

# PRESERVING THE LEGACY

REUNION - FAYETTEVILLE, NC  
OCTOBER 16-20, 2019

**HONORING**  
75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD  
WAR II COMBAT,  
30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
OPERATION JUST CAUSE -  
PANAMA

WORLD WAR II

KOREA ERA

DOMINICAN  
REPUBLIC

VIETNAM

NATO SUPPORT

GRENADA

PANAMA

IRAQ



**VETERANS · ACTIVE DUTY  
FAMILY · FRIENDS**

**WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS FROM ALL ERAS**

**WWW.508PIR.ORG**



The Family and Friends of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Dedicated to Honoring, Preserving and Communicating the History of All Eras of 508th Paratroopers.

**2019 ALL-ERA REUNION**  
***Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association***  
 Fayetteville, NC

**Preliminary Schedule of Events**

Wednesday, 16 October	1:00 PM	Arrival and Registration Opens
	4:00 PM	Hospitality Suite Opens
Thursday, 17 October	6:30 AM – 8:30 AM	Coffee/Danish Hour & Hot Buffet Breakfast
	8:30 AM – 9:45 AM	Formal Welcome Program & Events Briefing
	10:30 AM – 12 Noon	Golden Knights Program at Fort Bragg
	12:15 PM – 1:30 PM	Lunch with 508th Paratroopers
	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Visit to Renovated 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum and Hall of Heroes
	4:30 PM	Hospitality Suite Open
	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, 18 October	6:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Hot Buffet Breakfast
	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Annual Membership Meeting
	11:30 AM – 2:00 PM	Oral Histories & Video Viewing Sandwich Lunch Available during Viewing
	2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Presentations and Q&A from Different Era Veterans
	6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Active Duty Appreciation Night Buffet Food, Carving Stations, Open Bar, Raffles
	9:00 PM	Hospitality Suite Open
Saturday, 19 October	7:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Hot Buffet Breakfast
	10:00 AM – 3:00 PM	Open Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tandem Skydiving - Raeford, NC</li> <li>• Wind Tunnel Indoor Skydiving – Raeford, NC</li> <li>• Downtown Fayetteville Museums, Parks and Restaurants</li> </ul>
	6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Cocktail Hour
	7:00 PM – 9:30 PM	Formal Banquet
	9:30 PM – 11:30 PM	Socializing and Raffles
Sunday, 20 October	7:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Hot Buffet Breakfast
	9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Wrap-Up Board of Directors / Reunion Committee Meeting
		Departure



# F&F 508th PIR All-Era Reunion Registration Form Fayetteville, NC



October 16 – October 20, 2019

## Registration Fee (per Person)

**Members & Active Duty: \$135.00 Under 18: \$50.00 Non-Members: \$175.00**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (cell) \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_

\$135 Members/Active Duty - #Adults \_\_\_\_\_ x \$135 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Children under 18 - # Children \_\_\_\_\_ x \$50 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$175 Non-Members - #Adults \_\_\_\_\_ x \$175 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donations to Help with General Expenses = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT:** Include the following on a separate page – Full Legal Name, Address, DOB, Driver’s License Number, State of Issue. Please indicate if using a Military ID. This information is required for entry to military installations. All personal information safeguarded by the Association. Thanks.

### Hotel Reservation Instructions

Please reserve your hotel room(s) at the **Ramada Plaza Fayetteville / Fort Bragg**, 1707 A Owen Drive, Fayetteville NC 28304. **Call +1 910-323-0111**. Be sure to Reference **Reunion Group 508PIR** for the **attractive group rate of \$96.05 per night (13% tax and hot buffet breakfast included)** for 2 Queen Beds or 1 King Bed. Reservations must be made by **September 30, 2019** for this special rate. The hotel has a limited number of handicapped accessible rooms—please book early. Also, On-Line Booking Link off the Association’s website at [http://www.508pir.org/reunion/reunion\\_01.htm](http://www.508pir.org/reunion/reunion_01.htm).

REUNION REGISTRATION FEES WILL BE REFUNDED IN FULL IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND, BUT YOU MUST CANCEL YOUR HOTEL ROOM AT LEAST 72 HOURS IN ADVANCE TO AVOID ANY CHARGES.

Pay On-Line (Credit Card & PayPal) at [http://www.508pir.org/reunion/reunion\\_04.htm](http://www.508pir.org/reunion/reunion_04.htm) and Email Form to: [Treasurer@508PIR.org](mailto:Treasurer@508PIR.org)

or Please Mail Registration Form & Fee to:

**Chris Harris – Treasurer, 13 Eastern Ave, So. Deerfield, MA 01373**

Checks or Money Orders should be made payable to:

**“F&F 508th PIR Assoc”**



- All Eras of 508th Veterans
- Active Duty 508th
- Family & Friends of 508th Paratroopers



# 2019 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Join the one Association dedicated to Honoring, Preserving and Communicating the History of all Eras of 508th Paratroopers.



Only \$20 for an Annual Membership.  
Lifetime Memberships available.

**STAY IN TOUCH AND HELP PRESERVE THE LEGACY!**



The world's largest repository of 508th History.



# DIABLO



Merry  
Christmas



Merry  
Christmas

The Link for All Veterans, Active Duty, Spouses, Family and Friends of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association – December 2018

## Our 2018 Reunion

by Jim Farrell

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year I got a phone call from Rock Merritt asking me to be President of our association. Rock and my Uncle Martin Teahan served in the same platoon and as Rock said, *"It would be a great way to honor and continue your uncle's legacy"*. On November 4<sup>th</sup> at our reunion I accepted Rock's nomination and so happy to carry on our traditions.

During each year Jan Silver and I email and call each other counting down the days to the next reunion. Our reunion in Fort Walton was so special. When I served, I remember singing the cadence *"I want to be an airborne ranger"* thousands of times. Our trip to Ranger School gave us a small glimpse of how hard it is to earn that patch. Some of the highlights were getting to see and hold alligators and snakes. We also saw a live alligator feeding and the eastern diamondback snake. We all felt like airborne rangers for a brief second, then reality hit, and we went back to being civilians.



Our trip to the armament museum was fascinating. We got a guided tour into the history of munitions from the beginning of our republic to present. It was amazing to see how warfare has changed dramatically from decade to decade.



Back at the hotel was a believe it or not moment. Former 508<sup>th</sup> paratrooper Aaron Hadley assisted 97-year-old Ernie Lamson into the pool on a raft. Ernie proceeded to take dozens of laps around the pool. I am an eyewitness it did happen.

At our banquet it was such a pleasure to see old and new friends and the active duty soldiers. LTC Browning gave an inspirational speech. I had my friend Nadia come from Spain to our reunion and she gave a heart touching speech on why she finds it important to honor American veterans and how it brought her across the ocean to spend time with us at our reunion. Nadia got a standing ovation that brought her to tears. I think everyone now understand why I call Nadia Uncle Matty's Spanish Angel.



Many generations of 508<sup>th</sup>



Nadia and LTC Browning



Jan Silver is Presented with the Person of the Year Award



Rock and LTC Browning

I want to thank everyone for putting your trust in me to be our President and wish everyone a wonderful year, Jan Silver and I will now start counting the days to the 2019 reunion to be held in Fayetteville, NC. ➔

Diablo Editor  
262 Eastgate Dr #394  
Aiken, SC 29803-7698  
Phone: (606) 356-2913  
Email: [Editor@508pir.org](mailto:Editor@508pir.org)

# PARATROOPERS, PARATROOPERS, PARATROOPERS

by Ellen Peters

On Wednesday, November 14, the Benevidez-Patterson Chapter of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division hosted paratroopers from 1-508 and 3rd Brigade at a BBQ held at their Chapter house after the paratroopers had completed a month of training at Ft. Bliss. After living on MREs for a month, the soldiers were happy to enjoy a meal of hamburgers and hot dogs. The troopers arrived two busloads at a time. Each group of paratroopers enjoyed two hours of camaraderie with veterans of the Benevidez-Patterson Chapter prior to the arrival of the next busload. As each group arrived, John Ceballos introduced them to 508 veteran, LTC (Ret) Bob Chisolm. He gave them a brief description of Bob's service and the soldiers were lined up to shake his hand and have their picture taken with him. It was a wonderful day and I ran into a trooper I met in the square of St. Mere Eglise two years ago!



A busload of troopers arrive



The chow line



They lined for photos with Bob Chisolm



This trooper wanted to exchange headgear!



Troopers were asked to sign ceiling tiles to commemorate their visit



Troopers enjoying hamburgers and hotdogs



Maj. Jared Wagner and John Ceballos



LTC Zach Corke and Ellen Peters †

## Red Devils Ambush Sampans

by SP4 Carl Bach

A recent evening found Company A of the 1/508<sup>th</sup> in their night defensive position along one of the numerous waterways southwest of Long Bien. The fourth platoon set up a "nightingale" (night ambush) approximately 700 meters from the remainder of the company.

SP4 Frank A. Cuane, West Collingswood, N.J., spotted four sampans moving downstream. He yelled, "La De," ("Come Here") but they continued. Cuane then opened fire on the insurgents and initiated the contact that was to last an entire night.

PSG Michael L. Milton, Oakland, Calif., moved from his position into the water directly in front of the sampans, continued to move forward and managed to sink one of the boats himself. He then returned to his position and reported the situation to his company commander.

1LT David R.E. Hale, acting CO, immediately moved his command post to one of the MP boats. He then deployed the second platoon to follow him. Both boats received hostile fire on their journey downstream. Arriving at the initial point of contact, Hale consolidated his forces and moved them into position.

A Company's "Red Devil's" began to spray the area with a tremendous volume of fire. Air support was called in, and two Cobras responded to the call. While the gunships reconnoitered the area, "Spooky" arrived to light up the skies with flares. Another sampan was sunk at A Company's location and Bien Hoa artillery was alerted. The gunships spotted 15 additional sampans about 1200 meters upstream. They went into action and expended their entire ordnance a total of five times. The combined effort was accredited with a body count of 19 and a total of 29 sampans sunk or captured. †

## THE MEASURE OF A GIFT

by Fred Gladstone, submitted by Ellen Peters



Fred Gladstone at 2004 Reunion

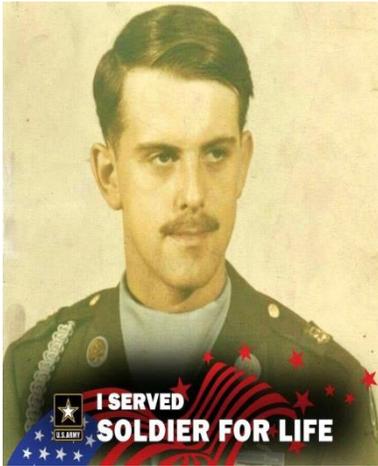
It was Christmas Eve in the year 1944 and we were moving quickly through the snow-covered Ardennes Forest in Belgium. The Army called it a tactical withdrawal, but as far as our rear-guard unit was concerned, it was a matter of blowing up some bridges and putting distance between ourselves and the oncoming enemy. With the coming of dawn, we were safely on a hillside, weary and hungry - but safe. My buddy, Bill (Sobelewski), was nearby. Suddenly, he said, "Merry Christmas, Fred!" and handed me a five-cent candy bar. Now, finding a candy bar in those grim conditions was like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. But Bill had one and was giving it to me for a Christmas gift.

A few weeks later Bill was fatally wounded, but I have never forgotten him nor his little gift. But was it really so insignificant? No - it represented all that he could give at the time. I learned a very important lesson from this incident: THE MEASURE OF A GIFT IS IN THE ABILITY OF THE GIVER. †

## My Combat Tour In Vietnam

April 1968 – April 1969

by Alvin "Buddy" O'Haver; Submitted by Ellen Peters



4/30/68 I was sent to Fort Lewis, Washington. I received all my gear: jungle cloths, etc. before being flown out to Vietnam. Some of my old friends were there and some were going to Korea.

5/03/68 We landed in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. We saw the men leaving. We were their new replacements. We were then sent to Bien Hoa. After a week training there, we were sent up north to our regular units.

5/06/68 Still at Bien Hoa. The Viet Cong had two battalions nearby. They mortared us the first night. A few rounds hit nearby and killed five men. They assigned me to the 82nd airborne. We were given M-16 rifles but no ammo.

5/13/68 After our training, we loaded onto trucks and headed to a bunch of helicopters. We got in the helicopters and took off. This was fun, riding in them. You could look down and see the Vietnamese people, water buffalos and the land below us.

5/14/68 We headed to a place near Phu Bai, to a big mountain, called Camp Birmingham. It was full of bunkers. I was assigned to "A" company 4th platoon. The sergeant was Sgt. William Evans. They had just come back from 14 days in the field. Each company took turns guarding the mountain, while the rest went out to keep the roads open.

5/19/68 We headed out to the field three days ago, and my back is about broken, from carrying: c-rations, grenades, flares, ammo, sleeping equipment, claymore mines, gas masks, and a lot more. We ran out of drinking water. The captain said we were only thirty minutes away from some. We ended up walking about nine hours till we found some.

6/02/68 We went back out to the field after a few days. At Birmingham we walked most of the time. I have a beard and mustache now. We follow trails a lot and talk to each other when we get a chance.

6/07/68 For two days we just sit along the road, until our convoys got through alright.

6/10/68 We found enemy bunkers and now we are going to blow them up. We cut out an LZ (landing zone) with C-4 (explosives), so the helicopters could bring us resupplies. We go back to Birmingham soon, so we can build bunkers and string wire. So far all we have done is guard hills, convoys, and destroy enemy bunkers.

6/11/68 Today we guarded men clearing land with bulldozers. They cleared out trees and bushes, along the road up to LZ Henry (base camp). It was hot sitting there all day. When we got back, it was for six days building bunkers. While another platoon went out, just heard that Kennedy was killed.

6/12/68 Convoy and engineering day again. Sitting around watching the men work. Our arms are cut from this thing called elephant grass. It really stings.

6/14/68 We were told to pack up and go to the chopper pad, so we could be taken across the river to recon the area (reconnaissance - going into the jungle to scout enemy activity). They took our platoon, a machine gun and two men from the 3rd platoon. When we landed, we made our way through swamps, creeks and high weeds. We only found an old Vietnamese village.

6/23/68 Now we are elsewhere. B and C Company are staying at Camp Birmingham.

6/24/68 We remained on our position until our new supplies were delivered. We fired up our old ammo, claymore mines and M-79 rounds. We cleaned our weapons and reloaded them. We moved on and found some V.C. communication equipment, motors and generators.

6/26/68 We have been in the field for several days now. A lot of men are becoming sick. We had to cut three LZs for the choppers to come in and get them out. One guy broke down and cried because his pack was too heavy for him to carry. So, we had to make it lighter for him, so he could go on. Jets have been bombing near here since daylight.

6/29/68 We are in the field again and only found more equipment, bunkers and foot prints. Yesterday we tried to cross a river the current was too strong.

6/30/68 We headed back to Birmingham Hill. When we got back, we heard we were going to China Beach near Da Nang for a few days. Stand down for some rest. Two months gone, ten to go.

7/01/68 We ended up at Coco Beach, swimming, drinking, enjoying the sun and having a good time. Our whole company came here in big helicopters. The ocean is big with salt water and plenty of jelly fish.

7/03/68 We went back to Birmingham Hill. While we were gone, they found three dead V.C. that were killed by artillery. Three more had given themselves up. Today is really hot. We had to put up ponchos to keep the sun from hitting us. We were given salt tablets, so we wouldn't sweat so much.

7/09/68 We got a new company commander today, He led us out to the field and up Saddle Mountain, where three or more V.C. bodies were found. A squad of men moved out ahead of us. All of a sudden, we heard M-16 shots. They radioed back that they ran into the Viet Cong. They killed most of them and we waited to see if any more came back our way. None did. So, we went back to Birmingham and got clean clothes. Beer, soda, mail, and food. When we got there, there were South Vietnamese soldiers on the hill. Got news we were going to camp Bastogne, another mountain nearby for a while. The 101st airborne there was going to Bien Hoa. The morale was low. It seems so unorganized lately. We don't know half the time what we are doing.

7/12/68 We arrived at Camp Bastogne and only had to go out on a recon mission.

7/13/68 Our platoon and the 3rd platoon went out to recon the area around Bastogne. We didn't see a thing. All it did was rain all day. We just got a shower and slipped all over the mountain side, in mud and water.

7/14/68 We went out again to guard the engineers between Bastogne and Birmingham. It gets boring, but I guess it's better than running into old Charlie.

7/20/68 The 4th platoon and the 2nd platoon went out to check out a rumor that a battalion of Viet Cong were north of Bastogne last night. Our 50 cal. guns at the bottom of the hill opened fire on another hill nearby. A few more days, then on to LZ Boyd. They say the land is flat with no trees or jungle.

7/21/68 Still at Bastogne. I pulled guard duty with the 106 men. My platoon just came in soaked and bushed. They found bunkers that the guns were firing on the other night. Found two graves with two dead V.C. in them.

7/24/68 We made it to LZ Boyd by choppers. Our platoon was picked to guard the bridge. The river is a big one and so is the bridge. Across it is a large Vietnamese village, with big hills and a Vietnamese mansion on top of them. I think it is the first village we have seen, since we got over here. We are not allowed to go into it. Bunkers are out of sight. Made of wood and holds at least eight men. They have wooden floors, cabinets, windows, screen doors, chairs, hangers, light bulbs and electric sockets which run on a generator. Around the bunkers are sand bags and on top of each one is mounted with a 50 cal. machine gun. At night four men guard the bridge, two go across and come back, then the other two take over.

7/25/68 Still at the bridge. Our captain came back from leave to the states. We are to leave soon, to the rice paddies about six miles from Hue. There are to be a lot of Viet Cong in that area.

7/26/68 At LZ Boyd, we are not allowed to have our weapons loaded here in the camp. Which is dumb. Now it's either LZ Sally or Tea Bone Mountain. But we know how rumors are.

7/30/68 LZ Boyd. We are packed up and ready to go. But don't know where. Still guarding the bridge. On standby alert. Our captain wants to hit the big stuff.

8/01/68 LZ Boyd. We go to the field tomorrow carrying a mortar and ammo. Still don't know where we are going. Today we had to string wire from the river back to our position. The night before six V.C. went through the village. Three left and three are still in it. Can't tell them apart, they all look alike to us.

8/4/68 LZ Boyd. Today we crossed the river by rope and air mattress, it took till dark. We headed up a large mountain and could see Bastogne, Boyd, Birmingham and part of Hue. We only got to fire the mortars for two days. Then we cleaned them and they were flown back into LZ Boyd. Wish they would make up their minds. Now they gave us two M-60 machine guns to carry with us. First two days several men got sick and had to be taken out of the field. We heard they are building an air field at the bottom of Birmingham. The South Vietnamese soldiers are still there, we call them "Ravens".

8/07/68 Southeast of LZ Boyd, we covered a lot of ground, humping up and down hills. We found a village and surrounded it and searched it. Found nothing. Only temples and pineapple trees. Ran into a bunch of leeches. Stopped and got resupplied with beer, c-rations and mail. The V.C. are putting out booby traps for us;



8/09/68 Today we surrounded five temples and waited till after chow, before we searched them. Found nothing. We were hit by our own mortars. Ten men and a Lt. from the 3rd platoon were hit. I helped carry the M-60 today. The captain dropped out today.

8/11/68 Hill 100. Now we are moving up hill 100. It's a long walk and we are really bushed. We stopped and are waiting for resupplies. After we were ready to move out, we heard an explosion. I saw a puff of smoke. Men were hitting the ground. One yelled "I'm hit". He had hit a booby trap. We reconned the area and found bunkers, mortar positions, and rounds of ammo. We also found a wrecked helicopter. Now we are pushing on west. Fifteen men are gone from our company, including R&R men (men on leave).

8/14/68 We have been in the field for fourteen days and got sniper fire from a village nearby.

8/18/68 In the field eighteen days. The night before last, Birmingham and Bastogne were hit by rockets and mortars. We went out on ambush last night. The mosquitoes are driving us crazy. Today the 2nd platoon is going out and gas a tunnel they found in the temples.



Willie Williams and Buddy O'Haver

8/20/68 In the field twenty days. Last night we sat up on a hill, about five or eight miles from LZ Boyd. Suddenly, we heard explosions and from a distance we could see the Viet Cong mortar attack LZ Boyd. They were firing from a place we were at two days ago. Now we are to return to LZ Boyd to get ready for a battalion combat assault.

8/21/68 We got back to LZ Boyd, resupplied and ready to leave again.

8/22/68 We left LZ Boyd and headed to Birmingham. When we got there, we dug prone shelters and received more equipment.

8/23/68 We left Birmingham to try and destroy the 22nd N.V.A. regiment. Part of a force ready to attack Hue and Phu Bai. Our company was the first to land in that area.

8/24/68 We walked up stream to meet the CPT and the rest of the companies. We set up our night logger on a hill that night. Hue and Phu Bai were attacked

8/25/68 We set out to help B company head off the enemy. On the way we found bunkers and huts. We heard firing. B Company had made contact with either the N.V.A. or the Viet Cong. Our platoon wounded two of them and chased one up a trail. We ran into a bunker complex. We found clothes, food, radios and weapons. Moved on and found another bunker with 140 rounds of mortar ammo and more weapons.

8/26/68 We were a blocking force for C Company. They ran into a machine gun bunker complex. Two were killed and two wounded, including a LT. The rest of us cleared out an LZ so the men could be lifted by chopper out. One of our men found a cache (tunnel) full of SK-47 rifles, pistols, shells, rockets, grenades, mortars, claymore mines, two big radios, and two pearl handled pistols. The whole company was given an SK-47 rifle to take home after their time was up in Vietnam. They were flown back to the rear and locked up until we were ready to leave Vietnam. One of the enemy that was captured said there was stuff like what we found from here to the "A" Chau Valley. A diary, maps and documents were also found. I saw the dead Viet Cong and the wounded, but it didn't shake me up as I thought it would. Our platoon stayed back to blow all the ammo up, which took a good while. Then we moved out to join the rest of the company.

8/27/68 Now we are cutting an LZ, so we can go on our real assault area, which we never made. Still looking for the 22nd N.V.A. regiment, which we haven't found yet. We stopped cutting the LZ and moved on. We walked all day up and down hills, through rice paddies and into the jungles. When we reached our night logger, we were all tired and hungry. Our captain told us to dig in for the night. Some didn't do it. We were mortared by the V.C. A round hit the 3rd platoon. Some had not dug in and some were killed and wounded. We cleared an LZ, so we could get the dead and wounded out.

8/29/68 We ran into contact today. Bullets were flying everywhere.

8/31/68 The 3rd platoon hit it big today. They found a tunnel with weapons, complete mortars, machine guns and shot guns. →

*(Editor's Note: This article will be continued in the next issue of the Diablo)*

## A STROKE OF LUCK!

by Ellen Peters

I had a trip planned to El Paso, TX the weekend of October 19 – 21 for a visit with LTC (Ret) Bob Chisolm and John Ceballos. Prior to my trip, I learned that 1-508 was training at Ft. Bliss, so I contacted LTC Zach Corke and arranged for a lunch with the 1-508 Command Staff and Bob (who is a combat veteran of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam), John and Benevidez-Patterson members, Marge and Jesus Bravo.

Upon arriving at the restaurant, COL. Arthur Sellers and CSM Reese Teakell – the commanding office and CSM of 3rd Brigade stopped by to meet Bob as well.



Maj. Jared Wagner, Maj. John Intile, LTC Zach Corke, SGM Chino Espinosa, John Ceballos, CSM Jacob Provence, Bob Chisolm, Jesus Bravo, CSM Reese Teakell, and COL Arthur Sellers



During the lunch, LTC Corke and CSM Provence presented Bob with a special gift from 1-Fury – a customized bottle of Gentleman Jack!

After lunch, we all made a visit to the Benevidez-Patterson "All Airborne" Chapter House. During the visit, John Ceballos asked LTC Corke if 1-508 would be available for a BBQ during their stay in El Paso. ➔

## The Passing of Bill Knapp

Memorial services were held this past Monday for one of our members and WWII veteran, Bill Knapp. I had the good fortune of meeting Bill during 2014 and with both of us being former 508th Paratroopers, we quickly established a "brotherly" bond. The weather that day was a beautiful cold, clear winter day with blue skies. There was a large turnout of family and friends to pay their final tribute to Bill, a gracious, kind and humble gentleman. Bill was also a member of the local chapter of the Patriot Guard Riders and they provided the motorcycle escort and flag line for Bill's final ride.



Patriot Guard Riders (PGR) escorting Bill, arrive at the cemetery



PGR members assembling for flag line detail

The memorial services were officiated by Bobi Oates, SMSgt, Retired, USAF, who did a wonderful job. There was an Honor Guard from the US Army that conducted the three-round volley of seven rifles, as well as the flag folding. Two buglers played "taps" with the second bugler playing the "echo". If you have not heard "taps" played this way, it is quite unique and memorable. Numerous individuals spoke fondly of Bill, to include his very close friend and traveling companion Em; the pastor from the church he attended; the American Legion Commander, Department of Nevada and the chaplain from the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 17.



Left: memorial display, Bill's WWII portrait, wooden box containing his cremains and a copy of his novel depicting his WWII experiences  
Right: Bill's pastor in foreground. His close friend and traveling companion, Em, is standing in the background



In September 2015, Bill received the government of France's "*Legion of Honor*" medal with knighthood, for his participation in the Normandy invasion (Operation Overlord). During the invasion, the C-47 Bill was on dropped its 508th Paratroopers a short distance from the French town of Ste Mere Eglise. That was his first involvement in the battle in western Europe. He was to go on and participate in the parachute jump into Holland (Operation Market-Garden), as well as the Battle of the Bulge two months later.



US Army Honor Guard folding the flag



Presentation of flag to Bill's daughter

Bill was a gentle soul with family and many friends who will miss him greatly. Bill has stood up, hooked up and made his final door exit from this earth and came to a soft landing in heaven. RIP 1Lt William Knapp, job well done.



Flags at cemetery with beautiful blue skies during Bill's memorial service

Airborne All The Way-  
Sgt. Gregory Hall  
508th "Red Devils"  
C-1/508; 3rd Brigade  
82nd Airborne Division  
Vietnam-era ✈

*Photographs courtesy of Mr. Scott Oates*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **82nd Airborne "All American" Jeep Group Historical Society** would like to invite you to participate in the 37th edition of our yearly winter historical march "**In the Footsteps of the 82nd Airborne Division**" scheduled for February 23, 2019. This year we will start from Bra-sur-Lienne (Lierneux) and follow the steps of the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) of the 82nd Airborne Division. Please see our website at: [www.inthefootstepsofthe82ndairbornedivision.be](http://www.inthefootstepsofthe82ndairbornedivision.be) †

The WWII Airborne Demonstration Team would like to extend an invitation to any WWII 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne veterans who'd like to join us on April 10-13, 2019. We're based out of Frederick, Oklahoma and will be conducting parachute operations at that time. Our two original C-47's will be flying. We'll pay the travel for the first three WWII veterans who'd like to attend. In addition, the veterans will be offered flights in the C-47's during jump operations. The veterans will be encouraged to assist in the wing presentation ceremony by pinning the wings on the newly qualified parachutist. Accommodations and meals will be provided. If interested please contact Steve Mrozek at 586-943-7555, [simrozek@gmail.com](mailto:simrozek@gmail.com) or Ellen Peters at 214-632-1360 or [eeptx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eeptx@sbcglobal.net).

Fury from the Sky!

Steve Mrozek †

*(Editor's Note: Steve was with the 508th in the Logar Province of Afghanistan from May 2007- May 2008.)*

### UPCOMING ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY BALLS

Save these dates. **1Fury** will hold its Military Ball at the Iron Mike Center on **Fort Bragg on Friday, 08 February 2019**. **2Fury** will hold its Military Ball at **Pinehurst Resort on Saturday, 09 March 2019**. More attendance and sponsorship details to be emailed out the first week of January.

## THANK YOU

Many, many thanks to Charmaine and Barry Deere, Gene Garren, Wanda Hamilton, and Rock Merritt for their very kind and generous donations to help defray the reunions costs. †

Thank you to Gene Garren and Adriane Falgione for generously donating the Annual Membership Fee for the next two years to our reunion's active duty color guard! †

## NEW FAMILY & FRIENDS LIFETIME MEMBERS

### New Lifetime Members

#### Sustaining Members:

Mike Hamel – more info to follow in the next Diablo

Col. Brent and Beth Johnson – Brent served in 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, A6. 1/508 from 1989-1990

Kevin Lewis – Kevin served in B Co. 1/508 from 1989-1990

Dwaine Selk - Dwaine is a combat veteran of both the Korean War and Vietnam War. As a member of the famed Golden Brigade, Dwaine served as 1st Sgt. Of B Co, 1-508 in Vietnam.

Peggy and Ray Younes - 508th ARCT, 19th Quartermaster, 1951-1952

#### Supporters:

Trevor Ferrell - B Co, 2-508, 2015-2018

Delbert Grush – Delbert was with C Co & HHC in **2-508** from 2006-2010. He deployed to Afghanistan in the 2007-2008 campaign.

Eric Sowers – Eric was with A Co in **2-508** from 2004-2008. He deployed to Afghanistan in the 2007-2008 campaign

### New Annual Members

Layton Austin – C Co. 2-508 PIR, Feb 2016-present

Nic Day – B Co. 1-508, 2014-present

Konnor Delk – HHC 1-508, 2016-2018

Richard George – HHC 508, March 1954-March 1955

Aaron Hadley – 2-508 B Co & HHC 2012-2018

Alexander Hennings – B Co. 1-508, 2015-present

Daemon Lane – 1-508

Gerry Merritt – Son of Rock Merritt

Christopher Pavy – 1-508, 2015-present

Liberty Phillips – Liberty and her family have been involved with honoring our veterans for many years and was one of the attendees of the Best Defense Foundation trip that took Ralph King, John Coates along with several other veterans to France, Holland and Germany

Miguel Salinas – HHC 1-508, 2016-2018

Donald and Susana Thompson – grandson currently in 508<sup>th</sup>

Johnathan Tomas – B Co. & HHC 2-508, 2014- present

Pat Wilson – D Co. 2-508, 2014-2018

## CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to SSG Justin Smith of 2-508 and wife, Lyndsay, on the birth of their daughter, Harper Lynn Smith, on December 3, 2018 at 1610. Harper weighed 7 lbs., 8 oz and was 20.5 inches long. †



## SEARCHING FOR.....

-Any WWII veteran who would like to go to Normandy for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day, please contact Ellen Peters at [eeptx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:eeptx@sbcglobal.net) or 214-632-1360 †

-Col. (Ret) Elizabeth Coble is taking a group of retired military officers to Normandy for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day and is looking for volunteer drivers. Anyone interested in helping can contact Col. Coble at [ABNATW@gmail.com](mailto:ABNATW@gmail.com) or 703-344-4016 †

### - THE JAPAN CONNECTION

This email was received by the Jumpmaster, Dick O'Donnell, and is published here with the consent of Ms. Takagi who is searching for a 508er named Wesley-Brown:

My name is Tsubasa Takagi, and I am the first grandchild of Minoru Sasajima who was in the 1st Airborne of Japanese Self-Defence Army around the 1950's-60's. I have just come across your comment thread in the 508th PIR website mentioning Lt. Sasajima and I have shared the information with my mother and uncle. We were very interested in your post.

My mother Kasumi Takagi (née Sasajima), my uncle Mamoru Sasajima, and I believe that the Lt. Sasajima that you met at Camp Kashii, Fukuoka back in 1955 was my grandfather. Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away in Japan in 2007 from cancer at the age of 80.

We are very proud of my grandfather's achievements. He has received Airborne badges from Japan, the U.S. and West Germany. I remember that my grandfather used to talk about people he had met in the U.S. and Europe through his military career. When he was sent to the United States Army Field Artillery School from 1959-1960, he saw people enjoying skydiving as a sport there. After returning to Japan, he was assigned to Airborne unit in Japan. This was when he found out that there were people from the U.S. Army stationed in Tachikawa, Tokyo enjoying skydiving and asked them to teach him and his colleagues how to skydive. He was especially thankful to the people of the U.S. Army in Tachikawa, Tokyo for accepting him and his fellow officers and teaching them skydiving. They also gave them some parachute equipment which enabled them to spread sport parachuting in Japan.

My grandfather was in fact the first man to skydive in Japan and my grandmother was the first woman. He was my father and my mother's skydiving instructor. In fact, they met through skydiving. (My father also served in the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and trained as a test pilot in Edwards AFB for a year.) I was the youngest Japanese person to skydive at the age of 16 and 6 days in Japan.

After reading your post, I wanted to make contact with you. My grandfather and I were very close, and it was really touching to read your post. I hope this letter finds you well.

Sincerely,

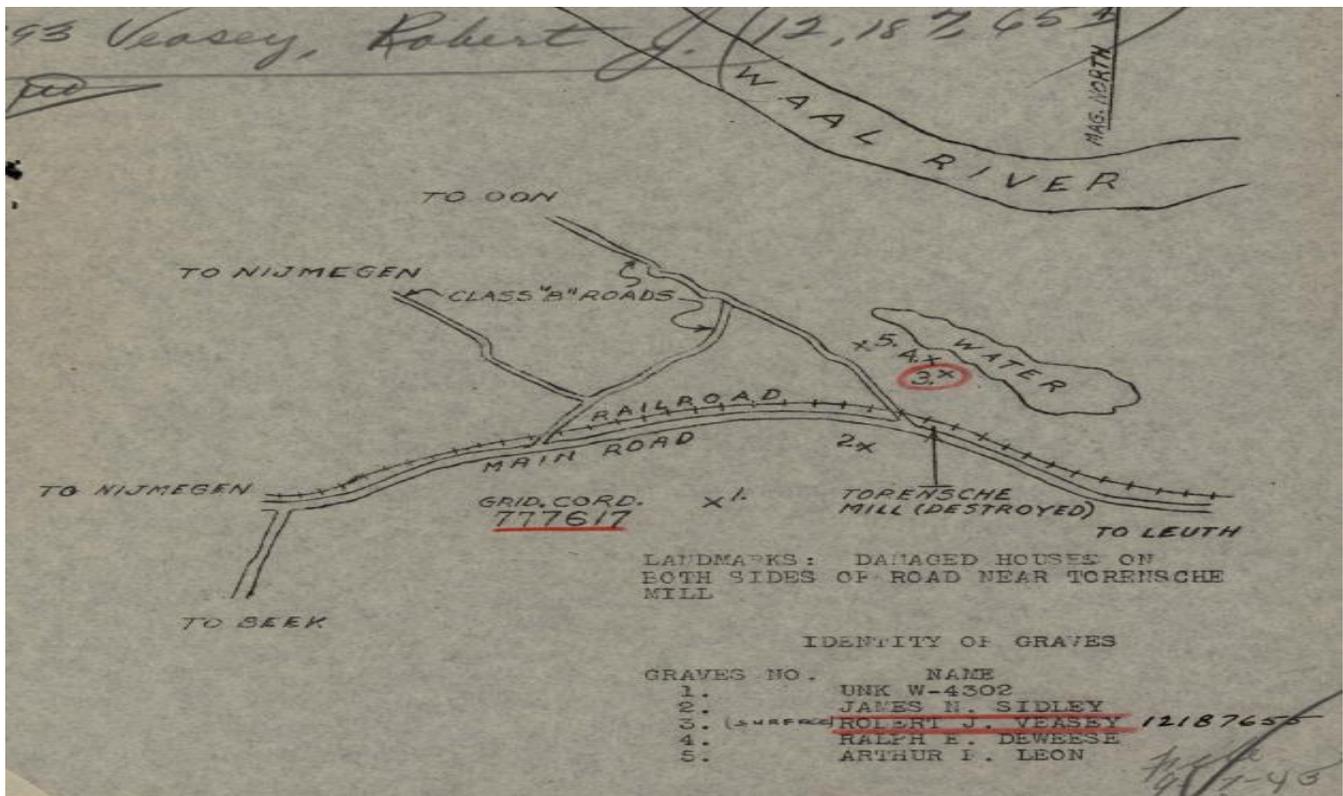
Tsubasa Takagi

[tsubasa.tkg@gmail.com](mailto:tsubasa.tkg@gmail.com) ↗

### -Battle of the Thorensse Mill near Beek

Dear Friends,

Perhaps someone can help me. During the battle for the Thorensse Mill in the Ooijpolders northeast of Beek [23 September 1944] several paratroopers from 3rd Battalion 508th were killed. The men were buried in a field grave at the north side of the road, opposite the Mill. The remains were recovered in 1945 and reburied in the temporary Margraten Cemetery in southern Holland.



Lt Ralph E. DeWeese from H Company

Sgt James N. Sidely Jr from HQ/3

Pfc Arthur F. Leon from G Company

There was another trooper, but who as he? probably he was later identified.

BUT: another man buried at the same location was:

Cpl Robert J. Veasey. Who was he?

He is buried in Margraten Cemetery and as his unit the 364th Bomb Squadron, 305th Bomb Group (H) is mentioned.

This is also confirmed by a letter from next of kin in the burial file I have. According to the families letter, the family was informed by Sgt Beall, G Company that Robert was with his unit for 7 days

Just records shows he was killed not  
 Holland on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1944, with the  
 508<sup>th</sup> Paratroop Depot - Co G. A recent  
 letter from Sgt. W.A. Beach, Co. G. 508 Paratroop  
 Inf. A.P. 0.230, whose very son was with for  
 7 days of fighting, this paratrooper writes  
 that Robert was killed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September  
 on the Wood Plains, southeast of Mijmegen  
 and that the Burial Corps could not get his  
 body at that time. There is a duplicate  
 letter of Sgt. Beach in England at Robert's  
 original address with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force.

This may mean that Robert had jumped with the 508th on the 17th?

Was Robert a paratrooper or did he belong to the Air Force?

Perhaps someone can help out?

Jan Bos

[circle82@gmail.com](mailto:circle82@gmail.com) †

## FINAL JUMPS

### Detwiler, T.K.

T. K. Detwiler, known to his Trooper buddies as "T. K." or "Det", passed away on September 22, 2018. "Det" was a Parachute Rigger, serving in the Parachute Maintenance and Repair Section of the 508 Provisional Service Company. In due course, his talents resulted in his preparation and operation of a Rigger's Carpenter Shop. "Det's" Shop handled general maintenance, plus design and construction of Drop Containers for recoilless rifles and other new developments. †



### Knapp, Bill

William F Knapp, 96, of Las Vegas, Nevada, was born on June 28, 1922 and passed away on November 8, 2018. Bill served with the 508<sup>th</sup> in WWII, jumping outside of Ste Mere Eglise, into Holland in Operation Market Garden and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. In 2015, Bill received France's "Legion of Honor" medal with knighthood. Memorial contributions may be made to the University United Methodist Church in Las Vegas, the American Legion Post 76, or a charity of the donor's choice. †



### Welch, Ervin H.

Ervin Welch, 94, of N. Wisconsin Street Elkhorn, WI died peacefully Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at his residence. He was born May 28, 1923 in Elkhorn, WI, the son of the late Harvey and Carrie Mae (Churchill) Welch. He was united in marriage to Marjorie Brown on December 3, 1948 in Dubuque, Iowa. She preceded Erv in death on February 1, 2017. Erv served as a combat infantryman parachutist in the US Army with a tour of duty in Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe with the 82nd Airborne Division from March 13, 1943 to December 31, 1946. For over 40 years, he worked with the Walworth County Highway Department, retiring as Sign Foreman in 1985. Erv was a member of the First United Methodist Church of Elkhorn and active with VFW Post 6375 of Elkhorn.

Erv was a loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather; who will be deeply missed by his three children; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren and by a host of other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 68 years, Marjorie, one great-grandson, two brothers, and six sisters.

Condolences can be sent to his family at:

505 N. Wisconsin St.  
 Elkhorn, WI 53121 †

## CONDOLENCES

Those who attended the 2014 Reunion in Dallas, TX will remember Cowden Ward and his P-51 Mustang aircraft, Pecos Bill. Sadly Mr. Ward and his passenger, a WWII B-17 pilot were killed when the plane crashed in Fredericksburg, TX on November 14. Mr. Ward provided Freedom Flights to WWII Veterans and recipients of the Purple Heart free of charge. †



Pinky Pinkston and Cowden Ward in 2014

Kindly submit final jump information to [Editor@508PIR.org](mailto:Editor@508PIR.org). Please include: name, company, years served in the 508<sup>th</sup> if available, and address where to send condolences if available.

## Mailbox

Good morning troops, well here it is, the 18<sup>th</sup> day of December and that is one day that I will never forget, it was 74 years ago today that I boarded the cattle trucks and headed for the Battle of the Bulge, the battle that cost the 508<sup>th</sup> 101 killed in action, this was also the first battle that I was a platoon sergeant. So let me say Merry Christmas to all of you and many thanks for all the support you have given me these past 43 years. I can say without any reservation that the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR and the F&F Association is what keeps me going. God Bless all of you as you are the greatest. †

**Kenneth "Rock" Merritt**

## EVERY SOLDIER HAS A STORY

And we want yours!! Do you have a story to tell of your service in the 508th? Combat or otherwise? If so, please send it to the Diablo editor at [Editor@508pir.org](mailto:Editor@508pir.org). Our goal is to one day have a story or article from each generation of 508th paratroopers in every issue of the Diablo newsletter. †

## HELP WANTED

Web site assistance with the following skills:

- 1 - Transcription assistants. From existing records to Word or Excel (or Open Systems equivalent applications). Accuracy imperative. Will provide master formats for input in either application environment.
- 2 - HTML experience for creation of new pages to include in existing website to record various types of facts. Raw data and web page templates available.
- 3 - Access Database design. Experienced person to extend existing design should be a motivated self-starter. Will collaborate regarding design requirements; provide sample inputs and assistance in testing results.

Contact Dick O'Donnell at [Jumpmaster@508pir.org](mailto:Jumpmaster@508pir.org) or 321-759-6174 †

## THE PX IS OPEN

Hats are \$26.95 and Shirts are \$35.00. Prices include \$5.00 Shipping and Handling. Shirts are available in Blue, Red, Black and Gray. To purchase a shirt, visit the website at [www.508pir.org](http://www.508pir.org) or contact Chris Harris at [harris.chris.j@att.net](mailto:harris.chris.j@att.net) or (310) 729-2745.



Royal Blue



Red



Black



Gray



### The Diablo

262 Eastgate Dr. #394  
Aiken, SC 29803-7698