



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2049**

**April 31, 2011**

*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 (from 2008) [www.517prct.org/roster.pdf](http://www.517prct.org/roster.pdf)

### *Taps – William MacRae – C Company*



#### **William Alexander "Big Daddy" MacRae**

William Alexander "Big Daddy" MacRae passed away Saturday, April 23, 2011, at Mt. Nittany Medical Center in State College, Pennsylvania. He was born January 17, 1925, the youngest of thirteen children, to Alexander and Jennie MacRae, and was a lifelong resident of Syracuse. After graduating from Nottingham High School, Bill enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943. He proudly and honorably served his country with the Airborne as a paratrooper in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team during World War II. His tour of duty led him across Europe, including a combat jump in Southern France during Operation Dragoon, and at the Battle of the Bulge. Bill earned a Bronze Star for meritorious service, as well as several campaign credits and unit decorations.

After being honorably discharged, he married Beverly (Murphy) MacRae, and together, had three children. He later married Janet (Halliday) MacRae. Bill was a long time member and former President of the Valley Men's Club. He retired as District Sales Manager with Lew-Mark Baking / Archway Cookies in 1996. Bill loved the camaraderie of the Men's Club, and the annual Valley Field Days. He also enjoyed reunions of the 517th PRCT held around the country annually.

He was preceded in death by twelve siblings, his first wife, Beverly, and his second wife, Janet. Bill leaves to cherish his memory two daughters, Karen Mahalick and her husband, John, of Flushing, MI, and Kim MacRae, of Danbury, CT; a son, Bill MacRae and his wife Ginger of State College, PA; three grandsons, Greg and Stephen Mahalick of MI, and Duncan MacRae, of PA; a granddaughter, Molly MacRae of PA; many nieces and nephews, and Cousins by the dozens. Friends are invited to attend a celebration of his life at the Valley American Legion Post 1468, 110 Academy Street, Syracuse, NY 13207 at 2 p.m., Saturday, April 30. Donations may be made to VFW Foundation ([www.VFWFoundation.org](http://www.VFWFoundation.org)).

*Published in Syracuse Post Standard on April 28, 2011*



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

Hi Ben:

Sad to report that Saturday the 23rd, my Dad, **William MacRae of C Company** passed away. He really enjoyed the camaraderie of the 517th reunions, and I would go through the website with him when we were together.

We were planning on making the trip to Atlanta in July. I know you are not organizing the reunion, but if you know about anyone who would go but the expense is an issue, I have reservations for 2 tickets to all the events and the dinner. I am glad to donate those to anyone who wanted to attend and can get to Atlanta. I have not checked, but I would hope Armed Forces Reunion would support transferring the tickets for someone that would be able to use them.

Thanks for maintaining the website; it is always interesting to find new items and information about the 517th.

Regards,  
Bill MacRae

### *Mail Call News*

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm trying to learn more about a **Sgt. Ira A Western** who was in HQ.

He later served in Korean and was the First Sgt. in a company my friend also served in. He speaks highly of Sgt. Western and asked if we could find out any more about him.

It is my understanding Mr. Western is now deceased but any info would be greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Matt Bryan

[mwaddie@woh.rr.com](mailto:mwaddie@woh.rr.com)

---

**Subject:** Change of link

I was notified that Google Video is being phased out at the end of the month. There is a video on the 517 of VP Cheney at the DC 97 reunion (one the main page of the 517 site), that was one of these. They allowed a relatively smooth transition over to the YouTube servers. This should be the new link for that video;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1pzAamw9mQ>

-Steve-



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

Subject: Taps

TAPS like you've never heard it!!!

UNBELIEVEABLY BRILLIANT!! The conductor of the orchestra is Andre Rieu from Holland . The young lady, 13 years old, her trumpet and her rendition of TAPS makes your hair stand on end.

Many of you may never have heard taps played in its entirety, for all of the men & women that have died for you to have the freedom you have in America . This is an opportunity you won't want to miss and I guarantee you'll never forget.

Amazingly beautiful .. Melissa Venema, age 13, is the trumpet soloist.

Here is Taps played in its entirety. The original version of Taps was called Last Post, and was written by Daniel Butterfield in 1801. It was rather lengthy and formal, as you will hear in this clip. So in 1862 it was shortened to 24 notes and re-named Taps. Melissa Venema is playing it on a trumpet whereby the original was played on a bugle.

Watch at this site. Takes about 5 min.

<http://www.flixxy.com/trumpet-solo-melissa-venema.htm>

**Phil McSpadden**

---

*[Technically, the song is not "Taps", but Il Silenzio. Il Silenzio (Silence in English) is an Italian pop music instrumental piece, with a small part of spoken Italian lyrics, notable for its trumpet theme. It was written in 1965 by trumpet player Nini Rosso and Guglielmo Brezza, its thematic melody being an extension of the bugle military call for taps. – BB]*

---

**From:** garybed@gmail.com **On Behalf Of** Gary - Baseball in Wartime  
**Sent:** Monday, April 25, 2011 2:11 PM  
**Subject:** What's New at Baseball in Wartime

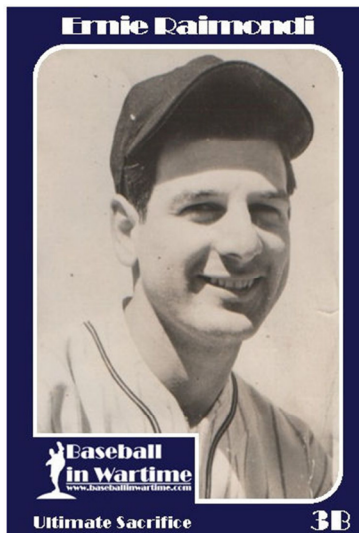
**Have you seen what's new at Baseball in Wartime?**

Dedicated to baseball players who served with the armed forces during World War II

**The Ultimate Sacrifice Baseball Card Set**

Of the 142 players who lost their lives during World War II, I doubt any of them ever appeared on a baseball card. This got me thinking about how nice it would be to create cards for each of them and I put together a couple for the Baseball in Wartime Blog and [www.seamheads.com](http://www.seamheads.com).

I've been overwhelmed by



### **Ernie Daimondi**

*Bats:* Right *Throws:* Right  
*Born:* June 15, 1919 Oakland, CA  
*Died:* Jan 26, 1945 France

Born in to a ballplaying family, Ernie caused quite a stir when he signed with the San Francisco Seals during his junior high school year. He batted .263 in 14 games his rookie year (1936) and hit .296 with Tacoma the following season. In 1938, Ernie batted .337 in 73 games with Tacoma and finished the season back with the Seals. Appendicitis limited his playing time to just 55 games in 1939 and Ernie was released by the Seals in May 1940. He spent the rest of the season playing alongside his brother, Billy, with the Oakland Oaks and batted .274. In 1941 he played for the Oklahoma City Indians before retiring from the game. Ernie entered military service with the U.S. Army in June 1944. Within six months he was in France with the 44th Infantry Division and was killed in action in January 1945.

[www.baseballinwartime.com](http://www.baseballinwartime.com)



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

the enthusiastic responses I've received. I had no idea a card set like this would be of such interest and I am now considering having them produced as an actual baseball card set.

Below is one of the cards together with links to blog articles featuring more cards. I'd love to hear what you think.

[www.seamheads.com/2011/04/16/ultimate-sacrifice-baseball-card/](http://www.seamheads.com/2011/04/16/ultimate-sacrifice-baseball-card/)

[www.seamheads.com/2011/04/22/ultimate-sacrifice-baseball-card-set-part-2/](http://www.seamheads.com/2011/04/22/ultimate-sacrifice-baseball-card-set-part-2/)

Best Regards,  
Gary Bedingfield

\*\*\*\*\*

Gary Bedingfield  
Baseball in Wartime (Founder and Editor)  
[www.baseballinwartime.com](http://www.baseballinwartime.com)  
<http://baseballinwartime.blogspot.com/>  
[gary@baseballinwartime.com](mailto:gary@baseballinwartime.com)

---

### Guestbook Entry:

Submitted by	Comments:
Name: <b>Mark Roby</b> From: Wichita, KS E-mail: <a href="mailto:maroby@sbcglobal.net">maroby@sbcglobal.net</a>	My uncle, <b>Clarence K. (Ken) Roby</b> , was attached to the Regimental HQ company. I would appreciate any information anyone might have regarding him. <hr/> Added: April 27, 2011

### Order of Battle

Bob and Gene...

I was the one that worked with Gene at the 2010 Palm Springs reunion with "Photo" copying the large format pages that displayed the *Order of Battle* of the 517. The individual image files are approximately 1-1 1/2 MB, and the complete PDF File is 18 mb. I thought after this project was completed, these files were sent on.

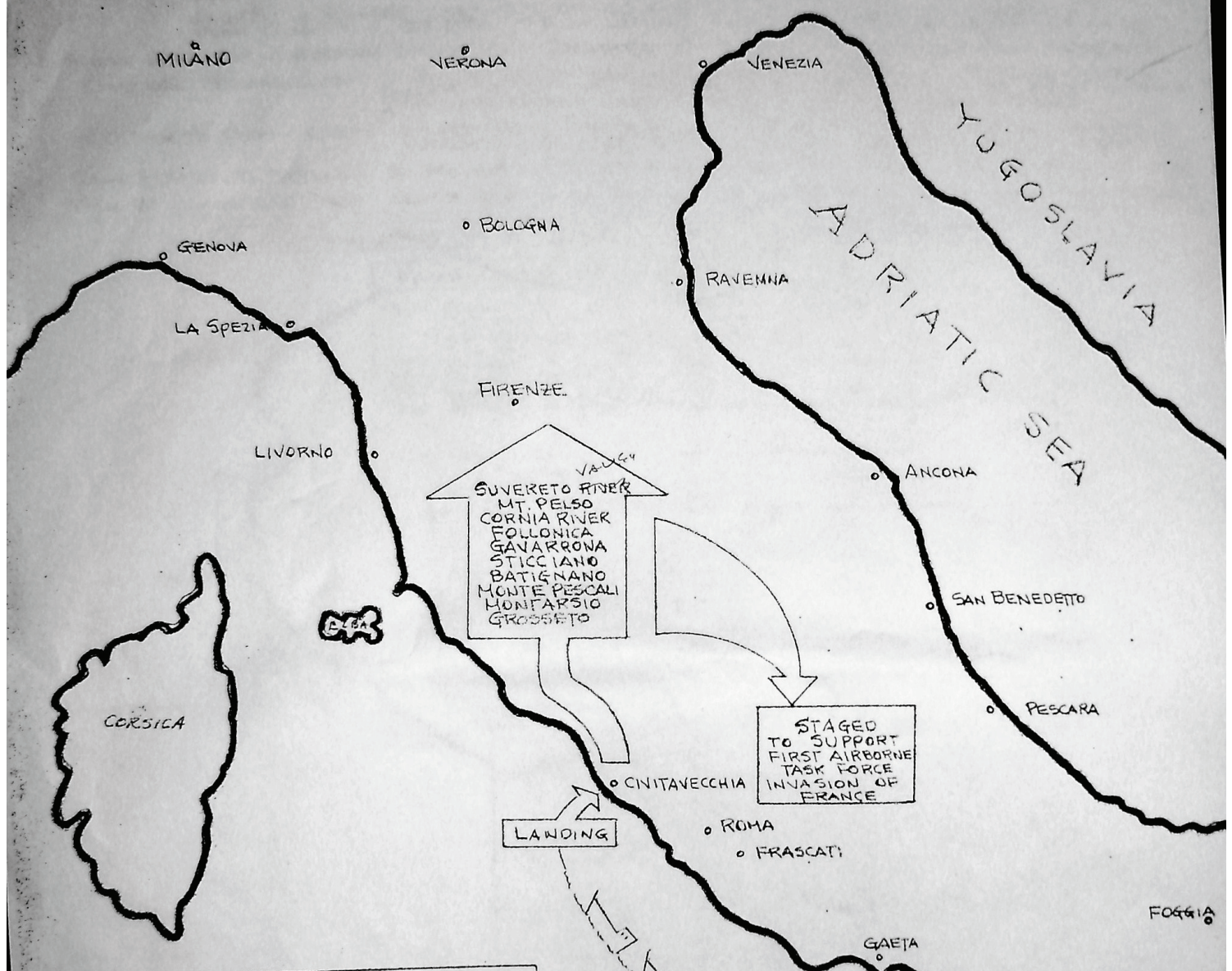
The complete PDF file is posted here <http://www.markleweb.com/gallery/d/21642-1/517OrderofBattle.pdf> . Let me know if you want the individual page images.

**Steve Markle**  
son of EC "Gene" Markle  
596 PCET

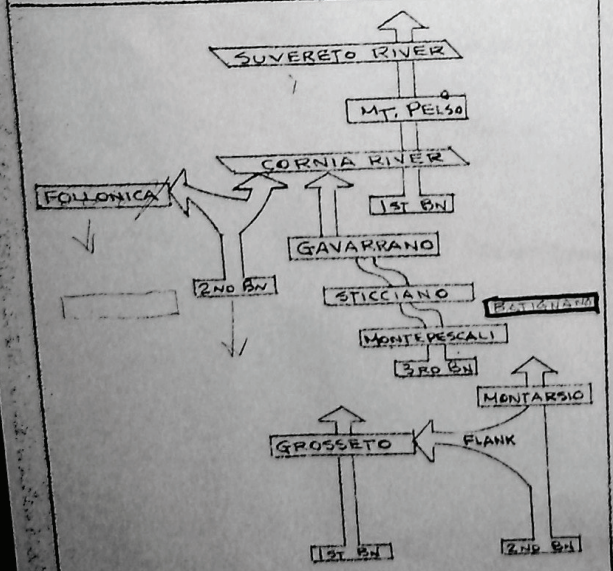
*[Page 1 of 15 is on the next page. I recognize the handwriting as Clark Archer's – BB]*

# • 517 ITALIAN CAMPAIGN •

DURING THE TENNESSEE MANEUVERS ALL PARACHUTE ELEMENTS OF THE (THEN) 17TH AIRBORNE DIVISION WERE ALERTED AND PULLED BACK TO CAMP MACKALL TO FORM THE 517 PARACHUTE COMBAT TEAM. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE 517 SHIPPED TO ITALY. THUS REALIZING A DREAM WHICH SPANG FROM THE SHADOWS OF MT. CURAHEE IN CAMP TOCCOA.



## SOME DETAILS OF ITALIAN CAMPAIGN



DEPART ABOARD USN LST'S LCI'S

LAND ITALY BAY OF NAPLES

517	55 SANTA ROSA
ALO-SAL	55 CRISTOBAL

STAGED TO SUPPORT 36 DIVISION

- 5TH ARMY: GEN. MARK CLARK
- IV CORPS: GEN. CRITTENDENBERG
- 36 DIVISION: GEN. WALKER



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

### *Jump or be Pushed by Herb Loken*

Herb,

Just to let you know that I received your booklet of stories and I am putting them into MailCall newsletters and will eventually get the entire booklet onto the website. Great stories. Thanks.

I started them in the last MailCall: <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2048.pdf>

While I was poking around, I also found an old picture on the web site that I think you are in, sent in by Buck Miller's son. It is of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne football champs. I have attached that photo in case you haven't seen it lately.

Thanks,  
Bob Barrett



Hi Bob,

I am flattered that you might use a story from my booklet. It was something I wanted to leave with my family. Hard to realize that it all happened. Yes, I do have a large picture of our football team. Thank you for offering this service... keep up the good work.

Sincerely, Herb Loken

### *Jump or Be Pushed by Herb Loken*

Second Excerpt – next 3 pages

To be continued

## SILVER or BRONZE

It was a cold, miserable evening near the town of Bergeval, Belgium during World War II and as the column of men from the 517th Parachute Regiment trudged along on either side of the road we saw an American half-track approaching from the opposite direction. It was January 4, 1945, and we were attempting to prevent the German forces from making a break-through on their way to the coast of France during the Battle of the Bulge.

Our Regiment had been ordered back to combat after a very brief break where we were given fresh clothes and supplies. The surprise thrust by the Germans caught the Allies by surprise, although our military paper, the Stars & Stripes, claimed it was a strategic withdrawal of the Allied forces to trap the German army. This was probably printed to keep the morale of the Allied forces up but our regiment knew full well this was a falsehood because we had just been pulled off the line for an extended rest and fresh supplies and that we were one of the few regiments on reserve in the whole European theatre of operations. From the center of France off we went in the luxury of trucks with bodies stacked everywhere trying to keep warm and somewhat comfortable. It was just a few days before Christmas when we were committed once again to not only the danger of the enemy but to try and endure the bitter cold of the forest area.

We were never able to have the luxury of a vehicle of any size...just didn't fit in too well with the mechanics of a parachute drop when surprise had to be a key element. Therefore to see an American armored vehicle made us all feel a lot safer and we waved at it as it passed our ranks. A short time later we were told to pull off the road and dig in for the night. Dig in...have you ever tried to dig into frozen ground with a little hand shovel...don't try! For the most part we would just shovel the snow aside and settle in for the night. It was customary for most of the men to take off their heavy helmets and stack their rifle at a nearby tree before preparing their cozy spot in the snow. It had been very quiet through most of our march that afternoon but then it happened! The American half-track we were so happy to see had been captured by the Germans and they had turned around waiting for us to bed down for the night. Once we became the sitting ducks they wanted they opened up with all their firepower. We were caught by surprise and as the men were reaching for their helmets and weapons they were being cut down by the German's machine guns.

I was a member of the third squad which because of deaths, wounds or frozen feet had been reduced to a half dozen and I was acting squad leader at this time. A call came down for a bazooka from the company commander. The first two squads reported that their bazooka's were not operational. We had lost our third squad bazooka man so I had been carrying it and its ammo. I crawled forward to the second squad, fully expecting someone to take it from me and continue forward. No way, they just directed me to move forward to the first squad. Once again I assumed someone was waiting there to relieve me of this special weapon. At that time I realized that I was only about 25 yards from the half-track and I was the chosen one for this particular task. The WW II bazooka's ammo had to be loaded from the rear of the weapon and then a wire from the ammo had to be attached to the weapon so that firing could be accomplished. When you fire a bazooka on a dark night it lights up the sky and I was convinced the entire German army would know exactly where I was and what a perfect target I would be. I figured my only hope was to get off a good shot, roll over to one side and quickly move, as fast as my legs would carry me, to the rear.

The first try was faulty so I had to go thru the loading procedure all over again. Finally I was ready and at the command of our platoon leader I fired the weapon and it did strike the half-track. It seemed to more than accomplish the job because there was no return fire as the platoon advanced.

The next morning our platoon leader came to me and asked if I thought I should be put in for a SILVER STAR MEDAL...WOW...I asked for why? Well, he said for what you did last night. I should have jumped for it but in my stammering he then suggested maybe a BRONZE STAR MEDAL.

I'm proud of my years in service and I was thrilled to be presented with this fine award but when I read the citation's version of what happened...well, that's something else.



## THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

"Sergeant Herbert L. Loken (then Private First Class), 517th Parachute Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in action.

While digging in on high ground near Bergeval, Belgium, 4 January, 1945, Co. "C" was subjected to intense enemy fire on the right flank. Sergeant Loken, a rifleman, noticed a half-track 100 yards to his front and entirely on his own initiative, he picked up a bazooka and some ammunition and crawled through intense small arms fire to within 25 yards of the vehicle. Loading and firing the bazooka by himself; he managed to disable the half-track and killed a number of the enemy. The courage and initiative of this man materially aided in repelling the attack."

That's the end of my story!





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

### *Annual 517<sup>th</sup> 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](#)

---

Bob,

I tried accessing the link to register for the National Reunion, but it would not allow me to open the link. Do you think the problem is with my computer or the site?

Lory Curtis

---

Hi Lory,

You are correct. The problem is with the MailCall. I'm having much trouble getting the links to work in the pdf version. My software is acting up. With a lot of extra work, I was able manually fix them if you try it again. I'll keep an eye out in future MailCalls.

Bob Barrett

---

I want to bring to everyone's attention that the registration form for our probably, maybe last ever National Reunion in Atlanta, Georgia is on Mailcall. I want to thank Bob Barrett for his diligence in making sure these forms are available to everyone. **NOW is the time to register.** It won't be long and July will be here. Our reunion committee of myself, Mike Wells, Helen Beddow, Claire Giblin and General Seitz have worked hard to bring you what I think will be the best ever reunion. We will be going to Fort Benning, and Camp Toccoa, and each trooper will have the opportunity to relive his training experiences. I am excited to hear these men's stories and see these great historic sites. So now is the time to access the registration form. Fill it out and I look forward to seeing each of you in Atlanta!

Airborne!

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

---

Bob: thanks for this email with the reunion info. Am mailing in Alan's and my registration for it. Look forward to seeing you, the 517th men and auxiliary members and their families.

**Pat Seitz**



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

### *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](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:

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

