



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2074

October 16, 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

The 2011 Re-invasion of Southern France

Hey, Merle and Bob -

So I don't think we told you about our trip to Col de Braus this past August.

Leo Dean, Allan Johnson and I went with good friends **Roland Orengo** and **Gilles Guinard** on the quest into the hills above Sospel right around Hill 1098. Although the little restaurant at Col de Braus was closed that day, they opened especially for us at Patricia Orengo's request. The owners will do anything for the men of the 517; the restaurant is decked with tributes and history, and many photos. They received a Certificate of Appreciation from the 517 in 2009, and it hangs proudly.

So we arrived at the appointed time, and were warmly greeted by the restaurant owners. Elizabeth, seeing us, immediately exclaimed, "Is Merle here?" Oh, she was so sad that he wasn't along with us this year and sends kisses to Merle. She is so adorable I really think he should go get them himself. The lunch was fabulous!

During October, the last towns of France were liberated in the Col de Bras - Sospel area. Roland pointed out the devastation that is still visible, both in the hillsides and in the buildings in the town. Something like 80,000 rounds were fired in the area; if I am remembering correctly, about 40 French soldiers and about 40 French civilians were killed. Paratrooper's Odyssey tells us that in the 517-460-596, 123 men were wounded, 21 were killed and 3 captured during the week of fighting at Col de Braus.

The people of France have not forgotten that you came to help when they needed you, and we know they think of you in October.

Claire Giblin



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

MailCall News

Bob,

The movie producer is finalizing the movie and will have a scene of C-47s in it. He would like to have the plane markings as real to life as possible. He has asked me if I know what markings were on the C-47s and what the tail numbers were on the airplanes the 517th jumped out of. Do you have any pictures or way of knowing what markings and a tail number might have been? Perhaps someone on mail call might know.

Thanks

Lory (Lory Curtis lcurtis@utah.gov)

Since we are on the subject of Capt. Bill Young, I will add a few. He was in charge of the 517th MP detachment in Lille, France just after one of our secret missions was called off. I was his deputy. **Col. Graves** had us as MPs as the battle hardened troopers would not follow orders of MPs without boots. The first day I reported to Young; he told me to take charge and I never saw him again. That suited me fine as I had a great bunch of 517th troopers and we kept everyone out of my jail except **McQuade** who we incarcerated before he tore the town apart and shot some civilian. Lille is where we were when the War in Europe ended. The trucks and troopers arrived at noon and departed at midnight. VE Day is one I will always remember. The French went wild and played their national anthem day and night for three days.

Right after the jump **Bill Young** gave some first Bn. men an order to cross a bridge the Jerries had zeroed in with all types of artillery and small arms fire. It would have been suicide. **Bill Boyle** came along in time to countermand the order and put the troopers into an action which saved most of their lives and saved the day in Le Muy.

I will end with the only thing I know about Bill Young that has a good ending. At Bergstein, Germany we captured only one German paratrooper. The others died fighting to the last man. We only captured him because we knocked him out with a concussion grenade. He was a huge man, but we carried him to regimental headquarters and turned him over to Bill Young. When the Kraut came to he was ready to fight and took a swing at Bill who clobbered him.

There must be a lot of untold stories that will never be recorded.

God Bless, **Howard Hensleigh**

*Note: Let's not confuse Capt. Young with the other Bill Young, **Charles William "Bill" Young** of C Company, that we heard about back in MailCall 2043:*

http://517prct.org/photos/c_w_young/c_w_young.htm



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Walt and I had the pleasure of meeting both Chop Chop and Jane at several past reunions. Both were super special people. Always a good laugh whenever we chatted with them. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family.

Walt and Peanie Smith, Hqs, 1st.

517ers:

In the 1990s, Gene and Jane Mars, Gene and Elaine Markle, my wife Gloria, and myself had occasional dinners together (We lived within a 50 mile area). Jane's death ended this, and after that we never could get hold of Gene.

Gene did a lot for the Association, especially at the San Francisco reunion where he arranged for a luncheon at the Presidio Officer's Club, at which General Grange gave a talk.

Gloria and I are doing OK. I'm out of her hair one day a week when I deliver Meals on Wheels.

Bill (Gloria) Hudson
144 Frederick St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95062
(831)427-1454
HUDSONWG@sbcglobal.net

Bob,

Please allow me to extend my condolences to the Mars family. I met Gene at the 1999 Ft. Benning reunion and made several pictures, here is one of 'Chop Chop' with the Yellow Suit and Hat. I never knew who he really was until Darrell Egner told me at the Washington reunion who the colorful person in the picture was. I hope everyone enjoys the picture. We are truly blessed to have known the many men of the 517 PRCT.

Morris McDowell

No this is not Dad, but it's a great photo!

Michou Mars Yenokida

[It turns out that this picture is NOT Gene Mars. He has that Gene smile, but Gene's daughter confirmed that it is not Chop Chop.]

So... does anyone know who this guy was? – BB]





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dear Bob: you have a real gift for putting together Mail Calls. The range of No. 2073 from the wonderful remembrances of **Gene Mars** and his positive influences and contributions to the Trooper story of vigilante justice to **Howard Hensleigh's** recount of the truth about Young and the negative impact that he had covered the gambit of the human behavior and really touched me on a number of levels. Wish I could express myself as well as Howard always does, but you gave me one of those insight moments on the choices we have while we are here and re-inspired me to follow Gene Mars' path to be a "lifter upper" and healer. Thank you.

Have just returned from DC and a visit with my brother Rick and Dad who was in town, with my cousin John Seitz, for the Association of the United States Army convention. We all voted to attend Lory's reunion in Kansas City next summer.

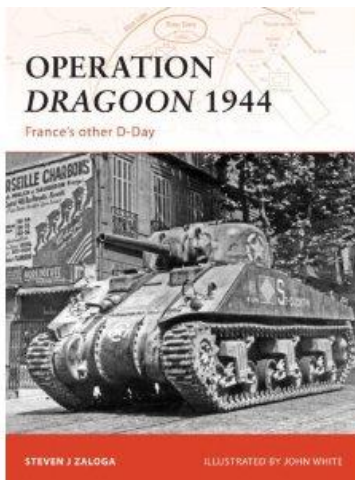
Pat Seitz

The WWII Airborne Historical Company thanks the 517th PRCT Association for the 517th pins. When we met with **Ray Hess** the other day, he gave them to us and said he was given them at the reunion for us. We love reenacting the 517th and being able to tell their story. We hope that we do it right and are helping keep the history alive. It means a lot to receive these.

Thank you!

Matt Holmgren

www.battlingbuzzards.org



I just ran across this book listed on Amazon:
"Operation Dragoon 1944 – France's other D-Day"
by Steven J. Zaloga.

It was published in June 2009. I didn't realize there was another book about Operation Dragoon. Has anyone read it? Does it get into the actions of the paratroopers or the 517th at all? Let me know.

Bob Barrett



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Capt. James Patrick Birder, I Company

Please remove my name from the mail call list. I am moving and will no longer be able to have access to computers. May I thank you a hundredfold for your dedication in keeping the 517th legacy alive. It provided me with so much information about the 517th and was the tool which helped me over the years keep the memory of my deceased brother, **Capt. James Patrick Birder**, alive in my heart. May you be blessed for the work you have done.

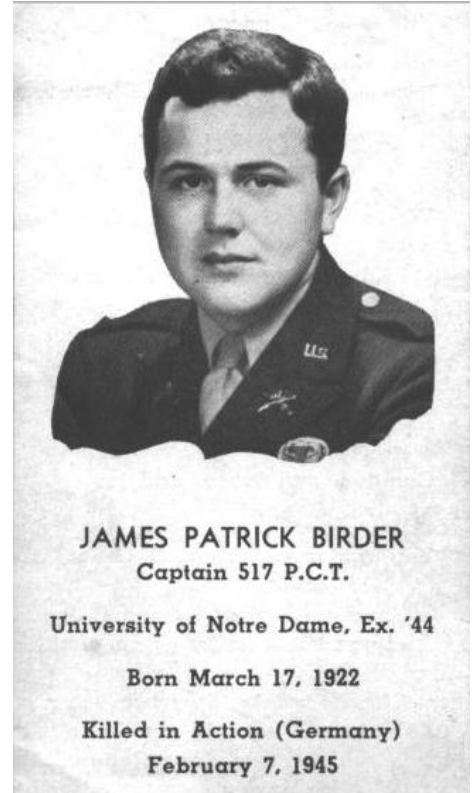
Terry Birder Casey

No problem, Terry. As you know, the entire group has deep respect and admiration for your brother and everything he did in his sadly shortened life.

Bob Barrett

Thank you, Bob, for remembering him...The 517th family, especially your work keeping the outfit's name alive, certainly will never be forgotten by me. I was 7 when Jim enlisted and only 9 when he was killed. To repeat myself, memories of him have been given me through your mail calls and those who were close to him in '45. May you be blessed for all you have done.

Terry



Jim Birder

with **Bob Reber**, Third Bn. mortar platoon leader

And if you haven't see it, read Terry's story about visiting Europe in 2005:
http://www.517prct.org/photos/james_birder.htm



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Sgt. Norman S. Frey, H Company

Bob,

Hi my name is Stephen McNamara and I am looking for information on my grandfather **Norman Samuel Frey**. He served in the 517th company H and he received 2 silver stars while in combat but I have been unable to confirm one of the awards. I have the original letter from one of the silver stars that was given at the time of the award and signed by E.G. Chapman (Eldridge G. Chapman) but the other silver star has no letter with it. Also I was curious if any of the men that served in the 517th were still alive? And if so would it be possible to communicate with any?

Thanks for your help, I tried the official Army records and they think it may have burned in the fire of 1973 ☹

Steve

Steve,

I will post your email on the next MailCall, a weekly email newsletter that I send out to 517th troopers, friends and family. Not all troopers are "on the net", but the email still goes out to about 370 people.

I see that your grandfather was in H Company.

<http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm>

My Dad, Ben Barrett was a Corporal in H Company and most likely knew him. Unfortunately, Ben died last year, but there are a few H Company and 3rd Battalion men still around. I will let you know if I get any responses.

Also, we are in the process of documenting and digitizing the "Morning Reports" that are available. I have a copy of the H Company morning reports, and below *[next page]* is what I found on your Grandfather. I don't know what all the shorthand codes mean, but it look like he was injured at least once and was listed as MIA from Dec 27 1944 (the attack on Manhay) up until early January. You should read up about the attack on Manhay, if you haven't already. I have some oral history about that on the web site at <http://517prct.org/documents.htm>

Does the Silver Star citation say any more about the location, or other people? Can I get a copy? Chapman was the commander of the 13th Airborne, so the award was done after the 517th was reassigned into the 13th. From what I hear, it became difficult for 517th troopers to get documented and approved for any decorations after the 13th AB came in.

Bob Barrett

MailCall@517prct.org



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

CO	STATION	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI	RANK	DATE	CODE	ASN	MOS	LOCATION	NOTES	SIGNED BY
H	LW	Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	19-Jun-1944		6943222		Montorsaid, Italy	fr duty to LW to 111th Evac Hosp LD	R. L. Sigl, Capt
H	LM	Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	29-Jun-1944	1P	6943222	651	Area 859-348	fr 111th Ev hosp LM to trfd to Det of patients Fifth Army as of 25 June 44	R. L. Sigl, Capt
H		Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	7-Oct-1944	A	6943222	7542	1 mile NE Peira Cava, France	reasgd & jd Cofr Det of patients 5th Army LWA to dy (NOTE: Morning Reports shows serial number as listed but National Archives shows number as 06943222)	E. H. Schofield, CMO, USA
H		Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	16-Nov-1944		6943222	7745	Coud de Braus, France	reld fr asgd to Co to atchd unasgd hosp NBC LD as of 15 Nov 44	E. H. Schofield, CMO, USA
H		Frey	Norman	D	Sgt	21-Nov-1944		6943222	7745	La Colle, France 431 786	fr atchd unasgd hosp NBC LD to atchd unasgd DS det of patients 7th Army	E. H. Schofield, CMO, USA
H		Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	6-Dec-1944	7745	6943222	6	La Colle, France 431 786	Reasgd & jd Co fr DS det of patients 7th Army LD	E. H. Schofield, CMO, USA
H	MIA	Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	27-Dec-1944	M1	6943222	7745	Manhay, Belgium	fr dy to MIA	Martin J. Fastaia, Capt
H		Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	10-Jan-1945	AIQ	6943222	7745	Rochelival, Belgium 69 3.953	fr MIA to duty as of 9 Jan 45	Martin J. Fastaia, Capt
H	LWA	Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	13-Jan-1945	AGQ	6943222	7745	2500 yds SE of Stavelot, Belgium (7 43.983)	fr duty to abs sk (LWA BC) Hosp basic status changed fr asgd to atachd unasgd.	Martin J. Fastaia, Capt
H		Frey	Norman	S	Sgt	21-Mar-1945	M2	6943222	71812	Joigny, France 767 -406	Fr Abs SK DS Hosp LWA BC basic status atchd unasgd to trfd to DOP 4182 US AHP APO#917 U.S. Army per p#2 SO#79 Hqs 279 US STA Hosp, APO #349 dtd 13 March 45	Richard C. Jackson, Capt



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I will get you a copy of the citation, I have it framed and hanging on the wall of my study, it gives me chills every time I read it! I am so sorry your father passed away last year, knowing what I know about these men that served he was a great man to say the least I'm sure. My grandfather told me of the mia part of his tour (he spoke about very little) I believe this was when he was captured and then escaped after some very brutal fighting. Bob thank you so much for responding I appreciate it very much, my grandfather raised me and was my best friend, my grandfather and my golfing buddy.

Steve

It was H and I Companies that captured Manhay. Here is another article I found on the web site about the Manhay attack:

<http://www.517prct.org/documents/The%20battle%20of%20the%20crossroads%20--%20Dieter%20Laes.pdf>

[I think this article is a section of Eddy Monfort's book, translated into English by Dieter Laes.]

Also, I heard recently from someone else who was also captured, possibly around that same time. I'll see if I can dig up that note.

Bob Barrett

Bob thank you so much for your information, every time I read another article or see another picture I get a chill. I listened to the audio file you sent me a link to and it was incredible hearing from some of the guys that were there fighting right next to my grandfather, it's almost like I could hear him saying these words as well, although he never spoke about the war much except towards the end when he and I had various conversations about it while looking through his "war stuff" together.

Again, my sincerest thanks!

Steve

Bob,

Here is what I found....The first photo is of my grandfather and I have this framed with the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. The next photo is a photo of the actual citation from E.G. Chapman that was folded and in the box with the medal from the day he got it to when I opened it in January 1994 right before he passed away from lung cancer. The last photo is a series of photo's together that my cousin was nice enough to send me, it should be noted that my grandfather was in the military twice, once in the late thirties and then he volunteered again in 1944 (ish) I believe this picture of him and another gentleman may have been from his first time in the military but I am not sure. I would be interested in obtaining any information related to the photos or anything else you may dig up. Many thanks for your help, I appreciate it very much.

Steve



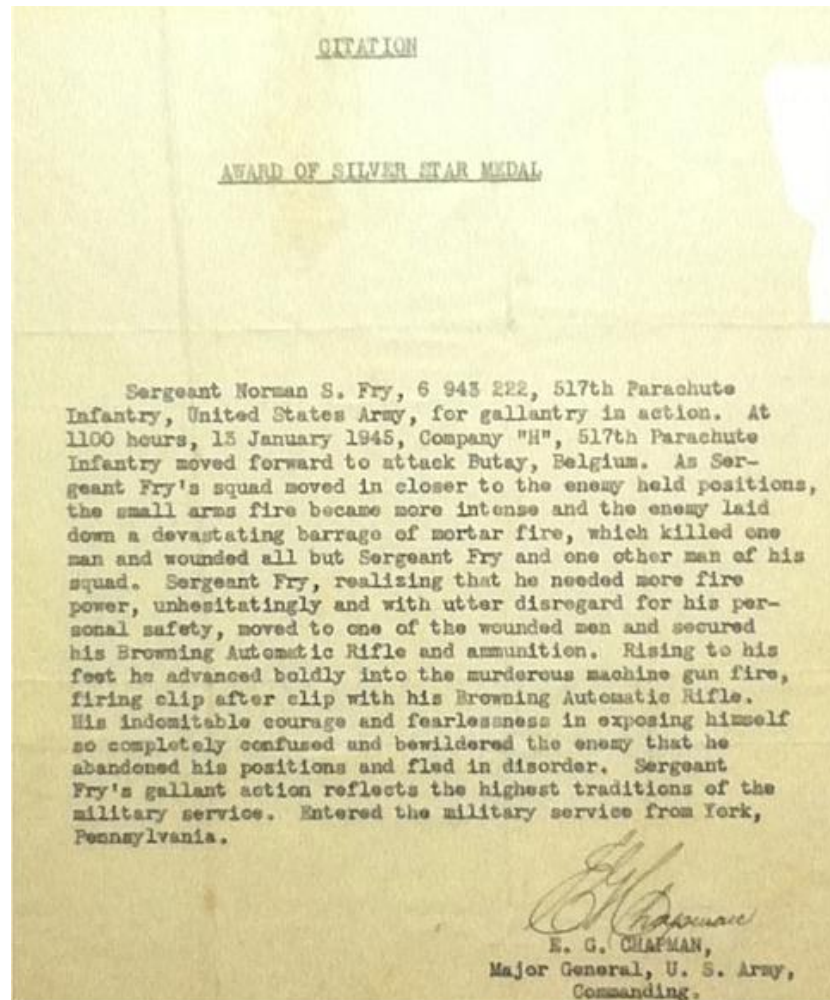
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Sgt. Norman Frey
H Company





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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 our new Association Treasurer: Identify the purpose of any donation (Annual Dues, etc.) and make all checks payable to:

517 PRCT Association, Inc.
c/o Joanne Barrett
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Cohasset, MA 02025