

# DIABLO



The Link for All 508th Veterans & Active Duty and Family & Friends  
Published by the *Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association* – October 2021

## Presidential Corner

*LTC James Browning (former commander of 2-508 PIR)*

To the association and the members of present and past, I cannot tell you how humbled I am to be considered for the position and excited to be a part of the future of our community. My 21 years of service has been grounded in serving and that remains true to this association. Seeing the long lineage of former presidents, I will never be able to meet the standard that has been set so high. My limited time with the legends of our association has given me perspective and direction on what is needed for our association.

My mission for this association is outreach. The basic step in understanding the demographics of our community is reaching out to our community. I am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Army Soldier and have seen the pain and pride of service. Opening the doors to a new generation is never easy but necessary to keep this connection alive. I believe the future of the organization is grounded in both the active service and the legends of the past. There is more that connects the two than separates. The first step is creating a space and platform for all the generations to connect.

The first step in my tenure is to expand the digital footprint of our organization. The work done in the cataloguing of our history is beyond phenomenal and must connect to the current times of the digital age. The plan to connect on multiple platforms will be the first step in expanding our influence.

The next avenue I plan to pursue is expanding our network of networks. I am a novice at the non-profit community, but I am a quick study. With that, I see so many organizations yearning to be a part of an effort that is worthy and true. My goal over the next 18 months is to connect with leaders, volunteers, representatives, key organizations, and our active duty to anchor our identity among the patriots wanting to make a difference.

Additionally, I want to scope the events we participate in and support. Near and dear to my heart are the paratroopers that are in harm's way every day. I've spoken with the battalion command teams and see that there is a strong desire to have active engagement with veterans of the past. I want to create an engagement plan that actively participates in the battalions training, family readiness, Paratrooper transition, and outreach. During unit balls and All American week, I commit to support the battalions in their social events and fundraising to promulgate the importance of lineage and history. Looking to future reunions, every other year I want to support the desire of the battalion commanders to ensure the events occur within 5 hours of Fort Bragg and when possible, host the events in areas that allow the active paratroopers to be away from home and enjoy different areas of America.

Finally, with Harry Jauret and Chris Harris in support, I see the future of the friends and family of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR seeking new areas of revenue. My vision is to keep the tradition alive with minimum cost to the paratroopers of past and present. We will seek out new opportunities and ventures to keep the cost of individual paratrooper, the family, and friends to a minimum to focus on what is important to all of us – the bond and relationship of Paratroopers. ➔

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## All Era Reunion 2021

Paratroopers from across time and the Family & Friends that keep us grounded, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR reunion was nothing short of a success. In the summer heat of Columbus, Ohio, paratroopers of all ranks, sizes, ages, generations and other regiments assembled and reconnected despite the heavy cloud of uncertainty with COVID-19 terrorizing the nation. To the ones we lost over this past year and those that could not attend, the weight of their absence could be felt the moment you walked into the hotel. With the lovely Diane at the reception desk ready to welcome the masses, you could feel the pride of CSM(R) Rock Merritt beaming down from heaven. There is no other place any of us wanted to be than in this exact moment, celebrating this community and this family.

In the midst of turmoil, pandemics, war, and two wedding receptions, the 504<sup>th</sup>, 505<sup>th</sup>, 508<sup>th</sup> PIR and 325 AIR were well-placed and well-represented. In fact, the one feature that stood out the most was the multiple generations of paratroopers and the sizeable representation of younger Soldiers eager to be a part of this legacy. None of this was possible without the incredible effort of the Columbus Chapter of the 82<sup>nd</sup> and our very own Chris Harris. The energy that was placed in the synchronization and planning made this event the biggest and most organized in years.

The scheduled events, like every year, are great suggestions but usually much more fun after all night in the hospitality room. The tightly orchestrated events were well organized and most importantly...late enough in the morning for all of us to recover before jumping on the bus out to Motts Military Museum or catching a round or two of golf. As expected, we heard stories from multiple eras of combat. Stories that we've heard a thousand times but we sit there listening to hear once again. The stories get bigger, the enemy gets meaner but paratroopers never change. Ready for a fight at any corner of the hotel or at least to take a big swig of Pinard wine while soaking in the details of the Battle of the Bulge.

The festivities carried the first few days, but the real meetings started with the presentations of key speakers. Well before the final ceremony, we heard from a great group of folks presenting oral histories, recent experiences from the current Command Sergeant Majors of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of 508<sup>th</sup>, LTC James Browning and SFC Harry Jauret in Mosul, Iraq, The Golden Brigade, and the M1 rifle display. The details of multiple generations were described and explored. In the end we found more commonality in the experiences than differences. In the end we nominated a new president of the association, LTC James Browning and our new Sergeant Major, Budd Dunn. The discussion and recognition set a new tone for the association and the well-received nomination provides a peek into the future of the Friends and Family of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association.

The end of the reunion was bittersweet. An event marked by the traditional formal dinner with family members, service members, friends, and family all anxiously waiting to see the festivities unfold. With LTC Browning, the new association president by only a few hours, taking the lead as the master of ceremonies, the formal portion of the reunion began. A night, focused on the long history of the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 508<sup>th</sup> while recognizing the many that are still dealing with the loss of parents, siblings, children, and friends. The Gold Star families in strong representation continue to support and remain connected as the association continues to honor their sacrifice.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division graciously sent LTC Patrick Stone (1-508 PIR commander) and LTC Ryan Bell (2-508 PIR commander) to deliver the keynote speech at the dinner with a virtual guest of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Commander, Major General Christopher Donohue. Their speeches focused on the commitment and readiness of today's paratroopers while highlighting the accolades of combat tours and high-intensity training. Their presence was steady, but the real story was the paratroopers that came with them. In lead with CSM James Bradshaw and CSM Charlie Harp, the enlisted paratroopers were everything we expected – tough, fit, strong, and ready for anything.

The night dwindled into auctions, celebrations, libations, and the very best inappropriate behavior. With over 200 items for auction, it was clear that the 82<sup>nd</sup> and all other regiments represented were ready for the night. It was clear to everyone in the room that this is the soul of America, the soul of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, and the soul of the Paratroopers.

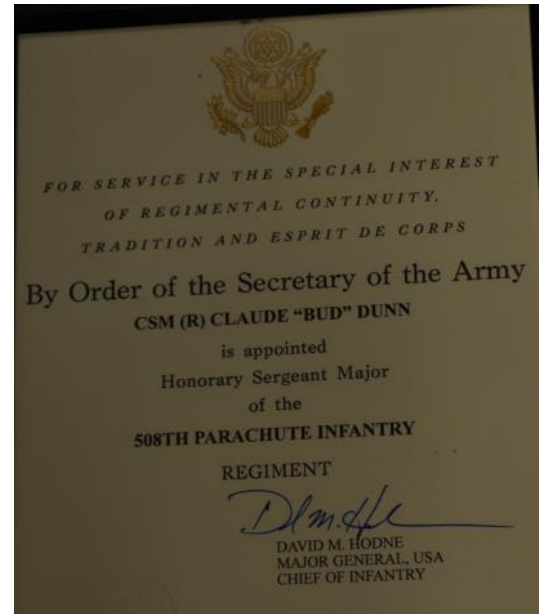
Fury From The Sky! ➔



# 508<sup>th</sup> All-Era & All-Airborne Reunion Columbus, OH – Banquet -26 June 2021







**Rock Merritt Items were Honored and Valued during the Silent Auction.**



# Wanda Hamilton & Family

## Columbus Reunion - June 26, 2021



From Back Left: Bill Hamilton (son), JaNelle Hester (granddaughter), Akhil Indurti (grandson-in-law), Eddie Hamilton (son), Alex Hamilton (grandson)

Middle: Wanda Horner (granddaughter), LaNell Hester (daughter-in-law), Becky Burton (daughter), Rachel Indurti (granddaughter), Ethan McNamara (great grandson), Heather Hamilton (granddaughter)

Front: Danielle Poland (great granddaughter), Wanda Hamilton (wife of Edwin Hamilton 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne 508th PIR, H Co), Isaiah Poland (great great grandson), Lillian Poland (great great granddaughter)

Front and center: Joseph Poland (great great grandson – Grandma's boy)

### Thank You Wanda!

2021 "Bob Chisolm Person of the Year" Award Recipient

***Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Association's New YouTube Page***

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyavbWPmZh2SXHxuhIbFDmQ>

See all Videos from sessions of the 2021 508th All-Era & All-Airborne Reunion in Columbus, Ohio.

**More content to post soon!**



## MANY THANKS TO OUR RECENT GENEROUS DONORS!

You Honored Rock Merritt & Made a Great Columbus OH Reunion Event Possible

Lucy Broderick-Hill  
Bob Chisolm  
Donna and Phil  
Cronin  
Richard Doyle  
Claud "Bud" Dunn  
Monica and Jim Farrell  
Gene Garren

Chris Harris  
Cindy and Steve  
Holcomb  
Ralph King  
Jean Newton  
Ellen Peters  
Rachel Riley  
Dwayne Selk

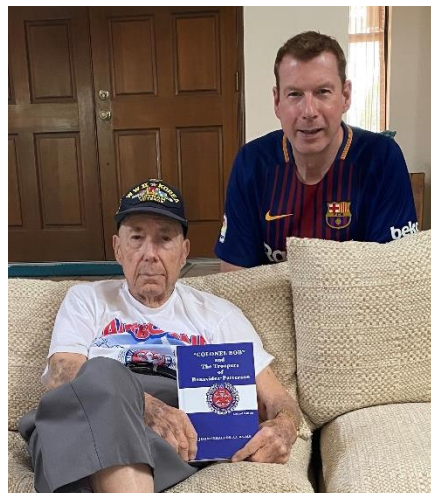


## CONNECTING ACROSS THE MILES POST-REUNION 2021

Great Visits with Special Original 508th Paratroopers!



Carl Porter – Peoria, IL



Bob Chisolm – Anthony, NM



Warren Wilt – Overland Park, KS

# BOB NOBLES TURNS 100!

## January 30, 2021



Wintertime Birthday Greetings in Ithaca, New York



Bob Nobles – February 2019

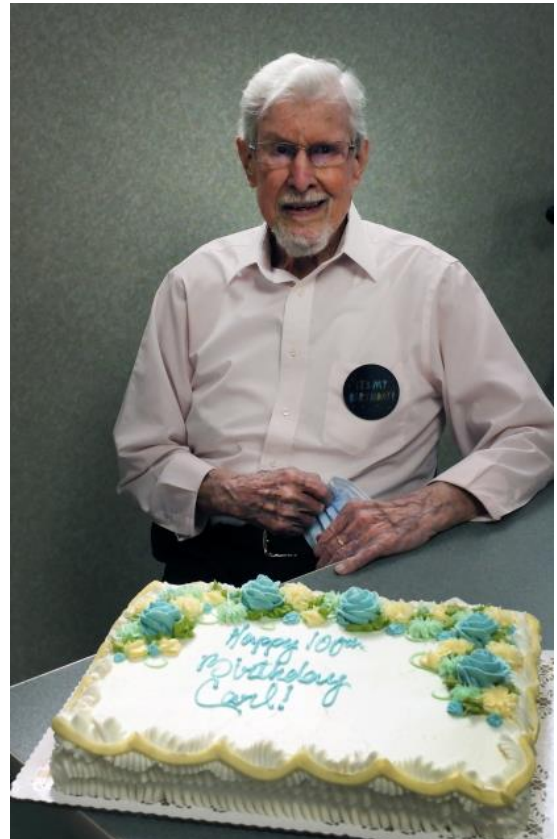


The Last 4 Love Letters from Bob's beloved Bette to Arrive before the Normandy D-Day Jump – Motivation throughout 11 Months as POW in Czechoslovakia Coal Mines †



# CARL PORTER TURNS 100!

## August 30, 2021



- Crystal Memento from 1st & 2nd Battalions: *"Congratulations on Your 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday! Proud to Follow in Your Footsteps. Airborne All The Way!"*
- Challenge Coins from Commanding Officers of 1st and 2nd Battalions – Fort Bragg, NC.
- Crystal Memento from Family & Friends 508th PIR Assoc: *"Thanks for Helping Preserve the Legacy. Your 508th Family and Friends. Fury From The Sky!"*
- Iron Mike replica statue: *"Carl H. Porter 'A Scholar and a Gentleman' Service Company, 508th PIR D-Day Normandy, France Jump – June 6, 1944"*
- *"508th PIR Normandy Riggers"* story written by Carl (see reproduction in this Newsletter).
- Phil Nordyke's definitive combat history of the 508th PIR in World War II, *"Put Us Down In Hell"*.
- Hand-painted Greek vase commemorating the Marshall Plan and the post-WWII world built by The Greatest Generation.
- White flowers symbolizing WWII parachutes used to tailor Carl's beloved Marly's wedding dress.
- A gold tablecloth honoring a long, rich life and how Carl has enriched the life of so many family & friends





## 508th PIR Riggers Prior to D-Day Normandy Jump



**Standing:** CWO Roy Barger, Tech Sgt John Kersh (POW), Cecil Neal (POW), T K "Det" Detwiler, Albert "Snapper" Pirtle, Edward "Pony" DuPont (POW & WIA), Elmer Martell (POW), Donald Hansen (WIA), **Howard "Randy" Ranbauer (KIA)**, **Lawrence "Larry" Snovak (KIA)**, Harry Gerheim, Robert "Bob" Watts (POW & WIA), and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Lindale "Button Nose" Keating (POW).

**Kneeling:** Tech Sgt Henry "Hank" Schillinger (POW), **James "Jimmy" Hall (KIA)**, Carl H Porter (POW & WIA), **Thomas "Tommy" Cross (KIA)**, Earl Cornwall, and Frank "Dutch" Dasch (POW & WIA).

Note: Pat Farrel jumped but was not in this photo. Only 3 of 10 POWs remained captured to the end of the War. †

[http://508pir.org/voices/p/porter\\_ch.htm](http://508pir.org/voices/p/porter_ch.htm) for the Escape Stories of Schillinger, Watts and Porter.

[http://508pir.org/voices/k/kersh\\_jd.htm](http://508pir.org/voices/k/kersh_jd.htm) for John Kersh's Escape Story.

[http://508pir.org/voices/m/martell\\_ee.htm](http://508pir.org/voices/m/martell_ee.htm) for Elmer Martell's POW Story.

## 508th PIR Normandy Riggers

The twenty 508th PIR Riggers who jumped into Normandy, France, in the early morning hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944, may well have been a microcosm of the chaos that briefly ensued when the 82nd and 101st Airborne troops were scattered widely (and wildly) over the Cotentin Peninsula. The drop also demonstrated the resilience, ingenuity and courage of the American Paratrooper - *traits properly attributed to our airborne brethren to this day.*

When the two C-47s, carrying 20 Riggers and 16 other Paratroopers, dropped our Sticks, we were north of Valognes, roughly 20 miles from the intended Drop Zone. Worse still, according to Phil Nordyke in his book "Put Us Down In Hell", we landed "...almost on top of the headquarters of Battalion 1, Grenadier Regiment 1058, 91st Luftlande Division of Le Haut Gelay". I can personally attest to the German presence because, after disengaging from a tree landing, I was met by a harsh "Hande Hoch" and a rifle and two burp guns pointed at my belly.

It is a testament to the courage and ingenuity of the American Troopers that, of those captured (some not yet out of their parachute harnesses), two were wounded, two made a daring escape, and three engineered a breakout so that a group of 13 paratroopers and 4 glidermen could turn the tables on their captors. We then marched the Germans to Utah Beach thanks to the 4th Division's successful penetration and establishment of a presence on/at the beach. Two more days and nights, two more German prisoners, a large can of stewed tomatoes, and an uncertain scabble through a dangerous countryside, and we finally found "our guys" near Chef du Pont. We weren't "home free" by any means...but we were home as far as we were concerned. ✈

**Thanks to the Association for Sharing Our Story!**

***In Memory of Jimmy, Tommy, Larry and Randy – Carl H Porter***

### Golden Brigade Reunion

On 9 SEP 21, the Golden Brigade of the Vietnam Era met in Steel City, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This collection of veterans represented what the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was always designed to do – deploy quickly and get the job done. In the recent published book "The Golden Brigade: The Untold Story of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in Vietnam and Beyond" by Robert J Dvorchak, describes account of a lost history that carries on among those that served in Vietnam as mixed group of heroes. The unique attributes of this organization are seen today by those that continue to show up to the reunions. Across the spectrum, you have paratroopers from across the 82<sup>nd</sup> and draftees that were pulled into the brigade that fought next each other not knowing if/when this would end. This unique group of Soldiers went into the fray, under the command of the 101<sup>st</sup>, unwilling to strip their 82<sup>nd</sup> patches, ready for any fight that was put in front of them.

On this day, LTC Browning had the opportunity to describe the events that happened during the fight against ISIS and the liberation of Mosul in 2017. That discussion resonated with the paratroopers of the Golden Brigade but the real moment came when discussing the recent withdrawal of US Service Members from Afghanistan. At this point, having seen the fall of Kabul and the disintegration of the Afghan Security Forces, the Golden Brigade Soldiers sensed the weight of shame and regret in the new generation of Paratroopers.

20 years of service in Afghanistan. Not much difference than the 10 years in Vietnam, the Golden Brigade Paratroopers in the room knew that feeling of despair when seeing Saigon fall. It was unfortunately too familiar and the pain too near.

The story of the Golden Brigade and the story of America are so intertwined it is hard to tell where one begins, and one ends. The losses of close friends in combat and the losses of close friends to emotional turmoil plagues every generation of Paratrooper. Today we lose on average 20 veterans a day to suicide. The hidden wounds do not end in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Panama. Iraq or Afghanistan. The recognition that this community is willing to fight for every one of those 20 that see no other way out is the commitment of who we are at the core. The Golden Brigade, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, the Devils in Baggy Pants – we all will and forever seek to embrace our brothers and sisters that see no other way out. This community remains committed to uplifting all those that hit the ground a little harder than expected. ✈

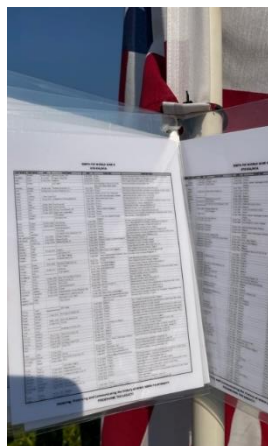


## 2021 FIELD OF HONOR – 11 September to 11 November AIRBORNE & SPECIAL OPERATIONS MUSEUM, FAYETTEVILLE NC

The *Family and Friends of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association* is a Proud Sponsor of 10 Honor Flags that Encircle the “Iron Mike” Statue in Front of the Museum Entrance



1. In Memory of CSM Rock Merritt, All-American Hall of Fame Class of 2018
2. In Honor of LTC (Ret) Bob Chisolm, All-American Hall of Fame Class of 2019
3. In Honor of Warren Wilt, Normandy & Battle of the Bulge, Purple Heart
4. In Honor of Carl Porter, Normandy, 508th Riggers
5. In Memory of PFC James A Childs, Normandy & Holland, KIA 18 Sep 1944
6. In Memory of 870 World War II 508th KIA/MIA
7. In Memory of 6 Dominican Republic 508th KIA
8. In Memory of 52 Vietnam 508th KIA/MIA
9. In Memory of 2 Panama 508th KIA
10. In Memory of 69 GWOT 508th KIA (1st Battalion and 2nd Battalion 508th PIR)



## THE PX IS OPEN

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



Royal Blue



Red



Black



Gray



### The Diablo

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