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508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association

Newsletter

Summer-Fall 2001 Issue 85

Dedicated to the Memory of Colonel Louis G. Mendez, Jr.

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Tampa Reunion a great success, THANKS to Co-Chairs Robert and Barbara Asher and Ernie Lamson.

Attendance figures reached 368. The Complimentary Breakfast for the Ladies on Saturday was a big hit – and it was a FIRST! Thanks again to Barbara Asher for a super job.

The Registration Desk was ably handled by our Chairs with an assist from volunteers, Charlene Lamson and Shirley Jeffers. The Staff at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore went all out to make our 27th annual reunion one to remember. We extend special "Thank You's" to Janet Hansen, Denise, and to Zoila at the front desk and all of her co-workers. We thank shuttle drivers, Chris and the three "Joes" who assisted him for their courtesy and their attention to our needs. They were a First Class operation. They all want us to come back!

For our 28th annual reunion we will travel out West to Laughlin, Nevada. The dates will be August 4 through August 7, 2002. Read all about it inside and send ENTIRE Page of Registration to Ernie Lamson.

508th P.I.R. ASSOCIATION
28th Annual Reunion
Sunday, August 4 through Wednesday, August 7, 2002
Laughlin, Nevada

NAME: Mr----------Wife: ----------Company----

ADDRESS:----------Telephone:----------

CITY: ----------STATE ……..ZIP ……..

I WILL HAVE ……. GUESTS. NAMES FOR THEIR ID'S ARE LISTED BELOW:

1. 2. 3. 4.

The fee per person is $65.00.
ENCLOSED IS: $_____ registration FEE for _____ PEOPLE.
Send THIS WHOLE PAGE in with your check and HOTEL RESERVATION

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Registration (Sunday)		**8/04**	☐ **King-size Bed** ☐ **Double bed**
Company Rep Meeting (Sun.)	**4P.M.**	**8/04**	☐ **Non-Smoking Room**
Memorial Breakfast (Monday)	**9A.M.**	**8/05**	
Pictures (Monday)	**11A.M**	**8/05**	
Business Meeting (Tuesday)	**9A.M.**	**8/06**	**Arrival date will be _____**
Banquet (Tuesday)	**7P.M.**	**8/06**	**Time_____A.M._____P.M.**
Farewell Breakfast (Wednesday)	**9A.M.**	**8/07**	**Checkout DATE _____**

Please make all checks or money orders payable to: 508th P.I.R. Association.
Send this pre-registration form with hotel reservation information and check or money order to:
Ernie Lamson, 1135 Edgcumbe Rd., St. Paul, MN 55105 Ph (651) 699-7366
**** No money is required at this time for Hotel Reservations. **A down payment of $19.00 reserves your room, but, it is needed only if you will arrive after 6:00 P.M.**
When you receive confirmation from the Hotel, your credit card number insures your room.
If you have questions you may contact the Hotel at **Ramada Express, Inc.**
2121 South Casino Dr., Laughlin, NV 89028; Tel: 702-298-4200
Please Note: To set up a room for a Company CP, contact Ernie Lamson to obtain group rate.

PLEASE CHECK OFF HOW YOU CAN HELP AT THE REUNION

☐ **Registration Desk** ☐ **Regimental CP** ☐ **Table Decorations**
I need a wheel chair: ☐ YES I need a refrigerator for insulin: ☐ YES
Pre-registration STOPS 3 weeks before the REUNION. Late reservations made at the HOTEL
ALL Changes must be made through ERNIE to avoid FALSE BILLING! And MIX-UPS!

Letter from Our President
Bob Speers

Another reunion is behind us and plans are in progress for our 28th Annual Reunion to be held in Laughlin, Nevada next year. For the skeptics among us – our attendance is holding up with over 365 on hand in Tampa. The year 2004 still stands for the final reunion and retirement date of the 508 PIRA.

Charlene and Ernie Lamson with Barbara and Bob Asher along with Shirley Jeffers are to be commended for their exceptional preparation and conduct of the 27th Annual Reunion.
The General Membership chose to reelect all incumbent officers except for Vice President.
Our new Vice President is David Nagle who will carry on the duties so well performed by Walt Silver this past year.

The feeling of great satisfaction after attending a successful reunion was sadly dampened by the dastardly attack on the people of the United States by terrorists on September 11. However the true spirit and patriotism of the people of this country became immediately apparent as the country came together to aid and assist where needed and to speak out in a loud voice , ***"You who carried out this dastardly attack and you who encouraged, gave asylum and abetted such action – shall pay!"***

We pray that God grant our leaders the wisdom to do what is right and that we will have the wisdom to differentiate between terrorists and those who have similar physical characteristics.

Bob

EDITOR'S NOTE:

If you wish to send condolences to the MENDEZ family:

Mrs. Louis G. Mendez, Jr.
3406 Stonybrae Dr.
Falls Church, VA 22044-1224

Jeannie and Lou were married for 60 years. They had 6 sons and 6 daughters, 22 grandchildren, 5 great-grand children.

Patriotism Takes Many Forms:

"What Does It Mean To Be Patriotic?"

When I was younger, the American Flag meant little to me. It was a piece of material with stars and stripes of red, white and blue.
When I was in grade school, I learned the "Pledge of Allegiance" and later the "Star Spangled Banner." When we sang this song we had to look at the flag but I couldn't understand why. But as time passed and I got older, I started hearing stories from my 83-year-old grandfather who fought in World War II. He told me very graphic and gruesome stories about that war. He described the bloody battles and how thousands of men and women were killed in front of his very own eyes.

When I asked him why he would risk his life to be involved in the war, he simply said, "I did it for you."

But he didn't only do it for me. He did it for everyone in this country. He did it so we could have the freedom we deserve. The freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, to go to school to go to work and to get the medical attention that we need.
Then I realized why we stand, take off our hats, put our hand over our heart, hold our heads high and say the "Pledge of Allegiance" and sing the "Star Spangled Banner." We do it for our country, for the veterans that fought for our safety and freedom and I do it especially for my grandfather, who risked his life for me and everyone else in this country. We should respect all veterans and have pride in our country.
So the next time you observe the American Flag, remember all of the people who gave their lives so we could have all of the freedom that we have today.
You should be proud to be an American. I sure am.

The above essay was written by **Lauren Ison** for her 8th grade English Class at Milan Junior-Senior High School, Milan, Indiana.
She delivered this speech at the Banquet of the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment in Tampa Florida on September 1, 2001.
Her grandfather, **Herman Jahnigen (A Co.),** was present to congratulate her. **This was a reunion FIRST!** *Thanks Lauren!*

REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

Recently promoted Major Gregg Parsons addressed the Business meeting in Tampa. The Museum at Camp Blanding is preparing for our **Final Reunion in 2004.**

Visitors from overseas were Dominique FRANÇOIS, president of "Cercle Historique "U.S. Airborne" and Jean-Loup DELATTRE, Secretary. The "Club" is dedicated to preserving the history of Airborne Operations during the liberation of Normandy in 1944. The Cercle maintains a clubhouse situated on Hill 30 which is open to all who return to visit Normandy.

Dominique had copies of his recently published book, "The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment", ***les Diables Rouges.*** The book has text in both English and French. A foreword by Colonel Louis G. Mendez is dated November 11, 2000. We quote: "Dominique FRANÇOIS and members of the Cercle Historique US Airborne of which he is President, are genuine friends of the 508. They safeguard the memory of our shared experience; indeed they are guardians of our special friendship. This book is the measure of our bond. With gratitude and affection we stand at attention and salute these citizens of Normandy."

All who have the book can attest that it is a welcome addition to the History of the 508. It is a beautiful book which belongs in the library of students of the 508 contribution in WW II and the liberation of Europe.

EDITOR"S NOTE : Coming up, a listing of books written by our own 508 authors and by foreign and American historians which include references to the 508.

PLEASE send your own list to the Editor. This will help to compile as complete a list as possible. It will be a valuable resource for our 508 Archives in Camp Blanding.

JUST IN: Word from Don Jakeway , **H Co** – a second printing of his book, "**Paratroopers, Do or Die"** is just off the press. WRITE to :196 Saratoga Dr., Johnstown, OH 43031-1142

More News

Hq 1st holds it's **14th Reunion** March 24 –27, 2002 at Le Pavillon Hotel, New Orleans, LA. Sponsors are Ray & Edna Kennedy. Register with them as soon as possible at:
1128 Sinbad Street
Baker, LA 70714-3949

TAPS

Martha Brown, wife of Warren Brown, Hq 1st died August 2, 2001 after eight months of hospitalization.
Warren R. Brown, 123 Gardens Dr.
Springfield, MA 01119-2535

Marjorie Dicks, wife of Don L. Dicks, "I" Co died December 24, 1999.
515 S. Bridge St..
Enterprise, KS 667441-9088

REUNION 2002 – Laughlin, Nevada

From many sources this site beats Las Vegas at its own game. Here you will find a "miniature" Vegas – more like what Vegas was like 30 years ago – and so are the prices. More scoop on what to see and do in our next Newsletter.

First-timers at our 27th Reunion in Tampa: Joe Tancrel, "G" Company. Joe was best man at wedding of Hildegarde and Francis Lamoureux on November 12, 1945 in Wilbraham, MA. Thanks, Joe – and you helped "G" Company to win the attendance trophy for the second time.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Veterans Day this year falls on a Sunday, as such, it will be observed on Monday, November 12. (Just as Armistice Day did in 1945.)

DO YOUR PART to remember a Veteran. Visit him at your VA Medical Center, or at a nearby Nursing Home. Call one of your 508 buddies and cheer him up – after all we are all veterans. We wish you all a great day!

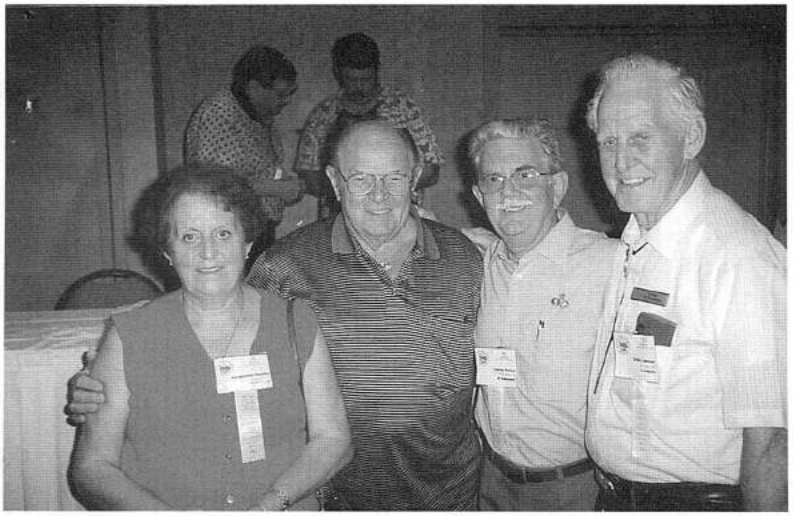


Photo by Static Line, Don Lassen

Lucien Hasley, French historian and sculptor was guest of Tom Porcella and Chet Graham at the Tampa Reunion. From left to right is Mme. Hasley, OB Hill, Lucien Hasley and Ernie Lamson. At the banquet M. Hasley gave a talk in French which was interpreted by Gray Plunkett. He presented autographed photos of Hill 30 to 508 troopers who had fought there. Lucien was also presented with a plaque in appreciation for the Memorial Wall which he has created at his home in Le Pont Filiolet to honor men of the 508.

Walt Silver (C Co), and his wife, Jan seated at the Head table in Tampa. Walt retired after a year of dedicated work on Task Four – the completion of Company Albums to be archived at the Camp Blanding Museum when the 508 PIR retires in 2004. There is not much time left for company reps to gather material and memorabilia and organize it as a tribute to the men of their respective companies, both past and present.



Static Line Photo by Don Lassen

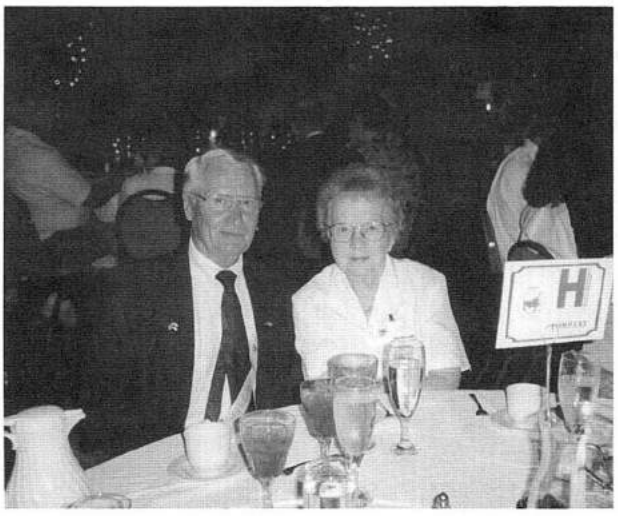


Photo by F.M. Lamoureux

Warren Wilt (H Co.) and his wife Charlyne Warren was Chairman of last year's Reunion in Kansas City..



Photo by F. M. Lamoureux

Monica Beno (G Co) and daughter Kathleen. Monnie and her husband, Tom are longtime favorites of Company G.



Col. Louis G. Mendez. Jr.

July 14, 1915 - September 19, 2001

Colonel Mendez graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. in the Class of 1940.

At Camp Blanding, Florida he assumed command of the 3rd Battalion of the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment upon their activation in October 1942.

He forged the men under his command into a combat-ready unit of soldiers whose *esprit de corps* would serve them well under the baptism of fire in Normandy.

On June 6, 1944 (D-Day) he parachuted with his Battalion 10 miles inland from the Atlantic Wall behind the German lines.

For thirty-three days without relief Colonel Mendez and his men distinguished themselves as they pushed back the enemy, thereby sparing the seaborne landings at Utah and Omaha Beach from further asaault. At great cost in human lives, the largest airborne armada in the history of warfare helped secure the beaches and guaranteed the break-through onto the Normandy peninsula.

Colonel Mendez was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for leading the attack that captured the town of Prétot, France on June 20, 1944.

On September 17, 1944 Colonel Mendez parachuted into Holland in the Nijmegen sector with his men. Again, the 508 fought valiantly, liberating many Dutch towns.

The final assault took place in December, 1944 – the Battle of the Bulge- where Colonel Mendez's 3rd Battalion distinguished themselves at Thier- du-Mont Ridge and at Lanzerath.

At war's end, May 8, 1945 the 508 was assigned to SHAEF Headquarters in Franfurt-am-Main, Germany were it served as honor guard to General Eisenhower.

Colonel Mendez then took over command of the 508 Regiment.



Arlington National Cemetery, September 26, 2001.
Full military honors dedicated to Colonel Mendez.

A solemn procession of mourners paid a final tribute to Colonel Louis G. Mendez. His flag-draped coffin was drawn by horses on a caisson escorted by an Honor Guard from Fort Meyers in dress blues. A military band, honor guard platoon and rifle saluting squad accompanied our beloved Commander to his final resting place.

****

At the wake in Falls Church, Virginia men of the 508 PIR gathered with the Mendez family and 150 friends Tuesday evening. Paul Hamblin (C Co.) conducted a brief service with the gracious consent and support of Mrs. Jeannie Mendez. The assembly applauded his remarks.

Paul Hamblin traced the record of Colonel Mendez with the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment. He emphasized that in 1998 at our Reunion in Nashville, Tennessee "the Association named Col. Mendez, 'Our General', as a measure of the love and respect we had for him. – a rank we all believed was long overdue."
Paul read a poem titled, "I'm Free", which best expressed Col. Mendez's words to his family, friends and to men of the 508. Francis Lamoureux (G Co) fastened the 508 PIR Association Red-Devil insignia on the side of the casket. Each member of the 508 delegation saluted farewell to "Our General" in turn, did an about-face and retired .



Jeannie accepts the folded American Flag from the Guard of Honor at the conclusion of services.



At the head of the casket is the 508 PIR insignia placed there at the wake by Francis M. Lamoureux,, Association Secretary. Fittingly, our beloved Colonel Louis G. Mendez is buried in a plot surrounded by Generals.
Attending the funeral were: Edward & Elsa Garrity (G); Paul & Sylvia Hamblin ,(C); John & Mary Hodge, (G Co); Francis & Hildegarde Lamoureux, (G); William Lord II, & Joannie, Hq 3rd ; Mrs .Skip McGrath, (G); Armando Ortiz, C Co, Richard & LaRue Owen, H Co, James & Tessye Russell, (G), George & Shirley Stoeckert. (Hq 1st.)

508 Parachute Infantry Regiment Association

A Donation Hooks You Up

Paratrooper _____ Wife _____

Check one: Member ☐ Associate Member ☐

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Company _____ Rank _____ ___

ASN _____ Dates Served

Make checks or money orders payable to 508th PIR
Mail to: Ernie Lamson, 1135 Edgcumbe Road,
St. Paul, MN 55105-2831



The Officers of the 508 PIR Association wish you a Healthy and Enjoyable Fall and Winter Season.
We look forward to meeting with you in Laughlin, Nevada for our 28th Annual Reunion in August 2002.
Your support is crucial for the Future of Our Association.

Message from the Officers and the Board of Directors

We appeal to all 508'ers to support the retirement ceremonies which will be held at Camp Blanding, Florida in October 2004.
This will be our **FINAL REUNION**. We need additional funds to do a "bang-up" job and to make our last get-together one of which we all can be proud .
Our colors will be retired to the Camp Blanding Museum where they will be displayed for years to come. Our Company Albums and other Memorabilia will be on display where they can be seen by the public. Future historians will have access to archival material allowing them to study the stirring achievements of the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment on the battlefields of Europe.
The History of the founding of the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment Association, 1942-1945 will also be available at the Museum. Newsletters spanning 30 years of our 508 Reunions as well as Membership Rosters will be stored there.
You are asked to participate in this **FUND DRIVE. An annual $10 donation is suggested.**
Please send your donation to Association Treasurer, Ernie Lamson.
(See Box at top of the page.)

***NOTE:** In the past two years only 18% of our members sent in a voluntary donation.
Printing and distribution of the Association NEWSLETTER eats up most of these funds.
If you are no longer interested in receiving the NEWSLETTER, please send a post-card or a letter to Association Secretary, Francis M. Lamoureux requesting that your name be removed from the roster and from the mailing list.
(Lamoureux's address is on the cover page (page 1) in the top, left corner.)

We thank all of our Past Donors. Just recently, we have received generous contributions from members and associate members on our Roster, for which we are extremely grateful.
We wish to acknowledge each of you personally, and in future editions of our Newsletter.