

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)

460th Parachute Field Artillery, 596th Parachute Combat Engineer

Thunderbolt

Newsletter Date: Fall, October 2013



Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since March 1943

August 11, 2013, three 517th PRCT troopers with family return to celebrate the liberation of Southern France. Our very own President of the 517th PRCT Association Allan Johnson, 596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company, along with Leo Dean, Regimental Headquarters, and Hoyt Kelley, Headquarters, First Battalion commemorate and remember their time in combat in Southern France.

Packed in this Chute

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Greetings from the President

As I write, the days are getting shorter and the nights cooler here in almost-rural New Jersey. It is hard to believe that only five weeks ago, we were in Provence observing the 69th (!) anniversary of our airborne invasion into southern France. It was hot, to say the least.

We began our trip in Sospel, with good friends Patou (Patricia) and Roland Orengo. Many of you might remember that Patou spoke so beautifully at the Savannah reunion. Patou and Roland live in a family home in Sospel, the last town liberated in France, and they have a monument on their property built of debris (mortar shells, rations, helmets and so on) found right there on their property. The war was – literally – in their back yard. We also always pay quiet respects to the memory of Don Fraser, whose ashes are there.

Members of the 517 should be pleased to know that a plaque has been placed at Col de Braus, honoring the fierce fighting there. Authored by Howard Hensleigh, the wording is beautiful, honoring the fighting there and expressing the wish that it should never again be necessary. That plaque was made possible by French friends Frederic Brega and Roland Orengo. Both are quiet gentlemen who are simply wonderful friends to the unit. Their knowledge is vast and impressive. I figure it is because of Frederic and Roland that there was a front page story in the Nice-Matin about the dedication of the plaque, which had been done between friends, “the Sospel way,” with a fantastic lunch afterward. Many thanks to Frederic, Roland, Nicholas Arnulf, Julian his brother, and all others involved in placing that significant memorial.

From there we moved on to the La Motte/Le Muy/Trans-en-Provence area, where we hooked up with Team Kelley. I am happy to say that Hoyt Kelley and his family seemed to enjoy their first trip back to Provence. I was joined by daughter Claire, her husband Jim, Leo Dean, and the Broudy family: Bruce and his wife Liz, as well as his sister Eileen Broudy Shaw. And as is so often the case, we met another veteran staying at our hotel, Art Helmer of the 602nd Glider Division – which was a pack mule outfit! We meet so few glider

guys, and Hoyt summed it up best when they met: “it’s an honor to meet a really brave soldier,” or words to that effect. We really enjoyed our time at the hotel and at events with Art, his friend Greg Kyle, the Broudys and the Kelley family.

It is amazing to see the appreciation for our service in Provence. Organizers and good longtime friends to the outfit, Eric Renoux and Jean Michel Soldi are tireless in their efforts to preserve the memory of 15 August, 1944. They have been planning the 70th anniversary celebrations for two years already, and the 69th anniversary celebrations were incredibly special. Please, if you can consider coming to Provence next year, start planning now! We always have so much fun, and meet so many friends. Carve out the heart of August, 2014 – say at least the 10th to the 20th – and Claire promises she will share the planning details with anyone interested. Fly into Nice if at all possible, she says.

Next month, reenactors are gathering at Col de Braus. Several of this group supported and assisted with the memorial project there in August, so it is with special affection that they gather there this year. We thank Nicholas Arnulf and his team for preserving the memory of the 517 there.

Next order of business: there had been talk of a national gathering next summer – but many people who’d expressed an interest also told Lory Curtis that they would not be able to do two major trips in the summer of 2014. Therefore, Lory has reluctantly decided to put things on hold until perhaps 2015. Please, attend our mini reunions in Kissimmee (January), and Palm Springs (March), and then meet us in Provence in August.

Election Notice!!

Finally, elections are coming up. Those who attended the Kansas City reunion will remember that it was voted that elections and other business may be conducted electronically, as we prepared for the years that reunions would not necessarily be every other year. If you are not able to access a computer, please let one of the officers or Bob Barrett know. The election, once organized, will be advertised in Mail Call. If you’re not on

Mail Call, we need to know so we can make it happen!

As always, it is an honor to be associated with the fine men of the 517th. Airborne all the way! And do not hesitate to call me!

908 852 1424

Or you can snail mail me at 215 Mission Road, Hackettstown, NJ 07840.

From Your Publishers

Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin

Do you have talents you can share with the Thunderbolt? We are looking for contributors! Photos are especially welcome!

From the webmaster

Bob Barrett

Yes, every few months I find that the MailCalls are blocked by various email providers. I always copy myself on each one, so that I can see if there is a big problem, and none are going out. But sometimes they are blocked by the receiver's email provider and I don't find out unless someone tells me. Even when my dad, Ben, ran the MailCall, we had issues. Sometimes Comcast or Verizon would not accept emails from his AOL account. Eventually he switched to gmail, but the same issues popped up again. He would just have to keep trying and after a week or so, things would magically clear up on their own, with no reason or explanation. For some reason, the internet powers find something they do not like in the MailCall and just decide to block us for a while.

I try to be very careful and follow the rules as best I can, but it's mostly that I send out MailCall to about 400 people each week, and that raises suspicions that it might be spam. For now, I break it into 8 different email groups that are sent individually and that seems to work most of the time. But not always. So be patient and know that you can always check for new and old MailCalls at www.517prct.org/mailcall/

Hoyt Kelley's Trip Report

I wanted to share a couple of things with you that might be of interest.

As you know, my Dad was in France was for the 517th celebrations --his first trip to Southern France since the end of the War. He was awarded the French Legion of Honor in Nice on the 28th of August, and following his return, his home town (Providence, Utah) held a big gathering honoring him. The Herald Journal had a nice article on him (see link below).

http://news.hjnews.com/allaccess/article_d739a546-1441-11e3-8021-0019bb2963f4.html

(See next page)

Also, in response to the Herald Journal Article, I penned the following Letter to the Editor:

Dear Editor:

I wanted to express my appreciation to the Herald Journal for its fine September 2nd piece on Hoyt Kelley, who received the French Legion of Honor on the 28th of August in Nice, France.

The 517th, one of the most storied special attack forces in the Army, was in many ways the forerunner of today's Army Rangers. Landing in Naples, they fought up the length of Italy, jumped into Southern France, survived the Bulge and fought their way into Germany. At the end of the War the regiment was formally retired, primarily due to a lack of men still standing (they had Europe's highest casualty rate at 89%). Like a lot of WW2 veterans that saw heavy combat, my father never spoke about the war. Until recently, we were not even aware of the many medals he and his unit had been awarded while in the Army.

Having accompanied my father on the trip, I can attest that he is still a trooper in the truest sense. The Legion of Honor is not for wimps, nor by the way, are French awards ceremonies. Imagine being 90-years old and standing at attention for a straight hour under the hot Nice sun. Dad also attended several parades, sitting in an open jeep for two hours or more. And talk about walking --we averaged 14,000 steps or roughly 7 miles each day (I

know, I had a pedometer with me) --try doing that when you're 90 years old!

When I was a boy, I once asked my Dad what was the primary thing he learned while in the Army. He responded, "I learned how to march." At the age of 90, he still knows how to march --he just about marched me into the ground.

Highlights of the trip for me included: the French people and the love that they still have for the paratroopers that liberated them; meeting the son of a French freedom fighter who was rescued from the Nazi's when my Dad's unit retook his town; Dad refusing to salute while the British veterans played "God Save the Queen," still a stubborn Irishman to his last breath ("I'm not going to salute for that damn royal family, we fought a revolution to get free of them!"); a parade in Cannes, with thousands of Frenchman along the parade route cheering my Dad; and an old woman in Les Arcs taking my father by the hands, looking into his face and saying "Bravo, Monsieur, Bravo!"

It doesn't get much better than that.

Brian Hoyt Kelley
Dana Point, California

Steve Gomez's Jump Report

On August 13th I had the honor of jumping into the same area that my father **CPL Ben Gomez of B Battery 460th** did on 15th Aug 1944.

By way of a generous invitation from the French Airborne Command group led by **Stephane Hadjadje** to the Airborne Demonstration Team we were able to join forces and honor those that led the way into the invasion of Southern France in Operation Dragoon.

Here I am with my buddy Tom Boyle (on right) enroute to the DZ. We timed our efforts back home so this would be the 100th jump for both of us!

On the DZ and celebrating with **Alan and Leo** with some Champagne (of course!). **Howard Hayes** is assisting in holding up the guidon and this jump was very special to him as his Great **Uncle CPL Melvin Cory** was also

in B Battery with my dad and they jumped together as well in '44!

The guidon belongs to **SGT Fred Brown of HQ Battery 460th** and has made its second jump into Southern France! **SGT Brown** is past President of the 517th association and lives in Port Arthur, Texas.

My wife Leah was able to attend and we had a very special time enjoying the hospitality and beautiful countryside of Provence!

We finally got to meet some good friends in person, **Nicolas Arnulf** from L'Escarene and Tim Bell from the UK.

I am sitting down with **Nicolas Arnulf** who is heading up the "Battle of Col De Braus" celebrations next month.

B battery set up their guns in his grandfather's front yard in the campaign toward Sospel!

The last photo is of Mr. Art Helmers of the 602nd FAB who arrived in gliders with their pack howitzers.

Next to him is my friend Tim Bell who is a 75mm pack howitzer expert and owns two of them as well!

What a privilege it was to be a part of these events! AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY!

517 in the News

Claire Giblin

Unbelievably, this was a front page story in the Nice-Matin. Good friends in Provence, led by **Frederic Brega** and **Roland Orenge**, recognized that there was no permanent outside marker observing the historic fighting and loss of life there at Col de Braus. This was a small and informal ceremony between friends, so we were surprised to see that it got any coverage at all, much less the front page. Howard Hensleigh, past president of the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, worked with Frederic to develop the text, which Frederic had translated. The plaque was unveiled by Leo Dean and **Allan Johnson**, and we were joined there by **Liz and Bruce Broudy** and **Eileen Shaw** (nee Broudy), representing their father. **Nicolas Blancarda (Arnulf)** and **Julien Des Prats** helped as well. Elizabeth, the restaurant owner, ended the occasion with wonderful food and drink. I have

photos that I will post soon (we just got home and my photos are on the camera card). We are grateful to friends who work to honor the sacrifices made by these soldiers so long ago. Thank you to all who made this day so special. If you live nearby or are able to visit, please stop by (and try to make it at time that the restaurant is open!).

With the 517th paratrooper regiment U.S., Alan Leo and resumed in the septembre44 colconstituant a lock between l'Escarène and Sospel. They revisited the scene of the last battle

Certainly, they are stainless! In great shape, casual as being only know the Americans. Alan Johnson and Dean Leo, two veterans of the 517th Parachute Regiment, returned yesterday with family in the theater of fighting the Col de Braus, between l'Escarène and Sospel. These young people from almost 90 years retain an intact memory of those days of September 44. They were not much fun. Seventeen of their comrades lost their lives on the slopes of these mountains, 1000 meters and more where they came dislodge the Germans entrenched in fortress.

"A wonderful welcome"

"I had to be parachuted in Le Muy, but I landed by mistake at about 3: 30 am near Callian, without knowing at all where I was. It took me a day and a half's walk down to the meeting point of my regiment," said Alan, president of the Alumni Association of the 517th. "We were 5,000 paratroopers, but the release has scattered us in the plain Var. So that 15,000 Germans on the ground have thought we were a lot more because it was everywhere and nowhere at once," says Leo, who is making his home on the East Coast of the United States, its 159th ... skydiving jump!

Both veterans remember the home "exceptional" that people reserve their villages. *"People do not know how we will be enjoyable. After the release of the Col de Braus, they exchanged our helmets against their berets. That's how my whole regiment or almost ended up with this symbol of France on the head"* jokes Alan. But before the corks - *"it was called the Champagne Campaign"* remembers the

son of Captain Broudy, who commanded Company A of the 517th - they had to deal with serious matters.

An eagle's nest almost impregnable

And they were: *"The Americans were faced with very seasoned German troops, not at all decided to go"* comments Frédéric Brega, Nice history buff, who has forged a friendship with the veterans that guide when he returned to Provence. *"Occupiers had taken refuge on the peaks in the positions of the Maginot Line. They were well armed, determined to fight. It was very difficult to bring down" position.*

Failing to surrender them by attacking them in a "classic", the Allies used to great lengths to get them out of the eagle's nest: a warship anchored in the bay of Menton has watered shells Navy. *"A deluge of fire. At the first shot, the Germans were not killed were already deaf sounded. The 517th finished the job. At least two days were necessary"*.

Yesterday, Alan and Leo have found these places almost unchanged operations. The Arnulf brothers, Julien and Nicolas, and Roland Orenge had released their Jeep collection, Elisabeth of the bar and restaurant of the Col de Braus pissaladière, its fried zucchini flowers, stuffed and its coast Provence rosé. On the front of the property, both veterans unveiled a simple plaque. She recalled these historical moments and concludes with these words: *"In order not to forget the suffering and sacrifices of those who fought here for the younger generations in Europe, aware of the price of freedom, can build their future harmony of peace"*.

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!

Irma and Arnold Targnion

(sunday 2013 july 28th)

the Community of Trois-Ponts is taking care of the flowers and is looking to keep this area clean.

With our love from Belgium,

Nice.france. 28th of august 2013.

Congratulation **Hoyt Kelley** for your legion of honor my friend Happy that my president remember the sacrifice of our heros and proud of my loved Son **Adrien Jolagourde** official 517th flag in Southern France..! you are a real heritage of the Airborne Spirit..i love you

If memory serves, then-president Merle McMorrow appointed Adrien 517 flag-bearer for life, a responsibility he takes very seriously. Thank you, Adrien!

Plaque apposée en septembre 2009 par l'association "Battle of Col de Braus" en collaboration avec la Mairie de l'Escarène. Les événements ont eu lieu avec la participation de l'association Forty Four Memories From Sept 2010:

Subject: Tribute to PFC Robert W. Brown A Battery -460th PFAB killed September, 5th 1944 near l'Escarène Rail-road station

PFC Robert W. Brown, A Battery -460th PFAB (first American soldier killed on our county of l'Escarène).

Since I was a child, my grand-pa Joseph Arnulf (1923-2004) said to me : "a young paratrooper was killed near our field on railroad-station area at beginning of September, 1944, and you owed to honor and remember this man !"

Sincerely,

ARNULF Nicolas

2418 CH de Montagnac
06440 L'Escarène –France

517th PRCT Battlefield place Reenactment 2013

October 19

Col de Braus

Purpose: On-site reenactment in tribute to the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team VENEZ NOMBREUX !!!!!!! d'ici septembre le programme sera publié !

weekend des 19 et 20 octobre 2013

reconstitution Terrain - Col de Braus - Alpes maritimes

COME! the programme will be published by September!

weekend of 19 and 20 October 2013

J. Mickael Soldi)

517th paratrooper **Hoyt Kelley** came back to France for the first time since he landed . we find the place he landed and place his best friend died in the first hours of D day after visiting his grave . lot of émotions this morning Thanks sir.

Jean Michel Soldi

great privilèges to Have at our ceremony our wonderfull vétérans and madame the consul mr the ambassador of united Stades . thankyou mes amis for coming -

Stephane Hadjadje

This is a picture of a static jump which was done in Le Muy on August 13, as part of the Operation Dragoon celebrations. It was organized by Stephane Hadjadje, and included our friends from the WW2 ADT from Oklahoma.

"23 jumpers were of the french reenactment group ABC (AirBorne-Command), 9 were ADT (Airborne Demonstration Team), 1 was an italian Folgore, and 4 were 319th Pfab-173rd AB (active).... thanks to all"

--

Claire Giblin

Teams of French and US parachutistes, including current US paratroopers, joined together for a very impressive twilight static line jump. Especially moving these evenings were the ceremonies in which the US veterans were presented with the French Croix de Guerre. Thank you to all who made this possible, especially **Stephane Hadjadje**.

Alain Fine

The veteran Hoyt KELLEY on a pilgrimage to the scene of his fights

In a correspondence with Mr. President 517 Parachute Regimental Combat Team about 69me Birthday. We wanted to share with the American oldtimers the memory of those moments glorious. And have proposed to bring one of them in the South of France for the month of August 2013.

Jean Michel Soldi:

reconstruction field - Col de Braus - Alpes-maritimes

**Highlights from Mail Call
July 8, 2013-September 22, 2013
Mail Calls 2167-2178**

Bob Barrett

As far as I know, the expected reunions and events for 2013 to 2014 could include the following:

January 2014 (MLK weekend): Kissimmee, FL East Coast Mini Reunion

March 10-14, 2014: West Coast Party, Palm Springs, CA

August 2014: Dragoon 70th anniversary, Provence

December 2014-January 2015: Battle of the Bulge 70th anniversary, Belgium (possibly attending: Scott and Deanna Ross)

I know that it is hard to plan for anything too far out, since many (most) of our troopers have some travel limitations, but I wanted to put the list out there in case people want to contact each other and coordinate their activities.

Gene Frice

Thanks for the note. I have not been in touch for months for a variety of reasons, personal, business, health, and real estate (new home), I only made it with the able help of my caring daughters Laurie, Karen and Robin (Son's Mark and Gene). Back surgery beat me up for months. Just got rid of my cane several weeks ago. Do you think some 400 parachute jumps, climbing mountains as a ski patrolman, or 14' breakers as a beach life guard had anything to do with the problem? Nah, just old age. Doing much better now.

France (70th) We will plan for PSP, March 2014. Many I have talked to feel that France and maybe Belgium are likely in 2014. I would like to see New Orleans planned as well, however I think 2 or 3 in such a short time period might difficult.

First, correction of an oversight in the last Tunderbolt:

Gene Brissey's material did not appear as intended. Here is some of the piece inadvertently omitted:

Eugene Lloyd Brissey, born in Owenton, Kentucky on March 23, 1925, died peacefully at home with his wife Edith beside him on June 7, 2013. Having met in 8th grade, Gene and Edie were sweethearts when he enlisted in the Army in 1943. They were married for 65 years. He served in the European campaigns in Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy with the 82nd Airborne, 517th Parachute Infantry, Company E, becoming a squad leader and earning four Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart, among other decorations. He returned home to finish high school, then earned a Bachelor's Degree from Wilmington College in business and history. His successful career as a civilian personnel officer for the Air Force took him and his family from Dayton, Ohio to Tokyo, Japan and finally settling in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1967.

A skilled athlete, he continued playing softball for decades. Known by their friends as Gene, he and Edie enjoyed golfing, bowling, square dancing with The Roadrunners Club, fishing and exploring the Southwest in their motor home. They maintained connections with many dear friends, including those made overseas and members of the 517th. He was a devoted and generous husband, father, brother, and grandfather. Storytelling of boyhood and war experiences were gifts to the family. A careful and frugal man, he was known for using items at hand to create and repair just about anything, fondly referred to as "Gene-itzing." He is survived by his loving daughters Denise (Craig Cohen), Lisa (David Ellenberg), and Gisele Livingston; his grandchildren Savanna (Miles Gloetzner) and Jesse Brissey-Cohen, Marlana and Ian Livingston, Lily and Iris Ellenberg; great-grandchildren Abel, Esther, and Anton Gloetzner; as well as sisters Ethel, Alma, Barbara, Betty, and Judy; brothers Cecil and Paul; and 21 nieces and nephews. His last years brought a struggle with PSP (Progressive Supranuclear Palsy), managed with the tireless care of his devoted wife and family who express deep gratitude to the caregivers from the Albuquerque VA, Right-At-

Home and the Ambercare Hospice team for their expert support. Memorial services are pending. In lieu of flowers, please honor a veteran (ask him his story; thank her for her service) and consider a donation to CurePSP: <https://give.psp.org/>.

Merle McMorrow

The French Embassy in Washington, DC is complemented by ten General Consulates in major cities throughout the United States. If Mel still lives in Texas he would contact the General Consulate in Houston, which handles the States of TX, OK and AR. The address is 777 Post Oak Boulevard-Suite 600 Houston, TX 77056. Telephone 713-572-2799 or 572-0654. I started by contacting the Consulate for my State (ND), which was Chicago. They will request a copy of your discharge which will show action in France during a period that coincides with the period that constitutes World War II. Then some correspondence will follow. You will be informed that it could take up to a year to process. This depends on the Consulate. After approval they will give you 3 options as how you may want the presentation of the medal made.

You can go to Washington, DC and have the award made with a group that are also being presented with the same honor or you can arrange to have the presentation made locally or you can have the medal sent directly to you by UPS. I selected the third option but Senator Hoven's office got wind of it and made some political hay.

This award was founded by Louis XIV in 1693. During the Revolution all orders were abolished, but it was soon realized that some form of official compensation was needed to recognize and honor outstanding service. By an order enacted under Napoleon Bonaparte on 4 Nivose, Year VIII the Arms of Honor were instituted for military. In time it became an honorary order that would reflect the principal of equality not only between military and civilian but also in services rendered to the country. Today such individuals as Bob Hope and others have been awarded the Honor.

Morris McDowell

The daughter of **Lt. Edward Athey**, 'H' company, notified me of Ed's passing Tuesday July 16, in California. Ed was buried with full military honors at the National Cemetery in Eagle Point. We have lost another great 517 trooper.

And Bob Barrett found this jewel from Ben: From MailCall #602, 2003:

I would like to mention an incident about one of the favorite officers in H Company.

We were in our barracks in Soissons getting ready to move into Belgium when **Lieutenant Athey** came into our barracks and saw that we were removing the tracer bullets in the machine gun belts. Tracers work both ways. He immediately turned around and walked out without saying a word.

– **Ben Barrett**

Taken from his obituary:

Longtime Yreka CA resident **Edward Moore Athey** passed away July 16, 2013 at Meadowlark Assisted Living in Yreka. He was 92 years old.

Ed was born June 1, 1921 in San Jacinto to Emerson and Julia Athey. He served in the U.S. Army's 517th Parachute Regiment during World War II, and saw action in Southern France and the Battle of the Bulge. He was awarded two Bronze Stars and three Purple Hearts during that period. After the war, Ed and his wife June moved to Montague and then Yreka, where Ed started a career designing and building homes throughout Siskiyou County. During the building boom of the 1960s, he was the building and maintenance coordinator for the Siskiyou County Schools, working with school boards and architects. He was active in the Saint Marks Vestry and choir for many years. He volunteered his design skills to local churches and the Humane Society. Ed was a founding member of the Yreka Kiwanis Club. He loved gardening, sharing vegetables and grapes with everyone he knew. He enjoyed repurposing and refurbishing old furniture, believing that good wood should never be wasted. Ed and June

attended 517th Parachute regiment reunions for years, and he was interviewed by writers and videographers for his knowledge of World War II history.

Pat Seitz

Thought you would like to know Dad's funeral and burial were beautiful, uplifting and a comfort thanks to the attendees, the Army and the community who pulled out all stops to remember Dad. (Dad would have been pleased that it ran on time and the soldiers were not kept waiting in the Kansas heat!) Both U.S. Senators came and the generals, included General Sullivan (former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff), Lt. Gen. Anderson, present 18th Airborne Corps commander, the present commanding general of Ft. Riley and about 5 former commanders, plus other general officers that Dad had mentored. After the burial, we had a full house at a reception with food and "adult beverages" somewhat akin to an Irish Wake.

President **Allan Johnson** and **Nancy Fraser Armand** honored Dad by coming all the way out and representing the 517th. Allan and Nancy came to dinner with the family after the vigil and the evening of the Mass (which was a little rowdy). It was wonderful to have them with us as the 517th was "family" to Dad and to the rest of us.

The 517th's logo was on Dad's urn, on the Mass program and on the display that Gen. Grange, Dad's radioman sent, which was posted in front of the pulpit. (**David Grange** very much wanted to be there, but had had eye surgery 6 days before the funeral and didn't even have his stitches out yet.) Plus all the Seitz clan members wore their 517th lapel pin. I will scan the program for both the Mass and vigil tomorrow and send it to you. The local radio station carried the Mass live and the Topeka TV station had extensive coverage which is the first link below.

Also, Senator Moran gave a wonderful tribute to Dad on the Senate floor, the press release and video of the tribute are [on the website].

Editor's note: Dick Seitz never missed out on an opportunity to give 517 pins. Wear yours proudly!

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 helped identify troopers in a photo with Ed Athey

That was a great tribute to Ed who certainly deserves it. His plane on take-off malfunctioned and caught fire. I saw this as my stick of troopers was in the plane just behind his. He gallantly got his stick, including Sgt. Harmon, out of the plane before it was engulfed in flames and then talked some glider pilot into letting him hitchhike into Southern France the next day to be back with the outfit. Our pilot swerved to the right to miss Ed's plane and then to the left to get back in the line of planes to continue down that dirt runway for take-off. Highest regards, **Howard Hensleigh**.

And here he comments on another photo:

Those two guys were also in the other picture with **Ed Athey** and others –**Irv Pinkston** and **Dick Spencer**. All three of us went through 4 years of ROTC at Iowa U. The T shirt is a left over from Iowa; I never threw anything away. The PE stands for physical education; I'm not sure what the M is for.

Dick had an illustrious career as a journalist, first as a professor at Iowa U, where among other things he "invented" Herky the Hawk as mascot and started a course in cartoon journalism, and not too long after as editor of Western Horseman headquartered in Colorado Springs. He took on the task of designing our "logos", the buzzard for the 517th, the mule for the 460th and the airborne minesweeper for the 596th. He was wounded at Col de Braus in the G Co. attack/patrol on Ridge X, when **Art Ridler** was KIA. By the time we left S. France he filled the S1 (personnel) slot on 3rd Bn. staff. He made airborne Vmail Christmas cards for the entire outfit. He always seemed to have that portable typewriter with him and put it to use sometimes as the lead

flew. As you can see from these pictures, we were scared stiff about the upcoming Jump.

Howard Hensleigh

[the photo is of three relaxed, handsome and smiling young troopers].

Darrell Egner

I don't know where to start as it's been a long time since I gave Bob something to do. First of all I fell almost 4 months ago and broke several vertebra's in my back. Stayed in the Hospital/Rehab over a month and home Rehab, etc. ever since. Two weeks ago they injected cement into several vertebra's but it didn't seem to help. Still have pain 24/7. The only time I get out of the house is when my daughter takes me to doctor appointments almost every week. That's enough of my sad story.

Then **Dick Seitz** passed away which was a total shock. **Chris Lindner** was here for a visit and we both had tears of sorrow after getting that news. I have said many times that I am still here because of Dick's leadership. Hard to believe he was only 5 years older than me. He was a dear friend to me and he was the greatest General that ever wore the Stars. Thank you **Pat Seitz** for keeping us informed about your Dad. You did a great job letting us know the many things he accomplished in his life. I will never get tired reading or hearing about him. I miss having our Martini's to close out the night.

The next subject is our Mini Reunion in January 2014. **Brenda Mortensen** chaired the last Reunion and what a wonderful job she did. Thank you Brenda! Our attendance was up from the year before to about 50 people. Due to unforeseen issues she will not be able to chair the 2014 Reunion. I went to the do-it-all girl **Claire Giblin** and she agreed to take on this major job. Thanks very much Claire. My goal is to get well by then so I promised to be her helper. I booked the same hotel and dates for 2014. More information to follow when we get closer to January.

There was some talk about having a National Reunion in New Orleans or some other locations. I believe what will be the deciding factor would be to find someone

willing to take this major project on. If we don't have a National Reunion it would probably increase the attendance at the 2 Mini Reunions. At least I hope so.

Just a reminder August is the month we voted to pay our dues. The dues are \$30 for the year or more, if you can afford it. Please send them to **Joanne Barrett**. Her mailing address is in all Mail Calls and the Thunderbolt. Thank you!

If you read this far, thank you. It's called running over on the key board.

For the record, any contributions to the 517th Association or events are voluntary donations, not dues.

—BB

Carrying on the Tradition

Son of a Battling Buzzard, **Cpl Floyd R. Perry**
Sgt Dannie Perry

After reading **Steve Gomez**, son of **Ben Gomez** B Btry 460 AFA, letter in MailCall No.2145, Feb 10, 2013 about his jump with WW II ADT I started doing PT every other day and collecting the WW II gear required for summer jump school. Two weeks ago, 27 July 2013, I completed 10 days of training with Cadre of the **WW II Airborne Demonstration Team** at Frederick Oklahoma Army Airfield and 11 other trainees. Training consisted of many days of parachute landing falls from a platform in the PLF sand pit. Hanging in harnesses we trained for emergency response for water, trees, high voltage wire landings and multiple canopy malfunction and deployment of reserve chute. We practiced exiting a C-47 mock-up with all of the jump master commands and had many hours and days of classroom instruction about all of the safety requirements and details of the pre-jump DZ briefings that would be given us prior to each jump.

Finally after being tested for qualification we made pre-dawn preparation for manifest call, DZ briefing, parachute issue, equipment checks and 2 JMPI's we boarded a 71 year old C-47 named "Boogie Baby" that was built in Oklahoma in 1942 and had served in many operations including London, Italy and Operation Dragoon Airborne assault of S.

France 15 August 1944. At 0600 in between thunderstorms I made my 1st of 5 round canopy static jumps at 1500 feet! The final 4 jumps were made in 2 lifts over the next 2 days culminating in open hanger day and graduation ceremony. My wings were pinned on by 93 year old WW II veteran Dick Fields who had jumped in Operation Dragoon with the 551st PIB 82 Airborne Div. Then the Commanding Officer Colonel Ray Steeley steps up and says, "Sgt Perry take 1/2 step back with your right foot" and with the palm of his hand drives the wing pins into my chest delivering my "Blood Wings"! Hooah! Remember, Honor, Serve! That is their creed and that is what I did in remembrance of my father, **Cpl Floyd Russell Perry**, who served with the 517th PRCT in Operation Dragoon invasion of S. France and received 2 Purple Hearts for wounds received in Belgium during January 1945 in the Battle of the Bulge and served with the 513th PIR 17th Airborne Div. in Operation Varsity invasion of Germany! Many thanks and much gratitude and appreciation goes out to the founders of WW II ADT, 1sg Wolf US Special Forces Ret., Colonel Ray Steely US Special Forces Reserve, Dedicated Cadre and Support Crew for assisting me in making a living tribute to my father and the troopers and units that he served with!

I just received an intel-e-mail 9 August 2013 from WW II Airborne Demonstration Team (<http://www.wwiadt.org/>) Frederick Oklahoma, Frederick Army Airfield, about their trip to Southern France this week to jump in honor of the 69th anniversary of Operation Dragoon 13 August 2013! The statement that follows is copied from a message I received from an ADT member.

"TODAY IS THE DAYthat the ADT DRAGOON det. deploys.

Ten jumpers, a total of 13 ADT men and women, will depart CONUS and rendezvous in southern France to spend a week in-country participating in the 69th anniversary ceremonies commemorating operation DRAGOON. We are scheduled to jump late afternoon on Tuesday the 13th just outside of Le Muy. Our base of operations will be out of Draguignan. The AO will encompass the

French riviera from Nice to St. Tropez and north and west into the Provence region where we will focus on the airborne AO in the vicinity of Le Muy, La Motte, Le Mitan and Draguignan. Dick Field is scheduled to join us. Prayers for a safe successful journey will be greatly appreciated.
AIRBORNE!"

Jim Kraus

I drove **Earl and Veva Boone** up to Payson, AZ today to see **Jack and Jean Sowell**. Some amazing and funny stories were told and pictures were shared. All are doing well. Attached is a picture I took today of Earl and Jack. Feel free to forward this picture to anyone who may be interested. Take care.

Lory Curtis

I spoke with **Gene Frice** today and he has informed me the Palm Springs Mini Reunion will be held the week of March 10-14. I am sure much more will be sent in future months from the Frice clan as to the hotel and itinerary for the reunion, but he want me to let everyone know the dates so you can start planning now.

Saints and Soldiers – Airborne Creed Film Update

Filming began in August!

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.

Matthew Clark

I am looking for information, pictures, and stories about my grandfather, **Marvin Crawford** who was in the 517 PIR. Can you help?

Note: there was a Morris Crawford in D Company.

maybe you could still help us to locate the place in Belgium or 2nd **Lieutenant Heafy** has lost his life? What unit were you in the 460th? Do you remember where you were located in Belgium on January 5, 1945? From what I found, the 460th PFAB was the artillery support of the 82nd Airborne. Thank you so much Phil!! Take Care. Xavier

I need your help for a daughter of a 460th's soldier... Mrs. Naomi Rauff, who lives in Massachusetts would much to trace the last steps of his father:

1st Lt. George Heafy (460), buried at Henri Chapelle

He was KIA the 5 January 1945... Could you help us? Where to put me in touch with someone? I also joined the mail my friend Christian de Marcken which is directly related to Ms Rauff. Thank you so much for Mrs Rauff... Take Care. Your Belgium friend: Xavier
Webmaster: <http://usairborne.be/>

Lynnette Myhre

Marlys Buchenau

My name is Lynnette Myhre. I am helping Marlys Buchenau in her efforts to get her brother, **Gordon J. Lippman** inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame. I was on the website for the 517th, checked the 'Christmas Roster', and found that Gordon was listed as a Staff Sergeant for Headquarters Company 1st Battalion. In March 1943, Gordon enlisted in the Army and became one of the most decorated military men from South Dakota. He served his country in combat in three wars. He was wounded in December 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge, for which he was awarded a battlefield commission of 1st Lieutenant. (Gordon was killed in Viet Nam in 1965.)

We are looking for pictures or articles about Gordon and his service in World War II. If you have any such items, we would love to hear from you.

Any help you can give us in our efforts would be much appreciated.

Bob Barrett

Hi Lynnette and Marlys,

I will put your request into the next MailCall that I send out weekly to the troopers and friends. **Bill Boyle** who passed away a couple of years ago commanded the 1st Battalion. If you read the history, you will see that the 1st Battalion, as well as all the 517th, fought many heroic battles. Back in 2007, Boyle did say this about Gordon:

"I barely knew him in the 517. I talked to him before he went to Nam at Ft. Bragg. It was this that caused me to say I remembered him. He was a good man or he would not have been with us."

Jerry F Wilbur IV

I don't I don't know If this is even the proper party to address but I got the email address from the 517th prct home page while trying to find information on my grandfather. My name is **Jerry F. Wilbur IV**. My grandfather was Jerry F. Wilbur Jr. I believe he was a member of Company D. I know he was dropped into France and was part of the battle of the bulge. He also has a medal for his part in operation Torch. I don't know any more than that and I would be very grateful to find out any more information. He passed when I was 15 and his son, my father passed when I was eleven. So I never got much of a chance to know of his part in our military history. Anything would be of help. Thank you

Bob Barrett

I will do some digging and put out the word to see if anyone remembers Jerry Wilbur Jr. On a quick look, he shows up in the Christmas 1944 roster as part of **I Company**, temporarily attached to the HQ Company of the 3rd Battalion. See: <http://517prct.org/documents/xmas1944/xmas1944.htm>

The 517th fought in Italy, was part of Operation Dragoon (the drop into Southern France in August 1944), and the Bulge. They were not part of Operation Torch, but it is possible if he was with another unit at another time.

I haven't found much else yet specifically mentioning Jerry Wilbur Jr., but will keep digging. Understand that the entire 517th

was a pioneering and very elite paratrooper unit. You can read the entire history of the unit in any of the histories published on the web site: <http://517prct.org/documents.htm>

Jerry IV

Thank you for your swift response. I am so very grateful to receive any information on my grandfather. I very much appreciate your time and effort. I will do some digging with the info you have sent to me and look forward to any other info that is available. Thank you again so much.

Bob Barrett

You don't have any wartime photos or stories of your grandfather that you can share with us, do you?

As I said, I don't know if any of the remaining troopers from I Company will remember your grandfather personally, but I will put the word out in the next weekly newsletter.

One story you might be interested in is the attack on Manhay on December 27, 1944 by I Company and H Company. Since your granddad was on the Christmas 1944 roster with I Company, I'm sure that he was part of this attack. I know this story well because my dad, **Ben Barrett**, was in H Company, and a good friend **Lud Gibbons** was in I Company. (I was also fortunate to be able to visit Manhay in 2009 with Ben and Lud, shortly before they both passed away.) The short version is that this was an important attack to retake the town of Manhay which was a strategic crossroads held by the Germans. The attack consisted of an artillery barrage followed by the attack from I Company, followed immediately by H Company. Unfortunately, close artillery was called in again while I Company was moving and fell right on the first platoon of I Company, killing about a dozen I Company men and injuring just as many.

In 2003, at one of the 517th reunions, a group of I and H Company troopers did an audio interview recalling the Manhay attack. This hour-long interview is at: <http://517prct.org/audiovideo/ManhayDiscussion060403.wma>

Jerry F Wilbur IV

Thank you Bob for all the info and links you have provided me with. Anything is helpful and greatly appreciated. I don't really have much as far as stories and/or pics of him in the military. Like I said I was young he only ever told me and the other grandchildren very little of his military exploits. The funny stuff that he figured we could handle I guess. One thing is he often told me about being dropped into France and he landed on a roof and crashed through and got stuck half inside and half out. He used his rifle but to beat himself loose and climb out.

Not much detail but one I have cherished him telling.

When you put the word out maybe some information could be useful. He went to Duke where he met my grandmother, Jinx Sellers. He proposed to her in a telegraph from Europe. I believe he was 23 when joining. Was an only child. Upon his return to the states he lived in Madisonville Kentucky where he father 3 girls and 1 boy. In the late 70s early 80s he moved to Arizona where he purchased The Four Ranch, S. of Tucson in (get this) the Dragoon Mtns. Went from op dragoon to the dragoon Mtns. Ironic. He ran a cattle ranch there along with participation on the board of directors for First Citizens national Bank. He also had some Coca Cola bottling and distribution factories across the south when my father was a child.

I don't know if any of that will help in any way but thought if anything you would at least like to get more info on one of the soldiers.

I and my cousins are extremely grateful for your help and effort. I look forward to checking my mail very much the past few days. I will do research on him and the rest of his comrades and keep you posted on what if anything I find about him. Thank you again so very much and I hope you have an excellent day.

Anna Bockis

Would love to hear anything about my Dad, **Martin Bockis**, of the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Combat Team. He passed away in

December of 2011. Would love pics if anyone has any.

Thank you.

Updates

Earl Tingle (Col. Retired)

Update on Lee Johnson:

After a 19 day stint in the hospital in New Smyrna Beach, FL, Lee was released and he's now home recovering from surgery. Lee had a benign infection in his left lung that wouldn't respond to medication and that resulted in the surgery. All went as planned and the surgery was successful. He's now doing laps between the living room and his front door and talking about rejoining his "coffee call" group on Tuesday mornings. This 93 year old 517 Paratrooper is tough.

Thanks Bob,

Howard E Hensleigh

795 Willow Road Bldg 360G
Menlo Park, Ca 94025

A couple of 460th troopers came for a visit--**John Garvey** and **Phil McSpadden**. With guys like that it is no wonder the 460th gave us such good support, sometimes at point blank range out ahead with the infantry. Their forward observers were always there, but I'm talking about the 75mms.

As **Dick Seitz** would say, AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY! Howard Hensleigh

Scott and Deana Ross

Home: 360 654 4334

Scott email: scott@ross-wa.net

Deana email: deana@ross-wa.net

Scott and I are looking into going to Belgium, December 2014 for the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. We really would like to go to Manhay where his Grandfather was wounded as part of I Company. Do you have any contacts in Belgium who could help in our planning?

Thanks!

Tim Curtis

Son of "Bud" Curtis.

I wanted to let everyone know that **Marshall Baird** will be receiving the French Legion of Honor very soon in a ceremony in Tucson where he lives. So good to hear they don't require travel anymore for those that are limited.

Justin Boggess

I'm not sure if you remember me, but I'm one of **Alfred Kunzer's** grandsons. I wanted to write you to let you know I have some bad news. Al Kunzer passed away this past Tuesday, 9 July. He was 88 years old. He had been in steadily decreasing health the past several months. He fought back multiple times, but he couldn't win this last battle.

He made sure that everyone around him, even in the hospital, knew that he was a paratrooper. It was all he ever talked about. I hope all is going well on the west coast

Steve Markle

Thank you so much for letting us know.... while this is sad news for us, he has rejoined many of his buddies who have left ahead of him. I only wish I had a chance to meet him. My dad was a good friend of his (my dad was born and raised in Rochester), and he often encouraged him to join up at the reunions but could never convince him to do so.

Have you seen the collection of photos of the 596 engineers? Your grandfather has more than a couple of photos of him; <http://www.markleweb.com/gallery/v/wwii/> (type Kunzer in the search box, there are 8 pictures)

I just let my mom know, and she also reflected about how he was in the inner circle of my dad's group of friends, including **Christian, Hudson, Moses, Saunders, Roberts,** and **Verdi** to name a few). All of these guys (including your grandfather) are extended family and will always be remembered.

Stay in touch.

Matt Skovera

On May 2, 2013, my uncle **Paul Skovera** (HQ/3) passed away. He was 93. He joined the 517th in Italy, 1944 after going AWOL from his airborne unit in Sicily to be with

his brother, my dad, **Matt (HQ3)**, a Toccoa man. From what I understand, **Captain Joe McGeever**, after hearing what my uncle did to be with my dad, fixed it with the Army brass. I am sure I made it sound way too simple. Before their jump into southern France, Captain McGeever would again involve himself in their lives by not allowing them to jump from the same plane. My uncle told me they were not happy about that at the time. My dad and uncle went on to serve together in the same 81 mm mortar squad the remainder of the war. My uncle then served and fought in Korea before retiring from the Army in the 1970's. I often wonder if they were the only brothers to serve in the 517th? Although my dad talked very little of the war, just before his death in 1986, he showed me a picture of Captain Joe McGeever. I knew then how important that was to share with me, and I have that picture in my home today.

I received a phone call from **Lory Curtis** that **Rick Sweet** (son of **Odas Sweet** of H Company) was recently in a serious accident and is now in the hospital.

Rick was in a motorcycle accident while riding in the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. He suffered seven (7) broken ribs, 2 fractured vertebrae in the neck, one in the upper back. His wife Carolyn says he is doing well now, recovering and sitting up in a chair to eat. He is still hooked up to oxygen.

Please keep him in your prayers for a speedy recovery. He is in the hospital in Knoxville, TN if anyone in the area wants to drop by and say hello.

Rick Sweet

My wife and I had a wreck on my motorcycle while riding in the Smoky Mountains on July 13th. I am now at home after being in the hospital for nearly three weeks. It is great to be home although I am still in much pain. I will be in a neck and back brace for at least another 6 weeks to avoid being paralyzed. My wife suffered from a bruised left arm and ribs and took good care of me and never left my side while I was in the hospital, thank God! She was better than the nurses at

taking care of me. Thank all of you for your prayers and especially **Morris and Beverly McDowell** for taking the time to come and see me at the hospital in Knoxville Tennessee. The food there was the worst I have ever tasted in my life! I lost ten lbs in two weeks. I also want to thank Lory Curtis for calling me and putting me on the prayer list at his church. I am recovering slowly and so glad to be at home. It is very hard to sleep while wearing these braces. I sleep when I can and am thankful for the pain meds that allow me to do so. It's a wonder that I am even alive. I drove over a steep embankment at around 40mph. Carolyn climbed up the hill and a man and his wife saw her white helmet and stopped to help us. He happened to be a retired EMT and climbed down the hill and held my head until the ambulance and helicopter arrived and airlifted me to the hospital. I feel lucky to be alive and grateful for such a loving wife and friends. When I need inner strength I always think of my dad, the 517th and what they went through during WWII. That helps me pull through!

Rick Sweet

SOB (son of a buzzard)

(Son of **Odas Sweet**, H Company)

Thank you all for your thoughts and prayers. Thank you **Paul Abbene** for your unexpected card and your fellowship at our Toccoa trip. Paul said he knows that being the son of a buzzard will help me gut it out. You aren't the only one Paul that knows this about me. When times are tough I do think about the men of the 517th prct and what they had to endure during WWII. My friend and drummer in my band, Tom Rammer, also knows this about me and made a sign to hang on my wall to give me inspiration. After spending two weeks at the University of Tennessee hospital without any surgery or intervention except raising my ribs off of my left lung, they sent me to a nursing home near my home of West Chester, Ohio for five more days of therapy and getting used to wearing a neck and body brace 24/7. After seeing my orthopedic doctor on the fifth day I came back and demanded that they release me and send me home. They said it may take until 9am the next morning but like a good

paratrooper, I did persuade them into releasing me within an hour. Tom did a great job on the sign and I wanted to share it with you. Thank you Tom. Airborne all the way!

PS I forgot to mention that I received 7 broken ribs and a broken left clavicle, 2 fractured neck vertebra (C4 and C7) and T5 vertebra was compressed and fractured on both sides. I also had multiple bruises and hematomas all over my body. All are left to heal on their own except for the neck and body brace that they said I need to wear for 6 to 12 weeks. I go back to the doctor for a cat scan on Sept 16th to see how I am mending. I do take off the brace for showers and eating. It's hard to move my jaws with so much resistance!

Julie Black

(541) 356-2550
mikejulieb@gmail.com
25437 Rocky Point Road
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

I'm Julie Black, **Ed Athey's** daughter. I heard from a French WWII writer that he'd seen news of Dad's passing, so I'm guessing you already have the information. I just found a 2011 Thunderbolt with the MailCall address and thought I'd send his obituary.

My husband and I had planned a trip to Europe on August 26, with a few days in Southern France in and around the Operation Dragoon sites, but it will be bitter sweet, as we won't be able to share experiences and memories with Dad when we return. If anyone can share tips on places we should visit, it would be appreciated. We're excited to stay with **Roland and Patou Orenge** in Sospel for a couple of days, and they plan to load us into a 517th jeep and show us around.

Thank you.

Bob Barrett

Hi Julie,

Yes, we did hear about **Ed Athey's** passing from a couple of friends. Word spreads quickly through this close-knit group. The info was posted in our MailCall a few weeks back at: <http://517prct.org/mailcall/2170.pdf>

I am sorry to hear of your loss. My Dad, **Ben Barrett**, was also with H Company served under Ed during the war, and knew him from past reunions and correspondence. Ben always spoke highly of him.

Julie Black

Thanks for the quick reply and the lovely coverage of his passing and old memories in the MailCall. Dad loved his men and spoke of them often during the years, including your dad "Barrett".

Bonnie Gross

My dad received the Thunderbolt newsletter, and loved it. I am sorry to say that my father, **Leonard Gardner** passed away June 7, 2013. He served in World War II as a paratrooper. He was very proud of that fact until the day he died. May he rest in peace. Could you please remove him from the mailing list?

Thank you very much.

Claire Giblin

Lee Johnson, aka Leroy Johnson, aka The Bad Johnson, is again in rehab and will be there for another 8 days or so. He is sounding good and the procedure to help his lungs and heart seems to have helped -he just needs to get his strength up. We hope he can go home soon!

Darrell Egner continues to improve and I have to call him back because he was on his way out the door when I called. Glad he was feeling up to it!

Leo Dean had a car accident this past week and broke his sternum. He is staying with his good friend Renee and we should know more next week. I hope he heals quickly because he is scheduled to come with us to France on 9 August!

Merle and Mardy McMorrow moved again in the last couple of months or so. They are much happier in their new place, I am happy to report. Mardy has broken out the wine glasses and I am sure neighbors will beat a path to their door.

My dad, **Allan Johnson**, is en route to Kansas as I type for General Seitz's funeral.

Nancy Fraser Armand will be meeting him and ferrying him around -thank you, Nancy!

All the best to my favorite vets and their families. Our hearts are with the Seitz clan this weekend as they gather to pay homage to our own **Lt. General Richard Seitz**. So many of us must settle for being there in spirit and in prayer from afar.

Lory Curtis

I received a letter from the daughter of **Norman "Rawhide" Allen**, Tammie Allen. She wrote this note and sent the obituary of her father who passed away on May 18, 2013.

Dearest Thunderbolt and Patriots,

I'm sending this information along to you, with deepest regrets as to our father's passing. Please use what you will to be published in your next Thunderbolt. If there ever was a great man, loved and respected by 1,000's of people of all ages, it would have been, and is our father, **Norm Allen "Rawhide."**

Personally, I've been having a real struggle with grieving my loss of my Dad. Being the only daughter I looked out for my Dad and he looked out for his daughter. My brothers and I will maintain our father's dream of owning his own ranch, the N Bar A, Allen Ranch on the Blue Slide, cows, tree farm and hay.

If you could get your hands on any war duty information, my brothers and I would truly appreciate it as our Dad did not discuss that much of this part of his life experiences with us. Send any correspondence to:

Tammie Allen

1325 Blue Slide

Thompson Falls, MT 59873

We would like to continue to receive the Thunderbolt if possible to the address you have for Norman Allen.

Thank you for all you do for these heroes.

Tammie Allen, Shawn Allen, Mike Allen

[PFC Norman Allen was with Regimental HQ Co, 517th.]

Robert Masters

Please have someone from the Tampa, Bradenton Florida area contact **Mildred**

Christie at 941-749-0870 concerning Thunderbolt memorabilia, certificates, etc. from France as soon as possible. Husband **Bob Christie** is at Emeritus Nursing Home in Bradenton in Memory Care.

Mildred is closing their house and is moving to Assisted Living. Thank you.

Jenny Eberle Mourning

I would like to be added to the email based mailing list. I am the daughter of **Cpl. James "Red" Eberle** who recently passed. My email is billjeni@tampabay.rr.com. Thank you,

Darrell Egner

Re: Peter Jansson Question

Pete expressed an desire to attend a 517 Reunion. We have 2 Mini Reunions each year that are well attended. See below:

East coast Reunion is held in Orlando, Florida in January

West coast Reunion is held in Palm Springs, CA in March

Both of these reunions are published in Mail Call and in the Thunderbolt with details prior to them taking place.

There is some talk about having a National Reunion in New Orleans in June of 2014 but nothing is set in stone at the present time.

Hope to see you at one of the Minis.

Jenny Eberle Mourning

@ 727-744-6606

It is with much regret that myself and my brothers Jim and Steve bring you news of our Father's passing.

James "Red" Eberle passed February 22, 2013 barely five months after losing his soul mate and wife of 69 years. He had been in poor health for the past several years but with strong will he held on to care for our Mother. In 1942, Jim joined the United States Army, entering the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. He began his initial training at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and then advanced parachute training at Camp Toccoa, Georgia. He served in the European Theatre in World War II and made his first jump behind enemy

lines at Normandy Beach, then on through France, Belgium, Germany, Holland and Italy; where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He was wounded in battle in the French Maritime Alps. During the last three months of his service, he was assigned as one of General Eisenhower's personal guards travelling with him on his personal train. Jim was awarded a Purple Heart, five Bronze Stars, two Silver Stars and the French & Belgian Croix de Guerre. If there are any soldiers out there who served with Red, his family would love to hear from them.

We can be reached via email: billjeni@tampabay.rr.com or phone

THOMPSON FALLS –**Norman Edgar Allen**, of Thompson Falls, went to the great rendezvous in the sky Saturday, May 18, 2013. He was 88. Mr. Allen was born Dec. 7, 1924, in Pine Ridge, S.D., the eldest of three sons. He attended Pine Ridge schools before spending his final two high school years in Chadron, Neb. As a teen he was active in football, boxing, basketball, track and rodeo.

Upon graduation in 1943, Norm enlisted in the U.S. Army and volunteered for the new parachute infantry. He made the elite 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which operated independently, with the 82nd Airborne Division and later, as part of the 13th Airborne.

Allen specialized in reconnaissance and demolitions. As a pathfinder and scout, he was among the first to be dropped, and spent a lot of time up front. "I think I crawled halfway through Italy and halfway to Berlin." The only time he rode a tank was during the attack that recaptured the Belgian crossroads town of St. Vith in January 1945, Battle of the Bulge.

Records indicate that during 15 months of overseas service, Cpl. Allen participated in a beach landing and three airborne assaults. He was attached to an intelligence unit where he performed reconnaissance patrols, collected enemy information and road maps, made sketches, routed out patrols and assisted in questioning enemy prisoners. Allen returned home in late 1945 after action in five major campaigns with the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

Fresh out of the service, Norm's application to the U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers in Missoula was accepted. His first jump was in 1946 near the Nine Mile Ranger Station. In 1954, he broke his back after landing in a 100-foot tree; recovery took two years. With the Army plus 10 smokejumper years, he made 76 jumps. "I enjoyed doing it." However, "I was sick anytime I got in an airplane."

Mixing college with smokejumping, gold mining and rodeo bronc riding, in 1951 he graduated from Black Hills Teachers College in Spearfish, S.D. He married Fay Bentz on Aug. 15, 1954. They were teachers in Rapeljae and Arlee before moving in 1957 to a ranch he named the N Bar A on the Blue Slide overlooking the Clark Fork River, 12 miles west of Thompson Falls. Norm later discovered the Koo Koo Sint Trail, used by tribes and explorers, crossed the property.

He and Fay raised a family, Michael, Tammie, Shawn and Patrick, and were supportive of their children's school and athletic activities. Norm taught junior high social studies, where he was praised as a teacher and disciplinarian. In 1961, he took a fire control job with the U.S. Forest Service. For a generation of students, Norm was the local Smokey Bear expert. He retired in 1980.

Norm was an all-around outdoorsman and land conservationist. Guiding hunters, he led strings of 25 packhorses into the Bob Marshall Wilderness. On his ranch, Norm raised a mountain-friendly appaloosa quarterhorse cross, along with trees and hay. In 1976, he went to Missoula on a mission to buy a suit, and came home with a muzzleloader rifle instead. He began hunting only with black powder and still bagged big game.

During the mid-1970s, Norm focused on his memory of doing rawhide braidwork with his Oglala Lakota grandmother. He began duplicating Plains Indian artifacts, and developed a rawhide tanning method. One thing led to another, and Norm became a Mountain Man with the rendezvous handle of "Rawhide." The items he produced are highly

prized. Rawhide participated in school and special events throughout the U.S.

For the Blue Slide, Norm was an honest, dependable neighbor. For his town, he was school board chairman who helped ramrod construction of the campus opened in 1973. For friends and random visitors, he was a source of black coffee, conversation –“come on in for a cup and we’ll swap some lies” –and a good game of cribbage.

Kathy McIntosh

Just to let you all know that my Dad, **Jesse K. Davis**, is still going strong and enjoying his twilight years in Sevier, Utah. He was a member of B Company. We are unable to get MailCall on our computer in Utah, so I print it all out for him in Nevada and take it home. At 96, it is hard for him to remember people and places, but he can tell you everything he did in the war. He would love to hear from anyone. He feels he has been forgotten.

And the prompt response:

This message is for **Kathy McIntosh**.

Kathy, this is Lory Curtis, we didn't know your father, **Jesse K. Davis** resided in Sevier County, Utah. I get down to Ephraim Spring City, and the Manti area occasionally and would love to stop in and talk with your Dad. I could take him copies of Mail call. Also does he get the Thunderbolt in the mail if not please let me know and I will send him the quarterly issue. To keep his demographic information off of the web please call me at 801-576-8248 or email me at lcurtis@utah.gov, and we can talk. There are other 517th troopers living in Utah and perhaps others can go and meet with him. Let me know

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

Gerry Hayes

Longhome, PA

Please put me on the mail list. I was in the 1st Battalion Headquarters Company and A Company from Toccoa to Germany. I just spoke to my buddy, **John Marsinko** who informed me that there may be a “final”

reunion. John is now 89 years going on 90 and I am 88 and we are both pretty active.

I received a call from a sister of **Gordon J. Lippman** who was in the machine gun platoon of the first battalion and who served in World War II, Korea and Viet Nam and was killed in Viet Nam in 1965. If any living member of the 517 has information regarding Gordon, they should communicate with his sister, Marlys Buchenau at martyh@aol.com. Thanks!

Dear 517th Newsletter Editor, September 17, 2013

I am the widow of Rossa Smith, Jr. of Company B, 1st Battalion. His papers state that he was an Ammo Sergeant. The Thunderbolt is such a pleasure for me to receive - so many nice letters and history to read. I note that your reunions are held in Florida and other cities the exception being the recent "Sentimental Journey" to Camp Toccoa in Georgia.

My intent herein is to ask your trip planners to come here to New Orleans to visit your museum - built and dedicated to honor World War II veterans.

We have it all - hotels, renowned food, and this WWII exceptional campus. Our buildings encompass two sides of Andrew Higgins Drive.

I have given our address to our Group Sales Manager to send information to you. We opened on June 6, 2000 and I've been a Volunteer there ever since.

You will have an unforgettable experience so please come.

My husband was enormously proud of his service in the 517th.

Elizabeth (Libby) Smith
90 years young

TAPS

Norman “Rawhide” Allen

Edward Athey

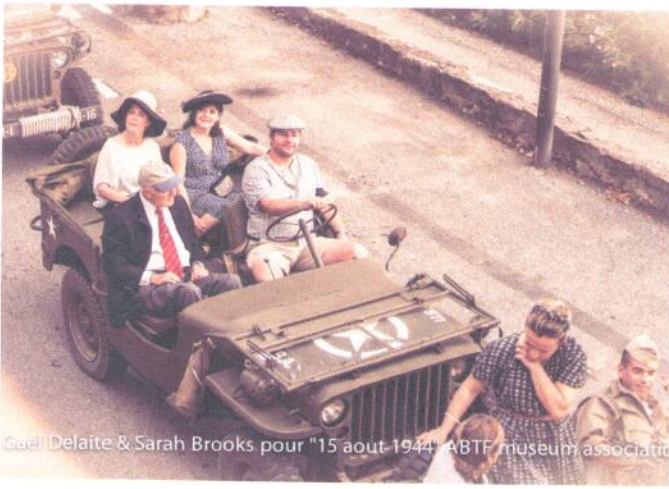
Martin Bockis

James “Red” Eberle

Leonard Gardner

Alfred Kunzer

Paul Skovera



Gaël Delaite & Sarah Brooks pour "15 août 1944" ABTF museum associatio

Allan Johnson, President 517th PRCT Association being chauffeur during parade



Ceremony Honoring the war dead and returning veterans



Allan Johnson, Leo Dean, and Hoyt Kelley at Ceremony honoring the war dead



The American Flag flies in the Veteran's Cemetery



Gaël Delaite & Sarah Brooks pour "15 août 1944" ABTF museum associatio

Leo Dean and Allan Johnson with other being honored



Hoyt Kelley with reinactor holding 517th Regimental flag



Allan Johnson identifies soldiers from the 596th Cbt Eng Co.



Allan Johnson and Leo Dean with reinactors



Hoyt Kelley discusses Operation Dragoon viewing map



Eileen Broudy Shaw discussing invasion with Hoyt Kelley while Leo Dean points out an important paper



Leo Dean explains the finer points of the M-1A1 rifle to a reinactor



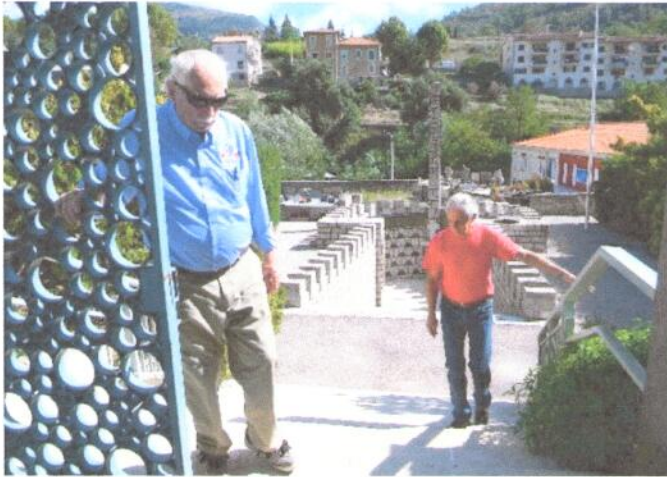
Eileen Broudy Shaw, Liz & Bruce Broudy, Leo, Allan, Claire and Jim



Hoyt Kelley with son Brian review the area where Hoyt fought 69 years ago



Hoyt Kelley in area where he parachuted in on August 15, 1944



Hoyt Kelley in Sospel France, 69 years later on August 15, 2013



Hoyt and son Brian Kelley leave Church where Hoyt was held up during fighting in Southern France



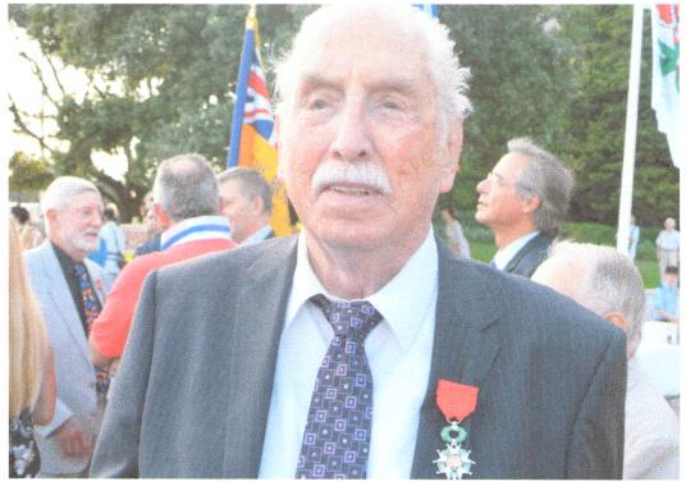
Hoyt Kelley revisits combat areas in Southern France



Volunteer places American and French flags on graves of fallen soldiers in Southern France



Mayor of Les Arcs France with Hoyt Kelley and J. Mickael Soldi



Hoyt Kelley receives his Legion of Honor Medal in France August 2013



Hoyt Kelley with French Military Officers as he prepares to receive the Legion of Honor Medal



Hoyt Kelley at Col De Braus with French host Alain Fine and Friend



Parade in Cannes France celebrating and remembering the American Liberation August 15, 1944



Hoyt Kelley with Alain Fine and friends having a traditional French lunch





Parachutes fill the sky as reinactors jump on August 15 2013 to commemorate 517th PRCT
Combat Jump

The Thunderbolt Newsletter

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Editor Claire Giblin

517th PIR, First Jump, Fort Benning, GA. 1943



I SHOULD HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED