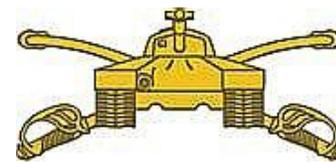




117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association



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 BN 5<sup>th</sup> RCN SQ 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV 1/102<sup>nd</sup> CAV  
Volume 30, Number 3 123<sup>rd</sup> Issue (post WWII) Fall 2009



**From the President - COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty** This is the sixty-fifth anniversary of many key historical events that took place during the late summer and early autumn of 1944 in organizational histories of the 117<sup>th</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadrons. The 117<sup>th</sup> was deeply involved in *Operation Dragoon* and *Task Force Butler*; the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Group (102<sup>nd</sup> & 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry) had just played a key role in the liberation of Paris and was in hot pursuit of the Nazis to the *Siegfried Line*.

September 2009 is also significant because 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry will return to their home Armories on the weekend 12-13 September for the first time since their mobilization over a year ago. Please, mark that date on your calendar and make it a point to get to one of the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Armories (Westfield, West Orange, Dover and Hackettstown) and say thanks to the troopers of the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry for their dedication and selfless service they all made on a daily basis in defense of our nation. They are a "New Greatest Generation," all volunteers; all serving our nation in this ongoing conflict that is now our nation's third longest war.

All of our Veterans, especially our newest veterans deserve our recognition and thanks. Our November 6 meeting will be devoted to thanking all our veterans. Our guest speaker will be Harry Yeide author of *Steeds of Steel*. Harry spoke at our last 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association biennial reunion last October 2008. He talked about the transition of Horse to Mechanized Cavalry and the story of the mechanized cavalry in World War II and in particular, roles and missions of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the 102<sup>nd</sup> Group (102<sup>nd</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry). He promised to return and speak again when the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry returned home. It should be quite a night!

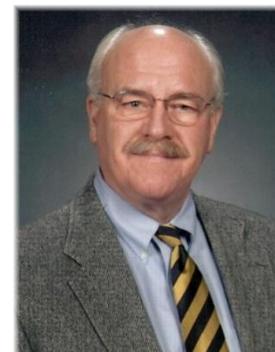
A special thanks to all our members who have made "Boosters" contributions to help defray the cost of the publication of "The SPUR." Please continue to show your support in your sponsorship of our 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Association newsletter "The SPUR." Many of you have made and continue to make donations to help pay the cost of publication and its mailing. Thanks to all of those who have given freely to our Association's many 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 who are currently deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Show' em the Way!  
Dennis



**From the Editor - Phil Notestine** In this issue, we remember that 65 years ago, on 3 September 1944, elements of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) fought a valiant battle against vastly superior German *Wehrmacht* armored forces, at Montrevel, France. I have made an attempt to tell the story in these limited spaces, by conducting interviews and taking excerpts from our WWII Unit History and Colonel Harold J. Samsel's book, *Operational History of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) World War II*. I do hope that our readers will be inspired to learn more by reading the unit WWII History and the paper by MAJ Michael J. Volpe, USA entitled *Butler Task Force...* on our Association web site <[www.117th-cav-org](http://www.117th-cav-org)>. In my studies on the invasion of Southern France – *Operation Dragoon*, the fight into the Vosges Mountains and the Rhine, I have read and recommend *Operation Dragoon 1944 – France's other D-Day* by Steven J. Zaloga, *Steeds of Steel* by Harry Yeide and *Decision at Strasbourg* by David P. Colley.



One of my interviews was with Ed Leonard of Pompton Plains, NJ. Ed celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday on August 10<sup>th</sup>! Ed is a *Class of '41* member, serving in B Troop of the January 1941 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry (Horse-Mecz) and much later, a Platoon Sergeant, B Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV during the Battle of Montrevel, and a POW for 9 months.

A few months ago, I received an email from the granddaughter of LTC John L. Wood Sr. who died on 17 December 1977. Mrs. Katie Adams has been trying to gather information about his WWII service for her 12 year old son. Wood was a Captain at Montrevel, commander of B Troop. Captain Wood joined the 117<sup>th</sup> in Algeria, and commanded B Troop in Italy and France, earning a reputation as a fine officer and brave leader amongst his men and peers. Wounded and captured in Montrevel, he later escaped along with 3 others, returning to the squadron. Wood was rotated back to the US in a few months. More about him later.

We will defer the next installment of *WWII History of the 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Recon Squadron (Mecz)* to the next issue.

**Regular meeting of the Association held at Westfield, 5 June 2009** The meeting was lead by President COL Dennis Dougherty, beginning with the *Pledge of Allegiance* and remembrances of those who recently died. He spoke of the plans for the November meeting, to be dedicated to all veterans. The Colonel has invited the new CO of the recently reconstituted 1-38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 525 BfSB stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. We possess an American Flag that was flown by the WWII 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Group and would like to present it in a brief ceremony during the meeting. We will also invite a WWII officer of the 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, a recon platoon leader at Monschau, in the "*Battle of the Bulge*". He is LTC Alfred H. M. Shehab; AUS (Ret.) Colonel Shehab made a career of the Army. He lives in Maryland, an active man in his '90's.

COL Dougherty told of the change in the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regimental Distinctive Unit Insignia from the old *Essex Troop* insignia to that of the post war 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. It is fitting, as the two were one before November 1943 and came together as one in recent years. We have ordered these to be worn on blazer jackets, and they may be had for \$25.00.

COL Harold Samsel and Arnold Lasner have been advised by French authorities that they are to be awarded the *Cavalier, French Legion of Honor*. Samsel was the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry S-3, XO and CO while in France, beginning with *Operation Dragoon* and becoming CO in January 1945. Lasner was a replacement trooper, joining immediately after Montrevel. He was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor after the Battle of Bitche.

Jim Pressman, a UH-1 Iroquois "Huey" pilot in Vietnam and retired D Air pilot told about his trip to Paris and tour of the Normandy, area, Omaha Beach and US Cemetery, which faces west, containing 10,511 graves.

NJANG representative Kim Castner spoke about health and life insurance options for retirees and those planning to retire soon.

An informal but sincere retirement event was held for LTC Mike Hrycak and LTC Bob Vicci. Speaking in praise and sometimes with a bit of humor were BG Ken Wondrack, COL Dennis Dougherty, COL Elliot Coley, LTC Chris Sands, LTC Dan Mahon, MAJ Lantz, CW5 Frank Mnich, 1SG Russo and SMG Ken Mahan.

In attendance: Ken Mahan, Jim Pressman, Arnold Lasner, Walt Lawrence, Henry Forstenhausler, Dennis Dougherty, C. Curry Sr., Robert Apgar, John Suiter, Jack Nafus, Lou Di Belardino, Rick Luciano, SGT Pablo Chavez, CPL Jeff Heine, Don Kondrowski, Frank Patrick, Dave Mormak, Bob Foley, Ron Nier, Dave Ellis, James Russo, James Anglim, Chris Sands, Orest Hrycak, Mike Hrycak, Phil Notestine, Jim Lantz, Frank Wiswall, Dan Melso, Rochus Lawrence, Marta Biskuf, Robert Vicci, Patrick du Tertre, Frank Mnich, Bill Gruss, Don Tracy, COL Elliot E. Coley, Kevin Hegarty, Dan Mahon, Ken Wondrack and Kim Castner, for a total of 41.



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**Class of '41 Luncheon & Meeting, 5 August 2009 at Gibbs Hall, Fort Monmouth NJ** Special guests were the Salcido men, family of 1LT Manuel Salcome Salcido, who joined the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry in February 1942, fresh from commissioning at



Fort Riley, a 2LT of Cavalry and a fine horseman. 1LT Salcido was a combat casualty in Italy, 24 June 1944 while leading his F Troop tank platoon against the *Wehrmacht* foe in combat. At the same time, his brother, Robert Salcido Sr. was a 764<sup>th</sup> Tank BN Recon Trooper fighting in Normandy. Robert Sr. and his 3 sons, Robert Jr., Manuel and Pete travelled from El Paso, Texas to meet with the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalrymen who served with 1LT Manuel Salcido. It was a great moment, as Salcido was remembered and honored by his fellow WWII 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalrymen, and his family. The Salcido men were welcomed by all. Two 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry officers who recently served in Iraq were also guests. They were Captains Joseph McNamara and Mike Tarricone. Joe was a Troop Commander and is now the S-1. Mike is "A" Troop Commander and had previously served with "C" Troop in the previous tour in

Iraq. The *Class of '41* men had another treat - joining this outstanding group was Edward J. Leonard, who was remembered as the B Troop farrier in 1941 and a great Platoon Sergeant of B Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, among those who fought valiantly in the Battle of Montrevel, 3 September 1944, and taken prisoner by the Germans, spending 9 months a POW. Leonard, Partelow, Prettyman and Ferguson all remembered Salcido and shared these with the Salcido men. After an excellent buffet luncheon, we retired to the great room and several presentations were given.



Captains Tarricone and McNamara spoke of the recent deployment and the Iraqi people and their appreciation. Robert Salcido Sr. spoke of his brother Manuel as a proud *Essex Troop* officer and his own service as a recon trooper fighting in France and Belgium. Son Pete Salcido told of the quest for information about his Uncle Manuel and how it led to the trip to NJ and this luncheon. The Salcido family gave several El Paso PD coins and later presented a very special El Paso Police memorial belt buckle to Phil Notestine for his efforts, guidance and support in helping the family develop the complete history of 1LT Manuel S. Salcido in WWII. It is a treasure and an honor to be so recognized. Attending: *Class of '41* - Frank Prettyman, Irv Partelow, Jack Ferguson, Joe Pcoroba, Ed Leonard, and Frank Wiswall. Guests: Arnold Lasner (WWII 117<sup>th</sup> CAV), Jack Coogan, Charlotte Merring, CWO (Ret.) Bill Merring, CWO (Ret.) Don Tracy, COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty, SMG (Ret.) Ken Mahan, Phil

Notestine, Robert Salcido Sr., Robert Salcido Jr., Manuel Salcido, Pete Salcido, CPT Joseph McNamara and CPT Mike Tarricone.

## **20 July 2009 - Interview with Ed Leonard, Class of '41 - WWII Veteran, POW, Husband, Father, Citizen, Patriot**

Joe Pocaroba told me about Ed Leonard, a survivor of the *Battle of Montrevel* and a POW. "Call Ed Leonard, he lives up in North Jersey. Ed was in B Troop, and became a POW. He was a blacksmith in Fort Jackson". I found him in our Association directory with a Pompton Plains address, (about 12 miles from my home) and called. Ed was surprised by my call, but happy to do an interview. He confirmed that he was in Montrevel and a Platoon Sergeant in B Troop, commanded by CPT John Wood. We made a date for the interview!



Later, I called Frank Wiswall to see if he remembered Ed Leonard. "Who? Our blacksmith in Fort Jackson?" said Frank, who lives in Boonton, NJ, about 10 miles from Pompton Plains. Frank came with me. Ed and Frank were in B Troop at Fort Jackson, and they remembered each other, clearly. A very lively discussion took off, mostly about the Troop horses and old comrades. The old gentlemen, both close to 90, reminisced about many horses' names, gender, colorations, temperaments...years melted away as they laughed and remembered.

Ed was born in Jersey City, 10 August 1919, in the family home on Griffin & Summit, Jersey City. His grandfather, a harness maker, emigrated from Ireland. His father was also a harness maker and owned a trucking business. His father was John C. Leonard and his mother was Catherine, a handsome couple. He had four brothers and sisters, John, Charles, Margaret and Pauline. All lived into their late '80's &'90's. They spawned many children. Ed was a stable boy from childhood. He learned blacksmithing and to be a farrier, making horse shoes and shoeing horses, at the side of a blacksmith. He spent many a day with a team and wagon, and learned to know and love horses. He continued working with horses after high school. His sweetheart was Francis Kelly, destined to be his bride, someday. Ed joined the Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1939 and was sent to Montana, where he and crew built watering systems for agriculture. His work with horses was helpful in managing young men, including many city boys from back east. That Ed was his Boy Scout Troop's boxing champ and a developing blacksmith, was to assure his mettle in certain physical requirements, as you might imagine, as a CCC supervisor. The CCC was a quasi military organization, developing and encouraging men to join the military. Like many, Ed enlisted.

**Fort Jackson, SC** World War II was clearly in the offing. Ed learned about an Army National Guard outfit that was horse cavalry, and planned to join the 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment (Horse-Mecz). Enlisting in the Westfield Armory, but convinced to join friends at the Newark Armory in early January 1941, he was soon in Fort Jackson, and after 30 days was assigned by SGT Dupree to the stables, to be a Farrier in B Troop. The older, veteran farrier was Eddie Kerr, an Irishman with a strong brogue. They worked together for about 13 months, responsible for about 150 horses. Ed enjoyed helping inexperienced troopers, and had some fun with lieutenants who thought that they knew something. After December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the regiment accelerated mechanization and the horses were retired. Ed thought that horse cavalry would suffer badly in war, and took becoming a mechanized cavalryman with no concern. He was promoted to corporal and leader of a 37 MM towed cannon squad.

**England** The Regiment was shipped to England in September 1942. They were reequipped, reorganized and did much training. Then a corporal, Ed remembers returning to barracks one night, late and very tired. He had retained a Springfield Rifle M1903 instead of accepting a Garand M-1. He quickly unloaded by working the bolt action - 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 cartridges, then pulled the trigger - BANG! Either he had loaded one in the chamber before inserting a clip, or he didn't fully retract the bolt. Captain John "Newt" Brown was not happy, and Ed had to suffer a bit. The punishment was light, as Ed's embarrassment was enough.

**North Africa** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry was sent to Algeria, North Africa on 24 December 1943 to provide combat security for Allied Headquarters. After many successes, including a rapid 1,000 mile march to Marrakech, French Morocco to provide security for Winston Churchill who was to confer there with General DeGaulle, some of the squadron helped to train Free French "Cuirassiers", cavalrymen, on US weaponry and tactics. Ed provided instruction on the .30 LMG. Ed remembers working with French Colonial "Spahis", Arab cavalrymen who rode Arabian stallions. When the Arab cavalrymen learned that the Americans had been horse cavalrymen in the USA, Ed was able to mount and ride one of their stallions. What a thrill! He put on a good show, and the relations were improved.

It was on 30 November 1943 that the Squadron was reorganized and designated the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized. The "new" 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry became the only separate cavalry squadron of the US Army.

Ed moved through the B Troop NCO ranks to become Platoon Sergeant, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon. He had served under Captains Bob McGarry, John "Newt" Brown, Jim Shenk and John L. Wood. CPT Wood joined the 117<sup>th</sup> in Algeria. He had been in combat, and reassigned from an infantry division recon unit. Wood initially took a squadron HQ position in S-3.

New M-8 Armored Cars replaced the old White Scout Car, a huge improvement. The M-8 had an open turret mounting a 37MM cannon and a .30 LMG. Some had a .50 heavy machine gun on the turret ring. Powered by twin Cadillac V-8 engines and with all-wheel drive, it was fast and potent.

**Italy** Having embarked for Naples on 10 May, the Squadron disembarked on 16 May and was assigned to the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, a veteran Army Guard outfit from Texas, relieving the division recon squadron on 22 May 1944.

< [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/36th\\_Infantry\\_Division\\_\(United\\_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/36th_Infantry_Division_(United_States)) > Squadron elements were often assigned to other units; movement and combat was continuous.

Among the many KIA and wounded was Ed's close buddy SSG Kenneth J. Horner. "Kenny" was shot in the thigh, severing the femoral artery. He died before the medics could get to him, on 2 May 1944 near Senza.

Platoon Sergeant Ed Leonard grows to respect and like the new B Troop CO, CPT John L. Wood, who has been reassigned from HQ S-3. Wood is also a horse cavalryman, shares a love of horses and has the élan and courage required to lead the Troop.

The Allies are now pushing hard towards Rome; German units fight delaying actions and take a toll. The Squadron takes ground, prisoners and casualties.

4 June 1944 – The Squadron enters the outskirts of Rome, enters and claims "first to enter" of Allied Forces. Delayed only by happy, even delirious Romans, they chase the Germans out of the city environs.

7 June - Ed lost another good man, PFC Gordon Chance, his Jeep driver. The Troop was on a mission to find a threatening tank. Ed left his Jeep to take the lead in an armored car, just in front of his Jeep. As they moved forward, the Jeep ran over a heavy mine. PFC Chance was instantly killed and two others were WIA.

Fighting continues well north, into Follonica and Vincenzo. By 20 June, the Squadron had advanced over 210 miles during 37 days of continuous engagement. A captured German document stated that "The 117th Cavalry Squadron was the equivalent of two German Panzer Divisions".

Ed remembers that the first tank officer killed was 1LT Manuel Salcido, a fine horseman who joined the squadron in February 1942. LT Paul Seidel took his place as platoon leader, F Troop.

On 29 June, the Squadron was relieved and pulled back (30 June) to an area near the port of Naples, a trip of 269 miles.

July 1944 - The Squadron begins R&R, reequipping and refurbishing. Combat lessons are recorded and used for planning. Replacement troops and officers arrive. E Troop gets the new M-7 105MM HMC assault guns replacing the M-8 75MM HMC; a major improvement. Some reorganization goes on. Awards and promotions are given. Planning for the invasion of Southern France, *Operation Dragoon* is ongoing. Platoon Sergeant Ed Leonard readies his 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, Troop B for an amphibious assault.

By August 11, the Squadron is aboard ships and by 14 August, the invasion fleet is in place.

**OPERATION DRAGOON – The invasion of Southern France** Underway on 15 August 1944, sets the German defenses reeling on all fronts. Commanded by Lieutenant General Jacob Devers, the Allies 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group, consisting of the 7<sup>th</sup> US Army and the French 1<sup>st</sup> Army, lands on the Mediterranean French coast between Toulon and Cannes. The Squadron's Troops are attached to the 36<sup>th</sup> ID, the 45<sup>th</sup> ID and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID. Resistance is mixed, and overwhelmed. Airborne troops make successful landings and consolidate gains. Allied air power is highly effective. Movement inland is rapid.

**Task Force Butler** LTG Devers and Major General Lucien Truscott soon determine that rapid and strong action against the retreating German 19 Army could disorganize, fragment and destroy it, before "He" crosses the Rhine into Germany. No armored combat command is available, so General Truscott, a veteran cavalryman, orders Brigadier General Fred Butler, also an old horse cavalryman to form such a force with the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Recon Squadron as the nucleus, and included 59<sup>th</sup> Armored Field Artillery BN, 753<sup>rd</sup> Tank BN (less one med. & one light co.); 2<sup>nd</sup> BN, 143<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Reg.; C Co. 636<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer BN; Co. F, 344<sup>th</sup> Eng. Reg.; Co. C, 111<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment; Co. D, 111<sup>th</sup> Medical BN; 3426<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Truck Co.; Det. 87<sup>th</sup> Ord. Co.; Det. Military Police (VI Corps). This was done on 17 August 1944. BG Butler ensconces his HQ within the Squadron HQ.

Operations commenced on 18 August. *TF Butler*, led by the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, fought the German 19<sup>th</sup> Army up through the Rhone Valley areas in an effort to impede and destroy before the *Wehrmacht* reached Germany. Although the German 19<sup>th</sup> Army did manage to reach and cross the Rhine, great damage was inflicted and many thousands of prisoners were taken. It was a highly successful mission, combined with Allied air power and Free French Forces (FFI), the "Maquis". By 30 August, the mission was considered accomplished and TF Butler was disbanded, and the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry reported to Corps HQ for orders. TF Butler had advanced hundreds of miles, expending huge amounts of ammunition, food, fuel and other supplies. Vehicle maintenance was meager and some replacements, due to combat and break-downs were required. The efforts and accomplishments of Squadron S-4 were herculean and vital. The leadership of HQ, line officers and NCOs was superb, as was the courage and performance of the Troopers.

However, adequate time for rest and maintenance was *not* forthcoming. The chase of the *Wehrmacht* continued, and the Squadron was tasked to block and deny movement at an important road junction, to "*Seize and Hold*" Montrevel.

### **The 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Montrevel, 3 September 1944 ...Dedicated to Those Who Were There...**

When I decided to do a feature on the *Battle of Montrevel*, I called several of our WWII veterans of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, who were "there", in some capacity. These included COL Harold Samsel, Bob Lutz, Marvin Carlile, Paul Seidel, Irv Partelow, Larry Haskett, Frank Prettyman, Santi Carnevali, Danny Melso and Ed Leonard. Memories were sketchy, but much was recorded in COL Samsel's book and the WWII 117<sup>th</sup> CAV unit history, compiled by Troop C men, SSG Bob Lutz and LT Dave Nelson, who had been a platoon leader. Nelson retrieved the Squadron Daily Reports from US Army at Carlisle, PA. <<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/index.cfm>> Lutz compiled, edited and published the history that we have on our Association web site. COL Samsel's *Operational History of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry*...is a treasure of information, including some personal testimonies, some of which I have scanned and excerpted for *The Spur*.

Due to limited copy space in this newsletter, I have chosen to use the unit history, excerpts from statements of Padraig O'Dea, Tom Piddington, Harold Samsel and Ed Leonard. *I urge any and all to write, email or call and contribute for the record of The Battle of Montrevel.*

**Excerpts from the Unit History** "On September 1, 1944, the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz), commanded by Lt. Col. Charles J. Hodge was in the field in France. At this time, the Squadron was attempting to penetrate the enemy's right flank and was encountering strong resistance. The enemy forces seemed determined that their main axis of escape from Lyon north into Germany should not be penetrated.

The Squadron consists of three Reconnaissance Troops (A, B & C), an Assault Gun Troop (E), a Support Troop (Tanks - Company F), a Medical Detachment and a Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Troop.

Troop "A" has been operating with the *Task Force Bilbo* in the vicinity of the Italian border and is expected to rejoin the Squadron on the 2nd. The balance of the Squadron was operating with the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The strength of the Squadron this date is 46 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 680 Enlisted men.

1 September 1944 - Troop "A" was reported to be in the act of moving to rejoin the Squadron. Troop "B" reinforced with one Platoon of "F" Company Tanks screened the advance of the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry north from Amberieu and Bessey. Light resistance was encountered but the Troop pushed ahead and reached a point 10 km northeast of Bourg. At this point, "B" Troop halted and covered elements of the 180<sup>th</sup> Infantry as they crossed the bridge at 343-245. "C" Troop encountered strong opposition at Meximieux and withdrew southeast to establish strong defensive positions. Eight enemy tanks attacked "C" Troop's positions but were repulsed. Troop "E" and "F" Company were in reserve.

2 September 1944 - The Squadron continued its mission to the northwest. "B" and "C" Troops were conducting aggressive reconnaissance to ascertain what routes were available for a proposed attack on Bourg by the 45<sup>th</sup> Division. Troop "C", on the left met stubborn resistance at Meximieux and was halted, but Troop "B" moved north very rapidly against little or no resistance. Troop "A" rejoined the Squadron and was ordered north to support Troop "B". At 1700 hours, Troop "B" was ordered to set up roadblocks along the highway leading north from Bourg through Montrevel and Marboz. To be more specific, the orders issued by General Truscott, VI Corps Commander, were to "*Seize and Hold*" the *village of Montrevel*". "B" Troop continued north in order to accomplish this before morning.

The Squadron Commander and Executive Officer (Maj. Robert F. J. McGarry) joined A and B Troops at Marboz. Major McGarry was placed in command of the two Reconnaissance Troops that were already present at Marboz and of Troop "E" and Company "F" which were en route to join A & B Troops. At midnight the forces were deployed south of Montrevel awaiting the coming morning when they were to attack the town.

3 September 1944 - On this date, Troop "A" was ordered to follow Troop "B" in close support to establish road-blocks on the main highway leading northeast out of Montrevel. At 0700 hours Troop "B" after overcoming small arms and machine gun fire, occupied the town. Troop "B" set up local security and part of Troop "A", which had followed "B" into the town, provided security for the bridge leading east out of Montrevel. The Troops engaged in separate fighting against Mark VI tanks and enemy infantry. By 1000 hours the situation had become so grave that the Commanding Officer of Troop "B", Captain Wood, informed the Squadron Commander that he would have to abandon the town if reinforcements did not arrive. Captain Wood was told that reinforcements would be forthcoming. Meanwhile, dismounted patrols were detailed to find an escape route northeast of town.

At that point, General Carlton of VI Corps, when asked for assistance for a counter-attack, told Col. Hodge to get it from the 45<sup>th</sup> Div. which gave him a Battalion of Infantry and returned C Troop for that attack which was set for 1600 hours. By 1300 hours the gravity of the situation had intensified to such an extent that the Troops were prepared to withdraw upon an instant's notice from the Commanding Officer. At 1430 hours, they found themselves cut off by enemy infantry, AT guns, self-propelled guns and a great number of Mark VI tanks. When news of this was radioed to the Squadron Commander, Company "F" Tanks were committed to the battle. The forces within the town also launched an attack to coincide with the tank commitment; but both attacks were futile, although the forces fought with extreme aggressiveness and determination.

Throughout the day the forces within the town were defenders in name only. Again and again the troops launched attacks against the greatly superior armor and numerical superiority of the enemy as they awaited the promised assistance. These forays kept the enemy off balance and in the dark as to the strength of the defenders. Unfortunately, their promised assistance never came.

At 1555 hours, General Carlton, VI Corps Chief of Staff, ordered the counter-attack cancelled.

At 1630 hours, Captain Wood called the Squadron Commander by radio and told him that it would be impossible to withdraw under any circumstances because of the great number of wounded personnel. This was the last message from Montrevel.

The aggressive tactics and personal bravery of the Troops within the town were of such a high degree that the enemy commander displayed considerable amazement that the force, which had opposed him, was so small numerically and so lacking in armor.

Our losses, though a great deal smaller than the enemy's, were very great. The losses in men and materiel were: All "B" Troop personnel less five men, who were MIA, LWA, SWA plus three KIA. Those KIA included Sgt Barsby, Cpl L. Stewart and Tec5 Renzi all of "B" Troop and S/Sgt Lawson of Company F. Troop "A" lost 2 Officers and 10 enlisted men. 20 Quarter ton 4x4s, 15 armored cars and 2 light tanks were lost.

What was left of A and B Troops were reorganized into a Provisional A Troop, and the Squadron assembled in the area west of Marboz for the night. A volunteer patrol was formed to enter the enemy held town of Montrevel to ascertain the results of the battle. The patrol left the Squadron CP at dusk and entered the town by midnight.

4 September 1944 - The patrol, which entered Montrevel after dark on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, returned at 0600 hours and reported. The enemy had complete control of the town but they were preparing to leave. This patrol had conducted a noteworthy foray and the information which they garnered was of great value.

Troop "C" and the remains of Troops "A" & "B" were formed into six Reconnaissance Details each consisting of two Armored Cars, three 1/4 ton trucks and one half-track. One Platoon of infantry was attached to each Reconnaissance Detail. These provisional Reconnaissance Platoons were to move north from the vicinity of Marboz and reconnoiter west

about three km from the main axis of advance along Route National 83. The mission to which the Squadron was assigned was to cover the left flank of the 3rd division as it advanced north of Besancon. Light enemy resistance was encountered and by nightfall, the Squadron was at a point approximately 10km Southeast of Dole.

More information relative to the Montrevel encounter was gathered today. It was ascertained that PVT Kusina of Medical Detachment and PVT C. Fisher of "F" Company were seriously wounded and that the following were lightly wounded: Lt. Lee, PVTs Benjamin and Purdom of "A" Troop; Tec5 Calabrese, Elliott, Halgren, and Kielty; PFCs Craig and Homrich and PVT Black of "B" Troop.

From reports which came in throughout the day, it was made known that: (a) the battle losses had not been as bad as was previously reported; (b) Troop "B" and one Platoon of Troop "A" had lost all of their vehicles; (c) of the 31 men known to have been wounded, the enemy left 12 of the more serious cases in care of Captain Van Ark and the Medical Detachment enlisted man.

Captain Wood, Lt. Lutye, 1st Sgt Grant and PVT Coe who had been captured at Montrevel, escaped and returned to the Squadron this date. The vehicles which were transporting these men to prison camp were shelled by American artillery and in the resultant confusion, Captain Wood and the others gained the cover of the woods. After the artillery had ceased firing and the vehicles had left, they made their way back by various means. (Note: There is no entry in this file of Daily Reports for the 6th of September.)"

**Statement of (then) Platoon Sergeant Ed Leonard, Troop B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon** "In foggy conditions, we arrived at Montrevel earlier than 0530, my guess - 0400 hours. LT Bill Lutye and I were the first in; it was still dark. Our platoon immediately captured about a company of Germans who were sleeping on the ground floor of the municipal building, rifles neatly stacked. We were elated. We did not, at this time, know the scope of our mission.

I left with orders from LT Lutye to position my mortar team and dismounted outposts on our left flank. On the way out I saw two men sleeping in the grass. I awakened them (roughly) and chewed them a little. I noticed then that one of them was young LT Daniel Lee (I still feel I owed him an apology - the way he performed later that day). I returned to our CP for further orders. Shortly after daybreak, the action started.

German heavy tanks began shelling our supply vehicles, which were strung out to our rear. The rounds were coming from our left flank. It was flat trajectory, cannon fire. There were no misses. The ammo truck first and then the gas truck blew up spectacularly. A short time later a German light tank started around the corner of the crossroad. When this target appeared, about a dozen of our LMG's fired at him simultaneously. He backed up, out of sight. At the time, the Germans were impressed with our firepower. They estimated that we were a battalion. (My captors told me this the next day, while traveling north.)

The road to the rear was now blocked by wrecked and burning vehicles. We had experienced our first probing attack from the front, at the crossroad. By now just about all the jeeps and armored cars had moved to the covered position, in the courtyard, by the municipal building - except one AC (M-8 Armored Car), commanded by SGT Schmetzer with T/5 Leopold J. Renzi on the 37MM cannon. They trained their guns on the crossroad. About six men and I supported them on the ground. We positioned ourselves alongside and to the rear of the AC. At this time, there was sporadic gunfire on the perimeters. I assumed Mitchell was on the right flank with members of the 1st Platoon. I knew LT Padraig O'Dea and LT Lee had a force on the left flank. By now we realized that, we, one troop of lightly armed Cavalry, (150 men) were up against the seasoned 11th Panzer Division - 6,000 men equipped with heavy armor, heavy weapons and a battalion of attached infantry. *We had grabbed a tiger by the tail. What do we do now?*

We had heard that one of our light tanks (M5A1) and/or one of our 105 Howitzers (M-7 HMC "Priest") had reached a position on the main road, north of us, and was knocked out by German tank fire. We couldn't go back and we couldn't go forward onto the main road.

Sometime later, from my position on the ground, I saw a German light tank. It was about 1/2 mile away, west of us, on the small road we were sitting on. It was barreling down the slope directly toward us. Schmetzer and Renzi saw it too. Renzi's first shot with the 37MM jolted it - his second stopped it, with its cannon and turret askew. Two direct hits - what a dead eye!

After a brief respite, we spied an object moving out from the corner of the crossroad. As it slowly inched out, we realized it was a *big muzzle brake - mounted on a very large cannon*, which was mounted, we were sure, on a *large tank or tank destroyer*. As it inched slowly forward the track and then a bogey wheel came into view - Renzi fired. The track was severed at the top. The track fell down and lay out in front of the tank. The tank's forward movement stopped. Now it slowly inched back. We knew it could only go back the length of the ruptured track - so it had to be right there, just around the corner. The six feet of severed track was now the only thing visible.

Schmetzer and Renzi and the other members of the AC crew needed relief. They had been hours at their position. They withdrew to the courtyard and a new AC came out and took up their vacated position. I heard later that Renzi dismounted and was killed taking part in the perimeter action. Schmetzer sustained a badly torn knee which occurred when he caught it in the traverse mechanism during the action. From where I was, Schmetzer and Renzi were two of the big heroes of the day.

The next big event at the CP position happened when the Germans got their big guns on the high ground to the west. They had, evidently, managed a covered approach and we didn't know they were in position until the first round hit the municipal building, about 20 ft. off the ground. Now, all they had to do was lower their sights a little and we'd all be chopped meat. It was then that our officers sent one of our German prisoners to arrange our surrender.

There were times during that day when I cursed the author of our "mission impossible", but we had held them at bay for about 11 hrs. Montrevel was gloriously liberated for those 11 hours. I wish we could have done more!

The next day the Germans lined us up in front of the barn we had slept in. Then they brought up 3 big tanks, their weapons pointed at us. We were sure it was *adios* - but they only wanted us to witness the ceremonial burial of their

young officer who died in the light tank that Renzi and Schmetzer had kayoed. I heard that POW Decoteau was killed en route to Germany by strafing American planes.”

After nine difficult months a German POW, Ed Leonard was repatriated, rehabilitated and returned home to NJ.

**CPT (then) Tom Piddington, CO A Troop** “The next day, Troop A received a new mission - screen and protect the right flank of the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. This was in the vicinity of Briancon near the Italian border. We became part of a task force under a LTC Bilbo. We spent about 12 days in this location. We were placed in a very poor position and almost lost the whole task force when the Germans attacked, swarming down from the high mountains. Troop A persevered as usual. That action split Troop A because we were spread over a twenty mile front. Eventually, we came together safe and sound.

After this action, we were required to report to Squadron somewhere near St. Arnoux east of Montrevel. We arrived late at night on the 2nd of September after a forced march of 250 miles in one day. The column was spread out for miles - mainly maintenance problems. We needed every conceivable supply.

A small task force under the command of Major Bob McGarry consisted of Capt. Wood's Troop B and Troop A in support. The mission was to attack Montrevel at dawn on the 3rd of September 1944.

All reports from Troop B's scouts indicated that the 11th Panzer Division was on the east side of the Rhone River in force. 6th Corps Headquarters denied these reports. Col. Hodge pleaded With 6th Corps to call off this ridiculous mission. This request was to no avail. I was with Hodge when he raised hell with the Corps Chief of Staff about this to be sure of fatal attack.

In a talk with Bill Lutye, who scouted the 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer force, he indicated we wouldn't survive this one. I had to agree, but also Wood and I knew we had to get on with our mission - regardless of the results. We had to do our best.

Troop B took Montrevel on schedule. Troop A outposted about 20 miles of roadway to Montrevel in order to keep a line of communication open. Troop B's wounded were evacuated immediately. Capt. Wood called me for assistance. I told McGarry that I would go in with LT Cronin's platoon (about one section is all we could muster). Just as we entered the edge of town, our rear was closed by 88 tank shelling. We never did get it open again.

Unfortunately we were trapped in town. It was a cardinal rule of mine - never stay in a town. It was too easy to be trapped. We tried all kinds of things such as two armored cars abreast firing 37MM salvos, laying mines (with no caps available) to delay the enemy in their approaches to our position and use of German weapons. However, the casualties were piling up.

With Wood's agreement, I asked, on a voluntary basis, LT Cronin to make and escape in his armored car to our lines and tell Hodge the real story of Montrevel. Cronin, a very brave officer, dashed through the enemy lines in a hair-raising, wild ride. He made it. We ended up in the school house, a sturdy thick walled building capable of withstanding heavy gun fire.

It ended up that all personnel were on the business end of some kind of weapon. CPT Wood and I manned a LMG. I fed the last rounds into his gun. We were firing at the slits of a Panther tank, about 40 to 50 yards from our position in the school building. The Germany infantry was in the ditches along side of the tanks - ready for the final assault on the school building. We were down to our last bullets. An 88 MM shell missed Wood and me by inches as it caused four more casualties in the building. CPT Wood, a very fine officer decided this was it. No more bloodshed.

Thereafter, we were captured by the 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division. The great Patton never did defeat this division. However, the German Regimental Commander, responsible for destroying Montrevel, Pointed out that our outfit was the toughest unit he had ever encountered. This German unit spent 3 years on the Russian Front. We had been fighting crack troops for many days.

As prisoners, we marched out as proud Americans. The Germans looked out for the dead and wounded. In days to come, several of our people escaped when Corps artillery caused them to take cover.

LT Padraig O'Dea was like a nurse to me when I was so very ill, prior to an operation by a German surgeon. In addition, some wonderful Catholic Nuns at the local hospital of Limburg, Germany, helped me to survive. I eventually ended up in Poland after an operation due to a lack of water and food. I was lucky, I finally returned home in June 1945.”

Colonel Tom Piddington served post war, becoming CO of the 50<sup>th</sup> Recon BN and later in the Army Guard Bureau, Washington DC as a Colonel.

**LT (then) Padraig O'Dea, XO, Troop B** As related in a letter to COL James B. Deerin, *The National Guardsman*, 23 December 1958: “Briefly, as I remember it, the mission was: Seize and hold Montrevel, establish road blocks on the roads leading into the town from the south, the east, and the north, so as to cut off the escape of the 11th Panzer Division. The Job looked "hairy". One thing I do remember is looking up from the map at Captain Wood and it seems that we both said, almost in unison, “This is it!”

Troop “A” was to join us in the vicinity or our CP and be attached to "B" for the mission. When they eventually arrived, the troop was not at full strength. The vehicles of the force refueled and resupplied at this place.

We moved out sometime after midnight, probably between 0100 and 0300 3 September. All that I can remember about that part of the march is that I was devilishly tired and had a rough time staying awake. We moved by a rather devious route led by Lieutenant William B. Lutye and the 3d platoon to the vicinity of Marboz. I believe we hit the Marboz - Montrevel road somewhere from 1000 to 3000 yards west of Marboz and mowed into Montrevel. We arrived in our objective, Montrevel, between 0530 and 0600 with no trouble.

The town was held by approximately 90 German soldiers, who were peacefully sitting outside the schoolhouse eating their breakfast when our 3d platoon rolled in. The simplest thing; to say about it is that they were surprised. There was no fight. The organization of the town began at once.

Beyond a doubt, the reason our men were treated as they were when they were finally captured was due to the treatment given the prisoners mentioned above. One of Captain Wood's strongest rules was that “no prisoner would be

*mistreated while in our hands*". As usual, two or three of the irresponsible EM found in every organization started to strip these prisoners of their valuables, and to abuse them. The First Sergeant, the Supply Sergeant, and I came upon the incident, stopped it, and had the men return to each prisoner personally, the items taken from him. The prisoners were then placed in the basement of the school safely guarded but out of the way of any normal incident of the fight. At the end of the day when the tables were turned, the officer in charge of these men remembered how he had been cared for.

Until about 0930 or 1000 there was not much action. There was rifle and machine gun fire, and "they" were able to bring several machine guns to bear on our light vehicles which were on the Etrez-Montrevel road (into Montrevel from the East). I saw Captain Wood once or twice during this time. I was mainly concerned with the situation in the southwest quadrant of the town. The troop CP was in the vicinity of the school house roughly in the center of town. Captain Piddington and Lieutenant D'Annunzio, the observer from our assault gun battery, were there with him.

The main feature of my location was a large three story white masonry building. The ground around it was slightly higher on the side facing the enemy, the south. Using most of headquarters platoon and members of another platoon, the position was organized, placing machine guns and riflemen in front of the building, 60 mm mortars behind it with an armored car or two in full defilade, generally behind the building.

Late in the morning things warmed up when the enemy forces began to try to get through town in earnest. There was considerable firing to the west and south of where I was, small arms, artillery, and tank or AT. Two or three German armored cars made a try at moving around to the left, or east, of where I was, but were repulsed. Then they tried to work in from the south, through a small orchard and across open fields, with Infantry supported by at least two Mark 5 tanks. From my OP in the large building I was able to slow up these attacks several times. They also attempted to put a small OP on a little knob no more than 300 yards from my position. I knocked these off with a rifle two or three times.

It was late morning or early afternoon when we were informed by Major McGarry's CP that Lieutenant Paul Seidel was being sent around to the south of town with a heavy section (3) of light tanks. His mission was to relieve the pressure on the town from the south. From where I sat it was just plain suicide. We heard his fire fight and I saw the resulting clouds of smoke. I found out two years later that Paul's tanks contributed to the smoke.

"He" continued his push on my side of town with tanks and Infantry, on at least two occasions bringing his tanks around to my left to fire on and knock out many of our vehicles on the Montrevel-Etrez-Marboz road. By this time the machine gun positions in front of my building no longer existed; all that was left were the mortar positions and one armored car.

During this period of several hours there were two or three times when the armor car that was left to me was forced to engage Mark V tanks. Luckily for us, on all occasions except one, he either couldn't see us too well or just ignored us. On the one occasion when he didn't, after we had pulled the armor car back into its partially protected position, my radio operator, Sergeant Barsby was killed. He was the only one killed at this position.

Also, some time during the afternoon, Captain Wood sent Private Patrick Devlin, one of the older soldiers in the troop, from the CP to my position with a rifle and several AT rifle grenades. Somehow or other Private Devlin made it over to where I was, despite the nasty thigh wound he had picked up on the way. Nevertheless "Paddy" was told to bring those over; he brought them. The rifle however, was useless. A bullet had struck it at the juncture of the bolt and breeching, welding it closed.

Sometime after 2:15 PM when I was up in the OP they came at us again with tanks. At least one of the tanks picked up my OP and made it unhealthy for me to stay there any longer. I couldn't fire at the moving tanks with the mortars anyway. I went down to the ground, joined the 3 EM left there and did what we could. An armored car and one Mark IV tank with Infantry came around the end of the house and we were cornered there. There was no place to go. Of the three men with me, two were wounded. That was all there was. Finis!"

Padraig O'Dea lived on to receive the *Distinguished Service Cross*, our Nation's second highest award for Valor. He stayed in the Army and became a Lieutenant Colonel, serving in Korea and retiring from active duty after 20 years, continuing service in the Reserves.

**CPT (then) John Langille Wood, B Troop Commander** At this time, we do not have any writings from Wood. However, his son does have his diaries, and granddaughter Katie Adams may soon acquire them, but too late for this edition of *The Spur*. A graduate of Mass. State College majoring in botany and military science, he was ROTC Cadet Colonel and commissioned a 2LT of Cavalry. He was a skilled horseman, winning Gymkhanas and such. He was posted to Fort Ethan Allen, VT with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry as a reserve officer. Later, he served a year on active duty with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry. He was recalled to active duty on 11 May 1942, and arrived in England on 16 May 1942. We do not have full information at this time, but do know that CPT Wood served in combat in North Africa before joining the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in Algeria, serving in HQ and Recon Troop assignments.

He led B Troop in Italy and France, until he was wounded and captured at Montrevel, escaping a few days later. He was rotated back to the USA and took part in training cavalry troops for the invasion of Japan. Wood stayed in the Army Reserve, attending the Command & General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth. He retired a Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry in November 1973. He continued his education and earned a PhD from Columbia. He became a renowned scientist and instructor at UMass, Penn State, Johns Hopkins, University of Cincinnati, College of William & Mary and the University of Virginia. His expertise was in Botany, Mycology, Marine Biology and Dermatology. He wrote many papers. He retired in November 1977, and died suddenly in December 1977 of a heart attack, leaving his wife Katherine, sons John Jr. and Arthur King Wood and grandchildren Katherine "Katie" Francis and Jonathan Shaw Wood.



**Major (then) Harold J. Samsel, 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Recon Squadron (Mecz) S-3** Wrote a summary of the Battle of Montrevel on 15 September 1944, 11 days later. Due to space limitations, the last few pages are transcribed here: "At exactly 1555 on 3 September 1944, a message was received by our forces VI Corps not to attack and move our forces to higher ground, east of Montrevel (MAJ Samsel had assembled a "rescue" force, with great effort, including elements of the 117<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup> ID and a Tank Destroyer Company).

Needless to say, even if our attack had been launched, it would have proven indecisive. All elements of the 117<sup>th</sup> (in Montrevel) had already been killed, wounded or captured.

At about 1700 hours, Major Samsel advised VI Corps of the situation and extent of our heavy losses.

Early that evening, General Carlton visited our HQ to launch an informal investigation of the entire affair.

One of General Carlson's main criticisms was that the 117<sup>th</sup> did not leave an escape route open and withdraw when it was apparent the squadron was against superior forces.

However, the writer strongly opposes this view inasmuch as General Carlson's order read "*Seize and Hold*". The order did not permit a commander to exercise any discretion or possible withdrawal. (Ed. Note: The units in Montrevel, led by MAJ McGarry, did have support elements on the road used to enter and take Montrevel. This was a route of withdrawal, but the German counterattack blocked by destroying our ammo and gas trucks on the road.)

The real criticism should be directed at VI Corps for assigning a mission without the full infantry and tank support so vitally essential when opposing an enemy force lead by an outstanding armored division; also the indifference of General Carlton to his responsibilities and lack of comprehension of the vital time elements highly essential in exploiting the initial success of the 117<sup>th</sup> in seizing Montrevel by daylight.

A very major successful action could have been achieved at Montrevel if VI Corps had truly evaluated the situation and thoroughly planned this operation with full and adequate troop participation.

Instead, a mechanized cavalry squadron of limited strength, men weary, the vehicles and equipment below standard, was sent upon a mission more in keeping with horse cavalry techniques but fighting against a highly trained, heavily armored German Panzer Division.

Both General Truscott and General Carlton willfully sacrificed a brave and efficient Cavalry Squadron on the altar of their Fort Riley Cavalry School ego...

...the enemy reacted violently and attacked in strength with its most capable troops, the 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer (Ghost) Division.

...Perhaps some other interesting intelligence was the personal habits of our generals indulging too strongly in the grape at a time when vital decisions were being made...

Perhaps the action of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron at Montrevel can best be summed up by the fact that the leadership displayed won a *Medal of Honor*, three *Distinguished Service Crosses*, innumerable *Silver Stars*, *Bronze Stars* and over 150 *Purple Hearts*. Also, every tank of F Troop was disabled from enemy action.

Nevertheless, on 4 September 1944 the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry maintained its continuous combat record by taking to the field reorganized with six battle sections comprising all elements of the Squadron."

Harold J. Samsel was appointed CO of the 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in January 1945, and promoted to LTC. He continued to serve in the post war NJARNG, CO of the "new" 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Recon Battalion and retiring a Colonel in the 50<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, HHT. Samsel also rose to Executive Vice President of the *Home Insurance Company*.

**1LT Daniel W. Lee was decorated with the *Medal of Honor*...**for his actions while serving as A Troop HQ Platoon Leader, 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz). During the raging, hours-long pitched battle, Lee organized a small patrol to knock out mortars which were inflicting heavy casualties. He led the small group to the edge of town, sweeping enemy positions and finding seven Germans manning two large mortars near an enemy half-track. LT Lee armed himself with a rifle and grenades, leaving his men on high ground. He crawled to within 30 yards of the mortars, was discovered and drew heavy fire. His right thigh was shattered. Bleeding and suffering intense pain, he continued the attack, killing 5 enemy before the rest fled. Fired upon by an armored car, he took cover by the half-track and found a *panzerfaust*, which he used to attack the armored car, which withdrew. Having cleared the area of enemy, he crawled back to his men and collapsed from loss of blood and pain. After the Germans took Montrevel, they left the seriously wounded, 12 in all. Lee was found 2 days later, evacuated and hospitalized. LT Daniel W. Lee returned to the Squadron on 16 January 1945, assigned to Troop C. Lee was leading patrols in February 1944. He was promoted to 1LT on 1 March 1945. (The MOH award ceremony was held at the White House, and presented by President Harry Truman on 23 January 1946). Captain Lee was recalled during the Korean Conflict, stationed at Fort Knox, KY. He and his wife Sallie raised Dan Jr., James and "Beth". He died in January 1985, 65 years old. They were active in the *Medal of Honor Society*.

**The *Distinguished Service Cross (DSC)* was awarded, posthumously, to SSG Bennet L. Lawson** of F Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry for extraordinary heroism. Platoon Sergeant Lawson led part of F Troop (tanks) in an attack on enemy forces in and around Montrevel, in an attempt to relieve Troops A and B. Halting his column and leaving his turret to engage enemy infantrymen on a side street with his MG, he was wounded. Lawson continued to direct his platoon until he was forced to withdraw his tanks against intense enemy tank, MG and rifle fire. His own tank stalled in front of a force of four enemy MK V Panther tanks and numerous machine guns. Ordering the crew to abandon the tank, Lawson held his post in the face of certain death to cover their withdrawal and divert the enemy fire. He was fatally wounded by an enemy shell.

**Killed in Action - Montrevel:** 2 September – Flournoy, Howard S. PVT. 3 September – Michel, Robert F. PFC; Renzi, Leopold J. T/5; Barsby, Lawrence W. SGT; Stewart, Louis W. CPL.; Lawson, Bennet N. SSG.

**Edward J. Leonard** Returned home, soon found a job and had a 37 year career with NJ Bell Telephone as a Switchman, a highly technical position. He married the lovely Francis Kelly, in 1947. Ed and "Kelly" bought a home with a stable and 2 acres in Pompton Plains, NJ and began their family. He was recruited into the post war 117<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at West Orange, and rose to 1LT. Family and work demands required that he retire early. Work included doing his part-time farrier business, which went on for decades. Kelly bore four fine sons - Edward, Robert, Kenneth and Richard. Robert and Kenneth became farriers soon after graduating from college, and continue their lucrative businesses today. Eddie is a Captain of the Pequannock PD and Rich is an ITT Defense Systems manager. Five grandchildren came along, to the delight of Kelly and Ed. "Kelly" developed cancer and fought bravely. Ed and sons cared for her at home, until she passed, in 2005. Pictured are Kelly and Ed in 1985, Ed in May 2009.



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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 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).

The **1-150 Aviation Battalion** is in Iraq. There many of their personnel have come from 5-117th CAV. Three members of the 117th CAV Assn. are in the 1-150 Aviation Battalion.

**Update: Belt Buckles of the Last Ride** are in; Cost is \$39.00 plus \$2.50 shipping. When ordering, use my above address.

**Something to think about:** Would you be interested in once a month gathering to refurbish and maintain the Heritage Room? We could also plan to meet over coffee, lunch, or evening over a beer or soda. This would be a good time for retirees to spend time together.

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**TAPS**

**GEORGE FREDERICK KIMBLE, COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR (RET.)** Passed away on 21 June 2009, Westfield, NJ. Served in the WWII US Army Air Force as a Sergeant. Joined the 5<sup>th</sup> CAV Recon, Troop A in 1947 and rose to 1SG before transferring to the 250<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, retiring as Command Sergeant Major. His sons Frederick J. and Kenneth R. Sr. also served in and retired from the 250<sup>th</sup> Signal BN. The CSM was predeceased by his devoted wife of 57 years, Jean. She was the sister of LTC (Ret.) Ken Quaas. Kimble and Quaas joined the 5<sup>th</sup> CAV Recon together in 1947. Mr. Kimble was with Cummins Metropolitan in Newark for 33 years, retiring as warehouse manager. He was an avid fisherman and Jersey Shore sailor. He is survived by his 3 children - Frederick J. Kimble and his wife Nancy; Kenneth R. Kimble Sr.; and Karen J. Bare and her husband Tracy. Also survived by four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by daughter-in-law Carol (wife of Kenneth) and grand-daughter Trisha Marie (daughter of Frederick).



**BE A BOOSTER OF THE SPUR**

Shown at the left of each name is the last issue and year in which your entry will be published. SP = Spring, SU = Summer, FA = Fall, WI = Winter

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- WI-10 EMIL & MARGARET ALLGEIER
- FA-12 BILL ANTONUCCI (mem. of) 1SG WM. B. MALONEY SR.
- SU-25 BOB & LORRAINE APGAR
- FA-12 ROSE MARIE BENNERT (mem. of) BILL BENNERT
- FA-12 RALPH BOKINO (mem. of) by wife CATHERINE
- FA-11 DOROTHY CASPAR (mem. of husb.) RICHARD J. CASPAR
- WI-11 MSG TOM BULLOCK A Troop
- FA-12 SANTI CARNEVALI
- SP-10 LTC (Ret.) CLAUDE COOK & HELEN
- FA-09 STEVE S. CUP, Scout, A Troop 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV WWII
- FA-09 LTC (Ret.) PETER D'ELIA
- WI-09 1SG (Ret.) DON CHAMBERLAIN (mem. of) 1SG PHIL CURRAN
- WI-09 CLEMENT & JEAN CURRY
- WI-10 MARIE DARBY (mem. of husb.) CPT JOHN DARBY
- FA-09 SGM (Ret.) JIM DOOLEY & JUDITH
- WI-13 COL (Ret.) DENNIS DOUGHERTY
- WI-10 1SG (Ret.) PHILIP DUNN, A Troop
- FA-13 LTC PATRICK du TERTRE (ARMY OF FRANCE)
- WI-09 1SG (Ret.) DAVE ELLIS, D Troop
- WI-17 MANUEL G. FERRI
- SP-10 MAURO FIERRO
- FA-10 LTC (Ret.) ALAN R. FISHER
- WI-22 MIRIAM FISHER (mem. of husb.) WILLIAM E. FISHER
- SP-12 WILLIAM FISHER JR.
- FA-11 BOB FOLEY, HHT (Ret.)
- WI-09 HENRY & MARION FORSTENHAUSLER
- WI-31 JOHN FRANTZ, LT A Troop
- WI-09 ROBERT GREEN
- SP-11 BILL HETRICK, CHIEF ARMORER (Ret.)
- FA-10 LTC (Ret.) JOHN S. HUFF (mem. of) C Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV '43-'44
- FA-11 CHARLES JOHNSON
- SU-10 GEORGE F. (FRED) KIMBLE
- SU-10 DONALD KONDROSKI
- SP-13 RON La VERDE (mem. of uncle) T-5 THOMAS G. HENNESSY, A Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV KIA 5 JUNE '44 ROME
- WI-11 ROCHUS E. & CELESTE LAWRENCE
- WI-09 WALTER & NANCY LAWRENCE
- WI-11 EDWARD J. LEONARD, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV, *Class of '41*
- FA-09 GRACE LILLEY (mem. of husb.) EDWARD
- WI-13 JEAN & SGM (Ret.) KEN MAHAN
- FA-09 (mem. of) TIM MALONEY
- FA-14 PETE & EDITH MARTINEZ
- WI-09 PSCAR MERBER
- FA-11 CHARLOTTE & BILL MERRING

- SU-13 PAMELA THONACK MILLER (mem. of father) HERBERT A. THONACK, *Class of '41*, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV
- WI-09 CW5 (Ret.) FRANK MNICH & JANET
- FA-13 RONNIE NIER
- WI-12 PHILIP NOTESTINE (mem. of) MAJ JOHN B. COULSTON Troops C & E, *Class of '41*; 602<sup>nd</sup> Tank Destroyer BN '43-'45
- SP-12 JOYCE & HAROLD "SMOKIE" OWEN, *Class of '41*, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV WWII
- WI-11 FOTINOS PANAGAKOS
- WI-10 FRANK & BETTY PATRICK
- SP-11 COL (Ret.) BOB PIERCE & CAROL, (mem. of) RICK APBLET
- SP-10 TOM PETTY
- WI-16 (in mem. of) COL (Ret.) TOM PIDDINGTON, *Class of '41*
- SU-12 SALLIE LEE PIERCE (Widow of) DANIEL LEE, **CMH**
- FA-09 CSM (Ret.) AL PHELAN Jr.
- WI-10 LTC (Ret.) TONY PLONNER
- SP-10 DOT & LTC (Ret.) KEN QUAAS
- FA-11 ART REINBOLD (mem. of) ED SUTTON
- FA-1- ART & RUTH REINBOLD
- SP-10 PAUL RIOS
- WI-92 MRS. ROBERT D. ROBBINS, (mem. of ROBBIE)
- WI-09 HELENA ROBERTS, HHT 5/117<sup>th</sup> CAV
- FA-16 FRED RODMAN, (mem. of brother) WALTER RODMAN F Company (tanks) 102<sup>nd</sup> CAV WWII
- SU-11 COL (Ret.) HAROLD SAMSEL, *Class of '41*, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV WWII
- SP-17 JAMES SCANLON
- WI-09 ROBERT J. SMITH
- SP-10 EILEEN SCHNAAR (mem. of husband) WILLIE
- WI-09 MSG (Ret.) ROCCO SPANO
- WI-09 ELMER K. SQUIER, B Troop, 117<sup>th</sup> CAV
- SP-12 JOHN SUITER
- 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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**NEXT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS:** 11 SEPTEMBER 2009, 6 NOVEMBER 2009, 5 FEBRUARY 2010