



# 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## MailCall No. 2258

February 15, 2015

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

Website  
Send MailCall news to  
MailCall Archives  
2015 Roster (updated!)  
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

[www.517prct.org](http://www.517prct.org)  
[MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)  
[www.517prct.org/archives](http://www.517prct.org/archives)  
[www.517prct.org/roster.pdf](http://www.517prct.org/roster.pdf)  
[www.517prct.org/archives](http://www.517prct.org/archives)

## 517th PRCT Reunion Info

### Upcoming Reunions



West Coast Party  
March 9-13, 2015  
[Registration Form](#)

As the West Coast Party is coming up soon, I have attached the info and Registration form at the end of this MailCall.

WWII THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM  
NEW ORLEANS

VISIT GIVE HONOR LEARN SEE & HEAR EXPANSION

2014 TRAVELERS' CHOICE  
tripadvisor

#4 AMONG THE TOP MUSEUMS IN THE US  
#11 AMONG THE TOP MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD

**2015 National Reunion**  
New Orleans, LA  
June 25-28, 2015  
[Program](#)  
[Registration Form](#)  
[Hotel Registration](#)



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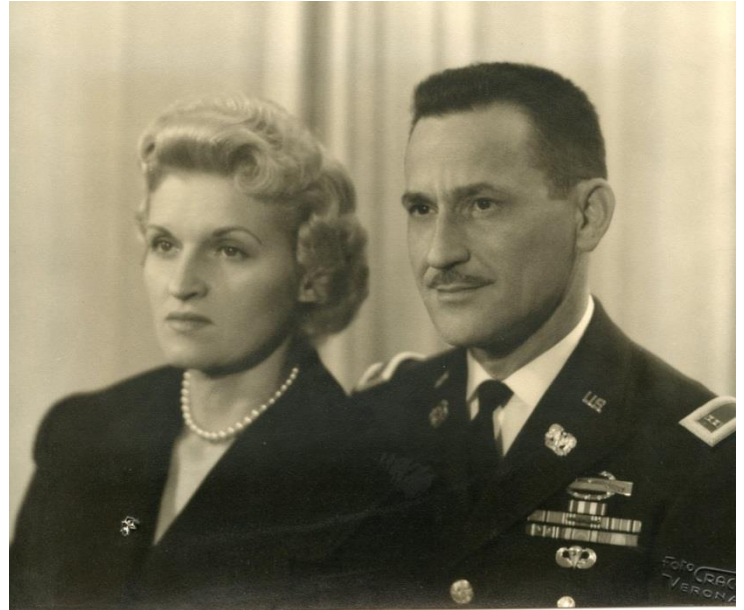
### MailCall News

Hi Bob...no excuse for getting back to you so late. Attached is a photo of Charles (my dad always knew him as Chuck) and his wife, Vera. I really don't have a clue as to when the photo was taken, but I would guess it was some time after WWII...probably in the 1950s or 1960s.

I will see if I can find any further photos for you.

Thank you for following up on my email so quickly and I will keep you informed if I run across any further pics.

By the way, Charles passed away in 2008, about a year after my dad (Robert C Derbin) - his cousin died. I think he was buried at the Veterans' Cemetery in the Sacramento, CA area. His wife, Vera, is also buried there (I think). Their daughter, Judith Seilhymer resides in Dublin, CA, with her husband, Don. Don was the one who provided me with some of the details (photo), but it was my dad's cousin, Barbara, who actually had an 'original' copy of the Silver Star citation.



This is a shot in the dark, but I am also looking into my dad's service records from WWII. He (Robert C. Derbin) was in the Navy from 1942 - 1946 and served in the Atlantic Theater. We learned quite some time back that many of the pertinent records were destroyed in a fire in St. Louis, but I suspect and hope there might be some other way of finding some details of his service record.

Anyhow, Bob, I hope the attached helps and keep up the great work!

Sincerely,

**Ed Derbin** (cousin of **Charles A. Derbin**)



See: [General Orders 42 - Silver Star for T/4 Charles A. Derbin, Reg. HQ.](#)

**Toccoa's where I got my start!**



Bob, I spoke with **Brenda Carlin** of Camp Toccoa museum, and they are having their fun run up and down Currahee mountain on June 6th of this year. She is requesting anyone in the area that could come and set up a table to represent the 517th would be most appreciated. They were hoping someone might have some artifacts from the 517th to display. If anyone lives in that area and would like to go they will be sure to welcome you. You can contact Brenda or someone at the museum in Toccoa, GA at 706-282-5055

**Lory Curtis**





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We recently received word that **Grace Paciotti** passed away in 2013. Grace was the widow of **Al Paciotti** of B Company, and they both attended many reunions until Al passed away in 2006. Here are some pictures of Grace in Belgium in 2008 or 2009:



**Grace Paciotti and Doug (son of Al Paciotti) at the church in St. Jacques, Belgium.**

Grace and Doug Paciotti with **Maria Gaspar**



When Grace met **Arnold Targnion** in Werbomont.

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As always Bob, we enjoy reading you Mail Calls. Especially enjoyed the history of the patch. Happy early Valentine's Day to you and your family.

**Pat and Alan**

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My son purchased a 517th patch on e-bay ?its too big for a shoulder patch so it has to be chest patch . It's not very colorful like the ones you see now.

**Mel Trenary**

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### Chaplain Alfred J. Guenette

Bob: Is there any personal history about **Father Guenette** in the Mailcalls? I haven't been able to find any. He led me, (and many others), to Jesus during the trip on the USS Santa Rosa while enroute to Europe. I have written of that in my autobiography (in progress) and would be interested in his background. How did he become a Chaplain in the US Army? I have heard that he was French by birth, and was assigned to a small parish in Chile after the war.

In trying to find information of him in the Mailcalls was reading the Spring April 2013 edition and came across a letter from Rick Van Dijk of Netherlands regarding his adoption of **PFC Hubert (Hubie) B. Ford** grave in the Henri-Chappelle cemetery and was asking for personal information about him. I could respond to his request in that regard if you could find his address for me. I know the details of Hubie's death in C" Co.'s assault on Logbeirne, Belgium that I'm sure he would be interested in.

#### Bill Bolin

Hi Bill,

I don't know a whole lot about Father Guenette, but there are a number of mentions on the website. I see on a 1944 Memorial Service that the two Chaplains full names were **Capt. Charles Lynn Brown**, Regimental Chaplain, and **Capt. Arthur J. Guenette**, Catholic Chaplain.

Go to the search page <http://517prct.org/search.htm> and try it with both Guinette and Guenette.

In a 2012 MailCall, **Pat Houston** reported that Guenette stayed with Bill and Pat Houston when he was 73 years old and returning from South Africa: <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2118.pdf> and Guenette wrote in 1987 that he spent 32 years in Latin America.

I will do a little more digging and will put a couple of the Guenette stories that I find in the next MailCall.

Regarding Rick Van Dijk's request for information about **Hubie Ford** at Logbierme, unfortunately I cannot find his email or contact info. But if you want to send me some notes about Hubie Ford, I could include them in MailCall, and eventually Van Dijk might search us out again and will be able to find the notes.

Bob Barrett

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*From 2012:*

One of my memories of **Fr. Guenette** was during our early days in combat and I believe it was Italy. We were in foxholes under artillery shelling when Fr. Guenette came crawling up leaning into the hole and asking who wished to receive communion. Being Catholic I took the sacrament and asked my foxhole buddy, **Al Kunser**, if he wished also to receive communion. He replied "I am not Catholic" but under my urging he agreed. I understand from Fr. Guenette that the bulk of the men in the foxholes received communion regardless of their Faith.

**Bill Christian** (596th Parachute Engineers)



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*We sorrowfully left on bloody battlefields hundreds of our friends.*

*They bravely and generously offered, though with understandable human fear, the heroic sacrifice of life so that others could live in peace and security.*

*Their invaluable sacrifice will never be forgotten. We know their precious blood was not shed in vain.*

*Our gratitude toward them is immense. God, in His Infinite Mercy, has surely bestowed upon them a well-earned Eternal Reward ...*

Fr. Alfred J. Guenette, A.A.  
Chaplain, Captain

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From the 596<sup>th</sup> Wings newsletter, Spring 1987:

[http://www.517prct.org/documents/596th\\_newsletters/Wings\\_Spring\\_1987.pdf](http://www.517prct.org/documents/596th_newsletters/Wings_Spring_1987.pdf)

Those of you who remember Father Alfred Guenette will be glad to know he has recovered from his illness and is back in Chile. Below is a short excerpt from his last letter to me in March.

"Impossible for me to make that Albany Reunion in June, especially after spending eight months on a rest cure in the States. May you really enjoy yourself with the War-Buddies you will meet! Yes our number is definitely dwindling from year to year. I must state that I am now feeling much better even though I'm still on medication. At 73 I shouldn't be complaining too much. I do know that my pace from here on in must be slower than what it has been during my 32 years in Latin-America.





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From **Hoyt Kelley's** Journal:

At Camp Toccoa:

I had only been there a few days when the fellows came in the barracks and told me that the Catholic Father was out on the steps and wanted to see me. Officers often sent someone into the barracks, rather than coming in themselves and having the whole barracks snap to attention. I went out, telling the Father that I wasn't a Catholic, despite my name being Kelley. I had trouble with this previously as they automatically put "C" on my dog tags. Father Guinette told me he knew I was a Mormon and that he wanted to know if I had a book of Mormon with me as he had always wanted to read it. He was, I found out, a very learned man, having studied the priesthood in France. Because I had a "good mother," I had a Book of Mormon with me and I loaned it to him. About five or six nights later he appeared on the same doorstep, and told me he had read the book and wanted to ask me a few questions. I agreed, and I remember the first one was do you believe in the Holy Trinity. Being as how my version was the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I assured him I did. He then asked me if I believed in the Immaculate Conception, and again being as how my version of the Immaculate Conception was a child born to a virgin, I again assured him I did. He then said to me: "You don't know much about your religion do you?" This shook me up and I think for the first time in my life started me to thinking about things I had taken for granted.

Father Guenette and I became good friends. He even forged passes for me to get off base, a few times. He drank a lot, so it was not difficult. On one of our last jumps in the States, he got his chute caught on the tail of the plane and landed with the plane, unhurt. However, undeterred, he took the next plane up and jumped with t. He had a lot of courage.

He did have some problems later, as he went AWOL while in France to visit some of his friends he had known there while in college, but I think he was only reprimanded and later rejoined our outfit. Being a chaplain for a paratroop outfit was not the choice of most men of the cloth so I don't think they had anyone else waiting for the job. Father Guenette told me that if he were not a Catholic he would be a Mormon or a Jew, as he felt they were the only ones who had a comparable claim to authority. He felt the Protestants were all condemned because they only protested against what they ought to believe in.

### Hoyt Kelley



Boxing with Chaplain Father Guenette, from **Lt. Warren Caulfield's** photos



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From: **THE UNITED STATES ARMY CHAPLAINCY 1920-1945**

[http://www.archive.org/stream/unitedstatesarmy04unit/unitedstatesarmy04unit\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/unitedstatesarmy04unit/unitedstatesarmy04unit_djvu.txt)

### The Jumpers

The parachute padres of World War II were something of a "new breed" in the chaplaincy. The training they received in Jump School was physically punishing and exhausting. The fact that they were chaplains got them special treatment — in the wrong direction ! Every sergeant who ever sat through a dull sermon felt called upon to even the score; while the hazing was good natured and well intentioned, the extra ache in the muscles was just as real as if the design were malevolent. Stories about training, running, being dragged by a chute, learning parachute landing falls, and pushups by the score, were revealed in several books and articles which remain entertaining and informative."

The story is told, perhaps apocryphal, that when Ike visited the paratroopers before their drop into Normandy, he asked a young soldier, "Do you like jumping out of airplanes?" "No sir." came the instant response. "Then why do you do it?" Without hesitation the trooper replied, "Because I like being around people who like jumping out of airplanes." Young, reckless volunteers needed chaplains too; the men with crosses on their helmets joined them.

Flying magazine credits Chaplain (CPT) Raymond S. Hall with being the first airborne chaplain. He took the regular five week training course, "and started the practice of having chaplains jump with their troops." "" Hall was a former rector of St. John's Episcopal Church of Lowell, Massachusetts. In answer to a reporter's "Why?" he replied, "It increases attendance at church, and the men can talk to me now." There was a bond among those who wore wings. To really belong the chaplain had to jump.

"This is our chaplain" said a young paratrooper at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The chaplain was Catholic, the parents of the soldier Methodist, and he himself was not affiliated with any church. But the chaplain was still his chaplain.

"... A chaplain, in the total institutional environment of the military, serves the entire military society rather than those of his own denomination alone. This is perhaps the most important difference between any institutional chaplaincy and the parochial ministry to a congregation of a particular denomination," wrote Richard G. Hutcheson.

Donald R. Burgett, a young private, remembered his days at Benning on the drop zone. Havang "successfully" completed his jump he was limping along toward the trucks when someone yelled, "Look out!" Almost overhead a man came hurling down with an unopened chute; it was pulled out of the pack tray, but remained closed. The jumper hit the ground a few yards away with a sound like a large mattress going floomp. Burgett went over to him and nearly fell over when the man opened his eyes and asked, "What happened?"

"Your chute didn't open," Burgett said.

"You're kidding. Help me up, I've got to get going," the man said.

"You're not going anywhere," a sergeant replied as a jeep pulled up, "except to a hospital," The man protested that he had another jump that night. He tried to get up, but could only raise his head, then let it



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fall back. Then Burgett noticed crosses on his collar. "Who else but a chaplain could fall a thousand feet with an unopened chute and live? He had suffered a broken leg and internal injuries, but just how bad I never did find out."

If one chaplain came down without a chute, another had a chute but didn't come down. **Alfred J. Guenette**, formerly of the faculty of Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts, made a training jump with the Airborne Command at Camp Mackall, near Pinehurst, North Carolina ; with a detail of troops, he attempted a jump from an aircraft over the Sandhills area. "His parachute pack caught on the door of the plane, and he was held fast about a foot and a half below the door." The men inside the plane didn't know about it, but other pilots saw him, radioed, and he was pulled inside; uninjured, he jumped again the next night.

### *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](mailto: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





## ***517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team***



### **2015 517th PCT PALM SPRINGS REUNION**

**March 9-13, 2015  
Palm Springs, California**

Anahata Retreat/Lodge Hot Mineral Springs Pool and Spa here we come!

We have reserved the entire resort for our group.

We will provide breakfast, lunch and dinner while you sit soaking your feet in the warm springs.

There will be options for each meal and snacks all day so you won't go hungry.

Your 150.00 registration fee will cover all meals at the resort. We may go out for our banquet this year, will keep you updated.

**Rate:** Rooms will run from 120.00 to 200.00 per person for the ENTIRE stay, not per night, including all taxes and resort fees. This fee will be based on how many sign ups we get.

**Registration fee:** \$ 150.00

Your registration fee will cover all meals at the resort including the banquet which will be at the lodge.

We may leave the lodge for ribs, museum, follies or ??, which would be additional charge.

Please mail registration form (next page) as soon as possible to lock in rate.

Karen Wallace  
66295 Highway 20  
Bend, OR 97701  
541 948 2486

Please join the Frice Team, (the gals), and our many friends for another great 517<sup>th</sup> event!

Questions?

Karen 541 948 2486

Wayne 541 948 2484

**Please confirm by February 25<sup>th</sup>, we will take registration after that if you need.**



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PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## 2015 517th PCT PALM SPRINGS REUNION

March 9-13, 2014  
Palm Springs, California

Please provide the following information before February 25th:

Date and time of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

(We will arrange transportation from airport and return if needed)

Names of participants:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note: Extra person(s) for banquet (at \$20.00 per person)

\_\_\_\_\_

Any special activities you would like to do?

Please send this registration form and \$150.00 registration fee per person to:

Karen Wallace  
66295 Hwy 20  
Bend, OR 97701