



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2103**

**April 22, 2012**

*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)

## *West Coast and National Reunions – Sign up soon*

### **West Coast Mini-Reunion**

Palm Springs, CA

May 14-18, 2012

[Information and registration instructions](#)



### **Annual National Reunion**

Kansas City, MO

July 12-16, 2012

[Program](#)

[Registration Form](#)

[Hotel Registration Form](#)





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## MailCall News

Please extend my many thanks to Howard Hensleigh for the explanation about the camouflage uniforms. It was great to read **Hoyt Kelley's** remembrances about **Colonel Boyle**. Like Hoyt, my dad loved Colonel Boyle and would have done anything for him. Like Hoyt said, all the men in the Battalion would have gone to hell and back for the Colonel. In 2007, it was so great for me and Tim to take Dad to the Washington, D.C. reunion where he sat with **Colonel Boyle** and **Major Fraser** talking about ole times. **Claire**, that was just the best reunion!! Thanks for hosting it.

On another note I see in this mailcall I stated the movie about the 517th, *Saints and Soldiers, Airborne Creed* was coming out August 3, 2012. Well, in speaking with the producers they have decided to delay the showing until August 15th, because that is the day the 517th jumped into Southern France. I thought, wow, what a great honor and tribute to the 517th. These are really wonderful people and are making sure the 517th is held in high esteem.

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

Mr. Barrett, Thank you for the quick response and for the information. It will help me in my research.

**Larry Greene [son of Matt Greene, G Company]**

I found a tribute page to **Vernon Dirksen (Dirksen) of H Company**, who was KIA on August 15, 1944 during Operation Dragoon.

This site is a Genealogy of the Brotherfield, Russian Mennonite Immigrants who settled in North and South Dakota.

– Bob B.

<http://www.dakotadirksens.com/getperson.php?personID=115050&tree=Brotherfield>

Vernon Dirksen 1923 - 1944 [Add Bookmark](#)

Person	Pedigree	Descendants	Related To...	Get Gedcom	Correction
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[Text](#) | [Photos](#) | [Notes](#) | [All](#)



x964286 115050

 Vernon was born in Bakersfield, California on March 17, 1923. He moved to New Home, ND at about seventeen years of age. His Sykeston, ND high school classmates recall him being there one or two years, living alone with his mother. He was nineteen years old in June of 1942 when the U.S. Selective Service system began to draft men between the ages of 18 and 20. He was inducted and delivered to Ft. Snelling, Minnesota on January 28, 1943.

Soon after basic training Vernon volunteered to join the newly formed (15 Mar 1943) **517th Parachute Infantry Regiment**, the **Battling Buzzards**, one of the U.S. Army's first elite combat units. Stationed at Camp Toccoa, Vernon received parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The 517th breezed through jump school with no washouts, setting a record that has endured to this day. They were a tough bunch, fielding division winning football and boxing teams. When an inspection team from Headquarters Army Ground Forces arrived at Camp Mackall to test the



1943 1945



The 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment was organized and trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, August 1943. Vernon Dirksen was one of the first to jump into Southern France in the airborne assault of Operation DRAGON on August 15, 1944. U.S. Army Photo.



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

Subject: Uniform

**Dear Mr Hensleigh**

I saw in the mail call today that you mentioned the uniform you wore in southern France. You had told me before that you had kept your jump jacket, but I didn't know it was the one you wore in southern France. In fact, are you sure the uniform you kept is the one you wore for the jump, as I remember seeing your american flag that was sewn to the shoulder of the jump suites is in your photo album; which gives me the impression you unsewed the patch at the time you threw away your jump suit.

In any case, if by any chance you do have the actual jump suite you wore for the jump into France, I would be very interested if you had the possibility of sending me a photo of it to include in my book.

Please tell me when you will receive my chapter about Montauroux, and if you like it I can send you some of the other chapters about the 517th.

Best regards

**Jean-Loup**

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Dear Jean Loup, The fact is that I didn't wear my jump suit on the S. France jump. I wore plain old fatigues and a field jacket. The fatigues were spray painted with camouflage paint as was the field jacket I wore over the fatigue jacket. As I recall, the 596th men whose photo Bob ran in MailCall wore fatigues, not jump suits. The fatigues were made out of tough stuff and before the jump we were all issued brand new clothing, because we did not know how long we would wear it and supply with our dearth of vehicles did all it could to carry ammo, water and rations to us. A field soldier as well as seasoned campers realize that although hot in the daytime it gets cold at night. We had to be outfitted so we could sleep on the ground without getting too cold. So many of us wore a sleeveless undershirt, a "long john" long winter underwear shirt, the fatigue jacket and the field jacket on top. During daytime forced marches and fire fights most of this clothing came off and was tucked into our web belts. It came out as needed during the night.

I had only one jump suit and saved it. It is still in good condition. Our cloth officers' insignia was sowed underneath the collar of the jackets we jumped so it would not be visible to the enemy. My cross rifles (infantry insignia) are still sewed to the underneath side of my field jacket. I did the sewing so it is a lousy job, but after all these years is still there. Since I wore the field jacket after I was promoted in the Iowa National Guard, I removed the 2nd Lt. insignia. That field jacket and my jump suit are in my old foot locker in my daughter's (Nancy) attic in Massachusetts so I can't get to it easily. The last I heard the footlocker was locked and Nancy didn't have the key. I told her to take it to a locksmith and he could unlock it easily, but I don't think she has done that. If you made a picture of it, it should be worn by someone to give you a decent picture.

I did unsew the American Flag from the field jacket and pasted it in the scrap book. There are pictures of it in MailCall.

I look forward to receiving your S. France package and will get back to you pronto when I receive it.

Highest airborne regards, HH



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

Hope this finds everyone well. Dad wanted to be sure and forward this information from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. Cumberland is holding a Remembrance & Respect Day on Tuesday, May 8th. Vets will receive a diploma for participating in the WWII Tennessee maneuvers.

**Teresa Cobble - daughter of Bob Vaught, I Company**

From: Stephanie Walker  
[\[mailto:swalker@cumberla.nd.edu\]](mailto:swalker@cumberla.nd.edu)  
Sent: Wednesday, April 04, 2012 2:50 PM  
Cc: [veterans@cumberland.edu](mailto:veterans@cumberland.edu)  
Subject: Cumberland University - Remembrance & Respect, Tuesday, May 8th

Attached is a flier with information about the Remembrance & Respect Ceremony to be held on Tuesday, May 8th at Cumberland University honoring the veterans who trained during the WWII Tennessee maneuvers. If you plan to attend the ceremony and will be with a veteran or receiving a diploma for a veteran, please arrive prior to 9:30 AM to register. Thank you for your support of this event.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Walker  
Associate VP For Strategic Affairs  
Cumberland University  
1 Cumberland Square  
Lebanon, TN 37087  
615-547-1387  
615-453-6653 - fax

## REMEMBRANCE & RESPECT

Cumberland University Honors the Veterans of the WWII Tennessee Maneuvers

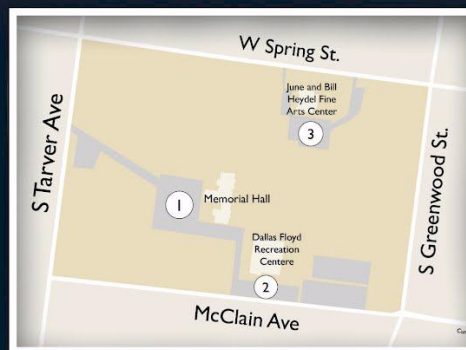


T U E S D A Y M A Y 8 , 2 0 1 2

10 AM - Ceremony, Keynote speaker, & presentation of degrees

11 AM - 1 PM - Refreshments & Memorabilia Displays

All veterans attending, please arrive at 9:30 am and register.



- From Exit 238 on Interstate 40 travel north on highway 231 (South Cumberland Avenue) for 1.2 miles
  - Turn left onto Leeville Pike
  - Take 2nd right onto S Greenwood St
  - Take 2nd left onto McClain Avenue
  - Campus will be on your right
- Parking is available in lots 1, 2, and 3.

For information on lodging, event details, and more please visit [www.cumberland.edu/veterans](http://www.cumberland.edu/veterans)



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

In many of the past MailCalls, we've included "Before and After" photos, showing scenes from WW2 and how they look today. **Gilles Guignard** does a lot of these from the 517<sup>th</sup> photos in France as well as from other units.

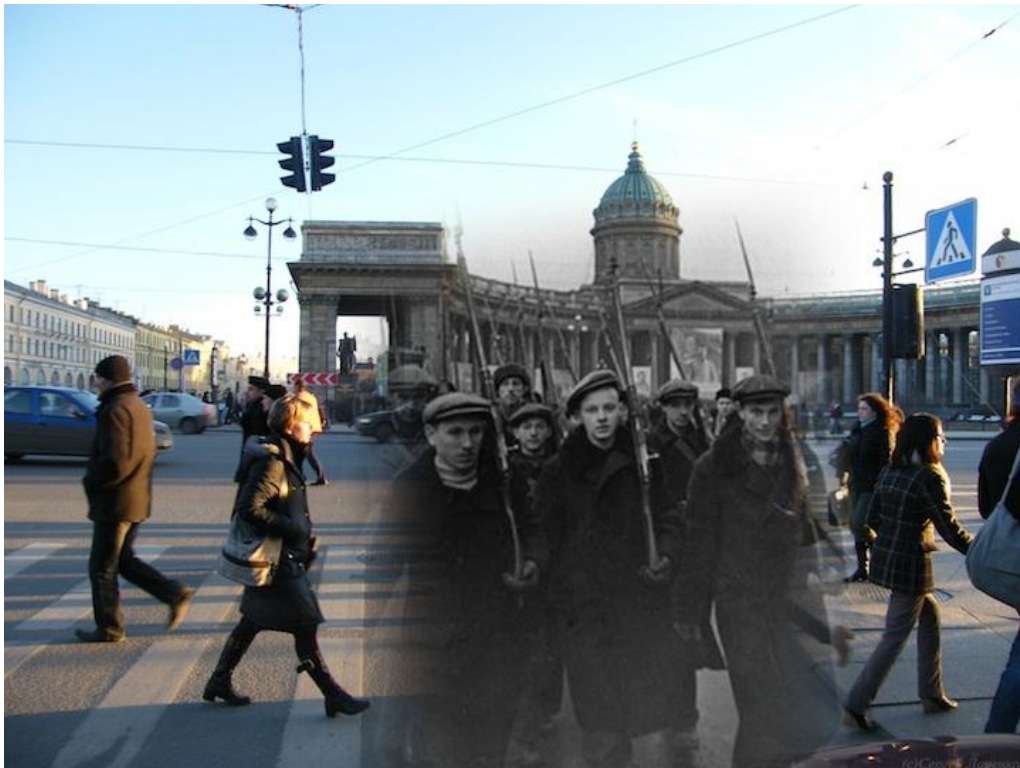
I ran across this web site which shows some interesting before-and-after photos from a Russian photographer. But in his photos, he inserts parts of the old photos into the new scene, combining them using Photoshop. The results are great, sort of a ghostly view of the scene.

Here are a few samples. – Bob B.





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See more "Ghosts of World War II Past" at:

<http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/the-ghosts-of-world-war-iis>



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

Re: 517 PRCT - MailCall No. 2102 - April 15, 2012

Bob: as always an excellent Mail Call. And thanks for the "Just laughs!" section. These are examples of genuine wit.

**Pat and Alan [Seitz]**

PS Also found **Merle's** pictures with descriptions very well done and interesting. Do **Patricia and Roland** know about the color photos at the end of their submission? As Alan says, it's a reminder that paratroopers are not saints!

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**From:** Naome Young [mailto:[nomiyoung@gmail.com](mailto:nomiyoung@gmail.com)]  
**To:** [mailcall@517prct.org](mailto:mailcall@517prct.org)  
**Subject:** pictures

Good afternoon Mr Barrett

My name is Naome Young and my Father **William H. Young** was part of the 517th. My mother and I have several pictures that my father had and saved and we would like to donate them. However, we don't know where to send them to. I would appreciate any information you could provide us in doing so.

Thank you for your time in this matter we appreciate it

Naome Young

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Hi, Naome,

I'm not the official keeper of records and photos of the 517<sup>th</sup>. However, I have built the website as an unofficial historical archive. My intention is that the website will remain for many years (forever?) and it has become the de facto and most complete historical record for the unit. But I just post copies of the photos and records; I don't generally keep the originals myself. But I would love to have copies of the photos to post on the web site. Can you scan them?

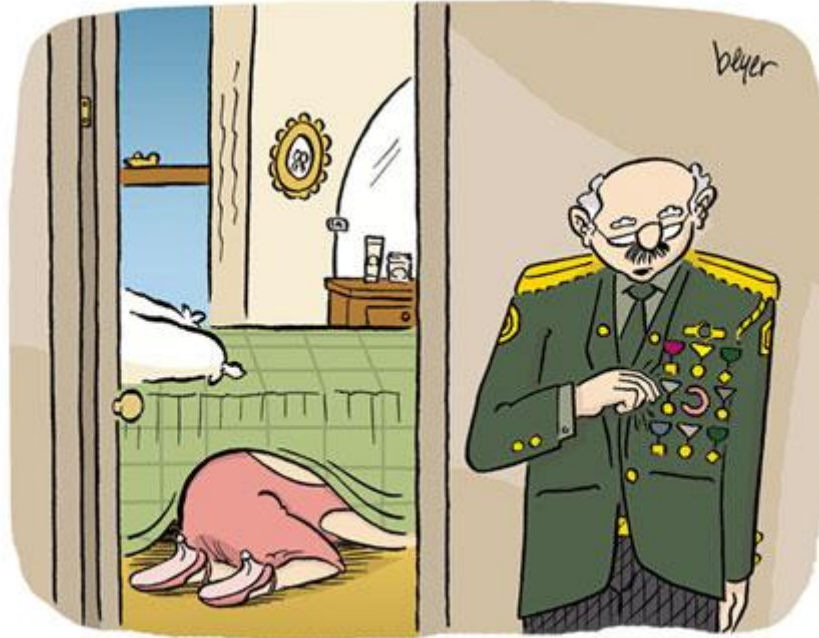
As far as I know, there is no official record-keeper for the 517<sup>th</sup>. But I will ask around. There might be some museums in the US and Europe that have some 517 items and might like the photos in their collections, depending on where they were taken.

Bob Barrett  
[Webmaster@517prct.org](mailto:Webmaster@517prct.org)



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### *Just for Laughs*



"I found your earring."

### *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