

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)

460th Parachute Field Artillery, 596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company

Thunderbolt

Newsletter Date: Spring, April 2013



Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since March 1943

Don't Miss the 517th Get-Together on Friday, May 31, and Saturday June 1st. Arrangements with Brenda Carlin, the director of the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum have been made to host us. Everyone is invited to come. There is no registration, (because this is not a reunion), but please come and celebrate the activation of the 517th. On the weekend of June 1, 2013, the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum will be hosting a D-Day fun run up and down Mount Currahee on Saturday morning.

(see http://www.toccoahistory.com/2013_D_Day_Run_form.pdf.)

Brenda has recommended that we stay at the Country Hearth Inn, 302 W Savannah St Toccoa, GA 30577 (706) 297-7799.

This issue of the Thunderbolt available online at 517prct.org

Packed in this Chute

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Greetings from the President

As I write, I am back from another invigorating reunion in Palm Springs. Time with friends old and new is so important. The word “restorative” comes to mind. It is so important to nurture these friendships and honor our shared history.

We are getting older, and in the past decade, more and more tasks have shifted to the next generations. We cannot thank you enough for all you do – whether you are hosting a reunion, making another beer run for the good of the cause, running the website, writing a book and making a movie, or simply picking up the phone and calling a veteran – this is all service, and it is all appreciated.

As you read this issue of the Thunderbolt, think about calling a veteran or dropping a note to a long-lost friend, or to someone you’ve never met. You’ll make a difference.

Make your plans now to come to Toccoa in June, to visit DC for Operation Dragoon in August, to join us in France in August, and then – January in Kissimmee again.

In the meantime, the 70th anniversary of the activation of the 17th Airborne is in April. I am honored to be associated with the men of the 517th, the 460th, and the 596th. Airborne all the way!

From Your Publishers

Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin

There might not be a reunion this summer, but who wants to run Currahee?

This month marks the 70th anniversary of the activation of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Camp Toccoa, GA.

As not to disrupt our Palm Springs reunion I have made arrangements with Brenda Carlin, the director of the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum to have a 517th Get-Together on Friday, May 31, and Saturday June 1st. Everyone is invited to come. There is no registration,(because this is not a reunion), but please come and celebrate the activation of the 517th. I know our President, Allan Johnson is planning on attending along with many others I have spoken with.

As you know there is no National Reunion this year and our organization is having two great mini reunions, one in Florida

that was held in January, and the Palm Springs California Reunion this month Mar 11-15th. Thanks to all who are putting these reunions on, I know what that is like.

On the weekend of June 1, 2013, the Camp Toccoa/Churrahee Museum will be hosting a D-Day fun run up and down Mount Currahee on Saturday morning I'm not sure how much fun that will be, but I and Brenda are planning some fun activities for the 517th while we are there. Brenda has recommended that we stay at the Country Hearth Inn, 302 W Savannah St Toccoa, GA 30577 (706) 297-7799, or the Toccoa Inn and Suites, 106 Stephen Cir Toccoa, GA 30577, (706) 886-1048

<http://www.toccoainn.com/Home.html>

A proposed itinerary of events is:

Friday, May 31st

12:00 noon Meet for Lunch and visit

1:30 pm Tour Toccoa and visit Camp Toccoa Museum

2:30 pm For those who would like drive up Mount Currahee and see the view

6:00pm Meet at Museum for dinner and watch the 517th movie, Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed.

Saturday June 1st

7:00 am Prepare for Fun Run up and down the mountain, that is if you are doing that

8:00 am Fun Run or in my case a fun walk on level ground

11:30 am Recognition of runners

12:00 pm Tribute to the 517th at Parachute Park

1:00 pm Lunch

2:00 pm Visit Museum, visit with friends, see WWII rein-actors

6:00 pm Dinner and 1940's Swing Dance

Brenda is expecting a large group to these events so I recommend making your motel reservations soon. I am

excited to return to Camp Toccoa to see where our father's trained. I hope to see you there Airborne All the Way!

517 in the News!

Wow – several articles of 517 men in the news!

France honors Fargo man with medal

Fargo, ND (WDAY TV) - A long-time Fargoan has been honored by the country of France.

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Merle McMorrow is being recognized for his bravery in helping liberate France, with the Legion of Honor medal.

He enlisted in 1943 and fought battles in Southern France, the Rhine Valley and Central Europe to name a few.

In 1944, he was part of the landings in the south of France called Operation Dragoon, that helped liberate several cities. He also fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

Merle McMorrow, French Legion of Honor Medal Recipient: "The real heroes are the ones buried in cemeteries all over the world that never had the chance to come home and pick up where they left off with their lives."

The Legion of Honor is the highest decoration in France.

WWII Veteran Returns Wedding Photos 68 Years Later

Even though he is 92, Howard Hensleigh remembers 1944 like it was yesterday.

By Cheryl Hurd

Friday, Dec 7, 2012

Even though he is 92, Howard Hensleigh of Menlo Park remembers 1944 like it was yesterday. That was the year the Army World War II veteran killed a German soldier during a gun battle in Southern France.

"The sergeant that I chose to fire the first shot fired and of course they hit the dirt. Firing going back and forth all the time," Hensleigh said.

Hensleigh, who was an intelligence officer and assistant platoon leader, says he knew the German soldiers were not going to give up without a fight. He says he gave them several chances to give up. But a man he later came to find out was named Georg Reick give him no other choice. Hensleigh shot and killed him during a firefight. Hensleigh said he felt it was something he had to do in order to save his men.

"When you take prisoners you get all the information off of all of them," Hensleigh said. "I hate to admit it but they don't end up with their watches rings and anything else."

In this case, Reick was stripped of personal artifacts, such as pictures of his wife

and family and his wedding photo: It was common to confiscate the goods from the dead Germans at the time. Hensleigh took them, and put his enemy's belongings in his personal scrap book. They stayed there for 68 years until a young French writer named Jean-Loup Gassend came along out of the blue. Gassend was interested in interviewing WWII veterans who served their country in Southern France for a documentary he was working on. While researching online, Gassend found Hensleigh as one of the many U.S. soldiers who had fought in World War II. Gassend flew to the Peninsula to meet Hensleigh, and during their meeting, learned of his story and started to connect the dots.

Gassend then contacted the company that developed pictures. But the company was no longer there. He then sent them to the mayor of the small German town where the soldier lived. The mayor recognized the dead soldier and put Hensleigh in touch with the soldier's grandson whose name is also Georg Reick. The grandson and Hensleigh now e-mail each other back and forth. Hensleigh gave Reick's grandson information he's been longing for and Reick Jr. has pictures he thought he would never get.

Howard Hensleigh

The interview regarding Georg Reick ran on NBC's channel 3, Bay Area, at 11 last evening. I have not seen it, but my friends here who did say the message came across. The VA put a summary on its computer delivered message today. Without your father's and your continuing Mail Call and the 517th website, and Jean Loup's untiring efforts, this could never have happened.

John Krumm

That situation with **Howard Hensleigh** and his contact with the grandson of the German soldier is remarkable; very moving emotionally.

Also in the news, but the article couldn't be reproduced here:

Steve Gomez

Son of **CPL Ben Gomez, B battery 460th**

We just completed our Winter jump school with a public open hanger day on

January the 26th and a local TV station covered the last jump that day with a great story.

Also a group of university students put together a well-made video covering the mission of the Airborne Demonstration Team, just go to Youtube and search "Remember Honor Serve" and it will be the first choice. And yes, Command Sergeant Major Herrington is 81 years old and he does jump.

And finally, Phil McSpadden was also in the news, receiving the Legion of Honor!

France marks special day for D-Day veterans

By [Ray Weiss](#)

STAFF WRITER

Published: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 5:30 a.m.

DAYTONA BEACH — They were mostly teenagers then, storming the beaches of Normandy, unsure if they would see tomorrow. Many didn't.

They died on D-Day or during the battles that followed while liberating France and the rest of Europe from Nazi domination. The survivors are now in their late 80s and 90s. Father time is their enemy, one that cannot be defeated.

But their D-Day legacy remains one of history's most critical turning points.

Almost 69 years after the invasion, 24 of those World War II veterans received France's Legion of Honor Medal on Tuesday at a ceremony at the International Motorsports Center, NASCAR's office building.

Established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, the medal is the most prestigious honor given by France for exceptional merit. Notable American recipients in the past include Thomas Edison, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Colin Powell.

"Today we honor 24 of those courageous veterans who represent all of those who fought for our freedom," Gael de Maisonneuve, the French counsel general in Miami, told a standing-room-only crowd. "I am honored to have the opportunity to formally present you with my country's highest distinction and assure you that the French people will never forget what you did."

Michael Yatsuk of Daytona Beach Shores served with the Army Air Corps from D-Day

through the Battle of the Bulge. "I'm excited. This is something I never thought about."

At age 94, Yatsuk was the oldest recipient Tuesday, which was attended by four generations of his family, including his 9-year-old great grandson, Cameron.

The medal currently is being given to American veterans nationwide who fought during the liberation of France between 1944-45. Isadore Serkin, 89, of Ormond Beach had his medal pinned to his old Army dress jacket. He was a messenger in the infantry at Normandy.

"I'm quite amazed," he said of receiving France's top honor. "I never had anything like this."

Ian Mackenzie, 89, of Palm Coast was a pilot who flew 79 missions in a P-38 at Normandy, moving on to other campaigns in France, Belgium and Germany, "As the front lines moved up, we moved up."

"I think it's great of the French doing this," he said.

Claude Berthoin, the French consulate's Volusia, Flagler and St. Johns County representative, said World War II veterans are being sought out who served in France after the invasion to liberate Europe on June 6, 1944. They then must apply and subsequently are screened for the medal.

"Not all of the applications result in a medal," said Berthoin, an international businessman from Ormond Beach. "It's a long process. It has to be certified. It takes almost a year." So far, he said about 800 medals have been handed out in

Florida — the most in the United States.

"The French people owe you," Berthoin told the veterans. "It is a blessing you survived."

Frank Smith, 86, of Ponce Inlet lied about his age in March 1943 so he could join the Army, telling authorities he was 18, two years older than he was. Smith was involved in three combat campaigns in France with the infantry as a combat engineer, landing at Normandy. "This was tremendous," he said after the ceremony.

Then it was time to join others and celebrate the victory of Normandy and the freedom they gave

Europe as teenagers — with some French champagne and pastries.

Reunion Reports Kissimmee

Darrell Egner

Got home from Kissimmee yesterday. Wow, what a great time that all of us had. **Brenda Mortensen** and all her helpers put on one of the best Reunions ever. By the way she has agreed to chair it again next year. We had about 40 people at the Banquet, ten more than last year. I'm sure she will send a roster of the people that attended. For the most part the weather was great, not up to our Florida standards but close. The high note of Banquet was the Victory Belles. Three great singers that work for the World War Museum in New Orleans. Brenda met them on a Mississippi river cruise. The sing songs from WW-II and I don't think there was a dry eye in the place. They not only sing they mingle with the crowd and they also put on a great show. In fact they were so good that there was talk about another National Reunion in New Orleans next year. Are there any brave souls that want to take the job on? If so please contact our President **Alan Johnson**. By the way these girls put on shows all over the country.

I would also like to thank Bob Barrett, **Lory Curtis** and **Claire** for all the work they do to put on the best Mail Call and Thunderbolt ever. Lory through his connections was able to cut the cost of publishing the Thunderbolt in half I am told. If anyone wants to receive the T'Bolt hard copy pay your dues and let Lory know. Your dues can be paid anytime but the date was set by the board of directors as August, the anniversary of our jump in Operation Dragoon. Almost forgot there were 9 Veterans at this Reunion. I'm sure someone will send pictures of the group to Mail Call and the Thunderbolt.

Tom Copsey

Hey Bob -sending a few photos from last week. My first time to a local reunion and it was a blast!

Kudos to **Brenda Mortenson** and her minions (munchkens?) for a fabulous setup and time. Her arranging the Victory Belles from the WWII Museum to attend was an awesome highlight. Never seen the Troopers smile so much!!

Claire Giblin

What a fantastic time we had last weekend in Kissimmee at the Florida Mini! It was just great to see everyone again, many of whom were unable to make it last year. It is always a wonderful to get caught up with old friends and make new ones. **Brenda Verbeck Mortenson** hosted us in wonderful style, with a warm and inviting hospitality suite with too many tempting offerings. I just checked last year's Mail Call and we had 6 veterans at the reunion in 2012, and 23 at the banquet. This year we had 9 veterans at the reunion and 39 at the banquet. Many people were unable to attend in 2012 due to serious situations at home, and it was lovely to see attendance back up. We had: **Leo Dean** (recovered from that fall with multiple fractures last year), **Leroy Johnson** (aka The Bad Johnson and possibly the oldest of the guys at 93), **Ray Hess** (now relocated to Florida), **Bill Webb**, **Allan Johnson**, **Hunter McDonald**, **Darrell Egner**, **Phil McSpadden** and **Hal Beddow**. We also had the pleasure of an expanded Team Boyle, led by **Bill Boyle's wife Babbie**, along with Joe, Pat, Frank, Becky, Mimsey (her first Florida reunion), Babsie, Finley, and I'm sure I'm forgetting someone. Fin is 6, in first grade this year, and it's at least her second reunion.

At least six people were attending their first Florida reunion, including **Nancy Fraser Armand** (Don's daughter), National Reunion regular **Tom Copsey**, Hunter McDonald's daughter Cornelia and nephew Rob, Ray Hess's grandson Joshua. Leroy Johnson's friend and driver, **Earl Tingle**, turned out to be retired Col. Tingle, an airborne veteran himself. Since **Darrell** has set a goal of 50 for next year, everyone needs to start planning now for 2014 -your 70th reunion year. What are you waiting for? Bring new people -bring guests -bring family. This year's new friends are next year's old friends.

Leo stayed with friends after the reunion and did....wait for it....jump #155!

There is time to get yourself to Toccoa for June 1, 2013!

Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

Bob: WOW --what a great MailCall and a fabulous Florida Mini-Reunion. Sorry Dad didn't attend. We'll work harder to get him to

come next year. Brenda is amazing to have found the trio. Looks like the guys had a super great time.

Foreign Friends Corner

The 517th is fortunate to have friends in Europe. These crucial people make sure that the history of the 517th is preserved and not forgotten. We are grateful to our European friends!

Nicolas Arnulf

2418 Chemin de Montagnac
06440 L'Escarène
France
arnulf.nico@gmail.com

Thanks for having sent me the sponsoring voucher before reenactment weekend in homage to 517th RTC soldiers.

I'm proud you trust me with making official the reenactment my brother Julien and me organized. I want to let you know that every time we are on those battlefield places, we do that thinking of 517th troopers who suffered and died for our freedom. We, young French, don't forget what young Americans did for us.

During this weekend, we were 14 participants with 3 jeeps and a GMC truck. We took positions in fox holes at "Hill 1040" feet because the weather was very rainy all night long. Then we took the road for historical places like "Plan Constant (460th PFAB)", Col de l'Ablé, Peira Cava and "Tête du Pin" mountain (517th PIR). We did some wonderful pictures attached to this message. I hope you will publish it on your website and will show it to our dear veterans. Then we went down on Col de Braus and did a night patrol toward Sospel (in memory of the village freedom on October 29 1944). Back, we had diner all together on our positions, full of history... When we woke up, it was very cold in fox holes and we were surprised to see a snow storm!! We went on the weekend doing a souvenir ceremony in memory of the fights, on top of "col de braus", this ceremony was followed by a walk in the snow toward Tête de la Lavina, along the hill crest, called "bloody stump" by our dear 517th troopers.

Thanks again for you trust and honor. I would like to thanks all the Forty Four Memories' association participants. Thanks

also to my friend Gilles Goberti for coming with his GMC truck and my brother Julien who helped me to organize this reenactment and ceremony.

Tom Copsey

Monsieur Arnulf - thank you and your hardy French comrades for honoring the 517th. Looking forward to revisiting you wonderful reenactors soon. Vive La France!

From Christmastime:

Eddy Monfort and family

Manhay, Belgium

Dear Friends,

Thanks to you, we are in peace since 68 years old. From our hearth, we would like say you Thank You and sending you our best wishes for a marvelous Christmas' season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year full joy and good health.

Nicaise Sylvain

I'm Belgian and I'm in touch with member of the family of **Corwin C Clark, H company** 517th PRCT.

I'm member of an association of History and Living History here in Belgium. We organize a walk in honor of the 17th Airborne Division.

I'm also a friend of **Eddy Monfort**.

I'm making some research about Corwin and Eddy said that you can help me.

I'm looking for any infos pictures ... about H company but also all the 517th by extension.

Thanks for your answer!

(Sorry if there are faults in my English)

Eddy & Sophie

Lenny and Maverick

- **Eddy Lamberty** Avenue Joseph Lejeune 45
B-4980 Trois-Ponts

Dear friends,

I'm thinking of you very often and despite the distance, I want to thank you for your friendship which is one of the most beautiful thing in my life.

New Year's Eve is also my 41st birthday, a special thanks to all my veteran friends who give me the opportunity to be a free man since

my birth. Freedom is not free. So THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart to the 82ers (504ers, 505ers, 508ers, 517ers, 551ers.....)106ers 75ers 30ers 28ers, 7ers,(armored div) 526ers, to all the men who have fought for a better world and are still fighting. I'll always do my best to perpetuate the

memory of your accomplishment. Sophie and Maverick, my son Lenny and myself join in wishing you a very HAPPY NEW YEAR! May 2013 bring you JOY, HAPPINESS, HEALTH and all the best for you and yours.

I'm looking forward to meeting you this coming year.

Flavio Laina

Belgium

Dear Veterans, dear families and dear friends of the 517 PRCT,

I wish you a happy and peaceful 2013!

Eddy Lamberty

Avenue Joseph Lejeune

45 B-4980 Trois-Ponts

I'm sending you a little bit late some pictures of the ceremonies held on the 05th of January 2013. For many years, I've tried to be there for honoring our liberators and I'll do it as long as I'll be able to do so.

I'm also joining a picture of the members of the C-47 Club taken after a mini-reunion in the afternoon. This association was originally founded by WWII paratroopers, one of the founder was a close friend, William H. Tucker!

Last year a Normandy chapter was created in France and in the early days of January 2013, our C-47 Club Ardennes Salm River Chapter has been officially registered.

As the president of this new chapter and on behalf of our chapter, I'm sending our very best wishes for 2013 to all the 517ers and their families, their friends.

Eric , Jean Michel & son Adrien

Airborne Task Force Museum Association
Letter box 79

Le MUY FRANCE. 83490

anvil-dragon@hotmail.com

It is with a great sadness that we heard that **Marv Tetrick** and **Wayne Ervine** passed away, they were both great supporter of action

of memory here in southern France, and we spend some wonderful time together at many reunion, Marv and Rickie came back for the first time in 1994, Wayne never been able to come back but we stayed in touch by mail since the first time we met him in 2000. they always host a special place in our hearts and in the Southern France Airborne Museum association, Eric, my son Adrien and myself are working hard since the terrible 2010 flood to recover, we are working on a Virtual Museum Website to have every friends not able to come back able to visit the exhibit. We will let you know when it will be on line, and as many of you, Marv and Wayne will have a special page dedicated. Please transmit to, Rickie, Dave, Donna , Owen and the Tetrick and Ervine family our sincere condolences .

Rest in Peace "mes Amis" you never been forgotten.

M.B. (Max) Poorthuis

Recently I have adopted the grave of **BOYCE, Ray L** at the American War Cemetery Henri-Chapelle. He served in the 517th PARA INF REGT, 2nd Battalion Headquarters.

Do you have any additional information about him? Or do you know a veteran who might have known him?

Rick van Dijk

Rick van Dijk evidently adopted Hubert Ford's grave at Henri-Chappelle.

I am Rick Van Dijk from Netherlands. Heerenveen (North) to be exact. I'm 19 years old.

I am looking for **Hubert B. Ford** from C-compagnie His SERIAL NUMBER: 36742041 his RANK:Private First Class, Award : purple heart

In the Second World War he fought with the 517 PIR of the 13th Airborne Division. Today I'm become his Godfather. In a small summary, I have read that he was born in Kansas in the year 1925.

I hope you guys can help me feather, I am looking for pictures of this man. Also, I am looking for other data of this man.

I feel responsible for his grave and take his adoption very seriously. This also has an emotional value for me.

I hope you [can help me].

Claire Giblin

Rémi Martin is a French friend we met possibly before, but definitely in 2009 in the tiny village of Sainte Cezaire. **Jean-Marc Atlan**, his wife, **Gilles Guignard** and others worked to bring the first observances to Ste. Cezaire. Remi is dedicated to the history of WWII, and especially to the invasion of Provence and the path of the 517. He participates in events in Belgium, Normandy and Provence, for starters. We spent some time with him in Les Arcs this year, where he and his friends introduced my father (**Allan Johnson**, 596) and **Leo Dean** (Reg HQ) to Belgian beer. Like they needed another drink to enjoy! In France!

Rémi travels here to the States at least a couple of times a year, and yesterday visited Arlington National Cemetery (from New York!) to pay his respects to **Ben Barrett**.

As I told Rémi, this means a lot to anyone who loved Ben. He told me that it was important to him to do it, and I am grateful for such solid friendship and respect for our veterans. Friends like Rémi keep the memory of the 517 alive in Europe, and continue to honor the sacrifice of this elite unit. We greatly appreciate them.

Thank you, **Rémi**, from the entire Barrett family! –**Bob Barrett**

Teresa Pugh's Trip Report

Teresa Pugh, daughter of Charles Pugh, made her first trip to Provence in the fall of 2012. During that trip, she met up with many long-time friends to the unit, including Eric Renoux and Jean Michel Soldi, founders of the 15 aout 1944 Museum Association.

Jean Michel and Eric offered to take me to meet the elderly people who still owned the farms and orchards where the paratroopers landed or where those who had family members were scheduled to be executed for befriending the French Resistance.

The two or three towns have a collective population of approximately 20,000 people today. According to the French perhaps many of these people would not be alive today if the Americans had not arrived when they did by sheer accident since the unexpected fog bank

confused the pilots and deposited the paratroopers some 30 miles shy of the target zone. As the war wore on in France, the German officers began to take unmerciful acts of revenge for any significant or even perceived assistance to the Resistance movement. These towns lay in a critical transport route between Marseille and Paris. The Germans SS officers did not want to lose ground to the Americans, British or particularly to the French resistance. All acts of sabotage by the citizens were met with cruelty by late summer 1944. Just weeks before my dad's group arrived in this region two other French towns had virtually all of the town's young children, women, and the elderly publicly hung or shot and left in open pits as revenge against Resistance or partisans who committed acts of sabotage against the Germans. In Oradour Sur Glane, all remaining 644 people were killed including a one month old baby after a few of the townspeople made acts of sabotage against the Germans. Oradour Sur Glane is a living memorial today where no commerce or rebuilding is allowed out of respect for the tragedy.

The other paratroopers had never told their own kids of these events just as my dad had never told my brother and me. My dad had been active with these men after the war although my dad was not career military. But he had organized many WWII reunions in the US and taken a group of retired paratroopers to Normandy at the 50th anniversary of D Day. Much of the mystery of my dad was that he was very close to these men and talked to many of them on every Sunday during my childhood. This tradition of weekly calls continued until his death in 2001. As a kid, sometimes the [steady](#) succession of Sunday calls irritated me. Sometimes the phone rang for hours. My dad was often very quiet for hours after those calls. Oddly, he rarely told us anything about his own WWII experiences but he had an unbreakable bond with these 50-60 men for decades after the war. He eschewed our own family reunions but meet yearly with these men in FL or CA until his death. I had helped with WINGS as typist or did the collating and mailing of the newsletters to the retired paratroopers for almost 20 years.

Steve Markle had a fantastic supply of scanned photos, day passes, trip reports, diary or journal snippets, and letters along with maps that he organized. He collected these from many of the families, by soldier's name, and shipped them to me on discs. These electronic collections will be enormously helpful to Jean Michel and Eric along with, perhaps, countless historians for decades to come. Steve's contribution of time and dedication cannot be underestimated.

While in France I met four women and men who were teenagers when my dad's paratrooper group accidentally landed on their farms at 4 am on August 15. They were alert, talkative and extremely kind to me. I had no expectation that I would actually meet the families who owned farms or houses where US paratroopers landed. I also did not expect my own emotional reaction since I rather doubted that any of the ninety-something year old people still existed –or wanted to talk to me. Thanks to Eric and Jean Michel who had known my dad I was taken to the very farm where my dad landed in St. Marie de Callian, a tiny medieval farming town. I also met their mayor, in his 40s, who kindly presented me with a plaque at a small but charming reception with champagne and chocolates. How French, indeed. The mayor's grandparents and parents had been also deeply affected by the war and he told me that they too would not talk about their experiences. The two people who owned the farm where my dad landed were invited to the reception. It was remarkable and very touching that Eric and Jean Michel knew of my father's unit and could pinpoint the exact farm where he landed. I presented the mayor of St Marie de Callian with a U. S. flag that flew over the US Capitol.

Perhaps you already knew that both Jean Michel and Eric were the grandsons of women who had been tortured by German SS officers for perhaps two months before the arrival in August 1944. The German SS officers arranged for the torture of these women (and presumably many others) since they suspected (correctly) that they were the sisters, daughters or wives of men who were French Resistance fighters. These two women, after torture were scheduled to be executed on the morning of August 15 in Le Muy, France only a few hours

after my dad and the group of 123 men arrived unexpectedly by parachute and glider. As a result of this drop of 124 men across 40 miles untold French lives were saved.

At Chateau St Rosaline Abbey and winery, where we met on October 25, we had a wonderful private tour with the owner. If you ever are in southern France, visit this winery and request to see this Medieval chapel and reliquary. It is very moving and contains terrific art spanning 6 centuries. They also produce delicious wine.

Through Eric and Jean Michel I met three families with people in their 90s or late 80s who remembered the landings, had relatives who would have been executed by the German SS officers or whose relatives were French resistance fighters. One of the few things that my dad did tell me was that they fought alongside the Resistance in many places in France and Belgium. Often the Resistance fighters had better intelligence or better maps than the Allied soldiers. I met 89-year-old Josette. Her stories of how her family dealt with both the German and American soldiers, hunger, confiscation of all their valuable possessions by the Germans and survival were quite emotional. She described how the sheets were taken by the US soldiers to make bandages and to wrap up the dead. Overall the day was quite positive and this photo was shot a moment when what she said choked me up. Only seconds later she had me laughing when she told me, with a sly smile, that perhaps my father had been one of the men who ate all their chickens. She also told a great story about a young man who got into the barrel of fermenting fruit for wine. He was so hungry that he ate the fruit by the handful. Her father warned him that he would have one nasty hangover after eating all of it. The young soldier ate it anyway and later was found slumped over in the field--sleeping it off for many hours.

Days before I left for the trip to France I received a second unexpected e-mail note from **Irma and Arnold Targnion** from Trois Pons, Belgium. They are friends of **Marie Gaspar**, the thoughtful 73 year old woman in Trois Pons, Belgium who knew Eric and Jean Michel and many of you.

I am impressed that the survivors maintain a close contact in France and Belgium. My mother remembers meeting Madame Gaspar about 15 years ago at a WWII reunion.

The Targnion family wrote to offer their home and hospitality to me for a future trip explaining that my dad's paratrooper unit kept Madame Gaspar (at age 4), her mother and grandmother alive during the Battle of the Bulge in Trois Ponts, Belgium. In a remarkable but simple e mail she described the battle with 3-5 foot snow in Trois Ponts (that we call Battle of the Bulge). There the US soldiers from the 596 & 517 supplied her family of three and a growing brood of 9 orphaned children with Hershey candy and whatever could be found outside during the dreadful winter of 1945. She said they survived for 2 months on what the soldiers brought them. I rather suspect a future trip will take me to Trois Ponts.

Highlights from Mail Call
November 4, 2012-March 31, 2013
Mail Calls 2129-2150

Melvin Trenary

I was in A Co. First. Btl. I meet with WW 2 veterans every wed. In Conroe, Texas, a young man came up to me and asked what outfit I was in. I told the 517th. He said his dad was in the same outfit. His son told me he was going to visit his dad. He did and he brought his dad back with him. We had good get together. They also interviewed us. We could tell we had been in the same places during the war. His name is **Elmo Kunkel**. He was a replacement and I think in Co. B. I brought some of our books on 517th. He showed me his picture. He's on page 100 in the 517th prct. A white book. [*The Turner publishing book - 1998*]

Elaine Walls Saunders

As I sit here at my computer thinking of the latest Mail Call, I am inclined to write a bit about my late husband, **David J. Walls**. He was in the 517th and of course, at Camp Toccoa. It strikes me after reading the post from **Theresa Pugh** (and posts from others), that many of the men in WWII did not talk much about their experiences in battle. I know David did not, when our daughter once asked

him why he didn't write a memoir about his wartime service, he merely stated: 'no one is interested, and besides, I was just doing my job'. I suspect that would be the response of many WWII veterans; yes, just doing their job.

My interest was particularly piqued when Theresa mentioned Sospel, and the story behind it, which I did not know. When David and I toured Southern France in the early 1960's, we did not stop there; he was more interested in going to the Col de Braus, where he had fought. Which we did, in peacetime it was quite lovely. Perhaps he was aware of what transpired in Sospel and did not wish to relive painful memories. We will never know, he died in 1987. David was with the 517th in the Battle of the Bulge where he had his feet frozen and was sent to England to recover. He did return to France, when I do not know, but his last WWII service in Europe was in Rheims, France, where he said they 'helped the displaced persons' from the war. I know many stories have been lost from the servicemen who did not want to re-live the war, and we, the survivor's, are left with piece-meal accounts and many questions. David re-joined the Army in 1955 and went on to become a Sergeant Major, retiring in 1975 after serving in Vietnam and peace time Korea.

I am very proud of the service David and all the men and women of all our wars have given to our country, it behooves everyone to remember them and pray we not endure another 'World War'. Our present battles are more than enough, we need peace, not additional memories of a war torn world.

Tony Patin

Good Morning Gentlemen, hope everyone is doing well. Bob, the articles written in MailCall were just amazing, The Respect and Honor that we give our veterans and current military is so deserving!

Reading about the Para Gliders, WOW! I'm not sure how to describe what I'm about to tell you, because I don't want to sound uninformed. After reading about the Para Glider, I became a little more interested, Bobby Martin who is also a paratrooper from Breaux Bridge and a friend of my father, always asked me if my father was ever with the Gliders, I always told him that I didn't think so. Well, I

was browsing through the 517 Logo's & Insignias. I saw the Para Glider insignias, I have seen this before in my father's treasures. I opened his treasure chest, sure enough, he has two hats with the Para Glider emblem. The hats are faded blue with a gold trim, he never said anything about the Para Glider and stupid me, I didn't ask. Just wanted to share a bit of history of Ret. **Lt Col Thomas Fred Patin.**

Rick Sweet

I have decided to send the poker set that I own that belonged to **Lt. Richard Spencer** during WWII to **Jean Michel Soldi** in France so that he can preserve it and share it in the museum there. I bought it from **BJ Spencer-McCauly** on Ebay and have enjoyed owning it but I think it belongs in the museum for all to enjoy... I also plan on sending him a copy of Lory Curtis's movie, " Saints and Soldiers, AIRBORNE CREED" to enjoy and a 517th challenge coin just in appreciation for what he does for the 517th....I met him at the Washington DC reunion in 2007 and now he is a Facebook friend...I'd like to go to France someday to see where my dad **Odas Sweet** fought under your guidance while in H company but for now it doesn't look promising....Maybe someday!

Take care sir and God Bless you!
Son of a Buzzard

Howard Hensleigh

Thanks for the message. I loved those H Co. guys and believe they had a good CO in Capt. Jackson, after Skip Morris left the 517th for better things. It was that H Co. squad that did such great things the morning of D plus 2 at les Arcs. I'm not sure Athey is still with us, but I think he is one of the last H Co. officers still around. After Jackson left us on points, Bennett, we used to call Burpgun Benny commanded the outfit. Bennett stayed in the army but we lost track of him some time ago.

PS. I'm glad you are sending Dick Spencer's poker chips back to Southern France where they were used from time to time in lull moments between attacks. As I recall they were durable and would even withstand another flood. Let's hope that never happens.

Dennis Sura

Son of a Buzzard

I second fine comments about **Howard Hensleigh** that **Rick Sweet** made in the last mail call. I told Rick at the Atlanta Reunion that my dad, **Mike Sura**, stood right next to **Odas Sweet** on many a roll call. My dad had the opportunity to visit with **Athey** sometimes in the the last 1970's. He had many fine words for the LT. as well as the rest of his comrades in H Company.

Airborne All The Way

Denise Delesio

My father, **Gabe Delesio**, read about **Melvin Jarman** in the August 1, 2012 mail Gabe lives in Newtown Square, PA and was 90 years old on June 28, 2012.

My father loves reading the mail call. Thanks so much.

Photos and Cameras...

***Phil McSpadden** brought up the subject of cameras, igniting a surprising amount of discussion on Mail Call.*

Phil McSpadden

Bob, I look forward to your Mail Calls....something that is the glue that holds us together. I'm surprised to see so memories told in various stories and so many photos.....if my aging memory is still with me, I remember being cautioned not keep diaries or notes, and no photos, the object being that if one were ever captured, these notes and photos could be used to the detriment of everyone else in the unit. I didn't own a camera, so I have no photos of that time.

I vividly remember all our outgoing letters had to be submitted for censorship. My boss, **WOJG Paul C Duey** took great delight in this job, and usually added a few 'postscripts' to letters to all the young ladies I was corresponding with. When I got their letters in return, it soon became routine for them to add a note to Mr.Duey. I did get even with him, however, as he decided to go to jump school, and get some of that 'easy money'. He broke his leg on the first jump and went into a hospital in

Rome. Naturally, I had to go into Rome every day to go over things with him and get his

signatures. When we were getting ready for the jump, anyone not physically with our units were transferred out to their various locations...hospital, stockade, etc.

Well, with no one to do all this official signing, I became Mr. Duey's double....I signed his name to morning reports, special orders, payrolls, etc, etc., and he wasn't even a member of the unit at that time!!! When he finally did get back to us and compared his signatures to the ones I had been signing for him, he made one request of me....please notify him if I ever got to DC (his home) after the war, so he could close out his bank accounts!! I know this was illegal, but it got the job done, and if they send me to the pokey after all this time, I'd write to you to put into the Mail Call my need for 'care packages'!!!

Bob Barrett

My Dad, **Ben Barrett**, said the same thing, "We were told no cameras. How did these other guys get so many photos?"

My dad, Allan Johnson 596, said the same thing...

Gene "Zoot" Snyder, Co. A

P S Someone asked a question "how did we get cameras when they weren't allowed?" It was usually easy to get a camera from a recently captured German if **H. Hensleigh** or someone in his unit didn't know about it.

Howard Hensleigh

Cameras have been the subject of inquiry several times. Here is what I observed. I didn't know anyone who carried his own camera into combat. Many of the Germans had them. When we took prisoners you know what happened. I had several and used them as we could have film developed by the civilians all over. I kept one in my B bag way in the rear and had one in my bed roll, lost by **Capt. Hooper** in the Bulge. **George Meline** and I took several pictures of the men of the armored infantry outfit which relieved us up in the Maritime Alps of Southern France. We remained to orient them at the end, while the rest of the outfit enjoyed the Riviera. A letter I sent to **Capt. Comboy** the commander of that

outfit that relieved the 3rd Bn. came back to me marked KIA. Some of the men of the well liked captain's outfit wrote me asking me to send them pictures of him we had taken. It was a double blow to have to write them that the film and camera were lost in the Bulge.

So, as far as I know most if not all the cameras used to take pictures by the 517th were of German origin.

Rick Sweet

In response to the cameras used during WWII, I am sending in a couple of pictures of the camera that my dad **Odas**, used. He received this camera from a woman who I think was a close friend (wink wink) in France or Germany. In many of the pictures submitted to the 517th, he has the camera case hanging over his shoulder on his side. It is a German camera called a Voigtländer and takes nice pictures. The viewfinder is terrible though. My dad had a picture taken with his lady friend but somehow the side of the picture with her image was cut off with a pair of scissors. Must have happened when my mom was sewing....I have also added a few pictures of my Nazi collection. Hope you enjoy it. (Dad didn't marry my mom until after the war in 1946, by the way..)

Bill Hudson

1st Platoon, 596th, and another former Calif Highway engineer

FORBIDDEN PHOTOGRAPHS

Mae West said, "When I'm good, I'm very, very good, but when I'm bad I'm better." The third platoon of the 596th Engineers must have adopted that as their guiding motto in many of their actions in the war, including the taking of photographs (a security no-no). While the rest of us, more or less, followed the ban, the third platoon violated the hell out of that rule.

What was the upshot? The result was that almost all of the photos of the engineers in the various war histories are of them. And they have never exhibited any shame about this. Is there any justice?

Memories of Toccoa....

Phil McSpadden

Got the Thunderbolt yesterday, and read everything with interest....Saw the article on the ceremonies at Camp Toccoa, and for a moment....just a moment....thought I might drive up to participate.

Then, I remembered it, not with fondness, but more like "Hell Week"!! Camp Toccoa was opened on March 29, 1943...I was inducted on March 29, 1943, my 19th birthday. (Had tried to enlist in the Marines in June '41, turned down because I was color blind...tried the Navy in June '42 to go in with a brother, same story). I volunteered for the Paratroops one day after I was sworn in, waited for about a week for a group to gather (every day was KP from 5:30 AM until 9 PM!!!). Finally got to Toccoa, and what I remember is running...and I do mean running!...up Currahee every morning before breakfast, doing some 'exercises' at the top of the hill, and running back down to shower, change clothes and get to the Mess Hall before it closed.

I remember going to the dental clinic, having my mouth examined, given several shots and told to go in the hallway and wait my turn. When my turn came, out came three teeth, no fillings (no time for practically everyone in the entire Army), which were not replaced with a partial until a mobile unit passed by during the Bulge. I remember a Capt. Green....he always wrote everything in green ink!!!.....wanting me to volunteer for OCS...which I turned down as I remembered several 17 year old 2nd Lts, strutting their uniforms, and challenging everyone to salute in Camp Grant where I was inducted, and I thought, no way am I going to be like that.

I remember marching someplace for a physical, wearing only our shoes and a raincoat! I wasn't at Toccoa for much more than a week, before we became the first group of 'recruits' to report to the 460th Parachute Field Artillery at Camp Mackall, getting off the train in Hoffman, arriving late at night, tired, hungry and ready for bed. Then in came the First Sergeant and we soon learned who was going to be boss in that Battery!!!

Toccoa, to me, is a memory of rain, red clay, runs, runs, runs, giving us no chance to form anything like a 'buddy system' during our stay. I don't think a trip would change my

memories!!! Now, the 517th, 460th and 596th stir up lots of good memories, some shaky spots, but a unit anyone would be proud to say "I was a member of that Team".

Tim Curtis, Son of Harland "Bud" Curtis

Another great Sunday reading MailCall. Thanks so much! I wanted to share what a pleasure I had yesterday spending the afternoon with one of the great heroes of the 517th. **Marshall Baird** was in 1st Battalion A. Co. and lives in Oracle, AZ. I was fortunate enough to watch the premier of Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed with Marshall back in September in Mesa, AZ, I have wanted to sit down with Marshall ever since, and yesterday he was such a gracious host telling me stories of his life and his time with the 517th. After the war Marshall spent a considerable amount of time managing a large cattle ranch which has since become the Biosphere 2 which is quite a tourist attraction here in Arizona, and currently run by the University of Arizona. Marshall was courteous and signed my SASAC movie poster, and here are a few pics so his old pals can see how well he is doing. Still driving around town in his truck with Purple Heart plates, and Jumpwing emblems on the back too. A day I will remember!

The Stone-Hensleigh exchanges **Howard Hensleigh** is our go-to guy when we have questions.

Howard Hensleigh

I was delighted to see that early 3rd Bn. officers roster. Old **Jackson** was in H Co. from the beginning and ended up commanding it. Everyone but **Zais** got promoted before I reached the outfit in Nov. 1943.

Message for **Pete D. Stone**. I remember your father who was an officer in G Co. in November 1943. I remember also when he was transferred out. Here is something you might not know. He married your mother without getting **Col. Lou Walsh's** permission and the outraged regimental commander transferred him out of the 517th for that reason. He was an excellent officer and I remembering his wearing an air corps sheep lined leather jacket, a scarce item in those days. You are right, the Bn. adjutant called for a first Lt.

Highest airborne regards.

Pete Stone

I've not heard the married without permission story. I have heard of the flight jacket which was stolen by a medical type after he was wounded in Holland. I had the pleasure of meeting many of Dad's 506 friends at reunions. I will take a picture of the silver plate from the 517 and send it to mail call.

Howard Hensleigh

Then your father's and mother's wedding date corresponds exactly with the time frame I recall when your dad transferred to the 506th.

It may be difficult for people in this day and age to realize how overall empowered some commanders were with respect to their subordinates during WWII. Getting permission for marriage from the regimental commander was one thing our 32 year old full colonel **Lou Walsh** required. I think for the enlisted men the Catholic chaplain had to tell Lou that the young lady was pregnant, so to prevent a bastard's being born into the outfit, he had to agree to the marriage. Apparently he had equally strong feelings regarding his officers.

Since you didn't know about the reason for the transfer, your Dad may or may not have known the reason, but it leaked out after Frank left the outfit.

What I have said many times over, is that if you lived through it, don't fight history. Who knows, if your father had remained with G Co. like **Art Riddler**, he might not have returned.

To complete the story I have to tell you an incident of a 3rd Bn. staff meeting, **after Lt. Col. Graves** replaced **Col. Walsh**. Graves graduated from West Point about ten years before Walsh. Like five star General Marshall, Graves may have had a humbling 17 years as a second lieutenant. At this meeting, **Lt. Col. Zais** asked Graves if we were to retain all of the high traditions of the 517th. Graves asked for an example. Zais responded that we all laced our boots the same way--laces straight across. Graves pulled in his chin a moment and said, "I always considered the way a man laced his shoes was his own business".

Before I finish, since others who had great respect for **Lou Walsh**, and I did myself for many of his sterling qualities, I should apologize for my candid statements in this message.

Pete, I am delighted that you have solved the mystery of the life of **Frank Stone** after he left G Co in December of 1943. His life after 517 proves that we lost a good officer. Thanks for making contact.

Howard Hensleigh

When I received this message I thought that there were things I could have told you about your uncle's death based on things we who had gone through combat knew. I will try my hand at this at the risk of telling you things you already know.

German artillery and particularly the 88 was a dreaded weapon by front line infantry. Everyone hearing the sound of an incoming 88 hit the dirt as a reflex which didn't require thought. Strangely, you were safe from the one you heard. The 88 rounds traveled faster than sound. It was the one you didn't hear until it exploded that was dangerous. Nevertheless, hitting the dirt was a good idea since you didn't know where the next one would land.

Your uncle was killed by a direct hit, so he didn't know he was in danger from that shell and he did not suffer or linger after he was hit. This may or may not be of interest but since I had a second shot at it I took the chance.

Dogtag mystery: the Barrett-Lambert exchange
Bob Barrett

Bob Barrett

I had a phone call yesterday with **John Pastalenic**. He was in H Company, same as my dad.

If you remember, you exchanged emails or notes with him about his dog tags that you found in Belgium. (<http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/1672.htm>) If I traced the notes correctly, you lost contact with him, probably when his email address changed. John does not read email or MailCall, but his wife has an email address, and I have his home address and phone number below.

He was wondering if you still have the dog tags, and if so, if he could have one of them sent to him.

John Pastalenic, H Company
1014 North Hill Road
Arkport, NY 14807 USA
Phone: 607-295-7382

His wife is Dorothy, and her email is
d.pastalenic@gmail.com

He also mentioned that the tags were found in Belgium, even though he was wounded in Southern France and did not make it to Belgium. Unfortunately, he cannot explain it either. Perhaps someone else or medical staff carried them into the Bulge and dropped them there.

Eddy Lamberty

I indeed remember well the contact I had with **Mr. Pastalenic** and the strange fact that I got his dog tag while he never came to Belgium due to his wounds in Southern France.

In fact, my team leader, when I worked in 2009, knew my interest in the WWII and more particularly in the Battle of the Bulge. He then explained to me that his boy who was around 15 years old at that time, had taken a dog tag in the house of his grandmother who lived in Basse-Bodeux.

I asked him if he wanted to know more about the owner and I made researches. I was lucky enough to find that Mr. Pastalenic survived the war and was still alive.

So, I contacted him and I've explained how I got his dog tag. Such a strange finding is quite more interesting to me and I would have loved to get a WWII picture of Mr. Pastalenic and a picture of today.

Then, I indeed lost contact with him and I really thought that Mr. Pastalenic maybe thought that I had try to contact him by a strange means.

Bob, I'm interested in the Battle of the Bulge for nearly 24 years now and I know that some people try to contact the veterans to get their stuffs. I do respect the veterans and I'll be forever thankful to them for my liberties, I'll do my very best to perpetuate their memories.

I'll do my very best with the dog tag because I would be happy to send it back to him.

So... Can anyone explain how John Pastalenic's H Company dog tags, last seen in Southern France on

D2 (August 15, 1944) ended up in Basse-Bodeux, Belgium? –BB

Bill Hudson

1st Platoon, 596th, and another former Calif Highway engineer

Marv Tetrick has left us, but is far from forgotten. Also, that story of the Tetrick-Snyder saga will be fixed in our memories for a long time.

Relating to their being able to stay together in the service, I volunteered for the paratroops at Fort Snelling, MN in April, 1943. A non-com of the reception center staff later informed us that, earlier in the year orders were issued to the effect that staffing up for the paratroops had a priority, and that once a man had volunteered, he was not to be considered for any other job. I assume that's the loophole that Marv and Gene exploited.

MINNESOTA HEROES

In relation to Fort Snelling's processing of inductees, you may have noticed that the 517th had a higher than would be expected number of men from Minnesota. Were we braver? The answer may lie with the reception center PFC, who gave the pitch for the paras. First, he unveiled a poster of a dashing fellow (not unlike Errol Flynn) in a jump suit parachuting down to the attack. The he told us of the \$50 a month extra pay, and then finished it off with saying, "And no KP!" (He lied about that.) This is the guy that should have gotten an award.

Dick Seitz turned 95!

And we had a Mail Call virtual party for him. One of those responses, of course from Howard Hensleigh, is too good not to repeat:

Memories from **Howard Hensleigh**:

You asked for it. Dick Seitz's bachelor party buddies held him upside down out of his upper floor Joigny quarters threatening to drop him without a chute until he agreed to say, "I do."

And another:

Kenton "Kent" Floyd Immerfall
Nephew of **1st Lt. Floyd A. Stott**
3rd Bat. "I" Co. 517th PRCT

If I had my druthers, I'd like to sit around a table with "Dick" and Howard and just listen

to them recall. Got a feeling what one didn't think of the other would. Heck, the whole history of the 517th could probably be summed up (in a few volumes) just listening to these two troopers.

And a delicious story from a member of the Boyle clan:

Paul Abbene

Last summer...the Kansas City Reunion...**Leo Dean** is planning a jump...**Nancy Armand** is joining him...she asks me if I want to jump..."sure"...**Mimsey Boyle** wants to jump...maybe **Mike Boyle** too. Leo's stick is filling up the plane. After breakfast I walk into the courtesy lounge and from across the room General Seitz calls out, "Hey Paul, I hear you're going to to jump with Leo today." I reply, "Yes sir, weather permitting." Loudly and with an encouraging grin the General says, "God Bless your heart !" When everyone was telling us we were nuts General Seitz is telling us to go for it. Attack life...it's what these guys do. I still laugh whenever I think about it.

Thanks to the Big Three: Bob Barrett, Howard Hensleigh and Lory Curtis Pat Seitz and Alan Greer

This is a Happy Valentine's Day email to three special people.

First to you, Bob, who continue to make MailCall the blessing that it is and continue your wonderful father's legacy of preserving the bonds of the men of the 517th and its history. You truly are the fruit that does not fall far from the tree. Your sister is rather outstanding as well --also fruit from the same tree!

Second to **Howard Hensleigh**. The last thing I want to be perceived as is a stalker, but in Howard's case, I am a true "groupie." I look forward to reading whatever he writes (and that you republish) in MailCall. What a gem of a human being, leader, lawyer, soldier, writer and historian he is to say nothing of being a fabulous guy. Our hats are off to Howard!

Third to **Lory Curtis**. His ears should have been burning recently as Dad was once again sang his praises for all that he has done to preserve the history of the 517th, to organize the reunions, to get his Dad's letters published and the movie made, and the last Thunderbolt

out. He must have a number of clones in his closet!

Happy Valentine's Day to you all!

**Saints and Soldiers – Airborne Creed
Film Update**

Roger Sullivan, son of **George A. Sullivan** – 1st Bn, Co. A

I ordered a copy of "Saints and Soldiers" from Barnes & Noble and it arrived in time for Mom's Thanksgiving visit.

We ALL enjoyed it so much and I think it was especially meaningful for Mom to imagine what Dad must have experienced during Dragoon.

Thanks very much, Lory for your efforts in seeing this come to life. It's a wonderful, inspirational story – highly recommended!

Searching for information

Many of our online readers are seeking information about their fathers, grandfathers or uncles. The trail has grown cold for them. Veterans of the 517, if you have even a little information or a blurry photo, it could be much more than these families ever hoped for. Please, see if you can assist any of these friends of the unit.

Tricia Parks

827 Hollywood Way #110
Burbank, CA 91505
(213)217-0358

Thank you for your wonderful website. My dad was a member of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. His name is **Msgt. Francis E. Whitaker** and he was with the 460-D. He passed away in November of 2002. I would like to submit some photos of him as I round them up.

Also, I was wondering if there is somewhere I can sign up for any and all info related to my dad and his former combat team. He had received a roster update in 1999 and if you could send me any current info it would be greatly appreciated. My address is below. My dad's former address on Murray Blvd is no longer current and has not been valid for many years.

In his honor, I am working on putting together a history of his life in the Army for my grandsons. They are extremely interested and

are full of questions. One of my grandsons is wanting to follow the lead of his great-grandpa and join the military as soon as he is able to. It is all he has talked about since he was three years old. He is now eight.

One day I hope to visit the areas that my dad never had the opportunity to "revisit during a time of peace".

It has taken me this long to start this project because I was taking care of my mom. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's shortly after my dad' passing. But my family and I are putting this together now and your help is greatly appreciated.

Thank you again.

p.s. My nickname is Saki which is why the email is from note_from_saki@yahoo.com

Elaine Walls Saunders

My uncle **Thomas F. Paturzo** was in the **3rd battalion, HQ Company**, he was a Corp. I'm looking for anyone in that Company and Squad. that may know him.. pictures info anything that will tell me how he died. He died of wounds...Feb 10th 1945 . and was buried for a time in Alsace ,before he was returned home to NYC.

Fred B. Liggett

My father died in 1960 plane crash in Alaska, I still have much of his WW11 memorabilia. I just emailed a photo with names of some of his buddies which he had written on the back of the picture. Hope you can post it on the website.

Jodi Holt

I am trying to find out information on behalf of **Thomas Leon Rea** whose uncle who was in the 517th Parachute Reg. His name was also Thomas Leon Rea and he died on February 9, 1945.

I would love to find out if there are any living members who may have known him

Any help or information you may have would be greatly appreciated.

Bob Lynam

(Richard's brother)

This is a letter I came across when I was going through some of my parents' things. I thought you may be interested in it. Also, if

anyone knew Richard, I would certainly like to hear from them by way of you.

"I have the honor to inform you that, by direction of the President, the Silver Star has been posthumously awarded to your son, **Private Richard L. Lynam**. The citation is as follows:

SILVER STAR

For gallantry in action. On 5 January, 1945 at 0400 hours, the second platoon, Company 'H', 517th Parachute Infantry, was ordered to reinforce Company 'C', east of Bergeval, Belgium. The platoon moved into position and was ordered to send a squad out as a combat and reconnaissance patrol. Private Lynam, acting squad leader, volunteered to take his squad on the patrol. The patrol advanced approximately 500 yards toward the position occupied by Company 'C' when it was subjected to heavy small arms fire from enemy soldiers protecting a mortar position. With utter disregard for his own safety, Private Lynam moved forward and calmly led and directed his squad in an attack on the enemy positions. Private Lynam, moving forward, killed five of the enemy before he was mortally wounded. Private Lynam's gallant and courageous leadership won the admiration of his comrades and was an inspiration to all who served with him. (Authority: GO No. 15, 13 ABN Div, 19 May 45, Pvt, 517 Parachute Infantry) My deepest sympathy is extended to you in your bereavement."

Edward F. Mitchell

Major General

The Adjutant General

Thomas L. Rea

I was named after my Uncle who was in the 517th and killed in the war on Feb. 9th 1945 . Thank you for your efforts to find anyone who might have remembered him.

Updates

Darrell Egnor on the passing of **Jack Collins**

Jack Collins was in HQ. Company 2nd Battery, Mortar Platoon. He was in our company from Toccoa all through the war.

The last reunion he was able to handle due to health reasons was in Atlanta last year. He was a good trooper and always fun to be around. He can be seen in our video "A Cut

Above". Two things I will always remember about him was he carried a little note book through the War that most of us signed with our home information, etc. He pulled it out every time we would see him at Reunions to make sure we didn't owe him any money.

The other thing he would not let us forget was he was younger than most of us. He just turned 88 years old just before he passed away.

Scott Ross

Update on **Norman Ross, Jr.** I Co. Just wanted to give an update on grandpa.

He has moved his residence to an assisted living care facility no more than 4 miles from his house in Ocean Shores, Washington.

Betty is still living and taking care of the house, but spends as much time as she can with grandpa at the assisted living residence. Grandpa is still in good spirits and relatively good health, and loves his new view from his room that overlooks the entrance to Grey's Harbor.

If anyone would like to get in touch with him, his new address is:

Emeritus at Harbour Pointe Shores
1020 Catala Avenue SE
Ocean Shores, WA 98569
Office Phone: (360) 289-9663

Brenda Verbeck Mortensen

Although MailCall carried an obituary notice for **Donald E. Walker, B Company**, who passed on August 23, 2012, contact information for **Virginia Walker** was not included. I have recently learned from her that she has not heard from anyone in the 517 and clearly, this was the reason. This has been and remains a very difficult time for her and those who knew Don and Virginia (Ginger) might like to drop her a note. Your prayers are also appreciated. She is not on email. This is her address:

Virginia Walker
2209 Shepherd St.
Wichita Falls, TX 76309

Bill Hudson, 596th, and **Gloria Hudson** of "Crowley Launch and Tug" which docked

almost all of the Pacific Fleet in San Francisco Bay during WWII (1944-45).

Here is our new Email address. We hope you'll send future Mail Calls to us here: HUDSONWG@COMCAST.NET.

Dan Perry, son of a Buzzard, **Floyd R. Perry**, HQ Co. 2nd BN 517th PRCT

I wanted to give the membership and association members a heads up about a BLURB-or-BLOG that I posted on a forum site about militaria aptly named, <http://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/163522-letters-home-a-soldiers-story-lcurtis/>

On this site is a forum section, among hundreds of others, that encouraged members to share a recent military related book or recent article read or interesting movie, documentary or video clip, and well, I sorta got carried away with my zeal for Lory's book and the resulting movie. I posted unit logos, pictures of the book and movie covers and some history of the unit leading to a link for the 517th web-site. If I have taken liberties that aren't acceptable please let me know and I can have the administrators of the US militaria forum remove the whole thing. I also took the liberty of copying and pasting the picture of the 24 DEC 1943 cover of YANK that is in the introduction of the most recent mailcall. I certainly don't want to get into any copyright infringement issues or appear too forward about spreading the great news about our Troopers and their history and their website. A very airborne holiday greeting to you all in remembrance of this 68th Christmas since the Battle of the Bulge.

Mickey Moses (son of Jim Moses, 596th PCEC)

Just a short note to let each of you know that my mother passed away this morning. She was 95 and live a full and complete life. She was living in the house that her and pa built in 1947 with a VA loan. Her and Pa were married before the war and she had graduated from college before her parent ever had an indoor toilet or lights. Keep us in your prayers.

Mike Wells

On MailCall No **2139** I read the requests for information on **CORWIN CLARK** and **RICHARD LYNAM** of H Co; both KIA

I don't know if you had previously responded, to those making the inquiries, with the Morning Report information. If not, here it is if you want to send it along.

Also, I will be retiring from West Valley City; last day of work with them is January 15, 2013. Almost 35 years in law enforcement and it's time to make a change; I'll be working on a couple of businesses we own and would like to see grow. I also expect that I'll have more time to devote to the Morning Report project. I'd like to get them "finished" in the next 6 months. This would include getting the pdf's of the documents renamed so that they fit the format you like. Once that is done then folks can assist by reviewing the Excel spreadsheet with the pdf documents and report on any errors. I would hope the information can be locked down on the web site so no changes could be made by just anybody; they could just report the errors.

Anyway, just want to get back into the swing of things. The last year has been very hectic at work and the last three months the most hectic of all. I don't know how you stay on top of MailCall, but I'm glad you do!

Morris McDowell

In response to the story of **Corwin Clark's** death. Corwin was killed by an 88 mm round and my Cousin **Layton Pippin** died from the same round. There were 16 other men wounded in the incident, and **Ben Barrett** was included. These men were from 'H' co. 1st platoon not second. Ben told me that a patrol was sent out the 6th of Jan and killed the men on the gun that had hit 1st plt. and destroyed the gun the day after Corwin and Layton were killed. Ben sent a map to me showing the location of the attack, about one eighth mile from **Marie Gaspar's** home. Fred and Ben told me this story in great detail several years ago.

Morris McDowell

I wanted to let everyone know that **Ed Athey** is in an assisted home in CA. and I am sure he would appreciate a card from anyone from the 517th his address is:

Meadow Lark Memory Care

351 Bruce St. Box 169

Yreka, CA. 96097.

Ed was an assistant Plt. leader of 'H' co.

Gene "Zoot" Snyder, Co. A

My lifelong buddy **Marvin Tetrick** passed away this week. He was a squad leader in the machine gun platoon, Hdqs. Co. 1st Bat. Marv and I have been buddies since the 4th grade of grammar school in Compton Calif.

We were drafted on the same day in March 1943 and both joined the 517th at Toccoa in April. I was in Co. A and Marv's machine gun squad was attached to us on many occasions in combat. Neither of us were ever evacuated or missed a day of our respective combat assignments. Since WWII our families have lived within a mile of each other in Calif. and Yuma, AZ. We both became civil engineers and worked on the design and construction of freeways and rural highways in the deserts and mountains of eastern California. After forty years we both retired on the same day in December of 1987. Marv was in such demand that he double dipped another two years on major construction projects.

Subject: Address change

George E. Rumsey, 949 SIBLEY MEMORIAL HWY, APT 425, SAINT PAUL, MN 55118

Arrived in Toccoa early March 1943. **John W. Forrest** and I were sent to the 460th first and then back to the 517 for whatever reason. Was in Headquarters 1st, Machine Gun Platoon to the end in 1945, and my dues are current. Had a Birthday, January 8, turned 88. Just turned 18 before I got to Toccoa so maybe was one of the youngest in the outfit.

Thanks for your help

G. Rumsey

Lory Curtis

As I mentioned I have been going through the roster calling folks to see if they want the Thunderbolt mailed to them. I spoke with a **Joe Mollina** from D Company, who lives in California. Joe told me he was blind now and couldn't read the Thunderbolt. So I asked him if he had any family members who could read it to him. He said yes his daughter so he requested that I send him the Thunderbolt. He

seemed excited to be able to get it again. Then Joe told me that a very good friend of his from the 517th, **Alex Sierra** passed away about 2 months ago. He told me that Alex was instrumental many years ago in setting up the Palm Springs Reunions. Hopefully, some will remember the great contributions Alex made to the organization. And I hope those attending the Palm Springs reunion this year will take a few moments to remember Alex Sierra.

Myron Gadoury

I would like to be in touch with other 517th members/families. I have some information that I could post as well as photos but not sure how to do it.

My Dad **Irving Edward Gadoury** enlisted July 24, 1942 in the 517th and was a platoon leader SSGT. SN 11070445 3rd Battalion 3rd Platoon Company G

He was hit on the ridge near Col de Braus overlooking Sospel France.

He was separated Aug 21, 1945 from Convalescent hospital, Camp Edwards Massachusetts. In 1970 the shrapnel finally killed him.

Myron Gadoury
53 Gibson Lane
Sterling, CT 06377
Phone 860 564 1000
Email mig@ct.metrocast.net

I thank you for your service. You were of the Greatest Generation and there will never be another as great.

Allan Johnson

Owen Ervine called him today with the news of the passing of his father, **Wayne Ervine**, who was a member of the 517th. Owen reported that his father died peacefully. He also reported that he and his father had attended several reunions, including some at Palm Springs, and that they had enjoyed them immensely. Old buddies will miss him.

Bill and Jenny Mourning

I am sending this at the request of my father: **Cpl James "Red" Eberle** shares the news of the death of his beloved wife of 69 years, **Charlene M. Eberle**. "Red" and Charlene were married August 26, 1943 after his return from Camp Toccoa. Charlene

passed away September 1, 2012. He can be reached through his daughter's email billjeni@tampabay.rr.com or phone 765-742-4784.

Nick Miller

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I'm writing you today on behalf of my family. Last night we lost a great grandfather, brother, husband, role model and most of all hero. Pvt. Dan Knoechelman was part of the Mortar Platoon, Hq. company, 1st Battalion and much more to those who he knew. He was contagious to be around and always the life of a party. His stories of WW2 are like something from a book; one filled with honor, courage, laughter and sorrow. I know we don't have much time before he is laid to rest but I was hoping that you may have some additional information that would send Dan out with the respect he and other veterans deserve.

Thank you in advance for your time and dedication!

Amy Pohanic

I am the granddaughter of **George Ochoa**. I am writing to inform you that he passed away Friday February 22 and his funeral will be held Thursday February 28th at Ft. Logan (CO) national cemetery at 2:30.

Myrle and Betty Traver

I want to give you an update on Myrle. He had fifteen radiation treatments and then we played the waiting game for over six weeks. Finally the doctor ordered another cat-scan and Praise the Lord the cancer in his lung is dormant. She didn't say gone but it is dormant and he is feeling great. I want to thank everyone for the prayers. He will have to have a cat-scan every three months to keep a check on the cancer. We missed the reunion because of this so now that he is able to travel again we are going on a cruise Nov. 10th and we will celebrate our 70th anniversary.

Also want to let Lory that we say Saints and Soldiers/Airborne Creed when it was here in Las Vegas. The movie was great and Myrle said that there were a few scenes that shook him up with memories. Myrle wants to know where the movie was filmed?

Our friend, Mark Easton just returned from Germany. He brought back many pictures of the Schmidt/Bergstein area. He found the fox hole that **Myrle, Guichi and Flynn** were in when they were captured. Also pictures of the mine field they crossed and all of the surrounding area. He talked to the villagers who were soldiers and fought our troops. He said they were very happy to take him on a tour of the battlefield. They are still removing mines from the field. He gave us two dvd's of pictures including the german ex-soldiers. Mark was able to follow the map that Myrle had given him.

Upcoming Operation Dragoon Events Washington, DC

C. Monika Stoy

President

Outpost Europe

Society of the 3rd Infantry Division

Gentlemen,

Outpost Europe of the Society of the 3rd Infantry Division, in partnership with the French Embassy and the Army Historical Foundation, will be conducting a historical seminar and commemoration of Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France by the 7th US Army (6th Corps - 3rd, 36th, 45th ID) on 15 August 1944 and the subsequent Southern France campaign. This invasion and campaign were supported by the OSS, included an airborne assault in support of the seaborne landings by the 1st Airborne Task Force - units are listed on the attached paper, as well as a seaborne special operation conducted by the 1st Special Service Force. This will be the fifth year we have hosted this event, and we would like to make this year's the biggest yet.

Our purpose remains to honor the veterans of Dragoon, as well as to gain them greater recognition for their tremendously successful operation which has historically been overlooked and overshadowed by the

landings in Normandy and the combat in Northern France.

Each year the centerpiece of the commemoration is our ceremony at the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery. During this ceremony the French Embassy awards the French Legion of Honor to veterans who fought in France. We will do so again this year.

I would like to ask you to please disseminate the attached information widely through your organizations and among your fellow veterans and ask for your participation and assistance in making the event a success. We won't have our WWII veterans around too much longer, we need to show them our appreciation now. Mark the dates on the calendar and plan to attend!

Thank you!

Rock of the Marne!

When: 8-11 August 2013 (Thursday-Sunday)

Where: Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel, 900 South Orme Street, Arlington, VA 22204

Who: Please join us in honoring the veterans of the 6th Army Group; 7th Army; 6th Corps; 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry

Divisions; 1st Allied Airborne Task Force – 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team (including AT CO/442nd

Infantry Regiment, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, 4463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, 550th Airborne Infantry

Battalion, 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion, and the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade (UK); 1st Special Service

Force; US Army Air Corps; US Navy, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine; the OSS; and from the participant allied nations of France, Poland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Canada; family members, friends, and anyone interested in WWII history.

What: 8 August: 1 to 3 PM – registration; 5 to 8 PM – historical seminar

9 August: 9 AM to 5 PM – historical seminars and veterans' remembrances

10 August: 8:30 to 1200 AM – ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery with presentation of French Legion of Honor in Amphitheater

5 to 9:30 PM – Banquet

11 August: 8:30 to 11 AM –historical seminars

Why: To honor the veterans of the Forgotten D-Day, to preserve history, to educate the public, and to pass on the torch of their proud legacy.

Room Reservations: Price - \$95 per night, one day prior to event and one day after.

Reservations: 1-800-325-3535

Reservation Group Name: Operation Dragoon

Cutoff date for reservations: Friday, 21 July 2012

Point of Contact: Monika Stoy, President, Outpost Europe, Society of the 3rd Infantry Division timmoni15@yahoo.com, PH: 703 912 4218

6531 Milva Lane, Springfield, VA. 22150 USA

RSVP by 30 June 2012

Registration: Event registration - \$30. Banquet - \$40. (Free for Dragoon Veterans)

TAPS

Robert Brown

Wayne Ervine

Dan Knoechelman

John Kocan

George Ochoa

Marvin Tetrick

Camp Toccoa 70th Anniversary



This Month marks the 70th anniversary of the activation of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Camp Toccoa, GA.

I have made arrangements with Brenda Carlin, the director of the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum to have a **517th Get-Together on Friday, May 31, and Saturday June 1st**. Everyone is invited to come. There is no registration,(because this is not a reunion), but please come and celebrate the activation of the 517th. I know our President, **Allan Johnson** is planning on attending along with many others I have spoken with.

As you know there is no National Reunion this year and our organization is having two great mini-reunions, one in Florida that was held in January, and the Palm Springs California Reunion this month Mar 11-15th. Thanks to all who are putting these reunions on, I know what that is like.



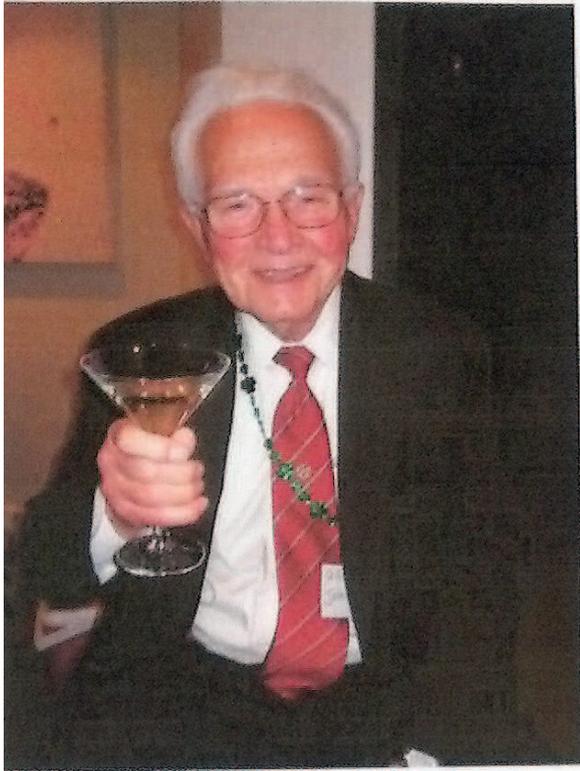
On the weekend of June 1, 2013, the Camp Toccoa/Currahee Museum will be hosting a D-Day fun run up and down Mount Currahee on Saturday morning.

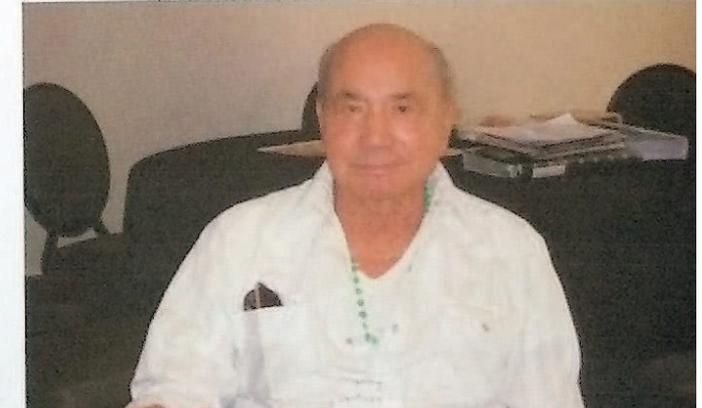
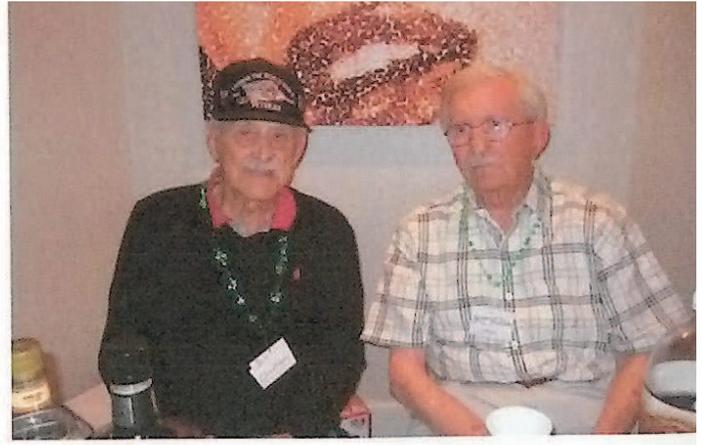
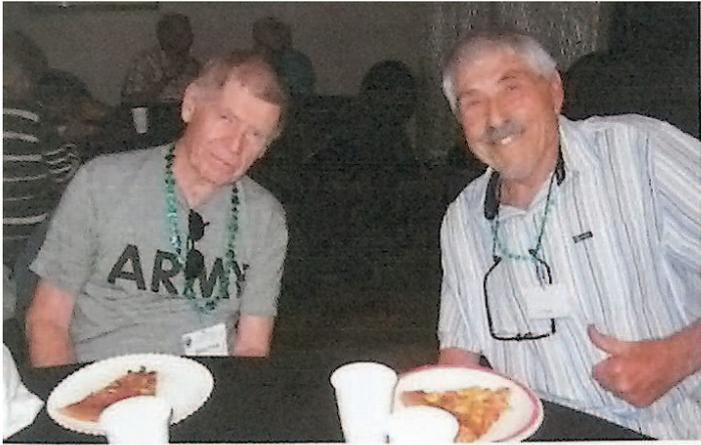
(see [http://www.toccoahistory.com/2013 D Day Run form.pdf](http://www.toccoahistory.com/2013_D_Day_Run_form.pdf)) I'm not sure how much fun that will be, but I and Brenda are planning some fun activities for the 517th while we are there. Brenda has recommended that we stay at the Country Hearth Inn, 302 W Savannah St Toccoa, GA 30577 (706) 297-7799, or the Toccoa Inn and Suites, 106 Stephen Cir Toccoa, GA 30577, (706) 886-1048 <http://www.toccoainn.com/Home.html>

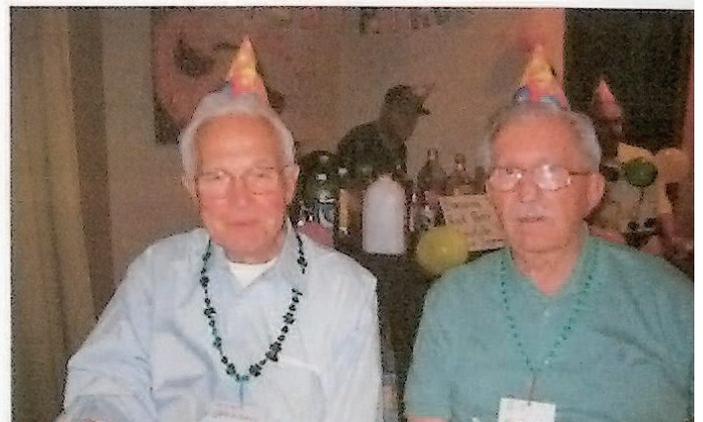
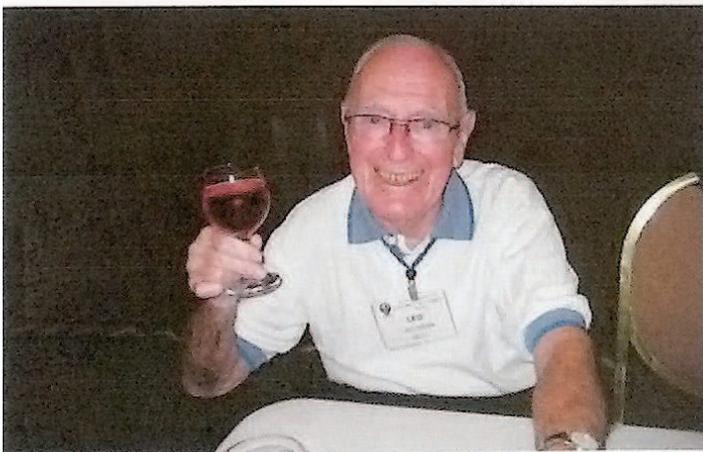
Brenda is expecting a large group to these events so I recommend making your motel reservations soon. I am excited to return to Camp Toccoa to see where our fathers trained. I hope to see you there Airborne All the Way!

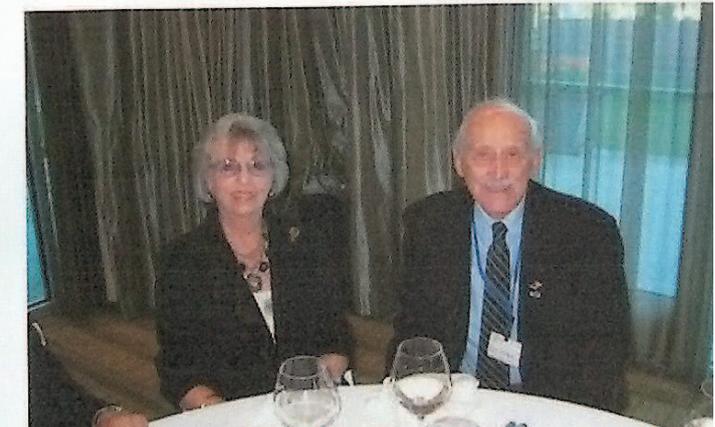
Lory Curtis, son of Bud Curtis, HQ, 1st BN

Palm Springs, California Mini Reunion,
March 11-15, 2013

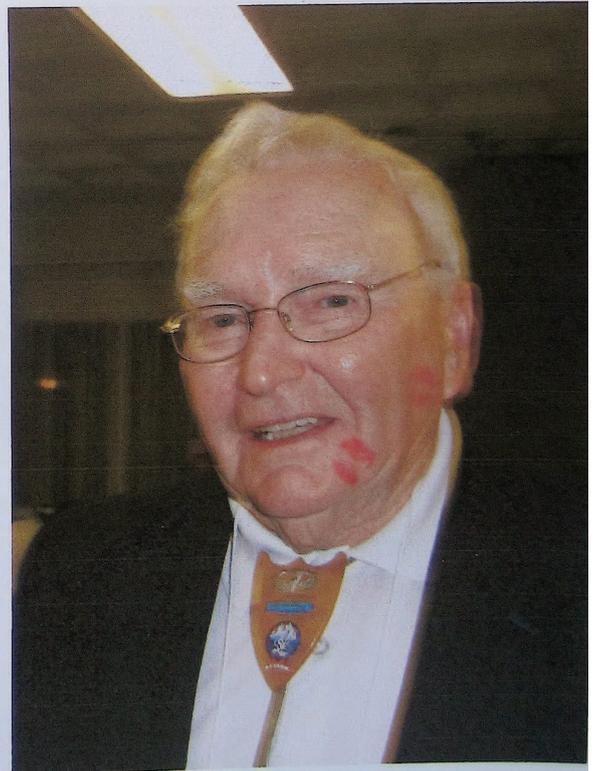


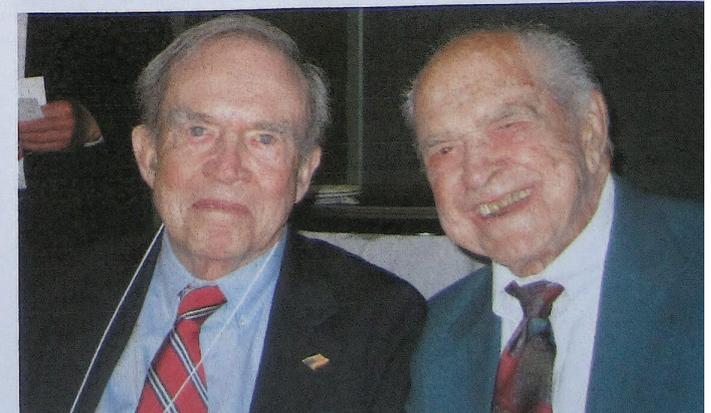
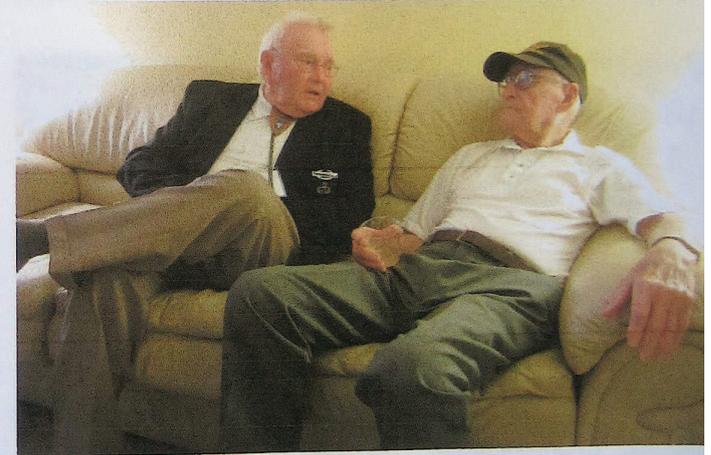
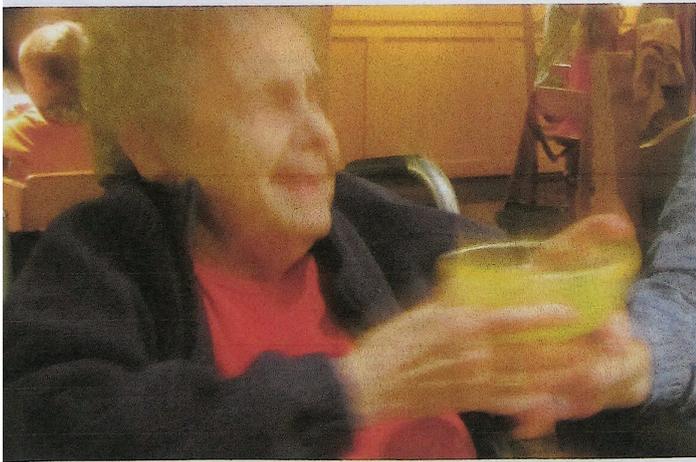


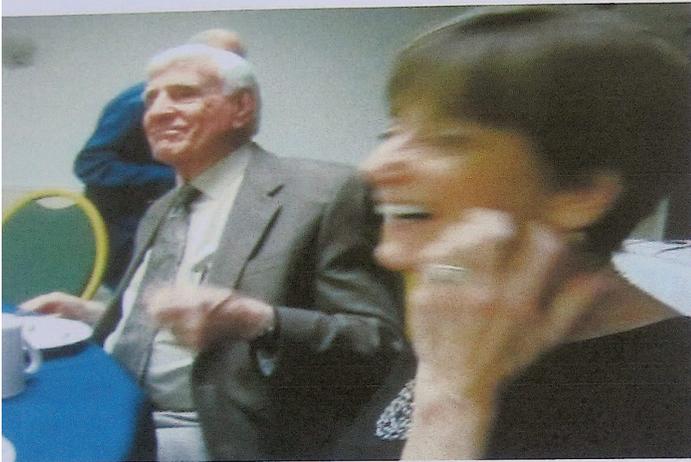


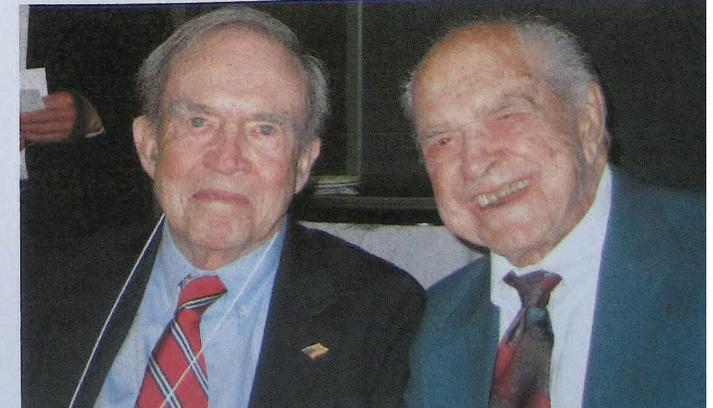


517th PRCT Kissimmee, Florida Mini Reunion,
January 18-21, 2013









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Editor Claire Giblin

517th PIR Jump Tower training at Camp Toccoa, Georgia 1943,

