



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

eLee HUE



**MailCall No. 2469**

April 4, 2021

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

### MailCall News

Hi Bob,

Would it be possible for you to include this 3rd pic, too? [Onto Kenneth Tucker's [Meet the Troopers](#) bio page, still in process – BB]

The handsome young Air Force pilot on the L is my Dad's older brother, **Raymond L. Tucker** (he piloted the B-24 bomber in Europe), and the **even more handsome guy** on the R is my Dad, **Kenneth B. Tucker** (517th PRCT). Both were American HEROES.

Thanks for your time and dedication to this website...it is simply FANTASTIC.

Peace and all good,

**Glenn M. Tucker**  
[glenntucker69@gmail.com](mailto:glenntucker69@gmail.com)



RE: Facebook pages for the 517<sup>th</sup>

Fair enough Bob. Thanks for your informed response. As always, you're a great source of insight!

I feel like a kid in a candy store with some of this stuff. I'm so proud of what my cousin and his fellow troopers did, that any new information for me is like finding gold nuggets in a clear, cold stream.

Take care.

Best,

**Robert Lofthouse**



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Oh, Bob -

I see your response about Mail Call and Facebook pages and it's true - we're still active enough that we're checking in with each other, and we do still have news!

I've been in contact with the team at the Toccoa Museum and they have definitely had a rough time of it this last year, and are working hard to gear up for more and more visits. They're planning an event around June 6, and will be sharing details soon.

I've also been in contact with **Rob McDonald** - and we're thinking that we should try to do an online viewing party for A Cut Above this year, maybe around the anniversary? We would definitely like for it to get wider viewership, and maybe something like this could be interesting.

Thank you for continuing to host Mail Call! It's how I got to know my veteran friends all these years ago, and it's still so awesome!

Stay safe, everyone!

**Claire Johnson Giblin**

daughter, **Kaare Allan Johnson**, 596

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Thank you so much for all the information on my uncle. It amazes me all the details you have. I'm curious to know if you already had this poem. The one my uncle wrote is not dated.

Thank you again!!!!

**Dee Garrett**

**Kelmer Garrett's "Poem of the 517th Infantry"** was published in <http://517prct.org/mailcall/2467.pdf>  
(Kelmer was a Tec/5 in the Service Company)

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Posted on Facebook page: [517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team - Families & Friends](#)

This is my father in law, 517th Headquarters 3rd Battalion Parachute Infantry. **James Franklin Piercefield.**

**Ben Janczewski**



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Last week, I showed the colorized, smiling versions of my Dad's WW2 photos. I forget to supply the link to a place that will do those for free (for now). -- BB

Visit the Instagram Smile Museum at: <https://instagram.com/restoreandprotect>

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Another wonderful Mail Call that was both beautiful and forward thinking. On the forward thinking side, two thoughts.

First, thank you for carrying on with the beautiful "glue" of Mail Call but also thank you for your thoughtful planning for the future and the connection with Soldi's Facebook page. As one who is not on Facebook, I am especially grateful as I know so many of the rest of us who still feel a connection with the 517th that the term "Mail Call" conjures up specially recollections of our fathers.

The second thought relates to the serendipity of your daughter's sending you the link to the picture morphing link. Today, in our discussion of the book, "The Future is Faster Than You Think" one of our group shared (we're doing it via zoom), how this can be done to make subjects in pictures actually move a bit, sort of bringing the subjects to life. Just amazing what technology can do and the creative things innovating minds are creating.

### **Pat Seitz**

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Bob... this photo tech was talked about in the last month or so. This company is at the heart of the stories that I saw and is offered free.

<https://www.myheritage.com/photo-enhancer>

Both cool and a bit spooky.

This is a blog based on the video feature:

<https://blog.myheritage.com/2021/02/new-animate-the-faces-in-your-family-photos/>

**Steve Markle, S/o Gene Markle, 596 PCEC**

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Comment posted on YouTube video, [517th PRCT History - Part 2](#)

Lt. General **Richard "Dick" Seitz** recounts the history of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (1943-1945) at the 61st 517th PRCT reunion in Savannah, GA, August 2005

[Marvin Reemeyer](#)

My grandfather was a member of the 517th and was in attendance for the reunions. His name was Henry, please message me.





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

Comment on [517th PRCT celebration in Sospel France 2009 - part 1 of 3](#)

"Is this a French Channel?"



Also posted on Facebook page: [517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team - Families & Friends](#)

April 1, 2021

I joined this site to see if anyone knew my uncle, **James H. "Jimmy" Mohr**. he was in the 460th but do not know which company.

### Bob Flaige

I have two stories about Jimmy, one he was in the forest somewhere at Bastogne and had to relieve himself. After getting all of his clothes off, Jerry started firing, I guess his 88s. Jimmy said the air bursts in the tree tops buried him in snow and he froze his butt of getting dressed again.



James Mohr was with C Battery, same unit as **Gabe Delesio** and **Merle McMorrow**.

Both **Merle McMorrow's** haircuts and **Jim Mohr's** shack (pg 17 and Pg 20) are mentioned in **Bill Houston's** biography "[Army Life](#)"-- BB



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There are some great stories in **Bill Houston's** 61-page journal, [Army Life](#), written in 1992, Here are a few samples::

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We had a rather unusual and interesting group of men in our battery. We had the first and only Japanese-American paratrooper (at least at that time), Junie Kawamura who was from Minneapolis. One of our lieutenants claims to be a fourth generation descendant of President Polk. The lieutenant also claims that his father was a lieutenant-general. This officer was Lt. Perry I. Polk, more often known as Perry I. And there was S/Sgt. Bill Westbrook, platoon sergeant from Florida, who insisted in telling the fellows from the north that down in Florida they spend the summers skinnin' 'gators and winters 'skinnin' Yankees, but he was an O.K. guy. Westbrook served with a division, before he became airborne, where some of the men had hooted at some women in shorts who were playing golf with a general. Two things developed from this incident - the entire division had to make a one hundred mile march and it became known as the "You Who" division. Then there was Phil Kennemer who was released from jail on the condition that he join the paratroops. Phil had a little racket of his own - he bought war bonds, had them mailed to him in Italy, sold them to Italian civilians, then put in a claim to the Treasury Department that the bonds had been lost or stolen and the bonds were then replaced. As fate would have it Phil was the first enlisted man to be killed in action,

Bud and I have a new hobby, We borrow blotters with pin-up pictures on them, draw skirts on the girls, then return the blotters. It is getting so a person can hardly borrow a blotter around here anymore.

From the 14th of March until the 28th in 1944 I must have been home on furlough. In a letter I mentioned returning to camp very early Tuesday morning on the 28th but did not mention the month or year in the letter. On my return that morning I discovered that the barracks were nearly empty except for a few bunks. The men had moved while I was on furlough and I didn't know to where. I spent the rest of the night on an empty cot with only a mattress as my bedding. The battalion was out in the field and only a few of us remained around the barracks. Later that morning those of us left in camp were told to get ready to go out into the field and join the others. However, they omitted to tell us where to assemble or at what time so we goofed off until noon. Then we went to chow. This was not the smartest move and the mess-sergeant caught us and ordered us to report to him at 1300. After eating we went to the P.X. and bought a sundae, a bag of marshmallows and six candy bars for the sergeant. Then we reported and presented our gifts. He must not have been impressed because the next thing we knew we were mopping the officers' quarters.

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I must throw in this story because it concerns Camp Mackall but the exact time is not important, even though the incident lasted for forty years. In the army it was a mark of prestige to be the first to know and divulge information so I played the game but pushed it a little further. By simple observation I would draw a conclusion and come up with some fairly accurate predictions. As an example, we only had chicken on Sunday so if I saw chickens being unloaded at the mess-hall on Tuesday I would wait until Thursday or Friday, then announce that I would like to have a chicken dinner next Sunday. Sure enough, we would have chicken. After a few successful guesses I had gained the confidence of some of the fellows and they started asking where I got the information. My answer was, "My uncle told me". By this I meant Uncle Sam, the symbol for the United States. However, it was interpreted to mean Col. Gumby, a colonel in our battalion. At one of the Saturday morning inspections Lt. Roberts asked, "Houston, what relation are you to the colonel?". I had to answer "None, Sir". That should have ended the farce but for some reason S/Sgt. Bucher never did get the word. At a reunion in 1984, forty years later, Bucher admitted that he had "treated me with kid gloves" because he thought that I was the colonel's nephew. To this day the incident is mentioned every time we get together.

On Easter Sunday I wrote home and complained about the lack of Easter spirit at Camp Mackall. There were no new and colorful clothes around and only a few lilies. We had turkey instead of ham for dinner but I missed out on most of the dinner because of an accident. While I was entering the mess-hall, that tells you how close I came to having turkey, I stabbed my thumb on the spring on the screen door and a medic took me to the dispensary. The medic did not wait until I had been treated, but went back to the mess-hall and joined the others for dinner, while I waited to be treated. By the time the wound had been attended to and I returned to the mess-hall there was very little left, so I was just S.O.L.

Bud had returned from his furlough on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday afternoon we went to a movie. We went but did not see the movie because the sound track failed to work so the movie was called off. Instead we ended up at the service club where a cat named Trouble had some new kittens. They were as cute as could be and each had a ribbon tied around its neck. Trouble spent all of her time carrying the kittens to new hiding places but the guys kept bringing them back to pet them. Trouble couldn't win.

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If you could not get to town there was always Merle "Mac" McMorrow to turn to. Mac was our battery barber but he certainly was not a professional barber - other members of the battery will back me up on that statement. At times we were so desperate that we had to chose between one of Mac's haircuts or no haircut and a gig. One thing, Mac did make house calls. He would come right to your tent with his tools in hand and ready to work. Just to make sure that he would be compensated for his work he required that each person pay in advance and once the money was in his hand there was no recourse - he had the money and you were stuck with the haircut, regardless of how it looked. Of course the customer furnished the towel and a box to sit on, this entitled the customer to his choice of seat location. My personal preference was to sit with the loud speaker and music to my back and

a softball game in front of me. Then Mac would start in, chop away wherever he pleased and in a few minutes you had a haircut (?). Neither the customer or the barber seemed too concerned as how the finished job looked because you were not going anywhere important anyhow.



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By the nineteenth of September we were in a position overlooking Luceram, a small mountain village near the French-Italian border. Our mission was to liberate the southeast corner of France from the Germans and to prevent any Germans who were in Italy, and fleeing north, from coming back into France. This was mostly a defensive position and we had time on our hands so Jim Mohr and I decided to improve our outpost by building a new shelter and a bunker, just in case the Germans should lob a few shells in. For building material we used the wood from the cases in which the 75mm shells were shipped in and some cut stone which formed a guardrail on the road that passed through our position.

The side walls and the ends of the shelter were made of the wood from the shell crates as was our genuine soft-wood floor, while shelter halves formed the roof. One side of the shelter was dug into the side of the mountain so it was better protected than the other, but there was still a wood wall used, Both of the ends were made of wood, but one was plain while the other end included an entrance along with a stone fireplace. For the chimney we used the cardboard cases in which the individual 75mm shells were shipped. Each shell contained four bags of powder and to control the range of the shell you removed one, two or three powder bags. Before turning in each evening we would take one or two of these unused powder bags, empty the contents into our fireplace, then add a few twigs or pieces of wood. In the morning we would flip a match into the fireplace to ignite the powder which, in turn, started the wood. Within a minute the tent would be warm. Of course the chimney would burn up every time we used the fireplace and we would have to replace it, however there was plenty of material available for replacements after a night of fire missions. As the fall weather got colder we appreciated the fireplace more and more each morning.

We also discovered that the fall wind often blew through the cracks of our exposed side wall so we undertook a remodeling project. Since the wall was about two feet high and made up about half of the height of our shelter it became urgent that we plug these cracks. We used wallpaper from the shelled out barber shop in Luceram. Pin up pictures completed the interior decor.

The bunker was a short distance down the hill from our shelter. It started out as a German slit trench. We cut out a side entrance, beefed up the roof with stone and sandbags, then added a ventilation system. Inside we installed two seats for our personal comfort.

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Probably our biggest mail-call took place on October 26th when almost everyone netted eight to ten letters. I did note that only one of my letters from the States had been censored but nothing had been cut out from it. I did not hear of anything ever being censored from the mail I had written. Our own officers were supposed to act as censors of the outgoing mail from the battery but they could not read each and every letter so many went uncensored. By this time the officers only looked at those letters written by a small number of guys who had tried to slip something through when we first arrived in Europe. While I was on pass in Paris a number of magazines had arrived so I had plenty of reading material.

On the same day as the huge mail call Jim Mohr and I had to move our house across the road and about seventy-five yards up the mountain side. No sooner had we removed the roof than it began to rain. At that time we decided that we should replace the wooden ends of our house so we went into a small roadside chapel to escape the rain and build new parts.

Two days later, on October 28th, the Germans abandoned their fortifications in the Sospel Valley, including Fort St. Roch, a part of the Maginot Line. This action liberated the town of Sospel which was the last French town to be liberated from the Germans in World War II. I did see the exterior of Fort St. Roch once while in the service and then, only from a great distance. The fort was so well camouflaged that it looked like the top of a mountain rather than a fort. In 1984 I, along with others in Sospel for the fortieth anniversary reunion, I finally had a chance to see the inside of the fort. It was a firsthand chance to see how the French army once lived.



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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.

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>
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