



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2341

December 24, 2016

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

This Day in 517th History -1944



HQ, 517th RCT
APO 109 U.S. Army
S-3 Journal

25 Dec 44

0900 hr - RCT relieved attachment to 30 Inf Div. Returned to XVIII Corps control.

1000 hr - Received orders to move to vicinity FERRIERS.

1700 hr - Arrived at FERRIERS. Opened RCT CP.

1800 hr - 2400 hr - 2nd and 3rd Bns. closed bivouac in vicinity FERRIERS.

26 Dec 44 - 1400 hr

3rd Bn (-G Co) and 1st Plat, 596th AB Engrs, and Bn Demolition Section, Reg HQ Co, attached to 7th Armored Div for the purpose of taking MANHAY.

Remembering Manhay

"Hold At All Costs!"



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

This was the command given to Co. "H" and Co. "I" on or about December 26, 1944. The next morning, about 0215, at least sixteen 517th Troopers...**Gave Their All**. The following were in the same squad as a "Friendly" shell most likely was fired late and short of its target.

72 years have passed, but these brave Troopers will Always be remembered:

Pfc. William "Billy" ECKART, Pfc. Fred ISERMAN, Pvt. Merle KAMINSKY, Pvt. John PENN, Pfc. Paul RZONCA, Pvt. Frank O. SCOTT, Pvt. Arthur SESSUM, Pfc. Shannon SMITH, 1st Lt. Floyd A. STOTT, Cpl. Courville TARPLEY, Sgt. Wendell J. TINGER, Pvt. Albert VASQUEZ, Pfc. Edward WALSH, Pvt. Edward WEIMER, Pfc. Clyde WHITTINGTON, and Pvt. Robert WILLIAMS.

May they Rest in Peace...always.

Kenton Floyd Immerfall

Nephew of **1st Lt. Floyd A Stott**, Co. "I", 3rd Bat., 517th PRCT

From American Military Historical Company on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/WW2ABHistoricalCo/?fref=ts>

Merry Christmas! The print block that **Lt Dick Spencer**, HQ 3rd Battalion 517th PRCT, made for Lt. John Neiler, S-2 HQ 517th PRCT.

Courtesy of **Ben Arnold**. Thank you for sharing!





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

For his heroism between 23-24 December 1944 in the Soy-Hotton area serving as lead scout, **Private First Class Melvin Biddle** of B/517th PIR have been decorate by president Harry Truman. On October 12, 1945, when President Truman presented the medal to Biddle, he whispered to him, "People don't believe me when I tell them that I'd rather have one of these than be president."



Citation: He displayed conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy near Soy, Belgium, on 23 and 24 December 1944. Serving as lead scout during an attack to relieve the enemy-encircled town of Hotton, he aggressively penetrated a densely wooded area, advanced 400 yards until he came within range of intense enemy rifle fire, and within 20 yards of enemy positions killed 3 snipers with unerring marksmanship. Courageously continuing his advance an additional 200 yards, he discovered a hostile machinegun position and dispatched its 2 occupants. He then located the approximate position of a well-concealed enemy machinegun nest, and crawling forward threw hand grenades which killed two Germans and fatally wounded a third. After signaling his company to advance, he entered a determined line of enemy defense, coolly and deliberately shifted his position, and shot 3 more enemy soldiers. Undaunted by enemy fire, he crawled within 20 yards of a machinegun nest, tossed his last hand grenade into the position, and after the explosion charged the emplacement firing his rifle. When night fell, he scouted enemy positions alone for several hours and returned with valuable information which enabled our attacking infantry and armor to knock out 2 enemy tanks. At daybreak he again led the advance and, when flanking elements were pinned down by enemy fire, without hesitation made his way toward a hostile machinegun position and from a distance of 50 yards killed the crew and 2 supporting riflemen. The remainder of the enemy, finding themselves without automatic weapon support, fled panic stricken. Pfc. Biddle's intrepid courage and superb daring during his 20-hour action enabled his battalion to break the enemy grasp on Hotton with a minimum of casualties.

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES, PRISONERS & ARMOR KNOCKED OUT

Casualties:	23 Dec 44	-	32	
	24 Dec 44	-	12	
	25 Dec 44	-	7	
	26 Dec 44	-	10	
			<u>61</u>	Total or 8 Dead & 53 Wounded

Prisoners Taken - 30

Armor knocked out - 2 Tanks
9 Self Propells
1 Half Track (no further description)
1 Recon. Car
1 Volkswagon
1 Ammo. Truck

Approximate number of enemy dead - 145



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

MailCall News

Hi Bob, I am the daughter of **Al Eckart**, and the niece of **William J Eckart, Jr**, of I Co., 3rd BN, 517th prct.

You have a photo posted on the site of I Co. My dad and I are trying to put names to faces, and I was wondering if you could possibly put me in touch with Tom Copsey.

Please forward this email to him so he can email me, or have him call me @ 1-814-583-5876.

Regards,
Denise

Hi Tom,

I was wondering if you could identify anyone in the attached photo. My dad and I are trying to put a name with each of the men. I believe your dad is in this photo, hoping you can identify him and some of his friends. I have numbered the men in this photo to help keep identities straight.

Appreciate any and all help!

Denise

Hi Denise - so sorry this took so long (I forgot about it).

My Dad **John F Copsey** is #39 in the middle of the photo and ironically he is right behind the Company Commander **Marty Fastia** #14. I say ironic because my Dad was court-martialed in Southern France for threatening Capt Fastia after liberating a lot of French wine at St Cezaire. :-)

I would only be guessing about the other guys - Bob Barrett may have better intel. One chap who could certainly help is **Bob Vaught** who is in Kentucky. Bob Barrett provided me his phone # once but I misplaced it. Bob can you help here?

What Zip code are you corresponding from Denise?

Holiday Cheers to all

TC

Hi Tom, Thank you for replying. Thank you for pointing out your dad. That is ironic! I am adding Bob to this email reply.

Hoping Bob sees this and can put me in touch with Bob Vaught.

Happy Holidays to you and your families!
Denise



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hello Bob,

I have **Gen. John Neiler's** WWII Ike jacket. On the right shoulder is the XVIII Airborne Corps patch. On the right is the Third Army patch.

This seems weird to me. Do you know why this could be like this?

Thanks,

Ben Arnold

Hello, I am searching for any kind of information on **Archie E. Brown** who was killed in action on New Year's Day, 1945 with HQ 2nd Battalion. I am his great nephew. Archie has been honored at two memorials here in his hometown of Anacortes, WA.

Thank you!

Mitchell Babarovich

Here is one of the memorials for WWII KIA's in Causland Park, Anacortes, WA.

Archie Eugene Brown is listed here.





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

From: <http://www.517prct.org/recollections.htm>

Date: **03/04/2002** 12:13:48 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: **Tom Cross**

I am forwarding **Dick Seitz's** latest message regarding the farmhouse incident described in the above referenced Mail Call. I talked to Dick a few minutes ago and we jointly were able to bring some more facts to light on this subject. Here are our latest recollections:

The date of the incident was January 1, 1945. The S-3 of Headquarters 2nd Battalion that was conferring with Dick and **Dave Armstrong** was **1st Lt. Peche**. They were conducting a map reconnaissance of the proposed forward assembly area in preparation of our coming attack in the Trois Pont area. When the enemy round exploded in the rear of the farm house, I was in the act of briefing the advance party prior to moving to the Trois Pont area. This party consisted of company guides from each of our three Rifle Companies and our 2nd Battalion Headquarters Co. The entire party consisted of approximately 12 individuals. We were going to use two jeeps for transportation and they were loaded and ready to go. The enemy round came in and exploded in the midst of our group. **Corporal Archie Brown** who standing beside me was instantly killed. I remember the timing as I had just passed my map case to him when the shell exploded. The force of the explosion knocked us all down. I was the first person to get up and saw that the others were still on the ground. When we recovered we found that almost the entire group had been wounded with some wounds more serious than others. **1st Lt. Jack West**, the 2nd Bn. 81mm Mortar Platoon Leader was one of the group more seriously wounded than the others. Our Battalion Surgeon **Capt. Harold Megibow MD** had us moved to the basement of the farmhouse where he worked on us and prepared us for medical evacuation that came later in the afternoon. Being wounded was bad enough but we had our two jeeps wounded too. This put Dick Seitz in a bind as he had already received orders to move at a designated time and a new reconnaissance party had to be formed and new transportation found. Fortunately we had a few stolen jeeps on hand that were pressed into service.

We were medically evacuated to a nearby Armored Division's Medical Clearing Station and from that point on I lost contact with those of our group that had been together up to this point. My troubles were not over for when I was evacuated to a nearby Medical Evacuation Hospital for emergency treatment, the ambulance driver became confused and took the wrong route that headed us for the enemy lines. Fortunately a Military Policeman stopped him at the last minute before crossing into danger and we were rerouted to the Evacuation Hospital.

That was a busy day for me because in the course of my travels I had visited the XVIII Airborne Corps Forward CP. for directions to the 517 PIR CP and from there to the CP of the 2nd Bn and then on to the medical evacuation journey.

Two memories of this incident remain. I often wondered whether Dick Seitz missed me more than he did the loss of the 2 jeeps. Fortunately I never asked. Secondly, I was impressed with our medical personnel and treatment facilities that were located nearby where they could quickly and effectively service the wounded. Needless to say every New Year's Day from 1945 to the present brings a moment of self reflection and thanks.

Would appreciate your adding this to the farmhouse story and passing this on to **Jim Mortensen**.

Regards, **Tom Cross**



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I am looking for information about **Lt. John C. Casselman**. He was in the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment 2nd Battalion 13th Airborne Division F Company. He was killed in action Jan. 3 1945 in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. He has a small mention in the book *Battling Buzzards* by Gerald Astor. He would have been in North Africa in October 1943 and then went to Sicily and Italy and the invasion of Southern France. He married my husband's late grandmother Feb. 1, 1943 in Clayton NY during a military leave.

The website is broken so I couldn't post this on the "mail call" page.

Thank you.

Megan Harshbarger

Hi Megan. I got you message. I don't know if I have much about Lt. Casselman, but I will look in the next couple of days.

What exactly is broken on the website?

Bob Barrett

I tried to post this on the mail call page but when I hit the submit button the link said it was broken. Not sure if that's where I needed to post this? I just wanted to see if I could get in touch with anyone who might have had a family member that knew John.

Thanks in advance.

Megan Harshbarger



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

RE: Lt. John C Casselman 517th 13th airborne div. Company F To be submitted for your website.



He was born June 3, 1919. And died Jan. 3 1945. He would have been 25 when he died. First Lieut. John C. Casselman, 25, a United States army paratroop officer was killed in action Jan. 3 in Belgium according to a war department telegram received by his parents. (1945)

He was a member of the New York National Guard when it became federalized in October 1940, and left his home here at that time for Fort McClelland, Alabama. He was sent with that company to Hawaii where he was stationed for six months. He was then returned to officers candidate school at Fort Benning Georgia and was given his commission as a second lieutenant in January, 1943.

He married Miss Wilta Ilene Webster of Chicago February 1, 1943. After receiving his commission and soon after a leave in Clayton with his bride,

entered training as an officer in the glider infantry at Camp MacKall, North Carolina.

He went to North Africa in October, 1943, and participated in the fighting in North Africa, Sicily and Italy and the invasion of southern France last Aug. 15.



Lieutenant Casselman volunteered to become a paratrooper while stationed in Sicily and since he entered southern France last August (1943) had been in constant combat. He was wounded slightly and awarded the purple heart in September but continued with his unit.

He also was recommended for the bronze star but the citation had not been received at the time of his death. His parents had a letter stating "I have been recommended for the Bronze Star because I pulled off a trick on the Krauts which was successful." His parents Mr. and Mrs. Casselman were notified of his death via telegram. His wife enlisted with the US Marine Corps. and served in the records department in Arlington, VA. At the time of her honorable discharge she had attained the rank of Sergeant.

Attached are some pictures of John and one picture is of him on his wedding day to my late Grandmother Wilta Ilene Webster-Casselman.

I would really love to get in touch with anyone who has information about John. We only recently learned about him upon the death of my late Grandmother. Thank you,

Megan Harshbarger



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

In Memorium - William Herbert McNutt

If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available

From: <http://www.mysanantonio.com/obituaries/article/A-member-of-the-Greatest-Generation-McNutt-10809587.php>

A member of the “Greatest Generation,” McNutt worked hard throughout his life

By Mary Mills Heidbrink, Staff Writer

Published 6:04 pm, Tuesday, December 20, 2016



William Herbert McNutt had a talent for fishing equipment out of oil well holes.

Born just a few years before the start of the Great Depression, William Herbert McNutt, who died Dec. 10 at 91, was raised with hard work and the down-to-earth values that defined so many of his generation.

Rising as early as 3 a.m. in his Central Texas hometown of Coleman, McNutt, along with his brothers and father, would milk the family's cows and deliver the milk before going to school.

“They were a very poor family,” his daughter Deb Badger said. “Their house had no heat ... it was cold in the winter.”

Joining the Army in 1942, McNutt was a member of the 517th Parachute

Regimental Combat Team and saw action in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany, including during the Ardennes Offensive, better known as the Battle of the Bulge, an experience of which he rarely spoke.

“A whole lot of his company were killed,” Badger said.

Returning to Texas in 1945, McNutt married and tried a variety of jobs before working on oil rigs, eventually discovering a talent for fishing equipment out of oil well holes.

“When companies are drilling, they lose tools in the hole,” Badger said. “They can't drill further until they fish the equipment out of the hole ... which he had a very good talent for.”



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

On-call 24 hours a day, McNutt was always ready to go, speeding his way across rough terrain to reach the rig.

“My dad was fast, very fast,” Badger said. “Customers appreciated his dedication to that.”

Starting his career in Texas, McNutt and his family moved frequently, following the work in West Texas before moving to New Mexico.

Purchasing his own tools, McNutt started McNutt Tool Company Inc. Fishing and Rental Tools.

“He traveled all the time, slept in his car or a dog house,” an unheated metal enclosure on the floor of the rig, Badger said. “It was a really hard life.”

When at home, the family learned to be very quiet as McNutt caught up on his sleep.

“We would get in so much trouble if we woke him up, we had to tiptoe around,” Badger recalled.

Selling his company in the late 1960s, McNutt “got into many different businesses, usually oil field related,” Badger said. “He was such a risk taker in every way.”

McNutt “made some crazy investments,” Badger said. “Some of them paid off.”

Even so, McNutt never stopped working.

“He would watch boxing, but he always was thinking of something else he could invest in, or some other business he could do,” Badger said.

More Information:

William Herbert McNutt

Born: Oct. 18, 1925, Comanche

Died: Dec. 10, 2016, San Antonio

Preceded by: Wife Bernice McNutt; son-in-law Ronnie Lee; parents William Hugh McNutt and Cynthia Lorene Gunn; a grandson, two brothers; and a sister.

Survived by: Daughters Deb Badger and son-and-law Dan, Carlotta “Corkylotta” Francis, and Celeste Mann; seven grandchildren; and 27 great-grandchildren.

Services: Funeral Jan. 6 in Farmington, New Mexico.



517th 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
- 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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