



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2218

June 15, 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)

www.517prct.org
MailCall@517prct.org
www.517prct.org/archives
www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
www.517prct.org/archives

MailCall News

Love watching this, even again.

Nila Gott (Vasquez)

See Nacho's bio on 517th on Amazon ebooks

Subject: Maybe the best commercial ever filmed and not a word is spoken

Food City, a Food Chain, is located in the Southeast, headquartered in Bristol, TN. This is a great commercial. Not a word spoken, and none needed. Very few commercials deserve to go viral. This one does.

Take 1 minute & Click here...<http://stg.do/OdQg>



To: MailCall, Steve Gomez

Good Morning! Have thought about you guys ...our Father's recently...wanted to let you know you have not been forgotten...my husband had painful back issues since February...able to lie down OR stand...recovering now so I am trying to get at a big sort through of picture containers...hope you and families are well

Christine Mace (daughter of **Cameron Gauthier**, 460th)



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Subject: Informations about 1er RCP

Bonjour, I am very happy for reading for your answer.

We confirm that, with others 1er RCP French airtroopers, we thought. But we don't have enough informations.

Can you help us ? Like names of the others French troopers.... or links with US vétérans who have participated at this opérations...

Thanks for your help

Lionel LEVEL

I think that **René Boffy** and the members of the 1er RCP jumped with General Fredericks (1ATF) and the 509th. But I did find this note that some of them joined with the 3rd Battalion of the 517th after the jump: <http://1stabtf.com/paras-francais-choc-rcp.htm>

I will ask the 517th troopers and see who might remember them.

Bob B.

1er Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes	Unité assigné
Capitaine René Boffy	HQ 1st Airborne Task Force
Adjudant Besse	HQ 1st Airborne Task Force
Adjudant Weber	509th Parachute Infantry
Sergent Barjavel	?
Para Durieux	509th Parachute Infantry
Para Passart	3/517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
Para Louis Arnaud	3/517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
Para Jay	?
?	?
?	?
?	?
?	?

*"I jumped with the heavy weapons section of HQ 3. We had no French paratroopers in our stick. Rapidly after the jump, I put **Johnny Neiler** (1st Lt. John Neiler) as S-2. He came into the regiment to replace **Albin Dearing** who was injured when jumping or injured shortly after. In the 3rd Bn. S-2 we had two French paratroopers with us for several weeks. "*

-- Lt. Howard Hensleigh - S-2/HQ 3, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment



Louis Arnaud

« J'ai sauté avec la section d'arme lourde du HQ 3. Nous n'avions pas de parachutistes français dans notre stick. Rapidement après le saut, j'ai mis Johnny Neiler (1st Lt. John Neiler) comme S-2. Il est venu dans le régiment pour remplacer Albin Dearing qui a été blessé lors du saut ou blessé peu de temps après. Dans le 3rd Bn. S-2 nous avions deux parachutistes français avec nous pendant plusieurs semaines. »

Souvenir du 1st Lt. Howard Hensleigh - S-2/HQ 3, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment



Jacques Debray

Also, this site lists that **Jacques Debray**, one of the French paratroopers, who may have jumped with the 460th, was killed on August 15 in Trans-en-Provence shortly after hitting the ground.



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Subject: Questions about **James J. Pacey** and Purple Medal 517 prct unit

Hello....My name is Kimberly Zonaras from Dayton Ohio. My husband James Zonaras is the nephew of **James J. Pacey** who died in France in September, 1944. I was working on some genealogy for him and found both this website and another...the US Militaria that both contain the same information about him. My Mother-in Law Catherine Pacey Zonaras is James J. Pacey's still living sister.

In both the bio here on this site....and a forum in the Militaria site...there are pictures of his purple heart. Apparantly a man named Lubos had purchased the medal from another seller and was asking about James.

My questions are....is there some way to get in contact with the man who has the Purple Medal. The family still remaining living has no idea why the Purple Medal is in Europe instead of here with the family. We would be most interested in knowing if Lubos knows who had it before him and we'd love to try to get to the bottom of it. My husband, being his eldest nephew...and his mother would certainly love to have it back in the family..but if that's not possible, we would love to know more about its journey.

thank you so much for any help you can be.

My husband is named after James J. Pacey as you can see and anything we can find out would be so much appreciated.

Yours, **Kimberly Zonaras**

Kimberly,

I just managed to find a contact at the US militaria forum, and sent a note to the person who has the purple heart. Back in 2011, he was looking for more information about James Pacey, so hopefully he will email me back and I can put you in touch.

In the meantime, I did find two documents which mention James Pacey:

Memorial Service in December 1944:

http://www.517prct.org/documents/dec44memorial/dec_1944_memorial_booklet.htm

Morning report for Sept 14 1944: http://www.517prct.org/morning_reports/pacey.jpg

I will let you know if I find more.

Bob Barrett

Thank you so much Mr. Barrett for your help. I sure hope the man does get back to you!! Thank you also for the documents. Much appreciated!!

Yours, Kimberly Zonaras



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Kimberly,

Good news. I was contacted by a Robert Wilson, a collector in North Carolina, who now has **James Pacey's** purple heart. From his website, it appears that he is a legitimate, proud and respectful collector. <http://www.purpleheartsnorthcarolina.com/>

I asked him if it was OK for you to contact him to trade information about Pacey and the medal and he agreed.

His email is ... and his cell phone is Please let me know what you find out.

Bob Barrett

Hi Kimberly,

Interesting timing, but I just received my copy of Jean-Loup Gassend's book: "Operation Dragoon – Autopsy of a Battle". It includes numerous accounts, from both sides, of the Battle for Hill 1098, in September 1944, including how James Pacey and others were killed. There is even a picture of Pacey on page 472.

Bob B.

Hi Bob... Yes! The author has been in contact with my mother-in-law getting information etc for his book. We are anxious to get our copy too :)

I did want to tell you that we heard from Mr Wilson... Unfortunately he wants a very large amount of money for the medal.... \$1600.00!! I can't find anywhere where they are selling for that much. He says that's what he paid for it. So unfortunately, he will be keeping it because though we feel the family should have it... 1600.00 is out of the question for us or my mother-in-law. Very sad :(

We sure wish we knew why James's mother... My husbands grandmother didn't receive it? Anyway, thank you so much for your help. It looks like his medal will have to stay out of our hands

Kimberly Zonaras

Ouch! That is a ridiculous price. I can't believe that a normal collector would pay that much. I hate to say it, but maybe he is hoping that since you're family you might be willing to go that high. I'd check his website and eBay after he settles down and see what the going rate really is.

Did you find out how it ended up in a collector's hands? Did a family member sell it in the past?

Bob Barrett

Oh and No... They never would have sold it!!

Kimberly Zonaras



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Dear Howard:

You are such a gifted writer and teacher, in addition to being an extraordinarily kind and generous human being. How blessed we all are that you took the time to capture, in a clear and concise thumbnail, the headline history of the the 517th, 460th and 596th to help student Keith Chan write his report. It is an excellent "Big Picture" especially for those of us who have heard many of the individual parts. You have synthesized them in a way that anyone can understand. Thank you. We also enjoyed your exchange with your granddaughter. Based on Alan's and my lovely time with you last October (which we still savor), Alison is very lucky to have you as her grandfather and to have visited your battlefields with **Roland and Patricia**. We had hoped that Dad could take his granddaughter, Jordan, to do the same when she graduated, but she took five years and the Good Lord decided Dad needed to join his Band of Brothers first!

Dear Bob:

Speaking of Dad, today is the one year anniversary of his death and I can't tell you how much reading this Mail Call meant to me. First, thank you for how beautiful it is -- both in it visual presentation and substantive content. Second, what a joy it was to read so many references to those who have come to mean so much to Alan and me -- **Howard, Ben, Bob and Joanne Barrett, Claire and her Dad, our 517th President, Lory Curtis, Helen and Hal Beddow, Maria, Irma and Arnold Targnion, Mickael Soldi and Eric, Frank Ramos, Kent Immerfall's** poetic tribute to Hal Beddow, and so many, many more. What memories! Thank you for sharing yourselves plus the wonderful experiences and memories. Most of all, thank you to the outstanding men of the 517th, 460th and 596th without whose sacrifices we would not have the opportunity to live in freedom as we do. May each of us be inspired to continue their legacy of selfless service to other before self and the promotion of the ideals for which this one nation, under God, is dedicated.

God bless you all.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

Hi Howard, I would like to inform you that your information was brilliant and that it helped me get good grades on my essay. Once again I would like to thank you so very much and it is a privilege to talk to a World War 2 Veteran.

Keith Chan

Dear Keith,

Thanks for the message. Glad you did a good job and got a good grade. You asked for my picture. There are several on the website.

Highest regards,

Howard Hensleigh



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hello,

You may or may not recall my name. I sent you a Camo Jump Pic of my Uncle **Charles M. Bonaventura** and his jump platoon.

I have a question, and obvious answer question.....

I just ran across a 50 page document "Regimental Record of Events - 517th HQ Company"

It is a very, very detailed account of D-Day and D-Day + events..... It speaks about individual platoons, movements, fire fights, etc.....Amazing details and information

Would you want this? I assume yes..... How is the best way to get it to you? Scan, USPS Mail?

Neil Peek

Hi Neil, Yes, I do remember that photo from about 2 years ago. It started a whole discussion about the camo uniforms. I don't remember if we ever resolved all the questions.

Yes, I would love to have anything you found. But it might be the same as something I already have.

See: http://517prct.org/documents/after_action_reports/record_of_events.pdf

This might be the same document, although mine is only 22 pages. Do you have more? If so, I'll take a clear scan, or you could mail me a copy. Let me know.

Regards, Bob Barrett

Bob,

It is the same as what you have.... I found it after I emailed you.... I have about 2 feet of paperwork I am digging through now.

I think the CAMO Uniforms got resolved but no other details of the photo.

I am trying again to dig up any detail about **Charles M. Bonaventura**..... His wife (my Aunt) is 90 now and ailing. But she really becomes quite lucid when I talk about him. She has dementia and perks up mentally when we talk about Uncle Bonny (C.M. Bonaventura)

I am just trying to define what Platoon Leader he was, what they did in August 1944, where, etc..... She loves the old stories

If you have anything that would help me piece it together, I would appreciate it. I will continue to dig in the paperwork to help the 517th (596th AE) history files.

Thank you!!

Neil Peek



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Submitted by

Name: **Craig Lewis**
From: Kings Mountain, NC
E-mail: lewis151@bellsouth.net

Comments:

I am enjoying looking at this great web site. My Grandfather was **William (Bill) Lewis** and he used to be Secretary (?) for the 517 and may have published some newsletters for the 517. Again, great site.

Added: June 11, 2014

From **Rick Sweet**:

Subject: World War Eleven

YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT LEARN FROM HISTORY ANY MORE BECAUSE HISTORY IS BEING REWRITTEN AND NO LONGER TAUGHT AS A REQUIRED SUBJECT IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS.

Theodore "Dutch" J. Van Kirk was the navigator on the "Enola Gay" when it dropped the bomb at Hiroshima, Japan, and is the last surviving member of the crew. This really happened. Dutch was asked to speak at a grammar school this past week. The young teacher introduced him by saying the speaker was a veteran of World War Eleven (as in WWII). Dutch stood up and walked out of the school without saying a word. End of story.

Hello !

We organize **the 22th of August** a big commemoration about the 70th birthday of the liberation of our village, Fayence, in the Var Département of France. (operation Anvil Dragoon august 1944).

I know that in 2009, we have had the visit of three or four American liberators of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Do you think it may be possible to have some of them with us for this memorial day ?

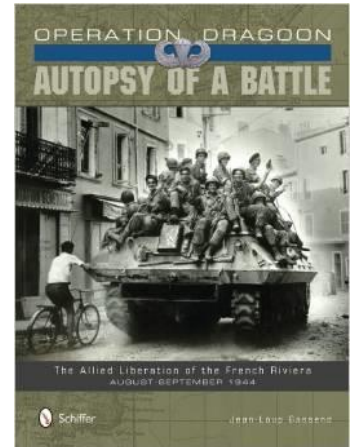
Thank you for your response.

Jean-Luc FABRE
Mayor of Fayence



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I just received my copy of Jean-Loup Gassend's book, Operation Dragoon. I have only had time to skim through it, but all I can say is "Wow!" This is not a light collection of stories – this is the definitive book about Operation Dragoon. It is a huge book, with 500+ pages of incredible research by Jean-Loup. I have followed a couple of stories of Jean-Loup's research over the years, and I know how detailed and careful he is in his research to uncover the true facts and to verify them. That is evident in this book. For every event, he has managed to locate first-hand accounts from multiple eyewitnesses with various viewpoints. He tells the story from the German, French, Canadian, British, and American soldiers and citizen sources, with collaboration from his own archeological investigations into documents and physical evidence.



It will take me some time to make it through this book, but so far, I have enjoyed every page. This isn't just about the 517th, but it does include stories from quite a few of our troopers – **Bob Daryl Imple, Howard Hensleigh, Bud Curtis, Gene Brissey, Walt Irving, Art Riddler, John Lissner, Clark Archer, Gene Frice, Myrle Traver, James Pacey, Allan Johnson, Mel Dahlberg,, Merle McMorro, Hoyt Kelley, Julius Richmond, Frank Dallas, Marvin Moles, Guy Carr, Henry Ciner,** and many, many more. I especially appreciate the details of the battles and deaths of some troopers that I had not heard about before.

Great work, Jean-Loup!

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
- 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 7)

Another chapter from **William Houston's** biography is on the following pages.

This chapter covers "*Jump into France*". .

JUMP INTO FRANCE

I slept for a couple of hours and at about 2300 hours we boarded the planes. It was still the 14th of August. One by one each man climbed aboard the plane with his heavy pack and a parachute harness so tight that you could hardly walk and took his place in the assigned seat on each side of the aisle, facing the man across from him.

The plane roared down the runway, a dusty runway with lights about as visible as flashlights, marking the right and left side, and finally we lifted off. The time was between 0136 and 0151, depending on the position of your plane in the flight, on August 15th, 1944 that we became airborne and set course for France. By this time we knew that we were supposed to land near the town of Le Muy but I still had a "lost" feeling, for I had no idea where Le Muy was. Try as I may it was impossible to sleep in the uncomfortable metal seats with the equipment I was carrying and with the tight parachute harness cutting into my legs so I just prayed and watched the exhaust flames from the plane's engine as they shot past the open cabin door.

Somewhere en route over the Mediterranean one of the three cargo chutes in the cabin came loose and the air rushing in through the door caused one of the chutes to bellow out. It took several men to collapse the chute and keep the load from being pulled out of the plane. If the first chute had been pulled out it would have pulled the other two cabin loads with it. Once under control there was no problem and when it came time to jump we simply pushed the load toward the door and let the wind drag the containers out.

As we approached the coast of France I remember the fear growing inside of me and of praying harder. Outside it was dark, it was still before sunrise, and when we passed over the coastline there were no lights to be seen. We did not encounter any anti-aircraft fire and as we neared the drop zone the red light came on to indicate that we were nearing our target and it was time to get ready for the jump. We stood up, made the equipment check and waited for the green light. It flashed on, we moved toward the door and jumped - the time was 0450. At that point I was pretty busy but I worried about what might be waiting for us on the ground and about the chances of landing in the vicinity of the drop zone. Once out of the plane and after the parachute opened things seemed to be all right for the first few seconds, I then realized that I could not make out any ground features. My first thought was that I had jumped out over the Mediterranean and was headed for a water landing but I could not hear any waves. All of a sudden I broke through a fog bank, for it was fog that covered the land and had prevented me from seeing any details. Suddenly there was the ground! The fog was so close to the ground that I had no chance to prepare for a landing.

The landing was not too hard but it was definitely in an undesirable place, it was on a hillside in a terraced orchard. Within a few minutes I had joined up with three or four men from my battery and it was only a short time before we found the parts of our field piece which had to be hand carried down the terraces to a road at the base of the hill then assembled. Our training paid off - the gun was assembled and we set off in a southeasterly direction. We joined with other gun sections and proceeded toward St. Roseline, our rendezvous point. We had landed about five miles northwest of the village of Trans-en-Provence but we were able to march nearly ten miles through the confused German positions with very few incidents. One gun section, while pulling the 75mm howitzer by hand, had marched through the town of Les Arcs without firing a shot, only to discover that they had taken the wrong road when leaving town. They retraced their route back to the town and the fork in the road and took the correct road, At that point they were fired on by the

Germans. There was a fire fight during which the gun crew fired any shell with any fuze that happened to be handy. Some rounds were equipped with time-delay fuzes, which did not explode on impact, but at a preset time after the round was fired. The gun crew did not have time to reset the time so they simply loaded and fired. These shells, with the time-delay fuzes, went through several houses before exploding somewhere down the street. Outnumbered by the Germans, the artillerymen were forced to destroy their field piece. They tossed a white phosphorus grenade down the tube, then divided the firing mechanism between three teams of two men and each team and set out on independent courses. Each team found its way back to Chateau St. Roseline without the loss or injury of a single man.

Shortly after daybreak Lt. Moore, a small but vicious man who had often expressed his hatred of the Germans, and PFC Kennemer ran into a machine-gun nest and tried to wipe it out. In this attempt both men were killed.

We tried to bring down some telephone or telegraph wires by shooting at the insulators. This failed, the bullets from our carbines only bounced off the glass insulators, so we chopped down the poles and cut the wires. By evening we were operating as a battalion from a position in a field near St. Roseline. At about 1800 we got a little action but it was the wrong kind. The 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion jumped into our position - they had heard that we had been wiped out so, when they saw troops beneath them as they floated down, the 551 pulled the pins from their grenades and dropped the grenades on us. In spite of the "bombing" we were glad to see them.

That evening I was assigned to an outpost along a railroad embankment. Passing under the tracks was a large culvert which caused me a great deal of worry - all night long I worried that a German patrol might use the culvert to get over to our side. To add to the fear was the sound of a German patrol signaling to each other by clicking the bolts of their rifles. This was a common method of signaling used by the Germans and made us jittery because we could not tell where the sound was coming from or how far away it was.

I experienced my first sight of a dead German soldier a day or so after the jump into France. He was an enlisted man spread out next to his slit trench. He had probably been killed during the early hours of the invasion and the corpse was already badly bloated from lying in the hot August sun. There was a ring on his finger which I contemplated removing, but because of the swollen finger I changed my mind. I had heard of G.I.s cutting off fingers to get the ring and, in some instances of the flesh coming off with the ring - my stomach could not stand this so the ring remained undisturbed.

In the evening of the 16th of August, D+2, the airborne phase of Operation Dragoon ended when American tanks linked up with the paratroopers in Les arcs and Le Mug. The 1st Allied Airborne force was ordered to hold the area bounded by Le Mug - Draguignan - Les arcs, an area of about twenty-five square miles, until the 36th Infantry Division arrived and passed through. The 468th bivouacked near La Motte until the 18th of August. We, along with the rest of the 517th Combat Team, started out for Peget. This operation was the reverse of the normal mode of operation, the infantry rode and the artillery marched, always pulling the 75mm howitzers by hand.