



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2226

August 10, 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
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MailCall News



2014 D-Day remembrance

An 11 year old boy honors those who fought that day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8k9Si28k0Fk>



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

This week we received word that **Gene Frice** had a serious heart attack. He is now in stable, but critical condition. - BB

From **Karen Frice Wallace** 8/7/14:

We are in ICU in Bend, OR. He suffered a heart attack and had problems with the catheterization to fix it. Doing better than expected but took a big hit and hopefully will recover. We know how tough these men are, if anyone can he will.

You may publish and send correspondence to my address

Karen Frice Wallace
66295 Hwy 20
Bend, OR 97701

Karen and family

Jesse and Louetta Darden – 460th PFAB

It's been a difficult three years. Jesse passed away Aug 3rd, 2011 three years ago at age 86 and Lou followed less than a year afterwards on July 16th, 2012 at age 74.

Been hard on Kristie and myself thought we had more time with them and especially with mom's passing so soon after Jesse.

McAlester News paper has their obituaries online. I really don't know what else to say. The 517th was so important in their lives and they loved everyone there and loved the winter get together in Florida. Not to mention how thrilled and honored they were to host the national event in OKC that one time.

I still receive the newsletter via email but life has been to crazy and I just could not get myself to sit down and finalize this one last thing notifying the 517th.

Thanks, **Tom Darden**





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



McALESTER — **J. A. Darden**, 86, of Cedar Park, Texas, died Wednesday, Aug. 3, 2011, at Lighthouse Hospice in Round Rock, Texas.

Born April 1, 1925, at Utica, to Aubrey Lee Darden and Etta Mae (Bagwell) Darden, he grew up in Atoka and Pittsburg Countys. He graduated from

Kiowa High School in 1943 and Eastern State College in Wilburton. He entered the U.S. Army in June 1943, and was accepted into the 17th Airborne Division.

He was a paratrooper with the 517th Parachute Combat Team, attached at times to the 82nd & 101st airborne battalions during WWII. He saw duty in Italy, France, Holland, Belgium and Germany. After being honorably discharged at the end of WWII, he served in the Army Reserves. He was called back to active duty during the Korean Conflict and served from November 9, 1950 to October 18, 1951. Once again he was honorably discharged and achieved the rank of T-sergeant. Citations he earned were Silver Star, Arrowhead Invasion, Five Battle Stars, Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, WW II Victory Medal, Joint Services Commendation, American Defense, Armed Services Reserve, French and Belgium Cruix DeGuerre as well as the Korean Defense Medal.

After leaving the military he remained in McAlester and was a longtime member of the First Baptist Church of McAlester serving on many church committees. He was active in several civic organizations including past assistant to the city mayor, McAlester Planning Commission, McAlester Housing Authority, McAlester Tree Board, and a member of the McAlester School Board from 1982 until 1998, a total of 16 consecutive years. He was also an active member of the American Legion Harrison-Power Post No. 79 and also a 32nd Degree Mason with the Masonic Lodge No. 550.

After retiring from Rockwell International/Boeing in 1987, he enjoyed several hobbies most notably restoring old cars and “RVing” with his family.



McALESTER — Louetta Jean Darden, 74, of Cedar Park, Texas, died Monday, July 16, 2012, at Lighthouse Hospice in Round Rock, Texas.

Born Nov. 14, 1937, in Oklahoma City, she was the daughter of Thomas and Georgia (Johnson) Welsh.

She grew up in Pittsburg County, graduated from McAlester High School in 1955 and Baylor University College of Dentistry in Dallas in 1957. While in school in Dallas, she worked for Texas Instruments.

During her years in McAlester, she owned and operated The Uniform Shop in the mini-mall for a few years. For more than 30 years she worked as a dental hygienist for Dr. Robert Bartheld. In her retirement she also worked at the American Legion Post 79.

She enjoyed her high school years, including the Glee Club. She served many years on the Class of 1955 McAlester High School Reunion committee as its treasurer. She was a longtime member of First Baptist Church of McAlester, serving on many event and church committees. **In 2006, she assisted in setting up the Women’s Auxiliary for the 460th HQ Battalion for her husband’s military reunions and was elected as the first president of the auxiliary.**

In her retirement she enjoyed RV’ing with her husband, traveling across the greater United States of America and Canada. She was an active member of the Red Hatters Club, enjoyed fishing, cross-stitching and making Christmas stockings for all the members of her family. She enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren, especially at holidays, birthdays and graduations.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

More MailCall News

Hi Ben

Do you have **Tom McAvoy's** email address or phone number? I would like to let him know about my book being out as a very long interview with him is shown in chapter 4. I used to have his email address, but he has since changed it apparently.

Thanks

Jean-Loup

*Does anyone have n email or phone number for **Tom McAvoy**?*

What is the history on the Challenge coins? did I miss it in a prior issue?

tom rea

A **challenge coin** is a small [coin](#) or [medallion](#) (usually [military](#)), bearing an organization's [insignia](#) or [emblem](#) and carried by the organization's members. Traditionally, they are given to prove membership when challenged and to enhance morale. In addition, they are also collected by service members. In practice, challenge coins are normally presented by unit commanders in recognition of special achievement by a member of the unit. They are also exchanged in recognition of visits to an organization

...it became tradition to ensure that all members carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through challenge in the following manner - a challenger would ask to see the medallion. If the challenged could not produce a medallion, they were required to buy a drink of choice for the member who challenged them. If the challenged member produced a medallion, then the challenging member was required to pay for the drink. This tradition continued on throughout the war and for many years after the war while surviving members of the squadron were still alive.

RE: **Lt. Robert J. Reber** and Stavelot, Belgium

RE: Topographical Maps

Dear Tom,

I have given up on using maps to refresh my recollections of the terrain south of Stavelot. You should not as they will assist you greatly in your tour of the Belgian countryside.

I do have some comments that may help you understand the general lay out for the attack in which your father was wounded. I also have reservations about the attack as it is explained in the Odyssey, our history. Many of these comments may not be of interest to you, but after looking things over; I got up some dander and had to get it out of my system. Please forgive.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Let's start with **General** Ridgeway. He was a West Pointer who had spent his entire professional life in the Army. He commanded the 82nd Division before its officers and noncoms were split to form the cadres for the 82nd and 101st Airborne. He took the 82nd through the process of becoming an airborne division, through its training and combat. When the 18th Airborne Corps was formed, he was the natural choice for promotion to it's three star commander. Like our **Dick Seitz**, he was airborne all the way, until he replaced Douglas McArthur in Korea and turned things around there.

Although there may be proof for it in the records which I have not examined, I have reservations about Ridgeway's ordering an envelopment attack with the objective of capturing two German divisions, as shown on page 138 of the Odyssey. In an envelopment the center of your line holds the line or has a short initial attack objective while the ends of the attacking line you position your strongest fastest moving forces to outflank the troops you intend to capture. What do we have here? The 30th Division (a seasoned line infantry outfit not known for its speed) was on the left and on the right, the 75th (a green division made up of disappointed ASTP students who were as ineffectual here as the Odyssey relates). And who do we have in the middle? The third battalion 517 that had just taken Manhay for Ridgeway with only 2 rifle companies, but reinforced by the addition of G Co. on the 9th of January, after its having a relatively easy time of it guarding Ridgeway's CP. Moreover, the 517th had a regimental commander who realized that, in the dark, we should hold the high ground between the river and the ridge line before the enemy had breakfast and were all set in their defensive positions to repel the attackers. **Col. Graves** changed the time we attacked from 0800 to 0400 and we hit the high ground before first light. In a coordinated attack with so many other units it would seem that Graves would have had to obtain Ridgeway's consent before implementing this change in time, but the 517th did not always play the game strictly by the book. So, we don't know. If Ridgeway did know about our early attack timing, it is one more strike against his ordering an envelopment.

My understanding of the attack order was that all elements in the attack had 13 phase lines to be crossed in unison until we reached the 13th. I remember the coincidence that the attack also began on the 13th of January. The reason I paid close attention to the order and the accompanying map was that my job after we reached the 13th phase line was to take a patrol to designated spots on the 13th phase line to make contact with the 30th on our left and the 75th on our right. In short, my understanding of the order was that all units involved in the attack were to move in unison against the enemy, not make strong attacks on the right and left flanks with the center holding the line or making a short movement forward.

The way the attack worked out was the exact opposite of what was expected of an envelopment. The Third Bn., in the middle, hit each phase line at the designated time. The 30th, on the left flank, ground ahead slowly and had advanced about half way to the 13th phase line and the 75th, on the right flank, was still in Grand Halleux in the bridgehead we had secured (including a bridge across the river wide enough for vehicular traffic built by the 596th), held up by small arms fire.

So, you know what my G Co. squad patrol ran into at the designated contact spots on the 13th phase line. We started to the right to contact the 75th, plowing through knee deep snow. The going was so rough on the lead man who broke the trail that we had to rotate that job within the squad. When we got near the contact point, we observed troops, but they wore German helmets. We reversed course and headed for the 30th contact point, where we got the same greeting. By this time it was midnight and we had had a full day of it. There was a road nearby with the snow packed down by the traffic that ran across the front into our lines. It was unusual for me to ask patrol members to participate in a patrol decision, but taking the road increased the risk of running into enemy or hitting mines. To a man the patrol said, take the road. We started at a fast pace and soon were challenged by a G Co. outpost. The



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

password had changed at midnight so none of us knew it. **Sgt. Kichin** solved the problem by bellowing in his unmistakable North Carolina accent, "This is **Sgt. Kichin** and we're commin on in." **Ray Scruggs** was the point man on the road and I noticed that as lead scout he had his M1 slung over his back and his hands in his jacket pockets. I didn't say anything to him on the way, but when we were within our lines I asked him how he intended to take care of the enemy in that posture, if we ran into any. He replied by pulling his right hand out of his pocket. It contained a loaded, cocked 45 pistol.

Obviously, this did not appear to be an envelopment attack. Actually the 3rd Bn. was enveloped with enemy on our right and left. Fortunately the Germans did not realize our exposed situation or were in such a condition that they did not want to attempt to take advantage of it.

I'll sign off now after bending your ear for too long.

I know you will have a great trip and will find some Belgians who still love us.

Highest Airborne regards,

Howard Hensleigh

Dear Howard,

As I said when we spoke in person some years ago, you should write a book!

I value and cherish your remembrances and explanations, as so many of us associated with the 517th do. I think it was a blessing that you "got your dander up" and explained your impressions of the attack. As a person who never has experienced the military lifestyle or military tactics, your observations and interpretations were clearly understood as you explained them.

Thank you for sharing those thoughts. With what you have already provided me, and the research I was able to do with the printed texts of the 517th and googled resources (thanks Bob!), I think I know where to look. I have even "pre-visited" some potential sites by using the google maps driving photos and checked the panoramic views.

It is an amazing tool. I have found buildings that may be survivors of the 40's and have seen the heavily wooded (now) ridge line you have described. The area is definitely still agricultural and the ridge is used for logging.

Howard, I cannot thank you enough. I promise to report back as soon as I can upon my return.

Highest Airborne Regards,

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



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Le 23 Août 2014
70^{ÈME}
ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA
LIBÉRATION
DE SAINT-CEZAIRE

17h15 :
Début de la manifestation
au cimetière

18h45 :
Cérémonie au monument
aux morts place Maure

Défilé de camions militaires
du groupe "Géronimo"

Mise à l'honneur
de vétérans américains

Un artiste sera présent
place De Gaulle
pour animer le dîner
et la soirée.

20h00 : Repas sur la place

Here is the program from Eric and Jean Michel; some of you probably already received it. You can see that there are many options on 15 August, including some not listed here. The service and luncheon at Valbourges on the 16th is a wonderful gathering. It's where the gliders came in; be sure to have someone point out where there is still the framework of a glider in a tree; the tree has grown around it.

Claire Giblin

From: "Renoux, Eric" <cabrian9@hotmail.fr>
To: "Claire GIBLIN" <clairejgib@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 6, 2014 3:51:40 AM
Subject: RE: Valbourges?

Claire,

We are finalising this night the Program of all celebration and events we organise this year for the 70th !!! Busy Busy... Crazy Buzy !!...

Find attached the program. About the 16th after our Celebration at US Cemetery in Draguignan, after, like every years we go to Castel of Valbourges for a special Mass with a French Chaplain. We asked to Chris to translate this year for our friends US & GB...

After the Mass, our convivial Lunch with everybody. Approx 200 persons this year !...

Jean Michel et Eric

Airborne Task Force Museum South France



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Program Dragoon 2014

3 Aout 2014 – La Motte

17h00 Start of « Dragoon Historic March »

14 Aout 2014 – La Motte

11h00 Célébration in Le Mitan.
12h30 Apéritif
18h00 Official Célébration of la Motte.
20h00 Parade and Arrival in la Motte Down Town.
21h00 Dinner Mayor with Veterans and Family
22h00 Bal of Libération

15 Aout 2014

LORGUES

10h30 Official Célébration at Stèle of the 13 Lorguais in Les Arcs
11h00 Official Célébration at Lorgues
12h00 Aperitif

PUGET Sur Argens

11h00 Official Célébration at Puget sur Argens
12h00 Aperitif
13h00 Lunch with Veterans and Ré-énactors

Les ARCS sur Argens

18h00 Official Célébration at Les Arcs sur Argens
19h00 Aperitif
20h00 Concert in Down Town

16 Aout 2014

9h30 « Our Célébration of Rémembrance” at Américan Cimetary in Draguignan
11h00 Mass of Rémembrance at Castel of Valbourges
12h30 Friend Lunch of Libération at Castel of Valbourges
18h00 Official Célébration at Trans en Provence
19h00 Apéritif
22h00 Bal of Libération.

17 Août 2014 - Salernes



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

16h30 Parade in the streets of Salernes
17h00 -18h30 Static exposition in down Town of Salernes
19h00 Official Célébration of Salernes
20h00 Apéritif
21h00 Dinner with Veterans and Ré-énactors
22h00 Bal of Libération of Salernes

18 Août 2014 - Varages

18h00 Official Célébration of Varages
19h00 Apéritif
20h00 Dinner with Mayor and Vétérans and Ré-énactors

19 Août 2014 - Barjols

10h00 Inauguration de la plaque de la bataille de Barjols 45th Div US – 179th
10h30 Inauguration de la plaque
11h00 Official Célébration of Barjols
16h00 Célébration at Stèle of Bessillon
18h00 Official Célébration of Sillans la cascade
19h00 apéritif
20h00 Dinner with Mayor Vétérans and Ré-énactors

20 Août 2014 Régusse - Moissac

11h00 Official Célébration of Régusse
12h00 Apéritif
13h00 Lunchs with Vétérans ans Ré-énactors
18h00 Official Célébration of Moissac-Bellevue
19h00 Apéritif
20h00 Dinner with Vétérans and Ré-énactors
22h00 Bal of Libération of Régusse

Prêts pour
accueillir nos amis
américains...

Ready to welcome
our American
friends...

**Patricia Roland
Pavia Orengo**



Avant les
commémos, on
fait un peu de
couture...

Before the
commemos, it did
a bit of sewing...
:D

**Loïc 'Jack'
Jankowiak**





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

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