



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2238

October 26, 2014

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

Website
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2013 Roster (updated!)
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

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MailCall News

LIBERATION DE SOSPEL

70^e ANNIVERSAIRE - 1944 - 2014



**SAMEDI 25
OCTOBRE 2014**

9h à 17h : *Bourse Militaria*
(Gymnase - Entrée 3 €)
Camp américain (Pré Tardivo)

15h : *Témoignages et débats*
(Salle Multimédias)

15h à 17h : *Visite des Forts Maginot*
Agaïsen, St Roch, Barbonnet

21h : *Bal d'époque « Glenn Miller »*

**DIMANCHE 26
OCTOBRE 2014**

10h : *Messe à la cathédrale.*
Bénédictio des véhicules Place
Cabraia

11h : *Dépôt de Gerbe Pont de*
la Libération et Défilé

11h30 : *Cérémonie au Monument*
aux Morts

12h : *Cocktail Place des Platanes*

Informations et réservations bourse :
sospel1944@hotmail.com ou 06 11 57 21 75 (le soir).



From: [First Airborne Task Force ; The Forgotten Paratroopers](#)

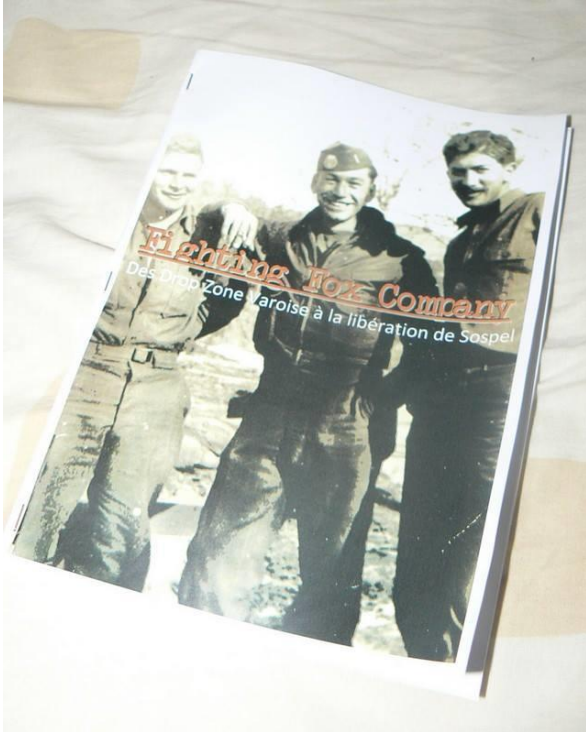
This weekend, the liberation of Sospel.

Many people will live in the footsteps of the F Company of the 517th PIR of the **1st Lt. John J. Lissner** from Saturday 25 to Sunday, October 26.

The city was "liberated" by a patrol of the 3rd Platoon F/517, commanded by **1st Lt. George Giuchici**, guided by some french resistant from Sospel.



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Small project on a booklet of the Fox Company, 517th, from the Var to Sospel.

From **Loïc 'Jack' Jankowiak**

Allan Johnson has arrived in Sospel the ceremonies

“AB & B liqueur with Allan”

with **Patricia Roland Pavia Orengo**



One of the reasons I am late with this week's MailCall is because I just received pictures from **Patrica and Roland Orengo** of the weekend celebrations in Sospel. See the pictures on page 14. -- BB

Could you please put me on the mailing list . My father was **Warren Caulfield (F Company)**.

Thank you, **Suzanne Klotz**



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Hope this finds you well? Myself and a group of buddies from GI 44-45 Living history group displayed a few weeks back at the beginning of October as F Company in the Alps in and around hill 1098. Would you be interested in seeing some of the pictures for the mail call? the display was in honour of **Gene Frice** who passed in Aug and his buddy **Gary Davis** who passed in 2008.

Kind Regards
Darren 'Daz' Bond
ATTACK!

Here's about ten images Bob, hope you will find them of interest. It was out pleasure, was lucky enough to met Gene twice during the Dragoon anniversary's. Plus I am in contact with the Hanson's, the daughter and granddaughter of Gary, Great people! Would be of interest to hear any feedback from friends/ family or vets about the pictures and our little snap shot of history.

Kind regards,
Darren 'Daz' Bond





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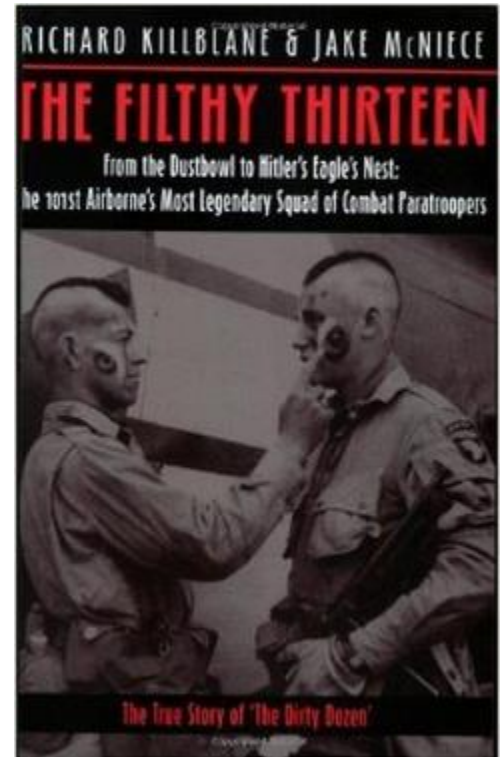


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Further discussion on the Mohawk haircuts.

Jake McNiece of the 101st Airborne Division is the one who started the Mohawk haircut. I met Jake in 2003 at Camp Toccoa. He had a book called the Filthy Thirteen that the movie the Dirty Dozen with Lee Marvin was based on. Jake came from Oklahoma and lived close to an Indian reservation and he told me he got the idea of cutting his hair into a Mohawk for his combat jump on June 6th. You can see from the cover of his book a lot of guys also cut their hair into a Mohawk and put war paint on their faces. In speaking with **Gene Frice** a few years ago, and at the 2012 National Reunion in Kansas City, Gene told me troopers of the 517th also cut their hair into a Mohawk. Maybe the idea came from Jake McNiece? Jake had 4 combat stars in his jump wings. He jumped on June 6th, then Market Garden, he jump in as a pathfinder at the Battle of the Bulge and he told me he also jumped into Germany as a pathfinder. It was a real honor to meet him.

Lory Curtis



My wife and I were at an antique show last Friday when I was looking at a display of military patches. Right there in the middle was this 517th patch. I was totally surprised. I quickly bought the patch. This antique vendor was from Idaho and she really didn't remember where she got the patch. It is a replica and not an original, but it sure made my day finding it. Of course I had to tell her all about the 517th and what they did in combat.

Lory Curtis



Dear Karen and Frice Family,

I share your heavy heart as it is breathtaking sad to hear of Gene's passing. He endured and endeared life with all his heart, soul, wit, humor and family. It was an honor to meet him and enjoy his company at the 517th Reunion July 2012 here in Kansas City, MO.

May God Bless Gene and all of the great men and family members, past and present.

Clare Erber



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To: **Howard Hensleigh**
Subject: a date and news

We have a date and news as well, unless you read it on Mail Call. Dad will be in Sospel later this month, too! So he and Allison will meet at Patricia and Roland's place. Very nice!

Dad really wanted to go - and so I just made the flight arrangements a few days ago. He leaves a week from tomorrow.

And I believe that we will be seeing you on Thursday, November 6 in the morning. We should arrive late Wednesday night and stay near the airport, and see you in the morning. Really looking forward to it.

More later and big hugs -

Claire Giblin

Dear Allan and Claire,

Just to make sure there is no confusion, my daughter, **Nancy Hensleigh** and her husband, Mark Quinn, will be present for the Sospel 70th liberation celebration on the 25th and 26th. Their daughter, Alison Quinn visited earlier this summer. We are delighted that you will be there Allan representing the 517th. During your term as president, you and Claire have accomplished much to keep the organization going and to bind our friendship with the European friends even tighter. God bless you.

Claire, I certainly will be here on November 6. I am usually up, through my "routine", and going by ten. I usually swim on Thursday afternoon, but we can postpone that if needs be.

A cold delayed my response but I am at the stage that life is again worthwhile. There are cures for most everything; someday, I hope they find one for the "common cold".

Love to all, **Howard Hensleigh**

Howard, Alison and I have been in touch and I have gotten it straight in my head! I am so happy that even more Hensleigh's are on the way to visit Sospel! Your accomplishments are well remembered there!

And I cannot wait to see you next month! But first, let me get Dad to France and back. So happy you are recovered from your cold - and I think the morning will work out - we'll get on our way for the afternoon.

So happy that Nancy and Allan will be meeting in France. More soon and big hugs all around.

Claire



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Subject: Sgt Sullivan photos

I would like to contact Roger Sullivan.

I believe he has a photo of my father on his photos page. My father was **Peter Tarasievich** in photo row 17 column A

The guy with the white T-shirt. I'd like to know who the other guys were.

My name is Dan Tarasievich

Hi Dan,

I am copying Roger Sullivan on this email.

I don't know if anyone will be able to put names for all the men on that photo, but Roger did once give us a list of the men in that squad and it did include Peter Tarasievich. See the notes in: <http://517prct.org/mailcall/2080.pdf>

I will look through the morning reports that I have and see if I can find any other mentions of your Dad.

Bob Barrett

Thank you Roger

My father never talked much about his time in Europe during WWII, although he said he was not involved in any fighting, which confuses me from some of the accounts of the 517th

I look forward to hearing from you.

Dan

Dan,
Here's what I've been able to (sort of) figure out about the timing of your dad's experience in WWII. As with yours & so many others, my dad never talked about his battle experiences of any of the wars in which he participated (WWII, Korea, Vietnam). He passed about 15 years ago and I only discovered the 517prct.org site and the fabulous work that Bob and his predecessors have done within the past 3-4 years. I only wish I could get back a little bit of time to talk with my father about what he went through!

My father was a corporal until (at least) 18 Jan 1945 – the date of action resulting in his receiving a Bronze Star. The Feb morning report lists him as a CPL on the 8th (Non-battle casualty – he had severe frostbite) The “Bulge” lasted until early Feb 1945. One can assume that he was promoted to S/Sgt some time after that.

I have a (presumably found/borrowed) notebook that has a Stavelot Belgium address with my dad being listed as Asst Squad Leader in what I think is someone else handwriting. There's no mention of your father in that one.

The one with your dad is in my father's handwriting and shows my father as Squad Leader and shows



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your father as PFC P Transievich - Asst (presumably to Pfc. M Halfpenny listed immediately above as L.M.G = 'Light Machine Gun' I presume). This second notebook listing your dad would have been written sometime in the spring/summer of 1945. Unfortunately, his DD 214 (or personal notes) are not any more specific about his WWII assignments.

If my memory serves me correctly, there was a LOT of reorganization/reconstitution of the 517th after the Bulge and new men without much/any battle experience were brought in to replace those KIA/WIA. Your dad's comment about "not seeing much action" would lend one to think that he was one of these relatively new men in the 517th after the Battle of the Bulge in the spring of 1945.

Your dad was is listed on the passenger manifest for the troop ship "Madawaska Vic[tory]" that sailed from LeHavre carrying the "517th PRCHT Inf Reg." – my father is shown on line #16 as S/Sgt and your dad is on line #170 Tarasievich, Peter A. PFC, Infantry. See the following:

http://www.517prct.org/documents/madawaska_victory/madawaska_victory.htm

But for VJ Day, the 517th would have participated in the invasion of Japan after passage to the US from Europe. Thank the Lord THAT didn't happen or they all would have seen far too much action.

From Dad's records, he was discharged from the 517th in Aug '45 then re-upped when Korea wound up.

I pulled the original photo with your dad and, unfortunately there's nothing on the back. Hardly any of my dad's pictures have notations on them as to who is who. I've attached a hi-res (600dpi) scan of the photo for you. If you see any others in which your father appears, let me know and I'll re-scan those as well.





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Thanks

Roger S

Roger, Excellent detective work. I don't have much to add.

Dan, I cannot locate Peter Tarasievich on the December 1944 roster with A Company. (Although none of the records are never 100% complete.) So he did probably join the 517th sometime after mid-December 1944.

I don't see him on the A Company casualty reports either. (Lucky him.)

http://517prct.org/records/casualty_reports.htm

Roger did find the February 1945 photo and notebook, and the Madawaska records in August 1945.

The only other thing I found is an NARA enlistment record which shows that a Peter B. Tarasievich enlisted in November 1942 in Chicago:

<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=893&mtch=1&cat=WR26&tf=F&q=Tarasievich&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=1&rid=1280690>

Is that him?

Bob Barrett

Thank you very much, I already have found that he was not on the 1944 Christmas list and did find him on the Madawaska list and in the NARA enlistment records - that is how I found you guys. When I saw Rogers fathers name I knew he would show up.

Dad was born in Yugoslavia and came to the States in 1934 when he was 12. He was one of the kindest men you would ever meet.

I plan to keep looking for more info - I have sent away for his records. I have yet to even find when he departed the US for Europe. I remember him telling me many years ago that he trained in armor before volunteering for the airborne. But that's about all I know from him during those years.

Roger, one of my brothers said the photo looked familiar - so I'm having my sister look into the photos our parents left. If I find out any more that may help in identifying others in the photo you have I'll send you info.

I have been in the parachute industry for 30+ years manufacturing emergency parachute systems for Warbird, Aerobatic, Glider, and Kit built aircraft pilots. I started jumping back in 1971 (all civilian). When I told him I was going to skydive he said I didn't have the balls. I have since made over 2000 skydives!

Please keep in touch - if I find out anything more I'll let you know. I have signed up for the 517th MailCall and can't thank you all enough as that is how I've gotten this far.

Sincerely

Dan



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My son is the "godfather" of 2nd class **Pvt. David Vane's** grave in the military american cemetary of Epinal, France. His number was 33732989 517th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT de la 13TH AIRBORNE DIVISION born in MARYLAND, died on May, 21st 1945 PURPLE HEART We'd like to learn more things about him, can you help us ? Thank you.

Yours,

Véronique GREINER *alias Ingrid Steiner, Writer*

RE: DisStanislao Report

Hello Bob,

Thank you for posting the 1985 report by **Dr. DiStanislao**. [\[MailCall 2137\]](#) What a wealth of information to those in A and B Companies.

Cousin **Richard Baysinger**, B Co was on patrol with **Ledley Pace** when Pace was KIA. Richard heard his last words, "Beak, Beak". **SGT Beak** White was the Squad leader on that patrol as identified in the Dr.'s report.

Richard was wounded that same day and evacuated for treatment and returned to the unit in March. So I will be interested in those morning reports when they are released.

Thank you for the time you spend holding this historical site together.

Don Gentry

The Curtis' and Wells' had a little 517th mini reunion here in Salt Lake City. My brother Tim came to visit and see my all American grandson play wide receiver in his high school football game. He caught 5 touchdown passes and his team won 56 to 21.



Anyway on Friday Oct 24th **Mike and Rhonda Wells** met with us for lunch to discuss important 517th issues. One of the big ones was having a National Reunion June 25-28, 2015 in New Orleans, LA at the National World War II museum. President Allan Johnson had requested we go there because the World War II museum is there. I would like to know what kind of interest there is out there in having a National reunion in New Orleans next June. Send in your responses to mailcall so I can get an idea. Hope you all will like to meet once again. Airborne All the Way!

Lory Curtis, 1st Vice President, 517th PRCT Association



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When I was in Belgium in August 2014 we went over to Stave lot where the 51 7th has a plaque on the bridge crossing the Ambleve River. A ceremony was held when the plaque was mounted and mayor made a presentation. This was probably in 2001 during my presidency since I was given a copy of his talk. Later I asked for a translation and a copy of it is in your files somewhere. Anyway while I was at the bridge site in August a 93 year old man came up to me and indicated he had seen the bridge blown. That jogged my memory and I knew I had a story written by Leland Cofer who was given instructions to blow the structure. It was a very important bridge since the Germans needed it to get their tanks across to roll on to Liege and Antwerp.

Merle McMorrow

THE BRIDGE AT STAVELOT

Leland Cofer

Platoon leader, Company A, 105th Engineer Battalion, 30th Infantry Division



In December of 1944 the Allied soldiers in Europe thought the war was winding down to an inevitable end. Hitler and his Nazi friends had other ideas. They had hoarded weapons and war material and collected them in the Ardennes for a major thrust through the American lines to take Liege and Antwerp -- and whatever else they could.

They hoped this would give them more time, disorganize and delay the Allies, so that Germany



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might be able to complete a secret weapon in time to give them victory. At least something other than unconditional surrender. They were working on new weapons as fast as possible.

American generals thought the Ardennes of Eastern Belgium and Western Germany was an easy front. Four U.S. Divisions were dug in on a long 80 mile line. They were the 99th, 106th, 28th and 4th Infantry Divisions, with the 9th Armored Division considered to be in reserve. Two of these Divisions, the 99th and 106th had never seen combat. Two others, the 28th and 4th, were put in this area because both had suffered heavy casualties in the Hurtgen Forest fighting.

The Ardennes was expected to be a quiet easy front, an ideal place for the green to learn and the battle shattered to lick their wounds. For two months, there had been little activity except patrolling along this line.

The quiet front ended about 0530 hrs. on December 16, when about 2,000 German cannon began shooting all at once. About 1000 hrs~, the Germans struck with 20 Divisions of Infantry and Armor. Our front soon evaporated into pockets of resistance • . Huge number of Americans became prisoners of war and the Germans continued westward, with not too much opposition.

At this time I was a platoon leader in Co. A, 105th Engineer Battalion, a part of the 30th Infantry Division. This division, the 30th, was just North of Aachen, Germany and West of the Roer River, where the front had been static for about 6 weeks.

On the 17th of December, the Division was detached from the 9th Army and reassigned to the 1st Army. We moved out in late afternoon and spent all of that night inching our way south in vehicles on a crowded road. We were harassed a good part of the night by German aircraft who dropped lots of flares and flew back and forth over our column, but dropped very few bombs. Several other Divisions, both Infantry and Armored, were also headed for the Ardennes from all directions to counter the German offensive.

By the end of 18 December, the 117th Infantry Regiment, (one of three Infantry Regiments of the 30th Division) to which our engineer company was attached, had attacked the town of Stavelot and pushed the enemy back across the Ambleve River.

A multi arch stone bridge across the river in the town was still intact. It was the only bridge for several miles ---a bridge the Germans needed to continue their offensive toward Leige.

If the' Germans could capture a bridge intact at Stavelot and hold it, their tanks and other armored units could cross. They might then run through the hastily defended areas north of the Ambleve River. Their opportunities and options would be greatly enhanced. Use of this bridge could result in the capture of Leige and Antwerp, their initial objectives.

Sometime about noon on the 19th of December, I received orders to go to Stavelot and destroy the bridge. Reconnaissance was the first thing to be done.

I took off with my driver T5 John Barone, in a jeep and drove as close to the river as I dared, then proceeded on foot to near the bridge. This was the front line of the 117th Infantry who were "holed up" in houses and basements along this line. Jerry held all the ground south of the river and had at least one tank and infantry with other weapons, covering the bridge. The bridge was in "no man's land".



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In the daytime it would have been instant suicide to approach the bridge in the open. It was completely exposed to German fire. It was necessary that I get a good look at the bridge so we could decide how to destroy it and how much explosive would be needed.

By crawling from one house to the next I arrived at an upper story window which gave me an oblique view of the bridge. By standing back from the window to remain unseen, I sketched a rough drawing of the bridge and estimated the length of the spans and thickness of the deck. There was a wrecked US jeep on the bridge and the body of an American soldier lying near our end.

While at my position overlooking the bridge, I was witness to a duel between one of our TD's and the kraut tank on the south side of the river. After some maneuvering by both combat-ants the TD got a couple of rounds into the side of the tank. A few seconds later a smoke grenade was tossed out of the tank hatch and soon followed by the surviving members of the crew who ran into a nearby building. They came out so quick there was no time to get a shot at them. (This tank is the one pictured on the 31st page of the picture section of the 30th Division history. This picture was taken from a position very close to where I observed the bridge).

After returning to my jeep we drove back up the hill to our Company CP to plan and to organize a demolition crew. We estimated an excessive amount of TNT to be certain, because the charge would be just setting on the top of the deck, nothing like an Engineer School solution. We decided on 1000 lbs., which was 20 fifty pound boxes of TNT. We placed caps at random in various boxes to insure it would all explode. TNT is super stable and it needs a good shock to set it off. We also built three slow burning fuses, long enough to burn about one minute with detonators and fuse lighters. This was two more than necessary but it was insurance to guarantee detonation.

We planned to approach after dark but didn't want to delay too long because the Germans might be planning an assault to recapture the bridge that night.

We arranged through the 117th Regimental Headquarters for HE artillery fire at a regular rate mixed with smoke shells into the enemy positions close to the south end of the bridge. This fire was to begin at the hour we planned to move to the bridge. (The time has long been forgotten but was probably 2000 or 2100 hrs). The artillery fire was necessary to cover the noise and the smoke to make it more difficult to be observed while we were approaching the bridge and setting the charge. The town had been shelled the previous days and there was much glass from shattered windows and doors laying in the cobble stone streets, making it impossible to walk quietly, especially while carrying a 50 lb box of TNT.

The TNT and men were loaded into a couple of 6x6 trucks and we drove down the hill. When the artillery fire started we moved to within 3 or 4 blocks of the bridge. We unloaded the trucks, passing out the TNT, one box per man and everybody headed for the bridge on foot. On our way a French speaking soldier was assigned to check the houses and basements near the bridge and advise anyone in them to leave. I do not recall whether we found anyone, they had probably already left due to the fighting earlier. Our infantry had already been ordered to move back from the bridge.

Staff Sgt. James McKeon (who was killed about a month later) and Sgt. Lowell Richardson accompanied me with the rest of the men following, to set all the TNT in one stack directly over the thinnest part of the deck in the first span. The men delivered their boxes and quickly returned to the trucks. This was done in probably 3 or 4 minutes and we three, McKeon, Richardson and myself on a signal pulled all three fuse lighters simultaneously. We took off, disregarding any noise we might make;



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a couple of short blocks away, "KA-BOOM!!!". It was a terrific explosion. Stone masonry houses close to the ends of the bridge collapsed. It must have been some shock to any krauts exposed or not on the south side.

Our artillery fire stopped and we were all standing along a sidewalk just north of the bridge when at least one Jerry machine gun began firing up the street from the south side.

We fell and jumped through doors and windows into houses until after a few minutes, the firing stopped. Luckily, no one was hurt.

It was then necessary to get a look at the bridge to see if the job had been accomplished. Sgt. Richardson and I stole back to the river as quietly as possible and looked over the edge of the hole in the bridge. The first span had disappeared, it was a good gap. As our company commander, Captain James Rice, told Hal Boyle, an AP reporter "No German tank can broad-jump that".

This stalled the German advance at Stavelot. In succeeding nights they attacked our infantry by wading the river in an attempt to drive our troops back, re-bridge the gap and use it for their Panzer units. The attacks were unsuccessful.

A few days after the bridge demolition the company was moved to other hot spots within the 117th's area until near the end of January, 1945. By this time, the Germans had been forced back and their "bulge" into our lines straightened. Their attack had completely fizzled out.

When we left to return to the Roer River North of Aachen, we drove part of it at night with our headlights full on. Running with our headlights on in Europe was something we had never done before. There seemed to be little danger of the Luftwaffe attacking our convoy.

When we arrived at the Roer River, we immediately began preparation for the assault river crossing, which would be the next major battle for the 30th Division and the 105th Engineer Battalion.

Leland E Cofer
446 Wildwood Drive
Grand Junction CO 81503



The Ambleve River bridge



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70th anniversary 517th. Sospel & Italian Border liberation

Here are some pictures, just sent in from **Patricia and Roland Orengo** of some of the activities at Sospel this past weekend. I included mostly pictures with **Allan Johnson**, since he is there to represent the 517th. Nancy Hensleigh, Howard's daughter and her husband Mark Quinn also attended.



If I understand this correctly, it appears that Allan was put to work before dinner, separating out the saffron from the flowers. Looks like a lot of work.



Patricia and Allan





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Flowers on the Pont du Liberation



Roland Orengo and Alan Johnson



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Allan enjoying dinner overlooking Sospel





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Here are a few more photos that I picked up from [AIRBORNE MUSEUM "15 Aout 1944" Association](#)



Adrien - 517th flag holder.



Laying of wreaths at the monument by the Mayor of Sospel, Allan Johnson president of the 517th came specially from the USA for the occasion and Howard Hensleigh's daughter, Nancy.



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Nancy Hensleigh



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