



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2059

July 11th, 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

Atlanta 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,

Thanks another outstanding publication for the 517 - thanks to all others too.

The transportation thing-a-bob for travel to Benning:

Could the Reunion folks provide another bus-small or large depending on the number of left outs? The "late registration fees" should cover the cost. Time and information to plan??

Individual travel certainly would be the other solution.

I found recently in renewing my window military decals the military (except the USMC) does not issue tags. Only required for entry, if lacking a military ID card, one must first go to the gate office and present "proof of insurance, driver's license and possibly an additional form of ID. Otherwise, only a military ID card is acceptable for entry. Proof of insurance comes with a rental vehicle.

Only problem may be the AM entry traffic.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I would think the best alternate plan would be obtaining rental vehicle's (van). Many individuals have driven to distant sites in the past anyway.

A member with military ID present in the vehicle would alleviate most of the problem. If we could obtain the necessary entry documents at ATL, considering "who we are" that could be explored. I will attempt to do that through Fort Benning-the Reunion folks may have a handle on that.

Gene Frice, Cdr, 3rd Bn, 12 SFG, 1st SF (Ret)

I was just speaking with **General Seitz**, and he and I are both concerned about how hot it will be when we attend the graduation ceremony at Fort Benning. It will be important to drink lots of water and stay hydrated. General Seitz suggested that everyone wear a big brimmed hat that will cover their heads and wear Sun Glasses. I thought this was great advice, so I wanted to pass it along. Only 10 days before the reunion. See you there.

Lory Curtis

Dear Bob;

I regret to inform my adopted 517 family that I will not be able to attend the reunion next week. I interned my father at the Nat'l cemetery in Riverside last week and my mother wishes for me to be with her in Ohio during the reunion dates.

I hope to see the 517th family in the near future and when a mini reunion is scheduled in Palm Springs or Florida I hope to be able to attend. Thoughts of the 517th family are in my heart and prayers. I will miss you all next week. I have not had an opportunity to share my sentiments of how much I appreciate the risk and valor they conducted during a time of quandary of our nation during WWII. I recently had a group of the DAR on my flight from Washington DC, and I made a very special announcement of how special their sisterhood means and appreciate them following up on their ancestors legacy.

I will miss you all!
Respectfully,

Teresa Messina

Just want to let you know that **Charles and Bernice Cook** will not be attending the reunion.

Please put us on the email list.

bc-cook @ suddenlink.net

Our address is - 216 Deepwood Dr.

Georgetown, TX 78626

Telephone# - 1-512/948-7025

Have a wonderful time at the reunion.

Bernice Cook



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

In Memorium



Mary Frances (Lawlor) Barrett of Cohasset was born on May 20, 1921 to William and Alice Bridget (ONeil) Lawlor in Dalhousie, New Brunswick. She was predeceased by her husband **Benedict Barrett** and her only sibling Joseph William Lawlor. Fran, as she was known, graduated as valedictorian of St. Marys Academy, Newcastle, New Brunswick.



Subsequently she graduated in nursing from Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Newton Massachusetts. Enlisting as a nurse in the U.S. Army she served in the Philippines at the end of World War II. Upon returning to the United States, she graduated from Boston University.

She married Benedict Barrett and raised six children in Saugus Massachusetts. She was employed as an Intensive Care Unit nurse at Saugus General Hospital, Saugus, MA, and Winthrop Community Hospital, Winthrop, MA.



After retirement, Fran and Ben greatly enjoyed traveling and attending the 517th reunions including 2 trips with the 517th to Belgium and France.

She is survived by six children, Stephen Barrett and Deborah Manning of Williston VT, Robert Barrett and Paula (DiGiulio) Barrett of North Andover, MA, Joanne Barrett of Cohasset, MA, Nancy Barrett of Incline Village, NV, Paul Barrett and Sherry (Vaughan) Barrett of Albuquerque, NM, Jeffery Barrett and Kathy-Jean (Martin) Barrett of Truksville, PA. She is also survived by eleven grandchildren, Brigid, Claire, Brianne, Keri, Eric, Kyle, Patrick, Caitlin, Casey, Liam, and Shannon.

Ben and Fran Barrett at the 517 reunion in Sparks, NV, 1991. This was the very first reunion that Ben attended since WWII.

She will be interred beside her husband in Arlington National Cemetery.

Donations to Alzheimer's Association (<http://www.alz.org>) are encouraged in lieu of flowers.

Ben and Fran in Trois Ponts, Belgium, 1994.





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Mail Call News

If you could copy the attached for inclusion in the Thunderbolt. It has specific information re: the new T11 chute (great with video), I recently saw it demonstrated in a mass jump. The web site has considerable information related to the armed forces. A good reference.

Gene Frice

Subject: Love to jump with this chute!!

Check out the T-11 chute

<http://www.militarytimes.com/multimedia/video/?bctid=51777086001>

RE: **Paul C. Thompson, Hq Co/1 Bn**

Bob: Many thanks for your help! It may help stir some memories if I added that my brother was known as "Tommy" to his fellow troopers. Also, I know that a Jim Wallace of Eagle Point Oregon served with him for a time and one of his close buddy's was known as "Dirty Slim".

I need to ask for your help on another matter; it looks like my trip to France in late Sept. is a go. I've investigated all the tour books in the library and can find almost nothing about the villages/towns the 517th fought through (according to *Paratroopers Odyssey*) as their part of the action following the Operation Dragoon jump. I would be very appreciative of any contact you might suggest that could guide me in planning a couple days around the jump area and to the East. I'm sure there were tours in the past by some of the vets---perhaps some of that documentation is still around.

Many thanks: **Pete Thompson**

Let's try this link - if it doesn't work google when a soldier comes home - keep it going - reagan wing wordpress.

Something to think about when you see a homecoming soldier.

<http://thereaganwing.wordpress.com/2009/06/18/when-a-soldier-comes-home/>

Heather



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Martha Raye

Richard Wheeler's Daughter in Alabama checked the story about Martha Raye on a website called TruthorFiction.com. The story is FICTION !! Please post a correction in Mail Call.

Katherine Kramer Wheeler

Ah, the wonder of the internet. Anyone can take something that seems reasonable, and exaggerate it and make it into a first-person story, so it must be real. And then it gets chain-mailed around until it is reported as truth. OK. So the story of her pulling rank on a Captain and taking over nursing duties while on a USO tour is somewhat fiction.

However, there is a reason that she was awarded so many honorary decorations – she was there, supporting the troops over a long time, and in some very risky places. She travelled extensively to entertain the American troops during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, even though she had a lifelong fear of flying.

She was also honored in 1969 with an Academy Award as the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award recipient for her volunteer efforts and services to the troops, as well as the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993.

From Truthorfiction.com:

The Truth:

Noonie Fortin, Martha Raye's biographer told TruthOrFiction.com that Raye was lovingly called "Colonel Maggie" but the rank of Lt. Colonel and membership of the Green Beret Special Forces unit were both honorary. The entertainer was also an honorary Colonel in the United States Marine Corps.

Fortin, who wrote "Memories of Maggie," also said that it was not uncommon for Ms. Raye to jump in to assist in caring for wounded serviceman throughout her history with the USO. Fortin said "She would often pull rank, pointing out the oak leaf or bird on her collar and Green Beret as well as the nurse's emblem. Likewise she often helped out in the surgical units and wards."

The Department of Defense issues non-military identification cards to civilians who accompany armed forces to present in the event of capture. Each card contains the person's name and vital statistics such as height, weight, eye color and blood type. The cards also have what is called a "Geneva Conventions category." Category IV issued to such volunteers which is a rank equivalent to majors, lieutenant-colonels, colonels.

Fortin told TruthOrFiction.com that "Maggie took it a step further and began wearing a uniform with the rank on it. As time progressed so did the honorary rank she held. By the time Vietnam ended she was a Lieutenant Colonel for the Army and Colonel for the Marines but wasn't really a member of either branch. Everything was honorary titles including the ribbons that she would often wear though some years later were actually awarded to her."



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Raye received numerous awards and commendations from the military in appreciation for her years of service and in 1993, President Bill Clinton awarded the entertainer with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Raye died on the 19th October, 1994 and was buried among veterans of many wars at the Fort Bragg Cemetery in Fayetteville, NC. Special request had been made for her to be buried there since she wasn't military.

The Colonel Maggie web site is maintained by Fortin and has a impressive display of Martha Raye's biography and awards.

[Click](#) to visit the Colonel Maggie site.

Here is another story about Martha Raye in Vietnam that is a documented (truthful?) version -- BB:

During that time, a serviceman flying a "Huey Slick" helicopter carrying troops recalls that his ship received combat damage to the extent that he had to return to base at Soc Trang:

I was the pilot of that "slick" which had received major damage to the tail-rotor drive shaft from a lucky enemy rifle shot. The maintenance team at the staging area inspected and determined that a one-time flight back to base camp would be okay but grounded the aircraft after that. Upon arriving back at Soc Trang, I informed Martha (she came right up to us and asked how things were going) that we had a gunship down in the combat area and additional efforts were being made to extract the crew. I don't recall if we had received word of the death of the pilot at that time. Martha stated that she and her troupe would remain until everyone returned from the mission. As there were no replacements, the servicemen could not return to the mission. While the servicemen waited, Raye played poker with them and helped to keep everyone's spirits up. I enjoyed playing cards with Martha but regretted it somewhat. It appears that she had plenty of practice playing poker with GIs during her USO service in multiple wars. But I still love her for who she was and what she did. When the mission was completed, which had resulted in the loss of a helicopter, gunship and a Viking pilot, there was also an officer, the Major who was in command of the Vikings who had been wounded when the ship went down. He was flying pilot position but was not in control of the ship when the command pilot, a Warrant Officer, was shot. When he and the two remaining crewmen were returned to Soc Trang, Raye volunteered to assist the doctor in treating the wounded flyer. When all had been completed, Raye waited until everybody was available and then put on her show. Everyone involved appreciated her as an outstanding trouper and a caring person. During the Vietnam War, she was made an honorary Green Beret because she visited United States Army Special Forces in Vietnam without fanfare, and she helped out when things got bad in Special Forces A-Camps. As a result, she came to be known affectionately by the Green Berets as "Colonel Maggie."

See: <http://www.vietnamexp.com/morestories/MarthaRaye.htm>



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

And here's another first-hand account from one of our own:

I knew Maggie quite well as a friend and as was common with most in Special Forces, (Special Op's including the USMC, USN, and the USAF did not exist in name) in those days-1960-70's). Maggie was some act.

She and a very small segment of Hollywood were great American's. Her stage drama was carried over into her personal support of the military into area's Hollywood generally did not venture. She gave entertainment to forward support camps which received fire. In fact, as a WW11 RN carried her skills to Viet Nam giving medical care in the field and at field hospital sites. She was the Audie Murphy of Hollywood.

The "Brass" and many of the Hollywood crowd did not care for her. Many tried to limit her presence among the troops, however those troops loved her. My SF unit, of all ranks, visited Maggie in her home on frequent occasions and she sponsored many events at her own cost.

She was an aggressive person who occasionally became a combative drinking buddy protecting her flock of SF troopers. She cared little whom she offended. As I recall on one occasion she confronted in no uncertain terms to include a USMC Colonel whose derision of Special Forces, in his comments, offended Maggie. He apologized to all of us. I later made peace with the Colonel. She was a great lady.

Gene Frice, Cdr, 3rd Bn, 12 SFG, 1st SF (Ret)





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Trivia Question -- Generals of the 517th

Can you name all the soldiers who were promoted to the rank of General?

From the 1975 Ft Bragg Reunion book;

Lieutenant General Richard J. Sietz (Major at Camp Toccoa)

Major General Sydney Michael Marks (Platoon Leader C Company, 1st Battalion)

Major General John Henry Neiler (Platoon Leader, Company Executive Officer, and Battle and Regimental S2 with the 517)

Brigadier General David E. Grange Jr. (Infantry)

Brigadier General Richard J. Eaton (Corporal A Company, 1st Battalion)

-Steve-

Regarding the eight who became Generals. I could find seven listed on the 1975 reunion booklet:

Zais, Mel

Seitz, Richard J.

Marks, Sidney

Walsh, Louis

Neiler, John

Grange, David

Eaton, Richard J.

There's probably another who made General after the reunion, but I don't know who it might be.

mark landreth

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