



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2304

December 27, 2015

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

MailCall News

Hi Mr. Barrett. My dad was a member of the 517th during WWII and his name was **Gerald Nelson**.

I would like to be added to the mailcall list and be in touch with others who were in the 517th or who are family members or friends of those who fought.

Thank you and best regards

Lisa Nelson Massey

Pvt. Gerald Nelson, HQ Co, 1st Battalion

http://www.517prct.org/photos/gerald_nelson.htm



Sujet : NOEL

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR. GOD LESS YOU AND YOURS. WE'LL NEVER FORGET YOUR COURAGE AND YOUR SACRIFICES TO LIBERATE US FROM THE ENNEMY. MAY THE MUSIC OF CHRISTMAS FILL YOUR HEART AND HOME. LOVE FROM BELGIUM.

Arnold and Irma TARGNION and members of CADUSA



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Another great mailcall Bob. A great tribute to **Marshall Baird** and a wonderful tribute to **Leo Dean**. He was a great man and it was my honor to know him. I will truly miss Leo. Thanks for all the great work you do for the 517th.

Lory Curtis

Bob--thank you for this Mail Call and pictures of smiling Leo Dean. What a man. A blessing to all. Hope you, Joanne and all the 517th families had the most blessed Christmas. Am going through some scrapbooks of my parents and have uncovered some 517th pictures and momentous that I have not seen before. Will try scanning some for you and will work with brother Rick to see if the hard copies should go to Toccoa.

Pat Seitz



My late husband, **David J. Walls**, Co E, 517th Parachute Inf Regt. Photo taken in Dallas, Texas while on leave before they went to Italy.

Elaine Saunders

Sent from my iPad. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas & a Happy New year. It's heart breaking this time of year as my buddies are passing away. Hope they open the door for me when I come there. **Bill Brannan & Marshall Baird** were in my platoon. They are trying to tell me something. I'm going to try & ignore them. I haven't gotten over my wife being gone yet. She passed away around this time last year. It's rough!! By the way, my picture is hanging on the wall in one of the hallways of the De Bakey VA in Houston, Tx. Along with several other WW2 Veterans. God Bless! Bob for what you do keeping us informed about the 517th.

Mel Trenary



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I have not received any emails from you since october 26 . was wondering what is up I have really enjoyed reading them.

Donald Eakins

Hi Donald,

I just checked, and yes, you were unsubscribed on October 28:

This person unsubscribed on Oct 28, 2015 06:25 pm

After receiving "MailCall #2292"

Reason: Spammy content

I'm not sure why this happens. You might have hit a "This is Spam" button, or your email system may have done it for you. Unfortunately, the email system will not let me re-subscribe you now, but you can quickly sign yourself up again at: <http://517prct.org/mailcall.htm>

Bob Barrett

I recently noticed this photo of **PFC Walter Graham** and friends of the HQ Company, 1st Battalion.
http://www.517prct.org/photos/jack_graham.htm

Did the 517 have a baseball team? -- BB





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Sadly, **Marshall “Mark” Baird** passed away December 19th. Mark was First Battalion “A” Company, and good buddies with **Mel Trenary** who we enjoyed getting to know at the New Orleans reunion. It was my honor to get to know Mark these last few years. Mark sat beside me for the Phoenix premier of Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed, and I quickly discovered what a kind and generous man he was as he shared so many stories with me in such a humble manner. Mark was a proud Paratrooper, with a jump wings decal on the back of his old Ford pickup truck, and was always wearing his 517th hat whenever I saw him. I was also honored to attend his awarding of the French Legion of Honor by the Phoenix French Honorary Consul. Mark was past president of the Battle of the Bulge Association in Tucson, Arizona and enjoyed that association for many years. He was a cowboy before the war, and a cowboy after the war. For many years Mark ran cattle, and raised his family, over hundreds of acres on property which is now home to the University of Arizona Biosphere 2 in Oracle, Arizona. Included pictures are from Mark’s French Legion of Honor ceremony in 2013. Mark is standing beside Joe Clark from Tucson, Arizona also a proud trooper from 1st Battalion. Mark’s daughter Maggie said a service would be held in March when the family can get together. Those who knew Mark know what a good friend and family man he was. You will be missed as you ride off into that sunset my friend.



Tim Curtis Son of **Harland “Bud” Curtis**



Thanks for your time and effort, Bob, on putting together that most recent wonderful Mail Call. I always look forward to receiving Mail Call, and I am certain the other recipients do so, too.

Merry Christmas to you and your family.

John Krumm



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

RE: **Frank W. Hayes** & Hill 400

Thanx for your reply and info -- yes I read the passage from the book elsewhere, but thanks for your effort all the same.

My preliminary conclusion regarding what happened at Hill 400 during the night of 8-9 Feb. 1945 is based on the 3/517 monograph from 1947-1948. One of the 517th officers got on the radio -- despite having a wired communication system available -- and spoke on the air. The Germans had at least one radio, which they had used against the 517th (to issue false orders), and so they were listening in. When the 517th later withdrew (to have its place taken by the 508th), they were apparently hit by the Germans, altho it's unclear in what manner, but it seems by arty fire.

This would suggest the 517th pulled back before the 508th fully took their positions, so the Germans (paratroopers of the 6th Fallschirmjaeger Regiment) re-took Hill 400.

At least, that's what I make of it, pending more documentation. But it's clear that someone in the 517th messed up with that radio.

By the way, when the 1st Bn./508th PIR fought for Hill 400 in the wee hours of 10 Feb. 1945, they sustained casualties, but according to the records I have, there were no fatalities. That would suggest their German airborne counterparts gave token resistance, but I wasn't there at the time... so...

Feel free to post this in your newsletter -- maybe someone comes up with something...

Thanks again and a Happy NY to all,

Kelly Ashton

The monograph which reports on and analyzes the battle for Hill 400 is from Fort Benning's Advanced Infantry Officer's Course" training. It can be found at:
http://517prct.org/documents/infantry_school/GohmertRolandL_CPT.pdf

I especially found the introduction to the 517th to be interesting. I have included that on the following pages.

-- BB

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

THE ATTACK OF THE 3RD BATTALION, 517TH PARACHUTE
INFANTRY REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM (SEPARATE)
IN THE VICINITY OF BERGSTEIN, GERMANY
4-8 FEBRUARY 1945. (RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Communications Officer,
without Emphasis on Communications)

Type of operation described: A PARACHUTE INFANTRY
BATTALION IN THE ATTACK OF A FORTIFIED POSITION

Captain Roland L. Gohmert, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

ORGANIZATION AND HISTORY

On 15 March 1943, the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment was activated as part of the 17th Airborne Division. After a brief training period, followed by airborne maneuvers, the regiment was relieved from the division and a separate combat team was formed. (See Chart 1) This combat team consisted of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, and the 596th Airborne Engineer Company, all jumpers.

(9) This unit was outfitted with only equipment which could be dropped by parachute, and had less vehicles than a standard infantry unit of corresponding composition.

31 May 1943 found the new combat team disembarking at Naples, Italy, and a few days later the four months old unit received its baptism of fire with the 36th Infantry Division near Grosseto, Italy. (See Map B) On 26 June, the combat team was relieved in this sector and moved back to the vicinity of Rome where it staged for the forthcoming invasion of Southern France.

Before daylight on 15 August, troopers of the 517th Combat Team bailed out of their C-47 aircraft in a widely dispersed area inland from The Seventh Army invasion beaches in Southern France. After accomplishing its preliminary missions, the combat team attacked east, until by late September it held a fifteen mile front running generally north from the Mediterranean coast to the Maritime Alps along the French - Italian border.

(10) By 16 November, all of the important objectives in that area had been secured and the combat team was relieved by the 14th Armored Division. It was in this rugged mountain fighting that the seriousness of the lack of fire and logistical support, which is so vital to successful sustained ground combat, was first realized. (11)



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The 517th then went north by "C-40&8" to Soissons, France, where it was attached to XVIII Airborne Corps, along with other major airborne units in Europe. It was expected that First and Ninth Armies would make an early crossing of the Roer and secure the west bank of the Rhine. XVIII Airborne Corps was to be held in readiness at staging areas to secure a bridgehead across the Rhine, by airborne assault, at the first opportunity. (12)

The Germans, however, were well aware of our troop buildup in the Aachen area which weakened our lines to the south, and on 16 December 1944 they launched their counteroffensive in the Ardennes sector. (13) 19 December found the combat team well on its way to helping stem the tide of the onrushing Germans. By the end of January, the 517th had stopped portions of the German attack in three places, had made five major attacks in reducing the German penetrations, and had been attached either in whole or in part to eight different divisions. As one mission was accomplished, orders would be received to move several miles on foot, through knee-deep snow, to launch another attack immediately on arrival in the new sector. Although the combat team accomplished all missions and received many commendations, the "Battle of the Bulge" with its miserable, zero weather had taken a grim toll of the fighting potential of the 517th. Battle casualties had depleted the infantry and engineer strength until the strongest combat company had a bare fifty men. All but a handful of the old leaders were among the casualties which further reduced the combat unity of the team. Personnel remaining in the combat team were little more than walking dead; dysentery, frost bite, trenchfoot and fatigue were prevalent along with secondary wounds in almost every man. Morale at this point was hanging on tradition and hopes of early relief. (14) These were the proud, fighting paratroopers about which the following action is written.



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Battle of the Bulge 1944



L.to R. **Joseph Tylka, Edward Winship**
and **Maurice Masich.**

Manhay, Belgium



Corporal Tony D'addio of Battery D, 460th
Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
labors to sight in a 75mm pack howitzer
outside the Belgian town Logbierme, Belgium



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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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