

DIABL



The Link for All Veterans, Spouses, Family And Friends Of The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association- November 2010 - Vol. 5, Nr. 2

The Prez Sez

By Troy Palmer

After Action Report

Family and Friends of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association gathered for our fourth annual reunion on Oct. 20, 2010 in Oklahoma City in honor of the 68th anniversary of the activation of the 508th PIR. Additionally, we celebrated the safe return of the current 508 from a long, second tour of duty in Afghanistan. With over eighty people in attendance, everyone had a great time reminiscing and creating new and lasting memories.

Daily activities were numerous, yet well paced and enjoyable. After a hearty, gratifying breakfast, our annual membership meeting got underway. Many thanks to those who were in attendance for providing valuable input and much needed insight!

Afternoon activities culminated with a moving and memorable tour of the National Oklahoma City Memorial, site of the April, 20 1995 bombing of the Murrah federal building. Through a well organized, highly informative, and moving presentation, the very articulate tour guide delivered us back to that tragic spring day.

After such a stirring experience at the bombing site, we retired to the Command Post for a 'lil "stirring" of our own! The conversation and drinks flowed to the late hours of the night, while folks spun tales, caught up with old friends, and formed new and lasting bonds with others. It was a fitting way to unwind, reflect, and relax after an exciting and emotionally charged day.

Friday we toured the 45th Infantry Museum, which has the third largest collection of weapons in the United States, many items appropriated from Hitler's home, and a tremendous display of sketches by Bill Mauldin, famous WWII cartoonist. The wide and varied items on display provided hours of entertainment and enjoyable education, making it difficult for many of us to leave when the time came.

During our formal banquet dinner, everyone was dressed to impress and several members donned their military dress uniforms. Before the meal, the Airborne Demonstration team color guard presented the colors. We had a beautiful candle lighting ceremony and invocation by Don Hunter, retired Army Chaplain. After dinner, CSM Bert Puckett, a two tour 508 combat veteran spoke about our army's activities in Afghanistan and the tremendous legacy of warriors our active duty 508 is continuing to generate. We ended our evening with a wonderful raffle dominated by our Wisconsin contingent.

Saturday's schedule included a much anticipated event; a special trip to Fredrick, Oklahoma, home of the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team. The cold, blustery, rainy day, made the long bus journey seem endless. As we reached the World War Two wooden hanger and home of the ADT, we were greeted by a dozen or so troopers in authentic WWII uniforms. The hanger contained two C-47's, a couple of vintage Willys jeeps, a deuce and a half, sleeping quarters, offices, a mess hall and latrines. The various displays contained a myriad of items from the WWII era. We climbed aboard and throughout the C-47, watched the troopers pack parachutes on the packing tables and wandered tirelessly throughout this incredible facility. Our hosts served lunch using period metal mess trays and army issue tableware. The inclement weather prevented the team from jumping but we all lined up for a flight in the C-47. After the troopers prepared the plane for flight, our first "stick" readied for take off and taxied to the runway. In an unfortunate turn, the plane developed a mechanical problem which ended our plans to fly. Despite the misfortune, we had a great time and spent the rest of our tour taking photos and telling stories. At this time, we realized we had several sub-groups that added greatly to this reunion and hopefully, are a sign of growth and change within our association. We had veterans from WWII, the Korean Conflict, active duty 508 recently returned from Afghanistan, the ADT and Family and Friends of the 508.

Regrettably I was unable to make the breakfast Sunday because of my cross-country drive. Oklahoma City was a great success and I hope everyone had as much fun and fellowship as I. Thanks to all who attended, with a special thanks to Jason Wolcott and the ADT. I am eternally grateful to our National Chairman and tireless worker for the 508, Dick O'Donnell. Dick worked diligently and passionately planning and coordinating this reunion. It could not have happened as seamlessly without him. We love him dearly and appreciate all his noble efforts. ✦



Ed. Note: - WWII veteran Ed Whebeck and his lovely wife, Amy, joined us for their very first 508th reunion. We hope to see them at many more.

508th Honored at Wollaton Park

During Britain's Armed Forces weekend, a new memorial dedicated to the 508th PIR was unveiled at Wollaton Park. The memorial was designed and built by Phil Kirk of Nottingham. Phil undertook this project at his own expense and spent about a year completing it.



Over the course of the weekend, re-enactors set up a base camp that gave a realistic glimpse into what the park looked like during the war. They had tents set up with cots and all the war time accoutrements, jeeps, troops dressed in WWII jump suits, weapons displays, jump equipment displays and a chow line.

Items discovered during last year's excavation of the park were on display at the 508th Museum. Captain William Nation's 8 mm war time films were shown and admired by all who saw them. A mortar demonstration was performed.

During the ceremony to unveil the monument, the First Allied Airborne Honor Guard Association posted the colors of the 508th PIR and the U.S. National Colors. Graham Lawson read a letter of appreciation from the Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Assn. and a C-47 made a fly over. The ceremony was conducted by Reverend Mieke Gaynor. Nottingham native, John Savage, spoke of how as a twelve year old boy, he would get fish and chips for troopers who were confined to camp.

Photos of the event can be seen on the website at www.508PIR.org. ✦

The following two articles appeared in the Nottingham newspaper:

People of Nottingham remember Paratroopers

In early March of 1944, 2,000 American troops of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment arrived in Nottingham after spending several months training in Ireland. According to a 508 history by paratrooper Hank LeFebvre, Don Jakeway said it best:

“You can imagine our joy when we first set foot in this wonderful city, after spending a couple of months in that barren, cheerless area of North Ireland. We busted our butts during the daylight hours getting the camp ready, but once the sun set, we hustled those same butts into town.”

A tent city sprang up on the grounds of Wollaton Hall and, when they were not training for D-Day, they frequented the pubs and dance halls around the city.

On June 6, 1944, from a height of just 400 feet, the men of the 508th jumped into a sky full of tracer bullets above the Normandy countryside.

When they were finally pulled out of the front line on July 15, of the 2,056 men who jumped on D-Day, just 918 returned to Wollaton Park, the rest killed, missing or captured.

In the 66 years since then, the people of Nottingham have never forgotten the Yanks...and the old soldiers have never forgotten Nottingham.

The memorial, officially unveiled by Elmer Melchi on March 14, is a fitting reminder of a brief but unique period in our city's history.

Elmer Returns to Nottingham with bride.

Elmer Melchi was one of the lucky ones – the GI from Colorado survived the Normandy invasion, the Amhem debacle and capture by the Germans. He returned to his home in the shadow of the Rockies with three bullets lodged in his body...and a beautiful Nottingham bride on his arm.

In March, Elmer returned with his wife June for the unveiling of a memorial to the 82nd Airborne, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, who were camped in Wollaton Park before they flew to France in June 1944.

Elmer and June met at the American Red Cross HQ in the Albert Hall---and defied US Army rates to marry in 1945.

“I was freed from a German POW camp by the Russians. I had been wounded trying to escape, so I should have gone straight back States. Instead, I made my way to England and to Nottingham to marry my girl” said Elmer.

Sixty-five years later, they are proud grandparents. Speaking from their home in Colorado City, June said, “They said it wouldn't last,” “It was love at first sight,” interrupted her husband.

Elmer and his buddies of the 508th arrived in Nottingham on March 14, 1944. They were struck by the beauty of the park with its castle and loved the local entertainment. Elmer said, “I remember the Gregory – my wife's mother worked there.” June, formerly Miss Lloyd of Bedford Boulevard, said, “You have to admit, we gave you all a wonderful welcome. Nottingham took you guys in. We were proud of the 82nd.”

There were no arguments from Elmer, who explained what happened next. “We landed in France; it was a bit of a mess. We had a lot of casualties...and then jumped into Holland and

lost more. I got captured and taken to a POW camp in the north. One night bombers flew over, heading for Berlin and Stettin. The guards were distracted and I thought, ‘this in my chance’, but I didn't make it. I was shot four times and I still have three bullets in me.”

Elmer and June were married on June 16, 1945, and then headed to the picturesque Colorado City. They have four sons – one served three tours in Vietnam in the 1970's. The couple have returned to Nottingham several times to see family and June insists: “It is lovely over here, but I am still a Nottingham girl. There is no place like home.” †

Diablo Editor

3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805
Phone: (214) 632-1360
E-mail: Editor@508PIR.org

Call to Duty

The Nomination Committee duly appointed and constituted during the Oklahoma City reunion, will select and recommend to the membership for their consideration a slate of officers for 2012. The committee would like to afford members of the Association the opportunity to be considered for office should they desire to serve. The positions which will be open are President, Vice President, Treasurer and such other officers, if any, that the Board of Directors or the members may determine. Any one interested in being considered by the Nominating Committee for office should communicate with Bob Chisolm; 7 Cielo Lindo; Anthony, NM 88021 Email: rchisolm01@elp.com. Tel: (575)-874-1004 †

Mail Box

I would like to know if there are any members who were part of the ceremonial company that was formed by the Regiment in SHAEF Hq. to greet visiting officials. I was, and would like to correspond with any that were.

Gerald G. Jones -
geraldjones@comcast.com

I am looking for information on Mayo S. Silvey, the ordnance officer of the 82nd at the end of the war. I am also interested to get in contact with 782nd Ordnance Co. veterans. Can anyone help me out?”

Frits Janssen - frits.janssen@planel.nl
www.rememberseptember1944.com

At next years Armed Forces Weekend, we will be placing a Time Capsule on the site of the 508th Monument which will be opened in the year 2144, 200 years after the 508th arrived at Wollaton Park. Walter Barrett has agreed to write a sealed letter to be placed in the time capsule. Other items of interest from the 508th

Museum will also be placed in the capsule. This will keep the memory of the 508th alive.

Graham Lawson-thedudeinnottz@sky.com

Many thanks to my friends of the F&F of the 508th PIR for their well wishes received due to my recent medical setback. The Good Lord has heard your requests as my recovery is steadily progressing. Here's hoping that we will be together again in El Paso, in 2012.

John Ceballos – JohCeb@msn.com

Ed. Note: - Our membership voted overwhelmingly to accept your invitation to return to El Paso for our 2012 reunion.

I go to Normandy quite often with my metal detector. My particular area of interest is the battle for the La Fiere bridge and causeway. I have collected quite a few spent 30 cal. shells from this area. If any D-Day veteran or family would like one, I would be glad to mail it to you. I consider the shells pretty special and almost sacred - if they could only talk.

Herb Lahout – hlahout@aol.com (603) 616-7991 †

Health Update

Hamblin, Sylvia

As of this date, Sylvia is doing reasonable well, but the future is less promising. During the first part of October, the population of her home was hit by a case of intestinal disorder. Sylvia managed to get it for a few days. This weakened her enough and she got pneumonia which ultimately required her being hospitalized for about 4 days. These two events, her progressing dementia, plus being 91 have sort of tipped the balance. She has no appetite, will not eat or drink very much plus at this stage of dementia, she can't really tell you what, when or how much she has eaten. The staff at the home have been wonderful about trying to persuade her to eat and drink. Kitty or I take her favorite food to her every day (Whopper Jr. no cheese), but we are lucky to get her to eat a quarter of it. We try to stimulate her with homemade pumpkin cake or other treats.

We have had several meetings with her doctor, who is a close personal friend of Kitty and me, as well as the nursing home staff. Mother has a “Do Not Resuscitate” and “No Feeding Tube” medical health directive. She will receive all medical treatments for any illness or condition that can be corrected or improve the quality of life. However, if she continues to lose weight, does not increase her food and fluid intake, there will become in the near future, a downward spiral that can not be reversed. She will always be given comfort care, be free of pain and discomfort.

Paul and Kitty Hamblin kittyhamblin@baldwin-telecom.net.

Get Well Soon

Wilson, Ray

Ray Wilson had a bad fall on August 14. He was hospitalized and had a heart cath and pacemaker. It was later discovered he had a compression fracture of the T10 vertebrae (broken back). He had vertebroplasty (with bone cement) injected into the T10. Ray has a long road to regain his independence, but his heart and mind are strong and he is hoping to attend the 2011 reunion. He is grateful for the cards and prayers. Cards and letters can be sent to Ray at his daughter's house: c/o Cynthia Carruth; 3 Windwood Cove; Jackson, TN 38301. Tel: (731) 267-0047. Email: cwcarruth50@gmail.com. ➔

Final Jumps

Beno

Tom Beno of Co. G passed away on Thursday, May 13. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Tom's family. Cards and letters can be sent to the Beno Family at: 11 Dunham Rd.; Park Forest, IL 60466-1831

Broderick

My father, Robert James Broderick, of F Co. passed away on April 1, 2010 at 88 years of age.

Sgt. Broderick served with distinction in the European theater including Normandy, Holland, and the Bulge. He was indeed one of the greatest generation and terribly proud to have been a paratrooper in the 508th PIR. After the war, he considered every day of his long life a gift.

He is survived by myself, Robert James Broderick, his three daughters and many grandchildren. Sadly for us all, his devoted wife, Carolyn, passed two weeks later.

Cards can be sent to the Broderick Family at: 403 12th Pl. North; Edmonds, WA 98020-2970.

Fairman

George Fairman of HQ 2nd passed away on September 3, 2010. George suffered a stroke on August 24 and never recovered. Cards and letters can be sent to the Fairman family at: 6002 Reno Ave.; Temple City, CA 91780.

Huwe

Elroy Huwe of HQ 3rd passed away on April 8, 2010. Cards and letters can be sent to the Huwe family at: 3153 Uranus Ave.; Eau Claire, WI 54703-0784.

LeFebvre

Col. Henry (Hank) LeFebvre of A Co. passed away April 18, 2010. Hank joined the California National Guard in high school which started him on a 30 year career in the U.S. Army. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt. following graduation from OCS in July, 1942. Col. LeFebvre volunteered for parachute troops and was assigned to the 508th PIR and went overseas

to Europe in December, 1943. He was a Platoon leader in the parachute jump into Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Col. LeFebvre also made the parachute jump into Holland and fought in the Battle of the Bulge and the Central European campaign. Returning to the States, Hank was discharged and married Mary Alice Jones, his high school sweetheart, in February of 1946. They served in Germany, Ft. Monroe, VA, Korea, The Ordnance School, the Pentagon, The Canal Zone, and they retired from the U.S. Army in January 1970.

Hank is survived by his wife, Mary Alice; his sons, Doug and Jim, his daughters-in-law, C.J. and Susan; three grandchildren, numerous cousins and countless friends. Hank and Mary Alice traveled to all 7 continents and close to 100 countries, and gave many programs on their extensive travels to various organizations. He was a driver in the Meals on Wheels program for about 25 years and was a tax counselor for the elderly for about 8 years. Hank was always active in sports: Tennis, Squash, Golf, and excelled at each sport with numerous trophies. Hank was also quite a good joke teller. Hank passed away quietly in his sleep at home in Balboa, CA. Cards and letters may be sent to the LeFebvre family at: 618 W. Ocean Front; Newport Beach, CA 92661-1112.

Murray

Tricia Culbertson writes: "My father and my hero, Lawrence F. Murray, Captain, B Co, 508th PIR passed away at his home on Sunday, September 26, 2010 after a long illness. He is survived by his war bride wife, Molly, two children and four grandchildren. Molly's address is 3476 Lakeshore Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312 or in care of pmculbertson@yahoo.com.

I celebrate all those that served, and pray we will not forget the price of freedom. AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY!!"

Nieblas

Bob Nieblas of HQ 3rd passed away on October 20, 2009. Bob jumped in Normandy, Holland, and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He was wounded twice. He and his wife, Joyce, were married in Nottingham and had 64 years together. They had 2 sons, 3 daughters, 8 grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter. Cards and letters can be sent to Bob's family at: 25491 McIntyre St.; Laguna Hills, CA 92653-5409.

Porcella

Tom Porcella lost his battle with cancer on August 12, 2010. Tom was a well known presence in Normandy, returning year after year.

It was Tom and his wife, Molly, who donated flags from every state in the United States to the Airborne Museum in St. Mère Église. Most states donated flags, but there were a few who didn't. Tom purchased these flags himself so

that every state would be represented in the museum. In 2006, he was honored by the people of Picauville, by having a room named after him in their town hall.

My first trip to Normandy was in 2004. I attended a ceremony at the 508th Park in Chef du Pont where I took a photo of a 508th veteran whom I did not know. Later that year, I attended the 508th Reunion where I was determined to find the veteran whose photo I had taken. It was Tom. I remember he told me a great story about General Gavin. In Normandy, Tom was showing General Gavin their machine gun emplacements when the Germans began shelling them. Tom jumped into a small ditch and General Gavin jumped on top of him saying, "Move over son." Tom replied, "There's only room for one in here, Sir!"

I only met Tom in person twice, but he was always very kind to me and often would call me on the telephone. For me it was a real honor to receive a telephone call from him. He emailed me a copy of his book, "Jump Into Darkness", which I thoroughly enjoyed reading and we later discussed. I was especially touched by the ending of his story when he talks about the end of the Normandy campaign. As they were marching to the beach to return to England, Tom realized he was the only one remaining from his stick. With tears streaming down his face, he stepped out of line, turned back to face Normandy, and saluted. This was his way of saying goodbye to the buddies he would never see again.

In 2008, in a telephone conversation with Tom, we were talking about his special room in Picauville. In it there is a plaque with the names of all the 508th Normandy KIAs. I told him how touching that was to me and seeing all those names made me realize the terrible price of freedom. Tom said that plaque was the most important thing to him in that room. He wanted to make sure his buddies were not forgotten.

During our conversation he said he knew he would never again be able to return to his beloved Normandy. I will never forget his words to me. He said, "Ellen, it is up to you now and your generation. Please don't let my comrades who never came home be forgotten." I assured him I would not. He always said those men were the true heroes.

I like to think that today Tom is somewhere reunited with the buddies he lost during the war and those who have passed on before him having their own 508th reunion.

Tom, you were well loved and you will be missed.

Cards and letters can be sent to Tom's family at: 1696 PGA Blvd.; Melbourne, FL 32935.

We were all deeply touched that our Family and Friends association was chosen to memorialize Tom. To date we have received close to \$2,000.00 and 550 Euros! In addition I have been informed by the mayor of Picauville that the town would like to make a donation in Tom's memory. Memorials may be sent to: FF508PIR Assn.; 3630 Townsend Dr.; Dallas, TX 75229-3805. Please note in the memo section that it is a memorial to Tom Porcella. You may also use our PayPal account at www.paypal.com. The email address to enter is treasurer@508pir.org.

Schedin

James A. Schedin of Service Co. passed away March 10, 2009. He served proudly in the 508th and saw combat in Holland, Belgium, and Germany. He passed away from complications of heart disease and Alzheimer's disease. Condolences can be sent to his family at: 1099 Serene Court; Shoreview, MN 55126.

Condolences

Garren

Family and Friends member, Gene Garren, lost his mother, Edna, on August 24, 2010. Edna lived with Gene the last several years of her life and he took wonderful care of her. Those who met Edna at various reunions will remember her as a wonderful woman. Cards and letters can be sent to Gene at: 656 Winter Star Rd.; Burnsville, NC 28714.

Lamson

Our dear Ernie Lamson lost his beloved wife, Charlene, November 26, 2010. Ernie and Charlene were married for 65+ years (787 months). Charlene was a wonderful woman and will long be remembered with love and great fondness by all who knew her. Cards and letters may be sent to Ernie at: 1600 Arundel St. #205; St. Paul, MN 55117.

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. A new facility

on the web site (www.508pir.org) enables payment and donations using your credit card through PayPal.

Please send dues to:

**F&F508PIR Assn.
3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805**

2011 Reunion

Our 2011 Reunion will be held at Ft. Benning, GA with the tentative dates of October 12-16, 2011. We will be combining our reunion with the Family and Friends of the 505th RCT Assn.

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

3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805