



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2321  
April 24, 2016

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

## MailCall News

Subject: **Nolan Powell, Company C**

Sadly, I must convey the news that my father, **Nolan Powell**, Company C, 517<sup>th</sup> PIR, is now receiving hospice care at the Friendly Home in Rochester, New York. Several of us, my brothers, sisters, and the next generations, were with him this week, as he had appeared to be near the end. We are grateful that he rallied and is with us for a while longer.

I have been printing MailCall and sending it to him since he entered Friendly Home a few weeks ago. He looks forward to it. My sister and I read the entire issue of MailCall #2319 to him. Although it was one of the longer issues, he indicated that he wanted to hear all of Bob Hart's recollections.

**Alan Powell**

North Wales, Pennsylvania

**Nolan Powell**  
with **Roland Orengo**  
in Sospel France, 2002





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RE: Dick Fields

From Ginni Field's Facebook page April 25, 2016:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ginnifield>

It is with a depth of sadness I can't express that I share with you that my hero, my Dad, has passed and joined my mom and my brother in Heaven. He is finally at peace. And there is a hole in my heart.

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I cannot tell you how much the support my family is getting means to us. Thank you. Some have asked so I am requesting that in lieu of flowers, donations be given to the World War 11 Experience. The founder of the charity is the woman who wrote my father's book. She cares passionately about keeping that history alive. Thank you all.

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Photo from **Eddy Lamberty**



Ginni - my best to you, your Dad and family.

I fondly remember being next to your Dad as part of the flag lowering team at the ceremony at Drauginon in 2014 and his tearing up upon receiving that flag..

Also cheerily remember Dick signing mementoes for the youngsters at the evening festivities at La Motte and sharing in those festivities with your family!

Airborne and God Bless

**Tom Copsey**

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One of our troopers objected to one of the parachute trivia items reported in last week's MailCall – 500 parachute jumps in 24 hours in 2001:

*Those facts on parachuting were not only interesting but also surprising. One that I think is impossible unless all the facts are not known. He jumps every 2 ½ minutes. In that time he has to get out of the chute he jumped with, put on a new one, load in the plane, climb to 2100 feet and spend time coming down. What am I missing?*

It turns out that this records has been brokemn several times, most of those by Jay Stokes.

Jay Stokes' World Record History

- 1st Guinness World Record, 31 May 1995 for 331 jumps in 24 hours at Raeford, North Carolina
- 2nd Guinness World Record, 27 November 1997 for 384 jumps in 24 hours at Somerton Airport, Arizona
- 3rd Guinness World Record, 13 November 1999 for 476 jumps in 24 hours at Somerton Airport, Arizona
- 4th Guinness World Record, 11 November 2003 for 534 jumps in 24 hours at Elsinore, California
- 5th Guinness World Record, 8 September 2006 for 640 jumps in 24 hours at Greensburg, Indiana.
- **6th Guinness World Record, 5 September 2014 for 700 jumps in 24 hours – canceled!**

See his attempt for 700:

<http://www.skydive-tv.com/most-jumps-2014-700-jumps-24-hours-with-jay-stokes>





# North Carolina judge sentences veteran with PTSD to night behind bars — and then goes to jail with him

BY MEG WAGNER NEW YORK DAILY NEWS Saturday, April 23, 2016, 3:31 PM



A compassionate North Carolina judge worried about locking up a retired soldier with PTSD served the 24-hour sentence with the veteran so he wouldn't be left alone.

Fayetteville District Court Judge Lou Olivera said he had to punish Green Beret Sgt. Joe Serna for lying to Veterans Treatment Court. But the judge — a Gulf War veteran himself — decided to stay the night with Serna because he worried time in isolation would be particularly damaging for a soldier with mental health issues.

“He comes in. They close the door and lock it,” Serna told WTVD. “And that’s when I realized — I said, ‘You’re in here for the entire time with me, huh?’”

Serna served three combat tours in Afghanistan and came home with military accolades — and a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder. During his downward spiral, he was charged with DUI, which landed him in Olivera’s veteran’s court.

The program requires veterans to appear in court every two weeks as they seek help for addiction.

During one of those sessions earlier this month, Serna admitted he had been dishonest about a urinalysis test — he denied it came back positive — but the veteran later confessed he knowingly lied to the judge.

For the violation, Olivera handed down a one-day sentence. But when Serna reported to the jail for his punishment, the judge walked in right behind him.

The judge said it was the first time he’d ever been behind bars.

“When they close that door, it’s really, you are shut off,” he said. “I had a more palatable understanding of the issues Joe was going through.”

Former Green Beret Sgt. Joe Serna suffers from PTSD, and the judge worried a night alone would be particularly damaging for the ex-soldier.

The two spent the night chatting about their military service, Serna said.

“It was more of a father-son conversation as opposed to a judge talking to someone and sentencing them. It was personal,” he told WRAL.

Olivera said the court program — which will see its first graduation ceremony later this month — is specifically designed for veterans.

“We are more like a family, the court and the team — that makes a huge difference in recovery,” Olivera said.



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The result of the B-17 "All American" midair collision with a Messerschmitt Bf 109.

### **A Wing and a Prayer**

A mid-air collision on February 1, 1943, between a B-17 and a German fighter over the Tunis dock area, became the subject of one of the most famous photographs of World War II. An enemy fighter attacking a 97th Bomb Group formation went out of control, probably with a wounded pilot then continued its crashing descent into the rear of the fuselage of a Fortress named All American, piloted by Lt. Kendrick R. Bragg, of the 414th Bomb Squadron. When it struck, the fighter broke apart, but left some pieces in the B-17. The left horizontal stabilizer of the Fortress and left elevator were completely torn away. The two right engines were out and one on the left had a serious oil pump leak. The vertical fin and the rudder had been damaged, the fuselage had been cut almost completely through connected only at two small parts of the frame and the radios, electrical and oxygen systems were damaged. There was also a hole in the top that was over 16 feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest and the split in the fuselage went all the way to the top gunner's turret.

Although the tail actually bounced and swayed in the wind and twisted when the plane turned and all the control cables were severed, except one single elevator cable still worked, and the aircraft still flew - miraculously! The tail gunner was trapped because there was no floor connecting the tail to the rest of the plane. The waist and tail gunners used parts of the German fighter and their own parachute harnesses in an attempt to keep the tail from ripping off and the two sides of the fuselage from splitting apart. While the crew was trying to keep the bomber from coming apart, the pilot continued on his bomb run and released his bombs over the target.

When the bomb bay doors were opened, the wind turbulence was so great that it blew one of the waist gunners into the broken tail section. It took several minutes and four crew members to pass him ropes from parachutes and haul him back into the forward part of the plane. When they tried to do the same for the tail gunner, the tail began flapping so hard that it began to break off. The weight of the gunner was adding some stability to the tail section, so he went back to his position.

The turn back toward England had to be very slow to keep the tail from twisting off. They actually covered almost 70 miles to make the turn home. The bomber was so badly damaged that it was losing altitude and speed and was soon alone in the sky. For a brief time, two more Me-109 German fighters attacked the All American. Despite the



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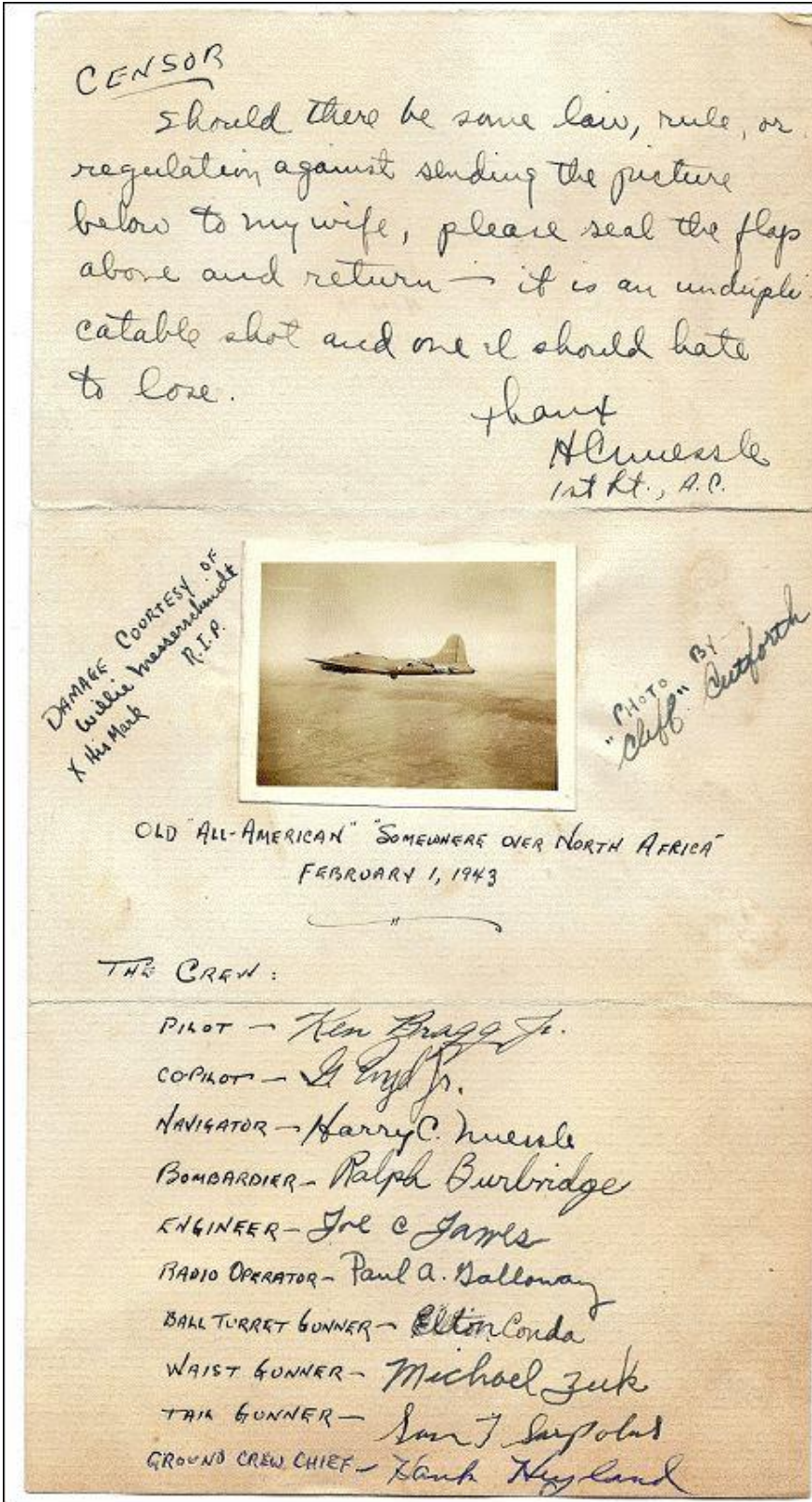
extensive damage, all of the machine gunners were able to respond to these attacks and soon drove off the fighters. The two waist gunners stood up with their heads sticking out through the hole in the top of the fuselage to aim and fire their machine guns. The tail gunner had to shoot in short bursts because the recoil was actually causing the plane to turn.

Allied P-51 fighters intercepted the All American as it crossed over the Channel and took one of the pictures shown. They also radioed to the base describing that the empennage was waving like a fish tail and that the plane would not make it and to send out boats to rescue the crew when they bailed out. The fighters stayed with the Fortress taking hand signals from Lt. Bragg and relaying them to the base. Lt. Bragg signaled that 5 parachutes and the spare had been "used" so five of the crew could not bail out. He made the decision that if they could not bail out safely, then he would stay with the plane and land it.

Two and a half hours after being hit, the aircraft made its final turn to line up with the runway while it was still over 40 miles away. It descended into an emergency landing and a normal roll-out on its landing gear.

When the ambulance pulled alongside, it was waved off because not a single member of the crew had been injured. No one could believe that the aircraft could still fly in such a condition. The Fortress sat placidly until the crew all exited through the door in the fuselage and the tail gunner had climbed down a ladder, at which time the entire rear section of the aircraft collapsed onto the ground. The rugged old bird had done its job.

B-17 "All American"  
(414th Squadron, 97BG) Crew:  
Pilot- Ken Bragg Jr.  
Copilot- G. Boyd Jr.  
Navigator- Harry C. Nuessle  
Bombardier- Ralph Burbridge  
Engineer- Joe C. James  
Radio Operator- Paul A. Galloway  
Ball Turret Gunner- Elton Conda  
Waist Gunner- Michael Zuk  
Tail Gunner- Sam T. Sarpolus  
Ground Crew Chief- Hank Hyland





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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](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

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