



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2287

August 30, 2015

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

MailCall News

Greeting. **Leo Dean**, Reg. HQ, asked me to share that he tripped and fell here in France, fracturing his right femur. He's in the hospital in Frejus, receiving excellent care. He will probably remain in France until early September, when we expect him to return.

And a note from Claire : I know that many people will ask if there is anything that can be done or any way you can help. Please do include Leo's recovery in your good wishes, positive energy and prayers. It's all greatly appreciated.

Thanks so much
Claire

Bob - I finally had a chance to review the FAQs you wrote up and wanted to compliment you on them. I now better understand the situation and while I hate to see the association dissolved, it's pretty much the best option at this point (save a funding angel of some kind). I wanted also to let you know that Florida State University, here in Tallahassee, has a WWII history program and is accumulating a lot of material. The records of the 517th would be very welcome as they do a really good job of cataloging and displaying the material. Of course, this is a suggestion that's in addition to places like the WWII Museum in NOLA, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Maryland, or the Center for Military History in Pennsylvania. I believe all of those locations have 517th records, either unit records or the records of individual leaders. Thanks for all you do to keep the memories alive.

Be well,

mark landreth

Claire -- any further reports on Leo? We are keeping him in our thoughts and prayers. He's got to watch those French gals trying to trip him up, or was it the wine he was savoring. Those paratroopers are a wild and crazy bunch!

Pat Seitz



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What a beautiful, faith filled tribute that **Billie Hiers** wrote about **Lucky**. She and the entire Hiers clan are very much in our thoughts and prayers. I know they miss him very much. Lucky is blessedly in the arms of the Lord and asking that He envelop them in His Love always and shower them with every grace they need to recall wonderful memories to counterbalance their sorrow.

Thank you to **Brenda Mortensen** for the fabulous picture of **Tom Cross** and his address. Tom is as handsome as always! And thanks to you Bob for another wonderful Mail Call.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer.

I wanted to let you know that my step-father, **Lucky Hiers**, has passed away. Mom (Billie) wanted to make sure you knew. He sooooo loved getting the 517th newsletters, and always talked about getting to the reunions, but the last several years have been difficult as far as traveling goes. (I've attached the link to his obituary below).

You all were such a huge part of his life, and just talking to him was like living the experiences with him.

Thank you all for what you have done, and continue to do.

Sincerely,
Robin Oda

Lucky's obituary: http://obits.dignitymemorial.com/dignity-memorial/obituary.aspx?n=Ludwick+H.-Hiers&lc=4681&pid=175497501&mid=6553712&locale=en_US

From: **Nila Gott**

This is worth 5 minutes of your time:

[The Last Fighter Pilot](#) who flew the last mission of WWII

Take five minutes to watch this video interview --- Listen carefully to what he says and how he says it. You won't regret a second of it.

Ask yourself, how many of the few surviving WWII veterans kept themselves and their uniform in such good condition for over 70 years and can still proudly wear it?

Notice his superb delivery, no teleprompter, no script --

?? just a 91-year-old fighter pilot representing the greatest generation at home and abroad who won WWII.

He has some surprises and a great take on the philosophy of life.



Capt. Jerry Yellin, from Fairfield, Iowa, flew the final combat mission in World War II. World War II veterans visit Iwo Jima for the 70th anniversary Mar. 21 in commemoration of the end of World War II.



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Wojtek (Voytek) was a bear cub found in Iran in 1942 and adopted by soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps.



Soldiers fed him with condensed milk from an emptied vodka bottle. The bear was subsequently fed with fruit, marmalade, honey and syrup, and was often rewarded with beer, which became his favourite drink. He also enjoyed smoking and eating cigarettes.



Over the long journey from Iran to Palestine, the bear quickly became the unofficial mascot of the 22nd company. The bear would sit around the campfire with the men, eating, drinking, and sleeping in tents with the rest of the soldiers.



Nila Gott sent in this interesting story about a hero of WWII that I had not heard of before:

Corporal Voytek....Hero of WWII



He enjoyed wrestling (obviously, no one had any chance with him) and was taught to salute when greeted. When the motorized convoy was on the move, Voytek sat in the passenger seat of one of the jeeps, hanging his head out of the window and shocking people walking on the street.



The problem, however, was that British High Command did not allow any pets or animals in their camp, so the Polish Army formally enlisted Voytek into their ranks. He was given the rank of Private (at the end of war, his rank was corporal), assigned a serial number, and from that point on he was included in all official unit rosters.



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The Poles' Finest Hour of the war came in the battle for Monte Cassino. The campaign was proving to be one of the bloodiest battles of the Western Front, and the Poles were brought in to make the final push to capture the fortress. During the fighting, Voytek actually hand-carried boxes of ammunition, some weighing in at over 100 pounds, from supply trucks to artillery positions on the front lines.



His actions were so inspiring to his fellow soldiers that after the battle the official insignia of the 22nd Artillery was changed to a picture of Voytek carrying an armful of howitzer ammunition.

After the war, some elements of the Polish Army, including Voytek, were reassigned to Scotland, since Poland was under USSR control, and many Polish soldiers did not like the prospect of living in a Soviet-run police state.



Voytek lived out the rest of his days in the Edinburgh Zoo. He always perked up when he heard the Polish language spoken by zoo guests, and during his life in there he was always being visited by his old friends from the Polish Army – some of whom would throw cigarettes down into his open arms, some of whom would even jump into the bear enclosure and wrestle with him for old time's sake.



The bear was a hero of World War II, and there are statues of him and plaques memorializing his brave service in Poland, Edinburgh, the Imperial War Museum in London, and the Canadian War Museum.

Wojtek passed away in 1963 at the age of 22.



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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
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Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



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