



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2221

July 6, 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
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www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
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MailCall News

For **Lamar Davis**
Stephens County Historical Society

I will make sure your address is updated and ready for the next edition of the Thunderbolt. Sorry we had your address wrong. Yes myself along with President **Allan Johnson** and **Hal Beddow** were there and we assembled under a tent type structure. There the mayor of Toccoa spoke, Allan and Hal both spoke and then I was given a minute or two to talk about the 517th. I sure wish we could have met you. When we come down hopefully next year for the run we can meet and talk. Thanks so much for taking such good care of the 517th troopers.

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

Speaking of Toccoa, have you seen the Camp Toccoa at Currahee restoration plans?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHos-t9w5_A





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We are in the final five weeks of planning before all start leaving the States and converging on Europe for various 70th anniversary events for Operation Anvil/Operation Dragoon! There is much excitement in the south of France for the 70th anniversary on 15 August!

So far, it is shaping up that many of us will begin with events in Sospel around 11 and 12 August. Although Sospel's anniversary is not until October, they are kind enough to invite us there before events in Provence. You will remember that last year, **Roland Orengo** and **Frederic Brega** arranged for a plaque to be installed at Col de Braus; **Howard Hensleigh** wrote the wording and Frederic had it translated. They feel very strongly that people who picnic and drive in the area for the scenery should know the terrible struggle that occurred there.

On 13 August, there will be a static line jump over Le Muy, organized by **Stephane Hadjadje** of Paris. Stephane has arranged for **Leo Dean**, now 90, to do a tandem jump just prior to the static line jump! We are very happy and excited.

There will be official ceremonies at the Rhone Cemetery on 15 August and "unofficial" ceremonies on the 16th. We will attend both. There are many officials expected at the 15 August celebrations and we must let the ABMC staff know if we will be attending. In the last few years, there have also been many observances in the communities of Les Arcs, La Motte, Salernes and Trans-en-Provence.

Feyance officials have asked the 517 to visit around the 21st or 22nd and Ste. Cezaire has done the same for the 23rd and 24th. We are happy to have towns reaching out to the 517 as they continue to honor the memory of the sacrifice of this storied unit.

The Jump List is getting longer, I am happy to report. **Steve Gomez** - are you jumping Le Muy again? Are you coming on 15 August?

So far, we have:

- **Merle McMorrow**
- **Gene Frice, Marty Donahoo** (sister of Gene Snyder), **Karen and Wayne Wallace**, and **Robin Frice Homedew**, plus one more
- **Leo Dean**
- **Allan Johnson**
- **Helen Beddow**, wife of Hal, 1st Airborne Task Force
- **Mimsey Boyle**, daughter of **Col. Bill Boyle**
- **Nancy Fraser Armand**, daughter of **Maj. Don Fraser**
- **Joanne Barrett**, daughter of **Ben Barrett**
- **Melanie Hanson**, daughter of **Gareth "Gary" Davis**, plus her husband and daughter
- **Shelly Azeff**, daughter of **Lt. William Caufield**, plus her husband
- **Wade Gilbert**, son of **Earnie Gilbert**, plus his brother I think
- **Bruce Broudy**, son of **Captain Joe Broudy**, plus his wife
- **Claire Giblin**, daughter of **Allan Johnson**, plus my husband, two sons and one daughter-in-law.

Do you know anyone not on this list who is coming? Please let me know - it could be a typo or we might not know about them!

There is still time to make arrangements! People are still buying their flight tickets! Join us if you can!

Airborne all the way – **Claire**



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Dear Friends,

We received the below information from the French Army Attache here in Washington. Please get the word out as quickly as possible to any WWII veteran of OPN Dragoon you know. Maybe they will be able to take advantage of this offer. Thanks!

Don't forget the Operation Dragoon commemoration we are hosting here in Arlington 30 July to 3 August this year! I'm attaching the flyer just in case you missed it! *[Next page]*

Rock of the Marne!

Tim and Monika Stoy

Dear Monika and Tim,

I just received the details for the **Dragoon celebration in France**.

20 seats are offered for US veterans **who participated in the landing** and want to fly to France for this event.

- They will be hosted for two (or three days) in Paris with **one person** or their choice and have a free ride to the Toulon.
- They will be invited to the ceremony on-board the CVN Charles de Gaulle.
- The fly to France, back and forth, is **not offered**.

If you know any of your veterans willing to be part of this, they just have to email to the **US Embassy in Paris** who is in charge of selecting the happy few.

The limit date to apply is July 20th !!!

Here is the email: dragoon2014@state.gov

If they were not already awarded with the Legion of Honor, French authorities will do an expedite process before the summer.

They must bring their packets to the respective **French consulate in the US**.

As so, they will be on a priority list for the ceremony in France.

All the best for you, I will fly tomorrow back to France for a month.

ATW

Jacques

Colonel Jacques ARAGONES
Military Attaché at the French Embassy
4101 Reservoir rd NW
Washington DC 20007
USA
office: +1 202 944 6520
cell: +1 202 812 0393



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70TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION!



Operation Dragoon to the Battle of the Colmar Pocket from St. Tropez to Colmar, the US 6th Army Group and 7th Army in France 15 August 1944 to 9 February 1945
Hosted by Outpost Europe, Society of the 3rd Infantry Division, the Army Historical Foundation, and the Embassy of France

When: 30 July to 3 August 2014 (Wednesday-Sunday)

Where: Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel, 900 South Orme Street, Arlington, VA 22204



Who: Please join us in honoring the veterans of the 6th Army Group; 1st French Army; 7th Army; 6th Corps; 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions; 1st Allied Airborne Task Force – 517th PIRCT (including AT CO/442nd IN), 509th PIB, 4463rd PFAB, 550th AIB, 551st PIB, and the 2nd IPB (UK); and 1st SSF in Southern France; the supporting US Army Air Corps; US Navy, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine; the OSS; and from the participant allied nations of France, Poland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Canada; the 21st Corps, 28th ID, 75th ID, and 12th AD which joined the 3rd ID and 36th ID in the Battle of the Colmar Pocket, family members, friends, and anyone interested in WWII history.

What	30 July	1 to 3 PM – registration; 7 to 9 PM – Historical seminar I
	31 July	9 AM to 5 PM – Historical seminar II and veterans’ remembrances
	1 August	8 to 12 AM – ceremony in Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetary 12:30 to 2:30 PM – Luncheon at Fort Myer Officers Club 7 to 9 PM – Historical seminar III and veterans’ remembrances
	2 August:	9 AM to 12 AM – Historical seminar IV and veterans’ remembrances 5 to 9 PM – Banquet
	3 August	8:30 to 11 AM –Historical display

Why: To honor the veterans of the Operation Dragoon and the campaigns in Southern France, the Vosges, and in Alsace, to preserve history, educate the public, and pass on the torch of their proud legacy.

Room Reservations: Price - \$92 per night, one day prior to event and one day after.
Reservations: 1-800-325-3535
Reservation Group Name: Operation Dragoon
Cut off date for reservations: Friday, 25 July 2014

Point of Contact: Monika Stoy, President, Outpost Europe, Society of the 3rd Infantry Division
timmoni15@yahoo.com, PH: 703 912 4218
6531 Milva Lane, Springfield, VA. 22150 USA

RSVP by 10 July 2014

Registration: Event registration - \$30. Luncheon - \$40. Banquet - \$40.
(Free for WWII veterans of the campaign in Southern France and in Alsace)

70TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION! OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



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Bonjour à tous,

Les inscriptions à la participation aux commémorations du débarquement de Provence organisé par les associations Airborne Task Force Museum, Mémoire de Provence 39/45 et VMH Provence sont désormais ouverte.

Merci d'adressé les informations suivante au mail (NON SUR FACEBOOK) : loicjankowiak@hotmail.fr.

Hello all, entries to participate in commemorations of the Provence landings organized by Airborne Task Force Museum, memory of Provence 39/45 and VMH Provence associations are now open.

Please address the following information to the mail (not on FACEBOOK): loicjankowiak@hotmail.fr.

Persons having not filled in their presence at the various camps cannot y pitched their tent for reasons of organizations.

Please indicate your participation with your name followed following events:

event:

-First Airborne Task Force:

- La Motte Camp (13-16 August)
- Dragoon Historical March (13 August) - Commemoration of the Motte (14 August)
- Commemoration of Lorgues (August 15)
- Commemoration of the arches (August 15)
- ceremony at the Rhone American Cemetery in Draguignan (16 August)
- meals in the castle of Valbourges (16 August)
- Commemoration of Trans - en - Provence (16 August)

- 45th Infantry Division "Thunderbirds" :

- Camp de Salernes (17-20 August)
- release of Salernes (August 17)
- Commemoration of Bessillon (18 August)
- Commemoration of Barjols (August 19)
- Commemoration of Sillans (August 19)
- Commemoration of Régusse (August 20)
- Commemoration of Moissac (August 20)
- Régusse ball (20 August)

sincerely, Loïc, responsible for registration & Dragoon Historical March.



70^{ème} Anniversaire

PROGRAMME DES COMMEMORATIONS DU DEBARQUEMENT DE PROVENCE

ANVIL / DRAGOON

13 AOÛT :

- 08h00 Ouverture du camp
- 15h00 Départ Dragoon
Historical March

14 AOÛT :

- 10h00 / 00h00 LA MOTTE

15 AOÛT :

- 09h00/14h00 LORGUES
- 16h00/22h00 LES ARCS

16 AOÛT :

- 09h00/11h00 Cimetière américain
- 12h00/16h00 Repas Valbourgès
- 17h00/22h00 TRANS EN DCE

17 AOÛT :

- 08h00/11h00 Camp SALERNES
- 11h00/00h00 SALERNES

18 AOÛT :

- 09h00/12h00 BESSILLON

19 AOÛT :

- 09h00/14h00 BARJOLS
- 16h00/22h00 SILLANS

20 AOÛT :

- 09h00/14h00 REGUSSE
- 16h00/20h00 MOISSAC
- 20h00/23h00 BAL REGUSSE

INSCRIPTIONS ET CONTACT : lolcjanekowiak@icloud.com
facebook : 70e anniversaire du débarquement de provence





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Submitted by

Name: **Jeff Moats**
From: Tallmadge, Ohio
E-mail: jmoats58@yahoo.com

Comments:

My father **James Moats** was in the 517th PRCT G company. He was WIA in Sept. 1944. Any information regarding my father would greatly be appreciated. I have his jump pants and photos including the 1943 Parachute Training Manual.

Added: June 30, 2014

Jeff,

Attached are copies of the Morning Reports for G Company for September 20, 1944. It lists several soldiers, including **James Moats**, as LWA (Lightly Wounded in Action) and transferred to the 7th Army, and one soldier Pvt. **Elmer Carlson** DOW (Died of Wounds).

That's all I've been able to find so far. But below is some info on that battle for Col de Braus from *Paratroopers' Odyssey*.

Bob Barrett

On September 16th Company D was pulled out of 2nd Battalion reserve to occupy Mt Farguet, on left of the Special Service Force, to free I Company for the attack. Concurrently, Company H occupied the reverse slope of Ridge X.

The attack was set to go at 0800, September 18th. Tete de la Lavina was divided into two sub-objectives --Number 2 on the southeast, to be taken by Company I from Mt.Scandeious, and Number 3 on the northwest for Company a from Ridge X. H Company would remain in battalion reserve, prepared to assist either of the assault companies. On the extreme right, D Company would support and maintain contact with the SSP. On the far left, F Company would go for Hill 1098 as soon as Tete de la Lavina was captured.

With three rifle companies in the assault and two more in support, over half of the regiment's fighting strength was being committed on a front of a little over a mile. Supporting fires would include Naval gunfire, a battalion each of 155, 105, and 75mm howitzers, and a company of 4.2" mortars.

On the night of September 17/18th 3rd Battalion S-2 Howard Hensleigh led a a Company patrol to the edge of the German positions on Lavina. Splitting into two groups, the troopers prowled around the enemy bunkers and returned with much information including the location of an alarm clock used to regulate the changing of sentries. The patrol was undetected. There were no indications that the enemy was expecting anything out of the ordinary.

In the last hours of darkness preparations were completed. Flame-thrower teams attached to the assault companies checked their weapons. Units were briefed to the last man. Colonel Graves moved into an OP on Ridge X. Off the coast, the French cruiser Lorraine moved into position.

This one had to go.

At 0800 on September 18th Tete de la Lavina exploded in a sheet of steel and flame. Task Force Artillery was



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concentrated on Objective 2. TOT* air-burst howitzer shells sheared tree limbs and split trunks, and Naval guns blew huge craters and uprooted trees. The 4.2" mortars blanketed Objective 3 with smoke and burning phosphorous. At 0830 G and I Companies launched their attack. The fires shifted eastward while the troopers fired bazookas from the hip to mask their lifting. White phosphorous grenades were thrown into bunker entrances and ventilating shafts to burn the Germans out. Those showing any disposition to fight were nailed as they emerged.

* TOT: "Time Over Target", an artillery technique in which firing times are carefully calculated, so that each round arrives on target at the same time regardless of the distance of the guns from the target.

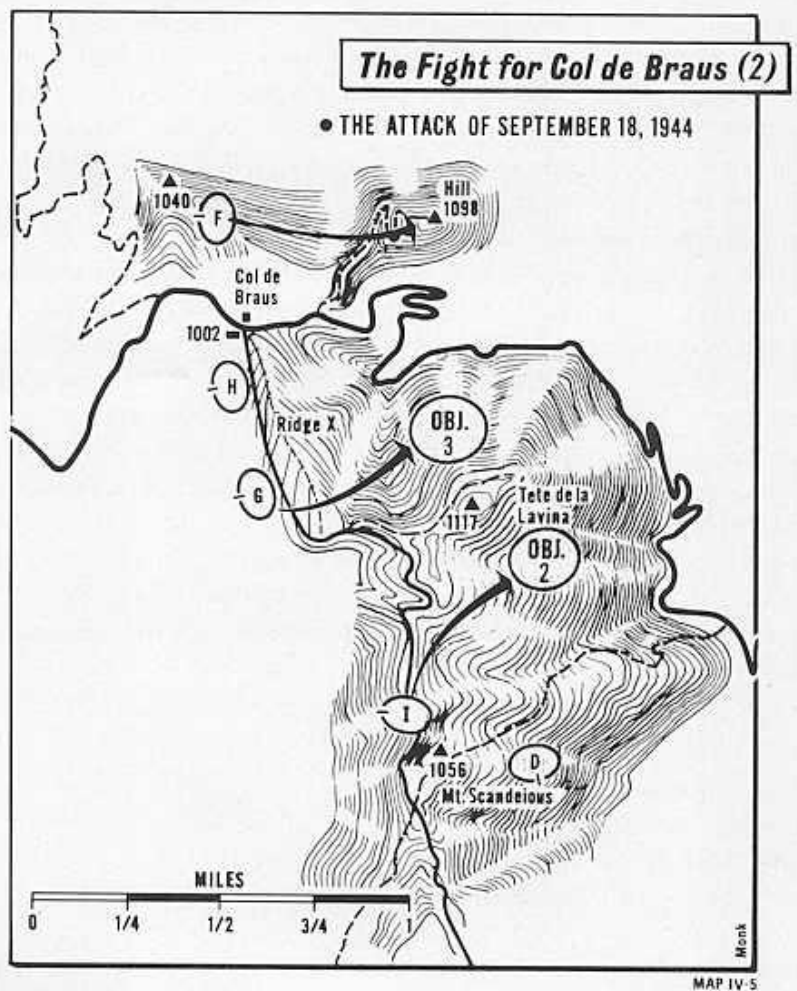
By 0900 Lieutenant Birder's I Company had reached the far edge of their objective. The artillery shifted to Objective 3, and the 4.2" mortar fire was placed on the reverse slope of Lavina. G Company worked from bunker to bunker and by 1100 had taken Objective 3. The supporting fires then shifted to Hill 1098, and Company F secured the eastern knob against slight resistance.

The surviving Germans were dazed and shaken. Even on the Russian front they had seen nothing like this. Sixty-one enemy surrendered and 30 to 40 were killed. The prisoners were herded up and sent to the rear, some with their clothes still burning. Four Americans had been slightly wounded in the attack.

Enemy return fire was swift. Even as the attack began mortar and artillery came in on Ridge X and Lavina, killing Lieutenant Thomas of H Company. As the troopers overran their objectives the guns at Agaisen began to pound the forward slopes of Lavina and 1098. The Americans withdrew to the reverse slopes, outposting the crests. Over the next few days several counterattacks were beaten off. One came within ten feet of the American riflemen, but the loss of their troops on Lavina had crippled the German capabilities and the counterattacks did not pose a serious threat. Having been driven from Lavina and Hill 1098, the Germans fell back into the Sospel forts and the mountains overlooking the Bevera.

Col de Braus was finally secure, but it had not been cheap or easy. Total American losses in the drive for Col de Braus were closely comparable with those of the enemy.

On September 20th and 21st the 3rd Battalion, in need of rest, exchanged positions with the 1st Battalion. The 3rd took over the comparatively quiet area of Peira Cava, and Colonel Boyle's men began to learn about "The Barber" who handed out close shaves from Mount Agaisen. The main supply road beyond Col de Braus was named "The Bowling Alley". Vehicles or men exposed for even a few seconds were sure to draw one or two rounds. Artillery and mortar exchanges went on constantly. The usual patrol and counterpatrol games were played, but the front





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remained unchanged for the next 5 weeks. The Combat Team maintained surveillance of Sospel and the Bevera Valley on a 15-mile front. The requirement for further advance was suspended.

Neither the Americans nor the Germans had any intention of becoming involved in any further heavy engagements in the Maritime Alps. The war was being decided elsewhere. Both sides were on defensive missions and were content to keep each other under observation. The situation became one closely resembling the static battlefields of the First World War .

Hi Bob,

This is just a long shot question but do you happen to know where my father was wounded in Belgium? Paul Abbene and I thought it was Bergerval but now I am wondering about that. As I have mentioned to Joanne your father once told me our fathers were wounded on the same day..

I am going to start doing some looking into it this week but I thought I would ask you since are so knowledgeable on the 517th Paratroopers.

Thanks Bob.

Mimsey Boyle Kelly

Hi Mimsey,

I do not have the Morning Reports for HQ/1, but I know that **Col. Boyle's** story has been reported many times in MailCall notes and other records.

I'm pretty sure that it was in or near Bergeval, Belgium. Here are a couple of mentions:

Here is Bill's own version, but it doesn't mention the town: <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/470.html>

One more: <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2196.pdf>

In paratrooper's Odyssey, it also says Bergeval, on Jan 4/5:

http://www.517prct.org/documents/odyssey/paratroopers_odyssey.htm#6_ardennes_counterattack

I just looked in the Battling Buzzards book, which tells the story on Page 327. The battle was somewhere around St. Jacques or Bergeval, but I am not sure of the exact location. Boyle was taken to Bergeval when he was wounded.

Hope that helps a little.

Bob B.



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Just released. Check out the official trailer for SAINTS AND SOLDIERS: THE VOID.

The next in the series of #saintsandsoldiers

Coming to THEATERS August 15, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iylbyBfjv9Y&feature=youtu.be>



RE: **Henry Woehrer** , H Co. (KIA)

thank you very much for the picture of Henry, it's very hard to find information or family. So I am glad I have finally a picture of Henry after searching for more than a year.

greetz **John van der Steen**

Subject: Re: 517th MailCall - June 29, 2014

Dear Bob, I read the newsletter and on the first page about Gil Gutbrod, it said the following:

After entering the military, Gutbrod joined the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, a unit that was formed in 1943 and trained at Camp Toccoa, GA. The unit's first combat jump was Operation Dragoon in Southern France in August 1944.

As you know I am writing a book on the Southern invasion of France.

As I may have mentioned it is about the intelligence operations prior to the invasion.

My question is this: I read this in your newsletter, and I had written a chapter some time ago going over the invasion on the coast. While I wanted to give credit to our undercover army agents and others in that work at that time, I also wanted to mention the groups that risked their lives in the actual invasion.

So when I did the research, I had found a different bit of information, here is more or less what I found, using it in my own words, for the book:

The 517th PRCT being commanded by Colonel Rupert D. Graves was the largest of the 1st ABTF groups. It included the 450th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 596th Airborne Engineer



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Battalion. It was the first airborne unit to participate in a combat jump. It had also been extensively involved in the fight in Italy. Being dropped behind enemy lines in Salerno, Italy, they had fought as mountain troops, storming ashore with the Fifth Army in Anzio Italy.

(I gave some thought to this being another great book to write)

I am not sure now if this information that I researched is correct, or perhaps the jump into Italy was maybe done by the 450th or the 596th. Might you know anything about this, by chance? I am doing my very best to be honest with history as so many times it gets distorted. It is a fictional book, but has mountains of historical data. I want to state it as it is.

What are your thoughts on this? I hope that I am not asking too much but thought that perhaps through the years of being in touch with all of these 'great men', someone may have mentioned something about this.

Best Regards,

Anne Justice

By the way, I just love that newsletter. When I see it coming through on my email, i put everything aside to ready the latest news and the story at the end. How lucky I was to find such great stories. Thanks again.

Hi Anne,

I'll do my best, but there's lots that I don't know. The Guthrod article was written by a reporter a couple of years after Gutrod died, so don't expect too much accuracy. Here are a couple of corrections/clarifications for your consideration:

- It's the 460th PFAB (Parachute Field Artillery Battalion), not the 450th.
- Both the 460th artillery and the 596th engineers were merged with the 517 Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) to become a single self-sufficient, regimental sized unit, the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)
- They did not land in Anzio, but were rerouted to Civitavecchia and Grosseto and into the mountains of Italy. (An account of their first battles will be in next week's MailCall.)
- Southern France was not the first airborne jump in WW2. Remember that other units jumped as part of the Normandy invasion in June. Into Southern France, the 517th was the largest unit, but not the very first -- There was a unit of British pathfinders that jumped a few hours earlier in the very early morning.
- Operation Dragoon in southern France was the first and only combat jump for the 517th. They arrived by ship to Italy, and by train and trucks and foot to the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium and into Germany. The 517th, being regiment sized, was designed to have highly trained soldiers and to be very mobile, so they were assigned wherever needed on short notice, usually to plug up holes and to take strategic targets.

A good short summary of the 517th is at: http://517prct.org/documents/short_history/short_history.htm

Hope this helps.

Bob Barrett



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Subject: Fwd: Soldier's Camera and Photos from Battle of the Bulge Found in Foxhole 70 Years Later

This brings back lots of memories, not good ones!

<http://petapixel.com/2014/07/01/soldiers-camera-photos-battle-bulge-found-foxhole-70-years-later/#RXYqSodyRR7XKUJR.03>



Phil McSpadden

Greetings Bob, I thought this would be an interesting article for the site. Have a spectacular 4th of July weekend. cheers, Paul

Subject: Fwd: Soldier's Camera and Photos from Battle of the Bulge Found in Foxhole 70 Years Later

<http://petapixel.com/2014/07/01/soldiers-camera-photos-battle-bulge-found-foxhole-70-years-later/#RXYqSodyRR7XKUJR.03>

Wishing the 517th PRCT and their families a spectacular 4th of July weekend.

All the Best, **Paul Abbene**

Submitted by

Name: **SSG Derek Baxter**
From: Fort Stewart, GA
E-mail:
derek.john.baxter@us.army.mil

Comments:

CPL John Brunner passed on 14 JUN 2014, he loved reminiscing with me about his experiences with the 517th and enjoyed his news letters. If any of you are still in touch with the boys at the reunions, let them know he is securing the DZ with the rest of them in heaven.

Added: July 2, 2014

Cpl. John J. Brunner was with Battery C, 460th PFAB.

I would like to convey my appreciation for the kind words and thoughts expressed for Mardy by Pat Seitz, Alan Greer, Brenda Mortensen and Bob Barrett. She had had a prior association with Bob and Brenda. However, she was meeting Pat for the first time when she sat next to her at the ceremony for Ben Barrett at Arlington. She came away from that brief association highly impressed with the imprint Pat left on her.

Merle M.



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Just got this story about a 101st AB trooper. I think our troopers will get a kick out of hearing his story.

Enjoy,

Lory Curtis

The Airborne Beer Story

World War Two veteran Vince Speranza tells the Airborne Beer story that occurred while he was serving in the 101st Airborne Division at the Battle of the Bulge. The 101st Airborne was cut off from the rest of the Army and was holding out in Bastogne when Vince was sent back to try and find some radio batteries for his company. As you see, he got a little sidetracked on his mission as he stopped to visit a wounded friend.



<http://biggeekdad.com/2014/05/airborne-beer-story/>





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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 10)

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

This chapter covers "*The Battle of the Bulge*".

Next week: "*England*"

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

The Germans struck a quick, hard blow on December 16th, 1944 and broke through our lines in Belgium. On the twenty-second we were in trucks and headed for the "Bulge". We were assigned to the northern sector of the Bulge as part of the 82nd Airborne division while the 101st went to Bastogne in the southern flank. I later learned from Eisenhower's "Crusade In Europe" that the 82nd was scheduled to go to Bastogne, with us in tow, but the situation was critical on the northern flank near Werbomont so we were diverted to that area. As it was we had a difficult time, but the 101st was completely surrounded, and probably had an even rougher time.

A few days before we arrived in Belgium, December 17th to be exact, the German troops massacred about ninety American soldiers in the Belgium village of Malmendy. Word of this crime spread rapidly and the Americans in the area were out to avenge the deaths of these men. On our visit to Belgium in 1986 we visited the site, where there is now a monument - a wall with the names of the American soldiers on it, to pay our respects.

While we were in action in the Bulge I wrote very few letters home, in fact there were none between December 11th and December 31st. We were too busy to write, it was too cold, and to top it off, I never did know where I was or what was happening.

I do remember our first evening on the line in the Bulge. We were taking up a position on a snow covered hill when we came upon a machine-gun position which had been overrun by the Germans. Bodies of several dead Americans, with the 106th Infantry division patch on their shoulders, were partially covered with snow and their gun was still in position.

The snow was about a foot deep and the temperature was low, probably close to zero, and there was a strong wind which seemed to increase during the night. It was easier than usual to see at night because of the fresh snow but, while on guard on an outpost, your eyes played tricks on you and it was easy to visualize figures in German uniforms moving about. When morning came no trace of any activity could be found, not even footprints.

We did get fresh socks every day to keep our feet dry and guard against trench foot. And the Stars And Stripes, the official army newspaper, found its way to the front lines and gave us a little information on the battle. Unless an action took place within a hundred yards of where I was I never knew about it. Often I have thought that the worse part of the bulge was not knowing how long it would last. The cold was bitter, the fact that the Germans had regained so much territory was depressing, but not knowing how long I would have to continue fighting in the cold really got to me.

From the beginning of the battle until until the day after Christmas the sky was heavily overcast and our planes could not support the ground troops. The German high command had picked that time because of the weather predictions and to render the Allied aircraft ineffective. But on December 26th the sky cleared and in the clear, blue sky we could see the vapor trails of hundreds of bombers. We only saw bombers on their way to bomb their targets since they returned via a different route and beyond our vision.

Christmas of 1944 was not a very joyous day. We were cold and hungry and missed out on our traditional Christmas Day turkey dinner, instead we had only emergency D-rations. D-rations were four ounce chocolate bars and often as hard as rock. We did get a real turkey dinner on New Year's Day which we ate outside and in the cold. It was cold enough that by

time we got through the chow line and sat down to eat it the meal was cold, but it was much better than the D-rations we had on Christmas.

As the year closed I was not thinking of celebrating the new year, instead Andersen and I were trying to find comfort in a barn. I had found a cubby hole near some cows - it would not have been so bad if the cows would stand still and in a straight line in their stalls. But no, they were continually moving around and both Andersen and myself had to push them around to keep them away from us. It was evident that the cows did not want to share their stalls with American G.I.s. We did have a few handy men around who got up early in the morning and milked the cows before the farmer got around to the chore.

There were chickens to contend with too. Often they would perch on a rafter - a very rude one did so and did a very accurate job of bombing me. The next morning I had to wash my bedroll cover. We did not find any eggs but several chickens disappeared and some of our men proved themselves to be good cooks.

With clear skies after the 26th of December air activity increases. We had a front row seat one day when two P-47s chased and shot down a Me-109. The 109 tried to turn to his left to shake the P-47s off his tail. As he did so the lead P-47 riddled him with his .50 cal. guns but could not turn tight enough to follow through and finish the Me-109 off. The trailing P-47, being further back, could keep the 109 in his sights so, when the first P-47 stopped firing the second one opened up and finished the Me-109 off. The German pilot bailed out but his parachute did not open and the pilot landed about a hundred yards from me. By the time I got to where he had hit his boots had already been removed.

There was another incident involving a Me-109 but this time the pilot was much more fortunate. I was on an outpost in an open field with a .50 caliber machine-gun on a ground mount when a Me-109 came in at about fifty feet above the ground and off to my left about one hundred yards. The plane was flying a course parallel to my machine-gun, from front to back, and in broad daylight, but because of the ground mount I could not swing the gun ninety degrees to fire at him.

While on guard duty at night we could see the German U-1 "Buzz bombs" fly overhead on their way to Leige or England. They could also be identified by their distinct sound. The U-1s could be seen during the daylight hours too, but they were not nearly as spectacular as those at night when you could see the flames shooting out of the exhaust. Whenever one came near we held our breath until it had passed over - if the engine stopped just before it got to us the bomb might come down in our area, therefore nobody shot at them. We were lucky that none came close enough to be a threat to us.

On January 23rd we were relieved and fell back to Stavalot, Belgium for a rest. At Stavalot we were billeted in houses which was a treat because it was still winter and fairly cold.

Running through Stavalot was the Ambleve River and near our billets was a bridge, so some of our men decided to go fishing. From the bridge they tossed a hand-grenade into the river, the grenade exploded and the dead fish floated to the surface. Unfortunately, the fishermen had not formulated a plan as to how they would retrieve the fish, so all of the fish floated down the river. The fish were not the only sign of death at the site of the bridge. At one end there was a dead German soldier and a dog which had been eating the soldier's flesh.

Credit must be given to the Red Cross which came around every so often, even while we were on the line, to pass out donuts and coffee. The Red Cross used 2 1/2 ton trucks, each equipped with a donut making machine which could turn out 1600 donuts a day. The trucks also had an electric phonograph, with a loudspeaker, all built in. They passed out two

donuts, a cup of coffee, a roll of lifesavers, a couple of cigarettes and a stick of gum to each G.I. These treats were free at the front but there was a five cent charge per item back in the rest areas. The feeling was that if the Red Cross came to the front so would the German shells. This was not a truism but it did indicate that the Red Cross did not avoid dangerous areas.

It was at Stavalot that many of the men got Mohawk haircuts. This did not meet with the pleasure of Cpt. Vogel, who was still our battery commander, and I heard at our 1993 reunion that one sergeant lost his chance to get a battlefield commission because he was one of those who got a haircut. I have not heard from that person, Rogers, since then so I cannot confirm the story. For some reason I was not one of the gang that got the Mohawk, probably because it was so cold at that time, but in the back of my mind I wish that I had. But this was written in 1993, not 1945.

It was one day in Stavalot that our captain assembled us in a field and warned that the local women had been crying "Rape" for little or no reason. It was reported that even communication men, while running wires in the line of duty, had been accused. A few days later the captain himself was accused of rape, charged, court martialled and transferred. We spent about ten days in Stavalot and when the battery left two or three of us were left behind to clean up the area. The first thing we did was to chase down a chicken in a framer's hayloft and boil it for dinner. The chicken was hard to catch - the hayloft did not have a solid floor but instead the hay was piled on tree branches spread about a foot apart in the upper part of the barn. To catch the chicken I had only a two prong pitchfork, but in the end we had chicken for dinner. The chicken didn't taste too bad.

In a day or two we caught up with the battalion which was already in Germany. There was a change in orders and the 517th Combat Team headed for the Huertgen forest. I wondered if even the Black Forest could be darker than the Huertgen. In the Huertgen we were up against the the German Sixth Parachute Division, an experienced, first class fighting unit. These troops put up an excellent fight.

On February 9th we were moved back to Aachen by truck. We stopped at the railroad station and I was able to pick up a metal custom stamp with the eagle, swastika and name of the town was on it. I still have the stamp. By 40 G & 8s we moved back to Joigny, France where, on February 15th, we were attached to the 13th Airborne Division. At Joigny the 517th Parachute Combat Team was dissolved and the 468th Parachute Field Artillery became part of the 13th Airborne Division Artillery.

On February 17th I was on K.P. again. This time I found myself peeling potatoes but Don and I found a way to make the time pass a little faster - we carved the potatoes into different objects such as horseshoes, houses, dice or anything else we could think of, even a buzz-bomb. However, the mess sergeant did not think our efforts were all that great. Oh well, what does a sergeant know about art? We, Don and myself, may have eaten too much that day - we were both sick that night. Such is the life of a K.P.

What happens to a guy who comes in late and is too drunk to get himself in bed? His friends help him, they stuff him into his sleeping bag head first.

On February 21st we were still in Joigny and still training. While there I tried my hand at assembling an HO gauge model railroad kit which I had received from home. It was a box car and a fiasco! I did not have the proper tools, some of the parts were lost, I could not paint the model and, to top it off, even if I had finished the model there is no way that I could have carried it around without damaging it.

On the first of March I was doing M.P. (not K.P. for once) and trying to keep our own men out of trouble. One battery figured that they had come out on the short end of the

reorganization deal, which put us into the 13th Airborne Division, so they threatened to march on the town of Joigny and throw a drunk. Well, they infiltrated instead, but they did stick to their promise to get tanked up. During the course of the evening our detail hauled three truck loads of drunk paratroopers back to the barracks and dumped them off to sober up.

About an hour before I went on duty a report came in that four Germans, in uniform, had been seen driving around in a car. The most suspicious person that I saw was a civilian wearing a black cape who ducked into a dark doorway when our jeep approached.

After we had pulled back from the Bulge I received a letter from my mother which puzzled me at first. In it she said that she had seen a movie news reel taken during the fighting in the Bulge that had pictured some soldiers in snow suits and she hoped that I had one of these warm suits. What she was referring to was white camouflage suits worn by the infantry. The suits were made of a light material and offered very little protection from the elements since they were designed to make the wearer blend into the terrain, not keep him warm.

By this time we had a new battery commander, Cpt. Weller. I did write in a letter to home that I thought he was like dad; how we always addressed you by your rank and name and remembered everything about you except the mistakes you had made. He had a joke for every occasion, passed out compliments freely and when you met him in the street it was just like running into an old friend.

There was a fellow in our battery who decided to identify his canteen cup by marking it in the bottom. To do this he took a hammer and a large nail and proceeded to punch his initials and the last four digits of his serial number in the bottom of the cup. It was positive identification, done in the same manner in which we identified our clothing. Maybe it was a little too positive - it turned out to be the only cup that leaked in the chow line.

In another written on the 11th of March, I mentioned going to Mass in a civilian church. Usually I went to the military one because it was nearby and I was too lazy to walk to town. I also mentioned that our chaplain, Father Guenette, had been ordained "somewhere in the outskirts of Paris" so he was right at home.

On the 31st of March which was the day before Easter in 1945, three of us, Bud, Jim Mohr and myself went to a small French town, which I could not name because of censorship and I have since forgotten the name, but did not have much fun. We spent two hours riding the bumper cars and had some ice cream. The "ice cream" was a frozen gelatin with no color and pretty high priced. It cost five to ten cents for about two teaspoons, no bargain.

Edee had mailed a book to me on October the 13th for a Christmas present which arrived on April first - it took only five and a half months to get to me.

Junie Kawamura, one of the men wounded when caught in a minefield, returned to the outfit when we were in Joigny.

Jim Andersen also returned from his stay in an English hospital. He had an aunt in London and had a chance to visit her. As far as Jim was concerned London was great - lots of cars, a good subway and more television sets than "Carter has little live pills". But, we could not agree with him 100% after listening to some of the British radio programs. On their home news they had an item about a football game (probably soccer) where they named the teams and the number of spectators but omitted the score of the game.

Again I praised Cpt. Weller in a letter home, this time for an act of kindness which he displayed toward me. There were to be no passes issued on that particular day but I thought that I had lost a fountain pen in a 40 & 8 that we had been working in earlier that day so I

asked him for a pass in order to look for the pen. Cpt Weller issued the pass and did everything he could, save going with me to look for the pen. I did not find the pen but it was no fault of the captain. As it turned out another person had found the pen and returned it.

Later in April we moved to an airfield in northern France to prepare for a mission; we were to be part of an airborne landing south of Stuttgart under the command of the 13th Airborne Division. We listened to the briefings and studied the sand-table in preparation for a jump but the armored units overran our objective before we had a chance to jump. Some men went on flights in C-47s to resupply the advance troops with gasoline by parachute. This was a break in the boredom which resulted from just sitting around. Other proposed missions included a jump on a concentration camp, but the name of the camp was never revealed, and jumps in Norway and Denmark, neither of which materialized.

The war came to an end in Europe on May 8th 1945. The day became known as V-E Day (Victory in Europe) since the war was still going on in the Pacific Theater. The 468th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion was scheduled to go to the Pacific but, by a lucky twist of fate, I was given the choice of staying in Europe or going to the far east. The choice came by the fact that, on an individual basis, all who had fought in Italy were given a choice. Being the brave soldier that I was I chose to stay - I had had enough of the war, of the fighting and all that goes with it. Also, I wanted to see as much of Europe as possible. At that time I could not foresee another opportunity to return - travel to Europe was not an everyday affair back in 1945. And, there was no guarantee that the 517th would go to the Pacific Theater via of the United States. I could visualize a trip through the Suez Canal and sailing to Australia or the Philippines. I was wrong, in August the 517th including the 468th, sailed out of Le Harve and when half way across the Atlantic, Japan surrendered and the war ended. When the combat team landed in New York the men were discharged, The colors were deactivated at Fort Bragg on February 25th, 1946. I was happy with my choice even though most of the men were discharged nearly three months before I was.

Since I had chosen to stay in Europe I was transferred to a unit which would also stay there, the 376th Parachute Field Artillery of the 82nd Airborne Division. On the thirteenth of July I joined the 376th in Epinal, France. I went to Headquarters Battery as the assistant mail orderly.

Censorship of our mail was lifted on May 15th, 1945 so, from then on we could name towns, places and dates in our letters home. I took advantage of this new freedom by sitting down and writing all the dates and places that I could remember since arriving in Europe, then sent them home to be used as a reference at a future date.

Every day that I spent in the 82nd I liked it better. On July 14th, which was Bastille Day, Bud and I went to Epinal to watch the French celebrate. The people were doing it up right but when the street dance started at 2330 we realized that we could not stay because we had to be off the streets by midnight. The local population danced until 0800 the following morning.

While in town I ran into Sgt. Schneider, now Lt. Schneider and we had a neat little talk. After his clash with Cpt. Vogel, Schneider was transferred to the 466th P.F.A. where he had a little trouble with the battery commander and Schneider was almost tried for mutiny. He was busted and sent to the 17th Airborne Division and placed in an infantry recon platoon. He shipped overseas as a corporal, made sergeant and in the Bulge, where the 17th saw their first action, he received a field commission. He had been on over sixty patrols behind enemy lines, fought in Germany and was, at one time, the mayor of German town during the occupation. He told me the story of a patrol he was leading one night in Germany - they had advanced far enough to pass into a German position when they were heard by a German

soldier. The German could not see that it was an American, nor did he suspect that there were any Americans in the immediate area; so he asked the time. Schneider, answering in German, gave him the time. "Ach", said the German, "It's too early, I think I'll get some more sleep". With that Schneider quickly withdrew his men and led them back to the American lines.

One more short but unconfirmed story about the Bulge. I had heard that some of the engineers of the 596th Parachute Engineers found a safe in a house in Belgium and decided to blow it open to get the valuables. They placed the explosives on the safe, took cover outside and set off the explosives. There was a loud explosion - the house was destroyed but the safe was unharmed.