



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2264

March 29, 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
MailCall@517prct.org
www.517prct.org/archives
www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
www.517prct.org/archives

Col. Gene Frice's Service at Arlington National Cemetery



More pictures soon



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MailCall News

Gene and Margaret Frice's family will be in our thoughts and prayers for their burial in Arlington. Know it will be moving to have the two of them together in that very special, beautiful place.

God bless.

Pat Seitz

PS We wish all the men of the 517th and their families a very Happy Easter and Blessed Passover.

I have had issues with this email address, so please change my address to reber517@yahoo.com.

It is with great sadness that I learned of the recent losses of **Howard Hensleigh, Bill Webb** and **Jim Royer**.

All of these gentlemen helped me to know more about my father in real and personal terms, before he endured his injuries in Belgium, in January 1945. Each of these special men took extra efforts to make certain that I was always welcomed and accepted. I can never begin to pay it forward, the way these men have paid it, and in such gallant fashion.

The first person I met up with at a FL mini reunion was **Bill Webb**. He boisterously welcomed me and announced that there was going to be someone arriving very soon that I just HAD to meet. Bill was so very correct. That person was **Jim Royer**, who I learned was my father's runner and assistant in the heavy mortar platoon of the 3rd Bn.

Jim and his wonderful bride, June, welcomed me with open arms, as one of their own. Jim soon told me that my father (**Lt. Robert Reber**) used to call him "the Kid". He also told me many other memorable and invaluable stories. I enjoyed many hours with the Royers at various reunions, until they were no longer able to travel.

Howard Hensleigh...what a treasure for the 517th. He would bend over backwards to help people learn more about their relatives and their exploits in some of the hottest spots in Europe, in WWII.

I miss these men, greatly. The men of the 517th have set the life achievement bar extraordinarily high and I count myself very fortunate to have met them.

Godspeed, Troopers -- you are missed and will be remembered.

Tom Reber

son of **LT. Robt. Reber**, HQ 3rd



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My dad **Ben Combest** was in G company. I just discovered an old scrap book that belonged to him with some pictures from the war. I would like to get them on this site so hopefully someone will recognize some of the guys in the pictures. How do I get them published on this site?

Joe Combest



G Company





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I will be posting the rest of **Ben Combest** pictures to the website soon. I did learn that Ben Combest died in 2010. Back in 2007, Joe contacted the 517th, and here was a note in reply from **Howard Hensleigh**:

Note to Joe Combest:

When Ben mentioned that he had received an email from you the other day I recognized your father's name but was not sure which G Company platoon he was in. Since his best friends were **Caylor** and **Hank Wengryzinovicz** I know he was in the third platoon. If he was in that platoon in Camp Mackall, we logged many miles together as we took our field training before going overseas. He would have enjoyed associating with Hank and the other G Company men at our reunions. **Dallas Long** who was first sergeant, **Harger, Scruggs, Hewitt, Kichin** and several others always had a big time rehashing their experiences. There were plenty of humorous stories in the whole outfit, but a couple your Dad might remember is when Hank had a possum in his footlocker during Saturday morning inspection and Hooper's dog got into the barracks and had a fit barking at the footlocker. **Col. Zais** asked him what was in there and Hank said he had just received a package of food from home. I'm not sure Zais believed Hank, but we all speculated on the interesting time we all would have had if Zais had opened the footlocker to investigate. We also used the spelling of Hank's last name as the countersign on platoon tests where the red troops usually learned the countersign easily by just listening in the dark to challenges of platoon members coming back into the platoon area. It took two weeks for the platoon members to learn how to spell Hank's last name, but none of the red troops ever made it to break our code. Caylor was a little guy who didn't weigh much more than one hundred pounds, but he carried that 60 mm mortar a thousand miles and single-handedly held off a German counter attack near Col de Braus.

I was transferred to headquarters company before we left the states, but tried to keep track of the third platoon men all through the war. I know your father was a good man from his reputation in the platoon and what the platoon did in combat. More important though is how he has led his life after returning to the States. And, what do I know about that? He raised a son who considers him the best man he has ever known. My hat is off to both of you infantrymen.

Howard Hensleigh

517th PRCT 2015 Annual Reunion



2015 National Reunion

New Orleans, LA

June 25-28, 2015

[Program](#)

[Registration Form](#)

[Hotel Registration](#)

New: [Online Registration](#)



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More MailCall News

Gene
Inspiring

I am impressed that this presentation was made by Steven Spielberg. Apparently, not everyone in Hollywood is a kook!! What an inspiring story.

Nila Gott

Short video by Steven Spielberg.

A son is killed, and what the father did to honor his son.

An American Hero!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tyT4glkvBs>





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I noticed this obituary in today's Daytona newspaper, there's a reference to the 517 and maybe Bob Barrett tracks things like this..

Obituary for Richard Carner, Dayton, OH

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/news-journalonline/obituary.aspx?n=richard-l-carner&pid=174454963&fhid=12939>

Earl Tingle



UNITED STATES VETERAN



Graveside services for Dr. Richard L. Carner of Elkton, FL will be held on Friday, March 27, 2015 at 11:00 AM in Flagler Palms Memorial Gardens, 511 Old Kings Road S. Flagler Beach FL with Dr. J. Dudley Weaver, Pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church of St. Augustine officiating. Military Honors will be rendered by the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard. Dr. Carner passed away on March 15, 2015 in St. Augustine. He Syracuse NY on December 20, 1922 a son of the late Leland T. and Ann

was born in

Walwrath Carner. **He was a veteran of World War II serving in the 93rd Troop Carrier Squadron of the United States Army Air Force. Dr. Carner served in the European Theater in which his unit was involved in the liberation of Europe participating in the Normandy Campaign, Operation Dragoon (Southern France), Operation Market-Gardens (Holland), the Battle of the Bulge, and Operation Varsity (the invasion of Germany) by dropping supplies, towing gliders and dropping paratroopers of the 101st, 82nd and 17th Airborne Divisions and the 517th PIR.** Upon returning from World War II, Dr. Carner attended Syracuse University earning there his Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate of Philosophy degrees. Dr. Carner was a Professor at the University of Miami, Coral Gables FL from 1962-1984 teaching in the Department of Education, supervising the reading clinic, and mentoring many doctoral students. He was a past president of the College Reading Association. Dr. Carner was an accomplished musician, an avid photographer, and amateur astronomer. Preceding him in death were his parents and his brother Bob. He is survived by his loving wife of 40 years, Dr. Zelda Brooks Carner; his son Dr. Richard M. Carner and his wife Donna of Lancaster, PA; his daughters, Dr. Lauren Carner of Putnam Valley, NY, Suzanne Carner of Tampa, FL, and Anne Becton of Miami, FL; four grandchildren, Dan Menon of New York City, Anna Menon of Portland, OR, McLean Becton and Kathryn Becton of Miami, FL; two sisters, Gloria Miller of Fayetteville, NY and Priscilla McCann and her husband John of Manlius NY, and numerous nieces and nephews. Dr. Carner was a member of Memorial Presbyterian Church of St. Augustine. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Memorial Presbyterian Church, The Bailey Family Center for Caring, St. Augustine or the National World War II Museum, 945 Magazine St. New Orleans, LA 70130.

On reading the obituary, it sounds like Richard Cramer was not a 517th trooper, but was part of the Army Air Force's 93rd Troop Carrier Squadron and on a crew with airplanes that were in multiple battles (Normandy, Dragoon, Market Garden, Bulge, Varsity), dropping supplies, towing gliders, and dropping paratroopers. Funny that he specifically remembers and mentions the 517th along with the 101st and 82nd and 17th Airborne. The 517th troopers must have left an impression.

PS: Notice that his family included "In lieu of flowers, donation made be made to ...the National World War II Museum" in New Orleans

Bob Barrett



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Found online at: <http://stillwatergazette.com/2014/11/14/91-year-old-vet-was-paratrooper-in-world-war-ii/>

91-year-old vet was paratrooper in World War II

By [Anna Bjorlin](#)

November 14, 2014 at 10:00 am

When he was just 19 years old, Robert Webber began his training to become a paratrooper of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which played a major role in the campaigns that led to the victory over the German Army in World War II.

Webber began his initial training in March of 1943 at Camp Toccoa in Georgia with about 40 other men. The “Battling Buzzards,” as they would eventually be nicknamed, were known as a brash and cocky mixture of young men from all social and economic backgrounds, and were immediately put to work by their regiment leader, Col. Walsh.

“Toccoa was all red mud,” said Webber, now a 91-year-old residing in Stillwater. He still sports his 517th Parachute Combat Team hat, badge and matching belt buckle. “Col. Walsh was a strict guy, and we had to start push-ups and training right away. It was a one-shot deal. A lot of the guys didn’t make it — they were asked questions at the beginning, and some were kicked out right away.”

After completing basic training at Camp Toccoa — which included special seven-mile runs up Mount Currahee carrying his rifle, parachute and full field pack containing everything from a gas mask to a sleeping bag to provisions — the young private headed to Fort Benning for parachute training. There, the soon-to-be paratroopers started by jumping off small towers of 36 feet, sliding down a rope and learning to tumble. They jumped off towers of increasing height day by day.

“To get our wings, we had to do five jumps,” “When we jumped, we had a static line. When we stood up, there was a cable running the full length of the plane. Then we’d hook ourselves up and check that everything was all right with the guy in front of us and the guy behind would check us. Then the chute would open with the ripcord.”

Webber finished his yearlong training period by practicing combat maneuvers at Camp Mackall in North Carolina and participating in a kind of practice war complete with live fire and 24-hour marching in Tennessee before heading overseas.

“Once we were there, we just tried to stay alive,” Webber said.





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The regiment landed in Naples, Italy on March 31, 1944. Two to three weeks later, Webber went on his first excursion to fight the Germans. His first battle remains clear in his memory.

“We were walking up a mountain in Italy with the Germans coming up the other side, and we met on top,” he said. “I was in the mortar platoon, and bullets were flying all around. Our platoon had to move back because we were too close to drop our shells. Then we started pushing the Germans back — or they started running.”

Webber’s regiment also participated in the famous Battle of the Bulge. But Webber was not among his comrade because he had come down with malaria the day they were set to leave.

“I ended up in the hospital three times with malaria – in the middle of winter,” he said. “I wanted to go, but they kept putting me back in the hospital.”

The 517th also played a crucial role on D-Day. Webber was among the thousands of paratroopers making up the four battalions to jump behind enemy lines in Normandy, and was himself on the line for days without relief.

“We jumped on Aug. 15 at five o’clock in the morning,” Webber reminisced. “It was dark and foggy, and we missed our objective landing zone. My outfit missed theirs by five miles, but the third battalion missed it by 25.”

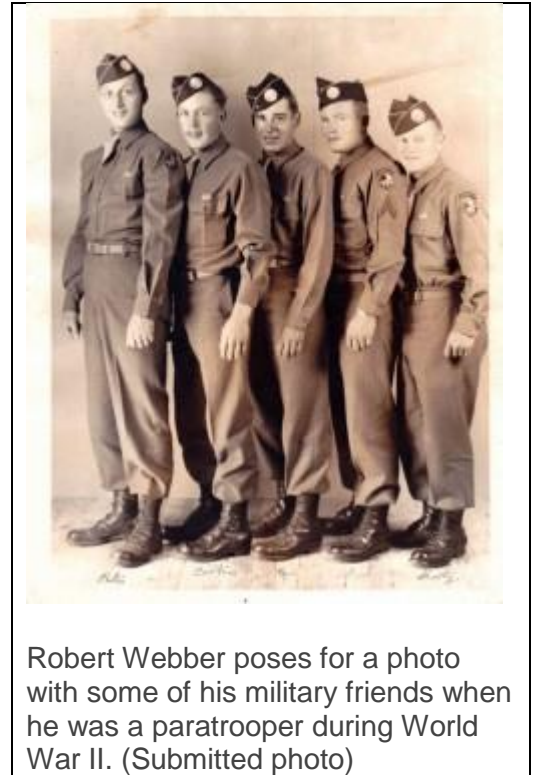
The paratroopers jumped from a low level of 400 feet so as not to get caught up in midair crossfire. Missing their drop zone was unfavorable, but did not stop the paratroopers from their objective of sandwiching the enemy between themselves and the troops who came up from the coast’s shoreline.

“We jumped real low,” Webber said. “I remember hearing noises that sounded like water, but it was people hitting brush and trees. I was lucky — I just landed in short brush, and I got out of the chute and started trying to find the other guys. A whole bunch of us got together and took off toward our objective, which was one side of a hill right off of a town. After almost a month later, they were still pushing up.”

The siege was finally over after 51 days of continuous fighting, and on Oct. 23, 1945, Webber came home. Even after his multiple battles and the experience of an exploding mortar that sent shrapnel through his forehead and throat, Webber said he was never badly hurt. His son Bruce describes him as “a tough old bull.”

The bonds and friendships that the paratrooper forged during the war have lasted over the decades. Besides attending occasional reunions, Webber keeps in touch with three men from his platoon to this day: George Jones and Curtis Williams, who both currently live in Texas and Louie Berrena, who lives in Pennsylvania.

In addition, Webber now boasts an array of medals and pins awarded to him for his service, including a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and a parachutist badge, along with a Presidential Unit Citation, a Medal of Honor Airborne and medals for Good Conduct and Marksmanship. Webber still has awards of recognition coming in, and is set to receive the French “Chevalier” of the Legion of Honor within the month.



Robert Webber poses for a photo with some of his military friends when he was a paratrooper during World War II. (Submitted photo)

PS: **Bob Webber** was one of the members of HQ Company that signed the “short snorter”:

<http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2069.pdf>



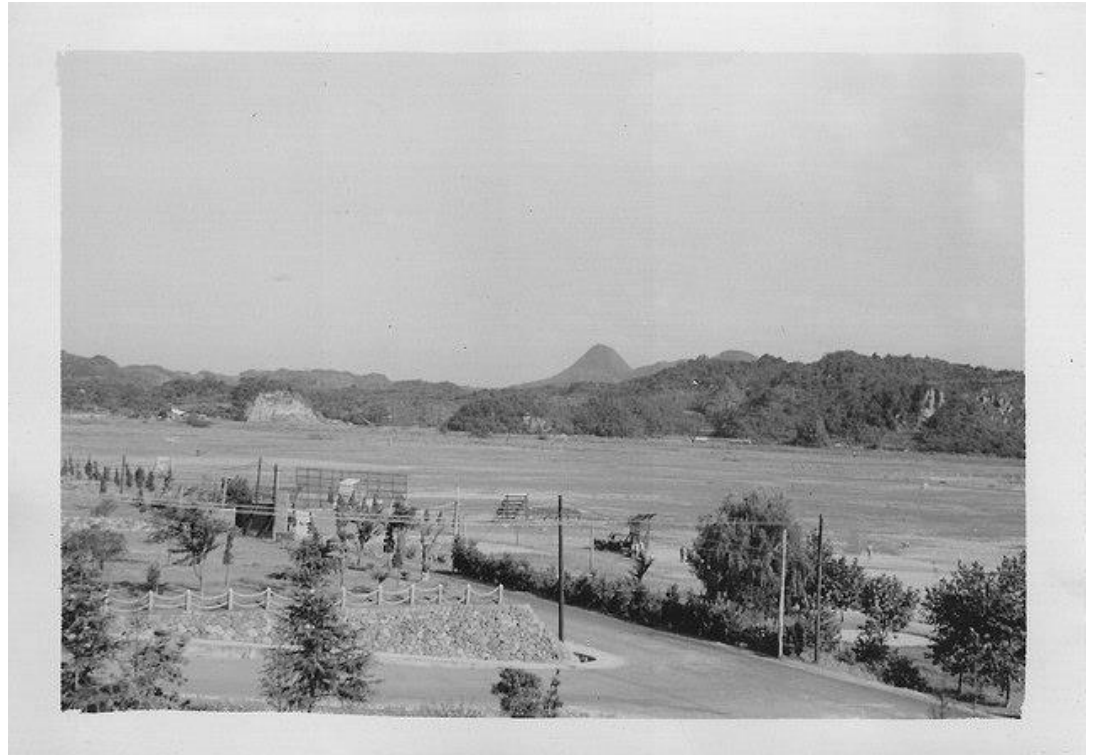
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I was working on another project (scanning pics of Dad as L-19 Artillery Spotter in Korea – '52-'53) and came across these that were in the wrong album.

Where I could identify from notations on the backs, I did.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/8678705@N03/sets/72157651605652841/>

Let me know if you're able to download them from Flickr ...



Best regards,

Roger Sullivan
Son of **George Sullivan**



These and more Picture of George Sullivan and A Company at Toccoa and Nice to be posted soon on the website. -- BB



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Where is it?

Q: Can you identify where this picture was taken?

Shelly Caulfield Azeff here - I double checked my dad's notes and they are from Camp McKall and they are the pictures of the platoon barracks. He had said it was F Company 2nd platoon.
Hope it helps.

Airborne all the way,

Shelly Azeff (Daughter of **Lt. Warren Caulfield**)



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