



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2331

Aug 14, 2016

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

Operation Dragoon – August 14-15, 1944



A toast to the 517th PRCT on the Anniversary of Operation Dragoon the Liberation of Southern France.

Paul Abbene

<-- **Wid Bill Boyle** preparing for the jump. Aug 14, 1944

Pvt. Robert Webber - heavy mortar platoon, 1/517th PIR, will be present during the commemorations of the landing of Provence.

This would be the first time in 72 years that he comes back in Europe.





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TOP SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 517TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY CT
APO 758, U. S. ARMY

Copy # 27

11 August 1944

1. The following general considerations should be noted in the operation now being undertaken.

a. For most of us this is our first combat jump. Consequently some may be a little apprehensive. Remember that the advantage is with the attacker, as the enemy does not know exactly how or when he is going to be struck. Particularly in an airborne operation in which we land in his rear areas where his CP's, lines of communication and supply echelons are set-up, will our activities give him grave concern. The enemy consequently will be a lot more uncomprehensive than we are. That the enemy will react to our landing by movement of forces towards our area should be expected within a few hours. However by that time we expect to be pretty well set for him and deal out a lot of punishment. It must be remembered also that he will be engaged at many other points by other airborne units and the large scale attack by the amphibious landing. There can be no doubt of the success of this operation if we use our heads and keep our confidence, work quickly but smoothly and act aggressively using good tactics and security measures.

2. As it will be dark when we first land it will be difficult to see what is going on around us. Therefore, we must not start firing promiscuously at any thing that moves. You must be certain it is the enemy before you fire. After the first unit lands many of our men will be moving around the area, some already in assembly or moving to assembly positions and others recovering bundles. Don't fire first and find it is one of your own men later. Weapons, on landing, should be loaded and locked, and fired only on orders of an officer or in case of emergency. The sound of enemy weapons is known to you and should disclose the location of enemy forces if present. Enemy flares may be fired around the area to give the appearance of enemy strength and to cause us to be alarmed. Remember that more casualties can be caused by some of our own men getting trigger happy than from enemy fire. It is possible that your stick may land some distance from the LZ. Your action in this case should be considered. The general idea is to move to your Battalion assembly area and if the Battalion has already left for its objective join them there. If this is impossible join up with friendly troops preferably of this unit and assist them in accomplishing their mission. In either case do as much damage as possible on the way, for example a staff car or a truck load of Germans may be driving along the road unaware of your presence in the area. In case no officers are present with your group the senior NCO should be prepared to take over. All men will be issued instructions regarding the terrain, objectives, important towns, streams etc., and also a map in the escape kit. Remember that a few men can create a hell of a lot of trouble if they happen to be in the right place.

(O V E R)

TOP SECRET



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This coming Monday is August 15th, the day our dads jumped into southern France. The day was actually on a Tuesday. Here is the letter my Dad wrote home to his mother about the jump.

All my best to the troopers of the 517th for their brave acts. They were really America's best!!!!

Lory **Curtis**, proud son of **H.L. Bud Curtis**, HQ, 1st Bn

Letter to Mom from Harland L. Curtis
Combat Jump into Southern France
August 15, 1944 as recorded by Bud on August 22, 1944

Dear Mom,

We boarded C-47's (the twin engine plane that was used by paratroopers) in Italy (Chiteviccia) about 2:30 am and had a nice pleasant ride with no opposition at all. Most of us were asleep until almost time to jump. They woke us up and said we would be over the field in eight minutes. That was about 5:00 am. We stood up and hooked up. It seemed like years went by as those last minutes ticked off. I was number 13 man. The green light came on and guys began to disappear in front of me. Then there I was at the door. I had a hell of a body position. I went out of the door like I was throwing a flying block with my right shoulder at somebody. I was heading down nose first when "Wham" she opened and jerked me back up right. I looked up to make sure my chute was open and then I looked around. We must have jumped awfully high because I thought I was never going to come down. There was a low fog about a 100 feet off the ground and it looked just like water. I really thought my number was up for sure. I was cussing the Air Corps and all their ancestors for 17 generations back.

When I sank through the mist I was just beginning to figure it all out when "Thud" I hit the ground. I will never forget that morning. I was miles away from the jump field. Later I found out that it was a good thing I didn't land on the jump field as the Germans had it all ready for us with mines, machine guns, and flame throwers. All I could see was forms of trees through the fog. I cut myself out of my chute and when I stood up I seemed to have lost my sense of balance. I fell down and rolled down the side of a mountain a few yards. I stood up again, and did the same thing again. I stood up again and took a couple of steps and fell off a ledge about 10 feet high and about broke my neck. There was dry grass all over and every step I took you could hear it for a mile. I decided to lay still for a while and see if I could figure out where I was at. I didn't know which way to go. I heard somebody moving a little ways in front of me. I shouted the password at him hoping it was one of our guys, but instead of getting the right answer I got a couple of bullets just over my head. I took off for a big rock and figured I would have it out with the guy, but then I heard somebody behind me. Once again I made the mistake of hoping it was one of our guys and shouted the password to him and got my answer in hot lead. It was so foggy we couldn't see each other but we could hear every move each of us made.

There must have been a whale of a patrol around me and every step I took away from them I could hear them coming closer. I knew as long as it stayed foggy I could hold them off, but it began to get light and I decided the best thing to do was make a run for it and hope they would miss. I took off zig zagging and they opened up on me, but I was lucky and got to the other side of the hill and down in the valley and there I met some of our own guys.

We climbed over another hill and came to a road and met up with most of the company. Ever since then I haven't had much trouble. In fact the Germans are running to fast. I haven't seen one for days.



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A few photos from Eddy Lamberty in Belgium, with Claire Giblin, Allan Johnson, Tour organized by Cadusa from Trois-Ponts.: Wanne Begium



Allan Johnson with Cedric Grégoire and Eddy Lamberty



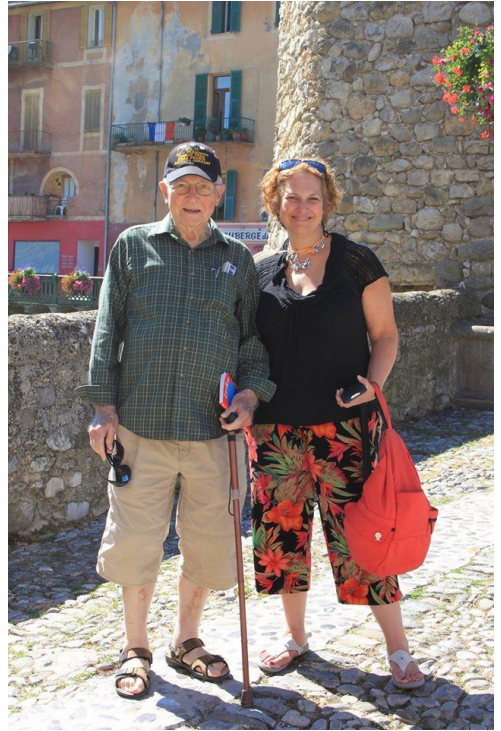
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Sospel 13th August 2016 photos from Patricia and Roland Orengo:



Allan Johnson, 596, and Bob Webber, HQ Mortar Platoon. Bob's first time back in France since the war!



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from Loïc Jankowiak:



Nice meeting with Robert Webber this afternoon in the mitan

MailCall News

What a packed, great Mail Call! So many wonderful stories and pictures.

It is amazing that Claire and Allan are getting ready for their 10th trip to the 517th's battle fields. God bless them for going as the representatives of the 517th and also bless all our friends in Belgium and France. **Irma, Arnold and Maria** made Dad's, Alan's and my visit something I will always treasure. Alan and I will never be able to thank them enough for their welcome and the extraordinary things they did to make it the most meaningful trip of my life with Dad. Please give them big hugs and our eternally grateful love. What very precious memories. We will be thinking of all of them especially on August 15. (Great pic of Allan from the 70th Anniversary).

Also very much enjoyed the article on the history teacher and high school students visiting **Norman Ross** and his fellow veterans. Seeing the pictures of the students brings home how young many of the members of the 517th were during those critical days in '44.

Speaking of age, thank you for the picture of Tom Rees jeep and his jeeping companion Wally Beery. Mr Beery must have been just shy of his 60th birthday when he visited the troops.

Thank you.

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer



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Subject: Re: 517 airborne information

Ok. I have found a lot of information in the last few days doing research online. I also have contacted some family members and I am waiting to hear back from them. If you would like me to pass along any information on him I would be happy to do so.

Megan Harshbarger

Hello everybody

I saw that Megan Harshbarger looking for information about **John C. CASSELMAN** I have adopted the grave of John who is buried in the American Cemetery of Henri-Chapelle So if she wants to be in contact with me there's no problem

Claude KALBUSCH
4630 SOUMAGNE
BELGIUM

Subject: John C. CASSELMAN

I have a picture of John !!!

----->

Claude KALBUSCH

Thank you for the picture!!!

Megan Harshbarger



May I get the direct e mail
Address for Claire Giblin? I don't have it.

Thank you
Theresa Pugh
Charles Pugh's daughter

The son of Wallace Beery is in westerns & is an actor in his own right. He looks a lot like his dad. I think his name is Noah Beery. He's in a lot of John Wayne western pictures.

Mel Trenary



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From The Louisville Courier Journal

82nd Airborne arrive via parachute | Video



<http://cjkj.it/2bbG8Vv>

From **Tom Reber**

My grandfather [**Frank Gallucci**] served in Company D of the 517th, and I grew up on his war stories. I recently spent two days at the [National Archives](#) in College Park, Maryland, scanning historical document relating to the 517th. I have 2000 scans, although that number includes many duplicates. Among the items are after action reports, battlefield maps, general orders, and more. I also have perhaps 200 or more photographs we found after my grandfather's passing. These were recently scanned as well. It will take some time to organize these items and cull the duplicates, but when I do I would like to submit them to the site so that they can be shared by all. What would be the best way to submit the documents when the time comes (I imagine I will be ready sometime this fall)? Thank you for maintaining this site!

Best,

Alex Gallucci

Hi Alex,

Yes, we would love to have anything from the National Archives to add to the website. I have a few items that other people have sent in in bits and pieces over the years, but 2000 scans is unbelievable! It could take me a while to organize and post it all, but it's all good. That might also fill up a lot of MailCall newsletters for me.

We should also take your grandfather's photos and stories and create a biography page for him. Once you are ready let me know how much you have – How many files? How big? – and we can work out a way to send them to me, on CD's or just via an internet file load. I have several options.

Bob Barrett



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

Update on the pavilion, had a meeting with our General Contractor, Matt Roesch of Roesch Construction and Gregg Gunn. Gregg will be in charge of pouring the 128 yards of concrete it will take for the footers and slab for the pavilion, a big job to say the least. On top of that, there are 34 heavy duty metal brackets that have to be set accurately, so that the post that hold the beams for the roof to sit on, will line up. We are on Gregg's schedule to start digging the footers sometime in the next 2 weeks, then it will take several days to get the form boards in place and all the rebar set and tied. We are still waiting on a quote from Morgan Concrete for the 128 yards that is needed. That should be coming in this next week. Thank you in advance to Morgan Concrete for helping us with this great project.

We had another very generous donation this week, Dwight Stovall of Stovall Machine Products in Lavonia, Ga. has donated the 300 - 5/8" X 7" bolts, nuts, lock washers and 600 flat washers that it will take to hold all the brackets to the posts and beams. Thank you Dwight and Rebecca.

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



Regimental Crest painted by Toccoa artist Joe Collins being added to the Regimental Headquarters building. Mr. Collins donated his time and his talent for this project.



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Manuel I. Ventoza, 596th PCEC

FW: Memorial for **Manny Ventoza**

I have been informed that we lost another fellow Paratrooper. I had met Manny at a number of reunion events. He is a fellow brother in Freemasonry with me. He will sorely missed.

Scott Ross

From a Facebook post by David Brown, WA:

As I've mentioned here before, I'm a freemason. One of the benefits of that is that I've got a lot of friends with a lot more wisdom than I have, and I get to count them as friends and brothers. One of the downsides is that many of these wonderful friends and brothers are dying. Since I've joined the lodge, the number of funerals and memorials I've gone to has increased tremendously.

Unfortunately, now I'll be going to a memorial for my friend and brother Manuel Ventoza.

Manny Ventoza was one of those people that was solidly in the category of people that you would call a "character." Everyone in Washington Masonry seemed to know Manny. Everyone has a Manny story.

Manny loved to talk. If you were in a car with him, he was going to be doing most of the talking. In a lodge meeting, if there was a call for any brother to say anything in lodge, Manny had something to say.

Manny had this way of standing, with his legs planted firmly a little wider than his shoulders. He stood like a rock. He stood in a way that let you know that there was no way you were going to knock him over.

Manny had parachuted into France on D-Day with the (101st/82nd, I forget which) Airborne, his machine gun unit softening up the German lines for the troops landing on the beaches. He talked emotionally about the needless destruction he saw in Europe during the war.

After the war, Manny was a union longshoreman, working up and down the west coast, knowing that he could find a job anywhere cargo needed to move.

Mostly, Manny was colorful. Manny contributed greatly to the nature of Puget Sound Masonry, and he leaves a very large hole in our lodges and our hearts.

When I'd heard that Manny was sick, I did what I could to find out where he was and if he was taking visitors, only to find out that he had already passed. I can take solace in knowing that I was able to tell him how much I enjoyed his presence in lodge, even as I ache that I didn't get to see him one last time.

I'll miss you, Manny.

David Brown



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In Memory of
Manuel Isedro Ventoza

December 25, 1924 - August 7, 2016



Brethren, The following is the memorial information for:

Noble Manuel "Manny" Ventoza

Manny passed on the evening of Sunday, August 7, 2016. He was decorated WWII paratrooper, an active member in the Legion of Honor, member of Delta-White Center Lodge, recipient of the Grand Masters Achievement award in 2015 and an active member in District 6.

There will be a viewing at:
[Yarrington's Funeral Home in White Center](#)

10708 16th Ave SW, Seattle WA 98146

August 16th from 5 pm to 8 pm

The family has requested a Masonic Service be performed at 7 pm on that day.

The burial will be held at:

[St. Bernadette Parish](#)

1028 S.W. 128th Street

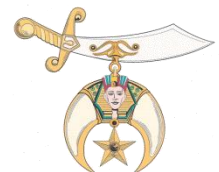
Seattle, WA 98146

August 18th at 11:00

Memorial will follow burial at:

[Bonney-Watson Funeral Home](#)
approximately noon

Sincerely,
Nile Shrine Center





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From West Seattle Herald, 2006:

War hero tells his story

By Tim St. Clair
05/23/2006

Manuel "Manny" Ventoza is a self-deprecating guy, a Shriner who likes cowboy boots and parks a camper in the driveway. He smiles often and effortlessly. Most of his Burien neighbors probably have no idea he's a war hero.

Memorial Day means something more to Manny Ventoza than a barbecue.

He was a U.S. Army paratrooper during World War II and was often in the first wave of assault, dropping behind enemy lines in France and Italy to deactivate land mines, German tanks and other enemy equipment. He also set booby traps.

Ventoza was awarded the Silver Star, one of the Army's most prestigious combat medals, for gallantry in action with an opposing foreign force.

A display cabinet in the Ventoza home is lined with flat cases bearing medals from France as well as the United States. Brightly colored service ribbons representing participation in specific battles and theaters of war attract the eye like the controlled riot of hues on an artist's easel. One ribbon is distinct in its simplicity, a plain patch of blue, a presidential unit citation for meritorious service awarded to his military outfit.

Ventoza usually spends the last Monday in May honoring all those who've died in service to the United States, including his own fallen comrades. This year he will be "parading and saluting" at Bonney-Watson Memorial Cemetery in SeaTac.

Ventoza joined the Army at age 18 fresh out of Highline High School.

"Every manchild in Burien joined up," Ventoza said. "All of us went in the war."

Ventoza wanted to join the cavalry because he always loved horses and had begun studying veterinary science. Then a friend told him paratroopers got paid \$50 more per month than cavalry soldiers.

He went to jump school in Georgia. Of 36 soldiers from Fort Lewis who went through paratrooper training together, only 16 made it home from the war.

Paratroopers wore pants with pockets up and down the legs to store grenades, food, whatever's needed. Berlin Sally, the German radio equivalent of Tokyo Rose, used to call American paratroopers "baggy pants," Ventoza said.

Ventoza was assigned to the 17th Airborne Division but so many paratroopers were killed in action, there weren't enough left to form a division anymore so the Army merged the remaining members of the 17th Airborne into the 82nd Airborne Division.



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Besides parachuting, Ventoza learned to deactivate different kinds of land mines made in Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Czechoslovakia. Some mines went off by a trip wire. Others relied on a pressure-release mechanism. Some mines were intended to injure soldiers on foot while others were designed to pierce a tank.

Besides being a paratrooper and demolitions man, Ventoza also was a machine gunner. Once after parachuting into France, his unit got into a ground fight with German soldiers near the coast.

Ventoza ran out of machine-gun ammunition so he grabbed his M-1 rifle and continued fighting. But he was sprayed with shrapnel from an incoming mortar. He and about 30 other American soldiers were captured by the Germans.

Previously during the war, Ventoza had apprehended and held German prisoners himself. He said he always made it a point to treat them humanely.

This time Ventoza was the prisoner. He and other American soldiers were locked up by German soldiers in a town in France near the coast.

At one point U.S. Navy ships zeroed in on the location.

"Those ships were lobbing shells in and the Germans had to go," Ventoza said.

The Allied prisoners were taken to a blown-out building, where Ventoza remembers seeing a German soldier with ammo belts across his chest. The German soldiers didn't want their retreat slowed down by a platoon of prisoners so they lined up the Allied prisoners to shoot them.

A German officer stepped forward to ask that Ventoza be spared. The officer had been a prisoner under Ventoza's supervision previously and, to show his appreciation for merciful treatment, he interceded to save Ventoza's life.

Ventoza still has the Iron Cross that German officer gave him.

Although badly wounded, Ventoza and a couple of British soldiers were released. They made their way to the coast and soon they were aboard a hospital ship. Ventoza recuperated at a hospital in Naples.

When he was well the Army decided to send Ventoza home, but he wouldn't go. He insisted on rejoining his outfit which by then was headed for the fighting in Italy. When Ventoza arrived, half of the soldiers he'd started with were gone.

Since they'd been in southern Europe, Ventoza and the other soldiers had only summer uniforms when they began the long march northward toward Belgium, the winter and the Battle of the Bulge.

"We cut up German blankets to wrap around our feet," Ventoza said.

These days cold weather is no concern for the paratroopers of the 17th and 82nd Airborne Divisions. They get together a few times a year now at places like Palm Springs and remember their warrior days, pay homage to the dead and ponder what life might've been like had all their buddies made it home with them.



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"The war changed us," Ventoza said. "It gives you a hard crust inside."

He parachuted into a lot of tough situations during World War II but Ventoza never jumped out of an airplane after the war.

"I don't do it for fun," he said.

Tim St. Clair can be reached at 932-0300 or tstclair@robinsonnews.com

From the 2015 West Coast 517th reunion:



Manuel Ventoza (596th), **Allan Johnson** (596th), **Gene (Zoot) Snyder** (A Co.),
Anthony Mandio (HQ/1), **Leo Dean** (Reg HQ), **John Jonientz** (F Co.)



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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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Thunderbolt Archives	www.517prct.org/archives

