

regimental commanders. I saw an opportunity of getting to command an infantry regiment and therefore joined the 2d Division. At first I was the regimental executive of the 38th Infantry and later became chief of staff of the 2d Division.

Executive Officer, 38th Infantry, 2d Infantry Division

Q: How did the opportunity arise? Were you asked for or did you volunteer?

A: I let it be known that I would extend for a second tour in Korea if I could join the infantry. The fact that I was known to the corps commander and the division commander made such an assignment easy. They knew I wanted to command an infantry regiment but made me pay my dues by first taking the job of regimental executive officer and then for a while chief of staff of the 2d Division.

Q: When you extended to stay in Korea for another 13 months, did you get another R&R back to Japan.

A: Yes, I got a second three-day R&R back to Japan. My first R&R was an unscheduled one during the Christmas of 1950 when we evacuated Hamhung.

Q: Could you describe for me your work with the 2d Infantry Division during your second tour?

A: My work with the 2d Division was divided into three parts. First, I was the executive officer to the 38th Infantry from July to October. Then, I was the chief of staff of the 2d Division until December. Then, from December of 1951 until April of 1952, I commanded the 38th Infantry Regiment.

Commanding Officer, 38th Infantry, 2d Infantry Division

My job as executive officer of the 38th Regiment was a very satisfying one because I worked for an absolutely first-class infantry commander. Colonel Frank Mildren had extensive experience in Europe in World War II where he distinguished himself in combat. He was also a good staff officer, I had worked for him previously and therefore knew him well.

Mildren let me plan and execute one of the principal battles of the 38th Regiment, even though I was his executive at the time. First, he wanted to take a rest--he didn't think that anyone was physically capable of commanding troops all the time.

He said he would take the responsibility, but would allow me to plan and execute a large-scale operation in September of 1951. It was one of the last big operations of the war and a memorable one for me.

The operation was to take an enemy position on a mountain which rose to 1,215 meters. The operation was named, appropriately enough, "Operation 1215." Taking the objective was key to opening up operations for other regiments which were pinned down on lower ground at Heartbreak Ridge. Dislodging the Chinese from the top of the mountain, to understate the case, was not an easy job. Tanks could get only a quarter of the way up the mountain, and there was no place to station artillery to support the attack. To provide fire support, we set up the bases with mortars and hand-held 57- and 75-mm. rockets. We parked the artillery and tanks, much to their displeasure of the tankers and artillery men, we put them in charge of KATUSAs who carried ammunition up to the fire bases with which we ringed the mountain.



Edward Rowny receives an award for distinguished service during the Korean War at a fund raiser for the Korean War Memorial, Los Angeles, California, 1988.

It was a hard 8-hour climb up to the fire bases, and these human supply trains walked around the clock, many dropping out because of fatigue, while others continued to climb, even though their feet were swollen and bloody. They carried pack loads of ammunition up to the places from which we could hit the top of the hill. Artillerymen and tankers not supervising the A-frame KATUSA "Chogi-bearers" were given jobs assisting the mortarmen and rocket launchers. We established six fire bases as close as we could to the enemy position. The idea was to put down a murderous rain of fire. Then, when the fire lifted, the could quickly charge to the top of the mountain.

On the day of the attack, September 15, 1951, a heavy fog set in. I postponed the planned dawn attack to 10 a.m. The commanding general was not happy with the delay. At 10 a.m. it was still foggy and I postponed the attack another hour. At

10:30 the commanding general called to ask if I had taken the hill. I told him it was too foggy to attack. "Damn it," he said, "I need that hill. The troops in the lower hills are taking a beating? At 11 a.m. it was still foggy and I postponed the attack once more-this time to 12 noon. The commanding general was highly annoyed. He ordered me to take the hill by noon or he would relieve me.

Just before noon the fog lifted and we began putting down a murderous barrage of fire from the six fire bases. It was something the Chinese did not expect; it completely unnerved them and put them in a state of shock. We walked the fires forward with the troops following close behind. When the troops were 100 yards from the top, we put down a 10-minute heavy barrage of fire. When we lifted the fires, the infantry rushed forward and took the mountaintop.

To me, the best part of the operation was that while there were numerous Chinese killed and wounded, our troops did not suffer a single fatality. Some of our men, of course, were wounded, but there was not a single soldier killed. The Chinese, on the other hand, suffered close to 200 killed. The attack was a great success because we had put down large amounts of fire in a place where the Chinese didn't think it could be done. By hugging our fires closely, and then charging up the hilltop immediately following a final heavy barrage of mortar and rocket fires, we took Hill 1215. Once the hill fell, the troops on the lower terrain were able to move forward. I consider commanding this highly successful operation to be the high point of my military career.

As his executive, Mildren used me for the most part to make certain he had good logistical support for the regiment. This allowed him to devote his energies to commanding the regiment without having to worry about the mundane but essential job of providing the regiment logistical support. In Korea, logistics often took priority over tactics; the availability of supplies determined what could and what could not be done.

Q: I gather that you next became the chief of staff of the 2d Division?

A: The job as chief of staff was a temporary one until the officer designated for the job arrived. I was chosen because I knew the local scene and had field experience. It was an interesting job because I could see the big picture and become familiar with the division's goals and plans. Also, I got to know the commanding general, Major General Robert Young; the deputy assistant division commander, Brigadier General Hayden Boatner; and the rest of the staff quite well. This proved invaluable to me later when I became a regimental commander.

If I may, I'd like at this point to leap forward a year or so. General Young took over the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and brought me and two other of his regimental commanders to the school. He put each of us in charge of a major division of the Infantry School, instructing us to bring the school up-to-date on what we'd learned in Korea. In a matter of months, we revolutionized the teaching and brought it up-to-date. Prior to that time the Infantry School was still teaching World War II tactics.

The association I developed with General Boatner, the assistant division commander, also paid off handsomely. Soon after I took over the command of the 38th regiment, a truce was declared. We were forced into a "no war, no peace" situation. We were under instructions from Washington to present an alert appearance, to patrol, and to capture prisoners. But we were not allowed to commit units larger than a platoon to combat.

Early in 1952, I repeatedly tried to capture Chinese prisoners. The usual tactic was to strike at some small outpost occupied by two or three Chinese soldiers. We would try to hit them by surprise and bring back a prisoner or two. This became extremely difficult-almost impossible-to pull off. By this time, the Chinese had dug in and were well protected in bunkers and underground tunnels. We didn't really know where they could be found. Moreover, they were always within supporting distance of their fires or reinforcing troops.

On one occasion I committed a platoon against an outpost of what I thought was a squad or so of Chinese. The Chinese brought a great deal of firepower against my platoon and it completely bogged down. I went to see for myself what the situation was. What I found was that the platoon was pinned down by fire; they could neither move forward nor backward without taking casualties.

My platoon just lay there in the extreme cold, fording themselves what little cover the terrain provided. They were simply frozen in position, frozen in by the firepower and frozen in by the weather.

My solution was to order the rest of the company into action. They were to attack through the platoon and take the outpost. The attack proved successful. Our troops snatched two prisoners before the Chinese reinforcements arrived. Several of our troops were wounded, but there were no fatalities.

The next day General Hayden Boatner, who was then acting division commander, came to my headquarters with orders from Washington to relieve me. I had violated instructions by committing more than a platoon. I explained to Boatner the situation I had faced, saying that I had no choice. If I didn't want to lose the entire platoon to the weather or to enemy fire, I had to apply more power. The

men of the platoon had stripped themselves of several layers of cold weather gear so they could move more rapidly. As a result, they were freezing and in no position to lie in the cold. And because of the accurate and withering fire, they could move neither forward nor backwards.

General Boatner was convinced that I had done the proper thing. He saw that I had no alternative but to commit more troops once the platoon had bogged down. He reported to Washington that he had investigated the situation and had absolved me of any wrongdoing. The next day he received a message which read: "Obey instructions. Relieve Rowny for having violated the policy of not committing more than a platoon. Notwithstanding the extenuating circumstances, we cannot allow commanders to violate instructions from Washington. Other commanders must realize that we are serious."

General Boatner wired back: "If you want to relieve somebody, relieve me. I'm in command here." He left me in command and I never heard any more about the incident. Washington knew Boatner was not bluffing. He was a man willing to stand up to higher authority, even though the pressure was great. He could have simply carried out his instructions and relieved me. To put it mildly, I was elated; it was a lesson in moral courage.

Q: What became of Boatner? Did he suffer any consequences for his action?

A: No. Washington had great confidence in Boatner who, among other skills, could speak Chinese. He had been a Chinese language student and had served in China. He was sent to Koje-do to liberate Chinese prisoners there had captured two U.S. general officers and held them hostage. When he was sent to Koje-do, I pleaded with him to let me go with my regiment which had orders to back him at Koje-do. But my time was up. The Army was rotating regimental commanders every six months and my six months had expired. I was told I had done my job and that it was time for me to turn over my command.

Q: So where did you go from there?

A: I went to Tokyo. I had accrued some leave and used it to pack up my family. and came back with them by boat to San Francisco. There, I picked up a new car and drove across the United States to Fort Benning to take over my new job as chief of the regimental tactics department.

Q: I note from Army records that you were assigned as administrative officer, Headquarters, 2d Port, Pusan, Korea.

A: That was simply a way of assigning me somewhere until I arrived at Fort Benning.

Infantry School

Q: I note from Army records that the first thing you did at Fort Benning was to go to jump school.

A: Yes. This was one of General Young's requirements. All instructors at Fort Benning had to be jumpers. I had always wanted to jump anyway so this was no big problem. However, I was in my mid-thirties and most of the students were in their early twenties. It was a rigorous schedule. It made me wish I had taken the course as a young lieutenant.

In jump school a humorous incident occurred. While we were still in the combat phase in Korea, the 2d Division had conducted a bloody operation which turned out well. It succeeded largely because a **sergeant** took over when his platoon leader was killed. He rallied the men and stormed the hill. I commended the sergeant and told him he deserved an award for valor. I told him I had seldom seen anyone do a better job of turning certain defeat into victory. The sergeant said, "Of course we took the hill, don't you know who I am?" He said, "I'm Lou Jenkins, the ex-welterweight champion of the world. What else would you expect from me?" Later, Sergeant Jenkins came to Benning to work for me. I told him he had to take jump training, the way I had. "I can't," he said. "It's my back." He pulled up his shirt and undershirt and asked me to take a look.

"I don't see anything wrong with your back," I said.

"Don't you see the big yellow streak?" he asked.

At this point I have a comment to make. General Bruce Clarke, a former engineer officer who rose to four-star rank, once said: "We've never won a war since the Airborne took over the Pentagon."

I got to know Bruce Clarke quite well. He considered himself the best trainer in the Army and was interested in my ideas about training. But he had several idiosyncrasies. One of them was that he didn't like elite units, and this included jumpers. He felt all soldiers should consider themselves to be elite troops.