

# DIABLO



Voice Of The Family And Friends Of The 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment Association- June 2008 - Vol. 3, Nr. 2

## Fort Bragg Reunion – Sixty-Sixth Anniversary

### *Volunteers Set Schedule - Plans*

#### From Command Sgt. Major

By Kenneth "Rock" Merritt

**Sixty-Sixth (66th) Anniversary  
Celebration of the 508<sup>th</sup> P.I.R.  
Veterans, Families and Friends  
Tuesday October 14 through  
Saturday October 18, 2008  
Fayetteville and Fort Bragg**

Greetings Fellow Troopers & Friends!

As the past President of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR Association, I'm honored to announce with the new Family and Friends of the 508<sup>th</sup> Association, we shall assemble at Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, NC during the period October 14-18, 2008, to celebrate the 66<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the activation of our beloved 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment. The history of WW II is filled with praise for our well known achievements – with which you are well acquainted. Therefore, I would like to briefly describe our plans for our assembly, and the agenda of activities we envision you will enjoy.

We will assemble in Fayetteville and Fort Bragg, NC from October 14-18, 2008, at the Holiday Inn Bordeaux Motel. Registration starts Tuesday at 3:00 PM October 14, 2008. The cut-off date for the Motel Reservations is September 15, 2008. This is a very important date, as we expect a large turn out for this unique opportunity, i.e., a last chance to celebrate our anniversary – to renew friendships, and finally – establish camaraderie with our courageous heirs, the active duty Officers and Men of the current 508<sup>th</sup> P.I.R.

#### Assembly Agenda and Schedule

##### Tuesday October 14, 2008

3:00 PM – Registration begins – Motel Lobby. Hospitality Room Opens.

##### Wednesday October 15, 2008

9:00 AM - Breakfast at Motel  
2:00 PM - Visit Airborne Museum,  
Fayetteville, NC

##### Thursday October 16, 2008

Special Day hosted by the Active Duty 508<sup>th</sup> P.I.R.

Schedule and details will be available at registration

##### Friday October 17, 2008

10:00 AM – Visit the Golden Knights Museum, Ft Bragg.  
11:30 PM - Visit the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Museum, Ft Bragg.  
1:30 PM – Lunch at Mckellar's Lodge, Fort Bragg, NC  
7:00 PM – "O.B. Hill Banquet" Ft Bragg Officer's Club (Buses depart Holiday Inn Motel at 6:30 PM)  
Remarks by Guest Speaker.

##### Saturday October 18, 2008

9:00 AM – Farewell Breakfast – Holiday Inn Motel

Note: Our volunteers include Jim Smith, Co. B, Ernie Lamson, Co. A, and Norb Studelaska Co. D. If you would like to assist in any way, please let me know.

Health permitting, we hope and encourage all our comrades and friends join us in the October 2008 Celebration.

Most Sincerely, Kenneth

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#### From the Crewmember

By Leland Burns - editor

**I'm giving myself a promotion.**  
The problem is I don't know what to call myself but Crewmember ain't gonna cut it any more. The reason I'm seeking a new title is that as of April 19 I completed 5 static line jumps with the Liberty Jump Team. Six days of training, a hundred PLFs then the high winds delayed the jumping and forced me to do all 5 in one day.

The actions of the week inspired me to generate a short story of the adventure and I have placed it on the World Wide Web. Here is a short example of the story...

*With all honesty I can say there was no fear going out the door; I just wanted to move out there on the step. I had waited so long for this moment that just getting it done was my only priority.*



Diablo Ed. Ready for his 5<sup>th</sup> jump of the day.

*But first I needed to force my knees and body into the perfect jump position. It never came. The air stream blew me off the strut, the airplane was gone and I was out in the sky alone.*

*By the time I realized the blur passing before my eyes was from me falling my chute was opening. There was no "opening shock" and I almost felt disappointed not to experience a big jerk. Ok, so the second step is to check canopy.*

*I look up to find extreme line twisting of the suspension lines. Pulling the risers apart seems to do nothing. But my training kicks in and I start bicycling and pull again and the now the parachute starts spinning out of the twist. Recovery comes fast enough and I'm able to look around. There is a barn and a pond and dotted trees below, no airport. Where the heck am I? I pull my left toggle and turn around; gee whiz I'm across the street. I try to head for the airport but I realize quickly that it is not reachable. If I could make it I still have to fly across the hardstand, over the taxiway and the runway just to reach the Drop Zone. It isn't going to happen and there are power lines running the length of the road. I'm not even sure I can get past them.*

*I turn back to the right to a south heading but I seem to be running with what ever slight wind is out there. I check the wind sock at the airport. It indicates a north wind but appears to be flat. At this rate of drift I see a barb wire fence and a knurly set of trees beyond that. With a tug on the left toggle I do a 180 turn. The ground is close now. I aim for a corner of the field where there is a gate off the road, north of the fence and west of the power lines. My decent to the spot is perfect, beginners luck maybe. When I hit the ground it is much harder than the sand pit. I review my body. Nothing hurt but wow, what a rude ending. Still, it was a very good landing given the hand I was dealt to play.*

The complete story with tons of photos can be found at <http://www.jumpintothevalley.com/> Go to Stories and Essays.

Anyone with an idea for a new byline for me, send it to my address below.

Leland



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## LETTERS TO THE DIABLO

### A Day With a Devil

Article by Thad J. Russell

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Cipriano Gamez was requested by the veterans' group Lest We Forget to appear during a seminar entitled *D-Day: From Normandy to Paris* to give testimony as to his experiences on D-Day and afterwards. Col. Don Alsbro, the backbone of Lest We Forget and a Vietnam Veteran, had contacted Cipriano and invited him to come. Lest We Forget instructs military history.

My assignment from was to pick up Cipriano and transport him to and from the seminar. I promised Cipriano a nice buffet dinner and while in the restaurant the waitress noticed that Cipriano was a WWII veteran of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, which was followed shortly by the arrival of the manager of the restaurant whose son is a medic in the modern day 82<sup>nd</sup>. These two spoke for about 15 minutes. After I finished my 3<sup>rd</sup> plate from the buffet I looked at my watch and realized that we needed to rapidly take to the road to meet our time requirement, so I pulled out my credit card to pay, but was not allowed to.

Upon arrival in the lecture room at Lake Michigan College, Cipriano came to know Arden Pridgeon of the 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the Pacific during WWII, and Marv Fuller, who served as an electrician on the USS Saratoga, one of the flat tops that had been out to sea when Pearl was attacked, as well as an army supply sergeant who was stationed near Frankfurt where the 508<sup>th</sup> served as the color guard. He then met Dr. James Smithers of Grand Valley State University, the speaker for the evening, who specialized in studying Latino's serving during WWII. Dr. Smithers was very interested in talking to Cipriano about his experiences since he is of Latino heritage.

During WWII, Cipriano was often termed *Mex*, and faced racial discrimination that was a severe and real aspect during that time era. Fortunately, Cipriano was of good temperament and

had good friends that helped him out along the way. One of these friends was *Chief*, an Indian who stood 6'5" tall and didn't tolerate injustice from anyone, and had no fear of demanding fair treatment, especially when it came to receiving glasses at a pub one evening.

For the second half of the seminar, Cipriano sat in front of the class as a panel of four veterans who would answer questions about their WWII experiences. After Cipriano was introduced as a *Pathfinder* for the regiment he fielded questions about those duties.

Cipriano was then asked about his drop, and stated that he was misdropped and landed 5 miles from the DZ, on the east side of the Merderet, a bit north and east of Chef du Pont. Since he could not reach the DZ, he banded together with other paratroopers and fought for Chef du Pont and La Fiere, both towns having bridges and causeways that had to be held for the incoming invasion forces.

When asked about one of the most frightening experiences, Cipriano said that he was in a wheat field being sprayed by an MG42, in which he laid perfectly flat on the ground, and counted the time between when the machine gun passed to other directions, and then returned. He said that he precisely trained for this situation, and remembered the training quite well. While the machine gun was firing elsewhere, he crawled forward for some moments, and then laid flat again when the firing returned. Eventually he successfully crossed the field.

Col. Don Alsbro then discovered that Cipriano had become acquainted with General James M. Gavin during three different instances. Intrigued, the Colonel asked Cipriano to comment about the General:

*Gavin was a soldiers' soldier. When you finished speaking with him, you felt encouraged, and ready to follow him into battle. He was also a general that you could have a cup of coffee with. Some of his nicknames were "Gentleman Jim, Slim Jim, and Jumpin' Jim." The non-verbal statement that the general made was "follow me and I'll take you there." Gavin always thanked the soldiers for their efforts, and was always up front in combat.*

In closing, Cipriano stated that when he returned to England after combat, one of

the most sobering moments was when he  
went into the tent and saw all of the

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and Friends**

**Tuesday October 14 through Saturday October 18, 2008**

**Fayetteville and Fort Bragg**

**Please send this entire page with your Registration Fee payable to: James Smith. 1403 Valencia Drive. Fayetteville, NC 28303 – Tel. 910-488-6201**

Mr/Mrs: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Note: The Registration Fee is \$ 80.00 per person.**

**(Registration Fee includes 4 meals)**

**I will have \_\_\_\_\_ Guest. Their names are listed below for Identification.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide the following Motel related information if possible:**

- 1. Arrival Date and Time: (AM/PM) Departure Date:**
- 2. Accommodations: King Size Bed or Double Bed**

**Enclosed is: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Registration Fee for \_\_\_\_\_ Persons.**

**Holiday Inn Bordeaux Motel Reservation Information**

**Based upon the information you provide herein, Jim Smith shall make “reservations” for you at the Holiday Inn Bordeaux Motel at 1707 Owen Drive Fayetteville, NC 28304. Tel. 800-325-0211. The room rate will be \$ 92.49 including Tax. After Jim makes your reservations, the Motel will provide you with a confirmation and request deposits, etc, if any, and confirm any special requirements you might have i.e. Wheel chairs, Refrigerators, etc. and number of rooms needed. # \_\_\_\_\_**

**Note: This is a Smoke Free Motel**

**No Money is required at this time for your Motel Reservations.**

**Any and All Motel changes must be made through Jim Smith.**

empty cots, knowing that these men, his friends, would not return.

Cipriano did not speak of the war after his return until many years later. He resumed his work at a saw mill for 38 more years before retiring, but now he participates with *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*, and has given his full testimony in a new book by Barry Veder, and regularly attends WWII reenactments. One of which is by Lest We Forget. It may be seen online at: [www.in-am.org/vwv2](http://www.in-am.org/vwv2)



## Looking For

Bob Burns, whose father was in the 80th AA and who has pretty much written the history of the 80th – is looking for eye witnesses to an 80th AA guy knocking out 5 tanks at Baupete. The 80th was attached to the 508th at the time. The man received the DSC. Bob also reports that 15 more tanks and armored vehicles were knocked out by paratroopers of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions with nothing more than bazookas. This action was on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June. Anyone with info should reach Ellen Peters @ 3630 Townsend Dr. Dallas, TX 75229, ph. (214) 352-7002 or email [eeptx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eeptx@sbcglobal.net).



## Well Wishes

Joe C. Andrew has been in the hospital. He's had problems with complications due to diabetes. On April 30<sup>th</sup> his right leg was amputated, and is facing a determination from doctors on his left leg. The family is requesting prayers from all. Cards are encouraged.

Joe C. Andrew  
83 Woodlawn Dr.  
Cleveland, GA 30528  
Cell ph.# 706-969-4002

*All our best Joe! Ed.*

Chet Graham has had an extended stay in the hospital of two plus months but returned home in early July. His recovery continues but he is getting better.

Chet Graham  
2700 Tice Creek #2  
Walnut Creek, CA 94595



## Condolences

**Piippo, Gloria B.**

Gloria Barbara Piippo, age 81, of Chatham, died peacefully in her sleep at her home March 10, 2008. She was born on November 23, 1926. A member of the National Honor Society

when in high school, she worked briefly in New York and while home for her father's funeral, she met Walter Piippo of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR. Gloria and Wally were married on August 28, 1946. She was a homemaker and she and Wally raised their three children – Walter, Lisa, and Dan. Gloria is survived by those children, three grandchildren and three great-grandsons. Wally preceded her in death on December 17, 2001. They were married for 55 years.



## Treasury

Needing to pay dues? Make a donation?

FAF of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR  
Attn: Ellen Peters, Treasurer  
3630 Townsend Drive  
Dallas, TX 75229  
Phone: (214) 352-7002

E-mail: [eeptx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eeptx@sbcglobal.net)



**The Diablo**

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