



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2025

December 5, 2010

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

Website

www.517prct.org

Mail Call

MailCall@517prct.org

Mail Call Archives

www.517prct.org/archives

Roster

www.517prct.org/roster.pdf

Name This Trooper



Can you name this trooper?
Which came first – the photo or the cartoon?



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

MailCall News

Has anyone heard from our friends in Les Arcs, **Eric Rennault** and **Micheal Soldi**? There was some talk earlier about setting up a pay pal account to help them mitigate the flood damage to their Musee de la Liberation in Le Muy. Mickeal and I corresponded last year and he very graciously helped me set up our visit to Le Muy. Eric came to pick us up at the train station in a 1944 Jeep!. He showed us all the drop zones and historic sites from the jeep. It was an amazing and meaningful visit. He is a great guy and I only wish my dad could have come with us, too. Dad enjoyed all the photographs immensely, though. My father, **John Bradovich** of Lt. Alliki's demo platoon, was so touched by the appreciation shown by Eric and Mickeal and the towns of Le Muy and La Motte. He thought everyone had forgotten! Their collection was extensive and amazing. I can only imagine what it must take to clean up the flood damage, so many of the artifacts were quite fragile to begin with.

Lea Bradovich



In Les Arcs with Eric Rennault and the '44 Jeep



Eric points out the battlefields and drop zones.



My dad in his Musee de la Liberation shirt. He loves it!



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Part of the Museum of the Liberation's extensive collection, just pre-flood, April 2010.



My dad took one look at this photo and said, "That's the bridge I was supposed to blow up!" Since he was dropped about 27km off course he never made it there, he was involved in a number of skirmishes after regrouping with about 51 other paratroopers. He never saw the bridge but recalled it from the photos he was shown and the sand trays with the terrain and other features that they used back then. He said they knew the difference in sound between an American tank and a German panzer tank. If he had made it to the bridge his orders were to wait and listen, if it sounded like a panzer division he was to blow up the bridge. My dad was wounded 2 days after the drop, on the 17th, I think. He was rescued by an infantry tank division, C Company, I think. About 60 years later he met one of his rescuers at a polka festival in Northern Minnesota!





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

SOON TO BE GONE By Capt. Steven Ellison, MD

This letter was written as a personal correspondence to a friend, Mr. Gene Tuttle, in April 2000 while Captain Ellison served in the U.S. Army under the administration of then President Clinton. Although not intended for widespread circulation, the email was forwarded to many others and has continued to circulate around the world. It is hoped that this letter will help bring focus to the difficulties faced by those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Your note about the movie *Saving Private Ryan* touched me deeply. As you know I am a doctor specializing in Emergency Medicine in the Emergency Departments of the only two military Level One trauma centers. They are both in San Antonio, TX and they care for civilian emergencies as well as military personnel. San Antonio has the largest military retiree population in the world living here because of the location of these two large military medical centers.

As a military doctor in training for my specialty I work long hours and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact and the endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay, only more work. Most often it is a victim from a motor vehicle crash. Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. With our large military retiree population it is often a nursing home patient. Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama prior to medical school, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees. I had not stopped to think of what citizens of this age group represented.

I saw *Saving Private Ryan*. I was touched deeply. Not so much by the carnage in the first 30 minutes but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene of the elderly survivor at the graveside asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my Emergency Dept and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else that has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting I now try to ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without the inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences recounted in the brief minutes allowed in an Emergency Dept encounter. These experiences have revealed the incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity, many on their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised despite her illness and the multiple needle-sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said "Auschwitz." Many of later generations would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering.

A long retired Colonel who as a young USN officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a pacific island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, his head cut in a fall at home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home then realized his ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He asked if he could use the phone to make a long distance call to his daughter who lived 70 miles away. With great pride we told him that he could not as he'd done enough for his country and the least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret was that my shift wouldn't end for several hours and I couldn't drive him myself.

I was there the night MSG Roy Benavidez came through the Emergency Dept for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him but I walked to his bedside and took his hand. I said nothing. He was so sick he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later.

The gentleman who served with Merrill's Marauders, the survivor of the Baatan Death March, the survivor Omaha Beach, the 101 year old World War I veteran, the former POW held in frozen North Korea, the former Special Forces medic now with non-operable liver cancer, the former Viet Nam Corps Commander. I remember these citizens. I may still groan when yet another ambulance comes in but now I am much more aware of what an honor it is to serve these particular men and women. I am angered at the cut backs, implemented, and proposed, that will continue to decay their meager retirement benefits. I see the President and Congress who would turn their back on these individuals who've sacrificed so much to protect our liberty. I see later generations that seems to be totally engrossed in abusing these same liberties won with such sacrifice. It has become my personal endeavor to make the nurses and young enlisted medics aware of these amazing individuals when I encounter them in our Emergency Dept. Their response to these particular citizens has made me think that perhaps all is not lost in the next generation.

My experiences have solidified my belief that we are losing an incredible generation and this nation knows not what it is losing. Our un-caring government and ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. We should all remember that we must "Earn this."

©Copyright April 2000 by Captain Stephen R. Ellison, M.D.

Dr. Stephen R. Ellison is a native of San Marcos, TX and a graduate of Jack C. Hays high school in Kyle, TX. He received his B.S. in Biology from Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, TX in 1987 before enlisting as a Private First Class medic in the U.S. Army, serving in the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Hunter Army Airfield, GA. He was the Enlisted Honor Graduate of his Ranger School class and participated in the parachute assault of Torrorrijos/Tocumen Airport, Panama during Operation: Just Cause.

In 1991, then Sergeant Ellison was accepted to medical school at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio on a U.S. Army scholarship. He received his Doctor of Medicine degree and promotion to Captain in 1995. His transitional internship was performed at Brooke Army Medical Center. He then served as the initial company commander and program director for the new Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center, Ft. Bragg, NC.

In 2001 he Graduated from the joint Brooke Army Medical Center – Wilford Hall Medical Center Emergency Medicine Residency in San Antonio, TX and was promoted to the rank of Major. While stationed at Ft. Hood, TX assigned to the 36th Medical Evacuation Battalion, Major Ellison was deployed in support of Operation: Iraqi Freedom during the initial phase of combat operations into Iraq. Attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, Major Ellison was one of the first medical personnel to arrive at Saddam Hussein International Airport on April 5, 2003 during the initial operations to secure Baghdad.

Dr. Ellison currently resides in Central Texas with his wife and children. He resigned from the Army in 2004 but continues to see many military retirees and dependents in the Emergency Departments he now attends.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

MailCall News

Bob: please tell Dave Navarre thanks for the video clip of John Carter telling the story of cooking frozen turkey near the Italian border for Thanksgiving 1944. A great way to end the Thanksgiving weekend.

Sincerely, **Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

Dear Bob,

The Big Ten football season is over and I must give Tom Reber credit for having backed Wisconsin, the best team in the big Ten. Although they are tied with Ohio State and Michigan State for the championship, their record is the best.

That is a great story about John Carter cooking the Eisenhower turkey on the front lines on Thanksgiving 1944, but it just didn't happen. The entire combat team was released from the lines ten days before Thanksgiving and the whole outfit (except Red Meline, Lt. Peche, some from the first Bn. and me, who remained up in the mountains to orient the outfits that relieved us) were down near Nice in the Riviera living it up. We got down to our outfits on Thanksgiving Day ready to enjoy the turkey dinner and found the camp sites deserted--everyone in Nice. There was not a turkey in sight, cooked or uncooked. I think supply dug up some K rations for us.

That Wikipedia site has many mistakes in it including what divisions we were a part of. We were attached to many, too numerous to mention. BUT we were the parachute regiment of the 17th Airborne Division in the States, until after Tennessee maneuvers we, along with the 460th and the 596th, became the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. We did all of our fighting as a separate combat team assigned to everyone under the sun who had a tough job for us. After Bergstein (the last disastrous assignment) and all our fighting was over, we joined the 13th Airborne Division. Had the War not ended while we were on the high seas, we would have fought as the airborne element of the 13th in the invasion of Japan.

Should we try to correct some of the errors?

Best airborne regards, **Howard Hensleigh**

[In Carter's defense, he never exactly says he was a soldier in the 517. "After I had gotten out of the Airborne Engineers, I was with an Airborne Signal company, and they sent me to be with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment and, for Thanksgiving 1944, situated along the Italian border, protecting the right flank of the 6th Army Group as it marched north". – BB]



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

From: **Gilles Guignard**
Sent: Apr 27, 2010 2:24 PM
To: Howard Hensleigh
Subject: Re: Photos from Marc Paoli for the 517th website

Dear Howard,

Thanks for your email and you comments about Callian.

As you say I guess it was destroyed by men left behind. I had a chat with Allan Johnson about it and he remembers seeing the destroyed German convoy.

Some time ago, you and I were talking about the march from Callian to La Motte and you told me that you did things during the march that were never taught in training and had the good fortune all of them work.

When you have time and if you wish to talk about it, I would be most interested to hear the story and possibly find key landmarks that you would remember.

During my stay in Southern France I went to Seillans on the footsteps of Zais' group. I was able to find the area where they assembled before departing for La Motte. Would you like to see pictures?

With kind regards, **gilles**

To: Gilles Guignard
Subject: Re: Photos from Marc Paoli for the 517th website

Dear Gilles,

What I did immediately after landing and getting my M1 and gear together was to assemble my machine gun stick in the dark and send them out five hundred yards each in all directions with instructions to round up everyone they found and bring them back to my position. This was not something I had read in a field manual or even thought out in advance. I just did it on the spur of the moment without thinking about it. It seemed to be the right thing to do in the pitch black of that early morning. It worked out better than I expected with the collection of almost fifty troopers, one of whom was sure he could lead me to a house. He did this and with my maps, we were oriented, several miles from Callian, and knew we had a hard forced march ahead of us to reach the intended drop zone.

The other thing was that, in scouting ahead of the main column on the route to the drop zone with several other troopers, I hopped from one high point to the next to make sure we were not blindsided by Germans in an ambush. I first convinced a young lady that we needed her bicycle worse than she did and later we shot a German and took over his motorcycle. We used them to go back and forth to the head of the column to let **Gibbons** or **McGeever** know what lay ahead. When a German vehicle or convoy was headed our way we laid off the road in an ambush and ended up with their vehicles. For part of the journey we pressed a hayrack and a



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

couple of mules into service. At first only the jump casualties with sprained or broken bones rode, but we soon had enough transportation that allowed others to hop on. When I learned from a straggler that the Bn. CO, **Mel Zais**, was a few miles ahead of us with most of the rest of the battalion, I rode ahead on the bike and let him know we were right behind him. Many years later Mel told me that he used the bike incident in his lectures at Ft. Leavenworth to emphasize that in combat it sometimes was necessary to improvise. Together the two columns included most of the 3rd Bn., a platoon of the 596th and most of Service Company.

Even though missing the drop zone was frequent, I guess we didn't plan for it and did the best we could when it happened. I'm not sure there was anything brilliant about what we did, but it worked and the 3rd Bn. made a successful attack on the south of Les Arcs on D plus one as a result. I am not sure this is what you expected from your question, but this is what happened.

Highest regards,

Howard Hensleigh

From: **Tom McAvoy**

Subject: Female Soldiers of the World.

Well this is inspiring. Should make for good recruiting... of guys !!

[Female Soldiers from Around the World](#)

"I'd rather win ugly than lose pretty." - Rod Brind'Amour 10/10/2008

Operation Dragoon will take place August 4 - 7, 2011. This event celebrates all of the units that were involved in Operation Dragoon. Needless to say the 517 PRCT played a large part. This event is put on by Monika Stoy (Retired Army Captain) and her husband Lt. Col. Tim. It's in Washington, DC every year and they do a first class job of putting it on. Last year General Graves, Gene Frice and myself were the only troopers to attend from the 517. I am in hope that many more 517 people will attend in 2011. Frankly I learned more about what we and the other units did in Operation Dragoon. It was pointed out that we played a large part in defeating Hitler. So Guys and Girls mark your calendars and plan to attend. Monika will provide more details in Mail Call and the Thunderbolt in the future.

Thank you Bob for putting some humor in Mail Call #2024. I refer to the clip on You Tube where John Carter told how he cooked a turkey while we were on the front lines. It's funny as hell.

Last item, Bob, please put Monika Stoy in your address book so she can receive your Mail Call's. Her E-mail address is monikastoy@yahoo.com.

Hoping you and the Barrett clan have a super Christmas.

Darrell Egner



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Bob, An Army Helicopter (pilot) buddy of mine sent this to me. This video is long about 30 minutes but well worth the time to watch it. What is very interesting is the original plane is reunited with the fighter pilot who flew it in WWII. These guys flying the P51s flew fighter escort for my uncle who was a B-17 Navigator. What is great about this video is it brings to the forefront how important WWII veterans are to us. It made me reflect on what my uncle and our fathers did to keep all of us free. Brought a little tear to my eye thinking about my Dad, the 517th, and my own experiences flying in the military.

Lory Curtis, son of **Bud Curtis**, HQ, 1st Bn, and a proud retired Army Helicopter Pilot

Subject: VIDEO P51 Gray Eagles

This is 14+ minutes long, but very well worth the time!

Have the Kleenex near by.

You gotta watch this video... if you like P-51 Mustangs and Grandpas.

<http://www.asb.tv/videos/view.php?v=1bf99434&br=500>

Hello Bob, I'd like to do all the Morning Reports for HQ Company, 2nd Battalion 517th PIR from the very first available. If that is not available I'll help where needed most. I'm trainable and have MS Office Suite.

Here is my POC data:

Don Gentry (DGentry509@aol.com)

3110 2nd St. SE

East Wenatchee, WA 98802

509-884-2245 Leave a message and I'll call back.

Thanks for your work on this web site.

Don

[Don's offer has been forwarded to Mike Wells, who has been working hard on the Morning Reports. If you have Microsoft Office, you can see H Company [here](#). – BB]

Please read this [\[next page\]](#) and listen to the website.....you haven't got much time left to thank the veterans of WWII for the sacrifices they made for you.....losing these vets at 2,000 a day, there won't be many left to thank. For many years we were ignored, and it has only been in recent years that I've had anyone come up and grasp my hand and say 'Thank you!', or give me a hand over the heart salute from across the street. Believe me, any vet will appreciate the gesture.

phil mc spadden, WWII, Korea, Vietnam

Subject: Before you go



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

The elderly parking lot attendant wasn't in a good mood!

Neither was Sam Bierstock.. It was around 1 a.m., and Bierstock, a Delray Beach, Fla., eye doctor, business consultant, corporate speaker, and musician was bone tired after appearing at an event. He pulled up in his car and the parking attendant began to speak. "I took two bullets for this country and look what I'm doing," he said bitterly.

At first, Bierstock didn't know what to say to the World War II veteran. But he rolled down his window and told the man, "Really, from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you."

Then the old soldier began to cry. "That really got to me," Bierstock says.

Cut to today.

Bierstock, 58, and John Melnick, 54, of Pompano Beach - a member of Bierstock's band, Dr. Sam and the Managed Care Band, have written a song inspired by that old soldier in the airport parking lot. The mournful "Before You Go" does more than salute those who fought in WWII. It encourages people to go out of their way to thank the aging warriors before they die.

"If we had lost that particular war, our whole way of life would have been shot," says Bierstock, who plays harmonica. "The WW II soldiers are now dying at the rate of about 2,000 every day. I thought we needed to thank them."

The song is striking a chord. Within four days of Bierstock placing it on the Web, the song and accompanying photo essay have bounced around nine countries, producing tears and heartfelt thanks from veterans, their sons and daughters and grandchildren.

"It made me cry," wrote one veteran's son. Another sent an e-mail saying that only after his father consumed several glasses of wine would he discuss "the unspeakable horrors" he and other soldiers had witnessed in places such as Anzio , Iwo Jim a, Bataan, and Omaha Beach . "I can never thank them enough," the son wrote. "Thank you for thinking about them."

Bierstock and Melnick thought about shipping it off to a professional singer, maybe a Lee Greenwood type, but because time was running out for so many veterans, they decided it was best to release it quickly, for free, on the Web. They've sent the song to Sen. John McCain and others in Washington.

Already they have been invited to perform it in Houston for a Veterans' Day tribute - this after just a few days on the Web. They hope every veteran in America gets a chance to hear it.

GOD BLESS EVERY veteran.....and THANK you to those of you veterans who may receive this!

CLICK THE LINK BELOW TO HEAR THE SONG AND SEE THE PICTURES:

Before You Go: <http://www.managedmusic.com/Music/PlayBeforeYouGo.php>



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Subject: Boogie Woogie

Do you think any of our troopers remember the Boogie Woogie???

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

Take a few minutes to enjoy, it is well worth it!!! Sit back and enjoy!

The male dancer is super . . . never moves his shoulders compared to what his feet and knees are doing. And the top of his head stays at the same height no matter what.

This is a pianist from Switzerland who plays some of the best Boogie Woogie anywhere. He is so BIG over there, they hold a week-long Boogie Woogie contest every year and all the best players in the world are invited. In this video he is joined by 2 amazing dancers... The male dancer even has a haircut from the forties.

Turn up the volume, watch and give it a listen! If you experience any trouble tapping your foot to the beat, you had better hurry and schedule an appointment with your physician.

FOR THOSE WHO DON ' T REMEMBER, THIS IS HOW THE BOOGIE WOOGIE WAS DONE!

[Dancin' The Boogie - Silvan Zingg \(piano\), Will & Maéva](#) 🎵 🎵 🎵

Bob:

I talked to a Ray Ward today who is a volunteer at the Currahee Military Museum in Toccoa, Georgia. I mentioned the 517th would be visiting the Museum in July 2011 and he indicated they were already aware of and excited about the upcoming visit. They have a separate room that will seat 160 people. I assume we will be eating somewhere there during our day-long visit and this could be an option.

I asked about the arrangement of the memorabilia of the airborne units in the Museum. He indicated the British had disassembled a 75 foot long stable that one of the regiments had bunked in during their stay in England (presumably the 501st or the 506th) and shipped it to Foster County. They took this stable, reassembled it, and divided it into 6 parts for each of the units that had been stationed in Toccoa during the mid '40s. The 517th has its separate partitioned area with only 517th memorabilia located in it. This might be an ideal location as a final resting place for 517th items from individuals or from the Association itself. The Museum is located in the very railroad depot that we disembarked at to face "Boom Boom" Alicki. The museum has been visited by people from 18 foreign countries

The reason for my call to the Museum was to see if they had certain criteria that had to be met in the display of material. We want to have a memorial of some type displayed in Ben's honor and memory in the 517th area. Ray Ward saw no problem with that but suggested I talk to Director Brenda Carlen on Monday.

Merle



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Kissimmee Mini-Reunion info

Hi, Bob -

Thanks so much for keeping up with Mail Call - it looks like you've settled into a Sunday pattern, so I hope I make the deadline! [\[Just made it! – BB\]](#)

Make your reservations now for Kissimmee! Love these mini-reunions - they are always a great time with friends old and new. Register and reserve today! Brenda and Helen are planning a great time and we so appreciate them!

We are having our first little cold snap here in NJ, and I know that the Florida warmth will feel great next month.

In other news, the Palm Springs and Georgia reunions are coming up. Make your plans for reunion season and attend as many as you can.

If you know a trooper who needs some financial assistance to attend these reunions, please let the organizer know. There are monies and hotel rooms available, totally confidential. Please don't let someone miss a reunion for the sake of a few dollars.

Finally, speaking of money, you know that there is always a place to send a donation if you are inclined: The museum in Le Muy continues its restoration efforts and the expenses are ongoing. Please, if you are able, consider sending a donation to Leo Dean to be included in a check for the museum.

All the best to my favorite troopers -

Claire Giblin

Kissimmee Mini-Reunion

[Click here for instructions](#) – Please register ASAP.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dig! ... or Die! Foxholes



Tunisia has taught that your life depends on digging in — *soon enough and deep enough* — with whatever tools you may have at hand. Foxholes protect you effectively from gunfire and mechanized attack and give you a chance to throw some lead yourself.

To prevent detection, the foxhole should be blended with the nearby terrain by weaving a lid of sticks and covering it with leaves, grass, or dirt. Where there is no brush, use your shelter half as a cover to break up the dark shadow the hole makes.

A BULLET WILL PENETRATE 30 INCHES OF LOOSE SOIL. Loose soil from the foxhole will not protect you from enemy gunfire. Soil should be removed, if possible, but may be packed into a low, solid parapet.

A PRONE SHELTER IS NO PROTECTION AGAINST THE CRUSHING ACTION OF TANKS. It is protection from small-arms fire, bomb and artillery fragments. You can dig it easily and sleep in it, but should deepen it into a foxhole as soon as possible.

(*Newsmap*, April 1943)



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Administrivia

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

Leo Dean
14 Stonehenge Lane
Albany, NY 12203

Save the date!

Annual 517th Reunion (probably the last one)

**July 13-18, 2011
Atlanta, GA**

with visits to Camp Toccoa and Fort Benning



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM