



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2085**

**December 18, 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

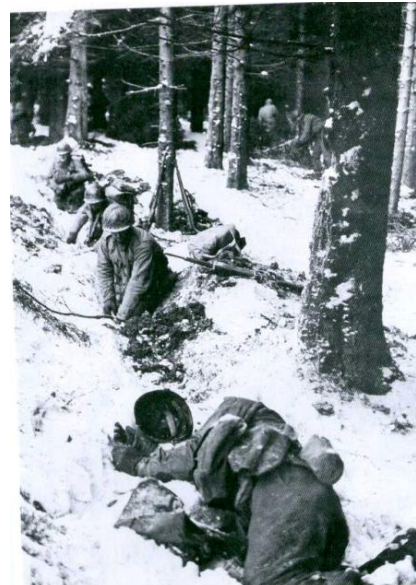
[www.517prct.org/archives](http://www.517prct.org/archives)

Roster (from 2008)

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

### *On This Week – December 18-24, 1944*

As we approach this Christmas season, sixty-seven (67) years ago our fathers, grandfathers were in Soissons France (which is very close to Reims). Everyone thought the war might be over, and that the fierce fighting they had already been involved in was now over. Then the Germans broke through the Ardennes Forest. The 517th was put into action right away without any real winter clothing to wear. My Dad said it averaged 20 degrees below zero at night. I asked, "Dad how did you stay warm?" He said, "You never stopped



moving." [Next Page] is a picture and an explanation of what a paratrooper's attitude was all about as they were sent to the front. This paratrooper's is just like the ones in the 517th/460th FA, and 596th Combat Engineers.



As most of us will be home for Christmas enjoying family and friends in the comfort of a warm home, let's not forget what these paratroopers did to preserve the freedoms of American. And let's not forget our servicemen and women of today as they serve and protect our freedoms. Thank you all and my God bless you this Christmas season.

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



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The picture of the paratrooper and the quote reflects the attitude of paratroopers of the day.

The text reads:

Dec. 23, 1944 - "Battle of the Bulge" - An entire U.S. armored division was retreating from the Germans in the Ardennes forest when a sergeant in a tank destroyer spotted an American digging a foxhole. The GI, PFC Martin, 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, looked up and asked "Are you looking for a safe place?" "Yeah," answered the tanker. "Well, buddy," he drawled, "just pull your vehicle behind me..."

**"I'M THE 82ND AIRBORNE,  
AND THIS IS AS FAR AS  
THE BASTARDS ARE  
GOING."**

The poster is a photograph of a dirty, scrappy, tough paratrooper, PFC Vernon Haught, of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, marching in the dead of that cold, snowy winter with a rucksack on his back, going to reinforce the retreating American forces in Belgium. His expression leaves no doubt about his determination. He is moving out to go toe-to-toe with the enemy in Belgium. As you look at the poster, it strikes you that nowhere in this photograph do you see a parachute, and yet you and I know there doesn't have to be one -- you simply know from the look: he's Airborne. Imagine, an Airborne PFC telling a sergeant in a tank to follow him. That is the tenacity of an Airborne trooper. The best America could offer to defend the country.



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**I'm the 82nd Airborne,  
and this is as far as  
the bastards are going.'**



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### MailCall News

## Bette Cross

### [Visit Guest Book](#)

**CROSS, Bette Jean Cross**, 89, of Fleet Landing, Atlantic Beach, passed away on Monday, December 5th 2011. Bette, the quintessential Army wife, was born in Vancouver, Washington on April 12th 1922 to a military family stationed at Camp Lewis, Washington. Bette's parents, Major General Wayne C. Zimmerman and her mother Ruth (Zosel) Zimmerman raised Bette and her sister JoAnne on a variety of Army Posts. Bette graduated from Immaculata High School in Leavenworth, Kansas in 1940. She attended Immaculata with two other current Fleet Landing residents, Bobbe Faulders and Harriet Linnell. Bette attended Auburn University for several years before meeting and marrying the great love of her life, Col. Thomas R Cross, in San Luis Obispo, California on December 26th 1942. Bette and Tom's marriage has carried them through the trials of wartime as well as service at a variety of military installations and foreign postings including Japan, the Phillipine Islands, and Norway. Bette will always be remembered as a quiet, gentle person of great sweetness and strength. As with many Army wives, Bette gave tirelessly to help other military families both through her work with the Army Officers' Wives' Club and other volunteer organizations. Throughout her life, Bette was always a rock to her husband and children as they enjoyed a life of frequent moves and a continuously expanding circle of close friends which continued into retirement with their many friends at Fleet Landing, Atlantic Beach Florida. Bette is survived by her husband of sixty-nine years, **Colonel Thomas R. Cross**, USA, (Ret.), and her three children and their spouses: Thomas and Christina Cross of Myersville, Maryland; Mary (Cross) and Jim Jennis of Winchester, Virginia, and Wayne and Kerry Cross of Olney, Maryland. Bette is also survived by her four grandchildren and one great-grandchild: Courtney Voigt, Thomas Cross, Dustin Umberger, Cassie McIntyre and great-granddaughter, Charlotte Voigt. Bette is also survived by her sister, JoAnne and husband John Smith. A Memorial Service is being planned and will be held at Fleet Landing, Atlantic Beach in January 2012. Final services and burial will be at Arlington National Cemetery. Please Sign the Guestbook @ [Jacksonville.com](http://Jacksonville.com)

**Published in the Florida Times-Union on December 7, 2011**

From: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/timesunion/obituary.aspx?n=bette-cross&pid=154930901>

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Please pass my sympathy on to Tom. Bette and Tom were special friends especially at reunions. She will be in my prayers Tom too.

## Babbie Boyle

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Thank you to all you guys who sent eulogies of Lud. I have saved them every one. He was a wonderful guy, and he loved the 517th to the very end of his life.

## Marty





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I am happy to report that **Leo** has been discharged from his rehab facility. His fractures are healing nicely, he is able to dress himself and he has found a left-handed wine glass until his right hand and wrist heal. He is staying with a friend until January, when a first floor apartment is available in his complex and he plans to move. His spirits are good and he says he feels much better. He can still be reached on his cell at 518 421 0351.

On a much sadder note, we have lost one of our favorite Pathfinders. **Peter Matthews** was a regular at August 15 celebrations, along with his daughter Sue and son-in-law Alan. We saw him in August and we knew he was not well, even though he seemed to be in great form and just as much a flirt as ever. Oh, you airborne guys...



Our hearts go out to Sue Folkard, Peter's daughter, at this difficult time. We are so glad to have seen them over so many years. [\[See page 7 for more info on Peter Matthews\]](#)

Best wishes to all –

**Claire Giblin**

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Hi Bob

I talked to **Jack “Red” Guthrie** 517th today. He didn't sound too good but he did remember me, he use to come by the house when i was a kid. I told him i would forward his address to the 517th website and bring him a copy of *A Cut Above*, He said i made his day. Westminster-Canterbury 3100 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 Phone: 757-496-1100

**Johnny Privott**

Grandson of **Raymond Doane, 596th**

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Got this from a friend, thought our group might be interested in seeing what Civil War Soldiers looked like.  
**Lory Curtis**

**Stirring footage of Civil War vets reunion at Gettysburg in the early 1900s .**

[Civil war veteran soldier footage, captured between 1913 and 1938](#)



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

RE: **Harold T. Ross, 460th PFAB Battery D**

Thank you so much Bob. I have read "Paratrooper's Odyssey" and "Battling Buzzards" and also the Chronicle and everything available online. I have a general idea of locations during the 460<sup>th</sup> action in WW2 but would appreciate any details, especially for Battery D, before a visit to Europe next September. I received an email from **J. Mickael Soldi** regarding the southern France invasion and assume you had forwarded my request to him and I thank you for that as well. I appreciate your efforts in keeping this history alive. Please keep me posted on any future information on the 460<sup>th</sup> and particularly Battery D. Thanks again.

**Greg Glunz**

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I'm trying to find any info on my brother **Paul C. Thompson** who shipped on the Santa Rosa as a Sergeant in Hq. Co. 1<sup>st</sup>. Bn. Of the 517 and fought in all their battles until sometime in the Ardennes. I have Odyssey and Battling Buzzards.  
Is there any way around the apparent lose of records in the 1973 fire? How do I access the Regimental records archives?

Any advice is most appreciated!!

Pete Thompson

[Petet123@earthlink.net](mailto:Petet123@earthlink.net)

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Yes, Paul C. Thompson was with **HQ/1**, and is listed on the 517 December 1944 roster when he was a Private. <http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm> So he made it that far.

I do see one other note in the October casualty reports for Hq/1, where he had a "non-battle casualty" on Oct 28 and returned to duty on Nov 22: [http://517prct.org/records/casualty\\_reports.htm](http://517prct.org/records/casualty_reports.htm) We are still in the process of compiling those Casualty Report records.

Otherwise, I don't see much else on the website records. But I will post your question on the next MailCall weekly newsletter and see if anyone else remembers him, or can give you advice on obtaining records. To my knowledge, a few people have managed to find some records despite the fire, but not often. In a recent discussion, one person said that even after being told the records were destroyed, when they submitted a request, they received their records anyway. So make an attempt at: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

Other than that, I don't know how to collect the Company records, but maybe someone else on the MailCall can point us both in that direction.

Bob Barrett

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This past year has had its ups and downs, but I feel better right now than I have in many months and looking forward to seeing family at our projected Reunion in July and my friends and comrades from my WWII unit, the 517th, both in Kissimmee in January and again for our national reunion in Kansas City in July. And, not to forget, working with my beloved World Wide Airborne Club here in The Villages.

I've started playing golf again, and still like to be the first to go out in the mornings! After such a long period of not playing, was pleasantly surprised to find my game hadn't suffered too much....it really couldn't get any worse!!

I will be celebrating the birth of Christ at my youngest daughter's place in New Hampshire this year....have given away all my winter clothes, so will not stray too far from her fireplace!

Merry Christmas!  
**phil mc spadden**

Also from Phil:

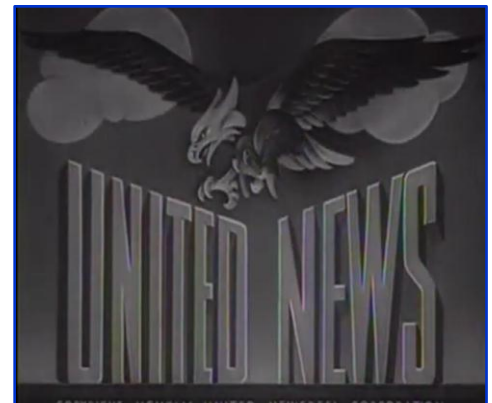
On December 7, 2011 we reverently 'observed' the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but with this film, we 'celebrate'!

Please click on to Japanese Surrender below. A keeper. This is a 'must see' for the WWII history buff or anyone interested in history. Interesting the other signers to the document, from New Zealand/Australia to Europe/Russia. This is an actual film made of the surrender ceremony of the Japanese to MacArthur in Tokyo Bay in September 1945. Actual voice of the General. We always saw the "stills" but never the film itself.

Click here: [Japanese Surrender](#)



*Hey, doesn't the eagle in the intro of this video look at lot like the 517<sup>th</sup> Buzzard? – Bob B.*







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### *Goodbye Peter, goodbye Notre Ami...*



*One of the spiritual fathers of Jean Michel Soldi and Eric Renoux, founders of the Airborne Museum de la liberation of Le Muy passed away this morning. **Peter Matthews** was one of the best supporters of their action to paying free tribute to the legacy of the Airborne in operation Dragoon, he was one of those brave paratrooper landed on southern France "D" day and he died this morning aged of 88.*

*the most popular British Veterans known in Provence, proud to have never missed a ceremony since the first time he came back to inaugurate the Museum, including this summer in spite of the sickness he was fighting against.*

*Awarded of the Legion of Honor in August 2004, Peter had always supported their action including with his daughter Sue, his son in Law Alan and his friend Chris Compton to request help of the parachute regiment of the British army during the terrible flood of June 15th, 2010 who destroyed the Museum.*

*18 years of fidelity in the ceremonies of La Motte, Le Muy, but also Trans and Draguignan cemetery.*

*He was 17th, when he joined the parachute regiment and battling in numerous campaigns As North Africa, Italy with the battles of Cassino, then He had been parachuted at daylight on the 15th of august 1944 on the hill of les béllugues between Le Muy and La Motte with the 4<sup>th</sup> battalion of the British parachute regiment, he also dropped in Greece, and took part in restoring Palestine in 1947.*

*his kindness will stay for ever in our hearts. It will always be there with us but the next ceremonies will not be the same any more without him.*

*He had once again this last summer asked to his friend Jean Michel and Eric to not give up , to rebuilt and to promise to him that one day they will find a good place for a new Airborne museum, in a appropriated building without risk to be destroyed once again by a flood here, in the Drop Zone he had never left since this morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1944. The promise will be held by the tow founders for its memory, but also the others friends veterans who left us, as Mickael Compton, Georges Chritie, Baron Thomas Foran, Gary Davis, Lud Gibbons, Ben Barrett, Carl Kieffer, Ed Jordan Henri Parlarieu and hundreds others that Mickael and Eric welcomed over 20 years now. All those who had made for the country of France and for freedom the sacrifice of their life.*

*Condolences will be forwarded via :*

*"15 Aout 1944" Airborne Association*

*Letter box BP79- 83490 Le MUY France*

*Or Emailed :Anvil-dragon@hotmail.com*

**Jean Michel Soldi and Eric Renoux,**

*founders of the Airborne Museum de la Liberation of Le Muy presidents of the Association " 15 Août1944 ".*



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From Merle:

### WWII tank found after 62 years



WW II Russian tank with German markings uncovered after 62 years. WW II Buffs will find this interesting. Even after 62 years (and a little tinkering), they were able to fire up the Diesel engine!

A Komatsu D375A-2 bulldozer pulled the abandoned tank from its tomb under the boggy Bank Of a lake near Johvi, Estonia. The Soviet-built T34/76A tank had been resting at the bottom of the lake for 56 years. According to its specifications, it's a 27-ton machine with a top speed of 53km/hr.

From February to September 1944, heavy battles were fought in the narrow, 50 km-wide, Narva Front in the northeastern part of Estonia . Over 100,000 men were killed and 300,000 Men were wounded there. During battles in the summer of 1944, the tank was captured from The Soviet army and used by the German army. (This is the reason that there are German markings painted on the tank's exterior.) On 19th September, 1944, German troops began an organized retreat along the Narva front. It is suspected that the tank was then purposefully driven into the lake to conceal it when its captors left the area.

At that time, a local boy walking by the lake, Kurtna Matasjarv, noticed tank tracks leading into the lake but not coming out anywhere. For two months he saw air bubbles emerging from the lake. This gave him reason to believe that there must be an armored vehicle at the lake's' bottom. A few years ago, he told the story to the leader of the local war history club 'Otsing'. Together with other club members, Mr. Igor Shedunov initiated diving expeditions to the bottom of the lake about a year ago. At the depth of 7 metres they discovered the tank resting under a 3 metre layer of peat.

Enthusiasts from the club, under Mr. Shedunov's leadership, decided to pull the tank out. In September of 2000 they turned to Mr. Aleksander Borovkovthe, manager of the Narva Open Pit Company AS Eesti Polevkivi, to rent the company's Komatsu D375A-2 bulldozer. (Currently used at the pit, the Komatsu dozer was manufactured in 1995, and has recorded 19,000 operating hours without major repairs.)

The pulling operation began at 09:00 and was concluded at 15:00, with several technical breaks. The weight of the tank, combined with the travel incline, made for a pulling operation that required significant muscle. The D375A-2 handled the operation with power and style. The weight of the fully-armed tank was around 30 tons, so the active force required to retrieve it was similar. A main requirement for the 68-ton dozer was to have enough weight to prevent slippage while moving up the hill.

After the tank surfaced, it turned out to be a 'trophy tank' that had been captured by the German Army in the course of the battle at Sinimaed (Blue Hills) about six weeks before it was sunk in The lake. Altogether, 116 shells were found on board. Remarkably, the tank was in good Condition, with NO RUST, and all systems (except the engine) in working condition. This is a Very rare machine, especially considering that it fought both on the Russian and the German Sides. Plans are underway to fully restore the tank. It will be displayed at a war history museum in the Gorodenko village on the left bank of the River Narv.

Incredibly, after a few minor repairs, they were able to start its diesel engine.

[See more photos here](#)





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70% of American youth are disqualified from serving in the military.  
97% of those who are qualified to serve choose not to.  
Overall, more than 99% of Americans will never serve.



Thanks for being this 1 Percent!

Lory Curtis

# We are the 1%.

### *517 PRCT Florida Mini-Reunion – January 14-16 2012*

[Click here to download info and registration form](#)

For further information contact  
Brenda Verbeck Mortensen, 813-335-8002 [bverbeck@gmail.com](mailto:bverbeck@gmail.com)

### *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 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