



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2136**

**December 16, 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 (updated!)

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

### *MailCall News*

Hello Ben,

I am trying to find out information on behalf of **Thomas Leon Rea** whose uncle who was in the 517th Parachute Reg. His name was also Thomas Leon Rea and he died on February 9, 1945.

I would love to find out if there are any living members who may have known him. I am also trying to put him in touch with **Lt. Richard J Seitz**. Any help or information you may have would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Jodi Holt

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We don't have a lot of info about **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Thomas Rea**. Maybe you could help us fill in some of the details. We know he was in the HQ Co, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, and died on Feb 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in the battles in the Heurtgen Forest area.

The most we have is from some research done by a **Stevin Oudshoorn** who lives in the Amsterdam and has compiled some history of the men buried in the Margraten cemetery in the Netherlands, including a page for Lt. Rea: [1Lt Thomas L. Rea](#)

I will pass your request on to General Seitz.

Regards,

Bob Barrett



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Thank you Bob for getting back to me. My friend Tom Rea was able to speak with General Seitz today which was wonderful. He said it was amazing how much he remembers at age 92 and he was very helpful.

Thank you again,  
Jodi

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*RE: I am still having trouble getting MailCalls delivered this week. - BB*

Hey Bob-

Just thought I would pass this along...not sure if you have looked into it before. I have been getting the 17th airborne and scion newsletter for a few months now and they use mailchimp to send it out. I'll forward along an example after this. Might want to look into it. Has a free edition for under 2000 recipients. I know there are other alternatives out there too, but don't have experience with them.

Thanks  
- **mark hanson**

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Mark,

I've used Constant Contact and MailChimp before, for my daughters' retail store. But I wasn't aware that MailChimp was free for as many as 2000 subscribers. That has to be a change! Constant Contact is only free for up to 100 users. That's great news! How did I not know that? It has a couple of limited features – including a test of spam blocking – but that could be exactly what I need to get things going again. I'm getting very tired of fighting the internet.

I may plug along the old way to get out today's mailing, but I will definitely set it up and give it a try over the holiday break.

Thanks for the advice!

Bob Barrett

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I haven't received any mail from the 517th in quite a while...have I been deleted?

**Boyd Ellis** (brother of **Taskel (PAPPY) Ellis**, F Co.)

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Boyd, I'm not sure why, but you disappeared of the mailing list. I will add you back on the list.

**Subject:** 517th Roster almost ready



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

I think I've got the roster updated, at least with all the documents I have. I took the 2008 roster, merged it with Helen's "Yes, send me the Thunderbolt" roster, went through the piles of notes and returned Thunderbolts, the pile of "Deceased" notes, and finally the lists of people who have been sending in dues with notes expecting that they would get the Thunderbolt. When I had 2 addresses for the same person, I think I figured out the one that was more recent.

The updated roster can be found at <http://www.517prct.org/roster.pdf> I did not yet merge this with the MailCall list, which contains only people's emails and not their home mailing address. I will merge the two lists in the future.

Here are the current counts from the new Thunderbolt roster:

Yes, send the T'Bolt	264
No	15
Deceased	40
tbd - used to receive Tbolt in 2008	164
tbd - ? Unknown	464
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	947

The plan is to send future Thunderbolts only to the people who are marked with a green "Y". So please check the list and send any correction to me at [MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)

Note: We are expecting that we will be getting the next Thunderbolt in an electronic form (.pdf) and we will be able to post it on the website. Therefore, all of you who are currently receiving weekly MailCalls will also be able to read the Thunderbolt online or print it out yourself. This will save us on the printing and Mailing costs, which as you should all know are expensive. So, make any corrections to the mailing list, but only request a printed copy if you need it.

Bob Barrett

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I noticed **Gene Brissey** of Company E of the Second Battalion is not on the Thunderbolt mailing list. His wife's name is Edie.

I recently purchased the film, Saints and Soldiers AIRBORNE CREED, through Amazon. It is an impressive film. I plan to look for **Lory Curtis** in that one particular scene the next time I watch it.

That situation with **Howard Hensleigh** and his contact with the grandson of the German soldier is remarkable; very moving emotionally.

John Krumm

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Bob,

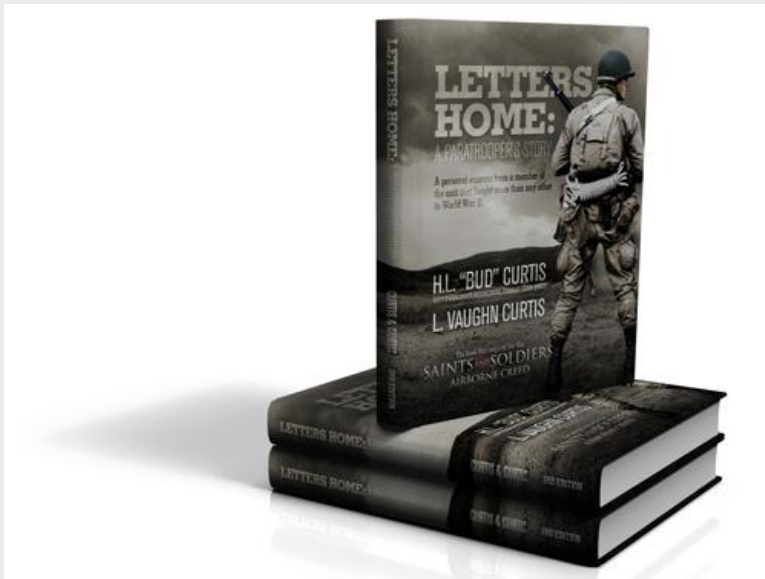
Salt Lake Magazine contacted me to do an article about the book and movie. Here is a link to the story.

Lory Curtis

<http://www.saltlakemagazine.com/blog/2012/12/letters-home-qa-with-l-vaughn-curtis/>

# Letters Home: A Paratrooper's Story — Q&A with L. Vaughn Curtis

Dec 10th 2012



Curtis' book is available in Barnes and Noble, Deseret Book, Seagull Book and Walmart

Last August, a movie captured theater audiences with its gripping story of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team's dangerous mission in the height of World War II. The story behind *Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed* is a true story, inspired by a book by L. Vaughn Curtis called *Letters Home: A Paratrooper's Story*.

Curtis based the book on the experiences of his own father, Harland "Bud" Curtis, as they were written in 150 preserved letters. When film director Ryan Little came to a reunion of the 517th in 2009, Curtis gave him a copy of the book. Two years later, Little contacted Curtis to ask permission to use parts of the book in a new movie. Curtis is still dumbfounded and thinks it's surreal and a blessing to see his dad's story come to life in *Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed*.



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Curtis shared a few thoughts with us about his book, the military and more:

### **Why is this story important?**

"The men of the 517th were the 9-11 team of their day. They were placed in the heaviest combat areas, but they received no recognition. Lots of others are recognized and portrayed in movies like *Band of Brothers*, but people need to know about those that performed parachute duty for the country."

### **Did your own military experience influence your writing?**

"When I was young I would go to my dad's mother, my grandmother, and ask why my dad was so tough. She would read me his letters. I got to know more about my dad as a father and husband and what he did in World War II as a paratrooper through those letters. My military experience helped me understand some of the things that he talks about though. For example, when he talked about KP, I knew that KP meant kitchen police. I knew when he talked about the HQ company he meant headquarters and that DZ meant drop zone. My military knowledge allowed me to explain connections and acronyms in the book. It also helped me understand the more poignant moments and experiences in my father's letters."

### **Most difficult part?**

"The hardest part was compiling all of the data to go with the letters. I had to take out some that said things like 'Hi Mom, things are great' and make sure the letters I included were meaningful. I also had to check the letters for accuracy in actual history and make sure they fit with the other facts I was connecting."



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*Corbin Allred, Jasen Wade (Curtis' father in the movie), L. Vaughn Curtis, David Nibley. Curtis was an extra in Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed.*

### **Favorite part?**

"I never would have thought of doing this until I saw the HBO series *Band of Brothers* with my brother. After we watched it, we thought 'Is this what Dad went through?' so we went home and asked him. He told us that it was and started telling us stories. Before, he never talked about his war experiences. A little while later, my brother received an invitation to go to Camp McCullough. We also wanted to take Dad down to where he went to jump school and trained in Georgia. Because I was retired military personnel, it was easy to arrange all that.

"I just have to tell a short side-story. When we got to Georgia, I told the Sargeant Major my name and said I wanted to take my dad to the mess hall so he could experience military dining again. He said no problem. So after we walked around for a bit we went back to the hall. There were hundreds of paratroopers waiting in line, and I thought 'I don't know how long we'll be here.' I suggested we just go grab a sandwich from Subway, but my dad said no. My brother was never in the military so it was a fun experience for him, too. After a bit, the paratroopers around started to notice my dad. Once they figured out he was a World War II veteran somebody shouted 'Make a hole and make it wide.' Everyone stood on the sides of the sidewalk and they were all standing at attention. It was neat to see that these men hadn't forgotten what happened in World War II and they recognized my dad as an American war hero. People were asking for time to eat with him and it was wonderful to see that even after 60 years, his service was not forgotten and he was still treated with such great respect.

"Going back to the question, the most excitement I had was connecting to the letters as a boy, forgetting about them, and then having my dad send them to me again in 2003. As I put them together and tied information in, more and more people, especially other veterans or family members of veterans, wanted a copy. Then I gave a copy to the movie director and you know the rest."

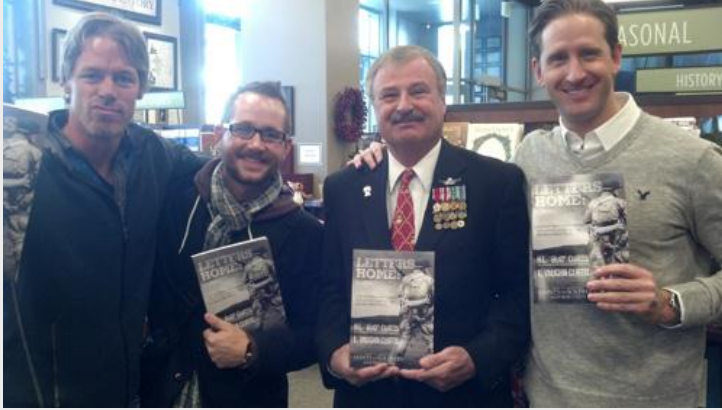
### **Anything else?**

"I would just like all veterans and people who served in the military to know that this book is meant to honor all of them, not just the paratroopers. It remembers and recognizes that big sacrifices that all of them made to defend our country.





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*Jason Wade, Corbin Allred, L. Vaughn Curtis and David Nibley at a promotional event at Deseret Book*



Photo of the Saints and Soldiers actors – plus **Lory Curtis** -- at the Orem, UT Costco store, signing posters and DVDs. December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.



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

Hey Bob,

Sorry I haven't been writing to Mail Call as often as I'd like. I still read them all and am amazed (actually genuinely happy) at the many new people finding this important view of Actual History.

Have had this note sitting on my 6-foot long 517th table since 19July2012. It's in reference to a photo on the 517th link to "Training and WW II Photos" from Camp MacKall. It's of the 3rd Bat. right before they went on Tennessee Maneuvers. I believe the photo was from **Cecil H. Doty** ("H" Co) and sent March 2000.

My notes also show that the same photo was sent to **Tom Reber** by **Howard Hensleigh**, March 18, 2002.

Here's the deal...Howard identified my uncle, **Floyd A. STOTT**, as the 6th in from the left. (I counted 28 in that row.) He actually is standing, 2nd from the right, in the front row.

I believe the person Howard identified is **Capt. James BIRDER**. If you check some of the photos of Floyd I've sent, I think you will agree. Just want to try and keep the records correct.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE don't put this in a Mail Call! I do not wish to embarrass Howard. He has offered so much to so many of us who never knew our 517th Troopers.

Merry Christmas and a Safe and Prosperous New Year,

### **Kenton Floyd Immerfall**

Nephew of Floyd A. Stott - 1st Lt. "I" Co, 3rd Bat. 517th PRCT

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Sorry Kent, but I decided that I am putting your note in this MailCall. Howard can handle this:

Actually, it's pretty simple. Howard just had those two – Stott and Birder – backwards. In his defense, he actually put question marks beside both those entries, so he wasn't 100% sure at the time. I am making the corrections now.



[http://www.517prct.org/photos/3rd\\_battalion.htm](http://www.517prct.org/photos/3rd_battalion.htm)

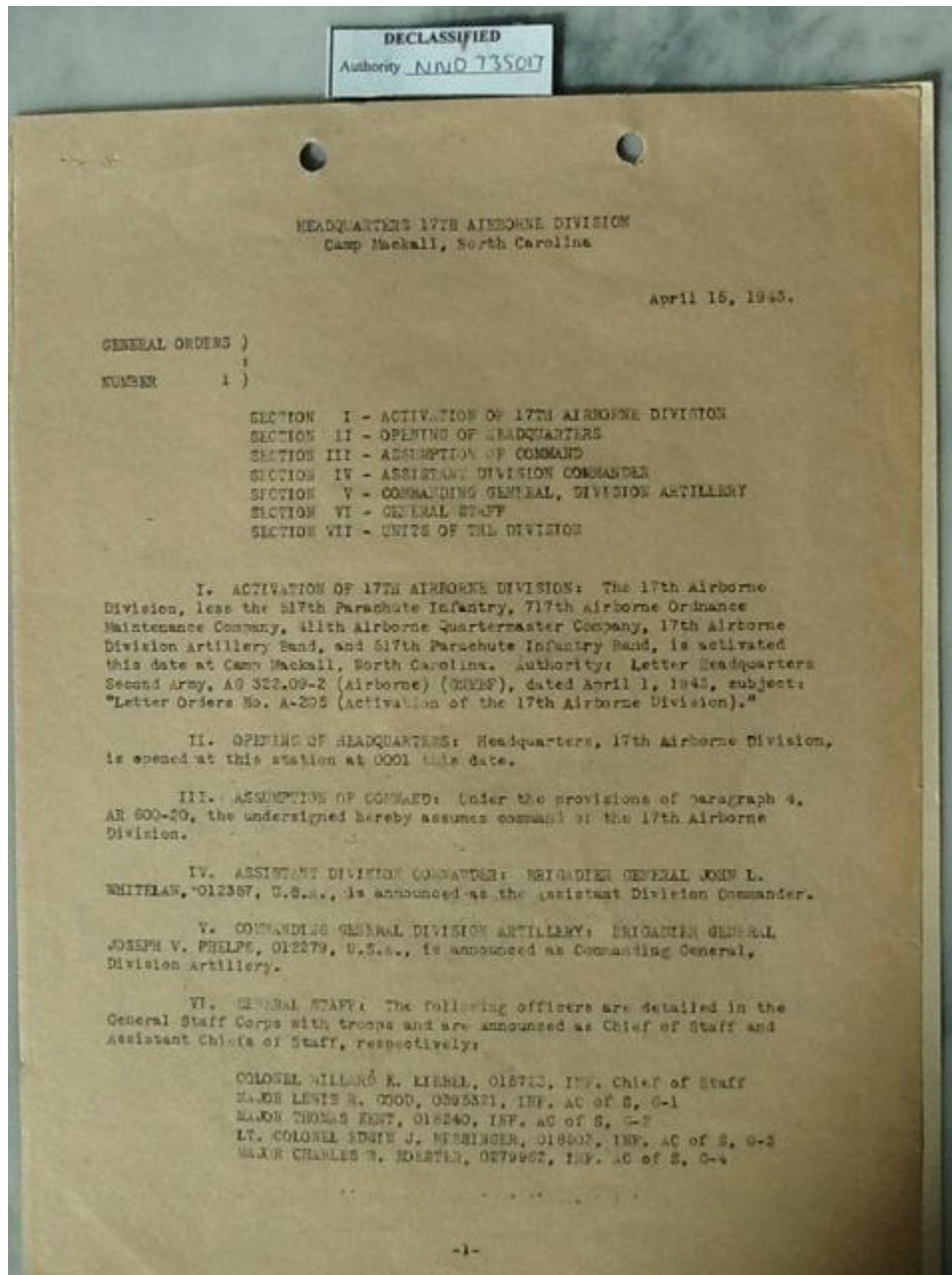
Can you imagine: Howard could name all 28 officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion by sight 60 years after the fact, but had to put question marks beside 2 of them because he wasn't 100% sure. I'm surprised that he didn't name each of the other 200+ troopers.

Bob B.





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Page 1 of a Document Found at the National Archives

Activation of the 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne at Camp MacKall, including the 517<sup>th</sup>. April 15, 1943



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

### *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

517 PRCT Florida Mini Reunion 2013  
Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL

Reunion Registration Form  
January 18 – 21

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 15<sup>th</sup>** to:

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

## **517 PRCT FLORIDA MINI REUNION, January 2013**

### **WHERE:**

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

800-327-9170

**WHEN:** January 18 – 21

(Hospitality Room Opens Evening of January 18)

### **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