

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)

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

Thunderbolt

Newsletter Date: Summer July, 2013



Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since March 1943

Our Leader, Friend, and Fellow Solider, Lieutenant General Richard J. "Dick" Seitz passes at age 95 on June 8, 2013. See a written tribute to his memory written by son-in-law Alan Greer, with photos from Bob Barrett. Funeral Services in Junction City, Kansas, July 22, 2013, with the Mass of the Resurrection at St. Xavier Catholic Church on Washington Street at 9 am.

On May 31 and June 1st 2013, men of the 517th along with sons, daughters, nephews assemble at Camp Toccoa, GA, to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the activation of the 517th PIR, March 15, 1943. See photos and stories from President Allan Johnson, 517th PRCT Association, Hal Beddow, with pictures of sons, daughters, and nephews running Mount Currahee in honor of their fathers on June 1, 2013.

Packed in this Chute

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Greetings from the President

I returned from the events at Currahee in Toccoa, Georgia filled with pride in the 517 and our place in history. It was thrilling to be there with Hal Beddow (1st Airborne Task Force), paying tribute to the 70th anniversary of the activation of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. So many second and third generation family members came, and the 517 was well-represented in the run up Currahee.

Unfortunately, that joyous celebration was followed by the sad news of yet another paratrooper making his final jump: our own Lt. General Richard Seitz.

Dick Seitz was a fan of the soldier in the ranks and believed firmly in the men and women of today's military.

From Your Publishers

Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Lt. General Richard Seitz. We have all spoken about him and read so much about him that it seems fitting to let someone else have the floor this time. The following piece appeared locally in Junction City, KS.

Seitz was a soldier's soldier

- Tuesday, June 18, 2013 3:03 AM

A good friend of mine, Gen. Richard Seitz, passed away the morning of June 8, leaving the world a better place for having walked among us. I had the honor of meeting him more than 25 years ago, and we became very good friends.

He had family in Salina, and I got to know him through his ties to St. John's Military School, which, incidentally, he called "The best military school in America." High praise from such an accomplished soldier. We had lunch June 7, the day after the anniversary of D-Day. He passed away the next morning. If you didn't know Gen. Seitz, I'd like to share a little about him.

Gen. Seitz, or "Dick," as he preferred to be called (at least by his nonmilitary friends), was born 95 years ago in Leavenworth. He and his brother Andy were both Army veterans, promoted to the prestigious rank of general. He

had a very distinguished, 35-year military career and often was called a national treasure.

Although the prestige of being a three-star general is something only a few accomplish, he was just as comfortable talking to a new Army recruit, fresh out of high school, as he was meeting with dignitaries in Washington, D.C. He was what some have called a "soldier's soldier." His military career was what legends were made of, yet, he always deferred praise to others.

He joined the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment upon entering the World War II and deployed for campaigns in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany. He later assumed command of the unit and became the youngest infantry battalion commander during WWII. Gen. Seitz was part of a task force sent to Southern France, landing in Le Muy and La Motte, later fighting through the French Alps and then on to the Battle of the Bulge.

His battalion teamed up with a regiment of armor that became known as "Task Force Seitz" that fought in some of the bloodiest engagements in the war, including the recapture of St. Vith, a major crossroads that the Germans had taken along with Bastogne. After the Battle of the Bulge, he saw heavy action in the Heurtgen Forest Campaign.

His career spanned three world conflicts, including World War II the Korean and Vietnam wars.

The honors that he earned, including the Purple Heart, the Silver Star and the Bronze Star, are too numerous to mention. He was presented the Creighton Abrams Award from the United States Army for his work with soldiers and the general public in 2003. More recently, he was presented France's highest decoration, the National Order of the Legion of Honor for his liberation of citizens and villages during WWII. At the awards ceremony, then CIA Director, Gen. David Petraeus, a close friend of Gen. Seitz's, made a surprise appearance.

Gen. Seitz also made several trips back to several villages that he liberated during the war, where he was recognized and shown appreciation for his personal contribution in halting the Nazi tyranny.

So much is written about the number of WWII vets we are losing every day. The number is staggering, and among with them are men and women who have sacrificed much and fought valiantly for our country. They, too, had a strong sense of patriotism and love for this great nation.

Gen. Seitz would say that today's military is no different. He loved the everyday soldier and did everything in his power to make their lives and their families' lives better. His leadership talks were legendary in the Army, and officers would seek him out to talk with their troops. Gen. Richard Seitz was truly an amazing military man who led not by intimidation, but by example.

Upon Dick's retirement, he lived in Junction City and became an icon for the community, as well as Fort Riley. Recently, USD 475 and the school board named a new elementary school, The Seitz Elementary School, at Fort Riley in his honor. It was something he was obviously very proud of, as he often talked about the school and its teachers.

If Gen. Seitz were here today he wouldn't be happy with me talking about him. He would say, "You know Larry, there are people much more deserving than me."

I will personally miss him very much, but our nation also will miss him ... and others like him. He touched everyone he met, leaving them feel honored to know him. He believed in the American way and its people and was a patriot in every sense of the word.

Thank you Gen. Seitz, you gave selflessly to your country and we are all better for it.

--**Larry Britegam** is president of Salina-based Sunflower Bank.

Alan Greer, husband of **Patricia Seitz**, wrote this incredible obituary, a history lesson in itself.

Lt. General Richard J. Seitz, age 95, completed a storied life on June 8, 2013 after suffering congestive heart failure. Born in Leavenworth, KS Feb. 18, 1918, he grew up in that city and then attended Kansas State University where in 1939 as a junior he began dating his first wife, Bettie Jean Merrill, a freshman. That same year Dick, foreseeing

WWII looming on the horizon, accepted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. Once in the Army he went through the sixth jump school class the Army ever had thus becoming one of its first paratroopers.

With the advent of the war, Dick rose rapidly until at the age of only 25 in March 1942, as a Major, he was given command of the 2nd Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Thereafter, he was promoted to Lt. Colonel and, as the Army's youngest battalion commander, led his battalion throughout its historic combat operations in Europe with the personal radio call sign of "Dangerous Dick."

The 517th was flung into combat at Anzio at the time of the breakout from that beachhead followed by fighting up the Italian Peninsula. They then made the combat jump into the southern invasion of France at 4AM, Aug.15, 1944 as the airborne element of Operation Dragoon with its subsequent heavy combat in the French Maritime Alps. Finally, put in reserve in Northeastern France in December 1944, Dick was drawing up Paris leave rosters for his men when Hitler launched the Battle of the Bulge.

At that point, Dick's 2nd Battalion was married with a Regiment of the 7th Armored Division to form what became known as Task Force Seitz. It was pushed in to plug the gaps on the north slope of the Bulge every time the Germans tried to make a breakout. In doing so, his battalion went from 691 men to 380 through combat losses in some of the worst fighting of WWII. The battalion went on from the Bulge to see even further bloody combat in the subsequent battles of the Huertgen Forrest.

Before shipping out to Europe, Dick and Bettie continued to see each other whenever they had a chance to do so. In 1942, after graduating from Kansas State, Bettie joined the Red Cross and was subsequently sent to England in late 1943 to support the bomber groups of the Army Air Corp's 8th Air Force. In the fall of 1944, she was moved to Holland to run an Army rest and rehabilitation center. There in January 1945, she read in *Stars and Stripes* that Task Force Seitz was heavily engaged in the fighting around St. Vith. By herself, she drove from Holland to the front in Belgium and managed to find the Regimental

HQ of the 517th. But they would not allow her to go on to the very front lines where Dick was. However, this put them back in personal touch which led to their marriage in June 1945 in Joigny, France with one Red Cross bridesmaid and 1800 paratroopers in attendance in one of the greatest love stories of WWII.

Dick ended the war with the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart plus what he most treasured besides his Parachute Wings, the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Thereafter, during his lifelong Army career including nearly 37 years of active duty he also received numerous other decorations and awards including the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit and the French Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor. Along with these awards, his commands included the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 503rd Infantry Regiment and the 82nd Airborne Division, which he led into Detroit and Washington, DC in 1967 to quell those cities' riots. He also commanded the XVIII Airborne Corps and was Chief of Staff US Army Vietnam in 1965 through 1967 under General Westmoreland. As a Portuguese speaker he served two tours in Brazil, the last as Chief of the Joint US/Brazilian Military Commission and one year in Iran as a military advisor. He likewise served in Japan with the occupation forces immediately after World War II.

Dick and Bettie retired to Junction City in 1975. Unfortunately, Bettie died of a heart attack June 1, 1978. Thereafter, Dick was blessed to marry Virginia Crane, a widow, in 1980. She also predeceased him in 2006. In retirement, Dick remained extremely active with the Army through Ft. Riley as well as in the Junction City Community and in Kansas generally. During the Iraqi and Afghanistan Wars he would go out to Ft. Riley to see off and greet the deploying and redeploying units from those fights, no matter the hour day or night. He was past Chairman of the Ft. Riley National Bank, very active with the Coronado Council of the Boy Scouts, a Trustee of St. John's Military Academy, on the Board of the Eisenhower Presidential Library, President of the Fort Riley-Central Kansas Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army, and Chaired Junction City's Economic Redevelopment Study Commission among many other

activities. He was also honored as an Outstanding Citizen of Kansas, received the prestigious AUSA Creighton Abrams Award, and most recently had the General Richard J. Seitz Elementary School named in his honor on the post at Ft. Riley. He felt a particular affection for the faculty and students of that school whom he visited as often as he could. The best way to describe Dick is that he lived his life "Airborne all the way!" to the very end.

He was predeceased by his parents, John Casimir and Florence M. Seitz, and seven brothers and sisters including Brigadier General Andrew Seitz (US Army ret. and former commander of Ft. Riley), Warrant Officer Edward Seitz (US Army ret.), Henry Seitz, Frances Gaddis, Helen Charles, Mary Ann Seitz and her twin Jane Marie Hardy. Dick was the fifth in this line of eight siblings.

Dick is survived by his daughters, Senior US District Court Judge Patricia Seitz of Miami, FL; Doctor Cache Steinberg (PhD) of Richmond, VA; Doctor Victoria Seitz (PhD) of San Bernardino, Calif.; son, Richard M. Seitz (USAF ret.) currently heading the US Coast Guard's C130 aircraft acquisition program, Washington, D.C., step-daughter Nancy Crane, of St. George, KS, son-in-laws Dr. Joel Steinberg MD and Alan Greer, attorney, granddaughter Jordan Christine Seitz, a senior at Arkansas State University and various nephews and nieces including Col. John Seitz US Army (ret.), Junction City, KS and Dr. Jim Hardy Superintendent of Schools in Chanute, KS.

In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to either the LTG. Richard J. Seitz Veteran Scholarship at Kansas State University, St. Xavier Catholic Church, Junction City YMCA, or the Coronado Council of the Boy Scouts.

517 in the News

Mel Trenary

RE: Veteran of the Week

As you know I meet with veterans in Conroe, Texas every wed. Most of them live in the area of Conroe, Montgomery, and woodlands, Texas. Some in Houston, TX. Anyway, in May I was the veteran of the week on station k-Star 99.7 in Montgomery, TX. Then last week, I was interviewed for their local paper as the veteran of the week this week , June 5th 2013. We all will eventually be given the chance to be on the station & be in the paper before it is all over. I think it is great that this little town is so patriotic.

As you know this town & schools sent 5 plane loads veterans to Washington, D.C. to see the WWII memorial. Conroe, Texas also helped. It takes me about one & one half hours to get to Conroe on wed. But I love to be with the guys as the lived in the same area of life that I did. We also have men of Korea & Vietnam area. We share donuts & coffee. Now I will have beer!

Curahee Report

Lory Curtis

We arrived in Toccoa for breakfast on Friday morning May 31st, and for the first time in about 20 years I had grits. They were so good, and it was great to be back in the south. The southern hospitality is second to none. The people there were fantastic and treated us like family. We ate, toured the area, went to the military museum, saw the movie Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed, ran the mountain, and went to a 1940's swing band dance in the town square. It was so much fun and it was so great to meet with fellow 517th family members. We had so much fun just being with one another and enjoying each other's company. It was wonderful. This is who attended. **Allan Johnson, President, Hal and Helen Beddow, 517th Troopers. Lory and Tim Curtis, Joe and Heather Riley, Justin Riley, Mimsey**

Boyle Kelly, Paul Abbene, nephew of Colonel Boyle, Morris McDowell, Rick Sweet, Mike and Rhonda Wells, The Moses brothers (I am sorry, but I forgot their first names. They came down to specifically meet with **Allan Johnson** and wish him well), **Eileen Broudy Shaw and her husband Michael**. We had 17 people there.

After the run on Saturday, June 1st, we had a special ceremony with the Mayor of Toccoa along with a City Councilman speaking to us and reminding all of the paratroopers they were Toccoa men and would always be part of their town and community. Lory Curtis, stood and told about the 517th activation on March 15, 1943, then President Allan Johnson spoke of his experiences at Toccoa, then Trooper Hal Beddow spoke about his experiences. Everyone there was honored to have these two paratroopers return to their town and commemorate the 70th anniversary of the 517th. Of course everyone there invited us to come back for next year's events and thanked each of us for coming this year.

The run up and down Currahee Mountain began at 8:00 am with the Sheriff's department blocking off the streets for the runners. A basic training group of Army Soldiers came all the way from Fort Jackson South Carolina. The 517th was well represented on the run with **Mike and Rhonda Wells, Mimsey Kelly, Paul Abbene, Joe Riley (Heather Riley's husband), Eileen Broudy Shaw and her husband Michael, Morris McDowell, Lory and Tim Curtis** all ran/walked the mountain. See attached pictures. As Mimsey Kelly was running down the mountain, Lory Curtis caught up with her and ran in with her for the last 1/4 mile. He encouraged her to run faster and as they approached the finish line Lory kept yelling back to Mimsey, stretch it out run faster and she did. Well, Mimsey won Second Place for her age group. She was the only 517th member to win an award for the race 3 miles up and 3 miles down of Currahee Mountain. She is an Animal !!!!.

President **Allan Johnson**, took it upon himself to get up early and travel all the way to the top of the mountain, 1, 725 feet above sea level, to be there to encourage and congratulate all runners as they made it to the top and turned

around to run back. Now that's a real Paratrooper!!

Greetings,

Toccoa was a lot of fun. Most of the group ran the hill, meaning that the veteran's (the smart ones) sat it out. They probably think we are nuts for running up Currahee voluntarily but then again they jumped out of airplanes voluntarily. Allan hitched a ride up the trail in a jeep and welcomed the runners as they reached the top.

The Colonel's daughter, **Mimsey Boyle**, represented the 517th well and brought home a trophy (see photo). "Wild Bill" would be proud. He was a track medalist himself.

Hal Beddow and **Allan Johnson** were the guests of honor. At the ceremony after the run they were asked to say a few words about their experience at Toccoa. With the one remaining barracks as their backdrop both men gave beautiful speeches straight from their hearts. I regret not recording them but I am sure that I and those who were there will never forget what they said.

Once again a good time was had by all.

Many grins, **Paul Abbene**

Rick Sweet

Hi Bob, First of all, thank you so much for all of the hard work that you do and have done for the 517th. I know that it is time consuming and that you do it for us and your love of the 517th and your father, Ben! Secondly, I have sent you 113 pictures for you to sort through and attach to mail call! (chuckle). News travels fast. I have already seen my picture and others that attended Toccoa on May 31st.

I wish all of you could've been here. We did have a wonderful time and there was never a dull moment...It was over in a flash! It was great seeing those of you who did make the trip. It is such a honor to be associated with such great people! I am getting to know more of you a little bit better each time and am looking forward to the next trip to get to know you all even better. It was also an honor for me to spend time at the airport with **Allan Johnson** and get his assistance in showing me around the airport! He is a very independent and intelligent individual and is

definitely not an invalid! I heard him say that in a very authoritative voice!! (another chuckle).

I was asked by a friend of mine, Tom Rammer, whose uncle was in a bomber during the war, to pick him up a rock from Mt Currahee. What a great idea! I ended up with three thanks to **Steve Lathan** who is associated with the Toccoa museum and drove up before the run and got them for me. Allan Johnson graciously signed two of them for me so I will also have one for my collection. Steve's son, **John Matthew Lathan**, had me sign my dad's name (**Odas Sweet**) on a piece of paper and he ran up and down the mountain with it tucked under his sleeve. He and my dad came in second place for his age group. He has black hair and a beard and wearing the blue shirt and I took his picture several times. It really choked me up telling his father about Matt's gesture. I appreciated it. I have the piece of paper and also had John Matthew to sign it. I will frame it and add it to my wall in a place of honor. The people at Toccoa were the best and treated us so good. I look forward to returning some day! I also want to add that our own **Morris McDowell** ran and walked up the mountain at the age of 71 and made it back in less than two hours, Very Impressive Morris! That is three miles up and three miles down...I couldn't do it for sure. By the way....**there was a mention of a possible National reunion at New Orleans for next year.....** I hope it happens. It will be epic!! Thanks to all who came. You are my family!

Claire Giblin

I have spoken with **Mimsey Boyle** and my dad **Allan Johnson**, and have been in touch with **Mike Wells, Lory Curtis, Mickey Moses** and **Helen Beddow**. They are at Toccoa for the 70 th anniversary of the airborne outfits.

Dad has thus far given me my favorite quote: "We are in the boondocks. I hear there is a gas station that serves breakfast." They have definitely found places to eat and drink, judging from the pictures.

They are having a fantastic time down in Georgia. The proud tradition of the 517 continues: at least SIX descendants of troopers made the run up Currahee this morning!! I am in awe of **Paul Abbene, Mimsey Boyle, Rhonda**

and Mike Wells, Eileen Broudy and her husband Michael Shaw - who all did the run this morning. My favorite text message was from Mike: "Mimsey was SMOKING fast!"

TOM HANKS DONATES \$25,000 TO CAMP TOCCOA AT CURRAHEE, INC.

In a recent email to Camp Toccoa Board of Trustees President Robin McClelland, Mr. Hanks expressed his support for the project offering the use of his name in any and all efforts to raise funds. Wrote Mr. Hanks, "I cannot imagine a more fitting site to recreate and honor as would a refurbished Currahee - a stop for all history students no matter the age." When McClelland learned of the gift, she replied, "We are thrilled Mr. Hanks took time from his lead role in the Broadway play, Lucky Guy, to write such a generous check that certainly will jump start our fundraising campaign."

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!

New French website launched!

<http://1stabtf.com>

Loïc

I have the pleasure to announce the first website dedicated to the paratroopers of the First Airborne Task Force in Southern France. This is my first try and it shall solely be published in French for the time being.

This site is intended to honor the men of the First Airborne Task Force who fought and liberated the south of France, the Var region, the Maritimes Alps, the French Riviera and the Hautes Alpes, often referred to as the "Forgotten Front".

Normandy was much publicized, and a lot of website exist about paratroopers in Normandy, but there's no website focusing only on Paratoopers in Southern France. Many people don't even know that paratroopers jumped in Southern France or know very little about it. They feel that the landings in Provence is less important compared to the

Normandy landings, and that there was almost no fighting in Provence... This is totally wrong! They seem to ignore that in Southern France almost 10,000 American and British paratroopers jumped or landed by glider between 3 AM and 7 PM on August 15, 1944...

Some of these units are "unknown" such as the 602nd Field Artillery Battalion, or the 442nd Anti Tank Company or yet the 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion...

There is almost no book about paratroopers in the south of France written in French language and this website is a way to go around this. Of course it is far from complete byr now, but I won't publish everything at once. Over time, the "death link" will be blue, showing the updated site which will be shown in the 1st page "index".

Bob, I search some contact with 517th Vet' Can you introduce me to some? I'm a good friend of Michael Soldi and Eric Renoux of southern France. I search too the listing of the 517th Pathfinder.

Memorial Day at American Battle Monument Commission sites

Check out their Facebook pages! You do not need a Facebook account to view the ABMC Facebook pages.

Dear friends,

We had a special thought for all of you during the ceremonies on MAY 8th. The children from the schools attended the ceremony.

Our Love and Respect to you.

Irma and Arnold Targnion

Trois Pons, Belgium

Report from the Rhone Cemetery at Draguinan

On the occasion of Memorial Day, a tribute was paid at the American Cemetery, the U.S. soldiers killed in combat.

The ceremony was attended by 600 people, civilian and military authorities as well as private citizens.

A highlight of the U.S. and dracénoises traditions, punctuated by the arrival of officials at 10 am, followed by the traditional speeches, laying of wreaths, minute of silence, raising flags and blessings.

Among the officials present, the Sub-Prefect Stanislas Gazelles, Mayor Max Piselli, Congressman of the 8th district Olivier Audibert-Troin, General Hervé Wattecamps, Vice Admiral Frank Pandolfo, and the Consul General of the United States in Marseille Diane Kelly.

Bob Barrett

I happened to be looking through some old records of **Clark Archer's** today (Memorial Day). I have seen most of these records before, but I did find a couple of things that I never knew about. One group of these notes includes the details about the search for **Pvt. Robert R. Gruwell**. (**Merle McMorrow** will probably remember some of this story from when he was the Association president.)

The conclusion is that Pvt. Gruwell of G Company was MIA on August 15, 1944, and believed killed in the vicinity of La Motte. But his body was never recovered. Clark's records, as always, are very thorough. They include a lot of correspondence dating back to the initial investigations in 1949-1951 as well as another search done by the 517th in 1997 with potential witnesses and the Department of the Army and even our friends in France (**J. Michel Soldi** and **Eric Renoux**) looking for the gravesite.

The conclusion is that Pvt. Gruwell was killed, and his body was discovered on the road from Callian to La Motte on August 17, and identified by three other members of the 3rd Battalion. His dog tags were missing, but they recognized his weapons (a BAR belt and clip) and were able to find an identification number in his boots. Unfortunately, his body was not recovered, then went missing and has never been located. In one note, they believe it was taken to a local Catholic Church and buried.

Because of his longtime MIA status, Gruwell has never been listed on the 517 Honor Roll, our listing of those who were Killed in Action. So I am now going to go ahead and add Robert Gruwell's name to the KIA list, which brings the total count to 254 men of the 517th killed in WW2.

On the next page is one of the letters written in 1997 in order to have a memorial marker installed in remembrance of Pvt. Gruwell.

I did find that Pvt. Gruwell's name is included with other MIA's at the Brittany American Cemetery in St. James France

Highlights from Mail Call April 7, 2013-July 1, 2013 Mail Calls 2153-2166

Merle W. Mc Morrow

Dorinda Whitley had a question as to the location of Btry B-460th FA during the period of April-August 1945. I will precede my comments with some background information that will convey the uncertainty of events happening during that period of time.

At the conclusion of the war in Europe (known as VE-Day) it was a happy time; it was a sad time. May 7, 1945 was a time we had all looked forward to and had hoped we would be survivors. Our enlistment period was for the "duration plus 6 months". The excitement could only be described as unbelievable. However, we also realize it would mean we would no longer be a Band of Brothers.

The men in Europe then had some decisions to make. If one had enough points based on months of service, decorations, marital status, and number of children he would be eligible to return home for discharge.

If one selected the option to fight in the Pacific he could return home, enjoy a 30 day furlough and then be shipped to the Pacific Theater of Operations. Those selecting this Option got halfway across the Atlantic when the atomic bombs were dropped and the war ended.

The third option was to remain in Europe on Occupation Duty.

These three options totally destroyed the makeup of many units. The 82nd Airborne Division was selected to occupy Berlin. To fill the vacancies resulting in the 376 Field Artillery Battalion of the 82nd Division men were transferred in from other units. I was in the 463rd FA of the 101st Airborne Division in Bavaria. The men of the 463rd electing to stay on occupation duty were shipped to the 376th. Men from the 460th who were to remain on occupation duty also were shipped to the 376th. I met many of my buddies for the first time since being transferred out of the 460th 7 months earlier. The various units of the 82nd

were billeted in various locations around Epinal prior to moving to Berlin. Many of the 376th were stationed in the area around Epinal and a certain number (myself included) were put up in a **large 4 story chateau near the Moselle River**. We remained there all through June 1945 and in early July we begin to move into Berlin. I would assume the members of Btry B-460th were in Epinal during June.

I, along with 698 other 376th members, was shipped to Camp Lucky Strike near Le Havre, France. We boarded the SS Walter Forward on December 3, 1945 and headed out into the Atlantic. After passing through a 3 day storm we ended up in New York on December 16th. It was one year to the day after the Battle of the Bulge had started.

Hope this clears up some of the uncertainty about B Battery's location at the conclusion of hostilities in Europe.

Melvin Trenary

I came thru France on the way to Arabia back in 77 but wasn't able to see where I fought in ww11.i was knock out of war the second day of our landing .sent to Naples for rehab. Joined outfit at Fort Barbonett. Spent time in nice with my CO. Then we took trip in box cars to Soissons getting ready for Xmas. Then trucks to the bulge. I remember having jelly & crackers for Xmas. We were kept busy from then on. My feet & hands got numb .we were pulled back for a day. Spent night in a barn put clean socks on, snuggled into hay & went to sleep. The next morning I could not put on my boots. My feet were swollen & black. Doc put tag on me & sent to England for rehab. So I missed some fighting toward the end. I cried when I learned my assistant machine gunner got killed & two others also got it.

I communicate with a Belgian named **Jean Francois Pendant** who found my shelter half in Bergeval. He sent me a picture of it. I told him to keep it for his collection of ww2 things. We correspond every Xmas. I live just north of Houston in Livingston ,TX. I meet every Wednesday morning with veterans of all the wars in Conroe TX. & seem to be the only ww2 paratrooper that joins them. I've been to 3 517th reunions as most of them have been too far away & cost more than I can afford.

So there you have it. I do take a few pills to keep me going ha!

Bob Jackson

I am the son of **Marvin J Jackson** , 517th company d, who was wounded on June 24th in or near Follonica , Italy. The casualty log for that day misspelled his name as "Mervyn" nor Marvin.

Did anyone out there know him or was with him when he was shot?

Just curious about my dad's wartime exploits. He sure was proud to be a 517th trooper.

Bob Barrett replies:

On a quick search, I cannot locate any more details about your Dad in the 517th records that I have on the web site, other than the casualty list for June 1944, which you already have. I have someone looking for the morning reports to see if there is any more detail.

There is a brief mention of the 2nd battalion attacks in Italy in the Paratroopers' Odyssey book:

On June 19th the 2nd Battalion captured the hilltop village of Montesario. On left the 3rd Battalion moved through Montepescali against light resistance, going on to take Sticciano with 14 prisoners. On the west along Highway 1 36th Division troops took Gavaranno, Ravi, and Caldanina.

The RCT bivouacked overnight June 22/23 on a ridgeline south of Gavarrano. There was public bathhouse in the village and many decided to take advantage of it. Mess and supply trucks moving on the ridgeline drew German artillery fire. Several troopers dived into the bath, clothes and all.

Next morning the RCT moved across the Piombino Valley and closed into an assembly area behind the 142nd Infantry. On June 24th the 2nd Battalion entered the eastern outskirts of Follonica under heavy artillery and "Nebelwerfer" fire. During the night of June 24/25 the 3rd Battalion made a long infiltration, emerging next morning on high ground overlooking the dry stream bed of the Cornia River. At 0800 the 1st Battalion passed through the 3rd to seize Monte Peloso,

dominating a broad valley with the town of Suvereto about a mile north of the far side.

The attack was preceded by a heavy artillery barrage fired by 36th Division Artillery under 460th direction. Moving in column along the dry stream bed, 1st Battalion met minor delays as skirmishers with "burp guns" fought to slow the advance. Six hundred yards short of the objective **Major Boyle** called his company commanders forward for orders. As they began to assemble enemy 81mm mortar fire came in, wounding Boyle and several others.

Under cover of a smoke screen laid down by "**Pop**" **Moreland's 81mm Mortar Platoon**, one company moved west in a shallow envelopment to the left. **PFC Carl Salmon** silenced a machine gun with rifle fire, and the troopers rushed the hill. While they were reorganizing an enemy motorcycle messenger arrived, took a horrified look, and raced away.

The enemy force had been a detachment of the 29th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, an altogether different breed than the Turcomen. None surrendered, although a badly wounded officer, incapable of further resistance, was captured and died a few hours later.

The remainder of the Battalion came forward and the position was consolidated. Major Boyle finally allowed himself to be evacuated, and executive officer **Herbert Bowlby** took command.

Enemy artillery fire continued heavy on Monte Peloso through the night. A haystack on the crest had caught fire during the afternoon. After dark it became an aiming point for the German artillery. At 0400 word was phoned down that "Daddy is here." No one had any idea what that was supposed to mean, but it became clear at daylight when the 3rd Battalion of the 442nd (Nisei) Combat Team moved in to take over. The 1st Battalion left the hill, formed up, and filed to the rear to join the balance of the RCT.

While the 1st Battalion had been taking Monte Peloso, **Colonel Graves** had been studying the terrain to the north. It was ideal for defense, with steep hills overlooking broad, open fields. In the distance he saw Tiger tanks moving around. Graves estimated that there

would also be minefields to contend with. The Colonel was planning a night attack to Suvereto, and breathed a sigh of relief when he heard that the 442nd was to pass through the 517th in the morning.

The 517th went into IV Corps reserve and remained in that status until early July. While the troopers rested and awaited further commitment, the final steps toward a great decision were being taken.

I will also include your request for information into the next MailCall newsletter, and see if anyone else remembers **Marvin Jackson**.

Howard Hensleigh, in a regularly recurring feature, "History with Howard."

Howard is an avid follower of weekly Mail Calls, and a frequent contributor as well. In this entry, he is able to give information on two troopers photographed together – that photo is now on the website.

Every once in a while I see an item that brings back memories and gives me the opportunity to answer questions raised by sons, daughters, nieces and nephews.

NOTE TO DOUG CHAULK

Believe it or not I took the picture of your father and two other troopers. **George "Red" Meline** is in the middle and **Tom Weil** is on the right. Red still reads Mail Call the last I knew and Tom passed away a year or so ago. I have one almost like it your father took with me in the middle and Tom and Red on each side. These were taken in Southern France not too long after the invasion. **Red, Tom, Frank Wakeman, Jack Castiglione, Ray Scruggs and Rene Benoit** were in the S-2 section; your father and **Sgt. Beer** were in the S-3 section, of Hq. 3rd battalion, 517th P.I.R. They were all good friends and were together a good share of the time in and out of combat. The S-2 section's job was intelligence and we did a lot of patrolling to search out the enemy. The S-3 section handled the plans, training and operations of the battalion. Your father was an excellent soldier and was always on top of his job. We all had a get together at the Albany, NY reunion. It was fortunate that all of us came back to the States in one piece.

NOTE TO GEOFFREY HARDING

I did not know your uncle **Jack Moon**, personally, but there is a good chance that I went on patrol with him and other H Co. troopers. The information you have on him is not clear in some places, but we can give you some solid facts from the pictures you have displayed. Bob Barrett has correctly concluded that his serious wounds were sustained at Manhay Belgium, but I will start out with Camp MacKall, NC.

The picture of your uncle behind the light machine gun was taken there. The background looks like MacKall and the parachute emblem on his overseas cap, which we liked, was sent to the scrap heap by orders shortly before we shipped out for Naples. The emblem on his overseas cap on his picture in dress uniform is the one that replaced it. If you will notice it has a glider as well as a parachute on it. Not like the Airborne Divisions, the 517th was made up 100% of paratroops; we liked the exclusivity of the old emblem. If these were colored photos, they would tell us whether he was in the infantry, H Co., or the engineers of the 596th. Our infantry background on the emblem was blue, the engineers and artillery, red.

MANHAY

As Bob indicated, I am sure your uncle was seriously wounded by incoming artillery at Manhay, Belgium in an SS counterattack shortly after we had taken the town. We had only two rifle companies, H and I, in that attack as G Co. guarded Ridgeway's 18th Airborne Corps CP. **Stott** and his platoon of I Company were virtually wiped out by "friendly" fire, which fell short and late, as we began the attack. So, I Company was badly understrength, which meant that H Co. had to pick up the slack. Your uncle and other H Co. riflemen were on the front line of perimeter defense in fox holes dug by the Germans. During a strong counterattack, German artillery killed 1 man, not 2, by a direct hit on one of these fox holes.

For a long time after the war we, like your uncle, thought both men in that foxhole died on the spot or on the way to the aid station. An H Co. trooper who traded places with one of those men recited his story about the two men who were killed, one of whom had his arm blown off. It turned out that that man recovered, read the Mail Call and said in effect,

"You guys have been talking about me; Manhay is where I lost my arm." It was a dramatic revelation to all of us, a story only made possible by Mail call, started and continued by another H Co. man, Ben Barrett (and family) to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

We can make a fairly accurate guess that your uncle Jack had enough points to remain in Europe with the 82nd Airborne for occupation duty, rather than stay with the 517th, which was headed for the States and then to the invasion of Japan. He would have left us at Joigny, France after May 8, 1944, VE Day. His dress uniform like jacket has the 82nd patch on the shoulder. His combat infantry badge states that he was in the infantry rather than the engineers. His patrolling in Italy is also the job of the infantry. The engineers had other dangerous work to do such as clearing mine fields and building foot bridges out in front so the infantry could quickly cross streams in an attack.

My airborne best regards.

And the reply –

Dear **Mr. Hensleigh**

Thank you so much for the information concerning my Uncle Jack, very much appreciated -and sir thank you for your service, I have great admiration for all veterans who have given all to keep this country safe and free.

Humbly yours,

Geoffrey Harding

From MailCall #1134, June 12, 2006:

Gene Brissey

Reference Mail Call 1132 and an article apparently submitted by **Wayne Cross**, subject Dragoon-After action Report Company "E" "D" Day. Some of this looked familiar But I would like to submit a non literary, chopped version as I saw it.

CO. E, in part landed somewhere near Les Arcs. Very dark. I connected with a couple friends. We crawled around in brush, etc. Heard strange voices. May have been Germans. We moved away. About dawn we found another friend and a Capt. Thought we had found a leader but he seemed really lost. Found out he was a mess officer. We were

being shelled and fired on. My friends and I took off.

About noon we found some Co. E people. Possibly led by **Capt. Newberry**. We advanced over a hill overlooking the Rhone Valley. Dug in among trees and were attacked by Germans who were massing in the valley below, many of them We held our ground. They fired on us with small arms and artillery. A boy next to me kept asking, "Do you think we will make it?" As we were being held down, **Lt. Col. Dick Seitz** walked by and this kid yelled at him "Hey mac do you think we will make it?" Dick said, "yes" It was then that I realized that this kid was the one who went past back [to the door] the door when we were jumping, and I had dragged and had then had him from the plane. I now wished that I hadn't.

Roger Bender, our mortar squad leader had set up his mortar squad by a house to my left. Germans kept firing. **Charles Lemen** one of our a mortar men was killed in the yard of the house. About dusk an American 81M mortar outfit and our artillery let loose a barrage of fire up that valley to our front that killed or chased every enemy out of those grape vines. We were saved but exhausted. We fell to the ground around that house and slept. Next A.M. we moved on, except Lemen, who remains in the cemetery at Drauignan.

It was in this yard that my dog tag was found by the woman of the house while raking the yard in 1978. In 1999 when some of our troops were visiting the Les Arcs area. The man from that house approached **Ben Adams** and **Dick Jones** and ask "if per chance they knew a Eugene Brissey?" They said yes. He said, "I have his dog tag". Dick and Ben brought me his address. In 1990 Edie and I visited them and retrieved my tag. We visited Lemen's grave site. In 1999, **John Krumm Jr.** and his wife Irene went with Edie and me back to the area and visited Lemen again and toured the route we had traveled to Sospel in 1944.

Mark Landreth

P.O. Box 1453
Tallahassee, Florida 32302

I only through this Mail Call learned of the passing of **Gene Brissey** and **Dick Seitz**. This news makes me very sad. Both were incredibly generous with their time and

knowledge in helping me create the Chronology I've been working on since my dad passed away in '01. I always thought of it as work in progress because there was always another trooper's story to add. I now know better.

I'd like to ask the vets to talk to their kids and grandkids about their service, they are curious about it but didn't ask because, understandably, you didn't want to talk about it. Not only is history written by the winners, but also the survivors.

Robert H. Speer

John Virgil Hanie, my grandfather, was taken to hospice care today. Bettie has been gone for a couple years now.

He has had many stories about his time with the 517.

The last time I was able to talk to him I asked him:

Me: "Grandpa, from what I can tell you were the nicest, sweetest guy in the whole outfit."

John: "**Chuckles* Well, maybe to start"

Here's a couple pictures, with just about the proudest grin I've ever seen, it may well have been justified.

Saints and Soldiers – Airborne Creed Film Update

Steve Markle

Not sure you have heard this yet, but *Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed* was just added to the Netflix streaming movie service.

Claire Giblin

Dad (**Allan Johnson 596**) and I traveled to Washington, DC today where we met up with **Tom Copsey** and Company at the GI Film Festival. We all attended a screening of *Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed*. It was the first time I'd seen it on the big screen, and it was great.

Tom brought quite an impressive team: his son Eric, daughter Helen, and his friends Larry (also airborne) and Chris. Very cool that he was able to bring such a good crowd to support the second film that has been made out of Lory Curtis's book.

The director, **Ryan Little**, and producer **Adam Abel** were both there and took questions after the film. It was really interesting

to hear from them about the film making process.

Congratulations to Ryan, Adam and Lory on their continued success. It is just great to see a WWII film involving the 517. And PS: they start filming a third film in August.

Tom Copsy

We all enjoyed the movie and the experience. It was more enjoyable on the big screen and I paid more attention to it than the first time in KC (or was it Atlanta?) -as Claire said probably a bit tired (h-over) at that time. The response from others in the theater was all positive and a Lady paratrooper veteran commended Ryan and Adam on how were they able to capture the emotions and feelings inherent in a trooper's mindset.

My best friend Larry, 101st airborne veteran -who saw his own turmoil and drama in Vietnam, said it was powerful and invoked a lot of emotion in him that he did not anticipate. My daughter-in-law Helen was very appreciative in that she got a lot better insight to what Pop had done during the war over and above just seeing his pictures and mementos that I have at the house. My son Eric and my colleague Chris (work with him for the Navy) also enjoyed the experience very much.

I did not know till that morning that **Allan** and Claire were coming down so that made the day of course even livelier. After the flick, Allan provided a brief insight into the 517th's history and his take on why he became a trooper. Allan held court with Ryan/Adam and was greeted/thanked by the patrons for his service. Larry, who was influenced by Pop in becoming a trooper, especially enjoyed chatting with Allan whom he first met at one of the initial Dragoon celebrations here in DC. A very fulfilling event indeed! Cheers and Airborne!

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.

Chad Upton

Assistant Principal

C.A. Erwin High School

My grandfather's name was **Bluford Leon Upton**, Company H, 517 PRCT. He is located 2nd from the right, back row in the photo of the Company H on the website. I'll try, at some point, to get you more info. I appreciate the site and the memory...and the ability to know more of him, my family is proud.

Anna Bockis

anniebee1@roadrunner.com

I am the daughter of Martin Bockis, who was a member of the 517th Battling Buzzards. Dad passed away December of 2011. I am interested in all info I can find about his life.

Updates

Ed Christman

I am the very proud nephew of Gene Brissey. On this D-Day plus one anniversary, I am informing everyone that God has another soldier. My childhood hero passed away this morning at his home in New Mexico.

Lisa Brissey Ellenbert

[written before her father's death on 7 June]

I am Gene Brissey's middle daughter. He served in WWII in the European theater of operations with the 517th. I know how much Mail Call meant to him when he could be involved with it. Perhaps someone reading this remembers something about my father. John Krumm still sends newsletters to him, but it is difficult to tell how much he can understand what it is. Last year I read one of the stories to him and it seemed to resonate on a deep level.

He is now under Hospice care at home and has lost all of his daily functions due to PSP (progressive supranuclear palsy), an uncommon condition which is under the Parkinson's umbrella but has no treatment. It is very rough on all of us, especially my mom, who remains his primary caregiver. I have just returned from helping my mom and sisters as much as I can. Dad turned 88 on March 23 and we had a nice family dinner to celebrate him. I think he knew what was happening on some levels. We all really want to honor him the best way we can, now and when he passes.

If anyone wants to send a note to my mom (**Edie Brissey**), her address is
7401 El Morro Rd NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

It is with sadness to inform The Thunderbolt Newsletter that **Joe P. Sliakis** passed away August 10, 2012 and his wife **Sue** passed away August 29, 2012 in Grass Valley, California.
With Respect,
Roy Houghton
Trustee of Sliakis Family Trust

Mike Wells continues to work on the Morning Report project, painstakingly transcribing information to make it legible and searchable.

What are Morning Reports?

Filed each morning by each company to higher headquarters, the company morning report provided a day-by-day record of unit location, activity, and changes in company personnel. That is, these reports were an "exception-based" accounting of the individuals whose duty status had changed from the previous day. Among the reasons for an individual being listed in this report were: transfer into the unit, promotion or demotion, killed or wounded (including a brief description of wounds), captured or missing in action, transfer to another unit, hospitalization, training, AWOL and desertion. Entries included the soldier's rank, Army Serial Number, and other information.

Lory Curtis

Last week I received a letter from **Harold "Sug" Lawrence**. Sug was in HQ, 1st BN with my Dad and I have had the pleasure to speak with him on the phone a few times. One time I got my Dad and Sug on the phone together and if you could have heard all of the reminiscing they were doing, it sounded like ole home week. Dad and Sug were close friends during the war. Anyway, Sug sent this letter about what he read in the Thunderbolt, and I wanted to relay the information. Also, if you want the Thunderbolt just let me know through mailcall. I have a few extra copies I can send out if you missed out on the last mailing.

Here is Sug's letter:

May 4, 2013

"It was with sadness that I read **Zoot Snyder's** letter about the passing of **Marvin Tetrick**. Marvin was one of the nicest men you would ever meet. Marvin was a machine gunner in 1st BN from start to finish.

He never missed a day of combat and didn't suffer a single scratch. After the war he returned home to his wife and child. They were married while he was on furlough after we completed jump school at Fort Benning, GA.

I live in Spring Texas and at 91 years old I am still working. My health is pretty good. I have always been very proud to be a 1st Bn 517th Paratrooper.

Sug Lawrence

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, 21July 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

Gene Brissey

Richard "Dick" Seitz

Joe P. Sliakis

Marvin Tetrick

John Woody



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2163

June 9, 2013

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

Lt. General Richard J. "Dick" Seitz



Lt. General Richard J. Seitz, age 95, completed a storied life on June 8, 2013 after suffering congestive heart failure. Born in Leavenworth, KS Feb. 18, 1918, he grew up in that city and then attended Kansas State University where in 1939 as a junior he began dating his first wife, Bettie Jean Merrill, a freshman. That same year Dick, foreseeing WWII looming on the horizon, accepted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. Once in the Army he went through the sixth jump school class the Army ever had thus becoming one of its first paratroopers.

With the advent of the war, Dick rose rapidly until at the age of only 25 in March 1942, as a Major, he was given command of the 2nd Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Thereafter, he was promoted to Lt. Colonel and, as the Army's youngest battalion commander, led his battalion throughout its historic combat operations in Europe with the personal radio call sign of "Dangerous Dick."

The 517th was flung into combat at Anzio at the time of the breakout from that beachhead followed by fighting up the Italian Peninsula. They then made the combat jump into the southern invasion of France at 4AM, Aug.15, 1944 as the airborne element of Operation Dragoon with its subsequent heavy combat in the French Maritime Alps. Finally, put in reserve in Northeastern France in December 1944, Dick was drawing up Paris leave rosters for his men when Hitler launched the Battle of the Bulge.

At that point, Dick's 2nd Battalion was married with a Regiment of the 7th Armored Division to form what became known as Task Force Seitz. It was pushed in to plug the gaps on the north slope of the Bulge every time the Germans tried to make a breakout. In doing so, his battalion went from 691 men to 380 through combat losses in some of the worst fighting of WWII. The battalion went on from the Bulge to see even further bloody combat in the subsequent battles of the Huertgen Forrest.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Before shipping out to Europe, Dick and Bettie continued to see each other whenever they had a chance to do so. In 1942, after graduating from Kansas State, Bettie joined the Red Cross and was subsequently sent to England in late 1943 to support the bomber groups of the Army Air Corp's 8th Air Force. In the fall of 1944, she was moved to Holland to run an Army rest and rehabilitation center. There in January 1945, she read in *Stars and Stripes* that Task Force Seitz was heavily engaged in the fighting around St. Vith. By herself, she drove from Holland to the front in Belgium and managed to find the Regimental HQ of the 517th. But they would not allow her to go on to the very front lines where Dick was. However, this put them back in personal touch which led to their marriage in June 1945 in Joigny, France with one Red Cross bridesmaid and 1800 paratroopers in attendance in one of the greatest love stories of WWII.

Dick ended the war with the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart plus what he most treasured besides his Parachute Wings, the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Thereafter, during his lifelong Army career including nearly 37 years of active duty he also received numerous other decorations and awards including the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit and the French Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor. Along with these awards, his commands included the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 503rd Infantry Regiment and the 82nd Airborne Division, which he led into Detroit and Washington, DC in 1967 to quell those cities' riots. He also commanded the XVIII Airborne Corps and was Chief of Staff US Army Vietnam in 1965 through 1967 under General Westmoreland. As a Portuguese speaker he served two tours in Brazil, the last as Chief of the Joint US/Brazilian Military Commission and one year in Iran as a military advisor. He likewise served in Japan with the occupation forces immediately after World War II.



Dick and Bettie retired to Junction City in 1975. Unfortunately, Bettie died of a heart attack June 1, 1978. Thereafter, Dick was blessed to marry Virginia Crane, a widow, in 1980. She also predeceased him in 2006. In retirement, Dick remained extremely active with the Army through Ft. Riley as well as in the Junction City Community and in Kansas generally. During the Iraqi and Afghanistan Wars he would go out to Ft. Riley to see off and greet the deploying and redeploying units from those fights, no matter the hour day or night. He was past Chairman of the Ft. Riley National Bank, very active with the Coronado Council of the Boy Scouts, a Trustee of St. John's Military Academy, on the Board of the Eisenhower Presidential Library, President of the Fort Riley-Central Kansas Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army, and Chaired Junction City's Economic Redevelopment Study Commission among many other activities. He was also honored as an Outstanding Citizen of Kansas, received the prestigious AUSA Creighton Abrams Award, and most recently had the General Richard J. Seitz Elementary School named in his honor on the post at Ft. Riley. He felt a particular affection for the faculty and students of that school whom he visited as often as he could. The best way to describe Dick is that he lived his life "Airborne all the way!" to the very end.



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

He was predeceased by his parents, John Casimir and Florence M. Seitz, and seven brothers and sisters including Brigadier General Andrew Seitz (US Army ret. and former commander of Ft. Riley), Warrant Officer Edward Seitz (US Army ret.), Henry Seitz, Frances Gaddis, Helen Charles, Mary Ann Seitz and her twin Jane Marie Hardy. Dick was the fifth in this line of eight siblings.

Dick is survived by his daughters, Senior US District Court Judge Patricia Seitz of Miami, FL; Doctor Cache Steinberg (PhD) of Richmond, VA; Doctor Victoria Seitz (PhD) of San Bernardino, Calif.; son, Richard M. Seitz (USAF ret.) currently heading the US Coast Guard's C130 aircraft acquisition program, Washington, D.C., step-daughter Nancy Crane, of St. George, KS, son-in-laws Dr. Joel Steinberg MD and Alan Greer, attorney, granddaughter Jordan Christine Seitz, a senior at Arkansas State University and various nephews and nieces including Col. John Seitz US Army (ret.), Junction City, KS and Dr. Jim Hardy Superintendent of Schools in Chanute , KS.

Funeral and memorial arrangements are still pending. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to either the LTG. Richard J. Seitz Veteran Scholarship at Kansas State University, St. Xavier Catholic Church, Junction City YMCA, or the Coronado Council of the Boy Scouts.





517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

I am so sorry to hear that Lt. General Richard "Call me Dick" Seitz has died. America has lost a true legend.

Dick Seitz has a list of accomplishments as long as all of our arms put together. He enjoyed connecting with everyone at reunions and attending so many events in Junction City. He was addressing the troops into his 90's, often speaking on the topic of leadership. Consistently, he would defer attention and credit to others, sharing the glory. He was generous with praise, and effusive in his delivery.

Those of us who had the privilege of hearing him in the past couple of years were all regaled with his delight at the school named after him, Seitz Elementary School at Fort Riley. He was thrilled to have been able to participate in the process of selecting their principal, and even the dragon was Seitz-recommended (albeit a bit tweaked for the younger kids - kind of a friendly-not-fierce dragon). He was especially complimentary of Samrie Devin, their principal there. He was not just a namesake - he had a personal relationship with the school community at Seitz Elementary, and even celebrated his 95th birthday there.



It was a joy to watch him receive the Legion of Honor at Arlington only a couple of years ago, and I was honored to be able to see him with his peers, who were so respectful of him and his accomplishments.



I will never forget him saying that the men of the 517th were the best ever to pull on a pair of jump boots. He said it repeatedly, but I heard it first in Savannah, and you should be able to watch it linked from our home page. He spoke often of character and its importance - timeless lessons.

Thank you to the Seitz family for sharing your father with us all these years. We mourn deeply our collective loss. We celebrate his life and his impact. We honor his service and his legacy.

-- Claire Giblin



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Lt. General Richard "Dick" Seitz died yesterday, and we have lost our last battalion commander of the 517th. He was a great man - an understatement by far.

Dick Seitz was a model - they just don't come any better. He was the ultimate gentleman. I greatly enjoyed meeting him at nearly every reunion we attended, and we all appreciated the fact that he attended our reunions so regularly. In fact, the high point of many reunions for me was the opportunity to speak with him, and he recalled so many details that clarified military actions decades later. He was generous with information and analysis, and shared freely his insights.



The 517's longevity can be attributed to the work of Dick Seitz at reunions and in his service on the Board, and to Ben Barrett, founder of the 517 website. Together, they assured a solid organization and continued reunions long after many other WWII outfits had ceased meeting. So many descendants of troopers have been able to make that connection across the generations, and

ensure that the legacy of the 517 is remembered and honored.

The photos of the anniversary celebrations in Le Muy from about 20 years ago reflect the importance of the Association's relationship with our European friends. There was Dick Seitz, donating his uniform and so appreciative of the work being done by Eric Renoux and Jean Michel Soldi in Provence. His jacket had been prominently displayed in the museum there, a solid show of support for their endeavor.

I had always thought of myself as a very ordinary soldier - a PFC who was only in service until the end of the war. After hearing Lt. General Seitz speak in Savannah, I left convinced that I was indeed one of "the best paratroopers ever to pull on a pair of jump boots."

Allan Johnson



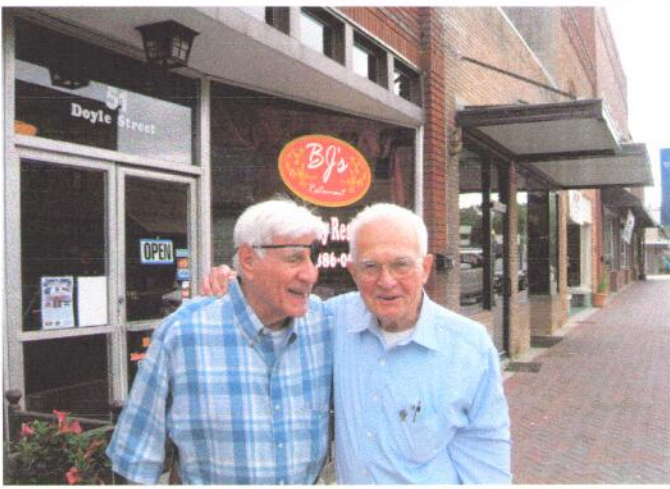


517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



Lt. General Richard J. "Dick" Seitz

Feb. 18, 1918 – June 8, 2013



Hal Beddow and Allan Johnson of the 517th



Last Buidling standing from Camp Toccoa, GA



Mount Currahee, Camp Toccoa, GA.



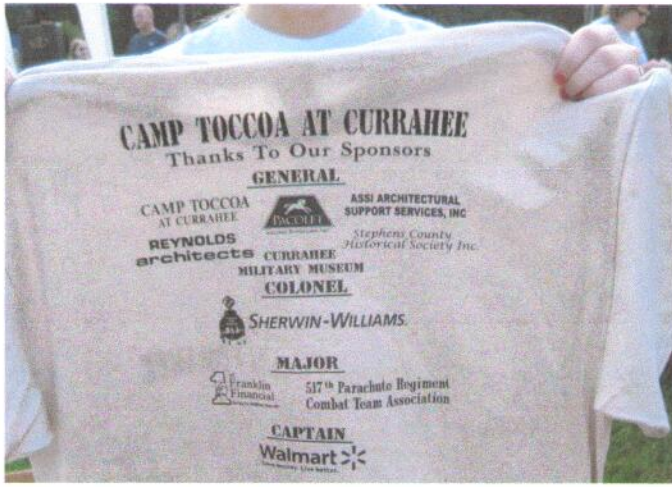
View from the Top of Mt Currahee



Helen, Mike, Hal, Mimsey, Rhonda, Lory top of Currahee



The long run up Mt Currahee



517th sponsors D-Day run, Camp Toccoa



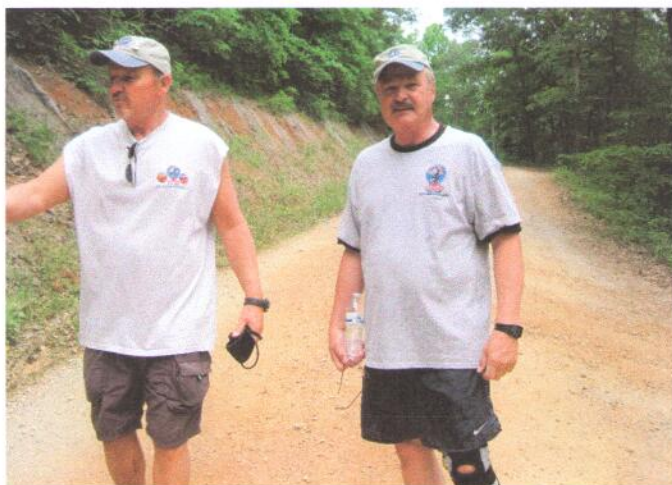
Paul and Morris start their long run up Currahee



Mike and Eileen Shaw running up Currahee



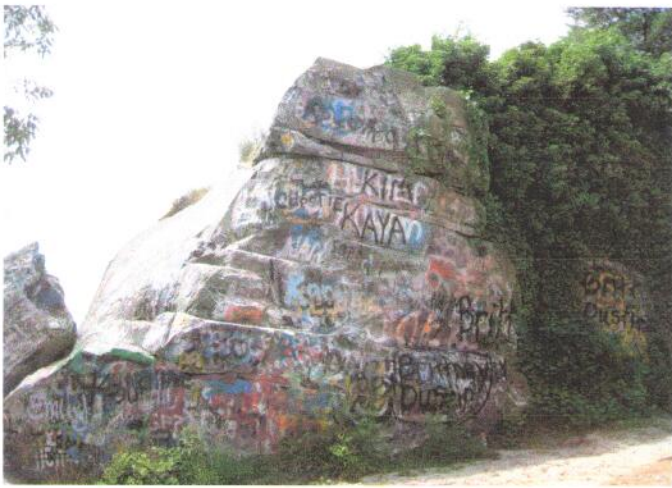
Joe Riley and Rhonda Wells start their 3 miles up and 3 miles back down



Tim and Lory Curtis on the trail of Mt Currahee



Mike Wells on his way down Mt Currahee



Painted Rock on top of Mt Currahee



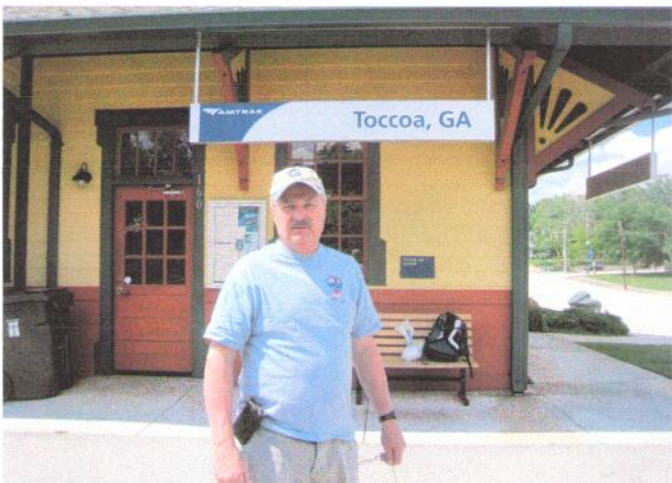
517th members gather for lunch, Toccoa, GA



517th PRCT Regimental Flag at the Toccoa Museum



Mimsey Boyle standing by picture of her father COL Bill Bove. Toccoa. Museum



Lory Curtis in front of train station, Toccoa, GA



517th members gather for dinner, Toccoa, GA



Mimsey Boyle running back down Currahee



Mimsey Boyle recognized for winning 2nd place



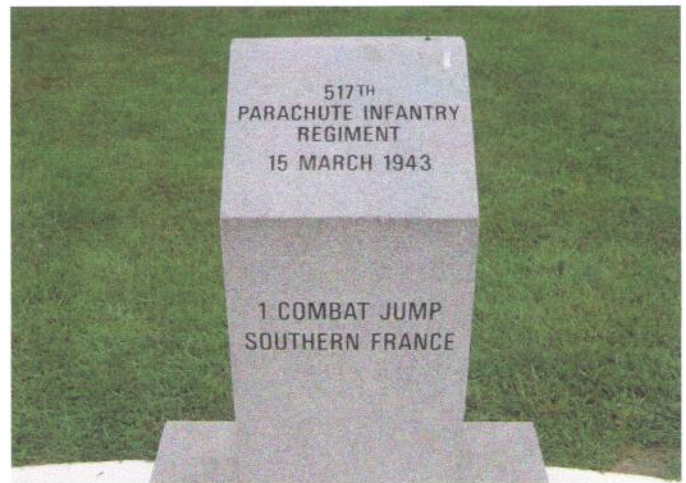
Mimsey proudly displaces 2nd place plaque for running Currahee



Morris McDowell crossing the finish line



517th Members gather at the monument to the 517th



Monument to 517th PRCT at Camp Toccoa, GA



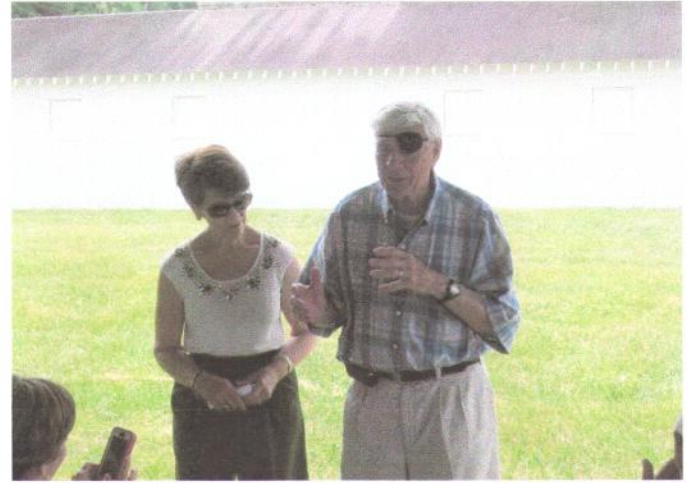
Mayor of Toccoa giving tribute to the 517th



Lory Curtis pays tribute to 517th with contributing stories from General Seitz



President Allan Johnson tells of training at Camp Toccoa



Hal Beddow tells his remembrances of Camp Toccoa, GA



Trail up Mount Currahee



Sheriff Department provides safety and security for runners



Toccoa celebration with 1940's Big Band



Hal and Helen Beddow kick up their heels to 1940's music



Stephens County Building Toccoa, GA



Night life on main street, Toccoa, GA



Hospitality Room where 517th members meet and talk



One last goodbye before leaving Toccoa, GA

The Thunderbolt Newsletter

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The Thunderbolt is published quarterly by the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association, Inc. 15303 Indian Paint Circle, Bluffdale, UT 84065, in the interest of the men who served in the Combat Team. The Association is a non-profit organization incorporated under Chapter 180 of the Massachusetts General laws, and is formed for the purpose enumerated in its Articles of Association as they may be amended from time to time. The Association will forever has as it's objectives to preserve in patriotic reverence, memory of those men who served in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team; to support and enhance the fame and glory of the Combat Team; to provide for the gathering and dissemination of information concerning these men; to provide for their patriotic assembly in local and National reunions; and to perpetuate the heritage and tradition of the Airborne Spirit.

Editor Claire Giblin

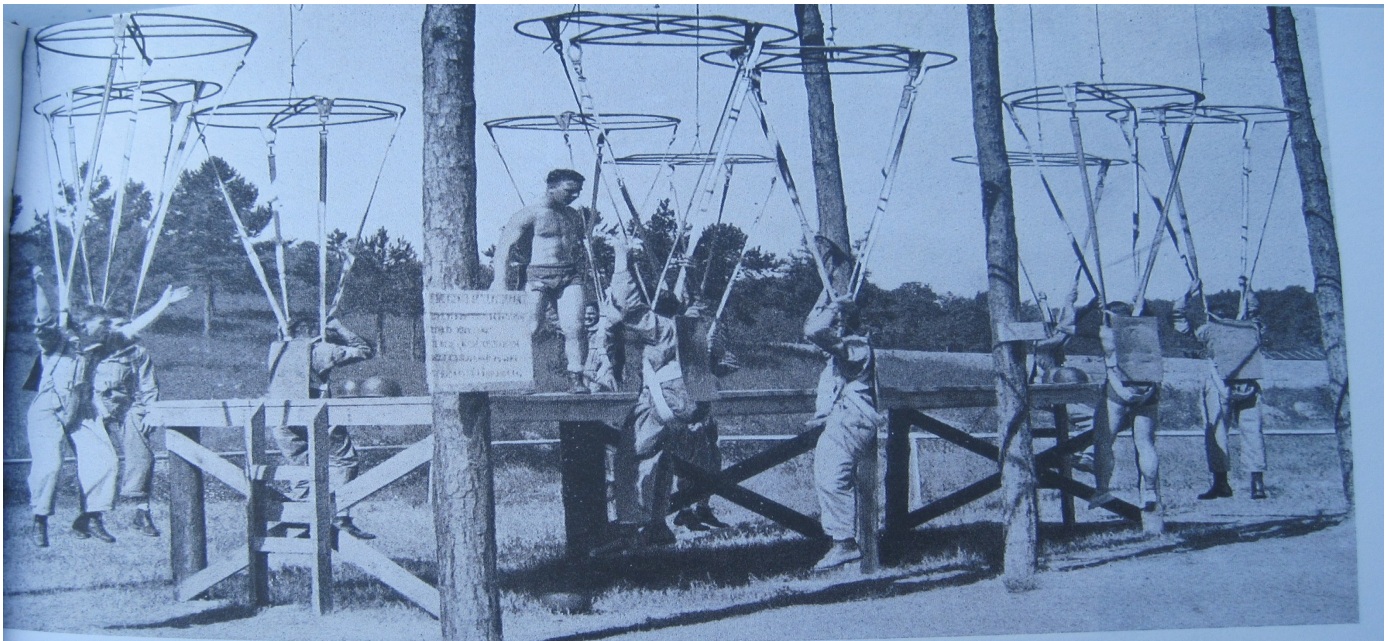
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517th PIR Parachute Landing training, Camp Toccoa, GA 1943



FIVE POINTS OF PERFORMANCE — Check body position and count . . . Check your canopy . . . Check initial oscillation . . . Get your back into the wind . . . Prepare to land and land