



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2048

April 23, 2011

*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 (from 2008) www.517prct.org/roster.pdf

Report on Palm Springs Reunion, April 11-14, 2011

A good time was had by all. The Palm Springs (PSP) weather was excellent with some beautiful clouds. Clearly showing above us was Mt. San Jacinto 10,850' with recent snow, and San Geronio, 11,502,' with a bunch of snow. Palm Springs is 103m from Los Angeles and **San Geronio is 65m from Los Angeles**-how about that.

We were in the recently rebuilt Palm Springs Holiday Inn for what I believe was the 20 + year. The hotel staff, the rooms, the meals, the 517 breakfast and several lunches, as well as the banquet, all proved to be excellent

Those in attendance, in part, scattered for entertainment of their choice. The Follies (50 to 90 year lovely -- just don't get too close) ladies performed, the Casino, a 10,000+ foot tram ride up to the top of San Jacinto, and a visit to the WWII Palm Springs Air Museum, plus other sites.

Karen, Robin and Sophia (K, R, S) during a daytime break conducted a Saloon Treatment of "facials" for most of the women and including several frightened volunteer troopers with their feet in warm soaking bins. The trio of K, R, and S also prepared an Ice Cream Social on one of the evenings. Karen RN, did not have to make one visit to the PSP Emergency Room as she did several years ago (some 28 hrs) in the week. The hospital was thinking of hiring her.

Those in attendance (some 28) including Ludlow Gibbons and daughter, Marty Donahoo, Gene and Florence Snyder, Jay and Rita Castello, Alex and Vera Sierra, Bill and Gloria Hudson, Virginia Jorgen, Rickie, Marvin, David Tetrick. Bill and Sophia Christian, Bill and Marian Brannon, President Merle and Mardy McMorrow , and Gene, Karen and Robin.

This has been a long message -- the reason for the depth is to remind all of the 517, PSP will remain and continue in the future after our 20+ years with the leadership of Bill Christian, Sophia, and Alex Sierra, setting our example for 2011. I wish to thank them as well as Karen and Robin for an excellent reunion.

All in attendance said they will be there next year, and the next... In spite of other dire comments, if you would care to join us for a **517th 2012 National Reunion-in Palm Springs on the same basic dates. We will be there.** In spite of observations of others in this great country-we do have indoor plumbing in the West Coast.

PFC Gene Frice and Karen, Robin, maybe Laurie, Alex, and the Christian's



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Order of Battle

Subject: Some help

Hi Bob -

I'm hoping you can help and pass this along to Gene Frice. I don't have an email address for him.

Mr. Frice -

I'm trying to track down some information that likely has been lost in the mail.

In a past Mail Call, I read something you posted regarding a document that you picked up at the 2009 Palm Springs mini-reunion. It came from Rita Davis. The document apparently was an Order of Battle for the 517th entitled something on the order of "517 Italian Campaign to Dragoon and the Ardennes."

Your post mentioned it was 15 pages of handwritten material on 11 x 17 paper and that the cost for copying and mailing would be \$15 and that any additional funds would be sent to the 517th fund.

July 1, 2009, I sent check #4336 in the amount of \$20 to obtain a copy. It was cashed October 30, 2009. I suspect it's been lost in the mail, but I'd still like to get a copy if one can be obtained.

Is there a chance you have additional copies laying around? Let me know at your convenience. In advance, I appreciate your help!

Thanks!

Mark Landreth

Mark and Bob

Received your email about the Order of Battle. I guess I missed your email during my travels to PSP for the 517.

Thanks for the heads up about the item. When it was first discovered (via Rita) I felt it was likely one of the most important and all inclusive of anything I had seen. As I had written before, it covered all 517 activities (some I was unaware of), the missions, sites, and accomplishments of the 517 units, the combat support units including air.

Between **Gen Seitz** and I we concluded that it was the work of **Clark Archer** who was a master at historical items. He likely made the original cy when the 517 returned to Ft Bragg and when he probably had access to the files of the first Allied Airborne Army. It was all hand (printed) and that led us to Clark Archer-we miss him.

When I related to our 517 PSP group I found that there was little interest by most (???). I explained what it was and maybe it was too much for some, or I did a poor job of describing it, although some were very interested.

Karen and I got together on it. She went to local shop and had 17 copies made (at her own expense by the way). We had a sign-in sheet, however she handed them out to anyone interested and between the two of us I think we lost the train track.

Where the cost item turned up is beyond me-I guess I pulled it from somewhere trying to reimburse Karen.



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Sorry, I don't know. I hope she cashed it-I don't remember ??.

Now...I still have at least one copy, which I will search for. I will cy and send to you. Alternative is we have it on the internet where one of our ardent supporters copied (photo) and it went into the links of the 517-where?.

I will cy and send it to you. I also need to cy for our French friends.

Sorry about the hang up

Gene Frice

Sir - Thanks for your email. I'm not sure where it got untracked, but that's not a problem. If you can find it, I'd really appreciate getting a copy. I've been doing a chronology of the 517th and I'm sure it'd be incredibly helpful in fleshing out the work. Because dad served with E Company, the chronology focuses mostly on their activities, with some attention to 2nd Battalion, and less so on the regiment as a whole. If you like, I'll send you a copy of the chronology; I'd like to get your input on it, too.

Many thanks! mark

[Gene: Can I also get a copy to put on the website? -- Bob B.]

Mark,

I have not found the Order of Battle (OoB) as yet, I guess because I get easily side tracked-I know it is within 10' of where I am sitting, but so are my taxes, the proof of my book (kidding), and the beer I lost last night.

Yes, I think you and any historian will find the OoB very useful-I wish we could have thanked Archer for his work.

I will have your copy shortly. I talked to Karen about the OoB thingabob and her memory is about as vacant as mine. I do remember how I came up with a \$ 15.00 amount-Kinko said due to weird size it would be about one dollar a sheet. Not an easy thing to cy. Who ever photo it had the right idea, however where did it go?

Call soon

Regards, Gene

Mark,

ok-I found the original (almost) of the OoB, as well as a photo (camera) copy. The photo cy is 15 pages and is much easier to handle, however in some portions not as legible as the original. So, I will send you the photo cy and if one needs I can refer to the main cy. Send me your mail address. I also have several related 517/Dragoon items to enclose.

Gene



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Mail Call News

RE: Spam Mail from Judy

Judy really gets around and apparently she's not fussy. She has asked me for a date as well.....and I'm old and a female.

Bob you're fabulous, keep up the good work. Best regards to all (except Judy)

Jeanne Davis (F Co. Gary Davis-deceased)

Hi Bob,

I am **Joyce Turco** widow of **Leo Turco A Battery 460th 517th PRCT**. I received the same letter as the guys who have written about it in this latest letter. I guess some men have the name Joyce but I was surprised to receive this letter from a girl. I did not open it as I felt it is a SPAM. Is nothing safe these days? I enjoy reading the letters but now I do not know many of the members and have not met the gals who are doing such a great job at keeping this organization together.

I sent our friend Michel and Eric some of Leo's items from his time with the outfit. They wanted copies of his discharge and when he made jump school. Also, send him one of Leo's dog tags. I kept the other in my memorial box on my wall with his medals and other items from our trips to Europe. I feel so fortunate that I was able to attend three years of our meetings in Europe with the 517th. We were married at the time when the 517th went overseas and our son was 3 months old. Our son passed away a couple of months after Leo. I was able to see where the guys were in those hard times and meet the wonderful people in Europe and have stayed friends with them all these years.

Thanks to you Bob for keeping up your Dad's work. We had some nice times with him and your mother at reunions.

Best wishes to all,

Joyce Turco

RE: "Shifty" by Chuck Yeager

Ran,

Thank you Ran. I met "Shifty" on several occasions. We happened to meet on an annual basis at my TRESPO (Tactical Response Assoc)" We were not in the same parachute org as he was in the 506th, Regt, 82nd Abn, Normandy, Holland and Germany. My organization was the 517th Parachute Regt, Italy, So France, France, Belgium, Rhineland and Germany.



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He was a good man. He would always be with his son who is a MD or Paramedic of our TREXPO Chapter Medical Assoc.

A great article by Yeager. Both good men.

Gene Frice

RE: Paratroopers Airborne

The physical fitness, determination and steadfast attitude I will do, makes up this airborne unit.

The men of the 517th came from all walks of life. Some lives you could not imagine or even think of. But they were there to make up this airborne unit. They survived Camp Toccoa, training, maneuvers and combat.

The name of this Airborne Unit 517th Parachute Combat Infantry Team will be in history books long after those of us who were there will be gone, but thought of as an A-1 fighting unit will be here.

Stories long after we are gone and print will come again to build a foundation for this unit to stand on.

Richard H. Wheeler

"B" Battery 1st Sect.

460th Prcht FA Btn

AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY

Guestbook Entry:

Submitted by	Comments:
Name: Anthony Rubino From: New Jersey E-mail: toneyr@optonline.net	My father was Joseph M Rubino, Battery D 460th PFA . I have one photo of him that looks like it was taken before he shipped out. I was wondering if anyone had a group photo (or any other photos) of Battery D that they were willing to share. I would also like to send his photo to this site and would appreciate any help in this matter. God bless all those that have served and especially the 517/460/593. Added: April 20, 2011



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Jump or be Pushed by Herb Loken

April 6th

Dear Bob,

In the latest Thunderbolt I read the request for personal tales from our days with the 517th in WWII. I have some stories that I prepared for my family and hopefully they might be of interest to your readers.

I joined Co C of the 2nd Bat in 43 when it was organized in Camp Toccoa. Participated in the France invasion, Battle of the Bulge and finally ended up with the 82dn Airborne when the option was given to stay in Berlin with Ike... or got to Japan. WRONG CHOICE... Japan gave up and the 517th was in New York and sent home. Our stay with Ike was pleasant duty and after a short stay we were also released.

Oh Yes, I certainly don't mean to brag about my medal award... I was just doing what I was supposed to do and lucky for me it was a success.

Anyway... hope this might be of some help to your efforts.

Thanks,

Herb Loken

3708 Elm St. Bakersfield, CA 93301

Email: Swingtime@bak.rr.com



Jump

or be

Pushed

By Herb Loken

By Herb Loken

RIDING A CHUTE

As a nineteen year old recruit out of Minnesota I had experienced only six occasions to fly in an airplane and yet to land in one. You see, I had volunteered for the paratroops and seldom, if ever, do they land in the comfort of a plane.

Here we were in Camp McCall, N.C., in the Spring of '43, and it was to be a simulated invasion jump, at night, with full equipment, everything but the kitchen sink. We could hardly stand up to march to the plane. We jumped in sticks, which meant there were usually sixteen men in a line on each side of the plane. First one side, or stick, would depart from the plane and then the second and if there was any hesitancy on the part of any individual there were at least two very strong jump masters at the open doorway to assist with a foot in the proper place.

I was the second man in the stick following the platoon leader. In most cases, as you push your way out the door, the prop blast will force you toward the tail of the plane as you start your drop. That meant we were usually at least 20 yards apart when our chute opened but not tonight.

For reasons unknown to this day as my chute opened I landed right on the canopy of the platoon leader. At first I thought, is this some kind of silky cloud or what, but then I realized I was in trouble. I could feel my shroud lines starting to droop around me indicating that my chute was losing air and was starting to collapse. I realized I was 28 feet above the platoon leader and if he were to land, his chute would collapse and I would end up falling straight to the ground, possibly on my head. I had to get off his chute before mine collapsed entirely. If I could get free of his chute there was a good chance mine would re-open fully and carry me safely to the ground. Easier said than done...have you ever tried to crawl up a slippery slope with a heavy pack on your back, another between your knees and a rifle tucked in the front of your chest...I hope not!

But I managed to struggle up the slope which was caused by my weight sinking into the silk of the canopy. The outer rim of the canopy is reinforced with a heavy rope and once I was able to reach it I was able to grasp it and turn myself around so I was hanging on the rim as if supported on my waist on a horizontal bar. With a mighty effort I was able to push myself out and away from his chute...and that's all I remember.

The next thing I knew I was laying flat on the ground and the platoon leader was cussing me out for landing so close to him. With the breath knocked out of me I had difficulty explaining what had happened. When I tried to get up and couldn't he realized what I was muttering might be true. The medics arrived and I was hospitalized for about ten days. A very stiff support for my back and plenty of therapy enabled me to return to duty with no apparent harm done. Tough Norwegian, I guess. As a matter of fact, I returned to college after discharge in 1946 and was able to compete in gymnastics for four years with no further complications.

NO...once discharged I have had no desire to try parachute jumping again!

S/Sgt. Herb Loken



Rita
1944



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Annual 517th Reunion

(Probably the Last) Annual 517th Reunion
July 13-18, 2011
Atlanta, GA with visits to Camp Toccoa and Fort Benning
[Program](#)
[Registration Form](#)
[Hotel Info](#)

Recent website additions:

[Fred Marron, B Battery, 460th PFAB](#)

[Charles William Young, C Company](#)

[2nd Battalion - Communications, Mortar and Machine Gunnery](#)

1943 May 10 - [Letter to parents of new recruits from Lt. McKinley](#)

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:

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

