

Arnhem, The Netherlands  
C (Tiger) Company Headquarters

Unveiling of Bronze Plaque Commemorating Operation Furious Pursuit April 2007  
18 December 2019





**2019 ALL-ERA REUNION BANQUET**  
**Operation Furious Pursuit Commemoration**

Remarks by Major Ralph van Kemenade, Royal Dutch Army Reserves

*MAJ van Kemenade was commander of CPL Strik's platoon during Operation Furious Pursuit in April 2007. He later took command of Tiger Company.*

"I learned this [about World War II] at a very young age. My son and my daughter are going to be learning these same things so they know that freedom isn't free and that they can grow up the way they do thanks to the heroes coming from across the Atlantic such as the living legends that are still here in this room today.

Our unit is stationed in Arnhem and we train, a lot of times we do a lot of battlefield tours from the Market Garden operation. So all the officers and NCO's have walked the Groesbeek area, the Berg en Dal area and Nijmegen. So they learned what the brave men of the 508<sup>th</sup> did to liberate our home country. So when we deployed to Afghanistan and we received orders that we would be attached to 1-508 Task Force Fury we were thrilled and honored to be able to fight side by side, shoulder to shoulder, with the same unit that landed in our home country 63 years before that date and fight together. During the operation what showed out was the sheer professionalism of the paratroopers. The dedication to duty and the warrior ethos and that epitomized when our corporal sniper, Corporal Cor Strik was killed in action and the US Sergeant Alexander van Aalten volunteered to help his brothers in arms. He never met us but still he volunteered to assist us.

To be here this week for us, for the whole delegation was overwhelming. On behalf of the whole delegation, I would like to thank you. I would like to thank your association for having us here. Thank you for the tremendous hospitality and friendship and I would like to thank Thulai van Maanen for making this all possible and Sergeant Major Noonan for helping us and also sharing the insights of the active duty regiment. We are going to take these plaques home across the Atlantic for they commemorate our fallen heroes but also to underline the common bond between soldiers, between units and between nations that have fought together and will fight together to defend our common values. All the way! Allez Chasse! Thank you very much!"

**OPERATION FURIOUS PURSUIT**  
**APRIL 2007**  
**SANGIN, AFGHANISTAN**

**IN COMMEMORATION OF THE SACRIFICES MADE BY THE US  
PARATROOPERS OF 1ST BN, 508TH PIR, AND THE DUTCH AIR ASSAULT  
TROOPERS OF C (TIGER) COMPANY, 11TH IN BN GG&J, WHO FOUGHT AND  
DIED SIDE BY SIDE IN THE DEFENSE OF FREEDOM.**



**PRESENTED BY THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE 508TH PIR ASSOCIATION**

**2019**



# SUN CITY ALL-AIRBORNE FIESTA



★ EL PASO, TEXAS ★

WEDNESDAY, JULY 01 – SUNDAY, JULY 05

For details and registration, visit [www.508PIR.org](http://www.508PIR.org)





## FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE 508TH PIR ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name (if desired—fee for each membership is based on one per household): \_\_\_\_\_

Address 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip / Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Nation (If Not USA): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a Veteran/Active Duty (circle one) 508th Paratrooper Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Years served: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

ASN: \_\_\_\_\_

I am related to a 508th Veteran or Active Duty (circle one)

(Paratrooper's Name, Unit, Relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

I am a Friend of the 508th with the following Connection to 508th Paratroopers:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### How did you hear about the Association?

- Army Publication \_\_\_\_\_ (which one?)
- Association Website
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Friend or Family

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS:  Sustaining Member \$350  Patron \$250  Supporter \$150

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:  \$20

Pay On-Line (Credit Card & PayPal) at [www.508pir.org/f\\_and\\_f/paymstr\\_1.htm](http://www.508pir.org/f_and_f/paymstr_1.htm) and  
Email Form to [Treasurer@508pir.org](mailto:Treasurer@508pir.org)

Or

Payment may also be made via Personal Check, made out to "F&F of the 508th PIR Assn".  
Mail Completed Form and Payment To: Chris Harris, Treasurer; 13 Eastern Ave, So. Deerfield MA 01373

***PRESERVING THE LEGACY***



# DIABLO



Merry  
Christmas



Merry  
Christmas

The Link for All 508th Veterans & Active Duty and Family & Friends  
Published by the *Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association* – December 2019

## A Successful 2019 All-Era 508th Reunion

A big Thank-You to the many persons who attended our 16-20 October All-Era Reunion in Fayetteville NC and to the many supporters who were unable to attend. We appreciate the great participation from 508th Veterans from all eras and from Active Duty 508th based at Fort Bragg. And a special thanks to Veterans and Active Duty airborne from the Royal Dutch Army.

Highlight events included:

- Joint Color Guard of Dutch and American Paratroopers
- A special Banquet commemoration surrounding Operation Furious Pursuit (Afghanistan - April 2007) during which Dutch and American Paratroopers lost CPL Cor Strik (C [Tiger] CO, 11th IN BN GG&J) and SGT Alexander Van Aalten (1st BN, 508th PIR).
- Outstanding presentations/oral histories from Panama, Afghanistan and Vietnam by 508th Veterans and a unique presentation from Sue and Jack Talley surrounding 508th wives' letters during World War II.
- Unveiling of LTC Robert Chisolm's paver alongside CSM Rock Merritt's paver at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in downtown Fayetteville.
- Lots of food, drink, karaoke and dancing during Friday night's Active Duty Appreciation event.
- Tandem skydiving jumps by Bill Hamilton, Robyn Harris, Carlane Morgan, Troy Palmer, Ellen Peters, Dianna Pflueger, and Sue and Jack Talley.
- A well-attended Annual Membership Meeting where Association Members elected two new Board Members: CSM (Ret) Francis (Frank) DeBois as President and SFC Harry Jauert as Vice President. Both spent many years serving with the 508th including numerous GWOT deployments.

Please see other Reunion-related articles and photo compilations throughout this *DIABLO* edition.

The Association will partner with the El Paso Benavidez-Patterson "All Airborne" Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Association to hold our 2020 Reunion in El Paso, Texas from 01-05 July. We see this as a great opportunity for more families to attend during the summer months, and El Paso offers lots of attractions and is one of America's most supportive cities for our Armed Forces and Veterans.

Don't miss our 2020 Reunion during this **Sun City All-Airborne Fiesta**. Visit [www.508PIR.org](http://www.508PIR.org) for the Reunion Agenda, Hotel booking information, and to Register! ➔

**AGAIN, THANKS TO EVERYONE!**

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**2019 All-Era 508th Reunion**



# 2019 All-Era 508th Reunion





# 2019 REUNION

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

One of the highlights of the 2019 Reunion for several of us was skydiving Saturday afternoon at Skydive ParacleteXP in Raeford, NC. Below are photos of several of us landing and coming off the drop zone. Sue and Jack Talley and I were in the first group to jump. I gave my camera to Tino Madrid and he took a bunch of photos of me gearing up. Tino is a GREAT photographer, much better than I. I may give him my camera to take photos at all future reunions!! Below are some photos of the skydivers landing and coming off the Drop Zone.



Sue Talley landing – photo by Tino Madrid



Jack Talley landing – photo by Tino Madrid



Ellen Peters landing – photo by Tino Madrid



Ellen Peters coming off the DZ – photo by Tino Madrid



First 3 jumpers – Sue and Jack Talley and Ellen Peters – photo by Tino Madrid





Bill Hamilton - photo by Ellen Peters



Troy Palmer – photo by Ellen Peters



Dianna Pfeuger Merritt – photo by Ellen Peters†

## From Our New President

Hello all 508th family and friends. I am the new president of the organization and would like to say what an honor it is to be selected for this position.

I was the CSM for 1st BN 508th for 5 years. It was the most rewarding time of my 32 years in the Army.

There are some things that we as an organization need to address as we move forward. The biggest is membership.

As we all know right now the association has very few GWOT involvement. We must figure out how to get more involvement from them as we move forward to help build and strengthen the organization. This is a very hard sell to the Paratroopers because they want to know what they get in return.

Without an active duty Association for the 508th it falls on us to actively engage the GWOT Troopers.

We can do this by talking to the CSMs and getting them involved to selling the association and what the association is doing and does for them, during deployments, college funds, money for unit parties upon returning from deployment, and the Reunion.

As the organization moves forward into 2020, we need to grow the organization numbers from GWOT by 20% for the year.

In July of 2020 we will be in lovely EL Paso, TX for the Reunion. Should be a great time.

Thank you for all that you all do for the organization and let's make 2020 another great year.

Best Wishes for the holidays

Frank DeBois  
President†

## From Our New Vice-President

SFC Harry G. Jauert joined the Army directly after graduating high school in the summer of 2005. Upon completion of Airborne School at Fort Benning, PFC Jauert was assigned to 1st Battalion 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, where he served from June 2006 to June 2011. While assigned to 1-508 PIR he participated in two deployments to Afghanistan before he left the unit to do his time as a Drill Sergeant at Fort Benning.

Then in the fall of 2013, SSG Jauert found himself back at Fort Bragg in familiar territory this time assigned to 2nd Battalion 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He remained in 2-508 PIR from September 2013 to July of 2019, deployed with the Battalion to Afghanistan in 2014, and again to Iraq in 2016.

SFC Jauert has served in every level of leadership from Fire Team Leader to Company 1SG within the 508th PIR, spending 12 of his 14 years in the Army with devils of the 508th.

Currently, SFC Jauert is stationed at Fort Benning with the 1st Battalion 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment as a Black Hat in the Basic Airborne Course.

SFC Jauert is married to Tara Jauert and they have two daughters Tahlia and Nadia. He is honored to be selected as the organization's Vice President and is looking forward to working with the friends and families of the organization to bolster the future of the association and preserve the history and legacy of the 508th PIR.

"Airborne, All the Way!" "Fury from the Sky

SFC Harry G. Jauert†



## Rock Merritt In the News

### CSM (Ret) Rock Merritt – Featured Speaker at WWII Commemoration Event 18 September 2019 · Deerfield, Massachusetts

Rock Merritt teamed up with Association Board Member Chris Harris' family as featured speaker in a public World War II Commemoration event organized around the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Market Garden and a historical sign unveiling honoring Chris' Uncle, PFC James A. Childs, an original 508th Paratrooper, who was killed on Day 2 of Market Garden.

Among the 125-plus in attendance were area Veterans including three other WWII Veterans, Town of Deerfield Selectboard leaders, the new Head of School at Deerfield Academy (we learned afterwards that his father served with the 508th in the Regiment's WWII combat campaigns), and area residents young and old. Members of the Frontier Regional High School Marching Band played the National Anthem and "Taps". Two aspiring West Point students from Deerfield Academy read the names of 15 Deerfield residents who perished during WWII.

During a packed-schedule week, Rock also talked with high school history students at both Deerfield Academy and Frontier Regional High School and addressed a weekly luncheon of Veterans in nearby Greenfield, MA. Rock was accompanied by other Association Lifetime Members, Dianna Pflueger, his daughter, and CSM (Ret) Lou Gutierrez, his long-time neighbor in Fayetteville, NC. Dianna and Lou enjoyed fascinating visits to 18<sup>th</sup>-century Museum Houses operated by Historic Deerfield and then the entire group made a whirlwind one-day trip to historic Boston, MA.

Many thanks to Rock for his unending commitment to "Preserve the Legacy"! →

# WORLD WAR II *Commemoration*

**Wednesday, 18 September 2019**

Childs Cross Road & 373 Greenfield Road (Routes 5 & 10)  
Wapping Section of Deerfield, MA

**Local  
WWII Veterans  
Please Come!**


**Complimentary  
Beverage Hour  
Starts at 3:30pm**

**Formal Program  
Starts at 4:30pm**

*Featured Speaker*

**CSM (Retired)**  
**KENNETH "ROCK" MERRITT**  
*Original 508th Paratrooper  
in World War II*

*82nd Airborne Division  
Hall of Fame*



CPL Rock Merritt - 1944

**Social Hour Starts at 5:30pm**  
**Complimentary Food and Beverages**

Contact: Chris Harris (310) 729-2745 harris.chris.j@att.net

*Public is Most Welcome*



**96-year-old CSM (Ret) Rock Merritt speaks about his WWII experiences in Normandy, Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge.**

### CSM (Ret) Rock Merritt's Week in Deerfield, Massachusetts



Rock with Frontier Regional High School Students



Rock with Deerfield Academy Head of School Dr. John Austin (L) and Associate Dean of Students Kevin Kelly



Rock and JC (James Childs) Harris Unveil Historical Sign Honoring PFC James A Childs, KIA 18 Sep 1944



Rock and JC Unfurl American Flag Sent from the Netherlands American Cemetery in 1949. PFC James A Childs was permanently interred at Gravesite F-3-1.



Rock and Chris Harris during the Social Hour at the World War II Commemoration



Local VFW Hale-Clapp Post 3295 (South Deerfield) were the Color Guard at the World War II Commemoration



Various 508th & Airborne Articles on Display at the World War II Commemoration





Rock Speaks to Weekly Veterans' Luncheon in Greenfield, MA  
Sponsored by "Building Bridges"



Rock, Dianna and Lou atop Mt. Sugarloaf overlooking the  
Connecticut River Valley Farmlands  
South Deerfield



Rock with Chris Harris inside  
Old North Church in Boston, MA

**Soldier Support Center – Fort Bragg, NC  
MG William C. Lee Building Dedication  
10 December 2019**

Rock Merritt, his daughter Dianna Pflueger and Lou Gutierrez, joined two great-nephews of General William Carey Lee and tens of other guests to officially rename the Fort Bragg Soldier Support Center in honor of the "Father of the U.S. Airborne". MG James E. Kraft was guest speaker, and he discussed the importance of this building dedication since it is the first and last place visited by soldiers as they arrive and depart from Fort Bragg. MG Kraft specifically commended Rock Merritt for initiating the effort to give permanent recognition on Fort Bragg to MG Lee. New signage and an impressive bronze plaque were unveiled during the ceremony. Rock, "Mission Accomplished!" Thank you. ➔



## Major General William Carey Lee, “Father of the Airborne”

by CSM (Ret) Kenneth “Rock” Merritt



First, let us establish whose idea it was for us to have airborne troops. To do that, I need to take you back to 1939. There was lots happening in 1939—we had just come out of a ten-year depression, and on September 1, 1939, World War II started as Germany invaded Poland on that date. Also on this date, President Roosevelt selected a new Chief of Staff for the Army. He went to the Pentagon and selected BG George C. Marshall. On the first of September at 10 AM, Marshall was promoted to Major General and at 2 PM, he was promoted to 4-Star General, by-passing the LTG rank. Dwight D. Eisenhower was a Lieutenant Colonel, our Tune-of-the-Year was “In the Mood” by Glenn Miller, the Song-of-the-Year was “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland, John Steinbeck had just released his novel “The Grapes of Wrath”, and Time Magazine’s selection for Man-of-the-Year was Adolph Hitler.

In late November 1939, President Roosevelt was watching the news and noticed that the German army had airborne troops. He called his Army Chief of Staff and said, “George, I see the Germans have airborne troops in their army.” Marshall responded, “So do the Russians,” and confirmed that the U.S. did not have airborne troops. The President responded, “I think we should have airborne troops, so check and see what we have to do to get airborne troops.”

The Chief of Staff submitted the President’s request to the General Headquarters U.S. Army (GHQ) and by early July 1940, GHQ came back recommending the Army first establish a test platoon. The President supported the test platoon approach and asked Marshall if he had a person in mind to organize the Test Platoon. Marshall replied, “I do. He and I served in World War I. His name is Major William C. Lee.” In 1936, MAJ Lee was attending the famous tank school in Paris and on weekends he would spend time with the German and Russian paratroopers. On holidays, he would drive down to Normandy picking out drop zones in case there was another war. The President concluded, “It sounds like Major William C. Lee is our man to organize the Test Platoon.”

As soon as MAJ Lee was told that he had been selected to organize the Test Platoon, he assembled his staff, and what a staff: CPT Matthew B. Ridgeway; 1LT James Gavin; 1LT Bob Sink; CPT Maxwell Taylor; 1LT Tony McAuliffe; and CPT William Miley—all of these junior officers eventually became 3 or 4 star generals.

Now, with a staff like that, they completed the Test Platoon in two months, and in two years, Lee had six regiments organized when word came down that the Airborne would include airborne divisions. The first airborne division would be the 82nd Airborne Division, and the whole world assumed this first airborne division would go to MG William C. Lee. Well, you and I know that was not the case—the first airborne division command went to BG Matthew B. Ridgeway. Now, General Lee was hurt and disappointed and he couldn’t understand where he went wrong, so he decided to go Washington D.C. to see his World War I buddy, Army Chief of Staff Marshall. Marshall greeted Lee with, “Bill, I know why you are here and let me tell you upfront that I had nothing to do with you not getting the 82nd Airborne Division. But you should be the happiest Major General in the world, because the President of the United States does not want just one airborne, not two, not three, not four, but five airborne divisions—and he wants them all ready for combat, and the President thinks you are the only man on this earth that can do that. And when you have them all onboard, you will be given command of the 101st.

So when the 101st Airborne Division was formed, as stated, General Lee was appointed Commander. All the five divisions were now in place—the 11th Airborne Division, the 13th Airborne Division, the 17th Airborne Division, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division. I might add that of the five divisions, four of them saw combat during World War II. Only the 13th Airborne Division did not see combat, as they were taken off combat alert for Japan when we bombed Japan in August 1945.

In closing, let me say that it was General Lee who recommended the three airborne divisions who were key to the Normandy invasion on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1944. ➔





## Rock Merritt Receives Honorary Sergeant Major of the Army Award

*Submitted by Dianna Pfleuger*

The trip to Washington was exciting for Dad and I as it was for a very special occasion, the awarding of Honorary Sergeant Major of the Army to Dad. We were met and shown to a very nice room by two representatives; one army and one AUSA. Sgt. Klutts was to be our guide and our chauffeur during our stay. He went over the schedule for Monday, October 14th with us; a tour of the convention center, luncheon at noon to 2 pm, after which we were free to depart if we wished. As you know, our 508th Family and Friends Reunion was scheduled to begin October 16th. The award would be presented following lunch, after which Dad could say a few words, (obviously they didn't know Dad, who has never said just a "few words") followed by the guest speaker, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, General Joseph M. Martin. The next morning after breakfast, we got ready for our big day. Dad had his uniform and I had a nice dress. We were ready to take the town! Ha! There were 10,000 people registered for this event! My feet were positive we walked 5 miles IN the convention center. Sgt. Klutts took mercy on us and escorted us to the SMA's office where we were able to sit and visit with him and some of his staff until it was time to go into the luncheon. Dad and I were seated at the head table. He was introduced to Deputy Chief of Staff Martin as well as the rest of the guests. Everyone was extremely nice. As usual, Dad was introduced to quite a few people during this time. I apologize for my memory, but I can't keep up with all the people! After eating it was time for all the various awards to be presented. Then came the big one, the



Honorary Sergeant Major of the Army. SMA Grinston was the one presenting it and he was the man who had chosen Dad. While he was giving a pretty detailed bio of Dad, screens on 3 sides of the room were showing pictures of Dad during his career, mainly during WWII. Then he asked Dad to please come on up to the stage. It was about this time he got a standing ovation, which since there were 3000 people at this luncheon, was pretty awesome! The very first words he spoke were to the effect that out of all the honors bestowed upon him, THIS one was the one he would most cherish. His "few words" included his favorite subject, the squad leader and how important he was to the Army of today and the Army of the future. His speech was stirring, thoughtful, and well received. He received another standing ovation when he finished. SMA Grinston laughed as he introduced Deputy Chief of Staff Martin remarking that he was very happy that it wasn't him following Rock Merritt! General Martin laughed as well then raised his hand and said he wasn't sure if anyone would believe him when he swore that he and Rock hadn't collaborated on their talks! Turned out that his talk was a continuance of Dad's talk. It was actually pretty amazing and went over quite well! Afterwards it took us a good 45 minutes to get to the door because of all the handshakes, picture taking, congratulations, and good wishes. It was an awesome experience! ➔

## Operation Furious Pursuit

### *Text from Recommendation for Sgt. Alexander van Aalten to Receive the Dutch Order of Merit (in Gold)*

The evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 saw the start of the largest kinetic NATO operation to date in Afghanistan when Operation Furious Pursuit commenced with the Air Assault of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment in the City of Sangin, Helmand Province Afghanistan.

Operation Furious Pursuit was part of the larger ongoing Operation Achilles to provide the security conditions necessary to allow the Government of Afghanistan to begin reconstruction and development in the area.

Attached to 1/508 PIR were the men of the Dutch Tiger Air Assault Company who landed during the first wave of the Air Assault operation Furious Pursuit to spearhead the Assault on Sangin and performed as an integral 4<sup>th</sup> infantry company during the operation.

The Dutch Tiger Company had, like the American Infantry company's its own area of responsibility in which to conduct Combat Reconnaissance Patrols and other operations.

The Dutch Tiger Company was the last unit to do a transfer of authority of their area of responsibility to the US ODA and the US ETT with their ANA troops on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 in order to be extracted by air from Forward Operation Base Robinson the 21<sup>st</sup> of April.

During a reconnaissance patrol on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 of a foot route back to FOB Robinson one of the Company's Snipers, Corporal Cor Strik, was killed after stepping on a pressure plate IED.

The remaining men had to fall back to a defensible position, because ICOM scanners picked up Taliban messages in relation to the incident and the planning of an attack on the patrol.

Sgt Alexander van Aalten was part of the US Quick Reaction Force that came to the assistance of the patrol. Alexander was one of the men who without hesitation volunteered to retrieve the remains of the fallen soldier, because he like the other volunteers knew how terrible it is to retrieve the remains of a dear friend. Alexander van Aalten followed the UK High Risk Search Team of engineers in order to retrieve the body, during this action he was instantly killed when he stepped on a secondary device.

For this act of military camaraderie Alexander has paid the highest price.

The men from the Dutch Tiger Company, will honour Sgt Alexander Van Aalten as one of their own! And mourn the loss of these two dedicated 21 year young men.

With regards,  
ATW,  
Allez Chasse!  
Marc. C. van Groenestein†



**Editor's Note: This article includes the correct photo of the original design for the company sticker.**



# Dutch National Newspaper, The Telegraph – 29 October 2019

## Story of CPL Cor Strik (Tiger Co – Dutch Airborne) and SGT Alexander van Aalten (1-508th)

**T6 NIEUWS VAN DE DAG**

**AFGHANISTAN TRAGEDIE VERBROEDERT LEGEREENHEDEN EN FAMILIES**

Korporaal Cor Strik was twaalf jaar terug de eerste Nederlander die sneuvelde bij gevechten in Afghanistan. Zijn verlies wordt tot de dag van vandaag gevoeld. Helemaal omdat bij het bergen van zijn stoffelijk overschot nog een militair omkwam; de Amerikaan Alexander van Aalten. Uit de tragedie groeide een unieke band tussen legereenheden en families die deze dagen wordt bezegeld.

# Band voor het leven

door: *Chiel van Jonck*



**D**rie zware weken aan het front heeft de Charlie Tiger-compagnie van de Luchtmobiele Brigade op 20 april 2007 op Aften. De mannen zijn met heliportage gedropt in de buurt van de dorp van Taliban belegerde Sangin. Voor de Amerikaanse collega's van het 1st Airborne Division van de Parachute Infantry Regiment moesten ze de route naar Sangin vrij en te maken hun afval. Als laatste zullen de Nederlanders het gebied ook weer verlaten waarna hun uitdaging erop zit.

**Dreiging**  
De stemming die dag in april is volgens adjudant Paulo echter anderszels. Het is een zwaar gebied met een dreiging van een aanval. De mannen zijn met heliportage gedropt in de buurt van de dorp van Taliban belegerde Sangin. Voor de Amerikaanse collega's van het 1st Airborne Division van de Parachute Infantry Regiment moesten ze de route naar Sangin vrij en te maken hun afval. Als laatste zullen de Nederlanders het gebied ook weer verlaten waarna hun uitdaging erop zit.

**Verbonden**  
De bond of brothers is bovendien internationaal geworden. Het gezamenlijke verlies heeft de Nederlandse en Amerikaanse eenheid verbonden en dat wordt in de Verenigde Staten ook gevoeld. Zondag dat Charlie Tiger-compagnie dit jaar voor het eerst een uitdaging kreeg om deze maand aanvang te zijn bij een reünie van de 508th Airborne. Een organisatie waarin actief betrokken, veteranen en nabestaanden van de Amerikaanse luchtmobiele eenheden samen optrekken. De uitdaging was een internationaal feest.

**Stierlijf**  
Dit woord jaar later geldt die afspraak overtuikt. Ook al is ruim 70 procent van de compagnie geen militair meer, maar burger. De mannen blijven elkaar steunen.

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**DE TELEGRAAF**  
DINSDAG 29 OKTOBER 2019

**NIEUWS VAN DE DAG T7**



**Acht militairen van de Amerikaanse Luchtmobiele Brigade en vier Nederlandse militairen van de Luchtmobiele Brigade zijn zaterdag omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin in Afghanistan. Het is de zwaarste aanval op de stad Sangin sinds de aanval op de stad Sangin in 2007. De Nederlandse militairen waren onderdeel van de Charlie Tiger-compagnie van de Luchtmobiele Brigade van de Koninklijke Luchtmobiele Brigade. De Amerikaanse militairen waren onderdeel van het 1st Airborne Division van de Amerikaanse Luchtmobiele Brigade. De aanval op de stad Sangin werd uitgevoerd door de Taliban. De Nederlandse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin. De Amerikaanse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin. De aanval op de stad Sangin werd uitgevoerd door de Taliban. De Nederlandse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin. De Amerikaanse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin.**

**'WE HEBBEN HETZELFDE VERDRIET'**

AMSTERDAM – Heel Strik wist niet wat ze moest beginnen toen ze hoorde dat haar oudere zoon was gesneuveld in Afghanistan. Hij had er thuis kleding en goederen. Lucht-mobiele slagen over-bereikbaar heen. Niet die.

Zonder Cor had ze in-zaam groetenbees geen-doe meer in het leven. 'Het was dat ik er voor-mijn jongste wilde zijn, anders hoefde het voor-mij niet meer', zegt ze. En toch gaf Cor haar een-reuze doel. De Am-er-foortse wilde alles over-zijn laatste momenten-weten en besef zich-heer als een terrein in vast. Een van de vingers die ze zich-zelf steekte was, wie was Alexander van Aalten? 'In 2007 had je nog geen Facebook of Twitter, maar toch voelde ik inder-deen die ik zocht. Tot de-minister en Commandant der Strijkrachten aan-toe. Ze kregen op een-gegeven moment tijdens-ditzelfde vergadering-talig een berichtje van-mij en hun Blackberry. 'Je hebt een drive na post'-'vertaalt Heidi Strik. 'Haar man Cor en-voor-

Net zoals de onthulling van een gaspogte en de haast van 't spul dat de Am-er-kaans Nederlanders. Biedt-Investerend gedient. Een-zelfde gedachten zal in-December op het kampus-terrein van de Luchtmobiele worden onthuld. Tijdens

het moment in de VS dwal-den bij de Nederlanders de-gedachten af naar toen en-de man die ze verloren. 'Cor was een geweldige-jeugd die enorm kon-moep-eren, maar er tegelijkertijd-bovenal, stak. 'Zou, zijn-gruppen en professionaal-

felt. Hij werd door iedereen-in de groep getoerd'. 'Ka-rikeren met de hulten-zaam. De adjudant vertelt hem-zam. 'Daarom is iedereen-ook jaarlijks bij talen de-handreiking. 'Cor wordt-nouveau respecten. Het is niet-ook in de VS niet.

Actie militairen van de Amerikaanse Luchtmobiele Brigade en vier Nederlandse militairen van de Luchtmobiele Brigade zijn zaterdag omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin in Afghanistan. Het is de zwaarste aanval op de stad Sangin sinds de aanval op de stad Sangin in 2007. De Nederlandse militairen waren onderdeel van de Charlie Tiger-compagnie van de Koninklijke Luchtmobiele Brigade. De Amerikaanse militairen waren onderdeel van het 1st Airborne Division van de Amerikaanse Luchtmobiele Brigade. De aanval op de stad Sangin werd uitgevoerd door de Taliban. De Nederlandse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin. De Amerikaanse militairen zijn omgekomen bij de aanval op de stad Sangin.

**Operation Furious Pursuit – April 2007 • Sangin, Afghanistan**

**Summary Translation**

The first few paragraphs offer an overview of where Charlie Tigers were in Afghanistan and how they moved via helicopter to the doorstep of the Taliban. It mentions 1-508 and their mission to clear routes to ensure safe passage to Sangin.

It then tells the story of Cor Strik and Alexander van Aalten and how they were killed by an IED, both at 21 years of age.

Lastly, it talks about the bond between Charlie Tigers and the 1st 508th and how it endures 12 years later. That members of Charlie came to the U.S. for a 508th reunion and visited the grave of Alexander van Aalten and laid flowers there. They also mention the plaque honoring the Tiger Co and the 508th being laid in the 11th Air Mobile Area in December to allow the Paratroopers there to think about their American brothers.

It closes talking about how emotional the bond between these two organizations is, right down to the families of both fallen Paratroopers. The parents of Cor still speak with Alexander's family and are happy that neither family forgets their child's sacrifice.



Alexander van Aalten



## “Dog Tag Ceremony” For 501<sup>st</sup> PIR KIA 75 Years Ago



Lt. Col. Christopher Brawley, right, hands Ronald Wright his late father's missing dog tags during a dog tag ceremony on Fort Bragg on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2019. Pvt. Maurice Wright, a Paratrooper who fought during Operation Market Garden, was killed in action on Sept. 18, 1944. [Andrew Craft/The Fayetteville Observer]



Association Vice President SGM Steve Noonan reads from an Appreciation Plaque presented to Thulai van Maanen during the 2019 All-Era Reunion Banquet. Thulai was instrumental in securing and coordinating Dutch Paratrooper participation. †

**Thulai van Maanen**, Association Patron Lifetime Member, is a retired NCO from the Royal Dutch Army, having served 20 years, 14 of them with the Engineers. She is now senior employability advisor to the Dutch Army medical specialist group. She has completed extensive research on World War II and the 82nd Airborne Division. Her research includes those MIA where she collaborates with the Dutch GRS, the U.S. DPAA and the international MIA network. Thulai's volunteer work includes partnership with the 82nd Airborne Division and the U.S. Embassy at The Hague on a project that returns World War II artifacts, mostly from 82nd Airborne Division Paratroopers KIA, to their families. See photo and caption above for a “dog tag ceremony” for a 501st PIR KIA 75 years ago. **Sincere thanks to Thulai.**



## 2019 NATIONAL CONVENTION

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

Last July, during a telephone conversation with Rock Merritt, he said to me, "Honey, why don't you fly up here to Fayetteville, spend the night at my house and then drive with me and Dianna to Washington, D.C. for National Convention?"! I thought, "Why not!" The whole trip from start to finish was one of the most amazing experiences I have had in all the years I have been involved with 508 veterans.



Grill master Rock!

I flew to Fayetteville on Monday, August 5 and Dianna picked me up at the airport. When we arrived at Rock's house, he was grilling the biggest steaks you ever saw. I asked for the smallest steak and Rock said, "No, you get the largest!" His neighbor and good friend, Lou Gutierrez joined us. We had a wonderful meal (all the vegetables except the salad) came from Rock and Dianna's garden. I don't think any of us finished our steaks - Lou's dogs ate well that night!

The next morning, Rock asked Dianna to fix a country breakfast for me. We had bacon (cooked to perfection), eggs and biscuits and gravy. Between the two meals, I think I gained five pounds before we ever left Fayetteville!

We arrived in Washington, D.C. in the afternoon, checked into the hotel and registered for the convention. It was great to see old friends, COL.(R) Liz Coble, John Ceballos, (the PAO for Benavidez-Patterson Chapter), T-Mac (the 555 historian), Rich Becker, whom I know from Airborne Awards days, Tony Benevidez, a 1-508 Vietnam veteran whom I met at the Golden Brigade Reunion, and of course, Kimo and Tino Madrid. We got something to eat in the hotel restaurant and made a visit to the hospitality room where I met some 508 GWOT veterans.



BR: Will Ross, Eric Sowers, Andrew Ritter  
FR: Tony Benevidez, Maggie Peppers, Tino Madrid

Several of these guys were 2-508 veterans who fought in the Arghandaub river valley in Afghanistan in 2009. That was the year our association participated in the first Operation Christmas. The prior year, 2-508 hosted the 508 Reunion at Ft. Bragg and it was spectacular. A few months later, they deployed to Afghanistan. I emailed CSM Bert Puckett and told him what I wanted to do, and he put me in touch with their Chaplain. Rock knew I was in over my head and asked the Family Readiness Group to help me. Thanks to them, we were able to send Christmas gifts to every soldier in the battalion. While I was talking to some of these veterans, it occurred to me that while I was running around trying to raise money, these guys were getting their butts shot off in that God forsaken place.

One night in the hospitality room, I was talking to a couple of these guys and one of them asked me about the heart shaped 508 pin I was wearing. I told them about the Christmas project and that Chris Puckett and Sherri Jenio, the wives of the Bn CSM and LTC, sent me that pin and a 508 stained glass panel that is still in my kitchen window and that I always wear that pin every day of every deployment of the 508. At the mention of the names Puckett and Jenio, one of the veterans said, "Ah Puckett and Jenio – two of the greatest guys in the world." Then they talked for a while about what great leaders they were and how much they thought of them. I never met LTC Jenio, but it sure made me proud to know Bert Puckett. And they were right, he is a great guy!

The convention was in remembrance of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Normandy and Operation Market Garden. There were eight WWII veterans in attendance: Rock Merritt (508th PIR); Hugh Wallis (504th PIR), whom I met during All American Week the previous May; Robert DeVinney (504th PIR); Raymond Wallace (507th PIR), Edson Kitchen (WWII-Korea-Vietnam veteran); Stanley Gryga; Henry Kusmierczy (11th Abn and Los Banos raid veteran); and Harry Miller (740th Tank Bn). The 740th was attached to the 82nd in the Battle of the Bulge. I told Mr. Miller; I had visited their monument in Belgium many times. He designed it!

Wednesday morning, we loaded up the buses and went to the WWII Memorial. General Mingus spoke, the 82nd Airborne Chorus performed, and the WWII veterans laid the unit wreaths. Rock laid the wreath for the 508th. Next, we went to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We watched the Changing of the Guard and when the wreath was laid, Rock represented the WWII veterans.



Rock with the 508th wreath



On Thursday, we went to Stafford Regional Airport to watch a training jump and enjoy a BBQ. Upon arrival, we were greeted by active duty 82nd Airborne soldiers and couples dressed in 1940's outfits swing dancing to WWII music. Rock and John Ceballos greeted the troopers while others danced to the swing music. One of the WWII veterans danced with a woman from his wheelchair!

The jump was a training jump and one of the soldiers, SFC Justin Mattison, earned his Senior Wings with that jump. Rock was asked to pin the wings on him. One of our 508 GWOT Veterans, Thomas Tardo, brought over two 508 troopers and asked me to photograph them with him and Rock. Below are some pictures of the day.



John, the babe magnet!



Rock greeting the troops



Three generations of 508th PIR paratroopers: Tino Madrid, Maggie Peppers, Rock Merritt, and Will Ross



Rock pinning Senior Wings on SFC Justin Mattison



Rock Merritt and SFC Justin Mattison



508 Veteran, Thomas Tardo and Rock Merritt



SPC Joseph Mikolaszak, Thomas Tardo, Rock Merritt, SPC William Marsh





Group Photo

Thursday evening in the hospitality room, CSM (R) Donald "Mac" McAlister arrived. It was great to see him. Mac was the B Co. 1st SGT in 2009 in the Arcgandaub. Thomas Tardo brought an 82 nd flag and was getting all the 2-508 guys to sign it.



Mac signing the 2-508 Flag



Eric Sowers signing the 2-508 flag

A Memorial Banquet was held Friday night. There were twenty-three candles lit for all the 82nd Airborne Operations.



Dianna, Rock and Randy Glancy, former Nat'l Director



John Ceballos and Ellen Peters



There was another banquet Saturday night. Dick Cheney was the keynote speaker. After the banquet, Rock spoke with Mr. Cheney about a 508 th reunion in Cody, WY in 1995 in which Mr. Cheney was the speaker and how cold it was.



The Memorial Candles



CSM (R) Don McAlister and Rock Merritt



Rock Merritt and Eric Sowers



Rock Merritt and Dick Cheney

Throughout the convention, I kept saying that I wanted to get a picture of all the 508 veterans in attendance with Rock. After the Saturday night banquet, one of the veterans grabbed the microphone and announced a 508 photo was taking place. People I had not met the entire convention were coming up to saying they were in the 508 at such and such dates and could they be in the picture. "Of Course!" Below is the photo I took. (Not pictured is Tony Benevidez, Eric Sowers and Tino Madrid.) →





**REMEMBRANCE DAY**

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

When Americans are celebrating Veterans Day, in the U.K., they celebrate Remembrance Day. Family and Friends Honorary Member, Graham Lawson, always ensures the 508th PIR soldiers who were billeted at Wollaton Park in Nottingham, England during WWII are remembered. This year, Graham’s Drop Zone N group laid wreaths for the founder of the WWII 508 PIR Veterans Association. O.B. Hill; PVT. John Daum, who was KIA 8 June 1944, and PVT Martin Teahan, who was KIA 23 June 1944. ➔



**REMEMBERING AND HONORING**



Susan and Lars de Heus, daughters Gwen & Alexis join Valorie and CAPT (USN) Shane Harris at Gravesite of PFC James A. Childs, KIA 18 Sep 1944  
18 September 2019  
Netherlands American Cemetery Margraten, Holland



Lars de Heus’ Grandfather Honors an American Early 1950s at Netherlands American Cemetery Margraten, Holland ➔

[www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/en/](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/en/)



## “Wreaths Across America” Goes Global

Dutch Place Wreaths throughout the Netherlands American Cemetery

Patron Lifetime Members Susan and Lars de Heus report that “Wreaths Across America” has come to the Netherlands, with over 8000 wreaths laid earlier in December at the Netherlands American Cemetery. There are sixty-six 508th World War II Paratroopers buried at the Cemetery located in the town of Margraten, a few miles east of the city of Maastricht. Thank you, Susan and Lars, for remembering and honoring fallen Americans. †



### MARGRATEN

## Amerikaanse traditie: achtduizend kransen op begraafplaats

Een Amerikaanse traditie wordt dit weekend voor het eerst uitgevoerd op de Amerikaanse begraafplaats in Margraten. Bij alle 8301 graven worden kransen neergelegd ter nagedachtenis aan de omgekomen soldaten.

MARGRATEN  
DOOR VIKKIE BARTHOLOMEUS

Elk jaar legt de organisatie WAA (Wreaths Across America) rond de feestdagen in de Verenigde Staten kransen op alle graven van veteranen. Niet alleen op de nationale begraafplaats in Arlington met meer dan 400.000 graven, maar ook op 1600 andere begraafplaatsen. Vorig jaar werd deze traditie voor het eerst naar Europa gebracht; toen werden op de Amerikaanse begraafplaats in Normandië kransen gelegd en ook op de D-day-stranden werden kransen geplaatst. Dit jaar komen Luxemburg en Margraten aan bod.

De Amerikaanse toezichthouder van de begraafplaats David Americo is vereerd. „Het is een fantastische traditie om onze mannen en vrouwen die gevallen zijn te eren.” Hij stelt dat onder meer voor Margraten is gekozen vanwege de ster-

ke band met de bevolking; het adoptieprogramma waarbij alle graven speciale aandacht krijgen van particulieren is uniek.

De kransen met rode strikken zijn samengesteld uit takken van de balsamzilverpar uit Maine en al overgevoerd uit de Verenigde Staten. De kransen zijn gesponsord door de initiatiefnemer van Wreaths Across America, Morrill Worcester. Hij raakte als jongen onder de indruk van een bezoek aan de begraafplaats in Arlington en startte als kweker van sparren de traditie in de jaren negentig.

Het vervoer van de kransen naar Margraten en Luxemburg is door transportbedrijven gesponsord. Zondag worden ze vanaf 10.30 uur geplaatst door vrijwilligers. De kransen hebben volgens David Americo drie doelen: *remember, honor, teach*. Ze zijn er niet alleen om de overledenen te gedenken, maar ook om Amerikaanse militairen in actieve dienst te eren en kinderen bewust te maken van de waarde van vrijheid en de offers die hiervoor worden gebracht. In de Verenigde Staten blijven de kransen ongeveer een maand liggen, van half december tot half januari. In Margraten zullen ze slechts een paar dagen zichtbaar zijn, tot woensdagochtend. Vanwege wetgeving op de import van niet-inheems plantmateriaal – waarbij gewaakt wordt voor exotische insecten of schimmels – mogen de kransen maximaal 72 uur blijven liggen.





## Remembering Don "Jake" Jakeway

Submitted by Ellen Peters

### Jakeway, Don "Jake"

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Don "Jake" Jakeway. Jake passed away in the early morning hours of November 30, 2019 in Johnstown, Ohio. Our friendship began with a telephone call in 2004. It was Francis Lamoureux who suggested I call Jake to obtain a copy of his book, "Paratroopers Do or Die". Jake was very kind and generous with his time. We were on the telephone for well over an hour. Jake sent me a copy of his book and I took it with me to the 2004 508 Reunion. Unfortunately, Jake was unable to attend, but I met several of his H Co. members at that reunion.

I don't believe Jake attended any 508 Reunions, but I did see him at Trigger Time events in Ohio and spent time with him in France in 2014. One of my fondest memories is of Jake and Sharron Pike greeting each other at the Stop Bar. They were such close friends and had not seen each other in many years.

Last year, I asked my sister and brother-in-law to go visit Jake in Ohio and ask him to sign my Air Mobility Command Museum E Co. D-Day print and my James Dietz Hill 30 print. Not only did he sign my prints, he signed a third print that he had and asked my sister and brother-in-law to give it to me. I will treasure it forever. †

Condolences can be sent to Rene at:

196 Saratoga Rd.  
Johnstown, OH 43031-1142



Jake in Parachute



Jake at Trigger Time



Jake at home





## Final Jumps



### Donald Jakeway – 1923-2019

Donald Ivan Jakeway, 96 passed away on Saturday November 30, 2019 in Johnstown, Ohio. He was born January 16, 1923 and he is preceded in death by his parents Myrtle and Stacy Jakeway and his siblings Dalton, Earl, Dorothy and Ralph. His sister Velda is still with us. He is survived by his wife of 73 years, Roselyn "Rene" (Geiger) Jakeway; their children, Denise, Kim, David (Connie) and Don (Alice). Don and Rene are the grandparents of Ashley, Grant, Jason, Greg, Tanner and Trenton and they have 6 great grandchildren. Don graduated from Johnstown Monroe High School in 1942 and was an All-County Football Player. After graduation he enlisted in the US Army and was one of the original members of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR, H Company of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. A WWII combat veteran, Sgt. Jake participated in the D-Day invasion, Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge where he was seriously wounded. He was awarded 4 Bronze Stars, 2 Purple Hearts and the French Legion of Merit. He was inducted into both the Ohio Veterans and Ohio Military Halls of Fame. He worked for the Marathon Oil Company and EBCO Manufacturing as International Sales Director. He finished his career with the Tech Rubber Company. He was a lifelong resident of Johnstown and supported many local youth programs and was a member of American Legion Post 254. He was the author of "Paratroopers Do or Die" about the WWII experiences of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. Private Funeral Services will be for the immediate family and he will be laid to rest with military honors at Green Hill Cemetery in Johnstown. A Special Memorial Service will be held next spring to celebrate Sgt. Jake's life. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to: The Motts Military Museum, 5075 S Hamilton Rd., Groveport, OH 43125. †

*Published in the Columbus Dispatch on Dec. 4, 2019*





## CONDOLENCES

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

### **Pike, Sharron**

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Sharron Pike, widow of Dave Pike. Sharron passed away October 5<sup>th</sup> after a nine month long battle with cancer. Sharron and Dave were the 508 representatives in Nottingham, England for many years before moving permanently to St. Mere Eglise. Sharron was a dear friend who's hospitality and kindness will long be remembered. Sharron always opened her home to people making their annual trips to Normandy, including me. She was a wonderful cook and always made sure her guests were well fed. She could often be found at Dick Copper's place helping him and Caroline with their Bed and Breakfast guests.

Condolences can be sent to her son, Sean at:

Maison Juniper  
24, Hameau Des Belle Graines  
50480 Ste-Mere-Eglise  
France †

## SEARCHING FOR

I need help identifying a 508 trooper if possible. At Wollaton Park between March and June 1944, Doc Thomas states in his memoirs in Dave Pike's book, "Airborne In Nottingham", page 13 that a rifleman from A Co., called in to see him, complaining about blurred vision. The rifleman was sent to Hospital for tests. He was found to be stone deaf and worked his way through training by lip reading. He pleaded with Doc Thomas to keep him in the 508th. Doc Thomas obliged by getting him a job as a cook's helper. This rifleman was unbelievable and dedicated.

I was wondering if someone can point me in the right direction to have access to any morning reports with regards to A Co.

Regards,

Graham Lawson – [frontline2154@gmail.com](mailto:frontline2154@gmail.com) †

## GET WELL SOON

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

### **Confrey, Charlene**

**Update** – After going through 28 days of radiation and chemo pills following the Whipple surgery, Charlene went for a catscan in October and cancer cells were found in two places on her liver. Her doctor has her on two different very strong chemos with the hopes that all cancer cells in her body will be eradicated. Her chemotherapy sessions will continue until the end of the year. Charlene maintains a positive attitude and thanks everyone in our association for their prayers. Please continue to keep Charlene in your prayers. Cards and letters can be sent to Charlene at:

P.O. Box 835  
Suffield, CT 06078-0835  
Email: [cconfrey@cox.net](mailto:cconfrey@cox.net) †

### **Madrid, Kimo**

Shortly after the 508 Reunion, Kimo Madrid underwent rotator cuff surgery. While she is in a lot of pain, she is recovering nicely. Get well wishes can be sent to:

453 Thruston St.  
Toledo, OH 43605-2552  
Email: [kimomadrid53@gmail.com](mailto:kimomadrid53@gmail.com) †

## Operation Christmas 2019

*Submitted by Ellen Peters*

Family and Friends of the 505 RCT Assn., the Golden Brigade Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Assn. (*82nd Airborne Vietnam Veterans*) and Mr. Leo Hobson, an 82nd Airborne, 505 PIR Veteran have joined forces to launch Operation Christmas 2019.

Our goals, in no particular order, were as follows.

1. Provide Christmas cookies to our 3rd BCT combat troops currently serving in Afghanistan
2. Purchase and distribute Walmart gift cards to the families of the deployed soldiers (*E-4 and below*).
3. Support the Paratrooper Family Readiness Group in providing "Comfort Baskets" for single soldiers who reside in barracks upon their return from service in Afghanistan. **NOTE:** *When single soldiers are deployed, all of their possessions are put into storage. Upon their return, these soldiers enter empty barracks and literally have nothing; no sheets, no towels, no toiletries. "Comfort Baskets" will provide them with these essential items.*

For the last 15 years, it has been my great honor to be involved with 82nd Airborne veterans and active duty troops and know, firsthand, how much these holiday remembrances mean to the men and women who fight to preserve the freedoms we enjoy.

As of now, the cookies, trees & ornaments, and cards have been sent to Afghanistan. The gift cards were sent to the rear detachment chaplain at Ft. Bragg and were distributed to the families at their Christmas party December 7.

We will start working on the comfort baskets after the first of the year. The soldiers come home in March, so we will be collecting funds for that until then. We plan to contribute 50% of the cost (this part of the project is to support the Paratrooper Family Readiness Group). I would like to be able to pay for 100% of the cost, but that is doubtful. We could not have done this project without the help of the PFRG.

**Editor's Note:** The Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association made a substantial donation of \$750 on behalf of our Membership while the El Paso Benavidez-Patterson Chapter, our partner for the July 2020 Reunion, contributed \$250 on behalf of its Membership, but if anyone would like to make additional contributions towards "comfort baskets" for returning Paratroopers, they can do so at the links listed below through March 2020.

### **They have not forgotten us. Let's not forget them!**

To make a donation to this worthy cause, please use one of the following methods:

**Venmo:** FF505RCT

**PayPal:** [ff505rct@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ff505rct@sbcglobal.net)

**Go Fund Me:** [www.gofundme.com/operation-christmas-2019](http://www.gofundme.com/operation-christmas-2019)

Or

Send a check to:

**F&F 505th RCT Assn.**  
**Attn: Ellen Peters – Secretary/Treasurer**    **OR**  
**3630 Townsend Dr.**  
**Dallas, TX 75229-3805**

**Golden Brigade Chapter**  
**Attn: Rich O'Hare**  
**4075 Old River Trail**  
**Powhatan, VA 23139-4112**

**LET'S MAKE THIS A DECEMBER TO REMEMBER FOR OUR SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES**



"All They Touched Turned to Gold" TM



## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

*Submitted by Delbert Grush and Troy Palmer*

Delbert Grush: "SGT Gabriel Guzman was one of my roommates and also a 13F Fire Support/Forward Observer. In fact, I was injured on a jump and broke my back and left foot, so they sent me to HHC to recover and Gabriel took my spot in Charlie Co. 2-508 as the FO for the infantry company. Gabe was a go getter, kind, funny and competitive. We did everything together he and a few more of us guys that were inseparable. We deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 and Gabe went out in a mission with C Co. Someone had a bad feeling about seating arrangement and Gabe voluntarily took the hot seat, which ultimately cost him his life as they hit an IED that very day. His mom wrote this book on dealing with her grief in the aftermath and being a person who fully did not support the war, but there her son was in it. It will outline more of who Gabe was by her perspective and how she's come to terms with his service, learning of his comrades and more into his military life."

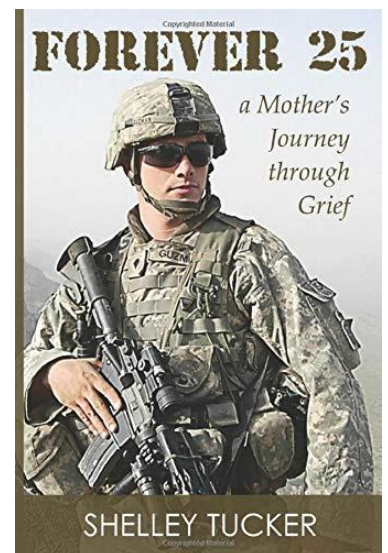
Synopsis: On March 8, 2008 Sgt. Gabriel Guzman of the US Army was killed by a roadside bomb while on patrol in Afghanistan. In her touching memoir, Shelley Tucker, takes us through the aftermath of having her son's life suddenly ripped away.

As she struggles with understanding her son and why he would choose to fight in a war when her desire in this world was for peace, further tragedy strikes. She's pulled into the mysteries of the Mayan Calendar and the ruling Lord of Destruction, Tetzcatlipoca.

Her journey is one of every grieving parent, trying to go on when the world stops making sense. There are no easy answers as those around her offer platitudes, she finds herself more alone than ever. She journeys deeply inward in search of her truth, to understand grief and what it means for her. Shelley finds that her way isn't as simple as war or peace. It's finding love and compassion for our soldiers and warriors, while also praying and working towards better solutions to our conflicts as nations, people, families, enemies and friends.

Even ten years later, she couldn't just let her son's life slip away without comment. This book is also Gabriel's legacy. He was an inspiration to family and friends. And in the end, she discovered the ultimate letting go was both embracing and releasing her son.

This is part of the untold story of the aftermath of war. With thousands of our young men killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, the lives of their families have been forever changed. The soldiers who return, after witnessing deaths of friends and comrades, back to a life they no longer recognize. No one likes to talk of death or trauma. Shelley's book is an opening to conversation that should not be bottled up or pushed aside. Her story isn't just for her and her son. It's for all those who have experienced great loss, it's for the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands, children and friends. Through understanding the pain of another, perhaps we can find our way to understand grief. †



## 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 †

# Holiday Flash Sale!

## HATS & POLO SHIRTS FLASH SALE!

Order by Friday, December 20

Dietz Normandy Hill 30 Prints now Available!

Signed by 82nd Division Hall of Famers CSM (Ret) Rock Merritt and LTC (Ret) Bob Chisolm



Go To: [www.508pir.org/f](http://www.508pir.org/f) and [f/qtrmstr\\_01.htm](http://f/qtrmstr_01.htm)



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