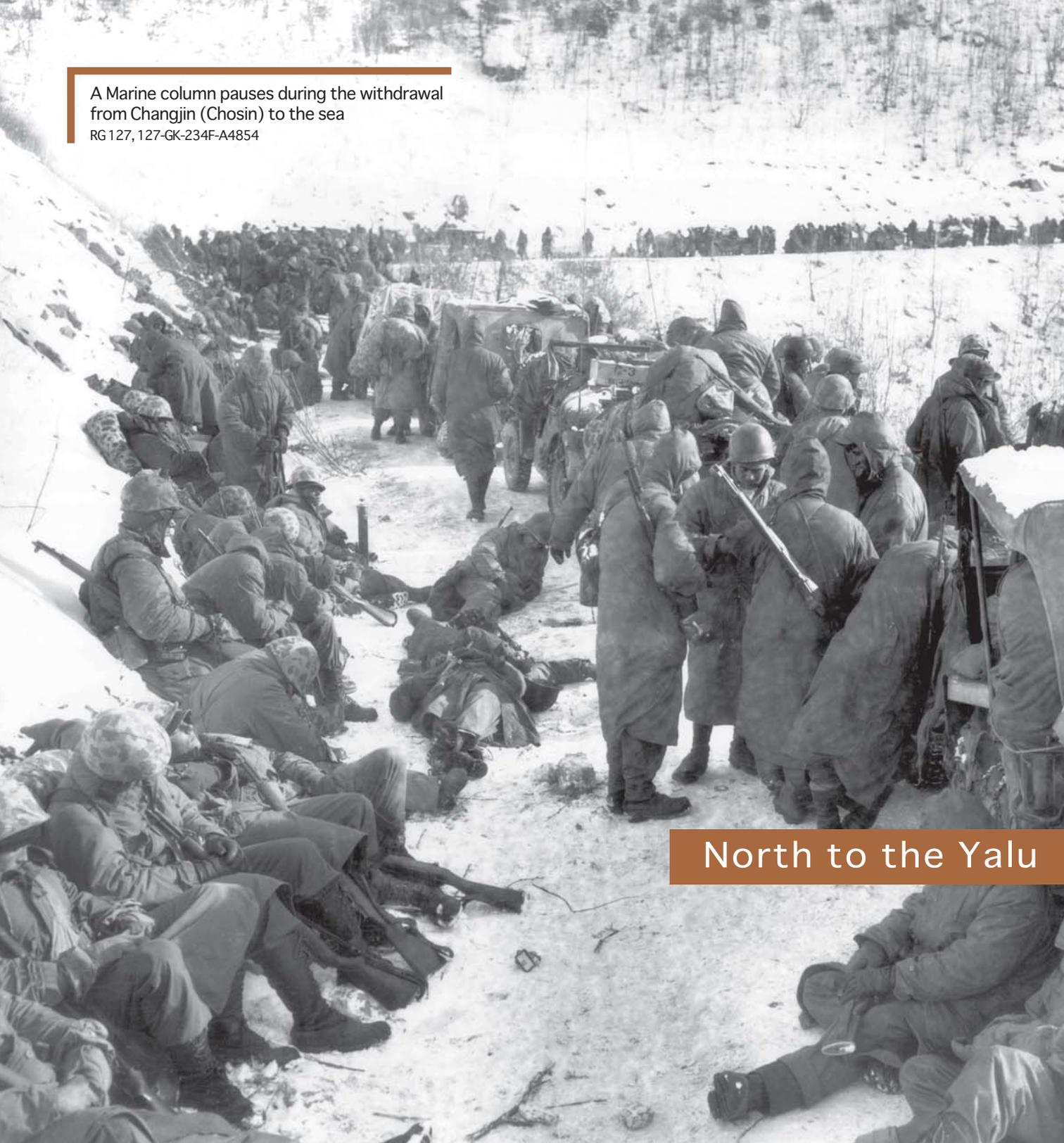


A Marine column pauses during the withdrawal
from Changjin (Chosin) to the sea
RG 127, 127-GK-234F-A4854

Chapter 3



North to the Yalu

September - December 1950

North to the Yalu

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



Introduction

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

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

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

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

enter the war. The United States contended that the North Korean war potential had to be eliminated. Most of the UN delegates felt that MacArthur had sufficient authority under the 27 June 1950 Security Council Resolution to go north. On 7 October the General Assembly of the UN approved the crossing of the 38th Parallel by MacArthur.

The South Koreans had already crossed the line when the UN advance began in October. The UN rate of advance averaged 10 miles a day. On 19 October the 1st Cavalry Division and ROK 1st Infantry Division entered P'yongyang, the North Korean capital. The X Corps made a second amphibious landing at Wonson on the east coast, and the U.S. 7th Division landed at Iwon, 178 miles farther north. Because of the mountains that split Korea from north to south, two distinct major commands conducted the operation: Gen. Walker's Eighth Army in the west, and Gen. Almond's X Corps in the east.

UN morale was high. MacArthur hoped that the swift advances of the two forces would restore peace to all of Korea before winter. In reality, because of political and strategic considerations beyond the scope of this volume, the war was about to enter a terrible new phase. On 26 October, ROK 7th Regiment troops had reached the Yalu River, firing on North Korean soldiers fleeing across the river into Manchuria. The day before, however, soldiers of the 2d Regiment, ROK 6th Division,

had been ambushed by a significant Chinese force, perhaps 30 miles inside Korean territory. In fact, largely undetected by UN intelligence, four Chinese armies, each with three divisions—some 130,000 men—were positioning themselves for a massive intervention. MacArthur's intelligence officers were inclined to minimize the threat. Chinese leaders were reluctant to enter the Korean Conflict, yet they grew more apprehensive as UN forces closed on China's national frontier. Moreover, despite Chinese reticence, recent evidence demonstrates how strongly Joseph Stalin urged the Chinese leadership to intervene, promising crucial aid from the Soviet Union.

By 1 November, intelligence identified elements of one Chinese division south of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. Within 10 days, units of 11 more Chinese divisions appeared in the forward area. Little action occurred during the first weeks of November, and the Eighth Army and X Corps advanced slowly, while temperatures dipped below freezing.

The conflict entered a new phase during the fourth week of November. Elements of the 7th Division occupied the town of Hyesanjin across the Yalu River from Manchuria. ROK troops had reached the Chinese border at Ch'osan nearly a month earlier, but had been forced back. In late November, MacArthur announced a new major offensive to end the war. At first, the offensive met no serious enemy opposition.

On 25 November 1950 hostile troops struck back hard. The ROK II Corps on the right flank of Eighth Army disintegrated. Only two days later a second enemy force hit the U.S. X Corps. Two Chinese communist field armies became part of the action and quickly snatched the initiative from the UN Command. In human waves, the Chinese swarmed over the forward units of the Eighth Army. The fighting was hand-to-hand all along the Ch'ongch'on River. The Eighth Army rapidly moved south while at the same time fighting delaying actions. It abandoned the city of P'yongyang on 5 December. By the middle of December, the Eighth Army had withdrawn below the 38th Parallel and formed a defensive perimeter north and east of Seoul.

During the attack north and the return south, September-December 1950, engineers maintained the roads and provided important bridge building and repair support for the infantry.

When the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter occurred, Col. Hyzer's 3d ECB supported the 24th Infantry Division's crossing of the Naktong by providing assault boats for the troop crossing. At Waegwan, the 11th ECB built a treadway bridge and the 3d put in the approaches to it. The 3d continued providing engineer backing of the division up to the Yalu, assisting a British brigade along the way by building and repairing bridges where needed. When the Chinese crossed the Yalu, the 3d moved south of the Han River keeping the

MSR open along the way so that the troops could be supported logistically.

The 19th ECG generally supported as infantry during the move south from the Yalu in November and December until the 1st Cavalry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 5th RCT, could attack north. The engineers then reverted back to roadwork: maintenance of roads and, in a number of instances, cutting new roads and putting in bypasses. As the group moved south it destroyed bridges and roads. On 4 January 1951 they dismantled the last M-2 floating bridge in the retreat from Seoul. Maj. Elder took over the group when Col. Forney was ambushed on a road and killed.

First Lt. James Johnson describes his intense participation in infantry operations in North Korea as commanding officer of Company B, 5th RCT, and his subsequent assignment to the 3d ECB, 24th Infantry Division.

Col. Emerson Itschner, I Corps Engineer, notes that some engineer work by I Corps units included floating bridge work for roads and railroads on the way north and some airfield work for small planes. On the way back south some 20 different military targets were demolished in P'yongyang.

Capt. Walter S. Medding recalls the rapid advance of the 14th ECB north from the Pusan perimeter after the Inch'on invasion, the Chinese intervention, and the

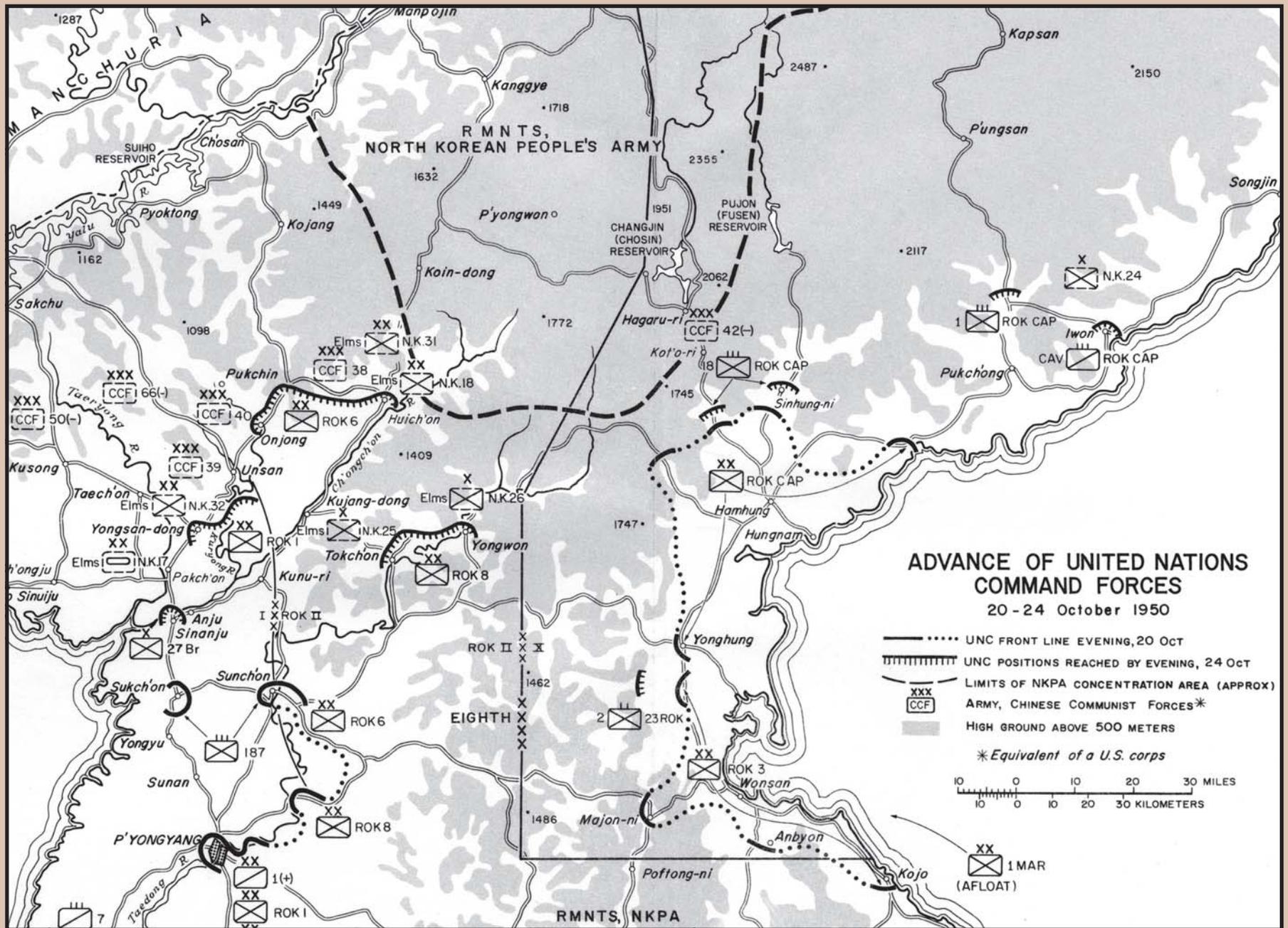
fall back to below Seoul, destroying anything of use as they went.

Col. Miles M. Dawson was assigned to the Yokohama Engineer Depot, Sagami, Japan, 1950-53. The depot collected material from all over the Far East, consolidating and repairing equipment for Korea, especially Bailey bridges and cranes. Besides rehabilitation and collection of material for engineers in Korea, he purchased large quantities of lumber from the Philippines and shipped it by the boatload to Korea for bridge-building projects.

Capt. Lawrence B. Farnum discusses the common practice of using engineers as infantry, noting that the engineers, although well prepared as infantry, were always ill equipped for that mission. He describes the Chinese entry into the war and the circumstances leading to the attack on the 2d ECB and the subsequent loss of much of the battalion. He then recounts his walk through the hills, leading about 150 troops under safety of darkness to American lines about 40 or 50 miles away. Farnum recounts the rebuilding of the battalion under his direction as battalion commander for 10 days, and the arrival of the new commander, Maj. Edmund H. Leavey.

Second Lt. James L. Trayers describes his engineer experiences on the drive north from the Pusan Perimeter in South Korea to Unsan, North Korea, building and blowing bridges along the way.

Capt. Delbert M. Fowler describes his assignment to IX Corps and the trip to Korea. He was then assigned to the supply section in the Office of the Engineer, IX Corps, and subsequently assigned as officer in charge of map distribution in IX Corps. 🏰



Colonel Hyzer describes the actions of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB) in the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, the crossing of the Naktong River, and the dash northward. Once Chinese forces entered the conflict in November 1950, Colonel Hyzer found himself moving south again.

We had a crossing of the Naktong River in September 1950. Our division [24th Infantry Division] was given a sector down south of Waegwan, somewhere down in the Taegu area. We got very short notice of the planned Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perim-

Soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division cross the Kumho River using a ferry and underwater bridge, 18 September 1950
RG 111, SC-348667



eter. We had one or two trailer loads of assault boats sent by Eighth Army.

We went around to the infantry regiments with teams to teach them how to run an assault boat. We taught them how you crossed the river in an assault boat, which I don't think most of these people knew much about, probably including our engineers, although we knew a little bit about it because it was our business.

We had to build a ford across a river [a tributary of the Naktong River, the Kumho, arching around Taegu]. This was a submerged ford. It was a mess [21st Infantry discovered (18 Sep 50) that I Corps engineers had not bridged the Kumho as planned. Third ECB engineers were called upon to sandbag the underwater bridge that the 5th RCT had already used so that large vehicles could cross]. We bypassed the tanks, and they could rate about four feet of water, so they would go around. The thing wouldn't carry jeeps. You had to tow jeeps across. We got a ferry operating a little later.

Culvert pipes underneath this thing were built up with rice bags—sandbags, but they were made out of rice straw instead of burlap. We formed a dam there, and the river was about three-feet deep. Most of the vehicles, except jeeps, could forge through it. Every now and then one would get stuck and you'd have to pull it out with winches.

That was the MSR for the division to go into this attack across the Naktong River. Now, can you imagine

a worse mess-up logistically than that—trying to move a whole division into position to attack across a river on an assault crossing where the river crossing was very badly opposed? The North Koreans were all over there, ready for us.

The attack was supposed to take place at dusk, but we didn't even have any assault boats by dusk. The troops weren't there—they kept moving all night. Finally, sometime during the night, we got the assault boats and put them up into place. This was a little north of the area that we had defended, so I wasn't too well acquainted with the area. Somehow we managed to get the boats up there and take off in the assault across the river. The report was that we were losing a lot of our Koreans. They were in Company C, which was supporting the 19th or 21st Infantry. We were crossing one of these Korean regiments. What happened was these Koreans didn't know much English, but they knew they were in Company C. It so happens we were crossing the first battalion of this regiment, including Company C. The infantry platoon leaders would jump out of these boats and say, "Okay, Company C, let's go." All these Koreans would grab their rifles and away they'd go. They were deserting our ranks. All they knew was, "Let's go Company C," so away they went. We lost quite a few of them that day. We got most of them back, or replacements for them.

I got a Purple Heart, but I got it strictly by fluke. I had been down at the beach with this crossing—lots of

artillery, lots of small-arms firing. I'd gone back to the rear because they said I was wanted on the telephone. So, I went back along a road, back behind some trees. The regimental commander wanted to see me down at division headquarters right away. They had another problem that they wanted taken care of. My exec was up at this crossing and the 19th Infantry was going to cross later that evening down below.

Anyway, I was walking down this road and all of a sudden, whammo, right in the ankle, this thing hit me. I looked down and blood was coming out of my ankle. This damn bullet was down in there. It was a spent bullet. I picked up the bullet, put it in my pocket, and went back to my division CP. The doctor put some iodine and a band-aid on it. About a month later the division commander pinned a Purple Heart on me. All the guys who had been through all this hell, and some of them were really badly wounded, and here I got a Purple Heart for a spent bullet. I had that bullet for years afterwards. I always carried it in my pocket until I finally lost it.

We got the division across under considerable opposition. We were moved up to Waegwan and a corps battalion put in a treadway bridge up there [the 11th ECB, starting on 20 September 1950, worked for 36 hours straight and completed the bridge with the aid of the 55th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company]. Fortunately, we didn't have to build that bridge. The 11th had an awful time with it. They didn't have the right

Our problem was that the engineers were being stretched out over hundreds of miles of road, trying to get the division forward, and trying to keep getting the supplies to them. There were no roads....

parts for it. The bridge was an old rusty one with all its parts bent and everything.

We were charged with building the approaches to it, which we did. I didn't like the approaches. One of the problems they had with building the bridge was that the approaches were much too steep. They were in too much of a hurry to get down, and they were not thorough enough in doing the groundwork.

We eventually got across and, from then on, we took off like a bat out of hell, right up north, following the North Koreans. We didn't really have very much opposition. Our problem was that the engineers were being stretched out over hundreds of miles of road, trying to get the division forward, and trying to keep getting the supplies to them. There were no roads—and what roads there were, particularly down where we were, had been destroyed when we pulled back.

The Koreans had never bothered to repair most of them. We had blown all the bridges. Fortunately, in many areas, it was dry season so we could build by-passes around them by going down through the riverbeds and back up the other side. We were just leap-frogging constantly. We went up through Seoul. Things were moving so fast. We were at Uijongbu, just north of Seoul, for several days on the way north, then we took off again up toward the Imjin and through P'yongyang.

I remember going through the river at P'yongyang but I didn't stay there very long. I went up to Anju and

Sinanju along the Ch'ongch'on River. We got some resistance there when we were busy crossing it.

We also were supporting the British [27th Infantry Brigade]. By that time I had some tank dozers. My tank dozer platoon commander was a very energetic guy. The men really leaned on those tanks. They were in action all the time doing demolition work, or helping the infantry up in the front line. The British got hold of that tank dozer platoon of mine and they didn't want to let go of it. They wanted to hang onto that outfit because it really helped them in combat and helped them get through.

We kept right on up, and we were headed up on a split road to the Yalu River. One went up to Sinuiju on the Yalu, and the other went up through Kusong from Chongju, which is right close to the Yalu. There was one company on each road supporting the infantry that were up those roads.

Makeshift Bridge and Culverts

In the meantime, I learned to use some of my engineering education. This was the first time I really got to use it very technically. The Taeryong River went through Pakch'on. We found some Japanese trusses there, and I said, "Let's build a bridge out of that stuff across this river." The tanks could ford across and we managed to get some Brockway trucks across. I took those trusses and measured them. I didn't know how strong the steel

was because it was Japanese steel. I got an old field manual and my slide rule out. I designed that bridge by myself because I couldn't find anybody else at battalion headquarters who knew how to do the structure work. I had just been to MIT a year or so before. Designing bridges was one of the courses we had. So, I designed that



Using 55-gallon drums as culverts, the 378th Engineers construct a bridge over the Pukhan River RG 111, SC-364793

bridge and we put it together. We built several trusses and we also built a causeway.

We welded together 55-gallon drums and made culverts. We rolled up sandbags and got lots of sand and gravel. We confined the river to that small span and put those trusses across. That bridge eventually carried all the tanks and trucks for the division. It was one of those little things that you come up with. The span was probably 50/60 feet. We named it the Wirt Bridge—the Captain Wirt Bridge—in honor of Captain Wirt, Company C, who'd been killed at Taejon. Company C built it and we named the bridge after him.

We got up to where the infantry could see the Yalu River. I was up the road quite a ways with my CP down

in a farmer's barnyard. We had the "old farmer" on the old farm with his funny hat and long moustache, about 15 miles south of the Yalu.

All of a sudden I got a radio message to get our outfit back in a hurry. We went back to Pakch'on where we built that bridge. The division CP was back there and I reported to Maj. Gen.

John H. Church. I think Gen. Church was still the area commander then. Later on, Lt. Gen. Blackshear Morrison Bryan came in—Blackshear Bryan who had been at West Point when I was a cadet and later was superintendent at West Point. He was a very fine guy and we got along great.

Well, the Chinese had crossed the Yalu and were outfighting us. The defense perimeter was from Pakch'on to just north of the Ch'ongch'on River, and we went back and forth there for a while.

In the meantime, we were getting these flimsy editions of *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines about the awful situation in Korea—how the Chinese were going to drive us into the sea. Well, we were up just 50 miles

from the Yalu River and we didn't think things were quite that bad. But the Marines in the meantime had taken a real rough shellacking over in Hungnam and the Changjin (Chosin). The units to our right, the Koreans and the 2d Division, were having a real rough time. Finally, the Chinese outflanked us and we had to pull back. This was nearly Thanksgiving and we were up north of Anju. Oh boy, it was cold.

I used to get mad because I had all those friends back at P'yongyang at Eighth Army headquarters, and they all had parkas, overcoats, and mittens. We didn't have a damn thing up there! Hell, we were just shivering in the foxholes, wrapping blankets around us, and sleeping bags, trying to keep warm. It was terrible. That was even worse than the Tennessee maneuver area. But we were being told that we were going to be the first outfit out of Korea and would be home by Christmas, so, not to worry about the winter clothes. We figured we could put up with a little cold weather.

When the Chinese attacked, things were very hectic. I remember the division was supposed to withdraw down a certain road. I jumped in an airplane to reconnoiter that road, to see whether it had bridges and whether it was passable—to get an idea from the air at least. This was an area we had bypassed going north. As our airplane would fly over, the North Koreans would be shooting at us. They would shoot holes in the wings, but fortunately they never hit us, except for the wings.

They had tank traps all the way down that road—minefields, barbed wire, everything you could imagine. I went back to division headquarters, wherever it was, and told them the division wasn't going to withdraw on that road. Now, it could fight down that road, but the mainland Chinese were coming around the flank very rapidly. The division was forced to come down on the main road that we had then, which was down through P'yongyang.

Saved by a Compass

I had just gotten a new compass in my jeep and I had trouble with it. It was a tank compass, a very fancy one. It had all these little metal rods that you put in and take out to adjust it. Well, I had gotten it adjusted all right, but I still had problems with it. The whole battalion was on the road pulling back. We came to this little town and the bridge was out, so we bypassed there. When we had come north a month or so earlier, MPs (military police) told us which way to go and there were signs. We were heading out into the countryside. I had two or three companies, and I was back in the middle of the column somewhere. Of course the roads were narrow. You couldn't pass very well. I looked at my compass, which had a luminous dial. It was turned northeast. We were supposed to be going southwest. "This damn compass has gone haywire again. This damn thing—I shouldn't even bother with it!"

We didn't dare turn over a prisoner to the Koreans because they would just torture him to death. This was standard practice. You figure if you got captured the same thing was going to happen to you.

There was a little light with a CP sign down around the side of the road. I asked a sentry out there, "What outfit is this?" He said, "This is the forward CP of the 1st Battalion" or something-or-another. "I don't know where your convoy is going but the Chinese are a mile down that road you're on." Well, I got on the radio right quick to the company commanders and said, "Stop, turn around." How we got turned around among those rice paddies I don't know. We got the whole battalion turned around and we went back into this town. I found out that somebody had removed the signs. We got back on our road, but that compass sure saved our necks in that particular situation.

I spent Christmas down on the Han River, but the divisions kept bouncing back and forth. The one time they sent the whole battalion back to the rear, except for one company. We were preparing fortifications for them below the Han. We spent a week or so there, working on the road net into this very hilly area. We were building roads so the infantry could get in and get supplies. We were putting up barbed wire and minefields while the rest of the division was up north. This was their fallback position.

Company C was bivouacked back in this fairly secure area. Right next to them was a Turkish battalion, which had gotten pretty badly mauled up north. The Turks were real fighters, but they'd gotten hurt and lost a lot of men. They were pretty tough. Fortunately, most

of the troops were out working. One day the Turks decided to have a little maneuver so they attacked right through the middle of the Company C bivouac area using live ammunition. Scared the hell out of the whole Company C. Of course, the fact that they'd kill a couple of guys didn't really matter to them. The Koreans were the same way. I found this out early in the war.



Aside from marking the forward edge of UN lines, the sign warned drivers they were under enemy observation
RG 111, SC-416204

I used to get mad because I had all those friends back at P'yongyang at Eighth Army headquarters, and they all had parkas, overcoats, and mittens. We didn't have a damn thing up there! Hell, we were just shivering in the foxholes, wrapping blankets around us, and sleeping bags, trying to keep warm.

We didn't dare turn over a prisoner to the Koreans because they would just torture him to death. This was standard practice. You figure if you got captured the same thing was going to happen to you.

We were up north in Anju and Sinanju. I had my tank dozer platoon supporting the British on the attack up toward the Yalu River. The rest of my battalion was stretched for a hundred miles back towards Seoul. We went back past P'yongyang. The corps' group, combat group [Col. Frank H. Forney, USMA 1929], came up here and finally we had some corps here. He was up here trying to support a division in combat with his corps troops. I was trying to keep division supply roads open so we could get our ammunition and food up to the troops.

Our assistant division commander at that time was Lt. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson, USMA 1927. He had been an engineer officer, but he was one of these guys who had transferred to the infantry—awfully smart guy. He went back to the corps commander and told him it was time to stop their foolishness and get the corps troops out of our division area and let us do our job. So, finally they did. Later, this group commander was killed in his jeep up in this same area in a Chinese attack. He got off the road a little too far and got killed by sniper fire soon after this incident.

The corps engineer wanted me to take over that group. I said, "Uh-uh. I got more troops than you do

with my Koreans, and I got a better job than you do, and I'm going to stay right there." I never got my group and I'm glad I didn't. We went back and forth down in this area around Seoul, mostly building roads.

We'd use any kind of expedient we could get. Several of the outfits that had tank dozers dropped their dozer blades by the side of the road so they could fight as tanks. If we needed more tank dozers we went back and picked up the blades. We would find a beat-up tank somewhere and put the blade on and use it. I used to send patrols out on our front lines because they might have a transmission, or a truck, that they needed. They couldn't get it any other way.

We had weapons that weren't authorized for engineers. We had recoilless rifles, ammunition, and material that we'd scrounged here and there from the infantry. I had a superb supply outfit. At this time in the war, Dan Harvey, a regular officer and a very fine guy, was my supply officer. But it was very frustrating. You'd send a convoy of trucks back to the rear to get some squared lumber to build a bridge or something that was very important to the division and corps MSR. They'd spend several days going around to various supply points and come back empty, so we'd fell a bunch of trees and make logs. It was a lot more work, and you got a much worse product. 🏰

Officers and men of the 62nd Engineers stand in front of the first train to cross the railroad bridge they built across the Han River in Seoul, 19 October 1950
Engineer School, 210-13-15



Despite Major Elder's warnings that the Chinese were massing troops south of the Yalu River, China's entry into the war caught UN forces by surprise. The engineer officer eloquently describes the shock and confusion of the Chinese onslaught. "The shepherd's horns, bugles, and these great masses of dark figures...in the night appeared around you, behind you. You were scared and didn't think you could kill them. They [the UN forces] really believed they [the Chinese] were supernatural."

After Seoul had been secured and Eighth Army had linked up with X Corps, Eighth Army continued the attack north on the west coast. Almond's X Corps withdrew, went around, and made landings on the east coast of Korea. We remained with I Corps going north. The advance from Seoul into North Korea was quite fast. We went through P'yongyang to Sinanju and Anju on the Ch'ongch'on River.

At that point, the 24th Infantry Division north of the river was counterattacked by what later turned out to be Chinese forces. Two of the regiments were fairly badly mauled and withdrew back across the river. Brig. Gen. Frank A. Allen, Jr., was assistant division commander of the 1st Cavalry Division. Two of its regiments were north in the attack. He was put in charge of the task force to secure the river line. *TASK FORCE ALLEN* was composed of Gen. Allen, who was the task force

commander, using our group headquarters; the 5th Infantry, which at that time was an independent regimental combat team; and some other units. Our group at that time had two battalions and they became a part of the task force. We had a tank battalion that came from the 24th Division. We occupied the eastern end of the line at Kunu-ri; we were along the river with the river valley to the northeast. The 24th withdrew through *TASK FORCE ALLEN* and was reconstituted and put back together. This initial phase was early in November 1950. That was the withdrawal in which *TASK FORCE ALLEN* was constituted. Our group served as infantry for a week to 10 days until the 1st Cavalry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, and the 5th RCT attacked north.

We reverted then to a supporting mission. We did some mining, which wasn't a major problem. The roads were narrow, dirt, and not designed to handle the kind of traffic we were putting there. In a number of cases we had to cut a new road or bypass down through the paddy fields. It was mostly dozer work. Our group commander was Frank H. Forney, USMA 1929, who was later killed. He was probably the most totally fearless man I'd ever meet. During our period in Seoul, Forney, at one time, with a party of two people, crossed the Han River in a jeep. They got across on a ferry to make a reconnaissance and they went through some mines. A battalion commander who was with him, Col. Hubbard, was injured and evacuated. This occurred in Col. Chesty Puller's

sector. He was not part of the jeep recon. Chesty Puller, who commanded the 1st Marines, and later retired as the deputy commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, had ordered Forney to quit being a hero and quit exposing himself on the riverbank because he was drawing fire on the 1st Marines. During the attack north, Col. Forney was probably the leading American to go over a good piece of North Korea. He preceded the infantry at times. Col. Forney had a high sense of mission and was totally courageous.

When we had gone north into Sinanju, the bridge over the Ch'ongch'on was blown. We heard reports that another bridge existed further up the river at Anju. Col. Forney, Maj. Davis, who was our S-3, Capt. Besing, who commanded one of the line companies in the 11th Engineers, and I [the executive officer] motored up in a couple of jeeps to about 10 miles east of Sinanju. Sure enough, we found a sandbag bridge across the river and we crossed. Besing, Davis, and I in one jeep stopped and took the charges off the bridge, which had been prepared for demolition. Col. Forney and his jeep driver continued on the north side of the river, back down the river to a point about opposite the British crossing. They came under considerable North Korean fire and later rejoined us.

The British 27th Infantry Brigade later made a crossing, which was a comedy in itself. The British crossed



Men of the 65th Engineer Combat Battalion reinforce a muddy road on the north bank of the Han River Engineer School, 93-63-12

in assault boats at high tide. The first wave got across—about a rifle company. They were greeted on the far shore by a bunch of Koreans in white suits with tubas and clarinets. These Koreans were local people—happy to see somebody, happy to be liberated. When the assault boats returned to pick up the second wave the tide went out. The second wave spent the next 24 hours in the middle of the river 500 yards from either shore in the mud flats. It was good that that particular crossing was not opposed.

The critical focus of the war on the west coast for a time was *TASKFORCE ALLEN*. I had contact with Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner, the chief of staff, in Tokyo,

Gen. Walker had a son who commanded one of the battalions of the 19th Infantry, which had been overrun north of the river. Walker was in a very difficult position. He was under great stress as a commander, but also under great personal stress because his son was missing.

Inch'on, and Seoul, but my principal exposure to general officers was when we were *TASK FORCE ALLEN*. It was normal for all the senior commanders—Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, Eighth Army commander; Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn, who was I Corps commander; Maj. Gen. Hobart R. Gay of the 1st Cavalry; I can't remember who commanded the 2d Division then—to assemble at one command post for their daily briefings and to make their plans for the next phase of the operation. I saw a lot of them, as assistant chief of staff of the task force, and did most of the briefing.

Gen. Walker had a son who commanded one of the battalions of the 19th Infantry, which had been overrun north of the river. Walker was in a very difficult position. He was under great stress as a commander, but also under great personal stress because his son was missing. I'd often thought that you should never put a commander in that position, that kind of dual stress. The stress showed on him. Gen. Milburn, I think, made the decisions. I think Walker was working under so much pressure—shock, really—he simply wasn't performing, not in a normal decisive way in which he usually operated.

Retreat to the South

We had a brief quiet period in November and then the attack resumed. During that period we had a couple of aircraft that flew a lot of reconnaissance. I flew four or five hours, I think, every day through that month. I'll

never forget the massive Chinese concentration south of the Yalu River. It was there, no question about it. The attack should have been no surprise. I don't care what history says. We saw it. We reported it.

I was flying in a little Piper Cub-type plane, an L-5. North of Anju, about 30 miles up the road, two roads turned off to the northwest. We used to fly up the southern one of those two roads, and then slip over the ridge and down the other road. We were going over that ridge one day with no altitude to speak of, and, my God, there were tanks, artillery, and troops. I guess we saw two divisions on the road. In a matter of minutes they totally disappeared off the road and under cover. We made these reports every day that we went out but I guess nobody really believed it.

That was the IX Corps. When the attack occurred, around Thanksgiving, the whole atmosphere in the infantry troops, in the corps, was just unbelievable. *The River and the Gauntlet* [S.L.A. Marshall, *The River and the Gauntlet*, N.Y. (1962)] gives you a little of that, but some people, I think, literally, believed that the Chinese were supernatural.

The shepherds' horns, bugles, and these great masses of dark figures in the dark, and the night appeared around you—behind you. You were scared and didn't think you could kill them. They really believed they were supernatural. In a sense it was a defeated army. It couldn't contend with what it was running into. It

was split up into three columns that were not mutually supporting, and each one took different routes. Each one had been tactically defeated and was falling back.

I really don't know about the east coast. We had really made no lasting contact over there. Some of our people were with them, but no contact. I guess that fleeting contact was made between the 65th Infantry Puerto Rican Regiment from the east coast and one of the regiments of the 1st Cavalry.

The objective of these three unconnected elements was to occupy North Korea close on the Yalu River, X Corps on the right, and on the east coast, I and IX Corps on the west coast.

The center was made of ROK forces. They had been fairly badly beaten in the south. They didn't have much in the way of communications and weren't very well armed. They couldn't very well be supported. That was where the attack was first and most successful. We knew things were really going to hell-in-a-handbasket.

We had had some demolitions put in along the

river east of Anju and Kunu-ri and we had about two ROK divisions come back through that roadblock, badly beaten by very heavy forces from the northeast. In that same day we had three columns in the I and the IX Corps, one going west towards the mouth of



An aircraft mechanic refuels an L-5E observation aircraft
RG 111, SC-356532

Yalu, one going somewhat northwest, and one going due north. All of them were heavily attacked and hurt. That day I flew over the element going northwest to the Yalu toward Sinuiju and I probably saw the furthest point of advance. I saw a tank platoon attack a heavy infantry force about 10 or 15 miles short of the Yalu. At that time we received very heavy anti-aircraft fire from a point

further up the road. We were just about out of fuel so we had to return to corps.

That night corps directed a withdrawal further to the south. That was the commencement of the withdrawal back into South Korea. These are the days so well written up in *The River and the Gauntlet*. Our group had two choices of withdrawal routes. We were

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Major John H. Elder, Jr. 19th Engineer Combat Group

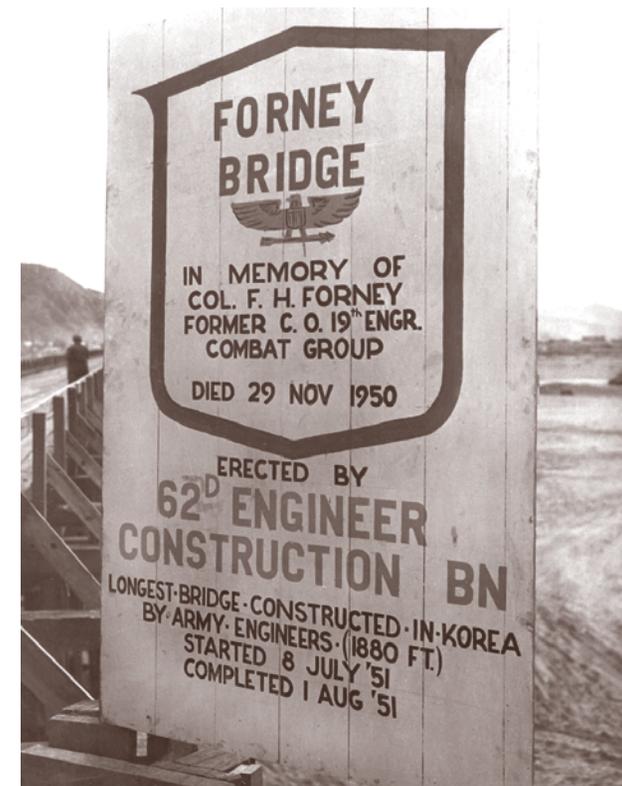
located just east of Anju along the river. In the 25- or 30-mile sector there was a road on the east that ran down from the river due south from Kunu-ri to the Taedong River near Sunan.

Near Anju was another road that we had opened that was a very poor trail also leading to Sunan. We could have withdrawn along either of these two ways. We knew that the ROKs had collapsed to the east, and we knew that there had been heavy fighting in the two valleys in the east. Col. Forney had gotten up in the morning with his jeep driver and he said, "Well, I think I'll go down to the east road with the 2d Division. You bring the headquarters. I guess the east road will be more crowded, so take the center road."

I left the headquarters and took the center road. We got down to the intersection about 20 miles to the south at Sunan. That night we set up headquarters. Two battalions were executing demolition and withdrawing in support of the divisions in reasonably good order. Much of the 2d Division was lost on the east road. Col. Forney never showed up at headquarters. We understood later that he and the Chinese arrived on a hill on that road at about the same time and he was killed. The next few weeks ran together in a blur. It was a very confused period. Communication was very poor.

We had two battalions commanded by lieutenant colonels. When Col. Forney didn't arrive that night, I went to corps because our communications weren't work-

ing. I reported that Forney was missing and probably dead. Corps said, "Well, let's wait 24 hours and in the meantime you run the group." In another 24 hours Forney still was missing, so Col. W.N. Thomas, Jr., corps engineer, called the commanders and me back to



The bridge at Chunchon was dedicated to the memory of Col. F.H. Forney, former Commanding Officer of the 19th Engineer Combat Group Engineer School, 210-13-4

corps. He said, "I recognize that I can't do this, but I want you, John," he was talking to me, "to command the group." I was a major then. And he said, "I've cleared this with Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter, IX Corps commander, and these are Gen. Coulter's orders. Are there any questions about these commands?" There were none.

He didn't want to pull these lieutenant colonels out of their units because both of them were officers who had been involved in civilian-type construction in World War II and had been put into troop command just before the Korean War with no combat troop command experience. On the other hand, I had been in troop command and with infantry units in World War II, and had worked for the commander (the corps engineer, Col. Thomas). He knew me. I knew him. He had confidence in me and knew how I reacted. I think those were the considerations. That situation existed until we got back into South Korea.

Apparently, the Eighth Army Engineer asked the corps constantly to accept one or two people to command the group, and the corps just simply refused. That standoff continued for some time. It continued until we got back south of the 38th Parallel, until about the time we withdrew back across the Han River. Then we got a bona fide commander and I became exec again. I think we all understood the situation and accepted it. The two battalion commanders were very satisfied

for me to lead. I tried to be reasonable and to make them understand the kind of things that they had to do. I think they appreciated it because they had not had troop combat experience.

IX Corps was on the east of Eighth Army withdrawing from P'yongyang along a road that ran into the Iron Triangle not too far north of the 38th. The Chinese got ahead of them and had several corps in what later became known as the Iron Triangle. We had to fight our way further south. The IX Corps side-slipped over onto the coast road behind the I Corps and withdrew. Then it went back east into a defensive position south of the 38th, with its back to the Han River.

IX Corps was east of Seoul. I Corps was astride Seoul. We were just a little west of the intersection of the Han and the Pukhan River. Brig. Gen. Davidson, the assistant division commander for the 24th Division and a former engineer, was put in charge of the withdrawal operation across the Han where we were. We prepared for demolition the wreckage of a civilian bridge, which had been opened up as a foot and jeep bridge, and also installed a treadway bridge across the ice and prepared it for demolition. Davidson commanded the crossing operation. We sat on the bank of the Han River for a week to 10 days until the decision was made to withdraw further south. We executed the demolition of the bridges and went back 50 or 60 miles to somewhere south of Ch'ongju.

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Sometime in that general period Lt. Gen. Walton Walker was killed and Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway took over the army and performed probably the most superb job of large unit leadership I've ever seen. Our army, at that point, was a defeated army. There was

no question about it. The orientation for troops and everybody was how fast can we go south and get out of Korea. In a matter of a week, by personal example and appearance, Ridgway really turned the Army around. It thought about going north again. 🏰

Engineer School, 41-5-107



RG 111, SC-35669



RG 111, SC-356266



After the last UN forces withdrew to the south bank of the Han River, the 14th Engineers went to work, dismantling much of the pontoon bridge and destroying the remainder, 4 January 1951

Lieutenant Johnson describes his role as commanding officer of an infantry company moving into North Korea with the 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) finally returning to engineering duty with the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion.

At that time, late autumn 1950, the civilian populace appeared happy to see us. After we pulled up by Kaesong, just shy of the 38th Parallel, we waited for a week or two because they hadn't made the decision to cross into North Korea. During that time we worked on equipment and weapons and re-outfitted. Eventually

the decision was made to go across the 38th. There wasn't much opposition. We went up the west side of North Korea along a peninsula called the Ongjin Peninsula. Part of the Ongjin Peninsula was in North Korea and part in South Korea. The 38th Parallel had cut it in half. As a result, there was no land access from South Korea.

Right at the apex of the ocean, where the peninsula mainland of North Korea came up, there was the town of Haeju. I was ordered to go and clean weapons out of the town. The town was laid out in such a manner that it was like a pie cut into three sections. At the center of the pie was the town hall and the police station. I established the company command post (CP) outside the town hall and gave one of the three sections of the town to each of my three platoon leaders. I kept the weapons platoon people in the center around the city hall and the police station.

Our mission was to clear the town of weapons. We were instructed to knock on each door or do whatever you could to get the attention of the homeowner and ask, "Do you have any weapons?" If the answer was, "No," then we went to the next house. We did not search.

We had enough interpreters. Each platoon at that time had one, and I had two in the company headquarters. They were supplied by the Korean government. They were allegedly not to be drafted or pressed into any of the other services. They had to prove that

Members of the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion change the oil and clean the filters on an air compressor
RG 111, SC-379254



they could speak good or passable English and that they were interpreters for the United States.

I had a jeep driver by the name of Rosy. He wandered around our CP the day we searched. When he came back he was ashen. He had gone up into the police station, a two-story structure, concrete building, where they had a big assembly hall. It looked like a basketball court. What he saw there made him come back. He said, "Sir, you have to come with me. You have to see something that's awful." I said, "Right now?" And he said, "Yes, Sir. You have to come right now." I went with him. The 1st Sergeant also came with me. We went into the police station, upstairs, and into the auditorium. There were probably a couple hundred people, all maimed. They had broken arms, broken legs, and blood was all over the place—just about all ages, from the young to the elderly. There were men and women; some women had crushed breasts. It was incredible. I told the interpreter to find out how this happened. He asked and said, "Follow me. Let me show you." We went back into a room off of the auditorium. There was a North Korean civilian who apparently had elevated himself to the police chief of the town when everything broke apart as far as North Koreans were concerned. He was allegedly an anticommunist. He was sitting on a stool and in front of him, kneeling on the floor, was the person being interrogated. Along side of the person being interrogated was another Korean with a club in his hand. The anticom-



South Korean refugees cheer troops of the 24th Infantry Division as they enter Taejon
RG 111, SC-349428

munist police chief would ask a question. The person on the floor would answer. If the police chief didn't like the answer, the guy with the club was energized and would clobber the hell out of the guy, either on the back of the head or some other place. He swung the club and he would bring it down on the arm or something. When the chief got the answer he wanted, the individual would be hauled back to the auditorium.

I relieved the police chief and his henchmen on the spot. I directed that the people be taken out of the building and marched up to a POW compound, which was being established in a big Catholic church on the

outskirts of town. The long line of people finally came out of the building and they were marched up the road guarded by North Korean, allegedly anticommunist, guards. Rather than turning left toward the church, they turned right. I jumped in the jeep and I went up there. I asked what they were doing and told them the direction of the church and the POW compound. Apparently, the guards were going to take them down to the riverbed and shoot them. They believed that if these people had survived under the North Koreans they were obviously communist.

Later, after the Chinese intervention, we were again moving south. As we went through little towns you could see clusters of people who were crying. They were deeply concerned that we were leaving them. Now the tables would be turned again. They were rightfully concerned. How did the people regard us? Did they cooperate? Yes, they didn't have any choice. Korea wasn't like Vietnam. We knew where the front line

was. We didn't have many people ambushing or shooting us in the back.

They didn't really know how to take us. All of a sudden they had nobody telling them what to do, and I'm sure up to that point they had been told we were the bad guys. Kim Il Sung had been filling them full of whatever, and the natural reaction was to stay very subdued. They didn't cheer, or holler, or yell, or anything else.

As we broke out of the Naktong perimeter and went north, most of the civilians were either under-

ground or had already gone south. There would be long, long lines of refugees going out, and presumably they were all South Koreans. They were trying to get out, particularly when we were down in the Naktong River area. When we broke out and went up towards Kumchon, they had already gone south and had gone by us long before. I don't recollect people standing, cheering, and throwing roses at us.

One of the interesting things I saw, I thought



To compensate for personnel shortages, Korean soldiers were integrated into U.S. Army engineer units KOR 555

about later in life when I became the Director of Munitions Production. When we went into P'yongyang, we went over a long concrete causeway elevated above the rice paddies and the tidal flats of the river. The tide was out in that particular area and there were thousands of bomb craters all around that bridge but none on the bridge. With all the carpet bombing that bridge hadn't been hit. It might have been hit once or twice, but it certainly was not destroyed. Today, one or two of our smart bombs would have knocked it out. It was interesting to me to see the ineffectiveness of our bombing in that instance. When the Air Force carpet-bombed just before we crossed the Naktong by Waegwan, the B-29s came over and they obliterated the hill mass on the north side of the Naktong. The North Koreans had a lot of high velocity weapons there—88s. When they hit that area, they wiped it out. Hitting a line target in those days was not that easy or successful.

The city was hit, but it wasn't anywhere nearly as destroyed as Seoul. I had been stationed on the outskirts of Seoul back in '48-'49, and it was a bustling city. When I went through it on our way north, everything was just wiped out—the railroad yards, the railroad station. There wasn't very much standing because of bombing by both sides.

We started getting replacement personnel from the Koreans. In fact, our battalion was the first battalion to get KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation to the United

States Army). At that time the company-authorized strength was 212 personnel. I was down to about 120-130, and so we were going to get Korean fillers. Our regimental commander, John Throckmorton, and battalion commander, Tom Roelofs, decided we were not going to just bring them in. We would have a training program in a rear area. They had some modest training, but we trained them intensively for two weeks and then had a graduation. We graduated the ones who looked like they could handle themselves, who understood the training, and could react to the English being spoken.

About one third of the Koreans that we received graduated. We had about 100—one third we put into the company, interspersed them, say, one per squad. Then the next week we had another graduation. The last week, we had the third graduation. By the time all of them were integrated into the company to bring us back up roughly to our 212, they were operating as a team with the Americans, rather than Koreans here and Americans there. We had some problems regarding food. We couldn't feed them all-American food—or C-rations. They wanted rice and fish heads. So, we established one section of the mess hall that boiled rice. They made rice but, if they wanted, they could also eat the American food.

We were loaded with KATUSAs. Once they were integrated in the company that way they really

Later, after the Chinese intervention, we were again moving south. As we went through little towns you could see clusters of people who were crying. They were deeply concerned that we were leaving them. Now the tables would be turned again.

The closer we got to the Yalu River the tougher it became. It was like pushing against a spring—when the coils get tighter, the resistance against the spring is harder and harder.

did a masterful job. The biggest problem, of course, was language communication, but they began to pick it up and at least understood the basic language requirements. It was easier during the daylight hours for them to understand because they could see. At night they couldn't see so they had to interpret and hope it was right. We also had more interpreters available. The KATUSAs did a hell of a good job. They really came through quite well. Up to that time, we had the good fortune of having time to train them because we weren't heavily engaged.

We were leapfrogging up. In those days we walked some, but we also had movement by convoy. They would get one outfit moved up and then they would bring another outfit up. When we got up to Sinanju and Anju we were still with the British 27th Infantry Brigade. They turned to the west and went along the coast. The closer we got to the Yalu River the tougher it became. It was like pushing against a spring—when the coils get tighter, the resistance against the spring is harder and harder.

The 1st Cavalry Division came up and got clobbered. The British 27th Infantry Brigade was out in front of us and we followed them. The British had erected a big sign, "The 27th British Brigade wishes the 5th RCT good hunting." They had cut off to our left, I remember, and then we went north. We got up to Taech'on. When we got up that road going north we were the right flank of the 24th Division. The 5th had taken one battalion, the 3d Battalion, and they were going to slip them around

to the right. We went up to the valley road, the 2d Battalion following the 3d Battalion. They moved us off to the left. There was a "chocolate drop" [looking] hill right in the middle of the valley where we were going. When we got up to the base of that chocolate drop hill all hell broke loose. We really got clobbered and within minutes we had a half a dozen killed. It was from the ridgeline to our front. I couldn't call it an ambush; we weren't covered from all sides. It was from the front and we just ran into opposition.

I guess what led into it was a two-jeep reconnaissance patrol that went out. When they passed the chocolate drop hill the road started to bend around the hill leading through a pass in the ridgeline. The little chocolate drop was dominated by the ridge. The men in the two recon jeeps went a little past the hill, got hit, and all were killed. I believe Hank Emerson's company, Company A, was sent to move along to our left. We were ordered to attack, take the chocolate drop, and then attack that ridgeline. I believe the 1st Battalion was sent around to the left to get behind the enemy who was holding up the 3d Battalion. We moved up on that chocolate drop and got up on top. We went over the military crest of the hill and immediately received intense small arms fire from the ridge to our front. Everything was like hornets stinging.

We pulled back to the reverse of the hill and then we brought artillery down on the ridge. We set up a base

of fire and really hit the ridgeline, which was not that far away—400-500 yards. We just hosed down the area and then dug in. The 2d Battalion went around our right flank on the main road. They got around the right flank. When we attacked the next morning and got up on the ridgeline, we saw almost 50 bodies up there, all lined up in a neat line. They hadn't all been killed there, but the enemy had stacked them up on one part of the hill.

My interpreter said, "They are mongoloid." I said, "They are what?" He said, "They are mongoloid. They are Chinese." They had new clothes and brand new shoes. The soles of their shoes were almost like hobnail boots. It was obviously a different group of people. There were no wounded and my company didn't take any prisoners. I don't think anybody else did either, unless maybe the 2d Battalion, when they went around the right side and picked up prisoners. That was the first time we ran into Chinese. I think probably the 8th Cavalry got clobbered first up by Unsan, and later the 5th Cavalry got badly hit at Kunu-ri [28 Nov 50].

Cold, but Alive

General Douglas MacArthur had said we would be home by Thanksgiving and Eighth Army believed him. They did not requisition all the clothing needed so our company had half of the clothing we needed—overcoats, sleeping bags, and so on. It probably was good that we did have only half. When we would put two guys in a



Chinese prisoners captured by the 1st Republic of Korea Division
RG 111, SC-357170

foxhole, one would have an overcoat and he'd be on guard, and the other one would be in the sleeping bag. When we went north the second time, it turned cold during that month interval. We had been going for days. The troops were exhausted. We all were. We only had half the overcoats and half the sleeping bags, so for the most part, half of the company was awake, cold, but awake. Another unit of the 24th was further to our left flank and they got wiped out one night. Nobody saw or heard the Chinese come in until they were over-run. The Chinese shot them all in their holes, left the bodies right where they were, and then walked off.

When we attacked the next morning and got up on the ridgeline, we saw almost 50 bodies up there, all lined up in a neat line.

The men had all been asleep. Whether they all had sleeping bags, I'm not sure. One of the biggest jobs was keeping the troops awake at night and on guard. It was cold, really cold, so I believe it was fortuitous that we only had half of our outer clothing.

We had plenty of ammunition. When we first landed way back in July/August, we did not have enough ammunition. But by this time we had 3.5-inch bazookas, rocket launchers, and recoilless rifles. We had a lot of SP artillery—self-propelled artillery—that had come in. About this time we were pretty well equipped, with the exception of clothes.

When they issued those pile-type hats with the earflaps, it was interpreted as a signal to dispose of the steel pot. I don't think it was overconfidence necessarily. When you have something warm around your head and your ears, it substitutes for protection. Lt. Col. John L. Throckmorton was insistent that we wear our steel hat. Some of the companies didn't wear them before he tramped down on us. The steel pot was cumbersome, you know. It wasn't too long before the command emphasized that the pot went on top of that parka-type hat. You can wear both—put the flaps down and keep your ears warm.

Close Air Support

After the Chinese came across the Yalu, the 1st Cavalry got hit and so did the 2d Division. My unit, the 5th

RCT, was ordered to set up blocking positions to hold the road open from Kunu-ri. For our blocking position, my company was on top of a hill, which was on a ridge of a series of hills. Our hill was smaller than the one Hank Emerson was on, which was on the higher part of the ridgeline. We were connected directly and covering the valley. We were blocking the Chinese from coming down the ridgeline. We were to protect the valley for the people coming south. There were a lot of air attacks on the upper part of the ridgeline, and I believe there was a Korean division up there blocking in front of us. Two South Korean F-51 aircraft came over and circled our positions. Those days we used the panel system where each day a colored panel was displayed to show the air corps where the friendly ground units were.

Hank and I both had our companies on the ridgeline. We had dug foxholes, but they weren't deep. We were down maybe a foot and a half—just slit trenches. When the F-51s came in we had put our panels out to let them know who and where we were. One of Hank's machine gunners saw the planes and thought, "They don't look too friendly to me. I'm going to give them a burst and scare them off." He fired a burst of that machine gun and all hell broke loose. That pilot fired two rockets, and then Company A started yelling, "MAY-DAY!" on the radio to alert headquarters that we were being fired on by friendly aircraft.

I jumped out to be sure that the panel was in plain view. My first sergeant, Sgt. Loeffler, was in the foxhole next to me. I was yelling at everyone not to fire at the aircraft, that they were friendly aircraft. They would pass over Hank's position and fire a blast, and then they'd make a turn and come over us on their return trip. When they got over Hank, Sgt. Loeffler jumped out of his hole, grabbed the red panel and rolled it up. I said, "What the hell are you doing?" He said, "They are firing at all the panels." I said, "No, they're not!" I had to grab the panel, run out, and throw it out again. We did this about three or four times.

During the 10 minutes of strafing we were all yelling, "MAYDAY!" They finally went away. Remarkably, not a person was hit and they had really hosed down Hank's area. That was the last time his machine gunner ever fired at another friendly aircraft. We blocked in that position for three or four days and then went east of P'yongyang, going south. Eventually, we went to just north of Seoul.

General Matthew B. Ridgway Takes Command

It was at the time Lt. Gen. Walker was killed. I had a jeep that did not have a windshield, and at that time driving down the road in a vehicle without a windshield was bad news. It was so cold, and without a windshield the wind made it that much colder. I was riding down the road when I happened to see this



Lt. Gen. Matthew Ridgway, commander 8th Army, confers with his officers RG 111, SC-357542

jeep off to the side of the ditch. There was nobody around and I said to myself, "Ah! I got my windshield." I jumped out of the jeep, went over and looked at it. There was a three-star plate on the front of the jeep. When I saw that, I said, "That's *not my* windshield!" I guess we got there almost a half-hour after he was killed. Nobody was around the jeep. Eventually, I found

a windshield, but it was a South Korean Army windshield in an old Korean hut. Ironically, it had two stars on it.

Gen. Walker was the commander during the initial operation, the defense of the Naktong Perimeter, and it was a case of cutting and patching. We did things

We did things like run bulldozers on a reverse side of a hill to make the bad guys think we had tanks over there. We did that in desperation. We think it worked....

like run bulldozers on a reverse side of a hill to make the bad guys think we had tanks over there. We did that in desperation. We think it worked; at least it was successful. We really didn't have much equipment, but we were piece-mealing units in. We were trying to hold our fingers in the dike to keep these bridgeheads from breaking up.

Under those conditions, you blow things in front of you and do what you can to conserve your forces or concentrate them when you need them. Remember what happened when the locks at Inch'on were blown during the first withdrawal? The guy who blew the tidal locks did such a thorough job that it was damn near impossible to rebuild them. He had the good fortune of being assigned to the engineer brigade that had to go in and rehabilitate the locks. He was the guy in charge of rebuilding them. Gen. Twitty was the commander of that engineer brigade. Two engineers from the Class of '46, Smith and McCullum, had been in the advanced course with me at [Fort] Belvoir and were part of that regiment. They talked about the major work that had to be done to repair the locks and impressed me with the pitfalls of over destruction, particularly if you have to go back and use the facility.

Now, let me put this in perspective too. When we had been way up north we had been euphoric with our victory, as it were. We're now getting out or we're getting kicked back. We simply didn't get information on what

was happening. The intelligence coming down to the troops was non-existent. We just didn't get any info or news. We just knew that we were coming south and we had run into some pretty good firefights. The morale was not good. The morale was at best, poor. Our euphoric feeling sort of eroded, and the closer we got to what we thought would be evacuation, the higher the morale went. The further we got back down towards Inch'on, or Pusan, to get on a boat, the better we felt.

When Gen. Walker was killed, Ridgway came in. I remember we were north of Seoul. We might have been around the Uijongbu area. When Ridgway came in, he was briefed by the British 27th Infantry Brigade. The 27th Brigade was something else. They thought the 5th Infantry was the finest fighting unit they had ever seen, and we thought they were the finest. Gen. Ridgway went to get a briefing from the British, and they briefed him on the retrograde plans. The word came out that Ridgway said, "I'm not interested in your plans for withdrawal. Where are your plans to attack?" I think that statement filtered out through the Eighth Army and certainly through our organization. The morale started going up.

Engineers as Infantry

When we got to Korea, about 10 of my classmates and I were assigned to the 5th Infantry. They were getting company commands and being promoted to captain. I was the ranking guy in our class in the 5th RCT. There

Gen. Ridgway went to get a briefing from the British, and they briefed him on the retrograde plans. The word came out that Ridgway said, "I'm not interested in your plans for withdrawal. Where are your plans to attack?"

were three of us in the engineer company—Hatch, Van Petten, and I. There was just absolutely no way we were going to get promoted in that separate company because we would never be made a company commander unless the company commander was relieved or evacuated, neither of which was going to happen.

Col. Throckmorton had wanted us to become infantrymen because he needed them, but he wanted us to get promoted to captain. I was ordered to take over the Company B of the 5th. Kenny Hatch, about the same time, took over the heavy weapons company of the 3d Battalion. I was asked if I wanted to take over a heavy weapons company, and I said, “I don’t know much about it.” Although I knew a lot about heavy weapons, I told Col. Throckmorton I would be more comfortable as an infantry line company commander, and I got it. To be promoted, one had to be in command for 30 days. I took over on about 18 September, and 30 days later they forwarded the recommendations for promotion to Eighth Army, Far East Command.

About that time, a boat with officers recalled to active duty arrived in Japan. On that boat were 700 to 800 captains. Immediately, the command had an excess of captains in the theater and so the authority to promote was stopped. In addition to that, I had been recommended for award of the Combat Infantry Badge. In order to get the Combat Infantry Badge you had to be detailed to the infantry. In other words, the

orders had to be issued that you were an infantryman. Well, those papers came back sometime in December, (1) not promoted, and (2) ineligible to receive the Combat Infantry Badge.

I was a little disgusted, of course. When Col. Throckmorton stopped to see how things were going I told him that the two recommendations had both been disapproved. He said, “Oh, what do you think?” I said, “Well, if they are not going to promote me as an infantryman I might as well go back and be an engineer. Furthermore, they are not even giving me a Com-



British and Belgian officers board a tank to travel to forward positions
RG 111, SC-375436

bat Infantry Badge.” Well, he really got ticked off but that was the rule. He said, “Well, what do you want to do?” And I said, “I may as well go back to the engineers.”

With the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion

He knew Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer, who was the battalion commander of the 3d Engineers and, I guess, he talked to him. Shortly after Christmas, I was transferred to the 3d ECB. When I got to the 3d Engineers I was a first assistant S-3, and then they made me the company commander of H&S Company.

They resubmitted my promotion from there. I guess Col. Throckmorton resubmitted my Combat Infantry Badge. About a month later, my promotion came through based on my time in the infantry, and my Combat Infantry Badge came through by order of General MacArthur.

As the company commander of the H&S Company, 3d Engineer Battalion, I also had the only platoon of armored tank dozers in Korea. They had a blade in front of the M4A1 tank. They were tanks, yes. We had five of them in the platoon. The platoon leader was a Lt. Greenwell. I had the pleasure of watching those tank dozers being used and seeing how effective they were in combat engineering. I think that experience stood me in good stead when I commanded [Fort] Belvoir. I really fought for the combat engineer vehicle. How should

tanks supporting engineer missions be used—blades in front of tanks, rollers for anti-mine, or what? All of that was pretty well formulated in my mind as we planned tank dozer support for engineers in combat.

When they had the airborne drop in Korea by the 187th, the first two vehicles in the link-up unit were two of my tanks. The value of those things was truly apparent in that kind of an airborne and ground link-up operation.

The engineer battalion was well equipped in those days. We had the D-7 bulldozer, which isn't all that powerful a piece of equipment. We had the two and one-half-ton trucks, which are certainly not the 5-tons or the 10-tons that we have today. And we had the pioneer equipment in the squads. Fundamentally, the combat engineer was well equipped to support the division but needed backup from corps engineers to do the job.

At that time we didn't do much mine clearing. They didn't get behind us to put mines in. We might not have been able to put the mines in, but we didn't clear any mines. In those days, the general philosophy was to mark a minefield and leave it on record. Again, my personal involvement in that type of activity was greatly limited because of the fact that I commanded the H&S Company. My mission was bivouac, security of the headquarters, communications, support of the headquarters by logistics, food, and so on, bedding

As the company commander of the H&S Company, 3d Engineer Battalion, I also had the only platoon of armored tank dozers in Korea....I had the pleasure of watching these tank dozers being used and seeing how effective they were in combat engineering.

down the staff, and protection of the staff. That's what the headquarters commander does, and that was what I did for the next four or five months.

Now, the Chinese began one more offensive before I left Korea. It was a spring offensive and began on 22 April 1951. I remember that we were going north. When we would get into a position, the battalion commander, Peter Hyzer, would put us right up at the front. We would be bivouacked a half mile from the front, and that was where he put our CP. We pulled the unit in, and then it took four, five, or six days for the front to be pushed further away on the other side. I thought he was almost putting us in to plug the front with the headquarters company, which was not really the mission of the headquarters company.

I didn't get involved in any more combat before I was rotated. I was in the first group of those to be rotated and left out of Pusan on an LST for Sasebo, Japan. They processed us there for a few days, and then we were shipped out on two boats; one went to Seattle, and one to San Francisco. I was on the first into San Francisco. From there I had orders for Fort Belvoir and the 6th Engineer Officer Advanced Course. However, they were just beginning to gather officers to teach at the engineer OCS and I was pulled off orders and assigned to the OCS. 🏰



A tank dozer
clears a road
in western Korea
Engineer School, 92-62-6

Major Parfitt describes his assignment with the 2d Engineer Construction Group as they design and rebuild the railroad from the Pusan Perimeter to P'yongyang, and survey the line further to the Yalu River.

In September 1950, when I was initiating the design for repairing bridges near the Pusan Perimeter, we didn't even have a construction battalion. However, shortly thereafter the 84th came aboard and they were prepared to accomplish work based on plans issued from group headquarters. Fortunately, troops who had made the withdrawal from Seoul provided us with a wealth of important information, thus we were somewhat prepared for what we would experience when the breakout was made.

The nearby bridges had a span of about a couple hundred feet; however, the damaged portion was significantly less. In the case of the highway bridge we chose to go with a timber trestle structure part of the way and to finish the closure with a Bailey bridge. For the railway bridge we decided to build a timber trestle foundation—drive-in the piles, cap the piles, put a trestle on top, and then use some big 24-inch I-beams that were available in the area to span the gap between these trestles.

It was apparent to all concerned that the road net would be inadequate to take the material and supplies

that had to flow forward as quickly as we anticipated the troops would move up the peninsula. But we realized there was in existence a very good railway net. It had been left behind as a legacy of the Japanese occupation of Korea. Early on it was decided to stress repair of the railway system. Indeed, that was the emphasis and the focus of my attention during almost all of my time with the 2d ECG, although I was involved in other aspects of MSR repair.

It should be noted that the 8th Army had arranged for skilled Koreans to work on the rail system. We understood that they were to repair tracks and obtain and operate the essential railroad equipment. We did not have much contact with them but all reports of their work were complimentary.

As we moved quickly to the north we accomplished considerable road and bridge repair as well as minor railway crossing repair. A few tunnels also had been damaged and were in need of repair. Each situation was a little different and required some ingenuity.

At the same time, the 62d engineers came in at Inchon during the later phases of the assault landing and moved inland to the Han River near Seoul. There they bypassed a large damaged bridge and began to build an entirely new crossing at low level, using stringers or sand-bag piers. They called it a "shoofly" bridge. I was not familiar with the name and was not sure of its derivation. Nevertheless, the terminology stuck. Shortly there-

Our soldiers worked for 12 hours a day, closing the rail line to traffic, and then for 12 hours they would use it. During this period the bridge was only completely out for three days, primarily because of extremely bad weather conditions.

after the 2d ECG arrived at the Han River and took over command of the 62d.

At this time it was obvious that heavy tides and storms would jeopardize the bridge unless the sand-bag piers were reinforced. This was done mainly by driving piles at appropriate locations. Our soldiers worked for 12 hours a day, closing the rail line to traffic, and then for 12 hours they would use it. During this period the bridge was only completely out for three days, primarily because of extremely bad weather conditions.

Our next major project was the building of a shoofly bridge over the Imjin River. This was the first such structure built by the 2d ECG. The basic design was to divert the rail line and take it down grade to a new site near the old location. Piles were then driven through templates, capped, and then trestles built up, and 24-inch I-beams were used as stringers. We moved out across the river, one trestle after another, and then tied back moving uphill to the original rail line.

By late November I had been promoted to major and our road construction had proceeded to P'yongyang where the 62d was in the process of building a bridge. While there I observed some Korean railroad workers nearby and they informed me that they were exploring the possibility of using the spur rail line from Chin-nampo north to P'yongyang. For obvious reasons this plan never materialized.



At that time my attention had turned to moving north across country, with a survey crew, to the vicinity of Sinanju, which was the next major crossing before the Yalu. The day after Thanksgiving we drove out but before long we became aware of large numbers of Koreans moving swiftly to the south. Immediately we turned back and headed towards the nearest roadway. We saw that large military forces were heading south and they informed us that a major Chinese attack had commenced and they had orders to withdraw. Before long we were back with the 62d in P'yongyang. They had already prepared their partially completed bridge for demolition. This completed, the bridge was turned over to Corps troops and we headed south. 🏰

Soldiers of the 62nd Engineer Battalion use sandbags to reinforce a temporary rail bridge over the Han River, 31 October 1950
Engineer School, 42-2-117

From his perspective as the I Corps Engineer, Colonel Itschner describes the Eighth Army drive north to the Yalu and the “bugout” coming back south. During the drive north Itschner recalls that his engineers were hampered by poorly maintained, left-over World War II equipment. “There’s no use sending equipment to a war,” the engineer officer said, “unless it’s in perfect shape.”

In July 1950, shortly after the war started, I got tapped to go over to Korea as engineer of I Corps, called “Eye” Corps. I was in Seattle as district engineer at the time, and it came as a great surprise to me. I went over there after about a week’s training at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where we went through combat courses—firing over our heads, crawling through barbed wire, and all that. I went to Tokyo for a briefing and then to Pusan for a night. I arrived in Taegu to find that the enemy was right on the hills surrounding the north end of the town, and things were in very, very bad shape. That was as far south as they got in that area.

Breakout North Toward the Yalu

Taegu is east of the center. We had come up by train from the port of Pusan on the coast. We stayed there about a week or so and found that the plan had been developed to counterattack and drive the enemy north. During the early part of that operation the Inch’on

landing would occur. Our first operation of any importance to engineers or anybody was to cross the Naktong River, which is quite a large river, but shallow. There’d be a lot of bars at that time of the year, but in the earlier summer, during the flood period, it could be quite deep; the floods are very high there. The rest of the year it’s rather low.

Our engineer part of the operation was to build a small bridge across a tributary to get to the main banks of the river and then build a bridge across. We had a bridge company plus a combat battalion to provide the labor force. The small bridge was no great project. Our main problem was getting through the extremely dense military traffic to get up to the bridge site. There was a ford, which our forces had been using, but the intense traffic over the ford wore down the sand bottom and the sandbags that had been put down, so it wasn’t very satisfactory.

This was a short bridge, approximately 80-feet long. The Naktong River was several hundred feet wide. We got there and started to build the bridge. The enemy had been driven off of the bank on the far side, but they weren’t very far away. In making the reconnaissance before they were driven back far, I came up to the site where the bridge was to go at the end of this road. There’d never been a bridge at this site before, but the natives could ford it during most of the year. They might have used a ferry, perhaps, during high water.

I got down on this big sandbar, as the river had receded, and saw an engineer captain down in a foxhole with sandbags built around it. He had been there for some time, apparently, and the foxhole had probably been used during the initial fighting. I was about to get after the captain for not being out doing his job, whatever it was, when we had a shell from a tank, an 88, screech by right next to the jeep. I jumped down in the foxhole with him, and my driver was there before I was! Then we waited a while; I told the driver that he'd better get the jeep and go back, which he was anxious to do. He was fired at once or twice. I got up after he had

cleared and ran as fast as I could and WHAM! A shell, an 88, went screaming by me. Fortunately, they were very poor shots. I think they fired three or four at me, and I was dropping down each time. The British brigade was up on the hill; it was their particular sector. They thanked me for helping them locate the tank!

Well, we built the bridge. We were supposed to



Engineers pull the last section of an M-4 ponton bridge in place over the Naktong River, 22 September 1950 Engineer School, 42-5-100

have it finished by 0700, having worked on it all night. I've never experienced so much trouble building a floating bridge. When we'd try to join the treads, some of the connections were bent. Probably, they had been bent when they left Japan. They were bent so badly that many of the tongues would not mesh together and we

had a terrible time. We'd have to reject the damaged section and then build another float of, say, two segments of 12-foot long each, 24-four feet of float, or maybe 36, and try to push them or pull them together. We finally ended up taking an awful risk and having

roughly 100 feet of bridge connected like a raft along the bank but separate from the bridge itself. We tried to get that on out into the river and connect it up, to save time, because otherwise you were limited to working in one place at the end of the bridge. In our method we could work at several places and combine the rafts. After terrific effort and delaying the

I was about to get after the captain for not being out doing his job, whatever it was, when we had a shell from a tank, an 88, screech by right next to the jeep. I jumped down in the foxhole with him, and my driver was there before I was!

entire advance of the division by two hours, we did finally get the bridge assembled.

There was no enemy fire but the commanding general was stamping his feet. He was really angry at the engineers for delaying this operation. I don't blame him. The trouble was, at the time we weren't prepared. The equipment was not in good shape. We tried to rectify it. It got so we were pretty good at putting bridges together much, much faster than we did that time. Our favorite trick on these shallow rivers as we went forward was to build a little island out of sandbags every here and there where the river got shallower. Native sandbags made of rice straw, maybe two or three times the size of American sandbags, were very plentiful. We'd just pile those in until we had a little island over the shallow parts, and in that way we didn't use so much bridging because the bridging was awfully short. It was always treadway bridging that we built. The division combat battalions did have a little Bailey bridging. We would have preferred to have Bailey bridging but all we had was the treadway.

It was material that I'm sure hadn't been touched since world War II, but how it got all that battered up I don't know. I'm sure it was not done when the bridge was in place. It must have been done in depots, or dropped, or something. But it was in very bad shape and very difficult to put together. It's not an easy bridge to put together anyway in that respect. It has two treads with a space between them. A jeep will not track on the

two treads, it's too narrow a gauge, and so we filled in the intermediate space with lumber.

There isn't much native wood in Korea. We had to import almost all of it. Korea was logged off centuries ago. Timber would grow there well but they had consumed it. It's a barren country in that respect and that lack of wood caused trouble.

After we got that bridge across, our troops went on. The objective was to cut off the North Koreans as much as possible because they were in full retreat. We went on up to the next largest river, the Yesong, which was beyond Panmunjom—that little village where they later had the peace talks. Our troops wanted to cross in a great hurry. They wanted to get tanks across, go north along the river on the other side and cut off the enemy from their remaining tank elements to prevent their getting across farther to the north. Although the river was too wide for a bridge, at this point near the Yellow Sea, with the amount of bridging we had, we did build some ferries.

Our work was frequently in advance of the columns as they moved north. They always had patrols and some troops out in front, not very many, but some. In this case, we didn't have any vehicles out there—just foot soldiers had gotten across. We built two ferries at that point and we unloaded two motor launches, each of which had two engines in it. It was World War II equipment and the engines were very much worn. One of the

engines in one of the boats we knew wouldn't work at all. Neither engine in the other boat would work, either. So, we had one engine out of four that would work.

We launched this boat that we thought had one good engine and it started to ferry across with a tank on it. It got about a quarter of the way across and the engine conked out. This was in the middle of the afternoon. We wanted so much to get this column across. With the tidal current going the way it was the boat drifted out to the Yellow Sea and was gone for the night. The next morning I got up in an airplane and flew over, hoping to see them someplace along the line. Sure enough, there they were on the river going back up at a fair rate of speed. I thought they had gotten the engine going. As it turned out, they never got the engine going but the tide was carrying them back.

Here they were going upstream. I then got on the ground and got back to the site. They said, "Oh, they went by here a little while ago but couldn't make a landing." Well, they got up the river quite a distance and they got into a fight with the North Koreans, taking shelter in back of the tank. As usual, nobody was hit, I guess on either side, but certainly not on our side. Back on down they came and made a landing at the point from which they had departed 20 hours before.

It was important to have operable motors in those boats! If they had worked, tanks might have been able to cut off some of these enemy columns. We could have

really devastated those columns if we had gotten our tanks on that side of the river. We couldn't because we didn't have the proper equipment. I think the generals of the divisions realized that at that time; at first, they thought it was maybe inexperience of the engineers. They began to realize it was poor equipment.

Apparently, those boats had been used all that time in Japan for duck hunting, fishing, and that sort of thing. They were just worn out. There's no use sending equipment to a war unless it's in perfect shape. Well, things began to improve and the people back in Tokyo began to realize our problems.



Soldiers of the 84th Engineer Battalion push a segment of a ponton bridge in place using a powerboat
Engineer School, 42-5-114

An engineer engaged in demolition faced twin problems: destroying too soon and destroying too late. How did you determine the right moment for demolition?

Col. Paschal N. Strong was the Eighth Army Engineer, an extremely competent officer. In addition to being a splendid engineer, he was quite a writer. Remember the series they used to have, “Jack Armstrong, the All-America Boy”? He was the author of that. He finally sold it, but he was the author of it for a number of years. He was very, very versatile, as well as a competent person. He got things changed and we got equipment that would do the job. Later we had too little equipment, much too little, but it was good, operable equipment.

We went on north again. As we’d cross a big river, we’d build our little islands and use what bridging we could. In some cases, we’d go on back and pull up a bridge and let people ford. We’d pull it up so we’d have the bridge for the forward area. In the attack on P’yongyang, they called on our troops to build a bridge real fast across the Taedong, upstream where it was quite a bit narrower, near the airfield, to enable a jeep column to get in and try to rescue American prisoners being held in a tunnel. They got up there, but it was too late to save most of them. They were machine gunned in the tunnel. Some of them escaped. I actually talked to one man who had just gotten out of there and was fortunate enough not to be hit by bullets in that tunnel.

We then kept on going. It was almost entirely bridge work all the way up—floating bridges. We did a little bit of airfield work, small airstrips, so planes could land. We did some repair work on the field at

Seoul. Later, on the way back up again next spring we did more work to repair bomb damage. The North Koreans didn’t have much in the way of bombers, just regular planes. We were bombed at the bridge site by North Koreans. What they were doing was dropping mortar shells out of a little plane. The bombs landed several hundred yards away; they caused us no trouble. They knew where the bridge was but they were very inaccurate. I never saw a Russian fighter there. In fact, I can’t really say that I ever saw a single North Korean airplane, but I did in this case hear the plane.

“Bugout” South?

One night the rear guard, which was British at that time, got across the bridge and then we were to take up that bridge. We had to salvage the bridge after the last troops got past. There wasn’t any particular danger because the enemy was probably 40 miles beyond. They couldn’t keep up with us because they moved on foot primarily and we used vehicles.

I was standing at this bridge one night and the British rear guard commander, Brigadier Brody, a splendid fellow whom I got to know well, came across the bridge in his Land Rover. I didn’t know who it was, and I motioned to him to use the tread on one side because the wooden fill-in between the two treads had a gap just large enough to bind a jeep tire if the driver rode on the other tread. His driver paid no attention. Sure

enough, he drove into this slot and came to a terrifically sudden stop. He was stuck on the bridge right at a time when the rear guard needed to get across in a hurry. My comment to him was, and I shouted it out not knowing who he was, "If people would only do what they're told!" He said, "That's right!"

This happened during the crossing of the Taedong River at P'yongyang, the North Korean capital, when we were evacuating P'yongyang. He apologized. We had a wrecker there and we lifted the Land Rover up. It wasn't too bad. After that he became a great friend of mine.

An engineer engaged in demolition faced twin problems: destroying too soon and destroying too late. How did you determine the right moment for demolition? It was very difficult and you couldn't always guess it. You had to be awfully careful to preserve every bit of bridging. On the way back on the Imjin River, which is pretty close to the present line of demarcation between North and South Korea in some areas, we saved the bridge entirely at night. Because of a very winding steep hill on the friendly side of the river, we removed the bridge and took many of the parts back on the enemy side of the river. After our last troops had gone, we went about 6, 7, or 8 miles on the enemy side, parallel to the river, and then back across a railroad bridge we had decked over a semi-permanent bridge. We reconnoitered the route very thoroughly beforehand to make sure we knew where we were going. We weren't



A stream of refugees leave their homes after receiving evacuation orders from the South Korean Army

Truman Library, 67-7417

the least bit concerned. Today I would be, but at that time we knew very well the enemy must have been 40 miles back and there was no fear of getting attacked.

We did this all at night and we came back across this railroad bridge, which we then blew early in the morning. We had quite an interesting incident there. There was what they called the Korean Youth Movement, an organization of young Koreans who were friendly to our side. A Korean officer came up to me and said there were about 5,000 of them (the number included their families) with carts and every possession they could carry, and they wanted to cross the river.

Colonel Emerson C. Itschner I Corps Engineer



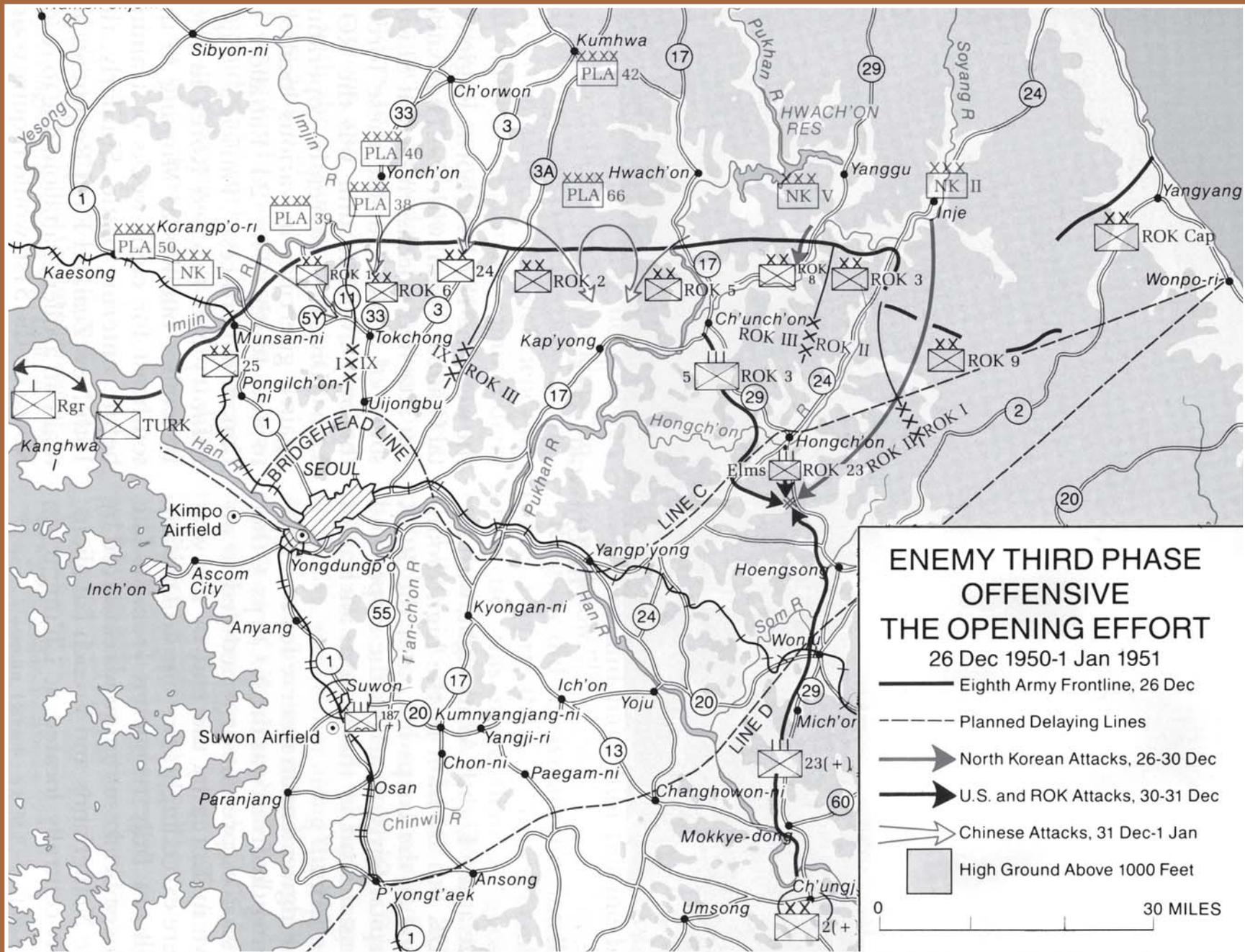
After the last UN forces withdrew from Seoul, Lt. Gen Matthew Ridgway (front row, left) and Col. Emerson Itschner (front row, center) gave the order to dismantle the bridge and destroy those sections that could not be quickly removed, 4 January 1951 Engineer School, 42-6-56

Should they be allowed to cross? I didn't know anything about it. I asked the Korean commander, who said, "Well, they're friendly to us." I said, "Well, okay. We'll let them across and caution them to keep on the road so they don't get shot." This was at night. So cross they did, and I was down there to make sure they got across. One or two carts, usually pushed by women with all their household possessions, got caught between the railroad rail and the wood decking. I personally lifted out one

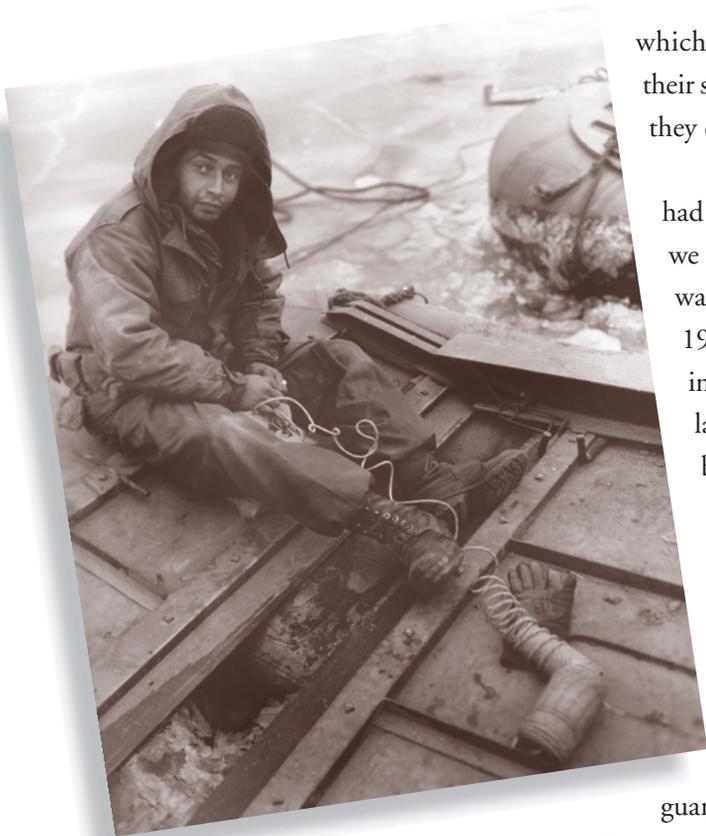
wheel of a cart and pushed the thing on and this Korean woman smiled and said, "Thank you," in perfect English. Those were the only words she knew in English, I guess, and it was very gratifying. Anyway, we cautioned them to stay on the road. After they came across and we got the last troops across we blew the bridge. It was a semi-permanent bridge, one we could not have salvaged.

In the demolition of P'yongyang we had about 20 different military targets. No problem. We just had our details go to these various places and they did the demolition with bridge explosives. I wasn't too happy that we were assigned that because it was just buildings, but anyway we did. The only problem we had at P'yongyang was that on one of the details a sergeant and some men couldn't get their truck started and had to walk back. They destroyed the truck and we didn't see them for a day or two. When they finally showed up that relieved a lot of anxiety. They walked all the way back, but they didn't have any trouble, and none from sniping by local people.

When I stood in one of the quartermaster depots there I saw an awful lot of foodstuffs just a few hours before we were leaving. We didn't destroy that. We couldn't. We didn't have the means. Lots of Korean women were standing around hoping we'd leave and I was tempted to just tell them, "Come on in." It would be better to let them have it anyway than the North Korean or Chinese armies. We could have shown them



Colonel Emerson C. Itschner I Corps Engineer



Pfc. Frank Bonvilla of the 14th Engineers prepares to set demolition charges on the remaining ponton bridge crossing the Han River at Seoul, 4 January 1951
RG 111, SC-355558

which ones were the best ones from their standpoint, but we didn't. I'm sure they came in right after I left.

One of the greatest problems we had in demolitions was at Seoul. As we left Seoul for the second time it was shortly after New Year's Day, 1951. It was cold, well below freezing. The river was frozen over to a large extent. To keep the floating bridge in service we had to break the ice to keep it floating properly. There also was a railroad bridge that was semi permanent, which had been planked over so you could use it for road traffic too. We waited until we knew we had to leave. Just a few rear-guard Koreans were on the Seoul side of the river. We had orders to remove the bridge and then to blow the other bridge. We just had to use our judgment about when because unless you were right there you couldn't tell. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway came up and saw what we were doing. He was newly in command of the army. We started to pull out the bridge, which is pretty slow work. We got some of it out when the division commander, Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, became extremely worried, and with good reason. The

British had lost a complete battalion, the Gloucester Battalion, the night before. Gen. Dean knew very well that things would be rough with the coming of another night. So he gave me a direct order to blow the bridge. I hated to do it and it took us quite a bit of time to get the explosives placed because we weren't prepared to do that. In the meantime we took out some more of it, but we did blow perhaps a third of it. It was a hard thing to do. This was an M-4 bridge, not a treadway—a different type of bridge, a very useful type, quite expensive—much better than the treadway, with aluminum balks constituting the solid deck.

Although we dismantled much of it, I would have preferred to have salvaged all of it. As it was, we got more than half of it; then we had to leave so we blew it up. Prior to that we blew up the railroad bridge. The British were assigned that mission. They insisted on a written order, which I was glad enough to give them. They blew that bridge up. I went over to see; it was nearby. It was a perfect job of demolition. When we came back there a few months later, lo and behold the North Koreans had salvaged all the decking they could—the aluminum balks. They were all piled up nicely, all ready for us. All we lost, really, was the part we actually destroyed by explosives. Most of the boats were beyond repair, but a few of them weren't.

Officers weren't talking about *Operation Bugout* in those days, but that was what everybody called it

over there. The engineers were magnificent, really magnificent. They weren't afraid to be right up at the front. They did their work extremely well. They worked infinitely long hours, without sleep, getting two meals a day part of that time, because that was all they could supply. We got plenty to eat, but at two meals a day instead of the usual three. Things were rough.

For a time, we thought we were going to have to go back to the Pusan perimeter and maybe get out of Korea entirely. We reconnoitered roads to the rear and found two roads I Corps could use, which come somewhat from the west into Pusan. We had to bridge several river crossings by improvising. We also had to leap-frog our bridging by taking it up as we left each river and moving it forward. If we had lost our motor equipment that would have been disastrous, so we had to save our bridging.

Actually, the "bugout" wasn't chaotic. As far as I Corps was concerned it was leisurely. We had plenty of time. On the east coast, and in the center with the Koreans, it was chaotic. The reason we pulled out from back of the Ch'ongch'on was because the Koreans caved in to our east. We knew very well that there was a big gap, and the enemy was down 30 or even 40 miles to our rear in that sector, so we had to pull out. I'm not at all sure we shouldn't have stayed someplace where we had access to the sea, like P'yongyang. There was a port serving the P'yongyang area where we might have stayed.



Built by the 62nd Engineers just three months before, this railroad bridge over the Han River is shown before and after it was destroyed by engineers during the evacuation of Seoul, 4 January 1951
RG 111, SC-355563
and SC355565



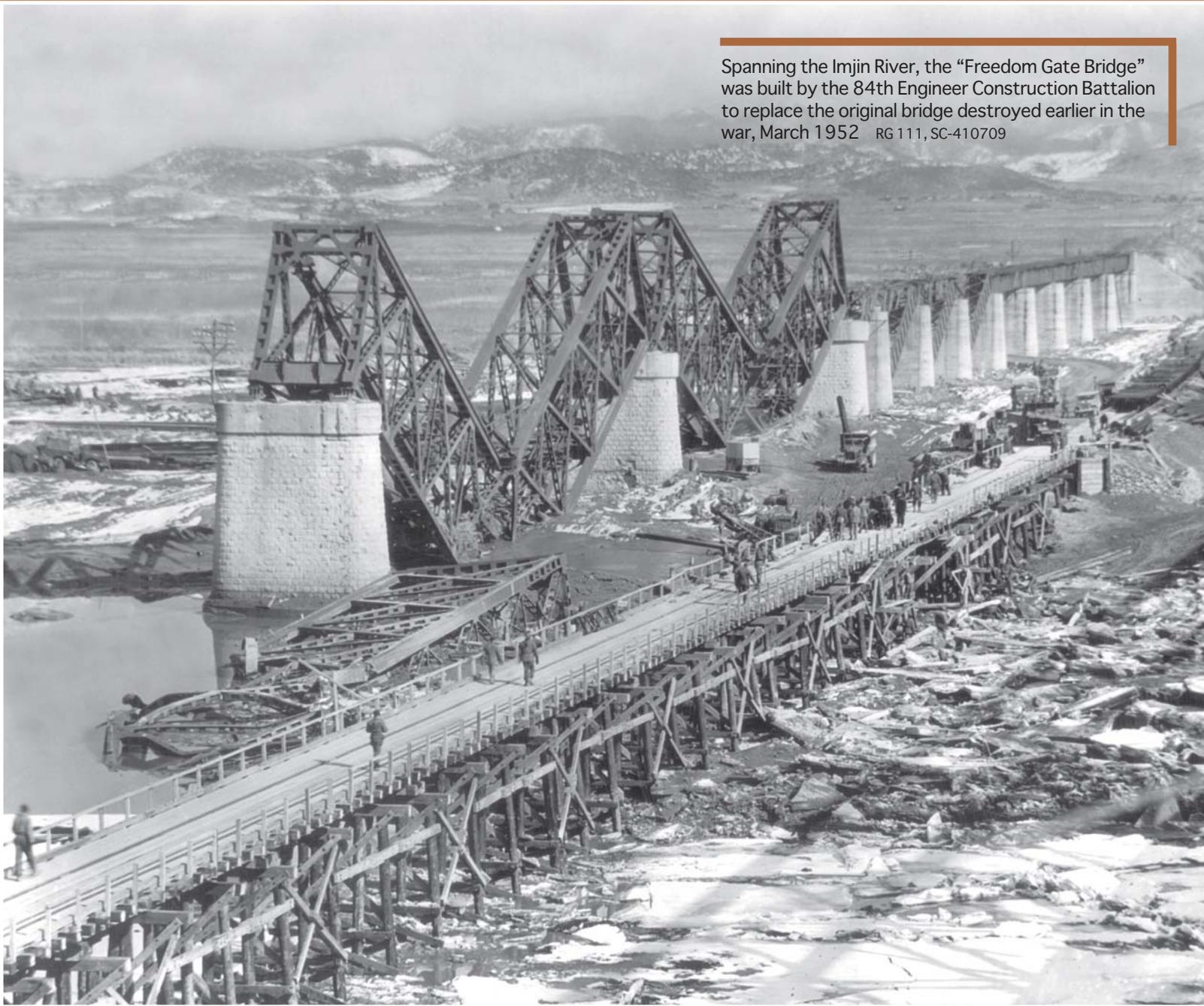
Colonel Emerson C. Itschner | I Corps Engineer

The engineers were magnificent, really magnificent. They weren't afraid to be right up at the front. They did their work extremely well. They worked infinitely long hours, without sleep, getting two meals a day part of that time, because that was all they could supply.... Things were rough.

Later, there were just hordes and hordes of Chinese. Our corps knew they were there long before the publicity about it. We didn't know how many, but we knew there was an awful lot of them.

In our corps we captured roughly 25 Chinese, not North Koreans, and every one of them said he was a cook. That was what they were told to say, but we didn't think they had that many cooks and that our chances were that good of catching *all cooks!* Our units jokingly said they were going to try them out, but nobody really wanted to eat their food anyway. So they didn't. These Chinese were awfully young looking people, just young boys. Good fighters, they always attacked at night. They'd generally sound the bugle when they attacked. There was one floating bridge in the IX Corps area, just to the east of Seoul, where they experienced that. They heard this bugle at night. There never was an attack, but everybody knew what the bugle call meant. Our engineer unit did not salvage that bridge as a result. 🏰

Spanning the Imjin River, the “Freedom Gate Bridge” was built by the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion to replace the original bridge destroyed earlier in the war, March 1952 RG 111, SC-410709



First Lieutenant Medding describes the rapid advance of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion north from the Pusan Perimeter, after Inch'on. He recalls the Chinese intervention and the UN fall back to below Seoul, after destroying everything of use, including the torching of Kim Il Sung's residence.

Advance and Retreat of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion

The Inch'on landing took place on 15 September, and I Corps, to which we were assigned, went on the offensive on 16 September. Breaking out of the Naktong perimeter, the 14th Engineers undertook a number of engineer missions. One of these, about 19-20 September, was the construction of a sandbag causeway and a 60-foot fixed treadway trestle bridge. The treadway trestle bridge replaced a sandbag causeway with culverts on a crossing of the Kumho River. In addition, the battalion built a floating treadway bridge across the Naktong River in support of the 24th Division. During much of this period, Company A provided engineer direct support to the 1st ROK Division.

Eighth Army and I Corps advanced slowly until about 20 September when an M4 ferry was built on the Naktong. After that date, the Eighth Army advance to the Han River and Seoul was fairly rapid. During this period, the 14th prima-

rily engaged in road maintenance activities. I don't remember any specific bridge construction during this period, but there may have been something. A number of small bridges had been demolished. These were bypassed whenever possible. We may have built a Bailey or a fixed treadway, but there was not much standard bridging equipment available at that time.

During the first few days of October, the 14th moved to Choch'iwon, Suwon, and then Seoul. About 6 October the attack toward the 38th Parallel got underway. When I Corps units reached the Imjin River they were supported in the crossing by the 14th Engineers with ferries, and later with an M4/M4 A2 floating bridge, completed on 11 October. The advance was very rapid. Many existing highway bridges had been destroyed or badly damaged by explosives, but, for the most part, the 14th performed either minor repairs or established bypasses to permit the rapid advance to continue. At least two Bailey bridges were built. About 12 October, Company A was again attached to the 1st ROK Division. This support was provided almost continuously for many months because the 1st ROK Division had no organic engineer troops.

These types of activities continued until Eighth Army reached P'yongyang and I Corps reached the Ch'ongch'on River in the vicinity of Sinanju. During much of this time, the 14th was supported by the 72d Engineer Company, 5th RCT. Part of the time, the 14th

First Lt. Walter Medding
Medding Collection



was attached to the 19th Engineer Group, commanded by Col. Frank Forney. Battalion units reached P'yongyang by about 20 October. Company A participated in the 1st ROK Division assault crossing of the Taedong River. Companies B and C repaired several bridges in the area.

One of the most interesting things noted during the advance to P'yongyang and beyond was that classification of existing bridges, mostly concrete T-beam or slab bridges, resulted in under classification. We were still using WWII bridge classification cards. On several occasions a bridge was classified as only class 35, but while building a bypass, class 50 tanks or other heavy vehicles would cross the bridge. Usually, during the advance, destroyed bridges were replaced by Bailey or fixed-treadway bridges. There may have been one or two fixed-timber trestle bridges built but I can't remember any.

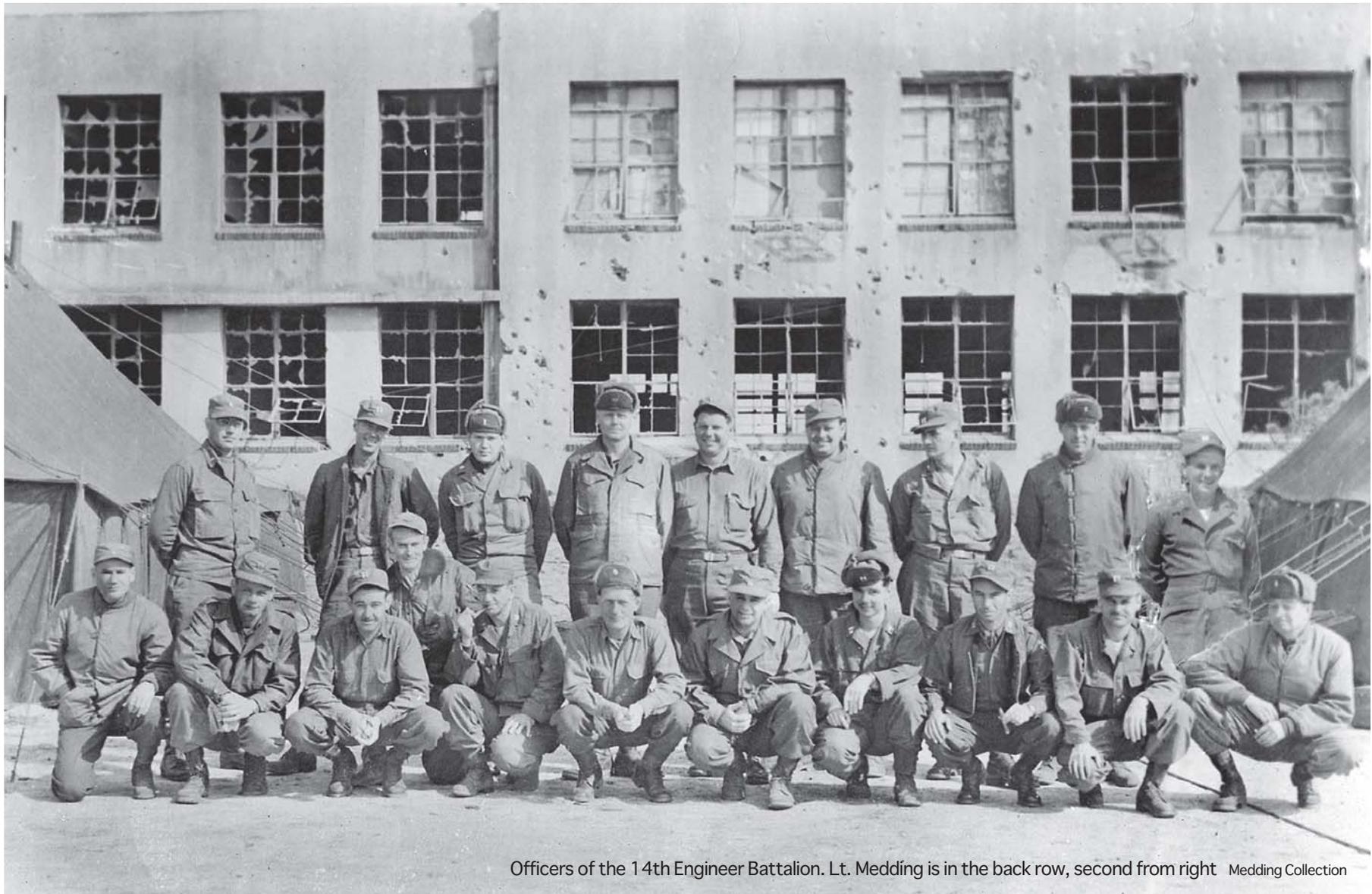
The 14th went through P'yongyang to the Anju-Sinanju area during the advance. Road maintenance was a very big effort at all times. In fact, there were frequent occasions when the battalion had more than 100 miles of road maintenance responsibility. In early November the battalion had several periods when defensive missions were assigned. At one time, Companies B and C both were attached to the 5th RCT for operations.

When the Chinese entered the war, Company A was still with the 1st ROK Division. On the day of the Chinese attack, I was in Anju looking at a sawmill to see if we could use it to cut bridge timber. (We often were in

need of lumber for bridges. We had collected dunnage from LSTs in Pohang, mostly 1 by 10- or 1 by 12-inch planks. One thing we used this lumber for was laminated decking). A local resident told me that he had seen a Chinese soldier in Anju the previous day. When I returned to battalion headquarters for lunch the battalion had been alerted and I was sent to P'yongyang to reconnoiter potential floating bridge sites. I found several suitable locations. Early the next morning I started back toward Sinanju but met the 14th headquarters coming south.

Over the next few days, the 14th prepared for the withdrawal from P'yongyang. Our efforts were mainly preparation of demolition targets. Virtually everything of any use to the North Koreans and Chinese that we couldn't take south would be destroyed. This included buildings, damaged weapons, the airfield, power stations, vehicles badly in need of repair, and bridges. We destroyed more than 30 targets in P'yongyang. As they were executed I sat at a road intersection south of the river while all platoon commanders reported the completion of their targets to me. One target was Kim Il Sung's residence, which was destroyed by putting a 55-gallon drum of napalm in the basement and igniting it! We then continued the withdrawal to and through Seoul, and south to Anyang-Ni and then to Ch'ongju. We destroyed all highway bridges and dismantled floating bridges along the Seoul-Suwon MSR. 🏰

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RG 111, SC-355229



As UN forces withdrew from Pyongyang, thousands of North Koreans began to flee south. Crossing the Taedong River was difficult—some refugees climbed over a partially destroyed bridge, while others, often carrying small children or aging relatives, waded across the icy river

RG 111, SC-355230



RG 111, SC-355225

Engineer operations in Korea, whether carving out new roads, offloading equipment at seaports, or building bridges, required specialized equipment. Much of that material was collected from bases throughout the Pacific and rushed to engineer depots in Japan. There the incoming material was inspected, repaired, and sent to units in Korea.

I joined the Far East Command and became commanding officer of the engineer depot at Yokohama in September 1950. The Yokohama Engineer Depot was organized right after the occupation of Japan. The Korean War increased its activities and that was the reason I was ordered there. I commanded the whole depot and stayed until July 1953.

A large proportion of the supply was made from items that were leftover from World War II, many of which were rehabilitated. This rehabilitation had been going on since 1946, because there was some feeling that there might be a confrontation with Russia. The Army was stockpiling equipment in preparation for any contingency.

When I arrived in September 1950 the depot was still expanding. It had expanded considerably. The main problem was personnel. I solved that by contacting the headquarters people who were assigning personnel, and by taking the assignment of officers of any branch. I received many infantry, field artillery, and other service

officers, as well as engineers. Now that requires training, but we had enough officers and civilians who could train these new officers.

The main reason these officers were sent over was they were going into combat units in Korea. They were happy to stay in Japan—it was a fairly safe place—rather than be assigned to a combat unit in Korea. I don't think they were particularly avoiding it, but they were just as happy to be assigned someplace else. By 1950, Japan was a much more pleasant assignment than Korea.

Initially, I wasn't very enthusiastic about being re-assigned over there. An officer who knew me was the engineer of the Japan Logistics Command and he asked for me specifically. He knew I had supply experience. Although I wasn't excited with the assignment at first, I became enthused with the work and the challenges it gave me, and I enjoyed it very much.

As far as the Japanese were concerned, they hadn't changed any. They were still friendly, industrious, hard-working people. As I have said before, it was hard to understand how they could have been what they were during World War II.

There were shipping problems, and I was able to solve some of them. For instance, the Bailey bridge needed to be made up of hundreds of items. By experimentation, we devised a box whereby we could put a complete bridge in two boxes, each weighing about 10 tons apiece. Each box contained a definite unit of

Practically no new equipment was sent from the United States. It was all equipment that was leftover from World War II that was sent up from New Guinea, Australia, the Philippines, and various islands.

bridge, so that if you had a whole box, you could at least build that much bridge. Before, if you lost a few boxes, you lost a whole bridge. It worked fine. The only thing the unit had to do was to be sure to have a crane for lifting the box off and onto a truck or tractor until it got to the point of use and they could dismantle the box. Our engineer units had a crane and they liked this arrangement very much.

Practically no new equipment was sent from the United States. It was all equipment that was left over from World War II that was sent up from New Guinea, Australia, the Philippines, and various islands. We processed the equipment so that it wouldn't rust or become damaged while it was sitting in the depot in Korea or in Japan, waiting to be used. We actually improved on the processing that had been done in World War II. Besides rebuilding equipment, our work at the depot involved redoing the processing and actually removing rust and corrosion. Some of the items had never been used, for example, tractors and hand tools—saws, chisels, and screws. They just needed a rust removal and, sometimes, repainting. Of course as the rust progressed it extended the damage to functioning equipment and limited the repairs that could be made. If the engine crankshaft was rusted, and the piston was rusted, you would have to replace it.

Demand for the bridging equipment in Korea was greater than in the island hopping of World War II.

There weren't many streams to be bridged in going up the chain of Pacific islands. Most of the operations were merely getting ashore in a boat, until we got to the island of Luzon, in the Philippines, where they required some bridging.

During the war we actually increased the stock of bridge parts. All of the remains of the bridging that were left down in New Guinea and Australia were shipped up to Japan and just dumped. They were in many, many boxes. We found in inventorying it that some of it was missing and we never did know what happened to it. We had to get bolts and certain parts made in Japan. We made these parts on our own equipment or we contracted it out.

Essentially, my supply work in Korea was rehabilitation and collection, rather than bringing in new stuff. The one exception was lumber. Very little lumber was shipped from the United States. When we got lumber, for instance, we purchased it in the Philippines and it was shipped by the boatload to Japan and Korea.

Treads for a Bailey bridge are loaded on a barge at the Yokohama Engineer Depot, 28 January 1951
RG 111, SC-356681



Following the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion's advance northward, in late November the intervention of Chinese troops forced the UN troops to retreat south. The withdrawal was chaotic, and after it became clear that the Chinese had blocked their escape route and would soon overrun the units trapped on the road, Captain Farnum led 150 men on an 18-hour trek, much of it through enemy territory, to safety.

Forward to the Town of Chonju

After breaking out of the Pusan Perimeter, the battalion had moved forward to a small town called Chonju. At that time I had turned over the responsibilities of the S-1 and S-2 and was the battalion S-3, but I know I went forward with the new S-1, who was Bob Nehrling, to find billets farther north.

We found a small agricultural college on the outskirts of Chonju and selected that for our battalion CP. The weather was good. It was cold at night, but we had beautiful, sunshiny days. During this

period Lt. Caldwell, at headquarters, was wounded and evacuated. Lts. Nehrling and Beahler were promoted to captain. About the same time, the 1st of October, our division rear moved from Miryang over to the west-coast port of Kunsan.

Early in October things were very quiet as far as the engineer battalion was concerned. We were working on the roads. Maj. Fry was the battalion commander. Col. McEachern was back at division rear waiting to go before a reclassification board.

The roads in this area, provided the weather was good, were not a particular problem. We were working at keeping drainage open and putting additional rock and gravel onto the road surface. Our heavy vehicles put a great deal more strain on these all-weather roads than the light traffic for which the roads were designed. By and large we were widening the roads to ensure easy passage of two-way traffic where feasible. Drivers had to be very careful of oncoming vehicles because the roads generally were substandard and their widths were not adequate to take normal traffic of military size.

The assistant division commander who had relieved our battalion commander, Col. McEachern, was Brig. Gen. Joseph S. Bradley. He is the one who had to place the charges against Col. McEachern for lack of leadership ability.

Capt. Robbins, assigned to the battalion, had not lived up to our expectations of him during the

Using hand tools, soldiers of the 65th Engineer Battalion work to fill holes in the road near Hagammyond, Korea Engineer School, Korea 86



Naktong perimeter experience. Maj. Fry put him up for reclassification action, or elimination from service, due to lack of ability.

Around 7 October, while we were still located at Chonju, I went forward through Seoul to check the bridges across the Han River, to see what was needed for the IX Corps to enter that area. While on that recon I made contact with the engineer section of both X Corps and I Corps. Fortunately, between the two engineer sections and the Eighth Army engineers, we were able to get them to put in additional bridges for the IX Corps. Sufficient Eighth Army engineers were there to maintain the bridges so we didn't have to pull our own bridging section from the Naktong and move it forward at that time.

About the same period of time, early October, I was serving as both the S-3 and the S-1, but Capt. Nehrling, who was the H&S Company commander, was moved into the S-1 slot. Joe Cox, who was the motor transportation officer, moved into the H&S Company commander slot. They were both promoted to captain. At this time I was the S-3, Nehrling was the S-1, and Joe Cox had become the H&S Company commander. Lt. Leamon became the communications officer, and Lt. Appenfelder became our liaison officer.

We were now in the Seoul area. Seoul was a virtual mess—refugees by the thousands. It was difficult to find space to get the entire battalion together but we did find



an area. It was the first time the entire battalion was together with all of our elements since mid-July when we had arrived in Korea. We actually were billeted about five miles south of Seoul in what had been the 1st Replacement Depot at Yongdungp'o. The division was in I Corps reserve.

We had sent one of our line companies farther north to work on some roads. It was very quiet, as far as operations were concerned, but the engineers had plenty of roadwork to do. Mid-October it started to rain both day and night. With the rain the roadwork

Soldiers of the 77th Infantry Division use a tank to pull American and Korean Army vehicles from the mud; spring rains quickly turned narrow dirt roads into quagmires
RG 111, SC-362455

...engineers, although well qualified to exhibit their bravery and their ingenuity as intelligent engineers, when used in the line as infantry, did not have the same capability the infantry units had. We didn't have mortars. We didn't have the proper communications facilities to call in mortar fire or artillery support.

became very intense and movement of our heavy loads became a problem and a challenge.

On 22 October, Maj. Carl Price returned to the battalion from Japan. Since the only field grade spot for him was the S-3, I became the assistant S-3 and Carl returned to his old job; however, the relationship between Maj. Price and Maj. Fry was such that Maj. Fry would not accept him as the operations officer. On two or three different attempts, Price was assigned to civil affairs to remain in one of the villages as a civil affairs officer. He would be gone for maybe a week or 10 days, and then be back to the battalion.

Along about this time Col. McEachern appeared before the reclassification board and no action was taken. He was then assigned from our division to 3d Logistics (log) Command in Pusan.

Capt. Robbins, who had been before a reclassification board, also was transferred to the log command in his grade as captain.

Moving North, October-November 1950

On 31 October 1950 Capt. Nehrling and I went north to locate a new area near Sariwon. The area had been heavily destroyed so we looked at several facilities in the P'yongyang area. Due to the damage and the number of other U.S. forces settling into the P'yongyang area, we couldn't find an area to take all of our heavy equipment and provide an adequate facility for us.

We finally relocated in a town south of P'yongyang called Choe Yong. We found a nice private girls high school, which was not in use, and used that as the battalion billet.

We only got to spend about three days in our nice billets in Choe Yong in early November and then moved on up to P'yongyang. We stayed there only one night, and then moved on to Sunch'on, which is about 40 miles north of P'yongyang. A couple of our line companies were some 30 miles farther north.

The weather was still quite good during the day, getting very cold at night. We found a silk farm in the Sunch'on area for a battalion CP, with ample space to park all of our heavy equipment, and set up.

At this time the Eighth Army engineer had asked me to write a paper on the use of engineers as infantry. Essentially, what I wanted to put forth in that paper was the fact that the engineers, although well qualified to exhibit their bravery and their ingenuity as intelligent engineers, when used in the line as infantry, did not have the same capability the infantry units had. We didn't have mortars. We didn't have the proper communications facilities to call in mortar fire or artillery support. Our radios were fixed, mounted in our vehicles, while the infantry carried their communications with them. They had all this support that we could not call upon when we were employed as infantry.

In the first week of November most of the battal-

ion was together in Sunch'on and ready to head north. The way the corps wanted to lay out sectors heading straight north, we didn't particularly have an MSR. There weren't enough existing roads to serve each division so that they would have an MSR. I was given the job to locate feasible routes within our division sector to move the division forward.

I did most of this reconnaissance by L-5 aircraft. IX Corps assigned me an aircraft on a daily basis. After a few days I was given my choice of pilots who would fly down through the valleys and give me a look at small streams that we would have to ford, or cross. The first couple of weeks of November I spent a great deal of my time on aerial reconnaissance for the advance of our division and the different regimental sectors.

Since I was not occupying a proper TO&E position, Maj. Fry offered me the command of Companies A or D, or H&S Company. I would have taken Company B if it had been available, but a good friend, Capt. Frank White, who was an excellent company commander, commanded it. My good friend Joe Cox was doing very well with H&S. Although Company A was commanded by Lt. Smith, I really was somewhat hesitant to command the company that normally was in support of the 9th Infantry. Honestly, my personal preferences of the regiments we had at that time was the 23d, which I had been with for about a year and a half, then the 38th, where I had many friends. I just didn't have the social

contact and desire to be actively engaged with the 9th.

Capt. Kahaniak, a very fine officer, commanded Company D at that time. I believe Capt. Kahaniak is still alive, and, if so, he would be one of only three of our officers who are still alive who were prisoners of the Chinese for some 33 months.

On 11 November the weather was good and we were directed to move up to Kunu-ri. The food up until that time had been very good, but as our supply lines extended in November we reverted to B rations.

Men of the
9th Regimental
Combat Team and
2d Engineer Battalion
are served breakfast
RG 111, SC-362314



On 15 November the battalion was located at Kunu-ri in a cotton patch. The weather was cold, below zero at night. We were in tents. The battalion had received no winter clothing as of that date. We were rather jealous when we would see some members of the 3d Log Command, or others who had their winter uniforms, but none of the front line troops in the 2d Division had received anything up to that time. There was no enemy in sight. We were able to keep quite comfortable in our CP tents.

The S-3 section, if not really busy because of operations, turned out the reports and all the directions for the following day, as well as the write-ups of what happened on each particular day. The S-3 section was always busy, usually until at least midnight every night, putting out the orders for the following day, getting all the reports in, and making a historical record of what we had done.

The battalion was basically working on roads at the time. Usually, the bridges, where they existed, were concrete affairs and very narrow. None of the bridges would really accommodate passing trucks for MSR purposes. In some cases we bypassed the bridges and just put a detour around them. Other times, we widened the bridge with timber trestle so that we could have two-way traffic on the MSR.

On 19 November the entire battalion was together except for Company C, which was over about

40 miles east of Kunu-ri. I was continuing to make aerial reconnaissance on a daily basis for our division, for different routes to continue north.

The Chinese Attack the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

I moved back to the S-2 position and had Lt. Jim Welcher as my assistant. I used him as a reconnaissance officer and he was constantly on the road or in an aircraft looking at the terrain for movement. He made some of the earliest reports on sightings of large numbers of enemy troops coming into our area.

We reported these to division. On at least a couple of occasions I recall taking Jim Welcher with me and going to division to discuss it with the division G-2 and G-3. I know that I was present when they had some radio discussion with higher headquarters, both corps and army, and the reports back were that the enemy forces could not be as numerous or as heavy as we were reporting.

Some of these reports came back from Japan, which I'm sure were based upon aerial sightings along the border and such things. All the way through to the end of November our reports of enemy activity were countered by our division staff who were receiving information from higher headquarters that the forces could not be large enough to bother the division.

At this time Turkish troops were assigned to the

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division. The first time I met up with some of them there was a heavy traffic snarl up on one of the roads. I went up to see if I could assist. The people who were having all the problems didn't speak English. We found them to be particularly fine troops and great to have around, but it was my first realization that there was a real language problem in having Turkish, French, and Netherlands [later on] troops with our division.

About 27 November the battalion was committed as infantry in the vicinity of Kunu-ri. We were given certain areas to hold. Our battalion CP area was hit at night. A couple of our companies were overrun at night up on a hill and we lost the hill.

The following day we had no communication with the companies and so I told Col. Zacherle that I intended to go up to where the companies had been to find out why we were out of contact with them. Col. Zacherle had taken over the battalion sometime after the middle of November. Col. Zacherle had come out on the DA promotion list, moved from junior major to a lieutenant colonel on the Regular Army DA promotion list, and took over as the battalion commander. It seems as if he was battalion commander for a lot longer than that, because so much happened in those few days.

Probably the stupidest thing in my 13 months in Korea was to charge up this hill where our companies had been to find out what had happened. Charlie Fry, who had reverted from commanding down to being the



XO, said he was going with me. Jim Welcher said, "I'm coming along too." We took about four sergeants and the three of us went charging up the hillside about as fast as we could walk. We got to the brow of the hill and found the company commander had been killed in action (KIA). The only sign of our troops was a few dead bodies. Companies A and B had been assigned to hold that particular hill. The captain whom we identified as being KIA, whose body was out in the open, was Capt. Frank Smith. About that time it didn't take an overly intelligent person to say, "We're in an area that we don't control at all and there must be an awful lot of enemy forces in and around us."

Attacked while building a raft on the Han River, soldiers of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion return fire
RG 111, SC-361277

Captain Lawrence B. Farnum 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

We started back down the hill. The Chinese, who had taken the hill from our companies, were in their shallow foxholes and, in some cases, apparently covered by some of our own troops who had been killed. They fired a few shots at us as we went running down the hill as fast as our legs would take us. We didn't take any effort at evasion or return fire. Just knowing that the Chinese held the hill and that we had no living elements of our company up on the hill was enough.

We got back down to our battalion CP area safely. Jim Welcher had taken the time to take the billfold from the company commander containing pictures of his wife and children, the kind that most of us carried. It was one of those memories that stay very clear in your mind. They certainly could have killed all seven of us with absolutely no problem but we were not a threat to them. They didn't choose to make a big issue of our making a recon up there to the top of the hill.

When the Communist forces hit our 9th Regiment fairly severely, the engineer battalion was placed on line



Capt. Farnum carried this photograph of his wife Jeanne and his children, l-r, Donna, Jeffrey, and Joan, with him all the time he was in Korea. It was, he said, "my inspiration to come home."

Farnum Collection

as part of the 3d Battalion, 9th Infantry. The night of the 27th our particular area was attacked, and Companies A and B lost many of their people as KIA.

The next day all the units were ordered to pull back towards Sunch'on. With all of our elements we moved back to an area called Kujang-dong and Kunu-ri. The division ordered all units in the division to proceed towards Sunch'on.

A battle order was issued with the order of march. The 9th Infantry was to lead through the roadblock, which had been established by the Chinese forces south of Kunu-ri, to be followed by the 38th. Interspersed with them was the division provost, MPs, the

72d Tank, our antiaircraft types, and then to be followed by the 503d Artillery, which was a 155 outfit, and then the 38th Field Artillery 105s. Last were the engineers. Within the engineer battalion, our order of withdrawal was to be our Company D, followed by the battalion staff, Headquarters and Service Company, and then Companies A, B, and C.

Jim Welcher had taken the time to take the billfold from the company commander containing pictures of his wife and children, the kind that most of us carried. It was one of those memories that stay very clear in your mind.

At this same time many things happened in just a two-day period that are important to the history of the 2d Engineers. On the morning of 29 November some others from the battalion and I had gone west from the Kunu-ri area to Anju, and then south, proving that the road was open and there was no enemy fire on it.

Our recon element also had patrolled as far as they could south of Kunu-ri to check the road and reported back heavy fire on the road. Certain elements of the 9th had already been hit by mortar fire along that section of road, which was causing not only a deterioration of the road surface itself, but also problems and blockages by some of our damaged equipment.

I reported our reconnaissance to division and asked permission to move our heavy equipment, and what we would consider our trains, out by the western route going through Anju. That was going through another corps area. I talked to Lt. Col. Holden, who was the division G-3. We remained while he asked permission by radio, not only from 2d Division personnel, but also from someone down at IX Corps. The answer was that the roadblock could not be as strong as we were reporting and that the division should be able to clear it and come out on the IX Corps MSR, which was straight south from Kunu-ri, and not go through the adjoining corps' area [I Corps] through Anju.

That same morning division received permission from I Corps to remove the division administrative

personnel and division trains that were with them out through Anju and down to the south. So some of our elements from division headquarters did move out in that direction on the morning of the 29th.

I felt that our engineering equipment, such as dozers, which we had to move on low boys, certainly didn't need to be with the combat forces. We ought to have been able to withdraw them on the road that we knew from our reconnaissance to be open and capable of taking all of our loads. Those are some of the heaviest loads of the division to go over roads and bridges. Division basically tried to get us that permission, but our directives were to go straight south.

On 30 November I was at division CP and asked for a change in the decision. We were continuing to patrol the road to Anju and south. We reported that it was still open and requested that we take our equipment out that way. The response was the same as yesterday's—the answer was no. They said, "Well, we've got to go now," because the 9th was making what efforts they could to clear the roadblock and to move their equipment through. The division headquarters personnel had already moved their administrative trains out the day before through Anju, their vehicles interspersed with military police vehicles of the division, and certain firepower from some of our tanks from the 72d, and started south to run the roadblock.

In subsequent years this was known as “The Gauntlet.” It was estimated at the time to be about six miles long. The enemy held all of the high ground overlooking the road going through a narrow defile. Our infantry troops from both the 9th and the 38th had been unable to clear the enemy forces from the high ground.

The 23d Infantry [Regiment] had the assigned mission of being the rear guard, the rear holding force, for the withdrawal of the division. They were, in turn, to follow the 2d Engineer Battalion down our IX Corps MSR, which ran straight south from Kunu-ri.

When the division staff headed south, I left the division CP to go back and report to Col. Zacherle and Maj. Fry that they hadn’t accepted our request to go out by way of Anju, or taken any of our equipment out by the alternate route. The last thing I tried to ask them was how long we were to remain deployed on the hills protecting this particular valley. I was unable to get any direction from division staff, mainly the division G-3, who I still to this day have a great deal of admiration for. He was a lieutenant colonel carrying a tremendous load and responsibility. He definitely tried to get authority. This basin was overlooked by a series of steep hills, practically at Kunu-ri, and north of Kunu-ri.

Our division headquarters was minus their administrative sections, which had pulled out on the 29th. The 503d Field Artillery was in a bivouac area, with their guns really pointing 360 degrees, and the 38th Field

Artillery of 105s, and the engineer battalion.

On the 30th, after failing to get authority from division to move any of our equipment out through Anju, I went back to our battalion area and told them to wait for the artillery battalions to get on the road, and then to follow them down IX Corps’ MSR through Kunu-ri, the fire block being approximately six miles south of Kunu-ri.

We waited on the hill all that afternoon with no particular action by the enemy. We still felt that we controlled the days and they controlled the nights, except that in the fire block area, where they held the high ground, it was obvious why our division was having a terrible time getting through it.

Late in the afternoon, but prior to dark, we intercepted a radio message not addressed to us. We were on the same net, but we heard the message from the 23d that they were breaking contact with the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) and withdrawing west to Anju and then going south. By this time the road had cleared sufficiently so that the 503d Field Artillery was on the road heading south. The 38th Field Artillery and our Company D of engineers had most of their vehicles on the road behind the 38th. We had sent all of our drivers, administrative type people, cooks, and whatnot, down to get on the vehicles, get on the road, and proceed as far south as they could.

We had people in our headquarters’ vehicles, H&S Company, A, B, and C, who were to follow in that

When we got up into the 503d area we found something that looked like Dante’s Inferno. One of the large ammo supply trucks of the 503d was on fire....and the 155-mm shells were cooking off and exploding.

In a scene that was indicative of the gale force winds and sub-zero temperatures that American forces encountered, Marines move south, December 1950 RG 127-GK-234J-A5370



order. I know that there was not enough road space to get Company C's vehicles out of their bivouac area and onto the road, and probably no room even for portions of A's and B's vehicles.

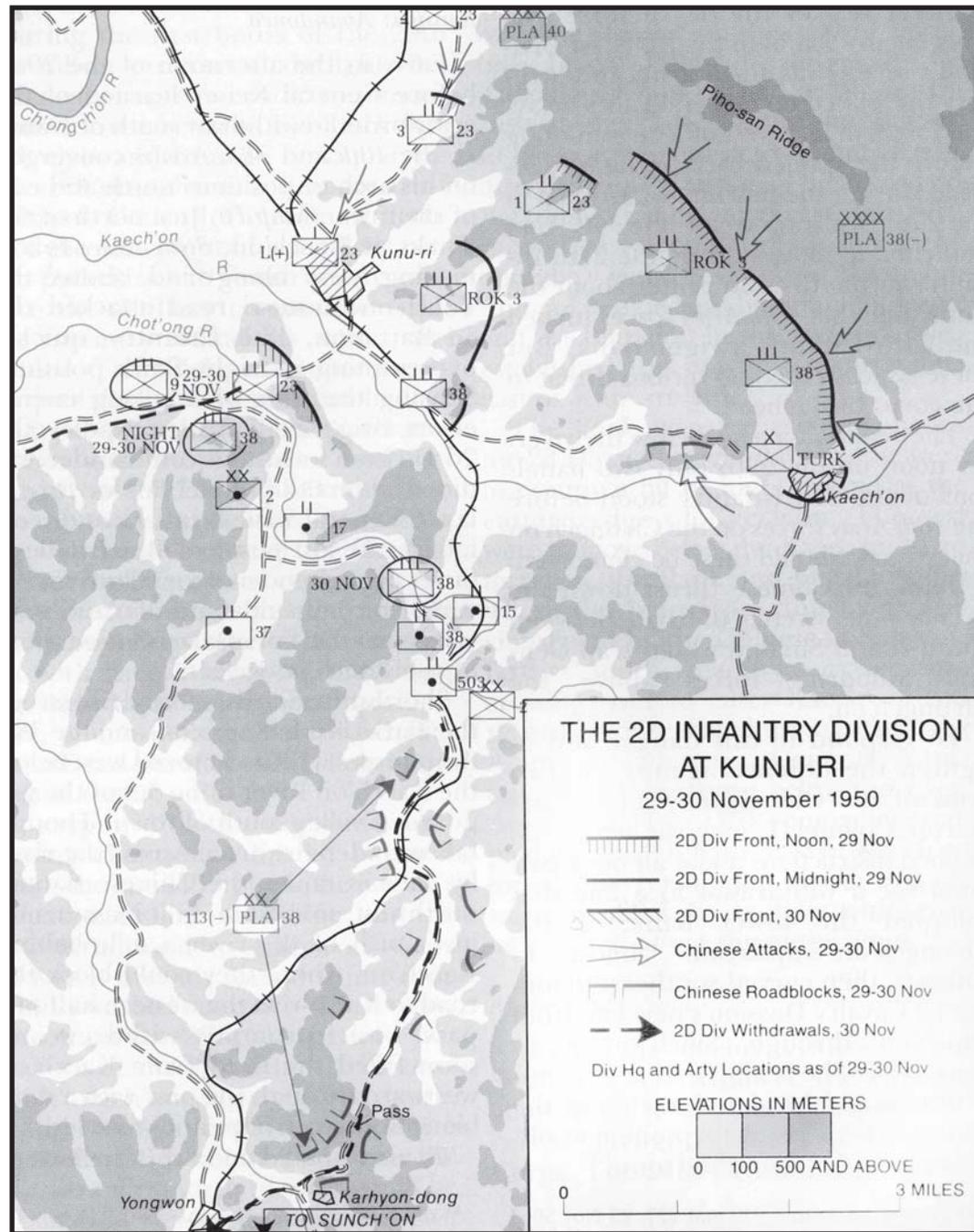
It wasn't a single column of vehicles. We used every inch of road space—at some places, three vehicles abreast, at other places, two. By 0730, or even earlier, the column was not moving at all.

I notified Col. Zacherle that I was going to walk forward along the road to see whether there was anything that we could do to assist in breaking the absolute gridlock of vehicles. Lt. John Bergner went with me.

Our column of vehicles stretched for three to five miles along the road. As we walked forward, of course, we walked past our Company D, through the 38th Field [Artillery], and were up into the area of the road that was occupied by the 503d.

By the time we got up there the Chinese forces, which were primarily to the east of the road at the section that we were on, were blowing bugles and flashing lights. These were their command and control-type mechanisms to precede a massive assault.

When we got up into the 503d area we found something that looked like Dante's Inferno. One of the large ammo supply trucks of the 503d was on fire. It was a gasoline, petroleum-type fire, and the 155-mm shells were cooking off and exploding.



By the time we got up there the Chinese forces, which were primarily to the east of the road at the section that we were on, were blowing bugles and flashing lights. These were their command and control-type mechanisms to precede a massive assault.

The road was completely blocked with vehicles. There wasn't any room along the sides to push them off into a ditch. It appeared to be an absolute physical block of the road. There were no alternate routes that we could bring a bulldozer up and try to put a road alongside, because this was mountainous terrain. It was a narrow defile, and it was plugged.

John and I then started back towards the 2d Engineer vehicles. Every vehicle had been sitting there for some time not able to move. There were the drivers and a certain number of personnel in each vehicle. Most of the people hadn't had a great deal of sleep in the past week, and it was about as cold as you can imagine. Many of the troops were bundled or, if they had their sleeping bags with them, they were in their sleeping bags with their clothes on, trying to stay warm and get some rest. We wanted to make sure that nobody was left in the vehicles asleep, wrapped in a sleeping bag.

John and I rapped on each vehicle and directed all the people to grab their weapons, vacate the vehicle, hit the ditch, and expect an attack within moments. These were not 2d Battalion people. They were artillery, the first group being 503d Artillery people. We got back and through the 38th Field Artillery Battalion doing the same thing. Their officers were out giving the same orders.

Although we didn't ask them to follow us, some of those people followed John and me rather than staying in that particular area, which obviously was going to

be an area soon to be hit by the Chinese forces. You could feel it. You could feel the attack. There was a strange garlic odor that would permeate an area and it was strong.

We got back to the 2d Engineer Battalion vehicles, with Company D in the lead. We got all the way through Company D, telling everybody to get out of their vehicles and take a defensive posture, into the H&S Company area. At that time the Chinese attack started in earnest. Massive numbers of ground troops attacked the vehicles, and my recollection is that the bulk of them came from the east.

I got back as far as my own vehicle, which was occupied by my driver Cpl. Merrill Philips, who survived the whole episode and is currently living in Grand Junction, Colorado. In the vehicle with him was Sgt. Cook, our sergeant major for the 2d ECB.

They accompanied me, along with a group of others, many of them belonging to the S-1 section. We got up onto some high ground. I made a very short attempt at locating the battalion and the other battalion staff members, such as Col. Zacherle and Maj. Fry, but particularly Capt. Nehrling, because many of the troops that were right in that area were from his section.

I didn't find him or receive any response. I had made a decision quite consciously a couple of days before that if we couldn't get our equipment out we would head due south. I had given maps to different platoon

leaders and company commanders with my view of the direction they should go to reach the Sunch'on area, which we knew was to be the regrouping area for Eighth Army.

A Long Walk in the Dark

I don't recall enough about the stars now, but at that time I was more interested in the stars. There was an evening star that was due south of Kunu-ri. I had told people to take a bearing on that star and to head due south, basically up until 2330 or 2400, at which time the star would be moving out of the sector that you wanted to follow. Then you had to revert to locating the North Star, and heading south.

The Chinese attacked in waves. The first wave had hit the road and the vehicle area. Then there seemed to be a lull and mass confusion. During that period I asked the people around me to follow me. I seemed to be the accepted leader and the self-appointed one.

The first wave came at 1930 or 2000. It was dark. There was a moon, not a full moon, perhaps, but it was a clear, bright night. I certainly knew from my hike up the road that the road itself was not a good route to take. So, I led the people off to the east of the MSR and headed south on trails.

There were a lot of paths in Korea because the mode of transportation from village to village and field to field often wasn't along the road. The Koreans

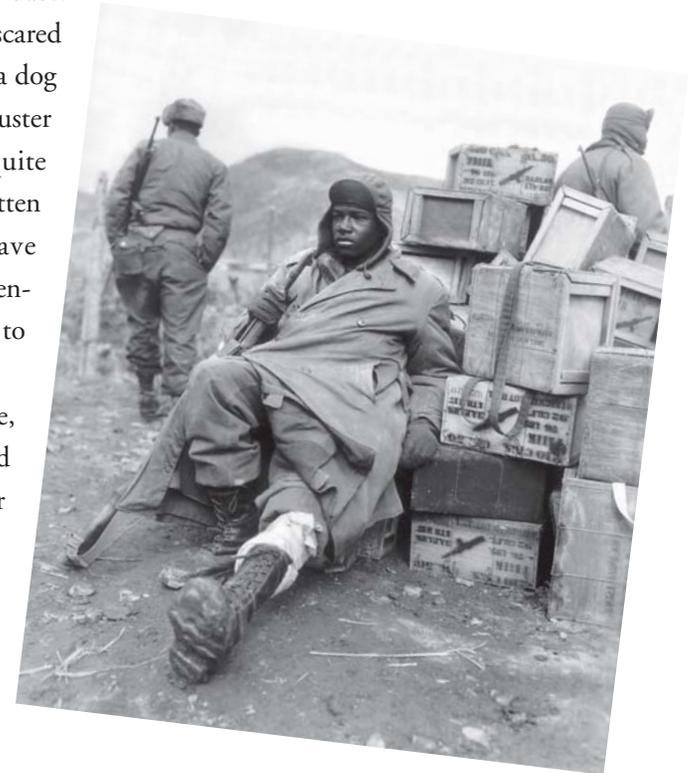
walked the shortest distance to the next village. It was not hard to find a trail going in the general direction.

We had only gone a short distance when we came to a cluster of houses. I wouldn't call it a village, particularly, but there would be a group of houses with fields around them, a lot of cotton and grain fields. You'd go some distance and there would be another cluster of houses. The farmers who owned and farmed the land lived in mud and straw houses. Their heat was a very low fire built so that the smoke went underneath the floor—a marvelous way to heat a house.

The only time that I was scared throughout that night was when a dog barked very loudly in this first cluster of houses. An American can't quite shoot a dog, but if I could have gotten my hands on him I would have throttled him. It seemed like the entire world must have responded to that barking dog.

We went through single file, the troops following me. We walked without stopping. We could hear mortar and gunfire to our right and to our rear. After about one hour of walking we came to some valley where we received a challenge to our movement. The challenge

Wounded in the leg,
Pfc. Edward Wilson,
24th Infantry, 25th
Infantry Division,
waits to be evacuated
RG 111, SC-358355



was in a language that I did not recognize. I have no idea whether it was Chinese, North Korean, South Korean, or even possibly one of the UN forces that were serving in that same area. We called back that we were Americans. With that an automatic weapon fired at us and we returned the fire. The weapon fell silent. I have no idea, nor did we send anyone to try to find out, what the challenge was. We altered our course and went further to the east, rather than continuing on the trail that we were on. In the valleys everything was cultivated, so there was always a trail going generally the direction you wanted to go.

We continued generally southeast, south-southeast, and I really didn't know how many people were following me. When I stopped the column I had them all just stop in place. It was a single-file Indian-style operation. I then walked back along the column until I reached John Bergner, whom I had asked to bring up the rear.

You remember the amusing things. We had received a PX Red Cross ration, which came along with the Thanksgiving food in late November. Amongst that was a tremendous amount of Lifesavers candy. They were the packages—and I can remember them so well—of the multi-flavored Lifesavers. They weren't the most popular things with the troops, obviously, but there were just a lot of them. On the 30th, I had filled all of the pockets of my officer's overcoat, my pants, and my jacket inside, with Lifesavers. I really have never liked

water and normally relied upon lemon drops and hard candy to quench my thirst whenever I was out all day long in the field. I went along with these Lifesavers and gave each person one Lifesaver until I got back to John. He made some flippant remark like, "My God, I'm doing all this work for you, bringing up the rear, and all you give me is one lousy Lifesaver?" With that, why, my spirits went up.

On one of these stops I can remember John saying, "Larry, look! There's thousands of Chinese. The whole field is alive with them and they're all coming this way!"

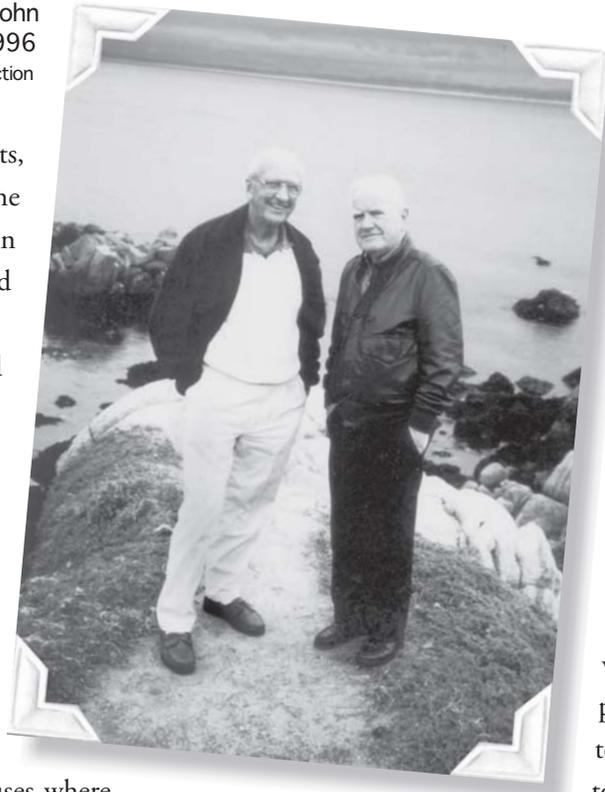
I said, "John, you're hallucinating. Those are old dead bushes waving in a cotton field, or they're old stocks of grain." He may have been right and I may have been wrong, but it was my choice to believe that we didn't see anybody.

I would go up to the front of the column and we would move out and go approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Then I would stop and go back along the column. I then realized that out of the people who were following me, a small percentage were 2d Engineers. They were mostly artillery people.

The column was about company size. Some of the reports say that I came out with 300 people. I think it was probably closer to 150. Out of that, maybe a third were 2d Engineer people.

They were all just individuals to me. I didn't know

Col. Larry Farnum and Col. John Bergner in Carmel, California, 1996
Farnum Collection



whether they were officers, sergeants, or privates. Up close to me at the front of the column there was an NCO from the 2d Engineers, and also Capt. Paul Jones.

Jones came up two times and pointed out heavy enemy troop concentrations. We were walking in the valleys, but they were usually up on the hillside, not going over the tops of the hills but traveling along the trails to their houses and villages. I felt that Paul was hallucinating but perhaps I chose not to see enemy.

We came to a group of houses where there was a granite quarry. Now, I'm a graduate mining engineer and had worked in open pit mines. I knew that the main access would be across the bottom of the quarry, but that there also would be a trail directly along the face of the quarry going over the top of the hill. I chose to take the trail along where they would do the drilling to blast out the rock. We went across to the other side of this fairly good-sized hill. We got to the other side and I stopped the column. I went back to the end of the column and John Bergner was not there.

I thought, "We're not going any farther without John because I don't know where the split in the column

comes." I asked four men to volunteer to go with me and we continued back the route we had come. At a fair distance we found John. He was on his left knee with his right foot in front of him. He was leaning his head against his carbine and he was sound asleep. His right foot was between 6 inches to a foot from the vertical drop of the quarry, which I would estimate was probably an 80-foot sheer drop to the bottom. It was very easy to see him. The moon was quite

high at that time. I went up and took his hand gently and led him away from the precipice; that was the last time he went to sleep that night!

When I got back to the head of the column we continued our hike. By this time we were getting into the wee hours, probably 0200 or 0300. I felt that we had to be a long way away from the CCF, not that we really were. But we were beginning to feel quite safe.

Along about 0400 we met our only other challenge and roadblock. It came as rather startling. We were challenged in a foreign tongue—Chinese, North Korean,

At a fair distance we found John. He was on his left knee with his right foot in front of him. He was leaning his head against his carbine and he was sound asleep. His right foot was between 6 inches to a foot from the vertical drop of the quarry, which I would estimate was probably an 80-foot sheer drop to the bottom.

South Korean—something other than English. We hollered back in English that we were Americans and we were fired upon.

We hadn't taken protective cover. We hadn't dropped to the ground. We were probably pretty damned tired. At that time Sgt. Mankowski, who had always been quite close to me in the lead of the column, was hit in both legs. He was the only one hit. We returned some fire and the shooting stopped.

We called but we didn't make a real effort to find out what had happened or who it was. They weren't firing at us anymore. We took Sgt. Mankowski over to a hillside to the west of the route we were taking down. It

was a slope of one of their steep hills with a fair number of trees on it. He, of course, said to go on. I asked for some volunteers and left four men and a fair amount of ammunition with them. I told them that we would send a patrol out as soon as we could.

Those were the only men we left.

Fortunately, those men got back before the rest of us finished our walk. As far as I know,

that was my only wounded throughout the entire hike, which was someplace between 30 and 50 miles, a good 18 hours of steady pressing on.

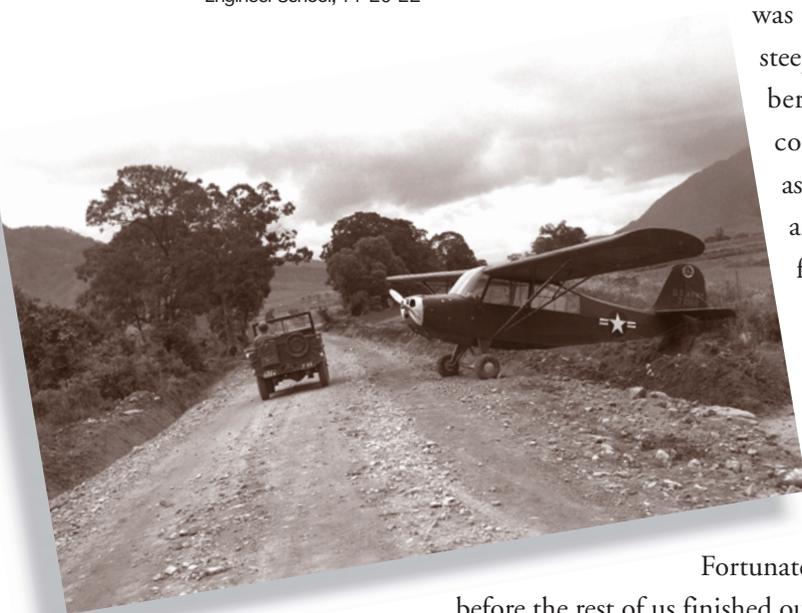
We walked a few more hours. Shortly after daylight, about 0600-0630, a small U.S. aircraft liaison type, an L-5, flew over and dropped a message to us that we were coming into the 5th Cavalry area, that we were approaching their lines and were safe. He circled for a while, and then landed in a valley off to our right front, near a streambed. He was from the 5th Cavalry and had room for one passenger.

Well, we looked around to see who was the most seriously hurt or impaired that we might have with us. A Turkish captain had a couple of serious bullet wounds in him and he hadn't made a complaint all night. We put him in the aircraft and told the pilot about Sgt. Mankowski and the men we had left on the hillside. He either radioed that back or went back and reported to the cavalry. The cavalry sent out a tank patrol and brought those men back. They all made it through.

The pilot asked us whether we needed transport to get our people back. We wanted to walk on rather than wait for trucks to come and get us. Everybody was in the mood to continue walking south just as rapidly as we could.

Eventually, one truck came by and the driver said, "Hey, I can take the people down." We put a certain

After landing on the road, an L-5 aircraft is parked to keep the road clear for traffic
Engineer School, 11-20-22



number aboard, but the main group walked until we were in a defensive perimeter of the 5th Cavalry. We continued to walk until lunchtime, about 1300. Then we were into the cavalry unit areas where we were given something to eat.

After that, there were sufficient vehicles to get us further to the south and into the Sunch'on area. Second Division elements were forming, bivouacking, and looking for others. From there we continued a hasty withdrawal.

Some people say we shot our way out. The people in the division, who wrote up the Silver Star for me, describe in the citation how we were attacking up the hill and attacking through some different blocks. My personal recollection is basically a friendly darkness of night that provided us an opportunity to get together in groups, decide which way we were going to go, and head that way.

Mine was not a mission to attack anybody, but to get the people who were following me safely down to Sunch'on. I don't recall firing my weapon one time. I was carrying a carbine. Other than the two very brief firefights when we were challenged, I don't recall a threat to our life and limb.

When we got back to the division area, Paul Jones, who was the next ranking officer, a captain, junior to me, remembered the hike differently. He thought we lost a large number of people. We would talk about

it and he would say, "The Chinese were reaching out and grabbing and people were disappearing." If we lost people along the road it was because a few may have been too tired to carry on and chose to crawl into a bush and go to sleep, but I really don't know of any. I prefer to think that we didn't lose a person who started out with us.

It was a long column of people walking single file. There were many places where, passing a deserted house, someone could have chosen not to go any further. But I had my rear guard in John Bergner. I think the men continued to walk in that single file. Most of them probably didn't know there were more than five or six people with them. All they could see were two or three people ahead of them and they knew that a couple of people were behind them. I know they were dead tired.

The other clear memory is one of those lighthearted ones. When it turned light, around 0600, about the time the aircraft came over, it felt like we were safe and it was all over and I halted the column. I walked back along it, trying to be the glib company commander, saying, "How are you?" and "It's been a good hike," and "Did you get enough exercise?"

Two soldiers particularly stood out in my memory. They were black, and one was in the lead carrying the base plate for a .50-caliber machine gun. He had several bandoliers of .50-caliber shells across his shoulders. I don't know the weight of the base plate for the heavy

Some people say we shot our way out....My personal recollection is basically a friendly darkness of night that provided us an opportunity to get together in groups, decide which way we were going to go, and head that way.

The doctor wanted to evacuate all of us to Japan. All the men who were with me agreed when I said, “Not on your life. We’ve got too much to do here.”

.50-caliber, but it’s heavy as hell! I said, “Well, you’ve carried that all night? Great job! Where’s the weapon?” “My buddy right behind me has it,” he said. I looked at the fellow behind him. He wasn’t carrying a thing. His eyes were great big and round and white. He was shaking his head, back and forth, mouthing, “No, no. Don’t tell him.” He was praying to me, with his eyes. I realized that at some point along the line he had laid down the .50-caliber. Well, I went along with him very rapidly and told the fellow who was carrying the base plate, “That’s all right. We’re safe now. You can put it down.” He said, “Oh, no. I’ve got to keep this.” And we said, “No. Everything’s all right now. I’ve told your buddy we’re leaving the .50-caliber here for the 5th Cavalry to pick up.” I don’t think he ever knew—I hope he never knew—that his good friend who was carrying the .50-caliber hadn’t had the .50-caliber for probably several hours. But I guess those are the things that, being in service, are so precious to you. I’ll always carry in my mind’s memory the looks on those two faces.

We got back down to the cavalry lines. I never heard from the artillery battalion people who had come out with me—not that I expected to. Everybody was terribly busy for the next month getting re-equipped and retrained to become combat effective again.

On 1 December the division was declared combat noneffective, a sad thing for any division to go through. All of our efforts were to get back to the division rear

area and to find our own units. I was probably the ranking person to come out from the 2d Engineers.

When we did get back to our division rear area some of our elements were there. Our bridge platoon had not been with us. Some of the people from Dog Company hadn’t been with us up forward. We had our division rear personnel, mail clerks, and people like that.

On 1 December our battalion strength was approximately 250, but probably close to 200 of those were in some other area, and not with us at Kunu-ri to make the long trek home. The battalion strength that had stood at Kunu-ri was approximately 900 people.

As soon as we got back to division rear, medical personnel looked us over. The doctor wanted to evacuate all of us to Japan. All the men who were with me agreed when I said, “Not on your life. We’ve got too much to do here.”

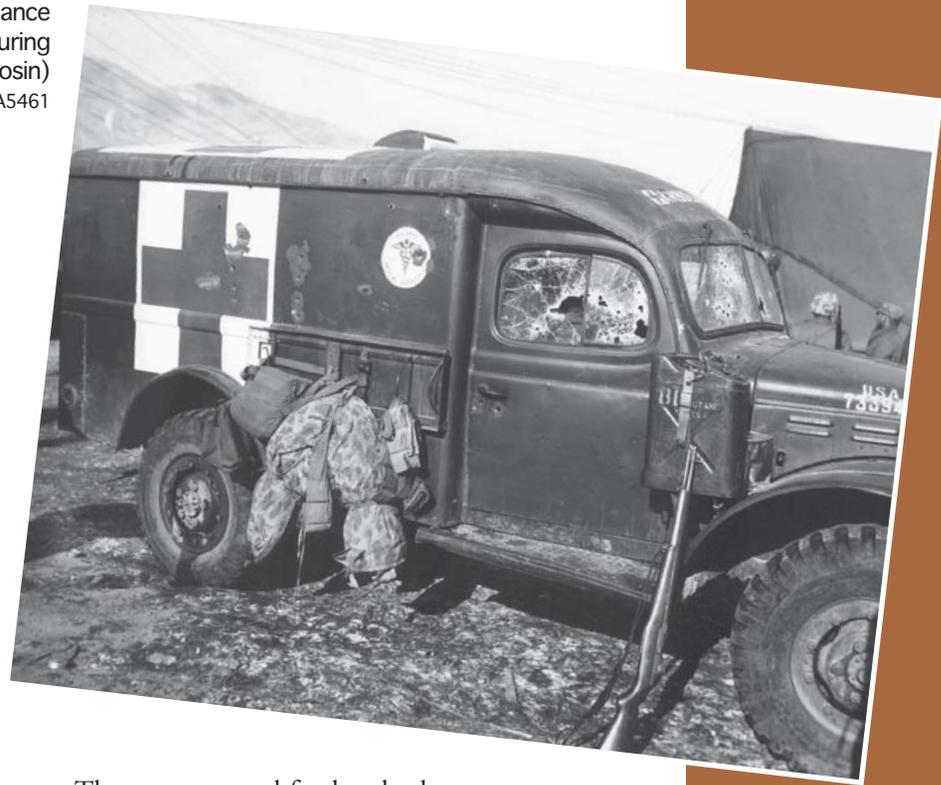
The reason the doctor recommended evacuation was that everybody had some form of frostbite. I had frozen toes, a couple of frozen fingers, and some spots on my face that were frostbitten. We made a deal with the medics that we would have a battalion/company formation daily to look at the frostbite, to ensure that people were doing what they asked us to do in the way of some creams and salves that they gave us. They told us what to look for in making sure that black streaks didn’t start going up your foot or leg, or up your arm, and that the spots on noses and faces didn’t get too

Although riddled by enemy gunfire, this ambulance continued to carry casualties suffered during the withdrawal from Changjin (Chosin)

RG 127, 127-N-A5461

serious. So, we had almost an amusing time, an interplay of all ranks, at 1400 each day, where we would meet in a large room to take off our shoes and socks, check each other, exercise our toes, massage the places, and put on the salve.

I assumed command of the battalion on 1 December and with the help of the people who had been at division rear, our mail clerks and people like that, we put on a battalion formation. We spread out the companies, H&S Company and the battalion staff, leaving place for all the people who were missing. [2d Div. War Diary for Nov 1950 shows the 2d ECB with an authorized strength of 977, with casualties of 561 (15-30 Nov 1950), and with an actual strength on 1 Dec 1950 of 266 men.] It was a very moving time. I tried to stand in the position that I should stand in as the S-2 as if Col. Zacherle was there. [Col. Farnum was battalion commander for nearly 2 weeks, until the new commander, Maj. Edmund H. Leavey, arrived]. Our division rear personnel, who had the roster, called off the names of all those people who were missing and the ones who were there. This was basically done with the help of our clerks who were back at division rear. They knew all of our names, got our mail up to us, and knew who our family members were. In this past year [1997], as I've gotten back into meeting with some of the people of the 2d Engineers, I've been told how much this meant to those people who were not with us up at Kunu-ri.



Then we retreated further, back to areas to try to regroup. Our only trucks that we had in quantity were our Brockway trucks, which were loaded with our floating bridge. I believe we unloaded a couple of those just to carry people and the supplies we were able to get.

During this period some of the people who had come out showed absolutely great ingenuity in getting supplies. As we were falling back rapidly, quartermaster-type units in the P'yongyang area were in the process of destroying all this equipment, tanks and vehicles, so that it wouldn't fall into the hands of the Chinese. We were in great need of the very vehicles that they were destroying.

We got some of our supplies at gunpoint because the person who was assigned to burn the supplies was afraid to turn them over to us. They were burning clothing and rations that we didn't have.

It seems infeasible, and it must be wrong, but the Army is a big organization. When people are told to destroy all of their supplies before they leave the area, that is their mission.

We got some of our supplies at gunpoint because the person who was assigned to burn the supplies was afraid to turn them over to us. They were burning clothing and rations that we didn't have. I don't personally remember reaching an area where they were destroying vehicles, which we needed so badly, but some of my people did. They were able to get some vehicles to help us in our movement back.

As soon as we got back to the Sunch'on area my driver told me that we liberated a jeep ambulance that I used as my vehicle. It was a particularly good vehicle to have because it had a heater in the back.

When we got back to the Yongdungp'o area we were going to be in position for a few days. Maj. Gen. Robert B. McClure had taken over as the commanding general of the 2d Division. He was only with us about one month. During that time he was very kind to me as a captain, and a member of the Corps of Engineers, and said that he was perfectly satisfied with me being his division engineer. It was nice to hear and I appreciated it. I knew at the same time that Eighth Army was doing everything in its power to get us restaffed with qualified engineers. As a matter of fact, the Eighth Army Engineer had contacted me that he was getting a

couple of majors who were coming out of Eighth Army in Japan. Gen. McClure said, "We don't need them. I've got a battalion commander." Those were things you liked to remember.

I contacted Col. Sawin at Eighth Army. He had been my Professor of Military Science (PMS) at college. He was a help in breaking loose some of our early replacement officers who came from Japan.

I made a trip down to 3d Logistics Command in Pusan and found Col. McEachern, our ex-battalion commander. He assisted in making up the necessary requisitions for all the equipment that we needed. That ran the gamut from weapons to trenching tools, shovels, vehicles, and engineer items of all sorts and descriptions. It was through his efforts that we were able to, within a matter of a week, have a couple of our companies ready to support if called upon and to get back to some engineering work.

Our headquarters and our H&S Company were sorely stressed to fend for themselves. It took some time to get engineering equipment, such as dozers, lowboys, that sort of thing, back into our hands to where we could say we're ready to do our job. 🏰

Heavy snow fails to stop men of the 2nd Engineer
Combat Battalion, 2d Infantry Division, as
they survey for supply routes RG 111, SC-387034



Lieutenant Trayers describes the 1st Cavalry Division's drive north from the Pusan Perimeter to Unsan in North Korea. Having never attended the Engineer Basic Course, Lieutenant Trayers found himself alternately building and blowing bridges and considering the advantages of "going by the book."

By now we had pushed on farther and gone north. On 12 October the reconnaissance officer was wounded, so I was assigned from Company D to H&SC, and became the reconnaissance officer. On 22 October Lt. Karl K. Georgeff was wounded, and I was reassigned from reconnaissance officer to platoon leader of the 2d Platoon in Company B. I had that assignment for most of the rest of my tour in Korea.

Georgeff was inspecting the capacity of the bridges, specifically the ability of the bridges to carry tanks. He went underneath this one bridge to inspect the strength of the stringers and a group of Koreans were huddled together there. He took no notice of them other than to realize that they

were there. When he turned to go back up to the top side of the bridge, one of the Koreans fired at him with a .45-caliber pistol. The bullet entered his back, came out through his chest, and nicked his chin. Georgeff was not seriously wounded but he required hospitalization.

I went to B Company to replace Georgeff and took over his platoon. The company commander at that time was Merlin W. Anderson who was in the Class of '47 at the Military Academy. He was the company commander of Company F-2

at West Point, and I was in Company G-2 at West Point, so I knew who he was having seen him at many of the cadet formations. Donald S. Aines was the maintenance, supply, and transportation (MS&T) officer. Lt. Bull Durham was one of the platoon leaders, and Ronald A. Severson was the other platoon leader. I had the second platoon.

I was very fortunate working for Merlin W. Anderson because he provided me with the instruction that I did not get in the basic course. Anytime that I was working on a project, he would give me guidance as to



Second Lt. James Trayers Trayers Collection

the best way to attack the project and what was expected when it was done. Even now I remember some of his words of wisdom. He paraphrased and made things very simple like, “Get the water off and the rock on,” and “Put angular rocks in square holes.” He had many sayings and he really provided me with basic course training.

I was part of the regimental combat team and did the usual things that a combat engineer platoon does. I installed many, many mines, both antipersonnel and antitank, much barbed wire, both single and double apron, and concertina, and I had a large section of roads for road maintenance.

I cleared fields of fire, put in culverts, revetments, built a bridge or two, and did a lot of demolition work.

At one location I had orders to build a bridge. We had built many bridges with typical vertical piers and the bridge coming flat across the top. On this mission I thought that it would be instructional, because the terrain was suitable, if my platoon built an A-frame bridge. That is, one with the piers, which instead of being vertical they were joined at the top to form an A, and the deck would come across the center of the piers such that the profile was in the shape of an A.

I discussed my plan with my platoon sergeant, Sgt. Joseph Gonzales. He said, “I don’t know if that’s such a good idea, lieutenant. The men are familiar with building the regular timber trestle bridge. This is different.” I



Soldiers of the 2d Engineer Battalion construct a timber trestle bridge across the Taedong River at Suncheon, 12 November 1950
Engineer School, 42-1-283

countered with, “Well, it would be good for training.” He said, “The men not only don’t need training, they don’t like it.” I said, “Okay, Sergeant Gonzales, we’ll build the regular kind of bridge.” That was another lesson that I learned. Let the men do what they do best. Don’t start changing it.

Sgt. Gonzales rotated home and it was my job to pick someone to take his place as the platoon sergeant. I picked one of the sergeants who had been a squad leader. His name was Sgt. James E. Schwarz. Schwarz didn’t have

as much time as squad leader as did my other squad leaders, but in my opinion he displayed potential. By the time he got promoted to master sergeant he was only about 20 years old.

The next job that I had to do was to blow a bridge. This is when we were withdrawing to the south. Capt. Anderson and I went to visit the S-3 of the 7th Cavalry. Capt. Anderson asked, "Why are we blowing the bridge?" and the officer from the 7th Cavalry replied, "Because the field manual says that in a withdrawal you destroy the bridges."

Capt. Anderson gave me the mission. I explained that while I understood the nature of the explosives, I hadn't really had any experience in blowing up a bridge. He said that I should take Sgt. Richard A. Henry with me because he knew all about explosives.

I explained to Sgt. Henry what we were going to do and I asked him how much explosive we should use. He advised me that it was not his job to estimate how much explosive would be needed—he said that was the lieutenant's job. I said, "If we take a trailer load that ought to be enough." The bridge to be destroyed was a box-girder railroad bridge. So I directed that we take 10 cases of C-3 explosive, which would fit in a jeep trailer.

Sgt. Henry, my driver Haney, and I drove some distance in front of the front lines to the bridge site. This bridge turned out to be a very, very important bridge

because it was on one of the main railroad lines in the Iron Triangle in the Ch'orwon area.

After we arrived at the bridge site Sgt. Henry, Haney, and I placed all 10 boxes of explosives in the space between the box-girders where they came together on the top of the pier. The space was just wide enough to put a case of explosives in. On one side we put five cases, and on the other side we put the other five cases. We put a 10-minute fuse with a blasting cap in order to give us time to get out of there. Haney and I drove one mile north on the road, and Sgt. Henry ran as far as he could in the other direction. I heard that thing go. Even a mile north I remember there were pieces of steel from the bridge flying over our heads.

I went back and we had done our job. We had demolished the bridge. About five feet of the pier had been destroyed and two box girders had been knocked off the pier. It wasn't really the right thing to do because shortly thereafter we attacked north and the bridge was back in our sector again. It was made with boxed-girders and installed by the Japanese. We had the Japanese fabricate new girders. The bridge was out of action for an extended time.

By late November we were as far north as we were going to go. We had Thanksgiving dinner just south of the city of Unsan. One of the other divisions replaced the 1st Cavalry Division in the line and we moved back to the Chinnamp'o area where my platoon built an

We put a 10-minute fuse with a blasting cap in order to give us time to get out of there. Haney and I drove one mile north on the road, and Sgt. Henry ran as far as he could in the other direction. I heard that thing go. Even a mile north I remember there were pieces of steel from the bridge flying over our heads.

Engineers place satchel charges
on a railroad bridge near
Pyongyang prior to demolishing it
RG 111, SC-355302

airstrip. One of the other platoons was taking mines out of the harbor. The story was that we were going to go home by Christmas; however the Chinese attacked in late November and pushed the UN forces south across the 38th parallel. When we crossed the 38th Parallel on the way north there was a sign that said, "You are now crossing the 38th Parallel, compliments of the 7th Cavalry Regiment." Later, when we were withdrawing, someone had written on the back of the sign to be seen as we traveled south, "You are now crossing the 38th Parallel compliments of the 1st Communist Chinese Field Army." 🏰



Captain Fowler describes his assignment to supply operations, Engineer Section, IX Corps. Subsequently assigned as IX Corps officer in charge of map distribution, he learned that “distribution” sometimes meant hurling burlap bags full of maps out of C-119s.

I received orders to Texas A&M, reported in May 1950, and managed to finish the summer semester before I left. In August 1950 I was assigned to IX Corps, which was preparing to leave for Korea. They were assembling in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and I had only two days notice to get there. One day I came home and told my wife, “We have got to pack our bags.” She said, “Why?” I said, “Well, I am going to Fort Sheridan and to Korea. Where would you like to go?” She said, “I guess I might as well go home,” which was her parent’s home in Freehold, New Jersey. The next day the movers came, and the day after that the household goods were gone. The following day she got on an airplane and flew to New Jersey, while I got in our car and drove to Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

IX Corps headquarters stayed at Fort Sheridan about two weeks. During that time I got about five days off. I drove the car back to New Jersey so it would have a home while I was gone. Then I went back to Fort Sheridan, and our IX Corps headquarters flew on Flying

Tiger Airlines to Korea, landing in Pusan in August 1950.

We unloaded off the plane and immediately loaded onto trucks. The thing I remember most about Korea from those days was the dust and the mud. All of the roads we were traveling were unpaved and the dust was 4 to 6 inches deep. The dust literally boiled up behind our truck. All the people in the back of that truck were covered with dust and it was almost impossible to breathe.

We traveled west from Pusan on the train as far as it could go, and that was a blown railroad bridge. We then got out of the train and reloaded on more trucks. These were essentially three-quarter-ton trucks. We traveled the dusty roads all of the way to a place near Chonju and that’s where we found what represented itself as IX Corps headquarters.

Although we came in with essentially a corps headquarters fully staffed, one was already in place. Apparently, General MacArthur had applied for this corps to be present for the invasion of Inch’ön. When it became clear that it was not going to get there in time, he activated one of his own. He took I Corps and they became the invasion corps at Inch’ön.

IX Corps then took over the other units in Korea. X Corps was not in Korea at that time, so it was just I Corps and IX Corps. IX Corps took over the remnant units from the Pusan Perimeter, mainly the 24th and 25th Divisions.

Map Distribution, IX Corps

I was assigned as a map supply officer. I said to myself, “What qualifies me to be a map supply officer and what the hell does one do?” Well, I found out pretty quickly when I got there what one did. I could only conclude that I was assigned as map supply officer because I had that short tour as supply officer in Austria and not a lot of first lieutenants were running with supply officer experience.

My boss was the IX Corps Engineer, Col. William N. Thomas, Jr. I’d just as soon forget his name. He was a Thomason Act officer. He really despised all West Point graduates and that included me. The Thomason Act was a source for officers in the twenties and thirties. It was like OCS or ROTC.

The corps commander was Lt. Gen. John B. Coulter. After a couple of months I began to ask my boss for a transfer to an engineer company. This corps headquarters was all right, but not for a career. Well, he would have no part of it. Every time I’d ask him he just got madder, so I stopped asking and waited for one of us to leave. He finally left at the end of the year.

Col. Gerald Galloway replaced him. Galloway was altogether different. He was a good supervisor, an intelligent person and very thoughtful. He hadn’t been there very long when I asked him for an assignment to a company. By this time I was a captain. I went over as a first lieutenant, but everybody had been promoted on the

Department of Army order to captain. He said, “No, you just stay around here and I’ll see that you are a major before you go home.” The GHQ in Tokyo could promote officers in the field, at least through the grade of major, so I stayed on [Capt. Fowler was promoted to major, 15 Feb 1952].

So, I served as a map supply officer. I’ll tell you about a few of my experiences and observations. The map production depot was in Yokohama, Japan. The plates they had to produce maps from in those days were very rudimentary. Most maps were black and white; there wasn’t any color initially, and they were not very accurate. I think they were really old Japanese maps. But, as time went on they got better.

The 3d Division
Engineer Section,
12 April 1951
RG 111, SC-365018



In recent years I have come to tell people that planning is the essential thing in life.

Those who plan get ahead.

The other expression is even better—we don't plan to fail; we fail to plan.

A division or another corps unit would call me and request maps. They typically wanted 1/25,000 scale maps. If you were ever an infantryman you know that is what you've got to have. That is the only scale of a map that shows you the detail that an infantryman needs. If you are in a retrograde action, as we were in a lot of those months in 1950-51, then you could move through and off of a 1/25,000 scale map in half a day, so you needed a good supply of maps if you were going to have that kind. Many of the units had to live with a 1/250,000 scale map. You could spend a month or so on one of those. They are good, but they don't give you any detail on the ground. They just show you some relative locations.

My line of supply was to call Eighth Army in Seoul, or during the time we were in North Korea, P'yongyang. Any time our troops moved, I had to call one of those two locations and put in my requisition for maps. I had to use my own imagination to second-guess where the divisions and other units would be two days from then, or a week from then, and try to order what they might need at that time. In recent years I have come to tell people that planning is the essential thing in life. Those who plan get ahead. The other expression is even better—we don't plan to fail; we fail to plan. As a map supply officer I learned what it was to plan. If I did not plan ahead, I did not end up with the right kind of maps.

Sometimes the maps came to IX Corps by L-5 aircraft, which was a little comparable to today's O-1. It was a single-wing, two-seater aircraft, and it would not carry an awful lot of maps. A two and one-half-ton truck also hauled maps overland. IX Corps, during much of this time, was several hundred miles from either P'yongyang or Seoul, so the maps usually had to come in by truck.

The division or other units usually came in and picked up the maps. In a few instances during the retrograde action from North Korea back to South Korea, they were so far afield that they could not get back to our headquarters. Sometimes we had three corps headquarters. We had a main, an advance, and a rear, and the map supply would be at one of those three locations. In more than one instance we loaded maps in the back of a C-119, commonly referred to as a "flying boxcar." It had the clamshell doors on the back. We would load the maps in those thin burlap bags, which was all we had. We did not have any air drop bags or material or even pallets. We would just put them in burlap bags and fly low over the drop zone near the division headquarters. I stood in the back and kicked them out of the back door. We hoped that some of them got to the people who needed them. Some of them got to the ground in a bunch, while others were scattered.

When IX Corps landed at Pusan, the Inch'on landing had already taken place so we moved north to Seoul.

Engineers place explosive charges to demolish a damaged bridge on the Naktong River
Engineer School, 71-19-37

IX Corps headquarters started out with one trucking company and built it up to a battalion, then later to a couple of battalions. Initially, there were so few trucks that moving a corps headquarters took second priority to shuttling some of the infantry units. It was not altogether a smooth move, but we got there all the same.

Everybody in headquarters lived in tents. People from World War II would ask, “Why didn’t you occupy buildings for your offices and headquarters?” The answer was very simple—there weren’t any except in Seoul, Inch’on, and a few places like that. Where we were the only buildings were the really crude ones that the Koreans lived in, and you wouldn’t want to use those for offices.

For 19 months I slept in a squad tent and I worked in a tent that was smaller than a squad tent. Initially, we had Coleman lanterns for light. We finally got enough generators that we had electricity and electric lights. During the worst of all of the winters, pot-bellied stoves and diesel fuel provided heat. This was a far cry from what even the troops in World War II had been accustomed to. If anything, the Korean War was noted for the rugged and rough conditions.

We got as far north as Kunu-ri. It’s not much of anything except a place name on the map. The divisions that IX Corps had at that time were the 1st Cavalry Division and the 2d Infantry Division. The 1st Cavalry Division said they dipped their sabers in the Yalu. Well, they had no sooner done so than the Chinese got after



them. Once that started, the 1st Cavalry was in a full retrograde and all other units were being hit pretty heavily too.

The corps headquarters itself got to Kunu-ri. When the retrograde started, we started withdrawing through P'yongyang. As soon as Eighth Army got out of P'yongyang, they told us in IX Corps that all of their maps in the map depot were now ours. We assembled a group of enlisted men and started burning those maps as quickly as we could. We took a few with us, but not many because those maps were very heavy items. We did not have the transportation either to load or move them.

One of the last things that engineer units did leaving P'yongyang was to blow the floating bridge over the Taedong River. It was the last bridge on the route back. Until you have blown a floating bridge you don't know what trouble is. They are not the easiest things to destroy.

From there we motored in two and one-half-ton trucks south until we leap-frogged either the rear, advance, or main headquarters CP. The primary problem was communications. If you did not have a pretty good-sized hill nearby that you could put a microwave tower on then you couldn't really count on communications.

The IX Corps unit that got hit the hardest in that whole episode was the 2d Infantry Division. The 2d Division sector went up a valley and right up the side of a group of mountains and headed up north. I don't know whether they could have ever gotten to the Yalu River the way they started or not. The Chinese had infiltrated along the ridges.

Since they did not have trucks they were not bound to the roads. American troops were road-bound by choice, particularly when they started retrograde action. They wanted to get out and to get out fast. The Chinese got behind them and cut the road. Only one regiment of the 2d Division got out as a regiment. I think that was the 23d Infantry commanded by Brig. Gen. Peploe, who may have been a colonel then. [23d Infantry's commander was Col. Paul L. Freeman. Col. George B. Peploe commanded the 38th Infantry, but was promoted to brigadier general when he transferred to IX Corps to become chief of staff.]

We moved from Seoul south towards Taegu. About that time a change in command of Eighth Army took place too. Gen. Walton Walker, who commanded the Eighth Army during the really tough part of the breakout of the Pusan perimeter and the advance to P'yongyang and Kunu-ri and back again, was killed in a vehicle accident at Christmas of 1950. Gen. Matthew Ridgway of XVIII Airborne Corps fame in Europe came in to head Eighth Army. The morale of Eighth Army was terribly low, and the rumor was, among all the troops, that MacArthur intended to evacuate Eighth Army from Korea. Ridgway got the Eighth Army reorganized and started a gradual advance. That was good for troop morale.

The need for maps grew less and less because we stopped moving 50 to 100 miles a day and we became pretty stabilized.

Officers of the 11th Engineer Battalion discuss the construction of a ponton bridge, 2 December 1950
RG 111, SC-354075

