



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2448**

July 05, 2020

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

### *Col. Thomas R. Cross - Executive Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion*

#### **COL (Ret) Thomas R. Cross**

Atlantic Beach, FL



Fleet Landing Resident COL (Ret) Thomas R. Cross, who turned 101 on February 1st, passed away on July 3, 2020. Tom was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather who will be fondly remembered.

Tom saw his first military duty at the summer encampment of the 115th Cavalry Regiment of the Wyoming National Guard in 1939. Part of his weapon's qualification entailed firing a 45 caliber pistol over a horse's head at a full gallop. In 1941 he received a Reserve Officers Commission and reported to the 29th Infantry Regiment at Ft. Benning, GA. He received a Regular Army Commission in 1942.

Tom began his airborne career as a company commander in the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Camp Toccoa, GA. He was promoted to Major and served as Battalion Executive Officer in the 2nd Bn, 517th PIR during the regiment's WWII combat jump into Southern France as part of Operation Dragoon. The Regiment's mission was to disrupt the Germans and prevent their reinforcement of the beaches being assaulted by the allied invasion force. Despite having broken his ankle in the jump, Colonel Cross led approximately 200



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paratroopers to their objective while under constant fire. Following recovery from his injury, he rejoined his unit at the outset of the Battle of the Bulge. He was severely wounded and evacuated to England. Upon recovery, he rejoined the 517th PIR and assumed command of the 3rd Bn, 517th PIR until the end of hostilities in Europe.

It is likely Tom was the last surviving commander of an airborne infantry battalion from WWII. He was 26 years old at the time. He was proud to have served in all five of the U.S Army's past and present Airborne Divisions – the 82nd, 101st, 11th, 13th and 17th

One of the most memorable assignments of his 30 year Army career was as Parachute Maintenance Officer of the 11th Airborne Division during 1948-1950. He had the opportunity to serve with several members of the original U.S. Army Airborne Test Platoon as well as other highly decorated Airborne WW II veterans. It was at this time COL Cross developed a great respect for the dedication, expertise and responsibilities embodied in the paratroopers serving as U.S. Army Airborne Riggers. He was extremely proud to have recently been inducted into the U.S. Army Parachute Rigger Hall of Fame at Fort Lee, Virginia. The Hall of Fame was later named in his honor.

Tom commanded the U.S. Army Basic Training Center at Fort Bragg, NC just prior to his retirement. He then enjoyed a second career with the State of North Carolina eventually serving as the Assistant Secretary for Administration in the Department of Transportation.

Both COL Thomas R. Cross and his brother COL Richard E. Cross served in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard". COL Thomas R. Cross as Commander, 1st Battalion in 1955 and COL Richard E. Cross as the Deputy Commander of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment at the time of President Kennedy's funeral in 1963.

Tom was preceded in death by his loving wife Bette and daughter in law, Kerry. He is survived by his children Thomas R. Cross, Jr (Christina), Mary Cathryn Cross (Jim), Wayne Clifton Cross, four grandchildren, Dustin Umberger (Chau), Cassie McIntyre (Dan), Courtney Voigt (Jake) and Thomas Cross (Morgan) and six great grandchildren, Bette, Logan, Charlotte, Caroline, Thomas and Sawyer. Tom leaves a beloved and highly dedicated staff of caregivers led by Ricky Richards for the past 10 years.

Tom and Bette will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date. There they will join his brother, COL Richard E. Cross (Lilo), parents, MG Thomas J. Cross and Edna Cross and father in law, MG Wayne C. Zimmerman (Ruth and Ruby).



Tom and Bette Cross, 2014



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**Sent:** Sunday, July 5, 2020 9:26 AM  
**To:** webmaster@517prct.org  
**Subject:** COL Tom Cross

I wanted to let you know that dad passed away July 3. His condition had grown progressively worse over the past couple of weeks. He went peacefully.

I am sending you a copy of the text (both Word and pdf versions) and picture contained in the obituary which appeared today in the Washington Post and Florida Times Union. They are likely not performing funerals at Arlington National Cemetery so it's going to be a while before services can be scheduled. I will let you know when they are scheduled.

Tom Cross Jr.

Thomas R. Cross

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So sorry to hear about Tom Sr.'s passing. I did hear second-hand that he was near the last battle. What a warrior and great man! I had the honor of meeting him at a couple of reunions. My Dad was a big fan and friend of Tom's.

Thanks for letting me know. I will pass the word to the 517<sup>th</sup> MailCall family.

I'll be sure to pay my respects to Col. Cross in Arlington next time I get to D.C.

Bob Barrett

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Tom Cross in Nice France 1945



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### MailCall News

Dear webmaster,

On your page <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/2397.pdf> you have posted a piece on the Manhay History Museum 44 with my text and the image of Peer Franken. This came directly from <https://www.tracesofwar.nl/sights/107944/Manhay-History-Museum-44.htm> without permission as far as we are aware. Therefore I hereby request you to take this page / document down immediately, or further action will have to be taken.

Met vriendelijke groet / Kind regards,

Lennard Bolijn  
Team TracesOfWar



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*TracesOfWar.com is a part of STIWOT.*

Read more about our organisation at <http://www.stiwot.nl/about.asp>

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Well, they are correct. In MailCall 2397, I included a post about the opening of the Manhay History Museum 44, including an announcement and photo of the museum from their web page. I had assumed this would be good news and free advertising for the museum. Why wouldn't they want people who fought for Manhay to know that this museum has opened? But I have now edited that MailCall so that the photo has been deleted. I suspect that this request probably came from an automated robot that searched for their photos and text on other websites. (They had to dig pretty deep to find an old MailCall on our website.)

I'll take the high road, and still give them a plug. You can find the museum's own website at <https://www.tracesofwar.nl/sights/107944/Manhay-History-Museum-44.htm>.

Oh, and here is the ironic part – Their site includes several notes about 517<sup>th</sup> troopers, including pages about **PFC Michael Kane**, **Pvt. Arthur Markle**, **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Howard Hensleigh**, **Sgt, George Mills**, **PFC Melvin Biddle**, and **SSgt. Nell Arterburn**

<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/45759/Kane-Michael-J.htm>  
<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/45772/Arterburn-Nello-R.htm>  
<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/45763/Markle-Arthur-L.htm>  
<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/45766/Hensleigh-Howard-E.htm>  
<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/45767/Mills-George.htm>  
<https://www.tracesofwar.nl/persons/34153/Biddle-Melvin-E-Bud.htm>

Note that all these pages list the source of the info as the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team's website <http://www.517prct.org/>.

- Bob Barrett



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Hi Damiano,

Here are the 5 Morning Reports for **Jack Bandy**. The first is of his promotion to PFC near Rome.

Bob Barrett

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Ogg: Fwd: BANDY, Jack - Co B Images

Good morning Bob.

I'm sorry but I had problems with the internet and I was only able to see your message today. Thank you very much, the documents are very interesting. If there were any more, when you have time, send me thank you. Would you have a wartime picture of Bandy Jack d?

Damiano Bartoletti

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Hi Damiano,

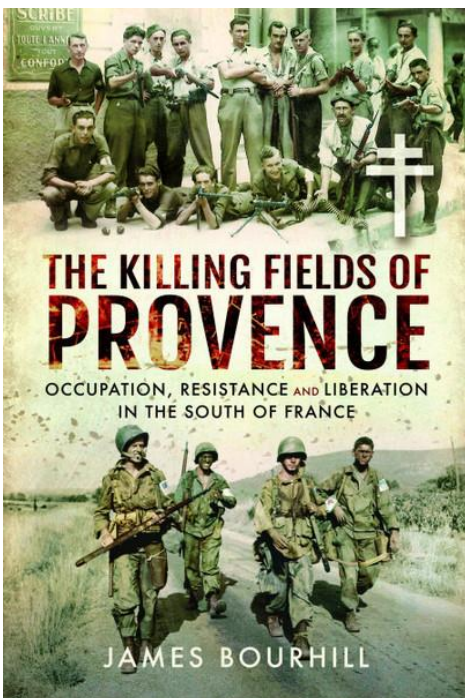
Sorry, but I have not yet been able to find a copy of a wartime photo for Jack Bandy.

All I know is:

Jack Douglas Bandy was born on July 1, 1920. He died on September 23, 2007 at age 87. We know that Jack Douglas Bandy had been residing in Spring Valley, San Diego County, California 91977.

Bob Barrett

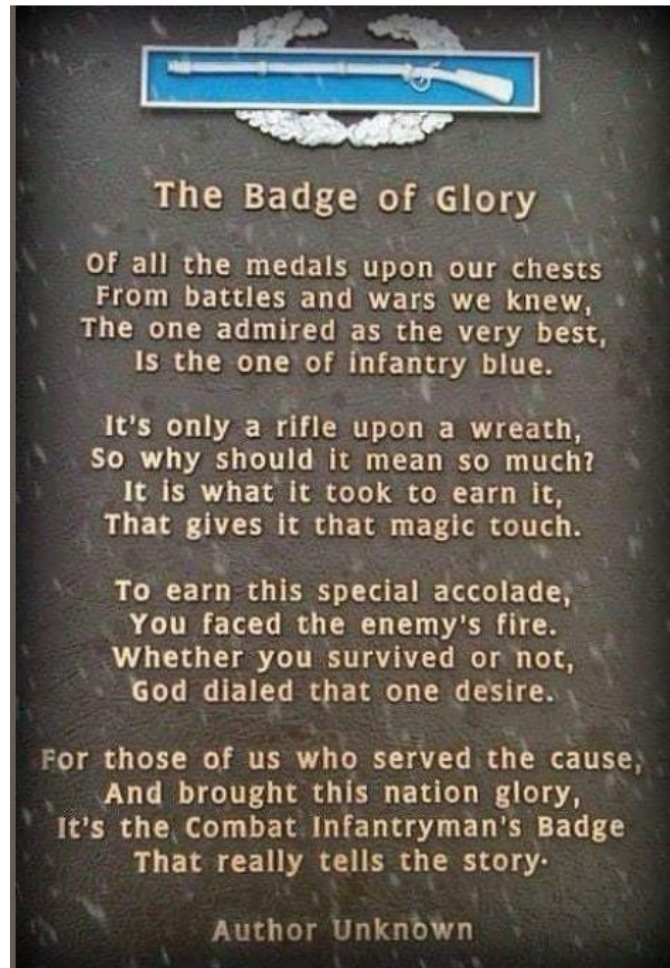
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I ran across tis book that was published in England last November 2019. Note that the bottom photo on the cover is of men from the 517<sup>th</sup>.



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Source: Veteran History, Photos, & More: <https://www.vetfriends.com/?source=fborganic>



<http://gunstonstreet.com/>



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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.

Website	<a href="http://www.517prct.org">www.517prct.org</a>
Send MailCall news to	<a href="mailto:MailCall@517prct.org">MailCall@517prct.org</a>
MailCall Archives	<a href="http://www.517prct.org/archives">www.517prct.org/archives</a>
2018 Roster (updated!)	<a href="http://www.517prct.org/roster.pdf">www.517prct.org/roster.pdf</a>
Thunderbolt Archives	<a href="http://www.517prct.org/archives">www.517prct.org/archives</a>



Lt. Col. Richard J. Seitz was 26 when he led his 2nd Battalion in Southern France, August 15, 1944. On the eve of the jump, he slides his Carbine M1A1 behind his reserve chute, butt up, without using a griswold bag.

As he jumps out of his plane, the opening shock of his parachute make strikes the butt of his rifle against his jaw. During his landing, his carbine butt again struck his jaw. Four of his lower teeth are shattered.

Despite this accident, he gathered part of his battalion and liberated the small village of La Motte in the early morning of D-Day. Dick Seitz commanded his battalion until the end of the war and fought during the Battle of the Bulge.

After the war, he was assigned to several high commanding in the army, including commander of the 82nd Airborne, then the XVIII Airborne Corps.

Dick Seitz died in June 2013.

The 517th's Gang is available at: <https://1stabtf.com/en/boutique/the-517ths-gang-us-eng-version/>