

Jack A Wagstaff

Compiled by Judy Hansen
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Jack Amos Wagstaff was born the 19th of November 1921 to Arthur Leon and Ladocia Jane Mayberry Wagstaff in American Fork, Utah County, Utah. He had siblings James, Roy, and Lola. Jack graduated American Fork High School in 1940 and was pretty musically inclined. He played the clarinet and belonged to the Beethoven Club in High School where he attended concerts by McCune Symphony Orchestra and United States Navy Band. After graduating, Jack attended the Utah State Agricultural College in 1941 and 1942. This school is known today as Logan State University. He was a member of the Lambda Delta Sigma; Alpha Chapter. From 1942 through 1944 he served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the East Central States Mission.



When Jack returned from his mission, he married Relva Elmina Larsen on the 12th of April 1944 in the Salt Lake Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They are the parents of one daughter, Verlene Wagstaff who was born in January 1945, right after her father left to go overseas to war.

Jack enlisted in the U.S. Army on the 15th of June 1944 at Fort Douglas, Utah shortly after his marriage. His service number is 39931345 and he was described as a 5'10" white male with blue eyes, brown hair, and light brown complexion.

Jack left to go overseas on January 1, 1945 to the European Theater where he served as a Technician 5 in communications for the 28th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized of General Patton's 3rd Army. Mechanized Cavalry was a very unique group. It was not commanded or assigned the same way as a regular Army unit. In the War Department FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations manual, 1944 it described the purpose of a Cavalry as: "*A Cavalry Division protects the disposition and other ground forces by counter-reconnaissance or screening, which may be conducted either offensively or defensively. In executing a counter-reconnaissance mission, the division seeks to defeat or neutralize enemy ground reconnaissance¹ forces.*" A big part of Jack's responsibilities being in communications was to make sure one infantry unit had communications with another infantry unit or with a command post so they all knew what each other was doing. Sometimes the communications were done by radio but a lot of the time when the radio frequency did not work they would use carrier pigeons to get messages through. I think it is pretty safe to say that Jack would have been responsible to get messages to the receiver using both means frequently.

¹ Reconnaissance - military observation of a region to locate an enemy or ascertain strategic features.

Because the cavalry was not tied to any specific unit it is difficult to track down exactly where Jack would have been involved. However, through a wonderfully written Master's Thesis by William Stuart Nance entitled Patton's Iron Cavalry – The Impact of the Mechanized Cavalry on the US Third Army beginning on page 100 we can follow the involvement where Jack provided major communication support as Mr. Nance reports specifically on the 28th cavalry squadron. We know that his 28th squadron was assigned to TF (Task Force) Fickett under the direction of Col. Edward Maynard Fickett on January 2, 1945 where they remained in the Battle of the Bulge area until February 19, 1945.

To summarize their activity from January through May 1945, the 28th squadron seized a bridgehead over the Wiltz River, they seized the town of Winseler and the town of Wiltz. They kept communication going during the attack across the Our River. They maintained a five mile frontage west of the Siegfried Line. They prevented the German's from interfering with the VIII Corps main attack efforts. The 28th squadron lost 27 men near the town of Viandan. They attacked the towns of Waxweiler, Bitburg, and Mael in Germany. During a two day fight, TF Fickett crossed the Nims River at Lasel and continued to move east and took control of Neuheilenback on March 4th 1945. On the 26th of March TF Fickett was ordered to pass through two divisions and act as the Corp advance guard into Germany. At this point they divided themselves into five separate task forces to support reconnaissance troops. They moved quickly on March 27th and during an aggressive attack in the town of Schmitten, Germany the cavalrymen lost 36 men along with a tank, a tank destroyer, and every jeep that entered the town. By the 29th they traveled 50 miles but by the end of the month they also lost their Tank Destroyer and Infantry augmentation. They were sent to act as rear guard for the VIII Corps rounding up German stragglers. They advanced toward Czechoslovakia on the 11th of April where the 28th squadron was communicating between XX Corps and VIII Corps. They entered Czechoslovakia on the 20th of April 1945. The Cavalrymen's last attack occurred on the 6th of May in a defensive position on the Weisse Elster River between Gornitz and Rossbach. On the 7th of May they were stopped by a possible ceasefire. They earned the name "Patton's Household Cavalry."

Jack's Hospital Admission Card indicates he was not in the medical facility prior to death. His wounds were to the Abdomen, abdominal wall and pelvis caused by Artillery Shell and fragments. His card dates his admission as May 1945 but does not give a specific date in May. Jack's death certificate, obituaries, and headstone notes his death as 1 May 1945. Jack's death is noted on his death certificate as Hundagrun, Germany. However, this is not a District, Village or Town of Germany. Jack was initially buried in Europe but was escorted home by Private Edward L Kline arriving in American Fork on Wednesday December the 8th 1948. He was buried in the American Fork City Cemetery with full military honors Friday December the 10th, 1948. His name is honored on the Veteran's Honor Wall at the American Fork City Cemetery in American Fork, Utah

This story is a combined effort of the Lehi Historical Society and part of the Stories Behind the Stars project (see www.storiesbehindthestars.org). This is a national effort of volunteers to write the stories of all 400,000+ of the US WWII fallen here on Fold3. Can you help write these stories? Related to this, there will be a smart phone app that will allow people to visit any war memorial or cemetery, scan the fallen's name and read his/her story.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30272569/jack-a_-wagstaff#view-photo=13173174

US WWII Draft Card

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2238/images/44041_04_00022-00785?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD319&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pId=10917505

Utah Military service card

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2228/images/31805_00025271-01872?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD321&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.100633246.1204283805.1596829334-1004001888.1591474577&pId=50179

WWII Hospital admission Card File https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=61817&h=4158240&tid=&pid=&queryId=6742db9475eaa5c43c96c8884322c9ba&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Pzw3&_phstart=successSource

Utah Military Records

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2228/images/31805_00025271-01870?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD322&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.92259866.1204283805.1596829334-1004001888.1591474577&pId=50175

Military Headstone application

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2375/images/40050_644066_0017-03055?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD323&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.97291935.1204283805.1596829334-1004001888.1591474577&pId=1164202

Utah Military Death Certificate

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9174/images/42879_b16022-01187?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD324&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&_ga=2.68995601.1204283805.1596829334-1004001888.1591474577&pId=802

WWII Enlistment Records https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=8939&h=2107089&tid=&pid=&queryId=999fc3bb7ac35c4d507b4eea6b82cbda&usePUB=true&_phsrc=htD329&_phstart=successSource

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KWJC-WXY>

<http://njcavalryandarmorassociation.org/WWII%20History/WWII%20American%20Mechanized%20Cavalry%20Reconnaissance%20Squadron%20and%20Armored%20Reconnaissance%20Battalion%20Profiles.pdf>

http://veteransfootlocker.com/cgi-bin/Display_Item.asp?6490

Patton's Iron Cavalry – The Impact of the Mechanized Cavalry on the US Third Army

https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc68023/m2/1/high_res_d/thesis.pdf

American Fork High School 1940 Yearbook

The Salt Lake Tribune Sun July 23, 1944

Salt Lake Telegram Thur May 17, 1945

Salt Lake Tribune Thur May 17, 1945

The Daily Herald Thu May 17, 1945

Lehi Sun Thu May 17, 1945

The Daily Herald Sun Jul 22, 1945

Lehi Sun Thur May 17, 1945

American Fork Citizen Thu Dec 9, 1948

Salt Lake Telegram Thur Dec 9, 1948

The Salt Lake Tribune Thur Dec 9, 1948

Lehi Sun Thur Dec 16, 1948