

Three of my mother's brothers, three uncles and 7 cousins were members of the 371st "Blue Helmets " will be honored in a **Commemorative Weekend November 13th, 2012 in Columbia SC for family, friends and descendants of the:**

369th"Harlem Hell Fighters 370th, Old Eighth Illinois Regiment, 371st"Blue Helmets" and 372nd

All comprised of the renown **Infantry Regiment of 93rd Division (Colored) WWI**

David, Julian, Eddie, Frank, Julian, Edwin Strother - 6 Strother's, 5 of the Bulls & 2 Eikelberger's of SC

E928 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—*Extensions of Remarks* May 23, 2011

REMEMBERING THE AFRICANAMERICAN 371ST INFANTRY REGIMENT

HON. JOE WILSON OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 23, 2011

Mr. Wilson of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the 371st Infantry Regiment was formed in August 1917 and consisted of African-American draftees mostly from South Carolina and white officers. After training at Camp Jackson, the unit arrived on the Western Front in April 1918. It was placed under the command of the French Army because of their desperate need for new troops, and because of racial tensions within the U.S. army. The 371st soldiers were given French equipment and reorganized to fit the French army structure. They spent the spring of 1918 training in French tactics and units.

The 371st was then thrown into the "Final Offensive" of the Great War in September. Though fighting well, they suffered heavy casualties: over 1,000 men out of 2,384 were lost in eight days. On September 28, 1918, just six weeks before the end of World War I, Corporal Freddie Stowers (21) of Sandy Springs, SC was killed, leading the remnants of his company to capture German positions after an ambush. After feigning surrender the Germans opened up with machine gun and mortar fire, instantly destroying over half of the company.

Stowers rallied the survivors and led them to knock out one machine gun nest, and though mortally wounded, urged them on to capture a second trench line to stop the threat and cause heavy enemy casualties. His commanding officer recommended him for the Medal of Honor. Vice-Admiral Moreau, on behalf of the French Government, decorated the regimental colors on January 27, 1919, in Brest. The 371st won the French Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre. The American Distinguished Services Cross was awarded to ten officers and twelve enlisted men. Upon the 371st Regiment's return to Columbia, SC, the community worked together to fundraise for a reception honoring the soldiers.

The event was held on February 29, 1919 at Allen University. The two flags of the 371st Regiment were presented to the community during the reception. These flags are part of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum's collection. With the war over, the unit was disbanded and the achievements of the 371st quickly faded. Fortunately, this was not the end of the story. The Medal of Honor nomination for Freddie Stowers languished for 70 years but in 1988, several members of Congress began campaigning on behalf of African-American World War I soldiers not properly recognized. Stowers became the first African-American soldier from World War I to earn the medal.