



## 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2397**

October 21, 2018

*517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment  
460<sup>th</sup> Parachute Field Artillery Battalion  
596<sup>th</sup> Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

### *MailCall News*



Sirs, I have the pleasure to send to you this picture of American soldiers taken in my village in Provence the 16 august 1944.

This village name is LES ARCS near Draguignan, I suppose that this soldiers are of the team of **Col. William J. "Wild Bill" BOYLE**

**Franck Dugas**



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Dear Sir,

I am writing this note to ask you to add **Corporal** Stephen Armbruster on your list of 517th soldiers shown on your web site. Steve was part of a Heavy Machine Gun team. He did the combat jump in southern France and was trucked north into Belgium where he participated in the Battle of the Bulge. After the war he joined the 82 Airborne during the occupation of Berlin.

Steve celebrated his 94th birthday this past August 26. He now lives in Hendersonville, North Carolina. If you need further information, please contact me at the following email address - [z6vette@gmail.com](mailto:z6vette@gmail.com).

**Jim Riley**

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RE: **Loïc Jankowiak** Request For Morning Reports...30 September 2018 Mail Call

Your response to **Mr Jankowiak** interested me because of my continued search for the Service Units and my deceased father in law **Lawrence P Shipp**.

Would you be able to send me the attachments you referred to in the copy of your first paragraph to Mr Jankowiak?

Thank you.

**Harris Johnson**

[hj11631@gmail.com](mailto:hj11631@gmail.com)

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Hi Harris,

Attached is the complete index of Morning Reports. As noted, **Mike Wells** compiled this from all Morning Reports that we had access to, from Clark Archer's copies. Not all companies and not all dates were in those records. But there are 5 records for **PFC Lawrence Shipp** of the Service Company.

If you know Excel, you select the entire sheet, then do a Search Filter to search for last name.

Bob Barrett



## *517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team*

**Subject:** Email change

Bob,

Thank you for the excellent job and dedication you have given to the 517<sup>th</sup> MailCall!

I will be retiring at the end of October and can no longer use my work email [sgomez@entergy.com](mailto:sgomez@entergy.com)

Could you please change my delivery email to [ke5o@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ke5o@sbcglobal.net)

Thanks & have a great Airborne day!

**Steve Gomez**  
Entergy Telecom Texas

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Hi Steve.

Congratulations on your retirement.

I went in to change the email address on the 517 MailCall list, but it already uses the sbcglobal.net address. So you're all set.

Bob Barrett

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Bonjour Michel,

First, I had to look up the word brêlage. It is not a common word in English, but from the pictures I figured out that it means lashing, strapping or belt in English. I am not familiar with the paratrooper's equipment, but this looks like knife and ammo carrier?

Unfortunately, I have never heard of anyone labeling their equipment with a laundry number or with anything except their army serial number which is usually an 8-digit number. But, of course, I will include your request and photos in the next MailCall. Hopefully some of the soldiers can educate me and have some ideas about how to track this down.

Regards,  
Bob Barrett

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oh sorry Bob, yes these are terms in French, the binding refers to military equipment with belt, USM3 dagger, bayonet Garand, shovel.

For the ASN yes there are 8 digits but for a Laundry Number it is simply notified the first letter of the surname and the last 4 digits of its army serial number

Thanks again for your return, hoping that your article on the forum is bearing fruit

Best regards,  
**Michel Quilez**



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Thank you again for all of the help you gave me in writing **Pvt. Gruwell's** story. Could not have done it without your help, and for all of the very hard work you put into keeping the memory of the 517th PRCT alive.

I am a bit confused though. In this MailCall it is stated that there has never been a comprehensive museum of Army history. Speaking solely as a private citizen, there has been a comprehensive museum of Army history for many, many years. That is the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, [www.usahec.org](http://www.usahec.org), at Carlisle, PA. It may not have the word, "National," in it, but USAHEC is the premiere museum of Army history in the USA.

Again, this is just my own personal opinion.

**Joe Figueiredo**

Hi Joe,

I agree. The U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle Barracks seems to be THE Army Museum, covering all wars. Maybe it is considered more of an archives and education center, and not technically a public museum. But a dictionary definition is, "a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited." And the Carlisle site is the primary storage for all Army records, for all wars. And as shown on their website, they do have exhibits to the public:

I've never been to Carlisle, but from the description of the new Army Museum, it might just be bigger, more formal, and more accessible to the public.

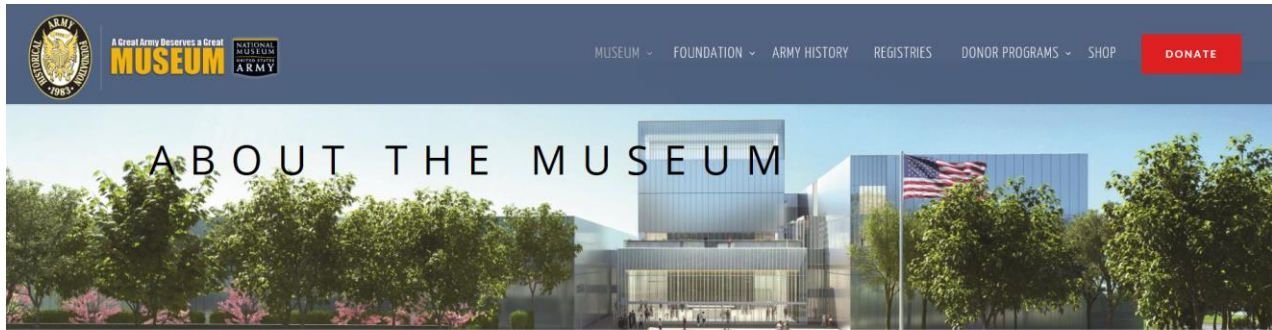
Regards,

Bob Barrett





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The National Museum of the United States Army will serve as the capstone of the Army Museum Enterprise and provide the only comprehensive portrayal of Army history and traditions. The National Army Museum will celebrate the selfless service and sacrifice of over 30 million men and women who have worn the Army uniform since 1775. The Museum will be a technological marvel incorporating the latest advances in museum exhibits while providing advanced educational opportunities that will capture the attention of visitors old and young. As the Army's national landmark, the Museum will honor United States Soldiers – past, present, and future – and provide an interactive educational experience explaining the Army's role in creating and defending our nation, as well as the Army's social initiatives and contributions for more than 240 years.



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Two different Memorandums of Agreement (2009 and 2015) designated the Army Historical Foundation as the official fundraisers for the National Museum of the United States Army. The 2015 MOA also turned over the construction and completion of the design to AHF. Our Capital Campaign is committed to raising \$200 million to build the Museum and the exterior elements (Parade Ground, Grandstand, Amphitheater, Memorial Garden, and Army Trail). Initial site preparation began in 2016 and construction is currently underway.

The Army also established the National Museum of the United States Army Project Office to oversee the design and construction of the Museum. In September 2008, the Army selected Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of New York as the design architect and Christopher Chadbourne & Associates of Boston as the exhibit design firm. In 2012, Eisterhold Associates Inc. assumed the exhibit planning, and Design and Production, Inc. began the exhibit fabrication. The U.S. Army will operate and maintain the Museum when it opens. We will be responsible for all revenue-generating operations.

The National Army Museum will be located on 84 acres at Fort Belvoir, VA, less than 30 minutes south of our nation's capital in Washington, D.C. The main building will be approximately 185,000 square feet and display selections from the Army Art Collection, artifacts, documents, and images. The vast majority of these rare and priceless artifacts have never been seen by the American people. The Museum will welcome an estimated 500,000 to 700,000 visitors every year. See the Museum Design.

If you are interested in hosting a future event at the Museum or becoming a Museum volunteer, you can submit your information to be contacted when those programs have become further developed.



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Dear Claire,

i have a réunion this evening to prepare the 75th birthday "libération de Saint-Cézaire".

I have need to know, if you know **Corporal John Rupcyk**?

Thank you.  
Gros bisous

Elisabeth

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I do not know him, no.

I'm asking our webmaster, Bob Barrett.

**Clare Giblin**

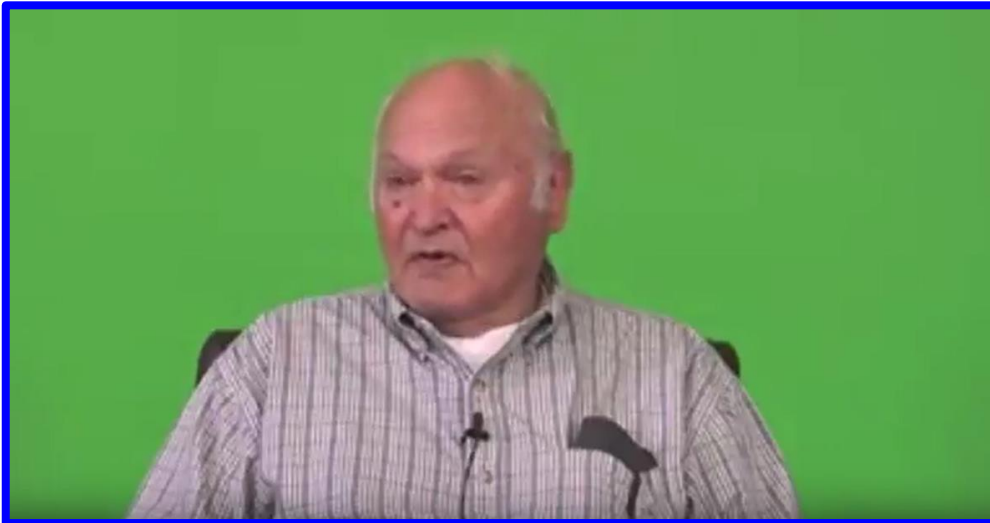
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There was a **John Rupczyk** in I Company. I don't have very much info on him, but what would you like to know?

Regards,  
Bob Barrett

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I found a few things online about John Rupczyk:



John Rupczyk on World War II - July 18, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4wQyzwzPa4>



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### Times Observer

Warren, PA

JUN 2, 2017



Photos submitted to Times Observer Thank you to all our special speakers who took part in Monday's Memorial Day Service. Pictured here are Mayor and Post Commander Pete Allenson, Staff Sargent John Rupczyk, County Commissioner Ben Kafferlin and Sargent of Arms Dave Younie.

#### Memorial Day Service

The community of Sugar Grove held its annual Memorial Day Service on Monday, May 29, at 11 a.m. More than 220 community members came out to honor our present and past veterans. The Sugar Grove daisies, brownies, junior and cadet Girl Scouts from troop # 36680 led the community in the Pledge of Allegiance . This was a combined service lead by the American Legion Post 758 and the AMVETS Post 50. American Legion Post Commander and Sugar Grove Mayor Pete Allenson led the welcome and message. The guest speaker was Warren County Commissioner, Ben Kafferlin. A special speaker added this year was Staff Sargent John Rupczyk. John shared stories and answered questions from the crowd about what it was like to serve in France during WWII.

The Honor Guards, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the American Legion and the AMVETS organized this event.





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And one more found online:

From John Rupczyk collection: Veterans History Project (Library of Congress)

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.53850/>

Audio interview – 77 minutes



Manhay History Museum 44

A new museum, opened in december 2017, about the Second World in Grandmenil, close to the [Panther tank](#). The museum is dedicated to the American units that fought in Manhay and was initiated by Patrice Dalrue after over 30 years of collecting and research.

For current visiting hours, please contact the museum.

Do you have more information about this location? [Inform us!](#)

Source

- Text: Lennard Bolijn
- Photos: Peer Franken
- [La Libre.be](http://LaLibre.be)





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Grand opening ceremonies:

See: [https://www.tvlux.be/video/info/manhay-le-mhm44-inaugure\\_30014.html](https://www.tvlux.be/video/info/manhay-le-mhm44-inaugure_30014.html)

## Manhay : le MHM44 inauguré





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One more about **John Rupczyk** from 2014

From: <http://www.timesobserver.com/news/local-news/2014/06/he-jumped-into-darkness-to-find-an-enemy-ahead/>

### Times Observer

Warren, PA

JUN 23, 2014

## He jumped into darkness to find an enemy ahead

“Hell, we were young. We were stupid. You had to be kind of crazy (if) you don’t care too much to jump out of anything.”

It may have been youthful ignorance that prompted John Rupczyk to volunteer for the parachute infantry after being drafted into the U.S. Army during World War II.

But it certainly does not define his service.

Born in February 1924, Rupczyk said that before the war he lived at a house about four miles farther up the road from his current Page Hollow residence, where he has lived since 1946.

Living in Warren County, Rupczyk, now 90, said he knew “nothing” about what was going on in the world during the early years of the war. “We were young. We knew Germany was knocking the heck out of everything in Europe.”

Drafted in March 1943, Rupczyk explained that he was initially placed in the 66th Infantry Division and sent for training at Camp Blanding, Florida.

“I didn’t think that was tough,” Rupczyk of basic training.

He was then transferred to Camp Robinson, Arkansas.

“That’s where I volunteered for parachute school,” he said.

Rupczyk explained, “I had a good friend from Alabama. It was his idea.” He said the friend spent an entire Sunday trying to convince him to join the Airborne. When he eventually agreed, the friend went AWOL. “I don’t know what ever happened to him,” he said.

The training at parachute school was more challenging than basic.

“A lot of it, just physical training,” he said. “A lot of it was just physical exercise stuff, running up those mountains. They’re big. There was about 400 left with me, only half of us made it. They, every Monday morning for three weeks, they said ‘whoever wants to quit, do it now.’ (There was) always a bunch that got up and left.

“I was never in an airplane until then,” he recalled. “Fort Benning, Georgia (was the) first time in my life I got (in) an airplane.” With seven or eight training jumps to complete, at the rate of about one a month, he “never landed in one for seven or eight times,” he said. “I always jumped out of them.”

Does jumping out of an airplane invoke fear?

“You don’t have time to think,” said Rupczyk. “You’re like a dog when it happens. They train ya’ and you react just like an animal. Before you know it you jump out that god darn door. Then you get that opening shock.”

From there, gravity does the rest.



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Rupczyk explained that the training jumps were made at just 1,500 feet. Falling at 20 feet a second, it was quick trip. He said “you could steer by pulling the riser with your hand but that speeded it up.... You ain’t going to have much time at 1,500 feet.”

“Nothing so beautiful in the world as being in a parachute coming down.”

With his jump wings in hand, Rupczyk was officially part of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team.

And his jump wings bought him a ticket overseas as the 517th sailed from Camp Patrick Henry near Newport News, Virginia on May 17, 1943 to the European Theatre of Operations.

He did not leave a girlfriend or wife stateside.

And that was a conscious choice.

“I just left friends,” he said. “I see guys that were married. They had an awful time. (I) said ‘I ain’t going to have that trouble.’”

Rupczyk said that he sailed on the George Bancroft, a Liberty ship, and traveled in a large convoy into the Mediterranean Sea. Once in the sea, “the Germans bombed us,” he said. “(It is a) good thing they missed my ship. There was 8,000 tons of ammo on my ship.”

Docking in Naples on May 31, Rupczyk said they didn’t waste any time getting off the ship.

“The Gerries were bombing us almost every day,” he recalled. The 517th was stationed close enough to the fight at Monte Cassino that “we could hear the big guns shooting in there.”

“We were just training,” Rupczyk said of most of the 517th’s time in Italy and Sicily.

But then did eventually join the advance north of Grosseto, in central Italy.

They “put us in combat for 18 days to see what it was like to get shot at,” Rupczyk said. “When we started losing guys, they pulled us out.”

The training continued through the summer months and, while the men did not know it, they were preparing for Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France.

D-Day for Dragoon was August 15 with the invasion to commence, H-Hour, at 8 a.m.

Just like the Normandy invasion two months earlier, airborne infantry were dropped behind the lines before the infantry assault, to secure key roadways, bridges and objectives.

“We loaded into planes at one o’clock in the morning (and) jumped at 4:40 in the morning. It was quite a long ride,” said Rupczyk.

And they didn’t receive any advance warning.

“They didn’t tell us until the night we were going to jump,” he said. “They told us where we were going. You can’t tell what you don’t know. That’s what they told us.

“It was just a night jump. We were loaded with ammo and everything. The only difference, I was in the second wave, we was not very high. We no sooner left the plane than we were on the ground.”

He said that the combat jump was well under the 1,500 feet they jumped at during training and was “probably just high enough to get the opening shock” and ensure the parachute opened.

But even though the specific site of their jump was a secret, the men had a pretty good idea.

“We were guessing,” he said. “We all were quite sure either Yugoslavia or France.”

Both locations would have forced the Germans to fight on another front, stretching their resources even further.





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Rupczyk said Dragoon “was supposed to be the same day as Normandy. (They) didn’t have enough ships. We had to wait while Normandy took first place.

“There were three divisions that came in after we jumped,” he said.

At least at the outset, German resistance was not too stiff.

“We didn’t have too much trouble,” he said of the enemy on the day of the invasion. “They caught up with us on the third day, 20 to 25 miles inland.”

Rupczyk and the rest of the 517th then moved inland up the Rhone River valley through France, liberating a host of towns along the way from Fayence, Callian and Saint-Cezaire to Saint-Vallier, Grasse, Bouyon and La Roquette, pressing into Peira Cava near the coast during 94 days in the Alp Mountains.

A Bronze Star citation details Rupczyk’s involvement there.

“Staff Sergeant John Rupczyk, Jr. ...for heroic achievement in action near Piera Cava, France, 23 September 1944. Staff Sergeant Rupczyk was a member of a patrol which was assigned the mission of destroying enemy replacements situated on the slope of a heavily mined hill. While crossing the mined area, three members of the patrol were seriously wounded by exploding mines. Alerted by the noise, the enemy opened fire compelling Staff Sergeant Rupczyk and his men to seek cover. From his position, Staff Sergeant Rupczyk saw that his three wounded comrades were lying dangerously exposed to enemy bullets. Disregarding his own safety, he crawled across the field, feeling his way among mines and trip wires until he reached the side of the nearest casualty. After removing the injured man to safety, Staff Sergeant Rupczyk repeated his performance in rescuing the other two wounded men. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by Staff Sergeant Rupczyk are in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service.”

The unit was eventually pulled off the line and assembled, along with all other Allied airborne troops, into the XVIII Airborne Corps and moved to Sissonne, France.

“They weren’t going to use us until Spring,” he said. The unit was then moved to Belgium to “clean out four or five buildings. They never told us it was a town.”

Just days later, on the night of December 15-16, the Germans offered one last-ditch offensive to break out of an ever-tightening Allied perimeter.

What ensued is known as the Battle of the Bulge.

On December 21, the 517th received an order to move and join the fight in Belgium. “It was cold,” Rupczyk said. “But I got shot the first time we was in there. I wasn’t out there very long.”

On Christmas, the Germans took the city of Manhay.

According to the 517th unit history, “the fall of Manhay... sent shockwaves throughout the Allied Command” because of how the Germans were now free to attack. “Urgent directives descended... demanding that Manhay be retaken at all costs.”

In that effort to re-take Manhay, Rupczyk was wounded.

“I was wounded the 27th of December,” he said, “right in the Battle of the Bulge.”

But while he claims he wasn’t out there very long, a citation awarding him the Silver Star says otherwise.

“Sergeant John Rupczyk, Jr.,... for gallantry in action at Manhay, Belgium, 27 December 1944. When a heavy concentration of supporting artillery fire fell short and into his company, causing casualties and confusion, Sergeant Rupczyk, although himself wounded, quickly organized his squad and moved forward to the objective. When forced to take cover by an enemy machine gun, he single handedly silenced the weapon and killed three of the enemy. Sergeant Rupczyk led his squad through the town, captured or killed all the enemy in his sector, and then placed his squad in a defensive position on the opposite side of the



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town. Only after this action and after checking with his flank units to make sure that the line was completely held, did he allow himself to be given medical aid.”

Rupczyk said he was “hit right in the hand.” He explained that the impact “shot the rifle right out of my hand. (It) laid on the ground in three pieces.”

“Airborne squads are small, 12 of us in there. About 30 in my platoon,” he said.

Four of those men emerged from the Bulge uninjured.

“I was in the hospital until almost Spring,” he said. He spent a week in a hospital in Belgium before flying back to England.

Once his wound sufficiently healed, Rupczyk said the war was “coming to an end. (I) didn’t have to go back to the front. We were ready to go but then Patton and them crossed the Rhine and they were going so fast that they didn’t need us.”

“We were going to make a jump on a Sunday morning in Germany,” he explained, “and the sandtables they had they had buildings on there. And we asked questions, where are these things. They actually said they didn’t know. What it actually was (was) a concentration camp. Thank God I didn’t have to see that.”

Rupczyk said he was back in France on Victory in Europe, V-E, Day. “The guys just went right to their regular days work,” he said.

But there was still a chance the 517th could have to go fight in the Pacific Theater.

“I fought in the Mediterranean Theatre and the European Theatre,” he said. “So we had a choice if we wanted to go to the Pacific or stay in Europe. (I) volunteered for the Pacific. The regimental commander said ‘No, these guys seen enough.’”

Rupczyk was discharged on November 28, 1945.

“They started kicking guys out in a hurry,” he said. “The government didn’t want to pay no Army wages. They talked to us. They wanted the guys to sign up and stay in. I’m glad I didn’t. Right after that, Korea hit.”

Coming back home, there weren’t any big celebrations.

“Just came home,” he said. “Neighbor said ‘Hi’ and that’s it.”

Rupczyk went to work at the Youngsville Furniture Factory and eventually moved to the Jamestown Metal Corp. fabricating steel.

He met his wife, Ann, in 1948 at a square dance in Busti and they were married October 6, 1951. They have two daughters, Nancy, who lives in Russell, and Sandy, who lives in New Jersey.

“He’s my hero,” Ann said of her husband.

In addition to the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster and Purple Heart, Rupczyk was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Medal, Victory Medal, E.T.O Ribbon with arrow head and four combat stars, the French Croix and the Belgian Croix.

“You do a lot of things you don’t even think about,” said Rupczyk of his service. “You just do it... A lot of it is how aggressive you feel. Some guys could do it. Some couldn’t.”



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Hello Mr. Barrett,

we met **Ben Barrett** in 2009 in Saint-Cézaire, and we were very moved to welcome the veterans Americans.

In 2019, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Saint-Cézaire and we wish with the association of "Souvenir Français" to pay a tribute to our American liberators.

As we have already done, we invite **Allan Johnson** to participate in this event with other veterans and their families. I learned from **Jean Loup Gassend**, writer of the book "The Landing of Provence" that **John Ruczyk** (517th company I) was still alive, we would like to see if it is possible that he will come to Saint-Cézaire on August 23, 2019.

In addition, we wish to realize an exhibition on this event, I look for information to write a small biography, maybe could you help me?

I'm looking for information and photos of these men:

- **Captain Grant Hooper**
- **Corporal John Ruczyk**
- **Sergeant Frank Dallas**
- **Walter W. Taylor**

And of course we can not forget the men who died during this event.

- **Hector Colo**
- **Jesse O. Goswick**
- **J.B. Hampton**
- **Charles Stanford**
- **Richard Sailor**

I thank you, for your attention and hope to have information from your participates

Elisabeth Atlan

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I found current addresses and phone numbers for John Ruczyk and Frank Dallas, which I sent to Elisabeth, -- BB





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### *517<sup>th</sup> History – October to November 1944 in Sospel*

From *Paratroopers' Odyssey*:

From about October 15th to 27th there was a considerable increase in enemy mortar and artillery fire. The mortar fire appeared to be "unobserved" \* and there were few casualties, but on October 23rd this fire forced the abandonment of a 460th OP on Hill 1098. It was quickly relocated on an adjacent ridge. The source of the enemy 105mm artillery fire was not precisely located, but it seemed to be coming from the reverse slopes of Mount Grosso.

\* "Unobserved" ... Fire delivered solely by map, without an observer to make adjustments. This fire usually follows a random pattern and is generally inaccurate, particularly with mortars.

Beginning on October 23rd, 30 to 50 rounds daily fell around the RCT CP at L'Escarene. The most popular target -- the Col de Braus -- Hill 1098 area -- received 200 or more rounds of all types daily.

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In Sospel conditions continued to deteriorate. The civilian food ration was set at the starvation level of 1 3/4 ounces of bread daily and the same amount of meat weekly. Even that was hard to provide as the German increased their demands. Each day the Germans took 30 men for forced labor and held five hostages the hostages often being elderly people who had volunteered to act in that capacity.

In mid-October German service troops from northern Italy arrived and began to dismantle installations, evacuate supplies, and take up telephone wire. Artillery and mortar fire was increased to use up stocks, and the three bridges over the Bevera were prepared for demolition.

The bridges on the east and west were relatively new, but the one in the center dated from the 11th Century and was of considerable historic and architectural interest. It had little military value. The gateway in the toll tower was too small for trucks to get through; even jeeps could not negotiate the narrow streets on the north side. Nevertheless it was packed with explosives like the others.

On October 20th the German commander announced that the Sospel population was to be evacuated to northern Italy. Mayor Domerego made a counter-proposal that the Germans obtain a 24-hour truce and allow the people to go west to join the rest of liberated France. Of course, this was denied and the matter remained at an impasse.

An interpreter between the German command and the local Public Safety committee learned on October 27th that the Germans were going to evacuate the town that night. Measures were taken to safeguard the sick and wounded in the Hotel des Etrangers near the heavily-charged



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east bridge. At 2100 the bridges were blown, a few last salvos fired, and the Germans now reduced to a covering shell quietly packed up and left.

That night the explosions were heard on the American side. Next day Lieutenant George Giuchici led an F Company patrol into Sospel. He found bridges blown and the Germans gone. Leading infantry units moved up to occupy Mounts Agaisen, Grosso, Grazian, and Mangiabo. The troopers were amazed by the strength and size of the fortifications on Agaisen and Grosso, and wondered why the Germans had abandoned them.\*

\* Why the Germans gave up the Sospel forts is unknown. It was not due to American pressure. The enemy withdrawal was probably an economy-of-force action, and possibly related to their preparations for the Ardennes offensive.

The 596th, following closely, found the roads an incredible mess of craters, mines, and booby-traps. An Engineer detachment removing a booby-trapped abatis near Mount Barbonnet had to stop work several times because of enemy artillery fire, drawn by a Red Cross convoy with civilian relief supplies. They finally succeeded in clearing the road and the balance of the RCT closed in Sospel. The 460th occupied positions on the reverse slope of Mount Agaisen and the CP set up near the Golf Hotel, east of town.

This time the incoming Americans met no cheering crowds, flowers, or wine. Instead they were greeted with cool indifference. The people had little to celebrate. In fifty-five days of siege forty-four had been killed and over a hundred wounded by mortar and artillery fire. The hospital and the bridges had been destroyed. All buildings had been ravaged and many were no longer fit for habitation. Sospel was the last town in France to be liberated in World War II. The people knew this and could not understand why.\*\*

\*\* With time the wounds have healed. A delegation of visiting ABTF veterans was received with great hospitality and enthusiasm in Sospel in August, 1984.

The Germans had withdrawn well into Italy, leaving only a few outguards at the Col de Braus on the road to Saorge and Tende. American activity was confined to patrols to Plena, Olivetta, Col de Braus, and Moulinet. With the slackening of American pressure the Germans began to filter back into the area. Positions on Mount Grazian and Mangiabo were probed by squad and platoon-sized combat patrols. Casualties were light. Only scattered long-range artillery fire came in, although (to the amusement of the troops) 20 to 30 rounds landed daily near the Regimental CP .

On November 4th a house sheltering 17 men of the 2nd Battalion blew up, killing five men and wounding five more. The place had either been booby-trapped or a delayed-action charge had been left in place. This set off a spirited search of all occupied buildings with negative results.

On the same day the 1st Battalion was relieved by the 3rd and reverted to reserve in Sospel. Colonel Paxton, not wanting his Headquarters to be "behind the Regimental CP", set up in the



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Golf Hotel, under direct enemy observation. His Headquarters men spent the next week or so dodging shellbursts.

Rumors of an impending relief were circulating. With winter coming on and the war apparently fizzling out, there was a general feeling that it was high time to get out of the Maritime Alps. The rumors became fact when between November 13th and 16th the RCT was relieved by the 14th Armored Infantry of the 19th Armored Division, fresh off the boat at Marseilles.\*

\* This was only temporary. Between November 10th and 23rd the area was taken over by the 442nd Combat Team, which remained until March, 1945, when it was relieved by the French Army.

La Colle-sur-Loup, six miles west of Nice, had been chosen as a staging area pending the next move. Task Force Headquarters had apparently decided that discipline and morale had declined and would be restored by foot-marching, so the Combat Team walked all the way. \*

\*Colonel Graves had asked for trucks but was turned down.

The troopers were quick to detect the aroma of chicken ordure. Taking trucks from an area beyond enemy observation -- such as L'Escarene -- would have made sense, but walking all the way made no sense to 20th century Americans. The map distance from Sospel to La Colle is about 36 miles. With vertical gradients and road twists it comes to about 50. This was well within the troopers' capabilities but it seemed totally unnecessary, and that rankled.

Nevertheless the disgruntled "grunts" (as they would be called in a later war) marched from Sospel to La Colle. The first night was spent at Pointe de Contes shivering around bonfires while ice formed on ponchos. On the second day they emerged upon the Nice Plain, going straight through the city along the Promenade des Anglais to bivouac at the racetrack at Cagnes-sur-Mer. A short hike on the third day past villas of the super-rich brought them to La Colle, thus completing a giant circle that had begun in August.

The Combat Team closed at La Colle on November 18th. Pup-tent camps were set up and efforts were made to catch up on administration, sadly neglected since August.

Inspections were held and clothing and equipment issued to replace worn-out gear. Duffel bags that had been left in Italy rejoined their owners and five hundred replacements were assigned.

On December 1st the 517th was assigned to XVIII Airborne Corps and directed to proceed to Soissons in Northern France.





# 517<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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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