



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2402

December 23, 2018

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

In Memorium - Merle McMorrow



Merle September 2018 at the camp ground where he took his young family every summer. How is this for a 96-year old!



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I have some sad news.

Merle McMorrow peacefully passed away on Dec 13, 2018. Merle was a dear friend of my dad's and mine. We corresponded regularly with calls & letters. I had the absolute pleasure of visiting him in his home state of North Dakota twice this year.

This past April, Mimsey Kelly, Nancy Frasier and I flew to Fargo North Dakota from our respective states for his 95th birthday. I went back for a 2nd trip in September. Merle again was a wonderful host & tour guide. We traveled thru Merle's old stomping ground from Medora in western North Dakota to the Minneapolis area. I took Merle back to the home he built and raised his family in Bismarck and to his lake home in MN.

Merle was the last person to speak to my dad before my dad passed in 2010. He did the eulogy for my dad at Arlington National Cemetery. In 2014 Merle accompanied me to spread my dad's ashes in Sospel France and Trois Pons Belgium. Together we traipsed thru a field of cow manure where my dad was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge.

Merle would always add a year to his age. He smiled when people noted how great he looked for a 96-year-old and then look at me knowing he was just 95.

Merle was a true hero who loved his country and home state of ND, a wonderful family man, a brilliant business man and an incredibly kind guy and gentle soul.

I will miss him.

Joanne Barrett, Ben Barrett's daughter



2004 Le Muy, France



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Merle McMorrow

April 22, 1923 - December 13, 2018



Merle W. McMorrow died at age 95 on December 13, 2018 after living a rich and full life.

An open house celebration of life will take place on January 16, 2019, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Boulger Funeral Home and Celebration of Life Center in Fargo, ND. Burial with military honors will be held at a later date at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery in Mandan, ND.

Merle was born on April 22, 1923 in Hankinson, ND to Robert and Clara (Kath) McMorrow. He graduated from high school in Breckenridge, MN. After working with the Wilkin County Highway Department and the Puget Sound Navy Yard (Bremerton, WA) Merle enlisted with the U.S. Army Paratroops during WWII. His foreign service included action in Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany prior to his discharge on December 22, 1945.

Merle married Kathryn (Kay) Jonietz in Los Angeles, CA on June 12, 1946. They returned to Fargo where Merle enrolled and graduated from North Dakota Agricultural College (NDSU) with a Civil Engineering degree. In 1949 they moved to Bismarck where Merle joined the Bureau of Reclamation, retiring in 1980. Merle and Kay raised their family in Bismarck. Kay died in 1996. Merle was married to Margaret Chapman from 2000 until her death in 2014.

Merle was a member of the United States Committee of the International Commission on Large Dams. He was also a member of the United States Committee on Irrigation, Drainage and Flood Control of the International Commission on Large Dams. He was a member of the Bismarck Lions, Kiwanis, VFW and the BPOE and was on the Board of Directors of the Capital Credit Union. He was the national president of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team and the state president of the ND Chapter of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Merle is survived by his two sons, Thomas (Patricia McCullough), Loretto, MN and Mark (Diane), Fargo; one brother Robert, Fargo; three sisters, Betty Petron (Don), The Villages of FL, Judy Azure, Fargo, and JoAnn Haddock, OR, and by numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Kathryn, his second wife Margaret, brothers Kenneth and Darrell and sister Mavis.

Gathering of family and friends

January 16, 2019

1:00 - 3:00 PM

[Boulger Funeral Home and Celebration of Life Center](#)

123 South 10th Street, Fargo, ND 58103



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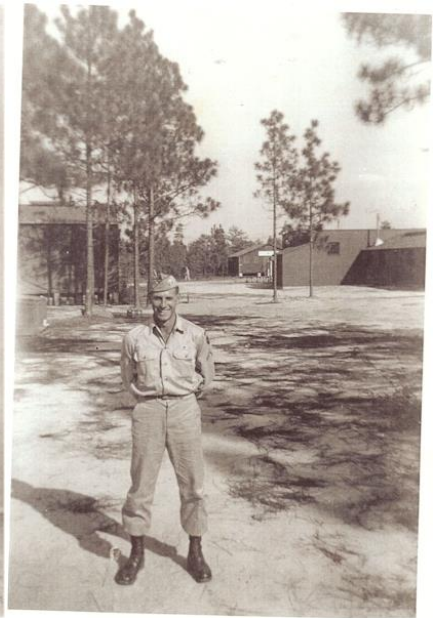
that



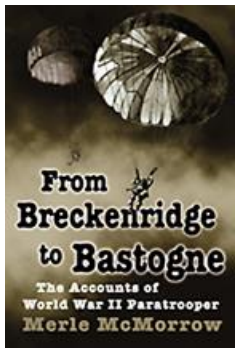
Merle was captain of the basketball team won the 1940 Minnesota State High School Championship.



Merle McMorrow
North Dakota State University
Class of 1949
Engineering and Architecture



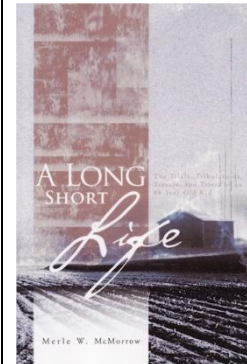
Camp Mackall, North Carolina



From Breckenridge to Bastogne by Merle McMorrow



From Rome to Berlin via Bastogne by Merle McMorrow



A Long Short Life by Merle McMorrow

For a very short bio of Merl's life, see: http://517prct.org/bios/merle_mcmorrow/merle_mcmorrow.htm



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Photos from Le Muy, 2009



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MailCall News



My dad, **COL Thomas R Cross** (Hq, 2nd Bn, 517th PIR), was recently inducted into the U.S. Army Airborne Rigger Hall of Fame. He was the 67th rigger inducted, and the first officer inducted. The induction ceremony occurred December 11, 2018 in Atlantic Beach, FL where he currently resides.

The series of events leading to the recent Rigger Hall of Fame induction came about as a result of the unique red ball cap and rigger badge worn by U.S. Army riggers.

Dad and one of his NCOs in the 11th Airborne Division designed the Airborne Rigger badge some 70 years ago. In the same timeframe, then Major Cross, commanding the Division's Parachute Maintenance Company, initiated the practice of riggers wearing red ball caps with the rigger badge affixed. The red ball cap enabled any paratrooper suspecting a faulty parachute to easily identify a parachute rigger to inspect his chute prior to boarding his plane.

Several weeks before the induction ceremony, Dad was in the Navy commissary at Mayport, FL wearing his red rigger cap. Two Vietnam War airborne riggers spotted him in the red cap and walked over to Dad and said "Hi Rigger". They asked dad his name. He replied, "Colonel Thomas R. Cross". Later one of them thought the name was familiar and did some research and notified the airborne Rigger School at Ft. Lee that dad was still alive. Realizing that he was almost 100 years old the Army Rigger School quickly arranged the ceremony earlier this week to induct him into the U.S. Army Rigger Hall of Fame. This coming February the Rigger Hall of Fame Room in the Rigger School will be dedicated to Dad.

The accompanying picture was taken at the Airborne Rigger Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Dad is in front, two Vietnam War rigger veterans, John Richardson and Wendell Lot, stand alongside current riggers who planned and conducted the induction ceremony.

Tom Cross Jr.



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Our main photographer at the rigger induction ceremony was a retired Air Force colonel who saw combat as a pilot in WW2. I always enjoy talking to the residents at Fleet Landing where dad lives. A number of the residents are retired military.
Tom

Thomas R. Cross

Bob: Hard to believe it has been 74 years since the Battle of the Bulge. An excellent Mail Call commemorating the anniversary. Thank you.

Pat Seitz

PS thanks for bailing me out in your postscript

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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