



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

### MailCall No. 2201

February 16, 2014

*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](http://www.517prct.org)  
[MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)  
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### *This Week in 517<sup>th</sup> History - 1945*

From *Paratroopers' Odyssey*:

On February 9th the tired and depressed troopers of the 517th marched back to Kleinhau and boarded trucks to move to the railhead at Aachen. Transportation was short and the trucks were overcrowded, but there were no complaints. They would gladly have traveled by whatever means were required to get out of the Dante's Inferno of Bergstein. At Aachen they climbed aboard the now-familiar 40-and-8's. Exhausted physically and emotionally, many slept for most of the two days required to reach Laon in France.

The Caserne Foch at Laon became home for the next week. The Caserne was still in the shabby state of disrepair in which the Germans had left it, but it was paradise after Belgian snows and German mud. Engineer details got the showers working. With rest, hot water, and regular meals the troopers began to recover their youthful vitality.

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On February 15th Colonel Graves was notified by Headquarters XVIII Airborne Corps that the RCT was assigned to the newly-arrived 13th Airborne Division, and was to proceed to Joigny, 70 miles southeast of Paris.

The 13th Airborne, commanded by Major General Eldredge G. Chapman, had been activated in August 1943. It consisted of the 515th Parachute Infantry Regiment, two glider Infantry regiments, and the normal complement of artillery, engineers, and supporting services. The Division had arrived in France in early February and was occupying Sens, Auxerre, and a few other small towns in the locality.

As the 517th closed in at Joigny on February 21st the Regimental Combat Team was dissolved. The 460th became a part of 13th Airborne Division Artillery, and the 596th Engineers were merged with Company B, 129th Airborne Engineer Battalion. The comradeship that had developed in Italy, France, Belgium, and Germany remained, but the



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artillery and engineers were no longer under Colonel Graves' direct command. All were directly responsible to General Chapman and Division Headquarters.

The area towns were pleasant and had been untouched by either of the two World Wars. At Joigny the troops moved into the local caserne and the officers were billeted in a small hotel. Training resumed slowly. New clothing and equipment was issued; old-timers returned from hospitals and replacements were assigned. Within three or four weeks after arrival in Joigny the 517th while far from eager was ready to go again if required.

On March 12th the 13th Airborne was assigned by First Allied Airborne Army to take part in Operation VARSITY -- Montgomery's crossing of the Rhine. Orders were passed down the chain of command and preparations for movement to departure airfields began.

C Company had been planning a Company party for several weeks, long before receiving the VARSITY alert. The day after the planned party all companies were to begin loading boxcars. The question of whether or not to go ahead with the party was put up to the NCO's and troops.

The answer was a resounding yes, so the Company loaded up in Service Company trucks and rolled into Montargis. It turned out to be a dull affair. The advance man had overlooked inviting the local mademoiselles. However, wine and cognac flowed liberally and later that night a group took over the local "maison de joie". At mid- night the whistle was blown and the outfit returned to Joigny. Most men barely got in- to their bunks when they were roused out to load boxcars. The hung over Company labored through the day, only to be told when almost finished that they could start unloading. The 13th's participation in VARSITY had been called off. It was the first of several more aborted missions.

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The 13th Airborne Division staff demanded administrative perfection. This was bad news for the 517th. Its administration and record keeping had never been much to begin with, and had gone steadily downhill since Italy. The 13th could not understand how property could be written off as "expended in combat" without supporting paperwork. It was no use trying to explain that some things had simply disappeared into the night sky over France, or that machine guns had been left leaning against a tree in Belgium because there was no longer anyone to carry them.

The 13th was startled to find that 517th Battalion S-3 Journals were non-existent. The 517th was equally startled to find that anyone could think that keeping Journals at Battalion level was even conceivable under the conditions in which it had fought. Captain John Dugan and others scurried around for weeks inventing "records".\*

### *MailCall News*

Does anyone know where I can get a flag of the 517th with the 460th & 596th like our Thunderbolt has on the front of it? I meet with veterans of ww11 at Conroe, TX. They have flags of every branch of service except an airborne unit on all the walls. I want our flag to be displayed along with them.

**Mel Trenary**



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My Father [Maj. **Tom Cross**] greatly appreciates the Birthday wishes from our wonderful friends associated with the Airborne Museum in France. For, the record, Dad was the XO of the 2nd Battalion which was commanded by **General Seitz**. Towards the tail end of the War, Dad did take command of the 3rd Battalion.

During the drop into S. France Dad did break his leg and yet still organized elements of the 2nd Battalion and headed them towards their objective before meeting up with **General Seitz**, who took command of this 2nd Battalion element and put them on their objective. On the way to the objective, Dad described to me how he would start at the head of the column and slowly have to drop back due to his injury. The column was under harassing MG fire during much of this movement, which Dad indicated provided him ample motivation to keep moving on towards the objective. He made it as far as he could before not being able to get up after a break along the way. Col. Graves eventually had Dad picked up in the field and taken to the Regimental HQ at Chateau St. Rosseline. Though ordered to stand down and seek medical attention, Dad continued to serve at the HQ and for a time was in command of the Regimental HQ element as **Col. Graves** and members of his staff left the Chateau to better assess the tactical situation.

Dad was one of many 517th troopers who were nominated for awards for their combat actions only to have the 13th Airborne downgrade the nominations. Dad was nominated for the Silver Star for his action during the Drop in Southern France but the nomination was downgraded to a Bronze Star with V clasp. This was par for the course for many members of the 517th and a source of irritation to many as the 517th was attached to the 13th Airborne Division who had not seen combat action.

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to our many friends like **Jean Michel Soldi** and **Gilles Guignard** for helping to keep these memories of shared sacrifice alive and remembered.

Best wishes,

**Wayne Cross**

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Bob: You are the master of the understatement ["it's a big MailCall."] -- this was a Mail Call on steroids! Soaked up everything. It was excellent. A special thank you for the birthday greeting to **Tom Cross**. A great man and Dad's best friend (and best man). Kent's copy of his uncle's description of a jump was fascinating.

Thank you.

**Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

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[Pat: Yes, the MailCalls have been getting larger recently. But I am just the scribe – I only include what people send to me that I think might be of interest, and I do minimal editing. It still surprises me how much there is to talk about with the 517<sup>th</sup> family. I thought by now, 70 years later, that things would slow down. But history keeps surfacing, the 517<sup>th</sup> family does not forget their legacy, and I for one love to hear from everyone. It helps me keep Ben and all his friends alive. Keep your stories coming in.  
– Bob B.]



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**Kathy McIntosh** responded to the picture of **Mike Wells** and I in MailCall 2199, when we were out to dinner. She noticed what she called 517th jackets, they were actually sweatshirts. Mike was wearing a black pullover hoodie and I was wearing a zipper hoodie with 517th Logos on them. If Kathy or anyone else would like a sweatshirt or even a jacket I can have them made with the 517th logo. Have them email me at [lcurtis@utah.gov](mailto:lcurtis@utah.gov) if they would like to order some 517th clothing.



Lory Curtis

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RE: The Iowa couple in Kissimmee

Hopefully Claire or Helen will remember the Iowa people's names for Howard H. I can't remember yesterday.

The story! The Iowa couple have been renting a room in our Reunion Hotel for 30 days for a number of years. This year the Hotel screwed up and gave them the room next to the Hospitably Suite. After some negotiations they were kind enough to move to another room so we could have the room that always goes next to the Hospitably Suite. They were a wonderful couple that fit into our gang like they belonged, and they did.

The picture shows **Leo Dean** (155 Jumps), **Phil McSpadden** and me sitting in the chair. I won the chair because at 90 years old I was the oldest one in the picture. Of course our Iowa friends joined us for the picture. They were a delightful couple and promised to join us for the Mini next year.



Claire with your memory I just know you can remember their names,

**Darrell Egner**

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Yup. Dick and Jane. Literally. Dick and Jane. Fellow hotel guests. She is a retired IL state trooper. They enjoyed visiting with the troopers.

**Claire Giblin**



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Forty-Four Memories recently posted a few photos of the August 2013 Operation Dragoon ceremonies:  
<http://forty-four-memories.fr/69eme-anniversaire-du-debarquement-de-provence-du-15-au-17-aout-2013/>



**Art Helmers** (602nd Glider Field Artillery Battalion)  
with **Eric Renoux**



**Art Hellmers, K. Allan Johnson, ?,?, Leo Dean, Hoyt Kelley**

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Love the MailCall's. My Dad, **John Stonis** (company's A and D-I think) will celebrate his **90th birthday** on Feb. 21st.

Thanks,

**Juliana Stonis**

[Juliana, Most of the John Stonis' pictures are with men of H Company. -- BB]

**John Stonis, 1944 -->**





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Hello, Mail Call -

**Allan Johnson's** flight is booked - arriving Palm Springs on Monday, March 10th and leaving Friday, March 14.

What are you waiting for? Your friends will be there - new and old.

Bob, do we have a current head count? It looks like some new faces might be there, including **Bruce Broudy** and others.

It's been 70 years. Come celebrate with family!

Wish I could be there - hugs to all -

Looking ahead, I know that friend and fellow paratrooper **Dick Field** of the 551 is headed to Belgium shortly for Bulge memorials - is anyone from the 517 going?

And start planning now for the south of France in August. Figure on arriving say 9 or 10 August; it looks like things will start in Sospel and move over to Var/La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguinan/Le Muy for 15 and 16. We do not have any formal notices of events yet, but that is usually the last of the details to fall into place. For those that are thinking about joining us - start here:

1. Do you have a current, valid passport? Please check. Find it and look at the expiration date. Renew if necessary; sometimes you need to get a new one even if the old one is good for another 6 months.
2. Flights - Nice is the most convenient airport. Dates: arrive by about 9 August for Sospel events; about 13 August for La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguinan. Depart: not before 18 or 19 August. Adjust this as you wish for you and your family. You might want a side trip - it's a long trip not to!
3. Hotels - usually our friends in Sospel (**Patou and Roland Orengo**) and in the Var (**Jean Michel Soldi** and **Eric Renoux**) make the hotel arrangements for us after we ask them; the websites often don't work internationally. But maybe you'd like to rent a home or stay elsewhere. Whatever - but make sure that someone is making the arrangements.
4. Rent a car - or make sure you've got a seat in someone else's car.

Please let's start compiling a Jump List in Mail Call. I know that the following are planning on going:

- **Leo Dean**
- Team Frice, including **Gene Frice and Karen** at a minimum
- **Allan Johnson** plus family
- **Phil McSpadden** and I think his daughter Maya
- **Hoyt Kelley** might return as well; I hope he does.

Who else?

Airborne all the way –

**Claire Giblin**



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Hi Guys,

I haven't talked to you for quite some time. Hope all is well. Are either of you going to Palm Springs? I found a way to make it out there for a couple of days. The 10th and 11th to be exact. Where is everyone staying? I am still trying to persuade Earl to come along but I don't think he can. He gets tired when I take him out to lunch so a four hour drive may be too much for him. I am looking forward to meeting and talking to his buddies. Hope to see you there.

Regards,

**Jim Kraus**

Submitted by	Comments:
Name: <b>Lamar Davis</b> From: Toccoa, GA E-mail: <a href="mailto:charlesd01@windstream.net">charlesd01@windstream.net</a>	I am trying to find out about my good friend, <b>Danny Coleman</b> who lived in Charleston, SC. It has been a year or more since I have heard from Danny and I wonder about his present status if anyone can tell me. I have forgotten what company Danny was in but he always enjoyed coming back to Toccoa for a visit.
Added: February 15, 2014	

Hi Bob, I organized and compiled my father's pictures from the War and sent them on to **Jean Michel Soldi** and also to **Jean-Loup Gassend** who is also doing a book on the 517th. I thought you might like to have them. I have noted by number, all the info that he wrote on the back of his photos. He didn't write too much but my mother said that the pictures were taken by men in his unit.

We're hoping to make it to LeMuy for the 70th reunion. Please keep us updated on plans. Airborne all the way,

**Shelly Caulfield Azeff**

This set of photos includes lots of photos of Operation Dragoon in August 1944, including pictures of German prisoners, gliders overhead, FFI members, and the liberation parade.





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See all the photos at: [http://517prct.org/photos/warren\\_caulfield\\_2/warren\\_caulfield2.htm](http://517prct.org/photos/warren_caulfield_2/warren_caulfield2.htm)

### *West Coast Mini-Reunion*

Palm Springs, CA mini-reunion

**March 10-14, 2014**

[Registration Form](#)

Please Register by March 1





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

### *Current Association Members: Remember to Vote*

All 517<sup>th</sup> Association active members (all troopers who served with the 517<sup>th</sup>/460<sup>th</sup>/596<sup>th</sup> in WWII):

Please remember to vote regarding the future of the Association, using either the form attached to the end of this MailCall (Page 10) or print out and use this one-page version:

[http://www.517prct.org/association\\_business/Solicitation for Votes of Active Members of the 517th PRCT.pdf](http://www.517prct.org/association_business/Solicitation_for_Votes_of_Active_Members_of_the_517th_PRCT.pdf)

Or you may also vote by sending an email to MailCall by clicking one of the links below. Please read the voting documentation carefully. Please include your name and unit in the email.

**[I vote YES: Merge the 517th Association and Auxiliary](#)**

**[I vote NO: Do Not Merge the 517th Association and Auxiliary](#)**

### *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, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: [MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our new Association Treasurer: Identify the purpose of any donation (Annual 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



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

## Vote to Merge the 517<sup>th</sup> Association and Auxiliary

### Solicitation for Votes of Active Members of the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association, Inc. to Merge the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Association and Auxiliary

**Background:** At the annual 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Reunion in Atlanta in 2011, the members voted to merge the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Association (troopers and veterans only) with the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Auxiliary Association (family). The purpose of this action was to ensure that the next generation is included and can officially participate in various committees and be voted in as officers of the Association, in order for the heritage of the 517<sup>th</sup> to continue even after all the troopers are gone. This merger was approved on the condition that it did not affect our ability to deduct donations to the Association on our individual income tax returns.

It turns out that the IRS does require us to lose the ability to deduct donations once we admit non-veterans; therefore that merger never took place. The officers and board members of the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Association now recommend that we remove the condition enabling a merger of the two memberships.

Current members of the 517<sup>th</sup> Association are asked to complete this form and send it to us.

**Note: In order for your vote to be effective, it must be received no later than April 1, 2014. The vote and merger will take effect on May 30, 2014.**

Please vote by placing an "X" in one of the boxes below:

I vote that 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Auxiliary members will become Active Members of the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Association, Inc. with all the attending obligations and privileges, including the right to vote and hold office. This will allow wives, widows, descendants, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews of Members to continue to fulfill the objectives of the Association. Donors to the Association will be able to deduct their donations on their 2014 tax returns if the donation is made on or before May 30, 2014, but will not be able to do so thereafter.

I vote that the 517 PRCT Association and Auxiliary group memberships will NOT merge and donations to the Association will continue to be deductible after May 30, 2014.

Note: Only current Active Members of the 517<sup>th</sup> PRCT Association (i.e. troopers who served with the 517/596/460 in WW2) are eligible to vote on this matter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Which Battalion, Battery or Company were you with during WW2? \_\_\_\_\_

Please send you completed form to: 517<sup>th</sup> Association  
c/o Bob Barrett  
27 Fuller Meadow Road  
North Andover, MA 01845

You can also vote by sending an email to MailCall by clicking one of the links below. Please include your name and unit.

[I vote YES: Merge the 517th Association and Auxiliary](#)

[I vote NO: Do Not Merge the 517th Association and Auxiliary](#)