



## **Honorary Regimental Sergeant Major Transition of the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment**

Once a Devil, always a Devil! That is what you hear around Ardennes every morning, or during the 504<sup>th</sup> Association Convention. Those that have left the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR and the veterans that were part of this storied Regiment cherish every moment. Former Brigade Command Sergeant Major, CSM Alexander Barnett, was just a Private when he served with the Blue Devils under former Blue Devils CSM (R) Vincent Myers and former 504<sup>th</sup> Regimental Sergeant Major Ron Rath.

CSM (R) Ron Rath became the Command Sergeant Major of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in February 1985. He deployed with them to Multinational Force and Observers (Sinai), Golden Pheasant, Just Cause, and Desert Storm. In November 1991, he became the Regimental Sergeant Major for the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment. Sergeant Major Rath's career spans over 30 years. After CSM (R) Ron Rath decided to retire, he couldn't bear staying away from the Regiment so he selflessly served as the Honorary Regimental Sergeant Major for over 17 years.

The Blue Devils and White Devils leadership lived the motto; Once a Devil, always a Devil! Former CSM (R) Vincent Myers, who was the Command Sergeant Major of 3-504<sup>th</sup> PIR, followed CSM (R) Ron Rath steps. CSM (R) Vincent Myers replaced CSM (R) Ron Rath as the 504<sup>th</sup> PIR Command Sergeant Major in 1994.

Just recently, 26 February 2017, CSM (R) Vincent Myers replaced CSM (R) Ron Rath as the Honorary Regimental Sergeant Major. In this article, CSM (R) Vincent Myers shared his experiences with the Blue Devils and the 504<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

What Year were you in the Blue Devils? I was part of the Blue Devils, 3-504<sup>th</sup> PIR from December 1991 to November 1994.

What was your position? I was the 3-504<sup>th</sup> PIR Command Sergeant Major.

What are some of your personal experiences?

There were numerous training events and jumps, but the major event was the Pope Airfield Crash that killed and severely burned some of our Paratroopers. I remembered those who came back to the unit that were disfigured, with burns on their face and hands. They were embraced by their fellow Paratroopers and did not want to leave when they came up on orders, because they felt accepted within the Battalion.





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I remember when we jumped into France for the 50th Anniversary and follow on to the Netherlands for Operation Market Garden where we did numerous color guard ceremonies. We had the opportunity to meet the great Dutch people, some of them were Father Thuring, Ellen Nas, and Jan Bos. The jump was in Nijmegen and I was the first jumper in the right door and I landed short of the leading edge of the drop zone by a farmers house, There was an old woman standing by a barn , she looked at me like she add seen a ghost! I waived at her and she waived back.

During our visit to the Netherlands, we received the chalice for Julian Cook (Commander 3-504<sup>th</sup> PIR, Waal River Crossing WWII) from the Catholic Church and presented it to his wife and Daughter, who in turn presented it to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Museum, where it is to this day.

Were you deployed with Blue Devils at some point? Where and what was your mission?

I was in the Blue Devils when we had to prepare, pack and load for the jump into Haiti. We were less than a couple of hours from green light when the operation was called off.

How does it feel to be the Honorary Regimental Sergeant Major of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for all these years?

I am very humbled and honored by it, but mostly I am grateful to still be connected to the Regiment. There have been 3 Honorary Sergeants Major of the Regiment, Frank Varillia (3<sup>rd</sup> BN), Ron Rath (2<sup>nd</sup> BN), and myself, 3<sup>rd</sup> BN.

CSM Barnett was a young private in the Blue Devils, I remember him well, I told him what I was told as a Private- be in the proper place, time, and uniform, learn your job as an Infantrymen, and embrace the warrior spirit. I told him all this as I stopped him as he walked across the grass in front of BN HQ!



CSM Alexander Barnett



CSM (R) Ron Rath



Honorary RSM Vincent Myers

1LT FloresAlvarez, Wilmarie

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

