by three German Panzers.

Searching for information

Many of our online readers are seeking information about their fathers, grandfathers or uncles. The trail has grown cold for them. Veterans of the 517, if you have even a little information or a blurry photo, it could be much more than these families ever hoped for. Please, see if you can assist any of these friends of the unit.

Jeanette Rosmus Shable

Winchester, Virginia

RE: **Sgt. Joe Rosmus**

This evening, we pulled out some boxes of my grandfather, **Sgt. Joseph Rosmus's** things. One of the items found was his notebook he carried with him in the field. Looking through the book, he notes that he was in HQ CO 2nd Bn -517 Para Infantry. I am trying to find some more information about his time in the military and would love to hear stories about him from those that he served with. He passed away when I was only 5 and I never got to hear him tell his stories. Would there be a way to reach out to others who may have served with him through this mail call? I would greatly appreciate any information you could give me.

My father in law, **Thomas Blymire** was a member of the 517th. I would appreciate any info you might have on him. Also I am trying to find out if **James Lyon** was a part of the 517th or the 596th. Probably more likely the 596th. I looked thru the 1944 Christmas booklet. Blymire's name was in but I could not find Lyon's name anywhere. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Alan

Hi Alan, Yes, I see that **Thomas Blymire** was in A Company. I haven't found any other info on him, but I will post a note in the next weekly MailCall newsletter to see who might remember him.

There is a Dr. James D. Lyon, who was in the 596th and attended reunions of both the

596 and 517th. I see his name and a picture in some of the 596th newsletters.

http://www.517prct.org/documents/596th_newsletters/Wings_Q1_1995.pdf

I have a note that Jim Lyon passed away in 2012.

Bob Barrett

Michael Culhane

I have been searching for information on my Uncle **Sgt. Robert J. Miller** for years now. No one in our family has shared anything about him other than he was KIA in WWII. I was told initially that he was KIA in the Pacific Theater, only later to be told that it was Italy.

Unfortunately no one in the family has said much about Roberts passing or of his 517th involvement. His wife and kids passed away a couple of years ago. I have been searching on Ancestry.com and also online for years for him. In September of this year I found Robert's Headstone application on Ancestry.com and then your site with information that Tony Ventura had posted.

What I know now is that he was a member of 17th Airborne Division, 3rd Battalion, I Company, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment and **1Lt Floyd A. Stott** was his Commanding Officer. He was MIA and or KIA on September 7, 1944 in the Provence region of France. I am waiting for his service records to come and have received his burial records.

I am looking for information on Robert's 517th time. Can you help me with any information or who to contact for more information?

Thank you for your help in my quest.

I have heard nothing so far in my request to learn more about my father's time in WWII. He was in the 517th as a member of the 460th Parachute Infantry Regiment Battalion. I know he carried a machine gun and initially fought at Anzio. He also participated in Dragoon and fought in the Ardennes. He wore the 82nd insignia on his jacket and did spend time in Berlin. His name was **Martin T. Bockis**.

He was active in the American Legion for his life and he died in Dec. 2011. Thank you
Anna Bockis

Hi Anna,

I did insert your note in last week's MailCall newsletter

(<http://517prct.org/mailcall/2178.pdf>

), but have not heard a response. That is unfortunate, but the ranks are thinning quickly. We do know that he was with Battery D of the 460th:

http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas_1944_battery_d.jpg

And we do have a history of the 460th online at http://517prct.org/documents/short_history/460_short_history.htm

I will post your note again in next week's MailCall.

Bob Barrett

Lonnie Almeida

I am trying to find pictures or more information on my deceased father-in-law to pass onto my husband as a gift however, I have not found too much information on him. I do know he was part of the 517th Battling Buzzards and his name is **Antonio Almeida**. Any information you could send me would be greatly appreciated.

Trevor Miling

My great uncle was **Edward J. Lang** of Company C, 517 PIR. He was killed in Christmas Eve 1944. I am completing my teaching degree at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan and am studying to be a social studies teacher. I was wondering if you had any information about my uncle Ed or could possibly put me in contact with someone who knew him during the war. Any information I could get on uncle Ed would not only be appreciated by myself and my family but would also assist me as a future history teacher and help preserve the memory of those who have sacrificed so much for this nation.

Updates

Paige Christman, Bob's granddaughter

I wanted to let you know that **Robert Cooper** of Co. D passed away this afternoon at the age of 94.

Please send this out in your next mail call, I would appreciate it, and I know that grandpa would want those that are still with us to know as well.

I don't any details yet, but when I do I can let you know.

Dale Moeller

I'm very sad to report the one of your men will not be reporting to the next semi-annual reunion in Palm Springs, Ca.

Bill Christian passed away 25 Sept. 2013 at approx 21:30 hrs. He gave his very best, to the very end, but cancer won the final battle. His wife, Sophia, and family were all with him.

Funeral arrangements are pending at this time.

He had served the last 10 years as a Hospital Volunteer at Western Medical Center - Santa Ana in his hometown of Santa Ana, Calif. He had been recognized for 3,733 hours at the end of June 2013.

Thank You ALL Very Much for Your Service

Betty Traver

Subject: Goodbye to computer

To All my friends and family:

It has finally happened,,,,, Macular degeneration has finally taken over my eyesight and I can no longer get on the computer. I have had a lot of fun but it is over so thanks for being my friend.

A special note to everyone:

Myrle's cancer is behaving so far and he seems to be in pretty good health.

My eyesight is the worst thing going on with me. I keep telling Arthur not to visit but he insists on giving me a bad time.

Take care and God Bless you all.

Peanie and Walt Smith First Bat. Hq.Co.

My Walter's memory is almost gone. So very sad to see him like this. He did take the Honor Flight on Sept. 28th. A very good friend was his guardian. He enjoyed it very much but doesn't remember anything about it but Tim (guardian) Hogan took lots of pictures and when I show him there is a big smile on his face. This was the Sat. before they closed the memorials.

I enjoy all your Mail Calls and read them to Walt as his ARMD keeps him from reading. We celebrated his 90th birthday on Sept. 3rd.

with family and friends. Thanks for all you do to keep these men together with Mail Call.

Subject: George Sanford

My Father would like to continue reading the newsletter. He has moved to a nursing home in Minneapolis. He is in fairly good health for his 95 years, but it is getting harder for him to do his daily chores alone in his own home.

I am his son and I am taking care of his paper work. I managed to change the address for most of his mail, but have missed a couple. The new address is below. I believe that some membership dues are also scheduled or even late. Can you tell me the address for the check and also the amount? Please use e-mail as the means of communications as I do not live close by.

Thanks for finding me and sorry for the inconvenience.

St. Anthony Health Center
c/o George Sanford
3700 Foss Road
St. Anthony, MN 55421

John Sanford

DeWitt Talmadge Huckabee, Jr., died Thursday, August 29, 2013. He was born in Rock Hill, SC, the son of the late DeWitt Talmadge and Inez Hudson Huckabee. Mr. Huckabee was the widower of the late Mary Helen Simpson Huckabee. He was a member of Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church, was twice president of the Wimberly Class, was active in the Activity Club and volunteered in many capacities in the church. Mr. Huckabee was retired from DuPont after 35 years and was a US Army WWII paratrooper serving as part of the 82nd Airborne Division and participated in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a member of the Kiwanis Club and the Golden K. He was a life member of the VFW and the James Leroy Belk Post 17 of the American Legion.

Mr. Huckabee is survived by his two daughters, Carolyn Huckabee Horton and her husband Mike

Horton, and Beth Huckabee Kelly and her husband Steve Kelly Jr., all of Camden; grandchildren, Stephen Kelly III (Kimberly), Michael Horton, Jr. (Betsy), Travis Kelly

(Paulette), Sarah Stephens (Rob), Lindsey Mitcham (Nathan) and Tal Horton; great-grandchildren, Stephen Kelly IV, William Horton and Anna Horton; his second wife, Jane Huckabee

Robert Roy Cooper, 94, of Indianapolis, passed away on Tuesday, September 24, 2013. He was born on June 2, 1919 in Indianapolis to Ernest W. and Eunice Clara (Shore) Cooper. Robert retired from the Indianapolis Fire Department in 1980 after 40 years of service, serving most recently as the Chief of Communications. He was a proud WWII veteran of the U.S. Army, serving in the Battle of the Bulge in the 517th Paratrooper Infantry.

Robert is a Past President of the Indiana Chapter (47) Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, a lifetime member of both the American Legion Post 500 and the VFW Post 98. He was also a member of the Scottish Rite, Murat Shrine and was a 32nd Degree Mason. Robert also enjoyed photography, playing the organ and attending Colts games at the new Lucas Oil Stadium.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Maxine (Hansbrough) Cooper; daughters, Pam (Bob) Christman, Pam (Jerry) Scott and Stephanie Finchum; grandchildren, Greg, Lisa (Dan), Paige, Jon (Jennie), Michelle (Bobby), Pat (Amanda), April (Tom), Rocky; and 8 great-grandchildren. Robert is also survived by nieces, Kathy Jo (Larry), Becky (Dale), Judy (Harry); sister-in-law, Jean Hansbrough and his loving cat, Sandy. He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers, Jack Chuck and Gene Cooper.

You are invited to go to the Guest Book page to pass along your personal message or tell a story.

<http://flannerbuchanan.tributes.com/obituary/read/Robert-Roy-Cooper-96435649>

Alex Gallucci

My grandfather, **Frank Gallucci**, served in D. Co. of the 517th. I am certain you don't remember me, but we met briefly at the Oklahoma reunion and, I believe, the 2007 Washington DC reunion.

My grandfather passed away last week and I have since come across numerous photos of him and others that I would like to

share on the website. I would also like to sign up for the Mail Call (at alexpgallucci@gmail.com) and any other subscription services for the 517th. (My grandfather received the Thunderbolt magazine and I would love to sign up for that if it is still published).

I am eager to become involved in perpetuating the memory of the 517th and would be able to serve in the Association in any capacity. I currently practice law in Michigan. I recently began a blog (website) about my grandfather's service in World War II and about other issues in World War II history. If you would like, I can provide the link to that site so that it can be put up on the 517th website. Thank you very much and please let me know how I can help.

Frank L. Gallucci, Sr., 88, passed away Thursday, October 10, 2013 at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne. Born in Detroit, MI, Frank was a graduate of the University of Detroit and its law school. He was a World War II combat veteran serving in the 517th Parachute Combat Team, attached to the 82nd Airborne Division and the Fifth Army in Berlin following the war. He had six combat jumps and fought in the Battle of the Bulge, receiving the Purple Heart multiple times. He also received the Bronze Star, Croix de guerre and numerous other military awards. He was Executive Vice President of Essex Wire, Founding Partner of Gallucci, Hopkins & Theisen, and Retired Of Counsel for the Barnes & Thornburg Law Firm. He was a member of the Indiana, Michigan and D.C. Bar, where he argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. He also served as Chairman of the Board of St. Joseph College and was a Board Member of Ohio Art and the Allen County Sheriff's Merit Review Board, St. Patrick Catholic Church, Arcola and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church.

Surviving are his wife of 60 years Rita Gallucci of Fort Wayne; son Louis P. Gallucci of North Las Vegas, NV; son Frank L. (Tina M.) Gallucci Jr. of Fort Wayne; daughter, Sandra M. (Raymond) Wardell of Fort Wayne.

Frank was preceded in death by son, Peter F. Gallucci; son Michael Patrick Gallucci; parents Luigi and Maria Rose Gallucci.

To sign the online guest book, go to www.domccombandsons.com

From the Tribune-Democrat:
JOHNSTOWN, PA

Vincent David Podrasky, 88, Johnstown, and Palm Desert, Calif., passed away Sept. 18, 2013, at Memorial Medical Center. Born Feb. 22, 1925, in Johnstown, son of Jakub and Susanna (Legath) Podrasky.

Preceded in death by parents; first wife, Mary Joan (McCaffrey); and siblings, Albert Podrasky, Leonard Podrasky, Robert Podrasky, Clement Podrasky, Ann Coffta, Stephen Churilla, Mary Stevens, Edmund Podrasky and Helen Barbush.

Survived by wife, Patricia (Simmons) Hart Podrasky; beloved children, Jeffrey, married to former Laurie Burkhart, Johnstown; Gary, married to former Mary Ann Datillo, Missouri; Donna, married to Joseph Simko; Jane Smith, and her special friend, Durwin Thomas;

Barbara, married to Randy Cummins; and Paul, and his special friend, Kara Shields, all of Johnstown; stepchildren, Laurie Hart, married to Joe Zott; Teri (Hart), married to Andrew Louder; Steve Hart, married to Jean; and Thomas Hart, all of California; beloved grandchildren, Jessica Little; Christopher Podrasky, married to Sarah; Ryan Simko, married to Nicole; Jeffrey Podrasky; Justin Simko, married to Julia; Brianne Reckner, married to Robert; Lauren Podrasky; Kristin Podrasky; Brittany Yarbinitz, and her special friend, James Collins; Chelsie Smith; Courtney Simko; Zack Podrasky, and his special friend, Ashley Crowe; Marc Smith; and Trent Simko; and great-grandchildren, Violet Amouk, Bryce Podrasky, Landon Reckner, Ryder Simko, Peyton Reckner and Timothy Collins. He was a World War II combat engineer/paratrooper, U.S. 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team attached to 82nd Airborne. Entered the Army in April 1943 and

honorably discharged Dec. 2, 1945. Received 5 Battle Stars for combat-Rome-Arno, Italy, Invasion jump into Southern France 8/44, Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge), Rhineland, Germany, Central Europe. Also awarded the

Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal.

After the war, he was with the Army Occupation in Berlin for three months. He then came back to the states via the Queen Mary. He was a retired engineer with Conemaugh and Blacklick Railroad with 38 years of service. Member of Hollsopple VFW Post 8861, Harmony Singing Society, Sons of Italy, Moxham Old-timers and longtime member of Oakbrook Golf Club, where he twice made a hole in one.

Earl Tingle

Lee Johnson was most proud of his Army service and that was the focus of his last years. He spoke many times about the reunion(s) especially the one last January -his last reunion was something he greatly cherished among his other adventures. I keyed on what was important to him -the 517 and his friends this past 70 years.

Lee's mailing address is 23 Bogy Circle, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168 if anyone wants to send a card to Doreen...

My best to my 517 friends....

Leroy (Lee) Johnson, age 94, passed away peacefully on 18 November 2013 at Sandalwood Nursing Center in Daytona Beach. Lee was born on 10 October 1919, in Detroit Michigan where he spent his childhood. Lee voluntarily enlisted in the Army on 19 June 1941, just 6 months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. After basic Infantry training, Lee decided that he was tough enough to be a paratrooper so at the age of 23, he volunteered for Airborne training at Fort Benning, GA. Upon earning his paratrooper wings, Lee was assigned to the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT) knowing that the 517th PRCT would see combat in the European Theater. Lee deployed with the 517th PRCT to Southern France where the 517th entered combat for 94 consecutive days –a feat unmatched to date. On 17 December 1944, the 517th was moved into Belgium where Lee saw combat at the Battle of the Bulge. Afterwards, the Presidential Unit Citation for heroism was awarded to the 517th PRCT. Having honorably served 4 ½ years as a paratrooper, Lee was

discharged. Returning to Detroit, Lee became a founding member of VFW Post 7573 and he served as Post Commander from 1949-1950. His outstanding Army service earned him the Good Conduct and Bronze Star Medals. Burial will be at Jacksonville National Cemetery with military honors.

Lee and his family are especially thankful for the compassion and care provided by Case Manager Marianne of Halifax Health Hospice as well as the staff of Sandalwood Nursing Center. At Sandalwood, a special thanks to Gus, Pat, Tania, Felicia, and Dana for their unwavering care and comfort that Lee enjoyed.

Lee is survived by his wife Doreen, his sister-in-law, Pauline, numerous nieces and nephews and his paratrooper friend, Earl.

Joseph Hardacre Calder

RALEIGH -Joseph "Joe" Hardacre Calder, 92 of Raleigh, died Tuesday evening, Feb. 5, 2013. Funeral service and celebration of life will be held 2 p.m. Sunday, at Bryan-Lee Funeral Home chapel, 1200 Benson Road, Garner. The family will receive friends an hour before the service, from 1-2 p.m. Immediately after, there will be a procession to the Montlawn Memorial Park at 2911 S. Wilmington Street with full military honors.

Joe was born in Flint, Mich. on Jan. 4, 1921. His father, Alexander, was a veteran of WWI after serving for many years in India as a member of the British Army. After the War, Alex and Joe's mother, Alice Smith Hardacre, immigrated to the United States from Dundee, Scotland and Alex worked in the Buick factory in Flint until his death in 1947.

Joe graduated from Mt. Morris High School, Mt. Morris, MI, in 1939. Signing up with the U.S. Army in 1941, Joe attended Parachute Training and Officers Training School, and received a combat commission as a 2nd lieutenant in 1942. As a Combat Intelligence Officer assigned to the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team, Joe was sent into North Africa and Italy before being part of "Operation Dragoon" in which the 517th paratroopers, among other Allied forces, dropped into Southeastern France on August 15, 1944. Joe spent the long winter of 1944 in Belgium fighting in the Battle of the Bulge.

After the War, Joe met Mary Ellen Carr, a native of Newton Grove, while she was working on base at Fort Bragg. Mary Ellen and Joe married in April 1946 and their son, Joseph Alexander "Sandy" was born the next year. Right after Sandy's birth, Joe, who had learned Japanese and received Counter Intelligence Agents training was sent to Japan to assist with reconstruction and intelligence activities. Joe, Mary Ellen and Sandy served for two tours in Japan over about five years, while returning to the U.S. for Joe to receive additional training and lead offices stateside. From 1957 to 1961, the family lived in Germany; after learning Russian, Joe was stationed near Kaiserslautern leading a counter intelligence Field Office operating against targets in Eastern Europe. In December 1959, the Calder family met five-day old "Barbara" in a Pirmasens, Germany hospital, whom they immediately adopted and named Carole Lynn.

Returning to the U.S. in 1961, Joe continued to be involved in intelligence operations, including special warfare activities involving the Cuban Missile Crisis. When he received orders to for a tour in Southeast Asia, Mary Ellen convinced Joe to retire. After a distinguished 23-year U.S. Army career, Joe retired in 1963 as a Lieutenant Colonel, Intelligence Corps Detachment, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Joe's many honors included Bronze Star Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation and Army Commendation Medal.

To his children, Joe was larger than life and an inspiration. They both followed his sense of "doing the right thing" and have had long careers as lawyers. Joseph Hardacre Calder was truly one of the Greatest Generation; his family sends him safe travels to a beautiful place and will miss him terribly.

Joe is survived by his two children, Joseph Alexander "Sandy" Calder of Raleigh, and Carole Lynn Calder of Chapel Hill; four grandchildren, Tay Calder Brewer of Garner, Cameron Calder Chandler of Wilmington, Alexander Kelly Calder of Raleigh, and Zoe Anna Johnsen of Chapel Hill; and four great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 51 years, Mary Ellen Carr Calder, and his wife

of ten years, Uldene Babcock Calder, as well as his parents.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, please consider contributing to the Wounded Warrior Project (www.woundedwarriorproject.org) or Wake County SPCA (www.spcawake.org).

Condolences may be made to bryan-leefuneralhome.com.

Published in The Daily Reflector on Feb. 9, 2013

Howard Hensleigh

Thank you for sending the obit for **Joe Calder**. Since I had not heard from Joe for about a year, I suspected that he may have passed on, but it is good to know of his death and the fine way he was treated by those who contributed to the obituary. Frequently there are discrepancies in facts that are reported many years after they happened. Joe was the 3rd Bn. S-4 through a lot of our training in the States and through all the combat in Europe. Although he had enough points to leave us at Joigny after VE Day, he stayed with the 517th until it was disbanded in early 1946. Since his post WWII career in the army was largely intelligence and counter-intelligence, it is easy to see why the obit writer might have thought he was S-2 in the 517th. Joe did an excellent job of supplying everything we needed in combat. He was up in the lines handing out ammo more than he was in the rear getting it. He always made sure we had rations and water wherever we were.

Johnie Neiler was the 3rd Bn. S-2 in the States, except for Tennessee Maneuvers, and until the August 15, 1944 jump into France. The regimental executive officer and the S-2 were injured on the Jump and **Zais** and **Neiler** left 3rd Bn. and went to regiment to replace them. I, at Zais request, acted as S-2 on maneuvers and replaced Johnie at les Arcs. I held the S-2 slot until Bergstein, Germany when I replaced **Grant Hooper** as S-3.

Again thank you for letting me know about one of the best friends of my life.

William L. Kruse

1st Lieutenant, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 517th PRCT

On May 23, 2012, Bill Kruse passed away peacefully at Avalon Care Center in Sonora. He lived to age 96. He was preceded in death by his wife of 30 years, Jacqueline Kruse.

Bill was born in Fairfield, California and later moved with his family to Ukiah, California. He attended Ukiah Union High School where he played on the football team. He grew up with and became lifelong friends with the Romer and Parducci families. He worked on the Romer Dairy Farm where he was known as "Brother Bill".

After high school, Bill moved with his father to Kauai, Hawaii and both worked at a sugar cane mill. Bill played semi-pro football on the company team. He joined the Hawaiian National Guard and later enlisted in the U.S. Army after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Soon after enlistment, Bill was approached to attend Officers Candidate School where he graduated as a Second Lieutenant. He also became a member of the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team. With the 517th Bill made a very well-known night jump into Southern France to do battle against the Germans. It was there he encountered a one on one shooting match with a German soldier while Bill was pinned in a gully on the side of the road. He said he could hear the bullets flying over his helmet that sounded like "loud pings". He was rescued when a number of his troops who were looking for Bill's whereabouts found him and took shots at the soldier who then fled. Soon after, the 517th was

sent to the Ardennes mountains to give support in the Battle of the Bulge.

At war's end, Bill was residing in Atlanta, Georgia where he met his first wife, Anne. Looking for a better income and wanting to move back to California, Bill and his family moved to San Francisco's Sunset district. He was employed by the U.S. Mint as a machinist which became his lifelong trade.

Not being fond of civil service, Bill found employment with Triple-A Machine Shop in Hunters Point, San Francisco. He spent over 30 years there as a top notch machinist then foreman and a member of I.A.M. Local #1327. In the early 1970's Bill lost his first wife.

It wasn't long after that that he met his second wife, Jackie Kruse. Bill and Jackie lived

in Pacifica, CA, for many years before retiring to Sonora, CA in 1981 to their weekend/vacation home.

Bill left his family and friends with many fond memories of good times and lots of fun and laughter. Whenever his name is mentioned, everyone says what a kind man he was and that he was a joy to be around. As Bill would say whenever someone said Good Bye, Bill's response was "if you can't be good, be careful!"

Kathy McIntosh

My father, **Jesse K Davis, B Company**, passed away peacefully. He was 96. He was surrounded by his family who loved him dearly.

I will be bringing my dad's ashes back to France for the 70th to be scattered.

I wanted to tell everyone what a beautiful Veterans home is in Southern Utah, in Ivins. They are incredible. The facility is like a resort. The vets are treated like kings, as they should be. Dad wanted to be at home but his safety was at risk, as he liked to wander at night. I placed him there on Friday and he passed the following Tuesday. I wished he had more time with them and us, but he was tired. Now he is at peace.

Robert Russell Reeves, 88, passed away November 30, 2012 in his residence. He served in World War II in the Army as a Paratrooper, CO H 517th PCHT Inf. and was the recipient of a Purple Heart during his service. He belonged to Magnolia Lodge #238 in Ragley, LA and served as Past Master and Treasurer. He was a 32nd degree Mason. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Gillis his entire life. He was a farmer in Gillis over 51 years and worked as an Ironworker during his younger years. He was a member of the Bridge, Structural, Ornamented and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local Union #623. He is survived by his wife, Berna Dean Mathis.

Howard E Hensleigh

795 Willow Road Bldg 360G
Menlo Park, Ca 94025

A couple of 460th troopers came for a visit--**John Garvey** and **Phil McSpadden**. With guys like that it is no wonder the 460th gave us such good support, sometimes at point blank

range out ahead with the infantry. Their forward observers were always there, but I'm talking about the 75mms.

As **Dick Seitz** would say, AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY! Howard Hensleigh

Airborne Museum 15 August Association Eric Renoux and Jean Michel Soldi

HAPPY 95 BIRTHDAY **MAJOR THOMAS CROSS!**

Happy birthday to one of our hero, Major THOMAS CROSS, famous officer of the parachute regiment American 517th just celebrated last Saturday its 95 years!

A true hero of the United States Army, son of general Thomas Cross, it will be respectively Commander of company, executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, wounded in the day J Provence despite a broken leg he held with his men its objective: the village of la Motte. Become Commander of the Rigger company of the 11th Airborne in Japan he is also the designer of the Parachute of the riggers patent. God bless you sir...

He is one of the real heroes of the US army, commanding officer of the 2nd battalion, 517th parachute infantry regiment. with great respect and admiration Happy Birthday Sir Thomas.

Wayne Cross

My Father [Maj. **Tom Cross**] greatly appreciates the Birthday wishes from our wonderful friends associated with the Airborne Museum in France. For, the record, Dad was the XO of the 2nd Battalion which was commanded by **General Seitz**. Towards the tail end of the War, Dad did take command of the 3rd Battalion.

During the drop into S. France Dad did break his leg and yet still organized elements of the 2nd Battalion and headed them towards their objective before meeting up with **General Seitz**, who took command of this 2nd Battalion element and put them on their objective. On the way to the objective, Dad described to me how he would start at the head of the column and slowly have to drop back due to his injury. The column was under harassing MG fire during much of this movement, which Dad indicated provided him ample motivation to keep moving on towards the objective. He

made it as far as he could before not being able to get up after a break along the way. Col. Graves eventually had Dad picked up in the field and taken to the Regimental HQ at Chateau St. Rosseline. Though ordered to stand down and seek medical attention, Dad continued to serve at the HQ and for a time was in command of the Regimental HQ element as **Col. Graves** and members of his staff left the Chateau to better assess the tactical situation.

Dad was one of many 517th troopers who were nominated for awards for their combat actions only to have the 13th Airborne downgrade the nominations. Dad was nominated for the Silver Star for his action during the Drop in Southern France but the nomination was downgraded to a Bronze Star with V clasp. This was par for the course for many members of the 517th and a source of irritation to many as the 517th was attached to the 13th Airborne Division who had not seen combat action.

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to our many friends like **Jean Michel Soldi** and **Gilles Guignard** for helping to keep these memories of shared sacrifice alive and remembered.

Juliana Stonis

Love the MailCalls. My Dad, **John Stonis** (company's A and D-I think) will celebrate his **90th birthday** on Feb. 21st. Thanks.

TAPS

Joseph Hardacre Calder

Bill Christian

Robert Cooper

Jesse K. Davis

Hal Eddy

Frank Gallucci

DeWitt Talmadge Huckabee, Jr.,

Leroy "Lee" Johnson

Chester Eugene Kayton

William L. Kruse

Vincent David Papodrasky

Robert Russel Reeves

Vote to Merge the 517th Association and Auxiliary

Solicitation for Votes of Active Members of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association, Inc. to merge the 517th PRCT Association and Auxiliary

Background: At the annual 517th PRCT Reunion in Atlanta in 2011, the members took a vote to merge the 517th PRCT Association (troopers and veterans only) with the 517th PRCT Auxiliary Association (family and friends). The purpose of this action was to ensure that the next generation is included and can officially participate in various committees and be voted in as officers of the Association, in order for the heritage of the 517th to continue even after all the troopers are gone. This merger was approved on the condition that it did not affect our non-profit, tax-exempt status with the IRS.

It turns out that the IRS does require us to change our association's designation once we admit non-veterans; therefore that merger never took place. The officers and board members of the 517th PRCT Association have now revised the motion, removing the condition and enabling a merger of the two memberships.

Current member of the 517th PRCT Association are asked to complete this form and send it to us.

Note: In order for your vote to be effective, it must be received no later than April 1, 2014. The vote and merger will take effect on May 30, 2014.

Please vote by placing an "X" in one of the boxes below:

- ☐ I vote that 517th PRCT Auxiliary members will become Active Members of the 517th PRCT Association, Inc. with all the attending obligations and privileges, including the right to vote and hold office. This will wives, widows, descendants, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews of Members to continue to fulfill the objectives of the Association. Donors to the Association will be able to deduct their donations made on or before May 30, 2014 to a charitable organization on their individual income tax returns, but will not be able to do so thereafter.
- ☐ I vote that the 517 PRCT Association and Auxiliary group memberships will not merge and donations to the Association will continue to be deductible after May 30, 2014.

Note: Only current members of the 517th PRCT Association (i.e. troopers who served with the 517/596/460 in WW2) are eligible to vote on this matter.

Name: ----- Which Battalion, Battery or Company were you with during WW2? -----

Please send you completed form by April 1, 2014 to:

517th Association
c/o Bob Barrett
27 Fuller Meadow Road
North Andover, MA 01845



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

2014 West Coast Reunion

2013 517th PRCT PALM SPRINGS REUNION

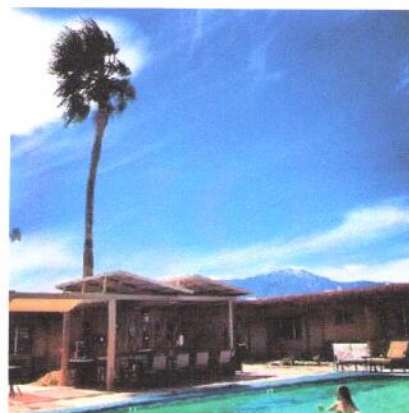
March 10-14, 2014
Palm Springs, California

Anahata Retreat/Lodge Hot Mineral Springs Pool and Spa here we come!

This will be a reunion like no other!! We have reserved the entire resort for our use.

We will provide breakfast, lunch and dinner while you sit soaking your feet in the warm springs.

There will be options for each meal and snacks all day so you won't go hungry.



Rate: Rooms will run from 120.00 to 200.00 per person for the entire stay, not per night, including all taxes and resort fees. This fee will be based on how many sign ups we get.

Registration fee: \$ 100.00
Your registration fee will cover all meals at the resort including the banquet which will be at the lodge with a choice of chicken or steak.
We may leave the lodge for ribs, museum, follies or ??, which would be additional charge.

Please mail registration form (next page) as soon as possible to lock in rate.

Karen Wallace
66295 Highway 20
Bend, OR 97701
541 948 2486

Please join the Frice Team, (the gals), and our many friends for another great 517th event!

Questions? Karen 541 948 2486 or
Wayne 541 948 2484

Please confirm by March 1st.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

2013 517th PCT PALM SPRINGS REUNION

Registration form

**March 10-14, 2014
Palm Springs, California**

Please provide the following information before March 1st:

Date and time of arrival: _____

(We will arrange transportation from airport and return if needed)

Names of participants:

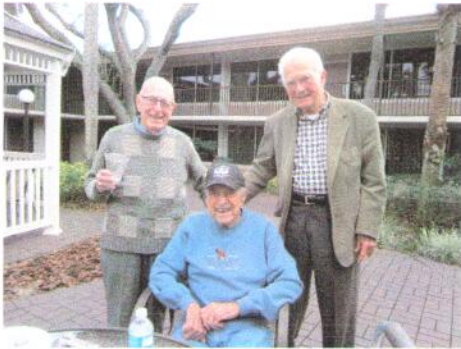
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Note: Extra person for banquet at \$20.00 per person

Any special activity you would like to do?

Please send this registration form and \$100.00 registration fee per person to:

Karen Wallace
66295 Hwy 20
Bend, OR 97701



**517th PRCT Association Mini Reunion
Kissimmee Florida January 17-20, 2014**



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The Thunderbolt is published quarterly by the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association, Inc. 15303 Indian Paint Circle, Bluffdale, UT 84065, in the interest of the men who served in the Combat Team. The Association is a non-profit organization incorporated under Chapter 180 of the Massachusetts General laws, and is formed for the purpose enumerated in its Articles of Association as they may be amended from time to time. The Association will forever has as it's objectives to preserve in patriotic reverence, memory of those men who served in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team; to support and enhance the fame and glory of the Combat Team; to provide for the gathering and dissemination of information concerning these men; to provide for their patriotic assembly in local and National reunions; and to perpetuate the heritage and tradition of the Airborne Spirit.

Editor Claire Giblin

517th PIR Drop Zone (DZ) Fort Benning, GA. 1943

