



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2225

August 3, 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

Dear Sirs,

Enclosed attachment is a photocopy of one of the pictures featured in the National WWII Museum Calendar 2013-2014 edition. My Father, **William "Bill" T. Christian**, was one of the soldiers featured for August 2014. I know he felt very blessed to have survived the War and to have come away with friendships that lasted him a lifetime. When the calendar first arrived my Father was fairly near the end of his life having fought valiantly against cancer for 8 years or so. His motor skills and memory had deteriorated quite a bit in those last few months so when he showed us the calendar and was insisting that one of the pictures featured was of him, our family, shamefully, did not believe. Still, every time we visited he would bring the calendar out maybe tell a story or two and stare at it sometimes with tears in his eyes. For him, being a someone, was very important.

Paratroopers move along dusty country road toward their objective on D-Day in Le Muy, France. August 15, 1944

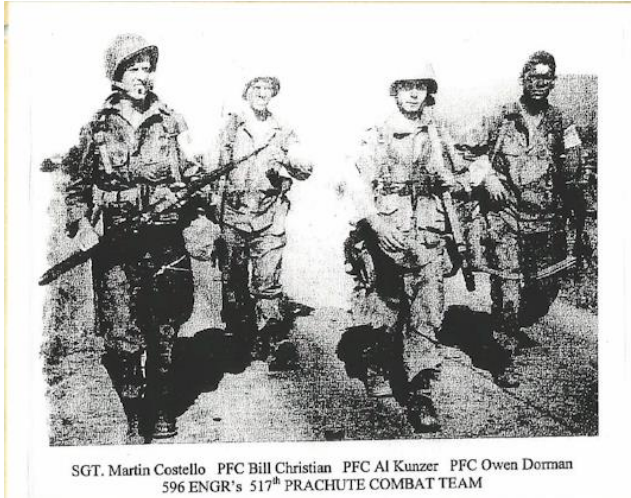


In the days after his death on Sept. 25th 2013 while one of his granddaughters was looking through the family albums for pictures to be used in the memorial video she came across the very same picture. There, alongside **SGT. Martin Costello**, **PFC Al Kunzer** and **PFC Owen Dorman** all with the 596 ENGR's 517th Parachute Combat Team was my Father, **PFC Bill Christian**. We all stared in disbelief and then laughed. Damn if that old man was right, right up till the end. He really was a somebody... well, that, we all already knew.

Regards, Nitsa "Christian" Cuevas on behalf of the Christian Clan



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SGT. Martin Costello PFC Bill Christian PFC Al Kunzer PFC Owen Dorman
596 ENGR's 517th PRACHUTE COMBAT TEAM



Christian, Verdi, Hudson, and Markle

At the Spring 1995 596th reunion in Palm Springs

Am glad **Darrell** is up to his usual self. Reading the emails from **Howard** and **Merle** always makes me see their smiling faces which causes me to smile. Please tell them thank you.

Pat and Alan Seitz

Airborne stamp from 1994, on the 50th anniversary of WWII:



Thank you Mr. Barrett.... Fantastic materials. Thanks for your guidance and preserving the history of service of the 517th and its brave soldiers.

Dad passed away in 2010 and we miss him terribly. We were lucky to have him as long as we did and carry his integrity and courage in our hearts.

God Bless.... **Tim Eaton** [son of Cpl. **Richard J. Eaton**, A Company]

Richard John Eaton, Brigadier General (US Army Retired) passed away unexpectedly on Saturday May 15th, 2010. "Dick" was 86 years old and resided in Nashville, TN.

Born to Leland E. Eaton and Caroline Simonson Eaton in Chicago, IL April 3rd of 1924, Dick attended school in Elmhurst, IL including Elmhurst College. Enlisting as a private in the army reserves in 1942, Dick had a distinguished military career including combat service as a paratrooper in Europe during WWII with the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team, in Korea with the 3rd Ranger Company



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(Airborne), and in Vietnam as a combat command officer with the 1st Infantry Division. Dick retired from the army in 1976 as a Brigadier General with many commendations and honors including:

- Silver Star (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters)
- Legion of Merit
- Distinguished Flying Cross (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Soldier's Medal
- Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters)
- Meritorious Service Medal
- Air Medal (5 Awards)
- Joint Service Commendation Medal (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters)
- Army Commendation Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Purple Heart (with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters)
- Good Conduct Medal
- Combat Infantryman Badge (3rd Award)
- Master Parachutist Badge
- Vietnamese Honor Medal 1st Class
- Thailand Parachute Badge
- Thailand Ranger Badge
- Induction into the Ranger Hall of Fame
-

His 33 years of service included tours of duty in Pakistan, Thailand, Germany, and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. He held a BS from Northwestern University, a Master of Science in Geography from the University of Illinois, Urbana, and was a graduate of the National War College.

Dick married Patricia Baldwin of Gainesville, GA in September of 1945 and together they raised 4 children during their world travels. Dick took advantage of living in each country to teach his children respect for different cultures, and religions, and about the opportunities available. His son, Michael trekked in Northern Pakistan and the Himalayas with him at the age of 8 years, and again in Northern Thailand when he was 15 years old; all his children went to international schools around the world and learned to be curious, explore and enjoy adventure. Dick and the family skied in Europe, and his kids and grandson still enjoy the sport as a family activity. Dick enjoyed bluegrass, jazz, and opera. He and his wife Pat shared a love of musicals and danced like Fred and Ginger. His beloved wife, Pat, passed away in October of 1999.

When Dick retired from the army, he joined the Staff at The Pennsylvania State University in the Strategic Studies Department and continued academic studies while sharing his knowledge and experience with advanced studies students. In 1990, Dick and Pat moved back to her native Gainesville, GA where they served in volunteer organizations and enjoyed travel, relatives and friends.

Dick is survived by his second wife Margaret Eaton of Nashville, TN, whom he married in 2001, and his children: Michael Eaton and Angela Eaton Snovak of Evergreen, Colorado, Pamela Eaton of Chula Vista, California and Timothy Eaton (wife, Phyllis) and grandchildren Kailey and Dillon Eaton of St. Louis, Missouri.

Interment with Military Honors will take place at the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego, California June 21st, 2010. A memorial service in Gainesville, Georgia is planned in the near future.

Thank you Dad for your inspiration, courage, and honor.



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Today when I turned the calendar from July to August, I realized that in two weeks the Forgotten War began on a Tuesday morning, August 15. That will be 70 years ago and I am beginning to feel old. The Mediterranean Edition of the Army News Paper printed Monday through Friday in Rome put out an EXTRA with a large headline that read ALLIED TROOPS LAND IN SOUTHERN FRANCE. A Staff Writer aboard one of the Troop Carrier Command Planes stated in his article that "Carefree and absolutely with no fear of Hitler's battered Wehrmacht the Yank troopers pushed each other forward in the rush to dive out the open door and pave the way for the troops who in a few hours would assault the mainland." I wonder who he talked to. It wasn't anyone I knew. If someone told him they "were without fear" they were lying. His article went on to say "The operation, one of the most tremendous devised by the Allied strategy, went off without a hitch. Waves of huge C-47 carried their human cargo to within yards of the designated drop zone without incident". Had he gotten out the plane with the rest rather than going back to write his article, he would have found that some landed miles, rather than yards, from their designated spot.

It is so easy to forget history but you Bob are helping to preserve and keep it alive.

Merle Mc Morrow

the last time I saw **major Fraser** , in combat, he had handle bars for a mustache. Of course at reunions, years later, I never saw one on him. he was a great guy.

By the way, I would like to have one of the 517 coins, but unable to use Lory Curtis E-mail address to order one. Can you help? My address is Melvin c. Trenary 110 Rainbow dr pmb # 1068 Livingston ,tx.77399-1010 I'll send whatever it costs to mimsey Kelly thanks a lot!

Mel Trenary

The cost for the 517 chelenge coins is \$10, plus \$2.32 for shipping for each coin, Send your request and a check to our new Treasurer:

517 PRCT Association, Inc.
c/o Miriam Boyle Kelly
19 Oriole Court
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866





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Dear Tom [Reber],

You are taking the right course to get maps that show elevation and as much information as you can on the area south of Stavelot before your 48 hours of exploration begin. All that will be helpful.

Based on memory questions that arise from 70 years of time to forget, here are some ideas of what was there in January, 1945, and what I think you may find today.

Here is what I remember. We went up a steep slope of open land from the river to what I call a ridge where there were small stands of trees. Then the line of attack south seemed to flatten out some but still was hilly. It was dotted with farm houses and barns with most farmers having milk cows and hay in the barns. Although the writers of our 517th history indicate that the story of **Lt. Col. Paxton's** putting a cow out of its misery by shooting it in the head with his 45 as we ran by in the attack was the official version of his killing a perfectly good cow for the troopers to feast on, the cow he shot actually was down in the snow and would not have survived the night.

There may have been some small farm communities in the area, but I do not recall anything I would call even a fair sized town. Most of the area was open with stands of trees here and there. The open areas I'm sure were used for pasture, hay and crops after the snow melted.

There was one farm family I will never forget. Although most of the families had deserted the fighting area, this family stayed. Their farmhouse and buildings were nestled down among the surrounding hills. The farmer had gathered his neighbors milk cows into his barn where he milked them night and morning. His beautiful little ten or eleven year old daughter, all decked out in her Sunday best, greeted the troops as they moved forward in the attack. She had a bucket of milk and a big pitcher in hand pouring milk into each trooper's canteen cup as he passed. We had had nothing but powdered milk since leaving the States, so you know what that meant. She was not entirely fluent in English, but got the full meaning of a few troopers who on bended knee asked, "Will you marry me?". There were lighter moments of comic relief even in the midst of a deadly attack and our troopers always made them happen.

Although many things can change in an area in 70 years, I think you will find this area about the same as we found it in January, 1945. If you do run across this little girl, I am sure there will be changes. It is hard for me to visualize her as an 80 year old grandmother. She might find changes in me too.

I know you are looking forward to this trip with pent up anticipation; we look forward to your trip report with the same.

Highest Airborne regards,

Howard E Hensleigh

Thank you Howard for another fantastic memory. I will look for that farm and I will ask about the story. In fact I will have it translated and printed before I go.

I can never thank you enough. I will try to remember to take lots of photos and push past my naturally introverted nature to try to connect to the story of January 1945.



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I will relay to you the results of my search. I leave on the 16th of this month for Dusseldorf.

Thanks again!

Tom Reber

Son of **Lt. Robert J. Reber** HQ 3rd 81mm mortars

Tom,

I just started poking around and found some WWII topographical maps at http://library.mcmaster.ca/maps/ww2/ww2_Fran_Belg_Holl_ndx100k.htm

Section 13 has Stavelot. It looks like you can download a high-res version.

Bob Barrett



Dear Howard,

If I ask too many questions, please just let me know, but I have attached a file that is a digitized version of the maps link that Bob so graciously sent out to me.

It is a little distorted (scrunched from the sides) but it shows a close up and a little wider view of the area South of Stavelot. I tried to keep the resolution level high to aid the detail of the map.

Based upon your description of the terrain I am guessing at two possible locations near where the 3rd Bn went, and where my Dad was hit on 1/13/1945. If it was the Eastern path toward Butay, I am thinking it was near the blue number 73 on the map. If it was the Western route, I would be thinking near the "V" in Vaulx Richard. A third possibility is near the "ch" in Richard, on the map.

I was wondering if you take a look and try to recall any additional details. The maps that Bob found are amazing and look exactly like the silk campaign maps you guys were issued. I have one from the Southern France jump that my Dad carried and it is in this exact style. I also still have some of the German mortar shrapnel that wounded him, which he kept in his Purple Heart case.

Again, Howard, I cannot thank you enough for all you have done and continue to do, not only for me, but for all of the descendants and historians.

Highest regards!

Tom Reber

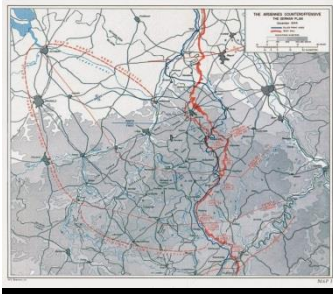
(Lt. Robert J. Reber, HQ 3rd)



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Not sure if you have seen this link...good information here. It does mention the 517th as of the January 3rd date.

[Tribute to an 82nd Airborne Veteran: The 82nd Airborne in the Battle of the Bulge December 18, 1944 – January 31, 1945](#)



Tribute to an 82nd Airborne Veteran: The 82nd Airborn...

Today is Veteran's Day November 11, 2013, so I wanted to post an entry to honor the veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division who fought in the Battle of the Bulge;

[View on ww2tribute.blogspot...](#)

Preview by Yahoo

Thanks!
Tom Reber

On Christmas Day the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion (PIB) was attached to the 82nd Airborne. Then on January 1, the independent 517th PIR was attached. **Source:** Nordyke, P., "All American All the Way: The Combat History of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II" 2005, p 653 – 655.

January 3: The Counterattack Begins (Illustrated in Map 7 below)

The 82nd planned counterattack began on January 3. The Airborne forces consisted of the 504, 505, and 508 PIRs, the 325 and 401st Glider Infantry Regiments (GIRs) - all of which had been initially deployed over December 18 – 19 and the newly attached 517 PIR and 551 PIB. Even with these additional forces, the Division was under strength.

The initial January 3 attack consisted of the 505 and 517 PIRs, the 325 and 401 GIRs, and the 551st PIB.

The plan called for the 505 PIR to thrust through the middle with the 325 GIR on the right flank and the 551 PIB as well as the 517 PIR on the left. The latter two units would form the first link in a pivot from the natural barrier the Salm River offered on the Division's left flank allowing the 505 and 325 to swing out from their starting positions and gain ground rapidly. It was a strategy which worked because on the first day's fighting the Division overran the 62nd Volksgrenadiers and the 9th SS Panzer's positions capturing 2,400 prisoners. **Source:** Gavin, J. "On To Berlin: Battles of an Airborne Commander 1943- 1946", 1978 p. 249.

Besides being killed or wounded, many men were debilitated by severe frostbite from advancing through deep snow without overshoes. This was compounded by the frigid temperatures brought on by nightfall. By the dawn of January 4, all of the initial attacking units had encountered fierce enemy resistance in the form of artillery from 88mm guns, mortar and tank fire, as well as machine guns and small arms fire.

Given these attacks and the cold, January 3 was to be the most costly day in Division history **Source:** Nordyke, P., "All American All the Way: The Combat History of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II" 2005, p 671.



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From **Lory Curtis**:

I received a nice letter from **Tom McAvoy** this week with pictures of the custom woodworking he does. Tom said:

Dear Lory and Claire:

I am the artist here or expert wood worker. I was a locomotive engineer for 25 years, and lost half of my hearing in both ears in an artillery barrage in Italy in combat with the 517th PRCT. I jumped into southern France on August 15, 1944 for the invasion of southern France. We had a drunk navigator on our plane and he was supposed to drop us 20 miles behind enemy lines. He put us 50 behind enemy lines, was court marshaled for this as 6-7 of us were so injured we could not continue to fight. For myself I broke my back in 5 places on the drop. The free French underground had been alerted of the large paratrooper drop. 17,000 of us, a lot of casualties. It just killed me to find I applied for disability with the VA and was told they did not believe my story of my injuries. It took my 51 years before I found a lawyer that lost my case against the VA. I had to send him more money and I have finally won my case with the VA and I am now receiving my disability pay.

Airborne All the Way!

Tom McAvoy

Check out the beautiful pictures Tom sent of his expert woodworking skills





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From First Airborne Task Force website: We are now at 10 days before the beginning of the commemoration of the Operation Dragoon; the "Forgotten D-day"

The website has an English version now (few pages are not translated) since August 1.



Photo : Few troopers of A/517th PIR on Canino airfield before Dday.

This promises to be a big event, but we are assured that adequate adjacent parking will be provided and we can drop off veterans and guests very close by.

[Join](#)
[70th Anniversary of Operation](#)
[Dragoon: Memoire de Provence](#)
[Ceremony at Rhone American](#)
[Cemetery](#)

Saturday, August 16 at 9:30am in
UTC+02

[Draguignan28 people are going](#)

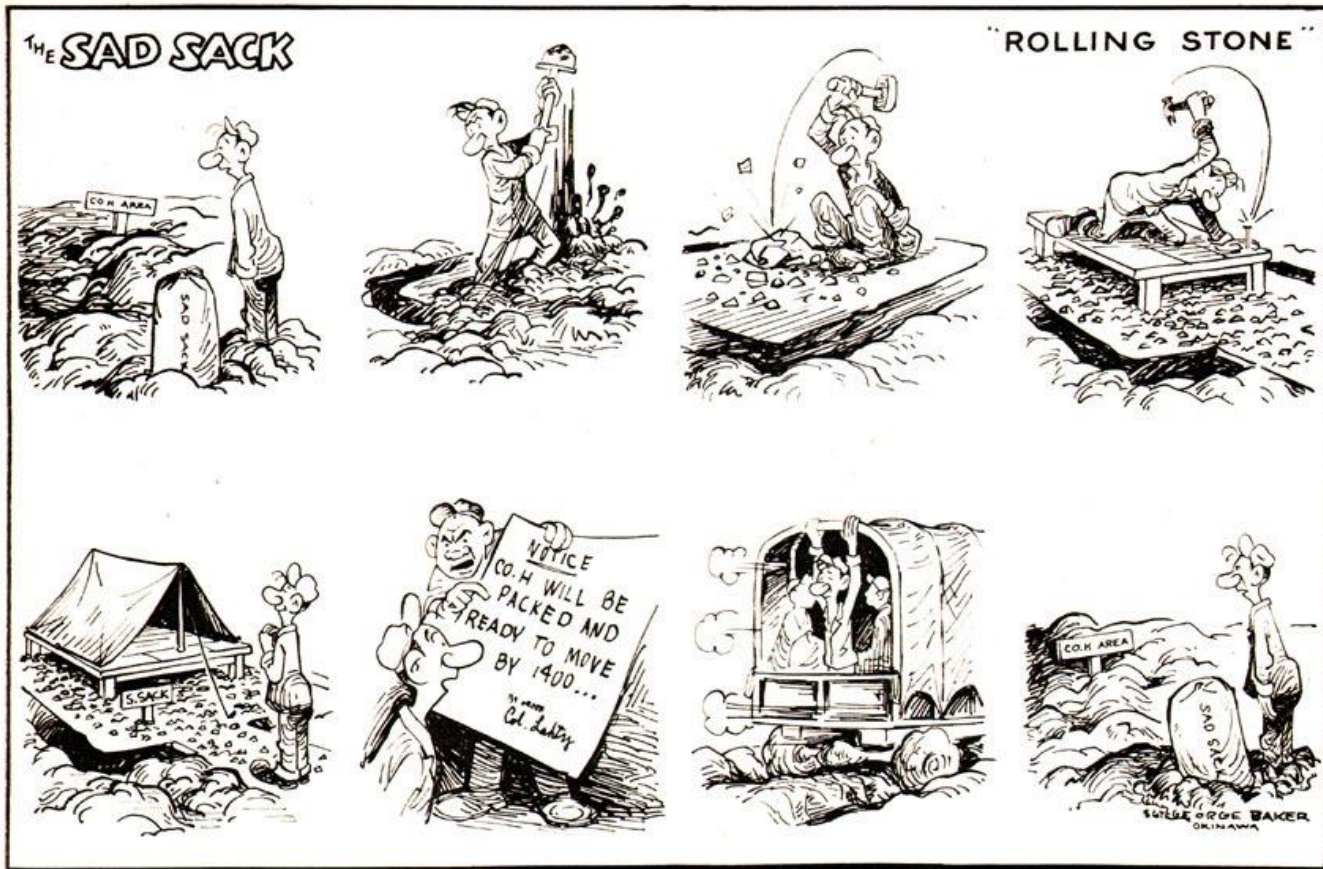


Claire G.



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YANK The Army Weekly • NOVEMBER 23, 1945



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