



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2372

December 9, 2017

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

MailCall News



The 139th Airborne Engineer Battalion (AEB) was constituted on 10 March 1943 at Camp Mackall, North Carolina (NC). It was activated 15 April 1943 at Camp Mackall, North Carolina under the command of **Lt Colonel Stanley Johnson**.

Company C, 139th Airborne Engineer Battalion (above), was redesignated the 596th Airborne (Parachute) Engineer Company. The 596th had a company headquarters and three platoons with an authorized strength of eight officers and 137 enlisted men. It was commanded by **Captain Robert Dalrymple**. He and his officers had been hand-picked, and had attended a 30-day course at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, prior to the Company's activation. The Engineers were lightly armed and equipped, but highly trained in their missions of construction and destruction. This training -- particularly in the removal of mines and booby-traps--was to stand them in good stead on the battlefields of Europe.

From: http://usairborne.be/1abt/596aec_us_txt.htm

For a very large version with identification, see: http://517prct.org/photos/596th_pcec.htm

OK Claire, in the photo identification list, there are 4 Johnsons, and KA is shown in 2 places, neither of which looks to me like **K. Allan Johnson**. And I don't think he is the one listed as "Pooper" Johnson, but if he is, I like to hear the explanation for that. -- BB

PS to Claire and Allan -- I just realized that we still haven't put Allan's drafted bio on the website. Let's talk.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Dear friends of America. Warm and special thoughts to all of you during this memorial day - Ceremonies of November 11st, Armistice Day 517th monument in Wanne Trois-Ponts - Francis BAIRIN, Mayor of Trois-Ponts , Gilles DANNIAU , Vice President of CADUSA and his son Raphaël. Raphaël is our youngest member, he is very devoted and he attends all the ceremonies. On 2018 jan. 6th, our annual homage will take place in St Jacques with a Holly Mass of Souvenir in St Jacques 'church and flowers at US monuments in this area. We think of you and your family with a deep gratitude and respect.

Love from Belgium.

Irma and Arnold TARGNION and the members of CADUSA (US Airborne Reception Committee.)





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

From **Paul Abbene:**

This would have been wonderful to see, if they had broadcast it.

It took 90 workers two weeks to get all of the colored card boards mounted under each seat. Each piece of card board had eye slits in them so the fans could hold up the colored sheet and still see through the eye slits. Every seat had to have the proper card, with no mistakes, to make this happen.

Lambeau Field





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hi Bob. In 2006 I had been involved in finding and excavating a mass grave of German soldiers in my hometown of Villeneuve-Loubet. Although this battle had not implicated the 517th, it had implicated the unit fighting right next to it in southern France, the US-Canadian First Special Service Force.

I have finally gotten to putting a video of the excavation online with English subtitles, and also photos showing the aftermath of the excavation, in other words the identification of some of the German bodies, and the contact with their relatives. Here is a link to the video:



A field near the road at Villeneuve Loubet, near Nice



[Mass grave of German soldiers discovered in Villeneuve-Loubet](#)

Regarding **Private Gruwell**, the only 517th trooper who is missing in southern France, I can't go into to many details for the moment, but the people from DPAA (the branch of the US army responsible for the recovery of missing soldiers) were working in the field in southern France, and looking into some old graves. However we unfortunately did not manage to locate Gruwell and everything indicates that his body will never be recovered.

Regards

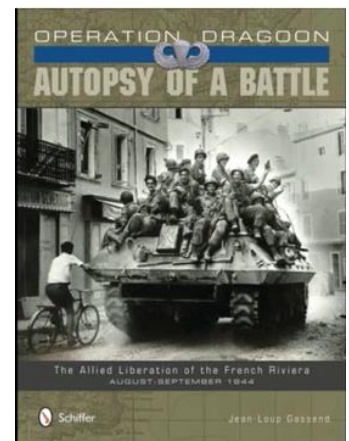
Jean-Loup Gassend

Exhumation by an archeologist and medical students of the bodies of 14 missing in action German soldiers from a mass grave in Villeneuve-Loubet, southern France, in 2006. The Germans had been killed in combat on August 26 1944, when Villeneuve was liberated by the First Special Service Force, shortly after Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France. Identification tags, helmets, ammunition, coins, buttons, and other artifacts were found with the bodies.

Following the exhumation, 8 of the bodies were identified. All were members of Reserve Grenadier Bataillon 372, of Reserve Division 148.

The journalist in the third newsreport says the German soldiers were executed. This is a mistake on her part, as the numerous shrapnel damaged items found in the grave prove.

The complete story of this grave is told in the book "*Autopsy of a Battle, the Liberation of the French Riviera, August-September 1944*", by Jean-Loup Gassend: <http://autopsyofabattle.blogspot.com/>





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I was trying to locate information on my Grandfather and if anyone might have any more extensive they may offer. Thank you.

William W. Winford, from Tennessee. Enlisted at Ft. Oglethorpe, GA on Oct. 8, 1942

Christian Mason

Hi Christian,

In a quick look through my records, I cannot find any mention of William Winford, but my records are very incomplete. There are people who were with the 517th and transferred or wounded out, and many who joined from other units during the war. Do you have any info or records of the 517th? Do you know what Company he might have been with? That could help in looking through morning reports.

Bob Barrett
MailCall@517prct.org

Hello sir

I recently bought in France this 517th P.I.R. patch. This model seems different from the ones I saw on the internet. Do you know it ? What period is it ? Thank you in advance for your comments.

Best regards.

JJ. Leclercq

P.S. : sorry for my possible english mistakes !

Hello Jean-Jacque,

I have never seen that exact version of the 517th patch before. But below is some info on the patch with samples of different versions. I often see pictures of both modern factory-made recreations plus a few war-time examples on eBay. Your version does look like the older examples, and from the stitching, it does appear to be handmade. So I would put it as an early version. But I cannot tell you any more than what I know from our patch history:

http://www.517prct.org/documents/patch_history/patch_history.htm

Hope this helps. And your English is fine. Much better than my French.

Regards,
Bob Barrett





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Subject: 517th map poster.
Hello Bob,

I found this map at a trade show this weekend. I looked on the website, but couldn't find anything mentioning it. It is 33" x 24". Can you give me any information about it?

The other photo is from the 517th Regimental Combat Team book by Turner Publishing. Do you have any idea as to where it was taken?

Thanks,
Ben Arnod

Hi Ben.

The photo I'm not sure. I have the Turner book, but it doesn't even list a photo credit for that photo. I will ask in the next MailCall. (I am currently way behind in emails and MailCall - busy at work and computer issues).

The map I have seen many times, but I can't find any info right now. I vaguely remember that maybe they were given out at one of the reunions, but that might not be correct. Again, I will ask in the next mailcall.

Regards,

Bob Barrett



L to R: Lt. Geason, Mortar Platoon, 517th; Lt. Johnny Neiler; S-2 Section; Lt. Joe Calder, S-4, 3rd Bn, (retired Col.); Capt. Bill Pencil, Hqs Co, 3rd Bn.

Also, the map references B-54. There is one reference on the website that indicates this as some location. Do you know where that is?

Regards,
Ben Arnod

I did print the same map back in 2015, and I made exactly the same comments.
www.517prct.org/mailcall/2273.pdf

I think your scan is better quality.

Bob Barrett



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I have talked with Roland Orengo and he confirmed that the picture was taken at the caserne in Peira Cava.

Thank you,
Ben Arnold

Yes, I know this MailCall is long overdue. The last MailCall was November 11th, Veteran's Day. My apologies to all, but I've been very busy with a combination of family life (4 birthdays and 3 holidays between late November and Christmas), long hours at work, and a PC that seems to be getting old and temperamental. My touchpad is broken at the moment and looks like it can't be fixed.

Anyway, here's the first MailCall in a month. I don't think I've lost too many emails. If I did miss anything, please let me know.

So as long as I'm mentioning birthdays, tomorrow is the family party for my grandson Crew. (**Ben Barrett's** great-grandson.) It's (already) Crew's 2nd birthday. His Dad makes some great videos. He is one of my favorites,



["Mic'd up at the Farm"](#)

Bob Barrett
Son of **Ben Barrett**, F Company

Subject: Arthur ELLER - 517th

Hello Bob,
I would like to know if Arthur ELLER was part of the 517th and if he participated in Operation Dragoon?
Thank you for your help
Best regards
Michel QUILEZ

Hi Michael,

Sorry for the late reply. I haven't found any mention of Arthur Eller in my files. Do you have any more info? Which Company?

Bob Barrett



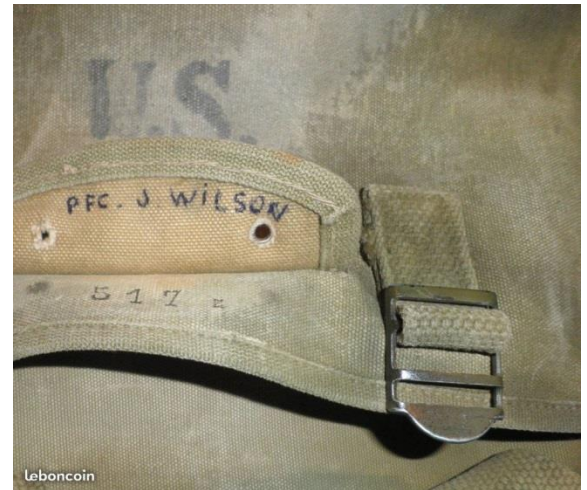
517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



I am looking for a photo of **Pfc WILSON.J** of 517

Can you help me in my research?
Best regards

Michel Quilez



Hi Michel,

There is a **First Sergeant James A. Wilson** in H Company on the Xmas 1944 roster, and a **John Wilson** (unknown Company) who used to be on the Thunderbolt mailing roster.

Plus we have the obituary for **Dr. John M. Wilson**, who was a Captain and battalion surgeon:

http://517prct.org/bios/john_m_wilson.htm

I would guess that your PFC J. Wilson is most likely the Sgt. Wilson from H Company.

Unfortunately, I don't have photos of any of these men. -- BB

Love to see reports on the Mini-Reunions!!!! Anytime, and anywhere in the World, a few "517 family members" get together it is great to hear from them!!

Keep them coming!

Who will be next to report on their Mini-Reunion! 🙏👍

Mike Wells

I would like to say to those who have the time, they should go back and read old MailCalls. I started with No. 27 dated November 9, 2000. Earlier MailCalls evidently were lost. Ben talks about one case where he hit one button and lost everything.

You know you are in the early history of the Site since Bob explains that a Byte is one character; a kilobyte is a thousand bytes and a megabyte is a million Bytes. Space on the site is limited so few pictures could be displayed.

Memories long ago placed in dead storage of the mind were suddenly enjoyed again.

Merle McMorrow



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Hello, My name is Phillip Truitt from Sparta NC. I am looking for any information on **Willard Clay Nichols**, He received silver star GO #17 in 1944. I am getting as much information as possible for request for entry into the North Carolina Veterans Hall of Fame. I know he was wounded in October 1944 and returned to duty November 18th 1944. All our efforts to get the citation from National Archives has been turned down because of the next of kin issue. He has two people that would qualify but age and other reasons prevent us from getting a signature on request for records forms. He was in the 513th PIR at the end of the war. Any help with this application for induction into NCVHOF will be a great help.

Phillip Truitt
Sparta NC

Subject: Re: S/SGT Willard Clay Nichols

Hi Phillip,

We know he was with G Company of the 517th PRCT during most of the war. I will see if I have the casualty records. The only photo of Sgt. Nichols I can find is the one from his obituary. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/31427356/willard-clay-nichols>

I haven't found much else in my incomplete records but will keep looking for more info.

Do you have a copy of the Silver Star G.O. that I could use? Or any other wartime stories or photos? Please keep me posted on your progress with the NCVHOF. I would like keep the 517th family informed.

Thanks,

Bob Barrett



WILLARD C NICHOLS
S SGT US ARMY
WORLD WAR II
MAR 3 1921 + MAR 10 2007
SILVER STAR MEDAL
PURPLE HEART

Hello Bob,

Thanks very much for your reply. I do have some pictures taken in Rome must have been while they were waiting for some weapons and equipment to arrive. I have his DD 214, A letter from Bn. Chaplin about His Silver Star, Silver Star was on DD 214 as G O #17 HQ 517th PIR, I Have Western Union notice to family when he was wounded a letter he wrote to family just before returning to duty Nov. 1944 My main computer died last week another one on the way . If you want copies I'll be able to scan and send, also have a account of some of his ww2 action in newspaper article Aug. 2006 that he discusses his Silver Star and the Jump into southern France be Happy to share any part you want. I just need to get my new computer here and working.

Thanks again for your reply
Phillip



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Bob:

Hope things are going well. Everything fine here. I am making good progress on the Gruwell story. I hope the powers that be do not make many edits to it for the web site.

I have just gotten a copy of **Pvt. Gruwell's** Individual Deceased Personnel File and want to know if you would like to have a copy. The only new information in it are copies of the letters sent to the three Soldiers who discovered his body, Karsten, Istvanik and Tanner. Karsten is the only one who responded and a copy of his letter is in there.

Thank you again for your help.

Joe Figueiredo

I am also hoping that Pvt. Gruwell's remains are found, but I would suggest that you keep your expectations low...very low. There is a man named Ted Darcy, who has been searching for the remains of WWII Soldiers, sailors and Airmen. His web site is, www.wfirg.com. Email him if you like about Pvt. Gruwell.

I've attached Pvt. Gruwell's IDPF for you. Do you know if any of the three Soldiers, Karsten, Istvanik or Tanner are alive? These are the men who discovered Pvt. Gruwell after the ambulance ambush and determined that it was indeed him by the stamp inside his paratrooper boots. The Army sent letters to them [copies in the IDPF], but Karsten was the only one who responded. I think the Army didn't have good addresses for the other two.



Thank you again for your help.

Joe



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Claviers, 25 October 1949

STATEMENT

I, the undersigned, Mayor of the commune of Claviers, certify that since the 15 August 1944, landing day, several searching teams visited our commune, looking for the bodies of the courageous American soldiers killed in our territory.

I certify that no remains were discovered in the territory of the commune.

To-day, 25 October 1949, an unsuccessful investigation was conducted concerning the soldier mentioned in your letter to you, in case of discovery.

Seal

18 April 1950

CMGMS 293
Gruwell, Robert R.
ASN 39 277 657

Mr. Frank Istvanik,
721 Gray St.,
McKeesport, Penna.

Dear Mr. Istvanik:

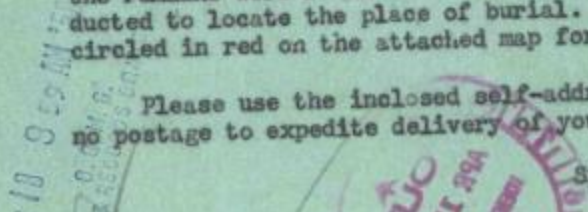
The Office of the Quartermaster General is endeavoring to assist the Graves Registration Service in the recovery of the remains of Private Robert R. Gruwell, 39277657, who was reported killed in action on 15 August 1944 in the vicinity of LaMotte, France. All efforts to date have failed to locate the grave in question.

Available records indicate that you were one of the members of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment that came across the remains of an American soldier on the road between Callian and Lamotte on 17 August 1944. At that time, a search was made for identification tags but none were found. The man's Paratrooper boots were removed and inside in indelible ink was the initial "G" followed by four numbers which were later determined to be the last four numbers of Private Gruwell's serial number. A BAR belt and clips were found near the body. Private Gruwell was a BAR man.

It would be greatly appreciated and very helpful if you will attempt to pinpoint the approximate site on the inclosed map where the remains were found so that further investigation can be conducted to locate the place of burial. Callian and LaMotte are circled in red on the attached map for your convenience.

Please use the inclosed self-addressed envelope which requires no postage to expedite delivery of your reply.

Sincerely yours,





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Thomas O Cox
Capt 2.M.C.
Memorial Div.

553 So St Andrews
Los Angeles, Calif

GROWELL ROBERT
39 277 657

Dear Sir:

In regard to your
of April 17 - I will be glad
help in any way I can. Yo
information regarding the is
is exactly correct.

I can't give you the exp
place I saw But. Grunell a
1944 but I will attempt to
the approximate area.

He was lying about 20 ft. from
the road (circled on map.) on an
6 or 8 ft embankment. On the
north side of the road. On the
road, a truck, presumably carrying
explosives had been entirely
demolished. causing a small
crater in the road.

now exactly where on this road
I can't say, but coming from
Callian and toward Draguignan
I be just over the
ground in that stretch
road.

④ Capt Morris - Commanding
Officer of 'H' company 517 Pct Inf.
took down the information
at the time -

I'd be glad to help
in any way.



Sincerely,
Clarence Kasten





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

RE: **LTC Thomas Fred Patin** Brick in Veterans Park, Breaux Bridge, La.

517 family,

Our military family's in Breaux Bridge is making Veterans Park a Monument of our past and present military personnel. This layout of bricks is in front of the Cajun Warrior Statue. This monument represents all Cajuns who have taken the oath to protect and serve. My father earned his Silver Star with the 517th Battling Buzzards. Also was the first company commander of the 20th SFAB, Breaux Bridge, La.

My father is looking down from the heavens, a very proud Veteran

Geronimo

Tony Patin





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

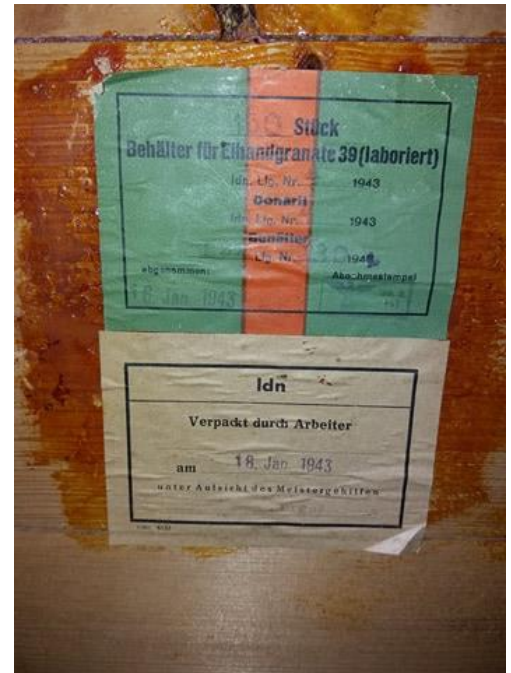
RE: **Herbert V Larson** Box.

Some years ago i found a wooden box (an old german grenade ammunition box) in the vicinity of Werbomon/Belgium with a name and a rank (see photo in attachment). When i visit your website, i discover todat that this name seem to be a Officer of the 596th Combat engineer. Do you have any informations, pictures, stories about 1st Lt Herbert V Larson? I am a Belgian guy and i am passionated by WW2 Story. Sorry for my English.

Regards,

Erik,

Grandhenry E.
Belgium



Hello Erik,

The only mention of Lt. Larson that I have found so far is one short mention of him as the Supply Officer in the history of the 596th:
http://www.517prct.org/documents/short_history/596_short_history.htm

He is in the picture of the 596th at:
http://517prct.org/photos/596th_pcec.htm
He is 16th in the front row.

Bob Barrett





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.

Website	www.517prct.org
Send MailCall news to	MailCall@517prct.org
MailCall Archives	www.517prct.org/archives
2016 Roster (updated!)	www.517prct.org/roster.pdf
Thunderbolt Archives	www.517prct.org/archives



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM