



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2161

June 2, 2013

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

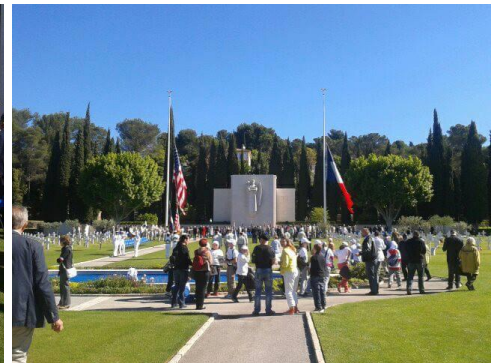
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Memorial Day 2013

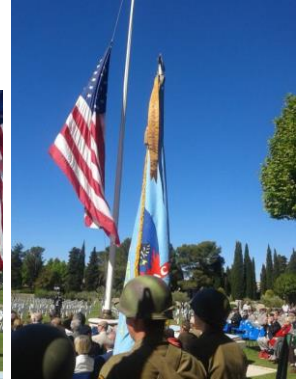
Last week, I issued MailCall #2106 on Sunday as usual, and included a few photos of Memorial Day observances in Southern France. Here are a few more notes and photos from other Monday observances. Better late than never. – Bob B.

[Eric Renoux](#) shared [AIRBORNE MUSEUM "15 Aout 1944" Association's](#) album: [MEMORIAL 2013. DRAGUIGNAN RHONE CEMETERY.](#)





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Lest we forget!

Remembering today, and every day, those veterans who gave their Full-Measure, that we might secure and appreciate our freedoms.

God Bless America!

Kenton Floyd Immerfall
Nephew of **Floyd A. Stott**
1st. Lt. "I" Co. 3rd Bat. 517 PRCT



1st Lt. Floyd A. Stott

some pics of 517th monument at home in Sospel...
we added a bike....

Patou and Roland Orengo





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Patricia and Roland, thank you for sending this on Memorial Day. We are indebted to you there in Sospel, the last town of France to be liberated on, unbelievably, the 28th of October, 1944. Thank you for commemorating the battle of Sospel with a stunning monument at your home, and for making sure that the marker was placed on the bridge in town. You are true friends to the men and families of the 517.

I just went back to see some of the footage that Bob had put on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEto9RRXbWc>). It was an incredible gathering of friends at your home in 2009. So lovely to see Ben and Merle together.

With great thanks and gratitude –
Claire

From **Jean Michel Soldi** and **Adrien Jolagourde**, here is a beautiful video of the annual Memorial Day tribute at the Rhone American Cemetery in Draguignan.

Watch for the gravestones of several 517th troopers, and yes, that is Adrien (Jean Michel's son) who is the flag-bearer of the 517th flag. (1:53 and 6:18)



<http://canal-d.tv/videos/memorial-day-a-draguignan/>



On the occasion of Memorial Day, a tribute was paid at the American Cemetery, the U.S. soldiers killed in combat.

The ceremony was attended by 600 people, civilian and military authorities as well as private citizens.

A highlight of the U.S. and dracénoises traditions, punctuated by the arrival of officials at 10 am, followed by the traditional speeches, laying of wreaths, minute of silence, raising flags and blessings.

Among the officials present, the Sub-Prefect Stanislas Gazelles, Mayor Max Piselli, Congressman of the 8th district Olivier Audibert-Troin, General Hervé Wattecamps, Vice Admiral Frank Pandolfo, and the Consul General of the United States in Marseille Diane Kelly.



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Pvt. Robert R. Gruwell – MIA/KIA

I happened to be looking through some old records of **Clark Archer's** today (Memorial Day). I have seen most of these records before, but I did find a couple of things that I never knew about. One group of these notes includes the details about the search for **Pvt. Robert R. Gruwell**. (**Merle McMorrow** will probably remember some of this story from when he was the Association president.)

The conclusion is that Pvt. Gruwell of G Company was MIA on August 15, 1944, and believed killed in the vicinity of La Motte. But his body was never recovered. Clark's records, as always, are very thorough. They include a lot of correspondence dating back to the initial investigations in 1949-1951 as well as another search done by the 517th in 1997 with potential witnesses and the Department of the Army and even our friends in France (**J. Michel Soldi** and **Eric Renoux**) looking for the gravesite.

The conclusion is that Pvt. Gruwell was killed, and his body was discovered on the road from Callian to La Motte on August 17, and identified by three other members of the 3rd Battalion. His dog tags were missing, but they recognized his weapons (a BAR belt and clip) and were able to find an identification number in his boots. Unfortunately, his body was not recovered, then went missing and has never been located. In one note, they believe it was taken to a local Catholic Church and buried.

There is one final note about Pvt. Gruwell at the end of the 1997 documentation:

Our single lead of a fairly specific nature is provided by Dr. Walter Plassman who served as 3rd Battalion/517th PIR Medical Officer.

I quote from his recent letter;

" The casualties I attended were in Montauroux. I believe there were seven (7) in number before we were evacuated on D+3 or D+4. The townspeople were very helpful with food etc."

" Diagonally across the street from our wounded center was a Catholic church and a small cemetery."

" One dead U.S. soldier was brought to us by the FFI on D+1. "

★ " The local priest and several others gave him a Christian burial in that small cemetery. "

"He was one of ours, but I don't remember his Company, "

Because of his longtime MIA status, Gruwell has never been listed on the 517 Honor Roll, our listing of those who were Killed in Action. So I am now going to go ahead and add Robert Gruwell's name to the KIA list, which brings the total count to 254 men of the 517th killed in WW2.

See: <http://517prct.org/kia.htm>

On the next page is one of the letters written in 1997 in order to have a memorial marker installed in remembrance of Pvt. Gruwell. Does anyone know if this was ever done?

Bob Barrett



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

•517 Parachute Combat Team•

CLARK L. ARCHER

525 NORTH HALIFAX AVENUE No. 6

DAYTONA BEACH, FL 32118-4066

904-258-4066

12 June 1997

Director of Memorial Programs (403 A)
National Cemetery System
Washington, DC 20420

Sir,

The following quote appears in a 'veterans advisory' newsletter:

"The VA will furnish a headstone or grave marker for a veteran's unmarked grave anywhere in the world and a memorial marker to recognize veterans whose remains were not recovered....."

The purpose of this letter is to get your opinion on the merits of the GRUWELL case as being eligible for placement of a memorial marker.

You will note by review of the enclosed material that PFC Robert R. GRUWELL, ASN 39277657, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was killed in action on D-Day of Operation DRAGOON (15 August 1944). His body was discovered and identified by three men of his Battalion on 17 August 1944. However, his remains were not recovered by Graves Registration Detachments. AGRC Board concluded Gruwell's remains "are non-recoverable" on 15 November 1950. This conclusion was confirmed on 3 August 1951 as Case 15517(1).

Forty-two (42) men of our combat team are interred at Rhone-American Cemetery, Draguignan, France. There are two appropriate locations for a memorial marker in remembrance of Robert Gruwell:

1. Catholic Cemetery, Montauroux, France
2. Liberation Museum, Le Muy, France

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Clark L. Archer,
Unit Historian

XC: LGN Richard J. Seitz (517)
Col. Robert E. McMahon (517)
Col. Milton H. Hamilton (D of A)



• 1943 • • ROME-ARNO • • S FRANCE • • RHINELAND • • ARDENNES-ALSACE • • CENTRAL EUROPE • • 1945 •
• FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE • • PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION 1/517 • • BELGIAN CROIX DE GUERRE •





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I did find that Pvt. Gruwell's name is included with other MIA's at the Brittany American Cemetery in St. James France:



MailCall News

My daughter wanted to know what type of rifle was used by the 517th when they were fighting the war in Europe and who the manufacturer was. She was at a gun show that had some WWII rifles and wondered which type her grandfather (**Marvin Moles**) would have used. Thanks for your help!

Diane Lynch
Daughter of **Marvin Moles**, I Company

I do plan on attending the 70th anniversary at Taccoa...I was in the hospital this past weekend with chest and back pains...They did a stress test on me with a nuclear injection and found nothing... My 21' Chris Craft boat stalled at the dock and wouldn't restart and it was blown against a rocky bank. I pulled it by a rope for 200 feet and then tried to paddle with a canoe paddle back to the dock....I almost made it twice but the wind was too strong....That is what gave me the chest pains! That was quite a work out for a 59 year old man! The nut doesn't fall far from the tree. I'm the son of a buzzard! I'm looking forward to seeing others at Taccoa!

Rick Sweet

Although I've had my plane tickets my youngest daughter gave me for my birthday for some weeks now, I'm finally packing and ready for my trip...first to spend a week with my youngest brother, and then to California to spend another week with my two youngest children and one grandson. While there, have already make arrangements to golf and have lunch with a very old (not in age!!) and dear friend, and then a mini reunion with two of my WWII comrades of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team.....not many of us left, so we treasure these moments we can get together. So...hold your mail until I return on June 18th...all the best, phil...I will have my cell phone with me....618-727-1709...only use it on trips!

Phi McSpadden



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dear 517th Troopers: On July 24th, 1943 at the chapel on base at camp Toccoa, **Chaplain Brown** performed the marriage of **Lt. Richard Spencer** to Joanne Nicholson, with **Major Melvin Zais** giving the bride away. At 91, I can no longer travel, but I will be thinking about those days in the red hills of Stevens county, Ga.

Best wishes...

.Jo Spencer Clark

I found these in my files

Bob Barrett

Lieut. and Mrs. Richard Spencer, III.

MISS JO ANNE NICHOLSON, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Nicholson, and Lieut. Richard Spencer, III, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Spencer, were married July 24 at Camp Toccoa, Ga.

Chaplain A. Brown of North Carolina officiated at the post chapel. She wore a floor-length gown of white with eyelet embroidery cap and mits to match. She carried white rosebuds.

Mrs. C. Shaeffer of Pittsburgh, Penn., was matron of honor and

Lieut. Erwin Pinkston of Council Bluffs, Ia., served as best man.

A guard of honor formed the line through which the bridal party passed on their way to the reception at the Officers' club.

Mrs. Nicholson and Mrs. Spencer, mothers of the couple, visited friends en route home after attending the wedding.

MARRIED IN GEORGIA



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I received this email from a friend, and it is about a WWII Army sniper. This story starts out at the infantry museum at Fort Benning, Ga, and it reminded me of our trip there at the National Reunion in 2011, and brought back a lot of fond memories there. Although this man was not a paratrooper it is a great story, and made me think of the deadly accuracy of our own 517th troopers with their weapons. I believe you had to be a an expert marksman to be in the 517th. I know my Dad was one.

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

[85 year old WWII sniper nails firing range targets](#)

Hi Bob.... **Lee Johnson** had surgery to drain fluid from his left lung on Wednesday, and today, he's much improved. The fluid is the remains of pneumonia and being the paratrooper that he is, he's winning this minor skirmish. He'll probably be released to go home on Tuesday or Wednesday. I leave for Normandy on 2 June, and I'll send another update on Lee when I return.

Thanks Bob,

Earl Tingle

Every once in a while I see an item that brings back memories and gives me the opportunity to answer questions raised by sons, daughters, nieces and nephews.

NOTE TO DOUG CHAULK

Believe it or not I took the picture of your father and two other troopers. **George "Red" Meline** is in the middle and **Tom Weil** is on the right. Red still reads Mail Call the last I knew and Tom passed away a year or so ago. I have one almost like it your father took with me in the middle and Tom and Red on each side. These were taken in Southern France not too long after the invasion. **Red, Tom, Frank Wakeman, Jack Castiglione, Ray Scruggs and Rene Benoit** were in the S-2 section; your father and **Sgt. Beer** were in the S-3 section, of Hq. 3rd battalion, 517th P.I.R. They were all good friends and were together a good share of the time in and out of combat. The S-2 section's job was intelligence and we did a lot of patrolling to search out the enemy. The S-3 section handled the plans, training and operations of the battalion. Your father was an excellent soldier and was always on top of his job. We all had a get together at the Albany, NY reunion. It was fortunate that all of us came back to the States in one piece.

We welcome you to the rolls of those who receive the THUNDERBOLT; there are no dues or subscription fees but you can make donations in the manner set forth at the end of each Mail Call.

NOTE TO GEOFFREY HARDING

I did not know your uncle **Jack Moon**, personally, but there is a good chance that I went on patrol with him and other H Co. troopers. The information you have on him is not clear in some places, but we can give you some solid facts from the pictures you have displayed. Bob Barrett has correctly concluded that his serious wounds were sustained at Manhay Belgium, but I will start out with Camp MacKall, NC.



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The picture of your uncle behind the light machine gun was taken there. The background looks like MacKall and the parachute emblem on his overseas cap, which we liked, was sent to the scrap heap by orders shortly before we shipped out for Naples. The emblem on his overseas cap on his picture in dress uniform is the one that replaced it. If you will notice it has a glider as well as a parachute on it. Not like the Airborne Divisions, the 517th was made up 100% of paratroops; we liked the exclusivity of the old emblem. If these were colored photos, they would tell us whether he was in the infantry, H Co., or the engineers of the 596th. Our infantry background on the emblem was blue, the engineers and artillery, red.

MANHAY

As Bob indicated, I am sure your uncle was seriously wounded by incoming artillery at Manhay, Belgium in an SS counterattack shortly after we had taken the town. We had only two rifle companies, H and I, in that attack as G Co. guarded Ridgeway's 18th Airborne Corps CP. **Stott** and his platoon of I Company were virtually wiped out by "friendly" fire, which fell short and late, as we began the attack. So, I Company was badly understrength, which meant that H Co. had to pick up the slack. Your uncle and other H Co. riflemen were on the front line of perimeter defense in fox holes dug by the Germans. During a strong counterattack, German artillery killed 1 man, not 2, by a direct hit on one of these fox holes. For a long time after the war we, like your uncle, thought both men in that foxhole died on the spot or on the way to the aid station. An H Co. trooper who traded places with one of those men recited his story about the two men who were killed, one of whom had his arm blown off. It turned out that that man recovered, read the Mail Call and said in effect, "You guys have been talking about me; Manhay is where I lost my arm." It was a dramatic revelation to all of us, a story only made possible by Mail call, started and continued by another H Co. man, Ben Barrett (and family) to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

We can make a fairly accurate guess that your uncle Jack had enough points to remain in Europe with the 82nd Airborne for occupation duty, rather than stay with the 517th, which was headed for the States and then to the invasion of Japan. He would have left us at Joigny, France after May 8, 1944, VE Day. His dress uniform Ike jacket has the 82nd patch on the shoulder. His combat infantry badge states that he was in the infantry rather than the engineers. His patrolling in Italy is also the job of the infantry. The engineers had other dangerous work to do such as clearing mine fields and building foot bridges out in front so the infantry could quickly cross streams in an attack.

My airborne best regards,

Howard Hensleigh

Submitted by

Name: **John Knowles**
From: San Diego, Ca
E-mail: jkknowles@sbcglobal.net

Comments:

As June 6th comes around once again, I look back on my father that served with the 517th Parachute Combat Team, The Battling Buzzards. I am honored to be a Navy veteran of over 10 years and always talk about my father who severed in WWII. I have a lot of his original letters and other items from his time in the war. I always try and reach out to find stories that he never told of his times in France. Thanks Dad!

Added: May 31, 2013



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Camp Toccoa 70th Anniversary

I have spoken with **Mimsey Boyle** and my dad **Allan Johnson**, and have been in touch with **Mike Wells, Lory Curtis, Mickey Moses** and **Helen Beddow**. They are at Toccoa for the 70th anniversary of the airborne outfits.

Dad has thus far given me my favorite quote: "We are in the boondocks. I hear there is a gas station that serves breakfast." They have definitely found places to eat and drink, judging from the pictures.

They are having a fantastic time down in Georgia. The proud tradition of the 517 continues: THREE descendants of troopers made the run up Curahee this morning!! I am in awe of **Paul Abbene, Mimsey Boyle** and **Mike Wells**, who all did the run this morning. My favorite text message was from Mike: "Mimsey was SMOKING fast!"

Looking forward to pictures and more stories!

All the best
Claire





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team





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Military Humor

I didn't enlist in the Army — I was drafted. So I wasn't going to make life easy for anyone. During my physical, the doctor asked softly, "Can you read the letters on the wall?"

"What letters?" I answered slyly.

"Good," said the doctor. "You passed the hearing test."

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 Donations, In Memory of... etc.) and make all checks payable to:

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