



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2461

January 24, 2021

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

MailCall News



Hello. Just wanted to share that my father **Gabe Delesio** is still an avid reader of Mail Call. Before visiting him we always print out the latest for him to read and keep up with the news of the 517th. He always looks forward to them and can recall people, places and dates as if they were yesterday. He will sit down to read the Mail Call before I even take my coat off. I had the privilege of accompanying him to a couple reunions, the last one being in New Orleans. What a special time. My father will turn 99 in June and is still living on his own and doing well.

Thank you for all you do in keeping the past and present alive for these special men and women.

Best wishes,

Denise Delesio



Gabe Delesio, Tony Mandio and Merle McMorrow - 2015



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Hi Denise,

I remember Gabe well, from the New Orleans reunion. That was a fun group. Thanks for the update on Gabe. Tell him I said hello!! -- BB

Are you still adding information to the Monthly Casualty Report Summaries? The 517th web site says that **Clark Archer** is creating these summaries from microfilm copies of Morning Reports. After looking at the samples of the Morning Reports on the web site I can see why this would be a time-consuming process. Do you know how Clark obtains the Morning Reports used for the summaries? Are they available on some government web site or do you have to go to some government records facility to view or copy them?

Thanks,

Glenn Helms (son of **Ray Helms**, E Company)

Clark Archer of B Company was an amazing historian and researcher for the 517th. He was the primary editor for Paratroopers Odyssey back in 1985. When he and my Dad were still alive, Clark would correspond frequently and send some of his reports. What I loved about Clark, who did most of this work before computers, is that he would hand-write most of his analysis, including morning reports. But he was careful to write in the clearest handwriting. You can see some of his handwritten records on the website.

I don't know the entire history of the morning reports. I do know Clark had stacks of paper copies of Morning Reports from many of the Companies (not all), which were made from microfilm printouts. Someone once set for many days printing these out one by one. I suspect that these were from official Army records, and therefore probably from the records stored at the US Army War College, commonly known as the Carlisle Barracks in Carlisle PA. The Carlisle Barracks stores other records, such as **Bill Boyle's** military papers. There are many other sources of Army personnel records, such as the St. Louis center, which had a fire many years ago, (<https://history.army.mil/reference/records.htm>) but I believe the Carlisle is where most of the 517th paper are located.

Eventually, Clark's copies of morning reports were collected by **Mike Wells**, son of **Chester Wells** of H Company). Mike spent many, many hours over several years transcribing the paper copies, often

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1-02-1

CASUALTY SUMMARY MONTH/YEAR FEB/45 COMPANY B Co

NAME/RANK	DAY	KIA	WIA	MIA	NBC	RTD
ELKINS, LAMAR	PT 02					*
PEAVEY, RALPH	PFC 02					*
CLANEY, GILBERT	PFC 02					*
GRAY, DOYLE	PT 03	*				
BOLIN, WYMAN	PFC 04			*		
VANDERFORD, GEORGE	PFC 04			*		
CROSTREE, MARCUS	PFC 04				*	
KEARDON, HAROLD	1LT 05				*	
GARCIN, THOMAS	PFC 05				*	
DIDOMINZIO, VINCENT	PFC 08		*			2/14
HREBEN, MICHAEL	PFC 08		*			
DAVIS, JESSE	PT 08		*			
BACON, HOWARD	1LT 09					*
HAYES, FRANK	CPL 09	*				
DOUGHERTY, CLARENCE	PT 09	*				
GAUER, FERDINAND	PFC 09	*				
FLAHAUT, SHERMAN	PT 09		*			3/31
ARCHER, CLARK	Sgt 09		*			3/11
DEAN, WILLIAM	PT 09		*			
GADDY, HARRY	PT 10					*
REECE, VIRGIL	PT 10					*
JAMES, FRANK	PT 10					*
FLORENTINE, JAMES	PT 10					*
THOMSON, ROBERT	1LT 22					*
HREBEN, MICHAEL	PFC 23	DOW				



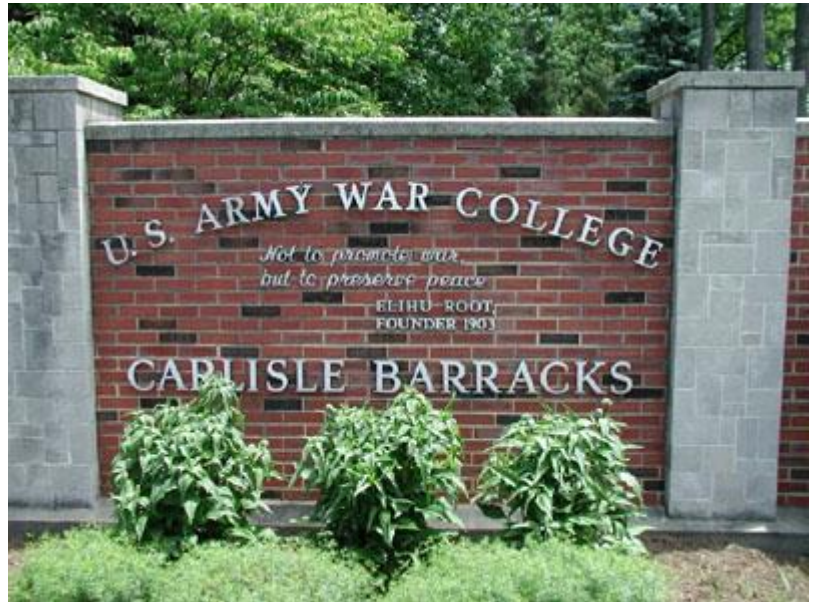
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difficult to read, into spreadsheets which can be searched by person, Company, date and location. Mike's files are one of my primary information sources when families want to learn about specific events of their family members. Sometimes it is the only place where I can prove that someone was in the 517th, since most enlisted men were not mentioned in books and histories. The morning reports are very incomplete, but for the ones we have, I can see transfers, locations, promotions, and injuries. And as we know they had a very high rate of casualties - 1,576 purple hearts for about 2,600 men, about a 60% casualty rate! Of course, some troopers had multiple injuries and purple hearts. The one that still stands out to me is actually Clark Archer himself, who shows up wounded at least 3 times.

Bob Barrett

Trivia: The Carlisle Barracks is the oldest active military base in the US, opened in 1776. (Second oldest is West Point.)

At the intersection of Indian trails along Letort Creek, in the eighteenth century the town of Carlisle became the jumping-off point for traders and settlers heading over the Alleghenies on their way west. A brief 1756 encampment at Carlisle preceded the more permanent settlement in May 1757 during the French and Indian War between the colonies of Britain and France, when Colonel John Stanwix marched upstream with British regulars and provincials against the backdrop of the international Seven Years' War. After the American Revolutionary War, from 1783–1837, the town of Carlisle was significant as the frontier gateway, as a greatly increased wave of land-hungry migrants moved west.



- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlisle_Barracks

RE: **John S Hopkins, Kelly (Coghan) Holderbaum** (John's granddaughter)

...just saw comments on my first post...very glad that Kelly found more info and was able to get service records accurately amended for her grandfather **John S Hopkins**. The link for the site which has the "long yard" photo I referred to is still active. The photo for 1st Battalion Company C at Camp Toccoa has him with the number 41 and a name of John S Hopkins; however, the person pictured does not appear to be the same as in Kelly's photo...it also mentions the "2nd row" but he is in the front row...just fyi link: <https://1stabtf.com/fr/histoire-des-unites/517th-parachute-regimental-combat-team/long-yard-picture-517/> There is a button to translate to English..

John Jolley

Thanks, John. Good info! -- BB



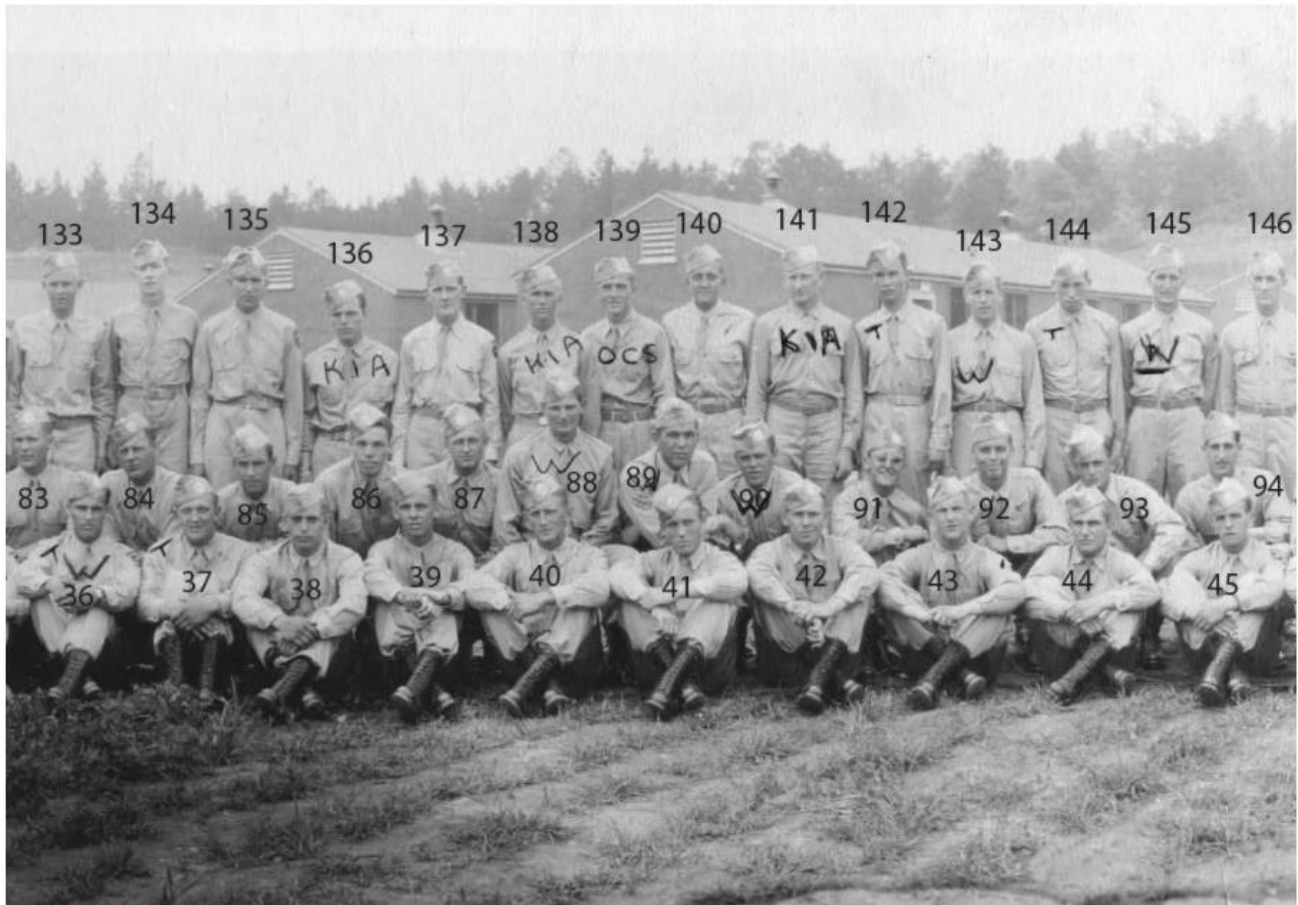
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This [1st Airborne Task Force website](#) is the work of our good friend **Loïc Jankowiak**, who is also the author of *The 517th Gang*. There are a lot more stories and info there than the last time I looked into it. The page referenced by John Jolley includes a number of Company photos of the 517th and attempts to identify as many troopers as possible. Good research again, Loïc!

Sample from:

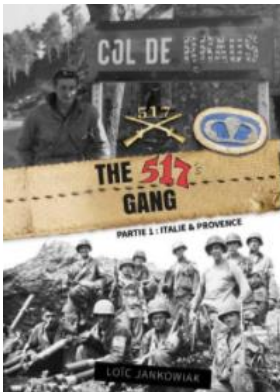
<https://1stabtf.com/fr/histoire-des-unites/517th-parachute-regimental-combat-team/long-yard-picture-517/>

C COMPANY



1st row : 3. Nate Rubenstein

2nd row : 41. John S. Hopkins



Loïc's book about the 517th is available at:

[The 517th's Gang \[US & ENG\] - First Airborne Task Force - The Forgotten Paratroopers \(1stabtf.com\)](#)



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I see that the Wikipedia page for **Terry Sanford** has expanded to include a little more data about his time with the 517th:

From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Sanford#FBI_and_military_service

FBI and military service

With Coates' help, Sanford applied to join the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The bureau waived its requirement of a law degree and admitted him. After completing his semester exams, he began training in December 1941. He was posted as a special agent in Columbus, Ohio and St. Louis. He married Margaret Rose Knight, a woman he had met at UNC-Chapel Hill, on July 4, 1942, and they later had two children: Terry Jr. and Elizabeth. Sanford became bored with his work at the FBI, and pursued a position in the Armed Forces—as the United States had since entered the World War II—being especially intrigued by the new paratrooper units. After securing leave from the FBI, he enlisted in the United States Army on December 7, 1942. He was sent to Camp Toccoa in Georgia for training and was assigned to a medical detachment in the 501st Infantry Regiment. After eight weeks he was made a staff sergeant, and following jump training at Fort Benning he was sent to Camp Mackall and made assistant first sergeant. After a month he was promoted to first sergeant. In 1943 he underwent officer training and became a second lieutenant, and was made a platoon commander in A Company, First Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

In May 1944 Sanford's unit was shipped to Italy. He first fought in combat against German forces in June in the mountains north of Rome. In August he parachuted into southern France as the leader of B Company, First Battalion in Operation Dragoon. By December he had achieved the rank of first lieutenant. On December 16 the German army launched a counteroffensive through the Ardennes region in Belgium, initiating the Battle of the Bulge. Sanford and his unit were quickly deployed to the village of Soy. On December 26, while his company was holding a ridge line near the Soy-Hotton road, German forces moved into the area. When they approached Sanford's position, he ordered his men to open fire. In the ensuing confusion a German major ran into the American line, and Sanford grabbed him by his belt and captured him. In early January 1945 the First Battalion occupied the town of Bergeval. Two companies then went to reconnoiter a bluff east of the town. Battalion commander **Major William J. Boyle**, Sanford, and two other men turned back towards the town to coordinate their forces. Along their route they were ambushed by German machine guns, which seriously wounded Boyle while Sanford was struck in the left hand by shrapnel. In late February the 517th Regiment was recalled to Joigny in preparation for a new airborne operation, but it and subsequent assaults were dropped as Allied ground forces made steady advances over German-held territory. For his service in France and his wounds Sanford was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.



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RE; War Diary

My father was **Fred Canziani**, D Co. 517 paratroopers.

Do you have any of these photos available that **Mike Kane, Jr** submitted. Do you know if he is alive, or a contact for him?

Diane Bradford

Hi Diane.

You can download any of the low-resolution photos from the web site. If you're looking for high-res copies, I will reach out to **Mike Kane**.

Bob Barrett

Diane is referring to the D Company photos from Mike Kane at:

http://www.517prct.org/photos/d_company_files/collage01.jpg



left: **Fred Canziani** in the foreground; Scarf over mouth: **John Sarti**. right (in blanket) **Mike Kane**



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A couple more photos of Fred Canziani form Mike Kane's collection:



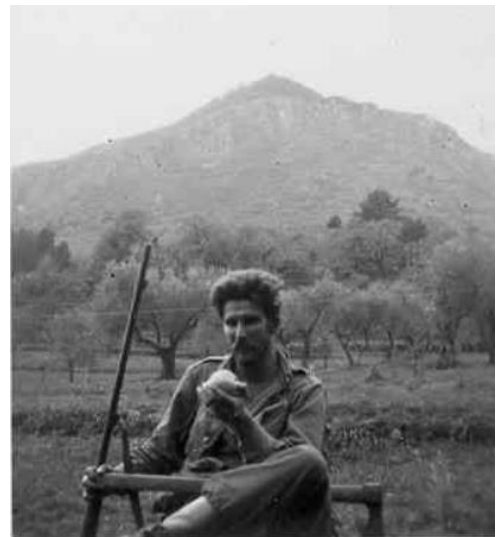
The men in the upper left corner are (L to R) Mike Kane and Fred Canziani

Jim McWilliams and
Fred Canziani



Jimmy (Little) Olsen,
Fred Canziani

Fred Canziani





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From **Ben Arnold**

16 February 1945, The Elizabethton Star (looks like a reprint of a Hal Boyle article in Stars and Stripes)

Burton "Tex" Meador was with H Company.

**Snow-drift Saves Paratrooper In
'Black Cat' Jump From Third Floor**

By HAL BOYLE

WITH THE U. S. 517th PARACHUTE COMBAT TEAM (AP) — Every parachute trooper sweats out that 13th "black cat" jump.

Cpl. Burton E. Meador, Waco, Texas, made his without benefit of a parachute. He was dozing peacefully in his billet in a frozen sector of snowy Belgium one night when flames swept through his third floor room.

A fellow trooper accidentally had kicked over a can of gasoline and a stream of it ran by a hot stove and ignited.

There was only one sure exit—a window—and there was a three-floor drop to the ground. But Meador didn't hesitate. He dived out of the window, counting from force of habit as he fell, and plunged into a deep snowdrift—unhurt.

"That was my 13th jump—and

didn't even have time to worry about it," said Meador.

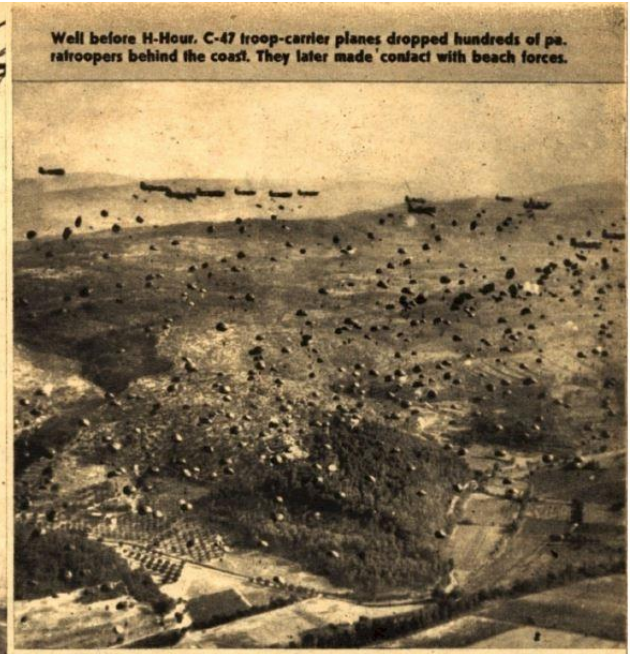
Next page, another page from the Sept 8, 1944 Yank Magazine with photos of Operation Dragoon.



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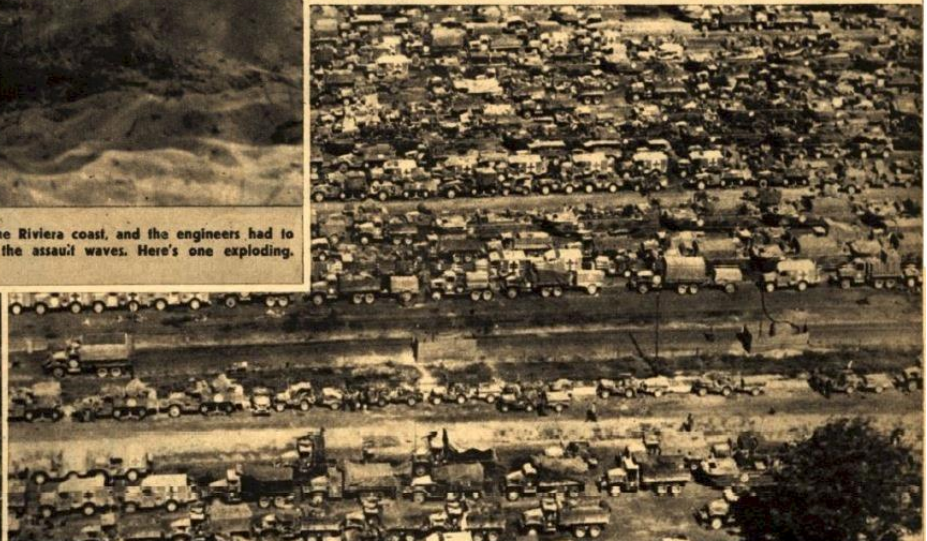
Mines were planted by the Germans along the entire length of the Riviera coast, and the engineers had to work at top speed to clear them from the beaches in time for the assault waves. Here's one exploding.



Well before H-Hour, C-47 troop-carrier planes dropped hundreds of paratroopers behind the coast. They later made contact with beach forces.



Oilders loaded with troops and jeeps were towed in by transports and landed on farm lands behind coast.



Thousands of jeeps, trucks, weapons carriers and other vehicles were landed with the assault troops. Mobility is one of the outstanding features of the 7th Army, which rolled on toward Marseilles at a record clip.

of the Allied fleet, and our LST shook from steam to stern with each blasting of the battleships, it was like watching a football game from a choice 40-yard-line seat.

Minesweepers patrolled up and down the coast shoreline. LSTs all around us were opening their broad bows and pouring out LCIs and LCVTs loaded with combat infantrymen and tanks speeding toward the beachhead. Far overhead groups of Thunderbolts and Spitfires and Lighnings swept across the pale blue sky looking in vain for Jerry planes. Flocks of Liberators, looking like giant silver birds, swung majestically toward the hills beyond the beachhead, and from the hills we could hear the faint but clear reverberations of their bombs.

At H plus five an LCVP swung along our ship and a GI yelled up, "It's all over but the shouting." We walked right in." That was the only news we had of the progress our doughfeet were making on the beachhead until late in the afternoon when another LCVP came by to report that our troops were eight miles inland, though the Jerries were putting up a rough rear-guard action. We sat around, still lining the top deck rails, waiting for some official announcement of the invasion's progress, but the announcement never came.

Throughout the afternoon the gunfire from our warships increased in intensity. Great clouds of smoke billowed over the hills on the coast. We listened for the return fire from the Jerry guns. There was none. "Jerry's getting it this time," said one GI grimly. "It sure was different at Salerno."

At H plus 10 our LST made its way around the peninsula to our designated landing point. We were ordered to pack and prepare to disembark. We crowded our way into the hot, stuffy tank deck. The ship's doors swung open and through the giant tunnel we could see flame-colored splashes of sunset.

We waited for more than half an hour without any order to disembark, and the RAF men started to sing, "Oh, why are we waiting, Oh, why are we waiting, Oh why, Oh why, Oh why?" with profane variations, and followed it up with "There'll be no promotions this side of the ocean,

so take my advice lads, — 'em all, — em all!" They were filling the tank deck with the sentimental refrain of Annie Laurie when an ear-splitting staccato of ack-ack suddenly burst from the top deck. We ran for the life belts, which we had already tossed aside, and the bow doors swiftly closed. "Army personnel," came a voice from the loudspeaker, "will return to their former positions and will remain on ship until further advice."

When we returned to our top deck corner, we were told that a Jerry ME 109 had been shot down while making a recon over the convoy.

On H plus 20 we finally got orders to disembark. We walked through the open doors of our LST, across the narrow pontoon strips, and onto the short, sandy beach. The early morning air was damp, cold and full of mist. Two hours later the sun broke through the mist, the air became bright and warm, and, as we trudged up the road from the beach to the wooded slope that was to be our bivouac area, we felt the cool breeze coming from the hills.

The invasion of Southern France was scarcely one-day old when T/Sgt. Murray Johnson of Boston, Mass., sauntered into the bivouac area, bringing with him a pretty French girl walking her bicycle, and a gnarled French farmer with a jug of wine. We pulled out our canteen cups. The wine was bright red, clear and dry.

"He's been saving it for us," explained Johnson. "He's been saving it for us a helluva long time."



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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
- 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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New Orleans, June 2015



John Jonientz (G), Gabriel Delsosio (460/C) , Allan Johnson (596), Leo Dean (Reg HQ), Mel Trenary (A), Phil McSpadden (460/HQ), Tony Mandio (HQ/1), Merle McMorrow (460/C)