



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2281

July 26, 2015

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

Mail Call News

I wanted to give the 517th family some good news. I just came back from Ocean Shores, WA to visit grandpa. He is in good health and spirits, and has recovered well from his ailments that afflicted him last year. He is looking forward to his 91st birthday in September. The pictures are of both Dorothy and I presenting him with a mini collage which we hope to add the unofficial 517th unit patch as well as the 17th and/or 82nd Airborne. I wish to give a special thank you to **Kent Immerfall** for giving us a copy of the company photograph from Camp McCall. The picture really has great meaning to him and our family. The other is of a picture of him that his wife Betty had a copy of in his dress greens just outside his house a little more than 15 years ago.

Airborne all the Way!

Scott Ross

Grandson of **Norman Ross Jr.**

I Co. 3rd Batt. 517th PRCT





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Hi Bob!! I know it's been a while but I FINALLY have the OFFICIAL documents about my grandfather's Silver Star @ the Bulge! I tried sending it to your Dad but was returned. Is this address still good? Having probs w/my new email here so if you can text me at (205)xxx-xxxx, it would be easier on my end. Thanks and I hope to hear from y'all soon! (I'm the guy who contacted your Dad yrs ago looking for info. before the site was built. Around 28ish then....42 now)

Chris Liddell

Of course I remember you. As my Dad tells people, you were one of the inspirations for us building the 517th website in the first place around 1999. Ben passed away a few years ago, but I maintain the website and the MailCall newsletter for him and his buddies.

I will send you a text note in case this doesn't go through.

Congrats on finding the records for your grandfather. I look forward to hearing more.

Bob Barrett

I'm so sorry to hear about your Dad.... I have also lost my Dad since we last spoke. (very unexpectedly at only 58 years old) Anyway, although I feel bad that I lost contact with Mr.Ben and really wish he could have seen the info on my grandfather, I find it amazing that I just happened to think about contacting you guys on his birthday! I'll send the following attachments to the mailcall email as well, I wanted to send it to you to read first. I'm really proud of this!! So great to hear from you Bob!!

Chris Liddell
Grandson of **Bobby M. Liddell**, F Company

Hi Bob! Very happy that we were able to reconnect and, ironically, on the day that your Dad would be celebrating his birthday. Your Dad, even before the site was built, refused to give up, or allow me to give up, looking for the story behind my grandfather's Silver Star and Purple Heart from the Battle of the Bulge. Maybe HE chose today to FINALLY get the story to you and the rest of the 517th family. (Im sure that he, my Dad and my Grandfather are prob sitting around and talking about it.☺) Anyway, I'll attach the actual, original document and photo of his medals to this email and I'll also send them as a separate file just in case.. Thanks again and great to reconnect with you!!

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Liddell (grandson of Pvt. Bobby M. Liddell 517th parachute infantry F Co.)





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CITATION

AWARD OF SILVER STAR MEDAL

Private Bobby M. Liddell, 34 916 144, 517th Parachute Infantry, United States Army, for gallantry in action. On 8 February 1945, near Bergstein, Germany, two enemy machine guns opened fire on the men of Company "F", who were in an open field, digging in. Private Liddell, gunner of a light machine gun, without hesitation and in direct observation of the enemy, opened fire from a position which was without cover or concealment, silencing one of the enemy machine guns. Although seriously wounded, and with mortar shells dropping all around him, he trained his machine gun on another enemy machine gun to the left and pinned its gunners down long enough to allow all the wounded to be evacuated and Company "F" to withdraw to a covered position. Private Liddell's heroic action in covering the withdrawal of his company, although wounded, was in keeping with the highest standards of the military service. Entered the military service from Birmingham, Alabama.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "E. G. Chapman".

E. G. CHAPMAN,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

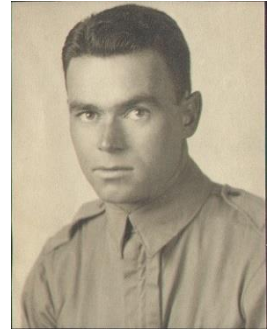


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As I am writing this MailCall, today is July 20, **Ben Barrett's** birthday. He would have been 97 today. He did always say that he was one of the oldest enlisted men in the 517th.

Bob Barrett



Dear Bob -- another wonderful email. Loved the picture of Joanne giving her report as well as the other pictures from the reunion (including the fun part!).

Was very sorry to read the news about **Walter Smith's** passing. His wife, Peanie, is a stalwart supporter of the 517th and its men. She was so kind to write us Seitz kids when Dad died. I hope that Peanie and Jeanne Smith and the rest of Walter's family know they are very much in Alan's and my thoughts and prayers. Jeanne most eloquently captured the spirit of the outfit. May the Good Lord give them every grace and envelope them in a loving circle of family and friends to help counterbalance their loss. If there is anything that Alan and I can do, I hope they will not hesitate to ask.

The Seitz clan is gathering at Ft. Riley on July 22 for the dedication of and naming of a training facility in Dad's honor. What an incredible legacy the members of the 517th have left in their imprint on us all. May we all do our very best to carry on their commitment to this country, with their integrity and courage.

Pat Seitz

I had a great time in New Orleans. It was so good to see everyone! I want to let **Lory Curtis** know that my dad also had a Battlin Buzzard card signed by **Capt. Richard Jackson**. It ran from Oct 9, 1944 to I think June, 1945. The departing date is hard to read.

I also want to thank **John Jonientz** again for letting me have his hat. It has become one of my prized possessions. I have shown it to most of my friends and told them the story about who it belonged to and how I got it. John signed it for me on the inside. I enjoyed sitting and chatting with him and all of the 517th, 460th and 596th soldiers and families. I am glad that I was able to attend. My friend Tom and his father stopped by too and were glad they did. They got to see Leo's parachute tattoo on his leg! What a great time! I'm glad that I didn't miss it.

Rick Sweet

Happy 91st birthday, **Ray Hess**. -- July 23.



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At the New Orleans reunion, Claire managed to grab a couple of the vets to interview them and get a short bio for our [Meet the Troopers](#) page on the website. Here is the first one for [Tony Mandio](#).

Anthony Mandio



Headquarters Company and A Company, 1st Battalion, 517th PRCT

Anthony Mandio, 1st Bn. HQ most of the time and A Company some of the time. He volunteered for the army, lying about his age, and for the paratroops.

Tony served as a Pathfinder. Every battalion had a unit of Pathfinders.

He and his good buddy George Scecina volunteered together. On the jump, George was killed, and several others were hit. "The jump was a disaster." We were a small group and scattered all over.

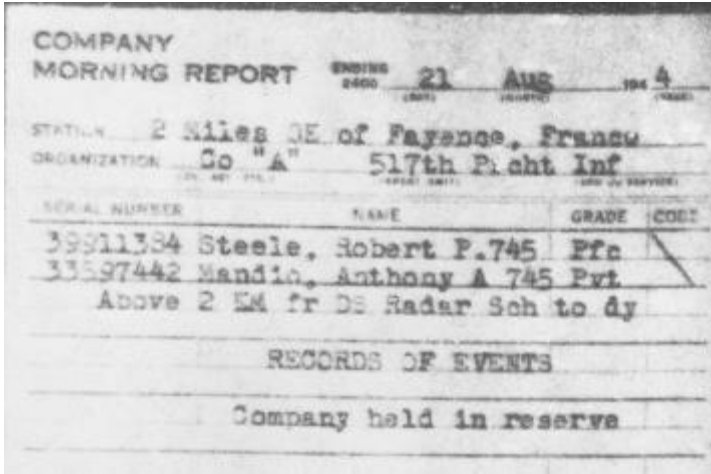
Pathfinders go in first, with the best pilots. It was so foggy when we flew in, we thought he was over the sea. He'd already been planning how when he saw the other guys drift away - "so then you know you're alone." He'd been thinking about how to ditch his equipment during a water landing, and had realized that he was unable to reach his jump knife. He realized he was over land, not water, at the very last minute.

One of the problems was that when the red light went on, the jumpmaster paused, and then paused again when the green light went on. Then, only the first half of the stick exited, and there was a break in the stick. They were scattered all over. There were some German patrols and minor skirmishes.

COMPANY MORNING REPORT			
DATE	15	Aug	1944
STATION	2 Miles NE Les Arcs, France		
ORGANIZATION	Co "A"	517th Parachute Inf	
SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
32105957	Delaney, James J.	Pvt	
	Dd Rome, Italy - 745		
39283943	Fliger, George M.	675 Pvt	
6949029	Ritchie, Henry	651 S Sgt	
	Above 2 EM fr dy to MIA		
39288689	Mizner, Glen E.	745 Pvt	
39127522	Davis, Robert E.	675 Pfc	
	Above 2 EM fr dy to absent SK		
	LIA (LD) to trfd to Det of Pat 7th Army		
35727348	Scecina, George J.	Pvt	
	Fr Dd to MIA - 745		
20112444	Plasse, Eldege G.	Pfc	
	fr dy to MIA - 675		
RECORDS OF EVENTS			
Left Canina Airfield, Italy 0230 by plane for combat jump. Jumped at 0500 and scattered in area around Trans de Provence, France. Encountered enemy at Draguignan & Les Arcs. Weather Clear & Wara Morale Excellent.			
OFFICER	PLD O R CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT
			WO
			PLT O



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All of the batallion was at the Col de Braus area for a while - trench warfare there. They were relieved in October or November and walked from Sospel to Nice, staying in Nice for a while. They went to Northern France in 40 and 8's - "and that was a very nice trip. When we got to a town, we'd jump off and try to get a drink or something to eat."

The unit went to Soissons - and was then pressed into service in Belgium. Issued ammo and packed in trucks to get tot he front lines. They approached the Soy-Hotton area, and the trucks turned around so fast it was tempting to jump on and head back!

They were in the Ardennees and the Ruh Valley, which was a minefield near a dam, adjacent to the Hurtguren forest. We were being used as bait - it was a feint operation.

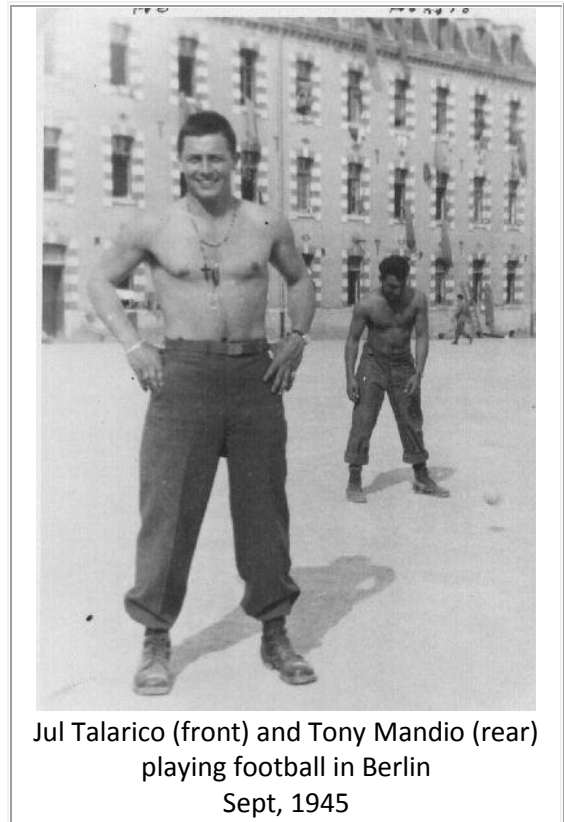
He vowed to himself that he'd never be cold again, but eventually took up skiing and really enjoyed it.

"At the end of the war, I had a lot of points. I chose occupation, and was with the 82nd in Berlin. I got home in November. Berlin was interesting. One day on and two days off - we would go to Tiergarten with our cigarettes and our chocolate - the Russians would bring counterfeit money - the Germans brought cameras - and we'd all trade until the MPs broke it up."

"Berlin had been destroyed, but there were some places that were untouched. We had a nice apartment."
Berlin was separated into quarters: Russian, English, French and American quarters. When I finally got out of Berlin, they took us by train to Harvre in France, and sailed on a liberty boat. A dinky ship, I was sick for four days. Bristol, PA was home then. I heard about the 20-20 club: I saved my 20 dollars every week, and by the end, the program had disappeared (replaced by the GI Bill). Tony attended Temple Undergrad and Temple Law, all on the GI Bill except the very last year of law school, and has been a lawyer ever since.

My mother had always been mad at me because I'd lied about my age to get into the army. Mamie was a great cook - she could whip up a great Italian meal in 10 minutes. When I was a kid, I did anything - set up bowling pins, deliver ice, anything to make money. We didn't have a phone.

I married Rosemarie Welsh, and we've been married for 65 years, and we have five children. My second son was a Marine captain (7 years) and is now a judge. Law school was in California, which saved me a lot of money! We have five grandchildren and a great-grandchild.



Jul Talarico (front) and Tony Mandio (rear) playing football in Berlin Sept, 1945

*Received from Anthony Mandio, via interview by Claire Giblin
June 2015, New Orleans, LA*



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Next week, I will include another new bio in MailCall.-- for **Gabriel Delesio** (460/C).

When I looked up info on **George Scecina**, Tony's friend who was killed in Operation Dragoon, I managed to find his gravestone on FindaGrave.com:

(Yes, the year is incorrect, as he was killed in the invasion in 1944, not 1945.)



I noted the following note from **Claire Giblin** in the last Mail Call:

"It's always an honor to get together with these guys and enjoy the history and the stories. If you're a second or third generation member lucky enough to know a WWII vet, get the story while you can. If you're a veteran yourself, please make sure you document your story! Don't wait."

I would like to echo her recommendations. My book about southern France, *Autopsy of a Battle*, is mostly based on interviews I conducted over the phone during my free time between 2004 and 2014. Some of them are extremely detailed and interesting, and most of this information would now be lost forever if I had not taken the initiative of interviewing the veterans.

Writing is a difficult task, and I don't think it is appropriate to ask most veterans now to write down their stories. Even if they do have the energy to do so, written accounts will probably be very short and lacking in detail. Such accounts hold little historical or informative value. This is why I encourage any people in contact with veterans to do recorded interviews. These can be done in person, or over the phone. An oral account is much easier for the veteran to produce, and will also be much more detailed. Such interviews can be done in a couple of hours, and leave a very precise and valuable trace of the veterans experience. At a later date, it can be written down.

The secret is to let the veteran do most of the talking without interrupting, and to keep detailed questions for the end. Interrupting usually causes the veteran to stop talking naturally, and then to just answer questions by short answers, which is not what we want.

So pull out your camera or tape recorders and interview your veterans before it is too late. If I managed to interview several hundred who were not related to me, surely relatives can find the time to interview their one veteran.

Jean-Loup Gassend



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It looks like I may have been mistaken in my identification of this photo of **William Harrison Soots** and G Company. I thought it was at Camp Toccoa, based on similar pictures submitted and previously identified. But Merle McMorrow informs me that when he passed through Toccoa, the barracks were mostly just tents, and that these buildings are more like the ones at Camp McKall. -- BB

But I have 2 pictures from Camp Toccoa web sites. First is one with all tents, and the second shows at least some buildings not too unsimilar to the ones in the photo.



Here is part of a photo from H Company at Toccoa, and CB Jones (E Co.) also at Toccoa:



But the buildings at MacKall are very similar, I think. I'm still trying to locate a good photo of the barracks.



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Speaking of Camp Toccoa:



Remember the "Twilight Zone" TV series? Rod Serling, the creator of the show, began his military career in 1943 at Camp Toccoa, Georgia under General Raymond "Joe" Swing and Col. Orin D. "Hard Rock" Haugen and served in the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 11th Airborne Division. Serling went on to fight with the 511th in the Philippines and was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and the Philippine Liberation Medal.

After the war Serling went on to create "The Twilight Zone" beginning in 1959, air for 5 seasons for a total of 156 episodes and garnered many TV and drama awards. [more...](#)

... and speaking of Camp MacKall:



Harold Russell. He was training paratroopers at Camp MacKall NC June 6, 1944 when some TNT he was using exploded in his hands. He lost both hands. After receiving hooks & training on them he was chosen to make an Army training film. Wm Wyler saw the film and cast him in The Best Years of Our Lives (1946). Russell played Homer Parish. He received 2 Oscars, a Best Supporting and one for being an inspiration to all returning veterans. He is the only actor to receive 2 Oscars for the same role.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Russell



Attached is a picture of me and my cousin **John Seitz** (Colonel USA ret) at the dedication of the Seitz Regional Training Campus at Fort Riley Kansas, 22 July.

As you can tell from our shirts and hats, we made sure the 517th was represented.

Rick Seitz



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New 'Seitz Regional Training Campus' dedicated at Fort Riley

By [Rod Jackson](#) Published: July 22, 2015, 7:29 pm Updated: July 23, 2015, 8:22 am

TOPEKA (KSNT) – At Fort Riley Wednesday there was a ceremony to honor one Kansas military hero.

Approximately 50-people gathered to celebrate the naming of Fort Riley's regional training Center in honor of retired Lt. General Richard "Dick" Seitz.

Seitz was born in Leavenworth and attended Kansas State University before joining the U.S. Army.

He lead a parachute regiment through World War II, including the "Battle of the Bulge" and then retired to Junction City after 35-years in the military.

The Seitz Regional Training Campus was dedicated to the Kansas native for his contributions to the U.S. military and the Flint Hills region.



<http://ksnt.com/2015/07/22/new-seitz-regional-training-campus-dedicated-at-fort-riley/>



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I am trying to gather information about my dad's service during WW II so that I might enter it into the history at the WW II Memorial in Washington. He was reluctant to talk about the part he played, so I am hoping someone may be able to recall his participation in the war effort — almost 75 years ago! Admittedly, it is a very long shot...

My dad: Chester B. deGavre
USMA, Class of 1933
Lt Colonel, Chief of Staff in 1942
Parachuted into Southern France shortly after D-Day
Retired, Brigadier General

Thank you,

Tim deGavre
Colonel, U.S. Air Force (retired)

Hi Tim,
From a quick Google search, I can see that your Dad was quite a soldier and leader. I also see that he was the Chief of Staff for the overall Operation Dragoon.

The 517th was part of the paratrooper units -- the First Airborne Task Force -- deployed in Dragoon, and it is a major part of their history. But I don't see anything in the 517th records that I have, that specifically mention the higher commanders of the overall Operation Dragoon landings such as your Dad.

Sorry, I can't help more with specifics. But, as I said, there is plenty about your dad in the public records.

Bob Barrett



General deGavre was one of the first Army officers to take parachute training at the outset of World War II, joining the Airborne Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. As parachute-training officer and chief of test and development, he improved techniques and standardized equipment for the rapidly growing airborne forces. He was chief of staff for the airborne invasion of southern France in 1944.

This is way off track but I ran across this fun story of Chester deGavre and how men courted women before Facebook:

[Friending '40s style: What lovers did before FB](#)



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dragoon Historical March

13 août 2015



Inscriptions et informations :

loicjankowiak@hotmail.fr

Facebook : DRAGOON HISTORICAL MARCH 2015





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On the previous page is a poster for this year's reenactment of a Dragoon Historical March in August. On the poster, isn't the black and white photo of the 596th in France? I think I recognize one of those guys on the back left. Can anyone verify this? – BB

We're up to 54 known 517/460/596th troopers still in communications with us. But we know there are lots more out there. Who else have you been in touch with lately?

Robert J.	Amerlan	Robert W.	Kennedy
Stephen M.	Armbruster	Chet	Kochersperger
Marshall W.	Baird	Harold G. (Sug)	Lawrence
Willard	Berdit	R.G. (Bob) "Doc"	Lecklider
John	Bradovich	Anthony A.	Mandio
William	Brannan	John T.	Marsinko
Fred	Brown	Hunter	McDonald
Jack J.	Cason	Merle	McMorrow
Jay	Castello	Philip P.	McSpadden
Joseph L.	Clark	Jim	McWilliams
Thomas R.	Cross	George E.	Meline
Melvin J.	Dahlberg	Dick	Miller
Robert (Bob) W.	Dalrymple	Joe	Molina
Leo P.	Dean	James Frank	Morris
Gabriel	Delesio	John M.	Pastalenic
Erle E.	Ehly	Leslie E.	Perkins
John L.	Garvey	Nolan L.	Powell
Roger W.	Goodsell	Norman	Ross
Carl W.	Gordy	Mike H.	Schlacter
Robert D.	Hart	Gene J. (Zoot)	Snyder
Ray R.	Hess	John	Stonis
Ludwick (Lucky)	Hiers	John J.	Strojan
Keith	Hobson	Myrle E.	Traver
William S.	Hudson	Melvin C.	Trenary
Kaare Allan	Johnson	Robert L.	Vaught
John G.	Jonientz	Manuel "Manny"	Ventoza
Richard	Kachalsky	Earl	Whisenhunt
George W.	Kennedy		



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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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