



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2185

November 10, 2013

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

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

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Tomorrow is Veterans Day – November 11, 2013



It is my pleasure to report I had the honor today of attending **Marshall "Mark" Baird's** French Legion of Honor Ceremony in Tucson, AZ. I will never forget when my father received the honor in Paris on the 60th anniversary of D-Day. I am so pleased the French Government is now bestowing the honor closer to home for many WWII vets. To be eligible you must complete an application which can be found on line. I found one quite easily on the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge website. Mark was in 1st Battalion and looking great in his jumpsuit for the ceremony. It was also an honor to see **Joe Clark** another 517th trooper from Tucson at the ceremony. Joe was HQ 1st Battalion. I have sent along a few pics from the ceremony of

these great men of the 517th. Long live the legacy of the 517th!

Tim Curtis, Son of H.L. "Bud" Curtis





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HAPPY VETERAN'S DAY 517TH PRCT and 517th Association!

All the best to you and your families,

Paul Abbene

Kansas City Reunion 517 PRCT.

Photo from **Paul Abbene**

[I think that's **John and Deanne Jonientz** – BB]



In Belgium, we don't forget and this is our objective, going in the school and talk with the children!

Eddy Monfort (from Eddy's facebook page)

Vaux-sur-Sure: Maintain memory in schools

The year 2014 will be a busy year in commemoration of the first world war and also the Battle of the Bulge. To educate the younger Vaux-sur-Sure is currently offering programs to elementary school students, around the region. On Thursday, it was the case in Remichampagne.

http://www.tvlux.be/video/vaux-sur-sure-entretenir-le-souvenir-dans-les-ecoles_14694.html#.Un6C5pVNPqo.facebook



Note: Eddy is in the video, diagramming out the Battle of the Bulge on the blackboard. Thanks Eddy!

REMEMBERING YOU ALL THIS VETERANS DAY

To all the men of the 517th that fought for my freedom as well as many others freedom in Europe, I THANK YOU!

Thinking of all of you this Veterans Day.

Melanie Hanson, daughter of **Gary Davis**, F-Co



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Dear Bob: On the eve of Veterans Day, am especially thinking of my Dad, your Dad and all the men of the 517th. I'd like to thank them for their outstanding service to our country and for protecting our freedoms with their lives and limbs. Their self-sacrifice, discipline and love of country cannot be described adequately nor can I express my gratitude sufficiently or appropriately. But from the bottom of my heart, thank you. Sincerely,

Pat Seitz

Ridgway's Paratroopers

As Veteran's Day approaches this coming Monday, and I make plans to attend an event in Green Bay to help honor all of those who served and continue to serve this great nation, thought I'd make mention of a book I've been trying to get through for the past few months. It's ***Ridgway's Paratroopers*** by Clay Blair. The only time I take to read passages of this almost 500-page account is when I have a short break from driving for Red Cross as a volunteer. I find I've had to "take notes" as I read to keep track of what actually took place in the European Theater of WW II. That, and I need to keep turning to pages that contain maps so I can figure out the movements of Allied soldiers.

I don't recall learning most of this when taking history courses in high school and college. Then again, this author had access to those who, "were there." I realize that Clay Blair has taken the liberty to choose words that put a particular twist to the politics between officers as well as reasons for carrying the fight to the enemy or holding back. But there were many times when I had to read a passage over more than once because it made me feel uneasy.

As soon as I saw the term DRAGOON my interest piqued. This was well into the book however. **Rupert Graves's** 517th, **Richard J. Seitz, Bill Boyles's** 1st Bat., **Cato's** 460th, and Ridgway's command of, "Retake Manhay whatever the cost," are excerpts that definitely glued me to this book. I didn't realize until reading about Manhay that the artillery for that fateful day, 27Dec1944, was under the corps command of Theodore Buechler.

It's been difficult to understand all of the acronyms used in Armed Service jargon but I certainly understand the political pulls and tugs between officers from Eisenhower to Montgomery to Patton, Ridgway, etc. It's amazing that the Allies were able to defeat the Axis with all of the testosterone flying around at meetings of, "What shall we do next?" I'm certain there was more than one GI hunkered-down in his cold and snow-filled fox hole wondering if the right hand knew what the left hand was doing in those meetings.

The losses of those young men of our Greatest Generation are unfathomable as I read about St. Vith, Manhay, Vielsalm, Trois Ponts, etc. It makes meeting those who returned even more genuine and important. How anyone got out of that War alive, is beyond me. And of course we all know many came home with physical and mental scars that never did heal. God Bless them all!

Remember Veteran's Day as a time to say, "Thank you!"

Kenton Floyd Immerfall

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



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MailCall News

Sent from my iPad hi bob! Yes I got to go on the lone star honor flight on October the 3rd. It was sponsored by Montgomery,tx.& Conroe,tx. We met the buses at Target in Conroe tx. Had an escort of patriot motor bikes to the airport in Houston, tx. A large crowd was there to send us off. .everyone shook our hand . Fire trucks shot streams of water across the plane .it was wonderful. the memorials were fantastic. We got to see all of them including the changing of the guard for the Unknown Soldier. The bus took us around Washington, dc before taking us back to the airport. They fed us on the bus & the airplane. It is something I'll never forget. Some of us meet every wed. Morning for coffee & donuts at 105 storage in Conroe, tx.

Mel Trenary

Hi Joanne,

My name is **Shelly Azeff**, daughter of **Lt Warren Caulfield** of the 517th. I was wondering if I could have **Leo Dean's** email address. He attended my father's funeral a while back, and I see him still carrying on and I would like to email him. My email address is shellyazeff@gmail.com. I would like information on the 70th reunion coming up in France next year-do you have information on it?

Thanks so much and keep up the fabulous work-it means a lot to the children of the brave 517th who never spoke about all they sacrificed.

Best Regards,

Shelly Azeff

Hi Shelly,

We don't have any specifics yet about the 70th in So. France, but I know that several people are interested in going. The main celebrations are in Le Muy and Nice on the days before and after August 14. When I hear something, I'll put the info in the MailCall and on the website.

Bob Barrett

I received a nice note from Bob Webber, I am not sure what company he was in, but from what he said in his note, I would guess he was in 1st Battalion. I want to thank him for sending a check in to support the Thunderbolt.

Lory Curtis, Co- Editor of the Thunderbolt

Here is what he said in his note dated October 26, 2013:

Just a little help for the Thunderbolt. I enjoy reading it very much. I am living to next August 15, 2014, and I am hoping to go to France. I was one of the first 40 guys in Camp Toccoa

Bob Webber



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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

Hi Gilles,

Back in Mailcall 2151 <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2151.pdf> I posted a photo that you had found on eBay. I cannot locate that listing (eBay usually lets us search completed listings, but I still cannot find it), so I am thinking that maybe you saw this on a European eBay site. Any way to trace who won the bid? You sent me the mail on 19-3-2013.

Bob B

Hi Bob,

Thanks for your email. The picture did come out on ebay US from seller Oregonduck... There are a few digits after his username. I searched last night online and couldn't find the original listing.

That seller sells reprints of pictures he gets at national archives and the same pictures often come back. If I see it again I will give you a shout.

Nice to meet you Rhianna; did your Grandad jump in Southern France in August 1944 ?

Would be interested to see his pictures and the memorabilia you have kept from him.

I will keep this in mind and will let you know as soon as I see that picture surfacing again.

Best wishes from Switzerland!

gilles



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Website Guestbook entry:

Submitted by

Name: **SPYRO VANGELLOW**
From: EVANS MILLS, NY
E-mail: spauva@twcny.rr.com

Comments:

To all the 517th veterans,

I had the most spectacular encounter with one of your heroes, **Nolan Powell**, and spent a couple hours speaking with him, and hearing his stories. A truly remarkable man, and even at 90 years old, his memories of his exploits during WW2 were amazing, and held me in awe to be in the company of one of our countries National Treasures. Our WW2 veterans. He showed me his medals, of course the DSC, and Purple Heart, and the book, "The Battling Buzzards", which I quickly found a hardback edition, and read quickly. I am looking forward to seeing him over the holidays, and asking him to sign my book.

To Mr. Powell, and all the other veterans, both living and those taken from our proud nation, thank you. Thank you for being a part of the Greatest Generation, and for SAVING THE WORLD. God Bless you all.

Respectfully, and Sincerely,

Spyro

Added: November 6, 2013

Where is this monument to the 517th and the 1st Airborne Task Force?

If you know, send me a note. -- BB





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Bob your Mail Calls keep getting better and more newsworthy with age. Thanks for doing this great service for us old timers and our families and friends.

Happy Birthday Howard! I just had one two weeks ago, 90 big ones. You must be younger than me as your memory is great. I forget what I did yesterday. By the way your answers to Bob about his questions about Pathfinders was right on. As you remember we jumped at night and it was foggy. **Sargent Western** and I were the last two to leave the plane and a bit late as we had to buckle up as we both took our life jackets off once we were over land. We landed together in a Grape Vineyard and nowhere near the rest of the stick. We crawled along to a road just in time to see a German messenger on a motorcycle get cut down by machine gun fire so we first knew we were near American troops. About the same time a Pathfinder joined us and said he was dumped miles from the DZ and he was mad as hell because he couldn't do his job. I don't remember his name or anything else about him. Our stick landed 20 miles from the DZ. Frankly this was good as the Germans had the DZ covered with Machine Guns.

One of the heartwarming stories in the Mail was **Pat Seitz** and **Alan Greer** spending time with **Howard** and sending the pictures. Thank goodness the apple didn't fall far from the tree as Pat's DNA took over after her Dad passed on. She has been doing a great job keeping us up on the news regarding the Seitz family and other things. And her Brother Rick is on our Board of Directors. Because we all love our General it's good to have the Seitz continue to be as active as Dick was. Oh yes, thanks Pat and Alan for your donation to the Currahee WWII Foundation. This was the first I heard about this Foundation. It will be fun to go back and see how we lived and trained in Toccoa.

OK I am almost finished as it's almost toddy time. At reunions **Gen. Seitz** and I would go to the bar and have our Martinis. He would go up and go to bed and I would go looking for trouble. Just kidding about the trouble.

Did want to remind everybody to plan your trip to the Florida in January for our Mini. **Claire and Helen** are already working on it. You can find information in Mail Call and the Thunderbolt. Ya'all come down for our sunny weather.

Darrell Egner

From 117th Cavalry webpage:

Our most recent connection is with **Gilles Guignard** of Geneva, Switzerland, about 1.5 hours drive to Montrevel, France. Also a WWII historian of southern France, Gilles is a reenactor whose unit portrayed a 45th Infantry "Thunderbirds" unit for ceremonies at Bourge and Montrevel. He is preparing for next September in Montrevel, and a correct enactment of the 117th Cavalry, 3 September 1944. Gilles has returned to Montrevel and did interviews of residents who were there during the battle, obtaining post-battle pictures, noting our fighting positions and taking many pictures. These have been shown to Ed Leonard who was a B Troop platoon sergeant and survivor of that day. Their collaboration has been emotional and gratifying for Ed and Gilles, who continues to research and share with us. For his hard work and efforts to honor our WWII veterans, He has been made an *Honorary Member of the Regiment*. Guignard served in the Swiss Army for over 14 years. He is the squad leader of the reenactors shown here, at the right side wearing a big smile.





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Bob, Here are some messages on pathfinders. Russ's experience with it was after the War, but it does shed light on the details of what pathfinders did. HH

-----Forwarded Message-----

>From: Russ Miller <loskmRFM@bellsouth.net>

>Sent: Nov 2, 2013 7:36 PM

>To: "HOWARD E HENSLEIGH, Attorney at Law" <hhensleigh@earthlink.net>

>Subject: Re:

>

>As usual, your memory is remarkable. Yes, I jumped into southern France
>as a B company platoon leader. Prior to that I'd been transferred to a
>unit we referred to as "S" company in the 17th Airborne Division commanded by Lt.
>Maxwell T. James. We had some limited training and actual live night
>exercises (for example, bringing in glider units for night landings at
>Maxton Air Base, North Carolina). During that same time frame, we
>acted at Pathfinders for C47's for rather large scale units training in
>the vicinity of a lake near Bisco, North Carolina. Our mission was to
>install a signaling device on which the lead aircraft could fix his
>azimuth and stay on the proper flight path to the drop area. We jumped
>in to set up our equipment and remained there overnight. Mac James
>(deceased)' wife has sent me some of Mac's personal military notes.
>I'll look through them and inform you of any pathfinder related info.

>

>

>-----Original Message-----

>From: HOWARD E HENSLEIGH, Attorney at Law

>To: Russell F. Miller

>Dear Russ:

>

>I just sent you a cc of a message to Bob Barrett on pathfinders.
>Somewhere in the back of my head I have the idea that you know
>something about this--maybe received some training, but I think you jumped with B Co.
>Straighten me out.

>

>My love to the Millers, HH

>

>Howard E Hensleigh
>795 Willow Road Bldg 360G
>Menlo Park, Ca 94025

Bob, I gave you a bum steer. Russ's experience was before we went to Europe and were part of the 17th Airborne Division, from which we were separated after Tenn. maneuvers to become the separate 517th combat Team. HH



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Brian and Hoyt Kelley's Trip Report – August 2013

Brian Hoyt sent me a DVD with video and pictures of their recent trip to France in August, where Hoyt was honored with the French Legion of Honour. I haven't yet figured out how to post the large video of the trip, but here is Brian's recap of the trip, with a few photos inserted by me -- BB

Notes Legion of Honor Video

October 22, 2013

I hope you'll have as much fun watching the enclosed Family Video as I had putting it together. This was really a "once in a lifetime" kind of trip, and I wanted to share some comments with you as you watch the video.

When Dad was invited last year to come to France and receive the French Medal of Honor, we frankly didn't quite know what to expect. Dad was certainly a good candidate for it, having survived a lot of heavy combat in Southern France and having received a number of medals and citations (most of which he never mentioned to us). My expectation was that we would meet in a room at Nice City Hall and he would be presented the medal. As you will see, it turned into much more than that. When he received the Medal of Honor,

France's Highest Award (not unlike England's tradition of Knighthood), the service was a big event, with many hundreds of people and dignitaries attending and reported by all the papers. It was a big deal.

The video is divided into five sections. I'd like to share some additional comments with you on each section.

Paris

The first place that we visited was Paris, France. I believe the last time Dad was in Paris was in 1977 when he came there with Lois and joined me for a month touring Europe. I don't think I've ever seen either of them happier than during that time, and for Lois Kelley, Paris was her kind of place. It was easier to still picture her there after so many years – the shops, sidewalk cafes, the restaurants – she loved it all. We spent 5 nights in Paris and played tourist while we were there. Before going, I had been concerned that Dad at 90 years of age would be able to keep up. Oh my gosh, he walked us into the ground. I had a pedometer on my phone that kept track of how many steps we took. On our first full day in Paris, we walked over 17,000 steps (6.5 miles). Throughout the trip, Dad would typically go like crazy for several days, crash for a day, and then be right at it again.



Provence

On the next leg of the trip, we went to Provence and joined members and family of the 515th Regiment. Of the original 2,500 men that were part of the 517th, there are about 40 that are left - three of whom we had there, Dad, Allan and Leo (all in their 90's). We also had several children of vets that made the trip as well. Allan Johnson's daughter, Claire, served as the grand organizer of events. She speaks French



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which was certainly helpful. There were also two local Frenchman who founded the 517th Museum in Le Muy, **Jean Michael Soldi** and **Eric Renoux** – they were great.



Purusing maps with two other Troopers, Alan & Leo

We stayed just outside of Trans-Arcs in a little motel with the other families and basically visited each town's commemoration services (which coincided with the day that they were liberated by the 517th. The 517th originally jumped close to the cities of La Motte and Le Muy, so the first commemoration service was there. My favorite visit in Provence was to the little town of Les Arcs.

Shortly before the paratroopers arrived, the SS had rounded up a number of the leading citizens in Les Arcs and executed them as collaborators. One of the first engagements between the 517th and the Germans occurred on the rail road tracks leading into Les Arcs. The Germans had initially abandoned the



Dad landed in this Orchard 69 Years Ago

town when the paratroopers arrived, but several days later sent a full battalion against the town to retake it. Rather than retreating, the 517th engaged the Germans at the entrance of the town, wiping out or capturing most of the Germans. This was 1st Battalion of the 517th (Dad's unit) led by **Captain "Wild Bill" Boyle**. The citizens of Les Arcs obviously have a tender spot in their hearts for the 517th. When they found out that Dad was not only part of the 1st Battalion, but had also been Captain Boyle's Staff



Operation Dragoon

Sergeant, they were ecstatic. The Mayor presented Dad the City Seal and gave quite the talk in his behalf. This was where the elderly woman I mentioned to you earlier, came up to Dad, grasped his hands, and said "Bravo, Monsieur, Bravo." It was really a fun day.

The National Cemetery is very close to Les Arcs, in a town called Drauginion. Every year there is a memorial service for the fall men buried at that cemetery (over 800 men), who lost their lives during Operation Dragoon. Very moving being there. We also attended memorial or commemoration services in La Motte, Trans-Arcs and Le Muy, but for me, Les Arcs was the best.



In the photos you will see other old veterans that were part of the commemoration services.

If they have a bunch of medals pinned to their chest, you can be assured that they are British veterans, who also participated in Operation Dragoon. American vets are fairly reluctant to wear their medals – that is not the case with British or French vets. The more medals the better. One thing, however, that I did appreciate about the British, is that at all the services, the British would send a high-ranking officer to honor the British vets. With the exception of the U.S. Ambassador at the Rhone Valley Cemetery, we sadly never saw any other representatives of the U.S. government – that is a pity (and an embarrassment).



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One funny aside – during the various services, Allan Johnson and Dad had a running battle over the British Anthem “God Save the Queen.” Typically, the vets would salute as each country’s anthem was played. Dad, refused to salute during “God Save the Queen,” saying something to the effect that: “It took us a revolution to get rid of those idiot royals in England, I’m not about to salute when they play their anthem.” Both Allan and Dad would salute during the U.S. and French Anthems – but I have classic memories of Allan frowning at Dad during “Good Save the Queen.” Obviously, once an Irishman, always an Irishman.

Lake Maggiore/Switzerland

Before the start of festivities down in the Riviera (Cannes and Nice), we snuck over to Northern Italy and visited the Lake District that borders the Swiss Alps. About 4 hours from Nice, the Lake District is absolutely gorgeous – Suzie and I had been there a few years earlier and we were dying to get back – particularly being that close. We spent 5 nights there, and also took one afternoon and drove through the Alps into Switzerland.

Cannes

I decided the parade in Cannes deserved its own separate chapter. Unlike the other towns we had visited that had memorial services, Cannes, which is where the famous film festival is held every year, actually has a parade. We almost decided to pass on Cannes, not expecting it to be a big deal. Boy, we’re we wrong. It is an annual parade that involves World War II re-enactors (sort of like our Confederate War re-enactors here, but in France, the re-enactors don American Trooper uniforms – by the way, nobody dresses up a Germans, just the good guys). Very funny to see these Yankee-looking guys wearing army fatigues and finding many did not speak a word of English. The parade involved



approximately 120 vintage vehicles from World War II – jeeps, troop carriers, transport trucks, and several Sherman tanks, plus hundreds of re-enactors. Dad and I rode in the command vehicle. There were several hundred thousand people attending the parade. Anyway, I hope the video gives you a sense of what it was like – the parade route was 2 miles long and lined with people almost the whole way. When people along the parade route were told that there was an actual American paratrooper that was riding in the parade, the American Flags started waving and the people would clap and shout. It was great.

Which leads me to another comment -- We’ve all heard about how unfriendly and arrogant the French are and it is constantly reported by our media the disdain that the French have for Americans. We definitely did not find that to be the case in Provence. The people were warm and friendly and definitely have a great affection for America. For them, the biggest day in the calendar, is the day their town was liberated from the Nazi’s. They have not forgotten what America did for them.

Hill Country

In the backdrop of the French Riviera is the Maritime Alps, which rise up to 10,000 foot elevation or more (actually the Western leg of the Swiss Alps). Dad spent much of his time in this rugged country, routing out the Germans and cutting off their retreat. They marched roughly 200 miles through some unbelievable rough terrain. We spent one day in the company of Alaine Fine, who heads of the Nice



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Historical Society and is also a real World War II History Buff. He took us up into the hills behind Nice and showed us areas in which the 517th had been encamped and fought. We went to a ridge above Sospel (the last city retaken by the 517th), where they had fought a pitched battle with the Germans. It's amazing – you can still see vestiges of the troop's presence, the remains of trenches dug by the regiment, barb wire that the strung, even shell casings and K-ration cans littering the ground. It was very sobering to stand on ground that Dad had fought on 69 years earlier.

We visited the town of Pierre Cava – high up in the Alps where Dad's battalion had been encamped – took the route down to Sospel (the last Provencal town held by the Germans). Visiting gun batteries from the famed Marginout Line. It was really interesting. The next day, we took off on our own and visited some old medieval-walled cities in the Hill Country – Entrevoux was our favorite – finally ending up at the Gorges du Verdun (France's equivalent to Arizona's Grand Canyon).

Nice

At Nice, we attended our last parade – even bigger than the parade in Cannes in terms of vehicles and re-enactors. The World War II Memorial sits out on the end of the Point below Nice's ancient Citadel. One of the photos you will see is of a middle-age Frenchman standing next to Dad who is sitting in the Command Car. He approached us during the parade and explained that his father had been a French Freedom Fighter that had been rescued by the 517th. Apparently, his Dad was wounded and trapped in a case outside a little village in the Hill Country and was surrounded by the Germans. Just when he expected to die, the paratroopers arrived in the town and the Germans fled. Had it not been for the 517th, he said, "I would not here today."



Hoyt Kelley

At the ceremony, there were a huge group of people attending – maybe 500 to 700. Military escorts, military bands, mayors, governors, etc. Dad was the only recipient of the Legion of Honor, which was presented by the Mayor of Nice. The poor guy stood at attention for at least an hour – thankfully in the shade, but still in nice warm Riviera weather. He is a tough old bird, and we are very proud of him.

After Nice, we returned to Paris and frankly crashed. We still attempted to be good tourists, but probably spent most of our time looking for a comfortable place to sit.

It was a great trip. Wish you were there, but hopefully this video will give you a flavor of what we experienced.

-- **Brian Kelley**



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Military Humor

(Note: This was an actual letter sent to a major newspaper)

Dear Editor,

Today is Veterans Day, so I asked someone who had been in the Armed Service what he did in the military. He said, "I was in the Pacific Theater." I asked him if any other GIs were with him. He said "Yes, there were thousands of us in the Pacific Theater." I asked him how much time he spent in the Pacific Theater. He said that he was in the Pacific Theater every day for five months!

I certainly believe that our fighting men need some recreation, but I think that they don't need to be in the movie theater that long. Back in 1944, for example, our boys in uniform were having a tough time on the beaches of Norway - yet there were thousands of GIs off in the movie theater who could have been helping out. And as a Concerned American, I think it is a bit excessive for a serviceman to be at the picture show every day for five months. Of course, all Veterans were not in the Pacific Theater, and we should be proud of those who fought and who made sacrifices.

A Concerned American

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:

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70 Pleasant Street
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