



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2464

February 21, 2021

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



Gordon Lippmann
HQ/1 platoon leader

Hi Bob,

Hope all is well, COVID and the winter scourges haven't affected you.

It's been a long road to get this book published but I'm finally well on my way.

Don't remember if I told you that I made contact with **George Rumsey**, an old platoon member of Gordon's.

I have another request of you.

Who could I speak with about the paratrooper photo on the 517prct website? I'd like to use that concept on the cover of my book, if whomever owns it will approve.

Let me know, and I'll reach out to them.



Thanks - Best,

Robert Lofthouse (cosing of **Gordon Lippman**, HQ/1), Author of *Hold the Line*

Hi Rob,

Interesting question about that paratrooper background. I borrowed that image from the internet and use it as a background on many pages. I'll attach a larger size for you. That's one of the images I started using when my Dad and I started the website sometime around 2000 – 21 years ago!

I'll have to do some digging to see if I can recreate where I found it. But I vaguely remember that I found out, possibly pointed out by one of the MailCall readers, that this is actually a photo of a German paratrooper, not American. (Don't tell anyone.) Let me see if I can find the source info.

I greatly look forward to your book.



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Hi Rob,

Well, this search for that photo is interesting. With an image search engine I found it used on 3 other websites, but could not copy the image. But in looking at the matches, I remembered that the original used to be a little darker. I lightened the image for use as a background. But I cannot find where I stored the original.

Search #2:

The first page I found with a copy of that image is: <https://www.combatreform.org/kneepads.htm>, a site touting the benefits of wearing Knee pads to prevent paratrooper knee injuries. I wonder how big an audience they reach for that? Also interesting is that their main pages has info about knee injuries taken from a book, *German Paratrooper Forces 1935-1945*, By Brian L Davis. Did any of the 517th trooper wear knee pads and ankle braces under their uniforms? The website does give this warning:



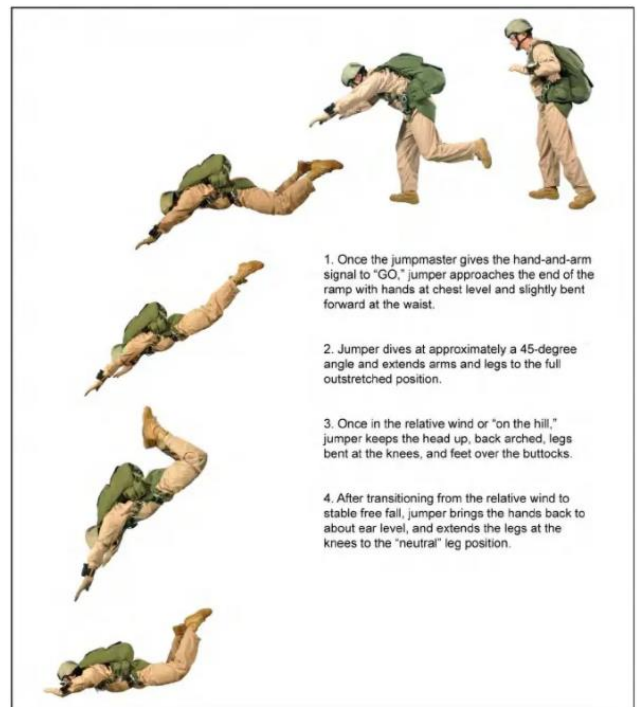
UPPER LEG PADDING

Fill your BDU/ACU trouser side pickets with soft TA-50 you have to carry anyway....to protect your legs in event of a hard landing. The nylon kit bag (not the cotton one) will fit into the BDU side trouser pocket instead of cluttering the parachute harness under leg straps. **The kit bag hinders exiting the harness in a combat/water landing and may have contributed to several parachute drowning deaths.**

The same image, but in a low-quality copy, is included in a *US Army Jumpmaster Study Guide* <https://www.scribd.com/document/99472871/US-Army-JM-Study-Guide>

I also found the image in another US Army document, *US Army Special Forces Military Free-Fall Operations*. <https://www.scribd.com/document/425572661/USArmy-SpecialForcesFreeFallOps>

It's in there somewhere, although I could not find the exact page, and again, I doubt that document was the original source. And so far, no one mentions that it is a German soldier. Now I am starting to think that someone might have thought it is a German soldier by looking at the shape of the helmet, but not knowing for sure. That manual written in 2014, is rather large, 398 pages, and I thought it is interesting in that it shows modern Special Forces do not necessarily jump out at low altitude with an attached jump strap that automatically deploys their chutes. They jump headfirst and freefall for some distance. Obviously, their chutes are more steerable than the WW2 variety. My Dad always reminded me that in WW2, the objective was to jump from as low as possible and land quickly, since you were an unarmed target on your descent.



1. Once the jumpmaster gives the hand-and-arm signal to "GO," jumper approaches the end of the ramp with hands at chest level and slightly bent forward at the waist.
2. Jumper dives at approximately a 45-degree angle and extends arms and legs to the full outstretched position.
3. Once in the relative wind or "on the hill," jumper keeps the head up, back arched, legs bent at the knees, and feet over the buttocks.
4. After transitioning from the relative wind to stable free fall, jumper brings the hands back to about ear level, and extends the legs at the knees to the "neutral" leg position.

Figure 7-3. Diving exit position



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Unfortunately, after a lot of searching, I cannot find anything that looks like the original image. Or even a higher resolution copy. But it does show up in many other websites and US Army documents. So it could probably be considered public domain. (But I'm not a lawyer.)

I did find this one I like, which looks like it is available for non-commercial use, from Creative Commons: [Parachutist Wallpapers HD Background | AWB \(allwhitebackground.com\)](http://www.allwhitebackground.com)



I thought the 517th family may be interested to in hearing of the passing of one of its former enemies, German soldier Udo Taubmann, whose story is told in my book.

Udo Taubmann was stationed in the Cannes area in August 1944, as a 17-year-old conscript. When the invasion occurred, he was, as far as I have been able to ascertain, sent to Montauroux, where he was wounded, and taken care of in **Doc Plassman's** improvised hospital in Montauroux. When the 517th liberated Montauroux for good a few days later, Taubmann was taken POW.

He later lived a peaceful life in Germany and died a few weeks ago. He is the last German soldier I know of who was in the Nice area in 1944.

Best regards

Jean-Loup Gassend





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From: https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/kilroy-was-here?utm_medium=atlas-page&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3WpSEYBxMIQ8hdSc9DbFYW3N_sBVVCv7CdyOXIdBenFJGszF7bJvweoHo

HIDDEN IN AN UNASSUMING NOOK behind the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., a small engraved cartoon pays homage to the lighter side of the “greatest generation.” The little bald-headed man known as Kilroy was one of the war’s most widespread inside jokes that circulated like a meme through allied forces in the European and Pacific theaters of war.



On military bases and battlefields the world over, GIs developed a reputation for covering every surface imaginable with variations of this simple cartoon. There were Kilroys in Japan, the Philippines, France, and Italy. One mysteriously even made its way into Joseph Stalin’s private bathroom at the Potsdam Conference, prompting questions from the paranoid dictator.

The whole thing started with an American rivet inspector named James Kilroy who would scrawl his name all over the interiors of Liberty Ships after certifying parts as complete. Pat Tillery of KilroyWasHere.org described in an interview how, “sailors would [subsequently] go down into the bilges and find ‘Kilroy Was Here’ all over, in places where nobody had ever been before on brand new ships.” The unexpected ubiquity of the phrase was amusing, and people started retagging it everywhere as a sort of joke.

After arriving overseas, the troops encountered a widespread English cartoon of a bald fellow that had similar humorous connotations and the two memes were quickly joined together.

The Kilroy graffiti, “was comfort and a little bit rebellion, because they were told not to, but it spread all over the world,” says Tillery. “No matter how bad it got crawling out of that foxhole everyday, when they found a Kilroy they’d know someone was there before and survived. It was so important to every GI.”

The original cartoons were fleeting wonders, commonly drawn with fading chalk, pencil, or whatever else was at hand. It’s fitting that at the Washington World War II Memorial, two symmetrical Kilroys have been etched into the stone, one near the backside of the PA pillar, and the other opposite it. These etchings keep the little story alive, and let veterans know that Kilroy is still with GIs whenever they are in harm’s way.



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From the Currahee Military Museum: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/toccoahistory>



If you like World War II history and road trips, we have the thing for you!


We are excited to officially announce the launch of the new Georgia World War II Heritage Trail!! Currahee Military Museum has partnered with sites across the state to bring a new experience to visitors. Take flight in a WWII airplane, build a Liberty Ship, explore a pilot training base, march in the boots of the Band of Brothers, and learn the personal stories of courage, character and patriotism.

Pick up a passport at any member location and begin your historical adventure today! You can now learn all about Georgia's incredible World War II story by visiting ten different sites across the state.

Currahee Military Museum, along with nine other Georgia museums with a unique WWII collection, has been selected to be a stop for visitors on the quest to learn more about Georgia's role in military training, supplies, equipment, and contributions during WWII.

Visit www.georgiawwiitrail.org to begin planning your trip!





CURRAHEE MILITARY MUSEUM *Toccoa*

In 1942, the U.S. government acquired a site in Toccoa, Georgia where specially selected men received training to become a new type of soldier – the paratrooper. The Currahee Military Museum focuses on the actual training these men went through that made them some of the most physically fit men in the U.S. Army

WEBSITE

160 North Alexander Street
Toccoa, Georgia 30577

PHONE — (706) 282-5055
NEAREST AIRPORT: [Toccoa-Stephens County Airport \(KTOC\)](#)



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Hi Bob, I have been in contact with **Carl Starkey's** son a few years ago and have an email address of him. I haven't been able to get a picture in good quality of him for my book at that time unfortunately. Can I have a contact with Cher Thibou ?

Thank you!

Loïc Janlowiak



Hello there Loic,

So glad to get a response. is my email. I would love to get a good email address or address so I can return Lt. Starkey's photos to family members. Thank you!

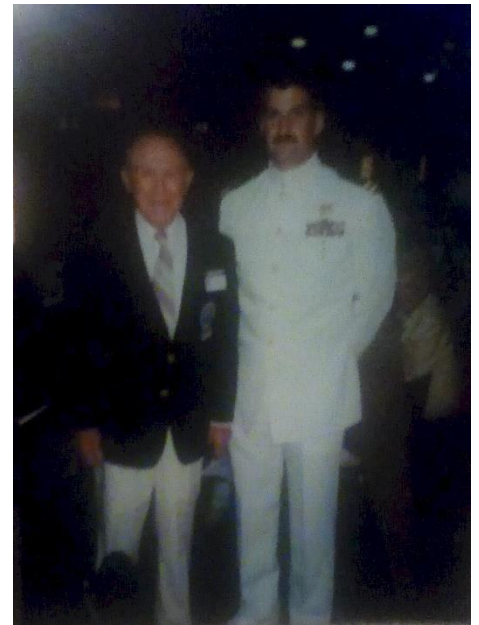
Ms. Cherylle Thibou

Here is another. I hope you can get in touch with his family members. I served 36 years civil service and have many photos of my former co-

workers. The memories are wonderful but a picture is so much better

Have a great day.

Cher Thibou



Hello Joe [Starkey]

We have been in contact a few years ago about the book I wrote on the 517th. Let me introduce you to Cher Thibou who find some pictures of your father in books.

Hope you are well by the way. I am still looking for informations about your father's service and pictures of him during WWII.

Best regards,
Loïc.

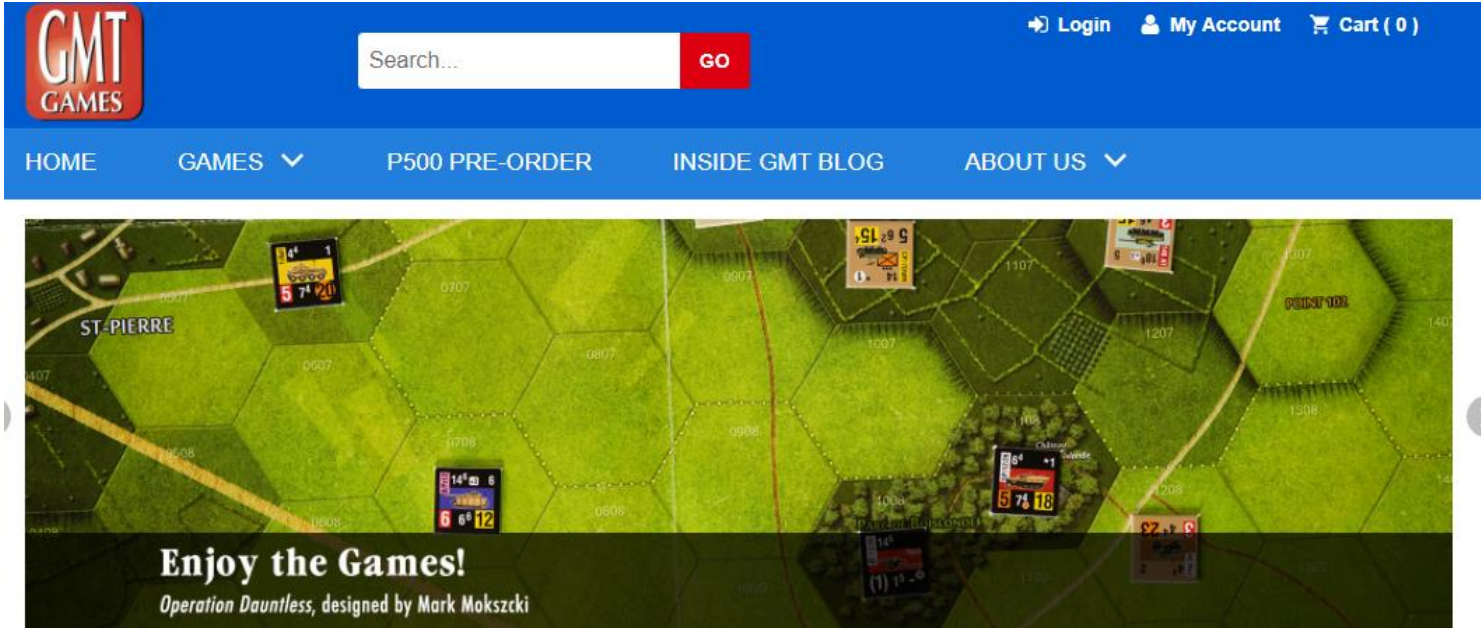
Bob. My father thought **Capt. Starkey** was one of the 517th's finest combat Officers. My Dad was a little mystified why he stopped coming to the reunions and eventually dropped of the radar. He tried several times to reach out to him without luck. It is a shame his presence was lost as I am sure he had many stories to tell.

Wayne Cross



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I found this web site for GMT Games, a company that makes board games based on many historical battles. One of them is called Drop Zone Southern France. The games are board games with maps, and markers for the various units of the different armies. For each of the games, GMT publishes lots of background on the actual units and events that occurred.



From: <http://www.insidegmt.com/2020/11/drop-zone-southern-france-unit-histories-part-2-us-517th-parachute-regimental-combat-team/>

Here are a couple of excerpts from the article on the 517th. Part of it focuses on personnel and weapons available. I don't know how accurate this is. (If it is accurate, I wonder where they got their information.)

DROP ZONE SOUTHERN FRANCE

Drop Zone: Southern France is a fast-playing (about 2 hours), company-level block game of the Allied airborne assault (code-named Operation RUGBY) that spearheaded Operation DRAGOON, the Invasion of Southern France—the Second D-Day, August 15th, 1944.



P500

Game Design by Dan Fournie



Colonel Rupert D. Graves

We continue our survey of Allied Airborne units in Southern France in the order of arrival—second to land was the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT), including the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion (PFAB) and the 596th Parachute Engineer Company (PEC).



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The elements of the 517th PRCT were activated, along with the 17th Airborne Division, on March 15, 1943. The cadre of the 517th was allowed to choose the best candidates from amongst all the volunteers for parachute duty over the next several months, resulting in the formation of an elite outfit, within an already elite branch. Each paratrooper had to qualify as “expert” with his individual weapon, “sharpshooter” with another and a minimum of “marksman” with all crew-served weapons in his platoon. Physical conditioning was paramount. In late summer the 517th moved to Fort Benning for parachute training. The 517th completed jump school with no washouts, setting a record that has endured to this day, and moved to Camp Mackall. At this time, an inspection team from Headquarters Army Ground Forces tested all the airborne regiment’s physical fitness. Using statistical sampling methods, men and units were selected to take the Physical Fitness Test consisting of pull-ups, push-ups, and other calisthenics done against time. Platoons and companies were chosen to run and march, for various distances. The 517th placed first, second and third place in all tests and events, scoring higher than any unit tested before or since.



Through the fall of 1943 the regiment conducted unit training — tactical exercises at squad, platoon, company and battalion-level, and at least one parachute jump a month. In February, the 517th participated in the massive “Tennessee Maneuvers.” In March 1944, the parachute elements of the 17th Airborne Division were withdrawn for overseas shipment as the 517th PRCT. This PRCT was being rushed to Italy in response to the Seventh Army request for airborne troops for Operation ANVIL/DRAGOON, the invasion of Southern France. Shortly before deployment, Colonel Rupert D. Graves, USMA ’24, was placed in command of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the PRCT. The organization of the

517th Parachute Infantry Regiment has already been covered, but we can now take a quick look at the 460th PFAB and the 596th PEC.

The Parachute Field Artillery Battalion (PFAB) was a uniquely American concept—the Germans and British always brought their artillery in by glider. The PFAB had an authorized strength of 39 officers and 534 enlisted men, consisted of a headquarters and service (H&S) battery; three firing batteries (A, B and C), each with four 75mm pack howitzers; and an Anti-Aircraft (AAA) & Anti-Tank (AT) D Battery with four M3 37-mm anti-tank guns and eight M2 .50-cal heavy machineguns (HMG). The M1A1 75-mm pack howitzer fired an 8.3 kg (18-pound) shell to an effective maximum range of 8,800 meters (9,600 yards or 5.5 miles). The pack howitzer broke down in to seven bundles for parachute drop (originally loaded on mules). Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Cato, USMA, 1936, took command of the 460th PFAB in the spring. The parachute field artillery jumps in Sicily and Normandy had been less than successful. Colonel Cato was determined to prove the value of parachute field artillery in Southern France.



The AAA/AT “D” Battery was something of an anomaly in the original parachute battalion. The 37-mm AT guns had to be delivered by glider, and so the guns would arrive separately from their crews, and the rest of the battalion. By 1944, the need for AAA to defend against the Luftwaffe had receded to almost nil. Also, by 1944, the 37-mm AT gun had proven obsolete. So, Cato turned in his AT guns and obtained four surplus 75-mm howitzers. He converted his D Battery from a AAA/AT role to become a fourth firing battery. This innovation was later adopted by most PFAB’s, but the 460th was the first to have sixteen howitzers in four firing batteries. The 460th PFAB’s D Battery retained its eight .50-cal HMG’s, thereby remaining a unique battery in the battalion. The .50-cal AA mounts were left behind, only the ground mount tripods were carried in the parachute jump. A .50-



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cal HMG is a cumbersome beast to maneuver by hand, but no more so than the 75-mm pack howitzer. And the HMG's provided a significant boost to the firepower of the PRCT. (I have a special interest in D Battery, 460th PFAB, as this was my father's outfit.)

The 596th Parachute Engineer Company (PEC) had originally been designated C Company, 139th Airborne Engineer Battalion of the 17th Airborne Division. It was the only parachute engineer company in the 139th Battalion, as the other companies were glider units. C/139 was redesignated as the 596th PEC when the 517th PRCT was formed. The 596th had a company headquarters and three engineer platoons with an authorized strength of eight officers and 137 enlisted men. The engineers were lightly armed and equipped, but highly trained in their missions of demolitions, mine warfare and construction. The 596th PEC was commanded by Captain Dalrymple.



On 31 May 1944 the PRCT arrived in Italy. On 14 June the 517th boarded LSTs bound for Anzio. During the night the RCT's destination was shifted further north to Civitavecchia. The PRCT was attached to the 36th Texas Infantry Division, IV Corps, Fifth Army. On 18 June the 517th joined the division's advance north from Grosseto on the Italian west coast. In its first day of combat, the PRCT suffered nearly 50 casualties but inflicted many more on the enemy. The next seven days were spent in almost continuous pursuit and combat. The Germans attempted to make an orderly withdrawal while the paratroopers steadily attacked. The 460th was continuously on the go, as batteries leap-frogged each other; usually two batteries were in position firing, while the other two were displacing forward. On 24 June the 517th entered the eastern outskirts of Follonica under heavy German artillery fire. Following this brief blooding, the 517th went into IV Corps reserve. On 2 July the Combined Chiefs of Staff finally issued a directive to go ahead with the long-delayed Operation DRAGOON on 15 August. As a by-product of this directive the 517th RCT was released from IV Corps and moved to join the First Airborne Task Force in the Rome area.



The pre-dawn parachute jump was called Mission ALBATROSS, consisting of 13 Serials. The 517th PRCT was dropped in four Serials, numbered 6 through 9, each carried by 45 C-47 transport planes. The 517th plan, unlike the plan for the 509th PBCT, placed most of its artillery in one serial (the 8th). This risked a major loss of fire-power if this serial had been mis-dropped. The units featured in the *Drop Zone: Southern France* are shown by serial below.





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SERIAL # 6

Armstrong
D 2
3 5 4

Newberry
E 2
3 5 4

McKinley
F 2
3 5 4

2nd Battalion, 517th PIR

Dalrymple
596
2 4 4

596th PEC

St Rosaline
517
(1) 3 0

517th HQ
& Demo Plt

Graves
Initiative

Commander
517th PRCT

SERIAL # 7

Hooper
G 3
3 5 4

Morris
H 3
3 5 4

Fastaia
I 3
3 5 4

3rd Battalion, 517th PIR

SERIAL # 8

Cato
460
3

460th PFAB

SERIAL # 9

Frasier
A 1
3 5 4

Robbins
B 1
3 5 4

La Chaussee
C 1
3 5 4

Vogel
C 460
2 4 4

C Battery,
460th PFAB

DeArmy
Choc
1 3 4

Liaison
Batallion
de Choc

1st Battalion, 517th PIR

The table below provides a comparison of the units and weapons carried in each of the four 517th PRCT serials:

Unit Type/Heavy Weapons	Serial 6	Serial 7	Serial 8	Serial 9
Battalion in the Serial	2/517	3/517	460	1/517
Rifle Companies	3	3	0	3
Engineer Platoons	1	1	0	0
Demolitions Platoon	1	0	0	0
Regimental HQ Company	1	0	0	0
Regimental Service Company	0	1	0	0
Artillery Firing Batteries	0	0	3	1
.50-cal Heavy Machineguns	0	0	18	4
.30-cal Medium Machineguns	8	8	0	8
.30-cal Light Machineguns	21	21	0	18
Bazookas	32	28	56	35
Flame Throwers	9	9	0	0
75-mm Pack Howitzers	0	0	12	4
81-mm Medium Mortars	4	4	0	4
60-mm Light Mortars	9	9	0	9

We will see how these Serials fared in the drop and the battles that followed later.

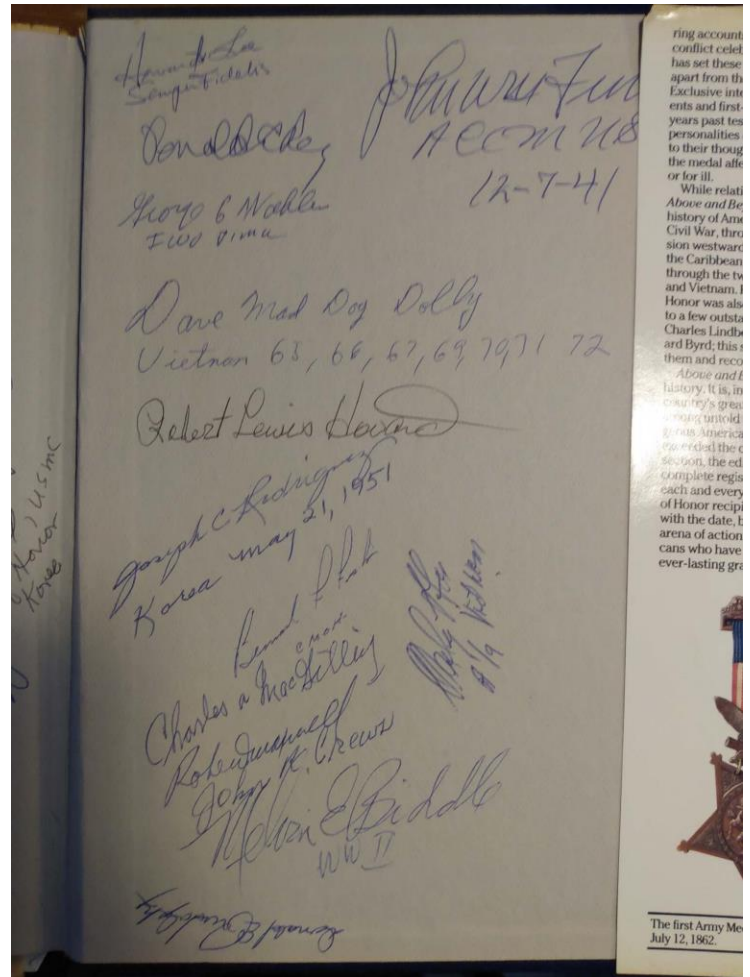
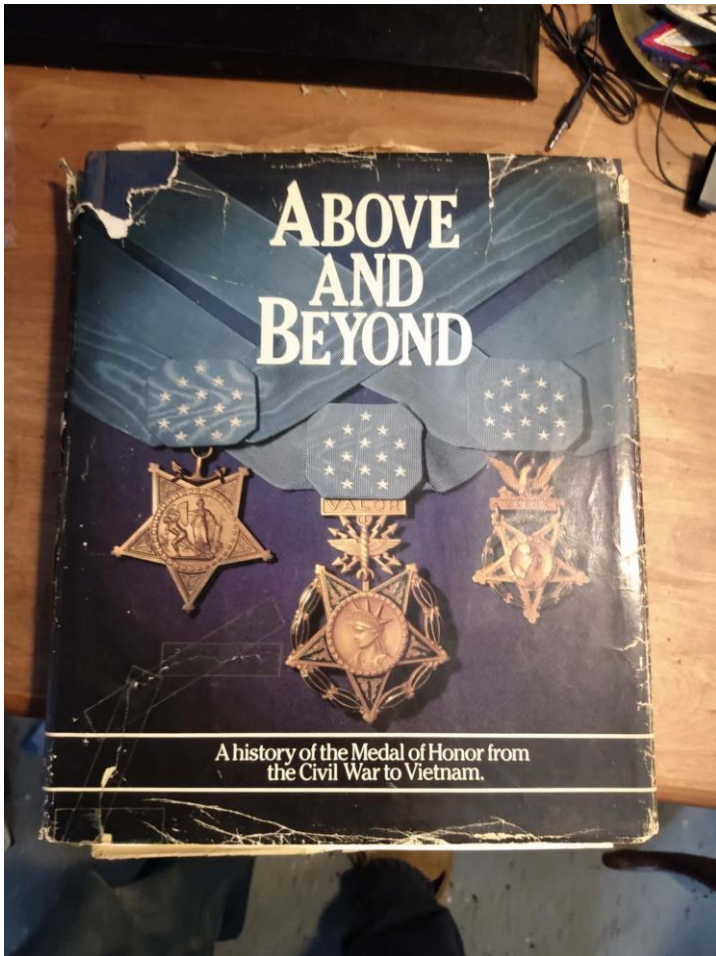


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Found on www.usmilitariaforum.com , posted by "Bill the Patch"

Posted March 25, 2020

Happy birthday MOH, if it's ok I would like to add this, it seems appropriate. I've met everyone that signed my book, if only for a brief moment. It was 1998 my wife had just given birth to my second daughter. That same day the MOH convention happened to be in the same city, Saratoga springs NY. I kissed the baby, told the Miss's don't go anywhere I'll be back soon. I stood in crowd as the guys were marching past in the parade. Everyone I asked to sign did so without hesitation. Melvin Biddle (517th pir), signed it twice. I promised my daughter this is hers when I go, seeing I left her in the hospital. She's understands. I'm sure some of you recognize the names. These guys were having a blast, most of them walking with drinks, it was great to see still living it up.



For the record, I met **Mel Biddle** at a couple of 517th reunions and had him and many others sign my copy of the *Paratroopers Odyssey*. - BB



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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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