

# DIABLO



The Link for All Veterans, Spouses, Family and Friends of the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment Association — September, 2012 - Vol. 7, Nr. 2

## 2013 Reunion

The 2013 Reunion will take place October 9 – 13, 2013 in Fayetteville, NC. Activities are tentatively scheduled as follows:

**October 9** – Registration day, CP will be open

**October 10** – Welcoming breakfast at 8:00 AM with activities the rest of the day at Ft. Bragg.

**October 11** – Trip to the General Lee Museum in Dunn, NC and the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in downtown Fayetteville, NC

**October 12** – Banquet

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## Congratulations

### Emile Lacroix

Congratulations to Emile Lacroix. This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the “In the Footsteps of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division” march organized by Emile. During the banquet following the march Emile was presented with the Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service by the by the Department of the Army. The award was presented by Larry Mallett and signed by General David M. Rodriguez of the U.S. Army Forces Command.

The award reads as follows: “Emile Lacroix is presented the Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service for exceptionally meritorious and unwavering commitment while serving as a volunteer World War II historian, 82nd Airborne All American Jeep Group, Hambraine, Belgium from March 1983 through October 2011. Mr. Lacroix’s selfless service and commitment to excellence was the driving force for the annual Battle of the Bulge Commemorative March, ‘In the Footsteps of the 82nd Airborne Division’. His deep appreciation for the courage and fortitude of the American soldier ensures those who served in the European Theater of Operation during World War II are never forgotten. His influence and undisputed credibility as a “tireless worker and first class historian” has allowed him to provide a continuing tribute to the American soldier who sacrificed their lives for the good of all. Mr. Lacroix’s distinctive accomplishments reflect great credit upon him, the 82nd Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, Forces Command, and the United States Army.”

Congratulations, Emile. Your award was well deserved.

### Norb Studelska

Congratulations to Norb on receiving the Wisconsin Veterans lifetime service award.

*(The below article by Tom Laney appeared in the Wisco All Airborne Reporter)*

Norb Studelska, Grafton, was born on a Canadian farm on August 4, 1925. His dad died in 1930 and his mom moved the five kids to Minnesota where Norb attended St. Casimir’s Catholic Grade School. He excelled in studies, chorus theater, government and played football, basketball and track. Norb credits his Honor Student achievement to his mother, who supported the family on a 6-days-a-week piecework job in a chicken factory. A devout Catholic, her faith rubbed off on Norb who has been a model of Catholic Justice and action all his life.

Norb was drafted in 1943 and received his paratrooper wings on May 20, 1944. “We thought we were invincible. Not true as we later learned, we were very available cannon fodder”, Norb says. He shipped to England in July 1944 where he was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, D Co., 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment of the famed 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. “We joined the 82<sup>nd</sup> Veterans of D-Day who welcomed us with open arms. They were great and we newcomers wanted to be just like them with combat experience under our belts,” says Norb.

On Sept. 17, 1944, Norb jumped into Nijmegen with the 508<sup>th</sup> in Operation Market-Garden, the Allied invasion of Holland. “The replacements found out the inglorious acts of war for the line infantry soldier, and of the terrible destruction of civilian lives and property.”

On Dec. 18, Norb marched into Belgium as the 508<sup>th</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> engaged Germany’s Panzer Divisions in the Battle of the Bulge. The Airborne is the lightest of infantry. But armed with the smallest of weapons, Norb and his 82<sup>nd</sup> brothers fought tanks with grenades, small arms and Panzerfausts and stopped the Germans cold..

In the smaller, more personal view, the 508<sup>th</sup> paid a dear price for their exemplary combat ability. “The misery of the foot soldier is inexpressible but we did our job and did it well” Norb says. Norb, like all the paratroopers, was cold, exhausted and hungry. Later, he dwelled “...on the made-homeless, innocent children, women, many killed or wounded...some of my closest buddies dead in the snow.” And so, Norb tried to keep the war out of his mind after he came home. He felt guilty about surviving the war while losing so many of his friends.

He marched in the Victory Parade, down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, NY with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and then he

came home to graduate from River Falls State College on the GI Bill and on his salesmanship pushing Chevys for Moody Chevrolet. After Norb retired from teaching, he discovered the 508<sup>th</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Associations. “I got hold of war reality again,” he says. Norb led the Badger State Chapter of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Association through its best years and was President of the National 508<sup>th</sup> Airborne Association. For his outstanding civic service, Norb was named “Grafton Man of the Year” in 2009.

Men like Norb Studelska gave their hearts and lives to my generation. He has endured the loss of the best friends of his life and while entitle to melancholy and rest; he has acted and given his considerable ability to raise us all up; to raise a wonderful family, to teach and to better his community and church.

Norb Studelska made America a special place and if it needs repair in these times, we can simply look at the way this good man has lived his life and do our best to be like Norb.

### Troy Palmer

Congratulations to Troy who was named the 508<sup>th</sup> Person of the Year at the 2012 Reunion in El Paso, TX. Troy received a miniature Iron Mike statue presented by Rock Merritt.

## “Put Us Down In Hell”

I am pleased to announce the publication of my latest book, Put Us Down in Hell - The Combat History of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment in World War II. This is the third of four regimental histories that I have written and intend to write about each of the regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division. As with my previous books, this story is told as much as possible in the words of the veterans. Over 800 veterans who served with or were attached to the regiment are quoted or mentioned by name in the book. This book is more detailed and extensive (568 pages plus photos) than either of the prior two regimental histories. For instance, it includes much more information regarding the German units which opposed the 508th PIR, including unit identifications. The book also has thirty-nine detailed maps, drawn mostly from the actual topographical combat maps and overlays used during the operations. The book also contains more human interest stories than my previous books, especially about the regiment’s paratroopers who were misdropped in Normandy and hunted by the Germans for the first few days of the campaign. This book also contains more eyewitness accounts of acts of extraordinary heroism that resulted in the award of the

Distinguished Service Cross or Silver Star taken from witness statements contained in the individual awards files. Here is the book description from the rear cover:

“The 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment was one of the elite parachute regiments of World War II. Attached to the famed 82nd Airborne Division, it parachuted into Normandy during the predawn hours of June 6, 1944, spearheading the invasion of Hitler's fortress Europe. There, it fought with distinction for thirty-four days before being relieved. Less than sixty days later, the regiment made a daring daylight jump fifty-three miles behind German lines to spearhead the invasion of Holland. It seized vital high ground and held it against repeated German counterattacks and was the first Allied parachute regiment to fight on German soil. Shortly after being relieved in Holland, the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment was rushed to Belgium to stem the German onslaught in the Ardennes. The 508th screened the withdrawal of more than 20,000 U.S. soldiers from the St-Vith pocket and then stopped an assault by the 9th SS Panzer Division at Erria. The regiment then participated in the drive to the German border to eliminate the Belgian bulge. It subsequently fought in the Hürtgen Forest, where it captured Hill 400 and other critical high ground south of the Kall River in its last combat action. The 508th was detached from the 82nd Airborne Division in the closing days of the war and was placed in strategic reserve. At the conclusion of the war in Europe, the regiment was selected to guard General Dwight Eisenhower's headquarters in Germany.

In the third of his highly acclaimed regimental histories, historian Phil Nordyke tells the story of this remarkable unit through the experiences and words of the veterans. He has gathered hundreds of first person accounts from interviews, questionnaires, diaries, letters, memoirs, awards files, and official accounts. Mr. Nordyke skillfully weaves them to create a powerful narrative that brings the reader into the action. It is a story of close combat, tremendous courage, devotion to duty, and sacrifice.”

In addition, to make available autographed copies of this book to 508th PIR veterans, their families, and friends, I will be accepting mail orders for a limited time for autographed copies of this book and several of my previous books for all of those interested in buying autographed copies. For those who wish to order copies please fill out this form and mail it along with a check or money order and I will get your autographed books shipped immediately.

I do not currently have plans to establish a website to sell this and my other previously published books. Rather, I am focusing on completing and publishing a number of books that I have partially written during the last four years. I would appreciate your support through the purchase of the book, possibly writing a review, and spreading the word of the book to help make it a success. Thanks for your consideration.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

**Phil Nordyke**

*(Editor's Note: An order form is included with this newsletter.)*

## The Parachuting Experience

One of the thirteen U. S. Forest Service firefighters who died in the infamous Mann Gulch, Montana fire of 1949 was David Navon. As a member of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II he survived two combat jumps. The first was at Normandy on D-Day and the second at the Nijmegen Bridge in the Netherlands as part of Operation Market Garden.

His experience in making a parachute jump for the Forest Service is described in Mark Matthews' A Great Day to Fight Fire: Mann Gulch 1949 (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), p. 122:

“The same feeling that overwhelmed him during his first training jump in the army overtook him again. In fact he had experienced it every time he had ever jumped, even in the thick of battle. Hanging suspended over the world with only the wind in his ears, David felt as if he were floating through heaven. No danger lurked up here; it all waited below. The biggest fix he'd gotten into as a smoke jumper had been when a horny bull moose had chased him up a tree while he was cruising timber in the forests surrounding Seeley Lake. For a fleet moment David wished he could sustain that feeling forever, but he knew better than to daydream during a decent.”

Do you agree with Navon's "floating through heaven" experience during decent – or – did you have other experiences or thoughts on the way down, whether in training or in combat? Share them with us for future editions by writing to Dick O'Donnell at 760 Conestee Dr., W. Melbourne, FL, 32905 or e-mail at [jumpmaster@508pir.org](mailto:jumpmaster@508pir.org)

## Final Jumps

### Gibson, Robert

Condolences may be sent to the Gibson family at: 4030 Bobolink Cir.; Reno, NV 89506-8852

### May, George

Condolences may be sent to the May family at: 908 Vine St.; Middletown, PA 17057-2345.

### Willoughby, William

Condolences may be sent to the Willoughby family at 115 Delaware Dr.; Clarksville, TN 37042-3661

### Windom, William

Condolences may be sent to the Windom family at P.O. Box 1067.; Woodacre, CA 94973-1067

## Condolences

### Jean Jaeger Mendez

On Saturday April 28, 2012 of Lake Barcroft, VA. Beloved wife of the late Louis G. Mendez, Jr., COL, USA (Ret.); loving mother of Pam Allen (Terry), Judy Smore (Ron), Louis G. Mendez, III (Mercedes), Tina Morgan (Leon), Nikki Goldsborough (Mark), Chris Mendez (Katherine), Greg Mendez (Nancy), Jon Paul Mendez (Tammy), Philip Mendez, Soley Boland (Ray) and Lori Mendez (David Packer); sister of Harry Jaeger (Shirley) and sister-in-law of June Jaeger. Also survived by 34 grandchildren and great-grandchildren, one great great-grandchild and many loving nieces and nephews. Preceded in death by her son, Rico Mendez. Memorial contributions may be made to Capital Caring Hospice.

Condolences may be sent to the Mendez family at: 3406 Stoneybrae Dr.; Falls Church, VA 22044-1224

## Searching For Info.....

I have an M42 jump jacket in my possession that has been identified as belonging to Private Bramwell Fredrickson of Second Platoon, I/508. I'd like to obtain a photo of Fredrickson, who died in 1971 at age forty-eight. Do you know anybody who might have an I/508 company photo, one of the yard-long panoramics from Camp Mackall?

Fredrickson was "slightly wounded" during the July 4th calamity on Hill 95. He was hit again during the Bulge, suffering a more serious injury that earned him a ticket home. Not sure how he died, but I'll get a copy of his Florida death certificate.

Over the past twenty-five years, veterans (or their families) have sent me things and asked me to return them. In recent years, I've made high-resolution scans of all photos and documents. If I could find an original I/508 panoramic, I'd scan it in several pieces and "stitch" them together in PhotoShop. I've done that with other panoramics. If I'm careful, you can't tell they were pieced together. - Any record of or obituary for Cpl. Robert J. Culp of I/508? He was from the Cleveland area where I live and was wounded on July 4, 1944 (along with most everybody else in his company).

Regards,

**Bill Warnock**

[warnockwm@yahoo.com](mailto:warnockwm@yahoo.com)

I wanted to share an interesting story with you all. I recently found a copy of "Airborne in Nottingham" by David J. Pike. Knowing that my friend, Gordon Cullings I/508 Medic attached to C Co., often spoke with fond memories of his time in Nottingham, I read through it. Then I made my way to his house and handed it to him. He had not seen the book before and began to leaf through it until he got to the photos in the middle.

There, on page 22, and quick as a wink he sputters, "That's me" and points to a kneeling trooper (along with several others) at the Council House Lions (he is the one on the very far left). Then his wife looks at the photo, not knowing which one Gordon pointed himself out to be, and indicated the same trooper as her husband.

His wife read the book after Gordon and told me that she didn't want to read any more books about the Paratroops... She said they must have been a rowdy bunch and she didn't want to know about their exploits with the ladies..... Gordon just looked at me and smiled.....

If anyone has the original photo, I'd love to get a scan.

Blessings to all!

**Tom Kibler**  
tckkibler@verizon.net

Hi Dick/Ellen

Could you ask 508 Personnel if any one can recall having dug Foxholes/Trenches/ at Wollaton Park in 1944? We have possibly uncovered what looks like foxholes and a possible trench system on high ground in the woods overlooking the Lake at Wollaton Park..

**Graham Lawson**  
thedudeinnottz@gmail.com

Ellen,

I need your help...Maybe, you know I adopted the grave of a paratrooper of the 508th PIR, Cpl Floyd Goodman. I have been researching the battles of the 508th PIR in February 1945. And I find nothing! I sent an email to Dick O'Donnell, but he can not help me either ... Could you help me?

Thank you so much!

**Xavier Van Daele**  
x\_va@hotmail.com

TO ALL 505/ 508 Veterans, FRIENDS AND FAMILIES:

My name is Dion Murphy, the son of Pathfinder, Bob Murphy, A/505. I am in search of any surviving D-Day +4, June 6- 10, 1944 veterans or their families that know the name of any soldier(s) killed in action (KIA) or died of wounds (DOW) as the result of the Normandy battles at La Fiere causeway, Aid station at La Fiere, Cauquigny hamlet church area, Hamlet des Heutes, Timmes orchard, La Pierre Farm, Le Motey, Gray Castle, Chef du Pont bridge and Hill 30 areas. These areas are approx. 3+ km/mi. west of St Mere Eglise around Drop Zones "N", "I" and "O". In these same areas nearby and around Chef du Pont, the glider Landing Zones of "E" and "W" are located as well. If ANYONE (this includes veterans, friends of veterans, families of veterans to include the wives, sons/daughters, grandsons/granddaughters, brothers/sisters, any former girlfriend waiting to hear from their pre WWII partner) can give me ANY soldiers names KIA/DOW from any of the

following : 82nd Airborne Regimental Combat Teams 505, 507, 508 and the 401/325/320/319/ Glider Infantry Regiments, 307 Med and Engineer Btn., 90th Infantry Div. 345 Field Artillery Btn, 746 Tank Btn., including any teams that may be missing from this list. This is for a personal project in dedication to my father and his fallen comrades who battled for the bridges. They shall have a name to a face, someday we may be able to know about the life they lived before the war, sacrificed in the name of freedom. Please send All responses to:

**Dion Murphy**  
surferdion@hotmail.com  
3332 Normandy Dr.; Port Charlotte, FL 33952  
(Tel.) 239-200-2420

## Checking In

Ellen,

I enjoy the Diablo. Please keep up the good work.

Jane and I are at Querencia, an Independent Living Senior Home. We are doing well and have no serious ailments.

**Jody Lander**

Dear Ellen,

Sorry we cannot attend the 508 reunions. My health will not allow it. Please let our friends know that we miss seeing them all. We made most of the reunions. They were great times in our lives.

**Soft Landings,**  
**Raymond Crouse**

I have enjoyed the Diablo tremendously! Keep them coming.

**Paul Bouchereau**

## Mail Box

The BBC is making a 10 part TV series about life with the Americans in England during WW2. with one of the episodes to be filmed in Nottingham about the 508th.

Along with myself, Kathy Price, Betty Tarry (who was the wartime girlfriend of Darrell Glass) John Savage, Joan Wallace and David Cook, who were there when the 508 came to Nottingham in 1944, are all participating in the program.

Filming is scheduled to begin in May.

**Graham Lawson**

Ellen,

On behalf of my family, I want to thank you and Dick O'Donnell for including my brother's obituary in the February Diablo. Your kindness and thoughtfulness helped brighten a dark period in our family's life.

Best regards,

**Jim Porcella**

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Having found your email-address on the internet, please forgive me for this impersonal email, but I believe that my story might be of interest to you.

I am from Belgium (Flemish), living in Normandy, France.

For several years I have been interested in the history of the Second World War, and I am also a private collector of military radio communications equipment used in the Second World War.

In 2014, we will be commemorating the 70th anniversary of the DDAY-landings.

I have started a project to create a new museum, here in Normandy, totally dedicated to military radio- & communications- equipment.

There is no one other museum here in Normandy which talks about radio and its uses during the Second World War, hence my idea to get my museum up and running by 2014.

This museum will have the following themes:

- Educational (sound, waves, frequencies, Morse, electronics, AM, VHF,...);
- WW1 (if I can find enough equipment);
- WW2 – operational usage of signals equipment in the field & vehicles;
- WW2 – Pathfinders;
- WW2 – field repair of signals;
- Clandestine communications – spy-kits;
- ... and much more.

Those themes will be animated with uniforms, lots of radio-equipment, pictures and other artifacts.

There might also be the possibility to have a section dedicated on civil radios and modern military radio communications.

Since this museum will be created in Normandy, and since I have a number of military American radios, I would like to dedicate a part of this museum to the Pathfinders and to those men who were part of this.

This letter is an appeal to ANYONE, who might know of any veterans still alive who landed in Normandy on DDAY, and who were involved in the Pathfinders.

I have less than two years to prepare this museum, so anyone who might know of hidden pictures, videos, sound-tapes, radio-equipment, and/or any other item which could be exposed in such a museum, I would appreciate if you could let me know and/or forward this letter to anyone who might know something.

Thank you for reading to the end of this email, and please do not hesitate to contact me for any further details.

**Luc Verschooris**  
Luc.verschooris@free.fr

Dear sir/madam,

Today, I went to Groesbeek to search for remains of the Second World War with my metal detector. To the north of Groesbeek I found an empty bullet case that was closed at the end. I heard

about closed bullet cases that contained personal notes before so I was a little curious to find out if this could be such a bullet case. When I opened the bullet case I could see a little piece of paper, I decided to be careful and took the piece of paper out of the case when I was at home. I was very surprised when I found two pieces of paper which both had the name of Frank Longiotti written on them as well as his number, blood group and religion. A little piece of history of the 508th saw daylight again after almost 70 years! I immediately began to search the internet and found out that he was a member of 508th and shortly after that I found his picture on your website.

With kind regards,

**Patrick Peek - peekpatrick@hotmail.com  
Zandvoort, Holland**

## New F&F Officers

Dick O'Donnell, National Chairman  
Lou Gutierrez, President  
Donna Palmer, Vice-President  
Pam Speers, Secretary  
Ellen Peters, Treasurer  
Joan Shanley, Clerk  
Rock Merritt, Trustee  
Harry Roll, Trustee  
Jan Silver, Trustee  
Bob Speers, Trustee

## Notices

"Association Veterans Back To Normandy " is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise money to provide financial assistance to US WW-II veterans who wish to return to Normandy for the annual D-Day ceremonies.

European contributions should be made out to "Association Veterans Back To Normandie" and mailed to Valerie Gautier/Cardin at:

50770 Village Bourgogne,  
Normandy, France.  
Home phone: 011-33-2-33-76-84-27  
Mobile phone: 011-33-6-72-06-97-89  
Email address: valeriosana@orange.fr

American contributions should be made out to "Veterans Back to Normandie" and mailed to Gene Garren at:

656 Winter Star Road  
Burnsville, NC 28714.  
Home phone 828-682-6650  
Mobile 828-284-0951  
Email addresses: genegarren@aol.com

Any amount will be greatly appreciated.  
Questions can also be made by contacting Valerie Gautier/Cardin in Europe and Francis Garren in the USA.

Sincerely,  
**Valerie Gautier/Cardin & Francis Garren**

Copies of the Third Anniversary book are for sale. They are excellent quality, spiral bound

reproductions. Price is \$15.00 plus \$5.00 shipping for a total of \$20.00. Books can be ordered from association Quartermaster Troy Palmer at 1206 River Lane.; Evans, GA 30809. Phone (706) 294-7125 or Email: palmertroy@aol.com

The 508th PIR website now has more than 5,000 pages and the main page hit counter has over 319,000 visits with typical daily activity including between 75 to 100 searches. Clearly the site has become a favorite amongst many researchers!

Call for Dues!

Dues for the new fiscal year of Family and Friends of the 508th PIR Assn. will be due

**November 1.**

Dues are \$10.00 per year per household. Multiple years may be paid if desired and donations are gratefully accepted. **Please send dues to:**

**F&F508PIR Assn.  
3630 Townsend Dr.  
Dallas, TX 75229-3805**

## Changes of Address

Please forward change of email addresses and/or postal addresses to:

**Ellen Peters  
3630 Townsend Dr.;  
Dallas, TX 75229-3805  
treasurer@508PIR.org  
(214) 632-1360**



## The Diablo

3630 Townsend Dr.  
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