

517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT)

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

Thunderbolt

Newsletter Date: Spring, May 2014



Serving the Men of the 517th PRCT since March 1943

Merger of the 517th PRCT Association and the Auxiliary is final. Members of the Association voted 89% to merge. We are now one Big Family! Congratulations to Miriam (Mimsey) Boyle Kelly who was approved by our Board as the new 517th Treasurer. Many, many thanks go out to Joanne Barrett who has served in that position for over 4 years.

517th troopers gathered in Palm Springs, California, March 10-14, 2014 to renew old friendships and discuss the important issues, and to remember their 517th soldiers and friends.

Now is the time to start making your reservations to attend the 70th anniversary of the 517th combat jump into southern France, August 15, 1944. A special ceremony will be held in Draguignan, France National American War Memorial Cemetery on or about August 15, 2014.

Packed in this Chute

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Greetings from the President

As I write, we are finally having spring in New Jersey. I am back at mowing the lawn and feeling guilty for not putting the lime down.

My usual process is to catch you up on what the Association has been up to since our last Thunderbolt. In this case, that is the Palm Springs reunion we just enjoyed, and looking forward to plans for Toccoa in June, France in August, and Kissimmee in January 2015.

However, just this morning I hear from Gene Frice that Karen Frice Wallace, one of the Palm Springs driving forces, is recovering from being thrown from one of her horses. With multiple injuries, Gene tells us that she will have a long recovery but is still looking forward to going to France in August. Send her a note at 66295 Highway 20, Bend, OR 97701.

The Palm Springs reunion at its new location was a fantastic time. Karen and Wayne were incredible hosts, and every meal was better than any restaurant I've ever been to.

We are also looking ahead to France for this summer. There are lots of ceremonies planned for the 70th anniversary of 15 August. We are re-running a planning piece if you're thinking of joining us.

We have already booked our return to Kissimmee for January, 2015. Plan on coming and enjoying Sunny Florida with us.

Finally, I see that men of the 517 continue to be awarded the Legion of Honor; congratulations to **Dick Hammel** on his recent recognition!

Update on the vote to merge

Thank you for sending in your ballots. The vote was clear to merge the Association and the Auxiliary, again, and to dismantle the provision that donations are tax-deductible. Thanks to all for securing the future of the 517 Association and its legacy. Here is the original Mail Call announcement:

It is with great relief that I receive the final results on the vote for the merger of the 517 and its Auxiliary. As everyone knows, we had already approved this concept but had inadvertently put a limiting qualification on it: that contributions would continue to be tax-deductible. That provision proved all but impossible, and thanks to the team of **Howard**

Hensleigh and **Joanne Barrett**, and their continuing hard work, we have held the necessary vote and can move forward. Thank you also to Bob Barrett for hosting our first mail/internet election!

Just as many if not most of our fellow WWII organizations have closed their doors, the 517 remains viable and active and will be moving forward.

K. Allan Johnson

As many already know, the membership voted to merge the memberships of the Association and the Auxiliary, effective May 30, 2014. Over eighty-eight percent of the Association members who voted voted in favor of the merger. On that date, Auxiliary members will become full-fledged members of the Association along with the troopers who served with the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team during World War II. We old timers welcome all those new members who have already proved themselves worthy by providing the invaluable assistance which has kept the Association alive and thriving while our 1943-1946 membership has thinned out.

The merger will allow the Association to continue its activities in the USA, Southern France and Belgium as long as there continues to be an interest in preserving the memory of the 517th men who fought valiantly through five major battles to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation.

The merger is timed for May 30 so that anyone desiring to make a donation to the Association before that date could deduct the donation as a charitable contribution on their 2014 individual tax returns. Donations after that date may not be deducted.

Joanne Barrett and **Howard Hensleigh** have informed the Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (where we are incorporated) of the merger and report that there should be a continuation of the Association's nonprofit status.

Airborne all the way,

Kaare Allan Johnson

President, 517th PRCT Association

Election Notice!!

With the merger vote behind us, elections of officers and Board members 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!

A note about our publishing schedule: you'll note that this issue is labeled Spring/Summer instead of simply Spring. Our publishing schedule isn't changing – we are still shooting for roughly every three months. We simply renamed it to be a bit more accurate in terms of the seasons. Enjoy!

From the webmaster

Bob Barrett

I know there is talk about getting to southern France next August for the 70th annual ceremonies for Operation Dragoon. The Le Muy and Nice events generally start just before August 14th and continue for several days.

Allan Johnson, with Claire, and Leo Dean make that trip every year, and I expect that there will be many other people in 2014. Although most of the troopers are now finding it hard to travel and cannot plan too far in advance, I expect that a number of the 517th families and friends will also go. I will be trying to go myself, since this just could be the last big trip for these troopers, and the 70th anniversary is bound to be a big one for that reason. There will be plenty of celebrations, US and British and French troopers, and plenty of friends including **J.**

Michael and Eric and Adrien of the museum, **Ronald and Patricia, Frederick Brega, Nicholas Arnulf, Gilles G.**, and many more.

I don't have a schedule yet, but I know there will be a big push starting in the spring to get us all there.

I'm sure there will also be events in Belgium in 2014 for the Battle of the Bulge anniversary.

Bob has been getting lots of kudos in Mail Call, justifiably. He has wrestled our email problems into submission, signed us up for a new mail delivery system, keeps us all in touch with each other and keeps the news coming. But even more than all that, he has become a relentless researcher, putting all the pieces of the puzzle together. He will get family members going on their searches, responding quickly with lots of great starter information they don't yet have. He maintains the Wikipedia entry and synthesizes a weekly mountain of information.

Thank you to Bob Barrett for your ongoing service to the 517!

You want to help? We need you!

Mike Wells

Just finished reading the last Mail Call that had info on Leo's most "recent" jump. I put "recent" in parenthesis since you never know when he's going to do another one! Anyway, attached find the Morning Reports for HQ AND HQ CO. (I will send the scanned documents later) In the Alphabetical listing you will find the name of that great sage, **Leo Dean**; I'd say he had a good day on March 1, 1945 while lounging around Joigny, France! (See the MR entry for 23 Mar 1945)

I am currently scanning B and D Companies, Service Co and the Medical Detachment. LOTS of entries for these four companies. Once scanned, I will be asking on MailCall for assistance in transcribing the MR's to the Excel format. There have been many people who have wanted to assist in this, but I have not wanted to part with the "original" copies; I wanted to get them scanned in first and then the information could be sent to anybody who wants to help. I have to say that the scanning process is very time consuming and that is one of the reasons it has not been completed yet; other "daily living" things have

gotten in the way. If anybody knows of a fast scanner, I'm all ears.

We, my lovely bride Rhonda and me, keep reading about all the folks heading for France in August this year and we get anxious to return ourselves! Oh, what a wonderful time we had with Frederick, Anna Sophie! However, due to business activities, we cannot commit at this time. Maybe October is better for us.

The morning reports are an important but time-consuming job. Thank you, Mike, for undertaking this as a personal crusade, and for getting it to the point where others can help.

If you can help, please contact Mike. Your association thanks you!

Palm Springs Reunion

Allan Johnson

Palm Springs was different, and I loved it! We had an establishment all to ourselves, and had the run of the entire place. It was a former nudist colony, and it might even be one right now. But it wasn't the week we were there, and most of us kept our clothes on.

All of our meals were eaten right there; we did have one dinner at the local Elks Club, as is tradition. All of the meals, unbelievably, were prepared by Master Chefs **Wayne and Karen (Frice Wallace)** and **Robin (Frice Homedew)**, assisted by **Barbara Nance, Nancy Boian, Brad and Connie Lecklider, Barb Leckliker, Scott and Deana Rossi and Diane Speelman**. The energy in the kitchen was infectious and it seemed like everyone was helping.

The first morning's breakfast was the best omelet of my life, and the great meals continued until we wrapped it up on Thursday night with our banquet -best food ever at a banquet! Both the steak and the salmon were absolutely delicious. **Wayne Wallace** is a master of the grill!

As always, it was wonderful to see everyone. We had nine veterans in total, and I'll have to count on Karen to provide the list because I know I will leave out someone.

Ever-crazy **Leo Dean** did a skydive while we were there -#161. Wayne drove him out there (during his short break from kitchen detail), and there were other fans with us as

well. We enjoyed our usual Palm Springs tradition of facials one day.

Because we weren't at a hotel, our expenses were far more reasonable and our food better and cheaper than in years past. Special thanks go to Wayne, Karen and Robin, who went to bed far later than I did every night, as they prepped the next day's meals. They were incredible!

The entertainment at the banquet was Irish-themed (the weekend before St. Patrick's) and brought our gathering to a close in excellent fashion. The sun had finally come out in every way!

Reunions are so enjoyable, and I was happy to see old friends and meet new ones as well. Please plan to join us in France this August (an informal and loosely-knit gathering where we coordinate but don't necessarily travel together), January 2015 in Kissimmee and probably March 2015 in Palm Springs!

Public Service Announcement

Honor Flight Network recognizes American veterans for your sacrifices and achievements by flying you to Washington, D.C. to see YOUR memorial at no cost. Top priority is given to World War II and terminally ill veterans from all wars. Honor Flight Network has expanded to include Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. In order for Honor Flight Network to achieve this goal, guardians fly with the veterans on every flight providing assistance and helping veterans have a safe, memorable and rewarding experience.

For what you and your comrades have given to us, please consider this a small token of appreciation from all of us at Honor Flight Network.

It is truly Honor Flight Network's privilege to fly our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at the memorials built in their honor. Our highest priority is to the aging World War II veterans along with any veteran facing terminal illness. Other veterans such as the Korean War and Vietnam War Veterans are included in our program and will be addressed in the near future. (Some hubs are already accepting applications for Korean and Vietnam War Veterans.)

If you know of someone who is a World War II veteran or a veteran with a terminal

illness, please fill out an application and send it in. Our goal for 2013 is to fly at least 20,000 veterans. And remember, every veteran flies free.

For further information, please contact us at 937-521-2400 or via email at

veteran-application@honorflight.org

Editor's note: Have you visited the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC yet? I know it is a long, long day from most parts of the country, but please, make it a point to get there if you are at all able to travel.

Public Service Announcement

Doug Dillard

The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association's membership represent all of these units. Many of the Division Associations are not active and the former members or those who would like to be associated with a unit that fought in the Bulge now have an active Association that honors and commemorates the Battle of the Bulge with an annual reunion, usually in September as well as the December commemoration held in the Washington DC area for three days where the memorials in Arlington National Cemetery and the WWII Memorial are conducted with wreath laying ceremonies. The Association publishes a quarterly publication the Bulge Bugle that contains soldiers' stories of their combat activities during the Bulge. During the December Commemoration we visit the Belgian and/or Luxembourg Embassies where we are welcome every year with a lavish dinner, wine, beer and good cheer.

As mentioned in an earlier message we plan a visit to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge the week of Dec.16, 2014. We anticipate meetings with the Royal families of both countries as was done in 2004.

We would welcome anyone who reads this message to join the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association as an Associate Member for a fee of \$15.00 and you will receive the quarterly Bulge Bugle, as well as, should you have interest perhaps joining our group to visit Europe in December 2014. I do not know if the veterans of the 82d have a planned trip, I am sure the 101 Abn Div Association will have one planned, but we welcome anyone would like to join our group.

Contact me via e mail or phone (301)262-2439 for additional information.

Airborne All the way.

Hal Beddow

Claire Giblin

It is with great sadness that I report that **Hal Beddow**, 1st Airborne Task Force, died this morning. [May 9]

I was fortunate to have traveled with Hal to the south of France for his return trip in 2009, when he received the Legion of Honor. He so enjoyed that trip, and was thrilled to find Le Mitan, where he'd landed and which was the first field hospital in the hours after the jump.

Hal and Helen hosted the legendary Savannah reunion in 2005. They are also regulars at the Kissimmee reunions in January and greatly enjoyed the times they made it to the Palm Springs reunions. Hal as a vocal spokesperson for airborne WWII history, Dragoon especially, and fierce supporter of his fellow Vietnam veterans.

In later years, he often helped welcome the troops back from Iraq and Afghanistan, going out to the airport to shake hands as they headed into the terminal. He insisted on shaking each soldier's hand, saying -and I'm paraphrasing -that it was important because he'd returned from Vietnam to a far different "welcome."

Hal would march in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Savannah every year, wearing his WWII-style uniform. He was a favorite on the local news circuit, and we're fortunate that those interviews exist both in print and on video.

Hal was a gentleman who fiercely loved his dear wife Helen, and a good friend to his fellow troopers. He is already missed.

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!

Gilles Guinard

I hope you are doing fine. I read the Mailcall every Monday morning with my coffee at work, what a great read especially on a Monday morning when everything is dull!

Just to let you know that I will be in Southern France this summer, I have a room reserved at Hotel L'Oree du Bois in Les Arcs. arriving on the 11th and departing on the 23rd. Bob Jackson (45th Division) and his family will also be there and we decided to stick together during the two weeks.

It would be great if you could make it to France, Bob!

Since I wasn't able to make it last year due to conflicts with my professional schedules, I am taking 2 weeks off this summer to be there for the whole period of ceremonies.

Looking forward to seeing you all this summer.

Loic "Jack" Jankowiak

Dear friends, last week, I was with my friend Rémi in the "Dead Man's Ridge Walk" a march honoring the paratroopers & gliders of the 17th Airborne Division. Every year since 5 years, the association "101st Airborne Belgium Friendly" organize this march and invites a veteran of the division. This year's guest of honor was John Leather who was part of the Fox Company, 194th Glider Infantry Regiment. During our stay we took the opportunity to visit areas where the paratroopers of the 517th, 551st and 509th Parachute Infantry fought them.

Jean-Loup's book is finally published!

Many 517 vets had been interviewed for this project.

Operation Dragoon: Autopsy of a Battle: The Allied Liberation of the French Riviera August-September 1944

Hardcover by [Jean-Loup Gassend](#)

On the night of August 14-15, 1944, the First Airborne Task Force, which included the U.S. 509th, 517th and 551st Parachute Infantry Regiments, jumped into enemy held territory spearheading Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France. Based on interviews from all combatant units, battlefield archaeology, period photos, letters and reports, this book provides an outstandingly detailed hour-by-hour account of the advance through southern France, as seen through the eyes of

those who lived through it, bringing to light the tragic and gruesome realities of what was later to become known as the, Champagne Campaign.

This book recounts the Liberation of Côte d'Azur, from the landing in Provence on August 15 1944, until the arrival of Allied soldiers on the Italian border on September 7, 1944. This campaign is told primarily through the testimony of witnesses present at the time: American parachutists, Resistance, civilians, and also several German soldiers. All the facts told by these witnesses were meticulously cross-checked with records and documents of the time, autopsy reports from exhumed bodies, and excavations in the field. The result is a very detailed and lively history about three weeks of fighting, illustrated by many period pictures, with equipment found on site, and excavated objects directly related to the events recounted in the book.

Congratulations, Jean-Loup!

Jean-Loup

I am very happy to say, after all these years of work, that the English edition of my book about the Liberation of Southern France, 'Autopsy of a Battle, the Liberation of the French Riviera', is now finished, and available in English. It can be bought on amazon, and elsewhere on the internet.

The book has a chapter overviewing the airborne aspect of operation dragoon, then goes into great detail about the liberation of the French Riviera, between August 15th and September 7th 1944, when the Allied troops stopped advancing east, and started a sort of trench warfare at col de Braus and at the Italian border.

The book is for the most part based on first hand oral accounts by Allied soldiers, as well as German soldiers, and local French civilians and Resistance. The 517th is very well represented, firstly because they were heavily involved in the fighting, and secondly because the excellent website you and your father set up greatly assisted getting in touch with veterans of the 517th to interview.

Concerning the 517th PRCT, the book has detailed chapters about the fighting at Seillans, Fayence, Callian, Montauroux, St Cézaire, la Roquette sur Var, and at Col de Braus. Some of the veterans interviewed (or who left written accounts that were used) include **Lt Howard Hensleigh, Col Dalrymple,**

Gen Seitz, Capt Newberry, Louis Holzworth, Marvin Moles, Frank Dallas, Guy Carr, Eugene Brissey, Henry Filipczak, Richard Hammel, Ray Helms, Don Fraser, Federico Martinez, Walter Ammermon, William Webb, Lt Ed Athey, Melvin Biddle, Claude Rickards, Allan Johnson, Bob Cooper, Ralph Nelson, Walter Perkowski, Ignatius Bail, Mirle Traver, as well as numerous others.

Unfortunately, most of these witnesses have since passed on, but I hope the few survivors, as well as the family members of those who are no longer with us, will appreciate the book.

The book not only goes into detail about the Allied operations, but also presents the German point of view, with details and photos of German soldiers who were killed in the encounters, German witness accounts, etc.

I really put a huge effort into making this book, and I don't think many people who buy it will be disappointed.

I have set up a little internet site with information about the book for anybody who wants to know more:
<http://autopsyofabattle.blogspot.com/>

The book is about 550 pages, A4 format, with around 800 photos, including many photos and short biographies of 517th troopers who were killed during the studied timeframe.

I would be very happy to hear any feedback from any readers. **Howard Hensleigh** has already read some of the chapters, and wrote a foreword for the book, so may want to chime in with his thoughts.

Claire Giblin

Patou and Roland are busy working with the new mayor of Sospel to organize this summer's celebrations! Please see below - those of you who were in Sospel in 2009 will remember Isabelle, Patricia's best friend who did a guided tour of Sospel for us. The events in Sospel will be before 15 August in Draguinan/La Motte/Les Arcs/Le Muy, so please plan on coming for special time with special friends in Sospel. Please note that they are also planning October events, which we have never attended. This is from Patou:

Could you tell to everybody (by next mail call) that we have 11 beds close our home at 30 € / night /person. Bedrooms to share for 3 or 4,

and 2 bedrooms for two. There is one for 2 with private bathroom at 60 € for the room. So we can take the breakfast all together at our home. The mayor of Sospel is now a young woman and Isabelle works with her... so you will have a beautiful welcome ... and Roland is in charge of organizing the 70th anniversary in October.

Our neighbor has a structure and offer for our "summer visitors" bedrooms:

- 1 bedroom with bathroom for 2 persons (1 bed), plus:
 - 1 bedroom for 2 persons (1 bed)
 - 1 bedroom with 4 beds for 1 person
 - 1 bedroom with 3 beds for 1 person
- these 3 bedrooms has 3 showers to share. It's very clean and nice and close to us. You can pay what you want, but I can recommend you 30 Euros each person for 1 night.

It will be nice because we can have breakfast on our terrace all together...we would like welcome you in Sospel as we did in 2009 with a party, and the new mayor (a woman) can also welcome you.

Please, send this message by mail call. We can book the bedrooms for you.

Planning for France August 2014

Claire Giblin

Start planning now for the south of France in August. Figure on arriving say 9 or 10 August; it looks like things will start in Sospel and move over to Var/La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguinan/Le Muy for 15 and 16. We do not have any formal notices of events yet, but that is usually the last of the details to fall into place. For those that are thinking about joining us -start here:

1. Do you have a current, valid passport? Please check. Find it and look at the expiration date. Renew if necessary; sometimes you need to get a new one even if the old one is good for another 6 months.
2. Flights -Nice is the most convenient airport. Dates: arrive by about 9 August for Sospel events; about 13 August for La Motte/Les Arcs/Draguinan. Depart: not before 18 or 19 August. Adjust this as you wish for you and your family. You might want a side trip -it's a long trip not to!
3. Hotels -usually our friends in Sospel (**Patou and Roland Orenge**) and in the Var (**Jean**

Michel Soldi and Eric Renoux) make the hotel arrangements for us after we ask them; the websites often don't work internationally. But maybe you'd like to rent a home or stay elsewhere. Whatever -but make sure that someone is making the arrangements. Hotels are getting tight.

4. Rent a car -or make sure you've got a seat in someone else's car.

Please let's start compiling a Jump List in Mail Call. I know that the following are planning on going:

- **Leo Dean and Renee**
- **Team Frice**, including **Gene Frice and Karen** at a minimum
- **Bob Barrett** is a maybe
- **Allan Johnson** plus family
- **Phil McSpadden** and I think his daughter Maya
- **Hoyt Kelley** might return as well; I hope he does.
- **Gary Davis's** daughter **Melanie Hanson**, husband **Scott** and daughter **Megan**.
- **Helen Beddow**
- **Mimsey Boyle**
- **Nancy Fraser Armand**

Who else?

Planning for October in Sospel

Dear **Patricia & Roland**,

It is my pleasure to make your acquaintance. My father was **George A. Sullivan, Co A**, 1st Bn of the 517th.

As I mentioned to Bob, there is a possibility that my wife Kathy and I will be in Europe in October. If the timing works out, we would like to attend the activities in Sospel.

While it may be too early to know the details of the ceremonies, if you just know the dates and could send that to me, it would be most helpful.

Merci Beaucoup!

Roger Sullivan

Dear Roger,

It will be a pleasure to welcome you in Sospel.

For the moment it's too early, as you write, to know the details but the ceremonies will be during 2 days **25 and 26th of October 2014**.

More a s a p.

Maybe you don't know but ashes of **Major Fraser** are on our property, dispersed by his daughter in 2009.

Patricia and Roland

517 in the News!

Arkport soldier: War and remembrance

By Al Bruce

The Evening Tribune

Posted May. 10, 2014 @ 9:09 pm

*Pictured is **John Pastalenic** of Arkport in the jump jacket he wore 70 years ago during World War II. The jacket displays his Combat Infantryman's Badge, Purple Heart, parachute wings with stars for a combat jump and decorations for his battles in France and Italy.*

SEAN CURRAN/THE EVENING TRIBUNE

ARKPORT, NY — John M. Pastalenic of Arkport was a combat veteran before he parachuted into southern France and Nazi gunfire at 4 a.m. on a foggy Aug. 15, 1944.

Pastalenic, with about 90 pounds of combat gear, landed on a stone, turned his ankle and hit the ground on his back, "knocking the wind out of me," while German troopers fired at the American GIs from all directions, he told the Tribune last weekend.

Enemy soldiers were desperate after being pushed back hundreds of miles through French hedgerows from Normandy and Brittany after D-Day, June 5, almost 70 years ago.

Pastalenic said regrouping with other members of Company H of the legendary 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team "took us about two days."

On the second day, Pastalenic "began to work my way into a vineyard when a German dashed across the road between the rows. I jumped the opposite way, not having time to fire. I waited a few minutes and began to creep out on my elbows and belly. Before I got to the end of the row a burst from a (Nazi) burp gun turned me over on my back. I knew I was hit hard."

“Hit hard” was an understatement. The veteran of fighting in Italy described the wound: “The burst (of 9mm bullets) went through my stomach wall, through the right groin and out the right thigh without touching a bone. I crawled back as far as I could, then rolled over on my back and made my peace with the Lord” in a bullet-punctuated French vineyard.

Pastalenic said “In what seemed a short while, I heard (his close friend) Wally Vincent asking about me. All I could do was whistle. He shouted and asked if it was me and I whistled again. The next thing I remember was two medics applying sulfa powder to the wounds and giving me a shot of morphine.”

He blacked out again and “came to on the operating table with one leg over the top of a doctor’s shoulder. He was finishing stitching my stomach wounds. He mentioned to a person standing by his side that I was shot with a burst of about seven” bullets.

Pastalenic’s odyssey of recovery included makeshift Army hospitals in Italy, Morocco, the Azores, Miami, near Pittsburgh and, finally, a real medical facility.

A surgical team at New England General Hospital in Atlantic City repaired Pastalenic’s “messed up femoral nerve. I came out of the operating room with a cast around my waist and down my right leg to the top of the knee. So I was hobbling around on crutches for some time. When the cast was removed I was sent to Ft. Monmouth, N.J., for reconditioning my right foot, which swung abnormally to the right. With therapy, it ultimately returned to normal.”

While he went through physical therapy in New Jersey, “the war ended in Europe and I was eventually sent back to New England General for a medical discharge.”

Before France, Pastalenic trained in Colorado with what became the 10th Mountain Division; graduated from jump school in Ft. Benning, Ga., and took a Liberty Ship across the Atlantic through two storms and nighttime bombardment from what he calls “visitors from the German air force (who made) the night skies look like a Fourth of July” fireworks display.

Combat in Italy included “a plateau where the Germans surprised us, opening up with small arms and pinning us down. We were shelled with mortar rounds and got orders to move back down the hill. As I rounded some brush and

rocks, I saw my first casualty. Our machine gunner” suffered a grisly fatal wound from German mortar fire.

Pastalenic is now 90 years old and has been married for 66 years to his wife, Dottie. They have lived for

27 years in Arkport.

He can still fit into his seven-decades-old jump jacket and proudly displays the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, his paratrooper wings with a star for the combat jump, the Purple Heart and medals for World War II campaigns in France and Italy.

Infrequent incidents bring memories of 70 years ago rushing back. A Belgian wrote that his grandmother found Pastalenic’s Army identification tags — the metal rectangles that GIs fondly call “Dog tags” — and after correspondence, sent one to Arkport about two years ago. Pastalenic imagines the tags were lost on a French battleground as he fought for his country and then his life.

A Tribune article last week mentioned a fellow World War II paratrooper from the 517th, Leo Dean of Albany. The comrades in arms shared combat reminiscences via telephone.

Pastalenic closed his recollections about combat 70 years ago with these sentences: “I would like to tell everyone I was proud to serve my God and country and I would do it again with the 517th. In the book about the parachute regimental combat team, ‘Battling Buzzards,’ I am listed as the third man who went down but not out. The writer didn’t know how to spell my Polish name.”

To learn more, Google ‘517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team - Pastalenic’ for information about the paratrooper’s combat experience and his photo. Wally Vincent, the GI who saved his life in France, is standing next to Pastalenic in the top row.

Pause as you read his memoir to look at the photo of young men who were part of what some call “The Greatest Generation” for their sacrifices fighting tyranny.

Nobody who reads Pastalenic’s combat story will doubt his membership.

**Highlights from Mail Call
February 23, 2014-May 18, 2014
Mail Calls 2202-2214**

Dick Hammel

I was the 2 Bn clerk from just after the Bulge until we went to area for shipping back to the states. I typed and retyped paper work that was to go to the 13th because it could have no typing mistakes or corrections. Col (Dick) was very unhappy about the Division's treatment of his recommendations for awards.

Received the Legion of Honor award last Thursday at the state capital building in Raleigh. French Council General presented the award and our governor.

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.

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Lindner-Curtis-Hensleigh-Seitz

Chris Lindner

Hi Bob,

Several years ago I questioned your Dad about the 13th Airborne and it caused a commotion in Mail Call.

Here was the bottom line as I remember it (I do have it in my binders and I could look for it if needed). If this is correct the 13th Airborne never saw combat. Apparently many men in the 517th were up for silver stars, bronze stars and I think promotions. It is my understanding that these orders were thrown away by the 13th. I was told there was no love lost between the 517th and 13th Airborne.

I think I am giving you correct information; you may already know about it!

Lory Curtis

This is for **Chris Linder**,

Chris you are absolutely correct about the 13th Airborne Division and the 517th. There was no love lost between these two organizations. My Dad always said they were a NON combat division and the 517th was nothing but hardened combat veterans, and the 13th resented that fact. My Dad wrote letters to his Mom stating that he was being put in for the Bronze Star, but as you mentioned, it never got

approved through the 13th AB Division. Here is what **Howard Hensleigh** said on Feb 12, 2007 in MailCall #1265 about the 13th AB Division. Howard if you read this, please correct any mistakes.

Howard Hensleigh remarked on "MailCall" # 1265, February 12, 2007,

"The 517th started out as the parachute infantry regiment of the 17th Airborne Division under General Miley. We wore that patch. We were pulled out and made a Parachute Regimental Combat Team for Italy, Southern France and all of our fighting in the Bulge and Germany which ended at Bergstein. We never did have an official patch of our own although Dick Spencer's Battling Buzzard has followed us all these years. In Southern France we were the largest element in the First Airborne Task Force, but we did not wear its patch if it had one. When we reached Northern France we became 18th Airborne Corps troops under Mat Ridgeway and wore its patch. Before the war ended in Europe we were transferred to the 13th Division where we had several missions such as the Rhine crossing that were canceled because of rapid Allied advances. We wore the 13th Division patch, most of us reluctantly. The 13th Division that did not see combat resented us almost as much as we resented them. We went with the 13th to the States on our way to Japan. The trip to Japan was cut short while we were in the middle of the Atlantic by the Japanese surrender which ended the War. Before we left France, at Joigny (south of Paris), high point men were given the opportunity to leave the outfit and go to other units. Some went to the 82nd, and some I'm sure to the 101st."

Pat Seitz

Thank you for the history of the 517th in February '45. I had not focused on the fact that the dissolution was in February! So soon after all of the sacrifices of the Bulge. When I did focus, I felt a great sense of sadness and unfairness in the way that the 13th Airborne Division treated the battle weary veterans. Please tell **Chris Linder** thanks for sharing.

.....

John Mullen

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform the 517 PRCT Association, and Auxiliary of the passing of my Grandfather, **Dallas Lloyd Long Sr.** He was the first sergeant in G Co., 3 Bn. until he was transferred to HQ Co and promoted to a warrant officer immediately following the Belgium campaign. I have provided a link to his obituary below, but I would like to add that he always spoke very fondly of the men he served with and shared several stories from his experiences with the 517.

A (large) portion of the content in the obituary covers his time with the 517 -he was very proud of his service and the unit. This past Christmas I had some time to talk with him and he told me that "the army did right by him." He felt that the Army followed through on all their commitments to him and treated him fairly in his retirement. I was able to be with him on his final day and told him about my finding Mail Call and he again expressed how special the 517th was to him. If anyone has any stories or information from his service my family would love to hear them.

One of his wishes was to have a graveside military honor guard -fortunately we were able to find his discharge papers and the funeral director coordinated with the honor guard from Ft. Benning. I apologize for sending this so late after his passing.

(I am) a proud and grateful grandson of a great man in a great generation.

Hensleigh's response

Howard Hensleigh wrote, in December of 2013:

Special note to **John Mullen** regarding his grandparents. **Dallas Long** was first sergeant of G Co. when I signed into the 517th in November 1943. He was truly a top sergeant. He had what it took to keep our rambunctious eighteen year olds in line with strict military discipline and at the same time display a fatherly effect that gave them some peace of mind. He took the same approach to second lieutenants, of which I was one. At some point in Southern France he transferred to Hq. 3rd Bn. and became its first sergeant. The officers in the 3rd Bn. thought highly enough of him to urge him to

go for a combat commission. He turned this down.

After the War he was commissioned in the Georgia National Guard or the army reserves as a warrant officer. He completed more than thirty years of military service and held the highest rank of warrant officer, equivalent to a major at his retirement. He and your grandmother attended all of our 517th reunions for many years and I kept track of him with Christmas cards after that. Seeing him and your grandmother at a reunion was like old home week and we always had things to share. It was only through him that I learned about the post War doings of **Grant Hooper**, who commanded G Co. until sometime in Southern France when Grant traded jobs with **Pysieuski** and became 3rd Bn. S-3. Hooper left us at Bergstein and never kept in touch with anyone from the 517th thereafter, except your grandfather who told me Grant became a school teacher in Washington or Oregon, remained in the reserves and retired as a Col. I can only say in closing that with grandparents like that, you came from good stock.

Mel Trenary

My son & I went to San Jacinto battleground yesterday see the 100th anniversary of the battleship Texas. It was in WWI & WWII. It is impressive to see. We saw & talked with some who had served on that ship. I got a kick out of telling them I had been on that ship before they had. Our family went on the ship for a lecture when I was about 4 years old. That would make it around 1928 that I was on the ship. They were stationed near Long Beach, California or San Pedro. At the battleground it started raining it didn't let up so we finally had to leave sooner than expected. I also have an ancestor who fought with Sam Houston at San Jacinto, Texas. my son was a Vietnam veteran so we got in at a reduced price.

[editor's note: being a WWII veteran didn't get you in at a reduced price?]

Lory Curtis, son of **Bud Curtis**, HQ, 1st Bn

I reported a while back I received an email message from a man who told me he had watched Saints and Soldiers Airborne Creed, and then bought the book Letters Home a Paratrooper's Story. In the documentary at the

end of the movie and in the book I describe how my father was all set to try and get in the Navy. He told me all of the soldiers he ever saw were old and the Navy had young men and he had made up his mind to go into the Navy. Then one Sunday, he went to church and saw his old Sunday school teacher now a Second Lieutenant in the paratroopers, Willard Hill. My Dad would not let him go until he told him everything about the paratroopers. Well, that's all it took when my Dad reported for the Draft board, he volunteered for paratroop duty and within 10 days of reporting to Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, CA he was on a train bound for Camp Toccoa.

Anyway, Willard's son Chris Hill lives in southern Utah, near St George. Last week I had the opportunity to go to St George and I went to Chris's home where we had a wonderful visit talking about our fathers. His wife, Liz made the most wonderful chocolate cake, it was to die for. Chris and Liz then gave me some pictures of his father which I have enclosed here for mail call along with a picture of Chris and I. Willard served all of his time with the 82nd Airborne Division and made two combat jumps into Sicily Italy and Normandy France. He received a Bronze Star Medal for bravery and a purple heart. Sounds like most everyone in the 517th. This truly is a small small world.

The story of finding Bill Houston's writings, with input from his widow

Shirley Catterson

I just want to let you know how very much I enjoy Mail Call. You do a fantastic job! Thank you so much! I only wish my Dad was here to enjoy it with me. He's **Edward J. Smith** from D Company of the 517th, and he passed away April 13, 2001. Three years before his death, at the age of 75, he took classes at his local library offered to teach seniors how to use the computer. He became very proficient at it, and he would have loved exploring the 517th's website had we only discovered it in time. While exploring it myself a few years ago, I found a picture of my Dad posted there --a photo I'd never seen before. What a thrill to come upon him, up there on my monitor screen, smiling back at me! Thanks for that!

And I have a question: My son's father-in-law is a World War II buff who attends a lot of

medals shows. A few weeks back, he purchased an 84-page, typed journal. Its title page reads as follows:

ARMY LIFE

As Told By **P.F.C. William B. Houston**

A Member of the 460th Parachute Field
Artillery Battalion

In The 517th Parachute Combat Team

1943-1945

It's wonderful reading! As I'm going through its pages, I can hear my Dad's stories and experiences echoing off Bill Houston's pages. I was wondering if you, the 517th's website, ever received a copy of this journal from William Houston or from his family. It would be a great document for your records. Please let me know. I would be happy to make a copy of it and send it along to you if you like.

Bob's response:

Bob Barrett here. (Joanne is my sister and the current 517 Treasurer. I do the Mail Call. Lory Curtis and Claire Giblin do the Thunderbolt.)

You can read the recent Thunderbolt's online at: <http://517prct.org/mailcall/> To save on printing and delivery costs, we do not automatically send the paper version to most of the Mail Call readers, figuring that much of the news is the same, and it is available online. But no problem, if you also want a paper version, just let me know, and we can put you back on the mailing list.

Your story of your Dad starting to learn computers in 2001 reminds me of my Dad, Ben. We bought him his first computer around 1999, and the first thing he did was to start getting in touch with his friends from the 517th. He quickly started up MailCall. He also tried to find info about the 517th online, but being such a small, elite unit that was deactivated in 1945, there was not much on the web. So he and I together slowly built a website and started to collect anything we could find. As you know, that site has grown into thousands of pages from items that people have sent in.

And no, I have never seen the **William Houston** army journal. What a find! I would love to get a copy of that for the website. Can I get a scan of it? If you need help, I could do the scanning and send it back to you. Let me know.

(Note: Pat Houston, William's wife, is on the Mail Call list.)

Shirley Catterson (daughter of **Ed Smith**, D CO.)

Just wanted to give credit where credit is due: My son's father-in-law who recently purchased the **William Houston** journal (that's appearing now in Mail Call) is Paul Trencan. He has quite a bit of interesting World War II memorabilia that he's acquired over the years from the medal shows he frequently attends. Since hearing some of the stories I've shared about my Dad, Paul has especially been on the look-out for items related to the 517th, and that's how he came upon the journal.

Thanks so much!

Pat Houston (Bill's widow)

It is good to see Bill's letters in print again. He wrote this in the late 1990's and Merle McMorrow had these published in the Thunderbolt when he was president of the 517. Bill was a member of the 460-C.

~~~~~  
**Peter W. Jansson** and family

Please find check made payable to the 517th PRCT Association in memory of **Bertil G. Jansson**, member of Company B 1st Battalion. Dad was proud to serve in the 517th under **Col. Boyle** and others. I also want to thank again your dad, Ben, along with **Trooper Walsh**, for their timeless work in 007 to get Dad to his one and only Washington DC reunion under intense physical conditions and last minute timing.

I am thinking or trying to put together a small tribute for Dada in "Meet the Troopers", despite my limited talents in the computer and digital age.

Again, many thanks to all members of the 517th and the auxiliary members.

**[Editor's notes: Thank you for your contribution, and yes, please do get a Meet the Trooper piece, however small, done on your favorite wonderful trooper.]**

**Juliana Stonis**

My dad, **John Stonis**, just celebrated his 90th birthday. Here is a picture of him at his birthday party and then a picture (with a friend) while he was in Company A (or maybe H, he

was in both). He is still driving (yikes) and going strong!

**Merle McMorrow**

Just completed the winter issue of the Thunderbolt and each publication is better than the previous. Having done the Thunderbolt for 4 years I know how time consuming and demanding the job is. The present publication with pictures is much more interesting and appealing. Claire and her staff are to be commended.

One comment—the front cover doesn't mention the infantry. The 517th Parachute Regimental Combat

Team is made up of the following: (See Paratroopers' Odyssey)

517th Parachute Infantry Regiment

460th Parachute Artillery Battalion

596th Parachute Engineer Company

May everyone have a very Happy Easter.

**[Editor's note: why, thanks, Merle! But you made me laugh out loud with the phrase "Claire and her staff." There is no staff: I take care of the printed matter in each Thunderbolt, and Lory assembles the pictures. But I'm happy that it appears that we have a staff!]**

**Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

Bob: another stellar Mail Call. So enjoyed the Palm Springs reunion pictures (congrats to **Leo** as it looks like he did another jump); **Lory Curtis'** notes about his Arizona visits and pictures, and **Juliana Stonis'** pictures of her Dad -- a most handsome young man, then and now. How blessed she is to come from such gene pool!

Am glad the electronic vote has put President Johnson's mind at ease and thanks to **Howard** and **Joanne** for all they do (as well as you.) Having said that, re the comment about the "Void's" defects -- agree that the too clean tanks is right on the money, but take extreme exception to the "the actors are too handsome!" From my humble, unbiased but well informed perspective, nobody could be as handsome as the men of the 517th!

Thanks for the first 5 pages of **Bill Houston's** "Army Life." He writes rather well, or it may be that I'm just interested in what he is writing!

***[Bill Houston's self-published book should now be entirely scanned onto the website – thank you once again, Bob!]***

### **Brian Monamee**

When visiting your website during some research of mine I came across an inquiry from **Ron Hagen** of the Netherlands ([Mail Call #2192](#)). I do not know how old this inquiry was, but it was regarding **1st Lt. Charles D. Casey** from 100 Prospect St. Providence. I knew Charlie and have a lot of history on him and the 517th I would like to share with anyone that is interested in this American Hero. Small man - below average height and weight by any standard. Two things above average -his heart and a large set of things I cannot mention. Parachutes into France at age of 17 (I understand this was a permissible enlistment age if one went to a military academy). My recollection was he attended a military academy in New York State during his high school years and enlisted when he was 17.

He was a childhood chum (dear friend) and neighbor of my Dad's. I knew him since I was a child until his death in 1998 (my recollection of the date). There is an exhibit at the Fall River Maritime Museum with some of his artifacts from an American POW Camp for German's where he was the man in charge of recreational activities. That Museum has a full biography of Charlie. I have some of those artifacts made by German POW's that his sister gave me after his death. One is a haunting pencil drawing. This man's life is quite a story.

### **Bob Barrett**

That is wonderful news. I think I might still have Ron Hagen's email and will forward that to you with his email address. Ron Hagen was mostly looking for a photo of Charlie. Is there one available? Of course, we would also love to have any photos or info about Charlie for the website.

### **Brian McNamee**

This is wonderful news for me too!!! My family certainly has pictures of Charlie in his civilian life. There is certainly a picture of him (official military picture) at the Fall River, Massachusetts, Maritime Museum. Charlie was a real American Hero.

Why is he recognized at a Maritime Museum?? I am one of the last people to know.

He was significantly affected after one of his jumps. When recuperating he got assigned to an American Prisoner of War Camp for German's (I think it was in Belgium???). When he was there he oversaw recreational activities of the German POW's. He asked them about the German Battleship Tirpitz. Everyone knew about the Bismarck, but there was great fear about the Tirpitz. It was a sister ship of the Bismarck and after outfitting and with enhancements it was bigger - tonnage and firepower.

He commissioned (I should say assigned) some of the German's under his watch to build the Tirpitz. They asked for drafting paper and pencils and drafting tools. Charlie did the best he could. The German POW's vanished for two months once supplies were found. Upon emerging from their intense planning sessions they then asked to meet with Charlie. He granted them an audience. The POW's reported to him they had done much work with the blueprints but said they were at an impasse. Detail drawings would require further direction because they were at the point where they were working on plumbing details and if it was his desire to have American plumbing over German plumbing?

He was shocked. The POW's thought that they had been impressed to build the Tirpitz for their captors. I am not kidding you Bob. At this point Germany was a beaten nation. None of these POW's knew their fate.

After the meeting they asked for permission to find materials to build a model. He granted them permission to forage for any materials they could find outside the camp. They found a balsa wood glider wing (remember many troops came in via glider) and they used it for the hull. With sea ration cans and the eyes of their shoes (every eye from their shoes) they built a model of the Tirpitz. The deck planking is from glued wooden match sticks. Charlie tried to donate it to the US Navel (at any site the Navy might approve - the Naval Academy etc.) they were snobs. The model was not a scale model. The model today is in Fall River Mass. It is/was a real working model - it has electric motors. All the German POW's signed the interior of the hull before the bridge components and deck were

attached (prior to completion). I would love to know whether any of the POW's are still alive - I am sure a family member would love to see this model. This model ship and two others (one of the others is also at the Museum - Charlie's sister gave the other model built by the POW's to a family friend) were put in four coffins (Tirpitz required two - one for hull and one for the deck and bridges) and shipped to Providence, RI. So no one could know what then were he gave them names of Streets and neighborhoods he had grown up near in the City of Providence or areas of Providence. I remember one of the German ships was the Mount Pleasant - that was the neighborhood he and my father grew up in.

His sister left me some wooden bowls made by the German POW's - quite amazing. All have Airborne 517th patches and symbols on them. The most impressive item is a pencil sketch (Charlie had it framed when the other items came to Providence). The sketch was done with what Charlie said was a 3 inch pencil and razor blade on a paper bag. I have it. He said the POW did it by memory or from his state of his mind. It is a house tittering on a cliff. It is done in such detail you would think it were a B&W photo.

### **Chris Lindner**

I just got off the phone with Darrell and he wanted to let everyone know why he has not been active on Mail Call for a while. I had told everyone one several months ago Darrell was having terrible back issues and had to go to rehab for a while. They have done some shots in his back and it is a little better but not much.

Darrell is now going through an issue with cancer of the tongue. His daughter told me they did a biopsy and they found cancer similar to skin cancer. The area that they did the biopsy on has not healed and is causing terrible problems for Darrell to eat (he weighs 138 lbs now).

Two weeks ago they started to give Darrell chemo once a week. At this point they do not know if the chemo is working and I do not know how long it will take for them to determine that. He does not have cancer of the throat but talking for any length of time is painful to him.

Rick and I are going to Jacksonville to visit with him in the next 2 weeks.

I just wanted to make everyone was aware of what was going on.

***Chris, thank you so much. When I read this, I called Darrell. He is his ornery self and promised to be at the Kissimmee reunion when I reminded him that he was in charge of aggravating us! We wish him the very best in his latest battle. He told me that when he signed up for the paratroops, he didn't think he'd come home. Here he is 70 years later, still dodging bullets.***

### **Claire Giblin**

Breaking news:

I am happy to report that a fabulous birthday celebration took place today in upstate New York: **Leo Dean** did a tandem jump to celebrate his 90th birthday! To make it even more special, **Mimsey Boyle**, daughter of **Col. "Wild Bill" Boyle**, also did her very first jump.

Although I couldn't be there today, I did enjoy getting the bulletins from the staging area and the DZ. Mimsey jumped carrying a photo of her father and said that she was honored to be there. She jumped in honor of her father "and all the men of the 517th." What an incredible tribute!!

Albany news stations were there, including Fox News and either Channel 10 or 12 (can't remember), but I don't see the footage yet.

More news as I get it!

### **Saints and Soldiers – The Void Film Update**

April 1945. On a fateful mission through the Harz Mountains of Germany, a M18 Hellcat crew is ambushed by three German Panzers.

The international trailer for *Saints and Soldiers: The Void* is now on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LswXs56\\_5t4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LswXs56_5t4)

As you should all remember, this is from Go Films, the company that produced *Saints and Soldiers: Airborne Creed*, which is based on some events of the 517th in France, with **Harlan "Bud" Curtis'** character in a lead role.

My only concerns about the new trailer are that the actors are all too good-looking and the tanks are all spotless clean. Definitely not paratroopers. – BB

**Editor's note: Bob, I am with Pat Seitz on this one – I think all the men of the 517 were quite good-looking!**

### **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.*

### **Sam Pedicone**

Re: Info about **Harvey Howard Epley, 460th**

Does anyone have information about **Harvey Howard Epley, aka "Duke"** he was a member of the 517 paratroopers, saw combat in Italy, France, Battle of the Bulge, and Germany. His daughter is my wife.

### **Richard Smith**

[rsmith16265@comcast.net](mailto:rsmith16265@comcast.net)

I was at the cemetery today cleaning up a few grave sites and one was my Uncle **Robert Joseph Rock, 517 Parachute Inf. Reg., Co. C, Staff Sargent**, US army. I used this information to find this web site and found out a lot about Uncle including that he received a Purple Heart. He was from Toronto, Ohio and served during World War II. He played football in high school and also was on a team in Nice, France that won a championship game. I was real close with him and sat many evenings and also in the farm fields talking and learning from him. He did not share any combat information with me or any of his other cousins but we knew he was proud to be in the U.S. Army. He wore his uniform often and I have a picture of him with me and 5 of my cousins in his sump boots and pants.

He was a wonderful Uncle to us and we love and miss him and his strong character and leadership. God bless you Uncle and all of the great generation that fought for our freedom.

### **Thunderbolt Throwback – from 1943 MEN OF 517**

Success in the battle goes to the troops who can “take one more step and fire one more shot” than the enemy.

The physical proficiency tests just completed give us an insight on our chances. Each unit in the Army undergoes the same tests and a company per battalion is selected by the testing headquarters to represent that battalion, as well as a Hq. or Ser. Co. per regiment. Selection of Rgt. Hq. Co., Co. B, Co. C, and Hq. Co. Third Bn. Was made two days prior to the tests.

Three times in one day the U.S. Army Record was broken and we now hold not only the first place, but also second and third as well. “D” Co. leading with 97.65 per cent, “B” Co. a close second with 97.59 per cent and Hq. 3rd next with 96.53 per cent. Regt. Hq. Co. is close behind with 95.02 per cent. (The previous record 96.37 per cent was set just the day previous by our Parachute Engineer Co.)

Men, it took more than just physical strength to set those records –it took determination and the will to carry through –THAT wins battles –it took team work and that WINS battles –it took leadership –and that wins BATTLES.

I saw one man fall over near the end of the 300-yard run. He struggled up and fell again. He couldn't rise so he crawled across the line. That's determination.

I saw another man just back from furlough and too ill to go on –too exhausted –so his company carried him and his equipment the full four miles –That's teamwork!

I saw each company as I neared the finish line of the speed march –they looked better than when they started –they're a rugged bunch, even if they can't sing –which they tried. That's Airborne.

You stack up pretty well!

L. A. Walsh

Commanding Officer 517th

### **Updates**

#### **Merle McMorrow**

My Mardy died today [Tuesday, March 4] at 1:03 PM. As were her wishes, her body was shipped to the Medical Center at the University of North Dakota.

She wanted to go to Palm Springs and wanted to purchase tickets for France for August. I asked are you crazy; at our age we shouldn't plan on grocery shopping more than a day in advance.

Then two days later this unexpected event takes place.

Enjoy life Bob; there isn't enough of it.



### **Bob Barrett**

Those of you who have been to 517th PRCT reunions in the past 10 years will all know Mardy and Merle McMorrow. In fact, they were the hosts of the 2001 reunion in Bismarck, ND.

I got to know Mardy at several of the 517th reunions in the last few years. I especially remember traveling with Mardy and Merle to Operation Dragoon ceremonies in southern France in August 2009, and I am so glad to have spent time with her. I will always remember her friendly smile and her patience with all of us during a hectic but rewarding trip. I am so glad that I got to know her on that wonderful adventure.

### **Brenda Mortensen**

I met Mardy and Merle through our reunions and thought the world of her. She was fun, feisty, courageous, and very kind. And what a wonderful smile. Mardy was the first person I looked for at reunions and I missed her when she was not there. I'm sure many of us felt the same way. Although I've communicated with Merle, I wanted to share my feelings with our 517th Family as well. She was a very special person.

### **Pat Seitz and Alan Greer**

Was very saddened to read the news about Mrs. McMorrow's passing. What a remarkable gal she was and how she touched folks' lives in such a special, upbeat way. Am glad for her sake that the Good Lord called her Home, mission accomplished, she was still going gung ho and enjoying the "party of life". What a blessing she was to so many and an inspiration to us all. Please let Merle know that words cannot express Alan's and my sympathy. He is in our thoughts and prayers that the Good Lord will shower him with all the graces that he needs at this time. We know she is looking out for him. May he feel the Good Lord's presence and comfort to counterbalance his sorrow.

### **Lory Curtis, son of Bud Curtis, HQ, 1st Bn**

I will miss Hal dearly, he was a great man, and was at every reunion I attended. He was a great inspiration to me and I admired him greatly. The last time I got to see Hal was at Camp Toccoa last June 2013. He and Helen came to help us celebrate the 70th anniversary

of the organization of the 517th in March 1943. Hal got to speak at a ceremony in Toccoa and he gave the most wonderful speech about his experiences. He truly loved the men of the 517th, and I know he was very proud of his service.

My deepest sympathies to Helen and family

### **Oscar Knerr**

[Oknerr09@comcast.net](mailto:Oknerr09@comcast.net)

By the time I discovered the website, in 2000 or so, it was too late physically to attend any reunions. I would love to hear from any of the HQ I&R guys still around.

### **Dick Whisenhunt**

My Uncle **Earl Whisenhunt** was a member of the 517 Parachute Infantry Regiment in WW II. He was in Company G. He has been receiving a magazine called the Thunder Bolt for years but for the past few years has not received anything.

His name is **Earl Whisenhunt**, he lives at 4 Heather Way Chandler NC and his phone number is 828-667-4932 His wife died about a year ago and have so many of his friends. He is going through some lonely trying times right now. I know he would greatly appreciate it if someone could contact him. I am his nephew and you can email me back or call me on my cell.

### **Lory Curtis**

I think the news for MailCall is **Earl** is 93, doing very well, and of course is very proud of his service in the 517th. When I spoke with him on the phone, he is as sharp as a tack, and very active!! He still drives his car according to his nephew. It was a real honor to talk with Earl and to hear his stories. He used to live in Santa Barbara CA close to where I grew up as a kid in Long Beach, CA. As you said he is anxious to receive the Thunderbolt and I believe what he said to me was he got the one in October of 2013, which was our last issue, but may have missed other issues because his street was spelled incorrectly. I do have back issues and will mail them to him right away. I believe the printer mailed out the issues last week as of yet I still haven't received my issue. Please let those

family members and friends on MailCall check with their 517th troopers and make sure they are receiving the Thunderbolt. We want all veterans to get a copy.

**Rhonda Newberry Hildreth** (daughter)

I received the Thunderbolt (winter, January 2014) today addressed to my Daddy, **Robert H. Newberry**.

Daddy died February 16, 2011 at his home in Dawsonville, GA. I thought I had notified everyone, but somehow I must have omitted the 517th PRCT.

Please adjust your mailing list. If I need to provide information for an obituary to be included in this publication, I will be glad to. Daddy had a long and distinguished Army career and we are proud of his service. He and Mama are buried in the National Cemetery outside Canton, GA.

God bless all of you forever,

**Rhonda Newberry Hildreth**

RE: **Bob Newberry**, E Company

I have sent a brief obit in a separate e mail. I have all Daddy's old military papers and could probably have included greater detail, but it is still hard for me to go through them.

I will always remember Daddy in his uniform as he looked when I was a little girl, though he commented from time to time that he'd been retired from the Army longer than he was on active duty.

In his later years Daddy enjoyed golf, gardening, and wood working -until macular degeneration greatly limited his activities towards the end of his life.

He died just 28 days after Mama passed away.

I will miss them always.

Best wishes to all the 517th,

This is to inform you that **Charles Edward Cook** passed away March 8th, 2014.

He was in the 460th - A Battery. The last reunion he attended was at Salt Lake City - since then Alzheimer's controlled his life. His memorial will be March 28th at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen, TX.

**The Hensleigh-Fenton Exchange**

To: **Howard Hensleigh**

Sir,

Somehow I got a message over the linked in network that had your name attached. Amazingly it was within days of my viewing the two part history of the 517th on U Tube. I wasn't even certain it was the correct Howard Hensleigh but with the Menlo Park address, couldn't risk it and so responded. Another of the coincidences / mysteries that seem to be sprinkled into this life, I guess.

At any rate this follow up "action report" is long overdue.

Dad (**Frank Fenton**, HQ/3) passed 9 April 2003. At that time I was assigned to Naval Special Warfare Development Group (2001 to 2006) and retired from the Navy from that unit. A top shelf group of guys not unlike the 517th, I'll bet. Was able to spend several, nearly uninterrupted, months on leave with Dad until February 2003 when I received orders for deployment with a task force headed for Iraq just prior to things starting up there.

Talked it over with Dad and I said given the circumstances I could likely get those orders changed. His words were "no you won't; when they call you; you go. That's what we do". Clearly the 517th to the end.

I'll never forget the ride down that drive way and the trip back to Dam Neck VA as I knew I wouldn't see him again, in this world.

Word came to me in Iraq April 8th his condition was critical and shortly thereafter that he'd passed. I went to a spot to be by myself for a while and realized I was at the same location in that desert that we'd had a service for 5 rangers we'd lost a few days earlier. All of them in their 20s with wives, children & mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. Hundreds that would never see them again. I realized I was so fortunate to have had such a man by my side for 79 years. I also thought of the many friends that I'm sure you both shared that were taken so young so many years before their time.

I can't tell you how much I appreciated your sharing your memories of the 517th and Dad. The bonds, lives and character you guys have passed remain a hard act to follow.

Thank You for everything you've given thank you for ceaselessly continuing.

Best to you and yours,

**Les Fenton**

CDR USN Retired

***[Editor's note: Les, this is what we all mean when we, as a nation, say, "Thank you for your service," because these are the things you miss. Thank you.]***

Dear Les,

In the attack across the tracks on D plus one in the south end of les Arcs, France, your father probably saved my life. He was in my machine gun section in the 3rd Bn. Hq. Company of the 517th. He carried a BAR as his personal weapon. The BAR, an excellent weapon, is much heavier than the carbine and M1, which increased his load along with our heavy machine guns, ammo and personal gear. All this went up and down the mountains of Italy, Southern France and the Bulge.

We were to attack and take the south end of les Arcs over the multiple line rail road tracks and rout the Germans who held good fields of fire and buildings on the other side. I was one of the few who made it over in a hail of enemy fire. The rest of the Bn. had the good sense to realize that there was a better way to do it. The other two who made it across the tracks were cut down by enemy fire. I decided after several near misses that my place was on the other side of the tracks leading my MG section. The enemy in a house fired at me as I crossed, but your father with his BAR and **Zawicci** with his bazooka disturbed their accuracy. We found an underpass for drainage down to the right and the entire Bn. Went through it to flank the Germans and take the south end of les Arcs.

You are to be commended on your respect and loyalty to your father. He was a good man. I am sure he brought you up properly. Most of the kids thought their 517th fathers were a little strict. Although I did not see him at any of the reunions I attended, I did get his phone number and we had a long chat several years ago. I could tell that he lived a good constructive life after his 517th service.

Congratulations to you on your Navy service and retirement. Let's keep in touch.

**Howard Hensleigh**

**Les Fenton**

I'm so happy I got to the intended, **Howard Hensleigh** and that you're "CHARGING and Choosing the Best Way

across the Tracks". This technology is amazing sometimes for the good and sometimes I think out of control. Somehow apparently, by its own devices, a couple of days ago I received "out of the blue" an email asking if I wanted to connect with **Howard Hensleigh** on Linked In.

I responded because I didn't want to risk missing a connection with you. At any rate thanks to "whatever, whomever" we connected again. Of course, I think of Dad often and not infrequently, more and more it seems, the image that comes to mind is Dad as he was as a younger man. Probably has something to do with my own reflection as I look in the mirror at an older fellow looking back at me and thinking that might change. I still get a "hey Frank" from some of the "other finely matured characters" in the grocery store.

Dad wasn't much for details of his military time, at least to his sons (my younger brother Jeff is 60 and lives 10 miles away and will be here this afternoon for burgers). The more I learn the more I'm amazed at similarities of the choices we made and experiences we've had.

I went to Benning for Jump school in 1967 and was surprised to be called out as one of 4 or 5 during the jump wings ceremony as a second generation paratrooper. I had no idea they kept those kind of records. I think Dad did get a charge out of that. 1967-70 I was Army enlisted as a Special Forces medic and went through SF combat swimmer school at Fleming Key in Key West Florida. I got out in 1970 (times then were like now, everyone thought we were over wars, wish that we're so but obviously it isn't). Went to undergrad and medical school and residency and then amazing, joined the Navy and spent most of my career with Naval Special Warfare. Unbelievably 4 years of that was at the University of Penn that ended in a PhD. The reason for that is a longer story for another time but my mentor there was Christian Lambertsen MD (former Army Major - OSS Special Detachment 101 underwater operations 1942-45) who had invented the diving rig we used in the Army SF combat swimmer course, the Emerson-Lambertsen rebreather.

He retired at 78 and we hadn't started building by the time he was diagnosed but he got to be in it from Thanksgiving Nov. 2002 until 9 April 2003. Jeff and I were both with him for most of that time, Jeff right to the end when I

went to Iraq. We had firing lanes cut and his 300 savage locked and loaded and by his wheelchair for deer season but the deer proved to be better hunters than we were that year. Heaven help us if we'd have found a BAR. I have a box full of BAR manuals Dad brought home with him, apparently he took that weapon quite seriously.

Well, enough of all of that for now. It's great to be in contact again, all the best to you and yours, trusting this finds you "well and "reloading".

Best,  
Les

Revisited

## Jumping behind enemy lines: Operation Dragoon

### US Army Fort Benning

Posted: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 4:05 PM  
EDT

By Sara Belsole

COLUMBUS, GA - "My first jump, naturally I was shaking. I was just 18 years old."

**Lieutenant Colonel Hal Beddow** was a member of the 517th Parachute Regiment Combat Team in the 1940's.

"When you're looking down like that, things are going on in your head. So that's what they taught us then to look out like this all the time, don't look down, look up," Beddow says.

Beddow was one of the soldiers who jumped behind enemy lines into Southern France 68 years ago today, on August 15, 1944 for Operation Dragoon.

"And out we would go. And we pulled the chute from our backs and out we would go and pull and here comes the chute open," Beddow says.

The operation was a huge success. US Troops and Allied Forces were able to force the Germans to retreat, liberating most of France in four weeks.

"Anyone involved in that and goes through those things, you never ever forget them," Beddow says.

And in honor of Operation Dragoon's 68th anniversary, I am going to jump off the 34 foot tower at Fort Benning's Airborne School.

The 34-foot tower is the first of three jumps soldiers in Airborne School will complete.

I stuck to the small one, but airborne soldiers will also jump from a 250-foot tower and then from a plane before graduating.

"When we actually have to go into another country, it's one of the main force of entry for most special operation units and conventional units. It puts a large force behind enemy lines and basically disrupts pretty much everything in the battle field," Airborne Instructor SFC Matthew Hill says.

Airborne School at Fort Benning graduates about 18,000 paratroopers a year, and things haven't changed much since beddow did his first jump.

"All the towers are the same, concepts are the same since 1940, nothing has really changed. The equipment has changed, but not really the soldiers, the motivation or the training," Hill says.

***This article was accompanied by a great photo of Hal, chute on the ground, as he held the risers.***

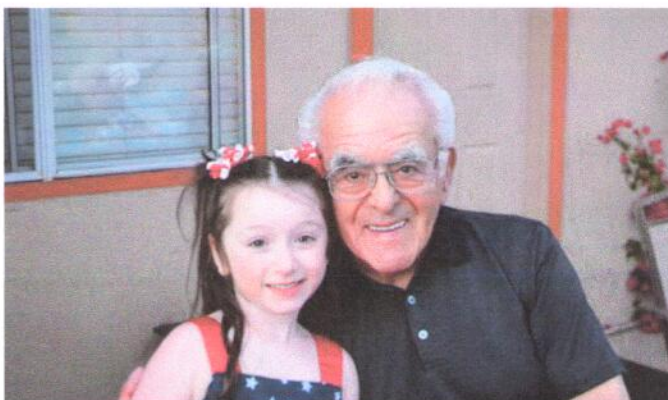
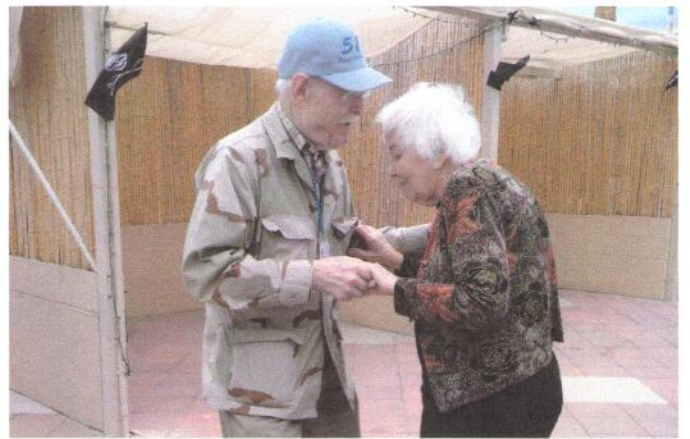
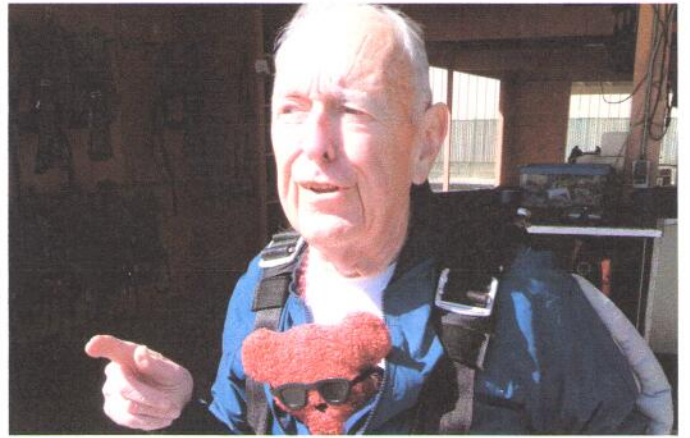
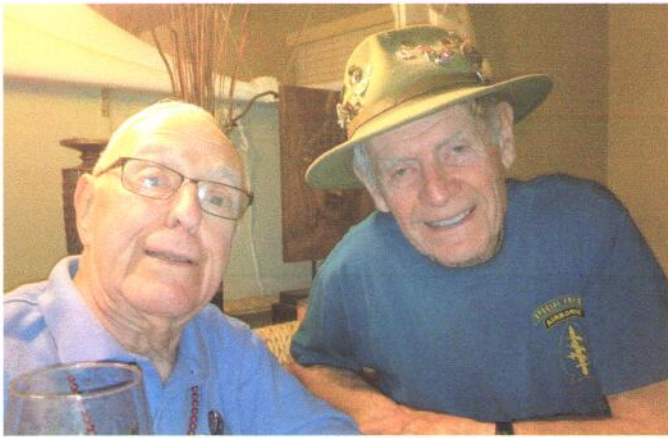
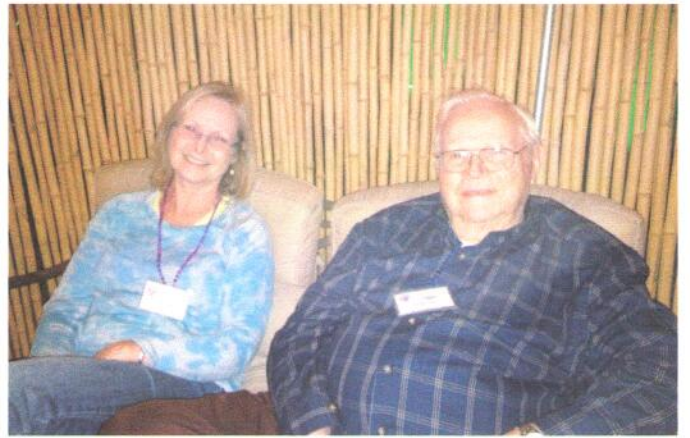
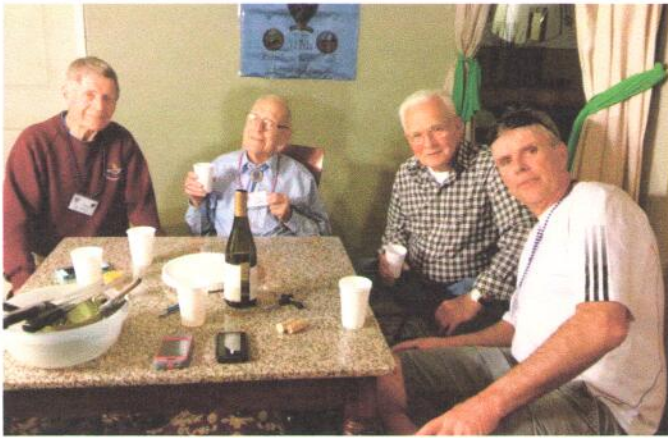
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Men of the 517th gather in Palm Springs, CA March 10-14, 2014





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The Thunderbolt is published quarterly by the 517<sup>th</sup> 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 517<sup>th</sup> 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 - Duck Walk and Log Drill, Camp Toccoa, GA. 1943

