



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



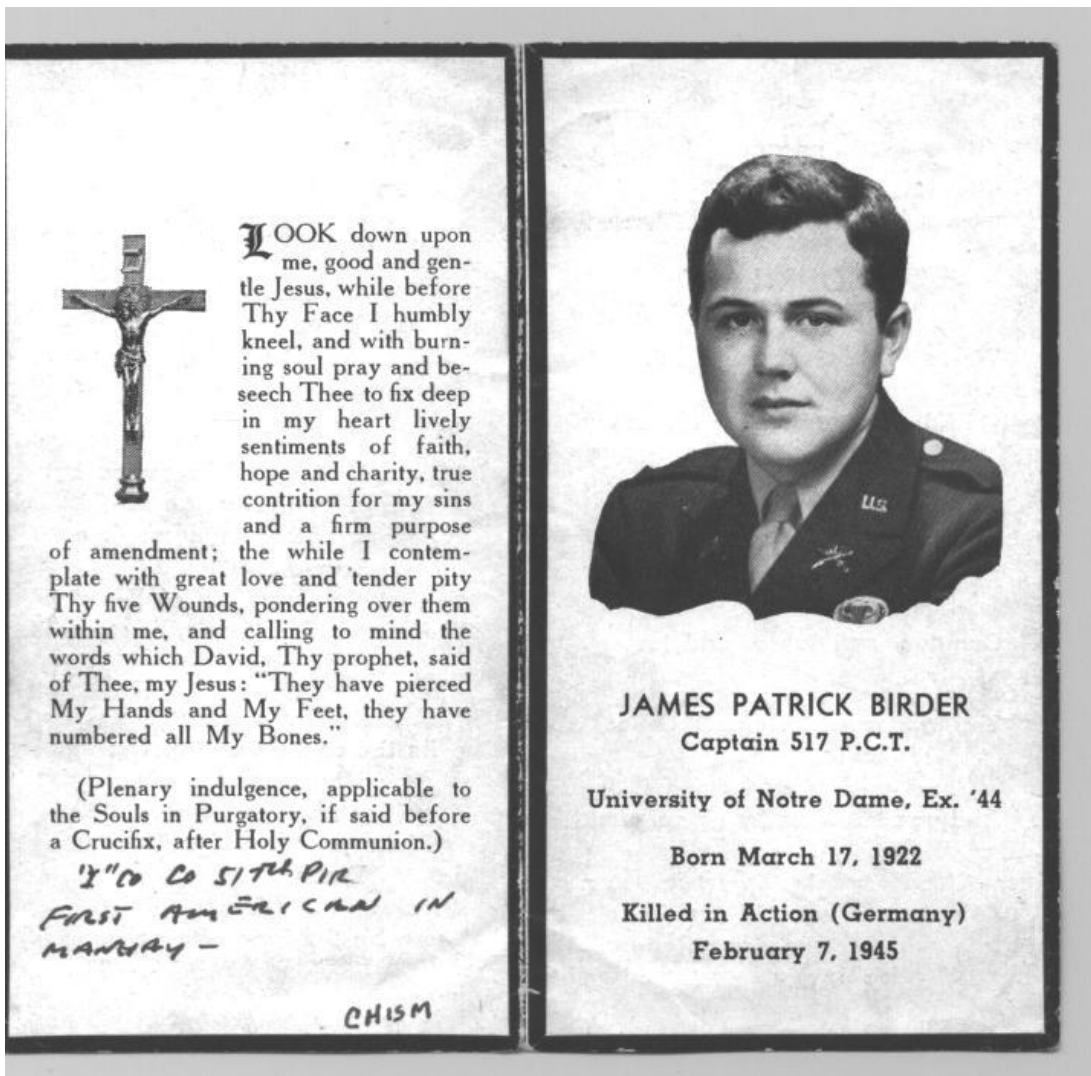
PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2310

February 7, 2016

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

71 Years Ago – February 7, 1945



71 years ago, **Capt. James P. Birder**, Commander of I Company, 517th PIR. He took command of I Company on September 12, 1944 during the battle for Col De Braus in Southern France.

James Birder led his company in seizing Manhay with the 3rd Battalion during the Battle of the Bulge.

On 7 February, 1945, during the last days of battle of the 517th PIR in the battle of the bulge, James Birder was killed by stepping on a mine.

“This man of barely 22 years ago was one of the best officers of all the fighting team.”

From: <https://www.facebook.com/FirstAirborneTaskForce/>



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James Birder with **1st Lt. Bob Reber**, heavy mortar platoon leader of the 3rd Battalion, who was seriously injured in the south of Stavelot on 12 January 1945

West Coast Mini-Reunion

2016 517th PRCT PALM SPRINGS REUNION

**March 7-11, 2016
Palm Springs, California**

Anahata Retreat/Lodge Hot Mineral Springs Pool and Spa here we come!

Held at Anahata Hot Springs, we take over the entire resort. It is very nice; all rooms open to pool side and hospitality room.



Cost will be low as usual, hard to predict until we know numbers, I would guess under \$250.00 for your room for the whole week, food usually \$150.00 for all meals at the resort, excluding when we go out.

To reserve a room please contact me before February 25

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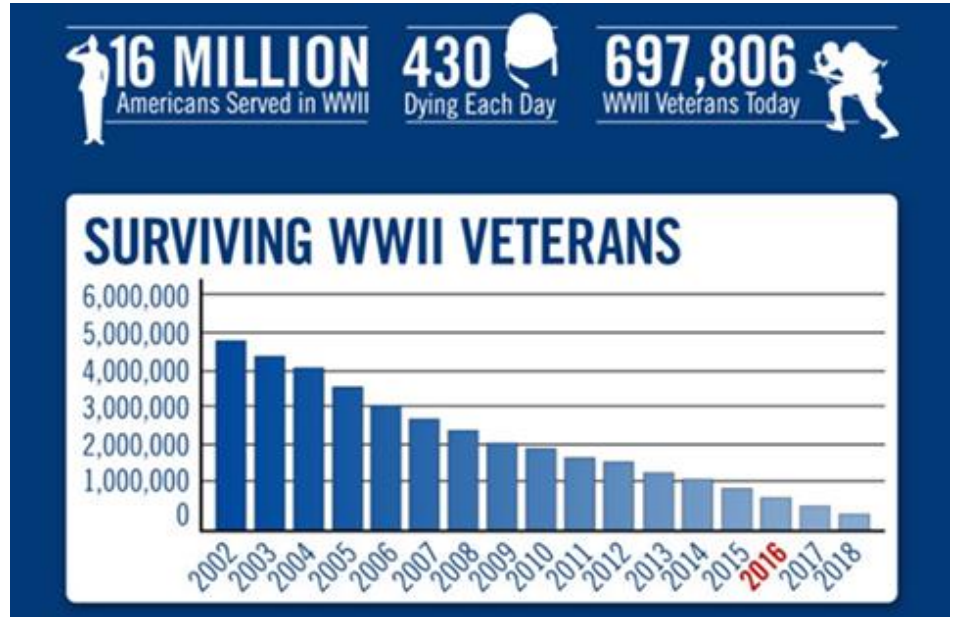
MailCall News

The thunderbolt is being mailed today February 4, 2016

Lory Curtis

The Final Edition of the Thunderbolt is ion the mail. You can read It now online [here](#).

From:
<https://www.facebook.com/Jim-Pee-Wee-Martin-G506-150930871630989/?fref=nf>

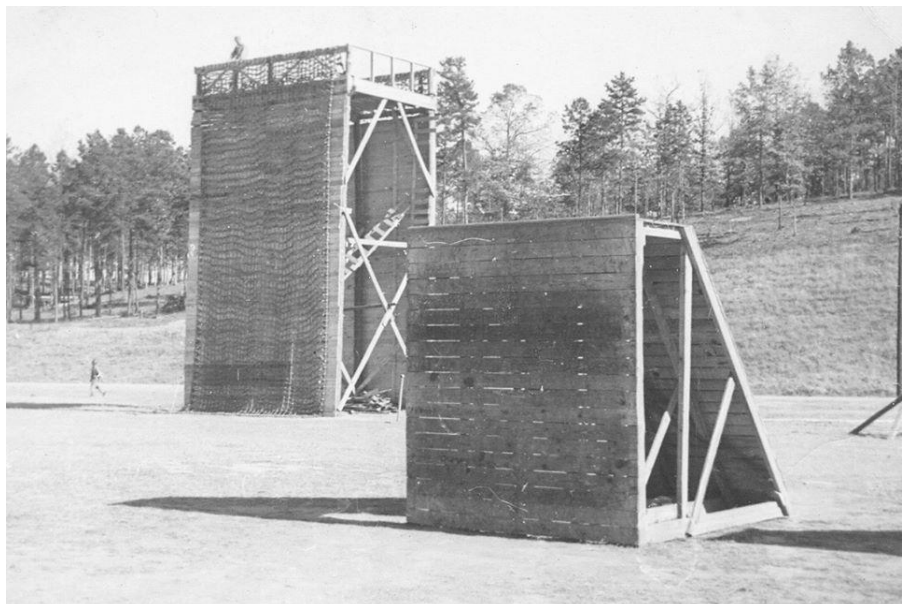


We veterans of the Second World War who have been fortunate to live into the early 21st century feel a continuing obligation to those we served with and to posterity to pass down the legacy and lessons of the defining event of our lives. Only a little more that 4% of us remain as of early 2016. Each day is a gift.

Also from Jim “Pee Wee” Martin, of G Company, 506th PIR:

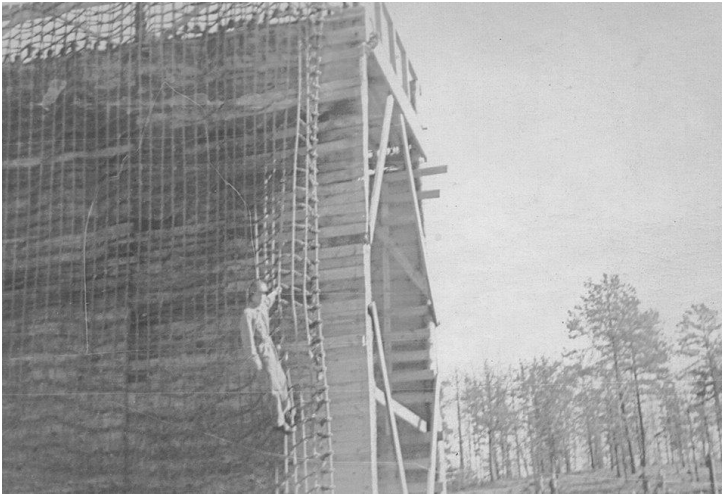
Camp Toccoa - September, 1942.

G Co. buddy Don Coil used my new Argus camera to take these photos of me demonstrating some of the newly established Airborne Basic training regime Colonel Sink was putting us through. These photos were sent back home to my parents to show them I was doing ok down in Georgia and not to worry about me. I'm glad mom and dad kept the photos and that I have them now.





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On the obstacle course at Camp Toccoa - September, 1942. I was 21 years old. By this time we knew the training regime was meant to be extraordinarily tough.



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Dear Sir,

I am a Dutch historian who is researching the 504th PIR. One of the officers in this regiment was 1LT Willard J. Hill from California. In [Mail Call No.2183](#) a Lory Curtis mentions to have been in contact with the son of Willard. Can you put me in contact with Lory or otherwise send him my mail address? macfrank82@hotmail.com

I have written two books so far on the 504th PIR.

http://www.amazon.com/Battle-Bridges-Parachute-Infantry-Operation/dp/1612002323/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1454883378&sr=8-2&keywords=frank+van+lunteren

http://www.amazon.com/Blocking-Kampfgruppe-Peiper-Parachute-Infantry/dp/1612003133/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1454883378&sr=8-1&keywords=frank+van+lunteren

Best wishes,

Frank van Lunteren

Military Humor

An army Major visiting sick soldiers, goes up to one private and asks "What's your problem, Soldier?"

"Chronic syphilis, Sir"

"What treatment are you getting?"

"Five minutes with the wire brush each day."

"What's your ambition?"

"To get back to the front, Sir"

"Good man." says the Major.

He goes to the next bad. "What's your problem, Soldier?"

"Chronic piles, Sir"

"What treatment are you getting?"

"Five minutes with the wire brush each day."

"What's your ambition?"

"To get back to the front, Sir."

"Good man." says the Major.

He goes to the next bed. "What's your problem, Soldier?"

"Chronic gum disease, Sir."

"What treatment are you getting?"

"Five minutes with the wire brush each day."

"What's your ambition?"

"To get the wire brush before the other two, Sir."



Military History

From Snopes.com:

Claim: Maps and other escape aids were smuggled to Allied POWs in Monopoly sets during World War II.



Example: [Collected via e-mail, May 2009]

Starting in 1941, an increasing number of British Airmen found themselves as the involuntary guests of the Third Reich, and the Crown was casting about for ways and means to facilitate their escape.

Now obviously, one of the most helpful aids to that end is a useful and accurate map, one showing not only where stuff was, but also showing the locations of 'safe houses' where a POW on-the-lam could go for food and shelter.

Paper maps had some real drawbacks — they make a lot of noise when you open and fold them, they wear out rapidly, and if they get wet, they turn into mush.

Someone in MI-5 (similar to America's OSS) got the idea of printing escape maps on silk. It's durable, can be scrunched-up into tiny wads, and unfolded as many times as needed, and makes no noise whatsoever.

At that time, there was only one manufacturer in Great Britain that had perfected the technology of printing on silk, and that was John Waddington, Ltd. When approached by the government, the firm was only too happy to do its bit for the war effort.

By pure coincidence, Waddington was also the U.K. Licensee for the popular American board game, Monopoly. As it happened, 'games and pastimes' was a category of item qualified for insertion into 'CARE packages', dispatched by the International Red Cross to prisoners of war.



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Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were regional system). When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they would actually fit inside a Monopoly playing piece.

As long as they were at it, the clever workmen at Waddington's also managed to add:

1. A playing token, containing a small magnetic compass
2. A two-part metal file that could easily be screwed together
3. Useful amounts of genuine high-denomination German, Italian, and French currency, hidden within the piles of Monopoly money!

British and American air crews were advised, before taking off on their first mission, how to identify a 'rigged' Monopoly set — by means of a tiny red dot, one cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of the Free Parking square.

Of the estimated 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated one-third were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets. Everyone who did so was sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British Government might want to use this highly successful ruse in still another, future war.

The story wasn't declassified until 2007, when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony.

It's always nice when you can play that 'Get Out of Jail' Free' card!

Origins: The gist of this account about maps (and other items useful for escape efforts) being smuggled to Allied POWs during World War II by cleverly hiding them in Monopoly game sets is true, although some of the finer details in this particular account may be inaccurate.

The general outline of the scheme to smuggle escape aids to POWs through specially manufactured Monopoly kits is recounted (among other places) in *The Game Makers*, a 2004 history of the Parker Brothers game company:

When allied airmen began to risk their lives flying missions over occupied Europe, Parker Brothers' English partner found a way to use the *Monopoly* game to come to the aid of those who were captured by the Germans. The British War Office worked with a select group of Waddington staffers to modify *Monopoly* boards for insertion in games that the Red Cross would deliver to Allied prisoners of war. These men carved out precise depressions in the unfinished game boards and, before applying their labels, filled them with low-profile compasses, files, and maps that depicted escape routes from the prison camp where each game was to be sent. (The maps were printed on silk because silk did not rustle when opened. Waddington's had perfected this process to such an extent that virtually all British flyers climbed into their warplanes with a Waddington's map secreted in the heel of one of their boots.) Hidden among the games' play money was real currency — German, Italian, or Austrian. It is not known how many airmen escaped thanks to these *Monopoly* games.



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Regardless of when it may have been officially declassified, information about the rigged Monopoly kits was openly acknowledged and discussed long before 2007. A 1985 *Associated Press* article, for example, reported that:

Waddingtons, which received the license to distribute Monopoly in Britain in 1935 from Parker Brothers in the United States, got involved in aiding the prisoners of war because of its printing expertise. It printed maps for the military on durable silk.

Thousands of fliers who went on missions over German-occupied Europe had the maps sewn into their uniforms if they were shot down and captured.

Victor Watson, chairman of the firm, said Waddingtons had a secret department that put the maps, files and money in shallow recesses on the board under the paper face. Then MI-9, the division of Military Intelligence devoted to helping POWs escape, smuggled the sets into prison camps as recreational equipment.

Powell Davies, who was a 19-year-old flier when he was captured, said the prison escape committees would destroy the sets after removing the escape aids to keep the guards from figuring out what was going on.

Although the account claims "an estimated one-third [of escaped POWs] were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets," both the *Game Makers* excerpt quoted above and Waddington's chairman said the number of POWs who were actually aided by the smuggled game kits is unknown:

Maps, files and compasses were hidden in Monopoly sets and smuggled into World War II German prison camps to help British prisoners of war escape, the game's manufacturer, the John Waddington company of Leeds, England, says. Monopoly boards were made with maps hidden in them showing "escape routes from the particular prison to which each game was sent," chairman Victor Watson said. "Into the other side of the board was inserted a tiny compass and several fine-quality files." The money piles were real money, with one piece of Monopoly money on the top and bottom of the pack. "We are not sure how many prisoners were able to escape by this method," Watson said, but the company likes to think a few did.

A former archivist with John Waddington also pointed out some discrepancies in the account in response to a 2007 London *Times* recounting of it:

Sir, I write as the former archivist for John Waddington, the company which made Monopoly during the Second World War.

In his article about Monopoly, Ben Macintyre states that the special sets of Monopoly were sent to prison camps via the Red Cross. Waddingtons produced many escape aids which were sent to the Nazi prison camps, but these were always sent via private, often fictitious, organisations like the Licensed Victuallers Prisoner Relief Fund. No escape aids were enclosed in the Red Cross parcels, so that the Germans would have no justification for stopping these much needed parcels from reaching the prisoners.

It is untrue that safe houses were shown on the maps, as there was a virtual certainty that some of the maps would fall into German hands — the Germans were not fools when it came to tracking down prisoners' ruses.



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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

Website	www.517prct.org
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