



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2376

January 7, 2017

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

MailCall News

Subject: joe a c williams bracelet from Malmedy in belgium

Hello,

I am Belgian and I do not speak English. I translate this message by google. I work at Malmedy and a friend at this curb.

he lived the war in Malmedy during the winter battle 44. do you know this soldier and his story.

thank you in advance

C.lonneux
Rue hodister 38
B 4860 Wegnez
BELGIUM





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Bonjour Christian,

First of all, I have only seen a couple of these bracelets. I believe that some members of the 517th had these made in France in late 1944. Examples of similar bracelets are in <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2117.pdf> , <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2338.pdf> and <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2280.pdf>

from MailCall 2880 – July 2015

There was a good bit of curiosity about these wing bracelets that **Nancy Frazier Armand** and I inherited from our fathers. They were both were in Co. B. Do you think a mention of these might help us determine where and when **Don Frazier** and **Ian Cowan** might have gotten them from?

It was very good to see everyone. Thank you for all your family has done for the 517th.

Heather Cowan Riley



I found out a few things about **PFC Joe A C Williams**: First, I found the enlistment record for Williams: He was from Denver Colorado, was born in 1924 (enlisted in 1943 at age 19), and was a “Skilled linemen and servicemen, telegraph, telephone, and power”.

<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=893&mtch=2&cat=WR26&tf=F&q=williams+joe+a+c&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=1&rid=6666965&rlist=6666965,7348492>

He was a medic in the Medical Detachment, and is mentioned several times in the book “*Battling Buzzards*” by Gerald Astor. (Photos of the pages are attached.) ----->

Clark Archer in B Company, as part of the 2nd platoon, started forward in the company of a pair of scouts. “A German came walking down in my general direction with arms extended upward in a gesture of surrender. As he approached to within twenty yards, he suddenly pulled a ‘potato masher’ grenade and tossed it in my direction. I dove behind a nearby tree but was hit with shrapnel in both legs. The damage was minimized because our platoon medic, Joe Williams, was on the scene within seconds. I learned don’t get so smart that you assume gestures lead to a next most logical action. Lesson two was you cannot afford the luxury of holding fire until your weapon is ideally positioned. And I realized, show me a medic and I will show you a hero.”



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Happy New Year to all friends and family of the 517th. Thank you Bob for all you do with Mail Call and allowing the bond to continue. I loved Merle's story last week about his wealthy friend. Certainly reminds us to count our blessings. Eddie's update gives us another reason to get back to Manhay, and reminds me of my Dad's stories from the Bulge. I thought some of you would want to know that my brother Lory Curtis remains strong with his battle with ALS and continues to have a great attitude. He is an inspiration to me. Wishing you all the best in 2018!

Tim Curtis son of **H.L. "Bud" Curtis** and brother of **Dr. Lory V. Curtis**

I am writing after reading about **John Egelhof's** mail saying he had made contact with **Tom Hill**. I was a very close friend of Tom from the start at Toccoa and was in the same squad. I also do not remember Joseph Egelhof but things were a little confused at that time. What I would like to know is if John would have a way I could contact Tom. E-Mail, Phone #, address, anything.

Bob Hart – 820 E. Rd. of Tralee -Shelton, Wa. 98584

Joe Molina, myself, and now Tom are all I know from the 3rd platoon still around. Maybe more?

Bob Hart

I dropped off Bob's contact info to **Tom Hill** just now. He wasn't feeling well so I just gave him a letter with the info. Here's his number if he doesn't call soon: (218) 368-9907.

Regards
John Egelhof

Video clip From "A Cut Above":



517th Airborne - "Battle of the Bulge" - Jan 3rd, 1945

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bh3tM3_gZl0



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RE: Virginia Jorgen

I spoke with Virginia not too long before Christmas and she was in good spirits and maintaining her unique sense of humor. I called last week to wish her a Happy New Year and I was informed by Anna Marie at her care facility that she had passed two days after Christmas.

I feel fortunate to have met her and to be her pen pal. She shared with me copies of her books that she wrote about her life experiences. Such a unique and humorous writing style.



We had a lot of laughs in the handful of days at the reunions. I will miss my pal Virginia. She was truly one of a kind.

Paul Abbene



Virginia J. was the wife of Lt. Andy Jorgen

Here is the picture of **1st Lieutenant Annon (Andy) Jorgen** (on the left) and **Captain Bob Newberry**, both of E Company, plotting at Col de Braus, France. Newberry was the Commander of E Company at the time and Andy was his executive officer.



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Paul,

I'm so sorry to hear that. I also remember Virginia from the reunion (maybe 2 or 3), and from multiple notes that we got from her for MailCall over the years. She had such a great attitude about everything. A fun and active member of the 517th family. - BB

Bob, all true. Had it not been for the 517th and its extended family I never would have had the pleasure of knowing her, and all the others. I feel fortunate. Thanks for keeping us all connected. All the best to you and your family in this New Year.

Cheers, Paul

Happy New Year BB!!!!

Had to send this. Came from an old ASA CWO living near Ft. Devens.

Don Gentry

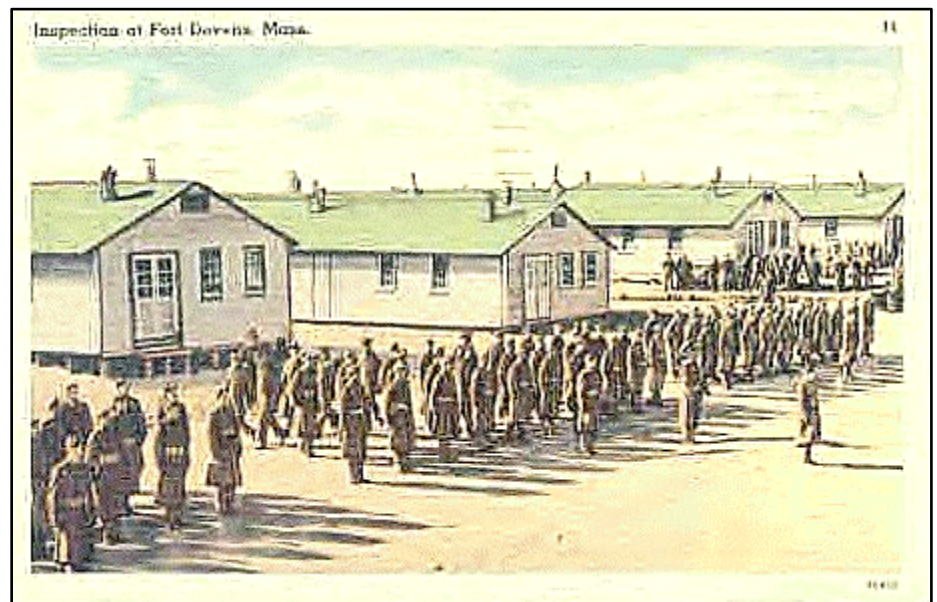


Hi Don,

Yep, that temperature is accurate. I live a little north of Boston, not too far from Ft. Devens. We just had a "bombogenesis" (a new name for a blizzard apparently), followed by a couple of nights of about -10 F.

By the way, my Dad, **Ben Barrett**, was inducted into the service at Ft. Devens, and also discharged there after the war.

Bob Barrett



Inspection at Fort Devens, postcard from the 1940s



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Found this on the internet:

Valley Veterans Forum #13: Walter G. Fees WWII Veteran

Published on Jul 13, 2015

The story of **Walter G. Fees**, WWII Paratrooper. He fought the Germans in Italy, parachuted into So. France as part of Operation Dragoon and participated in the Battle of the Bulge as part of the 517th Airborne Brigade. He has multiple decorations and holder of the Combat Infantry Badge as a Combat Infantryman and Mortar Operator.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iGslTj4EHM>

Also a radio interview by Walter Fees:

[EPISODE #300, 2/1/2014: 90-year-old Walter Fees of Bakersfield, CA remembers his World War II service with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team.](#)

<http://www.hometownheroesradio.com/mp3/FEESPOD.mp3>

My grandfather **Private Louis Rehak**, 33 720 510, served in 517th parachute infantry regiment, company A, receiving a Purple Heart, a bronze star and was honorably discharged in 1944.

He resides in Baltimore, Maryland at this time surrounded by family.

Janet Rehak



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Airborne Missions in the Mediterranean 1942 to 1945

I found this document online. I saved a copy on the website at:

http://517prct.org/documents/Airborne_Missions_Mediterranean_1942_to_1945/AirborneMissionsInTheMediterranean.pdf

It's a large file, but you can search it for references to the 517th with this link:

<https://archive.org/stream/AirborneMissionsInTheMediterranean#page/n0/mode/2up/search/517th>

Samples:

The second serial was to drop its troops, a platoon of the 517th PCT, at 0330. The actual drop was made at 0328. The platoon landed in woods three and a half miles east of DZ A and just east of Le Muy itself. Evidently the pilots were very close to the proper course and schedule, and a drop two minutes later would probably have been successful.

Instead the paratroops, thoroughly lost, had to wait for daylight to reveal their location. Before they could move the Germans attacked them, and much of the morning was spent in beating off their assault. Finally, with the aid of a British officer the pathfinders did make their way around the northern outskirts of Le Muy to DZ A. They arrived about 1630 and set up a Eureka, an MF beacon, and a panel T. Thus, though they had missed the paratroop operations in the morning, they were able to render substantial assistance to the afternoon missions.

By mid-July most of these troops were assembled in the Rome area and were engaged in a training program directed by Frederick's headquarters in conjunction with PTCAD and the airborne training center at Ciampino.

The paratroop units needed comparatively little additional training. The 509th Parachute Battalion and 2 Parachute Brigade, both veteran units, had worked with the troop carriers during the spring. The 551st Parachute Battalion had just completed a refresher course at the airborne training center and so had the 550th Glider Battalion. The 517th PCT, having been well trained for airborne operations in the United States, had been given a taste of combat in Italy and was just out of the line as was the 463d Field Artillery. As already stated, no large-scale paratroop training drops were carried out. Such parachute exercises as were held were on a token basis with the bulk of the unit simulating the drop and assembly. As in the training for AVALANCHE, time was too short to permit repacking of parachutes after a mass drop.

Although the capture of Le Muy was the highlight of D plus 1, the airborne troops took two other important places that day. At dawn elements of the 517th Regiment had attacked Les Arcs about four and a half miles southwest of Le Muy on the road to Le Luc. By 0915 a patrol had entered the town. The German garrison resisted tenaciously and were reinforced by approximately a battalion attacking from the southwest. In the afternoon they filtered through the thinly held lines of the 517th and seemed on the verge of breaking them. At that moment the 3d battalion of the 517th arrived by forced marches from Fayence and promptly swung into action. Its intervention gave the regiment a better grip on Les Arcs, but German pressure continued until evening. Then



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New Guestbook entry on website

| Submitted by | Comments: |
|---|--|
| Name: Ned Wittmann From: Kimberly, Appeton WI E-mail: coolcatwitt@att.net | My Father Hebert E. Wittmann was a member of the 517th, HQ Co 3. Passed away on July 4, 2009. From Camp Toccoa, Campaign in Italy, Operation Dragoon, Battle of the Bulge, wounded Jan,30 1945 in Germany near Schmidt. His last mission was on May 6,7 1945. Flew from Joigny to Nuttingham England on C47s 200 planes wt 17 British inf men to Norway for the surrender of German troops in Stavanger and Oslo made a stop in Petershead Scotland, then back to Nuttingham. Big party there. I have more stories. My Father often said that a lot of Good MEN died, and few would have been great leaders for our country from the 517th |
| Added: January 7, 2018 | |

Herbert E. "Herb" Wittmann

Herbert Edward Wittmann, age 86, made his final jump and passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Saturday, July 4, 2009. He was born on September 17, 1922, in Darboy to the late Herman and Margaret Wittmann. Herb attended Kaukauna High School and the Vocational School of Engineering.

He volunteered for military service as a Paratrooper on October 3, 1942. On May 28, 1943, Herb arrived in Naples, Italy and on August 15, 1944, he was involved in the invasion of southern France. Herb was then wounded in the Battle of the Bulge on January 30, 1945. He was the recipient of the Purple Heart and other awards while stationed in Schmitt, Germany. He continued serving his country and on May 7, 1945, Herb was there for the surrender of German troops in Oslo, Norway. Herb was a proud member of the 517th Combat Team. The Germans would refer to the 517th as "The Devils in Baggy Pants". Herb was quoted as saying about the 517th, "Many good men died and a few would have been great leaders for our country."

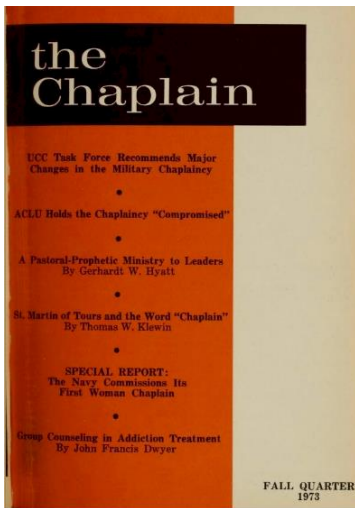
After Herb served his country honorably, he returned state side and married his loving wife, Jermayne Kuepper in Darboy in 1947. Together they raised 6 children in Kimberly. Herb was a proud member of the Legion and the Carpenters Local Union 955 for 62 years. He worked for Precour and Oscar Boldt and was a Superintendent in heavy construction. He built many homes and helped with home projects for his family. His last building was the Kimberly Football Field press box





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I found this article on **Chaplain William Devanny** on the internet. From "The Chaplain" 1973:



Chaplain (Col) William G. Devanny

Chaplain Devanny Succumbs *Buried in Arlington*

Chaplain (Colonel) William G. Devanny was serving as Staff Chaplain, Training and Doctrine Command, Ft. Monroe, Va., when he suffered a fatal heart attack on 2 July, 1973. His assignment prior to this was as Director, Administration and Management, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Washington, D.C.

Entering the Army in 1943, Chaplain Devanny advanced through the enlisted ranks with the 513th, 507th, and 517th Parachute Infantry Regiments, including service at age 20 as a First Sergeant in the 517th. After

World War II, he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Brown University and a B.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a Minister of the United Presbyterian Church in 1952. Re-entering the service, he began a succession of assignments as regimental chaplain in units of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, and with the 24th and 10th Infantry Divisions. He served as Chaplain of the Seventh Army NCO Academy, and as Staff Chaplain of TUSLOG, Turkey. He had been an instructor with the U.S. Army Chaplain School, and Advisor to the Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist Chaplain Directorates of the Armed Forces of Vietnam.

Chaplain Devanny, born on 24 June, 1925, was a graduate of the U.S. Army Sniper School, Parachute School, Chaplain Basic and Advanced Courses, Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. He also held a Master of Science in International Relations from George Washington University.

Among his awards and decorations were the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Distinguished Service Medal of the Republic of Vietnam, and the Republic of China Army Badge.

Buried from the Ft. Myer Chapel with interment in Arlington National Cemetery on 6 July, Chaplain Devanny left a widow, Margaret, and three children.



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I found this somewhere on the internet, but now I can't remember where.

Paratrooper enlistment requirements:

A minimum height of 66 inches and weight of 150 lbs. is desired. While it is true that smaller men can make easier landings, a small man does not have the strength required to handle the heavy loads of equipment. A good, little man is very desirable, but most little men are not good enough. Maximum height and weight are 72 inches and 185 lbs. Tall men have trouble getting out of the plane door and exceptionally heavy men may blow out panels of the parachute during the opening shock. Heavy men descend fast, thereby getting hard landings. Tall, thin men, have difficulty tumbling properly.

A vision of 20/40 uncorrected in each eye is required because a man must be able to gauge his height from the ground accurately when landing and must be able to see equipment bundles after he lands. Satisfactory color differentiation in the yarn test is also necessary because equipment of various types is dropped by means of colored parachutes.

The usual teeth qualifications apply. Men with small bridges are acceptable but if a plate is worn the man is not accepted because of the possibility of his losing or breaking the plate.

A persistent blood pressure over 140 systolic and 100 diastolic or a persistent pulse rate over 100 beats per minute are considered to be evidence of vasomotor instability and cause for rejection.

The duties of a parachutist after landing require initiative and individual thinking to an extent beyond that required by the average soldier. For this reason, in addition to the fact that the more intelligent soldier generally makes the technically more proficient parachutist, members of group 1 and 2 in the A.G.O. intelligence test scale are preferred and no one with lower than a group 3 rating is accepted. A high school education or its equivalent is required.

Additional causes for rejection are a history of fainting at the sight of blood or after minor degrees of overexertion, epilepsy, migraine, or similar nervous diseases. The reason for these standards is obvious.

Concerning emotional qualities desired, we are not at present in a position to establish fixed standards. Of course, gross evidence of emotional instability and failure to adapt to his army environment disqualify a candidate, but past this point one cannot go.

It has been our experience that we are liable to encounter refusals among the stoical, phlegmatic type of individuals as well as among the nervous, more volatile types. It would seem at the present time that a study of the soldier's mental attitude on arrival, including his reasons for volunteering for parachute duty and whether he knows in his own mind that he will be able to voluntarily jump out of an airplane in flight or just wishes to find out if he has the necessary amount of intestinal fortitude, correlated with a study of soldiers who refuse, will reveal the answer to the problem. This study has been initiated by medical officers who are themselves qualified parachutists and intimately acquainted with the mental and psychic factors involved.



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From Facebook -

[517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team - Families & Friends](#)



Tackle Berry: I have adopted the grave of this paratrooper:

Plot F Row 4 Grave 63
[Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery](#)
Hombourg, Belgium

1st Lt John C. Casselman, F Company.

KIA: January 3, 1945, in the vicinity of Basse-Bodeux, Trois Ponts, Belgium



1st Lt John C. Casselman ;was a member of the New York National Guard when it became federalized in October 1940, and left for Fort McClelland, Alabama at that time. He was sent with that company to Hawaii where he was stationed as a second lieutenant in January, 1943. He married Wiltallene Webster of Chicago on February 1, 1943.

After receiving his commission and soon after a leave in Clayton with his bride; Lt Casselman 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. He volunteered to become a paratrooper while stationed in Sicily and since he entered southern France in 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 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



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

ET ON REPART POUR UNE 2^{ÈME} ÉDITION

MANHAY

DECEMBRE 2017

2^{ÈME}

RASSEMBLEMENT

VEHICULES

MILITAIRES

DE LA 2^{ÈME} GUERRE MONDIALE

Retour des blindés... avec d'autres événements prévus pour ce grand week-end.

Le programme suivra sur la page Facebook: Arlonnes History Remembers ou sur le site internet

INSCRIPTION GRATUITE !

www.

There was a big event recently in Nanhay, Belgium with lots of WWII vehicles and education.

Note in the background of the photo below is the building which has this plaque remembering the 57th:






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517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Recently not too long ago on the First Airborne Task Force web site: <http://1stabtf.com/duo-inseparable/>

First Airborne Task Force
the forgotten Paratroopers 

Accueil Operation Dragoon Champagne Campaign History Blog L'auteur
Rugby Force

ALLAN JOHNSON & LEO DEAN – UN DUO INSÉPARABLE

🏠 / Allan Johnson & Leo Dean - un duo inséparable

✍ By Loïc Jankowiak 📅 10 août 2017 💬 1 comment 📁 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, Veterans



One is rather playful, rogue, while the other is calm and wise and yet, they are the same age! For years they formed an inseparable duo by participating in the commemorations of the landing of Provence.

Allan Johnson and Leo Dean are two veterans of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team Allan was a demolition specialist in the 3rd Platoon of the 596th Airborne Engineer Company, while Leo was part of the 517th PIR Headquarters.

Both participated in the Italian campaign where the Combat Team fought for two furious weeks. They then jumped into Provence during Operation Dragoon. Allan in the Fayence area (Callian) and Leo in Le Muy area.

They both participated in the “*Champagne Campaign*” and the liberation of the villages in the French Riviera hinterland. On September 12, 1944, Allan left to drive a jeep with his best friend; Patrick L. Michaels. But loses control of his vehicle. Fortunately for him, he has only one broken ankle, but Pat Michaels is killed on the spot. Allan will spend several months in the hospital for rehabilitation sessions and to ward off his wound. He succeeded, after many adventures, to rejoin his outfit just before entering Germany; The forest of Hürtgen. It is here that the Combat Team will live its last fighting and Allan will participate in it during the few days when its unit is there.

As for Leo, he remained very discreet about his experiences. He will receive a promotion as a Regimental Master Sergeant during the Battle of the Bulge and survive the war. Neither of them was wounded.



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A couple of Hollywood Squares jokes, sent in by Boom Boom Alicki, sent in back in 2006:

Q. If you're going to make a parachute jump, at least how high should you be?

A. Charley Weaver: Three days of steady drinking should do it.

Q. Which of your five senses tends to diminish as you get older?

A. Charley Weaver: My sense of decency.

From *Stars and Stripes* August 4, 1944:

High School Age Boys Will See War Service

HELENA, Mont., Aug. 7 — Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, national Selective Service Director, expressed the belief here last night that all eligible high school boys would eventually be in the armed services "regardless of whether or not the war with Germany is ended."

"I can't speak for the Navy or War Departments, but in my opinion high school youths of America who are militarily acceptable will see service in the armed forces after the war in Europe is cleared up," he said.

"There are a lot of doughboys and other American soldiers who have been in this thing for four years. I think they will be wanting to come back home."

The general said there was little prospect of rapid demobilization.





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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.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
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