



117th Cavalry Association

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102d CAV (Mecz) 38th CAV (Mecz) 117th CAV (Mecz) 50th CAV RCN SQDN 50th RCN 5th RCN 5-117th CAV 1-102d CAVALRY
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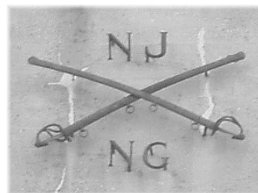
President's Message November 2015 The success of an organization is measured by the involvement of its member's. Our 117th Cavalry Association continues to engage our members and the members of our community on an active basis. We hold and honor the collective memory of New Jersey's Armor and Cavalry heritage through outreach to the currently serving troopers of the 1-102d Cavalry and all the veterans of our state's Armor and Cavalry formations (5-117th Cavalry Squadron and the battalions of the 102d Armor).

Over the past 15 years, I have been honored to lead our 117th Cavalry Association in the pursuit of these goals. We have partnered with the 5-117th Cavalry and, 1-102d Cavalry's Family Readiness Groups, Bonds of Courage, the Westfield Foundation (*Share our Story Initiative*), the American Legion, Memoires del' Ain 1939-1945, the US Cavalry and Armor Association and the Association of the United States Army as well as the towns of Westfield NJ, Dole and Montrevel France. All of this would not have been possible without the aid and assistance of our members. In particular our 117th Cavalry Association leadership; Ken Mahan (Membership), Bill Gruss (Treasurer), Bill Morris (Secretary), Henry Wetzel (Sergeant at Arms), Don Tracy and Bill Merring (WOA's), Chris Sands (former president 117th CAV Assn.) Mike Hrycak (Vice President), Danielle Bracco (Bonds of Courage and HHT 1-102 CAVFRG) and Anne Bergin (HHT102CAV FRG) and Amy Lovato (D 250 BSB FRG). Captains Harty, Giacchi and Prusser (1-102d CAV), Frank Mnich and Don Kondrowski (Casino Night) John Crescenzi (Web Master) and Phil Notestine (Editor of *The SPUR* and Historian par excellence). I also owe a special debt to my wife Nancy my editor in chief for 15 years of President's Messages. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the continuous tremendous support we have received from the leadership of the 5-117th Cavalry and the 1-102d Cavalry Squadron Commanders and their Command Sergeant Majors and all the leadership at the Troop level throughout the years.

I feel confident that when LTC (Ret) Mike Hrycak assumes the leadership of our 117th Cavalry Association this November he will continue its core mission preserving the history and telling the story of all who have served in New Jersey's Armor and Cavalry formations and that troopers of the 1-102d Cavalry and the 117th Cavalry Association will continue to *Show 'em the Way!*

Dennis

COL Dennis Dougherty USA Retired





SCO Message Recently the Squadron was tasked with a Domestic Operation. The Squadrons mission was to provide security, check point operations and support road closures for the Papal visit to Philadelphia. We were assigned missions in Camden New Jersey working with the New Jersey State Police and the Delaware River Port Authority. Troop A was assigned to the Delaware River Port Authority and was given the mission to provide security, checkpoint operations and road closures from the base of the Ben Franklin Bridge to the mid-span of the bridge. Troop B was assigned to the New Jersey State Police and was given the mission for checkpoint operations, security, and road closures. This was a Joint Operation as we had 25 Airmen from the New Jersey Air National Guard attached to us to conduct the mission. The HHT and D Company provided Command and Control and support operations from the Woodbury

Armory. The mission required a homestation mobilization and movement to Camden. The duration of the mission was 5 days.

As expected, the Squadron performed their mission flawlessly. I am proud of the professionalism and can-do attitude of the Troopers within the Squadron. Their ability to adapt and be flexible to the operational needs of the Civilian Law Enforcement agencies enabled a smooth operation.

The Squadron is poised for a successful training year 2016. The focus will be on Squad Level Proficiency and the Staff will be conducting a Warfighter Exercise to Support the overall 50th IBCT Training Objectives. There will be challenges this training year but I am confident in the Squadrons ability to navigate the hurdles.

Saber Six Out.

LTC Jeffrey K. Brownlee, SCO

1-102nd Cavalry, 50th IBCT NJARNG



From the Editor Phil Notestine I am a little sad that my friend COL Dennis Dougherty is stepping down as President of our Association...he has been very supportive and even inspirational, all these many years. Dennis has done so much for not just our 117th Cavalry Association, he works tirelessly and effectively in AUSA, Rutgers ROTC support and so many other NJ military related causes. I remember Dennis from back in 1981 when I joined the Association. He was a young Major sitting at the leadership table with COL Harold Samsel, LTC Ken Klein, LTC Ken Quaas, LTC Norman Koed and other great cavalymen. That was over 34 years ago.

So many WWII veterans were in our midst during meetings and reunions. I can name so many, but only after taking on the Editorship of The SPUR in 2006 did I learn their WWII and post war stories. What a great honor and journey is has been for me! And Dennis Dougherty was always ready and able to help and counsel. He knew so many and so much about our WWII veteran brothers and post war NJARNG.

I am a life member of AUSA and longtime member of the *Cavalry and Armor Association*. One reason is to receive the excellent magazines, ARMY and The Cavalry and Amor Journal. I recommend both associations highly; all troopers and supporters of our US Army should be members and keep up with events, issues and history. In this issue of The Cavalry and Armor Journal, two articles were especially interesting: "Cavalry in the Defense: Dec. 16-18, 1944" and "70 Years On: Battle of St. Vith". Readers will recognize that this was during the "Battle of The Bulge". The cavalry group was the 14th, consisting of the 18th and 32d CRS.

I will not recant these articles, save to say that leadership and unit performance was "mixed". This is in stark contrast to that of the 38th CRS of the 102d Cavalry Group, during the 38th CRS defense at Monschau, for which a *Presidential Unit Citation* was awarded. We are very fortunate to have the article "Cavalry on the Shoulder – the 38th CRS and the Defense of Monschau". This was given to me in 2011 by Association member LTC Alfred H. M. Shehab, USA Retired who was there, a platoon leader at the time, and decorated with the *Bronze Star – Valor* for his actions. The story needs to be told and retold. Accordingly, I have sent it to *The Cavalry and Armor Association* for consideration of publication, and will serialize it beginning in this issue of *The SPUR*.

It is time for me to retire as Editor of *The SPUR*. I will help the new Editor get started and advise as needed. Please do consider and call me to discuss. My home number is 910-420-2968, Pinehurst, NC.



Regular meeting September 2015 Mike Hrycak opened the meeting with the pledge and a moment of silence for our fallen comrades and for the victims of the 9/11 attacks.

We moved to pass on minutes and the financial report. Ken Mahan once again beat the group for non-payment of dues and gave us a rundown of his personal TTPs for how he notifies members they are overdue--likely explaining why they do not pay. He told us to let people know to tell him that you moved so he knows to get them their newsletter. Old Business: A week from tomorrow is the Spurs and Sabers dance...get there! Casino Night is 21 November, lots of great comments from folks about it.

Mike Hrycak pointed out the heritage items that are hanging on the wall outside the room that Dennis has worked hard to hang up.

New Business: LTC Brownlee proposed a committee to redo the heritage room. What is in there is dated...and it needs to be updated. There was a minor amount of discussion, but broad agreement that such needs to be done. 1LT Bob Freeman, the Cavalry AGR Training Officer will head the committee.

Minutes take by LTC Bill Morris. Attendance not provided.

Class of "41" and Friends of Cavalry Luncheon September 17 Those in attendance LTC (Ret) Claude Cook, Joseph Pocaroba, and Ken Mahan. When we would meet at Fort Monmouth, we have 12 to 14 in attendance. Due to the men's ages, we have lost several members. If you would like to attend a LUNCHEON, our next one is **Nov. 10 at noon**, at River Rock on Manasquan River Please call Ken Mahan at 732-548-7991. We would enjoy your company. **Taps for George "Jim" Colburn.** He attended many of the lunches.

2-38th Cavalry This speech below is from the casing of the colors of the 2d Squadron of the 38th Cavalry Regiment. This ceremony took place at Fort Hood this summer. LTC John P. Cogbill the squadron commander has asked us to save and preserve the guidon of 2-38th Cavalry. It will be displayed next to the WWII guidons of Troops E and F of the 38th Cavalry that are currently proudly displayed in our *117th Cavalry Association* Heritage Room. I would like to thank LTC Cogbill and all the troopers of the 38th Cavalry past and present for helping us to preserve the historic bond that was forged in combat during WWII between the 38th and 102d Cavalry Squadrons. We will be honored to display the 2-38th Cavalry's Guidon in our 117th/102d Cavalry's Heritage Room. Be assured, we will be glad to return it to the 2-38th Cavalry when it is once again called to service in America's Army. Until then - *Always in Front* and continue to *Show 'em the Way!*

Dennis



This morning we will case our Squadron Colors and prepare to ship them off to the Center of Military History for safekeeping, along with other artifacts and mementos we have collected along the way. This is not a task we take lightly, and not one that we would have chosen, but it is part of a larger Army plan and we will do our duty with professionalism and with the same standard of excellence that has been our hallmark since this unit was born in 1942.

You can look at the Colors and see where this unit has been. Each streamer symbolizes courage and sacrifice. At Normandy, the Squadron fought its way out of the hedgerows, taking 108 casualties in one day. In Northern France, the Squadron seized the V Corps objective of Tinchebray with hardly any casualties, using speed and audacity to outmaneuver the German defenders, thereby earning the Squadron nickname, "Lucky 38th". From there the Squadron pressed onward to Paris where they were the first American unit to enter the city. In the Ardennes and Rhineland, they fought with machine guns and hand grenades against German SS troops with Panzer tanks and self-propelled guns. They captured or killed hundreds of Germans and conducted over 150 dismounted reconnaissance patrols to pinpoint enemy positions along the Siegfried line. After crossing the Siegfried, they dug in and defended at Monschau on the First Army's vulnerable Northern flank. Stretched thin and without a reserve, the Squadron held off German counterattacks, even a German airborne assault, and held the line, finally stopping the enemy's momentum during the historic Battle of the Bulge. For their valiant defense, the Squadron earned the Presidential Unit Citation and then-LT Shehab earned a Bronze Star Medal for Valor. The Squadron later linked up with the 2nd Ranger Battalion and continued to take the fight to the enemy as they pressed Eastward across Germany seizing, towns, bridgeheads, mopping up pockets of resistance, and providing flank security for the 2d Division.

They finally came to rest on VE day and had the honor to lead the 1st Division in to Czechoslovakia. That was the end of the war for the Lucky 38th, and just a pause in the unit's history, until the unit was reactivated again in 2010, this time to support the Global War on Terror.

(Then) LTC Jones and CSM Simpson trained the newly formed unit hard and deployed to combat in RC-South where the troopers of the Squadron conducted a screen in depth in RC South and successfully partnered with the Afghan Border Police. The Squadron conducted over 600 patrols, 26 Air Assaults, captured or killed 26 high value targets, and seized tons of homemade explosives and illegal narcotics. Sadly, the Squadron lost CPL Frank Gross to an IED attack, but his memory lives on and his parents, Craig and Toni Gross will forever remain a part of this family. For their service in Spin Boldak, the Squadron was awarded the *Meritorious Unit Citation*.

Fast-forward another two years, the unit deployed to Kosovo to conduct peace support operations in Northern Kosovo as the Forward Command Post for the Multinational Battle Group East. Over the course of nine months, the FCP conducted 12 named operations, including three sets of elections, a crowd riot control mission in Mitrovica, and a series of reconnaissance missions to expose illegal smuggling networks in the north. We organized, led, and participated in four major multinational exercises. We conducted 9 different HOTO frameworks and trained, certified, and employed 11 maneuver coys from 9 different nations. With the support of our aviation partners in the Southern Command Post, we conducted 5 airborne operations, the first in over 10 years, two SPIES operations, and countless combined air assaults and sling load missions. Most importantly, we did what COMKFOR asked us to do, which was to contribute to a safe and secure environment and freedom of maneuver in AO North.

As you can see, this is a little Squadron, with a big mission. Whether it was leading the charge across Europe for V Corps, screening the Eastern border for ISAF, winning the peace in the Balkans for NATO, or conducting long-range reconnaissance for the III Corps Commanding General, this little squadron has had a major impact.

All of that achievement does not happen by itself. This unit has been blessed with great people and great leadership. I want to thank some of those leaders publicly, like MG Cox and BG Lai, for placing your trust in us an organization and allowing us to fully execute our mission as the III Corps Reconnaissance Squadron. I want to thank our brigade commander, COL Ryan Janovic, and his predecessor COL Chuck Hensley for allowing me to command and for supporting *all* of their commanders in our efforts to accomplish the tasks you gave us. I want to thank Command Sergeants Major Whitney and Serna for taking care of our Soldiers and maintain the standard. To our brothers and sisters in the 163d and 303d, thank you for being our teammates...the combination of reconnaissance troopers combined with your MI Soldiers was powerful and it was unique to the Battlefield Surveillance Brigade. To the leaders in the Squadron, past and present, too many to name, thank you for giving 110% in everything that you do. You are all professionals in every sense of the word and I thank you for your service and your unfaltering leadership. More importantly, for your friendship over the years.

Mostly though, the accomplishments of this unit came from the blood, sweat, and tears of men like LT Alfred Shehab, CPL Raymond Leone, CPL Frank Gross, and the men and women standing before you today. They are the heart and soul of this organization. They are volunteers, they are veterans, they are Cavalrymen and women. They represent everything that is great and wonderful about America and I am inspired by their patriotism and sacrifice. Equally impressive, and equally committed are the families that support them. I want to publicly thank all of our Phantom Recon families, and the FRG leaders that supported them, for allowing us to serve and accomplish our mission. I especially want to thank my beautiful bride, Jenny, and our three wonderful children, Jack, Emma, and Madeline, for supporting not just me over the last three years of command, but for giving freely of yourselves and your time to take care of our Troopers and their wonderful families. I love you.

As I close, I want to read you something I came across in a scrapbook put together by Ms. Denise Horning, the daughter of CPL Raymond Leone. It was written in a short history penned by MAJ Charles Rousek, the Executive Officer of the 38th in WWII.

"So ended the war record of the lucky 38th. A month later, the squadron suffered a shattering blow, when it was placed in category IV to be demobilized. It was hard to believe that the government did not need a Squadron any more with the reputation and spirit of the 38th, but there were enough new Squadrons to fight the Pacific War. The Squadron accepted the decision sadly.

For those who served in the 38th, there will never be another outfit quite like it. She was a gallant, happy, and lucky Squadron with a personality all her own. Born during the war for the purpose of fighting the Germans in Europe, it fulfilled that purpose brilliantly and then faded into history. But the Squadron, though demobilized, will never die. She will live forever in the hearts of the brave men who fought with the Lucky 38th.

Colors can be cased, artifacts can be stored, equipment can be turned in and personnel can be reassigned, but memories, shared experiences, joy, pain, pride, accomplishment, and the camaraderie that only a Soldier will ever know, lives on forever.

So, when our Nation calls again, and it undoubtedly will, the men and women of the Phantom Recon Squadron stand ready.

Break glass in case of war...

Always Ready, Phantom Recon, Always in front!

Past Commander of 2-38th Cavalry

LTC John P. Cogbill

The 644th Tank Battalion was constituted 3 December 1941 in the Regular Army as the 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Activated 15 December 1941 at Fort Dix, New Jersey, with personnel from the 44th Division, New Jersey National Guard. Withdrawn from the Regular Army and allotted to the New Jersey National Guard, 13 March 1942. Inactivated 5 December 1945 at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. *Pictured are M10 Tank Destroyers of the 644th TD BN in Germany.*



Redesignated 644th Tank Battalion, 9 July 1946. Organized and Federally recognized 18 November 1946 with Headquarters at Red Bank. Reorganized and redesignated as the 644th Heavy Tank Battalion and assigned to the 50th Armored Division, 1 March 1949. Redesignated 1 December 1952 as the 644th Tank Battalion (120MM gun). Relieved from the 50th Armored Division and consolidated 1 March 1959 with the 50th Armor, a parent regiment under the Combat Arms Regimental System.

Distinctive Unit Insignia. *Description:* A Gold-color metal and enamel device 1 1/8 inches (2.86 cm) in height overall blazoned: Gules, a dexter arm in armor erect couped at the wrist fist clenched and spiked Or. Attached below and to the sides a Gold scroll inscribed "FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE" in Red letters.



Symbolism: The mailed fist symbolizes the speedy striking and crushing powers of the Battalion, while the steel spikes and generally menacing appearance are indicative of the armor and method of attack of the organization. The red background with the gold fist is indicative of the basic arm of the unit, Field Artillery.

Background: The distinctive unit insignia was originally approved for the 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion on 10 September 1942. It was redesignated for the 644th Tank Battalion on 10 July 1947. It was redesignated for the 644th Heavy Tank Battalion on 27 October 1949.

CAMPAIGN STREAMERS: World War II Normandy Northern France Rhineland Ardennes-Alsace. Central Europe.

Over the years, the Red Bank NJ Army National Guard Armory has also been home to the following units of the NJ Army National Guard 102d Cavalry, 2-50th Armor, 4-102nd Armor, 2-114th Infantry, and the 250th FSB

Article provided by COL Dennis Dougherty, USA Retired

And here we begin the first installment of:

CAVALRY ON THE SHOULDER - The 38th CRS and the Defense of Monschau

On 10 November 1944 the 38th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, was reattached to COL Cyrus A. Dolph's 102d Cavalry Group (Essex Troop), and moved north from the Rokerath/Monschau Forest area on the Belgium - German border, where they had been since the end of September. This move was part of an adjustment of the Corps boundaries within the First US Army.

The area the squadron vacated was turned over to the VIII Corps' 18th Cavalry Squadron, and the 38th Squadron moved slightly north and east out of Belgium and into Germany to relieve the defending VII Corps 4th Cavalry Group's 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, LTC Edward C. Dunn, commanding.

The town of Monschau was one of the eastern most penetrations of the US First Army. Its defense had been the mission of the 24th Cavalry Squadron of the 4th Cavalry Group since September when it was occupied virtually without a fight. It was the stopping point of the 24th Squadron after a long hard march across France and Belgium in pursuit of the fleeing Germans. The cavalry originally captured the town so quickly that at least one German train was captured after it made its regular stop in the town not knowing of the arrival of the Americans.

Monschau was a picturesque resort town approximately two miles east of the German - Belgium border. It was popular among the country-loving Germans because of its quaint beauty and the scenic rushing Ruhr River cutting through a deep pine covered gorge. The town is situated at the intersection of the Ruhr River and a smaller north south tributary. It is dominated by high ridges on all sides. The area east of the town was particularly roughly cut by ravines and pine forests, offering good cover and concealment to an attacker.

The town's citizens were largely absent during the squadron's stay in the town. The squadron commander saw one child in the two months of occupation. He threw a snowball at the commander and the S3. The squadron did not counterattack.

The mission given to the 38th by the 102d Cavalry Group was to defend the town and the surrounding area. The 38th defensive line extended from just to the south of the town northwest and north along the Mutzenich ridge to the train station on the north side of the village of Konzen. Like most defensive cavalry missions, the purpose of the 38th Cavalry's mission was really to hold the ground in order to free up infantry to be used to maintain the momentum of offensive operations elsewhere on the front. As the cavalry defended, V Corps was assembling units for a major attack to seize the Ruhr dams to begin on 14 December.

The 38th Cavalry was commanded by LTC Robert O'Brien. Commissioned in cavalry from the West Point class of 1936, O'Brien was an experienced soldier: he commanded a horse cavalry troop in the First Cavalry Division's 8th Cavalry Regiment prior to the war; saw his first combat landing under fire at Salerno in 1943; and arrived in France in July 1944 as the executive officer of the 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Group. On 8 August 1944, he assumed command of the 38th from the former S3, Major Charles E. Rousek. MAJ Rousek took command when the previous commander, LTC John L. Lee, was wounded during the breakout from Normandy.

The 38th Cavalry was a tight-knit and proud organization and the previous commander was popular. This caused some friction between the new boss and his command. O'Brien's leadership style was based on directness, common sense, and a willingness to share the hardships of his soldiers. He frequently took part in the most hazardous duties such as patrolling. Because of this, he quickly won their admiration, respect, and loyalty. O'Brien for his part was proud of his squadron's combat record and confident that they could execute their current mission under any conditions. As the squadron settled into its defensive positions he and his soldiers had established a solid bond of mutual respect.

The squadron's nine hundred troopers were assigned a sector covering almost ten kilometers of ground, about six miles. In contrast, the similarly sized 3d Battalion, 395th Infantry, 99th Infantry Division, defending to the cavalry's right, occupied a 1,000 yard front on the eastern side of the village of Hofen. To the north the squadron was tied in with its sister squadron, the 102d Cavalry Group's 102d Squadron. Because of the size of the sector, O'Brien was forced to employ the entire strength of the squadron in the line, leaving no reserve. The squadron deployed with C Troop to the east and southeast of the town; F Company (tanks) put its 3d platoon in the valley in the town, and the rest of the company located northwest of the town in support of B Troop. B Troop positioned its platoons just to the northwest of the town along the north to south running railroad line; and A Troop set in north of B Troop along the slopes of the Malzhach hill to the train station in Konzen. E Troop (assault guns) was positioned to the squadron's rear and tied in with both the squadron, a direct support self-propelled light artillery battalion (105mm), and two medium artillery battalions (155mm). The squadron had attached the 3d Platoon of A Company, 112th Engineer Combat Battalion which was employed extensively building positions and laying concertina wire and mines, and a platoon of M10 self-propelled tank destroyers of the 893d Tank Destroyer Battalion. The tank destroyers were employed initially guarding the squadron's left flank, behind A Troop.

Through the month of November and into the beginning of December, the sector was relatively quiet. This was due to a number of factors, one of which was the squadron commander's concept to establish patrol dominance in the sector.

Patrol dominance describes the squadron's campaign to suppress the enemy's ability to patrol in the squadron sector. This, in turn, provided security for US patrols against the enemy. Achieving this condition was one of the early objectives set forth by the squadron commander after the unit's arrival in the sector. This objective was achieved by ceaseless and aggressive dismounted patrolling throughout the sector. Initially the clashes with enemy patrols were frequent and deadly. The cavalry patrols routinely came out on top and inflicted significant casualties on the enemy.

An example of the quick and deadly fights initiated by patrols is the instance at the end of October when a B Troop patrol lead by First Lieutenant Weldon J. Yontz, fought a sharp action against a German patrol in the thick pine forests of the Ardennes.

The cavalry point man, Private Herbert H. Whittard, spotted the enemy first and motioned the cavalymen into position to spring an ambush. Waiting in cover, the cavalry troopers engaged the large enemy patrol at close range. The resulting hail of bullets killed or wounded all of the 22 enemy. Prisoners later revealed that this enemy patrol was the handpicked reconnaissance company of the opposing German infantry regiment. This type of aggressive action was repeated often in the Monschau sector and caused enemy patrols to avoid contact and allowed cavalry patrols to make increasingly detailed reconnaissance reports and sketches of enemy positions. These reports would be invaluable three months later, in February 1945, when elements of the 78th Infantry division penetrated the *Siegfried Line* in the Monschau area using the cavalry maps and sketches to plan their attack. In addition, it left German commanders ignorant of the details of the cavalry's defensive dispositions.

While the daily and nightly battle of the patrols was on going, the squadron prepared and improved its defensive positions. The preparation of the defense was done under the careful eye of the squadron commander.

The area's terrain did not necessarily favor the defense or the offensive. From the perspective of the defender, the high ground west of the town dominated the town and the eastern approaches. From the perspective of the attacker, the numerous ravines and the river gorge permitted infantry to close on the town in dead space not observable from the high ground to the west. Also, early morning fogs and forests permitted attacking troops to mass unobserved within fairly close range of the town's defenses. Although the terrain did not offer any obvious advantages to either the defender or attacker, it did favor the use of a particular arm - infantry. Thus, the German infantry formations facing the cavalymen from across the deep river gorges and in the forests seemingly had the advantage of operating over terrain, which put the light and highly mobile mechanized cavalry at a disadvantage.

The preparation of the defense of Monschau may rank as one of the most thorough defenses by an American battalion size unit in US Army history. The cavalymen, taking stock of their equipment, the time available, and the aggressive spirit of the troopers, quickly established a defense, which made maximum use of all available assets. The defense was unique in many respects. First, the establishment of patrol dominance by the 38th Cavalry denied the enemy detailed knowledge of the squadron's dispositions and strength. Thus, any attacking enemy would be forced to guess where the squadron's units were deployed and where the squadron was weak and where it was strong.

A second aspect of the defense was the unusual attention to ensuring integrated command, control, and communications. To this end, the squadron employed sixteen radio nets incorporating over 60 radios. The high number of radios, several times the number found in an infantry battalion, supplemented a remarkable wire communications system consisting of 65 telephones, 50 miles of telephone wire and 6 switchboards. This effort is more amazing considering the fact that the squadron was not authorized any communications specialists. The wire command and control system integrated all squads, platoons, troops, and supporting artillery, into a single web. It was designed to ensure the system functioned even if a portion of it were destroyed. It also permitted very small units, in some cases individual four man machine gun positions and two man artillery observer teams, to continue to function and receive orders even when cut off from their immediate headquarters. In addition, all the wire was buried deep to protect it from enemy infiltrators, accidental cuts, and enemy artillery fire. Finally, the entire wire system was duplicated so that each line had a backup in the event of failure. This communication system would prove essential to the coordinated defense across such a large sector of front by so small a unit.

The third unique factor, which characterized the defense of Monschau, was the extremely precise and effective positioning of the available weapons, obstacles, and units. Machine guns were one of the keys to the defense of Monschau. The 38th Cavalry dismounted .50 caliber and .30 caliber machine guns from jeeps and armored cars, and carefully sighted in over fifty of them in the terrain surrounding the town. These weapons were carefully positioned so as to provide interlocking grazing fire along all the likely enemy avenues of approach. They were further tied into obstacles of concertina wire and personnel mines positioned along likely infantry avenues of approach. In addition, extensive use was made of trip flares to provide early warning of the enemy's approach. The unit preferred the flares because they prevented friendly casualties in case of mistakes and because they did not give the false sense of security that was associated with extensive mine fields. All the weapons were dug in with overhead cover to survive artillery attack, and they were carefully concealed so that an attacking enemy had to literally be on the position to recognize it as a machine gun position. Finally, the fighting positions were integrated into the squadron command and control telephone net.

A final point on the preparation of the Monschau defensive was typical characteristic of the defense common to the US Army. That was the thorough integration and abundance of artillery support. The cavalry squadron, with its own E Troop positioned to support and the unique artillery observer training of its soldiers, was more able than most units to use artillery quickly and with devastating effect. In this case, the 38th Cavalry had access to the squadron's M8 75mm HMC "assault guns" of E Troop, the organic 60mm and 81mm mortars of the recon troops, the 62d Field Artillery Battalion (105mm self-propelled) which was in direct support of the 102d Cavalry Group, and two 155mm medium howitzer battalions, the 955th and the 186th of the 406th Field Artillery Group, which were actually positioned to fire in support of an upcoming V Corps offensive, also were in position to support of the squadron." The fires of these artillery units were all planned and registered in accordance with the squadron's obstacles and the likely enemy approaches. Artillery observer teams from E Troop and the three artillery battalions were dispersed throughout the squadron's defensive position.

The effectiveness of the artillery in support of the squadron was later verified by a German prisoner of war. He reported that German troops in the Monschau sector were forbidden from leaving their bunkers and foxholes during hours of daylight. The German troops were reduced to observing their sectors through the use of mirrors in order not to attract rapid and deadly artillery fire.

The attack against Monschau was one of the opening blows of the German winter offensive in the Ardennes, which became known as the *Battle of the Bulge*. Monschau fell in the northern most corner of the Bulge, in the sector belonging to the main effort, the 6th SS Panzer. The 6th SS Panzer Army planned to penetrate the thinly held US lines with infantry shock troops, seize the road network, and then unleash elite SS Panzer division to continue the attack deep to the rear.

The road network in the Ardennes was not very robust and the key to success was to capture the towns where a network of roads met. Further south in the Ardennes the battles for the larger key towns such as St. Vith and Bastogne would become legendary. Monschau was also one of the towns sitting aside a key road. From Monschau highways led both north and south, and east and west. A key road led directly to Eupen where the V Corps headquarters was located. That same road continued on to Liege where General Courtney Hodges maintained the First Army Headquarters. On December 16 the only combat unit guarding the Eupen highway was the 38th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

The Germans initially placed great importance on the capture of Monschau and assigned an entire division to take the town and open the northern door into the American rear and block American reinforcements attempting to move down from the north. The mission was assigned to General Hitzfeld's LXVII Corps (Corps Monschau) who planned a two-

division attack. The 326th Volksgrenadier division was assigned the mission of taking Monschau itself and seizing the Monschau - Eupen Road. The 246th Volksgrenadier Division would attack to the south of the 326th through the town of Hofen. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the 246th Division was not in position to attack on 16 December. Worse, two battalions of 326th, the equivalent of a regiment, had also not arrived in attack positions (one was delayed and one was diverted to deal with an American attack farther north). Therefore, on the morning of 16 December the Germans were left with one understrength division and some fortress troops to execute the attack. Still, there was reason for optimism on the part of the Germans when considering that all that blocked the path to Liege was one dismounted cavalry squadron.

The total infantry strength available to the Generalmajor Erwin Kaschner, commander of the 326th Volksgrenadier Division was probably less than four battalions of infantry. However, he could count on a considerable amount of artillery in support. Two artillery corps with up to ten battalions of artillery were positioned to support the division. This totaled about 120 artillery pieces. In addition, two Nebelwerfer rocket-firing brigades were also positioned in support. This artillery support was three to four times the amount available to the Americans and was the largest faced by the Americans to this point in the war.

One of the most noted achievements of the German attack in the Ardennes is the surprise which was gained over the American defenders and the allied command. This surprise, interestingly, did not extend to the 38th Cavalry. Throughout the afternoon of 15 December, reports from all sectors of the squadron front came in indicating increased and unusual German activity. As darkness came, LTC O'Brien warned all his subordinates that a German attack was almost certain that night. That warning, to O'Brien's mind, was redundant; he knew that every soldier in the squadron, to include the newest replacements, was aware that something was up. That evening O'Brien ordered the Engineer platoon leader to put extra effort into the regular evenings mine and trip flare laying patrol. The engineer platoon leader complained that staying out longer than the normal hour would be very dangerous, as the men's hands would begin to freeze and be less able to arm the dangerous mines safely. O'Brien replied that he understood the risks but that the Germans would be attacking and it was necessary. The lieutenant continued to complain, but the orders remained firm. Thus, just hours before the attack, the squadron employed up to three times the number of flares and mines as it would in a routine evening. In addition, at midnight the squadron was placed on virtual one hundred percent alert. Thus on the eve of 16 December 1944, as many units in the Ardennes went to sleep with thoughts of the war ending by Christmas, in the veteran 38th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron every machine gun, tank, mortar and howitzer was manned.

Throughout the night of 15/16 December American units all through the dense pine forests of the German- Belgian border area were disturbed by the unusual activity of the previously passive German Wehrmacht. At 0545 the squadron was hit by the first of many intense artillery barrages. The artillery, consisting of a mix of conventional high explosive artillery and "screaming meemie" rockets hit C Troop and the squadron command post first. The command post, deep in the basement of the town's post office, rode out the attack with impunity. The squadron's S3 operations officer, MAJ Edward J. Edgerton, manned the squadron's mobile command post in a half-track outside. The artillery was so intense that it rocked the halftrack continuously and with such violence that it was impossible to talk or monitor the radios. The artillery then methodically moved west hitting F and B Troops to the west of town. Close on the heels of the artillery came the first German attack.

The first German attack was led by the 1st Battalion, 751st Regiment, of General Kaschner's 326th Volksgrenadier division. The attack hit the right flank of C Troop, and the 2d platoon of F Troop which was located in the town in the Ruhr river valley. This attack attempted to infiltrate using the twisting steep banked riverbed for cover. It was quickly discovered by the 2d Platoon of F Troop, led by platoon leader Staff Sergeant Bernard C. Bielicki. The German troops were picked up by the tankers as they worked their way through the dark foggy river bottom, and immediately taken under fire by tank machine guns and 37mm canister cannon fire at ranges as short as 50 yards.

Meanwhile, at the point of the attack SSG Bielicki's tanks kept the Germans pinned down with machine guns as the platoon leader adjusted E Troop artillery onto the German concentrations. The Germans, attempting to maneuver in close to the tanks used cover and concealment, and the poor morning visibility to attempt to outflank the Americans. Recognizing this danger, Bielicki directed SGT Martin P. Massano to dismount his tank's .30 caliber anti-aircraft machine gun and block this attempt. The German infiltrators were soon met and pinned by a hail of machine gun fire brought down by the dismounted tankers. With each passing minute, the artillery concentrations on the now immobilized Germans became more accurate. Finally, the disheartened Germans abandoned the effort and they withdrew. Snipers remained behind to remind the F Company tankers that the Germans had not given up.

As SSG Bielicki's platoon was beating off the attack down the river valley, another German attack tried to force its way down what the troopers called the snake road from the town of Imgenbroich. This attack was met by the deeply dug-in 2d and 3d platoons of C Troop, whose machine gun fire smashed the Germans as they advanced. Again, accurate and deadly artillery fire from the combined guns of E Troop and the 62d Field Artillery took a deadly toll on the pinned-down enemy. Again, the Germans were forced to retreat.

To be continued.....





Membership Update – SMG (Ret) Ken Mahan Trooper! Look at your address label! If the date is not September 2016 or later, you are behind in your dues. Your Subscription to *THE SPUR* is going to run out, due to non-payment of dues. A sample of label:

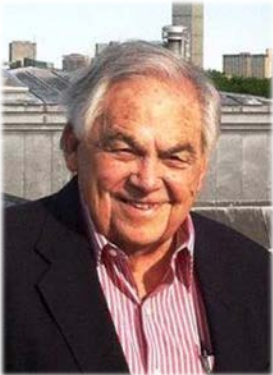
SEPT 16

**KENNETH L. MAHAN
12 W. WALNUT ST.
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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, Associate dues \$15.00 and enlisted E5-E1 \$10.00 are due in September.** Make checks Payable to **117th Cavalry**

Association. Pay Pal can be used as well – link is on our web site www.117th-cav.org **Boosters** help pay for SPUR mailings to WWII veterans and their widows, *not* for your dues! We cannot continue to mail *The SPUR* to lapsed members. Stick with us, we want you as a member, but you must pay your own “freight”. **Email:** Please send your email address to me at Kennethmahan05@gmail.com We are compiling an email list of members and we want to include *you*. **Association web site:** www.117th-cav.org/ Read past issues of *The SPUR*, look up the WWII histories of the 38th, 102nd and 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons (Mecz). All WWII Veterans will no longer pay dues, you will see WWII over your name.

TAPS



George James (Jim) Coburn, 95, of Sea Girt, NJ died peacefully on Friday evening, August 28, 2015. Born in Newark, NJ, Jim graduated from Milburn High School and attended Rutgers University for two years where he was a proud member of Rutgers' first varsity soccer team and the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity. Like his father before him, he answered his country's call to service and in 1939 enlisted with the 102d Calvary Regiment rising to corporal, and later transferring in 1942 to the 395th Fighter Squadron of the 9th Army Air Force where he served as a First Lieutenant in the Armaments Group. Landing in Normandy on D-Day plus five, he helped establish the first operating Allied airfield in Europe located in Cardonville, France. After his service, he began a 37-year career with the Prudential Insurance Company, rising from file clerk to a general manager in Prudential's Commercial Real Estate division where his last project was working on the development of the Gateway Plaza office building in Newark. Jim will always be remembered for his warmth, good humor and strength of character. He was a gentleman in the truest sense, an inveterate reader, a raconteur, lover of the arts and amateur historian. He

certainly Showed 'em the Way!



Warren LeRoy Congleton WWII Coast Guard veteran Warren LeRoy Congleton, 87, of Orange, N.J., passed away peacefully on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015. Born in East Orange, NJ, Warren was a resident of Orange for 18 years. He was employed as a maintenance supervisor with the Ivy Elementary School in Newark, N.J., for five years before retiring. Warren was a World War II veteran, having served with the U.S. Coast Guard, and later the New Jersey Army National Guard from which he retired, for a total of 31 years military service. Warren was a lifetime member of the *Essex Troop Association*. He served as a full-time employee in the West Orange Armory for many years. He was the devoted husband of Elizabeth Congleton; loving father of Jonell Congleton and Juanita Congleton; cherished stepfather of Mijanou Webb, and dear brother of Harvey Congleton. He is also survived by nine grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.





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