



117th Cavalry Association

www.117th-cav.org

102nd CAV (Mecz) 38th CAV (Mecz) 117th CAV (Mecz) 50th CAV RCN SQDN 50th RCN 5th RCN 5-117th CAV 1-102nd CAVALRY
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President's Message Fall 2010 I hope everyone has had a good summer. Our reunion committee has devoted many hours getting ready for our upcoming union. The 2010 Biennial Reunion promises to be a special event! When we come together at Gibbs Hall, Ft Monmouth on October 23 we will be celebrating 30 years as the 117th Cavalry Association. The night will begin at 6 PM with cocktails and dinner starting at 7 PM. Our guest speaker for the evening will be LTC Ed Chrystal, the Commander of the 1st Squadron 102nd Cavalry.

Our reunion Committee has outdone itself with a program of events that will please all in attendance. Again as in previous reunions, we will honor those who have served and those who continue to serve. This year's 15th Biennial Reunion will be special time for all our veterans. At our last reunion in 2008, the 102nd Cavalry had been mobilized and was deployed with the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Iraq. This reunion is very special to our 117th Cavalry Association because our newest veterans, the troopers of the 1st Squadron 102nd Cavalry Regiment have now returned home from a successful deployment. They are the newest addition to the over 120 years of Cavalry service and tradition in New Jersey. Saturday night October 23rd will be a night that travels across the generations. Our newest veterans will take their place next to those who have served in all our nation's wars and conflicts from the Greatest Generation of World War II, to Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, Panama, Grenada, Desert Storm, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. All now share a common thread, service to their state and nation in times of crisis. Now is the time to make your reservation to attend the reunion. Join with your fellow troopers and help us celebrate 30 years as an organization. Look at the history of an outstanding organization and share your stories with your fellow troopers.

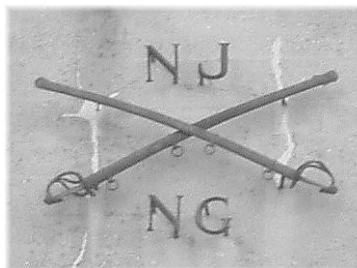
As mentioned in the previous paragraph, our 117th Cavalry Association will celebrate its 30th Anniversary during this 15 Biennial Reunion. It would not have happened without the vision, determination and leadership of Colonel's Ken Klein (Cdr. of the 5th Squadron 117th Cavalry Regiment at that time), and Harold Samsel (wartime commander of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron). Our 2010 *Member of the Year* is COL (Ret.) Ken Klein. Thanks Ken for your continued and ongoing support of our 117th Cavalry Association.

The following individuals have been named *Distinguished Members of the 117th Cavalry Regiment*. The position of Distinguished Member of the 117th Cavalry Regiment is designed to recognize former members for their service to the 117th Cavalry Regiment. Their appointment as a *Distinguished Member of the Regiment* will help to perpetuate the history and traditions of the 117th Cavalry Regiment, thereby enhancing unit morale and esprit. This year's selections include the following individuals; LTC Dean Spenzos, MAJ Timothy Coakley, CSM Timothy Marvian, CSM David Kenna, 1SG John Kraus, and MSG(Ret.) Edward Joe Barnes.

Our 2010 Biennial Reunion promises to be a great event. What can you do to ensure that the reunion is a success? Simple, come to the reunion. Call a friend, who you served with, encourage him to come. Reunions are a time to renew friendships, tell stories and celebrate the collective heritage of all our New Jersey Cavalrymen. Once there, I am sure you will see many others who you have served with. Reunions are a time to remember those who have dedicated their service in defense of our nation, state and community and most importantly, to have a good time. See you there.

"Show 'em the Way!"

Dennis





Greetings to all fellow Troopers and their families! First and foremost, I wish to extend my sincere condolences to the Samsel family. COL Samsel's passing was a great loss to the Cavalry community.

You will all be proud to know that the 1st Squadron 102nd Cavalry Regiment has been immersed in returning to the Missions and Traditions of the Cavalry upon return from deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Stetsons and Spurs are becoming the norm, and we have a *Spur Ride* planned for this Annual Training period to ensure that the traditions continue. Communities surrounding the Squadron's armories continue to seek out our inclusion in their events and the Troopers of the Squadron have responded in kind. Our ACU's and Stetsons have been recognized in events to include the Union County St Patrick's Day Parade and the Scotch Plains Fanwood Memorial Day Parade.

The Squadron has finally made it back to the "field" during recent weekend drills, getting the opportunity to see what it is like to sleep in the "new" Army tents

and qualifying with our M16 rifles and M9 Beretta pistols. August finds the Squadron at Camp Smith, NY for Annual Training. Most of this period is going to be dedicated to training on our individual soldier skills. We will continue with small arms qualifications and familiarization fire of our other weapon systems. We are incorporating many of these skills, such as land navigation, into our Squadron Spur Ride.

117th Cavalry Association President COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty helped us get our Annual Training ESGR visit organized, which always facilitates the soldiers' relationships with their employers.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some recent highlights in the lives of our Troopers. Captain Joe DeSantis and his fiancé, D'yani, were married in June and we wish them all the best. Captain Mike Cruz recently assumed Command of Alpha Troop, replacing Captain Mike Tarricone (who has an article in this *SPUR* edition). SGM Jonny Hannigan is a proud graduate of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

I wish you all well, and I hope to see you all at the 117th Cavalry Association reunion and at our own 1-102d CAV FRG Casino Night.

"SHOW 'EM THE WAY!"

LTC Ed Chrystal

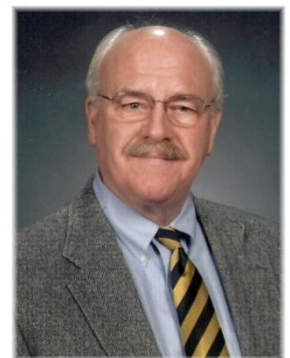


From the Editor Phil Notestine As you will read, CPT Mike Tarricone has offered a solid, exciting and easily read article about his past command's experiences in Iraq. In recent years, I have learned a bit about Mike, who deployed with C Troop to Iraq during 2005-2007. A well-liked platoon leader, I am sure that he was a highly effective commander of A Troop. Mike began his military career as a U.S. Navy "Hard Hat" salvage diver (murky and dangerous waters), and continues scuba diving, one of his many action-filled "fun" activities.

Since the last issue, with the help of our good friend in southern France, Guy Julien, contact was made with the Mayor of Montrevel-en-Bresse, France. As our members know, Montrevel was where our valiant B Troop with a platoon of A Troop, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) took Montrevel in the early morning of 3 September 1944. When the element of surprise was spent, overwhelming German armored forces surrounded and cut off the Americans. A great fight raged for over 12 hours, including reinforcement attempts and attacks by F Company tankers. At the end of the day, with all ammo expended and many casualties, German armor and infantry penetrated American defenses. With no hope of rescue, capitulation was accepted, with honor and admiration from the German reconnaissance battalion commander. The next day, the German forces left the area and continued their retreat back into Germany, taking many POWs and leaving behind those badly wounded.

The people of Montrevel rejoiced in their liberation and eventually erected a monument to the American heroes. Many years later, some veterans of the wartime 117th Cavalry returned to Montrevel and the open arms of her citizens.

Monsieur Guy Julien obtained the speech and picture of the most recent ceremony of 3 September 2009. Association member LTC Patrick du Tertre, Army of France (Reserves) translated it into English for us. I copy an excerpt here of the speech given by M. J. Pierre Roche - Mayor of Montrevel-en-Bresse:



“Ladies and Gentlemen, It was 65 years ago, on a day like today, on September 3 1944, 5 years to the day after the beginning in Europe of the Second World War.

At about 5:30 AM, guided by a member of the resistance, the Americans arrive after progressing on the route of Etrez and invest the township, capturing the town hall and then all of downtown. The German soldiers, who were resting before resuming their progression to the north, surprised while asleep, were almost all taken prisoners. The German command in Bourg-en-Bresse, still under occupation, realizes the threat caused by the loss of Montrevel and immediately sent reinforcements to reestablish the communication lines in its rear. Soon Montrevel is besieged on all sides, the Americans are overwhelmed by the enemy counter-attack, and forced to split into small teams to resist more efficiently. Reinforcements, brought in direct proximity, are not sufficient to break the stranglehold and are not committed to battle.

The US command also refuse to engage the Artillery positioned in Etrez, and to shell the city, sparing it from sure annihilation at a cost of numerous civilian casualties.

It is now 17:00. Out of ammunitions, the handful of besieged Americans with 5 KIAs and 60 wounded have barely any choice left. By the end of the afternoon, they surrender to the enemy and will be taken prisoners. Montrevel prepares for the worst, especially reprisals against the population, and starts the longest night in the city history. On Monday September 4 early morning, the allies having regrouped retake without any resistance Montrevel, which had been evacuated at night by the last German columns, which had managed to get through. These enemy forces had not executed their plans to destroy the City and had set their hostages free. The streets and squares are littered with discarded and charred equipment, and several houses are damaged. Unfortunately, there were two civilian casualties but Montrevel-en-Bresse was free.

Ladies and Gentlemen, here, on these very grounds the Army of the United States engaged in intense fighting to liberate Montrevel-en-Bresse.

Sixty-five years have gone by. From year to year, we remember these exceptional times. From year to year, we are moved with the same emotion. Our hearts choke from so much courage, so much generosity, so much suffering. We salute the commitment to the supreme sacrifice of these five young men, 20 years of age, who were fighting far from home, as if the fate of their own homeland was in the balance. In the name of us all, I want to say “Thank You” one more time, with admiration, affection and the certitude however that words will never match what we owe to our liberators, which have allowed us to defeat one of the worst barbaric regime of all times. They fought for a cause of which they knew, deep in themselves, that it was bigger than their own life. This restoration of Human Rights and democracy will never be forgotten by Montrevel.”



This ends the excerpt. I must admit, having studied and written much about *Operation Dragoon*, Montrevel and befriending many of our WWII veterans, I do choke with emotion when reading these words.

Our web site < www.117th-cav.org > attracts many visitors looking for information on relatives who may have served in the WWII 117th, 102nd and 38th Cavalry Squadrons. Some are doing research on WWII history. The most recent inquiry that I have received is from LTC (Ret.) Tom O'Brien, USAF. He is the eldest son of James O'Brien, B Troop 102nd & 117th Cavalry. Tom's initial question was about Montrevel – where his father fought and was taken POW. LTC O'Brien may make the – pilgrimage?

As a boy, Tom was greatly influenced by his father and his WWII USAAF friends. So much so, that he became a USAF pilot himself...Tom was born in Montclair, New Jersey on July 17, 1946. He was a member of the *Junior Essex Troop* from 1958 to 1960. He attended Malvern Preparatory School, Malvern, PA and Graduated from Passaic Valley Regional High School, Little Falls, NJ in 1965. After graduation from Nichols College, Dudley, MA in 1970 Tom attended Air Force Officer Training School and was commissioned in March 1971. He completed Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) at Reese AFB, Texas. Colonel (Ret.) Val Phillips, a lifelong family friend from Montclair and a decorated WWII P-38 Pilot pinned on Tom's wings at the graduation ceremony.

Tom was assigned to fly the mighty B-52 "*Stratofortress*". His duty assignments included Minot AFB, ND, Anderson AFB, Guam, U-Tapao AFB, Thailand, and March, AFB, CA. He flew 34 combat sorties over Cambodia and Laos. The last was on 15 August 1973 when combat air operations in Southeast Asia were halted.

Tom and his wife of 34 years met at Anderson AFB during the evacuation of Viet Nam in 1975. She was a flight attendant supporting the airlift evacuation. They settled in Walnut Creek, CA and have two grown children, Andrew and Aaron.

In 1976, Tom was released from USAF active duty with the Rank of Captain. In 1980, he joined the California Air National Guard and retired as a Lt. Colonel in 1994. After his active duty days, Tom has enjoyed a diverse business career in the aerospace/defense industry as a program manager and sales executive in various industrial market segments.

Regular meeting of 4 June 2010 The meeting was called to order by COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty, president. He led in the *Pledge of Allegiance*, and offered a remembrance of those who recently passed on. Mary O'Donnell and Frank Pickert of the FRG for Troop D, West Orange Armory spoke of past and future activities. SGT Sheila Zelaskowski of 1-150 Aviation, recently returned from Iraq, spoke of the unit mission and her experiences. 1LT Eric Petrevich, currently S-2 1-102nd CAV gave a fine talk and visual presentation on the 2008-2009 Iraq deployment, including training at Fort Bliss Texas, which was much improved over the Army's previous efforts and included hand-to-hand combat, urban war fighting, HMMWV EID action, emergency medical incl. IV placement, live-fire moving convoy and more. 1LT Petrevich proudly reported that his unit was the first to wear the NJARNG 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team "*Jersey Blues*" patch (at the right) in a combat zone. He showed many slides of Camp Bucca including living and bathing facilities. The contractor Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) provided quality food and support. The latest equipment, including mine resistant vehicles (MRVs) was issued. The basic mission was prison security - over 12,000 Iraqi detainees were well-cared for, as were their visitors. The U.S. Army was very generous to the visiting families. Prisoner education was conducted; many were illiterate. When finally able to read The Koran, some wept, realizing that they had been misled. Additional training included basic farming, carpentry and such. Many were overjoyed with their future possibilities. Some said that they were ashamed that Iraqis did not overthrow Saddam Hussein, and that the USA and Coalition had to do it. At the end of the presentation, the applause was hearty. In attendance: *Arnold Lasner, Phil Notestine, Sheila Zelaskowski, Art Maggs, Ron Nier, Emil Allgeier, Rodolfo Stasnik, Ken Mahan, Bob Apgar, Frank Patrick, Eric Petrevich, LTC Ed Chrystal, Ken Wondrack, Henry Forstenhausler, Don Tracy, Mary O'Donnell, Tom Pickert, Sandy Goldstein, Dave Ellis, Victor Rincon, Adam Rincon, Mike Hrycak, James Anglim, Donald Kondrowski, Frank Mnich, David Mormak.*



"Class of '41" Luncheon at Gibbs Hall, Fort Monmouth 5 August 6, 2010

The day was bright, hot and steamy outside, but comfortable in our private dining room. This was the first time that the meeting was held on a Thursday, avoiding much larger numbers of golfers and other meetings. Therefore, we could hear each other and the several presentations. Following a fine buffet lunch, COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty spoke of the upcoming biennial reunion of the *117th Cavalry Association* (see insert) to be held on 23 October 2010, Gibbs Hall, Fort Monmouth NJ and gave out the proposed agenda. We are hopeful that a good number of our WWII veterans and/or their family members will be able to make the trip. Dougherty also spoke of the Annual Field Training of the 1-102nd CAV at Camp Smith, NY, which begins on 7 August 2010. SGM (Ret.) Ken Mahan spoke of CSM (Ret.) Bob Theall who passed away 31 July 2010. Theall was the longest serving CSM in the NJARNG. He had attended several of the *Class of '41* luncheons before his health failed. Phil Notestine told about the recent inquiry via our Association web site of LTC (Ret.) Tom O'Brien, son of James O'Brien (see obits.), a *Class of '41* man and B Trooper of the 117th Cavalry who was among those who survived the Battle of Montrevel and ordeals of a POW. LTC O'Brien is planning a trip to France and Montrevel. Ed Leonard spoke fondly of Jim O'Brien, having served with him in B Troop from Fort Jackson to Montrevel and the German POW camps (see Leonard's remarks in this issue).





<< Arnold Lasner, who was a replacement trooper joining the 117th CAV just days after Montrevel, was asked to tell the gathering about his recent trip to Poland, Lithuania and Holland in a quest to discover some family “roots”. He and his wife Estelle (married 59 years) and eldest son Dr. Jay Lasner (past U.S. Navy MD) planned and made the trip of almost a month. Joe Pocaroba announced that Jim Kane, who sported a neat mustache, would be 94 >>> in August! Other August birthdays include Joe Pocaroba 91, Ed Leonard 91, Arnold Lasner 85 and Phil Notestine 70.



In attendance: *Class of ‘41 members Jim Kane, Jack Ferguson, Ed Leonard, Joe Pocaroba, Frank Prettyman, WWII vet. Arnold Lasner; Bob Apgar, Dennis Dougherty, Ken Mahan, Bill & Charlotte Merring and Phil Notestine.*

We especially missed *Class of ‘41 members Bob Lutz*, who had organized the luncheon for years and Frank Wiswall. Both are convalescing. **The next luncheon date is Thursday, 7 October 2010.**

Driving back north, Ed Leonard and I called Frank Wiswall, who lives in Boonton, Morris County. We both live in nearby towns. Frank cheerily answered the phone and said, “Come on by!” His lovely wife May served iced tea in their comfortable living room. As usual, the old B Troop horse soldiers remembered those Good Old Days and comrades passed on. Ed was speaking of Jim O’Brien, Frank Mitchell and other B Troopers when Mrs. Juanita Mitchell (770-983-1896) called from Gainesville GA. She is the Widow of PSG Frank Mitchell. They were married in NC in 1942, before the 102nd Cavalry Regiment went off to war. During the long absence of the Essex Troopers, not to return until late 1945, Mrs. Juanita Mitchell moved to Jersey City and established herself in a career as a Buyer for *Hahne’s* in Newark, the famous department stores. When the men came home, she was often hostess to frequent gatherings of this Band of Brothers.



By CPT Michael G. Tarricone – Operations & Training; Safety - HHT In June 2007, myself along with the Troopers of C Troop, 5-117th Cavalry, returned from our almost two year deployment to Iraq. Not more than three months later, the newly consolidated and reorganized 1-102nd Cavalry, along with the rest of the NJ Army National Guard’s 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, were told they would be deploying to Iraq to take part in the United States war on terror. Troop A, led by myself and 1SG Mark Rizzo, would leave its mark in history with a deployment full of dangerous Convoy Escorts, Search and Recovery missions and numerous Quick Reaction Force engagements.

Mobilized to Ft Bliss, TX, Troop A along with its sister Troop B, were designated as a Security Force (SECFOR) unit and would receive specialized training different from the rest of the BDE units, designated as Detainee Operations (DETOPS) units. Being unique made for some exciting times while at Ft Bliss. While most units were learning how to deal with prisoners and using non-lethal weapons, Troop A was out in the deserts of Texas and New Mexico, learning how to shoot, move, and communicate. We spent many days working simulated missions throughout the mock Iraqi villages and towns. A few of the Troopers even surprised the COBs or Civilians on the Battlefield with their grasp of the Arabic language. SGT Joseph Schorno, a 5-117th veteran who learned the language very well, was able to covertly listen in on the conversations they were having, and give his leadership a heads-up as to any surprises the COBs were planning. SGT Schorno’s abilities would be used extensively while overseas, especially during the international border crossings and one very high intensity search and recovery mission.

Troop A “graduated” or was validated as a SECFOR unit in August of 2008 and prepared itself for deployment to Iraq.

By 1 September 2008, Troop A was in Camp Buehring, Kuwait waiting to move on to its final destination of Ashraf, Iraq or FOB (Forward Operating Base) Grizzly. There we were to work with the Mujahedin-e Khalq or MEK. This group of soldiers was part of the Iranian freedom fighters who took part in the overthrow of the Shah back in 1979. They also took part in fighting against Ayatollah Khomeini in 1986 from its base in Iraq (Ashraf). When the US invaded and took down the Saddam Hussein regime, the MEK were added to the U.S. State Department’s terrorist group list in 1997. Since that time, they have been living as refugees in Ashraf.

During our stay in Kuwait however, we received a change of mission from the Squadron Commander, LTC Dean Spenzos. Three days before we were to cross the berm, orders came down assigning Troop A to the 2-113th IN as the SECFOR unit for FOB Bucca, Iraq. FOB Bucca, is named after New York City Firefighter Ronald Bucca, who lost his life in the South Tower during the 9/11 attack in NY City. Located just north of the Kuwaiti border and across the gulf from Iran, the camp itself is primarily a detention center or TIF (Theater Internment Facility) for over 15,000 detainees captured during combat operations over the past few years. Next to it is the port of Umm Qasr. Umm Qasr is the only deep water port in the area and handles all the cargo and supplies headed into Iraq.

On 18 September 2008, we crossed the border via CH47 Chinooks and flew in to Iraq. Upon arrival at Camp Bucca, Troop A was assigned to the Base Perimeter Security patrol as well as the augmentation of the USAF personnel in the perimeter guard towers. The troop was also tasked with training on, and operating the LRAS Observation Post atop Safwaan Hill. The troop immediately took on these missions with little or no resources or supplies, since our own stuff was still enroute to Ashraf and would not get turned around until three months later. Using equipment borrowed from the USAF unit on location, we established an increased footprint around the base perimeter by providing 24 hour security with a four gun-truck detail. This immediately doubled the protective bubble around the FOB. During this time, the troop became highly effective in finding and recovering numerous unexploded ordnances as well as detaining dozens of local nationals (LN's) attempting to infiltrate the perimeter of the FOB. Troop A established new battle-drills and random anti-terrorism measures (RAM) for the patrol. These RAM measures were responsible for the apprehension of LN's trying to breach the wire and were used by SSG Villy Burgos and SPC Ryan Bunty to find an emplacement of rockets aimed at the FOB.

This was done while augmenting the USAF in the perimeter towers and taking on the BN missions of the Mobile Eagle Eye II and the Sapphire III camera systems. These camera systems provide real-time over-watch in and around the FOB using magnified optics and thermal imagery. These cameras were utilized during incidents within the TIF and around the FOB to provide the BN Battle Captain a bird's eye view of the scene. Thus painting the bigger picture for the Battle Captain and allowing him to make sound decisions on where to place the troops mounted patrol elements.

During our stay at Bucca, we had the opportunity to work with the US Army's Military Working Dogs. We established a training schedule utilizing these dogs and were able to capitalize on the innate nature of the canine nose to track down escaped detainees. They were used to indirectly capture at least one escapee. Troop A would provide the security escort for the dog teams while they were tracking the detainee.

Not long into the deployment, I was tasked with sending a contingent of Troopers to Tallil where the fielding of the Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAP's) was taking place. Troop A led the way in obtaining close to thirty of these MRAP's of various types, totaling over thirty million dollars. In doing so, the BN gave us additional mission sets. One of these missions was the Bucca to Buehring Express. We logged an estimated 80 missions, totaling over 12,000 miles. These missions encompassed using the MRAP's Combat Platform variant to safely escort thousands of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and even civilians to and from Buehring, Kuwait. Normally we had an Iraqi National with us as an interpreter for these border crossings, however sometimes SGT Schorno or even SSG Khudja would fill in.

Schorno's ability to speak Arabic came into play during a very precarious search and recovery mission of a KBR Oil Tanker. The original convoy, escorted by civilian contractors, was traveling to Bucca using what we called the K-Crossing. This was a border crossing specifically set up for commercial vehicles, manned by the US Army, and not requiring any interpreters. On a good day this crossing took about 8 hours to complete. This route takes you on a winding road, through an abandoned minefield. If you are not careful, you will run off the road. This is exactly what happened to one of the tanker drivers one night. The road in question turns sharply to the left at a 90 degree angle and runs through the mine field. The driver apparently fell asleep at the wheel and ran straight off the road into the field missing every mine, but burying his truck about 100 meters off the road into the sand. The convoy commander decided to leave the truck where it was and continue to Bucca. There he reported the incident and truck location to the FOB Battle Captain. Troop A's QRF was stood up to respond with a KBR recovery vehicle. By the time we got out there the truck had been sitting abandoned for a few hours. We immediately cordoned the area off and set up 360 security. Of course the truck was locked and keys were nowhere to be found. We also did not know if any IED's had been set up during the time of the incident to now. Mind you, we were in the middle of a mine field as well. With all that being said, KBR had no intentions of driving out there to hook up the truck. Plus, soldiers from the Iraq Oil Ministry just showed up as well, claiming that the truck belonged to them. Platoon Sergeant SFC Ernest Iodaci took control of the situation, which was quickly deteriorating and brought SGT Schorno up to his location. With escalation of force measures being considered on both sides, SGT Schorno was able to calm the Iraqi soldiers down and explain the situation using their native language. Once the Iraqi soldiers departed, Troop A's QRF was able to slowly make its way out to the vehicle with the tow cable off the KBR recovery truck, dig out and secure the tanker. They safely returned to Bucca some 16 hours later with the tanker in tow.

The second mission we received with the addition of the MRAP's to our inventory was the Detainee Air Transfer (DAT) mission from the USAF. This required the troop to link up and escort on average 180 detainees from Camp Bucca to the airfield in Basrah, and back. This also required synchronized communications between the DAT buses, the MRAP's and then even with the Air Force Scan Eagle unit providing overhead coverage, in order to keep the movement safe and secure. These detainees were often times wanted outside the TIF by insurgents hell bent on capturing or killing them. These missions were extremely dangerous, but we managed to do almost one hundred of them. By the time we left, there were only about 5000 detainees left and these were the really hard core offenders. We had safely transported over 10,000 of them without any incidents.

Another mission the BN assigned us was the RPAT missions. These were one-for-one turn in of M1114 HMMWV's to Tallil in exchange for the above mentioned MRAP's. Troop A escorted the BN M915's tractor trailers, loaded with HMMWV's up to Tallil from Bucca. This was a four hour trip one way passing under 26 potentially mined bridges on the way. The troop XO, 1LT David Keffer led these missions a minimum of five times during the deployment. Each time he safely moved as much as one million dollars worth of military equipment.

Also at least once a month, Troop A would journey to Tallil again in order to pick up the latest COMSEC fill. The COMSEC fill is the set of frequencies used for communications throughout the area. It was changed on a monthly basis

in order to maintain its security and integrity. These COMSEC runs would include bringing the fills to Safwaan Hill and Umm Qasr. These were often on order missions and done on a moment's notice.

Utilizing both our HMMWV's and MRAP's, we also patrolled in sector daily, providing area security, and enhancing the Commanding Generals COIN or Counter Insurgency principles. Troop A brought safety, security, and the good will of the American people to the Iraqi populace within its AO, culminating in over 150 COIN missions. At the same time, I established within the troop, a Personal Security Detachment or PSD team. Using the same COIN Principles, this team was responsible for the direct protection of the Brigades Civil Affairs element. This element on average would enter the towns in and around the AO three times a week and establish a rapport with the local populace and attempt to foster a collaborative environment between the Coalition Forces and the Iraqi people.

Troop A enjoyed a very busy and productive deployment enabling it to use every aspect of its Cavalry training. We returned to our families and friends in early June, 2009 with all personnel and immediately made ready to take on the States mission of supporting its civilian authorities in times of emergencies.

Membership Update – SMG (Ret.) Ken Mahan Trooper! Look at your address label! If the date is not September 2010 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 2010



**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.** 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 kmahan117@aol.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).

The Memorial Service for COL (Ret.) Harold Joseph Samsel (21 Jan. 1911 – 7 April 2010) was held at Christ Church (Episcopal) in Short Hills NJ on 17 July 2010, where he and his wife Lucille were long-term parishioners. His ashes were interred with hers in the Memorial Garden. A fine and fitting eulogy (posted of the Association web site) was written by his son LCDR (Ret.) Donald Samsel and read by the Colonel's granddaughter Colleen, Donald's daughter. Another granddaughter, Courtney, did an amusing and loving reading as well. She is the daughter of Susan Havens, the Colonel's daughter. The service was a celebration of the life of a grand, unique and notable man. A number of *117th Cavalry Association* members attended, including Ed Leonard, representing the WWII veterans who served with COL Samsel.

TAPS

Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) John James Walentine, 79, of Carolina Shores, N.C., died Saturday, August 7, 2010 at Grand Strand Regional Medical Center. Born in Trenton, N.J., he was the son of the late John Walentine and Marie Walentine Anderson. He was a U.S. Army decorated veteran serving in Korea. He was awarded the *Purple Heart* with Clusters, and the *Bronze Star* with "V" and cluster. Mr. Walentine fired with the U.S. Army Rifle Team in the national matches at Camp Perry, Ohio, and had participated in the 1957 National Match at Springfield, Ohio at which he received the M1 Trophy Rifle. He retired as Sergeant Major after 33 years of service. Mr. Walentine was a member of Calabash VFW, American Legion and Elks Lodge. He was CSM of the 2/102 Armor in the late 1980s. Jack was also CSM of the High Tech Center at Fort Dix. When the M48A3, M48A5 and M60A3 tanks were declared obsolete/excess they were commonly given to foreign allies as Military Aid. Jack spent much time during his retirement in 1988 to about 2000 as a contract employee of the Dept of State and Dept of Defense traveling around the world teaching M48 and M60 gunnery. A sister, Carole Walentine, preceded him in death. He had resided in North Carolina since 1989. Surviving is wife, Sarah Jane Walentine. (COL (Ret.) Gordon Robinson, ARNGNJ provided the notification and details)

Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) Robert C. Theall Passed away on Saturday, July 31, 2010. He was born in Passaic, NJ, resided in Middletown for the past 49 years. He was a communicant of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Middletown and retired as a Command Sergeant Major in the New Jersey National Guard, after 43 years of service.

He was a recipient of many military awards and decorations. The CSM was a member of the *117th Cavalry Association* and past president of the *Essex Troop Association*. He was the longest serving DISCOM CSM, over 27 years.

CSM Theall served on the NJ Militia Museum board, and was a volunteer at the Sea Girt Museum. He was President of the Enlisted Association. The CSM retired as a Military Tech – Federal Civil Service, 30 years. Survived by his wife of 55 years, Eileen; and five children, Lauren M. Scarano, Carol Ann Covert, Robert J. and his wife Betsy A. Theall, Patricia A. Schroeder, Susan M. Theall, and 11 Grandchildren and one Great-grand daughter. (Thanks for Information from CSM (Ret.) Richard La Rocca)

Francis John Joseph Stinner (Skip) of Clark passed away on Sunday, May 16, 2010, in Manor Care in Mountainside surrounded by his loving family. Mr. Stinner was born on April 1, 1946, in Plainfield. After attending Dunellen High School, he joined the Army and served two tours of duty in Vietnam with the 11th ACR “Black Stallion” Unit. He received the *Bronze Star* and the *Purple Heart*. He was a true patriot and continued to serve his country by enlisting with the National Guard 5/117th CAV and later transferring to the Army Reserve 1/309th 78th Division. He was activated for Iraqi Freedom. He retired from service in 2006 at age 60. He was employed by the ShopRite Corporation for 30 years, retiring from the Clark store as Meat Manager, and was shop steward and served on the executive board of Local 464A through 2009. Mr. Stinner married Vicki Lombardi in 1982. He was a devoted husband until her death in 1990. He then met Donna Miller in 1994, and they married in 2003. He was an avid Green Bay Packers fan and enjoyed traveling, fishing, hunting, attending theater, fine dining and reading. Surviving him are his beloved wife, Donna; son, Michael Stinner and his wife, Sherri, of Dunellen; stepdaughters, Rachelle McCann and her husband, Bill, of Clark, and Alysha Miller of Clark; stepsons, Michael Opperman and his wife, Kristin, of Clark and Mark Miller and his wife, Kira, of Clark; sisters, Rosemary Deene and Louanne Stebor of Dunellen; brothers, Gerard of Bridgewater and Dennis of Stockton; beloved grandchildren, Naomi, Mikey, Billy, CJ, and Aviana. In addition, Skip leaves behind many nieces and nephews and dear friends

Shirley Christopher Died September 25, 2008. Metuchen, NJ. She was the widow of Harry Christopher, WWII combat veteran of the 117th Cavalry. (From a gravestone observation by SGM (Ret.) Ken Mahan)

James Herbert O'Brien Died May 1, 2006 Cape Cod, MA. He resided at South Chatham, MA where he retired. A long-time resident of Montclair, he was a *Class of '41* Essex Trooper and WWII combat veteran of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) Troop B, surviving the 3 September 1944 Battle of Montrevel, a POW until escaping to American lines. He was awarded the *Bronze Star* for Valor and other decorations. He graduated from Montclair HS and attended Villanova University. Postwar, Jim established the O'Brien Realty Co. with his brothers Frank and Jack, retiring in 1985 as vice president. He was a member of Holy Redeemer RC, Chatham MA, Villanova Alumni, *Essex Troop* and *117th Cavalry* Associations. An avid sports fan, he enjoyed fishing, baseball and football and a weekly poker game with his service buddies and friends. He was predeceased by his wife Mary J. (Keely) O'Brien. Jim is survived by three sons – Thomas of Walnut Creek CA, Kevin of South Chatham MA, and Peter of Reston VA; and a daughter Barbara (O'Brien) Faiella of Southampton, Bermuda; two sisters – Francis and Rosemary O'Brien of Sisters of St. Joseph Order in Flourtown, PA; and nine grandchildren.

A Remembrance of Jim O'Brien – by Ed Leonard I received a call about a month ago from a man in California, Tom O'Brien. He had seen a piece on the internet on Montrevel and the 117th Cavalry that mentioned my name. He wondered if I knew Jim O'Brien, his father, who served in the 117th Cavalry. Did I ever! We were B Troopers together at Fort Jackson and for years, in combat, and then as POW's after Montrevel. I lost track of Jim in POW camp. We were in a large camp at Kustrin, Germany, on the Polish border, holding over 10,000 men. I was losing a pound a day, down about 30 pounds. Then Jim showed up. He had heard I was starving. He had arranged for me to join him with Frank Mitchell and Bill Withers on a nearby farm. “All the potatoes you can eat,” he said. In the next month I had gained back the thirty pounds I had lost and more. It didn't last. The Russians were pressing from the east. So the Germans marched us off the farm to a large camp farther west at Luckenwalde. Again I lost track of Jim and Mitch and was teamed up with Withers. And then it happened! We were freed by the Russians! The bad news was they kept us prisoner. They wanted us to march 500 miles east to the Russian port of Sevastopol and they would ship us home. We didn't trust the Russians. Withers and I hadn't seen Mitch and O'Brien for quite a while and then one night I woke up from a hand on my shoulder and O'Brien whispering in my ear, “Come on! We're going through the fence.” Mitch had a wire cutter and a road map he had filched from the farm. There was no sign of the Russian guard. Mitch cut an opening in the fence and by daylight we were five miles west of Luckenwalde. We walked for two days – 26 miles to the American lines – and two weeks later we were rehabilitating in Atlantic City, NJ. After the war, when I married my beautiful bride Kelly, Jim was my best man. We had slipped away from the reception to go off on our honeymoon and, when we got to the apartment to change, we realized we had no key...two men in tuxedos and Kelly in her wedding gown – standing in the snow and freezing cold! Jim was strong. He boosted me up on a garage roof from which I could reach the apartment window. Problem solved. Jim was cool – he was good natured – he loved to laugh and I loved to make him laugh.

Yeah! I knew Jimmy O'Brien! A great guy! A good friend! He would bail you out when you needed it. I wish he was here.



117th CAVALRY ASSOCIATION

2010 BIENNIAL REUNION

OCTOBER 23, 2010

GIBBS HALL-FORT MONMOUTH

Honoring Those Who Have Served and Those Who Continue to Serve

\$45.00 per person (cash bar) if received before Aug 20, 2010; \$50 thereafter

Cocktail Hour: 6 – 7 PM / Dinner 7 PM

Meal Choices: Chicken Francaise....Prime Rib....Stuffed Flounder

Attending our 2010 Reunion on October 23 2010 - make arrangements to stay at the Comfort Inn and Suites located at 3 Center Plaza, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724. Make your reservation at their local number 1.732.4800 for the special reunion rate of \$89 per night. Directions to the Hotel:

FROM POINTS NORTH: Take the NJ Turnpike South to Exit 11 (Garden State Pkwy). Take the Garden State Pkwy South to Exit 105. At the first light, turn right onto Hope Rd. Follow for about .25 miles and turn right into Centre Plaza. Hotel is on the right.

FROM POINTS SOUTH: Take the NJ Turnpike North to Exit 7A (Shore Points). Take 195 East to the Garden State Parkway North. Follow the Garden State Parkway North to Exit 105. Stay to the left off the Exit and follow signs to Rt. 36 (Long Branch). At the first light, turn right onto Hope Road. Go about .25 miles and turn right onto Centre Plaza. Hotel is on the right.

Reservations

Money and reservations by Oct. 15, 2010

Respond to: COL (Ret.) Dennis J. Dougherty

615 Raymond Street

Westfield, NJ 07090

Saturday October 23X \$45.00 _____

X \$50.00 _____ after August 20

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Meal Choice: Chicken _____ Beef _____ Fish _____

Name: _____ Guest: _____

Seat With: _____



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



- SP-15 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
SU-17 RALPH BOCKINO (mem. of) by wife CATHERINE
FA-11 DOROTHY CASPAR (mem. of husb.) RICHARD J. CASPAR
WI-12 MSG TOM BULLOCK A Troop
FA-12 SANTI CARNEVALI *Class of '41, 117th CAV WWII*
SP-13 SSG (Ret.) CLEMENT & JEAN CURRY
WI-11 LTC (Ret.) PETER D'ELIA
WI-10 MARIE DARBY (mem. of husb.) CPT JOHN DARBY
WI-10 WALT DITZEL
WI-10 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-10 1SG (Ret.) DAVE ELLIS, D Troop
WI-17 MANUEL G. FERRI
WI-11 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-10 HENRY & MARION FORSTENHAUSLER
WI-31 JOHN FRANTZ, LT A Troop
WI-12 ROBERT GREEN
WI-10 1SG (Ret.) ROBERT GRZESZCZAK
FA-20 BARBARA HANSEN wife of TOM HANSEN
SP-11 BILL HETRICK, CHIEF ARMORER (Ret.)
WI-10 BG STEPHEN J. HINES
FA-11 LTC (Ret.) JOHN S. HUFF (mem. of) C Troop, 117th CAV '43-'44
FA-14 BILL HYNDMAN (mem. of) CPT PAUL SEIDEL, F CO. WWII 117th CAV. *Silver Star, Fr. Croix de Guerre*
FA-11 CHARLES JOHNSON
SP-14 COL (Ret.) KEN KLEIN in loving mem. of wife JOANN
WI-10 MADELINE KUTTER (mem. of) ERNEST KUTTER
SP-12 ESTELLE & ARNOLD LASNER, WWII 117th CAV *French Legion of Honor*
SP-11 JAY LASNER (in honor of father) ARNOLD LASNER
SP-13 RON La VERDE (mem. of uncle) T-5 THOMAS G. HENNESSY, A Troop, 117th CAV KIA 5 JUNE '44 ROME
WI-11 ROCHUS E. & CELESTE LAWRENCE
WI-10 WALTER LAWRENCE
SU-12 EDWARD J. LEONARD, *Class of '41, PSG B Troop 117th CAV, Montrevel POW French Legion of Honor*
SP-12 BOB LUTZ *Class of '41, C Troop 117th CAV WWII French Legion of Honor*
WI-10 ARTHUR G. A. MAGGS JR. CSM (Ret.)
WI-13 JEAN & SGM (Ret.) KEN MAHAN
SU-12 KEVIN MALONEY (mem. of) 1SG WM. B. MALONEY
FA-18 PETE & EDITH MARTINEZ
SP-12 ED & BETH MATTHEWS (mem. of Ed's father) T-4 ED MATTHEWS B TROOP 102nd CAV WWII
SP-11 W. SCOTT McCANN
FA-11 CHARLOTTE & BILL MERRING
- SU-13 PAMELA THONACK MILLER (mem. of father) HERBERT A. THONACK, *Class of '41, 117th CAV*
SU-15 JUANITA MITCHELL (mem. of husb) FRANK, *Class of '41, PSG B Troop 117th CAV, Montrevel POW*
WI-10 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; 602nd Tank Destroyer BN '43-'45*
SP-12 JOYCE & HAROLD "SMOKIE" OWEN, *Class of '41, 117th CAV WWII*
WI-11 FOTINOS PANAGAKOS
WI-11 FRANK & BETTY PATRICK
FA-14 COL (Ret.) BOB PEARCE & CAROL, (mem. of) RICK APBLET
WI-16 (in mem. of) COL (Ret.) TOM PIDDINGTON, *Class of '41*
FA-15 SALLIE LEE PIERCE (Widow of) DANIEL LEE, **CMH**
WI-10 CSM (Ret.) AL PHELAN Jr.
WI-10 LTC (Ret.) TONY PLONNER
SP-11 DOT & LTC (Ret.) KEN QUAAS
FA-11 ART REINBOLD (mem. of) ED SUTTON
SP-11 ART & RUTH REINBOLD
WI-92 MRS. ROBERT D. ROBBINS, (mem. of ROBBIE)
FA-21 FRED RODMAN, (mem. of brother) WALTER RODMAN F Company (tanks) 102nd CAV WWII
SU-11 COL (Ret.) HAROLD SAMSEL, *Class of '41, 117th CAV WWII French Legion of Honor*
SP-15 SALCIDO FAMILY (in mem. of) 1LT MANUEL SALCIDO (Ft Jackson '42) 117th CAV. F CO. KIA Italy June 1944
SP-17 JAMES SCANLON
FA-11 EILEEN SCHNAAR (in mem. of husb) WILLIE SCHNAAR
FA-11 ROBERT J. SMITH
SP-12 JOHN SUITER
FA-13 1SG GEORGE THOMAS
WI-10 SFC JOSEPH W. TOOMEY, B Troop 102nd CAV (Iraq) & SABINA
SU-13 CW4 (Ret.) DON TRACY & CHICKIE
FA-11 CHARLES A VIVIANO (50th CAV RCN SQDN)
SP-12 CSM (Ret.) HENRY WETZEL & GRACE, (mem. of) GEORGE "RED" EMERY
SP-14 LTC (Ret.) FRANK WISWALL, USAF *Class of '41 B Troop, 102nd CAV '41-'42 Fr. Legion of Honor*
SP-11 MRS. EDWARD J. WITOS (loving mem. of husb.) EDWARD J. WITOS SR.
WI-27 FRANK A. WOODS, PSG A Troop, 3rd Platoon 117th CAV WWII

BECOME A BOOSTER – RENEW YOUR BOOSTER

To become a Booster of *The Spur*, please send \$10.00 for a year of inclusion as a Booster in four issues of *The Spur*. Make check payable to the **117th Cavalry Association** - \$10.00 for each year of support. Mail to **Bill Gruss, Treasurer, 117th Cavalry Association, 21 Blake Drive, Clark NJ 07066-1645**. Indicate how you wish to be listed:

We will resume the serial (Part II) of The WWII POW History of SGT Clayton Skoda, 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz) in the next issue of The SPUR.

“The Essex Troop Association”

Celebrating 120 years of Service to the State and the Nation

Gathering at the West Orange Armory on Saturday, 25 September 2010 1800-2300 hours

Cocktail Hour, Buffet Dinner, Beer-Wine-Soft Drinks

Attire – Army Service Uniform (4-in-hand tie) or Service equal Civilian – Business

\$25.00 per person – RSVP by 4 September 2010 to

102nd Regiment Association, 1315 Pleasant Valley Way, W. Orange NJ 07052

Call 973-736-0952, email etroop@verizon.net or Frank Dulfer at fwdulfer@verizon.net

Members should have noticed that CW4 (Ret.) Don Tracy has given over responsibilities of Association Treasurer to Bill Gruss. A founding member, Don has been Treasurer for many years and did a great job, as he does with anything he takes on. Thanks Don, Old Friend!

1-102nd CAVALRY STAFF RIDE to WEST POINT USMA 15 AUGUST 2010



The “**Staff Ride**” is an honored Army tradition used by commanders to train unit leaders. While at Camp Smith, NY, LTC Ed Chrystal took most of his officers and NCOs to the **U. S. Military Academy at West Point, NY** for a Staff Ride.

Dennis Dougherty, Ken Mahan and Phil Notestine attended as guests.



(Above - left) A replica of a Revolutionary War cannon used by the Colonials (Above - right) Some replica links of the chain that was used to prevent British warships from approaching West Point on the Hudson River)



“Where’s the powder and shot?”



1SG Mark Rizzo flashes a secret signal!

Phil Notestine, Editor, *The SPUR*
22 Yorke Road
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046
Email: notie@msn.com



COL (Ret.) Kenneth Klein
President Emeritus
COL (Ret.) Dennis Dougherty
President
LTC (Ret.) Ken Quaas
Editor Emeritus

DUES DUE ↓

1ST New Jersey Cavalry



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

NEXT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS: 10 September 2010 and then *Reunion* at Fort Monmouth 23 October 2010; 5 November 2010, 4 February 2011, 1 April 2011, 3 June 2011