



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## MailCall No. 2213

May 11, 2014

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

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## *Lt. Col. Harold "Hal" Beddow*



It is with great sadness that I report that **Hal Beddow**, 1st Airborne Task Force, died this morning. [May 9]

I was fortunate to have traveled with Hal to the south of France for his return trip in 2009, when he received the Legion of Honor. He so enjoyed that trip, and was thrilled to find Le Mitran, where he'd landed and which was the first field hospital in the hours after the jump.

Hal and Helen hosted the legendary Savannah reunion in 2005. They are also regulars at the Kissimmee reunions in January and greatly enjoyed the times they made it to the Palm Springs reunions. Hal as a vocal spokesperson for airborne WWII history, Dragoon especially, and fierce supporter of his fellow Vietnam veterans.

In later years, he often helped welcome the troops back from Iraq and Afghanistan, going out to the airport to shake hands as they headed into the terminal. He insisted on shaking each soldier's hand, saying - and I'm paraphrasing - that it was important because he'd returned from Vietnam to a far different "welcome."

Hal would march in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Savannah every year, wearing his WWII-style uniform. He was a favorite on the local news circuit, and we're fortunate that those interviews exist both in print and on video.

Hal was a gentleman who fiercely loved his dear wife Helen, and a good friend to his fellow troopers.

Funeral arrangements are pending at this time.

Claire G.



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From Lane Bass Beddow's page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/lane.beddow>



With a comment about Hal's medals from Jon Heroux:

"There are some pretty impressive patches in Ribbons. The 1st Airborne Task Force was short lived but jumped into Southern France as part of Operation Dragoon in summer of 1944. The TF was disbanded by Nov 1944. The Airborne Glider 1024 patch is impressive as is the British US Allied Airborne Patch. Directly below the Allied Airborne patch is a US Army WWII Occupation Medal. Also the Brown and Green is a European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 2 service stars. Next to that to the left is the American Campaign Medal (interesting) to the other side is the WWII Victory Medal. In the next row is



the National Defense Service Medal (2 of those) At the bottom I also see a Vietnam Service Medal (with 4, count them, 4, campaign stars). Below that and to the right is possibly a Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, patch (which means he was likely in country early on when the war was really about Spec Ops and intel kind of people). Next to the Vietnam Service Medal is the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the Armed Forces Reserve. Below that is a Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and next to that is South Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Device. All in all, he did his time and lived and saw a lot in that time. A life well lived.

What it doesn't show is his Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal and others. In his age, he might have gotten the order of them a little jacked up in the pictures I saw, but still, he got them. Life well lived."



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### Jumping behind enemy lines: Operation Dragoon

#### US Army Fort Benning

Posted: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 4:05 PM EDT

By Sara Belsole



COLUMBUS, GA - "My first jump, naturally I was shaking. I was just 18 years old."

**Lieutenant Colonel Hal Beddow** was a member of the 517th Parachute Regiment Combat Team in the 1940's.

"When you're looking down like that, things are going on in your head. So that's what they taught us then to look out like this all the time, don't look down, look up," Beddow says.

Beddow was one of the soldiers who jumped behind enemy lines into Southern France 68 years ago today, on August 15, 1944 for Operation Dragoon.

"And out we would go. And we pulled the chute from our backs and out we would go and pull and here comes the chute open," Beddow says.

The operation was a huge success. US Troops and Allied Forces were able to force the Germans to retreat, liberating most of France in four weeks.

"Anyone involved in that and goes through those things, you never ever forget them," Beddow says.

And in honor of Operation Dragoon's 68th anniversary, I am going to jump off the 34 foot tower at Fort Benning's Airborne School.

The 34-foot tower is the first of three jumps soldiers in Airborne School will complete.

I stuck to the small one, but airborne soldiers will also jump from a 250-foot tower and then from a plane before graduating.

"When we actually have to go into another country, it's one of the main force of entry for most special operation units and conventional units. It puts a large force behind enemy lines and basically disrupts pretty much everything in the battle field," Airborne Instructor SFC Matthew Hill says.

Airborne School at Fort Benning graduates about 18,000 paratroopers a year, and things haven't changed much since beddow did his first jump.

"All the towers are the same, concepts are the same since 1940, nothing has really changed. The equipment has changed, but not really the soldiers, the motivation or the training," Hill says.

The film "Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed" premieres at seven tonight at the National Infantry Museum.

It tells the story of Beddow and his fellow paratroopers in Operation Dragoon.



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Hal and Helen Beddow at Camp Toccoa