

LORY'S STORY

THE KOREAN WAR: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF LAWRENCE J. RIEDMANN



By Louis M. Riedmann, Jr.

For Al and Frances Riedmann. No parent should have to bury their child.

To my aunts, uncles and father: Madeline, Irene, Frances, George, Al Jr., Ruth and Lou. He gave his life so you and your families could live free.

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Introduction

The war in Korea which took place from 1950 to 1953 is commonly referred to by Americans as the Forgotten War. The Riedmann family has an ancestor who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the Korean people and the American way of life during that time. My purpose for writing this paper is to ensure the memory of Lawrence J. Riedmann is not forgotten. He left behind no wife and no children like his brothers and sisters to carry on his life in our memories, stories and photo albums.

On Memorial Day in 2010 the Omaha World Herald printed a special section called “Korea: Forgotten No More”. It presented a synopsis of the war including a timeline of events with maps and articles of events related thru interviews with veterans. The articles gave me a spark that ignited a desire to learn what happened to Lory during his short, fateful time in Korea. With the help of our family elders, primarily Irene Van Moorlegem and Lou Riedmann, I was able to piece together some incidental stories prior to his military career. I also received copies of letters he had written to Irene and George Riedmann. In addition to these I began purchasing books on the Korean War, especially those that contained information on the 23rd Infantry Regiment which Lory belonged to.

After writing several letters to the U.S. Army and other government offices I received useful information on other sources to research. This included requesting his medals he earned while in the service. Another useful tool was the fortuitous creation of the internet which presented a wealth of information which would have taken years to research. Many articles can be found regarding many of the events which Lory to part in during the war. One of them most helpful organizations is the Korean War Project run by Hal and Ted Barker. Their website provides a wealth of information about the war and the many units that served in the war.

Unfortunately, it is hard to reconcile some of the events as information can be conflicting. An example, and perhaps the most difficult to work around, is the number of the 23rd Infantry Regiment’s fatalities during the Battle of Chipyong-ni which Lory as part of in February, 1951. Many records list the number of losses for the whole regiment the same as the number reported by the Second Battalion’s regimental commander for just his battalion. Perhaps someday I can reconcile those numbers with an official record.

It is often said history repeats itself, and with the Korean the same could be said. During much of European history the country of Poland was used as a buffer between the Russian and German empires. Its existence prevented the two countries from bordering each other and preventing any accidental outbreak of war. Throughout history the two empires would ravage Poland, splitting it apart at their whim, then it would reform as a country after some twist of events. Poland’s leadership would be forced to shift allegiances back and forth as each empire’s powers grew or shrank. Likewise, the Korean peninsula sits at the juncture of today’s great superpowers. Its northern border touches both the Russian and Chinese countries, separated primarily by the Yalu River at Chinese border and the Tumen River at the short border with Russia. To the west and south lies Japan which was then occupied by the United States following the conclusion of World War II. The Kim dictatorship in North Korea was historically backed primarily the Soviet Union and also China. Kim wanted to take South Korea and join them as one country. South Korea would serve as the buffer between Communism and the free world. South Korea only had a small number of American troops to support the peace. The peninsula was ripe for Communism to test the mettle of the rest of the world.

The Korean War would be the first, and as of this time, the only war directly between the Americans, the Chinese and the Russians. The Chinese supplied perhaps several million troops to battle. The Russians supplied not only aircraft, tanks (including one of the best tanks created during World War II, the T-34) and other armaments, they provided pilots to fly their MIGs which held off American air attacks along the northern Korean border with China. The United States flew bombing attacks in the north to stem the flow of Chinese troops south into Korea and destroy rail lines carrying supplies. The area near the Chinese border eventually became known as MIG Alley in which the Russians and Chinese maintained some air superiority over American aircraft.

The Koreans would lose over a million civilians in the war, the United Nations forces, including the United States would lose about 140,000. The Chinese count will probably never be known due to their lack of their transparency and honesty. They probably lost hundreds of thousands of troops in the war based on our after-

action battle reports. The difference in losses primarily rests on the facts of U.N. superiority in military equipment. As the war progressed the air superiority the U.N. maintained over the lower mainland provided better reconnaissance of enemy troop activity, quicker supplying of troops on the front lines and supporting firepower. The simple use of troop transport vehicles also allowed the U.N. troops faster movement along the front and the transport of artillery. The Chinese on the other hand did most of the work by hand, on foot or by oxen and horses. The Chinese advantage was the sheer quantity of troops they could throw into a battle; under armed and under clothed, but large in numbers with the hope of overrunning and outlasting their enemy.

The United States had the atomic bomb at this time. The Russians would conduct their first tests in 1949 and the Chinese a decade later. Use of the atomic bomb by the United States against both countries was considered at the early stages of the war. If used the results would be hard to predict and are debated still. Other than the Cuban missile crisis this may have been the closest the U.S. came to using a nuclear weapon against the Communists.

The Korean War ended in an armistice, or truce. There is no permanent treaty which ended the conflict. No victor was claimed as in World War II. While the U.N. forces can claim victory for pushing the North Koreans back out of South Korea, the Chinese in their own way also claim victory. Considering the long-lasting devastation which the North suffered and the subsequent economic development in the South it is easy to see who came out the better. Today the U.S. still has troops stationed in South Korea serving as a "tripwire" to prevent the North from resuming their attack on the South. Meanwhile the third generation of the Kim family still controls the North and has developed their own nuclear weapons.

The Cold War started at the end of World War II and would continue into the early 1990's with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Korean War established the determination by most of the world's free countries to prevent the spread of Communism. However, it can be argued the war with China continues to this day, just not in the obvious overtures seen in the past. History has shown Communism is a horrible governmental system which massacred almost 100 million of its own people in the twentieth century alone. Not in war, but by brutal regimes which have little regard for their people, let alone human life. The Korean War visibly showed that to us early on. In many regards the war in Vietnam was a continuation of this conflict. Only time will tell what will happen to Communism and their battle to overtake the free world.



Prologue

Lawrence, or Lory and Larry as he was called by friends and family, was born August 5, 1930 on Al and Frances' 11th wedding anniversary. He was born in the family house at 504 Martha as were all of his siblings but the oldest, Madge. He attended St. Patrick's Grade School and South High School. After school he drove a truck and delivered pop for his dad at Willow Springs.

Lory was a carefree and fun-loving young man, with an ornery side that could get him into trouble. But because of his pleasing personality it was hard for people to get mad at him. His customers were fond of him and enjoyed seeing him. He loved swimming at Peony Park and would attend dances there. He met Birdie Marsh and was dating her before he was called back into active duty. He had a 1949 Chevrolet that he was very proud of.



He originally enlisted in the Army in 1948 with the help of his mother. He was never fond of working at the pop plant and wanted to get away. He went through basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and after his first tour had finished, he came back home. While there he was in an artillery battalion and was a truckdriver. He was later recalled to active duty after the outbreak of the Korean War on September 28, 1950. Lory was 20 years old. He served with the 2nd Division, 23rd Infantry Reg, E Company. He was shipped to Korea on December 23rd as a rifleman. He arrived in Korea on January 1, 1951, shortly after the Chinese entry in the Korean War and during the American retreat from the Yalou River and Chosin Reservoir. It was the longest retreat in American military history.

The following story is an attempt to retrace his steps in Korea. The story follows the movement and action of Easy Company as part of the 23rd Infantry. He fought in the famous Battle of Chipyeong-ni three weeks before he was killed. This battle is regarded as the Gettysburg of the Korean War and was a major turning point in the war. His regiment earned the Presidential Unit Citation for their performance in this battle.



Lory was killed in battle on March 8th, 1951. His parents, Al and Frances, were notified a month later by telegram on April 8th. Al was working at the pop plant on 13th and Jones when the telegram came. The messenger who delivered the telegram stayed while Al read the letter and made sure Al was okay before he left the plant. Al called his daughter Frannie and asked her to go be with her mom at the house on Martha St. He then called the kids and told them about Lory. He asked that they wait until he went home and told Frances himself. The minute he walked in the door Frances knew it was about Lory. Al's face was white.

Lory posthumously was awarded a Purple Heart. It is said it lay on his parents dining room table a long time. His mother, Frances, said she didn't want the medal, she wanted her son back. She never forgave President Truman for sending him to Korea. It also could be said he was her favorite son. His sister Madge had the military portrait shown on the precious page.

Lory's body was returned to the United States. A Mass for him was held at St. Patrick's Church on 14th and Castelar. The military transported him to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where he was buried on October 15th in the base cemetery in grave 300 C Station B. His mom wanted him buried there rather than in Omaha to be with the rest of his buddies whom he served with. His name can be also found on the Korean War Memorial at Memorial Park in Omaha. His family was in attendance. His mother was presented with the flag which was draped over his casket. After years of research, I received the other medals Lory was awarded for his service. The picture, flag and medals are now together.

This is Lory's story. May he rest in peace.



Lory on the left with his buddy Rich Warsocki.



Lory on the right. He probably drove a truck similar to this while in basic training at Fort Sill.



ARRIVAL

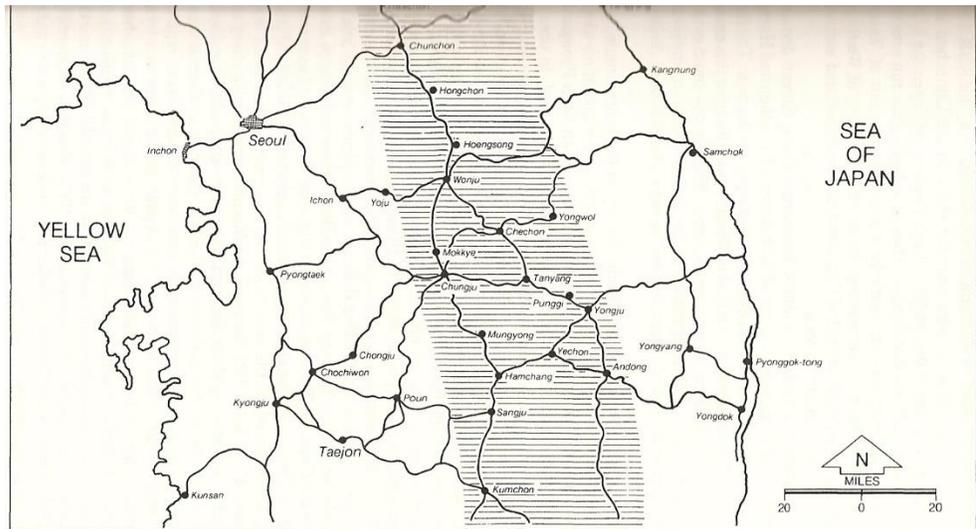
On January 1, 1951, our uncle and brother Lory Riedmann arrived in Korea. He was greeted by brutal winter weather with snow, frigid temperatures and frozen ground. His timing was not the best. He entered the Korean War as a member of E Company, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. E "Easy" Company is part of the 2nd Battalion of the 23rd which consisted, of E, F and G Companies.

Lory first enlisted in the Army on August 6, 1948, the day after his 18th birthday. He was very unhappy working for his father at the pop plant and begged his mother to take him down to the enrollment station. He went through boot camp at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. With the Army not in great need of personnel his service was up after 1 year, until the North Koreans decided to invade South Korea. He was soon called back on Sept. 28, 1950 and sent to join the 23rd Infantry Regiment in Fort Lewis. With the help of his brother-in-law Tony Panowicz he was assigned as a cook. But as things would work out, due to a couple of missteps by Lory, he was reassigned as a rifleman in the infantry and shipped off to Korea on Dec. 23, 1950.

The 23rd Infantry Regiment has a long and illustrious history. The regiment was formed in 1812 and first saw action in the War of 1812, taking part in many battles. They also fought in the Civil War. In 1866 it was reorganized and redesignated to the present 23rd Infantry. Over the decades they would be stationed in the newly acquired Alaska Territory, the Philippines during the Spanish-American War, World War I and in the European Theater of World War II. After the war they were stationed in Fort Lewis, Washington. This is where Lory joined the 23rd. Since then the 23rd has served in Vietnam, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The following story is an approximate day by day progression of his 9 weeks in Korea.

In mid 1950 after pushing the North Korean army all the way north to the Chinese border, the Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) stormed into the war and in a little over a month pushed the UN forces back south past the 38th parallel (the previous and current border) and out of the South Korean capital of Seoul. This was the longest continuous retreat in US Army history. The South Korean (ROK) army was not providing much support; frequently losing battle after battle to the North Koreans to the point the American Army did not have confidence in them. Their retreat had exposed the east side of the UN line increasing the possibility of being surrounded. To compound the bad situation General Walker, who was commanding all UN forces in Korea, was killed the previous December in an auto accident. General MacArthur placed General Matthew Ridgway in command of the Eighth Army.

The main body of the 23rd Infantry was already in South Korea when Lory was called up having arrived in early August. They were placed on the Nakdong River Line where the UN Forces had been cornered in the southern end of the peninsula in what was called the Pusan Perimeter. Under the command of Colonel Paul Freeman the Regiment was gradually transformed into a Regimental Combat Team. Col. Freeman, who was liked and respected by his troops, attached artillery, antiaircraft and engineer battalions to the regiment. This gave them a certain amount of self-supporting status and flexibility whenever they went into action. They fought in several battles shortly after arriving in Korea and had moved north with the UN forces into North Korea until the CCF entered the war and pushed them back south.

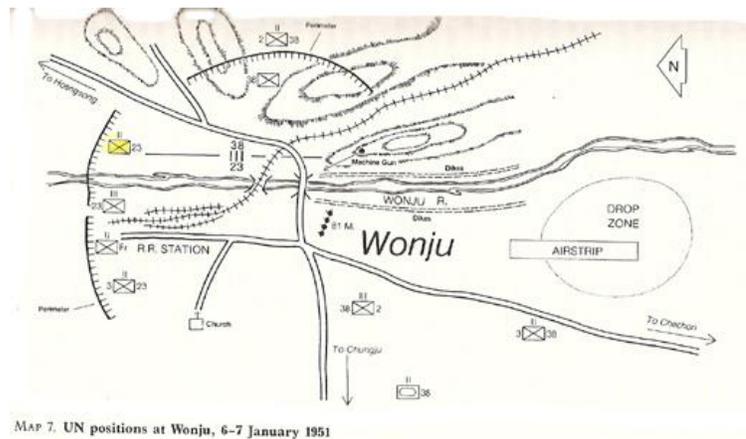


MAP 6. Central corridor, January 1951

When Lory arrived the 23rd Regiment was assigned by General Ridgway to assist in defending the Wonju line. Wonju is a town in central Korea where the UN line of defense ran roughly east-west through it. Wonju (see above map, Wonju is east of Seoul) occupied the central corridor of Korea with several main roads intersecting there. It was critical it be held or the CCF could take control of the whole region. The UN forces hoped to establish and stop any further advance of the CCF and North Koreans. Things were not looking good.

In the first few days of January, Lory and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 23rd were operating south of Hongchon (north of Wonju) near Changbong-ni. They had to break through a North Korean roadblock that was preventing ROK troops from retreating southward in the face of a fierce North Korean advance in their area. Once ROK troops had cleared their positions the 23rd next retreated south to Hoengsong on the 5th. On January 6th and 7th the 23rd Infantry was positioned in defensive positions in Wonju. The map below shows Lory's position with the 2nd battalion of the 23rd in the upper left. It is highlighted in yellow.

On January 7th, 1951 Lory's regiment, and other UN forces, retreated south from Wonju as it appeared the line wasn't going to hold. This time is regarded as one of the lowest points in the war. But General Ridgway would not stand for it. On January 8th Lory's company was part of the beginning of the counterattack to take Wonju back. The tide would start to turn.



MORALE AND CONDITIONS

The following is a summary from the book *Ridgway Duels for Korea* by Lt. Col. Roy Appleman:

When General Ridgway arrived he found that restoring the morale of the Eighth Army was critical. They were "a force without a name". Without it there was little they could accomplish. What he would tell his commanders at meetings was "'Don't want to see your defense plans, want to see your attack plans'. But old feelings died hard." When this was passed on to the rank and file their reply was usually, "Bull----, who does he think he is kidding?"

In the subzero weather they were enduring, everything froze in minutes. Add to it a 30 knot wind and the wind chill would be over fifty below. Staying warm was an all consuming effort. Eating was critical to maintain energy which the cold would sap from the body. Usually they ate cold, or frozen, C rations with their bayonet. It took an hour and a half to boil water. Then another two hours to heat their frozen meat. The cold affected their weapons as they would freeze, then malfunction. When poured into a radiator water would freeze before it got to the bottom. Trucks would have to be run every 15 minutes or they wouldn't start. They had to dry their socks, if they could get a fire going, twice a day to avoid frostbite. At Wonju the temperature would reach over 20 degrees below at night and there was 18 inches of snow on the ground. Frostbite cases were more numerous than battle casualties.

LORY'S FIRST BATTLE

On January 8th the 2nd Battalion (Lory's) of the 23d Infantry Regiment was designated as part of the attacking force to re-take Wonju. They jumped off against fierce resistance, fighting from house to house towards the town and making some progress in the initial stages. In one case E Company surprised a North Korean regiment asleep in a village and brought considerable destruction to it with the help of artillery killing up to 200. However, enemy reinforcements poured against both flanks of the attacking 2nd Battalion and it was forced to withdraw to high ground on the south side of town.

On the 9th they tried again and had little luck. They met more resistance when they arrived at the same location as the day before. E Company was ordered to take Hill 247 against a larger North Korean force (the number used to name the hills indicates its height in meters; the higher the number the taller the hill.) They set up a defensive position for the night and the temperature dropped to 25 degrees below. To add to their misery the shoepacs they were issued were all one size, large. Men had to wear up to four pairs of socks to make them

fit. At this point there were no hot meals as the kitchen trucks were 40 miles to the south.

Lt. General Edward Almond, who was under General Ridgway and commanded X Corps, visited the area on the 9th to meet with Colonel Freeman and Lory's immediate commanders. Almond complained that the 23rd's artillery pieces were not manned, some guns were pointed in the wrong direction and the wrong people were supervising the artillery. This emphasized the low morale and disorganization that Ridgway encountered everywhere.

On the 10th the attack was resumed, this time with more forces. Friendly artillery and air support pounded the masses of advancing communists inflicting staggering casualties while the bitter weather exacted an increasingly heavy toll on attackers and defenders alike. The 1st and 2nd French Companies, part of the French "Le Bataillon de Coree" which had joined the 23rd the previous December, now joined the battle. After savage fighting they repulsed four successive attempts by the enemy to envelop their positions. With their ammunition in some case spent they had to resort to fixing bayonets for the fight and together the Americans and the French turned the enemy back. The attack was broken and friendly lines remained intact. Over the next four days control of the hill would change hands with the 23rd taking the hill during the day, then setting booby traps and the North Koreans taking the hill at night. The attack did not carry into Wonju but the American artillery now had the hill and the town in range.

It should be noted that General Ridgway was impressed upon learning of the results of the French, and other troops, use of the bayonet. He sent out information to all of the Eighth Army encouraging its use. The enemy was sending so many waves of troops at our lines that at times we ran out of ammunition, and the waves of enemy troops kept coming. It was a weapon of last resort, but successfully so. Apparently the Chinese were not trained in its use or how to defend against it. It should be noted Ridgway awarded Silver Stars to two French officers for their role in using bayonet attacks.

When the CCF sent their troops into the battle they had a gun, a few rounds of ammunition, a few grenades, and a knapsack with some rice. Not much more. They were just as likely to run out of ammunition too. The Chinese command was relying on the sheer number of troops to overrun the UN lines. Bodies would literally pile up in front of the defensive lines as they were killed.

MOVING BACK TO WONJU

Again the cold weather was a major factor and it may have affected the Chinese more seriously. After CCF had taken Wonju they would spend a great deal of time inside buildings to stay warm. They were tired too. However they did not have control of the air. So on January 11th when the skies finally cleared it was discovered that they were crowding into buildings and it was easy for the air force and artillery to bomb them. We essentially established a scorched-earth policy and leveled everything. It was this superiority that helped stem the tide and inflict severe losses while saving many American lives. Lory's 2nd Battalion, with the 3rd French Company attached, moved forward from their defensive lines. The 23rd struggled to wrest important positions from the enemy on the southern outskirts of Wonju from which the Koreans had been laying down bases of fire on our positions.

On January 12th the 2nd Battalion, with heavy air and artillery support, again captured Hill 247 southwest of Wonju. On reaching the crest of the hill they found 80 enemy dead and many trails in the snow where the wounded or dead were dragged off the hill. The battalion then formed a defensive ring with several other American, French and Dutch companies

On the 13th, or 14th (records give both dates), General Almond conducted a personal inspection of the front lines. When he met with Colonel Freeman of the 23rd Infantry Freeman told him there had been three "bonzai" attacks on his troops during the preceding night. Towards the end the fighting was in very close. He said E Company had been hit the hardest but they had inflicted over 100 casualties. Only two were killed and four were wounded from E Company. He thought there were about 10,000 enemy troops massed in front of them in Wonju.

Later that day Generals Almond and Ridgway went on foot to inspect E Company and their positions. He spoke with Captain Sager and reviewed how we were dug in. Almond felt we were poorly prepared and the providing of hot food poorly organized. The men would use their bayonets to cut into and eat their frozen c-rations. He

also talked with Captain Allen at the front lines of E Company and saw the bodies of 14 enemy dead in front of the Company. He felt their morale was good, but their positions (foxholes) were poorly dug in. The ground was frozen about 10" deep at that time. Apparently Almond found that the French did a much better job of digging than we did. Upon learning that the men hadn't had a hot meal since Christmas he promised them a hot meal that very night. To everyone's surprise they were served a hot meal of beef, potatoes, warm biscuits, canned vegetable and cookies that evening. Everyone took turns hiking down the hill from their positions to eat.

CHANGE IN COMMAND AND A REPRIEVE

On January 14th Ridgway, with all elements of the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) locked in battle, relieved General Robert McClure of command of the 2ID and replaced him with General Clark Ruffner. He was the former Chief of Staff for X Corps. Ridgway, and especially General Almond, felt McClure had made serious mistakes and disobeyed his orders regarding the evacuation of Wonju by moving too far south and giving up too much ground.

At midnight the same day General Ruffner received orders to withdraw the 2ID south from Wonju to establish a new line on the 15th and 16th. It appears a bulge had developed in our line and Ridgway wanted to create a more defensible position. The 2nd Battalion of the 23rd was moved back into a reserve position which lasted only one day. They were first moved to patrol the Wonju-Chungju road then reassigned to the Chechon area to the southeast of Wonju to assist other units. The North Koreans were continuing to pose a serious threat on the east side of our lines and they were needed to help defend that flank.

The 2nd Battalion of the 23rd Infantry was to assist the 9th Infantry and the 7th Division. It was separated from the 23rd's 1st and 3rd Battalion by the 2ID Command. Even the French Battalion was reassigned to a different regiment. Over the next two weeks the 2nd Battalion would conduct patrols in the area to hold the North Koreans in check while other units continued to clear them out of the eastern flank. Combat activity was reaching a peak in this area but it appears Lory wouldn't see any heavy combat action until the end of the month.

It can be noted here that Ridgway felt the tables had turned on the North Koreans. After several days of bombardment and devastating aerial attacks in the central corridor their troops were being killed by the thousands and entire divisions were wiped out. Whatever troops were left were evacuating to the north, quickly. The 2ID had reduced their numbers, their effectiveness and their will.

On the western side of the peninsula Operation Thunderbolt had commenced to push the North Koreans and Chinese back to the Han River, just south of Seoul. The hope was to establish a new line farther north extending from the Han River to Hoengsong and to Kangnung on the eastern coast.

It also should be said that the 9th Infantry entered Wonju on the 17th and found little resistance. By the 20th the area was secure enough for Ridgway and Ruffner to land at an airstrip near the town to review the situation for a day. By the 24th Wonju and the eastern flank were back under UN control. By the end of the month Chechon would be established as a rail-head allowing supplies to be shipped in closer to the front.

LORY'S ARMY UNIT EXPLAINED

Since things were relatively calm at this time the following is an explanation of how his unit was made up. Keep in mind the US Army would move units around as needed and attach them to whatever unit was most in need.

Lory was in the 23rd Infantry Regiment, also known as "Tomahawks". They were given this name during the Korean War. Their motto is "We Serve". The 23rd had 3 Battalions of infantry: 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Each Battalion was made up of several Companies. A, B and C Companies were in the 1st Battalion; E, F and G Companies were in the 2nd Battalion. Lory was in E Company. I, K and L Companies were in the 3rd Battalion. Each Company could be from 60 to 250 men. Each Battalion could include 300 to 1,000 men. Each Regiment could be from 2,000 to 5,000 men.

Each Company could in turn be broken down into Platoons, then Squads and then Patrols. Regiments would be combined to make up a Division, and Divisions combined into a Corps and several Corps into an Army. The

23rd was part of the 2nd Infantry Division.

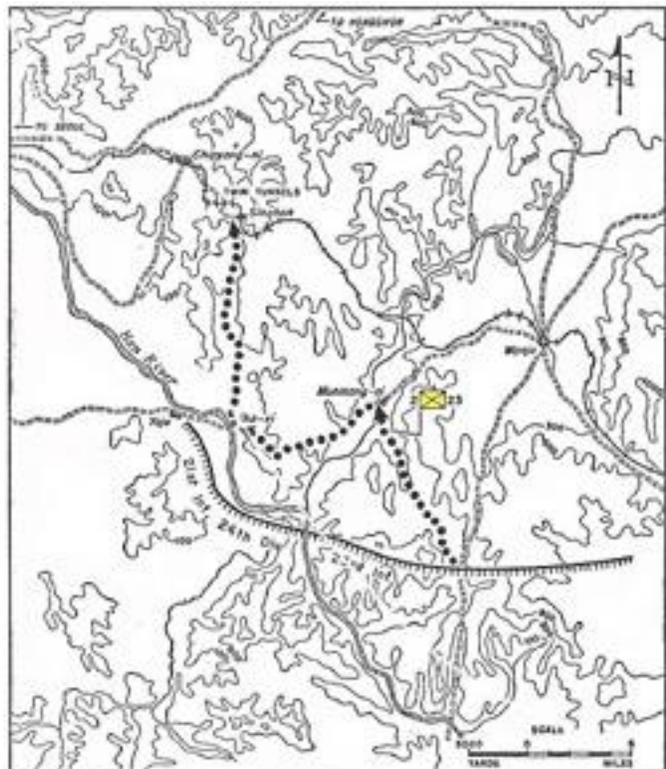
To recap Lory was in E Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Division, X Corps, 8th Army. The US sent the 8th Army to fight in Korea. For much of this part of the Korean War there was a French Battalion attached to the 23rd Regiment. In upcoming battles there were also Field Artillery Battalions, Medical Battalions and Engineer Battalions among others.

BUILDUP TO TWIN TUNNELS

Operation Thunderbolt was initiated on the western side of Korea south of Seoul, pushing the Chinese (CCF) back to the Han River. Since the CCF entered the war this was the first time we were attacking them. This action put the Chinese in the precarious position of having their backs to the river. Unless you were well prepared you did not want to be in this position. Gradually the Chinese were retreating from this area. Unfortunately, they were moving to the east towards the Central Corridor and the Wonju area with new objectives. This buildup would lead to the 4th Offensive by the CCF and North Korean armies in early February. The first three offensives were planned attacks starting at the Chinese border and the Chosin Reservoir. The 4th Offensive was intended to be their next major attack to push us further down the Korean peninsula.

General Ridgway placed great emphasis on reconnaissance by keeping contact with the enemy to find out where, who and how many there were. Extensive patrolling during this time was ordered in the area between Wonju and the Han River for this was the point of greatest concern. Lory's 2nd Battalion would be sent to the north and west in search of the CCF troops to find out what was happening. During this time they would rejoin the 2nd Battalion and relieve the French Battalion at Munmang-mi. Patrolling in these areas was done under miserable weather conditions, with little time given to complete their missions, and seldom allowing them to work with caution. It was dangerous and nerve-racking work. Over the next few days the 23rd Regiment would start coming back together and revert back to regimental control.

To the right is a map that shows the route Lory took during the latter part of January. The highlighted symbol in the middle, the rectangle with the x inside, indicates the 23rd Regiment, 2nd Battalion. You can see his unit was moving gradually north and west towards the Twin Tunnels area. This refers to two small mountain tunnels a railroad line passed through between Chipyeong-ni and Wonju.



On January 28th members of K Company from the 23rd, with the Weapons Company (M Company) was ambushed on patrol north of the Wonju-Yoju road near Anchang-ni. It was a small patrol and they had traveled over the same road the day before and encountered no enemy troops. However, on this day they were there, waiting. Eight enlisted men were killed very quickly as 200 enemy charged towards the patrol. The remainder was captured with one injured soldier let go. Another small patrol heard the fighting and rushed to the scene rescuing the injured man. They then had to withdraw because of superior size of the enemy force.

Colonel Freeman sent Capt. Tyrell and F Company to the scene. They pushed the enemy back but only found the eight dead men and brought them back with four of the five jeeps from K Company. The other troops were never seen again.

TO TWIN TUNNELS

On the same day the 1st Battalion of the 23rd sent a platoon to the Twin Tunnels area where the railroad ran from Wonju to Chipyeong-ni. The rail line ran under two large hills before running about 3-4 miles to Chipyeong-ni to the northwest. To the surprise of the regimental, and division, headquarters they returned with no sighting of the enemy. That night General Almond, commander of X Corps, not satisfied with the lack of information, ordered the 2nd Battalion to repeat the patrol the next day.

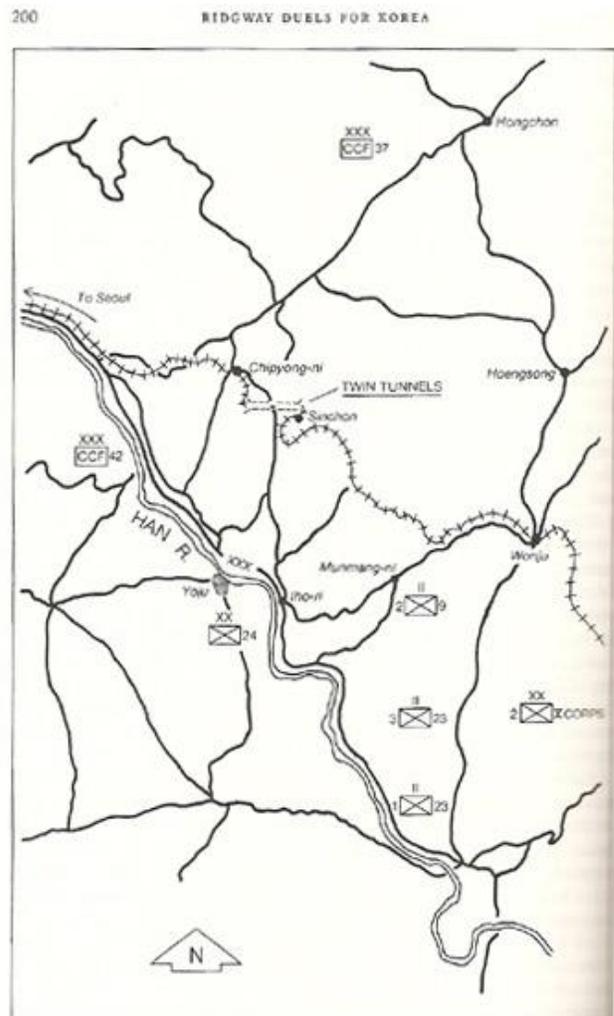
The patrol would be a combination of troops from C Company of the 23rd, a few men from D Company of the 23rd, and patrol from the neighboring 21st Infantry. Lieutenant Mitchell of C Company was put in charge. They were ordered to make contact with the enemy believed to be in the area but not to engage them. The patrol came together on the 29th at Iho-ri where the 21st was having trouble getting equipment across the Han River. They were well armed at this point with light machine guns, BARs, .30 caliber machine guns, 75 mm and 57 mm recoilless rifles and 3.5 inch rocket launchers, for those who may be familiar with weapons used at that time. The entire patrol would eventually consist of 60 men after being joined by Capt. Stai who was a Battalion assistant. Unfortunately some of the men were new and had never experienced combat and had little infantry training. Twin Tunnels was 15 miles north of Iho-ri. See the map below.

Lory was not involved in this battle until the very end as part of a rescue operation. There are several websites that have more detailed accounts of this and the next battle. If you have any interest in history you will find it amazing as it is a courageous effort on the part of the American soldiers.

On January 29th about mid-morning the patrol began its journey north towards the Twin Tunnels area. They had limited communication with their headquarters and each other. There was an observation plane in the air for a short while to help by spotting enemy troops. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate and it was too hazy to permit adequate reconnaissance from the air until it was too late.

The patrol stayed on the road north which was surrounded by hills on both sides. For the most part they traveled in a single column of vehicles with large gaps in-between making them harder targets to attack. This also spread them out enough that the rear vehicles could not see what was going on at the front. At about noon the patrol reached Sinchon, a small town near the tunnels. Part of the patrol moved ahead to check the area while Capt. Stai and his driver drove towards the town to investigate. He would tell the driver to wait while he walked into the town. He would never be seen again. His driver, when he saw enemy troops coming, turned around and tried to make it back to the main body but was killed.

The main patrol saw a small group of CCF troops and opened fire on them, but soon the patrol was being hit by mortar shells. Then they saw a large group of the enemy making a charge down one hill towards them. Lieutenant Mitchell could see that the entire column was now becoming bunched up in the valley and realized they were in trouble. He ordered the men to turn around and get out of there. But it was too late and



MAP 8. UN positions in Twin Tunnels area, January-February 1950

they were surrounded. Most of the men had dispersed from their vehicles seeking cover. Mitchell realized their only hope was to get to higher ground on one ridge before the enemy did. It was a steep climb up the snow covered hill and the Chinese were racing them up from the other side. As they were climbing they were under fire from other enemy troops.

48 of the 60 men reached the crest; some of them wounded. They set up a defensive perimeter as best they could but there wasn't much area to work with. Because of the steep climb most of the heavy weapons were left behind so they could climb the hill. The Chinese began attacking them immediately and would come in waves from different directions. It was estimated about two enemy battalions surrounded the patrol.

By this time the observation plane saw what was happening and radioed back to Col. Freeman their situation. Freeman ordered Captain Tyrell to take F Company of the 23rd and set out immediately to rescue them. They did not leave until about 3:15 and wouldn't get close for over 2 hours. They were told if they couldn't get there before nightfall to set up a defensive position for the night. As they approached the area they met some enemy resistance from a nearby hilltop and had to deal with them before they could get any closer. Once the enemy was killed or chased out they set up base at the top of the hill.

The observation plane was also able to assist by calling for air support for the patrol. Two attacks by 4 planes were made. They arrived just before dark and their strikes were effective. They would strafe the enemy position and drop napalm bombs. Another plane made several passes and dropped some ammunition for the troops and a note saying help was on the way. During this time the enemy stopped their attack, giving the patrol a break from the situation and lightening their spirits knowing help would be coming.

When darkness fell the Chinese would resume with their attacks. Several were made during the evening hours. Each attack was repulsed, but many in the patrol had become wounded, some having been hit multiple times. Incredibly they kept fighting on.

Tyrell and F Company now had his position secure so he organized several platoons to move towards the stranded patrol that night. As they were carefully progressing along the hillsides they encountered three wounded men from the original patrol. The men told Tyrell that the patrol had been wiped out. Since it had been a half hour since he last heard any fighting in the distance he decided to wait till morning before going any further. Then a few minutes later he received a radio call from one of his platoons that had found the patrol's medic who said the patrol was still there and fighting. After asking a couple questions that's all Tyrell needed to know, he ordered his men to continue in the dark.

Between first darkness and 9:00 the trapped patrol had encountered four attacks. During this time a couple of enemy troops had actually broken into the American position but didn't survive. It was so dark though that while they were in the camp it caused considerable confusion in trying to locate and kill them. By 10:30 many of the men were wounded and ammunition was nearly gone. It was about this time the first troops from F Company reached the patrol and after a few stressful minutes of trying to determine if they were American or Chinese troops the patrol realized they were rescued.

Apparently the Chinese had decided they weren't going to attack anymore that night and had pulled back. A thin moon had come up providing a little light. Over the next several hours all the men who were still alive were evacuated down the hill and taken back to F Company's position. They were loaded up in trucks and moved back to Iho-ri. They arrived at sunrise without seeing any more enemy troops. In all it was determined that only 12 men from the original 60 were unharmed. F Company did not suffer any casualties. It is estimated that enemy casualties were as high as 200 killed and 175 wounded, but this is speculative.

In review, it is believed that by moving the men to a high point on a hill, in combination with bringing a one machine gun and several BARs, that this was the difference in their surviving versus being overrun and probably killed or captured. Credit also goes to Captain Tyrell in his mastery of small-unit tactics and steady leadership that allowed F Company to arrive in time and intact.

RETURN TO TWIN TUNNELS

As the battle ensued at Twin Tunnels on January 29th General Ruffner of the 2nd Division ordered the 23rd Infantry Regiment to move two battalions to a line along the Munmang-ni - Yoju road to prevent enemy

attempts to attack up the Han River valley. Colonel Freeman started the move the afternoon of the 29th and was to be finished by the evening of the 30th. The 3rd Battalion moved first carrying as much ammunition and supplies as they could and the French Battalion followed. Limited transportation was available and the infantry had to proceed on foot. They found a place to cross the Som River, which was a tributary of the Han River, and 3rd Battalion crossed it before nightfall.

During the night of the 29th-30th Ruffner changed his orders for the 23rd. He ordered Freeman to move the two battalions to the Twin Tunnels area immediately, find and destroy the enemy, then occupy the high ground and verify which enemy forces were there. Freeman chose the 3rd Battalion and the French Battalion.

The 1st Battalion was left to defend the Munmang-ni - Yaju road and the 2nd Battalion (Lory's) was to remain at Munmang-ni under the 2nd Division. Other regimental forces such as artillery and medical companies joined up with the 23rd for either the trip to Twin Tunnels or to assist in defensive positions.

The 3rd and French Battalions with the supporting 37th Field Artillery were ordered by Freeman to move up the valley on the same road the earlier patrol had taken and attack the enemy. The attack was to commence at 7 a.m. on the 31st. The French Battalions moved up the left side of the road and the 3rd Battalion covered the right side of the road. The French had the more difficult terrain including Hill 453 which is where F Company, while rescuing the earlier patrol, met their first resistance. Their progress was slow and methodical as they moved from hill to hill. They had an aerial observation plane to assist but they reported no enemy seen. E Company (Lory's) screened the right flank of the advancing forces until they contacted elements of the 3rd Battalion. E Company then moved back to their base at Munmang-ni.

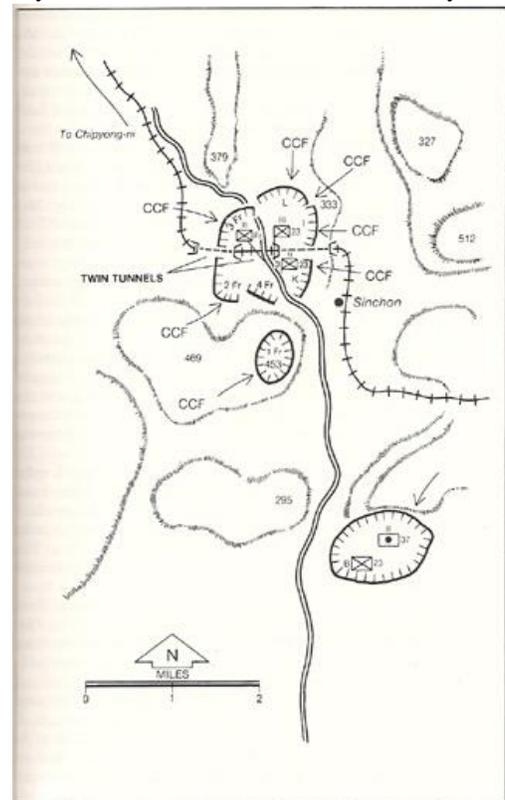
Freeman, with some misgivings, ordered the French 1st company to remain on Hill 453 because of its strategic significance and the 37th Field Artillery Battalion was positioned to the southeast. The rest of the units were moved to the hilly area where the patrol had fought two days prior and around the tunnels. They were spread thin but there wasn't much they could do about it.

THE BATTLE OF TWIN TUNNELS

The night of the 31st passed quietly until just before dawn on February 1st. Members of the CCF 42nd Army sent a large regimental force down the road on the north side of the tunnels and right into a roadblock L Company had set up. After the roadblock team pulled back the Chinese then attacked their position. Artillery strikes by the artillery battalion were called in to stop them and many casualties were inflicted. The Chinese pulled back. Prisoners were taken and a copy of the enemy attack plan was found on one. They were concentrating for an attack in the Chipyong-ni area and an entire division was moving down the road where they would march right into the 3rd and French Battalions.

As you can see on the map to the right the CCF would attack from three sides; the north, east and west. The French Company on Hill 453 received the first full attack that morning. They attacked for three hours primarily hoping to take their hill because of its strategic value overlooking the Twin Tunnels area. The battle eventually reached hand-to-hand fighting as ammunition ran low. Both sides were taking heavy casualties, but mostly the Chinese because of the supporting artillery bombardment. The French company decided to launch a bayonet attack on the Chinese just when they were about to lose the hill. With a small victory in their grasp the Chinese fell back in retreat. They never came that close again the rest of the day.

The weather that day went from hazy to overcast and eliminated any hope for air support. While Hill 453 was under attack Freeman learned enemy troops had moved around to the east, cut



MAP 9. Twin Tunnels battle, 31 January-1 February 1951

off the road to the artillery unit to the south and was preparing to attack them. Freeman knew without artillery support things could get far worse and ordered B Company to go down the road and disperse the enemy, then go and assist the artillery. B Company quickly broke through the enemy roadblock and reached the artillery unit. Just as they dug in the Chinese attacked but were driven off. B Company remained with the artillery battalion for the remainder of the battle.

While the French were beating back the Chinese attack on Hill 453 the first Chinese regiment resumed with a new assault on L and I Company from the north and east. They concentrated on the gap between the two companies forcing I Company to withdraw. After re-grouping I Company counterattacked and regained their position and closed the gap. The Chinese persisted with their attack up a steep ridge into the heart of I Company and suffered very heavy casualties.

By noon General Ruffner realized that the 23rd was in for a hard fight and released the 1st and the rest of 2nd Battalions back to Freeman's control. The Battalions immediately began organizing for the march to the Tunnels but it took time to get equipment rounded up and there was a shortage of vehicles. They weren't expected to reach the area until nightfall. E Company was sent forward at once from the 2nd Battalion because they were the most prepared.

While the rescue was organizing, the Chinese at noon began an intense attack again, this time on the French 3rd Company and L Company. The Chinese gained control of a high hill on the northwest with a machine gun allowing them to fire into the center of the 23rd's position. The French 3rd Company tried repeatedly to overtake the Chinese hilltop. At this time there were heavy attacks all around the perimeter and no troops could be spared to assist the French. Everyone, drivers, cooks, clerks and mechanics were now committed to the fight. A final effort was ordered to take out the Chinese position by bringing in a "twin 40 flak wagon" (which means it shoots a lot of big bullets, very fast) to rake the area and ordered all available mortars and artillery to concentrate on the hill. After saturating the hill the French fixed bayonets and ran screaming up the hill. With victory in their grasp again the Chinese turned and ran. The French regained the hill amidst the hundreds of enemy dead they found.

The peak of the battle was reached at 2 p.m. as the Chinese were pressing intensely against the French 2nd Company on the west and I Company on the east. One American platoon was down to 12 men using just grenades and bayonets to hold their position. The Chinese had gained control of another piece of high ground between L and I Companies and were again firing into the interior of the 23rd's position. Ammunition was nearly exhausted everywhere, American and French casualties were increasing and by 3:00 Freeman believed they were going to cave in and have to fall back to their last possible line of defense.

Then a small miracle occurred, the haze began to lift and the skies started to clear. Immediately planes were launched to begin their assault on the Chinese. The first flight was four Marine Corsairs with 500 pound bombs, rockets and machine guns. After making several passes to determine who was who they climbed for their strike, then swooped down and unloaded everything they had on the Chinese in front of I Company. A second flight came in right behind the first and concentrated on the Chinese in front of the French troops where they found them massed on a bare ridge and fully exposed. They were killed in droves.

The pressure was now off as the Chinese were forced to start digging and hiding wherever they could to escape the devastating attacks from the air. 24 planes were involved in the air strikes and observation planes came in to direct artillery and mortar fire on those in hiding. By 5:30 the Chinese began a hasty retreat. Tanks were sent up the main road to cut off their escape and the rest of the heavy machine guns were brought to bear on the Chinese. The battle ended in a rout. Soon an airlift began to drop supplies for the regiment and ambulances began taking the wounded back to Yoju.

Shortly afterward the 1st Battalion arrived and was moved into position with L Company and the French 3rd Company. E company arrived next and was placed in a valley between the French 1st and 2nd Companies. They were used to plug holes in their defenses and strengthen the 23rd's position. The rest of the 2nd Battalion arrived after midnight and were ordered to stay back and defend the 37th Field Artillery. Freeman anticipated renewed attacks during the night, but they never came. At sunrise on the 2nd there was no sign of the enemy other than the dead.

In all the French suffered 27 killed, 97 wounded and 4 missing. The 23rd had 18 killed, 110 wounded and 1 missing. The Chinese had 1,300 counted dead and approximately 3,600 wounded. 700 dead were counted in front of all the French positions and 600 in front of the 23rd. More will be discussed about this amazing imbalance of casualties in a future story.

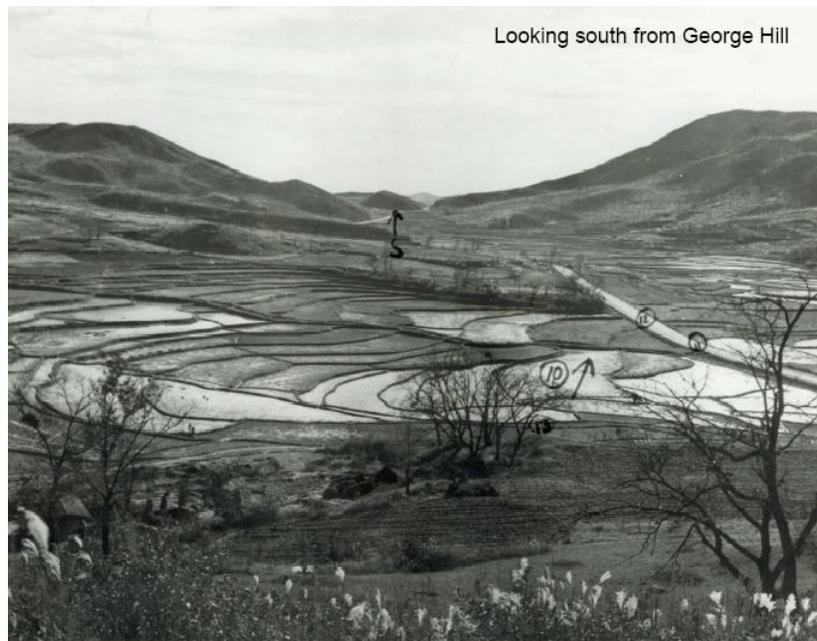
Freeman now had the entire 23rd Regiment under his command. In addition to the 37th Field Artillery he had the French Battalion, B Battery of the 82nd AAA AW Battalion and the 2nd Recon Company.

TO CHIPYONG-NI

It was now February 2nd and the CCF had been stopped at Twin Tunnels. Earlier it was mentioned they had found a note on one of the Chinese prisoners saying the Chinese were preparing to go to Chipyeong-ni which was four miles northwest of the Twin Tunnels area. Freeman now brought the 2nd Battalion into the perimeter and set up for the night in case the Chinese attacked again, but they didn't.

On February 3rd the 23rd advanced to Chipyeong-ni and began systematically scouting the hills surrounding the town. The road all the way to Chipyeong-ni was strewn with dead Chinese who didn't survive the air and artillery strikes two days before. E Company arrived in the village first. They moved north of town and started up snow covered Hill 348 and took on rifle and machinegun fire as they ran into a well-entrenched enemy. They were ordered to pull back to the village and man one of the lower hills on the north side of the village. The 23rd also encountered light resistance from adjoining Hill 506 to the east. Also on the 3rd Generals Ridgway, Almond and Ruffner met Colonel Freeman and his staff met back on Hill 453 back at Twin Tunnels to survey the situation. Most of the dead Chinese the French killed still littered the hill.

In setting-up a defense perimeter for Chipyeong-ni Col. Freeman decided to use a ring of low-lying hills surrounding the town. Better, higher, more easily defensible hills were available further out but would have required more forces than were available within his command so he chose to dig-in on the less desirable hills where his units would not be so widely dispersed. The picture to the right will give you an idea of their viewpoint. It is taken from a hill G Company occupied on the south side of the town. This is west of where Lory was positioned. The hills the 23rd occupied were lower than what you see in the distance, but still they had a fair capability to look



down on any advancing enemy troops. The road in the picture is 24A and the hill to the left is Hill 397. To the right is Hill 583 which is about 4 miles away. As you can see the CCF had access to the higher surrounding hills which would be of concern to any military commander.

THE GENERALS

The following pictures are of the generals discussed in this story and of Colonel Freeman.

The first picture is of Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway (on the right), Commander of the Eighth Army. Sometimes his name is incorrectly spelled Ridgeway. He was a respected and aggressive leader whom MacArthur trusted. He earned his rank in WWII as a commander in many battle operations including the Battle of the Bulge. Notice in the picture the hand grenade on his right side. On the other he carried a first aid kit, which many thought was a second hand grenade. He had a habit of always wearing them. Lieutenant Colonel

Montclar (left) was a legendary general and fearless leader from WWI, WWII and the French Foreign Legion. He gave up his rank so he could lead the French Battalion in Korea at the age of 60.



The second picture, from left to right, shows Montclar, an unidentified French officer, Major General Clark Ruffner who was in command of the 2nd Division under Ridgway, and Col. Freeman who commanded the 23rd at Chipyeong-ni. The 23rd was part of the 2nd Division.



The picture below was included to show the clothing they wore. Notice the heavy boots and hats. Also notice the soldier in the back with the rifle. The rifle was a standard issue M1 semiautomatic carbine. You will see a clip in the bottom allowing them to not have to continuously reload each bullet after a shot was fired. This weapon came into use primarily in the Korean War. General Ruffner is on the left; Lieutenant General Almond, Commander of X Corps, is in the middle and Montclar is on the right with the cane.



THE CHINESE 4TH PHASE OFFENSIVE

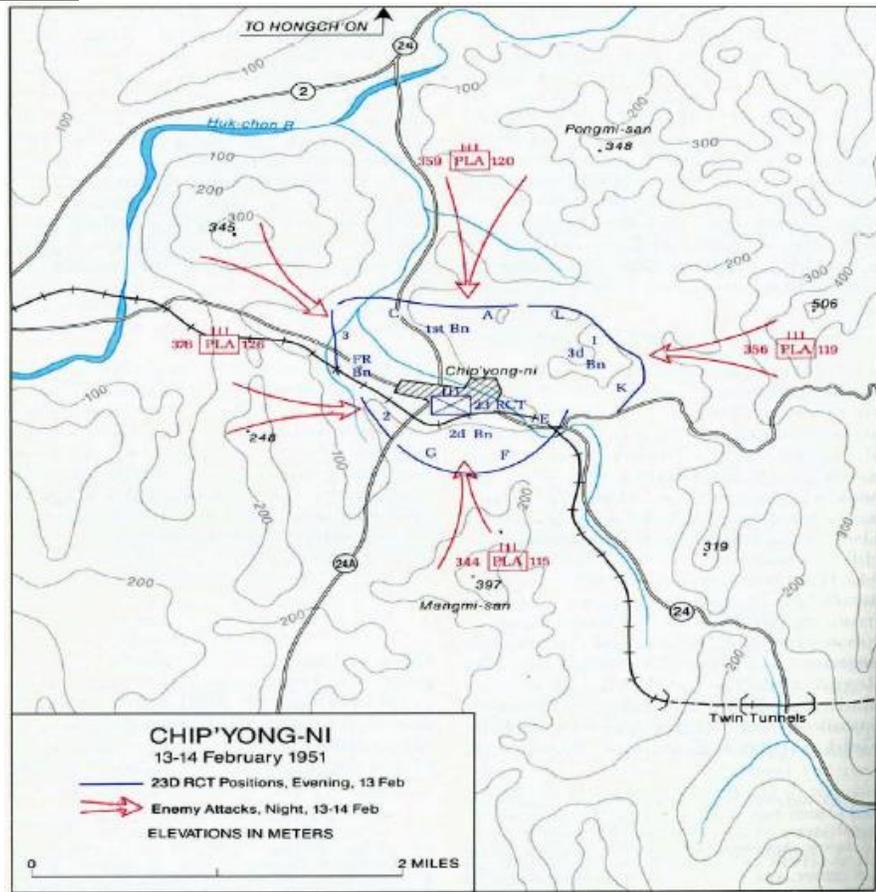
The 23rd Infantry Regiment, the French Battalion and supporting units are now all stationed in Chip'yong-ni after portions of it fought in the Battle at Twin Tunnels. The primary focus for Col. Freeman the next few days would be sending out patrols to locate the enemy and ascertain their intentions and size.

As mentioned earlier and still unknown to Ridgway and the entire 8th Army the CCF was planning to begin their 4th Phase Offensive. It should be noted discovered in Chinese documents found on February 14th that because Ridgway was pushing the UN army into an offensive mode and moving into Chip'yong-ni, and other areas, he forced the Chinese to begin their offensive well before they were ready. The conditions were not favorable to their plans, their planned rest period had been interrupted and they were not ready to fight. But the Chinese apparently considered the battle with the 23rd and the French Battalion at Twin Tunnels as the start of the 4th Phase Offensive. They hurriedly began re-consolidation of their forces to start their push over the next two weeks.

PATROLLING FOR THE ENEMY

Each morning Freeman set up forward observation posts about 1,000 yards to the north, west and south to watch for enemy movement. At dusk the outposts would be evacuated, leaving behind mines, booby traps and trip flares to let them know if there was any activity at night. See the map below to illustrate where some of the following hills are located and the location of the 23rd and French Companies in Chip'yong-ni.

On February 4th and 5th patrols from various units of the 23rd were sent out to Hill 345 (some contact with the enemy), Hill 506 (heavy contact), Hill 397 (no contact), Hill 129 (no contact) and Hill 248 (no contact).



On February 6th Freeman began sending patrols out up to three miles away. Lory's E Company made contact to the east of Chip'yong-ni at Sanggosong. On the 7th part of the 2nd Battalion was sent back to Sanggosong and successfully cleared out the enemy but the surrounding hills were still occupied. Of greatest concern was Hill 506 to the east. Other troops were sent to clear out Hill 506 but they were not successful.

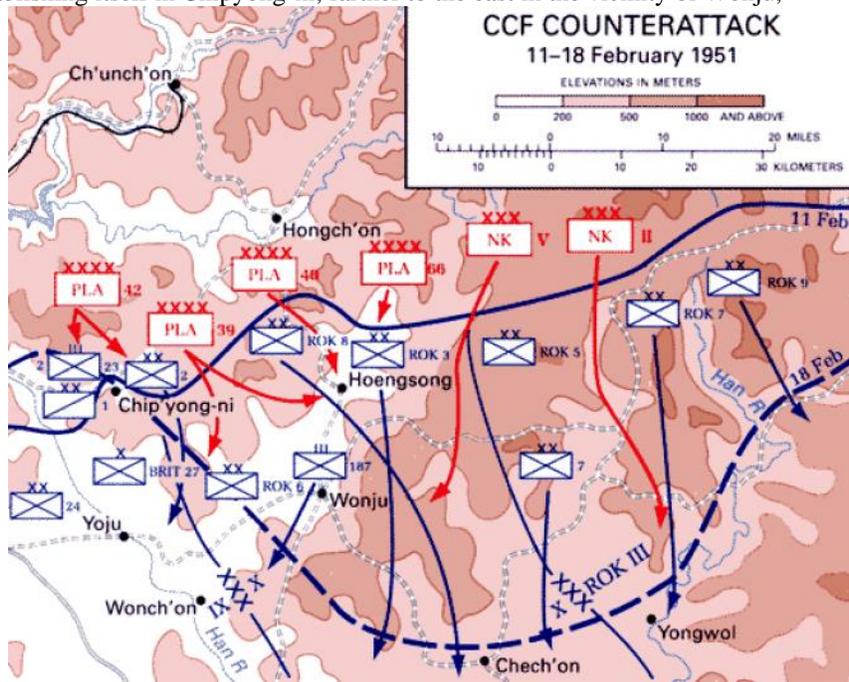
On February 8th the 2nd Division Command became concerned about the build up of CCF troops between Chip'yong-ni and Hoengsong to the east. Aerial spotters reported several CCF divisions moving east towards Hoengsong which means they were passing just north of the 23rd's position. Other patrols from the 23rd were sent north and met heavy resistance and had to withdraw. Patrols to the south and southwest still made no contact. So now Freeman knew the enemy is to the north and to the east. The enemy to the east was disconcerting as this threatened to cut the 23rd off from the rest of the 2nd Division.

Hill 506 continued to be of concern to Col. Freeman and he sent B Company to try and take the hill, with no success. F Company sent a platoon to the south to Hill 397 and G Company sent a platoon to Hill 129 and both make no contact.

There was also now concern about Hill 583, about 4 miles southwest of Chipyong-ni (not on the map), and heavy activity reported in the area occupied by the 24th Division. Freeman sent company sized patrols from the French Battalion to try and clear them out. But after two days they had little success.

OPERATION ROUNDUP

While the 23rd Infantry was establishing itself in Chipyong-ni, farther to the east in the vicinity of Wonju, General Almond established a plan for the X Corps called Operation Roundup. The plan was to move several large combined forces north towards Hoengsong. This force consisted of three divisions of the Republic of Korea (ROK) army and troops from several US battalions. The US troops were under the command of the ROK army and were to provide support for the ROK divisions. As discussed previously this was a questionable tactic given the past performance of the ROK troops. Compounding the situation was the reported movement of thousands of CCF and North Korean troops from the west and north.



During this time the ROK and US troops advanced their line to the north and reached Hoengsong by February 10th. The force had progressed enough to create a bulge in the line in the vicinity of Hoengsong. This created a dangerous situation given that we now know the CCF were moving portions of four entire armies and several divisions of North Koreans into the area stretching from Chipyong-ni to east of Hoengsong. The following is not a story about Lory and the experiences of the 23rd Infantry. It is not a happy story either. It is the story of what happened to many of our troops just prior to when Lory would fight the battle that will be regarded as the turning point of the war. This battle occurs February 11-13th.

The map below gives a picture of what they faced. All the boxes with XXXX over them represent a CCF army group of approximately 120,000 troops. The XX represents a Division of 10-20,000 ROK troops. When looking at Hoengsong in the middle where the ROK troops were you can see how badly they were outnumbered. When looking at Chipyong-ni where Lory was the III over the box represents the 23rd Regiment which normally has up to 2,000 troops. They had more than that, thankfully. The other boxes around Chipyong-ni represent portions of the 2nd Division that were in the area.

This story is about Support Force 21 and Support Team Baker made up of troops from the 38th Infantry Regiment, also of the 2nd Division, the 503rd Field Artillery Battalion and several other units. There was also a Netherlands Battalion defending Hoengsong that comes into the story at the end. The Support Force was now north of Hoengsong several miles. The return from their position in the north was on a road that traveled through a valley with high hills on each side.

MASSACRE VALLEY

On the night of the 11th the CCF began their 4th Phase Offensive towards Hoengsong and eventually Wonju. That night thousands of CCF troops overran the ROK 8th Division and sent their troops fleeing down the valley. Most were killed in the initial attack. Those not killed would try and keep up with the US troops during their retreat or never be heard from again. Unfortunately the US forces didn't learn immediately what happened ahead of them to the 8th Division until it was too late. To make things worse they didn't get orders telling them to retreat for several critical hours. Discovering what happened ahead of them the US Support Force started to retreat back down the road with the Chinese either pressing on their rear or attacking from the flanks.

The Chinese also put immense pressure on the ROK 3rd Division to the east and they fell back quickly during the night leaving the Support Force more exposed than ever. As the Force struggled to move south they were shot at from the high surrounding ground almost continuously. The men hugged the tanks for some protection but some of the tanks and trucks would be destroyed by rocket fire. This would make the trip harder as the road would become littered with destroyed equipment blocking their path.

As the day of the 12th pressed on other units would try and make the journey down the road. Many times the enemy would directly attack the troop column, wreaking havoc on any attempt to try and stay organized during the retreat. The tanks and artillery that were with the Force would fire back at the Chinese troops on the surrounding hills to try and clear their path, but there were just too many of them. They were also coming into the most dangerous section, a narrow gorge between several large hills just north of Hoengsong and safety.

A Battalion of troops was sent north from Hoengsong to assist the retreating forces but they ran into an enemy roadblock that prevented them from going further. They were unable to dislodge the enemy forces and suffered heavy casualties of their own. Eventually the Chinese attacks would reach Hoengsong itself while the troops to the north were still a couple of miles away.

By the afternoon of the 12th the ROK 3rd Division had continued its retreat allowing North Korean forces to enter the fight on the east. Because of the poor communication between some units and the refusal of the South Koreans to assist in the retreat the US commanders had to take many matters into their own hands. As the troops continued to retreat south they would meet and be joined by troops of other units. And the attacks would continue all through the rest of the day and into the night. They were essentially cut off from the rest of the 2nd Division.

While in the narrow valley a truck towing a howitzer was hit by mortar fire and the two jackknifed across the road at a narrow point. Only a couple of tanks could get by, everything else was stuck behind it. All equipment was now abandoned and the remaining troops moved south on foot. Eventually some would reach Hoengsong, taking a wide path as the Netherlands Battalion that was defending it was under fire from the attackers. Once the remaining force was behind the Netherlands unit they all retreated back to Wonju leaving Hoengsong to the CCF. Anyone left behind was on their own.

The devastation to the US and ROK forces in the battle were staggering.

ROK casualties (killed or wounded)

3d Division - 4,330

5th Division - 4,060

8th Division - 8,524

Total ROK - 16,914 (This number may not be accurate as the ROK forces did not keep good records.)

US 2nd Division losses - 1,136

Total US and UN losses - 2,018

There was also a large amount of equipment that was left behind in usable shape.

It was a month before the 1st Marine Division, the first American soldiers to arrive at the battle site, found the shocking carnage that still lay in the valley. It was they who gave the narrow valley just north of Hoengsong the name "Massacre Valley" and "The Valley of Death". They found the frozen bodies still there.

A comment should be made about what happened to many US troops that were captured here and at other times

during the war. While some were taken prisoner many would be stripped of their valuables and sent back to their own forces. Sometimes they would be captured a second time and sent on again. Then once they reached their own forces, and especially if it was dark, they would have to convince their own troops they were not Chinese troops lying to them and not to shoot. Several cases are documented where the Chinese would approach the US forces and make them believe they were ROK troops then attack once they were allowed past.

Another point of interest: It was also found that as the war went on the Chinese troops were poorly trained and equipped. It was eventually discovered through interrogation the troops were sent into battle with a few hand-grenades and some basic supplies. No guns. They were expected to pick them up on the field of battle.

The Chinese 4th Phase Offensive was now underway. By February 12th the central corridor of Korea was under attack and the UN and ROK forces were being pushed back again. This was only the opening battle, and it was a disaster. On February 13th large enemy forces began to focus on Chipyeong-ni and the 23rd Infantry Regiment. Heavier fighting was to come and it would depend greatly on the outcome of the Battle of Chipyeong-ni and the courage of the 23rd.

For a more detailed description of the above battle go to:

<http://www.kmike.com/EbbAndFlow/Ch14.htm>

Bill Mossman gives a good recount of the story. There a lot of names to keep track of, but you'll get the point.

CHIPYONG-NI BECOMES SURROUNDED

When we last reviewed the situation of the 23rd Infantry Regiment Hill 506 to the east and Hill 583 far to the southwest were of major concern to Col. Freeman and the 2nd Division. The region to the east was becoming a no man's land for US and UN troops as the CCF found this a weakened position in our lines. This area was between Chipyeong-ni and Hoengsong was partly occupied by the 9th Infantry Regiment but it was too great an area for too few men. Two Chinese divisions had entered the gap and could have taken advantage of it by continuing south and wreaking havoc on the entire X Corps which was responsible for this portion of Korea. They could have split the line wide open and reached the rear with little opposition. But true to previous Chinese tactics they didn't and instead turned west in order to cut off the two roads leading south from Chipyeong-ni. These would have been the escape routes for the 23rd. Now they were being trapped.

For several more days Freeman continued to send patrols out in all directions to ascertain where the CCF was. Previously B Company had been sent to Hill 506 on the 11th and had to return to the perimeter defensive lines of Chipyeong-ni after suffering some casualties. The French were trying to seize Hill 583. Freeman sent two platoons and three tanks from Lory's E Company to assist the French.

On the 12th another platoon of E Company was sent south to Hill 397 but they made no contact. A platoon from G Company was sent to Hill 248 to the southwest and also made no contact. This would turn out to be misleading as the Chinese would come to occupy these hills in the next 24 hours and commence attacks from these areas. Later on the 12th all patrols were pulled back as attack seemed imminent.

THE DECISION TO STAY

On the afternoon of the 12th Col. Freeman wanted to withdraw his forces from Chipyeong-ni at once and sent a request to General Ruffner of the 2nd Division, his immediate commander. Ruffner agreed. General Almond who commanded X Corps, which was over the entire area also agreed but could not give the order to withdraw because General Ridgway had decided he wanted Chipyeong-ni held at all costs. At this point Freeman also knew he could not pull back because of the lateness of the day. He did not want to move the regiment at night.

On the night of the 12th there were some minor probes by the enemy in the area of C Company on the north and the 3rd Battalion on east. Enemy flares were observed in the distance, probably indicating troop movement in those areas.

On the 13th Freeman did send out several patrols in all directions including a patrol from E Company to Hill 319. They reported the enemy approaching from the north, east and west. Aerial observers farther away reported large enemy groups moving towards Chipyeong-ni. Artillery and 40 air attacks concentrated on the enemy groups to the north and east while they were still some distance away. Some patrols from the 23rd were pinned down and required air strikes and artillery fire to assist them in getting back.

At about noon on 13th General Almond flew in to a makeshift airstrip at Chipyeong-ni and made a short review of the situation. When asked again about pulling out Col. Freeman said he felt they should again wait until the next morning, if permitted. Later that day he sent a new message to the 2nd Division command that he now felt they should pull back immediately even if it was getting dark. This was based on observations by his troops and troops from the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion in the area. Again Ridgway denied the request. As darkness fell everything indicated they were about to be attacked that night.

THE 23RD's SITUATION

Over the preceding days several other units were moved in with the 23rd. Colonel Freeman now had the following major units at Chipyeong-ni:

- 23rd Infantry Regiment, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of rifle companies and supporting weapons companies
- French Battalion consisting of 3 rifle companies, supporting weapons companies and some ROK troops
- Regimental Headquarters including a tank company, heavy mortar company, service company and medical company
- 37th Field Artillery Battalion
- B Battery, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Battalion (their guns were not used so much for anti-air attacks but rather against invading troops because of their lethal firepower)
- 1st Ranger Company
- B Company, 2nd Engineer Battalion
- 2nd Clearing Platoon, 2nd Medical Company

Their force totaled between 4,500 - 5,000 men. They were being surrounded by tens of thousands.

On the map shown previously on page 14 you will see Lory's E Company is positioned in the lower right corner of town. They were split on either side of the railroad tracks and across the road that came into town. The road passed under the rail line through a tunnel in which they placed booby traps and trip flares to prevent the Chinese from using it as cover to attack. The 2nd Battalion was all positioned on the south side, the French were positioned on the west, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions were positioned on the north and west respectively. The Regimental Headquarters, Medical Company and the 1st Ranger Company were in the center. Tanks, artillery and mortars were distributed as necessary throughout the garrison.

The first few days at Chipyeong-ni the troops did not dig in too much, but as the buildup of the enemy troops around them was more apparent they did make greater effort. The ground was frozen approximately 8-10 inches deep and they needed a pick to get through it. It was still extremely cold and snow covered much of the ground. The infantry did not do a great job of digging in but the artillery did. They used a sledge hammer to pound a crowbar into the ground and then attached a winch to pull it back to break into the frozen ground.

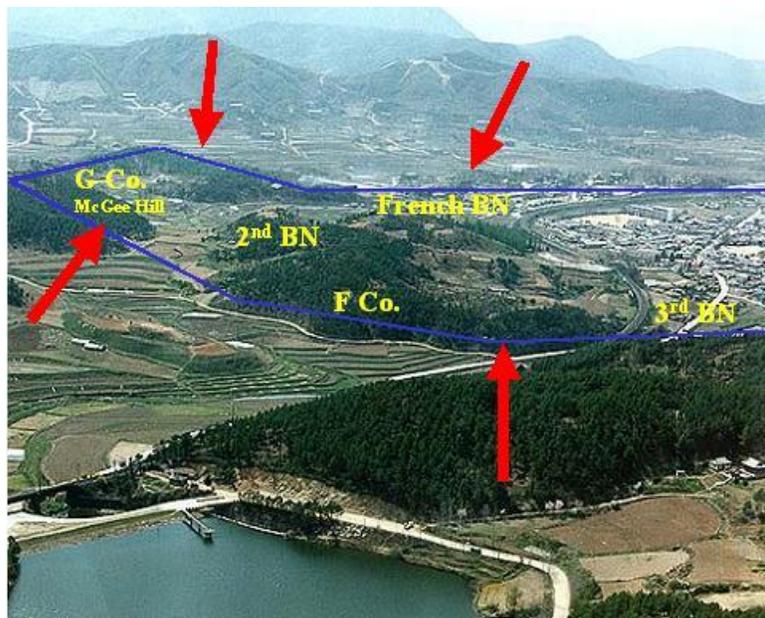
During this time Lory and the rest of the troops installed barbed wire, trip flares, land mines and every type of booby trap they could come up with in front of their lines in preparation of an attack by the Chinese. They had a M16 half track with quad 50 machine guns to cover the entrance to the tunnel. Two tanks were positioned in front of the 1st platoon on the left side of the road and another on the road. They went so far as to remove the tracer bullets from the machinegun belts to prevent the enemy from knowing where the shots were coming from. It was getting pretty obvious to everyone that they were in for the long haul. All their faith was now in Colonel Freeman to lead them, as long as they could get enough bullets.

There were five main roads coming into the town. There was also the rail line from Twin Tunnels that came in from the southeast. This is what made Chipyeong-ni important to both sides because of its importance as a transportation hub. The troops were spread around the town on low hills giving them some advantage on advancing enemy troops. In the modern picture below Lory's E Company would have been positioned to our right of F Company where the rail line passes around the hills. By 8:00 on the 13th darkness had fully fallen and they heard Chinese bugles and whistles blaring in the distance. 25,000 Chinese were coming and the 23rd waited.

NIGHT ATTACK – FEB 13TH

With the blaring of bugles, whistles and sirens they knew the Chinese were working their way towards Chipyeong-ni. For the first couple of hours things were quiet in their lines as the troops of the 23rd waited till they could see the enemy. At 10:15 pm the Chinese launched a mortar and artillery barrage to try and soften up their positions. As they approached the enemy troops ran into trip flares, mines and booby-traps in front to C Company on the north. Our troops held their fire until they reached the barbed wire in front of them.

At 10:20 a small enemy platoon probed Lory's E Company position followed by an enemy rifle company. E Company held their ground. Then the CCF launched the first attack against G Company followed by another attack at 11:00 with some enemy troops reaching the Company's foxholes. At this time a medical jeep was going down the road towards K Company but they were hit by enemy fire. The driver was captured by the Chinese and the medic would crawl to an E Company foxhole. A squad from E Company would make an unsuccessful attempt to reach the wounded soldiers. A second attack was launched against E Company at about 11:20.



On the west side the French launched a small surprise attack from their positions on the Chinese gathering in front of them sending most of the Chinese running. They were able to capture 15 Chinese prisoners. On the east K Company came under heavy attack.

Next the Chinese assaulted the regiment from the surrounding hills with heavy mortars into the center of the perimeter threatening the command post, supply dumps and first aid stations. At about midnight a fragment from a mortar shell hit the command post and wounded Col. Freeman in the leg. He insisted he was okay and refused evacuation. Freeman was actually more upset because the shell broke his last bottle of bourbon.

On the perimeter there was a brief calm before the next wave of attacks around 1:00 hit all of the 1st Battalion on the north with A Company receiving the worst, and a second attack on C Company. A third assault was conducted to the south on E Company, and G Company was probed again. On the west the French 2nd Company was also attacked.

About this time the Chinese decide to focus their attacks on the French from Hill 248 on the west, K Company on the east, and the 2nd Battalion from Hill 397 on the south. The terrain in these areas gave the Chinese the best approaches to these positions. While there was a fourth assault on E Company at around 2:20 the Chinese attacked G Company shortly afterwards and repeated their attack on G again at 3:00. The entire perimeter blazed with fire as the artillery poured round after round into the determined, frenzied attacking troops as they came in human waves at the 23rd. The defenders slammed all the firepower they could muster into the enemy hordes. The bodies piled up in front of them like logs.

The attacks in the area of E Company were attempts to move into the town on the roads between them and K Company. They tried repeatedly to break through the roadblocks comprised of tanks and the flak wagon. They would attach high explosives tied to the end of long poles, similar to a Bangalore torpedo, and try to destroy the tanks. Two tanks would be damaged but because of the heavy gunfire placed upon the enemy forces they would abandon the effort.

The attacks on G Company would prove to be the most intense as they would briefly break through the line

reaching the artillery positions behind them. Some of the troops would have to fall back. Reinforcements from F and K Company and an artillery battalion were sent in to stop the Chinese advance and re-establish the defensive line.

Portions of K Company would be cut off as the Chinese penetrated their lines. A counterattack was launched by vehicles with high caliber mounted guns to drive the enemy back inflicting great damage to their numbers.



SUNRISE

As the sun would rise the enemy pressure would relax except at I Company's and the French positions. K Company was still fighting determined Chinese troops at the roadblock leading into town. Finally, at 7:30, bugles sounded for the Chinese to withdraw.

As the soldiers climbed out of their positions to survey their surroundings they would count 500 slain enemy just beyond their lines. The sound of the moaning wounded and dying Chinese would fill the air. The ground was covered in blood soaked snow. There were approximately 100 wounded US troops in the Medical Collecting Station.

Ensuring the 23rd wasn't going anywhere, during the night two Chinese Divisions would swing south of Chipyeong-ni and occupy the terrain to the south wiping out the 2nd Reconnaissance Company and L Company of the 9th Infantry Regiment. They were now fully surrounded with no road out.

VALENTINES DAY REPRIEVE

Helicopter evacuations began as soon as the situation was stable enough in the area. Many of the wounded were airlifted out during the day. Col. Freeman, still wounded in the leg, refused evacuation and hobbled around the area to review the situation and urge his troops to continue the fight. Lieutenant Colonel John Chiles was flown in to relieve Freeman but Freeman told him to have a seat and stay out of the way., he wasn't going anywhere. General Ridgway also flew in by helicopter and promised help, but said they would have to stay and fight one more night. Freeman would not leave his men until the 15th.

Only four air strikes were made in the area back around Twin Tunnels because the largest mass of troops was found hiding there. More air support could not be provided because of the raging battle at Hoengsong and Wonju which was discussed previously. Fortunately there were airdrops by 24 C-119 Flying Boxcars as they were called (see picture to the right), which dropped cargoes with many supplies. Unfortunately they did not include illumination shells, which would be shot over enemy troops to light up the night sky revealing enemy positions, and the rifle ammunition was not sent packed in clips which would cause problems trying to load during night fighting. Freeman became furious as many of the troops were critically low on supplies, especially ammunition. But what was sent was greatly needed.

Once the supplies were dropped the troops would have to run out into the drop zone, which was an open field, to retrieve them. The Chinese would take advantage of the situation and shoot at the troops as they tried to grab the supplies and bring them back inside their perimeter.

The day was spent mending defensive positions, digging deeper holes, distributing ammunition, doing close-in reconnaissance and serving hot meals. Some prisoners were taken during the day by patrols which provided information on what the Chinese had planned next. The 23rd's moral was good considering the circumstances.

Early that evening the perimeter was subjected to a furious hour-long bombardment by the Chinese. Because no illumination shells were provided Col. Freeman made urgent calls for a "Firefly" to come to help. A Firefly was a cargo plane that would fly over the enemy positions and drop large flares that would burn for 15 minutes and illuminate large areas. The Fireflies came in relays most of the night to keep the enemy lit up. Freeman would later write that these helped keep them alive as much as any other gadget they had.



The attacks would resume once it was dark. The Chinese had a day to better plan how and where to attack the 23rd. They decided to focus again on the area of the 2nd Battalion and mostly G Company's position.

NIGHT TWO

On the night of the 14th the attacks started at different times around the perimeter of the garrison. K Company received their first probe by the enemy at 8:25. A and C Companies of the 1st Battalion would become heavily engaged at around 10:00 and the French 1st Company at midnight.

The attacks started on the 2nd Battalion at 7:30 with G Company receiving the most attention. The Chinese were unsuccessful in making any progress against the US lines at this time. Their next attack on G Company would come at 10:00 followed by wave after wave of nearly three regiments of Chinese troops. They kept coming at them over the next five hours trying to break through their line as the Americans poured all their firepower into them.

At 9:00 the Chinese began their attack on Lory's E Company. They came at them with Bangalore Torpedoes which are long extendible tubes with explosive charges at the end of them. The idea being to prepare the charge on the end of the tube and keep extending and pushing it out ahead of you with the tubes till it reaches its destination then set it off. This would enable troops to safely stay back and avoid getting shot. It was used to blow through barb wire or clear out obstacles. Fortunately the Chinese were caught in the breach they were creating and were killed before any serious damage was done.

The Chinese attacked E Company again at 10:00 with the attack on G Company. F Company, between E and G, was also attacked by a small group of Chinese. It was becoming obvious that the Chinese knew where they were going to press their attack. Using a spur, or ridge, from Hill 397 that adjoined the hills in the location of G Company they were able to gather and launch their attacks on G Company's position.

At 1:30 on the morning of the 15th the Chinese began coordinated attacks anew all around the perimeter. On the west side, at the 3rd Battalion position of I Company, the Chinese briefly penetrated their line. The line was restored when troops for L Company came to the rescue and pushed the Chinese back. An hour later the Chinese would come again and break through K Company's line. The fighting was hand-to-hand at times with the battle going back and forth. Finally the line was restored around 5:00 after a heavy counterattack with the help of reinforcements from L Company.

G COMPANY LOSES THE HILL

At 1:30 new probes were also launched on E and F Companies. Over at G Company's position the massing horde of Chinese still kept coming and coming. By now there weren't enough men left in G Company to hold

their line because of all their casualties. By 3:15 what few men were left had pulled back from their position. The fight had been hand-to-hand for each foxhole. The adjacent French 1st Company was pulled over to help provide a secondary line behind the weakened G Company line. The 2nd Battalion commander sent a platoon each from the 1st Ranger Company and F Company and a tank to try and re-take the ridge, but because of poor planning they had little success and many of them were wounded or killed.

At this point the Chinese had G Company's small hill under their control and could have followed the retreating troops inside the perimeter of the 23rd, but an order was given by the Chinese commanders to hold the position and not to progress any further. Once again the Chinese had victory within their grasp but they didn't take advantage of it. Repeated attacks on the hill were made throughout the remainder of the early morning hours, all brutally unsuccessful.

The rest of the 23rd's perimeter held through the night but ammunition was extremely low everywhere. At one point during the early morning hours all troops around the perimeter were told to not fire unless they had targets in front of them in order to conserve ammunition. As morning broke fighter planes came in to pound the enemy troops close to the perimeter and wipe them out or send them running for cover, except on Hill 397 to the south and in front of G Company's hill. The Chinese refused to budge from G Company's hill and appeared ready to hold their ground to the death. 131 fighter sorties were made that day at locations surrounding the 23rd. At 1:00 air strikes began to focus on the Chinese held hill of G Company hitting them with napalm bombs. The US troops pulled back while they were bombed for almost an hour. Napalm splashed and seared over the enemy troops. It was too much. Burned and screaming they withdrew and B Company rose up, firing into the retreating forces, then advancing and regaining some of the lost positions. An assault was made on the remainder of the hill but the Chinese resistance was furious and the US troops were pushed back again. The Chinese still held part of the hill.

Amid the frantic battle, planeload after planeload of ammunition was dropped during the day to the garrison which was holding on by its fingernails. Enemy mortar fire, falling into the drop zone, inflicted heavy casualties as the troops who exposed themselves to regain the precious ammunition and supplies. Counter fire from the artillery and mortar units finally silenced the pounding enemy mortars and the collection of the airdrops continued without letup.

Finally, about mid afternoon, a tank group was formed with supporting troops from the Ranger Company. They began to pull around the Chinese held position to try and out flank them as B Company continued to try and regain the hill. At about 4:30 B Company reported they could see an American tank column advancing up the road from the south and the Chinese were beginning to run.

TASK FORCE CROMBEZ

Colonel Marcel Crombez, commander of the 5th Cavalry was stationed to the south near Yoju. He was given notice by IX Corps command on the afternoon of February 14th to prepare for an attack from Yoju to Chipyeong-ni to rescue the embattled garrison. Another force, attacking from the southwest had encountered heavy enemy resistance along their route and was unable to break through. Upon receiving the order Col. Crombez began to immediately organize his task force.

The task force consisted of 24 tanks, a regiment of infantry, medical and supply trucks and a company of combat engineers. They had a fifteen mile trek to get there on a road that was little more than a narrow secondary road surrounded by hills. The infantry was needed to defend the tanks from enemy fire and the engineers were needed to clear the road of mines and make any repairs required at damaged bridges they might encounter.

To make a long story short it was almost a disastrous trip. They pulled out late that afternoon and would make the trip over night. They were repeatedly ambushed and attacked from the surrounding hills. About two thirds of the way there, early the afternoon of the 15th, Col. Crombez decided to leave a portion of the infantry and equipment behind at Kuksu-ri because they couldn't keep up on foot and there weren't enough vehicles to carry them. Time was becoming critical to make it to Chipyeong-ni before it was dark again.

On the last leg of the trip many of the remaining infantry troops were wounded or killed. Later the mission of the task force would become controversial because of the lack of information about the status of the route they

took, how many enemy troops they would encounter, inadequate protection for the tanks, the severe loss of US lives during the trip and the difficulty of making a fifteen mile trek in that short a time.

Eventually they did make it to the embattled 23rd by late afternoon just as another attempt was made to re-take the hill G Company had manned. When the Chinese saw the new tank group advancing and firing on them from the south after B Company had pushed them off G Company's hill and they realized they were about to be out flanked by the small tank group mentioned earlier they decided it was time to run. At that point it became a turkey shoot for the Americans. They killed as many of the running Chinese as they could. The hill was now back under the 23rd's control and the entire perimeter was secured.

It was now about 5:00 in the afternoon. Both US and French troops came out to greet the task force. Some of the men even kissed the tanks they were so happy. About 20 men dismounted the tanks once they reached Chipyeong-ni. Casualties to the task force were scandalous. 164 infantrymen and engineers were aboard the tanks when took off for Chipyeong-ni. The rest were wounded, missing, dead or lucky enough to make it back to their base. It is estimated around 2,000 Chinese troops attacked them along the route.

Everyone spent the rest of the day repairing their defenses, distributing much-needed ammunition and preparing for another night of attacks. Task Force Crombez positioned themselves with the rest of 23rd to shore up weakened defenses.

But the attacks never came. The Chinese never showed up. For various reasons the Chinese command decided they had enough of the 23rd. Much of it was because they were tired after two days and nights of attacks with little rest, the confused condition of the troops and their many casualties.

THE AFTERMATH

This was the turning point of the war. Military historians would refer to it as "the Gettysburg of the Korean War". The Chinese command later would acknowledge that they never anticipated the Americans to put up a fight based on the previous month's actions. They thought for sure we would run. It was the first time the Chinese had been defeated since they came into the war back in October of 1950. It was the first time an American and UN force of regimental size faced a larger Chinese force and successfully defended themselves. It immensely solidified the morale of the entire 8th Army once the word got out and gave them confidence that with good planning and strong desire they could meet and beat the Chinese head on.

Of the 4,500-5,000 troops in the 23rd's combat team only 52 were killed. 259 were wounded in battle and 42 MIA. The Chinese force consisting of 10 regiments from 4 divisions with over 25,000 troops suffered approximately 2,000 killed, 3,000 wounded and 79 captured. Some reports had the count of Chinese dead as high as 5,000 from all the combined action in the area. The entire Chinese force in that region was essentially put out of commission as an effective fighting force.

In an address to Congress in May 1952 General Ridgway said the following:

"I shall speak briefly of the Twenty-third United States Infantry Regiment, Colonel Paul L. Freeman commanding, [and] with the French Battalion....Isolated far in advance of the general battle line, completely surrounded in near-zero weather, they repelled repeated assaults by day and night by vastly superior numbers of Chinese. They were finally relieved....I want to say that these American fighting men, with their French comrades-in-arms, measured up in every way to the battle conduct of the finest troops America and France have produced throughout their national existence."

On February 20th, 1951 Sergeant First Class William Sitman was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. On July 11th, 1951 by Extract of General Order 49 the entire 23rd Regimental Combat Team and all attached units were awarded the United States Distinguished Unit Citation, today known as the Presidential Unit Citation, for the "Seige OF CHIPYONG-NI".

Colonel Freeman, who received the leg wound on the first night of fighting, was lifted out of the area for medical attention. He would later be sent back to the United States and never returned to Korea. He would receive the Award of the Distinguished Service Cross for his leadership during this period. Lt. Col. Monclar was awarded the Silver Star.

In a report later given by Col. Freeman regarding the battles he commented on the damage the Chinese suffered during the battles of Twin Tunnels and Chipyong-ni. He wrote:

"Two days later the 23rd RCT (Regimental Combat Team) pulled itself together and marched on to resume the offensive, to repeat Wonju and the 'Twin Tunnels' and Chipyong, again and again, the scene a little different, but the pattern always the same. This was the Infantry, dirty, tired, dragging Infantry and its brothers of the supporting arms. Not too tired to hold their heads up, not too tired to joke and cuss, not too tired to remember sadly the 630 buddies who had been carried to the rear during the past two weeks and to weigh their own chances. This was a proud and cocky Infantry -- proud to the point of haughtiness. Morale, what's that? What was the score? Well, that gook division at Hongchon, two more at Wonju, the Chinese 125th at the 'Twin Tunnels', and now the 'old man' says at least three of those at Chipyong won't fight again. Seven divisions knocked off in six weeks. Say, what are we worrying about? Let's get this thing over with. Let's go you foot sloggers!"

On February 16th and 17th the 23rd remained at Chipyong-ni and had no further major contact with the Chinese. The 5th Cavalry Regiment commanded by Col. Crombez moved back south to rejoin the troops he left behind at Koksuri and found no enemy troops during the trip. Air observers reported that the Chinese were hurriedly leaving the Chipyong-ni area.

During this time patrols were sent out short distances in all directions to also verify that the Chinese had backed away. They only had to deal with the occasional harassing mortar fire from distant hills as they made only moderate contact. It started snowing again on the 16th covering the Chinese dead who remained in the fields around them. This limited helicopter medical assistance. With the road to the south having been cleared much needed supply trucks and ambulances moved up to Chipyong-ni and the wounded were trucked south to Yoju for medical assistance.

The map on page 15 shows the advances made by the Chinese as they threw everything they had into the 4th Phase Offensive. To the west you will see Chipyong-ni and to the east how far the UN and ROK armies had advanced (solid blue line) and then how far they would be pushed back (dotted blue line). In the center at Hoengsong you will see where the US 38th Infantry and the ROK divisions were wiped out and pushed back to Wonju and further. But this was as far as they would get before the line held and we began pushing the CCF and North Koreans back north towards the 38th parallel.

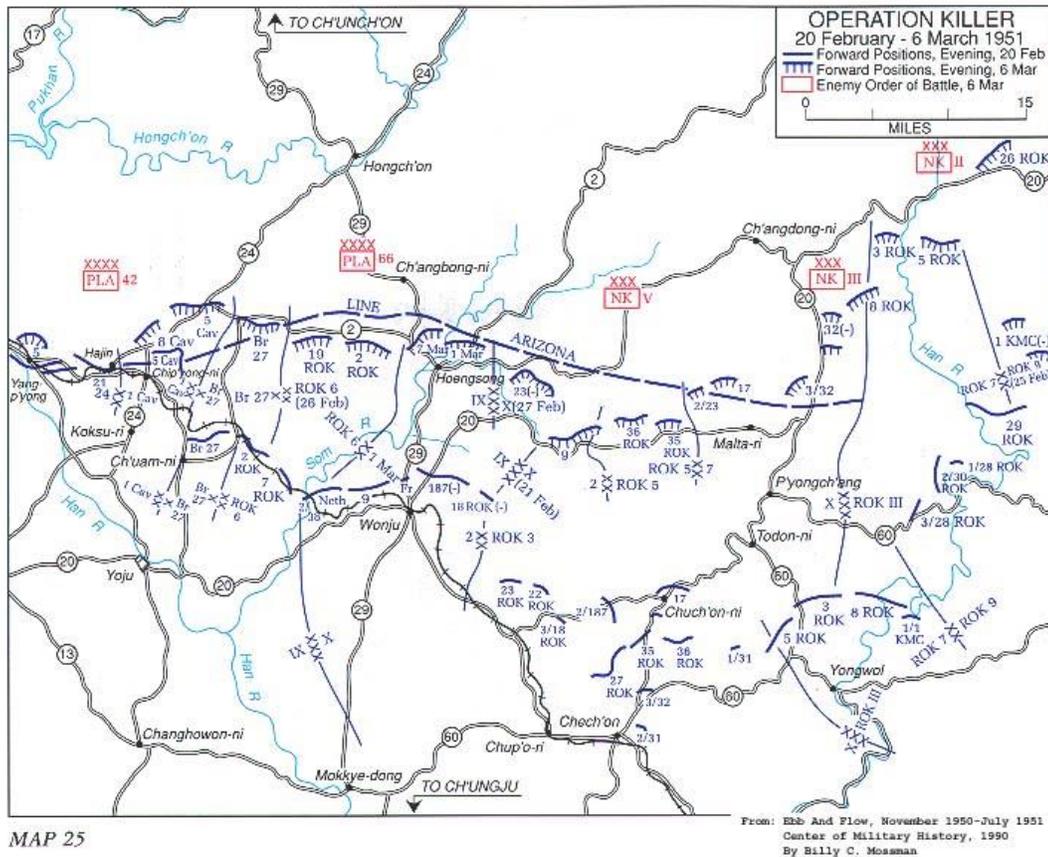
RELOCATION

The 5th Cavalry Regiment would be sent back to Chipyong-ni to relieve the 23rd on February 18th. The 23rd, with the 37th Field Artillery and "B" Battery of the 82nd AA, were ordered back to Wonju to the east. On the 20th Operation Order 24 sent the 23rd north and east to assemble at Nodong via the roads to Chechon to the south and east.

OPERATION KILLER

Ridgway's next plan, Operation Killer, began at 10 a.m. on February 21st and ran till March 6th. The intent was to continue the attack to the north and west where the Chinese and North Koreans were positioned and establish a new front referred to as the Arizona Line (see map below). The operation ran from Seoul on the east to the mountainous region the 2nd and 7th Division occupied in the Central Corridor. The idea was to annihilate as many enemy troops as possible. Ridgway wanted to emphasize the minimizing of the risks to our troops while taking any opportunity to inflict maximum damage to the enemy, especially after what happened at Hoengsong and our disastrous retreat through Massacre Valley.

Opposition was light as the troops moved north. In fact UN forces had more trouble dealing with rough terrain, the spring thaws, rain and days of sub-zero freezes than from the enemy. Simply put it was miserable. During the last week of February the UN troops were receiving much of their supplies via airdrops from the Air Force. There was no other way to supply the troops in the high mountain country with the streams overflowing their banks, bridges out and every trail a slimy path of mud. The ice was breaking up and the snow was melting which resulted in rising rivers making river crossings treacherous. A tank regiment had to be used to ferry troops across the rivers if bridges were gone and if a crossing point could be located.



The 2nd Division was becoming increasingly concerned with the logistical problems which hampered its activities. The combined factors of weather, terrain and lack of supply routes prompted a request for more relief supplies. Their appeal asked for (1) Native bearers to establish a carrier supply network, (2) sufficient air drops to keep forward units supplied, or (3) a halt in the advance of the Division until the necessary road network could be built. They were told that air drops could not be arranged but that bearers would be provided. In any case the attack was to continue.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- When transportation equipment was not available or the terrain warranted it, the US troops requested "native bearers" which consisted of hiring the South Korean locals to physically carry the supplies from place to place, just like human mules. In some cases they would suffer as many casualties as the UN troops did.
- Ridgway's staff had many doubters of his orders to attack. They were the same officers who allowed the Eighth Army to continually retreat when the CCF first entered the war and never attempt to significantly delay them by setting up defensive positions. Ridgway realized that the CCF was over-extended and weakened from the heavy losses they had taken recently. He knew the Eighth Army's morale and confidence was improving and he should go on the offensive. Despite this his staff recommended voluntary and complete surrender of the offensive and to withdraw far to the south to the old Pusan Perimeter. When Ridgway ordered the counterattack his staff jeered him behind his back and called him "Wrong Way Ridgway". History has shown he was right and they were wrong.
- In Ridgway's personal papers he wrote a memorandum expressing surprise at General MacArthur's actions on February 20th. While visiting Korea and at a press conference by MacArthur in Wonju, just before Operation Killer was to kick off, he announced that the attack was about to begin and that he planned the attack, briefed the generals on it and he ordered the attack. This despite the fact he wasn't even at the planning meetings and secrecy was imperative for the Operation.

On the 26th the 2nd Battalion of the 23rd was moved to the east and prepared for an attack on Ungyo-ri (not shown, but just west of Malta-ri on the map). The 9th Infantry which was operating to the west sent a battalion to the east side of the town in case the enemy withdrew in that direction. A portion of the 7th Division was operating further to the east and they would block any movement in that direction. The 1st Battalion of the 23rd was also brought in for additional blocking positions around the town on the 27th. Looking at the map you can see by March 6th the 23rd had moved far to the east from Chipyeong-ni. The majority of the 23rd is shown just to the right of Hoengsong and Lory's 2nd Battalion, indicated by the "2/23" flag, is further east and just north of Malti-ri.

The 2nd Battalion began their attack of Ungyo-ri from the east on the 27th. They immediately met resistance from an enemy company which was dug-in around the town. Easy Company was given the responsibility of attacking Hill 692. They prepared defensive positions and held the hill while the fighting continued throughout the day in the town. With nightfall all units called it a day and settled into defensive positions.

On the 28th the 1st Battalion joined the fight and managed to secure the town although A Company was temporarily pinned down under intense fire. Air strikes and artillery fire were placed on the enemy positions and A Company was able to pull out of danger. Easy Company maintained control of their hill during the fight, periodically sending out patrols.

On March 1st or 2nd Easy Company was ordered off the hill and sent down into the valley to join a platoon of tanks who were dug in and camouflaged. They were told to also take defensive positions as they were about to be attacked by the Manchurian Cavalry. It was anticipated they didn't know there were tanks positioned ahead of them. In perhaps one of the stranger episodes of the war the Manchurian Cavalry, which was made up of men and horses, was sent down the valley towards Easy Company. Some carried rifles and some carried swords. With bugles blaring and men yelling they charged down the valley right into the waiting tanks. The Americans almost couldn't believe what they were seeing. They were told to wait till the tanks opened fire before they started shooting, and when the shooting started it was a massacre. Both men and horses were wiped out in front of them, almost reaching their lines before bugle calls told them to retreat. When the firing stopped all that was heard was the sound of fading hooves and the cries of the dying men and horses. What an unbelievable waste of life.

The evening of this last day of February found the 2nd Division in positions astride the Hoengsong-Pangnimni road, Route 20, and preparing to continue its advance to the Arizona Line which paralleled the road roughly 7,000 meters to the north. Ahead of the Division were strong elements of CCF Divisions and lesser elements of the North Korean Corps which were retreating slowly to the north in the face of the grinding UN offensive. Generally opposition by the Chinese and North Koreans during Operation Killer was light. Most units only encountered moderate resistance. They were retreating and avoiding a fight at just about every opportunity. Intelligence reports indicated the enemy intended to delay the advance as much as possible while they prepared fixed defenses north of the 38th parallel.

About this time a Chinese notebook had been found on captured troops and it disclosed the trouble the CCF was also having. It noted the same difficulties with the roads and weather conditions and that their soldiers were exhausted. They couldn't sleep during the day because of the air strikes so their movements were made at night. They lacked good winter boots and many suffered frostbite. They lacked ammunition and food was critically low. Their morale was fading and their conviction to win was wavering. Communication was breaking down and many began to wonder if they would ever return home.

A LETTER HOME

On March 2, 1951 Lory wrote the following letter to Aunt Renie. The letter arrived after he was killed. She was gracious enough to allow me to scan it and share it with everyone. The letter is presented at the end of the story. Below I have re-typed the letter, with Aunt Renie's help. I have added some punctuation marks to make it easier to follow and corrected a couple spelling errors. Forgive me please. If you find I made a mistake please let me know. As an FYI, if you try and read his actual letter the top of the third page of his letter is the PS I posted at the end down below. He starts his letter referring to a letter and package he received from Aunt Renie. She would have been 29 at this time and her son Bill would not arrive for another year.

The most interesting part, to me, was his reference to how bad the fighting was. After reading about his participation in the Battle of Chipyong-ni it puts new light on what he says. It's hard to imagine it could get any worse and live to tell about it.

March 2, 1951
East Korea

Dear Renie, Clem & Boys:

My, what a heading, you better not have a little girl or it will take a whole page. HA

Well, got your wonderful package sis and it was really swell. The rice krispies came in perfect shape no lie. Irene it wasn't smashed a bit. The peanuts and candy really hit the spot. I hate to beg but just keep them coming sis. This is one time lent or no lent I'm eating candy if I can get it. To be truthful I'm not giving up anything!!! Except home!!! HA

I also got your letter of Feb. 20 and really enjoyed it also, really sis like you say 15 letters a day wouldn't be to many. Somebody really stuck a fin in the postmasters butt as my mail is really coming through in good time. Maybe it was Clem's letter but everything is coming through fast now.

Boy ol Denny and Wayne must really be the guys from mom's and every one(?) letter they really rave about them. Its times like this when I read about home and all the little kids growing up that I really get that homesick feeling. All I can do is pray this thing is over before too long. Say Clem this Air Corps is really the thing, they really help us doughboys out a lot when we're taking these hills. We're on one and they attack the right one with fire bombs, rockets and then strafe it with 50 caliber. No kidding. They do a terrific job and sure get their share. I'll bet you never saw a B26 used for the same purpose, it's really fun watching the guys fly. I'd sure like to be up there rather than down here in a fox hole but I just got unlucky.

We've been fighting on a big mountain for 2 days now. Every night the gooks hit us and try and get it back but it's a massacre. I for one sure never thought I'd see combat so soon or ever with the infantry but look at me. Youse ask what I'm doing and I just can't tell it all and really I'm not acting brave neither, but I just can't tell youse about it. But believe me I'm where it's the worst and when I get home I'll tell you all about it. Just remember no Chinaman is going to get me unless it's accidental and we're getting more than our share of them. Just keep the chow coming, anything is fine. We just don't get enough. By for now,

Larry

PS If this looks like its been through some rough going well it has!! Right in my fox hole with me for 2 days and I'm just getting a chance to mail it.

PSS Please don't worry about old Lory.

L.J.R.

OPERATION KILLER ENDS

The area in which Lory and the 23rd were now operating in, as Lory mentioned in his letter, was more mountainous with narrow, sharp ridge lines and spurs jutting east and west from the mountains. The region is nearly devoid of a road network. In this area there were typical Korean roads; narrow, graded soil, and surfaced with gravel. All were weathered and eroded. The terrain ranged in elevation from five hundred to almost one thousand three hundred meters and was characterized by several corridors running north and south between two main roads. The main objective at this point was to gain control of the main road running east and west from Hoengsong, through Ungyo-ri and to Pagnim-ni.

It is now early March and every hill was a battle for the 2nd and 7th Divisions which were driving the North Koreans north. This area was predominately occupied by the North Koreans. The Chinese were mostly just to the west. The 23rd Regiment was assigned to take Hills 1145 and 778 with the French Battalion, again attached to their unit, taking on towering Hill 1037. On the 3rd Easy Company attacked Hill 778 and after working their way through the small arms fire from the North Koreans they took control of the hill. At about 11:00 that night the North Koreans attempted to retake the hill throwing hand grenades and firing their rifles and burp guns. In short order they were beaten back. Another unsuccessful attack came later that night.

On the 5th the French began their attacks but were having a terrible time because the enemy was so well entrenched on the hill. It would snow during the two days of attacks which limited visibility and made the going rougher. Air strikes and artillery barrages had limited effect on the enemy. Eventually the French reached the crest of the hill and found 300 enemy dead, mostly from the air strikes. During the night of the 5th the enemy withdrew from in front of the rest of the 23rd and when they resumed their attack on the 6th they found the hills had been vacated. The French received a third US Presidential Unit Citation for their courage in attacking Hill 1037. They suffered 40 men killed and 200 wounded while the 23rd reported 2 killed and 93 wounded in their unit.

Earlier you read the story of the 38th Infantry Regiment's disastrous defeat in what is now called Massacre Valley. It was during the first days of March the 1st Marine Division moved north from Hoengsong into Massacre Valley and found the remains of the American troops still lying in the valley along the road and all of their equipment still sitting there after more than 2 weeks.

On March 6th Lory's Second Battalion was temporarily attached to the 7th Division until it could secure its sector. This was the last day of Operation Killer. Over the fourteen days of Operation Killer the IX and X Corps took and consolidated positions along the Arizona Line. Each reported having inflicted substantial enemy casualties. The IX Corps alone reported 7,819 enemy killed, 1,469 wounded, and 208 captured.

As Operation Killer was winding down plans had been drawn up for the next phase of the 8th Army's attack to the North. It was called Operation Ripper and it was designed to carry UN forces to the 38th Parallel. Similar to Operation Killer it aimed at maximum destruction of enemy personnel and equipment with minimum friendly casualties. Operation Ripper was set to begin March 7th, 1951.

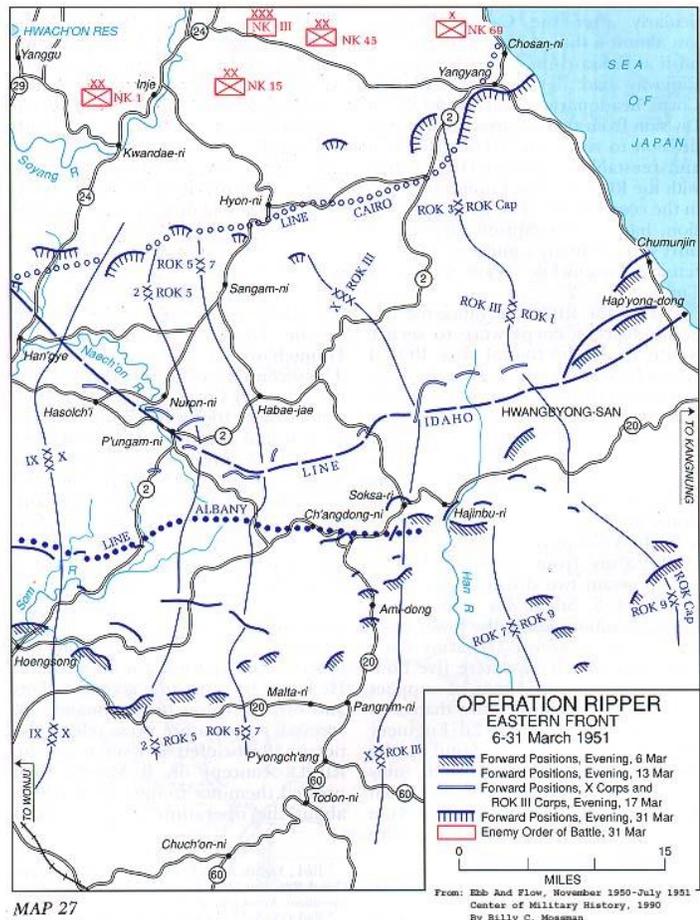
OPERATION RIPPER

On the morning of March 7th Ridgway kicked off Operation Ripper. It was really a continuation of the fighting already underway and was more ambitious than any attack he had planned and ordered previously. Its objective was to re-take Seoul and move the Communist Chinese and the North Koreans back to the 38th Parallel. The three main areas of focus were 1) crossing the Han River and taking Seoul, 2) moving up the Central Corridor from Hoengsong to Hongchon and then to Chunchon and 3) moving the 2nd and 7th Division, which included Lory's regiment, in a wide swath on either side of Route 20 further to the north. ROK forces were included in the advance in various locations. This time Ridgway asked MacArthur to not come to Korea before the start of the offensive. Besides the fact he was concerned he would say too much to the press he also felt that if he came in just before the start of every new offensive the Chinese would realize that his arrival indicated an attack was imminent. MacArthur flew in the afternoon of the 7th.

The map to the right shows the eastern half of the operation. You will see symbols illustrating our troop locations. The two above and left of Malta-ri are the probable location of Lory's battalion based on previous reports. So from here he was moving north, hill by hill, attacking and pushing back the North Koreans.

The following is an excerpt from Billy Mossman's "Ebb and Flow":
"In the X Corps zone, the 2nd, 7th and the ROK 5th Divisions advanced abreast, the 2nd moving through the Pungam-ni corridor on the left, the 7th along Route 20 on the right, and the ROK 5th over the ridges in the center. In a well fought delaying action, North Korean forces kept gains short until 11 March, when they began to withdraw above the Albany line. Against the diminishing resistance, the 2nd and 7th Divisions each placed a regiment on the phase line on 13 March. At corps center, the ROK 5th Division reached the line on the following day."

It was during Operation Ripper that Lory was killed. The North Koreans fought bitterly to hold the high hills north of this area because their assembly areas had been in the small valleys amongst the hills. Everywhere the terrain was snow covered and forbidding and the enemy increased the use of mines to slow our advance.



In an article written by Capt. Bickford Sawyer for The Infantry School Quarterly entitled *A Week With Easy Company* he describes the events of E Company and Lory's last day. The company was operating north from Chonggum-ni towards several enemy occupied hills. On the morning of the 8th the 2nd Battalion, with E Company leading, was to move north while the 3rd Battalion was clearing high ground on the left side of their line. E Company consisted of three infantry platoons and had a regimental tank company, one section of heavy machine guns and several mortars with artillery observers attached. The 72nd Tank Battalion also was supporting the regiment. Their attack would start after 08:30 as soon as the hills on the left were cleared.

In front of E Company was a low hill marked as Objective A and several other hills. At 10:00 the tanks of the 72nd led the way with the 3rd platoon following behind using the tanks as a shield. The 2nd Platoon swung around to the right to approach the hill from the flank. With the supporting fire from the tank the 3rd Platoon was able to make it to the base of the hill. Once the 2nd Platoon reached the base of the hill on the flank it joined forces with the 3rd. Both platoons fixed bayonets and stormed the hill throwing hand grenades and firing as they went. Within a few minutes they had taken the hill. It is written that E Company had received one fatality during this attack, having been shot by a sniper from Hill 2. They also had 13 other casualties.

Both platoons set up defensive positions because of fire they were receiving from Hill 2 on the left. Heavy machine gun and artillery fire was brought to bear on the hill and most of the firing ceased. F Company was brought in to take Hill 2 which it did in a short period of time. Next orders came in from Battalion Headquarters to attack Hill 281 to the right. The 2nd Platoon was assigned to take it supported by the heavy machine guns firing from Objective A. However just before they took off a round of heavy mortar rounds fell onto the hill and inflicted heavy casualties to the 3rd Platoon and the weapons company. After a few minutes and some reorganizing the 2nd Platoon began their mission.

With supporting mortar and machine gun fire the 2nd Platoon made good time advancing on the hill despite the heavy fire from the hill. They approached to within 50 yards of the hilltop but they were not able to advance any further and were forced to retreat to Hill 1. Amazingly not a single man was hit presumably because of the enemy's poor aim. After the situation was reported to the battalion commander he pulled Company G out of reserve and sent them around the right flank to attack with the 2nd Platoon. Once the enemy realized they were about to be outflanked, and with the accurate fire placed on them by the tank company they withdrew without a fight. The 2nd Platoon and Company G then took the top of the hill.

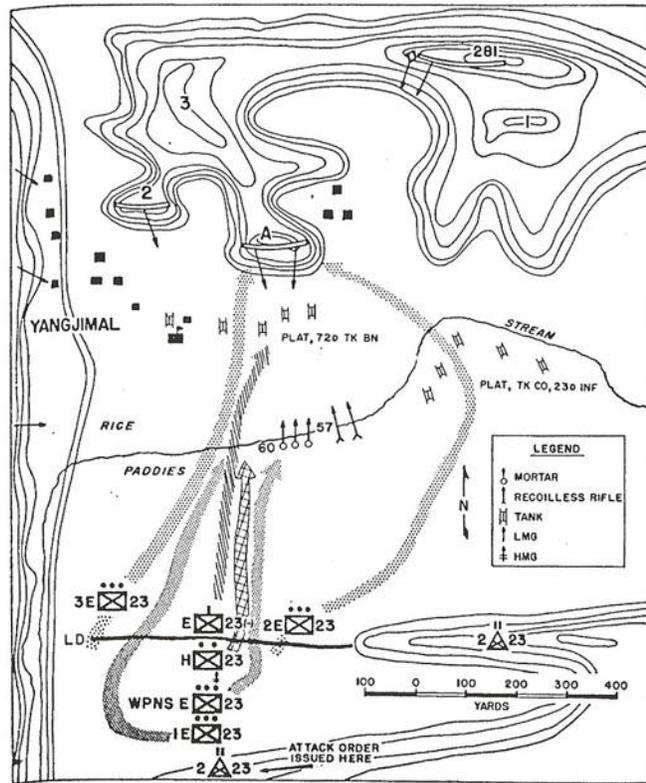


Figure 2. First phase of attack, 8 March.

Next the battalion commander ordered E Company to move to Hill 3 to the northwest. This would finish clearing out all the adjoining hills in the area. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons were sent to take the hill and did so in less than an hour. By 1600 E Company was finished and they began setting up into defensive positions in conjunction with the rest of the 2nd Battalion. For the day E Company received 26 Wounded in Action (WIA) and 4 Killed in Action (KIA). There was no enemy contact that night. Lory would be one of the 4. We have a copy of the "morning report" of the E Company for March 8th and it lists the four men killed that day, including Lory. On that day 18 were KIA and 83 were wounded from the entire 23rd Regiment.

OTHER SOURCES

From the 2nd Infantry Division in the Korean War - Terrain Sketch:

"Initial resistance to "Ripper" varied from light to heavy. Abreast, the 9th and 23rd RCT's ground forward, the 9th concentrating on the trail to Adding-ni while the 23rd assaulted an important hill mass about a mile west of Sanggun-ni. The narrow Division front made possible the massing of artillery fires and this advantage was called upon time and again to pound delaying groups of enemy.

"The 2d Reconnaissance Company screened the left flank of the 23rd to guard against bypassed and infiltrating enemy groups. B Company of the 72d Tank Battalion lent the weight of its guns to those of the 23d Tank Company in support of the 23d RCT's dogged attack. The 10th of March saw more climbing, digging the enemy out of one hill only to find him entrenched on the next, the North Korean troops holding on till the last minute and then falling back to more prepared positions.

"Amidst the scrapping which characterized the action on 11 March came grand and welcome word - the Army was going to begin a rotation program. The news spread like a prairie fire throughout the Division. It was destined to be a long time before sizable groups were to leave but the mere announcement sent morale soaring.

"Relief of the 23rd took place on 13 March and the regiment moved back to set up blocking positions in the vicinity of Saemal." Saemal is just north of Hoengsong.

Based on this description of the location of the 23rd being west of Sanggung-ni, the earlier story about the Easy Company and the depiction of events in the book *"Ridgway Duels for Korea"* it is safe to say this is where Lory was when he was killed. After reviewing maps all the towns mentioned are in the same area.

LORY

The Korean War is called The Forgotten War. Through our family's connection with Lory it will never be forgotten to us. On March 8, 1951 our brother and uncle Lawrence J. Riedmann gave his life for his country. He was reported by the Army as Killed in Action. The Report of Death received from the military says he was killed by mortar fragments putting to rest most of the family stories of what happened to Lory. He very likely was killed on the hill called Objective A.

In the family there was some debate on the circumstances of his death and it is unknown where the stories originated. These included: 1) he was killed in his sleep during a night attack; 2) he was killed while on patrol; 3) he was killed by a knife wound or by a mortar shell. There is also the story that his body was not recovered for several days after he was killed. As you have read previously the third was closest to the truth. On a handwritten note by Lory's mom she does indicate that he died in battle; he was Killed in Action. With all due respect to Lory's brothers and sister here are my observations from my research.

Regarding the first there are instances where the North Koreans made counter offensives to slow down our advance. However, there is no mention of any attacks made on the company either night making it unlikely this occurred. The 23rd was on the offensive at this time and the North Koreans were holding defensive positions.

The second could be he was on patrol having been sent out ahead to ascertain the location and size of enemy forces before we came in contact with them. However, there are no reports of any patrols made that day as his company was sent out in full attack mode from the outset.

The third ends up being the closest. As related in the previous stories the 2nd and 3rd Platoons did make charges taking the top of a hill that day. Probably during the attack on the North Korean positions, or after the hill was taken, he was struck by mortar fragments.

It is unlikely that the body was not found for several days as the 23rd was always marching forward at this time, never retreating. In those instances the troops who were killed in action would have been retrieved quickly and returned either for burial in Korea or sent home.

The sad part is the 23rd was rotated off the front lines for R & R five days after his death. However this would not be the end of the fighting for the 23rd and if Lory had survived this day he eventually would have taken part in other battles possibly including at "Bloody Ridge" in September and "Heartbreak Ridge" in October. Casualties to the 23rd were just as great in those battles, if not greater. (FYI - Heartbreak Ridge is not the same battle as the Clint Eastwood movie of the same name. That is a different story in a different war.)

Lory would be posthumously awarded with the following medals:

- Purple Heart
- Combat Infantryman's Badge
- Sharpshooters Badge with Carbine Bar
- Korean Service Medal
- United Nations Service Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Distinguished Unit Citation (now called the Presidential Unit Citation) for participation in the Battle of Chipyong-ni
- The Korean Presidential Unit Citation
- Republic of Korea War Service Medal
- Cold War Certificate

From Lory's funeral card:

Your gentle face and patient smile
With sadness we recall.
You had a kindly word for each
And died beloved by all.

The voice is mute and stilled the heart
That loved us well and true,
Ah, bitter was the trial to part
From one so good as you.

You are not forgotten loved one
Nor will you ever be
As long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.

We will miss you now, our hearts are sore,
As time goes by we miss you more,
Your loving smile, your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place.

God bless Lory and may he rest in peace.

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**23rd Infantry Regiment – “Tomahawks”
Distinctive Unit Insignia**