



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## MailCall No. 2216

June 1, 2014

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

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

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## Memorial Day – May 26, 2014

A few more items came in about Memorial Day events, after I sent out last week's MailCall. – BB.

Commemorations at Rhone American Cemetery in Draguignan, France, from  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/AIRBORNE-MUSEUM-15-Aout-1944-Association>



Memorial Day / 25/05/2014 /  
Rhône American Cemetery

Once again a great day for great heroes, French never forget the ultimate sacrifice of this soldiers.

Airborne Task Force Museum Association put down seven flower wreaths on seven heroes graves, for the seven years of the hard and bloody occupation of our country.

May they rest in peace for ever.

Video about the Rhone American Cemetery: <http://media.oaktreesys.com/abmc/video/cemeteries/rh.wmv>



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

Here are some photos of the 517<sup>th</sup> graves that were honored in Draguignan. Notice the flowers, the flags, the photos, and the recognition for each individual soldier. Thank you **Adrien** and all the members of the Airborne Museum Association.



### Pvt James J. PACEY

517th Parachute Infantry Regiment

KIA 12th September 1944 — at Rhone American Cemetery and Memorial.



### Cpl Daniel A. Fisher

517th PIR, Hq 1st Battalion

KIA 15 August 1944, cutting a wire who was supposed to be a phone wire, he cut the high voltage wire of Les Nourradons, near Trans en Provence. — at Cimetière Américain Draguignan.



### Pfc Robert W. BROWN

460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion

KIA 5 Sept 1944 in l'Escarène, under the railway bridge where the 75mm Howitzer were hidden to fire the Col de Braus and Sospel area. — at Cimetière Américain Draguignan.



### Cpl Arthur E. SHERMAN

517th PIR, "F" company

KIA 18 Sept 1944 in the bloody Hill 1098. — at Cimetière Américain Draguignan.



I hope **Melanie Hanson** doesn't mind me including this recent photo of her father's site in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery. — BB

**Gary Davis**, F Company (father of Melanie Hanson)



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

### *Other MailCall News*

I have made what I think is a HUGE faux pas in comments I made in Mail Call #2214, dated May 18, 2014, on page 5. I FORGOT to mention the hospitality of **Patricia et Roland Orengo**, and their many friends, who welcomed us to France, and Sospel, in such a special way! I have sent them a personal apology and would ask that you print this public one.

I don't know how I forgot to mention them, as I had planned to; and was quite surprised to see that I hadn't put in words what I was thinking at the time. No excuses. Just a heartfelt apology.

Thanks!

**Mike Wells**

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RE: **Albert Delgado** - KIA Battle of the Bulge 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Good evening,

I just came across your website and saw that someone was looking for relatives of **Albert Delgado**. I am Albert's niece, the daughter of his youngest brother, Carlos Delgado. There was a large story about my Uncle Tarsi as well. I know this is my family as these stories are all to familiar.

I emailed the person who posted the notice directly, but hoped you may be able to assist me.

Thank you,  
Melissa Delgado Stutenroth

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Hi Melissa,

Thank you for letting us know. I remember the note from Paul Hamilton in 2011, who had some possessions of **Albert Delgado**.

Also, we had another previous note from Paul in 2009, which contained a mailing address and phone number, in case this helps in contacting him. See: <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/1786.htm>

Please let us know if you are able to reach Paul.

Bob Barrett

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**Cpl. Albert A. Delgado**, A Company, was KIA in Belgium on January 16, 1945. He is buried in the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, CA.



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

I was very happy to read the comments from **Merle McMorrow** and **Shirley Catterson** regarding my book, *Autopsy of a Battle*. I would like to excuse myself towards Shirley that the names of the troopers are not written under that photo on page 67, where they are standing under the nose of the Dakota. The reason is that I received conflicting information on who the soldiers were; so I decided to simply put their company, without their names, to avoid potential mistakes.

Shirley, it indeed sounds like your dad was first in the 509th Parachute Battalion, before being in the 517th. There is another trooper who is still alive called **Earl Whisenhunt** who was also first in the 509th, before ending up in the 517th. I am not sure what the reason of the transfers was; perhaps they were wounded, then sent to the famous replacement depots, and ending up in a different paratrooper unit?

I would be very interested to hear the thoughts of other readers of my book, as it has just only been released, and I have received no feedback from anyone for the moment.

Regards

**Jean-Loup Gassend**

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Hi Shirley,

I can't say for sure when your Dad was with the 509<sup>th</sup> before the 517<sup>th</sup>, but it makes sense since that would explain the Africa, Sicily and Italy before joining the 517<sup>th</sup>. Transferring was very common. (My Dad, Ben Barrett also joined the 517<sup>th</sup> in France.) According to this history of the 509<sup>th</sup> from Wikipedia, the 509<sup>th</sup> was so devastated that by the end of the Bulge they were dismantled and all became replacements.

Bob B.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/509th\\_Infantry\\_Regiment\\_\(United\\_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/509th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))

The 509th carried out the first US combat drop during the invasion of [North Africa](#). The transport planes flew all the way from English airfields to the African coast. This first operation was unsuccessful, with 7 of its 39 C-47s widely scattered. Only 10 aircraft actually dropped their troops, while the others unloaded after 28 troop carriers, nearly out of fuel, landed on the Sebokra d'Oran, a dry lake near their target. The 509th marched overland to occupy its objective, and on 15 November, 300 paratroopers successfully dropped on the [Youks-les-Bains Airfield](#).

Forty-six Paratroopers from the 509th participated in the liberation of [Ventotene](#), a small Italian island, on 9 September 1943. The German commander was tricked into surrendering to the weaker American force before realizing his mistake. An account of this is given in [John Steinbeck's "Once There Was a War."](#)

Later, the 509th saw two more combat jumps in [Italy](#) and [Southern France](#). After landing, they were often used as elite mountain infantry in the Italian mountains and [French Alps](#). [Paul B. Huff](#), a member of the 509th, was the first American Paratrooper awarded the [Medal of Honor](#) on 29 February 1944 for action at [Anzio](#), Italy.

During the [Battle of the Bulge](#), the 509th fought in Belgium to blunt the German attack. An account of this battle is described in the book "Bloody Clash at Sadzot." The war ended for the 509th at the end of January 1945 near [St. Vith](#), Belgium, with only about 50 remaining unwounded of the original 700 who entered the battle. At this time, the 509th was disbanded, and the men left were used as replacements for the U.S. [82d Airborne Division](#).



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Thanks so much for this, Bob. I'm going to do some more research myself to see what else I can learn. I know that my Dad told me all this, once upon a time, but for some reason the numbers of the regiments just never stuck with me or had real meaning until now. I regret so much that I didn't listen more closely when I had the chance.

All the best,  
Shirley

Hi Bob, Had the flag for the weekend and spent some time in prayer for our military, then later I opened the mail and found your newsletter.

I am so grateful to be on your list of people. I, of course, cried my eyes out through the video.

I read the newsletter twice, about how we are remembered, the Czech lady who has attended the grave all of these years.

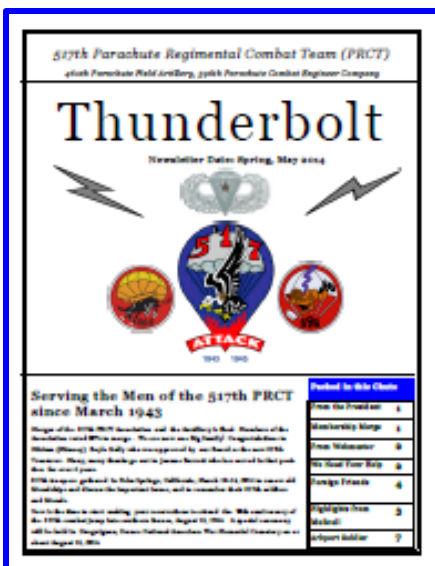
Glad to see that **Jean-Loup Gassend's** book is out. My book is based on an OSS agent sent to France prior to the southern invasion and reading in the newsletter about **Cecil Doty's** parachute jump let me know that I got this part right in my book. Small important detail.

Loved all of the pictures.

I could just go on and on. I will more than likely read it again and again. I had been stuck on the important chapter on the main character's part once the invasion starts but I think just reading this newsletter helped me to get out of 'writer's fog'.

Thanks again for all that you do. Your father would be so proud of what you have done for the 517th.

Many blessings, **Anne Justice**



**The Spring-Summer 2014 Thunderbolt is finalized and is in the mail!**

Troopers and families can expect to receive it this week. For online readers who can't wait, you can read it here now:

<http://517prct.org/thunderbolt/2014%20May-June/Thunderbolt%20SpringSummer%202014.pdf>

Thank you Lory and Claire!



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

A belated Happy 90th Birthday to our President **Allan Johnson**. President Johnson has served the 517th PRCT Association since he was voted in at the Atlanta Reunion in 2011 as our most recent President. Allan has served long and hard making sure he attended all of the mini reunions and 517th get togethers such as we had last year at the Camp Toccoa, Currahee mountain run where some of you attended. **Allan Johnson** and **Hal Beddows** both attended and during the run they initiated a new tradition of having a WW II veteran at the top of the mountain where they were shaking hands and encouraging runners to complete their run up and down Currahee Mountain. Because they instituted this the Currahee mountain run this year will have another WWII veteran atop the mountain encouraging runners. Allan has also been a main stay in attending the celebrations in France, and has represented our organization overseas. Again this year he will be attending the 70th anniversary of the 517th jumping into southern France on August 15, 1944.

Allan, I wish I had 1/2 of your energy! You are the man!! Thank you for your many years of serving the 517th. May you have many more happy birthdays!!!

### Lory Curtis

My friend and drummer in my band, Tom Rammer took a vacation to Honduras. He knows I love the 517th and he is also a fan so he took this picture of the hat that I bought for him when we took our trip to Toccoa. I hope everyone had a fine Memorial day and thank you vets for your service and sacrifice to keep us free.



### Rick Sweet

Dear Bob: We have just finished reading the last three Mail Calls after returning from 15 days visiting Berlin, Dresden, Prague and Teresinstad, the Hitler "show camp" through which so many Jews passed on their way to the death camps. It was a trip that reminded us of the many wonderful things as well as the evil things that mankind does for other human beings and especially how important defeating Hitler was to saving freedom for all. Thus, to read the last Mail Call recounting how grateful the Czech people still are for the efforts of American soldiers was particularly meaningful this Memorial Day especially as we remember those who have recently departed this world for their eternal reward, like **Hal Beddow** and **Cecil Doty**. Thank you, Bob to you and your Dad, for providing this place, Mail Call, where we can come together to share in the memories of the wonderful men of the 517th. The pictures of Hal and Helen especially touch our hearts! The men we honor certainly married outstanding women.

The speech of the Ft. Bragg general at one of the reunions was wonderful as is the news of the publications of Eddy's and Jean-Loup's books.

Happy Birthday to **President Johnson** -- how handsome he looks (such "eye candy" he is). Congratulations to **Leo Dean** and to **Mimsey Boyle** on his latest and her first jump. Our thanks to all for carrying on the spirit and memory of our outstanding heroes. God bless them all.

### Pat Seitz and Alan Greer



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

From: Leslie Fenton  
To: Attorney at Law HOWARD E HENSLEIGH  
Subject: **SGT Frank Fenton**

Howard,

This is a Large Boulder with bronze plate inscribing a memorial to my Dad. Placed across from the North East Township building in the Township park. The township building, Park and many other changes took place on "Dad's Watch"

It reads.

In recognition of 52 years of Hard Work and Dedicated Service From 1950 Through 2001 To North East Township and It's Residents by Frank Fenton.

"Sometimes I Can Do The Impossible But if You Want a Miracle, It Might Take Me a Little Longer"

**FRANK E FENTON**

Retired

North East Township Supervisor / Road Foreman January 7, 2002

The picture of the Cemetery has my Dad and Mom, Great Grandparents and Great-GrandParents. Great-Great Grandparents are in a spot about 10 miles away. They got here in 1816 which was within 20 years of when the very first white folks started braving life around these parts.

Trust this finds you and yours, well.

**Les Fenton**

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Dear Les,

Thank you for your inspirational Memorial Day message and for this one which is a tribute to your father's life after the time he spent as a leader in the heavy machine gun/bazooka platoon of Headquarters Co., 3rd Battalion, 517th. From what we knew of Frank then, this tribute is no surprise. He was too busy with his responsibilities to the Township to attend our summer reunions, but we did track each other down.

When we were in touch many years ago, it took me a while to figure out where the North East Township of PA was located. I looked at the north east part of the state, but it wasn't there. It was a surprise to find that is further north than any other township, but in the small North West part of the state that joins Lake Erie.

I still give your father credit for saving my life by his accurate BAR fire into that house south of the tracks in our D plus one attack on the south end of les Arcs. He was a good man and you are to be commended for your remembrances of him.

Highest Airborne regards,  
**Howard Hensleigh**



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

Bonjour,

Je suis un ancien parachutiste Français. Je fais des recherches sur un épisode de l'histoire du régiment au sein duquel j'ai servi pendant 19 ans. Il s'agit du 1er Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes.

Il semblerait, qu'en Août 1944, des éléments de ce glorieux Régiment furent rattachés au 517 PRCT. Ces éléments auraient été commandés par un Capitaine Français, le Capitaine BOFFY. Ils auraient été largués pour aider les unités para US à se diriger dans l'arrière-pays. Cette opération aurait eu le nom « Opération DRAGOON »

[Hello, I am a former French paratrooper. I do research on an episode in the history of the regiment in which I served for 19 years. This is the 1st Regiment of Chasseurs Paratroopers.]

It seems that in August 1944, elements of this glorious regiment were attached to 517 STIP. These items have been ordered by a French Captain, Captain BOFFY. They were dropped to help para U.S. units to move in the hinterland. This would have the name "Operation DRAGOON"]

« In a larger sense, the operation was intended to keep the German coastal forces from getting north and impeding the movement of Allied forces across northern France. It was a beautiful use of the airborne. Also, the nature of the terrain and the situation in the South of France was such that regular, heavy infantry outfits would have had a lot more difficulty in accomplishing those missions. The airborne was more flexible. For instance, we chased the enemy up into the Maritime Alps and then deployed along the passes in small groups and engaged in mountain warfare. You couldn't expect a regular infantry outfit to do that to the degree that we did. »

Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough 509th PIB Commanding

Thank you for your help

Lionel LEVEL  
lionellelevel@hotmail.fr

*I found this in the Spring 1987 issue of the 596<sup>th</sup> Wings newsletters. It is a clipping from from the Static Line, February 1986.*

*Note the mention of Aime Leocard, a longtime friend of the 517<sup>th</sup>.*

### Southern France Airborne Memorial



Memorial to Parachutists at Mitan, near LaMotte, France. French Paratroopers at annual wreath laying ceremony on 14 August 1985.

Each year on 14 August, the French people of the area conduct a wreath laying ceremony at the Monument to Parachutists in Mitan, near La Motte. The ceremony is to honor all the Airborne troops who participated in the Southern France invasion in August, 1944. The photographs show the Memorial Stele and the ceremony of 14 August 1985.

A contingent of French paratroopers participated and a wreath honoring the 517th P.R.C.T. was placed by three men who are Honorary Members of our Combat Team. They are L to R: Col.

*Rene Boffy, who jumped with us in 1944 from the plane with Gen. Robt. Frederick, Aime Leocard, who was a resistance fighter in southern France and later the Founder and President of Souvenir Franco-American, and Jacques Laubie, who also participated in the invasion as a French paratrooper.*

Col. Boffy sent these photos along with his wish that our members have a good year in 1986 and that he may soon again welcome some of us who may be visiting in the area where we jumped together with him in 1944.

Does anyone have any more information about the 1er Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes, that jumped as part of Operation Dragoon?





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



Memorial Day 2014 ceremonies at the  
Rhone American Cemetery,  
Draguignan, France

Greetings -

I just spoke with Alison Libersa, the cemetery associate at the Rhone Cemetery in Draguignan, France.

There will be large, official ceremonies there on 15 August. She needs the full guest list as soon as possible. Please email me at [clairejgib@comcast.net](mailto:clairejgib@comcast.net) and I will start compiling a full list. Or if you send it to Bob at Mail Call, he can forward it to me.

**Please include:**

- **full name of each veteran in attendance, including unit and company, and basic contact information (address and stateside phone number)**
- **full name of each person in your party, including address and stateside phone number**
- **if you are representing a deceased veteran or one unable to travel, which veteran you are affiliated with (unit and company). Again, provide complete information.**
- Contact information for your stay in France would also be great but we don't have to have it at this time.

If you know someone not on Mail Call who might be planning to go, please let them know AND let us know. Thank you!

This is the 70th, folks. There will be big celebrations with lots of people. You are VIPs, but they need to know about you. Please get your tickets and join us!

There will be "unofficial" ceremonies on 16 August - still large - which will likely involve the reenactors and many friends to the 517 from all over Europe.

We will start with events official and unofficial in Sospel around 9 or 10 August and move down to the Var region near Draguignan on 13 August.

Keep me posted! Thank you all. Airborne all the way!

**Claire Giblin**



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

Subject: 70th ANNIVERSARY OF DRAGOON

I am **Jeff Rossi**, son of **George Ross**, F Company, 517.

I would like a contact email or phone number of **Gene Frice/Karen Frice Wallace** in regards to travel and arrangements to Provence this August. I am very interested in joining any group going.

Please forward my email and phone (612 822 7069) to anyone organizing a trip there.

Thank you and regards,

**Jeff Rossi**

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Jeff,

Thanks for the note. I think via the 517 page and your inserting the many, many pictures from your dad. I also think a extended family member and I talked recently. Maybe it's the late night 2AM now and a fuzzy mind.

Anyway, yes we are going to a number of our favorite sites, as well as to Nice for 15 Aug. Karen (while currently badly injured) has worked on our family schedule including Holland, Berlin, Garmish and Nice. Most not relating to the 517, but close to our collective heart.

We are currently scheduled to arrive Nice 14-21Aug. That leaves us the latter dates to follow our Nice (actually LeMuy to the mt's of Levens, Luceram, (F Company's 1098), Col de Braus and Sospel, and Italian border. Some villages up the Var River.

We are necessarily traveling as a family with our own travel, lodging, etc., There is no tour group scheduled, however we will meet with all the local planned events. We had a problem with this in the past where our own 517 families or associated friends wandered away, on their own, leaving the locals very unhappy and disappointed. It's party time in respect to their "Liberation" and not ours.

We would be happy to have you join with us, however you will necessarily have to be on your own for the "necessaries" as they say in Europe. Karen and I will certainly assist you in recommendations, contacts and all that stuff. Contact us at any time. Time is getting short.

**Gene Frice  
Karen Wallace**

Be happy to see you

Gene

PS For all three years I was just 5 paces in front of your dad or 5 paces behind him. We shared the same foxholes, the weather and the same incoming round. Do you remember Margaret and I meeting you in your back yard and you were the bartender. You met my son Mark (also in bartender school at the time). George and Teresa were my dearest friends.



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

Hi, I'm from France, my name is Fabrizio AKA Mister Moon  
I'm an M9 bayonet collector,  
Here my website [WWW.M9M4.COM](http://WWW.M9M4.COM)

I'm from Nice city, between Monaco & Cannes ( french riviera )

Two days ago i was near my city at Col de Braus and i found many military parts on the field. I search, some information on the web about which army was at Col de Braus, and i found the 517th division.

I don't know who you are, but if you know some Gi's always in life, i put in my message, some photos of the things that i found near THIS : [http://www.517prct.org/photos/don\\_fraser\\_cp/don\\_fraser\\_cp.htm](http://www.517prct.org/photos/don_fraser_cp/don_fraser_cp.htm)

M9 M4 [usm9m4@gmail.com](mailto:usm9m4@gmail.com)





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

FROM ENEMIES TO BROTHERS...



70 years ago, one of World War II's most incredible moments took place...

As German fighter ace Franz Stigler approached the badly damaged American B-17 he took his finger off the trigger. "My God, how are you still flying?" Franz thought.

Inside the bomber's cockpit, the 21-year-old rookie American pilot, Charlie Brown, was thinking the same thing.

An air battle had shredded his B-17. When Charlie leaned forward to check an engine on his right wing, a sight made his heart skip. There, three feet from his wingtip flew a gray German Bf-109 fighter. Charlie closed his eyes then opened them but the German was still there.

"He's going to destroy us," Charlie concluded. But instead, Franz Stigler did something incredible—he nodded to Charlie.

In the presence of his enemy, Franz had changed. He had only become a fighter pilot to avenge his brother, a pilot killed early in the war. But there, alongside the defenseless B-17, Franz decided to break the cycle of violence, to spare the bomber and more—to escort it out of Germany.

It was a gesture that Charlie Brown would never forget. In his old age, he would search the world for Franz and in 1990 they would reunite, not as former enemies but as brothers separated for 46 years.

Their story is told in the international bestselling book, "A Higher Call," now available in bookstores everywhere, in time for Father's Day.

70 years after "the encounter," we honor Charlie Brown and his guardian angel, his enemy, Franz Stigler.

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkVc5o1UXAA>



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

### *517<sup>th</sup> Association Business*

As some of you know, **Joanne Barrett** (yes, she is my sister) has served as the Association's treasurer for many years. She spent an enormous effort into reorganizing and managing the Association's bank accounts and also a great deal of effort, with the help of **Howard Hensleigh**, to get our affairs in order with the IRS. Joanne is now handing the reins over to **Miriam "Mimsey" Boyle Kelly**, whom you all know.

Thanks Joanne, for your great work, and thanks Mimsey for offering to help. -- BB

### *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 Miriam Boyle Kelly  
19 Oriole Court  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

### *Army Life, as told by PFC William B. Houston (Part 5)*

Another chapter from **William Houston's** biography is on the following pages.  
This chapter covers "**We Sail for Europe**" from **May 1944**.

Next week: "*We Arrive in Italy*"





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## WE SAIL FOR EUROPE

For about ten days we waited at Camp Patrick Henry to ship out, ten days with very little to do. A few of us took a walk around the camp to see what we could - there was nothing to see. Then we went to the P.X. but the lines were so long that we decided we weren't hungry after all. Our next stop was at the service club which looked rather plain from the outside, but was very nice inside.

Even at Camp Patrick Henry poor Bud ended up on K.P. To be honest it was nice to have one or more of your own men on the serving line, they took good care of you when you went through the line by giving out generous servings.

The 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion boarded the Panama Canal ship "Cristobal" on the 17th of May for an unknown destination. We sailed down the James River and out to sea but it was not until the third day at sea that they announced that we were headed for Italy.

Life at sea was not too bad considering that we were aboard a troopship and the ship was not overloaded. Unlike most wartime troopships where troops had to share their bunk we had our own. The bunks were pipe frames anchored to vertical posts by means of a hinges. The vertical posts were located between two bunks or on the side nearest the bulkhead. A chain, from the vertical post to the opposite side of the frame, anchored the frame at the head and foot of the bunk. The mattress, or rather what should have been a mattress, was a piece of canvas which was laced to the pipe frame on all four sides with a rope. As there was not much room between the person above or below you or the floor, only about two and a half feet, it soon became evident that the best way to gain a little extra space was to loosen the ropes of your bunk and tighten the ropes on the one above you. This worked well but it was not long before everyone got wise to the idea and the scheme lost its value. The best approach was to adjust yours and climb into the bunk early so the person above you could not loosen his, which he would not do if you were present. A tactical error was to come to bed late because, not only was it impossible to adjust the bunks with so many people around, but the ship was blacked out and even if there was nobody in the area you could not do a good job in the dark. Another trick that was pulled in the dark was to untie the ropes of a bunk, being careful that it was not the one above you, so that when the guy got into his bunk the canvas would fall through.

There was not much to do on the trip over except to read, that is if you had any reading material. I had a paperback book, "Withering Heights" which I never did finish because someone took the book before I had a chance to finish it. The sad part is that I was using a picture of Bobbie as a bookmark and that went too. We did wonder around the ship as much as possible to see how the "other half lives" (the navy). The ordinary seaman had pretty good quarters with two to four to a cabin. There were sheets on the bunks, a light over each bunk, shelves for storage and one sailor even had a big rag doll on his bunk. Of course our officer's quarters were off limits to us. We did spend a lot of time on deck in the sun. The weather was warm and sunny and I don't think there was a wave over five feet high all of our way across the Atlantic or through the Mediterranean. While crossing the Atlantic the ship zig-zagged as a precaution against submarines but none were sighted. There were several abandon ship drills and never was because of a real threat. The drills did help to fill the extra time we had on our hands.



There was a P.K. on board which was open at designated hours. The P.K. was not at all like a civilian store, the prices were very low and you could not buy just a single candy bar or one package of cigarettes, you had to buy a box, carton or even a case.

On board we were served only two meals a day. The chow lines were so long that most of the day was spent waiting in line for the two meals. To make matters worse there was an officer stationed at the mess-hall door and if your hair was too long or you were not clean shaven the officer would pull you out of line and you got a haircut or shaved before you could get back in the line - at the end, naturally. What we got to eat had no relationship to the time of day. It could very well be chili, pickles or boiled potatoes for breakfast and everything was piled on one tray. We ate standing up at tables about four feet high and had to hurry so there would be room for others. Bud knows about that better than I do since he spent so much time on K.P. He probably did not know that there was more to the ship than the mess-hall.

There was a public address system aboard ship which played music all day. Every evening they had a regular news broadcast and played transcriptions of radio programs such as Jack Benny, Henry Aldrich or Bob Hope. That was about the extent of our entertainment. There were two things I did not like about life aboard a troopship. The first was the toilet facilities. Instead of stools there was a trough with toilet seats on it, somehow it reminded me of a large out-house. Water ran through the trough, from one end to the other, which provided a constant flush. Because of the rolling action of the ship it soon became evident that the more desirable positions were at the water inlet end of the trough. Since our passage was on such a calm sea it did not make a great deal of difference but it would be something to consider on rough water.

Also the showers were rather crude. They were crowded and the water temperature was poorly controlled. The water in the enlisted men's showers was saltwater for which there was a special soap, "saltwater soap". This soap felt like sandpaper on your skin and there was no way on earth, or at sea, that you could work up a lather. The saltwater left a residue on your skin that made it hard to decide whether it was better to take a shower or to go dirty and sweaty.

On the way over to Italy two men tried to process some medical alcohol by filtering it through a loaf of bread to make it safe to drink. There was a flaw in their method and as a result both died from poisoning.

As we neared the end of our cruise we passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea. About a day before we passed Gibraltar we were joined by our first escort, a Dutch destroyer, which left us soon after we entered the Mediterranean. We hugged the African coast, close enough to be within sight of land, then turned north and headed for Italy. After thirteen days at sea we docked in Naples, Italy.