



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2239

November 2, 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

More from the 70th Anniversary - Liberation de Sospel



a video movie made by an inhabitant of Sospel Jean-Pierre LAROCHE.....

http://cannes.civis.free.fr/70th_0001.wmv

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Patricia et Roland Orengo

Near the beginning at 30 seconds in, that's Roland driving his 517PIR jeep with **Allan Johnson** beside him, and I think that is Patricia "I Can Do It!" in the back seat.



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Here are some more Sospel photos of Allan and friends from the Facebook pages of **Patricia Orengo** and **Eric Renoux** of the Airborne 1944 Museum (and maybe others – I've lost track.)





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Sospel aux couleurs de ses libérateurs



La célébration du 70^e anniversaire de la Libération du village se poursuit aujourd'hui



L'association Bande Einaudi a fait sensation.

Hier, Sospel s'est réveillée en 1944. À chaque coin de rue, dans le cadre du 70^e anniversaire de la Libération, on pouvait croiser des résistants, des soldats en tenue et parfois armés, une femme au chignon et à la robe à pois, des drapeaux français, américains et canadiens, des vitrines décorées. Une ambiance vintage planait sur un village repeint aux couleurs tricolores et militaires grâce aux commerçants et à plusieurs associations de reconstitution historique comme « Battle of Brans », « Cannes véhicules historiques » ou encore « Bande Einaudi », du nom

du résistant léjusien Albert Einaudi.

Les forts pris d'assaut

Sous le chapiteau, la bourse militaria a attiré une importante foule tout au long de la journée. Il n'était pas rare de rencontrer un grand-père offrant une leçon d'histoire plus captivante que jamais à son petits-fils devant les objets de l'époque ainsi exposés : des uniformes aux armes en passant par les décorations, les jumelles, les gourdes ou encore les véhicules en miniature comme en grandeur nature... Seul regret de la journée d'hier, le camp militaire n'a



Près de deux cents personnes ont visité les forts, toute la journée d'hier, comme ici celui de Barbonnet.

(Photos Cyril Dodogny et Julien Avinent)

pas pu être mis en place. Mais du côté des ouvrages de la ligne Maginot, le succès a été total. Près de deux cents visiteurs sont entrés dans les forts de l'Agaisen, Saint-Roch et Barbonnet. Tous en ressortaient impres-

sionnés. La journée s'est poursuivie avec une conférence animée par Roland Orenco, en présence d'une centaine de sospelloises avides d'histoire et de vérités pour rendre hommages aux victimes

sospelloises et voisines ainsi qu'aux alliés libérateurs. Ce premier jour de fête s'est achevé par un bal en habits d'époque, en présence de la formation roquebrunoise Liber-T et de l'orchestre cas-

sillonnais New-feel, avec une huvette ouverte par Sospel en fêtes. Les festivités se terminent ce matin avec les cérémonies officielles et des surprises.

JULIEN AVINENT

Ils ont dit

« Au nom de tous les vétérans »



Alan Johnson, 90 ans, vétéran américain et président de l'association du 517^e PRCT

« Le jour de la Libération, j'ai perdu un ami dans un accident de voiture, en direction de Sospel, pour entrer dans le village. Aujourd'hui, je parle au nom de tous les vétérans qui vous expriment, Sospellois, tout leur bonheur et surtout leur honneur d'être parmi vous. »

« Une grande histoire d'hommes »



Frédéric et Arthur, en vacances dans la famille sospelloise

« C'était l'occasion de faire visiter à mon fils le fort de l'Agaisen, après la bourse militaria. C'est ici une grande histoire d'hommes dont il faut garder le souvenir, comme le font ces associations qui entretiennent ces ouvrages. La visite était plus impressionnante qu'on ne l'avait pensé. »



La bourse militaria a attiré de nombreux visiteurs sous le chapiteau.



Le chenillette, hier devant l'entrée du fort de l'Agaisen, est attendue au défilé ce matin vers 11 h.

Le programme du jour

Les festivités du 70^e anniversaire de la Libération de Sospel se poursuivent aujourd'hui. La journée débute par une messe à 10 h en la chapelle des Pénitents gris, place Saint-Michel. Puis, bénédiction des véhicules à 11 h, place Cabrala. Suivra un dépôt de gerbes et les hymnes ainsi qu'un événement surprise sur le pont de la Libération.

Le défilé de véhicules démarrera ensuite pour emprunter l'avenue Jean-Médecin avec hommes à pieds, jeeps, camions, chenillette, etc. Jusqu'au monument aux Morts avec un dépôt de gerbes à 11 h 30 et un survol aérien par le club de parapentistes Sospel Vol libre. Apéritif d'honneur et discours des officiels à 12 h, sous le chapiteau, clôtureront ce long week-end de festivités.





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One more photo from the Sospel liberation celebrations with **Nancy Hensleigh** and **Allan Johnson**.



Other MailCall News

My father [**Tom Cross**] will be receiving the French LOH this coming Sunday. He plans to use this as an opportunity to educate a broader audience about the courageous men who served in the 517th.

Best wishes, **Wayne Cross**

Fellow 517ers, time flies! It seems like we've just gotten over summer and it is time for [the Annual Kissimmee Snowbird Reunion](#) at our usual place and usual time: The Ramada in Kissimmee over Martin Luther King weekend.

Get your flights; make your plans now. This is always a great party with friends old and new - a great chance to raise a glass and toast the men and families of the 517.

Helen Beddow and I will be hosting; we hope that **Nancy Armand** will be coming down as well, and of course I always hope that **Tom Copsey** will make the trip.

We hope to have the order form available next week. Make your plans!

Claire and Helen



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Could you please put me on the mailing list . My father was **Warren Caulfield**. Thank you

Suzanne Klotz

See pictures of **Lt. Warren Caulfield** (F Co.), including Operation Dragoon photos at:

http://www.517prct.org/photos/warren_caulfield/warren_caulfield.htm

Hi,

I'm Shelly Azeff daughter of Lt Warren Caulfield. I was just looking at the roster and I saw that under his company it is blank. I know that Dad started with the F company than he was a liason officer for General Ridgeway and then he requested back and he was given H company. Can this be added to his roster information?

Thanks so much-you do wonderful work –I enjoy every Mail Call!

Shelly Azeff

Hi Shelly,

Funny you should bring that up. Suzanne Klotz (your sister?) just signed up for MailCall, and as part of that conversation, I reviewed the photo pages for Lt. Caulfield.

http://517prct.org/photos/warren_caulfield/warren_caulfield.htm

http://517prct.org/photos/warren_caulfield_2/warren_caulfield.htm

On those pages he said he was initially assigned to F Company. On the first page, I noticed the story that he was a liaison for Ridgeway then asked "Zeits" to rejoin the third Battalion and ended up in H Company. (He must have meant **Mel Zais**, who ran the 3rd.) I'm not sure when that happened, but on the mid-December 1944 roster, he is listed in the 3rd Battalion with I Company.

I just checked the Morning Reports and see that he was listed with I Company in Oct through Dec 26 '44, but with H Company in Jan-March 1945.

Bob B.



PS: And I also found him listed on the F Company morning reports in July 44 and early October 1944.



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Thanks Bob, yes Suzanne is my sister and I was telling her about Mail Call and how she should get it. I enjoyed "a Cut Above" and showed it to my mom and she knew several of the men from the reunions! All the years when I had moved away from home I never understood all the reunions they went to but now I understand!!

Thanks again for all you do

Shelly Caulfield Azeff

Hello,
I am responding to the request for any interest in having a reunion of the 517th next year in New Orleans. YES, I would be very interested in helping with this endeavor and in attending. My father, may he rest in peace, was **Frank Grbinich** of A Company. I also remember attending the 517th's reunion in New Orleans nearly 44 years ago with my Dad!!

Warmest regards,
Margo Grbinich-Hunt
8080 Georgetown Circle
Suwanee, GA. 30024

Hi all,
In reply to Lory's request of how many would be interested in having a reunion in New Orleans in June 2015, count me and Carolyn in! As long as I am not too sick or in too much pain I would like to be there to see the 517th families and friends. My kidneys shut down in June 2014 and I was in the hospital, not even knowing my own name for 6 days. I was on too many meds is the cause. In July of 2013 I wrecked my Harley Road King in the Smoky Mountains and was in the trauma center for two weeks. I broke and fractured allot of bones but I'm much better now. I replaced my motorcycle with something a little safer...a convertible Porsche that will go nearly 200 mph. (lol) I hope I will remain healthy next summer so I can see all of you! My first reunion was in 2007 at Washington DC. I have been pretty loyal ever since. It's always fun!

Rick Sweet

Liz and Bruce Broudy are definitely interested in National Reunion in New Orleans!

Subject: Reunion 2015

Trooper **Phil McSpadden** emailed me and said he would be coming to the New Orleans reunion. He is the first to respond. Thank you Phil!

Lory Curtis

I think a National Reunion June 25-28, 2015, in New Orleans is a great idea. If I'm still around I will attend

-Leo P Dean-



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Hi,
I've been researching **Henry Kope** for quite some time and got some very valuable information from your website! He was a member of F Company and served in the 517th for the entire time. I am a collector of WWII memorabilia and was able to acquire the items of Henry Kope. You can already see his items on the following url; <http://ww2-eto.com/ongoing-projects/> (see photo on right)

When I was browsing your website, I came across the following page; http://www.517prct.org/photos/earl_boone/earl_boone.htm. There I've seen a picture with Kope on it. I was wondering if you have the contact information of the person who provided you with the pictures? I am hoping to get a better high resolution scan that I can use for my website.

Regards,
Danny Stravers
[From the Netherlands]



Kope, Collier, McDaniel, Boone - Bagatelle's Club 1944



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Subject: FW: Information about **Henry Kope, Jr.** (F Company, 517th PRCT)

Hi Jim,

A while back you helped to get me the photos of **Earl Boone**, and I know that you have been in contact with him. I was just contacted by someone who is looking for any pictures of **Henry Kope**, and there is one picture of Henry among those that Earl supplied. This person, a collector in the Netherlands, is looking to get a high resolution copy of that photo. Is this something you might help with?

If you do contact him, let me know or copy me on the emails, as I will want to get copies of his pictures and artifacts of **Henry Kope** for the website.

Thanks,
Bob Barrett

Absolutely! I am actually in possession of Earl's entire photo album as well as medals and other memorabilia. I have a map with blood on it and a polaroid of General Graves! I visited Boone for several hours just yesterday and he is still doing well but his legs are getting weaker due to the Alzheimer's. We are going to a fancy dinner next week at a steak house very near the veteran's home as he tires easily. We re-ordered all his medals but the government seems to be taking their sweet time getting them to him. If you would like copies of any other photo let me know.

Regards,
Jim Kraus

Danny, I will get you a better scan of the picture as soon as I figure out how to do that. Any other photos you are looking at I can get to you as well.

Regards,

Jim

Hi Jim,

Thank you for your message! Great to hear Boone is doing well. Do you think he remembers Kope? I've included the article I have put together about Kope's time in service. It's still a rough draft though. *[Danny's write-up is included at the end of this MailCall.]*

If possible I would love to see pictures of the memorabilia you have in your possession. That's always interesting to see and I've included some pictures of Kope's memorabilia.

I've attached the picture with Kope on it. It would be great if you can make a digital scan of it on high resolution. If you have any other pictures with Kope on it, it would be great if you can scan those as well.

Regards,

Danny



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Bob: I am sending copies of two forms I ran across when cleaning but a file. One form was the receipt given when money from salary, poker, or other sources was sent home.

WAR DEPARTMENT
FINANCE DEPARTMENT
FORM NO. 38 (MODIFIED)

WAR DEPARTMENT
Finance Department

No. _____
P. T. A.

(5,447) FRS. LIRA RECEIPT FOR FUNDS TRANSMITTED TO UNITED STATES
\$ 110.00 BURY D 463rd Prcht PA Bn APO 484 3 November 19 44
(ORGANIZATION AND APO NO. OF REMITTER)

RECEIVED IN CASH FROM: 1ST MERLE W. MCMORROW, 37558391
(PRINT IN CAPS: NAME, FULL NAME AND ASN OF REMITTER)

one hundred ten DOLLARS AND NO- CENTS

PAY TO: First National Bank
Brookridge, Minnesota
Accounts of Merle W. McMorrow

WHICH SUM I HAVE PASSED TO THE CREDIT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND HOLD MYSELF ACCOUNTABLE THEREFOR.
RECEIPT ACKNOWLEDGED:

PERSONNEL OFFICER
DISBURSING OFFICER
J.A. STEWART, Capt., F. D.

NOTE: IF IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE REMITTER VERIFY NAME AND ADDRESS OF PAYEE PRIOR TO SUBMISSION OF THIS DATA TO THE FINANCE DEPT.

To be executed in triplicate.
Original to Disbursing Officer.
Duplicate to Personnel Officer.
Triplicate to Remitter.

The other document was sent to Mr. **George Assatiani** in Paris, France. I know the reason for the request by George but I don't know the rest of the story.

It was thought the Germans would make a last ditch stand in the Bavarian Mts. As we headed south the Germans moved faster than us blowing out the center span of the Autobahn bridges crossing the valleys. When we got in the vicinity of Memminge, Bavaria we encountered prisoner of war camps. One prisoner (George Assatiani) was Russian. You wouldn't think so by the spelling of his name. He got a few parts of Army uniforms and stayed with us. He had been a teacher and had the rank of Lt.

We continued south and the snow-topped Alps were visible in the distance. When we reached the vicinity of Landsburg we discovered 11 concentration camps in the area.

We spent two months in the Berchtsgaden area, living in chalets, sleeping between sheets and cooking in stainless steel kitchens.

In July many were transferred to the 82nd Airborne including George. Life was good in Berlin but George would never go with us to the bars, canteens or other evening hangouts. He didn't want to be seen by Russian soldiers who also frequented these places. He would be sent to Siberia if he returned home. They were told to fight to the death and not be captured.

Early December 1945 came and many of us were scheduled for shipment home. George must have left Berlin for Paris. That is where the request came from. He needed proof he spent 6 months with the American Army to be legible for citizenship. It would be nice to know the rest of the story.

Merle McMorrow



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VETERANS SERVICE CENTER

F. E. MULNIX
Director
↓
ELKS TEMPLE
BREMERTON, WASHINGTON

AFFIDAVIT

I, Merle McMorrow, residing at 819 Warren Street, Bremerton, Washington, depose and saith:

C

That I served with the 101st Airborne Div. 463rd P. F. A. Bn., from April 12, 1945 to June 25, 1945, and I also served with the 82nd Airborne Div. 376th P. A. Bn. from June 25, 1945 to November 15, 1945.

That during the above periods George G. Assatiani also served with the above divisions, in the uniform of the United States Army.

O

MERLE MCMORROW

P

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO THIS _____ DAY OF _____

Y

NOTARY PUBLIC in and for the State of Washington, residing at Bremerton, Wn.



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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





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Grouping: Private First Class Henry Kope, Jr. (ASN: #36822084)

By Danny Stravers

Henry "Hank" Kope, Jr., was born on September 1, 1924, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. He was the son of the late Henry and Evelyn (Rost) Kope, Sr. On May 25, 1943, Henry joined the U.S. Army. Shortly thereafter, in early June, he arrived at Camp Grant, Illinois, and had been assigned to the Reception Center for about 9 days. On Thursday, June 17, 1943, he started at 0730 and went to Chicago where they switched trains, and went on to Cincinnati. Again he changed trains at about 0830 and rode all night to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he arrived at around 0630 in the morning. From there his journey went to Atlanta, Georgia, where he had three hours off, so he took a walk around the town. After this short stop, Henry went on to Camp Toccoa, Georgia, where he arrived at about 1630. At the end, he rode about 45 hours with only three hours off.

In Camp Toccoa, Henry joined the paratroops after finishing the physical exam, and was assigned to the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The first 2 weeks he went into preliminary training, which meant he got up at 0530, make his bed, get dressed, and at 0645 they lined up and went on a 3 mile run and walk. Then on to the mess for breakfast and after that some drill for about 2 hours. After that, they had to listen to a lieutenant that gave a lecture for the rest of the morning. They did about the same thing in the afternoon, and went to bed at 2130. About a week later, they camped in the woods for the first time. This was about 5 miles from Camp Georgia, and lasted 5 days.

On July 4, 1943, Henry got assigned to his new barracks and platoon. His 13 weeks of basic training just started. During basic training, Henry proved to be an excellent marksman, scoring high on the range. He finished 11th on the list, out of 250 men firing the Garand. He also qualified on the Carbine. On August 8, 1943, Henry went to Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Here training continued, and Henry was kept busy training with the mortar. He also learned how to pack a parachute, how to maneuver them in the air, and how to land. On August 28, Henry completed basic training, and started packing his things and cleaning the weapons and barracks to go to Jump School.

On September 6, 1943, Henry arrived at Fort Benning. He is now in the final stage of becoming a paratrooper. He is having the best week in the Army so far. Every afternoon he went to the 250 foot towers to drop from them with parachute. This is how he is supposed to learn how to turn in the air and slide left or right, and how to land. In the morning of September 16, Henry is packing the chute he's going to use on his first jump, from a plane. On Monday, September 20, he made his first jump. This was the easiest because it all happened so quick, that he hardly knew what was going on until he was rolling up his chute. He made the 2nd jump on Tuesday. And because of bad weather he wasn't able to jump on Wednesday. So he made 2 jumps on Thursday, and his final jump on Friday. On his first 2 jumps, he landed pretty easy, but during the last 3 it was windy, so he hit pretty hard. But he didn't get hurt, so he felt pretty good about his jumps. Then on Saturday, September 25, 1943, Henry got his wings after making 5 jumps. He can finally call himself a paratrooper!



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During October and November, Henry was back at Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Where he spent much of the time hiking, training and bivouacking in the woods. On November 28, Henry went on a 11 day furlough, to spent some time with his parents at home. On his way back to Camp Mackall, his train was a late in almost every place he had to change train. So he arrived a few hours to late, but nobody said anything. He was lucky this time, that he wasn't listed as being AWOL.

1944

In February of 1944, Henry participated in the large Tennessee maneuvers, which were pretty tough. These maneuvers hardened soldiers for combat, taught them how to work as part of a large team, and how to perform effectively across different types of terrain in a variety of weather conditions.

On February 25, Henry wrote: *“Tennessee is really a beautiful state but we haven't been dry since we got off of the train three weeks ago and instead of saying somewhere in Tennessee (referring to stationary) it should say, all over Tennessee and parts of Kentucky because that's where we've been and we covered most of it by foot. Basic seemed pretty tough but it can't even compare with what we've been doing lately. Ever since we've got here it seems we've been walking and sleeping in mud and except for four or five meals we've been buying our food in cafes, stores and the last couple days I've eaten in farm houses. Most of these meals have been pretty good and we usually eat in the kitchen, and they keep putting hot biscuits on the table until were full. I and about twelve other fellows haven't seen our company for about three days now and we've been sleeping in barns, school houses, churches and any other place that's dry and has enough room in it, but that's a lot better than sleeping in the mud like we would be doing if we were still with the company. These last few days have been pretty good and it's more like I thought the paratroops were, before I joined. We stopped for a while in a field, so I and another fellow went to a farm house to eat and there we met three more guys. Well, by the time we got back our company had pulled out and that's how we got lost or whatever you'd call it. We picked up a couple more guys and started up the road for a town, but we only walked about a mile and the whole bunch got captured. By the time the enemy could get us to the prison camp we escaped and then we knew their pass words and everything. So we put blue bands on our caps so we had the same color as the enemy and they never knew the difference. We got two of their jeeps and went to Murfreesboro with mud all over us and I haven't washed for about five days but everyone else is the same so it didn't make much difference.”*

Then, early march, Henry was back at Camp Mackall for the third time. He was glad to be back, getting 3 good meals a day and sleeping in a bunk. Back in Camp Mackall, all he's been doing is having inspections, and staying fit. From this time on, they are no longer part of the 17th Airborne Division. A Combat Team was formed by the attachment to the Regiment of the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 596 Airborne Engineer Company. Giving his unit the name of 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. A team that could be deployed on its own.

On April 12, 1944, Henry got another 11 days furlough. Again he was a little late, because he stayed in Chicago to see a game of baseball between the Cardinals and the Cubs. Unfortunately the



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game was postponed due to bad weather. When he got back at Camp Mackall, they didn't say anything about being late, because almost everyone else was too. Even though he was listed AWOL on April 23. Henry arrived back on Camp, on April 25, but don't forget, getting back to camp was close to a 960 miles trip by train. When he got back, they took everything he had while he was gone, and turned it in for new equipment. From the looks of it, it wouldn't take long for him to be sent overseas. Then on April 26, Henry and five others were transferred to the HQ Company of the 3rd Battalion. Here he has a good time, and isn't doing much except for some swimming and playing baseball. But this doesn't last long, because on May 15, Henry got transferred to Company F, 2nd Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The unit he stays with for the duration of the war.

The Combat Team sailed from Newport News, Virginia, on May 17, 1944, on the United States Army Troopship Santa Rosa, a converted luxury-liner. The Special Service Section and three detachments of the Women's Army Corps on board did much to alleviate the monotony of the trip and provided many forms of amusement for the entire Command.

Two weeks after sailing, on May 31, 1944, the ship arrived at Naples, Italy. The Regimental Combat Team was getting ready for its first assignment. On June 14, the unit moved to a beach, where Company "F" boarded Landing Craft Infantry 40 (LCI), to bring them to the coast of Anzio. The following day the convoy stopped off the coast of Anzio and the staff, regimental and battalion commanders went ashore where they were briefed on the enemy situation, and informed that the destination was Civitavecchia. The convoy resumed sailing and the following morning the RCT disembarked over the beach unopposed. The RCT was then attached to Major General Fred L. Walker's 36th Infantry Division, which under IV Corps was operating on the left of Fifth Army. A long truck ride and a short foot march on June 17, brought the units south of Grosseto. Colonel Graves (Commanding Officer of the 517th) was handed an overlay marked with zones, Objectives and phase lines. The regiment was to join the division's advance north from Grosseto the next day.

On June 18, 1944, in its first day of combat, the regiment suffered 40 to 50 casualties but inflicted several times that number upon the enemy. The next seven days were spent in almost continuous movement. The Germans tried to make an orderly withdrawal while the Americans pressed them hard. On June 19, the 2nd Battalion captured the hilltop village of Montesario. The RCT bivouacked overnight June 22-23, on a ridgeline south of Gavorrano. Next morning the RCT moved across the Piombino Valley and closed into all assembly area behind the 142nd Infantry Regiment (36th Infantry Division). On June 24, the 2nd Battalion entered the eastern outskirts of Follonica under heavy artillery and "Nebelwerfer" (rocketlauncher) fire. During late June, the 517th went into IV Corps reserve and remained in that status until early July, 1944.

FRANCE

On July 2, the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued a directive to the CINC Mediterranean to go ahead with ANVIL (renamed DRAGOON) on August 15. As a by-product of this directive the 517th RCT was released from IV Corps and moved to join the First Airborne Task Force in the Rome area. The German Nineteenth Army was along the Mediterranean coast. Four divisions and a corps headquarters were west of the Rhone. East of the Rhone the LXII Corps at Draguignan had a



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division each at Marseilles and Toulon and one south-west of Cannes.

There were an estimated 30,000 enemy troops in the assault area and another 200,000 within a few days march. The planners decided early that an airborne force of division size would be needed. Since there was none in the Mediterranean, a force of comparable size would have to be improvised. In response, the 517th RCT, 509th and 551st Parachute Battalions and the 550th Airborne Battalion were provided. Other units in Italy were designated "gliderborne" to be trained by the 550th and the Airborne Training Center. By early July the concentration of airborne forces in the Rome area was almost complete. Two additional troop carrier wings totaling 413 aircraft were enroute from England.

H-Hour and D-Day were tentatively set for 0800, August 15. The 517th RCT had been allocated 180 C-47 aircraft in four serials. The Combat Team was sealed off on August 10. Maps, "escape kits" and invasion scripts were issued. During the last hours of daylight on the 14th, equipment bundles were packed, rigged and dropped off beside each plane. Around midnight the paratroopers formed by sticks and marched to their planes. After slinging the pararak bundles they fitted parachutes, adjusted weapons and equipment and climbed aboard. At 0100 on August 15, 396 C-47 aircraft began turning over their engines. At 10-second intervals, planes taxied down dirt runways, lifted off and circled into formation.

Twenty plane loads jumped early and were spread from Fréjus to the west. Only about 20 percent of the 517th RCT landed within two miles (3 km) of the Dropzone. Actions throughout the next three days threw the Germans into a state of chaos. Enemy convoys were attacked, communication lines severed and German reinforcements were denied access to the beach landing areas. Towns and villages were occupied as troopers fought toward their objectives, capturing Le Muy, Les Arcs, La Motte and Draguignan. On August 16, while at Le Muy, Henry got wounded to his hand. After that, he was taken prisoner by the Germans, who had treated his wounds pretty good. He got his first purple heart for these wounds.

Henry wrote to his parents, on September 29: *"The jump wasn't much different than any of the others and I guess we did all right. I didn't do much myself though, because about six hours after I hit the ground the Germans had me prisoner. There were a couple of other guys too and the jerrys treated us pretty well. They gave us plenty to eat, cigarettes (which weren't very good) and plenty of wine. They only had us for a day and a half though because as soon as we heard the fellows coming into town we took the guard prisoner and we got a few more out of the back alleys after they got us out. After the town was cleared two other fellows and I got a German car and started looking for our outfit but we were using a bayonet for a key and we broke the circuit after starting a few times, so we started hitching a ride. It was pretty easy getting one because guys were riding around in everything from two passenger couples to big water and ammunition trucks. The only trouble was that a lot of them ran on charcoal and you had to get out and stoke up the fire every couple of miles. We finally got back to the company"*.

The Airborne operation was a remarkable performance, considered by many military historians the most successful of the war. Within 18 hours 9,099 troops, 213 artillery pieces and anti-tank guns and 221 vehicles had been flown over 200 miles (320 km) across the Mediterranean and landed by



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parachute and glider in enemy-held territory. Despite widely-scattered landings, all missions assigned had been accomplished within 48 hours. Airborne task force losses included 560 killed, wounded and missing, and 283 jump and glider casualties. 517th PIR losses included 19 killed, 126 wounded and 137 injured through D+3.

AFTER DRAGOON

As VI Corps moved west, the Airborne Task Force reverted to Seventh Army control and was assigned to protect the Army's eastern flank, while the main forces moved up the Rhone Valley. The British 2nd Parachute Brigade returned to Italy and was replaced by the First Special Force. Protection of the Army's eastern flank meant moving as far east as practicable and then protecting the best ground available. The initial Task Force objective was the line Fayence-La Napoule. The 517th RCT was assigned the left, the Special Service Force the center and the 509th/551st the right in a narrow strip along the coast.

The remainder of September was spent digging defensive positions in and around Peira Cava. The 517th RCT now held a thinly manned 15-mile front, using mines and booby-traps to take the place of troopers. Attacks on Hill 1098 ended the month with the roar of artillery duels echoing through the Maritime Alps.

Despite heavy artillery fire, a patrol from Company F pushed into Sospel on September 29. The Germans withdrew as Company B moved up to occupy Mount Agaisen. The siege of Sospel was over after 51 days of continuous fighting. Troopers fanned out in pursuit of the enemy. 517th involvement with the campaign was terminated on November 17, 1944.

The RCT marched 48km to La Colle. On December 6, the combat team moved from La Colle to entrain at Antibes. The men and baggage were crowded into small 40 and 8's (railroad cars) with a destination of Soissons, a famous battle ground of World War I. The slow, uneventful trip ended in the morning of December 12, and the column filed through the still sleeping town to be greeted by the welcome sight of barracks for the first time overseas. Along the way, Henry got sick on December 11, and returned to duty 5 days later. During the night of December 15-16, the German army launched its last great offensive of World War II, striking with three armies against weak American positions in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg. The Allies were taken totally by surprise. The Germans made their main effort with the Sixth SS and Fifth Panzer armies, while their Seventh army on the left made a limited holding attack. Movement orders came for the 517th at 1100 on December 21.

Every American airborne unit in Europe was now part of General Matthew B. Ridgway's XVIII Airborne Corps. This included the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions just back from Holland and the 517th and other separate units up from the Mediterranean. Additionally, the 17th Airborne Division was now in England and was scheduled to come across to France in the near future.

Henry writes (January 14, in Belgium): *“This is the first letter I’ve written in at least three months so I suppose you’re wondering what I’ve been doing. There isn’t much to tell, just the same old grind, and the weather just about the same as it was back there at this time. If you really want to*



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find out what kind of a time I'm having just roll up in a couple of blankets and sleep in the snow a few nights.

From the stories the papers print about the way prisoners of war are treated back in the States, I'd think the whole German Army would want to get captured. They should send a bunch of us guys back there that know what the score is to take care of them for a while. I don't think they'd be having such a good time. Christmas eve wasn't anything like Christmas eve, but we got a lot better break than I've ever could have expected. I happened to be among a few guys that spent it inside. We had a radio and drank beer while we listened to Bob Hope, Jack Benny and a lot of others. For supper we had a pork chop sandwich and a couple cups of coffee and to lap it all off we had two fried eggs for Christmas breakfast. It didn't last very long though, and we spent new year's out in the woods".

On January 3rd, the 517th acting as the left flank regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division struck south along the Salm River. The 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion on the right, fought through Basse Bodeux, and the Second Battalion of the 517th took Trois Ponts, advancing toward Monte de Fosse where they were held up by heavy enemy fire. On January 18, Henry got promoted to Sergeant, and is now in charge of a mortar squad.

On the 4th of February Colonel Graves received orders to move the 517th from Stavelot to Germany, and to join the 82nd Airborne Division near Honfeld and Hesheim. Two days later, the Regiment was attached to the 78th Division. The column moved out by truck convoy, and within a few hours had passed the idle tank traps and shattered pill boxes of the Siegfried Line into Rotgen, and through the Hurtgen Forest en route to Bergstein.

The Second and Third Battalions moved out of Bergstein at 2400 hours of the 6th against a high ridge east of the Roer River defended by the German First Parachute Army. The 517th's mission was to occupy this ridge cutting off the enemy's escape route from Schmidt.

Numerous obstacles had been thrown up to prevent the crossing of the river and to help repel attacks. The Germans had had six weeks in which to prepare their positions and had made the most of them by building reinforced cement emplacements, and laying one of the largest mine fields ever seen in Europe. The 596th Parachute Engineers worked heroically while under heavy artillery fire removing the mines, and clearing a path for the 517th.

The battle grew in intensity and by twilight of the second day had reached a violent pitch. An artillery duel was being waged by both sides with the men in the fox holes always on the receiving end. The cross roads that had been in an insignificant sector turned, over night, into the most hotly contested area on the western front.

The Regiment kept up continuous pressure against enemy positions and fulfilled their slogan "ATTACK" up till the last moment when they were relieved by the 508th Parachute Infantry on the morning of February 8. During the day, Henry got wounded in action. A piece of shrapnel hit him in the thigh, so he was evacuated to a hospital. He needed to stay there for at least 3 weeks, but this turned out to be 6 weeks.



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While Henry went to the hospital, the 517th pulled back out of the lines to Laon and then again by "40 and 8" moved to Joigny, where they became officially assigned to the 13th Airborne Division, commanded by Major General Elbridge G. Chapman, Jr., on March 1, 1945. By March 6, Henry did not yet return to his outfit. He went to Paris a couple of times, but was eager to join his unit again. He expected to be back in the outfit within a couple of days. However, things turned out differently.

Henry explains, in a letter dated May 13; *"In the last letter I wrote to you in March I thought I'd be back to the outfit in about a week but I just got back the day the war ended over here. I had to go to Paris to be interrogated about being a prisoner of war for those two days back in Southern France, and I was supposed to get a fourteen day pass and a seven day furlough out of it. Before I could get it though I had to take a physical exam. While we were up on the Bulge I froze my big toe (that's the same one that was always getting banged up while I was still home) and it was infected so the doc sent me back to the hospital. I had a little trouble with one of those ward boy commandos back there when I went to tour for about a half a day to see what Paris was like and he wanted to call the Captain over to make me sign some papers that I was AWOL. I just made sure he didn't call up then but I heard plenty about it later, and got a court martial out of it. I got 30 days, a little fine and busted. I got a good job with the fingerprint and photography man while I was in the stockade and I got a chance to do a little picture making for twenty five days."*

On May 6, 1945, Henry joined his unit. This time, the 517th was attached to the 13th Airborne Division. Late May, he was in Joigny, France, as a private, and again as a light mortar crewman. The time spent in Joigny, was just like basic training. Doing calisthenics, close order drill, problems, inspections and that sort of things they did in basic training.

On May 27, Henry **wrote to his parents**: *"I received your letter the other day with an airmail envelope and paper enclosed so I thought I'd use it before it gets lost. There isn't much to say, but I'm getting along all right back here, even though I'd sooner be on the front line again than doing the things we are.*

It's just like basic training all over again. Calisthenics, close order drill, problems, inspections and all the rest of the junk that goes with it. The worst part of it is that officers are all over the place now that there isn't any danger of getting hit. They're really in their 'glory' back here.

We've been getting passes every night but there's no place to go anyhow so they might as well keep them. They show movies right on the post here so we usually go there or play cards and read to pass away the time. Last night they got the film in backwards and it took them over two hours to straighten it out.

It's a lot better being a private again. They made me a private first class when I came back to the outfit but I wouldn't spoil a good shirt by sewing those things on it so you better keep addressing my letters Pvt because that's what it'll be in a short while. It will always be easy to get another rating when we get to the Pacific because most of the guys don't want it very much on the line. Almost all of the guys that stuck it out on the line got dirty deals when we got off of the line so they went to Paris or some other place for a few days and had a good time and got court martialed for it. 'that's what I like about this outfit'. I feel like going for a few days myself as soon as I get paid this month. I'm really fed up with this stuff.

Well I just got another letter from you. Every once in a while I get one from you that sounds as if



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your worried about me or something. I wish you wouldn't make such a fuss.

You wanted to know how I stand on my point, well I only have 70 so I guess I'll be seeing a little more of the world. Besides my time in the army and overseas I have five campaign stars and the purple heart and cluster. I got hit when we jumped in France too but I didn't write about it because you make such a fuss over nothing.

I only got two small pieces in the hand and one in the side and the jerries fixed it up pretty good when I got captured. Sometime this week I'll send the purple heart home. I just got it last week. Hell there isn't much more to say because I haven't been doing much since I came back. I guess I told you I got here the same day the war ended. We're having a two day holiday but we were in France so we were going up to the airport and make a practice jump. It beats me why we have to bang up a bunch of guys making practice jumps because no matter how much you practice it don't cure that funny feeling you get before each one. I managed to get out of a problem the next day by jumping again with my old Company, Headquarters Company of the 2nd Battalion. I'm not exactly certain, but I guess those were numbers 16 or 17 for me.

Before I close I'll try to answer something you asked about in one of your letters. I've been trying to figure out which army were in myself ever since I've been in the army back in the states we were in the 2nd, in Italy the 5th, in France the 7th and 6th army group, in Belgium the 18th Corps. We were with the 7th armored division around St. Vith and those places and in Germany we were with part of the first right now were in the 13th Airborne Division and I guess that's in the first allied airborne army. It's pretty well mixed up, isn't it?"

A day later, Henry wrote another letter home. Part of it reads; *"How's the fishing back there? I hope you're not catching all of them because I'd like to get a few when I get back, even though it's pretty hard telling when that will be right now.*

A couple of us guys went fishing in the river near here a couple weeks ago with some flies, spinners and stuff that we got from an emergency kit that they use for gliders, but we only got a couple small ones. It got pretty monotonous after a while so we tossed a few hand grenades in the river to find out what kind of fish there were in it, but the Frenchmen started complaining and we had to quit."

When the war in Europe was over, the main effort of American forces switched to the Asiatic Theater where Allied Armies were making an all out bid for an early victory. The 13th Airborne Division was alerted for overseas shipment and the 517th packed its equipment for what was to be the last move. The move was made to Camp Pittsburgh, then to Camp Philip Morris, and on to Le Havre, the port of embarkation. Here the Regiment was divided into two groups one boarding the **U. S. S. ONEIDA VICTORY** and the other the **U. S. S. MADAWASKA VICTORY**, both ships sailing by 14th of August 1945. Two days out from Le Havre hostilities with the Japanese ceased, and because of this, redeployment orders to the South Pacific were later to be canceled.

Both ships arrived in New York City by the 22nd of August, and the Regiment moved to Camp Shanks for processing. All members of the Command were given forty-five day furloughs, men with enough points were given discharges, and the few that were left reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to pass on to the new men who were to refill the ranks of the depleted regiment, the lessons they had learned in war.