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THE LAST CAVALRY CHARGE IN U.S. HISTORY

By Steve Shaw

Enemy fire had commenced. The point man was wounded. Twenty-four year old Lieutenant Edwin Price Ramsey glanced at his mounted troops and back toward the enemy scurrying among the buildings. He issued the command, "AS FORAGERS!" Without time to consider whether they were outnumbered, he ordered by hand and arm signals, "CHARGE!". This would be recorded as the last wartime horse cavalry charge in U.S. history. No, this wasn't during the Indian Wars, Spanish-American War or World War I. The date was January 16, 1942!

Born in Illinois and raised in Kansas, Ramsey graduated from the Oklahoma Military Academy, where he garnered a love for polo. Commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the Cavalry Reserve in May 1938 he entered active service in February 1941 with the fabled 11th Cavalry Regiment at Campo, California. Ramsey became a platoon leader and remount officer, training horses and matching men and mounts. Most were city boys, and getting them mounted was "quite a job," Ramsey remembers.

In June 1941, Ramsey volunteered for service in the Philippines with the elite 26th Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts), based at Fort Stotsenburg, a unit of the Regular United States Army. "The 26th had an excellent polo club, something the 11th Cavalry stateside lacked," Ramsey quips. Consisting of Regular Army Officers and Filipino soldiers, the 26th Cavalry was smaller than a stateside regiment, with six line troops in two squadrons, totaling 54 officers and 784 enlisted men. They were "probably as fine, if not the finest, regiment the U.S. Army had," Ramsey said. "The horses were cross-breeds shipped in from the states, with a good number of stallions for improving the breed over time."

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and invaded the Philippines, his regiment was ordered north to oppose the enemy landings in Lingayan Gulf. The Japanese pressed American and Filipino forces to Bataan. The 26th Cavalry served as rear guard.

January 15th, 1942, Lieutenant Ramsey, the G



This painting by artist John Solie, commissioned by the United States Army, is a depiction of the Last Cavalry Charge in U.S. history under the command of Lieutenant Edwin Price Ramsey for which Lt. Ramsey received the "Silver Star" and "Purple Heart". Col. Ramsey's consult made this newly commissioned work as authentic as possible.

Troop platoon leader, and Filipino soldiers returned exhausted from reconnaissance duty; they were



Lt. Edwin Ramsey On Bryann Awryn; Cavalry Memorial At Clark Field; Lt. Edwin Price Ramsey



scheduled for some well-deserved "R&R." Troop E, as advance guard, was heading toward the village of Morong. The town sat strategically on the west coast of Bataan and the South China Sea, so the US Army intended to take Morong and build a defense line. No one knew the territory like Ramsey, who volunteered to assist Troop E. "I did the one thing they tell you never to do in the Army—volunteer," Ramsey jokingly remarks years later.

On the morning of the 16th, General Jonathan M. Wainwright, North Luzon Forces commander, saw Ramsey standing nearby.

"Ramsey?" Wainwright recognized him from the 26th polo team matches, which the general often refereed.

"Yes, sir."

"Take the advance guard into Morong."

"Sir," Captain Wheeler, Troop E commander, piped in, "Ramsey volunteered to assist me with the assault."

"Nonsense ... Ramsey, move out!" Wainwright ordered.

Such are the ways history is made.

January 16th Ramsey led three mounted squadrons—a 27-man advance guard of Philippine Scouts, 26th Cavalry, and 1st Regular Division of the Philippine Army—into the jungles. Encountering a Japanese infantry and artillery force at Morong, Ramsey ordered a charge.

After a bitter battle, E Troop emerged from the Bataan jungles disheveled and dog-tired. They had repulsed the Japanese and held Morong, with only three casualties. Ramsey received a mortar wound not requiring hospitalization. Ironically, the surviving horses of America's last cavalry charge weren't so lucky. They were butchered to provide food to the starved Filipino-American fighters.

For gallantry in action, General Jonathan Wainwright awarded Ramsey the Silver Star. More honors followed, including a Purple Heart and three Presidential Unit Citations for defense of the Philippines, Lingayen Gulf and Bataan. In Manila, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur personally pinned the Distinguished Service Cross on

Ramsey for his three years of guerrilla activities following the fall of the Philippines. A hero to the Filipino people, Ramsey was awarded that country's Medal of Honor, the Philippine Distinguished Conduct Star, Distinguished Service Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Gold Cross of Valor and the Wounded Personnel Medal.

Retired Colonel Edwin Price Ramsey, at age 91, participates in the USO and Veterans Affairs, gives inspirational speeches and accepts interviews. The day before this interview took place, Colonel Ramsey and his wife, Raqui, attended the 67th Anniversary of the USAFFE (United States Army for Far East) in Beverly Hills, California.

Ramsey's story is spellbinding. His book, Lieutenant Ramsey's War, From Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander, can be purchased at Amazon.com.