

MY SERVICE WITH THE 45TH INFANTRY
DIVISION FROM OCT. 11, 1950 TO AUG 1952 AT
CAMP POLK, LOUISIANA, HOKKAIDO, JAPAN AND
IN THE KOREAN WAR
(BY ALVIN E BOESE)

4. WE SAIL FOR KOREA
(THE LUCKY PLATOON)

We are now standing on the dock at Muroran waiting to board a Navy Attack Transport. I have Stinky sitting next to me on a leash. We have become so attached to him that we didn't want to leave him in Japan and didn't think we would have any problem taking him along. It is now early December and pretty cold just standing around waiting. Then one of the officers in charge of loading the troops comes by and when he sees Stinky next to me he comes over and says, "You will have to turn that dog loose, you can't take him on the ship with you". Then he walks on by. I'm really feeling down now. Then I feel this tap on my shoulder. I turned around and a rifleman from one of the rifle companies tells me that he has enough extra room in his duffle bag for the dog and would try and smuggle him aboard if I wanted. It sounded good to me so we did. He said he would try and get together with me sometime after we get off the ship. A little later the officer comes by again and when he didn't see the dog he just walked right on by. We had out foxed him. I guess that should have been, out dogged him.

The voyage is pretty uneventful. The food is real good just like it was on the Navy ship that we were on for our amphibious training. Not like the slop we had on the Army transport ship coming over to Japan. We never saw Stinky because the fellow he was with was in a different compartment in the ship.

In the afternoon of the third day we arrive at the port city of Inchon, South Korea. Inchon is located on the west coast of South Korea about 50 miles west of the South Korean capital of Seoul. This is where the U.S. Marines with back up from the U.S. Army landed in an amphibious invasion early in the war to cut off the advancing North Korean Army and their supply lines. The North Koreans had already pushed the South Korean Army and what U.S. troops were there all the way down to the southern tip of South Korea at the port city of Pusan. After cutting the supply lines and with many more reinforcements from the U.S. and United Nations forces who had just entered the war, the North Korean Army was pushed all the way back to the 38th parallel which separates North and South Korea and then almost to the Chinese border. The United Nations forces were made up of troops from Great Britain, Belgium, France, Greece, Turkey, The Philippines, Canada, Australia, and Columbia. Most of them just furnished small battalion or brigade size forces. They annihilated or captured the major part of the North Korean Army. Then when they thought the war was won, the Chinese launched a major offensive of over 100,000 troops with a few hundred thousand more troops in reserve and

pushed the South Koreans and United Nation forces back into South Korea. The South Korean and United Nation forces then regrouped, were reinforced, and then pushed the Chinese back across the 38th parallel and in some places about 30 miles beyond the parallel. It will be in this area near the destroyed towns of Yonchon and Chorwon on the central front where we will relieve the 1st Cavalry Division. They believe there are now over 500,000 Chinese troops on and behind the front line. The peace talks are going on now but the war will drag on for another twenty months.

The tides here run very high and very low so we will have to wait awhile before leaving the ship. At low tide the area where we will go ashore is deep in mud. As soon as the tide rises we load onto landing craft and head for the beach. When we get there we just walk ashore on friendly territory, not like the landing that had originally been planned for us when we were training in Japan. Perhaps this was an omen of more good luck ahead. But!, what was ahead? We walked to an assembly area and then boarded a Korean passenger train. It sure isn't any Amtrack Domeliner. The seats are made of wood, two of them facing each other by each window. Each has plenty of room for two Koreans but not for two soldiers with full field pack, duffle bag, rifle and helmet. One of us gets on each seat, one on the floor between the seat and one in the aisle. I get the aisle. There is a little snow on the ground, getting dark and it is very cold. There isn't any heat on this train. I wonder where the officers are riding?? We try and get a very little sleep but it is just too cold.

By the time we all get aboard wait a long time to get under way and slowly roll along we finally arrive at our destination on the outskirts of Seoul. Here we will wait again for the trucks to arrive to take us closer to the front lines. While we are waiting I locate the fellow who has been keeping Stinky and he is still with him. What a great reunion. He said that he didn't have any problem keeping him hidden. He fed him some table scraps that he took from the mess hall and never did find anyplace where he had went to the bathroom. I don't imagine any of the officers ever ventured into those compartments. They were probably traveling first class where we were traveling coach or baggage.

The trucks finally show up. You do a lot of hurry up and wait in the Army. We get aboard and head north. As soon as we leave the outskirts of Seoul the countryside changes abruptly. Where there once were small villages, farms with crops growing and farm buildings there was now nothing. It had all been destroyed by the war. The war had passed through this area four times. All you could see were abandoned trenches, bunkers, gun emplacements, barbed wire, fenced off mine fields, shell holes and bomb craters. Most of the hills had only a few trees. The rest had been blown away. All the civilians had fled to the south.

After we have been traveling for about two hours (very slow traveling on dirt roads and in a convoy. No paved roads here) we arrive in the area where we will stay for two or three days before moving up to the front line and relieving the 1st Cav. We pitch our two man pup tents and settle in for our second cold night in Korea. We know now

155mm howitzer-- Same as above only larger and is fired by placing powder bags behind projectile instead of being in a shell casing.

Chinese burp gun-- Short small caliber air cooled hand held machine gun with round drum type magazine. Fires very fast.

Our platoons positions will be about 300 yards north of the main company area toward the MLR. We will be living in bunkers which will be constructed of sandbags and small logs. These particular ones are dug into a sloping hillside and are about 10x10 foot square. Some are slightly larger. The part that doesn't have dirt walls are finished off with sandbags. The roof is then made out of closely placed small logs which are covered with one or two layers of sandbags with a tarp or plastic over the bags and then one or two feet of dirt. The doorway just has a piece of canvass hanging over it. The bunker that my buddy and I are to move into is only about half finished so we will share with others. I get to move in with three sergeants, one a squad leader and the other two were from the 1st Cav. who didn't have enough points to leave with the 1st Cav. We got points for in the States, over seas and for Korea. I have to sleep on the floor on an old Australian Army cot which is only about 4" off the dirt floor. The bunks are made out of small poles like bunk beds, one over the other with communication wire stretched between them for springs. We put a blanket over the wire and our down filled mummy type sleeping bag over that. We usually had a second blanket wool blanket. I didn't realize that I would also have to share this bunker with other creatures. Four legged creatures. "Rats". Large ones.

The Korean countryside abounds with these large rats. They are always seeking a warm place and this bunker has an oil fired stove in it. The only bunker in our position that does. The sergeants from the 1st Cav. hadn't mentioned them but I suppose they were probably used to them but I sure wasn't. When I went to bed at night I was completely covered in that mummy bag except for my face. I put my field jacket over that because I didn't want any rats crawling around my face. I am sure there would be some crawling over me. Later we got a big rat trap from the supply tent and tried all kinds of bait on it and would place it right in their runs but we never did catch any.

We finally got our bunker finished and moved in: We had regular Army folding canvass cots for our beds. The bunker was very cold inside but at least we didn't have any rats. We put one blanket over the cot and draped it over the sides to help keep the cold from getting underneath the cot. Then we put the other one over our sleeping bag and also our fur lined parkas. It was so cold that first night that we even slept with all our clothes on. That was a mistake. We darn near froze. The next morning one of the sergeants told us never to do that and to just wear our winter under wear. We tried that the next night and were real warm. We also put our boots in bed with us. These were rubber bottom boots with leather tops and if we left them out at night they would freeze stiff as a board by morning. My feet always sweated a lot and were always real cold even when I wore two pairs of wool socks.

We found out that we also had another problem. There wasn't any water for us to wash and shave with. The only water we had was in our canteens for drinking. We were

also required to shave at least every other day. I thought this was a war not a beauty contest. Who was going to see us up here anyway. The water in our canteens froze when we were out very long and we would have to heat them with a small alcohol stove so we could get a drink. The water supply was brought in by truck in five gallon cans and then put in the mess tent where there was always some heat. They always told us that there was just enough for drinking, for mess tent use and for washing the cooking utensils and our mess kits. We had to melt snow in our helmets over one of those little alcohol stoves for our wash water. Some times if we had time we would melt it on the sergeants stove but that was hard to do when you have a dozen or more men that want to melt snow on one stove. I guess you know that we were not the cleanest guys in Korea. We took very few sponge baths.

Eating our meals was another problem. Our bunkers were about three hundred yards from the mess tent and if we carried our food back to our bunkers which were also cold the food would be ice cold. We usually just sat on our overturned helmet in the snow or anything else we could find to sit on. The officers ate in warm tents and were waited on by Korean KP's. One day we had dry cereal with our breakfast with powdered milk on it and by the time I sat down to eat it was already covered with ice crystals. We had mess kits to eat out of which were two fold up metal plates about one inch deep with two sections on one side and one on the other. By the time we got our food they were so cold that our food didn't stay warm very long.

Someone had to be on guard every night in each area so we usually had two hours of guard duty. There was always a chance of Chinese infiltrators in the area. My first guard duty was at the first aid station. Medics couldn't pull guard duty because they were not allowed to carry firearms. It wasn't like on the TV show "M.A.S.H. where they stood guard duty and some officers carried side arms.

My shift began at midnight. Less than an hour after I went on guard I could hear heavy incoming mortar fire on the M.L.R. just north of our area me Chinese were making another one of their probing attacks. I always refer to Chinese because they are the ones we will be facing in Korea. There are still a few North Korean divisions in North Korea but none in our sector. A short time later a litter carrying jeep (a litter is a stretcher) came rolling in to the aid station from the M.L.R. and had one man on a litter. The driver told me he was a lieutenant and a forward observer for a mortar platoon and that his leg had been blown off below his knee. The medics took him into the aid station and did what they could with the facilities they had and put him back on the jeep to transport him back to a field hospital. As they drove down the road I could hear the lieutenant scream every time the jeep hit a bump. If it had been daylight they may have evacuated him by helicopter. After they left one of the medics brought me a cup of strong black coffee. It really hit the spot in the freezing weather.

We have now been up front about ten days and today is Christmas. I always wanted a white Christmas but not like this. The day goes by with little fanfare. It is so cold! and the morale is very low on a holiday like this when you are thousands of miles from home and have no way of calling home. We were not home for Christmas last year

either. We were at Camp Polk where we could call home. We had a great Christmas dinner in a warm chow hall. Afterwards we could go to the PX for snacks and beer. We were never able to call home during our almost sixteen months overseas. We did have a good dinner but as usual, sat in the snow to eat it. Some went back to their bunkers and ate theirs cold. The letters and packages from home really helped matters.

Part of the platoon including my squad now get our first assignment which will be on the M.L.R. We will be constructing a barbed wire entanglement part way around an observation post. An observation post is usually on one of the higher areas and sometimes a little farther out from the M.L.R. The barbed wire is to help keep the Chinese from moving in real close to the o.p. and to help repel any attack.

We arrive early the next morning at the base of a long steep ridge. There are several sand bagged light and heavy mortar positions here. The mortars are used for close support of the rifle companies during an attack. They can also fire about three miles, on and beyond the Chinese held hills.

We start up the ridge and below the top about a hundred yards there are several bunkers scattered around the area. These bunkers are for the storing of ammunition and for the troops to live who will move in to reinforce the ones already in the trenches and gun positions on top of the ridge after dark. The Chinese always attack after dark. They believe it has a psychological effect which it does. Anyone would rather be attacked in the daylight when you can clearly see your enemy than at night. They are sneaky by nature anyway. We always referred to them as "Chinks" or "Gooks" among other things. When we reach the top we get our first glimpse of the M.L.R. and the Chinese held hills beyond which are across a wide valley which is about a mile or more wide. The area resembles the area north of Mt. St. Helens right after the eruption. Most all of the trees have been blown away by the mortar and artillery fire. The whole area is pock marked with shell holes. There are a few snags here and there and an occasional scrub tree with a few limbs, There is a trench running the entire length of the ridge with barbed wire about one hundred feet in front. There are sandbagged B.A.R. positions and bunkers which house the many light and heavy machine guns and with a few recoilless rifle positions. There are also a few tanks dug in with only the gun turret protruding above ground level. There are just a few men in these positions right now but will be more when it gets dark. We work our way along an icy trail just behind the ridge top to the base of the hill where the op is located. From here to the top the trail is as slick as a skating rink. There are ropes tied to posts all the way to the top that we pull ourselves along with. When we reach the top our steel post and barbed wire are there waiting for us. Some KSC's had brought them in the day before. KSC's are the Korean Service Corps who are men either too old or not able to serve in the Army but are under the Army's control. They do most all of the packing of food, ammunition, barbed wire and food stuffs on a wooden pack frame on their back. They can carry extremely heavy loads.

We work on our fence for the most part of the day without any interference from the Chinese. Either they haven't noticed us, which I doubt they didn't think what we were doing was anything of high priority. If we saw a group of Chinese out in the open like

this we would throw everything we had at them. They don't have the unlimited supply of ammunition like we do though.

Today is New Years Day and we feel that we will stay here in the company area for New Years Dinner like the rest of the company, but end up back on the MLR and our fence building. It is almost lunch time and we are getting out our alcohol stoves and C rations when one of the fellows from the rifle company comes up to us and tells us that he just had a call from our headquarters and that we are to come back to the company area for our New Years dinner. Things are going well. The Chinese have left us alone all morning and now we get to have a good New Years dinner. It seems like the only time we get a really good meal is on a holiday. We had a real good dinner but sat out in the snow to eat it. We went back out the next morning and finished building our fence. I still don't know how we got by without being shelled. We were like sitting ducks out there. Maybe this isn't going to be as bad as we had feared it would be. Or then again, we may have just been very lucky.

After a few days we get orders for another project. We are to construct some barbed wire entanglements on the forward slopes of Hill 266. Hill 266 is the hill that has been nick named "Old Baldy". I don't know how it came to be called that when there are so many hills that would qualify for that name. This hill and two others are noted in the history of the Korean War for having had some of the fiercest fighting before, during and after we arrived in Korea. The other two were "Heartbreak Ridge" and "Pork Chop Hill". Old Baldy is what we call an outpost. This is a position out in I * front of the MLR and is usually occupied by a small number of troops as a listening post and observation post to detect the arrival of Chinese troops who are preparing for an attack on the MLR. It is a very dangerous position because the Chinese really want control of it as it is a perfect jumping off point for attacks on the MLR. If the troops on the op are expecting a large attack they just pull back and call in a mortar and artillery barrage and pull out, but sometimes they get trapped and have been wiped out. We have reinforced this op because we know how bad the Chinese want it.

We arrive early the next morning at B Company's headquarters which is located about a half mile from the MLR. From here to where we will start out onto Baldy there is a heavy growth of fir trees. Some are 40 to 50 feet high. I wondered how they were ever spared. The trail runs along the ridge top right through these trees.

We have several KSC's with us carrying our material. When we arrive at the MLR we get into a trench and look out over Baldy. Its elevation is slightly lower than the MLR, and about the size of Rocky Butte in Portland. It drops off real steep on three sides. There is a narrow trail which is also pretty steep and is about 400 or 500 yards long to the bottom where we will start up toward the top of Baldy. At least 300 yards of the trail is in view of the Chinese held hills. When we get about 100 yards down the trail we notice the bodies of several Chinese soldiers that had been killed in an earlier attack. Because of the below freezing weather they were still frozen. No one had bothered to try and bury them mostly because they didn't want to spend that much time out in the open. They weren't posing any problem now anyway. We move on to the bottom and out onto Baldy. When

we reach the top we go down the other side about 75 feet where we will start constructing the first section of fence. Later on the rifle companies will dig some trenches and gun emplacements at several locations on the hill. This fence will be different than the first one we built. This fence will be al-most impossible to penetrate except for maybe a direct hit by an artillery shell. We drive our metal stakes into the ground and leave them about 5½' out of the ground. We put a stake about every eight feet. I called these posts before but they are actually a metal stake about 1½" in diameter with notches all the way on one side where the barbed wire fits in. After we get several stakes in we stretch barbed wire between them about 12" apart. Then we place another short stake out about 8' between each of the tall stakes. We now weave more barbed wire real loose about 12" apart through wire that we put in from the top of the fence stakes down to the short stake. Then behind this fence we leave a gap of about 8' and build the same type of fence with the apron part pointing the other way. In between these two fences we stretch three or four rolls of concertina wire which are rolls of barbed wire about 3' in diameter that pulls out like a large coil spring. We usually have 10 or 12 men working on one of these projects.

The Chinese held hills are much closer in this area than they were on our last project and while we are on this side of the hill we are in plain view of them. There is a heavy overcast hanging over the higher areas of their lines so maybe they can't see us. After a couple hours of working on the fence we wonder if we are going to be able to pull this off without any problems like the other one. Probably not because this is a piece of real estate that they really want. We get our answer as soon as the clouds lift. We hear a popping sound coming from the Chinese lines and then some swishing sounds coming in where we are and then explosions about 100 feet away. We are under fire from Chinese mortars. This was our baptism of fire. One of the 1st. Cav. sergeants told us a little later that if you can hear the mortar or artillery round coming in you have plenty of time to get down on the ground but if you don't hear it, then it is so close that it is going to explode before you get down. They throw in a few more rounds that are also wide of their mark and after those hit we get up and run over to the back side of the hill. There is not any cover for us and while they are dropping in rounds on this side now we are trying to dig fox holes with our bayonet and helmet which is hard to do with the first few inches of ground frozen, but those exploding shells make it much easier. They finally give up since they really don't know where we are now. We were lucky and no one is hit.

We decide that there is no use trying to build any more fence today so we decide, to head back to the MLR but we have to go back up that trail and will be seen again. We take off one at a time about 50 yards apart and head up the hill. This way they won't have much of a target. It worked and they didn't fire a round. Lady luck was with us once again today.

We are back out the next morning with about the same situation weather-wise. This time we brought along some small picks and our entrenching shovels. In about twenty minutes we have dug our foxholes deep enough so only a direct hit or a hit right next to the fox hole will get us. Then we are back over the hill and stringing our wire and as soon as the low clouds lift it is the same song second verse. Someone yells, "incoming!!!". We all hit the ground and as soon as the shells explode we are over the hill

and in our foxholes. Their aim is getting better and we know now that they definitely don't want us to build this fence. They drop in a few more rounds just like yesterday and we move off the hill the same as yesterday with the same results. No casualties. How long can this last? Our squad leaders and platoon sergeant decide to let things cool off for a couple of days and maybe we will have more favorable weather in our favor.

One of the 1st Cav. sergeants managed to get a few days leave and went to Japan. They call it R&R. Rest and Recuperation. He left before we got involved in the Old Baldy situation. He was back in the late afternoon of the first day that we didn't go back out on Baldy. He told us that he had brought back some good American whiskey and thought we deserved to have us a party. Our platoon sergeant and platoon leader had bunkers in the company area and wouldn't be coming around after dark. We had the small problem of no mixer. My bunker buddy (Lowell) and I volunteered to sneak into the mess tent after the cooks leave for the night and do what they call a "midnight requisition". Well after dark we slipped under the wall of the mess tent to see what we could find. We didn't want to show much light at all and it was hard to see but Lowell soon found some large cans of grapefruit juice. Then we thought we should have some tomato juice for the next morning and I took one small case of what looked like tomato juice. There was so much that the cooks wouldn't miss it. We were taking an awful chance and would have some pretty stiff punishment if caught. But we were determined to have a party. My buddy seemed to be forgetting that he was a devout Mormon. War can change people, at least for awhile.

We later gathered in the sergeant's bunker. There must have been a dozen of us in a bunker built for a maximum of six people. Kinda like sardines in a can. I guess you know that our guard duty in this area was practically nil tonight. The sergeant reached behind his bunk, pulled out a fifth of whiskey, opened it and started passing it around. We each took a drink and then a drink of juice and kept both moving till the fifth was gone. Then another was produced and we drank that one. That one took a little longer and now everyone was getting real talkative and discussing our problems. We thought that was it and were getting ready to leave, but no, he brought out a third one. Oh well, what the heck. Tomorrow was Sunday, we weren't going out on Baldy and maybe we wouldn't be doing much. If my memory serves me right I believe we were on number six when the party finally broke up. The first out the door was Jack Dawson, a replacement from another outfit. I followed next and when I got outside I saw one of the funniest sights I had seen in a long time. The ground was terraced down the hill from our bunkers and was real slick with packed snow and ice. Jack staggered around awhile and then fell head first to the ground. From there he just kind of slithered down the hill like I had seen animals do in cartoons. None of us were very coordinated but we managed to get him back up the hill and into his bunker. We were really lucky once again since none of our superiors dropped in but wore so that no Chinese decided to try and infiltrate into our area. That could have been disastrous. We look back and realize that now.

We were still in bed the next morning when two of the guys came into our bunker looking for tomato juice. I told them that it was in the case next to the door. I was hoping it wasn't frozen. They got a can out and opened it with the little can opener that we all

carry on our dog tag (identification tags) chain around our neck. They said, "this isn't tomato juice, it's catsup!" I guess you know my a-- was mud for several days after that. There weren't any markings on the cans. I often wonder if it is still there.

There have been some Chinese soldiers infiltrating through the MLR and getting into the rear areas, attacking convoys and causing other problems. Across the road below us there is a narrow valley before you get to a steep hill side. The top brass believes that it is a possibility some of them may try to sneak through that way so they had us build a sandbagged gun emplacement there and mount a 50 cal. machine gun. We each had to put in two hours on that gun at night (two at a time) besides our daytime work. The night time temperature is now around 20 degrees below zero. They were some of the most miserable nights I spent in Korea. I would put on all the clothes that I could get on which was my summer t shirt and shorts, my wool underwear, my wool pants and shirt, fatigue pants and jacket, pile jacket (fur type lined vest) field jacket and parka with a hood on it. I could hardly move but had to in order to keep my feet half way warm. The guys in the rifle companies were really suffering from the cold also. We heard of one case where there were a few of them on guard in a bunker on the trench line that stood guard with their mummy bags around them zipped up. (these bunkers are open on the sides and front) Some Chinese slipped up on them and bayoneted them before they could get out of the sleeping bags. We would forget the cold for a time when we would hear rustling in the brush above us. It was usually always the big rats roaming around but it could always be two legged rats too. It was so dark some nights you couldn't tell what was up there. Some nights were real light when the moon came out and the snow would glisten just like it millions of diamonds on it. The real dark nights were the worse, especially when one guy had to leave to wake up the next relief. We always used some kind of password then so when the relief would come back you knew for sure who was approaching. It was so cold some nights that if it wasn't too dark we would just stand guard by standing in the doorway of our bunkers and look out toward the valley. Good thing we didn't get caught doing that too but it was so cold we just didn't seem to care. This way just one guy stood guard while the other slept.

Before all of the above took place we did go back out to Baldy again. On our first morning out we had just arrived at the place where we were going to extend part of our fence when we noticed something brown color in some brush below us and went down to investigate. We found it to be the bodies of two Chinese soldiers. They were probably killed a night or two before and of course were frozen. They just looked like they were laying their asleep. We were thinking about rolling them over and going through their pockets but had been told never to disturb their bodies because a lot of times they have been booby trapped with explosives under them. We did notice that each of them were carrying a small pouch on their belt. The 1st Cav. sergeant told us that they were pouches full of dope which a lot of them carried before going into battle. They liked to get a little high before attacking. No wonder they did such weird things sometimes.

Now we get back to our fence building. It was a day with very little cloud cover and before long we were under mortar fire again and by the time we were in our fox holes they stopped firing and we immediately found out why. Two Australian or Canadian

(both had the same markings) fighter planes came screeching in right over our heads real low and both of them were firing their 50 cal. machine guns at something over on the Chinese held hills which we hoped were the Chinese mortar positions. When they fire their guns the empty cartridges and the metal clips that hold them together in a belt come falling out under the wings. One of them hit my buddy, Bob Counter from Milwaukie, Oregon dead center on the top of his helmet. He yelled, "I'm hit!!, I'm hit!!". We saw what had happened and were all laughing at him. Heck, we weren't even being fired on. Bob was an overly nervous person anyway and didn't see the humor in it. The Chinese didn't fire on us anymore that day. The fighters must have knocked them out. We finished building our fence and pulled off the hill. No one wounded except the slight dent on top of Bob's helmet.

I was talking with one of the riflemen one day when I remembered those pouches we had seen on the two dead Chinese soldiers. He said that he was a machine gunner and one night during a heavy attack on their position he had so many Chinese coming at him he couldn't shoot them fast enough and the ones who got through went right by him looking straight ahead and someone behind him got them. They were so doped up all they knew was to keep moving straight ahead. I guess you could say that they were overdosed.

When we got back to the company area that evening we had some great news waiting for us. They had brought up some portable showers and set them up in a squad tent. There would be hot showers heated by oil fired stoves and there were wooden floors inside. We hadn't seen anything with a wooden floor since we arrived in Korea. We were to get our turn first thing in the morning and would also get clean underwear and fatigues. We were there bright and early the next morning. We thought something might be wrong when we didn't hear the stoves burning. When we looked inside the tent floor was covered with ice and the shower heads had ice sickles a foot long hanging on them. The oil stoves had broken down and there was no attempt to repair any of them. They just took everything down and hauled it away. We did get some clean underwear and fatigues. Our clothes were just about standing up on their own, they were so dirty. It seemed as if our platoon never got the breaks that the others did.

Since I am on the subject of showers I thought I would mention what kind of bathroom facilities we had. When we were in a more permanent position with the whole company we had sandbagged walled outhouses with a canvass or plastic roof. Usually they were two holers. Can you imagine going out to the outhouse at night at 20 degrees below zero and sitting down on that ice cold wood. When we were in other areas we just dug a shallow one holer with our entrenching tool. There was also a lot of yellow snow here.

It has been so cold at night that Lowell and I were getting desperate trying to figure out a way to keep warm. We were warm in our sleeping bags but when trying to write letters, play cards or whatever by candlelight it was really miserable. Probably around 0 degrees. We decided to rig up some type of stove and some kind of stove it was. We found an old square can 2½ x 2½ feet which had been a container for some type of mortar shells. We laid it down on a wooden frame we built with the opening toward the

inside of our bunker in the corner by the doorway. Then we built a wooden frame outside and placed a can of diesel fuel upside down on that with a hose from the can through the sandbags into a hole that we had punched in our stove to be. We pinched off the hose enough so the fuel would drip real slow and then touched it off with a match. It was working pretty good. We weren't getting too many BTUs out of it but there was enough heat to take off the chill so we weren't too cold and didn't have to wear so many clothes while inside. After a few days we noticed we had a slight problem. It was burning dirtier than we thought it would and we noticed we had black soot hanging from the overhead logs about three inches long and the top of our sleeping bags were turning black with the soot that must have been coming from our hair. Lowell thought that maybe if we added just a little gasoline to it maybe it would burn a little cleaner. We tried it but it seemed to be burning too fast so Lowell tried adjusting the pinched off area of the hose and it came loose and the mixture poured into the can and we immediately had a big fire and the corner of the bunker was on fire. I ran outside and knocked the can of diesel off the stand which stopped the flow and we soon put out the fire. Lowell was lucky that he was wearing the gloves that we use for stringing barbed wire which are real heavy leather and go up as far as your elbow because they were on fire too. There had also been a sheet of flame shooting out the chimney but no one had noticed it. Showing any kind of light at all at night was strictly forbidden.

Our food seemed to be getting worse. Part of the problem was our bad cooks. We had cold storage eggs quite often that must have been in cold storage past their time. The white of the egg was edible but the yokes were real stale tasting. The potatoes were dehydrated and had a bad taste. Sometimes they served them mashed and it was like eating sticky cream of wheat mush. The frozen turkey and chicken always had dark blood around the bone but didn't taste too bad. I can't remember of getting any breast meat. I have a good idea where that was going. One day I was really hungry but they were serving liver. I never could eat liver, even at home but I was so darn hungry I thought I would risk it. They gave me a big thick slice which had kind of a green tint to it and was so big it must have come from a horse. I took one bite and reserved the rest for the garbage can. On another day we had chili which I used to like but this looked like a large deep pan of nothing but grease. They dipped down under the grease with a large ladle and gave me a large helping. I got sick and also diarrhea for a couple of days. They must have served the same type of chili to the rifle companies that same evening (the menu in the Army is the same every day no matter where you are but some cooks cook better than others) because I later heard from one of the riflemen that on the next day after the chili their company had made an attack to take a Chinese held hill and one of the guys had diarrhea so bad that he had to stop every so often during the attack to drop his pants. Just making the attack would scare the s--- out of you and then to have a bad case of diarrhea on top of it would really be something.

For about the first month or so we were given free cigarettes and one candy bar a day. Then the free candy bars stopped. They said that they believed the Korean K.P.s were taking them. I wonder if that is where they were going.

They tell us that we will be pulling off the line within the next two weeks and going into reserve. We have really been looking forward to that. We will have hot showers available there and are also due for our first beer ration. Before we arrived in Korea the G.I.'s were allowed one free can of beer a day. The Women's Christian Temperance Union found out about it and raised such a fuss about the G.I.'s up on the front lines getting alcohol beverages that they stopped giving it out just before we arrived, but it was still being distributed, except now you had to pay for it. Sure made a lot of sense. It was hard to distribute one can a day so they would just give it out all at once to outfits like ours but I don't know how it was distributed to the rifle companies when they were on the front line.

We now get orders to construct another fence. This fence will be across part of a valley real close to the MLR east of Old Baldy a few miles. It was difficult to cover this area at night since there was no easy way to construct any fortifications when in plain sight of the Chinese and no cover. They didn't seem to mind sending us out there to build the fence though. I thought that didn't make a whole lot of sense. We were going to build a regular straight fence with concertina wire on either side of it. After we complete the fence the rifle company would tie tin cans and other noise making devices on the fence which would make a lot of noise when touched. They would have very sensitive microphones placed all along the fence which would pick up any sounds. On a small hill at the end of the fence they would place machine guns and when any sound was heard along the fence they would saturate the area with machine gun fire. It sounded like a real good idea except that we had to build the fence. We seemed to get all the fun jobs though.

We arrive at our fence building site early the next morning. We have one truck for us and one for the KSC's and our material. The KSC's will go back to the company area after they pack out our material. They never help us build any fences. It would be hard to have them help when they do not speak English and their honcho's spoke very little. When we move out from behind the small hill where the trucks are parked we are in plain sight of the Chinese. It appears to be a real risky situation and there is practically no cover in case we get shelled. There is an irrigation ditch near where we will build the fence but it angles away out into the valley. Other than that there is only the raised pathways about one foot high and two feet wide which go around the dried up rice paddies which are about a hundred foot square. That isn't much cover but would be better than nothing.

The KSC's pack out our material and leave and we get a pretty good start on the fence when we hear the faint popping sound of a Chinese mortar firing. Then comes the ever so familiar sound of the incoming mortar shells. As soon as the first rounds explode we head for the cover of the irrigation ditch which is about eight feet wide and four feet deep. The shells hit wide of their mark but after a few more rounds they are beginning to zero in on us. We have our platoon leader with us. Lieutenant Vietta, and he gives the order to take off one at a time and run for the truck. They drop in a few more rounds near the ditch and then quit firing. They don't seem to be interested unless they can fire at a group of men like they had done on Baldy. We all manage to make it back to the truck without anyone being hit. They didn't try to shell the area behind the hill, probably

because they didn't know where we were once we were out of sight. We have once more had been very lucky and had survived another very dangerous situation. But now we had to look forward to going back out there again later on.

We are right back out there the next morning but today we have the good fortune of low clouds over the Chinese lines. We made some progress before the clouds began to lift and as soon as they do we are under their mortar fire once again. This time we hadn't heard the mortars firing but we heard the incoming rounds and hit the ground. Just as I got down on the ground I looked over and saw my squad leader walking with some steel pickets on his shoulder. He hadn't heard the incoming. Before I could yell at him a shell exploded right between us. It was probably about twenty or thirty feet from me but only about ten feet from him. All I saw was a large puff of black smoke and flying dirt. When that cleared we saw him laying on the ground. We ran over to him thinking he was either dead or seriously wounded. He was a little dirty and shook up but there wasn't a scratch on him. Some mortar shells have kind of a mushroom effect when they explode which throws the shrapnel slightly up and away instead of flying real close to the ground, but that shell hit so close to him it was a miracle he wasn't hit. All that shrapnel had went around and over him. As we jumped into the irrigation ditch the shelling became heavier. Some of the rounds landed on the edge of ditch and some in the ditch but some distance from us. My buddy, Bob Counter, the nervous one who had the empty shell hit on top of his helmet on "Baldy" said, "I'm getting the hell out of here!!!". Just then our gung ho platoon leader, Lieutenant Vietta patted the 45 pistol on his hip and said, "Don't get any ideas about running. I'll tell you when to go". Real nice fellow. I looked over at Pvt. Bledsoe who was one of the 1st. Cav. replacements we had with us who always seemed real strange. He had seen quite a bit of combat and kind of looked like a zombie when you looked at him. He was rolled up in a ball and was shaking. When we finally got our order to split up and head for the truck we couldn't hardly budge him, but he finally went. This time they shelled us all the way to the truck and around the truck. We all dove under the truck which was the only cover. Then they quit firing and we high tailed it out of there.

When we got back to the company area we asked our platoon sergeant and squad leaders to see if Lieutenant Vietta couldn't pull some strings with the top brass to get us off that detail. How much longer could our luck hold out? He either didn't do it or didn't have any success. We knew we were going to be back out there the next morning. We were all getting pretty jittery after all the shelling we had gone through and to think about going back out there again just made matters worse. We couldn't quite see the logic in getting someone killed or wounded just to build that fence. Some of us were getting desperate enough that we hoped we could get wounded just bad enough that they would send us home. We had heard about some of the riflemen shooting themselves in the foot or leg and causing a wound bad enough to be sent home. Of course they would be court-martialed and possibly serve some prison time but at least they would be home. We also decided along with our platoon leader to leave Pvt. Bledsoe back at the company area when we would be going up on the line because with his mental condition the way it was he could cause a problem in a tight situation.

The next morning we were back out in that valley again and the weather conditions were not in our favor. This could be a real disaster now that they had our position pretty well zeroed in. We had only worked for a short period of time when without any warning at all a shell hit pretty close to us. We hit the ground and then realized what it was as soon as they fired again. I guess they had given up on using mortars and were now using a flat trajectory firing cannon. These are like our 76mm tank cannons or like the 88mm German cannon which fires a projectile real flat just like a rifle. By the time you heard the gun fire the shell was there. We were now quite a distance from the irrigation ditch so our only cover was the walkways around the rice paddies. When these shells exploded they threw shrapnel out faster than a mortar shell and some of it right above the ground. If the shell hit beyond you at some distance you had a good chance of not being hit but if it hit in front of you your chances were slim without some kind of cover and the path was probably just enough if the shell didn't hit real close. They were really zeroing in on us now. There was no time to waste getting out of there and the lieutenant immediately yelled for us to head for the truck. We just all got up, tried to scatter out and headed for the truck. We probably looked like a football team running back a kick off. I was always scared before with the mortar fire but this stuff really scared me. We couldn't hear these shells coming in. I would just run a short distance and then roll into a shell hole or depression in the ground, wait till one exploded and then take off again till I thought it was time for another one to hit. They kept firing till the last man got behind the hill. Once we were behind the hill they couldn't hit us because with that flat trajectory weapon the shells would either hit the hill or go way over. Even the lieutenant had the hell scared out of him. We just couldn't believe that no one had been hit this time. The Chinese didn't want that fence built. Our good luck almost ended today.

It is now the next morning and no one has come after us to go back out into the valley. We were beginning to think that they had cancelled that project. Then the platoon sergeant came with the bad news. We were now going to go out after dark to finish the job. We wouldn't have to worry about being shelled but would have the problem of the extreme night time cold and possible Chinese patrols. It was close to ten miles to the valley and the temperature was still below zero at night. Riding in a truck that far with only a canvass cover over it can really be miserable, even in the day time. Actually, it is almost unbearable. I remember looking at a thermometer one day when it seemed to be pretty warm with the sun shining bright. The temperature was 4 degrees above zero.

We were back out in the valley that night. We took off part of our outer clothing when working on the fence and even as cold as it was we would still work up a sweat, especially me because we were always working so fast so we could get done. We got a lot of work done that night without any problem with Chinese patrols but the ride back to the company area was terrible. I was so cold I could hardly stand it and my feet which had sweated a lot got real numb feeling and then ached like a bad tooth ache. I thought sure they were freezing or were at least getting frost bitten. We went out one more night and finished building the fence. No problem with the Chinese and no one with frost bitten feet. We never did hear if the fence served its purpose. We pulled back into reserve a few days later.

When we arrive in our reserve area about 15 miles from the MLR we set up our two man pup tents and then head for the hot showers that are waiting for us in a squad tent. This will be our first shower since we arrived in Korea. We are a pretty raunchy bunch. I guess these showers were kind of like dying and going to heaven. They were really great. I can't remember when a shower had felt better. Our beer ration had also arrived. We could each buy a case and also that of those who didn't drink which was a small minority. Several of us got together with members of the other platoons and built a big bon fire. This was permissible since we were so far from the MLR. The Turkish soldiers used to build big fires trying to coax the Chinese in real close so they could engage them in hand to hand combat where they can use their big knives and bayonets. We must have drunk beer and sang songs till midnight. I can understand why there was such a drug problem in the Vietnam War. We may have had the same problem in the Korean War if drugs were available. There is so much tension when you are up on or near the MLR and your nerves get stretched almost to the limit and you will do anything to calm them down. The next day my partner and I found some broken shell boxes and pallets to use for making us a floor in our pup tent so we wouldn't be sleeping on the ground. We got us a hammer and also nails from the supply tent and made us a nice floor for our tent. Later that afternoon the officer of the day came by and noticed the floor in our tent. He told us to take it out and throw it away. Nobody else had a floor in their tent so we couldn't either. You can see why I have a thing for some officers.

We thought reserve would be a real vacation after what we had been going through the past six weeks with just a little guard duty and possibly some training classes. We were in bed fairly early that night and around midnight we were awakened by what sounded like real loud thunder in the direction of the MLR. We got up and took a look up in that direction and then we knew what it was. There was a massive artillery and mortar barrage taking place. The sky was all lit up with flares. These are the flares that are fired in artillery shells and when they get so close to the ground they ignite and then slowly come down on a small parachute. They are very bright and when the Chinese are making an assault the artillery barrage is called in on them and about every fifth shell is a flare shell. This way they can keep the battlefield well lighted all the time. We had never seen or heard anything of this magnitude before. Now that we knew what it was we went back to bed and about two hours later we were awakened again, this time by our platoon sergeant yelling, "everybody up, pack your gear, we're moving out". We get up and get our gear packed and are standing by (you do that a lot in the Army) when our platoon leader comes by to tell us that the Chinese have launched a major assault and they are afraid they may break through the MLR and we will be moving up to reinforce the rifle companies. Well, there goes our reserve time. No more hot showers for awhile. We climb aboard our trucks and head toward the MLR.

We arrive at our position just after daylight in what they call a blocking position which is roughly three or four miles from the MLR. We move into bunkers just like we had been living in but these are all built above the ground. Part of the rifle companies have already moved on up to the MLR to reinforce those trying to repel the Chinese assault. The rest will take up positions in our area in case the Chinese do break through.

After a few hours the firing stops and we hear that the assault was turned back. From then on till almost dark there was a steady stream of ambulances, litter jeeps and evacuation helicopters going past our area with the dead and wounded. Our casualties were very heavy. The Chinese casualties must have been tremendous. The next day we are told that we will not be going back into reserve. We will be staying here for two or three weeks in case the Chinese try again.

One day our platoon sergeant came by and said he needed a volunteer to sweep an area with a mine sweeper (mine detector) where they want to clear out some under brush etc. where they want to put up some tents. Ernie Miller who is the second youngest in our platoon and who enjoys a challenge volunteered. If he finds any we will have to remove them or detonate them. As he was sweeping the area he didn't notice a real fine wire stretched across the ground about 4" high and when his foot caught on the wire it tripped a bouncing betty anti-personnel mine which is a mine that pops up into the air four or five feet and then explodes. They are very deadly but Ernie was very lucky and only got hit by one piece of shrapnel in his upper arm. No one else was real close to him and none of the shrapnel hit anyone else. His wound was bad enough for them to take him back to a field hospital where he would spend about three weeks before joining us again. We just fenced off the area and marked it as an uncleared mine field.

A few days later we had another serious problem when some infiltrators had wandered into another mine field in our area during the night and one of them had stepped on a mine and was badly wounded. The others were so scared that they just froze and wouldn't try to get out of the mine field. Now they wanted a volunteer with a mine detector to go in and lead them out. Here they were probably Chinese or North Korean soldiers who were dressed in civilian clothes and one of our guys had to risk his life to get them out. If they were civilian North Koreans trying to get out of North Korea they probably would have surrendered to our front line troops. If some South Koreans had of been caught in the same situation behind the Chinese lines they probably would have been shot on the spot. But then we didn't know what the South Korean Army would do to them after we got them out and turned them over to them. The South Korean soldiers could be very ruthless themselves. Actually, there is no difference between a North Korean and a South Korean. We heard that the North Korean soldiers were much more ruthless than the Chinese. They got a volunteer from our platoon and he got them out o.k. We never did hear what happened to them.

A few days later I was sitting in my bunker one afternoon looking out the doorway and pvt. Bledsoe was sitting just outside the doorway taking advantage of some sun. There was a small group of Korean kitchen help coming down the roadway. I couldn't believe what I saw next, just as the group of Koreans were right out in front of our bunker. Pvt. Bledsoe had a hand grenade in his hand. He pulled the pin and rolled it right out into the middle of the Koreans. They scattered and hit the ground just as the hand grenade just made a loud pop like a big firecracker. Bledsoe had drained the powder out of it and only the detonator exploded. He started laughing just like it was a big joke. I mentioned before that I thought he was mentally unbalanced. We told our platoon sergeant about the situation and a few days later they transferred him out. We never heard what happened to

him but they probably sent him to a mental hospital back home. Nothing else of consequence happened while we were in this position.

We move out of this blocking position but instead of moving back into reserve we move up to another sector of the Central front. When we reach our new position our squad doesn't stay with the rest of the company but we will be much closer to the M.L.R. to take over the forward ammunition supply point. There will be five of us and a squad leader who is one of the fellows who was drafted with some of us from the Northwest. He had specialized in ammunition handling and had made sergeant. We will be taking care of the battalions reserve ammunition. We will be living in a duplex type bunker. Four of us in one bunker and one sharing the bunker with the sergeant. We will even have a stove. The weather has warmed up some now and there isn't any snow. We are at the base of a slight hill. It is about three or four hundred yards to the top and the M.L.R. is a few hundred yards beyond that. We have one of our companies to the left and a ROK company to our right. There is a large dry irrigation ditch across the road about fifty feet away. There is a flood gate which was used to divert the water from the big ditch to smaller ones. We notice that the banks of the ditch are filled with rat holes. I'm sure we will be having rat problems now that we have heat in our bunkers. We do not have any cots or bunk type beds here and will have to sleep on the ground with an air mattress. We didn't have much to do here except help the rifle companies load their ammunition when they came for it and each of us pulled about two hours of guard duty at night. The ammunition was stacked about fifty feet from our bunkers which I thought was awfully close to have several tons of ammunition if a mortar or artillery round would make a direct hit on it. When I pulled my guard duty I either got in between some cases of ammunition or would sit up in some of the scrub brush above our bunker. If you are out where you can be seen all the time it is easy for someone to slip up on you which the Chinese are very good at. Since we are so close to the MLR we sleep with our clothes on and have our rifles alongside our sleeping bags. This location will later almost lead to our demise.

A few days after we had been in this location a bad situation took place back at the company area. They brought up some tanks and positioned them about one hundred yards in front of the company area toward the MLR and began firing at a target somewhere on the Chinese lines which would have been alright if they would have fired a few rounds and then left/but instead of doing that they just stayed and kept firing. This gave the Chinese time to get a fix on their location and pretty soon the Chinese were firing back with their artillery. One of the rounds overshot the tanks and landed in the company area while everyone was eating lunch. One of my buddies who was there said that the shell hit right by a group of guys that were sitting down eating their lunch. The concussion threw them all flying and covered them half up with dirt but none of them were wounded. The company clerk who was farther away standing by a tent got hit in the stomach with a piece of shrapnel. He was the only one hit and died later at a hospital in Japan.

One day an artillery unit set up some rocket launchers about a hundred yards from our bunker. These launchers hold at least 60 three to four inches in diameter rockets.

When they fire the rockets are all gone in less than a minute. I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end. As soon as they fired they were pulled away before the Chinese could figure out where they were. They returned a few days later with some 155mm howitzers but left after firing a few rounds. I guess they realized that if the Chinese got a fix on them that our ammunition supply point would be very vulnerable.

We saw something kind of humorous one day. A general who once in a great while visited the MLR area was starting to land near the rifle company's headquarters and the Chinese threw in a few mortar rounds just as he was landing. His helicopter was up and gone from there in a few seconds.

We were outside sitting around one morning when we heard a China pheasant rooster crowing up near the top of the hill. He must have been at least two hundred yards away but we could see him. We began thinking about pheasant dinner. I don't know how we would have cooked him though unless we boiled him. I got my carbine out and took four or five quick shots at him and he disappeared in a clump of brush. I couldn't tell if I had hit him or not so I decided to go up and take a look. All I found was the body of a Chinese soldier that had been there for months. He was just a skeleton in his uniform. When I got back to the bunker sergeant Heller told me that the company commander from the rifle company down the road had just called and wanted to know what the shooting was. He said, after I told him what it was he really chewed me out, but then said, "did you get the pheasant"? When I told him no he just said not to let it happen again. At least he had a little sense of humor. When he heard the shooting he probably thought there may have been some Chinese in our area.

It was a few nights later when we were awakened by heavy incoming artillery and mortar fire on the rifle companies position down the road from us which was less than a half mile away. We went out to see what was going on when our artillery and mortars opened up and there were several flares in the air right in front of the rifle company's position. The terrain was real flat between our position and theirs and we could see the whole show. Right after the flares started arriving we could hear the Chinese blowing their bugles, (they do that a lot when making an attack) yelling and firing their burp guns and rifles. Then the rifle company opened up with their machine guns, rifles and recoilless rifles. In a short time the attack was repulsed and they pulled out. We doubled our guard for the rest of the night and didn't get much sleep because we thought some of the Chinese may have slipped through the MLR during the attack and come down our way.

I believe it was during this same attack that a Chinese artillery shell made a direct hit on the rifle companies cooks bunker but didn't explode upon impact and it went right through the sandbags and logs and buried itself in the dirt right in the middle of the bunker where they were sleeping, but I doubt if they were asleep with that attack going on. They probably vacated the premises immediately. Our platoon usually gets the call to detonate unexploded shells but we weren't called on this one. Not so lucky was an ammunition bearer for a 57mm recoilless rifle team who was carrying two 57mm shells

in his back pack to his gun position. A Chinese mortar shell made a direct hit on the pack. All they found to send home were his dog tags. (ID tags)

I have forgotten to mention that Stinky was up here at the ammunition supply point with us. He was usually always with us except when we were on the MLR or in front of it stringing barbed wire. We thought he might come in handy as a watch dog but he was useless for that job. He was just too friendly with everyone.

Then came the night which I mentioned earlier where we came within a few minutes of all being killed. James Walker, one of the Indian boys from the National Guard was on his shift of guard duty and had just come into the bunker to stand by the stove for a short while because it was still pretty cold at night. The stove was by the doorway so he could see good in front of the bunker but that was all. It really wasn't too good of an idea to do that because he left all the other approaches to the bunker exposed. I was sleeping next to the stove and was awakened abruptly when James began kicking my foot real hard. I yelled out, "what are you doing!!?" He said, "there is someone out in the irrigation ditch." I asked him if they were wearing caps or helmets. He said, "they are wearing caps." "Those are Chinese!!!," I said. He should have known that because the Chinese always wear caps and the ROKs wear helmets like ours. Everyone was awake now and scrambling out of their sleeping bags and grabbing their rifles. We eased out the doorway but didn't see anyone. Apparently they knew we were on to them and not wanting to risk a fire fight (exchange of fire) with us they had slipped away. A fire fight would have alerted the ROKs (Republic of Korea, South Korean Army) and they would have been right down there. We alerted sergeant Heller and his partner, grabbed some extra ammunition and hand grenades and started out into the valley following the irrigation ditch with two of us on either side. It was pretty light out and we could see quite a ways. They had to be in the ditch. After following it as it curved out through the valley for about a half mile we gave up and went back. If James hadn't seen them when he did they probably would have thrown concussion grenades into our bunkers (the bunker would have muffled the sound) and then came in and finished the job. Then they would have either set explosive charges in the ammo dump with a long fuse or set it afire and be long gone by the time anyone noticed what was going on.

The next morning we checked out the irrigation ditch and there were the tracks in the dirt. I believe there were four or five sets of tracks. We set up some trip flares in two or three places along the ditch and some on the hill behind our bunker. These are flares that are detonated by a trip wire just like the bouncing betty mine. They go up in the air about 50 feet or more, ignite and then come down below a small parachute similar to the ones that are fired in artillery shells. We thought the Chinese may try and come back because blowing up the battalions reserve ammunition would be a big bonus to them in case there was an all out attack against our battalion. They may have had a map with them also and have our location pinpointed on the map for their artillery and mortar units. But, as our good luck would have it, they never came back and we never had a round of artillery or mortar fire come in while we were here. Stinky did set off some of the flares we had placed on the hill behind the bunker.

We had heard rats crawling around in the bunker every night and on one night we heard one moving along the top of one of the sandbags about ten feet away. One of the guys held a flashlight on him and I shot him with my carbine. I hit him dead center and he didn't move afterwards. When we went to throw him out the next morning he was gone. Some other rats must have carried him off during the night. Food was scarce for them up here.

On another night we were awakened by the sound of airplane engines and real loud talking in Chinese. It was one of the C-47 transport planes that they used for dropping leaflets and were broadcasting over loud speakers tonight offering safe passage for any Chinese troops who would surrender. They also offered good treatment, food and lodging just as they did in the leaflets. The Chinese did the same thing but fired theirs over in artillery shells. One that I can still remember had two pictures on it. The top one showed a big fat guy in a bathing suit sitting in a lounge chair next to a swimming pool. He had a drink in one hand and a big cigar in his mouth. The bottom picture showed a group of U.S. soldiers all bundled up, sloshing through some snow and mud. Between the two pictures was this caption. "Mr. Money bags is in Florida drinking cocktails and smoking big cigars. Where are you? We later found that the top picture came from a cigar advertisement in a Florida magazine.

We got conned by who we thought was a real friendly ROK soldier while we were here. He used to come down and visit occasionally. He spoke practically no English but one day got it across to us that he had some whiskey and would trade it for a pair of combat boots which we now wore since the weather was warmer. One of the guys had an extra pair and we thought, oh, what the heck. Let's do it. We gave him the pair of boots but he never did come back with the whiskey. In fact, he never did come back. Live and learn.

The weather has warmed up quite a bit now but the evenings are still pretty cool. We have been living on C rations while up here because it is about a mile to our company area and we don't have any transportation here so some of us can go back for a good meal once in awhile. Nothing else of much consequence happened while we were at this position but we heard that some time after we left to go into reserve some Chinese slipped up on the check point at the cross roads one night between our ammunition point and our company area. I believe there were two or three men there to check traffic to and from the MLR and to give directions. They were found that morning, all with their throats cut. It could have been the same group that had tried to do us in.

We have now moved back into another reserve position which is farther back than we were before and we will be living in squad tents this time but will not have the floors in them like we had in Japan. We will have cots to sleep on though. We will also have hot showers. Whenever we were up front or in blocking position we just had an occasional sponge bath.

After a few days in reserve we get the job of building a rifle range to train snipers. When we arrive at the location we see we will have a real flat area for the range and then

a small hill at the end where we will put the targets. We spend all day clearing small trees and brush to the base of the hill. It seemed like 1000 yards was an awfully long ways even for a sniper with a high powered telescope. I guess that is what they expected to do though because the only targets we were going to set up were at 1000 yds.

When we got back to the company area I found out that I was on the guard duty roster for this night. I thought we would be having a lot more free time while in reserve. I couldn't figure out why we were pulling guard duty in Headquarters Platoons area because us and Communications Platoon always pulled our own guard duty. The next night it was the same thing so I asked someone why we were doing that and they said that Headquarters Platoon did not have to pull any guard duty. I got pretty irate about that. They weren't any better than we were even though they were working with the top brass. I protested to the 1st sergeant and he told me I could transfer to a rifle company. I decided not to protest anymore.

We went back out to the sniper range and after clearing trees and brush nearly to the top of the hill we came across a partial case of 60mm mortar shells with the detonators still in them. They were a very dangerous thing to have lying around so we decided to just toss them over a cliff at the top of the hill. We threw several over and when they exploded we were back from the edge of the cliff so none of the shrapnel could hit us except maybe a well spent piece might drop on us, but then we tossed one over that was a different color and when it exploded it wasn't the regular shrapnel shell but was a white phosphorous shell. White phosphorous is a white sticky like powder and when any of it gets on your skin or clothes it just keeps right on burning through you if you can't get it off. If some of that would have dropped on us we really would have had a problem. We just grabbed the box, threw it over the hill and ran. We were very lucky that none of that one had dropped on us. There are three things I think should be outlawed in warfare even though they say, all's fair in love and war, and those are, white phosphorous, flame throwers, and napalm. Napalm is a jelly gasoline which is usually dropped from an airplane in a metal canister like an extra fuel tank and when it hits the ground it explodes into a flaming inferno. It also sticks to your body, similar to white phosphorous. Our forces used a lot of napalm and white phosphorous. We used it occasionally in some of the ravines in front of the MLR. They would place barrels of it on either side of a ravine and connect the detonator by wires to a hand held magneto, and when the Chinese would launch an assault up the ravine, someone on the MLR would crank the magneto and turn the ravine into a flaming inferno. The Chinese would be burned alive. Anyway, we finished clearing the brush and trees on the hill, set up our targets and left.

A few mornings later just as we were getting out of bed we heard an explosion between us and the road where there was a fenced off mine field. A fenced off mine field usually just has a strand of wire stretched between steel post around the mine field with bright colored triangle shaped pieces of metal attached every few feet which designates it as an uncleared mine field. We ran out to see what happened and saw two KSCs carrying a dog between them on the road. It was "Stinky". He had run through then minefield and set off a mine which killed him. He did manage to run all of the way out of the field

before he died. Service Company down the road had a female dog as a mascot and Stinky had been going down there to visit once in awhile but had always went by way of the road but must have been in a hurry this morning. We had never given the mine field a second thought thinking that a dog wouldn't be heavy enough to set off a mine. I guess we were too shocked to even think about running after the Koreans so we could get him back and bury him. The only dogs you ever see in Korea are mascots. The Koreans have eaten all the others. But these were KSC's and they were getting plenty of food to eat. It was quite a loss for all of us. He had been with us for several months.

Our reserve time expired and we have now moved into another blocking type position only farther from the MLR than the last time. They are building a second line of defense here in case the Chinese should launch an offensive and overrun the MLR. The weather has warmed more and we have been getting some rain. The bunker that myself and three buddies are going to move into doesn't have a real thick roof on it and we think that it could easily start leaking in a heavy rain. We found a large canvass tarp laying in a jeep trailer near our bunker that wasn't being used for anything and after a short time we had it spread over the roof and tied down. Now we won't have to worry about it leaking. Not so!! We no more and had the job done when two sergeants came by and told us to take it down because they had to have it to put over the Major's bunker. Just a little more food for thought regarding the officers.

We spend the next few days cutting small logs to be used for the building of bunker roofs. Then we are told that some of us are going to be going up to the MLR to construct some small bunkers and gun positions. The war is beginning to heat up again with a big increase in Chinese probing attacks. They have an area which they want to reinforce with more gun positions and bunkers and we get the job. The rifle companies haven't been able to do it because most of them are up all night either repulsing probing attacks or expecting them. It is one of our jobs anyway.

We arrive at our destination the next morning after a long slow muddy ride. The ground has all thawed out now and the roads are real muddy. We heard there had been a pretty strong probing attack the night before by the Chinese and our side had taken some casualties. As we started up the hill to where we will be working we pass a bunker and notice two stretchers on the ground, each with a blanket covered body on them. We can see the combat boots sticking out from under the blankets. These were some of our dead. We had seen several dead Chinese soldiers in all kinds of conditions which didn't seem to bother us anymore but when you see the bodies of your own people, even though they are covered it makes you kind of sick to your stomach. We reach the top of the hill and look over at the Chinese held hills which are less than a mile away. We began digging out areas near the top edge of the hill for gun positions. We will dig out areas about four feet deep and use that dirt for filling our sand bags. Then we put a few rows of sand bags around the hole with an opening in the front to place a machine gun or recoilless rifle and a trench out the back. We build the roof out of small logs and sandbags just like any other bunker and put dirt on top of that. Once again we have the KSCs bringing the bags and logs from where we dropped them off at the base of the hill. We are probably just barely visible to the Chinese and since they see people moving around in this area pretty often

they probably aren't too concerned and we manage to work all day without any interruption from them.

The next morning we are back bright and early. One of the guys from our platoon who hasn't been out with us before when we were under fire is with us this time. He had been working around the company area most of the time. He has his camera with him which we are allowed to do. He walks over the crest of the hill and down the other side a ways and begins taking pictures of the Chinese held hills which wasn't a good idea. He had no more than finished taking his pictures when we heard the incoming mortar shells. They must have thought he was a forward observer for an artillery or mortar unit. At least we had some good cover here and just jumped into the holes we were digging. Some of the shells hit real close but no one got hit. They fired a few more rounds and gave up. LeRoy, who was taking the pictures said, "well, I guess I've earned my combat infantry badge". Here it was his first time under fire and he was the one that caused it and he thought he had really accomplished something. The combat infantry badge is the rectangle shaped metal badge with a silver rifle on a blue back ground with a silver wreath around it. It is awarded for being under enemy fire. Anyway, LeRoy wasn't too well liked by most of us. He was a very strict member of the Nazarene Church. It wasn't because he was a Nazarene but just the way he handled himself. I remember once in Japan when some of us were playing pinochle, we asked him if he would get us a few cans of beer from the mess hall and we would buy him some pop. Actually the beer was in the day room. He refused because he wouldn't even touch a can that had beer in it. I had never seen anyone so strict. I also remembered that when anyone got a package of food from home he was right there for his share . I received a package of cookies and a letter from my sister one day and in the letter she said that the cookies were "rum" cookies. It was the rum that gave them the flavor and when they were baked the alcohol evaporates. LeRoy was right there to get his share. When I told him what they were he got sick and was under the weather for three days. I can't remember him sharing anymore food packages of mine. He didn't seem to realize that there couldn't have been any alcohol in those cookies.

The next morning we were back on the hill to finish up our construction work. After working for a few hours we began hearing a lot of rifle and machine gun fire coming from the side of the hill across from us. It was the Chinese test firing their weapons. Our troops did the same thing once in awhile to be sure their weapons were in good working order. We could see the muzzle flashes coming from all over the hillside. We contacted a forward artillery observer and showed him what was going on. He went back and called in a heavy artillery barrage on the hill which covered the whole hillside. After all the smoke and dust cleared the Chinese began firing again. The shelling didn't faze them a bit. What we were looking at was one of the hills that they had controlled for a long time and had built tunnels all over inside. They build one big main tunnel and then several side tunnels out to the side of the hill. Just like a bunch of moles. Sometimes the side tunnels are big enough to accommodate light artillery. When they heard the incoming artillery shells they just pulled back into their tunnels.

I was talking with a rifleman one day and he told me of an instance where the Chinese had been driven off a hill some time ago and he and his buddies discovered a camouflaged hole in the ground near the top of the hill that went straight down with a long ladder in it. He went down to see what was down there and when he reached the bottom he found a room big enough to hold 40 or 50 soldiers. This way if our troops attacked and ran them off the hill, these soldiers could come out and have our troops caught between them and the retreating Chinese soldiers. Kind of like a bunch of ants pouring out of the ground. It sounded like a pretty good plan. We finished up our job and left. The Chinese never shelled us since the day before.

One day after we were back in our company area one of the rifle companies commanders contacted our headquarters and said their intelligence section were predicting a heavy Chinese assault on one of their positions because of the way the Chinese had been launching probing attacks in that area. They wanted to pull a few men out of another area to reinforce the area where they thought the attack would come and wanted some men from our platoon to replace those they pulled out. Our squad and a few others got picked for the job.

We arrived at our position on the MLR just before dark and took over an area of trench and two small bunker type gun positions. We stayed awake all night staring down into the valley below watching for any sign of movement. By morning we were really bushed. We didn't have any problems in our area and the attack they were predicting didn't happen. Luck was still with us.

We have now pulled back into another reserve position farther from the MLR than we have been before. We will be living in squad tents. We have now discarded our mountain sleeping bags for lighter summer bags. We have it pretty easy here for a change except for the usual guard duty, morning exercising and training classes. We even get to see a USO show. Our first and only one. It wasn't anything fantastic and we had never heard of any of the performers before.

Our thirty days of reserve time has passed and we are now in another area of the central front. We now have the job of building a large, all above ground bunker which will be used for the battalion headquarters. It will be constructed of sandbags and logs just like the others we have built. We took three of our two and a half ton trucks and two squads of men and drove several miles to the Imjin River where there are some large deposits of sand along its banks. It is about the size of the lower Clackamas River at home but isn't as rocky or swift. We were told that during the early part of the war a big battle took place near here and that there were so many killed and wounded in the river that it ran red with blood. On our way to and from the river we passed what used to be the city of Yonchon which had a population of around 50,000 before the war. All that was left now was the bank vault and a large tall smoke stack. I don't know how it ever survived all the shelling and bombing. The rest of the city was all grown over with weeds and scrub brush. The 3rd Infantry Division had painted their division shoulder patch near the top which is a square with blue and white lines running at an angle across it.

When we arrive at the river we start loading our sand which had to be done with shovels. That was the only way we had to do it because we didn't have any kind of mechanized loaders. We unloaded it the same way because we didn't have any dump trucks. The day was pretty warm and when we got our trucks loaded several of us went for a swim. I never was much of a swimmer but I made it across and back again.

We made a few more trips to the river for sand and when we had enough for the bunker some of us went to another rear area and cut small logs to use on the roof.

A couple days after we get our logs cut and back to the company area an order comes down from one of the rifle companies that they want one of our mine detector teams to lead a patrol part way out through a valley early the next morning. They will be in an area part of the time that they haven't been before just outside what they call "The Lions Mouth" and are afraid it could be mined with some anti-personnel mines. I guess you know who one of the ones were who got picked.

We leave the MLR early the next morning with a patrol of around 30 men and start out into the valley. After we had gone about a mile the lieutenant in charge put us with our mine detector up front. We were on a little used trail most of the time and the patrol followed right behind us all the time. My partner and I took turns running the mine detector. After a half mile or so one squad split off from the rest of the patrol and headed into "The Lions Mouth" where another patrol got shot up pretty bad a few days earlier. We would spread out and wait for their return. The squad captured 11 North Korean civilians (possibly infiltrators waiting to sneak through the MLR) and were coming back to meet us, but just as they were within about 1000 yards of our position some Chinese opened fire on them with machine guns and mortars from a near by hill. They immediately radioed for an artillery barrage on the hill which they got within minutes. Then they hightailed it out of there leaving their prisoners behind. None of them got hit and we all made it back safely to our lines. We never found any mines. Only pieces of shrapnel.

A few days later we were thinking that we may have a pretty easy time of it this time up front especially after getting through that patrol so lucky. Then came the word from the rifle company that our services were required again. I don't know why someone else didn't get picked this time but it was me and my partner again. This time it would be a night operation. They have been observing a small number of Chinese troops occupying a small hill out in the valley and are planning to take a large patrol of around 40 to 50 men and making what they call a "sweep" over the hill for the purpose of taking some prisoners. I didn't see why we would be needed in such an operation, especially at night, but then we didn't have any choice.

We arrive at the MLR shortly after dark and contact the officer in charge who will be leading the patrol and asked him why are services were needed. He said there must have been some mix up in communications because he hadn't requested us to be there. We thought we were home free till he told us that he wanted us to go along anyway (without our mine detector) as a backup for the communications squad from our company

who would be stringing communications wire at the rear of the patrol so they could communicate back to the MLR instead of using their radios that the Chinese could listen in on. We were kind of riding shotgun. When we were still several hundred yards from the hill the patrol must have moved along faster than the commo squad could keep up and we got separated from the patrol. Now we had a real problem. Do we try and work our way back to the MLR and possibly run into a Chinese patrol or try to get through our lines without knowing what the password was. This could be very risky and we could get shot by our own troops. We decided to stay put where we were and hope that the patrol would return where we were waiting. Then we heard rifle and burp gun firing coming from the direction of the hill followed by rifle and B.A.R. fire from the patrol. A short time later there were artillery shells coming over our heads and hitting the hill. Some time later the patrol came back right by our position. What had happened was that when they started up the hill they found that the Chinese had reinforced their position and the patrol was unable to continue the sweep because of the heavy fire against them. They radioed for an artillery barrage which was right on the money. Our artillery units were extremely accurate at all times. All these different areas had been zeroed in before. There were no casualties (believe it or not) and my partner and I had once again come through smelling like a rose. Looked pretty shaky for awhile though.

We did not draw anymore front line operations and we finished constructing our bunker which took a total of 4000 sand bags to complete. It was a real piece of art as far as bunkers go. I still have a snapshot of it. It was so nice inside that the battalion commander who was a lieutenant colonel decided to move his cot into one room and use it for his sleeping quarters. I heard that some of the other officers didn't take too kindly to this because it was to be used strictly for headquarters business but then he was the highest ranking officer. A few days after he moved in the regimental commander who was a full colonel dropped in and when he saw that the battalion commander was using one room for his bedroom he got pretty irate and made him move out of it. We thought that was great.

Before I go on I thought I would mention another incident that was kind of humorous to us. Many times when the artillery units had a fire mission their shells would pass over or near our area and we got real used to hearing them go over but one day when they went over they were making a real weird kind of a shrill whistling sound like we had never heard before. We thought they were using some new kind of shell. Well, I guess they were. We found out the next day that some of the gunners were punching holes in the end of beer cans, cutting them down the sides and then jamming them down over the end of the shells. When the air passed through these holes it was making this terrible weird sound. I'll bet it really shook up the Chinese for awhile. It only lasted one day though because their commanding officer made them stop. Oh well, a lot of officers don't have any sense of humor.

We moved out of this position and moved back into another blocking area instead of a reserve position farther back. We were living in bunkers again up on a hillside. We had the usual bunk beds made out of poles and communication wire. I remember my air mattress had seen better days. It had so many real tiny holes in it that I couldn't patch it

anymore. I would blow it up real good before going to bed and before morning it was flat as a pancake. We got an unusual ration of beer while we were here. It was bottled Japanese beer. Real good, but we had to drink it warm like always. Some of the National Guardsmen are beginning to rotate home now. They have more time in than we do. They tell us that we should start rotating home within four or five weeks. The peace talks are still dragging on and will drag on for another year. The war is really beginning to heat up. The Chinese want to take more ground and more prisoners for bargaining purposes at the peace talks.

We have been carrying our water that we use for washing and shaving from the mess tent area (you may have wondered why we have used tents in some of the front line and blocking areas when we live in bunkers. For some purposes such as the mess tent, a bunker isn't large enough so they have to use the squad tents. They do have sand bags piled around them.) which is a considerable distance from us. One day my buddy and I were going to go and get some water and then we thought, why go clear over to the mess tent area when there is a small stream running a short distance away. That water will be ok for wash water. We got down to the creek and I was starting to dip out water with my helmet to pour in our five gallon can when I noticed some kind of object which had a brown color to it in the brush just up stream a ways. When we went to investigate we found the body of a Chinese soldier half in the water and half out. He had been there for months. We decided to head for the mess tent with our water can.

It is time to move up to the front lines once more and we have our gear packed and ready to go when the sergeant comes by and tells me and my buddy to go over to the company area and take down the majors tent and pack his gear. Pretty degrading. While we are carrying things out of his tent we notice one of the round insulated containers about two feet high and eighteen inches in diameter that they sometime keep hot soup or other hot food in. Now what was something like that doing in his tent"? We took off the lid and found that it was full of iced down beer. We had to drink our beer warm and didn't know ice even existed while we were in Korea except what was on the ground and the streams during the winter. After we got every thing packed up and left, that container was four cans of beer short. We never heard anything about it.

We move back up to the front and of all places to end up for which should be our last front line duty is the area that we started at. The "Old Baldy" area. I thought we had seen the last of that hell hole. Maybe we will get lucky and not have to go out there again. This time we are not in our original bunkers but are in all above ground bunkers near the mess tent area. Now that it is warm we get to be close by. Our first project is constructing a large partially underground bunker with the assistance of three ROK soldiers. This is the first time any of them have ever helped us. Most of us, especially my squad won't be working on it very long. Yes, "Old Baldy" beckons again. They are still battling over that damn hill. They are trying to hold it at all cost now because the Chinese are trying to take over that area of the MLR. They have more areas where they need more barbed wire and some of our other wire has been opened up from direct artillery hits. We are getting scattered rounds of mortar fire on the company area most every day now. I can just imagine what it will be like out on Baldy. Here we should be going home soon and now

this. We are very nervous about this situation. At least the weather has really warmed up but so has the war.

The next morning we are headed down the trail for Baldy and when we passed the area where we had seen the frozen bodies of the Chinese soldiers in January the stench just about floored us. Apparently they had been buried while still frozen and didn't completely decompose and some mortar or artillery shells had made a direct hit on some of them throwing bits and pieces all over the trail area. I have never smelled anything so bad. When we arrived on the hill part of the rifle companies were digging more trenches and gun positions on different areas of the hill. These positions were to fight off the Chinese who would get beyond the crest of the hill. Today we put up fences in this area and cannot be seen by the Chinese. We get through the whole day without being fired on. We wonder how much farther we will be able to stretch our luck.

The next morning part of the platoon (real low overcast) is stringing wire on the side of the hill facing the Chinese but I am not with them today. My job will be leading a group of KSCs out to Baldy with more steel post and barbed wire. It is kind of difficult working with a bunch of guys who don't speak English and their honcho (boss) only speaks a few words. A lot of sign language is used. By the time we arrived at the trail head going out on Baldy the overcast had cleared. We hadn't gone 50 yards when a rifle bullet went whizzing past us. Now we had a sniper to deal with. We immediately went back and jumped into the trench. I knew we had to get that material down to the guys building the fence, but how? I managed to contact a 2nd lieutenant who just happened to be a forward observer for a heavy mortar platoon. We decided to send one KSC at a time as fast as he could go down the trail to try and draw the snipers fire. We figured that since he missed us as a group walking that it would be almost impossible for him to hit one person moving along real fast at that range. The nearest place he could be firing from was at least five or six hundred yards away. The plan was to draw his fire enough for the lieutenant to try and get a fix on his location. I sent the first man down the trail and the sniper fired once. I sent two more one at a time drawing his fire both times but he didn't hit anyone. The lieutenant said he was pretty sure of the location of the sniper. He checked his map and called in the grid coordinates to his mortar platoon. In a few minutes a heavy barrage of mortar shells hit the side of the hill across from us. After the smoke and dust cleared I sent another man down the trail. No firing from the sniper. Then I sent the rest with no difficulty. The mortars had either killed the sniper or discouraged him from trying again. We were just about back to the trail head when the guys on Baldy and us were spotted by the Chinese. The mortar shells were coming in on Baldy heavier than I had ever seen them before. By the time we headed down the trail through the trees the shells were coming in there too. This was the first time I had been under mortar fire with a group of KSCs. They didn't panic but just watched to see what I did and followed my move. (on one occasion another one of our guys had a group of KSCs carrying ammunition down to the rifle company on Baldy when a few rounds were coming in. They refused to go down the trail. He just pointed his rifle at them and then down the trail. They got the message and proceeded on down the trail) Somehow the Chinese must have had information of the exact location of the trail because the shells were all hitting right alongside or on the trail. One time when I heard an incoming round I just stood

behind a small tree which was the only cover. Another time we all dove into a deep depression in the ground. After the shells exploded I started to raise up to run again when a shell that was so close I didn't even hear it coming in exploded on the edge of the depression about four feet from my head. It stunned and deafened me for a moment. When I came to my senses I looked around to see if the KSCs were ok. They were except for a lot of dirt on them and one of them was throwing up. Later after a lot of sign language and the honchos little English I found out that this guy always threw up when he was under fire. I guess he had that happen so much that this was the way it affected him. We managed to get back to the rifle company's headquarters with only a few more rounds coming in and with no one hit. The rest of the platoon managed to get off Baldy with only one wounded. He was pvt. Day, one of the colored replacements we got recently. It was his first time under fire and he got hit in the arm with some shrapnel. It looked as if our string of good luck was getting to wear pretty thin. I was getting so jumpy that several times I would hear a noise that I thought was incoming rounds and would hit the ground. It would embarrass me but no one ever laughed. I wasn't alone. Any sudden noise would make me jump.

After the heavy shelling we didn't think we would be asked to go out there again but they still had one section of fence that they wanted which they thought was critical for one of their defensive positions. There were some areas that didn't have any wire at all. A lot of it was just left out because there wasn't time to do it the way we were being shelled all the time.

Well, here we are back out on Baldy again. We hadn't got a whole lot done when we were under fire again and we headed for our fox holes. They really started pouring it on now and these were not the usual mortar shells. They were using heavy stuff this time. When one hit close it shook the ground like a small earthquake. I was laying on my stomach and right after the next round exploded I felt something hit my back. I reached around to grab it and darn near burned my hand. It was a large piece of hot shrapnel. It hadn't hit with much force and didn't even penetrate my clothing. We knew we couldn't hang around here any longer but when we looked up at the trail the shells were hitting in that area too, but it was the only way off this hill so we had to go. It was the same song, second verse. One man at a time far apart running as fast as you can. I stopped at the base of the hill to catch my breath and wait for a shell to explode and then began running up the trail. Trying to run up a steep hill very far is no easy feat but is a little easier when you are scared half to death. I would run till I was out of breath, fall to the ground, catch my breath and start out again. Some of the shells hit close enough to throw dirt on me. I could always hear them coming in and had time to get on the ground before they exploded. I finally made it to the top of the hill and just rolled into the trench completely exhausted. My heart was pounding so hard I thought it was going to jump out of my chest. After I got my breath back I started down the trail for B Company's headquarters. They had this area zeroed in again just like they did with the mortars the day before. When I finally managed to get about half way to B Company I saw a guy laying a few feet off the trail rolling around and hollering. I noticed right away that his right leg was all bloody from the knee to the ankle and his pant leg was in shreds. He had been hit real bad with shrapnel. I tried to get him to his feet so I could get his arm around my neck and

help him get to the first aid station at B Company. He was just too heavy and was of little help because he was in shock. Just then, one of my buddies came running up and between us we got him up, got his arms around our necks and started down the trail. We had only gone a few feet when we heard another shell coming in, but it was so close to us that when we heard it there wasn't even time to get on the ground. I thought we were goners for sure but the shell just hit with a thud and didn't explode. We looked back and there was the biggest mortar shell I had ever seen sticking out of the ground about 15 feet from where we had been. It must have been at least six inches in diameter. If it would have exploded, all three of us probably would have been killed or seriously wounded. Talk about good luck. This was getting to the point of almost ridiculous good luck. We made it the rest of the way to the aid station and turned him over to good hands. While on the way to where our truck was waiting for us we noticed a bunch of KSCs standing around in a group looking down at something. We went over to see what was going on. There was a wounded KSC laying on a stretcher with blood from his neck to his waist. He had been hit real bad from one of those mortar shells. I guess there wasn't anything more that the medics could do for him and they were probably waiting for a helicopter to take him to a field hospital. I doubt if he ever survived. And guess what? All of our guys managed to get off Baldy and back here with us without a scratch. I never did hear if anyone else was wounded from B Company.

B Company called early the next morning with good news and bad news. The good news was that they didn't want us to come back and build any more fence because things were just getting too hot out there on Baldy. The bad news was that the Chinese had launched a heavy assault on Baldy a few hours before daylight. B Company had three men killed, 25 wounded and two missing and presumed killed or captured. Part of A company who was in support of B Company also suffered some casualties. One of those killed was sergeant Jerome Sears from Portland, Oregon. He was a platoon sergeant and when he saw that his platoon would probably be over run he ordered them to pull back while he gave them cover fire. The Chinese soon over ran his position and the last anyone saw of him he was trying to fight off some Chinese with his entrenching tool. The next morning after the Chinese were pushed off the hill they found him just over the crest of the hill where the Chinese had drug him down and shot him.

Late that afternoon we were feeling pretty good knowing that we wouldn't be going back out on Baldy. We also had heard earlier that some of us would be leaving for home within the next two weeks or so. Most all of the National Guardsmen had already left and been replaced. It looked like our chances of surviving this war were really good now. A few hours before dark a truck pulled into our company area. There were several men on the truck who appeared to be under armed guard. We heard that they were a squad and a squad leader from B Company who were scheduled to go back out on Baldy that night but had refused to do so. They were put under arrest and were to stay at our company area for the night. The Military Police would pick them up in the morning and take them back to Division Headquarters where they would be put in a stockade while awaiting court-martial. This was a very serious offense and the penalty would be very severe.

A short time later we get some news that just about floors me. My squad leader told me that B Company was expecting another assault on Baldy tonight and since they were a squad short and no time to bring anyone up from reserve he said that our squad was picked to fill that position. That news hit me so hard I darn near got sick to my stomach. Here we were going home soon and our squad, actually, our whole original platoon had come through the war with only one man wounded and now there was a good chance that part or all of our squad could end up getting wounded or killed. The first thing I did was borrow a M2 carbine from one of the officers. The M2 is just like my M1 carbine except by just moving a lever on the side it makes the rifle full automatic. Why they had M2s and we didn't, really didn't make very much sense. I taped four 30 round clips together, two clips each. This would give me 60 rounds in the rifle at a time plus the other two and my four 15 round clips. I wanted to have plenty of firepower in case we got into a fire fight.

We arrive on Baldy shortly after dark and are met by one of B Company's officers. The rifle companies are already in their positions. We are each given a bullet proof vest. They are more for stopping shrapnel than they are bullets. They would never stop a rifle bullet at fairly short range but may slow up a burp gun bullet. The officer briefed us on what we could expect. He told us not to fire a shot unless our position was actually attacked and that the Chinese would try all sorts of ways to draw our fire so they could pinpoint our position. One lesson they had already learned was not to go to someone during an attack if they call for a medic unless you know for sure it is one of your own men. It is hard not to go to someone's aid if you think they are wounded even if you aren't a medic. We are assigned two to a foxhole and my partner will be Bob Counter, yes, the nervous one. The foxhole is big enough for two men to move around a little and deep enough to keep our head below ground level when sitting down. We know that the worse thing we could expect would be an all out attack and maybe over run like some of them were the night before. A real nice thought. We decide to pass the time digging our hole deeper. I don't know why, because if a shell made a direct hit on us it wouldn't make any difference how deep the hole was.

Things seem to be going well so far but it is now a little after midnight and we know if the Chinese are going to attack they will do so sometime between now and daylight. A short while later we hear what sounds like every artillery piece along the Chinese front lines open fire. I turn to Bob and say, boy!!!, somebody is really going to catch it now. That someone was us. In a few seconds we were under heavy artillery fire. We had been under fairly heavy mortar fire before but nothing like this. There were artillery shells coming in all over the hill. If we ever needed more of our good luck, we sure needed it now. They saturated the whole hill for around 15 minutes and all of a sudden they quit. Then we heard someone hollering for a medic off to our left. Was it one of ours or a Chinese. We remembered what the officer had told us and didn't make a move. Then a machine gun began firing about 70 yards in front of us on the crest of the hill. I could see the muzzle flashes and of course the tracers as they criss-crossed the area. I knew I could easily take him out with a burst from my M2 but we were told not to fire a shot. Then it got quiet again and I rose up to see if anyone was moving toward our position which was hard to do as dark as it was. Just as I got my head well above ground

level I heard a bullet go whizzing past my head. Someone saw my movement and took a shot at me. Now we knew we were really in trouble because our position was discovered. We were expecting them to come pouring over the crest of the hill at any moment. Before we had time to worry much about it, the best thing that could have happened at this point did happen. Our heavy artillery had begun firing and had that hill top zeroed in. Artillery shells began pouring in over our heads and other areas and hitting right on and over the crest of the hill. At the same time several of our machine guns and rifles opened up and really saturated the hill. That artillery must have blown them right off the hill. We were just praying that there wouldn't be any short rounds because some of those shells were hitting pretty close. This happens sometimes when they are trying to give such close support. That was an odd situation. One minute we are praying that the Chinese artillery won't get us and the next minute we are praying that our own artillery doesn't hit us.

The shelling finally stopped and it got very quiet again. There was an excellent chance that they wouldn't try to attack again. We had survived another terrible situation and felt sure that we were home free for the rest of the night. Apparently this had been set up as a probing attack rather than an all out attack. In a short time matters got worse again. The Chinese now started shelling us again, but this time it was with their light and heavy mortars. After a pretty heavy barrage all over the hill they then began what we call, walking their mortars. This is where they fire anywhere from 4 to 6 shells in a straight line spacing them about ten feet apart. It was hard to believe but with all the area on Baldy to hit they lined up on our fox hole three times. Each time we thought the next shell would come right into our fox hole. That is a terrible feeling. There was a lot of praying going on and I'm sure we weren't the only ones praying on the hill that night. It wasn't hard to see why that squad from B Company just couldn't take it any longer. We got our wish for more good luck though and every one of those shells either exploded in front of us or behind us. There was a little sporadic fire till just before daylight and then they quit.

Daylight finally arrived and no one in our squad was wounded. Our squad and a few from B Company made a quick sweep over the crest of the hill looking for dead or wounded Chinese but we didn't find any. There had to be several killed and wounded as heavy as our artillery barrage was. They usually leave their dead behind but take their wounded with them. B Company wasn't as lucky as we were and had taken quite a few casualties. We never heard if anyone was killed. We assisted carrying some of the wounded off of Baldy and were not fired on. One of the riflemen in a trench on the MLR told us that he had watched the whole show and that he counted 60 rounds of artillery shells a minute coming in during the heaviest shelling. We didn't tell him that we weren't counting. I took one last look at Baldy thinking, so many men on both sides had died trying to take and hold that hill before we arrived, while we were there, and after we left Korea. Such an awful high price for so little.

The next few days were uneventful except for the usual scattered mortar shells dropping in and around the company area occasionally which we were pretty used to. They were just annoying. Then came the best news we had heard since arriving in Korea.

Barney Wilbur (my Indian buddy from Shelton, Washington) and I were going to be leaving for home the next day.

The next morning Barney and I are all packed, ready to go, and are just waiting for the truck to come and pick us up. We did it!!! We had survived the war. We knew now that we were home free. While we were waiting the monthly beer ration arrived. We each bought a case, had a few with our buddies, put several in our duffle bags and left the rest behind for those who would be following us soon and for those who had just arrived a short time ago. The truck finally arrived and we were on the first leg of our journey home.

After staying overnight in a location somewhere northeast of Inchon we were on our way to Inchon, the same place that we had arrived about eight months before. When we arrived we were put in what resembled a prison camp. There were several metal buildings with a high fence around them. The fence was at least 12 feet high and there were Korean guards outside the fence who were armed with shotguns. There was a reason for this. There were always several girls and young women outside the fence talking with the G.I.s and they wanted to be sure no one got involved with them and possibly carry a disease home with them. Some of these guys, including myself, hadn't even seen a woman in eight months except at one USO show. There were several hundred of us in this compound. After each meal we would all scrape off any leftovers off our mess kits into garbage cans by the fence on the opposite side of where the women were. There was a gate here and after everyone was finished the mess hall help would open the gate and set out the garbage cans. There were always 25 or 30 children and elderly people waiting for the garbage cans and made quick work of emptying them. These people were really starving. They were all dirty and ragged looking. It was a pathetic thing to look at. While I was here I met one of the guys I had gone to high school with at Tillamook and had run around with since then. I hadn't seen him in over a year and a half. He was a rifleman in the 2nd Infantry Division and was on his way home too. In fact, we both went on the same ships.

Two days later we left the compound and marched down the main street of Inchon toward the harbor. There were several hundred of us. The street was lined with Koreans waving good bye to us. They were a ragged dirty lot with ragged clothes, some with no shoes and some of the little children with no clothes at all. Here they were, in a terrible situation after over two years of war which passed through their town four times but they were still able to show their thanks to us in the only way they knew how. It was a very touching scene. The odor all the way through town was really bad. There were open sewers and a few open air fish markets with flies everywhere.

We left Inchon the same way that we had come in. We loaded onto landing craft, went out to the troop ship and waited till morning to leave on the high tide. We headed for Saesabo, Japan, which is on the southern island of Kyushu. The trip took about two days.

When we sailed into the harbor at Saesabo there was a huge sign across the building on the dock that read, "Through this port pass the best damn fighting men in the world". Kyushu is a beautiful island but unfortunately we will see very little of it except what we saw from the ship and the small village near the base where we went to buy some souvenirs to take home. After getting off the ship we went into one of the large buildings where there was this large empty room except for a long counter with shelves of clothing behind it. When we reached the counter the guys behind it had us turn our duffle bags upside down and dump everything out. Then we had to take all our clothes off and put them on the counter. They took everything but our wallets and toilet articles. They even took a Japanese language book I had. In return we got summer underwear, two pairs of suntans, (summer uniform) two pairs of fatigues, (work clothes) a pair of dress shoes, socks and a raincoat.

The weather here was very hot and humid. I would get very little sleep at night. I was constantly getting up to get a drink of water because I was sweating it out so fast.

A few days later we boarded another troop ship (The Marine Adder) and sailed for Seattle, Washington via what they called, the northern route which would take us near Alaska. It would be about a two week voyage. I got put down on about the third deck below and had a top bunk which didn't leave much headroom. I believe the bunks were four high. It was like being in a can of sardines, but I didn't care. I was on my way home. I did draw some duty for this voyage. I had to wear a MP (military police) helmet and my job was to keep people off the life rafts and life boats. After we were out of Japan a few days it was so cold that sometimes I was the only one out on deck.

We arrive in Seattle and there are fire boats cruising around the ship with their water cannons shooting up in the air. When we get to the dock we all came up on deck and lined up on both sides of the ship. I happened to get on the side that wasn't facing the dock. I could hear band music playing and cancan music. They had cancan dancers but I missed it all.

When I got off the gang plank Lois, my parents, and my brother and sister were waiting for me. Lois and I were married about two weeks later after my discharge at Fort Lewis, Washington.

For photo gallery, click [here](#) and [here](#).