



always ran as a place where the family could fall back to if things got tough and all of an open time working as a. Dad always had work to do on it if one of his brothers or someone in the family needed a job, but we had to work to earn it."

When the East Tennessee economy fell on hard times during the Depression, even the local "barber system" was noticeably hurt and men throughout the region started looking towards job opportunities away from home. Troy McGill decided to go west with his brothers and find work as a "wildcatter" in the Oklahoma oil fields. Although it was hard and dangerous work, the McGills settled into the profession, but it wasn't enough to keep Troy McGill happy and he began looking for opportunity in the military.

In 1940, with World War II beginning to involve American interests, McGill volunteered into the U.S. Army on Nov. 6, 1940.

Troy McGill had always been fascinated with the horse cavalry and it was where he wanted to serve. The modern Army, however, was changing quickly and there was no more horse cavalry other than the ceremonial parade units. After basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas, however, McGill joined the Army's 5th Cavalry Regiment and remained with them throughout his service, except for a short time when he attended infantry school in Texas. As he rejoined his unit, the war in the Pacific was going badly for American forces and McGill's G Troop was called up for service.

General Douglas MacArthur's first campaign against the Japanese had proved less than fruitful. With most of America's Pacific fleet at the bottom of Pearl Harbor, America had adopted a defensive strategy. The Japanese had

main line of resistance. They were ordered to set up a tactical spearhead and hold the position so Naval Construction Battalions could start clearing the strip and filling in the holes caused by aerial bombardments and naval shelling.

The G Troop squad got into position and began making defensive preparations. While McGill and his men worked to strengthen the position, they were unaware that the Japanese had decided to make their position a point of attack to retake the airstrip.

Around 4 a.m. on March 4, 1944, the morning air was torn apart by battle cries and rifle fire as 200 Japanese charged McGill and his right man squad. Like a scene out of the Wild West, the Tennessee and his outnumbered men fought back viciously and pushed the first wave back to the edge of the airstrip and regrouped for a second assault.

The Japanese attacked again and then continued to throw waves of men in brutal attacks at the American's unit. The furious firestorm was taking their toll on G Troop. Five of McGill's men were killed in the assaults and another was seriously wounded and

bleaker. When I left at the end of the squad he was killed or wounded except McGill and myself. It was just about dawn when this happened."

Because of the ongoing battles around the airstrip, however, no relief could be sent to Sgt. McGill. The units behind the position began preparing for the upcoming Japanese attack and studying their weapons.

The Tennessee, however, continued fighting and pushing the Japanese back on his own. When the last wave started, the truth of the situation must have dawned on him. Alone and out of ammunition, the Sevier County native waited until the Japanese were within five yards of his position. When they reached the mark, he grabbed his rifle like a club and, with utter disregard for his own safety, belted out of the footlock and into the incoming force. It was the last time Sgt. Troy McGill was seen.

The Japanese attack the remaining soldiers lay in wait for revenge came. As dawn broke over the airstrip, members of the First Cavalry Division began looking for

McGill's push toward the Philippines.

"I was drilling with the gunners," McGill said, "when the next operator yelled at me, 'Hey, what one of your kindfolk was just awarded the Medal of Honor!' I didn't know what he was talking about at first. We were in the Los Negros Islands area loading supplies. And I didn't even know Uncle Troy was in the Pacific, but when he called off the unit number, I knew it had to be him. We all gathered around the radio hoping they would air it again. When they relayed the story, it was the most incredible thing we had ever heard and I would have never thought Uncle Troy was capable of doing that for us. He was, by far, the finest and most well-mannered of men."

Every soldier who heard it talked about it and the story of the battle became a legend among the cavalry units.

Bertie Fowler, Troy McGill's team, accepted the Medal of Honor in a solemn ceremony at Fort Sill, OK. In 1951, McGill's body was recovered from the Philippines and he was laid to rest, without honors, at Knoxville's National Cemetery.

Knoxville, Sevierville, and Tennessee. When he did in combat you can't put into words. With him, he knew it was going to happen. When he faced those charging Japanese alone, Uncle Troy knew it was over and gave it everything he had. When I came home to Tennessee, I was saddened to discover there was nothing named after him and his story was only a footnote in history."

Was McGill's efforts to make sure the memory of his uncle's service is not forgotten are also worthy of recognition—as it has often been a long and lonely fight for him. He has done whatever he could and, in spite of the odds, got some of the results he was searching to obtain.

McGill began a one-man crusade. On a small retirement pension, he purchased a bus ticket and rode all the way in Texas to retrieve the only known photograph of his uncle. He donated some of Troy McGill's artifacts to the Tennessee Museum and the National Medal of Honor Museum in Chattanooga for use in displays. McGill's efforts slowly began to pay off—especially in the state house thanks in part to former Sen. Carl Evers.

On July 2, 1990 Was McGill, state and federal dignitaries, and the remaining McGill family members looked on as a section of Interstate 40 from the London County line to the North Carolina State line was renamed the Troy A. McGill Memorial Highway. In 1996, the National Medal of Honor Museum of Military History donated his photograph and citation along with numerous others to the Knoxville Military Processing Center for inclusion into their Medal of Honor Memorial Garage. Although McGill is buried in Knoxville, it is the only place in the city

Photo courtesy AAAOKM Museum



Decorative ceremony held at Fort Sill, OK posthumously awarding the Medal of Honor to Sgt. Troy McGill's family.