

# The Panther

505 RCT ASSOCIATION



SUMMER 2010



505th RCT  
WWII UNITS



505 PIR



456 PFA



80TH AA



B-307 ENG



307 MEDICS

AIRBORNE



82ND  
A/B DIV.

## Report to Ft. Bragg!!

## 2010 Reunion Set For Fayetteville, NC

After a two year lapse, the annual reunion of the 505RCT Association in conjunction with the Family & Friends of the 505RCT Assn. will be held at the Holiday Inn I-95 in Fayetteville, NC from September 23 to September 26.

Conditions at Ft. Bragg no longer allow us to stay at Moon Hall, but through the assistance of CSM Ted Gaweda and the Public Affairs office at the 82nd Airborne, the Memorial Luncheon will be on the base at the Officer's Quarters and a bus trip to include a visit to the WWII Museum and other activities will be staged on Friday, September 24.

As per usual, the Hospitality Room will be well stocked by Jim Blankenship for the three day event. The bus trip to Ft. Bragg, admission to the museum, the Saturday night Banquet Dinner and the Hospitality Room refreshments are all included in the \$85.00 registration fee.

As has become our custom in the past two years, we will set aside a couple of hours Friday night for our Veterans Forum which has proven to be educational, entertaining and revealing for all those who participate. This year, we hope to include our present day 505RCT Warriors from the 82nd at Fort Bragg and include them in our discussion—"The Greatest Generation Meets the Latest Generation" of All American combat soldiers.

CSM Ted Gaweda is working hard on the logistics of getting us another in a line of great guest speakers from the regiment and arranging the always popular All American Chorus to perform at our Banquet Dinner.

Meanwhile, do not delay in getting in your registration form and booking your

hotel rooms. The registration form is contained inside The Panther. So too is the expected itinerary so plan your trip and events around them. Any changes to the itinerary will be noted on Mailcall, the website, [www.505rct.org](http://www.505rct.org), and in literature at the hotel itself when you arrive. We promise not to throw you too many curveballs, but we are confident you can handle them.

Be sure to let Ellen Peters, Sec-Treasurer, know about any special needs you might have that will make your travel plans and stay in Fayetteville more comfortable. She and VP Katie Tricoli are great hostesses and they always round up a good crew of volunteers who aim to please our veterans and families.

Have a safe landing and we'll see you sooner than you think!

### Dues Notice:

Your \$10.00 annual dues become due on July 1. WWII 505 RCT veterans, widows of WWII 505 RCT veterans, and Honorary Members are not required to pay dues. All others are. Your dues are critical to our FF505RCT operations and reunions. As many of you pay multiple years in advance, if you are not sure if you are paid up to date for 2009-2010, please email our treasurer at [ceptx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ceptx@sbcglobal.net). If you no longer wish to belong to our Family and Friends Association, please advise and we will remove you from our membership roster.

If you wish to remain on the roster, kindly send your dues to:

FF 505 RCT Assn. c/o Ellen Peters  
3630 Townsend Dr., Dallas, TX  
75229-3805

Please know you can pay multiple years in advance if you wish. Also, donations are gratefully accepted.

Ellen Peters - Treasurer

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### Panther Reminder

Please inform Ellen Peters of any address changes as the Panther's are not returned by the post office. It is your responsibility to notify us. Undelivered Panther's waste association money. We are trying to come up with new ideas to make money, we do not have money to throw away. Besides, you are missing out on all the new 505 RCT news. So please send address changes to Ellen at 3630 Townsend Dr., Dallas, TX 75229

## Friends & Family 505 RTC

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### The Panther

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The Panther is a periodic newsletter published by and for the men of the 505 RTC and their friends. Comments, questions, suggestions and articles can be submitted to the editor. Please inform us of address and name changes.

Editor Emeritus  
Don McKeage

Editor  
Bob Burns

## President's Report

Things are going fine up here in Michigan on the farm. The corn and beans are off to a good start and I'm still cruising around in my pickup listening to the big bands!

It sounds like the Reunion Committee is doing a good job getting things organized for our reunion back to Ft. Bragg, NC. We hope there will be a good attendance as is usually the case when we get back home to the 82nd Airborne headquarters.

I'm looking forward to seeing my friends again and I'm sure all of you are too.

I'll sign off for now and "remember the good times."

Your President,  
Duane Pinkston

## REUNION ITINERARY

**DATES:** Sept 23-26

**WHERE:** Holiday Inn, I-95, Fayetteville

### ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

#### THURS-SEPT 23

1400 hours : Registration and opening  
of Hospitality Suite

1700 hours: FF505 & 505RTC  
Board Meeting

1400 to 2300- Hospitality Suite Open-  
POOLSIDE ROOM

Dinner on Own

#### FRI-SEPT 24

0700 to 0830 -Breakfast

0830- Board Buses to visit Ft. Bragg

0900- Depart for Bragg

0930 to 1200- pre-planned visit to Museum or  
other on-base event

1200 to 1330 hours- MEMORIAL LUN  
CHEON- OAK Room

1400 to 1600 hours- Museum visit or  
other pre-planned event

1630 hours- Return to Hotel

1730 hours- GENERAL MEETING in  
Hosp Room

1800-1930 hours-- Dinner on Own

2000-2130 hours -VETERANS FORUM

2130-2300- HOSP Remains Open

#### SAT- SEPT 25

0700-0900- Breakfast

0900-1800- Hospitality Open

1800-1930- BANQUET DINNER

1930-2300- Hospitality Open

#### SUN- SEPT 26

Shuttles to Airport for Returns

# Eulogy to my Dad

by Alice McKeage

On Feb 2, 1945, 19 year old paratrooper Don McKeage, fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, finally gave in to the unrelenting pain of frozen feet. He took off his combat boots, gave up the fight, and in his Artic 4-buckles walked 5 miles to an aid station for help

On Feb 2, 2010, 84 year old paratrooper Don McKeage, fighting the ravages of age and infirmity, finally gave in to the unrelenting pain of a dying body. He took his last breath, gave up the fight, and made his final jump into the waiting arms of his Creator and the comrades who preceded him.

Dad's combat experience in WWII was perhaps the most defining experience of his life. He became not only a lifetime member of the VFW and the 82nd Airborne Division Association, but he was an ACTIVE member, taking a leadership role; doing his part to reach out to other veterans; and giving a hand up where needed. He taught his children, by word and deed, to be an activist...to participate...to stand up and do their part to make the world a better place. His daughter Mable and granddaughter Teresa have proudly continued Dad's example in the Hemlock Merrill VFW Post 7302 Ladies Auxiliary. His daughter Barbara has proudly continued his example in the Friends and Family of the 505 Regimental Combat Team Association.

His activism extended beyond the military experience. Dad was an officer on the Derby Lake Home Owners Association for many years and most proud of his efforts to get a no-wake rule passed so the lake would be a welcoming place for fish-

ermen as well as for boaters.

Dad was a builder. That's how he made his living, and it's also how he made his small corner of the world a better place for himself and his family. From the time I was little, he always had several projects going. In the early days at Derby Lake, you might hear a lot of grumbling from us: "Well, we came up here to relax and all we've been doing all day is working." Finally a rule was made: at 4 o'clock, done or not, we quit and go swimming or fishing. Dad was often the last man standing on his project while the rest of us grabbed our gear and headed to the lake. In the last few years, although he still planned projects, he turned the actual work over to his grandsons and granddaughters.

My dad was not a perfect man. He could be wildly impatient, stubborn as a mule, overly attentive to doing a job perfectly (which usually meant doing it his way), and as his hearing declined, he could be downright rude. He thought if there was a quiet spell in the conversation, people must be waiting for him to speak...and since he couldn't hear, everything sounded like a quiet spell! So for those of you who he cut off in mid-sentence...he didn't mean it.

He wasn't a perfect husband and father, but he did the things he was taught that men do to provide for their families. He "brought home the bacon" and provided a comfortable roof over our heads, even if that meant working away from home for long periods. Like many men of his generation, he could be quite chauvinistic and this was often a source of friction between us. I did not want my role in the world defined exclusively by my gender. To his credit, my dad did not remain a rigid man and he came to appreciate the abilities of his daughters and to express his



praise, and sometimes his surprise (!) for work we did.

Although he sometimes took out his frustrations on those closest to him, ultimately my father loved my mother and loved his family. He was proud of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, not just for their accomplishments, but for who they were as people. He was "a good man in a storm", always there in a crisis to lend a hand up or sometimes a hand out; a shoulder to cry on, or a shoulder to the wheel to fix the problem. And he generously shared what he had with all of us.

When Dad and Mom bought a timeshare in North Carolina, it wasn't just for them...it was for family vacations and they footed the bill so we could all share the time together. They shared their home at Derby Lake, not only with us but with cousins as well. Their grandchildren and great-grandchildren all learned to fish and swim at Derby Lake. There is a source of comfort and continuity and even of humor in watching the children of my nieces and nephews do the same things their parents used to do at Derby Lake...and sometimes get in the same trouble!

Dad and Mom were able to travel quite a bit, especially in their middle years. They traveled around the country sightseeing, sometimes with friends, and sometimes visiting friends. They made a number of trips to Europe to celebrate different

anniversaries of D-Day, where the veterans are still greeted as conquering heroes and asked many times for their autographs. They made many friends in Europe as they toured the old battlegrounds and always had people they "must visit" when they went back again. Thankfully, Dad was able to take a last trip over to celebrate D-Day in 2008, with the aid of his granschildren Todd, Kim and Tyson. It was a memorable trip for all.

Dad had a good long life and today we want to celebrate his life, remembering the good times and bad, the serious moments and humorous ones. We salute him for the many things he taught us, including: how to play ball, how to be a hard worker, how to be a productive citizen, how to be an active and engaged organization member, and ultimately how to be "a good man in a storm"...which is a good thing, because the myriad health issues Dad faced in the last months of his life turned into an unexpected storm.

I must say a heartfelt "thank you" to my awesome family: mom, my sisters, my nieces and nephews who have all pitched in since November: first to get Dad to the hospital every day for treatments so he didn't have to go into a rehab center; and then to bring him home from the hospital and keep him in his own home during what turned out to be his final weeks.

We're sad that Dad's gone is but we're relieved that he's no longer in pain. He died in his home, surrounded by his wife, 2 daughters, a granddaughter, great-granddaughter, and his beloved dog Missy. He was kept safe, comfortable and loved until the last breath he took

Dad earned his paratrooper wings and his "blood" wings and now he's earned his angel wings!

We love you Dad!

\* \* \*

## Dedication to my Dad

A dedication to my dad for the first Panther newsletter without him at the helm.

I want to thank all the 505 RCT veterans, and Family and Friends members for all the prayers and words of comfort and strength sent to my family.

I believe dad had a ring side seat up in heaven with all his comrades around him -men like Murphy, Norton, Tallerday, Andy Kilcullen, George Ziemski, all his 505 RCT, and his 82nd Airborne friends; all watching the service and the respect and honor given him. His life revolved around the military, with the 82nd, the VFW, and then the 505 RCT when it was formed, and of course becoming the editor of the Panther newsletter.

I know he would have been proud of his military 'service' (funeral) just as he was proud of his military service in WWII. The patriotism that he lived during his lifetime carried over at his death. My sister Mable picked out his favorite color for his casket -a deep blue. At each corner and pallbearer handle was a beautiful color eagle head; and a three-dimensional looking hanging flag on the inside top of the casket.

His flowers were red, white and blue. He wore his jump wings, miniature medals (including his purple heart and bronze star), CIB, 505 panther pin, and 82nd past president pin along with his jump wings tie. Inside the casket was his 82nd past presidents hat, and his VFW hat. On the end of the casket per

his request was an 82d decal, a 505 RCT decal, and my nephew's decided to add one of his personalized 82nd ABN license plates. We had the 82nd song playing low continuously throughout the day of the viewing. Dispersed around the room was the 82nd flag, army pictures, airborne paraphernalia, and his 505 RCT gray jacket. At the graveside we played the 82nd entrance song as they were taking the casket out; and the exit song as we were leaving. The VFW color guard was present and did an outstanding job, along with active duty soldiers who folded the flag, and of course played taps.

My sister Alice wrote the obituary, made a slide show presentation of almost 600 pictures (from childhood to the last 505 reunion) that ran continuously on a large TV screen and 2 computer monitors in different areas of the room. She also wrote and gave his eulogy. The picture in the obituary was from the last 505 RCT reunion in Seattle.

Special thank you to all the 505 RCT and Family and Friends members who made donations to the Michigan's Own Military Museum in his memory. I am enclosing the article from the 82nd Airborne Division Association Paraglide -from fall 1987. That was the year dad donated his uniforms and memorabilia to the museum. What a proud day that was for all of us! Your donations will help continue his legacy for generations to come. Lbs one of the founders of the 505 RCT, and the editor of the panther, his memory will live on forever in this organization.

Barbara McKeage Fortenbaugh

# Emile Lacroix's 28th Annual In the Footsteps of the 82nd Airborne Division

By Ellen Peters

Emile Lacroix's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual In the Footsteps of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was a huge success. As always, Emile had a great turnout with around fifteen hundred attending.

On Wednesday, February 17, I flew to Chicago where I met 80<sup>th</sup> AA veteran Ray Fary. Ray and I flew over to Belgium together for the second year in a row. To have Ray all to myself for eight hours was quite a treat. That guy is so interesting. His post war life is every bit as interesting as his war time accomplishments. And the work he has done in finding out what happened to all the 80<sup>th</sup> MIA's is truly incredible. In one case I know of he spent years trying to locate a family member to let them know what had happened to their loved one.

Ray and I arrived in Brussels early in the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>. At the baggage claim, we met 551<sup>st</sup> PIB veteran, Dick Field. After the 551<sup>st</sup> was disbanded due to so many losses, Dick was sent to the 505<sup>th</sup> where he joined Company B. It was a real treat meeting Dick.

Family and Friends member, Pascal Hainaut, picked up the three of us and took us to Baraque de Fraiture, also known as Parker's Crossroads, where Dick and I checked into the Auberge du Carrefour (Inn at the Crossroads). The Auberge is a lovely inn owned by Bernadette Lejeune-Lengler. I would recommend it to anyone. We took Ray over to the home of Joseph and Ida Fourgon. We had a lovely visit with them and Ray told us how he had met Joseph during



the war and spent Christmas Eve of 1944 in Joseph's house. When we returned to the Auberge, Family and Friends member, Gene Garren, had arrived along with Mike Hipwell, a former 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne soldier and helicopter pilot, Wally Swanson, the son of a 101<sup>st</sup> officer, and Joe Chestnut, who is involved with the group, VBOB (Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge).

That evening Pascal and his lovely wife, Nathalie, very kindly invited all of us to dinner in their home. Nathalie prepared a wonderful meal for us and Dick kept us enthralled with stories of his war time experiences. Pascal has a very impressive collection of WWII memorabilia and he gave us a tour after dinner. He had everything imaginable. Gene tried to teach me a few things on the Thompson sub-machine gun, but he was not too successful. It wasn't the teacher – it was the student!

Friday morning we drove to

Bastogne. We met some friends of Pascal in the square at the Café au Carré. Dick and Ray were kept busy signing autographs and later their photos were unveiled on the Muir de Memoire (Wall of Memory). Captain Wallace Swanson's photo was also unveiled by his son, Wally.

Pascal took us all to the sites where General Anthony McAuliffe had his headquarters. It was very interesting. It was in some old Belgian barracks. It was scheduled to be torn down last year, but so many people raised such a ruckus (including myself) that the building was saved. All the rooms were below ground. We walked down a steep staircase to get to them. In one room, there was a room with a cot in it along with a desk and maps set up. This room was used by General McAuliffe. Other rooms contained various weapons and photos of that time. The famous "Nuts" letter was there as well. In one room, there were photos

of many veterans who had visited the barracks. I was surprised to see so many familiar names. I am sure if I ever go there again, I will see photos of Ray and Dick there. Ray and Dick were presented with special commemorations for having visited the barracks.

After touring the barracks, we all walked across the street to the cemetery where we visited the grave of René Lemaire, the Belgian nurse who was killed while tending to American wounded during the Christmas Eve bombing.

Friday evening there was a dinner at the Auberge. Ray and Dick were the guests of honor. Family and Friends member, Jean-Marie Lemoigne was there with his lovely family-- Catherine, Flavie and Tomas. Several American soldiers who had come over from Germany were also in attendance. Our Dutch friend, Frank Mesu, was there as well. It was a lovely dinner. The highlight for me was meeting Pierre Toubon, the young man who, with the assistance of Don McKeage, created the new monument at Abrefontaine for all the F Co. men who were killed there.

Saturday was the day of the march. We all awoke early and headed over to La Gleize where the march was scheduled to start. I saw my dear Belgian friends, Nicole and Pol Meunier and Anne Marie Lemort. Henri-Jean Renaud was there with his brother, Maurice. I also saw Chantel and Yves Poisson, the French couple who own the La Fiere Manoir. Of course, Emile was there as was Jeanne Melcher, our good friend from Holland. A group of German soldiers attended the march this year. I got a great picture of them

piled on the Tiger tank next to the museum. Tommy McArdle was in attendance with his re-enactment group as was my Belgian friend, Irwin Peters. (I wonder if he is my cousin!!)

While the march was on, I stayed with Pol and Nicole. We went to the lunch site and waited for the marchers to arrive. We weren't there long before an American soldier came running in with his seventeen year old son. They ate their lunch in about two minutes and were on their way. They ran the entire march and finished it in just over three hours. Gene Garren was the one I was concerned about. ‘

Knowing Gene, I was certain he could make it, but as the marchers from our group came in they all said the same thing, “Gene will never make it.” Gene walks with crutches or his “sticks” as he calls them. He is 100% service related disabled. I had told him, I would have a large bottle of water for him at the lunch area.

The beginning of the march was somewhat treacherous and several people fell including Mike Hipwell. Nine people were injured on the march. As we waited, people finally stopped coming in to the lunch area and there was no sign of Gene. We returned to the start/finish and waited for the marchers to come in. As they arrived, they picked up their certificates and then stood in line to have Ray and Dick sign them. There were some documentarians there – Americans who live in Romania – who interviewed Dick.

These same guys had interviewed Ray last year. Finally, it started getting dark and there was still no sign of Gene. I

asked Emile to send a jeep to look for him which he did. The jeep came back and said Gene refused the ride. They did, however, give him a flashlight. They checked on him periodically. Mike and I went outside to wait for him at the final leg of the march. Several others came out as well.

Finally, we saw the flashlight in the distance. People lined either side of the road to cheer him on. When he entered the banquet hall, everyone erupted into cheers and applause. I had tears in my eyes. Gene began that march at nine o'clock in the morning and finished it at eight o'clock that night. I have as much respect and admiration for Gene as I do for our World War II heroes. He is Airborne All the Way!

We did not stay for the banquet, but returned to the hotel and had dinner there. Gene went straight to his room and gave us orders not to wake him in the morning. He did not want any dinner, but he finally allowed me to bring him a basket of bread. When I returned to his room with the bread, he was in the bathroom washing his crutches in the tub. They had mud caked on them. I left him then and I don't think he woke up until Sunday evening!

We woke up to a snowy Sunday morning. Pascal came to the Auberge in the morning and we all went to the Norfontaine Farm where Dick fought. (Ray spent the day with the Fourgons.) A group of soldiers from 3<sup>rd</sup> Btn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Calvary who are stationed in Germany joined us. I had met some of these guys the day before during the march. The father and son who ran the march were there. There was one soldier who told me two stories of how he had

narrowly escaped death in Iraq. Once when he saw a trip wire just in time before he set off an I.E.D. and another when someone else saw the trip wire and stopped him just in time. When I met his battalion C.O., he told me of yet another story where the same soldier almost got killed. He said, "That guy is one lucky S.O.B.!" The soldier told me he has not told his parents of any of those things happening to him. I told him there is no reason for his parents to ever know about any of that!

Dick showed us the road they came up when they attacked the farm. He told us a story of how a German machine gunner opened up on them and they all jumped in the ditch along the side of the road. The machine gunner began raking the ditch and they knew they had to get out of there. They made a break for it and one guy fell backwards into the ditch. Everyone assumed he was dead until a few minutes later they heard him say, "I'm coming back!" We took a bunch of pictures of Dick with the soldiers and then we headed to Dairemont where Co. A of the 551st made a bayonet attack on January 4, 1945. I was there, along with Bob Murphy, for the dedication in 2008 of the monument in 2008. It was there that I met Col. Doug Dillard and Joe Cicchinelli whose card reads, "There's no one taller than a short paratrooper." I always liked that. It is so true.

Our next stop was Rochlinval. The house that was used as an aid station was still there. Dick had a 1945 picture of it and we were able to compare then and now. During the battle for Rochlinval, Dick's buddy was wounded and Dick carried him to the aid station.

While there, Dick took off his boots and socks. The doctor noticed ice crystals had formed between his toes and he was sent to the field hospital along with his buddy. I told him that may well have saved his life. I am certain it saved his feet, of course he has had problems with them ever since. As we drove away from Rochlinval, Dick pointed out to me how they came out of the tree line and attacked across open fields. It looked to me about the distance of four football fields. I will never understand how a man can make himself do that.

Our soldiers left us to return to Germany, and we went to the Musée de la Bataille in Ennal. It was a great Museum and I would highly recommend it to anyone. It had lots of great stuff from all the Airborne Regiments that fought in the Battle of the Bulge. It was there that I met Eddy Lamberty, the Belgian who adopted the grave of the 508's Captain William Nation. His nephew and name sake is a good friend of mine, so I got Eddy's contact information to forward on to Bill.

Our next stop was truly the highlight of the trip for me. We went to Abrefontaine where we met Pierre Toubon. About a year and a half ago, someone forwarded an email from him saying he would like to erect a monument at Abrefontaine to the men who were killed in the battle there. I put him in touch with Don McKeage. Don, as 1st Sgt, led F Co. in the attack there. All the officers in the company had been killed or wounded. The last remaining officer was the company C.O. When he was hit, he called Don to him and said, "You take the company. There's

no one left." Don wrote Pierre about the fighting there and sent him the names of the ten F Co. men killed there and one A Co. man. It was a beautiful monument and this young man made it entirely on his own. I was deeply saddened thinking that Don never got to see it.

The memorial consists of a big piece of stone embedded in the ground surrounded by a star. At the center top of the stone is the 82nd Airborne insignia, underneath that on the left is the WWII 505th "Ready" Panther insignia and on the right a pair of Airborne wings with 505 written under it. Written at the bottom of the stone in French is "We will never forget the sacrifice of the young American soldiers who fell for our freedom." Beneath that is a rectangular piece of stone leaning against it with the names of those killed there. It is a very moving monument and I like to think that Don is somewhere very pleased with it.

Next, we visited what I call "Musée de Bob", a private museum in the home of Robert Noirhomme in Lierneux. His private museum took up an entire three story building. It was really incredible. I think he had every kind of weapon used by the Germans and Americans. He had an entire collection of Nazi postage stamps. There were mannequins with every kind of German and American uniforms. He had a field telephone and an old "Sad Sack" comic strip! Where the man lives was a mill at one time. There were several buildings and the property was beautiful. We went down to the creek and went inside the old mill. The forest was right behind his property.

Sunday evening at the Auberge, Bernadette hosted a dinner party for us. It was an incredible meal of things not on the Inn's menu! Everything was wonderful. During the course of the meal, she told us some of her family's history. Her grandfather was part of the resistance in the area. Someone betrayed him to the Germans. The Germans tied him to a chair in the Inn, which was on the same site as it is today, and set the Inn on fire. An American soldier from the 106th Infantry Division saw this and ran in and rescued him, saving his life. On his death bed he said to his daughter, Bernadette's mother, "Always remember the Americans." No American veteran ever pays for a room at the Auberge du Carrefour. I think we all had tears in our eyes as she told the story. Dick got up and hugged her.

Monday morning we went to Ciney for a memorial service in memory of Milo Huempener, a 551st trooper who was trapped behind the German lines and single handedly waged warfare against the Germans for two days (December 23-25, 1944). He was later awarded the D.S.C. A reception was held inside the town hall. There were a couple of Belgian veterans there as well. One of them had been a POW from 1940 – 1945. In the room where the reception was held, the uniform and boots of Milo were displayed.

After the reception, we went to La Roche, a lovely town on the L'Ourthe River. Our intent was to visit the museum there, but it was closed. We wandered around the town and stopped in a small café to have a beer (Dick had a big

glass of milk).

We returned to the Auberge and had a lovely dinner. Tuesday morning, Pascal picked me up at 4:30 AM. Bernadette had made several sandwiches to take with me on my journey. Late that afternoon, I was back in Dallas. As always, it was a wonderful trip.

I later learned that Mike Hipwell was taken to the hospital that afternoon where it was discovered he had broken three ribs in his fall during the march. In true Airborne fashion, Mike waited three days to tend to his injuries. I am trying to convince Mike to join us at our 505 RCT reunion.

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## TAPS



MASTER SERGEANT (RETIRED)  
JAMES A. GORMAN.

88, of Browns, Mills NJ. loving Husband of 63 years to Freda H. (nee Unterberger), passed away on January 3, 2010. Born in Manayunk (Philadelphia) PA. Graduated from St. John the Baptist High School, Class of 1939. Served in World War II as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division, 3rd Battalion, 505th RCT. Jumped in. St. Mere' Eglise, Normandy on D-Day and in Operation Market Garden, Holland. Fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Served in Korea. He was a Master Parachutist who was a recipient of two Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, the

Combat Readiness Medal and both the French and Belgian Croix de Guerre. He retired after 22 years of service in the Army. He retired from Stepan's Chemical Company, Fieldsborough, NJ after 18<sup>1/2</sup> years. He was a member of the Purple Heart and 82nd Airborne Association. He is survived by his loving wife, Freda. Also survived by his 5 children, Colleen of Browns Mills, James Jr. of Coco Beach, FL, Patricia and husband Alfred Lowry, Johanna and Freda, all of Browns Mills; 3 grandchildren, Sarah and Morgan Bruce, and Hanna Gorman; and 3 great grandchildren, Nelson, Elijah James and Brienna; who all loved him dearly. He was buried on January 12, 2010. at Arlington National Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to the Deborah Heart & Lung Center, Browns Mills, NJ 08015.

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JOE COMER

It is with deep sadness that I write to share with you news of the loss of one of the 82nds 4-star veterans, my uncle, Joseph L. Comer. Uncle Joe passed away suddenly and unexpectedly early in the morning (June 19). He had turned 92 in November but was in good health and still very sharp mentally and still living in his home in Roanoke, Va. He



apparently became ill during the night and collapsed and passed away. He was a wonderful man who as much loved by his family and by all who knew him. He was very active in his church and in his community throughout his long life, quietly serving all we needed or wanted his help in many ways.

Joe served proudly with Co. H, 3rd Battalion, 505 PIR during WWII, participating in all four combat jumps in Sicily, Italy, Normandy and Holland. He participated in every major combat with his company, including the Battle of the Bulge, earning the Bronze Star. Strangely enough, despite all the action he saw, he was never seriously wounded in battle but was finally knocked out of action in April of 1945 by a ruptured appendix. Like most veterans, he was very reluctant to talk about his experiences in the war and never considered himself a hero, even though he was a hero to all of us both for his service to his country and because of the man he was throughout his life. In recent years, he became more open about his time in the service and shared many stories with me. He also made a return trip to Europe in May 2008, traveling to St. Mere Eglise, on through to Belgium and into Holland and the Groesbeek area. I had the great privilege of sharing that journey with him and it was the trip of a lifetime.

I hope you will share this news with the other veterans and 05 family members with whom you stay in contact. They should know that one of their proud members has been lost, and that he is deeply missed and mourned.

Rick Rogers

## Mail Call

Dear Ellen,

Just wanted to let you know that your picture went next to dad's heart. I folded the pictures, gave him a big smoocher from you, a kiss from me and put the pictures under his jacket next to his heart. So we went with him. The service was beautiful. We put one of his personalized 82d Abn license plates on the back of the casket, along with a 505 RCT decal, and an 82d emblem. We had the 82d song playing the whole time at the viewing, along with a slide show of pictures my sister did. The military funeral at the cemetery we started out with the 82d entrance song as they were taking the casket out and bringing it up, had active duty military folding the flag, the color guard from the VFW post we all belong to, taps, the 82d exit song. I cried the whole time. His casket was beautiful, blue (his favorite color) with eagles on all the pallbearer handles, and a flag on the back of the top. I know he loved it. I will try calling Ed in the morning, we went to my sisters on Thursday and did not come back until today.

May the Lord bless you and protect you;  
May the Lord smile on you, and be gracious to you;  
May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.  
Num 6:24-26

Love,  
Barbara Fortenbaugh

Dear Family & Friends:

Losing Don McKeage has left a big hole in my heart. I think of him everyday and miss him more than I can say. The picture he sent me of himself on his 83rd birthday sits on my desk. Don was always so kind to me and welcomed me from the start. I miss his many emails. He always ended them by sending me a big smoocher. He ended all our telephone conversations the same way. I will miss his smoochers. No finer man ever walked the face of the earth than Don McKeage. He has left a legacy that will be remembered for generations to come. I am proud to have had such a friend. He was Airborne All The Way.

Ellen Peters

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### Losing "Frenchy" Lemaire

To all of Paw Paw's friends:

We regretfully send this email to let you know that our PawPaw has gone on to a better life in heaven. He had some complications during surgery on Tuesday and passed later that evening. He will be dearly missed by all of us. As of this time funeral arrangements have not been finalized. Once arrangements have been made, I will send an email with that information. Please keep our family in your thoughts and prayers.

The family can be contacted at:  
yojim78@atvci.net (Yolanne's email address)

The family of James Ray Lemaire

# Mail Call

## One of a kind

The few Veterans of World War 11 that are still with us look for a clone of Don McKeage. He was a successful business man and used his many talents for over twenty five years to keep us going in the right direction.

In combat he was courageous and brave in Sicily, Italy. Normandy, Holland and the Bulge,

He made numerous trips to Europe and gave leadership when it was essential to keep us going in the right direction. His wife and daughter accompanied him to most of our reunions and was welcomed by all the 505 veterans and their families.

Col Edwin M. Sayre- Ret. US Army

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## Support Our Troops

I have been participating in "troop support" since the 82nd Airborne Division went to Kosovo in 1999. Four years ago, I became responsible for the "A Million Thanks" Booth at the Prairie Air Show ([www.prairieair.org](http://www.prairieair.org)), where patriotic-theme cards are provided to the Show's visitors on which to write notes of thanks and encouragement to our deployed, wounded, and veteran Service Men and Women.

To continue collecting and sending these cards, I must ask for sponsors and donations (tax-deductible) for the Booth. When it comes to honoring, respecting, and remembering America's Guardian Angels, I have no pride, no shame--I will beg. And that is what I am doing now. Attached please find information on how you can help.

A good friend of mine, CSM Donovan E. Watts was killed in Iraq on November 21, 2006. A career soldier in the 82nd Airborne Division, Donovan put people into two classes--porch dogs, those who did

nothing and yard dogs, those who acted. Please be a "yard dog," just like Donovan, just like the rest of America's Service Men and Women.

Any amount is greatly appreciated, and donations are tax-deductible, as Prairie Air Show is a non-profit 501c(3) organization.

Also appreciated is passing this information on to your friends, family, and business associates. Major sponsors of the booth (\$500+ donation) will be recognized on a banner posted on its back wall--or may remain anonymous.

Please call or write with any questions.

Thank you for your support - and if you are unable to donate, then please fly the Flag, shake a Veteran's hand, and take a moment to remember that "rough men" (and women) do what must be done so that you and yours sleep safe at night.

Star Jorgensen  
309.533.2285 or 309.750.3931

## Sicily Campain Not Forgotten

Dear Sir,

My name is Marie Gousman from Phoenix, AZ. My brother-in-law was one of the paratroopers killed on July 10, 1943 at Point Dirillo.

My husband and I are planning a trip to visit the site this July. We are not familiar with Sicily and have some concerns about our visit. Information is not easily available. We have heard there will be a ceremony but it will be held in Gela, date undecided at this time.

Our concerns are about traveling in the area, local transport, taxis, buses, accomodations, etc. I have your speech from July 11, 2008 and thought since you were there you might be able to share your experience and insight about the area. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Marie Gousman  
Phoenix, AZ  
email: [denisemaas@qwest.net](mailto:denisemaas@qwest.net)

Ms. Gousman:

Yes they do have a ceremony each year and the schedule is controlled by the Naval Air Station <http://www.cnic.navy.mil/Sigonella/index.htm> should allow you to find a link so that you can email the base PAO and get more details as to the ceremony

Usually the five year anniversaries are the BIG SHOWS--so the next one will be in 2013--the 70th.

Make reservations early--busy tourist season in the area.

It is very hot and dry--hats are in order as are cool clothes

We flew into Catania from Rome and rented a car to drive across the island.

The farmer who owns the

farmhouse that the memorial is on the wall of is quite gracious

There is a local resident who has his own mini-museum who I am sure would like to be of help if he can. His name is Salvo Reale and I have copied him on this message.

I would also recommend that you join Friends and Family of the 505th and you may find other relations of paratroopers who are going to Sicily also. [rjburns@aol.com](mailto:rjburns@aol.com)

Hope that this helps.

Bruce B. G. Clarke  
Colonel, US Army (ret)  
785 550-8653

Dear Mr. Burns,

Recently I discovered some of your newsletters on the 505rct.org website (<http://www.505rct.org/80aa/80aa-outpost1.asp>). Several of these newsletters deal with the actions of the 80th AAA in Normandy, including several encounters with German tanks. Especially issue 10 of Spring 2004 is very interesting.

For the last four years I've been doing detailed research on the German formations that fought against the 82AB in Normandy. As a result I've found additional information that you and your readers might find interesting, that is if the Outpost is still being published of course.

To understand what the 80th was facing, let me address the formations that actually fielded armor and the battles they were involved in.

1.) Panzerjäger Abteilung 709 (of the 709.Inf.Div.) has been mentioned in many books, but most books have at least some of their information wrong.

The battalion had three companies. The 1st company had self-propelled guns, but contrary to most claims these were not Sturmgeschütze III. Instead the company had vehicles known as Marder I. Basically a 75mm anti-tank gun on the French Lorraine Tractor. Ten of these had been sent to the battalion, nine of which were probably still available at the start of the invasion. 2nd company had twelve 75mm Pak40 and 3rd company was equipped with nine 37mm Flak guns. Both 2nd and 3rd company were motorized. Whether or not the guns of 3rd company were self-propelled or towed is difficult to determine.

It were most likely vehicles from this battalion attacked Turnbull's force at Neuville-au-Plain. Photographic evidence suggests at least two Marder I were destroyed north of Sainte-Mere-Eglise. Unfortunately the exact location of those wrecks remains unclear for now, but at least one of those was knocked out north of Neuville.

2.) You probably know the photographs that were taken after the German attack on Sainte-Mere-Eglise on 7 June. Usually the destroyed assault guns are attributed to Pzj. Abt.709, but this is incorrect as the battalion did not have any. Instead these assault guns belonged to 2./Pzj.Abt.243, the anti-tank battalion of the 243.Inf.Div. (officially known as Stu.Gesch.Abt.1243 at the time).

This was the only formation that did have (ten of) these assault-guns. The vehicle that was destroyed closest to the town was numbered '201', meaning it was the vehicle of the company commander (2 for 2nd company). The first company of Pzj.Abt.243 was equipped with fourteen Marder III Ausf.M, 75mm anti-tank gun on the chassis of the 38(t). One of these vehicles was probably knocked out/captured later on 7 June near Neuville-au-Plain. That particular vehicle is numbered '112'. The style of the numbers also matches those on the assault-guns. Of course it also matches the organization of the battalion (112= 1st company, 1st platoon, 2nd vehicle).

3.) Most accounts describing the tanks of Panzer Ersatz und Ausbildungs Abteilung 100 that attacked La Fièvre bridge on D-Day and D+1 are somewhat inaccurate. Photographs of the wrecks show these were not simply 'Renault tanks', nor 'light tanks'. Instead there were only two Renault R35s. The other two wrecks are a Hotchkiss H39 and even an old, medium, Panzer III. As you might know the Pz.III looks very similar to the Pz.IV and both types even used the same tracks. This also means Dolan's claims of Pz.IV tanks and the entry in the 80th AA battalion log of Corp. Wilson destroying a Mark IV, make more sense. However, the Pz.IV was quite likely already destroyed on D-Day. The reason for saying this are accounts that claim the commander of the lead tank was killed, but the tank continued to move and fight. Because the light Hotchkiss and Renault tanks only had a two man crew, the accounts cannot really be referring to one of those.

The R35 photograph from Lt. Baugh is also interesting. In his book it is said to have been photographed west of the Merderet where 505pir troopers were operating, but the article in Outpost says north of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, in turn Mr. Nordyke looks for a link with the vehicles destroyed by Staff Sgt. Rider near Baupthe. I do not know which one of these options is correct, but it seems unlikely it was photographed north of SME. The German tank battalion simply did not fight there and the other tank battalion (Pz. Abt.206) only had at best two of these tanks and quite possibly none at all.

4.) The armored troops that attacked SME from the south of D-Day, are still a mystery. It seems unlikely there were any German tanks, assault guns or tank hunters in the area. It is possible however the armored

vehicles were halftracks or 'Flak-trucks'. Either option could mean vehicles with (1 or 4) 20mm or a single 37mm gun.

There are many more details but I think this is sufficient for now. I hope you found it interesting and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

With kind regards from the Netherlands,

Niels Henkemans

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Dear Neils:

Thank you for your comments and interest in the 82nd ABN combat actions in Normandy.

I think you are correct on several fronts. The SP guns Ko'd on June 6 on N13 approaching Neuville au-Plain were likely Marder 1s. We still do not know for sure who the gun crew was with LTC Vandervoort and Lt. Turnbull and whether the gun remained at its position or was towed away by hand as no report of a jeep returning to the area was ever reported.

I have never seen a photograph of the Lafiere causeway showing more than three destroyed tanks. Yet, Dolan's account would have you believe there were five, and not all the same type. Dolan reported that the .57mm gun was firing with some effect when the two bazooka teams went to work on the first and second tanks to approach the bridge. My guess is that the .57 mm disabled the lead tank on June 6th and the bazookas at close range set the first and second tank afire. The third tank was also hit by the .57mm but that tank may have also hit the .57mm shield. A company C, 505 man reported seeing 6-7 men killed or wounded at that gun position. No casualty report can confirm 307 engineers killed there or 80th AA men at that gun. I believe that the 80th AA crew took over for the second attack, June 7. Here again, Dolan reported two tanks approaching, out of bazooka range. He reported the crew ko'd both tanks and halted the armored attack. I think Dolan is the best source of information. Phil Nordyke and I had several discussions about whether the forward tanks were Renaults or Hotchkiss. We concluded that both were used. I have seen no physical evidence of a Mk III or MkIV tank. Undoubtedly, CPL Wilson of A battery would have been at the Lafiere gun position, 1,000 yds SW of SME (Lafiere) and he reported hitting the lead vehicle on June 7 and saw it as a Mk IV.

Note, however that the battalion log also reports Pvt Uitto knocking out a "Mk IV "in Ste Mere Eglise" His 6-pounder would have been the one defending 2nd Bn 505 Command Post on the north end of SME, the defense under the command of LT Cliff of A battery, 80th AA.. This attack came from the west while D and E company 505 were attacking to the north. What Uitto actually hit was an STUG III. I believe Uitto and his loader were wounded. Pvt Atchley of H Co. 505 fired the .57MM single-handedly thereafter and KO'd the second STUG III. many photos show these vehicles and their appearance is much more likely to be mistaken for a Mark IV than a Marder in my estimation.

As to LT Baugh's R35 Tank, I would think he photographed it from June 10-11 and possibly on the road to Cauginy where it was rumored a paratrooper dropped a grenade down the hatch after vaulting a hedgerow on June 6. Nordyke's contention that this tank was one KO'd by SGT Rider on June 13 is unsubstantiated by any evidence. Based on 508 evidence of Kaying more than a dozen light tanks near Baupre at that time with bazookas and gammon grenades, it is likely

that an R35 would have been one or more of the five armored vehicles Rider destroyed with the 508 with his .57M M on June 13. It is doubtful a D Battery officer like Baugh would have been in the 508 area around Baupre as his battery would have been defending the Division Reserve with .50CAL MGs in the area of Picauville at that time. His battery moved down to San Saveur on June 17 to protect the bridge which had been taken the day before by the 505. I can't imagine Baugh roaming around Baupre and taking pictures with his personal camera at that time! Four ME 109s attacked the bridge on June 17 and were fired on at 0630. Since Battery D landed at Utah 1400 on June 8, it did not settle in until June 9 and LT Baugh ran some supply runs to Utah and Audoville Hebert immediately thereafter. Between then and June 12 he might have gone out looking for LT Booth of B battery who was reported KIA in a glider crash near SME. If he had photographed this R35 in the 505 area, during that time frame, they would have been attacking LeHam to the north before moving south and west to cross the Douve with the division.

As to the attack from the south, I as-

sume that the troops would have been from the 91st Airlanding Division, its HQ in San Saveur, not far from SME. Whether or not the 709 had a detachment to attach I cannot say. I interviewed an Battery A, 80th AA eyewitness who was wounded and evacuated on June 9 who confirmed they fired on an armored column. The 52 Journal confirms a crew in the area on June 6. What the components of that column of 5-6 vehicles would have been I cannot say. There is no confirmation of a kill, only that the firing scattered the column off the road to take cover. Men routinely called armored vehicles "tanks" which often were not. The field of fire on N13 was often long, one report of KO'ing an armored car at 1700 yds., almost a mile, within the first 48 hours of landing. So vehicle identification was not always accurate.

Good luck with your investigations.

Do you have any German sources to supplement your research?

Bob Burns, Pres

FF505RCT Assn.

Editor, The Outpost

## *The Panther*

2453 Loft Avenue

Baldwin, NY 11510

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# 2010 REUNION-Fort Bragg, NC

## Family & Friends and the

## 505 RCT Association

WHEN: SEPTEMBER 23-SEPT 26

WHERE: Holiday Inn I-95, Fayetteville, NC; TEL 910-323-1600 FOR RESERVATIONS

RATE: \$89.95 including breakfast for two per room, each day. *Price guaranteed to 8/24 /2010*

REG FEE: \$85.00\* made payable to the FF505RCT ASSN. Fee includes the cost of the Hospitality Room, (Thurs, 2PM –Saturday, 11PM); Memorial Luncheon at Fort Bragg, Bus Fare to Visit FT Bragg and the WWII Museum (FRI); Banquet Dinner (Sat. Nite.)

*\*If you cannot make all events or stay the entire time, contact Ellen Peters, SEC-TREASURER at 214-352-7002. She will adjust fee accordingly.*

AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION: Holiday Inn has a Shuttle Service. Call hotel when you arrive.

FILL OUT REGISTRATION FORM BELOW and MAIL WITH CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

ELLEN PETERS, 3630 Townsend Drive, Dallas, TX 75229

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO FF505RCT ASSN

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ WWII UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

GUESTS IN YOUR PARTY \_\_\_\_\_

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

TEL: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

ARRIVAL FLIGHT/AIRLINE (If known) \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTURE DATE/TIME/AIRLINE \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL REQUEST OR ASSISTANCE \_\_\_\_\_

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