



82nd AIRBORNE DIVISION ASSN. INC.
ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

PARATROOPER

see our new web address at
www.82ndairborne-assoc.com



Chartered by the
United States Congress

The
"All Airborne" Fraternity



November 2019

Chris Mirowski, Editor

RMC Legend Passes



Tony Lopez, 503rd PIR, World War II

The card handed out at the service said in all caps, "IN LOVING MEMORY." And, that's exactly what happened on Monday, September 16, 2019. Preceded by his wife Maria Louise,

Airborne (Tony Lopez Memorial) Dinner
November 2nd
See page 7 for information

See "**Tony Lopez**"
on page 3



From the Chairman



It is been a long 5 months since the last newsletter; and we begin with a very large volume of information to pass on to the membership. We need about 25 pages to cover it all. Here we go with only a few pages. **Make sure you attend the dinner November 2nd**, We will have a lot of pictures, and totally cover these events. **Most important, and first- I received a text from Tom Lopez at 3:55 AM on the 5th of September- “He ain’t gonna jump no more. He left peacefully. The last of F Co 503 PRCT”, Tony Lopez had passed...** A tremendous friend and faithful participant in our Rocky Mountain Chapter for decades. Tony was our only ever “Master Parade Coordinator”. He possessed the ability to know what a parade

needed. Tony’s extended family helped prepare, and attended our major parade venues including: Denver, Commerce City, and Ft. Collins. He and his “Lopez Wing” of the RMC not only worked on, prepared for, and attended parades; but were also active supporting the troops (...including the Iraqi children toy drive- 2004); and were active in other public service campaigns. The RMC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE voted to make **November 2nd -THE TONY LOPEZ MEMORIAL DINNER**. Nine of us attended the Mass at 11:30AM the 16th, and Eight were at Ft. Logan w/503 guidon, where Tony was laid to rest with Mary Louise at 2:00PM.

We had an outstanding picnic in Paramount Park, Wheatridge... lots of attendees, and great food. I also attended the Washington DC Convention, 75th Anniversary of D-Day and Holland. Five days of amazing events, and good times. We had three separate trips, which included being bused to: 1) the WWII Monument and a ceremony to include the presentation of Wreathes by WWII members, and 82 Abn. Div. Commander; 2) to Stafford Regional Airport for an 82nd Airborne Training Jump via six C130 Aircraft from Ft. Bragg; and 3) to the monuments, where we were on our own to visit the Vietnam Wall, Lincoln Memorial; Korean War Memorial; and any other of the many attractions including the Air and Space Museum. The Vietnam Wall was an important visit and personal visit. All were impressive. The two dinners were well planned and I met a number of new and some old friends and fellow troopers. Among those I met were members of the DC Chapter and from next years Houston Chapter-host of our next Convention. Among those in the DC Chapter was Robert (Andy) Anderson, who gave me a large number of Airborne Items for the benefit of our members. **Each current member will receive one of these free gifts (a \$20. Value) on entry to the November 2nd Dinner.** To cap it all off, I met the subject Trooper of “AIRBORNE BEER” fame-WWII 101st Airborne Trooper, Vinnie Speranza, pictured with Tony Alger and me in this Issue. His story will be told, at the dinner. Mike Marsh, who actually visited the Belgian Store, will tell us all about Vinnie at the Dinner. Oh... goodies for auction, including the Belgian Store donations. Drawings of course, to make it a jam-packed dinner experience... See more inside

The Veteran Day Parade at Loveland will be our only one this year. Just 9 days after the dinner, we’ll be in Loveland... STRAC and ready for another presentation of the ROCKY MOUNTAIN “ALL AIRBORNE” CHAPTER on parade... See more in this issue.

PLAESE DON’T FORGET **ANNUAL DUES \$35. NOW DUE**... we need to stay current. New member applications are available online @ www.82ndairborneassociation.org , and go to Forms. All officers in the chapter are volunteers... please help us keep this easy. Chasing dues by mail is an expensive waste of time and money. Please send your dues to Alan Jenkins, Treasurer. The address, Phone, and email for all of us is inside this issue. Bob Barnett, Chairman 970-482-7364

Bob Barnett,
Chairman, RMC

“Tony Lopez”
Continued from page 1

Tony Duane Lopez joined her on September 5th. Born on November 9, 1924, he was a World War II veteran of the Pacific Theatre and proud of his service, particularly in Corregidor, Philippines. But his greatest contribution was as a father and as a husband. Those words seem cliché, but you couldn't possibly come to that conclusion if you knew Tony and his family. RMC events were family events to the Lopezes, so much so that we would use the terms “Lopez continent” and “Lopez Wing.” Those terms lovingly described the situation perfectly- a family that loved their patriarch and would do just about anything to show their support. Tony left a legacy. It was seen in the crowd that gathered at Anthony Padua Catholic Church and those that observed his service to his country at Fort Logan Cemetery later in the day. Tony touched many lives and we are proud that we could call him friend and fellow paratrooper.

A couple of years ago, Tony sent me a 20-page document; and addressed me as Chapter Historian. He said, as his good friend, he wanted me to be its Caretaker. I was overwhelmed with humility and honored that he would trust me with this, his personal "503 History". The fact is, for Decades I have been amazed by his steadfast support and cooperative attitude in everything he ever did. I have nothing but praise and thanks for my friend, Tony, and will honor his request. I've asked Chris to include one page from this document in the newsletter. This page could only have been written about heroes, by a hero...

- **Bob Barnet**

HEROES

I guess as long as there are wars, there are those that will be labeled as heroes and I suppose that is as it should be, but if it comes during combat against an enemy. Nowadays you hear the word “hero” for an athlete who hits a homerun, scores a goal, sinks a basket, etc. There are people making millions of dollars to play a game. Where does the “hero” come in?

During WWII, the GI training for combat was paid \$21.00 a month to risk his life as an infantry soldier! \$50.00 more if you trained to jump out of an airplane into enemy territory.

When in a combat situation, you are all fighting for your life. In my opinion, these could all be called “heroes” not just on being singled out. I have been called a hero many times. But I tell them I am not a hero. I went through WWII and had my wounds, but I came home. I married, raised a family, and lived a full life.

My heroes are my friends and brothers who at the age of 18, 19, and 20 years old never had that opportunity. Their lives were taken from them before they were grown up. They were, I guess we all were.. just kids. Those that never came home, never saw their families or friends, those in my opinion are the true heroes.

Tony D. Lopez

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Tony Lopez: BREAKING THE ROCK

Written by and permission given to reprint by RMC (Past) Chairman Jose Aguayo

Friday, February 24, 1943 was graduation day at Denver's Manuel High School. Among those waiting to receive a diploma was a wiry Hispanic kid named Tony Lopez. Lopez had turned eighteen. A transplanted New Mexican, Tony was born in 1924 in Rodey, a scattering of adobe huts just south of Hatch in green chili country. His father died shortly after Tony was born and his mother took him and four older brothers north to work in the Colorado sugar beet fields. The family settled first in Greeley and then moved to Denver's Curtis Park neighborhood. As he waited for his diploma, Lopez thought about the war consuming Europe and now the islands of the Pacific Ocean as well. The United States was hurriedly mobilizing its military capabilities in order to fight the war on two fronts.

In Denver, Tony Lopez thought he better do something about this war. He went to Fort Logan and enlisted in the Army. Two weeks later he was on a bus bound for Camp Roberts, California. "It was right in the middle of the Mojave Desert and it was hot!" recalls Lopez.

Lopez was in great physical shape and basic training was easy for him. His leadership qualities and marksmanship were quickly recognized. These skills and qualities would serve him well later on. On the rifle range he shot 195 out of a possible 200. The range commander came over and said, "How'd you learn to shoot like that soldier?"

Lopez replied, "I don't know- shooting rabbits I guess."

After basic training, Drill Sergeant Tragget said, "Hey Lopez, why don't you go to parachute training school?"

That sounded like a good challenge, so Lopez and three other guys said, "Yeah, let's go."

After jump school, Lopez was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment training near Port Moresby, New Guinea for the first airborne assault of the War. On September 5, 1943, eighty-two C-47 transports dropped 1,700 paratroopers of the 503rd in the Markham Valley near the northwest corner of New Guinea. Their mission was to capture the airfield at Nadzab to allow landing of Australian forces for the capture of Japanese strongholds at Lea and Salamaua. Tony Lopez missed this first historic jump because he was in the hospital recovering from an appendectomy.

The successful campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands set in motion the two-pronged offensive across the Southern Pacific to recapture the Philippines and take the war to the Japanese mainland. Admiral Nimitz's army and marine forces would leapfrog from island to island in the Central Pacific while General MacArthur led forces, including the 503rd, along the northern coast of New Guinea toward the Philippines.

Again, the 503rd jumped, this time to capture Kimiri airstrip on the island of Noemfoor in Dutch New Guinea. The plan called for planes to fly in single file over the narrow airstrip, but because of miscommunication, they came in two abreast and at a dangerously low altitude. Parachutes barely had time to open before troopers landed on the hard coral airstrip and on construction of other equipment lining the runway.

First and Second Battalion casualties were so high that the Third Battalion came in by sea. The 503rd was on Noemfoor only two weeks before receiving orders to load on LSTs bound for the Philippines. After a four-day journey, the 503rd PRCT met little

"They were shooting at us all the way down," says Lopez. I looked up and there were holes in my canopy. I landed in the trees with my feet about six feet off the ground. I couldn't get harness unbuckled. I heard someone

resistance as they landed on Leyte. “We didn’t see much action here,” says Lopez. But now, MacArthur was anxious to fulfill his promise of returning to the Philippines. He planned to attack the main island of Luzon from the sea, but he had other plans for the 503rd. From their base camp on Mindoro, the 503rd would jump onto Corregidor – the highly fortified “rock” guarding the entrance to Manila Bay.

The American commanders devised a plan to drop the 503rd onto Topside, the highest point of the island. What had been a golf course and the parade ground of the former American fortress were the only places paratroopers could land. Even then, they had to jump in short sticks of six to eight troopers to avoid missing the drop zones and landing in the ocean. The Third Battalion led the way, starting to drop at 0800hrs. Their initial mission was to secure the drop zones for the Second Battalion scheduled to jump at 1240hrs.

Tony Lopez was in the second wave standing behind the photographer that had never jumped before. “When the green light came on, I pushed him out the door,” says Lopez. “They were shooting at us all of the way down. I looked up and there were holes in my canopy. I landed in the trees with my feet about six feet off the ground. I couldn’t get my harness unbuckled. I heard someone approaching and thought, I’m a goner! I pulled my .45 and waited. I saw the helmet was one of ours. It was the photographer. His eyes got real big when he saw my pistol I told him to get me down. I never saw him again.”

The combat on Corregidor was a deadly game of flushing the Japanese out of labyrinthine networks of caves during the day and beating back frenzied banzai attacks at night. On the second day of the assault, Lopez and his comrades saw a wounded American soldier stumble out of the brush below them. LT Flash and PFC Kambakumis tried to reach him, but both were hit by enemy fire. Lopez and others dragged them to safety.

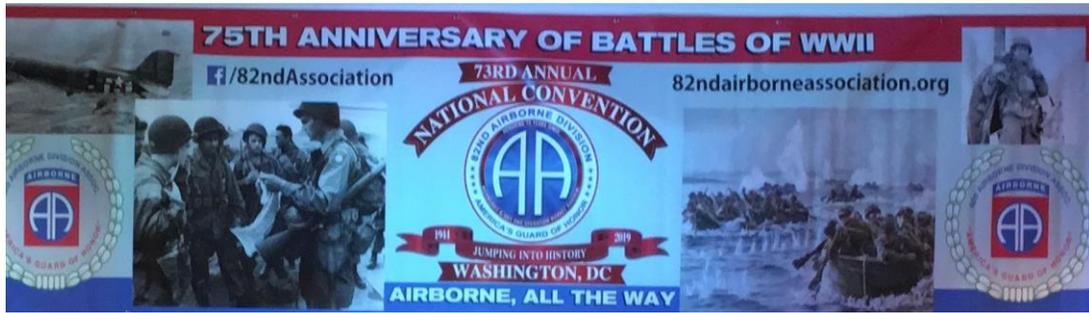
Then Lopez and PFC O’Connell ran to the ruins of the hospital and pulled the wire springs of a bed. Armed with only his .45, the two ran to the wounded soldier, threw him on their makeshift litter and ran back across the clearing. Just before reaching a concrete wall, Lopez heard “sheew, sheew, sheew” and felt a stinging sensation in his back. A bullet struck O’Connell in the leg. Lopez called for others to help carry the stretcher to the aid station. For this action, Lopez was awarded a bronze star medal with a V for valor.

Lopez allowed only rudimentary treatment of his wound and continued search and destroy patrols until noon by this time he could hardly walk. His leg below the wound was red and swollen. Medics sent him to the temporary hospital where he continued to shoot counterattackers from his hospital bed.

Five days later, when a hospital ship was able to dock at the tail of the island, Lopez joined a trail of walking wounded trekking to the ship. After recovering from his wound, Lopez rejoined the 503rd in their six-month campaign to clear remaining Japanese forces from Negros Island. To Lopez, this was the worst of all their campaigns. It was a seemingly endless string of patrols trying to root out the desperate Japanese holed up in the mountainous interior of the island. Lopez was still on Negros when the war in the Pacific ended on August 14, 1945.

Lopez had enough points to rotate back to the United States. In San Francisco, he realized his options outside of the military were few, so he reenlisted. While on a two-week leave in Denver, he married his childhood sweetheart Mary Louise Jimenez. Then he reported to duty with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC. He marched with the 82nd in the Philadelphia Victory Parade. Lopez served for eighteen months in Alaska before his discharge from active duty on May 22, 1950.

Washington DC Convention



Banner in the Main Hall of The Sheridan Pentagon



Paul Riley and Andy Anderson-DC Chapter: Andy Anderson is the man responsible for the items our members will enjoy at the November dinner. The value of the gifts he has made to our RMC is substantial! Be at the dinner, and enjoy special gifts and a great drawing.



I'm joined here with Tony Alger, VP of the Midwest FL. Chapter and Vinnie Speranza, 101st Airborne at Battle of the Bulge-responsible for "Airborne Beer"-the story will be told at the dinner; and the significant donations of the Belgian Store will be on the Auction block! This is made possible by Mike Marsh and a result of his travels to Belgium.



Our wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown. WWII members, our Division Commander, and Assn. President participated.



The **ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER** presents:

The Tony Lopez Memorial Dinner

November 2, 2019

3:00 – 5:00pm

**American Legion Post 161
6230 W. 60TH Av. Arvada
(between Wadsworth and Sheridan)**

Originally October 26th, now: *****November 2, 2019*****

- PRICE - \$15.00 per person
- MEAL - Chicken Cordon Bleu, with mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, salad, rolls, coffee, and desert
- All current members will receive a gift (\$20 value) from the DC Convention at entry
- A special premium “AIRBORNE BEER” Auction will be held. Mike Marsh will introduce “AIRBORNE BEER”
- Premium items including coins from the DC Convention will be on the table for our drawings

PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO RSVP FOR THIS ONE- ACCURATE HEAD COUNT IS CRITICAL-PLEASE BE EARLY WITH YOUR RSVP- DO IT NOW... CALL BOB BARNET at 970-482-7364

Directions

1. From I-25, merge onto I-76 heading west toward Grand Junction
2. Take exit #1B towards Sheridan Blvd/CO-95
3. Turn right on Sheridan Blvd.
4. Turn left on W. 60th Ave.
5. Continue to 6230 West 60th Ave

2019 Veterans Day Parade Info

On Monday, November 11, 2019, the Rocky Mountain Chapter will march in the Loveland, Colorado Veterans Day Parade. We will stage at East 3rd St. and Railroad Ave. Please arrive at 0830 hrs to assist with assembling the float.

Parade uniforms beret, navy blue blazer, light blue shirt, official airborne or maroon tie, gray slacks, and black shoes or jump boots.

Members with specific assignments (e.g. carrying banner or standing in the door will wear period uniforms.

American Legion Post 15, 305 N. Cleveland Ave., invites us to join them for breakfast starting at 0600 hrs and continuing until departure staging area.

Please contact Bob Barnet at 970-482-7364 or abn64@gmail.com if you are going to attend.



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The “**All Airborne**” Fraternity

