



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



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

**MailCall No. 2453**

November 15, 2020

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

### *More from Veterans Day*



On the 11 of November 1944, for the commemoration of the end of the world war one, several companies of the 517th PIR parade on the Place Massena in Nice. Here, the B Company of **Captain Charles E. La Chausee**.

Remembering and wishing well the proud and brave veterans of the 517th Parachute Regiment Combat Team on this Veteran's Day 2020. All the best to you and your families.

**Paul Abbene**





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NOVEMBER 11 – Sorry, on this day of Souvenir, all the ceremonies are cancelled but we remember the sacrifices of the US soldiers. This picture in Wanne at the 617th monument as we laid flowers thinking of you – especially of Alan JOHSON, we wish him all the best. Our thoughts are with all of you –

Love and respect from Belgium.

For the CADUSA,  
**Irma and Arnold TARNION**







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## MailCall News

My grandfather, **Jack Koopman**, served with the 517th and I am trying to learn more about his service. I have gone through the roster numerous times and do not see his name. I have attached a photo of the only document the family has. Thank you for any information you may provide and thank you for all you do.

Hi Jim,

Well the discharge paper says 517th PIR, and the dates on traveling to Europe and returning make sense, but the locations are more than the 517th. The 517th was not in Normandy, for example, although they were in all the other locations listed. But I have seen errors on discharge papers before. So my guess -- and it is just a guess -- is that he was with another unit first, and then transferred into the 517th, probably in 1945. That's why he does not show on the December 1944 roster.

Wait... I did just dig up one note for Tec/5 Jack Koopman in the 517th Morning Reports, showing that he joined the HQ Company 517th in Joigny, France on 19-Mar-1945.

"Atchd to Co fr 515th parachute Infantry, Per Par 3, SO #44, Hq 13th Airborne Division, dtd 19mar 45."

That was just after the 517th saw their last combat action. So all his action was probably earlier with another unit.

I don't have a copy of that Morning Report in my files, but I'll see if I locate it.

Hope this helps a little.

Bob Barrett

MailCall # 2453

**ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION  
HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>KOOPMAN JACK</b>			2. ARMY SERIAL NO. [REDACTED]		3. GRADE <b>SGT</b>	4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>INF</b>	5. COMPONENT <b>AUS</b>
6. ORGANIZATION <b>517TH PARA INF</b>			7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>25 OCT 45</b>		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>SEP CTR FT DIX NJ</b>		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>108 ELLWOOD ST</b>			10. DATE OF BIRTH [REDACTED]		11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>GERMANY</b>		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>SEE 9</b>			13. COLOR EYES <b>BROWN</b>		14. COLOR HAIR <b>BROWN</b>	15. HEIGHT <b>5-2½</b>	16. WEIGHT <b>160 lbs.</b>
17. NO. DEPEND.	18. MARITAL STATUS <b>SEE 9</b>		19. U.S. CITIZEN <b>W</b>		20. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>SHIPPING CLERK 1-34.130</b>		
<b>MILITARY HISTORY</b>							
21. DATE OF INDUCTION <b>29 APR 43</b>		22. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>6 MAY 43</b>		23. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>6 MAY 43</b>		24. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>NYC NY</b>	
25. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <b>X</b>		26. LOCAL U.S. BOARD NO. <b>68</b>		27. COUNTY AND STATE <b>NEW YORK CO NY</b>		28. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>SEE 9</b>	
29. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. <b>INTELLIGENCE NCO 631</b>				30. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., industry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>RIFLE M1 MKM 162 25 JAN 44</b>			
31. THEATERS AND CAMPAIGNS <b>ARDENNES CENTRAL EUROPE NORMANDY NORTHERN FRANCE RHINELAND GO 33 WD 45 AS AMENDED</b>							
32. DEGREES AND CITATIONS <b>EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN SERVICE MEDAL GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL</b>							
33. AWARDS RECEIVED IN ACTION <b>NONE</b>							
34. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES SMALLPOX <b>27 JUL 45</b> TYPHOID <b>15 MAR 44</b> TETANUS <b>31 JAN 44</b> OTHER (specify) <b>NONE</b>				35. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>20 FEB 44</b> DESTINATION <b>ETO USA</b>		36. DATE OF ARRIVAL <b>11 MAR 44</b>	
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE CONTINENTAL SERVICE: YEARS <b>0</b> MONTHS <b>9</b> DAYS <b>21</b> FOREIGN SERVICE: YEARS <b>1</b> MONTHS <b>7</b> DAYS <b>29</b>				38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD <b>SGT</b>		39. PRIOR SERVICE <b>NONE</b>	
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT AR 615-365 15 DEC 1944 &amp; RR 1-1 DEMOBILIZATION INTELLIGENCE CORPS CAMP RITCHIE MD GERMAN INTERROGATION PRIS OF WAR FROM JUL THRU AUG 43 STUDIED INT PROCEDURE AND REPORTS</b>							
<b>PAY DATA</b>							
41. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEARS <b>2</b> MONTHS <b>5</b> DAYS <b>27</b>		42. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL <b>300</b> PAYMENT <b>100</b>		43. SOLDIER DEPOSIT <b>NONE</b>		44. TRAVEL PAY <b>3.95</b>	
45. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER <b>\$258.38 J HARRIS COL FD</b>				46. INSURANCE NOTICE IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.			
47. KIND OF INSURANCE <b>X</b>		48. HOW PAID <b>X</b>		49. EFFECTIVE DATE OF ALIENATION <b>31 OCT 45</b>		50. DATE OF NEXT PREMIUM DUE <b>30 NOV 45</b>	
51. PREMIUM DUE <b>6.50</b>		52. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Only <input type="checkbox"/> Requitaine <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
53. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) <b>** INTELLIGENCE CORPS ETO FROM ART TO MAY 44 COMBAT INTELLIGENCE ADVANCED COURSE OF FIELD INTELLIGENCE PROCEDURE. LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED INACTIVE ERC FROM 29 APR 43 TO 6 MAY 43 ASR SCORE (2 SEP 45) 72</b>		54. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <b>Jack Koopman</b>					
55. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>JE WHITE JR CAPT AC</b>						56. APPLICATION FOR RE-INSTATEMENT ALLOWED? <b>NOV - 1 1945</b> Through New York State Dept. of Labor	

WD AGO FORM 53-55  
1 November 1944  
This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 53 and 55 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.



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Bob, I'm trying to identify some of the people in the attached photos.

1. I believe the first photo is probably a studio portrait taken in late 1943 while the 517th was at Camp Mackall, NC. The soldier on the left is my dad, **Ray Helms**, who was in E-Company. He didn't identify the other soldier in the photo and I'd like to know if there is anyone out there who can identify him.



2. My dad's notes on the 2nd photo say it was taken north of Nice in southern France. My dad is the soldier in the center. He didn't identify the soldiers on the left or right and I'd like to know if anyone out there can identify them.

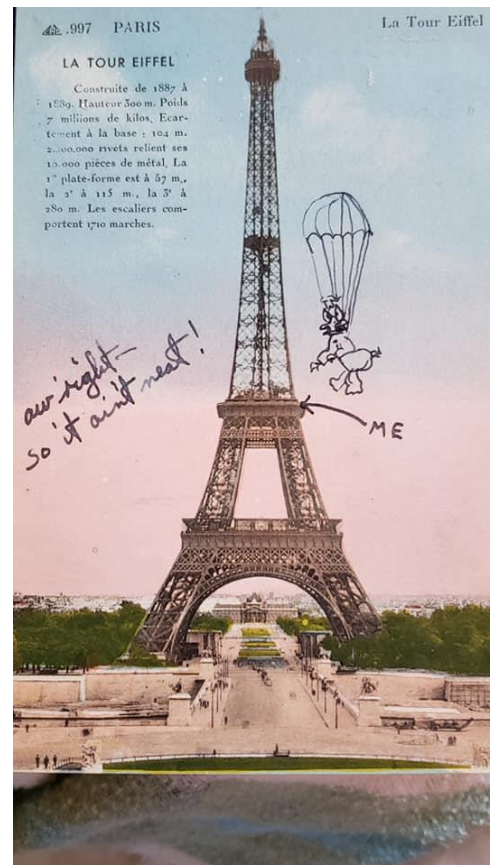
Thanks,

**Glenn Helms**

Anyone recognize the people in these photos? Probably all E Company. – Bob Barrett

From **Claire Giblin** and **Allan Johnson**, posted Nov 10:

Dug into a couple letters home, from 1945, with Dad today.







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Claire, I am so sorry your Dad is having this rapid health changes. Prayers for your Dad and you.

**Chris Lindner**

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From **Claire Giblin** (Nov 15):

There was a knock at the door this morning, and a huge pile of Veterans Day cards delivered from the local school. Each is signed, "from your 2nd Grade Friend. "

Random quote: "Thank you for protecting us from bad people. "

Such a lovely thing



"Dear Brave Soldier..."



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A beautiful picture commemorating those who lost their lives in the Southern Invasion of France. Thank you. Thank you also for the great picture of the 517th's last President Johnson and Claire. Allan has always been such a great, energetic representative of the mem of the 517th and he was the perfect leader as the association grappled with the task of dissolution yet ensuring that it's remaining treasury funds went to preserve the history of the 517th. How blessed we were to know him and to have him at the helm.

We are also grateful to Irma and Arnold for their persevering spirit in honoring the service of the 517th during the Battle of the Bulge even as we as a world are confronting the pandemic. Needless to say, their message pumped me up. Thank you **Irma and Arnold** for your love and caring.

May we all pause to remember the many selfless sacrifices of our 517 heroes on this Veterans Day. Because of their commitment we have the privilege to live in this great country as we strive to work together to form a more perfect union. That is our united responsibility as an expression of gratitude for their sacrifices. May God shower us with every grace to do so as the best way to honor them. God bless America and our troops.

### **Pat Seitz**

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Hey Bob, You are a great man for all you do to keep the legacy of the 517<sup>th</sup> alive. In the last Mail Call there is mention of the movie "Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed," based upon my brother Lory's book "Letters Home." Of course, I am so pleased that the movie was made as it contributes to the legacy of the great men of the 517<sup>th</sup>. The movie was based upon the book, and weaves accurate facts throughout, but the story is mostly fictitious. I thought for those interested I would send the accurate facts of that day. Here is an excerpt from the jump into Southern France from the book "Letters Home." I also want to send best wishes to **Allan Johnson** and Claire. You are in my prayers.

### **Tim Curtis**

Son of **Harlan "Bud" Curtis** (HQ/1)

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Letter to Mom from Harland L. Curtis  
Combat Jump into Southern France  
August 15, 1944 as recorded by Bud on August 22, 1944

Dear Mom,

We boarded C-47's (the twin engine plane that was used by paratroopers) in Italy (Chiteviccia) about 2:30 am and had a nice pleasant ride with no opposition at all. Most of us were asleep until almost time to jump. They woke us up and said we would be over the field in eight minutes. That was about 5:00 am. We stood up and hooked up. It seemed like years went by as those last minutes ticked off. I was number 13 man. The green light came on and guys began to disappear in front of me. Then there I was at the door. I had a hell of a body position. I went out of the door like I was throwing a flying block with my right shoulder at somebody. I was heading down nose first when "Wham" she opened and jerked me back up right. I looked up to make sure my chute was open and then I looked around. We must have jumped awfully high because I thought I was never going to come



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down. There was a low fog about a 100 feet off the ground and it looked just like water. I really thought my number was up for sure. I was cussing the Air Corps and all there ancestors for 17 generations back.

When I sank through the mist I was just beginning to figure it all out when “Thud” I hit the ground. I will never forget that morning. I was miles away from the jump field. Later I found out that it was a good thing I didn’t land on the jump field as the Germans had it all ready for us with mines, machine guns, and flame throwers. All I could see was forms of trees through the fog. I cut myself out of my chute and when I stood up I seemed to have lost my sense of balance. I fell down and rolled down the side of a mountain a few yards. I stood up again, and did the same thing again. I stood up again and took a couple of steps and fell off a ledge about 10 feet high and about broke my neck. There was dry grass all over and every step I took you could hear it for a mile. I decided to lay still for a while and see if I could figure out where I was at. I didn’t know which way to go. I heard somebody moving a little ways in front of me. I shouted the password at him hoping it was one of our guys, but instead of getting the right answer I got a couple of bullets just over my head. I took off for a big rock and figured I would have it out with the guy, but then I heard somebody behind me. Once again I made the mistake of hoping it was one of our guys and shouted the password to him and got my answer in hot lead. It was so foggy we couldn’t see each other but we could hear every move each of us made.

There must have been a whale of a patrol around me and every step I took away from them I could hear them coming closer. I knew as long as it stayed foggy I could hold them off, but it began to get light and I decided the best thing to do was make a run for it and hope they would miss. I took off zig zagging and they opened up on me, but I was lucky and got to the other side of the hill and down in the valley and there I met some of our own guys.

We climbed over another hill and came to a road and met up with most of the company. Ever since then I haven’t had much trouble. In fact the Germans are running to fast. I haven’t seen one for days.

*End of the letter*

*In 2004 an article appeared in the Thunderbolt newspaper (a newspaper started after the war for men of the 517<sup>th</sup> to correspond with each other). Bud had read an article about a challenge and password used on that first day after their combat jump. The password did match with what he remembered so he related to me what he remembered about his jump on August 15, 2004 and asked me to write down so it could be put on the email site that is used daily by members of the 517<sup>th</sup> and their family and friends. His comments started a great deal of conversation on the email site from many troopers and what they remembered about the challenge and password that day. Some men had clickers like the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division did on D-Day. Like my dad some did not have those.*

This is from mail call on 517<sup>th</sup> email site:

Okay, [here is more about the challenge and password.](#)



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My father (Bud Curtis, HQ, 1<sup>st</sup> BN) did not have a clicker, but was only given the challenge and password. He told me last night 2-11-04, when he jumped into southern France all of the information he was given didn't match. The moon was supposed to be on his right side, with trees on the left. He said it wasn't. All he saw was clouds below. With the moon shining on the clouds my dad thought it was water. He began to try and release himself from his harness. He didn't want to drown. The harness was too tight and he couldn't get out of it (thank goodness for him and me!). When he landed, it was on a terrace. He still couldn't get out of his harness and had to cut himself free with his knife. He said it was pitch black and he couldn't even see his hand in front of his face. He said he must have landed right into a German patrol of 5 or more men. He said he took a couple of steps and fell down the side of the terrace to a lower terrace below next to a tree. There were leaves on the ground and every time he took a step it made a crunch sound. He heard someone and so he quietly said, "Democracy", the challenge. Then waited for the password, Lafayette. It never came. Just then he could see the silhouette of a German soldier though the haze, about 100 feet in front of him. He also heard other Germans off in the distance to his right crunching on the leaves. The German to his front raised his rifle. In that split second my dad was going to shoot him, but remembered his gun powder flashed and the German's gun powder did not. He knew if he shot the German to his front, the Germans to his flank would shoot him when they saw the flash from his rifle. He didn't shoot but dove to the ground just as the German to his front shot. My dad heard the bullet wiz by. He laid there quietly until the Germans walked off in the other direction, I guess thinking they killed him because they heard him fall. He lied there for a few minutes and then got up and took off in the opposite direction and heard someone else. He said "Democracy" quietly, no answer. He said it louder, DEMOCRACY! He next heard an American voice say, "Shut up your going to get us killed." He did and was very thankful to find another American Paratrooper, of which to this day he never knew his name, but they sure took care of each other on that day.

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From the Longview TX New Journal:

## **Pool: Remembering one of our veterans**

By Frank T. Pool

Nov 10, 2020

Tomorrow we celebrate Veterans Day. This is the time when it is appropriate to say, "Thank you for your service," to those who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Several of my family members are veterans, including two brothers-in-law. Almost all the fathers of my friends growing up on Maple Street in the '60s were veterans of World War II.

My mother's two brothers were both combat veterans of that war. I dedicate this year's holiday especially to the memory of one of them, **Leon Crain**.

In the last few years, I have deliberately stopped reading books about war. I take too much pleasure from reading about people killing people, and I've become increasingly





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anti-war as I have aged. I believe that war is the worst thing humans do to each other, and if wars are sometimes unavoidable, they are much more avoidable than I once believed.

I broke my own rule recently when I read a book about Leon's outfit, "[Battling Buzzards: The Odyssey of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team 1943-45](#)" by Gerald Astor. It's primarily an oral history based on interviews given decades later, but it also gives the bigger picture of deployments and battles.

Leon served in the [460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion](#) that was attached to the 517th. They jumped out of C-47 aircraft with cannons and ammunition. All of them were volunteers.

They were equipped with [75mm pack howitzers](#), originally designed in the '20s to be broken down and packed by mules in difficult terrain. Although the stubby guns were the low end of artillery support, they could lob an eight-pound shell five-and-a-half miles. That could make a big difference to their fellow paratroopers.

The 460th fought in three campaigns. They deployed to Italy by ship and engaged in light to moderate combat with German units. These units [consisted sometimes of Russians](#) who volunteered to fight rather than starve to death in POW camps.

The 460th only jumped into combat once, with [Operation Dragoon](#), the assault on southern France in August 1944. Their objective was to prevent German counterattacks on the landing beaches. As with the air drops in Normandy two months earlier, many of the paratroopers missed their landing zones. The 460th batteries had to be wheeled by hand for miles before coming into combat.

The invasion chased the Germans out of southern France. By then the Nazis were using third-rate troops and obsolete weapons, often captured French, Polish and Czech. The invasion brought an end to the Vichy regime.

Though the fighting was relatively easy, a lot of good men got killed. Astor interviewed paratroopers who described the deaths of friends and enemies, and sometimes their own war wounds.

Far worse lay ahead. In December the Airborne units were called in to stop the German advances in the [Battle of the Bulge](#). Battalions of the 517th were detached to points of greatest need and suffered heavy casualties. It was a frozen hell on earth.

Eventually the battle was won, but at great cost. The unit was withdrawn from the line, and eventually disbanded and incorporated into another Airborne division.

Leon survived the war but died too early, in his 50s. There is a family story of his accidental meeting with his brother Charles at a fountain in Paris.

We use the word "hero" promiscuously these days. If everybody is a hero, then nobody really is. Leon was a hero, jumping out of airplanes into combat, 17 years old.

Thank you for your service, Leon.



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From: <https://www.facebook.com/CampToccoaAtCurrahee/>

Camp Update:

Oct 20:

NEXT WORK WEEK: November 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th.

OK, our last work week was very successful. We were able to repair some of the damage to the fuselage, get it primed, painted and attached to the main land gear spar. Now we need to finish attaching the fuselage, prime and paint the top of the spar, install the windows and flooring, then move it to the parking lot for final assembly while we work on the foundation and parking pad for the aircraft. If you have time and want to help with this project, just bring your lunch or your lawn chair. We always enjoy having workers or spectators. Currahee.

Nov 9:

It has been a busy time at the Camp. In the last 60 days, Project C-47 has made major progress. The fuselage and center spar has been repaired, cleaned, primed and painted. The fuselage and center spar was mated together and secured. 75% of the flooring has been installed and we're waiting on the window gaskets to be delivered, then the windows will be installed. On Sunday November 8th, we moved the airplane to the front parking lot, close to where it will be permanently displayed. The rest of the assembly will take place as soon as the site work is finished. The plane will be on display anytime the Camp is open.

Work on the 506th Barracks has been completed. The interior walls are now in place and painted. The floor has been sanded, stained and has a gray walkway strip down the center. A 3 Ton HVAC unit was installed, along with duct work for a very cozy stay. There is now a ADA ramp on the back of the Barracks so anyone with mobility issues can inspect or stay overnight once the Barracks are open. Our thanks to Matt Roesch Construction and his crew for all their hard work.

The 517th Barracks has had windows installed and the interior work continues.

The Headquarters Building received a new coat of paint and gutters.

The Pavilion was cleaned, treated, pressure washed and a stain sealer applied. It received new gutters also.

As always, if you haven't been to the Camp to see all of the progress, you are missing out on seeing a true Gem and a piece of American history right here in your backyard. It's worth the trip.

Churrahee!





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On November 11, 2020, the National Museum of the American Indian shares a virtual message to mark the completion of the National Native American Veterans Memorial and acknowledge the service and sacrifice of Native veterans and their families. To learn more about the memorial, visit <https://AmericanIndian.si.edu>.



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I read that they just opened the Native American Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. It got me thinking about whether there were any Native Americans in the 517<sup>th</sup>. So I did some digging in the archives and I found a couple of references to troopers who were at least in part Native American. -- BB

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First is a note from **Marty Donahoo** in MailCall 1117, May 2006, about **Jack Dunaway**

*Hi Ben~ This is pretty long but interesting. Do with it whatever you think is best.*

***Lud Gibbons** and I went to the Memorial Service for **Jack Dunaway** on Saturday. I'm forwarding this photo of Jack and his son, Michael, (taken in late '43 or early '44) along with a synopsis of his obituary. His ex-wife wrote the obit. She told us that they had remained friends throughout his life. He did many things in his life that I think anyone who knew him might be interested in.*

*He was born in Oklahoma in 1914. His maternal grandmother was a full-blooded Indian of the Cherokee Nation. He enjoyed growing up with friends and relatives as part of the Cherokee culture.*



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*Jack was very interested in school and graduated from High School at age 16. He graduated summa cum laude from college at the age of 19. After graduation a cousin working in the casting department at 20th Century Fox in Hollywood told him he might be able to get him work at the studio for \$50 a week (1936). Several screen tests later Jack was under contract. He soon became one of its most in-demand stunt men, particularly in Westerns. As a Cowboy, and sometimes as a feathered Indian, Jack took falls for the likes of Clark Gable, Joel McCrae, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry as well as on countless Studio location film sets.*

*Jack met actress, Virginia Wicks, on a Paramount Studios set where they were shooting "Wells Fargo." Jack was Joel McCrae's stand-in for the film. Later that year Jack and Virginia married. They had one child, a son, Michael Wicks Dunaway. Not long after, Virginia was under contract to the Samuel Goldwyn Studios. She was a Goldwyn Girl.*

*At the outbreak of World War II Jack enlisted and trained as a paratrooper. He served with the 517th PRCT.*

*Returning to California after the War, Jack set up a driving school in Hollywood and attended night courses, earning his law degree and passing the State Bar of California January 14, 1954. He soon after opened a small office at Hollywood and Vine.*

*An important thread in Jack's life was always the yearly gathering of Jack's parachute combat team, the veterans of the 517th. He never missed going until his health finally deteriorated to the point where he was unable to attend.*

*In 1973, Jack met Yoko Seto, a Hollywood film editor. She remained a faithful companion of Jack's for the rest of his life.*

Marty Donahoo



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There is a story in *Battling Buzzards* from **Charlie Keen** of B Company:

“On one patrol, we had an Apache named Cammacho [**Patricio M. Camacho**] for lead scout. With his dark skin he put me in mind of a black panther, the four-egged kind. It was a bright moonlit night; scattered clouds occasionally blotted out the moon. The trip took a long time because we had to contend with terraces, each one with a rock wall every few yards.

“All the way down I heard footsteps behind us and they sounded like hobnails, not our boots. I kept passing the word up but they thought I was spooked by squirrels. Finally, everyone else heard them and they whispered back the command to “freeze”. As luck would have it, I was caught with one cheek of my behind on a ledge and the other half of my backside hanging. Every time I attempted to move, some stones would fall. Everyone would go “Sshhhh!”

“Steve Weirzba and Stan Rozwood, both Polacks from Buffalo, New York, were on each side of me. Steve still had family in Poland and he hated the Germans with a passion. Stan felt the same.





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Suddenly, I realized the Germans were coming down the same path we were on and I was caught in the middle. Steve had to piss and did it on his hand so that the urine would run off his fingers and not make a loud noise. At the same time, he muttered Polish under his breath. Old Dad, me, figured this old Delaware by was in one hell of a spot.

“When they were only about ten feet back on the next terrace, they abruptly turned left and passed down about fifteen feet before they came down on our terrace. Just at this moment, the moon popped out. There was Cammacho, crouched over looking like a disciple of death with his Tommy gun cradled in his arms. The Germans sopped, froze and one of them said ‘Hottentot.’

“That was the last word he ever uttered because the Apache opened up and about thirty rifles and Tommy guns opened up and somebody even threw a hand grenade. Weirzba fired his rifle about four inches in front of my face. I thought, would my mother ever understand how I could have been killed by a friendly Polack in the south of France.”

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There is another brief mention in *Battling Buzzards* from **Lt. John Saxion** of HQ/3:

“**Colonel Paxton** assemble all of the bazookas into a single platoon and put me in command. My sergeant was an American Indian, one of the best fighting leaders I saw. When the lead company would meet resistance, the cry. “bazookas up front’ would come. Most times I split the platoon, the sergeant taking one half and I the other. I would give him the choice of advancing through a field or a road, and he would usually pick the worst of it.”

Unfortunately, Saxion did not mention the name of the Indian sergeant in the book.

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Then there were a couple of stories, also in *Battling Buzzards* about the troubled **Woodrow W. McQuaid** of G Company:

As recapped by **Jerry Wolfford** in MailCall 1814:

“Hi Ben, I have read several stories in the book "Battling Buzzards" as well as little vignettes in past 517th Mail Calls about Woodrow McQuaid. I tried to find accounts on the 517th Mail Call Archives site by the search engine [Google] about McQuaid but came up empty handed. I had decided that there never was a trooper named McQuaid and that some author made him up to spice up some of the stories in order to sell more books. And that I didn't really read about him in some of the past Mail Calls. So to prove it I went to the 1944, 517th Christmas Roster. Sure enough there he was listed in Company G. as Pvt. Woodrow W. McQuaid. He at least did exist in the 517th and not a figment of my imagination. The story I read in the *Battling Buzzards* told of an incident in a bar in Italy where he was the only trooper in the place along with Italian patrons. According to the story there were at least a couple of Black Shirts Fascist sympathizers among the crowd that did not appreciate the presence of a rather inebriated U S Paratrooper and made their presence known by producing a long blade knife. To the surprise of the Black Shirts our trooper was packing a .25 cal. Beretta pistol in his waist band when the confrontation occurred. As the book related, it all depended on which account of the story you heard but the facts are that at least one of the knife wielding bad boys was shot to death in the altercation. If nothing else Pvt McQuaid taught the Italians in that bar an important lesson, “never take a knife to a gunfight”. Especially if the gun is in the hands of a rather drunk paratrooper. Of course the Mayor of the



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town wanted McQuaid charged with murder according to the account I read in "Battling Buzzards". This resulted in Major Zais having to keep Pvt. McQuaid on a short leash. "

Then a follow-up note from **Howard Hensleigh**:

"McQuaid was real alright. In the attack on St. Cezaire he was in I Co and assisted **Sgt. Frank Dallas** in killing enough Germans in their defense line to allow I Co to achieve their objective with few if any casualties. In Lille after VE Day when I saw McQuaid get off the pass truck I instructed my MPs to pick him up when they saw him headed for trouble but before he got into it. I locked him up in our jail that was a miserable hole until the pass trucks were ready to leave. By then he had sobered up, but thought he would be in deep trouble with **Mel Zais**, but I assured him that no charges would be preferred. McQuaid had points and the I Co CO made sure he made use of them and left the unit in Joigny with the other high point men. That was the saddest day in McQuaid's life and tears stained his face all the way to the departing train. He was a dead shot and a hell of a man to have in combat. I talked to **Frank Dallas** once about him and Frank told me he was an American Indian. We were fairly certain when he left us that we probably would not see him again."

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In a future MailCall, I'll include the whole story of **Woodrow McQuaid** from Mississippi. – Bob Barrett

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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](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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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>

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During World War II, four paratroopers each from England, Scotland, France and the US, were on a plane about to jump when they realized there was only one serviceable parachute.

The French paratrooper downed a glass of cognac, said "Pour la France!" and jumped without the parachute.

The American downed a glass of bourbon, said "For freedom!" and jumped without the parachute.

The Scotsman downed a glass of whiskey, said "For Scotland!" and threw the Englishman.