



82nd Airborne Division Assn. Inc. Rocky Mountain Chapter



Legacy of Sgt. Alvin York Lives On

During World War I, Sgt. Alvin York was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic action outside the French village of Chatel-Chehery. When his 82nd Infantry Division, 328th Infantry Regiment, Company G platoon suffered heavy casualties, York assumed

get my chance, I'd like to make it like he did."

Spc. York instinctively knew he'd wind up in the Army, but he had planned on finishing college and entering as an officer. He was a receiver on the Heidelberg University football



Spc. Jake York, 82nd Airborne Division, admires a display honoring his great-great-grandfather the legendary Sgt. Alvin York



Sgt. York Commemorative Stamp

named in honor of Alvin York. Gary Cooper starred in a movie about his heroic actions.

At Fort Bragg, it is hard for Spc. York to escape attention. His squadron buddies have fun making jokes about his family lineage.

Spc. Jake York plans to make the army his career. He is married to Kylie and has two daughters. 

Excerpted from an article by USA Paratroopers Staff Writer Amanda Dolasinski

command and led a squad of seven men in the destruction of German machine gun nests; killing 20 enemy soldiers and capturing 128 more along with four officers.

Fast-forwarding, the present day 82nd Airborne Division has Spc. Jake York, great-great-nephew of the legendary Sgt. Alvin York, serving in its ranks. In a rare feat, Spc. Jake York earned the coveted Ranger tab just sixth months after his arrival at Fort Bragg. He is assigned to the 1st Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

"Service has long been part of the York family," the 24 year-old York said. "It's really prideful to carry that name. But it's not something I'm trying to live up to. Still, when I

team in Tiffin, Ohio when he first talked with a recruiter. He also considered serving in the Reserves but decided instead to follow in his father's footsteps.

Growing up, Jake first learned about his famous great-grandfather when he asked his father for help with a book report. His father suggested he write about Sgt. Alvin York. His father also regaled him with stories about all the cool stuff he got to do as a cavalry scout while serving at Fort Carson.

Spc. York says, "I didn't understand then, the actual impact that Alvin York made on the country. It wasn't until I got to Fort Bragg that I saw how much it's talked about." Streets, buildings and prestigious awards are

AIRBORNE DINNER



Saturday, December 5
American Legion Post #161

See page 6
for information and a map



FROM THE CHAIRMAN



to run or know someone else who does.

At their November 2 meeting, officers and trustees discussed the future sustainability of the Rocky Mountain Chapter. Cost saving ideas such as reducing the size of the newsletter, different ways of communicating with our members, and changing the number and location of our dinners were proposed. In order to improve communication with members, officers and trustees will be contacting each of you soon to make certain we have current phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

We still do not have a viable strategy for increasing our membership or for raising funds from other sources. My plea in the September/October issue of PARATROOPER for Life Member contributions produced \$550, but this was from only nine of our members. We need a response from the other 225 Life Members. Clearly, there is an urgent need to address all of the issues listed above in order for the Chapter to survive. Some of the proposed changes in our operation will be discussed at the December meeting, so, again, I hope you will attend.

I want to thank Harry King, Dawn Lisbon, Lloyd Chavez and Zeke Vigil for representing the 82nd Airborne Division Association at the Colorado Spring Veterans Day Parade. And thanks to Mike Marsh for making arrangements to refurbish our C-130 model in preparation for next year's Memorial Day Parade.

This issue of the PARATROOPER features a brief history of the 505th PIR and a profile of Green Beret and Vietnam War veteran Art Gallegos.

Finally, thanks for allowing me to serve as your Chairman for the past three years. It has been challenging but fun and I look forward to doing my part to keep the Rocky Mountain Chapter going far into the future. Airborne! 

Jose Aguayo
Chairman, Rocky Mountain Chapter

First of all, I want to wish all of you and your families a joyous holiday season. Our final Airborne Dinner of 2015 is coming up on Saturday, December 5 and I hope that all of you living within reasonable driving distance of Denver will attend. The December dinner is also when we elect officers and trustees for next year, so that makes your attendance even more important. I will be stepping down from the office of Chairman, but want to continue serving as Treasurer and Membership Coordinator. The nominees for officers and trustees are listed on page 5. Of course, additional nominations can be made from the floor at the dinner meeting if you want

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Please provide the following information to help us improve our communication with you. Mail the completed form to:

82nd Airborne Division Association RMC
2122 West 28th Avenue
Denver, CO 80211-4037

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip Code _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

e-mail address _____

IN MEMORIAM



Rocky Mountain Chapter
LIFE Member
Robert A. Bumpus
died on October 31, 2015.
He served with the
11th Airborne Division and
508th Parachute Infantry
Regiment, 101st Airborne
Division from 1954 to 1957.
Bob is survived by his wife
Joya, two children, three
grandchildren and
5 great-grandchildren.



The "All Airborne" Fraternity



ARTHUR GALLEGOS

ARTHUR "ART" GALLEGOS stood watching paratroopers descend during a 101st Airborne Division demonstration jump at Lowery Field in the summer of 1959. Though he came from a family of Marines, he knew then that he wanted to become a paratrooper.

Art Gallegos was born in Denver, Colorado on August 25, 1941, just months before the United States entered World War II. He attended Denver schools, graduating from North High School in the summer of 1959. During the summer of his junior year, he worked at the Climax Molybdenum Mine, high in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. He was a "mucker", shoveling ore in the depths of the mine. "It was frightening work," he said. "It was noisy, with squeaking and cracking sounds from unknown sources." The veteran miners took pleasure in regaling the young rookie with tales of miners trapped underground. This banter unnerved Gallegos to the point that he transferred to work on the ore crusher above ground.

After graduating from North High School in 1959, Art's father, a Teamsters Union official, got him a job loading trucks for the Denver/Chicago Truck Line. Art was paid \$200 a week; a lot of money in those days. His earnings enabled him to buy a "decked out" 1957 Chevrolet. These brief halcyon days ended when Art got into trouble. The judge hearing his case gave him a choice - jail or the military. So he joined the Army on October 11, 1959.

Gallegos learned the basics of infantry training at Fort Riley, Kansas. Coincidentally, all of the recruits in his platoon had enlisted for the airborne. They were a "gung-ho" bunch, whose enthusiasm attracted the attention of cadre that gave them extra training in weaponry. Their spirit got out of control sometimes, like when a fight broke out in the barracks. MSGT "Pop" Glaze, a wizened WWII and Korean War veteran, brought the bedlam to an abrupt halt. Identifying Gallegos as the ringleader, Glaze told him, "You think you are a bad dude. I'll let you take a couple of shots at me." So Gallegos said, "I took my shots, and it wasn't long before he had me dancing every way but right. I never met anyone that could beat the old guy." After that boxing lesson, Glaze said, "I'll give you fifteen minutes to clean up this mess. Now get your asses moving!" That incident earned MSGT Glaze the respect of the young recruits. Gallegos credits him with much advice on how to stay alive in combat.

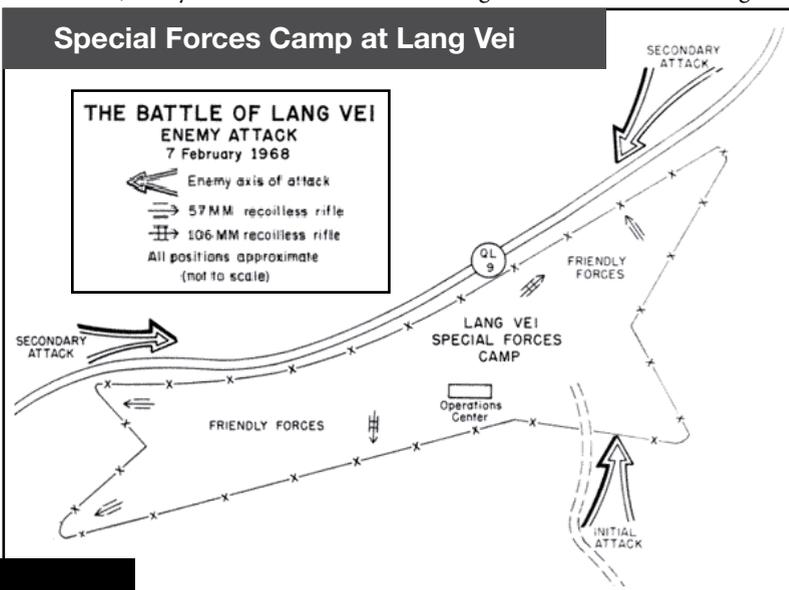
After basic training and advanced infantry training, Gallegos was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 187th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He completed parachute training there in March 1960. Gallegos's time at Fort Campbell coincided with Major

General William Westmoreland's desire to have his 101st troopers undergo more training in raiding and reconnaissance patrolling. Westmoreland knew that the U.S. Army Ranger School could not manage division sized training, so, in 1958, he gave Korean War Medal of Honor recipient Major Lewis Millet the task of forming the first Recondo School at Fort Campbell. In 1966, Westmoreland took the concept with him to Vietnam, where he enlisted the help of 5th Special Forces's commander Colonel Francis J. Kelly to form the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Recondo School at Nha Trang.

To qualify for the Recondo course, a soldier needed to have a combat arms MOS and be in top physical condition. Because Gallegos was

him to Okinawa. From there, he flew to Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon. Gallegos was assigned to help train the Vietnamese 1st Airborne Brigade for clandestine operations in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. First, Gallegos spent time learning local customs, and adjusting to the weather and terrain. The southern delta area was hot, malaria ridden swampland. Jungle covered mountains formed the central and northern provinces. Typical duty for the twelve-man Green Beret A-Teams in which Gallegos served was establishing

Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei



SFC Art Gallegos lay among the survivors when Marine CH-46 helicopters landed at daylight. He was wounded in the arm and leg and only semi-conscious. "This is it," he thought.

already a paratrooper, he was ready for the intense physical demands of the course. When he reenlisted, Gallegos took the next step by applying for the expanded and even more

physically demanding Special Forces training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Training began with an eighteen-day winnowing-out period. Gallegos made the "cut" and advanced to the year-long part of the training. Gallegos says that 512 started the class. Only 57 finished. He graduated from the course with a weapons specialty and the right to wear the arrowhead patch and coveted Green Beret.

Gallegos then volunteered to go to Vietnam. An aging Essex Class aircraft carrier, the USS Bon Homme Richard took

fortified camps near the North Vietnamese Army infiltration routes along the Laotian and Cambodian borders. From these camps, Green Berets led indigenous squad-size forces in fifteen to forty-five day patrols to monitor enemy movements, set up ambushes, and call in airstrikes when hostile units appeared in relatively open areas. On patrol, Gallegos carried an M-14 rifle, a shotgun, a .45 caliber pistol, twenty magazines of ammo, and two or three Claymore anti-personnel mines. Gallegos admitted he was scared during the first of these "sneak and peek" patrols. "I wasn't afraid to die, I just feared being captured. My time in Vietnam was 90% boredom and 10% action. We were shelled a lot, but not many knock-down, drag out battles," he says.

Gallegos was wounded the first time during one of those enemy artillery barrages at Nha Trang. He was running for cover when an exploding shell knocked him flat. The rim of his steel helmet cut the back of his head. His M-14 magazine hit his face, breaking his nose. Shrapnel riddled his body, except for the area of his back where he lugged a radio. The blast killed eight guys, but Gallegos survived. He was evacuated to a hospital where a doctor, trained to treat industrial accidents, used

ARTHUR GALLEGOS

a powerful electromagnet to remove the shrapnel from his body. After convalescing for six weeks, he returned to duty.

Like every other soldier that served in Vietnam, Gallegos enjoyed R&R time in



Construction of command bunker at Lang Vei

Saigon or some other more exotic location. In Saigon, Gallegos visited a notorious brothel called the Green Door to “take care of business”. Gallegos says, “Mama San would let Americans in the front door while VC and NVA went out the back door.” Illicit commerce didn’t discriminate between the opposing combatants. Gallegos also got to visit Australia for eighteen days.

In January 1968, Gallegos was one of six Special Forces advisors leading 161 Hre tribesmen of a Mobile Strike Force (Mike) company. The Mike Force was sent to reinforce 5th Special Forces Detachment A-101 at Lang Vei just before NVA forces overran the camp on February 6 and 7. Lang Vei, one of nine Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camps in the I Corps Tactical Zone, was situated on Highway 9, in northern Quang Tri Province near the Laotian border. This was the second location of the camp; 1,000 yards west of the original camp near Lang Vei village and just over four miles from Ke Sanh. To conduct border surveillance and interdict enemy infiltration into South Vietnam, Camp Commander Captain Franklin C. Willoughby had one Montagnard company, three South Vietnamese rifle companies, three reconnaissance platoons, and Gallegos’s Mobile Strike Force at his disposal. Twenty-four American advisors were dispersed among the various CIDG forces.

In late January, the NVA 304th Division, reinforced with twenty-two PT-76s of the 198th Tank Battalion crossed the Laotian border, sweeping survivors of the Laotian BV-33 Battalion and 8,000 civilian refugees fleeing before them. The Laotians took refuge at the previous location of the Special Forces camp. Six Green Berets were flown in to assist the remnants of the Laotian BV-33 Battalion in restoring the old camp and to wait for further orders.

This was the first time the NVA used tanks in South Vietnam. To meet the expected enemy onslaught, Captain Willoughby strengthened the Lang Vei defenses and distributed his force along the length of the boomerang-shaped camp. Gallegos’s Mike Force of Hre soldiers manned an early warning outpost west of the command bunker.

Just before midnight on February 6, enemy artillery began raining down on the Special Forces Camp. Closely following the barrage, the PT-76 tanks attempted to breach the wire barricades of the camp’s outer perimeter. Earlier, LTC Daniel F. Shungel, 5th Special Forces Commander, had flown into the camp. Together, he and Captain Willoughby directed the developing battle. They



Destroyed PT76 tank

called in artillery and air support to break up the waves of attackers. SFC James Holt destroyed three tanks with a 106mm recoilless rifle, but other tanks and the closely following infantry swarmed over the outer defenders and roamed over the surface fortifications. A group of four Americans and about fifty CIDG soldiers tried to break out through the northern perimeter. Only twelve of the group succeeded. At the camp center, Captain Willoughby, seven other Americans, and twenty-nine Vietnamese and CIDG soldiers huddled in the underground command bunker while the enemy tried to dislodge them with grenades. Twice Willoughby radioed for relief forces from the Marines at Ke Sanh. His requests were denied. About one-hundred Laotian soldiers that survived the initial NVA cross-border advance, now led by the six American Green Berets, tried to break through the enemy lines from behind, but were beaten back and fled when the Green Beret leader,

SFC Eugene Ashley, was killed. Finally, General Westmoreland learned about the plight of Lang Vei defenders and ordered the Marines at Ke Sanh to formulate a rescue plan.

SFC Art Gallegos lay among the survivors when Marine CH-46 helicopters landed at daylight. He was wounded in the arm and leg and only semi-conscious. “This is it,” he thought. So he laid his remaining ammunition magazines and his .45 pistol within reach to one side, expecting to die fighting. Gallegos said, “I didn’t see the medivac come in.” Suddenly someone grabbed him and said, “We’ve got your sorry ass.” Medics threw him into a copter and flew him offshore to the hospital ship USS *Repose*. When medics started to cut away his clothes, they asked, “Man, do you guys ever take a bath?” In addition to his wounds, Art also had malaria so he was sent to a hospital at Subic Bay, Philippine Islands.

Art Gallegos came home on Thanksgiving Day 1968. He walked through the Stapleton Airport terminal with the aid of crutches when a man approached, spit on his uniform, and called him a “baby killer”. Gallegos punched him in the face, knocking him down. Later, attending mass in uniform at St. Dominic Church, he was also reviled by anti-war protestors. Gallegos says, “Hell, I don’t know if I killed any children. In the chaos of combat, one never knows.”

Gallegos served two tours in Vietnam during 1966, ’67, and ’68. He still has lots of nightmares and flashbacks. Periodically, he laments the loss of most of the company he led at Lang Vei. In Vietnam, he was also exposed to Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant widely spread by the U.S. Air Force throughout the conflict. Gallegos still grieves for the loss of his son. He suspects that his exposure to the



Evacuating the wounded after the battle

deadly carcinogen affected his son’s health.

Art Gallegos was awarded two Purple Heart Medals and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge for his service in Vietnam. In civilian life, Art and his wife Dianna operated their own “eighteen-wheeler”, until failing health forced him to retire. Dianna continues to haul cargo throughout the United States. 

505TH PIR PANTHERS

During World War II, the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment participated in seven major campaigns and four regimental airborne assaults.

On July 6, 1942, at Fort Benning Georgia, the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment was activated. On February 4, 1943, the Regiment was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Sicily – Operation Husky

On July 9, 1943, just a year after its activation, the 505th made the first regimental size combat parachute attack as part of Operation Husky I. Under the capable leadership of Colonel James M. “Slim Jim”

Gavin, the 505th was organized into a Regimental Combat Team which included the 3rd Battalion of the 504th. As a staff officer in Airborne Command under General Lee, Colonel Gavin wrote the *Instructional Pamphlet for Airborne Operations*.



General James M. Gavin

The theories and observations in this pamphlet would now be put to the test.

The 505th's objective was to parachute behind enemy lines into an egg-shaped area around Gela, Sicily. They would then close off roads leading to beaches and secure the drop zone for further use. An especially important target near the DZ was Objective Y – a series of sixteen concrete pillboxes from which German gunners controlled movement on nearby roads. However, Mother Nature did not cooperate. On July 9, Colonel Gavin was informed that wind velocity in the landing area was thirty-five miles per hour, but the invasion was underway and there was no turning back. It was under these harrowing conditions that the 505th had its first trial-by-fire. Only fifteen percent of the combat team was delivered to the correct DZ. Nevertheless, small groups of lost paratroopers cut every phone line that they found, devastating the communications of the Axis forces.

Ambushes were conducted and even



Objective Y was secured. By continuing to fight in small groups, the 505th led the Germans and Italians to overestimate the number of airborne invaders, thus inhibiting any effective counterattacks. The German Herman Goering Panzer Division was another matter. Even though outmanned and outgunned, the 505th used raw courage and fighting spirit to block the steel behemoths of this division from advancing toward the Allied landings on the beachhead. With Sicily secured, the Allies pressed their attack on the Axis powers with landings on the Italian mainland.

Salerno – Operation Avalanche

An Allied force, commanded by American General Mark Clark, landed at Salerno, Italy in the early morning of September 12, 1943.

Within seventy-two hours, German Field Marshal Kesselring was poised to drive the Allies back into the sea. This set the stage for the 505th's second combat jump. On the night of September 14, 1943, Jim Gavin's 505th, 2,100 combat hardened paratroopers, dropped onto the tenuous Salerno beachhead. It was an encore performance of the previous night's precise parachute jump by the 504th and no less spectacular. Within 24 hours, these two units of the 82nd Airborne had jumped on short notice and shored up the faltering Salerno beachhead.

Two weeks later, the 505th probed into the outskirts of Naples and then captured the first major European city for the Allies. On December 9, 1943, Colonel Gavin was promoted to Brigadier General and assumed

duties as Assistant Division Commander of the 82nd Airborne. Lt. Col. Herbert Batchellor assumed command of the 505th.

During the early months of 1944, the 82nd Airborne Division moved to England to prepare for the assault on Western Europe. The 505th again changed commanders with Lt. Col. William Ekman taking over on March 22, 1944. He would lead the 505th through the remainder of the war.

D-Day

The largest combined military operation in history, D-Day was spearheaded by the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. Dense cloud cover hampered visibility as hundreds of C-47s crossed the English Channel during the first hours of June 6, 1944.

When the troop carriers made landfall over the Cherbourg Peninsula, they encountered heavy German antiaircraft fire. Many of the troop carrier formations scattered. It was 0300 hours when the 505th

got the green light to jump. Though earlier landings by Pathfinders signaled their drop zones, many of the planes missed their drop zones and the All-Americans of the 505th landed across a large swath of the Normandy countryside.

Nevertheless, the 505th, one of the first units to hit the ground, overcame the confusion and following 2nd Battalion commander Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort, liberated the first town in France – St. Mere-Eglise. Living up to their motto, “H-MINUS”, first into the fight, the paratroopers of the 505th jumped before the actual start of the



Pathfinder Team & Aircrew Plane #11 3rd Battalion 505th PIR

Continued on page 8.

Airborne Holiday Dinner

Saturday, December 5, 2015
American Legion Post #161
6230 West 60th Avenue
Arvada, Colorado

Cocktails begin at 1800 Hours
Dinner at 1900 Hours

Dinner menu includes: Tossed Salad, Turkey with Dressing, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Candied Yams, Rolls, Pumpkin Pie, Coffee, and Tea.



Directions

1. From I-25, merge onto I-76 heading west toward Grand Junction, take exit #1B towards Sheridan Blvd./CO-95. Or from I-70 take the Sheridan Blvd. North exit.
2. From Sheridan Blvd. turn left on West 60th Avenue.
3. Continue about 1/2 mile to 6230 West 60th Avenue.

BRING AN ITEM FOR THE RAFFLE. IN ADDITION, WE WILL AUCTION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, TWO CLUB LEVEL SEATS, WITH PARKING PASS AND OTHER AMENITIES TO THE JANUARY 3, 2016 DENVER BRONCO/SAN DIEGO CHARGERS FOOTBALL GAME.

RESERVATIONS ARE A MUST! Please call Al Hoorn at 303-550-2953 or Jose Aguayo at 303-433-1825 by 2:00 pm Wednesday, December 2 to make your reservations. If you get voice mail, please leave a message with the number of people that will be attending. Please be courteous and call no later than 9:00 pm.

If you find after the deadline that you want to attend, please call. We can always make adjustments, *but you have to call!* Also, if you make reservations, please attend. Once we have submitted the attendance numbers, we are committed to pay for that number of meals. If someone does not show up, we pay anyway.



Coming In 2016

EXCITING NEWS ABOUT OUR AIRBORNE DINNERS!
NEW LOCATION, LOWER PRICE, UNLIMITED DINING CHOICES AND GREAT ATMOSPHERE.
OUR OWN ROOM FOR UP TO 75 PEOPLE
DETAILS AT OUR DECEMBER 5TH AIRBORNE DINNER

The price will include drinks, all you can eat entrees, salad bar, desserts, beverage, taxes and tip.

Even with a lower price, with your help our chapter can actually enhance our treasury based on dinner attendance.

(Hint: Country Buffet) (!)

SEE YOU DEC 5TH!

CANDIDATES FOR 2016 ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER OFFICES

Chairman	Wade Dennis
Vice Chairman	Alan Jenkins
Secretary	Dawn Lisbon
Treasurer	Jose Aguayo

Trustee

Bob Barnet	Art Gallegos
Al Hoorn	Mike Marsh
Thomas Lopez	Jack Phillips



VETERAN MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership applications can be completed and processed on-line via PAYPAL (for a fee) at the Association website: www.82ndairborneassociation.org. Click on the membership link.



For applications completed on-line, the turnaround time is approximately 2-3 weeks.

FORMAL NAME (No Nicknames) _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

STREET _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ 9 DIGIT ZIP _____

ARMY SERIAL NUMBER _____ (or) SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (MIN LAST 4) _____

MARITAL STATUS _____ SPOUSE'S NAME _____ NUMBER OF CHILDREN _____

_____ ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR _____ YEAR _____ \$25.00 OR _____ \$26.00 (= \$1.00 DONATION TO _____ ED OR _____ WW FUND)

_____ REINSTATE _____ NEW MEMBER _____ TRANSFER _____ NEW CARD(\$1) _____ INFORMATION UPDATE (NO FEE)

LIFE ALL AMERICAN MEMBERSHIP (\$250.00 FOR 49 YEARS AND UNDER OR \$175.00 FOR 50 YEARS +) \$ _____

CURRENT VETERAN / MILITARY STATUS (Check status below and complete the rank and date entries)

ACTIVE DUTY / RESERVE OR NATIONAL GUARD Rank _____ Date of Rank: _____

RETIRED MILITARY / MILITARY VETERAN Rank _____ Date of Rank: _____

List AIRBORNE Unit(s) – Most recent. Include from Month/Year to Month /Year.

UNIT #1 _____ From MO/YR _____ To MO/YR _____

Combat Tour Location: _____ From MO/YR _____ To MO/YR _____

UNIT #2 _____ From MO/YR _____ To MO/YR _____

Combat Tour Location: _____ From MO/YR _____ To MO/YR _____

NEW MEMBERS MUST INCLUDE PROOF OF AIRBORNE QUALIFICATIONS OR SERVICE WITH THE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

OCCUPATION _____ HOME #: (_____) _____ CELL #: (_____) _____

EMAIL _____ CHAPTER PREFERENCE _____ **ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER** _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Effective immediately, view the Paraglide on-line via the Association website: www.82ndairborneassociation.org

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PARATROOPER

82nd Airborne Division Assn. Inc. Rocky Mountain Chapter

2122 W. 28th Avenue
Denver, CO 80211

**General Officers
of the Rocky Mountain Chapter**



LTG Harold Moore, U.S.A. (Ret.)



BG Sal Villano, U.S.A.F. (Ret.)

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505TH PIR PANTHERS

invasion. For their actions in the invasion, the 505th was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation, the unit equivalent of the Medal of Honor awarded to individual soldiers. In the words of author Clay Blair, the paratroopers emerged from the Normandy campaign

with the reputation of being a pack of jackals; the toughest, most resourceful and blood-thirsty soldiers in Europe.



505ers (left to right) William Eppler, William Embury, and Irvin Seelye.

Operation Market Garden

On September 9, 1944, British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery proposed Operation Market Garden, a plan to secure a bridgehead across the Rhine River in Holland.

The operation called for a combined armor and airborne assault to seize and hold bridges and roads deep behind German lines. The airborne phase of the operation consisted of capturing five bridges ahead of the armored force. So, on September 17, 1944, the 505th made its fourth combat jump at Groesbeck as part of the largest airborne assault in history. During the ensuing, fierce combat, two lightly armed platoons of about 80 men, were surrounded by an entire German infantry battalion supported by tanks. The paratroopers fought back three savage enemy assaults and held their ground until relieved. For this action, the 505th received a second Presidential Unit Citation. This success, however, was short-lived because British paratroopers failed to capture the last bridge at Arnhem. The gateway to Germany would not open in September 1944 and the 82nd was ordered back to France.

Battle of the Bulge – The Ardennes Offensive

On December 16, 1944, German forces launched a massive offensive through the Ardennes Forest, catching the complacent Allies completely by surprise. Two days later, the 82nd joined the fighting and quickly blunted German General Von Runstedt's northern penetration of the American lines

above Bastogne. Meanwhile, on the morning of December 19, the 101st Airborne Division's 501st PIR was digging in at Bastogne. German units cut a road between the two American airborne units and the Battle of the Bulge flowed around them. Despite a lack of cold weather equipment, once again airborne spirit, courage and hard-nosed determination won the day as the 505th withstood bleak winter weather and stopped the fanatic German attacks at Ste. Vith and the Salm River.

For its valor in seven major campaigns of the European Theatre of Operations, the 505th was awarded two American Distinguished Unit Citations, the French Forragere, Netherlands Military Order of William, and the Belgium Forragere.

Occupation

World War II in Europe officially ended on May 8, 1945. The 82nd Airborne Division was called upon to serve as the occupation force in the American Sector of Berlin. Here the 82nd Airborne Division earned the appellation America's Guard of Honor as a fitting end to hostilities in which the All-Americans chased the German army some 14,000 miles across Europe. 