



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2290**

September 20, 2015

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

## MailCall News

Visiting Leo! Looking great!

Claire



Bob -- enjoyed this Mail Call, great pictures of President Allan and fabulous news about Leo. He is just amazing.

Pat Seitz



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Bob, thanks for looking into this for me. My dad sent me photos of a shadow box my grandfather had made. I've included them here. Let me know what you think. Thanks :)

**ChesterLesko**





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Hi David,

I also want you to be aware that we often hear from family members who are not quite sure where their relative served, and it can often happen that it is misinterpreted. When soldiers tell their families that they parachuted into France, or were part of the D-Day invasion, others often assume that means Normandy. But every invasion day is referred to as D-Day. I cannot say whether or not this is the case for your grandfather.

I will forward you a note from Jean-Loup Gassend attesting the same. Jean-Loup has been researching and writing WWII history in France for many years.

I can't quite read the number on the shoulder patch. It does look like he wore both a 101<sup>st</sup> badge and the streamer of a parachute infantry regiment. He could very well have been in both. The 506<sup>th</sup> PIR for one was part of the 101<sup>st</sup>.

Regards,  
Bob Barrett

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Regarding the questions of **David W Lesko** about why his grandfather would have lied about being in Normandy. What frequently happens is that veterans said they had been on the invasion of France, so family members later ASSUMED they had been in Normandy, when the veterans were in fact talking about southern France.

Several of the families of KIA soldiers from Operation Dragoon that I contacted informed me that their relative had been killed in Normandy, shot on the beach in Normandy, shot while jumping into Normandy (when the guy in fact died at Col de Braus).

So the question is where does the veterans story end, and where do the assumptions and misinterpretations of relatives begin?

**Jean-Loup Gassend**

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Re: Replacement medals

does anyone know how to get replacement medals for the family? I don't think I have them all, is there any way to check??

thank you,

**Juliana Stonis**

Daughter of John Stonis, H Company <http://www.517prct.org/photos/stonis.htm>

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I found this letter attached to the September 1973 Thunderbolt of my Dad's. This letter outlines the details of the trip to France for the 30th Anniversary of the jump into Southern France, August 15, 1974. I thought folks would enjoy reading it especially Claire, Allan, and Leo.

Enjoy

**Lory Curtis**





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SUBJECT: Tentative plans for AUG. 15. 1974. Trip to Southern France.

FROM : Bill Nickerson, Trip Chairman, 517th Parachute Infantry RCT Association.

1. August 15th 1974 will be the 30th anniversary of the airborne arrival at Les Arcs, France and surrounding towns. It is also a day regarded highly by the good people of Southern France as a time of their liberation from occupying German forces by the American troops. Each year, the Association Arcoise, (Anciens Combattants, Prisonniers et Victimes de Guerre) conduct their Liberation Day ceremonies which has become a very pro-Franco-American activity. This year, former parachutist Terry Sanford and his wife participated in the ceremony as a representative of the American Paratroopers. In the past, I was honored by the French as I participated in their program as a "libérateur, Parachutiste Americain". Now I hope that we might always have someone among us share that honor and privilege. Interested persons are asked to keep in touch with me for future years to come.

2. The scene of the biggest daytime drop, the evening of August 15th 1944, is to be the site for a formal dedication of a plaque to mark the arrival of Airborne Troops at a 30th anniversary ceremony and memorial. The proprietor of CHATEAU ST. ROSELINE (Les Arcs-sur-Argens) has asked that I invite as many veterans of that campaign as I can muster, to witness the dedication and take part in the activities to precede and follow the event. Therefore, I encourage husband and wife to plan now for a very interesting and heartwarming goodwill trip to France in 1974. For the 517th Veteran it will be a nostalgic one, to say the least.

3. The old veterans among the French civilians, the Resistance members and old time citizens of the familiar towns along the campaign trail...are fast diminishing. They are becoming less in number and only the uninformed and perhaps disinterested youths are taking their place. It is the people who remember and shared with us the horrors and hardships of war who seek to welcome us back to their soil in peacetime to express their sincere gratitude for the services and the sacrifices rendered by the American soldier. Therefore, I urge you to consider taking this rare and delightful opportunity of revisiting the areas of former combat and the people who recall our arrival as though it were yesterday.

4. Here is what I propose for the initial considerations: Charter flight from J F Kennedy Airport, N.Y. (Thus a savings to all). Time permitting, we should allow for 22 to 45 days from time of departure to date of return, with August 15th our focal point. So many days before and after to make it a lifetime event. The costs by air cannot be determined at this time, however, all steps will be taken to insure economic benefits, both in travel and lodging in Europe. One advantage is this, a guarantee of friends and acquaintances in France who will open their hearts and homes to deserving people.

5: Travel plans can involve round-trip air fare from New York to Paris to Nice. Bus or train travel from Nice to Les Arcs station. A tour bus arrangement from Les Arcs to Sospel (Ft. Barbonet). OR, round trip N.Y. to Orly and then Eurailpass trip via train to Lyon, Marseille, Les Arcs. (Ladies Day at the public beaches of St. Raphael via train and a walking-shopping tour through the charming streets of that resort town of the French Riviera.) While the men bar-fly it with the towns people at the outdoor cafes of towns of their choice. Be it Les Arcs, Le Muy, La Motte, Vidauban, Trans-en-Provence, wherever. However, the families should see the Gorges-de Verdon (French Grand Canyons) and the U.S. Military Cemetery in Draguignan TOGETHER. A good number of our former buddies still remain interred in this cemetery including Mel McLeay and Dan Fisher.





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6. Alternate considerations might include camping at L'eau Vive Campgrounds at the outskirts of Les Arcs on the main highway. They have tent sites and cabannas. Small cabins for family use. There are other campsites along the whole stretch of Riviera and especially at Prejus. Beaches are many along the Cote d'Azur (Riviera). The weather is always ideal for swimming in August and the waters clear. The Euralpass allows for much travel by train during the time spent there, and to any place in Europe. There will be opportunities for living in with the French families if one so chooses. However, this depends on the numbers desiring to live in and homes available. Early planning and arrangements are necessary. Communication between interested persons would be proper, I'll make the introductions possible. As some of you might know, I have been named Honorary Citizen of Les Arcs and made an Honorary Member of the Association Arcoise...as well as associated with the Souvenir Franco-Americain and am a member of Riviera Post No. 5, American Legion, Nice. I, too am a regular member of the Camping Club of France International (Nice Groupe)...so I might have sufficient contacts for you all. A former U.S. Naval Commander and his French wife own a fine Hotel/Motel in Nice called the Hotel Massanet, just 3/4 block from the Promenade des Anglaise and the beach. He is also a member of the American Legion Post and assured me that he will be pleased to give consideration to our members but would prefer it on an off season. However, to make this trip any other time would defeat our objectives with the French People of Les Arcs. We must take our chances of vacancy(ies).

7. For entertainment, aside from the usual summer programs, I could prevail upon my friends of the Academie Provençal. Dancers of the Provinces who put on a good show. I performed with them on several occasions as their guest aboard British Tourist vessels in Cannes, and in the Folklore Festival International in Cannes. We must do much in group form and I'd be happy to arrange for the best forms of tour and entertainment. To wander alone is delightful, but much can be overlooked without a suitable guide. I will try to arrange for a reception at all towns we liberated in 1944. It is my wish to hear from interested persons, telling me of their preference...telling me of their favorite landmarks to be visited. I'd like as much history of the 1944 events from every member, so that I can introduce a plan for a 517th MEMORIAL TRAILWAY that will memorialize the veterans of 517th and retraces the steps of each Battalion in days gone by.

8. I'm currently in touch with the French National Tourist Director and will pass on information as it come in. The more members for this trip that we can muster will enhance the voyage and cut costs. However, time is of the essence. Time now to plan, time now to start saving, time now to refresh your memory, time now to get in touch with old friends and with me. So you see, time is of the essence for a fruitful, successful venture abroad. Your suggestions more than welcomed and appreciated. Your cooperation desired.

Nice seeing many of the familiar faces of the past, at the NEW ORLEANS reunion. Hope it was a pleasant experience for you all. I enjoyed meeting your wives and it was a delight dancing with your charming daughters. Lets do it again in 1975, in the meantime let's look to 1974 and the trip to SOUTHERN FRANCE.

For the members of the 517th Parachute Infantry

288 Heritage Drive  
Brick Town, New Jersey 08723

Bill Nickerson *Bill*  
Tour Director...of a sort.

Tel: 201 477-1240



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

Appreciate help getting this through. I lost contact with Howard after last email Flag Day 2014 and sadly now know why. Haven't been able to connect and thought This was a reasonable "shot"

Thanks

Les Fenton son of Sgt Frank E Fenton HQ Co 3rd Bat

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Leslie Fenton  
**Date:** September 20, 2015 at 3:40:54 PM EDT  
**To:** "[hhensleigh@earthlink.net](mailto:hhensleigh@earthlink.net)"  
**Subject:** From a Friend

To Family of **Lt Howard Hensleigh**  
From: Sgt Frank E Fenton, HQ Co 3rd Bat (Son)

Your Dad & I Communicated by email since 2002 following your Dad's kind support of my Dad during his last few months 2002-2003. My Dad & I greatly appreciated his emails and phone calls during that time & following until Flag Day of 2014. When my subsequent emails went unanswered initially I hoped it was a technical issue but now realize he's joined his old team mates. I learned a lot about my Dad, Your Dad & myself during those conversations & will miss those conversations a great deal.

When I think of all of those guys I see Tommy Lee Jones and Robert Duvall in Lonesome Dove & hear "Well Woodrow; It was one Hell of a party wasn't it?"; and the answer "Yes Sir, It Was"

God Bless, Be Safe, All my Best as We get to continue to Enjoy the Party!  
Your Dad Was / Is Special to Many.

Leslie H Fenton MD, PhD FACP  
PO Box 749  
Ripley NY 14775

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Can someone send me Nancy Hensleigh's email or forward this message to her? – BB

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

## 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



Website  
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2015 Roster (updated!)  
Thunderbolt (Winter 2014)

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