



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



MailCall No. 2076

October 30, 2011

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

Website
Mail Call
Mail Call Archives
Roster (from 2008)

www.517prct.org
MailCall@517prct.org
www.517prct.org/archives
www.517prct.org/roster.pdf

517 PRCT Florida Mini-Reunion – January 2012



WHEN: January 14 – 16 , 2012
(Hospitality Room Opens Evening of January 13)

WHERE: Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway
7470 Hwy 192 West
Kissimmee, FL 34741
800-327-9170

The registration form is attached at the end of this MailCall.

For further information contact
Brenda Verbeck Mortensen, 813-335-8002
bverbeck@gmail.com



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MailCall News

Dear Bob, Here is a note to **Hoyt Kelley**.

Your note on Bill Young touched off a lot of things as I slept last night. One is that you may still live in San Jose, CA, which is near my Menlo Park VA abode. A rare coincidence, because I bill myself as a country boy lowan who lived in DC and Massachusetts many years, ending up here in this good climate by accident.

Thanks for the update on Bill Young's failed political attempt to become a corrupt sheriff. If good men like you had not exposed his real military shortcomings, he might have soared to eminence like that fraud, "Tailgunner Joe" McCarthy, who never went up in an airplane in combat and had a desk job rather than one calling for a fighter. It took a televised McCarthy investigation of the Army for the public to get that guy's number. Congress recently was so upset about guys like a Massachusetts professor who had never been in the service, but panned himself off as a Viet Nam war hero teaching college courses on Viet Nam, that they enacted a law to make lying about service records and medals, real heroes die for, a federal crime. If you can believe it, the constitutionality of that law has been challenged and is before the Supreme Court on grounds that it violates free speech. We are awaiting the decision of our nine top justices. We trust it will not even be a split decision.

What really got to me in your note to Bob was the fact that we were in the same type of duty, S-2 and S-3, you in the First Bn. and I in the Third. You must have had a close association with S-2 **Lt. Emmons** who was badly wounded in S. France while racing ahead in a jeep to locate enemy positions while the Jerries were pulling back to the East not too long after the invasion. He and those with him hit a German ambush road block and took a lot of maching pistol fire. I remembered that Emmons home town was Bingham, NY. After the War, as I was hitch hiking form the Adirondacks down to DC I went through Binghamton, went into a phone booth and by luck got the Emmons home on the second or third try. A sister called Emmons to the phone and we had a long chat on what happened in the outfit after he was evacuated, never to return to us. He invited me to have dinner with the family and picked me up in the Oldsmobile with hand controls the VA had provided him. He had serious spinal cord damage, but got around quite well on Canadian crutches. His father was a federal judge who was away at the moment riding the circuit. His family was warm and supporting. Emmons had started law school, but found it too confining after his injury and years in the Army. He was one of the best, but like **Mel Zais** and **Dick Seitz** never as a student saw the halls of West Point.

It has been a pleasure to learn of your S-2, S-3 days, which is close to the heart of the battalion.

Best airborne regards, **Howard Hensleigh**



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from Mickael & Eric, Le Muy France.

"F" co. Gary L. Davis.

Dear Bob,

Last sunday we went up to hill 1098 for a special occasion... pictures attached are talking by itself. We just want to thanks the kind young fellows of the "44memory" reenactor group, spending 2 days up there, and remembering together Gary Davis and the great battle that the 517th regiment Combat Team hold there in September and October 1944 for the service and "Nicolas" for the Bugle "last call"

AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY !..
With great respect and admiration,

J. Mickeal & Eric

"15 Aout 1944 " Airborne Museum association, anvil-dragon@hotmail.com and all the friends of the "44memory" reenactors group.

note : Could you please Bob, attached the pics to the Gary Davis web page.thank you so much.





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Bob I will let you be the judge whether you want this to go into Mail Call. The message is so true that I am sure you will enjoy the read.

Regards,
Darrell Egner

PS: I haven't seen anything about the Mini in Florida. Dates, etc.

"The true Soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he LOVES what is behind him" - G.K. CHESTERTON

A Thank You to all Vietnam Vets from a Marine in Iraq

A guy gets time to think over here and I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it all came down to one thing: Vietnam Veterans. I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us. However, we learned from our mistake. Somewhere during the late 1970's and on into the 80's, we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So ... starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treat our troops of today like the heroes they were, and are, acknowledge and celebrate their sacrifice, and rejoice at their homecoming ... instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq. Our country knows that it must support us and it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are all better because of it.

Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have gone before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq. They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom. But when I get back home, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for THEIR sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a country learned from our mistake and now we treat our warriors as heroes, as we should have all along. I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines and I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

Semper Fidelis,
Major Brian P. Bresnahan
United States Marine Corps



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I received this story in the mail from Joe Martel, who lives in Hawaii:

The Invincibles Fall*

(* I got the title from the book *Battling Buzzards*)

[I already had part of this story sent to Sergeant Landreth's son and then lost it, but I will try to make another. I am 86 years old now so my memory is not quite the same. – JM]

I was in E Company on January 3rd 1945. **Sergeant Landreth** was my squad leader until we came down off the mountain in Southern France. **Sergeant Provo**, a replacement, was given a squad and I was one of the ones assigned to the new squad. **Corporal Ditmar** was assistant Squad Leader. And that situation seemed to work out fine when we moved up to Northern France to prepare for the jump into Germany in the spring. And we were prepared to have a ball until then.

We got a very well-established routine in a short time. Then, on December 16th came the news – the Germans attacked on several sectors in and around Belgium. They broke through all the American and British lines, so there seemed to be no line. The beginning of the Battle of the Bulge.

The 517th was alerted on the 20th or thereabouts and the trucks lined up the parade ground for us on the 21st. The first battalion had already left and we were issued a full belt of ammo, plus two bandoleers and two grenades. I heard the music on the truck in front of us and my heart sank. It was "I'll be Home for Christmas" by Bing Crosby I believe. It had some nice words though, "if only in my dreams." I called my buddy **Eckstrom** and he said, "We will be lucky to be alive by Christmas." Tough.

We left before dark and it was one miserable night. The traffic of civilians trying to get away from the fighting. Army vehicles, drizzle of freezing rain. In Belgium, they moved us back and forth all over the place for several days and finally picked the spot for E Company to make its move. From what I heard, it was going to be a pushover. I figured maybe two or three killed and maybe a dozen or so wounded and for us, the second platoon in reserve, it would be a relative breeze. Later the rumor was that they heard we were paratroopers and had doubled their defenses.

Maybe nine in the morning, snow about knee deep, the first and third platoons in front, and the second in reserve (that's us). And we were on our way to make the attack. I don't care what they say, but most of us were not heroes. We were just ordinary guys, but now the world seemed to be asking us to do extraordinary things and all we could do is try. But all of us clearly understood that we could be killed at any moment.

Then all of a sudden all hell breaks loose. Heavy machine and mortar fire. My expectations seemed to evaporate all of a sudden, now we had maybe a dozen killed and maybe 30 wounded and this was just the first 20 minutes and the first two platoons were pinned down.

For us it was raining mortars all around us and my squad leader **Sergeant Provo** got hit by mortar shrapnel right across the road from me. He was able to get up on his own power and head towards the CP. And the second platoon got the order to make a flanking attack to the right. But they were waiting for us to get there too. The two scouts were killed and **Lt. Kiselwitz** got a couple of machine bullets in the stomach. My buddy **Eckstrom**, the machine gunner in the other squad, was killed and **Lewis** took over.



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Sergeant Landreth and a couple of guys pulled the Lieutenant to relative safety and he called for **Lt. Whitey** to take over. Lt. Whitey was way in back of us and when he passed me he looked worried. But he patted my back and went on. I am not sure but I think he lasted about ten minutes before he was killed too.

Nevertheless, **Bill Womack** and I manage to get within a stone's throw from the edge of the town but a Jerry machine nest held us up. Billy who was on my right was able to hit one of the guys in the nest. When the medic came out I relaxed my rifle but Billy was ready to shoot him too. He saw me hesitate and he yelled back to **Sergeant Hines** who was behind us and Sergeant Hines (bless him) yelled back, "Leave him alone." We were getting shots from other places so we both decided to just play it cool. We were both in a safe location. I smoked all my cigarettes and I had a can of something but we all just laid there until dark when we dropped back to regroup.

That day was the most traumatic of my entire life. Later on, when we got relieved on February 8, I think we had a little over two dozen men left in E Company. I was very lucky, not a scratch on me.

I wish all you guys continued good fortune.

Joseph Martel, E Company

87-122 Nanaikeola St. Suite 308
Waianae, HI 96792

I hope this comes thru....where were these guys back in the Battle of the Bulge!!? As you can see, war has come a long, long way, but we are still getting too many KIA's and wounded troops. Even though too many of our men/women are coming back minus legs, arms, etc., I have to assume, under the same circumstances, back then they wouldn't have come home at all.

phil mc spadden

Subject: Drones! Wow!

I'm sure you are basically familiar with how we control the drones from Nevada. This is really interesting.

Three of the weapons and guidance systems on the drones are products of Raytheon. Our drone technology absolutely scares the livin' bejeezus out of the Taliban and Al Qaida folks.

These controllers are in Nevada and are each flying a drone thousands of miles away in the combat zone in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Their left hand is on the throttle controlling the drone's engine. Note all the buttons which perform various tasks without removing the hand from the throttle. The right hand is flying the drone. This is modern warfare.

Watch how it's done. Turn the speakers on and watch in full screen mode.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unv9C2t7f5c>



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Name that Trooper

Q: Can you name the 517th trooper from the 3rd Battalion who became a qualified member of the 'Mensa Society'? - Nephew of a Buzzard

And the first person with the correct answer is:

Sun 10/23/2011 3:48 PM

Hello Dear 517th heroes, families and Mr. Bob Barrett,

In answer to your question of the 517th Mensa member I believe it would be Sgt. Sturgeon, who, if I am correct was also a founder of Mensa. My father, John Bradovich, spoke of him.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of the 517th and their families.

Daughter of a Buzzard,
Lea Bradovich



A: Peter Sturgeon of Boom Boom Alicki's Demolition team, 3rd Battalion, 517 PRCT. See the photo (right) with the captured sedan.

Right: Demo Platoon after jump into So. France
Front L to R: Peter Sturgeon, J.P. Jones, John Alicki and Herman Glenetske
Sitting on hood: Peter Christensen
Back: Paul T. Allison

The origin of Mensa in North America

The first handful of Mensa members in North America joined between 1951 and 1959. One such American was a reporter named John Wilcock, who attended a Mensa meeting while visiting England. He returned and wrote a column about Mensa for *The Village Voice*.

Peter A. Sturgeon, a medical writer in Brooklyn, fortuitously read that article, wrote to the Mensa Selection Agency on Mar. 8, 1960, and became a member as of May 1960. In August 1960, Peter was authorized to start forming a New York City regional group, and the founding meeting took place on Sept. 30, 1960, at the Brooklyn home of Peter and Ines Sturgeon.



Since that time, Mensa in North America has spread throughout the United States and Canada, and there's even a growing National Mensa in Mexico! American Mensa alone had more than 59,000 members this year!



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Peter Assheton Sturgeon (November 22, 1916 – July 22, 2005) was the founder of the American branch of Mensa and the older brother of noted American science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon.

The two brothers were the sons of Edward Molineaux Waldo, a Staten Island paint manufacturer, and Christine Hamilton Dicker, a British writer and political activist. Their parents divorced when they were children and in 1929 their mother married William Dicky Sturgeon, an emigrant Scottish college professor. Christine and her children relocated to Philadelphia where Peter and his brother Ted were educated in public schools. Both Sturgeon and his brother Theodore eventually became atheists.

After high school Peter joined the Communist Party and fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War as a volunteer with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The writer William Tenn has stated that Sturgeon became involved with POUM (the Spanish Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) while in Spain and fell into disfavor with his superiors. After returning to the United States he resigned from the Communist Party and associated with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. In 1941, he was drafted into the Army, serving as a combat paratrooper in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team until his discharge in November 1945.

After the war he earned a BS degree at New York University. He settled in Brooklyn with his wife Ines, working as a medical writer and writing technical material for the pharmaceutical industry. He founded the first American chapter of Mensa in New York in 1960, holding early meetings at his Brooklyn apartment. In 1965 he left the United States, taking a job with the World Health Organization in Switzerland. In 1968 he relocated to Vienna, Austria where he worked for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. He died in Vienna in 2005.

Note from the editor: Here's an unusual entry. Every so often, I'll do a search on the internet for anything about the 517, just to see if anything new has popped up. Sometimes I see things from re-enactors, and European tribute sites, or things for sale on eBay. This week I ran across something unusual. As most of you know, I try to avoid printing anything political or controversial in the MailCalls. Just stuff about the 517th history, memories, tributes, some military stories, and any personal news about what the troopers and friends are up to these days.

This time I found an entry because it included the obituary for **Lt. Fred E. Allen**, a well-known member of the Service Company who died in 2007. It was just the same obit info that we have on his bio: http://517prct.org/bios/fred_e_allen.htm. But it was included on a web site blog written by Fred's great-nephew James Allen. The site tells James' story about trying to retrieve his young son who was "kidnapped" by his mother in Columbia, and James' struggle to retrieve his son and return him to the US. Apparently, he has been fighting this battle for 3+ years and lost everything he owns in the process. The site is called [Bring Joseph Allen Home to the United States](#)

I know this entry is off topic, and maybe controversial. It's just a sad story, and you can make up your own mind.

Bob Barrett



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Mystery Solved

from **Lee Hekkala** (wife of the late **Barney Hekkala, Co. A**)

Bob: The trooper who attended the Palm Spring Mini Reunions in a zoot suit was **Burt Duran, Company A**, deceased. His son's name is Rueben and the address I have for him is 3680 Santa Clara Circle, Corona, Ca. 91720.

Elbert Duran with ??? →



And yes, there is a store in Fullerton CA, started by Elbert Duran, known as El Pachuco Zoot Suits.



Read the story of their history and you will read about how Phyllis Estrella and Elbert Duran turned their jewelry store into a Zoot Suit destination: <http://www.elpachuco.com/pachucoindex.html>

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
70 Pleasant Street
Cohasset, MA 02025

517 PRCT FLORIDA MINI-REUNION, January 2012

WHERE:

Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway
7470 Hwy 192 West
Kissimmee, FL 34741

800-327-9170

WHEN: January 14 – 16

(Hospitality Room Opens Evening of January 13)

RATES:

A double room is \$65.00,, Tower rooms \$75.00. They will provide these rates for the period +/- five days of the actual reunion to allow for early arrivals and stay-overs.

MAKING YOUR RESERVATION:

CALL 800-327-9170

Identify yourself as attending the 517 PRCT Reunion to get this special rate, WHICH INCLUDES BREAKFAST.

SCHEDULE:

The hospitality suite will be open 5pm to 10pm on Friday
10 am to 10 pm on Saturday through Sunday
10 am to 5pm and after dinner on Monday

Registration: Saturday morning

Rides to Services on Sunday can be arranged

Monday: Memorial Service 6:30 - 6:45 pm; Banquet 6:45 – 10pm

Hospitality suite open following the dinner

For further information contact

Brenda Verbeck Mortensen, 813-335-8002

bverbeck@gmail.com

517 PRCT Florida Mini Reunion 2012
Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL

Reunion Registration Form
January 14 – 16

Name_____ Spouse_____

Guest Names_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (Home)_____ Cellphone_____

Unit_____ Arrival Date_____

Registration Fee - \$45.00
(Includes Banquet Dinner and Hospitality Room)

Banquet Dinner: Roast Beef_____ (# of people)

Chicken Marsala_____ (# of people)

Fresh Catch of the Day_____ (# of people)

Please send this registration form with your **check made out to**
517 PRCT Reunion by December 15th to:

Brenda Verbeck Mortensen
13046 Race Track Road #220
Tampa, FL 33626
Phone: 813-335-8002
Email: bverbeck@gmail.com