



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## MailCall No. 2207

March 30, 2014

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

Website  
Send MailCall news to  
MailCall Archives  
2013 Roster (updated!)  
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

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## *In Memorium*

This is to inform you that **Charles Edward Cook** passed away March 8th, 2014.

He was in the 460<sup>th</sup> - A Battery. The last reunion he attended was at Salt Lake City - since then Alzheimer's controlled his life. His memorial will be March 28th at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen, TX.

RE: **Bob Newberry**, E Company

I have sent a brief obit in a separate e mail. I have all Daddy's old military papers and could probably have included greater detail, but it is still hard for me to go through them.

I will always remember Daddy in his uniform as he looked when I was a little girl, though he commented from time to time that he'd been retired from the Army longer than he was on active duty.

In his later years Daddy enjoyed golf, gardening, and wood working - until macular degeneration greatly limited his activities towards the end of his life.

He died just 28 days after Mama passed away.  
I will miss them always.

Best wishes to all the 517th,

**Rhonda Newberry Hildreth**



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## MailCall News

RE: **Bob Newberry**, E Company  
Good Evening,

I just read the Mail Call for 23Mar2014. On page 7 is a photo on the left that Richard has. According to the Mail Call the photo is/was from **John Harte**. When John Harte moved from his home, we lost track of him. Never received an address or phone number for him. Do you have any recent information on him? Since the picture came from another source, perhaps the photo was not recently sent from John.

**Katherine Wheeler**

B Battery, 460<sup>th</sup> PFAB -->



Hi Kathryn,

No, it is not a new photo from John Harte. It was just posted recently on <https://www.facebook.com/FirstAirborneTaskForceTheForgottenFront> next to a current picture of the same area. But the Harte photo is the same one that was posted on our website in 2007, and these were all sent in by his son, Don Harte.

[http://www.517prct.org/photos/john\\_harte/john\\_harte\\_460\\_b\\_company1.htm](http://www.517prct.org/photos/john_harte/john_harte_460_b_company1.htm)

Don Harte does receive MailCall and I will copy him on this email.

I also checked the Thunderbolt roster, and John Harte did receive it in the past, but has dropped off the roster for some reason.

Don, Is your Dad still alive? If so, should he be receiving the Thunderbolt?



John Harte, 460<sup>th</sup> PFAB

Bob Barrett

Hello Katherine, Bob

Yes, Dad and Mom are still with us and living in Pasadena, Ca. He has gotten Thunderbolt in the past and would probably appreciate receiving it again. I'll get the address and forward it to you. Thanks for all you're doing for this group.

**Don Harte**



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Dear friends,

last week, I was with my friend Rémi in the "Dead Man's Ridge Walk" a march honoring the paratroopers & gliders of the 17th Airborne Division. Every year since 5 years, the association "101st Airborne Belgium Friendly" organize this march and and invites a veteran of the division. This year's guest of honor was John Leather who was part of the Fox Company, 194th Glider Infantry Regiment. During our stay we took the opportunity to visit areas where the paratroopers of the 517th, 551st and 509th Parachute Infantry fought them. Here are some pictures

Kind regards,

Loïc

## 517<sup>th</sup> memorials in Manhay and Wanne (Trois Ponts).



It looks like Loïc also found the plaques for the 596<sup>th</sup> and 517th in Stavelot:





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Another very interesting Mail Call. Thanks -- you are amazing where you find some of the WWII bits of history -- the bombing of Oregon, for example. The picture of the 20 Anniversary of MGM was also amazing (was MGM ever that young!).

What a list of stars who served in our armed forces. Please remember Winston Churchill's comment that "you can trust the Yanks to get it right, after they have tried everything else." My prayer is that the pendulum will start to swing back to focusing on serving others before self. My job is to have that focus and trust that the Holy Spirit will enflame others as well, keeping in mind that everything is on God's time not mine. Have seen a lot of young folks who do care about serving others before self, dedicating themselves to building up communities in the spirit of "Democracy in America" by Alex de Tocqueville.

**Pat Seitz**

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Can you tell me why I just received my copy of the Thunderbolt yesterday? it is dated Winter, January 2014.

**Willard Berdit** 460th

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Hi Willard,

Actually, you received the same time as the rest of us. The January/Winter issue really means January/February/March. However, you are correct in that it was sent later than initially planned due to some issues with the printing company. The volunteers who work on the Thunderbolt hope to have those issues straightened out before the Spring issue.

Stay in touch and if you can, send us some news for the next issue.

Thanks!  
Bob B.

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**Subject:** Poster WWII

I have a map of what I believe my uncle **Ralph Bajczyk** who was I think based on this find, a parachuter with the 517th, traveled in Europe during WWII. It lists the paths taken, Joigny, Bergstein, Paris, Luceran, Roma, Nice, La Roquette. It has caricatures as well as photos. It is a poster about 3 foot by 2 foot. How / Who can I get this too to preserve it?

Mary Bajczyk Fennig

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Hi Mary, I haven't seen this poster. Is it homemade? Can you take a clear photo of it? If you cannot scan it, and you are willing to send it to me, I could scan it and return it to you. Let me know. Do you know what Company Ralph Bajczyk was with?

Bob Barrett



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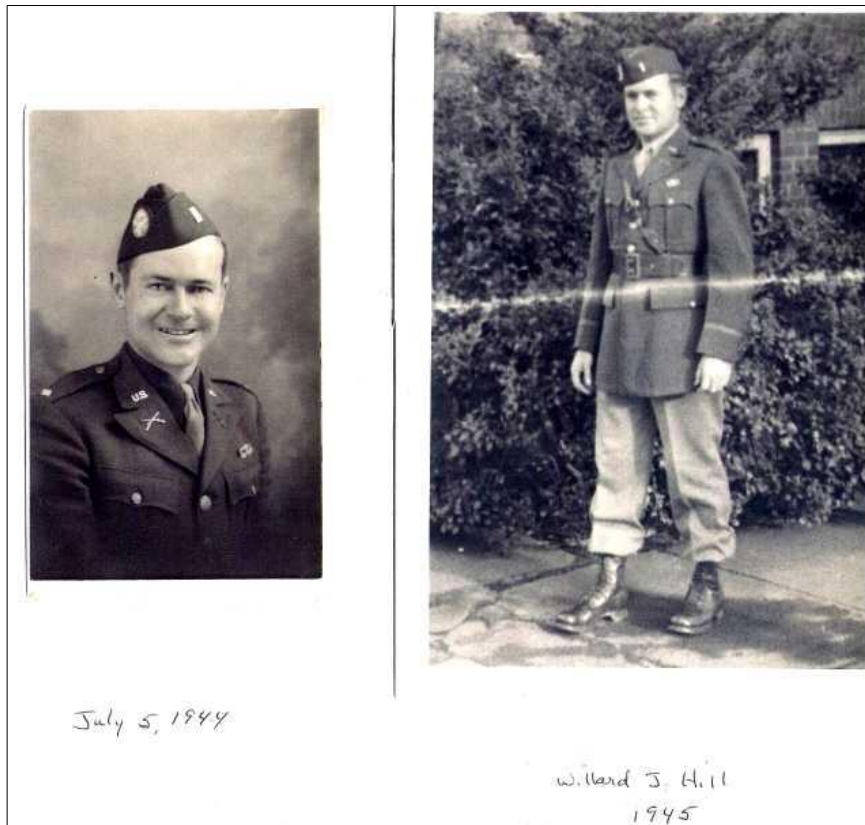
I reported a while back I received an email message from a man who told me he had watched Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed, and then bought the book Letters Home a Paratrooper's Story. In the documentary at the end of the movie and in the book I describe how my father was all set to try and get in the Navy. He told me all of the soldiers he ever saw were old and the Navy had young men and he had made up his mind to go into the Navy. Then one Sunday, he went to church and saw his old Sunday school teacher now a Second Lieutenant in the paratroopers, Willard Hill. My Dad would not let him go until he told him everything about the paratroopers. Well, that's all it took when my Dad reported for the Draft board, he volunteered for paratroop duty and within 10 days of reporting to Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, CA he was on a train bound for Camp Toccoa.

Anyway, Willard's son Chris Hill lives in southern Utah, near St George. Last week I had the opportunity to go to St George and I went to Chris's home where we had a wonderful visit talking about our fathers. His wife, Liz made the most wonderful chocolate cake, it was to die for. Chris and Liz then gave me some pictures of his father which I have enclosed here for mailcall along with a picture of Chris and I. Willard served all of his time with the 82nd Airborne Division and made two combat jumps into Sicily Italy and Normandy France. He received a Bronze Star Medal for bravery and a purple heart. Sounds like most everyone in the 517th.



This truly is a small small world.

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





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THE GREATEST PLAY IN BASEBALL

**Nila Gott**

Gotta See This-nice rerun –

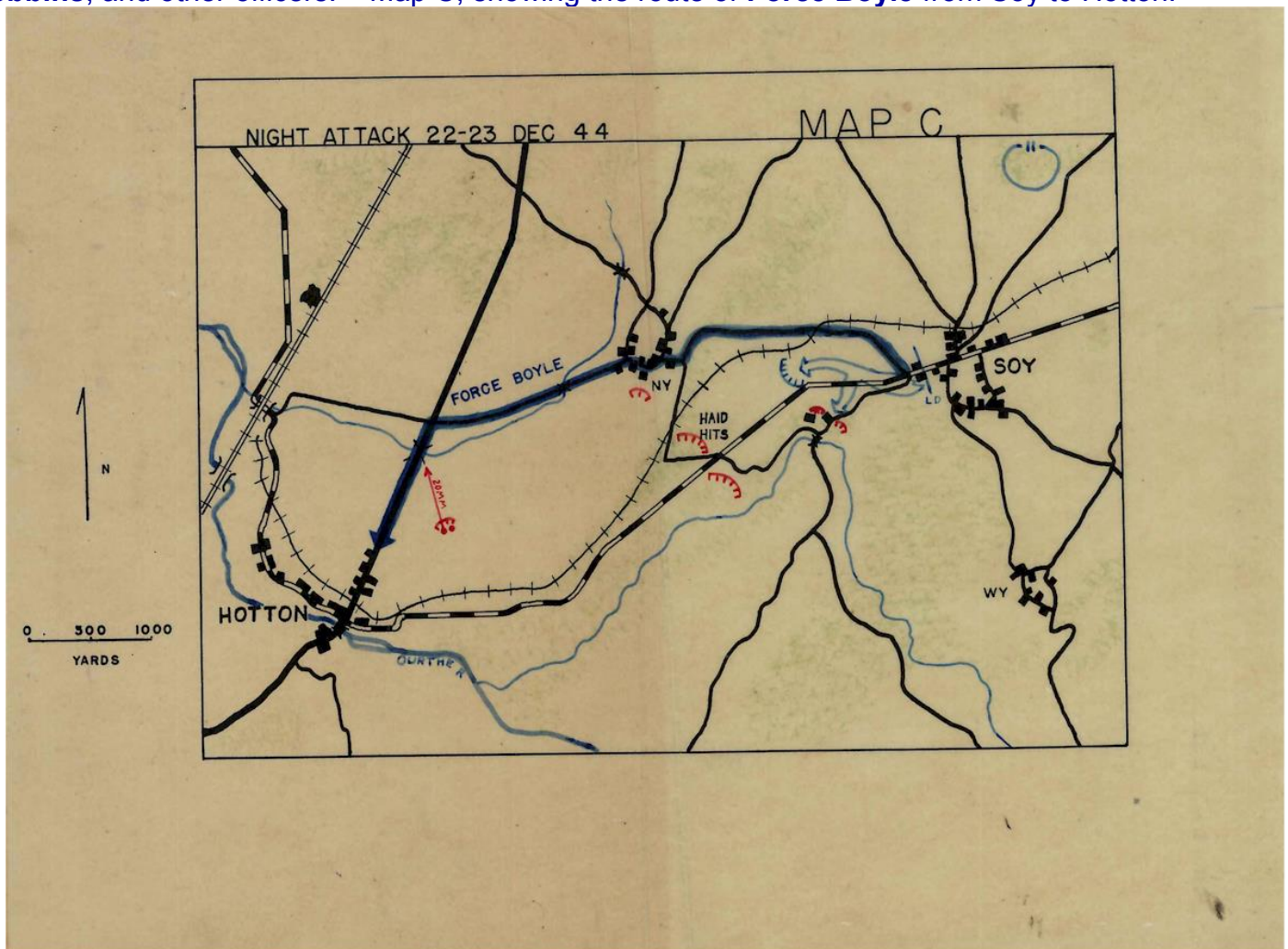
PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT AND WATCH ONE OF THE GREATEST PLAYS IN BASEBALL. IT IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK FOLKS. IT WAS A PLAY THAT FOR THE MOMENT BROUGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER TO THINK ABOUT SOMETHING THAT THE NATION SEEMS NOW TO FORGET. But MANY MAY STILL REMEMBER!!

VIEW IT AND REFLECT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY.

Ranked in the top 100 events in baseball history....

[THE GREATEST PLAY IN BASEBALL](#)

Another map from the Fort Benning Infantry School. This map is from [The Operations of the First Battalion 517 Parachute Infantry Regiment at Soy, Belgium, 22-24 December 1944](#); by Cpt. Sydney M. Marks. See the references to **Colonel Boyle**, **Capt. Joe Broudy**, **Don Fraser**, **Dean Robbins**, and other officers. Map C, showing the route of **Force Boyle** from Soy to Hotton.





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Hi Joanne,

A couple of things: First, I haven't received copies of Thunderbolt for a while now. I'm really missing it! Could you please send me the snail-mail version?

I just want to let you know how very much I enjoy MailCall. You do a fantastic job! Thank you so much! I only wish my Dad was here to enjoy it with me. He's **Edward J. Smith** from D Company of the 517th, and he passed away April 13, 2001. Three years before his death, at the age of 75, he took classes at his local library offered to teach seniors how to use the computer. He became very proficient at it, and he would have loved exploring the 517th's website had we only discovered it in time. While exploring it myself a few years ago, I found a picture of my Dad posted there -- a photo I'd never seen before. What a thrill to come upon him, up there on my monitor screen, smiling back at me! Thanks for that!

And I have a question: My son's father-in-law is a World War II buff who attends a lot of medals shows. A few weeks back, he purchased an 84-page, typed journal. Its title page reads as follows:

ARMY LIFE  
As Told By **P.F.C. William B. Houston**  
A Member of the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion  
In The 517th Parachute Combat Team  
1943-1945

It's wonderful reading! As I'm going through its pages, I can hear my Dad's stories and experiences echoing off Bill Houston's pages. I was wondering if you, the 517th's website, ever received a copy of this journal from William Houston or from his family. It would be a great document for your records. Please let me know. I would be happy to make a copy of it and send it along to you if you like.

All the best,  
**Shirley Catterson**

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Hi Shirley,

Bob Barrett here. (Joanne is my sister and the current 517 Treasurer. I do the MailCall. Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin do the Thunderbolt.)

You can read the recent Thunderbolt's online at: <http://517prct.org/mailcall/> To save on printing and delivery costs, we do not automatically send the paper version to most of the MailCall readers, figuring that much of the news is the same, and it is available online. But no problem, if you also want a paper version, just let me know, and we can put you back on the mailing list.

Your story of your Dad starting to learn computers in 2001 reminds me of my Dad, Ben. We bought him his first computer around 1999, and the first thing he did was to start getting in touch with his friends from the 517th. He quickly started up MailCall. He also tried to find info about the 517th online, but being such a small, elite unit that was deactivated in 1945, there was not much on the web. So he and I together slowly built a website and started to collect anything we could find. As you know, that site has grown into thousands of pages from items that people have sent in.

And no, I have never seen the **William Houston** army journal. What a find! I would love to get a copy of that for the website. Can I get a scan of it? If you need help, I could do the scanning and send it back to you. Let me know. (Note: Pat Houston, William's wife, is on the MailCall list.)

Regards,

Bob Barrett



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Hi Bob,

I keep getting these WWII etc emails and when I feel they are really good, then I'll send them to you. It's your discretion to put in the 517 email or not.

Thanks

**Nila Gott**

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Hi Nila,

I do like most of the WW2 articles that you and others send in. You are exactly right, in that I do not print everything that people send me. Some of the long items are way too much for MailCall. So depending on the length, the potential level of interest, and whether I think we've already printed something similar in the past, I may or may not include such items in MailCall. It also depends on my time and my memory and confusion at the time. Thanks for your understanding.

Bob Barrett

PS: I have put some info about the Arlington Cemetery Honor Guard in MailCall in the past, but it is worth repeating now and then. I have a personal interest since my Mom and Dad are both buried at Arlington, and I always visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier ceremony when I am there.

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To: 517 PRCT Association, c/o Joanne Barrett  
From: Peter W. Jansson, Plymouth, MA

Dear Joanne,

Please find check made payable to the 517th PRCT Association in memory of **Bertil G. Jansson**, member of Company B 1st Battalion.

Dad was proud to serve in the 517th under **Col. Boyle** and others. I also want to thank again your dad, Ben, along with **Trooper Walsh**, for their timeless work in 007 to get Dad to his one and only Washington DC reunion under intense physical conditions and last minute timing.

I am thinking or trying to put together a small tribute for Dada in "Meet the Troopers", despite my limited talents in the computer and digital age.

Again, many thanks to all members of the 517th and the auxiliary members.

All the best to you and your family,

**Peter W. Jansson** and family





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**John Pastalenic**

H Company



### *The Honor Guard for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*



[These are the facts, as checked by Snopes: <http://www.snopes.com/military/unknown.asp>]

As a society, we have long observed traditional, solemn funereal ceremonies as a means of remembering, honoring, and mourning those who have passed on from this life to whatever lies beyond. As a nation, we observe some very formalized rituals as a means of affording our very highest honors to members of the armed forces who have died in the service of their country, particularly those who have fallen in wartime. Military funerals with honor guards, flag-draped coffins, salutes, and burials in cemeteries set aside for veterans are all symbols by which we honor and acknowledge our gratitude to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

There is perhaps no more potent symbol of this sacrifice than the "unknown soldier," the serviceman who has died in combat but whose remains are not identifiable. He cannot be returned to his home, his friends and loved ones cannot know for certain how or when (or even if) he died, he cannot be placed to rest in a site of his own choosing. He remains, perpetually, a soldier who not only gave up his life for his country, but his very identity as well. That loss of identity makes the unknown soldier a powerful symbol, however — because he is no longer an individual, he stands for the purest ideals of courage, valor, and sacrifice and serves as a noble and selfless representation of service to one's country.



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We acknowledge our unidentified fallen heroes with a special place of reverence in our most honored of burial grounds: the [Tomb of the Unknowns](#) (also known as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) in [Arlington National Cemetery](#) (ANC), where in 1921 we first laid to rest "In Honored Glory An American Soldier Known But To God." Although we cannot inter all of our unidentified war dead in Arlington, we nonetheless honor them all by including the remains of three representative soldiers of unknown identity who died in foreign wars (World War I, World War II, and the Korean War) there. (Beginning in 1984 the tomb also held the remains of a serviceman killed in the Vietnam War, but after DNA testing [confirmed](#) his identity in 1998, his remains were disinterred and returned to his family. The crypt of the Vietnam Unknown has remained empty ever since.)

The most visible honorific symbol associated with the Tomb of the Unknowns is that the site is guarded around the clock, every day of the year, by specially trained members of the Third United States Infantry Regiment (also known as the "[Old Guard](#)"). The Sentinels who guard the Tomb must be exemplary in discipline, dress, and bearing; thoroughly knowledgeable with the history of their unit, the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery (and those interred there), and the U.S. Army; and able to execute a variety of ceremonial rites flawlessly and with precision.

Someone apparently wanted to highlight the special qualities and training required to be a guard at Tomb of the Unknowns by creating the widely-circulated message quoted above, a list mixing fact and fiction which we'll try to sort out below:

### ***1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?***

***21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.***

The guards do make 21-step walks past the Tomb of the Unknowns because 21 is considered a number of special significance, a topic discussed on our page about the origins of the [21-gun](#) salute.

### ***2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?***

***21 seconds for the same reason as answer number 1.***

This is a somewhat true but incomplete statement. The guard does not execute an about-face, and there is more involved in the procedure than is described here. As another [site](#) describes the process, the guard performs his movements according to the following pattern:

- The sentinel marches 21 steps across the black mat, past the final resting places of the Unknown Soldiers of World War I, World War II, Korea, and the crypt of the Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War.
- With a crisp turn, the sentinel turns 90 degrees (not about-face) to face east for 21 seconds.
- The sentinel then turns a sharp 90 degrees again to face north for 21 seconds. A crisp "shoulder-arms" movement places the rifle on the shoulder nearest the visitors to signify that the sentinel stands between the tomb and any threat.
- After the moment, the sentinel paces 21 steps north, turns and repeats the process.

### ***3. Why are his gloves wet?***

***His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.***

According to the [FAQ](#) on the web site of the Society of the Honor Guard — Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, this is correct.

### ***4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time, and if not, why not?***

***He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb After his march across the path, he executes an about face, and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.***

As noted above, the guard shifts his rifle prior to each 21-step walk to ensure that it is always carried on his outside shoulder, the one away from the Tomb ("to signify that the sentinel stands between the tomb and any threat").



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### **5. How often are the guards changed?**

***Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.***

From 1926 through 1937, the Tomb was guarded only during daylight hours. Ever since 1937, the Tomb has been continuously guarded 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Tomb guards are changed every thirty minutes between 8 AM and 7 PM during the period from early Spring to early Autumn (April 1 through September 30), and every hour between 8 AM to 5 PM the rest of the year. At all other times (i.e., while the cemetery is closed), the guard is changed every two hours.

### **6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?**

***For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30.***

This is also true, according to the [ANC](#) web site, which notes that "Each soldier must be in superb physical condition, possess an unblemished military record and be between 5 feet, 10 inches and 6 feet, 4 inches tall, with a proportionate weight and build."

***They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives.***

Even the Old Guard doesn't regulate the off-duty lives of its members so stringently!

Sentinels at the Tomb do not have to commit to serving there for any fixed period of time, and the average tour of duty is only about half the two year period claimed here. Like most servicemen, Tomb guards may live either on-base (at nearby [Fort Myer](#)) or off-base in housing of their choosing. There are no restrictions on guards' off-duty drinking.

*They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform (fighting) or the tomb in any way.*

*After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb.*

*There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.*

The [Tomb Guard Identification Badge](#), first awarded in 1957, is a honor for which a guard qualifies by "flawlessly performing his duty for several months" and passing a test, not something simply handed out to everyone who serves for a given period of time:

Once the sentinel has completed his or her training, he or she is examined formally for proficiency in performing the duties and in knowledge of ANC. He or she must first pass a written examination of 100 questions about ANC and then be evaluated on proficiency in keeping watch at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Upon successful completion, the soldier is awarded a temporary Tomb Guard's Badge at a ceremony presided over by the company commander. The Badge is one of the Army's higher honors and can be taken away from the soldier if he or she does not continue to maintain the highest military standards.

The 500th Tomb Guard Identification Badge was awarded in early 2002, and the total number of recipients is now about 525. The award is, as its name states, a badge worn on the pocket of a uniform jacket, not a pin worn in the lapel.

Although the claim that guards "cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives" is fallacious, there is some truth to the notion that the Tomb Guard Identification Badge can be taken away, even after the recipient has left the service. According to Old Guard Public Affairs:

The Tomb Guard Identification Badge is one of the least awarded badges in the Army, second only to the Astronaut Badge. Since the sentinels are held to such a high standard, if they ever do anything that is deemed behavior unbecoming a Tomb Guard or brings dishonor upon the Tomb, their badges may be revoked, even after [the sentinels] have left active duty military service.

As of early 2002, there had been nine revocations of the Tomb Guard Identification Badge.

***The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt. There are no wrinkles, folds or***



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***lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror.***

The [FAQ](#) at [www.tombguard.org](http://www.tombguard.org) also addresses this topic:

The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt. There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror.

The shoes are standard issue military dress shoes. They are built up so the sole and heel are equal in height. This allows the Sentinel to stand so that his back is straight and perpendicular to the ground. A side effect of this is that the Sentinel can "roll" on the outside of the build up as he walks down the mat. This allows him to move in a fluid fashion. If he does this correctly, his hat and bayonet will appear to not "bob" up and down with each step. It gives him a more formal and smooth look to his walk, rather than a "marching" appearance.

The soles have a steel tip on the toe and a "horseshoe" steel plate on the heel. This prevents wear on the sole and allows the Sentinel to move smoothly during his movements when he turns to face the Tomb and then back down the mat.

***The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.***

A Tomb guard's behavior is not so stringently regulated that he is prohibited from speaking to anyone for a full six months (someone seems to have confused the Old Guard with a monastery!), and guards may do whatever they want (including watching TV) during their off-duty hours. But since any soldier wishing to become a sentinel must undergo rigorous training, including several hours a day of marching, rifle drill and uniform preparation, and every tomb sentinel is expected to be completely versed in the history of both the tomb and of Arlington National Cemetery (including knowing how to find the graves of all the prominent person buried in the cemetery), they don't necessarily have a lot of free time to devote to recreational activities.

***Among the notables are: President Taft, Joe E. Lewis (the boxer), and Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy (the most decorated soldier of WWII) of Hollywood fame.***

[Joe Louis](#) (aka "The Brown Bomber"), Heavyweight Champion of the World between 1937 and 1949, is the boxer interred at Arlington National Cemetery. (Joe E. Lewis, the comedian, is buried in New Jersey.) Although Joe Louis served in the Army during World War II he did not meet the technical requirements for burial at Arlington, but he is interred there because President Reagan waived the requirements when Louis died in 1981.

We close here with a bit of trivia suggested by the above item:

Although serving as President of the United States qualifies one to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery, only two former Presidents are interred there: William Howard Taft and John F. Kennedy

### Additional information:



**The Sentinels of the Tombs of the Unknown  
(Arlington National Cemetery)**



**Sentinel Training  
(Arlington National Cemetery)**

Read more at <http://www.snopes.com/military/unknown.asp#3vMxscqLmEzrmGBP.99>



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

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

**Last chance. Voting closes on April 1<sup>st</sup>**

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 this one-page form:

[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