DIABLO

The Link for All Veterans, Spouses, Family And Friends Of The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association – July, 2015 - Vol. 10, Nr. 1

On October 28th through November 1, 2015, the annual 505th and 508th Reunion will take place in San Antonio, TX at the El Tropicano Hotel located at 110 Lexington Ave.; San Antonio, TX. 877-736-4311 or 212-223-9461 Ask for the 505/508 82nd Airborne Reunion. The reunion is hosted by Bill and LaNell Hamilton.

Scheduled activities will include:
1) a visit to the Quadrangle and Museum in Ft. Sam Houston followed by lunch;

2) a visit to the museum at Stimson Field which may include a parachute jump;

3) a barge ride along the San Antonio River which will include dinner.

4) on Saturday morning a trolley will be available for tours of downtown San Antonio, the King William area, the Alamo or shopping.

5) Saturday night banquet

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Bridging A Gap

When the phone rang that day Steve Gass, son of the late Robert Gass (Co E) never expected that he was about to meet a brother he never knew he had.

On the calling end was Leon Tethterton of England who as an infant in the mid-1940s had been put up for adoption.

In recent years Leon had set out to learn his parentage and was able to obtain a copy of his birth certificate which disclosed who his parents had been. His English mother was relatively easy to trace but unfortunately Leon also learned that she was now deceased.

However, he was able to contact members of her family, i.e., his step-siblings who were stunned to learn that she had another child earlier in her life, a child that she never mentioned. Since that initial contact they have all met and remain in touch.

Learning more of his father, however, was more difficult as the man had been an American soldier and while his name was given, little else was recorded about him other than the fact that he was from New York.

Turning to the internet for further research Leon came across our 508th website and found a few mentions of his dad including a number of photos, some of which were attributed to a Steven Gass.

Searching for occurrences of that name in New York produced a few possibilities and Leon began calling each in turn.

That day he hit upon the right number!

It was something of a miracle, Steve recalled, as he had been living in Las Vegas and only recently had returned to NY state. It was as though he had been positioned by an unseen force to be found.

An exchange of various photographs showing Leon's mother served to prove that the match had been made. She had somehow met Bob who was convalescing in England following a wound in July 1944 and a romance ensued.

Steve had already been working to commemorate his father by donating all his memorabilia to The Museum of Military Memorabilia in the Naples, Florida Municipal Airport. Gass felt that having the items on permanent display where they can be seen by the traveling public every day would be a wonderful way to commemorate his dad.

But now there were two sons in the mix so Leon is traveling to Naples to be there in August 2015 on the day that the display is unveiled.

The two brothers are looking forward to meeting face-to-face for the first time and we are certain that there will be lots to talk about!

Calling All WW II Veterans to San Antonio

Chris Harris, Vice President of the *Fe&F 508th*, will be coordinating with WWII Veterans and their families to ensure that all veterans who want to attend in October do so. Whether it be help addressing logistical needs such as local transport to/from airports, escort services within airports, and special hotel needs or help with financial constraints, contact Chris and he will promptly respond. Chris can be reached on his cell phone at (310) 729-2745 or by email harris.chris.j@att.net.

2015 is the 70th Anniversary of the end of WWII, so let's get as many Greatest Generation veterans to San Antonio as possible for a most memorable reunion!

Belgian Citizen Honors The 508th PIR

by Rob Palmer

In December of 1944, the city of Rencheux, Belgium lay in the shadow of the conflict raging across the region. Many families from this small town had fled to the nearby caves in order to safeguard their property and cattle while a few refused to abandon their homes and stayed behind hoping for the best. One of those was a young boy named Fernand Hiernaux, whose family took in some fifty paratroopers from Company A. Hiernaux's family home was positioned just behind the line of defense on the road leading up to the barracks and right in the zone where combat took place, allowing the fifty paratroopers quick access to their guard positions and later helped them in fighting a rear guard action from Rencheux to Goronne and the Barrier Line.

Fernand was thunder struck by the men of Company A who had taken up billets in his home during the Christmas of 1944. Both he and his brother Arnaud were so impressed with the gallantry of the men of Company A that years later when they were called up for military service in the Belgian Army they chose to join the paratroopers and "It was the example set by the men of December 1944 that made us decide to join the paratroopers, stepping into their footsteps, many years after we had met them in Rencheux," recalls Fernand.

Hiernaux has recalled that Joseph Farrell (Canadian translator pictured above), Gerigeri (Willy) and Lapso (George) were among those who stayed with his family that December. Not only did Fernand choose to follow in the steps of the paratroopers who had so mesmerized him as a child, but his profound respect continues to this day as he has adopted 10 graves of fallen members of the 508th in the cemetery at Henri Chapelle. This is a tradition that he has passed to his eldest daughter Catherine, who has herself adopted two graves. In his seventies, Fernand is still very active and is constantly participating in ceremonies at Rencheux, continuing to honor the memory of the 508th PIR.

Fernand Hiernaux has adopted the following 508th graves:

-Edward Rusch
-Brussie Cascio
-Howard Alfrey
-Wendell Sedam
-Walter Firestone
-George Clementz
-Harry Ackerman
-Manuel Cordova
-Walter Drelick
-George Bates

His daughter, Catherine, has adopted the graves of Eugene Roy and Albert Nicoletta. His daughter, Anne, and granddaughter, Maria Naty, have also adopted other American graves.

If anyone would like to contact Fernand, they can do so through Family and Friends member, Erik van der Hoeven at erikvenderhoeven@planet.nl and he will translate for Fernand.

Many thanks to Erik for providing us with Fernand's story.

Mail Box

Dear Editor of Diablo,
My grammar school coach, George William Wall was killed on that fateful day March 14, 1945 at Sissone, France. Disaster struck that day as the 508th did practice jumps. The plane behind G.W. Wall's stick lost an engine and crashed, taking its crew and six other troopers already in the air to their death.

I attended the 508th reunion in Birmingham, AL and became an honorary member. Plus, I met some of the men who jumped with Wall. I have searched for men who knew him and for a possible unit picture.

Enclosed is my personal memory of his death and his photo from the Birmingham News announcing his death. I thought you might use this material in the Diablo.

I received a letter from Charles W. Paradise in 2007. He wrote, "One day we were to do a practice jump. Before we got on board, I noticed the propeller blades were flopping back and forth, not running 'true'. As I had been balancing propellers for Hamilton Standard, a part of United Technologies in Connecticut for several years, I believed that something, possibly a 'spider', had broken inside the hub and the propeller was not operating 'true'. I stepped forward to alert the colonel that the props were not operating correctly only to be strictly ordered to, 'get back in formation'. I did so reluctantly along with seventeen other troopers boarded the plane for the next jump. I made my jump with others, but as I drifted earthward, I saw the plane afire and falling."

Seven members of the 508 and four members of the plane crew were among the dead. My question is, "Who was the colonel that dismissed Paradise's information?" And did the said, colonel, ever regret not heading Paradise's warning?

I, too, served in the army of occupation, in Japan.

Sincerely,
Dr. William P. Buck
2409 Vestavia Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35216
Ph. (205)-979-2296

Memories

By Dr. William P. Buck

Memories, we all have many of them. Every time I drive past the old Cow Pasture at lower Highland Avenue and 32nd Street one of my memories floods my emotions. It involves Billy Wall, my sand lot grammar school football coach who was only a couple of years older than his players. He came to the cow pasture one Sunday to watch us play football.

These were the days before little league and organized football, but somehow Billy Wall had pulled together a group of Norwood kids to play on "his" football team. We played other teams all over town.

World War II was in full swing and out forces were fighting in France. Billy Wall turned eighteen and joined the paratroopers. Naturally I wanted to follow in his footsteps. On furlough before going overseas Billy stopped at the Cow Pasture to watch some of "his" boys play.

After our game, I shook Billy's hand and remarked how sharp he looked. He wore his trooper wings proudly on his chest and his pants were bloused in his polished boots. His round paratrooper emblem was sewn on the left side of his overseas cap which sat squarely in the middle of his forehead. He was small, lean, wore glasses and was not the usual robust type generally pictured when you think of a paratrooper.

He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Buck, promise me you'll never join the paratroopers."

He knew my daring spirit, but I answered in an offhanded way that I wouldn't.

Billy soon had to leave. He walked some fifty feet away from the crowd, topped the embankment near 32nd Street and stood there on the grass that has already become brown form the first frost. He took a long last look at the bright blue autumn sky, and slowly surveyed the entire scene. Then turned, got in his car and drove away.

I still have his picture that was in the paper telling of his death, "killed in action". It is pressed close to a letter he wrote to me the day before he died.

Faded treasures, but every time I pass the old Cow Pasture the memory of Billy Wall standing tall taking his last look at the boys he helped raise and for whom he would soon die passes across my mind. That was the autumn of 1944.

Dear Ellen,

Chuck Howell and I were in the first group to reach Blanding on October 19, 1942. Tell Darrell Glass that I am one more from C Co. still around. I was 94 in January. Have talked with Brody Hand, also from C Co. I am still in good health (I think).

I lost the love of my life, Bette, 5 years ago. We were married on April 25, 1943 with Chuck and Helen Howell in York, South Carolina. We were high school sweethearts and were married for 66 years.

Enjoy reading "Diablo"

Bob Nobles
C Co. 508

Thank You

Many, many thanks to the good people of Picauville who made a very kind and generous donation to our Family and Friends association in memory of Jack Schlegel.

Final Jumps

Calvert, Carroll
Condolences can be sent to the family at:
209 Winter Creek Dr.; Bluefield, VA 24605

Confrey, Evan
Condolences can be sent to Charlene at:
246 W. Elm Street; New Haven, CT 06515

Cook, Robert
I am writing to let you know of the passing of our Father, Grandfather and Brother, Robert E. Cook. He was a WWII and Korean War veteran. He was 90 years old at the time of his passing. His greatest gift was being able to go on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. and the WWII and Korean War memorials. He was met there by his three grandsons and great-grandson. What a memory for all of them! He was a wonderful man and a great mentor to all of our family and we miss him. Thank you for sharing the Diablo newsletter with him as he really enjoyed it!

The Family of Robert E. Cook, Hq Co. 3rd Bn
Daughter, Linda L. Mays; 320 E. Main St.; Atlanta, IN 46031

Evans, Willard "Bill"
Sadly Dad, the last surviving child of Ralph and Rose Evans has passed at the age of 91. Dad passed at home peacefully at 5:50 PM March 28, 2015 after a tough few years battling recurring pneumonia, gall bladder and other age related health problems.

Steve and Rose Evans – 1451 Cedarhill Dr.; Riverside, CA 92507; ph: (951) 529-1755

Hamilton, Ed
Condolences can be sent to Wanda at: 821 S. Main St.; Kenton, OH 43326.

Majka, John
Condolences can be sent to Grace Majka at:
2328 Evergreen Ave.; Scotch Plains, NJ 07076.

Michal, Lawrence
Condolences can be sent to the family at:
9018 Meadow Vista Rd.; Charlotte, NC 28213.

Schlegal, Jack
Condolences can be sent to the family at:
P.O. Box 112; Mt. Tremper, NY 12457

Turley, Charles
I am writing to inform you of the death of Charles on June 7, 2014 after a lengthy battle with cancer. He loved his Lord and Savior, as well as his family. He was loved by all who knew him, including his

wife, Carol, four children, nine grand children and twelve great-grand children.

Charles served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from Sept 26, 1944 to November 24, 1946. He was an outstanding soldier and a loyal friend. A distinguished member of the "Greatest Generation".

After retiring from Cooper Tire Co, he began a hobby of making crafts such as bird houses, swings, and dog houses.

Condolences can be sent to Carol at 747 Ward Rd.; Texarkana, AR 71854

Williamson, Francis "Willie"
Condolences can be sent to the family at:
631 Twilight Trail; Richardson, TX 75080

Wynne, Jimmy
Condolences can be sent to the family at:
3248 Old Mill Rd.; Chesapeake, VA 23323

NEW PLAQUE UNVEILED

On June 7, the Assoc. Amis des Vétérans Américains (Friends of American Veterans Assoc) unveiled a large plaque in special tribute to the 82nd Airborne paratroopers who fought at the La Fiere bridge and causeway and the Chef du Pont bridge and causeway from June 6 – 9, 1944. The plaque was placed on the base of the Iron Mike statue located at the AVA Memorial site of La Fiere bridge.

The AVA Assoc. is requesting donations to help pay for the plaque. If you would like to contribute to this project, donations are possible via PayPal at: contact@avanormandy.org. If you prefer to donate by check, you can send your check to me at:
Ellen Peters
3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805

The AVA Assoc. is the oldest association in France that honors American veterans. It was founded in 1945 by Mme. Simone Renaud, wife of the war time president of St. Mere Eglise. The current president, Maurice Renaud, is her youngest son.

Many, many thanks to Bill Knapp and Ernie Lamson who have already sent donations.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Bill Knapp and George Shenkle who received their Orange Lanyards from the Netherlands 70 years after war's end. George received his on a visit commemorating the 70th Anniversary of Operation Market Garden and Bill received his on a visit commemorating the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

On his trip, Bill, also visited the American Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium where he laid a wreath at the grave of his buddy, Joe Endress. About the experience, Bill wrote, "Em (Bill's wife) made a beautiful folder about Joe and his brother (the Endress family lost two of their three sons in WWII) and I left a couple of coins. One of the 508 that I had been carrying around for ages, to be placed in his archives. I loved that guy so much."
(Note: Listening to you, Walter Barrett, and Harry Roll speak of Joe, I almost feel like I knew him. I always visit his and Capt. Bill Nation's graves when visiting Belgium.)the battlefield, but it gives Paratroopers additional skills that will last beyond their service.

WWII VETS JUMP BACK IN TIME

By Chris Fletcher, Fort Jackson Leader

CAMDEN, S.C. (April 2, 2015) -- More than 20 World War II veterans celebrated completing the U.S. Army's first mass parachute drop at the 82nd Airborne Division Memorial Sunday.

Though the parachute drop 72 years ago was successful and helped pave the way for mass parachute operations in Africa and Europe, three paratroopers died during the training event. The magnitude of this initial jump was conveyed in a letter written by Barbara Gavin, the daughter of Lt. Gen. Jim Gavin, who commanded the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, or PIR.

"Training leads to perfection in performance, and without this jump in Camden, which is being commemorated here today, those combat jumps during the war might have had a different ending," read military historian Robert Anzuoni, from Gavin's letter to the audience of more than 100. Anzuoni also noted how Gavin felt for the paratroopers who sacrificed their lives in training so others could get it right in combat. "Today, I believe my father's spirit is there with you, honoring those three paratroopers who lost their lives taking part in this operation in Camden," Anzuoni read from Gavin's letter. "It led to four magnificent combat jumps of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II."

Before the jump 72 years ago, the largest parachute drop consisted of a battalion-sized operation. The entire 505th PIR, three battalions from the 82nd, participated in the Camden parachute drop. Anzuoni said the parachute assault on Camden left no doubt about the feasibility of regimental-sized parachute operations.

Highlighting the event were vignettes and anecdotes from retired Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Merritt and former Maj. T. Moffat Burriss, both participants of the jump in Camden, S.C. and a number of combat jumps in World War II. "I had just made squad leader after being in the Army only five months," said Merritt, of his jump into South Carolina 72 years ago. "I was so determined to do something good; the first thing that happened was I lost my compass and my South Carolina map." Merritt added he was called up to see his supply officer after the training operation and told he would have to pay $16.98 for the lost compass, which equaled one-third of his monthly basic pay.

U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson and retired Army Maj. Gen. Julian Burns also spoke at the event.

The commemoration allowed today's generation to jump into the past with World War II re-enactors dressed the part and period-piece equipment displays on hand for spectators.
(The above is from the U.S. Army website)

SEARCHING FOR.....

I am looking for anyone connected to Lt. Barry Albright. It seems he was a pretty good officer, and is commended for calling in an artillery barrage on the Germans attacking Hill 30. I cannot find a picture of him anywhere, nor any personal info.
Also seeking ...
- Family members of LTC Thomas Shanley or Otho Holmes.
- Contact details for James Rigas. He was part of General Gavin's staff at Braunstone Park. I have a few questions about the Divisional HQ. Finding information is proving to be difficult.

Adam Berry
email: aberry@initsys.co.uk
ph: 011 44 7584 414189
Skype: adam505504

Are there any veterans who knew 1st Lt. Neal Beaver of the 81mm mortar platoon of Hq/3rd? We visited Sebeville with him in 1976, 1978 and 1986, and we stayed at his home in 1980. We would like to know of his war experience 6th – 9th June at Chef-du-Pont, and later at St. Sauveur le Vicomte and La Haye du Puits.

Thank you,
Paulette and Michel Le Cambaye
Sainte-Mere-Eglise
Email: Michel.lecambaye@sfr.fr

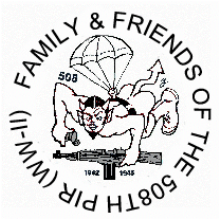
508th Items For Sale

Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association hats and shirts are available.
Hats are $20.00 --- Shirts are $30.00

Copies of the Third Anniversary book are for sale. They are excellent quality, spiral bound reproductions. Price is $15.00 plus $5.00 shipping for a total of $20.00. Books can be ordered from the website: www.508pir.org or direct from Troy Palmer, 1206 River Lane, Evans. GA 30809.

Changes of Address

Please forward change of email addresses to treasurer@508PIR.org and change of postal addresses to Ellen Peters; 3630 Townsend Dr.; Dallas, TX 75229-3805."



The Diablo
Dallas, TX 75229-3805