



## COMMEMORATION OF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN



“Those Devils in Baggy Pants” the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, soldiers who gave their life and fought for the freedom of the Netherlands during WWII, are honored and remembered every year in the Commemoration of Operation Market Garden. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division (ABN DIV) has had the opportunity to participate during the events and ceremonies. Different communities come together once a year for the same cause, and they do so out of their own heart and passion for our soldiers.

Some of these communities are in Grave, where they commemorate the John Thompson Bridge Memorial and the Liberation of the city by our 504<sup>th</sup> PIR soldiers. Another community is in Groesbeek, where you can appreciate the Liberation Museum. This Museum is dedicated to the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV and all the history of Operation Market Garden. Another ceremony also in Groesbeek, is the Annual Monument Tour.

Every year the Annual Monument Tour involves three ceremonies where they commemorate and visit the General James Gavin Plaque, the Groesbeek Memorial and the new road sign “Arie Bestebreurtjepad”. These ceremonies are organized by the “Groesbeek Airborne Friends.”

The Paratroopers of the 1BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV had a platoon element representation with the Division Colors during a special ceremony in Kranenburg last year. After 72 years, they found information of two crew members from one of the C-47 transport planes that flew during Operation Market Garden on the 17 of September 1944. The C-47 crash-landed a few miles into Germany. Two of the crew members were taken prisoner and transported to the neighboring village of Kranenburg. Both



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men were executed in the center of the town by a SA-man (Nazi party member). This incident shocked the eyewitnesses and left a scar in the hearts of the population of Kranenburg. After the information was found, they decided to organize a commemoration ceremony and a plaque with their names. They commemorated these two soldiers and named the plaque and the ceremony "Hate kills, Love conciliates". Family of the crew members that were remembered and commemorated attended the ceremony as well.

The paratroopers and Color Guard of the 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV, also had the opportunity to have representation at the Liberation Service dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient John Towle. The Liberation Service takes place every year at a church in the city of Oosterhout. The church showcases drawings of John Towle made by the community elementary school children. The service is very special with participation of the Church Chorus and small band.

The 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV also participated at the Commemoration of Market Garden over at Ginkle DZ the 17<sup>th</sup> of September. The ceremony, organized by the Dutch and 11 Air Mobile Brigade, commemorates the day were the soldiers jumped into different cities and DZs during Operation Market Garden. During the ceremony, some of the paratroopers have the opportunity to jump out of an aircraft using Dutch parachutes and joined by a multinational contingency of paratroopers with different parachutes and different aircrafts.

One special city is the City of Nijmegen. Nijmegen is known for the work of art in the bridge, "The Crossing", called the Lights Crossing. The Crossing Lights project is a discreet daily tribute to the soldiers and liberators of the Netherlands who lost their lives during the crossing of the Waal River during Operation Market Garden. Nijmegen is also known for their school ceremony and commemoration, also named "The Crossing Middle School". The children have a full program in the morning where they sing, act, play music and write poems to those soldiers who gave their life to liberate them. The school program is followed by a Commemoration at the Bridge Monument, and there is a stone with the 48 names of those who lost their life that day crossing the river. They even named the street of the bridge "General James Gavin" and the underpass that leads to the Monument over in the dike, "The 82<sup>nd</sup> Division Viaduct".

There was participation of the Sunset March. The Sunset March that was walked on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, and was dedicated to the communities and to all of those who work so hard every year to show that "They Never Forget" and are forever grateful for what the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV, accomplished during Operation Market Garden. There were paratroopers, families, veterans and community members walking that evening. The United States Flag was in the front of the formation being hold up high by two of our Honorary Members of the 504<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Johan Van Asten and Anja Adriaans. A 504<sup>th</sup> PIR Paratrooper and Frank Van Lunteren led the formation that evening. After the Sunset March, the paratroopers were presented two street signs, just like the ones that are in the dike and the bridge.



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Because of their amazing contributions, the 1BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV inducted the following as Honorary Members of the Regiment:



Frank Van Lunteren is a historian of the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, teaches history and economics to junior and senior students. Paratroopers had the opportunity to visit two groups of students who learned the basics of how to perform actions on the aircraft, and what happens in the ground after jumping. They also learned what takes to be a professional, dedicated, committed and highly motivated paratrooper.

Frank became passionate about the WWII History of the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment in 2001, after contacting Fred Baldino of A/504. Fred wanted more information on master scout Ted Bachenheimer and Frank helped him in his search. Even now, he's still amazed by the actions of the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR in WWII and the fact that 644 of them died in the fight to liberate Europe. Contact with veterans and family members encourage him to continue researching the greatest airborne unit of all times.



Anja Adriaans is the Founder of the "Friends of Albany and Nijmegen Project" (FAN). She works with the sister city, Albany, in gratitude for the restoration of Nijmegen after the war during WWII.

Albany adopted Nijmegen as a sister city after the war and collected 300 tons of food, vitamins, pots and pans, medical supplies, clothing, shoes, toys, window glass, building materials and other goods worth nearly \$1 million. The humanitarian aid was loaded onto the cargo ship Westerdam at the Port of Albany and shipped to Nijmegen on July 4, 1947.

Anja became interested in the sister city connection as she researched efforts of the U.S 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for a history book "The Crossing." "The 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV is revered in Nijmegen and we honor the sacrifices of the fallen soldiers and our liberators."



Johan Van Asten committed himself to honor the legacy of the 82ND Airborne Division in Nijmegen in general but, especially the legacy of the 504 Parachute Infantry Regiment and 307th Engineer Battalion in one of the most heroic and daring military operations of WWII, the River Waal Crossing. He upgraded the memorial located at the "The Crossing" bridge and took care of the fact that the new bridge directly next to the memorial was named in reference to the military operation:



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“De Oversteek” or “The Crossing Bridge.” By linking the memorial directly with the Bridge with the name The Crossing he created the largest war memorial in the Netherlands.

Special community members that plan, coordinate and organize all of the Operation Market Garden events every year are: Frank Van Lunteren, Johan Van Asten, Anja Adriaans and “Friends of Albany and Nijmegen Foundation”, Tim Ruijling and “Team Sunset March”, Evert Vos, Marco Cillessen and “The Groesbeek Airborne Friends Foundation”, Ben Overhand, John Blom, Jan Bos, Rosalie Thomassen, Ada Wevers, Dorine Steenberger, and many others who have given so much, work so hard and their dedication, selfless service and commitment shows every time the 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV is present in any of the events, communities and commemorations. Thank you for your hard work to preserve the history and pass it along generations through generations. The paratroopers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division are forever grateful.

1LT Flores Alvarez, Wilmarie

2<sup>nd</sup> BN, 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV





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Children from “The Crossing Middle School” presenting a small play and poems of “The Crossing” in memory of the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV paratroopers who lost their lives crossing the Waal River during Operation Market Garden.





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1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV paratroopers at the John Thompson Bridge Memorial in Grave the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2016.



Picture taken during the CSG High School visit. Frank Van Lunteren with his students and his three publications of the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR history. "Battle of the Bridges", "Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper" and "Spearhead of the Fifth Army".





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Sunset March on the 18th of September 2016. Dedicated to the Community and all of those who have contributed to the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> BCT, 504<sup>th</sup> PIR and 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV.