In This Issue

Medal of Honor Recipient First Lieutenant Jack L. Knight

The Last Horse-Mounted Charge of the U.S. Cavalry

Mounted Musicians

The 124th Cavalry Regiment

M1892 Field Trumpet (Bugle)
The United States Cavalry Association
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Contents

1  The Last Horse-Mounted Charge of the U.S. Cavalry
4  M1892 Field Trumpet (Bugle)
5  MOH First Lieutenant Jack L. Knight
8  Mounted Musicians
12  124th Cavalry Regiment
17  Book Reviews
18  Editor’s Notes
19  Specials from the Sutler’s Store

Join the Cavalry
See page 21
75th Anniversary
The Last Horse-Mounted Charge of the U.S. Cavalry
By Jeffrey E. Jordan, USCA Trooper and Member 26th Cavalry (PS) Living Historians

The Oxford English dictionary defines the word “cavalry” as follows: “(in the past) soldiers who fought on horseback." It explains the word's origin as mid-16th century: from French cavallerie, from Italian cavalleria, from cavallo, from Latin caballus (horse). Wikipedia further explains: “From earliest times cavalry had the advantage of improved mobility, and a man fighting from horseback also had the advantages of greater height, speed, and inertial mass over an opponent on foot. Another element of horse mounted warfare is the psychological impact a mounted soldier can inflict on an opponent.”

Perhaps it was a bit anachronistic that in the 1930's, following the harsh lessons of World War I that the future battlefield would be dominated by barbed wire, machine guns, artillery, armored vehicles and aircraft, the U.S. Army would still retain horse cavalry and train its officers in the advantages of height, speed, inertial mass, and psychological impact inherent in a mounted cavalry charge. But these lessons continued to be taught, and, on 16 January 1942 they were deployed for the last time by a U.S. horse-mounted cavalry unit in a charge conducted by a platoon of combined Troops E and F of the 26th
U.S. Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts), led by First Lieutenant Edwin Ramsey.

Lt. Ramsey on his horse Bryn Awryn

Edwin Price Ramsey, born in Illinois on 9 May 1917, was raised in Kansas by his widowed mother and graduated from the Oklahoma Military Academy in May 1938. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Cavalry Reserve and entered active duty in February 1941 with the 11th U.S. Cavalry. In June 1941, he volunteered for service in the Philippines with the 26th U.S. Cavalry (Philippine Scouts). An avid rider and polo player, he was attracted to the 26th Cavalry (PS) by its active polo competition.

The 26th Cavalry (PS) was formed on the Philippine island of Luzon in 1922 from elements of a U.S. Army field artillery regiment and a U.S. Army infantry regiment whose service in the Philippines traced back to the end of the Spanish American War. The 26th Cavalry (PS) was headquartered at Fort Stotsenburg, about an hour north of the capital city of Manila. At the start of World War II, the regiment had about 55 officers (U.S. and Filipino) and 785 (Filipino) enlisted troopers. It was organized with six horse troops, a HQ troop, a machine gun troop, a platoon of White scout cars, and trucks for transporting support services, including a veterinarian. The regiment was thoroughly trained and highly proficient in its service as horse cavalry. It was regarded as an elite unit. Ramsey described it as "probably as fine, if not the finest, regiment the U.S. Army had."
Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese army, on 12 December 1941, invaded the Philippine island of Luzon and began a determined drive south towards Manila. They encountered U.S. and Philippine forces who engaged in dogged resistance, delaying the Japanese advance. By mid-January 1942, the Japanese forces had focused on breaking the defending line by driving through the area around Mount Natib. In the path of this drive was the small village of Moron, which initially was defended by the Philippine Army. However, they had withdrawn from Moron on 14 January, and General Wainwright ordered combined Troops E and F of the 26th Cavalry (PS) to fill the gap.

Lt. Ramsey, due to his familiarity with the area from prior patrols, was ordered to lead the first platoon, composed of 28 mounted troopers, into Moron. As they approached Moron without resistance, he ordered four troopers to ride point into the village. They entered the village at the same time as the advance guard of a large Japanese infantry unit and drew the fire of the startled Japanese soldiers. Galloping back with one trooper wounded, they alerted Ramsey. Riding forward, Ramsey saw dozens of Japanese infantrymen firing from the village center and further back hundreds more crossing the Batalan River towards Moron. He deployed his platoon as three squads in line of skirmishers, and they drew pistols. Recalling his cavalry training, he realized that the height, speed, mass and impact of a charge would be the only hope to break up the body of Japanese infantry. He shouted for his troopers to charge. Nearly lying flat on their horses’ necks, they galloped into the mass of Japanese soldiers, shouting and firing as they went. They crossed the 100 yards from the village center to the river in moments, causing the startled Japanese infantry to break and flee in confusion and disarray. Seizing the advantage, Ramsey ordered the troopers to rein up, dismount and engage the disorganized enemy with rifle fire. The second platoon, led by Lt. Eliseo Mallari,
and the third platoon, led by Sgt. Manuel Mascangcay, of the combined Troops rode to the sound of the guns and reinforced Ramsey’s platoon. Later, the cavalry was relieved by infantry, and the action initiated by Ramsey had brought the Japanese advance at Moron to a complete halt. Lt. Ramsey’s quick and resourceful action was witnessed by several superior officers, and ultimately Ramsey was awarded a Silver Star for successfully leading the last U.S. Cavalry horse-mounted charge.

Of course, the victory at Moron, like the rest of the heroic defense of Luzon, was temporary. The determined resistance of the U.S. and Philippine armies seriously slowed the Japanese advance and made it costly, but ultimately, months later, all of Luzon fell. This final outcome does not diminish the last charge or the 26th Cavalry’s history of exemplary service.

There is a tendency to romanticize horse cavalry, to speak of the dashing cavalier on a horse. However, the many written histories of the service of the U.S. Cavalry make it clear that actual cavalry service was not dashing or romantic. War is a harsh, brutal and ultimately ugly business, and this is not relieved by the beauty, majesty and power of the horse. The true significance of the last charge is not the romance of the horse charge. The American and Filipino soldiers who participated in the last charge displayed the best attributes of cavalymen. They exercised rapid judgment, seized the opportunity and with selfless courage charged into the fray. Because of this legacy, the U.S. Army today proudly retains the terms and images of the horse cavalry to remind them of the power of spirit, initiative, determination and courage in defense of our nation.

[Ed. For further information of the 26th Cavalry’s intense fighting of the Japanese, I recommend The Doomed Horse Soldiers of Bataan – The Incredible Stand of the 26th Cavalry by Raymond C. Woolfe, Jr. and The Twilight Riders – The Last Charge of the 26th Cavalry by Peter F. Stevens.]
The word bugle in the United States is often used as a generic term for many types of horns including the instruments used by the armed services, drum and bugle corps, and by various other organizations such as the Boy Scouts. Nevertheless, bugles have always been specified correctly by the armed services and the suppliers and manufacturers of these instruments as either bugles—a conical bore natural horn—[Ed. such as the M1894 Bugle presented in the December 2012 The Cavalry Journal]—or as a field trumpet—a cylindrical bore natural horn over 2/3rds of its length.

The M1892 was used by the U.S. military, Boy and Girl Scouts, drum and bugle corps, fraternal and paramilitary organizations as the standard bugle for sounding calls. There were variations of this bugle which included a long single twist version with a length of 28 in. designed in the 1930s for parade use, large baritone bugles pitched one octave below the standard M1892 bugle which became popular in drum and bugle corps use, as well as a plastic version manufactured for the military during World War II due to a shortage of brass.

These horns are quite easy to find on Internet auction sites and are still manufactured by a company called Buglecraft, formally the Rexcraft Company. The M1892 bugles are pitched in the key of G which is lower than the modern B flat trumpet, making it easier to sound all the notes. The problem is that most of these horns are of cheap construction and play rather poorly. Better ones were made by instrument companies like C.G. Conn, Wurlitzer, Holton, King, Buescher or Ludwig. Beware that, like the “Gunga Din” bugles, there are thousands of these instruments being made in Pakistan and India of very poor construction. These have no marking on them anywhere.

Extracted from
The Origins of the Model 1892 Bugle (M1892 Field Trumpet) By Jack Carter
tapsbugler.com/the-origins-of-the-model-1892-bugle-m1892-field-trumpet

Have you paid your 2017 USCA dues?
See Page 21
penetration unit similar to Merrill's Marauders. It consisted of three regiments. One contained the survivors of Merrill's Marauders, which had been reorganized, brought up to strength with replacements from the United States, and redesignated the 475th Infantry Regiment. Another was the 124th Cavalry Regiment, a dismounted former National Guard Cavalry unit from Texas functioning as infantry. The third, considered to be an elite unit, was the U.S. trained and equipped 1st Chinese Regiment (Separate).

The Mars Task Force was given the mission of clearing Northern Burma of Japanese forces and opening the Burma Road for truck traffic to China. In order to accomplish this mission, the force moved more than 200 miles by foot over the most hazardous terrain in Burma, over mountainous jungles, steep trails, swift streams and rivers on hot days and cold nights, in rain and mud. This was all done while being cut off completely from friendly forces and having to depend entirely upon air supply. The 124th established contact with the enemy on January 19, 1945, and fought continuously for 17 days. The objective was secured around February 15, 1945.

On the morning of February 2, 1945, Knight and his men started out at 6:20 a.m. Following a barrage, Knight's Troop F moved 1,500 yards through the Hosi Valley jungle, then up a 250-foot slope towards the objective. Only two Japanese were met on the way. Knight killed them both with his carbine.

Knight and his men reached their objective after 35 minutes. The men began to dig in. Knight reconnoitered the slope at the end of the hill. He spotted an enemy pillbox and grenaded it. He found two more pillboxes and gave them the same treatment.

Knight called to his men, "Come on up. There's a whole nest of them here." His men obeyed. Knight found himself in the center of a horseshoe formation of pillboxes. He threw a grenade into his fourth pillbox, then fired his carbine into it.

Men who later described the scene said Knight acted as if he were out to get every pillbox himself. A Japanese soldier tossed a grenade at the lieutenant. He backed away but the burst caught him full in the face. As he turned around and walked back to Lt. Leo C. Tynan to get more...
carbine ammunition, the men saw blood dripping from his face. Another enemy soldier tried to bayonet Knight as he walked past a pillbox. Lt. Tynan killed him. Knight took half of Tynan's ammunition and started forward again. As he broke into a run, he muttered to Tynan, "I can't see."

The troop had caught up with him by then. Concentrated fire came from the pillboxes. Men were falling all around Knight. He regrouped his squads by arm motions and went out in front again.

He grenades his fifth pillbox. An enemy grenade landed nearby and wounded him a second time. This time he went down. But as he lay there, he kept shouting encouragement to his men. Lt. Knight's brother, 1st Sgt. Curtis Knight, saw his brother fall and ran forward to lead the troop. But he was dropped by a bullet under the heart.

The lieutenant asked one of the men to get his brother back to an aid station. He continued to encourage his men. Then, on his hands and knees, he started to crawl towards another enemy pillbox. He was hit by a bullet. It was the end for Lt. Jack Knight. His men went on to take the objective. His brother, flown to an evacuation hospital, recovered.

Three days later Lt. Jack Knight was buried on the hill he had given his life to capture. In recognition of his valor, Southeast Asia Commander Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten ordered the objective be named "Knight's Hill" and be shown that way on official Theater maps. The action became known as "The Battle of Knight's Hill."

His regimental commander, Colonel William F. Osborne, veteran of Bataan and Merrill's Marauders, said of Jack Knight: "In more than four years of combat, I have seen many officers fight and die, but Lt. Knight's action in leading his troop to its objective against strong enemy concentrations is to me the finest example of courage, valor and leadership of any officer I have ever commanded."

"What Lt. Knight did that day is something for every American to be proud of. It is officers of Jack Knight's caliber and the troops that follow his kind of leadership that are winning the war—not colonels and generals."

Major Thomas J. Newton, Knight's previous commanding officer with the 124th Cavalry shared "There were three Knight boys in my troop. Jack, Curtis and Lloyd in that order. Jack and Lloyd went to OCS but I couldn't persuade Curtis to go. He had just been married and didn't want to leave his wife.

"Jack went to Cavalry OCS at Ft. Riley. Lloyd came out as a Tank OCS officer and I lost track of him. When Jack received his commission, we naturally wanted him back with us. So he returned and headed a reconnaissance platoon. Later he became commander of F Troop over here, with Curtis as his first sergeant."

"You know," the major said, "I never was certain which was the best soldier of those three brothers. Jack's deeds in Burma didn't surprise me, nor did Curtis's. I knew they had it in them. I think the story and the death of Jack Knight actually is the story of the Knight family."

Jack Knight's Medal of Honor citation of June 6, 1945 reads as follows:

"He led his cavalry troop against heavy concentrations of enemy mortar, artillery and small-arms fire. After taking the troop's objective and while making preparations for a defense, he discovered a nest of Japanese pillboxes and foxholes to the right front. Preceding his men by at least 10 feet, he immediately led an attack. Singlehandedly he knocked out 2 enemy pillboxes and killed the occupants of several foxholes. While attempting to knock out a third pillbox, he was struck and blinded by an enemy grenade. Although unable to see, he rallied his platoon and continued forward in the assault on the remaining pillboxes. Before the task was completed he fell mortally wounded. First Lieutenant Knight's gallantry and intrepidity were responsible for the successful elimination of most of the Japanese positions and served as an inspiration to officers and men of his troop."

On June 25, 1945, the Medal of Honor was presented to his father, Roy Knight, by General Bruce Magruder at Camp Wolters, Texas. Jack Knight's body was returned from Burma and buried in Holders Memorial Chapel Cemetery at Cool, Texas.
Part of the trick of playing an instrument on horseback has to do with the personality of the horse. Horse handling was a primary consideration for mounted band members, and depending on the instrument, musicians improvised many different riding techniques. With drums and other instruments, players guided horses with their knees, or held the reins in their left hands, while they played with the right.

Such musicians have provided communication and inspiration in battle and on the march as warrior-musicians for centuries. As well, horses have played prominent roles in warfare since prehistoric times. Coupling them with military music has resulted in a tradition of horse-mounted military bands that spread throughout Europe and followed British, French, Portuguese and Spanish colonization to Africa, Australia, and North and South America. In the United States alone, more than 30 mounted military bands served between the Civil War and World War II, including those of the National Guard.

While musical elements were common in militia units since colonial times, it wasn't until the 1903 and 1908 Militia Acts that National Guard units, including bands, were required to conform to the same organization as Army units. This authorized (and standardized to an extent) bands across the country. A few National Guard mounted cavalry bands emerged around World War I, but most were established during the 1920s.

While no longer a part of the U.S. military, their memory is strong in many who participated in the most recent bands—more than 60 years ago. According to the Official National Guard Register for 1936, 19 authorized mounted bands existed within National Guard cavalry units. They were scattered across the country from Brooklyn, NY, to Deming, NM.
Musical Composition

While each National Guard mounted band officially had 28 musicians, most bands supplemented this—sometimes numbering up to 40 for special occasions. Depending on the band, a full complement of instruments consisted of various combinations of woodwinds, brass and percussion.

Due to a lack of horses, and because some units weren't allotted sufficient numbers of horses for their bands in peacetime, it is difficult to determine how many of them actually performed on horseback. But for units with horses, musicians made conscious efforts to ride the same horse each time, others didn't. "Sometimes [stable sergeants] would like to play tricks on us by giving us horses that were ringers—that were excitable, and they would prance and buck when we started playing," says Roy Woodward, a trumpeter and drummer with the Texas Guard's 124th Cavalry band. "We looked for the meekest, docile horses that weren't afraid of trumpets and cymbals and the other instruments."

Woodward was only 15 years old when he joined the 124th Cavalry band in 1932. He used an assumed name and lied about his age. His father, W.W. Woodward happened to be the bandmaster.

In Northumberland, PA., from 1940 to 1941. He says the band would play at "local concerts, parades, dedications ... as well as two weeks of summer training comprised of maneuvers and musical performances with the regiment at Camp Drum, New York."

John Dittmer, who rode with the New York Guard's 101st Cavalry band from 1936 to 1940 as a trombone and euphonium player, and from 1940 to 1942 as bandmaster, remembers summer camps of mounted and concert rehearsals and performances, as well as drills and ceremonies. "In summer camp and active duty, we did ceremonies called Guard Mounts, which took place every day--three out of seven days mounted in which the band would play," he says. "We took the horse cavalry regiment to North Carolina in 1941, with the horse vans carrying the horses over the road."

Elwood Langdon, who played trumpet with the 101st Cavalry out of Brooklyn, NY, from 1931 to 1938, remembers the benefits of being in one of New York's five boroughs. "The 101st was stationed at the armory on Bedford Avenue, just up the hill from Ebbets Field, home to the Brooklyn Dodgers," he says. "We played most all the Sousa marches for polo matches—some light concert pieces and cornet solos like Clarke's Bride of the Waves and A Soldier's Dream. Langdon adds that his unit had seated rehearsals Monday nights, and "mounted rehearsals about twice a month."

In New York and elsewhere, mounted bands were geared toward the particular populace that they served. Woodward's 124th Cavalry band back in Texas, for example, served a small town/rural population. Other bands were organized as highly visible organizations in major urban centers and served as military escorts and ceremonial troops.

One hundred black horses were required to fully equip the Chicago Black Horse Troop and Mounted band of the 106th Cavalry. Members were attired in uniforms patterned after the U.S. dragoons of the War of 1812. "The whole idea was for public relations," says Francis Mayer, who rode with the 106th and played clarinet from 1929 to 1933. "We would ride from our headquarters at the Chicago Riding Club on East Erie Street to the LaSalle Street or Dearborn station and escort dignitaries [from Amelia Earhart to President Herbert Hoover] through the streets to their..."
hotels, or we'd take someone through the fairgrounds through the World's Fair. Of course, we'd create quite a sensation."

The band was also expensive—so expensive, Mayer says, that Chicago corporate leaders and politicians paid subscriptions to add to government funds to support the band.

George Ish, who also served in the 106th from 1936 to 1941, says the band not only had the complete instrumentation of any Army band, it had two kettledrums at the front of the band—quite expensive and very rare for U.S. military bands.

**Why the Band?**

Reasons musicians joined mounted bands in the 1920s and 1930s were similar to those of today's military musicians. Until the late 1930s, a world at war was far from the public’s mind.

Men who played instruments in amateur as well as professional settings found steady work in the Guard. Several joined because of their high school band experiences, including Mayer, whose band director at Chicago's De La Salle High School was also the director of the 106th mounted band.

George Ramsden, who rode with the 110th Massachusetts in Boston from 1934 to 1940 as a saxophonist became involved when he was asked by warrant officer and bandmaster Chester Whiting—also the music supervisor at Ramsden's high school—to be his orderly. "I walked his horse and took care of his uniform, and played saxophone in the rehearsals." Ramsden says. "He gave me the equivalent of a buck private's pay out of his own pocket, as well as candy bars and tonic. I finally joined the band myself when I was eighteen."

Others joined to supplement their income or to avoid other military duty. "Since the band was located in New York, we recruited at universities and the musicians' union, and we would tell the musicians, 'You guys are going to get drafted if you don't do something about it. You're going to be firing a machine gun, driving a truck, etcetera. You'd be better off in one of the bands. Come to rehearsals on Monday nights and talk with our recruiter," Dittmer says. "Musicians who played every possible instrument from mandolin to Jew's harp would show up."

One of the oldest reasons to join any kind of military organization also played a part as friends stayed together. "I played with the drum and bugle corps—and later, the band of Boy Scout Troop 159 in Brooklyn," Langdon says. "I played in a brass quartet within this band comprised of my brother Art and me on trumpet, Jack Wyrtzen on trombone, and George Schilling on euphonium." All joined New York’s 101st.

**Not all Fun and Games**

While some mounted musicians enjoyed mounted duty, others felt otherwise. "The horses were typically trained well enough to follow the horse in front of them," says Mayer from the 106th. "It was the front rank that had to worry about maneuvering, and I think that the outriders did more guiding than playing." He also says he didn't particularly enjoy horseback riding. "I endured it, though," Mayer says. "You couldn't put a rein over your wrist because the horse would jerk his head and you'd get the clarinet bumped into your teeth."

But Langdon says the 101st harnesses had a "martingale"—an extra strap that steadied a horse's head. Shaffer, from Pennsylvania's 103rd, who hadn't ridden before joining the Guard, adds that training was a bit scarce. "Here's your horse, get on it," he says was the extent of his riding instruction. "I still don't like the thought of a
McClellan saddle, [it's] like sitting on the top rail of a fence."

Demise of the Tradition

But, good or bad, memories are all that remain from these bands. The National Guard mounted band tradition ended essentially at the beginning of World War II. Between September 1940 and October 1941, more than 300,000 Guardsmen in 18 divisions, 28 separate regiments and 29 observation squadrons entered federal service, doubling the size of the Army. At the same time, the now-mechanized U.S. military—from cavalry to artillery units—supplanted horses with motorized vehicles, which dismounted cavalry bands in the Army and Army Guard throughout the war. These advances, combined with societal changes and the expenses required to support and supply mounted bands, eventually eliminated all U.S. mounted bands. Many mounted musicians transferred to other bands or units, and some mounted bands were reorganized as other bands, ultimately closing the book on a grand piece of American military history.

Bruce Gleason is an assistant professor of graduate music education at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. A veteran of the 298th U.S. Army Band of the Berlin Brigade, he is an expert on military music history and is chronicling the tradition of horse-mounted bands from the Crusades to the present.

Reprinted from National Guard magazine, February 2004, with permission of the author.
The 124th Cavalry Regiment, Texas Army National Guard, as a numbered regiment, was established in 1929 during the twilight of the U.S. Cavalry, but its history dates back to Spanish Texas and spans service to six nations. Through circumstances, world events and timing, the 124th found itself the last operationally mounted horse cavalry regiment in the U.S. Army, only dismounting in late 1944, prior to service in the China-Burma-India theatre of war. Without getting into discussions about constabulary units, separate squadrons, or Regular Army versus National Guard, the 124th holds a unique place in cavalry branch’s history and one worth noting.

The history of Texas is the history of cavalry. The Texas Army National Guard traces its lineage back to the year 1822 and the Republic of Mexico’s Militia Act organizing two militia districts along the Brazos and Colorado Rivers. In 1823, Stephen F. Austin, the Father of Texas, issued a call for mounted volunteers to "range" the colonies for local defense.

With the onset of the Texas Revolution, the Texas Permanent Council, in November-December 1835, reorganized and expanded the existing militia companies into a regular infantry and artillery regiment, a cavalry battalion, and auxiliary forces. During the revolution, Texas Cavalry units fought at Gonzales, Bexar, the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto (the decisive battle of the war).

After the independence of Texas from Mexico, Comanche raids along the Republic's frontier in 1841 resulted in congressional authorization of "Minute Companies" manned by individual volunteers under the county judge's jurisdiction. The Texas congress additionally authorized the creation of regular troops and the 1st Cavalry Regiment was organized. The 1st never reached full authorization and probably remained at battalion strength. During the Republic era, Texas Cavalry, both regular and militia, fought at Plum Creek, Salado, and in numerous Indian campaigns, and also with the Mier and Santa Fe Expeditions.

With Texas' annexation to the United States and the threat of war with the Republic of Mexico, U.S. Major General (Brevet) Zachary Taylor called upon the governor of the new state of Texas to provide volunteers. Texas raised eight cavalry regiments and battalions, most notably the 1st and 2nd Regiments of Mounted Rifles. Texas Cavalry fought in the Texas, Monterey, Buena Vista, and Mexico City campaigns.

During the 1850s, Texas mounted forces participated in numerous expeditions, along with the regular U.S. Cavalry, against the Comanche and Kiowa Indians.
"A man afoot is half a man."
- A Texas Civil War Cavalryman

In 1861, Texas seceded from the United States and contributed 129 Cavalry organizations to the Confederacy and two for the Union. In the Civil War, the Texas Cavalry fought in every campaign in the Western and Trans-Mississippi theatres. Over 60,000 Texans served in the Confederate military. The monument to Texas' Confederate soldiers on the capital grounds in Austin has a simple monogram upon it; "Died for States' Rights." Inscribed upon a monument to fallen Confederate soldiers in Richmond, Virginia is the following epitaph:

"Not for fame or reward, not for place or rank, nor lured by ambition or goaded by necessity, but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, these men suffered all, sacrificed all, endured all, and died."

With the defeat of the Confederate States of America and Texas' occupation by United States' reconstruction forces, all state military organizations were disbanded. After reconstruction and the withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces from Texas, new militia organizations were created. From 1876 to 1879 a new regiment of Texas Cavalry was raised, the 1st Texas Cavalry. Company A, "Gillespie Mounted Rifles," was headquartered at Fredericksburg; Company B, "Prairie Rangers," at Oyster Creek; Company E, "San Bernard Mounted Rifles," at Brazoria; Company G, "Montel Guards," at Montel; Company H, "Heads Prairie Guard," at Heads Prairie; Company I, "Dimmit Rangers," at Carrizo Springs, and Company K, "Frio County Volunteer Guard." The regiment moved and was reorganized many times during the 19th Century and never exceeded squadron level strength.

In January 1918, the U.S. Secretary of War authorized Texas to organize two brigades of cavalry, to replace the U.S. Army's 15th Cavalry Division patrolling the U.S.-Mexican border. The 15th Division was needed in France. During this mobilization, the Armistice ending WW I was signed and the Texas units were returned to state control.

In December 1920, the 1st Texas Cavalry Brigade (Houston) was reorganized as the 56th Cavalry Brigade and the six Texas Cavalry regiments consisting of: the 2nd Texas Cavalry Regiment (San Antonio), 3rd Texas Cavalry Regiment (Brenham), 4th Texas Cavalry Regiment (Amarillo), 5th Texas Cavalry Regiment (Dallas), 6th Texas Cavalry Regiment (Texarkana), and the 7th Texas Cavalry Regiment (Houston), were reorganized into the new 1st Texas Cavalry Regiment. The 1st Texas Cavalry Regiment was re-designated the 112th Cavalry Regiment, which together with the 56th Machine Gun Squadron (Texas) and the 111th Cavalry Regiment (New Mexico) made up the 56th Cavalry BDE. The original 1st Texas Cavalry Regiment dating back to post-Civil War Texas was deactivated, never to return.

In March 1929, the Machine Gun Squadron and the 2nd Squadron of the 112th Cavalry Regiment were re-organized into the 124th Cavalry Regiment. The 124th Cavalry Regimental HQs was in Austin. The 1st Squadron was in Ft. Worth with its A and B Troops (formerly E and G Troops/2nd Squadron, 112th Cavalry Regiment). The 2nd Squadron was in Houston with its E Troop at Brenham and its F Troop at Mineral Wells. The regimental Band was also at Mineral Wells, with the Machine Gun Troop in San Antonio. All elements of the 124th Cavalry Regiment were federally recognized on March 20, 1929. This action released the 111th Cavalry Regiment back to New Mexico's control and made the 56th Cavalry Brigade an all Texas organization.

Units and individuals of the Regiment were on duty under Martial Law at Borger, Texas, when in 1929 it became necessary to supplant the civil authority in that oil town. The regiment was also

East Texas Oil Fields – Martial Law
deployed to Sherman, Texas in 1930 due to a race riot and to the East Texas Oil Fields when the entire 56th Brigade was moved to enforce the Railroad Commission's Oil Production Regulations in 1931. Some troopers remained on this assignment for over six months. Production control measures on oil and gas were enacted by the Texas Legislature as a result of the East Texas Martial Law control.

Prior to World War II, the 124th Cavalry Regiment was complete with all three squadrons and, along with the 112th Cavalry Regiment, formed the 56th Cavalry Brigade. In October 1940, the 56th Cavalry Brigade had the only purely "Horse Regiments" left in the National Guard. All other National Guard Cavalry Divisions and Brigades were inactivated and their regiments converted to Field Artillery, Coast Artillery, and Horse and Mechanized Regiments. Of the nine National Guard Brigades from which to choose, the 56th survived and entered active Federal Service. This decision was based on the caliber and training of the Brigade men and officers.

On November 16, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 8594, ordering certain units of the National Guard of the United States into active service of the United States. The order was effective November 18, 1940, and included the 56th Cavalry Brigade. Members were to be inducted for a one-year period only.

Officers and men were given 10 days to sever civilian ties before moving by train to Fort Bliss, Texas, near El Paso—their first training station as members of the Army of the United States. Early in February 1941, the Brigade received orders to change stations with the 1st Cavalry Division stationed at the lower border posts. The 56th Cavalry Brigade Headquarters moved to Fort McIntosh at Laredo, Texas. The 112th Regiment relieved the 5th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Clark, Texas. The 124th relieved the 12th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Brown in Brownsville and Fort Ringgold at Rio Grande City, Texas. The troops were becoming acquainted with barracks life when the Brigade was ordered back to Fort Bliss for desert maneuvers in June 1940, with the 1st Cavalry Division in Texas and New Mexico. The largest review of Horse Soldiers since the Civil War took place while at Fort Bliss, made up of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 56th Cavalry Brigade -- some 13,000 mounted men. Major General Innis P. Swift stated, "Of all the regiments participating, the 124th was the most outstanding, both in appearance and performance." Just seven months earlier they had been weekend citizen soldiers.

The 124th was sent to Fort Brown in Brownsville, Texas where it remained, patrolling the border. On May 10, 1944, the 124th Regiment moved by train from the border posts to Fort Riley, Kansas, taking all horses and horse equipment. At Fort Riley, the Regiment received an A-2 Priority Rating for procurement of controlled items of equipment. Personnel
adjustments were made, and they received new men and officers in order to be "combat ready." On July 7, 1944, the Regiment departed Fort Riley via rail for Camp Anzio, California, a port of embarkation near Los Angeles. Prior to departure, the Regiment turned in its horses to the Quartermaster at Fort Riley, but loaded all saddles and other mounted equipment for shipment overseas.

On July 25, 1944, the Regiment boarded the U.S. Ship General H. W. Butner, a troop transport, bound for India and the China-Burma-India (CBI) theatre of war. The voyage ended in Bombay, India on August 26, 1944. From Bombay, the unit moved by wide gauge rail across the country to the Ramgarh Training Center in the Province of Bihar, India, some 150 miles West of Calcutta. Here the Regiment learned that it would be dismounted, but would retain its Cavalry designation. Orders were received to reorganize into a long-range penetration unit; and the unit was re-designated the "124th Cavalry (Special)." Mounted equipment was stored and dismounted type items of clothing were issued.

The Regiment departed Ramgarh, India for Burma on October 20, 1944. Transportation was on primitive railroad and river steamer up the Brahmaputra River to Gauhatti, India, then by narrow gauge rail through the Assam Valley to Ledo; from Ledo to Myitkyina, Burma by C-47 aircraft, then to Camp Landis by truck. The Regiment arrived in Burma on October 31, 1944. It was here that the Mars Task Force was formed. This organization contained the 124th Cavalry, the 475th Infantry (a regiment which would become the 75th Ranger Regiment), a Chinese Combat Team, two battalions of Field Artillery, some Quartermaster mule pack troops, and medical and other miscellaneous units needed in a combat force of such magnitude.

The Mars Task Force was given the mission of clearing Northern Burma of Japanese forces and opening the Burma Road for truck traffic to China. In order to accomplish this mission, the force moved more than 200 miles by foot over the most hazardous terrain in Burma, over mountainous jungles, steep trails, swift streams and rivers on hot days and cold nights, in rain and mud, coupled with the ever-present fear of mite typhus. This was all done while being cut off completely from friendly forces and having to depend entirely upon air supply. The 124th established contact with the enemy on January 19, 1945, and fought continuously for 17 days. With the objective secure, an administrative bivouac was declared around February 15, 1945.

The only Medal of Honor awarded for ground action in the CBI theater was presented posthumously to Lt. Jack Knight for heroic action in battle. Lt. Knight was commanding Troop F 124th Cavalry at the time of his death. The hill on which he was killed was named Knight's Hill by order of Admiral Louis Mountbatten.

The Regiment departed the combat zone for Lashio on February 28, 1945; and after a short stay in Lashio was flown over "The Hump" to Kunming, China, completing the move on May 14. On June 11, orders were issued for inactivation of the Regiment, and on July 1, 1945, the 124th Cavalry Regiment (Special) was deactivated.

Following WWII, numerous reorganizations occurred in the Texas Army National Guard with the 124th fulfilling both cavalry and armor roles, and serving in both the 36th (TEXAS) and 49th Divisions. In 1959, the U.S. Army's regimental system was modified and all but three active Cavalry Regiments (2nd, 3rd and 11th ACRs) were reorganized into multiple battalion level organizations. The former A Troop/124th Cavalry Regiment was reorganized into the current 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment. Should there be a need to mobilize more squadrons of the 124th Regiment, the pre-1959 troops would be activated and expanded to form subsequent squadrons, i.e., B Troop/124th Cavalry Regiment would from 2nd Squadron/124th Cavalry Regiment, etc. In the event of full-scale mobilization, this will allow each former army regiment to produce up to fifteen battalion level organizations from the original unit.

The 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment, was reactivated and reorganized in 1973 and
The Squadron was headquartered in Waco. The Squadron was assigned with its Headquarters and Headquarters Troop (HHT), A and B Troops in Waco, C Troop in Corsicana and Athens, and D, E and F Troops in Austin. The Squadron’s equipment consisted of M1 tanks, M3 cavalry fighting vehicles, AH1 Cobra attack helicopters, and OH58 scout helicopters. The Squadron had an authorized strength of 793 troopers making it the second largest lieutenant colonel command in the 49th Armored Division. As a cavalry squadron, its historical mission remained unchanged: to perform security, reconnaissance and economy of force missions for the division commander. The Squadron used its economy of force, lethality, mobility and audacity to overcome superior numbers and report enemy positions, strengths and intentions.

In 2001, the Brigade Reconnaissance Troops (BRT) were activated for each Brigade in the 49th Armored Division. (The former 56th Cavalry Brigade, in 2001, served as the 2nd Brigade, 49th Armored Division.) These troops (G, H, and I/124th Cavalry Regiment) proudly fly the 124th guidon, carrying with them the same lineage and honors of the original regiment.

In early 2004, 180 troopers were mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). They conducted one year of operations in and around Camp Ashraf, Iraq and returned home with no loss of life. They were awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation for their service and were the first troopers to earn the newly created Texas Cavalry Medal. These troopers are also the only members of the old 49th Armored Division to be authorized to wear that patch as a Former Wartime Service – Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (aka the combat patch). This patch was also recently approved by the Institute of Heraldry for wear as a Combat Service Identification Badge.

In September 2005, the Squadron was once again mobilized, this time in support of the Multi-National Force and Observer mission on the Sinai Peninsula in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry, along with Company D 949th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), was mobilized in the summer of 2008, and deployed with the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) to Iraq in direct support of OIF 09-11. HHT and Troop A provided Force Protection for the Victory Base Complex (VBC) and Troop B provided Force Protection for the International Zone (aka the IZ or “Green Zone”). Troop C was tasked with running the Joint Visitors Bureau and providing personal security to VIPs. The Squadron returned home from its tour in August 2009 and was awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation and the Governor’s Unit Citation. The 124th sustained one non-combat casualty. SGT Christopher Loza died on 10 April 2009. He was a member of 2nd Platoon, Troop A, 1-124th Cavalry.

The Squadron is now part of the 36th Infantry Division following the reflagging of the 49th Armored Division in 2004. In 2006, the Squadron was converted from a Division Cavalry Squadron to a Recon Squadron for the 56th IBCT. As a RSTA (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition) Squadron, it is currently configured with two motorized Troops (A and B Troops), one dismounted Troop (C Troop), one Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, and an attached Forward Support Company (Company D, 949 FSB).

The 124th Cavalry is a proud regiment of firsts, onlys, and lasts: the first (last and only) unit from the 49th Armor Division to deploy to combat, the only Medal of Honor recipient from the China-Burma-India theatre, and the last cavalry regiment organized and employed in the traditional horse mounted reconnaissance role. The 124th Cavalry Regiment counts the 75th Ranger Regiment as its sister unit from World War II, symbolizing what is unique and great about our nation’s army—blending the best of our Regular Army with the best of our citizen soldiers to make an effective fighting force. The unique history, missions, and continued service to the State of Texas and the United States of America make the 124th Cavalry one of our country’s proudest regiments.
This extremely well researched book is a must read for any USCA member. The author brings together a multifaceted story involving institutions, horses, politics, the military, and courageous individuals who acted above and beyond the norm to save the world’s finest purebreds from almost certain destruction or capture by the Soviets during the closing days of World War II.

The author has the ability to not only put you at the scene, but to also put you in the scene.

The opening chapter is set at the Olympics of 1936 in Berlin where we are introduced to Alois Podhajsky, future director of the Spanish Riding School (SRS) in Vienna, who is competing in dressage for which he is awarded the bronze rather than gold after a slight-of-hand change of score by the German judge. Podhajsky’s ability to communicate with the horse is what has pulled him out of his despair (PTSD) from WWI.

Gustav Rau, the man who sets out to breed the perfect horse for Nazi Germany and will try to seize whatever stock is necessary, is the man who has set Germany’s path to Olympic domination.

In 1938, Rau arrives in New York to visit various equestrian sites and now has the title Chief Equerry of Germany and Master of the Horse. Included in the tour was a visit to Fort Leavenworth where Rau could learn first hand about the Army’s Remount Services Program. Rau had been impressed with Jenny Camp a silver medal winner at the 1936 Berlin Games in eventing and a product of the Remount Service.

In 1938 Germany had 183,000 horses including donkeys. Rau put his horse breeding skills to work, particularly in conquered territories. By 1945 Germany had 2.7 million horses.

With the invasion of Poland, Rau soon had all of Poland’s 3.9 million horses including all the highly prized Polish Arabians, the most famous of which was the blood bay Arabian Witez.

While Rau continued moving horses like chess pieces, now also including Lipizzaner, as he had been since 1939, on the other side of the world the U.S. Cavalry was in the process of becoming mechanized.

On January 15, 1943, at Fort Jackson, SC, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was reactivated six months after being deactivated and losing its horses. Lt. Col. Charles Hancock “Hank” Reed, a horse cavalry officer, West Point ’22, is the commanding officer. The 2nd Cavalry was now a mechanized unit.

On May 31, 1944, at Camp Bewdley, West Midlands, England, the 2nd Cavalry, and now Col. Reed, was present when General George Patton made his famous speech immortalized years later in the opening scene of the movie “Patton”.

On July 21, 1944, the 2nd Cavalry landed at Normandy, France. The 2nd Cavalry fought its way across Europe as part of Patton’s 3rd Army and would become the only Regiment in Europe to fight off an entire Germany armor division. Its achievements by April 1945 would surpass any regiment of comparable size but its most noble adventure was yet to come.

On April 26, 1945 near the Czechoslovakian (CZ) border, the 2nd Cavalry captured a Luftwaffe intelligence colonel and it is revealed that over 300 horses, some of the most valuable in the world, are located at a breeding farm in Houstau, CZ. Formulating a rescue and evacuation plan after some hair-raising reconnaissance and negotiations, Col. Reed receives permission from Gen. Patton to proceed with his rescue plan and enter CZ which is an area denied to the U.S., per the Yalta Conference in February.

While Col. Reed and the 2nd Cavalry are engaged in the CZ operation, 120 miles away in St. Martin, Austria, Alois Podhajsky, who has successfully evacuated the SRS with its personnel, horses, and equipment from Vienna, awaits the arrival of the Americans hoping that he may obtain protection for the SRS. After a stunning performance and a verbal request to Gen Patton, the protection is granted.

On May 16, more than 300 horses rescued from CZ arrived in Bavaria but the adventure was not over. The problem of what to do with these purebred horses was just beginning. After 219 Lipizzaners were returned to Austria, more than 100 purebreds remained. They were claimed, after due process, as the spoils of war and became property of the U.S. Army. At the end of the summer 1945, responsibility for the horses passed from Col. Reed to Col. Fred Hamilton, Chief of the Remount Service.

On October 1, 1945 at Bremerhaven, Germany, 151 of the world’s most beautiful horses boarded the Liberty ship Stephen F. Austin for passage to the USA. After sailing through a violent storm that
left both horses and soldiers injured, the ship arrived in Newport News, VA on October 28, 1945 with a cargo of now 152 horses.

Many of the horses were eventually sold off and cavalry veterans were given a chance to purchase them at a discount. On July 1, 1948, all Remount Depots including all livestock and equipment were transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

On May 25, 1949, the remaining Polish Arabians, to include Witez, and Lipizzaners, were auctioned off at Ft. Reno, OK, thus ending the US Government’s involvement with the rescued horses.

Years later when Col. Reed was asked why he saved the horses, his answer was, “We were so tired of death and destruction. We wanted to do something beautiful.”

The 2nd Cavalry succeeded beyond measure.

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**Book Review**

**Sound the Trumpet, Beat the Drums: Horse-Mounted Bands of the U.S. Army, 1820 – 1940**


Reviewed by Trooper Sam Young

As a bandsman, horseman, and living history Cavalry trumpeter, I was immediately drawn to this book when I saw its title. I have played bugle calls and bugle marches while mounted for parades and other events. It is a unique experience. But since the United States Army (US) disbanded its Cavalry in the 1940s it no longer has mounted musicians. However, you can go to Youtube and see music videos of British, French, and other country’s mounted military bands.

Trooper Gleason—a member of the U.S. Cavalry Association—has researched, in great depth, and authored a tremendous reference book that takes the reader back thousands of years to when animals, such as horses and elephants, their riders and horns were combined to more effectively provide command, control, and motivation of soldiers during both war and peace. He further addresses the traditions, such as kettledrums, that countries, rulers, and the mounted bands established, and how these traditions migrated from the Middle East and Europe to literally all parts of the world.

He details the evolution of instruments and instrumentation; music and composers; training of horses and riders; transporting horses, equipment, and musicians; performances; and band directors/leaders.

For the United States, the first mounted musicians were company trumpeters serving in Revolutionary War units. From then until the end of World War II there is a rich history of the Army, National Guard, and militia mounted bands, especially during the 1920s and 1930s.

Bandmen were soldiers first, with the same duties and training requirements as the other soldiers in their regiments. As bandmen, they also spent many hours practicing and then providing music for both military and community events. Frequently the company/troop trumpeters were added to enhance the band’s musical performances.

The book is a researcher’s “god-send.” It is extensively footnoted with details and references. The bibliography is over two dozen pages and includes articles; books; laws, procedures, regulations, and other official documents; newspapers, newsletters, and programs; websites; discography; correspondence; and interviews. And, the index is equally detailed with almost twenty pages.

This definitely must-read book should become a prominent part of your personal library.

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**Editor’s Notes**

By Trooper Sam Young

I hope you enjoy this issue of The Cavalry Journal as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. The 75th Anniversary of the last horse-mounted charge of the U.S. Cavalry deserved recognition, thank you 26th Cavalry (PS) Living Historians. The 124th Cavalry sent its very interesting story, from which came a separate article recognizing its Medal of Honor recipient. The book review of the daring rescue of extremely valuable horses from defeated Nazi Germany gives us a terrific horse story. And what did we know about the Army’s horse-mounted bands? Trooper Bruce Gleason gave us that story—thank you Bruce! It would be awesome if a number of musicians who are also horsemen and women could create a living history horse-mounted cavalry band with its home at Fort Reno as a part of USCA! And finally explaining the different types of trumpets and bugles used by the cavalry enhances your cavalry equipment knowledge.

Please keep stories and book reviews coming—we all gain from your input.

Please send your letters and article ideas to me at journaleditor@uscavalry.org or to my home address: Samuel Young, 712 Englewood Street, Lansing, KS 66043.
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