



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



## MailCall No. 2015

October 4, 2010

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

Website

[www.517prct.org](http://www.517prct.org)

Mail Call

[MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)

Mail Call Archives

[www.517prct.org/archives](http://www.517prct.org/archives)

Roster

[www.517prct.org/roster.pdf](http://www.517prct.org/roster.pdf)

## American Cemetery Henri-Chappelle adoption ceremony

Dear veterans and veterans' family,

Last friday it was the 2010 grave adoption ceremony at Henri-Chapelle and Ardennes Cemetery. They have been 400 adoption this year , and we have received our certificate of adoption.

We , Girls, Men, Children are very proud to have this opportunity to take in charge a US WW2 grave .

This year 2 schools have adopted 2 graves , It is the proof that the memory of these heroes is going to continue in the future.

We have been also the great honor to have 2 veterans from WW2 and 1 from Korean with us .

God Bless America

Dominique Potier  
Belgium  
(paracsm @ hotmail.com)





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





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



### MailCall News

Dear Bob,

I was on mail call for years until recently, when I changed my address and I couldn't get you to put me back on. Please, please put me back on as I really miss it and don't know what is going on. My e-mail address is: Dinnylee7@coosnet.com. My name is Virginia Jorgen.

I got to know Ben quite well as I've been to a number of reunions. Also Ben helped me find out so much about my husband, **Andy Jorgen**. He was a 1st Lt. in E-company. But he wouldn't talk about the war much, he would just cry. He didn't know about mail call either as he was wounded on the way to the Battle of the Bulge and sent back to the U.S. to the hospital and then he wasn't in touch with any of the guys.

It wasn't until he died that I found the website and wrote to Ben, who sure helped me find out things about my husband. I miss Ben so much, but then we all do. You had a wonderful father. Please put me back on.

Virginia Jorgen

---

From: Dgentry509 @ aol.com  
Subject: Fwd: 517 PRCT - MailCall No. 2013 - September 18, 2010 (2)

Greeting Bob, Here is a MailCall, 2013 that will not open from this page or from the archives. I noticed you replied to someone having a problem. I save the mail calls and when I put 2014 away, noticed 2013 was missing. That's when I found the archive version not active either.

Thank you Bob for your service to this fine organization.

Don Gentry

*[Don – I'm willing to bet that you have the same “problem” that Ben used to have all the time – You are on AOL. So far, everyone who has told me that they cannot see website updates are all AOL users. For some reason, AOL's web browser seems to use their own versions of web pages, and sometimes doesn't update them immediately. Often, after I would post updates to the 517 web site, I would let Ben know, but he could not see them until a day later. Your best bet, when that happens, is to use another web browser outside of AOL, such as Internet Explorer. Or wait another day. – BB]*

---



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



Dear Friends of the 517th,

The name of the trooper is Woodrow McQuaid, I company. He is listed as Company G on the Xmas roster but was with I Co in Southern France.

I am sorry I haven't yet given a follow up on the Callian affair with the 141st regiment of the 36th Div.

The After action report I have for the 141st is of very bad quality and I need to work on some of the text.

The new mailcall on PDF is great, thanks so much Bob.

Kind regards Gilles

### Remembering Dick Spencer III

From Bobbie Jo Spencer, daughter of Dick Spencer

The following is an excerpt from the Western Horseman Magazine's staff written as part of an article on Dick's death.

#### **Richard Spencer III: January 28, 1921 – July 15, 1989.**

Dick graduated from University of Iowa in December 1942, and immediately went into the infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Later in 1943, as a second lieutenant, Dick was sent to parachute jump training school. While he was at Camp Toccoa, he married Jo Nicholson, whom he had known since high school. He served with distinction in World War II with the 517 Parachute Combat Team.

The unit sailed for Italy in May 1944 and was committed to action north of the bomb-battered port of Civitavecchia. The 517th was bloodied in a decisive battle before being pulled from the lines, reassembled, and air-dropped from C-47s at night into south France. Its mission – to block German reinforcements from reaching the Allied beachhead on the southern coast at St-Tropez. In this campaign, Dick's outfit saw 94 days of combat that pitted the 517th against an enemy entrenched in pillboxes and other fortifications snaking down from the Maritime Alps. There was a period of rest after the campaign in southern France before the unit was moved north by rail to Soissons, the site of a World War I battlefield.



*Dick fought during World War II with the 517th Parachute Combat Team.*



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



Plans for a Christmas holiday were aborted with von Rundstedt's breakthrough that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The 517th action in the battle was significant, but primarily of interest to the professional military men. His third battalion was assigned the objective of taking the Belgian village of Manhay, a cluster of houses at an important crossroads held by the 2nd SS Panzer, the Nazi unit responsible for the atrocities at Malmedy. On December 27, 1944, supported by a barrage of 8,600 shells from 15 massed artillery battalions, Dick's outfit attacked across the snowfields surrounding the village. the Germans counterattacked with their armor, including captured American Sherman tanks. The fighting that followed was a savage hammer and tongs battle, but by 0330 hours, the village crossroads had been secured. The 517th's success at Manhay denied the Germans a route north via Liege to the vital port city of Antwerp – von Rundstedt's objective.

The paratroopers of the 517th would soon be involved in two difficult river crossings, including the Roer in the vicinity of the Hurtgen Forest. The Roer was defended by one of Hitler's crack parachute outfits that had been preparing fortifications for 6 weeks. Dick's outfit continually attacked until the united captured its sector on the east bank of the river. When Germany surrendered, Dick came home with the Silver Star and a Purple Heart with two clusters. The 517th was soon deactivated, but its members still reflect the old esprit de corps by holding reunions.

Dick was discharged from the Army in September 1945, and he headed for Des Moines to be with his wife and baby daughter whom Dick had never seen. He went to work for Look Magazines in

their Des Moines office, as a commercial office. A couple years later, he worked for Steinle Publications, on three statewide police publications, then went back to Look. He wasn't there long before he took the job as managing editor of the information service for the University of Iowa. He also taught a new course – editorial cartooning – and wrote the first textbook on this subject.



*This picture of Dick was taken about the time he became Western Horseman's publisher in 1969.*

He was director of publications for the University of Colorado when Western Horseman publisher Don Flint offered him the job of editor at the magazine. Under Dick's guidance the magazine grew and prospered. It gained worldwide respect as the leader in its field. He helped with the formation and support of the Cowboy Artists of America. He went on horseback trail rides all over the nation. Dick played a major role in gaining support for the fledgling Appaloosa horse Club when he was editor of

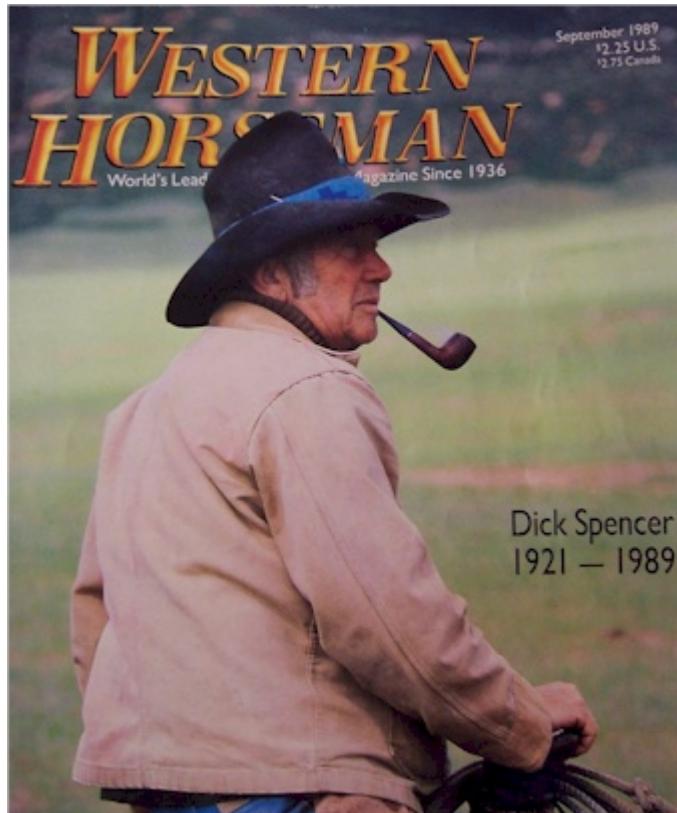


## 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Western Horseman. Like his father, Dick developed an abiding interest in Indian lore and culture. He adopted the name of Pony Tracks, learned to speak several Indian tongues, and learn sign language. He enjoyed anything to do with the outdoors. he liked scuba-diving, snorkeling, hunt and fishing, skiing, snowshoeing, flying. Dick will always be remembered for his humor. One fan said, "Telling Dick Spencer a joke he hasn't heard is the equivalent of killing four bulls in Madrid."

Dick was preceded in death by his son, Rick. His wife of 40 years still lives in Colorado, as do his two daughters Bobbi Jo and Debbie.



[Visit Dick Spencer's biography page, with additional pictures and info on the "Meet the Troopers" section of the 517 web site.](#)

---

Please submit **your** trooper's story for [Meet the Troopers!](#)! Troopers and their families are asked to submit their stories, sending material to: webmaster @ 517prct.org

Material submitted is completely up to the soldier, or to their family and relatives. Take a look at the biographies already submitted -- Jesse Darden's bio is a great example -- but feel free to be as creative as you like. It's your story. This information can be as long or as short as you like.



## Name That Trooper

This experience took place only a few days after D-Day August 15th, 1944 as the 517th PIR was untracking itself and beginning the trek that would take them through Southern France on their way to Germany. With a taste of successful combat in Italy the "Battlin Buzzards" were ready to make their presence in the European Campaign known to the world. Our mystery trooper is none other than one of the battalion commanders of the 517th. Following the trail that led to the Maritime Alps, our commander led his troops to the vicinity of what would be their first objective in the fabled 'Champagne Campaign,' that being the town of Fayence. Fayence was being held by a German garrison and was known to be well armed with small arms as well as many gun emplacements at strategic locations. Our mystery commander was a good strategist and thus would not risk any encounter of his men with the enemy until some homework was done. He immediately sent in a patrol led by Lt Walt Irwin to do some scouting to give the commander a good idea of what he would be up against. Lt Irwin did as thorough a job of reconnoitering the surroundings of the town of Fayence as possible without letting their presence be known. He returned to Bn with very accurate detailed sketches of the many 20 mm gun emplacements protecting Fayence as well as estimations of personnel numbers and locations as well as information on machine-gun nests and small arms personnel. This report was brought back to 517th CP and was given to our mystery Bn Commander for his personal analysis. As was said earlier, our mystery commander was a master strategist and he set the wheels in motion for preparations to attack strategic points deemed as most important in taking the town of Fayence without destroying it completely. At this point our commander called on the artillery to take out each of the 20mm guns which was the firepower that the German garrison relied upon. The recon map with the sketched locations of the 20's was so detailed as far as location and range co-ordinates that our artillery was able to knock out all 20mm gun emplacements in one salvo. After careful analysis and formulating a battle plan, our commander felt that he had the upper hand and could take the village of Fayence. In fact he was so sure that he issued a verbal ultimatum to the Wehrmacht Commander to surrender his garrison or we 'would blast them out of the town.' A reply was needed immediately from the German commander as the ball was now firmly in his court. No he did not reply 'NUTS', as did McAuliffe at Bastogne. His reply was much more inflammatory. Perhaps he had not yet gotten word that all his 20mm emplacements had been knocked out but his reply was, 'you won't do it with those peashooters,' meaning our pack 75's with which the 460th Arty would support the attack.

According to the writing of Gerald Astor in his paperback book "Battling Buzzards" the ongoing attack was witnessed by a PFC Bill Hudson of the 596th Engineers from a nearby olive grove. The denigrated Pack 75 Pea-shooters honed in on the German ammo dump in Fayence and once the guys from the 460th Artillery Group let go with the salvo the resulting explosion was said to be akin to a 4th of July fireworks celebration on a grand scale. This final barrage resulted in the Wehrmacht officer surrendering his entire force and 184 soldiers, all were taken as prisoners. As far as the Pack 75's peashooter status you might say that the size of an object is not as important as the way you use it. Next stop on the trail will be the "sweet smelling perfume capital of the world, Grasse. Do you know who our mystery commander was ?????? Answer will be in the next issue of "MAIL CALL".

"NEPHEW OF A BUZZARD"



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



## Administrivia:

- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>
- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: [MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our treasurer:

Leo Dean  
14 Stonehenge Lane  
Albany, NY 12203

### 517th Annual Florida Mini-Reunion January 14-18, 2011

Banquet on the 17th (Monday)

Hosted by: Brenda Verbeck Mortensen and Helen Beddow

Location: Ramada Gateway Hotel  
7470 Highway 192 West  
Kissimmee, Florida 34747  
Tele: 1(800) 272-6232  
web site: [WWW.ramadagateway.com](http://WWW.ramadagateway.com)

