

WARREN WILKINS NO CHANGE



DEVILS



DIGEST



March 2016

www.red-devils.org

Vol. 10 No. 1

WARREN R. WILKINS UPDATE

By Ken Hamill

There is no change to the **Warren R. Wilkins** situation. I contacted our Good Samaritan, Mrs. Theresa Holt about the progress being made to recognize Warren Wilkins as a full-fledged veteran with all of the privileges that would bring. She contacted Mr. Cleveland Johnson, the veteran's affairs officer at Congressman Zeldin's Patchogue, New York Office last month. Her email response was "I checked about two weeks ago and he is still working on it. I will keep you posted". A condensed version of our effort to help Warren Wilkins follows. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) indicated that Wilkins records were most likely destroyed in the fire of 12 Jul 1973. Our last package to the NPRC included my personal letter, the two NPRC forms and all of the statements, photos and documents provided by veterans Aristeo Blanco Jr., Ben E. Branch, Bernard E. Brown, Frederick P. Gilliam, Raymond Jasinski, Eugene F. Leonard, Joseph G. Lesniak, Patrick J. McCarthy and James H. Vanderhoof. We received a NPRC denial letter dated 4 August 2015. The second paragraph states – "The information furnished on the enclosed NA Form 13075, Questionnaire about Military Service was able to locate the entrance date of January 3, 1951, but was not able to determine the discharge date, final pay grade, or the final character of service". We proved that Wilkins was a respected leader in the 508 at Fort Benning and volunteered for Korea. Apparently that is not good enough for the NPRC. We decided that coordination in good faith with the National Personnel Records Center is hopeless. We remain patient and confident that Mr. Cleveland Johnson, the veteran's affairs officer for New York Congressman Zeldin will be successful.



Photo on left shows Warren Wilkins wearing wings, Combat Infantry Badge, 25th ID patch and SFC E-6 stripes. Right photo taken 1951 or 1952 in town depicts L-R Standing - Warren Wilkins, Pat McCarthy, Mike Wade; L-R Sitting - Art Mooney, Vinnie Morra and Joe Lesniak

OPERATION LONGHORN

By Mark Eckenrode, Chapter Historian

Operation Longhorn was the largest Army/Air Force exercise in US history to date. It involved 115,000 soldiers to include 3,200 Red Devils of the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (ARCT), the 31st and 42 Infantry Divisions, and the 1st Armored Division, which provide some 100 tanks and armored vehicles from Ft Hood, in addition to air assets from the Air Force. These forces were pitted against the aggressor forces comprised of the 82nd Airborne Division. The 31st Infantry Division was flown-in from Shaw AFB, NC. At the time it was the largest troop movement by air transporting 8,750 troops. The 508th ARCT traveled from Ft Benning via covered Duce and a Half trucks. There were 32 paratroopers to the truck and then traveled 8 hours per day taking seven days to make the journey. They slept in fields and subsisted on field rations. Operation Longhorn took place over an 18-day period in March and April 1952, with an estimated cost of \$5,800,000 or in excess of \$30,000,000 in 2015 dollars. The operational area was about 60 by 30 miles or 1,800 square miles west of Waco, TX with much of the air traffic out of Goodfellow Air Force Base and Mathis Field both in San Angelo. The operation was a standard boilerplate exercise where an aggressor force, the 82nd Airborne Division, invaded a friendly country that had to be liberated by allied forces.

An operation of this size attracted a number of senior military officers of the Armed Forces. Some of those present were; General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Mark W. Clark, Chief Army Field Forces, General Jacob L. Devers, General George Horkan, Quartermaster General US Army, LTG William M. Hoge, Commander 4th Army and maneuver director, MG Thomas F. Hickey, Commander 18th Airborne Corps, MG William O. Senter, Chief Air Weather Group, MG. J.C. Sullivan, Quartermaster Army Field Forces, BG James Ferguson, Commander 9th (Tactical) Air Force, BG Lacey Murrow, Commander 18th Air Force, BG William Gillmore, Director Joint Airborne...

...Board, COL Preston M. Wood, Operation Quartermaster and 4th Army Quartermaster, COL Kenneth L. Johnson, Commander 375th Troop Carrier Wing, COL Clynne M. Jones, Commander 327th Troop Carrier Wing, and COL Joe F. Lowrie Commander 508th ARCT, among others. In addition, a number of civilian and foreign military officers were also present.

Of particular interest is the airborne drop on April 8, 1952. Two major drops were to be conducted, on two separate Drop Zones (DZ's). One drop for the 508th ARCT paratroopers followed by another consisting of a heavy equipment drop. Drop Zone Red was located in a cornfield 48 miles southeast of Brownwood, TX between Goldwaite and San Saba along the Colorado River on Hwy 16. DZ Blue was located about 2 miles north of DZ Red. The tonnage for the equipment drop amounted to 750,000 tons of equipment to include 53 jeeps, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ ton trucks, 12 105 mm howitzers, and 24 A-22 containers to include such items as gasoline, ammunition and rations. The purpose of the drop by the 508th was to rout the 82nd Airborne and "liberate the occupied country."

In the early morning darkness of April 8, 1952 3,200 paratroopers of the 508th ARCT marched from their assembly area to Mathis Field in San Angelo to board 96 C-46 Curtis Commandos of the 516th Troop Carrier Wing. The night before a cold front moved in from the northwest bringing in high winds. At approximately 5:00am, at exercise headquarters at Ft Hood, LTG Hoge ordered the jump cancelled due to the winds blowing between 20 to 25 miles per hour (MPH). Winds above 15 MPH presented a no jump condition. Unfortunately, word never reached COL Lawrie, Commander 508th ARCT and BG Murrow Commander 18th Air Force. The paratroopers were to jump first over DZ Blue and DZ Red followed by 18 C-82 Fairchild Packets and 16 C-119 Fairchild Flying Boxcars for the heavy equipment drop. This is contrary to procedures in my day where equipment was dropped first.

The pathfinders jumped at 6:48am. The Red Devils went out the door between 7:58am and 8:20am. When they landed one paratrooper...

...lie dead and 232 injured. Of those injured, 196 required hospitalization due to the severity of their injuries. It took more than seven hours to evacuate all the injured due to the fact that medical units stood down believing the jump was cancelled. Medics reported that five Air Force planes landed on the DZ's but refused to evacuate the injured due to the lack of orders to do so. Later, Army Sikorsky H-19 Chickasaw helicopters and Air Force C-122 AvitruC airplanes evacuated a number of paratroopers off the DZ's. C-124 Globemasters were used to transport 120 injured Red Devils to their home base at Ft Benning for additional medical care. The heavy equipment drop was cancelled while in flight. They made the equipment drop two days later on April 10th.

The dead paratrooper was PFC Clements H. Arvizu, Jr. from Baldwin Park, CA. PFC Arvizu had less than six months time as a paratrooper. He reportedly was severely airsick as he somersaulted out of the door. As he came down headfirst his parachute wrapped around him. PFC Arvizu attempted to deploy his reserve about 50 feet above the ground which was too late. The nature of those injured included a broken neck, leg fractures, broken shoulders, arm fractures, and broken backs. Medical personnel did not think the paratrooper with the broken neck was expected to survive although I could not find any record of his demise.

General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, who did not witness the jump from Ft Hood, stated "It dangerous. That is why the paratroops are made-up of volunteers. That is why they get extra pay." LTG Hoge, Commander 4th Army and maneuver director, borrowed a quote from General Collins saying he was "wholly satisfied" with the jump. LTG Hoge further stated how much he "suffered" by miss seeing the jump. BG Lacey Murrow, commander of the 18th Air Force added the jump looked "damned fine from my plane." Spoken like the true LEGS they were.

When the exercise ended a total of ten Operation Longhorn participants were dead. In addition to PFC Arvizu being killed on the...

...jump: PVT Homer Travick, a Red Devil, was killed by a fellow paratrooper. PVT Daniel Kelly, Jr. took exception when he was called a "Lunkhead" by PVT Travick. PVT Kelly struck PVT Travick in the head with a fist-sized rock. It goes without saying that the murderer, PVT Daniel Kelly, Jr., was in fact and indeed a "Lunkhead." The other deaths came from other units to include a fatality when two F-51 Mustang fighters collided in mid-air which killed one. The other pilot was able to bailout safely.

Prior to the exercise local farmers and ranchers from San Angelo to Waco agreed to easements to allow the Army to maneuver on their land. When the maneuvers were over they were left with torn down fences, scattered livestock and damaged land. The Army had plans to stage war games next year in the area, but the landowners refused to sign easement rights. There were no more maneuvers in the area.

Neither COL Lowrie nor BG Murrow were reprimanded for their decision to drop the Red Devils. Without a doubt this was the highest causality count of any 508th jump outside of combat jumps.

Chapter Historian's Note: I know that some of you reading this took part in Operation Longhorn. I am inviting you to submit your account of Operation Longhorn and the jump to the Devil's Digest for the benefit of our readership and for the historical record. Special thanks to Sarah Ellis and Bernard Brown for their contribution of newspaper articles which made this writing possible.

ATLANTA AIRBORNE FESTIVAL
APRIL 13-16, 2016
MARRIOTT AIRPORT ATLANTA
4711 BEST ROAD
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30337
404.766.7900

ALL AMERICAN WEEK FORT BRAGG
23-26 MAY, 2016 MOON HALL
910.853.7624 CODE ABD

70 TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
82 AIRBORNE DIVISION ASSN
AUGUST 10-13, 2016
CROWN PLAZA HOTEL
LOUISVILLE AIRPORT, KY
888.233.9527

A PARATROOPERS MEMORIES #11

By Ed Slocum of HQ3-508 ARCT 1955-56

All American member Edward A. Slocum of Headquarters Company, 3-508 ARCT 1955-56 and Sumter, SC has written his life story. The book is titled – Searching for the Yellow Brick Road. Ed would like feedback from us. If you spot an error, pass it on back, so Ed can fix it. Article #11 starts now. It turns out that our unit had been levied to provide one man to officer billeting. The longest period of time the Army would permit you to be on special duty was six months. Therefore I was replacing one of the other soldiers from our platoon and at the completion of his six months tour of duty. In six months, I would be replaced by another young soldier. The good side of special duty according to the Platoon Sergeant is that you have no formations, no packing parachutes, no guard duty, and no living in the barracks. I then discovered that my new duties were those of a houseboy or maid in the officer's bachelor quarters. My quarters would be a shared little room in an old barracks that needed paint and remodeling. I was also to receive extra pay for being a second class citizen and servant.

I was furious. I could not believe, I joined the United States Army and had gone through all the training to become someone's servant. One of the things that I am certain of is that my ancestors have been in this country before there was a United States. Giles Slocum left Summerset, England in 1686 AD, crossed the ocean on stormy seas to what is today's Rhode Island. His descendents moved west, cleared the land, and fought the weather, Indians, and this country's wars since 1776. These ancestors were brave and free people. They were no one's servant, and neither am I! I didn't know that I had every right to object to this duty, and should have requested an interview with the First Sergeant or the Company Commander. I did not know what to do, but I did know one thing, I am not now nor will I ever be someone's servant. I will not now, nor will I ever make some officers bed and sweep his floors. As I write this narrative, 56 years after the event, I am amazed that I am still angry that the Army that I respected and enjoyed would treat me this way. As soon as I had enough rank to stop this kind of crap, I made sure it did not happen to any...

...soldier who worked for me. Also, in today's army, this work is performed by civilian employees. As I was pondering what I could do about this, I saw a recruiting poster stating that the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team was looking for troopers to join them and serve a four-year, Far Eastern tour in Japan. This seemed to be my chance to see the world. I immediately volunteered and by February 5, 1955 I was on my way to Fort Campbell, Kentucky to join the 508th Airborne. The 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment was a WWII part of the All American 82nd Airborne Division. Now with support troops and artillery added to the regiment, it was reborn as a standalone Airborne Regimental Combat Team. Was my tour with the 82nd Airborne Division a beginning search for the Yellow Brick Road? Maybe it was. I joined the 508th Airborne at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The unit was preparing for deployment to the Far East. We were to replace the 187th Airborne who were returning from the Korean War to their home bases in Japan. Like the 187th, our unit consisted of three airborne infantry battalions, with attached support units to include artillery. The total strength would've been over 3,000 personnel. My initial assignment was to the parachute packing Company. While we prepared for overseas assignment, I packed parachutes. We were quartered in old World War II type barracks. These were a two-story building made of wood and unfinished interiors. That meant wall studs were showing and that there was no insulation between the interior and exterior of the building. The floors were linoleum and the bathrooms called latrines had no privacy. The beds were Army cots. Again, there was no privacy. This was typical of this era. Our duties entailed training and preparation for deployment to the Far East. Operation Gyroscope & Air Movement to Japan. By the end of May, we were ready to move to Japan. We were to make a 36 hour flight and land in Fukuoka, Kyushu Island, Japan. The aircraft were United States Air Force C124 Globe Masters. The aircraft had a capacity of about 200 troops, plus baggage. Because of fuel limitations, we made a series of refueling stops. We left Stewart Air Force Base, Tennessee and flew to Travis Air Force Base in California.

TO BE CONTINUED



**508 AIRBORNE
CHAPTER CHAIRMAN**
Ken Hamill
2207 Coventry Drive
Columbus, GA 31904-5034
Telephone: 706.327.3207
E: khamill@knology.net



CHAPTER HISTORIAN
Mark Eckenrode
721 Nevada Ave
Trinidad, CO 81082-2426
Telephone: 719.846.4713
E: haamchang@gmail.com

**TAPS - 508th PARATROOPERS
RECENTLY DECEASED**

- Chester E. Graham. Badger State Chapter
508 PIR 1942- 6 Sep 2015
- Charles V. Hamm Mid America Chapter
Svc Co. 508 PIR 1945-46 17 Jan 2015
- Elwell T. Stone Wilbraham, Massachusetts
508 PIR 1945-46 16 Oct 2009
- James T. Wynne Detroit Chapter
508 PIR Oct 1942-45 12 May 2015

Statistics

Annual Members.....20
Affiliate Members.....14
All Americans.....298
Total Members.....332

March 2016 Treasurers Report

Printing expense Dec 2015: \$143.01
Newsletter Envelopes Mar 2016: \$30.87
Chapter Account 29 Feb 2016: \$2104.73
Annual Memberships to date 20 = \$160.00



Art Stone left a message on my telephone on 31 Dec 2015 that his father Elwell had died on 16 Oct 2009 and was still receiving our newsletter. Elwell T. Stone of Wilbraham, MA had served in the 508 PIR in 1945-46 and was an All American member. May you rest in peace Elwell T. Stone. My database indicated that Elwell's telephone was no longer in service.

NEW ALL AMERICAN (LIFE) MEMBER

David A. Crance
B Co. 1-508 Feb 1988 – Feb 1990
and Falls Church, Virginia



Vincent H. Gomez of B Company, 3rd Battalion, 508 Airborne, Panama Canal Zone 1962-65 and Mobile, Alabama elected to save our chapter the cost of mailing by reading our Devils Digest on line at www.red-devils.org. Thank you Vince!!!

Raymond L. Younes of the 519 Quartermaster Company, 508 ARCT 1951-52 and Oxnard, CA sent a newspaper obituary pertaining to Clarence H. Walthall who was an Airborne Ranger and fought as an infantryman in Korea and Vietnam. You can read the whole obit on our website www.red-devils.org then browse to the News/Events page and click on the link "Clarence H. Walthall". Thank you Ray !!!

Much gratitude is extended to four very generous chapter members for their outstanding donations to our chapter treasury. They are:

- David A. Crance** B Co. 1-508 1988–1990
Fort Kobbe, Panama CZ & Falls Church, Virginia
 - Aristeo Blanco** C Co. 1-508 1951-54
Sand Hill, Ft Benning and Reno, Nevada
 - Allen F. Larson, Sr.** 3-508 1954-56
Fort Campbell, Japan & Blythe, Georgia
 - Raymond L. Younes.** 519 QM Co. 1951-52
Fort Benning, GA and Oxnard, CA
- Thank You Dave, Aristeo, Allen & Ray**

Thanks again to our Historian **Mark Eckenrode** for his many contributions, past, present and future to our 508 Chapter. Mark recently sent historical items generated by Rodger Jacobson & Sarah Ellis and he would not accept payment (Big Bucks) for mailing these items.



Most things that you need to know about the 82nd Airborne Division Assn can be found at:
www.82ndairborneassociation.org/

HILTON HEAD WEEKEND

By Ken Hamill

The Hilton Head Weekend took place 25-27 Feb. 2016. We arrived at the Marriott Resorts Hotel at about 3:30 PM on Thursday the 25th. It was crowded until Saturday because of a teacher's conference there. The hotel red caps were efficient in getting our gear to the room while I self parked. I had asked for a room on the floor where the hospitality room would be located. It worked out well, my room and the hospitality room were on the 10th floor. It had an ocean view and you could see for miles. We went to the hospitality room and registered for the reunion, chatted with several people and ate some deli sandwiches, multi layered wraps, croissants filled with chicken and egg salad and some potato salad. The bartender, Ron Mitrook made sure he always had cold Chardonnay and cold beer for us. Friday started early, the graduation at the Marine Recruit Training Center, Parris Island, SC started at 9:00 and it was a two hour drive. I did have coffee, juice and some pastry before departing the Marriott. It was not as cold this year as in 2015, but I'm glad I wore my long johns. The 25 person bus owned and driven by Doug Andrews is pretty drafty with those plastic tape down windows and a loose door. Two companies of new Marines marched on the outdoors grinder. One company of men and another of women. I counted 16 in a file, with four files per platoon, and four platoons per company. Approximately 500 new Marines graduated that Friday. One exceptional Marine was selected in each platoon. That Marine wore dress blues and carried the platoon guide on. All other Marines wore Marine Greens. The name and home town of each exceptional new Marine was announced on the Public Address System. The rank and name of the Marine Recruiter who recruited an exceptional new Marine was also announced on the PA set. When ceremonies ended we rode the bus to the Beaufort National Cemetery for memorial services. Jim Andrews made it happen with the help of Doug Andrews, Gard Miller & Jim Fedashyn. Reminiscences of Reuben Tucker, Ben Vandervoort and six prior members of the Vandervoort Chapter were conducted. We then enjoyed a very nice lunch at a restaurant / bar in downtown Beaufort...

...The ladies had enjoyed shopping that day and joined us for a pizza pie supper in the hospitality room. We had coffee, juice and pastry around 9:00 AM on Saturday, and then toured Hilton Head Island in our POV. We had a very nice kosher lunch at a nearby Jewish restaurant that had been recommended. Their cashier was originally from the Bronx, New York. The banquet was held Saturday night, the ladies wore beautiful outfits and the men wore suits or 82 blazers & ties. Doug Andrews was the MC. Two 82 Airborne Division NCO's were sponsored to attend the Reunion. They were selected because they had excelled during an Expert Infantry Badge test. Both brought their wife and one child, one a boy, the other a girl. These 82 families were introduced at the banquet and were presented beautiful quilts by the two quilt ladies who had made them. VIP's were introduced and hard working Vandervoort Chapter members were thanked. A major, the XO of an infantry battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division was our guest speaker. Association President Allen Schoppe spoke about the current state of our organization. Executive Director Bill Bauer said a few words. Five members of the Vandervoort Chapter were sworn in for their new term by Allen Schoppe. Also attending were Assn Treasurer Larry Slavicek, Assn Secretary Laurie Clay, Executive Secretary Laura Bauer, Past President Rich Becker and Mary Darby, Nero & Carol Tucker from Huntsville, AL. Plus there were several members present from the Ben Vandervoort Chapter, which may be the finest Chapter in the 82 Airborne Division Association. It should also be said that our reunion MC and very patriotic Doug Andrews has assumed the duties of Judge Advocate for the association. Bill Eberle and Mike Williams helped Doug Andrews with the auction and passing out of dozens of items won by the participants. Jersey Joe Scherer who retired from the Chicago Fire Department made a long and humorous presentation to Doug Andrews on behalf of the seven men who rode on the cold bus to Parris Island. It was a bag of several rolls of duct tape as a hint to seal the windows of the bus. Doug accepted the gift in good humor as we knew he would. Jersey Joe is very generous to Patriotic causes of all kinds. A good time was had by all.



Early Morning View from Marriott 1st Floor



Marine Graduation Parade at Parris Island



Vandervoort Wreath at Beaufort National Cemetery



Barbara Eberle Serving At Hospitality Room



Quilts Presented to 82 Airborne Division Families



Guest Speaker MAJ & Mrs. Basso

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 508 CHAPTER, 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION ASSOCIATION, INC.

FORMAL NAME (No Nicknames) _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

STREET _____ CITY _____ STATE _____

9-DIGIT Zip _____ ASN _____ (or) SSAN (Last 4) _____

MARITAL STATUS _____ SPOUSE'S NAME _____ NUMBER OF CHILDREN _____

OCCUPATION _____ HOME #: (_____) _____ CELL #: (_____) _____

EMAIL _____ SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

____ ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR YEAR 2016 \$25.00 + Wounded Warrior _____ Ed Fund _____ Total Sent _____

____ LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP (\$250.00 FOR 49 YEARS AND UNDER OR \$175.00 FOR 50 YEARS +) \$ _____

____ ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY, RESERVE, NAT. GD – Current Rank and Date of Rank: _____

____ RETIRED MILITARY – Retired Rank and Date Departed Active Military Service _____

____ MILITARY VETERAN – Rank and Date Departed Military Service _____

508 UNIT: Co _____: Bn _____: Location _____ FROM MO/YR _____ TO MO/YR _____

Combat Tour Location: _____ FROM MO/YR _____ TO MO/YR _____

NEW MEMBERS MUST INCLUDE PROOF OF AIRBORNE QUALIFICATION

MAIL TO: KEN HAMILL; 2207 Coventry Drive; Columbus, GA 31904-5034

508 Fort Kobbe/Just Cause Reunion

In 2015 Chapter life member **Dave Crance** hosted the fourth annual reunion of the 1-508 Fort Kobbe, Panama CZ and Operation Just Cause Brotherhood. This organization started as a squad and has grown to a scattering of veterans from various units of the 1-508 Abn Bn. Their committee decided to stay with a 508th Kobbe era reunion in 2016 and will focus on an all era reunion in 2017. The 2016 reunion will honor the memories of SGT Michael A. Debois and PVT Vance T. Coats, who made the ultimate sacrifice during Operation Just Cause. The families of both men killed in action will attend the reunion to be held June 10-12 at San Angelo, Texas. A link to this 508 reunion is - <http://motorcycle-maps.us/operation-texas-2016-red-devil-reunion.html> Password to this old business page is – 1989. Veterans of the 508 Airborne in Panama and / or veterans of Operation Just Cause who are interested in attending the San Angelo Reunion may contact: Dennis Munden at telephone # 910.639.7093 or Email - dmunden508@juno.com Or contact Chris Petty at christopherpetty@bellsouth.net ...

...The graphic below depicts the 508 Regiment's association with the 193rd Brigade, the 173rd Airborne Brigae and the 82nd Airborne Division.

