

**On the afternoon of February 25, 2nd Lt. Charles Pierce, Troop A, 116th Squadron, and 2nd Lt. Alfred Kupferschmidt, of the IPW team, were at Troop A's outpost near Werbeln with a prisoner of war who had been captured earlier that day. The prisoner pointed out specific installations in Schaffhausen, and then he told Pierce and Kupferschmidt that he and the second prisoner had thrown away their weapons about fifty yards inside the wood, near the spot where they exited to surrender.**

**Pierce and Kupferschmidt asked the prisoner to show them the location, and, at about 5:30 that evening, the group headed down the hill. At the bottom, they met up with other members of the 116th: 1st Lt. Robert Schafer, S/Sgt. Walter Mennel, and Pvt. Earl Geiger, all of Troop C; and S/Sgt. John Schnalzer, Troop A. At the base of the hill, the men, with the prisoner in the lead, walked cautiously in the dark of early evening along the edge of a marked mine field that followed the line of the woods. They moved slowly, as one false step would mean disaster. Instead, disaster fell out of the sky when, without warning, a concentration of mortar fire fell all around them.**

**The blast killed 2nd Lt. Pierce instantly, and S/Sgt. Schnalzer jumped or was thrown into a nearby ditch. Lt. Schafer jumped into the same ditch, falling on top of Schnalzer. No sooner had they landed than a second mortar shell flew through the air and landed almost directly on top of them, killing Schafer instantly and hurling his body from the ditch to the edge of the mine field.**

**Wounded in the hands and legs, Sgt. Schnalzer managed to jump up and run back the way they had come to take cover in a small brick building. While running, he noticed the panicked prisoner run directly into the mine field. There was nothing Schnalzer could do but watch as the fleeing prisoner tripped a land mine and flew into the air. Also killed were 2nd Lt. Kupferschmidt, who died within an hour of being wounded, and S/Sgt Mennel, who died later the day. Pvt. Geiger was seriously wounded.**

**(From the book „Tracking The 101st Cavalry“ by Melaney Welch Moisan - pages 29 and 30)**