



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2248

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

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MailCall News

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

DECEMBER 17, 2014 3:49 PM

Beyond Valor By Patrick K. O'Donnell

Meet the men who turned back Hitler's last great offensive.



Seventy years ago this week, Hitler launched his last great offensive of World War II. The only thing standing in his way was a group of men like Private First Class Earnest Williams, a paratrooper from the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

In a largely forgotten chapter of American history, the 509th and two other independent, "bastard" units — the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion and the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team — were hastily attached to the legendary 82nd Airborne Division and trucked

in to plug the holes in the northern shoulder of the Bulge.

It was six months after the Allies' triumphant D-Day landing. The war in Europe seemed to be slowly grinding to an end.



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But Hitler wasn't ready to surrender.

On December 16, 1944, he made his last big gamble, sending tens of thousands of his best troops toward the Meuse River to retake the Belgian port city of Antwerp and drive a wedge between the British and American armies. It was the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, a month-long brutal conflict that involved more than a million men from each side. Before it was all over, the United States had lost more than 80,000 killed, wounded, taken prisoner, or missing.

The attack largely caught the Allies unaware. With few reserves available to stem the massive onslaught, they rushed U.S. paratroopers into the gaps in the line in a desperate attempt to hold back the German tide.

THE 509TH HOLDS THE LINE

In a small Belgian crossroads town called Sadzot, German troops had found and were exploiting a hole in the Allied lines. In a daring nighttime raid, the 509th attacked and drove elite Waffen-SS troops from the town, killing 30 and taking another 33 prisoner.

The next day, the 509th pushed forward, but the German forces had sent in a fresh battalion to meet them. "The firefight was the fiercest some of the men claim they've seen," recalled Captain Robert C. Healey. "There was violent small-arms resistance, and the enemy had managed to move through the gap two antitank guns, which knocked out one light and one medium tank."

The troopers' stand at Sadzot was a face-off between two elite units. The 509th checked the Waffen-SS's advance, but at a terrible price. It had entered Belgium with about 750 troopers; only about 50 men were still standing and combat-ready by the final days of the Battle of the Bulge.

BIDDLE UP FRONT!

The 517th joined the 509th and the rest of the 82nd Airborne to the northern part of the Bulge. The 517th's 1st Battalion acted as fire brigade to plug a hole between the Belgian towns of Soy and Hotton, which German units were attempting to exploit in order to envelop the 82nd, which was dug in along the Salm River. The 517th, meanwhile, was also trying to open an escape route for 400 GIs trapped behind German lines.

Private First Class Melvin Biddle found himself in the vortex of the battle. "Everything broke loose — machine-gun fire and mortar fire," recalled Biddle. "The lieutenant was lying next to me, and he started to light a cigarette. There was a branch right next to his nose, and a bullet clipped it off, and he about fainted! He put his cigarette away."

Biddle advanced toward the enemy. According to his Medal of Honor citation, "he aggressively penetrated a densely wooded area, advanced 400 yards until he came within range of intense enemy rifle fire, and within 20 yards of enemy positions killed 3 snipers with unerring marksmanship."

But the scout didn't stop there. "Courageously continuing his advance an additional 200 yards, he discovered a hostile machinegun position and dispatched its 2 occupants. He then located the approximate position of a well-concealed enemy machinegun nest, and crawling forward threw hand grenades which killed two Germans and fatally wounded a third. After signaling his company to advance, he entered a determined line of enemy defense, coolly and deliberately shifted his position, and shot 3 more enemy soldiers. Undaunted by enemy fire, he crawled within 20 yards of a machinegun



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nest, tossed his last hand grenade into the position, and after the explosion charged the emplacement firing his rifle.”

As night fell, he went alone to reconnoiter the enemy positions and returned with vital information about the location of enemy tanks. But there was to be no rest for Biddle or the 517th. The shout went up and down the line, “Biddle up front again!”

THE 551ST LAUNCHES A BAYONET CHARGE

A couple of weeks after the initial offensive, the independents were part of the Allied counterattack to push back the Bulge. Colonel Doug Dillard, who was a corporal at the time, remembers Lieutenant Dick Durkee ordering the attack: “Fix bayonets and charge!”

The men of the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion charged across the snowy field and into the nearby woods yelling and screaming. Two MG 42 machine guns, known as “Hitler’s Bone Saws,” attempted to fire more than 1,200 rounds a minute at the charging Americans. “We could see the Germans’ breath in the cold air and flashes from their two machine guns,” recalled Dillard.

The 551st charged at the enemy soldiers in their foxholes and swarmed on top of them. “It was kind of like a scene from a movie,” said Dillard. “As Durkee moved from one position to another, it was like he was going down a row of corn, eliminating it. There were six or eight Germans in those foxholes that he alone killed.”

A few days after that charge, the GOYAs (the unit’s nickname: Great Outstanding Young American; or the more colloquial version: Get Off Your Ass) took the Belgian town of Rochelival, at great cost, and helped lead the Allied counteroffensive.

Each of these independent airborne units received the highest decoration that could be given to a combat unit: the Presidential Unit Citation, the equivalent of each man in the unit receiving a Distinguished Service Cross. On the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, the veterans who fought there are slowly fading away, but it is fitting that we remember and honor their sacrifices and courage.

— Patrick K. O’Donnell is the best-selling author of nine books, including, most recently, *First SEALs: The Untold Story of the Forging of America’s Most Elite Unit*. The stories in this article about the Battle of the Bulge are from his first book, *Beyond Valor: World War II’s Ranger and Airborne Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat*. He provided historical consultation for DreamWorks’ award-winning miniseries *Band of Brothers*; he served as a combat historian with a Marine rifle platoon during the battle of Fallujah; and he is an expert on special operations, Iraq, and counterinsurgency on the modern battlefield. More information is available at PatrickKODonnell.com and FirstSealsBook.com. You can follow him on Twitter at [@CombatHistorian](https://twitter.com/CombatHistorian).

This article is on the National Review Online at:

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/394903/beyond-valor-patrick-k-odonnell>



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Corporal **Tony D'addio** of Battery D, 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion labors to sight in a 75mm pack howitzer outside the Belgian town Logbierme, Belgium

We are in December and I cannot help recall the gallant effort of the 517th PCRT in the bitter cold *Battle of the Ardennes in December 1944*. Please extend, in my behalf, to the present 517th PCRT members and to the families of those who have passed, a grateful remembrance of December 1944- seventy years ago. We will never forget their service and sacrifices to our Nation during World War II.

I shall never forget, as a young boy, the stories my older brother, **Ishmael Ramos**, Company H, related of his experiences of that time. I now understand what it was he recounted to me as his way to leave me with a historical memory of those difficult days in the Ardennes with the 517th and his fellow "troopers", the Fred Harmon's and the Bill Ford's, et al.

Thank you. I will never forget you.

Frank Ramos

517th in the Bulge





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From: [American Military Historical Company](#)



70 years ago, Germany launched "Unternehmen Wacht am Rhein" or Operation "Watch on the Rhine". American Army units were taken by surprise in their quiet sectors of the Ardennes Forest. December 16, 1944 was the beginning of the bloodiest battle of World War II, the Battle of the Bulge.

By December 21, the 517th PRCT would enter the fighting and see combat while attached to numerous units.

The battle which spread through Belgium, France, and Luxemburg resulted in 89,500 U.S. casualties and 1,408 British casualties.

After the fighting, the 517th PRCT moved to the battle of the Hurtgen Forest.



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From: Patrick O'Donnell [<mailto:combathistorianpko@gmail.com>]

Subject: 517 in Today's National Review

<http://m.nationalreview.com/article/394903/beyond-valor-patrick-k-odonnell>

[This link is the source of the article on Page 1 of this MailCall. – BBJ]

Note: If you post please use this email versus the other. Thanks

Patrick

www.patrickkodonnell.com

www.firstsealsbook.com

Hi Patrick,

Great to hear from you. That's a great article. I will include it in this week's 517th MailCall newsletter. Your books are getting better and more popular with each new issue, so it's also great to see you are getting lots of recognition for your work.

I thought it was funny that on their Table of Contents, the National Review gave the story the tagline of *The forgotten "bastards" of the Bulge*. It's true. The men of the 517th are very proud of being that "swat team" that could be called in to take a tough objective on short notice, with the training and experience beyond the typical infantry units. But because of their independence and reassignments, their story just might have disappeared into a footnote about Operation Dragoon and the Battle of the Bulge. Much of the reason it did not is due to the inspiration you started back when collecting their stories for *Beyond Valor*.

My Dad, Ben Barrett, was very proud to know you and we are all glad to see you having so much success.

Regards,
Bob Barrett

Your email really warmed my heart and made me reflect on the past twenty years. I miss everyone: **General Seitz, Clark**, your dad and so many others all Exceptional men, friends and Americans.

So true the independent nature of these units made them an elite within an elite.

Pat www.patrickkodonnell.com

I love the veterans of these independent airborne battalions. Their independent status did make them an elite within an elite. I used to call many of them like **Clark Archer** of the 517th on a weekly basis. I miss him and my other friends.

Pat



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My dad **Lt. Joseph Broudy** is seated in 2nd row 3rd from right with man peeking over left shoulder. He was promoted to captain in September 1944. He was awarded the bronze star and 2 purple hearts. He would be 100 years old this year but died at age 66 in 1981. Unfortunately I never heard him talk about the war. I think the memories of the battle of the bulge were too hard to reveal and furthermore he was not someone who spoke about himself. My wife and I have

tried to honor him by attending the celebration of the liberation in Provence for the last 3 years. The French are so hospitable and grateful.

I think **Mel Trenary** knew my dad and would love to hear any memories he may have of their time together!

Bruce Broudy bruceb83@twc.com

I am looking for any info on **Private 1st Class Edward Anthony Hobor**. He was in the 517th P.I.R W.W.II. This request is for his son Edward Anthony Hobor jr. Any help would be deeply apresheated.. I am a very close friend.. Thank you.....

Jacob Lazare

Hi Jacob, I don't have much in my files, but my records are incomplete. We do know that PFC Hobor was with E Company. He is listed on the December 1944 Christmas roster. <http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm>

I can only find one record of him in the casualty reports on March 11 1945 (attached). I believe this says he was returned to duty after a Non-Battle Casualty.

" Fr AB HOSP DL NBC-LD to Dy. Basic status changed Fr atchd unasgd to asagd."

It also lists him as MOS 7745 – Paratrooper rifleman.
That's all I have for now. Do you have any info or pictures?

BB

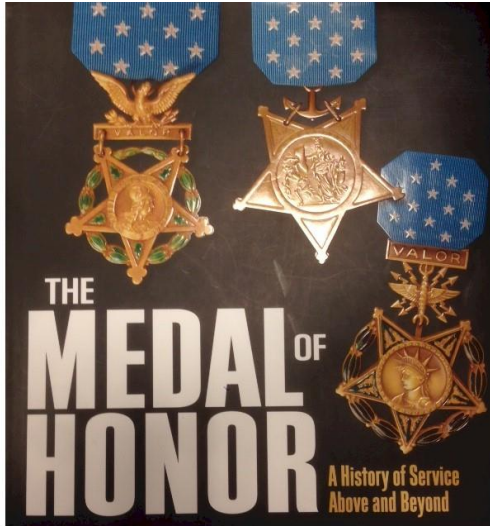


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I would be interested in France this year.

Will it be August 2015, as usual or October 2015

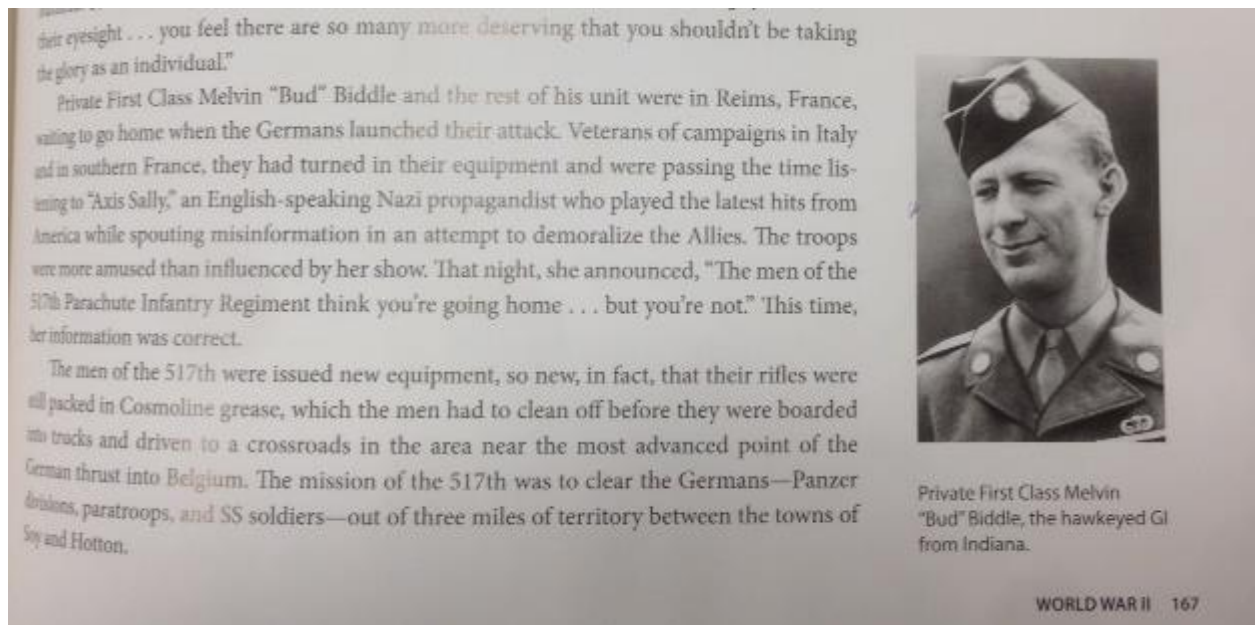
Chris Lindner



I happened to be in a bookstore the other day, and saw this new book which was published in October 2014.

Of course, I took a quick look to see if **Melvin Biddle's** story was in there, and was glad to see that it was. -- BB

“Private First Class **Melvin “Bud” Biddle**, the hawkeyed GI from Indiana”



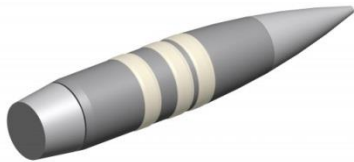


Military News

If you miss

DARPA Has Created Self-Guided, Mid-Flight Changing Bullets

December 15, 2014 | by Justine Alford



Accuracy's the name of the game when you're a military sniper. If you fail to acquire a target, you risk the safety of fellow troops by highlighting their presence and potentially giving away their positions. But hitting moving targets is no mean feat when conditions are challenging, for example during shifting winds or poor visibility if the landscape is dusty.

That's why the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) embarked on a rather ambitious project which set out to develop technology that would "revolutionize rifle accuracy and range," with the ultimate goal of improving sniper effectiveness and increasing troop safety. And what have they come up with? None other than movie-style, self-guiding bullets that can change course mid-flight.

Their new "Extreme Accuracy Tasked Ordinance" (EXACTO) bullets seem to function in a similar manner to the laser-guided bombs developed by US scientists during the Vietnam War. The technology marries .50 caliber maneuverable bullets with a real-time guidance system that allow the projectile to change direction during flight in order to correct for anything that may throw it off course.

The EXACTO bullets are complete with optical sensors positioned on the surface of the nose that collect in-flight data which is then sent to internal systems for interpretation. The data gathered is then used to adjust the position of a series of external fins on the projectile, which changes its direction.

According to DARPA's website, the system should "greatly extend the day and nighttime range over current state-of-the-art sniper systems," minimize the time required to engage with targets, and also reduce misses.

DARPA recently released a video showcasing the technology, in which the rifle intentionally aimed slightly off target. You can see how the bullet manages to successfully change its flight path and connect with the intended target despite being aimed to the right.

Check it out here:

[http://www.darpa.mil/Our_Work/TTO/Programs/Extreme_Accuracy_Tasking_Ordnance_\(EXACTO\).aspx](http://www.darpa.mil/Our_Work/TTO/Programs/Extreme_Accuracy_Tasking_Ordnance_(EXACTO).aspx)



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Drawing by **Ben Gomez**, 460-B

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
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Saratoga Springs, NY 12866