

MATOR ROUSEK

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HEADQUARTERS
38TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (MECHANIZED)
APO 230 U. S. ARMY

AFTER/AFTER ACTION REPORT
FOR
PERIOD 1-30 APRIL 1945

Robert E. O'Brien Jr.

ROBERT E. O'BRIEN JR.,
Lt Colonel, Cavalry,
Commanding

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REGRADER OF *OSD Thompson* BY AUTHORITY *May 3, 1982*
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The month of April 1945 saw the Squadron being used extensively on two primary cavalry missions of flank security and mopping-up operations. It was a period of constant movement in which the Squadron zig-zagged its way across Germany and finally ended the month a stone's throw from the Czechoslovakian border. The necessity for quick and repeated movement, and to get to a destination ready to operate, made the missions ideally suited to cavalry. While the Squadron, operating miles behind what could be called the front lines, sometimes felt strange in its mopping up role, it was a necessary task which it could and did accomplish.

1 April: At noon the Squadron once again took to the road and moved to the vicinity of Fritzlar where all troops deployed to undertake the new mission of protecting the right flank of V Corps from the vicinity of Reide to the vicinity of Fritzlar; maintaining a counter-reconnaissance screen three miles in all directions from that line. The Squadron command post was established at Lohne and all troops proceeded to patrol within their sectors.

2-9 April: During this period the Squadron mission remained unchanged. As soon as the troops began operating in the new area, the normal run of repatriated soldiers--in-civilian-clothing, nondescript uniforms, and the inevitable Russians were processed. All troop commanders became rather proficient in Military Government which devolved to a process of hiding from the steady stream of German civilians with their petty requests such as for permission to visit a relative who lives seven kilometres from here. Dozens of complaints against the Russians and Poles who had the temerity to slaughter a German pig were received and handled with due consideration. Troop A never did get used to the five hundred odd German soldier-patients in the hospital at Merxhausen which sprawled all over the village. On the evening of the third, personnel check-points were established on all roads in the Squadron area. On the afternoon of the eighth, members of the Squadron were decorated by the Group Commander at a ceremony which was held at Lohne. On the ninth, new orders were received to patrol and clear the area East of the Autobahn to the Werra River and South from the Autobahn to the Corps South boundary. The Squadron marched to the new area and the command post was established at Benterode.

10 April: The new mission was short-lived, for a new order was received to follow the 2nd Infantry Division and maintain contact with the unit on the Corps left. Troop B was assigned the left sector and made and maintained contact with the 104th Infantry Division of the VII Corps. Since both infantry units were closely tied in, the mission was relatively a simple accomplishment.

11 April: The Squadron mission continued and, as all troops moved East-ward, the Squadron command post was established at Kirchworbis.

12 April: Mission continued with no changes of note.

13 April: As the troops displaced Eastward, the command post moved to pretentious quarters at Querfurt. When a quartering party of seven men under Lt Metcalf, from Troop A, entered the town of Landgrafroda, it immediately had to forget quartering and round up the many German deserters in the village who were apparently awaiting the appearance of American troops. Before Troop A had arrived, over forty PWs had been taken, including three officers. By the time the troop settled in its new position a total of 67 PWs had been taken from the village alone. As the troop took up positions in the wooded area north of Landgrafroda, patrols discovered three SS bar parks where all types of civilian vehicles were found. All vehicles were in good condition with only small parts removed to prevent operation. In the meantime, PWs taken from the woods had reported that a German General was somewhere in the wooded area. In the evening, just after dark, a civilian vehicle was fired on by an "A" Troop outpost commanded by Lt Tully, when it attempted to run the outpost. All four occupants were killed including General Major Fuller of the German Army.

14 April: A minor change in mission was received. The new mission was to protect the V Corps left flank, maintaining road blocks along the Corps boundary. The Squadron Command Post moved to Gr. Grafendorf and the troops were deployed along an east-west line from Gatterstadt to Gr. Grafendorf.

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15 April: Another mission was received to relieve the 23rd Infantry Regiment in an area generally along the Saale River in the vicinity of Merseburg. All troops moved into position and the Squadron Command Post moved into Merseburg. All personnel were surprised at the condition of the huge synthetic rubber factory at Corbetha and the great Leuna refineries which were untouched by bombings. The great number of anti-aircraft guns in the area was impressive. All that were found intact were destroyed. During the night elements of Troop A and its attached Company A, 2nd Ranger Battalion came under a moderately heavy shelling which was thrown by the German anti-aircraft guns to prevent crossings of the Saale River. In Troop B's sector, enemy were dug in on the east bank of the river in front of Halle.

16 April: The mission was continued; the enemy directly facing Troop B was estimated as a force of 200 men composed of elements of anti-aircraft units who were manning a number of anti-aircraft guns against ground targets. When patrols of Troop B and Rangers approached the river bank they invariably came under small arms and machine gun fire. In Troop A's sector, Lt Edlin of Company A Rangers, led a small four man patrol across the Saale River. Upon encountering a German outpost, the patrol by-passed it and entered a small town in back of the outpost. Here they quickly captured four Germans, visited the Burgermeister and told him the basic regulations of Military Government. They also informed him that he would immediately raise white flags on all buildings. With that accomplished, they completely surprised the German outpost of ten men who were disporting themselves with some of the local frauleins. The girls were slightly indignant about the whole thing. The patrol then returned with 14 PWs. Troop E in battery position was unable to fire as the situation on the east side of the Saale became rather fluid. Lt. Allen of Troop E left the Squadron to report to the 102nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron where he assumed the duties of Commander of E Troop.

17 April: Continuing its mission, the Squadron passed an uneventful day except in the Troop B sector where the usual fire fight was held. One patrol of Rangers and Cavalrymen from Troop B destroyed an enemy machine gun with a soft-nosed Bazooka at a range of 400 yards. Pfc Carl Day, the ranger who did the shooting, is well known for such hits. A little artillery fire from the 62nd Field Artillery was a great persuader. Once again the Squadron lost an officer, as Captain Rogers of Troop C reported to the 102nd Cavalry Group to assume command of Group Headquarters Troop. Lt. Farmer assumed command of Troop C.

18 April: The Squadron, while its mission remained unchanged, moved eastward due to the advance of the 2nd Infantry Division. Troop B took over the former line of the Squadron west of the Saale River, with one platoon of Troop A attached, while the balance of the Squadron crossed the river. At this time, Troop E of the 102nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to the Squadron. This Troop had Company E of the 2nd Ranger Battalion and one platoon of light tanks attached to it. The Squadron Command Post moved to Gunthersdorf.

19 April: All resistance against Troop B having ended, it also crossed the Saale and went into position on the east side of the river just west of Leipzig. As all troops were patrolling to the north from the Corps boundary, many villages and towns were entered for the first time by patrols from the Squadron. In most towns our patrols were greeted with much hand-waving and in one town the Burgermeister seized the opportunity to make a speech about the liberators. The patrol, however, didn't stop to listen to it. Lt. Purobsky, of Company A, 2nd Rangers, and about four men, have credit for taking Schkeuditz without a shot. This town had a population of 16,000. The attached Troop B of the 102nd Cavalry and Company E, 2nd Ranger Battalion ran into a small scale battle in which they deployed their attached platoon of light tanks in such a manner as to be able to destroy several enemy vehicles as they tried to escape from Radefeld, the town under attack.

20 April: The troops were shifted and moved into new positions along the Corps boundary in accomplishment of the mission. Troop B of the 102nd Cavalry and Company E of the 2nd Ranger Battalion were detached from the Squadron. Patrols proceeded north in an attempt to contact elements of VII Corps which had not yet advanced that far east. A large percentage of boys ranging from the ages of 14 to 16 were noticeable in the PWs taken. Their morale was higher than that of the older men of the Wehrmacht.

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21 April: Having been ordered to move to the vicinity of Laucha and assemble there, the Squadron made another march and closed in the new area. A mission was then received to clear a wooded area near Lossa where several American vehicles had been ambushed by guerilla bands of German soldiers.

22 April: Early in the morning, the Squadron moved on its mission and proceeded to patrol its area. Almost immediately a patrol of Troop A became engaged in a fire fight with about eight Germans. Six of the enemy were killed and one wounded. It became evident that these guerillas were desperate and not the usual types of deserters. One of the Rangers of Company A was wounded in the engagement. All units engaged in small fire fights with a few Germans in their sectors, and by afternoon most of the wooded areas had been cleared. Nearby towns were then screened and troops billeted for the night in towns around the area. From the subsequent absence of ambushes, it was evident that the troublesome band of guerillas had been destroyed. An object lesson was given to the Germans by laying these dead guerillas in the streets of villages near where they had been killed, as an example to the people of our intention to stamp out this sort of warfare. It was quite evident that this sank deep into the German hearts and proved a very effective counter-measure against further depredations.

23 April: The mission was continued further north and this day yielded no more from the wooded area than the normal deserter type of PW, with one unfortunate exception as Tec 5 Dimino of Troop A was killed by one of these Germans whom he had just captured proving that the rear area still contained dangerous Germans. Toward evening orders were received to screen the town of Stockhausen, and CIC furnished a list of names of fourteen Nazi party leaders to arrest. The towns of Stockhausen and Sondershausen were obviously hot beds of Nazism. Captain Frink taking one platoon of Troop A proceeded on this task as the balance of Troop A and Troop B placed a ring about the town and cleared the outskirts. To aid Captain Frink, a local townsman whom the Military Government had appointed policeman went with the patrol. Having spent ten weeks in a Nazi concentration camp the policeman proved to be a great help and provided the party with many laughs. He seemed to enjoy his newly born authority and proceeded to brow-beat all Nazi arrestees and their weeping families. He practically took charge of our detachment. Most of his oratory was not understood by the Troop A patrol but must have been quite effective for he left families in tears and received large ovations from the townspeople onlookers. He reached his climax when at the end of the job, he majestically stepped into a Jeep and ordered the driver to take him home.

24 April: Early in the morning the Squadron proceeded to its old location at Laucha and vicinity. The balance of the day was spent in maintenance, and all personnel enjoyed showers and clean clothes.

25 April: In the morning, all troops gave their vehicles a much needed washing and in the afternoon a decoration ceremony was held. For the formation, a Company of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, a Troop of the 102nd Cavalry Squadron, a detachment from the 102nd Cavalry Group and a composite troop from the Squadron were present. Under clear skies Major General Huebner, the Corps Commander, made the presentations as the Group Commander escorted him. Lt. Col. O'Brien was presented with the first and only Legion of Merit of the Squadron. Men from all units were decorated, and in addition to the Squadron Commander, the following members of the Squadron were decorated.

SILVER STAR

1st Lt William H. Wilkerson, Troop C
S/Sgt Kenneth C. Lindquist, Company F
S/Sgt John E. Tietjen Jr., Troop A
S/Sgt William F. Fisher, Troop E
Tec 4 Carlos G. Lucero, Company F
Tec 5 Fred J. Cantrell, Troop C
Tec 5 George C. Sullivan, Troop C

SOLDIER'S MEDAL

1st Sgt Leroy Johnson, Troop B

BRONZE STAR

Capt Joseph R. Seim, Troop B
S/Sgt Edward R. Naldrett, Troop A
Cpl John M. Schuler, Troop A
Tec 5 Charles J. Lau, Troop E
1st Lt Fredrick H. Metcalf, Troop A
Sgt Glen D. Bowman, Troop A
Cpl Harrison A. Sligh Jr., Troop B
Pvt John H. Anderson, Troop A
S/Sgt Glenn L. Manchester, Troop B
Tec 4 Glenn A. Keller, Hq Troop
Tec 5 David Anderson, Troop A

At the conclusion of the ceremony Major General Huebner addressed the formation and highly complimented the Group and its attached units. All units of the 2nd Ranger Battalion were detached from the Squadron and assembled nearby under Battalion control.

26 April, During the day Troop A moved to the village of Rossbach where military telephone wires had been cut the previous day. After screening the village and questioning many individuals, Lt. Harf of IPW Team #11 discovered the culprit who proved to be a Hitler Jugend of about nine years of age. The boy and his father were taken into custody. Initial punishment was administered to the boy by his irate father in the form of a good beating. In clearing this town an arrogant young member of the Hitler Jugend, who was the local leader, was apprehended. It is interesting to note that this sixteen year old boy practically ran the town; the Burgermeister being fearful of crossing him. In the afternoon, Troop B with a platoon of Company F left for Eilenburg; ready to act as guard of honor for high ranking officers at a formal meeting with the Russians at the link-up on the Elbe.

27 April, Troop B and one platoon of Company F were the pride of the Squadron on this day. The occasion of the meeting of the V Corps Commander, Major General Huebner and the Commanding General of the Russian 34th Corps. Troop B resplendent in newly painted vehicles and clean clothing, did the Squadron justice as they escorted the Corps Commander to the west bank of the Elbe. The Squadron Commander crossed the Elbe and witnessed the historical event. Later, the officers of Troop B and the attached platoon of Company F, crossed the river and American-Russian relations proceeded to soar to new heights of accord. A feast fit for kings had been prepared and under the stimulating influence of Vodka, spirits ran high. Troop E moved to Naumburg to assist in guarding the overflowing PW cage at the Corps command post. Major Edgerton, T/Sgt Pichurko and S/Sgt Skardzius started the magic journey to the States and a forty five day leave and furlough. Captain William J. Buentzle reported to Squadron Headquarters to serve as S-3 and Lt. Hedger assumed command of Troop A.

28 April, The day passed quietly as troops E and B remained on their missions and the balance of the Squadron continued maintenance and training. A new mission was received and the Squadron made ready to move. Troop B was recalled and Troop E was relieved effective daylight on the following morning.

29 April, A tactical road march was made to Weiden, a distance of 158 miles. Nothing unusual occurred enroute.

30 April, All troops engaged in maintenance at their posts in or in the vicinity of Weiden. Several road reconnaissance patrols were dispatched to acquaint us with the new area. Lt. Col. O'Brien and Captain Sain, on a reconnaissance, were the first to step into another new country as they passed into Czechoslovakia.

In summarizing the month of April, it is impossible to do so without giving the summary of not only the Squadron's movement but also of Companies A, B, and C of the 2nd Ranger Battalion who were so closely knit with Troops A, B and C respectively that the story of one is the story of the other. The cooperation, understanding and mutual respect, one for the other, was the outstanding factor in making this team a natural task force. The Rangers have a welcome home with the Squadron and it will be an odd feeling if and when they leave.

The first part of the month was mainly a series of moves into flank positions on the Corps left boundary, while the latter part of the month saw the Squadron concerned mostly with the clearing of woods and screening of towns.

As the month ended the Squadron stood ready for the job of passing into Czechoslovakia for the final battle of the European War.

Members of the Squadron to whom awards were awarded and presented during the month of April were as follows:

Distinguished Service Cross

Captain Jerry H. Lewis, Company F, (Posthumous)
Staff Sergeant Edward V. Maloney, Company F (Posthumous)
Private First Class Gene F. Burks, Troop C

Silver Stars

First Lieutenant William H. Wilkerson, Troop C
Staff Sergeant Kenneth C. Lindquist, Company F
Staff Sergeant John E. Tietjen Jr, Troop A
Technician Grade Five Fred J. Cantrell, Troop C
Technician Grade Five George C. Sullivan, Troop C
Technician Grade Five Edward E. Stewart, Med Det
Staff Sergeant William F. Fisher, Troop E
Technician Fourth Grade Carlos G. Lucero, Company F

Bronze Stars

Captain William J. Buzzele, Troop A
1st Lieutenant Weldon J. Yontz, Troop B
1st Lieutenant Raymond O. Hedger, Troop A
1st Lieutenant Fredrick H. Metcalf, Troop A
1st Sergeant Frank J. Harty, Troop A
Staff Sergeant Edward R. Naldrett, Troop A
Staff Sergeant Glenn L. Manchester, Troop B
Sergeant Glen D. Bowman, Troop A
Sergeant Virgil Nelson, Hq Troop
Technician Fourth Grade William F. Podaviltz, Troop C
Technician Fourth Grade Glenn A. Keller, Hq Troop
Corporal John M. Schuler, Troop A
Corporal Harrison A. Sligh Jr., Troop B
Technician Fifth Grade Gerald A. Mastrocovo, Troop C
Technician Fifth Grade David Anderson, Troop A
Technician Fifth Grade Charles J. Lau, Troop E
Private John H. Anderson, Troop A

Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star

Captain Joseph R. Sain, Troop B
First Lieutenant Weldon J. Yontz, Troop B

Soldier's Medal

First Sergeant Leroy Johnson, Troop B

The following men of the Squadron returned from the hospital to duty during the month of April:

Technician Fourth Grade Carl H. Hessel, Hq Troop
Technician Fourth Grade Eugene W. Howes, Troop E
Corporal John M. Schuler, Troop B
Private Francis D. Killin, Hq Troop
Private Lester L. Stearns, Troop B
Private Harold J. McCauley, Troop A
Private Paul J. Tabor, Troop B.