



## 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association

102<sup>nd</sup> CAV (Mecz) 38<sup>th</sup> CAV (Mecz) 117<sup>th</sup> CAV (Mecz) 50<sup>th</sup> CAV RCN BN 50<sup>th</sup> RCN 5<sup>th</sup> RCN 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV 1/102<sup>nd</sup> CAVALRY  
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**From the President – COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty** November is a time to remember the service and sacrifices of all our veterans. Our 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association meeting will share the night with the members of the Northern New Jersey Chapter of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). In keeping with this theme, we will salute all our members.

When you look at the membership of both organizations, you will see individuals who have served in all our nation's conflicts, from the Greatest Generation who liberated Europe from Nazi tyranny and island hopped across the Pacific to defeat the Japanese Empire in *WWII*, veterans of the Forgotten War, *Korea*, *Vietnam Vets* whose service is only now being recognized, *Cold War Veterans* who stood guard in Europe and hot spots throughout the world, *Desert Storm Veterans* who returned freedom to Kuwait and our newest veterans from *Operation Enduring Freedom*, *Operation Iraqi Freedom* and the *Global War On Terror*. In particular, we will recognize a Junior NCO from each of the Troops of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry with a membership in the Association of the United States Army given in memory of Corporal Steven Koch, a member of the Northern NJ AUSA who died from injuries sustained during combat operations in Afghanistan.

Of special note is the return appearance of Harry Yeide, author of the book "**Steeds of Steel**", A history of American Mechanized Cavalry in World War II. Many of you remember that Harry Yeide spoke at the 2008 Biennial Reunion of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association. At that time, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry was deployed in Iraq. They are now home and we have invited Harry back so that those who missed his presentation can now hear it. Sixty-Five years ago in November of 1944, hard fighting was the order of the day. The snow rain and mud of winter had come early to Europe, the Cavalrymen of 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Group (102<sup>nd</sup> & 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry), stood eyeball-to-eyeball with the enemy across the Siegfried Line, while the troopers of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had just liberated the Town of Baccarat were slugging it out with the Germans in the Vosges Mountains. Come listen to Harry Yeide and share our history, it is the story of New Jersey's Cavalrymen the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Group who played a key role in the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

A special thanks to all our members who have contributed to help defray the cost of the publication of "*The SPUR*". Please continue to show your support in your sponsorship of our 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association newsletter "*The SPUR*". Many of you have made and continue to make donations as SPUR BOOSTERS (pp. 10 & 11) to help pay the cost of publication and its mailing. Thanks to all of you for your generosity in support of our Association's initiatives in support of our membership and the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry.

Please remember in your thoughts and prayers the soldiers of the 1-150<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, currently deployed in *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

Help us celebrate *Veteran's Day*! I hope to see many of you on Friday, November 6, 2009 at 7:30 PM at our next meeting of our 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association in the Heritage Room of the Westfield Armory. Bring a fellow veteran with you and help us welcome home our newest veterans, the Troopers of 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment.

Show' em the Way!

*Dennis*



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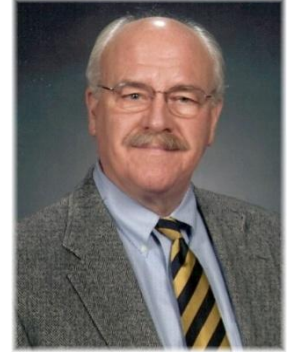
**LTC Dean Spenzos Leaves Command** Effective 1 November 2009, LTC Dean Spenzos will relinquish command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment to LTC Edward Chrystal. We would like to thank LTC Spenzos for his service to all the Cavalrymen of the New Jersey Army National Guard during his tenure of command.

His ability to lead, plan, execute and provide guidance to the complexities involved in the reorganization of the 5-117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Armor into the current 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry and their subsequent mobilization for service in *Operation Iraqi Freedom* identified him as a leader of exceptional merit and helped insure the success of his command.

We wish him well in his new assignment as the Deputy Commander of the 254<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Sea Girt, New Jersey. Through *Fidelity and Fortitude*, he *Showed 'em the Way!*

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**From the Editor Phil Notestine** It is a scramble to get together another edition of The SPUR, just two months after the last one. After this Winter issue, it is a long haul 'til the Spring 2010 issue. Following up on Fall 2009 and Montrevel, I called all of the men who might have some Montrevel or related tales to tell, including Clayton Skoda, who was a B Troop man, captured at Montrevel. Ed Leonard and Clayton were POWs and kept each other well, as best they could. Ed told me about Clayton, and I soon called him at his assisted living quarters in Nebraska. He and Ed have kept in touch over these many decades. Skoda was not eager to speak of the POW experience. So, I did not press him. After the war, he returned to Nebraska and became a successful rancher. A fine man, to be sure.



Another was Frank A. Woods. I found him in the 117<sup>th</sup> CAV roster of May 1945 at Ruetz, Austria. I was checking the current Association membership list and this 65-year-old roster, and saw his name in both. So I called. Yes indeed, Troop A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Sergeant Frank A. Woods, now 85 and living in Bloomfield, NY took my call. See his story later.

More on Montrevel follows. We also continue the story of the "*Lucky Little 38<sup>th</sup>*".

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**Regular meeting of the Association held at Westfield, 11 September 2009** The meeting was called to order by the President COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty, who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was held, in remembrance of those now passed, and especially for COL Elliot Coley, who died recently. A friend of LTC (Ret.) Mike Hrycak, COL Coley attended our last meeting to honor Mike in his retirement. Dougherty recognized CPT Joe McNamara, recently returned from Iraq. Dougherty spoke of WWII 117<sup>th</sup> CAV veteran Arnold Lasner, who will receive the French *Legion of Honor, Cavalier*, at the Consulate of France in NYC on 30 September 2009. Bill Merring has assembled and organized old papers of unit historical data into binders for the Heritage Room. FRG leader Nancy LaCorte spoke of making improvements to parts of the Armory, like the old NCO Club. She told of a town parade on 14 November to be followed by a "Fun Day" at the Armory, with a carnival, rides, food, beer & wine. Dougherty outlined the next meeting, combined with the AUSA on 6 November, with guest speaker Harry Yeide, author. In attendance: Robert Apgar, Mike Handley, Bill Merring, Dave Ellis, Dennis Dougherty, Frank Mnich, Jim Pressman, Jaime Ayala, James Anglim, Mike Hrycak, Dave Mormak, Karen Alifano (FRG), Nancy LaCorte, John Crescenzi, Kyle Jones, Ron Nier, Bill Sedlak, Walt Lawrence, Ken Mahan, Joe McNamara, Arnold Lasner, Bill Gruss and Don Tracy.

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**Class of '41 Luncheon and meeting, 9 October 2009 at Gibbs Hall, Fort Monmouth NJ** The meeting was opened with The Pledge of Allegiance, led by SGM (Ret.) Ken Mahan. Following a fine buffet luncheon, where everyone cleaned their plates, Arnold Lasner told of his very moving experience at the French Consulate, NYC and the *Legion of Honor* ceremonial event (see next article). He is preparing a guide for submitting a complete set of documents for consideration by the French Government. Ken Mahan spoke of the change of command to 1/102<sup>nd</sup> CAV to take place 1 November 2009. Phil Notestine outlined the planned combined meeting of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association and AUSA, North Jersey Chapter. The Association has the American Flag flown by the WWII 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) and will present *Old Glory* to representatives(s) of the newly activated 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, a Regular Army unit stationed at Fort Bragg, NC.

*Class of '41* member Jim Kane was a 1SG with the WWII 38<sup>th</sup> CAV, and was encouraged to BE THERE for this very special meeting on 6 November 2009, Westfield Armory. Jim said that he WOULD be there! We were joined by *Class of '41* member Vincent Rettino, who was with the 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV, an A Trooper during the Normandy invasion. Rettino was wounded and captured soon after, and spent the rest of the war as a POW. Ed Leonard and Rettino did not know that they were both POWs, at one time in the same Limberg Stalag. "Notes" were compared. Rettino joined the post war 50<sup>th</sup> CAV RCN at Westfield, and was Don Tracy's 1SG.

He later joined the NJ Air Guard, participated in the *Berlin Airlift*, and retired MSG with a total service time of 26 years.

**A schedule for future meeting was requested: 6 January 2010, 3 March, 5 May, 4 August and 6 October 2010.**



Present: *Class of '41*- Jim Kane, Ed Leonard, Frank Prettyman, Joe Pacoroba, Vincent Rettino and Frank Wiswall. Also WWII veteran Arnold Lasner, Grace Lilley (widow of Ed Lilly *Class of 41*), Don Tracy, Bob Apgar, Bill & Charlotte Merring, Ken Mahan and Phil Notestine. Sick Call: Bob Lutz and Irv Partelow.

Following the meeting, a detail was dispatched to visit with Bob Lutz. Assigned were Frank Prettyman (point man), Ed Leonard, Frank Wiswall and Phil Notestine. Bob took our report and we all enjoyed the visit.

← Top row: *Prettyman, Leonard, Wiswall, Pacoroba*. Bottom row: *Rettino, Lilley, Kane, Lasner*.

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**Arnold Lasner receives the Legion of Honor** It was another glorious day in France – in a beautiful reception at the French Consulate in New York on 30 September 2009 when sixteen WWII veterans were awarded the *Legion of Honor*. The room was filled with families, friends and French dignitaries, including our own LTC Patrick du Tertre, Army of France.

Philippe Lalliot, Consul General made the presentations, each preceded by a brief accounting of the honoree's actions in wartime France. Nineteen-year-old PFC Arnold Lasner was a replacement, joining B Troop near Grenoble on 7 September 1944, part of the replenishments of the Squadron following the losses at Montrevel. He was a scout and a jeep driver. Arnold has plenty of stories about the continuous enemy contact as the Squadron fought into the Vosges Mountains, reaching the Rhine and Strasbourg. It really got hot at the end of 1944. Close to midnight, 31 December 1944, he was operating a .30 LMG by himself; the Troop was thinly spread, part of a long defensive line near Bitche, France, in the Vosges Mountains. A sustained attack by four German Volksgrenadier Divisions proved overwhelming. The Troop had to pull back; Lasner provided cover fire until his ammunition was expended. He managed to escape and rejoin the Troop. The German attack was blunted and eventually finally reversed. For his tenacity and brave actions, Lasner received the *Bronze Star for Valor*.



Arnold's wife Estelle and eight members of his family, including his sons Andrew Lasner and Dr. Jay Lasner, who had served in the US Navy as a Lieutenant Commander and Flight Surgeon, looked on with pride as the medal of *Chevalier* was pinned on his lapel. Ken Mahan and Phil Notestine were there to witness as well. Coincidentally, another man honored was a veteran of the Texas 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. A lively Italian – American man from Brooklyn, NYC, he remembered the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Troopers, as they were often in support of each other, from Italy through Germany. Pictured to the left are Lasner, LTC Patrick du Tertre and the "T - Patcher" from Brooklyn.



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**Association member Frank A. Woods** Joined the US Army in 1942. After basic training at Fort Jackson, SC, he was assigned as a riding instructor. Later, Woods was assigned to the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (*Thunderbird*), an ARNG <http://www.45thdivision.org/history.htm> unit from the Southwestern States.

Corporal Woods served in a Division Artillery Battalion, landing at Anzio, Italy. Seeing plenty of action over some months, Woods was decorated with the *Bronze Star for Valor* and a *Purple Heart*. A forward observer, he was injured when his jeep flipped over on a mined road. After recovering, Woods was sent to a replacement depot near Naples, and recruited into A Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) by 1LT Nathan Fitz-Randolph.






Engaged in intense fighting through Rome and into the Italian northwestern coast, the Squadron had been pulled off-line to rest, refit and ready for *Operation DRAGOON*, the invasion of Southern France.

CPL Woods was a scout squad leader as Troop A went ashore with the Texas ARNG 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (T-Patchers) <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/texas.htm> near St. Raphael on 15 August 1944. The Squadron, now the core of *Task Force Butler* fought up through the Rhone Valley in pursuit of the enemy, trying to cut off their escape into Germany.

Weeks later, it was now SGT Frank Woods who took charge of a number of the German prisoners taken on 3 September 1944 in Montrevel. Troops A & B had seized the strategic crossroads town early in the morning, in a surprise attack that took many German prisoners. Woods had turned his charges over to MPs when German Panzer units counter-attacked, cutting off all routes in and out of the town. The fighting was very fierce, and none of the Squadron outside of Montrevel was able to fight into the town and rescue their comrades.

SGT Woods commanded an M-8 “*Greyhound*” Armored Car. Soon “she” bore the name of “*Alma*”, a girl back home in Ridgeland, South Carolina. SGT Woods proved to be an effective leader and tough fighter, as Troop A and the Squadron fought into the Vosges Mountains. On New Year’s Eve, 31 December 1944, Woods and his men held ground and killed over 200 enemy soldiers, before being ordered back to Mouterhouse, where his actions resulted in his being decorated with the *Silver Star*. By 24 January, when he turned 21, he was Platoon Sergeant (SSG), Troop A.



 Soon after VE Day, the Squadron was assigned security to SHAEF at Frankfurt, Germany. PSG Woods led a detail to escort GEN Eisenhower and was posted to Bad Homburg, a beautiful spa village. When he was finished securing lodging for his men, Woods went to a nearby park and pond for a walk. He saw a beautiful young girl who was caring for young children. Fraulein Marianne Klein was 17, slender, blonde, and blue-eyed. They met. Weary of war, Marianne was wary, but soon perceived that the young American was a kind and good man. Several months later, they were married – three times! First by the Burgomeister, then the American Consulate and finally in a Lutheran church wedding.

PSG Frank A. Woods said farewell to his brothers of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) as they returned to beloved America, was discharged from military service and became a US Civil Service employee in Germany. The South Carolina farm boy, soldier-hero and husband, took responsibilities for a stable and 350 horses, providing recreation for GI’s. Their first child, “Kitty” was born in Germany, in 1946. Soon, the young couple moved to America.

Frank took his Marianne and baby girl back to South Carolina, where he took up farming, logging and the sawmill. In time, they moved north to a better work opportunity, settling near Rochester, NY and long career.

This great American family includes Kitty, Alfred, William, Barbara Ann and Daniel (called Fritz) and lot’s of grandchildren. Eldest son Alfred is a Vietnam veteran – 52<sup>nd</sup> Pathfinder Det. 52<sup>nd</sup> Aviation BN, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, Pleiku Vietnam. Several jumps, *Bronze Stars* and more. “Billy” was USAF, “Fritz”, Army. *God Bless the Woods family, and God Bless America!*

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**Some tales of Montrevel** My calls to our older brothers gained these items: SGT Joe Pocaroba, Troop E assault gun crew chief had positioned his M-7 105MM HMC for fire support. His platoon leader had gone into Montrevel to call fire missions. None came. The German Panzer Recon BN and supporting armor had surrounded and, in some hours, fought into the town. Radio comms were unreliable. At the end, LT D’Annunzio was among those captured. Domenic “Danny” Melso was a B Troop jeep driver, sent out of Montrevel on a task, and unable to return. 1LT Paul Seidel, F Troop (tanks) tried to fight into Montrevel, but was shot up and disabled, as were the rest of his platoon. 1LT Marvin Carlile, SGT Bob Lutz and the rest of C Troop came racing back from their mission many miles away near the Swiss border, but not in time. As they approached Montrevel, they discovered that the Germans had moved out of Montrevel, leaving 12 badly wounded A & B Troopers behind with medical support. MAJ Harold Samsel, S-3 had assembled and readied a counter-attack and relief, but was eventually ordered to halt operations by VI Corps Chief of Staff Brig. General Carton.

This was the first defeat of the valiant Squadron. The losses of Troop B, much of Troops A and F left the Squadron distraught, angered and vengeful. Many of the troopers had been together since 1941, and were as close as brothers. Not the least of which were the Jersey City boys of B Troop.

***Your editor would be very grateful for our readers to comment or add to the Montrevel experience.***

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**“Beans & Bullets”** During the initial German counter-attack, CPT Santi Carnevali, Squadron S-4 saw his ammo and fuel trucks, positioned and supporting the initial Montrevel operation, destroyed by enemy cannon fire. Troopers fighting in Montrevel saw these huge explosions and realized that their supply and escape route was blocked.

Carnevali and his men redoubled the scramble to support their brothers, as they had done since landing in North Africa. Keeping a rapidly advancing fighting cavalry squadron supplied and rolling was a huge responsibility. Just think of the complexities! Food, ammo for many types of weapons, gas, oil, parts, replacement vehicles and so forth. Maintenance, retrieval of broken tanks, armored cars, jeeps, truck. Scavenging parts, repairs. No waiting! Keep ‘em moving and fighting! Day and night! Every day, months on end! CPT Carnevali was decorated with a *Bronze Star*, and more.

Santi L. Carnevali was a 2LT and a law student when the 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV was called to Federal Service in January 1941. A *Class of '41* horse soldier, Carnevali was a Troop Commander before transferring to the S-4 Section, in Algiers, North Africa. He met a beautiful WAC at Allied HQ. Anne Bradley and her handsome Santi married, and several of his *Essex Troop* brothers were in the wedding party. Anne and “The Judge” are still very much together, living in Florida.

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**CONTINUED – The WWII History of the 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Group; from “A Short History of the 38<sup>th</sup>.....written by Major Charles Rousek, XO of the 38<sup>th</sup> eff. 8 August 1944”**

**BELGIUM 12 September 1944** The second platoon, Troop “B”, spearheaded a task force consisting of one reconnaissance platoon, one infantry platoon and one platoon of medium tanks commanded by Lt. Yontz. Their mission was to proceed to Vielsalm and on to Petite Thier, Recht and Born. No contact was made until patrols of the reconnaissance platoon discovered strong enemy positions in Born. The patrols maintained contact with the infantry platoon supported by two medium tanks deployed to make the assault. The three remaining tanks took up positions on the high ground in support of the attack. The infantry platoon and patrols from the reconnaissance platoon advanced through the town with armored cars in immediate support. Several strong points were reduced by armored cars, and snipers were cleaned out by hand grenade effectively silenced by direct fire from 75mm guns of tanks. All actions were successful, and the enemy was forced to retire with heavy casualties. The entire Task force occupied the town for the night. The 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon of Troop “B” was assigned the mission of guarding the Troop “B” flank and bivouacked tactically that night between Holzeim and Manderfeld, without having made enemy contact. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, “B” Troop, 102<sup>nd</sup> Squadron was stopped by machine gun and mortar fire from Auw. “B” of the 38<sup>th</sup> developed resistance in the form of small arms fire from the high Ground east and northeast of Manderfeld. This resistance was the outpost line of the Siegfried.

**14 September 1944** the Squadron was given the mission of securing an objective on the Kyle River on the far side of the Siegfried Line, which was not known to be garrisoned at the time. The Squadron started off boldly to penetrate the Siegfried Line with the two “B” Troops; “A” and “C” still being employed to protect the left flank. “B” Troop of the 102<sup>nd</sup> was stopped cold by resistance on the Siegfried. Troop “B”, 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry advanced a distance of two miles to the east of Manderfeld, when its advance was halted by machine gun, mortar and artillery fire in Krewinkel. The 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon and a section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon supported by a platoon of “F” Company, then attacked Krewinkel. The attack moved northeast through the town meeting stubborn resistance. Strong points were reduced by overrunning them with light tanks under command of Captain Lewis and S/Sgt. Wright. Then the enemy had moved through the town to the northeast. A quick reorganization enabled all forces to meet and repulse an enemy counter-attack from the south. Strong enemy positions, including pillboxes and dragon teeth (anti-tank obstacles) had been observed on the high ground along the road from Losheim to Roth. The troop secured the towns of Krewinkel and Berterath and remained in observation.

Troop “C” supported the Squadron advance and, after the seizure of Krewinkel, outposted a line from that town to the village of Afts for the night.

Troop “A” was ordered into Group Reserve and assembled at Herresbach. Troop “E” supported the advance of the Squadron from battery position. Company “F” reinforced the leading troops.

Troop “B” of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Squadron was relieved from attachment.

By the day's end, it was evident that the Squadron had hit the Siegfried Line as far north as Krewinkel, driving in the outposts in front of the line.

**On the 15<sup>th</sup>**, one more effort was made to pierce the Siegfried Line in the Squadron sector, this time by the entire 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Troop "A" was ordered to screen the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry advance while "B" Troop, now reduced to two platoons, protected "A" Troop's left flank and "C" Troop protected the right flank. "A" Troop advanced aggressively but was stopped dead in its tracks when it came under heavy fire from the Siegfried. The 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry then marched to the south to take part in the Division main effort, while the Squadron undertook the mission of protecting the Division left flank from Roth to Lanzerath. The balance of September was spent defending the eight miles of the Squadron front against strong patrol action on the part of the Germans. The 4<sup>th</sup> Recon Troop substituted for "A" Troop, which was protecting the right flank of the Division. The Squadron was spread out over the entire front leaving no reserve except one platoon of "C" Troop and no personnel for offensive patrolling. It was heartbreaking to see the strength build up in the Siegfried Line daily as the enemy became stronger. Patrol action became very aggressive and at least one sharp patrol action took place every day, mostly in the "C" Troop sector in the center. The strain was so severe that when a company of Belgian Maquis was attached to the Squadron toward the end of the month, their help was greatly appreciated. One Maquis platoon helped a "C" Troop outpost east of Krewinkel to withstand an attack of a 70 man German patrol until their limited ammunition supply gave out, necessitating their withdrawal. During the period, "E" Troop developed into a first class artillery battery, firing many missions in defense of the Squadron sector.

Mechanized cavalry was designed to perform the type of missions which were assigned the Squadron during this month of September, and the Squadron was eager to prove that the cavalry could produce when called upon to perform missions for which its armament and training qualified it. The Squadron was determined to give the 4<sup>th</sup> Division an efficient and fast moving screen, which would enable the Infantry to advance as rapidly as they could march, while protecting their exposed north flank. By fording and securing bridgeheads over the Meuse and the Ourthe, and by actions at Fumay, Hargnies, Willerzie, Smuid, Wellin, Wavreille, Nassogn, CR 38369 (vicinity Champion), Baal, Maderfeld and Born, the platoons and Troops of the Squadron reinforced by infantry and medium tanks in the last instance, had pushed back delaying forces, which enabled the infantry to march without interruption. By the action at Rienne, Haut Fays, St. Hubert, LaRoche, Vielsalm, Salmchateau and Losheim, the aggressive action of the small unit leaders on the spot had developed the enemy forces so precisely that the infantry was able to march into the attack without hesitation or delay. Finally, at Krewinkel, Troop "B" determined, by their gallant fight in that town, that the Siegfried Line was very much occupied and that the long march was over. Then, in screening the north flank of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division before the Siegfried Line, The Squadron found that the training of the men in acting by small units, the large number of machine guns and the excellent radio equipment, all combined to qualify the Squadron particularly well for performing this type of mission.

The Squadron completed September's activities grateful that it had been granted the opportunity to function in the manner for which it had been trained and equipped.

## **V. BEFORE THE SIEGFRIED**

**On October 1<sup>st</sup>**, the Squadron took over the area of the 24<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron between Rocherath and the town of Hofen, near the Roer River. This was a heavily wooded area, which the Squadron covered temporarily by means of patrols only. However, as the 28<sup>th</sup> Division advanced into the forest, it became necessary to make their left flank firm so a line was formed in the woods from Rocherath to Alzen.

The distance was only three miles now as opposed to the eight previously covered, making it possible for each Troop to have one platoon in support. An MLR and a support line were set up, defended in the order right to left by A, F, C, and B. These lines were placed so as to cover with fire-cleared areas in the woods. The Siegfried Line was approximately one mile to the east with an outpost line in front. The Squadron could now afford to dispatch patrols to the front as security to destroy hostile patrols and to probe the Siegfried outposts. The strain was not nearly as great as in the Maderfeld position because of the opportunity to rotate front line duty and because the Squadron was pushing out to meet the enemy instead of receiving his attacks.

However, it took a lot of work and training to make our patrols proficient in the art of patrol work in the woods. When the Squadron first moved into the sector, enemy patrols roamed at will through

the entire wooded area, even ambushing vehicles on the Elsenborn-Kalterherberg Road. As our patrols began destroying enemy patrols, the latter refused to come into the line in the "F" Company sector, while our patrols were able to pin the enemy into four strong outpost positions. One of these defended 600 yards of vital high ground just east of Monschau, which was in very close contact with the Siegfried Line. "F" Company defended the town and a gap of 500 yards between "C" Troop's left and "B" Troop, which defended Mutzenich Hill. "A" Troop defended Konzen Station and the hill to north thereof, linking up with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Squadron near Lammersdorf.

Having selected a proper line to defend, there was a lot of work, which had to be done to establish defensive fires, final protective lines, wire mines and flare lines. The final result was that the front was efficiently covered, but with no reserve and no great strength on the line. However, it was tight against all forms of enemy patrols. The defense depended almost entirely on bands of grazing machine gun fire and artillery of which there was a high proportion of both. The rifle strength being low, machine guns gained their security from each other's covering fire. Anti-personnel mines were placed in definite fields to cover specific avenues of approach. For local security of outposts and machine gun positions, flares were used instead of explosives. It is believed that the policy was to prove effective since it saved many men from being killed on friendly mines and did not give the false feeling of security occasioned by the thin line of AP mines.

There was strength enough left after garrisoning the line to conduct extensive patrolling during the night and in periods of low visibility, in order to reconnoiter the Siegfried defenses and to establish again patrol superiority in the Squadron sector. During clear daylight, patrolling was limited to the "C" Troop area, which was cut up by trees and hedges. In all other sectors, either side could see the other very clearly across the valley.

Most of the patrolling was on reconnaissance to locate the pillboxes and other defenses of the Siegfried Line. This part of the Siegfried Line was a vital one to the German defensive scheme and was sure to be attacked sooner or later by our troops. The line had been penetrated to the north at Lammersdorf and to the south at Hofen. Only this salient remained in the original line, which was very strong at this point because of the necessity of protecting the Roer Dams. These dams controlled the whole Roer Valley to the north, because no army would cross the Roer against the threat of having the river flooded behind it and its bridges destroyed. This salient feature of the Siegfried, plus its covered MSR up the Roer Valley, made the German position ideal for any offensive action he might choose to make, and its position west of the dams made it imperative that the enemy hold it at all costs. When the 78<sup>th</sup> Division attacked the salient in February, Capt. Fink, the Squadron S-2, was able to give that Division an accurate description of it, based upon our reconnaissance patrols and observations made at our observation posts.

The 40 day period, **6 November to 16 December**, was spent in a lot of hard work by all ranks to protect the Squadron defenses, for it was known that the German Sixth Panzer Army was in reserve and that an attack was possible through our area to drive straight on Eupen, which contained the Headquarters and all supply services for the V Corps.

While the Squadron was in this position, 81 mm mortars were substituted for 60mm mortars on the basis of 2 for 3, and intensive training was conducted with the new weapon. Of all the preparations made during this period, probably the most important one was the extensive communications system, which was set up. Double nets of telephones and radios linked all platoons and CPs as well as observation posts and many machine gun positions. The result was that the Squadron Staff and the Troop Commanders were to be enabled to conduct a coordinated defense, employing all supporting arms and such reserves that could be obtained from outside the Squadron. It is significant that communications never failed during the trying days to come.

On **13 December**, two medium battalions of the 496<sup>th</sup> EA. Group moved into position behind the hill west of Monschau to support the V Corps offensive aimed at the Roer Dams. The 78<sup>th</sup> Division was attacking on the left side of the Squadron to take Kesternich, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was driving in from Rokerath on the right to take Rohren. These attacks were progressing slowly but satisfactorily on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, when the blow struck on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

## VI. DEFENSE OF MONSCHAU

On **16 December 1944**, the German Army in the West opened its great winter offensive. The battle later became known as *The Ardennes*, but it could very easily have been The Battle of Liege were it not for the defense about to be narrated. (Ed. Note: "*The Battle of the Bulge*" as it is now called.)

At 0535 a tremendously heavy artillery and rocket barrage hit the "C" Troop positions and the

Squadron CP area, and then rolled back to hit "B" Troop and "F" Company on the Mutzenich Hill. This barrage was followed at 0600 by the attack of the Wehrmacht 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 751<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 36<sup>th</sup> Volks Grenadier (VG) Division on "C" Troop's right and the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon, "F" Company, S/Sgt. Bielicki commanding, defending the Roer Valley in Monschau.

The spearhead of the attack was completely smashed by canister fire of the tank platoon delivered at a range of 50 yards. A "C" Troop Patrol under Tec. 5 Van Order broke up other attacking elements, as they emerged from Menzerath, with artillery and mortar fire which he called for and adjusted by radio. When "F" Company's mortar illuminating flares revealed more enemy approaching up the valley, Sgt. Bielicki requested artillery defensive concentrations, which broke up this attack. However, the enemy reorganized and attempted to infiltrate into the tank positions. Sgt. Messano seized an anti-aircraft light machine gun and placed it in position, dismounted, to block for good this attempt. Continued "C" Troop mortar fire and artillery fire finally broke up concerted enemy activity in the valley, except for sniper fire all day.

Meanwhile, the enemy launched another attack at 0830 down the winding road, which led from Imgenbroich to the north end of Monschau, known as the "snake road". This attack was first brought to a halt by machine gun fire from "C" Troop's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> platoons, and then smashed by fire from the 62<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion and "E" Troop. German patrols were observed and fired on all parts of the Squadron line during the rest of the day. When an observer reported that all the enemy pillboxes were being loaded with extra men, it was plain that another and heavier attack was due to come. Reinforcements were requested of Group Headquarters, which procured Company "A" 146<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineering Battalion, Captain Ball commanding. One platoon was given to each of "B" and "C" Troops to bolster their line, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon was dug in on the hill behind Monschau to cover the front line positions with overhead fire and to protect our right flank. Six machine crews from the 186<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion, and attached TDs were also put into the line with "F" Company's hard-pressed 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon.

The night of the **16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>** was marked by much activity. As many as five enemy searchlights lit up the Mutzenich Hill and a score or more large low-flying planes flew westward over the Squadron line. These were the planes which dropped *Luftwaffe* LT. Col. Von der Heydre's Parachute Battalion behind the Squadron line. At 0400 a "C" Troop listening post under Tec. 5 Allen Anderson on the Merzerath Hill detected a force of 60 or 70 enemy approaching their post. They called for and received fire from "E" Troop within two minutes, which broke up the enemy endeavor. At 0615, another heavy barrage struck the Squadron line, even reaching back to the "C" Troop mortars this time. At 0630, the enemy launched his initial attack to pierce the line in "C" Troop's left. The enemy, having assembled in the draw east of Mutzenich during the night, attacked "F" Company's 1<sup>st</sup> platoon, at the railroad track, but were finally driven off with machine gun fire, and punished severely by artillery fire as they retired into the draw. At 0800, the full weight of the entire 751<sup>st</sup> VG Regiment struck the Squadron, as one attack coordinated with the initial attack just mentioned was made down the "snake road" while the main effort was made in an all out assault on the Mutzenich Hill. The attack down the "snake road" was met by machine gun fire from "C" Troop's 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, but kept coming. It was finally stopped by tank and TD fire from "F" Company's 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon whose weapons overlooked the "C" Troop position. Artillery fire further broke up this attack.

**TO BE CONTINUED...**

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#### **Membership Update – SMG (ret) Ken Mahan**



Trooper! Look at your address label! If the date is not Sept. 09 or later, you are behind in your dues. Your subscription to *THE SPUR* is going to run out because of non-payment of dues. A sample of label:

**SEPT 10**

**KENNETH L. MAHAN  
12 W. WALNUT ST  
METUCHEN NJ 08840-2616**

**To Members behind in their dues, you will have date circled in RED!** This is the only notice you will receive. Send information and/or dues to me at the Metuchen address shown above.



**Annual regular dues of \$20.00 are due in September.** Make checks payable to **117th CAV Association.**

**NOTE:** As of the February meeting it was voted to increase dues to **\$20.00, starting September 2009.**

**Note:** If you have an e-mail address, please send it to me at [KMAHAN117@AOL.COM](mailto:KMAHAN117@AOL.COM). We are compiling an email list of members and we want and to include you. **Association web site:** [www.117th-cav.org/](http://www.117th-cav.org/) If you have a computer, try going to the web site. You can look up the WWII history of the 38<sup>th</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons (Mecz).

**New Member** MAJ William F. Morris. He will be the new AO for 1-102<sup>nd</sup> CAV Westfield

**Here is a list of some of the families that were/are in the NJARNG:**

Grandfather, CWO (Ret.) Leon LaPoint, *Class of '41* & 50th Recon BN; Son, LTC (Ret.) Leon LaPoint, 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Grandson MAJ Michael LaPoint, XO 1-150 AVN BN. (Iraq)

Grandfather, 1SG (Ret.) William B. Maloney Sr., *Class of '41* & HHT 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Son, LTC (Ret.) William B. Maloney Jr. Started in A TRP, 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Son, Kevin B. Maloney HHT 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Son, Tim B. Maloney A TRP, 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAC; Son, Bruce H. Maloney 250<sup>th</sup> Signal BN; Grandson, Brian M. Maloney 250<sup>th</sup> Signal BN.

Father, 1SG (Ret.) John Scannell, D-Air, 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Son, COL John Scannell, CO 1-150<sup>th</sup> AVN BN (Iraq)

Father, CWO (Ret.) William H. Merring Jr. Started in HHT 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV; Son, MAJ (Ret.) Thomas Merring, started in HHT 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV

Grandfather, 1SG Frank J. Harty, *Class of '41* 102<sup>nd</sup> & 38<sup>th</sup> CAV WWII; Grandson, 1LT Ryan M. Harty, C TRP 1-102<sup>nd</sup> CAV.

Father, CWO Thomas V. "Pop" Christopher, *Class of '41* & HHQ 50th Recon; Son, Donald M. Christopher, A TRP, 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV

Father, SGM George F. "Fred" Kimble, was 1SG of A CO 50<sup>th</sup> Recon, then 250<sup>th</sup> Signal; Son, SGM Kenneth Kimble, was in 250<sup>th</sup> Signal; Son, 1SG Fred Kimble, was in 250<sup>th</sup> Signal

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## ***TAPS***

**JOSEPH P. MULFORD SR.** Passed away on 28 September 2009, in Phoenix AZ. He was a Trustee of the *Essex Troop Association*, and retired a Sergeant First Class after serving for 27 years in the NJARNG. He was an Administrative Assistant with the Essex County Youth House, retiring after 23 years. He also worked for Professional Security in Nutley. His wife Carol (nee Boland) had passed away previously. Devoted father of Michele Stelling, Joseph Jr., Margaret Mulford and James R. Mulford, USMC; sister Agnes Conway and 5 grandchildren.

**LTC (RET.) KNUTE E. SEEBOHM** Died 5 October 2009, Chester NJ. He served in the US Army 1970-1972 and later joined the NJARNG, retiring in 1993. He was past CO 2-102<sup>nd</sup> ARMOR and an active member of the *Iron Horsemen Association*. He had retired as Director of the Morris County Library. He is survived by his wife Janet, sons Scott, Erik, Todd and their wives and children; sisters Ingrid McCollum and Lorna Nelson and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

**KEITH ASHLEY** Died 18 September 2009, Melbourne, FL. He served in the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry as a Sergeant, Troop A, mortar platoon. He was a co-founder of Ultimate Tool and Manufacturing, and later director of mechanical and manufacturing engineering at NBS. He was an inventor and had nine U. S. Patents. He is survived by his wife Bonnie, sons Brett and Drew, 3 grandchildren and a brother David Ashley.



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 WI-10 SFC JOSEPH W. TOOMEY, B Troop 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV (Iraq) & SABINA  
 WI-10 CW4 (Ret.) DON TRACY & CHICKIE  
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1941 - CPL Al Robbins & horse  
"Snuffy", 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV



Germany 1945 - 117<sup>th</sup> CAV - F Troop with new M-24 "Chaffee" Light Tanks

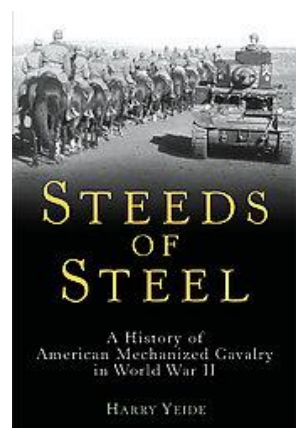
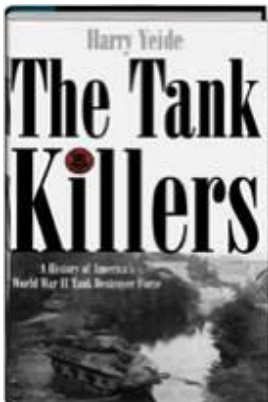


12/2008 Iraq 1-102<sup>nd</sup> CAV Troop C  
(Hackettstown) "Hooligan's" Christmas

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**Harry Yeide, author of six works on World War II, including histories of the separate tank battalions, the WWII tank destroyer battalions – “The Tank Killers”, Roer River campaign, and Sixth Army Group will be the guest speaker at the combined 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association & AUSA meeting 6 November 2009 at the Westfield Armory.** His latest work "*Steeds of Steel*", is the story of the mechanized cavalry in World War II in all theaters of operations.

The U.S. Army's mechanized cavalry force served in an astounding variety of ways in World War II. Mechanized cavalymen scouted and fought in tanks, armored cars, and jeeps; battled on and from the sea in tracked amphibians; stormed beaches from landing craft; slipped ashore in rubber rafts from submarines; climbed mountains; battled hand-to-hand on foot like any GI; and even occasionally rode horses. The troopers learned to outwit the enemy in African desert, Italian peaks, European hedgerows, and Pacific jungles. Often, the cavalymen worked alone, miles ahead of the nearest friendly units. "*Steeds of Steel*" is their story.



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**DUES DUE** ↓

### 1<sup>ST</sup> New Jersey Cavalry



**MISSION STATEMENT:** It is the continuing objective of The SPUR to foster and preserve the Spirit of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association, and to promote and enhance the friendships and camaraderie of our members, who are mutually bound by service and devotion to our country.

**NEXT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS:** 6 NOVEMBER 2009, 5 FEBRUARY 2010, 2 APRIL 2010, 4 JUNE 2010