

# DIABLO

The Link for All Veterans, Active Duty, Spouses, Family and Friends of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association – April, 2017

## MESSAGE FROM ROCK MERRITT

### HELLO TROOPERS AND FRIENDS

This year we will be celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our beloved 508<sup>th</sup> PIR.

We will also celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division.

The Family and Friends, 508<sup>th</sup> Association will host their 11<sup>th</sup> Reunion.

We will gather at the Ramada Plaza in Fayetteville, NC from 18-22 October 2017.

Your reunion host is CSM (ret) Lou Gutierrez.

Lou is working hard so we will have a real good reunion.

In addition to the regular Family & Friends members, we will have several WW-II members, along with active duty 508<sup>th</sup> Paratroopers from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions, 508 PIR at Fort Bragg at our reunion.

All the details of our reunion will be published in the Diablo Newsletter.

Hope to see all of you in October 2017.

**ROCK MERRITT** →

## 2017 REUNION

October 20, 2017 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the the activation of the 508 th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Join us to celebrate this legendary regiment in Fayetteville, NC October 18 -22, 2017. Below is a tentative schedule of events:

Wed, Oct 18: -Registration Day

-Arrival of Reunion Attendees

-Hospitality Room will be open

Thu, Oct 19: -Welcoming Breakfast to include briefings of events taking place over the next three days.

-10:00 AM – Board vans for Airborne Airborne and Special Operations Museum tour.

-11:45 AM – 12:30 PM – Lunch downtown

-12:30 PM – Board vans for trip to the General Lee Museum, Dunn, NC.

- 4:30 PM – Depart for the Remada Plaza

Fri, Oct 20: -8:30 AM – Board vans for Fort Bragg activities with one or both 508 PIR BNs to include lunch with active Duty paratroopers at 1<sup>st</sup> BN Dining Facility, and visit to modern barracks.

-2:30 PM – Board vans for visit to 8 nd Airborne Museum

-4:30 PM – Depart Fort Bragg for the Ramada Plaza.

Sat, Oct 21: -10:00 AM – BOD Meeting

-Board vans for:

-Fayetteville areaTransportation Museum's Depot and

-Local History Museum and,

-Veterans Park

-11:30 AM – Lunchn Downtown

-3:00 PM – Board Vans for Ramada Plaza

-3:30 PM – General Membership meeting to include the election of new Officers.

-7:00 PM - Banquet

## 1 FURY: READY, EMPOWERED AND DISCIPLINED

Since returning from the holiday break, 1Fury has had a busy couple months as the Global Response Battalion 2, which is a classification where a battalion gets to take part in an intensive training cycle to get ready to assume the Global Response Battalion 1 on 15 March. The GRB 1 is the battalion inside our Army that is the most ready to deploy. In 2 weeks, we will be at our highest form of readiness, and remain on 2-8 hour recall to fly from Fort Bragg to anywhere in the world in 18-48 hours or less. Getting to GRB 1 isn't easy, and it involves multiple training events and inspections.

In January, our Delta Company conducted crew gunnery at Fort Benning, Georgia, where all crews (gunner, driver, and truck commander) qualified on the weapon systems mounted atop each HMMWV. At the beginning of February, the rest of the battalion headed to the field via airborne operation to conduct platoon live fire exercises here at Fort Bragg. These live fire exercises had each platoon maneuver across an open area with weapons squads supporting just to their flank, breach of a mined wire obstacle, and seize multiple houses on an objective with enemy personnel inside. Gunnery and platoon live fire exercises are some of the best training events we conduct at the battalion level, and each day was dedicated to making us more ready, empowered, and disciplined to answer the nation's call.

The last weeks in February were devoted to recovery from this intensive training cycle and for Organizational Readiness Surveys (ORS). ORS inspections are unique to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Run by the Division Inspector General, these inspections are a complete turn-out of every weapon, system, and personnel record we have to ensure that everything in our battalion is functioning perfectly and prepared to deploy the moment we are called. 1Fury Paratroopers and leaders performed magnificently at these inspections, as expected.

In the months ahead, 1Fury will participate in additional training (section live fire exercises for our heavy weapons company, fire support coordination exercises, company combined arms maneuver live fire exercises, and more battalion-level airborne operations. This will only increase our readiness, but rest assured that 1Fury stands ready now to jump, fight, and win tonight – anywhere in the world.

### ALL THE WAY! FURY FROM THE SKY!

By MAJ Dru Rhodes, 1-508 PIR Operations Officer ↗

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## 2 FURY REPORT

In early January the 2Fury deployed two companies and the battalion headquarters element. Charley Company (C Co), two platoons from Delta Company (D Co) and the headquarters element deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve while one platoon from Delta Company deployed to Turkey.

At Fort Bragg the rest of 2Fury took responsibility as the Out-load Support Battalion (OSBn) for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team. As the OSBn, 2Fury ensured that all equipment and paratroopers from the Global Response Force (GRF) were ready to deploy within 96 hours of notification. In mid-January the GRF conducted a deployment readiness exercise in which 2Fury conducted 24 hour operations to ensure a rapid outload for 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. The GRF and OSBn work hand in hand to achieve the All American standard of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division as the nation's guard of honor.

Operations for the 2Fury Team forward were well underway since beginning the deployment process in January. The Transfer of Authority from 1-502 Infantry to 2-508 Parachute Infantry took place at TAA Filfayl on January 15th. On this day, the Paratroopers of 2Fury joined with other Paratroopers and U.S. Soldiers to officially become Task Force (TF) 2Fury. This includes engineers, artillerymen, a dog-handler, and an ordnance team; all of whom have joined together under the TF 2Fury banner with the mission to advise and assist the Iraqi Army in defeating ISIS and bringing stability to the region.

TF 2Fury Paratroopers eagerly began learning their roles from their 1-502 counterparts. The Paratroopers immediately understood the importance of owning the responsibilities at TAA Filfayl and were motivated to learn from the outgoing Soldiers. These responsibilities included everything from security of the camp to planning patrols. SSG Shanahan (D Co) and SSG Balona (C

Co) did a spectacular job in ensuring security of our base camp, while 1LT Shannon (D Co) and 1LT Rabbitt (C Co) took the lead on familiarizing our troopers on our new environment to include initial introductions with the Iraqi Army at their planning Headquarters. While members of C Co and D Co were interfacing with their 101<sup>st</sup> counterparts, LTC Browning and his staff were doing the same with the 1-502 Battalion Commander, LTC Umbrell, and his staff. All of these efforts set conditions for a successful Transfer of Authority with the Battalion postured and ready for our mission at hand.

Once officially in the driver's seat, TF 2Fury embraced the Advise and Assist mission with our Iraqi counterparts. Several members of the staff and security element moved forward to co-locate themselves with the Iraqi Headquarters and provide guidance for clearing the East side of Mosul, Iraq of ISIS fighters.

Similarly, our 2Fury Paratroopers in Turkey assumed full responsibility of security operations for a HIMARS Platoon. Our Paratroopers have been steadfast in their positions despite potential threats from enemy sympathizers in the region and harsh conditions during the Turkish winter. Morale remains high and our Paratroopers continue to improve their positions as time goes on in the deployment.

At the end of January/early February, Eastern Mosul was deemed liberated by the Iraqi Security Forces. All the units went on a leave period before planning for the Western Mosul clearance operation. For TF 2Fury, this meant a well-deserved rest and refit period at TAA Filfayl before beginning planning for West Mosul. During this rest and refit period, TF 2Fury was realigned with a new Iraqi Army Division. The team said good bye to the unit they partnered with for East Mosul, and began to forge new relationships with their Western Mosul partners. All in all, the change in mission, locations, and partners for TF 2Fury created a dynamic, exciting, and fast-paced environment for the unit.

During the rest and refit period at TAA Filfayl, LTC Browning immediately embraced his new partnership as an advisor to an armored division and began to conduct regular trips to their headquarters, building rapport with the Division Commander, Deputy Commander, and their staff. As LTC Browning began to foster a relationship with his partner, the TF 2Fury staff conducted mission analysis on how to best provide support to the division for the western Mosul fight. A significant portion of the mission analysis involved logistical planning as TF 2Fury had to relocate almost all of their equipment and personnel to various locations aligned with our Iraqi counterparts.

In March the remaining 2FURY personnel on Fort Bragg went on prepare to deploy orders and stand ready to deploy within 14 days' notice and join TF 2Fury in Iraq if the call comes.

### **Airborne! All the Way! Fury From the Sky!➔**



*Members of 2 Fury at a liberated Amusement Park near Mosul City – from the 2Fury Jan Newsletter*

## The Forgotten Battalion

Ellen,

As per our conversation the other day, I would like to tell you a little something about the “Almost Forgotten Battalion of the 508 PIR – the 3<sup>rd</sup> at Ft. Kobbe, CZ.

Some time early in 1966 there was a Levy to take most of the men in Panama and send them to Vietnam. There were two different efforts to restrengthen all units. They first brought troops to Ft. Davis, Atlantic side; the second brought troops to Ft. Clayton, Pacific side. I was a member of the second effort.

Me and hundreds of other soldiers were sent to the 20<sup>th</sup> Mech Inf for AIT training at Ft. Clayton. During this training we were all taken by bus to the DZ at Howard AF Base and Ft. Kobbe to watch a jump. After the jump, we were given the opportunity to volunteer for Airborne. I did. After AIT, we went to Ft. Kobbe for two weeks of “Prebac”, because the jump school at Ft. Sherman was in session. After this, two weeks of P.T. and some classes (Best shape I’ve ever been in), we went to Ft. Sherman for Jump School. My first jump was from a C-47, second jump a C-46, and third – fifth jumps were from a C-130. Then we went to the 3-508 for the duration of our tour in the Army.

1 September of 1967 another Levy came down and again they took most of the troopers from the “08”. Sent them to Ft. Campbell, reformed the 101<sup>st</sup> and went to Vietnam as a unit. [Just in time for Tet ’68.] The Levy was taking anybody with six months or more for the 101<sup>st</sup>. The hundreds of guys I went down with had only four and five months left in service – didn’t get to go.

I left Panama in February of 1968. Went to Ft. Jackson to muster out. We were put on standby delay because of Tet, but we were finally released and became civilians again. But, we will always remain Paratroopers.

Duty in Panama was very good. We stayed in the jungles training quite a bit, always going on “Alert” for something. I ended up with 24 jumps in only nineteen months. I had numerous equipment jumps, 3 night jumps and the remainder were “Hollywood” jumps.

The guys I went to the 08 with stayed together for the whole time. We were Airborne most of the time. I was at Recon Plt. at HHC. When most of the guys left for Nam, we were split up in HHC. I was in Support Plt. and Maintenance Plt.

John Timker and I put together a reunion in Raleigh, NC in 2006 of all the Recon guys we could find. Attending were: Col. E. Berweli (Co. Commander), SgtM. Ken Fox, Plt. Sgt. Ron Miller, Mike Palasek, Richard Dowdigan, John Tinker, Mike Wojtyszyn, Lee Steppe, Henry Lee, Lance Ball, and some wives showed up.

I’ve got to say that my experience at 3/508 Ft. Kobbe was a great one. I met and still keep in touch with a lot of good troopers. We had as our leaders some highly decorated men for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and Korea. I later heard that Sgt. Joe Hooper (commo plt.) won the Medal of Honor in Vietnam.

I am very proud to be part of the 508<sup>th</sup> family.

As Always,

“Airborne All the Way”

Anyone that was there between June 1966 – Feb 1968 please contact either:

Marvin D. Pulley  
80 Terrance Ave.  
Henderson, NC 27536  
252-425-5042

OR

John Tinker  
2407 Wooding Pl.  
Greensboro, NC 27407  
336-855-1406

*Editor’s Note: Danny – it was nice chatting with you and I hope to see you and some of your buddies at our Ft. Bragg Reunion. As I told you, we will provide you with a table to display your items.*

## REMAINS IDENTIFIED AS 508<sup>TH</sup> MIA

From the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Facebook page:

Army Pvt. Gene J. Appleby, missing from World War II, has now been accounted for.

On Sept. 17, 1944, Appleby was a member of Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, as part of Operation Market Garden. The regiment was tasked with landing at Drop Zone "T," north of Groesbeek, The Netherlands. Appleby successfully jumped and was seen on the ground by members of the unit. However, as the soldiers rallied to move toward their objective, Appleby was seen struck by enemy fire. Following the attack, he was listed as missing in action, and declared him deceased as of Sept. 18, 1945.

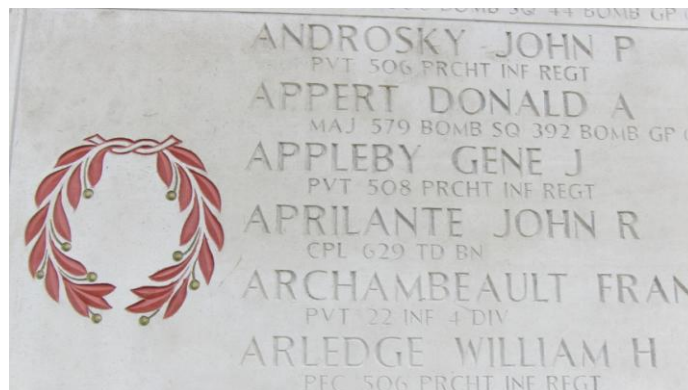
On Sept. 8, 2011, the Royal Netherlands Army Recovery and Identification Unit (RIU) was notified by the Groesbeek Police of possible human remains found at the Groenendaal Farm by local residents. Officials conducted an excavation and recovered possible human remains and material evidence. The remains were transferred to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, now DPAA, for identification.


Historians from DPAA working on cases of missing Americans from Operation Market Garden received valuable recovery information from the RIU and traveled to the original recovery site with the local researchers who originally found the remains. With this information, the DPAA historians established a list of individuals whose circumstances of loss and last known location matched the remains. Appleby was among the top candidates.

DNA analysis and circumstantial evidence were used in the identification of his remains.

Welcome home and rest in peace, Pvt. Appleby.

Notes: Although his remains have been recovered and identified, his name is permanently inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing at Netherlands American Cemetery.



When an individual's remains have been accounted for by the U.S. Department of Defense, a rosette  is placed next to the name on the Wall/Tablet/Court of the Missing to mark that the person now rests in a known gravesite.

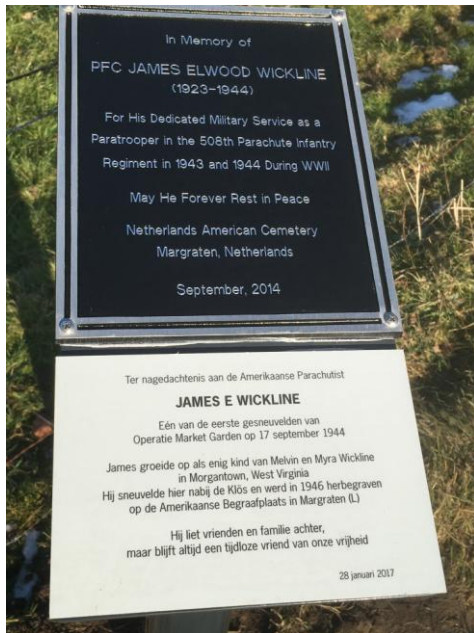
Many thanks to honorary Family and Friends member, Jan Bos, for the information on Pvt. Gene Appleby†



Dutch newspaper article on Pvt. Appleby

## A DUTCH BOY'S ODYSSEY

On September 17, 1944, thousands of 508th Paratroopers landed on Dropzone T at Groesbeek. One of those paratroopers was PFC James Elwood Wickline of Hq. Co. 2nd BN. PFC Wickline's parachute failed to open and he fell to his death. He was interred in the temporary cemetery and later found his final resting place at the American Netherlands Cemetery at Margraten in Plot 1 Row 17 Grave 21. His grave was adopted by thirteen year old Dutch boy, Maarten Vossen. Maarten spent the next thirteen years trying to find out more about this soldier whose grave he had adopted. "When I saw that name on that cross, on that white marble cross, James Wickline, I knew he was someone who sacrificed his life for my freedom, for the freedom of the Netherlands," Vossen states in the film, "Ageless Friends" produced by Dutch filmmaker, Marijn Poels, about the quest of Maarten. The film maker followed Maarten for four months in both the Netherlands and West Virginia in his search for family and friends of the fallen soldier. In 2014, Maarten was present in Morgantown, WV when a bridge was reopened and named for James Wickline. Maarten was given a plaque with the request it be placed near the location where James died. Maarten had a Dutch plaque made and in 2017 both plaques were installed near the field on De Klös at Groesbeek.



*The plaques in English and Dutch*



*The field near Dropzone T where PFC Wickline lost his life.*

Many thanks to Jan Bos for the above story and photos. †

## CONGRATULATIONS

MAJ. Adam Scher (XO 1-508) and SSG Holmes (B Co. 1-508) passed Jumpmaster School on March 1.

SPC Aldeano (A Co. 1-508) earned the Ranger tab on March 31.

1LT Vince (HHC 1-508) and SGT Franz (HHC 1-508) both graduated RSLC the week of March 31. 1 LT Vince was the honor graduate and SGT Franz won the Land Navigation Award. †

## NEW FAMILY & FRIENDS LIFETIME MEMBERS

### Sustaining Members:

LTC Robert S. McChrystal and wife, Jennifer – Commander of 1/508th

### Supporters:

Libby Todd – Libby is related to Thomas Edward Carson who served in Hq. Co. 2nd Bn. in WWII.

Louis Toth, Jr. – Louis is the son of Louis Toth, Sr., the Commander of H Co. during WWII.

## 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†

## CALL FOR DUES

Dues were due January 1. To keep your membership current, kindly remit your yearly dues of \$20.00 per household. Multiple years may be paid in advance and donations are gratefully accepted. Lifetime Memberships may be purchased in the following tiers:

Sustaining Membership - \$350.00

Patron - \$250.00

Supporter - \$150.00

Remit payment to: F&F 508<sup>th</sup> PIR

3630 Townsend Dr.

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Payments may also be made with PayPal to [Treasurer@508pir.org](mailto:Treasurer@508pir.org)†



### The Diablo

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