



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2027**

**December 19, 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)

### *Melvin Biddle – Reluctant Hero*

## **Anderson man, last living Hoosier Medal of Honor recipient, dies at 87**

By Rodney Richey

From the Herald (Indiana) Bulletin, Fri Dec 17, 2010, 08:04 PM EST

ANDERSON, Ind. — Melvin E. “Bud” Biddle, the soft-spoken Anderson native who went on to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for his role in World War II’s infamous Battle of the Bulge, died Thursday at Saint John’s Medical Center. He was 87.

Gov. Mitch Daniels, upon hearing the news, issued a statement saying, “We call them the Greatest Generation for a reason, and in Melvin Biddle we have just lost one of the greatest of the great. Every Hoosier is proud that our state produced such a man.”

Biddle was the last living Hoosier to have received the Medal of Honor. His death leaves a total of 86 living Medal of Honor recipients.

“It’s quite a loss to the community and to the state,” said Stephen T. Jackson, Madison County historian. “He was a hero, and we don’t have that many heroes today.”





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

### *Melvin Biddle – Reluctant Hero (cont.)*

Leona and Melvin Biddle, childhood sweethearts, had been married for 64 years. She said in a statement only one thing: “I’ve lost the love of my life.”

Linda Stanley, his niece, said that Biddle “was definitely my hero.

“He didn’t like to talk about the war too much, about what he did. He did quite a lot. What he did was amazing.”

It was Christmas 1944, when Pfc. Biddle found himself with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment near Hotton, Belgium.

A graduate of Anderson High School, Biddle had left his job with Delco Remy as a draftee into the U.S. Army. Now he was in the thick of the Battle of the Bulge, a last-gasp German offensive.

Though taken by surprise, the Americans fought back, in temperatures that reached below zero.

Biddle was scouting ahead for his unit when he encountered three German soldiers. Biddle quickly shot them all.

Then, the next night, Biddle was met with 17 German soldiers. Singlehandedly, Biddle engaged them, killing all 17, reportedly with 19 shots.

Less than a month later, Biddle took shrapnel. As he lay recovering, Biddle discovered that he had been nominated for the Medal of Honor, for what the order would later call “intrepid courage and superb daring.”

Biddle would always admit to a certain amount of fear while in combat, especially when he was out front.

“But I lost a lot of fear because I was out there and couldn’t let the troops down,” Biddle told Madison magazine in 2008.

According to family and friends, Biddle had led life on his own terms, shunning the spotlight except for the occasional interview. He never reveled in or glorified his exploits, say those who knew him, though he was within his rights to do so.

Former Madison County Circuit Court Judge Fred Spencer, himself an Army veteran, knew Biddle well enough that, rather than “Judge,” Biddle referred to him as “Spence.”

“It’s a cruel coincidence – or maybe fate made it happen that way – but he died on Dec. 16, which was the day the Battle of the Bulge started in 1944,” Spencer said Friday.

Toni Ledbetter, bar manager at American Legion Post 127 on Columbus Avenue, said that Biddle had always been a “very special person.”

“I’ve been here 18 years, and Bud was an everyday person,” Ledbetter said. “He’d never go around bragging about what he did.”

Biddle’s wife and family are Jehovah’s Witnesses, said granddaughter Lauryn Wicevic. To honor their beliefs, Biddle had requested his funeral not include a military observance.

According to Ledbetter, military honors will be rendered Monday night at the Legion.

“He was the best,” Wicevic said Friday. “He took care of all of us. He was the rock in our family. He was what held us all together.”

“It was a rare honor and pleasure to know one of Anderson’s real World War II heroes,” Spencer said.

“Probably the finest compliment that could be paid to him was by President Truman, who (speaking about the medal) told him on Oct. 12, 1945, ‘I’d rather have this than be president.’”

From the Herald Bulletin, Fri Dec 17, 2010



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

## MailCall News



### [NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams: Medal of Medal of Honor Recipient Melvin](#)

#### [Biddle Dies.](#)

39 sec - 10 hours ago

*Melvin Biddle*, who was awarded the medal for his actions in Belgium in 1944, died Friday. He was 87. His death leaves 86 living recipients of the Medal of Honor. NBC's Brian Williams reports.



The National news carried a story tonight on Melvin Biddle's death. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions in the Battle of the Bulge on December 23 and 24, 1944. He was in Company B-517th PRCT. Presentation was made by President Harry S. Truman on September 28, 1945 in the Rose Garden at the White House.



I will write a condolence letter to the family on behalf of the 517th Association.

Merle





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

# **Hoosier Medal of Honor recipient Melvin Biddle dies**

From Indystar.com

Written by [Vic Ryckaert](#)

Melvin E. Biddle, the last surviving Hoosier to receive the Medal of Honor during World War II, died Thursday at his home in Anderson.

He was 87.

Friends said Biddle, a Daleville native, was a humble man who rarely talked about the two days in 1944 when he single-handedly killed more than a dozen German soldiers.

"He didn't want to be publicized too much," said Lew Goodwin, commander of Veterans Of Foreign Wars Post 266 in Anderson. "He told us he did it to help his buddies out. He got tired of being shot at. He got tired of everyone being pinned down."

Biddle was a member of VFW Post 266 but had been visiting less frequently as his health deteriorated, Goodwin said. Goodwin said he never saw Biddle wear his medal.

Fellow post members were proud to have Biddle among their ranks.

"He was just somebody you could look up to," said Bennie Cravens, 66. "You felt proud to be a member of the same organization."

Pfc. Biddle was a scout with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment when his unit was sent to attack German soldiers encircling the town of Hotton, Belgium, on Dec. 23 and 24, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge.

Biddle pushed through dense forest and used his rifle and grenades to kill more than a dozen German snipers and machine gunners, according to his award citation.

"His 20-hour action enabled his battalion to break the enemy grasp on Hotton with a minimum of casualties," the citation said.

With Biddle's death there are 86 surviving Medal of Honor recipients, including Sammy L. Davis, a Vietnam War veteran formerly of Indianapolis.

Davis, 64, said Biddle was known as "Uncle Bud" to fellow Medal of Honor recipients.

"When I grow up I want to be just like Melvin Biddle," Davis said. "He was a good man in every aspect."

Davis had just undergone knee replacement surgery and was recuperating in a Vincennes area hospital Friday. He said he hopes doctors discharge him in time to attend Biddle's funeral.

"It's made my heart heavy," Davis said.

President Harry S. Truman gave Biddle the medal on Oct. 12, 1945. According to the Medal of Honor Society, Truman whispered to Biddle: "People don't believe me when I tell them I'd rather have one of these than be president."

Biddle is survived by his wife, Leona, and other family members. Funeral services were pending.





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



## 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

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

918 Essex Drive  
Anderson, IN 46013

Dear Mrs. Biddle

Although many members of the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT have never met you, all members of the Unit know of Melvin's deeds and have been proud to have had the opportunity to know him. I was in a different unit but had the honor to meet "Bud" during the time we held a National Reunion in Bismarck, North Dakota in 2001. The local newspaper attempted to interview him and other members of the Unit had to fill in some of the details of Melvin's exploits because he tried to downplay his actions.

We are all saddened to hear of his passing and I am writing to extend the Unit's deepest sympathies to you and your family. May the memories you two have built over the years help you "soldier on" through this difficult time.

With warmest regards,

  
Merle W. Mc Morrow

President-517<sup>th</sup> PRCT

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



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

### *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](mailto: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](http://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*



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

### Guestbook

| Submitted by   | Comments:   |
|--|---|
| Name: <b>Denise Delesio</b><br>From: Delaware<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:dmd427@aol.com">dmd427@aol.com</a>          | My father, Gabriel Delesio, was a member of the 517th. He is 88 years old and still lives on his own in Newtown Square, PA. He would be thrilled to hear from anyone that remembers him. I would like to buy him a subscription to the Thunderbolt.<br><br>Added: December 14, 2010   |
| Name: <b>Randy Posey</b><br>From: Jasper, AL<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:rhposey47@gmail.com">rhposey47@gmail.com</a> | Sorry I entered the wrong email address! Correct address is rhposey47@gmail.com<br><br>Added: December 7, 2010  |
| Name: <b>Randy Posey</b><br>From: Jasper, AL<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:rhposey@gmail.com">rhposey@gmail.com</a>     | My father was Hershel Posey. He was a medic attached to 2 BN Co.E and I believe Co. F. Sadly he passed away 9 Sept. 2010. He always spoke of attending to many of the wounded on the battlefield. He kept in touch with many of his comrades as long as he could but I have never had the honor of speaking to any of you directly. If any would like to contact me about him please do.<br><br>Added: December 7, 2010 |

### MailCall News

Oh my gosh, I have this kind of card. I never imagined this could ever happen. You have got to watch the video

#### Lory Curtis

In case you did not get this yet...

<http://www.wreg.com/videobeta/?watchId=8ba6f8fc-90a2-4711-90ea-1884ec348310>

Watch and then check your credit cards for the symbol.

---

4 year old is one cool drummer. Drops his stick but recovers very quickly.

<http://www.angelfire.com/ak2/intelligencerreport/drummer.html>

#### jerry wofford

---

**Subject:** When they play Taps, do you know the words? And Why?

Ray Hess

[Taps](#)



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

### *MailCall News*

From: Jean-Loup  
Sent: Dec 14, 2010 12:43 PM  
To: Howard Hensleigh  
Subject: 517th PIR

Dear Mr Hensleigh

I have been reading over some of the old emails you sent to me, and would like to clarify one point: you mentioned being in the first patrol into Montauroux as the Germans pulled out, and also mentioned being fired on by 20mm guns near Fayence.

Am I correct that in one day, you were first Callian, then in Montauroux, then back in Callian, and then were sent in the direction of Fayence by major Paxton who wanted you to serve as a guide to one of the companies who had gotten lost? And it is during this mission that you were fired on by the 20mm guns?

I would just like to make sure to get everything in proper chronological order.

Best wishes,

Jean-Loup

---

De : hhensleigh@earthlink.net  
À : Jean-Loup <schyzowolf@yahoo.fr>  
Envoyé le : Mer 15 décembre 2010, 1h 07min 50s  
Objet : Re: 517th PIR

You have stated the sequence correctly.

Melvin Zais, the 3rd Bn. CO on his way to become Combat Team executive officer, made me 3rd Bn. S-2 just before he left for the regimental combat team. He and Col. Graves gave me the mission of rescuing our jump casualties from around Callian and getting them to a field hospital. He gave me an old French car and Frank Longo as driver. We first went to Callian and found both our troopers who had remained around Callian where they had dropped and some Germans fighting it out for occupation of the town. We had the upper hand and German resistance was spotted.

The civilians in Callian told me the jump casualties had been moved to Montauroux still held by the Germans and one of them offered to go with me to get me in the "back door". After making arrangements with the infantry regiment not to fire on the town until I reported and to provide an ambulance for the jump casualties, I got into the medical clinic without being detected. While I was there for about an hour making arrangements, the Germans pulled out and the infantry outfit took it without firing a shot. So I was in both towns (first Callian then Montauroux) the first day.

I spent the night in Callian as we had heard that the combat team had been ordered to head east to protect the right flank of the rest of the invasion troops who were heading north towards Paris. Major Paxton who was then 3rd Bn. CO arrived a day or two later in Callian with part of the





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

Bn. He sent me driving the black sedan down the road west of Fayence to head the rest of the Bn. (that had taken a wrong turn) towards Callian. I told Paxton that the Germans still held Fayence, but he assured me the road was clear. So, it was a couple of days after rescuing our jump casualties that the 20 mms opened up on me and I swerved behind the disabled French truck to save the sedan. Several days later the combat team pushed on east from Callian towards Sospel and the Italian border. The closest I got to Fayence was on the road to the west.

Again, you state the sequence correctly and I hope the detail is helpful, not confusing.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR. Howard Hensleigh

---

From: Jean-Loup  
Sent: Dec 15, 2010 2:15 AM  
To: [hhensleigh@earthlink.net](mailto:hhensleigh@earthlink.net)  
Subject: Re : 517th PIR

Dear Mr Hensleigh

Thank you for taking the time to write about all these events in chronological order. You had told me about each event separately in the past, but without indicating what came first. Now everything is very clear to me. If I am not mistaken, when you went back to Callian from Montauroux, there were still a few German snipers around?

Do you know what part of the day it was when you were fired on with the 20mm's? Possibly in the morning?

You should really think about writing a book about all your experiences with the 517th. I think you must be the last one left who still has such an excellent memory of the names and events.

Merry christmas and happy new year to you as well!

Best wishes

Jean-Loup

---

From: [hhensleigh@earthlink.net](mailto:hhensleigh@earthlink.net)  
Sent: Wednesday, December 15, 2010 2:19 PM  
To: Jean-Loup  
Subject: Re: Re : 517th PIR

As an afterthought on timing--When on the mission to rescue the jump casualties, I had a mission and moved and did things on my own. When it was complete, I decided to wait in Callian for the Bn. rather than trying to locate them on the road. After I was with the Bn. in Callian, we moved on orders from regiment. We moved out of Callian a day or two later on orders to attack and liberate St. Cezaire, after I had attempted to go into the town to check things out. I barely escaped after being fired upon. I learned from the French there were 400 Germans in the town.

Yes, there were snipers and small clusters of Germans in Callian at that time. The 141st company CO there needed an SCR 300 and I set out to get it for him, running in open spots to minimize the effect of enemy fire which missed me. I got the SCR 300 delivered to the captain and went after one of the snipers. I located him in a bush about 100 yards away after he grazed a 517th Lt. in the



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

butt. We got behind a stone wall. Sgt. Grezaffi, who later got a battlefield commission, from the regimental Hq. S-2 section emptied his carbine clip into the bush hitting the sniper in several places. Covered with blood, he surrendered to us. We 517th stragglers and the 141st were cleaning up the town at that time.

I think I was fired on west of Fayence around noon. After hitting the ditch on the west side of the road, I picked up a few 3rd Bn. men there and we did not get back to Callian, on foot, until well after dark. The next morning, Meline and Benoit, of my S-2 section, got the black sedan and the brand new jeep of a Lt. Col. Head, a British intelligence officer working with the FFI. All the tires on the jeep were flat, but I had gotten it started (to the tune of more 20 mms that missed me) and ran it off the road to the west where the Germans could not hit it. Meline and Benoit got new tires and painted out all the British identification on the jeep and we thought we had permanent transportation. BUT Col. Head showed up just as Meline drove the jeep into Callian and proved the jeep was his. So much for lend lease.

Highest regards,

Howard Hensleigh

---

Bob,

Thanks so much for featuring my Dad in MailCall 2026.

Today is his birthday, December 13, 1924, and this is a great honor and tribute to see him in MailCall. He passed away on December 16, 2007, and yes I miss him terribly.

It is great to see his picture again dressed in combat gear and ready to jump. I am sure everyone else must have looked the same on that day, August 15, 1944. Also, thanks for reprinting the picture of him receiving his Legion of Honor Medal in Paris France, June 5, 2004. Any of our 517th troopers can make application to the French government to receive their Legion of Honor Medal also.

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

---

Bob:

Attached is a copy of a Certificate of Donation which I received from Jean Mickael Soldi. It appears it may be used as documentation in filing an insurance claim for damages incurred in their recent flooding.

I am wondering if others receive a similar request for such information.

Merle

---



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



**Jean Michel SOLDI & Eric RENOUX,**  
Co-fondateurs & conservateurs/co-founder & curators

**Musée de la Libération « 14 août 1944 »**

**AIRBORNE MUSEUM**

**Adress : Letter Box : BP 79**

**83490 LE MUY . France**

[anvil-dragon@hotmail.com](mailto:anvil-dragon@hotmail.com) / [cabrian9@aol.com](mailto:cabrian9@aol.com)

*Dear Merle and Mardy dear Friends,*

*Hope this letter will find you in good health, reay to have a nice Xmass season*

*Could you please be kind to sent us back as soon as possible the document attached, for the insurances inventory .*

*Here the situation is going very slowly with insurances and politics reaction...very very slowly.. but very active from both of us and our good friends to renovate all the items able to be we collected since 30 years now.*

*Thanks already for all the copy you have sent us last month.*

*WE NEVER GIVE UP AND WILL BE "AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY "!!!!*


*We think of you and love you so much, with a lot of souvenir we share together, We realy plan to make the Fort Benning reunion next year and see you there*

*Jean Mickael and Eric,*

*Temporary mail have to be sent to Mickael home address :*

*J. Mickael SOLDI , 64 Les Simons. 83510 ST ANTONIN VAR . France*

*Or Letter box N° 79, Le Muy France*

*Lot of  
Wishes  
REGRADS!  
Mickael  
and  
Eric* 



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

This is a copy of the letter transmitting the Certificate of Donation Form. -- Merle

## CERTIFICATE OF DONATION

The : .....2010.

I, undersigned: (*name- firstname*).....

Veteran of the : .....**460<sup>th</sup> parachute artillery batallion , 517<sup>th</sup> parachute Combat team**

Address: .....

City & country: .....

Certify by this document have made donation, to **Jean Michel SOLDI & Eric RENOUX**, on behalf of our friendship and trust for their outstanding 30 years unpaid work of historical research, their duty to the legacy of the Airborne soldiers of **the 517<sup>th</sup> parachute combat team** during World War Two, to help them in their task to perpetuate, treasure, protect and transmit to the new generation in permanent exhibit the documents, uniforms or mementoes following there after:

- copy with my agreed of my WWII era army pictures.
- Copy of WWII army personal documents.
- A little 517<sup>th</sup> WWII D guidon (penant)
- One 1943 Toccoa framed picture of the 517<sup>th</sup> regimental combat team
- One 1943 Toccoa framed picture of the 460<sup>th</sup> artillery battalion
- One 1943 Toccoa framed picture of the C battery of the 460<sup>th</sup> artillery battalion
- A 1943 booklet from fort benning training center
- Copy of WWII army 517th documents.
- .....
- .....

**Jean Michel Soldi and Eric Renoux** will be obligate by this document to continue the exhibition of those mementoes above mentioned in the best permanent appropriate exhibition in the towns involved about the 15<sup>th</sup> of august 1944 airborne operation.

Jean Michel SOLDI

Eric Renoux

the donator

copy of ID card Attached necessarily



# 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

***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**