



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2211

April 27, 2014

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

Website www.517prct.org
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2013 Roster (updated!) www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
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Looking for 1st Lt. Charles Casey, I Company

When visiting your website during some research of mine I came across an inquiry from **Ron Hagen** of the Netherlands ([Mail Call #2192](#)). I do not know how old this inquiry was, but it was regarding **1st Lt. Charles D. Casey** from 100 Prospect St. Providence. I knew Charlie and have a lot of history on him and the 517th I would like to share with anyone that is interested in this American Hero. Small man - below average height and weight by any standard. Two things above average -his heart and a large set of things I cannot mention. Parachutes into France at age of 17 (I understand this was a permissible enlistment age if one went to a military academy) My recollection was he attended a military academy in New York State during his high school years and enlisted when he was 17.

He was a childhood chum (dear friend) and neighbor of my Dad's. I knew him since I was a child until his death in 1998 (my recollection of the date). There is an exhibit at the Fall River Maritime Museum with some of his artifacts from an American POW Camp for German's where he was the man in charge of recreational activities. That Museum has a full biography of Charlie. I have some of those artifacts made by German POW's that his sister gave me after his death. One is a haunting pencil drawing. This man's life is quite a story. Best wishes, Brian

Brian Monamee

--

<http://brianmcnamee.com>

Brian,

That is wonderful news. I think I might still have Ron Hagen's email and will forward that to you with his email address. Ron Hagen was mostly looking for a photo of Charlie. Is there one available? Of course, we would also love to have any photos or info about Charlie for the website.

Thanks for reaching out.

Bob Barrett



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Ronald Hagen's inquiry was in [Mail Call #2192](#), from December 22, 2013, and is included in the following conversations.

Dear sir / miss,

I'am **Ron Hagen** living in the Netherlands my passion is to collect 51th airborne related items. i ave a intresting collection about the rare unit.

my question is and i hope you are can help ore also the 517th chapter friends can help me with he following thing.

I HAVE IN MY COLLECTION A RARE AND AWESOME 517TH 509TH NAMED GROUPING.

1ST LT CHARLES D CASEY.

0-503800.

100 PROSPECT ST PROVIDENCE.

PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND.

I LOOKING FOR A PHOTO FROM THIS 517TH MEMBER IS THEIRE A WAY PLEASE TO HELP ME MY QUESTION.

THANKS IN ADVANCE,

RON HAGEN THE NETHERLANDS.

YES I TRY TO LOCATE A PHOTO FROM HIM AND ALSO FROM HIS FELLOW 517TH TEAM MEMBERS. HE IS WOUNDED IN ACTION IN A PLACE CALLED (SMITH) A SMALL PLEASE NEAR HURTGENWALD.

KIND REGARDS,

RON HAGEN

Claire and Ron,

Yes, we know there was a **Lt. Charles D. Casey** with I Company listed on the Christmas 1944 roster. Unfortunately, I have not found any photos or casualty reports listed for Lt. Casey on the website. We do know that I Company was in the area of Schmidt (Smith?) in February 1945. I will post Ron's note in the next MailCall and see who remembers him.

Bob Barrett

I HAVE A HIS COMPLETE GROUPING PATCHES / DOGTAGS / FULL 509TH ALFABETIC ROSTER AND ALSO HIS SEPERATION QUALIFICATION RECORD.

HE IS ALSO NAMED IN THIS BOOK SEE THE PICTURE AND BOOK-PAGE (361 DOWN THE PAGE) YOU SEE HIS NAME.

THANKS IN ADVANCE AND THANKS FOR THE HELP I HOPE YOU COULD FIND OUT A PICTURE FROM HIM AND HIS TEAM MEMBERS.

RON



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Here is a short excerpt from *Battling Buzzards* by Gerald Astor, describing some battles in the Huertgen Forest.

This is the only small reference that I can find about Lt. Casey. Does anyone remember him or have any info?

Battling Buzzards, FINAL BATTLES, Pages 361

Saxion watched what he describes as an endless stream of men carried back on litters. "When mortars started to pound us our position became exposed so we withdrew to our starting point. On the way back we passed the bodies of Captain Woodhull and his observers, killed by the mortars that we observed being set up that morning."

One of the wounded from I Company was Lt. Charles Casey who had been a friend of Saxion since Sicily, and through Saxion's difficult days in Rome, then the invasion of Southern France, the Bulge and now the bloody encounter between Bergstein and Schmidt.

"Casey came up from the Kall ravine," says Saxion. "blood pouring from an ear and he had another wound in his hip. He asked me for a cigarette but did not ever recognize me."

MailCall News

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517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I'm wondering if you recognize the name **R.H. Bob Lewis**. (RH stands for Robert Howard)
He was in the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team; 17th Airborne Division.
I'm not sure I have the correct website that honor his team (and others).

I'm his daughter and I would like to know if this IS his "team" and would like to find out if any of his buddies in that group are still around as well as enjoy the pictures knowing it is his team/group.

If this isn't the right "team" ... would you be able to direct me TO the correct place to find out more information about the 517th?

Respectfully,

Cheri (Lewis) Folk,
Portland, OR

Hi Cheri,

You have the right team. We do know that **Bob Lewis** served with the 517th. He is listed on the unit's Christmas 1944 roster as a Private in the Headquarters Company.

See: <http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm>

I also have some info from the Morning Reports (not all of them), and I can see that he was wounded on January 4th, 1945. (LWA = lightly wounded in action, BC = battle casualty)

A copy of that morning report is attached.

In addition to the website, there are a few books about the 517th. The official history is on the website at: http://517prct.org/documents/odyssey/odyssey_history.htm

There is also a paperback book "Battling Buzzards" by **Gerald Astor** that is available at bookstores and Amazon.

Bob Barrett

THANK YOU SO MUCH. This is the most information I've received!!

I'm not even sure dad knows the date he was wounded and I know he doesn't know about a website or book! I will share this with him on the letter I submit for his mail-call on the Hero Flight.

THANK YOU AGAIN!!

Cheri Folk

I have a couple of photos of dad and a few of his buddies in one of numerous scrapbooks my mom kept! Might even have some newspaper clippings; I can send those too, if I can locate them. I will try to do this this weekend (I work 5-6 days a week) Would love to share some of his war stories. He started writing a book called: "My Funny War Stories," so I have some directly "spoken" by him.

Respectfully,

Cheri Folk



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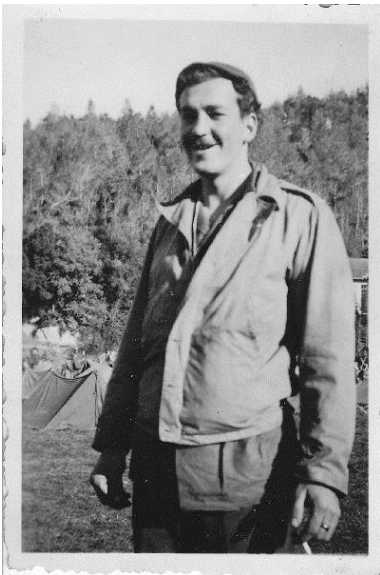
Great Mailcall this week (as usual). Happy Easter to you & your family. I was proud to see Dad listed in as a Bronze Star recipient. The recommendation summary of how he earned it (by capturing a German patrol) case is the only recounting of any of Dad's activities in Europe.

There's a 'chance' that my wife & I will travel to Europe in October. If it's possible to coordinate the trip, I'd like to know when the Sospel activities are taking place. Would you please forward me contact information for the folks (Patou & Roland) who are organizing it?

Anything I learn I'll forward to you for inclusion in Mailcall.
Thanks very much,

Roger Sullivan

Corporal George A. Sullivan, 36 652 972, 517th Parachute Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in action. On 18 January 1945, a patrol of five men, under Corporal Sullivan, was sent to contact the 290th Infantry pushing through Petit-Thiere, Belgium. After moving out about 500 yards the patrol ran into some enemy who had been forced out of the town. Immediately putting his patrol into action, he killed five of the enemy and took three prisoners. Sending the three prisoners back with one of his men, Corporal Sullivan moved up the road about 200 yards when he spotted more enemy being pushed out of the town. Corporal Sullivan deployed his men on both sides of the road and had them fire their rifles as fast as possible. Approximately two platoons surrendered and elements of the 290th Infantry took the town. Entered the military service from Chicago, Illinois.



PFC/Corporal George Sullivan of A Company, continued his army career, and retired as a LTC.

See his 517th photos at
http://517prct.org/photos/george_sullivan/george_sullivan.htm

Email warning: I don't know about you, but I have been getting lots of spam mail lately, especially from people that I know who have an **AOL email account**. The emails are simple but include a link or attachment to a file that ends in ".php" FYI, anything that ends in php is a program that could install software or a virus on your PC. You should be aware that a php program sent to you, even from someone that you know, is probably a virus. Do not click on that link or open the file. – BB



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Note: In addition to the April 1945 Silver and Bronze Stars awarded in the April 1945 General Orders, we have some other General Orders on the web site at: <http://517prct.org/documents.htm>

Here is a Bronze Star description for Lt. Howard Hensleigh issued on July 27, 1945:

First Lieutenant Howard E. Hensleigh, O 526 649, 517th Parachute Infantry, United States Army, for heroic achievement in action. On 6 February 1945 the Third Battalion launched an attack against the enemy east of Bergstein, Germany. The forward platoon of the assault company soon was pinned down by enemy small arms and mortar fire. First Lieutenant Hensleigh, Battalion S-2, promptly obtained an SCR 300 radio and with complete disregard for his own safety made his way forward and directed counter-fire on the enemy emplacements, thus enabling the assault company to move forward. After advancing four hundred yards, the assault company was again immobilized in a minefield by five enemy machine guns, a number of riflemen and extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire. Many casualties resulted, several men falling in an area exposed to direct small arms fire. First Lieutenant Hensleigh, despite a hail of fire, cut a path through barbed wire so that the men could be evacuated. The fire in this area was so intense that over half of the assault company was killed or wounded. When the artillery liaison officer was killed by mortar fire, First Lieutenant Hensleigh took over his radio and directed fire on the enemy for over eleven hours, many times making his way forward to the leading elements for better observation. In one particularly heavy enemy attack First Lieutenant Hensleigh courageously remained in his position when death or capture seemed imminent. His expert fire direction was instrumental in breaking up the attack. In these gruelling hours First Lieutenant Hensleigh's heroism was an inspiration to all those serving with him. His resolute actions saved the lives of many of his men and were instrumental in inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Entered the military service from Des Moines, Iowa.

Meeting up with General Patton in Tunisia



Left: General Patton (1942-3)

Right: **Gilles G.** (last week)



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hello,

I have recently begun searching for information on my grandfather's military service in WW2 and I found that he was part of 517 3Bn I Co.

His name was **Horace "Sonny" Edell Melton**.

There are some interesting things about him that I was trying to authenticate. He has his rank in his discharge papers as "Corporal" but I have his insignia and I believe it to be Sgt. Also, I have a few stories about him being a Sgt. and a newspaper clipping that his mother clipped about his regiment asking him if the story about a Sgt. was him.

I also have his medals, and ribbons. He has the Purple Heart medal and ribbon, Italian, East-European, East African Theater ribbon with four bronze campaign stars, and the Good Conduct medal. But what's weird is that he also has a Silver Star and Bronze Star ribbon, but I have no record of him receiving it. I also have all of his marksman awards, regiment badges, infantry badge, paratrooper badge, and rank insignia.

I would also like to find out his platoon and where all they served.

If you have any information on him, please help me figure this out!

Every Kid,

Chris Herrin

Hello Chris,

Yes, I can confirm that **Horace Melton** was with the 517th, I Company. He is listed on the Christmas 1944 roster: <http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm>

He is mentioned in an account of the battle of Manhay: <http://www.517prct.org/documents/The%20battle%20of%20the%20crossroads%20--%20Dieter%20Laes.pdf> (My Dad, Ben Barrett was with H Company in that same battle.)

I have a copy of the Morning Report from July 20 1944 where he was promoted to Corporal near Rome, and some others when he was MIA/wounded at Manhay. I can send you those this weekend.

I cannot explain the Sergeant vs. Corporal question. That could have happened later in 1945. but my records are very incomplete.

There are a couple of books about the 517th, plus a great video of their history at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guJE71bIP10> The battle of Manhay is at about 45 minutes into the video.

I would love to have any wartime pictures, stories, or newspaper clippings for the website.

Bob Barrett



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And here is the Manhay morning report for I Company, December 27, 1944:

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDS 27 Dec 1944

STATION Manhay, Belgium 533-902

ORGANIZATION Co. I, 517th PIR Inf

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
0-1311445	Stoß, Floyd A.	1510-9 1st Lt	M
32469013	Walsh, Edward G.	7607	Pfc
42094072	Scott, Frank O.	7745	Pvt
32720072	Tinger, Wendell J.	7745	Sgt
34726664	Tarpley, Courville B.	7745	Opl
32839278	Kaminsky, Merle A.	7745	Pvt
36740551	Bronca, Paul A.	7745	Pfc
37666440	Isarman, Fred E.	7607	Pfc
30226824	Eckart, William J. Jr.	7607	Pfc
37670508	Vaquer, Albert J.	7745	Pvt
12003652	Weiner, Edward W.	7745	Pvt
35095355	Williams, Robert L.	7745	Pvt
Above (1) Officer and (11) EM fr dy to KIA			
35893427	Smith, Shannon F.	7607	Pvt
14006893	Frater, Grover J.	71812	S/Sgt
38435496	Rapczyk, John Jr.	7745	Sgt
38434599	Kelton, Horace E.	7745	Opl
19170899	Williamson, Charles S.	7745	Pfc
38437239	Whitehead, James G.	7745	Pfc
33555613	Moles, Marvin D.	7745	Pfc
36812570	Bayer, Frederick T.	7745	Pvt
30225013	Zamorski, Charles A.	7745	Pvt

OFFICER STRENGTH: PLES, ASST, PRESENT, ABSENT, etc.

ENLISTED MEN: PRESENT, ABSENT, etc.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF RATIONS REQUIRED FOR DAY OF THIS REPORT: BREAKFAST, DINNER, SUPPER.

WOMEN AUTHORIZED TO BE SEPARATELY ORN FOR RATIONS: MEN, WOMEN.

PAGE 1 OF 3 PAGES

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDS 27 Dec 1944

STATION Manhay, Belgium 533-902

ORGANIZATION Co. I, 517th Prct Inf Regt Inf

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
35807752	Jexine, John L.	7607	Pfc
14091598	Henry, Richard	7740	Pfc
34797734	Cornett, Joseph E.	7745	Pvt
35207955	Scherer, Charles G.	7607	Sgt
Above (18) EM fr dy to MIA			
36589517	Witt, Arno F.	7745	Pvt
Fr dy to SMA (80) ab sk hosp. basic status changed fr sgd to atchd unsgd			
6985112	Beasley, Albert L.	7745	Sgt
30225165	Seth, Daniel W.	7607	Sgt
33150873	Watola, John	7607	Pvt
38334462	Bacaloff, Jim	7607	Pvt
37252213	Baca, Alva J.	7745	Pvt
30905133	Toado, Maron	7745	Pvt
35128732	Witt, Walter J.	7745	Pvt
38277516	Eparsa, Antonio	7745	Pvt
42064195	Weichenbaum, Melvin	7745	Pvt
3825344	Ninano, Frank H.	7745	Pvt
38279312	Richards, Alford E.	7745	Pvt
37554525	Halvarson, Julian	7745	Pfc
30906265	Bass, Norman L. Jr.	7745	Pfc
38290095	Tinsner, Charles R.	7745	Pvt

OFFICER STRENGTH: PLES, ASST, PRESENT, ABSENT, etc.

ENLISTED MEN: PRESENT, ABSENT, etc.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF RATIONS REQUIRED FOR DAY OF THIS REPORT: BREAKFAST, DINNER, SUPPER.

WOMEN AUTHORIZED TO BE SEPARATELY ORN FOR RATIONS: MEN, WOMEN.

PAGE 2 OF 3 PAGES



L'Offensive Des Ardennes -- Eddy Monfort, 1994, Softcover (From Belgium, in French)

[Chapter about the 517th and the battle at Manhay](#), translated by Dieter Laes

Hi Bob



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Bob: enjoyed the last two Mail Calls (great pictures from the western mini). Congratulations to Jean-Loup on his book.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

Thanks for advertising my book in the mail call. I have not spoken about it much so far as the release date has been pushed back several times, but now the editor has said the book will be delivered to them in early may, and will then start being shipped out, so hopefully clients will be receiving their copies by late may.

Regards

Jean-Loup

BB: You can pre-order Jean-Loup's book on Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Operation-Dragoon-Autopsy-Liberation-August-September/dp/076434580X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1398079160&sr=8-1&keywords=Jean-Loup+Gassend

Military Humor



<http://article15.storefrontier.com/prod/STD-TEE>

<https://www.facebook.com/UsMilitaryMarketplace>



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team


Found on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Dunaway

George W. Dunaway (July 24, 1922 – February 6, 2008) was the second [Sergeant Major of the Army](#). He was sworn in on September 1, 1968 and served until his term ended in September 1970. He was born in [Richmond, Virginia](#), on July 24, 1922 and died on February 6, 2008 in Las Vegas, Nevada.^[1]

After attending the Airborne Course in August 1943, Sergeant Major Dunaway remained at [Fort Benning](#), Georgia as an [Airborne School](#) Instructor until January 1945 when he joined the [517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team](#) in France as a platoon sergeant. He returned to Fort Benning in December 1945 with assignment to the [501st Parachute Infantry Regiment](#) where he served as first sergeant of Company "A". In March 1948, Sergeant Major Dunaway was reassigned to the [82d Airborne Division](#) at [Fort Bragg](#), North Carolina. There he became a member of the [505th Parachute Infantry Regiment](#) as Operations Sergeant, ascending to the Regimental Sergeant Major position in 1952.

In early 1954 he transferred to the [187th Regimental Combat Team](#) as the Combat Team Sergeant Major. He continued in that position for seven years during which he saw the Airborne Regimental Combat Team renamed as the 187th Infantry, when the [101st Airborne Division](#) was reactivated on September 21, 1956, at [Fort Campbell](#), Kentucky. Departing Fort Campbell in 1961, he took the reins of the 1st Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces in United States Army Pacific and later moved to the [5th Special Forces Group](#) in Vietnam, where he remained until June 1967.

Returning to the United States, he re-joined the 101st Airborne Division as it prepared to move to Vietnam in the largest unit deployment by air in the history of the Vietnam War. Sergeant Major Dunaway arrived in Vietnam with the commanding general's command group on December 13, 1967. In February 1968, he moved to Camp Eagle in the I Corps Tactical Zone with the division where he remained until July 1968 when he was selected as the second Sergeant Major of the Army.

George W. Dunaway	
	
SMA George W. Dunaway	
Born	July 24, 1922 Richmond, Virginia
Died	February 6, 2008 (aged 85) Las Vegas, Nevada
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Army
Years of service	1943–1970
Rank	Sergeant Major of the Army
Unit	82nd Airborne Division 101st Airborne Division
Battles/wars	World War II Vietnam War
Awards	Army Distinguished Service Medal Silver Star Purple Heart Air Medal



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I also found a 167-page biographical interview with SMA George Dunaway, which is now on the website at: [George W. Dunaway](#) Here are a few words about the 517th:

Interviewer: What rank were you when you joined the 517th?

SMA Dunaway: Sergeant First Class E6.

Interviewer: What was your duty assignment?

SMA Dunaway: Platoon sergeant.

Interviewer: What was the mission of your unit?

SMA Dunaway: Same as all combat arms units - to close with and destroy the enemy.

Interviewer: How long was your tour of duty?

SMA Dunaway: From January '45 to November '45.

Interviewer: How do you assess the leadership abilities of the NCOs in the unit?

SMA Dunaway: Excellent.

Interviewer: How was the morale of the soldiers in the unit?

SMA Dunaway: Superb.

Interviewer: Was there a drug or alcohol problem in the unit?

SMA Dunaway: No. It was a well-disciplined all-volunteer unit.

Interviewer: Were there discipline problems in the unit?

SMA Dunaway: No. We didn't have discipline problems in the 517th.

Interviewer: Did you receive special recognition or were you awarded any combat decorations during your tour of duty in Europe with the 517th?

SMA Dunaway: Yes. I was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge and the Bronze Star Medal.



SMA George w. Dunaway



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Administrivia

- If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>

At any time, if you

- 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
- 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

Army Life, as told by PFC William B. Houston (Part 4)

A few more pages from **William Houston's** biography are on the following pages.

This chapter covers parachute training at **Fort Benning in September 1943.**

Next week: Back at Camp MacKall

FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

Fort Benning was beautiful. The grass was green, well kept and the fort looked more like a city than a military installation. There was even a narrow gauge railroad running through Benning for delivering supplies, and as we got off the train, we could see some foreign looking locomotives on display.

We had about an hour to unpack our stuff and get organized, then we fell out at 1200. We then went down to the training area, past the 250 foot steel training towers from which trainees were being dropped, then we returned to our tents and finally, at 2100 hours we got something to eat.

The area in which our tents were located was a dry, dusty location known as the "Frying-pan". Our tents were squad tents, semi-permanent tents with a wood floor and walls of canvas and mosquito netting and a door or flap centered on one side. In case of rain canvas curtains could be rolled down to cover the netting but this cut off the ventilation. Each tent measured 16 X 16 feet, had a pyramid style canvas roof and there was room to sleep sixteen to twenty men in double bunks.

On September the first we started our training at Fort Benning. The first morning we had a class on the nomenclature of the parachute. We received a small book about the parachute which gave the name and location of each part - I could not help but wonder just what good it would do you to know the names of the parts if the parachute should fail to open and you were plunging toward the earth. That afternoon we went out to the mock-up towers and made a few jumps from the good, old mock-ups. Then we tried the suspended harness, the landing trainer and finally a mock-up of the C-47 plane.

While at parachute school we only had our bunk area and the only place we had to write letters was on our bunk, which made writing a long, drawn out chore. However, I saw my first amphibious jeep while there and mentioned in a letter home.

Two days later we were in full swing with our training. In the morning there was training on how to pack our chutes. That afternoon we went on the "Plumber's Nightmare", a maze of pipes which was well named. If there was one pipe in that muddle of pipes there were a million. They formed ladders, tunnels, runways and other unnamed configurations. To get through it you had to climb, twist, turn, squirm, squeeze and slide - guess that is where the nightmare comes in. We also learned to do the "Paratrooper's Shuffle" which was a the step used by the paratroops when moving toward the door of the plane when they make a mass jump.

In those days a long distance telephone call to home was a chore under normal conditions, but at jump school such a call was impossible since it took from five to twelve hours to get the call through. We simply did not have that much free time.

We went down to the towers on the morning of September fifth and had our first ride on the "buddy seat". This was from a two hundred fifty foot tower and a copy of a ride at the 1939 New York World Fair. Two of us sat in a seat, tandem fashion, and were hoisted to the top of the tower with a parachute above us which was held open by a ring it was attached to. When released the parachute, guided by guy wires, lowered us at a safe rate and when we hit the bottom coil springs softened our landing. I remember the view from the tower. The whole earth seemed to unfold as we were pulled up to the top and I likened it to being inside of a huge oatmeal bowl where the horizon covered the entire 360 degrees and seemed to curve up from the bottom in a gentle slope. The color was beautiful, much better than a Technicolor movie could offer, with grass so green and a neat pattern of streets and buildings spread out before you. Benning's towers were twice the height of those at the

World Fair and the ride at the fair cost thirty cents so our ride must have been worth at least sixty cents.

The following day we went on a ride similar to the "buddy seat" except that you were strapped into a parachute harness and rode alone. The chute was held open by the same type of ring and guided by wires but, in this case, you landed on your feet. What a fun ride that was!

We spent time learning how to control the parachute just after landing, when the wind could drag you along the ground, before you were able to free yourself from the harness. For this exercise they had a Ford chassis with a V-8 engine that drove an airplane propeller, thereby creating a strong ground wind. You had to lie on the ground in front of the propeller with a parachute on, then the instructor would rev the engine up, the wind would inflate the canopy and pull you along the ground. You were then ordered to collapse the canopy and stand up on your feet. This exercise was carried out on a normally dry, dusty field which proved to be uncomfortable for the instructors so they would water it down to control the dust. This would create a mud puddle where you were pulled along behind the chute and after chow you had to turn out in a clean set of fatigues. Not only did the changing take time but you had to wash you fatigues every night.

The classes about the parachute itself and parachute packing went on along with continued exercises in landing, tumbling and anything they could think of to occupy your time. While at Benning there was no mention of going to a movie or the P.X. in the letters written home because there just was not enough time, or energy, for those extra activities. It is doubtful that I could have stayed awake through a movie even if we had been able to go to one.

Normally parachute school would last four weeks and be divided into A Stage, B Stage and C and D Stages with A Stage used as physical training period used to toughen up those who had been in regular outfits before their transfer. In our case we skipped A Stage because we had been doing that type of training for three or four months before we got to Benning. We started with B Stage and went on to C Stage at the beginning of our second week which concentrated on training on the towers. The closest thing to a real jump was a ride from the free-fall tower. The chute, with a man in the harness, was attached to a ring and hoisted to the top of the tower. At the top the chute was released from the ring, it inflated with air and you got a ride down. On the way down you were ordered to, "Slip to the right" or "Slip to the left" by an instructor on the ground with a bull horn. Upon landing you were required to tumble, and if necessary, collapse your chute. Each tower had four arms at the top and if there was no wind all four arms were used. If there was a wind, up to fifteen miles per hour, only three men jumped and the arm on the up wind direction was not used. In the event that the ground wind was above fifteen miles per hour the towers were not used until the wind died down. The first drop of the day was always made by an officer to test the wind condition. In C Stage we almost lost one officer. He had been pulled up and released when the wind caught his chute and collapsed it. He managed to maneuver the shroud lines and open the chute. It was such a close call that many of us turned pale and asked ourselves why we were there and wondered if we really wanted to go through with the training. We did not go up on the towers that day.

Finally we completed our first and second weeks, B and C Stages, and were ready to jump. But first, there were some details to be taken care of, such as packing the chute that we would actually jump. For the first five jumps we packed our main chutes plus our reserve. The name of the game was to avoid opening the reserve because, if you did open it, you would have two chutes to pack that night. For the first jump we spent a great deal of time

and care in packing the chute but, as the number of jumps increased, less and less care went into packing process.

Packing a parachute was a big operation at Benning. Except for the first jump it really started in the field immediately after a jump when we had to pick up our parachute and bring it to the packing shed. The packing shed had an area where the apex of the chute was attached to a rope and pulley and pulled up to the ceiling to enable the jumper to shake out any debris. Any and everything came out - rabbits, field mice, grass, sticks and always grasshoppers. The parachute, after it had been shaken, was then taken to the packing room and laid out on a long table where the twisted lines and the canopy were untangled. After the lines and canopy were in order the packing process began. First the canopy was folded, according the book and by the numbers, in a plaited fashion. Then the lines had been folded back and forth and a rubber band was slipped over the end of each fold to hold the lines in place. The folded lines were laid across the canopy then the pack was folded over the canopy and lines and secured with a lace, much the same as a boot is laced up. The static line was then attached to the apex of the parachute by means of a string which was strong enough to pull the canopy out of the pack but would break away after you fell the length of the static line. After the parachute had been packed the final step was to sign the card - the operation was complete and the parachute ready to be jumped. It was to our personal advantage to do the packing quickly because the last few men to complete their packing got the detail of sweeping the packing shed floor. And it was a huge floor!

Unfortunately I did not write down many details about the five jumps made during D Stage. The reason probably was the lack of both time and energy. I did manage to send a postcard home after each jump to keep the family informed about the jumps and to let them know that I had not been hurt. After the fifth jump I did put some of my feelings down on paper that evening while they were fresh in my mind. There was a feeling of relief that it was all over and a sense of satisfaction concerning my accomplishment.

Our five qualifying jumps were made in one week starting on Monday, September the 26th and ending on Friday of the same week. The weather was cooperative with no heavy rain or ground wind over 15 miles per hour.

My first jump and my first airplane ride were one in the same thing and took place on September 13, 1943. We were up at 0530, had our breakfast then climbed aboard the huge, huge by the standards of those days, C-47 and took my place in the cabin. There were about twenty four jumpers who formed into two sticks; I was in the second stick. The plane climbed to 1200 feet and made its first pass over the drop zone. The first stick disappeared through the door and out into space and as the plane banked for the second pass I could see the chutes floating down. I would be jumping on the second pass in the number nine position. This gave me time to see the reaction of the first stick and to sweat the jump out a little longer.

Then the commands started, "Get ready" which alerted us that it was almost time to jump. Then, "Stand up" and the entire second stick stood up. Another command followed quickly, "Hook up" and each man snapped his static line on to the cable which ran the length of the cabin near the ceiling, and made sure the hook was closed and secure. Then the jump master shouted, "Sound off for equipment check". At that point the last man in the stick turned so his parachute could be seen by the second to last man. This man would visually check the pack of the last man and give him a tap on the shoulder to signal that everything was O.K. Then the second to last man, in this case the number eight man, would turn again, this time facing the front of the plane, so the last man could check his chute. The second to last man got double duty and had to check the number seven man's chute. From

there on the check the O.K. and the pat worked its way up to the number one man. There were no doors on the plane used for jumping. The C-47s were cargo planes with a large cargo door which had a personnel door within the large door. For jumps the personnel door was left on the ground. For this reason the jump master had to sound off loud enough to be heard over over the roar of the engines. Then we heard, "Stand in the door" and the first man took his position in the open door with the palms of his hands on the outside of the door opening. On the first jump when it came time to jump the jump master yelled, "Go" and gave the first man a slap on the butt - out he went. The rest of the stick then started the "paratrooper's shuffle" toward the door. One by one each man moved forward, the line became shorter and shorter, and soon it was my turn. I pivoted and stood in the door until I heard "Go" and felt the slap, which seemed to come simultaneously. Out I went with 1200 feet of only air between me and the ground. Everything happened so fast that I did not have time to think about what I was doing. Once clear of the plane I started counting, "One thousand, two thousand, three thousand". No sooner had I finished the count than I heard the sharp crack of the canopy as it opened above me. Even though the opening shock was rather severe it was welcome, as was the big, white canopy when it blossomed out. I started to float, rather than fall, toward the earth. I checked the canopy to see if there were any blown out or otherwise damaged panels; they were all there and in good condition, so I relaxed and enjoyed the ride down. I was impressed as to how quiet it was up there. You could talk to another jumper a hundred feet away in a normal tone of voice and he could easily hear you. At first everything looked so small but at that time I was still a 1000 feet above the ground. Even the airport which had been designated as our drop zone looked to be about the size of a postage stamp. At first the ground looked harmless but as it got closer I began to worry about the landing. The landing seemed quite normal but later in the evening one knee did not feel too good. Never the less, I considered it a good landing even though my knee was still sore the next day.

I did carry a small, cheap camera on my first jump which was against the law. Security was the reason, especially during the war. I had the camera up the sleeve of my uniform and had sewn the sleeve closed instead of depending on the button. After my parachute opened I ripped the stitches out, recovered the cameras and tried to take a pictures while still in the air. Then I dropped the camera down the neck of my uniform and made the landing. After all, I did not want to arrested and spend twenty years in jail as a spy. Unfortunately the film jammed and I accidentally opened the camera while trying to clear it which spoiled the film.

For some reason I recorded the number of the chute which I used for my first five jumps - it was TM-1 number 42-54591.

The second jump was also from 1200 feet but without the individual command to go from the jumpmaster. I landed like a feather but I could feel the knee which I had injured on the first jump. It was a real thrill to float down and be so detached from the earth.

In my opinion the third jump was the most difficult. By that time the whole procedure was fairly automatic so I did not have to worry about the technicalities. Instead I had time to wonder what I was doing jumping from airplanes and time to worry about what could go wrong. On this jump I could feel the static line break free, the folds in the canopy unravel and even see the suspension lines as the rubber bands flipped off the end of each fold. Then came the opening shock and after the shock I felt myself being tossed helplessly around in the air. Then the canopy inflated and I started my ride to earth.

Jump four was also from 1200 feet and by this time we were trying to see how fast the whole stick could get out of the plane. I landed pretty hard on one foot and it was sore for the rest of the day. During the first four of the five qualifying jumps you you did not

want report any knee or foot injuries for fear of being kicked out of jump school, so you lived with them.

Our fifth jump, the jump which earned our wings for us, was a night jump. We took off from Fort Benning, flew over the Chattahoochee River and jumped into Alabama. The jump was from 800 feet and in a very light rain. Jumping at night was different from jumping in daylight and I was surprised to find how well you can see in the dark. What was difficult was the ability to judge distances, especially to judge the height of an object. It was nearly impossible to determine whether a pole was a fence post or a telephone pole. Your sense of direction is not as keen in daylight either, you do not have the sun by which to orient yourself and at night the limit of vision is restricted. Upon landing in Alabama we were supposed to assemble in a nearby wooded area - I never did find the woods or the sergeant. A few of us joined together and finally found our way back.

I now had made five jumps and was considered a qualified jumper, as were the rest on the men in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, but we did not get our wings until a few days later.