



# 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

## MailCall No. 2303

December 20, 2015

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion  
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

*Merry Christmas to All Our 517<sup>th</sup> Family and Friends*





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1943 postcard from Camp Toccoa



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To all the 517th PRCT Veterans and their families, and to everyone who is amongst the family & friends that the 517th has become,

have a safe and healthy MERRY CHRISTMAS and All the Best in 2016 !

**Paul Abbene**

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### *In Memorium – Marshall Baird, A Company*

**Marshall "Mark" Baird** passed away 2 nights ago. No info other than he will be cremated with a service in March. Such a nice and kind man. Laura spoke to his daughter. I am in Mexico until tomorrow.

**Tim Curtis**

I think this message got to you through my cell phone, but I wanted to resend from my computer. Marshall Baird was a great man. It was my privilege to meet him a few years ago when I was visiting Tim in Tucson, AZ. A few years back I submitted a picture of Tim and I with Marshall, I hope you still have it you can post on mailcall.

**Lory Curtis**



### *In Memorium – John T. Marsinko, HQ Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion*

I am sad to report that my buddy, **John Marsinko**, died at age 91 in July of 2015 at his home in Laurinburg, NC.

John served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 517<sup>th</sup> from Toccoa to its last day of combat.

John was Col. Boyle's radio operator and followed him until the Colonel was badly wounded in the "Bulge".

From **Tony Mandio**





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### *More Remembrances of Leo P. Dean*

Claire--wasn't prepared for your email as much as I know that we all have an unknown expiration date. Leo was indomitable; so full of airborne mischievousness, and still jumping in his 90's, he seemed to have found the fountain of youth and would always be with us. He is with his comrades in arms. So glad he too got to leave this earth with his boots on but it won't be the same without him. How blessed we were to have had the privilege to know him. Will miss him very much.

#### **Pat Seitz**

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Hello Bob and 517th friends,

It was with great sadness and shock that I read of Leo Deans passing this morning. I thought that he had healed from his broken leg and was back to full health. We had so much fun at the New Orleans reunion, thanks in part to the antics of Leo. He had us all laughing when he pulled up his pants leg to show one of the hotel patrons his paratrooper tattoo. I am also amazed that he was still "going to the office!"

I'm happy that I got to meet Leo and many of the other 517th paratroopers before they left us. The reunions are so important for that reason.

I lost my dad, Odas Sweet of 517th "H" company when I was 4 years old and didn't get to hear war stories from him but have heard and read stories from Howard Hensleigh and others that helped fill a void in my own life. I found the 517th website in 2006 and attended my first reunion in 2007. My wife and I have enjoyed every one we have attended since then and meeting all of the great 517th soldiers and their families. Thank

you Leo for the memories and for taking time to talk with me.

***Son of a Buzzard***  
***Rick Sweet***

Here is the picture of Leo showing off his tattoo in the hotel café....





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Bob and the 517th Family,

I don't always open Mail Calls right away but for some reason I did this morning...even though it's a day or two after it appeared on my "New Mail" listing.

Don't know that there is an adequate term to express the sadness felt when learning of another 517th Trooper passing. We all know there will come a time/day when that final breath will expire from our lungs, but it is still a shock when we are faced with the reality of not being able to set-eyes on that living individual again.

Each of the 517th Troopers I've met along-the-way have a special place in my heart. Even those I've never met are held in the highest esteem because of what they believed-in, what they trained-for, and what they accomplished as a Unit. We all could learn valuable lessons, to get-along-better in this mixed-up World, from the documents about and face-to-face conversations with our 517th Troopers.

I feel blessed that I was able to connect with Ben, Lud, and "Dick", mainly because they knew my Uncle Floyd A. Stott. They could relate events about Floyd that not even my own family members knew about. This was (and still is) one of the most valuable treasures-of-memories I have with the 517th Family.

Trooper Leo Dean also held a Special Place in my heart. He was fiercely proud of his service for his country. And he was ready to "fight" anyone who made a comment about "his size." Believe me, I made the huge mistake of asking Leo, once, if the training was more difficult for him because he was smaller than most of the guys.

Didn't ask that question EVER again. And know I won't make that mistake with anyone else who is height-challenged. Leo tore into me with some spitting words about..."I did everything everyone else had to do!!!" Enough said. Fortunately, offering him another glass of wine (and definitely changing the subject), led Leo back to smiling and explaining what made him most happy.

Liked Leo from the start, the first reunion I ever attended. Sort of was drawn to him because my father's first name was Leo. But also because I was "very small" when I was the same age Leo was when he entered the service. Right you are! I should have known better than to ask such a stupid question about his Trooper training. Guess I'm just one of those guys that it takes longer to learn about opening my mouth when I shouldn't.

Have many memories about Leo, but there is one that sticks in my mind, mainly because it was just Leo and me that experienced it. It was at the Salt Lake City Reunion. A group of us had attended mass Sunday morn and sat together in the cathedral. It was announced after mass that they were giving a tour of the cathedral for anyone who cared to stick around.

Since I had my own vehicle, I mentioned to the group that if anyone wanted to stay for the tour, I'd get them back to the hotel. Leo said he was interested, so the two of us stayed. The tour guide was very informative and we both enjoyed the history explained to us.

There was one location that the guide mentioned, out of reverence, we should not walk across or in front of. For whatever reason (probably because he was looking at something else and didn't hear the request), Leo started to cross that "reverent barrier" as the group was moving on. I grabbed Leo by the sport coat sleeve and pulled him away from what might have been a "lightening strike." When he looked



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at me with that, "What the heck," glance, and I explained, Leo just shrugged his shoulders and on we went with the group. Had a good laugh about it later though.

So, once again, one of our 517th Family makes a Final Jump...this one, however, is UP. God Bless!

**Kenton "Kent" Floyd Immerfall**

Nephew of **Floyd A. Sott**

1st Lt. 3rd Bat. Co. "I" 517th PRCT

Cheers to Leo! A friend to all, and as Claire said so well, "A life fully lived." I'll miss his stories. Airborne!  
All the way!

**Tim Curtis**



Bob Barrett and Leo Dean



Mimsey Boyle and Leo

Photos from the New Orleans reunion  
July 2015, by **Paul Abbene:**





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At Camp Toccoa, GA:



Leo was an indomitable spirit. The energy and enthusiasm Leo displayed was a great example on how to live life to its fullest.

Richard Seitz

Leo's Obituary Published in The Record on Dec. 16, 2015



### **Leo P. Dean WWII Hero passes peacefully at 91.**

ALBANY - Leo P Dean, of Albany passed away peacefully on Saturday Dec 12, 2015. Leo was employed at Norvest Financial Services as Executive Vice President since 1991 as an Insurance Consultant.

Leo was born May 3, 1924 , son of the late Richard J Dean and Lillian M, Hynes of Albany and Watervliet. Brother of the late John R Dean of Albany and Wappinger Falls Graduated from CBA Christian Brothers Academy in 1941 and after taking a few business courses went on to work for the Texaco Co at the Port of Albany. At 17 years old started at General Electric in Schenectady working on IBM machines that used the punch card system, the beginning of computers!

December 7, 1941 the world changed when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. At age 18 in 1942 he registered for the Draft, always wanting to be a soldier and by 1943 volunteered for the Parachute Troops. Spent almost 3 years with his beloved 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Saw action in Italy, Southern France and the





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famous Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. Was Honorably Discharged in November 1945 and transferred to the 105th Infantry, 27th Division of the New York National Guard. Served as an Enlisted Man, a Warrant Officer and a Commissioned Officer. Transferred to the Inactive Reserve in 1952. Leo was also a Sharp Shooter and could still hit the bullseye at 90 years old. Leo received the highest Honor given to a Soldier from France, the Legion Award. He received a [Bronze Star](#) from the President of the United States in 1950 for his service in WWII.

He later went to Siena College in Loudonville NY under the GI bill for Veterans. Started Jan 1946 and graduated June 1949 with a BBA with a Major in Accounting. Soon thereafter worked in Albany for the James B. O'Brien, Inc. Insurance Agency/General Agency for the Berkshire Life Insurance Co of Pittsfield, Mass.

After WWII Leo was active with the American Legion, Post Finance Officer then Vice Commander. After the Military, he married his beloved Helen Hart of Waterford, NY in June 7, 1952 and bought their first home in 1955 there. While in Waterford, he served as Chairman of the Waterford Taxpayers and Rentpayers Association. Leo also served as Secretary to the Board of Water Commissioners until 1979 when they moved to Albany. It was in Albany that the Mayor recommended to the Governor that Leo be appointed to the Albany Port District Commission and was also appointed to serve on the Albany Water Board, which he served on both up until his passing. During periods of those years, Leo served as Chairman of the Heart Fund Drive, a Representative of St. Mary's Church on the Albany Diocese Advisory Committee and Albany Association of Life Underwriters. He was an active communicant of All Saints Church under Father Tom in Albany NY up until his death. Leo started his own Insurance business receiving Designations of Chartered Life Underwriter, Chartered Financial Consultant and Fellow of the Life management Institute. Leo heard a guest speaker say ""You should always be involved in 3 things: Not necessarily all at the same time – No matter what your business or profession, you should participate in activities with others of the same. You should do something for your Community. Do something for your Church or Synagogue. Leo donates every year to CBA and to Siena, In 2004 made a Charitable Gift Annuity to Siena College giving a Name on a Dormitory in McCloskey Square as the Dean House. The Plaque on the door lists Leo P Dean 1949 and John R Dean 1956.

He was predeceased by his wife who died February 1998 . They were never apart in life and have once again joined each other. Leo used to tell his friends, ""I don't have any vices. I don't smoke, I don't play golf, I don't drink, well, maybe glass of wine occasionally."" So after Helen died, he took up a new hobby....Skydiving. He said he no longer had someone to tell him what to do and where to go. So now he does it ""HIS WAY"".

Every year Leo returns to Southern France to celebrate with WWII Re-enactors the Liberation of Southern France. He returns to his French friends and travels with his dearest Friends and WWII Comrade, Allan Johnson, age 91 and his daughter Claire and Jim Giblin. Leo recently spent last August in a French hospital and can truly say that they saved his life there.

As of 2015 Leo has over 167 Skydives between France, California, New York and Florida. He did get up at Level 3 three times.

Survivors include his niece Elizabeth Dean of Pleasant Valley, her son Michael Siefert of Northfield, Mass and his niece Patricia Dean also of Pleasant Valley, NY. Leo enjoyed his Thanksgiving Holidays with them and looked forward to creating many memories there. He is also survived by several cousins. Survived by his adopted family, Renee Farley , her children Desiree, Ian Farley all of Malta NY Shannon Vosburgh of Marco Island and his adopted grandchildren, all of Florida all of whom he has skydived with. Leo led a full and complete life with his family and friends. He was the Glue that bonds us together. He was loved by so many in the community and he has loved us all so unconditionally. He served our country and am sure we all agree .....that to be touched by Leo P Dean in this lifetime.....was truly a blessing.



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From the Albany Times-Union:

### **Leo Dean, paratrooper who took up skydiving at 75, dead at 91**

He was behind Monday dinners with friends

By Steve Barnes Updated 7:13 am, Tuesday, December 15, 2015



Leo P. Dean, a World War II paratrooper who made 167 sky diving jumps since taking up the sport at age 75 and still worked full time at 91, died Saturday afternoon at his office in Latham. He'd told a friend the previous night that he intended to go to the office to work on his obituary, saying, "I've got to get my stuff in order."

A genial and gracious man, Dean cultivated friendships across the generations and was considered family by many, though he'd been a widower for 16 years and had no children. Among his closest "relatives" were the 12 members of Mandatory Monday, an informal club of friends, anchored by Dean and, as the name suggests, dedicated to going out on the first night on the work week.

Mandatory Monday was born in 1998 on the fortuitous night at the former Nicole's Bistro in Albany when Dean met Renee Farley, a real estate agent who would become one of his closest friends.

"He was the father I never had, and I was the daughter he never had," Farley said on Monday. She has been sky diving with Dean, as have her children and grandchildren. They've also, during their regular travels, been snorkeling and ziplining.

"He had so much life in him," Farley said.

Farley saw Dean and other members of their group on most Mondays for 17 years, usually for drinks at any of the many Albany and Saratoga Springs restaurants that considered them regulars. This week, the group gathered at Farley's home on Monday to put together a photo collage to be displayed at his funeral.

"He was big on pictures," said Mark Tallman, an Albany cardiologist who regularly saw Dean in restaurants in downtown Albany. "He'd take a picture of you together with him, and the next time he saw you he'd pull the picture out of his pocket and give it to you," Tallman said.

"He was just so kind and thoughtful," said Tess Collins, owner of McGeary's, an Albany pub Dean enjoyed. Said Collins, "He'd always bring me an Irish (catalog) so I could order things for the bar. He brought me an Irish Christmas ornament. We all cried when we got the phone call saying he'd died."

Dean was born May 3, 1924, son of Richard J. Dean and Lillian M. Hynes of Albany and Watervliet. A 1941 graduate of Christian Brothers Academy, he registered for the draft the following year and went on to serve for almost three years with his beloved 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team. He saw action in Italy, southern France and the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium.

Dean was also part of an amphibious and airborne assault of 40,000 to 60,000 U.S. soldiers who stormed the beaches of southern France with French and British troops. They suffered heavy casualties





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two months after the Normandy Invasion but never got much recognition. They came to think of their mission as "the forgotten D-Day." Farley said Dean retained his sharpshooter's eye. "He was 90 and still hitting the bull's-eye," she said.

Following military service, Dean attended Siena College in Loudonville on the GI Bill, majoring in accounting. He worked in the insurance industry for the rest of his life, most recently as executive vice president at Norvest Financial Services.

He liked to say some variant of, "The business I'm in used to be insurance, but now it's called 'financial services,' so I guess I'm a glorified insurance salesman."

In recent years, Dean and fellow veterans traveled annually to participate in parades and ceremonies in France, which honored him with the Legion Award, its highest honor for soldiers.

In this country, Dean received a Bronze Star for his service in World War II.

In August, during a parade in France, Dean fell off a curb and broke his hip and femur. He required five surgeries to become stabilized enough to fly stateside, and was in the hospital, a rehabilitation facility and Farley's home until just a few weeks ago. Farley last saw him, on Friday. They went to dinner and decorated his Albany apartment for the holidays.

As Farley prepared to drive away, she turned and saw Dean in a window.

"He was beaming," she said. "He was so happy to be home, to have his apartment all decorated for Christmas." He gave her an elaborate wave, including a little bow, and she returned the gesture.

"To see him like that, just joyous, with that fabulous smile — that was the best gift he could ever have given me," Farley said.

Dean's wife, Helen, died in 1998 after 46 years of marriage. He is survived by two nieces and his extended "adopted" family, the Farleys.

Calling hours are 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at Hans Funeral Home, 1088 Western Ave., Albany. Services will be at 9 a.m. Thursday at All Saints Church, 170 Western Ave., Albany, and will proceed to St. Mary's Cemetery in Waterford.



Leo Dean, 83, of Albany makes his 100th jump in tandem with instructor Mike Donlon, who makes his 6000th jump at the Mohawk Valley Skydiving Club in Scotia on Aug. 11, 2007. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union)



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Leo P. Dean, 79, from Albany, N.Y., at Mohawk Valley Skydiving in Scotia, N.Y. on Sunday Sept. 7, 2003. Dean began skydiving in September of 1943 when he joined the Army. (Paul Buckowski/Times Union)



Leo Dean, senior vice president at Norvest Financial Services, in his office in Latham, NY on Thursday, April 16, 2009. (Paul Buckowski / Times Union)

Leo Dean, 85, of Albany, a WWII vet, was awarded the French Legion of Honor in a 65th anniversary commemoration in Draguinan, France, marking the Allied invasion in southern France that helped liberate the citizenry from the German Army. (Provided photo - Photo: Times Union)



Leo Dean, 83, of Albany shows how to exit a plane in preparation for a jump prior to his 100th parachute jump at the Mohawk Valley Skydiving Club in Scotia on Aug. 11, 2007. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union)



Leo Dean with his parachute gear in training in 1943 at Camp Mackall, N.C. with the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team. (Provided photo)

Leo P. Dean, December 1943 at Camp Mackall, NC, with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team/





## *"White Parachutes"*

*Sometimes when I am here at home  
In the middle of the day  
I catch my breath and say a prayer  
For my laddie young and gay.  
I've seen a canopy of white  
Unfurl above your head  
And carry you thru drifting clouds  
Toward the earth's uncertain bed.*

*It blossoms out like a fresh new rose  
Beneath a summer sky  
And no one else will ever know  
Its thrill like you and I.  
My soul knows all the silent fears  
That sometimes grip your heart  
And that breathless moment when you step out  
At the Airborne journey's start.*

*So if I look vacantly into space  
Or blindly turn around  
The ones that are by me can not know  
My feet are far from ground  
That I am floating thru the air  
'Neath a silken chute with you  
And my eyes are blind to things I can touch  
For I'm much, much closer to you.*

*So when I lie down at the end of day  
And pray for my boys all three  
I'll pray that you may have a chute  
That will open strong and free,  
That the parachutes your buddies get  
Will the same strong silk unsheath  
God Bless my lad  
And all the lads of the Airborne 517th.*

**EDITH REAUGH COWGILL.**



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## Other MailCall News

517th uniform

Hello, My father in law was in the 517th, Thomas Blymire. I have emailed before if anyone had any photos or stories but unfortunately I never heard back of any. But this email was to see if anyone out there would be interested in selling a uniform or jump jacket from the 517th. I would like to put a mannequin together with authentic gear and keep and show others. I want to keep the history together for future generations.

Thank you,

Alan

[bonzsearcher@netscape.net](mailto:bonzsearcher@netscape.net)

## Administrivia

If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>

- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: [MailCall@517prct.org](mailto:MailCall@517prct.org)
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our new Association Treasurer: Identify the purpose of any donation (Annual Donations, In Memory of... etc.) and make all checks payable to:

**517 PRCT Association, Inc.**  
c/o Miriam Boyle Kelly  
19 Oriole Court  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

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