

DIABLO



The Link for All Veterans, Spouses, Family and Friends Of The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association- November 2008 - Vol. 3, Nr. 3

Friends and Family's Second Reunion Held At Fort Bragg *Association Gathers With 508th Returning From Afghanistan*



From The Jumpmaster

By Dick O'Donnell

The 508th Family and Friend's second reunion is now past but we're not resting on our laurels. The third reunion is on the drawing board as well as a visit to Normandy for the observation of the 65th anniversary of D-Day.

Association's Third Reunion Forming

El Paso, Texas will be the site of the next association soirée. Hosted by the 82nd Airborne's Roy P. Benavidez - Robert Patterson "All Airborne" Chapter, an event-filled agenda is promised.

The venue will be El Paso's Airport Marriott with festivities lasting from July 2 through 6, 2009.

A registration form is available by clicking on the **REUNION 2009** button on our web site at www.508pir.org ... if you don't have Internet access; please call me at 321-759-6174 to get a registration form in the mail.

D-Day Plus 65 Normandy Tour

Next up is a bus tour in Normandy for the 65th anniversary of D-Day. We need 30-40 people to sign up and at last count there were 26 people committed to go, so the trip should fill up with this notice.

Contact Eddie Polk at 800-556-1460 or eddie0337@aol.com for trip details.

Some of our members planning on going:

Jack Schlegel and Arlene Powers; Raymond and Nancy Kevilly; Gary Zuber; Leon, Linda and Robert Longe; Rich Bencivenga Jr. with Grandmother Noreen Czahor, and parents Maren & Rick Bencivenga.

Also Ellen Peters, Joe and Charlotte Parker; Jan Silver, Paul Ciorra and wife; Joe & Linda Hill and son ... and more! †

From The Stick Pusher

By Leland Burns - editor

Your Editor & Treasurer Visit ADT - The Airborne Demonstration Team.

Overwhelming! I drove an hour past the end of nowhere to discover an old army bomber base with a single remaining WWII hanger. It is just south of Fredrick, OK and serves as home to ADT. This is the parachute team that did a jump for the 508th at the Birmingham '07 reunion. I showed late for that reunion and missed their jump so it was good to get to finally meet the team, especially Jason Wolcott who is an email friend. Jack Wolcott, F-Co, KIA 9/18/44, was his uncle and Jason was the first to plant the jumping idea in my head. I showed up on a Friday afternoon and was scheduled to lecture that evening. My invite to speak about dad's story, as written in *Jump Into the Valley of the Shadow*, came despite the fact I was a member of Liberty Jump Team, a competitive exhibition unit. I give them credit for being bigger than the riff that sometimes divides the two paratrooper re-enactment groups. It was VIP all the way.

ADT owns three vintage birds of the WWII era. Two are C-47s, the Boogie Baby and the Boop-B-Doop (with Betty Boop on the side). The third airframe is a C-45 - twin rudder Beechcraft. Several ol' troopers were about, all happened to be 101st Screamin' Eagles but I forgave them. There was a jump school ending and graduation day would be Saturday afternoon when the 101st veterans would pin wings on the students, 17 new members.

Ellen Peters also drove up from Dallas arriving about three hours behind me. On Saturday there were 3 lifts of 20 jumpers. They went out the door in sticks of ten.

Ellen was treated to a C-47 ride. It was warm (late July) but wonderful weather for parachuting and I was a bit envious. However my own team was scheduled to make 6 jumps at the Victory Days Military Show in Indiana in just 6 weeks. As a personal experience Victory Days was even better. In my three morning jumps I served as the Stick Pusher. But that will have to be another story for another Diablo. Anyone traveling in west Oklahoma *must* visit ADT.

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Reflections of Reunion 2008

By Ellen Peters - Association Treasurer

The 2008 508th PIR and Family & Friends of the 508th Reunion was truly spectacular. Rock Merritt and Jim Smith did an incredible job. I can't even imagine the amount of work that went into putting this reunion together. It was held at Fort Bragg with the assistance of the active duty 508th. Rock explained to us that the 4th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division is the 4th generation of 508th; all four generations were represented at the reunion.

The 2nd Battalion 508th troopers assisted us. CSM Puckett told me that every one of them volunteered to assist us. Those guys deserve a medal!

Wednesday morning was the Memorial Breakfast. Rock opened the breakfast and spoke for a while. After breakfast, 2nd Battalion 508th CSM Puckett spoke. He said that whenever he sets his troopers loose he always tells them the regiment is a family. He said he

knew that at 21 and 22 years old they didn't really get it. Several young troopers were in the CP the previous night, looking at CSM Puckett they said, "We get it."

That afternoon, the 2nd Battalion troopers took us to the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville.

Thursday morning the troopers picked us up at 9:30 and took us to Ft. Bragg for the day. We first went into a church where all the stained glass windows were of paratroopers. CSM Plunkett talked to us about how the 4th Brigade is set up and about the body armor they have. It does a great job protecting our soldiers and weighs 27 pounds. He said the weight is something you just have to get used to. We learned that Thursday morning, prior to picking us up, the soldiers made a 10 mile run in full body armor and field packs, pretty amazing. They also had an Armored Assault Vehicle we were able to climb into and a bunch of tents set up with WWII weapons in it – an M-1, a Springfield rifle, a Thompson submachine gun and other weapons. A few troopers dressed in WWII uniforms.

After lunch we were escorted to the 34 ft. tower where we were given a demonstration. Then they allowed us to jump from the tower. We were fitted out with the proper gear and helmets and climbed up the tower. While waiting my turn, I stepped up to the door. It was kind of scary looking down. I asked the trooper standing in the door if blood curdling screams bothered him. He said, "No, ma'am, but it might make me think I did something wrong." Finally, given the o.k., I stepped out knowing there was no ground there. Going out I yelled "Airborne" and down the cable I went.

Friday morning we visited the Golden Knights museum. Then we went to the 82nd Airborne Museum. After visiting the museums, we had lunch at the Pope Air Force Base officer's club. We took up a collection and bought lunch for the troopers who were driving us around.

At the O.B. Hill Banquet, memorial candles were lit by various veterans who participated in the different campaigns with a new candle added for Afghanistan. CSM Flowers was the keynote speaker in a lovely evening capped by the 82nd Chorus

The Saturday morning Farewell Breakfast at the hotel was sad, seeing it all come to an end. But it was a wonderful reunion with memories to last a lifetime. I commend Rock and Jim for the really incredible job they did.

MAIL BOX

Leland,

I think my service in WWII was unusual. At least I hope there were few if any that went through what I did; I enlisted on July 22, 1943, eight days before my eighteenth birthday. I was called to active duty on August 18, 1943 to report to Ft. George G. Meade, MD.

During my processing a Sergeant asked me what I wanted to do in the Army. I said "fly" but since I wore glasses I probably could not. A few minutes later he suggested, "If you want to fly, why don't you join the airborne?" Not knowing anything about the airborne, I agreed.

Sent to a Ft. Benning holding company, we all know they spend a lot of time trying to get you to quit. The average time in the holding company was three weeks. They lost my records and I was there for nine weeks. All this time they could not pay me because of the lost records so I made do on \$10 a month from my father. It was about 5-6 months before I got paid.

They then sent me to the 15th Airborne in the Harmony Church area which was in the middle of basic training. When I got there with three or four others they were on the firing range. The First Sergeant asked us if we would mind pulling KP for the week so they would not have to break training for those on the range. We Ok'd that and then we got in on the rest of the basic and then off to Jump School. I left with a light machinegun MOS, although the only thing I had ever done with a light machinegun was carry it on hikes.

I went through Camp Mackall, NC, then to Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts. While there I got something that caused me to develop a fever during the day which broke some time around ten P.M. I went to sick call in the morning when my temperature was normal. The verdict was to take APCs and come back in the morning. Then on a British transport to Liverpool I finally got smart and went on sick call the first night there, I had a fever of 102. Off to the hospital for about three weeks with ten days of Sulfa drugs, I was ready to leave at the end of three weeks then I got pneumonia and had to stay for another three weeks during which time D-Day took

place. Considering the aforementioned state of training I feel that I was lucky because I would probably still be there had I joined my Company in time for that Jump.

Meanwhile they lost my records again when I went to the hospital and this time it took them nine months to find them and when they did someone had received three months of my pay. However they did pay me \$10 a month.

As I said, I hope nobody else went through this. Finally, I was assigned to G. Company, Third Bn, 508th PIR and was assigned to a 60mm mortar squad, my permanent home. By the time I jumped in Holland I was much more battle ready than when I arrived in the ETO.

So as you can see I started in this man's Army as a lend lease soldier for 15 of my first 19 months. I never did get that three months pay. I could probably have done so while checking out in December 1945 if I had been willing to stay and let them investigate. But I won \$400 at poker on the way home. I figured I was ahead.

Sincerely, Gerald G. Jones

Friends,

This is to inform everyone that Emile Lacroix is no longer associated in any way with the C-47 Club. Due to unfortunate circumstances all ties have been severed. There is a new Belgian chapter that has no involvement with Emile Lacroix. If you receive anything from the Belgium Chapter of the C-47 Club, please be aware that this is not from Emile Lacroix. The In the Footsteps of the 82nd March will not be affected by these severed ties in any way. The march has always been run by Emile's All American Jeep Group and will continue to be run by them. Of course, all members of the C-47 Club are welcome to attend Emile's march as they have always been welcome to do so.

Condolences

Studelska

Elaine Louise, wife of Norb Studelska, was called to eternal leave on the morning of Friday, April 11, 2008. Elaine left after 79 years of productive life. Elaine's top priority in life was the care of

her family and her enduring religious faith and commitment.

She was an ardent follower of school activities in which her children and grandchildren participated. Elaine and Norb helped produce raised six Eagle Scouts - three sons and three grandsons. Condolences can be sent to:

Norbert Studelska
1021 12th Ave.
Grafton, WI 53024-1964

Call For Dues !

Dues for the new fiscal year of Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Assn. are due beginning **November 1**. Dues are \$10.00 per year per household. Multiple years may be paid if desired and donations are gratefully accepted. Dues from WWII veterans are optional. Please send dues to:

F&F 508 PIR Assn.
3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805

Many people paid their dues at our recent reunion and we signed up several new members including several active duty troopers. I would especially like to thank member Jan Silver and WWII veteran, John Coates for their very kind and generous donations to our association.

Ellen Peters, Treasurer

Final Jumps

Brodd, Harold, PFC

It is with deep sadness that I report the passing of a great patriot and trooper. I was advised by the family that Harold Brodd, Company I, made his final jump on 4-14-08. Our ranks are thinning. The line is graying and distant memories are becoming more difficult to recall. But I will always, until the time of my passing, remember Harold Brodd with the greatest respect and affection. Especially our times and tribulations together in combat and the reunions we shared. Please pass this on to other members of the Regiment.

Airborne, Bob Chisolm

Terry Brodd, ph. 508-883-4335.

Doucet, Earl J. Sgt.

I'm writing to inform you that my father passed away on February 23, 2008. Dad was a proud member of the 508th PIR, 82nd Airborne. He served in Normandy, made a

combat jump into Holland and saw action during the Battle of the Bulge at Luxemburg. In civilian life he was part owner of Doucet Bros. Construction and Realty for 50 years and lived in New Orleans, LA. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mona Doucet and is survived by two sons and one daughter.

He served in the Honor Guard in Frankfurt and I know he had the privilege of meeting General Eisenhower. He told us on several occasions how nice the General treated the guys guarding his quarters - on one occasion he spoke of the General bringing fresh milk and fruit to the guards (Dad thought that was a real treat).

Danna A. Doucet
#3 Berkley Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70123
(504) 738-8032

3rd Anniversary book lists Doucet in B Co. - Ed

Koch, Steven, SPC

Steven Koch of D Co., 1st Btn; 508th PIR was KIA in the Sabari District of Afghanistan on March 3, 2008. His parents, Christine and Bill, are new members of the Family and Friends Assn. The following link is a tribute web site to Steven: <http://www.freewebs.com/steven-koch/>. It is a wonderful tribute to their son. Steven is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Pike, David, Honorary Lt. Col.

A native of Nottingham and a child while the 508th was stationed there, David was a true friend of the regiment. He authored a rather unique book titled Airborne In Nottingham and worked hard for the local museum there. In his retirement years Dave moved to Sainte Mere' Eglise, so that he could engage in better research there. He took his research to the limit and made two static line jumps to see what the fuss was about. It was this editor's delight to also bestow the title of "Honorary Texan" to David from the Burns' family. The plaque I presented him was hung in a special place when I visited his Normandy home in 2007. For a "Brit" Dave was one hell of an American. By request his body was cremated and his ashes were scattered on Hill 30.

Leland Burns, Editor

Postal Address for Sharon Pike
24 Hameau Des Belles,
Graines, 50480.

Ste Mere Eglise, France

Stack, John F.

My Grandfather, John F. Stack of Co. B, jumped into Normandy and was critically wounded (blinded) on his 20th birthday June 18, 1944 when a German 88 shell exploded directly in front of him. My hero, my Grandfather passed away Easter morning at 10:10 eastern time. He was surrounded by his family the entire 2 weeks during his struggle in a New Jersey hospice. His viewing at the memorial home was like a museum in honor of his life and legacy. There is not a day that goes by or will ever go by that I will not think of him and the men and women he served with. If you knew my Grandfather I would love to hear from you as we really don't know all of the details about his time with the 82nd Airborne other than snippets of stories he would tell and a news article about his 14 days in combat".

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Andrew, Joe

Mr. Joe Cephus Andrew age 83 of Cleveland died Tuesday, August 05, 2008 at Northeast Georgia Medical Center following an extended illness.

Mr. Andrew was retired from the U.S. Army, 82nd Airborne having served in WWII, Korean War and Vietnam. He was of the Christian faith.

Survivors include: wife: Betty Lou Andrew, Cleveland; sons: Rodney Andrew, Cleveland and Ricky Erwin Andrew, Monroe, WA; daughter: Debra Diane Massey, Midwest City, OK; sisters: Hazel Epps, Seattle, WA; Nina Martin, Santa Fe, NM; brother: J.D. Andrew, Wichita, KS; 6 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Those wishing to express online condolences to the family may do so by visiting www.barrettfh.com Barrett Funeral Home of Cleveland was in charge of arrangements. (706) 865-3101

Thank you from a grateful daughter,
Deborah (Andrew) Massey

Searching For ...

Responses to the Searchers can be sent to the Diablo Editor if the address is not given or known. Ed

Myers, Max - Medic

Sirs,

You have a great web site. Thank you for setting it up. I am trying to locate any information on a Max Myers, Medical Detachment, 508th PIR, died 10/7/44 of an accident. I was trying to see if anyone can tell me anything about him (i.e., how long he was in the 508th, did anyone know him, etc.). He was my grandfather's youngest brother and the only one of the family that served in the military at that time. Any help at all would be greatly appreciated.

T.A. Puterbaugh
Orlando, FL

timothy.puterbaugh@cambridge-na.com

Johnson, Alex (Alec?)

During the recent Veterans Weekend held at Wollaton Park, 508th friend Graham Lawson was in conversation with a lady called Glenys Burton. She told Graham how her friends, the Swift family, befriended an American soldier with whom they would like to reestablish contact.

Back in 1944, Mr. H. and Mrs. B Swift along with their daughter Elsie Swift who was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, (the women's branch of the British Army) knew an American service man by the name of Alex or Alec Johnson. They recall that Johnson played the piano and visited them on many happy occasions. The address that the SWIFT family lived at in 1944 was: 1 Wainright Street, St. Anns, Nottingham.

They would love to hear from Johnson who may contact them through Graham Lawson at – graham508@sky.com

Barrena, Jose O.

Maria Eugenia Barrena, daughter of Jose Barrena has contacted us looking for information on her father's 508th service. About January 1944, Jose, a native of Cuba, enlisted in the U.S. Army and may have gone through jump school in April of that year. Based on photographs that Maria has shared, her father was with the regiment at least during a portion of its stint as Gen. Eisenhower's Honor Guard. Whether he caught any of the Ardennes action is not yet known.

It is certain, however, that Jose re-upped in January 1946 and was at Fort Bragg in 1947, perhaps as an instructor.

Anyone who knew Jose Barrena is asked to contact his daughter Maria at –

mariaeugebrb@yahoo.com

Father...

Dear Sir/Madam

I wonder if the 508th veterans could help me. I live in Scotland, I am trying to find out about my biological father who served during WW II and was stationed in the UK up till September 1944.

I have been looking through the history of the 82nd PIR and I know many were furloughed in Edinburgh during the war years staying at the American Red Cross Service Club.

I came across your photograph(s) and wondered if my father's name ever popped up during conversations or if you were aware of his existence.

In September 1944 he was S/Sgt Gayle (sp?) Robinson or Robertson or something very similar, it is believed he came from PA and was raised in an orphanage, worked as a miner before enlisting.

Any help you can give is greatly appreciated.

Kindest regards,
John Wastle
john_wastle@btinternet.com



Get Well

Glass, Darrell

Recently had back surgery but is recovering nicely. Cards can be sent to:

Darrell Glass
1609 Mimosa Pl.
Fullerton, CA 92835

Ahrens, Jolene

The daughter of Ralph Burrus, F-Co. recently had surgery and is recovering at her home in Colorado. Cards can be sent to:

Jolene Ahrens
P.O. Box 3166
206 N. Gunnison Ave.
Buena Vista, CO 81211

**The Diablo**

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