



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



MailCall No. 2435

February 23, 2020

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

MailCall News

Dear American and English-speaking friends,

Here is a message to let you know the books of 'The 517's Gang' Part 1: Italy & t France, arrived on the 17th of February. A few of you have already ordered the book. About 80 have been already shipped on the 500 which have been printed. Many peoples asked a translation on that book and I worked really hard on it.

Just a reminder of this project:

During a few years, I asked your help to write a book on the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. Without you, this project would have never happened. During all these years, I interviewed many veterans, collected diaries, recollections and many military documents. I am still looking for documents, histories and pictures for all my ongoing projects about the airborne troops in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation.

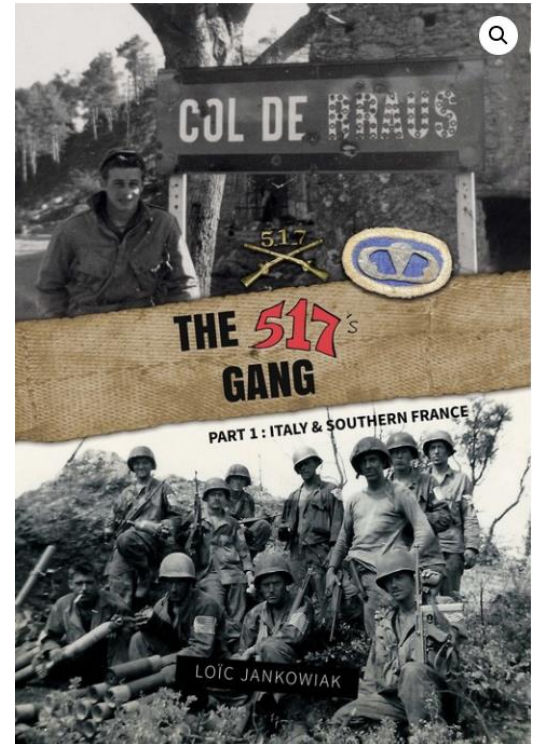
This book which was published in French in May 2019 is now available to pre-order in English in my website. This is a self-publishing, so you will not find this book in any bookstore, only on the link below.

After long months to translate the texts and captions of the book, the English version of 'The 517's Gang' Part I is now finished. Many books can be shipped in one time so don't hesitate to combine shipping.

There is an English translation on the website to order your book(s) so you don't get it wrong. Remember to fill in your address correctly in the online form. There is no registration required.

Thank you very much to have wait until now and thank you again to have take time to answer me and shared with me your relatives pictures and histories.

Loïc Jankowiak, author of the 517's Gang.





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PS : There is also a video you can view on the book.

<https://1stabtf.com/en/boutique/the-517ths-gang-us-eng-version/>
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Hello,

First let me tell you how much I enjoy the newsletter. I've been receiving it for years and it has been a great way to stay connected and meet others. I have pictures of my father that I'd never seen before.

My father, **Don O'Neil**, was an Engineer in the 596th. He jumped at Dragoon and was eventually wounded at the Bulge and was evacuated. He returned and served a final year in Berlin with the 82nd where he worked in the enlisted club. He passed in 1993 and never shared much detail about the war. I've been able to better understand his experiences through this community. At his funeral, this group sent a beautiful wreath. That was the first time I even knew he was in touch with his friends.

For what it's worth, he shared the following stories with me.

- One of his friends managed to smuggle a German Sheppard dog home on the troopship in a duffle bag. He had a picture of it.
- He talked about the cold at the Bulge and how they were short of supplies. Around Christmas day, the weather finally broke and they were able to drop supplies. He said he'd never been as cold as he was then, and never so happy to see the sun come out.
- In Berlin, he said he took possession of a German motorcycle and would zoom around the city. He said it felt so good to be alive then.
- He attended a big football game in Berlin with the 82nd.

I have a request as well. I have a collection of challenge coins and recently saw that there is a 517th coin that I'd like to add to my collection. Can you advise as to how I can get my hands on one, please? I also saw a picture of the 517th patch, anniversary edition. Are those available for purchase?

Keep up the good work.

Charlie O'Neil

On the next page is a picture of the 3rd platoon of the 596th, with **Don O'Neil** (and **Allan Johnson**)



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Second Squad-Third Platoon
Standing L to R: K. Johnson,
Michaels, Myers, Ayling
Middle Row: Szakacs, O'Neil,
Englert, Boggan
Front Row: Wrobleski, Jaynes.
The question marks belong to
Szakacs, Michaels, Englert,
and Myers. Can you identify
them for me and I will run
this photo again? EDITOR

From the [Winter 1995 596th Wings newsletter](#)



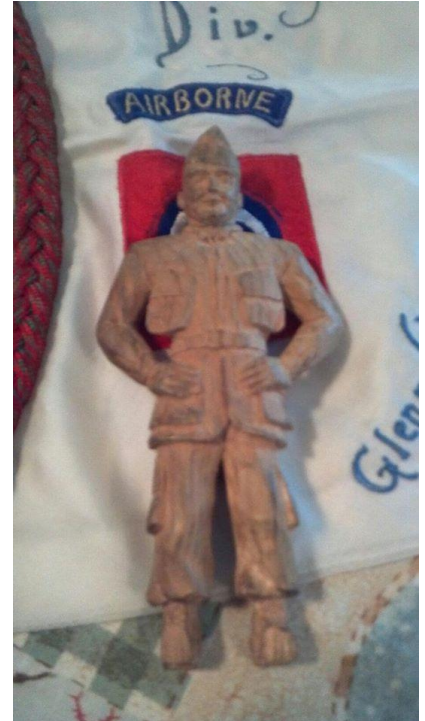
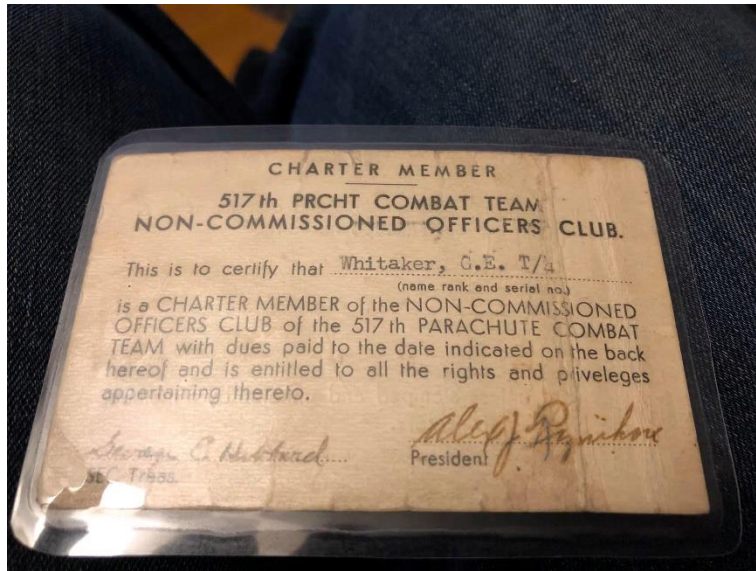
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From [517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team - Families & Friends](#)

February 19, 2020:

Hey guys, thank you so much for the add! I am very passionate about trying to find out as much as I can about my grandfather **Glenn E Whitaker**. From what I can find, he was a NCO, T4 I believe, radio operator in the 517th. He passed away before I was born, so any help would be immensely appreciated. Here are some pictures of some of the treasures I have of his.

Tom Whitaker





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

N° 19

Sunday 15 October 1944

THUNDERBOLT

PUBLISHED FOR THE MEN OF THE 517 PRCHT. INF. COMBAT TEAM

517 COMMISSIONS THREE MEN

Men Of 517 Get Citations

FIVE SILVER STARS, 16 BRONZE STARS AWARDED BY PRESIDENT

Twenty One Men of the 517 were cited by the president of the United States during the past week as he awarded five Silver Stars and 16 Bronze Stars to men whose courageous and skillful work made it possible for their outfit to be successful during numerous combat missions.

The THUNDERBOLT quotes the General Orders which cite the respective men for their heroic deeds.

HAROLD M. FREEMAN, Second Lieutenant, Infantry, for gallantry in action near Les Arcs, France, on 16 August 1944. During an attack, the platoon which Lieutenant Freeman commanded was pinned down by enemy machine gun and sniper fire. Lieutenant Freeman deliberately exposed himself to accurately locate enemy positions. He located several enemy positions and directed effective fire upon them. While crawling along the top of a railroad embankment to verify the existence of another sniper nest, he was fatally wounded by enemy rifle fire. Lieutenant Freeman's heroic actions inspired the men of his platoon to continue the attack whose rapid success further disorganized enemy resistance in this area.

RICHARD J. SEITZ, Lt. Col. Infantry; for gallantry in action on August 16 at Les Arcs, France. In order to effectively direct the action of his battalion during an assault against an enemy held town, Lt. Col. Seitz established an advance Command Post which was soon spotted and subjected to intense enemy artillery and mortar fire. Refusing to vacate his exposed Command Post because of its excellent tactical location, Seitz with complete disregard for his own safety continued to direct the action of his battalion until the tactical mission was completed. Throughout

(Continued on page 4)

THE OL' MAN SAYS



Troops holding defensive positions too long develop a sort of inertia or lead in the pants. A continual effort must be made to avoid succumbing to this condition. One of the most outstanding examples of how to accomplish this was demonstrated by Sgt. Kievet of Headquarters Third Battalion and his patrol. The men succeeded in penetrating the enemy position surprising and shooting seven Germans and returning safely to our own lines.

Splendid organization, thorough planning and assignment of jobs to all men as well as a excellent carrying out of instructions by all concerned caused extensive damage to a German company and its morale.

Major Wiegand visited the regiment last week and was extremely interested in our operations as well as highly pleased with the things he saw during his visit. He is the son of the famous General Wiegand who was called on to take command of the French Army after General Gamelin was removed from command.

A design for an insignia for use on jackets and other

informal wear was made by Lt. Spencer and will be produced in quantity as quickly as possible. Lt. James turned in some excellent designs, one of which will be sent to the war department for a formal crest or shield at the proper time. Designs showing service in Italy, France and whatever will all be incorporated on this shield with parachute qualification wings. Lt. Spencer has also a splendid Christmas poster made for V-Mail distribution by all members of the 517.

Congratulations are due the following on their combat promotions to second lieutenant: First Sgt. Bridges, B company; Sgt. Moreland and First Sgt. Forrest of Headquarters First Battalion. All three promotions were based upon the ability to lead men capably in actual combat.

Other outstanding awards received for acts of courage in the face of the enemy are as follows: Lt. Col. Seitz, Sgt. Nichols, and Lt. Freeman (posthumously) all of whom received the silver star.

Congratulations are also in order to the recipients of the Bronze star award listed elsewhere in this paper.

R. D. Graves

Col. 517 Prcht. Inf.

Moreland, Forrester, Bridges Get Gold Bars

Col. Boyle's Boys First Combat Promotees

The 517 and the first battalion lost three of its best non-coms Friday morning. But in so doing it gained three new officers as the division commander pinned gold bars on the collars of First Sgt. Walter Bridges of B Company, First Sgt. John Forrester and Staff Sergeant Moreland of Headquarters First.

The three men became the recipients of the 517's first combat promotions by virtue of their brilliant work both in Italy and France.

Lt. Forrester entered the army and the 517 almost simultaneously as he volunteered for parachute duty upon induction. Shortly after qualifying he was given the job as first sgt. of Headquarters company. In his likeable but earnest way he kept Captain Ehley's boys in line and now the cadremen who taught him his basic training are saluting him.

Lt. Moreland has led the mortar platoon of headquarters first for more than a year and has shown his ability to lead men on many occasions. The best example came after the jump into the Riviera when his platoon leader was injured. He took charge and directed mortar fire at the enemy at the right places and the right times coordinating his work with that of the artillery and in every way possible contributed to the success of the jump.

Lt. Bridges for a long time was considered among the best first sergeants in the regiment and proved his worth as a leader when his company was called upon in the first important mission in Italy. Three of his company officers were injured soon after the battle began. So Lt. Bridges took it upon himself to direct the resupply of ammunition to his men, with the efficiency of a born leader and a capable officer of the United States Army.

YESTERDAY'S FOOTBALL SCORES

FINALS

Boston College, 33 ; CCNY, 0
Georgia, 13 ; Kentucky, 12
Navy, 7 ; Duke, 0
Tennessee, 25 ; NYU, 0
Michigan State, 45 ; Kansas, 6
Penn, 46 ; William and Mary, 0
Michigan, 27 ; Northwestern, 0
Penn State, 29 ; Bucknell, 0
Ohio State, 13 ; Wisconsin, 7

THIRD PERIOD

Army, 54 ; Pitt, 0
Yale, 27 ; Columbia, 3
Notre Dame, 37 ; Dartmouth, 0
Iowa Preflight, 7 ; Purdue, 6

HALF

Cornell, 7 ; Colgate, 7
Illinois, 20 ; Iowa, 0
Indiana, 14 ; Nebraska, 0



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I have searched through my (incomplete) records of the 527th, but unfortunately cannot find any info on **Glenn Whitaker**. From these photos, it seems clear that he was an NCO with the 517th, was with the First Airborne Task force, and with them on October 1944. He is not listed on the December 1944 Christmas List, although that is probably not 100% complete. At some time, he was with the 82nd "AA" Airborne Division.

Note that on this *Thunderbolt* from October 15, 1944, it looks like the first I know of that a 517th insignia is mentioned:

“A design for an insignia for use on jackets and other informal wear was made by Lt. Spencer and will be produced in quantity as quickly as possible. Lt. James turned in some excellent designs, one of which will be sent to the war department for a formal crest or shield at the proper time. Designs showing service in Italy, France and whatever will all be incorporated on this shield with parachute qualification wings. Lt. Spencer has also a splendid Christmas poster made for V-Mail distribution by all members of the 517.”

Here is a picture of Loic's new book, arrived on a pallet and ready for shipping.





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Last week's MailCall had a couple of pictures of 596th troopers in Operation Dragoon. This photo I think is **Sgt. Martin Costello**.



I found one other photo of a young **Martin Costello** in **Don Saunder's** photo collection.

From Top:

**Stark, Reed, Costello, McRoy,
Christian, Barbera, Shaw and Spencer**



From:

http://www.517prct.org/photos/don_saunders/don_saunders.htm



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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.
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- 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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"Sure I got seniority. I got busted a week before you did."