



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2028**

**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*

Thanks for your prompt notification of Mel Biddle's passing. It is a great loss to the 517th. In addition to what he did in the breakthrough at Hotten, he was one of the most decent individuals I have ever met.

Several authors tried to get me to agree with the idea that we and other units treated replacement badly, not one of the outfit. I mentioned this to Mel at one of our reunions knowing he joined us at the crater in Italy as a replacement. This was before we had any combat. He responded that he came through regimental processing, was assigned to B Company and eventually to a platoon and squad, not quite knowing what he was getting into. He arrived at the squad's tent area and let the squad members know that he was joining them. One of the guys had just received a "care package" of goodies from home. When he was offered to partake, he said this is for you guys, I just arrived. The answer was you are one of us now and what is ours is yours. Possibly this reception was because Mel was just that kind of a guy. However, Ben Barrett was another replacement. If we treated him badly, he never let any of us know about it.



I have always thought that keen eyesight saved many troopers lives when on patrol or as scouts. I talked to Mel about this and he said he always picked up any slight movement in front of him and reacted quickly. I think he had done some hunting before joining the Army. His keen eyesight was tough luck for the other guy.

A twenty one gun salute for Mel Biddle and WWI's Captain Harry,

Howard Hensleigh





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



Melvin Biddle at the 2007 517 PRCT Reunion banquet, Washington, D.C.

---

Please extend our condolences to Leona Biddle and family. "Bud" was truly a hero and will be missed by the 517th family.

### **Myrle and Betty Traver**

---

Dear Bob: it is with great sadness that we read this MailCall with the news about Col. Biddle's death. How blessed we were to have had the privilege of meeting and sitting with him at the D.C. reunion. It is a treasured memory -- being with him -- he was delightful company yet the epitome of the selfless, ever modest hero. While our words can't convey our feelings adequately, would you please relay our condolences to his wife and family and our most sincere gratitude for his exemplary service to this nation.

This moment causes us to pause and reflect and to appreciate once again the sacrifices of the men of the 517th during the Battle of the Bulge that was raging at this time 66 years ago, and to say thank you to everyone, such as yourself, your Dad, Howard Hensleigh, Merle, Darrell, Claire, Helen and so many others that I cannot do justice to extolling their contributions for making the Association and Auxiliary the institutions that they are. It is with a most grateful heart we say thank you. A most Blessed Christmas and New Year to all.

### **Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**



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

### *Consideration of Others Training – Lesson Plan Army Values (Selfless Service)*

(Excerpt from *Above and Beyond: A History of the Medal of Honor from the Civil War to Vietnam* by the editors of the Boston Publishing Company in cooperation with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society of the United States of America, 1985)

TASK: ARMY VALUES

CONDITION: Process in a small group discussion environment.

STANDARD:

- a. All participants will be able to define the Army's seven values.
- b. Identify any of the Army Values that Private First Class Biddle applied in his situation, and share with the group on the importance of that value.

---

The Army's seven values are:

- Loyalty – Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers.
- Duty – Fulfill your obligation.
- Respect – Treat people as they should be treated.
- Selfless-Service – Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.
- Honor – Live up to all the Army values.
- Integrity – Do what's right, legally and morally.
- Personal Courage – Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral).

---

#### **SELFLESS SERVICE**

Private First Class Melvin "Bud" Biddle and the rest of his unit were in Reims, France, waiting to go home when the Germans launched their attack. Veterans of campaigns in Italy and southern France, they had turned in their equipment and were passing the time listening to "Axis Sally", an English-speaking Nazi propagandist who played the latest hits from America while spouting misinformation in an attempt to demoralize the Allies. The troops were more amused than influenced by her show. That night, she announced "The men of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment think you're going home but you're not". This time, her information was correct.

The men of the 517th were issued new equipment, so new, in fact, that their rifles were still packed in Cosoline grease, which the men had to clean off before they were boarded into trucks and driven to a crossroads in the area near the most advanced point of the German army: Panzer divisions, paratroops, and SS soldiers. The mission of the 517th was to clear the Germans out of three miles of territory between the towns of Soy and Hotton.

Biddle was the lead scout for the 517th, a job he had inherited when other scouts were wounded or killed during the Italian campaign. One of his qualifications was his superb vision. "I saw every German out in front before they saw me, which was a large part of keeping me alive." He was keenly aware of the



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

responsibility he held as the lead scout and said later it helped him forget this fear. "I think I got so I would rather die than be a coward... I was terrified most of the time but there were two or three times when I had no fear, it's remarkable... it makes it so you can operate [in the lead]."

One of those times came on the twenty-third of December. Biddle was ahead of his company as it crawled through thick underbrush toward railroad tracks leading out of Hotton. Unseen by the Germans, he crawled to within ten feet of three sentries. Firing with his M1 rifle, he wounded one man in the shoulder and killed a second with two shots near the heart. The third sentry fled, but not before Biddle shot him twice in the back. "I should have got him. He kept running and got their machine guns and all hell broke loose."

Under heavy fire from several machine guns, Biddle stayed on point as his unit crawled to within range, lobbed grenades, and destroyed all but one of the guns. With his last grenade, Biddle blew up the remaining machine gun. Then he charged the surviving gunners killing them all.

That night, the Americans heard a large number of vehicles, which Biddle figured had to be American: "I'd never heard so many Germans. They didn't have equipment like we had, not in numbers." Biddle volunteered to lead two others in a scouting foray to make contact with these "Americans" In the darkness the three men came upon a German officer who fired at them. Separated from the others, Biddle crawled toward the German lines by mistake. Realizing his error, he continued to reconnoiter alone and carried back valuable information to use in the next day's attack.

The next morning Biddle spotted a group of Germans dug in along a ridge. He ducked behind a small bank for cover but found that he could not properly maneuver in order to shoot. In basic training Biddle had learned to shoot from a sitting position, but at the time he had thought that there would be no way to use it in combat. Now, moving to a sitting stance, he shot fourteen men. He hit each one in the head, imagining that the helmets were the same as the targets he had aimed at in training. Although others in his unit later went to view the bodies, Biddle could not bring himself to look on the carnage he had wrought. His sharpshooting, however, made it possible for his unit to secure the village.

Biddle was wounded a few days later when a German 88MM artillery shell exploded against a building behind him. As he was returning to his unit from a hospital in London, another soldier asked him if he had heard about "that guy in the Bulge that shot all those people. My God, between Soy and Hotton it was littered with Germans. I think they're going to put that guy in for the Medal of Honor."

Biddle's outfit was one of many units to be rushed to the Ardennes to relieve the embattled 1st Army there. When General George S. Patton's 3rd Army rolled out of Lorraine, it left the Allied units in its wake vulnerable to attack. The Germans moved the 17th SS panzer to the attack near Bitche, France, in an area where the 44th Division struggled to hang on.

### **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Name the 7 Army Values, and define them.
2. What Value is most important to you?
3. Explain what Army values did Private First Class Biddle apply that night with his company.
4. If you were in Private First Class Biddle situation, how would you have applied the Army Values?
5. Do you apply Army values daily?
6. How does being told to live by these values make you feel?



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

### MailCall News

Subject: Hope you are well

Dear Howard,

Hope all is well with you and yours?

It's been a long time that we communicated.

I'm the Dutchman that takes care of the grave of **Capt. Robert P Woodhull**.

All the best to you and yours.

Best regards

Ronald Stassen

See: <http://www.517prct.org/bios/woodhull.htm>

---

Dear Ronald,

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR from all of us in the 517th. We want you to know that we appreciate your enduring efforts to honor those of us who lost their lives in giving all of us survivors the opportunity to live a life worth living without dictatorial domination. Captain Woodhull is worthy of your loyalty and devotion.

All is well with me.

God bless all Dutchmen,

**Howard Hensleigh**

---

**From:** david hausvater [mailto:haususmc@yahoo.com]

**Subject:** 517th RCT information

Hi,

My name is David Hausvater. I'm a WWII reenactor/living historian in the Seattle, WA area. I was looking to make a group of reenactors that portray the 517th RCT. Everyone usually does the 82nd and 101st AB div. But I know there was many more paratroopers during the war. I've just started to look into the unit history and I'm trying to figure out the uniforms for the most part to get the impression correct.

The pictures I've seen of the 1944 jump into southern France the Paratroopers were wearing unreinforced M42 jump uniforms and they were camo painted similar to the pathfinders on operation overlord. Were the helmets also camo painted using the "gas detection" paint? As they were taken off the line were they issued the m43 uniform? Did the unit have a shoulder patch they wore, was it the 17th AB or 13th AB patch? I really want to make the impression as spot on as we can make it. Any information would help me out. I do this because my generation has no clue about the men of the Second World War. I am a USMC Iraq war vet and have done 2 tours over there. I just want to pay my dues to men that have paved the way for us. If your able to help please email me when your able too. Thank you for your time.

Semper Fidelis  
Sgt. David Hausvater  
USMCR



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

David,

I am only the son of a 517<sup>th</sup> vet (deceased), so I cannot answer the questions myself. But I will post your questions onto our weekly newsletter, where some of the veterans might be able to respond to your questions.

In the meantime, I do know there is a discussion of the helmets on the Wikipedia page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/517\\_PRCT#Helmets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/517_PRCT#Helmets)), and one of the best sources, I believe, is in the Book *First Airborne Task Force* (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/2960017625/o/gid=947823150/sr=8-1/002-7452251-2282645>) And as you are probably aware, there are numerous other reenactor groups that cover similar units (<http://www.atthefront.com/wwiilinks/reenactingorganizationsandunits.html>, [http://www.panthers505.com/airborne\\_improvement.htm](http://www.panthers505.com/airborne_improvement.htm)), even including the 517<sup>th</sup>: <http://www.battlingbuzzards.org/>

Good luck! Bob Barrett

Dear webmaster,

Yesterday (December 18) I visited Henri-Chapelle war cemetery to pay my tribute to my adopted soldiers (graves). The occasion for this visit was Christmas of course.

From the six adopted graves I have two adopted soldiers from the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

- **S-Sgt David T. Hines** of Company E, 517 PIR

- **Pvt John J. Jarozy** of Company F, 517 PIR



I added pictures from the graves from last visit. Maybe they are of any use to you. Warm regards from across the pond,

Tom Peeters  
Best, the Netherlands



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

Hi Bob-

I just joined the 517<sup>th</sup> mail call newsletters last month, and they continue to interest me and look forward to each one. Thanks so much for taking the time to put these together.

I wanted to share some information on my personal research project and what I have uncovered so far and how I came to search out the 517<sup>th</sup>.

I am 30 years old and love all things related to the history and stories of WW2. Movies, books, pictures, movies, videos, etc...seems I cannot get enough of it lately.

I always knew my grandfather was in WW2 and my father told me he was in the battle of the bulge, but never had any details other than that. Even my father and his 5 siblings couldn't offer any more than that. They all said that GPA never wanted or offered up discussions about his time in WW2. So the information is quite limited from stories passed down thru the family, and unfortunately GPA died from leukemia when I was 8 years old, so I wasn't able to ask him. Recently however, I was able to uncover some information that my aunt had stored away in a box that helped send me in some sort of direction. Pictures, patches, pins, dog tags, a bayonet, a wallet size version of his discharge form (pretty hard to read most of it due to its size), an officers school diploma, and some German and French money.



My Grandfather was Milton Julius Hanson, born Dec 15, 1922 in Mattoon, WI. Entered service in Feb of 1943, and was discharged in Jan of 1946. From what I can read on his discharge papers he was a Technical Sergeant of the 517th Parachute Infantry, 13th Airborne Division. I have attached a few pictures I have scanned in of my grandfather and what I assume is a group of guys from his unit. I also have attached a diploma we found from my grandfather attending Officer's School in Dec of '45.

I have scoured the information you have on your website, including the 1944 Christmas roster, but do not find him anywhere.

Any other pointers on filling in some of the gaps about where he was and what he was doing during his time in the service? Or how to find out what company he was a part of?

I did submit on behalf of my father, next of kin, to the national archives to see what info they have, but have no clue how valuable that will be.

Thanks again, enjoy the pictures

-Mark Hanson

---

*See more pictures on the website at: [T/Sgt. Milton J. Hanson at Fort Bragg](#)*



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

**From:** Mike Christensen [mailto:mikechristensen @ frontiernet.net]

**Sent:** Friday, December 17, 2010 4:53 PM

**To:** mailcall @ 517prct.org

**Subject:** please share with **Merle W. McMorrow**

The following is the ship's manifest identifying the arrival of Merle's great grandfather arriving in the US

Name: Henry McMorrow

Arrival Date: 28 May 1855

Birth Year: abt 1850

Age: 5

Gender: Female

Ethnicity/Race/Nationality: Irish

Place of Origin: Ireland

Port of Departure: Liverpool, England

Destination: United States of America

Port of Arrival: New York

Port Arrival State: New York

Port Arrival Country: United States

Ship Name: Dreadnought

My wife Lois is the granddaughter of Merles fathers' sister Josephine McMorrow

### **Lois and Mike Christensen**

---

Here is a list of the current bounced MailCall addresses. I will apply Ben's Rule: 3 bounces in a row and that address gets removed from MailCall until we hear from them. Often it is just a change address or an overly full mailbox. I hope everyone is OK. -- BB

A message that you sent could not be delivered to one or more of its recipients. This is a permanent error. The following address(es) failed:

Kathy McIntosh (#1)

Marc Paoli (France) (#1)

Brett Stadler (#3)

William T. Webb (#3)

---





## *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

## *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**