



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2026

December 12, 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

Pearl Harbor 1944

December 7, 2010

Bob,

Today is Pearl Harbor day. I have spent the morning teaching students about the Pearl Harbor attack. Do you know which two ships are still in Pearl Harbor to this day? The USS Arizona and USS Utah. Both have bodies entombed. The ship's bell for the Arizona is on the memorial, but where is the ship's bell for the USS Utah? Yep in Utah. It sits out front of the Naval ROTC building at the University of Utah. You can see it 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Also, where did the crews train to drop the atomic bomb on Japan???? Right here in Utah. In Wendover Utah. I met one of the pilots a few years back who married a girl from Utah and chose to stay here. George Mc Quart. He was a wonderful man. He had radiation scars on his face from when the bomb was dropped at 30,000 feet.

Also, John (Boom, Boom) Alicki was at Schofield Barracks on December 7, 1941, as a First Sergeant in an Air Defense Artillery unit. He told me he was at Church when the attack took place. He gave me some great information to provide to students as I taught them about the attack. He was a great man.

Any other stories out there about Pearl Harbor, let me know.

Lory Curtis,

son of Bud Curtis HQ, 1st Bn and a proud citizen of the Great State of Utah!



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Name This Trooper - Answer



The trooper in the picture (left) is **Harland .L. "Bud" Curtis** in a photo taken on August 14, 1944, just a few hours before he left Cittivechia Italy to make that historic combat jump with the 517th into Southern France. Bud Curtis was a member of HQ Company, 1st Battalion, communications section. This picture appears in the book *Battling Buzzards*.

The cartoon (right) is a Dick Spencer sketch which was included in the [517 PCT Booklet](#) printed in March of 1945.



Below is Bud Curtis receiving the French Legion of Honour medal at the 60th Anniversary of the Normandy invasion in 2004.





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Kissimmee Registration made easy

If anyone has been having difficulty pulling up the Kissimmee Reunion Registration Form (you must click on the link and then print it out) just include the following information with your check for \$45.00 per person made out to 517 PRCT Reunion:

- Name of each person attending
- Meal choices for the dinner (Roast Beef, Chicken Masala or Fresh Catch of the day)

Mail to: Brenda Verbeck Mortensen, 13046 Race Track Road #220, Tampa, FL 33626

Please mail by December 15th.

If you need additional information call me at 813-335-8002 or email: bverbeck@gmail.com

517th Annual Florida Mini-Reunion

January 15-17, 2011

Location: Ramada Hotel and Inn Gateway
7470 Highway, 192 West
Kissimmee, Florida 34747
Tele: 1(800) 327-9170
web site: www.ramadagateway.com

For more information, please call
Brenda Verbeck Mortensen at (813) 335-8002. or Helen Beddow at (912) 665-2766.

Step 1: Hotel Information

Special hotel rates apply January 14 – 17
\$65.00 + Tax per night

For those that will be arriving on Friday, January 14, these rates will apply.
For room reservations: Call 800-327-9170 daily between the hours of 9 am – 5pm EST
Identify yourself as attending the 517 Parachute 2011 Reunion

Step 2: Reunion Registration

Registration fees are \$45.00 per person which includes your banquet meal. For those that will be coming just for the banquet, your meal will be \$38.00 including tax and gratuity. Please send your [Registration form](#) and money to:

*Brenda Verbeck Mortensen
13046 Race Track Road #220, Tampa, FL 33626*



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Airborne Task Force Museum, Le Muy, France

To: 517 mail call
From: J.mickael SOLDI
Date: 12/08/2010 06:16PM

*My Dear Friends,
Attached to this mail some pictures of our work, damaged and renovated items..*

We still very active to save and renovate all the WWII items able to be saved, damaged by the flood, thankyou so much already for your great support, letters, mails, calls..

Our friends British veterans and family but also the parachute regiment of British Army are very active and helpfull with their Support. thanks to all of you who had already sent us WWII pics to replace the framed destroyed.

very good friends working very hard during their free time to help us, but also professionals experts peoples..

Water and mud was everywhere.. Water but also, dangerous products carried by the water, engine Oil, Petroleum...we have to disassemble all component of equipment, carefully and make sometime a second wash to rinse the mud.. dry it again, and make a anti rust treatment. We apologize to have not a lot of time to update the news, hope you understand, We will try to do it better. Xmass season is coming soon and our wish will be that the 2010 flood never happen again. Never , Never!...

*All the best to you all dear friends, one more time thankyou very much for you help and support that we appreciate so much. .. ! Merci Beaucoup !!
Never give Up ! Airborne all the way !!!!*

Mickael and Eric, Airborne task Force Museum.

15 Aout 1944 Association.

letterbox 79

83490 Le Muy France

anvil-dragon@hotmail.com

J. Mickael and Eric,

God bless you and your folks for your dedication, hard work, spirit, and determination in salvaging the airborne museum. This mirrors the same spirit and determination the 517th showed against hardships experienced in Dagoon, the Bulge, Manhay and other campaigns. You are indeed special members of the 517th family!

Take a well-deserved break and please enjoy the Seasonal Holidays with your loved ones. A hearty Merci Beaucoup from your friends across the pond!

Tom Copsey



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team





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MailCall News

Dear Jean Mickael and Eric,

Many thanks for the update and I fully echo the thoughts below. You have had a terrible year and you can now look forward to a happy Christmas and a healthy and more relaxed 2011.

Many thanks once again for all your dedication and hard work from myself and Regimental Headquarters The Parachute Regiment.

Our very best wishes,

John and Karen Handford (UK)

[to: J. Mickael and Eric]

Fantastic job.

We will be meeting John Handford for lunch in China Town on Saturday, remember? we took you there when you came over. I will show John the photo's he will be so pleased. He will ask about the plans for the future so we need to start soon.

Love to all and Bon Anniversaire to Adrien, I think I remember his birthday is around this time.

Alan, Sue & Peter. Folkard (UK)

From: DTaddei@aol.com [mailto:DTaddei@aol.com]

Sent: Friday, December 10, 2010 5:05 AM

To: webmaster@517prct.org

Subject: Gliders

Sir,

i know that some gliders had been towed by B-25 Mitchell instead of C-47 during the Southern France Landing in mid -August 1944.

Do you have some information about such detail?

Thank you

Dominique Taddei, USS Corsica

RE: Morning Reports

I am looking for volunteers and will respond to Don. THANKS!

Mike Wells



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hi Bob

Are the Morning Reports that are being transcribed by different people the same morning reports that Clark Archer had? I am interested in the HQ 2nd BN.

Thanks

Chris Lindner

[Yes they are. They will require some careful reading by Mike Wells and friends to transcribe, as they are paper copies that Clark somehow retrieved from old micro-fiche copies. [See this sample.](#) – BB]

Dear Bob and Claire,

Months ago I sent the draft of this amendment as an attachment in an email to Bob and the committee, but apparently the attachment did not come through. So, last week I sent it to Bob snail mail to the North Andover address in the roster. It should be circulated, approved by the committee, and after approval published in Thunderbolt so it could be put to a vote at the next reunion. If there is still a mix-up, please let me know.

Howard Hensleigh

Howard,

Yes, I did you're your snail-mail (US Postal Service) copy of the Amendment last week. You may also have sent it to me in an email, but I haven't located that yet. (Bear with me, as I get dozens of email sent to the MailCall each week that I have to dig through.) And I have been out of the country, on business in China for the past week. I just got home, so I am just getting back into action. I will make sure to get it out in the next MailCall today or tomorrow.

Thanks and regards,

Bob Barrett

[Sorry, I ran out of time tonight. It'll have to wait until the next MailCall. – BB]

December 17 marks the 75th anniversary of the Douglas C47 transport plane.

See next page. -- BB

Also see: [1944 MR C-47 Skytrains with Paratroopers in France](#)

BOOKS

Homely and Nearly Indestructible

DC-3: A Legend in Her Time
By Bruce McAllister

Roundup Press, 256 pages, \$49.95

By DAN FORD

When the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico in April, BP and the federal government deployed the latest in technology to cap the well and disperse the oil that had already gushed into the coastal waters. Among the tools that were rushed to the Gulf was a Basler BT-67, a twin-engine cargo plane that serves with the U.S. Air Force, the Forest Service and 17 other air forces and civilian operators around the world.

To those of us who love old airplanes, however, the red-white-and-blue tanker spraying dispersant across the Gulf looked rather like a DC-3, the homely, nearly indestructible, 21-passenger airliner rolled out by the Douglas Co. in 1935. And so it was: The Basler retrofits old DC-3's with gas turbine engines, five-bladed propellers, modern instruments and other refinements to increase their speed and service life.

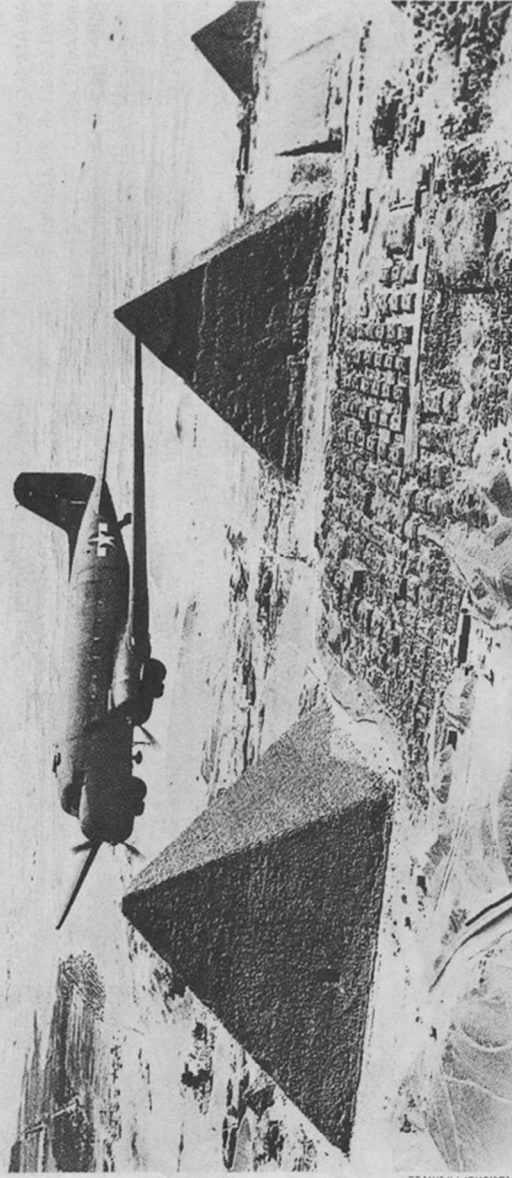
Strictly speaking, only 607 DC-3's were ever built. But modified versions of the plane were built in huge numbers, thus becoming the U.S. Army's C-47 (many of them lend-leased to Britain in 1940 and 1941), the Soviet Union's Li-2 and even Japan's L2D navy transport. By some accounts, the worldwide total of modified DC-3's comes to roughly 16,000. They hauled passengers, paratroopers, refugees, livestock and freight; they served as spy planes, weather stations and

gun ships; they flew to both poles and to almost any place on Earth where a 1,000-foot runway could be roughed out.

This Dec. 17 marks the 75th anniversary of the airliner's maiden flight, a good reason for Bruce McAllister's coffee-table tribute, "DC-3." Mr. McAllister has worked both as a photographer and as a pilot, and he draws upon both talents to assemble the 250 photos in this book. Together with his pithy text, the images will, I suspect, cause the spirits of aviation buffs to soar. But the majesty of the plane's design can please the aesthetic sense, too; and the history of the plane itself offers a winged approach to key moments in 20th-century history.

There was of course a DC-1—but only one. The Douglas Co. of Santa Monica, Calif., quickly honed it into the 14-passenger DC-2, in which the future Trans World Airlines hustled passengers across the U.S. in two days of flying, with the intervening night in a Pullman berth. To compete, American Airlines asked Douglas to modify the DC-2 as a sleeper, which the company did by widening the fuselage.

Thus the DC-3, with two refueling stops, could cross the continent in an eight-hour night and an eight-hour day. Airlines soon realized that they could maximize revenue by removing the bunks and putting one seat to the left of the aisle and two to the right, for a then-astonishing total of 21 paying passengers. It was in just this configuration that I made my first commercial airline flight, from Frankfurt to Brussels, for the 1958 World's Fair. It was a roomier experience than the one that today's



National Archives

IN WAR AND PEACE During World War II, the Douglas C-47, the military version of the DC-3, was essential in Egypt.

sardine-can seating arrangements allow.

In all likelihood, the plane I was traveling on in 1958 was actually a converted C-47, the plane that Dwight Eisenhower credited as one of four great American transport contributions to victory in World War II (the others being the Willys jeep, the six-wheeled General Motors truck and the Caterpillar tractor). Adapted for combat, the plane had a wide cargo door, aluminum bucket seats facing inward to the aisle and an overhead bubble through which a navigator could take star sights.

Thus outfitted, the Douglas transport seemed capable of almost anything. In the 1944 "bridge too far" attack on Arnheim in occupied Holland, clouds of C-47's dropped 20,000 parachute infantrymen while towing another 14,000 in

wooden gliders and delivering 1,700 vehicles, 263 artillery pieces and 3,000 tons of ammunition. The U.S. Army rated it for 28 passengers, a limitation that was regularly ignored. In 1944, a Russian pilot in a C-47 flew 32 stranded Americans out of a rough airstrip in the mountains of Yugoslavia. When China fell to the communists in 1949, 84 refugees crammed into one flight to the offshore island of Taiwan. And when Vietnam experienced a similar fate in 1975, 103 orphans and attendants escaped Dalat, an overrun provincial capital in South Vietnam, in a Douglas.

Not that the DC-3 was perfect. Even in modern dress it is a "tail-dragger," with two main wheels in front and a small, swiveling wheel in back, a design that makes it tricky to handle on the ground. "Anybody can fly a DC-3," said one

veteran airman, "but it takes a pilot to taxi one"—or to land it. Army pilots liked to come in on the main wheels and coast to the desired parking spot at a speed sufficient to keep the plane level to the end, then let the tail drop.

For those of us who were passengers in the Douglas toward the end of its service life—my other DC-3 flights were dropping flares over Vietnam in 1964 and vacationing in the Bahamas in 1982—the Douglas could seem a vibrating, noisy, frigid vehicle compared with the jetliners that succeeded to its role. I almost said "replaced it," but as Mr. McAllister says toward the end of his engrossing tribute: "The only replacement for a DC-3 is another DC-3."

—Mr. Ford is the author of "Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers, 1941-1942."



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Subject: First there was this Gun

Forwarded by **Tom McAvoy**

Read this story of the [General Electrics A-10 30mm Gatling Gun](#)



A-30mm Avenger Cannon

December 1944

As we are getting close to celebrating another Christmas at home with family and friends, I could not help but reflect on what my Dad and others of the 517th were doing at Christmas time in Belgium in 1944. Because of their selfless sacrifice, each of us can enjoy a peaceful Christmas this year. A major battle at Soy and Hotton was being fought by the 517th in December 1944. This is what I wrote about it, and a response from Colonel Boyle as to what really happened 60 years later in 2004. Then I have included a letter my Dad wrote home to his mother on December 29, 1944. You can see from his letter Bud Curtis is very proud of the 517th and explains to his mother what a parachute regimental "Combat Team" is. He also writes some very poignant thoughts about life in combat at Christmas time.

On behalf of the Curtis family may we wish each of you a safe, and Very Merry Christmas!

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



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

In Bud's next letter dated December 29, 1944, he related that the 517th PRCT had taken and secured the towns of Soy and Hotten Belgium. Bud thought he remembered the 517th turned control of these two towns over to the 106^h Infantry Division, and on Christmas day the 106th Division had lost the ground given them by the 517th. Bud thought the 106th Infantry Division was pushed back by the Germans at the towns of Soy and Hotton. Because the battle was unclear to Bud, his son L. Vaughn Curtis asked the question on "Mailcall", the 517th PRCT Association email site in May 2004. On May 27, 2004 an email message was sent out to me from then Lieutenant Colonel Boyle, 1st, Battalion Commander, 517th. He straightened out the story as to what really happened. Colonel Boyle related the following on Mailcall #700. He said,

"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 two battalion of this regiment (517th) were unable to take the hill, Laremoulier. 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. 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. 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.

Bud remembered that artillery attack very well, (he told his mother about it after the war was over in his letter dated May 29, 1945) and has never forgot it all of these years later. He said, "On December 26th, I was stringing field telephone wire up to LTC Boyle, the Battalion Commander while conducting an offensive operation to retake Soy and Hotton. I had spliced the wire many times that day as German artillery rounds kept blowing up the lines. At about noontime on December 26, 1944, I was stringing wire for the field telephone for Lieutenant Colonel Boyle, the First Battalion Commander, when friendly fire from the some Artillery Battalion of the 75th Infantry Division came screaming in. Apparently grid coordinates for the intended rounds were landing short. LTC Boyle and I hit the ground as the shell exploded with most of the shrapnel going upward and not downward."

Bud then continued, "Close by were two men. One man was the forwarded observer with a radio on his back from that Artillery Battalion standing by the foxhole. The other man was a 517th paratrooper in the foxhole. When the rounds came in the man with the radio strapped to his back dove into the foxhole on top of the other man. The artillery shell exploding killing the radioman and his body covered the other man lower in the foxhole. This man started screaming and lost all control about the radioman's death." Sixty years later Bud could still hear his screams. After the artillery rounds stopped coming in, Colonel Boyle, and Bud were shook up badly, but not hurt. LTC Boyle asked Bud, "Curtis are you still alive?" Bud checked himself and said, "Yes sir, I think I am." The Colonel said he had to go and get things organized but would be back. LTC Boyle did come back and kept reporting to Bud the condition of the battle and reassured Bud that everything was alright.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Letter to Mom from Harland L. Curtis
Stavelot, Belgium - Thursday December 29, 1944, postmarked January 24, 1945

Dear Mom,

This is the first chance I've had to write you for sometime and I'm afraid for a while now my letters are going to be few and far between, so try to understand that it isn't my fault.

I'm not going to tell you anything about these past few days because you would only worry about me and I don't want you to do that. I'll tell you about it after it is all over, but for now all I'll say is that I'm up front fighting here in Belgium and it is plenty cold

Right now I'm a little ways back from the front lines (in Stavelot Belgium) and I am in a big mansion just like you've seen in the picture shows. I am in one of the big rooms and I am warm and even have a radio sitting in front of me listening to a broadcast from England, so I am enjoying myself while I can. Yesterday I had one of the fellows that use to live on a farm get me a whole canteen cup of milk out of a real live cow. Boy, it was good just like when I was back in Payson and Uncle Willis (Bud's father's brother) milked that old cow of Ma's (Bud's paternal grandmother).

I got a lot of mail yesterday and will probably get some more today if we stay here. I got those pictures of you and Dad, Ma, and Grandmother. They sure turned out nice and clear. I got seven letters from Jill and one from Gary and one from Jerry. I sure was glad to get so many from Jill and I am glad she has gotten over that cold she had. I'm going to see if I can find some more ink. I did. The clipping you sent me was about our outfit, but I'm a long ways from there now. I came all the way across France in one of those 40 and 8 box cars (train) you heard about in the last war. You won't find much about the 517th by looking for news in the paper because we are a "Combat Team" and wherever there is some place they need good men fast that is where we go. We have been attached to almost every Army over here at different times.

The reason we don't get much rest is because we are a good outfit and all the time someone is needing us. There is nothing we can't do, but you people won't read about it because we aren't a big enough outfit to make front page headlines.

I was sure thinking a lot about you people at Christmas and wondering what you were doing and if maybe you were thinking about me that day while I was ducking bullets and shells, and if there would ever be a time when we could all be home for Christmas together again. I saw a lot of guys that day both ours and Krauts that will never see another Christmas, and all I could do was pray to God that it wasn't my time to go, and I guess it wasn't cause here I am. I'll never forget this Christmas as long as I do live, and you will never know how glad I am that this war is being fought in these countries and not in ours and I'm glad that you people there will never have to see some of the awful things I have, but I don't even want to think of them so I'll drop the subject.

I sure hope Bert was home for Christmas and Jill was happy with what ever you got her from me. Write soon and tell me everything and tell everyone hello from me and I'll write again as soon as I can.

I'm going to heat me up something to eat now so I'll say so long for now, and I hope some more mail comes in tonight. It is sure swell to get mail from home so keep it coming. Oh yes, I got two packages from you just before I left that last area (censorship would prevent Bud from telling his mother exactly where he was in case the Germans intercepted his letters home. Each of his letters were opened by Army mail personnel and screened before they were sent out) to come up here in Belgium. Thanks a lot for them they sure tasted good. Believe it or not I ate that whole can of pineapple and fruit cake laying on the ground with machine gun bullets whizzing only about 6 inches over my head. I figured at least I was going to eat that instead of some darn Kraut, come what may. Send some more when you can and some cookies and candy. Lots of Love, Bud



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