

DIABLI



Voice Of The Family And Friends Of The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association - August 2009 - Vol. 4, Nr. 2

“65 Years Since the D-Day Invasion” *Association’s 1st Co-Meeting With 82nd At Sun City*



Reunion Review

2009

It’s history now. The Sun City “All Airborne” Fiesta is held every three years and hosted by the Roy P. Benavidez/Robert Patterson Chapter, 82nd Airborne Division Association. Current Chairman John Ceballos passes along his hopes that everyone enjoyed participating in the events. There were socials, historic tours, much shopping, fajita eating, and tribal dances along with other top notch entertainment. Many friendships were renewed and others created.

This was the first time that Family and Friends of the 508th PIR joined up with another entity for reunion activities. It appears to be a positive method of coming together as most enjoyed the common bond that joins us all. Tribute and heritage of the Airborne soldier. God Bless ‘em old and young – retired or still active.

We send a very special salute and thank you to the event organizers and anyone else who assisted in putting on the 5th ever Fiesta.

For anyone with internet access there is a very good slide show of the Fiesta. The multiple photographs taken can be viewed at the following link: <http://www.SgtC101Abn.phanfare.com>

Another web site for keeping tabs with is for the Benavidez/Patterson 82nd Chapter.

<http://www.bpaac.org>

For those who plan *my* ahead, the Sun City “All Airborne” Fiesta VI will be coming in 2012.



From The Stick Pusher

By Leland Burns – editor

Secret At the La Fiere Bridge

There’s a secret of mine I’ll share with you. It is known to only three people close to me and another three or four professional types. But first I’d like to write about my activities in Normandy during the 65th anniversary. Two years ago my trek there was much quieter. I had eight days to just take in the sites and meet many of the good French people who help keep the Airborne history alive. This year I went across the pond for eleven days but I went to Nijmegen first and then finished in the greater Saint Mere’ Eglise area. I was scheduled to make several “sorties” with the Liberty Jump Team. The team kept us hopping and I didn’t get nearly the free time I had before.

On June 7th the big military jump was scheduled at the La Fiere Bridge. LJT was coming in first making two loads with the C-47 and dropping sticks of eleven jumpers per pass. Then a long string of six C-130s made multiple passes dropping sticks of 20 filling the air. Nations involved included the USA, England, Canada, France, Italy and, for the first time, Germany.

This jump was going to be a very special one to me. It was jump number 13. Dad considered the number 13 to be lucky, at least for him. He jumped 13th on his very first exit out of a C-47 (third man in the second stick of ten). My mother’s birthday is on the 13th. And hand-painted on the sheath of his Mark I boot knife my father had painted a patriotic shield with the number 13. He carried this throughout

the war and it is now my most treasured WWII souvenir.

Like many paratroopers dad hung up his wings the same as he hung up his weapons. He wore a chute many times as a pilot but on leaving the military he never made another jump. He told me he had made an even dozen.

On the morning of June 7th, 2009 my jump count equaled that of my father at twelve. So now with my jump at the La Fiere I was set to beat his mark and do it with his lucky number. As I prepared myself for jump 13 dad’s Mark I sheath was strapped to my right calf. I rubbed the painting lightly and wondered where he was when he painted it. Was it in Nottingham? I carried my parachutes, main and reserve, to the bus and we left for the Cherbourg Airport. At the airport our team president and our jumpmaster put the manifest together. They scheduled me to jump in the first load, second man in the second stick. I already shared that we jumped eleven men sticks. This made me 13th out the door on my 13th jump. But that is not the secret.

My exit out of the C-47 was the best of my French jumps and I landed near the florescent orange cross missing all the ditches. The breeze required I land backwards but my roll was without any noticeable issue. I was able to find my feet and run around my chute to deflate it. I started field folding it right away by braiding the lines and just as I reached the parachute to start folding it I realized where I was.

“Burns,” I told myself. “You just jumped the La Fiere Bridge. That rise over there is Hill 30 and further over your daddy was fighting for his life 65 years ago today.”

Then something – it was something spiritual in nature – laid across my shoulder. Then and there I felt dad with me as plain as any time in my life. The feeling sent me to one knee but I fought to get back up as I did not want the medical team rushing out. However, although this was a private moment, it is not my secret. At this time I didn't even know I had a secret.

After Liberty jumped their two loads it looked like the military jumps might get rained out. But the rains came by in waves. One could watch it forming and rolling in over Hill 30. In between the waves of rain a military spotter on the ground had the C-130s swing in and drop paratroops, four separate passes and almost a thousand airborne soldiers. I was already very emotional and I had tears at every pass.

During one of the rain storm delays 508th F&F treasurer Ellen Peters came by. I remember I was seated next to Major Tom Mason who is active duty and active with LJT. I introduced the two and then I stood to place a Liberty Jump Team pin onto Ellen's lapel. She didn't know and Tom didn't know but I had a lightning bolt of pain shoot through my left knee. As long as I walked around the knee was tolerable but if I stopped and sat for more than a half hour it was painful getting back up.

Over the next three weeks I skipped my noon-time visit to the gym so the knee would heal. It did not. It got worse and on week four I scheduled a doctor visit for July 22nd. Before seeing him however I made my fourteenth jump. Major Tom invited me to meet him at a west Texas airport and I went.

After an MRI I learned of the cartilage damage and as of this writing I am facing surgery later in the week. I do not know if it is major and I'll have life time problems or if the doc can clean it up and I can make another jump soon. This is my secret. Like the greatest generation that first jumped into Normandy I jumped La Fiere in better condition than I left. At least I walked out. I must tell you however that what ever the damage is – it was worth it. I would have given my leg for that jump. And as long as I can keep my leg I still have at least one more jump to make.

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LJT is scheduled to jump at Fort Benning. We'll be the very first "civilian" team to ever jump on the DZ there. It is a 507th PIR reunion. It may very well be my last jump.

When I started this jumping business I knew my age was on the wrong side of 50. Any extended career as a parachutist was out of the question. After some thought I decided 36-38 would be my goal. Should I have to quit before then that will be fine. I'll finish this parachute stuff where dad and every other trooper began, at Fort Benning. What a way to end up!

*Leland ******



MAIL BOX

NORMANDY REPORT

Tom Stumpner

I have just returned from my first trip to Normandy and what a trip it was! I went to Normandy with my oldest brother John and my niece Gayle. We went to visit the grave of my uncle, Private John A. Daum, KIA 6/8/44. Everything I planned went perfectly, from the lodging to the flights as well as the weather.

There were a couple of highlights to our trip. The most important was visiting the grave of my uncle at the Normandy American Cemetery at St. Laurent-sur-Mer. We were taken by golf cart to his site, where my niece rubbed sand in his name to make it clearer to read. We also placed an American flag and French flag plus flowers at his grave. It was a very moving time for someone who never had a chance to meet or know him.

Prior to this, Bobby from Normandy took us to the St. Mere Eglise Temporary Cemetery Number 1. John was first laid to rest here in 1944, before being moved to the American Cemetery. Bobby walked us out to about 5 feet from where he would have been laid to rest. Today the field has been turned into a soccer field.

Another highlight was having Bobby introduce us to the family of Odette Saint. Odette and her family adopted my uncle's grave. We spent about an hour with her and one of her sons. Bobby was there to translate and it was an enjoyable evening meeting them. The unique thing about the visit is that Odette had just visited my uncle's grave the Sunday before we made the trip. She did not know we were coming to Normandy. At the end of the evening we exchanged small gifts and went back to the hotel.

The other highlight was meeting and spending a day and a half with Yvan Leriche from Belgium. In 2007 Yvan wanted to photograph Normandy, and he tried to do it through the common soldier, not through Generals or politicians. In his research he saw a picture of my uncle and he has also adopted him. He has visited my uncle's grave a couple of times. When I informed him I was coming to Normandy, he took time off to meet us, and even stayed at the same hotel. It was a special moment to spend time with Yvan and to learn about him and his family.

I am looking forward to future trips back to Normandy. The country and people of this area make it very easy to want to visit again. I am already thinking about when I might make my next journey.

DIG AT NOTTINGHAM

After a few years of promoting the 508 in Nottingham during the war years I was glad to report that letter writing and talking with the local authorities paid off.

Back in November 2008, I was contacted by the Nottingham Trent University to discuss the possibility of a T.V Documentary being made with regards to the 508th at Wollaton Park. This project is being coordinated with the Trent Peak Archeological unit organized by Pauline Armstrong.

Pauline is very excited about this project. It included excavating the 508 Camp site at Wollaton Park to see if any artifacts could be found. This was the first time in Wollaton Park's 500 year history of any kind of excavation had been planned so we were all hopeful to find other things from the past as well. This all got started by 508 veterans by

claiming over the years that they or someone they knew buried their personal property for safe keeping before departing for the drop into Holland.

Funding for the project was finalized, and filming of the excavation at Wollaton Park took place at the end of May and was to continue for the Static Line, 65th Anniversary Trip to Nottingham on 9th June 2009 and beyond.

I would like to thank the 508 F&F Association for all the help given in making this T.V. Documentary come true. This escapade has kept me very busy. We did excavate a few things that your Yanks left behind: A trench knife with most of the blade missing, some buttons, a few old pennies, a small tobacco tin, cartridge cases and part of the wooden post fencing around the 1st Battalion Wash Area.

Although there are still artifacts hidden in the grounds of Wollaton Park, we had to stop digging as we hit asbestos sheeting. After the war, the German POW camp was dismantled and all the things that were left behind by the Americans and Germans were put in a rubbish dump and were covered by the asbestos roof sheeting. It was then covered by 3 feet of top soil. The cost is \$millions to clear this up. So due to health risks we had to abandon the dig. However the T.V. Documentary is still being filmed at Wollaton Park.

I am hoping to attend the 2010 reunion, so hang in there.

Take Care & God Bless.

Graham Lawson, Nottingham
508th Honorary Member

Graham,

We look forward to a full report from you and maybe seeing the documentary at the 2010 reunion.
Ed



Ernie Lamson with the Sheriff of Nottingham, trying to sneak a 508th sticker on the sberiff's bald spot. †

Dues Info

Do Not Send Dues Made Out To DIABLO, or to the editor. The devil in me wants to cash in but there is no account in that name. ed.

Dues for fiscal year November 1, 2008 – October 31, 2009 were due on November 1, 2008. Many members have not paid any dues since 2005. Please note that if we do not receive your dues by September 1, 2009, you will be removed from our rolls. If you have any questions about how much you owe, please contact me at 214-352-7002 or treasurer@508pir.org.

Dues are \$10.00 per fiscal year. Dues for multiple years may be paid in advance. Donations are gratefully accepted. Please be sure to inform Ellen Peters of address changes – both home addresses and email addresses.

Make checks out to “Family and Friends of The 508th PIR Association” and send to:

Ellen Peters
3630 Townsend Dr.
Dallas, TX 75229-3805

The association is incorporated as a 501(c)7 corporation and all donations are tax deductible. †

Condolences

Lamson, Kevin

Son of Ernie and Charlene Lamson and a F&F member living in Fridkey, Mn. Suffered a fatal heart attack on July 25th. He was visiting friends in California at the time. Kevin was 52 years young. Cards and letters can be sent to Ernie and Charlene at:

1600 Arundel St. #205
St. Paul, MN 55117

Chisholm, Margaret

Bob Chisholm's wife Margaret succumbed to cardiac arrest on August 15th. They had been married for sixty-three years. Arrangements are tentatively scheduled for August 24th with burial in the Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

Condolences may be sent to LTC (ret.) Robert E Chisolm, 7 Cielo Lindo, Anthony, NM 88021-9259.

Wilcot, Sam

Hello to everybody in L Co. of the 1951-1954 Red Devils. Sad to report that Cpl. Sam H. Wilcot, mail clerk for L Co., passed away a few months back.

Thank you,

Submitted by –

Leslie F. Crocker, L Co.
508 ARCT 1951-1954”

Longiotti, Frank

It is with great sadness that we shared the passing of Frank Longiotti. Frank died Saturday, May 29. Condolences may be sent to his family at:

20660 Baird Ave.

Meadville, PA 16335-8004

Frank was a member of C Co. from 1943 – 1945. He will be missed by all who knew him and of course by every Red Devil of the 508th PIR.

McCue, Maurice H.

It is with my deepest and saddest regret that I tell you of the passing of my father Maurice H. McCue. He died 04-20-08 in peaceful sleep with our LORD, his God. I know he is still flying in the clouds with all his buddies and his wife of 60 years. Daddy was in the 82nd Airborne & 508th PIR from 1942-1945. He jumped in Normandy on D-Day and received the Purple Heart and Bronze Star after being wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. I now know the true meaning of “Hero”. He will be missed by his children, grand children and great-grandchildren. Thank God for our vets [- without you who knows where we would be and thanks also for our active military. May God keep them in the palm of His hand and protect them so they too can come home to their families like my father did.

Phyllis (McCue) Jones †

Searching For ...

Members! If you cannot respond by email to either of the descendants below then send via the Diablo Editor and I will pass your information along. Include a phone number if you don't mind. Ed

Johnson, George

Good afternoon, Sir or Madam,

I'm a new member of "Family & Friends." Ellen Peters suggested that I contact you for some possible help.

Here's the situation... My Grandfather (George Johnson) was in the 508th during WWII. Unfortunately, he passed away a month before I was born, so I never got a chance to meet him. The only info my grandmother had to offer really was his 508th yearbook and a newspaper clipping of his deployment, which has been helpful getting me to this point. I am just trying

to find so more information about his involvement, or maybe someone remembers him. I think he was HQ 3rd Battalion, Camp Mackall, 1943.

You may get this type of e-mail often, but any info or a direction I can look, would be helpful.

Thank you!

Andrew Renzoni

Worcester, Massachusetts

Email: future5325@charter.net

The 3rd Anniversary Program of the 508th PIR has a PFC George J. Johnson listed in G. Company. Ed

LTC Harry Harrison

Diablo Editor Leland Burns was at Andrews AFB taking part in the Joint Combined Air Show with the Liberty Jump Team and selling a few copies of

Jump Into the Valley of the Shadow off the team's info table when he met Harry Harrison Jr. LTC Harry Harrison (senior) was the regiment's E.O. when the unit jumped into Normandy. Email is the only contact. Harry.harrison@park.edu

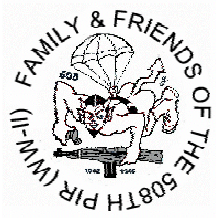
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Thank You !!!

A special "thank you" goes out to all who contributed donations to the 508th 2nd Battalion Military Ball. The ball was a huge success. I happened to meet a 508th Sgt. in Normandy who informed me that the cost of tickets declined from \$35.00 to \$15.00 each. This was due to the donations sent by all of the WWII F&F 508th members. That's you!

Ellen Peters – Treasurer

+



The Diablo

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