



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2342

January 1, 2017

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

MailCall News

I am saddened to report that **Bill Hudson** from the 596 Parachute Combat Engineering Team passed away last night (12/30/2016).

According to his wife Gloria, they are planning for a small private service for Bill.

Please keep the Hudson family in your thoughts.

- **Steve Markle**

In last week's MailCall, I noted the anniversary of Mel Biddle's Battle that won him the Medal of Honor. Here is the story in his own words. – BB



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULGOI_tdgMI&sns=em



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dear Bob: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and the extended Barrett family. Happy new Year to the brace men of the 517th and their families.

A most enjoyable Mail Call, thank you. I was particularly touched by **Tom Cross'** email of 14 years ago - how the annual memories of the day he was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge triggers a moment of quiet reflection. As we recall the hard fought battles 72 years ago this season, it is an opportunity to thank those who fought for our freedoms and most importantly to thank God for the blessing of them on this earth and for their willingness to sacrifice themselves so selflessly for our sake. It is a humbling thought for me.

Thank you, Bob (and Tom Cross).

Pat Seitz

Re: **Archie E. Brown** KIA 1/1/45

Attached is a photo of me holding Archie's brother, Maynard, folded American flag on Veterans Day this year as a tribute to reunite them. Maynard was a cook with the 8th Air Force in England.

Mitchell Babarovich



RE: WW2 Memories

Hello, My name is Briec Cudennec, I am a 32-year old French historian, living in Paris.

Like many countries, France and the United States have suffered because of the war. I have learned a lot about this period with my studies in France and in Ireland and I am still very interested of all the points of history during the Second World War. I would like to correspond with persons who knew well the war and may be who was a soldier in that time. The deeds of the US paratroopers of the 517th PRCT were crucial during the Operation Dragoon and we must write more about it. I would like to have with these people a correspondence for speaking and writing about these memories.

Best Regards,

Briec Cudennec
briec.cudennec@yahoo.fr



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



My uncle **Thomas L. Rea**, 517th PRCT driving movie star Wally Beery. A happy moment.

Tom Rea

We did include this photo previously in MailCall 2330 last August, including some info about Wallace Beery, the Academy Award winning actor. -- BB

Can you find Wallace Beery in this 1944 photo of all the MGM stars? [Here](#) is a larger version if you need it.





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

This Day in 517th History -1945

3 JAN	82 AB Div 517 BCT 517 2nd Bn 82 AB Div 517 1st Bn	ATTACK INITIATED AT 0800 WITH 505-325-517 (504 SERVED AS RESERVE) REGIMENTAL CP MOVED TO BASSE-BODEAUX CAPTURES TROIS PONTS LAUNCHES ATTACK NEAR MONT POSSE GEN. GAVIN ISSUES ORDER FOR IMMEDIATE ATTACK ON ST. JACQUES MOVES THROUGH THE AREA ASSIGNED TO THE 551 PIB TOWARDS ST. JACQUES	(3)
4 JAN	517 2nd Bn 517 1st Bn 517 1st Bn 82 AB DIV 517 1st Bn	COMPANY F SIEZES THE AREA BEHIND POSSE ATTACKS FROM A FLANK POSITION AND CAPTURES ST. JACQUES 2300 CONTINUES THE ATTACK FROM ST. JACQUES TOWARDS BERGEVAL GEN. GAVIN ISSUES ORDER TO CONTINUE ATTACK MISSION TO THE SALM RIVER MOVES THROUGH BERGEVAL AND CONTINUES TO THE SOUTH	(4)
5 JAN	517 1st Bn 3rd Bn 551 PI Bn 551 PI Bn 82 AB Div	ASSUMES NIGHT POSITION IN AN AREA BEING HELD BY THE GERMANS MOVES TO ASSIST THE 1st BATTALION. CONTINUES THE ATTACK. MOVES TOWARDS PETITE HALLEAUX ALONG THE SALM RIVER CAPTURES PETITE HALLEAUX, 504 MOVES FROM RESERVE POSITION. GEN. GAVIN ISSUES ORDER FOR COMBAT TEAM TO RELIEVE 505 PIB	(5)

From **Pat Seitz** in MailCall 2034, January 2011:

All blessings of the New Year to you and all the members of the 517th and their families. Last Friday, I was with Dad when he spoke with the officers and enlisted personnel at SouthCom about leadership and about his two tours in Brazil in the mid-50's and late 60's (which is part of SouthCom). [See article on the next page.] During the Q &A, two of the questions from the audience of combat veterans elicited answers that brought home all the more vividly for me, who has never been in combat, the significant, searing issues the members of the 517th had to deal with and that they did so selflessly so that we could live in freedom.

Dad was asked how does a leader cope himself and help his men deal with the loss of many of their comrades and yet effectively keep going; the second question was what was Dad's worst day. His immediate answer was January 3, 1945, and he recounted in such detail that each of us could visualize the battle and what lead up to it; he ended his answer saying that he constantly replays it in his mind, even going back to walk the battlefield a couple of times to see if he could have done things differently so as not to have suffered the number of casualties that they did. I was with him the last time that he walked that field, and I flashed back to that visit. Suddenly, I understood why Dad walked off by himself without saying a word and why his face was so troubled yet his mind was obviously so far away. It was a powerful moment for me.

All the best. Pat



Leaves from a War Correspondent's Notebook

By Hal Boyle

WITH THE 517th PARACHUTE COMBAT TEAM, WESTERN FRONT, Jan. '6 (delayed) (AP) —“I still feel funny about that hill,” says Lt. Dick Spencer. “We never lost a hill before—and we have never lost one since.”

Dick will never forget “that hill” because he thought he had disgraced the paratroopers there. He ordered his platoon to pull back after 22 of its 28 men were killed or wounded trying to storm the slope and knock out 22 enemy pillboxes—a full-sized job for a regiment.

“They had us cold that day,” said the slim little 24-year-old former University of Iowa journalism student. “We had been taught how to win, but nobody had taught us how to lose. We didn't know how because we never expect to—in the paratroops.”

Dick was assistant platoon leader that day, weeks ago, when they attacked the double-sloped hill at Col De Braus, France, in the Maritime Alps.

“We thought those pillboxes were empty,” said Dick. “I studied them for 15 minutes through a telescope and didn't see a sign of any movement. But just as we started up the hill I felt something was wrong.”

“Then I heard a shout and looked up and the air was full of hand grenades and anti-tank grenades,” Dick said.

One grenade burst at Dick's feet. His leg was numb and he was bleeding from his mouth and ears. Several men were killed or wounded, but Dick and three others managed to drag themselves to the nearest pillbox where Dick set up an aid station.

Two men trying to bring up water were killed. Although realizing he was facing incredible odds; the young platoon leader—he had just come back from the hospital the night before—reorganized for a second attack.

“The Germans opened up again

and the leader was killed at the start,” said Dick.

Although the Nazis caught them with burp guns, machine-guns, rifles and grenades, the paratroopers surged up the hill. Men fell every few steps. The Germans began dropping mortar shells behind them and flames spread in the grass and brush.

Finally they had to fall back to where Dick was caring for the wounded. One German was killed almost at the entrance to the pillbox. A paratrooper staggered back with a wounded man under each arm. A third wounded man, clinging to his waist, was shot through the lung. The paratrooper himself was wounded in the face, arm and shoulder. He wears the Distinguished Service Cross now.

Only six men were unhurt. The only non-com on his feet was a sergeant with a bullet wound in his knee. He looked down at Dick and said:

“What'll we do, sir? We are being butchered. But we will try once more if you say to.”

The lieutenant gave the order to pull back. They worked their way down the hill, with each man helping the wounded as best he could. Eight paratroopers on another hill opened fire and routed a column of 200 Germans trying to cut them off.

“All the way back I thought I would be thrown out of the paratroopers for falling back without orders,” Dick recalled.

Instead, he got pats on the back from the battalion commander, who had given orders, after the first attack, for the platoon to withdraw. But their radio was knocked out, the platoon never got the order—and made a second gallant try.

Two days later a battalion and two companies of paratroopers—more than 500 men this time—attacked and took the hill, capturing 18 Germans in the first pillbox alone.

1945 Jan 06

Starts and Stripes

War Correspondent's Notebook
By Hal Boyle

In Col de Braus; with the 517th



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



A Remembrance to the Citizens of Belgium from the U.S.A. 517th Parachute Combat Team Association

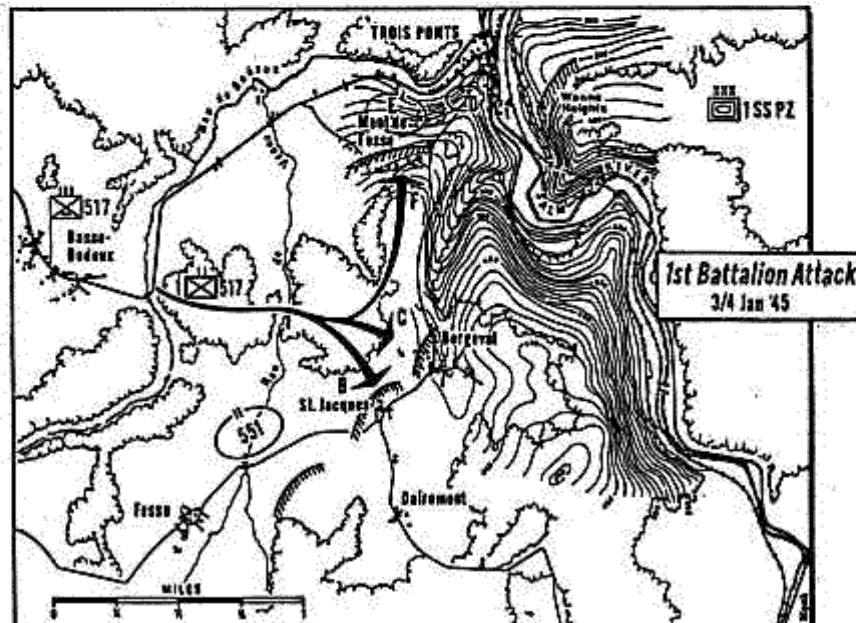
DURING THE ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN, MEN OF THE 517th PARACHUTE COMBAT TEAM FOUGHT GERMAN FORCES IN A SERIES OF FIERCE ENGAGEMENTS:

- SOY • HOTTON • FREYNEUX • DOCHAMPS • MANHAY • TROIS PONTS • SAN JACQUES
- BERGEVAL • HENUMONT • COULEE • LOGBIERME • HOCHKREUZ • HUNNANGE • HUERTGEN

THE TEAM SUFFERED OVER 800 CASUALTIES AND HAD 130 MEN KILLED IN ACTION. THESE MEN AND THE SACRIFICES OF BELGIAN CITIZENS SHALL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

• SAINT JACQUES • 3-6 JAN 1945 • BERGEVAL •

THE 1st BATTALION MOVED FROM POSITIONS NEAR BASSE BODEUX TO DRIVE GERMAN FORCES FROM SAINT JACQUES, BERGEVAL, FOSSEHEID AND BOIS L'ENFANT. THE BATTALION INFLECTED HEAVY LOSSES ON THE ENEMY AND TOOK OVER 100 PRISONERS.



MEM OF THE 1st BATTALION/517th PIR KILLED DURING SAINT JACQUES/BERGEVAL OPERATIONS

S/Sgt. ANTHONY J. JACONINI
Sgt. ALBERT R. WISE
T/S JOHN D. WILKINS

Pvt. FRANCIS A. BLOOM
Pvt. MELVIN E. COLE

Pvt. MILTON M. JOHNSTON
Pvt. ALVIE F. REM
PFC EDWARD M. DISS



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Administrivia

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- 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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