



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2184

November 3, 2013

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

Website
Send Mail Call news to
Mail Call Archives
2013 Roster (updated!)
Thunderbolt (Spring 2013)

www.517prct.org
MailCall@517prct.org
www.517prct.org/archives
www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
www.517prct.org/archives

MailCall News

Loïc 'Jack' Jankowiak posted a photo to [Battle Braus's timeline](#):

VÉTÉRANS Col de Braus

« Le 12 août dernier, deux vétérans du 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team sont revenus sur les lieux où ils

ont combattu en septembre 1944. Allan Johnson, aujourd'hui président de l'association du 517th, se trouvait alors au sein de la 596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company et son job était de réparer la Route Nationale 204 (RD-2204) que les Allemands avaient fait sauter. La tâche ne fut pas de tout repos car le lieu est abrupt et les hommes étaient forcés de travailler de nuit car ils se trouvaient sous

le feu des mitrailleuses et mortiers. Au même moment, le T/4 Leo Dean de la HQ Co. du 3/517 se trouvait sur les pentes du Col car son bataillon donnait plusieurs assauts sanglants sur le verrou allemand de Hill 1098 et Tête de la Lavina.

Aujourd'hui ils se souviennent... Grâce à l'initiative d'amis français du 517th PRCT résidant dans la région et à l'association Battle of Col de Braus avec leurs véhicules d'époque, a pu être inaugurée une plaque commémorative, que tout le monde pourra désormais voir sur la terrasse de l'Auberge du Col.

À la suite d'une sobre cérémonie et de la sonnerie aux morts américaine, les vétérans ont pu prendre le verre de l'amitié et nous remercier de notre acte de sympathie et de respect envers leur mémoire et celle de leurs camarades.

Nous espérons les accueillir l'an prochain sur les mêmes lieux et les retrouver encore en pleine santé!

Merci Allan et Leo, pour ce que vous et tant d'autres de vos frères avez fait! »

Nicolas Arnulf



Léo à gauche de la plaque et Allan, en compagnie de membres de Battle of Col de Braus.

See more about this ceremony and read the plaque in [MailCall 2175](#)



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

RE: Our visit with **Howard Hensleigh**

Bob: thank you for Howard's contact info. We had a wonderful visit with him. He is such an outstanding, delightful human being. I am sending you three separate emails with pictures of Howard so it is possible to visualize him when you read his emails. These two pictures are of Howard at his computer and his working/reading area.



Howard, ever the savvy photo taker, suggested that a red sweater and jacket would make a better photo. This is taken in the lovely outdoor patio area where we sat during our visit. It was a gorgeous day.



Bob: Think Howard's birthday is this coming Tuesday in case anyone would like to send birthday greetings. We felt like you, your Dad and my Dad were with us as we talk about the 517th and what your family had done to preserve the close bonds of brotherhood and promote the history of the outfit. Howard is a fabulous raconteur and he shared a story about my parents' wedding that we hadn't heard about one of the men getting on the back bumper of their honeymoon car and holding on for 40 or 60 kilometers! Thank you again for this opportunity.

Pat Seitz and Alan Grier



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Subject: French legion of honor

I called the general consulate in Houston , tx. No answer.so made a copy of my discharge and gave a brief rundown of our jump into southern France and where we fought, etc. and sent it to them. May or may not hear from them. Anyway I did my part in letting them know that I would be honored to wear their medal. Thanks to you and Merle for giving me the info.im still working on my war history. Will send it when it's complete.

Sent from my iPad.

Mel Trenary

October 28, 1944:

69 years ago, after a besieged of 55 days, Sospel is liberated by F/517...

Il y a 69 ans, après un siège de 55 jours, Sospel est libérée par la F Company du 517th PIR.

From: <http://1stabtf.com/champagne-campaign/Sospel.htm>



Found on eBay:

WW2 Trenchard 1921 Silver Dollar Engraved for 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment

Winning bid: GBP 65.00
(Approximately US \$103.49)

<http://tinyurl.com/l8saxna>





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I recently had the opportunity to visit the WWII Museum in New Orleans. I would highly recommend it for anyone interested in WWII. So far there are two buildings that are completed and open. A third building dedicated to the European Campaign and most likely of highest interest to the 517th will open in late 2014. The two completed buildings have small alcoves where visitors can sit and listen to the vets tell their stories. They are open to donations of artifacts including memoirs both personal and published. Here is a link with more information:

<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/give/donate-an-artifact/>

That will also allow you to access the rest of the website for more information. While it is a bit expensive for most (\$22) it is free to WWII vets.

Thanks for making the MailCall available!!!!

Christine Bunce Daughter of
Ray Bunce 2nd Platoon, F
Company

See: <http://nationalww2museum.org/>



Hello,

I recently came across the photo of **Pfc. Edward R. Snyder** that you mentioned was sold on ebay. Edward Snyder was my grandfather (we actually have a large original copy of this photo). I was hoping to find out who bought it to provide them with a little more back ground but I couldn't find the sold listing on ebay history. Do you have any information about the buyer?

Thank you,
Rhianna Cultrona



As reported in <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2151.pdf>



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I finally got around to posting a pile of ww2 photos sent to me by Ray Hess of F Company. They include photos from the airfield in Italy, and southern France, including deep snow near Luceram. Here are a few samples. See all the photos at: http://517prct.org/photos/ray_hess/ray_hess2.htm



Kid with the glasses on is Pvt. Francis Banks from New York City. He is now the Colonel's body guard. The kid sitting alongside of him is Pvt. Paul Young from Evansville, Ind. He was hurt on the jump and is still in the hospital. Taken D-1 day



Kusmierz, Kilmartin, Cope (?) and Collier



Mortar right after fired shell & just left. Kuzmierz, Gibbs, and Cope



Joniertz



Gene Frice



Hess, Gilbert, Jonientz, Adelman



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Subject: Information **1st Lt Thomas L. Rea**

Dear Ben,

I live in the Netherlands, nearby the American War Cemetery in Margraten. There it is possible to "adopt" a grave of a fallen soldier. I got the grave of **Thomas L. Rea**, and I visit this place (the cemetery) still frequently, always taking some flowers with me to thank "my soldier"... I adopted the grave when I was about 8, and I had it for 8 years now. When I needed to do a school project about something that always had a deep impact on you, I chose to do something with the Cemetery. Because of that I wanted to know more about "my soldier". It was like something was telling me that I could find more at his grave. There I saw that there was an abbreviation, which read 517 prcht fight. This was the only trail that I could really trace back to something. That is how I ended up with this email-address. I only have one question. is it possible for me to get into contact with one of his old comrades, or somebody who is related to him? I would love to know something more about him, so he is not just a "random" name for me. I thank you for all the effort you will hopefully put into this.

Yours Sincerely,

Thomas Bessems

Hello Thomas,

We all thank you for your tribute to our soldiers. We greatly appreciate your remembrance of their sacrifices. Next week, November 11th, is our "Veteran's Day" when we honor all our veterans, so your note is especially timely.

Most of what we know about Lt. Rea is what is on the memorial page at:

<http://www.adoptiegraven-database.nl/index.php/margraten/american-war-cemetery-margraten-r/7735-rea-thomas-l>

Sadly, I think that he was killed in one of the very last battles of the 517th.

I do have a couple of short notes from past conversations about Lt. Rea, which were in past MailCall Newsletters.

<http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2136.pdf>

<http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2137.pdf>

<http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2142.pdf>

I will reach out to other soldiers in the next weekly MailCall, but I think that what we know is in the above MailCalls.

Oh... And I just realized that **Thomas L. Rea**, nephew of Lt. Rea with the same name, is on our MailCall list so I am copying him on this email.

Bob Barrett



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Subject: What is a pathfinder?

Hi Howard, How are you? I put those pictures of you and Pat Seitz and Alan in the last MailCall. All three of you look great!

I have a dumb question: One of our European friends, Loïc Jankowiak, asked me to send him some photos recently. Loïc is the Webmaster for [First Airborne Task Force : the Forgotten Paratroopers](#). He was looking for stories about the "pathfinders" of the 517th, and I sent him a story and some bios from the Turner Publishing book about the 517th just pulling out any of the bios that mentioned "Pathfinder". But I don't want to look stupid – What exactly is a pathfinder and what did they do? It sounds like they were the early arrivers in the Dragoon drop, and had responsibilities to prepare the area. I do know from Paratrooper's Odyssey that "Pathfinder teams of one officer and nine men from each battalion were sent to Marcigliana for training by Air Force experts and OVERLORD veterans."

Did they get special training? What prep did they do at the drop zones? Is a Pathfinder a special rank or unit or award or badge? As far as I can tell they were not a separate unit, each one I see are assigned to one of the Companies. E.g. **Gene Frice** was a pathfinder with F Co.

Not important. I'm just curious. Regards,

Bob Barrett

PS: Here is what Wikipedia says about Pathfinders in Southern France:

Southern France

The invasion of the South of France took place on August 15, 1944, in the form of [Operation Dragoon](#) (Rottman, p. 80). The [509th PIB](#), the [517th PIR](#), and the 1st Battalion of the [551st PIB](#) formed the American airborne contingent of the invasion, dropping into the [French Riviera](#) in the early hours of the morning.^[9] As had been the problem with previous night drops, such as Normandy, the pathfinders here were misdropped when the planes carrying them got lost.^[11] Further delays were encountered when these men had to find each other on the ground, work their way through a heavily wooded area near the town of Le Muy, and fight off German soldiers in the process.^[11]

Due to the ineffective placement of the pathfinders, the follow-up waves of paratroopers were not dropped in the right place either. This was further exacerbated by pilot error, as many of the pilots opted to drop their paratroopers at too high an altitude; the result was that these men were widely scattered.^[11] Much like the paratroopers in Normandy, however, the overall operation was a success as the paratroopers still managed to accomplish their missions and capture their objectives in conjunction with the seaborne landing forces.^[11]

Dear Bob,

The pathfinders were pulled out of the units (I think exclusively the infantry units) to jump into the jump zones a few hours ahead of the main body. Their job was limited to guiding the Air Corps pilots transporting the troops into the proper drop zone. Like an intelligence/information patrol, I presume they were told to fight only if they had to and to avoid it in order to concentrate on their guidance mission. In Dragoon, as may have been the case in other operations, the pathfinders could not complete their missions. Some were dropped in the wrong place; some were dropped in the right place surrounded by defending German troops; some dropped wherever could not find their equipment bundles with the radar guidance packages, or found only part of it in the dark.

I think all who acted as pathfinders were pulled out of our training/bivouac areas near Frascati, Italy for special training. My guess is that the training did not prepare them for the confusing job they found when they hit the ground in France.

Howard Hensleigh



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From **Jerry Wofford**

Here is a story about a WW-II Army pal of **Al Cavnar Junior**, Alonzo Hooker at WWII Memorial.

*[Jerry W is the nephew of **George Cavnar**, Reg HQ, 517th, and **Al Cavnar, Jr.**, 89th Infantry.]*

Monumental flight: World War II veterans remembered, honored on trip

By GENE ZALESKI, T&D Staff Writer The Times and Democrat

The World War II Memorial, which opened to the public in April 2004, was “long sought after” by the veterans, Wienges said. Despite many being confined to wheelchairs or needing other assistance, nothing could stop these members of “the Greatest Generation.”

The veterans arrived at the Columbia Metropolitan Airport at 6:15 a.m., each donning a red South Carolina Honor Flight jacket. The Patriot Guard Riders biker group bid them farewell.

Upon arriving at Washington’s Reagan International Airport at 9:30 a.m., the men were welcomed on the tarmac with a water salute by two fire trucks on either side of the plane. The salute brought a smile to the veterans’ faces.

The men disembarked one by one and were greeted by a crowd of more than 100 cheering, flag-waving people and music by the National Guard Concert Band Whitworth Brass Quintet. Reagan tour guide Jodie Swacha gave each veteran a symbolic kiss on the cheek.

“I will always remember the immensity of it. It is very humbling if you remember all that it represents. I am glad I came.”

Vance resident Alonzo Leslie “Al” Hooker, 87, served in the U.S. Army’s 89th Infantry Division. He served in France, Belgium and Germany.

“I joined the Army when I was 16,” he said. He did his basic training at Fort Jackson, and stayed there almost a year and a half before he went to Antigua in the West Indies during the early part of the war.

Hooker remembers when Pearl Harbor was bombed. By then, he had been in the Army for three years.

The opportunity to see the World War II Memorial, he said, is something that will stay with him. “It means a lot,” Hooker said. “It really does.”

He said for those who fought in the war, it will never be forgotten. Hooker hopes the younger generation will not forget, either. “This will help them remember,” he said of the memorial.

Reflecting on the trip, Hooker said the visit to Arlington Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknowns — and watching the Changing of the Guard ceremony — were, by far, the most moving experiences for him.

Each veteran was given a letter from South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley expressing appreciation for their military service and wishes for a good flight.

The return flight landed in Columbia at 8 p.m. Despite the eagerness to find a place to lay their heads, the veterans — every last one of them. A crowd of several hundred individuals — young and old, friends and strangers — gathered and waved American flags while clapping and cheering.

Hooker wore a smile on his face and had an extra pep in his step as the band played “God Bless America.” He stopped periodically to shake hands with those who took time on a Wednesday evening to pay their respects and appreciation for his service so long ago.

“It don’t get no better,” Hooker said of the welcome, the highlight of his trip. “Coming home. It always has been.”



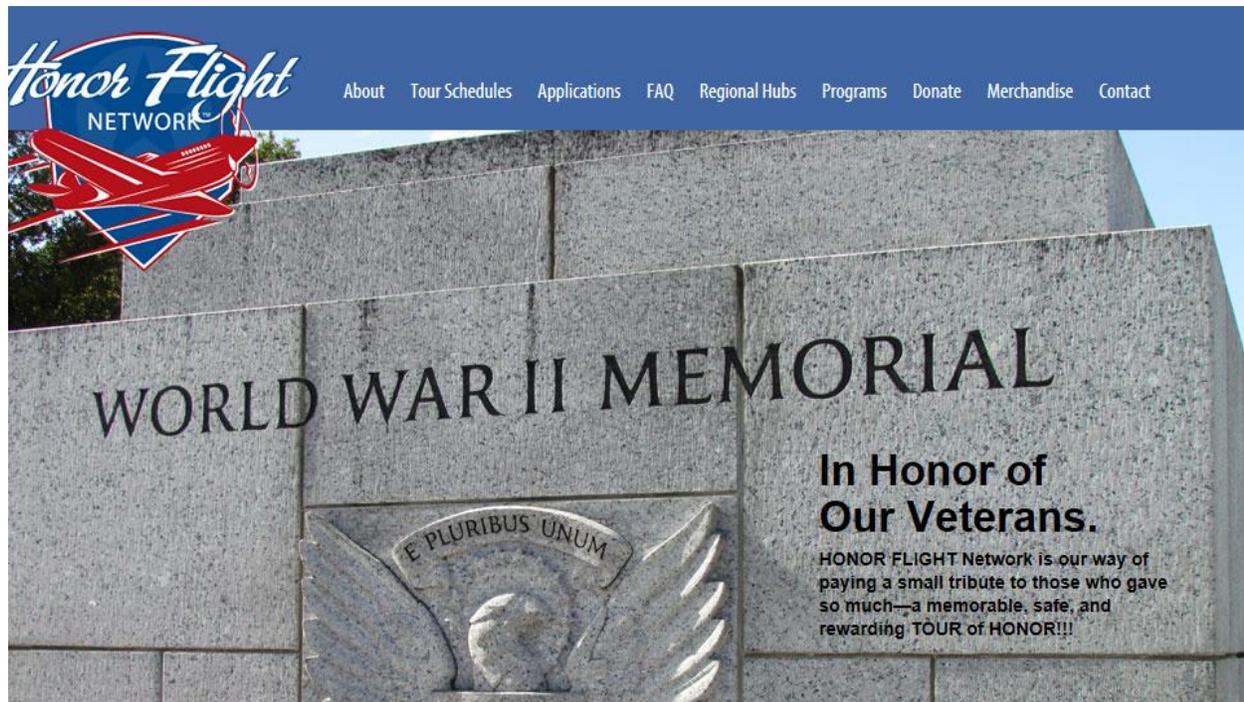
Vance resident Alonzo Leslie “Al” Hooker, center standing, removes his cap while a prayer of remembrance for his World War II comrades is offered.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Has anyone from the 517th visited with the Honor Flight Network? It is a FREE, non-profit service that brings groups of vets to visit the WW2 Memorial in Washington DC, from all corners of the US.

If you are a WW2 vet or know someone, especially those who have never been to see the memorial, you can fill out an application at: <http://www.honorflight.org/apply/>



Honor Flight Network recognizes American veterans for your sacrifices and achievements by flying you to Washington, D.C. to see YOUR memorial at **no cost**. Top priority is given to World War II and terminally ill veterans from **all** wars.

Honor Flight Network has expanded to include Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. In order for **Honor Flight Network** to achieve this goal, guardians fly with the veterans on every flight providing assistance and helping veterans have a **safe**, memorable and rewarding experience.

For what you and your comrades have given to us, please consider this a small token of appreciation from all of us at **Honor Flight Network**.

It is truly Honor Flight Network's privilege to fly our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at the memorials built in their honor. Our highest priority is to the aging World War II veterans along with any veteran facing terminal illness. Other veterans such as the Korean War and Vietnam War Veterans are included in our program and will be addressed in the near future. (Some hubs are already accepting applications for Korean and Vietnam War Veterans.)

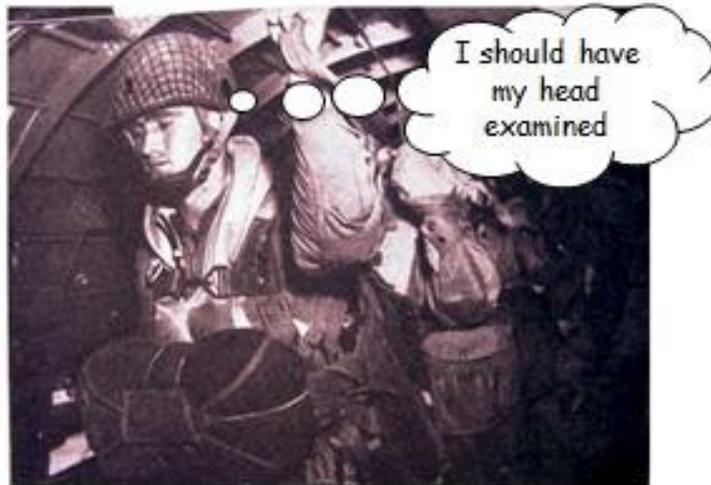
If you know of someone who is a World War II veteran or a veteran with a terminal illness, please fill out an application and send it in. Our goal for 2013 is to fly at least 20,000 veterans. **And remember, every veteran flies free.**

For further information, please contact us at 937-521-2400 or via email at veteran-application@honorflight.org



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Military Humor



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

Note: This address is only for donations. If you have materials, stories, newspaper clippings, photos that you want to include in MailCalls, please send those to MailCall@517prct.org

517 PRCT Florida Mini Reunion 2014
Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL

Reunion Registration Form
January 18 – 20

Name_____ Spouse_____

Guest Names_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (Home)_____ Cellphone_____

Unit_____ Arrival Date_____

Registration Fee - \$65.00
(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 15th to:

Claire Giblin
24 Beverly Drive
Hillsborough, N.J.
Phone: 908-963-3528
Email: clairejgib@comcast.net

517 PRCT FLORIDA MINI REUNION, January 2014

WHERE:

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

800-327-9170

WHEN: January 18 – 20

(Hospitality Room Opens Evening of January 17)

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

Claire Giblin, 908-963-3528

Email: clairejgib@comcast.net