

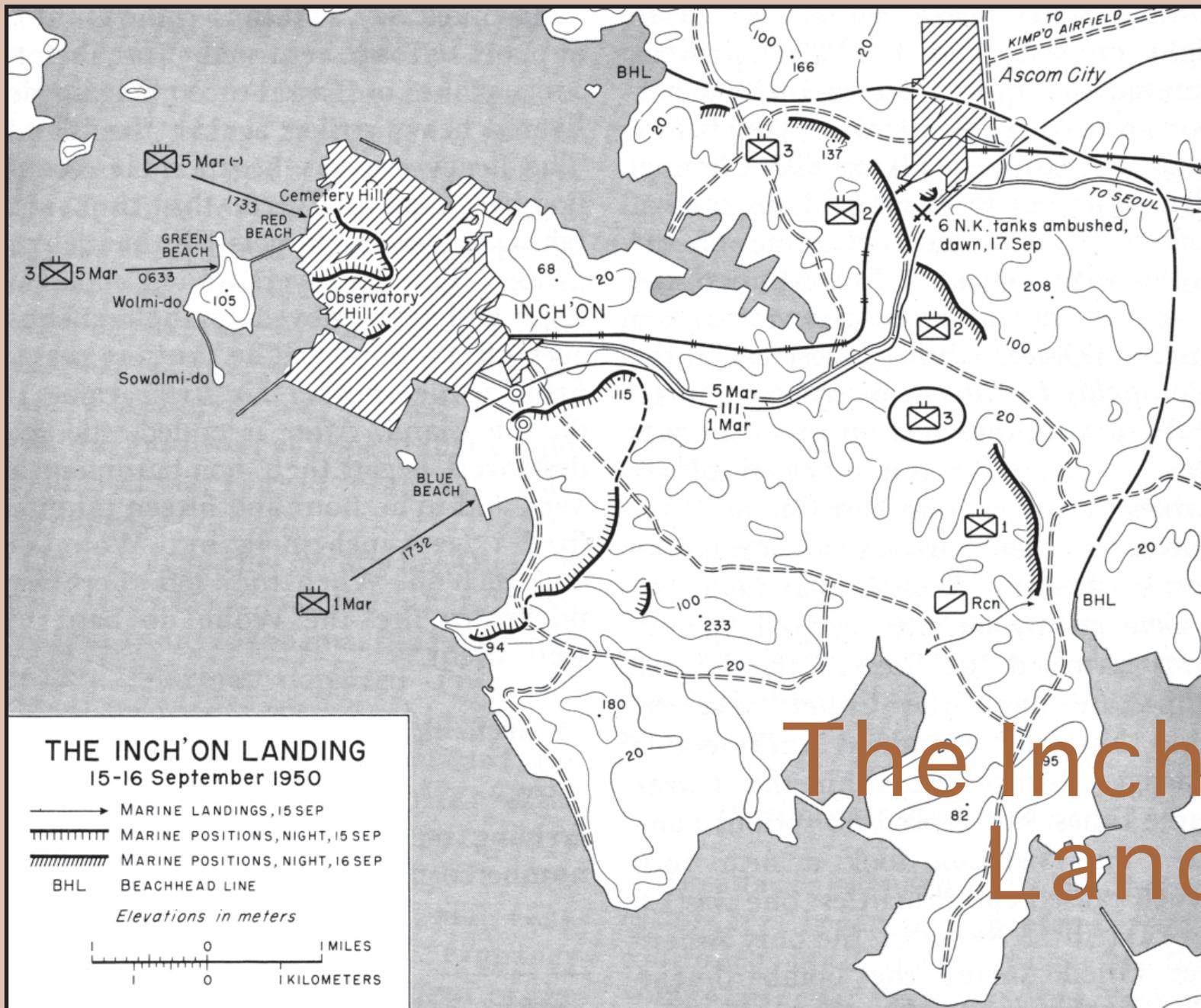
Marines storm over the seawall
at Inch'on, 15 September 1950
RG 127, 127-GK-2341-A3191

Chapter 2



The Inch'on Landing

September 1950



The Inch'on Landing

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Decision on Inch'on

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pacific Theater and even the United States.

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

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



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

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

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Rowny X Corps Engineer

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

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

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



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

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

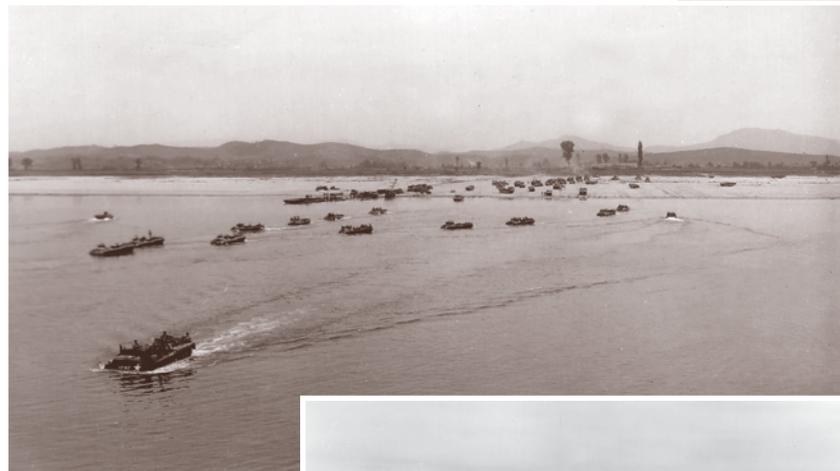
Another problem we had to resolve was whether to have the troops hit the beach from small assault boats or from LSTs. The troop ships would have to stay several miles away because of the tides. This meant that small boats would have a long way to come—two or three miles—and the troops would be subject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

We also spent a lot of time trying to figure out

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

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

RG 111, SC-349166



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

allowed these bridges to link up with one another.

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



RG 111, SC-349039

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

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

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

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

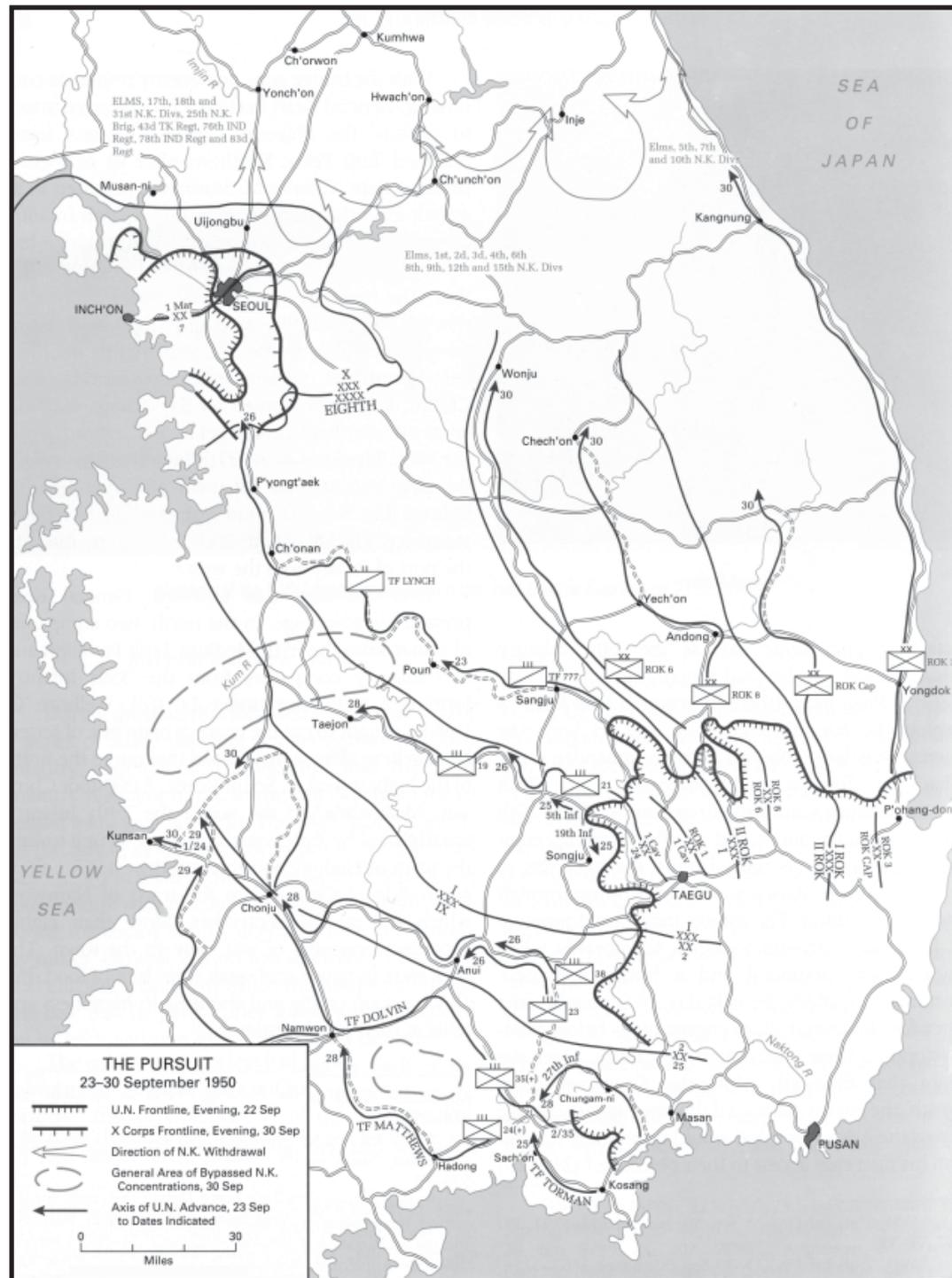
One of the curious and entirely unexpected problems we faced was that the Marines assigned to us had no prior training in river crossings. They knew how to assault a beach, but they complained they didn't know how to make a river crossing. I had to convince them that the two types of operations were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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Speech by General Douglas MacArthur, 29 September 1950

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Amphibious Training for Inch'on

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

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

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

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

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

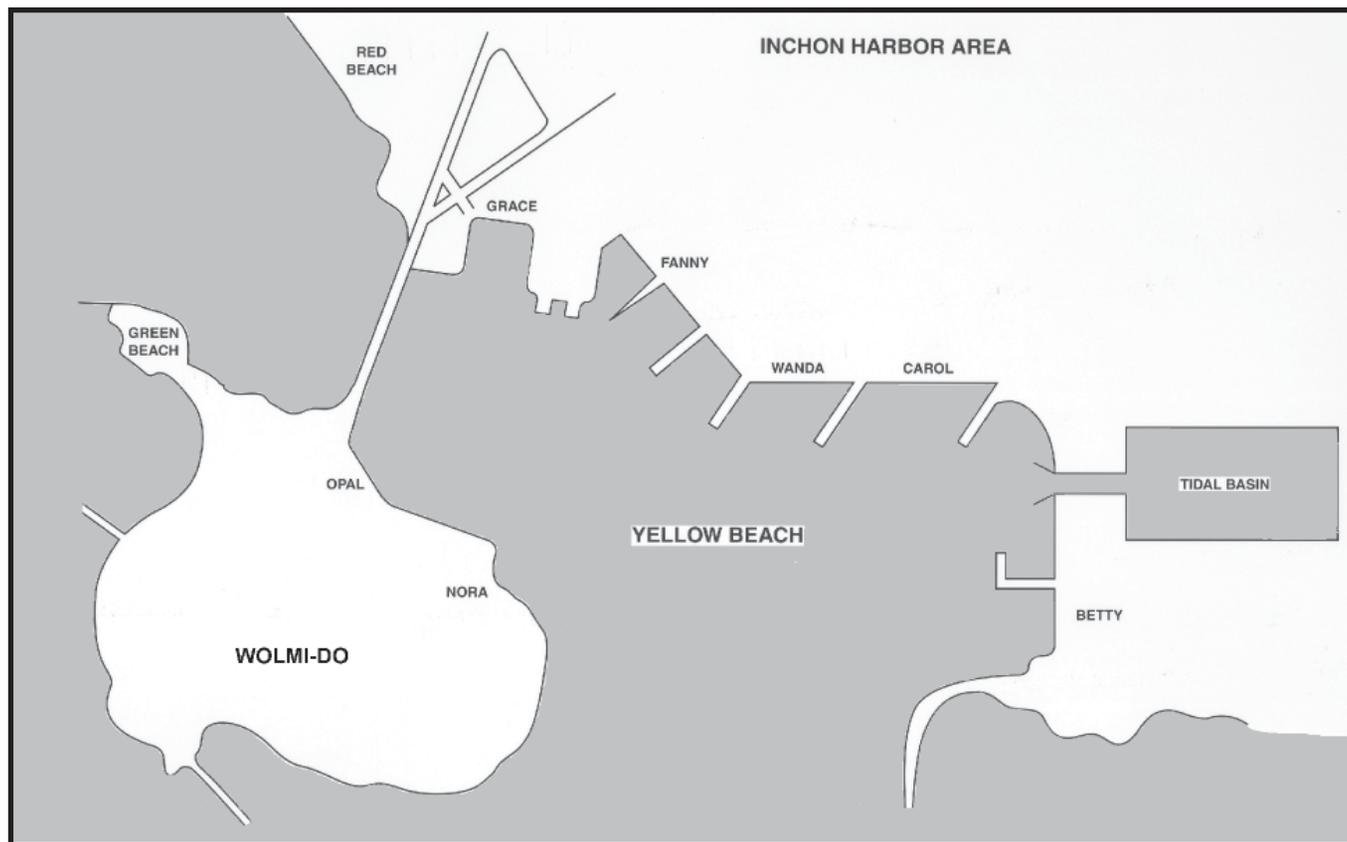
Assignment of areas of responsibility among units of the Provisional Shore Battalion, in order to carry out the mission of control over beach operations and the repair of marine facilities, was initially as follows: Company D—the control and operation of *Fanny* and *Carol Beaches* to include Baker and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

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

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

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

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



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

Landing beaches and tidal basin at Inch'on

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



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

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

The Landings

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

landing craft passed from the Navy to the regiment.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Impressions Ashore

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Engineers raise an LCM sunken in the Han River
Roberts Collection

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Planning and Execution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Crossing the Han

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were snipers in Inch'on.

I was told, "We want you to clean all of the snipers out of Inch'on." I got two or three companies together...spread everybody out about 50 yards apart, and walked through the whole town. We shot into every shack and house and cleaned them out. Then we turned those guns in.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Engineer Equipment

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

