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HEADQUARTERS  
38TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (MECZ)  
APO 230 c/o POSTMASTER  
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AFTER/AFTER ACTION REPORT  
FOR PERIOD

FEBRUARY 1 - 23 1945

*Robert E. O'Brien Jr.*

ROBERT E. O'BRIEN JR.,  
Lt Col, 38th Cav Ren Sq (Mecz),  
Commanding.

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BY *D.A. Ruyton* 5/12/92

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1 - 3 February: The first phase of the attack of the 78th and 9th Division to the North and South of the Squadron sector came to a successful conclusion on the third with the complete liquidation of the first line of Siegfried defenses. As their attack pushed on to the East it was the Squadron's task to take over successive terrain features from the Infantry so that the latter could continue their Eastward drive with their rear and flanks protected.

During this period it was possible for all members of this Squadron to observe for themselves exactly what had been the German's defensive positions, and exactly where his pillboxes were located. Without exception, all were amazed at the sight of these cleverly concealed and superbly constructed fortifications. So too, were the ruins of what had been the towns of IMGENBROICH, KONZEN, EICHERSCHEID, a satisfaction to each trooper. The Squadron command post during this period was in MONSCHAU, back at its old home, in the post office. The nights of 2nd and 3rd found overhead visitors, unestablished as to identity but destructive in effect. Some casualties were caused each night to civilians in the town, but there were no military casualties.

Troop A, which on the 1st of February was assembled in MONSCHAU, sent a patrol led by Lt. Saccomanno, with four men, up the road from MONSCHAU to IMGENBROICH and discovered the only obstacle, beyond the previously known blown bridge at MONSCHAU was the steel road block with some mines in its vicinity, just west of IMGENBROICH.

On the 3rd of February, Troop A was alerted to take over in the vicinity of DEEBENBORN from the 78th Infantry. Captain Buentzle made the usual personal reconnaissance and movement orders were awaited. As dusk approached the orders arrived and the troop moved mounted to HAMMER from which place it proceeded dismounted over the unswept road to DEEBENBORN. Upon reaching its objective, instead of finding a town cleared of enemy by a company of Infantry, it was discovered that one platoon from "C" Company 31st Infantry, which had courageously swum the river and stormed the town, was still fighting to clear the town. This known, it was necessary to take up defensive positions in the town and await daylight to clear the town.

Troop B with its command post in MONSCHAU, in the former home of Company F during the memorably hectic December 16-19, was mopping up in MENZERATH which had been encircled as a result of the advance of the neighboring Infantry divisions. A patrol under command of Lt. Shehab, in the deepest snows, reconnoitered the road from Monschau to WIDDAU to IMGENBROICH to MONSCHAU. Despite the darkness, the mission was completed by noon on 2nd February, with the information that the road from MONSCHAU to HAMMER was merely a cowpath. The balance of the route was reported as passable for one way traffic when the road was cleared of snow and some anti tank mines in the vicinity of IMGENBROICH.

The attached Engineer Company, with the assistance of security from Troop B, endeavored to clear the MENZERATH road, but after three bulldozers and one 6x6 had been destroyed and several casualties had been suffered, the task was abandoned on 2 February.

Early 3 February, Troop B relieved elements of the 78th Infantry in HAMMER at 0915A. They were immediately greeted by a hail of artillery and mortar fire which continued sporadically thru out the day. Two vehicle casualties were suffered by artillery fire. One section was used to protect the ROER RIVER bridge crossing at 010199 which Engineers were repairing.

Troop C commenced the period attached to the 102nd Cavalry Squadron and was assigned the mission of defending the town of ROHREN, which at the moment was a snow covered mess of rubble. This for Troop C was really living in the rough. The troop command post itself was little more than a pool of melted snow under a waterfall from what used to be the first floor of a two story building. Despite the rigor of the weather when the troop was relieved 3 February, the trench foot casualties had been considerably lighter than could normally be expected, and only one casualty from this cause was reported.

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On 3 February, Troop E moved into battery position in EICHERSCHEID at 986213. Here again, as with all other buildings in EICHERSCHEID, it can be noted that American Artillery had indeed taken the maximum toll from what formerly were dwellings.

Company F, now the proud possessors of seven brand-new M-24 Light tanks found itself out of the line after 146 days of continuous contact, almost all being on German soil. The unit quickly plunged into an intensive training schedule on use and operation of the M-24.

4 - 5 February: The Squadron command post moved to EICHERSCHEID on the morning of 4 February to what was probably the only intact building in the town. Here it was possible to observe, to the west, all the positions previously occupied by the Squadron on the MUTZENICH HILL. It was noted by everyone that this portion of the Siegfried Line was so situated as to dominate the entire area and any movement to the west could be discovered with ease.

Troop A continued the clearance of DEDENBORN together with an attached platoon of 644 Tank Destroyer Battalion, the town was cleared and 18 Prisoners of War taken. Immediately Captain Buentzle set about maintaining contact with the fast moving 311th Infantry. The swollen ROER RIVER and the steep snow covered hills presented a serious obstacle. The 3rd platoon quickly crossed the river over a hastily positioned log by a blown out bridge. The log gave way, some equipment was lost and one man narrowly escaped drowning. A foot bridge further down the river was found and the Troop continued across and up the hill. The mission of securing the high ground north of EINKUHR was soon accomplished and contact was established with the 102nd Squadron on the left north flank. Communication, which was found to be extremely difficult in this hilly Roer valley, was maintained throughout the period by means of a relaying vehicle at DEDENBORN. By the afternoon of the 5th all the troop vehicles were assembled in the vicinity of the troop command post; the journey having been completed over a circuitous route through KESTERNICH.

Troop B maintained contact with Company E 311th Infantry, 78th Division along the Roer River bridge crossing at 010199 and then relieved them at first light. The entire Troop then moved forward with the mission of relieving one battalion of the 47th Infantry Regiment and outposting EINKUHR and PLEUSHUTTE. The march was made dismounted as the demolished bridges and muddy road would not permit vehicle traffic, nevertheless Sergeant Belcher in some inexplicable manner contrived to get a vehicle up with HOT CHOW. Two Prisoners of War were captured by Captain Sain and his driver Corporal Cohen. The Troop was relieved of its mission on 5 February and assembled in HAMMER and as usual it was maintenance of vehicles for the first order of business.

Troop C moved on the 4th to DEDENBORN to take up support position and on 5th moved to EICHERSCHEID where it, too, spent the balance of the day in vehicle maintenance.

Troop E and Company F continued their training program during the period.

During the period 1 - 5 February the Medical Detachment Aid Station remained at MONSCHAU where the usual efficient medical aid was rendered and nine casualties from adjacent units were treated. Captain Canter and the half-track ambulance accompanied Troop A to DEDENBORN, from which point 4 wounded and half frozen infantrymen, who had been discovered lying along the Roer River banks, were evacuated.

Headquarters and Service Troop removed during the 2nd and 3rd to MUTZENICH. The excellent practice of recovering all salvage along main supply routes was continued by all drivers in the rear echelon. The rear echelon moved forward again on the 5th February to MONSCHAU and occupied the post office and other buildings in that town.

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6 February: On this date the Squadron started its preparation for the forthcoming crossing of the ROMER RIVER dam area. All Reconnaissance troops stressed assault boat training on the upper ROMER RIVER. After much practice it was felt that the Squadron was sufficiently trained in use of these sturdy six man craft, even though Major Edgerton, Lieutenant Tully, Lieutenant O'Brien and one or two C Troopers did have to learn the hard way.

Troop A, incidently, engaged in all the training throughout February and at the same time continued on the mission of maintaining contact between the 102nd Squadron on the North and the 9th Infantry Division on the South.

Troop B continued in reserve throughout the balance of the month.

Troop C had a mission on 7 February assigned of relieving the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion and defending the town of WOFFELEACK (SW of Schmidt). The mission continued through 9th February, without enemy contact or incident, until 2235A when relieved by Troop C 102nd Cavalry Squadron. The Troop returned to EICHENSCHEID and resumed its intensive training.

To all appearances, despite the mission of Troop A of maintaining contact between 102nd Squadron and 9th Division, the Squadron was virtually out of the line and in a rest and training status.

7 - 28 February: During this period the Squadron received permission from First Army Armored Officer, Colonel Peter C. Hains Jr., to conduct experiments in use of the M5 Light Tank as substitute vehicle for the M3 Armored car. To accomplish this each reconnaissance troop was so arranged that the three reconnaissance platoons had none, one and two, respectively, light tanks as basic vehicles. It is hoped that from these experiments and with extensive training a superior reconnaissance tank can be developed and utilized.

First impressions of the crews, which are identical with those of the armored car, were that the vehicle gives greater maneuverability, protection against enemy weapons and no reduction in speed of the new platoon as compared with the T/O Cavalry Reconnaissance Platoon.

Some improvement was made in the tanks when we installed SCR 506 radios in the right sponson, in addition to the 508 FM radio. No maintenance differences have been found which can not be handled by the present maintenance personnel.

All Troops engaged in small unit exercises, among which were platoon in dismounted attack, the Cavalry platoon mounted in cooperation and liaison with the Field Artillery liaison plane; combined Cavalry Rangers platoon in the attack, and village fighting.

All platoons evolved an SOP for action on initial contact with the enemy. The particularly valuable part of this training lay in the fact that it wasn't text book training to green soldiers but the applied experiences of every last man in each platoon, all of whom had actual experience during the past seven months. Weapon firing was not neglected. To the contrary, despite the close proximity of the front lines and the many neighboring units, four ranges were selected and approved by V Corps Headquarters. On these every weapon in the Squadron was fired, not just unrecorded bursts of firing, but recorded, marked and corrected firing. It is worthy of note that despite the daily use of weapons by our soldiers periods of marksmanship training are necessary to insure the utmost in accuracy, to insure that the first shot hits the target.

Company F which prior to the close of the period had received its full complement of M-24 tanks, conducted intensive training in indirect and direct firing and in platoon assault.

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Another phase of training, field expedients, which had never before been stressed and was found deficient, was undertaken by all units, i.e.: building of corduroy roads, corduroy fords and hasty river crossings.

Map reading and compass training were not neglected either for, as ever, they are the basis of all cavalry movement and maneuver.

The Medical Detachment did its usual work of excellent care of the health of the command. All personnel received tetanus immunization. Aid men with units conducted usual semi-monthly feet inspection of the command.

During the entire period every opportunity was availed to send men and officers on pass to the several available recreation towns.

Three members of the Squadron staff received the Air Ground Cooperation orientation tour of seven days with the 452nd Squadron of the 322nd Bomber Group at Beauvais, France. The fortunate ones were Major Ewart J. Edgerton, T/ Sgt John J. O'Connor, and Tec 4 Carl H. Hessel.

#### FEBRUARY AWARDS

##### Presentation of Decorations:

On 9 February in the partially destroyed church in EICHERSCHIED, before approximately 350 men of the Squadron, Col Dolph, Group Commander, presented Bronze Stars to the following for heroic achievement against an armed enemy:

Tec 5 Allen J. Anderson, Trp C  
S/Sgt Bernard C. Bielicki, Co F  
Cpl Walter E. Brown, Trp B  
Pfc Ross Aranea, Trp B  
Pfc Charley D. Thomas, Trp B  
Pvt Willard F. Johnson, Trp B  
Pfc Vincent A. Serchia, Trp C  
S/Sgt William D. Llewellyn, Trp C  
Pfc Edwin Russell, H1 Troop

On 17 February 1945 at Eupen the Corps Commander presented the Silver Star to Captain Robert E. Meyer, for gallantry in action.

Again on 20 February Col Dolph presented Bronze Stars. This time at a mounted ceremony in EICHERSCHIED, in which Troops B, C, and F participated. The awards were presented, for heroic achievement against an armed enemy, too:

Capt Joseph R. Sain, Trp B  
Sgt Elmer V. Struble, Co F  
S/Sgt Henry B. Hill, Trp C  
Pvt Henry B. Terrell, Co F

As of 28 February 1945 the total decorations awarded to personnel of this Squadron is as follows:

Silver Stars	-	22
Silver Stars Posthumously	-	5
Oak Leaf Cluster to Silver Star	-	1
Bronze Stars	-	69
Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star	-	1
Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star Posthumously	-	1
Soldiers Medal	-	2

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The following are the men who returned from the hospital to this organization during the month of February.

Sgt Donald Stuart, 33435697, Troop C  
Tec 5 Howard J. Eckel, 32728690, Hq Troop  
Pfc Lincoln Robertson, 36639349, Troop C  
Sgt Dale J. Otto, 37470748, Troop B  
Pvt Thomas I. Clark, 37106258, Troop C  
Pvt Joseph M. Wies, 37039721, Troop E  
Pvt Carlton E. Richmond, 36937353, Company F  
Pvt Clarence M. Wright, 34702874, Troop B  
Pfc John J. Glynn, 15354070, Company F  
Pvt William C. Beckett, 35314178, Troop A  
Pvt James E. Woodard, 34685548, Troop B  
Pvt Clayton L. Sayre, 37512971, Company F  
Pvt Louis A. Williams, 34627026, Company F  
S/Sgt Robert R. Urwin, 20244667, Troop C  
Pvt Harvey A. Saunders, 37560358, Troop B  
Pvt Louis W. Klima, 37039377, Troop C  
Tec 5 Robert H. Selgren, 36676129, Troop B  
Cpl Vernon Boteler, 33564083, Troop B  
Pvt Robert J. Skelton, 39467625, Company F  
Sgt Charles H. Phipps, 16115035, Troop B  
Tec 4 Lloyd E. Soyex, 37011828, Company F  
Tec 5 Charles E. Garcia, 36575351, Med Det  
Pfc Warren W. Golding, 32147413, Troop A

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