



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2108

May 26, 2012

*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

Memorial Day

Bonjour Bob,

Just to inform you and all the 517th family that this year for the first time, the 517th and others US Units (509th - 551st - 45th - 36th - 3rd and perhaps 550th) will be represented in the American Cemetery in Draguignan for the Memorial day the 27 of May... We will send you pictures of the celebration.

Memoires de Provence Asso. is leading this action, in partner with

Airborne Museum Asso., FFM Asso. and MLD Asso. Everybody are working a lot to make the best for this great and very important celebration and honorate the memory of all the soldiers stayed here in South France... And others....

Regards

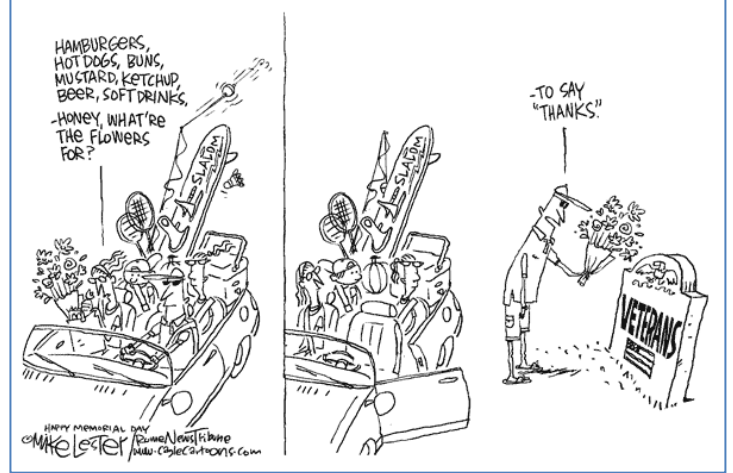
Eric RENOUX & Jean Michel SOLDI

Airborne Museum Asso.





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Above pictures sent in by **Phil McSpadden**

It is the **VETERAN**, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the **VETERAN**, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

Reading the "Taps" section of Thunderbolt this Memorial Day weekend, I am reminded of so many who have given their all for our freedom and those who served with them preserving these precious rights. How blessed we are to have personally known some of the men of the 517th, to be touched by them and their stories. In this warp speed time in which we live with what comes across as blaring discord rather than seeking to understand and work together for the common good, these men have been a beacon of selfless service to others and the common good. As we take time to reflect and say prayers of thanksgiving for the greatest generation, may we honor their service and continue what they gave everything for by humbly trying to emulate them in serving others before self. To all the men of the 517th, words cannot begin to express our thank-you's for the freedoms we enjoy. May we endeavor to preserve, protect and defend as you have shown us to do.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY 517TH ! - Paul Abbene



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Three Gifts You Can Give Returning Veterans That Will Last Them A Lifetime

Contributed by USMC Col Tim Hanifen - Atlanta, GA

From <http://www.marinemoms.us/USMC/vets-3gifts.asp>

The combat phase of the campaign in Iraq is winding down and now the hardest job of all begins-winning the peace. Soon many of our fellow citizen-Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsman-both active and reserve will return home with their units or as individuals. All have served and participated in an extraordinary campaign of liberation that was fought in a manner that reflected not only the determination of the American people to do what was necessary but also reflective of our value to spare life whenever and wherever possible.

As these veterans begin returning home and people are asking themselves what they can do to celebrate their return, honor their service and remember those that have fallen in the performance of their duty. After every war or major conflict, there are always concerns about the emotional state of returning veterans, their ability to readjust to peaceful pursuits and their reintegration into American society. People naturally ask themselves "what can we do or what should we do?" The purpose of this message is to offer that there are three very important gifts that we personally and collectively as a society, can give to these returning veterans. They are "**understanding, affirmation and support**".

With "**understanding**", I am not speaking of sympathy, empathy, consoling or emotional analysis. Rather, I offer that we, to the best of our ability, need to comprehend some of the combat truths learned and experienced by these returning servicemen and women. Their perspectives and their personal experiences will shape each of them and our society in large and small ways for years to come. Though we were not there, our comprehension and respect for their "truisms" will be part of the gift that will truly last them and us for a lifetime.

The truth every combat veteran knows, regardless of conflict, is that war is about combat, combat is about fighting, fighting is about killing and killing is a traumatic personal experience for those who fight. Killing another person even in combat, is difficult as it is fundamentally against our nature and the innate guiding moral compass within most human beings. The frequency of direct combat and the relative distance between combatants is also directly proportional to the level of combat stress experienced by the surviving veteran. Whether the serviceman or woman actually pulled the trigger, dropped a bomb or simply supported those who have, I've yet to meet any veteran who has fought and found their contribution to or the personal act of killing another human being particularly glorious. Necessary - Yes. Glorious or pleasurable - No. In combat, the veteran must psychologically distance themselves from the humanity of their opponent during the fight. The adversary becomes a target or an objective or any number of derogatory epithets that separates "them from us". Combat becomes merely business-a job that has to be done, part of your duty and killing-a necessary result. It's a team job that needs to be done quickly, efficiently, unemotionally and at the least cost in lives to your unit, to innocents and with the most damage inflicted in the least time to your adversaries. Then you and the team move forward again to the next danger area and fight. The only sure way home is by fighting through your opponents as quickly and efficiently as possible. Along the way you quietly hope or pray that your actions will: be successful; not cause the loss of a comrade; the death of an innocent; or that you'll become one of the unlucky casualties yourself. You stay despite your fears because the team-



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your new family of brothers or sisters, truly needs you and you'd rather die than let them down. You live in the moment, slowly realize your own mortality and also your steadily rising desire to cling to and fight hard for every second of it. You keep your focus, your "game face" on and you don't allow yourself the luxury of "too much reflection" or a moment's "day dreaming" about home, loved ones, the future or your return. You privately fear that such a moment of inattention may be your or worse, because of you, a comrade's last.

So if I may caution, please don't walk up to a combat veteran and ask him or her if they "killed" anyone or attempt well meaning "pop" psychoanalysis. These often-made communication attempts are awkward and show a lack of understanding and comprehension of the veteran. They also reveal much about the person who attempts either one. Instead, please accept there is a deep contextual gap between you both because you were not there. This chasm is very difficult to bridge when veterans attempt to relate their personal war experiences. Actual combat veterans are the one's least likely to answer the question or discuss the details of their experiences with relative strangers. Most likely they will ignore you and feel as though they were truly "pilgrims" in a strange land instead of honored and appreciated members of our Republic. So accept and don't press. One note of personal caution for your awareness- If a combat veteran does answer or appear to openly revel in the number of adversaries they've personally slain then they either haven't or they are likely part of society's 2% sociopaths. In either case, I would recommend you beware and quietly distance yourself. Their enthusiasm and behavior are not normal for a true combat veteran. But here is what you can do. Don't ignore them or the subject. Please feel free to express your "gladness at their safe return" and ask them "how it went or what was it like?" These questions are open-ended and show both your interest and concern. They also allow the veteran to share what they can or want. In most cases, the open door will enable them to share stories of close friends, teammates or some humorous moments of which they recall. Again, just ask, accept but don't dig or press.

The second gift is "**affirmation**". Whether you were personally in favor of the war or against it no longer matters at this point. As a Republic and a people we debated, we decided and then we mustered the political and societal willpower to send these brave young men and women into combat in hopes of eventually creating a better peace for ourselves, for the Iraqi people and for an entire region of the world. More than anything else, the greatest gift you can personally give a returning veteran is a sincere handshake and words from you that "they did the right thing, they did what we asked them to do and that you are proud of them". We need to say these words often and the returning combat veteran truly needs these reassurances. Also please fly your flag and consider attending one or more public events with your families as a visible sign of your support and thanks. Nothing speaks louder to a returning veteran than the physical presence of entire families. Those Americans attending these events give one of their most precious gifts-their personal time. Numbers matter. Personal and family presence silently speaks volumes of affirmation to those you wish to honor.

The third gift is "**support**". Immediately upon return there will be weeks of ceremonies and public praise applauding the achievements of the returning units and their veterans. But the pace of life in America is fast and it will necessarily move rapidly onward towards the next event. Here is where your support is most needed to sustain the returning veteran and you can make the most difference in their lives for years to come. Continue to fly your flag. If you are an employer, then simply do your best to hire a veteran who is leaving service or if he or she was a Guardsman or Reservist, welcome them back to a new job within the company. All reserve personnel know that the economic life of the



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company has continued in their absence. It has to do so in order for the company to survive and prosper. They also know it is likely their jobs have since been filled. Returning veterans are always unsure whether or not they will find or have employment upon return. As an employer, if you can't give them an equivalent job because of downsizing then extend them with your company for three to four months so they can properly job hunt. Please take a personal interest in them and their families and use your extensive list of personal and professional contacts to help them land a better job-even if it is with one of your competitors. The gratitude they will feel for you, your personal actions and your company is beyond words.

For everyone else, the greatest gift you can give to continue support will take 10 seconds of your time. In the years to come, if ever your paths cross with one of the hundreds of thousands of veterans of this or any other conflict, then simply shake their hand and tell them "thanks" and that "they did a great job!" Your words show you understand, you affirm their service and you continue to support them. Teach your children to do the same by your strong example. Though veterans may not express it, every one of them will be grateful. If this message rings true with you, then let us each give these returning veterans these three gifts that will truly last them a lifetime.



MailCall News

Note: In the recent Thunderbolt, the notes on Page 38 for sending in **dues and donations** are incorrect. **Brenda Mortensen** is no longer the Treasurer for the 517th. Those duties have been passed on to **Joanne Barrett**. If you already sent in your donations, Brenda is forwarding those to Joanne, but for any future dues or donations, please send them to:

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



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Bob: I (and many others) do enjoy your Mail Calls. Thank you. The Thunderbolt was excellent. Thank you **Helen and Claire** for your labor of love on top of everything else on your plates.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

I have my plane tickets purchased but I haven't made my hotel reservation yet. That will be my job to do tonight. I am hoping that there will be a good crowd, but it sounds a little shaky.

Thanks for all that you do for the 517th. I am mailing Mail Calls to a gentleman in Texas who does not have a computer, and on a regular basis writes me letters telling me that we should have more Thunderbolts out more often. I send the T'bolts to him about every six weeks. God bless him.

Will we see you in KC? Again, thanks for all that you do.

Helen

Just for Laughs

I served in a parachute regiment. During a nighttime exercise, I was seated next to a young officer. He was looking a bit pale, so I asked, "Scared, lieutenant?"

"No," he replied. "Apprehensive."

"What's the difference?"

"That means I'm scared, but with a university education."



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Palm Springs Reunion

Greetings,

It was a most enjoyable reunion in Palm Springs last week.

Bill Christian and wife Sophia have been involved there for many years. Bill and I came to Toccoa with four others from Camp Upton on Long Island in April of 1943. All of us made it into the 596 after being interviewed by then - **Captain Robert Dalrymple**. Also essential to this reunion were **the Frice ladies, Karen and Robin**. I am certain that others put effort into the reunion, and I beg their forgiveness for not mentioning their names.

Various activities were available. For example, there was a trip up a mountain by some sort of suspended car. I bugged out; heights frighten me. There was also the Follies show featuring mature ladies in seductive costumes.

While the vets conducted a business meeting, the ladies conducted a facial session. This was quite a sight: all of them wearing head coverings and robes, faces coated in some sort of goo guaranteed to make the face smoother. Then came the turning of the tables when Robin announced that she needed several men secure in their manhood to volunteer for facials. Who can resist the Frice women? Four of us vets agreed to have our faces rejuvenated. There we were: complete with hairnets and robes, looking somewhat like mummies. However, I did think my face was considerably smoother afterward.

The dinner was great. After dinner, an incredible number of articles were raffled off. I personally won five times. I think that was the record, but many others won as many as three times.

I am certain others will add their stories and insights about this wonderful gathering. A good time was had by all.

I apologize for not making the first Mail Call after the trip. I was too tired.

Next year's West Coast reunion will be in March. Make your plans now for Kansas City in July, Kissimmee in January 2013 and Palm Springs in March 2013.

Please, everyone - make a call and get yourselves to Kansas City. As I write, we have fewer than 75 people coming. Get on the phone and call a friend. Make your plans firm and see you in Kansas City! **Lory** has worked hard to make it our best ever National Reunion, and we all need to be there. I hear that the film - based in partial fact on the experiences of **Bud Curtis** in the 517 - will actually premier at our reunion.

Call now to reserve your spot! Friends are waiting to see you and help you if you need it!

Call me with any questions at 908 852 1424

Allan Johnson



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General Orders – January 1945 to February 1946

Mike Moyer (US Army War College) sent in 192 pages of General Orders for the 517. It will take me some time to review and post them all.

Mike,

Confirming -- I got them all. 4 zip files, with 192 pages. That was easier and quicker than I thought.

Excellent stuff. It may take me a while to go through it all and organize it, but this will provide great research material for friends, relatives and any researchers looking for the 517 history – and that's the whole point of our web site. This is great!
I will let you know when I get it all loaded.

Thanks!
Bob Barrett

Hi Mike,

Just wanted to let you know that it will take me a while to organize and post the files (192 pages!). On a quick look, most of these are GO's done at the very end of the war from January to June 1945, and then pick up again in Fort Bragg starting in November 1945 to late Feb 1946. Most of these are overdue documentation for Purple Hearts, with a few for Combat Infantryman Badges and also a few Guard Orders and instructions. So unfortunately, none of these are for major battles or major awards.

FYI, the 517th had been assigned to the 13th Airborne on Feb 14, 1945 until they were deactivated. And the 517th found it difficult to get credit for previous battle events after they joined the 13th Airborne. As the 517 troopers say, they did not have the time to keep good written records while in combat conditions, a fact that the 13th Airborne did not seem to appreciate.

From "*Paratroopers' Odyssey*":

The 13th Airborne Division staff demanded administrative perfection. This was bad news for the 517th. Its administration and record keeping had never been much to begin with, and had gone steadily downhill since Italy. The 13th could not understand how property could be written off as "expended in combat" without supporting paperwork. It was no use trying to explain that some things had simply disappeared into the night sky over France, or that machine guns had been left leaning against a tree in Belgium because there was no longer anyone to carry them.

The 13th was startled to find that 517th Battalion S-3 Journals were non-existent. The 517th was equally startled to find that anyone could think that keeping Journals at Battalion level was even conceivable under the conditions in which it had fought. Captain John Dugan and others scurried around for weeks inventing "records".*

* Fortunately, these "records" did not survive. At least they cannot be found in the National Archives.



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There were other areas of conflict. All recommendations for awards had to be submitted to a 13th Airborne Division Awards Board. Most 517th decorations were hard-earned. When entire units had performed with fortitude and gallantry it was difficult to single out any particular men. The recommendations that did go forward were, for the most part, genuine. The Awards Board used some unusual criteria, and routinely knocked recommendations down a notch or two. Thus, an officer who had been physically ahead of his riflemen in an attack was "only doing his job"; others who performed such valorous acts as supervising procurement of ammunition were awarded Silver Stars.

For all these and other reasons there was little love lost between the 517th and the 13th Airborne.

Sample ----->

DECLASSIFIED PER NND 73501
 BY W3 NARA DATE 11/27/09

RESTRICTED

Sheet #5,
 Bar #2, Section #II, General Orders #46, Hq 517th Procht Inf Regt,
 #PO 333, U. S. Army, dated 28 July 1945, Cont'd.

BELGIUM

Sgt	ROBERT T. DODDS	32781989	28 December	1944
Pfc	ROBERT F. DURNAL	39042285	4 January	1945
Tec 5	WILLIAM L. EDGEM	36653212	27 December	1944

GERMANY

Tec 5	LAWRENCE CONSTANTINE	31304386	7 February	1945
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3. Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, an OAK LEAF CLUSTER representing a fourth award of the Purple Heart is hereby awarded to the following named individual for wounds received in action against the enemy in country as indicated on the date as indicated.

SOUTHERN FRANCE

Tec 3	WILLIAM J. HARVEY	31237962	15 August	1944
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III - AMENDMENT OF GENERAL ORDERS.

1. So much of Par #1, Section II, General Orders #44, this Hq, dated 25 July 1945 pertaining to the awarding of an OAK LEAF CLUSTER representing a second award to the Purple Heart to Lt. Col. MELVIN ZAIS, O-354595, Inf for wounds received in action against the enemy in So. France is hereby amended to read "AWARD OF THE PURPLE HEART".

2. So much of Par 1, Section #II, General Orders #42, this Hq, dated 22 July 1945 awarding a BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER representing a second award of the Purple Heart to the following named personnel is amended to read "Award of BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER representing a third award of the Purple Heart"

Tec 5	EDWARD V. EASTBURY	33382455	24 December	1944
Pfc	ROBERT K. JONES	39389270	24 December	1944

IV - RESCISSION OF GENERAL ORDERS

1. So much of Par #1, Section I, General Orders #44, this Hq, dated 25 July 1945 pertaining to the Awarding of the Purple Heart to the following named officer is rescinded.

1st Lt.	ROBERT C. HACKETT	0-1304069, Inf	25 January	1945
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2. So much of Par #1, Section II, General Orders #44, this Hq, dated 25 July 1945 pertaining to the Awarding of the Oak Leaf Cluster representing a second award of the Purple Heart, to the following named Officer is hereby rescinded.

1st Lt.	EDWARD M. ATHEY	0-1325466, Inf.	15 August	1944
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- 3 -
RESTRICTED



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Operation Dragoon – hand-painted camo



596th with camo outfits – Where and when?

Much to my surprise I received a phone call from 517th trooper **Al Sperry** on Saturday. It was wonderful to hear from him and he brought back to my attention the picture of 517th troopers in camouflage uniforms. Al told me he wrote back in to mailcall asking about the camouflage uniforms. In the picture of these 517th troopers the uniforms look like they as Al describes wearing camouflage printed uniforms. They look just like the ones I saw from WWII Marines. I can remember being in the Marines in the 60's and seeing some of this old camouflage gear in the supply rooms. I have attached a couple of Marine WW II pictures of Marines in camouflage uniforms and to me it looks just like the uniforms in the 517th picture, but I could be wrong. If you remember **Colonel Walsh** in 1942 went to observe Soldiers and Marines in combat in the Pacific. He brought back ideas on how he wanted to train his paratroopers. Could there be a chance he saw these uniforms and brought them back to be used by paratroopers??? I do know. If you look at my Dad's combat uniform you can tell the camouflage pattern was spray painted on (see photo), and I thought that everyone in the 517th had their uniforms spray painted for the combat jump. So I would sure like to hear from more people about this if anyone else knows.

Lory Curtis

Pacific uniforms



Bud Curtis in Operation Dragoon





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From Eric Renoux: (AIRBORNE MUSEUM "15 Aout 1944" Association)
The 517th hand Painted Flag for southern France Ceremony
Work in Progress, merci Mireille..





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Annual Reunion – Register Now!

Annual National Reunion

Kansas City, MO

July 12-16, 2012

[Program](#)

[Registration Form](#)

[Hotel Registration Form](#)

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