

# Remembering the “Forgotten War”

*U.S. Army Engineer Officers in Korea*

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Soldier from 8th Engineers arms an anti-tank mine  
RG 111, SC-379370

77th Engineers probe for a booby trap  
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## *U.S. Army Engineer Officers in Korea*

*Edited by*

**Barry W. Fowle**

and

**John C. Lonnquest**

**Office of History**

Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Alexandria, VA

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*This book is dedicated to the Army engineers  
who worked, fought, and died during the Korean War.*



“Our nation honors her sons and daughters  
who answered the call to defend a country  
they never knew and a people they never met.”

Dedication  
Korean War Veterans Memorial  
Washington, D.C.

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# Foreword

In 1950 the Korean Peninsula was an inhospitable place to wage war. Steep mountain ranges, narrow valleys, and numerous rivers divided its landmass. The summers were oppressively hot, the winters bitterly cold, and the monsoon season turned what few roads there were into muddy quagmires and transformed meandering streams into raging torrents. In short, Korea's arduous terrain and climate, coupled with a poor transportation network, made it a very difficult environment for the United States and its United Nations allies to fight.

In conjunction with the difficult terrain, North Korea's surprise attack also placed a premium on U.S. Army engineer operations. In the opening weeks of the war, engineers bought the UN forces valuable time; they destroyed bridges and other vital facilities to impede the enemy's advance, and after the UN forces withdrew to Pusan, engineers helped build a defensive line that enabled the beleaguered defenders to hang on. Also, during those chaotic early months of the war, engineer units frequently fought as infantry. Later, when UN forces went on the attack, engineers were in the vanguard building and maintaining roads, constructing bridges, operating ferries, rebuilding ports, and unloading cargo. The intervention of Chinese forces in November 1950 posed new challenges; engineers built

roads and bridges to facilitate the UN withdrawal, while at the same time destroying vital facilities and supplies to deny them to the enemy. The engineers often were the unsung heroes of the Korean War, for they helped create the environment that allowed the United States and its allies to fight and win.

The oral history interviews that appear on these pages reflect many facets of the engineer experience during the Korean War. They are decidedly personal glimpses, reminiscences of people, places, and events of 50 years ago. As with any oral account, these interviews may contain differences of memory or interpretation, but that does not diminish their value. Readers will be able to experience the Korean War through the stories and images of the engineers who fought there, and their hard-won experiences can provide today's engineers with valuable insights.



Carl A. Strock  
Lieutenant General, US Army  
Chief of Engineers

### The Editors

Barry W. Fowle, Lt. Col., AUS(Ret.), received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has served as historian for the Corps of Engineers and teacher of military history at the U.S. Army Engineer School. He has written a number of articles; coauthored *The 51st Again*, a history of the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion during World War II; and was general editor of *Builders and Fighters, U.S. Army Engineers in World War II*. In 1998, Dr. Fowle retired from the Office of History and became a senior historian at the Office of the Surgeon General where he works on oral histories.

John Lonnquest received his Ph.D. in history from Duke University in 1996. He joined the Air Force history program in 1997, and in 2000 accepted his current position with the Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers where he is the director of the oral history program. He is the co-author of *To Defend and Deter: The Legacy of the United States Cold War Missile Program* and the editor of *A Guide to Source Material on Ballistic Missile Defense*.

# Preface

While serving as manager of the oral history collection of the Office of History, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Barry Fowle discovered a wealth of material for an anthology about the Korean War. Although the Korean War ended more than 50 years ago, little has been written on the important role engineers played in that conflict. Barry began to assemble a history of the Korean War composed almost entirely of engineer officer oral interviews. Through this collection of oral history interviews, today's engineer officers have the opportunity to learn from those who have gone before.

In organizing this anthology, the editors divided the Korean War period into six sections, starting with the North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950 and ending in July 1953, the month the armistice was signed. Each section contains the interviewed officers' experiences during that time period.

The first chapter encompasses the initial period of the war from the attack by North Korea against South Korea on 25 June 1950 and the retreat to the Pusan Perimeter. The second chapter delves into the Inch'on invasion by X Corps on 15 September and the capture of Seoul, Korea. Chapter three begins with the Pusan Perimeter breakout, timed to coincide with the

Inch'on landing, and follows Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker's Eighth Army from Pusan to the Yalu, then the long withdrawal south to below Seoul following the Chinese counterattack of November 1950. Chapter four covers a similar period of time when X Corps landed on the east coast of Korea in October and pushed up to the Yalu. The chapter ends when the Chinese attacked in November and X Corps evacuated North Korea from Hungnam in December. Chapter five covers the period of Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway's command, following the death of Gen. Walker in December 1950. Ridgway turned Eighth Army around and again moved north, eventually to the area of the 38th Parallel, while at the same time raising the men's low morale. The last chapter begins with the opening of the peace talks and runs to the end of actual combat two years later on 27 July 1953. Compared to earlier phases of the conflict, much less movement occurred during this final period.

Each Korean War interview presented here has been extracted and edited from a longer "career" oral history transcript. All nonessential items, including the *Q*s and *A*s denoting questions and answers, have been removed to smooth the flow of the narrative. If an oral history covers more than one of the six sections, it is divided into separate sections and placed in the

appropriate chapter. The original tapes and unedited transcripts are in the Research Collections of the Office on History. A number of the full career interviews contain restrictions concerning who may see them. Readers interested in seeing any of the career oral histories should first contact the Office of History, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alexandria, Virginia.

This book contains 52 articles, extracted from 26 oral histories and one published memoir. Each interviewee is introduced in the Table of Contents with the rank he held during the Korean War. For certain individuals, the Table of Contents reflects promotions during the war. Many of these officers later achieved senior rank. The Biographies list each interviewee alphabetically, including his final rank. It also includes the name of each interviewer and the date each interview was conducted.

Preparing these interviews for publication required an editorial decision that bears special mention. Several of the oral histories refer to KATUSAs, that is, participants in the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army program. In other publications, however, readers may also find KATUSA rendered as “Korean Army Training with the U.S. Army,” or “Korean Army Troops, U.S. Army.”

Racial tensions clearly were present in certain U.S. Army units in Korea and engineer units were not exempt from these frictions. Contemporary readers will

note the absence of senior African-American officers among the oral histories. The Army had integrated officer training during World War II. Certainly, the Korean War was a catalyst speeding the further integration of the Army, but senior black officers in Korea still were a rarity. An excerpt from Lt. Col. Charles M. Bussey’s memoir has been included, with the publisher’s permission, to afford an African-American’s perspective on engineer activities in Korea.

One of the more interesting aspects of this history is the broad spectrum of military engineer experiences covered by the interviewees. Their activities were not necessarily limited to the field of engineering; several officers recounted instances where engineers not only operated under hostile fire, but also actually served as infantry. For example, most engineers in the Pusan Perimeter were put into the defensive line.

The engineer experiences covered in this volume include such activities as road building, repair, and maintenance; bridge building, repair, and maintenance; airfield construction; laying and clearing of minefields; sweeping for mines; building barrier lines; erecting cantonments; and constructing port facilities. Some officers, including Lt. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson, give interesting descriptions of personnel they worked with. Some interviews describe examples of poor leadership. Several other interviews describe inadequacies in training and the need to improvise *ad hoc* solutions as situations arose.

Geography made the role of the engineers especially significant in the Korean War. Korea is extremely mountainous and, as a result, rivers tend to be narrow and rapid. The monsoon season in July and August increased the water flow during the summer and added to the problems of bridging and roadwork. Mountain roads generally were narrow. To handle larger vehicles or trailers with large loads, the engineers had to redesign the roads to eliminate the narrow S-curves. Where front lines existed, roads often did not, and engineers had to carve roads out of solid rock to handle the heavy vehicles a modern army uses to resupply front-line soldiers. Winter ice, floods, and debris on the rivers took out many of the low-level combat bridges, requiring the installation of permanent high-level bridges that would not wash out.

These experiences in cold, rough, mountainous terrain led individuals and groups to use practical experience as a guide to getting work done. For example, training prescribed by the U.S. Army Engineer School called for roads to have no more than a 20 percent grade, but to get the work done rapidly to support the front-line troops, some roads were given a 30 percent grade. Bunkers were pre-cut in the rear, then brought forward where they were dug in, assembled, and covered over.

Another very important area of concern to engineers was supply. Col. Harry Hoskins talks about operating outside of the supply system, that is, in the “black

market.” Others talk of using the “good old boy network,”—the trading and swapping of goods. Not requisitioning supplies through the system, especially at first, meant that logisticians did not recognize that the material was needed, and subsequently no reservoir of parts and equipment was established. When demands through requisitioning were documented, material often was lost in the supply system. For these reasons the supply system did not work well in Korea. Brig. Gen. Miles Dawson, a logistician, was not in Korea, but was stationed at the Yokohama Depot in Japan. He contributes a very interesting interview on supply support to Korea.

The experiences of these engineer officers provide excellent examples—both good and bad—of how the U.S. Army operated during the war. This volume is not the definitive history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Korea. The engineer interviews of the Korean War provide a valuable history of warfare in a cold, mountainous country, as well as a history of combat where severe supply and equipment problems placed untold hardships on the soldiers and led to an emphasis on field expedients.

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from this book is that the engineers, officers and men, are indeed the glue that holds the Army together and makes it go. The Corps of Engineers provides the combat support on the front lines in the form of bridges, ferries, roads, and road maintenance, so that

replacements and logistical support can be provided to the front line. Engineers emplace and remove minefields, build airfields, maintain ports, and provide technical logistical support. The Korean War underscores that perhaps no other branch of the U.S. Army can boast of such a broad and extensive mission in wartime as the Corps of Engineers. *Essayons!*

We would like to offer a few final thoughts about this volume. Barry Fowle was the conceptual father of this book, and he selected representative interviews and organized them into chronological chapters. After Barry retired in 1998, John Lonnquest was appointed co-editor, and in that capacity he reviewed the interviews, selected the photographs, supervised the layout, and oversaw the many other steps necessary to produce this history. Selecting photographs to illustrate this volume was a long but rewarding task, and the editors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Military History Institute, Truman Presidential Library, the Marine Corps Historical Center, and the United States Naval Institute for providing copies of images from their collections. A very special thanks goes to Janet Fisher in the Office of the Command Historian, Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, who patiently and with unfailing good humor scanned dozens of images from their collection for use in this book. Marilyn Hunter, USACE, Office of History, was an advisor on editorial matters in the early stages of preparation but, tragically,

did not live to see the final publication. Arnold G. Fisch, Jr., also worked on the manuscript in the early stages; his deft pen helped eliminate the inevitable redundancies that creep into a work such as this, and he also helped craft much of the supporting narrative that puts the interviews into their proper historical context. Our neighbors down the hall, Rich Comiso and Jack O'Neill, of the Army Engineer Association, graciously responded to a steady stream of questions on engineer equipment, terminology, and procedures. Jean Diaz, USACE, Office of History, edited the final manuscript, scanned and prepared images and maps, was instrumental in implementing a standard, cohesive style throughout, and performed many other steps that shepherded this book to its final publication. Our colleague, Bill Baldwin, reviewed the manuscript, and his keen eye caught a number of errors and inconsistencies that our eyes were too tired to see. Jessa Poppenhager, USACE, Office of History, designed the book cover and assisted in scanning and preparing electronic images. Cindy Dyer of Dyer Design handled book design and production. Although we are grateful for their efforts, we alone are responsible for any substantive errors that may appear.

Barry W. Fowle

John Lonnquest

# Introduction

The army of North Korea, with the diplomatic and military support of the Soviet Union, launched a powerful attack against the Republic of Korea (ROK) on 25 June 1950. Less than six months previously, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in a speech to the National Press Club, had delineated the United States (U.S.) first line of defense in Asia, emphasizing the off-shore archipelago stretching from Japan to Taiwan and on to the Philippines, but not mentioning the Korean Peninsula. The Soviets, initially inclined to restrain the Communist regime in the north, now interpreted this omission as an invitation to back North Korean aggression in the south.

Korea's central position in Asia had long been the source of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian interest, as well as interest on the part of the U.S. Historically, Korea had been under the control of China, but the Japanese defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 eliminated the Chinese political influence. That defeat left both Imperial Russia and Japan competing for influence in Korea, with U.S. interests a distant third. After Japan's surprise attack on Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), only the U.S. remained as a weak competitor to Japan in Korea. By 1922, the Japanese had displaced the U.S. and all other foreign competition and controlled Korea.



With Japan thoroughly defeated at the end of World War II, the U.S. and the Soviet Union divided Korea at the 38th Parallel. Soviet troops occupied the northern half, while the U.S. occupied the more populous south, including the national capital, Seoul. The leaders of both superpowers recognized the Korean peninsula's strategic potential. Vladivostok was only 80 miles northeast of the Soviet border with North Korea. China, 125 miles to the west of South Korea, lay across the Yellow Sea, and Japan was about the same distance to the east, beyond the Sea of Japan. Despite its strategic importance in Asia, Korea was little known elsewhere. Many regarded the nation only by its ancient designation, the "Hermit Kingdom."

In 1947 the U.S. brought the matter of reunification of Korea before the United Nations (UN), and the General Assembly resolved to hold an election in the spring of 1948 for both Koreas to elect one National Assembly. About 95 percent of the registered voters in the south voted, but the Soviets blocked participation in the north. On 17 July 1948 the National Assembly in Seoul established Korea's first constitution in 4,000 years. One month later, American military government below the 38th Parallel ended with the establishment of the Republic of South Korea. In September 1948 the Soviets created a communist state in the north called the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, with its capital at P'yongyang. The U.S. began withdrawing

combat troops, and in June 1949, only the U.S. Army's Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) of about 500 people remained to continue training Korean forces.

As a result of the UN-sponsored election, the General Assembly acknowledged the ROK as the only valid Korean government and continued to work toward reunification. Thirty-two foreign nations formally recognized the republic, but a Soviet veto denied the South Koreans UN membership. Despite the UN's willingness to be flexible on the nature of a government for a reunited Korea, the North Koreans and Soviets stonewalled. Clearly, reunification would be a difficult goal. Both Kim Il Sung's Soviet-supported regime in the north and strongman Syngman Rhee's government in the south were autocratic administrations, utterly unwilling to compromise with the regime on the other side of the 38th Parallel.

The officials in P'yongyang concluded that Korea could be united only by force. Accordingly, the North Korean Peoples' Army attacked South Korea at approximately 0400 on 25 June 1950. The South Korean army resisted but had to retreat in the face of better-armed North Korean forces. North Korea's ground forces consisted of seven assault infantry divisions, a 6,000-man tank brigade, an independent infantry regiment, a motorcycle regiment, border constabulary, army and corps headquarters personnel, and three reserve divisions—a total ground force of 135,000, supported by ample

armor and artillery. Against this host, the ROK Army could muster some 94,800 men, with no tanks, no medium artillery, and no recoilless rifles. Moreover, South Korea's Air Force consisted of only 22 propeller-driven trainers and liaison aircraft. KMAC had 10 F-51s available, but no Korean pilots had been trained for the Mustangs. The North Koreans supported their land forces with at least 180 aircraft, including 40 YAK fighters, and 70 Ilyushin ground-attack bombers.

Concerned about the fate of the strategically-placed peninsula, American officials brought the North Korean aggression to the United Nations Security Council less than six hours after learning of the invasion. The Soviet's UN delegate, Yakov Malik, might have been expected to veto any possible Security Council response. Ironically, he was boycotting because of the Council's refusal to recognize Communist China instead of the Nationalist regime. With the Soviet representative deliberately absent, the Security Council voted 9-0 with one abstention, calling upon the North Koreans to withdraw and asking UN members to refrain from assisting the aggressors. Two days later, a second Security Council resolution recommended that the members of the UN assist the ROK in repelling the armed attack from the north.

Meanwhile, the U.S. independently took steps to aid South Korea. On 25 June, President Harry Truman directed the Commander in Chief, Far East, General of

the Army Douglas MacArthur, in Tokyo, to send ammunition and equipment to the ROK forces, along with a survey team to assess the situation. The president's response was immediate, but it also was remarkably measured. The U.S. government had long understood the difficulties involved in projecting force onto the Asian mainland from American bases in Japan. Still, the North Korean Army was advancing unchecked.

On 26 June, General MacArthur reported from Tokyo that South Korean forces could not hold the capital of Seoul, a North Korean plane had been shot down, and an evacuation of American nationals was underway. Truman then ordered air and naval forces to provide cover and support to South Korean forces south of the 38th Parallel. By the morning of 29 June the situation in Korea was serious as Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson called President Truman to brief him. In response, Truman authorized General MacArthur to use supporting ground units in Korea. He also directed the U.S. Air Force against targets in the north and ordered the U.S. Seventh Fleet deployed to the Formosa Straits to insulate the Chinese Communists and the Nationalists from one another in Taiwan. That same day MacArthur flew from Japan to Korea and back. The Commander in Chief, Far East, saw with his own eyes the rapidly deteriorating military situation. His report to Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins went next to Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr., who

in turn briefed the president at 0457 on 30 June. At midmorning President Truman announced his decision to send two American divisions from Japan to Korea and to establish a naval blockade of North Korea.

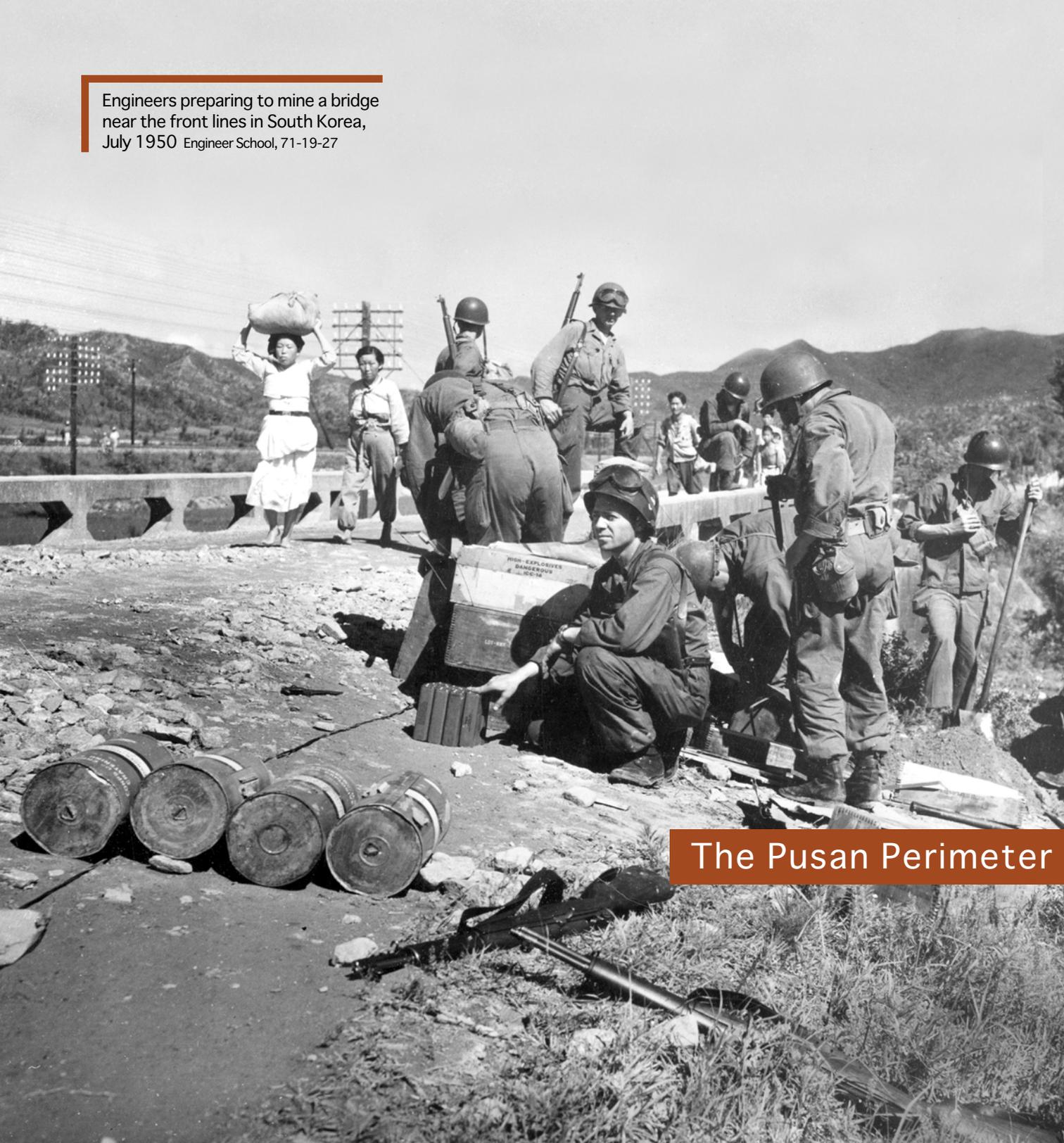
On 7 July, the efforts of the U.S. and the UN merged. Since other UN members intended to send men and materiel to Korea, the Security Council authorized the unified command in Korea to use the UN flag in the course of operations against the North Koreans and asked the U.S. to designate the commander of unified forces. The next day Truman named General MacArthur as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command. The new UN commander appointed Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, Eighth Army com-

mander, to direct all UN ground forces in Korea. There was no turning back now. The U.S. was committed to a major land war in Asia, one that would grow even more bitter with the entry of Communist Chinese forces.

It proved to be a conflict that would test the U.S. Army in general, and the skills and adaptability of the U.S. Army engineers in particular. Both the harsh and rugged nature of Korea's terrain and the ebb and flow of combat operations forced the engineers to build, to fight, to destroy, and to rebuild. From the very onset of hostilities until the truce talks years later, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers played a significant role in the Korean War. 🏰

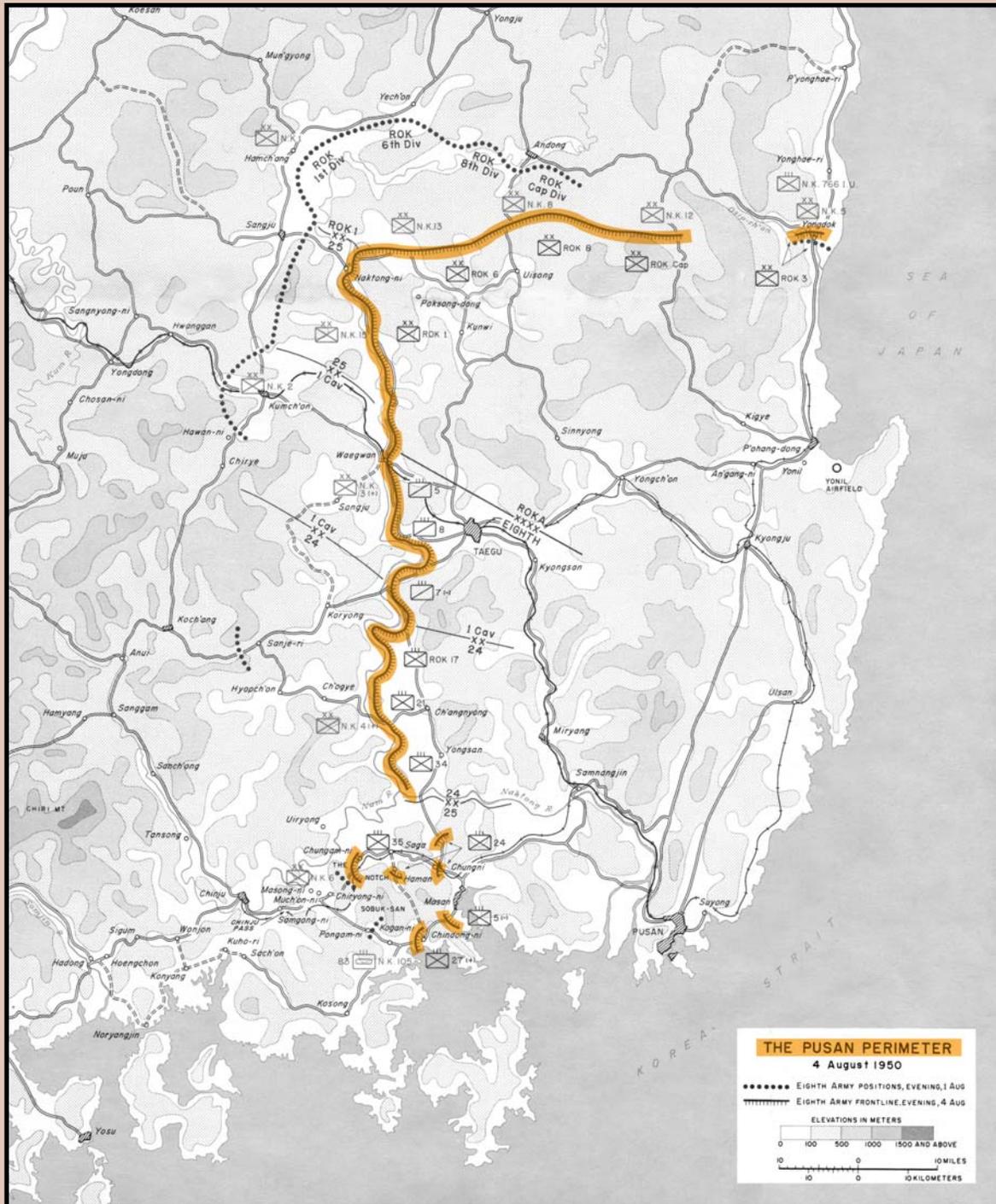
Engineers preparing to mine a bridge  
near the front lines in South Korea,  
July 1950 Engineer School, 71-19-27

## Chapter 1



### The Pusan Perimeter

June-September 1950



In the weeks following the North Korean invasion, Republic of Korea (ROK) and U.S. Army units fought a protracted retrograde movement as they slowly withdrew toward a defensive position around the port of Pusan on the southeast tip of Korea.

While the U.S. rushed reinforcements to Korea, in early August Lt. Gen. Walton Walker, commander of the Eighth Army, established a defensive perimeter around Pusan that eventually included four U.S. and five ROK divisions. Fighting in and around the perimeter was intense, but with the arrival of additional troops, heavy weapons, and American air support, the defenders were slowly able to blunt the attack and stabilize the situation. The fighting around Pusan soon sapped the strength of the North Korean Army, and by mid-September, the UN forces in Pusan were poised to launch a counterattack.

# The Pusan Perimeter

# Introduction

On 28 June 1950, three days after the North Koreans took the offensive, the South Korean capital fell. Seoul is only some 30 miles south of the 38th Parallel, and the defending Republic of Korea (ROK) units could not stem the invasion. The Communist tank columns then continued the attack south of the city against weakening South Korean resistance. Although the armies of the two Koreas were not all that different in size, South Korea lacked tanks, aircraft, artillery, adequate anti-tank weapons, and M-1 rifles. By contrast, the North Koreans began their offensive with modern Russian equipment including aircraft, such as the battle-proven IL-10 “Stormovik” fighter-bomber, automatic weapons, and tanks with 85-mm main guns.

From his headquarters in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur took immediate action to prevent a complete disaster and to gain time to create a defensive zone in Korea’s southeast. Warships and American airplanes from Japan blasted North Korean troops and installations. At least in the air, the initial American response quickly prevailed, achieving air superiority over South Korea by 10 July. On the ground, however, the challenge was far more difficult and the initial American response woefully inadequate. The first U.S. ground forces sent to Korea came

from the 24th Infantry Division. Although it was the smallest (12,197 men) among the divisions available to him in Japan, MacArthur chose the 24th Infantry Division because it was stationed in southern Japan, near ports closest to Korea, and he knew that time was critical. *TASK FORCE SMITH*, two reinforced companies from the division’s 21st Infantry Regiment, was rushed to the South Korean port of Pusan on 2 July 1950. Heading north by truck, these elements made contact with enemy troops on 5 July 1950 near Osan, Korea.

A strong force of North Korean infantry and 33 tanks struck *TASK FORCE SMITH*. For seven hours the outnumbered Americans held on, knocking out four tanks and killing 42 of the enemy. The North Koreans flanked the American positions, forcing a withdrawal and inflicting 150 casualties on the task force. The rest of the 24th Division caught up to *TASK FORCE SMITH* and fought a delaying action through central Korea, while three other U.S. divisions (2d Infantry, 25th Infantry, and 1st Cavalry Divisions) prepared to cross from Japan. Elements of the original eight ROK divisions tried to recover after the breakthrough and performed well against those North Korean units not supported by tanks.

On 28 June 1950, three days after the North Koreans took the offensive, the South Korean capital fell.

# Korea

The mountainous Korean Peninsula encompasses 85,000 square miles. The width of the peninsula varies between 90 and 200 miles and it is between 525 and 600 miles long. The mountains are highest in the north, with some peaks rising to 8,500 feet. The Taebaek Range extends along much of the east coast.

In 1950 Korea had a population of 30 million people, of which 21 million lived in the south and 9 million in the north. At that time, although only 20 percent of the country was considered arable, 70 percent of the population secured its livelihood from agriculture. Korean summers are hot and humid with a monsoon season generally lasting from June to September. In the winter, cold, biting winds sweep down from central Asia.



During the next four weeks, American forces fought a number of sharp engagements against the advancing North Koreans. None of these battles, e.g., the Kum River line, Taejon, Sangju, Masan, could stem the onrushing enemy tide, nor was that the immediate objective. American field commanders sought to delay the North Koreans while executing a retrograde action to a sustainable defensive line. Unfortunately, during the action around Sangju, accusations arose of American forces “bugging out.” Although these were not the first such charges of American soldiers fleeing before the North Koreans they were the most serious and widespread. Because some of the soldiers involved were from the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, the Army’s ill-considered segregation policy came under increasing scrutiny and harsh criticism. Maj. Gen. William B. Kean relieved the commander of the 24th Infantry, Col. Horton V. White, when the regiment’s hasty retreat threatened the orderly American withdrawal to the southeast.

On 12 July, Eighth Army’s Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker assumed command of all ground forces in Korea and began establishing a defensive line. Although a few Sherman tanks and a handful of the effective new 3.5-inch bazookas eventually reached troops in Korea, initially the 24th Division lacked the adequate weapons and well-trained men necessary to face the Russian-equipped North Koreans. *TASK FORCE*



*SMITH*, for example, had discovered how ineffective the American 75-mm recoilless rifle and 2.36-inch bazooka were against Russian-made T34 tanks.

Throughout July, battered American and ROK forces fought a 75-mile retrograde action along Korea’s dusty “roads.” The mornings often brought fog and sometimes rain, but most days were oppressively hot. The unpaved roads were shared with thousands of Korean civilians fleeing the invaders. Refugees not only choked the few roads, but also made communications

After loading their possessions into a small cart, a Korean family flees south  
RG 111, SC-355017

more difficult. They often cut out sections of telephone wire to improvise harnesses for their meager possessions. Later, when strengthened Allied forces would move forward again, the image of American forces moving up toward the front while refugees streamed in the opposite direction would become a familiar one.

By 4 August, U.S. and South Korean forces generally withdrew to a defensive position anchored by Pusan on Korea's coast. It was critical that this port, only 120 miles from Japan, be held open. The so-called Pusan Perimeter was a rough rectangle, approximately 200 square miles of terrain, bounded by the Naktong River in the west, the Korea Straits to the south, the Sea of Japan in the east, and by rugged mountains above Waegwan to Yongdok in the north. With his defensive line around Taegu and Pusan, Gen. Walker directed an army composed of four U.S. divisions [1st Cavalry, 2d, 24th, and 25th Infantry], the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and five ROK divisions [approximately 45,000 men]. Advance elements of other units, including the 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) from Hawaii, also had begun to arrive.

MacArthur and Walker made a vigorous stand all along the line, although the term "line" is not entirely accurate in this instance. The Pusan Perimeter was in reality a collection of loosely connected strongpoints, around which the North Koreans frequently infiltrated.

By early August, UN combat forces outnumbered the Communist attackers by perhaps 20,000 men, although this numerical advantage was not fully appreciated at the time. The UN defenders now had the advantage of interior lines of communication, while the attacking North Koreans were stretched along a long and tenuous supply line. On 7 August, *TASK FORCE KEAN*, [named for Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, 25th Division commanding general] opened an offensive on the perimeter's left flank to protect Pusan from attack. In the center of the line, the enemy tried to take the rail junction at Taegu, but Walker contained the attack. The North Koreans struck again, but UN air power had previously destroyed many of their tanks and killed many of their veteran soldiers—untrained recruits took their places. The North Koreans herded refugees in front of their attacks to confuse U.S. troops, but that tactic ultimately failed. Late in August, UN forces drove back several more attacks. The bravery of the many soldiers and Marines killed in action prevented the North Koreans from driving UN forces from the perimeter and into the sea.

Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny's interview introduces this section on the Pusan Perimeter. He offers his perspective as a member of the Plans Section, G-3 [plans and policy] at MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters, and speculates about the possibility of a North Korean invasion.

Engineer activities were crucial to the successful fall back into the Pusan Perimeter. The first engineer unit in combat in Korea was Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer's 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, arriving in Pusan on 5 July in support of the 24th Infantry Division. Engineer activities in those first weeks of the war consisted primarily of planting mines and blowing bridges. The battalion also supported the division by maintaining the dirt and gravel roads as the division pulled back its men and equipment. Sgt. George D. Libby, Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), won the Medal of Honor supporting Gen. Dean's defense of Taejon. The battalion continued in a defensive posture until Eighth Army broke out of the Pusan Perimeter in September.

Another unit arriving during the early days of the war, the 72d Engineer Combat Company (ECC), returned to Korea from Hawaii, landing at Pusan on 31 July 1950. First Lt. James A. Johnson was an engineer platoon leader who also found himself serving as a combat infantryman. The company spent the early days in Korea transporting ammunition to the front, supporting *TASK FORCE KEAN*, preparing defensive positions, and fighting as infantry. Johnson's recollections introduce two controversial subjects: the performance of the 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea, and the still-unresolved issue of how and when engineer troops should be attached to infantry units and used.

When the war began, Brig. Gen. Garrison "Gar" H. Davidson was chief of staff, Sixth Army. His first assignment was to prepare the 2d Infantry Division for overseas movement (POM) to Korea from Fort Lewis, Washington. He arrived in Korea before that division, having been assigned to Eighth Army. He reported to Gen. Walker, who directed him to lay out a defensive line around Pusan. Following this assignment, Gen. Davidson was assigned to the 24th Infantry Division and later took a 24th Division task force to P'ohang-dong to plug a hole in the American line.

Second Lt. James L. Trayers, fresh from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, and without basic officer training, reported in to the 1st Cavalry Division in August 1950 and was assigned to Company D. His duties included laying minefields, clearing roadways by sweeping for mines, and building bridges. His experiences exemplify the problems any young, inexperienced, newly-commissioned 2d lieutenant faces when in combat for the first time.

Capt. Lawrence B. Farnum describes his call to active duty and assignment to the 2d Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington. He recalls the efforts at getting the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion up to strength in personnel and equipment, and in training the personnel for going to war. Capt. Farnum further describes the battalion going on line upon his arrival in Korea, and the problems encountered by engineers at-

Engineer activities were crucial to the successful fall back into the Pusan Perimeter. The first engineer unit in combat in Korea was Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer's 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, arriving in Pusan on 5 July in support of the 24th Infantry Division.

tempting to fight as infantry without normal infantry weapons or support. As a result, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion suffered numerous casualties. With the X Corps landing at Inch'on 15 September 1950 and the Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perimeter shortly thereafter, the 2d Engineers worked on roads and bridges on the way north to Yongdungp'o during the rest of September and October 1950.

First Lt. Charles M. Bussey brings an African American perspective to engineer service in Korea in excerpts from his own written account of the war. Bussey describes his service as commander of the all-black 77th Engineer Combat Company (ECC), during which time he was promoted to captain.

On 15 September, the U.S. X Corps with the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division landed at Inch'on, well behind enemy lines. The forces in the Pusan perimeter began their breakout, streaking northward to connect with X Corps in hopes of entrapping much of the North Korean army. 🏰

A soldier preparing a rail-cutting  
charge to destroy a bridge  
Engineer School, 71-19-60



**C**olonel Rowny was a member of General MacArthur's planning staff and kept a wary eye on events unfolding on the Korean Peninsula. After reviewing intelligence reports and cable traffic in early June 1950, Rowny urged his superiors to be alert for a possible attack in Korea.

I was sent to Japan in 1949 to join the Plans Section, G-3, of General MacArthur's headquarters. There was an interesting windfall occasioned by my early arrival. The officer I was replacing was not ready to leave and the headquarters didn't want a long overlap. As a result, I was given an open ticket—air, rail, and ship—to travel around Japan for 30 days. By coincidence,

a civilian historian/anthropologist, Dr. Kenneth Morrow, had also planned a 30-day tour. I enjoyed his company and profited a great deal from his expertise. We started from Tokyo and went down the east coast of Japan, around the southern islands, and up the west coast. We then went to Hokkaido, returning to Tokyo by way of the east coast of Honshu.

While my purpose was not to inspect or check on military in-

stallations, I could not help but note the failings of the so-called "occupation force." In every village and hamlet there were small detachments of U.S. troops not serving any useful function. There was no need for occupation forces in Japan because there was no danger of a Japanese military revival. In fact, our troops were only interfering with the Japanese civil authorities who were functioning well. General MacArthur's instructions were carried out in the name of the emperor.

When I returned from the tour, I wrote a trip report to Maj. Gen. Edward Almond, the chief of staff to General MacArthur. I said that our so-called "occupation forces" were not carrying out any real function; in fact, they were interfering with the Japanese civilian authorities. Almond directed Col. Dewitt Armstrong, the G-3, to have me make a study of the occupation. My recommendation that the troops be pulled back to training camps for possible use elsewhere was approved. The "elsewhere" I had in mind was, of course, Korea. To replace the occupation forces, I recommended the formation of a "Japanese Self Defense Force," patterned after the U.S. National Guard. Their mission would be to handle disasters and maintain law and order.

In retrospect, the idea of pulling out our occupation forces didn't happen any too soon. We were still pulling out the remainder of the troops in June 1950



Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, commander of X Corps, studies a sand-table terrain map at X Corps headquarters in Korea, October 1950. Lt. Col. Rowny is second from left Rowny Collection

Col. Edward L. Rowny,  
March 1953 Rowny Collection



when the Korean War broke out. But we had been able to reassemble some of the troops into regimental-sized units that were available to go to Korea soon after the North Koreans invaded South Korea.

This planning for the retraining of the occupation force and the Japanese Self Defense Force was done by a rather small number of officers. As I recall, there were not more than eight or nine officers in the entire plans section.

I worked exclusively on the military side, but I made friends with a number of planners on the civilian side through Dr. Morrow, with whom I had traveled around Japan. I was fascinated with the way General MacArthur's civilian staff, SCAP (Supreme Commander, Allied Powers) was restructuring the entire political, social, and economic fabric of the Japanese government. This staff contained a number of the best minds in the U.S.—all experts and highly regarded in their respective fields. MacArthur was revolutionizing—and this is an understatement—the entire Japanese society. He drew up a new constitution, redesigned the judiciary and economic systems, and set up industrial standards. Japanese industry had a very low reputation up to that time because of shoddy workmanship and low standards of quality. MacArthur turned all that around; in fact, the Toyotas

and Sonys that are so reliably built today can trace their success to MacArthur's directives.

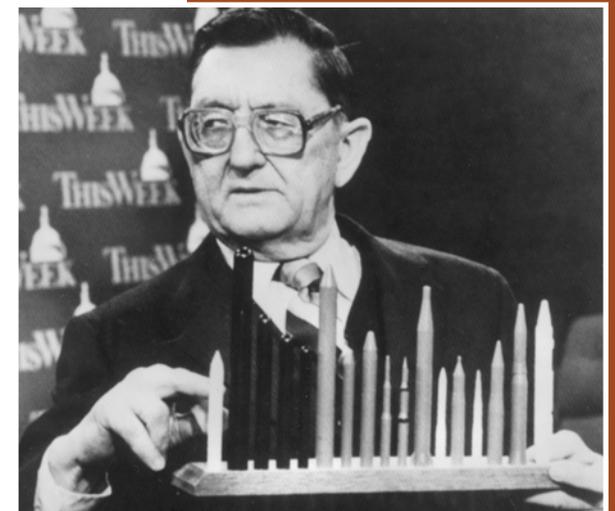
### Reaction to Dean Acheson's Statement

I remember well how stunned we were when Secretary of State Dean Acheson made his public statement that "left Korea outside the area of U.S. strategic interest." It would have been one thing to say privately among

ourselves that Korea would no longer be within our sphere of interest, but to say this publicly seemed to us the height of folly and irresponsibility. We were shocked that anyone in a high place, and especially a man with the reputation that Acheson enjoyed, would make such a statement.

I might add that now, in hindsight, I feel even more strongly about Acheson's statement. On one occasion a high-ranking Soviet negotiator told me in Geneva, in the late 1970s, that it was hard for the Soviets to understand Americans. He said that the Soviets were surprised when Acheson, in

Edward L. Rowny compares  
Soviet and U.S. missiles,  
November 1974 Rowny Collection



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1950, announced that Korea was outside the area of U.S. strategic interest. This caused the Soviets, he said, to “unleash” North Korea and authorize them to invade South Korea. “At that,” he said, “the United States went back on its word and mobilized not only its own forces but called on the United Nations to come to the aid of Seoul. We can’t trust the United States to keep its word. The United States is very volatile; it changes its mind.”

“You’d better believe it,” I said, not wanting to disabuse the Soviets of our volatility. I told him that Americans are slow to anger, but once aroused, are quick to react when our national interest is threatened.

Up until the time the North Koreans attacked south of the 38th Parallel, I worked on plans for the Japanese Self Defense Force and on contingency plans. I worked in the planning section drawing up plans in the event the North Koreans attacked South Korea. I remember sending a memorandum to my boss early in June 1950 telling him that from reading intelligence reports and reporting cables I believed we should be more alert to a possible attack in Korea. My boss, Col. Armstrong, sent my memo to the chief of staff, Gen. Almond. He, in turn, sent it to the G-2, (intelligence section) Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby. The G-2 took a dim view of anybody in G-3 interfering in his business. He said the North Koreans would not attack. Moreover, he said, G-3 should in the future send memos on intelligence matters

to him, and he would decide whether or not to send them to the chief of staff. Fortunately, Gen. Almond did not listen to Willoughby. He sent my memo to General MacArthur.

When the Korean conflict broke out in June of 1950, by coincidence, one might say poetic justice, I was the G-3 duty officer that Sunday that the North Koreans attacked. When the news came in I went to see the G-2 duty officer and we called the chief of staff. He told us to meet him in General MacArthur’s apartment.

General MacArthur said, “Rowny, are you going to say ‘I told you so?’” I didn’t say anything but must have looked like the cat that swallowed the canary. I recall that General MacArthur was quite calm and appeared unperturbed. He directed Gen. Almond to call the military staff back to work immediately. Gen. Almond had the staff prepare messages for MacArthur to send to Seoul and Washington. MacArthur, meanwhile, was on the phone to Seoul, Washington, FECOM (Far East Command) military headquarters, and the Japanese government. He ordered all U.S. troops in Japan to return to barracks.

I disappeared into the Dai Ichi Building. For the next several days my wife brought me clean clothing and toilet articles. We worked around the clock, except for time off for catnaps on cots in our offices. For a week we worked, slept, and ate in the Dai Ichi Building.

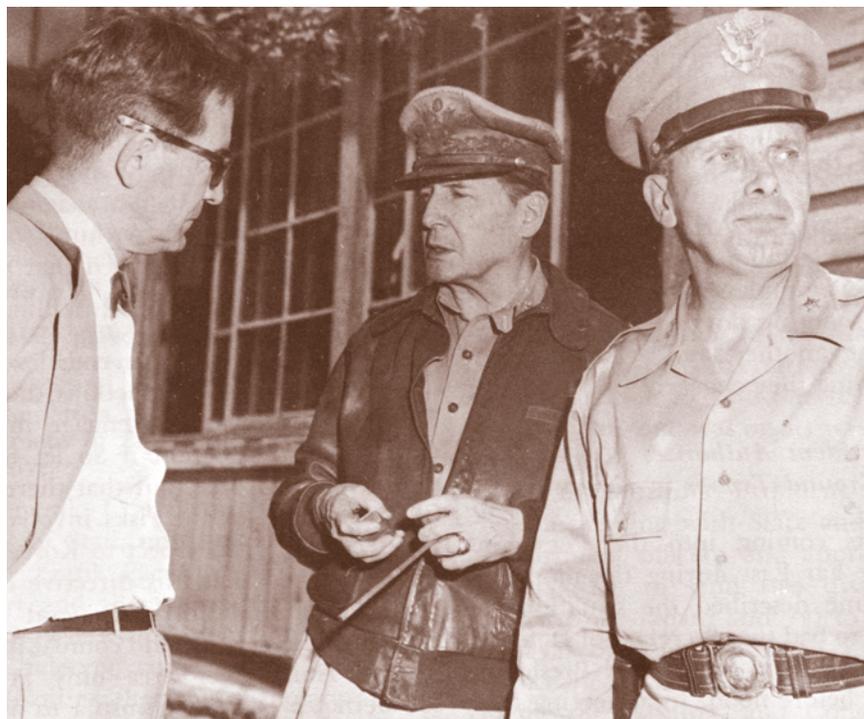
I remember sending a memorandum to my boss early in June 1950 telling him that from reading intelligence reports and reporting cables I believed we should be more alert to a possible attack in Korea.

It was a very chaotic period. Most of our contacts in Seoul were with a remarkable individual, Ambassador John J. Muccio, our ambassador in Seoul. He was well organized, calm, and courageous. We were getting better estimates about the situation from him than from our military headquarters. This, in hindsight, is understandable because the military had its own problems trying to cope with the enemy. However, we were fortunate that Muccio was a broad-gauge and capable Foreign Service officer. He believed our troops could be organized to stand and fight. He did not think that we should simply pick up and move to the rear.

Several days after the attack, a crisis developed within MacArthur's staff. His public relations advisor couldn't cope with the situation. Reporters had started to arrive from the U.S. almost immediately and were putting General MacArthur under a great deal of pressure. On one occasion, the public relations officer, having fortified his courage with several stiff drinks, passed out while briefing reporters. Later that day I received a two-line directive from the Supreme Commander. It read:

1. *Effective immediately, you will—in addition to your other duties—act as my official spokesman.*
2. *You will tell the press everything they need to know and nothing they need not know.*

*Signed: Douglas MacArthur.*



General Douglas MacArthur discusses the military situation in Korea with Ambassador John Muccio (left). Maj. Gen. Edward Almond is at right  
U.S. Army photo

It was a very simple, direct order. While it didn't give me much guidance, it certainly gave me a lot of freedom. I was the spokesman and continued to work in the Plans Section until we left Tokyo to join the invasion forces headed for Korea. I think this was around 5 September, about 10 days before we landed at Inch'on. During the early days of the war we were looking everywhere we could throughout the Pacific Theater and throughout the Army for troops to send to Korea to stabilize the situation. 🏰

**W**hen news of the North Korean invasion reached Japan, Colonel Hyzer was given command of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion of the 24th Infantry Division and rushed to Korea. In savage fighting from Taejon southeast into the Pusan Perimeter, the 24th Division fought a retrograde action, meter by meter, buying time until the 25th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division could arrive from Japan.

As American and South Korean forces retreated, engineers prepared bridges for demolition to halt the North Korean advance Engineer School, 71-19-28



From MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) I went to Japan in 1949. I had to leave my family behind. There was no concurrent travel at that time so they came over about six months later.

Once in Japan, I went to general headquarters (GHQ) in Tokyo and I said, “I want to be a combat engineer officer. I want to go down south and have a combat battalion or a combat group, or maybe a construction group, to learn to use some of this new technology that I’ve learned in civil school.” They said, “Okay; we’ll send you down to Yokohama to Eighth Army.”

I went down to Eighth Army, and Pat Strong—Pascal Strong—was the Army Engineer. He was a colonel then and a brigadier general later. He said, “Well, yeah, I know. You want to go down with a troop unit. Fine. Meantime, we need you right here in headquarters.” So, I stayed in headquarters in the Operations Division.

### Getting into the Action

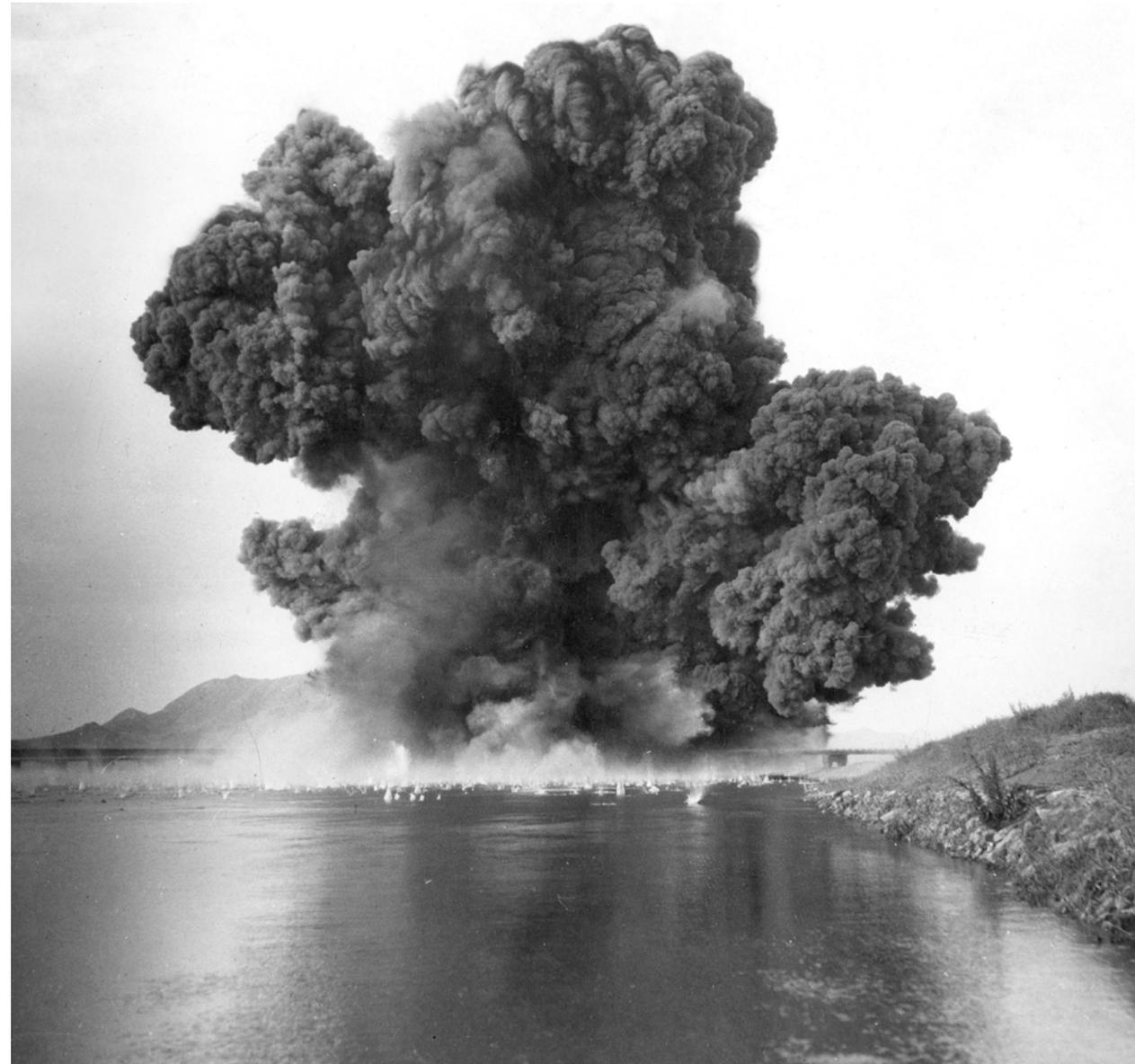
I was there for less than a year. One morning at 0300 the phone rang. The North Koreans had attacked just the day before and Pat Strong was on the phone. He said, “Pete, you’ve been wanting to get down with a combat unit so you’re on your way. You be on a train that leaves the station at 0900 and go to Kyushu. You’re going to take over the 3d Engineer Battalion of the 24th Division.”

It was the middle of the night. I threw on my fatigue clothes and put everything I had in a footlocker and a suitcase. I grabbed a couple of engineer field manuals. I'd never been with engineer troops so I didn't know what all that stuff was about.

On the train going down, I read those engineer field manuals all the way. I had them pegged from cover to cover, practically, as far as I could go. The battalion was on its way to Korea. By the time I got there one company had already gone over attached to one of the infantry regiments. We got on board the ship about the 4th of July. That was how we celebrated the 4th of July on an LST (landing ship, tank). One of the companies in headquarters went over to Pusan, and I was in Pusan for a couple of days.

When I went over to Pusan, I was about to get on the train to go up to Taejon, along with most of my troops, and who should I run into but Mike [Jon H. Michaelis], coming out of the headquarters building in Pusan. Mike Michaelis and I were together in the Philippines, and we'd been together at Fort Ord. I used to run into him once in a while in Europe, and we were together in G-1 (Personnel Section) back in the War Department. When I went to Yokohama, he was there in the G-3 section. He was about to come over and take command of the 27th Infantry, one of the regiments of another division [25th Infantry Division].

Engineers destroy a bridge over the Han River, 18 July 1950 Engineer School, 71-19-42



We were mostly blowing bridges in those days and planting mines. That was about all we had time to do. One of the company commanders I remember was out in front of our lines blowing a bridge. He had a jeepload of dynamite, and finally a sniper got him....

So, we were somewhat together all the way through Korea as well. I was with the 24th Division, while he later became assistant division commander of the 25th Division.

I got on the train and went up to Taejon, where we were in the midst of a pretty rough battle. Company A was up there with the 21st Infantry working its way back in a retrograde movement, destroying bridges, etc.

I was brand new with this outfit. It was a bunch of guys that for the last few years had been back in garrison in southern Kyushu. They'd been on the roads out in the boondocks and they'd gotten some pretty rough combat and engineering experience. Gee, they were terrific. There wasn't anything that that outfit couldn't do.

When we found out that they were going to Korea they rounded up every piece of engineering equipment that was on the island of Kyushu. Unfortunately, we lost most of it when we got over to Korea because other people stole it from us. They loaded everything in the way of engineering supplies and equipment that they could on these LSTs. We had normal weapons and were pretty good with them

I found that the officers and the men were very innovative. They didn't have much to use. Somehow we managed to get explosives here and there. We begged, borrowed, or stole them from somewhere. I don't know where. I think they took every block of

TNT (trinitrotoluene explosive) that was on the island of Kyushu.

We were *the* engineers in Korea for the first month or two, until somebody else finally got over there. Since I didn't know the unit, I spent daylight hours driving in my jeep. I'd get back after dark and find out what was going on in the rest of the division area. I'd lay out the work for the next day, get a few hours sleep, and then take off again.

#### Intense Fighting at Taejon, 18-20 July 1950

We had a very rough time and we lost an awful lot of men too. This was the worst part of the whole thing. At Taejon, we lost almost all the working element of Company C. They were there with Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, who was captured at Taejon. Some of our guys got out. Sgt. George D. Libby of Company C won the Medal of Honor for defending some wounded men. He was killed in his truck as he was trying to protect these people getting out of Taejon.

In those days we were mostly repairing roads. Korea was virtually roadless. They had a few dirt roads. The main highways were gravel roads. When you got off of those, there were mostly rice-paddy cart tracks and trails over the mountains. We were trying to support the infantry with communications so they could get their supplies and get their stuff out of there as they pulled back. We were mostly blowing bridges in those days

A soldier checking the fuse of a land mine in the Chunan area, 7 July 1950  
Engineer School, 119-11-31

We were still quite under-strength, but we got a few replacements and a few Koreans to come in and help us. We seemed to have Koreans with us all the time. I don't know where we got them all but finally we had more Korean army soldiers than we had Americans in our battalion.

and planting mines. That was about all we had time to do. One of the company commanders I remember was out in front of our lines blowing a bridge. He had a jeepload of dynamite, and finally a sniper got him and blew up the jeep. He was a terrific young officer, out of the Class of '45 or '46.

Two other divisions came up and relieved us. [The 25th Division and the 1st Cavalry Division landed in Korea, 10-18 July, and deployed by 22 July to support the battered 24th Division.] We went over on the east coast for a week or two. I reconstituted Company C out of the other companies. They still had their mess and supply people and company headquarters. Capt. Wert, the Company C commander, was killed at Taejon. We worked on the roads along the east coast of Korea in the P'ohang area for the week or two we were there.

In addition to working on roads, most of that time we spent licking our wounds and trying to reconstitute units that had been wiped out. We were still quite understrength, but we got a few replacements and a few Koreans to come in and help us. We seemed to have Koreans with us all the time. I don't know where we got them all but finally we had more Korean army soldiers than we had Americans in our battalion.

I did not lose any of my engineers to the infantry. As a matter of fact, it was the other way around. Engineers were in very short supply. I had a lot of infantry

officers assigned to me and I made engineers out of them. Some of them turned out to be pretty good engineers. Of course, we weren't doing any great esoteric engineering feats. We were strictly regular engineers, building roads and demolitions.

Now, we'd been there not more than a week or so when we were pulled back and a division [23d Infantry, 2d Infantry Division] moved in—I think Ch'angnyong rings a bell, south of Taegu. The division had this sector, but the division was chewed up worse than the 3d Engineers were. The 31st Infantry was virtually wiped out at Taejon. The other units had fought hard up north of Taejon.

Two other divisions were over there by that time [1st Cavalry Division and 25th Division]. The engineers were given a 15-mile front along the Naktong River just south of Taegu, which was half of the division sector. The infantry regiments were so decimated that there wasn't any choice but to put us in. It was sort of ironic, in a way. But as I say, we had some infantry officers.

I remember one of these guys from one of the companies; he was crazy. He would swim across the Naktong River in broad daylight hanging onto a log or something and scout out all the enemy positions. Somehow he managed to talk to some of the natives who were hiding underground over there and come back and tell us what was going on.

I sent quite a few patrols. Pretty soon the Koreans never really bothered us at all. We'd get a little sniper fire once in a while and sometimes some artillery, but not very much.

My guys felt really puffed up because we were practically cut off in the rear, but somehow we were managing to hang on. *Seoul City Sue*, the North Korean propagandist, said that the 3d Engineer "Division," the largest and best division that the Americans had, was holding that sector along the Nakdong River. Well, she was all we had at 2100. The guys would turn on their radios and listen to what was going on. *Seoul City Sue* was our principal news source.

We didn't lose too many men there, although we lost quite a few out of Company B. When we sent them on a patrol to the north hill they were ambushed and had a hard time getting back. I lost the company commander of Company B in that one. I lost my driver and my radio operator too, because they were there. Some of us managed to get back.

We were so busy up there. The so-called *TASK FORCE HYZER* provided more intelligence on the enemy than anything else. We were renowned all the way back through Eighth Army and the Office, Chief of Engineers, which was a good thing for the 3d Engineers, really.

I can't recall what assets I had on the Nakdong now. We had a task force that included the 3d Engi-

neers, augmented with quite a few Koreans. I'm not sure whether I had all my companies or not. I had several other attachments—an anti-tank platoon, possibly a couple of tanks, and some artillery in support.

In late August we were relieved by a classmate of mine, Skeldon [Lt. Col. James H., 38th Infantry, 2d Division]. I believe he later became a major general. The day after we pulled out and he took over, the North Koreans attacked in force and really gave them hell. Oh, they had an awful time and lost a lot of people. Their intelligence knew we were pulling out and the new operator was coming in. They took advantage of it and attacked the day after we pulled out, so we were lucky.

We were finally brought off to the rear there, pulled out of the line. We didn't go very far. We resupplied and got reorganized for a couple of days. By that time they'd had the landing at Inch'on, so we were getting ready to attack again. The Koreans were afraid of getting cut off, so the pressure on us decreased. 🏰



A convoy waits to be ferried across the Kumho-gang River Engineer School, 30-25-6

**L**ieutenant Johnson describes conditions in Korea during his initial assignment in 1948-49 before the war, his transfer to Hawaii, and his return to combat in the summer of 1950. During the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter he encountered enemy tanks. One was hiding in a building given away by a telltale bulge. Johnson and his squad leader grabbed their bazooka, stuck it through the window of the building, and destroyed the tank at point-blank range. Reporting to the commander of the 21st In-

fantry Regiment, which was coming up the road and preparing to pass through the 5th Regimental Combat Team, Johnson said, “We’ve been playing tic-tac-toe with two tanks. We got ours. On the hill are two more, and they’re yours.”

When I went to Korea in 1948 as a lieutenant, I was assigned to the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. At that time, the 7th Division was in the northern part of South Korea along



In the fall of 1948, soldiers of Company B, 13th Engineer Battalion, posed with local children outside of Kapyong Johnson Collection

the 38th Parallel. The 13th Engineers had their battalion headquarters at Camp Sabingo, on the outskirts of Seoul near the Han River. The battalion did a lot of the traditional combat engineering functions, such as maintaining the roads, building outposts up along the 38th, and supporting the infantry battalions that were occupying those positions. We were repairing bridges, building bridges, and so forth. We cleared road slides, put in perimeter fences around infantry battalions, and dug prepared emplacements. We prepositioned explosives to blow a bridge or blow the road.

Even in those days, before the Korean War began, it was pretty hairy up on the 38th Parallel. They were getting mortared from the North Koreans in those days. North Koreans came across the line and tried to ambush people.

In October 1948, the 7th Division was pulled out and sent back to Japan. They left an RCT for rear guard protection, the 32d RCT. We stayed in Korea as the 32d RCT until 1 January 1949. Then, the 32d RCT was transferred to Japan on paper, and the elements remaining in Korea were redesignated as the 5th RCT. We were redesignated the 72d Engineer Combat Company. That’s how we became the 5th RCT. Finally, the Russians pulled out of North Korea and Harry Truman said we also were to pull out. So, we left in early summer and were transferred to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.

## The War Begins

The Korean War began 25 June 1950 and we were alerted about 1 July. I'd only been married six months. We were loaded aboard ship around the 15th. By that time we had received a lot of fillers from the 442d [RCT, a Hawaiian-based infantry unit].

We landed at Pusan at the end of July. By that time, the UN forces had been driven back almost to the Naktong River. We had our equipment with us. It was the luck of the draw that I was put in charge of the loading. I had to live aboard ship in Honolulu, maybe two or three days before anybody else did. We got off-loaded in Pusan and went into a schoolyard outside of Pusan that we used as a cantonment and marshaling area. I was sent out to look for engineering construction materials such as timber. I came back and found that somebody had scarfed up one of my squads to run ammunition to the 27th [Wolfhound] Regiment, which was then commanded by Lt. Col. Jon H. Michaelis.



Pfc. Walter Graba of the 116th Engineers  
RG 111, SC-366520

## Running Ammo to the 27th Infantry

The 24th Division by that time had been chewed up pretty badly. They were located generally north and west of Pusan. We were down in the Masan area. When I found out that my squad was taken, I went to the regimental S-3 [Operations and Training Officer], a major by the name of Gordon Owens. I was a 1st lieutenant by this time, and I blew my stack and said, "Who took my squad?" He said, "Well, we needed them to run ammunition up to the 27th." I told him, "Not without me." He said, "I don't want you taking them." I said, "I'm going

to take them if it's my people. Nobody is going to take my people." He said, "All right, you have to go see Col. Ordway" [Godwin L., CO, 5th RCT]. When I went to see Col. Ordway I said, "They have taken one of my squads, they have taken my trucks, and I'm going with them." He said, "All right" so we loaded up with ammunition. It took, I think, three ammo trucks and my jeep.

When we got back, I told Col. Ordway, "When the regiment moves, take the high ground. Don't go down those valleys because that's where the ambushes are." We didn't know it at the time but we were running into one hell of a buzz saw.

The trucks and drivers were from other units—the squad and jeep were mine. We ran through about five North Korean roadblocks. We just put down a base of fire and went through and brought the ammo to Col. Michaelis and the 27th.

Michaelis was located north and west of Pusan toward Masan. [Masan is less than 30 miles west-northwest of Pusan harbor]. We were above Masan. The 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry had been up that road before, two days before, and they were wiped out. They got wiped out because they went up piecemeal. They didn't go up as an organized unit. Then they threw the 27th in. The 27th was apparently cut off and couldn't get the ammunition. We took the ammunition up. The truck drivers did not belong to me. On the way back we got into a pretty good firefight. One driver apparently got excited when they started shooting. He pushed the accelerator, lost control of the truck, and the truck rolled down the mountain. I had a number of men killed, plus four or five badly wounded.

I was in the jeep. When I saw what had happened we went back, finally secured the area and got the troops out, but I lost top-notch people. The squad leader was a fellow by the name of Cpl. Torres. He was outstanding. Before he died, he turned to one of the men and said, "Take care of Lieutenant Johnson." To this day that clutches me up. When we got back,

I told Col. Ordway, "When the regiment moves, take the high ground. Don't go down those valleys because that's where the ambushes are." We didn't know it at the time but we were running into one hell of a buzz saw.

*TASK FORCE KEAN* was 7-12 August. Named for the CO, 25th Division, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, *TASK FORCE KEAN* was the first American counter-attack. The objective was elimination of enemy forces behind the front lines between Masan and the Nam River. We landed in Korea on 31 July. Within the first few hours we went into the staging area by a school-house. We stayed there the first two or three days, since we were offloading our equipment and getting it ready. During that time, we ran the ammo to the 27th. Regimental headquarters was still in the Pusan area in the vicinity of the schoolyard. In fact, I believe Col. Ordway's office was in the school building.

After we ran that ammunition up, the RCT moved onto the front line. This was before *TASK FORCE KEAN*. Things were still very fluid. On our approach march I remember being on the road and getting shelled. The Triple Nickel [555th Field Artillery Battalion] was already in place. Then we got into position. I believe that *TASK FORCE KEAN* was the first organized offensive UN engagement. Up to that time, and I am speaking as a 1st lieutenant, UN forces were being kicked back into the general area of the Naktong perimeter.

There were other meeting engagements, but no organized offensive action. The 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry, had been sent up the same road towards Chinju. They got clobbered—lost a lot. I can't remember if the Naktong ran through Chinju [Chinju, 27 miles due west of Masan, is on the Nam River, which links with the Naktong River to the northeast]. We were told that *TASK FORCE KEAN* was to straighten out the Naktong defensive line. Masan was a pretty good-sized port, so if we could control all of that area, at least the southern flank would be tied in. The 5th Marine Regiment landed after we did, and they came up the road on our left flank. At that time our 1st Battalion was commanded by a Lt. Col. John Jones.

Later, Lt. Col. T.B. Roelofs, a pretty competent guy, took over the battalion. I was the 1st Platoon leader, and as a result I traditionally worked with the 1st Battalion. The 2d Platoon worked with the 2d Battalion and the 3d Platoon with the 3d Battalion. Throckmorton had the 2d Battalion and I think Heckemeyer had the 3d Battalion. I believe Heckemeyer and Throckmorton were classmates at West Point.

So *TASK FORCE KEAN* jumped off. The 1st Battalion was to lead off the attack, and the 2d Battalion was off to the side and a little bit behind.

We were in a line of battalions looking for enemy supplies. My platoon, which was with the 1st Battalion, was up front. We started to find a lot of pre-stocked



ammo hidden in peanut fields. The North Koreans had pre-stocked it and when we attacked it became uncovered.

At that time the road was not mined because they didn't know we were coming. We attacked and then we started running into the buzz saw of a number of North Korean units. I guess you could classify it as a meeting engagement in the vicinity of Kogan-ni on the way to Chinju. When I went up north from Kogan-ni in a jeep, I saw two North Korean tanks. I came back maybe 300-400 yards, maybe a kilometer,

An engineer from the 39th Engineer Battalion arms an anti-personnel mine  
RG 111, SC-366476

and I ran into one whale of a lot of ammunition hidden in a peanut or soybean field. I blew the ammo in place. I was going up to look for anything I could use as construction material—timbers, and that kind of stuff. We didn't really have much construction material and I thought I could tear down some old buildings, or huts, and get some timber out of them. I came back and reported those tanks to the battalion commander, but nothing was really done about it at that time.

The next day we got clobbered from that direction. They called the place "Bloody Gulch" [soldiers' name for the pass around Sobuk-san]. I believe that the 3d Battalion had already gone through the pass leading to Chinju. We had a hell of a fight back in the valley before the pass over the mountains. I remember the night before I had pulled my platoon off the road in a small area occupied by a 155-mm artillery battery. Practically the entire RCT was jammed in the small valley, all but the 3d Battalion. We had pulled off the road when it was getting dark. I had my jeep and the three squad trucks with pole trailers. I had one pole trailer loaded with a ton of dynamite, and on another pole trailer I had a lot of M-6 anti-tank mines as well as barbed wire, and so on.

I pulled up into the 155-mm battery area behind their guns. By then it was dark. One of the battery officers asked me what we had in the trailers. I said, "dynamite." He wanted me to get out of there right away but we had no place to go. We were in a small valley sur-

rounded by mountains. We went up the valley road and then up the foothills through the pass to Chinju. About 0300 or 0400 we began to receive small arms fire from the hills. The North Koreans were shooting directly at us and were so close the muzzle blasts looked like a bunch of fireflies.

The 1st Battalion of the 35th [Infantry Regiment] was supposed to provide lateral security for the road. By the same token the 24th, which was the black unit, was supposed to have taken the hills, but they didn't. The 35th was actually north of this set of hills and was part of the drive on Chinju. In between us was the 24th, allegedly. That night my jeep was stolen. Four days later we caught a soldier from the 24th with the jeep. The 24th was supposed to be on our right flank and they weren't. They failed to take the high ground and our flank was open.

The next morning about 0400 their attack began. Well, we had rifles and we had 2.36-inch rocket launchers. The first couple of days we were there they sent over a 3.5-inch rocket launcher training team while we were in the schoolyard. The team came over to instruct us on the 3.5. The team leader was a lieutenant by the name of Bob Parr, who had been an upperclassman in my cadet company, the Class of '45. The team came over from the Infantry school. I don't believe that we received any 3.5s then but we needed them. The 2.36s were bouncing off those T-34s like ping-pong balls. I don't remember if we

The soldier on the left holds a 3.5-inch bazooka; the soldier on the right holds the smaller 2.36-inch bazooka it replaced.



had armor with us on *TASK FORCE KEAN*.

Everybody was oriented towards attacking with *TASK FORCE KEAN*. Ordway, the commander, was oriented towards success. He was going to attack. The night before we went into the valley, the regimental CP was at the base of a hill at the entrance to the valley. The hill really commanded the entrance to the valley. I was told to occupy the hill and secure it for the evening be-

cause the regimental headquarters was going to be at the foot of the hill. I got up there and had two squads up on top and had the hill secured. After dark, I was ordered to move off the hill and to secure the valley around the CP. That was 2200 or 2300.

Nobody replaced me on the hill. When we got down we were exhausted. My platoon sergeant, Sgt. Parrish, was with me. I had two squads, and I put them out along the rice paddies to cover the trails. I was so tired I told Sgt. Parrish, "I'm going to sleep right on this trail because if anybody comes across they are going to have to trip over me." It was pitch black and, you know, somebody did! A

North Korean tripped over me. He was coming down the valley. I think he was just a scout.

The next morning about 0500 I was told to get back up on the hill. We had a hell of a fight getting up on the hill—*hell of a fight*. The reason they were concerned about the hill then was because a classmate of mine, Al Van Petten, who had the 3d Platoon of our company, was supposed to take ammunition further up

We were up front when things began to happen. First, a concussion grenade came flying in. I dropped alongside a rock. Copeland disappeared. The grass in front of me was chopped by machine gun fire. It wasn't ours. I started to back up, but it was being chopped behind me too.

the road to the 3d Battalion. He got ambushed in the little town just outside of that hill and lost a couple of people including a squad leader by the name of Newcomb, who was opened up, as if by can opener, with a burp gun. Al was in his jeep when he saw a grenade coming. He caught it in the air and threw it back, but it didn't quite clear and blew off one of his fingers. About that time Wally Veaudry, another classmate, the assistant regimental S-3, was blown out of a truck going into the valley. Then they started getting concerned about the hill.

I was told to go back up on the hill, but I had to report to Col. Ordway first. I went over and reported. He said, "Go up and take that hill." "Yes, Sir." I brought the two squads up and we got up there about daybreak. I was out front with one of the assistant squad leaders by the name of Copeland, a top-notch guy. We were way up front when things began to happen. First, a concussion grenade came flying in. I dropped down alongside a rock. Copeland had disappeared. Then, the grass in front of me was being chopped by machine gun fire. It wasn't ours. I started to back up, but it was being chopped behind me too. That rock saved me.

I shouted for Copeland, "Where are you?!" He responded. I threw two grenades and started yelling at the platoon to "hose down" the area—you know, start firing. They yelled back that they couldn't see anything. I yelled, "Fire at everything!" They started to hose down

the sides of the hill and Copeland jumped up and ran back. He plopped down along side of me. At that moment—it was funny—he had a girlfriend in Hawaii and he was AWOL (absent without leave) before we got on the ship. He wasn't going to come back. He was flat going to stay with his girlfriend, and I finally got word to him that he better damn sure come back. He did and he had told me that his girlfriend was going to be praying for him. When he flopped down along side of me, he looked at me and said, "Lieutenant, you reckon she's praying for me?" Well, we took the hill and got it back. That morning, we moved into the valley.

Historically, it was a meeting engagement of a large force of North Korean units against *TASK FORCE KEAN*. The 3d Battalion of the 5th RCT got through the pass. The 1st Battalion was holding the right side of the pass. The artillery was down there in the valley along with the 72d Engineers, the 2d Battalion, 5th RCT, and the 155-mm battery. I had my jeep and three trucks on the road. The regimental S-2 [Intelligence Officer], Maj. Aden Renz, pulled his jeep out in front of me and said he had to get the regimental CP set up. I let him out on the road. When I got further up on the road they blew out all of my tires.

That night I was in between the trails of the 155-mm battery, sleeping under my truck, down in the valley in Chindong-ni. It was just about dawn when the attack came. They laid down a base of fire

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and the muzzle flashes were like watching fireflies on all the hills around us. The only hill that I guess fire wasn't coming from was the hill on the right side of the pass. That was a cut through the mountain. I remember the valley going around this S curve and then through the pass. The 1st Battalion had that part of the hill.

I lost a classmate by the name of Stan Crosby up there, Company B of the 5th. Company A was up there and they were getting clobbered. They didn't have the whole hill. It was half and half. To the right flank of the hill and down into the valley was all North Korean. We had nobody up there. That was where, I believe, the 24th was supposed to have been. We were getting fire from all of those hills, on the right side and then behind us.

Vehicles were assembling on the road, but they were not moving because of trouble at the pass. About dawn we were starting to move and I pulled all my trucks and my jeep up on the road and out from around the artillery. Then it happened. It was like a curtain went up at a play and the production started. In this instant all hell broke loose. We received fire from all directions.

By that time the North Koreans had gotten into position. When dawn broke they could see what they were shooting at and they really lowered the boom. Of course, we were not just sitting there. I had my radio operator with me. He had the platoon radio, an SCR 300, on his back with a long whip antenna on it. The antenna was easily identified. It seemed that we



were getting a lot of the fire. I suspected it was because of the antenna. I told the operator to get that damn radio out of there—it was an aiming stake on us. Then I started shooting off to the left side of the road, which was suddenly heating up. When I saw flares come up from the left side of the road I really started shooting. At that time I was leaning on the jeep and a remarkable thing happened. A guy by the name of Bradley, who was the warrant officer in our company, the maintenance officer, grabbed me and slammed me down on

Naval aviation provided desperately needed close-air support during the early days of the war. Here, ground crewmen check rockets mounted on a Marine F4U Corsair  
RG 129, 129-A130426

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the ground. He did so just as a burp gun opened up on me. I literally sat on the bullets and said, "Mind your own business." He started laughing. That broke some of the tension but he obviously saved me.

About that time the flying parson came over, Dean Hess. He was a colonel, a pilot, but also a parson—a preacher. He was in charge of training the South Korean air force, around the Masan area. He was flying an AT-6, the single-wing training aircraft. He flew over us and he saw what was happening. He had some rockets, and I believe he had .50-calibers. He flew in circles around and over the pass. He would let go a rocket and then he'd come back and fire a few rounds on the machine gun. We had a regimental Tactical Air Controller who had gone through the pass with his control jeep. He apparently came back and was operating from the pass areas. He and Col. Hess were both yelling, "Mayday!" for other aircraft to come in. Eventually, some Marine Corps' F4Us [propeller-driven "Corsair" fighter-bombers] came to help.

In the meantime, even though he was low on ammo, he circled and dove in like he was going to strafe. One time he'd strafe, and next time he'd throw something out like his lunch pail. They thought it was a bomb and they'd all duck. Then we got a few more vehicles through the pass. He did that with the thermos bottle, boots, and then he would mix it up with some ammunition. He would fake it and it was really effec-

tive. I believe he stayed up there for a half to three-quarters of an hour until the F4Us came in to give us support. Were I to say who helped saved the 5th Infantry, the 5th RCT, I'd give more credit to Dean Hess than anybody. Later he was on "This is Your Life." We finally got through the pass. Remarkably, I believe I was the only one wounded in my platoon during that entire action. It was a superficial wound that hurt my dignity more than anything else. Luckily, it caught me in the leg and just went through flesh, no bones.

The operation apparently got called back. The 3d Battalion was ordered back but they were almost into Chinju. We came back by a circular route. A few got through going back the way we came, and that was by necessity. Wayne Hauck, one of my classmates, an artilleryman, had been shot through the throat. Another artillery classmate, Bob Koch, who later became a brigadier in the Army, grabbed him, pulled him under a concrete bridge, and sat there with his thumb on his jugular vein for about four hours. Then they threw him on one of the 155-mm battery's half-track prime movers. To my knowledge, that was the only vehicle that got out going the other way. That action saved his life. They pulled Wayne out, and I believe treated him on the hospital ship *Hope*, which was in the Masan harbor. They then quickly air-evacuated him to Tripler in Hawaii. Very few of us came out the way we went in.

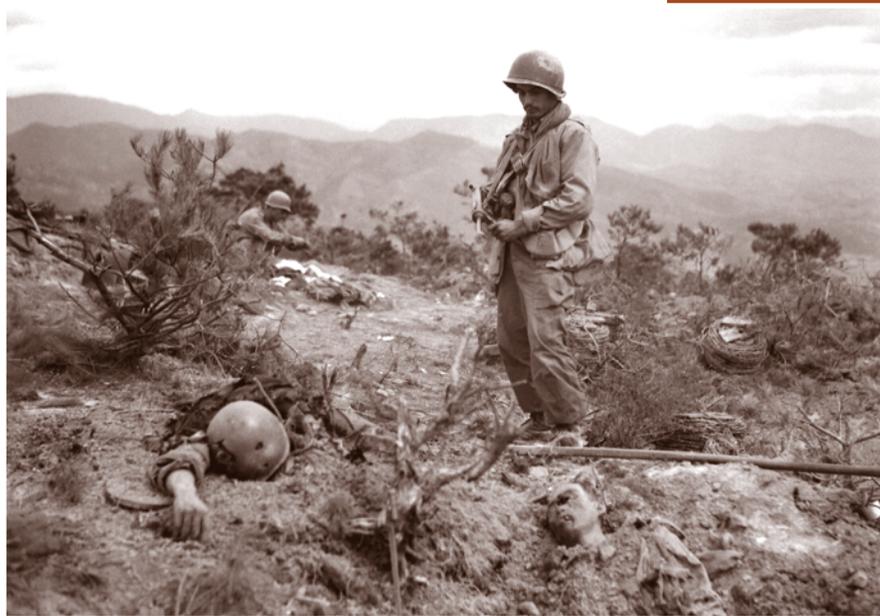
Once we got through the pass things calmed

down and we moved back into roughly the original position around Mt. Sobuk-san. We then were assigned to that position and it stabilized the line. The reason the position was taken was because Sobuk-san is the dominant feature of the terrain around Kogan-ni, off to the southeast of Pongam-ni. We stayed there until we moved to the Waegwan area in late August.

I was up around Sobuk-san doing what an engineer platoon leader does, taking mines up on the mountain, putting in mines between little draws, and sometimes physically taking an infantry position with my platoon. We became pretty original in our fighting. We even took headlights from a destroyed truck, put them on a rod, and tied ropes to them so that we could move the headlights around. We hooked them to a battery in a foxhole. When we'd hear something, we'd turn the lights on. The North Koreans didn't know what was going on. How did we get a vehicle on top of the mountain? There was also a destroyer down in the harbor that fired star shells for us and gave us artillery support.

Most of the attacks were *banzai*-type at night. I remember one attack on Company A under Henry Emerson, another classmate. One morning after a *banzai* attack they found forty North Korean bodies in front of one platoon. They just kept coming, but we held Sobuk-san. It had not been occupied when we got up there. Company A was on the left side, Company B

The remains of North Korean troops killed near Waegwan, September 1950 RG 111, SC-349306



was right on top of Sobuk-san, and Company C was off to the right down the draw. What I tried to do was to tie the companies together by cutting a road with a bulldozer up almost to Company C on the reverse slope of the hill. In a small valley to the left of Company A was the 3d Battalion.

Hank Emerson of Company A asked that we place anti-personnel mines on the ridgeline covering his front. He occupied the top of a steep hill above the battalion headquarters. Between his position and Company B was a saddle over which the North Koreans could infiltrate. We carried the mines up the steep hill and started putting the mines in. I thought our action

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had been coordinated with everyone. Since we were in front of Company A, Company C across the valley could see us. They thought the North Koreans were out in front of Company A, so they called in artillery.

I went back to Hank and said, "You guys are shooting at me." He said, "No, that's not us." I said, "It's coming from back here; it's not coming from out there. You get that squared away and I'll go down and put mines in behind your flank," because he had been attacked from there too (between his position and the



Second Lt. John Kane, 65th Engineer Battalion, removes a Chinese box mine  
RG 111, SC-357543

3d Battalion). So we went down there, and we were putting in mines and trip flares. Apparently, people from the 3d Battalion saw us and they started opening up on us with their .50-calibers. I went back to Hank and said, "When you get this straightened out, I'll be back." It was funny, since, again, we were fortunate that nobody was hit. It was just lack of coordination.

We were continuously getting hit by the North Koreans and really had no good maps of the area for artillery adjustment. Col. Throckmorton told me to get on top and sketch the terrain in front of Company B. I went up Sobuk-san, the highest peak in the area, and tried to sketch the terrain out front for artillery fire missions. It was reproduced for defensive artillery fire missions and general control.

Col. Ordway was relieved because of Bloody Gulch. He was a heck of a nice guy. He went on and became an IG (inspector general). Col. John L. Throckmorton became the regimental commander.

Things were really touch-and-go in the fighting. We really had no reserves. Many nights I sat in the CP with Col. Throckmorton waiting to be committed as the "regimental reserve" with my platoon. The other engineer platoons also were used as the regimental reserve. John L. Throckmorton was really super. I could never say enough good about him. He would shake his head when things looked really bad and say, "I don't want to use you. I don't want to commit you." Of course,

I was on his team and I didn't want to be committed either. Nothing was worse than going out in the dark not knowing where you were going and not being able to reconnoiter. He never panicked. It was really an interesting study for me to watch that lieutenant colonel operate.

We were under attack every night and we were *banzaied*. There would be a lot of North Korean bodies on this slope in front of us. We weren't being ignored down there. Whether or not we were being pushed or punished as much as the 35th or 24th, I don't know.

David Carlisle [a colleague of 1st Lt. Charles Bussey] has written a lot about the 24th. He was one of my cadets when I was a first classman. Carlisle was a smart guy—became an engineer. There were two black cadets who came in with the Class of '50—David Carlisle and the other was Green. My company, the 6th New Cadet Company, was the company that got both of them. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell from New York kept tabs on how they were treated and how they did. He used to come up twice a month to see if they were getting hazed or being treated any differently. They weren't. I knew Carlisle and Green as well as an upperclassman could know two plebes. Carlisle became an engineer and was assigned to Ft. Belvoir [Virginia] when I ran an OCS (officer candidate school) company. I used to see him frequently at Belvoir, but I don't know whatever happened to him. [David Carlisle be-



came instrumental in seeking a reappraisal of the 24th Infantry's performance in Korea. One of the 25 Division's three regiments, the segregated 24th Infantry, was rumored, fairly or unfairly, to have "bugged out" in the face of the enemy. In late September 1950, the division commander, Maj. Gen. William B. Dean, requested that Eighth Army disband the regiment as unreliable. The controversy had one salutary effect—it forced the Army to reexamine the overall policy of using segregated units. For more on the 24th Infantry's performance in Korea

Two soldiers remove a North Korean anti-tank mine from a riverbank, 21 September 1950  
Engineer School, 119-12-2

The 3d Engineers manned the assault boats across the river at night....My boat hit what we thought was the opposite shore. We all piled out and ran inland only to find ourselves back in the water. In the darkness they had dropped us on an island in the middle of the river.

and on the segregated army in Korea, see the U.S. Army Center of Military History's *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (1996); and Charles Bussey's *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (1991).]

My recollection is that the 24th did break. That's my recollection. I know that Col. Throckmorton was concerned that his right flank was not stable. He moved units around to try to absorb anything that might happen. We were in the Sobuk-san area about a month and then we got pulled out. Who backfilled us, I don't know [the 27th Infantry Regiment]. Then we moved up to the Naktong to Taegu and attacked north to Waegwan. We were attached to the 24th. We crossed the Naktong just south of two bridges, which had been destroyed.

### Breakout Across the Naktong

I had a bet with our first sergeant, Sgt. Loeffler, who was the 1st sergeant of the 72d. Sgt. Loeffler kept asking me, "What the hell is going to happen?" I said, "Well, we're going to break out and attack the north." He said, "How?" And I said, "We have got to cross the Naktong." He said, "When?" I said, "Well, we will cross the Naktong when MacArthur attacks Inch'on." We weren't getting our replacements either because they were being scarfed off someplace. I told him, "We're going to have an amphibious landing probably at Inch'on." He said, "When?" And I said, "The 15th of September." It obviously was a

wild guess, but I was serious. He said, "I betcha." I said, "What do you mean you bet me?" He said, "I'll bet you 10 bucks." I said, "I don't have 10 bucks to bet." He said, "I bet you a dollar." And I said, "All right, I'll bet you a dollar." He paid me a dollar on the 16th.

On the 15th we attacked across the Naktong [the 5th RCT was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, 14 Sep 50]. A classmate, Kenny Hatch, led the 72d's 2d Platoon, and I had the 1st Platoon. The 24th Division had attacked during the day, and they must have lost a lot of their people in the river assault process. We attacked at night. We crossed by the Waegwan Bridge that had been blown. [The 1st Cavalry Division had destroyed the permanent bridge at Waegwan in August and the North Koreans had not repaired it].

The 3d Engineers manned the assault boats across the river at night. I was in the first boat with part of a squad and the rest of the platoon followed. We were going to get on the other side to clear some mines. My boat hit what we thought was the opposite shore. We all piled out and ran inland only to find ourselves back in the water. In the darkness they had dropped us on an island in the middle of the river. I yelled for the boats to come back and get us across. Well, we finally got across.

Finally, my two squads were across plus the platoon sergeant. We ran into mines on the road. Clearing mines with a mine detector at night is tedious and time consuming. I mean, hell, we would have been doing it

Soldiers from the 65th Engineers  
repair a bypass on the road to  
Chonju, 27 September 1950  
Engineer School, 93-56-1



yet if I had to do it that way. So what we did, we'd find a mine and then just throw it off the side of the road. They were wooden box mines. Finally, we got up to the hill through which the road had been cut. At the hill the road turned 90 degrees—perpendicular to the river. By now the night was pitch black.

The infantry was attacking on both sides of the road and had secured the hill. Fighting continued, primarily on the left side of the road. On the right side there was just a little “chocolate drop” kind of hill. The road was cutting through the ridgeline, almost parallel to the river, until the hill, then it took off north away

Members of the 3d Engineer Battalion ferrying a jeep across the Naktong River  
Engineer School, 30-25-100



from the river. Kenny Hatch, who had the Second Platoon, 72d, was now up with me. It was night, 2200 or 2300. We were getting ready to look for more mines or do what we could as engineers when all hell broke loose.

There were two North Korean T-34 tanks down on the other side of the hill. They had come up the road apparently not knowing we had crossed the river. We heard their engines and tracks clanking. One of the squads from Company A led by a Sgt. Lyon went down with a 2.36-inch bazooka. They stopped the tanks but they didn't knock them out. I believe they scared them and probably knocked the tracks off of one because after they bounced some rounds off our hill, it sounded like one tank was pulling the other back up the road. We couldn't see anything because it was so dark. Anyhow, Sgt. Lyon came charging back on our side of the cut. He said he got within 20 feet of the first tank and said he knew he blew the tread off it. Those two rounds were all the bazooka ammo that we had with us. None of our vehicles were on our side of the river as yet.

At the same time, up on the hills on the left side of the road, there was a hell of a firefight. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where anybody was. Ken Hatch and I both had a squad or two with us, but when the firefight took place we didn't know where anyone was. We started digging in on the reverse slope of the chocolate drop hill. Unknown to us at the time one of the lieutenants from the Class of '49, John Hayes, caught

a concussion grenade right in the face and it blinded him. John and I had been together at Lafayette College. The fight went on all night long. By the next morning things had quieted down and we (the 5th) resumed the movement up the road toward Kumch'on, South Korea. During the night, the 3d Engineers had emplaced a ferry near the blown bridges and our vehicles started coming over. My jeep and trailer arrived early that morning.

I had some tools on the jeep trailer, a pioneer set, another mine detector. Col. Roelofs, the battalion commander, came back and said, "We ran into more mines. Get up front." I said, "Yes, Sir" and went up front. The Koreans had buried the wooden box mines, maybe a hundred of them, right on the road. Under those circumstances, the mine detector wasn't necessary since we could easily see where the mines had been buried. Removing them was a different problem. You are supposed to dig around the things, carefully remove the dirt, check for booby traps, remove the fuse, and so on. Another technique is to put a rope on the mine, get off to the side, and pull it out with the rope. I did all of that for the first one, but it took so long that I just cleared the dirt off the tops, opened the pressure plate, took the fuse out, and threw the mine off to the side of the road. I mean, in those days *we had to move*. We didn't have time for all that. I simply didn't believe that the enemy had enough time to booby trap each mine so I just threw them off the road. Obviously, it worked.

We got up to a blown concrete bridge-culvert. We didn't have any dozers over yet but we had to build a bypass around the bridge. I guess the bridge had been hit by air. We did build the bypass using picks and "D" handled shovels—hand labor.

The 24th was driving into Kumch'on. The 5th was leading the attack [9-14 Oct 50] for the 24th Division. About that time they started the system where one RCT would attack all day.

Then another RCT from the division would pass through and attack. If all went well, that meant we would fight one day and rest two. The 21st Infantry was to leapfrog us and attack the next day. I ran into some more mines, so Col. Roelofs said, "Well, get rid of these mines and rejoin the battalion." When we got up to a small town between Waegwan and Kumch'on, the road went straight through the town and another road went off of it perpendicular to the right. I didn't know where the damn regiment went. There was no trace of the 5th. What happened is that the 5th went into the town, took the road to the right, and let the 21st bypass or attack through. I got up to the town with one squad and my jeep and didn't see anybody.

When I turned around and looked down the road behind me I saw the 21st coming up the road. The road went right through rice paddies. The road was built up, of course, by fill through the paddies. The 21st was marching in a column of twos. They had a

At the same time, up on the hills on the left side of the road, there was a hell of a firefight. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where anybody was.

few vehicles, not many, because the ferry still wasn't operating effectively. Anyhow, I was standing at the road junction in this little village talking to the squad leader when the building we were standing by exploded. A tank, T-34, came out and turned, facing its gun down the road toward the 21st. We were so close to it the North Koreans didn't see us. It let a couple of rounds go at the infantry. Most of those villages had walls right up to the road, and there was a six-foot wall right there at the corner. I jumped over that wall and didn't touch it—cleared that thing like you wouldn't



An American convoy passes a disabled North Korean T-34 tank near the Naktong River  
RG 111, SC-355124

believe! My squad leader ran through the hole that the tank made coming out. We met on the other side.

The jeep had been parked on the side road close to the wall but the jeep trailer was hanging out in the roadway exposed to the direct line of the tank. The squad leader and I were pulling, trying to get the trailer out of the way so the tank couldn't see it. In the meantime, we got under the trailer tarp and tried to get the rocket launcher out. I looked down that road, which had just been loaded with 21st infantrymen. When the tank fired that first round, or the second, there wasn't a soldier to be seen. I don't know what swallowed them up, but that whole line of infantry was gone. They were down.

I wanted to climb on top of the tank and drop something down the turret. Instead, the tank backed up just as fast as it could go to the next little bridge. It had to turn to go down a bypass and was going so fast it flipped over on its top. I never saw this happen before but the tank crew scrambled out of an escape hatch on the bottom of the tank and took off.

A short distance up the road there was a little schoolhouse. The building had a bulge. It was another tank, which had been driven into the building. So we stuck the 2.36-inch through the window and blew it.

The 5th went up to the town and turned right for the 21st to pass through. I looked up on the side of the hills outside the town and saw two more T-34s.

I figured it wasn't prudent to go looking for the 5th under those conditions, so I took the squad and the jeep back down to the 21st. I met the regimental commander, who was coming up. He asked, "What the hell is going on up there?" I said, "Sir, I don't know what happened to the 5th. I think they went up there and turned to the right, but I don't know. We had just been playing tic-tac-toe with two tanks. We got ours. On the hill are two more, and they are yours." I can talk about these things because they're funny now.

He wasn't happy because he claimed the 5th had left him with a bag of worms that he had to overcome at the point of the leapfrog or pass-through. I went back closer to the ferry site where I met the rest of my platoon. I had the platoon bed down since we'd been going for three days—no sleep, little food. I decided to go back to the company CP, which was on the Waegwan side of the river, to get food, ammo, and mail. So I went back over on the ferry with my jeep and met the company commander. I told him that I wanted food, ammo, and I wanted the mail.

Well, I got food. I think they were 10-in-1 rations, which I had never seen before. We only had C rations. Anyhow, I got those and the mail and I went back up to the ferry site. It was now dark. While we were in line waiting at the ferry site to get across, I fell asleep sitting in the front seat waiting for the ferry to pick us up. The next thing I knew my jeep driver, Cpl. Wilkins,

was in the ditch and pulling on me. "Lieutenant, get in the ditch!" I said, "What for?" He yelled, "We're getting shelled!" There was an 88-mm or something across the river that was firing at the ferry site. The rounds were missing the jeep by only a couple of feet and exploding against the riverbank. I was so damn tired. In war you get so tired you don't care. I said, "Okay." He later told me that I took my poncho, put it over my head, and fell back asleep.

We got back over the river and the next day we leapfrogged the 21st. They had taken out those two tanks. We were now, I think, getting close to Kumch'on, South Korea. They returned the favor and left us a bunch of tanks as we leapfrogged them.

I found the 5th the next day. They had been out to the right as I had thought. They hadn't left signs, not even tracks on the road, because there were no vehicles at that time.

After Inch'on the whole enemy front collapsed, about 17 September. The 5th attacked, leapfrogging the 21st. I was still an engineer and the 1st Platoon leader. My three trucks and my jeep were across the river, and we were going toward Kumch'on. I was in a riverbed just before we went up over a rise on the road going towards Kumch'on. Col. Roelofs came back in the riverbed where the temporary battalion CP was. He said they had run into more mines and I had to go up and get them. By that time we now had tanks

The rounds were missing the jeep by only a couple of feet and exploding against the riverbank. I was so damn tired. In war you get so tired you don't care. I said, "Okay." He later told me that I took my poncho, put it over my head, and fell back asleep.

from the 72d Tank Company, 5th RCT, and two of them were up on the road.

My jeep driver, Wilkins, and I got the jeep up on the road. We were lined up with one tank, an M4A3, I believe, then my jeep, one more tank, two of my trucks, two more tanks, and my last truck. We were the lead element of the attack. When we ran into the mines, I got out in front of the tanks to start clearing them. A platoon sergeant from Company B of the 5th, Sgt. Suga, plus a few of his troops were with me. I found the mines, picked them up and threw them off to the side of the road, and we continued the attack. It started getting dark, but we continued going up the road with our small group in front.



Soldiers sweeping the road for mines before an advancing M-4 tank  
Engineer School, 119-13-1

All of a sudden a North Korean machine-gun just off on the left side of the road opened up. I jumped off the right side of the road and part way down the road embankment. The road was built on fill through the rice paddies. Suga jumped off to the left side of the road and within seconds he came jumping back to our side. When he leaped off, he landed right on the enemy machine-gun—we were that close. I threw a grenade and about that time the tank behind me, the lead tank, opened up and sprayed our side of the road. One of Suga's soldiers had his head laid up against my thigh. When that tank let go it blew that poor boy's head off and Suga also got wounded, not badly, from our tank. The bullet just grazed my right leg enough to sting, but I got so damn mad that I stood up and went back to the tank. I got the outside telephone and said, "You son-of-a-bitch, if you fire one more round on that side of the road, I will personally blow you to kingdom come!" When the firefight started, our own tank was buttoned up and reacted by firing to the front.

Well, things calmed down. The machine gun was eliminated and it must have been the only thing there. I was wounded in the right leg but was able to walk, fortunately. Later that night the Company B commander, Kermit Young, was badly wounded and evacuated. Shortly afterward it became daylight and I pulled my platoon off to the side. The 5th continued attacking, and they ran into a hell of a firefight from the hill



They [the North Koreans] weren't that anxious to surrender. They were primarily trying to get north. I suspect, though, that if we had really put a block out there, they would have come in rather than be killed. Things that they could see, such as napalm, flamethrowers, and so on, would cause them to stop, but they didn't seem to fear rifle fire.

Wounded North Korean prisoners captured during the drive north to the Naktong River, 18 September 1950  
RG 111, SC-361779

line to the left of the road. To my knowledge it was the first time we ran into grazing fire. The North Koreans were not on the ridgelines. They were on the lower slopes so that they weren't getting plunging fire but instead grazing fire. It was pretty effective machine gun fire, and they hit Kermit Young plus a couple more officers in the company.

#### Becoming an Infantry Company Commander

Later, I got a call from Col. Throckmorton. His call sign was Danger Six. My call sign was Dynamite One, which is a good call sign. He said, "Dynamite One, this is Danger Six. I want you to assume command of the



An artillery crew awaits the signal to fire on the enemy, 25 July, 1950  
RG 111, SC-344383

unit you have been supporting," which was Company B. That was how I became an infantry company commander. I then became an infantryman. I had been wounded twice up to that point. It seems that we had been working all day and fighting most nights. We were exhausted. When I became an infantryman, I could sleep all day long and then fight at night.

That night the regiment had been trying to take this hill, trying to go up toward Kumch'on. It was a tough fight. I told Col. Roelofs I wanted to take it my way. I wanted to envelop it because I suspected there was nothing really off the road on the enemy flank. I thought it was all concentrated on the road leading to Kumch'on. He said, "All right. Go ahead." I told him how I was going to do it and that I'd keep him informed of my position. I took the company and we went all the way around to where they were. We used the reverse slopes so they couldn't see us from the road. I had the whole company lined up on the reverse slope of the ridgeline behind them.

After we got the company on line I called for both artillery and the 4.2-inch mortars on two target areas. I knew where the North Koreans were, even though I couldn't see them, since I could tell where the fire was coming from. I had the Triple Nickel fire for effect on the left area and the 4.2-inch mortars at the right area; then, I switched the two, so we really saturated the target area. We lifted the artillery and went over

the top. One of the 72d's tank platoon leaders, Keith Whitham, who had been an usher at my wedding, was in the valley below and saw us come over the top. He thought we were North Koreans and let fly at us with their 76-mm tank cannon. When those rounds hit we all jumped back on the reverse slope and I radioed a flash message: "FLASH, FLASH, I am receiving high-velocity fire, and I believe it's from our tanks."

Col. Roelofs, fortunately, was down by the tanks. He ran up and yelled at Whitham, "Goddamnit, you're firing at Johnson and Company B!" Keith apparently said, "He looks like a North Korean to me."

The next day, the enemy opposition just evaporated and they began retreating north. I really don't know why. We just didn't have the people to pick them up, so we bypassed them. Our battalion was ordered to move east of where we were and put in blocking positions in a valley, which ran north/south. The companies were separated by considerable distance, about 10 miles to the next unit. The 555th did provide general support to each of us. Our job was to just keep the North Koreans going north. If they came in we would pick them up.

I put the company out in defensive positions occupying high ground to the approach routes coming up the valley. As I said, we had field artillery support, and we had our own 60-mm mortars. We fired mortar flares, but the round would work maybe one-tenth of

the time. We sat on the hills and watched long columns of North Koreans moving north on the other side of the valley. They were obviously going back home. Every once and a while some would walk into us.

A few surrendered. I vividly remember one who did. He had been badly wounded. I believe he had been hit by white phosphorus or napalm. The back of his head was almost gone and maggots were growing in his wound. I had put roadblocks out on the approach routes and one of those called me when that guy came in. I went down there and saw him. My people were wondering what we should do with him. I said, "Put him on a jeep and take him to an aid station." They said, "Lieutenant, we're going to blow his brains out." They felt that he was in that bad of a condition. Whether or not he survived, I don't know, but we took him to an aid station. A few of their wounded did come in, plus stragglers in threes and fours, but the masses were moving in the foothills on the other side of the valley.

They weren't that anxious to surrender. They were primarily trying to get north. I suspect, though, that if we had really put a block out there, they would have come in rather than be killed. Things that they could see, such as napalm, flamethrowers, and so on, would cause them to stop, but they didn't seem to fear rifle fire. They couldn't see the bullets. I must admit that the first couple of months I didn't think I'd get hit either. It's the survival attitude, just the philosophy

I had been wounded twice up to that point. It seems that we had been working all day and fighting most nights. We were exhausted. When I became an infantryman, I could sleep all day long and then fight at night.

you have to have. Training does that for you.

The situation changed so fast. What those tanks were doing down there was getting ready to go on the attack, to cross the Naktong and to go into Pusan and to take South Korea. All of a sudden things reversed. The North Korean tanks were surprised and were caught. They really couldn't move much off the roads because of the extensive rice paddies.

When we were going toward Waegwan we had real problems keeping the roads through the paddies open. We simply couldn't get the fill material to fill the failed spots in the road. I blew a great big tall brick chimney to get the bricks out of it to use as fill. In that case it was the only thing we had that could get us across the doggone rice paddies. Col. Emerson Itschner was brought into my CP by Capt. Gayhart. He was coming in as the new IX Corps Engineer. He said he'd like to go up to see the bridge at Waegwan. At that time it was in the 1st Cavalry area.

I said, "Well, Sir, you know that the road on this side parallels the river and it's pretty hairy. It runs down by the river for about three kilometers." "Oh?" he said, "I want to go see it." I said, "All right." So he got in the front seat of the jeep, I got in the back, and Wilkins drove us. I said, "Now Wilkins, when you get over this rise, floor it." Itschner said, "Why?" I said, "Because we're going to get shot at going along the river." He said, "You think so?" I said, "Yes, Sir. I made that trip many

times, and they always fire their 88s from across the river." We really flew up that road. Sure as hell, those high-velocity guns were tracking us trying to get us. Col. Itschner never forgot that.

When I was a TAC (tactical) officer at West Point, Col. Itschner came up just to talk to the cadets who were graduating and being commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He was Chief of Civil Works or something. Since I was the only engineer tactical officer, I was included in the reception at Round Pound. I went over to him and said, "You remember the ride we had on the road going to Waegwan?" He smiled and said he certainly did.

A combat engineer is part infantry and part engineer. The interrelationship of combat engineering and civil engineering is inseparable. I contend the best engineer has to be the guy out in front for one reason. Whatever he does or fails to do, engineers who come behind him have to either correct the deficiencies or build on what was done. That guy has got to have a damn good foundation to know what is good, what is smart, and what is dumb. I've seen that so many times. People do things in combat engineering on the spur of the moment that are stupid. Other people come along and they build, and build, and build on those stupid things. Pretty soon the whole thing has got to be torn down. That's why I say that the Army must have the best combat engineers possible. You get them by pro-

A combat engineer is part infantry and part engineer.

The interrelationship of combat engineering and civil engineering is inseparable.

viding good engineering training and experience in peacetime as well as providing tactical training.

I had just become an infantry company commander, Company B, 5th Infantry, as we broke out of the Pusan Perimeter, crossed the Naktong River, and liberated the town of Kumch'on in South Korea. Other elements of the 24th division were liberating nearby towns, as I recall. We were leapfrogging. The regiment would fight one day, consolidate what we had, and then pull off to the flank. The next regiment, the 21st, would take over and fight a day. The third member of the three units of the 24th Division was the 27th British Brigade. The British brigade would then attack for a day while the 21st pulled off the side and rested. On the fourth day, the 5th would come back and attack. We were relaxing for two days and fighting for one.

Everything as far as the North Koreans were concerned was going to hell-in-a-handbasket. They were disintegrating. We took Kumch'on, South Korea, and the next day we did nothing. About the third day there appeared to be nothing in front of us. That was when our battalion was sent to the north and east of Kumch'on and we were put in blocking positions. Our orders were to block them from getting onto the roads. If they did, they could have set up and ambushed some friendly force coming up the road. But they were staying in the mountains and walking up the



trails. I guess they were abandoning an awful lot of the equipment. We did pick up a few prisoners and some of their wounded, who we put on a truck to take to an aid station or POW (prisoner of war) compound. That went on for three or four days and then we moved. We didn't really get into combat for quite a while after that because of this leapfrog philosophy and the fact that the front had just disintegrated. We moved north and took an assembly area north of Seoul up by Kaesong, south of the 38th Parallel. We initially walked, but then we got on a motor convoy through Seoul to near Kaesong. 🏰

Rice paddies  
outside of a  
small Korean  
village  
RG 111, SC-344537

**B**rigadier General Davidson describes the interview he had with General MacArthur upon Davidson's arrival in Japan, his assignment to build a defensive line around the Pusan Perimeter, and his subsequent assignment to the 24th Infantry Division.

When the North Koreans attacked south on 25 June 1950 I was chief of staff to [Lt. Gen. Albert] Al C. Wedemeyer [Sixth Army commander at The Presidio, California]. My wife's a Catholic and I'm a Protestant.

She had gone to church—early church—and the rest of us were sitting around the pool. On the way back her job was to bring back the Sunday paper. When we opened the paper, we read the account of the invasion. Little did I realize that six weeks later I was going to be over there too.

We followed the course of the conflict. Col. Anderson, my exec then, and I would walk from the engineer office up the hill to The Presidio to our quarters. We'd walk up the hill together and discuss the war.

As the North Koreans advanced so rapidly, the obvious thing seemed to us was to have some sort of amphibious landing behind the North Korean lines. We wondered whether or not that type of action would be taken. Of course, we didn't discuss as far north as Inch'on, but that seemed to us the logical thing to do because they'd gotten such a jump on us.

The 2d Division was going over there early from Seattle and we had to POM them. The major occupation for me, as chief of staff, was to be sure that everything was done properly and that we got all the supplies and equipment to them so that they could load and get going. I didn't realize then that I was going to beat them over there.

I first found out I was going about 10 days or two weeks before I left. I left either the very end of July or the very first of August and arrived over there about 4 August. General Douglas MacArthur had a policy that every general officer who was on his way to Korea would report to him before going to Korea. I landed at the airport in Tokyo, was taken down to Yokohama, and put in a hotel. I was told that General MacArthur was away and wouldn't be back for a few days. I was to wait there on call and report to him when he arrived and could see me. So I spent two or three days down there.

Finally, his headquarters staff called me and I reported to him. In his usual way he was very friendly. He had a great capacity, when he saw an individual, for

A South Korean soldier looks over the railroad yards in Pusan RG 111, SC-349449



making him think that he was the one person he wanted to see at that time. He had a very fine, friendly ability in that regard. He greeted me, and, of course, every private conversation turned, in a reasonable degree, to Army football [Brig. Gen. Davidson had been head football coach at the U.S. Military Academy, 1933-38]. Then he said he didn't know what job Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker had lined up for me. I was assigned to Gen. Walker's headquarters and he made the assignments from there. MacArthur outlined the situation in very general terms, wished me luck, and that was it. I guess I was there about 10 or 15 minutes. He was the same friendly person he had been when I reported to him as a lieutenant, and he exhibited the same degree of friendliness when I reported to him as a brigadier general.

I went over as a brigadier general. I never lost my rank after I first got it in Sicily. I went over there as an infantryman. Gen. Walker said, "I want you to lay out a defensive line around Pusan in the event we have to evacuate the peninsula." I made my reconnaissance first despite the time lag of getting the supplies over, because I hadn't seen Korea before—hadn't seen that terrain.

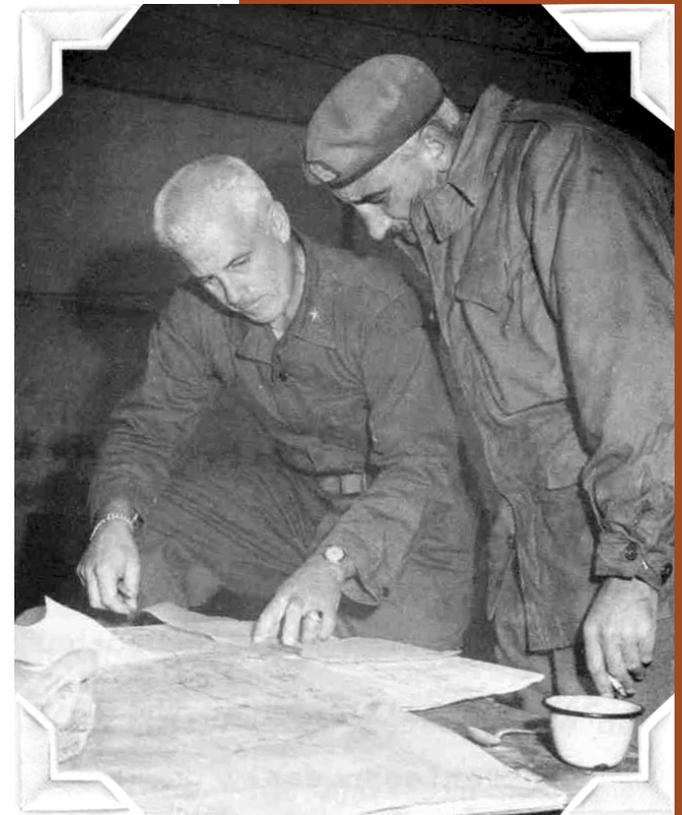
First, I made a map of reconnaissance to see what the problem was. That may have taken a day or so. Then I got a hold of a jeep and went over as much of the ground as I could. I don't think I got an airplane then because, as I remember, there weren't any. It really was with a map reconnaissance and a limited vehicle ground recon-

naissance that I got my feel for the terrain and laid out what I thought was a proper trace for a defensive line. As I went over the terrain I looked at it and one thing that impressed me greatly, in the line where I felt the positions should go, was the shallowness of the soil, and the rock. To dig placements through that rock, in the time and the number we had to, was almost impossible. The only recourse, as I saw it, was to build up instead of going down—new sandbags. I remember the first supply list I put in. I asked for an ungodly number of sandbags. When they were unloaded on the dock there were a mountain of them. They called that "Davidson's Folly," at least some wags did, but they didn't last too long.

I was told to make this reconnaissance as fast as I could, three or four days. Then I had to come back and report to Gen. Walker's chief of staff—Lev Allen [Maj. Gen. Leven C.]. He seemed to think it was a pretty good idea. He said he would present it to Gen. Walker at his first opportunity, which he did later that

Brig. Gen. Davidson discusses the military situation with a British officer  
Davidson Collection

Gen. Walker said, "I want you to lay out a defensive line around Pusan in the event we have to evacuate the peninsula."



I started to work that Sunday when I got there. I don't think I ever felt lower in my life because they had absolutely nothing to work with.... There was nothing in the way of supplies.... There were no troops or civilian organizations.... It looked like an unplayable lie. I was really low.

night. Gen. Walker said, "No, it's got to go on this line," which was the line that General MacArthur had drawn with his finger across the map.

I thought it was unsound. In the first place I thought it was too long. The kind of perimeter we wanted had to be defended with a force of steadily diminishing size, you see, and a line that was so long would be difficult to defend with all the troops we had then. It would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to defend as the force became smaller. I still thought my line was sound but, of course, I was in no position to say no.

I was instructed to go down to Pusan and to construct this line along the trace that General MacArthur had picked out from an airplane on one of his visits. I don't think he made a detailed reconnaissance or a map study, certainly not to the degree that I had, although mine only took place over 72 hours.

He sent me back to Pusan, and I flew down in an L-4 with the base section. They gave me a little room. I started to work that Sunday when I got there. I don't think I ever felt lower in my life because they had absolutely nothing to work with. I was all by myself and doing all the planning and so on. There was nothing in the way of supplies to speak of. It was going to take time to get the supplies. There were no troops or civilian organizations to work with, to do the job. It looked like an unplayable lie. I was really low. Anyway, I laid out the

defensive line and figured out the sectors and the amount of supplies for each sector. Then I added them all up, made my supply list, and sent it over to Japan. The big items were those damn sandbags. [The *DAVIDSON LINE* began at Sodong-ni, approximately eight miles north of Ulsan and extended to northeast of Miryang. It then curved southeast of Muan-ni, crossed the Naktong, and ended at Masan.]

I started what I could with whatever personnel I could dig up, which was pretty much of a ragtag and didn't amount to anything. I hardly got started. I was just lucky as hell that they never even had to go back there because they wouldn't have found the damn thing. What little was done wasn't worth a damn anyway, so that petered out.

We were able to hold the Naktong perimeter when that developed. The 24th Division was the first division over there and they were pretty decimated. Bill Dean, the commanding general, had been captured; the deputy commander had gone home again because of stomach trouble; and so Johnny Church, an infantryman, was assigned to command the 24th Division. They had been taken out of the line and were in a rest area in an orchard behind the perimeter, resting and recuperating and reorganizing because they had just introduced Koreans into our units. They put so many Koreans in each part to beef it up and give it close to the standard number of people.

I joined that division about 31 August. I was the assistant division commander (ADC). We were in reserve. One day we got an order to relieve the Marine division, which was down south. Gen. Church sent me ahead of the division to meet with their G-3 and arrange for our taking over the positions they were holding along the Naktong River.

I did that one night, and the next day there was a breakthrough on the east coast of Korea near a town called P'ohang-dong. They called the Marine division and said, "Sequence off. You have to continue your position and the 24th Division has a job to do over on the east coast." I had my jeep and my driver, so we took off toward P'ohang-dong to the corps headquarters [ROK I Corps]. In the meantime our division came over and we physically located the divisions in the corps area. After our division got over there the clear penetration developed at P'ohang-dong, so on 9 September 1950 Gen. Church sent me with a regimental task force over to P'ohang-dong to plug the hole. That was my first operation over there. We had a successful operation and rejoined the division. 🏰

Soldiers of the 14th Engineer Battalion place a barbed wire entanglement on the banks of the Naktong River, 10 August 1950  
Engineer School, Korea 011



**L**ieutenant Trayers describes his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy and his branch selection to the Corps of Engineers. Rushed to Korea as a replacement, he did not attend the Engineer Basic Course before reporting for duty. He received his indoctrination to combat on the Pusan Perimeter. Mounting casualties soon found him as a temporary company commander. Later he helped install and remove a minefield.

At West Point, cadets could choose only one of five branches: Infantry, Artillery, Armor, Engineer, and Signal Corps. These were considered at that time the five combat branches. We went into an assembly room and there was a blackboard in the front on which were written the number of vacancies available in each of the branches. The sum of all of the vacancies added up to the number of cadets who were graduating from West Point, minus the 25 percent who were going into the Air Force. You chose a branch based on your academic standing.

One officer had the roster of our academic standing and the other officer was in front of the blackboard with a piece of chalk. The one officer with the roll called out, "William Bradford DeGraf," the number one graduate in our class. Bill DeGraf stood up and said, "Infantry." He had been an infantry lieutenant

before he went to West Point. The officer changed the number of vacancies in the infantry by minus one. Then the officer with the roll called the second person to graduate, "Charles Ozro Eshelman." Charlie Eshelman stood up and said "Engineer." With that the number of engineer vacancies was changed from 69 to 68. The third person called was "James Mason Thompson." He chose engineers, as did Robert Maris Wilson who graduated fourth in our class. After Wilson made his selection, 66 engineer vacancies were left. A large number of the people who graduated with high academic standings chose the engineers. Finally, they got around to "James Leo Trayers." I stood up and said, "Engineers." They changed the number from three to two, meaning that only two vacancies were left in the engineers.

The person who was sitting beside me during the selection of the branches was Warren Littlefield. Warren was undecided about which branch to choose. Even as he was standing up to announce the branch he was going to choose, he was saying, "Armor, Engineers, Armor, Engineers." When he stood up, he said, "Armor," and he went into the armor branch.

The graduates of the Military Academy Class of 1950 did not go to their Basic Course and, as a result, had no branch training before going to Korea. Warren had no training in armor. One time, when his patrol was attacking, it came under heavy mortar fire. Not realizing the safest place to be would have been to

remain in the tank, he got out and was running to seek cover under a bridge when he was killed by an incoming mortar round.

I selected the engineers because I was always fascinated with building things, such as highways, bridges, and buildings. I remember when I was a plebe going around to visit [making mandatory calls as they were called then], one of the upper classmen asked me what branch I was going to select; I said I was going to choose the engineers. He said, “Why do you want to go into the engineers?” I said, “I like to build things.” He said, “Why don’t you get an erector set?” I thought that was kind of humorous.

I was commissioned on 2 June. We graduated on 6 June, four days later. The reason we were commissioned on 2 June was because the Naval Academy was commissioned on the second. Graduates of the Naval Academy and the Military Academy would both go into the Air Force, and the Army did not want the Naval Academy graduates to have the seniority of four days commissioned service over the graduates of the Military Academy.

After we chose our branches, the 69 engineers went into another large room where they followed the same selection procedure—one officer with the roster, one with the piece of chalk. On the blackboard were the vacancies by theater for the engineers.

The name of the ranking engineer selectee, “Charles



Two wounded soldiers of the 5th Regimental Combat Team receive medical care at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital  
RG 111, SC-351944

Ozro Eshelman,” was called. He stood up and I believe he said, “Europe.” The Europe and CONUS (continental United States) slots were soon filled. When it was my turn the only vacancies left were in the Far East Command, so I was ranked as going to the Far East. When I got to the Far East Command I was going to get further orders.

I took my authorized leave of 60 days, 6 June to about 6 August. I landed in Korea sometime between 15-20 August at Pusan. As we were going through the replacement channel I noticed that the bleeding wounded were being returned to Korea. Soldiers

who were in the replacement stream had bandages with blood showing. While chatting with a couple of them they explained that they had been wounded in Korea and were on their way back. I had thought they kept the bleeding wounded in the hospital.

I was in Pusan for a couple of days and then I was given orders to the 1st Cavalry Division, which was in Korea at that time. Eddy West, a classmate of mine from West Point, and I made the journey to Korea together, and we both went into the G-1 of the 1st Cavalry Division together. The only records that we had with us were our I.D. cards, a copy of our orders, and our Form-66.

#### The Flip of a Coin

The 1st Cavalry was on line in the Pusan perimeter, on the Naktong River. The G-1 looked at the back of our Form-66 and the single line entry read, "Graduate, USMA." He said, "You haven't been to your Basic Course?" We said, "No." He said, "Well, then you're as qualified to be an infantry officer as you are an engineer." So he reached into his pocket and he took out a 50-cent piece. He said, "You call it. If you get it right, you go to the engineers, otherwise we'll assign you to the infantry." He flipped the coin in the air and it came down on his wrist. I think Eddy said, "Heads," and it was heads, so he said, "You both go to the engineers." That was how we were assigned to the engineers. Eddy West and I, being in the 1st Cavalry Division, were as-

signed to the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion. Eddy was assigned to A Company and I was assigned to C Company. The company commander of Company C was Capt. Alvin Siegal.

The commanding officer of the 8th Engineers at that time was Lt. Col. William C. Holley; the executive officer was Russell J. Wilson; the S-1 (Adjutant) was Capt. John A. Maxson; the S-2 (Intelligence Officer) was Capt. Samuel H. Yoast; the S-3 (Operations and Training Officer) was Maj. Glade S. Witwer; and the S-4 (Supply Officer) was Capt. Harvey C. Lewis.

Within a day or two I was reassigned to D Company. The company commander was Lt. Thomas Kennedy and the platoon leaders were Walter H. Radschlag, Richard O. Eiler, and Tom T. Jones [USMA, '48]. I was the fourth lieutenant. I was assigned as assistant platoon leader to Lt. Eiler because Lt. Kennedy realized that I hadn't been to the Basic Course. I was there for training.

It seemed to have been battalion policy that supplies were replenished either by swapping or stealing. Lt. Eiler and his platoon were known as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" because they were so successful in resupplying. I also remember Lt. Eiler taking me fishing one time; he took a half-pound block of TNT and threw it in the lake. About 50 fish floated to the top. That was the first time I'd ever seen that. Coming from a big city—Boston—I didn't do much fishing.

"You haven't been to your Basic Course?" We said, "No." He said, "Well, then you're as qualified to be an infantry officer as you are an engineer." So he reached into his pocket and he took out a 50-cent piece. He said, "You call it. If you get it right, you go to the engineers, otherwise we'll assign you to the infantry."

## Firefight at Hill 902 and the City of Ka-san, 4-5 September 1950

An engineer battalion has four companies, A, B, C, and D. We were organized into regimental combat teams. Company A supported the 5th Infantry, Company B supported the 7th Calvary, and Company C supported the 8th Calvary. Company D, which was backup for A, B, and C, served as reserve and handled the overflow requirements levied on the battalion.

Because it was the last uncommitted unit in the division, Company D was ordered to make a coordi-

nated attack with Company E of the 8th Cavalry on Hill 902, on which was the walled city of Ka-san. Ka-san was not actually a city, but a section of wall along the crest of Hill 902, 10 miles north of Taegu. The 3,000-foot mountain afforded observation south through Eighth Army positions into Taegu itself.

We loaded up in the trucks one rainy, foggy afternoon [3 Sep 50] and drove down the road. We saw wounded South Korean soldiers coming back, but because of the time and the weather, and having no coordination with E Company, we returned to the company bivouac area at about 1900.

I was designated by Lt. Kennedy to act as liaison officer with the 8th Cavalry. He told me to go over to the CP, introduce myself, and spend the night.

I went over and let the 8th Cavalry know that I was representing Lt. Kennedy, and if they had anything for him I would be happy to take it back. I put my tent and sleeping bag outside the

Later the trucks left the schoolyard. They were traveling quickly because they were being tracked down the road by 120-mm mortar fire. The trucks were going too fast, particularly since they had flat tires. One driver lost control of his truck and it spilled down into the ravine....



Two soldiers of the 27th Infantry Regiment fire on North Korean positions, 4 September 1950  
RG 111, SC-347752

They put a grenade in his hand, pulled the pin, and said, "If the Koreans come, you know what to do."

CP and spent the night. Early the next morning I returned to D Company, which was loading up. We drove to the Hill 902. At the base of the hill was a schoolyard. Lt. Kennedy told me, "You're in charge of the trains. Park all of the trucks loaded with ammunition, rations, and water in the schoolyard." We were told that this was going to be a coordinated attack and to secure the top of the hill; there were estimated to be 75 North Korean guerrillas on that hill [enemy strength near Ka-san was closer to 800 on 4 Sep; it consisted of a North Korean regular army unit reinforced with 120-mm mortars].

The three platoons and Lt. Kennedy attacked up the hill. I stayed with the trucks in the schoolyard. The trucks and I came under heavy 120-mm mortar fire for the whole day. Mortars landed in the schoolyard and blew out the tires on the trucks and punctured their radiators. Later in the afternoon I was directed to return the trucks to the battalion CP area. I was to remain at the battalion advance CP where Col. Holley had been all day directing artillery fire on the hill.

Later the trucks left the schoolyard. They were traveling quickly because they were being tracked down the road by 120-mm mortar fire. The trucks were going too fast, particularly since they had flat tires. One driver lost control of his truck and it spilled down into the ravine. The other trucks slowed down then and were able to proceed out safely.

It was dark now and rainy. I went up to the CP area where Col. Holley was. He said, "I want you to go to the E Company commander and tell him to attack." I said, "Yes, Sir" and started walking down the road. It was so dark I couldn't see the road in front of me. I was whistling so that nobody would shoot me, because I was advancing into the E Company perimeter from the outside. Somebody yelled, "Halt!" I quickly stopped and explained who I was.

Somebody came out to meet me, and, by God, if it wasn't an ex-classmate from West Point whose name was Lt. Robert Wood, who later earned numerous decorations for bravery during the war. We recognized one another. He took me safely through the lines and delivered me to the company commander. I explained to the company commander what Col. Holley wanted. He said, "Yes, tomorrow." With my mission accomplished I reported back to Col. Holley, but he had gone. The I&R (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) platoon from the 7th Cavalry had set up a perimeter around this little CP (command post) area where we were, and provided security for us during the night.

On the afternoon of 4 September, D Company secured the top of the hill. Later we learned that the North Koreans surrounding the hill had opened their lines to let the engineers through, and then closed their lines and cut D Company off. On 5 September, Capt. Yoast arrived and said that he had Korean laborers

This young boy wears an A-frame pack similar to those used by porters to carry ammunition and supplies RG 111, SC-344541

and supplies to deliver to D Company. He had trucks, ammunition, rations, and water, and was going to re-supply D Company on top of the hill.

We had maybe forty Koreans, all loaded down with supplies, starting up the hill. It was a winding, torturous path, if there was a path at all. The hill was steep and the brush and trees were thick. I was policing the end of the column, making sure that everybody in front of me was moving up the hill. We were being shot at with small arms fire and with mortars. I noticed as I was going along this one soldier wasn't taking cover at all. He was just walking along, standing straight up. I said to him, "Soldier, you ought to take some cover. You may get shot." He said, "Okay." I continued ducking from rock to rock, and then I heard somebody call "*Medic!*" The soldier whom I had just spoken to had been shot and was down on the ground.

I went over to him, praying to the Lord that there wouldn't be blood, and opened up his fatigue jacket to see where the wound was. The bullet hit a pencil, was deflected downward, and then entered his chest. It was starting to swell, but there was no blood. The bullet had traveled a long distance so it was well spent by the time it hit the soldier. I figured that the bullet had at the most broken a couple of ribs. I got two soldiers to return the injured man to the battalion CP area, cautioning them to be very careful. If the bullet did break some ribs, I didn't want the ribs to puncture a lung.



“I knew he was in the thick of fighting by the sound of his letter,” Mrs. Trayers said. “It didn’t make me feel a bit good, but as long as he’s safe, I’m a happy mother.”

— Boston Traveler, October 6, 1950

There were a number of Koreans in front of me moving in and out of the trees because we were being shot at continuously. I could not see farther than a few Koreans in front of me because of the terrain. We stopped to take cover from incoming fire for several minutes. The column ahead of me was not moving. I walked to the front of the few Koreans I could see, looked ahead, and saw that no one else was to be seen. I decided that since I did not know where I was going, that it was time to return to the advance battalion CP. I don’t know exactly what time of day it was, but it was late in the afternoon. It was a good decision because when I arrived in the battalion advance CP, I was told that the company had been ordered to withdraw.

As we were going up the hill, Lts. Kennedy and Radschlag, both of whom had been wounded, were being taken down the road to the aide station. Remnants of the company started coming back and began assembling in the company area. The North Koreans captured Tom Jones. Lt. Eiler, who was a platoon leader, was running with Sgt. Manelsky, and one other sergeant to escape from the North Koreans. They came to a stone wall. Manelsky and the sergeant jumped over the wall. Lt. Eiler leaned on the wall. The sergeants were exhorting him to jump over the wall. He said, “I’ve got to rest...I’ve got to rest.” While he was leaning on the wall the inside of his thigh was shot out with .51-caliber machine-gun bullet. He was

severely wounded and was losing a lot of blood. The sergeants took him down over the other side of the wall, put a tourniquet on his wound, and carried him to a nearby shed.

They said, “We’re going to get a wagon from one of the houses here and we’ll come back to get you.” They put a grenade in his hand, pulled the pin, and said, “If the Koreans come, you know what to do.” Then they went to get the cart. By the time they had found the cart and returned, the Koreans had come down and captured Lt. Eiler. It was discovered later that he must still have been alive and had not detonated the grenade; his hands were bound with wire and his body was burned.

It was during this engagement that Pvt. Melvin Brown of our company distinguished himself for bravery. During the fighting around Ka-san he killed a number of North Korean soldiers with his rifle and grenades, and when he had run out of ammunition he continued to protect the company’s retreat with his entrenching tool. When they recovered Brown’s body they found the bodies of 20 North Korean soldiers scattered around his position. For his heroism Pvt. Brown was awarded the Medal of Honor.

I returned to the battalion CP and found that I was the only officer left in the company. First Sgt. Kopper told me that the battalion commander wanted to talk to me. I went over to the radio and he gave

A reporter from the Boston Traveler filed this account of 2d Lt. Trayers's activities in Korea Trayers Collection

me the microphone. I picked it up and said, "Colonel Holley, this is Lieutenant Trayers." Sgt. Kopper leaned over and said, "You've got to push the button." Being left handed, I had the microphone in my left hand and the button wasn't in the right place to push. So, while I was talking I wasn't being received. So I pushed the microphone button down and repeated the same thing. "Colonel. Holley, this is Lieutenant Trayers." I immediately got chewed out over the radio because I wasn't using proper radio procedure. I should have said, "Sandbag Six, this is Sandbag Dog Six, over."

Col. Holley explained to me that he wanted me to move the company out and gave the coordinates in code. I assured him that we would do it. I asked Sgt. Kopper, "How do you move the company out?" He said, "Well, first give me the coordinates." I gave him the coded coordinates and he deciphered the code and showed me a map where the company was going to go. I asked again, "Sergeant, how do I move the company out?" He said, "Just tell me." So, I said, "Sergeant. Kopper, move the company out." By God, in 30 minutes tents were struck, trucks were loaded, engines were turning over, and the company was lined up and ready to go.

He said, "Lieutenant, I would suggest that you tell me to proceed onto the area so I can outline where the people are going to go." I then told the 1st sergeant to proceed to the designated area in advance of the column and to lie out the bivouac area. He then gave me the

### Hal Clancy in Korea

# Hub Officer Sure Fire On a Mine-Busting Job



2D LT. JAMES L. TRAYERS

## Proves Army Engineers Don't Just Build Bridges

By HAL CLANCY

SOMEWHERE IN KOREA, Oct. 6—If you think Army engineers just build bridges, you should look up someone like 2nd Lt. James L. Trayers of 10 Pleasant Hill avenue, Dorchester.

**YOU WON'T FIND HIM** in Dorchester now, of course. He leads a platoon in D Co. of the 8th Engineers in Korea.

I looked him up in a reeking river bed—and quickly learned tanks were tied down until the fields could be cleared.

why even the proud infantry thinks highly of the combat engineers. This mine field stretched possibly 40 yards down a ledge road that twisted around the side of a hill. It was under direct enemy observation and fire.

**TRAYERS' MISSION** was to clear a mine field which our troops had lain down during the early days of retreat. The Reds had left them in place and now our

**TWICE TRAYERS TRIED** to

**CLANCY**

(Continued on Page Twenty-one)

map with the road that went to that area. As we were driving down the road, I said to myself, "Boy, this being an officer is pretty good. I just tell the sergeants what to do and they get it done." We went to the new company bivouac area where Col. Holley, in his infinite wisdom, sent down a senior lieutenant to command the company.

### Installing and Removing a Minefield

We were still in the Pusan perimeter. The next mission that I received was to put in a minefield. The minefield was to be placed where the terrain was admirably suited for the installation of mines. On the left side of the road there was a deep cut, which together with the high vertical embankment on the right side of the road channeled all enemy tanks and vehicles down to the roadbed. Sgt. Manelsky, who was the platoon sergeant, took the platoon out to put in the minefield. He outlined the way the minefield would go in. He suggested that we put in several rows of anti-tank mines, staggered so that the entire width of the road was covered.

I looked in the FM 5-34 [field manual] that I carried in the pocket of my fatigues. It told you everything you had to know about minefields. It discussed taking accurate measurements between the mines and establishing an accurate azimuth and distance to the right rear reference point, and establishing an accurate azimuth to the topographic marker. The manual also specified that it was the responsibility of the lieutenant in charge to take the measurements.

As things were progressing I was up in the minefield measuring the distances between the mines. Sgt. Manelsky came over and said, "Lieutenant, I think it would be better if you were to go over there and sit down and watch what we're doing." I said, "Why is that?" He

said, "Well, the men are afraid you'll get hurt." I said, "I looked in the FM and I'm supposed to do this." He said, "I'll take the measurements *for* you. But more importantly, they're afraid with you in the minefield *they're* going to get hurt." I agreed to take a position to the rear and allowed the platoon sergeant to take the measurements, install the mines, and then check the measurements after the minefield was installed.

A little while later Sgt. Manelsky came over and said, "Lieutenant, shall we booby-trap the mines?" I said, "Tell me about booby-traps." He said, "The kind we would put in is a pressure-release type, which means that if the enemy were to pick the mine up and didn't know it was booby trapped, it would set off the mine." I said, "How do you do it?" He said, "Well, we put the mine in on a solid base and tunnel in from the back of the mine. After the mine is in position, we carefully remove the pin, and then we cover it over." I said, "I think we ought to do it because the North Koreans are coming down, taking our mines, and using them against us."

That was my second order. My first was to move the company out. The second one was to booby-trap the minefields. After the mission was completed I prepared a minefield report and turned it into the battalion S-2.

A few days later, I was given the mission to remove the same minefield. We went out in the after-

Before we got the order to remove the minefield, a North Korean truck, one that was loaded with ammunition and had some soldiers on it, hit the minefield and blew up. Now the minefield pattern was disturbed and strewn with truck fragments and covered with dirt. We didn't know which mines had detonated and which ones had not detonated.

Engineer School, 119-11-3



Engineer School, 119-11-34

Engineers from the 25th Infantry Division unload and emplace anti-tank mines along a reference tape, August 1950

noon to take the minefield out. One of the fundamental rules after installing a minefield is that it should be under your observation and covered by friendly fire. Unfortunately, in this case the minefield was covered by enemy fire. They had a machine gun that was laid right over the minefield, and so every time we went out there they'd fire the machine gun. I decided that we couldn't remove the minefield in daylight and that we'd have to go up and take it out under the cover of darkness.

Before we got the order to remove the minefield, a North Korean truck, one that was loaded with ammunition and had some soldiers on it, hit the minefield and blew up. Now the minefield pattern was disturbed and strewn with truck fragments and covered with dirt. We didn't know which mines had detonated and which ones had not detonated. It was not necessary that a vehicle go over a mine to detonate it because if the mine was within a certain distance of the explosion, it would explode by sympathetic detonation.

After the explosion the minefield was covered with body and vehicle parts. Having seen the minefield that afternoon I decided to use a net made of primer cord and half-pound blocks of TNT. We took a strand of primer cord, maybe 30 feet long, and at every foot we tied on a half-pound block of TNT. We made enough of these strands of primer cord and TNT to form a grid

such that every foot, north and south, and east and west, there was a half-pound block of TNT. When we exploded all of this primer cord and TNT simultaneously, it would cause the explosion of any mines in the minefield.

That evening, under cover of darkness, we went up to do that. I took up the first strand of TNT and stretched it across the minefield. A soldier could step on an anti-tank mine and it wouldn't explode because the pounds-per-square-inch of a person is less than the pounds-per-square-inch of a tank. That was why I could walk in the minefield and stretch my strand of primer cord across it. Sgt. Paul Chambers went up with the second strand of primer cord and he laid it in the minefield one foot apart from the first one. Then it was Sgt. Cyrus Whitby's turn to go up. He laid his strand out. While he was in the minefield, the enemy lobbed in some mortar shells and killed him in the minefield. We went up and recovered his body.

The next night we added some explosives to the minefield and blew up the primer cord that we had already placed in the minefield. I was sure that the right-hand side of the minefield was clear, but the left-hand side was not. I reported this to the tank company commander.

The next day the 1st Cavalry Division moved up a Waegwan road, which was the road we had cleared the night before. The road had a curve in it a bit past the

minefield. Because he was lining up his vehicle to navigate the oncoming turn, the first tank through the minefield didn't stay far enough to the right. As it went through the minefield it hit a mine, blew a track, and coasted forward until it came to a stop in front of the minefield.

The disabled tank now was blocking the route of attack so that the rest of the tanks couldn't get by. By the time they had removed the tank from the road the day was well spent. The division commander called off the attack for that day. The next day the division was ready to make its attack again and the tank company went through the minefield without any trouble. The lead tank went about 50 yards past our minefield and hit another mine.

What happened was that during the night the North Koreans had come down and put a mine or two in the road in front of my minefield. The company commander of the infantry unit that was securing the position said that his soldiers heard digging but they didn't know what the digging was. Now another tank was blocking the route of advance. That tank was pushed off to the side of the road and the attack continued north. So much for minefields, minefield reports, and booby trapping. 🏰



Engineers check a disabled tank for booby traps, and the area around it for mines Engineer School, 116-13-1

**W***ith the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Captain Farnum describes the efforts to man, equip, and train his unit, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), for deployment overseas. Soon after their arrival in Korea, the 2d ECB moved up into the line. In late August and early September the battalion was deployed as infantry during the heavy fighting around the Naktong perimeter. The battalion played a vital role in stabilizing the perimeter and suffered heavy casualties in the process.*

I arrived at Fort Lewis to join the 23d Infantry, 2d Infantry Division, in December 1948. After getting my Regular Army commission in the Corps of Engineers in late March 1950, I was transferred to the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, and my first assignment there was as the assistant S-2.

When the North Koreans invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950, I had been in the 2d Engineers less than three months. The 2d Division was alerted for POM, and right off the bat it was a question of determining who was going to stay in the division. Certain officers had career development considerations that would take priority. By and large every-

body was alerted and we went on a high state of readiness to get all of our TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment) up to snuff and get our fillers in.

We were short a lot of people. I really don't know the percentages but, to fill us, it took considerable effort. On 3 July, I became the S-1; therefore, it was my responsibility to make sure we had all the officers that we were authorized, and all the sergeants and enlisted personnel.

For days we had telephone communications with Fort Belvoir on a standby basis of maybe eight hours a day. They were assisting us in locating specialists in different fields, getting equipment that we were authorized and didn't have, getting some of our more obsolete equipment transferred out, and getting new equipment in.

We immediately filled our Company A to full strength. Any shortages of equipment were met by transfer from the other line companies or other units at Fort Lewis not alerted so that Company A could depart with the 9th Infantry, our first element to head for Korea. After Company A was fully equipped and manned in less than one week, we worked on Company B, and then Company C.

Officers such as a Harold Curry, whom I replaced as the adjutant and S-1, stayed there for a while helping with the requisitions that we had to process. He was scheduled to go to school for career development.

Capt. Lawrence Farnum on his way to Korea, late summer, 1950  
Farnum Collection



We had to get those people out of the organization and other people in so we could deploy to Korea.

We had phone contacts with so many different places it is hard to account for, but a battalion needs clerk-typists, finance people, and the whole gamut of capabilities. It seemed as if we were dealing with Forts Benning, Knox, and about every base that had any kind of a training mission all over the entire U.S. to fill this one division that was going to be deployed to Japan and Korea.

We succeeded in filling our TO&E. Much of our equipment needed to be replaced. Old World War II equipment needed to be turned in, and replacement trucks, jeeps—everything that you can think of—procured to replace it. We expedited one company at a time to meet the schedule that was set, having the 9th RCT leave first, followed by the 23d, and the 38th, then remainder of the division and divisional elements.

We accomplished it all on a very short schedule. Prior to our due date to arrive in Japan, things in Korea had deteriorated to the point that while the ships were on the high seas, the orders were changed. All elements of the 2d Division went straight into Korea.

Concerning our readiness in 1950 to get the 2d Infantry Division—one of our front-line divisions—on board ship with the full TO&E took major resources across our country to send people in as fillers, then to train people to operate small items like the new 3.5-inch



anti-tank bazooka. We had to obtain this weapon then get our people trained. There were these types of problems—last-minute qualifications on the range, and all of the things that suddenly should have been done yesterday. You needed to do them, and yet you needed to sail on a ship within a week's time.

To the best of my knowledge the division did a fine job of getting the first RCT off, fully equipped and manned, in about a week's time. The ships came in; we loaded them and sent them on their way. The

Destined for Korea, U.S. troops prepare to board troop transports at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, 1950  
USNI, 343163

next RCT followed about a week later, and so on down the line.

We had a very limited number of Regular Army officers in the battalion. I think, perhaps, I was the only one, until Lt. Col. Alarick Zacherle was transferred from division headquarters to the battalion once we were in Korea. I think we were the only two Regular Army types at that time.

Zacherle had been in the 2d Battalion at Fort Lewis, I believe, as the S-3, as a major. He had been transferred to division headquarters, and his job at first was secretary of the general staff. I'm sure that as soon as we were deployed to Korea, Col. Zacherle wanted to be with the battalion, and not at division headquarters.

Our battalion commander, Lt. Col. McEachern, flew to Japan with the assistant division commander and a group of the division staff very early on, as soon as we were alerted. It was thought, originally, that we would be going into Japan to replace some of the units there that were being deployed to Korea, so he was not with us during the hubbub and furor of being deployed.

The division arrived in country as regimental com-

bat teams and our Companies A, B, and C were attached to the three regiments. Upon arrival, the 9th RCT was placed into the line, and our engineers were used as needed. The same was true of B and C. As soon as the entire battalion arrived, the companies basically reverted to battalion control and were placed in direct support of the regiments.

### Heavy Officer Casualties

We had only been in Korea a very brief time when the battalion was called upon to go in the line as infantry, to plug a particular salient point where the North Koreans were threatening the integrity of the Naktong perimeter line. Our Company D was on a particular hill. During that single operation they lost their company commander, killed in action; another lieutenant, platoon leader, killed in action; two more platoon leaders, wounded. Lt. Lee Beahler was the sole remaining officer. The company was very successful in plugging the line and stopping the North Korean advance at that time. Lt. Beahler received the Distinguished Service Cross, and the engineers, Company D in particular, were credited by Eighth Army as probably being a key element in maintaining the Naktong perimeter. If that particular penetration had gone through, we could very well have lost our foothold in Korea.

For at least a week's period, 31 August-12 September, the engineer battalion was utilized as infantry.

Members of the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion pose for a photograph near the Naktong River. Front row, left to right: Capt. Farnum and Lt. Bergner. Back row: Lt. Harris, Lt. Brighton, and W.O. Meeks  
Farnum Collection



Our assignments would be as a reserve element of one of our infantry regiments to be in a blocking position. We just happened to be in a position in the defense of Yongsan, which was one of the key towns in that area where there was a deep penetration by the North Koreans coming from the west. Our line companies had suffered sufficient casualties, so we assigned several of the H&S (Headquarters and Service) officers over to the line companies. In Company D, alone, all the officers, save Lt. Beahler, were either killed or wounded. We obviously had heavy losses within the other companies because one of our H&S officers, Joe Cox, who was normally the battalion motor officer, was assigned to one of the line companies. John Bergner, who was the leader of our bridge section, also was assigned to one of the companies, as well as Lt. Lehman and W.O. Falls. In that particular action we lost Capt. Reeves, CO of Company C, who was killed in action, Lt. Matoni, and Lt. Forste. At least nine other officers were wounded and evacuated.

In early September, our battalion commander was relieved by the assistant division commander. The reason given at the time was lack of leadership and the ability to utilize his engineers as infantry. At that time, Maj. Fry assumed the command of the battalion, and Col. McEachern went to our division rear.

We came off the role of infantry about 17 September and started working on the roads. This coincided

with the landings of other U.S. forces in the Inch'on area. Due to this maneuver on the part of the U.S. forces, the North Koreans were in a position to be cut off completely in the south. Basically, they went into a full retreat to the north.

We continued to lose some officers in that period. I know that Lt. Reed, who was commanding Company A, was wounded, and a couple of our officers had to be evacuated for combat fatigue. At the time, we referred to them as having gone "psycho." This was more an aftermath of them having seen their friends killed or wounded while serving as infantry in the defense of Yongsan. A fair number of people had been evacuated to Japan, and among them were Lt. Wilson, who also had combat fatigue; Lt. Webb, who was wounded and evacuated; and out of Company C, Lt. Jalicour, wounded. Out of Company D, Lt. Nichols was wounded and evacuated; Lt. Donahue, also wounded and evacuated; and out of our H&S Company, Lt. Burr was wounded and evacuated.

Living out of very limited facilities with no place to dry off your feet, change your socks, and do things like that, we lost some of our people due to blistered feet, and basically a jungle rot that came with having your feet wet all day and night from walking through the rice paddies.

With the North Koreans in retreat it seemed obvious that the 2d Division and all the forces in Eighth Army down in the Naktong area would proceed

We had only been in Korea a very brief time when the battalion was called upon to go in the line as infantry...where the North Koreans were threatening the integrity of the Naktong perimeter line.... If that particular penetration had gone through, we could very well have lost our foothold in Korea.

north towards Seoul. The Naktong was a sizable barrier to motorized transport in our area and varied in width from 250 to 500 feet. It was a meandering river, sometimes going north and south and other times east and west. As the operations officer at that time, I made a reconnaissance, along with our bridge platoon leader, John Bergner, for a site to put in our bridge across the Naktong.

During that period in the war effort, we received no replacements that I can remember. About the same time, some of the people who were enlisted members of the battalion and held a reserve commission were recalled to active duty. Among them was Bob Green who was recalled. He was our operations sergeant, and he was recalled as a 1st lieutenant. He was assigned out to one of the line companies. We gave a couple of field commissions to some of our sergeants at that time. Two I remember because they were at headquarters—one was Sgt. Hatfield and the other sergeant was Jim Malone.

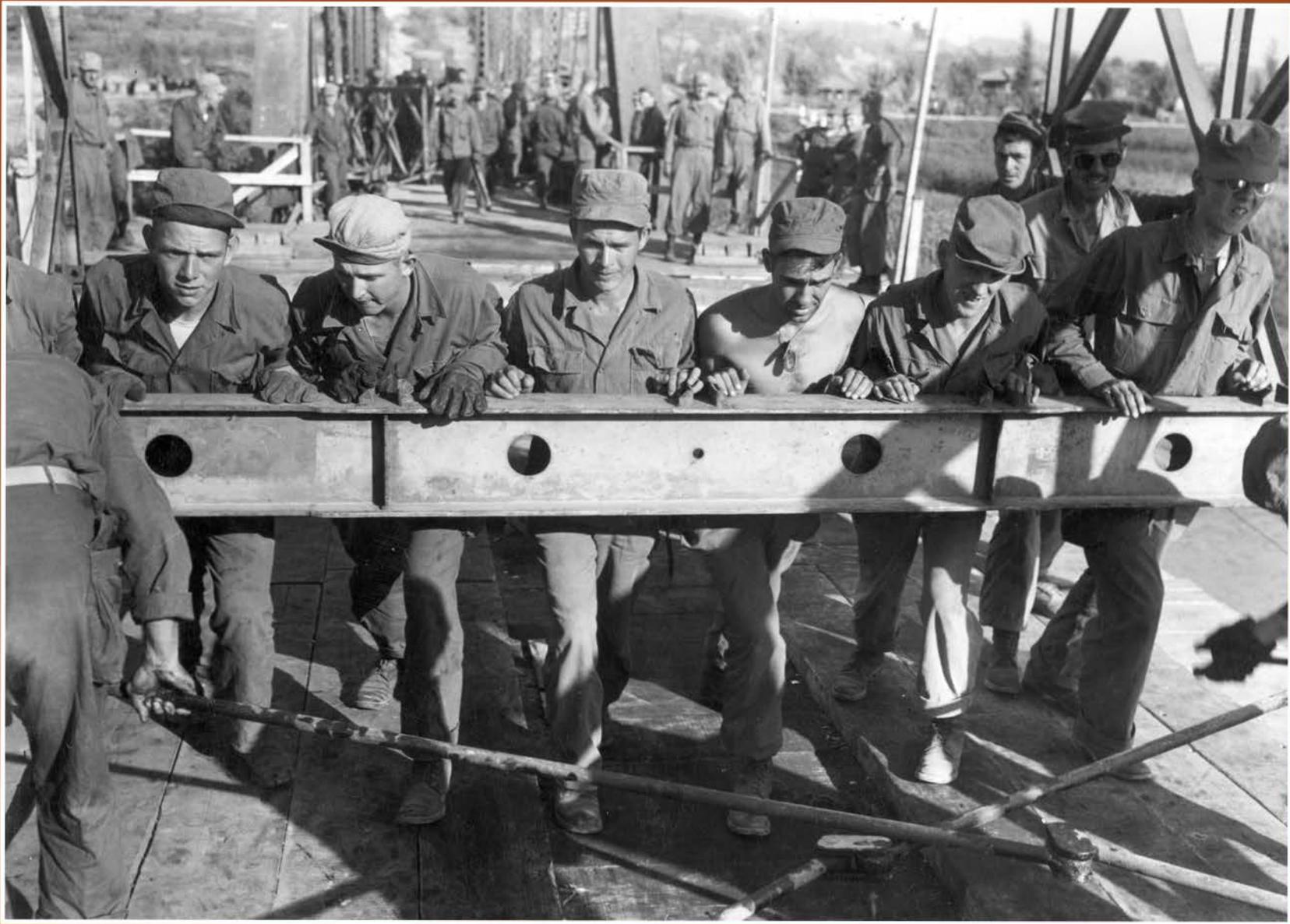
With the relief of Col. McEachern, we were expecting Maj. Zacherle to be assigned to the battalion. He had been with the battalion back at Fort Lewis but was now serving in the division headquarters. He was a Regular Army engineer officer.

On 21 September, Maj. Carl Price, who was our S-3, was shot in the leg and evacuated to Japan. Capt. Anderson was evacuated as sick to Japan. We had a problem with some bouts of encephalitis B, which

was a rather serious malady to the Americans and required fast evacuation to Japan. Some of them were fatalities from that disease.

Maj. Zacherle reported to the battalion on 23 September. Charlie Fry, who was then the battalion commander, ranked Maj. Zacherle as a major. 🏰

Engineers build a Bailey bridge across the Naktong River  
at Waegwan, 1 October 1950 Engineer School, 42-10-206



**T**he following essay is excerpted and reprinted, with permission from *Firefight at Yechon: Courage & Racism in the Korean War*, by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bussey, with permission of the University of Nebraska Press © 1991 by Charles M. Bussey. *The 77th Engineer Combat Company (ECC) was a separate African American company assigned to the 25th Infantry Division to provide engineer support to the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment. It was not part of the white 65th Engineer Combat Battalion, which provided support to the rest of the division. The 77th had an authorized strength of five officers and 153 enlisted men, but most of the time had more than 200 men, since most African American combat engineers in the Pacific were assigned to it.*

#### Retreat from Sangju

The 77th ECC was given a series of missions to protect elements of the 25th Division, which were moving back from the Sangju area into the Pusan perimeter. Our first mission was to blow a crater in the main supply route (MSR) to the north that would preclude passage of tanks; the selection of the site was optional. The second mission was to perform a rearguard action at the crater for 12 hours. The third mission was to destroy the throughput capability of rail traffic and demolish all switches,

frogs [track-switching devices], and rail necessary to deactivate the Sangju rail yard. The fourth, and final, mission was to destroy the three southern spans of the bridge across the Kum River to include the south abutment. I was to report to the division engineer upon completion of these missions.

We selected a site on the MSR where we could blow an inside curve with no possibility for bypassing and little possibility for combat-quality repair. A Lt. Zandis from the infantry was designated to be the last and final contact person; his arrival at the demolition site would signal that all elements and individuals of the regiment would have evacuated their combat sectors. This would be my authority to blow the crater. Lt. Zandis was due at the crater site at 0400.

He was on time. He assured me that all 24th Infantry personnel had cleared the area and that I could blow the crater at any time.

It had taken 10 hours to place nearly 1,500 pounds of TNT deep into the mountainside. Zandis had a cup of coffee as dawn crept over the barren hills. I looked down the long empty back road, and then walked over to the site of the crater with the generator, or “hellbox,” in my pocket. I connected the box to the electrical blasting wire after “proving” the circuit with the galvanometer. “Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!” I vigorously twisted the T-handle on the generator and the whole world blew up in a cloud of

rocks, dust, and cordite. It was the crack of doom! I felt a surge of elation as we awaited the settling of a virtual cloud of dust. I wanted to inspect our handiwork.

When I arrived back at the crater, day was breaking. Nobody was to be seen on the back road. I prepared to send most units to Sangju and beyond and to man the roadblock with one of Lt. Chester Lenon's squads across the arroyo.

High above me on a cliff overlooking the crater a soldier yelled down, "Sir, you just blew up two men in that blast. They were coming up the road when you blew it. They were on the edge of the crater. See their shoes and belts and carbines? That's them laying against the bank, down there about a hundred yards."

I looked, but there was a slight bend in the road that blocked my vision. That is how the two people had been able to move up to the site of the crater without my seeing them. I could feel the gates of Leavenworth clanging shut on me. With a couple of my officers, I hurriedly climbed the hill, skirted the bend, and descended to the victims of the blast.

The sun was casting long horizontal rays over our heads as we climbed down the hillside. At the level of the back road I was looking into the eyes of my dear friend Capt. William Jackson. He wasn't focusing well but he knew it was me. So he asked, "Tryin' to kill me, Hoss?"

"God, no, Jackson. But it was still too dark to see

you, and Zandis was my contact. He got here about a half-hour ago. He was supposed to be the last man out."

"Well, it was a typical snafu. We had a short firefight as we were disengaging. I think I've got a concussion. My eyesight comes and goes. You may have done me a big favor, homeboy. Five thousand men and their vehicles and equipment were supposed to pass this point. Two men late ain't too bad. Sorry I'm one of them though."

I looked over at Jackson's companion, a Lt. Morgan, who was silently crying. He looked at me as if I was the personification of death. I *had* been, nearly. I sent for some stretchers to carry the two of them back over the hills. Jackson asked me, "Where's my shoes, my web equipment, and my carbine?"

"Don't ask me how, but all your stuff is about two feet from the edge of the crater. I'm glad you weren't one step farther to the east or you'd be dead and I'd be on the short end of a court martial."

Jackson and Morgan both had concussions and were evacuated back to Japan, but not for long. Personnel were in short supply. Injured personnel were returned from the hospital to the combat zone as soon



Left to right: Lt. David Carlisle, Lt. Collins Whitacker, and Cpl. Paul Witt of the 77th Engineers probe for a booby trap under a mine RG 111, 348837

As mortal combat deliberately comes closer and closer, an attitude of dead seriousness overtakes the protagonists. A pain rises out of one's spine, tightness grows between one's shoulder blades, and the stark reality of imminent death intrudes on one's consciousness.

as possible. So both of them were back to duty in about two weeks.

#### Crater Fight, 29 July 1950

I had done the first part of the mission by blowing the crater. Now I had to secure it for 12 hours. First, it was about time for breakfast and the food went down well. After breakfast, I carved up the company mission among the platoons. When all was well, the company, minus the squad remaining with me, fired up their engines and motored down the road to the city of Sangju.

During the proceeding day and night we had prepared foxholes. We moved into them as the morning began to heat up. It was yet another day when the temperature was going to climb to 110 degrees F. by noon. We waited and waited. We had been issued 3.5-inch bazookas, which were touted to be tank killers—real effective hell busters, the living end. I believed it all. I was manning one along with Cpl. Jerome Barnwell.

The enemy came. They moved cautiously up the road and our boredom ceased. Adrenaline began to tighten us up. First, there was a squad or so of infantry on the road. Then came a small Russian-built tank. The temperature grew hotter, and the enemy task force came closer. As mortal combat deliberately comes closer and closer, an attitude of dead seriousness overtakes the protagonists. A pain rises out of one's spine,

tightness grows between one's shoulder blades, and the stark reality of imminent death intrudes on one's consciousness. The question of fight or flight arises. But there was no possibility of flight. A sense of patriotism takes control. It justifies whatever killing is to ensue—the possibility of one's own demise or the probability of the enemy's. "America, America, land that I love." Nothing else matters except the killing—powerful, glorious, bloody, overpowering killing.

We hunkered down in our foxholes and the enemy drew ever closer. The game plan provided for no firing of small arms or automatic weapons until the bazooka had eviscerated the tank. We waited and waited still more amid the ever-mounting tension, and the adrenaline flowed, charging our bodies higher and higher and still higher.

The enemy infantry arrived at the crater. Animated conversation and gesticulation took place. After sizing up the situation they began to survey the terrain. We were hunkered well down into our foxholes and were not observed. So the enemy squad leader radioed to the tank. It lumbered up the grade to the point of impasse—literally and figuratively. The tank could not negotiate the crater.

The tank crawled right to the edge of the crater. I was tight as a cat on a rail fence. I touched the trigger of the bazooka as the sighting hairs steadied right on the guts of the tank. Blam! While the missile was still in flight,

Cpl. Barnwell reloaded. As soon as he touched my helmet, I fired a second round. Double hell broke loose.

There was no doubt that two direct hits had knocked out the tank. Through smoke and dust my men had begun firing. They were chewing up the startled enemy infantry all around the tank. Some who weren't hit managed to rush to the cover of the tank itself. Although it had lost its tracks, it was still intact. But the tank was not dead. Ponderously, that giant 89-mm gun started to swing onto our bearing. Blam! I fired a third missile. It exploded in virtually the same armored spot as my first two.

Suddenly Cpl. Barnwell yelled, "Look behind us, sir!" I jerked my head around. Up the hill to our rear a huge gray-white arrow had been gouged out of the dirt by the bazooka's backblast. It pointed directly into our foxhole. Goddamn, I thought.

The snout of the 89-mm tank gun stopped dead on us. Ka-whump! The whole world moved at the first impact and kept on, registering 10s on the Richter scale, through a total of forty-seven rounds. I shivered as I counted the rounds.

Scared, we hunkered more and more deeply into the foxhole as frantically we tried to prove that a man-size object could shrink through sheer willpower into an infinitesimal point. We were trapped, shivering, and that bastard across the arroyo was trying to dig us out or to eliminate us altogether. Dust and cordite began

choking us to death. I managed only enough awareness of our predicament to continue counting each successive earth-shattering ka-whump! I kept saying over and over, "Damn, Bussey, you screwed up again!"

First, I had trusted our ordnance people's assessment of the enemy weapon. Second, I had overlooked entirely the backblast characteristics of my own weapon. Third, I had been overly eager to engage the tank. After all, it couldn't go anywhere or do anything. I should simply have left it alone. Finally, I should never have emerged from my mother's womb.

At some point the enemy tank's machine gun opened up on my troops. They had continued to fire on the enemy infantry. The tank gun finally slowed its cyclic rate of firing. Either it was overheating, or the crew was running out of ammo. Finally it stopped—almost.

I looked over at Barnwell. His eyes were red. His face was totally begrimed in tanish, grayish dust. I had to laugh. Looking at me he also laughed. Owlishly, we blinked. Tears cleansed our eye sockets. We both rose up a little to assess our situation. Unfortunately, the tank was ready to resume.

Ka-whump! There was hardly any time between the gun's report and the shell's explosion beneath our foxhole. The sun had kept doing its thing, and it became stiflingly hot as we approached midday. Shaking, grimy, disgusted...the corporal and I shared a K ration.

We stayed well down in our hole for fear we couldn't duck fast enough the next time. We had reached an impasse. Stalemated, we waited in the stifling noonday.

Fortunately—through pure happenstance—I had spaced our foxholes so that we had extended coverage of the MSR. We covered 1,000 yards or so of the road and bordering hillsides. When a company-size enemy force came into view, we could let them advance into extreme BAR (Browning automatic rifle) range but no farther. Fortunately, also, two of our foxholes were out of view of the crippled tank.

Seemingly, only darkness would afford us a means of safe escape. By 1600 I would have fulfilled my assigned mission and we would be free to leave. In tactical language, we would be able to disengage from the enemy. If, that is, he would permit us to do so.

The day wore hard on us, but not as hard on us as on the tank crew. We kept them bottled up tight. No matter how many

tank ports might be open, there was very little ventilation. That enemy endured a very hot and long afternoon.

Time passed—1600 came and went. About 1630 the sun had declined to an angle that brought some respite from the burning, blistering heat. The barren hills began to lose some heat, and it became slightly less miserable. The corporal and I shared a C ration. We drank the last of our water. A thought came to mind: I didn't need to be here at all. After all, I was the boss of the 77th ECC and, as such, I could have, and perhaps should have, been in Sangju in some shady place. Any of my lieutenants could have handled this roadblock just as well and probably better. But I was a slave to my convictions. One of them was never to send my men into a situation I would not go into myself. So, at this time, at this place, here is where I belong and here is where I should be.

### Rain of Stones, 30 July 1950

No matter the hazard, if one works at an occupation or chore long enough there's a strong tendency to become a little careless on occasion. We were moving back into the Pusan perimeter, withdrawing from Sangju. Division sent down a demolition plan and made the explosives available to carry it off. We burned the rice warehouses at Sangju and destroyed the switches and frogs in the rail-marshaling yard. Theoretically we were denying the productive systems to the enemy. This was farcical in the extreme because the enemy had no trains or rolling

Engineers use 120 pounds of explosives, placed on the top of the pier and the inside of each beam, to destroy this railroad bridge RG 111, SC-359427



stock of any kind, and if they acquired any, our Air Force would've had a field day with it. Ours was not to reason why! Systematically we accomplished the demolition plan—burning and destroying as we retreated.

We practiced the engineer school guidance on demolition techniques with strong emphasis on safety. I always carried the generator, so there could never be an accidental firing. All charges were prepared both for electrical firing and for fuse firing. On those rare and dangerous occasions when the electrical firing failed, we waited the prescribed period, gingerly lit the fuse, and then ran as though pursued by the devil to be out of harm's way when the demolition exploded. It was exacting and dangerous work.

We fired bridges, dams, electrical transmission stations, and railroads—everything in the demolition plan. Any equipment or installation that could be beneficial to the enemy had to be destroyed. It all went well—until our last target.

The countryside was peaceful. The rice paddies were green. The weather was hot and dry as we prepared our last bridge for destruction. The 2d Platoon placed the charges three spans out: deck, pier, pier, deck, and abutment. The rest of the company, except for the security element, swam and luxuriated in the slow current of the Kum River, which was wide, shallow, and warm at that point. We leisurely inhaled the cans of beer that the American people deigned to allow us

over the violent objection of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and other do-gooder outfits.

When the charges were all placed and wired, we ate the evening meal and got the trucks up on the road heading south. Sgt. Woods and I went back to the bridge to set off the charges. Sgt. Woods was a favorite of mine. I guess it was because I understood him so well. He came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and he was a hell-for-leather guy. He gave the impression of not giving a damn, but in reality he cared. He loved a challenge, and he was strong, tough, and ghetto smart. There was nothing he didn't know about equipment operation and field engineering. He was rare. I had served with him in the 74th Engineer Battalion in the States. He was not very popular there because he was considered to be a know-it-all, and he was. I had no problem with him because he was a top-flight soldier. He was also reliable and loyal. Whenever there was anything difficult, dangerous, or urgent, he came to mind. So I was glad he and I were working together on this demolition job.

When we got back to the bridge site, I connected the action wire, which ended close to the abutment charge. We played out the reel of wire after getting a positive reading on my galvanometer. I paced off the distance as the wire played out: exactly 100 yards. I made a rapid calculation, which indicated that for the amount of TNT in the abutment, the minimum safe distance was 180 yards. But there was no more action

I didn't need to be here at all....Any of my lieutenants could have handled this road-block just as well and probably better. But I was a slave to my convictions. One of them was never to send my men into a situation I would not go into myself. So, at this time, at this place, here is where I belong and here is where I should be.

“Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!” With a twist of the little black handle the whole world erupted. We started to run away from the bridge, but looking up I could see that the sky was full of boulders—some as large as jeeps. They landed all around us with sickening thuds.

wire and I was in a hurry. Sunset was nearing and what the hell? I looked at Woods. He shrugged his shoulders, and like a damned fool, I abandoned caution, cleared, and connected the hellbox.

“Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!” With a twist of the little black handle the whole world erupted. We started to run away from the bridge, but looking up I could see that the sky was full of boulders—some as large as jeeps. They landed all around us with sickening thuds. It was a rain of stones and I twitched as they landed around us. I knew that a rock the size of my fist could be lethal, and lo and behold it was raining boulders of two-ton size! They were burying themselves in the turf around us. I gazed upward all the while, ostensibly to duck away from stones that might have endangered us. Finally, the gigantic stones stopped falling, and only gravel and dust remained. Woods and I looked at each other, silently acknowledging our stupidity, but most of all our good fortune at being alive.

I placed my life in jeopardy through my stupidity; I did the same to my sergeant. For that, there is no forgiveness.

#### The Pusan Perimeter, 1-19 August 1950, Haman, Korea

During August 1950, I took part in some of the most vicious fighting of the war. We were defending the south-

ern part of the Pusan perimeter. It was a period of constant combat and work for the 77th ECC.

As the North Koreans advanced in July 1950, the U.S. and ROK forces were forced to retreat to the southeast to form a defensive position around the port of Pusan. This was truly a last stand. If the U.S. forces were forced to evacuate Pusan, the North Koreans would win. Pusan was a big port and the second largest city in South Korea. It had to be held.

Initially, we fought in the south-central part of the country near Sangju, but on 31 July 1950 the 25th Infantry Division was shifted suddenly to a new defensive sector in the southwest near Masan in order to stabilize the defensive position securing Pusan against a new NKPA (North Korean People's Army) threat from the west. The NKPA forces had broken through in the west and were threatening to outflank the UN forces in the south. The 24th Infantry Division, reinforced by the 27th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division, was already fighting in the area but losing ground steadily. In a brilliant move, the 25th Infantry Division moved 150 miles in two days just in time to hold the line.

The 24th Infantry Regiment was deployed on Subok-san, an imposing piece of high ground running across the corridor leading from Chinju through Masan and into Pusan. The enemy needed that high ground, which was its stumbling block on the way to



Troops of the 24th  
Infantry Regiment move  
toward the front line,  
18 July 1950  
RG 111, SC-343967

Pusan. Subok-san was a steep, treeless mountain. The terrain was rugged. Vehicles were confined to the roads, which were poor. The temperature was 110 degrees F. The tactical plans were inept and poorly suited to the terrain. Barrier and field fortification material was in limited supply and often simply not available. Our personnel were not conditioned to cope with the harsh terrain, the heat, and the shortage of water for bathing and drinking.

Shortly after the 24th RCT closed in on the southern end of the Pusan perimeter our first regimental commander, Col. Horton V. White, was sent back to Japan. I liked Col. White. He had always been a fair man, and he was a good commander, but he was 50 years old and Korea was not a place for a man of his age. Col. White was an intelligence officer who had previously worked for Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, Douglas MacArthur's G-2, so he went back to Tokyo.

Col. White was replaced on 6 August 1950 by Col. Arthur S. Champeny. Col. Champeny was 57 when he assumed command; he was four years older than the 25th Division Commander, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean. I found Col. Champeny to be biased...and totally inefficient. The regiment did not do well under his command.

During the defense of the Pusan perimeter, the 24th Infantry lost its position only once when they evacuated Subok-san under heavy pressure from the

enemy and with a lack of reinforcement by friendly troops. On this occasion, the regiment withdrew under the supervision of its white officers, who must accept a large part of the responsibility for the performance of the troops. It is inconsistent to attribute only the defeats of the 24th Infantry Regiment to its black troops. Officers accept the glory of success; they must also bear the onus of defeat.

Gradually, the Pusan perimeter became stronger. More UN troops arrived, and the gaps were filled. The line became better reinforced and took on aspects of trench warfare. Small attacks regained some ground from the North Koreans. The line stabilized. The North Koreans still pressed the attack, however, and the fighting was fierce. The issue remained in doubt until our amphibious landing at Inch'on took the North Koreans by surprise and cut their supply lines. Our job during this period was holding the line.

#### **Naktong River Bridge, 6 August 1950, Near Masan, Korea**

The war was becoming a habit and, God, what a grisly habit. We were a generation of ghosts. We had never had an opportunity to build, to create, or to structure. We went from college directly to combat, from Sunday school to slaughtering shed. We were blessed, I suppose, to have had a five-year interlude of peace—long enough

to sire two or three children, many of who were to mature fatherless.

We were quartered in a schoolhouse in Masan. We'd been there for several days. The regiment and division were in and around the town also. We weren't doing much and we needed the time for maintenance of equipment. We'd been mighty busy, first at Yech'on, then at Sangju, and then during the withdrawal into the Pusan perimeter. So maintenance it was. Early in the morning on 6 August, a message came in for a platoon-sized recon up to the bridge on the Naktong River. "More instructions after arriving."

Platoon-sized reconnaissance always interested me, so I decided to add my jeep to the small convoy carrying Lt. Lenon's platoon. We left about 0930. The trip to the bridge was uneventful and I called and reported this to division. The G-2 type responded that a battalion-sized North Korean unit was approaching and was about two miles from the bridge. He instructed us, "Hold at all cost. Deny the bridge to the enemy until relieved." This didn't worry me much because it was still in the forenoon and denying the bridge wasn't difficult, even with only one platoon.

I could see the elements of the enemy battalion moving toward us. Thousands of refugees were on the road in advance of the battalion. It was always the



Soldiers of the 5th RCT  
fire on North Korean  
positions near Taejon  
RG 111, SC-349347

same. When the enemy moved, the civilian populace scurried before them. There were thousands of white-clad women, carrying suckling children on their hips and huge bundles of household goods on their heads. Once in a while one of the women would have a radio in the bundle to advise the enemy of our strength, weapons, locations, and general disposition. We were wise to that and the few men we left with our meager trains were to look for women using radios. If any were found they were summarily shot. No radios on this occasion, however.

There were numerous foxholes on the bank facing the oncoming battalion. The plain was flat. The riverbanks were 20 to 30 feet higher than the

Thousands of refugees were on the road in advance of the battalion. It was always the same. When the enemy moved, the civilian populace scurried before them.

plain and roadbed. The enemy approached. We waited. And waited. The troops became antsy.

It's better after the firefight starts because once you're in action you function with a certain amount of automatic reflexes. I planned to let the battalion's point come to within 600 yards. Six hundred yards is good killing range where there's no cover, and it was far enough away, under those conditions, to make the enemy pay dearly for any advance. I knew we'd kill his point and make it impossible for him to advance in the daylight.

#### Engineer Road, 14 August 1950, Haman, Korea

Upon arriving at our new location in the southern part of the Pusan perimeter, I made a reconnaissance of the area and started a program to improve the roads, culverts, and bridges. The work kept the troops occupied and ensured the 24th RCT of clear passage on the MSR and auxiliary roads and trails. We stayed busy. I established priorities for work to be done in infrastructure, field fortifications, and other engineer works.

When I had gone over all of the 24th RCT area, I assigned a high priority to developing an access road to eliminate the bottleneck where the MSR dead-ended in front of the 24th RCT command post. The MSR ran for about three miles southeast from the town of Haman, and if the enemy ever cut that

road, there was no way the troops could leave their positions by vehicle.

I discovered a trail about 14 feet wide that led off eastward from the MSR. The track indicated that it was used by farmers with their ox-drawn carts. The trail led up to a row of low hills and ended at a shale hogback, which precluded passage by vehicles. As the main road-work wound down, we went to work vigorously on the trail, while another crew worked on the hogback. It was hard work because the shale was too hard to move, even with our bulldozer. I posted daily reports of our progress on the regimental situation map. Removal of the hogback would allow the trail to extend uninterrupted for several miles and finally rejoin the MSR. This would give the RCT another vehicle road to get supplies in or to move out.

I was concerned about the RCT being hemmed in with no roadway out of the Battle Mountain area. The 6th North Korean Infantry Division was exerting extreme pressure on the RCT, and the pressure seemed to be increasing from night to night. Our work on the trail intensified, and eventually we removed enough of the overburden to place a large demolition charge deep enough to remove the shale or at least to loosen it up.

I was a bit concerned. Shales and slates are difficult to blow because they're stratified, or layered. The spaces between the layers often contain water and fine silts that

cushion the effects of a demolition shock, dampening the explosion so that it's ineffective. Not so this time. After careful preparation we blew the obstruction. We blew it well, leaving only a lot of loose rock, which the dozer could handle.

Shortly after the big blow, a jeep rushed up to the demolition site, and a very excited colonel got out. It was the new regimental commander, Col. Champeny. When he saw me, the old man puffed up the hill shaking his finger at me.

He coughed, "I thought that noise was artillery. What are you doing? I told you we didn't need another road."

I advised the colonel that this was just a training project and that the notice of the blow was on his situation map and had been for two days.

Col. Champeny took a long, mean look at me and said, "I'm unhappy with you. You just do things the way you want."

I replied, "Sir, I serve the regiment well."

I was careful not to become contumacious, because it was easy to do with him. His face had become florid, and he turned and went down the hill. Fortunately, he had not told me not to open the road. His parting remark was, "I don't know what we'll ever need it for."

I beckoned for the troops to continue their work. It was my duty to maintain and construct roads in my

area of responsibility. I always did that, and it was always good for the regiment that I did. I, too, hoped that the infantry would never need that narrow, slightly improved dirt strip that we named "Engineer Road," but it was available if and when.

I announced that the road was completed at the next regimental staff meeting and Col. Champeny glared at me in his ugliest manner. He advised his commanders and staff that the road was of no significance, and it would neither be needed nor used. He was wrong. Engineer Road proved to be invaluable in the fighting for Battle Mountain.



Engineers of the 77th Combat Engineer Battalion lay a single-apron barbed wire fence  
RG 111, SC-359427



A North Korean prisoner awaits transportation to a POW camp RG 111, SC-347027

### Battle Mountain, 18 August 1950, Near Haman, Korea

Pound for pound the North Korean soldier was as good as any in the world. He was wily and tough. He was tremendously motivated and probably the best mortarman on the planet. The North Korean was trained to a razor's edge. Through the glasses I once watched an NKPA soldier dig a fox-hole. He dug into the hillside with a crude half-shovel, deposited the soil into a large kerchief, and then moved away a few yards where he meticulously redistributed the soil and gravel. When he was finished, it was barely visible. The NKPA soldier was arrogant, confident, and highly capable. He was at home in the heat, the dust, and on the barren mountainsides.

For some reason our northern enemy wanted possession of Hill 625, which became known appropriately as "Battle Mountain." NKPA units attacked the hill nearly every other night, and on the odd night the 24th Infantry Regiment took the mountain back. It was dirty, bloody, and hot.

The 24th Infantry Regiment lost and regained that hill for nearly 45 days. They had no baths, very little

drinking water, and seldom did they have clean clothes. Sunset provided the only respite from the hell-fire of the sun. It was a stinking conflict, with numerous changes of commanders at battalion and company level. It was impossible for the troops to identify with their officers or vice versa.

On the other hand, there were some dedicated and highly competent officers who led their men brilliantly, officers who respected the troops and were respected in return. Such an officer was Capt. Laurence Corcoran, the commander of Company C.

Larry Corcoran was a good-sized man with determination showing in his hard blue eyes. He was blond and strong, and he knew his business—a no-nonsense type of man. I had last seen him back at Gifu, a light year ago, and I noticed that he had lost a lot of weight. The same was true for most of us.

Larry mentioned his need for installation of mines, barbed wire, and trip flares. I knew he needed those items to help solidify his position. I could have provided the engineer support, except that I normally performed my activity at the request of the regimental plans and operations officer. However, I arranged to wire in Larry's Charlie Company anyway.

We set out a concentrated minefield, interspersed with trip flares, and anti-personnel mines to include bouncing betties. Lord, it was hot up on that hill—hotter than the hinges to the door of hell. It was slow

and difficult carrying mines and rolls of wire up those hills, particularly in that heat.

The troops were neither trained nor conditioned to function efficiently in the prevailing high temperature and humidity or in the rough terrain. It was particularly difficult for American soldiers to occupy hilltop positions where food, water, ammo, barbed wire, and other heavy items of equipment had to be manhandled. Somehow it had to be done; the stuff had to be transported and installed. There had been a time when regiment tables of organization and equipment called for mules, but modern technology won out over common sense. Accordingly, beasts of burden were no longer authorized, whereas soldiers were authorized to be beasts of burden. So, enterprising soldiers used cows or other indigenous transportation devices whenever possible.

When the regiment occupied Battle Mountain and its environs, the engineer commander was directed to round up and corral all the livestock the natives had left behind in their flight from their homes when the enemy came near. We rounded up cattle, pigs, and chickens. We corralled the animals where pasturage and water were available. Then I got a bright idea.

I realized that in many other parts of the world cattle were beasts of burden. Why not in Korea? Why not use the beefsteaks to carry significant loads up hills? One cow could carry the load of four or five soldiers

without griping or bellyaching. I had two A-frames secured together and hung over the backs of the cows. We found that if we used the rings in their noses that the cattle wouldn't resist doing our bidding. We led the burdened animals up to the mountaintop positions. I'm sure that the animal lovers from home would take a dim view of the use to which we'd put the beasts, but in combat only the soldier is significant. From that day onward I expanded the use of the animals. They were used to transport all of our field fortifications, water, and ammunition to the line companies of the 24th Infantry Regiment.

The field fortifications stopped the enemy from storming Company C's positions. The anti-personnel mines interspersed in the barbed wire wounded or killed NKPA soldiers who came crawling with great caution or recklessly hurtling through the wire. The riflemen and machine gunners did their slaughtering under the eerie light of the trip flares. It became extremely difficult for the NKPA to dislodge the GIs from that hill. Our enemies paid an awesome price for every inch of Battle Mountain. That was probably the most expensive real estate in the world.

However, on 22 August 1950 things turned from bad to worse on Battle Mountain when a hellfire 120-mm mortar round came in. The big mortar round exploded about 40 feet above the deck with a ka-whump! Lt. Mathis and four good soldiers of the 24th were cut

Lord, it was hot up on that hill....It was slow and difficult carrying mines and rolls of wire up those hills, particularly in that heat.

down. With Mathis down, Larry Corcoran was the only officer left for duty in Company C until 30 August. Those were hard days and hard nights.

The casualty rate was devastating, and the replacements were kids, most of them 18 to 20 years of age without combat experience. Most of the replacements were not infantrymen. They came from the technical services: signal corps, ordnance, medical, whatever. The lack of combat training rendered the replacements less than fully effective.

The Army's personnel assignment and utilization policy specified only that replacements to the 24th Infantry Regiment be Negroes. It didn't matter if they were properly trained or were qualified in the proper skills. It only mattered that they were black. That policy guaranteed the weakening of the 24th RCT.

Immediately following the loss of Mathis came the loss of Lt. Anthes and another officer from Company E. These losses left a terrible leadership hole in the 1st and 2d battalions. The shortage of experienced junior officers, together with the rapid turnover of senior officers, really created a hole in the main line of resistance (MLR).

Wounded men who were ambulatory were of necessity returned to their units, often too soon—before their wounds were healed properly. That created a terrible morale problem, which militated against organizational efficiency.

In spite of all the negatives, however, Capt. Corcoran and a few other fine company-grade officers hung on, as is the hallmark of infantry officers and non-commissioned officers. One night Larry Corcoran lost his position when the NKPA overwhelmed him. He yielded, regrouped, counterattacked, and retook his position—all without the knowledge of battalion or regimental headquarters. For his outstanding leadership at Battle Mountain, Capt. Larry Corcoran was awarded the Silver Star medal.

The troops complained bitterly about the presence of decaying enemy bodies in front of their positions in that withering, rotting environment. The regimental commander ordered the engineers to obtain quicklime and provide it to the line units immediately. The lime was used to decompose the enemy bodies. What had been bodies a few days ago were reduced to a few long bones, some rags, and some grease spots. It was grisly business but it satisfied the troops. It also was demeaning to those fallen soldiers.

On the night of 31 August—1 September, the 6th North Korean Infantry Division attacked in force and moved the 24th Infantry Regiment off Hill 625. Col. Champeny was one of the first people to leave through the cut we had blown to create Engineer Road. He was followed by at least two of his infantry battalions. The road Col. Champeny had derided had saved him and his troops.

Later, the regiment came back to take Battle Mountain by way of Engineer Road. One battalion of the 27th Infantry Regiment reinforced the 24th RCT in retaking the hill. The NKPA suffered great losses from our counterattack. There were no more mass attacks by the North Koreans on Hill 625 after the night of 31 August 1950. We paid a price also. Over 500 American casualties were suffered on Battle Mountain during the month of August 1950.

Once Hill 625 was properly fortified and we had a tight grip on it the mountain was never lost again. Superb duty performance by a few officers and some valiant enlisted men made it possible to retain our positions until the Army broke out of the Pusan perimeter in mid-September 1950. We held because of some tough NCOs and a handful of dedicated officers—Capt. Larry Corcoran of Company C; Capt. Charles Piedra of Heavy Weapons Company, 1st Battalion; Capt. Roger Walden of Company F, 2d Battalion; and Capt. Mike Keiler of Heavy Mortar Company. All of these fine officers contributed to making good things happen in spite of the very transient leadership at regimental, battalion, and company levels.

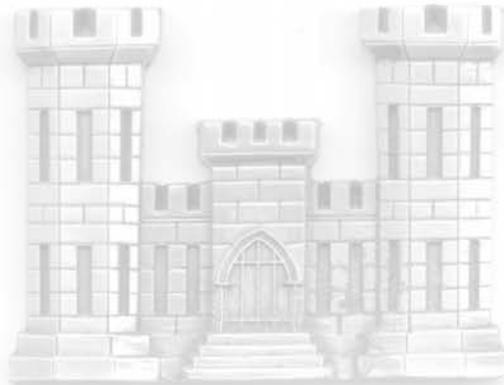
The great pity of it all was that so many good men had to die needlessly because the U.S. Army refused to send qualified white combat soldiers as replacements to a black infantry regiment, even in desperate combat.

Battle Mountain was certainly one of the most

fought over and exchanged pieces of real estate in the annals of American military history. Pork Chop Hill, later on in the Korean War, and Hamburger Hill in the Vietnam War, also were scenes of intense combat. There is no use arguing over which was the hardest—they *all* were hard. 🏰



Men of the 77th Engineer Combat Company use explosives to try and dislodge enemy troops taking cover along the banks of the Hantan River  
Engineer School, 148-16-1



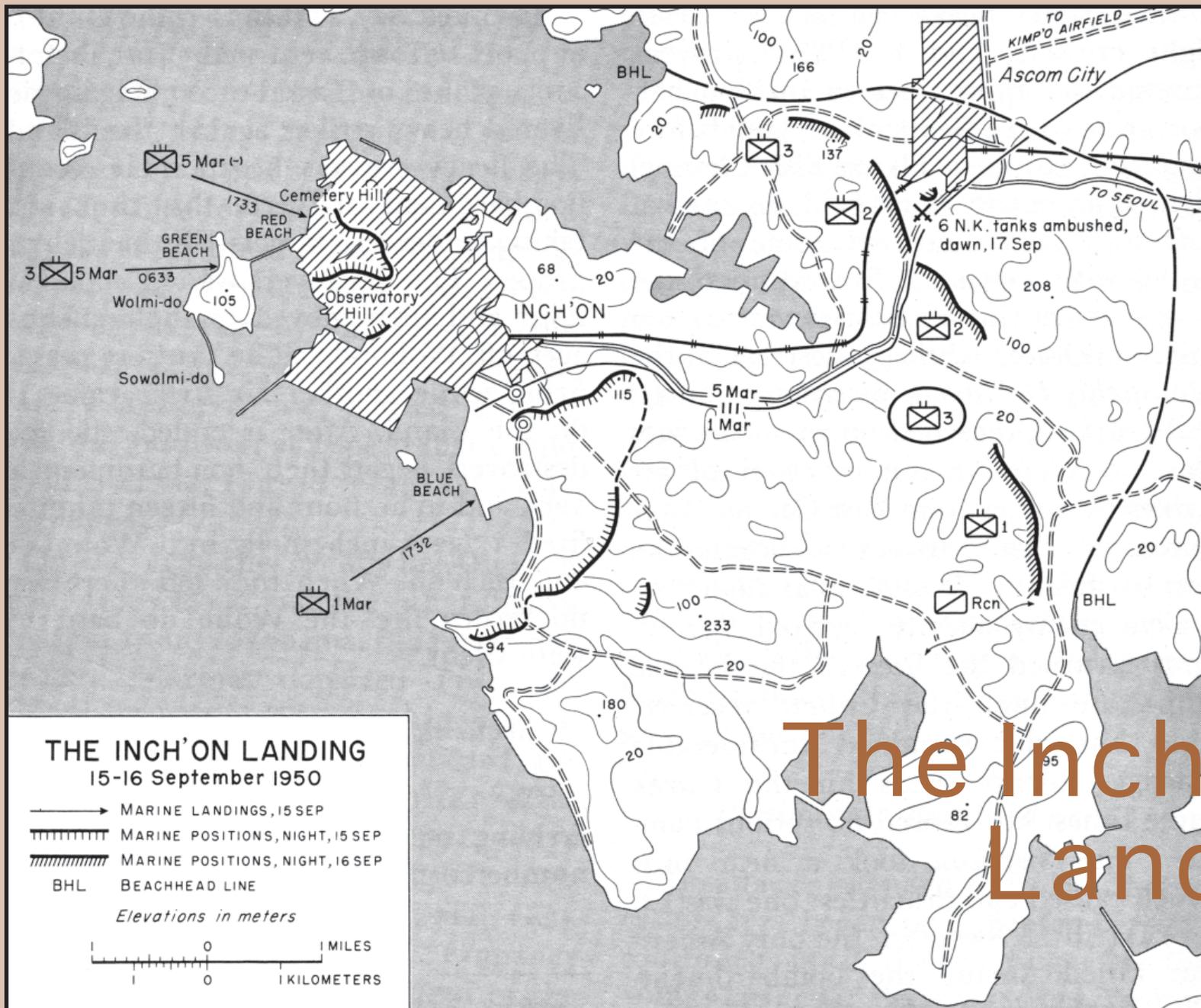
Marines storm over the seawall  
at Inch'on, 15 September 1950  
RG 127, 127-GK-2341-A3191

## Chapter 2



### The Inch'on Landing

September 1950



# Introduction

General Douglas MacArthur's long-range plan for Korea called for an amphibious landing behind the North Korean lines to coincide with a breakout offensive from the Pusan Perimeter. He selected his Chief of Staff, Far East Command, Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, to lead the newly activated X Corps in a landing on the west coast at Inch'on, the port city for Seoul. The objectives were the South Korean capital itself, and the communication routes over which enemy troops and supplies moved south. MacArthur chose Inch'on because he knew the difficult tides there might lead the North Koreans to expect an attack elsewhere. The plan called for two U.S. divisions—the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division—to make the landing, while the Eighth Army, supported by UN aircraft, launched a counteroffensive along the Naktong River.

When presented with MacArthur's initiative, some members of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were skeptical that such a landing could be carried out at Inch'on. Army Chief of Staff, General Lawton J. Collins, was reticent, but willing to defer to MacArthur. Representatives of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps expressed more serious reservations. MacArthur considered alternative sites, but kept coming back to his original objective. He was

convinced that only an Inch'on landing would conclusively sever the enemy's supply lines.

Aerial sorties against the enemy-held harbor began on 4 September 1950. American and British cruisers and destroyers took up the attack on 13 September, dueling with the North Korean batteries on Wolmi, an island controlling the entrance to Inch'on Harbor. In the early darkness of 15 September, the first troops went ashore on Wolmi-do. Marines took the island in less than two hours. In the afternoon, when the tide came in again, the Marines climbed over the seawall and took the city.

The 1st Marine Division, with four battalions of Korean Marines, pressed toward Kimpo Airfield, the Han River, and Seoul. The 7th Division headed south toward Suwon. On the fourth day of the battle, elements of the 5th Marines captured Kimpo, the largest airfield in Korea, and a major UN objective. The Marines then captured Seoul and, on 29 September, MacArthur welcomed President Syngman Rhee back to his capital.

At the same time the amphibious assault took place at Inch'on, the Eighth Army began its breakout [16-22 Sept.] from the Pusan beachhead. The main thrust fell to the newly-formed I Corps [Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn, commanding] in the center of the Perimeter



cans. Accordingly, the Eighth Army offensive was scheduled for the day after the Inch'on amphibious assault. The news of the successful landing did indeed reach the American soldiers with the desired effect, although it appears that poor communications kept the North Koreans ignorant for a few days of the X Corps landing.

The enemy resisted stubbornly at first, but as the news of Inch'on spread, North Korea's forces moved northward with sudden zeal. To elude MacArthur's trap, many North Korean soldiers took off their military uniforms and changed into civilian clothes to become guerrillas behind UN lines. Nevertheless, by the end of September, the enemy lost effective control of nearly all territory south of Seoul.

Engineers played a vital role in the Inch'on invasion, one that began in the planning phase of the Inch'on operation. Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny participated in the initial planning for the invasion as a member of MacArthur's staff. He was then appointed X Corps Engineer and participated in the actual operation.

First Lt. Claude Roberts, Jr., of the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, took part in the landing. The brigade made the amphibious landing of troops and equipment, ferried Marines across the Han River, and assisted in the repair of the damaged locks.

Another engineer unit involved in the Inch'on planning was the 19th Engineer Combat Group (ECG), with Maj. John Elder as S-2. The 19th went ashore on

D-day. Its primary mission was to support the assault crossing and to support the Marines in their drive to the Han River.

Lt. Col. Evan S. Pickett was the commander of the 73d ECB at Fort Hood, Texas, when the war started. He brought the 73d to Korea and landed at Inch'on on D-day. His unit supported the Marines in their drive to the Han River by clearing destroyed tanks and vehicles from the road, searching for snipers, and maintaining the MSR. Upon reaching the Han River, the 73d ECB supported the Marine crossing using assault boats. The battalion also supported the Marines during its move to Uijongbu on the north side of Seoul before it turned around and road marched to Pusan where it loaded on LSTs and went up the east coast, landing at Wonson.

First Lt. Maurice D. Roush came in with the 13th ECB, 7th Infantry Division, on D+2. The battalion built and maintained roads and bridges in support of the 7th Division. 

**L**ooking for a way to stem the North Korean advance and relieve pressure on the besieged Pusan perimeter, Colonel Rowny and his colleagues in the Far East Command's planning section proposed a daring plan—an amphibious landing behind enemy lines. General MacArthur quickly embraced the concept, but he proposed a more ambitious target, the port of Inch'on—100 kilometers behind enemy lines and directly opposite the fallen Korean capital, Seoul.

#### The Decision on Inch'on

Within the FECOM staff there were, broadly speaking, two schools of thought. One school of thought, the prevailing one, was that we should pull our troops back into a perimeter at Pusan and evacuate them to Japan. The second school of thought, the one held by my boss, Col. Armstrong, was that we could land an amphibious force in Korea instead of evacuating our forces. He believed, and we in the Plans Section concurred, that once we evacuated Korea there would be very little opportunity to go back. Accordingly, we began thinking along these lines in mid-July. It took that much time to determine what was happening in Korea and how seriously the situation would deteriorate before we could stop the enemy. Around the first of August we planned an amphibious force to outflank the North Koreans and thus save us from having to evacuate our troops.

Once we got the okay from our boss, three of us worked up an invasion plan. One was Col. James Landrum, who was a distinguished war hero who had been seriously wounded in the Pacific War. He retired to Hawaii as a major general. The second was Col. Lynn Smith, who became a brigadier general before the end of the Korean War. Smith was a very bright officer and a practical one—I've lost track of him. And I was the third.

It's interesting that when we developed our plans, all of us had the same idea of landing on the west coast



General Douglas MacArthur boards the U.S.S. Mt. McKinley after touring Inch'on, 16 September 1950  
RG 111, SC-348600

behind the enemy's front lines. One of my fellow planners, I think it was Smith, thought we should land at the "hinge," the front line itself. The other, Landrum, thought we should land farther up, about 10 kilometers behind the front line. My idea was to penetrate deep, about 25 kilometers beyond the front line. Col. Armstrong decided not to make the decision himself, but had us present our plans directly to General Douglas MacArthur.

General MacArthur listened carefully to the first plan of hitting at the hinge. It was the classic solution. He then listened to the plan of landing farther up the coast. By the time he got to me I was trembling. I thought MacArthur might not consider me bold but simply foolish for recommending we land so deep. MacArthur, however, surprised us all. He went to the charts, picked up a grease pencil, and drew a big arrow more than 100 kilometers up the west coast opposite Seoul. "One should land as close as possible to the objective, and the objective is the capital," he said. "You're all too timid. You're pusillanimous. You should think boldly and decisively." He said he had learned from the Pacific War that the best way to produce results was by island-hopping. So, why not terrain-hop? "Land at Inch'on," he said, "have you considered that?"

"Yes, General, we thought of it briefly," I said. "But we decided there were several good reasons against it. First, it is very close to Seoul and the enemy would

certainly be defending the capital in great force. Second, it was the most difficult of all areas for a landing because the tides are so great. Inch'on has a 31-foot tide—the second largest tidal area in the world. We would have difficulty getting a force on land, and it would be hard to support them once they got there."

MacArthur simply said, "Go for the throat; Seoul is the objective. And as for the tides," he said, "don't take counsel of your fears. Physical obstacles can be overcome by good planning, strong nerves, and will power." We went back to our office and developed the plan to land at Inch'on.

But the plan was far from having the approval of Washington. In the first place, the Pentagon thought it might be better to evacuate our troops from Pusan. They thought a Dunkirk back to Japan was the best solution. However, if there was to be an amphibious landing, they thought that the worst place to land was Inch'on.

General MacArthur invited the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Tokyo to discuss the plan. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, did not attend. After we had presented it to the chiefs, the Air Force chief spoke first. He thought it was unnecessary to land troops amphibiously. "Given sufficient priority," he said, "the enemy's supply lines could be so heavily bombarded that he would have to pull back."

The Chief of Naval Operations was next. "A 31-foot tide," he said, "makes an amphibious landing

MacArthur simply said, "Go for the throat; Seoul is the objective. And as for the tides," he said, "don't take counsel of your fears. Physical obstacles can be overcome by good planning, strong nerves, and will power."

infeasible. We could not get sufficient troops in before the tide turned,” he said, “and the troops ashore would be driven back into the sea. Besides,” he said, “the area is heavily protected with powerful sea mines and underwater obstacles.”

The Chief of Staff, United States Army, General J. Lawton Collins, thought we were planning to land where the enemy would defend most strongly—Seoul, but he was quiet. He knew MacArthur well and hesitated to take him on.

Then General MacArthur took the floor. Crisply and elegantly, often citing examples from the Peloponnesian Wars and other classic battles, MacArthur began to charm the chiefs. His lecture to them was a *tour de force*. After he finished, the chairman said that he and the chiefs would “have to take this back home and study it.” Several days later General MacArthur received a message from the joint chiefs saying that if he thought the operation was essential and would succeed, he should proceed with plans to land at Inch'on.

After reading the chief's message, General MacArthur called us into his office. MacArthur placed his arm around my shoulders and said, “Colonel Rowny, Inch'on shall go down in history as the 22d Great Battle of the World.” From my West Point studies I knew there had been 18. My mind wandered for a second—where were the other three? But I soon came back to earth as MacArthur pumped my hand. Feeling about

eight feet tall I went home and told my wife what MacArthur had said. “I believe he can put on his trousers two legs at a time,” I said.

The three of us worked on the landing up the coast. I know I was personally quite busy because I had to brief the press every day. I had problems with the press, but nothing to compare with the problems of today's world. Today, the press are much more demanding and much more insistent that they need to know details. They speculate upon and criticize everything in sight. They editorialize more today than they did back then, when they were content simply to report the news. Every day I had some minor crisis or another in dealing with the press. But overall, it went fairly well and I had a rather good rapport with reporters.

Several of the reporters got wind of the fact that we were working on an amphibious plan and questioned me about it. I told them it was nothing I could comment upon. Off the record I told them they were correct but appealed to them not to tip off the enemy. The press corps kept the secret and did not telegraph our plan to the enemy. I was pleased that no leaks occurred.

Once General MacArthur got the chiefs' approval for the landing at Inch'on, we got down to serious planning on the details, of which there were many. We had to alert the troops, assemble the ships and supplies, and do it all in a big hurry. It was not an easy task because the troops, ships, and supplies had to come from all over the

MacArthur placed his arm around my shoulders and said, “Colonel Rowny, Inch'on shall go down in history as the 22d Great Battle of the World.”

Pacific Theater and even the United States.

General MacArthur called the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 June. He approved MacArthur's request that the 24th Infantry Division be dispatched to Korea immediately to reinforce the troops there. The division was the first unit that had been brought to some degree of readiness after the occupation forces were pulled out of the provinces and cities of Japan. We were thankful we had at least one division to move to Korea at the beginning of the war.

It was located at one of the training camps, Camp Zama. Maj. Gen. Almond kept pushing Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, the Eighth Army commander, to train a regimental combat team and get them in shape for combat. Walker believed there was no real urgency; he did not want to make extraordinary demands on the training establishment or the troops. But Almond kept pushing and complained to MacArthur that Walker wasn't vigorous enough. MacArthur called Walker in and said, "Look, when Almond tells you to do something, he speaks for me." From then on, there was no love lost between Walker and Almond. When the plans were being drawn up for the Inch'on invasion, Almond insisted—and MacArthur approved—that the X Corps, which Almond would command, not report through Walker, but directly to General MacArthur. In addition, Almond was to continue as MacArthur's chief of staff. X Corps was to be a separate force and not a unit under Eighth Army.



I'm not certain that MacArthur lost faith in Walker's ability, but the fact that MacArthur backed Almond was undoubtedly a blow to Walker's morale. MacArthur obviously believed that Almond was on the right track. He approved Almond's ideas that we had better get the U.S. out of being occupation troops and begin training them for combat. Our troops in Japan were in unbelievably bad shape physically, mentally, and morally. Many U.S. soldiers had Japanese live-in girlfriends and there were hundreds of Japanese-American babies. The troops had become lazy and fat. Pulling them back into training camps was long overdue.

General Douglas MacArthur and Lt. Gen. Walton Walker, the Eighth Army commander, in Korea, 26 July 1950  
RG 111, SC-344430

## Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Rowny X Corps Engineer

As it turned out, the North Koreans did not think to turn off the fresh water and it continued to flow. All our prior planning proved unnecessary; we never needed our tanker-transported water at all.

But to get back to Walker—if MacArthur had lost confidence in him, he would have relieved him. You will recall that MacArthur was a man of strong loyalties and believed that Walker was loyal to him. Still, a gulf opened up between Walker and Almond, and when push came to shove, MacArthur backed Almond.

I learned I would be the engineer for the Inch'on landing the day after MacArthur got final approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the plan. I was notified that I would be the corps engineer for the X Corps operation. Although still a lieutenant colonel, I would have all the privileges and authority of a brigadier general.



Hard aground on Inch'on's Yellow Beach, an LCM (foreground) and LST are stranded by the receding tide  
RG 111, SC-348829

There were many problems involved in getting the troops together, putting them on ships, and getting them moving in a short period of time. The first favorable date for a landing was 15 September 1950. If we failed to meet that date we would have to wait a considerable length of time for the next favorable set of tides. By then the weather would be freezing and the troops in the south of Korea overrun. We had to make the 15 September date.

Another problem we had to resolve was whether to have the troops hit the beach from small assault boats or from LSTs. The troop ships would have to stay several miles away because of the tides. This meant that small boats would have a long way to come—two or three miles—and the troops would be subject to enemy fire. On the other hand, if we landed troops by beaching LSTs, they would be vulnerable to North Korean counterattacks until the next high tide. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to figure out from aerial photographs whether or not we could repair the damaged locks of the harbor basin. We decided it was unfeasible—that it was too far for the troops to come in on small landing craft. In the end, we decided to take a chance on landing the troops directly from LSTs. We knew that once they beached, the LSTs would be stuck for 12 hours until the next tide. This turned out to be the best plan. We were lucky.

We also spent a lot of time trying to figure out

how to bring in a large supply of fresh water. We learned from intelligence sources that the whole area between Inch'on and the Han River received its fresh water supply from Seoul through a single pipeline. The North Koreans could simply turn off the water at Seoul and dry us up. There were no deep wells in the area, and the shallow wells produced only brackish and contaminated water. Accordingly, we spent a lot of time trying to procure tankers to take in fresh water. But the only tankers available in the Pacific Theater were vessels that had transported oil. After three steam cleanings, the tankers were tested and the water was still covered with oil slicks. We knew it would make our troops sick. The dilemma was whether to count on trying to treat brackish water that was highly contaminated with dangerous bacteria or to take in fresh water that contained some oil and would therefore nauseate the troops. As it turned out, the North Koreans did not think to turn off the fresh water and it continued to flow. All our prior planning proved unnecessary; we never needed our tanker-transported water at all.

Another major problem was to assemble enough floating bridging to span the Han River, which in the vicinity of Seoul was a mile wide. It took every piece of floating bridging in the Pacific Theater to span the Han River. Even then, there were three different types of bridges involved. We had to plan on setting up forge shops after the landing to manufacture connectors that

RG 111, SC-349166



Marine amtracs and DUKW carry the 5th Marine Regiment (left) and members of the 7th Infantry Division across the Han River, September 1950

allowed these bridges to link up with one another.

We were faced with still other problems. One was to assemble enough explosives, such as the snakes we had used to clear minefields in World War II, against the eventuality that we had to clear underwater obstacles to reach the beach. Intelligence reports held that the entire area at Inch'on was full of mines and underwater obstacles. Fortunately, these reports were highly exaggerated and we faced an easier problem than we had expected.



RG 111, SC-349039

We also were fortunate that the enemy resistance we expected was grossly overestimated. This made those of us who planned the invasion happy because MacArthur's idea was to have the planners go in on the first wave. In retrospect, this had the desired effect. It caused us to think carefully about the safety of our troops knowing that we would be the first troops to hit the beach.

While we proceeded to plan the Inch'on invasion we assembled our staffs. I was somewhat amused to pick up a lieutenant on my personal staff because I was now an acting brigadier general. I also was assigned a full colonel as my deputy and two other full colonels to command engineer groups. Maj. Gen. Ruffner, then an Army general in Hawaii, was named Chief of Staff, X Corps. Because Ruffner had worked closely with the Marine Corps, it was natural that we would take charge of planning for the landing. He brought with him Col. Tom Forney, a highly capable Marine Corps officer who was an expert on loading ships for amphibious operations. He also knew a great deal about the organization and capabilities of Marine Corps units. This was very useful since I knew little about the Marine Corps.

Another problem we anticipated was the strong current of the Han River, which was in excess of eight feet per second. We doubted that we could make the river crossing in the little plastic boats the Army used for

this purpose. This turned out to be the case. Accordingly, we planned on using the powerful amtracs (amphibious tractor) of the Marines for the river crossing.

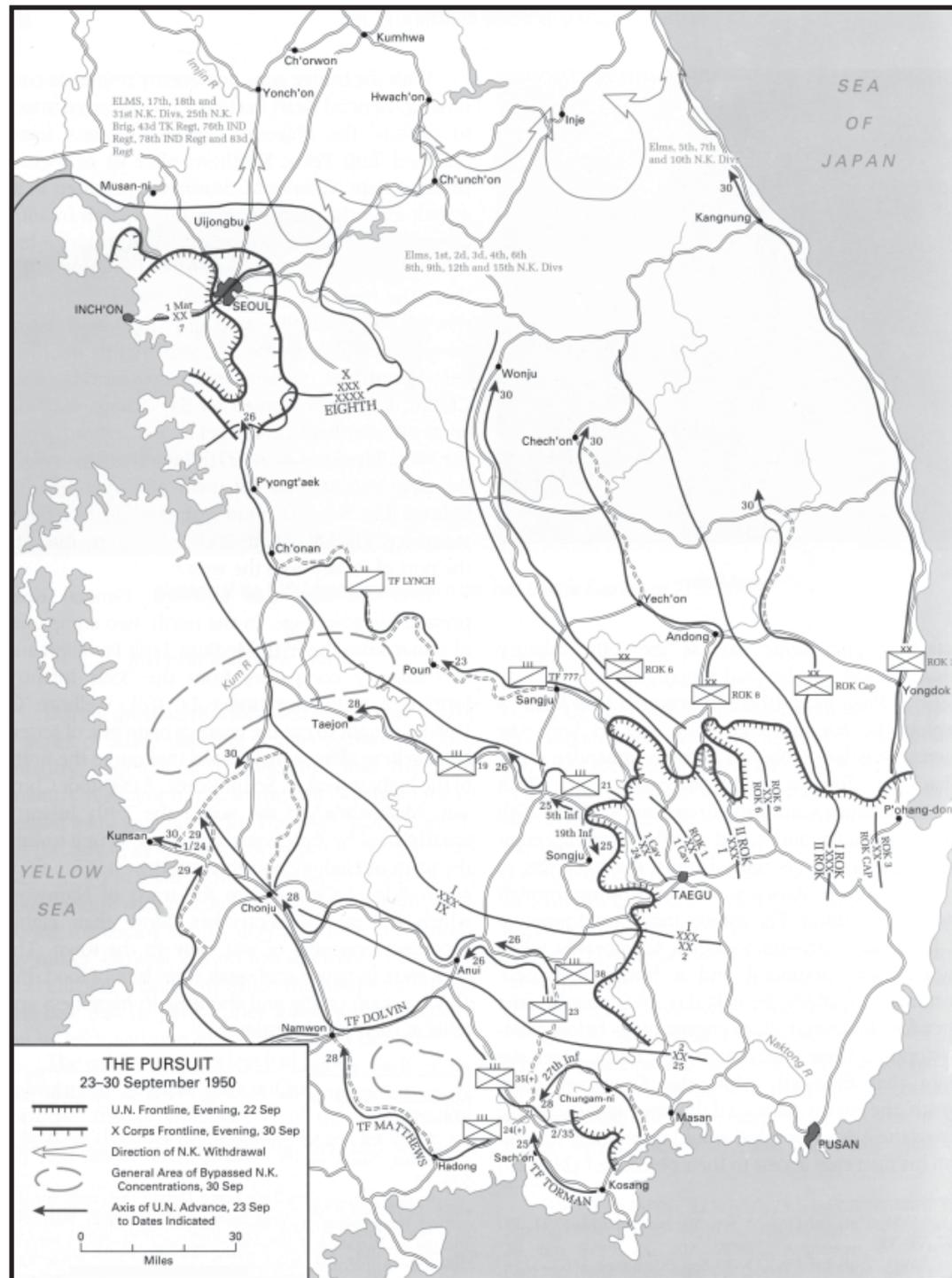
One of the curious and entirely unexpected problems we faced was that the Marines assigned to us had no prior training in river crossings. They knew how to assault a beach, but they complained they didn't know how to make a river crossing. I had to convince them that the two types of operations were closely related. Two or three days after we landed at Inch'on I conducted classes at the Kimpo Airfield for the Marines who were scheduled to make the river crossing. In the end we turned over half of the Marines' amtracs, and a Marine driver for each, to the 7th Division. The 7th Division, which had been trained in river crossings, made the main crossing of the Han River; the Marines made a secondary crossing downstream.

Immediately after landing at Inch'on, a rift occurred that continued to widen between Gen. Almond and Maj. Gen. Oliver Smith, the commander of the 1st Marine Division. Following Marine Corps doctrine, Smith believed it necessary to "tuck up his tail" and get everything in good shape before moving inland from the beach. Almond didn't give a fig for Marine Corps doctrine. He believed that when you've got the enemy on the run, you should continue to push him and not let up. The tension between Almond and Smith was further exacerbated when Almond jumped the chain of command and

dealt directly with Smith's regimental commanders. The Marines had very good regimental commanders who seemed to enjoy dealing directly with Almond. One was Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, a highly decorated Marine who had two Navy Crosses. Another was "Big Foot" Brown, an artilleryman who preferred to be a foot soldier. The third, whose name I don't recall, also was very good. After being shot in the leg, this officer continued to command the regiment while on crutches.

Almond would pop in on the regimental commanders at the front and give them direct instructions, sending information copies of his instructions back to the division commander. This naturally infuriated Gen. Smith.

Remarkably, the invasion itself was carried out smoothly. The diversionary force that landed at the island of Wolmi also came off well. The troops debarked at Inch'on against light resistance and quickly established a beachhead. The next day, a North Korean tank column started down from Seoul toward Inch'on. The Air Force performed magnificently. They swooped down and with several passes knocked out the tanks. Enemy resistance was light. Almond kept pushing the Marines to move rapidly, pushing them to capture the near side of the Han quickly. He told the regimental commanders, "Get going and capture the river bank. Don't let the North Koreans build up a force south of the Han." At the same time Gen. Smith was trying to slow the



Marines down. He felt they should wait until all their supporting artillery and ammunition was ashore. Fortunately, the regimental commanders listened to Almond and not to Smith.

The Marines arrived at the south bank of the Han four or five days after the landing. Once the enemy tank column had been knocked out, there was not much enemy resistance. Gen. Smith continued to try to slow down the Marines. He warned that they would run into stiff resistance when crossing the Han. He said they would need artillery support and lots of ammunition to get to the north bank of the Han.

Almond said, "We'll solve that problem when and if we have to. If we need fire support, we'll use mortars and call on the Air Force. The Air Force has done well, and if the weather holds, we can count on close air support to substitute for artillery."

Smith's philosophy was like Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's "tidying up the battlefield." It was a repeat of the classical problem: Patton's lightning thrust versus Montgomery's rolling masses.

It's curious that in the midst of battle one remembers the more ludicrous incidents. On the third day after the landing, we were on a hill in sight of the Han River. Gen. Almond was talking to Col. Chesty Puller. There were only a handful of North Koreans south of the Han River, and sporadic small arms fire was coming in on the hill. Col. Puller, who you will recall had two

Navy Crosses, was crouched down quite low while Almond was standing up straight.

Almond said, "Chesty, why are you cringing down there?" Puller said, "I'm not cringing; I'm just playing it safe. By unnecessarily standing up, you're drawing fire in on us. I don't know why you feel you have to stand up." Almond said, "Don't worry; we're pretty much out of range. What's coming in are spent bullets." Puller said, "General, I lost a brother to one of those spent bullets." Finally, Almond knelt down. He said, "I want to present you with a Silver Star for your gallantry in action. Now stand up and salute me while we get a photo of me pinning the medal on you."

Puller stood up but snatched the Silver Star medal and stuffed it in his pocket. "Thanks General, that's damn decent of you. You can dispense with reading the citation," he said. "I can read that later." As soon as the photo was taken he pulled Gen. Almond down with him. "Let's be sensible," he said, "and talk over things in a foxhole." Reluctantly, Almond crawled into the foxhole with Puller.

I conducted classes for the Marines at this location on how to make a river crossing. But, by this time, the 7th Division had come ashore. We turned over many of the Marines' amtracs to them for the main crossing.

One regimental combat team went south to block the North Koreans who had been cut off, in the event they would turn around and attack our rear. The rest of the 7th Division was used in the river crossing.

My main problem was assembling the bridging and making sure it would all fit together. Unfortunately, we had lost about one-third of our bridging in a storm several days before the landing at Inch'on. To make up this shortage the Air Force flew in bridging from the U.S. We assembled about a third of the bridge upstream on the near bank and then wheeled it out into the river. We brought additional segments from the rear until the bridge reached the far side. Fortunately, we had brought in a number of 60-inch searchlights so we could work around the clock. One of our officers, a very fine engineer colonel, had developed the 60-inch searchlights for use in World War II. He commanded one of the two engineer groups assigned to me.

The 19th Engineer Group commander [Frank H. Forney, USMA, 1929] was the one who had developed the searchlights. He was killed later up north. The other engineer group commander, Col. Leigh Fairbanks, was from the Class of '37. His unit may have been the 8224th ECG, but I don't recall precisely.

Both colonels were good officers and very fine commanders. This caused me some embarrassment because even though I was acting in the capacity of a brigadier general as corps engineer, I was only a lieutenant colonel. Moreover, I had previously served under Fairbanks. However, we got along fine; he bore me no resentment. The other colonel, the one who was killed, also took the rank problem in good grace.



General Douglas MacArthur crosses the Han River on his way from Kimpo Airfield to Seoul  
RG 111, SC-349331

General MacArthur wanted the bridge in place by 25 September. He wanted to ride into Seoul, with Syngman Rhee sitting beside him, to celebrate the date Syngman Rhee had become President of Korea. MacArthur wanted to show that we had established a solid link between Inch'on and Seoul.

We had a great deal of difficulty meeting MacArthur's timetable. A squall blew up and knocked out part of the bridge some 12 hours before MacArthur was due to cross. Since there were no spare parts we had to straighten out pieces of the bent bridging in the forges we had set up. We made the deadline with less than an hour to spare. MacArthur landed at Kimpo Airfield and rode across the bridge in a jeep. Looking at the bridge one would have thought it had been in place for a long time, not for less than an hour. I recall

I recall writing to my wife that we encountered so many difficulties getting that bridge in place I wished MacArthur really could walk on water.

writing to my wife that we encountered so many difficulties getting that bridge in place I wished MacArthur *really could* walk on water. MacArthur, with Rhee beside him, rode over the bridge without incident.

Seoul was in American hands, but not solidly. The 1st Marine Division crossed the Han west of the city limits and the 7th Division occupied the hills northeast of Seoul. Except for a few pockets of resistance, the enemy had been pretty well cleared out. The small pockets of enemy left behind were not organized and fired mostly in self-defense. The sporadic small arms fire did not interfere with the ceremony that MacArthur and Rhee had later that day.

The engineering troops assigned to me performed extremely well. With a few exceptions, we had first-class leaders and soldiers. One poor lieutenant colonel, seeing his troops killed while working under fire, cracked up under the strain. He couldn't understand why we had to push so fast to construct the bridge.

"Why build the bridge under fire?" he argued. "Why not wait until the infantry has cleaned out the enemy pockets of resistance and then finish building the bridge?" But we were under orders to finish the bridge before noon on 25 September. MacArthur had attached a great deal of importance to the symbolic significance of that date.

Although all units performed well, there was one National Guard battalion from Alabama that did excep-

tionally well. There had been some discussion at headquarters over whether or not a National Guard engineer battalion could hold its own in competition with Regular Army units. But the National Guard battalion assigned to me was absolutely superb. It caused many officers to change their minds about the performance of National Guard units.

The X Corps staff had made prior plans to follow up the capture of Seoul with an amphibious landing on the east coast. However, our movement into Seoul went so quickly that it took several days to regroup and prepare for the next stage. We were not looking at the situation politically but only from a military point of view. While the 38th Parallel came in for a great deal of discussion later on, it did not have much impact on our planning at the time. The basic question to be decided was whether we should introduce more forces through Inch'on and move to the north, or whether it would be better to go around to the other side where the enemy was weaker and move north from there. The decision was to move to the east and then proceed north from there. 🏰



“Mr. President:  
By the grace of a merciful Providence, our  
forces fighting under the standard of the  
greatest hope and inspiration of mankind,  
the United Nations, have liberated this  
ancient capital city of Korea.”

Speech by General Douglas MacArthur, 29 September 1950

South Korea's President Syngman Rhee, (second from left), General Douglas MacArthur, and U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, John Muccio, confer following a ceremony that returned the capital of the Korean Republic to its president RG 111, SC-349340

## First Lieutenant Claude L. Roberts, Jr. 2d Engineer Special Brigade

**L**ieutenant Roberts describes his assignment to the 2d Engineer Special Brigade (ESB) and its preparation for assignment from Washington state to Korea. The 2d ESB landed both the 1st Marine and the 7th Infantry Divisions at Inch'on and operated the port until October 1950. Lieutenant Roberts describes the unit's redeployment for another combat landing on the east coast, and recalls his adventures on the Han River—rescuing stranded personnel and retrieving runaway bridges.

In August 1950 I was assigned to the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (EB & SR), 2d Engineer Special Brigade (ESB) at Fort Worden, Washington. It was a four-day trip from Birmingham to Fort Worden,



First Sgt. Patty Flynn and Lt. Bernie Sevel, E Company, 532 EB & SR  
Roberts Collection

and the first person I met was Lt. Carl Baswell, who was the brigade adjutant. He was my real introduction to the troop side of the Army.

The TO&E strength of the 2d ESB was 8,400 officers and men. We had a little over 1,200. Instead of three regiments, we had part of one consisting of a Headquarters Company, two shore companies, and one boat company. It also had Company A, 562d Engineer Base Maintenance Battalion and the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company.

On 8 July 1950 the 2d ESB was alerted for movement to the Far East Command. Inspections of TO&E equipment were immediately held to determine serviceability of equipment and to determine any shortages. Requisitions were placed through normal supply channels to replace worn-out equipment and to secure all missing items or equipment. Special requirements were developed for an amphibious operation and requisitions were placed through normal supply channels to equip the regiment with essential Class IV items.

Special ordnance teams inspected all weapons to ensure serviceability and repairs were made to all weapons as the need was revealed. Ordnance replaced all ordnance trucks with reconditioned vehicles, except for organic dump trucks, which were not available within the time limits. The 3.5-inch bazookas were procured and issued to the organization by post ordnance. Replacement was made of Company B machine guns and each

line company was supplied with two additional .50-caliber heavy machine guns. Basic loads of ammunition were supplied to the regiment from post ordnance.

Engineer heavy equipment and the engineer sets were inspected by a special team from the Office of the Chief of Engineers and Sharpe General Depot. Equipment declared unserviceable was replaced and shipped to the port of embarkation for shipment to overseas destination on available shipping.

Training had to be done on a staggered schedule to allow for concurrent preparations of the regiment for shipment. This was one handicap that was not easily overcome and resulted in a small percentage of the command missing some training.

Throughout the entire period of preparation, training was conducted to familiarize all enlisted men in the regiment with their basic weapon and the automatic weapons.

The job of “paper loading” the shipping of the entire brigade was delegated to regiment. Company B of the regiment had the peculiar problem of loading their assigned personnel and equipment on some six or seven ships so as to accommodate their boats.

After receipt of permanent change of station (PCS) orders, all personnel records were screened. Enlisted men whose terms of enlistment were about due to expire, those who had requests for discharge under the Career Compensation Act, and those with requests for discharge for



compassionate reasons, were transferred out of the organization. Requisitions were prepared for replacements and fillers for officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men up to and including TO&E authorizations. Prior to embarkation, all officer and warrant officer vacancies were filled, but about 23 percent of the enlisted strength were still short.

On 3 August 1950 the regiment embarked from Fort Worden, Washington, for Camp McGill, Honshu, Japan, on the USNS *Breckinridge*. The regimental CP was closed out at Fort Worden and opened immediately afloat. On 4 August, Lt. Col. E.C. Adams was assigned

Spools of barbed wire, each 80 rods long, at the Yokohama Engineer Depot, Japan  
RG 111, SC-356677

and assumed command. Lt. Col. A.A. Valente, the former commander, was appointed executive officer.

Preparation for shipboard training began: military stevedoring, familiarization firing of .50-caliber machine guns and 20-mm guns, semaphore and visual light signal training, and basic indoctrination of the 3.5-inch bazooka.

We landed in Japan on 14 August and went to Camp McGill near Yokosuka, a U.S. naval base, and started preparing for Korea. I was given the task of taking 40 trucks to the Yokohama Engineer Depot and picking up barbed wire, pierced steel plank, burlap, and other engineer supplies.

#### Amphibious Training for Inch'on

A training program was prepared and used insofar as work commitments would allow: specialist training, primarily communications personnel and heavy equipment operators; officers indoctrination course conducted by the S-3, 2d ESB for officers without previous amphibious experience; training in infantry squad, platoon, and company tactics; swimming instruction and training; boat operation, navigation, and formation runs for all boat crews; stevedore training; and familiarization training with the 3.5-inch rocket launcher.

On 5 September 1950 a general order was published organizing a Provisional Shore Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Valente, and a Provisional Boat

Battalion, commanded by Maj. L.E. Chambers, as units of the 532d EB & SR.

The only available plan of the city of Inch'on was not adequate for our needs and a new map was prepared from aerial photos. This map was of a scale of 1:5,000 and was of sufficient size to allow the locating of tentative unit areas and other valuable data. An adequate supply of other maps of the objective area were received and distributed prior to embarkation.

Based on the tactical plan, the 1st Marine Division Shore Party would provide the initial logistical support for the assault elements, and all shore party operations would revert to Army Shore Party control on order. Zones of responsibility were selected. The 1st Marine Division Shore Party was assigned the operation of *Green* and *Red Beaches*. The Army Shore Party was assigned the operation of *Yellow Beach* and the Tidal Basin, which constituted the inner harbor of Inch'on.

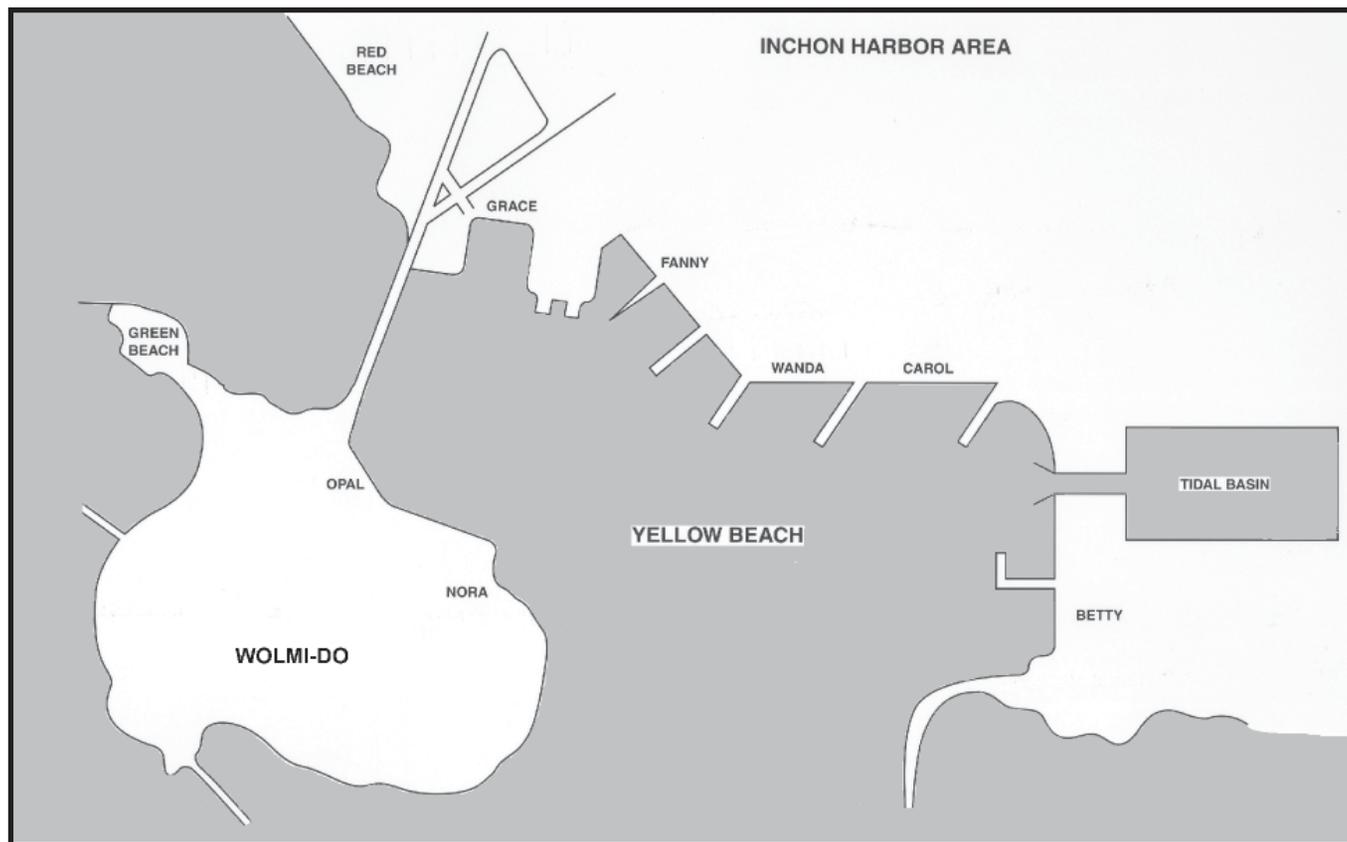
Assignment of areas of responsibility among units of the Provisional Shore Battalion, in order to carry out the mission of control over beach operations and the repair of marine facilities, was initially as follows: Company D—the control and operation of *Fanny* and *Carol Beaches* to include Baker and Charlie Piers; 50th Engineer Port Construction Company—the area from Able Pier to the Tidal Basin, the north side of the Tidal Basin, and the marine facilities repair work; E Company—the remainder of the Tidal Basin and *Betty Beach*.

The Medical Detachment accomplished required immunizations of all personnel through the use of “shot teams” that went to the company areas on prearranged schedules, thereby reducing to a minimum the time lost from training and other activities.

The regimental CP was closed out at Camp McGill on 5 September 1950 and immediately established aboard the Q-075 [an LST].

Upon assignment of the 2d ESB under Brig. Gen. Joseph J. Twitty, to the X Corps task force for the Inch'on operation, regimental planning was conducted concurrently with that of the brigade and higher headquarters. Such action was essential due to the limited time available. The regimental mission as stated in the brigade FO (forward observers) was:

Phase I. Assume responsibility and control of landing areas including *Green Beach* on Wolmi-do and *Red Beach* at Inch'on, extending south along waterfront to include the tidal basin. These areas will be developed to permit the movement of a minimum of 3,000



tons bulk cargo ashore daily to temporary dumps by D+15. In addition to operation of beach, will be responsible for movement of supplies to initial beach dumps operated by brigade service elements. Phase II. Will close beach dumps to receipt on order; will be responsible for the continuing development of beach unloading areas outlined in Phase I to facilitate the movement of a minimum of 3,000 tons bulk cargo across the beach daily by D+15 to D+45.

Landing beaches and tidal basin at Inch'on

## First Lieutenant Claude L. Roberts, Jr. 2d Engineer Special Brigade



Lt. Roberts outside of the BOQ (bachelor officer's quarters) at Wolmi-do, Inch'on  
Roberts Collection

The operation involved unusual physical obstacles to amphibious operation in the form of a 30-foot tidal range coupled with muddy beaches incapable of supporting traffic. Plans to counter this involved discharge of lighters at hard surfaced quay points during high tide, or from craft "dried out" at these points. Initial dispositions were based on the assumption that the tidal basin, which lighters could enter at all tides, would not be available immediately since blocking of the lock channel leading thereto seemed an easy and certain action on the part of the enemy.

### The Landings

All Army units assigned and attached to the regiment moved to the objective area via LST, arriving on D-day, and standing by for landing on D+1. All craft concerned were ordered into *Betty Beach*, adjoining the tidal basin on the morning tide of D+1 after the regimental reconnaissance team that had landed with the Marines on *Red Beach* had reported the lock channel clear and *Betty Beach* usable. This departure from the planned landing over *Red Beach* was to expedite movement to, and exploitation of, the tidal basin.

A slow response on the part of LST operators resulted in certain LSTs not making it in on the tide, and as a result the order of landing was essentially reversed. The 50th Engineer Port Construction Company was landed on the tide without difficulty. Company D's LST grounded short of shore and personnel only were able to land over some 150 yards of footlogs after their crafts had dried out. When it was seen that the LST carrying regimental headquarters, shore battalion headquarters and Company E, was not going to make the tide, command and communication elements of the two headquarters proceeded to the tidal basin via LCVP (landing craft, vehicle personnel) and took charge of operations. The 50th Port Construction Company, despite lack of training and experience in this type of mission, very effectively operated *Betty Beach* and initiated cargo discharge by crane at quay-side in the

tidal basin as cranes became available from their LST. Fifty LCM (landing craft, mechanized) loads of cargo were called for at 1500 and successful discharge proceeded. Company D personnel with a dozer borrowed from the 50th Port proceeded to occupy and operate beaches for the ramp discharge of vehicles from LST and other craft in the area assigned by field order. After a second craft control failure on the next tide, Company E finally beached on D+2 and immediately relieved the 50th Port on *Betty Beach*, and manned additional cargo discharge points in the tidal basin to greatly increase its capacity.

Cargo operations in the basin were concurrently augmented by the advent of cranes, with operators, from the 1st Marine Division Shore Battalion. Civilian labor was assembled rapidly by brigade personnel who landed with the 50th Port Company and was, in fact, used to lay the foot logs on which Company D personnel came ashore. The importance and significance of early and ample availability of civilian personnel cannot be overstressed. It is a safe estimate that in cargo operations in the tidal basin, a crane teamed with two engineer soldiers and all the civilians they could supervise was the equivalent of a shore platoon in typical operations over a surf beach.

Availability and dispositions of attached units, other than the 50th Port Construction Company, varied greatly from the plan as set forth in the field order.

Elements of the 73d ECB, mounted in the first LST to beach on *Opal Beach*, unloaded themselves on the beach on D+2 and pioneered the operation of that beach. The potentialities of that beach as an LST landing had been recognized only after arrival in the area, and at that time it was sorely needed to offset the loss of *Red* and *Green Beaches* due to the passing of the spring tides. This unit, again untrained in such a mission, operated very creditably with the assistance of an experienced shore operations officer provided from the regimental staff. When the 1st Marine Shore Battalion closed *Red* and *Green Beaches* on D+5, after spending only 24 hours under regimental control, they were displaced forward on a river-crossing mission. The same was true of the



Cargo is loaded from a Victory ship to a waiting DUKW in Inch'on harbor  
RG 111, SC-370363

Marine DUKW (amphibious truck) company that had been counted upon for tonnage on the order of 1,000 tons per day. These actions reduced the regiment's potential operating force by virtually half. As partial compensation, the 104th Naval Construction Battalion was placed under regimental control for the operation of *Opal Beach*, thus relieving the 73d ECB for essential engineer work in the area. The latter unit immediately undertook the construction of a DUKW ramp on Wolmi Island and the construction of a 30-foot road along the badly damaged one-way shelf trail to that point. The 73d also repaired MSR damages throughout the town of Inch'on and cleared debris. On D+10 they were displaced forward on a river-crossing mission.

During the initial phase of the operation, all landing craft were under the operational control of the Navy. To alleviate the shortage of Navy boat crews, crews were furnished from Company B of the regiment and operated Navy craft under control of *Navy Beach* Group #1. [The organic boats of the regiment had been left with the rear echelon to be shipped in turn.] Subsequent requirements requested by X Corps for the Han River crossing were met so that by D+11 the regiment had furnished crews for two power utility boats and 12 LCVPs for use by the 1st Marine Division in the river crossing. This operational requirement seriously reduced the number of operational landing craft available for lighterage during the later phase when control of

landing craft passed from the Navy to the regiment.

Anticipating the return of the Marine DUKWs, eight DUKWs from regimental units were placed in pioneer operation at the Wolmi-do DUKW point. They discharged between 200 and 300 tons per day from an ammunition ship, and by this small but persistent operation the entire block-loaded ship was discharged. These facts serve to illustrate the magnitude of the loss of service of the 85 Marine DUKWs.

On D+11, control and operation of the Navy boat unit craft passed to the regiment, and was delegated to the Boat Battalion. On D+13 the duties of the Navy beachmaster unit passed to the regiment. These duties included the beaching and retracting of LSTs, LSMs (landing ships, medium), and LSUs (landing ships, utility) on all beaches; provision of pilotage for ships entering the inner harbor or tidal basin; maintenance of ranges, aids to navigation; and the operation of the communications center at Charlie Pier, the nerve center for all ship-to-shore communications. The additional load posed by these duties severely taxed the regimental resources in personnel. This was especially true for communications personnel, particularly radio operators.

During this period of changeover in boat operations, it became evident that the heavy demand for boat crews for the river-crossing mission seriously cut down the number of LCMs available for lighterage. To prevent any slowing in cargo discharge—plus the fact that con-

tinued work on the lock gates had placed them in operable condition—it was decided to attempt locking in a 5,000-ton Japanese freighter loaded with POL (petroleum/oils/lubricants). This was attempted at high tide on D+10 and was successfully carried out. Subsequently, a total of five such ships were locked in and out of the basin during and up to the time that control passed to the 14th Transportation Port. Operational responsibility for lock control was vested in the regiment and delegated to the shore battalion. By further research and with the aid of an electrical engineer furnished from Headquarters, Far East Command, Engineer Section, electrical control of the locks was restored on D+20, replacing the hand operation, which, although satisfactory, was relatively slow.

With the arrival of 76 Japanese power barges on 2 October 1950, plans were made for their immediate use as lighters. By 6 October, a total of 93 barges were available and in use. The use of these barges required a separate system of control due to language difficulties. This was overcome by the employment of numerous Japanese-speaking Korean interpreters and the use of a fast powerboat for shagging purposes. Radio contact was maintained between the shag boat, the boat control station, and the regimental operations section on Charlie Pier. Through the use of these voice radios, rapid dispatch and control of lighters in the outer harbor and shipside was maintained.



During the crucial period from D+1 to D+20, during which elements of the 1st Marine Division and the entire 7th Division and corps units were landing and rapidly displacing inland, enviable records of tonnage landed were achieved. Basically, this was achieved by leadership and foremanship on the part of every engineer soldier in directing civilian labor. Cranes were key items of equipment ashore, while the availability of ample lighterage was the key feature on the water side, with pre-disposition of ships, platoons, and hatch gangs a very significant factor. Cargo net supply was touch and go—there was never enough. Concurrently, units and vehicles were landed ahead of schedule. Key to this success was the use of LSTs for ferry service from larger ships to shore.

Destroyed by the retreating North Koreans, the Inch'on tidal basin gates were repaired by the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company  
Roberts Collection

I went ashore on 15 September 1950, D-day, for a reconnaissance of the tidal basin. I have never seen a place so battered in all my life. My first night ashore I was kept awake by the firing of the battleship Missouri.

On D+11, the 14th Transportation Port Battalion, consisting of the battalion headquarters and one port company with a superb complement of dock equipment, was ashore and attached to the regiment. The battalion staff was integrated with the shore battalion and regimental staffs, both to provide relief and to afford the port unit staff an opportunity to assume overall operational responsibility against the day when the regiment would be displaced. The 155th Port Company was assigned a major sector in the tidal basin [south side], and its specialized equipment [forklifts, etc.] effectively utilized throughout the basin area. A second port company, the 153d, arrived on D+26. It was used for relief of the 155th in its sector and to provide increased demands for hatch crew supervision.

On D+24, out loading of the 1st Marine Division and certain corps troops was initiated. Out loading of 20,545 tons of bulk supplies was completed in eight days, well ahead of schedule, using facilities on one side and one end of the tidal basin. Tonnage in the lighterage pipeline continued to be discharged in limited quantities despite the “no priority” on discharge. Out loading of vehicles and equipment and personnel in the Company D sector progressed well, using LSTs again for ferrying to APA (attack transport) and AKAs (attack cargo ship). An unfortunate upset in the plan and schedule from the viewpoint of the shore party, and

those concerned with resuming discharge, occurred when all LSTs and most LSUs were combat loaded with their final loads prior to completion of their ferrying mission. This suddenly dropped the mission of out loading some 11,100 vehicles [33 percent of the total initially involved] in the lap of the shore party units and facilities otherwise designed and available for cargo handling. However, the 11,100 vehicles were out loaded, using ramps to LSUs and LCMs and 30-ton floating cranes from dockside to various craft, as available, in eight days. During this period, the regiment was relieved from discharge operations, but continued in charge of out loading.

Immediately upon completion of the out loading of corps vehicles and using the same dock facilities, the regiment initiated the out loading of impedimenta and vehicles of the 2d ESB, including the regiment itself. The process was slow due to the lack of lighterage and the lift rate on the number of ships receiving the material, which was limited. It was, in the final phases, an interesting process of attrition. The regiment loaded everybody who didn't load themselves. Just at dark on 21 October 1950, an LCM operated by port personnel bearing brigade, regimental, and battalion command and staff personnel, the commander and a detachment of Company E, company commander, and a lately relieved group of boat crews from B Company, locked out of the basin and boarded the USNS *Eltinge* in the stream.

The need for mobile-mounted radio communications for control purposes was critical within the regiment. The number of authorized SCR-300 radios, however, was inadequate to support a division landing.

### Impressions Ashore

I went ashore on 15 September 1950, D-day, for a reconnaissance of the tidal basin. I have never seen a place so battered in all my life. My first night ashore I was kept awake by the firing of the battleship *Missouri*. The place we selected to bed down for the night was adjacent to a large tank of molasses that had been punctured by the battleship fire. Molasses was all over the ground and it had become putrefied and smelled horrible.

For an amphibious assault the landing went well. All units were under strength. In the 5th Marine Regiment, the first time many had fired their rifles was off the stern decks of the ships as we went in. The 7th Infantry Division also was at Inch'on. Some do not give them credit for even being there. The 7th Infantry proceeded forward towards Seoul, and we stayed and operated the beach.

Some thought MacArthur was crazy for landing at Inch'on because of the 30-foot differential in tides. The tidal basin, with its lock, had been built to take care of the differential in tides. Unfortunately, the lock was destroyed so we could not bring ships into the basin for unloading. We used Company B's LCMs and



Engineers of the 532d EB & SR transfer 155 mm artillery shells from a DUKW to a waiting railroad car  
RG 111, SC-370368

DUKWs for hauling cargo from ship to shore. We worked there while the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company was rebuilding the lock gates. We worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off. The port operated 24 hours a day. As the 2d ESB, we landed the troops, supplies, and we handled the combat cargo and ammunition. Company B was the Boat Company. We had 20 two and one-half-ton DUKWs. The DUKWs could get the ammo off of the ships, then bring it over to the shore, and take it to the ammunition dump.

Now, the regiment was trained to operate the ship's gear also, but in this case we didn't because the

## First Lieutenant Claude L. Roberts, Jr. 2d Engineer Special Brigade

When we were underway I received a radio communication that a 276-foot treadway bridge had broken loose in the Han and was headed for the Yellow Sea. Our job was to bring it back to Inch'on.

merchant marines were doing that. Well, a lot of us cleaned debris out of the streets, but our primary role there, mostly, was ensuring that the cargo got from the boats up to the depots. And there would be some cargo. The units that had come in that had not taken all of their gear with them when they landed would come down and pick it up, but it was pretty much of a port operation at that time.

I was on a competitive tour and had served my time in Company E. Then I was assigned to Company

B, the boat company. We had 56 LCMs and a DUKW platoon. Well, I guess I was lucky because it was my lot to be the DUKW platoon commander.

One day I was told to take my DUKWs and go up to the Han River. We moved by road to the vicinity of the Han River. There we lightered [moved] parts of the 7th Infantry Division assault forces across the Han River where they could proceed on into Seoul. Then we returned to Inch'on and settled down strictly into the shore party and boat operations. Things became fairly routine. We did get a plane flying over every night—we called him *Bed-Check Charlie*.

The brigade was given a number of specific missions. I was involved in at least two of these. The first was the evacuation of an AA (anti-aircraft artillery) battalion left stranded by floodwaters of the Han River at Seoul, and the second was the salvaging of a bridge that had broken loose in the Han River and floated out to the Yellow Sea.

Capt. Bob Croad assigned the first mission to my platoon and, as it turned out, I ended up with both jobs. For the first mission I took the company "flak" boat and four LCMs. The flak boat was an LCM modified to provide crew quarters. It had a 40-mm gun mounted forward with a twin-fifty on the after deck. Things went well. We departed Inch'on and passed through the Yellow Sea to the mouth of the Han River. Halfway up the Han we anchored for the night.



Engineers raise an LCM sunken in the Han River  
Roberts Collection

When we got up the next morning we were surrounded by dry land. At that point the Han was still affected by tidal action. When the tide came in we moved on. A lesson learned, or so I thought. We reached the Seoul area and moved all of the AA personnel and equipment to dry land. While in this area we had to pass through an area where a steel bridge had been dropped into the river. My flak boat got too close to the fallen bridge and a hole was ripped into the side. Fortunately, we were close to shore. Only the stern of the boat was under water. Capt. Bob Croad, bless him, a former salvage officer in the 85th Engineer Boat Company in the Philippines, raised and repaired the flak boat. Remember the “Lesson Learned”? While we were fixing the flak boat, my other four crews had beached their LCMs and were enjoying the sun. They didn’t realize that this was floodwater, not tidal action. I ended up with four LCMs beached 1,000 feet from water. Bob Croad helped get them back to the water.

With the flak boat repaired and the four LCMs back in the water, my crew headed back down the Han River for Inch’on. When we were underway I received a radio communication that a 276-foot treadway bridge had broken loose in the Han and was headed for the Yellow Sea. Our job was to bring it back to Inch’on. We found the bridge shortly after we passed the mouth of the Han. We lashed it to the four LCMs and beached it on Wolmi-do at Inch’on.



Upon withdrawal from port operations at Inch’on, the 532d EB & SR, along with all other elements of the 2d ESB, embarked on seagoing vessels. Our mission was to proceed to Wonsan to pioneer the operations in that port before landing the 7th Infantry Division there. 🏰

Engineers from the 532d EB & SR rescue a runaway treadway bridge Roberts Collection

**M**ajor Elder describes his combat group's planning for the Inch'on amphibious assault and their road and bridge building and repair in support of the Marines' crossing of the Han River.

When I got out of school [Engineer Officer Advanced Course] I was on orders to an engineer district in Okinawa. While I was at the school, we left our young second son with my parents in Richmond, Virginia. We had taken leave to Florida with our older son. Then the Korean War broke out.

I went back home to check in and was instructed to comply with my orders to report to Camp Stoneman. Dick Hennessey, who had graduated with me, and I went out together on the train to Camp Stoneman, which is just out of San Francisco in Pittsburg, California. There we met up with Wal Holgrete and Willie Neff. After we arrived, we sat there for three or four weeks. The Korean War had really begun. There was total priority for 2d lieutenants of Infantry, Artillery, and Engineers because the casualties were high. Field grade officers were a drag on the market. Eventually, at the end of July, we asked someone to get us the hell out and get us to work someplace. So, we were told to go by train up to Camp McCord, Seattle, Washington. The four of us managed to get a C-54 out of McCord Air Force Base hauling 155-mm ammo to Korea. We'd got orders cut to a replacement unit, so we rode in the back

of a C-54 on top of ammo crates over to Haneda and I reported into Eighth Army Rear, Far East Command, in Tokyo.

### Planning and Execution

The task force for the Inch'on landing was being put together. I was reassigned then from the district engineer office in Okinawa to the S-2 in the 19th Group, which had come over by ship from Fort Campbell. I didn't see the group except to report to the commander. I joined a planning group for the Inch'on landing working in Tokyo. When I joined the planning group, the planning was fairly well along. I took some part in several areas. Our main concern, our main mission, was to represent group headquarters in coordinating the operations once they began. It was not *TASK FORCE ALLEN*; it was *TASK FORCE X-RAY*. It became X Corps when it sailed.

There was a building assigned to *TASK FORCE X-RAY* and some ancillary activities of Far East Command Headquarters. Almond, who was the deputy Far East commander, also was commander of *TASK FORCE X-RAY* and later X Corps. He kept both hats for a while and he ran the planning operation. Ed Rowny was engineer of the X Corps. I've served with him a number of times since and have a very high regard for him. Ed transferred to the infantry, retired as a lieutenant general, and headed the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) talks in Geneva.

I didn't have any impressions of MacArthur. I never saw MacArthur in Japan, although I saw him later in Korea. My impressions would be no more valuable than any other layman's. I guess you have to have the feeling that he was rather remote from the war. You reach that conclusion primarily through the performance of Ridgway, who relieved him, who did it just the other way. Ridgway was a soldier's general on the ground.

One of the things we were concerned about in our planning was the water supply. There was great doubt about whether you could get enough water for the troops. The Marines took ashore a desalinization unit, which I think was experimental. They set it up on the beach. Of course, we later found there was more than enough water. If we had known more about Korea we probably would not have spent our efforts to create a fresh water supply.

Our concerns about insufficient bridging, on the other hand, were well founded. We just didn't have any bridging to speak of apart from an M-4.

The balance of the bridging was allocated to Eighth Army along with the Marines to the south, and they needed it.

We went ashore on D-day, 15 September 1950. The group commander, two enlisted people, and I went to Inch'on with the 1st Marine Division, which made the landing. Until the group headquarters came ashore, we went to the headquarters of the 2d Special Brigade, which had established itself in Inch'on, and stayed with them for a couple of days. Our group commander was Col. Frank Forney,

who was killed in Korea a little later. Almond required Forney or myself to attend all of the Corps headquarters briefings. As soon as we got our units ashore,



Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgway arrives for a conference with South Korean President Syngman Rhee, February 1951  
RG 111, SC-357172

Tidal changes were horrendous and so were the velocities on the outgoing tide. We had put one rail crossing over the river and piled sandbags in the river to make piers. I'll have visions the rest of my life of standing on those piers and watching 80 pound sandbags hit that current and just disappear....

we established our own headquarters and moved up to Yongdungp'o.

We expected more opposition than we encountered in that area. We thought it would be a tough fight, but the operation went much faster when we got ashore. Getting established ashore was more of a Marine problem than it was X Corps. It was X Corps probably overall, but specifically a Marine problem. Since the tides in Korea are horrendous, they'd selected the day of the spring tide for the landing. That was done so that you could get ashore on LSTs and the like. As it turned out, the LSTs beached on D-day couldn't get off for a month because after the spring tide all other tides were less, and we couldn't get them back out of there.

As I recall, the tide range on D-day was 32 feet—something like the Bay of Fundy. There were miles and miles of mud flats when the tide was out. An island called Wolmi lies just offshore connected by a causeway to the mainland. Initially, the assault force landed in landing craft on Wolmi-do, but several LSTs were brought in behind Wolmi-do and beached and that was an initial source of supply. Shipping in peacetime in Inch'on you went into the tidal basin at high tide, loaded and unloaded, and came back out again at high tide. The basin was not usable on D-day. We left Inch'on within two or three days and focused on Seoul.

### Crossing the Han

We supported the Marines on two crossings of the Han—one down at Kimpo. We built a couple of rafts with one of our battalions, did some approach roadwork, and supported a regiment of the 7th Division east of Yongdungp'o. But our bigger mission during that period was to get a bridge across the Han River over which MacArthur and Syngman Rhee could ride for the grand reentry into Seoul. We didn't have enough bridging in the task force to do that. In fact, we didn't have enough bridging to build more than two rafts for the crossing site at Seoul. Almond arranged to have some aluminum balk bridge flown into Kimpo. It was an M-4 bridge, which then was a new bridge none of us had ever seen. We received that as it came in and put it in the water in Seoul as fast as we could to get to the opposite shore. Initially it was a couple of rafts. Then we put the rafts together to start the bridge. We came out of that operation with a depot in Tokyo being depleted and still 200 feet short of the far bank of the river.

This was the same site where the North Koreans tried to build a rail bridge. They were unsuccessful, and so were we in our try to make it a vehicle bridge. Tidal changes were horrendous and so were the velocities on the outgoing tide. We had put one rail crossing over the river and piled sandbags in the river to make piers. I'll have visions the rest of my life of standing

on those piers and watching 80-pound sandbags hit that current and just disappear, going horizontal at a high rate of speed.

We put together railroad rails and tied them up with wire. Those were the stringers. But span links could only be the length of the rail, which I think was 39 feet. So, we were really trying to build a dam. It was a nightmare. We were going to try drive piling in the river and even looked at the possibility of using corrugated U-shaped sheet piling for treadways to get jeeps across to get MacArthur and Syngman Rhee into Seoul. It was kind of a ridiculous thing, but X Corps pressured us to get them across in a vehicle for a triumphal entry.

About that time a linkup was made with the Eighth Army coming up from the south. Eighth Army came forward with some treadway bridge. There was simply no way to take treadway bridging and match it up with what we had. About that time we found a Navy floating ponton causeway sunk on the side of the river at Yongdungpo, which had been machine gunned and fairly badly torn up. We pulled it up and caulked the holes. Then, we put it in the gap of the bridges we had. We took 24 feet of treadway and made an expedient ramp from the M-4 to the causeway section. Finally, we had a bridge across Han River over which you could drive a jeep, but it only lasted three days. The third day a crane operator took a crane across. He hit the causeway section off-center and the whole thing flipped.



We could see the crane in the bottom of the Han River. By that time there had been enough treadway bridge brought up from Eighth Army. We were able to take the M-4 out, and we put a treadway bridge across.

I probably overstated the triumphal entry into Seoul, which we talked about a lot. Certainly, a bridge was needed to keep on going north and to get Seoul cleaned up. The town was still being fought for, and North Koreans were still scattered all over the place. 🏰

Engineers assemble a ponton bridge near Waegwan, Korea, 22 September 1950  
Engineer School, 42-5-86

**C**olonel Pickett recalls how the 73d Engineer Combat Battalion was alerted and transported to Korea in support of the Marines at Inch'on. He then describes clearing snipers in Inch'on and supporting the Marines' crossing of the Han River in their drive on Seoul.

I was up at Pine Valley, Utah, camping and fishing, and each day I would turn on my radio. On 25 June 1950 it said the Korean War had started. Although I still had two weeks left on my leave, I got my wife out of the tent and said, "We're going back to Texas. The war has started, and I know darn well that we'll be one of the first to be called."

We jumped into the car and went back to Fort Hood, Texas. Soon as I got there, they said, "The general wants to see you." I went up to the 2d Armored Division Headquarters. The general called me "Traveling Pickett," because we'd just come back from maneuvers. He said, "Traveling Pickett, your outfit's been alerted to go to Korea. Get them together and go start packing up," which we did. We left by train and went to Camp Stoneman, California. From there we loaded on troop ships and went to Japan. My wife took our daughter, closed the house, and went to Utah.

As soon as we got to Sasebo, Japan, I found out that we were going to be in on the Inch'on landing. We got our equipment together, loaded on LSTs, and took

off. The commander and each of the crewmembers on these LSTs were Japanese. The only requirement was that the captain of the ship had to be able to speak and read English. Each day they gave me about five envelopes, and each day I'd give him one and it'd tell him a different longitude and latitude to go to. These boats were scattered all over the sea of Japan so it wouldn't look like a great, huge, convoy going into one particular place and tip the enemy off. We were under radio silence. The last day, all of these boats ended up just off Inch'on.

The Marines made the initial assault on Wolmi Island, and then, as I recall, we went in on *Red Beach*. They had Marine landing parties there with the signals. In the middle of the night we went in at the highest tide of the year. We immediately started off-loading, getting our stuff together, and began helping support the 1st Marine Division going towards Seoul.

There were snipers in Inch'on. I was told, "We want you to clean all of the snipers out of Inch'on." I got two or three companies together, went to ordnance and picked up 300 sawed-off Winchester Model 12 riot guns—shotguns. They gave us case after case of double-O buckshot ammunition in brass shells. We loaded those things up, spread everybody out about 50 yards apart, and walked through the whole town. We shot into every shack and house and cleaned them out. Then we turned those guns in. That took about a day-and-a-half. I kept one of the guns and used it later to shoot pheas-

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ants, then turned it back in. While we were there, we also set up water points and helped with stockpiling in the depot.

The thing that really saved us on the Inch'on landing was that we had a carrier with us with fighter planes—Corsairs [Marine Corps F4U fighter-bombers]. Apparently there'd been a big concentration of North Korean tanks, Russian T-34 tanks, in the Seoul area. There was only about one real good road going from Seoul to Inch'on. Both sides of the road were covered with rice paddies. Of course, tanks don't go very well in three-foot deep muck in rice paddies. All of these tanks started coming out of Seoul, going like hell for the beachhead at Inch'on. These Corsairs had rockets on them, and they knocked out every damn tank along that road. It was littered with burned-out tanks. The Corsairs really saved us. If those tanks had gotten into the Inch'on area, we'd have really been in trouble.

I remember we were unloading the LSTs and here comes one of these Corsairs, trailing smoke. He ditched it right along side of our boat and it sank immediately. The Navy put a boat over. I said, "Oh, gosh this guy's going to..." and he pops up in a life jacket and they picked him up.

In addition to that, there'd been some ammunition dumps south of Seoul. The Corsairs had hit these ammunition dumps and set them on fire. They did a good job. That made the job a lot easier for us. Of course,



one of our jobs, as soon as we got our equipment off, was to go up with our dozers and start clearing the road. We had to push the burned out tanks, trucks, and anything else off the road into the rice paddies and repair any damage to the road. It was our MSR, of course.

We got up to the south bank of the Han River, and I got a call from the 1st Marine Division. I was supposed to support the 1st Marine Regiment, led by "Chesty" Puller, crossing the Han River. I went up that night and I saw him. He was in a CP just under the levee of

United Nations  
forces fighting in  
the streets of Seoul,  
20 September 1950  
RG 111, SC-351392

the Han River. He said, “How many assault boats do you have?” I think I had 15 or 20, and he had armored amtrac that carries infantry— “alligators.”

He was going to make the initial assault in those. We had these assault boats ready with a crew in each one of them to paddle across. For two nights, before the morning attack across the Han, the battleship *Missouri* came in the Inch'on harbor and fired 200 rounds a night of 16-inch battleship artillery into Seoul. When we got into Seoul it was heavily damaged with these big 16-inch shells. They weigh 2,300 pounds apiece. From the south bank of the Han you'd see this big flash off on the west. You could hear these things coming over. They sounded like a freight train. Seoul was all on fire. They would take two or three blocks at a time with these big shells. So, we got through Seoul, and we just kept going north.

We went with the 1st Marine Division and supported its crossing of the Han River in assault boats. After we got to the other side, we followed them right on into Seoul and things were going well. Of course, the North Koreans were really on the run by then. So, north of Seoul, up around Uijongbu, we were pulled out. We made a motor march with all of our equipment back to Pusan to get on LSTs. We went up the eastern coast and made the landing at Wonsan.

The Wonsan landing occurred about the time we got up to Seoul. As I recall, there was a big attack in the

Pusan perimeter. The North Koreans came streaming up north. It took them about a week or so before they could get themselves out of there.

The communication amongst the North Koreans was bad. As the people came north, they ran into a lot of Koreans that didn't know there'd been an Inch'on landing. Finally the word got around and they started to get back north as fast as they could, mainly, I think, not along the western coast, but along the eastern coast. So, the North Koreans pulled back and we didn't have any trouble getting south toward Pusan with our equipment.

### Engineer Equipment

The LSTs have quite a ramp on them, and we were issued these 20-ton hydraulic-operated front-loading trailers, which weren't worth the powder to blow them to heck. In my operations report I mentioned them practically every Monday. They weren't worth a damn. What we needed was a rear-loading trailer. You had to take your truck tractor out from under the trailer, let it down, and get the dozer off. Then, you were between the two on a narrow road and it was just impossible. Anyway, they had hydraulic brakes on them and the fill plug on this hydraulic operation hung down below the frame. As we went over the ramp it sheared that plug off so it locked all of the wheels right in the unloading gate of the LST. We couldn't move it. So, we went to

the Marines and borrowed a tank. We put it on the front and put the bulldozer on the back, and just pulled the thing out through the doors of the LST. It ripped all of the tires off because the brakes were locked. We just pulled it off to the side and left it. They were a junk piece of equipment and were a handicap everywhere we went.

Most of our equipment was good, except for one other piece of engineer equipment that wasn't worth a damn. I finally got authority to turn it in. It was called a blast-driven earth rod. It had about an inch-and-a-half, like, a drill bit, and it was about eight feet high. On top of that it had a big steel cup about four inches in diameter and about 15 inches high. You would go to ordnance and never be able to find the explosive charges for them. You couldn't use TNT in them. That would just shatter the tube. It was a fast-burning powder cartridge, and it was just like black powder. You'd put this powdered explosive in the tub, set the fuse afire, and get the hell out of there. You'd have this big blast, and it was supposed to drive this rod into the ground instead of having to drill a hole with your air compressor. The only thing it worked in was mud. You could have taken the rod and done it by hand. That was a piece of junk. Every platoon had this great big box with all of these rods. It had a tip on it that came off when you pulled the rod back out. This tip stayed in the ground. You couldn't drop it off



of your equipment list. You had to pay for the thing. We did everything we could to try to use that piece of equipment. Finally I got hold of the Corps engineer and I said, "This is the biggest piece of junk!" He said, "Go turn the darn thing in." It helped getting rid of stuff like that. 🏰

An engineer uses a bulldozer to repair a road damaged by retreating enemy troops  
RG 111, SC-363823

**A**fter graduating from West Point in June 1950, Maurice Roush traveled to Japan and, in September, landed at Inch'on. Prior to his arrival in Korea, the young lieutenant worried that the war was going to be over before he got a chance to fight. Looking back, Roush commented, "That shows you how wrong you can be."

Before leaving the U.S. Military Academy we had been given our options of where we would like to go, and I picked Japan. We graduated 8 June 1950 and on 25 June the North Koreans invaded South Korea. When I reported to Camp Stoneman, California, to go to Japan, it was pretty obvious by then that I actually would be going to Korea.

I got to Japan the latter part of August and joined the 7th Infantry Division, which was then bivouacked at Camp Fuji at the base of Mount Fujiama, Japan. About two weeks subsequent to that we embarked on ships and started north for the Inch'on landing.

I was selected to manage a regimental vehicle assembly station in Yokohama. One third of all the tanks, guns, and trucks in the entire 7th Infantry Division came to this station, parked there, and I dispatched them down to the boats.

I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't sleep for 72 hours. It was one of the worst possible selections they could have made, to take a green, young, 2d

lieutenant who didn't even understand the bumper numbering system and give him the vehicle assembly station. But it worked.

I think a lot of officers—particularly the junior officers—were afraid it would be over before they got a chance to fight. That shows you how wrong you can be. I was concerned about that. There was enough of the trained experienced cadre left over from World War II that we were able to handle the embarkation, the debarcation, and the tremendous logistical operation associated with something like that with relative ease. In retrospect, it was extremely smooth. I don't know how it could have been that smooth. I was impressed.

The NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and older officers really knew their way around. In the 1960s, and later, I took part in some similar operations in which we didn't have that experience pool, and it made a big difference—a *big* difference.

The Inch'on landing was very orderly. I was on a class C-3 ship, a rather large one, troop ship. I was a platoon leader and led a platoon of combat engineers in the 7th Infantry Division. We went over the side of the big ship on cargo nets, down onto the deck of an LST. The LST was run in and beached in the early morning hours and we then proceeded inland on foot. We came in about day two—D+2. D-day was 15 September. We marched inland. I remember that the roads were 12 to 14 inches deep in what I could best describe as talcum

Certainly, during most of my time in Korea, what we did more than anything else was work on roads....I once stood and watched a three-quarter-ton truck disappear right in the middle of a road into the mud. All that was left were some bubbles.

powder. It was the dry time of the year and the trucks and tanks had churned the roads up—just eaten them into nothing but powder. You would step and your foot would go down deep in it. There was dust all over the place—I've never seen dust like that.

Eventually, after about four or five miles, we were able to get off the road, cross rice paddies on dikes, and finally arrive in a bivouac site. It took about three or four days to get the company all back together. My little platoon was attached to an infantry battalion, and it took some time to get back together. Our vehicles and all of our gear married up with us about the second day we were in. We didn't have to live off our packs for very long at all. It was an extremely efficient logistical operation.

The 7th Infantry Division was there to help cut off the North Koreans that were down south on the Naktong perimeter. Of course, the combat engineer battalion in a division supports the infantry, the artillery, and everybody else, and also acts as infantry.

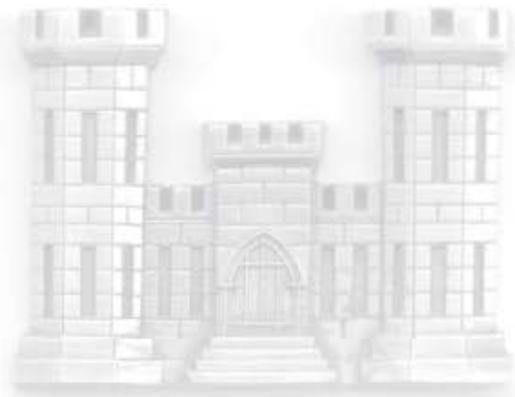
We got into the fighting at Seoul, Korea, and did quite a bit of it. We were shot at and shot at other people. Certainly, during most of my time in Korea, what we did more than anything else was work on roads because that was the critical thing in Korea. They had almost no roads. At times the roads would just completely disappear. I once stood and watched a three-quarter-ton truck disappear right in the middle of a road into the mud. All that was left were some bubbles.



Men of the 31st Infantry Regiment and 13th Engineer Battalion evacuate a wounded soldier using an aerial tramway  
Engineer School,  
148-16-164

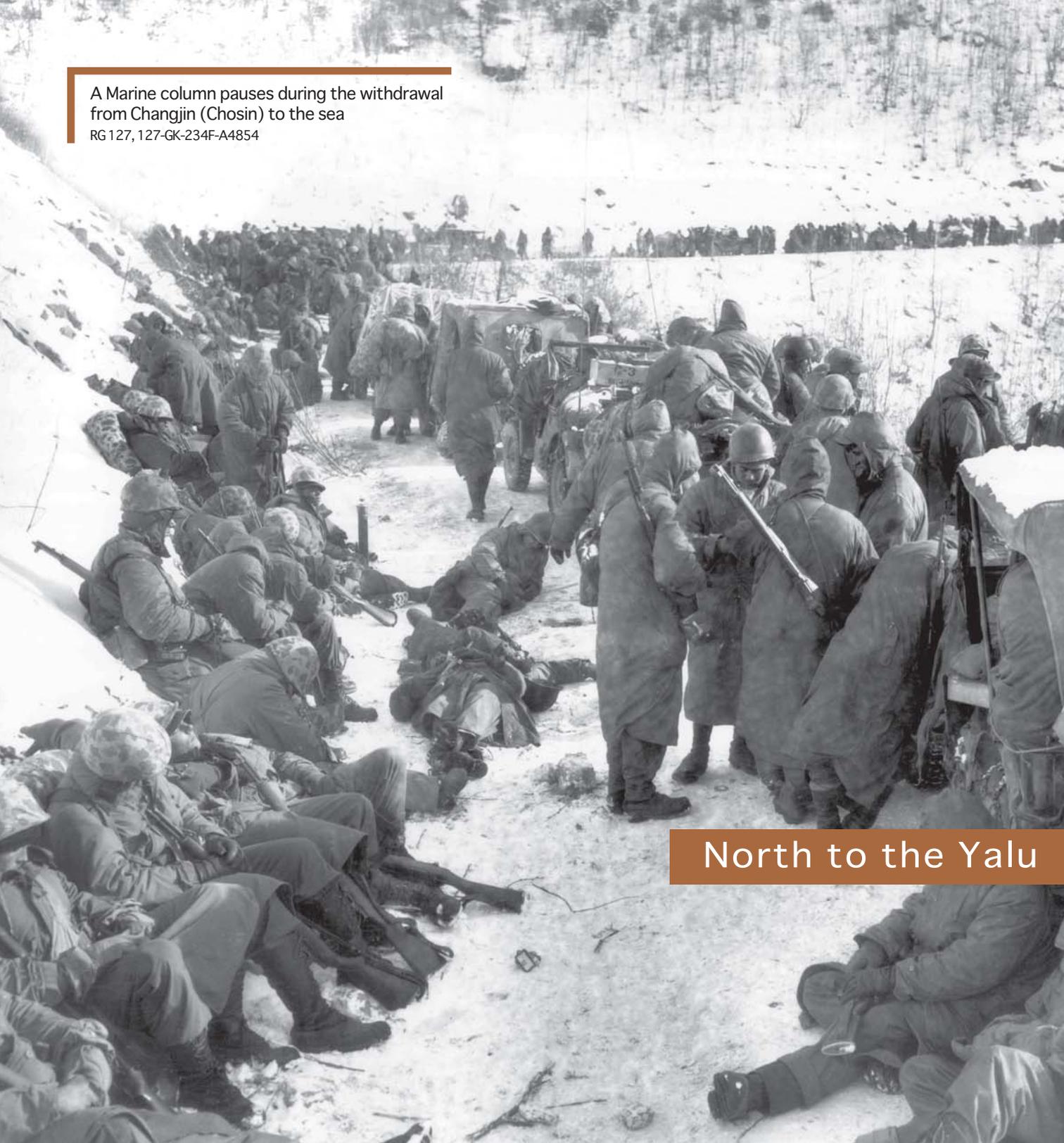
At one time, I worked with nothing but an entrenching tool and a pick right alongside the rest of my men on narrow mountain roads, trying to make them wide enough so a jeep with a trailer could get by. I have built—fabricated out of nothing but scrap—aerial tramways where we couldn't build roads; moving men and materials and bringing back casualties were the most difficult things in Korea, because the roads were almost nonexistent. They couldn't take the heavy stuff we were putting on them.

While I was there we never got to pave any roads. We just put rock on the roads so that the roads wouldn't disappear. We also built a lot of bridges. We built them, Mother Nature washed them out, we built them again. 🏰



A Marine column pauses during the withdrawal  
from Changjin (Chosin) to the sea  
RG 127, 127-GK-234F-A4854

## Chapter 3



North to the Yalu

September - December 1950

# North to the Yalu

Engineers of the 2d Infantry Division construct a bypass to enable heavy equipment to cross the Hwang-gang River, 25 September 1950  
Engineer School, 41-0-09



# Introduction

**D**uring the first half of September 1950, enemy forces threatening the Pusan Perimeter suffered heavy losses. Later interrogations revealed that North Korean morale had collapsed. Their supply lines for replacements and materiel had been stretched to the breaking point and were under constant UN air attack. Meanwhile, UN strength within the perimeter continued to build. By mid-September, approximately 140,000 U.S. Eighth Army [I Corps, 1st Cavalry Division, and 2d, 24th, and 25th Infantry Divisions], British, and ROK forces were facing perhaps 70,000 demoralized North Koreans.

On 15 September, X Corps landed at Inch'on, near Seoul. The closely timed [16-22 September] Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perimeter found the 2d ECB laboring to construct floating bridges over the Naktong for the march northward. Fighting to break the enemy cordon was surprisingly sharp. The Inch'on landing threatened to cut the North Koreans off from the rear, and Eighth Army's breakout was coordinated to have maximum psychological impact. The news from Inch'on did not have the desired effect immediately because enemy communications were so disrupted. By 23 September, however, the North Korean retreat became a rout.

The UN forces, more road-bound than the retreating enemy, still moved rapidly northward. The ROK I Corps moved up the east coast toward the 38th Parallel. The ROK II Corps advanced north through central Korea, while the U.S. I and IX Corps advanced across the peninsula from east to west, overwhelming rear guard elements. In their panic to escape northward, North Koreans abandoned arms and equipment. Tanks and artillery littered the highways as the enemy south of the 38th Parallel ceased to exist as an organized army. Army engineers bridged the Kum River, where the bridges had been destroyed just two months earlier by the 3d ECB during the earlier retreat south. Eighth Army recaptured Seoul by the end of September 1950.

The policy issue now arose of whether or not to pursue North Korean forces across the 38th Parallel. Syngman Rhee announced on 19 September that, with or without UN help, he would continue north. On 27 September, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff sent MacArthur a directive outlining his advance across the dividing line with the objective of unifying all of Korea under President Rhee. At the UN, India opposed crossing the 38th Parallel fearing that China and the Soviet Union might

enter the war. The United States contended that the North Korean war potential had to be eliminated. Most of the UN delegates felt that MacArthur had sufficient authority under the 27 June 1950 Security Council Resolution to go north. On 7 October the General Assembly of the UN approved the crossing of the 38th Parallel by MacArthur.

The South Koreans had already crossed the line when the UN advance began in October. The UN rate of advance averaged 10 miles a day. On 19 October the 1st Cavalry Division and ROK 1st Infantry Division entered P'yongyang, the North Korean capital. The X Corps made a second amphibious landing at Wonson on the east coast, and the U.S. 7th Division landed at Iwon, 178 miles farther north. Because of the mountains that split Korea from north to south, two distinct major commands conducted the operation: Gen. Walker's Eighth Army in the west, and Gen. Almond's X Corps in the east.

UN morale was high. MacArthur hoped that the swift advances of the two forces would restore peace to all of Korea before winter. In reality, because of political and strategic considerations beyond the scope of this volume, the war was about to enter a terrible new phase. On 26 October, ROK 7th Regiment troops had reached the Yalu River, firing on North Korean soldiers fleeing across the river into Manchuria. The day before, however, soldiers of the 2d Regiment, ROK 6th Division,

had been ambushed by a significant Chinese force, perhaps 30 miles inside Korean territory. In fact, largely undetected by UN intelligence, four Chinese armies, each with three divisions—some 130,000 men—were positioning themselves for a massive intervention. MacArthur's intelligence officers were inclined to minimize the threat. Chinese leaders were reluctant to enter the Korean Conflict, yet they grew more apprehensive as UN forces closed on China's national frontier. Moreover, despite Chinese reticence, recent evidence demonstrates how strongly Joseph Stalin urged the Chinese leadership to intervene, promising crucial aid from the Soviet Union.

By 1 November, intelligence identified elements of one Chinese division south of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. Within 10 days, units of 11 more Chinese divisions appeared in the forward area. Little action occurred during the first weeks of November, and the Eighth Army and X Corps advanced slowly, while temperatures dipped below freezing.

The conflict entered a new phase during the fourth week of November. Elements of the 7th Division occupied the town of Hyesanjin across the Yalu River from Manchuria. ROK troops had reached the Chinese border at Ch'osan nearly a month earlier, but had been forced back. In late November, MacArthur announced a new major offensive to end the war. At first, the offensive met no serious enemy opposition.

On 25 November 1950 hostile troops struck back hard. The ROK II Corps on the right flank of Eighth Army disintegrated. Only two days later a second enemy force hit the U.S. X Corps. Two Chinese communist field armies became part of the action and quickly snatched the initiative from the UN Command. In human waves, the Chinese swarmed over the forward units of the Eighth Army. The fighting was hand-to-hand all along the Ch'ongch'on River. The Eighth Army rapidly moved south while at the same time fighting delaying actions. It abandoned the city of P'yongyang on 5 December. By the middle of December, the Eighth Army had withdrawn below the 38th Parallel and formed a defensive perimeter north and east of Seoul.

During the attack north and the return south, September-December 1950, engineers maintained the roads and provided important bridge building and repair support for the infantry.

When the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter occurred, Col. Hyzer's 3d ECB supported the 24th Infantry Division's crossing of the Naktong by providing assault boats for the troop crossing. At Waegwan, the 11th ECB built a treadway bridge and the 3d put in the approaches to it. The 3d continued providing engineer backing of the division up to the Yalu, assisting a British brigade along the way by building and repairing bridges where needed. When the Chinese crossed the Yalu, the 3d moved south of the Han River keeping the

MSR open along the way so that the troops could be supported logistically.

The 19th ECG generally supported as infantry during the move south from the Yalu in November and December until the 1st Cavalry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 5th RCT, could attack north. The engineers then reverted back to roadwork: maintenance of roads and, in a number of instances, cutting new roads and putting in bypasses. As the group moved south it destroyed bridges and roads. On 4 January 1951 they dismantled the last M-2 floating bridge in the retreat from Seoul. Maj. Elder took over the group when Col. Forney was ambushed on a road and killed.

First Lt. James Johnson describes his intense participation in infantry operations in North Korea as commanding officer of Company B, 5th RCT, and his subsequent assignment to the 3d ECB, 24th Infantry Division.

Col. Emerson Itschner, I Corps Engineer, notes that some engineer work by I Corps units included floating bridge work for roads and railroads on the way north and some airfield work for small planes. On the way back south some 20 different military targets were demolished in P'yongyang.

Capt. Walter S. Medding recalls the rapid advance of the 14th ECB north from the Pusan perimeter after the Inch'on invasion, the Chinese intervention, and the

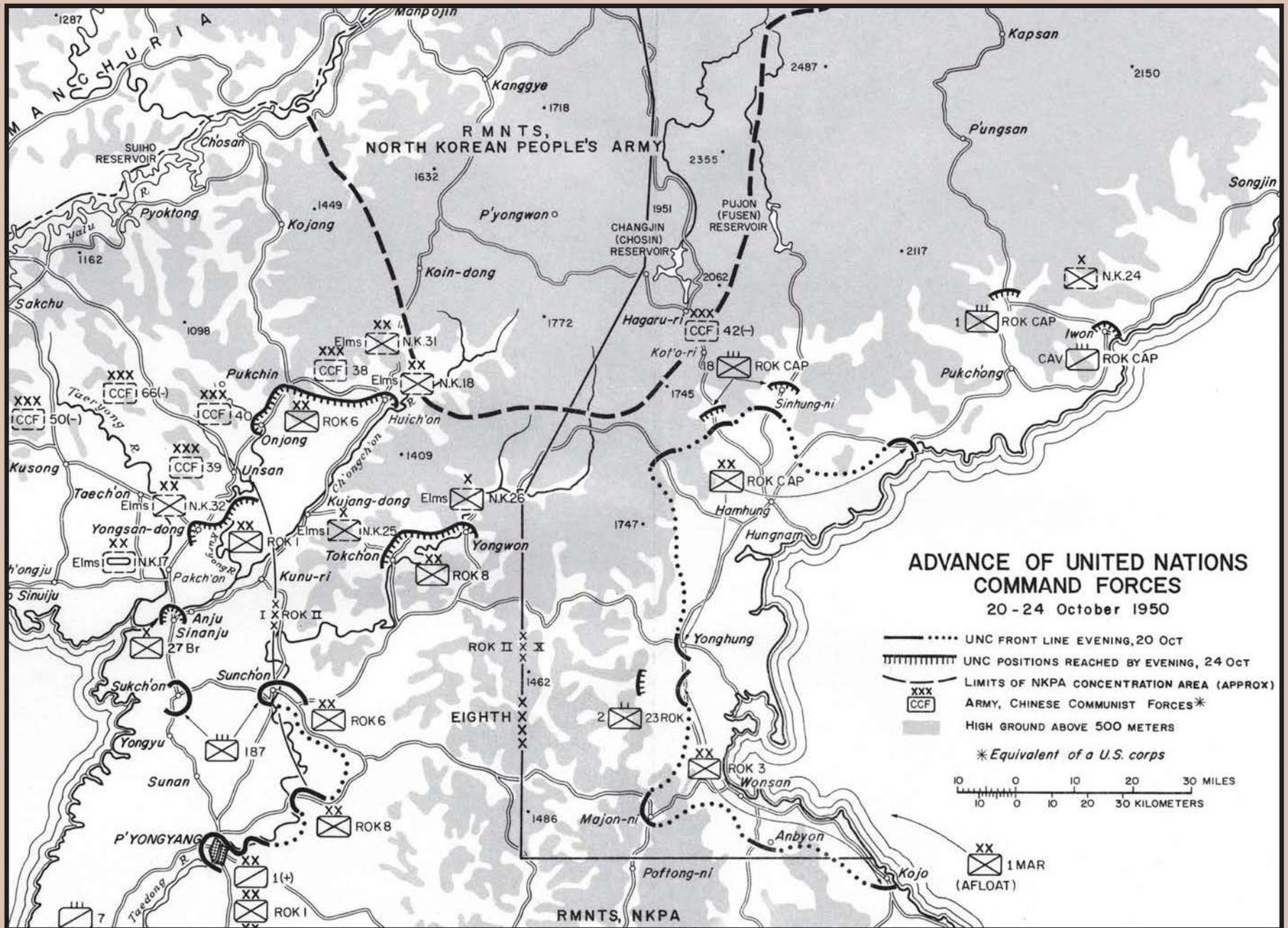
fall back to below Seoul, destroying anything of use as they went.

Col. Miles M. Dawson was assigned to the Yokohama Engineer Depot, Sagami, Japan, 1950-53. The depot collected material from all over the Far East, consolidating and repairing equipment for Korea, especially Bailey bridges and cranes. Besides rehabilitation and collection of material for engineers in Korea, he purchased large quantities of lumber from the Philippines and shipped it by the boatload to Korea for bridge-building projects.

Capt. Lawrence B. Farnum discusses the common practice of using engineers as infantry, noting that the engineers, although well prepared as infantry, were always ill equipped for that mission. He describes the Chinese entry into the war and the circumstances leading to the attack on the 2d ECB and the subsequent loss of much of the battalion. He then recounts his walk through the hills, leading about 150 troops under safety of darkness to American lines about 40 or 50 miles away. Farnum recounts the rebuilding of the battalion under his direction as battalion commander for 10 days, and the arrival of the new commander, Maj. Edmund H. Leavey.

Second Lt. James L. Trayers describes his engineer experiences on the drive north from the Pusan Perimeter in South Korea to Unsan, North Korea, building and blowing bridges along the way.

Capt. Delbert M. Fowler describes his assignment to IX Corps and the trip to Korea. He was then assigned to the supply section in the Office of the Engineer, IX Corps, and subsequently assigned as officer in charge of map distribution in IX Corps. 🏰



**C**olonel Hyzer describes the actions of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB) in the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, the crossing of the Naktong River, and the dash northward. Once Chinese forces entered the conflict in November 1950, Colonel Hyzer found himself moving south again.

We had a crossing of the Naktong River in September 1950. Our division [24th Infantry Division] was given a sector down south of Waegwan, somewhere down in the Taegu area. We got very short notice of the planned Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perim-

Soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division cross the Kumho River using a ferry and underwater bridge, 18 September 1950  
RG 111, SC-348667



eter. We had one or two trailer loads of assault boats sent by Eighth Army.

We went around to the infantry regiments with teams to teach them how to run an assault boat. We taught them how you crossed the river in an assault boat, which I don't think most of these people knew much about, probably including our engineers, although we knew a little bit about it because it was our business.

We had to build a ford across a river [a tributary of the Naktong River, the Kumho, arching around Taegu]. This was a submerged ford. It was a mess [21st Infantry discovered (18 Sep 50) that I Corps engineers had not bridged the Kumho as planned. Third ECB engineers were called upon to sandbag the underwater bridge that the 5th RCT had already used so that large vehicles could cross]. We bypassed the tanks, and they could rate about four feet of water, so they would go around. The thing wouldn't carry jeeps. You had to tow jeeps across. We got a ferry operating a little later.

Culvert pipes underneath this thing were built up with rice bags—sandbags, but they were made out of rice straw instead of burlap. We formed a dam there, and the river was about three-feet deep. Most of the vehicles, except jeeps, could forge through it. Every now and then one would get stuck and you'd have to pull it out with winches.

That was the MSR for the division to go into this attack across the Naktong River. Now, can you imagine

a worse mess-up logistically than that—trying to move a whole division into position to attack across a river on an assault crossing where the river crossing was very badly opposed? The North Koreans were all over there, ready for us.

The attack was supposed to take place at dusk, but we didn't even have any assault boats by dusk. The troops weren't there—they kept moving all night. Finally, sometime during the night, we got the assault boats and put them up into place. This was a little north of the area that we had defended, so I wasn't too well acquainted with the area. Somehow we managed to get the boats up there and take off in the assault across the river. The report was that we were losing a lot of our Koreans. They were in Company C, which was supporting the 19th or 21st Infantry. We were crossing one of these Korean regiments. What happened was these Koreans didn't know much English, but they knew they were in Company C. It so happens we were crossing the first battalion of this regiment, including Company C. The infantry platoon leaders would jump out of these boats and say, "Okay, Company C, let's go." All these Koreans would grab their rifles and away they'd go. They were deserting our ranks. All they knew was, "Let's go Company C," so away they went. We lost quite a few of them that day. We got most of them back, or replacements for them.

I got a Purple Heart, but I got it strictly by fluke. I had been down at the beach with this crossing—lots of

artillery, lots of small-arms firing. I'd gone back to the rear because they said I was wanted on the telephone. So, I went back along a road, back behind some trees. The regimental commander wanted to see me down at division headquarters right away. They had another problem that they wanted taken care of. My exec was up at this crossing and the 19th Infantry was going to cross later that evening down below.

Anyway, I was walking down this road and all of a sudden, whammo, right in the ankle, this thing hit me. I looked down and blood was coming out of my ankle. This damn bullet was down in there. It was a spent bullet. I picked up the bullet, put it in my pocket, and went back to my division CP. The doctor put some iodine and a band-aid on it. About a month later the division commander pinned a Purple Heart on me. All the guys who had been through all this hell, and some of them were really badly wounded, and here I got a Purple Heart for a spent bullet. I had that bullet for years afterwards. I always carried it in my pocket until I finally lost it.

We got the division across under considerable opposition. We were moved up to Waegwan and a corps battalion put in a treadway bridge up there [the 11th ECB, starting on 20 September 1950, worked for 36 hours straight and completed the bridge with the aid of the 55th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company]. Fortunately, we didn't have to build that bridge. The 11th had an awful time with it. They didn't have the right

Our problem was that the engineers were being stretched out over hundreds of miles of road, trying to get the division forward, and trying to keep getting the supplies to them. There were no roads....

parts for it. The bridge was an old rusty one with all its parts bent and everything.

We were charged with building the approaches to it, which we did. I didn't like the approaches. One of the problems they had with building the bridge was that the approaches were much too steep. They were in too much of a hurry to get down, and they were not thorough enough in doing the groundwork.

We eventually got across and, from then on, we took off like a bat out of hell, right up north, following the North Koreans. We didn't really have very much opposition. Our problem was that the engineers were being stretched out over hundreds of miles of road, trying to get the division forward, and trying to keep getting the supplies to them. There were no roads—and what roads there were, particularly down where we were, had been destroyed when we pulled back.

The Koreans had never bothered to repair most of them. We had blown all the bridges. Fortunately, in many areas, it was dry season so we could build by-passes around them by going down through the riverbeds and back up the other side. We were just leap-frogging constantly. We went up through Seoul. Things were moving so fast. We were at Uijongbu, just north of Seoul, for several days on the way north, then we took off again up toward the Imjin and through P'yongyang.

I remember going through the river at P'yongyang but I didn't stay there very long. I went up to Anju and

Sinanju along the Ch'ongch'on River. We got some resistance there when we were busy crossing it.

We also were supporting the British [27th Infantry Brigade]. By that time I had some tank dozers. My tank dozer platoon commander was a very energetic guy. The men really leaned on those tanks. They were in action all the time doing demolition work, or helping the infantry up in the front line. The British got hold of that tank dozer platoon of mine and they didn't want to let go of it. They wanted to hang onto that outfit because it really helped them in combat and helped them get through.

We kept right on up, and we were headed up on a split road to the Yalu River. One went up to Sinuiju on the Yalu, and the other went up through Kusong from Chongju, which is right close to the Yalu. There was one company on each road supporting the infantry that were up those roads.

### Makeshift Bridge and Culverts

In the meantime, I learned to use some of my engineering education. This was the first time I really got to use it very technically. The Taeryong River went through Pakch'on. We found some Japanese trusses there, and I said, "Let's build a bridge out of that stuff across this river." The tanks could ford across and we managed to get some Brockway trucks across. I took those trusses and measured them. I didn't know how strong the steel

was because it was Japanese steel. I got an old field manual and my slide rule out. I designed that bridge by myself because I couldn't find anybody else at battalion headquarters who knew how to do the structure work. I had just been to MIT a year or so before. Designing bridges was one of the courses we had. So, I designed that



Using 55-gallon drums as culverts, the 378th Engineers construct a bridge over the Pukhan River RG 111, SC-364793

bridge and we put it together. We built several trusses and we also built a causeway.

We welded together 55-gallon drums and made culverts. We rolled up sandbags and got lots of sand and gravel. We confined the river to that small span and put those trusses across. That bridge eventually carried all the tanks and trucks for the division. It was one of those little things that you come up with. The span was probably 50/60 feet. We named it the Wirt Bridge—the Captain Wirt Bridge—in honor of Captain Wirt, Company C, who'd been killed at Taejon. Company C built it and we named the bridge after him.

We got up to where the infantry could see the Yalu River. I was up the road quite a ways with my CP down

in a farmer's barnyard. We had the "old farmer" on the old farm with his funny hat and long moustache, about 15 miles south of the Yalu.

All of a sudden I got a radio message to get our outfit back in a hurry. We went back to Pakch'on where we built that bridge. The division CP was back there and I reported to Maj. Gen.

John H. Church. I think Gen. Church was still the area commander then. Later on, Lt. Gen. Blackshear Morrison Bryan came in—Blackshear Bryan who had been at West Point when I was a cadet and later was superintendent at West Point. He was a very fine guy and we got along great.

Well, the Chinese had crossed the Yalu and were outfighting us. The defense perimeter was from Pakch'on to just north of the Ch'ongch'on River, and we went back and forth there for a while.

In the meantime, we were getting these flimsy editions of *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines about the awful situation in Korea—how the Chinese were going to drive us into the sea. Well, we were up just 50 miles

from the Yalu River and we didn't think things were quite that bad. But the Marines in the meantime had taken a real rough shellacking over in Hungnam and the Changjin (Chosin). The units to our right, the Koreans and the 2d Division, were having a real rough time. Finally, the Chinese outflanked us and we had to pull back. This was nearly Thanksgiving and we were up north of Anju. Oh boy, it was cold.

I used to get mad because I had all those friends back at P'yongyang at Eighth Army headquarters, and they all had parkas, overcoats, and mittens. We didn't have a damn thing up there! Hell, we were just shivering in the foxholes, wrapping blankets around us, and sleeping bags, trying to keep warm. It was terrible. That was even worse than the Tennessee maneuver area. But we were being told that we were going to be the first outfit out of Korea and would be home by Christmas, so, not to worry about the winter clothes. We figured we could put up with a little cold weather.

When the Chinese attacked, things were very hectic. I remember the division was supposed to withdraw down a certain road. I jumped in an airplane to reconnoiter that road, to see whether it had bridges and whether it was passable—to get an idea from the air at least. This was an area we had bypassed going north. As our airplane would fly over, the North Koreans would be shooting at us. They would shoot holes in the wings, but fortunately they never hit us, except for the wings.

They had tank traps all the way down that road—minefields, barbed wire, everything you could imagine. I went back to division headquarters, wherever it was, and told them the division wasn't going to withdraw on that road. Now, it could fight down that road, but the mainland Chinese were coming around the flank very rapidly. The division was forced to come down on the main road that we had then, which was down through P'yongyang.

### Saved by a Compass

I had just gotten a new compass in my jeep and I had trouble with it. It was a tank compass, a very fancy one. It had all these little metal rods that you put in and take out to adjust it. Well, I had gotten it adjusted all right, but I still had problems with it. The whole battalion was on the road pulling back. We came to this little town and the bridge was out, so we bypassed there. When we had come north a month or so earlier, MPs (military police) told us which way to go and there were signs. We were heading out into the countryside. I had two or three companies, and I was back in the middle of the column somewhere. Of course the roads were narrow. You couldn't pass very well. I looked at my compass, which had a luminous dial. It was turned northeast. We were supposed to be going southwest. "This damn compass has gone haywire again. This damn thing—I shouldn't even bother with it!"

We didn't dare turn over a prisoner to the Koreans because they would just torture him to death. This was standard practice. You figure if you got captured the same thing was going to happen to you.

There was a little light with a CP sign down around the side of the road. I asked a sentry out there, "What outfit is this?" He said, "This is the forward CP of the 1st Battalion" or something-or-another. "I don't know where your convoy is going but the Chinese are a mile down that road you're on." Well, I got on the radio right quick to the company commanders and said, "Stop, turn around." How we got turned around among those rice paddies I don't know. We got the whole battalion turned around and we went back into this town. I found out that somebody had removed the signs. We got back on our road, but that compass sure saved our necks in that particular situation.

I spent Christmas down on the Han River, but the divisions kept bouncing back and forth. The one time they sent the whole battalion back to the rear, except for one company. We were preparing fortifications for them below the Han. We spent a week or so there, working on the road net into this very hilly area. We were building roads so the infantry could get in and get supplies. We were putting up barbed wire and minefields while the rest of the division was up north. This was their fallback position.

Company C was bivouacked back in this fairly secure area. Right next to them was a Turkish battalion, which had gotten pretty badly mauled up north. The Turks were real fighters, but they'd gotten hurt and lost a lot of men. They were pretty tough. Fortunately, most

of the troops were out working. One day the Turks decided to have a little maneuver so they attacked right through the middle of the Company C bivouac area using live ammunition. Scared the hell out of the whole Company C. Of course, the fact that they'd kill a couple of guys didn't really matter to them. The Koreans were the same way. I found this out early in the war.



Aside from marking the forward edge of UN lines, the sign warned drivers they were under enemy observation  
RG 111, SC-416204

I used to get mad because I had all those friends back at P'yongyang at Eighth Army headquarters, and they all had parkas, overcoats, and mittens. We didn't have a damn thing up there! Hell, we were just shivering in the foxholes, wrapping blankets around us, and sleeping bags, trying to keep warm.

We didn't dare turn over a prisoner to the Koreans because they would just torture him to death. This was standard practice. You figure if you got captured the same thing was going to happen to you.

We were up north in Anju and Sinanju. I had my tank dozer platoon supporting the British on the attack up toward the Yalu River. The rest of my battalion was stretched for a hundred miles back towards Seoul. We went back past P'yongyang. The corps' group, combat group [Col. Frank H. Forney, USMA 1929], came up here and finally we had some corps here. He was up here trying to support a division in combat with his corps troops. I was trying to keep division supply roads open so we could get our ammunition and food up to the troops.

Our assistant division commander at that time was Lt. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson, USMA 1927. He had been an engineer officer, but he was one of these guys who had transferred to the infantry—awfully smart guy. He went back to the corps commander and told him it was time to stop their foolishness and get the corps troops out of our division area and let us do our job. So, finally they did. Later, this group commander was killed in his jeep up in this same area in a Chinese attack. He got off the road a little too far and got killed by sniper fire soon after this incident.

The corps engineer wanted me to take over that group. I said, "Uh-uh. I got more troops than you do

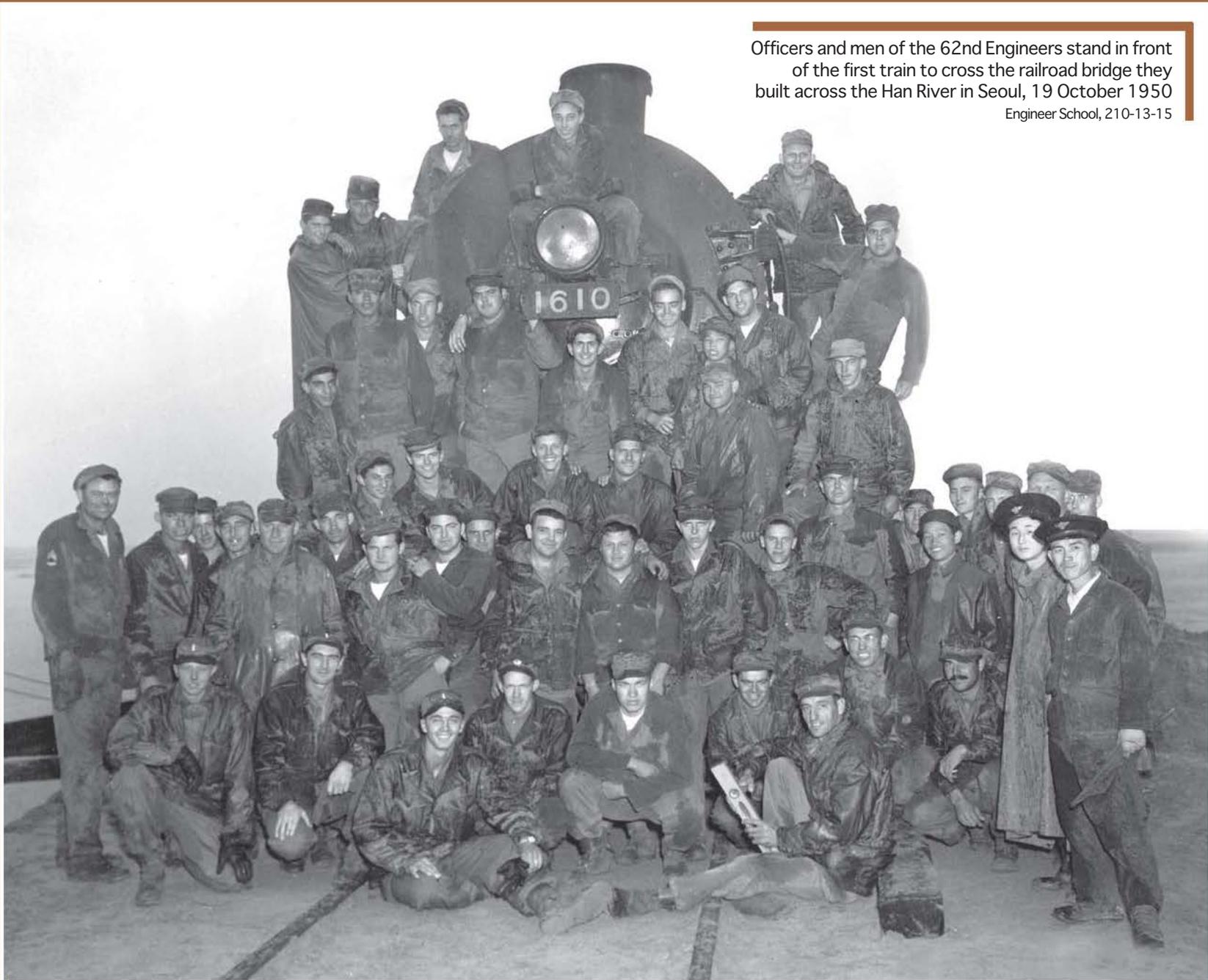
with my Koreans, and I got a better job than you do, and I'm going to stay right there." I never got my group and I'm glad I didn't. We went back and forth down in this area around Seoul, mostly building roads.

We'd use any kind of expedient we could get. Several of the outfits that had tank dozers dropped their dozer blades by the side of the road so they could fight as tanks. If we needed more tank dozers we went back and picked up the blades. We would find a beat-up tank somewhere and put the blade on and use it. I used to send patrols out on our front lines because they might have a transmission, or a truck, that they needed. They couldn't get it any other way.

We had weapons that weren't authorized for engineers. We had recoilless rifles, ammunition, and material that we'd scrounged here and there from the infantry. I had a superb supply outfit. At this time in the war, Dan Harvey, a regular officer and a very fine guy, was my supply officer. But it was very frustrating. You'd send a convoy of trucks back to the rear to get some squared lumber to build a bridge or something that was very important to the division and corps MSR. They'd spend several days going around to various supply points and come back empty, so we'd fell a bunch of trees and make logs. It was a lot more work, and you got a much worse product. 🏰

Officers and men of the 62nd Engineers stand in front of the first train to cross the railroad bridge they built across the Han River in Seoul, 19 October 1950

Engineer School, 210-13-15



**D**espite Major Elder's warnings that the Chinese were massing troops south of the Yalu River, China's entry into the war caught UN forces by surprise. The engineer officer eloquently describes the shock and confusion of the Chinese onslaught. "The shepherd's horns, bugles, and these great masses of dark figures...in the night appeared around you, behind you. You were scared and didn't think you could kill them. They [the UN forces] really believed they [the Chinese] were supernatural."

After Seoul had been secured and Eighth Army had linked up with X Corps, Eighth Army continued the attack north on the west coast. Almond's X Corps withdrew, went around, and made landings on the east coast of Korea. We remained with I Corps going north. The advance from Seoul into North Korea was quite fast. We went through P'yongyang to Sinanju and Anju on the Ch'ongch'on River.

At that point, the 24th Infantry Division north of the river was counterattacked by what later turned out to be Chinese forces. Two of the regiments were fairly badly mauled and withdrew back across the river. Brig. Gen. Frank A. Allen, Jr., was assistant division commander of the 1st Cavalry Division. Two of its regiments were north in the attack. He was put in charge of the task force to secure the river line. *TASK FORCE ALLEN* was composed of Gen. Allen, who was the task force

commander, using our group headquarters; the 5th Infantry, which at that time was an independent regimental combat team; and some other units. Our group at that time had two battalions and they became a part of the task force. We had a tank battalion that came from the 24th Division. We occupied the eastern end of the line at Kunu-ri; we were along the river with the river valley to the northeast. The 24th withdrew through *TASK FORCE ALLEN* and was reconstituted and put back together. This initial phase was early in November 1950. That was the withdrawal in which *TASK FORCE ALLEN* was constituted. Our group served as infantry for a week to 10 days until the 1st Cavalry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 5th RCT attacked north.

We reverted then to a supporting mission. We did some mining, which wasn't a major problem. The roads were narrow, dirt, and not designed to handle the kind of traffic we were putting there. In a number of cases we had to cut a new road or bypass down through the paddy fields. It was mostly dozer work. Our group commander was Frank H. Forney, USMA 1929, who was later killed. He was probably the most totally fearless man I'd ever meet. During our period in Seoul, Forney, at one time, with a party of two people, crossed the Han River in a jeep. They got across on a ferry to make a reconnaissance and they went through some mines. A battalion commander who was with him, Col. Hubbard, was injured and evacuated. This occurred in Col. Chesty Puller's

sector. He was not part of the jeep recon. Chesty Puller, who commanded the 1st Marines, and later retired as the deputy commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, had ordered Forney to quit being a hero and quit exposing himself on the riverbank because he was drawing fire on the 1st Marines. During the attack north, Col. Forney was probably the leading American to go over a good piece of North Korea. He preceded the infantry at times. Col. Forney had a high sense of mission and was totally courageous.

When we had gone north into Sinanju, the bridge over the Ch'ongch'on was blown. We heard reports that another bridge existed further up the river at Anju. Col. Forney, Maj. Davis, who was our S-3, Capt. Besing, who commanded one of the line companies in the 11th Engineers, and I [the executive officer] motored up in a couple of jeeps to about 10 miles east of Sinanju. Sure enough, we found a sandbag bridge across the river and we crossed. Besing, Davis, and I in one jeep stopped and took the charges off the bridge, which had been prepared for demolition. Col. Forney and his jeep driver continued on the north side of the river, back down the river to a point about opposite the British crossing. They came under considerable North Korean fire and later rejoined us.

The British 27th Infantry Brigade later made a crossing, which was a comedy in itself. The British crossed



Men of the 65th Engineer Combat Battalion reinforce a muddy road on the north bank of the Han River Engineer School, 93-63-12

in assault boats at high tide. The first wave got across—about a rifle company. They were greeted on the far shore by a bunch of Koreans in white suits with tubas and clarinets. These Koreans were local people—happy to see somebody, happy to be liberated. When the assault boats returned to pick up the second wave the tide went out. The second wave spent the next 24 hours in the middle of the river 500 yards from either shore in the mud flats. It was good that that particular crossing was not opposed.

The critical focus of the war on the west coast for a time was *TASKFORCE ALLEN*. I had contact with Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner, the chief of staff, in Tokyo,

Gen. Walker had a son who commanded one of the battalions of the 19th Infantry, which had been overrun north of the river. Walker was in a very difficult position. He was under great stress as a commander, but also under great personal stress because his son was missing.

Inch'on, and Seoul, but my principal exposure to general officers was when we were *TASK FORCE ALLEN*. It was normal for all the senior commanders—Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, Eighth Army commander; Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn, who was I Corps commander; Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay of the 1st Cavalry; I can't remember who commanded the 2d Division then—to assemble at one command post for their daily briefings and to make their plans for the next phase of the operation. I saw a lot of them, as assistant chief of staff of the task force, and did most of the briefing.

Gen. Walker had a son who commanded one of the battalions of the 19th Infantry, which had been overrun north of the river. Walker was in a very difficult position. He was under great stress as a commander, but also under great personal stress because his son was missing. I'd often thought that you should never put a commander in that position, that kind of dual stress. The stress showed on him. Gen. Milburn, I think, made the decisions. I think Walker was working under so much pressure—shock, really—he simply wasn't performing, not in a normal decisive way in which he usually operated.

### Retreat to the South

We had a brief quiet period in November and then the attack resumed. During that period we had a couple of aircraft that flew a lot of reconnaissance. I flew four or five hours, I think, every day through that month. I'll

never forget the massive Chinese concentration south of the Yalu River. It was there, no question about it. The attack should have been no surprise. I don't care what history says. We saw it. We reported it.

I was flying in a little Piper Cub-type plane, an L-5. North of Anju, about 30 miles up the road, two roads turned off to the northwest. We used to fly up the southern one of those two roads, and then slip over the ridge and down the other road. We were going over that ridge one day with no altitude to speak of, and, my God, there were tanks, artillery, and troops. I guess we saw two divisions on the road. In a matter of minutes they totally disappeared off the road and under cover. We made these reports every day that we went out but I guess nobody really believed it.

That was the IX Corps. When the attack occurred, around Thanksgiving, the whole atmosphere in the infantry troops, in the corps, was just unbelievable. *The River and the Gauntlet* [S.L.A. Marshall, *The River and the Gauntlet*, N.Y. (1962)] gives you a little of that, but some people, I think, literally, believed that the Chinese were supernatural.

The shepherds' horns, bugles, and these great masses of dark figures in the dark, and the night appeared around you—behind you. You were scared and didn't think you could kill them. They really believed they were supernatural. In a sense it was a defeated army. It couldn't contend with what it was running into. It

was split up into three columns that were not mutually supporting, and each one took different routes. Each one had been tactically defeated and was falling back.

I really don't know about the east coast. We had really made no lasting contact over there. Some of our people were with them, but no contact. I guess that fleeting contact was made between the 65th Infantry Puerto Rican Regiment from the east coast and one of the regiments of the 1st Cavalry.

The objective of these three unconnected elements was to occupy North Korea close on the Yalu River, X Corps on the right, and on the east coast, I and IX Corps on the west coast.

The center was made of ROK forces. They had been fairly badly beaten in the south. They didn't have much in the way of communications and weren't very well armed. They couldn't very well be supported. That was where the attack was first and most successful. We knew things were really going to hell-in-a-handbasket.

We had had some demolitions put in along the

river east of Anju and Kunu-ri and we had about two ROK divisions come back through that roadblock, badly beaten by very heavy forces from the northeast. In that same day we had three columns in the I and the IX Corps, one going west towards the mouth of



An aircraft mechanic refuels an L-5E observation aircraft  
RG 111, SC-356532

Yalu, one going somewhat northwest, and one going due north. All of them were heavily attacked and hurt. That day I flew over the element going northwest to the Yalu toward Sinuiju and I probably saw the furthest point of advance. I saw a tank platoon attack a heavy infantry force about 10 or 15 miles short of the Yalu. At that time we received very heavy anti-aircraft fire from a point

further up the road. We were just about out of fuel so we had to return to corps.

That night corps directed a withdrawal further to the south. That was the commencement of the withdrawal back into South Korea. These are the days so well written up in *The River and the Gauntlet*. Our group had two choices of withdrawal routes. We were

I'll never forget the massive Chinese concentration south of the Yalu River. It was there, no question about it. The attack should have been no surprise. I don't care what history says. We saw it. We reported it.

## Major John H. Elder, Jr. 19th Engineer Combat Group

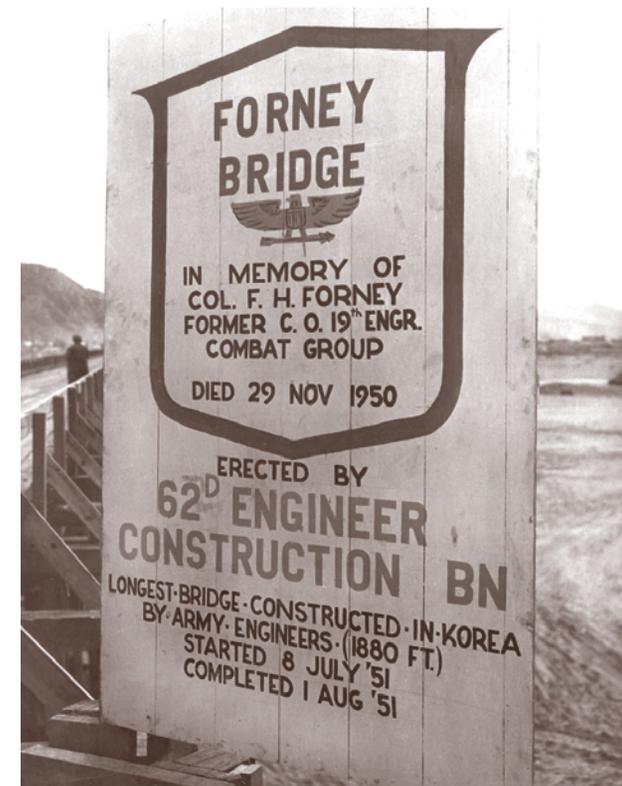
located just east of Anju along the river. In the 25- or 30-mile sector there was a road on the east that ran down from the river due south from Kunu-ri to the Taedong River near Sunan.

Near Anju was another road that we had opened that was a very poor trail also leading to Sunan. We could have withdrawn along either of these two ways. We knew that the ROKs had collapsed to the east, and we knew that there had been heavy fighting in the two valleys in the east. Col. Forney had gotten up in the morning with his jeep driver and he said, "Well, I think I'll go down to the east road with the 2d Division. You bring the headquarters. I guess the east road will be more crowded, so take the center road."

I left the headquarters and took the center road. We got down to the intersection about 20 miles to the south at Sunan. That night we set up headquarters. Two battalions were executing demolition and withdrawing in support of the divisions in reasonably good order. Much of the 2d Division was lost on the east road. Col. Forney never showed up at headquarters. We understood later that he and the Chinese arrived on a hill on that road at about the same time and he was killed. The next few weeks ran together in a blur. It was a very confused period. Communication was very poor.

We had two battalions commanded by lieutenant colonels. When Col. Forney didn't arrive that night, I went to corps because our communications weren't work-

ing. I reported that Forney was missing and probably dead. Corps said, "Well, let's wait 24 hours and in the meantime you run the group." In another 24 hours Forney still was missing, so Col. W.N. Thomas, Jr., corps engineer, called the commanders and me back to



The bridge at Chunchon was dedicated to the memory of Col. F.H. Forney, former Commanding Officer of the 19th Engineer Combat Group Engineer School, 210-13-4

corps. He said, "I recognize that I can't do this, but I want you, John," he was talking to me, "to command the group." I was a major then. And he said, "I've cleared this with Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter, IX Corps commander, and these are Gen. Coulter's orders. Are there any questions about these commands?" There were none.

He didn't want to pull these lieutenant colonels out of their units because both of them were officers who had been involved in civilian-type construction in World War II and had been put into troop command just before the Korean War with no combat troop command experience. On the other hand, I had been in troop command and with infantry units in World War II, and had worked for the commander (the corps engineer, Col. Thomas). He knew me. I knew him. He had confidence in me and knew how I reacted. I think those were the considerations. That situation existed until we got back into South Korea.

Apparently, the Eighth Army Engineer asked the corps constantly to accept one or two people to command the group, and the corps just simply refused. That standoff continued for some time. It continued until we got back south of the 38th Parallel, until about the time we withdrew back across the Han River. Then we got a bona fide commander and I became exec again. I think we all understood the situation and accepted it. The two battalion commanders were very satisfied

for me to lead. I tried to be reasonable and to make them understand the kind of things that they had to do. I think they appreciated it because they had not had troop combat experience.

IX Corps was on the east of Eighth Army withdrawing from P'yongyang along a road that ran into the Iron Triangle not too far north of the 38th. The Chinese got ahead of them and had several corps in what later became known as the Iron Triangle. We had to fight our way further south. The IX Corps side-slipped over onto the coast road behind the I Corps and withdrew. Then it went back east into a defensive position south of the 38th, with its back to the Han River.

IX Corps was east of Seoul. I Corps was astride Seoul. We were just a little west of the intersection of the Han and the Pukhan River. Brig. Gen. Davidson, the assistant division commander for the 24th Division and a former engineer, was put in charge of the withdrawal operation across the Han where we were. We prepared for demolition the wreckage of a civilian bridge, which had been opened up as a foot and jeep bridge, and also installed a treadway bridge across the ice and prepared it for demolition. Davidson commanded the crossing operation. We sat on the bank of the Han River for a week to 10 days until the decision was made to withdraw further south. We executed the demolition of the bridges and went back 50 or 60 miles to somewhere south of Ch'ongju.

Forney never showed up at headquarters. We understood later that he and the Chinese arrived on a hill on that road at about the same time and he was killed. The next few weeks ran together in a blur.

## Major John H. Elder, Jr. 19th Engineer Combat Group

Sometime in that general period Lt. Gen. Walton Walker was killed and Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway took over the army and performed probably the most superb job of large unit leadership I've ever seen. Our army, at that point, was a defeated army. There was

no question about it. The orientation for troops and everybody was how fast can we go south and get out of Korea. In a matter of a week, by personal example and appearance, Ridgway really turned the Army around. It thought about going north again. 🏰

Engineer School, 41-5-107



RG 111, SC-35669



RG 111, SC-356266



After the last UN forces withdrew to the south bank of the Han River, the 14th Engineers went to work, dismantling much of the pontoon bridge and destroying the remainder, 4 January 1951



**L**ieutenant Johnson describes his role as commanding officer of an infantry company moving into North Korea with the 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) finally returning to engineering duty with the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion.

At that time, late autumn 1950, the civilian populace appeared happy to see us. After we pulled up by Kaesong, just shy of the 38th Parallel, we waited for a week or two because they hadn't made the decision to cross into North Korea. During that time we worked on equipment and weapons and re-outfitted. Eventually

the decision was made to go across the 38th. There wasn't much opposition. We went up the west side of North Korea along a peninsula called the Ongjin Peninsula. Part of the Ongjin Peninsula was in North Korea and part in South Korea. The 38th Parallel had cut it in half. As a result, there was no land access from South Korea.

Right at the apex of the ocean, where the peninsula mainland of North Korea came up, there was the town of Haeju. I was ordered to go and clean weapons out of the town. The town was laid out in such a manner that it was like a pie cut into three sections. At the center of the pie was the town hall and the police station. I established the company command post (CP) outside the town hall and gave one of the three sections of the town to each of my three platoon leaders. I kept the weapons platoon people in the center around the city hall and the police station.

Our mission was to clear the town of weapons. We were instructed to knock on each door or do whatever you could to get the attention of the homeowner and ask, "Do you have any weapons?" If the answer was, "No," then we went to the next house. We did not search.

We had enough interpreters. Each platoon at that time had one, and I had two in the company headquarters. They were supplied by the Korean government. They were allegedly not to be drafted or pressed into any of the other services. They had to prove that

Members of the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion change the oil and clean the filters on an air compressor  
RG 111, SC-379254



they could speak good or passable English and that they were interpreters for the United States.

I had a jeep driver by the name of Rosy. He wandered around our CP the day we searched. When he came back he was ashen. He had gone up into the police station, a two-story structure, concrete building, where they had a big assembly hall. It looked like a basketball court. What he saw there made him come back. He said, "Sir, you have to come with me. You have to see something that's awful." I said, "Right now?" And he said, "Yes, Sir. You have to come right now." I went with him. The 1st Sergeant also came with me. We went into the police station, upstairs, and into the auditorium. There were probably a couple hundred people, all maimed. They had broken arms, broken legs, and blood was all over the place—just about all ages, from the young to the elderly. There were men and women; some women had crushed breasts. It was incredible. I told the interpreter to find out how this happened. He asked and said, "Follow me. Let me show you." We went back into a room off of the auditorium. There was a North Korean civilian who apparently had elevated himself to the police chief of the town when everything broke apart as far as North Koreans were concerned. He was allegedly an anticommunist. He was sitting on a stool and in front of him, kneeling on the floor, was the person being interrogated. Along side of the person being interrogated was another Korean with a club in his hand. The anticom-



South Korean refugees cheer troops of the 24th Infantry Division as they enter Taejon  
RG 111, SC-349428

unist police chief would ask a question. The person on the floor would answer. If the police chief didn't like the answer, the guy with the club was energized and would clobber the hell out of the guy, either on the back of the head or some other place. He swung the club and he would bring it down on the arm or something. When the chief got the answer he wanted, the individual would be hauled back to the auditorium.

I relieved the police chief and his henchmen on the spot. I directed that the people be taken out of the building and marched up to a POW compound, which was being established in a big Catholic church on the

outskirts of town. The long line of people finally came out of the building and they were marched up the road guarded by North Korean, allegedly anticommunist, guards. Rather than turning left toward the church, they turned right. I jumped in the jeep and I went up there. I asked what they were doing and told them the direction of the church and the POW compound. Apparently, the guards were going to take them down to the riverbed and shoot them. They believed that if these people had survived under the North Koreans they were obviously communist.

Later, after the Chinese intervention, we were again moving south. As we went through little towns you could see clusters of people who were crying. They were deeply concerned that we were leaving them. Now the tables would be turned again. They were rightfully concerned. How did the people regard us? Did they cooperate? Yes, they didn't have any choice. Korea wasn't like Vietnam. We knew where the front line

was. We didn't have many people ambushing or shooting us in the back.

They didn't really know how to take us. All of a sudden they had nobody telling them what to do, and I'm sure up to that point they had been told we were the bad guys. Kim Il Sung had been filling them full of whatever, and the natural reaction was to stay very subdued. They didn't cheer, or holler, or yell, or anything else.

As we broke out of the Naktong perimeter and went north, most of the civilians were either under-

ground or had already gone south. There would be long, long lines of refugees going out, and presumably they were all South Koreans. They were trying to get out, particularly when we were down in the Naktong River area. When we broke out and went up towards Kumchon, they had already gone south and had gone by us long before. I don't recollect people standing, cheering, and throwing roses at us.

One of the interesting things I saw, I thought



To compensate for personnel shortages, Korean soldiers were integrated into U.S. Army engineer units KOR 555

about later in life when I became the Director of Munitions Production. When we went into P'yongyang, we went over a long concrete causeway elevated above the rice paddies and the tidal flats of the river. The tide was out in that particular area and there were thousands of bomb craters all around that bridge but none on the bridge. With all the carpet bombing that bridge hadn't been hit. It might have been hit once or twice, but it certainly was not destroyed. Today, one or two of our smart bombs would have knocked it out. It was interesting to me to see the ineffectiveness of our bombing in that instance. When the Air Force carpet-bombed just before we crossed the Naktong by Waegwan, the B-29s came over and they obliterated the hill mass on the north side of the Naktong. The North Koreans had a lot of high velocity weapons there—88s. When they hit that area, they wiped it out. Hitting a line target in those days was not that easy or successful.

The city was hit, but it wasn't anywhere nearly as destroyed as Seoul. I had been stationed on the outskirts of Seoul back in '48-'49, and it was a bustling city. When I went through it on our way north, everything was just wiped out—the railroad yards, the railroad station. There wasn't very much standing because of bombing by both sides.

We started getting replacement personnel from the Koreans. In fact, our battalion was the first battalion to get KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation to the United

States Army). At that time the company-authorized strength was 212 personnel. I was down to about 120-130, and so we were going to get Korean fillers. Our regimental commander, John Throckmorton, and battalion commander, Tom Roelofs, decided we were not going to just bring them in. We would have a training program in a rear area. They had some modest training, but we trained them intensively for two weeks and then had a graduation. We graduated the ones who looked like they could handle themselves, who understood the training, and could react to the English being spoken.

About one third of the Koreans that we received graduated. We had about 100—one third we put into the company, interspersed them, say, one per squad. Then the next week we had another graduation. The last week, we had the third graduation. By the time all of them were integrated into the company to bring us back up roughly to our 212, they were operating as a team with the Americans, rather than Koreans here and Americans there. We had some problems regarding food. We couldn't feed them all-American food—or C-rations. They wanted rice and fish heads. So, we established one section of the mess hall that boiled rice. They made rice but, if they wanted, they could also eat the American food.

We were loaded with KATUSAs. Once they were integrated in the company that way they really

Later, after the Chinese intervention, we were again moving south. As we went through little towns you could see clusters of people who were crying. They were deeply concerned that we were leaving them. Now the tables would be turned again.

The closer we got to the Yalu River the tougher it became. It was like pushing against a spring—when the coils get tighter, the resistance against the spring is harder and harder.

did a masterful job. The biggest problem, of course, was language communication, but they began to pick it up and at least understood the basic language requirements. It was easier during the daylight hours for them to understand because they could see. At night they couldn't see so they had to interpret and hope it was right. We also had more interpreters available. The KATUSAs did a hell of a good job. They really came through quite well. Up to that time, we had the good fortune of having time to train them because we weren't heavily engaged.

We were leapfrogging up. In those days we walked some, but we also had movement by convoy. They would get one outfit moved up and then they would bring another outfit up. When we got up to Sinanju and Anju we were still with the British 27th Infantry Brigade. They turned to the west and went along the coast. The closer we got to the Yalu River the tougher it became. It was like pushing against a spring—when the coils get tighter, the resistance against the spring is harder and harder.

The 1st Cavalry Division came up and got clobbered. The British 27th Infantry Brigade was out in front of us and we followed them. The British had erected a big sign, "The 27th British Brigade wishes the 5th RCT good hunting." They had cut off to our left, I remember, and then we went north. We got up to Taech'on. When we got up that road going north we were the right flank of the 24th Division. The 5th had taken one battalion, the 3d Battalion, and they were going to slip them around

to the right. We went up to the valley road, the 2d Battalion following the 3d Battalion. They moved us off to the left. There was a "chocolate drop" [looking] hill right in the middle of the valley where we were going. When we got up to the base of that chocolate drop hill all hell broke loose. We really got clobbered and within minutes we had a half a dozen killed. It was from the ridgeline to our front. I couldn't call it an ambush; we weren't covered from all sides. It was from the front and we just ran into opposition.

I guess what led into it was a two-jeep reconnaissance patrol that went out. When they passed the chocolate drop hill the road started to bend around the hill leading through a pass in the ridgeline. The little chocolate drop was dominated by the ridge. The men in the two recon jeeps went a little past the hill, got hit, and all were killed. I believe Hank Emerson's company, Company A, was sent to move along to our left. We were ordered to attack, take the chocolate drop, and then attack that ridgeline. I believe the 1st Battalion was sent around to the left to get behind the enemy who was holding up the 3d Battalion. We moved up on that chocolate drop and got up on top. We went over the military crest of the hill and immediately received intense small arms fire from the ridge to our front. Everything was like hornets stinging.

We pulled back to the reverse of the hill and then we brought artillery down on the ridge. We set up a base

of fire and really hit the ridgeline, which was not that far away—400-500 yards. We just hosed down the area and then dug in. The 2d Battalion went around our right flank on the main road. They got around the right flank. When we attacked the next morning and got up on the ridgeline, we saw almost 50 bodies up there, all lined up in a neat line. They hadn't all been killed there, but the enemy had stacked them up on one part of the hill.

My interpreter said, "They are mongoloid." I said, "They are what?" He said, "They are mongoloid. They are Chinese." They had new clothes and brand new shoes. The soles of their shoes were almost like hobnail boots. It was obviously a different group of people. There were no wounded and my company didn't take any prisoners. I don't think anybody else did either, unless maybe the 2d Battalion, when they went around the right side and picked up prisoners. That was the first time we ran into Chinese. I think probably the 8th Cavalry got clobbered first up by Unsan, and later the 5th Cavalry got badly hit at Kunu-ri [28 Nov 50].

### Cold, but Alive

General Douglas MacArthur had said we would be home by Thanksgiving and Eighth Army believed him. They did not requisition all the clothing needed so our company had half of the clothing we needed—overcoats, sleeping bags, and so on. It probably was good that we did have only half. When we would put two guys in a



Chinese prisoners captured by the 1st Republic of Korea Division  
RG 111, SC-357170

foxhole, one would have an overcoat and he'd be on guard, and the other one would be in the sleeping bag. When we went north the second time, it turned cold during that month interval. We had been going for days. The troops were exhausted. We all were. We only had half the overcoats and half the sleeping bags, so for the most part, half of the company was awake, cold, but awake. Another unit of the 24th was further to our left flank and they got wiped out one night. Nobody saw or heard the Chinese come in until they were over-run. The Chinese shot them all in their holes, left the bodies right where they were, and then walked off.

When we attacked the next morning and got up on the ridgeline, we saw almost 50 bodies up there, all lined up in a neat line.

The men had all been asleep. Whether they all had sleeping bags, I'm not sure. One of the biggest jobs was keeping the troops awake at night and on guard. It was cold, really cold, so I believe it was fortuitous that we only had half of our outer clothing.

We had plenty of ammunition. When we first landed way back in July/August, we did not have enough ammunition. But by this time we had 3.5-inch bazookas, rocket launchers, and recoilless rifles. We had a lot of SP artillery—self-propelled artillery—that had come in. About this time we were pretty well equipped, with the exception of clothes.

When they issued those pile-type hats with the earflaps, it was interpreted as a signal to dispose of the steel pot. I don't think it was overconfidence necessarily. When you have something warm around your head and your ears, it substitutes for protection. Lt. Col. John L. Throckmorton was insistent that we wear our steel hat. Some of the companies didn't wear them before he tramped down on us. The steel pot was cumbersome, you know. It wasn't too long before the command emphasized that the pot went on top of that parka-type hat. You can wear both—put the flaps down and keep your ears warm.

### Close Air Support

After the Chinese came across the Yalu, the 1st Cavalry got hit and so did the 2d Division. My unit, the 5th

RCT, was ordered to set up blocking positions to hold the road open from Kunu-ri. For our blocking position, my company was on top of a hill, which was on a ridge of a series of hills. Our hill was smaller than the one Hank Emerson was on, which was on the higher part of the ridgeline. We were connected directly and covering the valley. We were blocking the Chinese from coming down the ridgeline. We were to protect the valley for the people coming south. There were a lot of air attacks on the upper part of the ridgeline, and I believe there was a Korean division up there blocking in front of us. Two South Korean F-51 aircraft came over and circled our positions. Those days we used the panel system where each day a colored panel was displayed to show the air corps where the friendly ground units were.

Hank and I both had our companies on the ridgeline. We had dug foxholes, but they weren't deep. We were down maybe a foot and a half—just slit trenches. When the F-51s came in we had put our panels out to let them know who and where we were. One of Hank's machine gunners saw the planes and thought, "They don't look too friendly to me. I'm going to give them a burst and scare them off." He fired a burst of that machine gun and all hell broke loose. That pilot fired two rockets, and then Company A started yelling, "MAY-DAY!" on the radio to alert headquarters that we were being fired on by friendly aircraft.

I jumped out to be sure that the panel was in plain view. My first sergeant, Sgt. Loeffler, was in the foxhole next to me. I was yelling at everyone not to fire at the aircraft, that they were friendly aircraft. They would pass over Hank's position and fire a blast, and then they'd make a turn and come over us on their return trip. When they got over Hank, Sgt. Loeffler jumped out of his hole, grabbed the red panel and rolled it up. I said, "What the hell are you doing?" He said, "They are firing at all the panels." I said, "No, they're not!" I had to grab the panel, run out, and throw it out again. We did this about three or four times.

During the 10 minutes of strafing we were all yelling, "MAYDAY!" They finally went away. Remarkably, not a person was hit and they had really hosed down Hank's area. That was the last time his machine gunner ever fired at another friendly aircraft. We blocked in that position for three or four days and then went east of P'yongyang, going south. Eventually, we went to just north of Seoul.

### General Matthew B. Ridgway Takes Command

It was at the time Lt. Gen. Walker was killed. I had a jeep that did not have a windshield, and at that time driving down the road in a vehicle without a windshield was bad news. It was so cold, and without a windshield the wind made it that much colder. I was riding down the road when I happened to see this



Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgway, commander 8th Army, confers with his officers RG 111, SC-357542

jeep off to the side of the ditch. There was nobody around and I said to myself, "Ah! I got my windshield." I jumped out of the jeep, went over and looked at it. There was a three-star plate on the front of the jeep. When I saw that, I said, "That's *not my* windshield!" I guess we got there almost a half-hour after he was killed. Nobody was around the jeep. Eventually, I found

a windshield, but it was a South Korean Army windshield in an old Korean hut. Ironically, it had two stars on it.

Gen. Walker was the commander during the initial operation, the defense of the Naktong Perimeter, and it was a case of cutting and patching. We did things

We did things like run bulldozers on a reverse side of a hill to make the bad guys think we had tanks over there. We did that in desperation. We think it worked....

like run bulldozers on a reverse side of a hill to make the bad guys think we had tanks over there. We did that in desperation. We think it worked; at least it was successful. We really didn't have much equipment, but we were piece-mealing units in. We were trying to hold our fingers in the dike to keep these bridgeheads from breaking up.

Under those conditions, you blow things in front of you and do what you can to conserve your forces or concentrate them when you need them. Remember what happened when the locks at Inch'on were blown during the first withdrawal? The guy who blew the tidal locks did such a thorough job that it was damn near impossible to rebuild them. He had the good fortune of being assigned to the engineer brigade that had to go in and rehabilitate the locks. He was the guy in charge of rebuilding them. Gen. Twitty was the commander of that engineer brigade. Two engineers from the Class of '46, Smith and McCullum, had been in the advanced course with me at [Fort] Belvoir and were part of that regiment. They talked about the major work that had to be done to repair the locks and impressed me with the pitfalls of over destruction, particularly if you have to go back and use the facility.

Now, let me put this in perspective too. When we had been way up north we had been euphoric with our victory, as it were. We're now getting out or we're getting kicked back. We simply didn't get information on what

was happening. The intelligence coming down to the troops was non-existent. We just didn't get any info or news. We just knew that we were coming south and we had run into some pretty good firefights. The morale was not good. The morale was at best, poor. Our euphoric feeling sort of eroded, and the closer we got to what we thought would be evacuation, the higher the morale went. The further we got back down towards Inch'on, or Pusan, to get on a boat, the better we felt.

When Gen. Walker was killed, Ridgway came in. I remember we were north of Seoul. We might have been around the Uijongbu area. When Ridgway came in, he was briefed by the British 27th Infantry Brigade. The 27th Brigade was something else. They thought the 5th Infantry was the finest fighting unit they had ever seen, and we thought they were the finest. Gen. Ridgway went to get a briefing from the British, and they briefed him on the retrograde plans. The word came out that Ridgway said, "I'm not interested in your plans for withdrawal. Where are your plans to attack?" I think that statement filtered out through the Eighth Army and certainly through our organization. The morale started going up.

### Engineers as Infantry

When we got to Korea, about 10 of my classmates and I were assigned to the 5th Infantry. They were getting company commands and being promoted to captain. I was the ranking guy in our class in the 5th RCT. There

Gen. Ridgway went to get a briefing from the British, and they briefed him on the retrograde plans. The word came out that Ridgway said, "I'm not interested in your plans for withdrawal. Where are your plans to attack?"

were three of us in the engineer company—Hatch, Van Petten, and I. There was just absolutely no way we were going to get promoted in that separate company because we would never be made a company commander unless the company commander was relieved or evacuated, neither of which was going to happen.

Col. Throckmorton had wanted us to become infantrymen because he needed them, but he wanted us to get promoted to captain. I was ordered to take over the Company B of the 5th. Kenny Hatch, about the same time, took over the heavy weapons company of the 3d Battalion. I was asked if I wanted to take over a heavy weapons company, and I said, “I don’t know much about it.” Although I knew a lot about heavy weapons, I told Col. Throckmorton I would be more comfortable as an infantry line company commander, and I got it. To be promoted, one had to be in command for 30 days. I took over on about 18 September, and 30 days later they forwarded the recommendations for promotion to Eighth Army, Far East Command.

About that time, a boat with officers recalled to active duty arrived in Japan. On that boat were 700 to 800 captains. Immediately, the command had an excess of captains in the theater and so the authority to promote was stopped. In addition to that, I had been recommended for award of the Combat Infantry Badge. In order to get the Combat Infantry Badge you had to be detailed to the infantry. In other words, the

orders had to be issued that you were an infantryman. Well, those papers came back sometime in December, (1) not promoted, and (2) ineligible to receive the Combat Infantry Badge.

I was a little disgusted, of course. When Col. Throckmorton stopped to see how things were going I told him that the two recommendations had both been disapproved. He said, “Oh, what do you think?” I said, “Well, if they are not going to promote me as an infantryman I might as well go back and be an engineer. Furthermore, they are not even giving me a Com-



British and Belgian officers board a tank to travel to forward positions  
RG 111, SC-375436

bat Infantry Badge.” Well, he really got ticked off but that was the rule. He said, “Well, what do you want to do?” And I said, “I may as well go back to the engineers.”

### With the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion

He knew Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer, who was the battalion commander of the 3d Engineers and, I guess, he talked to him. Shortly after Christmas, I was transferred to the 3d ECB. When I got to the 3d Engineers I was a first assistant S-3, and then they made me the company commander of H&S Company.

They resubmitted my promotion from there. I guess Col. Throckmorton resubmitted my Combat Infantry Badge. About a month later, my promotion came through based on my time in the infantry, and my Combat Infantry Badge came through by order of General MacArthur.

As the company commander of the H&S Company, 3d Engineer Battalion, I also had the only platoon of armored tank dozers in Korea. They had a blade in front of the M4A1 tank. They were tanks, yes. We had five of them in the platoon. The platoon leader was a Lt. Greenwell. I had the pleasure of watching those tank dozers being used and seeing how effective they were in combat engineering. I think that experience stood me in good stead when I commanded [Fort] Belvoir. I really fought for the combat engineer vehicle. How should

tanks supporting engineer missions be used—blades in front of tanks, rollers for anti-mine, or what? All of that was pretty well formulated in my mind as we planned tank dozer support for engineers in combat.

When they had the airborne drop in Korea by the 187th, the first two vehicles in the link-up unit were two of my tanks. The value of those things was truly apparent in that kind of an airborne and ground link-up operation.

The engineer battalion was well equipped in those days. We had the D-7 bulldozer, which isn't all that powerful a piece of equipment. We had the two and one-half-ton trucks, which are certainly not the 5-tons or the 10-tons that we have today. And we had the pioneer equipment in the squads. Fundamentally, the combat engineer was well equipped to support the division but needed backup from corps engineers to do the job.

At that time we didn't do much mine clearing. They didn't get behind us to put mines in. We might not have been able to put the mines in, but we didn't clear any mines. In those days, the general philosophy was to mark a minefield and leave it on record. Again, my personal involvement in that type of activity was greatly limited because of the fact that I commanded the H&S Company. My mission was bivouac, security of the headquarters, communications, support of the headquarters by logistics, food, and so on, bedding

As the company commander of the H&S Company, 3d Engineer Battalion, I also had the only platoon of armored tank dozers in Korea....I had the pleasure of watching these tank dozers being used and seeing how effective they were in combat engineering.

down the staff, and protection of the staff. That's what the headquarters commander does, and that was what I did for the next four or five months.

Now, the Chinese began one more offensive before I left Korea. It was a spring offensive and began on 22 April 1951. I remember that we were going north. When we would get into a position, the battalion commander, Peter Hyzer, would put us right up at the front. We would be bivouacked a half mile from the front, and that was where he put our CP. We pulled the unit in, and then it took four, five, or six days for the front to be pushed further away on the other side. I thought he was almost putting us in to plug the front with the headquarters company, which was not really the mission of the headquarters company.

I didn't get involved in any more combat before I was rotated. I was in the first group of those to be rotated and left out of Pusan on an LST for Sasebo, Japan. They processed us there for a few days, and then we were shipped out on two boats; one went to Seattle, and one to San Francisco. I was on the first into San Francisco. From there I had orders for Fort Belvoir and the 6th Engineer Officer Advanced Course. However, they were just beginning to gather officers to teach at the engineer OCS and I was pulled off orders and assigned to the OCS. 🏰



A tank dozer  
clears a road  
in western Korea  
Engineer School, 92-62-6

**M**ajor Parfitt describes his assignment with the 2d Engineer Construction Group as they design and rebuild the railroad from the Pusan Perimeter to P'yongyang, and survey the line further to the Yalu River.

In September 1950, when I was initiating the design for repairing bridges near the Pusan Perimeter, we didn't even have a construction battalion. However, shortly thereafter the 84th came aboard and they were prepared to accomplish work based on plans issued from group headquarters. Fortunately, troops who had made the withdrawal from Seoul provided us with a wealth of important information, thus we were somewhat prepared for what we would experience when the breakout was made.

The nearby bridges had a span of about a couple hundred feet; however, the damaged portion was significantly less. In the case of the highway bridge we chose to go with a timber trestle structure part of the way and to finish the closure with a Bailey bridge. For the railway bridge we decided to build a timber trestle foundation—drive-in the piles, cap the piles, put a trestle on top, and then use some big 24-inch I-beams that were available in the area to span the gap between these trestles.

It was apparent to all concerned that the road net would be inadequate to take the material and supplies

that had to flow forward as quickly as we anticipated the troops would move up the peninsula. But we realized there was in existence a very good railway net. It had been left behind as a legacy of the Japanese occupation of Korea. Early on it was decided to stress repair of the railway system. Indeed, that was the emphasis and the focus of my attention during almost all of my time with the 2d ECG, although I was involved in other aspects of MSR repair.

It should be noted that the 8th Army had arranged for skilled Koreans to work on the rail system. We understood that they were to repair tracks and obtain and operate the essential railroad equipment. We did not have much contact with them but all reports of their work were complimentary.

As we moved quickly to the north we accomplished considerable road and bridge repair as well as minor railway crossing repair. A few tunnels also had been damaged and were in need of repair. Each situation was a little different and required some ingenuity.

At the same time, the 62d engineers came in at Inchon during the later phases of the assault landing and moved inland to the Han River near Seoul. There they bypassed a large damaged bridge and began to build an entirely new crossing at low level, using stringers or sand-bag piers. They called it a "shoofly" bridge. I was not familiar with the name and was not sure of its derivation. Nevertheless, the terminology stuck. Shortly there-

Our soldiers worked for 12 hours a day, closing the rail line to traffic, and then for 12 hours they would use it. During this period the bridge was only completely out for three days, primarily because of extremely bad weather conditions.

after the 2d ECG arrived at the Han River and took over command of the 62d.

At this time it was obvious that heavy tides and storms would jeopardize the bridge unless the sand-bag piers were reinforced. This was done mainly by driving piles at appropriate locations. Our soldiers worked for 12 hours a day, closing the rail line to traffic, and then for 12 hours they would use it. During this period the bridge was only completely out for three days, primarily because of extremely bad weather conditions.

Our next major project was the building of a shoofly bridge over the Imjin River. This was the first such structure built by the 2d ECG. The basic design was to divert the rail line and take it down grade to a new site near the old location. Piles were then driven through templates, capped, and then trestles built up, and 24-inch I-beams were used as stringers. We moved out across the river, one trestle after another, and then tied back moving uphill to the original rail line.

By late November I had been promoted to major and our road construction had proceeded to P'yongyang where the 62d was in the process of building a bridge. While there I observed some Korean railroad workers nearby and they informed me that they were exploring the possibility of using the spur rail line from Chin-nampo north to P'yongyang. For obvious reasons this plan never materialized.



At that time my attention had turned to moving north across country, with a survey crew, to the vicinity of Sinanju, which was the next major crossing before the Yalu. The day after Thanksgiving we drove out but before long we became aware of large numbers of Koreans moving swiftly to the south. Immediately we turned back and headed towards the nearest roadway. We saw that large military forces were heading south and they informed us that a major Chinese attack had commenced and they had orders to withdraw. Before long we were back with the 62d in P'yongyang. They had already prepared their partially completed bridge for demolition. This completed, the bridge was turned over to Corps troops and we headed south. 🏰

Soldiers of the 62nd Engineer Battalion use sandbags to reinforce a temporary rail bridge over the Han River, 31 October 1950  
Engineer School, 42-2-117

**F**rom his perspective as the I Corps Engineer, Colonel Itschner describes the Eighth Army drive north to the Yalu and the “bugout” coming back south. During the drive north Itschner recalls that his engineers were hampered by poorly maintained, left-over World War II equipment. “There’s no use sending equipment to a war,” the engineer officer said, “unless it’s in perfect shape.”

In July 1950, shortly after the war started, I got tapped to go over to Korea as engineer of I Corps, called “Eye” Corps. I was in Seattle as district engineer at the time, and it came as a great surprise to me. I went over there after about a week’s training at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where we went through combat courses—firing over our heads, crawling through barbed wire, and all that. I went to Tokyo for a briefing and then to Pusan for a night. I arrived in Taegu to find that the enemy was right on the hills surrounding the north end of the town, and things were in very, very bad shape. That was as far south as they got in that area.

#### Breakout North Toward the Yalu

Taegu is east of the center. We had come up by train from the port of Pusan on the coast. We stayed there about a week or so and found that the plan had been developed to counterattack and drive the enemy north. During the early part of that operation the Inch’on

landing would occur. Our first operation of any importance to engineers or anybody was to cross the Naktong River, which is quite a large river, but shallow. There’d be a lot of bars at that time of the year, but in the earlier summer, during the flood period, it could be quite deep; the floods are very high there. The rest of the year it’s rather low.

Our engineer part of the operation was to build a small bridge across a tributary to get to the main banks of the river and then build a bridge across. We had a bridge company plus a combat battalion to provide the labor force. The small bridge was no great project. Our main problem was getting through the extremely dense military traffic to get up to the bridge site. There was a ford, which our forces had been using, but the intense traffic over the ford wore down the sand bottom and the sandbags that had been put down, so it wasn’t very satisfactory.

This was a short bridge, approximately 80-feet long. The Naktong River was several hundred feet wide. We got there and started to build the bridge. The enemy had been driven off of the bank on the far side, but they weren’t very far away. In making the reconnaissance before they were driven back far, I came up to the site where the bridge was to go at the end of this road. There’d never been a bridge at this site before, but the natives could ford it during most of the year. They might have used a ferry, perhaps, during high water.

I got down on this big sandbar, as the river had receded, and saw an engineer captain down in a foxhole with sandbags built around it. He had been there for some time, apparently, and the foxhole had probably been used during the initial fighting. I was about to get after the captain for not being out doing his job, whatever it was, when we had a shell from a tank, an 88, screech by right next to the jeep. I jumped down in the foxhole with him, and my driver was there before I was! Then we waited a while; I told the driver that he'd better get the jeep and go back, which he was anxious to do. He was fired at once or twice. I got up after he had

cleared and ran as fast as I could and WHAM! A shell, an 88, went screaming by me. Fortunately, they were very poor shots. I think they fired three or four at me, and I was dropping down each time. The British brigade was up on the hill; it was their particular sector. They thanked me for helping them locate the tank!

Well, we built the bridge. We were supposed to



Engineers pull the last section of an M-4 ponton bridge in place over the Naktong River, 22 September 1950 Engineer School, 42-5-100

have it finished by 0700, having worked on it all night. I've never experienced so much trouble building a floating bridge. When we'd try to join the treads, some of the connections were bent. Probably, they had been bent when they left Japan. They were bent so badly that many of the tongues would not mesh together and we

had a terrible time. We'd have to reject the damaged section and then build another float of, say, two segments of 12-foot long each, 24-four feet of float, or maybe 36, and try to push them or pull them together. We finally ended up taking an awful risk and having

roughly 100 feet of bridge connected like a raft along the bank but separate from the bridge itself. We tried to get that on out into the river and connect it up, to save time, because otherwise you were limited to working in one place at the end of the bridge. In our method we could work at several places and combine the rafts. After terrific effort and delaying the

I was about to get after the captain for not being out doing his job, whatever it was, when we had a shell from a tank, an 88, screech by right next to the jeep. I jumped down in the foxhole with him, and my driver was there before I was!

entire advance of the division by two hours, we did finally get the bridge assembled.

There was no enemy fire but the commanding general was stamping his feet. He was really angry at the engineers for delaying this operation. I don't blame him. The trouble was, at the time we weren't prepared. The equipment was not in good shape. We tried to rectify it. It got so we were pretty good at putting bridges together much, much faster than we did that time. Our favorite trick on these shallow rivers as we went forward was to build a little island out of sandbags every here and there where the river got shallower. Native sandbags made of rice straw, maybe two or three times the size of American sandbags, were very plentiful. We'd just pile those in until we had a little island over the shallow parts, and in that way we didn't use so much bridging because the bridging was awfully short. It was always treadway bridging that we built. The division combat battalions did have a little Bailey bridging. We would have preferred to have Bailey bridging but all we had was the treadway.

It was material that I'm sure hadn't been touched since world War II, but how it got all that battered up I don't know. I'm sure it was not done when the bridge was in place. It must have been done in depots, or dropped, or something. But it was in very bad shape and very difficult to put together. It's not an easy bridge to put together anyway in that respect. It has two treads with a space between them. A jeep will not track on the

two treads, it's too narrow a gauge, and so we filled in the intermediate space with lumber.

There isn't much native wood in Korea. We had to import almost all of it. Korea was logged off centuries ago. Timber would grow there well but they had consumed it. It's a barren country in that respect and that lack of wood caused trouble.

After we got that bridge across, our troops went on. The objective was to cut off the North Koreans as much as possible because they were in full retreat. We went on up to the next largest river, the Yesong, which was beyond Panmunjom—that little village where they later had the peace talks. Our troops wanted to cross in a great hurry. They wanted to get tanks across, go north along the river on the other side and cut off the enemy from their remaining tank elements to prevent their getting across farther to the north. Although the river was too wide for a bridge, at this point near the Yellow Sea, with the amount of bridging we had, we did build some ferries.

Our work was frequently in advance of the columns as they moved north. They always had patrols and some troops out in front, not very many, but some. In this case, we didn't have any vehicles out there—just foot soldiers had gotten across. We built two ferries at that point and we unloaded two motor launches, each of which had two engines in it. It was World War II equipment and the engines were very much worn. One of the

engines in one of the boats we knew wouldn't work at all. Neither engine in the other boat would work, either. So, we had one engine out of four that would work.

We launched this boat that we thought had one good engine and it started to ferry across with a tank on it. It got about a quarter of the way across and the engine conked out. This was in the middle of the afternoon. We wanted so much to get this column across. With the tidal current going the way it was the boat drifted out to the Yellow Sea and was gone for the night. The next morning I got up in an airplane and flew over, hoping to see them someplace along the line. Sure enough, there they were on the river going back up at a fair rate of speed. I thought they had gotten the engine going. As it turned out, they never got the engine going but the tide was carrying them back.

Here they were going upstream. I then got on the ground and got back to the site. They said, "Oh, they went by here a little while ago but couldn't make a landing." Well, they got up the river quite a distance and they got into a fight with the North Koreans, taking shelter in back of the tank. As usual, nobody was hit, I guess on either side, but certainly not on our side. Back on down they came and made a landing at the point from which they had departed 20 hours before.

It was important to have operable motors in those boats! If they had worked, tanks might have been able to cut off some of these enemy columns. We could have

really devastated those columns if we had gotten our tanks on that side of the river. We couldn't because we didn't have the proper equipment. I think the generals of the divisions realized that at that time; at first, they thought it was maybe inexperience of the engineers. They began to realize it was poor equipment.

Apparently, those boats had been used all that time in Japan for duck hunting, fishing, and that sort of thing. They were just worn out. There's no use sending equipment to a war unless it's in perfect shape. Well, things began to improve and the people back in Tokyo began to realize our problems.



Soldiers of the 84th Engineer Battalion push a segment of a ponton bridge in place using a powerboat  
Engineer School, 42-5-114

An engineer engaged in demolition faced twin problems: destroying too soon and destroying too late. How did you determine the right moment for demolition?

Col. Paschal N. Strong was the Eighth Army Engineer, an extremely competent officer. In addition to being a splendid engineer, he was quite a writer. Remember the series they used to have, “Jack Armstrong, the All-America Boy”? He was the author of that. He finally sold it, but he was the author of it for a number of years. He was very, very versatile, as well as a competent person. He got things changed and we got equipment that would do the job. Later we had too little equipment, much too little, but it was good, operable equipment.

We went on north again. As we’d cross a big river, we’d build our little islands and use what bridging we could. In some cases, we’d go on back and pull up a bridge and let people ford. We’d pull it up so we’d have the bridge for the forward area. In the attack on P’yongyang, they called on our troops to build a bridge real fast across the Taedong, upstream where it was quite a bit narrower, near the airfield, to enable a jeep column to get in and try to rescue American prisoners being held in a tunnel. They got up there, but it was too late to save most of them. They were machine gunned in the tunnel. Some of them escaped. I actually talked to one man who had just gotten out of there and was fortunate enough not to be hit by bullets in that tunnel.

We then kept on going. It was almost entirely bridge work all the way up—floating bridges. We did a little bit of airfield work, small airstrips, so planes could land. We did some repair work on the field at

Seoul. Later, on the way back up again next spring we did more work to repair bomb damage. The North Koreans didn’t have much in the way of bombers, just regular planes. We were bombed at the bridge site by North Koreans. What they were doing was dropping mortar shells out of a little plane. The bombs landed several hundred yards away; they caused us no trouble. They knew where the bridge was but they were very inaccurate. I never saw a Russian fighter there. In fact, I can’t really say that I ever saw a single North Korean airplane, but I did in this case hear the plane.

#### “Bugout” South?

One night the rear guard, which was British at that time, got across the bridge and then we were to take up that bridge. We had to salvage the bridge after the last troops got past. There wasn’t any particular danger because the enemy was probably 40 miles beyond. They couldn’t keep up with us because they moved on foot primarily and we used vehicles.

I was standing at this bridge one night and the British rear guard commander, Brigadier Brody, a splendid fellow whom I got to know well, came across the bridge in his Land Rover. I didn’t know who it was, and I motioned to him to use the tread on one side because the wooden fill-in between the two treads had a gap just large enough to bind a jeep tire if the driver rode on the other tread. His driver paid no attention. Sure

enough, he drove into this slot and came to a terrifically sudden stop. He was stuck on the bridge right at a time when the rear guard needed to get across in a hurry. My comment to him was, and I shouted it out not knowing who he was, "If people would only do what they're told!" He said, "That's right!"

This happened during the crossing of the Taedong River at P'yongyang, the North Korean capital, when we were evacuating P'yongyang. He apologized. We had a wrecker there and we lifted the Land Rover up. It wasn't too bad. After that he became a great friend of mine.

An engineer engaged in demolition faced twin problems: destroying too soon and destroying too late. How did you determine the right moment for demolition? It was very difficult and you couldn't always guess it. You had to be awfully careful to preserve every bit of bridging. On the way back on the Imjin River, which is pretty close to the present line of demarcation between North and South Korea in some areas, we saved the bridge entirely at night. Because of a very winding steep hill on the friendly side of the river, we removed the bridge and took many of the parts back on the enemy side of the river. After our last troops had gone, we went about 6, 7, or 8 miles on the enemy side, parallel to the river, and then back across a railroad bridge we had decked over a semi-permanent bridge. We reconnoitered the route very thoroughly beforehand to make sure we knew where we were going. We weren't



A stream of refugees leave their homes after receiving evacuation orders from the South Korean Army

Truman Library, 67-7417

the least bit concerned. Today I would be, but at that time we knew very well the enemy must have been 40 miles back and there was no fear of getting attacked.

We did this all at night and we came back across this railroad bridge, which we then blew early in the morning. We had quite an interesting incident there. There was what they called the Korean Youth Movement, an organization of young Koreans who were friendly to our side. A Korean officer came up to me and said there were about 5,000 of them (the number included their families) with carts and every possession they could carry, and they wanted to cross the river.

## Colonel Emerson C. Itschner I Corps Engineer



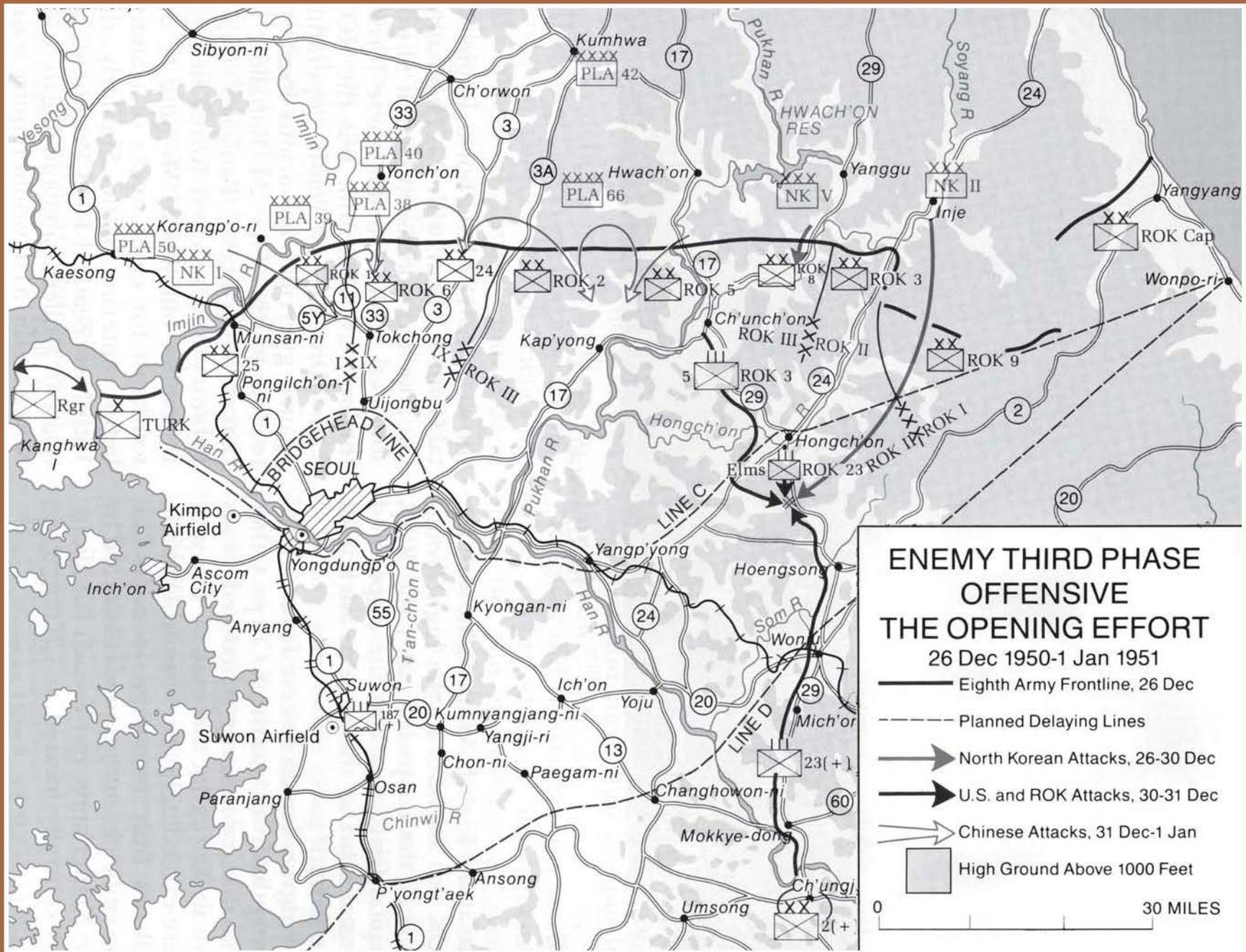
After the last UN forces withdrew from Seoul, Lt. Gen Matthew Ridgway (front row, left) and Col. Emerson Itschner (front row, center) gave the order to dismantle the bridge and destroy those sections that could not be quickly removed, 4 January 1951 Engineer School, 42-6-56

Should they be allowed to cross? I didn't know anything about it. I asked the Korean commander, who said, "Well, they're friendly to us." I said, "Well, okay. We'll let them across and caution them to keep on the road so they don't get shot." This was at night. So cross they did, and I was down there to make sure they got across. One or two carts, usually pushed by women with all their household possessions, got caught between the railroad rail and the wood decking. I personally lifted out one

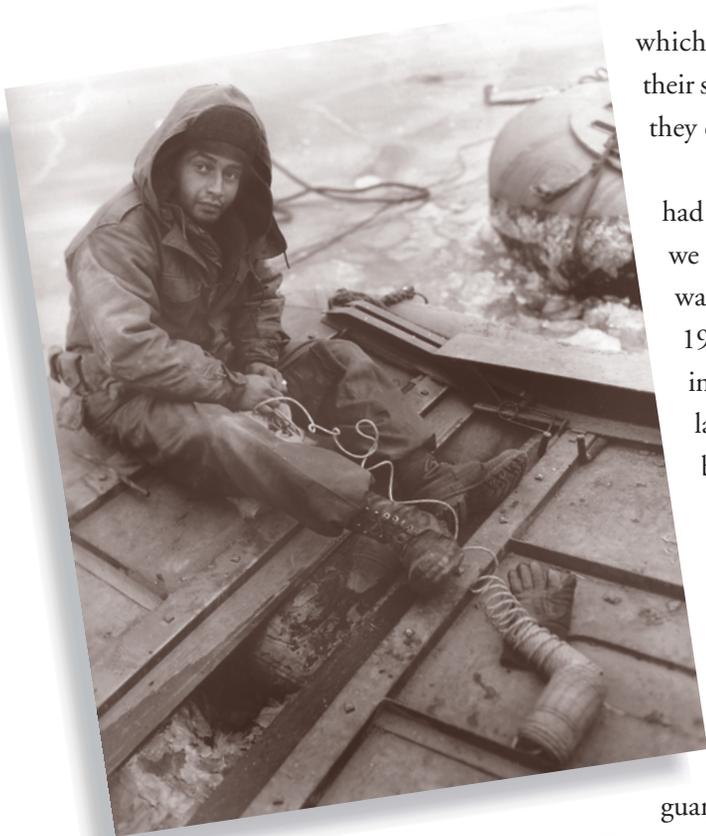
wheel of a cart and pushed the thing on and this Korean woman smiled and said, "Thank you," in perfect English. Those were the only words she knew in English, I guess, and it was very gratifying. Anyway, we cautioned them to stay on the road. After they came across and we got the last troops across we blew the bridge. It was a semi-permanent bridge, one we could not have salvaged.

In the demolition of P'yongyang we had about 20 different military targets. No problem. We just had our details go to these various places and they did the demolition with bridge explosives. I wasn't too happy that we were assigned that because it was just buildings, but anyway we did. The only problem we had at P'yongyang was that on one of the details a sergeant and some men couldn't get their truck started and had to walk back. They destroyed the truck and we didn't see them for a day or two. When they finally showed up that relieved a lot of anxiety. They walked all the way back, but they didn't have any trouble, and none from sniping by local people.

When I stood in one of the quartermaster depots there I saw an awful lot of foodstuffs just a few hours before we were leaving. We didn't destroy that. We couldn't. We didn't have the means. Lots of Korean women were standing around hoping we'd leave and I was tempted to just tell them, "Come on in." It would be better to let them have it anyway than the North Korean or Chinese armies. We could have shown them



## Colonel Emerson C. Itschner I Corps Engineer



Pfc. Frank Bonvilla of the 14th Engineers prepares to set demolition charges on the remaining ponton bridge crossing the Han River at Seoul, 4 January 1951  
RG 111, SC-355558

which ones were the best ones from their standpoint, but we didn't. I'm sure they came in right after I left.

One of the greatest problems we had in demolitions was at Seoul. As we left Seoul for the second time it was shortly after New Year's Day, 1951. It was cold, well below freezing. The river was frozen over to a large extent. To keep the floating bridge in service we had to break the ice to keep it floating properly. There also was a railroad bridge that was semi permanent, which had been planked over so you could use it for road traffic too. We waited until we knew we had to leave. Just a few rear-guard Koreans were on the Seoul side of the river. We had orders to remove the bridge and then to blow the other bridge. We just had to use our judgment about when because unless you were right there you couldn't tell. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway came up and saw what we were doing. He was newly in command of the army. We started to pull out the bridge, which is pretty slow work. We got some of it out when the division commander, Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, became extremely worried, and with good reason. The

British had lost a complete battalion, the Gloucester Battalion, the night before. Gen. Dean knew very well that things would be rough with the coming of another night. So he gave me a direct order to blow the bridge. I hated to do it and it took us quite a bit of time to get the explosives placed because we weren't prepared to do that. In the meantime we took out some more of it, but we did blow perhaps a third of it. It was a hard thing to do. This was an M-4 bridge, not a treadway—a different type of bridge, a very useful type, quite expensive—much better than the treadway, with aluminum balks constituting the solid deck.

Although we dismantled much of it, I would have preferred to have salvaged all of it. As it was, we got more than half of it; then we had to leave so we blew it up. Prior to that we blew up the railroad bridge. The British were assigned that mission. They insisted on a written order, which I was glad enough to give them. They blew that bridge up. I went over to see; it was nearby. It was a perfect job of demolition. When we came back there a few months later, lo and behold the North Koreans had salvaged all the decking they could—the aluminum balks. They were all piled up nicely, all ready for us. All we lost, really, was the part we actually destroyed by explosives. Most of the boats were beyond repair, but a few of them weren't.

Officers weren't talking about *Operation Bugout* in those days, but that was what everybody called it

over there. The engineers were magnificent, really magnificent. They weren't afraid to be right up at the front. They did their work extremely well. They worked infinitely long hours, without sleep, getting two meals a day part of that time, because that was all they could supply. We got plenty to eat, but at two meals a day instead of the usual three. Things were rough.

For a time, we thought we were going to have to go back to the Pusan perimeter and maybe get out of Korea entirely. We reconnoitered roads to the rear and found two roads I Corps could use, which come somewhat from the west into Pusan. We had to bridge several river crossings by improvising. We also had to leapfrog our bridging by taking it up as we left each river and moving it forward. If we had lost our motor equipment that would have been disastrous, so we had to save our bridging.

Actually, the "bugout" wasn't chaotic. As far as I Corps was concerned it was leisurely. We had plenty of time. On the east coast, and in the center with the Koreans, it was chaotic. The reason we pulled out from back of the Ch'ongch'on was because the Koreans caved in to our east. We knew very well that there was a big gap, and the enemy was down 30 or even 40 miles to our rear in that sector, so we had to pull out. I'm not at all sure we shouldn't have stayed someplace where we had access to the sea, like P'yongyang. There was a port serving the P'yongyang area where we might have stayed.



Built by the 62nd Engineers just three months before, this railroad bridge over the Han River is shown before and after it was destroyed by engineers during the evacuation of Seoul, 4 January 1951  
RG 111, SC-355563  
and SC355565



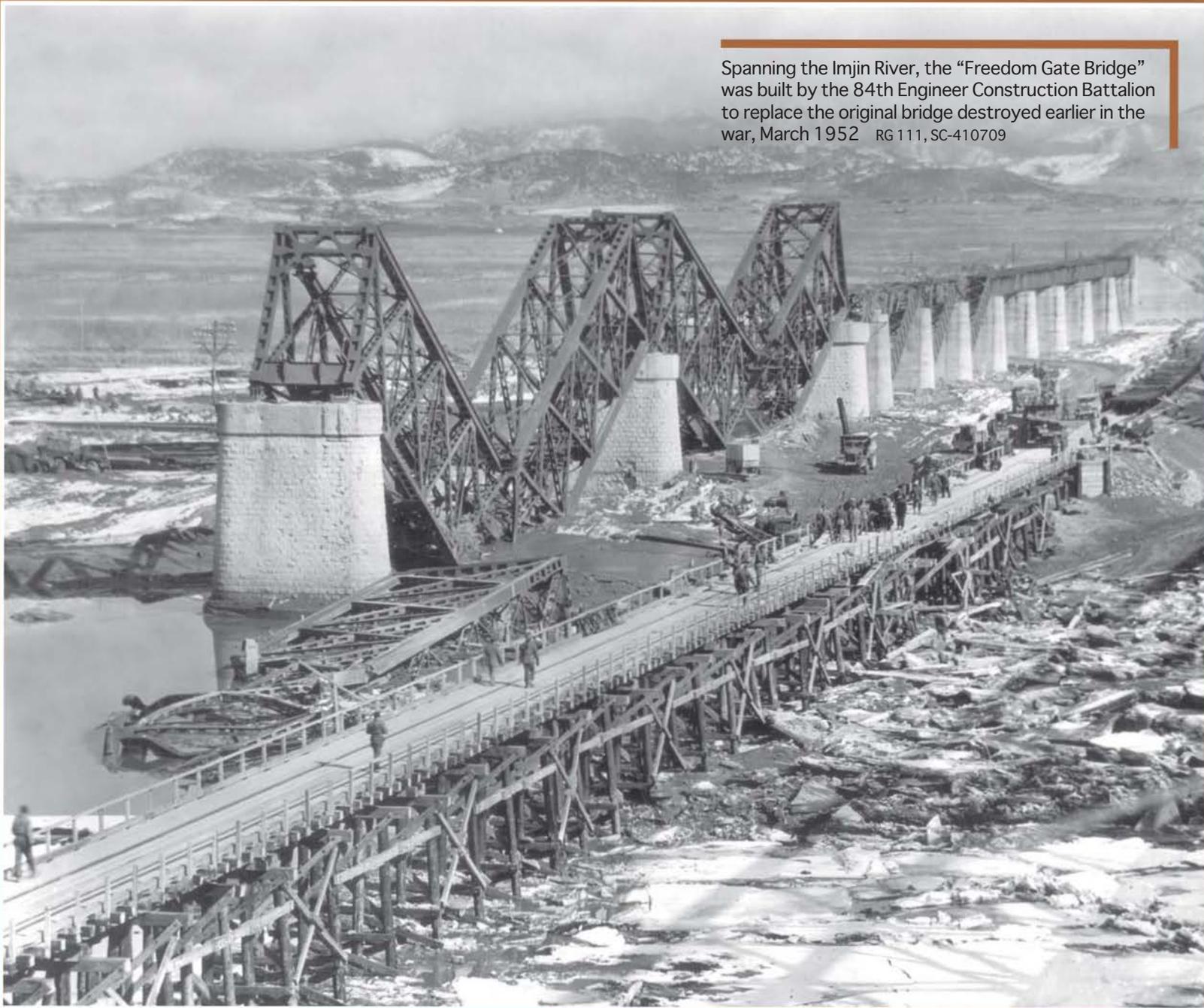
## Colonel Emerson C. Itschner | I Corps Engineer

The engineers were magnificent, really magnificent. They weren't afraid to be right up at the front. They did their work extremely well. They worked infinitely long hours, without sleep, getting two meals a day part of that time, because that was all they could supply.... Things were rough.

Later, there were just hordes and hordes of Chinese. Our corps knew they were there long before the publicity about it. We didn't know how many, but we knew there was an awful lot of them.

In our corps we captured roughly 25 Chinese, not North Koreans, and every one of them said he was a cook. That was what they were told to say, but we didn't think they had that many cooks and that our chances were that good of catching *all cooks!* Our units jokingly said they were going to try them out, but nobody really wanted to eat their food anyway. So they didn't. These Chinese were awfully young looking people, just young boys. Good fighters, they always attacked at night. They'd generally sound the bugle when they attacked. There was one floating bridge in the IX Corps area, just to the east of Seoul, where they experienced that. They heard this bugle at night. There never was an attack, but everybody knew what the bugle call meant. Our engineer unit did not salvage that bridge as a result. 🏰

Spanning the Imjin River, the “Freedom Gate Bridge” was built by the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion to replace the original bridge destroyed earlier in the war, March 1952 RG 111, SC-410709



**F**irst Lieutenant Medding describes the rapid advance of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion north from the Pusan Perimeter, after Inch'on. He recalls the Chinese intervention and the UN fall back to below Seoul, after destroying everything of use, including the torching of Kim Il Sung's residence.

#### Advance and Retreat of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion

The Inch'on landing took place on 15 September, and I Corps, to which we were assigned, went on the offensive on 16 September. Breaking out of the Naktong perimeter, the 14th Engineers undertook a number of engineer missions. One of these, about 19-20 September, was the construction of a sandbag causeway and a 60-foot fixed treadway trestle bridge. The treadway trestle bridge replaced a sandbag causeway with culverts on a crossing of the Kumho River. In addition, the battalion built a floating treadway bridge across the Naktong River in support of the 24th Division. During much of this period, Company A provided engineer direct support to the 1st ROK Division.

Eighth Army and I Corps advanced slowly until about 20 September when an M4 ferry was built on the Naktong. After that date, the Eighth Army advance to the Han River and Seoul was fairly rapid. During this period, the 14th prima-

rily engaged in road maintenance activities. I don't remember any specific bridge construction during this period, but there may have been something. A number of small bridges had been demolished. These were bypassed whenever possible. We may have built a Bailey or a fixed treadway, but there was not much standard bridging equipment available at that time.

During the first few days of October, the 14th moved to Choch'iwon, Suwon, and then Seoul. About 6 October the attack toward the 38th Parallel got underway. When I Corps units reached the Imjin River they were supported in the crossing by the 14th Engineers with ferries, and later with an M4/M4 A2 floating bridge, completed on 11 October. The advance was very rapid. Many existing highway bridges had been destroyed or badly damaged by explosives, but, for the most part, the 14th performed either minor repairs or established bypasses to permit the rapid advance to continue. At least two Bailey bridges were built. About 12 October, Company A was again attached to the 1st ROK Division. This support was provided almost continuously for many months because the 1st ROK Division had no organic engineer troops.

These types of activities continued until Eighth Army reached P'yongyang and I Corps reached the Ch'ongch'on River in the vicinity of Sinanju. During much of this time, the 14th was supported by the 72d Engineer Company, 5th RCT. Part of the time, the 14th

First Lt. Walter Medding  
Medding Collection



was attached to the 19th Engineer Group, commanded by Col. Frank Forney. Battalion units reached P'yongyang by about 20 October. Company A participated in the 1st ROK Division assault crossing of the Taedong River. Companies B and C repaired several bridges in the area.

One of the most interesting things noted during the advance to P'yongyang and beyond was that classification of existing bridges, mostly concrete T-beam or slab bridges, resulted in under classification. We were still using WWII bridge classification cards. On several occasions a bridge was classified as only class 35, but while building a bypass, class 50 tanks or other heavy vehicles would cross the bridge. Usually, during the advance, destroyed bridges were replaced by Bailey or fixed-treadway bridges. There may have been one or two fixed-timber trestle bridges built but I can't remember any.

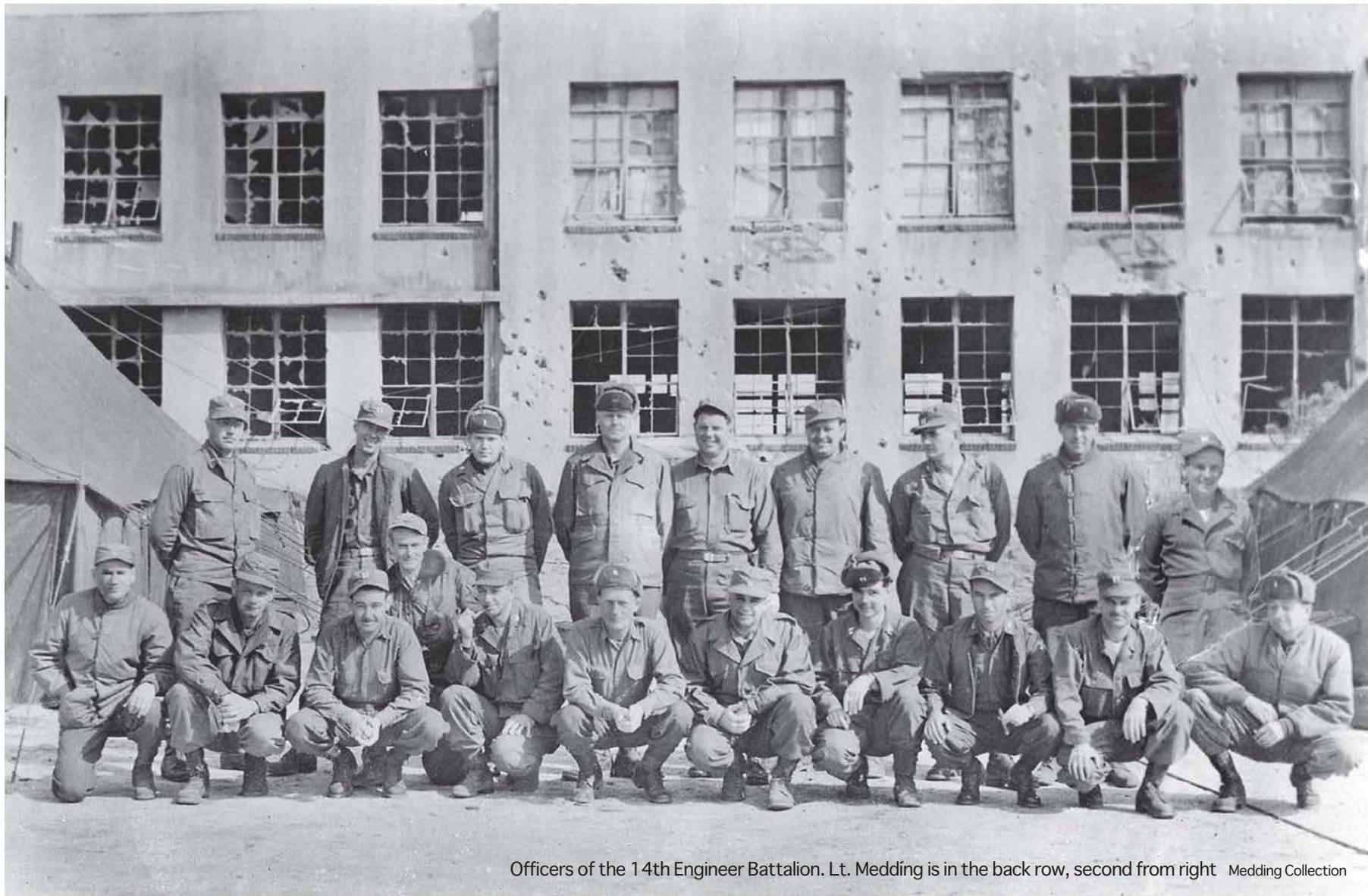
The 14th went through P'yongyang to the Anju-Sinanju area during the advance. Road maintenance was a very big effort at all times. In fact, there were frequent occasions when the battalion had more than 100 miles of road maintenance responsibility. In early November the battalion had several periods when defensive missions were assigned. At one time, Companies B and C both were attached to the 5th RCT for operations.

When the Chinese entered the war, Company A was still with the 1st ROK Division. On the day of the Chinese attack, I was in Anju looking at a sawmill to see if we could use it to cut bridge timber. (We often were in

need of lumber for bridges. We had collected dunnage from LSTs in Pohang, mostly 1 by 10- or 1 by 12-inch planks. One thing we used this lumber for was laminated decking). A local resident told me that he had seen a Chinese soldier in Anju the previous day. When I returned to battalion headquarters for lunch the battalion had been alerted and I was sent to P'yongyang to reconnoiter potential floating bridge sites. I found several suitable locations. Early the next morning I started back toward Sinanju but met the 14th headquarters coming south.

Over the next few days, the 14th prepared for the withdrawal from P'yongyang. Our efforts were mainly preparation of demolition targets. Virtually everything of any use to the North Koreans and Chinese that we couldn't take south would be destroyed. This included buildings, damaged weapons, the airfield, power stations, vehicles badly in need of repair, and bridges. We destroyed more than 30 targets in P'yongyang. As they were executed I sat at a road intersection south of the river while all platoon commanders reported the completion of their targets to me. One target was Kim Il Sung's residence, which was destroyed by putting a 55-gallon drum of napalm in the basement and igniting it! We then continued the withdrawal to and through Seoul, and south to Anyang-Ni and then to Ch'ongju. We destroyed all highway bridges and dismantled floating bridges along the Seoul-Suwon MSR. 🏰

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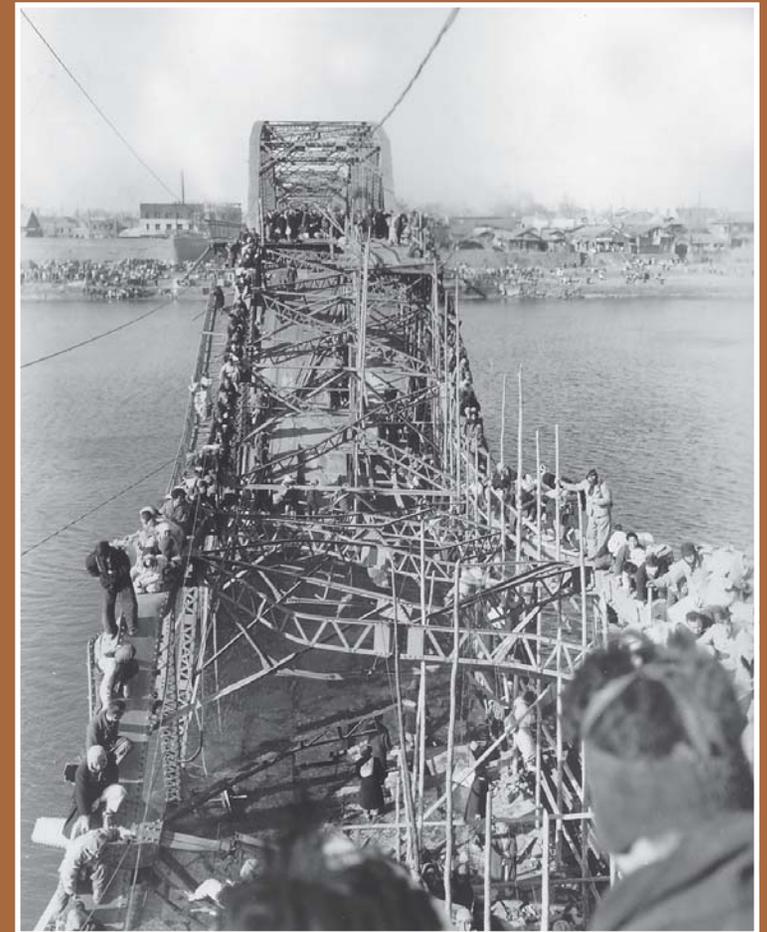
Officers of the 14th Engineer Battalion. Lt. Medding is in the back row, second from right Medding Collection

RG 111, SC-355229



As UN forces withdrew from Pyongyang, thousands of North Koreans began to flee south. Crossing the Taedong River was difficult—some refugees climbed over a partially destroyed bridge, while others, often carrying small children or aging relatives, waded across the icy river

RG 111, SC-355230



RG 111, SC-355225

**E**ngineer operations in Korea, whether carving out new roads, offloading equipment at seaports, or building bridges, required specialized equipment. Much of that material was collected from bases throughout the Pacific and rushed to engineer depots in Japan. There the incoming material was inspected, repaired, and sent to units in Korea.

I joined the Far East Command and became commanding officer of the engineer depot at Yokohama in September 1950. The Yokohama Engineer Depot was organized right after the occupation of Japan. The Korean War increased its activities and that was the reason I was ordered there. I commanded the whole depot and stayed until July 1953.

A large proportion of the supply was made from items that were leftover from World War II, many of which were rehabilitated. This rehabilitation had been going on since 1946, because there was some feeling that there might be a confrontation with Russia. The Army was stockpiling equipment in preparation for any contingency.

When I arrived in September 1950 the depot was still expanding. It had expanded considerably. The main problem was personnel. I solved that by contacting the headquarters people who were assigning personnel, and by taking the assignment of officers of any branch. I received many infantry, field artillery, and other service

officers, as well as engineers. Now that requires training, but we had enough officers and civilians who could train these new officers.

The main reason these officers were sent over was they were going into combat units in Korea. They were happy to stay in Japan—it was a fairly safe place—rather than be assigned to a combat unit in Korea. I don't think they were particularly avoiding it, but they were just as happy to be assigned someplace else. By 1950, Japan was a much more pleasant assignment than Korea.

Initially, I wasn't very enthusiastic about being re-assigned over there. An officer who knew me was the engineer of the Japan Logistics Command and he asked for me specifically. He knew I had supply experience. Although I wasn't excited with the assignment at first, I became enthused with the work and the challenges it gave me, and I enjoyed it very much.

As far as the Japanese were concerned, they hadn't changed any. They were still friendly, industrious, hard-working people. As I have said before, it was hard to understand how they could have been what they were during World War II.

There were shipping problems, and I was able to solve some of them. For instance, the Bailey bridge needed to be made up of hundreds of items. By experimentation, we devised a box whereby we could put a complete bridge in two boxes, each weighing about 10 tons apiece. Each box contained a definite unit of

Practically no new equipment was sent from the United States. It was all equipment that was leftover from World War II that was sent up from New Guinea, Australia, the Philippines, and various islands.

bridge, so that if you had a whole box, you could at least build that much bridge. Before, if you lost a few boxes, you lost a whole bridge. It worked fine. The only thing the unit had to do was to be sure to have a crane for lifting the box off and onto a truck or tractor until it got to the point of use and they could dismantle the box. Our engineer units had a crane and they liked this arrangement very much.

Practically no new equipment was sent from the United States. It was all equipment that was left over from World War II that was sent up from New Guinea, Australia, the Philippines, and various islands. We processed the equipment so that it wouldn't rust or become damaged while it was sitting in the depot in Korea or in Japan, waiting to be used. We actually improved on the processing that had been done in World War II. Besides rebuilding equipment, our work at the depot involved redoing the processing and actually removing rust and corrosion. Some of the items had never been used, for example, tractors and hand tools—saws, chisels, and screws. They just needed a rust removal and, sometimes, repainting. Of course as the rust progressed it extended the damage to functioning equipment and limited the repairs that could be made. If the engine crankshaft was rusted, and the piston was rusted, you would have to replace it.

Demand for the bridging equipment in Korea was greater than in the island hopping of World War II.

There weren't many streams to be bridged in going up the chain of Pacific islands. Most of the operations were merely getting ashore in a boat, until we got to the island of Luzon, in the Philippines, where they required some bridging.

During the war we actually increased the stock of bridge parts. All of the remains of the bridging that were left down in New Guinea and Australia were shipped up to Japan and just dumped. They were in many, many boxes. We found in inventorying it that some of it was missing and we never did know what happened to it. We had to get bolts and certain parts made in Japan. We made these parts on our own equipment or we contracted it out.

Essentially, my supply work in Korea was rehabilitation and collection, rather than bringing in new stuff. The one exception was lumber. Very little lumber was shipped from the United States. When we got lumber, for instance, we purchased it in the Philippines and it was shipped by the boatload to Japan and Korea.

Treads for a Bailey bridge are loaded on a barge at the Yokohama Engineer Depot, 28 January 1951  
RG 111, SC-356681



**F**ollowing the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion's advance northward, in late November the intervention of Chinese troops forced the UN troops to retreat south. The withdrawal was chaotic, and after it became clear that the Chinese had blocked their escape route and would soon overrun the units trapped on the road, Captain Farnum led 150 men on an 18-hour trek, much of it through enemy territory, to safety.

#### Forward to the Town of Chonju

After breaking out of the Pusan Perimeter, the battalion had moved forward to a small town called Chonju. At that time I had turned over the responsibilities of the S-1 and S-2 and was the battalion S-3, but I know I went forward with the new S-1, who was Bob Nehrling, to find billets farther north.

We found a small agricultural college on the outskirts of Chonju and selected that for our battalion CP. The weather was good. It was cold at night, but we had beautiful, sunshiny days. During this

period Lt. Caldwell, at headquarters, was wounded and evacuated. Lts. Nehrling and Beahler were promoted to captain. About the same time, the 1st of October, our division rear moved from Miryang over to the west-coast port of Kunsan.

Early in October things were very quiet as far as the engineer battalion was concerned. We were working on the roads. Maj. Fry was the battalion commander. Col. McEachern was back at division rear waiting to go before a reclassification board.

The roads in this area, provided the weather was good, were not a particular problem. We were working at keeping drainage open and putting additional rock and gravel onto the road surface. Our heavy vehicles put a great deal more strain on these all-weather roads than the light traffic for which the roads were designed. By and large we were widening the roads to ensure easy passage of two-way traffic where feasible. Drivers had to be very careful of oncoming vehicles because the roads generally were substandard and their widths were not adequate to take normal traffic of military size.

The assistant division commander who had relieved our battalion commander, Col. McEachern, was Brig. Gen. Joseph S. Bradley. He is the one who had to place the charges against Col. McEachern for lack of leadership ability.

Capt. Robbins, assigned to the battalion, had not lived up to our expectations of him during the

Using hand tools, soldiers of the 65th Engineer Battalion work to fill holes in the road near Hagammyond, Korea Engineer School, Korea 86



Naktong perimeter experience. Maj. Fry put him up for reclassification action, or elimination from service, due to lack of ability.

Around 7 October, while we were still located at Chonju, I went forward through Seoul to check the bridges across the Han River, to see what was needed for the IX Corps to enter that area. While on that recon I made contact with the engineer section of both X Corps and I Corps. Fortunately, between the two engineer sections and the Eighth Army engineers, we were able to get them to put in additional bridges for the IX Corps. Sufficient Eighth Army engineers were there to maintain the bridges so we didn't have to pull our own bridging section from the Naktong and move it forward at that time.

About the same period of time, early October, I was serving as both the S-3 and the S-1, but Capt. Nehrling, who was the H&S Company commander, was moved into the S-1 slot. Joe Cox, who was the motor transportation officer, moved into the H&S Company commander slot. They were both promoted to captain. At this time I was the S-3, Nehrling was the S-1, and Joe Cox had become the H&S Company commander. Lt. Leamon became the communications officer, and Lt. Appenfelder became our liaison officer.

We were now in the Seoul area. Seoul was a virtual mess—refugees by the thousands. It was difficult to find space to get the entire battalion together but we did find



an area. It was the first time the entire battalion was together with all of our elements since mid-July when we had arrived in Korea. We actually were billeted about five miles south of Seoul in what had been the 1st Replacement Depot at Yongdungp'o. The division was in I Corps reserve.

We had sent one of our line companies farther north to work on some roads. It was very quiet, as far as operations were concerned, but the engineers had plenty of roadwork to do. Mid-October it started to rain both day and night. With the rain the roadwork

Soldiers of the 77th Infantry Division use a tank to pull American and Korean Army vehicles from the mud; spring rains quickly turned narrow dirt roads into quagmires  
RG 111, SC-362455

...engineers, although well qualified to exhibit their bravery and their ingenuity as intelligent engineers, when used in the line as infantry, did not have the same capability the infantry units had. We didn't have mortars. We didn't have the proper communications facilities to call in mortar fire or artillery support.

became very intense and movement of our heavy loads became a problem and a challenge.

On 22 October, Maj. Carl Price returned to the battalion from Japan. Since the only field grade spot for him was the S-3, I became the assistant S-3 and Carl returned to his old job; however, the relationship between Maj. Price and Maj. Fry was such that Maj. Fry would not accept him as the operations officer. On two or three different attempts, Price was assigned to civil affairs to remain in one of the villages as a civil affairs officer. He would be gone for maybe a week or 10 days, and then be back to the battalion.

Along about this time Col. McEachern appeared before the reclassification board and no action was taken. He was then assigned from our division to 3d Logistics (log) Command in Pusan.

Capt. Robbins, who had been before a reclassification board, also was transferred to the log command in his grade as captain.

#### Moving North, October-November 1950

On 31 October 1950 Capt. Nehrling and I went north to locate a new area near Sariwon. The area had been heavily destroyed so we looked at several facilities in the P'yongyang area. Due to the damage and the number of other U.S. forces settling into the P'yongyang area, we couldn't find an area to take all of our heavy equipment and provide an adequate facility for us.

We finally relocated in a town south of P'yongyang called Choe Yong. We found a nice private girls high school, which was not in use, and used that as the battalion billet.

We only got to spend about three days in our nice billets in Choe Yong in early November and then moved on up to P'yongyang. We stayed there only one night, and then moved on to Sunch'on, which is about 40 miles north of P'yongyang. A couple of our line companies were some 30 miles farther north.

The weather was still quite good during the day, getting very cold at night. We found a silk farm in the Sunch'on area for a battalion CP, with ample space to park all of our heavy equipment, and set up.

At this time the Eighth Army engineer had asked me to write a paper on the use of engineers as infantry. Essentially, what I wanted to put forth in that paper was the fact that the engineers, although well qualified to exhibit their bravery and their ingenuity as intelligent engineers, when used in the line as infantry, did not have the same capability the infantry units had. We didn't have mortars. We didn't have the proper communications facilities to call in mortar fire or artillery support. Our radios were fixed, mounted in our vehicles, while the infantry carried their communications with them. They had all this support that we could not call upon when we were employed as infantry.

In the first week of November most of the battal-

ion was together in Sunch'on and ready to head north. The way the corps wanted to lay out sectors heading straight north, we didn't particularly have an MSR. There weren't enough existing roads to serve each division so that they would have an MSR. I was given the job to locate feasible routes within our division sector to move the division forward.

I did most of this reconnaissance by L-5 aircraft. IX Corps assigned me an aircraft on a daily basis. After a few days I was given my choice of pilots who would fly down through the valleys and give me a look at small streams that we would have to ford, or cross. The first couple of weeks of November I spent a great deal of my time on aerial reconnaissance for the advance of our division and the different regimental sectors.

Since I was not occupying a proper TO&E position, Maj. Fry offered me the command of Companies A or D, or H&S Company. I would have taken Company B if it had been available, but a good friend, Capt. Frank White, who was an excellent company commander, commanded it. My good friend Joe Cox was doing very well with H&S. Although Company A was commanded by Lt. Smith, I really was somewhat hesitant to command the company that normally was in support of the 9th Infantry. Honestly, my personal preferences of the regiments we had at that time was the 23d, which I had been with for about a year and a half, then the 38th, where I had many friends. I just didn't have the social

contact and desire to be actively engaged with the 9th.

Capt. Kahaniak, a very fine officer, commanded Company D at that time. I believe Capt. Kahaniak is still alive, and, if so, he would be one of only three of our officers who are still alive who were prisoners of the Chinese for some 33 months.

On 11 November the weather was good and we were directed to move up to Kunu-ri. The food up until that time had been very good, but as our supply lines extended in November we reverted to B rations.

Men of the  
9th Regimental  
Combat Team and  
2d Engineer Battalion  
are served breakfast  
RG 111, SC-362314



On 15 November the battalion was located at Kunu-ri in a cotton patch. The weather was cold, below zero at night. We were in tents. The battalion had received no winter clothing as of that date. We were rather jealous when we would see some members of the 3d Log Command, or others who had their winter uniforms, but none of the front line troops in the 2d Division had received anything up to that time. There was no enemy in sight. We were able to keep quite comfortable in our CP tents.

The S-3 section, if not really busy because of operations, turned out the reports and all the directions for the following day, as well as the write-ups of what happened on each particular day. The S-3 section was always busy, usually until at least midnight every night, putting out the orders for the following day, getting all the reports in, and making a historical record of what we had done.

The battalion was basically working on roads at the time. Usually, the bridges, where they existed, were concrete affairs and very narrow. None of the bridges would really accommodate passing trucks for MSR purposes. In some cases we bypassed the bridges and just put a detour around them. Other times, we widened the bridge with timber trestle so that we could have two-way traffic on the MSR.

On 19 November the entire battalion was together except for Company C, which was over about

40 miles east of Kunu-ri. I was continuing to make aerial reconnaissance on a daily basis for our division, for different routes to continue north.

### The Chinese Attack the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

I moved back to the S-2 position and had Lt. Jim Welcher as my assistant. I used him as a reconnaissance officer and he was constantly on the road or in an aircraft looking at the terrain for movement. He made some of the earliest reports on sightings of large numbers of enemy troops coming into our area.

We reported these to division. On at least a couple of occasions I recall taking Jim Welcher with me and going to division to discuss it with the division G-2 and G-3. I know that I was present when they had some radio discussion with higher headquarters, both corps and army, and the reports back were that the enemy forces could not be as numerous or as heavy as we were reporting.

Some of these reports came back from Japan, which I'm sure were based upon aerial sightings along the border and such things. All the way through to the end of November our reports of enemy activity were countered by our division staff who were receiving information from higher headquarters that the forces could not be large enough to bother the division.

At this time Turkish troops were assigned to the

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division. The first time I met up with some of them there was a heavy traffic snarl up on one of the roads. I went up to see if I could assist. The people who were having all the problems didn't speak English. We found them to be particularly fine troops and great to have around, but it was my first realization that there was a real language problem in having Turkish, French, and Netherlands [later on] troops with our division.

About 27 November the battalion was committed as infantry in the vicinity of Kunu-ri. We were given certain areas to hold. Our battalion CP area was hit at night. A couple of our companies were overrun at night up on a hill and we lost the hill.

The following day we had no communication with the companies and so I told Col. Zacherle that I intended to go up to where the companies had been to find out why we were out of contact with them. Col. Zacherle had taken over the battalion sometime after the middle of November. Col. Zacherle had come out on the DA promotion list, moved from junior major to a lieutenant colonel on the Regular Army DA promotion list, and took over as the battalion commander. It seems as if he was battalion commander for a lot longer than that, because so much happened in those few days.

Probably the stupidest thing in my 13 months in Korea was to charge up this hill where our companies had been to find out what had happened. Charlie Fry, who had reverted from commanding down to being the



XO, said he was going with me. Jim Welcher said, "I'm coming along too." We took about four sergeants and the three of us went charging up the hillside about as fast as we could walk. We got to the brow of the hill and found the company commander had been killed in action (KIA). The only sign of our troops was a few dead bodies. Companies A and B had been assigned to hold that particular hill. The captain whom we identified as being KIA, whose body was out in the open, was Capt. Frank Smith. About that time it didn't take an overly intelligent person to say, "We're in an area that we don't control at all and there must be an awful lot of enemy forces in and around us."

Attacked while building a raft on the Han River, soldiers of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion return fire  
RG 111, SC-361277

## Captain Lawrence B. Farnum 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

We started back down the hill. The Chinese, who had taken the hill from our companies, were in their shallow foxholes and, in some cases, apparently covered by some of our own troops who had been killed. They fired a few shots at us as we went running down the hill as fast as our legs would take us. We didn't take any effort at evasion or return fire. Just knowing that the Chinese held the hill and that we had no living elements of our company up on the hill was enough.

We got back down to our battalion CP area safely. Jim Welcher had taken the time to take the billfold from the company commander containing pictures of his wife and children, the kind that most of us carried. It was one of those memories that stay very clear in your mind. They certainly could have killed all seven of us with absolutely no problem but we were not a threat to them. They didn't choose to make a big issue of our making a recon up there to the top of the hill.

When the Communist forces hit our 9th Regiment fairly severely, the engineer battalion was placed on line



Capt. Farnum carried this photograph of his wife Jeanne and his children, l-r, Donna, Jeffrey, and Joan, with him all the time he was in Korea. It was, he said, "my inspiration to come home."

Farnum Collection

as part of the 3d Battalion, 9th Infantry. The night of the 27th our particular area was attacked, and Companies A and B lost many of their people as KIA.

The next day all the units were ordered to pull back towards Sunch'on. With all of our elements we moved back to an area called Kujang-dong and Kunu-ri. The division ordered all units in the division to proceed towards Sunch'on.

A battle order was issued with the order of march. The 9th Infantry was to lead through the roadblock, which had been established by the Chinese forces south of Kunu-ri, to be followed by the 38th. Interspersed with them was the division provost, MPs, the

72d Tank, our antiaircraft types, and then to be followed by the 503d Artillery, which was a 155 outfit, and then the 38th Field Artillery 105s. Last were the engineers. Within the engineer battalion, our order of withdrawal was to be our Company D, followed by the battalion staff, Headquarters and Service Company, and then Companies A, B, and C.

Jim Welcher had taken the time to take the billfold from the company commander containing pictures of his wife and children, the kind that most of us carried. It was one of those memories that stay very clear in your mind.

At this same time many things happened in just a two-day period that are important to the history of the 2d Engineers. On the morning of 29 November some others from the battalion and I had gone west from the Kunu-ri area to Anju, and then south, proving that the road was open and there was no enemy fire on it.

Our recon element also had patrolled as far as they could south of Kunu-ri to check the road and reported back heavy fire on the road. Certain elements of the 9th had already been hit by mortar fire along that section of road, which was causing not only a deterioration of the road surface itself, but also problems and blockages by some of our damaged equipment.

I reported our reconnaissance to division and asked permission to move our heavy equipment, and what we would consider our trains, out by the western route going through Anju. That was going through another corps area. I talked to Lt. Col. Holden, who was the division G-3. We remained while he asked permission by radio, not only from 2d Division personnel, but also from someone down at IX Corps. The answer was that the roadblock could not be as strong as we were reporting and that the division should be able to clear it and come out on the IX Corps MSR, which was straight south from Kunu-ri, and not go through the adjoining corps' area [I Corps] through Anju.

That same morning division received permission from I Corps to remove the division administrative

personnel and division trains that were with them out through Anju and down to the south. So some of our elements from division headquarters did move out in that direction on the morning of the 29th.

I felt that our engineering equipment, such as dozers, which we had to move on low boys, certainly didn't need to be with the combat forces. We ought to have been able to withdraw them on the road that we knew from our reconnaissance to be open and capable of taking all of our loads. Those are some of the heaviest loads of the division to go over roads and bridges. Division basically tried to get us that permission, but our directives were to go straight south.

On 30 November I was at division CP and asked for a change in the decision. We were continuing to patrol the road to Anju and south. We reported that it was still open and requested that we take our equipment out that way. The response was the same as yesterday's—the answer was no. They said, "Well, we've got to go now," because the 9th was making what efforts they could to clear the roadblock and to move their equipment through. The division headquarters personnel had already moved their administrative trains out the day before through Anju, their vehicles interspersed with military police vehicles of the division, and certain firepower from some of our tanks from the 72d, and started south to run the roadblock.

In subsequent years this was known as “The Gauntlet.” It was estimated at the time to be about six miles long. The enemy held all of the high ground overlooking the road going through a narrow defile. Our infantry troops from both the 9th and the 38th had been unable to clear the enemy forces from the high ground.

The 23d Infantry [Regiment] had the assigned mission of being the rear guard, the rear holding force, for the withdrawal of the division. They were, in turn, to follow the 2d Engineer Battalion down our IX Corps MSR, which ran straight south from Kunu-ri.

When the division staff headed south, I left the division CP to go back and report to Col. Zacherle and Maj. Fry that they hadn’t accepted our request to go out by way of Anju, or taken any of our equipment out by the alternate route. The last thing I tried to ask them was how long we were to remain deployed on the hills protecting this particular valley. I was unable to get any direction from division staff, mainly the division G-3, who I still to this day have a great deal of admiration for. He was a lieutenant colonel carrying a tremendous load and responsibility. He definitely tried to get authority. This basin was overlooked by a series of steep hills, practically at Kunu-ri, and north of Kunu-ri.

Our division headquarters was minus their administrative sections, which had pulled out on the 29th. The 503d Field Artillery was in a bivouac area, with their guns really pointing 360 degrees, and the 38th Field

Artillery of 105s, and the engineer battalion.

On the 30th, after failing to get authority from division to move any of our equipment out through Anju, I went back to our battalion area and told them to wait for the artillery battalions to get on the road, and then to follow them down IX Corps’ MSR through Kunu-ri, the fire block being approximately six miles south of Kunu-ri.

We waited on the hill all that afternoon with no particular action by the enemy. We still felt that we controlled the days and they controlled the nights, except that in the fire block area, where they held the high ground, it was obvious why our division was having a terrible time getting through it.

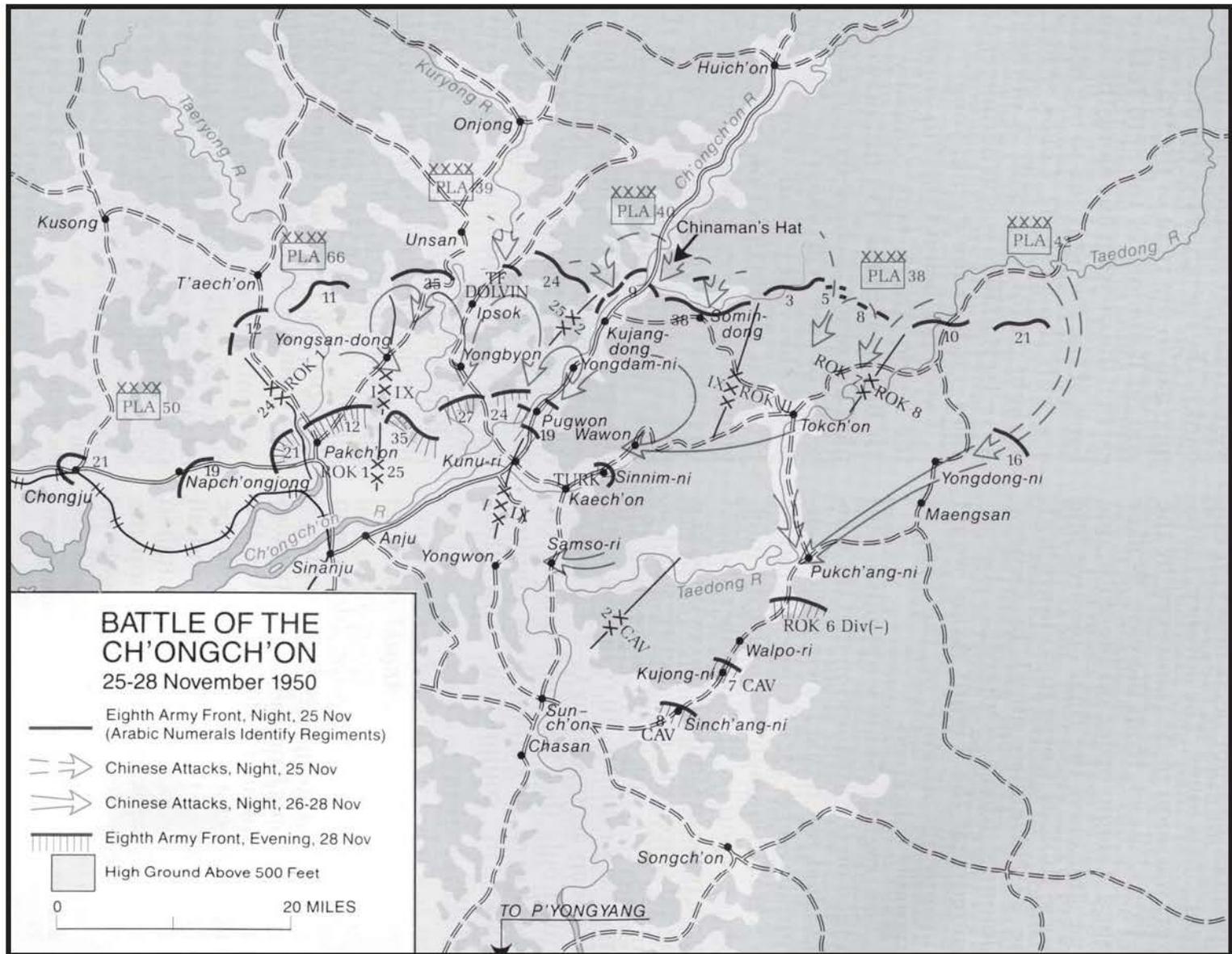
Late in the afternoon, but prior to dark, we intercepted a radio message not addressed to us. We were on the same net, but we heard the message from the 23d that they were breaking contact with the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) and withdrawing west to Anju and then going south. By this time the road had cleared sufficiently so that the 503d Field Artillery was on the road heading south. The 38th Field Artillery and our Company D of engineers had most of their vehicles on the road behind the 38th. We had sent all of our drivers, administrative type people, cooks, and whatnot, down to get on the vehicles, get on the road, and proceed as far south as they could.

We had people in our headquarters’ vehicles, H&S Company, A, B, and C, who were to follow in that

When we got up into the 503d area we found something that looked like Dante’s Inferno. One of the large ammo supply trucks of the 503d was on fire....and the 155-mm shells were cooking off and exploding.

In a scene that was indicative of the gale force winds and sub-zero temperatures that American forces encountered, Marines move south, December 1950 RG 127-GK-234J-A5370





order. I know that there was not enough road space to get Company C's vehicles out of their bivouac area and onto the road, and probably no room even for portions of A's and B's vehicles.

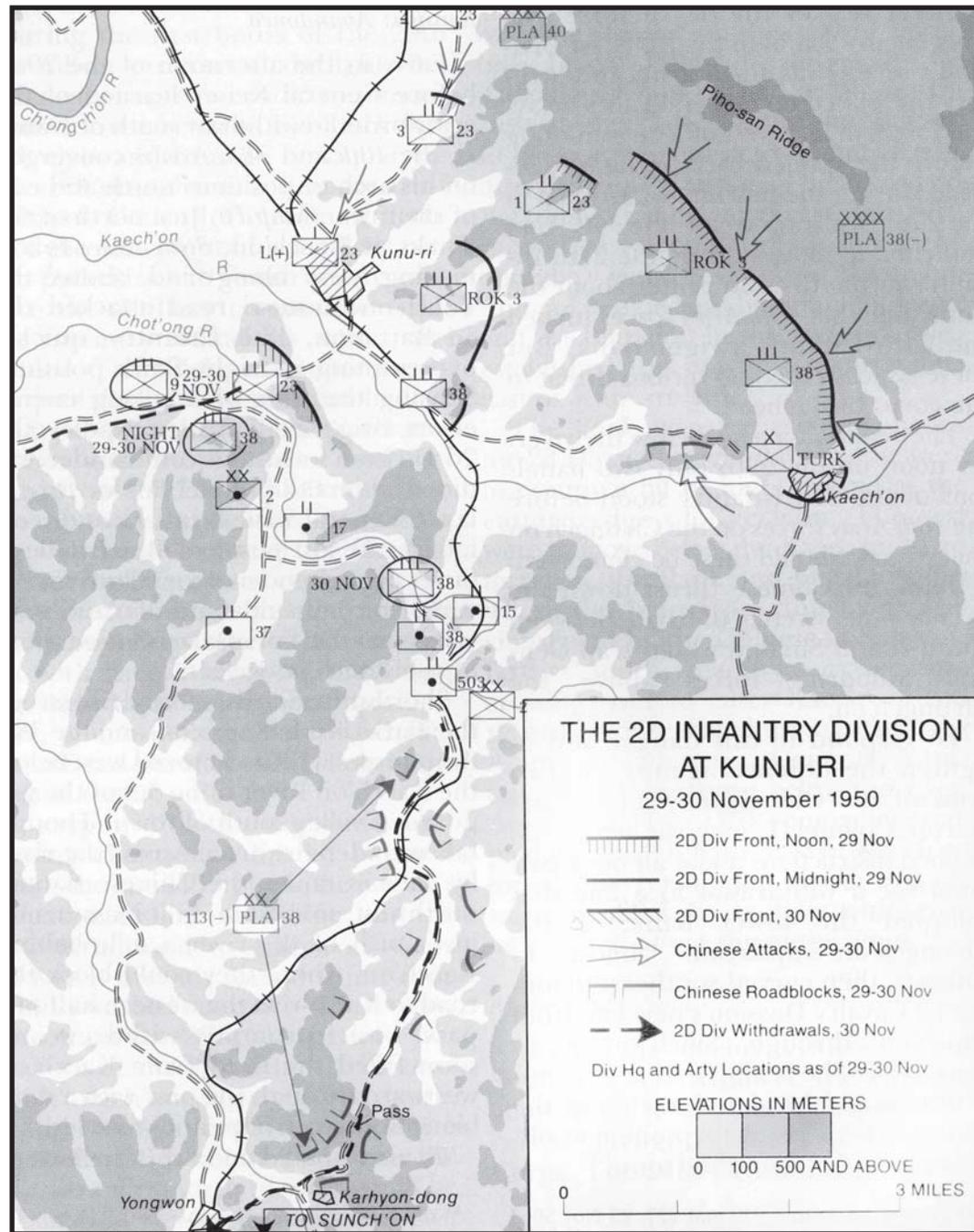
It wasn't a single column of vehicles. We used every inch of road space—at some places, three vehicles abreast, at other places, two. By 0730, or even earlier, the column was not moving at all.

I notified Col. Zacherle that I was going to walk forward along the road to see whether there was anything that we could do to assist in breaking the absolute gridlock of vehicles. Lt. John Bergner went with me.

Our column of vehicles stretched for three to five miles along the road. As we walked forward, of course, we walked past our Company D, through the 38th Field [Artillery], and were up into the area of the road that was occupied by the 503d.

By the time we got up there the Chinese forces, which were primarily to the east of the road at the section that we were on, were blowing bugles and flashing lights. These were their command and control-type mechanisms to precede a massive assault.

When we got up into the 503d area we found something that looked like Dante's Inferno. One of the large ammo supply trucks of the 503d was on fire. It was a gasoline, petroleum-type fire, and the 155-mm shells were cooking off and exploding.



By the time we got up there the Chinese forces, which were primarily to the east of the road at the section that we were on, were blowing bugles and flashing lights. These were their command and control-type mechanisms to precede a massive assault.

The road was completely blocked with vehicles. There wasn't any room along the sides to push them off into a ditch. It appeared to be an absolute physical block of the road. There were no alternate routes that we could bring a bulldozer up and try to put a road alongside, because this was mountainous terrain. It was a narrow defile, and it was plugged.

John and I then started back towards the 2d Engineer vehicles. Every vehicle had been sitting there for some time not able to move. There were the drivers and a certain number of personnel in each vehicle. Most of the people hadn't had a great deal of sleep in the past week, and it was about as cold as you can imagine. Many of the troops were bundled or, if they had their sleeping bags with them, they were in their sleeping bags with their clothes on, trying to stay warm and get some rest. We wanted to make sure that nobody was left in the vehicles asleep, wrapped in a sleeping bag.

John and I rapped on each vehicle and directed all the people to grab their weapons, vacate the vehicle, hit the ditch, and expect an attack within moments. These were not 2d Battalion people. They were artillery, the first group being 503d Artillery people. We got back and through the 38th Field Artillery Battalion doing the same thing. Their officers were out giving the same orders.

Although we didn't ask them to follow us, some of those people followed John and me rather than staying in that particular area, which obviously was going to

be an area soon to be hit by the Chinese forces. You could feel it. You could feel the attack. There was a strange garlic odor that would permeate an area and it was strong.

We got back to the 2d Engineer Battalion vehicles, with Company D in the lead. We got all the way through Company D, telling everybody to get out of their vehicles and take a defensive posture, into the H&S Company area. At that time the Chinese attack started in earnest. Massive numbers of ground troops attacked the vehicles, and my recollection is that the bulk of them came from the east.

I got back as far as my own vehicle, which was occupied by my driver Cpl. Merrill Philips, who survived the whole episode and is currently living in Grand Junction, Colorado. In the vehicle with him was Sgt. Cook, our sergeant major for the 2d ECB.

They accompanied me, along with a group of others, many of them belonging to the S-1 section. We got up onto some high ground. I made a very short attempt at locating the battalion and the other battalion staff members, such as Col. Zacherle and Maj. Fry, but particularly Capt. Nehrling, because many of the troops that were right in that area were from his section.

I didn't find him or receive any response. I had made a decision quite consciously a couple of days before that if we couldn't get our equipment out we would head due south. I had given maps to different platoon

leaders and company commanders with my view of the direction they should go to reach the Sunch'on area, which we knew was to be the regrouping area for Eighth Army.

### A Long Walk in the Dark

I don't recall enough about the stars now, but at that time I was more interested in the stars. There was an evening star that was due south of Kunu-ri. I had told people to take a bearing on that star and to head due south, basically up until 2330 or 2400, at which time the star would be moving out of the sector that you wanted to follow. Then you had to revert to locating the North Star, and heading south.

The Chinese attacked in waves. The first wave had hit the road and the vehicle area. Then there seemed to be a lull and mass confusion. During that period I asked the people around me to follow me. I seemed to be the accepted leader and the self-appointed one.

The first wave came at 1930 or 2000. It was dark. There was a moon, not a full moon, perhaps, but it was a clear, bright night. I certainly knew from my hike up the road that the road itself was not a good route to take. So, I led the people off to the east of the MSR and headed south on trails.

There were a lot of paths in Korea because the mode of transportation from village to village and field to field often wasn't along the road. The Koreans

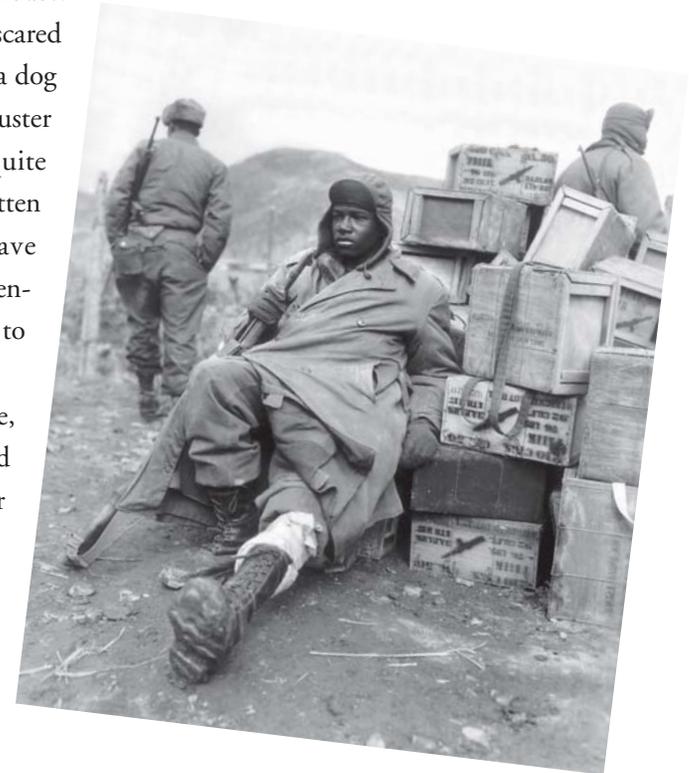
walked the shortest distance to the next village. It was not hard to find a trail going in the general direction.

We had only gone a short distance when we came to a cluster of houses. I wouldn't call it a village, particularly, but there would be a group of houses with fields around them, a lot of cotton and grain fields. You'd go some distance and there would be another cluster of houses. The farmers who owned and farmed the land lived in mud and straw houses. Their heat was a very low fire built so that the smoke went underneath the floor—a marvelous way to heat a house.

The only time that I was scared throughout that night was when a dog barked very loudly in this first cluster of houses. An American can't quite shoot a dog, but if I could have gotten my hands on him I would have throttled him. It seemed like the entire world must have responded to that barking dog.

We went through single file, the troops following me. We walked without stopping. We could hear mortar and gunfire to our right and to our rear. After about one hour of walking we came to some valley where we received a challenge to our movement. The challenge

Wounded in the leg,  
Pfc. Edward Wilson,  
24th Infantry, 25th  
Infantry Division,  
waits to be evacuated  
RG 111, SC-358355



was in a language that I did not recognize. I have no idea whether it was Chinese, North Korean, South Korean, or even possibly one of the UN forces that were serving in that same area. We called back that we were Americans. With that an automatic weapon fired at us and we returned the fire. The weapon fell silent. I have no idea, nor did we send anyone to try to find out, what the challenge was. We altered our course and went further to the east, rather than continuing on the trail that we were on. In the valleys everything was cultivated, so there was always a trail going generally the direction you wanted to go.

We continued generally southeast, south-southeast, and I really didn't know how many people were following me. When I stopped the column I had them all just stop in place. It was a single-file Indian-style operation. I then walked back along the column until I reached John Bergner, whom I had asked to bring up the rear.

You remember the amusing things. We had received a PX Red Cross ration, which came along with the Thanksgiving food in late November. Amongst that was a tremendous amount of Lifesavers candy. They were the packages—and I can remember them so well—of the multi-flavored Lifesavers. They weren't the most popular things with the troops, obviously, but there were just a lot of them. On the 30th, I had filled all of the pockets of my officer's overcoat, my pants, and my jacket inside, with Lifesavers. I really have never liked

water and normally relied upon lemon drops and hard candy to quench my thirst whenever I was out all day long in the field. I went along with these Lifesavers and gave each person one Lifesaver until I got back to John. He made some flippant remark like, "My God, I'm doing all this work for you, bringing up the rear, and all you give me is one lousy Lifesaver?" With that, why, my spirits went up.

On one of these stops I can remember John saying, "Larry, look! There's thousands of Chinese. The whole field is alive with them and they're all coming this way!"

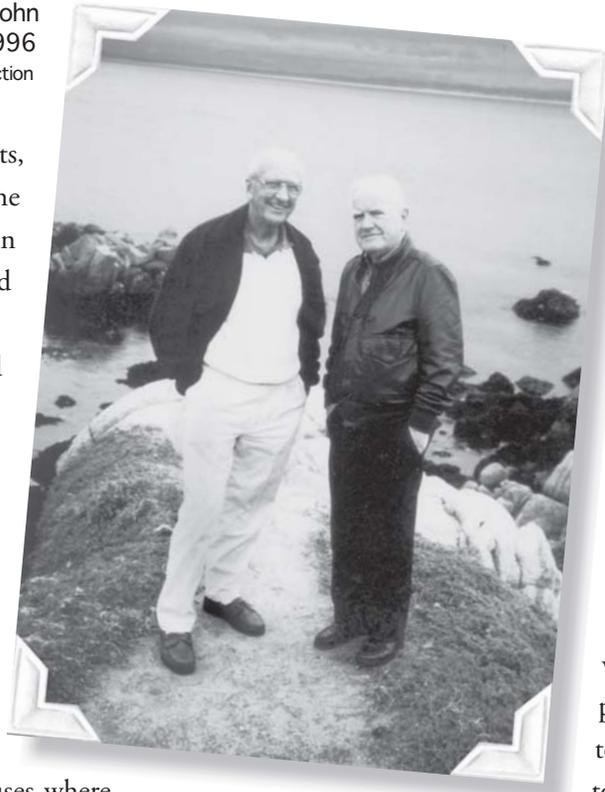
I said, "John, you're hallucinating. Those are old dead bushes waving in a cotton field, or they're old stocks of grain." He may have been right and I may have been wrong, but it was my choice to believe that we didn't see anybody.

I would go up to the front of the column and we would move out and go approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Then I would stop and go back along the column. I then realized that out of the people who were following me, a small percentage were 2d Engineers. They were mostly artillery people.

The column was about company size. Some of the reports say that I came out with 300 people. I think it was probably closer to 150. Out of that, maybe a third were 2d Engineer people.

They were all just individuals to me. I didn't know

Col. Larry Farnum and Col. John Bergner in Carmel, California, 1996  
Farnum Collection



whether they were officers, sergeants, or privates. Up close to me at the front of the column there was an NCO from the 2d Engineers, and also Capt. Paul Jones.

Jones came up two times and pointed out heavy enemy troop concentrations. We were walking in the valleys, but they were usually up on the hillside, not going over the tops of the hills but traveling along the trails to their houses and villages. I felt that Paul was hallucinating but perhaps I chose not to see enemy.

We came to a group of houses where there was a granite quarry. Now, I'm a graduate mining engineer and had worked in open pit mines. I knew that the main access would be across the bottom of the quarry, but that there also would be a trail directly along the face of the quarry going over the top of the hill. I chose to take the trail along where they would do the drilling to blast out the rock. We went across to the other side of this fairly good-sized hill. We got to the other side and I stopped the column. I went back to the end of the column and John Bergner was not there.

I thought, "We're not going any farther without John because I don't know where the split in the column

comes." I asked four men to volunteer to go with me and we continued back the route we had come. At a fair distance we found John. He was on his left knee with his right foot in front of him. He was leaning his head against his carbine and he was sound asleep. His right foot was between 6 inches to a foot from the vertical drop of the quarry, which I would estimate was probably an 80-foot sheer drop to the bottom. It was very easy to see him. The moon was quite

high at that time. I went up and took his hand gently and led him away from the precipice; that was the last time he went to sleep that night!

When I got back to the head of the column we continued our hike. By this time we were getting into the wee hours, probably 0200 or 0300. I felt that we had to be a long way away from the CCF, not that we really were. But we were beginning to feel quite safe.

Along about 0400 we met our only other challenge and roadblock. It came as rather startling. We were challenged in a foreign tongue—Chinese, North Korean,

At a fair distance we found John. He was on his left knee with his right foot in front of him. He was leaning his head against his carbine and he was sound asleep. His right foot was between 6 inches to a foot from the vertical drop of the quarry, which I would estimate was probably an 80-foot sheer drop to the bottom.

South Korean—something other than English. We hollered back in English that we were Americans and we were fired upon.

We hadn't taken protective cover. We hadn't dropped to the ground. We were probably pretty damned tired. At that time Sgt. Mankowski, who had always been quite close to me in the lead of the column, was hit in both legs. He was the only one hit. We returned some fire and the shooting stopped.

We called but we didn't make a real effort to find out what had happened or who it was. They weren't firing at us anymore. We took Sgt. Mankowski over to a hillside to the west of the route we were taking down. It

was a slope of one of their steep hills with a fair number of trees on it. He, of course, said to go on. I asked for some volunteers and left four men and a fair amount of ammunition with them. I told them that we would send a patrol out as soon as we could.

Those were the only men we left.

Fortunately, those men got back before the rest of us finished our walk. As far as I know,

that was my only wounded throughout the entire hike, which was someplace between 30 and 50 miles, a good 18 hours of steady pressing on.

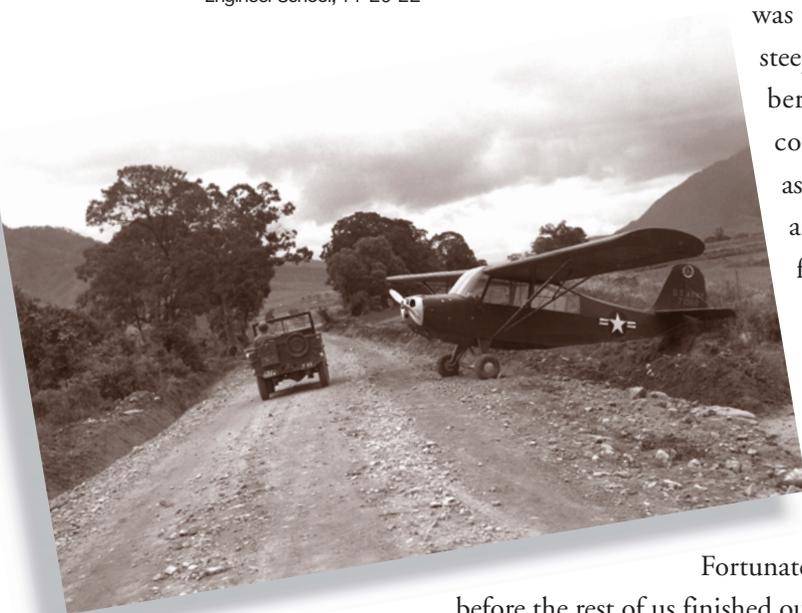
We walked a few more hours. Shortly after daylight, about 0600-0630, a small U.S. aircraft liaison type, an L-5, flew over and dropped a message to us that we were coming into the 5th Cavalry area, that we were approaching their lines and were safe. He circled for a while, and then landed in a valley off to our right front, near a streambed. He was from the 5th Cavalry and had room for one passenger.

Well, we looked around to see who was the most seriously hurt or impaired that we might have with us. A Turkish captain had a couple of serious bullet wounds in him and he hadn't made a complaint all night. We put him in the aircraft and told the pilot about Sgt. Mankowski and the men we had left on the hillside. He either radioed that back or went back and reported to the cavalry. The cavalry sent out a tank patrol and brought those men back. They all made it through.

The pilot asked us whether we needed transport to get our people back. We wanted to walk on rather than wait for trucks to come and get us. Everybody was in the mood to continue walking south just as rapidly as we could.

Eventually, one truck came by and the driver said, "Hey, I can take the people down." We put a certain

After landing on the road, an L-5 aircraft is parked to keep the road clear for traffic  
Engineer School, 11-20-22



number aboard, but the main group walked until we were in a defensive perimeter of the 5th Cavalry. We continued to walk until lunchtime, about 1300. Then we were into the cavalry unit areas where we were given something to eat.

After that, there were sufficient vehicles to get us further to the south and into the Sunch'on area. Second Division elements were forming, bivouacking, and looking for others. From there we continued a hasty withdrawal.

Some people say we shot our way out. The people in the division, who wrote up the Silver Star for me, describe in the citation how we were attacking up the hill and attacking through some different blocks. My personal recollection is basically a friendly darkness of night that provided us an opportunity to get together in groups, decide which way we were going to go, and head that way.

Mine was not a mission to attack anybody, but to get the people who were following me safely down to Sunch'on. I don't recall firing my weapon one time. I was carrying a carbine. Other than the two very brief firefights when we were challenged, I don't recall a threat to our life and limb.

When we got back to the division area, Paul Jones, who was the next ranking officer, a captain, junior to me, remembered the hike differently. He thought we lost a large number of people. We would talk about

it and he would say, "The Chinese were reaching out and grabbing and people were disappearing." If we lost people along the road it was because a few may have been too tired to carry on and chose to crawl into a bush and go to sleep, but I really don't know of any. I prefer to think that we didn't lose a person who started out with us.

It was a long column of people walking single file. There were many places where, passing a deserted house, someone could have chosen not to go any further. But I had my rear guard in John Bergner. I think the men continued to walk in that single file. Most of them probably didn't know there were more than five or six people with them. All they could see were two or three people ahead of them and they knew that a couple of people were behind them. I know they were dead tired.

The other clear memory is one of those lighthearted ones. When it turned light, around 0600, about the time the aircraft came over, it felt like we were safe and it was all over and I halted the column. I walked back along it, trying to be the glib company commander, saying, "How are you?" and "It's been a good hike," and "Did you get enough exercise?"

Two soldiers particularly stood out in my memory. They were black, and one was in the lead carrying the base plate for a .50-caliber machine gun. He had several bandoliers of .50-caliber shells across his shoulders. I don't know the weight of the base plate for the heavy

Some people say we shot our way out....My personal recollection is basically a friendly darkness of night that provided us an opportunity to get together in groups, decide which way we were going to go, and head that way.

The doctor wanted to evacuate all of us to Japan. All the men who were with me agreed when I said, “Not on your life. We’ve got too much to do here.”

.50-caliber, but it’s heavy as hell! I said, “Well, you’ve carried that all night? Great job! Where’s the weapon?” “My buddy right behind me has it,” he said. I looked at the fellow behind him. He wasn’t carrying a thing. His eyes were great big and round and white. He was shaking his head, back and forth, mouthing, “No, no. Don’t tell him.” He was praying to me, with his eyes. I realized that at some point along the line he had laid down the .50-caliber. Well, I went along with him very rapidly and told the fellow who was carrying the base plate, “That’s all right. We’re safe now. You can put it down.” He said, “Oh, no. I’ve got to keep this.” And we said, “No. Everything’s all right now. I’ve told your buddy we’re leaving the .50-caliber here for the 5th Cavalry to pick up.” I don’t think he ever knew—I hope he never knew—that his good friend who was carrying the .50-caliber hadn’t had the .50-caliber for probably several hours. But I guess those are the things that, being in service, are so precious to you. I’ll always carry in my mind’s memory the looks on those two faces.

We got back down to the cavalry lines. I never heard from the artillery battalion people who had come out with me—not that I expected to. Everybody was terribly busy for the next month getting re-equipped and retrained to become combat effective again.

On 1 December the division was declared combat noneffective, a sad thing for any division to go through. All of our efforts were to get back to the division rear

area and to find our own units. I was probably the ranking person to come out from the 2d Engineers.

When we did get back to our division rear area some of our elements were there. Our bridge platoon had not been with us. Some of the people from Dog Company hadn’t been with us up forward. We had our division rear personnel, mail clerks, and people like that.

On 1 December our battalion strength was approximately 250, but probably close to 200 of those were in some other area, and not with us at Kunu-ri to make the long trek home. The battalion strength that had stood at Kunu-ri was approximately 900 people.

As soon as we got back to division rear, medical personnel looked us over. The doctor wanted to evacuate all of us to Japan. All the men who were with me agreed when I said, “Not on your life. We’ve got too much to do here.”

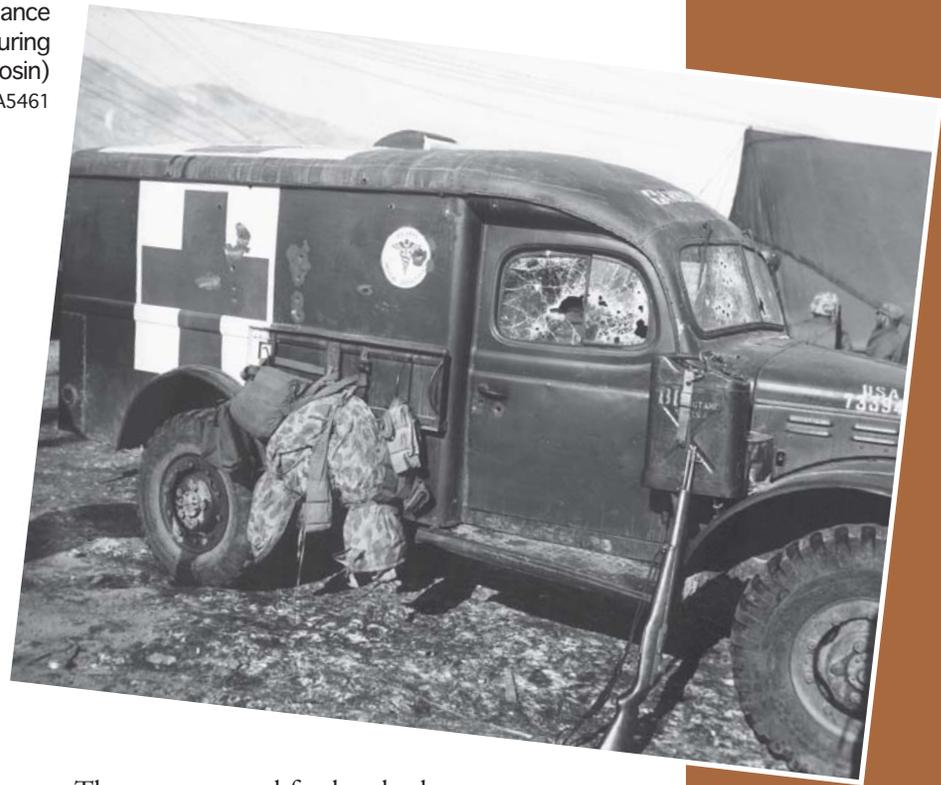
The reason the doctor recommended evacuation was that everybody had some form of frostbite. I had frozen toes, a couple of frozen fingers, and some spots on my face that were frostbitten. We made a deal with the medics that we would have a battalion/company formation daily to look at the frostbite, to ensure that people were doing what they asked us to do in the way of some creams and salves that they gave us. They told us what to look for in making sure that black streaks didn’t start going up your foot or leg, or up your arm, and that the spots on noses and faces didn’t get too

Although riddled by enemy gunfire, this ambulance continued to carry casualties suffered during the withdrawal from Changjin (Chosin)

RG 127, 127-N-A5461

serious. So, we had almost an amusing time, an interplay of all ranks, at 1400 each day, where we would meet in a large room to take off our shoes and socks, check each other, exercise our toes, massage the places, and put on the salve.

I assumed command of the battalion on 1 December and with the help of the people who had been at division rear, our mail clerks and people like that, we put on a battalion formation. We spread out the companies, H&S Company and the battalion staff, leaving place for all the people who were missing. [2d Div. War Diary for Nov 1950 shows the 2d ECB with an authorized strength of 977, with casualties of 561 (15-30 Nov 1950), and with an actual strength on 1 Dec 1950 of 266 men.] It was a very moving time. I tried to stand in the position that I should stand in as the S-2 as if Col. Zacherle was there. [Col. Farnum was battalion commander for nearly 2 weeks, until the new commander, Maj. Edmund H. Leavey, arrived]. Our division rear personnel, who had the roster, called off the names of all those people who were missing and the ones who were there. This was basically done with the help of our clerks who were back at division rear. They knew all of our names, got our mail up to us, and knew who our family members were. In this past year [1997], as I've gotten back into meeting with some of the people of the 2d Engineers, I've been told how much this meant to those people who were not with us up at Kunu-ri.



Then we retreated further, back to areas to try to regroup. Our only trucks that we had in quantity were our Brockway trucks, which were loaded with our floating bridge. I believe we unloaded a couple of those just to carry people and the supplies we were able to get.

During this period some of the people who had come out showed absolutely great ingenuity in getting supplies. As we were falling back rapidly, quartermaster-type units in the P'yongyang area were in the process of destroying all this equipment, tanks and vehicles, so that it wouldn't fall into the hands of the Chinese. We were in great need of the very vehicles that they were destroying.

We got some of our supplies at gunpoint because the person who was assigned to burn the supplies was afraid to turn them over to us. They were burning clothing and rations that we didn't have.

It seems infeasible, and it must be wrong, but the Army is a big organization. When people are told to destroy all of their supplies before they leave the area, that is their mission.

We got some of our supplies at gunpoint because the person who was assigned to burn the supplies was afraid to turn them over to us. They were burning clothing and rations that we didn't have. I don't personally remember reaching an area where they were destroying vehicles, which we needed so badly, but some of my people did. They were able to get some vehicles to help us in our movement back.

As soon as we got back to the Sunch'on area my driver told me that we liberated a jeep ambulance that I used as my vehicle. It was a particularly good vehicle to have because it had a heater in the back.

When we got back to the Yongdungp'o area we were going to be in position for a few days. Maj. Gen. Robert B. McClure had taken over as the commanding general of the 2d Division. He was only with us about one month. During that time he was very kind to me as a captain, and a member of the Corps of Engineers, and said that he was perfectly satisfied with me being his division engineer. It was nice to hear and I appreciated it. I knew at the same time that Eighth Army was doing everything in its power to get us restaffed with qualified engineers. As a matter of fact, the Eighth Army Engineer had contacted me that he was getting a

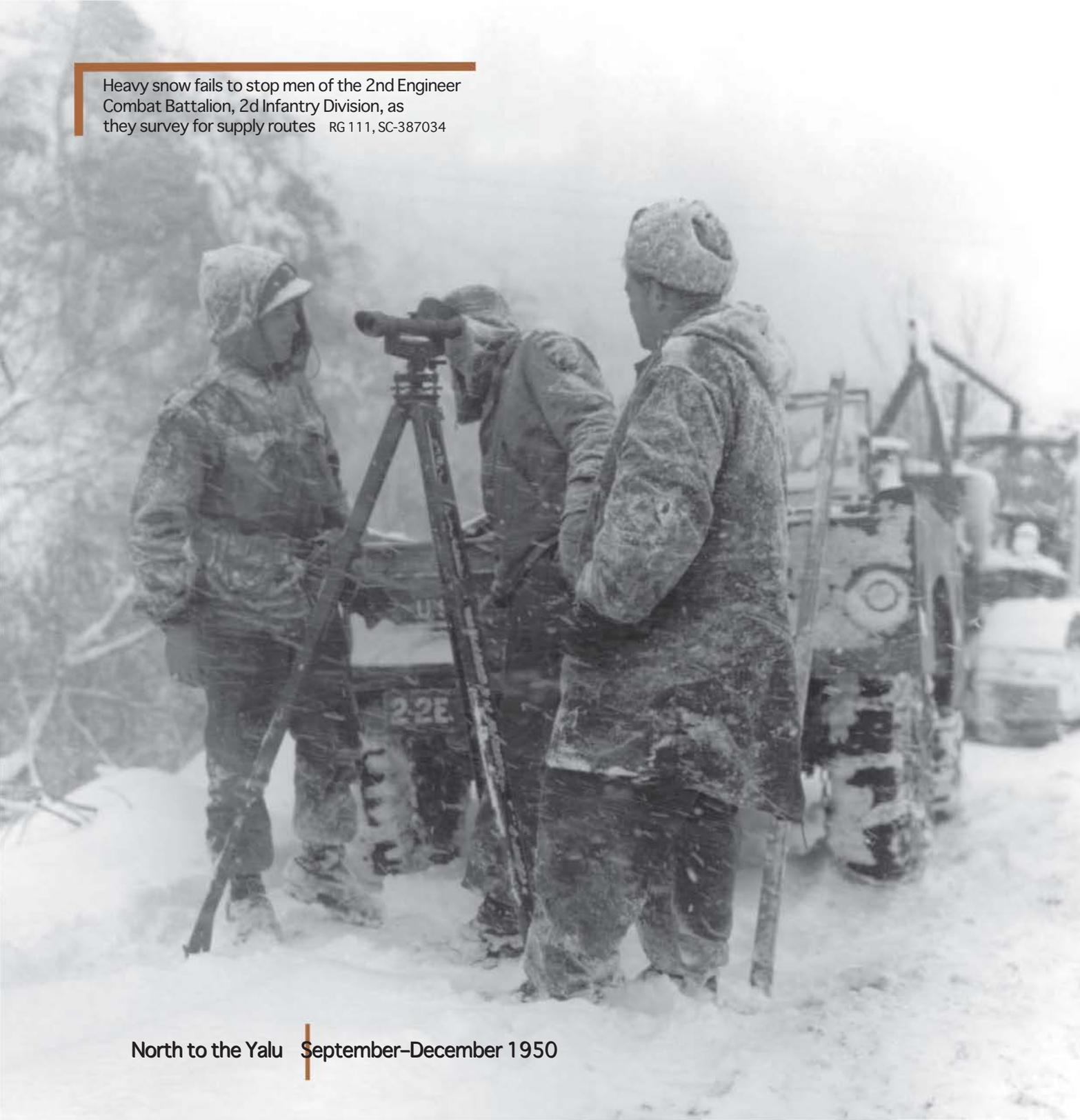
couple of majors who were coming out of Eighth Army in Japan. Gen. McClure said, "We don't need them. I've got a battalion commander." Those were things you liked to remember.

I contacted Col. Sawin at Eighth Army. He had been my Professor of Military Science (PMS) at college. He was a help in breaking loose some of our early replacement officers who came from Japan.

I made a trip down to 3d Logistics Command in Pusan and found Col. McEachern, our ex-battalion commander. He assisted in making up the necessary requisitions for all the equipment that we needed. That ran the gamut from weapons to trenching tools, shovels, vehicles, and engineer items of all sorts and descriptions. It was through his efforts that we were able to, within a matter of a week, have a couple of our companies ready to support if called upon and to get back to some engineering work.

Our headquarters and our H&S Company were sorely stressed to fend for themselves. It took some time to get engineering equipment, such as dozers, lowboys, that sort of thing, back into our hands to where we could say we're ready to do our job. 🏰

Heavy snow fails to stop men of the 2nd Engineer  
Combat Battalion, 2d Infantry Division, as  
they survey for supply routes RG 111, SC-387034



**L**ieutenant Trayers describes the 1st Cavalry Division's drive north from the Pusan Perimeter to Unsan in North Korea. Having never attended the Engineer Basic Course, Lieutenant Trayers found himself alternately building and blowing bridges and considering the advantages of "going by the book."

By now we had pushed on farther and gone north. On 12 October the reconnaissance officer was wounded, so I was assigned from Company D to H&SC, and became the reconnaissance officer. On 22 October Lt. Karl K. Georgeff was wounded, and I was reassigned from reconnaissance officer to platoon leader of the 2d Platoon in Company B. I had that assignment for most of the rest of my tour in Korea.

Georgeff was inspecting the capacity of the bridges, specifically the ability of the bridges to carry tanks. He went underneath this one bridge to inspect the strength of the stringers and a group of Koreans were huddled together there. He took no notice of them other than to realize that they

were there. When he turned to go back up to the top side of the bridge, one of the Koreans fired at him with a .45-caliber pistol. The bullet entered his back, came out through his chest, and nicked his chin. Georgeff was not seriously wounded but he required hospitalization.

I went to B Company to replace Georgeff and took over his platoon. The company commander at that time was Merlin W. Anderson who was in the Class of '47 at the Military Academy. He was the company commander of Company F-2

at West Point, and I was in Company G-2 at West Point, so I knew who he was having seen him at many of the cadet formations. Donald S. Aines was the maintenance, supply, and transportation (MS&T) officer. Lt. Bull Durham was one of the platoon leaders, and Ronald A. Severson was the other platoon leader. I had the second platoon.

I was very fortunate working for Merlin W. Anderson because he provided me with the instruction that I did not get in the basic course. Anytime that I was working on a project, he would give me guidance as to



Second Lt. James Trayers Trayers Collection

the best way to attack the project and what was expected when it was done. Even now I remember some of his words of wisdom. He paraphrased and made things very simple like, “Get the water off and the rock on,” and “Put angular rocks in square holes.” He had many sayings and he really provided me with basic course training.

I was part of the regimental combat team and did the usual things that a combat engineer platoon does. I installed many, many mines, both antipersonnel and antitank, much barbed wire, both single and double apron, and concertina, and I had a large section of roads for road maintenance.

I cleared fields of fire, put in culverts, revetments, built a bridge or two, and did a lot of demolition work.

At one location I had orders to build a bridge. We had built many bridges with typical vertical piers and the bridge coming flat across the top. On this mission I thought that it would be instructional, because the terrain was suitable, if my platoon built an A-frame bridge. That is, one with the piers, which instead of being vertical they were joined at the top to form an A, and the deck would come across the center of the piers such that the profile was in the shape of an A.

I discussed my plan with my platoon sergeant, Sgt. Joseph Gonzales. He said, “I don’t know if that’s such a good idea, lieutenant. The men are familiar with building the regular timber trestle bridge. This is different.” I



Soldiers of the 2d Engineer Battalion construct a timber trestle bridge across the Taedong River at Suncheon, 12 November 1950  
Engineer School, 42-1-283

countered with, “Well, it would be good for training.” He said, “The men not only don’t need training, they don’t like it.” I said, “Okay, Sergeant Gonzales, we’ll build the regular kind of bridge.” That was another lesson that I learned. Let the men do what they do best. Don’t start changing it.

Sgt. Gonzales rotated home and it was my job to pick someone to take his place as the platoon sergeant. I picked one of the sergeants who had been a squad leader. His name was Sgt. James E. Schwarz. Schwarz didn’t have

as much time as squad leader as did my other squad leaders, but in my opinion he displayed potential. By the time he got promoted to master sergeant he was only about 20 years old.

The next job that I had to do was to blow a bridge. This is when we were withdrawing to the south. Capt. Anderson and I went to visit the S-3 of the 7th Cavalry. Capt. Anderson asked, "Why are we blowing the bridge?" and the officer from the 7th Cavalry replied, "Because the field manual says that in a withdrawal you destroy the bridges."

Capt. Anderson gave me the mission. I explained that while I understood the nature of the explosives, I hadn't really had any experience in blowing up a bridge. He said that I should take Sgt. Richard A. Henry with me because he knew all about explosives.

I explained to Sgt. Henry what we were going to do and I asked him how much explosive we should use. He advised me that it was not his job to estimate how much explosive would be needed—he said that was the lieutenant's job. I said, "If we take a trailer load that ought to be enough." The bridge to be destroyed was a box-girder railroad bridge. So I directed that we take 10 cases of C-3 explosive, which would fit in a jeep trailer.

Sgt. Henry, my driver Haney, and I drove some distance in front of the front lines to the bridge site. This bridge turned out to be a very, very important bridge

because it was on one of the main railroad lines in the Iron Triangle in the Ch'orwon area.

After we arrived at the bridge site Sgt. Henry, Haney, and I placed all 10 boxes of explosives in the space between the box-girders where they came together on the top of the pier. The space was just wide enough to put a case of explosives in. On one side we put five cases, and on the other side we put the other five cases. We put a 10-minute fuse with a blasting cap in order to give us time to get out of there. Haney and I drove one mile north on the road, and Sgt. Henry ran as far as he could in the other direction. I heard that thing go. Even a mile north I remember there were pieces of steel from the bridge flying over our heads.

I went back and we had done our job. We had demolished the bridge. About five feet of the pier had been destroyed and two box girders had been knocked off the pier. It wasn't really the right thing to do because shortly thereafter we attacked north and the bridge was back in our sector again. It was made with boxed-girders and installed by the Japanese. We had the Japanese fabricate new girders. The bridge was out of action for an extended time.

By late November we were as far north as we were going to go. We had Thanksgiving dinner just south of the city of Unsan. One of the other divisions replaced the 1st Cavalry Division in the line and we moved back to the Chinnamp'o area where my platoon built an

We put a 10-minute fuse with a blasting cap in order to give us time to get out of there. Haney and I drove one mile north on the road, and Sgt. Henry ran as far as he could in the other direction. I heard that thing go. Even a mile north I remember there were pieces of steel from the bridge flying over our heads.

Engineers place satchel charges  
on a railroad bridge near  
Pyongyang prior to demolishing it  
RG 111, SC-355302

airstrip. One of the other platoons was taking mines out of the harbor. The story was that we were going to go home by Christmas; however the Chinese attacked in late November and pushed the UN forces south across the 38th parallel. When we crossed the 38th Parallel on the way north there was a sign that said, "You are now crossing the 38th Parallel, compliments of the 7th Cavalry Regiment." Later, when we were withdrawing, someone had written on the back of the sign to be seen as we traveled south, "You are now crossing the 38th Parallel compliments of the 1st Communist Chinese Field Army." 🏰



**C**aptain Fowler describes his assignment to supply operations, Engineer Section, IX Corps. Subsequently assigned as IX Corps officer in charge of map distribution, he learned that “distribution” sometimes meant hurling burlap bags full of maps out of C-119s.

I received orders to Texas A&M, reported in May 1950, and managed to finish the summer semester before I left. In August 1950 I was assigned to IX Corps, which was preparing to leave for Korea. They were assembling in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and I had only two days notice to get there. One day I came home and told my wife, “We have got to pack our bags.” She said, “Why?” I said, “Well, I am going to Fort Sheridan and to Korea. Where would you like to go?” She said, “I guess I might as well go home,” which was her parent’s home in Freehold, New Jersey. The next day the movers came, and the day after that the household goods were gone. The following day she got on an airplane and flew to New Jersey, while I got in our car and drove to Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

IX Corps headquarters stayed at Fort Sheridan about two weeks. During that time I got about five days off. I drove the car back to New Jersey so it would have a home while I was gone. Then I went back to Fort Sheridan, and our IX Corps headquarters flew on Flying

Tiger Airlines to Korea, landing in Pusan in August 1950.

We unloaded off the plane and immediately loaded onto trucks. The thing I remember most about Korea from those days was the dust and the mud. All of the roads we were traveling were unpaved and the dust was 4 to 6 inches deep. The dust literally boiled up behind our truck. All the people in the back of that truck were covered with dust and it was almost impossible to breathe.

We traveled west from Pusan on the train as far as it could go, and that was a blown railroad bridge. We then got out of the train and reloaded on more trucks. These were essentially three-quarter-ton trucks. We traveled the dusty roads all of the way to a place near Chonju and that’s where we found what represented itself as IX Corps headquarters.

Although we came in with essentially a corps headquarters fully staffed, one was already in place. Apparently, General MacArthur had applied for this corps to be present for the invasion of Inch’ön. When it became clear that it was not going to get there in time, he activated one of his own. He took I Corps and they became the invasion corps at Inch’ön.

IX Corps then took over the other units in Korea. X Corps was not in Korea at that time, so it was just I Corps and IX Corps. IX Corps took over the remnant units from the Pusan Perimeter, mainly the 24th and 25th Divisions.

## Map Distribution, IX Corps

I was assigned as a map supply officer. I said to myself, “What qualifies me to be a map supply officer and what the hell does one do?” Well, I found out pretty quickly when I got there what one did. I could only conclude that I was assigned as map supply officer because I had that short tour as supply officer in Austria and not a lot of first lieutenants were running with supply officer experience.

My boss was the IX Corps Engineer, Col. William N. Thomas, Jr. I’d just as soon forget his name. He was a Thomason Act officer. He really despised all West Point graduates and that included me. The Thomason Act was a source for officers in the twenties and thirties. It was like OCS or ROTC.

The corps commander was Lt. Gen. John B. Coulter. After a couple of months I began to ask my boss for a transfer to an engineer company. This corps headquarters was all right, but not for a career. Well, he would have no part of it. Every time I’d ask him he just got madder, so I stopped asking and waited for one of us to leave. He finally left at the end of the year.

Col. Gerald Galloway replaced him. Galloway was altogether different. He was a good supervisor, an intelligent person and very thoughtful. He hadn’t been there very long when I asked him for an assignment to a company. By this time I was a captain. I went over as a first lieutenant, but everybody had been promoted on the

Department of Army order to captain. He said, “No, you just stay around here and I’ll see that you are a major before you go home.” The GHQ in Tokyo could promote officers in the field, at least through the grade of major, so I stayed on [Capt. Fowler was promoted to major, 15 Feb 1952].

So, I served as a map supply officer. I’ll tell you about a few of my experiences and observations. The map production depot was in Yokohama, Japan. The plates they had to produce maps from in those days were very rudimentary. Most maps were black and white; there wasn’t any color initially, and they were not very accurate. I think they were really old Japanese maps. But, as time went on they got better.

The 3d Division  
Engineer Section,  
12 April 1951  
RG 111, SC-365018



In recent years I have come to tell people that planning is the essential thing in life.

Those who plan get ahead.

The other expression is even better—we don't plan to fail; we fail to plan.

A division or another corps unit would call me and request maps. They typically wanted 1/25,000 scale maps. If you were ever an infantryman you know that is what you've got to have. That is the only scale of a map that shows you the detail that an infantryman needs. If you are in a retrograde action, as we were in a lot of those months in 1950-51, then you could move through and off of a 1/25,000 scale map in half a day, so you needed a good supply of maps if you were going to have that kind. Many of the units had to live with a 1/250,000 scale map. You could spend a month or so on one of those. They are good, but they don't give you any detail on the ground. They just show you some relative locations.

My line of supply was to call Eighth Army in Seoul, or during the time we were in North Korea, P'yongyang. Any time our troops moved, I had to call one of those two locations and put in my requisition for maps. I had to use my own imagination to second-guess where the divisions and other units would be two days from then, or a week from then, and try to order what they might need at that time. In recent years I have come to tell people that planning is the essential thing in life. Those who plan get ahead. The other expression is even better—we don't plan to fail; we fail to plan. As a map supply officer I learned what it was to plan. If I did not plan ahead, I did not end up with the right kind of maps.

Sometimes the maps came to IX Corps by L-5 aircraft, which was a little comparable to today's O-1. It was a single-wing, two-seater aircraft, and it would not carry an awful lot of maps. A two and one-half-ton truck also hauled maps overland. IX Corps, during much of this time, was several hundred miles from either P'yongyang or Seoul, so the maps usually had to come in by truck.

The division or other units usually came in and picked up the maps. In a few instances during the retrograde action from North Korea back to South Korea, they were so far afield that they could not get back to our headquarters. Sometimes we had three corps headquarters. We had a main, an advance, and a rear, and the map supply would be at one of those three locations. In more than one instance we loaded maps in the back of a C-119, commonly referred to as a "flying boxcar." It had the clamshell doors on the back. We would load the maps in those thin burlap bags, which was all we had. We did not have any air drop bags or material or even pallets. We would just put them in burlap bags and fly low over the drop zone near the division headquarters. I stood in the back and kicked them out of the back door. We hoped that some of them got to the people who needed them. Some of them got to the ground in a bunch, while others were scattered.

When IX Corps landed at Pusan, the Inch'on landing had already taken place so we moved north to Seoul.

Engineers place explosive charges to demolish a damaged bridge on the Naktong River  
Engineer School, 71-19-37

IX Corps headquarters started out with one trucking company and built it up to a battalion, then later to a couple of battalions. Initially, there were so few trucks that moving a corps headquarters took second priority to shuttling some of the infantry units. It was not altogether a smooth move, but we got there all the same.

Everybody in headquarters lived in tents. People from World War II would ask, “Why didn’t you occupy buildings for your offices and headquarters?” The answer was very simple—there weren’t any except in Seoul, Inch’on, and a few places like that. Where we were the only buildings were the really crude ones that the Koreans lived in, and you wouldn’t want to use those for offices.

For 19 months I slept in a squad tent and I worked in a tent that was smaller than a squad tent. Initially, we had Coleman lanterns for light. We finally got enough generators that we had electricity and electric lights. During the worst of all of the winters, pot-bellied stoves and diesel fuel provided heat. This was a far cry from what even the troops in World War II had been accustomed to. If anything, the Korean War was noted for the rugged and rough conditions.

We got as far north as Kunu-ri. It’s not much of anything except a place name on the map. The divisions that IX Corps had at that time were the 1st Cavalry Division and the 2d Infantry Division. The 1st Cavalry Division said they dipped their sabers in the Yalu. Well, they had no sooner done so than the Chinese got after



them. Once that started, the 1st Cavalry was in a full retrograde and all other units were being hit pretty heavily too.

The corps headquarters itself got to Kunu-ri. When the retrograde started, we started withdrawing through P'yongyang. As soon as Eighth Army got out of P'yongyang, they told us in IX Corps that all of their maps in the map depot were now ours. We assembled a group of enlisted men and started burning those maps as quickly as we could. We took a few with us, but not many because those maps were very heavy items. We did not have the transportation either to load or move them.

One of the last things that engineer units did leaving P'yongyang was to blow the floating bridge over the Taedong River. It was the last bridge on the route back. Until you have blown a floating bridge you don't know what trouble is. They are not the easiest things to destroy.

From there we motored in two and one-half-ton trucks south until we leap-frogged either the rear, advance, or main headquarters CP. The primary problem was communications. If you did not have a pretty good-sized hill nearby that you could put a microwave tower on then you couldn't really count on communications.

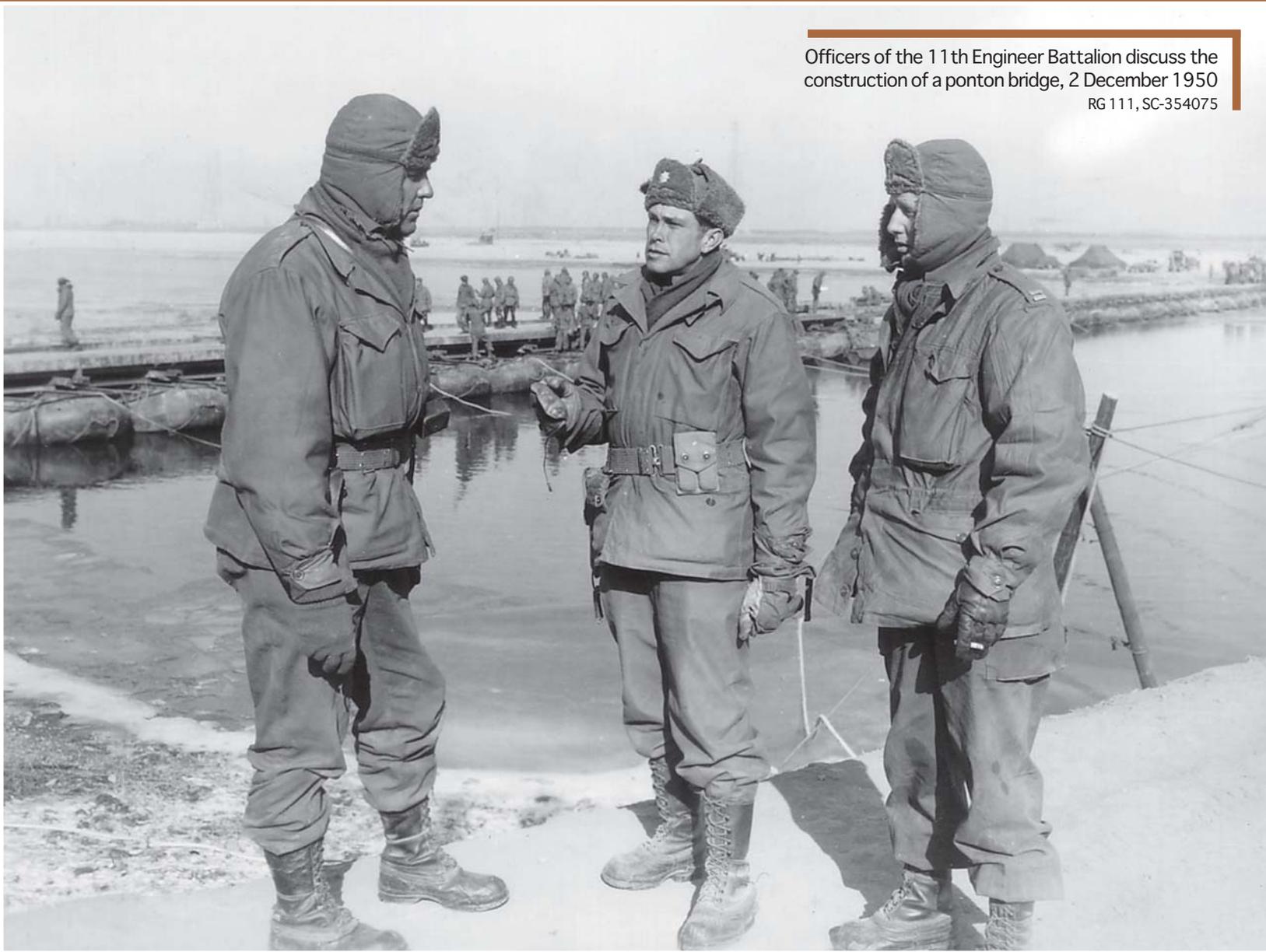
The IX Corps unit that got hit the hardest in that whole episode was the 2d Infantry Division. The 2d Division sector went up a valley and right up the side of a group of mountains and headed up north. I don't know whether they could have ever gotten to the Yalu River the way they started or not. The Chinese had infiltrated along the ridges.

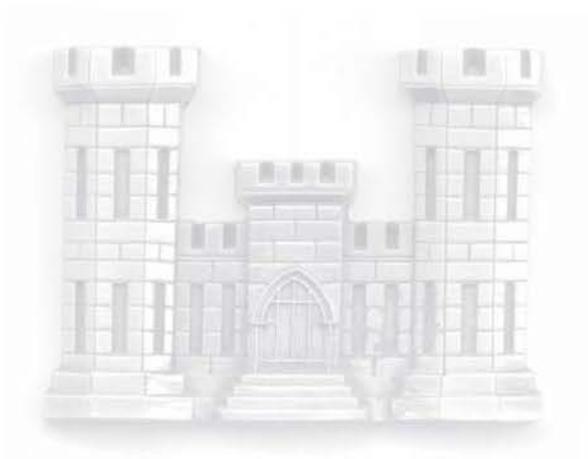
Since they did not have trucks they were not bound to the roads. American troops were road-bound by choice, particularly when they started retrograde action. They wanted to get out and to get out fast. The Chinese got behind them and cut the road. Only one regiment of the 2d Division got out as a regiment. I think that was the 23d Infantry commanded by Brig. Gen. Peplow, who may have been a colonel then. [23d Infantry's commander was Col. Paul L. Freeman. Col. George B. Peplow commanded the 38th Infantry, but was promoted to brigadier general when he transferred to IX Corps to become chief of staff.]

We moved from Seoul south towards Taegu. About that time a change in command of Eighth Army took place too. Gen. Walton Walker, who commanded the Eighth Army during the really tough part of the breakout of the Pusan perimeter and the advance to P'yongyang and Kunu-ri and back again, was killed in a vehicle accident at Christmas of 1950. Gen. Matthew Ridgway of XVIII Airborne Corps fame in Europe came in to head Eighth Army. The morale of Eighth Army was terribly low, and the rumor was, among all the troops, that MacArthur intended to evacuate Eighth Army from Korea. Ridgway got the Eighth Army reorganized and started a gradual advance. That was good for troop morale.

The need for maps grew less and less because we stopped moving 50 to 100 miles a day and we became pretty stabilized.

Officers of the 11th Engineer Battalion discuss the construction of a ponton bridge, 2 December 1950  
RG 111, SC-354075



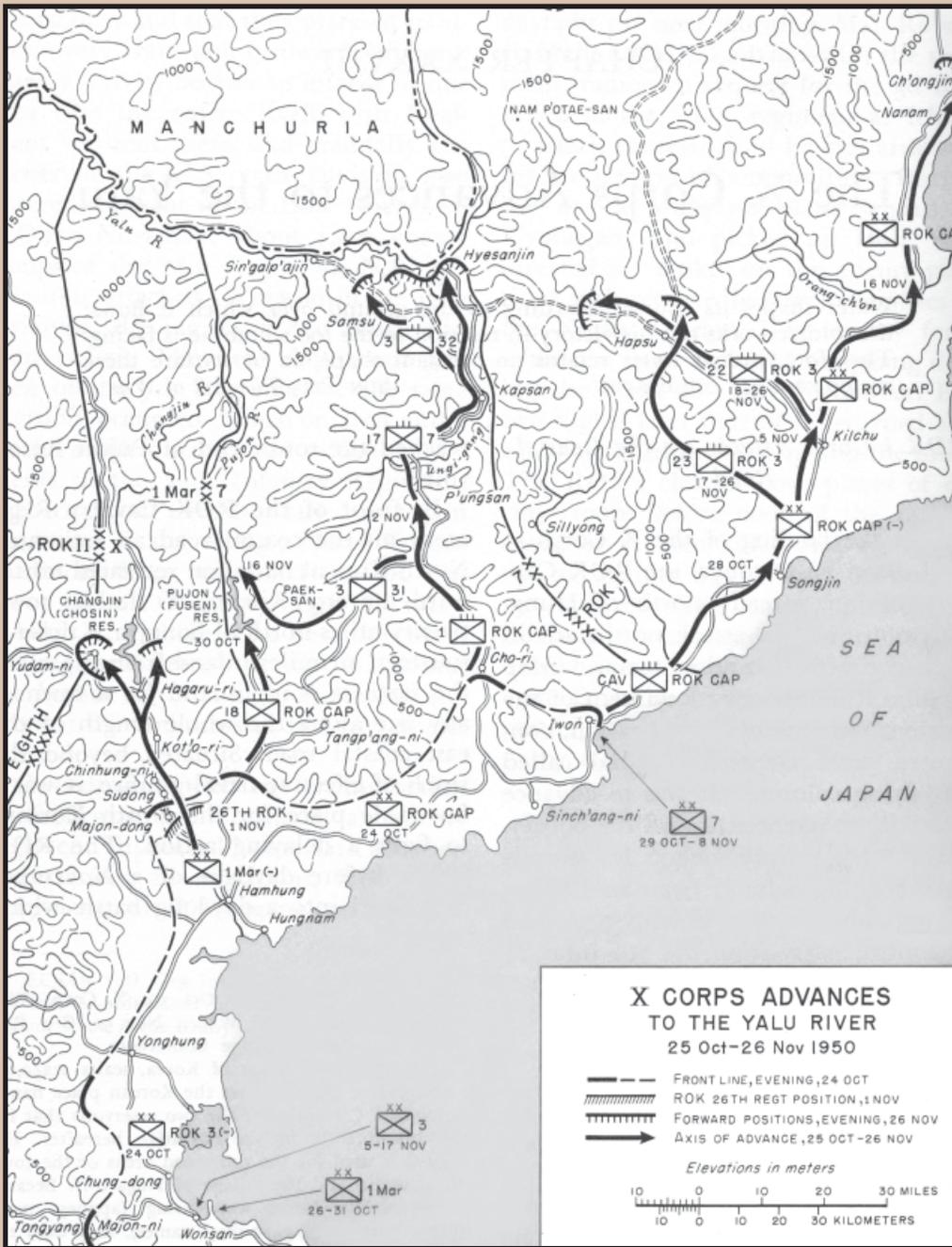


Soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division stand on the banks of the frozen Yalu River at Hyesanjin, North Korea, 23 November 1950  
RG 111, SC-363308



### The East Coast Landing and Retreat

October–December 1950



After landing at Iwon, the 7th Infantry Division fought its way north, and on 21 November 1950 it occupied the village of Hyesanjin on the south bank of the Yalu River. Looking across the frozen river into Manchuria, the American soldiers could see Chinese army units in the neighboring village. Hyesanjin was the high water mark of the X Corps' advance, and on 25 November the Chinese hurled two field armies against the UN forces, prompting General Douglas MacArthur to withdraw X Corps south to the Port of Hungnam.

# The East Coast Landing and Retreat

# Introduction

MacArthur withdrew X Corps after its Inch'on landing and capture of Seoul and sent it to the east coast of Korea where it made an unopposed amphibious landing at Wonsan. The 1st Marine Division landed on 26 October and the 3d Infantry Division landed on 5 November. The U.S. 7th Infantry Division landed at Iwon 178 miles farther north on 29 October. Because of the mountains that split Korea from north to south, two distinct major commands now conducted operations into North Korea: Gen. Walker's Eighth Army in the west and Gen. Almond's X Corps in the east.

By 1 November, intelligence identified elements of a Chinese division south of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. Within 10 days, parts of 11 more Chinese divisions appeared in the forward area.

The conflict entered a new phase in the fourth week of November. Elements of the 7th Division occupied the town of Hyesanjin across the Yalu River from Manchuria. ROK troops had reached the Chinese border at Ch'osan in the Eighth Army area nearly a month earlier but had been forced back. On 24 November, MacArthur announced a new major offensive to end the war. Although no serious enemy opposition appeared on that first day, on 25 November hostile troops struck hard at

the ROK II Corps on the right flank of Eighth Army. Two days later, a second enemy force hit the U.S. 1st Marine and 7th Infantry Divisions. Gen. Almond's corps, which had penetrated deep into northeast Korea, withdrew nearly 60 miles southward to the industrial city of Hamhung and its port, Hungnam on the coast.

Because of the massive size of the attacking force, General MacArthur decided to transfer X Corps to South Korea. Here, the corps would establish a defensive line just south of the 38th Parallel to reinforce the Eighth Army against the expected Chinese winter offensive. The evacuation required 193 vessels and began on 11 December. It took two weeks. The X Corps established a perimeter around Hungnam to allow the Navy to carry out its formidable task of evacuating all troops and a large number of civilians. Army engineer units destroyed all usable buildings, bridges, rail lines, and railroad equipment. During the days before Christmas 1950, the defenses enclosed only a small beachhead filled with dirt-encrusted soldiers and civilians. On Christmas Eve the rear guard of the U.S. 3d Infantry Division climbed into waiting aircraft and left.

The harbor of Hungnam had been an excellent port; by the time the engineers finished, virtually noth-

Because of the massive size of the attacking force, General MacArthur decided to transfer X Corps to South Korea. Here, the corps would establish a defensive line just south of the 38th Parallel to reinforce the Eighth Army against the expected Chinese winter offensive.

ing stood. The Navy moved X Corps with its three divisions—the 1st Marine Division, the 3d Infantry Division, and the 7th Infantry Division—south of the parallel where they went into Eighth Army reserve. Once again, the North Koreans controlled all of North Korea, albeit this time with the help of two Communist Chinese field armies.

During the movement south, Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny's X Corps Engineers built an airstrip to evacuate Marines from their defensive perimeter at Hagaru-ri. Sub-zero temperatures caused equipment to malfunction, and frozen terrain made grading more difficult than normal, but all casualties [4,300] were safely evacuated. Another



Engineers destroy a railroad bridge near Hamhung to slow the enemy advance  
Engineer School, 71-19-8

evacuation strip was built further south at Kot'o-ri to take out additional evacuees [750] when the Hagaru-ri strip was closed around 4 December. When the Chinese destroyed the bridge just south of Kot'o-ri, cutting off the Americans' escape, Maj. Al Wilder, X Corps Engineers' office, devised a plan whereby the Air Force would parachute-drop a bridge from a C-119 at Kot'o-ri. It was then put over the chasm by the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge (ETB) Company and the 1st Marine Engineer Battalion, and allowed for the pull-back of troops from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir to Hungnam.

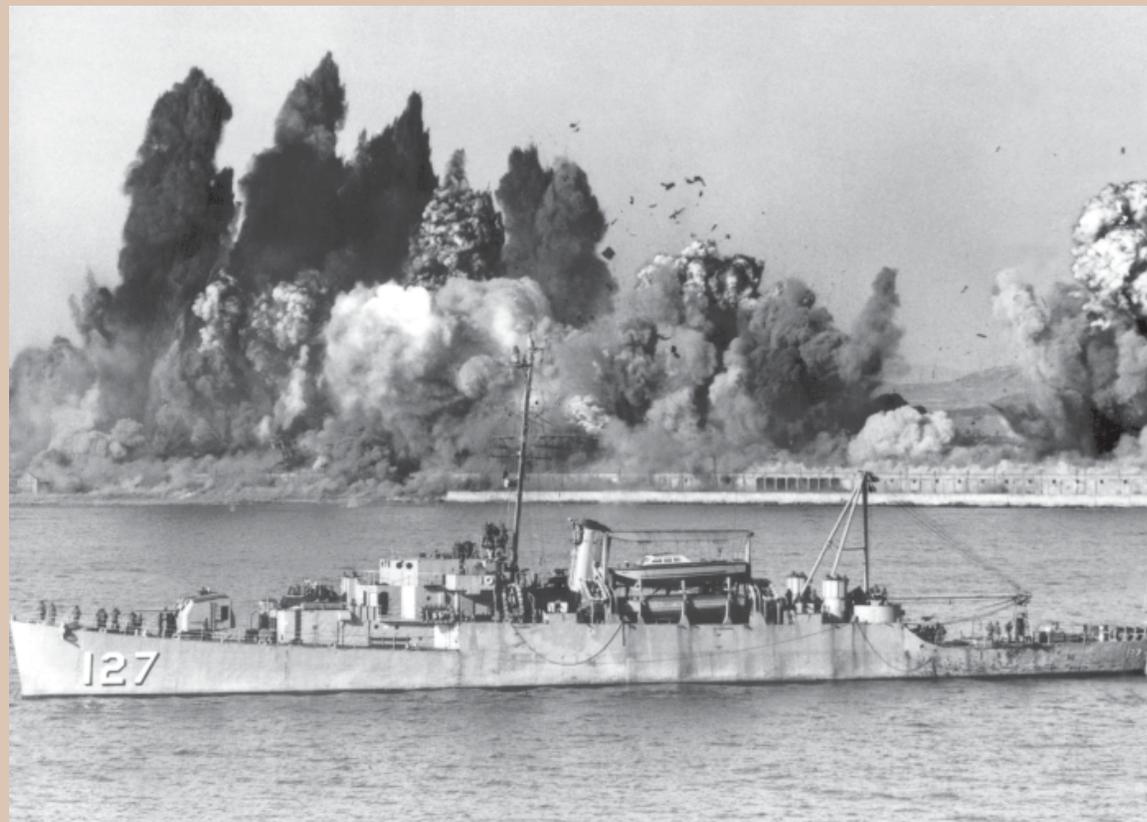
The 2d ESB at first planned to land at Wonsan, but mines in the harbor forced them to land at Iwon instead, putting the 7th Infantry Division ashore. The brigade then moved to Hungnam, where it operated the port. First Lt. Claude L. Roberts, Jr., assisted in the landing at Iwon and at Hungnam, before becoming involved in *TASK FORCE DOG*, to open an escape route from Hagaru-ri to Hungnam. He describes in detail the men and materiel put ashore at Iwon. He spent part of his time giving fire support to the Marines and engineers at the Kot'o-ri airfield in order to evacuate wounded personnel. Once that was completed, *TASK FORCE DOG* moved back to Hungnam, fighting off Chinese most of the way.

First Lt. Maurice D. Roush was with the 13th ECB, 7th Infantry Division. He notes he had never seen it as

cold as it was in North Korea—a recurrent theme in several of the interviews. In the pullback from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir, the 13th Engineers built fortifications and destroyed a 1,200-foot-long concrete highway bridge between Hamhung and Hungnam, and a railroad bridge parallel to it.

The 73d ECB landed at Wonsan by the 2d ESB and motor marched from Wonsan to Hungnam. X Corps assigned Lt. Col. Evan S. Pickett, the 73d commander, the mission of maintaining and improving the MSR from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni. It also maintained a narrow-gauge railroad that ran parallel to the MSR. When the Chinese cut the road, the battalion provided infantry support to the Marine division. Company A, 73rd Engineers, provided the engineer support to *TASK FORCE DOG* and attacked north on the MSR toward the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division to provide an escape route for the two divisions. The battalion then provided perimeter defense at Hungnam until evacuated on 18 December 1950.

First Lt. Charles T. Williams, 73d ECB, notes the shortages of engineers in the units of the 8224th Construction Group and gives substantial credit to the KATUSA program that filled out the engineer units and allowed those units to accomplish their missions. Williams gives high marks to the National Guard battalions in his engineer group and describes the generally successful efforts to racially integrate the group. 🏰



The crew of the U.S.S. Begor watches as engineers destroy the port facilities at Hungnam, 28 December 1950 RG 80, 80-G-424297

**C**olonel Rowny describes parachuting a bridge from a C-119 “flying boxcar” to help Marines retreat from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. He also discusses why, when road building, they tried to avoid rice paddies, seeking instead the solid rock foundations that the mountains offered.

After the Inch'on landing and the capture of Seoul, we planned but did not make an amphibious landing on the east coast. Initially, the Marine amphibious force sat offshore from Hamhung because the waters were heavily mined. Meanwhile, the South Korean 3d Division pursued the North Koreans as they retreated up the east coast and secured Hamhung. I flew into the city from Seoul with an advance contingent of X Corps headquarters. We operated out of its headquarters well before the Marines came ashore.

Because the mine clearing took several weeks, part of the 1st Marine Division came in by helicopter from its transports. The remainder of the division landed administratively once the mines were cleared. The 7th U.S. Division arrived on the east coast by air from Kimpo. The 3d ROK Division, the best unit of the South Korean Army, was attached to the X Corps.

As soon as the U.S. 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division closed in on Hamhung, Gen. Almond sent reconnaissance forces north to the Yalu River. These advance reconnaissance forces were largely un-

opposed. I rode up to the Yalu in a jeep with the chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner. What surprised me was that the river was not an obstacle. It was only a hundred yards or so wide and was completely frozen over.

The terrain becomes much more rugged once you move north of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir and stays rugged up to the Yalu. The reservoir is on a plateau several thousand feet above sea level.

We had heard rumors through the X Corps' own intelligence network that the Chinese were in North Korea. Our confidence in Eighth Army intelligence was so low that X Corps set up an intelligence net on its own. On 22 November we captured several Chinese. This made it now certain that the Chinese were in North Korea.

However, we had difficulty convincing Eighth Army that there were Chinese in North Korea. Eighth Army intelligence officers said they didn't have any evidence to that effect. Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, the Far East Command G-2, flew to X Corps headquarters to determine for himself whether or not the soldiers we captured were Chinese. I remember Willoughby saying to me, “They're not Chinese; they're North Koreans.”

“I'm certain they're Chinese,” I said. I told him I was no anthropologist, but the epicanthic fold of their eyes proved that the prisoners were Chinese and not North Koreans.

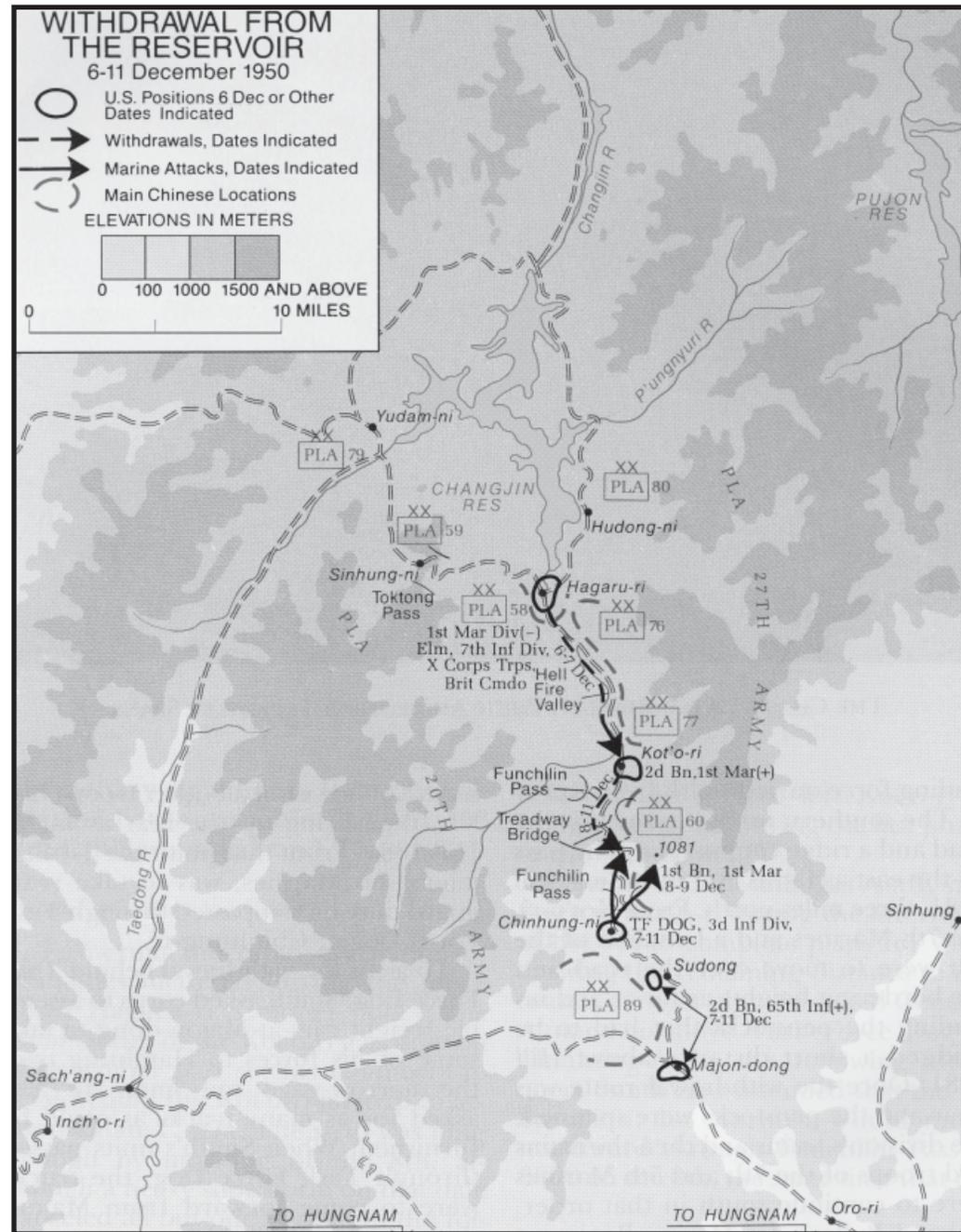
When the Chinese struck they did so in their classical manner. They blew bugles and whistles, beat metal drums, and yelled as they attacked at night. They struck terror in the hearts of our soldiers who were not used to this type of warfare.

“Don’t give me that scientific nonsense,” he said. Willoughby remained skeptical up until the time the Chinese hit us in force on 27 November. Only then did he become convinced that the Chinese had moved south of the Yalu.

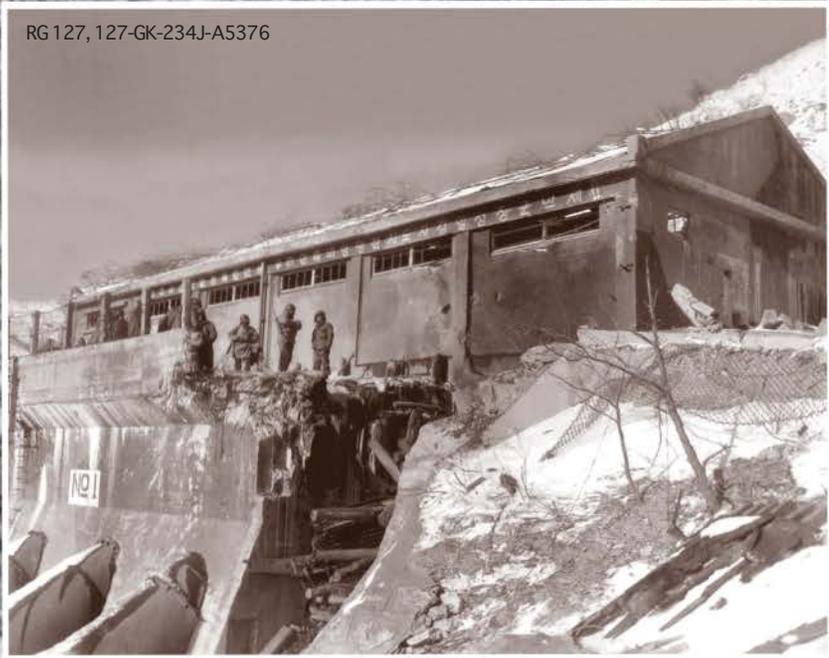
When the Chinese struck they did so in their classical manner. They blew bugles and whistles, beat metal drums, and yelled as they attacked at night. They struck terror in the hearts of our soldiers who were not used to this type of warfare. The Chinese went directly for our logistical supply bases, our artillery, and our tank parks. They hit us where it would do the most damage, that is, our firepower and logistical support.

The Chinese ambushed an artillery battalion of the 7th Division, killing many of its men and burning its artillery pieces and vehicles. They blew up the division’s artillery ammo dump leaving it in shambles.

Immediately after the Chinese struck, the decision was made to pull back into defensive perimeters and then move south and east toward Hamhung. The 7th Division rolled up into defensive positions rather quickly. The Marines were more dispersed and moved more slowly. By the time the Marines formed a perimeter, a bridge across the chasm at Kot’o-ri near the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir had been blown. The Marines finally gathered into a defensive perimeter on the Chosin plateau but were cut off from evacuating to the south.



Aerial view of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir penstocks in the Funchilin Pass, with a close-up of the damaged bridge  
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A130504





With the repaired bridge in the background, Marines resume their march south toward Hungnam  
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A5408

### Getting the Wounded out of Hagaru-ri by Air

We were faced with two major engineering problems: building a runway and bridging the chasm. First, we needed to build an airstrip within the Marine perimeter so we could evacuate the many casualties caused by enemy gunfire, frostbite, and extreme cold. Although there was a fairly flat piece of ground within the perimeter for a runway, it needed smoothing out. The six percent slope on the runway was manageable. The Marines had several pieces of engineering equipment with them, but it was very difficult keeping the equipment operating in the extreme cold, which hovered between 30 and 20 degrees below zero. Because the ground was frozen to quite a depth, we set off explosive charges to loosen up the ground to bulldoze the strip. We also erected warming tents—large tents with space heaters in them—at each end of the field. In this way the operators who were running the equipment, and the equipment itself, would warm up between passes as the dozers smoothed the airstrip.

The theory was good, but in practice it didn't work very well. The warmed-up dozer blades melted the moisture in the earth and caused the dirt to stick to the blades. We solved this problem by applying ski wax—dropped in by air from Japan—to the blades. When the dozer and grader blades were waxed, the dirt did not stick to the metal. Some press wag accused me of having ski wax air dropped into Korea so we could enjoy *skiing* on the

slopes! The warming tents we set up came under fire.

The Chinese moved in close to the perimeter, lobbed in some mortar shells and then disappeared. By the time a patrol would locate the base from which the mortar shells were fired, the Chinese were gone. They would then set up another base and hit us again.

When the wind blew up, which it did sporadically, the temperature dropped another 10 or 20 degrees. Fortunately, the winters in North Korea were quite dry, and if there was snow, it was very light and powdery, more like dust than snow. When the wind blew, it formed clouds of dry snow and dirt that were like dust storms.

Nevertheless, after a great deal of hard work we were able to construct a fairly decent airfield. With a number of courageous pilots flying the planes we were able to airlift all of the casualties. With this problem solved, Col. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller was able to organize an effective defensive perimeter.

Then we tackled the second major engineering challenge—bridging the chasm [a 16-foot chasm in the road cut into a steep slope, 3.5 miles south of Kot'o-ri. It blocked the Marines' movement south from the Changin (Chosin) Reservoir]. I put the question of how to get across the chasm to my engineer staff back in Hungnam. The best suggestion came from an engineer officer, Maj. Al Wilder, who had been my battalion executive in World War II. He had the idea of bolting together some rigid frame bridging and dropping it

from a C-119 [cargo plane, the “flying boxcar”] into the perimeter. By cantilevering the bridge over a fulcrum, it would bridge the chasm.

We quickly worked out the engineering aspects of the plan. The main problem was to find an Air Force pilot who was courageous enough to drop the bridge. Most of the pilots we talked to said it couldn't be done. If a bridge was dropped from a C-119, they said it would be impossible to keep the aircraft under control. Fortunately, we found one pilot who said it could be done. To test the concept we dropped a bridge south of Hungnam. The pilot was able to keep the aircraft under control; however, the parachutes didn't open properly and the bridge wound up in a big pile of wrecked and bent steel. With more careful rigging we believed we could correct that problem. The next day we actually dropped the bridge successfully into the southern portion of the perimeter. The bridge was assembled and put together by our X Corps engineers [58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company]. They rigged it and loaded it into the aircraft. After the bridge was dropped into the perimeter, Marine engineers pushed it across the gap. I personally talked to Col. Puller, the commander who thought it was a good idea and approved the plan. The Marines laid down a barrage of small arms fire at the narrowest part of the chasm where we had planned to place the bridge. While the Marines kept up the barrage, engineers manhandled the bridge and spanned the chasm.

The Marines were then able to come out in an orderly fashion, fighting a rear guard action as they evacuated the perimeter. They sent out patrols to the right and left as soon as they crossed the bridge to protect their flanks. It was a professionally executed military operation.

After they withdrew to Hungnam, the Marines embarked on evacuation boats, which took them out to the troop transports. The 7th Infantry Division followed. I stayed back with an engineer detachment to assure that there was maximum destruction to the port and to destroy whatever supplies we were unable to evacuate. We wanted to make certain that nothing of any value was left in the hands of the Chinese.

I was put in charge of planning and executing the evacuation of supplies. We got out most of the supplies. I was also put in charge of setting explosive charges to damage the port, so it could not be used by the Chinese without a good deal of work. When the explosive charges went off it was a rather spectacular sight. I think the

Lt. Col. Edward Rowny receives the Legion of Merit from Maj. Gen. Edward Almond, commander, X Corps, in Hungnam, 14 December 1950  
RG 111, SC-355069



job was well done. The evacuation was carried out in an orderly fashion. The perimeter was kept intact and we didn't suffer any real interference with the work of evacuating the supplies and setting the explosive charges. It was all done in an efficient and professional manner. The Chinese struck us with hit-and-run attacks, but there were no concerted attacks. While we were subjected to sporadic attacks, there was no big push to cut us off or to drive us into the sea.

The X Corps staff evacuated to a command ship and landed well to the south on the east coast of Korea. Since I was in charge of the final evacuation, I was one of the last persons to leave. The boat in which I was to leave blew up and sank. One of the soldiers lit a cigarette and set a stack of mortar charges on fire. The charges exploded and the boat sank in a matter of minutes. This left us stranded ashore. Luckily, a U.S. plane was hovering above. We had no way of communicating with the plane so we spelled out "HELP! U.S. TROOPS" with powdered milk on the runway. The plane landed, picked us up, and took us back to Japan. We landed at Tachikawa on Christmas Eve.

I stayed in Japan just three days. My family, who was in Tokyo, was surprised to see me and glad to have me home for Christmas. Gen. Almond was worried about me. When I didn't come out to the command ship he thought I might have gone down with the boat that sank. When he learned I was okay he sent me a message:

"Fine, be back at X Corps headquarters on 27 December." I caught a plane at Tachikawa and got back to X Corps headquarters on time.

### Thoughts on the KATUSA Program

The KATUSA program was a good one and it helped us considerably; however, we only used the KATUSAs intermittently and in small numbers before our evacuation of Hungnam. We made much greater use of them when we started going north again in 1951. At one time X Corps had more than 7,000 KATUSAs. They worked alongside our engineers to build roads, repair railroads, and otherwise help out the logistical efforts. They also manhandled supplies and ammunition.

There were no particular problems; they were easy to deal with. The KATUSAs learned quickly and worked hard. We screened them and put those who were more mechanically adept to work at first maintaining, and then operating, equipment. Some of them made excellent equipment operators. Many KATUSAs who maintained our equipment believed that if the equipment looked good it would work well. As a result, they polished the vehicles but didn't pick up the hoods and look at the oil levels. We had to teach them to change the oil and use grease guns. After that the vehicles not only looked good but also ran well. We also used KATUSAs to manhandle supplies, at which they performed well. One KATUSA could put 100

pounds of supplies on an A-frame and walk right up the side of a mountain. For one attack, I recall using 500 KATUSAs as a human supply chain.

We also used KATUSAs to carve out roads on the sides of mountains. We tried to avoid disrupting the rice paddies that had been terraced over centuries with much care. In general, we tried to do as little damage as possible to Korean ecology. We had an unlimited supply of dynamite and taught KATUSAs how to drill and emplace explosive charges. Building roads by cutting into the side of mountains had another advantage. The rice paddies in the flat lands required enormous amounts of rock to act as a foundation, whereas a road carved out of the side of a mountain had a natural rock foundation. Moreover, building roads on the sides of mountains left us lots of rock to lay down foundations for roads on the flat ground. Accordingly, we carved out roads on the sides of mountains whenever possible.

When X Corps began to move north again, I remained a corps engineer for only a week or so longer. Shortly after I returned to Korea, the corps G-4 was killed. For the next six months or so I was the X Corps logistician. After that, when my one-year tour was up, I volunteered for a second year and joined the 2d Infantry Division. 🏰



Students in the crane operator's course, ROK Army Engineer Training School, gather around their instructor RG 111, SC-367752

**W**ithdrawing from Inch'on, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade out loaded troops and moved to Korea's east coast for a projected landing at Wonsan and Iwon. After off loading the 7th Infantry Division at Iwon, Lieutenant Roberts and the brigade moved to Hungnam for more loading and unloading of equipment.

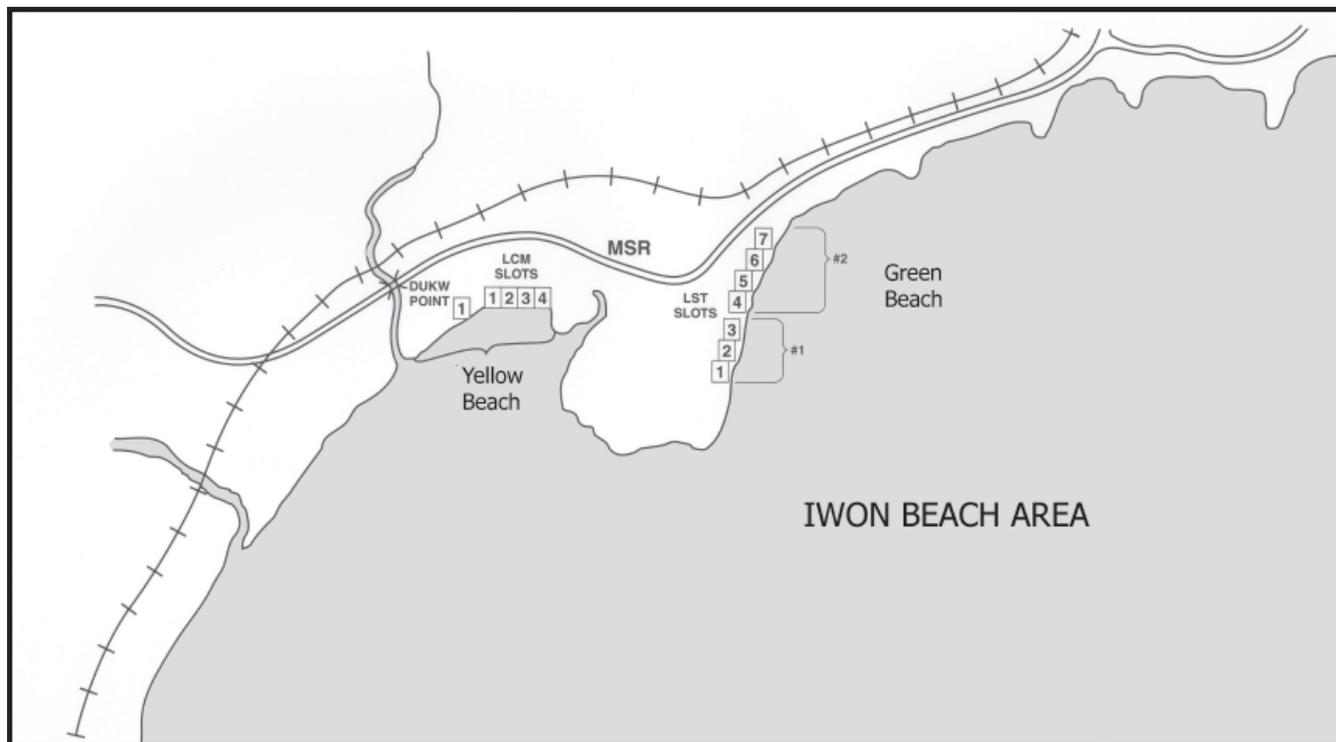
After withdrawing from port operations at Inch'on, the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (EB&SR), along with all other elements of the 2d ESB, embarked on seagoing vessels and proceeded to Wonsan. The mission was to pioneer operations in that port and to land the 7th Infantry Division there. A 50-ton crane barge was assigned to the brigade, and its prime use was for boat maintenance. It could lift our LCMs [at times identified as landing craft, medium] out of the water where they could be repaired on the barge. Directives for the operation contained very little detail since the situation at the time was fluid. A small rear echelon of one officer and 10 enlisted men were left in Inch'on to assist in the maintenance of Navy LCMs left at that port. These men later rejoined the unit via LSTs that also carried a small number of heavy vehicles left with the brigade rear detachment.

On 18 October 1950 the executive officer of the shore battalion, and the signal and surveying officers from the regimental staff, proceeded via air to Wonsan with a

small brigade reconnaissance party. Prior to sailing from Inch'on this group had been directed to give brief radio reports and to reconnoiter at the Port of Hungnam.

All personnel boarded the USNS *Eltिंगe* on 21 October 1950. The *Eltिंगe* and ships carrying equipment remained at anchor off Inch'on until they sailed for Wonsan on 26 October 1950. The brigade commander left the ship shortly before it sailed and proceeded to Wonsan by air. The somewhat prolonged stay aboard ship served well as a rest and recuperation period for the troops who had been working shifts of 12 and more hours per day for many weeks. Food and accommodations aboard the *Eltिंगe* were excellent. No training or duties other than for administration of the ship were assigned. Morale and discipline were of a high order.

Because of the fluid tactical situation, and the discovery that the harbor at Wonsan was heavily mined, alternate plans were considered for landing at Hungnam and operating that port. I traveled by ship to Iwon. Some of the guys traveled by rail, and the crane barge was towed up there. For some unknown reason they took it into Wonsan harbor where it hit a floating mine. We had Lt. Bill Mordacai from the Citadel and four other men on there. Bill and one of the other fellows were killed. Bill was knocked off of the barge and we never found him. Bill was a roommate of Gen. Carroll LeTellier and the only officer casualty we had. He attended the Engineer Officer Basic Course with me at Fort Belvoir [Virginia].



Upon arrival at the entrance to the swept channel into Wonsan, at about 0800 on 29 October 1950, the ships received new orders to proceed to the beach area near Iwon, 65 air miles northeast of Hungnam. At the same time a message from the brigade commander aboard the USS *Eldorado* was received via the ship's radio. It stated that the unit was to proceed to the Iwon area, put ashore only necessary personnel and equipment to land the 7th Division, and upon completion of that mission, reembark and return to Hungnam.

In view of the port operations mission for which the unit had embarked, the mission posed quite a problem. The unit was not combat loaded, nor did it have any specialized Class IV engineer material for operations over a sandy surf beach. Determination of what elements and equipment to disembark was made more difficult by a lack of information on what was to be discharged over the beach. News reports had indicated that at least part of the division had gone ashore at Wonsan. Also, in view of the planned reembarkation and return to

Hungnam, it could be inferred that perhaps only combat elements of the division were to be landed over the Iwon beaches; therefore, it was tentatively planned to send ashore only the shore battalion with a limited complement of dozers and equipment, selected by viewing ships' loading plans to determine accessibility.

At 1215, 29 October 1950, the ships steamed into the swept channel leading to the Iwon beaches where naval control vessels passed anchorage instructions. While proceeding to anchorage it could be seen that the naval command ship *Eldorado* was present and that eight LSTs were discharging vehicles on the beach. When the *Eltinge* anchored, the brigade commander came aboard and approved tentative plans for the force to be used ashore, including the plan that the shore party troops would continue to billet aboard the *Eltinge*, changing work shifts by lighter. In addition to the eight LSTs there were three LSUs and 10 LCMs available for lighterage in the area.

During the course of the evening the shore battalion and its first shift were proceeding via LST to pick up their initial complement of equipment from the *Luxembourg Victory*. Further contacts with the staff aboard the *Eldorado* revealed that the mission involved unloading the 7th Division reinforced with 20,491 personnel, 9,685 tons of bulk cargo, and 4,659 vehicles mounted on 42 ships. Plans were immediately changed and orders issued at 2100, 30 October 1950, to debark all brigade

and regimental personnel and equipment from the *Eltinge* at 0700 the following morning and to debark essentially all equipment from the other ships concerned.

While the beach had excellent seaward characteristics, we found upon landing that the very steep washed area and the sand area back to the lateral road were not passable to wheeled vehicles. The sand was of very uniform grain size—approximately 20 mesh being the dominant size. Wet areas did not attain increased supporting power, and surf action immediately swept away material dozed out to meet ramps of landing craft. Even DUKWs could not exit without tow. As a result of the administrative loading of regimental equipment, essential items came ashore slowly. None of the vitally needed matting was available.

Fortunately, the early priority was on vehicles, and their landing could proceed—though awkwardly—by utilizing available dozers as tow machines. An attempt at handling heavy cargo without appropriate crane base preparation resulted in the crane tipping seaward and demolishing its boom. During the period before proper landing points and exit roads could be built, spot observations logically led many to question the efficiency of the regimental effort and the ultimate outcome of the landing operation.

During the night that regimental personnel landed, heavy swells in the anchorage area had begun to hamper the leading of lighters alongside ships. At 0947 the fol-

Some bright soldier came up with the solution to stabilizing the roadbeds and other areas—straw rice bags filled with sand.

lowing morning a combination of swells and surf on the beach caused all discharge operations to cease for 10 hours. From the shore party's point of view, perhaps, this was fortunate because that period allowed full application of personnel and equipment to the construction of useable landing points and exit roads. Action had been underway from the beginning to procure local materials for stabilizing roads and wash areas. Very limited quantities of pierced-steel plank had been brought ashore in division loaded LSTs and used in varied fashions in their discharge. This material was salvaged, straightened, and re-laid. We found the best method of laying it was upside down with the end points staggered. Some poles of corduroy size were available in a lumberyard in the village of Kunsen. They were used but did not provide a durable, satisfactory surface.

Some bright soldier came up with the solution to stabilizing the roadbeds and other areas—straw rice bags filled with sand. They worked great. Adequate supplies

of rice bags were located and hauled to the site concurrently with assembly of sufficient Korean labor to make their filling and placement proceed at a satisfactory rate. Roads and hammerheads built of one or more layers were excellent, both as to stability and dura-

bility under wheeled traffic. Five thousand burlap sandbags ordered for airdrop arrived on 1 November 1950. While they were useful for the job of rapidly "trimming" the ramp area on beached craft, they could not compete with the rice bags for surfacing major areas—even if they had been available in time and quantity.

With facilities established and Korean labor recruited, opera-

tions resumed at 1730 on 31 October 1950 when clear weather and seas presented a different scene. Vehicles could roll ashore as rapidly as they could be processed over the ramps. Time at the beach spent in discharging vehicle-laden LSTs was consistently a fractional portion of the time spent at shipside taking loads. From



Engineers use rice bags to stabilize the roadbed near a ponton bridge RG 111, SC-349361

this time on the principal deterrent to operations was the fact that weather and sea conditions made the loading of lighters, particularly LSTs alongside ships, very difficult and resulted in some shutdowns and considerable damage to LSTs and ships.

The need for shore party “rank” and aggressiveness on the beach was repeatedly evidenced. Craft loads of vehicles coming ashore frequently represented a heterogeneous collection from different units. They needed to be organized and pushed by shore party officers to rapidly get drivers on vehicles, motors warmed up, trailers coupled, and dead vehicles taken in tow. During several days of loading and water movement, individual drivers and some units in this type of unopposed landing tended to slack off and were slow in realizing that they must resume the character of a fast breaking land unit when their landing craft beached. Those units that came ashore more or less intact, and whose officers had given thought to the problem of an expeditious landing, came ashore very promptly. The record for discharging a given LST was 84 vehicles in 20 minutes from the time the craft beached.

When we used North Koreans as laborers on the beach they didn't steal a thing, as opposed to our experience at Inch'on, where the South Koreans stole everything. I guess they would get their heads chopped off if they did something like that under the communist regime.

The record for discharging a given LST was 84 vehicles in 20 minutes from the time the craft beached.

Handling bulk cargo from LSTs and LSUs proceeded well, using the same roadways and landing points that were developed for vehicles. Working areas at the water's edge were surfaced, first as hammerheads, and later the surfaces from adjacent slots were joined to form loops. A good, tough brown clay was available within a mile of the beach, and when a power shovel became available it was possible to stabilize the beach sand by placing a two- to four-inch layer of clay over it. Cranes were used only for heavy lifts from LSUs. All possible cargo from these crafts were hand loaded into trucks backed in over their ramps or carried by coolie lines to temporary piles on the beach. Considerable temporary piling was required because of the shortages of trucks and the lack of a fully manned dump organization to clear them rapidly.

The handling of cargo from LSTs is a laborious process that can be aided little by the use of normal machinery. It is virtually impossible to handle heavy lifts from them at any satisfactory rate. This is most unfortunate since this craft, with its large carrying capacity, shallow draft, and ability to beach, could be as revolutionary an asset in amphibious cargo operations as it is for vehicles and personnel. I believe that LSTs could be modified to provide a light gantry crane to deliver cargo over the bow in nets or on pallets.

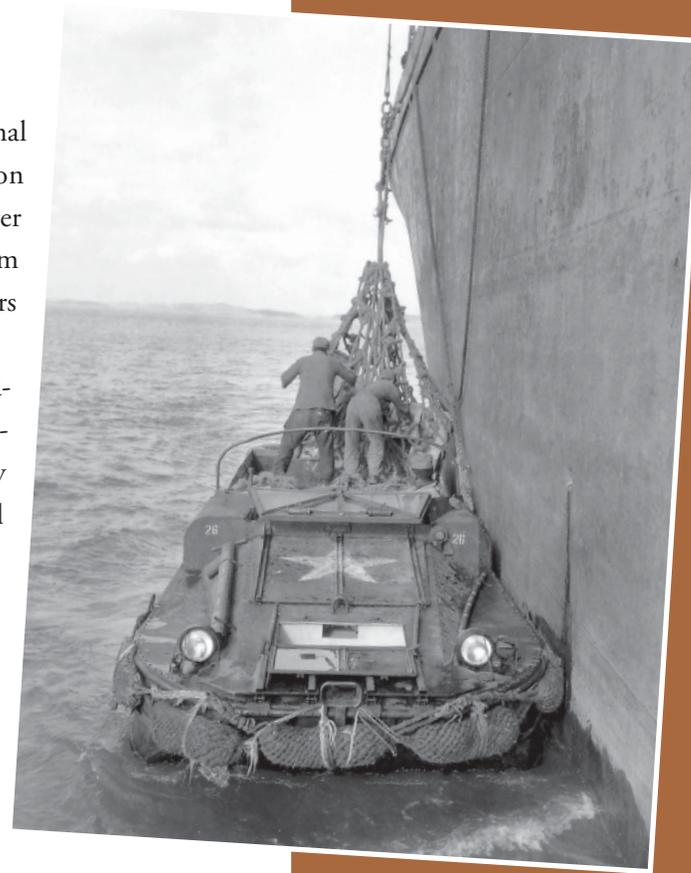
On 6 November 1950 an LST completely loaded with a total of 5,572 barrels of POL arrived for discharge.

After the bow was lightened by discharge of one LSU-load via marrying up in the stream, the LST was beached and the POL drums were rolled ashore by native labor. This procedure is quite practical; in fact, 5,162 drums [902 tons] were discharged in 31 hours.

The efforts of Company B, the boat company, were most effective in this operation despite the fact that 32 percent of its strength was committed to rear echelons in Japan, Inch'on, and Wonsan. At naval request, on 31 October 1950, Company B crews were placed on the 10 LCMs working the area. Two Q-boats were operated; one on night patrol for the Navy to accost and investigate strange small craft picked up on naval radar systems. As an unusual feature, 20 SLOE (special list of equipment) DUKWs arrived on shipping and were issued to Company B for operation in addition to eight DUKWs of Companies D and E, and two DUKWs from Company A, 562 EB (Engineer Boat) Battalion. The naval command readily consented to anchor selected ships in the more sheltered Yoke anchorage area of *Yellow Beach*. An efficient DUKW circuit, hauling directly to nearby dumps, was quickly established and the DUKWs produced a very significant percentage of the tonnage discharged. The 30 DUKWs, with a minimum number out for maintenance, brought ashore as much as 416 tons per day and landed a total of 1,472 tons during the operation. Company B lacked personnel to provide a second man on each DUKW

of “DUKW Riders,” so additional personnel were provided, first on loan from an artillery unit, and later by a pool of light vehicle drivers from brigade and regimental headquarters companies.

Only *Green Beach* was considered and initially operated. Planning had been hastily done largely by naval authorities prior to arrival of the 2d ESB units in the area. Early regimental reconnaissance had revealed the desirability of opening *Yellow Beach*, and such action was recommended to the naval command shortly after arrival. The beach was opened some 24 hours later, on 2 November 1950. *Green Beach* was assigned to Company E, since it was in the direction of their sector on *Green Beach*, and since developments were showing that waterside characteristics of the Company D sector of *Green Beach* were somewhat better for beaching LSTs. All LCMs were routed to *Yellow Beach*, where the sand was firm and conditions for cargo discharge were virtually ideal. In the later phases a limited number of LSUs carrying cargo were discharged at *Yellow Beach*. The DUKW exit and control points were established



Soldiers use cargo nets to transfer supplies from a transport ship to a waiting DUKW RG 111, SC-383938

on a separate sector of *Yellow Beach*, and required no service from the shore company since the beach was quite stable.

By 9 November 1950 the landing of the 7th Division and supporting elements was virtually complete and plans were underway for movement of 2d ESB units to Hungnam. Based on a tentative plan for continued resupply of the 7th Division over the Iwon Beach, a rear detachment was designated consisting of one officer from brigade headquarters and 27 enlisted men from regimental elements.

Plans were initially drawn for movement by LST, which was the preferred method of movement. Shortly before time for movement it became known that all LSTs were to return to their bases expeditiously for provisioning and repair. It then developed that the brigade units were to move by rail and road. Road characteristics were such that only two and one-half-ton and lighter vehicles could go by road. Plans were so drawn. They were necessarily somewhat tentative since tunnel clearances and the availability of rail cars were not firmly established. Rail transportation control and operation in the area were still in the pioneer stage. The local naval command was very helpful at this point and granted authority to utilize an LSD (landing ship, dock) for the water movement of a substantial portion of the vehicles and equipment. These items were to be loaded into available LSU and LCM for transport aboard the LST. All the way through, the

movement plans were set up on a priority of units basis and held flexible. Except for the forward echelon of brigade headquarters, regimental units moved first, with Company H leading. The movement by rail, road, and water was executed without incident, and all major elements of the regiment closed at Hungnam on 15 November 1950.

#### From Iwon to Hungnam

We had operated at Iwon for a little over 30 days. After Iwon, we moved to Hungnam. I was reassigned from Company B to Company A of the 562d Engineer Boat Maintenance Battalion under the command of Capt. Steve Farr.

Upon completion of operations at Iwon, Korea, the 532d EB&SR, along with other elements of the 2d ESB, began movements to the Port of Hungnam, which was to be operated as the principal port for support of the X Corps. Company E road elements, together with advance representatives of the regimental headquarters, arrived at Hungnam on 13 November 1950. Principal remaining elements, moving by road, rail, and water, closed at Hungnam the next day. As units and equipment arrived, immediate dispositions were made to effect development of the port to full or required capacity. Eleven days after first elements of the unit arrived we achieved a daily cargo discharge record of 5,442 tons.

The fact that the waterside facilities at Hungnam had been designed for specialized industrial cargo handling, together with the state of complete wreckage of the vast industrial area that hemmed it in, caused major problems in debris clearance and quayside development. Consequently, Company D was given a primary mission of area development with a sec-



A jeep and trailer are loaded into an LST Engineer School, 30-10-20

ondary mission of operating an LST and lighterage beach of limited capacity. Two key projects were undertaken: first, the development of an LST beach in the “badlands” waste and rubble area on the waterfront northeast of Pier No. 4, with a connecting road back along Pier No. 4 to the other piers; and then, the filling of the railroad tracks on Pier No. 1 to permit truck access along that principal pier. A heavy steel gantry crane, which had fallen on Pier No. 1, had to be cut up and removed to allow full access to the two outer berths on Pier No. 1. The access road along Pier No. 4 constituted an initial operating space and permitted a ship to be worked from that pier. Clear-

ance was rapidly expanded from the road back into the badlands to provide a very satisfactory, wide, and unrestricted area for the discharge and storage of drum POL in transit, where the profitable technique of hand rolling barrels could be employed.

Other regimental projects in road maintenance and improvement were un-

dertaken as rapidly as possible, always with a view to ensuring convenient access and egress for port clearance. A very satisfactory sign-posted traffic circuit evolved.

Lighterage operations were available in the discharge of cargo but were limited to the utilization of DUKWs and a small number of LCMs for the discharge of ammunition ships and for other suitable priority cargo. Ammunition ships were not permitted alongside piers. The draft of one POL ship required that it be lightened before berthing. As at Iwon, Company B operated all 31 available DUKWs. Their employment was most effective since ammunition was being delivered to a

It soon became apparent that with the lack of trucks, the factor controlling the tonnage handled through the port would be the availability of railroad cars....

railhead near the harbor, but not accessible to the piers. A total of 46 LCMs were delivered to Company B by various shipping. This included the eight boats that had been on hand at Iwon, 16 that had been shipped from Inch'on to Wonsan, and 22 rebuilt boats sent from Japan. During discharge operations, only 10 boats could be crewed and operated concurrently with full-scale DUKW operations because of the limited number of operating personnel.

After the sixth day of operations a Japanese contract group of 1,061 personnel arrived in the area and provided hatch crews. They remained billeted aboard a mother ship, the *Shinano-Maru*. Their administration, disposition, and supervision presented a variety of problems, but overall, they served effectively. The quality of their winch operators was mediocre, but improved with experience. The wear and tear on ship's gear was higher than when military operators were provided. The mother ship was given pier space, since the majority of ships to be worked were at pier side, and since the arrangement for hatch crew disposition had to be simple to be efficient. The presence of an alert Japanese-speaking NCO in the regimental staff was invaluable in the management of the Japanese personnel. There was a command restriction against using North Korean personnel as labor aboard ships, and, considering the meager strength of the available troop units, the Japanese crews were a critical and essential element of the port force.

Korean dock laborers were available in desired quantities for day shifts. The numbers available at night were quite variable, and generally not up to requirements. The accumulation and general disposition or breakdown of labor for all elements of the brigade was handled by the regimental S-4, since the regiment was the major user of native labor.

Railroad was the principal method of clearing cargo from the port. Double tracks on Pier No. 1 served four of the better berths, and trains could be loaded directly from ships. Korean railroad workers, under brigade direction, carried out railroad repair and construction. Track extensions were later laid to Piers No. 3 and 4, the former in time to render useful service in the discharge of a ship. It soon became apparent that with the lack of trucks, the factor controlling the tonnage handled through the port would be the availability of railroad cars, or rather, the ability of depot operating forces to clear and return them. After the ninth day of the operation, and after demonstrating a port capacity of 5,442 tons, a situation developed wherein a preponderant percentage of available rolling stock was loaded and awaited discharge at dumps or on railroad sidings. An insignificant trickle of empty cars was returning to the port. Some augmentation of truck service was undertaken to clear priority cargo, but the capacity of the depot system to absorb supplies had obviously been exceeded. We were ordered to discontinue the discharge of ships except for

ammunition, POL, and selected items in quantities. The port was operating at a rate well below capacity during this time.

### Kot'o-ri

One day I walked into the orderly room and Capt. Steve Farr said, "What are you doing?" Well, I gave the wrong answer, "Nothing." He said "Good. They need you over at X Corps Headquarters. They've got some sort of job for you and a couple of other guys."

That night we reported to Lt. Col. W.C. Winston, commanding officer, 52d TC Battalion. Col. Winston told us that we were to be part of the traffic regulating setup that was to control traffic on the MSR from the beach at Hungnam to the front. Lt. Col. John U.D. Page was to supervise the traffic regulating system. The plan was to have two officers and a few enlisted men at strategic spots along the MSR; Capt. Clarence Whorman and I picked Kot'o-ri. Cpl. Bill Epps, from Anniston, Alabama, was our driver.

At 0500 the next morning we proceeded in a convoy of 10 jeeps until all of the checkpoints had been established, except the one at Kot'o-ri and the one at Hagaru-ri. We had an uneventful trip from Hungnam up to Kot'o-ri. When we arrived there we ran into the 1st Marine Regiment commanded by Col. "Chesty" Puller. Along with the Marines were elements of the 52d Truck Battalion, the 185th ECB,



Troops watch as close air support pounds enemy positions south of Hungaru-ri, 6 December 1950  
RG 127, 127-GK-234F-A5440

the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, and British commandos.

We were informed that we could proceed no farther because the MSR forward had been severed by Chinese Communist forces. In fact, the Marine officer giving the information seemed quite amazed that we had gotten through from the south, because at that time the entire area was completely surrounded by enemy units. We were quite concerned about a radio relay station that we had passed along the way into Kot'o-ri.

We borrowed a tent from the Marines to put up on the southern edge of the camp. We had the tent

almost up when a Marine tank captain informed us that intelligence had reported a possible Chinese attack from the south and that our tent was in the line of fire of his tank company. My jeep driver, Cpl. Epps, and I gave up on the tent. In a half-destroyed building we found some men from the 7th Infantry Division with a stove! Upon talking to these men we learned that they were all from air sections of the various regiments of the 7th.

We sat around the fire talking and I learned that these men were trained to operate airfields for small L-type planes. Sometime around midnight it seemed as if all hell had broken loose. The Chinese had hit us on our northern flank. After about a 25-minute firefight, the firing subsided and the night was quiet again.

As each day went by the Navy medics, with the Marines, were pressed harder and harder for hospital space and supplies. This was due to the increasing number of casualties and the fact that the helicopters evacuating the wounded were inadequate in number. Helicopters also made excellent targets in the ascent and descent for the enemy snipers in the hills.

I was told that Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny, X Corps Engineer, directed that an airstrip be constructed at Kot'o-ri. Years later he confirmed this in a conversation with me. Upon its completion by the 185th Engineer Battalion (Company C), the airstrip was 100 feet wide and 2,000 feet long. I was placed in charge of operating

the airstrip along with my adopted guys from the 7th Division.

The airstrip was put into operation on or about 3 December, and from that time until it was shut down it was almost always under sniper fire. At the outset, only the small liaison planes were brought in. Later, however, we had Navy and Marine aircraft, and then finally Air Force C-47s were able to land. The "L-type" planes carried one or two wounded, and the C-47s could accommodate up to 40 wounded. All in all, about 750 wounded UN soldiers were evacuated from the airstrip. Among the more famous visitors to the airstrip were Generals Almond, Shephard, and Barr, and also Marguerite Higgins, war correspondent from the *New York Herald Tribune*. One time Maggie Higgins came; I heard a lot of vehicles coming down the road to the airfield. Col. Puller got out of one and said, "Lt. Roberts, I want you to put this woman on an airplane and don't ever let her come in here again." She was not a favorite of his.

It snowed off and on during the entire evacuation of the wounded. On one occasion, a C-47 had made a particularly dangerous landing on the snow, and the pilot requested that we try to clear some of the snow off. We called on the engineers and they sent over a grader. As the operator made the first pass over the strip, a sniper shot him in the neck. Everyone cleared off the airstrip and we took up a line of fire along the railroad fill that ran down one side of the strip.

On 9 December, elements of the 7th Marines, with the 7th Infantry Division protecting their flank, passed through us on their way to Hungnam from Hagaru-ri. We were to follow them down the hill. When the convoy formed, we were on the tail end. Col. Puller placed Col. Page there so that he could help with the control.

One small group formed behind Col. Page's jeep. Before we left we received direct orders that we were to stop for nothing. If a vehicle broke down we were to push it off to the side, destroy it, and proceed. The entire withdrawal was based on a rapid movement down the hill.

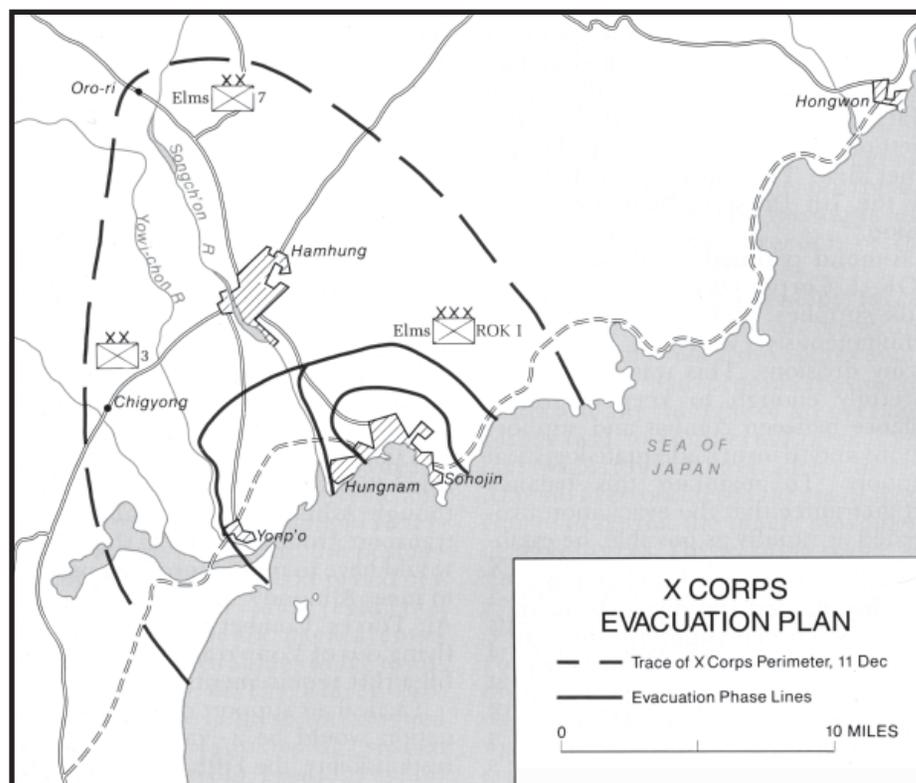
The trip down the hill, however, was made at a snail's pace and consisted of one ambush after another. We would ride for a while, then we'd get out and walk. It was so cold that it was almost impossible to sit in a jeep for any length of time. Walking was the only way we kept our feet from freezing.

There was intermittent communist rifle and machine-gun fire from each side of our narrow escape route down the mountains. Some distance south of Kor'o-ri the Chinese had destroyed the penstock bridge at Changjin Power Plant Number 1. This was the bridge over which we had to pass if we hoped to save our equipment. Without this bridge we would have to abandon our transport, and wounded, and cut across the enemy-held mountains. Fortunately, thanks to X Corps, the Air Force had dropped six spans of steel treadway bridge to

us. This bridge was assembled over the gap. We moved without any further incident to Hungnam.

### Evacuation

The advent of large enemy forces in North Korea was becoming apparent—bringing about general reverses for the UN forces. On 9 December 1950, instructions were received for using the port for evacuation. Prior planning had been made against this contingency. A layout



of assembly areas and “slotting” areas had been prepared and furnished to brigade headquarters. Clearance and leveling of additional assembly and parking areas in the general area behind the LST beach was completed as rapidly as possible. We recognized the shortage of slings and spreaders for loading vehicles on ships, and their manufacture was immediately undertaken in the Company E motor ship. Company D was given a unit mission of operating a “gear locker” and fabricating required chocking material.

So, we evacuated. It became an amphibious landing turnabout. We began moving out and loading ships. Some large Danish or Norwegian locomotive ships were brought in to evacuate the tanks. You could see the boom on these ships swing down to pick up a tank and watch the ship list. To my knowledge, we evacuated all the equipment. That was in December. Some of my guys were involved in blowing up parts of the port.

During this operation, harbor master duties falling to the regiment were of an unusual scope. Early action was taken to verify pier-side depths and approach-channel conditions. Six berths with drafts capable of taking Victory ships not too heavily loaded were immediately available, and a seventh, on Pier No. 4, was quickly made usable by the Navy’s removal of two sunken Korean power mines prior to initiation of port operations by this unit. Since the movement into the area was an administrative one, naval representation ashore was

small, consisting of a beach master detachment of about 12, displaced after a few days by a fleet activities detachment, and an officer representative from MASTS (Military Air/Sea Transport Service). Two naval tugs remained in the port, and initially a naval officer worked jointly with the regimental boat operations officer in the berthing of ships. Soon, however, the entire matter of piloting and berthing ocean-going ships fell to the regimental boat operations officer whose qualifications in ship handling were invaluable to the operation. Pilot service was rendered for 258 movements of ocean-going vessels in and about the restricted harbor.

A number of unusual measures were taken to expedite out loading that involved accepting risks and attendant difficulties. Piloting of ships from the outer anchorage at night became very difficult after this area became full of naval and cargo vessels. With the anchorage full, passing between and around ships made these movements extremely hazardous as the outside ships were anchored on the minefield safety line. Docking ships in high winds at night with very little light on the docks, and in congested berths, also was a dangerous operation. Although the damage to ships and piers was nil, it taxed the ability of all concerned. When it became necessary to nest ships to expedite out loading, the absence of fenders aboard ships made the docking approach and docking difficult and hazardous. The nested ships were worked on the outboard side by lighterage,

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which resulted in a highly congested water traffic problem. The banking of LSUs and LCMs alongside the outboard ship added to the problem of docking vessels. Because of this, it frequently became necessary to move a 450-foot ship sideways into a 500-foot space, instead of the safe and conventional way of an angle approach. The docking of LSTs bow at Dock No. 4 also resulted in a complicated docking problem. During this period, high winds made it necessary to kedge all ships in between the LSTs to prevent serious damage to other ships and/or docks. During the evacuation period, 9-24 December 1950, the harbor and docking pilot handled 163 ship movements.

Since additional operating units were attached to the brigade to facilitate development and control of the evacuation facilities, the regimental mission was narrowed to the out loading of ocean-going ships at pier side. The LST beach was turned over by Company D to an element of the 1st Marine Division Shore Party, and Company D was given charge of ship loading at three berths on Piers No. 3 and 4. Company E retained charge of four berths on Pier No. 1.

The evacuation period was one of intense pressure. It was critically important that maximum utilization be made of all available pier space, and that all ships work at a maximum rate throughout the 24-hour day. It soon became apparent that the supply of civilian labor was becoming disrupted by the deteriorating situation.

We requested through brigade headquarters that the loading unit or service provide 40 dock workers per shift. This procedure was established but required close follow up to ensure its implementation.

Each division, as well as corps, established embarkation control officers in the dock area and provided a source for direct contact in implementing a loading plan once a ship had been assigned by corps control. In order to facilitate contact at regimental level and the unit loading each ship, and in order to quickly ascertain "slack" that might require action at regimental or higher level, an officer reporting directly to S-3 was on duty aboard each ship at all times. Officers were made available for this duty by discontinuing all staff functions not critical to the immediate problem, by use of Headquarters Company and medical administrative officers, and by the loan of four officers from brigade staff and special troops. These officers were assigned in pairs to a given berth. They rendered spot reports on any deficiencies and turned in journal sheets and notes at three-hour intervals on percent completion. In addition, they generally assisted



Equipment waiting to be loaded on ships as UN forces prepare to withdraw from Hungnam, 11 December 1950 RG 111, SC-355022

## First Lieutenant Claude L. Roberts, Jr. 2d Engineer Special Brigade

responsible companies in solving problems that arose on the ships.

Principal recurrent difficulties encountered during the out loading included apparent slowness of assigned elements in getting material and work parties at the dock once a ship was berthed, failure on the part of ships to open hatches and rig gear as requested prior to berthing, and delays due to damaged winches or rigging.



Men and equipment of the 1st Marine Division are loaded aboard ships in Hungnam, 14 December 1950 RG 111, SC-355244

The first of these difficulties was usually most apparent during the loading of the first one or two ships of a given division or element, and the pace improved as their control office gained experience with the system. The second-mentioned difficulty stemmed both from a lack of personal contact and follow up by naval boarding officers, and from occasional failure on the part of ships' masters to respond to requests or to work their crews at odd hours to open hatches and rig gear. The advance rigging asked for, based on average requirements for unit loading, consisted of the two jumbos on the hatches so equipped, and standard double rigging on the other three hatches. As to delays from damaged ships' gear, a number of the ships were newly out of "mothballs" and had deteriorated wire or winch machinery. Even on the better-maintained ships there was considerable breakage by the unskilled Japanese winch operators handling the Navy lifts. Also, many unit vehicles were overloaded.

Many ships' masters were authorized to work their crewmembers as winch operators, both to provide improved operation on heavy lift gear and to alleviate a shortage of winch operators in the local forces. Action had been taken early in the out-loading phase to screen engineer units for potential winch operators, and these personnel were quickly given on-the-job training and used to supplement the force of Japanese operators.

The matter of loading the special heavy lift ships

of the *Bel Jeanne*-type is worthy of comment. Three such ships were loaded with tanks and heavy engineer equipment. Loading rates were distressingly slow under the circumstances due to the inherently cumbersome make-up of the very heavy lift rigging. These ships should not be used for such an urgent mission when LSTs can possibly be made available. One such ship was loaded with new railroad cars, which had just been off loaded in the area. Twelve railroad cars were loaded on Victory ships, six per ship, and at a much faster rate.

Loading of unit vehicles, impedimenta, and ordnance vehicle stocks constituted the preponderant mission in terms of ships loaded, but the evacuation of POL, rations, Class II & IV, and ammunition was the laborious feature of the operation. Initial indications were that some 5,000 barrels of POL were to be out loaded; in the final analysis, approximately 30,000 barrels were out loaded. Ammunition out loading was undertaken late in the evacuation process with a similar initial low estimate of the amount to be handled. Much was loaded out by LST under other than regimental supervision. In the final effort, a Victory ship was brought to pier side, and its loading with 1,000 tons of ammunition comprised the last special problem under regimental supervision. Loading of this ship, one of the last merchant vessels in the harbor, was carried out until it was called out by the Navy at 2300 on the last night of operations in the Hungnam area.

During the evacuation phase, the detailed dispatch of LCMs, along with LSUs, was turned over to the special operational group established by brigade for control of the lighterage beaches. The demand for LCM service was moderate in view of the availability of LSUs and the dominant use of alongside facilities for loading ships. DUWKs continued out loading ammunition to a ship in the stream until they were phased out on the last day.

Evacuation of casualties was a moderate problem for the regimental medical detachment up to the time that UN forces encountered overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Following that, the flow of casualties was heavy, and the medical detachment established noteworthy records in their evacuation activity. As many as 941 casualties were evacuated to sea in a twenty-four-hour period.

Phasing out of the regiment required careful planning to ensure that administrative personnel, vehicles, and impedimenta were cleared as early as possible, and that operational elements were held intact until they had rendered their last possible service. We determined that certain bulk impedimenta, administrative vehicles, and heavy equipment in each company, were not required for the specialized evacuation mission. We further determined that the Headquarters Company, less all enlisted personnel of the S-3 Section and selected personnel in S-1, S-2, and S-4, Communications Platoon, and Medical Detachment, would best be evacuated in advance of

the final withdrawal. These elements, including minimum guard personnel from lettered companies, were all placed under the charge of the Headquarters Company commander and phased out on shipping assigned to brigade for such a purpose six days preceding the day of final withdrawal.

At 2300, 23 December 1950, with the final tactical withdrawal scheduled for the following morning, the loading of large ships at dockside completed, and final operating equipment loaded aboard an LST standing by on the beach, Company E and the final group of regimental headquarters personnel embarked on craft and went aboard the *Sultan* and the LSD *Ft. Marion* in the stream. Company B had loaded LCMs and DUKWs aboard that vessel during the late afternoon and evening. Company D, scheduled for movement on the LST carrying final operating equipment of all companies, remained on shore and assisted in a final effort on out loading ammunition on LSTs nearby until about 0600, 24 December 1950. The withdrawal of their ship from the beach completed the successful withdrawal of all elements of the regiment and concluded its part in this unusual operation.

Only two officer replacements were received during these operations and the regiment as a whole continued to operate at about 20 percent under its limited peacetime TO&E authorization. The inadequacy in the size and strength of the unit was felt, particularly during

the evacuation phase when it was necessary to use service units to augment the shore force. The shortage of personnel in existing units was accentuated by the fact that the unit held 21 amphibious trucks and a number of pieces of engineer equipment, all of which were considered essential to the operation. The provision of operating personnel on this equipment could only serve to curtail personnel available for other essential purposes, including maintenance. As at Inch'on and Iwon, the tonnage records achieved were attributable largely to the availability of civilian labor. Also, the existence of ample dockside capacity precluded the derivation of any relation between the records achieved and the theoretical capability of the unit at its normal beach operations mission.

Organizationally, the lack of an H&SC was most noticeable. The Headquarters Company lacked the service elements normal to a regiment, and the absence of the H&SC of the shore battalion emphasized the void. Capabilities for central shop work, the pooling of certain items of heavy equipment, and the conduct of organizational maintenance at other than company level were lacking. A further organizational deficiency existed in that whereas personnel strength of units had been reduced to form a peacetime organization, the corresponding tables of equipment had not been reduced to take into account the loss of operational or specialist personnel. Early publication and adoption of revised full-



Supplies to  
be evacuated  
from Hungnam,  
11 December 1950  
RG 111, SC-355021

strength TO&E—particularly for the shore battalion and regimental Headquarters & Headquarters Company—would have greatly enhanced the unit’s capabilities and regularized its supply and maintenance procedures.

We evacuated Hungnam. We went into Ulsan where we had a small beach operation for a short period of time. Then we returned to Inch’on where we picked up where we had left off. While we were gone the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company had replaced the lock gates. It made the cargo-handling situation a lot

easier since we could bring all the boats into the tidal basin, close the locks, and the water would rise. Then we could work almost from the LCM right onto the dock. The first time we were in Inch’on we had to put 30 feet of extra line on all our cranes so they could pick up the cargo. In Inch’on it became pretty much routine port operation. I was in the boat company again.

I got a Bronze Star. Chesty Puller recommended me for the Silver Star, but it was not approved. 🏰

**L**ieutenant Roush describes the bitterly cold Korean winter of 1950-51, and the lack of adequate winter clothing. “We got into one of the worst winter situations I’ve ever seen. I’ve never been so cold, and I come from Wyoming!” He also recounts the tragic fate of Korean civilians caught between the Chinese and American forces.

From Inch’on, after the fighting there quieted down, we went down to Pusan, got on ships, and made another amphibious landing, this time at Iwon and Wonsan, on the east coast of North Korea. About the time we landed we were given trigger-finger mittens and some hats with earflaps. That was the extent of winter gear. We still had our blanket sleeping bags. We didn’t have good parkas or good footgear. We got into one of the worst winter situations I’ve ever seen. I’ve never seen it so cold—and I come from Wyoming! Up in North Korea on the plateau, up near the Yalu River, it’s extremely cold. In that area my company stayed in an old schoolhouse that happened to have a wood stove in it, which was very helpful. I don’t know how the infantry got by. I know they had a lot of frostbite and many people froze.

The infantry battalion commander was able to round up some trucks in Hamhung and said he was going on up into the place called the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. I could go with him, or I could wait for my

trucks, which were going over land with all our tools. I told him that I’d probably just be a millstone around his neck until my trucks arrived, because we weren’t much good without our tools. My platoon waited for the trucks. About three days later the trucks came, along with the company commander and headquarters. The other two platoons had not yet surfaced.

We were normally with the 31st Infantry, one of the regiments that was caught in the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. At the time that the Chinese came across we were up near the Yalu. We didn’t know they had come across. No one told us. We started a retrograde movement back to Hamhung, which is right near the coast. My platoon at that point had again been attached out to an infantry battalion, and we went from where we had been, up north, down to Hamhung in a train with open gondolas.

Then we started up into the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir and went through an extremely narrow, deep canyon. That canyon must have been 400-feet deep and no more than 100-feet wide at its widest, nothing but basalt and granite. One place there was sort of a niche chiseled out of the side of the wall. It held a small reservoir town and had been built during World War II.

We stayed there overnight with a platoon of Marine engineers. The next morning we tried to go on all the way into the reservoir but were stopped by the Marines in Kot’o-ri. They turned us around and said

we had to get out as fast as we could. We were able to get out but we were one of the last elements to do so.

Some of the troops got out and some of them didn't. We were extremely fortunate. We then proceeded to help the people who were not as fortunate as they came out. We took care of them—built tent cities and that sort of thing. One of our platoons was decimated. I think only two people got out. Lt. Wescott, the commander, was an Irishman and quite proper Bostonian. He was a hell of a fine person, but he didn't make it. I heard that a couple of his people and he actually charged a platoon of Chinese soldiers and were killed outright.

We spent some time building fortifications at Hamhung, using about 500 to 600 volunteer North Korean people. The North Korean people were extremely friendly. One day I was going out in a three-quarter-ton truck to build some bridges before the bottom fell out. Apparently, some water got in the gas and the carburetor and it froze up. We were out in the middle of nowhere, and an old North Korean came trotting out of his house wearing the white clothing that they wear—good for summer, terrible for winter—carrying a brazier with boiled potatoes on it for us. Knowing what I know now, I realize it represented probably two to three weeks of food for his family, but he gave it to us. Like idiots, we didn't eat it. We should have, even if we didn't want it because we had just had breakfast. It was one of the most grand and generous things I've ever seen.



### The Futility of War

These people turned out en masse to help us build fortifications. They had absolutely no love for their administration and they worked tirelessly without pay for watery rice. We didn't know how to cook rice. They just kept working for us.

I planned the demolition and blew up a reinforced concrete highway bridge, 1,200-feet long, between Hamhung and Hungnam, and a railroad bridge on huge circular concrete piers that paralleled it. We spent some time preparing the fortifications. At the same time we

Korean laborers  
repair a forward  
runway for use  
by Air Force  
transports  
Engineer School,  
13-13-140



First Lt. Maurice Roush leaves Korea aboard a landing craft, December 1950 Roush collection

With the sky getting dark, I waited until late in the afternoon for the last reconnaissance vehicle to come across that bridge so I could blow it up—one of the eeriest and loneliest things I have ever done.

prepared the bridges for demolition. With the sky getting dark, I waited until late in the afternoon for the last reconnaissance vehicle to come across that bridge so I could blow it up—one of the eeriest and loneliest things I have ever done. No American forces were around, except my company commander and me. After the last vehicle came across, and he gave us permission, we blew the bridges using three tons of demolition. You could feel it. It shook you a mile away when it went up. We went back the next morning and

took a look at it. Our forces had moved back up and were defending along the river line.

A pitiful thing happened there. About 150 Koreans were trapped between the Chinese forces and our forces. They were just going back and forth across this little river valley, going through the water, cold as cold could be. The infantry told me that the Chinese had infiltrated them and we weren't to let them through us. They'd go back toward the Chinese and the Chinese would shoot a few of them. They'd come back toward us and the same thing would happen. Those people may have perished. There was no damn good reason for it, except that it was war. It demonstrates the futility of war. After that, we got on a boat and went to Pusan. 🏰



With demolition charges in place, the last UN troops withdrew over the bridge and 13th Engineers destroyed the span 15 minutes later. Although the destroyed bridge slowed the Chinese advance, in the days that followed, refugees continued to cross the riverbed. The destroyed railroad bridge is in the background Roush collection



**A**fter the landing at Wonsan, the battalion traveled north to Hambung where it worked feverishly to improve the narrow, one-lane roads that constituted the MSR. Later, after the Chinese entered the war, the battalion fought its way south and was evacuated through the Port of Hungnam.

We left Seoul and went south to Pusan on a motor march. The first part of October we got back to the east coast, loaded on LSTs, and made the landing at Wonsan. The Marines were coming in there, and we were attached to X Corps in support of the 1st Marine Division.

Then we made a motor march from Wonsan to Hungnam. Just north of Hungnam we were doing engineer operations and the Marines were moving north. We got orders on Thanksgiving Day to go up the road towards the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. I put out an advanced battalion CP, and I moved to Chinhung-ni—just north of Sudong. It was right down in the bottom of a canyon. That road was very narrow going from Chinhung-ni to Kot'o-ri, to Hagaru-ri going on north.

We had the MSR from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni—about 42 miles. The 185th ECB had it from Chinhung-ni to Kot'o-ri; then the divisional engineers had it from Kot'o-ri to up around the reservoirs.

A narrow gauge railroad there was in pretty good condition. They gave me the job of checking it to see that the tracks were all intact, to make any repairs, and

to put it in first-class condition, so the X Corps could use it as a supply train.

While we were at Chinhung-ni one night we heard a lot of artillery fire. There was an infantry company of Marines and a battery of 105-mm Marine howitzers at Chinhung-ni. While I was talking to the Marines the Chinese came in, and I was assigned to hold the west side of the perimeter of this little town. We were all dug in and fire was coming in all around the perimeter. Fortunately, it was not very accurate.

I was wired in to the Marine artillery switchboard listening to the conversation. There was contact all around the perimeter. The road had been cut ahead of and behind us. This Marine infantry commander was telling the artillery commander, “Lower your fire, lower your fire! You’re shooting over them. You’re shooting over them.” He said, “You’ve got to lower your fire.” The artillery commander gave a classic comeback, “I can’t lower my fire anymore. The shell splinters are wounding my gun crews now.” That was pretty close support!

### Road Work

The biggest part of our job was widening and improving the roads, which were mostly one-lane, ox cart roads. Widening them involved a lot of dozer and grader work. We found these big rockslides and we set up quarries. We put our power shovels and front-loading scoop mobiles in these rockslides and hauled

“Lower your fire, lower your fire! You’re shooting over them. You’re shooting over them.” He said, “You’ve got to lower your fire.” The artillery commander gave a classic comeback, “I can’t lower my fire anymore. The shell splinters are wounding my gun crews now.”

rock as fast as we could to hard-surface these roads and to make them two-way.

Winter was starting. We had a lot of work to do on snow removal and sanding the roads because those mountain passes were terrible. Starting up from Sudong to Chinhung-ni was where it really got steep. We were widening those roads and cutting off sides of hills so that tanks and trucks could move up. The roads didn't have much stone on them, so if we got any moisture these big vehicles would mire down.

The frozen road would frost heave. As the vehicles went over it the frost heaves would just turn the road to mush. We were hauling thousands of tons of stone to put on these roads. Then we'd take the bulldozer back and forth on the stone to spread it out and push it in with the dozer tracks to get some stability in the road.

The troops were doing a pretty good job. In those areas there were very few mines or booby-traps to hinder us; the enemy had been chased out so fast. Some bridges were blown, but primarily we had to widen these really pitiful roads up in those canyons. Of course, the Chinese took the high ground. Our people were mostly down in the valleys, which wasn't a good position.

When the Chinese came in, everything changed. The road behind us and the road ahead of us were both cut. You could hardly move. They would surround these cut-off units. They did a lot of hit-and-run tactics. They'd come in on you at night and then be back in the hills in

the daytime. Travel on the roads was pretty hazardous.

When all of this hit, the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir, and the 3d Division all got cut off. The bridge was blown south of the reservoir. That was when they came in and dropped this treadway bridge by parachute, and the engineers [the 58th ETBC] put it in place to open the road up.

When we got the orders to withdraw back to the port of Hungnam there was an outfit called *TASK FORCE DOG*. My Company A was the engineer element of *TASK FORCE DOG*. We attacked up the hill with some Marines. The biggest part of the 1st Marine Division, plus the 7th Division and the 3d Division, attacked down the hill to make contact with *TASK FORCE DOG* to open the road up and see that they got back.

When Company A was designated as part of *TASK FORCE DOG* trying to clear the road to help the Marines coming down from Kot'o-ri, the company commander's name was Capt. Albert Bray. They ran into a lot of roadblocks put there by the Chinese. Some of



Engineers collect rock  
in a stone quarry  
RG 111, SC-393504

When a lot of those ships arrived they were loaded with everything that you could imagine—and they dumped it. They dumped a lot of their cargo in the harbor or in the ocean. One ship, which was loaded with pineapples from Hawaii, just dumped everything in order to take all of the troops and our equipment aboard.

the larger rocks had been rolled down so you couldn't get vehicles through.

Company A removed some explosive charges on the road that hadn't been set off, but I don't think they ran into any mines. They were under fire part of the time from the surrounding hills. They cleared the road of obstacles so vehicles coming down the hill could pass. Many vehicles were carrying a lot of dead and wounded.

A couple of individual awards were issued, but they didn't get any unit award like the Presidential Citation that some of the Marines got for their work there. We had a Lt. Reed who received the Silver Star for helping the Marines at Kot'o-ri.

#### Retreat from Chinhung-ni to Hungnam

After we opened the road for the Marines, my unit returned to the battalion. My forward headquarters was in Chinhung-ni with Company A, so Company A went up the hill from there and they came back. As they came back down the hill the main body of all the troops pulled back. They fought a rear-guard action to keep the Chinese off of their backs. So we pulled out with the rest of them and moved on back down into Hungnam port.

We slowly pulled back to a big perimeter around the port of Hungnam, about an eight-mile perimeter. The first thing they did was get the heavy equipment—the artillery in particular—onto the boats. They had

pulled some destroyers and a cruiser into the port, and they used these ships as floating artillery.

They put out FOs, and they had radio contact back to the ships. My FOs did an outstanding job. In addition to keeping the Chinese and North Koreans at bay with gunfire, they kept our whole perimeter lit at night with the parachute flares. Along our perimeter we could see any movement. That was really good because we were dug in and they were up there trying to move. This was when they'd really get plastered.

The Navy did an outstanding job protecting us with their fire from the ships. I remember going to Corps Headquarters for a briefing on the situation and Gen. Almond asked these commanders, "How long can you hold out?" One of them said, "Three days." One of them said, "Maybe we can hold out a week." Another said, "10 days." I remember Gen. Almond saying, "Well, you're either going to hold out for two weeks or die here on the beach because we've got every boat in the Pacific Ocean coming to pick us up. You're going to have to hold out for probably two weeks until they get here to get everybody out." Everybody dug in and really did the job. We pulled back into an eight-mile perimeter around Hungnam, waiting for ships to come from all over the Pacific to pick us up.

When a lot of those ships arrived they were loaded with everything that you could imagine—and they dumped it. They dumped a lot of their cargo in the har-

bor or in the ocean. One ship, which was loaded with pineapples from Hawaii, just dumped everything in order to take all of the troops and our equipment aboard.

At the end they allowed nearly 100,000 civilians to get on the ships. These people were afraid of the communists. As we started pulling out these people were begging to get aboard. The commanders of these ships allowed them to get on board. They were on the deck and it was bitter cold—20 degrees below zero. They took these refugees out of that perimeter and brought them back to Pusan.

We left on 18 December 1950. The first ones out were the ROK troops. They were afraid that as things started to get bad these people would panic. Then they took the people out who had the biggest part of the fighting. Next, they shipped out most of the Marines and the artillery, because they were using naval gunfire for artillery. The 7th Infantry Division left after the Marines, and the 3d Division was last. 🏰



North Korean refugees wait at the harbor at Hungnam to be evacuated. U.S. and South Korean warships, along with commercial vessels, evacuated tens of thousands of civilians in the bitter cold RG 80, USN 424093

**L**ieutenant Williams thought he was going to the Engineer Officers Advanced Class but the North Korean invasion instead brought him to Asia as a casual replacement. He praises the National Guard units in his engineer group and describes the relatively smooth racial integration of the unit.

When graduation from the University of California came in June 1950, the Korean War had not yet started. I was sitting during those spring months with a set of orders to report to the Engineer Officers Advanced Class (EOAC), which would have started at Fort Belvoir [Virginia] in September 1950. Therefore, I was concerned about what would happen to me during that summer, considering that the academics at the University of California would end around 10 June and this EOAC course wouldn't start until September. I had visions of being ordered to summer reserve training with two-week active duty types. I took this occasion to write the Chief of Engineers office and say, "I don't know whether you've noticed, but I have this gap here. My suggestion for filling this gap is for me to go down to Fort Benning, Georgia, and take airborne training." Much to my surprise they wired back within about a week saying, "We have a quota for you in a class that starts so-and-so. Get on your horse and get there." That was exactly what I did. While I was at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the airborne school, the Korean War started.

Although several people in the class did get emergency orders to report back to their units, I was able to finish that course and drive on up to Fort Belvoir expecting to start the Advanced Class. The course started that fall, but the minute I walked on the post and reported in they had a set of telegraphic orders for me to report to the Seattle Port of Embarkation for immediate assignment out to Japan, and onwards to some unit going into the Korean War. I didn't have many days to wind up my stateside affairs, perhaps a week or so. I had a brand new Chevrolet convertible and I was debating what to do with it. In the end, I put it up on blocks, and it was waiting for me 18 months later when I finally got home. That was the sort of thing that I had to cope with.

I went out to the Far East as a casual replacement. I went to a replacement center in Japan and was assigned to the rear detachment of the 73d ECB, whose forward elements had already gone into the Inch'on landing area in Korea. The rear detachment was rounding up supplies and other items that they thought would be useful. I became involved in that activity with the idea that we would be going over to Korea to join the unit in a few weeks.

My job for those first few weeks was to see what we could get for the battalion out of the depot stocks that were available to us in Japan. Although the weather was still warm, my battalion commander had been in Korea before and knew the winters got cold. We put in

enough requisitions for parkas, Arctic parkas, for every man in the battalion. We gathered these together. When we went over a few weeks later we had some cold weather gear, which most of the Army that moved over from Japan to Korea did not have. There just weren't sufficient stocks to outfit the whole expeditionary force.

I did not stay long in Japan. That rear detachment went on over around the middle of October and I joined my company, which was the Company C of the 73d ECB, just south of Seoul. The U.S. forces had crossed the Han River at Seoul and by this time were north of there. We were working on the roads leading up to that area. The 73d was a unit that had Negro enlisted men and noncommissioned officers and white officers. It was very much like the one I'd been in on Guam except this was a combat engineer battalion; therefore, it did not have the construction equipment that the one had on Guam [the 93d ECB].

The next higher unit was the 19th ECG. Shortly after I arrived in Korea and was assigned as a platoon leader in Company C, the unit

went down to Pusan and out loaded into LSTs and other ships to be part of the X Corps operation landing on the northeast coast of the Korean peninsula. At that time we came under the control of a provisional engineer group headquarters that had been organized in Japan, and I quote here, "for the occupation of Northeast Korea." It was the 8224th ECG. That group headquarters, which lasted through my time in Korea—perhaps a year or two longer, was the engineer combat support group of the U.S. X Corps. It was, in effect, an engineer control headquarters for a labor and line-of-communications construction workforce that probably amounted to 10,000 to 12,000 people at its peak period—mostly Koreans.



Korean laborers level a roadway Engineer School, 92-64-1

Often, in those early days, it was all sign language. If we were all going to go and clear out a culvert so it would drain, we would pick up shovels, hand them out to the KATUSA soldiers, and motion for them to follow us.

When I arrived at the unit forward, once the battalion joined up together, it was not up to full strength. Only a trickle of U.S. casualties came in against the requisitions, just as I had come. We participated in a program that started in those dark days of the early part of the Korean War called the KATUSA Program.

Whereas we might normally have an organizational structure calling for 12 or 13 individuals in an engineer squad, under this program we might have had four Americans and seven Koreans.

Those Korean soldiers were put into U.S. Army uniforms and were simply given to us to use. We tried to get somebody who could act as an interpreter so that at least one person in each company, and then later maybe one in each platoon, could tell these people in their own language what to do. Often, in those early days, it was all sign language. If we were all going to go and clear out a culvert so it would drain, we would pick up shovels, hand them out to the KATUSA soldiers and motion for them to follow us. It was about the best we could do. That was how the U.S. engineer forces were brought up to any kind of reasonable working strength.

When Company C of the 185th ECB [a sister battalion in this same group with us] landed there were 24 Americans in it. Every man in the company, including the company commander, drove a vehicle off the LST onto the shore. There were as many vehicles as there were people. Obviously, a unit like that had no real capability of doing communications work unless you augmented it rather quickly.

In October 1950, the 7th U.S. Division and the 1st Marine Division landed on the east coast of North Korea and were headed up toward the Yalu River. We were placed in support of them on those very long moun-

tainous lines of communication leading up toward the Yalu River. It began to get very cold very early in the year in that mountain area, and those divisions ran into a lot of trouble with the initial onslaught of the Chinese forces.

In the end we were all sitting in the out loading perimeter around the Hungnam Harbor. My organization was given orders to blow up supplies that were obviously not going to be out loaded, to deny them to the enemy. My company was fairly late in the evacuation. I don't mean the bullets were being fired at us as we got on the boats, but there weren't many people behind us when we left the beach. We went back down to Pusan by LST and then very quickly came up the center of the peninsula to where the lines had stabilized—not far from the 38th Parallel. We were in the middle of the country by late January 1951. For almost a year, the 8224th with its battalions stayed and dealt with that mountain country in the center of the peninsula in support of the U.S. and Korean divisions of the U.S. X Corps.

Two of the battalions—the 185th and mine—were Regular Army battalions. Of course, replacements—draftees—were coming into them, based on our shortages. When you start talking about regular units now (i.e., in 1985), you're thinking of people with Regular Army volunteerism. But that didn't apply then. The enlisted men were draftees. These were line units of the U.S. Army that existed before the war and were brought into the war.

## National Guard Units and Racial Integration

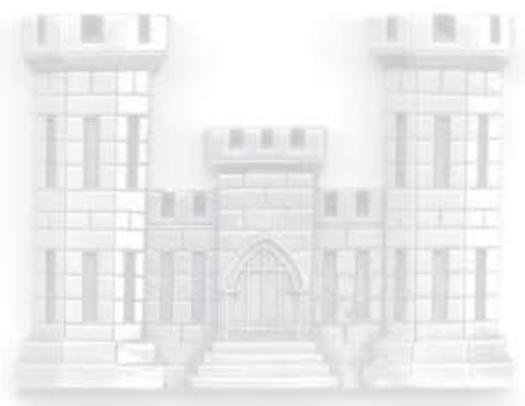
Two other battalions joined the group sometime in the spring of 1951 [116th and the 1343d ECB], one was an Alabama National Guard battalion [1343d] called to the colors for the Korean War. The other was a similar battalion [the 116th] from Idaho. Both were all-white units. When it came time to integrate the units, sometime around the fall of 1952, we had one black battalion of the Regular Army, one white battalion of the Regular Army, and two white National Guard units, one of which was full of Alabamians. We put one-quarter blacks into that unit and into the other Regular Army battalion. We took one quarter of each of the three white battalions' individuals and put them into the formerly black battalion. We had a big three-way switch. Some of the biggest arguments were over the best cooks, irrespective of what race they were, as to whether they would stay on in one unit or go to another. Those nationalized National Guard battalions took this in surprisingly good grace. As individuals, both black and white soldiers earned rotation points and, in end, they all rotated home at about the same time.

The National Guard battalions were very effective units. One reason was because everybody knew everybody else. Many of them had served in World War II, and enough time had elapsed that, as a coherent unit, they all knew each other well.



I was in Korea around 17 months, and I spent about five months of it in the 73d Engineer Battalion. Then I was pulled up to the group S-3 section, and I did a sequence of duties there as a reconnaissance officer, assistant S-3, engineering officer, and so on. 🏰

Lt. Emmett Proctor, 1343d Engineer Combat Battalion, points to the location of his hometown. At left is Lt. Gen. Edward Almond, commander, X Corps, who dedicated the bridge  
RG 111, SC-371851



Engineers push heavy sills into place as they build a bridge in the rain, 1951  
RG 111, SC-365621

### Ridgway Takes Command

January–July 1951



# Introduction

Shortly after the Chinese attacked the UN forces and began pushing south, the Eighth Army commander, Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, died when his jeep collided with an ROK Army truck. Immediately after the accident, Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, on the Department of the Army's staff as deputy chief of staff for operations and administration, assumed command of the Eighth Army.

When he arrived, Ridgway found that American soldiers' morale was poor. He determined his first action would be to stop the Chinese attack, falling back where necessary, then execute a series of attacks to push the line back to the vicinity of the 38th Parallel. Before he began his offensive he assigned X Corps to the Eighth Army. For the first time since the corps landed at Inch'on, the Eighth Army commander controlled all UN ground troops in Korea. This force numbered about 365,000 men.

Gen. Ridgway established a defense line along the 38th Parallel. On New Year's Eve the Chinese attacked along the entire front with four field armies. Ridgway ordered UN forces to pull back to the south bank of the frozen Han River. As the Chinese pressed the attack, Ridgway continued his withdrawal to keep his units

intact and to achieve "maximum punishment, maximum delay."

The Chinese suffered heavy casualties. On 20 January, Ridgway decided to exploit the situation with brief but violent counteractions. He followed these on 25 January with a still larger operation, *Operation Thunderbolt*, a reconnaissance in force of one U.S. division and one ROK regiment from each corps. UN forces advanced cautiously against light opposition. By 30 January 1951 resistance stiffened and the enemy began counterattacks. The Chinese resisted the UN drive vigorously until 9 February, and then abruptly they gave way. The Eighth Army took Kimpo airfield, near Seoul, without opposition.

Meanwhile, Ridgway planned another attack called *Operation Roundup* that began on 5 February. The Chinese responded by attacking in strength against the South Koreans on the night of 11-12 February. On 13 February, the Chinese drove against the left hinge of X Corps at Chip'yong-ni. For three days the Americans defended the road junction at Chip'yong-ni against assaults, but by 19 February the initiative passed back into UN hands.

On 21 February, Ridgway established a general

Because of the massive size of the attacking force, General MacArthur decided to transfer X Corps to South Korea. Here, the corps would establish a defensive line just south of the 38th Parallel to reinforce the Eighth Army against the expected Chinese winter offensive.

advance called *Operation Killer*, undertaken by both the U.S. IX and X Corps. Unusually warm and wet weather throughout much of the operation turned the American offensive into a plodding affair and permitted many of the Chinese to escape northward. *Operation Killer's* physical objectives were attained with little more than a delaying action on the part of the enemy, but the broader objective of destroying a large enemy force eluded the Americans. The entire Eighth Army front stabilized by 1 March.

The UN forces continued the offensive north with *Operation Ripper*, 6-31 March. By the time *Operation Ripper* concluded at the end of the month, Ridgway's forces had fought their way back to the 38th Parallel. On 5 April, Ridgway followed *Ripper* with *Operation Rugged*, a general advance toward a new 115-mile objective line along a commanding ground north of the 38th Parallel. From there, UN forces would press the attack still further.

Meanwhile, several major changes in command took place. A new IX Corps commander, Maj. Gen. William M. Hoge, had arrived on 5 March. On 11 April, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway replaced General Douglas MacArthur, who had been relieved by President Truman for insubordination, and Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet, commanding the Second Army, took over Eighth Army.

By the end of April, enemy activity increased and UN forces prepared for the expected enemy spring of-

fensive. The attack came on 22 April, but by 20 May, UN troops had stopped the Chinese drive. Gen. Van Fleet began a new offensive on 18 May and the enemy pulled back. By mid-June, the Eighth Army had largely attained its objectives of *Operation Pile Driver*, while at the UN a different type of offensive began. Voices in many circles began defining a UN "victory" as a return to the status quo ante bellum, with Korea once again divided by the 38th Parallel.

When Ridgway took command of Eighth Army, one of his first actions was to take Brig. Gen. Garrison Davidson out of the 24th Infantry Division and place him in charge of building another defensive line around Pusan. This time, Davidson had more time to do the work and could plan the line as he wished. Once that line was started he was asked to build a defensive line north of Seoul in the I Corps area. When he finished that assignment he became the acting commander of KMAC until rotation out six weeks later.

During the offensive north with the 7th Infantry Division, Lt. Maurice D. Roush, 13th ECB, spent much of his time building bridges. He describes dealing with the Chinese spring offensive in 1951.

Capt. Charles T. Williams, 8224th ECG, lists the units in his group and points out that most of the problems in returning north were water related—bridging and flooding. Supplies were needed for the front line and constant maintenance was required to keep the roads

from washing out. There was some enemy infiltration resulting in a few casualties and some men were lost clearing minefields.

Maj. Harold R. Parfitt, 2d ECG, notes that the group moved back toward Seoul again, repairing the rail line one more time. It also built three bridges over the Han.

Lt. Col. Evan S. Pickett's 73d ECB moved to Pusan in December 1950 and started north again, widening the narrow Korean roads, making bypasses and, in general, keeping the roads open.

Col. Paschal N. Strong was the Eighth Army Engineer during the first year of the Korean War. His major engineering concern was in bridging rivers and keeping the bridges in during flooding.

Col. Emerson C. Itschner, I Corps Engineer, describes a joint bridge-building operation with the Chinese at Panmunjom.

Maj. Lawrence B. Farnum describes 2d ECB activity after Maj. Leavey came in and took over the battalion. Leavey volunteered the battalion to do engineer work while building up to strength. They built bridges, repaired roads, and cleared minefields. In one instance, a Korean woman was killed in a minefield. Farnum rescued the woman's baby by going into the minefield and bringing the woman's body out along with the baby.

First Lt. George Stukhart describes arriving in Korea with the 93d Engineer Battalion. He tells about

building an airfield complex and repairing buildings just north of Pusan. He then moved to the 2d ECB, where one of his big problems involved finding and disarming mines.

Capt. Walter S. Medding describes the 14th ECB's bridge-building activities in the spring and summer of 1951, which were extensive. He notes that the battalion also was involved in road maintenance and mine clearing.

Lt. Col. Harry D. Hoskins, Jr., describes his time in Korea as Supply and Maintenance Officer, Base Section, Eighth Army, December 1950-August 1951, and the various problems he experienced, such as a lack of inventory of equipment and the resulting non-responsiveness of the supply system to using units. He also gives us a remarkable picture of the "black market" system as it existed in Base Section, Korea.

First Lt. James L. Trayers describes his assignment to Company B, 8th Engineers, and his responsibilities in that unit. He describes building a sand bag bridge, making concertinas, and clearing minefields. He also talks about his regimental commander, Col. Dan Gilmer, USMA 1932, who he describes as a real go-getter. Trayers left the unit for the engineer school just before the unit left Korea for Honshu, Japan. 🏰

**B**rigadier General Davidson details his second opportunity to build a defensive line around Pusan, contrasting it with his first proposed line. He also comments on the North Koreans' skill at camouflaging their foxholes.

Lt. Gen., soon-to-be General, Matthew B. Ridgway had taken over command from Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker. It looked like there might be an evacuation from Korea so Gen. Ridgway took me out of the 24th Division in January 1951 and sent me south to build, again, a defensive line around Pusan. But this time the decision of the location site was up to me. I went back pretty much to the line I had originally recommended. It was a shorter line, about 50 miles long, and I went to work on the defensive line there. This time I got some support. I had Korean troop units to work with plus some Americans and American supervisors. I had combat-experienced officers to command sectors. I divided the whole thing into sectors and turned a sector over to each American officer who supervised the construction in that area. The Koreans were damn good at their field fortifications once we taught them. That line was a good line. When the evacuation didn't develop they had me go ahead and finish it anyway, or at least carry it through to its first phase. As the line finally evolved, it would have taken something to puncture it.

The line we built around Pusan was a good one...well camouflaged. There's a real art to field fortifications....

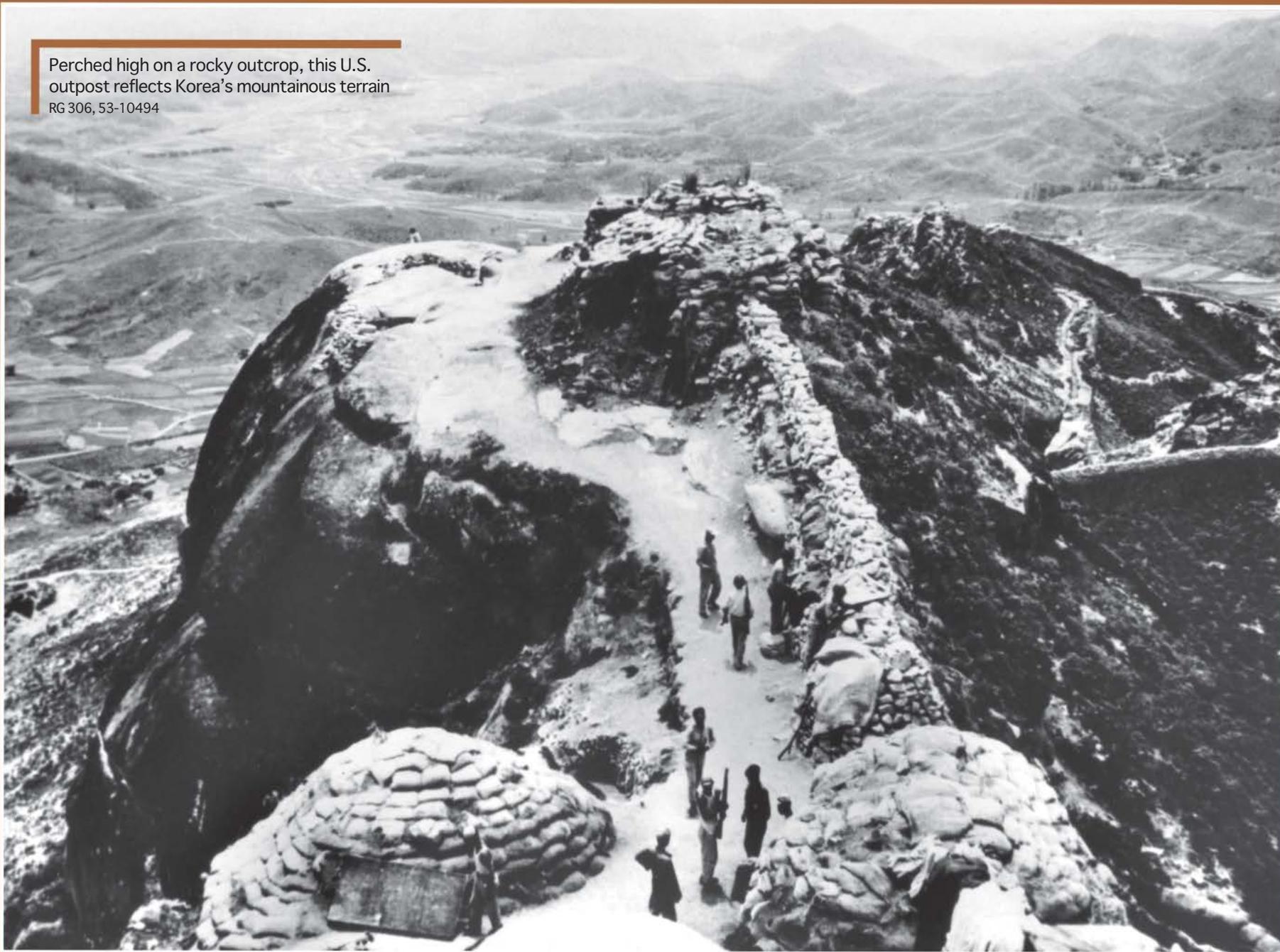
It's not just a matter of throwing a few logs or things together. The definitive location is extremely important.

Several things were interesting in connection with the construction process. When those Koreans had been instructed and organized they became masters at making field fortifications. I laid out the trace of the line, which was about 50 miles long, and then we sent the units out to start. I started personally to go over the whole line from the right flank or the center. I went onto the ground to see how the individual fortifications were laid out and reviewed the whole thing physically.

I ran into some funny situations. One was where a Korean outfit had been given a sector to defend on a hill. We instructed them about fields of fire and made sure they had ample field supply. They took everything off the hill. You'd go over on the other side, look back up there, and see the front line was right on the edge of the trees. It was a terrible job. We had to correct that by a little selective land clearing.

We'd go along, and I'd approve the location, say, of a machine gun emplacement. I had to do this in great detail myself until I trained the people. Then my subordinates did it. They located the individual emplacements and it had to be done in a hurry. They'd go and say, "Now, you put a machine gun emplacement right here," you see. We'd have them draw the design for the emplacement and showed them how to build it. We'd mark all the mortar emplacements; put stakes in the ground tied with little red pieces of cloth so they would be readily visible to the troops when they came to do the

Perched high on a rocky outcrop, this U.S. outpost reflects Korea's mountainous terrain  
RG 306, 53-10494



construction work. As soon as our people left those spots at night the Koreans would come out and steal those little wooden stakes. That was money in the bank for them even though the stakes were small. They didn't see that much wood for their fires. It would take them hours up in the woods to get that much wood to burn. We had trouble with that.

I discovered that in the ridgelines, where we had to build emplacements, we forgot to tell the Koreans what that stake represented, whether it was a middle or the forward corner or the back corner, or what. The officers I had helped me locate each one, and the governing factor was the field of fire. They had intended the stake to be the forward location stake of the emplacement. Some of the men expected the stake to be the center of the emplacement. When the Koreans came along they built the emplacement so that the stake was the aiming stake for the emplacement—maybe moved it back three to five feet. When you went down in that thing and put the machine gun in, because of the terrain there was about a 10-foot field of fire. We had to make that clear. They got very, very accomplished at it. They could make those emplacements so you were very close to them yet not be able to see them.

The line that we finally built around Pusan was a good one. It was well camouflaged. There's a real art to field fortifications. It's not just a matter of throwing a few logs or things together. The definitive location is

extremely important. As I said, moving the emplacement four or five feet forward or backwards changed the whole field of fire. In the case of the mortars that didn't mean so much but it was very important with machine guns. You just can't do it haphazardly; you have to be certain of what you're doing.

In Korea, I was at an area where there'd just been a fight a few hours before. I was standing within a few feet of a North Korean foxhole and didn't see it. They were circular, like a manhole in the street, and they'd weave these mats and just put them in. The holes were built so they could fire from them when they stood up. They could squat in them, use this mat made from the grass around them, and pull it over them like a manhole cover. Unless you looked sharply you couldn't detect them. I don't think we gave enough attention to that.

During that time the Chinese were attacking and Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn had I Corps north of Seoul. His CP was in Uijongbu. He asked for me to be sent up there to supervise the construction of a defensive line north of Seoul. He anticipated that they were going to be driven back and he wanted to find a line north of Seoul to stand on. I left my line around Pusan and went to Uijongbu. I laid out that line for the I Corps. I went to Gen. Milburn after I'd laid it out and said, "Now, you can work from now to eternity on a defensive line. You always keep improving it. It's an endless proposition. I've laid out this line with its construction,



General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry Truman meet for the first time at Wake Island, 15 October 1950  
RG 111, SC-34915-S

carried out in at least three phases. Nothing was picked out of the air but I made a rough estimate.” I said, “Now, this is the date the first phase will be completed. We hope to complete the first phase by this date. And then we’ll go to the second date.” Just by happenstance and coincidence the date I picked for the completion of the

first phase was the night the Chinese attacked, and they stopped them there. I pointed out that the first phase was the minimum we needed to stop the earliest attack.

When my job with the defensive line was finished, I went to Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet, Eighth Army commander, and asked him what the prospects were

for my next assignment, because I couldn't get back to the 24th Division—they already had an assistant division commander. He said there were no prospects for anything that I was interested in so I just let nature take its course and they sent me home.

#### Working with the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG)

For about a month or so, until I got my orders, I was acting commander of a KMAG. Frank Farrell, who had headed that program, had done a superb job from the start. He was really bushed when they sent him home. I was appointed acting commander. I remember Lev Allen was insistent that they put the word "acting" in front of it because he said, "I don't want to have you assigned as commander of KMAG. The records would show that you were appointed commander and then relieved in about five or six weeks. It would look bad on your record," he said. "We'll make that clearly 'acting' so there will be no connotation of that." I was in that capacity for a time and I had an office in Taegu right next to Chung Il-Kwon, who was the senior military man on the Korean side. He later became the chairman of their joint chiefs of staff and served as president of the country for a while.

The principle duty of the acting chief of the KMAG was to supervise the training of the Koreans. The Koreans were responsible for the actual training. By the time I left in 1951 the Koreans were doing nicely.

#### The Change of Command

General Douglas MacArthur's removal in April 1951 came out of the blue. When I was working on the defensive line I had gone down to headquarters in Pusan in a jeep. The driver tuned the radio into the station that broadcasted the news periodically and I heard about it on the street in Pusan. It was a complete surprise.

The immediate result of Ridgway's assumption of command was the feeling of a tighter rein. It was a more positive direction. Gen. Walker operated without all the intelligence information he should have had. I don't think he was as intimately informed as he should have been, through no fault of his own. I don't think he had the information, the overall picture, and the resources that were available to Ridgway. I thought Ridgway was able to take a more positive hold on the reins because he had more information about the overall strength, capacity, and availability of Army resources. 🏰

Soldiers of the 2d Engineer Battalion  
disarm a mine, January 1951  
RG 111, SC-362313



**L**ieutenant Roush recalls going north with the 7th Infantry Division and encountering the Chinese spring offensive, 1951. After advancing 20 miles, the Chinese outran their supply lines and their troops began “surrendering in droves.”

From Pusan, we made our way north to around Chechon on an unheated train in the dead of winter. We then prepared a company encampment and started licking our wounds, trying to rebuild our company and get back into fighting shape. That was how we got through the Christmas holidays. In the beginning of the next year, in January-February, the whole [7th] division started back up north, fighting as we went. That was a very critical time for the engineers.

The roads were okay; because they were frozen they were solid. Getting across the streams, though, was really tough. We did a lot of bridge building and spent a lot of time in icy water. It gave me a great appreciation for the American soldier. He sure put up with a lot.

Finally the spring came and all hell broke loose. The Chinese hit us with their spring offensive and we rolled back about 20 miles and then stopped. They had outrun their supply lines. It became a turkey shoot. Literally, when it was over, I am convinced there was nothing between us and the Yalu. Apparently the Chinese reached a breaking point and there were no North Korean soldiers to speak of.

Finally spring came and all hell broke loose. The Chinese hit us with their spring offensive...we rolled back about 20 miles... then stopped. They had outrun their supply lines. It became a turkey shoot.

The Chinese began surrendering in droves. I've never seen anything like it. At one point, I would take a bulldozer on a lowboy along with a tank column and go out as much as 15 miles in front of our lines. We took the bulldozer so we could fill in holes that might have been blown in the road. I was in front of our lines three or four miles in the evening with a bulldozer. Nobody was there but us, a squad of engineers, and we were not troubled. There just wasn't any resistance in front of us.

I recall quite clearly the day that we were stopped. I was with Col. William J. McCaffrey [USMA 1939], who commanded the 31st Infantry, and he had two battalions advancing up two sides of the valley—one on each mountain on either side. He was called by the division commander on his radio and told to stop his people. He refused and said, “I'll stop if you come here and tell me to.” Maj. Gen. Claude B. Ferenbaugh [USMA 1919] arrived in a chopper about 30 minutes later and said, “Stop.” Col. McCaffrey, however, had lost radio contact so the general went after one battalion and I went after the other and we stopped them.

That time President Harry Truman stopped us. Once again, we entered into a confusing period of operations. The Chinese had time to rebuild their forces. Then things just simmered along from that point forward and it was the winding down of the war. 



“We did a lot of bridge building and spent a lot of time in icy water. It gave me a great appreciation for the American soldier. He sure put up with a lot.”

Engineers build a trestle bridge  
Engineer School, Korea-072

“**O**ur major problems were that we were dealing with a very underdeveloped country with a very restrictive road net, and yet we were a mechanized army with mechanized supply levels required in the forward areas.” *Captain Williams describes his duties as a road reconnaissance officer.*

A reconnaissance officer is somebody who goes out and looks to see what the existing conditions are. We began to try to get the roads ready for the monsoon season. Korea has quite a monsoon season. The winters tend to be very dry, and one can pretty much ford everything except the major rivers like the Han and Imjin. But, starting around the third week in June, for about the next six or seven weeks, there are often torrential rains, and even relatively dry stream crossings suddenly might contain 8 or 10 feet of very turbulent water.

The original roads, primarily built by the Japanese occupiers after they took over Korea in 1910, had concrete reinforced bridges, usually with about 20- or 25-foot spans, single or multiple spans as needed by the site. Many of these bridges had been blown out of existence. We were replacing a number of them, some with Bailey bridges, some with timber bridges—trying to get ready for what we knew was coming up in the spring summer rains. The main problems were water related.

My organization was far enough behind the lines that we did not get either artillery fire or much in the

way of sniping—just a very few incidents with infiltrators. We suffered practically no casualties. We lost a few while clearing minefields when we advanced and took over ground. The enemy or our own forces had mined and not recorded the locations properly.

Our major problems were that we were dealing with a very underdeveloped country with a very restrictive road net, and yet we were a mechanized army with mechanized supply levels required in the forward areas. It was pretty much straightforward pioneer-type work.

I was promoted to captain, which was another reason for my going up on the group staff. There were four American engineer battalions and a number of separate companies, such as a light equipment company [630th Engineer Light Equipment Company], a ponton bridge company [58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company], a fixed bridge company, and an engineer dump truck company. We also had two or three ROK Army engineer combat battalions assigned to us. We had large numbers of Korean Service Corps (KSC), which at that time were basically used to “chogey” (i.e., carry on one’s back) the A-frames with ammunition and those supplies up the hills. A number of those smaller units were organized into KSC regiments, which might be 2 or 3,000 strong. They were assigned to us to provide our hand labor. They were fed from U.S. supplies, provided with hand tools from our depots, and their work assignments were coordinated by the 8224th.

...there are often torrential rains, and even relatively dry stream crossings suddenly might contain 8 or 10 feet of very turbulent water.



Men of the 185th Combat Battalion stand watch over a bridge damaged by floodwaters on the Soyang River, May 1951 RG 111, SC-369385

The depth of American involvement with that kind of a system in a work force of 12,000 did not go very far down. One of the problems that it made for the engineer battalions back home, wherein our people returned, was that American soldiers in Korea didn't do as much in the way of physical work, except of course skilled work by mechanics. American soldiers hardly had to pick up a shovel; there were always plenty of Koreans around. When they got back to units in the States, where the full squad was American, shovels still had to be picked up

and used, but in their minds they had graduated to a step above this.

The Korean War was the only war in which I actually saw service in the theater of operations. My life was not in danger 99 percent of the time; therefore, I think it was not too dissimilar to serving in peacetime engineer troop units, under virtually continuous maneuver conditions. 🏰

**M**ajor Parfitt recalls repairing roads, railroads, and bridges.

The 2d Group came back through Seoul about mid-December. We kept on moving south as the front line came back. Our area of responsibility kept moving toward Taegu. Our mission was heavily oriented to improving the crossings for the retrograde movement, and then preparing them for demolition so that follow-on troops could blow them up if they found it necessary. We did this up until late January 1951 during which time I was assigned as the S-3 of the 84th ECB.

When the line held and a counter offensive was initiated, I was back with the 2d ECG headquarters. We began moving back up the corridor we had been on, enroute to Seoul, checking and repairing roads and railroads that had been damaged. Along the way the 62d was diverted out onto a spur line from Chochiwon toward Chongju. The 2d Engineers together with the 82d arrived in the Seoul area about 7 March 1951.

The mission given to the group was related to three crossings over the Han. One was the low-level shoofly bridge, and we were to prepare plans for repair of two high-level bridges. We were getting closer to the rainy season but there still was a feeling we could repair the shoofly quickly and get an effective use of it—maybe a month or two before the rains got us.

Although crossing plans were quickly prepared, Army headquarters made a decision to assign someone else to do the construction of the high-level bridges. Nevertheless, the group was to continue work on the shoofly across the Han.

About this time a rotation policy was initiated and units began to lose experienced officers and men. Coincidentally, I was seeking to get assigned to an engineer battalion in a combat division to fill out my career experience. I had never been with a division although I had considerable combat service in World War II. Fortunately an opening developed in the 8th Engineers, 1st Cavalry Division, and I was sent up for an interview with the commanding general to see if I would be acceptable. Happily, Maj. Gen. Charles Palmer, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, interviewed me and approved my assignment as Assistant Division Engineer. I reported for duty on 2 April 1951. 🏰



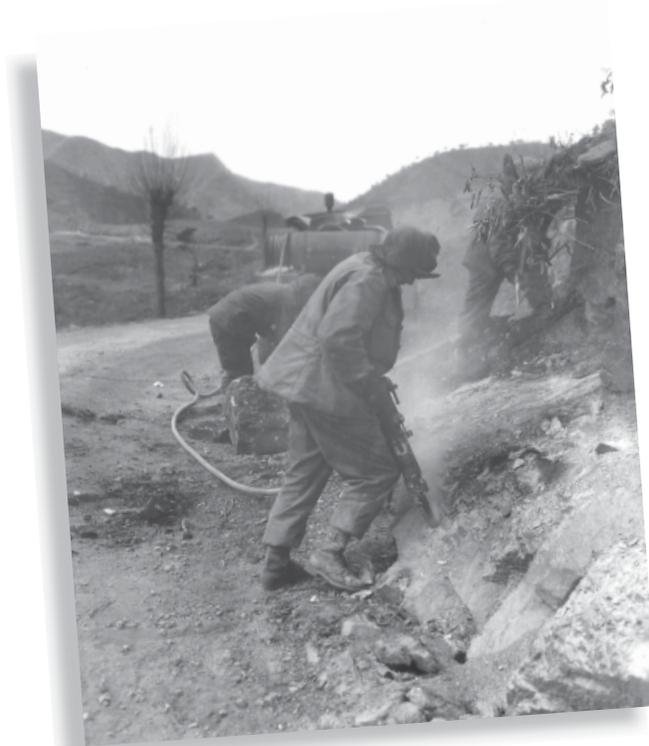
Soldiers of the 55th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company begin construction of a floating bridge at the Han River

Engineer School, 42-5-84

Ridgway Takes Command January-July 1951

**C**olonel Pickett describes his battalion's constant battle with Korea's roads—sanding, clearing snow, and widening. He also shares his impressions of General Matthew Ridgway, and of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA) Program.

Our outfit left Hungnam on 18 December 1950 and went to Pusan. I'd lost a lot of my heavy equipment from different sorts of operations. We had five different kinds of cranes and dozers. Getting spare parts was difficult so we had a lot of deadlined equipment.



Soldiers of the 13th  
Engineer Combat Battalion  
work to widen a road  
RG 111, SC-359630

When we got back to Pusan we were there just a short time. We were told to get rations and ammunition and go north up the MSR until we got to the front. The Chinese by that time were coming south and we were going north. I think the front was near Andong in the Ch'ongju area. That's above Taejon. It was the middle of the winter so we did snow clearance and sanded icy roads. Mostly we spent our time widening, graveling, and making bypasses on the very narrow Korean roads in this mountainous area. There were very few mines or booby traps in our work areas. It was primarily road and bridgework.

At one time X Corps was setting up a defensive line. We had some of our troops helping to construct barbed wire entanglements. They called it the *KANSAS LINE*, and these double and triple barbed wire fences with gun emplacements ran from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea, clear across Korea, about 60 to 100 miles.

Another big job was the Check'on Railroad Station. We were going to put a big quartermaster and ordnance ammunition dump and supply point there. One of the railcars that was full of ammunition blew up. We had one sergeant seriously injured and several others injured. The explosion had scattered ammunition all over the railroad yard. We spent quite a lot of time cleaning that up and then getting gravel in, hard surfacing the area where they could stack

boxes of supplies and 55-gallon oil barrels for their POL dump.

We built our L-5 or L-19 strip next to headquarters and corps asked that we find a suitable place for the corps' airstrip. We put it alongside of our own airstrip and built it so corps could have their airplanes there. We had used some pierced-steel planking but we didn't use any there. You use it when the ground is really soft and you've got bigger planes. The ground at that time was frozen solid and all we did was lightly gravel it. We once used pierced-steel plank at Kimpo Airfield and interlocked it. Then we pinned it to the ground and it worked pretty well.

We set up our headquarters down there and began working on the roads in the area. During the spring, we started to work on the roads that had frost heaves. As soon as it started to thaw these roads just turned into a sea of mud. As the vehicles went over them the top would break and mud would ooze up through them. We opened up several gravel quarries and got crushers going. We crushed rock, hauled it night and day on these roads, and put on a heavy coat. With a grader and a dozer we'd level it out. Then we'd run back and forth on it with one of these D-7 Caterpillar tractors. That would push the rock back into the mud until it would just stop going down, and it stabilized.

We started moving north in May. We had slowly come up from Andong, Yongju, Check'on, to Wonju,

up to Hoengsong. We were building the big Hoengsong River bridge in May, the first part of the month.

### Impressions of General Ridgway

Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgway was a soldier's soldier. He always wore a pair of suspenders like a backpack and he had two grenades tied on it. He was always at the front. The troops were pulling back in a lot of areas. When Ridgway came in a lot of people called him "Wrongway Ridgway" because he turned everybody around and said, "We're going to take this ground and we're going to hold it."

Some people thought things were kind of hopeless but Ridgway was right. He got some good morale going with the troops and started setting up some defensive lines instead of pulling back every time you got hit. I think he did an outstanding job.

He was right up there at the infantry regimental CPs all of the time with the troops. He would go right among the troops. Gen. Walker spent most of his time in the rear areas. He wasn't as aggressive as Ridgway. Ridgway talked to the soldiers, mingled with the infantry commanders, and saw that they got the right amount of support. He did an excellent job.

The last big North Korean and Chinese offensive was in June. X Corps got 10 two and one-half-ton trucks from every unit to haul artillery ammunition. Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond said, "We're going to haul all of this artillery ammunition. We're going to put it in dumps.

When Ridgway came in a lot of people called him "Wrongway Ridgway" because he turned everybody around and said, "We're going to take this ground and we're going to hold it."

Gen. Almond said, “When they hit us hard we’re going to trade a little ground but we’re going to saturate them with artillery. Rather than lose these guns we’ll burn the damn barrels out.”

When they hit us hard we’re going to trade a little ground but we’re going to saturate them with artillery. Rather than lose these guns we’ll burn the damn barrels out.”

We hauled artillery ammunition and placed it in these delaying positions where the corps artillery officer told us to put it. We stacked hundreds and hundreds of tons of ammunition. When the Chinese hit, the infantry didn’t run. They kept a line and the artillery just kept saturating the area. Maybe we fell back 20 miles, but the Chinese absolutely ran out of steam. There was practically nothing left of them.

Then the infantry turned around and with the tanks went back north. When we went back up there that whole area for miles was littered with dead Chinese, and dead horses that they used to transport a lot of their equipment. This was May and it was getting hot and most of these dead soldiers were still in the padded uniforms from winter.

Along in May and June the front had stabilized and Ridgway stopped the people from retreating. We had put in

this defensive line. The Chinese’s back had pretty well been broken. Although one thing had given us a bunch of trouble—Koreans were free to move everywhere. You didn’t know who were enemy and who weren’t. Ridgway moved every Korean out of the front line area. We put them about 10 miles back and wouldn’t let a one be up there unless in uniform. This way nobody was passing information to the enemy. Nobody was sabotaging. Every Korean you saw who wasn’t in uniform was suspect. The line was stabilized and I think at that time people

really started thinking that they had the thing won.

Lt. Gen. Ridgway left and Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet came in. Corps was put under Eighth Army, and the 8224th ECG was attached to X Corps. Van Fleet was very similar to Ridgway; he was a good commander. Things had stabilized by then.

In that period the Chinese figured that they couldn’t run us



Lt. Gen. William Hoge, commander, IX Corps, congratulates the 62d Engineer Construction Battalion upon the completion of the Forney Bridge, August 1951 Engineer School, 210-13-9

off the end of the peninsula. That was when they started rumors that they wanted to have peace talks, stabilize the line, and all of this kind of bologna. A big part of stabilizing the front and coming out as well as we did was Gen. Ridgway's command and leadership. Up until that time, every time we got a lot of pressure, people were pulling back and a lot of the commanders were saying things like, "You know, we shouldn't even be here."

### The Bridge at Hoensong

We built a bridge at Hoensong, across the Hoensong River. The Twinnan River Bridge at Hoensong was 600-700 feet long, a concrete and steel reinforced bridge with about 10 bents under it. Several spans of it had been blown. Those spans that we could jack up and crib under, put new bents under, repair and use, we did. We put in 24-inch I-beams so that the bridge would carry 50-ton capacity traffic. My Company C, under Capt. Snyder—who was a really good engineer—built the bridge.

After it was completed Gen. Almond, the X Corps commander, and Col. Leigh Fairbanks, X Corps engineer, came for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Col. Walsh, the 8224d commander was there. We called that the Frank H. Forney Bridge. Col. Forney, the previous commander, had been killed in an ambush in North Korea. After Gen. Almond cut the ribbon and made his speech he got in his jeep. He told me to get in the jeep

with him and we drove across the bridge. I thought highly of that general, both in Italy and then in Korea.

Building the bridge was a big project taking about a month and a half. It required welding of those steel I-beams, doing a lot of cribbing with railroad ties, concrete work, and crane work, to lift the steel I-beam spans up. That was the biggest job we had.

Capt. Snyder in Company C invented a 55-gallon dump bucket that you could pick up with a crane. We would put it under the cement mixers on the ground and then the crane would lift these 55 gallons of concrete. It would weigh about a ton. We would pour it into these forms that we had for concrete bents. We'd put bolts in the concrete and let the concrete cure for about 21 days so it wouldn't start cracking.

### New Uses for Artillery Powder Bags

I've always liked demolitions and powder and dynamite. Every time the artillery fired they usually had four powder bags. Depending on the range they'd throw away two or three of these powder bags. They were not salvageable. They'd throw them in a pile and after the fire mission was over they would burn them. I'd seen this time and time again.

We were doing a lot of quarry work so I took my S-3 and went down to one of these artillery outfits. I said, "I want to experiment with this powder. Can I have some of these powder bags?" He said, "Hell, we'll

We stacked hundreds of tons of ammunition....the artillery just kept saturating the area. Maybe we fell back 20 miles, but the Chinese absolutely ran out of steam. There was practically nothing left of them.

give you a ton of it.” It was smokeless powder. The pieces were about the size of your little finger, about an inch long, and had holes in them. I took a lot of that powder. At that time we were drilling into solid rock with our wagon drills, maybe 18 feet for some of our powder holes. I got some of my demolition people and said, “I want you to fill these holes full of this smokeless powder up to about a foot from the top. It just burns unless you compress it.” I said, “What we want to do is take either TNT, dynamite, or composition C, and fill in the last foot on top of that powder. Then put your primer in it.”

We tried it. When we detonated it this terrific explosion on top compressed it, setting it afire at the same time. That worked perfectly for blasting quarry work. It didn't cost the government five cents, except for the primer and the TNT on top of it, because we were using artillery powder that they would have thrown away. I wrote the thing up and sent it to the Chief of Engineers' office. I don't think anybody else had ever done that. We must have used hundreds of pounds of that powder in our rock quarry work.

#### Ditches, Culverts, and Bridges

We were primarily working on the MSR by widening, graveling, and doing lots of drainage work on the roads. We'd go to the local police and they would round up civilian men for us. We'd put them in tents and feed

Starting in June, and going through August and September, you'd get the monsoon rains. In those periods, within a week, sometimes, we got 15 inches of rain.



U.S. and Korean engineers construct a timber culvert during the construction of a new road, October 1951  
Engineer School, Korea-081

them and use them as laborers. But, because of the food it was difficult to keep them. Very often during the night a hundred would run off. Sometimes I'd have 500 one day, and 1,000 the next, and then only 800. Along toward the end, when we got better housing and better food for them, the retention rate improved. We had hundreds of civilians out on the road primarily doing drainage work because, starting in June, and going through August and September, you'd get the monsoon rains. In those periods, within a week, sometimes, we got 15 inches of rain.

First, you built the road and crowned it so the water would run off of the sides. From the center of the road to the edge of the road, on a two-way road, you would get from a three- to four-inch difference in elevation, so the water would run laterally off of the road. Then these people in the ditches along the road with picks and shovels would make a trapezoidal ditch. We made a template that was just a trapezoid. The man in charge would go along and tell them, "You've got to dig it like this." We dug those drainage ditches along the side, and then we were sure to get the water to an area where it would run away from the road. If the water had to cross the road we would put culverts in.

The engineer manual at the time called for the trapezoidal ditch as the best type of drainage. It worked well because we had all of this hand labor to dress it that way. If you were making a drainage ditch with a grader, the grader operator went along with his blade and bladed it out. Or the dozer pushed aside the earth. But we had thousands of hours of hand labor. When the monsoon started I gave orders to patrol the roads constantly. Where we'd made cuts on side hills there would be slides, which filled up your drainage. The water would rush across and cut your roads. Night and day we had people patrolling the roads, keeping debris from clogging the culverts and keeping any slides from blocking the drainage. We weren't interrupted by washouts because our patrols spent 24-hours-a-day on patrol.

Culverts had to be widened. The engineer dump had a good stock of corrugated iron culvert. When they didn't have one big enough we used timber. What we would do is make a box culvert out of timber, maybe five feet square, reinforce it really well, and bury it. So, if we didn't have a big enough culvert quite often we constructed it.

The Hoensong River was like some of those rivers in Africa. It was a half-mile wide and six inches deep. The Marine engineer combat battalion had gone in there with this bridge and constructed culverts in the river. They used many hundreds of 55-gallon oil drums. They put a piece of primer cord on the top and the bottom of each drum and set it off. The primer cord blew the tops and bottoms out. They took all of these and laid them end-to-end to make culverts. They had 48 individual culverts to take water on the south side of this bridge that we rebuilt. During the winter these improvised culverts made out of 55-gallon drums, and covered with dirt, took the traffic. That was an MSR. The monsoons weren't there yet so it was adequate at the time. When we completed the bridge the first part of June the monsoons hit. The monsoons washed out all of those culverts.

In one of the railroad yards we found some great big steam boilers, about half-inch thick steel, that looked like they'd been used for high-pressure gas or something. We cut the ends out of those and used them for culverts.

They were about 40 feet long. We used everything we could find, and most items worked really well. We needed anything to keep the road open. The roads, especially in the mountains, were terrible.

Before the war somebody from the government would tell the Korean civilians, "Well, now, you live in this town, and you take care of the road halfway to the town on this side and halfway to the next town on the other." A few times a year they'd get a lot of hand labor out there and they would chop at the road and fill the ruts. Very few vehicles used them. If anybody wanted to go anywhere they rode the train. The local traffic was primarily horse or ox carts. The roads and the bridges, whatever bridges they had, were very inadequate for military traffic.

If we needed to put in bridges in a hurry we used Bailey bridges. When things quieted down we replaced them with wooden bridges. We were getting timber in from the Philippines. The engineer dump had 12-by-12 teak and mahogany beams, if you can believe that. That kind of timber today would cost \$1,000 apiece. Some of these were 20- to 40-foot long. The most gorgeous timber you ever saw. That was what we were using to build bridges.

We would make our bents and our stringers out of those 12-by-12 timbers. We would take two-by-sixes and two-by-eights, stand them on end with a two-inch spacer between, and use them for a deck. They would

drain really well. On top of that we would nail the two-by-eights flat for treads the width of a tank tread, about three feet wide on one side and three feet wide on the other side, on top of those two-by-eights standing on end. That made a real good bridge decking. It would hold 60-ton loads. We made a good bridge. I would imagine some of those things could still be standing.

#### Using KATUSA Troops for Engineer Work

Two companies of KATUSAs were attached to us. Ultimately, we had 1,600 KATUSAs working for us. I assigned a lieutenant and an interpreter to each company. I was assigned two Korean first lieutenants who stayed at my headquarters. On a daily basis they went down with those troops and our S-3 would tell them what was required of them. They would be the liaison back and forth. They spoke good English and they had uniforms. They were first lieutenants, Korean Army. If you wanted to send some information to the people running the civilians they helped all the way around; they did a good job.

When we first received them, the KATUSA troops were untrained and inadequate for engineer work. I put that in my reports. They had no coordination for running bulldozers and graders or running our hydraulic equipment. They were good at hand labor but they were very poor with mechanical equipment. But, as time went on, we found that they learned to

operate the mechanical equipment fairly quickly. The first things they learned to use quite well were all of the air tools on the compressors. You had air circular saws, air chain saws, jackhammers for drilling holes, and air hammers for pounding spikes. They caught on to that really quickly.

They were slower yet with the running of dozers and graders, but they finally learned to do that. Within a month or so they seemed to be able to learn the other mechanical equipment. From their background and upbringing, I suppose, they were unfamiliar with mechanical equipment, but they caught on to it pretty quickly and did some good projects. They were doing what we were doing. In the end they were well qualified and seemed to contribute a lot to our mission, which at that time was primarily road drainage, culvert construction, road widening, some blasting, rock quarry work, and graveling.

### Roadwork Equipment

We didn't have any trouble finding rock over there. We had lots of rock. There were hills and rockslides all over the place. If the rocks weren't larger than two inches in diameter we would put a shovel in the pit and start loading the dump trucks. If the rocks were larger than that, we would put them in a crusher, start crushing, and dump the gravel in the trucks. Then we'd haul it onto the roads and spread it out. We would walk it in



with the bulldozer so it would push on down in the dirt and give us a good hard base surface.

We had a great deal of trouble with our trucks. We were forever breaking springs on our two and one-half-ton dump trucks, travelling fully loaded over those terrible roads. We couldn't get replacements. At any one time we'd have 10 to 15 trucks out of operation because it was very difficult getting spare parts.

We had four or five Quickway cranes and each of them had a different kind of motor. One set of spare parts wouldn't fit all, and we were always trying to get spare parts. In my reports that went to Washington, I said many times they should mount those darn cranes on regular truck chassis rather than Quickway chassis with some bogus type of motor that you couldn't get spare parts for. We needed to have a truck chassis with a

Korean workers repair a section of a washed-out road  
Engineer School, 93-63-1

crane on it where the motor in the crane was the same as the motor in the truck so we could get spare parts for both. But we'd have five cranes, and they'd have different kinds of motors in the cranes, and different kinds in the trucks, and we could never get spare parts.

The 512th Engineer Dump Truck Company was camped near us. I was able to go through group headquarters to get a platoon of their trucks so that really helped. It was a black outfit, like mine was. They got along well. A very competent black first lieutenant commanded it. They gave us a great deal of support on trucking. We needed their support because 80 or 90 percent of our effort was hauling stuff to keep those roads in operation for the corps.

### Better Food: Better Morale

The front line stabilized and we were able to improve our living conditions. When you were settled down and the weather wasn't so blasted cold your cooks could do a better job.

About that time one thing General Ridgway did was to improve our food. He put the heat on the Eighth Army, and the Department of the Army, and we started getting fresh rations.

Our food improved 100 percent. Instead of having Spam and powdered eggs, we started getting some fresh beef and very often some fresh pork and turkey—things we'd never seen in Korea before. Along with that you got

improvement in morale. Ridgway said, "Unless you're in the front line as an infantryman, in a hole, and they can't get some hot food to you, you can't eat C-rations."

Even some of the infantry regimental headquarters, and some of those who were back behind where they were out of fire, set up kitchens with hot food. They had these big insulated containers that they'd take up to the front and give the men hot food if they weren't under intense fire. Those people were eating some fresh rations for a change, which really helped. General Ridgway should receive all of the credit for it. We never had fresh rations before then—he really did the job.

On 18 August I left. Three or four trucks were with me. It had been raining like the dickens. About 20 miles south of the CP a big landslide blocked the road to the replacement depot. I was riding in the lead truck. I dismounted everybody in Class A uniforms. We started picking up rocks and rolling big boulders off of the road by hand so we could get through. We cleaned a path through this rockslide and got to the replacement depot.

I went from Pusan to Sasebo, Japan, to the replacement depot there. It was a rotation center, the 29th Replacement Depot. We were there for a short period of time until they put us on a boat and we came back to Camp Stoneman, California. From Stoneman everybody got on a different train to go in a different direction. After a short vacation I moved my wife and child to my next assignment at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. 🏰

Men of the 13th Combat Engineer Battalion  
repair a road damaged by retreating North  
Korean forces RG 111, SC-361232



## Colonel Paschal N. Strong, Jr. Eighth Army Engineer

**C**olonel Strong recalls there were some 25,000 engineers in Korea, and shares his motto—“Any engineer can build a bridge if he has all the stuff he needs. It takes a REAL engineer to build one when he doesn’t have it.” He describes the need for high-level bridges to avoid Korea’s floods, and, as Eighth Army Engineer, he characterizes his dealings with Lieutenant General Van Fleet and General Ridgway.

Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet was the Eighth Army commander in the spring of 1951 when I used quite a



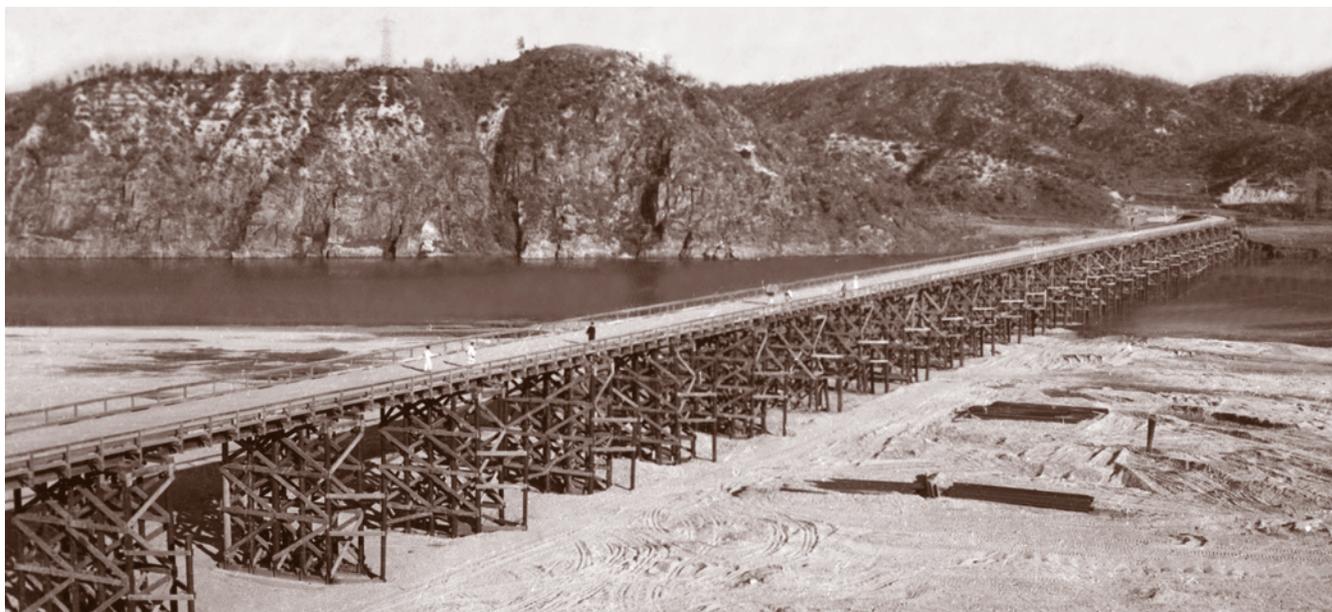
Maj. Gen. Lee Chong Chan,  
ROK Army, presents a  
commendation to Col.  
Paschal Strong  
RG 111, SC-382855

few of my engineer troops to build high-level bridges over the main streams. Up to that time we had low-level bridges over the main streams. Van Fleet said to me one day, “Strong, why are you spending so much of your time and effort on these high-level bridges when you don’t need them?” I said, “General, I had a study made of the floods in this country.” I requested a flood expert through Washington. One came and made a study. I wasn’t talking through my hat.

I said, “When the floods come all those low-level bridges are going to be out. If you don’t have a few of these high-level bridges, one at least behind each corps, the troops are going to be isolated.” Well,” he said, “I’m not worried about the floods.” I said to him, “Well, general, that’s not your job. That’s *my* job to worry about the floods.” He laughed and said, “Okay, go ahead.”

I was very lucky in having three Army commanders who accepted my judgment and didn’t try to make me do things that were absolutely impossible.

Shortly before Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker was killed we were way up in North Korea, not too far from the Yalu River. Then the Chinese struck. The Korean divisions gave way and we had to fall back to prevent the Chinese from flanking us. Walker had a conference with his staff and I was present. He said he had not been able to receive any orders or directives from MacArthur’s headquarters. He had to make up his mind what his main objective was. He decided that it



Yoju Bridge, August 1951  
Engineer School, 41-1-129

was to maintain the physical integrity of Eighth Army, being the only military command we had in the Far East.

He said, “I am prepared to give up any real estate in Korea I have to, to make sure that Eighth Army is not destroyed.” I will never forget when he said that. He was a very able commander. He had to decide whether he would risk Eighth Army by letting all the Chinese come in behind him and cut off our routes to Pusan. That is why he planned to withdraw whenever necessary.

General Matthew B. Ridgway came in after Lt. Gen. Walker was killed in a jeep accident. Walker had planned to evacuate Seoul. I knew that Ridgway would

want to defend it. As soon as Walker was killed, and I heard that Ridgway was coming, I immediately took steps to get barbed wire and all defense material—picks and whatnot, and Korean labor—to work on my best concept of a defense line.

When Ridgway came our main headquarters was 60 miles from the front. I was up at Seoul. I was the only section commander who was up there with those advance troops. Ridgway came up to the advance headquarters and found my staff and me working there. He was at West Point, a tactical officer, when I was a cadet. He said, “Strong, I am going to defend Seoul as long as I can. Meet me at 0800 and we will make a

Shortly before Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker was killed, he said, “I am prepared to give up any real estate in Korea I have to, to make sure that Eighth Army is not destroyed.”

reconnaissance of the area and pick out the parts we want to defend.”

I met him at 0800 and we went over the ground. Fortunately, the terrain was such that it was pretty obvious where the defense lines would be. The ones he selected I had pretty well already selected. The next morning I got a call from him to go out again to look things over. Many places we went he found engineer troops coming up with wire and labor. He wanted to know how I could get them up so quickly. I couldn't tell him that this mission had been planned a week ahead of time and that we were just coming up now after a week's delay. From that time on Ridgway trusted my judgment all the way through. Van Fleet did too.

I was very fortunate to have had Army commanders who if I said a thing could not be done, accepted it. Sometimes it was pretty “iffy” if it could be done or not. We were only half a jump ahead of the sheriff, but we did stay that half-jump ahead.

I knew Ridgway would defend Seoul because of his record in Europe as commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps. Because the Korean division broke on our flanks and endangered the railroad behind us, eventually we had to evacuate Seoul. In the spring we started back again and recaptured it.

I knew that Ridgway would try to hold it and he did. We held it through New Year's Day. The river froze and our bridges froze in the river. We had a hell of a time

maintaining them against the floating ice, or when the tides came in, but we did. We completed the evacuation leaving our bridges behind us. When we returned in the spring we found the Chinese had neatly stacked them up on the banks.

The floods came. There was always a conflict between an engineer of a unit and the commander of a unit when a flood was imminent. The engineer wants to get the floating bridges up before the flood's high water hits, whereas the tactical man will want to keep them in place as long as possible for tactical reasons. He has the say-so. Just as we expected the commanders kept the floating bridges in too long. Soon all of our floating bridges were careening down in the flood out to sea. That was where the high-level bridges came into play.

I am a great admirer of General Douglas MacArthur. I know something about him. When I was a cadet, he was superintendent. I think he would have been a complete failure working with the British and the Allies in Europe, and General Dwight D. Eisenhower would have been a complete failure in the Far East. Eisenhower was a great conciliator—maybe that's not quite the word but—he knew how to work with other people. MacArthur could only work with and by himself. In Japan, MacArthur was just the man to take charge of Japan because the Japanese expected a god. They expected an emperor to take command, and he was an emperor figure. MacArthur would never have gotten along with

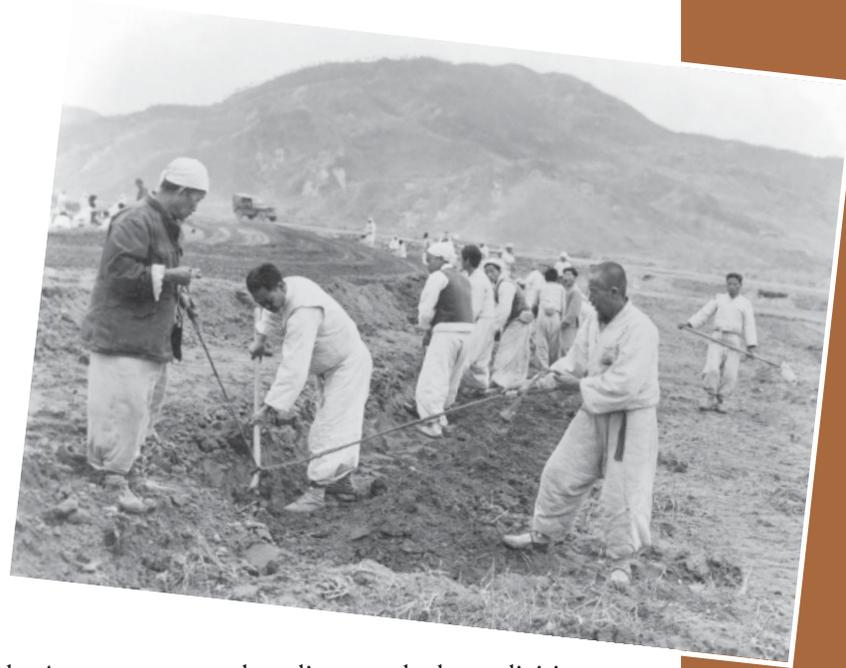
I can't emphasize too much the importance of indoctrinating your engineer unit commanders with one reality—the necessity for using native methods with native labor and native material, in the absence of the materials they are supposed to have....

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, and Eisenhower would not have presented the god-like figure to the Japanese that MacArthur did.

From my experience, the best regimental commanders for heavy construction work were contractors who had been doing that work and who were commissioned in the reserves. I found them better for that purpose than the West Point graduates because the West Point graduates hadn't had the practical experience in heavy construction that the contractors had. West Pointers also were a bit too worried about the spit-and-polish, sometimes at the expense of their construction activities.

I can't emphasize too much the importance of indoctrinating your engineer unit commanders with one reality—the necessity for using native methods with native labor and native material, in the absence of the materials they are supposed to have according to the book. When every new engineer unit came through Korea, I sent the commanding officer and some of his staff on an inspection trip to see how the Koreans handled concrete structures without concrete machinery and how they built pilings without pile drivers. That gave them an appreciation of what they could do with Korean labor.

My motto was that any engineer can build a bridge if he has all the stuff he needs. It takes a *real* engineer to build one when he doesn't have it. We had 25,000 engineers of all sorts in Korea. Engineer units are attached to



the Army; some are a battalion attached to a division, or a regiment or group attached to the corps. Then there are heavy construction groups attached to the Army. Well, I requested and received permission to have all the ones attached to the Army placed under my direct command. I could always exercise the authority of the commanding general. I found it better when they knew that I was their commander when writing their efficiency reports.

Generally a staff officer doesn't exercise command, but I found that in Europe and in Korea it worked out much better for the units attached to a high command to be under the command of the engineer. Other people might disagree with me. That's my theory and it worked out very well. I didn't have to issue orders through the commanding general, which meant through his chief of staff. I could issue orders directly to the Army engineer units. 🏰

Korean workers repair an airfield to enable it to handle heavy transport aircraft  
Engineer School, 13-14-6

**C**olonel Itschner describes a meeting between Chinese and American forces on building a bridge at the site of the Peace Talks.

I had an opportunity to cooperate with a Chinese engineer unit while rebuilding a bridge. The peace talks were at Kaesong and this bridge was very close to Panmunjom. The river was on the route between our line at the Imjin River and Kaesong. We were given orders to go up there without arms and build this bridge so our delegates could get to the peace talks.

I didn't think much about it at the time. We had become pretty hardened and kept in close touch with the fighting. I wasn't apprehensive at all. I hoped the orders were right—that they had gotten it all cleared. I went along in my jeep ahead of this unit and got to the bridge. Nobody was there.

This bridge had a gap of maybe 60 feet, with a demolished pier in between. Soon our treadway bridge company came up, looked over the situation, and immediately started to unload the treads. We could put three treads together and get a jeep across a 30-foot gap without any support in between, but with a 60-foot gap they had to build a trestle. About the time we were just starting to assemble our bridge sections we could see a column coming down the road on foot. They were Chinese. Each pair of men was carrying a small log, or they had axes and saws, and they also had

shovels. That was their bridge equipment. They came on the other side of the river and we were on ours. We put out a little boat.

One of our soldiers had a Polaroid camera, which at that time was brand new. He wanted to take pictures of the Chinese but they wouldn't let him. The Chinese appeared to be surprised and concerned. He took pictures of our own people and held them up. They were amazed to see those pictures taken and developed instantly. The first thing you know they were all lining up wanting their pictures taken—to send to mama back in Canton or wherever their home was. He did take a number and passed them around until he ran out of film. They were pleased to get them; that helped ease the tensions.

It had been a tense situation until that time. They had axes and we didn't have any arms. They outnumbered us as they always did. That photo session relieved the situation and we all worked together very well. They provided a lot of the labor on that trestle. They got their axes out and they worked on that. They had rough timbers and some of them were used to cover large holes in the deck on their side. We built the bridge without incident and it was useful for the peace talks. 🏰

One of our soldiers had a Polaroid camera, which at the time was brand new. He wanted to take pictures of the Chinese but they wouldn't let him.



**F**ollowing the November 1950 Chinese assault across the Ch'ongh'on River, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB) was heavily engaged. The battalion suffered 561 battle casualties and lost almost all of its equipment during 2d Infantry Division's retreat. The 2d ECB's condition in December was truly bleak. Major Farnum describes efforts to reconstitute it as an effective force.

The Chinese continued to the south and we continued to fall back. Prior to Majors Edmond Leavey and Clare Farley reporting in, I'd moved the elements of the battalion back to Yongdungp'o. We were back there by 5 December. At that time we had just a few vehicles and we were using our Brockway trucks to move our people around. Still, we felt we had to keep the bridge close enough to them, and, if called upon to provide it, we would be able to do so. At one time for the entire battalion we had one jeep and a few trucks. We didn't have lots of time to get re-equipped and get ready.

Col. Paschal Strong, Eighth Army Engineer, contacted me and told me when Majors Leavey and Farley would be arriving. Maj. Leavey, the ranking officer, came in on 10 December 1950 and took over as the battalion commander the following day. Maj. Farley became the executive officer.

The first officers that we received as fillers were virtually all recallees from the inactive [standby] reserve.

They had not been active in a reserve unit. They might carry an MOS (military occupational specialty) that had no bearing on any background or interest that they might have. Some were excellent; some were worthless.

Generally speaking, the officers who came from Japan were a much better qualified and motivated group. But the resources in Japan were being stressed to provide fillers. You got whomever was sent. You interviewed them and you tried to figure out where you could use them best, based upon their background and maybe their interests.

Maj. Leavey chose to run the battalion from the division CP in his role as the division engineer. That was contrary to how we had operated and to what I thought would be the normal operation. We were not that far from the division CP. By staying at division, he ran the battalion with the view that I, as his S-3, would be in charge of all operations.

I appreciated Maj. Leavey's trust. The situation was a little difficult in that Leavey would not trust Maj. Farley, the XO, to make a decision in his absence if it pertained to any operational matter. They were both West Pointers; Leavey was Class of '42, and Farley was Class of '43. Those were short classes so there probably was little difference in their rank.

Ed Leavey looked to Farley to run the administrative matters of the battalion—the S-4, kitchens, and battalion rear. I felt it must have been rather hard on Farley

We were busy from the word go. We took whatever assets we had and tried to get one company fully equipped....

not to be involved in our day-to-day road work and bridge building, which are the heart and blood of an engineer battalion's job.

When Maj. Leavey arrived, the 2d Infantry Division was still classified as combat noneffective. We had a large training mission to accomplish, getting people in, integrating them into the outfit, and preparing them so they knew what they were doing on roadwork, bridge building, or other engineer tasks.

While we were re-equipping and getting in our personnel, Leavey volunteered his battalion to do a lot of engineering tasks for the corp. In the first days I resented this, feeling that our personnel had gone through quite a bit and were still limping around on frostbitten feet. Much later on I realized his approach was the best that it possibly could have been.

We were busy from the word go. We took whatever assets we had and tried to get one company fully equipped, and then one platoon out of each of the other companies to where we could have motor transport to get them out to the roads to do the work.

Although our division was in reserve, we took on the responsibility of the MSR work, which normally would have been a corps, or Army, function, and maintained all the roads that were in our division sector where we were in reserve. We even built a couple of bridges for Army in that period.

A couple of these were Bailey bridges and some

were timber trestles. The best training actually is to build a bridge that was going to be used by the vehicles of Eighth Army. It took a long time for me to appreciate the added tasks when all my friends in the 23d Infantry, and other people we knew within division, were, I suppose, sitting around on their duffs.

The bridges were mostly small. We were replacing small, concrete bridges that we had blown, whether it was coming back the first time, coming back the second time, or whenever. We had destroyed practically everything that had been built along the roads, so it was a question of replacing those with something that was serviceable and wide enough for the military traffic.

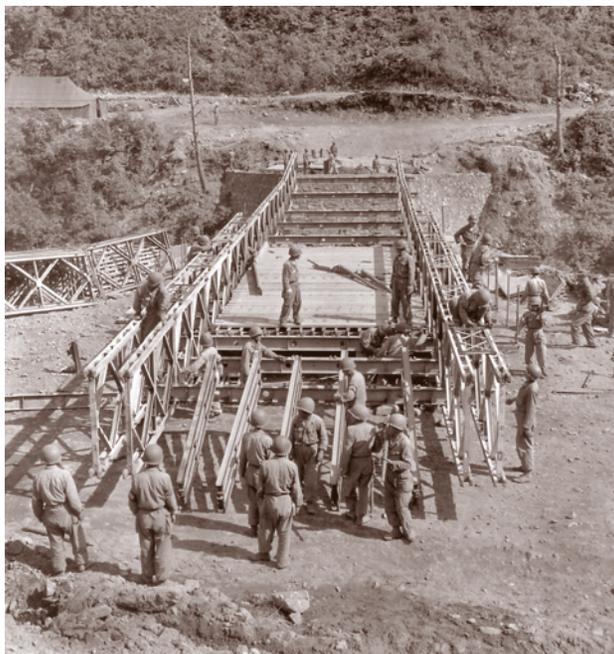
Soldiers of the 13th Combat Engineer Battalion repair a bridge destroyed by U.S. air power  
RG 111, SC-359632



It was my first experience with Bailey bridges. I'd never had any training in them. The handbook was a marvelous help for any engineer needing to look up the classifications for what you want to span. The directions of what to order and how to put it together were excellent. We were like little boys playing with Tinker Toys.

I don't know that we had any supporting Army-type engineer forces who were sitting on their duffs because we were doing this but it was good training and it kept us

all busy. For the first few months we still continued to have our little get-togethers in the middle of the afternoon, to take off our shoes and socks to check everybody, to make sure that nobody was getting gangrene from black toes. As an aside, my middle toes on my right foot still don't have the proper sense or feeling in them. For many years after I returned from Korea I'd all of a sudden be positive that my foot was bleeding and that my toes were down there just soaking in blood. I'd take off my shoes and socks and look and they



Soldiers of the ROK 117th Engineer Battalion build a Bailey Bridge RG 111, SC-451511

were perfectly all right. That probably went on for 20 years. When we got back to skiing I'd get that same sensation again in the early ski boots. Now, with the modern equipment, my feet never get cold. They just tingle a little bit. It was a common ailment that virtually all of us, who had been in the north, came back with. For some of us it lingered, in different degrees, throughout life.

Yongdungp'o was a decent area to try to re-equip. Gen. Christiansen,

the GHQ Engineer, and Col. Strong, the Eighth Army Engineer, came to call on 14 December. They promised all the help that they could push from their respective headquarters in the way of personnel and equipment. By 20 December we had our line companies sufficiently reestablished, in personnel and equipment, to move out a couple of our companies in support. By Christmastime we had received more than 250 replacements. We were still short on vehicles and engineer-type heavy equipment.

It was my first experience  
with Bailey bridges....  
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order and how to put it  
together were excellent.  
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playing with Tinker Toys.

It was almost like Santa Claus coming—on Christmas Day we received 35 trucks. We received our Christmas mail about the end of December. By that time we had certain reports back on some of our people. More than 200 of them were known to have surrendered in the Kunu-ri area. They were in two groups of about 100 each. Many small groups were spotted from the air surrendering to the Communist forces. Much of my time, after I wrote the operation reports and made the assignments for the next day, I was involved in writing to the wives of the many people we had lost at Kunu-ri.

Early in January 1951, in the area of Yoju, we were back in the engineer business in support of our own units, installing a floating bridge and a ford across the Han River. Division asked me to personally be in charge of the bridge and ford area. I had Company D working on it, with a little help from a couple of the other line companies because we really were only capable of fielding about one platoon out of the company.

On 9-10 January the battalion was located at Ch'ungju. I was the S-3 at that time and we were doing normal engineer work for the division. We installed our floating bridge and a ford across the Han River in our division sector. The latter part of January we moved to Wonju. At that time we had better than 200 miles of road to maintain in our division sector. By early February we had received much of our replacement heavy equipment and we were actually building air-

strips in each of our regimental areas. The weather was cold but very clear.

On 7 February a Korean lad who had been working with some of our 2d Engineer Battalion personnel as a “house boy,” and who had been taken prisoner along with our people at Kunu-ri, came by our headquarters. He had been released and returned to find us. He reported firsthand to us that no clothing was taken from our POWs, only their weapons, bayonets, and flashlights, and that they were all fed what corn and rice was available. He identified some of our officers and among them was a W.O. Lackner, who had been an assistant S-4. No one had known what had happened to



In the midst of the spring thaw, engineers lay dirt and rocks over a corduroy road to enable supplies to reach the mess hall  
Engineer School, 13-14-1

Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond made the statement that he didn't have to worry where he assigned the 2d Division because their engineers could 'build a road and maintain it anywhere.'

him. He was able to tell us for sure that Lackner was a POW in a group of about 350 U.S. POWs. A relatively smaller number of American soldiers were killed in action at Kunu-ri, compared to the number MIA (missing in action). I used that information to give some solace to the wives in my continued letter writing and asked them to share it amongst themselves.

By mid-February we thought things were going much better again. We were still at Wonju on 11 February but our UN forces were back up in Seoul and our forward forces had moved east. At that time the 2d Division was assigned to X Corps, and X Corps over in the east section faced most of the CCF (Communist Chinese Forces).

The CCF losses were considered to be very high due to our artillery and continued air strikes, or at least we assumed they were very high. I'm not too sure how accurate those evaluations were. I believe that our sweeping artillery fire and associated artillery reports of the Chinese losses were much truer than the estimates of damage and people killed by our heavy Air Force bombardment attacks. Although we knew their losses continued to be high, we also knew that they were still strong in numbers.

On 11 February we moved from Wonju to Hoengsong. Spring was coming and that meant the thawing of the roads. The MSR—which had been quite good—all of a sudden turned to a sea of mud. We had to

resort to corduroying the MSR in many places, plus putting on as much gravel as we could possibly obtain.

When Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, commander of X Corps, came by we were really fighting a sea of mud to keep the roads open. He made the statement that the 2d Engineers can put their division through anyplace; he didn't have to worry where he assigned the 2d Division because their engineers could 'build a road and maintain it anywhere.' I'm sure he had seen many of our roads going through virgin territory from the air. They probably looked pretty good from there even when they became muddy, but from our viewpoint, on the ground, it was a sea of mud. It was a nice feeling that a corps commander would come by and say that about the engineers in one of his divisions.

We did receive some fine people as replacements. I want to comment on the fellow who became our S-2. His name was Botkin—I don't remember his first name yet we lived in the same tent for some time. In December he reported in and I know that by the spring he had not yet been to bed. He never changed his clothes from when he reported in. He was a fine worker all day long. He sat by the tent stove and tended it all night—not that it needed tending, it was oil or kerosene. As I would waken and look up from my sleeping bag he would say, "They're coming tonight, Larry. They're coming tonight." He was a fine S-2. During the daytime he would go anyplace on reconnaissance with no hesitation.

The mines placed by the enemy along those roads were mostly wooden box mines. The mine detectors did not pick them up. The only way of locating them was by probing with bayonets. It was the old hunt and peck method, by hand.

Although it may sound as if he was afraid, he showed no fear personally.

Most of the battalion was still in the Wonju area on 19 February. There had been a heavy CCF attack in February but the engineers were not committed. Our forces considered the CCF losses to be absolutely staggering. Although our losses had been relatively sizable, our stand in February 1951 by the 23d Infantry at Chip'yong-ni was outstanding. I don't know that we knew exactly where we were by names. We knew what hill we were on, and what hill the CCF and we were fighting for. They were all numbered based on elevations. The papers had to pick up something catchy and so they called it the battle of Chip'yong-ni in which the 23d Infantry made a good showing for themselves and the 2d Division. We supported the action with engineer work tasks and by serving as a reserve force for the 23d Infantry.

On 16 March we were located at Yudong-ni. Someone had received an Associated Press photo of some POWs. It showed a column of people from the 2d Division. In that photo many of us recognized both Zacherle and Fry. If I'm not mistaken, in the particular column as shown in the photo, Zacherle was number eight in the line and Charlie Fry was behind him. About that time I'd had word that Chaplain Wayne Burdue had been killed. When I checked that out with the chaplains in country I found out that the report was due to an error in the chaplains republishing a list of chaplains where



Captains Farnum (left) and Botkin. Botkin was a replacement officer who joined the battalion in December 1950  
Farnum Collection

Burdue was shown as KIA when he was actually MIA and in a prison camp up along the Yalu. Chaplain Burdue subsequently did die in prison camp.

In March the division had some action in the Hoensong area. Most of the action pertained to the 38th Infantry and to the artillery supporting them. The weather was beautiful and spring was arriving along with spring flowers. On 20 March the division was moving north on a limited advance. The spring thaws really hit

us and the roads were virtually impassable. The 23d Infantry, in division reserve, was placed under the supervision of the engineer battalion to work on the roads. We also hired Korean laborers; we had better than 500 Korean laborers plus some ROK engineer units working on our roads. We expected another 800 laborers to be delivered to us the following day for roadwork.

This created a rather heavy administrative load on H&S (Health and Services) Company to set up field kitchens and feed more than a thousand Koreans who were working on the roads. The laborers just showed up and we had Korean supervisors who paid

Korean engineers build timber piers for a new bridge, February 1951  
RG 111, SC-358000



them. We gave them a certain amount of food and they seemed much happier eating with our people than cooking their own rice. All of a sudden we had an engineer battalion with a total maximum strength of 900 people supervising an entire infantry regiment, plus 1,500 Korean civilians and some ROK engineer units all working on our division roads. It was an all-out effort to maintain our mobility.

The road in our particular sector was strictly a dirt road that had insufficient rock base to make it a year-round MSR. Many of our division field artillery units supported us by working on the roads. Some of our artillery units had contests with each other regarding how many yards of roadwork they could do versus the others. There was great competition between our 503d Artillery, which was our division's heavy artillery, and a heavy artillery unit attached from Eighth Army. They were both black units and they did absolutely outstanding jobs in their assigned sectors.

Our mission was to stay with them and check for mines all along the roads to make sure that, because of mines, we didn't lose any of this wonderful support we were getting. Although we used the mine detectors, we didn't have much confidence in them. The mines placed by the enemy along those roads were mostly wooden box mines. The mine detectors did not pick them up. The only way of locating them was by probing with bayonets. It was the old hunt and peck method, by hand, and

I think we were very successful. We found many of them. I don't recall losing any of our vehicles when we were clearing the roads at this time.

### The Baby in the Minefield

Anti-personnel mines had been placed by our forces, the North Koreans, and the Chinese. Many of these were in the small Korean villages. These were not really villages but just farmhouses along the roads. As the refugees came back to their villages, and tried to get back in their own homes, sometimes these homes had been booby-trapped. Civilians—the children, or the wives and mothers—were often wounded and maimed, which was very hard to take.

One day we were told at the battalion CP that a Korean mother with a small child on her back was down in the midst of a mine-field. We searched but found no records of a minefield in that area. Our S-2 and S-3 sections made every effort to contact all the other divisional units, and anybody who had passed through, for information on this minefield. It was very hard to amass a reasonable file on what had been put in, by whom, and why.

Lt. James Welcher, my assistant S-3, and I went up to where one of our line companies was holding guard around the minefield where the wounded Korean lady was. Many engineers volunteered to go in and bring her out. One thing you remember about being



An American soldier poses with Korean children in Hungnam  
Weygand Collection

in the service is that you don't ask or direct somebody to do something you wouldn't do yourself.

Since I was the ranking person there I asked Jim Welcher to back me up and follow me through as closely as he could and still stay a safe distance behind. I entered the minefield and reached the woman but she was dead. The baby was crying. It just seemed to be impossible to get the baby separated from the mother the way she had the baby tied to her clothing. I carefully pulled her back along the route I had come in, then Jim took her legs and we carried them out. I think Korean children are among the most beautiful in the world and this baby was no exception—except it was crying.

One thing you remember about being in the service is that you don't ask or direct somebody to do something you wouldn't do yourself.

We were not too far from a village. Some locals came down and were standing around watching us get the body out of the minefield. One of the Koreans was a doctor who spoke a bit of English and he offered to take the child. That is one of the remembrances of war that stays with you forever. You can forget where you were, what you'd eaten, what you were doing, but these special times stand out, and they're always there.

On 28 March, I was called to division headquarters where they presented me with the Silver Star for attacks through enemy lines during the Kunu-ri period. I'm sure Capt. Jones and others at division staff had some input into it. Although I can't really subscribe to the citation as written, I did thankfully receive it.

My recommendation for promotion to major had been knocking around Eighth Army and various places for months on end. The division commander looked into it and said, "Give me all that paperwork," and he carried it personally to Eighth Army. Ultimately, he was successful. My promotion to major came through with the date of rank 17 April.

On 10 April the 23d Infantry Regiment was on line and we were supporting them with two of our companies, Companies A and B. Maj. Farley, much to his enjoyment, got to go to the 23d to coordinate the engineer support. He was very happy finally to get into some of the operational elements. My assistant, S-3 Jim Welcher, went on R&R to Japan and we started our first

rotation of people back to the states. Based upon the point system I was the top eligible captain in the battalion for rotation, but I really had no desire to rotate until all of our original personnel were gone.

On 11 April, the engineer battalion was in the Hongch'on-Ch'unch'on area and we were erecting two Bailey bridges. At this time we received word that General MacArthur had been relieved of command. We all felt that the relief of General MacArthur was quite a blow.

On 13 April, we received our first quota for our battalion to rotate some of our personnel. Our quota was for two officers and 30 enlisted men to be rotated. Since some of our replacement officers that we had received after the Kunu-ri incident had come from Japan, they actually had more time in theater than any of our original group. Our first rotatees, therefore, were replacements that we had received either in December or early in 1951.

We wondered just how the rotation system was really going to work. Most of the replacements we received were either brand-spanking new young second lieutenants, or people recalled from the Inactive Reserve who had not been with a unit since World War II for any training and had no desire to have been recalled for Korea.

I was still writing letters to many of the wives of our missing personnel who had been captured in the Kunu-ri area. I wrote Col. Zacherle up for the Distin-



On their way to a second tour of duty in Korea, soldiers of the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion wait to leave their troop transport.

RG 111, SC-412166

Ridgway Takes Command January–July 1951

guished Service Medal for his part in our very successful crossing of the Naktong. It was quite an engineering feat to put in a bridge across a major river with the limited amount of bridging we had. I've never been sure whether Col. Zacherle was recognized with that citation or not.

There were rumors that were supported by some reports from returning POWs that our Maj. Price and W.O. Falls were presumed to be working in a coal mine near Kunu-ri. Maj. Price, as I recall, did have some expe-

Soldiers of the 1437th  
Treadway Bridge  
Company install a  
floating bridge  
Engineer School, 42-5-118



rience with underground mining prior to his service in the military. I'm not too sure what came of that. Neither of them came back from their POW days.

The communist offensive late in April hadn't hurt the 2d Division. What it did was put us back on Class B-type rations, rather than Class A. We were back to eating canned beef and gravy. At that particular time our H&S mess was very poor and we certainly missed the old company commander, Joe Cox, who had always, even under the most difficult of circumstances, been able to run a mess hall that you were happy to go to.

During this period we were camped on the Naechon. It was a good location and we had a swimming hole. We built a floating bridge on the Soyang River and the bridge was right on the 38th Parallel. On 27 May we had heavy rain and on Memorial Day it rained some two inches. The Soyang River, at the place we had our floating bridge, rose 32 inches in a matter of hours, so it was a real challenge to keep the bridge intact.

We saw our rotation program come to a screeching halt. Certifying that we had qualified replacements was a very difficult thing to do when no one really knew the capabilities of the people who were assigned to us.

By the end of May we were receiving considerable corps engineer support. They were taking over the MSR work to our rear and we were strictly within the division area. The rotation picture once again was very grim.

In mid-June, the 2d Division was in reserve; however, when the division is in reserve, that doesn't mean any rest for the engineers. Edmond Leavey, by this time a lieutenant colonel, volunteered our battalion to corps, saying we could do any tasks they wanted done, so we continued to do engineer work, mainly fixing and widening small bridges, to bring the MSR up to the width that we wanted.

About this time we heard over the radio more than once, Lt. Col. Zacherle reading a letter to his wife, Peg. In his letter he mentioned many of our officers and others who were with him as POWs so that we knew they were alive. At that time we couldn't say they were 'well,' but they were 'alive.'

I'd received a letter from my wife asking about a second lieutenant from the 2d Engineers who someone had met in Tacoma. He had been wounded at the time of Kunu-ri. He had returned to the states and was commissioned. After looking into it I decided that this was Sgt. Joseph Mentkowski, who was the sergeant wounded in the early morning hours of 1 December. We had left him and a tank patrol had picked him up. Our paths never crossed after that. He had been in the hospital in Japan for almost six months from early December until mid-May in 1951.

On 20 July I received my orders and was due to leave on rotation. I expected to be in Japan by the end of July. On 21 July I received the Legion of Merit from

GHQ in Japan. It was a big surprise to me, to my battalion commander, and to many in the division. It covered the period I served as the battalion commander, 1-10 December 1950, and was for the resupplying and returning of the battalion to an engineering capability within that short period. Brig. Gen. George C. Stewart, our assistant division commander, presented it. The following day I received the Bronze Star, kind of a formality as you're leaving the division after having done a good job.

On 23 July I headed for division rear, Pusan, Japan, and then home. All of the original crew, save one, had preceded me. The one remaining was Capt. Paul Jones, then serving as the battalion S-3. Col. Leavey was trying to have him promoted to major prior to being rotated. I don't believe it was a successful extension. 🏰

**A** *platoon officer with the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, Lieutenant Stukhart recalls clearing mines, mines, and more mines, often by probing since the SCR-625 mine detector was unreliable for enemy box mines.*

When I hit Camp Stoneman, California, the Korean War had broken out. A number of us hoped to go straight on to Korea, but they said, “No, your orders are to the 76th Engineer Battalion, Okinawa.” The day we arrived in Okinawa the 76th was leaving. Until October 1950 they had us overseeing construction projects and doing little, minor jobs. Around that time, GHQ in Tokyo decided to take the 93d Engineer Battalion out of Guam, bring it to Okinawa, and staff it with people. We were all assigned to the 93d Engineer Battalion and went on to Korea from there.

We were engaged in building an airfield complex north of Pusan. I had a platoon there and our units were rather scattered around. I ended up supporting the 2d Logistical Command and also doing some jobs around Pusan. Until April or May 1951 we were building, making repairs, and helping to construct the depot outside of Pusan.

Several of us wanted to get in a combat unit. In May 1951 we were still around the Pusan area but I transferred to the 2d Division. I did this by directly dealing with a person in the 2d Division whom I met in Pusan.

I got orders to go to the 2d Division when it was in the area near the Punch Bowl, so off I went.

The first assignment I had was to Company A of the 2d Engineers. Company A supported the 9th Infantry. The first assignments were putting in defensive positions. Not long after that we were taken off the line. We went back and moved over to another position. We were in reserve a short time. Then we were put into the line west of our original position and started moving back north. That involved more offensive-type operations—putting in bridges and clearing roads and mines. The one thing I recall the most was clearing mines off roads.

We cleared mines by probing. The SCR-625 didn't work very well. They could pick the nails up in the shoe mines, but most of the mines were made of wood. We used them, but metallic detectors were not very efficient [see “The Portable SCR-625 Mine Detector” in *Builders and Fighters: U.S. Army Engineers in World War II*, Barry Fowle, ed.]. Probing was maybe 80-90 percent efficient—unfortunately not 100 percent. We thought we had cleared a strip of road, or a field, then somebody would lose a leg or a jeep would blow up. It was very disturbing to us when we would declare the road clear and somebody would go up there in a jeep and get blown up. Considerable pressure was on us to get the areas cleared. The enemy was far more efficient in putting those things in than we were in getting them out. You couldn't tell at all where they were. The mines could have been on the

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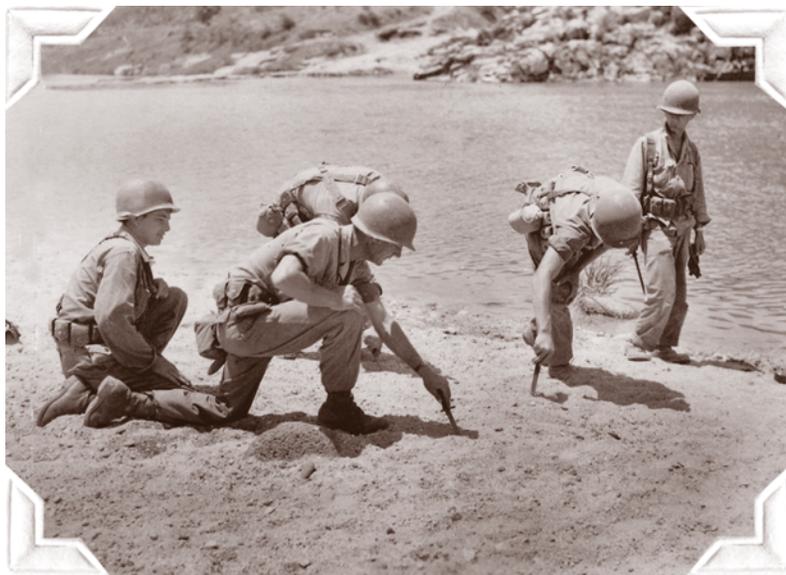
shoulders or in the middle of the road. There was no rhyme or reason to where they were.

We lost a number of our own people through their use of two mines, one on top of another. We cleared one out and then a second one would go off. Or, they would have a second one in a remote location.

When you pulled one out, it would set off the other one. They used ingenious schemes like that.

We operated in a series of narrow valleys. The infantry were up on the hill. I recall some of the battles, watching the infantry trying to take those hills. We were down in the valleys trying to clear them out and repair the bridges so that they could get close support. The armor units were normally not able to come to their help until we cleared the area. In the meantime the infantry were in a very exposed position up on a lot of the hills. They had air and artillery support, but there was some very tough fighting up in those mountains.

The roads were pretty narrow so we did some road



Engineers probe for mines using bayonets Medding Collection

widening. Except for the armored engineer dozer there wasn't really too much need for engineer equipment. That was fairly effective because it was not affected by most of the smaller mines. It had to be one heck of a large mine to take out that type of vehicle. On several occasions our platoon went out with the armored en-

gineer vehicles and cleared a bypass—off the road down into a streambed, for the armored units to get through.

A lot of our work was done at night because we were under artillery fire most of the time during the day. The enemy could see us from where they were.

The infantry dug in their own positions. We had one major project putting in a road up a very steep hill. We had to do a lot of blasting to get that road through. This was after I'd taken over Company C, which was in support of the 38th Infantry Regiment. The 38th Infantry was in a rather exposed position so we had to put a road in up that mountainside. They actually needed to come back down that road to get out because they had a

The guys in our company loved what they were doing. We could hardly understand the mentality of stateside soldiers or people who complained about being in war. These guys really were enthusiastic about what they were doing.

## First Lieutenant George Stukhart, Jr. 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

lot of trucks up in their forward position. We had to help them get out; we had to keep our equipment there.

The commander of the 38th, Col. Ed Rowny, commended us after they got out. He called us up and said he thought it was quite a remarkable thing that we were able to keep that road open. Although it was raining very hard we managed to keep it open.

We had a lot of maintenance problems. Unfortunately we had to cannibalize a lot. Most of our trucks eventually were cannibalized to keep the remaining ones running. Maybe on a fleet of 15 to 20 trucks, a third would be running. You couldn't get the parts sup-



Engineers experiment with a newly received Tournadozer at a facility near Seoul  
RG 111, SC-378098

port you needed to keep them running so you cannibalized. You had to leave a lot of vehicles inoperable. These were mostly World War II vehicles.

They sent us the Tournadozer, a wheeled dozer with big rubber wheels built by LeTourneau. They sent it over to Korea for us to evaluate. We didn't think very much of it and the Army never adopted it. It was very hard to move around. You couldn't have built that road up the side of the mountain without a D-6 or a D-7. No rubber-tired vehicle would go up that incline. The wheeled dozer might be good for building highways out here in Bryan College Station, Texas, but it wasn't very good for mountains.

Our people were out doing demolitions to clear the roads. That was always a very difficult thing because of the slope of the hillside. We were not skilled enough to be able to tell what would happen when we blasted those slopes. On one or two occasions we had some serious accidents. I don't recall anybody being killed while I was there, but the day after I left we had two guys killed doing demolitions.

The guys in our company loved what they were doing. We could hardly understand the mentality of stateside soldiers or people who complained about being in war. These guys really were enthusiastic about what they were doing. It didn't matter what hour of the night. We never got complaints about getting people up to go out and do a job.

When I joined the battalion it had not been completely reconstituted after coming back down from the Yalu River. A few veterans told stories about how they got out, mostly by foot over the mountains. They told stories of convoys getting blown up. Two lieutenants, one in another company and one in my company, had some very interesting stories to tell about how they escaped by foot. They couldn't get out by vehicle. They had to take off over the mountains, hide during the day, and hoof it at night. There weren't many survivors but I remember these two fellows, Hunter and Crosley, very well. They really told us stories about how the Chinese would come past them but they managed to get away.

We did some bridge building in the 2d Division. We built a couple of Baileys. The first real experience I had under fire was trying to put a Bailey bridge in. As we started this move back north, we put a Bailey bridge in over a creek under constant fire. We'd have to stop and go back and start again. We'd get hit, but we finally got it in.

I remember the rain in Korea. The rains came in late summer and they'd take out a great deal of what you did. We had to replace that Bailey bridge we put in although the second time wasn't as bad as the first.

The winter clothing was not very good but it was getting better when I left. It didn't affect us too much because we normally were in a position where we could stay warm. But the infantry had a tough time. The in-



fantry were very exposed. I remember the winter coming on and how cold it got.

By the time I left in January 1952, things had fairly well stabilized. About that time I remember once again going back into reserve and going through training exercises. I left the 2d Division and was assigned to the 11th Airborne Division, the 127th Airborne Engineer Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. 🏰

In the midst of a battered Korean village, soldiers of the 25th Infantry division huddle around a small fire  
RG 111, SC-368493

**C**aptain Medding describes the battalion's extensive bridge-building activities during the spring and summer of 1951.

After the withdrawal and turn-around, our major bridge-building efforts really got underway, mainly during the late winter and early spring of 1951. I Corps assigned numbers to all of the bridges. Starting in March, the 14th Engineers, with the 72d Company attached, built 18 semi-permanent bridges, mostly two-lane and multi-span. At one time the battalion had 11 bridges under construction by only nine platoons. For a while we had no equipment for pile driving so that piers and abutments were founded on concrete slab footings. By late spring, pile-driving equipment was available and pile piers were used in most instances. During May the battalion built a 480-foot Bailey bridge with six 80-foot spans.

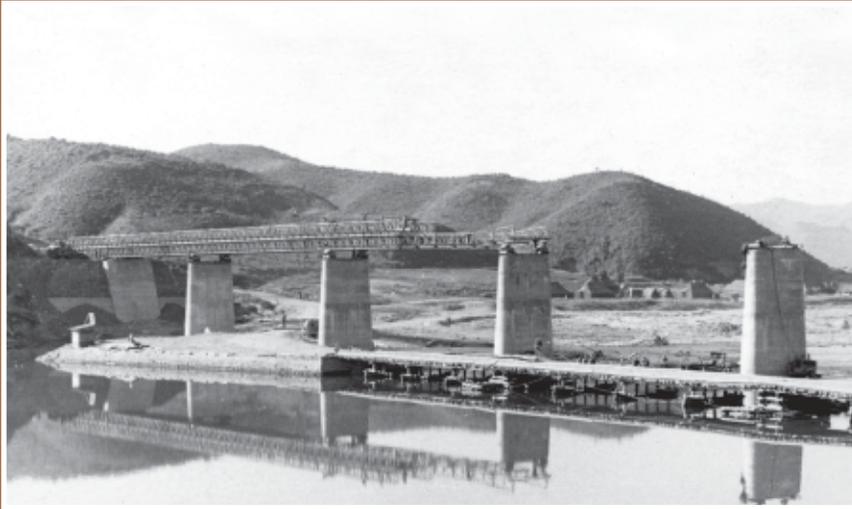
The materials available for bridge construction consisted of 24-inch I-beams, 42-foot long, 18-inch wide flange (WF) beams, about 20 feet long, eight-by-eight- and six-by-six-inch timber, and two-inch and three-inch lumber for bracing, decking, and abutment walls. In addition, there was miscellaneous lumber for decking, small steel angles, and channels for cross bracing and diaphragms. Portland cement, welding rods, and welding equipment also was available. Most semi-permanent bridges were two-lane, multi-span bridges

with 40-foot spans, using six 24-inch I-beams. Intermediate supports usually consisted of two bent piers, using either eight-by-eight-inch timber or piling. Occasionally, we designed laminated decking, using two-by-four- or two-by-six-inch lumber on edge, covered by longitudinal treads of two-by-twelve or three-by-twelve lumber.

Probably our most unique bridge was the Bayton-Evans Bailey bridge built in June 1951 on the Hantan River north of the 38th Parallel. The site included 1-1/4 existing spans of haunched concrete T-beams and five unfinished spans. The Japanese started but never completed the bridge, except for piers and abutments and the 1-1/4 span. Center-to-center spacing of the piers was approximately 98 feet, and the distance from the deck to the pier tops was about 10 feet. The 1/4 span was a cantilever with a supporting lip for an intermediate simple span. The top of the lip was about 45 inches below deck level. The Chinese or North Koreans had built an existing one-lane bypass bridge at low level over the river.

There was considerable confusion about how to build the high-level bridge. It was believed that the best solution was to use Bailey bridging in some way. The confusion resulted from the fact that the Bailey is built in multiples of 10 feet. A meeting was held at group headquarters to discuss the problem. Although I had designed most of the bridges previously built by the battalion, I remained outside in an adjacent room at the request of Col. Linden.

At one time the battalion had 11 bridges under construction by only nine platoons. For a while we had no equipment for pile driving so that piers and abutments were founded on concrete slab footings.



The Bayton-Evans  
bridge under  
construction  
Medding Collection

Built by the 14th Engineers, a  
pontoon bridge takes shape  
while a ferry carries troops and  
equipment across the river  
Medding Collection



Dedication ceremony  
for the newly completed  
Bayton-Evans bridge  
Medding Collection

During my wait it occurred to me that we could build a 480-foot continuous double-double Bailey with the roadway on the upper story. It could be built and launched from the end opposite the existing span by demolishing the top of the existing far-shore abutment. It would be necessary to build grillages on top of the existing piers with bearings and rocker beams. I interrupted the meeting and explained my solution, which was immediately accepted. That is how the bridge was built. Company B built it in about two weeks. It took five days to jack it down onto its bearings. The bridge was completed on 30 June 1951. When dedicated, an impressive group of people attended. We named the bridge for Capt. Bayton-Evans of the British 55th Royal Engineers, who had been killed in action a short time before, and with whom we had had many close associations.

At about the same time, Company C built a 720-foot two-lane pile-bent bridge further downstream over the Hantan River. The last bridge I built while I was there was an M2 treadway floating bridge, also on the Hantan River. Because of an existing sandbag causeway and angled approach, the bridge was built on a skew with the river. A large number of Chinese box mines in the area required extensive probing clear them. Mine detectors would not pick them up. They were discovered when a jeep hit one, but it only flattened a tire!

For a time the 14th Engineers also had about 150 miles of road maintenance responsibility. During the spring of 1951 we had a reserve ROK division attached to the 14th for road maintenance work for about a month. I visited them every day for two or three hours to check their assigned area.

During the spring of 1951, DA (Department of the Army) announced several promotions. We didn't get any battlefield promotions. In March, Lt. Col. Burcher was promoted to colonel and reassigned to CONUS. Maj. Linden was promoted to lieutenant colonel and reassigned as battalion commander, 14th ECB. Capt. Gass was promoted to major. Lt. Col. Linden temporarily assigned me as the battalion S-3, a position I held for about a month. When Maj. Gass was assigned as S-3, Capt. Kania was reassigned as S-2. Col. Linden departed for CONUS on 21 June, and Maj. Charles E. Wright was assigned as battalion commander.

I left the 14th Engineers on 18 July 1951, exactly one year after arriving. I returned to Tokyo where I served on the post-treaty planning board, and then with the Japan Construction Agency. 

Soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division  
return to their unit after purchasing  
food in the neighboring village,  
February 1951 RG 111, SC-357651



**A**s *Supply and Maintenance Officer, Base Section, Eighth Army, Korea, December 1950-August 1951, Colonel Hoskins describes the frustrations he faced—a thriving black market and a chaotic and unresponsive supply environment that left most engineer equipment inoperable because of a shortage of spare parts.*

I was sent to Korea around Christmastime 1950. The Corps of Engineers wrote in my orders that I had a Department of the Army-directed 1331 (Combat Engineer MOS) because I wanted to go over and be a division engineer. When I got to the port they decided that I had to be troop commander and take a shipload of troops to the Far East.

When we got to Yokohama and were debarking all of the troops, the aide of Maj. Gen. Walter L. Weible came on board. He told me that Gen. Weible wanted to have my orders changed and that I would go to work for him. I said, “No, I would appreciate it if the general would just leave the orders alone. I wanted to go to Korea and I wanted to be a division engineer.” That was the only opportunity I would have, and if I made it through after my tour was up in Korea, I could come back and work for the general if he still wanted me. The aide said, “Okay,” he would go and talk to the general. He came back and finally told me, “Yes,” the general was not going to interfere with me going to Korea, but that I would

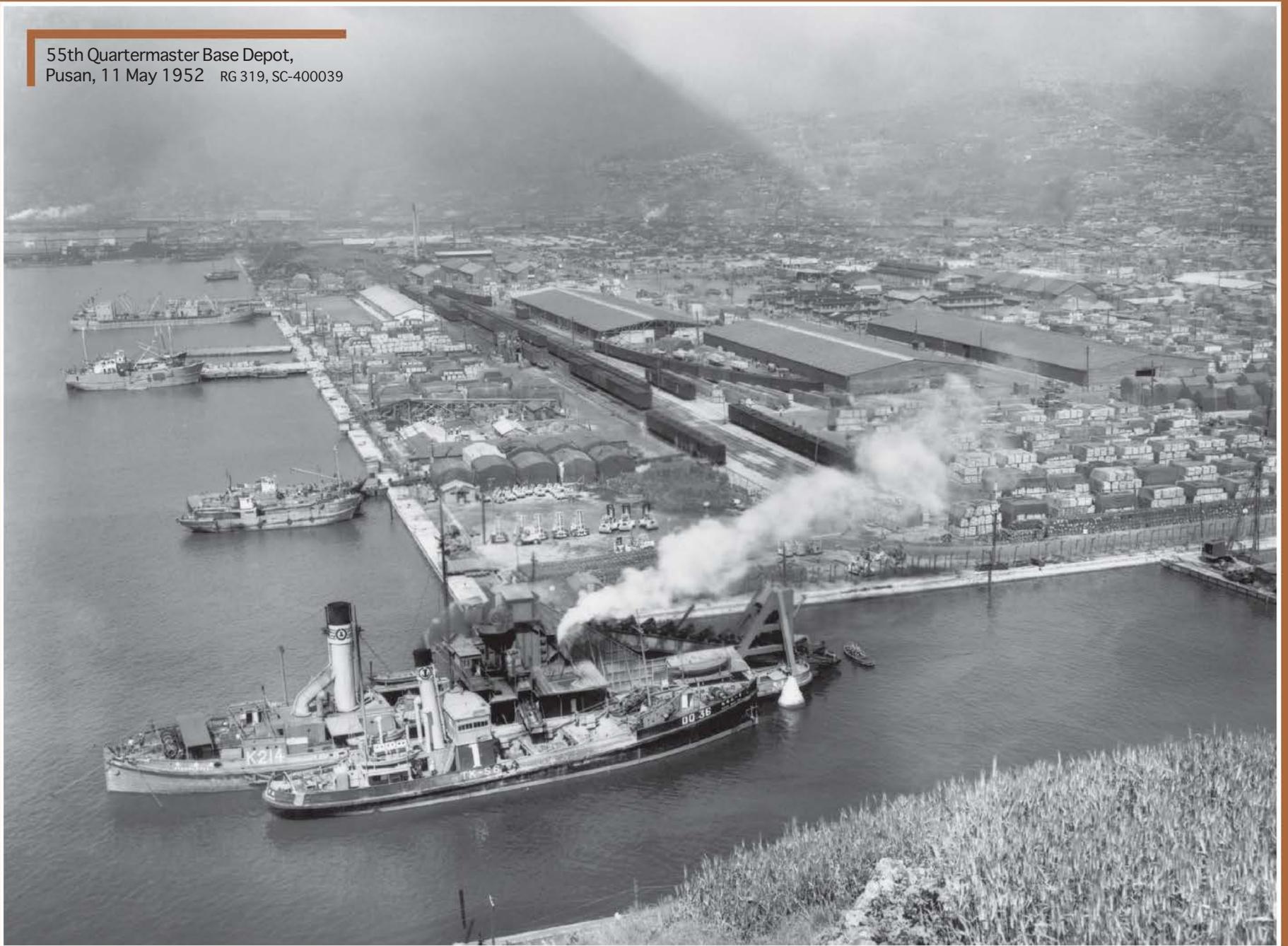
never get to be a division engineer. I’d get siphoned off along the way somewhere, and I would contribute more to the war effort working for him than I would over in Korea.

I went over to Korea and up to 7th Infantry Division. After I was there about two hours I had to report back to Eighth Army headquarters to Col. Baker, who was the Eighth Army Engineer, and to Col. Gus Wyrick, the Deputy Army Engineer. Gus Wyrick and I had been at ICAF (Industrial College of the Armed Forces) together. They handed me an IG report that must have been an inch-and-a-half thick. Why somebody wasn’t court-martialed as a result of that report I’ll never know. Somebody should have been fried as a result of the alleged malfeasance outlined in that IG report. I was assigned as the engineer supply and maintenance officer at the base section to correct the situation.

Shortly after that I went to Pusan and didn’t report in for three days. I walked around and observed what was going on. That was the damndest mess I had ever seen in my whole life. Then I reported in. They accused me of going AWOL, of going to Japan, or someplace, to keep from getting that assignment. But I had a pretty good idea of what was going on by the time I went in and accepted the responsibility for what I was getting into.

They had this automatic supply arrangement. Anybody who had something they didn’t want just shipped

55th Quartermaster Base Depot,  
Pusan, 11 May 1952 RG 319, SC-400039



it to Korea. They had ships in the harbor at Pusan that had been there for five months loaded with engineer supplies. There was no way in God's world they could be unloaded. There was no place to put the stuff. Hell, I didn't know anything about the supply system. I knew how to manufacture equipment, and I knew how to run a plant, but I always had a sergeant or somebody who did all of the supply requisitioning. I'd look around for either a sergeant or somebody to be my S-4.

I looked at what my problems were and what my resources were. After I surveyed my current situation I went up and visited the three corps. That was where the war was being fought. About 80 percent of the engineer equipment was deadlined. Everywhere I went, everybody was mad as hell. They'd heard that I had just arrived. I said, "Look, I came up to find out what the score is. I'm not sitting back there in some plush set-up. I'm trying to find out what my problems are." It worked out. I got the support of a lot of fine people.

I soon realized all of this so-called automatic supply had to stop. The first thing I did was set up a requirements group. With a requirements group the theater determines what they need. Nothing comes in except what you ask for. You accept a lot of responsibility when you do that. I set up the requirements group, and I knew what the authorizations were for all of the units, those on the authorization tables. Plus, I got a list from the theater G-4 and from the different national services for

special authorizations that they had.

I soon found out what I was supposed to support—the established consumption under combat conditions. I ran all of these numbers off. Then I notified Tokyo to stop automatic shipment. I sent a couple of ships back—talk about 'hitting the fan.' The engineers and transportation went to Gen. Weible, and they—the engineers particularly—wanted me fired. They were going to hang me from the nearest yardarm.

Before he would do that, Gen. Weible sent a major over to see me, one he had some confidence in, and said, "Find out what the hell's going on over there. I thought Hoskins was supposed to be in a combat unit." The major came to see me. I went through the numbers with him and told him what was happening. I took him down to the port and to all of the other depot and maintenance locations. They were trying to put everything through Pusan. There was no way you could bring everything through that one port and distribute engineer equipment and supplies by the existing rail system.

I gave him the notes I had on what was happening in the forward areas. I said, "You're practically at a standstill. If there'd be any enemy breakthrough, you couldn't win this war, not with the condition that the equipment is in." He said, "Well, how are you going to solve it?" I told him, "I'm going to set up a requirements division. The next thing I want to do is run this thing like you build automobiles." He said, "How do you build auto-

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mobiles?” The key to building automobiles is making requirements that are geared to sales. You set up a movement control, which controls all materials and equipment, and the transportation system as well. I said, “I’ve got to get a handle on it. I need to make sure that I can get the ships loaded the way I want them, get the rail system so I could control something on it, and get all of the needed trucks, and even handle the air traffic.” He said, “My God, how are you going to do that?” I said, “I’ll work on it.”

I went to the transportation people, who were having all kinds of problems because there was no consistency in their movements. When I told them what I was trying to do they said, “Let’s get on board.” I sent instructions back to the States, Japan, and even the Philippines, as to how ships would be loaded. When one opened the hatch, stuff that was needed right away would be taken right out and moved forward. Instead of trying to manhandle everything two or three times, I would load it at dockside and send it as far forward as it could be taken. The transportation people were happy because they could plan ahead about how their equipment would be used.

I got the people up forward to receive their supplies for me. Hell, it was in their interest. By going to the railhead or the truck stop and unloading the damn stuff they got their supplies. Pretty soon, I wound up with not just the engineer supply responsibilities, but a lot of



the other services’ supplies, because I was controlling much of the transportation system.

Rations are unloaded  
at Pier 3, Pusan harbor  
RG 111, SC-355011

### Black Market Problems

When the theater IG came to see me after I was on the job about a week he stood me at attention and told me about all of the things that he expected me to do. I said, “Well, what happened to all of these officers ahead of me? When are you going to get after them?” He said, “I’m talking to you. I want you to clean it up.”

One of the big problems was the pilferage. We're not talking penny ante. One whole train disappeared. That was when it got my attention. I went to the hospital and told the hospital commander that I was looking for six company-grade officers. I wanted men who had been either with the FBI, Food and Drug Administration, or with a special undercover unit that used to exist in New York. I said, "These officers are probably in your hospital because they've been wounded but not wounded badly enough to be shipped back to the states." He said, "We've got a bunch of them around, but I don't know what their backgrounds are. Man, they're a surly bunch. Many of them were wounded in World War II and they're back here in Korea. They are mad as hell at the country and at the service." I said, "You just give me six of them."

When those investigators arrived, let me tell you they were a surly bunch. I told them I was going to take their officer rank off of them and get them lost as enlisted men in the organization. I said, "There have to be Americans involved in such a large-scale pilferage operation, as well as Koreans, and there has to be somebody high up. I don't give a damn who the hell they are. I'm going to get them." This one first lieutenant, a little Italian guy, told me, "Man, I caught the biggest fish in New York State one time and what did they do to me? Instead of giving me a medal they sent me to the garbage dump. I've heard this before." I said, "Okay.

One of the big problems was the pilferage. We're not talking penny ante. One whole train disappeared. That was when it got my attention.

If I find out that you haven't carried out what I'm telling you, I am giving each one of you orders in the face of the enemy—I'll throw the book at you." So, they disappeared after we arranged how we'd keep in contact with each other.

Some guerrilla units in the area occasionally would hit one of the depots. I used that as an excuse to keep one company on alert at all times. They would have to sleep in their full field equipment with their weapons and their hard hats and be prepared to move out on very short notice. One supply point got hit regularly so we sent the different companies out there to get a little experience. They screwed up a bit at first, but after that they did a little better.

One night I was alerted that they had the real kingfish involved in this operation. Did I really mean what I said? I let them know I meant it. You follow through and I'll be here where you can get to me. Around 2200 one of the undercover officers came and said, "We've got him. Break out the company and we will lead them to the area we want surrounded." We got the company out.

It was at night. We were under the cover of darkness. We went in and completely surrounded a particular area of Pusan. Nothing could move in or move out. The company had fixed bayonets. We moved in and surrounded a big shed. I saw for the first time the original chop shop. There was everything in there, not just engineer equipment. They could take a piece of equipment,



The engineer shop supervisor at the Yokohama Depot inspects a D-7 tractor during overhaul  
RG 111, SC-427315

break it down, and disperse components and parts faster through the underground system than we had any idea. There were components of equipment we were short of that had been showing up everywhere on the Korean black market.

We had a top Korean official, an Army full colonel, a couple of other field-grade officers, and other lesser ones, and a few Korean civilians. I put leg irons and handcuffs on all of them. They shouted, screamed, and accused me. The full colonel was going to have me court-martialed and put away for good. So, I said, “Start inventorying all of the evidence now. Get each individual’s name, rank, and serial number.”

I called the local MP and I told him who and what we had. I wanted them to come in and give us a receipt for the individuals and all of the evidence. He blew up and said he’d have nothing to do with it. He called the area commander and the area commander asked me who the hell was I? I said, “I’m sorry. If you just give me a letter saying that I’m relieved of my specific responsibility to stop pilfering in the depot, I can hand your letter to the IG and they’ll

take it from here, but I have caught these people red-handed. So I want that signed letter first.” Well, he wasn’t about to give such a letter.

I wound up going up the chain of command. In fact, a man claiming to be the ambassador in Tokyo called me later that evening and said I was creating an international incident. I told him to call the IG and to send me a letter that I was relieved of the responsibility the IG had given me. Otherwise, these individuals were going to stay where I had them until I got that letter, or somebody gave me a receipt for the evidence and the individuals.

Not long after that the MPs came in. They gave me receipts for all the evidence and the individuals. The Americans were court-martialed and the Koreans had

Not long after that the MPs came in. They gave me receipts for all the evidence and the individuals. The Americans were court-martialed and the Koreans had “fatal accidents.” You can break up a black market operation if you catch the “big fish.”

“fatal accidents.” After that, I never had any trouble with anything that moved, except the penny ante pilferage that was going on all of the time. You can break up a black market operation if you catch the “big fish.”

After that I probably came close to being killed by some of those who hadn't been caught and resented what I had done—there were sniper shots. I was unable to travel in the same vehicle at predictable times. I never rode in the sedan I was authorized; I never used it anyway. I rode in trucks, jeeps, half-ton trucks—anything but an ox cart. I don't know if it was by accident or design but the IG inspected my operation and gave me a superior. When I was given the assignment, the Eighth Army Engineer had agreed if I got a superior rating from the IG they would send me back to be a division engineer.

Ellsworth I. Davis, a Corps of Engineers officer, was a very good friend of mine. After I got sent to Pusan and found out what a mess I had there I decided I better find out what the situation was with the rest of the engineering organization in Korea. I went to the different corps areas where most of the work was going on and to the divisions. I soon found out that about 80 percent of the engineer equipment was deadlined and they were just cannibalizing it to try to keep some of the equipment going.

As a colonel of one of the combat groups, Ell Davis supported me. He really got on the rest of the engineers.

I told him what I would like to do. I didn't know if I could sell it, but if I could get the right support I'd see what I could do. I wanted to replace all of that equipment, just get it out. Spring was coming and they were going to lose all of the roads. There'd be no supply lines for an awful lot of the army other than rail, which only went up to the corps rear areas. They really had no choice.

I got into a lot of haggling with the people in Japan. They said, “Oh, you'll never get approval.” I was sending ships back that I didn't want, loaded with a lot of supplies because we had enough of those supplies in Korea to fight three wars. We didn't need any more, and yet the automatic supply system sent us more.

I knew that if I went up to the G-4 I'd get in an argument, so I went to Gen. Weible. I said, “The situation over here is pretty desperate. If you want, send some people over to Korea. Don't return them on a three-day deal where they could get credit for a month and then go back to Japan. Let them get down in the mud and the cold and find out what the situation is.” So he sent a couple of his officers over and Ell Davis was one of those who really helped me.

The agreement was that the operating units would come to Inch'on and accept the equipment. We would transfer the ownership of all of the new equipment, evacuate all of the rest of the deadlined equipment by rail through Pusan, and we would set up repair lines in Ja-

I tried to tell the general, “Look, you're playing with a firebomb. I have to call the chief of staff of the X Corps and tell him what's happened here.” He said, “Go ahead.” I did. I thought the end of the phone line was going to melt.

pan. The repair lines in Japan had no organization or system because somebody said, “We need a few D-8s, or some graders, or something.” No requirements had been laid on it for a time-phased program to start with. This was the fault of the units in Korea. They had never stated their requirements.

Once they approved this exchange program we evacuated all of the junk. We used LSTs to bring the new engineer equipment into Inch'on. I sent a team up there and we transferred the ownership of it on site. They did all of the paperwork right on the beach. The units on their own, with their own capabilities, moved it across Korea to the different locations where they had to have it. We were close to the point of a total breakdown at that point. The mass transfer of equipment came just in time. It took about two months to complete and the spring thaws were about to start. Ell Davis got all his counterparts together and said, “Hey, somebody’s trying to help us. Let’s

get behind him. Get off of the dime yourself and do something.”

It could have been a total engineering disaster if we hadn’t been able to pull that off. So much inoperable equipment was for all practical purposes just junk. Engineer construction and support capabilities were practically nonexistent—it had gotten to that point.



Salvaged vehicles being returned to the United States  
RG 111, SC-399179

Automatic supply from Japan was all right for the first 30 days on a beachhead. After that, somebody ashore, close to the situation, has to assume the responsibility to tell the supply people what they need. I got shiploads of barbed wire. Hell, I needed barbed wire like I needed a hole in the head. One ship had been in the Pusan Harbor for six months loaded with barbed wire. We had enough barbed wire to go back and forth across the Korean peninsula about five or six times.

People in the automatic supply operation sent in material. There was no supply operation *per se* in Korea. The

There was no supply operation *per se* in Korea. The depots were nothing but bone yards.

depots were nothing but bone yards. The supplies and equipment were shipped in and everybody around Korea came in to get them. If you wanted a bottle of liquor, or something of that sort, you could get it and haul it away. There wasn't any control.

The Corps of Engineers never put a regular officer in the supply system who had any backbone. If you want to get ahead in the Corps, go into civil works. We had a Regular Army full colonel assigned to command the depot and he had absolutely no backbone. The guy spent all of his time with his Korean girlfriend and he just let the depot operate as a bone yard. He was one of those we had to get out of there.

A brigadier general, head of one of the engineering departments in one of the California colleges, was at brigade headquarters. He had a few operating troops, but very few of them. Most of the engineering operations were up north. When I saw that equipment was sitting in mud and that there were no drains or fencing around anything I asked him to give me some help. He told me that was not his job; he had other more important things to do.

I said, "I can't think of anything more important in a logistical area than protecting the logistical system." He said, "Lieutenant colonel, it's not for you to question a brigadier general." I said, "Yes, Sir." Well, I knew I wasn't going to get anything from him. Later, I got a replacement for myself and took command of the depot and maintenance operations.

I kept trying to tell this brigadier general that all of the equipment belonged to the Eighth Army. We simply could not barter equipment out. Some of my people were bartering out generators and other items of that sort for things that they wanted to make their own lives a little more comfortable. We put an end to that. The general took a bulldozer one day and knocked down all of the fences I had built and took what he wanted.

X Corps chief of staff called me and said they desperately needed a lot of this equipment. They would arrange for a special shipment by train to get up there to the railhead as quickly as possible. I said, "Let me check and make sure I have it all available. I will freeze it in place. I'll call you back and tell you what I can ship and when I can expect the rest of the equipment that I'm short." I checked all of the equipment, gave him the information, and told him the rail car numbers. Damned if this brigadier general didn't come in and take some of that equipment off of the rail cars as they were to be pulled out. It was some of the D-8 angle dozers that were very much needed up forward.

I tried to tell the brigadier general, "Look, you're playing with a firebomb. I have to call the chief of staff of the X Corps and tell him what's happened here." He said, "Go ahead." So I did. I thought the end of the phone line was going to melt.

Two officers—one was the G-4 and one from the Corps Engineers' office—came down by L-19s. We had

The next thing I knew the brigadier general was packing up and had 24 hours to clear the area. He and his whole brigade headquarters were returned to the United States and released from military active duty.

built a landing strip that the L-19s could land on near the main depot there in Pusan. Those two planes came barreling in. In the meantime the train had gone. They wanted to know the numbers on the equipment. I gave the information to them and told them what I knew about the equipment. They went over and found the equipment in this brigadier general's motor pool on some project that he decided he wanted to work on. They came back and got on the phone back to the corps headquarters. The next thing I knew the brigadier general was packing up and had 24 hours to clear the area. He and his whole brigade headquarters were returned to the United States and released from military active duty.

### The "Papa-san System"

I organized between 5,000-6,000 Koreans. You've got to remember, all males above 15 to 17 years of age wound up in the ROK Army. They sent police sweeps through an area, ROK Army sweeps, and they'd catch anybody they could find and send them to the military. That was how they got their recruits. I was left with the old men, the old women, and small kids to do work. Most Orientals are damned good workers. The Koreans particularly are good in doing stonework, in putting in drainage and hard stands. You could build airfields by this method. You could build roads. You could build all kinds of structures with them, but you must use the Korean culture, which then was the "papa-san system."



I organized what I called the "Sing Song Korean Construction Company." I had mostly young kids and mamma- and papa-sans, but those people from the rice paddies really understood drainage. They knew how to make water flow. They knew how to build stone embankments and retaining walls. In a short time we had good hardstands and good facilities in all the depots. The troops were living in deplorable conditions and we got that quickly straightened out. The morale improved.

Korean workers use hand tools to excavate a storage facility  
Engineer School, 11-30-7

The papa-san is the chief honcho in the community, and he's got his sub-papa-sans under him. If you want to get anything done you deal through the papa-san. He's the big man who makes things happen. I rounded up five or six papa-sans in the community where we were and told them I wanted to provide work for them. I had arranged through the civil support area to get food. I could offer them so much food a day for those who worked and did a good job, as well as some pay. I insisted on stopping all of the breaking of boxes and pilferage going on, but I would take the scraps that we had and make bundles of scrap wood. At the end of each week, those who did a good job for the week would get a bundle of firewood. Well, that was extremely appealing to these people.

By using the Koreans, in very short order, I got a hell of a lot of work done. They even did pile driving, by what I called the "Sing Song pile driving" crew. They worked with the local hemp rope and a great big wooden block they had. God, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) would have had a heart attack if they had seen the way these people worked. They'd get the piling up, get some guides on it, and with a chant and a daisy chain, they'd pull that driving block up. Then they'd pull it down with a series of chants. It was amazing the amount of pilings that they could drive in a short period of time.

### One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure

I had very little to do with the supply system until Korea. I don't really know if the situation was typical. I knew where depots were, and I'd visited them, but I had never had the responsibility of having to deal with the problems that existed. When you make something run, you get all kinds of problems. Not only do you have your men, you have all of the laborers you need to use. You also have to deal with all of the pilferage and black markets.

I contacted the local police. I told them this was their country and I was trying to stop all of this pilferage. Their troops and ours were suffering because we couldn't get all of the equipment up there due to the black market—would they help me? They said, "Yes," they'd help me. One day I got a call from the local police chief and he said, "We have recovered a bunch of your supplies. I want to see you." I went to his compound where he had all of this material. There were two piles. He says, "One pile's for me and one pile's for you." I said, "I can't go along with that. That's U.S. Government property in that other pile. For me to agree to give it to you I'd just be a part of the black market." He said, "I either get my cut or we don't help you any more. You can take it all now, but we don't help you."

I said, "What do you want that I have some control over that I can give you?" He said, "We would like the garbage from all of your messes from all of the differ-

ent companies you have. There's a big racket going on." I said, "What do you mean big racket?" He said, "Oh, big pay, big pay off." I said, "Okay, the garbage has to be disposed of. I'll make sure that the police can come in and only the police can pick it up." He said, "You tell all mess sergeants and all of the company commanders." I called them all in, told them what was going to happen, and said, "The police chief told me there was a big racket going on with our garbage. My God, if I can pin it down, I'll hang some bodies just like I've hung a few other people around here." Some of them squirmed with that.

I said, "The garbage goes and there hadn't better be any hanky-panky on this damn thing. It's going to go to the police so I get the cooperation of the police in breaking the back of the black market." Then the pilferage was reduced down to the smaller type of stuff, but material still got out.

In these countries, particularly in wartime, any trash, garbage, kindling, or any kind of material, had some kind of value and it meant something to somebody. It was part of their survival. You had to deal with that. A lot of officers would say, "Let the sergeant take care of that." When they see that chance for extra money some people cannot resist the temptation of being paid off. They figured, "This is my chance. I can pick up a bunch of money."

Plenty of it was going on. When I left, I had cleaned out an awful lot of it. I'm not even going to begin to say



that I cleaned out all of it because I didn't have responsibility for all of it. What you wind up with in these base sections is a base section commander who was an infantry colonel. Hell, he had as much chance as a snowball in hell of getting command of an infantry regiment, or any kind of an assignment of any significance up in the combat area. He was a cast-off that they had to find an assignment for.

When I would go up to Col. Baker and say, "Look, I need more manpower down there," he'd say, "If I give you any more manpower I cannot control it. I did trans-

Salvaged truck and jeep engines waiting to be shipped from Mason, Korea, to Japan, August 1951  
RG 111, SC-379213

fer some engineer troops down there and they made MPs out of them.” I had to solve my problems myself. The way I did was to change the approach to the problems. For example, the only way we improved the maintenance situation was through a rebuild program in Japan, and by eliminating many thousands of small parts. I decided we’d go to a major assemblage exchange. In other words, if you had a problem with a fuel pump on a diesel engine, we’d just replace the whole pump instead of trying to repair the damned thing. You had to turn one in to me, which I then sent back to Japan for repair, and we issued a good one.

That reduced the number of parts and made sense too. The working conditions most of the time in the field were pretty brutal. These mechanics were out there trying to repair equipment when it was bitter cold, snowing, windy, or sleeting. Their cold hands were trying to repair components or sub-assemblies. It was no wonder that a lot of the maintenance concepts broke down the way they did. If you gave them a replacement component it was easier to work with.

We soon found a significant improvement and reduced the deadline rate. We’d say, “You give me an old transmission, I’ll give you a new transmission. You give me a gearbox and I’ll give you a gearbox. If you’ve got a problem winch, we’ll replace the winch and send it back. Let them repair it where they’ve got shops inside and warm.”

There were mountains of supplies. I’ve heard about people going through the depots and picking over equipment to try to find what they needed. The divisions had enough priority that if they lost a ‘dozer we’d try to find a complete replacement for it. When you got farther back from the frontline, into corps’ units, then you ran into other problems.

Generators were our biggest problem, simply because people would not maintain them. Certain pieces of equipment are absolutely essential to military operations and a generator is one of them. You’ve got to be able to communicate. You must have certain lights and a certain amount of power so you could heat equipment. We would run these generators. A blower is required to start in bitter cold so that you can heat the light aircraft and the helicopters’ engines. You’ve got to have some of this equipment—a blower, a heater—to get those engines started in that cold weather.

We always had trouble with generators simply because all organizations assigned the last GI that came in to take care of the generator. Nobody told him where the dipstick was, or to check the level of the oil, or water, or anything about maintenance. He knew it was going to take diesel or gasoline, depending on the type of engine, to keep it running. When it conked out, he’d say, “The damned thing’s no good. Somebody didn’t do their job.”

The best engineer equipment in the Korean conflict was Caterpillar equipment. One reason is the inter-

That reduced the number of parts and made sense too. The working conditions most of the time in the field were pretty brutal. These mechanics were out there, trying to repair equipment when it was bitter cold, snowing, windy, or sleeting.

changeability of the components on the grader or tractor. Some people liked the bulldozer, but I preferred the angle dozer with a Hyster winch on it because it gave you so much flexibility. You could get it into locations by using a “dead man” to get it up to an elevated area where you could go to work. If you had another one down below you working you could marry up two sections of a road, or three or four sections of a road. If you didn’t have the Hyster winch, you didn’t have the flexibility or maximum capability you needed. You couldn’t angle that blade so that you could shove all of that material off on one side. With the bulldozer, you’ve got to swing your track to clear the blade. A lot of people don’t like the angle dozer because it’s got a longer blade. Nothing is perfect. I found the bulldozer’s best application was digging sanitary fills.

You never know what you’re going into, or what you’re going to be called on to do, so I preferred equipment with the winch flexibility and the angle blade. The generators, the road graders, and the D-7 and D-8 angle dozers were really the workhorses. The dump truck and the truck-mounted bucket crane were vital for many different types of projects.

Korea was a bad situation in that you were constantly rotating all of your troops. You’d get men in, and they’d leave about the time you got them trained. We’d have to get it through their thick heads that, by god, they’d better put the outriggers out on that track-mounted

crane before they ever started that engine up to move that crane. If they didn’t, it was going to turn over. If it didn’t kill them, it was going to wreck the crane to where it’s no longer operable.

We had any number of individuals who were too lazy—or they thought it was too cold and unpleasant—to put the outriggers out. Those are the booms you’ve got to put out on each side and you telescope them in when you’re going down the road. You don’t dare use that crane with the bucket in front of it, even for a lift, if you don’t put those outriggers out. That provides the stability to that truck because the truck has a high center of gravity. That was a constant problem.

The constant rotating of individuals caused a lot of the problems. In World War II, a person was in a unit and he stayed with that unit until the war was over, unless he was wounded, or something happened to him. Then somebody immediately behind replaced him, and it was usually some understudy. You had some continuity. The man wasn’t always thinking about the day he was going to go home and figuring out how he was going to get out of doing something. That’s why I understand in *Operation Desert Storm*, General Schwarzkopf said, “Absolutely no more. You come over here and you’re staying here until it’s over.” I’m sure that the commanding generals who were involved in *Operations Desert Shield/Storm* had been in Vietnam, where commanders had the same rotation policies we dealt with in Korea. 🏰

Korea was a bad situation in that you were constantly rotating all of your troops. You’d get men in, and they’d leave about the time you got them trained.

**L**ieutenant Trayers recalls the engineering challenges he faced in the spring of 1951 while supporting 1st Cavalry Division operations south of the Hwach'on Reservoir, just above the 38th Parallel. He and his men built sandbag bridges, strung concertina wire, cleared mines, and maintained floating bridges.

One of the missions I had was to build a sandbag bridge. We had no lumber supplies and we didn't have an air compressor for a while. We took the air compres-



Engineers use a pneumatic chain saw to clear trees from along the MSR  
RG 111, SC-383355

or out to cut down some trees but it was parked on the wrong side of the down-falling trees. A tree fell on the compressor and put it out of commission.

Korean sandbags are about three times as large as American sandbags. They are not made of hemp; they're made of rice straw. I had about 50 Koreans who were permanently attached to my platoon to assist in doing manual labor. With the available labor and sandbags I decided to install a sandbag bridge.

As we constructed the sandbag bridge the channel through which the water flowed became narrower. One of the principles of hydrodynamics is that the cross-sectional area of the river multiplied by the velocity of the water gives the quantity of the flowing water. If the area of the flow is decreased, but the quantity of water remains the same, the velocity will increase. The smaller the area the greater the velocity. In our bridge the gap became too small, which caused the water to flow too fast, and it washed the sandbags downstream as quickly as we put them in the bridge. We hoped that when we put in a sandbag bridge it would allow the water to flow gradually over the top of the sandbags. It's almost a hidden bridge because you can't see it. In this case the velocity of this river was such that a sandbag bridge was not appropriate; we had to put some culverts in the middle of the bridge.

I sent a squad out to secure some materials to build culverts to install in the bridge. The squad leader returned

with a truck loaded with railroad ties to build the box culverts. We used a crane to place the culverts into the river and then put sandbags on top of them. Everything was going great. The bridge was holding and the water was flowing through the culverts.

When we were loading up to leave the construction site I saw a train in the distance with someone standing

on the cowcatcher with a lantern. He was swinging this lantern back and forth. Suddenly, instead of swinging it side-to-side, he began moving it up and down and the train stopped. Several people exited the train and came up to the front of the engine and looked at the railroad bed. I was not aware of what was going on until the sergeant who had brought the railroad ties came over to me and said, "We'd better get out of here. That's where I got the railroad ties." We got out of there! The mostly sandbag bridge worked. They brought in a railroad repair crew and they replaced the missing ties so everything was fine.



The 120th Combat Battalion experiments with a new method for replacing barbed wire while under fire RG 111, SC-410975

### The Concertina Wire Episode

Talking about a lack of supplies, the engineer battalion ran out of concertina wire so we had to make our own. One company in the engineer battalion was given the responsibility of making concertinas. Barbed wire stakes were driven into the ground in a roughly four- or five-foot circular pattern. Then the wire, which on

the spools was used for single or double apron fences, was stretched out around the stakes in the ground to make concertina.

The battalion was putting pressure on the company commander, telling him that he wasn't producing concertinas fast enough. He got up in front of the company and said, "We're going to produce more concertinas, so tomorrow, the person who produces the most concertinas is going to get a three-day pass to Seoul along with the jeep." The next day, everybody worked their rear ends off. The one who produced the most concertinas the next day was awarded, publicly, in

Everybody worked their rear ends off. The one who produced the most concertinas the next day was awarded, publicly, a three-day pass to Seoul along with the jeep.

front of the company, a three-day pass to Seoul along with the jeep. Although no one else in the company was able to produce as much concertina as the winning soldier, the exercise increased the company's production of concertina such that it was able to produce enough for the entire division.

The 7th Cavalry regimental commander was Dan Gilmer [USMA 1932]. He was a controversial person but a man whom I admired because he was a real go-getter. General Ridgway, who took over after Gen. Walker was killed, made a flyover of the Army front and complimented Gilmer with words to the effect that, "If every unit had as much protection in front of it as does the 7th Cavalry, we wouldn't have to worry."

I do believe that Col. Gilmer used to work 24 hours a day. One time he went out in a jeep and inspected the three battalions—actually four battalions, because a Greek battalion was assigned to the 7th Cavalry Regiment. Col. Gilmer inspected each of the battalions in the morning and gave the battalion commander a list of the deficiencies that were to be corrected, and he told the commander that he'd be back to inspect them later that day.

After he had lunch, Col. Gilmer borrowed a helicopter from the division commander and hooked a loud speaker up to it. He then went over and inspected each of the battalions from the air. In one case, in spite of the fact that he had given instructions that the barbed wire

was to be increased in front of that battalion's sector, the men were not working quickly enough. Gilmer flew the helicopter over the battalion CP and talked into the loud speaker. He had a few "words of wisdom" for the battalion commander, from the helicopter, 45 feet above the ground.

### Organizing Engineering Support

When supporting the regimental combat team there's two ways to do it. The engineer company can either be put in direct support of the regiment, or it can be attached to the regiment. Col. Gilmer wanted to have it attached. That meant that the orders he gave were the ones that were followed by the engineer company, rather than having to go through the engineer battalion commander. He also felt that the equipment that was in support of the company was under his control.

In one instance the graders from battalion were out maintaining the MSRs, contrary to instructions that had been given to the company commander by Col. Gilmer. Gilmer had said that the graders would be used to improve the roads to the medical clearing stations and to the battalion CPs. When he called Capt. Georgeff to task, Georgeff explained that the engineer battalion HQ said that he was to maintain the MSRs. Gilmer then told Georgeff, "Well, ask your battalion commander if he'd like to have evening meal with me tonight and we can talk about this."

After he had lunch, Col. Gilmer borrowed a helicopter from the division commander and hooked a loud speaker up to it. He then inspected each of the battalions from the air.

The battalion commander came and after a rather hospitable supper was over, Col. Gilmer told him that the equipment attached to or in direct support of the 7th Cavalry was his equipment and he would do with it what he wanted. With that Col. Gilmore told the engineer battalion commander that if he didn't like it they'd both go see the division commander. Well, needless to say, not much equipment was attached to the engineer company after that because the company commander lost control of it to the regimental commander.

### Clearing Mines...the Hard Way

My platoon was given the mission of clearing mines from the roadway. As we were driving down the road there was a big sign that read, "Road and shoulders cleared of mines." Going down the roadway were the tire tracks of a two and one-half-ton truck that had previously gone down the road. I was leading my trucks down the road and my jeep driver chose to put the wheels on his side of the jeep in the left-hand truck tire track. That meant the right wheels of the jeep were in between the two tire tracks left by the truck. That didn't make any difference to me because the road sign said, "Cleared of mines."

I was about 30 to 40 yards in front of my first two and one-half-ton truck and I heard this large explosion. I turned around just in time to see Sgt. Janus, the squad leader, being blown out of the truck. The two and one-half-ton truck had run over a mine in the right truck tire



track. If my driver had chosen to put the right wheels of the jeep in that track I wouldn't be giving you this interview. Remarkably, Sgt. Janus only suffered two punctured eardrums. Battalion headquarters later changed the signs from "road and shoulders cleared of mines" to "road and shoulders swept for mines," which allowed for the possibility that there still could be mines in the road.

### Breaking Bridges to Save Them

The Hwach'on Reservoir was quite a large reservoir with a lot of water in its pool. It had a gate system and the

Damaged face of the dam at the Hwach'on Reservoir  
Engineer School,  
120-15-79

I turned around just in time to see Sgt. Janus, the squad leader, being blown out of the truck. The two and one-half-ton truck had run over a mine.

Chinese were opening and closing the gates, which raised and lowered the downstream river level. We had a number of floating bridges downstream on the river that passed through the reservoir. The Chinese would open the gates at random, allowing a large wave of water to surge down the river, washing out the floating bridges.

We kept a light aircraft in the air all of the time and when the Chinese opened the gates our airborne observer could see the water moving downstream. He would radio ahead and the engineers would “break” open the bridges. They would take out the middle section connecting pins allowing the bridge to swing open, pushed open by the force of the flowing river. After the wave of water passed through the bridge opening, the engineers would have to reconnect the two sides of the bridge and replace the pins.

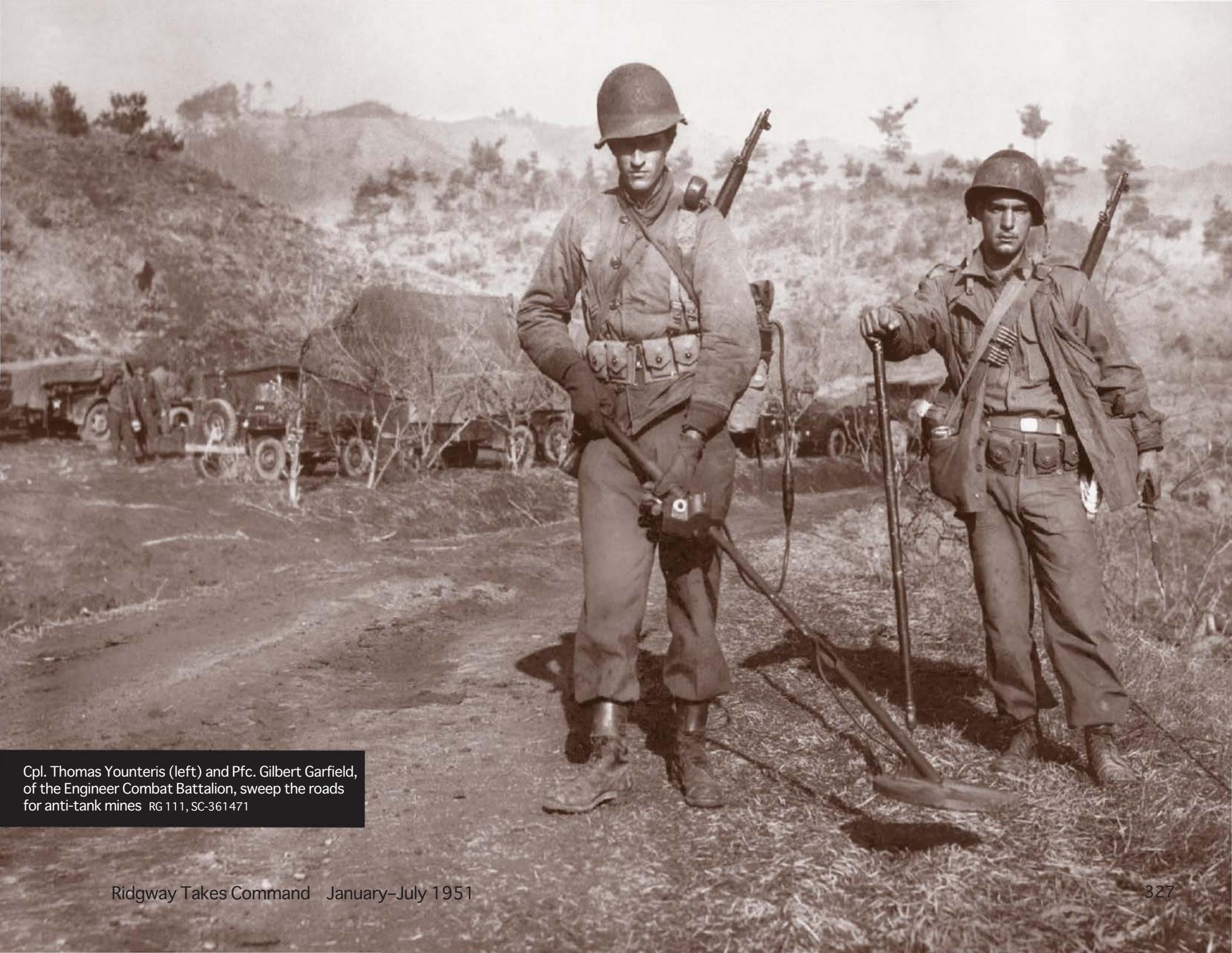
Opening and re-connecting the bridges was a difficult, time-consuming process. We wanted to demolish the reservoir gates in either the open or closed position to prevent the enemy from releasing large quantities of water downstream and disrupting our bridges.

The first attempt to destroy the gates was made by the 7th Cavalry. It was unable to seize the gates because of a lack of 105-mm howitzer support. In the second unsuccessful attempt the 4th Ranger Company suffered a significant number of casualties in its amphibious assault on the gates. The field-of-fire for the Chinese machine gunners was the tabletop-like surface of the reser-

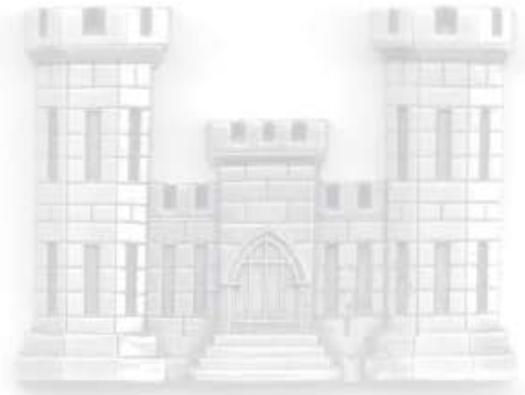
voir. The 7th Cavalry never did take the reservoir. I think the Navy torpedoed the gates [30 Apr-1 May 51, Douglas AD Skyraiders from Air Group 19 knocked out the dam’s gates and ended the enemy’s tactic of impeding UN forces by selective flooding].

I was promoted to first lieutenant in November. When the battalion commander promoted me I was unshaven because my face was covered with impetigo. I hadn’t had a bath in a number of days. I had lice, fleas, and scabies. It was a rather bad situation but he promoted me anyway.

One evening Eddy West and I were sitting watching a movie in the open-air theater when we were directed to report to the S-1. We were told that we were returning to the states the next day. We rotated out of Korea in November and Eddy and I were assigned to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Eddy went to OCS and I to ERTC. 🏰

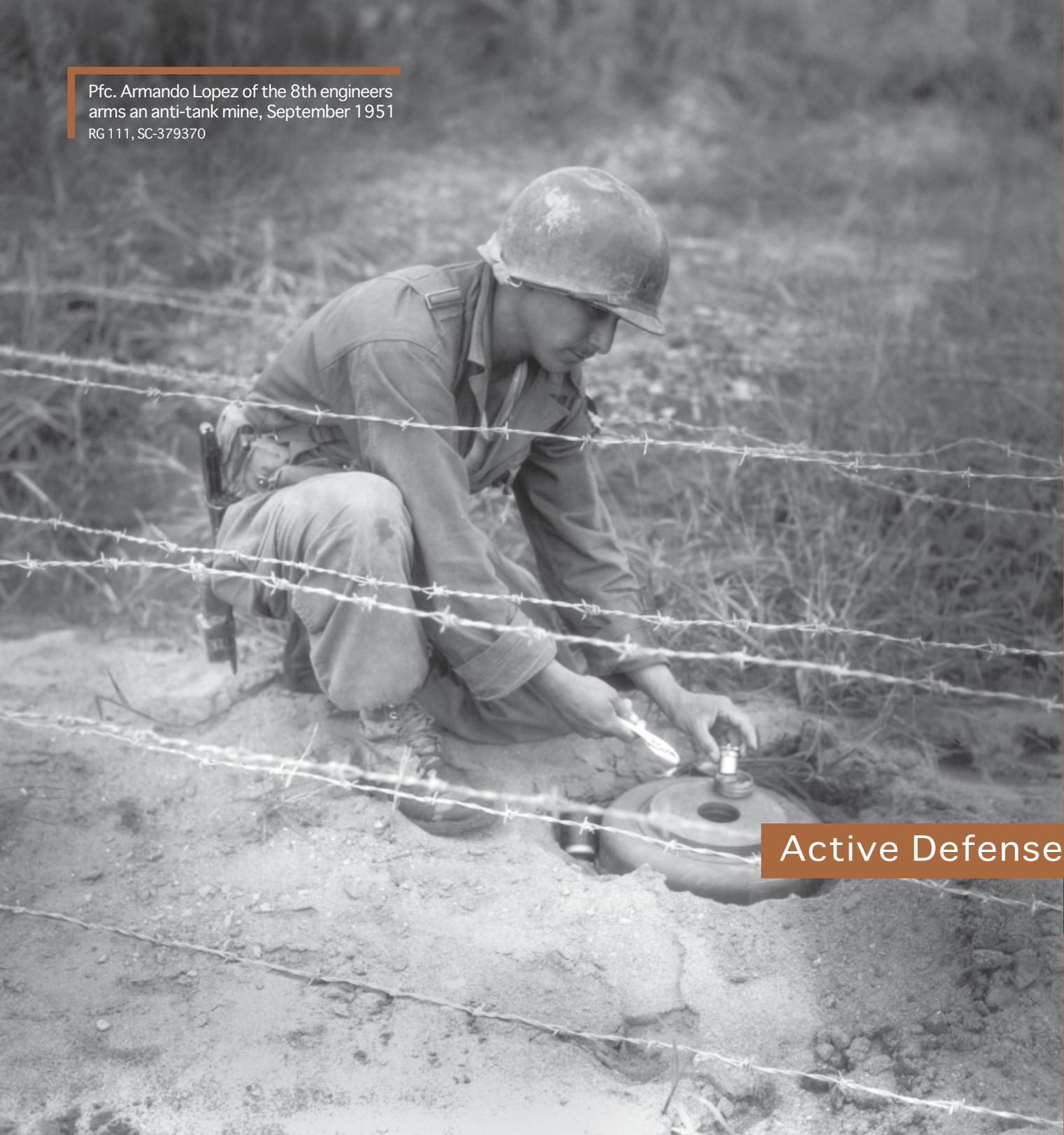


Cpl. Thomas Younteris (left) and Pfc. Gilbert Garfield, of the Engineer Combat Battalion, sweep the roads for anti-tank mines RG 111, SC-361471



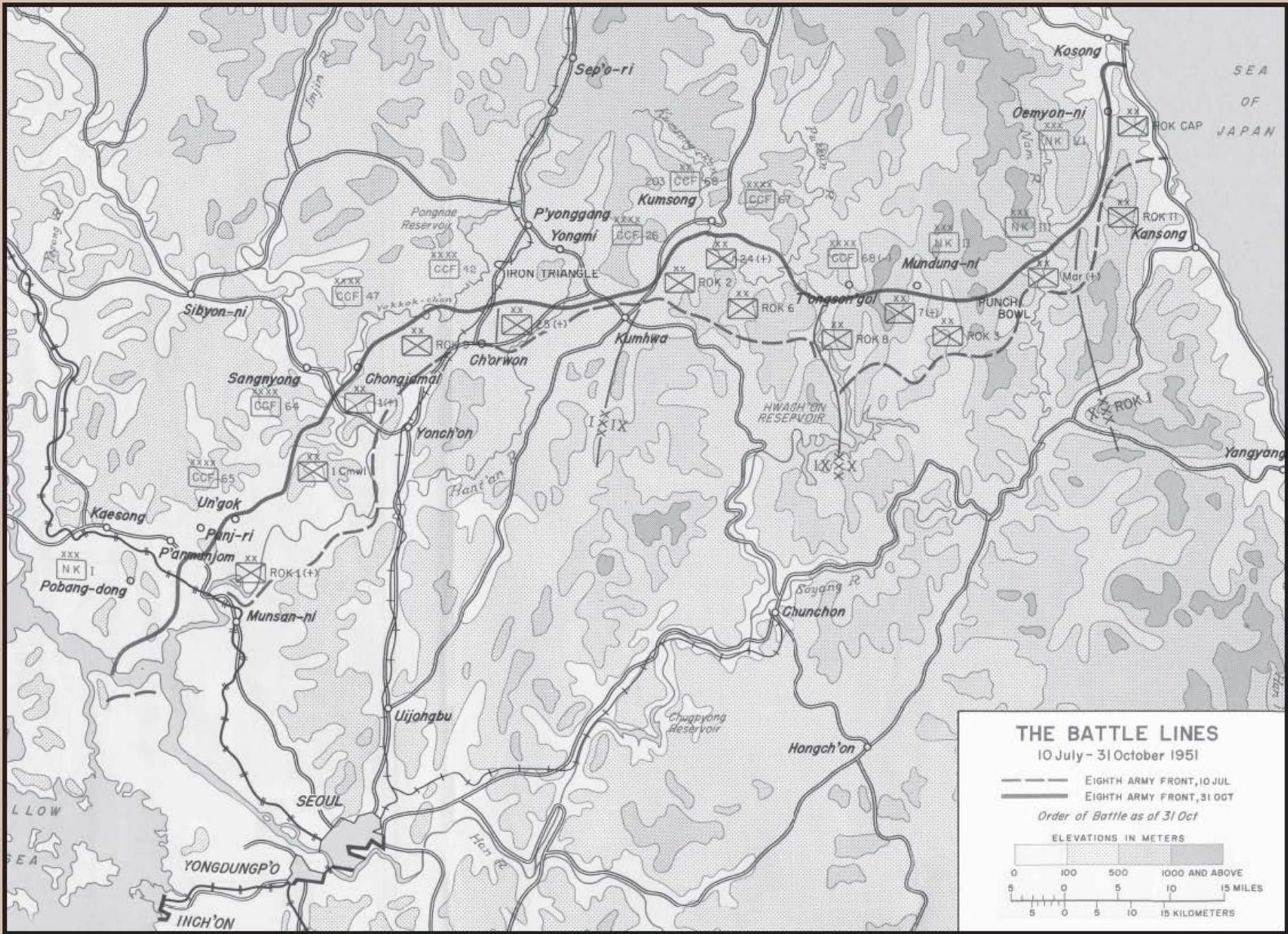
Pfc. Armando Lopez of the 8th engineers  
arms an anti-tank mine, September 1951  
RG 111, SC-379370

## Chapter 6



Active Defense

July 1951–July 1953



# Introduction

On 23 June 1951 the Soviet delegate to the UN, Yakov Malik, proposed cease-fire discussions between the two sides in the Korean conflict. Shortly thereafter a Chinese communist broadcast on Peking radio indicated support for a truce. The ebb and flow of the fighting had convinced all parties to the conflict that stalemate was the likely outcome. Only Syngman Rhee, his goal of a unified Korea under his control unfulfilled, objected to an armistice.

President Harry Truman authorized General Matthew B. Ridgway to negotiate with the enemy generals. On 10 July, talks began at Kaesong, about three miles south of the 38th Parallel, between the opposing front lines. Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy was the chief delegate for the UN. Both sides agreed to continue hostilities until they achieved a truce, but neither started any large-scale offensives while the peace talks progressed. Artillery fire and air strikes characterized the action. Eighth Army regularly sent out combat patrols with offensive action consisting chiefly of limited regimental or battalion-sized attacks designed to seize more favorable terrain, capture prisoners, and keep the enemy from getting too close to UN lines. With the exception of the flare-up in the fall of 1951 following the August

break-off of negotiations, this general pattern prevailed until just before the signing of the truce in 1953.

Throughout the summer of 1951, continuous local fighting occurred. These actions were designed to capture limited objectives. In general, the front lines remained stable. Two notable exceptions were the UN actions to disrupt communist communications and supply lines in the Iron Triangle, and to reduce another fortified enemy position in the Punchbowl. Late in August 1951, when the truce talks broke down, Gen. Van Fleet resumed the offensive, driving the enemy back and straightening and shortening the UN front. The successful advances of August-October gave the UN forces the high ground along the entire front, and possibly influenced the enemy to resume talks on 4 October.

As 1951 drew to a close, fighting tapered off into a monotonous routine of patrol clashes, raids, and bitter fighting for key outpost positions. By the end of the year, a lull settled over the battlefield with both sides deployed along defensive lines. Ground action was limited throughout the winter but, in May 1952, the enemy became bolder and activity increased in the Ch'orwan area. In June the 45th Division's *Operation*

*Counter*, seeking to establish 11 patrol bases across the division front, prompted the Chinese to counterattack. The Chinese lost some 5,000 men before breaking off the attack.

The deadlock continued into late June 1952 as the conflict went into its third year. July began with a series of small-scale attacks by both sides that continued into the fall. In October, Chinese and North Korean units, sometimes employing their notorious human-wave tactics, began a series of assaults against the Eighth Army's main line of resistance. More than 93,000 rounds of artillery fell on UN positions on 7 October as the enemy tried to crack the line. After one 10-day battle, UN forces counted more than 2,000 dead Chinese in front of one position. In November, with the coming of winter, enemy aggressiveness began to decline. Most of the front remained relatively quiet, although some enemy attacks took place throughout the rest of the year.

As 1953 began, activity along the entire front subsided. In February, Gen. Van Fleet retired and Lt. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor took over his command. In the spring, the enemy renewed its assaults upon the Eighth Army. Capt. Delbert M. Fowler describes his duties in the Operations Office, IX Corps Engineer, managing the floating bridges, roads, and aerial tramways. He also expresses his feelings about the American and Korean military personnel.

In the 1st Cavalry Division area, flooding destroyed bridges and roads, and Lt. Col. Harold R. Parfitt's 8th Engineer Combat Battalion was busy restoring crossings, fords, and bridging. Following the rains of summer, the battalion improved the road network by building pioneer roads during the fall of 1951.

First Lt. Kenneth E. McIntyre, 802d Aviation Engineer Battalion, arrived in Korea with the battalion in 1951 from Okinawa. The battalion's biggest problem was in a shortage of certain supplies and spare parts. Nails were in extremely short supply. He details how Korean nationals were used in the construction work of airfields.

Initially, 2d Lt. Richard M. Wells was with the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion, IX Corps, in 1952. A major project for his unit was putting the corps headquarters underground. The work consisted of drilling into several hills and developing big underground rooms in which the command post could move. Once the tunnel work was finished, Wells took over a company in the battalion and began work on a road project.

In August 1951, Lt. Col. Harry D. Hoskins, Jr., who in a few months was able to convert the battalion into an outstanding unit, relieved the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion commander. Hoskins then moved on to his original assignment with the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion.

In the next excerpt, Col. Hoskins describes his nine months in the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion, Febru-

ary-October 1952, working on the front lines putting in roads and bridges and supporting the division on line.

First Lt. Floyd D. Wright details some of the problems he faced with officer personnel when he first arrived at Company A, 62d Engineer Construction Battalion and also describes the work the company did as its mission in the 24th Engineer Construction Group. He further describes his assignment to the 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company, the last all-black Army unit in Korea, with orders to integrate the company as soon as possible. He notes some of the problems he encountered in the 573d, August 1952-March 1953, and tells how he addressed them.

Lt. Col. Harrington W. Cochran, Jr., was in the 808th and 809th Engineer Aviation Battalions, 1952-1953. He describes building and maintaining several types of airfields and discusses the problems involved with asphalt and pierced-steel plank runways. Later, when moved to another unit, he began work on a 10,000-foot concrete runway at K-8 (Kusan).

First Lt. George B. Gray, Jr., commanded the only engineer port construction company in Korea (50th Engineer Port Construction Company). Much of the work involved installing submarine pipelines. That entailed using cranes on barges, a very difficult procedure that could easily lead to capsizing the cranes and barges. If anything sunk in the area, the 50th was the only unit with divers to repair it. Few of the platoon leaders were

qualified divers, so Gray required all platoon leaders, as well as unqualified enlisted replacements, to be qualified by master divers.

First Lt. Richard M. Wells spent his last six months in Korea as company commander, 72d Engineer Combat Company, 5th RCT. The 72d supported the 5th in infantry operations. One of the unit's biggest problems was obtaining engineer replacements. The support it provided to the 5th RCT was in emplacing minefields, building fortifications, and putting in roads to the front line.

Brig. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson discusses the personalities of general officers with whom he had contact during the Korean War. He closes his comments on personalities by listing the three things he believes that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur did wrong in Korea.

First Lt. Joseph K. Bratton describes his tour with the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion as Division Engineer Supply Officer. During the end of the fighting in the spring and summer of 1953, and during the defensive period of 1953 to 1954, he notes some of the real supply problems that engineers had in Korea. He describes how the engineers became "combat multipliers" in Korea. 

Engineers worked their way up the gorge, but the road was the most heavily mined and cratered they had ever encountered. The battalion had mine detectors but they were inadequate. Many mines were deeply buried.

**C**olonel Love describes his tour as commanding officer, 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, September 1951-August 1952, with emphasis on the battalion's role in Operation Touchdown. He also discusses the crucial question of how engineers should be used in a division—scattered throughout the division's regiments or kept together as a distinct engineer battalion. The Korean War highlighted that particular issue but did not resolve it.



Lt. Col. Robert Love receives the Silver Star from Maj. Gen. Robert Young, commander of the 2d Infantry Division, 3 December 1951  
RG 111, SC-390200

I left the States by ship from Fort Mason, San Francisco, California. We went to Japan where I was assigned to Korea and then to the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion in September 1951.

When I arrived at the battalion they were not on line. They were rebuilding and training. The unit was not in bad shape. The old battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ed Leavey, was still there but would leave in a day or two. I stayed with the battalion and visited division headquarters every day.

Since I was the engineer of the 2d Infantry division commander, Maj. Gen. Robert N. Young, I convinced him that I commanded the battalion. He could look to me to get the most out of the troops and to use them where they were needed. I didn't want them spread out. Often, one company was attached to each of the regiments and you had a fourth one that you could move around, but I didn't like that kind of operation.

I wanted to use the engineers' efforts where I thought they should go, rather than where an infantry regimental commander might want to use them. The assistant division commander was used to doing it the old way, but I talked Gen. Young into letting me do it my way. Although I was senior to the infantry regimental commanders, it took some effort to make that shift. I'm sure that Gen. Young was pleased with the way we operated.

When I got to the unit we were in the planning stages of *Operation Touchdown*. This was the last real offensive of the Korean War. The idea was to break through the enemy lines and score a touchdown—break through to the enemy rear and destroy him from the rear forward.



With the smoke of exploding artillery visible in the distance, infantry advance over a road cut by the 2d Engineers Love Collection

The 23d Infantry had the hardest job because Heartbreak Ridge was the 23d sector. The 9th was on the left, which wasn't as hard, and the 38th was in the center. Each regiment had a different nationality attached. The French battalion was with the 23d. The 38th had the Dutch battalion, and the 9th had the Thai battalion. The French were far and away the best.

At the CP of the 38th Infantry, a forward CP was set up to operate Companies A, C, and D. Company A, reinforced with mine detector and demolition crews from Company C, was to carry the burden of opening the MSR as far as the point opposite the junction of

the Suip-ch'on and the So-ch'on Rivers. Company C was to put its primary effort into getting tanks in the valley running northwest from Saegonbae and, as Company A opened the MSR behind them, was to repair and improve the heavily-cratered section around Saegonbae and pioneer a road up the valley

toward the northwest. Company D was to maintain and improve the MSR behind Company A until Saegonbae was taken, and then sweep, clear, and repair the road north toward Mundung-ni, and when it was possible for tanks, mount a platoon to move forward with the 72d Tank Battalion. Company B, working alone in the Satae-ri valley, was to provide direct support to the 23d Infantry. Mine detector repair facilities and a forward supply dump were to be established at Company A. Extra engineer effort available in the early stages of the operation were to be put on expanding and improving the forward ammunition supply point in

*Operation Touchdown was by no means typical, even of the fighting in Korea. It does, however, offer a dramatic example of division teamwork and of the varied tasks engineers performed to overcome enemy obstacles....*

the western valley and to pushing through the road over Pass 558.

At 2100 on 5 October 1951, all regiments moved out on *Operation Touchdown*. Engineers worked day and night in the western valley. Engineers worked their way up the gorge, but the road was the most heavily mined and cratered they had ever encountered. The battalion had mine detectors but they were inadequate. Many mines were deeply buried. Most were wooden box mines with plastic detonators. Widely spread shell fragments gave innumerable false alarms. Engineers used a substantial pattern of explosives to clear out enemy mines by induced detonation. The enemy had not followed any set pattern in the placement of mines, scattering them indiscriminately along all roads.

At dawn on 10 October, a tank dozer rounded the last corner and completed filling the last crater. The tank spearhead burst into the valley, along with a platoon of Company D, to overcome whatever obstacles might be encoun-

tered in the open valley. With the breaking loose of the 72d Tank Battalion, the most spectacular part of the engineer task in *Operation Touchdown* was completed. The work of the next six days, however, was just as important.

By 15 October, when the line was quiet, Companies A, C, and D had moved up into the valley north of Kong-dong. Work in this period included 120 mines removed or blown in place; 35 culverts installed; areas of the 23d and 9th Infantry Regiments swept and cleared; one cableway installed for the 23d

and three laid out for the 38th position on Ridges 636, 905, and 974; the airstrip extended 450 feet; a water point established and operated; and wire and anti-personnel mines laid in the 2d Recon and 72d Tank Battalion areas.

Shortly after the objectives were taken, the 7th Infantry Division relieved the 2d. The operation was the last all-out offensive before the resumption of truce talks in 1951.

*Operation Touchdown* was by no means typical,



Pfc. Gene Davidson, a member of the water purification section, 453d Engineer Construction Battalion, tests the chlorine level in the water supply RG 111, SC-371535

even of the fighting in Korea. It does, however, offer a dramatic example of division teamwork and of the varied tasks the engineers performed to overcome enemy obstacles and to expedite the division's advance.

In this operation the engineers located and removed or destroyed enemy antitank and antipersonnel mines; reduced natural and

man-made obstacles; constructed, repaired, maintained, and worked roads and trails; constructed fords, fixed bridges and culverts; constructed and assisted in the improvement of command posts, artillery positions, and other installations; repaired and maintained landing strips; provided engineer supply service; procured and distributed maps; collected and disseminated engineer intelligence; and prepared and executed the engineer plan for the operation.

Prior planning is essential. Proper allocation and use of the engineer effort is needed for there is never an



With a demolished bridge in the back-ground, a tank fords a stream in the Piari Valley, October 1951 Love Collection

excess of engineer effort available. The leapfrogging of Companies A, C, and D as successive spearheads of the engineer effort boosted moral by providing fresh troops at the fore, and equalizing labor, sacrifice, and opportunity for achievement.

Liberal use of explosives in mine clearance was the only method that would permit so

rapid an advance, and the expense was fully justified by the elimination of personnel and equipment casualties.

The attack was over when we reached our objective. We were relieved by the 7th Division and were allowed to drop back and consolidate for the rest of the time that I was there. I left Korea in August 1952 and went to the Japan Construction Agency for two years. 🏰

**S***erving in the Operations Office, IX Corps engineer, Captain Fowler developed a varied perspective. He discovered that an equipment maintenance system just “did not exist.” He came to believe that individual reservists were treated unfairly by the call-up system used for the Korean War.*

### Rapidly Rising Rivers

I got the job of managing the floating bridges, and I learned some interesting things. The Koreans had stripped every mountain in Korea of vegetation and anything that would burn. Since there were no trees to speak of, except in rare locations, during a hard rain the delay between the rain on the top of a mountain and the river below would sometimes be 15 to 30 minutes. To most of us that was unbelievable since, in normal circumstances, when you have trees and vegetation, the delay can be hours. Therefore, we quickly learned that we had about 15 to 30 minutes to cut a floating bridge. It took us awhile to learn how to do that. We didn't know what to do about those high waters to begin with. I Corps lost a couple of bridges that floated out to the South China Sea. Although our bridges never got quite that far, they would go right on down the river and just break apart. We finally discovered that the solution had to be to designate one end of the bridge ahead of time to be cut loose, and we knew which one that was. We cut the

The main purpose of the aerial tramways was to get ammunition up to the top of some of these ridgelines and to bring back casualties and anything else that needed to come down.

anchor lines, coiled them, and actually floated that bridge to shore on the other side. The high water passed, and sometimes the water would pass in a couple of hours, and we would put that bridge back in place.

We had a regiment come in and bivouac in a dry riverbed one late afternoon. When they woke up the next morning, everything was floating downstream. So, IX Corps issued an order that no unit would bivouac in a riverbed without first getting clearance from IX Corps command headquarters. One of the people in the engineer section usually had the job of checking the site and saying, “No you can't bivouac there,” or “Yes, you can.” Most people just didn't understand how fast the water could get to where they had pitched their tents.

Besides floating bridges, the engineer units also were involved with Bailey bridges. There was a pretty sizable pier placed under the bridge across the Pukhan River, which led to the Hwach'on Reservoir. The Hwach'on Reservoir turned out to be an exercise for engineer units, too. It was a very high dam and it had movable gates. For a long period of time, intelligence reported that the water was building up behind that dam. We surmised by this time that the Chinese, not the North Koreans, were going to let that water accumulate behind that dam and open those gates and float all of our floating bridges down to the South China Sea.

We set about trying to figure out what to do about that. We had aircraft attack the gates and try to blow

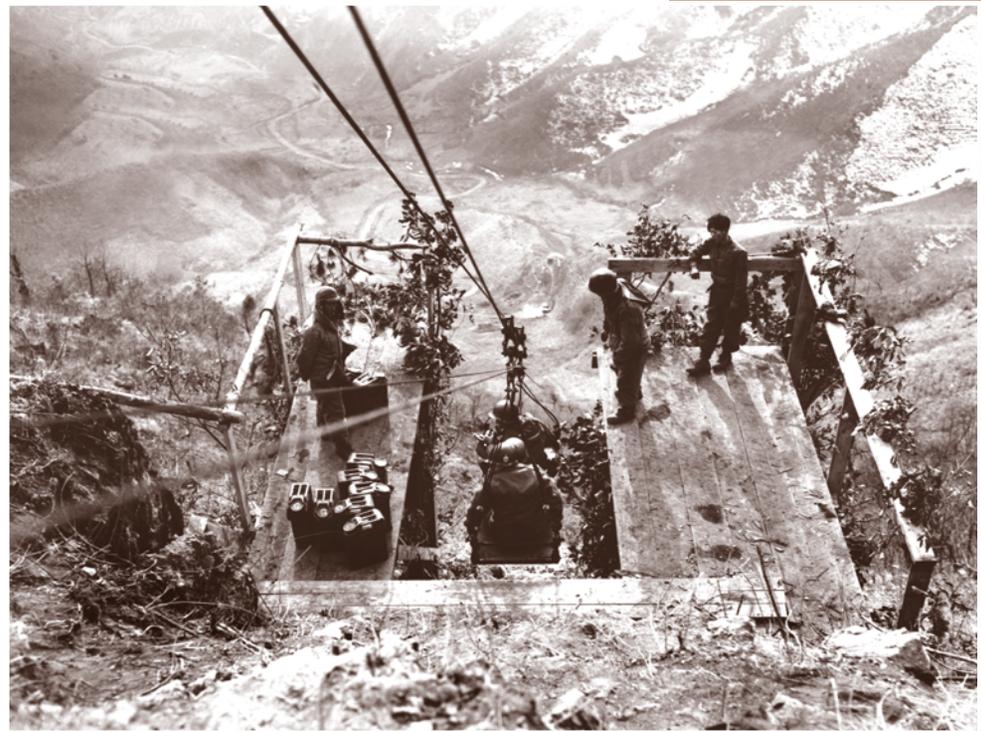
them out, but that didn't work very well. We didn't have laser-guided bombs in those days and the circular error probable of bombs and aircraft was pretty sizable. It was finally decided—while we possessed the area of the dam, we would either blow out the gates or remove them. That was done and then we could forget about that dam being the problem, as far as the water being released to destroy all of our downstream bridges [The dam gates were successfully attacked by air. See 1st Lt. James L. Trayers's account of this action].

### Roads and Aerial Tramways

The real problem, initially, with the roads in Korea was that very few were paved. Maybe the road from Seoul to Pusan was paved, but I don't think any side roads were paved. If they were, the pavement quickly disintegrated. The trucks we had were World War II two-and-a-half-ton trucks, not those 5-ton or 10-ton monsters we have now. They did not operate on those back roads for more than 24 hours before all four springs were broken. If you have ever ridden in a two and one-half-ton truck with no springs, you know it is awfully rough. It is essentially like riding in a wagon. There weren't any springs available. The U.S. Army gave the Japanese a contract to manufacture springs. When we first started getting these springs they were very bad; they would only last a short while. Then they got better and better, and finally the trucks had springs on them.

The main reason the springs broke was because there were not enough units to maintain the roads. The roads were literally all full of holes because of rain and mud, and the pounding from incessant truck travel. The engineer units had a tough job going from one crisis to another on the MSR to try to keep the roads in some form of repair. We had no asphalt plants. All we had were some rock crushers, but not nearly enough. We managed to put together some supply of crushed rock. In other instances, soil and rock were used to try

A cable car built by  
the 3d Engineers  
RG 111, SC-386824



Engineer units...had the unenviable task of trying to keep the MSR open, the roads and floating bridges installed, and the wooden bridges, which they had installed, serviceable; building and maintaining aerial tramways; and...maintaining the water supply.

to keep the roads in passable condition. We adopted a standard for the roads—to be built wide enough that you could slope the shoulder so that rain would actually move *off* the road and into a ditch. That helped.

The engineer units also began to build aerial tramways. The first one was built over in the X Corps sector, since they had the toughest terrain at the time. By that time a front of troops stretched all of the way across Korea, which had not been the case in North Korea. In North Korea you had I Corps on the left, IX Corps in the middle. You had some Korean units, and way over on the right flank you had X Corps, but the two flanks were not connected. When we faced the Chinese this time around there was a front all of the way across.

The main purpose of the aerial tramways was to get ammunition up to the top of some of these ridgelines and to bring back casualties and anything else that needed to come down. Someone improvised one, drafted a set of plans, and wrote down the instructions. When I got that in IX Corps, we put together engineer circulars, or engineer lessons learned. It showed what other units had done and described how to do it. [During the Korean War, three of Capt. Fowler's articles on bridging appeared in *The Military Engineer*: "Bridging the Han River," 43, No. 296, Part I (Nov-Dec 51): 414-16; "Bailey Bridge Across the Pukhan," 44, No. 298 (Mar-Apr 52): 86-87; and "Expedient Aerial Tramways," 44, No. 299 (May-Jun 52): 198-201].

We did that in IX Corps, and in the other corps as well, to tell engineer units how to build an aerial tramway and how to run it with a three-quarter-ton truck engine or some other engine. They proved to be very successful because for a number of months in 1952, and later in 1953, the fighting was essentially static warfare. Until a peace agreement was signed, the front didn't move very often. When it did, it was just a small advance and a small withdrawal.

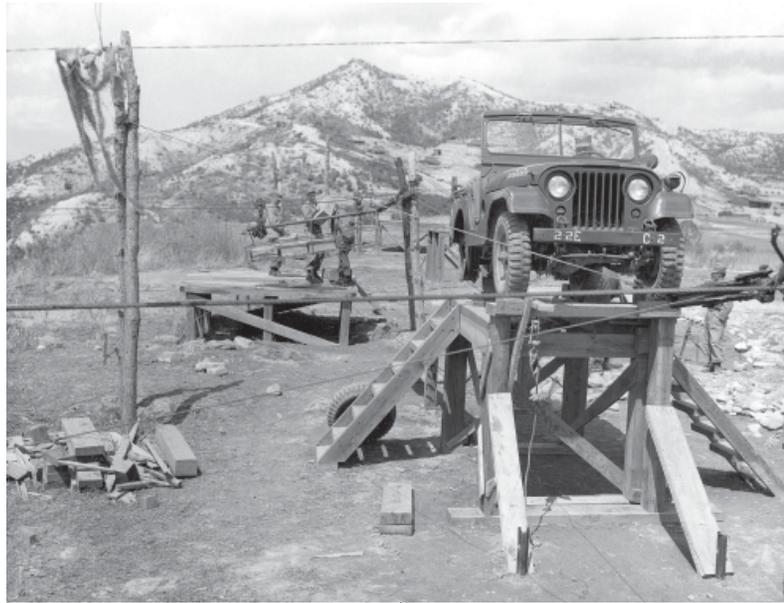
Engineer units did at least three things: (1) they had the unenviable task of trying to keep the MSR open, the roads and floating bridges installed, and the wooden bridges, which they had installed, serviceable; (2) building and maintaining aerial tramways; and, (3) the old standby, maintaining the water supply.

I got out to the battalions and groups every few days, mostly at the work site though, rather than at the unit. My main job in the engineer section at IX Corps was to maintain a status map of the MSR and bridges. If a G-2 or G-3 wanted to know the status of any of those at any given time, they would come over and check. At the same time we went to the G-3 operation's tent periodically and brought them up to date on what, if anything, had happened to the MSR or the bridges.

#### The Missing Maintenance System?

In the beginning, maintenance was simply not being performed systematically. Every two and one-half-

A jeep powers a tramway built by the 2d Engineers Engineer School, Korea 063



ton truck in the U.S. Army was running with broken springs. There just weren't any replacement springs. It was not just a question of having some parts in a warehouse someplace. You have got to have a system that gets the parts from the continental U.S. to Japan or Korea. Then, they have to be sent to a repair center somewhere in the rear, and from there to the unit.

That maintenance system in Korea just did not exist. Everybody had to do his own maintenance. Cannibalizing was normal. That was the only way you could get things running. Everybody knew the situation, so nobody complained about it much at the time.

### Reflections on the Personnel

The worst inequity during the whole Korean War was the manner in which we treated reservists. When the war started, the Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC) didn't exist. Nobody had facilities to train replacements. So, what did the Army do to provide replacements? They called up individual reservists, most of whom, I think, were really inactive, not active, reserv-

ists. They called them up and shipped them over as individual replacements in combat units. That was not what they had signed up to do as reservists. We should have found a different solution. It was very inequitable.

As far as the quality of officers or noncommissioned officers was concerned, neither group did anything to leave a lasting impression. They seemed to be well qualified. They were as good as you could have expected at the time. Many of them were not as professional as the ones in the service today because we have an all-volunteer service and have had for 20 years. We still had the draft in those days. We had to rely on reserves recalled until the replacement stream started flowing. It was several months after the Korean War started that that happened.

Everybody was always short of people in the units. That was resolved by extending the year of service to 18 months. That really had an effect on morale. A year goes by pretty fast for most people, but somehow, anything more than a year seems like too long. I spent 19 months in Korea. I left in May 1952. I did not ask to be sent back. 🏰

That maintenance system in Korea just did not exist. Everybody had to do his own maintenance. Cannibalizing was normal. That was the only way you could get things running.

**C**olonel Parfitt describes his experiences as commander, 8th ECB, 1st Cavalry Division, as a hectic time. The battalion built and maintained roads, reinforced defensive positions, and in doing so made widespread use of Korean laborers and local materials.

When I joined the 8th Engineers on 2 April 1951 they were on the Hongchon River just southwest of Hongchon. The 1st Cavalry Division, together with



Soldiers from the 13th Engineers repair a road damaged by a landslide  
RG 111, SC-362324

the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade attached, was moving aggressively, attacking north along the Hongchon-Chunchon axis. Two bridges had just been completed and our troops poured across the Soyang River.

Shortly thereafter, despite considerable mortar and artillery fire, allied forces reached *Line Kansas*. At this point [10 April] the division was scheduled to go into EUSAK Reserve (Eighth United States Army in Korea) and, less one regiment, moved 60 miles to establish new bivouac areas near Ilbi-ri, seven miles northeast of Seoul. The 7th Cavalry remained behind in an attempt to capture the Hwachon Dam but was unsuccessful and two days later joined the division.

During this short period the engineers were fully engaged and performing the usual tasks: mine detecting and clearing teams accompanied the advancing soldiers, the MSR (Hongchon-Chunchon) was widened for two-way traffic, road surfaces were improved, and drainage ditches were cleared or constructed. Special attention was given to repair and maintenance of the Soyang River Bridge and approaches. Also, 100 Koreans were employed to fill and place nearly 5,000 sandbags at weak spots on highways.

The 1st Cavalry Division was moved back on line 23 April. The respite was all too short because the Chinese launched their spring offensive with great success. By the end of the month the 5th and 8th Regiments had taken up blocking positions on the outskirts of

Seoul on *Line Golden* and 7th Cavalry withdrew into Seoul.

At this point the engineers worked diligently to augment defenses on *Line Golden*. There was a race to clear fields of fire, erect barbed wire entanglements, and lay AP mines. Fortunately, the Chinese assault ground to a halt five miles north of Seoul. They seemed to be moving forces to the east.

Once again quiet reigned along the front as tank patrols of the 1st Cavalry pushed about two miles north of Uijongbu before being forced to halt by enemy fire. Also, the 7th Cavalry, with Co. B of the engineers, set up a patrol base two miles south of Uijongbu. Road nets to these positions were improved by ditching, grading, and spreading gravel.

On 17 May the Chinese opened a new offensive attack and 1st Cavalry withdrew to *Line Golden*. However, within several days the enemy reverted to the defensive and U.S. forces counterattacked all along the front. By 27 May 1st Cavalry troopers reached *Line Kansas*, just short of the 38th parallel.

During June, efforts were directed to improving an existing road net to all-weather, two-way standards. Ditches were widened, deepened, and shaped; culverts were emplaced to improve drainage; and rock was stockpiled on the soft shoulders to be readily available for emergency repair in the event of heavy rains. Once this was accomplished, attention was turned to

establishing a network of lateral communication and supply routes. Much blasting and cutting with dozers, as well as ditching by a large force of Korean laborers, was necessary.

Though road construction dominated, many other projects were accomplished, such as mine detecting, clearing and mine laying, airstrip construction, and destruction of enemy positions within the 1st Cavalry sector. While the combat units were throwing up hasty fortifications on *Line Wyoming*, plans were made and initiated on a permanent defensive line south of the Hanton River following the trace of *Line Kansas*.

About this time, training of replacements became more and more important. Each incoming group was held for two days at H&S Company for a thorough indoctrination. Though short, this program proved to be invaluable.

One other item of interest was the fact that during this period the 28th British Brigade and the 25th Canadian Brigade were under the operations control of the 1st Cavalry Division. The 8th Engineers were responsible for the operations of the engineer units working with these brigades. Constant liaison was maintained and heavy equipment and other support were provided when necessary.

At the beginning of July, three patrol bases were established in front of *Line Wyoming*. Engineer work at the time mainly consisted of improving an already

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good road net. In addition, normal mine clearing missions were conducted. There was some indecision as to whether mines should be laid. Finally, G-3 authorized a limited number of anti-tank mines for the 16th Recon sector on *Line Wyoming*. During a three-day period the engineers emplaced these mines; however, they were removed a week later when the division moved back to *Line Kansas*.

As previously noted, early on a decision had been made to divert considerable effort to *Line Kansas*. A road net was constructed behind the line in the division sector and minefield sites were prepared. The roadwork was particularly challenging and involved blazing roads through virgin territory, scaling peaks up to 300 meters high, while never exceeding a 20 percent grade.

At this time other personnel were engaged in preparing minefield sites, to include everything but actual emplacement of mines. The “go ahead” was immediately given when the division returned to *Line Kansas* on 16 July.

Later in the month a second order was received requiring removal of all mines and concertina wire from *Line Golden*. Little trouble was experienced with AT (anti-tank) fields but anti-personnel mine removal was a nerve-racking job.

During a seven-day period much work was accomplished although three men were wounded. The operation was called to a close on 31 July as the 1st Cavalry

moved forward. Considerable effort was made to posting warning signs in Korean, Chinese, and English.

While the mine laying was in progress, work proceeded on the roads. A heavy rain midway through these operations caused a juggling of assignments. Numerous fords on the MSR became impassable—ditches and culverts were clogged. It took two days of concentrated effort to repair the damage. At the same time we were given the job of constructing a bridge across the Sinchon River. In view of heavy rains, a minimum span of 117 feet was required. We had on hand 72 feet of dry span M-2 bridge, and the remainder of the bridge was constructed with two pile bents, a rock, and native timber crib.

The division headquarters were isolated at one point because they were on the other side of a stream from their MSR. The division commander reacted by placing urgent demands on the engineers. He was cut off by a raging stream, but only for a short time because we used a small Bailey bridge to span the gap. Fortunately our mission was accomplished fast enough to satisfy him that we had done a good job. Since I had just been assigned as battalion commander this was good news to hear. Nevertheless, it had become obvious to me that our soldiers, particularly new fillers, had little or no experience with the Bailey bridge. In fact, we found that besides myself, the one officer who knew anything about Bailey bridges was my exec, who had been an instructor in Bailey bridging at the Engineer School

during World War II. Thus, as soon as possible, some special training was given.

Although the 1st Cavalry Division had been in reserve for 10 days, the engineers had worked extremely hard during this time. Plans to rest a little were aborted as the Chinese had moved uncomfortably close to *Line Wyoming* and the division was called upon to return to the front on the last day of July.

The move to *Line Wyoming* was completed in the first days of August with the 1st Cavalry Division relieving the 25th Infantry Division. At this time, mine removal had ended on *Line Golden*. The mines and tactical wire removed were then used to improve *Line Wyoming*. After some delay the order was given to fortify *Line Wyoming* with anti-tank and anti-personnel minefields.

Early in August, a limited attack was launched but the ground was too soft to support the armored vehicles. They were abandoned and later in the month a tank

patrol, accompanied by a D-8 angle dozer, moved out, reached the bogged tanks, and succeeded in digging out the vehicles, enabling their recovery while covered by small arms fire and mortars.

In the meantime, engineer operations had started with a large backlog of work to be done due to the heavy rains in the latter part of July that washed out roads, bridges, rafts, and minefields. The Imjin River and its tributaries, the Hanton and Amichon rivers, had overflowed their banks.

A second downpour of rain on 4 August caused even more damage. Work that had been accomplished now had to be redone. Much of the bridging as well as rafts used in the major crossings were damaged

or beyond repair and had to be replaced. Also, small bridges on the MSR were washed out and needed prompt replacement. Throughout the month bridging of many types was under urgent construction. Assault boats and rafts were heavily used as other work was in progress.

Native timber was used as much as possible for the construction of large timber culverts and for revetments. In reconstructing fords, hand-placed rocks were the best solution.



Korean laborers use A-frame packs to carry stone for the construction of a revetment near Yonchon, July 1951 Engineer School, 93-66-6

During this period, maintenance of roads required almost 24-hour daily effort. In many cases the record rains of the month succeeded in piercing the hard road surface—this plus heavy traffic resulted in sub-grade collapse. Runoff from the hills soon resulted in loss of culverts and some bridges previously mentioned. Fords were rendered inoperative.

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Fortunately, there wasn't heavy pressure along the line at the time. The Chinese probably were having the same kind of problems we were having, although they were not as road bound as we were. At that time, negotiations were in progress and there was a feeling that things were going to be settled at the negotiating table. While this was going on we had our own hands full just keeping the roads and crossings open in order to get the essentials up to the troops.

Our efforts were fruitful as we followed the engineer adage "Get the rock on and the water off." The Koreans who were attached did all kinds of hard work. They were digging out the ditches, trying to drain the water, and hauling as much rock as they could get from streambeds. During what I call the survival period of August, we called upon more and more laborers from

the Korean population because equipment wasn't all that much help.

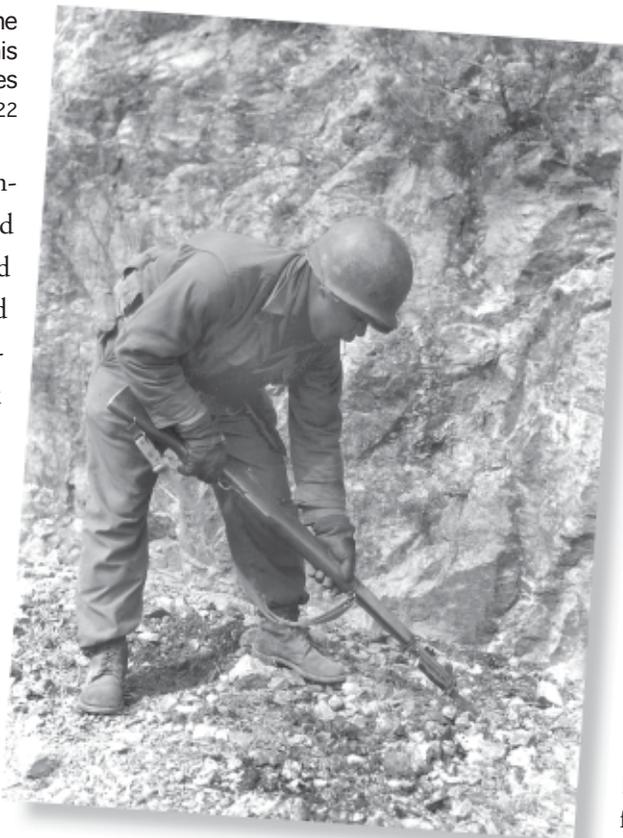
In September we had a continuation of operations to restabilize and improve the road network, which, due to the rains of August, still required major repair. New roads connecting regimental MSRs to the division MSR were a challenge since they involved establishing roads above an elevation of 1,080 feet. The terrain was very rocky and there was extensive use of graders and scrapers as well as explosives.

Extension of operations to the west bank of the Imjin River also necessitated construction of a resupply road over high terrain. This was briefly held up until the infantry secured the predominant terrain feature. At that time 516 feet of footbridge was installed. This enabled the 5th Cavalry to put a screen in front of the proposed M-2 treadway bridge, which was to be constructed by Corps engineers. Upon completion, our engineers moved forward with dozers and other equipment and built a road to connect the bridge site and the North Ferry.

As the Infantry advanced, work proceeded on primary and secondary roads leading to various division positions. This involved the construction of three bridges on the southern portion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment MSR. An MSR from *Line Wyoming* to *Line Kansas* also was developed. By the end of the month, roads had been completed to the limit of the infantry advanced positions.

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Pvt. Alfred Vaughan of the  
13th Engineers uses his  
bayonet to probe for mines  
RG 111, SC-363822



That month we also completed field fortifications started on *Line Wyoming*. This included not only minefield and barbed wire obstacles, but also such obstacles as an artificial lake, tank obstacles, and various booby traps. All minefields were enclosed with a barbed wire fence and large white rectangular signs with lettering, “DANGER, MINES,” as well as “MINES,” written in Korean and Chinese. Noteworthy, also, was that during this period an airstrip had been built for the division artillery in the vicinity of Yonchon. Furthermore, nearby work had commenced on building a 40-ton ordnance loading ramp and a ramp for ambulances to use at a medical clearing station.

Engineer operations for the month of October consisted primarily of supporting the 1st Cavalry Division in *Operation Commando* during the seizure of *Line Jamestown*. Prior to 3 October (D-day), I laid out a proposed road network based on information compiled from ground reconnaissance in this sector during previous operations, detailed map study, and personal

air reconnaissance. Then, throughout the month the battalion built, maintained, and improved a large network of roads. Initially they pushed forward directly behind the attacking elements, and periodically, lateral connecting roads were installed between them. About this time I received the great news that I had been promoted to lieutenant colonel.

For one short period Company D was committed as infantry. They occupied a blocking position but did not become

engaged and soon returned to battalion control.

Our road construction was mostly accomplished in very high terrain. Criteria concerning width of road and grade limitations were very demanding. The demands on heavy equipment were enormous since they were used day and night. Fortunately, we had an outstanding warrant officer who, together with a team of technicians, did an outstanding job on maintenance. Much of the work was accomplished in the field by maintenance teams and, in other worst cases, equipment was taken to base camp.

As *Operation Commando* progressed, we encountered many minefields laid by the enemy in front of their MLR. We had difficulty locating all the mines because the wooden box-type mines had been buried six or more inches below ground surface. Sweeping the roads with mine detectors did not locate them. Thus, on many occasions, the troops resorted to hand probing. Since the enemy also tended to camouflage their mines in rocky areas by laying large slabs of rocks over the mines, we decided to use pressure charges on all critical points [curves, defiles, dips, and cuts].

In addition to all the mines, stockpiles of explosives also were found and destroyed. They included TNT, composition C-3, anti-tank grenades, and bangalore torpedoes.

Defensive minefields for *Line Jamestown* were started on 13 October. Many anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were laid up until our troops were relieved on 20 November. This work was very dangerous and many times conducted under harassing enemy mortar and artillery fire.

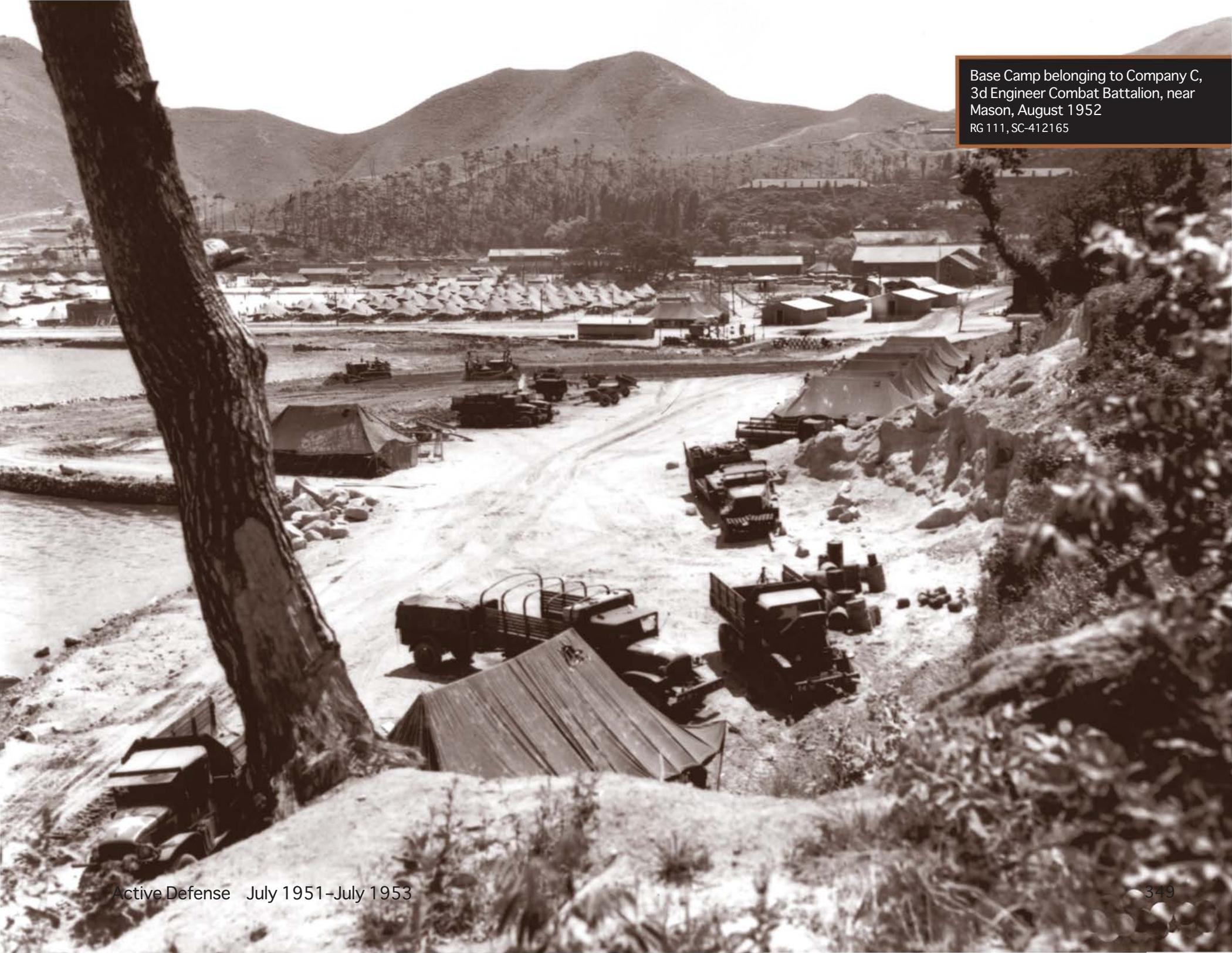
Warning orders were issued to the 1st Cavalry Division on 5 November to anticipate a reserve status on or about 20 November. This required the establishment of close liaison with the relieving division to ensure all projects would be turned over to them. Our battalion mission continued until the 10th ECB relieved

us on 10 November 1951. At that time complete records of all of our activities [minefields, roads, airfields, etc.,] were given to them.

Each unit commander made prior reconnaissance of the reserve area. The general area was located north and east of Uijongbu. The next several days were spent in its establishment. Furthermore, an intensive training program was ordered into effect on 26 November and continued until 16 December.

Within a day after being back in reserve I went to division headquarters and was informed that the 1st Cavalry was being withdrawn to Japan. We were going to be replaced by the 45th Division and the transfer was to be effected with a change of equipment. The 45th was going to leave its equipment in Camp Chitose, Japan, and we were to leave our equipment in Korea, except for personal items and, for some strange reason, the kitchen gear. Our dozers and heavy equipment had been worked pretty heavily so we made every effort to put them in first class condition for the 45th Division.

Transfer of personnel of the 8th Engineers to Camp Chitose, Hokkaido, began 5 December and was completed on 23 December. I flew back to Japan in the latter part of December and remained with the 1st Cavalry until returning to the U.S. in April 1952. 🏰



Base Camp belonging to Company C,  
3d Engineer Combat Battalion, near  
Mason, August 1952  
RG 111, SC-412165

**L**ieutenant McIntyre describes supply and support conditions during airfield construction in Korea, April 1951-January 1952. At times, his unit had to barter with other units for basic materials, especially nails.

I joined the 802d in the summer of 1950 on Okinawa. The whole battalion moved to Korea in April 1951. I had never been with a unit that had moved before, and I didn't get involved with moving the equipment. The personnel went from Okinawa to Korea on a Japanese hospital ship. The sleeping quarters were terrible. We were only on it for a couple of days. I remember going to the wardroom, which was gorgeous, sitting around very elegant tables with nice lights and nice furniture and being served warmed cans of C-rations.

We had shortages of supplies and spare parts, but I wasn't as aware of them in Korea. I knew whether or not we had a grader available, but I didn't particularly focus on the supply problems. We were definitely short of some basic construction materials, such as

nails. We just could not get enough nails or some kinds of lumber. We resorted to a barter system. I can remember loading up the goodies of one kind or another, including booze, going off to the other engineer units within 15/20 miles, and swapping what we had. A good item we often had was air mattresses. We were trading those for nails.

Later on, we really had the best of all trading material. The battalion was located in an old mill area. An ice cream plant was there. About this time the Army was making forced issues of the ingredients for ice cream. We found somebody in one of the units who knew something about this so we started producing ice cream. We had a certain amount of ingredients. Everybody else was getting ingredients too, but they had no way to use them. So we would trade, say, a gallon of ice cream for three gallons worth of ingredients. When we started building up a surplus, we started trading the ice cream for whatever else we couldn't get, like nails, and so on. It was really ironic, using ice cream as a means of buying supplies. I'm sure things got better, but I distinctly remember swapping ice cream for nails.

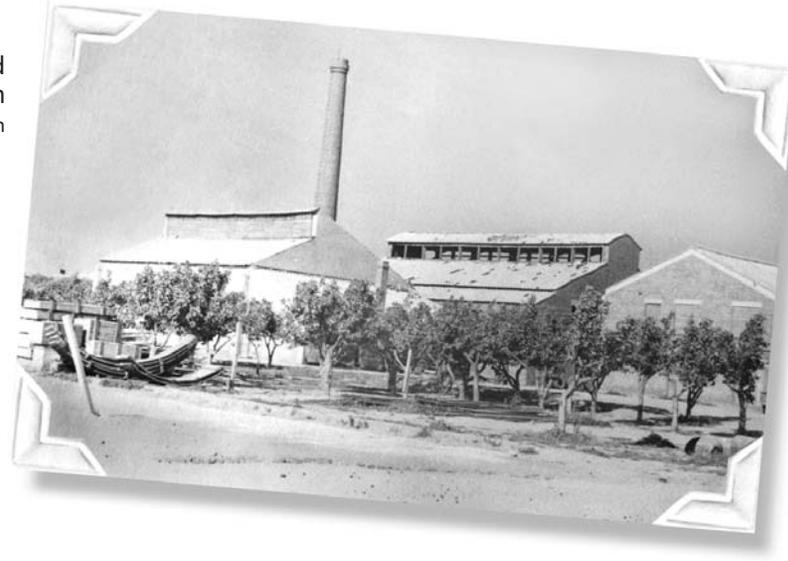
We were also short of plumbing supplies. We went up to Seoul and stripped an old locomotive factory of pipe to get that.

I suspect that some of the supply problems were the result of, as an Army unit with the Air Force, the Air Force had no high-level office looking out for these sorts

First Lt. Kenneth McIntyre  
McIntyre Collection



The mill where the 802d  
made ice cream  
McIntyre Collection



of things. There was an engineer officer on the 5th Air Force staff, but he was more interested in how construction was going. I don't know whether the supplies were coming from Army depots or from Air Force facilities. The equipment was certainly Army equipment, and it came in Army-type colors.

We had a problem with the asphalt. We certainly did a lot of paving. All the asphalt came in 55-gallon drums, and we had no easy way of getting it out of there into the production machinery. It took forever to do that and it caused a bottleneck.

It was autumn and it was getting cold. They wanted to get this airfield finished for a number of reasons. They were thinking about a cease-fire in late 1951 and they were afraid that they wouldn't have as much construction completed as they'd wanted. Apparently, there was going to be some freeze on what you could do, so we were under great pressure to get the runways extended.

It was so cold there—we could cut these drums open with axes and the stuff would handle just in chunks. We'd throw them into the mixing machine, which had plenty of heat, so they would melt quickly. We paved on frozen ground, which is something you just don't do. We thought we could always go back and replace it. We had to have it on the ground in case of a cease-fire. I don't remember if the paving lasted. It should not have, in theory.

We were attacked. Light planes—*Bedcheck-Charlie* type of aircraft flew over and threw out mortar shells or

small bombs. They could see us because we were working at night and we had lights. The platoon had two minor casualties. For the most part, however, it was more a nuisance than anything else.

We used a lot of Korean nationals. When we first arrived, we needed to get the rice paddies drained. We needed a very substantial ditch, maybe 12 feet deep and 50 feet wide—a big, big ditch, so somebody contracted with the foreman for this Korean group. We performed the construction inspection on it. In a month's time they dug this ditch about a mile long. I don't think we could have dug it that quickly with heavy machinery. This was in the middle of the war, and the Koreans were hungry for food and hadn't earned any money for weeks, so they worked hard. Men pulled scrapers. A couple of people would be pushing the scraper and some other guys on top would be pulling it up. They ran it with an iron fist, too. They were just as tough on control. I was impressed then, and I still am. 🏰

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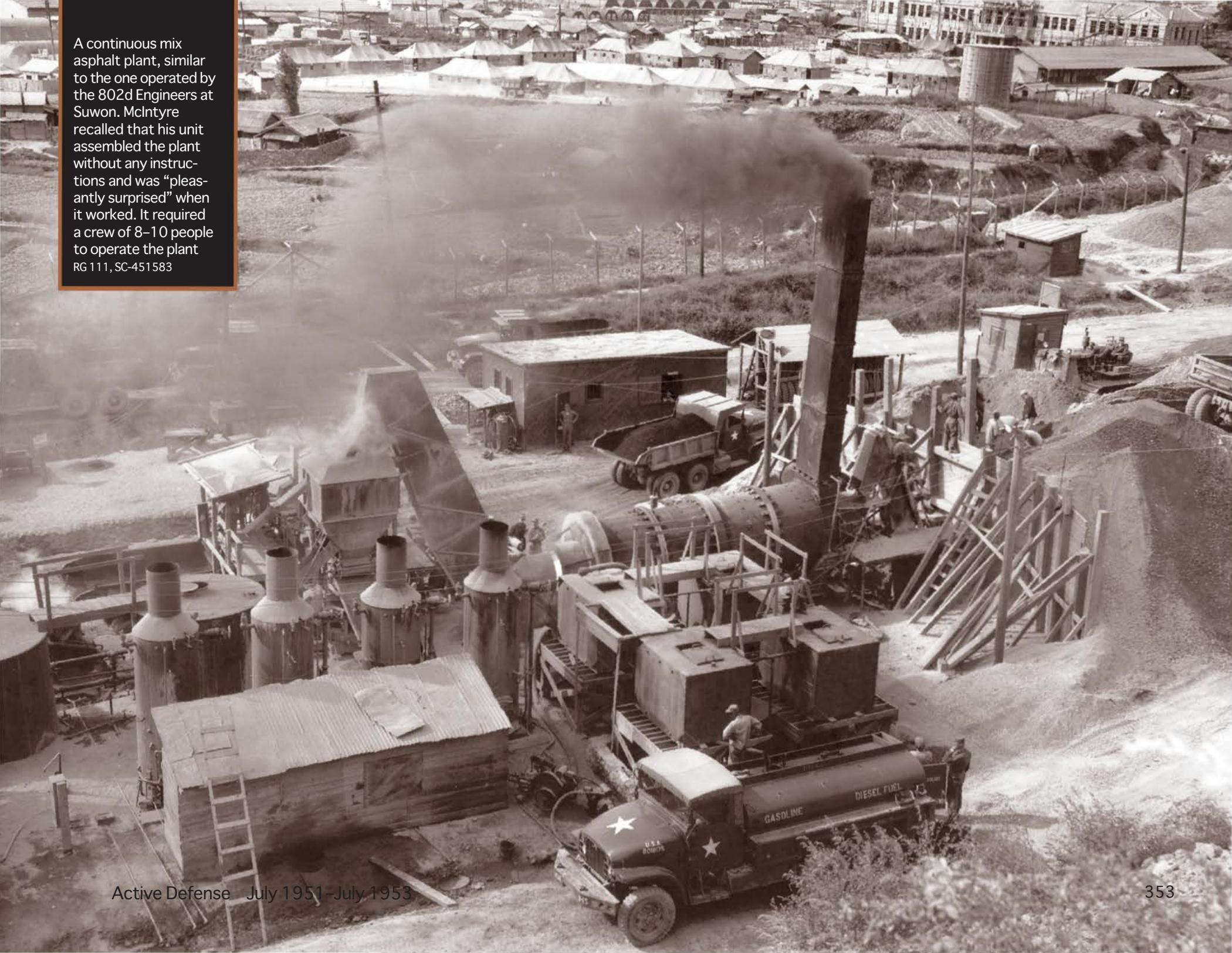
# First Lieutenant Kenneth E. McIntyre

# 802d Aviation Engineer Battalion

(Clockwise from upper left) Lunch at the officers mess, Suwan; McIntyre in a foxhole outside his quarters; posing for pictures, from left to right: Harry Griffith, Kenneth McIntyre, Ward Wheaton, and George Price; and McIntyre sits with the Korean boy who cleaned his quarters  
McIntyre Collection



A continuous mix asphalt plant, similar to the one operated by the 802d Engineers at Suwon. McIntyre recalled that his unit assembled the plant without any instructions and was “pleasantly surprised” when it worked. It required a crew of 8–10 people to operate the plant  
RG 111, SC-451583



**L**ieutenant Wells arrived in Korea eight months after graduating from the Military Academy. He describes the personalities of the officers in his battalion, the various failures in leadership, and the absolute necessity of maintaining a sense of humor.

I received my assignment in the spring of 1951. We first selected our branches, and then, within a day or two, we selected our assignments. Anyone who asked



First Lt. Richard Wells  
Wells Collection

for Korea got it. Of course, a lot of people didn't ask for Korea, and they went elsewhere if they were high enough in the class to rate going somewhere else.

Those going to Korea were assigned to the Basic Course, followed by an assignment where we were supposed to improve in leadership and other skills. For me, that was Fort Leonard Wood. I was there for about three months in a basic infantry training unit.

I headed over to Korea in February of 1952, without any knowledge of where I was going to be assigned. My good friend Anthony J. "Tony" Delano [USMA 1951] and I went to Seattle together. We had orders to catch a flight on a military plane. We flew as far as Shemya, Alaska. Because we were hitting headwinds, they unloaded the four junior officers—two MP captains, Tony, and me. Then the plane took off and left us. One large building contained everything on Shemya.

About once a year, it got clear enough to see Attu, and that was the big event on Shemya. We went out to look a couple of times, but it wasn't clear enough during our time there. The Aleutians in February are not a resort area. At the end of the four days, Tony and I were able to hitch a ride on a Canadian mail plane, which was barely heated. It was so bad on Shemya that it was better to be leaving.

We arrived in Tokyo and took a train across Japan to Sasebo. We were loaded on an old Japanese ship that apparently had been used to transport livestock. You

could sit on the straw-covered deck, and there was quite a bit of manure mixed in with the straw. That us from Sasebo over to Pusan.

In Pusan we were given our orders. I was ordered to the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion, which was a corps combat battalion. My friend, Tony, was ordered to the 2d Infantry Division. We got on a train heading up to Seoul. This train had rigid platforms that you slept on. It was well ventilated because the train had been machine gunned extensively and you could look right out through all the machine gun holes as you traveled north.

We got up to Seoul and split up. I went to my unit, which was over in IX Corps, pretty far up to the east. They had just had a final push against the Chinese and North Koreans and we were backing up that particular push. I joined the 378th Engineer Battalion, which was a National Guard unit from North Carolina. All of the officers in the battalion had a minimum rank of captain in World War II. They'd all joined the National Guard out of patriotism and were really a very sharp group. They were just as good an engineer unit as I'm sure you'd ever find. They were in the process of phasing out. The battalion commander, however, was weak, but he was surrounded by very talented people who ran a good battalion.

I was given a platoon that had been allowed to run down—they hadn't had a platoon leader for some time.

It was a platoon with no one in it. I was given a buck sergeant, and, as the new trainees came in, we built our platoon. Finally, I got a sergeant who had a little bit more rank. When you talk about going to your first unit and leaning on the experienced NCOs, there wasn't anyone for me to lean on. My buck sergeant had been in just a few months and had been given the rank because they needed to have some sergeants.

We were sitting in a very muddy area right on the backside of the front lines. About the time that I got to the unit the Marines bombed us. They came over in a Corsair [F4U]. They machine gunned our company area and dropped a bomb, which knocked out a three-quarter-ton truck. We had one casualty in the company—a man standing in the urinal at the time dove into a foxhole without zipping up and scraped himself a bit.

I learned that while close-air support can be very devastating, it can also look worse than it is. I'm sure that Marine pilot thought he had really raised havoc, but he hadn't done anything but knock out one truck. Well, the other side of the hill was the front line and he just hadn't seen our panels. It was the kind of mistake that can happen. One should not hold it against the pilot.

Then, my battalion went back a ways in the corps' area. There was a need to develop protection for the IX Corps headquarters against an enemy air attack. I'm

We got on a train heading up to Seoul. This train had rigid platforms that you slept on. It was well ventilated because the train had been machine gunned extensively....

not sure where the enemy air was supposed to come from. They wanted to be sure that the protection was proof against atomic weapons. My platoon was given the job of getting the corps headquarters completely underground. The corps engineer was an outstanding officer, Gerald Galloway, who later became a major general.

His advice to me when I showed up, a 2d lieutenant with my inexperienced platoon, was, “The one thing you’ve got to remember to do is not lose your sense of humor.” This was very good advice, but then he had to give me some follow-on advice. Many officers around



Soldiers of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion use a wagon drill in preparation for blasting a hillside  
Engineer School, 71-11-23

that headquarters had a license plate on their jeep with an insignia—full colonel or a one or two star. When I got myself a license plate with a gold bar, Galloway said with amusement, “Well, that’s carrying humor a little too far.”

### Tunneling

Our job was to tunnel under some hills and to develop big underground rooms for the CP to go in. None of us had ever seen a tunnel. Fortunately, we had one enlisted man who had served as a worker in a little mine in West Virginia. He showed us how to go about shoring a tunnel and we got a manual that covered tunnel construction. So in we went. We excavated from two sides of the hill and the tunnels were supposed to link up in the middle. This made for a very exciting time until we lined up. It was a great job for building a platoon and an interesting experience to actually complete these tunnels.

One of the “workers” on one of my shifts was a Brig. Gen. Lawrence R. Dewey [USMA 1924]. He used to like to work a drill. He would come in at odd hours of the day and I’d find the general in there drilling. Dewey was the IX corps’ chief of staff. Once I got a request from the corps commander, whose name was Weyand, a three star. He requested that we blast more *quietly* at night. I didn’t really know how to blast more quietly! You just kind of ignore requests like those.

One experience tested my humor the most. When I came walking around the side of the hill, I found a big Swede in one of my squads strangling a captain. He had him by the throat and he was shaking him. I broke up this fight and I asked him, "What's going on here? Why are you doing this to the captain?"

The Swede said that this captain "called me some very bad names." Here I was as a 2d lieutenant trying to officiate this thing and to find out where the problem lay. I asked the captain, "Why did you call private so-and-so these bad names?" He said he was sitting in his tent in the Staff Judge Advocate section by his typewriter when a huge beam came in through the side of the tent. I think it was an eight-by-eight. This beam cleaned off his desk and then it went back out through the tent. As he was sitting there astounded, the eight-by-eight came in again from another angle and took down the whole tent; it fell on top of him, banging his head. He climbed out from under this destroyed tent and he found this private turning a truck around with these beams sticking out of the rear end. So, he called him a bad name and he got strangled in the process. I was able to break that up. Everyone apologized and we went back to work. That was the reason that you had to follow Col. Galloway's advice and keep your sense of humor.

It was a National Guard unit but it was mostly federalized. All the National Guard members left within the first two or three weeks after I arrived. The unit was

made up of replacements, and most of the replacements were reservists. There was one regular in the battalion, Larry Crocker, in another company, who was a West Point classmate. One other regular there was from Norwich University. Everyone else was ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Course); graduates who were just in for their two years, or OCS types.

### A Variety of Personalities

We got a battalion commander who was one of the worst officers I think I've ever seen. When he came out to a job site and stood there and glared you knew everything was perfect. If he found the slightest thing wrong he would explode. The battalion exec had personal problems, whom one of the enlisted men tried to kill later, unsuccessfully. The battalion staff essentially did nothing, as far as I could tell at that point. I never saw any of them. No one from the battalion ever tried to come and find out if my platoon knew anything about building tunnels, even though a three-star general was interested in the outcome of the whole thing. These were really rocky times, as you can imagine, but we completed the tunnels.

One close associate there was a friend of my family named Warren Webster, from the Class of '50. He was with the infantry company that was supposed to guard the corps headquarters. I saw quite a lot of him before he volunteered to go to the front. When he

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I could see I was really beginning to physically lose it. I'd heard from my father about general officers and others having nervous breakdowns in World War II and I decided, "Hey, you've got to pace yourself."

got to the front his unit was overrun. They found his body with his hands tied up behind his back with barbed wire, shot through the head. As I say, all in all, it was a learning experience.

There was so much work to do that I found myself working more than 20 hours a day. I could see I was really beginning to physically lose it. I'd heard from my father about general officers and others having nervous breakdowns in World War II and I decided, "Hey, you've got to pace yourself." So, I cut back to around 16 hours a day. I had absolutely no help. The NCOs were much less experienced. We were all learning on the job. However, we succeeded in building these great big rooms underneath the ground.

I was still learning tact, as I still am today. One day a major came around and went through the tunnels. He was a very officious sort. There was one little room off the commanding general's room and he asked me, "Who's that room for?" I said, "Oh, that's where they keep the house boys." He said, "What do you mean, the house boys?" and I said, "You know, the aides." Well, he turned out to be the senior aide! Every once in a while I think Col. Galloway probably heard about me.

I was in Company A. We started out with a captain with World War II experience, who was a very nice fellow, but who was just totally out of his depth. So, he just did nothing. I got together the platoon leaders, who were ROTC or OCS types, and we had a platoon



Staff and mess tents at the headquarters of the 2d Engineer Battalion, October 1951 Love Collection



leader meeting every night where we planned the next day's activities for the whole company. When the captain came in, we'd tell him what was going to happen and he'd say "Fine."

I was on my tunnel job and the other platoons were maintaining roads or doing things like that. I ran the company, directing these lieutenants based on a 15- or 20-minute-a-day meeting. They relieved that captain and they brought in an infantry captain who had become an engineer because he had joined an engineer unit someplace. He had been in the infantry in World War II as a rifle company commander in Europe and he had done very well.

The battalion commander was so bad that at the end of about a month's time, this former infantry commander developed the shakes because he was constantly being harassed. He was trying hard but there was absolutely no battalion leadership.

About the time I finished my tunnel job they had another company, Company B, which had had several company commanders in a short length of time, all relieved by the battalion commander. So, I was called in by Colonel Jenkins. He said, "I'm going to make you Company B commander. I know you're going to fail. Everyone else has, and I'm sure you will, but I want you to go and do what you can with that company."

I went to Company B and I found a relatively good group of people who had just been abused. I got

the company together and told them exactly how things were going to run in the future and how I wanted the chain of command to work. People who did well were going to be rewarded and people who did poorly were going to get the stick.

We quickly shaped up Company B. We had some good platoon leaders in the company. We got in a first sergeant who was actually a tech sergeant, but he had had some NCO experience. Shortly after I arrived there, I was awarded a Bronze Star for my work on the tunnel. It didn't hurt any to see the new man had been recognized. Warren Webster, the fellow who later was killed, was there when I was awarded the medal.

We were on a road project for about a month when my classmate, Larry Crocker, took over Company C, shortly after I took over Company B. Larry's experience in the 378th was different from mine, but again, illustrative of the times. He had a separate platoon. He was off doing a job, and doing it well, I'm sure. Then, he was ordered to go to battalion headquarters to do a job. He found that all of the officers on the staff in battalion headquarters had prostitutes they kept in their tents with them. So, Larry refused to bring his platoon into the battalion area. He camped outside. He said, "There will be no prostitutes here." There was a lot of ranting and raving among the incompetent staff but nothing happened and

We had to build miles of road through the middle of a totally underdeveloped area. We learned to walk our bulldozers down the tops of ridgelines and to cable them down to platforms we had blasted.

Larry prevailed, which is the kind of thing you had to do then. You just couldn't take orders if they were wrong; you had to do what was right.

A fellow by the name of Harry Hoskins had been sent from the States to take over the 10th Engineer Battalion, 3d Division. The Pusan depot was in abysmal condition and Harry was pulled out of the pipeline and put in the Pusan depot where he spent several months straightening things up. Then, once again he was ready to head to the front, but the 378th Engineer Battalion was in such horrible shape that he was put in as our battalion commander.

He was a breath of fresh air. You won't find a better officer than he. When he came, everything immediately started to shape up. He did not tolerate anything bad. He came up through the amphibious engineers, and Gen. Art Trudeau, who has now passed away, and Harry had a little get together. Harry was one of the guys that he brought in. Super guy. So, we went from night to day as far as battalion headquarters went. He began to build up the battalion with very little help. I don't think he ever got any first-class staff officers there but he brought in some young officers. In those days, you didn't rely on someone with 10 years experience who knew his job. You had to get someone who had enough initiative to do what had to be done.

Our job was to build a road to support a rear line that the UN forces could fall back to if they had to give

up the front line. We were building a road along the rear side of the hill behind the defense line. Each company had a section of that road.

It was a very educational experience for me. We had to build miles of road through the middle of a totally underdeveloped area. We learned to walk our bulldozers down the tops of ridgelines and to cable them down to platforms we had blasted. We had blasting going on along the entire length of the road at the same time. The whole company was broken up into small teams that were blasting or doing something that had to do with building a road. Harry Hoskins used to compare that to the Ledo Road type of operation. It was a very exciting job, one where you could really develop a very professional organization.

One time, the group commander flew out and arrived unannounced at my company. I was out in the field so he just went out unescorted and looked. As he went along sections of the road, he talked to individual squad leaders and assistant squad leaders who were running various jobs. They all reported to him and told him exactly what they were doing.

I think that Hoskins had just arrived about that time. After the group commander had looked at my area he went back and told Hoskins it was the best company in the group. This was a long ways from our company's status about a month or so earlier. People had really

We weren't getting the things we needed through normal channels, but we were able to do a lot of trading. For example, I traded an extra .45-caliber I had for a two-and-a-half-ton truck.

shaped up into a good organization. Of course, it was good for me to have a pat on the back shortly after the new battalion commander arrived.

I did one thing at the time that I didn't think was wrong. There was a depot back south that handled the construction battalions down south, but not my battalion. We were having a difficult time getting enough explosives to keep this road going, as you can imagine. Although we were supposed to get our explosives through battalion S-4, we weren't getting a lot that way. I'd just send convoys of trucks down south to that depot and we would load up explosives and come back. This gave us plenty of explosives. All the paperwork was correct and the depot people knew exactly what units they were supplying. They just didn't know they weren't supposed to supply us.

When I later told that to Harry in Washington he was a little shocked and said, "I never could figure out how you built that road so fast." I said, "Well one thing, of course, was the advantage of having all of those extra explosives."

We had the IG come to the company for an inspection once when I was company commander. He seriously injured his leg when he walked out behind the company area to take a picture of something. He fell into a foxhole, which was covered with branches, and he landed in the midst of all of our hidden spare parts. So he complained, "This is terrible. This company



A fixed-trestle bridge built by the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion across the Han River  
Engineer School,  
Korea 084

has twice as many parts as they're supposed to." But nothing ever happened.

We weren't getting the things we needed through normal channels, but we were able to do a lot of trading. For example, I traded an extra .45-caliber I had for a two-and-a-half-ton truck. I had a very good supply sergeant and a very good mess sergeant, but you had to be out there constantly scrounging, which was the word used then to make sure that you had what you needed. When I took over the company we were short all kinds of things. I think the outgoing company commander might have been stuck for them, but I vowed that wouldn't happen

to me. I made sure the company had an extra allotment of everything, which was the way we operated.

Because of the job, we were able to get augmented in dozers. We had a lot of Caterpillar D-7's with the angle blades, which were best for working on the sides of hills. Each dozer had a winch on the back. That was what we needed. At some times I had in my company as many as 10 dozers spread along the road. We had Cat-12 graders and we had some strange pieces of equipment. For example, I had a grade-all and a little hand-operated rock crusher. Koreans would throw rocks in the crusher and produce a little rock for the surface of some of our roads. Those were the major pieces of equipment. But the main items, our bread and butter, were the dozers. For companies that were involved in road building and road maintenance, of course, graders would be really important. Road maintenance was the job we least wanted to have. Luckily, we were able to stay away from it most of the time.

My company location moved farther east into a valley where they wanted to build a road up to the top of a mountain where there was an Air Force communications detachment. The detachment was being supplied then by airdrops. We spent a couple of months building this road up to the Air Force. This was building straight uphill in very mountainous terrain, through timber that you would hardly believe for Korea—36-inch diameter trees, a couple of hundred

feet tall. It was an area where there just hadn't been any roads before.

About that time we switched battalion commanders. Harry Hoskins went on to the 10th Engineers; he finally made it. We got in a new fellow who looked every inch of a soldier, with a big barrel chest, a gruff voice, and very official appearing. Underneath all of that he was a total nonentity. I only saw him in my company area twice. Once he flew over to visit us in this valley, and later when we went to Ch'orwon he came out to my company. He was one of these people who had been in World War II. The battalion was good enough by then that it got along pretty well without him.

We finished that job and then went over to Ch'orwon to work on the road into Ch'orwon. This was just on the edge between IX Corps and I Corps. The river that runs through that area was crossed by a floating bridge and an old concrete arch bridge. Another engineer unit had replaced a blown span on the concrete arch bridge with tactical bridging. My company area was on one bank of that river. There had been a third bridge crossing the river that a classmate of mine, George Bicher, built. It was a Bailey bridge on Bailey piers. It had a life span of about a week because about a 30-foot wave of water came down the river from the north and just left a crumpled mess where that bridge had been.

While we were building roads across the Ch'orwon Valley I had a typical experience with the new battalion

commander. We had a very good group exec who was a lieutenant colonel. He came out to my company along with the battalion commander. We had just been in this area for a couple of weeks. When the group exec went to the mess tent and saw that we had a concrete floor he said, "Dick, I'm surprised that you are wasting concrete since you are only going to be here for a short time."

I said, "Yes, sir." My battalion commander who, back at battalion headquarters, had given me an order to put in the floor, stood there and said nothing. I was chewed out briefly and that was the end of that. But that was the mark of the man. He was good enough to give orders but not good enough to back them up.

At that time Harry Hoskins was up commanding the 10th Engineers in the 3d Division. Attached to the 3d Division was the 5th Regimental Combat Team. A separate company of the RCT was the 72d Engineers and they were about to lose their engineer company commander through normal rotation. Since they were attached to the 10th Engineers at that time, Harry got in touch with me and asked me if I would like to take over the company, which, of course, I was very eager to do.

They sent a message to group headquarters saying that my presence was requested at the 5th RCT. The group commander replied that I was not available since I was essential to the battalion. I got all this through a friend of mine, Homer Ambrose, who was on the group staff at that time. Homer was one of the regular officers

from my Basic Course. Shortly thereafter the group got a telegram from Maxwell Taylor saying that I would move. He was then the Eighth Army commander. It was not that Maxwell Taylor knew me from Adam, but when the 5th RCT and the 3d Division wanted someone, they didn't wait around and wonder whether the group commander wanted to release him.

When I left the battalion we had accomplished a tremendous amount during the time I was there; however, I went from being the best company commander and a very valuable man to just being an average officer, as reflected in my efficiency report. They couldn't write a bad efficiency report. It never would have gotten through group. The report said, "This man did a very good job with his company." That was about it; one or two lines. They weren't saying anything derogatory; they just were not recognizing that anything really had been accomplished. Without any recognition at all I just left. That's not the way to get transferred. It was not good for me. Nevertheless my transfer to the 5th RCT, a prestige unit, to handle a separate company, was a real plum. 🏰

**D**uring the winter of 1951-52 Colonel Hoskins and the 378th ECB began carving a 55-mile lateral road through the mountains in IX Corps' area. The working conditions were brutal. One night, in the midst of a blizzard, he volunteered to guide a helicopter pilot to the top of a mountain to rescue one of his injured men. Chastised for damaging a helicopter during the rescue, Hoskins told his commanding officer "Colonel, every one of the men in that battalion was watching. If I wasn't willing to lay my life on the line to go and save that man, why the hell should they be going through what they are, day after day—just because I'm pushing them?"

I was supposed to get a division engineer assignment. When I got up to IX Corps I reported in to Col. Galloway, who knew me from the amphibious engineers. He said, "Oh, by the way, there's going to be a delay before you go to a division." I said, "What the hell do you mean a delay, colonel?" He said, "Well, there are no lateral roads over the IX Corps. We want to build a full defense line for all defending elements to drop back to in case there's a breakthrough in the present position the Corps is occupying now." I said, "That's 55 miles across from corps boundary to corps boundary." He said, "I'm going to give you a battalion and a light equipment company to get the job done. We need it last week."

When I arrived, it was raining like hell. I went to the battalion headquarters and checked in. The different floods they get in Korea are really bad, and they take out all of the bridging every time they get these torrential rains. I called around to the company commanders and asked, "I see in your company area of responsibility you've got these bridges. How are they built?" They'd describe how approaches were built out to where there was a bridge. It became evident that the bridging gaps were narrower than the span of the rivers.

So, I said, "What I want you to do is put some canister explosive back from cribbing." They built the crib up to support the pier on each end of the bridge. I said, "Back of the cribbing, I want you to blow out the approaching roadway. When the water gets up to where it starts putting any kind of pressure on the bridge, you open the gap behind the bridge and relieve the pressure on the bridge, because you create a wider gap for the water to go through. You don't lose the bridge. Before you do that, on each side of that bridge I want you to have dump trucks and a truck-mounted crane so that just as soon as that water drops to where it's safe, I want to fill those holes in and restore traffic. Do you understand?"

They thought that was terrible. They'd never done anything like that. I said, "By God, you're going to do it now. This is the way it's done down in Arizona, New Mexico, and some parts of Texas. You don't build a bridge

that's going to take all of the water. You put dips on each side of the road so the water can pass around the bridge. You put a marker in the dips to indicate how deep the water is and post the warning, 'you don't enter this dip until the water drops.'" I said, "You're going to use the same principle here. We're not going to lose all of these damn bridges. It takes too long to replace them."

Dick Wells, who commanded one of the companies and was a captain at that time, called in and almost in a whisper says, "Colonel, the water's up to the bridge."

I replied, "Goddamn it! Do you understand English? What did I tell you to do about those bridges?" He answered, "Blow out the approach." I said, "If you lose the bridge, have your jeep packed because you're going down the river with the bridge. But let me know when you've blown them."

I got the report in that they had cut all of the roads and the water had dropped so

there wasn't any pressure on the bridges. The cribbing was staying in place. These floods were flash floods. It wasn't something that lasted 24 hours. The high water may stay for 24 hours, but the crest was maybe for four to five hours.

I called the MP and told him what I had done. It hit the fan. He said only MPs change traffic patterns, no damn engineer has the authority to do it. I said, "I'm sorry. I did it. Do you want me to lose the bridges and then tell you I'll get the bridges rebuilt three weeks from

now? Which would you rather have?" He didn't answer me. He hung up on me.

In about four to five hours, when the crest had passed, the water level started to drop in the rivers. We started filling in the roadway. About noon the next day I called the Provost Marshal and told him the traffic was free to move through the area. The other battalions let some of their bridges go.



A section of the Spoonbill Bridge is covered by flood waters of the Imjin River, July 1953 Engineer School, 43-6-5

“Why the hell should we give up the high ground when we own it now?” [the Col.] said, “You can’t build roads up there.” I said, “Don’t tell me what I can do. Tell me how you want the defense area laid out.”

Col. Galloway came over to see me and asked, “What the hell have you been doing, Hoskins?” I told him. “Haven’t you ever been out in that part of the country and seen what happens? Why lose your bridges? These are not tactical bridges in this area. These are fixed bridges. The tactical bridges are farther up north.” He said, “I hope to God they pulled those tactical bridges, because there’s no way in the world you can hold them in this kind of water.”

With the battalion moving to a new assignment, the responsibility for the road net was given to the other battalions in the group. We started to build the lateral road across the 55-mile area. I took a helicopter and a bunch of small flour sacks to mark the centerline of the road as I flew. I put an alidade in the helicopter so I could get my angles. With the helicopter hovering as I went along, I put the lateral road in first, marking where I wanted it to go with these flour sacks.

Then, I brought in some Koreans and cleared the centerline for the road. We put in three companies along the centerline. We went up streambeds to where I could get one in the middle and one on either end about half-way in from the middle company. We started cutting the roadway in two directions for each company so that we very quickly had the lateral two-lane road across the 55-mile stretch built. It was strictly a pioneer cut but I left one company behind to widen it out and

make certain it was a double-lane road so we could get traffic across.

I’d been up to the 7th Division and the 3d Division. Every time someone raised his head he got it knocked off. An infantry full colonel was in charge of the new defense position project. The colonel wanted to build a reverse slope defense because he said the engineers could not build the road network to organize the high ground. I said, “Why the hell should we give up the high ground when we own it now?” He said, “You can’t build roads up there.” I said, “Don’t tell me what I can do. Tell me how you want the defense area laid out.” We ultimately met with Lt. Gen. Reuben E. Jenkins, the corps commander. He wanted the high ground and asked if I could get the job done. I told him to give me the requirements and let me figure out how to get it done. He approved the high-ground approach. I laid out the defense of that 55-mile area and planned how we would deploy the artillery, the infantry, and the tanks in the area.

The corps commander used to fly over this area regularly watching every move we made. He’d get in his helicopter and he’d hover, looking right down watching these dozer crews work. We pulled an air compressor on a two-and-a-half-ton truck up near the top. We’d use the winches on the equipment and reel that cable out. We’d put a “dead man” in and hook the cable to it. With a combination of the winch and the bulldozer put in re-

verse, we'd crawl up to where the "dead man" was. We'd have a pad cleared away so we could secure the compressor or tractor until we ran the next cable up to where we had a "dead man." Then we repeated the process until the equipment was where we wanted it.

That was how we got the tractors, bulldozers, and compressors up to the different points where we wanted them to work, so that we could connect that road up in a hurry. Otherwise, if we were punching out on one straight line in a linear fashion we would never get a damned thing done. So, we were working in 14 directions. We'd work in one direction until we had to do some demolition, and then we'd turn around and go the other direction and work on it until we ran into demolition. We'd work in two directions, simultaneously, for each one of those seven dozers that were up there. That was how the roads were built. That whole defense position was built using that approach.

It was necessary to build supply and evacuation roads from the lateral road up to each peak of high ground. On one particular hill mass I had seven D-7s working one above the other. I laid out the switchback roads with flour bags. Then we went in and grubbed the centerline the same way as we had the road going across the corps. We used the same principle all the way across the front for the supply and evacuation roads. Our men and equipment worked in two directions to speed up the construction.

A road built by the 8th Engineers shows the hairpin turns needed to climb many of Korea's steep hillsides  
RG 111, SC-374167



Edward R. Morrow came to Korea to make a TV program for Christmas. Somebody told him that his crew ought to see all of these bulldozers stacked up on the side of the hill working. He came up there to see us. We had controls and signals so that the men wouldn't knock boulders and fill down on others as they were working. He and his camera crew crawled up to some of these work areas. One crew went all the way to the top.

The camera crews all wanted to get on the dozer blades. These angle dozers were sweeping off the rocks that we'd knocked loose. It was a rather precipitous drop. One cameraman got out his flask, took a couple of swigs,

Snow was falling at the time, and my men—these poor devils—were working up at these elevated positions. It was rough on these troops. I was pushing the living hell out of them anyway.

and got on that dozer blade. He took his pictures as he went out over the edge and came back to the States with an hour-long show of the work we were doing.

When he got back to Washington, however, and tried to clear some of the film to show it, it turned out that this was the area that was presently occupied by the American forces that were part of the Korean defense. When the fighting stopped, the U.S. troops withdrew from the position they had been occupying and dropped back five to six miles. They now were occupying the position that we built. The defensive position, of course, had been improved one hell of a lot since then. The Defense Department did not want him showing on TV what was being done to stop a breakthrough in the Ch'orwan Valley. We damn well got the high ground that time. We were not sitting there looking up, with the enemy firing down our tonsils.

#### Dramatic Rescue in a Blizzard

We had an incident one bitter-cold winter night. Snow was falling at the time, and my men—these poor devils—were working up at these elevated positions. It was rough on these troops. I was pushing the living hell out of them anyway.

As I walked up to the group headquarters for a meeting, Lt. Col. "Iron Mike" Miletich, the exec of the group, came running out and said, "Harry, you've got a very bad accident on the top of the hill." He said, "The

MASH (Mobil Army Surgical Hospital) people will not fly up there because of the weather. They're begging for somebody to come in and get the injured man out. Your pilot says you know every foot of this area up there and he'll take you if you'll go. I knew that you would go, and he knew that you would go, so we've already got the engine gassed up and warmed up. All you need to do is get in the chopper sitting over there on the pad and he's ready to go." I said, "Okay. We'll get the man out and then I have to come back down here because I've got to see you about some other problems that I've got." He said, "Okay, we'll be around."

We took off and it was blinding snow and bitter, bitter cold. We got about halfway up and over a minefield. We approached the area where the men were working from the front of the range, in other words, from the enemy side not from our side. It was easier to get into the area coming from that side because we could go through a small saddle and turn around in the lee side of the mountain. Then, he could land the helicopter on an angle where I was told they were going to be. Well, the damned rotors froze up on us and we had to settle in the minefield. Mines were all over that area but it was so cold the damn mines didn't go off, or we didn't land on any.

The heat of the engine finally thawed out the ice on the rotors so that the pilot was able to get the pitch he needed. We took off, went back up through

the saddle, and came around the side of the hill. The wind was blowing so hard it almost flipped that helicopter over. We sat it down on an angle. The pilot had yet to change the batteries to get the weight right so he could strap the injured man on the runner of his landing gear.

We strapped the injured man on a litter on the runners of the



A seriously wounded engineer is treated at the 121st Evacuation Hospital RG 111, C6620

helicopter. We had him in a sleeping bag because there was no litter rack on the helicopter that I had. I said, “Bob, for God sake, be damned careful taking off in this thing. I don’t want to lose two of you. These air currents are very strong. I’ve flown enough so that I know the problem of fighting these air currents. Give yourself some latitude. Don’t just crank it up and try to get out of here right away. Give yourself a little cushion.” He said, “Okay, okay, colonel, we’ll make it all right. I’ve got no problem.” I told him, “You’ve got to get that engine cranked up pretty soon because it is so cold you won’t be able to get it fired up.”

two of them!” The pilot must have known I was worried. He came back up over where we were standing, blinking his navigation lights to let me know he was okay. Then he disappeared out through the saddle, went back to the MASH, and landed the helicopter.

They checked the helicopter after he had landed it and said, “Don’t fly this helicopter again. You have racked this machine up to the point of destruction.” He must have had the engine pulling maximum vacuum. It sounded like he was going to blow the heads off of that engine to get all of the power he could to control that chopper to get out of there. They left it at

The pilot said, “No problem.” He finally got it going, revved it up a little bit, and they both lifted off. The air currents caught him and he dropped down into that valley. We couldn’t see him with all of that snow blowing the way it was. We started out about 1530. It was getting around 1600-1630. I thought, “Oh, my God, I’ve lost

We took off and it was blinding snow and bitter, bitter cold. We got about halfway up and over a minefield. Well, the damned rotors froze up on us and we had to settle in the minefield. Mines were all over that area but it was so cold the damn mines didn’t go off.

the landing pad at the hospital and hauled it away by truck.

In order to get back, I had to walk back down through the hill mass. I'd arranged for my jeep to pick me up, and it was about 9 or 10 miles to where the jeep was going to meet me. We had a lot of line crossers in the area because the North Koreans would send these line crossers to act as guerrillas. There'd probably be about four or five, maybe a few more, well-armed individuals. They would harass our troops, plus they would go after the communication towers, carrier towers, and the towers that the Air Force used to guide their planes as they went north and returned. I ran into one bunch of line crossers. They opened fire on me and I went down that mountain through the snow and blow-

Fitted with a litter for carrying patients, a helicopter takes off on an evacuation mission  
Engineer School, 21-72-8



ing mess faster than I've ever moved in my life. The only hope I had to get away from them was to disappear down into the snow mass, because visibility was so poor. It was getting dark, and the blowing snow made it possible for me to get away.

I kept on walking. Finally I got to my jeep and went back to the hospital to see how my man was getting along. I couldn't get much information. The pilot had been picked up and gone home. They told me the helicopter was in sad shape and shouldn't be flown. So I went to group headquarters. I saw Mike and we went over the problems that I had and finally got some decisions. I did not see Col. Ferony. I left and went back to my own battalion CP.

The next day when Col. Ferony found out that helicopter had been racked up the way it had and needed major overhaul he was furious. He put in an Article 15 on me saying that I was guilty of wanton destruction of government property. It went over to corps headquarters. It didn't go to Col. Galloway. It went to Gen. Jenkins, who was the corps commanding general. The chief of staff at the corps had been at Fort McNair on the faculty when I was there. We used to refer to him as "old yellow legs." He sent for me. I walked in; he was as formal as hell. Gen. Jenkins was standing behind me while I was standing there at attention.

The chief of staff was telling me how I had damaged government property without regard to its

value, and its importance, and all of that baloney. He said, “What the hell were you doing up there flying that damned helicopter?” I said, “I wasn’t flying it. I went in to save one of my men.” I said, “Colonel, every one of the men in that battalion was watching. If I wasn’t willing to lay my life on the line to go and save that man, why the hell should they be going through what they are, day after day—just because I’m pushing them? They knew I could go in and save his life.”

I said, “You can’t drive men. You have to lead them. Sure, there’s a risk. I knew it was a risk. What worried me more was that it might cost the life of my pilot. For your information, I’ve already started drafting up the papers. I want him to get a Distinguished Flying Cross. That man did an incredible job. It took a tremendous amount of courage and skill to do what he did and I was there. The rest of you weren’t.” Gen. Jenkins kind of sauntered around. Finally, he looked at the chief of staff and said, “You know, this is the best damned recommendation for a promotion that I’ve run into.” The chief of staff said, “General, do I tear this damned thing up or do I forward it?” First Gen. Jenkins said, “Tear it up.” Then he said, “No, wait a minute. I’ll put my endorsement on it and send it forward.” I don’t know whatever happened to the Article 15. I never heard anything more about it. I never heard any more from Col. Feron, either. 🏰

**I**n his nine months commanding the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion [February-October 1952], Colonel Hoskins supported the 3d Infantry Division during a period of static, or position, warfare. Rather than keeping the battalion together, Hoskins sent one company forward in direct support of each regiment. He describes how they served as infantry at night and as engineers during the day, as the units moved back and forth near the 38th Parallel like a yo-yo. “What we were trying to do was to survive—to kill as many of the enemy as we could and save as many of our own men. It wasn’t a case of pursuing the enemy and destroying him....”

#### Better Food...and Champagne

I was able to get much better food for my men. Many would fight as infantry at night and work during the day as engineers. We were living on some pretty rough field rations there for a while. Everybody behind us was doing very well. One day I was sitting in the cold, picking my beans out of the cold grease and bitching about the food. My sergeant said, “Well, one way to heat those little cans up was to siphon some gas out of your jeep, put the gasoline in the sand, and use the sand as a wick to heat up your cold beans.” I was sitting there saying, “This is a hell of a way to do it. The people behind us eat well.”

I said, “General, the people behind us have got the best food in the world. We’re up here taking all of the hits. Why can’t we get that same kind of food?” I continued, “These men are working all day, and fighting at night. They need more in their bellies.”

The division commander came along about this time and said, “What are you bellyaching about now?” I said, “General, the people behind us have got the best food in the world. We’re up here taking all of the hits. Why can’t we get that same kind of food?” He said, “We can’t get the better food up here because the reefers can’t come up here and break it down. We don’t have reefers.”

I said, “General, if I solve that problem, can I make a deal with you?” He informed me, “Lieutenant colonels don’t make deals with major generals.” I said, “May I state it differently? If I can figure out a way to solve that problem, would you authorize me to feed my men four meals a day?”

I continued, “These men are working all day, and fighting at night. They need more in their bellies. Another thing, too, I know you’re going to get certain cuts of beef. I know that the regimental commanders and the division artillery commander are going to get their cut. I want to be damn sure that I get enough for my people and that they get to eat good food. The only way it’s going to happen is if you tell the G-4 and he gets the quartermaster up here to carry out your instructions.” He said, “You figure it out; you tell me how to get it done.” I said, “The IGs have got to stay away from me.” The General said, “What do you want?”

“I can take some of these lowboys that we move tractors on. There are enough of them around that are in bad shape. I’ll fix them up to the point of where I can



The original DoD caption read, "COLD IN KOREA? Sure, but, so what, when you throw a mess of bacon and beans right on the hot top of a gasoline drum stove, make toast, and have a hot cup of coffee!" 373  
RG 127, 127-A4617

build a reefer. We've got enough sawdust, and enough materials around here that I'll build the reefers. When the reefers come in from the rear, you don't have to hold the food more than a couple of days." The general wanted to know how we would provide the necessary refrigeration. I told him, "We don't have to worry about that until the summer time. It's so damned cold up here now. The food will freeze on sight."

He said, "Okay, I'll talk to the IG, and I'll talk to the G-4, and I'll be back in touch with you." I got my men together, and said, "Okay, we're going to get the job done. Probably we need four of these lowboys, and we'll build reefer boxes lined with sawdust. Take a dozer back there and cut some slots in the hills so that these reefers will have some protection. We'll put these lowboys in there and that's the way we'll get it done." In the American Army, a lot of men have a variety of skills. It's amazing what you can get done, particularly when you start talking about getting good food. The division commander came back to me and said, "Okay."

We built those things. The company that was doing odd jobs in the rear worked on them, and some of the maintenance people helped put these reefers together. They used log saw dust and any other available material. Sure enough, the division commander made good on his commitment. He gave us the food for my men.

At Christmastime some of the French officers I knew in Europe were not too far from us. They heard

that I was with the 3d. A couple of them came over to look me up. It was getting close to Christmas and they were saying they would sure like some American food. I had them eat with me. At that time we were getting really good food. They said, "We wish we could eat like this." I don't remember who it was but one of the officers spoke up and said, "Well, maybe we could make a deal. I understand you've got a lot of champagne in your outfit." One French officer said, "Oh, we've got more damn champagne than we know what to do with but we don't have this kind of food."

I got my company commanders and my first sergeants together and told them, "Look, maybe I can make a deal so that we can take some of the turkeys we will get, because we're on a four-meal day, and I can swap them for champagne. If anybody opens their damn mouth about it I'm in deep trouble. We can get some champagne for everybody for Christmas." They said, "Oh, man, we'll take care of that. If anybody opens his mouth we'll practically decapitate him." I said, "No, I don't want to go that far, but just button their lips."

I got word to this French battalion commander, and I told him that I might be able to make a deal with him—turkey for champagne. At night, we swapped a bunch of turkeys for champagne. It was bitter cold, so we didn't have any trouble keeping the champagne iced. The champagne was passed around. I think

I got word to this French battalion commander, and I told him that I might be able to make a deal with him—turkey for champagne. At night, we swapped a bunch of turkeys for champagne.

each man in the battalion got maybe a third of a bottle, or something like that.

There's always some jackass that can't keep his mouth shut. Someone had to brag, "Man, we not only had Christmas turkey, but boy, we had champagne." So, word got out. The first thing I knew the division commander came up to me. He said, "Hoskins, I understand you've got champagne in your outfit." I said, "General, there's no champagne in this outfit." Of course, at that point in time there was none. He said, "Let me put it this way. It's a damn poor officer that doesn't recognize that if he's got champagne that at least he'd give his division commander a bottle." I said, "If I can find any champagne, I assure you, I'll get you a bottle." That was the end of it. I never brought the subject up again. It was strictly verboten. You were not supposed to have any alcoholic beverages up there. But you'd be surprised what it does for the morale of the men.

When the men started getting that new ration, better food, the morale went up 200 percent. Warm food in your belly, under those conditions, went a long way. They just didn't bring it forward far enough. The people in the rear areas were living high on the hog, while we were getting nothing. We were living on damned canned rations. That's one of the problems that happen in every war, though. But with a little imagination, you'd be surprised how you can solve those problems. I was very

fortunate and had some good people. If you're not going to go out and break the law, but you want to get a job done, you get people like Dick Wells and others who start coming forth with ideas about what they want to do and how they want to improve the situation themselves. You don't have to have all of the ideas yourself.

### Mines...Our Mines and Theirs

We made a whole series of firetraps to be used in the event the North Koreans got into the Ch'orwon Valley. That was a wide area, so we needed to have a lot of people or a lot of mines or something to stop them. You have to have a series of interlocking firetraps to stop that kind of an attack. At that time the North Koreans didn't have tanks. They were just waves, and waves, and waves of manpower. You had to have mines, especially antipersonnel mines, to stop the manpower and any heavy vehicles. Then all kinds of napalm were needed, so you could drop it in quickly. You couldn't be waiting around because once there was a breakthrough they'd pour in there in a hell of a hurry.

I never had any problems with the availability of mines. That was an ordnance responsibility. We had some experience; some of the NCOs had training with lifting and placing mines and antipersonnel mines, but it was something that you had to work on. You had to conduct training yourself to make sure that your own men weren't going to blow themselves up.

...areas that we were working in...had these Schu mines all around....When we were constructing the new defense position, one lieutenant followed my footsteps....He tried to put his feet exactly in my footprints, but he wound up stepping on a Schu mine that blew his leg off....

The 3d Engineer Battalion combined drums of napalm and 81mm-mortar shells to create a potent anti-personnel mine that could be detonated electronically. The first image shows an engineer placing the napalm, the next shows a test of the new device



Engineer School, 112-11-7



Engineer School, Korea 052

The North Koreans had those damn Schu mines. It was like a little wooden box with a pressure detonator on it. They were very hard to detect. I don't know how much C-3 was in there, but it was enough so that it'd blow the better part of a leg off. They were everywhere. A lot of the areas that we were working in, clear back into the corps rear, had these Schu mines all around the place. When we were constructing the new defense position, one lieutenant followed my footsteps as I went through a particular area. He tried to put his feet exactly in my footprints, but he wound up stepping on a Schu mine that blew his leg off just above the knee. We had to go back in and get him out. Of course, we didn't know whether we would set off any more Schu mines or not.

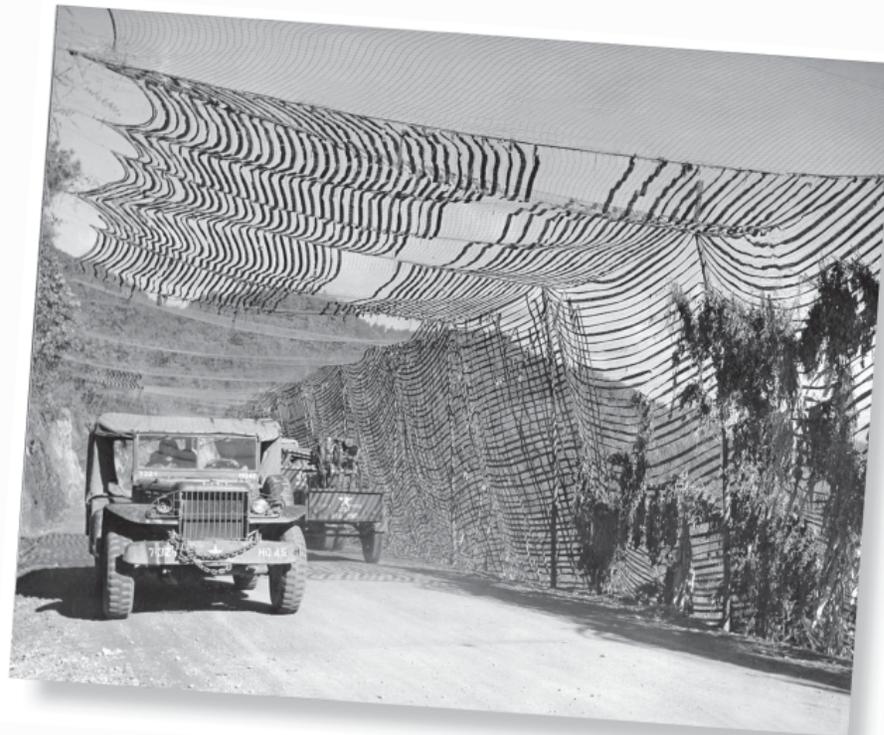
There was always a bunch of trash around so it was easy to hide a Schu mine. The metal detector wasn't worth a damn for these mines. The best detector was the dog. These scout dogs were originally used with somebody on patrol. If the soldiers were a little nervous, the dog would get noisy after a while. They'd make some noise that would give the patrol away. We used to get those dogs from the infantry and use them for checking out mined areas. The dog would dig up a lot of other trash, but he'd also locate the mines. As soon as a dog would see disturbed earth he'd check it out. I never saw a dog set off one of those things.

I'm sure what happened was the dog would press down on it and smell. Apparently, it required more

weight than the dog's paw would put on it. The dog would dig around and get it out. Of course, as soon as we saw the dog had uncovered a Schu mine, more people would go in, pick it up, and disarm it. Cleaning up minefields is really dangerous work. People lose their eyes and their hands and get other injuries. All kinds of accidents happen from clearing mines.

We were in a static position. Your whole situation is entirely different when you're in a static position than when you're moving. When you're moving you've got to have special equipment with you all of the time. If you go in, you've got to use it. We were concerned about mines in the area where we were and about line crossers who might put them in. You defended an area—particularly a large area like the Ch'orwon Valley—with patrols, fields of fire, and with strong points. A hell of a lot of open ground exists between those strong points. People can slip in and out at night through those areas.

You catch some line crossers, but you don't catch all of them. That was why we ran into them when I tried to get that soldier out. These line crossers had infiltrated between strong points and had gotten through. It was not like in World War I where you had a whole series of trenches and everybody was connected up. You had to tie all of the ground together with strong points and get a lot of people who you know all around you. If you go wandering around you're liable to get nailed by a few of those line crossers.



The 7th Division commander who preceded General Trudeau was an absolute nut on camouflage. They brought tons and tons of camouflage up into that area. Everything was camouflaged. There was no air observation. He was not in a position where higher ground in front of him required all that camouflage.

Where we were in the 3d Division we had old "Papa-San." It was a good-sized mountain that looked right down our throats. Every time we moved the enemy would just sit with binoculars and check on us. Every-

A truck travels along a main supply route camouflaged by the 13th Engineers. The netting was intended to keep the enemy from observing the volume of traffic, not to conceal the road

Engineer School, 51-14-22

Cleaning up minefields is really dangerous work. People lose their eyes and their hands and get other injuries. All kinds of accidents happen from clearing mines.

thing we did was observed across the whole division front. Just on the edge of the Ch'orwon Valley in that area over there in between the 7th Division and us was the division that Pak commanded, you know, Tiger-San. He was the one who later became president of Korea.

On the right side we had the Capitol Division, an ROK division, between I Corps and us. The road net and defense position I had to put in gave us the ability to tie together all the way over to the I Corps boundary from X Corps. It would have covered the Cap-ROK division's rear. When they had to pull back we had some of the positions ready.

The Koreans, whom they gave uniforms and assigned to the various units in the divisions, were called KATUSAs. Some of them were assigned to me when we were building the defense position, and I had them in the 3d Division. These men were up against both a cul-



A jeep and trailer move across a temporary earthen bridge that is being reinforced with sandbags Engineer School, 83-56-2

ture problem and an economic problem. The officer in charge of the Koreans assigned to me in the 3d Division had been a big national baseball hero. He had a lot of prestige and strutted around instead of getting down and taking care of his job. Finally, one night I called him in. I said, "Look, word has come back to me that the

zone's supplies and food that we're providing for you and your men is getting back to Seoul and being sold. So help me God, if I ever get proof that what I'm hearing is correct about you, let me tell you, you'll wind up just like all of the Koreans do. I'm going to turn you back to the Korean Government. I'm not going to get

involved with you. What they do is take you out and shoot you because you lost face for the government." "Now," I said, "This is exactly what I'm going to do. I'm not going to fool with it. You train your men. You make sure that they're well fed. We have given you the proper kind of clothing and equipment. I want

to be darn sure that they have it. The first chance I have in a few days I'm going to inspect your unit and make sure they have all of that equipment. If they haven't got it, you better have a damned good explanation where the hell it is."

He winced a little bit. When I did check on them, I don't know whether he'd gotten it from someplace else or not, but they had all of their equipment. There was no question that some of the food did go back to Seoul and get sold, but it stopped at that point. That was a real problem. They called it the "kimchi run." The kimchi run is going back to the rear and selling the stuff on the black market. It was a part of the reason that the black market existed.

If he was involved in it, I never had any more problems with him. I checked on him very closely. One night, when the two of us were in a bunker together, we were getting the usual shelling and workover from the North Koreans. I was reading the *Stars and Stripes* and the headlines were that a lieutenant governor, or somebody, was going to go to jail because of a political rip-off back in the States. This guy was a pretty well educated individual and could read English very well. He looked at me and he said, "You Americans are a bunch of hypocrites."

I said, "What the hell do you mean we're a bunch of hypocrites?" He said, "Look, in America you've got big kimchi run. We've only got little kimchi runs

over here." Some of them read what the press had to say about the political scandals and rake offs that were going on back in the States. He couldn't see why I was bearing down on him the way I was. Every now and then that would really stick in his craw, the fact that he thought that I was working on two standards. That does happen in these countries and Americans have to recognize it. 🏰

**W**hen recalled to active duty, Floyd Wright's boss offered him a way to avoid service in Korea and characterized him as a "damn fool" for not accepting it. In August 1952, Wright assumed command of the 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company, the Army's last segregated unit in Korea. The young lieutenant describes some of the challenges he faced after taking command, and soon after he supervised the integration of the unit.

Upon graduation from Clemson, I went to work with this construction company and was sent to Rutherford, North Carolina, to report to T.C. Reese, the superintendent, who had the job of building a five-story reinforced concrete hospital. I was supposed to be the engineer. The fellow who hired me told me that the last three engineers that were sent to him lasted one week before he ran them off of the job. That fact didn't send me off with too much enthusiasm, but as things turned out, T.C. Reese and I got along very well.

#### Recalled to Active Duty

I worked there for one full year. The painters were backing out of the doors and the owner of the company had come with a set of drawings for our new assignment—another hospital about like this. They had won the contract and I would be the superintendent for that job. At the same time I received orders from the War Depart-

ment to report for a physical examination for a recall to active duty.

I called up the boss and told him. As it turned out he was a lieutenant colonel, Corps of Engineers, in World War II, and started his construction outfit when he got out. He had received the same type of orders, but he was on friendly terms with the senators and congressmen from the state. He could afford to do what he did and that was to throw the damn orders away and ignore them. He told me to do the same thing. He said, "I've got a job in a Marine barracks at Parris Island. I'll put you down there on defense work. You won't have to go." Somehow or another that just didn't sit right in my stomach.

I think his response to the situation exemplified the general attitude toward the Korean War. He said, "If they will stop calling this thing a police action, declare war, and mobilize this country, I'll gladly lock up my business and go off to fight a war. If they'll call it a war the United States will get behind it. As long as they're going to call it a police action and just call up a few people, I'm not about to throw away everything that I've built up over the last few years." Anyway, I told him, "I think I'll go with it." It was a recall for two years to go to Korea. He said, "Well, your job's waiting. I think you're a damn fool, but your job is here for you when you get back."

I reported to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on 13 July 1951 and was assigned to the 94th Engineer Battalion, a dem-

"If they will stop calling this thing a police action, declare war, and mobilize this country, I'll gladly lock up my business and go off to fight a war. If they'll call it a war, the United States will get behind it."

onstration unit of troops at Fort Belvoir. I was assigned to the S-3 section. This was an all-black battalion. The only white officers in it were the battalion commander and myself. All of the company officers, company commanders, and platoon leaders were black officers. They were demonstration troops and for me it was just a staging area before they shipped me to Korea.

I stayed there for about six months. I got a delay enroute, moved the family back to Asheville, North Carolina, and went to Seattle, Washington. I caught a ship and on 14 February 1952 I arrived in Pusan, Korea. They moved me by rail up to Seoul and I was assigned as a platoon leader to the 1st Platoon of Company A of the 62d ECB of the 24th ECG.

The 62d Engineer Battalion, with Company A, was given the primary job of maintaining the MSR, which I think was number 17 from Seoul up to Ch'unch'on. We had attached to us the 128th Korean Service Corps Regiment—KATUSAs. They were wounded Korean soldiers, or Korean men who were not fit for combat service. They'd put them into these Korean Service Corps. They were actually labor battalions. We had one of these battalions assigned to us to assist in our fieldwork.

After about six months, Company A was relieved of all of its work in Ch'unch'on. In fact, except for my platoon, the whole 62d was replaced by the 79th Engineers. My platoon was attached to an engineer aviation battalion that had moved into Ch'unch'on with a mis-



sion of extending the runway. It was a propeller-driven fighter plane runway. Jet fighters had just been introduced to the Korean War. Since they were coming over at that time, the runway had to be extended.

We'd just finished this job when my platoon was ordered back to Seoul. Company A was given the job of building the first hemorrhagic fever hospital that was constructed in Korea. They didn't know what would cause that disease but a soldier would break out in a rash and run a temperature and the next day he would be dead. After much research they finally found out that it was a mite that they got from rats. Curiously, only soldiers in the field came down with this. The ones in the village,

Engineers carry an aluminum ponton to the water's edge, November 1952 Engineer School, 44-6-7

which had as many rats as out in the field, didn't get hemorrhagic fever.

### Integrating the Last Segregated Army Unit in Korea

Col. Eagle C. Klinke, the 24th Group commander, was a brain. In fact, he designed many of the high-level bridges that the group constructed in Korea, such as the Parker Bridge.

Col. Klinke called me over to group headquarters in August 1952 and told me that they had a ponton bridge company there that was the last all-black army unit in Korea. He had been given orders to integrate that company as quickly as possible. I don't know why he asked me this question but he said, "You're from North Carolina, aren't you Floyd?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I'm placing you in command of the 573d Ponton Bridge Company. The company commander is now under house arrest for selling government property to the Koreans. I'll release him to your custody to go over an inventory of the company property." He said, "The way it will work is that we will scatter out the black soldiers in the 573d within the white battalions within the group. Your company will end up with about 12-13 percent black troops, like all of the other units in Korea. The plan was to be implemented in one day by the arrival of a convoy of all white soldiers.

"Lieutenant, you're not going to be walking around the company area without a sidearm, are you?"...At that point he opened his field jacket where he had a .45-caliber in a shoulder holster. He said, "Well, in that case, sir, I won't let you out of my sight."

When the first convoy arrived it was only one truck with two white men in the back of it. It took me about three months to integrate that outfit. The group commander did tell me, "I'll let you interview every master sergeant that is assigned to the 24th Group and you can pick out your 1st sergeant to help you do this." In those days, master sergeants all held the same rank and drew the same pay. It didn't matter if you were the 1st sergeant of an infantry company or whether you were a master sergeant in a division headquarters, you drew the same pay and wore the same chevrons.

The worst job for a master sergeant is being the 1st sergeant of a company. I interviewed several master sergeants before I found one that said, "Yes, I'd like to be the 1st sergeant of this outfit." And that was my criterion. I didn't want a guy who didn't want the job. He would not have been any help at all. As it turned out, 1st Sgt. Rubinstein told me that he had been a sergeant major of three or four different battalions and he wanted to get back to troops. I said, "Sergeant Rubinstein, you've got the job." He came over as the 1st sergeant for the company, but I had been there for about three weeks before I got my own 1st sergeant.

The black 1st sergeant—who was there on the first day I reported in—noticed that I wasn't carrying a sidearm. He said, "Lieutenant, you're not going to be walking around the company area without a sidearm, are you?" I said, "What are you talking about, sergeant?" He said,

“Well, I think it would be advisable if you carried a weapon in the company area.” I looked at him and I said, “Sergeant, I’ve been to a lot of outfits, and I’ll be goddamned if I can run an outfit if I’ve got to carry a gun when I walk through the company area.” At that point he opened his field jacket where he had a .45-caliber in a shoulder holster. He said, “Well, in that case, sir, I won’t let you out of my sight.”

I got this 1st sergeant, all the platoon sergeants, and the platoon leaders together in a group. I started talking about how I wanted to run things and what was going to happen. This company was in a building adjacent to group headquarters, which was about five miles outside of Seoul in a place called Sing Kongdak, where the engineering university of South Korea is located. The 62d headquarters was also at this location. Its companies were scattered around, but the group, the 62d, and the 573d Ponton Bridge Company, all were at this location.

### Challenges and Successes

Up on the second floor of this building they had constructed a nightclub. It was equipped with bars where you could order any kind of a mixed drink you wanted. They had gambling tables where you could roll dice or play cards. At each one of these tables a sergeant sat there to keep law and order. Everybody would pile their money in the middle of the table and start to gamble. The ser-

geant would pull out five bucks and stick it in his pocket. That was his fee for keeping law and order. I asked the 1st Sergeant, “Is this open to every man in the company?” He answered, “Oh, no, sir. They have to pay a 10 dollar fee to join the club.”

I didn’t say a word that night. The next morning, I called the 1st sergeant in and looked him straight in the eye. I knew he was from the south some place from the way he talked. I said, “Sergeant, do you know what stove wood is?” He said, “Oh, yes, sir, I know what stove wood is. We used to chop it up and use it to cook all of our meals at home.” I said, “Yes, I did the same thing when I was a kid. I always had to chop stove wood. That was one of my chores that had to be done before dark. You know that club that’s upstairs?” “Yes, sir.” “I want you to make stove wood out of it, sergeant.” He looked at me. He said, “sir?” I looked at him and asked him again, “Sergeant, do you know what stove wood is?” And he said, “Yes, sir.” And I said, “Well, by God, that’s what I want. And I want it done today.” I said, “That’s all. Go get busy.” He got a crew in there. He tore that damn thing down, lock, stock, and barrel. Then I said, “Now we’re going to build a facility for the men in the company.” I don’t think that Col. Klinke knew about the club because I don’t think he got out of the office very much.

In those days in Korea there wasn’t a damn thing for the soldiers to do when they were not on duty

We hauled that bridge down to the Han River, which was frozen over.

We'd put the pontoons on the ice and scooted them out. We built a floating bridge on the ice over the Han River.

except to go to some house of ill repute in the village or find some illegal whiskey or something to drink some place. I told him, "We'll build a place and we'll have a bar in it." But I said, "There won't be any drugs or any fee to join. Every man in the company can go to it. It will be like a day room, but in that situation in Korea it would also be like a service club." We constructed a new club and opened it up to all the members of the company.

When the Korean War started, the 573d had been flown into Korea from Japan and landed in an Army field near Seoul on the Han River. The bridge material was also flown over and they constructed a bridge across the Han River. That was the only bridge that the outfit had ever constructed and that had been a couple of years ago.

The ponton bridge company was the outfit that had the bridge, the ponton, the balk, and the deck mounted on the bridge trucks. The company hauled it around and was supposed to install it with the help of engineer combat battalions. Only three people in that outfit had ever helped construct a bridge. Incidentally, in addition to bridge building, the 573d also had the mission of operating this Engineer Supply Point Number 5 in the same area where group headquarters was located.

My mission was to construct a bridge if Eighth Army ever needed one. We were the only ponton bridge

company in Eighth Army reserve, and we wouldn't be able to build a bridge if called upon to perform our mission, so I immediately started a training program. In a draft army you can find all kinds of talent when you start looking. I had a fellow who had a hobby of making things out of wood. I had him construct a model of a ponton bridge that this company had and was supposed to be able to build.

I got a field manual that completely described this bridge in detail. I sat down with this model maker and had him construct a small-scale model of the bridge that would fit on the top of a table. After this was done, I gathered all of the NCOs and the officers and we had training sessions in the day room constructing this bridge using the model. Models also were made of the rigging and all of the knots that you'd need to construct the bridge—the square knots, the bowline, and the knots any engineer soldier should know. Very few of these people knew anything about this.

We went through an intensive training program. By this time fall had set in. To build a bridge I did the same thing that we did in Plattsburgh Barracks in 1942. We hauled that bridge down to the Han River, which was frozen over. We'd put the pontoons on the ice and scooted them out. We built a floating bridge on the ice over the Han River. Then we took it down and hauled it back in. At least we had the outfit ready to

where they could construct that bridge if they were ever called on to do so.

At this time they were still talking in Panmunjom, trying to get an armistice signed, or a cease-fire, but none of that had happened. I commanded this company from August 1952 until I departed Korea on 9 March 1953. By that time we were completely integrated and were pretty much like other units.

### Integration At Last

I don't recall having any problems between blacks and whites in the 573d when I was integrating the program. This plan that the group commander gave me—that the convoy would show up with white troops and load up some black troops and send them—actually took about three or four months to accomplish, not one day. For a couple of months my company was about 50 percent black and about 50 percent white.

By the time I left we were about 13 percent black soldiers and the rest were white. As I mentioned, I had constructed a company day room for everybody that was closely policed. We had a Korean band in there every Saturday night for a dance. In Korea at this time there were absolutely no recreational facilities available for the troops so anything that they had had to be provided by the company or the battalion commander. Both the blacks and the whites went to this club-room that I built for the 573d. I can't remember ever



Wooden model of a ponton bridge built as a training aid by the 573d Ponton Bridge Company  
Wright Collection

having any difficulties between the black troops and the white troops.

When I got new people in, I called them into the orderly room and explained to them what I expected from them. I told them that we were all soldiers in the United States Army and that was it. Period. There was no difference between men, regardless of skin color. Everybody was treated the same.

We didn't have any major problems, such as a riot, or a group of people trying to start fistfights. I was proud of that outfit by the time I left. From there I went to the Japan Construction Agency in Tokyo and my commanding officer was Col. E.E. Kirkpatrick and the deputy was Col. Robert Love. 🏰

I told them that we were all soldiers in the United States Army and that was it. Period. There was no difference between men, regardless of skin color. Everybody was treated the same.

**C**olonel Cochran describes the problems and frustrations of airbase construction in Korea, July 1952-July 1953. Faced with a shortage of LeTourneau dozers parts, he purchased parts from a commercial dealer back in the States only to discover later that the parts were stocked in Korea, but not on the inventory. He remembers one good lieutenant in his battalion, John Conyers, who later became a Michigan Congressman and head of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Ironically, I got ordered to Korea because I had originally requested assignment to an engineer aviation unit in England. In my entire career I had never been to



Lt. Col. Harrington Cochran, Jr.  
Cochran Collection

Europe but I had spent three-and-a-half years in the Pacific. We wanted at least the chance to go see England or Europe. I got my choice of an engineer aviation unit but it was in Korea. I was assigned to Fifth Air Force, which was the Air Force command in Korea, and to the 809th Engineer Aviation Battalion.

That was in Ch'unch'on at K-47 Airfield, where our battalion headquarters and one company were. It was a big, heavy battalion of about 1,100 men and all sorts of equipment. In the 809th I did not have concrete augmentation. I had an asphalt augmentation, an asphalt unit with 16 D-8 dozers. We had LeTourneau dozers; that was the trade name. We had about 24 five-ton dump trucks, rollers, scrapers, and compactors. We could do just about anything. I had one company at An-yang, south of Seoul. That was 100 miles away and that company was engaged in operating a huge quarry to produce rock. We were tunneling into the mountain there and going up the mountain to produce crushed rock for concrete construction materials. I had another company rebuilding the airstrip at Wonju.

I sent a company over to Kangnung, an airstrip over on the east coast. It was an all-pierced steel-plank runway used by the ROK Air Force, which had an F-51 group [WW II-era P-51 Mustangs, redesignated F-51s in Korea]. That runway had to be rebuilt and we were not allowed to interfere with their operations. I had to unbutton the strip surface at night, roll back



Engineers and Korean laborers repair a runway covered with pierced-steel planking Engineer School, 12-30-10

a section of it, rebuild, smooth out, and compact the base. Then we had to roll the landing mat back, weld it all back together, and have it operational by daylight the next morning.

We did that night after night. That was a very hairy operation. We frequently had problems with planes com-

ing in. Something would go wrong and they would roll off the runway and into our construction equipment.

We had to transport the equipment over the most impossible roads. This mountain road was hanging from the side of a cliff. To get some of our big flatbed trailers with dozers and vans around those hairpin turns on that mountainside was one of the scariest experiences I have ever had. We had to hoist up the end of the trailer, tie it up in the rocks above, and swing the trailers to get them around corners. You can imagine how long it took us to get this convoy over there, but that was what we did.

I joined the 809th in July, and about November or December I got pulled out of the 809th and sent to be executive officer of the 931st Engineer Group, which was at Yongdungp'o. I was there for about four months.

A new mission was given to the engineers to build a 10,000-foot concrete runway, dispersal area, and bomb dump at Kunsan, which was on the west coast, south of Seoul. A river went up to the port of Kunsan and it was an area of coastal flats. There was at first PSP (pierced steel plank), and then an asphalt runway was built. It was K-8 and it was breaking up, so Fifth Air Force ordered an intersecting, 10,000-foot concrete runway right out over rice paddies. It was the worst place in the world to try and build airstrips, because there wasn't any bottom in there—it was all muck. They ordered the 808th Engineer Aviation Battalion to do the job, and I was sent down to take over command of the 808th about January

To get some of our big flatbed trailers with dozers and vans around those hairpin turns on that mountainside was one of the scariest experiences I have ever had. We had to hoist up the end of the trailer, tie it up in the rocks above, and swing the trailers to get them around corners.

I wrote a check and bought some LeTourneau discs, and the lieutenant's father sent them to us via commercial shipping to Korea. We found out later there were LeTourneau discs in the engineer depot down in Pusan. That was the biggest problem we faced—getting the right parts at the right place and at the right time.

1953. Meanwhile, the war up north was stagnated. At the time they were going through the prisoner exchange negotiations. Although battles were going on all the time along the front, there were no major movements, north or south.

Through contact with Gen. George Brown, and with the A-3 of Fifth Air Force, I had an opportunity to go up with Col. Ben LeBailly to Panmunjom. He was the base commander or wing commander at K-8, which was a B-26 base at Kunsan. They were the locomotive killers—train killers. We stopped off in Seoul, got a helicopter, and flew up to Panmunjom. Adm. Turner Joy greeted us and asked us what we wanted. We said we would like to go observe the negotiation area with a view to surveying it for a site for any future airfields in case a truce was reached. We wanted to be able to construct an airfield up there for our purposes on short notice. He said, "Sure," and gave us a car. We went up to the site at Panmunjom. We were ushered into the negotiating room and they sat us down at the table facing the North Koreans and Chinese advisers. The Chinese would whisper into the ears of the North Koreans and tell them what to say. This was the spring of 1953. I witnessed that operation for a day. It looked like the most frustrating thing in the world to try and negotiate anything with them.

The prisoner exchange negotiations were underway. We were building facilities up there for the receipt of the American prisoners, and the North Koreans were

building facilities for their prisoners. Col. LeBailly and I got into this car and we drove north into the North Korean camp. Artillery barrages on either side were going off within hearing distance. We were driving into the North Korean zone to where they were building their camps, and we drove alongside marching companies of North Korean soldiers. I got the ice-cold feeling in the back of my neck that this was someplace



A Korean stevedore carries supplies ashore at Inch'on  
RG 111, SC-354173

that maybe we shouldn't be. We got stares from them but that was about all. It was very interesting that we got to see what they were going to build. They were putting up a temporary encampment building to receive and process all their prisoners.

Back at Kunsan, we made all the preparations and began constructing the 10,000-foot concrete runway at K-8. It was very frustrating as an engineer, both because the Air Force ordered it to be built at absolute minimum specifications and because we knew it wasn't going to last very long. They ordered us to use absolute minimum pavement thickness. Most of the reinforcing steel—tempered steel, joint steel, whatever—had to be along the neutral axis, because you were required to have two inches of cover over the steel and they only wanted a four- or five-inch pavement. It seemed ridiculous since it was almost impossible to get good base material.

There just wasn't any good rock around and we had to produce all these fills across rice paddies. The Koreans were in a state because we totally ruined their rice growing area. The runway went right across all their drainage canals and it really ruined them. It was a struggle. Many thousands of tons of cement were being shipped to me. The cement was coming in sacks by ship. It had to be unloaded in Kunsan, manhandled, loaded on boxcars, and shipped by rail 25 miles from the port of Kunsan out to K-8. We built a very large warehouse to receive all this. We had to build a concrete mixing plant

and manage all of the stuff to produce large quantities of concrete.

To handle all these bags of cement we needed thousands of pallets, because you don't stack bags very well, you have to palletize them. I could not get the lumber to build the pallets. We requisitioned, put in emergencies, and everything else to acquire the lumber to build the pallets. The cement started coming in before we could get the lumber for the pallets. When the cement starts coming you can't stop it. We began loading this by hand. We had to have every man in the battalion, cooks, whatever, out there handling bags of cement, and we hired to the limit.

We had Koreans, but they had put a limit on the number of Koreans that you could hire. We were just up to our necks in cement. There were a lot of broken bags, and the worst thing I ever went through in my life was trying to handle those thousands of bags of cement without proper pallets. When it got beyond our control in the warehouse, we had to build bins, scrape up all the broken bags, put them in bins, and handle the cement with bucket loaders. Then, we hastily threw up an aircraft hangar and stored cement in there. We had cement coming out of our ears.

That was the ugliest part of that job, but we also had problems getting parts for some of our equipment. Most all of our LeTourneau dozers began going down for brake discs and we couldn't get any

on requisition. They always were back-ordered, and on LeTourneau dozers we came almost to a 100-percent deadline. The father of one of my officers was a LeTourneau dealer in Texas. I wrote a check and bought some LeTourneau discs, and the lieutenant's father sent them to us via commercial shipping to Korea. We got some of our rigs off of deadline that way. We found out later there were LeTourneau discs in the engineer depot down in Pusan. Since they weren't on the record, they were no good to us. That was the biggest problem we

Chinese POWs on Kojedo Island spent much of their time building elaborate religious icons out of cement and mud  
Shotwell Collection



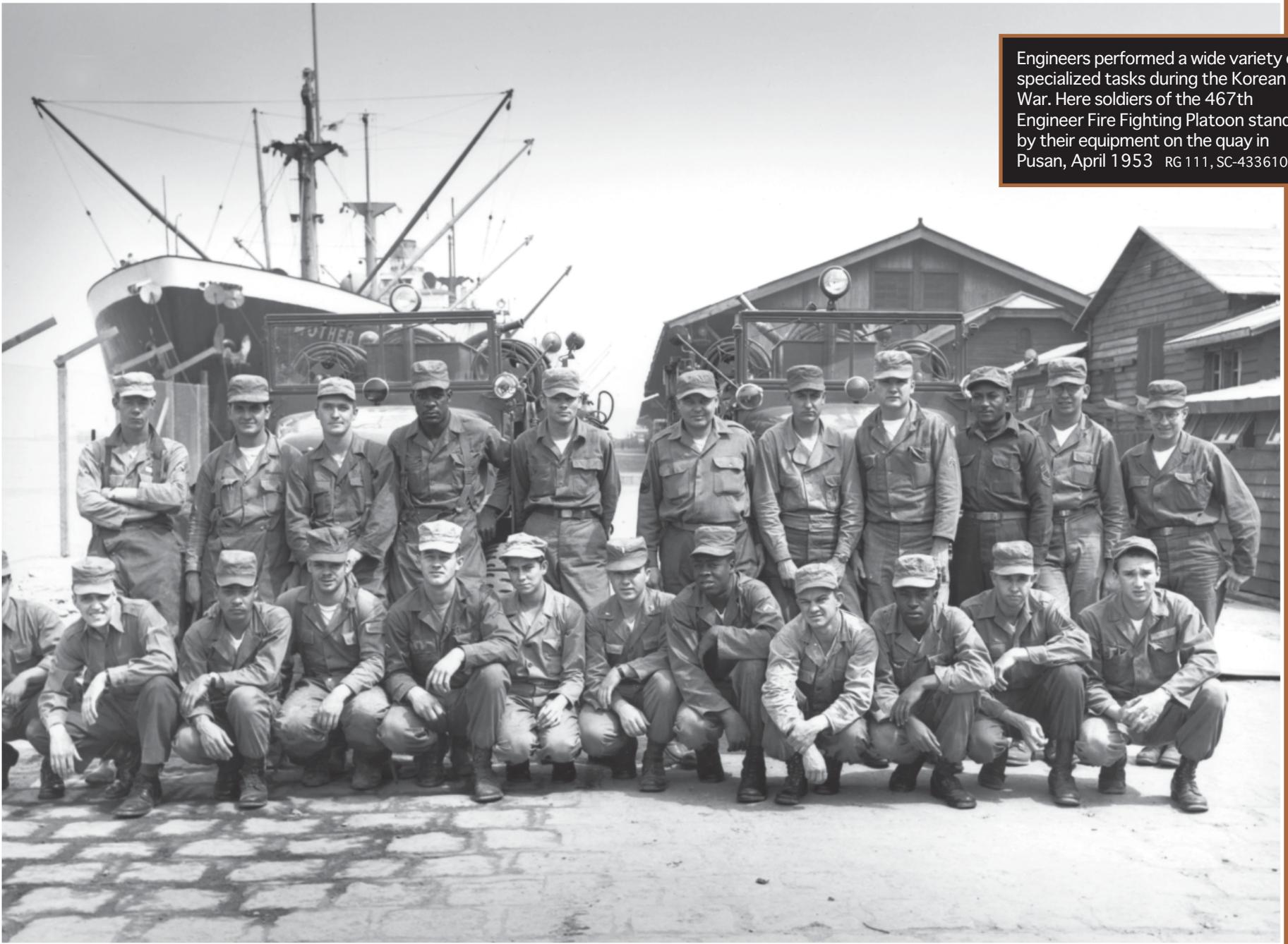
faced—getting the right parts at the right place and at the right time.

I completed my tour for the Air Force. We were assigned to the Air Force and it was a one-year tour. The Army was an 18-month tour, but we were under Air Force regulations. I had 1,200 men in the 808th. Fifty-four were lieutenants—half were Air Force and half were Army. Most of the Air Force officers were non-engineers. Out of 55 officers, I had a major, executive officer, a captain as S-3, and 51 first and second lieutenants. All companies were commanded by lieutenants, and in one case by a 2d lieutenant, because he was the best qualified. A good many of them were not engineers and had no engineer training.

Although I had no West Point graduates at the time, I had some splendid boys. They were all good people but some of them simply did not have engineer training, so we did the best we could. One of my officers was John Conyers, a young black lieutenant from Detroit, Michigan. He was the head of the Black Caucus for a long time and is very well known today as a senior Congressman—good man.

I started on the runway, completed some of the taxiways, and then I left long before it was completed. I was ordered to Fort Leavenworth to the Command and General Staff College. 🏰

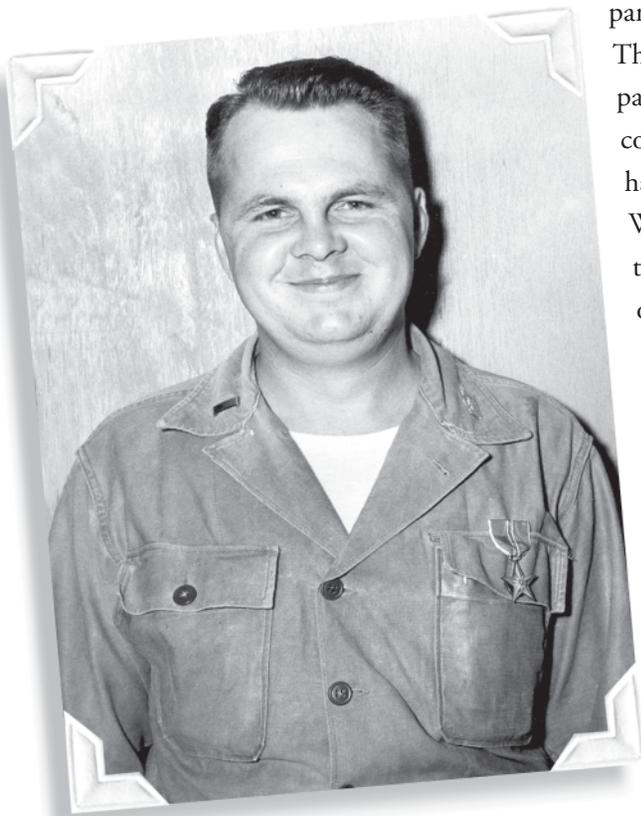
Engineers performed a wide variety of specialized tasks during the Korean War. Here soldiers of the 467th Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon stand by their equipment on the quay in Pusan, April 1953 RG 111, SC-433610



## First Lieutenant George B. Gray, Jr. 50th Engineer Port Construction Company

**L**ieutenant Gray was commander of the only Engineer port construction company in Korea. He describes how he had to train many of his own divers for laying underwater pipeline and how he enjoyed his experiences so much so that he extended his tour in Korea for an additional six months.

First Lt. George Gray  
Gray Collection



I went to Korea in December 1952 and was sent directly to the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company commanded by Kurt Amende. The 50th Port Construction Company was the only port construction company in Korea and, as such, it had responsibility for all the ports. When I first joined it the headquarters was in Pusan and it was part of the 44th Engineer Group.

My first job was at Gazan, an ammunition port that had exploded and was totally destroyed. My job was to rebuild it—more than 2,500 linear feet. I had some very interesting pile-driving classes at Fort Belvoir, but these were non-interlocking timber piles and steel pile. The first step was to drive steel interlocking sheet pile. To this

day, every time I see a sheet pile I have bad memories because we didn't have anybody in the platoon that knew anything about it. It took us a good three weeks before we could get any of them driven because they would all twist and bend. You would have friction on one side but not on the other. We tried everything—setting them all up, interlocking them, and driving them this way and that. We got the port built in about three or four months. Then the company commander was leaving and I became the company commander. After that I could assign sheet pile driving to a platoon leader!

At that stage in my life I was young and confident enough that I figured I could probably take over Eighth Army. If they only wanted to give me the 50th Port Construction Company, well, I felt I was prepared. Little did I know how little I knew until I got into some real problems.

The bulk of the 50th was offshore. All the POL came in by tankers and we had to put in offshore borings with submarine pipelines out to the borings. I'd never had experience with that either. One of the first things I did was to get qualified as a hard-hat diver. I had a diving section of about 20 people. About six or seven of them were master divers. For diving, you have second class, first class, and master. We worked all up and down the coasts, and in all of the places that we had to bring in POL. We put in the offshore anchorages and ran pipelines out to them. Once again we didn't have

anybody who had ever floated a pipeline out so we did it in numerous ways, but we succeeded.

I moved the company headquarters up to Inch'on because the bulk of our work was in the northern area. We even had work over on the other coast directly across at Sak-a-ri. Inch'on is a very interesting place because of the 30-plus-foot tides. There were the tidal basins that handled four small ships. All the rest of it had to be done by offshore anchorages and then the materials were unloaded from the ship onto the barges and were brought in. We had quite a bit of salvage work to do. If anything was sunk in our area we were the only people around with divers who did that work.

At various times we had a pipeline company attached to the 50th. Once we had two pipeline companies, and occasionally we would get a dump truck company. The 388th Pipeline Company was attached to us for most of the time I was company commander. That was interesting because the company commander of that company was senior to me; before I left I was a lieutenant and he later became a captain.

We had the best food in Korea. If any of the ships coming in had any difficulties whatsoever, we were the only ones who had divers to look at and do the repair work, so all the ships kept in good graces with us and



Lt. Gray preparing to dive on a sunken dredge  
Gray Collection

gave us free access to their food. A lot of people would come visit us to take advantage of our good food. One of those who showed up was an infantryman named Gus Baxter. He became a regular attendant at our meals. Finally, we let him move in with us—I don't remember why. I guess by this time we discovered he was dating my wife's cousin in Manny, Louisiana. He switched his branch to engineer, came up to the 388th and took over the pipeline company.

As for equipment and supplies, what we didn't have we were able to get. We didn't have any problems because the Eighth Army engineer considered us one of his assets.

At that stage in my life I was young and confident enough that I figured I could probably take over Eighth Army. If they only wanted to give me the 50th Port Construction Company, well, I felt I was prepared.

## First Lieutenant George B. Gray, Jr. 50th Engineer Port Construction Company

We had very heavy cranes and it was hairy loading those cranes on the barges in deep water and shipping them from barge to barge. We had floating cranes. We had J boats and LCMs and barges powered by sea mules, which are just very large diesel engines to drive the propellers. Moving the stuff around was impossible, except by barge. We got into a lot of places where it wasn't worth the effort to try to get a crane in. I wanted something to move it, so, the Eighth Army engineer got me two tank retrievers with trailers. We also had dump trucks assigned to us that weren't on the TO&E. The 50th was a very large company with almost 500 people. In addition, we were assigned Korean engineers. We were supposed to train them so they would become the port construction company when we left.

Furthermore, we were always given authorizations to hire very large numbers of Korean laborers. We must have had 500 Korean laborers in Inch'on alone. When we moved into any port, such as Kunsan, where we put in more floating piers and pipelines, we hired several hundred Korean workers to work with our soldiers.

The first thing that was impressive about the Koreans was how hard they worked. They are small people,



Mooring anchors waiting to be placed at the offshore fuel terminals Gray Collection

For most of the rest of us, our experience with water was limited to a rowboat or fishing boat. I am sure we made a lot of mistakes but we finished all of our projects.

but a 55-gallon drum of fuel must weigh, what, 450 pounds? One little Korean, trotting along, would carry one on an A-frame and load it on a ship or barge. I don't recall ever having any disciplinary problems with the Koreans, either. I am sure the record is pretty complete on what the 50th did. Unless someone looked at the manpower available to the company, and the fact that they had those Koreans, you probably wouldn't believe the amount of work that was accomplished.

The port construction company had two construction platoons, but they were very different platoons. One had a marine section and a normal construction

section, and then there was a diving section and two others. They were more marine and mechanical than normal construction. Our work should stop at the shore.

The troops we got were just regular troops from any place, but we didn't have any real difficulties. We had very few courts martial and very little venereal disease. Any of the normal problems we just didn't have, but we had to work pretty hard. Most of the NCOs were from the Regular Army, but the troops themselves were mostly draftees.

The Army didn't teach some of the skills needed so we had to do some on-the-job training. The divers were taught at Fort Lee, so we had trained divers, but since we never got enough, we trained a lot of divers in the company ourselves. Master divers were authorized to qualify people. They qualified me, and I required that all the platoon leaders who supervised the divers also had to become qualified.

We did not have a significant number of black troops. We had a few, mostly truck drivers and equipment operators, but most of our carpenters and welders were white. I don't know if we just didn't get our share of blacks, but we simply took whomever they sent us.

None of the officers and very few enlisted people came with any experience in marine work. A few people came out of the company in California, at The Presidio, where we had a full construction company for many, many years. For most of the rest of us, our experience

with water was limited to a rowboat or fishing boat. I am sure we made a lot of mistakes but we finished all of our projects.

We took our orders from both the 44th Group and from our customers. Eighth Army was not as vitally concerned with ports down in the southern part and most of the way up the coast as they were with some ammunition ports and Inch'on. We got our assignments and support from the 44th Construction Group for all these projects, and we had really good support from the Eighth Army engineer on all the projects up in the north. If we needed support in the south, he helped us there if he could. Roy Kelley was deputy to Col. Willard White, who was the group commander. He worked directly with the Eighth Army engineer on all the work we did up north. Between the Eighth Army engineer and Col. Kelley, we did get good support.

We had a pretty high priority because the ports had to function if a bottleneck in logistics was not going to develop. When we had a problem it was always a crash emergency. We always had some of these going on. It was very interesting for me, traveling all over Korea, trying to supervise all of it.

We had 22 officers in the company, of which four were warrant officers. In Vietnam, none of the port construction companies were near the size or structure of the 50th. Some skills obviously fall into the company properly, such as welding, carpentry, equipment

I used to think I could operate anything.

I am sure that the real equipment operators in my companies were always very amused at my attempts to be an equipment operator. Probably the best lesson would have been, "Stay the hell off the equipment."

## First Lieutenant George B. Gray, Jr. 50th Engineer Port Construction Company

operation, and so forth. Oddly enough, we didn't get Transportation Corps people assigned to the 50th. We only got engineer troops, so I didn't have any boat operators.

An LCU is a pretty good-sized boat. We also used LCMs, which makes about 12 knots. That was a pretty tricky craft to operate. We trained our barge operators right there in the company. The barges were made of pontoons welded together—a boat with panels. Navy cubes, they called them. They were developed in World War II. We could make them any size we wanted.

Operating a barge with those pontoons—especially with a crane on board, and doing heavy lifting—was trickier than operating a boat. We had two or three

50-ton cranes we mounted on barges. We finally got a floating crane with a Japanese crew assigned to us from Japan, which was a big improvement. We also had a tugboat assigned to us not too long before I left.

Up until that time we were just putting a regular track crane on the barge, securing it to the barge, and using it as a marine crane, which wasn't the safest thing to do. If you tried to move it the barge began tilting and there was no stopping it—it was going to go. I never lost one, but I came awfully close a few times. I fancied myself as a crane operator in those days, but I never operated one on the barge.

I used to think I could operate anything. I am sure that the real equipment operators in my companies were always very amused at my attempts to be an equipment operator. I didn't try to do much. I just wanted to show them that I knew how to operate the equipment. Probably the best lesson would have been, "Stay the hell off the equipment." But how do you tell a second lieutenant that?

I was promoted to first lieutenant and extended for six months; I enjoyed my job that much. Surprisingly, my wife didn't divorce me. Here I was, a brand new first lieutenant, and I had that huge company with all of that lovely heavy equipment and floating equipment and all those Koreans and everybody. I just couldn't tear myself away from it, so I extended for six months to July 1954, and then I returned to the States.

MSgt. Melvin Alderman of the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company slowly climbs aboard the support barge after a dive  
RG 111, SC-451590





Capt. Morrison Clay leads the 546th Engineer Fire Fighting Company to fight a fire in Pusan RG 111, SC-356242

**L**ieutenant Wells recalls his experiences as company commander, 72d Engineer Combat Company, 5th Regimental Combat Team, January-July 1953. Under the duress of war, the young first lieutenant remembered that he and his men learned quickly, for “there’s nothing like practical experience....If you’re willing to listen and learn, you can get to be pretty good, pretty fast.”

The 5th RCT was a fascinating organization to join. Col. Lester L. Wheeler, the regimental commander, had been a tactical officer at West Point. He probably would have been a real comer in the Army except he got what they call “hemorrhagic fever” after he left the unit and nearly died. I think that pretty well finished him.

It was interesting to get into a different organization like this. The RCT had three infantry battalions, the triple nickel [555th] Artillery Battalion, and the 72d Engineers. Within the 72d Engineers I had very different kinds of people than I had experienced before. I had a first sergeant from the 82d Airborne who had about 30 years experience. At this point I’d already been a company commander for a year so it wasn’t that I needed someone like that, but just having that kind of talent was great.

All my platoon sergeants were very strong people. I had one engineer officer, Max Howard, from the Class of ’52, who was a real sharp officer. All the rest of my

officers were infantry because they didn’t get many engineers into the 5th RCT. I had some engineer enlisted people and I had a lot of infantry enlisted people. This was controlled by what was available when they were filling vacancies, but they were good people.

My TO&E was in question. Should we come under the corps or divisional TO&E? We got out the TO&Es. We found that companies in divisional battalions were authorized four dozers, but companies in corps battalions were authorized an extra 30 or 40 people. So, we decided we were a divisional company for equipment and a corps company for people, an arrangement we were able to get away with.

I found I didn’t have a single experienced dozer operator for our four dozers so I went to the regiment S-1. They went through their records and came up with 12 people who had at least two years of civilian experience operating dozers but were assigned to the infantry units. I then had experienced dozer operators coming out of my ears.

I had a very interesting experience when I first arrived in the company, which set the tone for things later. We were located on the forward edge of a hill where we could see the Chinese lines right from our area by just gazing out of our tents. Our tents were not dug in. We had foxholes for a few people, but not for very many. No one had ever shot at that hill so that was where we were.

The first day I was the commander I said that we

About midnight we had a time-on-target (TOT) on the company area that shredded all of our tents but not a single man was killed. After that they decided that maybe I wasn’t as dumb as I looked.

would dig in all these tents and that we also would dig foxholes for every man before we went to bed. That was greeted with great groans, as you can imagine—‘this damn new lieutenant who was the company commander.’ That day one artillery round went off down in the valley about a thousand meters away and another artillery round went off just opposite our company. Then there was nothing more. I thought to myself, maybe they’re trying to range in on this company—who knows?

We dug in and went to bed around 2200. You’ve never heard such grumbling and mumbling. Even the platoon leaders were having a hard time containing themselves. About midnight we had a time-on-target (TOT) on the company area that shredded all of our tents but not a single man was killed. After that they decided that maybe I wasn’t as dumb as I looked. We then moved behind a hill. The next night, with our shredded tents behind a hill, everything was fine.

The 5th RCT and the 3d Division manned a section of the front line and three outposts: Tom, Dick, and Harry. Our engineers were out there putting mines on the front of these outposts and building fortifications. We also were building roads to support the front line positions so that you could bring people up to the positions without being too much out in the open. I was able to use my road building experience to teach my people, who hadn’t built many roads up to that time, how to do that. When the enemy was about to overrun



Harry one night, we deployed as infantry and were prepared to counterattack the hill. Happily, the infantry was able to hold on so we didn’t have to counterattack, but we were ready to go in position for that. We had a mix of the good combat engineer kinds of jobs.

The enemy then conducted an offensive over to the east in X Corps, where an ROK division was knocked out of the front line, so Eighth Army deployed the 5th RCT over there. As an illustration of the capabilities of the unit, we were given orders to deploy and an hour later my company was on the road moving. We passed the Turks going in the other direction. There were about

A bulldozer strips and does rough grading on a forward airstrip designed to accommodate reconnaissance, supply, and evacuation aircraft  
Engineer School, 11-13-5

as many Turks in the ditch as there were on the road, but fortunately we didn't hit any of them. We got over to the X Corps and found this big offensive underway.

One of our first jobs as engineers was to build a road up the valley behind the front line positions. Since the ROKs had lost all the old positions that had a road network behind them, there was no road leading up the valley to our positions. When I first got there I met with the regimental commander and I also met with the battalion commander from a supporting corps engineer battalion. The regimental commander had asked the engineer battalion commander how long it would take to build a road up there and he said it could be done in a month's time.

I came in—a brash, young first lieutenant at that point. The regimental commander said, “How long will it take you to put a road in here so we can get trucks up?” I said, “Four days.” I got the big horselaugh. I didn't know why since I didn't realize he had this other estimate. Four days later we had trucks going up there. We did this by running dozers up and dropping them down in position, blasting ahead of time and doing the whole road simultaneously instead of just working slowly from one end. If you had worked from one end it probably would have taken you a month.

I learned this on the job and immediately applied it. That's why you really can take a biology major and make him into a very fine combat engineer com-

pany commander—if he's got the initiative to do the job. It's just when he gets higher up that he begins to have problems.

At the time I felt—and I'm typical of my contemporaries—that if they wanted to make me a battalion commander, I was ready. I was cocky and had been able to show that I could do these things. It probably was very much like that during the war in Europe. If it had been the European Theater and all the commanders had been killed, one of my contemporaries or I would have taken over and done a credible job. We had as much experience as some of those battalion commanders had in Europe.

But it was a very narrow experience—combat engineering and support of an infantry division, doing all the different kinds of things you have to do. Later, when I was a battalion commander in Vietnam, I mentioned to one of my company commanders that as a company commander with 15 months in the Army under my belt, I felt that I could handle a battalion. He laughed and said, “There's no way you could do what you're doing here with 15 months under your belt.” He might have been right, but with the very limited role that you had with a battalion, I was sure I could have handled it.

I'm sure a lot of other people would have done equally well with that kind of experience, but the initiative comes from being given jobs and being allowed to do them. You didn't have any of this silly zero defects

I think zero defects definitely went way overboard; it was a terrible idea. Zero defects means you never take a risk. You hide behind it; you're so safe that you can't do anything wrong.

Engineers clear a new supply  
route to the front lines, 1951  
RG 111, SC-379090



thing. You made mistakes and learned from them. Then you didn't make the same mistakes again.

When I went to the 5th RCT we had an incident with Max Howard, one of my engineer platoon leaders. I sent him ahead with his platoon to do some blasting and I heard these very loud noises—obviously he wasn't tamping his charges enough. In a good blast you hardly hear anything but a rumble and all the rock moves. So, I



Men of the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion repair a road damaged by an enemy mine near Changp'yong, June 1951  
RG 111, SC-369972

went up there and I told him, "Hey, this is not the way to do it" and got him aside. He was really taken aback but he never did that again—all of his blasts in the future were quiet and effective.

Well, under the zero defects, if I went up there and said, "You're relieved, Max. You don't know how to blast" that would have been stupid. You learn these things quickly and you hopefully don't make the same mistakes too often. There's nothing like practical experience. And you can learn from people in your unit. A private, first class, who saw something in civilian life, might say, "Hey, why don't you try this?" If you're willing to listen and learn you can get to be pretty good, pretty fast. I think zero defects definitely went way overboard; it was a terrible idea. Zero defects means you never take a risk. You hide behind it; you're so safe that you can't do anything wrong. You might not accomplish anything but you're good and safe.

The 5th RCT was a very exciting experience for me being a part of the combined arms teams. I learned a lot in the other engineer battalion, but in the 5th RCT I was a little king. I was the regimental engineer as a first lieutenant. Later, I was amused in Vietnam when they had majors doing that job.

We just got along great with the infantry and they depended on us. One time in X Corps, when our people were taking out mines, I heard a bunch of infantry saying, "Thank God we're not engineers." You

were right there with them all the way. You really felt part of a team.

We moved back over to IX Corps again when the war ended. We were told that the war was going to end at midnight. The original instructions were, since it was going to end at midnight, there would be no more firing unless the other guy fired first. After a little bit someone fired, and then the fire was returned. Both sides apparently thought that they might as well use up all the ammunition. The place was just like the 4th of July with explosions going all over the place.

We were attached to the 45th Infantry Division [a federalized National Guard division]. Our mission after the cease-fire was to mark the southern limit of the demilitarized zone, which was several hundred meters wide. We would have Chinese over on the other side marking their limit. While all the firing was going on prior to the cease-fire, I got called over to see the engineer battalion commander of the 45th Division. He said, "All right, we've got this mission," which I already knew I had. "These are the sectors." My sector was about half as big as his battalion sector. He said, "Now, I want this done right so I want you to go out there and I don't want anyone to sleep." It was a three-day job. I told him, "That's not the way I planned to take on the job. My men will be allowed to get some rest and they will complete on time." He said, "You will

do it the way I told you to do it." We did it our way and we completed it on time.

When the war ended, the 5th RCT moved back to a reserve position in the I Corps area. Since the war was over I asked to be released to return to the States. Max Howard took over command of the 72d. Even though I liked the people, I had been in Korea 19 months. I had extended twice and I was ready to go home. 🏰

**D**uring World War II, Lt. Gen. Walton Walker was in the Third Army under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. My strongest impression about Gen. Walker was that he tried to mimic Gen. Patton. He certainly did a superb job in Korea with what he had to do it with. Every day was a fire brigade, trying to put out a fire in a different place. He kept his finger on the pulse personally by his personal reconnaissance and his close contact with his field commanders. I thought he did a great job.

One day Gen. Walker was driving past a South Korean truck column. Some of the Koreans' trucks were British trucks with the right-hand drive. One of these trucks forced Gen. Walker's car off the road. When the truck stopped ahead of him, Walker's short-tempered aide jumped out, ran up, and opened the left-hand door. He grabbed a South Korean in the truck and socked him in the jaw—hit him off the seat for driving like he had—but, he was the *passenger*. The driver was on the other side. Walker's driver drove like hell. He'd get in that jeep and just go hell-bent-for-leather up the road. Walker was on his way back from our headquarters just before Christmas 1950 when he had that accident that killed him. He had just left the headquarters about a half-hour before.

Lev Allen was a good chief of staff. While Gen. Walker was out in the field so much he ran the show



Brig. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson  
CEHO, Davidson File

from the office end. He was a well-experienced staff man and he ran a good shop.

I developed the greatest admiration for American youth in that operation. One criticism that I would have of General Douglas MacArthur's tour of Japan was that the training of his troops was insufficient. It was adequate, but not what it should have been. These young men certainly weren't in good physical shape. By that, I mean they were flabby. These youngsters, then, living near the fleshpots of Japan, were taken out of that atmosphere where they were living high on the hog. They came over to Korea and were introduced into combat without any

physical preparation. They stood up, first under that hot, humid summer, and then by winter, they were better conditioned. The way they stood up under that bitter winter of '50-'51 was fantastic.

After a while I had a van that I slept in. It had a little makeshift stove in it that depended on dripping oil for its source of heat. Of course during the night that stove would go out. Then the water in my canteen would freeze in the van—it was that *cold*. Fortunately, I had a sleeping bag that I slept in. When I'd go out to see the troops in the daytime I can remember occasions when I was on the top of a hill. That damn wind must have been coming right out of the North Pole. I'd had a good night's sleep in reasonably comfortable circumstances; then I'd visit the units on top of a hill. Here were these GIs, sitting on the edge of their slit trenches, wearing shirts in some cases, with heavy underwear under them, reading comic books. I'd go up there, turn my back to the wind, and try to stay there for a few minutes talking to their platoon sergeants or company commanders. I couldn't take it much longer. I had to get off that damn hill and get down behind protection. These youngsters had been up there all night for nights on end. They turned into very, very rugged individuals. I think the transition they made—the way they stood up under the conditions and the way they fought—was great.

The ROK army as a whole was terrible. We had the best commander with us, Maj. Gen. Paik Sun Yup,

ROK 1st Division. He was a good commander, but the troops were certainly unreliable to the nth degree. On the other hand we had three ROK soldiers in the squad who intermingled with the Americans and they did fine. They trained with our troops, used our equipment, and ate in our messes. They were assimilated easily.

When we first got them, they'd never seen that volume of food as were in our messes. They'd get in the mess line and go through it two or three times, as often as they could. After they'd filled their bellies up they'd go out on the field and “toss their cookies.” The food was too plentiful and rich for them. After a while they learned to tone it down a little bit. From what I saw, they turned out to be good soldiers and worked well with our troops.

My first combat experience with the division, except for P'ohangdong—which was a short operation, a skirmish really—was after the breakout from the Naktong perimeter. The North Koreans were on the run, so I didn't see too much of them from a combat point of view. I tried to talk to some of the prisoners, but I didn't see the North Korean army in operation. I certainly didn't see them in their hey-day as they came down, but they were more motivated than the South Koreans.

When we went north, hell-bent-for-leather, we sent out these patrols and got our nose bloodied each time. We didn't know what the hell was up there. We'd been pursuing these North Koreans as fast and as closely as

Here were these GIs, sitting on the edge of their slit trenches, wearing shirts with heavy underwear reading comic books. I'd go up there, turn my back to the wind, and try to stay there for a few minutes talking to their platoon sergeants or company commanders.

we could. They hadn't given us any opposition to speak of.

When we got back to the Ch'ongch'on River line I was left with a task force [*TASK FORCE DAVIDSON*, 4 November 1950] to hold a bridgehead north of the line in the event that the Eighth Army was sent north a second time. We had quite a fight there one night. The next morning I went out on the battlefield and rode over the terrain. That was the first time I saw a Chinese soldier. They made this attack and they'd gotten the hell beaten out of them. Our troops did a good job. The Chinese retreated just before dawn and pulled way back. We were not in contact because they left hurriedly and moved so fast. There were bodies around the battlefield. They were well clothed, with good quality, quilted clothing, and the men were obviously well fed. The dead bodies on the field gave the impression of a well-equipped, well-fed, and, probably an efficient army. When the real fighting later took place with the Chinese army, I was out of the division.

After Walker's death, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway took over the Eighth Army and changed things greatly. He did a superb job. He had an advantage over Gen. Walker in that he came from Washington and knew the circumstances in Washington. He knew more about the availability of troops, the available supplies, and more about the general situation. He was able to get more,

particularly heavy artillery units, over there with the necessary supplies. He turned the thing right around.

One day he came up to our headquarters right after he reported. He came unexpectedly and I was in my tent or van. When I came to the meeting in my shirt, but without a steel helmet, he sent me back to get my helmet. Like Gen. Patton in North Africa, he wanted to impress upon me the fact that it was a combat command and he was ready for combat on all occasions. So, I went back, got my helmet, and then joined the conference.

Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet was a fine man, well experienced, calm, and really a soldier's soldier. He was a superb combat commander [Eighth Army].

Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn was a great corps commander. He was a little guy but he was feisty. He was very capable and personable. They called him Shrimp Milburn because he was so small. Despite his size he had been a quarterback at West Point and later was a football coach, so we had a little extra community of interest between us.

I questioned what MacArthur did on three occasions. Number one, my proposed line for the Pusan defenses had been summarily turned down. I wasn't used to being turned down. Gen. Patton and Gen. Patch had pretty consistently approved what I had done in previous situations. I had been able to think this through. Whether Gen. Walker agreed with the line that General MacArthur outlined, or whether he did it just because

They [the Chinese] made this attack and they'd gotten the hell beaten out of them....There were bodies around the battlefield....The dead bodies on the field gave the impression of a well-equipped, well-fed, and, probably an efficient army.

General MacArthur had given him an order or a quasi-order to construct along those lines, I don't know. I thought the decision with respect to that line couldn't be supported because it was too long and the terrain wasn't as good. The communications were not as good as they were in the line that I chose. If you're going to execute an interior defense with a small number of troops, you've got to depend on your internal lines of communication.

Number two, I thought it was foolish to hold us up when the Marines landed at Inch'on. They should have let us keep the pressure on the North Koreans, which he could have done either by sending the Marines north, or by letting us go through them, giving us their supplies. He had no control over stopping at the 38th Parallel.

The third thing, and the worst of all, was the organization after the X Corps came over from Japan. How a man with General MacArthur's intelligence, training, and background could have permitted that kind of an organization I could never understand. I do not understand it still to this day. Here you had three corps operating—counting the Koreans there were more. His chief of staff, Gen. Almond, commanded the easternmost corps, separated from the others by a mountain range. Although he was corps commander in Korea, he retained his position as chief of staff and was not put under Gen. Walker, or, later, Gen. Ridgway. So, he was reporting to himself from Korea back to Japan. The intelligence and the



information we got were coming that roundabout way. Instead of having him under the Eighth Army in Korea, he was operating to a degree as an independent corps. How General MacArthur permitted Gen. Almond to set up that kind of organization I really don't understand. There wasn't the unity of command, the cohesion, or the interchange of information that there should have been. 🏰

Huddled against the cold, Chinese prisoners are guarded by the 7th Marines, December 1950  
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A5377

**L**ieutenant Bratton went to Korea with hopes of commanding a company, but was quickly appointed engineer supply officer. He recalls how he spent much of his time scrounging for badly needed heavy equipment and spare parts. Later his unit produced hundreds of pre-fabricated “kits” for tent platforms and bunkers to improve living conditions for troops in the field.

I was with the 70th Engineer Battalion in Austria and reassigned directly to Korea from Europe. I was assigned to the 9th Engineer Combat Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, along the way, and told to reapply for Korea. I did that shortly after arriving at Fort Lewis in August 1952. Some weeks later that was approved. I was given orders to report in January 1953. That was how long the procedure took. I signed out of the 9th Engineers around Christmas 1952, went home for a short leave, and reported back to Fort Lewis again before shipping to Korea.

I was glad to leave. Having volunteered for Korea and watched from the sidelines, I was concerned that it might play out completely before I'd get there. It was kind of a selfish feeling I guess, but it made me anxious to leave Fort Lewis and get on with getting to Korea, rather than staying longer in an outfit that, from my point of view, was not particularly beneficial from the standpoint of training or learning.

Having volunteered for Korea and watched from the sidelines, I was concerned that it might play out completely before I'd get there.

I believed Korea was important to my career. I probably thought so more than I might in retrospect. I had missed all combat in World War II, and if I wound up missing all combat duty in the Korean War, I would be lacking something in my professional background that many of my contemporaries would have had. I felt that this would have been disadvantageous.

I also felt at the time—a bit altruistically—that we had been trained to go to war and here was a war going on. I'd already spent most of it sitting over in Europe. I certainly didn't want to spend the rest of it sitting in Fort Lewis, Washington. I was chomping at the bit. I remember several times calling the various offices and channels that my papers had gone through to see where on earth my transfer to Korea was. When it finally came through I was very relieved, anxious to get on the way.

While I was still in Austria, we used to get periodic reports describing the engineer activities in Korea. We even got film clips. Some of the clips were engineer specific. Some were just general film clips of combat action in Korea. They were very popular. They also were useful; many of them illustrated points that I recognized readily when I finally did get to Korea and was able to apply some of those so-called lessons learned.

The trip to Korea was difficult. My ship sailed from Seattle. I was assigned as the administrative officer on the ship in charge of all the troop records. There were about 2,000 troops on the ship. On our way to our port



When we went up to the 7th Division, I remember going up in a packet of 14 officers....Of the 14 officers, I was one of two who was not wounded or killed in the next few weeks.

of destination, Yokohama, Japan, an unfortunate thing happened just off Midway Island in the Pacific. The main reduction gear of the ship broke and we were dead in the water and helpless. It could not be repaired at sea and we had to be towed by a seagoing tug back to Pearl Harbor.

When we got back to Pearl Harbor they had diverted another ship. It was the *Patch*, a large troop ship, which was already loaded and on its way to Korea. They put all of us on the *Patch*, which meant double bunking and all the other inconveniences that one puts up with on a double-loaded ship. Twenty-four hours after we got back to Pearl Harbor in our disabled ship we sailed again on the *Patch* and went to Yokohama. We lost a number of days because the towing operation from somewhere near Midway Island back to Pearl was done at a speed of only about three knots.

Eventually we got to Yokohama. We went from there to Camp Drake, where we were given some initial training. We reloaded back onto another ship at Yokohama and sailed to Inch'on, where we disembarked. It was only after we got to Inch'on, incidentally, that we received orders to our units, in my case, the 13th Engineers, 7th Infantry Division. We stayed at Inch'on at a replacement depot for about three days and then went by train up to where the 7th Division was located.

I had no idea that I was going to the 7th. I had requested a divisional combat battalion and that was what I got, so I was happy. Part of our shipment went to the

2d Engineers in the 2d Division; the rest of us went to the 13th Engineers.

When we went up to the 7th Division, I remember going up in a packet of 14 officers. I was the senior one so I was the packet commander. I had 13 other lieutenants under my "command."

We arrived at a time when the 7th Division was engaged in heavy action. Most of the packet officers were infantry lieutenants and they were immediately placed into a combat situation. Several of them lost their lives and others were wounded. Of the 14 officers, I was one of two who was not wounded or killed in the next few weeks. There was only one other engineer in the packet of 14. He was assigned as a company commander in the 13th Engineers and was rather severely wounded only about a week after he arrived.

I stayed at division headquarters for two days for orientation and a series of briefings and then went directly to the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion. When I first arrived the battalion commander and the executive officer interviewed me. Then, I had a short briefing at each of the staff sections at battalion headquarters and it was arranged for me to visit each of the companies.

I had hoped that I was going to be assigned again as a company commander but that was not in the cards. I was assigned as assistant S-4 with the thought that I would be the battalion supply officer. The S-4 himself, a senior captain, later major, was the Division Engineer

Supply Officer. It didn't work out exactly like that. I eventually became the Division Engineer Supply Officer when the other officer went home.

Initially, I was disappointed because it was my only chance to command a company under combat conditions, but my request of the battalion commander was politely turned down. I did visit each of the companies in that orientation, which I guess took about two days, and developed an idea where the companies were and how they were operating. Our three companies, A, B, and C, were in direct support of the three infantry regiments. Our fourth line company—what we called the Dog Company, you'd call it Delta now—was in general support of the whole division and we had a large headquarters company.

The battalion commander was Earl Hickey, a senior lieutenant colonel. Later, I knew him after he'd been promoted to full colonel—a man, incidentally, for whom I had great respect in every way. He was a very strong leader and a strong commander. He ran a very good battalion. Our executive officer was Fred Proctor, who later had a successful career in the Corps of Engineers. I thought he was outstanding. Our battalion S-3, or operations officer, was Col. Joe Jansen, with whom I've maintained a friendship all through the years. He was another excellent officer.

One of the officers in the battalion when I first got there, who had been wounded and left the battal-

ion shortly after I arrived, was my good friend Bucky Harris, later Maj. Gen. Harris in the Corps of Engineers.

I had no experience with the DESO (Division Engineer Supply Officer) as a function of the battalion S-4; I'd never seen it function that way. The person assigned as S-4 of the engineer battalion was a supply officer for engineer equipment for the entire division. As such, I had a lot of responsibilities that transcended anything I'd learned earlier about being a battalion S-4. Each of the divisions over there operated in that fashion, and that was the way the TO&E was drawn up. Although I'd been in combat battalions in Europe and the States, and they were division combat battalions, there was no real division in which to apply the DESO concept.

I spent most of my time while I was in the 7th Division overseeing the requisitioning and the receipt and the distribution of engineer supplies. A lot of that was what we used to call Class IV material, fortification material, and timbers to build bunkers. Later, after the war ended, I was heavily involved with the effort to get the troops into some sort of shelter for that first postwar winter. We manufactured many tent kits. We sent all over the Pacific Theater to get Quonset huts and prefabricated buildings and so forth. It was a tremendous job. We were literally working at that seven days a week, 16 to 18 hours a day through that whole fall and winter of 1953.

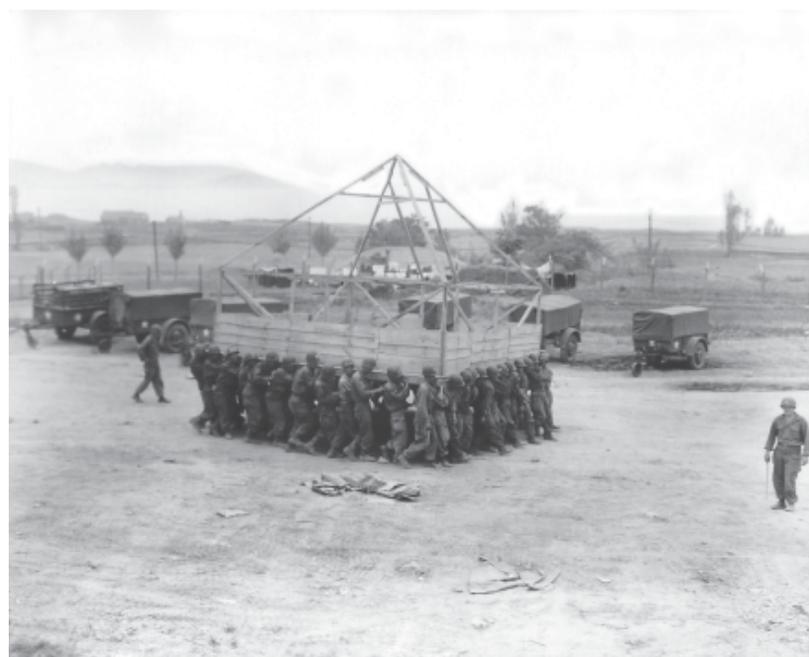
Even at the end of my tour, we were still writing airmail letters to the manufacturer with money orders to get parts to keep our generators running. It was a problem when I got there in March 1953, and it was a problem when I left in May 1954.

This was different from anything I'd ever done. I learned by doing. We got a lot of support from the division G-4, and indeed, support from the division chief of staff. It became a very important thing for the division in that first postwar winter to get the troops out of the tents, bunkers, and holes they'd been living in back at the base camps. Ironically, I myself spent all that winter in a tent. Fortunately, it was well equipped with stoves.

For a while, it was difficult getting sufficient explosives. We were using lots of explosives of various kinds, and we went through a period where that was a crunch. Then, for a while we couldn't get enough bunker timber to build the bunkers that were being installed in such large numbers by the front-line troops.

There was a tremendous demand for sandbags. I used to requisition them by the tens of thousands at a time. Once or twice there was a shortage, and a great scream of anguish would come up from people who needed more sandbags and couldn't get them.

By and large, although I mentioned exceptions, normally I was able, by good planning and by going to a number of different depots around the Korean peninsula, to supply the division with everything it wanted. I



Soldiers move a wooden tent frame into position at a camp outside of Pusan RG 111, SC-350636

don't think we ever suffered in any significant way operationally by a shortage of engineer materials.

We were always scrounging to get more equipment. We were trying to get more bulldozers, and we wound up with way more bulldozers than we were authorized. We needed them to cut roads out of the hills and mountains along the front.

We had a lot of problems with keeping cranes running. Since I never could get two cranes of the same make and model, getting spare parts for one crane didn't help

you when the other crane broke down. I became a great advocate of buying standardized makes and models to ease the maintenance problems over there. That applied to a number of other types of equipment as well, but the cranes gave us the biggest problem. We were using cranes heavily, especially in off loading at the railhead all of the timber and other supplies that would arrive. It was not uncommon for a while in the fall of '53 and the winter of '54 to receive a train car with 50 flat cars loaded with heavy material to be unloaded. You had to have cranes working around the clock to do that.

### Generator Problems

One of the most annoying pieces of equipment that we were responsible for were the generators, which provided the electricity for lighting and other purposes through the division area. There was a terrible problem getting and maintaining enough generators. Here again, the make and model thing was a very annoying factor. You'd have parts on hand for one type of generator, but you'd receive a different kind of generator. Keeping the generators in good repair as far as providing parts and doing the mechanical work that had to be done on them was a major problem.

When one of the large generators, those providing light and power for division headquarters, went down for any reason, you had tremendous pressure placed on you to get that generator back up and running as quickly

as possible. For several weeks after the war ended it seemed to me that the biggest problem we had in the 7th Division was generators. Someone should have realized that if you were shipping 5 kW generators to a particular division, you ought to ship all the same makes and models and get the right parts there to keep them running. A couple of models of small generators, 3 kW and 5 kW's, performed very poorly. You'd issue a brand new generator to a unit and a week later it would be inoperable with no parts to fix it.

The engineer battalion was responsible for all the generators in the division. It was the responsibility of the supply officer. Why our battalion maintenance officer didn't play more of a role, I'm not really sure. Although these difficulties with generators may sound petty to you now, it seemed to me that as far as generators were concerned, the burden of the world fell on my shoulders.

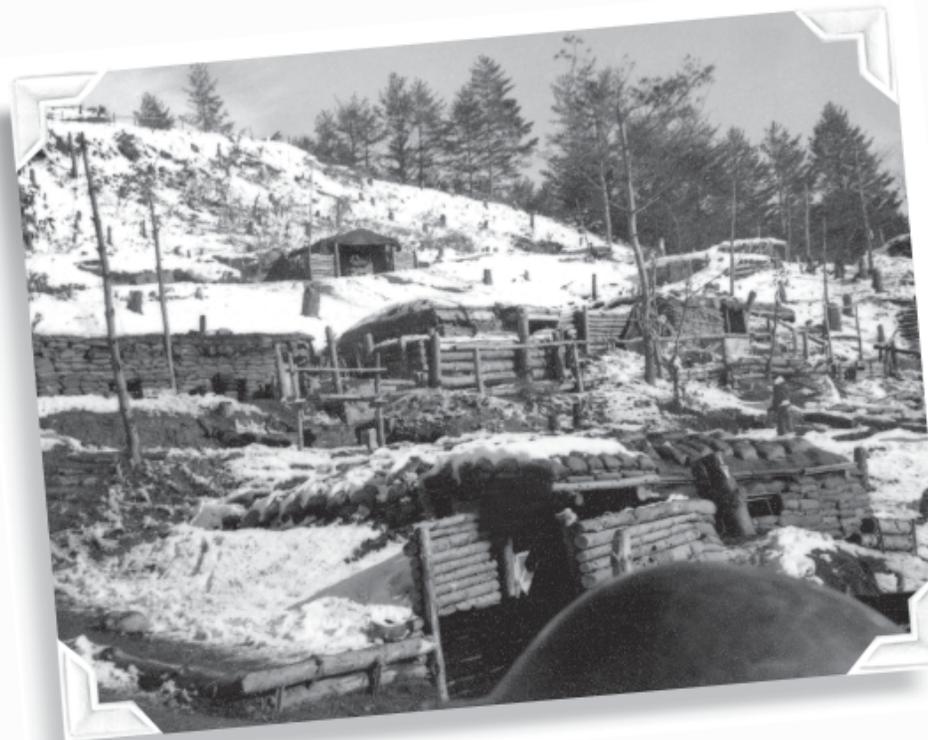
We improved by adopting certain procedures, and by a lot of effort down at the supply depots to get parts and to get generators that had some sort of a backup supply. But I'll tell you the truth—even at the end of my tour, we were still writing airmail letters to the manufacturer with money orders to get parts to keep our generators running. It was a problem when I got there in March 1953, and it was a problem when I left in May 1954.

That puts a tremendous burden on a front-line division. The only way you could run that job of divi-

...we were making tent kits. These had nothing to do with defensive positions on the line. It was an effort to get the troops out of the mud and the dirt....

One of my biggest jobs as Division Engineer Supply Officer was running all through Korea trying to find more equipment....One had to be very aggressive because everyone else was out scrounging around looking for the same types of things.

sion engineer supply officer well would be to literally work at it seven days and nights a week. Fortunately I had some superb people. I had two or three NCOs who were just absolutely marvelous. I always had an assistant who was a lieutenant. I managed to get some good young officers who'd served their time out in platoons, who weren't senior enough to command a company, so I'd bring them in for their last three or four months and make them assistant supply officers. They were frequently the ones who wound up with the jeep at 0200 going back to repair someone's generator.



Bunkers built by infantry units operating in the Punch Bowl area, December 1952  
Cochran Collection

### Prefabricated Kits

While the war was still going on, one of the most important aspects of the defensive positions in our division area was the construction of a refurbished set of trenches and bunkers for defensive purposes. The bunkers were of a variety of types. There were fighting bunkers, observation bunkers, communications bunkers, and observation post bunkers.

We came up with the standard design in our division, which was made out of large timbers that were cut to size and made into a kit. We called them bunker kits, and it consisted of a large package of timber, drift pins, and large nails to build the bunker when you got it out on site. It was all banded up with steel bands. Any outfit—not just an engineer unit—an infantry unit, or an artillery unit, could get one of these bunker kits, load it on a truck, drive it as close as they could to where they wanted to put it, unpack it and install it on site. We had a very ingenious set of plans, which we guaranteed that even an infantry squad would have no trouble understanding when assembling the bunker. By and large it worked that way. We issued hundreds of these things. We established a prefabrication yard back in our battalion CP area where these different types of bunker kits were turned out en masse using large sawmill type operations. It was very successful.

At the same time we were doing that we were making tent kits. These had nothing to do with defensive

positions on the line. It was an effort to get the troops out of the mud and the dirt, if not out of tents, by building what amounted to a floor and a framework for the squad and parametal tents we were using. We turned those out by the hundreds. Again, they would be issued to the units that needed them. They would come and pick them up, wrapped in bundles, with suitable little diagrams on how to assemble them. That saved engineer effort. A lot of non-engineers could take our simple plans and the materials we gave them, and with a few hammers and crowbars and things, they could erect the tent kit as well as we could have.

I think all of the divisions had some form of pre-fabricated kits because, at the time I was in Korea, the front line had stabilized. There was great emphasis on improving the defensive positions along that line, which roughly paralleled what the demilitarized zone is today. All the divisions came up with one plan or another, each one a little bit different. We kept constantly revising our kits as we got better ideas, and we'd get reports back from the people using the bunkers that said, "Why don't you have a port here? Why don't you make it one timber higher here?"

There was some site adaptation, too. One prefab kit would be purchased for each site, so there was some modification and digging involved. Our bunker kit program was one of the more successful things that we did. I don't mean to imply that we simply turned these out



and gave them to the other units in the division to put up. We did a lot of the erecting ourselves. An engineer battalion in a division is always over stretched so it was very helpful to have something that the other units could assemble and use on their own.

### The Defensive Period

We rarely saw anyone from Eighth Army. We frequently had teams in the division area, and we had a lot of interchange with the staff of I Corps, which was

Built to house  
12 soldiers, this  
pre-fabricated  
bunker could be  
assembled in  
about an hour  
Engineer School,  
250-12-130

headquartered down in Seoul. I can only recall one time that a senior team from Eighth Army visited our battalion, or even our division. There may have been visits and contacts that I wasn't aware of at my relatively low level.

I Corps, on the other hand, worked with us frequently and we saw the corps commander and his staff often. In the case of our battalion, we did a lot of work with the corps' engineer, his staff, and the troop units that were part of the corps' engineer outfits.

The TO&E allotment for equipment to an organic engineer battalion in a division, such as the 13th Engineers, certainly was inadequate for what we were doing in Korea. What we were able to do was get special authorizations for additional heavy equipment and equipment of all kinds and sizes. Eventually, we had four or five times as many bulldozers as the TO&E authorized us, as well as a number of road graders, front loaders, and cranes.

When augmented with equipment, we had plenty of it. If we'd been limited strictly to the TO&E, we couldn't have done the job. One of my biggest jobs as Division Engineer Supply Officer was running all through Korea trying to find more equipment. If you discovered some available, it was a question of sending



Equipment stored at an Engineer Depot, September 1952 Engineer School, 170-11-128

something down to pick it up. One had to be very aggressive because everyone else was out scrounging around looking for the same types of things.

I remember one day going back to one of the depots south of Seoul and finding eight brand new, unpacked D-8 angle dozers. Well, an angle dozer was worth its weight in gold if you were cutting the roads around the Korean hills. I was able to get four of those eight because I was the discoverer. I never did know how long they'd been there, perhaps a year or two. It was not a place where we normally went, or a place that normally serviced our requisitions. Once we discovered

them we sent lowboys down, picked them up, and had them working in the division in two or three days.

Although an Engineer Maintenance and Supply Group in the Seoul area tried to do a good job, they were swamped when it came to locating all of the available equipment. The war had been going on for three years and in that time a lot of the equipment and supplies had poured into Korea. Some of it was not well-tracked by paper, especially in the earlier days when the impetus was, “Get the stuff over there and we’ll straighten it out later.”

We had no property accountability, as such, when I first went over there. Very shortly after the hostilities ended in July ’53, big efforts were made to establish proper supply accountability. It was much easier to operate when there was no property accountability. You got what you needed as best you could, even though you couldn’t always get what you wanted. You got the job done quickly and asked questions later. That changed when the war ended. People were less apt to do you favors than they had been while the hostilities were still going on. Everybody became more conscious of control and cost economy.

### Troop Morale

A constant concern of the soldiers in our line companies had to do with the system by which points were assigned to give you credit for your tour in Korea. The number of

points accumulated governed when you could leave Korea. The system established different categories of work depending on your locality, the danger you faced, the amount of combat effort you put out, and so forth. It assigned you a certain number of points per month. In our divisional engineer battalion our soldiers received three points per month. When you reached a certain total of points you could rotate home.

The infantrymen with whom our frontline soldiers were working every day were getting four points a month. Our troops were always disgruntled if they were up there and felt they were facing the same dangers and hardships but were only getting three points. That remained a morale problem; it was never changed. On the other hand, some of the other outfits were only getting two points a month and, in some cases, they encountered similar dangers and difficulties. When a general rule is established to cover many thousands of people there are always some disparities.

I was always tremendously impressed with how well the soldiers performed in Korea and with the sacrifices they were willing to make under very difficult conditions—not just engineers, but all the soldiers over there.

There were gradations of living conditions. The infantrymen up on one of the outpost hills in our division lived a completely different life and saw a completely different Korea than the fellow back at division headquarters. He, in turn, lived a completely different life

The captain commanding one of our companies had to sell himself and his engineer capabilities to the regimental commander who was typically a senior infantry colonel. I was always amazed at how well our young guys did this.

and saw a completely different Korea than the fellow down in the rear areas of Korea, the southern parts of Korea and the depots and the supply systems.

It's always that way in any theater. The burden does not fall equally on all soldiers. It depends on where you are and what unit you're in. Our guys took a lot of satisfaction in feeling that they were up front doing the job, and they used to look, fairly or unfairly, down somewhat on the people who never heard a gun go off in Korea.

We were not augmented in personnel. The rear-area roadwork was picked up by the corps engineers. We could never have taken care of the entire division road net. As far as working with the infantry regiments and the other units of the division, we were adequately manned and staffed.

It placed a great burden on our young company commanders, because our Companies A, B, and C were assigned to support each one of the infantry regiments. Depending on how the regiment operated, and depending on the skill, personality, and leadership of the engineer company commander, that worked extremely well, or it had difficulties.

The captain commanding one of our companies had to sell himself and his engineer capabilities to the regimental commander who was typically a senior infantry colonel. I was always amazed at how well our young guys did this. I had hoped to be one of these company

commanders myself when I went over there, but it didn't work out that way.

We were blessed with an excellent division engineer while the war was still going on, and another equally outstanding commander when the first one left after the cease-fire. These men had seniority and were qualified to explain engineer missions and the role of the engineers. Each of them became a valuable adjunct to the division staff and to the combat power of the division as well.

We never used the term "combat multiplier" then, but as I look back on it, I think a very good case could have been made for its use. In fact, both of our battalion commanders, near the end of their tours, became the chief of staff of the division, which is very unusual. It was recognition of the fact that the engineers had done a lot of good work in that division and identified themselves as very capable people. The wartime commander was Col. Earl Icke, and Col. Paul O'Neil succeeded him. Both were very outstanding people.

I joined the division during a very difficult time when they were actively involved in intense fighting on a hill called Old Baldy [March 1953]. In April of 1953 the division was heavily engaged in the first battle of Pork Chop Hill, which is the one in the movie, the one most people think of.

In the first week of July 1953 the division was heavily committed in a series of conflicts, the most promi-

It was alternating freezing and thawing, kind of miserable weather. I lived two Korean winters in a tent and I found it a terribly unpleasant way to live. You tended to be cold most of the time.

ment of which was the second battle of Pork Chop Hill. The division eventually was forced to withdraw from the hill. That was a very costly battle. Ironically, just three weeks later the cease-fire was signed.

Close to the time of the cease-fire, in about the third week of July 1953, there was another hard-fought battle on a hill called Westview [the next hill to the southeast of Old Baldy]. An outstanding regimental commander, Col. Dolman, was the officer in charge and did a magnificent job. The battle of Westview was the last big battle fought by the division in the war. It was only about a week or 10 days after that before the cease-fire came.

Our division took quite a beating during that last month of the war. Company A, commanded by Capt. Jim Brettell, was the direct support company for the 17th Infantry Regiment. It was a portion of the 17th Infantry that was on Pork Chop Hill when the very heavy onslaught around 1 July 1953 was made against the hill. The regiment took heavy casualties and our Company A took casualties. That was when we had our Medal of Honor winner, one of our Company A soldiers [Cpl. Dan D. Schoonover, Company A, 13th Engineers]. Jim Brettell, the A Company commander, was a hero in his own right. He was a man of towering strength and great leadership. The regiment's great confidence in him was well placed. He was a very valuable adjunct to them in their fight on that hill.

But, the division took heavy casualties. The 32d Infantry Regiment relieved the 17th Infantry, because the 17th had received so many casualties. The 32d fought well, but also took casualties. Finally, it was no longer profitable to continue defending the hill, so we withdrew.

A series of outposts along our line marked the MLR. Various units of the infantry regiments manned these outposts as sort of a first line of defense. Typically, they would take a lot of manpower, sometimes an entire rifle company, beefed up with heavier weapons.

Some of them were isolated forward of the main line. It was difficult to get to them, because you had to go through what amounted to a "no man's land." There was a pair of these called Arsenal and Erie, which the 17th Infantry manned. Brettell gave what engineer support was needed in these outposts, as well as providing support to the main line. To get out there you had to go along a trail—not a very safe thing to do, especially in daylight in an unarmored vehicle. One would choose to go in an armored personnel carrier or a tank if one had to make the effort.

This particular day, however, the battalion commander, who you would have characterized as rather "gung ho," decided that he wanted to go out to outpost Arsenal and he wanted the engineers to go with him. Well, as luck would have it, I happened to be up working with Company A that day. Brettell said, "Come on.

I felt like a clay pigeon going across a shooting gallery range, watching other clay pigeons being picked off and wondering when I was going to get it. I was scared to death but I was too proud to acknowledge it.

Get in your jeep and follow us.” We took off with three jeeps through this no man’s land.

Halfway out they began shooting at us using mortars, mostly. It was a mighty scary trip. I felt like a clay pigeon going across a shooting gallery range, watching other clay pigeons being picked off and wondering when I was going to get it. I was scared to death but I was too proud to acknowledge it. So, I wrapped my flak vest around me, pulled my helmet down, got in the jeep and said, “Let’s go.” None of us were touched. Maybe the fire wasn’t as close to us as I thought it was, but I would say it was a rather foolhardy journey. The battalion commander got his kicks. He was a very outstanding man with a flare for leadership and he did a great job with that battalion. Brettell was going to go wherever that battalion commander went. Since I was with Brettell I didn’t have a lot of choices. The terrible thought that ran through my mind after I made the trip out there was the realization that I had to come back again. We came back in the same jeeps. The jeep drivers thought we were crazy.

The armistice was signed, or the cease-fire as we called it, on 27 July 1953. The troops had suffered in the previous winters and the CG, Eighth Army, decided, properly so, that a major priority immediately after the cease-fire would be preparations for the next winter. One of the ways of doing this was to get prefabricated buildings up into the division areas and the other areas where

For one reason or another the Korean War tends to get forgotten. I guess it’s because it was so much smaller than World War II, and then it was overshadowed later by Vietnam. But the engineers did play a key role in the Korean activity. It was something we can all be proud of and it should be recorded.



On 27 July 1953, General Mark Clark, UN Supreme Commander in the Far East, signed the armistice documents that became effective three days later  
RG 306, 306-53-10815

we’d been living in tents the previous winter.

The prefab buildings we received came from all over the Pacific Theater. Most of them had been left over from World War II. The largest single shipment we got into the 7th Division came from Okinawa, by rail up from the port at Pusan. They were tropical, prefabricated

huts, designed for a tropical climate, and had been left in Okinawa at the end of World War II. Eight years later, in some condition of deterioration, they were picked up and shipped up to put officers and soldiers in for a Korean winter.

As you can imagine they needed considerable repair. They needed a lot of extra parts and they needed something done to winterize them. That was a big program for the division. We continued making tent kits for the troops who were still going to have to spend another winter in tents. At least we could get them off the ground onto a platform with A-frame tents with special provisions for heating stoves. Many eventually burned up, by the way.

Other types of buildings were being received steadily all through the late summer and fall of 1953. By the time the cold weather came in November '53, the division was semi-winterized, and the men were certainly in a more comfortable state than they'd been in the previous couple of years. It was a major effort that kept our entire battalion busy.

We set up a system again where the units using the prefab buildings would come to the engineer yards and pick up the pieces they needed. Here we ran into more trouble because the buildings were much more complicated than the bunker or tent kits. We had to give the infantry, artillery units, and other units, considerably more assistance. Theoretically, at least, our engineer sol-

diers knew more about setting up the buildings than the other people did. In many cases, however, an engineer soldier didn't know the first thing about putting up a tropical building and winterizing it.

I went all over Korea with the division G-4, Lt. Col. Jack Wright, who later became a lieutenant general and Comptroller of the Army. Col. Wright was a very inspirational man and we worked out a good program together. We'd get in a light aircraft and fly all over Korea trying to find the necessary parts and buildings. We succeeded fairly well in doing what we had to do but it was a big job.

The Korean winter where we were, north of Seoul along the DMZ (demilitarized zone), was a moderately severe winter, with a fair amount of snow and cold weather, but it was nothing like the Korean winter at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. We never got down to those temperatures or had that much snow on the ground. The climate was certainly a more severe climate than in Washington, D.C., and more like you'd find in central Pennsylvania or upstate New York. It was alternating freezing and thawing, kind of miserable weather. I lived two Korean winters in a tent and I found it a terribly unpleasant way to live. You tended to be cold most of the time.

A big problem was finding clean, dry areas to do maintenance on our trucks and our heavy engineer equipment. By the time I left we had established a

series of maintenance parks where we were able to do this under cover very well, with space heaters to heat the space so that the maintenance could be done a little more easily.

It was still quite primitive. How they'd gotten by the first couple of years of the war without any of those facilities was amazing. I'm sure maintenance suffered. It's hard to get a man who's cold, wet, and miserable, to go out in the mud and pull maintenance on a bulldozer. It's much easier if you've got a hard stand, a roof, and a space heater.

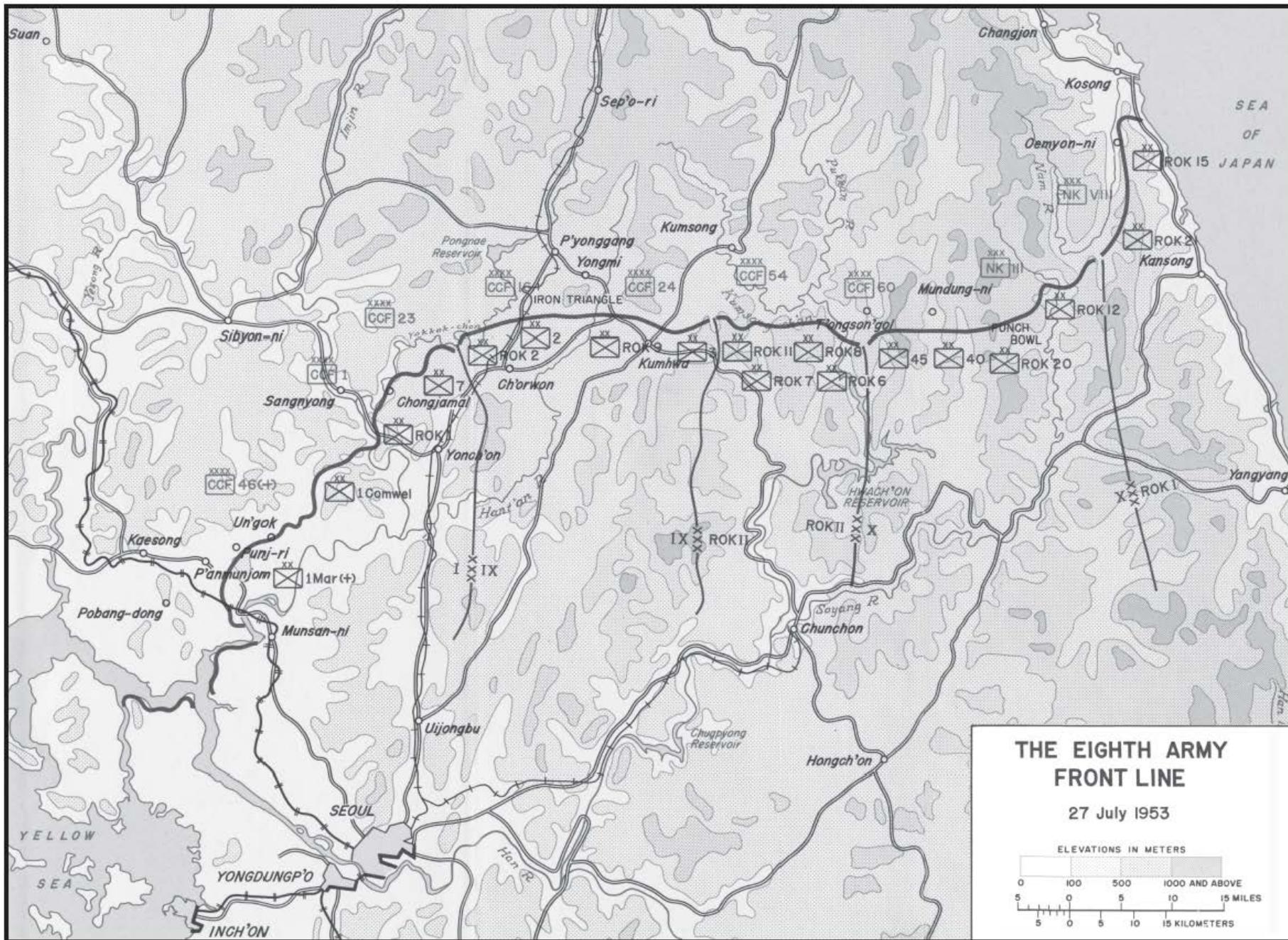


Engineer supplies stored on the pier at Inch'on  
RG 111, SC-354721

Soldiers are remarkable people. They will improvise and carry on under considerable hardship and discomfort when they see the need for it. They really rise to the occasion. Of course, when hostilities ceased, people naturally began to think more about themselves and to expect creature comforts.

I was assistant division engineer only for the last 60 days or so of my stay. That was during a period when I was working with the division G-4 to find materials and buildings for the division. As assistant division engineer my efforts were heavily slanted towards logistics and supply. One of the big challenges was to get the materials we needed and to properly house them. I literally had two offices as assistant division engineer. I had a desk at the battalion headquarters where I spent about a third of the time, and I had a desk up in the division G-4 office where I spent the rest of the time, when I wasn't off hunting things.

It was a lot of fun being assistant division engineer because you got involved in virtually everything going on in the entire division. You got to know the key people in the division and I found it quite exhilarating. I enjoyed my last couple of months very much because it was such a challenge. You're going seven days and nights a week trying to accomplish a job that you know you're not going to finish, but at least you want to get off to a good start so the next guy can pick it up and carry it on. At the time I left the division in April 1954, people were



beginning to plan for the next winter, along with redeployment, and shifting of stocks and supplies.

### Lessons Learned

There was quite a program to bring back lessons learned. We turned in a number of reports. I always sent reports to the I Corps Engineer and to the Eighth Army Engineer. General Lewis J. Rumaggi, the Eighth Army Engineer for part of the time, was an outstanding man. He was personally interested in unit histories and the lessons learned.

While I was the supply officer in the 7th Division, a team from OCE came over with a whole battery of questionnaires and investigators, because they were preparing a history of engineer operations. I never did see the end result of that but we spent a fair amount of time with them. We took them all over the division area, gave them an eyeful and an earful, and provided a lot of good material with which to write an engineer history of Korea.

The transition from war to peace was a busy, confusing, and disruptive time. People were rotating home. New people came in who'd not been there while the war was on so they didn't understand the history of things or why we were doing things the way we were. It was a good time to write lessons learned and a history. There's a very small window when you can capture a team of people who were on the spot and understand what hap-

pened. When the cease-fire came, people began leaving. The information that was available in the summer and fall of '53 was no longer available in one nice, contained package by the spring and summer of '54.

Both of our battalion commanders, Cols. Icke and O'Neal, were very conscious of this. They were well aware of a military history approach to things and they both kept extensive ledgers of their own.

We had a very close-knit battalion, in the sense that we gathered at least once a day, typically after the evening meal. Pretty thorough reports were given; briefings were given on everyone's activities for the day and plans were made for the next day.

Our adjutant, who kept an ongoing ledger of the battalion's activities, wrote down a lot of these things. I know they did the same thing in our S-3 shop. They had an operations book, which noted all the principal activities of the battalion from day to day.

For one reason or another the Korean War tends to get forgotten. I guess it's because it was so much smaller than World War II, and then it was overshadowed later by Vietnam. But the engineers did play a key role in the Korean activity. It was something we can all be proud of and it should be recorded.

When I went over to Korea in 1953, I had four-and-a-half years of service, three of which had been in Europe, and yet I don't recall reading a single thing that prepared me specifically for what I was

If the regiment knew how to use the engineers, and if the engineers were not bashful in explaining their capabilities to the tactical unit commanders, they gained a great deal from the engineers' support.

going to do in Korea. I did see some films of unit actions in the early days of Korea, but at no point was I ever given any piece of paper to read on the Korean conflict by any of my organizations, or by OCE, or by Headquarters DA, that would have prepared me. I was simply sent over.

What's available by way of lessons learned and history is never sufficiently available to the people at the time and place they need it. Of course it takes a tremendous organizational effort, as well as some expense, to bring the pertinent information to the right people early on.

If I'd been smarter when I was getting ready to go over to Korea and had called the right people or written for the right materials, I am sure I could have gotten some. But, in the rush to clear my company command in Fort Lewis, Washington, take a short leave, and get back to ship out to Korea, that fell through the cracks.

Much of what I did when I got to Korea I did not anticipate. I had no thought of being a division engineer supply officer, for example. Even if I had known the book solution on being the DESO, I never would have thought about tent kits, bunker kits, or all the other strange things we wound up doing.

The overwhelming positive lesson I learned was the great value of direct engineer support to the infantry regiments. If the regiment knew how to use the engineers, and if the engineers were not bashful in explain-



ing their capabilities to the tactical unit commanders, they gained a great deal from the engineers' support. I was thrilled to see how well our companies worked with the regiments. That was happening when I arrived and it built up while the 7th Division stayed in Korea. That was a tremendous lesson that I think not only engineers learned, but everybody learned. Again, the word "combat multiplier" applies, although I don't ever remember that term being used at the time of the Korean War.

The engineers' supply and maintenance system did not operate as well as it should have, and there were a lot of lessons to be learned on getting the right mix and models of equipment to the right units. I'm

Soldiers of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion cross the Han River on an improvised ferry  
RG 111, SC-359556

conscious of the problems with maintenance and supply because I was involved in it so much, but it was just a tough battle all the way through to get the right things to the right people at the right time.

I was always impressed with the type of combat leadership we had in the 7th Division, starting with the division commander, Maj. Gen. Arthur G. Trudeau, who was superb, right on down through the units. And, that applied across-the-board, regardless of the branch involved.

Engineers build a ponton bridge across the Imjim River, June 1951  
Engineer School, 42-5-111



One disappointing lesson learned in Korea probably has been true of every combat operation in the history of warfare. The lives led by those doing the fighting differed greatly from the lives of those who were back in rear areas. It just didn't seem fair. I was disappointed that our leadership allowed such a disparity to exist.

Later, when I got to Vietnam, I found the same thing. If I'd been in combat in World War II, I might well have seen it there too. There's a pervasive psychology that tends to build up the amenities for the rear area troops, not necessarily at the expense of, but to a much greater degree than anything that's done for the forward area troops who are, after all, the cutting edge of the effort. This bothered me the whole time I was there. I always returned from a visit to the rear area feeling sort of uneasy and let down about this disparity.

One lesson that I learned was that the things that we'd been taught at the basic school at Fort Belvoir, and our basic military training, actually worked when applied properly in a field environment. There was no need to go off for a lot of ad hoc solutions to problems. The problems were all addressed in your training. If you just recalled the right training and placed it into the situation you encountered, things we had been taught worked. The methods of maintaining roads, building bridges, putting in field fortification, and using demolitions and explosives, all came right out of our basic background and training that the Army had given us.

I'm not sure whether this would apply universally, but the NCOs I encountered did a magnificent job. Our senior NCOs, with very few exceptions, were World War II people. About a third of the others were World War II veterans. Even those who weren't, I thought, did a fine job. The ones I worked with were excellent. They were capable of assuming considerable responsibility.

Another observation was the willingness of the troops to make great sacrifices and to work extremely hard, given decent leadership and guidance. All they had to know was what to do. When they were given guidance and a job to do, they did it very well.

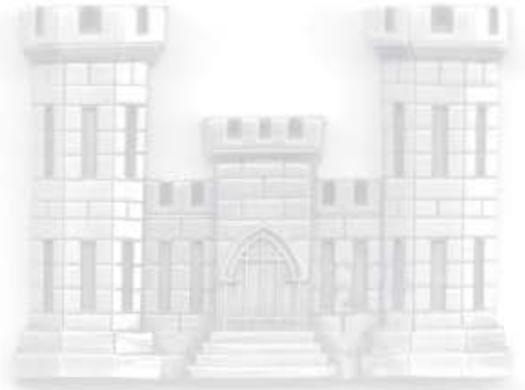
It was a draftee Army. There were Regular Army people, but some of my finest soldiers were draftees who had absolutely no plan to make the Army a career. That would have been the farthest thing from their minds—yet, they were there to do a job and when the pressure was on those people rose to the occasion.

I was notified that I was going back to Fort Belvoir in the late winter of '53-'54. Although I went back to take the Advanced Course, I left the Advanced Course halfway through to revert to reserve status because of family business matters. I left active duty in February 1955 and returned to active duty in November 1955. Consequently, in 1957 I attended the Associate Advanced Course, which I probably would have enjoyed more if I hadn't been to Korea. Some of the things taught in the Advanced Course were very helpful, things that

I had not learned in Korea. Other things were troublesome to those of us who were back from the Korean War, because they didn't jibe completely with our personal experiences.

Of course, you have to look upon this with an open mind. Your perspective depended on your experiences. The fellows who were in the division, as I was, had totally different experiences than some of the people who were back in the rear area engineer units, or on engineer staffs, e.g., Eighth Army headquarters.

There were always some cantankerous students in the Advanced Course who would try to shoot down the instructor because, "...I was in Korea and this is how it really was." That was never a fair thing to do because the Engineer School and the Army schools taught the general case. There were always exceptions where things were done differently or wouldn't have worked just that way. Some of the things I learned in the Advanced Course I wish I'd known before I went to Korea. But there was no substitute for being in the Korean War for learning how a combined arms team operates or how a division staff functions. I learned a great deal from my Korean experiences. 🏰



# Conclusion

When North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel on 25 June 1950, U.S. strategic planners were ill prepared to react. The relatively minor role Korea played in American policymaking in Asia meant that U.S. military forces in the area were focused instead on the Japanese home islands, Okinawa and Taiwan. All of the diplomatic players regarded the division of Korea along the Parallel as a temporary expedient, and the possibility existed that someday, peacefully, the Soviet Union (which bordered North Korea) might dominate the entire peninsula.

Geopolitical realities aside, official Washington could not ignore the North Korean invasion. Watching the Korean Peninsula slide into a backwater of the Soviet orbit was one thing; seeing South Korea fall to naked aggression was quite another. The initial American response was measured—air and naval actions against the north, and additional materiel support for the ROK defenders. However, the fall of Seoul, less than four days after the invasion, clearly demonstrated the need for American ground forces.

Douglas MacArthur's Eighth Army in Japan was hardly prepared for a major ground commitment, but there was no time to flesh out depleted regiments, or to replace worn equipment. If the North Koreans were to be stopped, time was of the essence. MacArthur sent

Maj. Gen. William F. Dean's 24th Infantry Division, because the division was located near Japanese ports closest to Korea. The division landed in Pusan in early July. Two reinforced companies (*TASK FORCE SMITH*) made the initial American contact with enemy forces and were badly bloodied. The war began to exact its terrible toll on the American soldier.

Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer's 3d Engineer Combat Battalion arrived on 5 July in support of the 24th Infantry Division. These men were the first engineers to enter combat, and they, like many other engineers who followed, served as technicians and as infantry—builders and fighters.

During the four or five weeks following the Communist invasion, Americans fought a series of battles against overwhelming odds, while retreating into a defensive perimeter around the Korean port of Pusan. During this retrograde action, the engineers often were simultaneously blowing bridges and building them, clearing minefields and planting them, destroying port facilities and establishing them. Then, there was the endless crush of refugees—always the refugees who, through no fault of their own, often seriously impeded the engineers' operations. Whenever possible, the Army's engineers helped ease the sufferings of these people.

In August-September 1950 the UN forces fought a series of engagements along the defensive positions, all the while building up strength for an offensive

northward. During the North Korean sharp attacks against the Naktong River line, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion fought stubbornly as infantry defending its positions.

In a bold stroke to seize the momentum, on 15 September 1950, MacArthur conducted a successful joint amphibious landing at Inch'on deep behind enemy lines. Engineer units, including the 19th Engineer Combat Group, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, and the 73d Engineer Construction Battalion went ashore at Inch'on, assisting the Marines in the assault landing and in their crossing of the Han River, south and southwest of Seoul. The 13th Engineer Combat Battalion also landed to support the 7th Infantry Division with road building and bridging.

The closely timed Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perimeter found the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion laboring to construct floating bridges over the Naktong for the march northward. Soon thereafter, these engineers also had to bridge the Kum River, where the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion had destroyed the bridges in July during the earlier retreat south.

The North Korean forces, at the end of a long supply line, were in retreat. The Inch'on landing threatened to cut them off from the rear, while unremitting American air attacks made life hazardous. The UN forces moved northward and recaptured Seoul by the end of September 1950.

With the successful Inch'on landing and the Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, the immediate question was how far the UN forces should advance. MacArthur advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that all available Corps of Engineer troops would have to concentrate on repairing the rail lines from Pusan to the 38th Parallel. Air operations had utterly devastated the communications links on both sides of the Parallel. As Eighth Army approached a junction with X Corps' forces near Seoul, officials in Washington (including the JCS) determined that MacArthur should pursue and destroy the North Korean forces. While the UN debated whether UN forces should cross the 38th Parallel, MacArthur received presidential authority to do so.

Lt. Gen. Walton Walker's Eighth Army attacked north from Seoul, capturing the North Korean capital of P'yongyang in October. The 3d Engineer Combat Battalion cleared the highway north to Sinanju, improving it as the main logistical road for Eighth Army's projected drive to the Manchurian border. This roadwork was often accompanied by mine removal, and the Communists frequently used wooden box mines that were difficult to detect and dangerous to remove.

X Corps, under Maj. Gen. Edward Almond, was extracted from Inch'on and moved by sea to Korea's northeast coast. MacArthur, knowing the condition of the roads and shattered rail lines south to Pusan, recog-

nized that the entire UN force could not be supplied this far north through Pusan. Wonsan would have to be cleared of mines and opened as a supply conduit. After an amphibious landing in late October at Wonsan, which had already fallen to ROK forces, X Corps joined the attack northward toward the Yalu River. American troops began talking about going home for Christmas. It was not to be.

Communist Chinese Forces (CCF), having already infiltrated the area, fought with ROK units near the Yalu. In November CCF units ambushed the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, near Unsan, as enemy guerrilla activity intensified throughout Korea. MacArthur ordered the Yalu River bridges bombed for the first time, but still the CCF entered the conflict in waves. A new and dangerous phase of the Korean conflict had opened.

Despite these new threats, the American and ROK forces pushed forward in X Corps area. In mid-November the 17th Infantry, 7th Division, reached the Yalu, but on Thanksgiving Day UN forces were ordered to retreat south. Chinese forces opened a major offensive, striking Eighth Army, especially 2d and 25th Infantry Divisions, along the Ch'ongch'on River in the west and the 1st Marine and the 7th Division in the east near the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. More often than not, the fighting disintegrated into a series of company-sized engagements. The 2d Engineer Construction Battalion was

especially hard hit while fighting through Chinese roadblocks as the 2d Division disengaged and moved south. Gen. Walker, fearing envelopment from the east, struggled to save Eighth Army.

In the east, engineer units were instrumental in X Corps' evacuation from Hungnam. They kept the roads to the North Korean port open for the 1st Marine Division, 3d Infantry Division, and 7th Division to reach the coast, while erecting obstacles behind the American units to slow any Communist pursuit. During the outloading, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade operated the dock facilities. The 10th Engineer Combat Battalion and Navy demolition teams then destroyed the port, after the last American units—along with thousands of civilian refugees—departed on Christmas Eve 1950.

The Communist forces launched a major offensive across the 38th Parallel on New Year's Day 1951, recapturing Seoul in a matter of days. After regrouping along the 37th Parallel, UN forces resumed the offensive, only to run into a severe Chinese counterattack at Chip'yong-ni in early February. At Chip'yong-ni, men of the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion distinguished themselves fighting as infantry, by now a familiar scenario for engineers in Korea. UN forces retook Seoul in mid-March, more for its political and psychological effect than for its military value (apart from the Kimpo Airfield). The fate of the South Korean capital was indicative of the ebb and flow of the fighting. Between the initial

North Korean invasion in June 1950 and March 1951, Seoul changed hands four times and very nearly did so again during another Chinese offensive in April.

During their offensive of April-May 1951, the CCF suffered heavy casualties. UN units once again drove north, reaching the 38th Parallel by mid-June, and moved into defensive positions along the *KANSAS LINE*. This defensive position began in the west near the mouth of the Imjin River, some 20 miles north of Seoul, and ran across the breadth of Korea to Yangyang on the east coast. Preliminary peace discussions began in July at Kaesong, followed by more extensive armistice negotiations in November at Panmunjom, five miles to the east.

Hill fighting marked the conflict thereafter. In a prolonged series of limited engagements and seesaw battles for Korea's high ground, hills with names such as Bloody Ridge, Heartbreak Ridge, Pork Chop Hill, and Old Baldy came to symbolize the Korean experience for many American fighting men. Because of the terrain, engineer units sometimes used aerial tramways to get men and materiel to the ridges. Although limited in objective, the punch and counter-punch engagements for position often involved savage fighting and persisted until the cease-fire was signed on 27 July 1953.

During the years of fighting, the extreme weather conditions and rugged topography placed a severe strain on the men and their equipment. The engineers' oral histories are peppered with references to the dusty Ko-

rean "roads," and the Herculean efforts required keeping those same roads open during the monsoon season. Starting in mid-June and lasting for six or seven weeks, the monsoon season, with its torrential downpours, turned roads covered in dust "like talcum powder" into muddy tracks. Trucks and heavy equipment would sink down and become hopelessly stuck. Consequently, considerable engineer energy was devoted to improving the drainage and slope of the roads. Travelling mostly on foot with limited armor, the enemy did not find the rains as worrisome.

Over the years, most of the trees had been cleared from the Korean hills. When it rained heavily on these defoliated hillsides, the ground was not able to absorb the rainfall. The waters swelled the rivers much more quickly than under normal conditions, often causing unanticipated flooding in the valleys. In only a matter of hours, a dry streambed might be transformed into a river filled with eight to ten feet of rushing water.

The harsh winters also were a shock. Several of the officers commented on the frigid temperatures, even those accustomed to colder regions in Europe and the United States. Military planners did not take the cold into consideration, so winter clothing was not available for most of the troops that first year. Moreover, the troops were expected to be home no later than Christmas 1950. The arctic temperatures caused some of the equipment to freeze up and certainly compounded the difficulties

of maintenance and repair. The engineers who were building bridges needed to spend considerable time in icy water, exposing the men to the harsh elements and making their jobs much more unpleasant. Sometimes, however, the ice permitted movement across a frozen river, such as the Han, without a bridge.

Rough terrain and flooding rivers impeded the engineers' efforts to facilitate the movement of men and materiel. Both the saturated lowlands and the rocky uplands made road building and maintenance difficult. The sudden tendency of Korea's rivers to rage and flood made bridging a nightmare. Three years of adapting to the geography and terrain of Korea burned the names of several rivers—the Naktong, Kum, Han, Imjin, Twinnan, and others—into the memories of those who served.

Soon after the American military entered the Korean conflict, it found that Korea's rudimentary roads, bridges, and railways were incapable of handling the needs of a mechanized army. Engineers were charged with the task of redesigning, strengthening, maintaining, and building the MSRs from the ports of arrival to the front lines. From crowded ports, the routes often ran across rivers and rice paddies, through minefields, and up into the mountains.

Most of the troops and supplies arrived by ship. Some ships in the harbor at Pusan, loaded with engineers' supplies, waited for months to be unloaded. Removing obstacles and mines from the ports was largely

an engineer responsibility. Engineers also assisted in the unloading process, moving the supplies to shore and using cranes for heavy lifts from landing crafts. The 50th Engineer Port Construction Company built port facilities and also laid miles of underwater pipeline to bring fuel ashore from tankers. Their master divers also were valuable in assisting with underwater ship repairs. Consequently, the engineers had significant responsibilities in the ports during both landings and evacuations.

Once the ships were unloaded, the Korean railway system strained to distribute the supplies. The rail system both in North and South Korea quickly became overburdened when it became the principal method of clearing cargo from the ports of Pusan and Hungnam. Repairing damaged rail lines, especially between Pusan and Seoul, became critically important, and that task fell largely to the engineers.

Faced with a torrent of incoming materiel, the depots quickly became swamped and did not have the capacities to absorb the supplies. In the first year of the conflict, so many supplies accumulated in the depots that finding the necessary items involved searching through piles of materiel that had not been organized or sorted. After awhile, engineers built additional depots to house the materiel. The depot system became more organized over time, and workers were held more accountable for the supplies.

Korean roadways, which were mostly unpaved, were not built to carry the military's heavy equipment. The engineers were tasked with adding a gravel base on the roads. This responsibility often included quarrying and crushing the rock as well as spreading it on the roads. Putting in proper culverts and drainage to control water runoff also was an important and time-consuming part of roadwork.

Because of the fluid nature of the fighting during the early stages of the war, bridges, often crucial for the MSR, had to be designed, built, destroyed, and then rebuilt. Several different types were used, including treadway bridges, Bailey bridges, aerial tramways, and ponton bridges. Engineers had to determine which type of bridging would suit each particular crossing and consider its use as well as cope with the available bridging supplies. At times, the engineers provided ferry service for river crossings. Demolition often was necessary so as not to leave things behind that might be useful to the enemy. Of course, there were the "pitfalls of over-destruction." Some things that the engineers had been ordered to blow up were needed later, so engineers had to build a few bridges over and over again.

Keeping the supply route open would have been difficult under advantageous conditions. The job became far more challenging in a combat situation with the hazards of mines, mortar attacks, and enemy fire.

At the beginning of the war, the Army Corps of Engineers' officers felt the lack of readiness acutely in the areas of equipment and supplies. Much of their equipment was old and worn, dating from World War II. Reclaimed from the Pacific area through the "roll-up" plan of the Far East Command, many vehicles were in bad repair and some were even towed as they were loaded up to be sent to Korea. Chronic part shortages and maintenance problems also plagued many of the engineers.

A number of officers in charge of maintaining the roads emphasized the shortages of bulldozers, angledozers, and cranes, especially the first year. To make matters worse, there also was a severe shortage of spare parts to repair trucks and broken equipment. Because the equipment and parts were not generally standardized, and units received a variety of different types and models, the problems were magnified.

Shortages of materiel often were felt in one area but not in another. One engineer described having shiploads of barbed wire while another officer was desperate for wire. Another officer's requirement for concrete was filled until he had concrete "coming out of his ears." One unit traded homemade ice cream for badly needed nails. The lack of functioning generators and the necessary spare parts caused great frustration, especially since so many other pieces of equipment depended upon them.

The engineer bridge builders complained there was an insufficient supply of lumber, bent connections for interlocking steel, and no pile-driving equipment. As one officer mentioned, there was never enough bridging!

The troops had to cope with their situations as best as they could, especially during that hectic first year. Parts were regularly cannibalized from several vehicles in order to make one vehicle run. "Scrounging," the term one officer used for looking around depots and other areas and taking anything that was useful, was another way many officers managed. Sometimes, this meant actually taking supplies and equipment belonging to other units. The "Good Old Boy Network" served as an informal and expedient means of meeting the needs of some units. Salvaging scraps and abandoned equipment was another means of surviving the shortages.

Unfortunately, failure to keep strict accountability and the temptation of large quantities of materiel led to abuse by both military personnel and Korean nationals. Pilfering was a pervasive problem, which ranged from the disappearance of whole trainloads of supplies to small-scale pilfering. Many of the stolen items ended up on the black market, which thrived during the war. Some Americans even resorted to using the black market as a source of supplies when the normal supply lines failed them.

Initially, an automatic supply system determined which supplies were sent to Korea. Further complicat-

ing the situation, engineer equipment was shipped to Korea without real consideration for its condition or usefulness. By the spring of 1951 the engineers had a better understanding of their requirements and began evacuating some of the inoperable equipment from Korea. They began requisitioning specific types of heavy construction equipment and improving the facilities at the supply depots. With the help of thousands of Korean laborers, engineers built roads and bridges that facilitated the movement of men and materiel. A heightened awareness of the situation in Korea helped the military supply people back in Tokyo respond to the requests more effectively.

The UN's quick offensive into North Korea in the fall of 1950, followed by the rapid retreat a few months later, left men on the front lines short of necessary supplies. The bitter cold of the Korean winter made the lack of sufficient winter clothing a particular hardship, and the sub-zero temperatures wreaked havoc on the equipment that first winter. During the fall of 1951 the fighting was more static, making the distribution of supplies easier. By then, items of winter clothing were widely available even though the frigid temperatures continued to hamper the men and their operations. As the engineers became more aware of the operational realities of building and fighting in Korea, they were able to make appropriate modifications to their equipment and supplies. Over time, they were able

to alleviate many of the materiel problems they had originally experienced. Nevertheless, problems with the supply system continued to some extent for the duration of the Korean Conflict.

The resilience and ingenuity of the engineers themselves were key ingredients of their success. The engineers made do with what they had. When roadwork required huge numbers of sandbags, the men simply filled straw rice bags, which were readily available, with sand. When faced with the awesome challenge of bridging a chasm during the retreat from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir, Army engineers figured out a way to air drop a bridge, and the Marines on the ground wrestled it into place. Without other means of communication, one engineer, stranded on a beach, spelled out "HELP! US TROOPS" in powdered milk on a runway to hail a plane flying above. In short, the actions of these men and many others testified to the fundamental resiliency and resourcefulness of the American soldier.

Training for the men serving in Korea, however, was not always adequate. A number of second lieutenants, members of the West Point Class of 1950, were thrust into combat without attending their designated branch basic course. For other engineer officers, the Korean War meant working with enlisted men whose skill levels and technical expertise varied widely, often depending upon whether or not these men had experience in World War II. More than one of the officers commented

on the need to improvise training sessions and on-the-job training opportunities, for in Korea the men grappled with unfamiliar and difficult engineering tasks, especially in such areas as road building and bridging.

Several engineer officers believed that the troop rotation policy had a negative effect on morale, and addressed the problem of securing adequate troop replacements. Other officers discussed the unfairness of calling up individual inactive reservists instead of entire Ready Reserve units.

Other personnel issues impacted performance and could not be ignored. Race relations in Korea were not always smooth and the underlying tensions were exacerbated under the stress of combat. In May 1951 Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgway formally requested authority to abolish segregation in Eighth Army. Integration followed, and although it was not without its awkward moments, it was generally successful. First Lieutenant Floyd Wright's 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company was the last segregated Army unit in Korea. The interviewees frankly discuss the issues integration raised. Other engineers described their experiences working with Korean laborers. KATUSAs and other Korean workers performed much of the physical labor, and several of the engineers relied heavily on their efforts.

The experiences of the engineers varied considerably. As in the wars before and after Korea, the burden felt by the individual soldier depended largely on where

he was and what he was expected to do. Naturally, the perspective of an infantryman in front-line combat was different from that of a man in the rear areas of Korea. Although some experiences were shared, their stories about supplies, temperature, food, and fighting varied considerably. Certainly, an engineer serving in the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, which lost all of its equipment and suffered more than 500 casualties, had a far different story than someone serving in a unit where conditions were not too dissimilar to peacetime assignments.

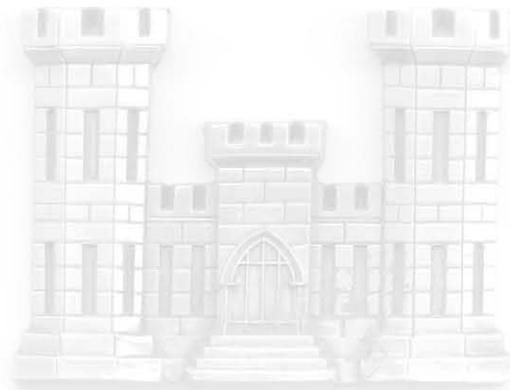
For the engineers, the fundamental personnel issue during the Korean War was how engineer troops were used. Should the engineers routinely be used as infantry? Historically, the broad mission of U.S. Army engineers has always been to facilitate the deployment of American and allied forces, while impeding the progress of enemy forces. This dual mission was central to the engineers' experiences in Korea, and in that sense, the conflict was no different than the nation's previous wars. As several of the interviews make clear, the fulfillment of this mission often meant that engineers in Korea also served as infantry. Generally, expediency and the course of the war dictated their roles more than their training and skill designators.

What of the other side of the coin, where engineer units were filled out with infantry soldiers? And how should an engineer unit be used—as a distinct engineer combat battalion, remaining together, or as companies,

scattered amongst the division's infantry regiments? The oral histories reveal that both arrangements were used in Korea, and the question remained unresolved at the end of the conflict.

Whatever their assigned roles, the engineers battled the enemy in a hostile environment, faced challenging personnel issues, and devised innovative ways to cope with their missions. The ebb and flow of the fighting made the engineers' job more difficult. The fluid nature of the fighting front would not be matched until the Vietnam conflict. With the cessation of hostilities, the sense of total victory that came with the end of World War II was absent in Korea. Army engineers felt the same understandable frustrations as other American and allied servicemen who did their duty and then simply went home.

During the three-year conflict on the peninsula, the engineers contributed, disproportional to their numbers, to the effectiveness of the regimental and corps units they supported. As one officer noted, the engineers were clearly a "force multiplier" for UN forces throughout the conflict, and in doing so they added another proud chapter to the history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The interviews in this volume provide a real and very personal glimpse of a few of the officers whose skill, courage, and dedication were the hallmarks of the engineers' contribution to America's "forgotten war." 



# Biographies

## Bratton, Lieutenant General Joseph K.

*Interviewed September 1985 and November 1987 by Dr. John T. Greenwood*

Lieutenant General Joseph Bratton was born in 1926 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He graduated from the U. S. Military Academy in 1948 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. General Bratton later attended the Engineer Officers Advanced Course, the Command and General Staff College, and the United States Army War College, and received a master's degree in nuclear engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Besides Korea, his service included a number of overseas assignments in Europe and Asia. He also served in a number of capacities in the U.S., including as Chief of Engineers. He retired in 1984.

## Bussey, Lieutenant Colonel Charles M.

*Colonel Bussey's 1991 book, Firefight at Yechon, was excerpted by Dr. Arnold G. Fisch, Jr.*

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bussey was born in 1921 in Bakersfield, California. He studied engineering at Los Angeles City College, and in 1941 volunteered for the U.S. Army. He completed pilot training at the Tuskegee Army Flying School and flew with the 332d Fighter Group in Italy. Colonel Bussey later attended the University of Southern California and San Francisco State

University, completing his bachelor's degree. In August 1948 he returned to active duty with the 74th Engineer Battalion, Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In 1950 he was re-assigned to the U.S. Army of Occupation in Japan, serving first with the 538th Engineer Service Battalion, before assuming command of the 77th Engineer Combat Company. The 77th Engineer Combat Company transferred to Pusan, Korea, in July 1950. Colonel Bussey later returned to flight status, serving at several bases in the United States and Germany.

## Cochran, Colonel Harrington W., Jr.

*Interviewed in March 1987 by Herbert Hart*

Colonel Harrington Cochran, Jr., was born in 1919 in San Diego, California. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1941, receiving his commission in the Coast Artillery Corps. He transferred to the Corps of Engineers in 1948. He later received a Master of Science degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M, and an MBA from The George Washington University. In addition to his tour in Korea, he served in a number of other overseas assignments in the Pacific and Europe. His stateside assignments included an assignment as District Engineer for West Virginia. He retired in 1971.

Korean Service Campaign Medal with seven Campaign Stars



**Davidson, Lieutenant General Garrison H.**  
*Interviewed in November 1980 by Dr. John T. Greenwood*

Lieutenant General Garrison Davidson was born in 1904 in New York, New York. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1927 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. General Davidson also holds Honorary Doctor of Law degrees from Williams College and the University of Akron. In addition to his service in the Korean War, General Davidson's overseas assignments included World War II service in North Africa and Europe. He commanded Seventh Army, 1960-62. His stateside assignments include service as superintendent, U.S. Military Academy, 1956-60; and commanding general, First United States Army, 1962-64.

**Dawson, Brigadier General Miles M.**  
*Interviewed in May 1980 by Dr. Laurence Suid*

Brigadier General Miles Dawson was born in 1902 in Viroqua, Wisconsin. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1925 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. He later earned a degree in civil engineering from Cornell University and a Master of Science degree from the University of Iowa. In addition to his overseas duty in Japan, General Dawson served in a wide variety of assignments in the Pacific and in Europe. His extensive stateside assignments included service as commanding general, Granite City Engineer Depot, Granite City, Illinois, 1954-56. He retired in 1956.

**Elder, Lieutenant General John H., Jr.**  
*Interviewed in July 1982 by Dr. Lynn Sims*

Lieutenant General John Elder, Jr. was born in 1920 in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Virginia, in 1941, with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and was commissioned as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers Reserve. He was called to active duty 1 August 1941. His overseas assignments included service in France, Germany, Korea, and Vietnam, where he commanded the 18th Engineer Brigade. General Elder's stateside assignments were numerous and varied and included service as Chief of Plans & Programs, J-5, and Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.

**Farnum, Colonel Lawrence B.**  
*Interviewed in May 1997 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel Lawrence Farnum was born in 1921 in Ashley, Michigan. He began his military career at Michigan College of Mining & Technology where he enrolled in the ROTC basic course for two years. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in mining engineering. He later received a master's degree in mining from the College of Mines, University of Washington, and a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Illinois. He served in the Air Corps during World War II. He received his Regular Army commission in the Corps of Engineers in 1950. In addition to Korea, his other over-

seas service included numerous Pacific and European assignments. His stateside assignments included serving as Engineer, Office of the Engineer, HQ, U.S. Army Strategic Communications Command, Washington, D.C., and Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

### Fowler, Colonel Delbert M.

*Interviewed in April 1994 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel Delbert Fowler was born in 1924 in Fannin County, Texas. He attended Texas A&M and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1945 with a commission as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. He later earned a master's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M, and a master's degree in international affairs from The George Washington University. In addition to 19 months in Korea, Colonel Fowler's other overseas assignments included duty with engineer units in Europe and Vietnam. His stateside assignments included service with the Office of Plans, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. He retired in 1972.

### Gray, Colonel George B., Jr.

*Interviewed in July 1985 by Thomas Tulenko*

Colonel George Gray, Jr., was born in 1926 in Georgetown, Louisiana. After high school, he served three years as an infantryman and military policeman, and was commissioned in 1952 at the Engineer Officer Candidate School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Colonel Gray at-

tended Louisiana Polytechnic Institute and received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the Missouri School of Mines. He later received a master's degree in international relations from Boston University, and a master's in civil engineering from Iowa State University. Besides Korea, his overseas service ranged from Greenland to Vietnam to Saudi Arabia. His stateside assignments included service as Deputy Director for Plans, Requirements, and Technology at the Defense Mapping Agency Topographic Center.

### Hoskins, Colonel Harry D., Jr.

*Interviewed May-July 1995 by Dr. John T. Greenwood*

Colonel Harry Hoskins, Jr., was born in 1914 in Trinidad, Colorado. He graduated from the Colorado School of Mines and received an ROTC commission as a 2d lieutenant in the Army Reserve. He entered military service in 1942 and served in the Pacific, North Africa, and Italy. He was heavily involved in establishing the engineer special brigades in the South West Pacific. Following his tour in Korea, Colonel Hoskins served in a variety of assignments stateside and in Europe. He retired in 1963.

### Hyzer, Brigadier General Peter C.

*Interviewed in December 1984 by Herbert Hart*

Brigadier General Peter Hyzer was born in 1914 in Rockford, Illinois. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1937 as a 2d lieutenant, Infantry, and later

United Nations Korean  
Service Medal



received a master's degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He served in England, France, and Germany with the 5th Infantry Division during World War II. In Korea, he was battalion commander, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, 1950-51. He later served in a variety of other assignments in the Pacific and in the United States. He retired in 1967.

#### **Itschner, Lieutenant General Emerson C.**

*Interviewed in July 1977 by Dr. Frank Schubert*

Lieutenant General Emerson Itschner was born in 1903 in Chicago, Illinois. He was appointed to the U. S. Military Academy, and in 1924 was commissioned a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. In 1926 he received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Cornell University. General Itschner's overseas duties included a variety of engineer and command assignments in Europe and Asia. His stateside assignments included service as Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, 1956-61.

#### **Johnson, Major General James A.**

*Interviewed March-April 1993 by Dr. Charles Hendricks*

Major General James Johnson was born in 1924 in Stoughton, Wisconsin. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1947, and was commissioned a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. He later received a Master of Science degree from Stanford University. General Johnson served in a variety of overseas and stateside en-

gineer and command assignments, and retired as Deputy Chief of Engineers, 1979-80.

#### **Love, Colonel Robert W.**

*Interviewed in April 1994 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel Robert Love was born in 1916 in Madisonville, Tennessee. He attended Vanderbilt University for one year because he was too young to go to the U.S. Military Academy. He graduated in 1938 from the Academy as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. Colonel Love later attended Harvard University Business School and received a master's degree. In addition to his assignment to Korea, Colonel Love's other overseas assignments included duty in Latin America, Europe, and the Pacific. His stateside assignments included service as Division Engineer, Missouri River Division. He retired in 1968.

#### **McIntyre, Brigadier General Kenneth E.**

*Interviewed in October 1984 by Dr. Martin Reuss*

Brigadier General Kenneth McIntyre was born in 1926 in Randolph, Vermont. He attended the U.S. Military Academy and was commissioned a 2d lieutenant in 1949. Further education included a Master of Science degree in civil engineering from Harvard University, and a Master of Science degree in business administration from The George Washington University. In addition to his service in Korea, his other overseas service included command assignments in the Pacific and Vietnam. His nu-

merous stateside tours included service as Division Engineer, South Atlantic Division, 1976-79.

### Medding, Captain Walter S.

*Interviewed in October 1997 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Captain Walter Medding was born in 1922 at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated from Central High School, Memphis, Tennessee, in 1940. He joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps and was called to active duty for basic training and Officer Candidate School (OCS). He graduated from OCS in April 1943 and was commissioned a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. His later education included a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in sanitary engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, respectively. In addition to his assignment to the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion, other overseas assignments included duty in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. His stateside assignments included duty as Operations and Intelligence Officer, 92d Engineer Construction Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 1963-64.

### Parfitt, Major General Harold R.

*Interviewed in May 1986 by Dr. Charles Hendricks*

Major General Harold Parfitt was born in 1921 in Coaldale, Pennsylvania. He attended Kutztown State College, the Sullivan Preparatory School, Washington, D.C.,

and the U.S. Military Academy, where he was commissioned in 1943 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. He later received a master's degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and attended the Advanced Management Program of the Harvard Business School. As part of the 6th Engineer Special Brigade, he was wounded on D-day during an amphibious landing on Omaha Beach. In September 1950 he was assigned to the 2d Engineer Combat Group, Korea, and later became commanding officer of the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. Among other assignments, he later served as commanding general, U.S. Army Engineer School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and as the last governor of the Canal Zone. He retired in 1979.

### Pickett, Lieutenant Colonel Evan S.

*Interviewed in June 1993 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Lieutenant Colonel Evan Pickett was born in 1920 in St. George, Utah. He attended Dixie College in St. George. In 1939, the Utah National Guard organized C Company, 115th Engineer Combat Battalion at St. George, Utah, and Pickett became an original member. The unit was called to active duty, and he applied for Officer Candidate School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, graduating in 1942 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. In addition to his assignment to Korea as battalion commander of the 73d Engineer Combat Battalion,

Republic of Korea  
Presidential Unit Citation



Colonel Pickett's overseas tours included North Africa and Italy with the 1108th Engineer Combat Group, and duty in the Philippines, Japan, and Turkey. His various stateside tours included serving as commanding officer, 73d Engineer Combat Battalion, Fort Hood, Texas.

**Roberts, Colonel Claude L., Jr.**

*Interviewed in March 1997 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel Claude Roberts, Jr., was born in 1924 in Birmingham, Alabama. He attended Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now Auburn University. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943 and served as a corporal in the 417th Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Division, in Europe. Released from active duty, he returned to Auburn and in 1948 received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. He later earned a master's degree in civil engineering from Iowa State College. He returned to active duty in 1950 and was commissioned in the Regular Army. In addition to his tours in Korea, and in Europe during World War II, his other overseas tours included assignments in Germany and Thailand. His stateside assignments included service as Engineer and Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer, U.S. Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia.

**Roush, Brigadier General Maurice D.**

*Interviewed in February 1983 by Fred C. Bohm*

Brigadier General Maurice Roush was born in 1928 in Douglas, Wyoming. He graduated from the U.S. Military

Academy in 1950 and was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He was assigned to the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), 7th Infantry Division, and helped prepare the unit for movement to Korea. He landed at Inch'on on D+2 with the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion. General Roush also served overseas in Vietnam and Turkey. Stateside, General Roush commanded an engineer battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, and a brigade at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He also served as a Tactical Officer at the Engineer Officer Candidate School, the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Naval Academy.

**Rowny, Lieutenant General Edward L.**

*Interviewed 1986-93 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Lieutenant General Edward Rowny was born in 1917 in Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, Johns Hopkins University, and, in 1941, from the U.S. Military Academy. He later earned two masters' degrees from Yale University. Both before and after Korea, General Rowny served in a variety of overseas tours in Africa, Europe, and Asia, and in numerous stateside assignments. He retired in 1979 and subsequently served as Chief Negotiator, Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) and special advisor to the president with the rank of ambassador.

**Strong, Brigadier General Paschal N., Jr.**

*Interviewed in January 1984 by Dr. Paul K. Walker*

Brigadier General Paschal Strong was born in 1901 in Savannah, Georgia. He was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy and commissioned a 2d lieutenant, Air Corps, in 1922. He transferred to the Corps of Engineers two months later. General Strong attended Cornell University where he earned a degree in civil engineering. General Strong was assigned as Engineer, Headquarters, Eighth Army, Japan, 1949-50. He continued as Eighth Army Engineer when Eighth Army moved to Korea. His other overseas assignments included service in the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Stateside, General Strong served in a variety of engineering assignments, culminating with duty as Engineer, Ohio River Division, before retiring in 1954. General Strong wrote several books and articles, however his most popular work was the radio serial, "*Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*," which broadcast during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Stukhart, Colonel George, Jr.**

*Interviewed in July 1992 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel George Stukhart, Jr., was born in 1927 in Hoboken, New Jersey. He received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy under the category "Sons of Deceased World War I Veterans." Stukhart graduated in 1949 and later earned a Master of Science degree

from New York University and a doctorate from the University of Ohio. In addition to his tour in Korea, Colonel Stukhart's other overseas assignments included tours in Okinawa, France, Italy, and Vietnam, and another tour in Korea. His various stateside tours included a final assignment in the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1972, before retiring.

**Trayers, Colonel James L.**

*Interviewed February-March 1996 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel James Trayers was born in 1927 in Providence, Rhode Island. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1950 as a 2d lieutenant, Corps of Engineers. Colonel Trayers subsequently received a master's degree in civil engineering from Iowa State and a master's degree in math from the University of Missouri. His initial assignment in the Army was to the 8th Engineers, 1st Cavalry Division. Other overseas tours included service in Germany, Iran, and Vietnam. His stateside duty included numerous engineering assignments, such as Director, Coastal Engineering and Research Center, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and a tour with the Office of the Chief of Engineers in 1979. He retired in 1980, but returned to active duty for three years as commanding officer of the Engineer Activity, Capital Area.

Korean Service Campaign Medal  
with seven Campaign Stars



### Wells, Major General Richard M.

*Interviewed in June 1991 by Dr. John T. Greenwood*

Major General Richard Wells was born in 1929 in Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D.C. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and was commissioned a 2d lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1951. General Wells earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Iowa and attended the Naval War College. In addition to service in the Korean War, other overseas service included an additional tour in Korea and other assignments in Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. His stateside service included a variety of engineer and command assignments, culminating with duty as Director, Defense Mapping Agency, and Deputy Chief of Engineers. He retired in 1984.

### Williams, Colonel Charles T.

*Interviewed in February 1985 by Thomas Tulenko*

Colonel Charles Williams was born in 1926 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was the son of the late Colonel Charles F. Williams, U.S.A. (CE, Ret., USMA 1913). Colonel Williams graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1946 and was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He subsequently received his master's degree in civil engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. Colonel Williams served in Korea with the 73d Engineer Combat Battalion and the 8224th Engineer Construction Group Headquarters. His other overseas tours included various engineer and command assignments in Europe and Asia.

His last overseas tour was in Leghorn, Italy, as Mediterranean Division Engineer. His stateside tours included service as Chief, Special Weapons Division, Engineer Strategic Studies Group, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Washington, D.C., and District Engineer, Memphis.

### Wright, Colonel Floyd D.

*Interviewed in September 1994 and September 1995 by Dr. Barry W. Fowle*

Colonel Floyd Wright was born in 1923 in Asheville, North Carolina. He reported to the 6th Officer Candidate School Class at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. In 1942, at the age of 19, he was commissioned a 2d lieutenant in the U.S. Army and assigned to the 51st Engineer Combat Regiment. He stayed with the 51st as it changed to a group, and its 1st Battalion became the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion, and went to Europe during World War II. He subsequently graduated with honors from Clemson University and received a Regular Army commission. He earned a master's degree in applied science from Montana State University and a master's degree in structural design from the University of Illinois. Besides the European battlefields of World War II and the Korean War, Colonel Wright's other overseas assignments ranged from Tokyo, Japan, to the Canal Zone. His various stateside assignments included service as the commander, 575th Engineer Construction Battalion, Fort Stewart, Georgia. 

# Bibliographic Essay

**D**uring the 1950s and '60s, certain participants in the Korean War endeavored to describe their experiences. Various government agencies published official accounts, and a number of popular battlefield histories appeared, although the conflict never quite captured the popular imagination the same way accounts of World War II did. The 50th anniversary of the Korean War has stirred a renewed interest and certainly will result in additional titles. Compared to the numerous other aspects of the conflict, however, the engineers' role in Korea has not been broadly described. This fact makes the excerpted oral interviews in this volume all the more important.

Military historian Allan R. Millett's "A Reader's Guide to the Korean War," in *The Journal of Military History* 61 (July 1997): 583-97 is a fairly comprehensive look at the body of literature on the war. Interested readers will find in his review essay subsections on such subjects as "Causes of the War," "Logistics and Coalition Warfare," and "Special Operations," but none on engineer operations. Other bibliographies of the war—or of certain aspects of the war—are worth considering for general knowledge. These include Carroll H. Blanchard, *Korean War Bibliography and Maps of Korea* (Albany, N.Y.: Korean Conflict Research Foundation, 1964); Paul M. Edwards, *The Pusan Perimeter:*

*An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport: 1993); Keith D. McFarland, *The Korean War: An Annotated Bibliography* (N.Y.: Garland, 1986); and Bernard S. Silberman, *Korean Conflict: A Collection of Historical Manuscripts on the Korean Campaign Held by the U.S. Army Center of Military History* (Washington: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 1975).

The following bibliographic overview is not inclusive. The intent here is to highlight, wherever possible, books describing U.S. Army Engineers' activities in Korea, without overlooking the important general histories of the war.

## Official Publications

The overview of the war from the level of the Secretary of Defense is contained in Doris Condit's *The Test of War, 1950-1953* (Washington: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988). The Army's official history of the Korean War, set forth in the U.S. Army Center of Military History's (CMH) "black books," contains numerous but scattered references in each of the four volumes to Corps of Engineers' contributions: Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (June-November 1950) (Washington: CMH, 1961); James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: CMH, 1972); Billy C. Mossman, *Ebb and Flow, November 1950-July 1951* (Washington: CMH, 1990);

and Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington: CMH, 1966).

Another very useful official publication is John G. Westover's *Combat Support in Korea* (Washington: CMH, 1955). Originally copy protected by the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), and since reprinted more than once by CMH, this collection of Army officer and enlisted interviews includes 39 pages devoted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel.

Students of the Army Corps of Engineers in Korea certainly will want to look at William R. Farquhar, Jr., and Henry A. Jeffers, Jr., *Bridging the Imjin: Construction of Libby and Teal Bridges During the Korean War* (October 1952-July 1953) (Fort Belvoir, Va.: OCE History Office, 1989) edited by Charles Hendricks.

Less valuable is Russell A. Gugeler's *Combat Actions in Korea* (Washington: CMH, 1970), a revised edition of a 1954 publication. Gugeler captures the cold, the mud, and the harsh terrain of Korea in a series of small unit actions, but without treating the engineer contribution specifically.

Other official writings that capture aspects of the build-up in Korea, the subsequent engineer supply problems, and the early fighting include: James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953* (Washington: CMH, 1966), and William Glenn Robertson, *Counterattack on the Naktong*, 1950, Leavenworth Paper 13 (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1985). Finally, for the years of the conflict and immediately thereafter, the periodical *The Military Engineer* contains

a number of articles about the engineers in Korea (see, for example, vols. 43 and 44, 1951-52, for three articles on bridging by Delbert Fowler). Contact *The Military Engineer* for information on reprints.

For a perspective on the African-American experience in Korea, see William T. Bowers, William M. Hammond, and George L. MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (Washington: CMH, 1996). This study contains valuable references to both the 65th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 77th Engineer Combat Company.

### Secondary Works

Very likely, the best-known books on the Korean War are S.L.A. Marshall's *The River and the Gauntlet* (N.Y.: Morrow, 1953), and T.R. Fehrenbach's *This Kind of War: A Study of Unpreparedness* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1963). This last book, as the subtitle suggests, is not only a combat narrative, but also a cautionary tale. Fehrenbach elaborated further in *The Fight for Korea: From the War of 1950 to the Pueblo Incident* (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlop, 1969). In his later years, once his turn at "official history" was completed, Roy E. Appleman continued to add to the literature about Korea. Four critical works, *East of Chosin: Entrapment and Breakout in Korea* (1987); *Escaping the Trap: The U.S. Army in Northeast Korea, 1950* (1987); *Disaster in Korea: The Chinese Confront MacArthur* (1989); and *Ridgway Duels for Korea* (1990) all were published by Texas A&M University Press.

Charles M. Bussey's, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, [1991], 2002) is one African-American veteran's description of perceived bias in official accounts of the segregated 24th Infantry Regiment. Putting this larger goal aside for the moment, Bussey's book provides excellent insights into at least one engineer unit's operations in Korea.

Editing the unit history of the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion, combat engineer Lt. Frank H. Armstrong has contributed additional original material, and the result is Frank H. Armstrong, *The 1st Cavalry Division and their 8th Engineers in Korea* (South Burlington, Vt.: Bull Run of Vermont, Inc., 1996).

James Huston contributed a logistics volume specifically about Korea: *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice: U.S. Army Logistics in the Korean War* (Selingsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 1989). Well researched and written, this book is now out of print.

Three well-written oral histories are worth mentioning for an insight into the individual soldier or airman's experiences. Although none deal specifically with engineer troops, they contain gripping accounts of the fighting and really catch the sense of terror, cold, and resourcefulness of the individual soldier. Two of these books are by Donald Knox, *The Korean War, Pusan to Chosin: An Oral History* (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), and *The Korean War, Uncertain Victory: The Concluding Volume of an Oral History* (1988) published by the same publisher after Knox's death. These

books have been justifiably popular. More recently, Rudy Tomedi's *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War* (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1993) is a good read that includes individual accounts, not only by soldiers, but also by Navy and Air Force airmen, a British soldier, and a Marine Corps general. Military historians will recognize the names of at least two of the contributors, Edwin Simmons, and Harry G. Summers, Jr.

Several other older books about Korea have a broader scope or focus on issues too specific to be instructive on the engineers' role. These include Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (N.Y.: Times Books, 1982), a readable book with an almost ironic subtitle, given the author's borrowings from Appleman's official history; Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1967); Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1986); and British author Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

One final title is of real value to students of the engineers in Korea: *The Korea War, An Encyclopedia*, edited by Stanley Sandler (N.Y.: Garland Publishing, 1995). This reference work has a good four-page section on the engineers in Korea, a photograph, between pp. 200-201, of one of the engineers' bridge construction efforts, and an excellent 28-page bibliography of the war. 🏰

# Notes on Photographs

The photographs that appear in the text are a crucial part of this anthology, for they poignantly depict many of the people, places, and events mentioned in the interviews. The pictures provide a human dimension to the conflict, and the images offer mute testimony to many of the hardships the engineers, and the Korean people, endured during three long years of war. The pictures, however, are not all grim—many reflect the lighter side of the engineer experience including snapshots of friends and family, scenes from camp life, as well as a myriad of images that reflect the day-to-day working life of engineers in theater. When viewed in their entirety, these images will provide readers with a much better understanding of the role U.S. Army engineers played, and the life they lived, during the Korean War.

The editors collected the Korean War images from a variety of sources. The interviewees themselves provided dozens of pictures, and those images are credited to the interviewees' personal collections. Two other Korean War veterans, Maj. Jack B. Shotwell, USAR(Ret.) and Lt. Col. Leroy Weygand, USA(Ret.) graciously gave us access to their personal collections of Korean War photographs, some of which appear in the book. Maj. Shotwell also provided the Korean War medals that appear in the Biographies section at the end of the book.

The Korean War photographs taken by the Army Signal Corps constitute the largest body of Korean War images used. The Signal Corps images are stored at the National Archives and Records Administration's Still Pic-

tures Branch at the Archives II facility in College Park, Maryland. The National Archives arranges its documents and photographs into record groups (RG) and the Signal Corps images are in RG 111, Records of the Chief Signal Officer. Other Korean War images came from the General Records of the Department of the Navy (RG 80), Records of the Marine Corps (RG 127), and the Records of the U.S. Information Agency (RG 306).

We also obtained Korean War images from several institutions that have Signal Corps photographs in their collections. The Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Engineer School, Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, maintains a large collection of Signal Corps images that they have incorporated into their collection. We made extensive use of their holdings, and those images are credited to the Engineer School (ES). The Truman Presidential Library also has Signal Corps images in its collection, as does the Army's Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and the United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland. Photographs from those institutions are attributed to them.

To aid future researchers, detailed credits are provided for each image. Photographs obtained from personal collections are noted as such; images from the Engineer School and Truman Presidential Library are accompanied by individual negative numbers; and the citations for images from the National Archives include the record group number, as well as the sub-series, and negative number. 🏰

# Glossary

AA	Anti-aircraft	EB&SR	Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment
ADC	Assistant Division Commander	ECB	Engineer Combat Battalion
AKA	Attack cargo ship	ECC	Engineer Combat Company
Amtrac	Amphibious tractor	ECG	Engineer Combat Group
APA	Attack transport	EOAC	Engineer Officer's Advanced Class
AT	Anti-tank	ERTC	Engineer Replacement Training Center
AWOL	Absent without leave	ESB	Engineer Special Brigade
		ETB	Engineer Treadway Bridge
BAR	Browning automatic rifle		
BOQ	Bachelor Officer's Quarters	FECOM	Far East Command
Brig. Gen.	Brigadier General	1st Lt.	First Lieutenant
		FM	Field manual
C-119	Cargo plane	FO	Forward Observers
Capt.	Captain		
CCF	Communist Chinese Forces	G-1	Personnel Section
CG	Commanding General	G-2	Intelligence Section
Col.	Colonel	G-3	Plans and Policy
CONUS	Continental United States	G-4	Supply Officer (Logistics)
CP	Command Post	GHQ	General Headquarters
DA	Department of the Army	H&S	Headquarters and Service
DESO	Division Engineer Supply Officer	H&HS	Headquarters & Headquarters Services
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone	H&S	Health and Services
DUKW	Amphibious truck: (D=1942, year of production; U=utility vehicle; K=front-wheel drive; W=two rear-drive axles)		
		ICAF	Industrial College of the Armed Forces
EAB	Engineer Aviation Battalion	IG	Inspector General
EB	Engineer Boat	I&R	Intelligence and Reconnaissance
		JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff

KATUSA	Korean Augmentation to the United States Army	MSgt.	Master Sergeant
KIA	Killed in action	NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group	NKPA	North Korean People's Army
KSC	Korean Service Corps		
LCM	Landing Craft, Mechanized	OCE	Office of the Chief of Engineers
LCU	Landing Craft, Utility	OCS	Officer Candidate School
LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicle-Personnel	OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Log	Logistics		
LSD	Landing Ship, Dock	PCS	Permanent Change of Station
LSM	Landing Ship, Medium	POL	Petroleum/oils/lubricants
LST	Landing Ships, Tank	POM	Prepare for overseas movement
LSU	Landing Ship, Utility	POW	Prisoner(s) of war
LSV	Landing Ship, Vehicle	PMS	Professor of Military Science
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel	PSP	Pierced-steel plank
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General	Pvt.	Private
Maj.	Major	RCT	Regimental Combat Team
Maj. Gen.	Major General	ROK	Republic of Korea
MASH	Mobile Army Surgical Hospital	ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
MASTS	Military Air/Sea Transport Service	R&R	Rest and relaxation
MIA	Missing in Action		
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	S-1	Adjutant
MLR	Main line of resistance	S-2	Intelligence Officer
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty	S-3	Operations and Training Officer
MP	Military Police	S-4	Supply Officer
MSR	Main Supply Route	SCAP	Supreme Commander, Allied Powers
MS&T	Maintenance, supply, and transportation	2d Lt.	Second Lieutenant
		Sgt.	Sergeant

SLOE	Special List of Equipment
SP	Self-propelled (artillery)
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
TAC	Tactical Officer
TO&E	Table of Organization and Equipment
TOT	Time-on-target
TNT	Trinitrotoluene explosive
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USMA	United States Military Academy
WF	Wide flange (beams)
W.O.	Warrant Officer

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