



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2251

January 4, 2015

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

Website
Send MailCall news to
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2013 Roster (updated!)
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

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Lt. Howard E. Hensleigh, 3rd Battalion HQ



It is with great sadness that I have to report the recent death of our dear friend Howard Hensleigh. Howard has been one of the anchors of the 517th Association, having served as the President in 2004-2005. He has continued to be one of our core advisors, often behind the scenes, on all matters legal, financial, procedural, and historical. His tremendous work over the past 10 years – including the IRS tax submissions, non-profit status, and straightening out the Associations financials – have been instrumental in keeping the 517th afloat.

Howard is also one of the most brilliant men I have ever met. His recollection of events of the 517th was incredible, down to people, locations, background, conversations, for all the events of 70 years ago. He was the 3rd Battalion S2 intelligence officer, so he had some inside and detailed information of the events.

On behalf of the Barrett family and all the 517th family and friends – We will miss you Howard. -- BB

See Howard's unfinished biography at:

http://www.517prct.org/bios/howard_hensleigh/howard_hensleigh.htm



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HQ Co. 3rd Battalion Officers
Huertgen Forest
January 1945

Standing (L-R):
Lt Col Forest Paxton,
Major Robert McMahon,
Capt Grant Hooper

Bottom (L-R):
Lt. Dick Spencer,
Lt. Howard Hensleigh



<-- Ben Barrett and Howard Hensleigh -2009

(Below) Frank Ramos (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense) and brother of Ismael Ramos ("H" Co.) presenting to Howard Hensleigh and Dick Seitz the note from President George W. Bush to the August 2005 517th Reunion





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I am deeply saddened to hear of the death of Howard Hensleigh. Howard was one of the custodians of the 517 history and legacy, and I am one of the many fans of his writings. I especially loved the story of the return of the family photos to German descendants. [\[See video on next page.\]](#)

His resume was staggering. I mean, who says, in the same conversation, "I was so disgusted with Harvard; they were so arrogant," and then later reveals that he was the legal advisor to the US Mission to NATO for two years? Seriously, who had a better right to be arrogant - and yet he was not. He was genuine, kind and down to earth.

I was lucky enough to see Howard less than two months ago, and he was as sharp as ever. It was amazing to be in his presence, and he could shift gears from topic to topic, waxing on subjects as diverse as "pick up that book I'm reading - see the last paragraph there? Read it and tell me what you think - isn't it great?" to a complete recounting of a battle to a lovely retelling of a bar fight between the paratroops and the Rangers in Paris.

We spoke about how he did return to France once, taking Jan and the kids on a reverse drive from Le Muy to Callian, but not after he'd been injured in the fall and paralyzed. He said that it would have been impossible to return without being able to scramble up Ridge X, as he'd done "a hundred times." I'm not sure, but Ridge X might also be Hill 1098; it is at the very least in the very close vicinity.

I am grateful that he was so prolific in his writings and generous with his time. He has done so much to preserve the history of the 517 Parachute Regimental Combat Team. He was especially grateful for the enduring relationship the association enjoys with the south of France and particularly with the people of Sospel, where he spent so much time in the hills.

I will miss Howard's humor, generous spirit, and his infectious smile. I'll miss the stories great and small - like how he achieved a near-100% voter turnout in the battalion. "Fall out if you're under 21," and he marched the rest to go vote.

Howard has been one of the troopers who has saved the association repeatedly from less than perfect record keeping. He and Joanne Barrett worked non-stop for months; we all owe him a great debt. He wrote the language for more than a dozen proclamations and plaques placed in the south of France, including one right at Col de Braus.

I am so glad that his daughter, Nancy, was able to represent him in October for the 70th anniversary, and that his granddaughter, Alison, was also able to visit this last year.

It was a privilege to know Howard.

Claire Giblin

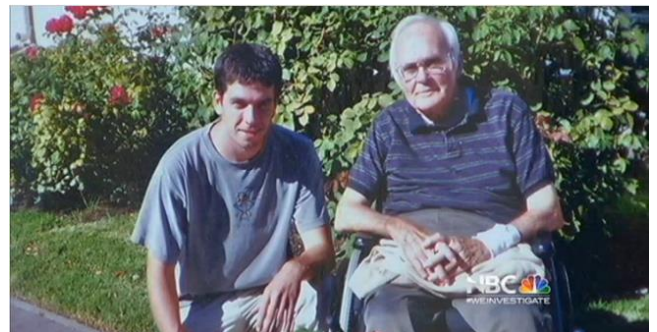


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[See the NBC video at: [WWII Veteran Returns Wedding Photos 68 Years Later](#)]

Note: This connection of Howard to the Georg Rieck's family happened through the efforts of **Jean-Loup Gassend**, who writes the entire story in his book, [Operation Dragoon - Autopsy of a Battle](#).



Claire --

We had not heard. Thank you so much for letting us know. Am so glad Alan and I were able to see him when we were in San Francisco a year ago October. Am also glad his granddaughter was able to walk his battlefields while he was still on this earth.

What a terrible loss for us still here but liberation for him plus a joyous reunion with his band of brothers! What a treasure to know him to say nothing of his incredible brain, gift with words, encyclopedic recollection of history and wisdom. Selfishly he and Tom Cross provided me a tangible connection with my Dad's history during WWII. Dad, Howard and Ben Barrett now belong to the ages. I thank God for them and for the fact that they carried out their mission on earth with such courage, resoluteness, integrity, dignity, honor yet had that paratrooper mischievousness! We are certainly all better for their having walked the face of this earth (and it goes without saying I wouldn't be here without Dad). What a band of brothers!

I also thank God for the fact that Bob Barrett's effort for keeping Mail Call going as it is the link and glue.

Pat and Alan



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See Dick Spencer's account of Howard's Bronze medal actions in Les Arc:

1944 - Dec 14 - [Hamburg Iowa Reporter - Howard Hensleigh in Les Arc](#)



Irv Pinkston, Howard Hensleigh, and Dick Spencer



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From November 16, 2009:

World War II paratrooper to speak in Redwood City

By Joan Aragone - San Mateo County Times

Howard Hensleigh is from the generation that got on with it.

Now 89, he was a beginning law student with four years of ROTC under his belt when the U.S. Army in 1943 assigned him to be a paratrooper.

For the next two years, starting at age 22, as an officer in a parachute combat team during World War II, he fought in five major battles in Europe, including the battle for Italy, the airborne invasion of Southern France, the Battle of the Bulge and the invasion of Germany. He received the Purple Heart.

Paratrooper by day, he was also assigned — based on one year of law school — as legal counsel to his comrades.

"I served as defense counsel," he said. "Most of the clients were AWOL, often trying to contact families about crises at home, and I did the paperwork. I got a lot of enlisted men off. They were good soldiers."

Re-entering civilian life, he completed law school and embarked on a long legal career that took him to the Pentagon and later to Paris as legal counsel to NATO before he joined the Raytheon Corp. and served as assistant general counsel there for 25 years. A spinal cord injury nine years before retirement at age 71 left him in a wheelchair — he fell 25 feet from a ladder while trimming a tree — but he continued his job.

Now a resident of the Veterans Affairs Community Living Center in Menlo Park, part of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, the articulate Hensleigh looks back on a full life of military service, the law, marriage and family and notes challenges and benefits of living then and now.

He'll share his stories in "Before and After: The Life of a Soldier," at 1 p.m. Wednesday in the Sunset Room at Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Ave., Redwood City.

He's grateful for the VA system. Although covered by his company's medical plan when he incurred his injury, he received rehab from the VA in Massachusetts, near where the accident occurred. After relocating to California to be near his daughter's family in Sonoma County, he now receives physical therapy and other services through the Palo Alto VA.

"The cost of what I would have to pay through other insurance for what I get here would strangle me," he said. "Vets are extremely fortunate to have the VA."

Hensleigh said his experience in the military built him physically.

"I wouldn't be alive today if I hadn't been strengthened by my time in the service," he said. "It taught us to work with large groups of men. It helped in decision-making."

But, in his understated manner, he admitted that combat in World War II, which was "probably as bad as it gets," took a toll. Paratroopers dropped in to form a protective "umbrella" over invading allied forces.



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"Many people were killed in front of me," he said.

The paratroopers carried their equipment on their back, sometimes landing 25 miles from the planned drop.

"But we dealt with it on our own. We were stiff-upper-lip types," he said. "Bad things happened, and we coped as hard as we could. After I was married, my wife told me I would fight the war at night in my sleep. I didn't realize that."

Hensleigh, who served in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, retired as a colonel after serving more than 30 years in the National Guard and the Army Reserve.





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MailCall News

Notice:

Nova J. Bonaventura passed away 12/20/2014. Wife of **Major Charles "Bonny" M. Bonaventura. (596th PCEC)**

Neil Peek

Subject: A request from BELGIUM - Cpl George H. "PAPY" JONES - 596 th Airborn Engineer COMPANY

Hi,

I live near the American Military Cemetery in HENRI-CHAPELLE (BELGIUM). Since October 2014, I have "adopted", with a french friend (COLLETTE Pascal), **Cpl George H. "PAPY" JONES** (06712046) his grave. Cpl JONES served in the 596th Airborne Engineer Company attached to 517 th PIR.

This "adoption" consist in flowering the Brave's grave several times a year (Birthday, death's anniversary, memorial day,..). We do that only to honor the brave's sacrifice and to entertain his memory. We also try to know better his history. We are searching his death 's circumstances and also where he was exactly killed in action on january 5 1945 during the battle of the Bulge.

Can somebody help us to find those informations about his death and also all informations about George "Papy" JONES during the battle of the Bulge. Maybe a veteran who knew him during the battle of the BULGE have informations about him..It will be very kind to send us those informations..

Sorry for the mistakes but my english is very bad..

If someone has informations about George "Papy" JONES, he may contact me.

Here's my mail : ddew07@hotmail.com

I join 2 photos of flowered George's grave

I want to thank you already in advance for the help you can give me.

Best Regards,

Didier DRADON
avenue de la Concorde 216
4100 - SERAING
BELGIUM
Mail : ddew07@hotmail.com



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Hello Didier,

Thank you for your wonderful tribute to **George H. "Pappy" Jones**. I will include your note in the next 517th "MailCall" newsletter and will let you know if anyone has any memories of Cpl. Jones.

I have attached one photo of Cpl. Jones that I found in an old 596th newsletter. Sorry for the poor quality.



George (Pappy) Jones & Ed Larivey
Trooper in Rt. rear unknown

I did find his enlistment info from the National Archive (NARA) records:
<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=893&mtch=1&tf=F&q=Jones+george+06712046&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=1&rid=229303>

And there is the story of Pappy Jones as reported by **Don Saunders** in the book "Battling Buzzards" by Gerald Astor:

Cheered by the news that the 75th Division would now relieve some sectors held by the 82nd Airborne and its affiliated units, a bunch of 596th engineers under Lt. Ray Hild stripped to their shorts, plunged into the icy Salm River and, undeterred by an occasional mortar, constructed a trestle-style bridge across the stream to a bridgehead secured by members of the 3rd Battalion.

Other members of the engineering company busied themselves sanitizing roads and field infested with mines. Don Saunders was among a party of engineers combing out the devices. "We happened upon a large house and found it full of German soldiers. We captured all of them without a shot and I carried a wounded radio operator out of the cellar. A little further down the road, we saw movement in a field. We all dove for cover and a burp gun fired at us. Several of us shot back and wounded the German. Cpl. "Pappy" Jones and I went into the field and captured three more Germans.

"We were marching them back when a bullet from behind hit Pappy and he fell to the ground. I called for a medic and held him in my arms as he died. I carried him off the field to our group of guys. It was my worst experience of the war."

I will let you know if I hear any more info.

Bob Barrett



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Unfortunately, I tried to track down **Donald Saunders**, and found that he passed away in 2010. I am sorry that I missed that at the time. -- BB

Donald R. Saunders Sr.

Age 86 of Elmira, NY, Passed away on Friday October 8, 2010 at Arnot Ogden Medical Center. He is survived by his wife Janice H. Saunders, Children, Michael (Sharon) Saunders, Donald Jr (Susan) Saunders, Eileen (Donald) McCall, Mary (Gary) Davenport, Mark Saunders and Margaret Saunders; step children, Jack M (Rhoda)Lewis and Marsha (Patrick) Prentice; 14 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Donald was predeceased by his first wife Marian Saunders. He was a World War II Veteran in the Army Combat Paratroopers with the 596th Engineering Battalion, and of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. He was a member of the Elmira Heights American Legion,, member of the Horseheads Elks, also the Horseheads Loyal Order of Moose. Donald retired from the Elmira Heights School District after teaching Algebra for 21` years. For 50 plus years. Donald was an Usher at St Mary's Church. Also a Member of the NYFLU Airstream Association, WBCCI. Family and Friends are invited to attend a Memorial Mass of Christian Burial on Tuesday October 12, 2010 at 10:00 AM in St. Mary's Church (Southside) 224 Franklin Street, Elmira, NY. Those wishing may make memorials to the Air Conditioning Fund at St Mary's Church, 224 Franklin Street Elmira, NY 14904.



Bob,

Hey it's Trevor again, great grandnephew of **Edward J. Lang** of Company C. I recently read Gerald Astor's book *Battling Buzzards* about the 517 PRCT and that reignited my interest in my great uncle's exploits in the Second World War. I asked my mom about it and she found this picture of Ed Lang which I have attached to this email. I also located him (at least I think I did) in the big photo of Company C at Toccoa (13th from the right in the 1st row).

Is there anyone on your mailing list from C Company that might have known him?

Thanks again,

Trevor Miling



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Subject: Private David H VANE - 33732989

Hello,

My children and I have adopted three graves in the American Military Cemetery in Epinal, Vosges, France in October 2014. We live not far away from this place.

My son has adopted the grave of the soldier :

Private David H VANE

number 33732989

517th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT

13th AIRBORNE DIVISION

David H VANE was from MARYLAND, he died on May 21st 1945 and he has been buried plot A - row 17 - grave 64

PURPLE HEART

Now we are trying to get more information about him, his birth date, his history, what kind of man he was and so on. We'd like to get a picture(s) of him too, and eventually find his family left to make them know that David won't be alone in France anymore, we'll take care of his grave, visit him several times a year, bring flowers and burn the eternal flame every May 21st.

I can give you a proof of what I wrote to you, the association USMGEF(.org) has given to us the certificates of adoption, and we take pictures each time we go to bring flowers (we went twice this year, on November 1st and 11th). One of this picture has been downloaded on the FB of the 13th Airborne Division.

Can you please help us in our investigations ? If this is possible, thank you for my son.

Regards,

Véronique GREINER *alias Ingrid Steiner – writer*

Hello Ingrid,

Thank you for your wonderful tribute to our troopers in Epinal.

I remember your request for information about David H. Vane from October. I did include you note in our weekly "MailCall" email to the 517th PRCT friends, but did not receive any responses. I will ask again this week.





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I did some research in the records that I have, but I can only find Vane listed in the KIA documents, and in the December 1944 roster: http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas_1944_hq_co_2nd_2.jpg

You have probably already found his info in the ABMC records: http://www.abmc.gov/search-abmc-burials-and-memorializations/detail/WWII_4708#.VKQgASvF-So

I cannot locate his enlistment records from the National Archives. I did find this family info from the 1930 US census:

<http://us-census.mooseroots.com//201131250/David-H-Vane>

David H. Vane

Born: ~1925 in Maryland
5 years old in the **1930** U.S. Census

Elk Ridge,
Howard
County,
Maryland

- Single
- White
- Male

Relationship to Head: Son

Parents: Leroy C Vane and Ethel S Vane

Siblings: Olive M, Barbara G, Sarah A, Ellsie M, Lee C, Edward S, and Helen E

[See Details](#)

What is unusual to me is that he died on May 21, 1945, which is after the 517th was no longer in combat and was merged into the 13th airborne. Therefore, although the 517th were still stationed in Europe with the 13th Airborne, I do not have any 517th Morning Reports from that time which might have given us more information about Pvt. Vane or when or where he was killed. I believe that most of the men were still stationed in Joigny, France at that time, although many were attached to the 82 Airborne and sent to Berlin.

I will ask the 517th troopers if they have any more information about Pvt. Vane. I will let you know if I hear anything.

Bob Barrett

Somebody in France could find the family on Ancestry, so I've been investigating this way and I could find the addresses of Edward S VANE and Lee C VANE, I wrote them on December 8th, unfortunately no answer for instance (names, initials and year of birth were matching). I don't know how many times it gets for the postal letters between France and the States, so maybe I just have to be a little bit more patient.

Those men are 88 and 86 years old, I hope that they will understand that it's not a joke. I could have many documents, but as my English is quite old, maybe I don't understand all of them. You say that he was born in 1925, goodness, he was a baby, like 2nd Lieutenant Don Winston LUSK Jr, my daughter's godson (21 years old, died on January 1st 1943, we'll go to the cemetery on Saturday for him).

The most important thing for instance is getting a picture to put under glass with the Purple Heart Ribbon I bought for him (I bought one for each of our three guys as it was written on the certificates of adoption).

Thank you for your help.

Regards,

Véronique GREINER *alias Ingrid Steiner* - writer



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Does anyone remember **Pvt. David H. Vane of HQ/2**? Can anyone explain what might have happened to him on May 21, 1945?

According to Find-A-Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=56376093>)

“David died in the "Line Of Duty" of a non-battle related incident during the war. He had previously been awarded a Purple Heart.”



Heureuse
année 2015
à tous

Happy New
Year !

**Eddy
Monfort and
Raphaël**



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dear Ben: Please put Sarg's obit in mail call.

Gene "Zoot" Snyder

Florence Irene "Sarg" Snyder

"Sarg" Snyder age 89 resident of Bishop for 67 years, born in Los Angeles, California on May 11, 1925 passed away on January 29, 2014 at Bishop.

Sarg was born in Los Angeles California and graduated from Compton High School in 1943. While living in Compton she met her future husband of 68 years Gene Snyder, though they met as teens they agreed to no wed until after Gene's return from service in World War II. The pair moved to Bishop in 1947 together with their best friends **Marv and Ricki Tetrick**, during that time Sarg worked as an operator for the telephone company and raised her three children. She continued to work for the phone company until her retirement in 1983.

In her younger years she was a member of the Junior Women's Improvement Club, she loved to do the Kankan and was an avid golfer. After her retirement she volunteered for hospice and she and Gene enjoyed traveling to Hawaii and their second home in Yuma Arizona. The pair also took part in an extensive trip through Europe to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D day.

While her given name was Florence Irene, the names Florence, Flossy, and Flo were completely unacceptable, as anybody who knew her well could attest too. If you valued your life you called her "Sarg," a nickname given to her in her youth by a dear friend who admired her colorful vocabulary and its likeness to that of his drill sergeant.

In her twilight years nothing became as important to her as her family; she was a constant presence in the lives of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren all of whom will greatly miss their birthday phone calls each year wherein she would "sing" happy birthday at the top of her lungs until you could no longer hold the phone to your ear.

She will be remembered for her hugs so tight you couldn't breathe, her fantastic sense of humor, and her infectious laugh that filled the room whenever she was around. Though her great grandchildren would probably argue that her "denture trick" was one of her best qualities.

While she will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her it is a comforting thought knowing that she is now reunited with her beloved son Dean. The pair are likely smiling down upon us all from Heaven right now marveling over the fact that they "got in."

Survivors include, husband for 68 years Gene Snyder, son and daughter-in-law John and Marie Snyder, daughter Evelyn Snyder, grandchildren - Camerin Kreizenbeck, husband Garret and great grandchildren Will and Phoebe – Ian Snyder - Morgan Ray husband KC and great grandchildren Birch, Ridge and Rowen – Alyse Snyder – and Peter Ascencio.

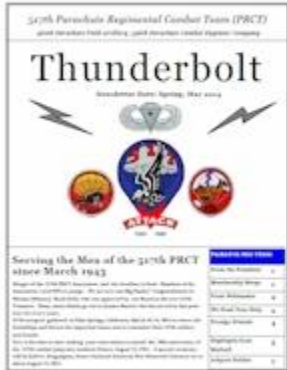
Funeral services will be Saturday January 10, 2015 at 11:00 at Brune Mortuary 325 West Elm St. in Bishop, CA. Interment will be will be private at East Line St. cemetery.





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Thunderbolt – Winter2014-2015



Time Good news. I just spoke with the printer and he is mailing the Thunderbolt out today.

So all of you that receive a printed copy should have it in a few days.

Happy New Year everyone!

Lory Curtis

MailCall readers can see it now at:

<http://517prct.org/thunderbolt/2014%20December/Thunderbolt%20Winter%202014.pdf>

Kissimmee FL Reunion - Less than 2 weeks left to register!

Calling all troopers to the January Mini Reunion! Troopers and friends need to report to Kissimmee for MLK weekend! Come to Kissimmee!



We have at least four troopers coming: **Steve Armbruster, Leo Dean, Phil McSpadden and Allan Johnson**. Also, there will be lots of friends, like **Helen Beddow** and **Earl Tingle**.

Please make your hotel reservations today! I am!

Ray Hess - are you coming?

Looking forward to Kissimmee!

Claire Giblin

Time is running short. Please let Claire and the hotel know if you're able to join everyone in **Kissimmee, Florida, from January 17-19 2015**. Info and Registration Form is at:

http://517prct.org/reunions/2015_florida_mini/kissimee_reunion_2015.pdf



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Lt. Howard E. 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