



51st Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2190

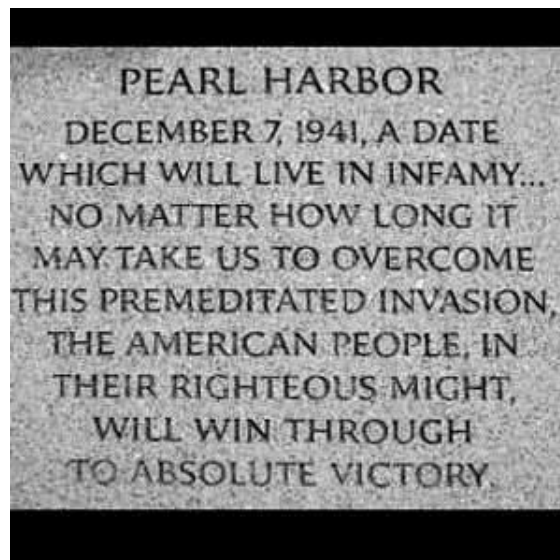
December 7, 2013

*51st Parachute Infantry Regiment
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

December 7, 1941



Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day December 7, 2013





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Only Six Weeks Until the Florida Mini-Reunion

Hey there, Bob -

The great thing about hosting the Kissimmee Mini is hearing from people at unexpected times! Just in the last two days, I've heard from **Leila Webb** - she is two months out from a hip replacement and coming next month along with **Bill Webb** - and **Ponnie Davis**, who is also coming!

Please make your plans now! We always have so much fun! Your friends, old and new, are waiting!

Claire Giblin

Register now!

**Florida mini-reunion
January 18-20, 2014
Kissimmee, FL
[Registration Form](#)**

MailCall News

Thank you so much for printing **John Boom Boom Alicki's** book. On page 10 he talks about greeting the new paratrooper candidates as they arrived at Camp Toccoa. My Dad remembered very well being greeted by Lieutenant **Alicki** and **Lissner**. Here is what my Dad told me that I put into his book, *Letters Home - A Paratrooper's Story*.

Lory Curtis

"Bud Curtis arrived at the Toccoa train station about a month after the 517th was organized. It was around the 15th of April 1943. Bud was assigned to the Second Battalion, "F" Company, and would be one of the first men to receive this new style training devised by Colonel Walsh. Bud remembered very clearly the day he arrived. "It was raining and cold and between 3:00 and 4:00 AM." Army trucks picked up the new trainees and took them to camp. As soon as Bud arrived at Camp Toccoa, he was taken to his barracks where he was assigned a bunk. He was then marched off to "Chow" (breakfast) around 6:00 AM. Then back to the barracks. There the first officer of the 517th he met was Lieutenant John Lissner. He was a rugged man and had a commanding voice. He yelled at the men, saying, "If you think this is bad now it is going to get worse, if you think the Chow was bad, it will get worse. If you think you can make it through this you won't." And he was right. Many of the men dropped out. Bud also remembered Lieutenant John Alicki. man and took pleasure in greeting the new troops with, "All



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John Lissner

right, ya volunteered for parachute duty, now is your chance to prove ya meant it!" One night after the men had gone to bed a man had to go to the Latrine (restroom). Lt Alicki woke up everyone and made all of the men go to the Latrine. For Bud, Lieutenant's Lissner and Alicki's authoritative voices and commands were nerve shattering, but not enough to scare Bud off. He would rise to the challenge. Next he was taken to the medical facility for a physical exam of which he passed. Bud wrote home that only 3 of 20 men were accepted into the paratroopers that day. Then he was taken to the mock-up airplanes, where an old outdated parachute harness was placed on his back.



John Alicki

He climbed the ladder to the mock-up airplane. There he and other candidates were told to hook up their static lines to the steel cable, stand in the door and JUMP! This was the first day. Wasn't there any training required before he had to jump? Why was he forced to do this? It was frightening. How anyone could be required to jump out of a mock up airplane with no training. It seemed crazy. Many of the new paratrooper candidates felt just that way and hesitated at the door and could not jump. They were moved off to the side and disqualified from airborne training, and mustered out to the "straight leg" (ground) infantry. Perhaps Bud saw what was happening to these men, or perhaps his daring life style as a youth gave him the courage to jump right away. He didn't hesitate, but jumped right out and slid down the cable to the ground. Bud remarked in later years that, "The men who were mustered out where put on K.P. (kitchen police) for weeks before they could be processed out to their new units." That one fact kept Bud going he did not want to be put in a disgraced status of being a K.P."

Bud wrote this to his mother about his first mock tower jump:

Letter to the Folks from Bud Curtis, Camp Toccoa, Georgia
April 27, 1943

Dear Folks,

It is Tuesday and have I been busy since I called you up in New Orleans. Right after I talked to you we got a train and were on our way to Georgia. We went through Mississippi right where the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Then we went through Alabama (the train would stop periodically and in the evening Bud would see lighting bugs. He was intrigued by these little bugs that he had never seen before in his life and finally early Monday morning we got to Toccoa (we had to travel on a passenger train because we missed the troop train in New Orleans by about 15 minutes so I didn't have any sleep from Friday until last night. Now here is the joke. As soon as we got to camp here we ate and then started the day by taking a physical exam. Well believe it or not I passed everything, I don't see how, but I did. If you could have seen how many flunked out you wouldn't believe it. The average was about 3 out of 20 that made it. Oh the two fellows I've been palling around with since Fort McArthur, made it too.

Well then we went out to a thing called a mock tower. It is about 35 feet in the air and is built like a middle section of an airplane, with a door on one side. Well you put on a parachute harness (without the parachute) and then you go up the ladder to the door where an instructor hooks you onto a pulley attached to a long cable. Then you get in the position at the door. There is a certain way you have to jump out; you don't just dive; there is a real technique to it. Well anyway you jump and count 1000, 2000, 3,000 as loud as you can and as you holler 3,000 you are at the end of your line and with a big jerk you are stopped. Then the pulley slides about 50 yards in a down ward sloop to where you can touch the ground.

Boy is it fun!



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In speaking with **Hoyt Kelley** of HQ, 1st Battalion, he said when he went to the jump towers the men were standing in line in the tower. Hoyt said a Sergeant would hit you in the leg as the signal to jump. One soldier standing by the door who DID NOT have a harness on was accidentally bumped in the leg. He immediately jumped out the door without a harness on. Hoyt said he broke both of his legs. Hoyt said the Sergeant said, "Don't worry men that only happens a couple of times a day."

Lory Curtis, son of **Bud Curtis**, HQ, 1st Bn.

In copying Lory's story above, we had some discussion about the picture of John Lissner, not being sure if we had the correct person in a photo of John. In doing the research, I also found this note about Lissner from a MailCall in 2009. – BB

Ben, I was looking through my Father's papers last night and came across the attached picture of **Col. John Lissner**. Looking at this picture of John, I recalled his funeral where his son gave a most eloquent review of his life. John was an exceptional man. During the war he lead Co. F of the 2nd Battalion where he was awarded the Silver Star for action at Col de Bras and the Croix de Guerre for action at Draguignan. He was a Gold Glove boxer, played Football and Baseball for Iona and, as I recall the story, was delivered to the Army Induction Center by two policemen who sported bloody and broken noses! In many respects John was the heart and soul of the 517th because he embodied the many traits the troopers all shared in common. I hope John, Mary Ann and Brian still check in on Mail Call as I wanted to share this photograph with them.

– **Wayne Cross**





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I could be wrong, but here are a couple pictures of Lissner:



Lissner is in the middle

http://www.517prct.org/photos/lissner_renton.htm



Tom Cross and John Lissner

<http://www.517prct.org/photos/coleman.htm>

Therefore, in the HQ/2 officers picture, John would be the third from the left:



http://www.517prct.org/photos/toccoa_1943_officers_2nd_btn/camp_toccoa_2nd_btn_officers_1943.htm

Bob Barrett

I'm quite sure the guy in the jeep is not **John Lissner**. I am going some by the rank; this man is either a Lt. Col. or a major. John was a Lt. until promoted by **Gen. Fredrick** in S. France where he was promoted to captain.. The picture with the man with **Tom Cross** is questionable as it looks to me his rank is designated by a leaf instead of the captain's railroad tracks; this picture was probably taken in Nice after our 94 days of combat in S. France was over. John was a captain at that time, so the leaf does not look right. I tried to figure it to be captain's insignia, but couldn't make it. Maybe you could blow it up to see is it captain's insignia, but I could not get there. In the Bn. picture with **Dick Seitz**, I am sure Johnie is the third from the left; the other two are questionable..

Howard Hensleigh



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Despite Howard's technical analysis of rank versus timing, I'm sticking with my analysis that it is **John Lissner** in each of the 4 photos above. They were all identified as Lissner by the person who sent in the photos, and they sure look like the same person to me.

Randolph Coleman identified the front jeep passenger as "**Capt. John Lissner** (F Co.), Oct 1944, and written on the back of the picture is: "Oct 1944 Nice, France; "Do not judge the book by its' cover" - John J. Lissner"

Coleman also identified **Major Thomas R. Cross**, 2nd Bn Exec., and **1st Lt. John Lissner**, F Co. Nov 12. 1944

And the officer's pictures are identified on the back of that picture.

So the ranks could be off, but I still think that's Lissner in each.

Bob Barrett

Greetings Bob, hope all is well and you and yours had a great Thanksgiving. Here are a few photos from the DC reunion for the gang. Also, I haven't received mailcall for a couple weeks. I never had any trouble before so things should be OK on my end. I still forward mailcall to Babbie until she has one of her grandkids trouble shoot her problem.

All the best, **Paul Abbene**





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DC Reunion 2007

Hi Bob...Happy Thanksgiving to you & yours. Personally I have the flu along with my roommate...so we have kept closely home & in bed, waiting for it to wear off!

My question is this: Is **Dallas Long** still alive? I read the little blurb about him in Mail Call 2189 & couldn't remember. My husband, David Vickers, & I visited them up in GA some years ago when we were RV'ing around the US & enjoyed it very much. They were very gracious hosts who took us around GA, especially to FDR's Little White House which was a thrill for me.

Thanks so much,

Lyn Vickers (widow, G. Company)

THE WIDDAH LYN, THE GOOD DR RUTH, & the somewhat finicky ABBE VON DACHSHUND

Thanks so much for verifying the Mohawk haircuts with that great pictures. I too thought it came from Jake McNeise of the 101st Airborne who grew up in Oklahoma near the Indian tribes there. In meeting Mr. McNeise in Toccoa in 2003 (he is the only man I know that had 4 combat stars in his jump wings), he told me he decided to shave his head into a Mohawk to intimidate the enemy. Many other men of his company did the same thing. It must of caught on with paratroopers. In speaking with **Gene Frice**, he told me that men of the 517th did it also. Thanks again for printing the picture to prove it was done in the 517th.

Lory Curtis



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Bob - I am sorry I haven't gotten back to you yet. Your information has been very helpful in my research. I owe you and the rest of the remaining 517 community a more thorough update.

As I mentioned in my guestbook signing, my name is John Mullen. I am currently in Chicago IL working at an advertising agency. My mother is Deborah Mullen, the youngest daughter of **Dallas and Jerrie Long**. They are both still alive, although are not very mobile and spend much of their days in bed at their home in Atlanta, GA, with a live-in nurse. I have a younger brother and a younger sister. We make it down to Atlanta to see Nana and Papa (Jerrie and Dallas) maybe three times a year, or more. They are not really active on email anymore, which might explain their lack of correspondence on Mail Call.

If anyone would like to get in touch with them I would be happy to facilitate that. I see them next in December, right after Christmas, but I call them more frequently. If there are any troopers out there still alive I could help set up a skype call, on our end, when I am there in December.

If you don't mind, I would like to be added to the mail call and again, would be more than happy to pass along any correspondence, or provide any updates since Nana and Papa are not as active on email.

I'll be in touch. Thank you for all your help so far.

John Mullen

Subject: Re: George Sanford

Yes my Father would like to continue reading the newsletter. He has moved to a nursing home in Minneapolis. He is in fairly good health for his 95 years, but it is getting harder for him to do his daily chores alone in his own home.

I am his son and I am taking care of his paper work. I managed to change the address for most of his mail, but have missed a couple. The new address is below. I believe that some membership dues are also scheduled or even late. Can you tell me the address for the check and also the amount? Please use e-mail as the means of communications as I do not live close by.

Thanks for finding me and sorry for the inconvenience.

St. Anthony Health Center
c/o George Sanford
3700 Foss Road
St. Anthony, MN 55421

John Sanford

Re: Sgt Joe Rosmus (HQ/2)

I also found his name listed on the Christmas roster. He will not be listed on the casualty reports. He was injured at Auf der Haupt Woods (not sure of spelling), but made it home and raised a family, suffering a stroke in 1982. I was hoping to make contact with some of the men he served with that remember him and could share some stories. I left the journal at work today, but do recall that he mentioned meeting several royal people. I will share that information tomorrow.

Jeanette Rosmus Shable



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I received this message about the number of Airborne units the Army has. The article reflects that Airborne units are being reduced do to lack of funding in the Government. This concerns me and makes me feel we are putting our country at risk by reducing these elite soldiers from the sky.

Lory Curtis

Army Dropping Number of Paratrooper Units

Dec 01, 2013

Associated Press| by Brett Barrouquere



FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. -- The legendary Pathfinders have taken their final jump and the Red Devils aren't too far behind.

The two paratrooper units -- formally known as the 5th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division and the 508th Infantry Regiment -- are closing out long histories as a result of the U.S. Army's reconfiguration and budget cutting. Among the changes being made is a reduction in the number of parachute positions across the service.

"You have to make the best use of resources across the Army to make sure we're using tax dollars as best we can," said Jim Hinnant, a former 1st lieutenant and

paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg and spokesman for U.S. Army Forces Command.

The military is capping parachute positions at 49,000 as part of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, a plan detailing the development of military forces through 2020. The plan calls for some units, including paratrooper units, to change their focus.

Lt. Col. Don Peters, the team chief for Operations, Intelligence and Logistics with Army Public Affairs, told The Associated Press the reductions are being made in part because of reduced budgets and to reach the mandated maximum number of paratrooper slots 49,000. Peters said 24 units accounting for 2,600 soldiers across the country were removed from jump status. That includes 12 units with the 18th Airborne Corps and the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, N.C., and the Company F (Pathfinder), 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Aviation Brigade at Fort Campbell, Ky.

"However, paratroopers continue to train and maintain readiness to execute airborne operations should a mission arise, and the impact on the reduction of paid parachute positions will not degrade the capability of the Army," Peters said.

The Army kept three standing pathfinder companies: Company F (Pathfinder), 5th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault); and Company F (Pathfinder), 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Aviation Brigade, both at Fort Campbell, Ky.; and Company F (Pathfinder), 2nd Battalion, 82d Aviation Regiment at Fort Bragg, N.C.

The Pathfinder units are dropped into place in order to set up and operate drop zones, pickup zones, and helicopter landing sites for airborne operations, air resupply operations, or other air operations in support of the ground unit commander. They also handle rescues of downed pilots and helicopters.

In the case of the Pathfinders at Fort Campbell and the Red Devils at Fort Bragg, their units trace their history back to being among the first to drop into Nazi-occupied France at Normandy on D-Day during World War II, helping



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set the stage for the allied siege that eventually drove the Germans out of the country.

Current soldiers are aware of that history and what the loss of jump status means to their roles in the Army's future. Some are dismayed by the changes, but generally believe the units can still carry out the missions.

"History is history. Being on jump status is history. It's out of my control," said Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Beville of Cheyenne, Wyo., a member of the Pathfinders. "We'll continue to fine-tune what we do."

Staff Sgt. Ryan Savage, an Elk Rapids, Mich., native and Pathfinder member, said soldiers prepare for every scenario imaginable and while no longer jumping in ahead of ground troops, they'll be ready to tackle their duties without helicopters.

"It's a real fancy and pretty way to do it," Savage said of jumping from helicopters. "But, for every soldier, you still have to train and prepare to do the same mission."

The cutbacks have some airborne alumni worried about the future of paratroopers at various posts. Kenneth "Rock" Merritt, a retired Command Master Sergeant Major with the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N.C., said the military's focus on special forces could be detrimental to units such as the one he served with until retiring in 1977.

"My big concern is ... I just wonder how long they're going to keep the 82nd Airborne on airborne status," Merritt said. "I'm wondering if some day, somebody's going to get the bright idea and the 82nd Airborne is going to go back to the 82nd Infantry."

Army officials haven't publicly spoken about pulling units from airborne status. Current soldiers hope one day they'll be allowed to return to making air jumps.

"We're ready for anything," said Sgt. Shea Goodnature of Clarksville, Tenn.

I received this article about the government downsizing our military. You will see many think we are putting our country at risk and weakening our ability to defend this great nation. I encourage everyone to contact their representatives/senators and ask them to support a strong military.

Lory Curtis

Have Budget Cuts Killed Readiness?

Nov 29, 2013

Associated Press| by Pauline Jelinek



WASHINGTON - Warnings from defense officials and some experts are mounting and becoming more dire: The nation's military is being hobbled by budget cuts.

"You'd better hope we never have a war again," the House Armed Services Committee chairman, Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., said of the decline in what the military calls its readiness.

So should Americans be worried?

A look at what the Pentagon means by "ready" and where things stand:



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READINESS

It's the armed forces' ability to get the job done, and it's based on the number of people, the equipment and the training needed to carry out assigned missions.

As an example, an Army brigade has a list of the things it would have to do in a full-level war, called its "mission essential task list." And a 4,500-member brigade is deemed ready when it has the right supplies and equipment, is in good working condition and pretty much has that full number of people, well-trained in their various specialties, to conduct its tasks.

Military units are rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the best, or fully ready. Typically, a unit freshly returned from a tour of duty would carry a 5 rating, since it's missing people because of casualties or because some are moving on to other jobs, and it's missing equipment that was battered or worn in the field and is in for repairs or must be replaced. A unit can be sent out in less-than-full ready status, but officials warn that would mean it could do less, take longer to do it, suffer more casualties, or all of the above.

THE U.S. MILITARY RATING NOW

Detailed information on that is classified secret so adversaries won't know exactly what they're up against. But because of ongoing budget fights, officials in recent weeks have given broad examples of readiness lapses in hopes of convincing Congress and the American people that cutbacks, particularly in training budgets, are creating a precarious situation.

For instance, an Air Force official says they've grounded 13 combat fighter/bomber squadrons or about a third of those active duty units. And the Army says only two of its 35 active-duty brigades are fully ready for major combat operations. The service typically wants to have about 12 ready at any given time so a third of the total can be deployed, a third is prepared for deployment and a third is working to get ready.

Analysts say a decade of massive spending increases have built a strong force superior to anything else out there. "We could certainly fight another war on the order of the first Gulf War (1991) without any problems; the Air Force could do air strikes in Syria," said Barry M. Blechman of the Stimson Center think tank. "We wouldn't want to get involved in another protracted war (like Iraq and Afghanistan), but in terms of the types of military operations we typically get involved in, we're prepared for that."

THE PROBLEM

Even those who believe the situation is not yet dire say that eventually these budget cuts will catch up with the force. Some analysts say another two or three years of training cuts, for instance, will leave the U.S. military seriously unprepared.

As an added wrinkle, the cuts come just as the military had planned a significant re-training of the force. That is, the bulk of U.S. forces were organized, trained and equipped over the past 12 years for counterinsurgency wars like Iraq and Afghanistan and now need to sharpen skills needed to counter other kinds of threats in other parts of the world.

For instance, much of the Air Force focus in recent years has been on providing close air support for the ground troops countering insurgents and not on skills that would be needed if the U.S. were involved in a conflict with a foreign government - skills like air-to-air combat and air interdiction.

A SOLUTION

There's broad agreement in Washington that budget cuts should be tailored rather than done by the automatic, across-the-board cuts known as sequestration over the next decade. There is not agreement on politically sensitive potential savings from closing and consolidating some military bases, holding the line on troop compensation that has grown over the war years or drawing down more steeply from the wartime size of the force.

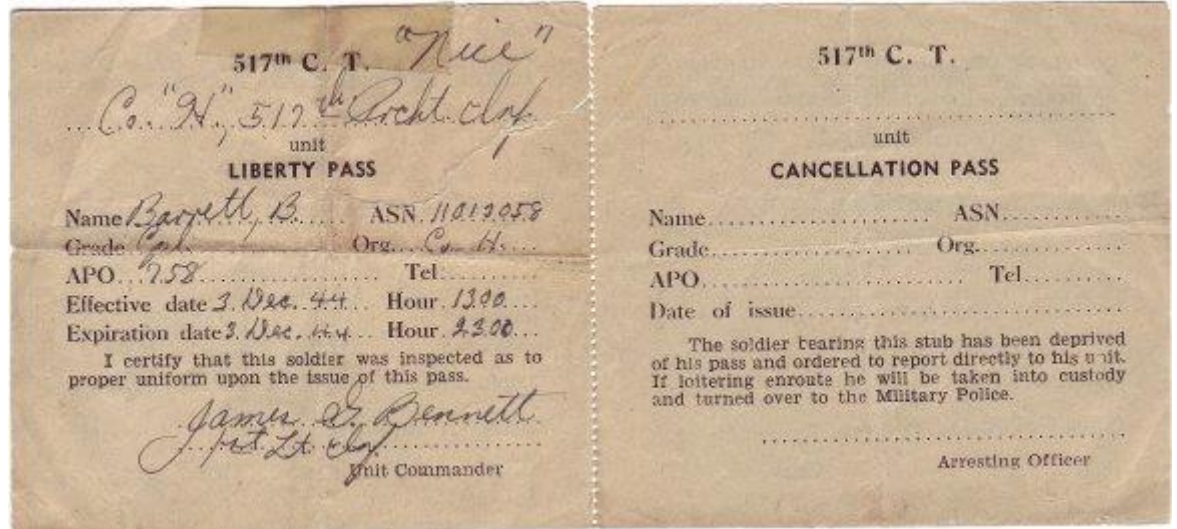
Finding replacement cuts for sequestration is the priority of budget talks led by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and his Senate counterpart, Patty Murray, D-Wash., who are facing an informal Dec. 13 deadline to reach a deal. Any agreement that they negotiate could still be rejected by their colleagues.



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This Week in 517th History

Ben Barrett was on a liberty pass into Nice on December 3, 1944, just before the 517th was moved to Soissons.



From Paratroopers' Odyssey:

On December 1st the 517th was assigned to XVIII Airborne Corps and directed to proceed to Soissons in Northern France.

The movement of the RCT for five hundred miles up the length of France resembled a migration of hoboes in the Great Depression. While vehicles of all units went overland, the rank-and-file infantry, artillery, and engineers moved by 40-and-8 boxcars, which indeed bore the legend "40 hommes -- 8 chevaux". Three trains had been provided, roughly one for each battalion with attachments. Each platoon-sized group of 35 or so was assigned a boxcar, a bale of hay, and several cases of C or 10-in-one rations. Sleeping was done anywhere room could be found; some ingenious souls made hammocks by slinging ponchos and shelter halves from the ceiling. Rations were heated on Coleman burners, but washing and shaving were pretty much out of the question.

The three trains were loaded at Antibes on December 6th and for the next few days rolled across France on a schedule determined by the French railway workers' union. Each crew could only work within its own locality, and every fifty miles the trains stopped to change crews. With no scheduled stops and no toilets on board, the question of how the men were to relieve themselves became a matter of urgency. Desperate men began jumping off whenever the train slowed down; often it started up again without stopping, leaving them behind. Men on the first two trains could wait for the next to come along, but those on the third were stuck in the middle of France. A few decided "to hell with it" and enjoyed a self-granted pass.

The first two trains arrived in Soissons on December 9th and the third came in next day. The first two had suffered a noticeable loss of passengers, but the third was so overcrowded that men were hanging on between cars. With the help of the 508th Parachute Infantry, the advance detail had prepared the Caserne Gouraud for occupancy and the transition from train to caserne was relatively painless.

The 517th RCT had now accrued over a hundred days of combat experience. The courage and stamina of its members had been proven beyond doubt. Mistakes had been made, but a lot of things had also been done right.

However, in only a few instances had the Combat Team been opposed by an enemy of equal determination. In the coming winter months the outfit was to undergo its most severe test as the Germans threw in their last reserves in a desperate gamble...



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Administrivia

- 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.
- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know.
- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>
- 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 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



Website
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2013 Roster (updated!)
Thunderbolt (Fall 2013)

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