Chapter Six

15th Infantry, Korea

1952–1953

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By December 1952, the Korean War was stalemated both on the front lines and at the truce negotiations in the neutral village of Panmunjom. In fact, the war had become more of a *place* than an event. The two opposing armies were static, facing each other from lines of elaborate fortifications that stretched across the mountains and valleys of the peninsula from the Yellow Sea to the Sea of Japan. The U.N. command's Main Line of Resistance (MLR) was a 160-mile battlefront that curved and bulged near the original border of the 38th parallel.

Both sides had abandoned the massive offensives, amphibious assaults, and fast-paced war of maneuver that had characterized the seesaw fighting of the conflict's first sixteen months. For a year now, neither the U.N. nor the Communists had captured or lost a major position. Both armies were dug in deep. Both now relied more on artillery than on ground assault to punish the enemy. And inflicting unacceptable casualties on the opposing army in order to win concessions at the truce negotiations had become the combatants' principal strategy.

This was the prevailing situation when Colonel Richard G. Stilwell asked me to take over the 2nd Battalion of the 15th Infantry Regiment, which he had commanded for two months. The 15th Infantry was one of three regiments of the 3rd Division, which in turn was one of four divisions assigned to the U.S. IX Corps holding the central sector of the U.N. lines. The area was known as the Iron Triangle. It included the Chorwon River valley, one of the few natural, north-south invasion routes through the mountains. Before the war, road networks and a rail line through the valley had linked

the three corners of the Triangle at the towns of Pyonggang in the north with Kumhwa and Chorwon in the south. The sides of the Triangle were steep valleys; its center was a block of wild, roadless parallel ridges and free-standing mountains. As elsewhere along the battlefront, the country to the north was higher than the mountains to the south, which gave the Communists the military advantage of controlling the high ground.

Dick Stilwell invited me to visit the regiment in the line, while my orders were pending in early December. I drove north from Seoul, up through the sprawling rear areas with their supply depots, truck and armor parks, workshops, and field hospitals occupying all the reasonably flat ground available. Moving north, the refugees' cardboard and tarpaper squatter villages thinned out until I crossed the IX Corps' southern boundary near the shell-torn village of Yonchon. From here on, civilians were not officially permitted. Tent camps now had elaborate sandbagged bunker complexes dug into the reverse, southern side of the mountains. The farther north I drove, the fewer tents there were and the bigger the bunkers became. I knew I was near the fighting front from the concentrations of our artillery dug into sandbagged positions, all the howitzer tubes facing north through camouflage nets.

Dick Stilwell gave me a good briefing on the 2nd Battalion at his regimental command post. The unit was up to full strength, approximately 900 men, divided among three rifle companies, a heavy-weapons company, and the normal support elements, including some anti-aircraft teams and a platoon of engineers. But it seemed the battalion had lost its will to fight, what he called the "aggressive spirit." Most of the men were more concerned with the fundamental issue of survival than with performing well as soldiers. The outfit's problem, he explained, was not unusual at that time in the war. Everyone knew the conflict would be eventually settled through negotiation, not military operations. The average soldier's job consisted of guarding his own sector, patrolling the mile or so of no-man's-land between the lines, and pulling dangerous tours of duty on the isolated outposts forward of the MLR.

Given the limited nature of the war, a formal duty system had evolved by which all American troops in Korea earned "rotation points" toward their eventual transfer back to the States. The magic number was thirty-six points. An infantryman earned four points for every month he spent on a line. Artillerymen and tankers got three points a month, depending on their proximity to the MLR, and so on back toward the rear. On the average, a guy in a combat outfit could expect to serve nine months. The purpose of this system was to spread the risk of death or wounding fairly. In practice, the rotation-point policy often destroyed unit morale and esprit de corps by making each individual soldier acutely conscious of his time remaining in combat. It was only human nature to take fewer risks if you had just a few

weeks left on the line. Loyalty to a particular unit—a company, battalion, or regiment—had no place in Assistant Secretary of Defense Anna Rosenberg's rotation policy.[1]

But the Chinese Communists on the opposing ridges were there for the duration. Those who survived were veterans, skilled in the local geography and the methods of their enemy. By contrast, Americans were rotated back to the States just when they had acquired these skills. The Chinese were often more aggressive than the American troops they faced. And by this time the CCF were very well equipped with Soviet-made medium and heavy artillery, which had been in short supply during their initial intervention. In the Iron Triangle, the Chinese had dug truly elaborate bunkers and tunnels, often cutting right through a mountainside from north to south, with the southern firing position carefully camouflaged. From these positions they could drop 76, 85, and 105mm howitzer rounds on our trenches and most of the approach roads from the rear. And they weren't short of ammunition. A quick glance at the regimental records showed our lines had been hit by dozens of artillery rounds daily. Some nights hundreds of Chinese howitzer and mortar shells struck the positions.

One effect of this shelling was to keep men down in the trenches, rather than out patrolling or working to improve their bunkers. The men had come as individual replacements and hoped to make it through their months on the line, to depart as individuals. This survival attitude, Stilwell said, was most prevalent in the 2nd Battalion. The men patrolled poorly, seldom making contact with the enemy. They were even reluctant to dig their trenches too deep or fortify the roofs of their bunkers for fear the improved positions might attract enemy artillery fire. Lieutenant Colonel Hughes Ash, the 2nd Battalion commander, had tried to win his men's loyalty through kindness, granting them unusual concessions. For example, men who were "short" (who had almost earned their thirty-six points) were excused from outpost duty or patrols. There was an insidious ripple effect to this leniency: By the time I took over, the least experienced men drew the most hazardous assignments. Naturally, this led to unnecessary casualties, which only compounded the men's aversion to aggressive combat.

And, interestingly enough, the CCF had somehow discovered the battalion's weakness, so they directed the brunt of their artillery and ground assaults—usually night attacks on outposts—against 2nd Battalion positions.

The disparate backgrounds of the men in the rifle companies exacerbated the morale situation. Every platoon had American GIs (almost all of them draftees) and Korean soldiers of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA). The American soldiers were further divided by race and culture. The 3rd Division was one of the first Army units to be racially integrated the year before, but there was still a prevailing lack of confidence

in the fighting ability of the black soldier. My regiment also had several hundred Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans from the 65th Infantry Regiment (a National Guard unit), which had done badly in combat that fall and had been broken up as a wholly ethnic unit.[2] These Puerto Rican soldiers were further divided along racial lines; those with predominantly African ancestry were often shunned by their lighter-skinned compatriots. So a buck sergeant squad leader in this battalion (probably a draftee without benefit of an NCO academy background) found himself trying to lead twelve men with little in common, some who couldn't even understand his orders.

Noncommissioned officers are the backbone of any infantry unit. But in Korea at this time, almost all experienced career NCOs had served their combat tours and were gone. This meant a unit depended on the leadership of junior commissioned officers—who were often kids fresh out of ROTC, simply serving their four-year obligation. These lieutenants in turn depended on their regular army battalion staff officers for leadership. Unfortunately, Dick Stilwell told me, Lieutenant Colonel Hughes Ash was not up to providing the kind of leadership the troubled 2nd Battalion needed.

I took over the battalion from Ash three days before Christmas when the unit had been pulled out of the MLR and placed in the regimental reserve area for training. I had visited the outfit in the line a few days earlier and had drawn some preliminary conclusions about exactly the kind of training they needed.

The war along this front was fought at night. And the CCF had shown they were masters of the night assault. But the men of my new command had little experience moving quietly and efficiently up and down the steep, snow-packed mountains at night. This meant the battalion could rarely mount a successful counterattack, when the Chinese threatened an isolated outpost. Service at these outposts, therefore, was terrifying. A company on outpost duty simply hid in the trenches, hoping to get through their two- or three-day stint without a Chinese assault. They only improved the outpost bunkers and firing positions when absolutely necessary. The men also were so fearful of artillery that, when on patrol, they rarely radioed for friendly fire support. This aversion to calling in the "protective fires" of American mortars and artillery close to their position had reached the point that several of my companies were grossly ignorant of the actual fire support available to them.[3] But I remembered the "Mad Minute" demonstration of precision artillery support I'd witnessed at the Infantry School at Fort Benning. I was determined that all my men would become familiar with this firepower and gain confidence enough to depend on it.

Their fighting spirit and efficiency had deteriorated to the point where apathy was general. All each man wanted was to survive another day. The junior officers, noncoms, and individual soldiers simply did not understand

that their chances for survival would increase if they learned to fight effectively as a unit. It was my job to teach them.

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I STARTED the process by assembling my company commanders, mortar section officers, and the liaison officers from regimental artillery. We went back to the fundamentals. I wanted my men to know the exact capabilities of the mortars and big guns supporting them. When we went back into the line, I told them, I expected optimal coordination between infantry and artillery. If an outpost asked for a flare over its position at 0220 in the morning, I expected that flare to be *there* within thirty seconds, not five minutes later half a mile down the line. Equally, I expected every noncom (and every commissioned officer), be he in a rifle platoon or from the "clerks and cooks" support staff, to be skilled at the vital task of pinpointing his exact position by map coordinates, so that artillery support could be effectively used.

The men were not pleased with this rigorous assignment. Most of them had expected that their time in regimental reserve would be punctuated by "I&I"—Intoxication and Intercourse—in the shantytown beer halls and brothels that sprouted (between periodic MP sweeps) like mushrooms in the rear areas. But I let them know any NCO or officer unable to clearly demonstrate his map skills would be relieved. My job was not to make friends of these people through leniency; it was to keep them alive and fighting. There'd be time for friendship later. Mutual respect came first.

Once I had them working on improving fire support, I turned to another fundamental of infantry tactics: the night attack. Until I took over the battalion, most of the men saw the naked slopes north of the MLR as a threatening wilderness controlled by the enemy. Part of this feeling came from the geography. The Chinese did hold the distant highlands. But the forward slopes near our positions were *our* real estate. If we learned to move across this terrain silently and fast, beginning with squads, then increasing unit size to full companies, we could prevent the Chinese from capturing our outposts or sections of the MLR, which had occurred with unacceptable regularity in the preceding months. Most of our men Killed in Action (KIA) had died trying to recapture positions we never should have let the Chinese take in the first place.

So I let it be known that a sergeant's or lieutenant's job depended on his ability to move his men quickly and quietly in absolute darkness. The men simply had to learn that this darkness was their ally, that they could use it if they took the time to learn the basic skills of their jobs. But on the first demonstration of these "skills" I witnessed the spectacle of squads and

platoons bungling through each other, cursing loudly as they did so, and I even saw NCOs and lieutenants shining flashlights—as if this could help them find their way in the frozen wilderness.

Over the next two weeks I had the battalion out each night in the icy gullies and snowy, boulder-strewn slopes of the reserve area, moving up and down the hills, from one prearranged coordinate to another. And I was out there with them, every night, not back at the cozy oil stove in my tent doing paperwork. I had an adjutant for that task. My job was to be with the troops. Once they learned they had an honest-to-God soldier in command, I knew they would respond. But you don't get that kind of respect from delivering pep talks or issuing idle threats.

I also worked closely with my Pioneer platoon and the engineers who supported us. When we went back into the line, I wanted them available to help the rifle companies improve the fortifications. From what I'd seen earlier, many men had been satisfied with a poorly shored trench and a firing bunker that couldn't take a near miss from a heavy mortar, let alone survive a direct hit from an artillery round. We built models of the kinds of bunkers I expected to see in the line. They were dug deep into the hillsides and had vertical supports of heavy, twelve-by-twelve-inch timbers. The fronts were thickly protected with sandbags. The machine-gun positions were carefully designed to protect the men inside but allow adequate defensive fire. Most important, the bunker roofs had to be carefully constructed with alternating timbers, sandbags, and a "burster" layer of stones, gravel, and brush, all capped by more sandbags. In bunkers like this, the men could survive fierce enemy artillery barrages. And they would feel confident about calling in their own artillery on those terrifying moonless nights when the Chinese bugles sounded and the dark forms of men in padded suits flitted through the shadows on the slopes below.

I also used the engineers to construct a combat firing range that employed the kind of pop-up silhouette targets I'd been introduced to by the indomitable team of British commando officers, Majors Fairbairn and Sykes, during my Jedburgh training. My troops in Korea had learned to fire their rifles on the range, not while charging up a snowy hill. I taught them the fine art of instinctive firing. After several cold nights on this range, the companies were consistently riddling the silhouettes as the men advanced smoothly up the hillside. Now was the time to introduce additional realism. I had the mortar sections fire walking barrages close enough ahead of the advancing columns to accustom the men to that vital form of fire support.

Three weeks after I took over the 2nd Battalion, I staged my first full-unit night exercise. The objective was to move a counterattack force of three companies, by platoons, to the crest of a hill, while the fourth company maneuvered along a ridge line and dug in as a force to block the enemy

retreat. The exercise involved artillery flares and mortar support. By three in the morning all of the objectives had been secured ahead of schedule and the men were safely back off the mountain. There'd been no serious accidents or injuries, despite the use of live fire in darkness on an unfamiliar mountainside. The men had come a long way in a short time.

I'd identified several young officers with real leadership potential, including First Lieutenants Dick Atkinson and George Meighen, the commanders of G and E companies. Atkinson was an Airborne soldier who'd been fuming at the lax conditions in the battalion. Meighen's company had a large proportion of KATUSA and Puerto Rican troops, but he made them the top scorers on our combat firing range. Another promising lieutenant was Dan Foldberg, Meighen's executive officer. He was a former All American tackle from West Point who could have easily landed a job coaching football in Japan. I knew I could depend on them when we returned to the line.

After the company officers reported in to my jeep that night, I suggested we head over to the Headquarters Company mess for a cup of coffee to celebrate the successful maneuver. I'd been unnaturally antisocial with these young lieutenants until then, purposefully distancing myself. Now I felt it was time to get to know them a little better. It was still pitch dark outside, and probably well below zero. We headed for the mess tent by the shortest route, across a shallow stream where trucks and jeeps had broken the ice repeatedly that night. I didn't notice that the stream banks had frozen again into a sheet of pure glare ice. As soon as I fell and landed with my right ankle twisted beneath me I knew it was broken. Even through my thick rubber Mickey Mouse boot I heard the dull pop of the bone.

I sat down on the ice, shaking my head. "Somebody get my jeep," I said, "I just broke my damn ankle."

For the next three hours I was shuffled back through the regiment's medical facilities, exactly what I did not want to happen. I'd hoped to get my leg taped up at the battalion aid station or, failing that, at the regimental collecting station. But the medics there examined the angry blue-and-yellow swelling and dispatched me to the division clearing company. Now military bureaucracy took charge. Officially, I was a "casualty" who couldn't be cared for within my parent organization. That meant I was technically no longer in command of the battalion. After sunrise, I found myself at the corps MASH unit several ridge lines back from the division front. This hospital, incidentally, was the one on which the "4077th MASH" of television fame was modeled. But while I was there, no one offered me a martini.

I sat in a drafty tent with wounded GIs moaning around me on bloody stretchers while clerks filled out their multiple admission forms, in triplicate, of course. The X-rays showed a nasty full fracture. The cast went all the way up to my knee. By ten o'clock in the morning I was in a bed, wearing GI pajamas, a long way from the 2nd Battalion.

This was unacceptable. I hadn't worked so hard getting the unit back in condition to abandon them. I waited until the senior MASH officers had made their rounds, then scrounged a wheelchair and went to the office to call my executive officer, Frank Hewitt. I told him to send the battalion surgeon down to the MASH with my jeep and driver. When they arrived, I had the doc browbeat the young NCO at the admissions office to release my uniform, telling the kid he was "moving" Major Singlaub.

By early afternoon I was back at my battalion command post, using a handy tree branch as a cane. I called Colonel Stilwell to explain what had happened.

"I'm glad you called," he said. "I just heard from General Smythe. That MASH colonel down there has you listed as AWOL and has filed a complaint with the corps commander."

"Damn," I muttered. "What can we do, sir?"

Stilwell had told me we'd soon be back in the line, and I knew he didn't want to have to find another CO for the 2nd Battalion. "You sit tight, Jack," he said. "We'll work something out."

The compromise was acceptable. I went back to the division clearing company for a couple of days to make sure the cast hardened correctly, and they plastered on a walking iron so that I could hobble around my area. In my personal gear I found an old rubberized rice bag, a relic of OSS days in China, which protected the cast from the mud and slush. I even managed to secure a handwarmer under the bag, so my toes didn't freeze as I supervised each night's training. The men probably thought I was crazy to be out there, leaning on a cane as they stormed up the exercise hill. But they certainly knew I was serious.

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Two weeks later, the 15th Infantry moved back into the Iron Triangle MLR, relieving the 35th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Division. My battalion took up positions on the right center, the eastern side of our sector. One of the 35th's departing officers offered this advice:

"Major," he said, "this isn't a bad part of the line. I've found that if you don't mortar them"—he pointed across the barren hills toward the frozen high ground to the north—"they won't mortar you."

I thanked him for the suggestion. That was exactly the type of defeatist attitude I'd worked so hard to eliminate among my men. Predictably, the trench line we'd inherited needed a lot of work. I deployed Easy and Fox companies from left to right, and set each to work with an engineer team, strengthening their bunkers, deepening their trenches, and extending their barbed wire and mine fields.

Two thousand yards northeast of our MLR sector stood Outpost Harry,

a shell-pocked knob of an isolated hill that was the most advanced American position in the Iron Triangle. Harry was a company outpost, which meant in practice that there was room for three platoons plus some support elements at one time (about 100 men), with one platoon rotating back to reserve behind the MLR. During their last tour on the line, the 2nd Battalion had occupied a similar, but less exposed outpost. The practice then had been that a given company would only pull outpost duty for two days at a time, three maximum. This had been another of Colonel Ash's concessions to the prevailing survival attitude.

But, again, the effect had been negative. An infantryman who believes he's only in a trench or bunker for forty-eight hours will do little to improve the position. I had other plans for my outpost.

I took Lieutenant Dick Atkinson aside and pointed across the slope to the outpost. "You've got it for the duration, Lieutenant," I said.

"Sir?" He didn't look especially troubled, just curious.

"George Company will occupy Outpost Harry," I said formally. "You will hold that position until relieved. I think you're going to want to make some improvements out there, so I've got the engineers standing by."

Atkinson pursed his lips and nodded. His expression was neither pleased nor disappointed. He certainly didn't look afraid. Without my saying so, he understood that I had chosen his company for the toughest assignment. They would hold that exposed outpost for as long as required. It was a job for real soldiers.

Over the next several days I spent as much time with Atkinson and his men as I could. The trek out there along the snaking communication trench was not easy with that heavy cast on my leg. But I knew the men would appreciate my coming. It's one thing to order troops to do a hard job; it's another to lead them in the task.

The Chinese had good observation of our positions and seemed to realize a new battalion was in the line. That made things interesting on Harry. They hit the outpost with 82 and 120mm mortar fire for three nights running. But luckily they didn't stage a ground attack. That gave Atkinson and his men time to dig. We moved a lot of timber and construction material forward along a communication trench, depending on the strong backs of our Korean Service Corps "Chiggies," civilians who stoically accepted their heavy loads, the cold, and enemy fire.[4]

As George Company's men dug in deeper, they found some shocking discoveries. In one shell-torn bunker they ripped up to rebuild, they came across the decomposed remains of three Chinese soldiers and two GIs. I couldn't help but wonder at the morale of the American outfit that had shoveled rocks and burst sandbags over the bodies of these soldiers. It was an indication of the prevailing survival obsession along the line.

Men who would do that had to have been too scared to function well as soldiers. The outpost itself was a moonscape of shell holes. I realized that massed enemy barrages, and the resulting casualties, could scare men into such action. But I was determined that Harry would stand up to the toughest assault. The Chinese were skilled at attacking *through,* not behind their own mortar fire. This tactic caused casualties, but usually overwhelmed the American defenders hiding in their bunkers as the mortar rounds burst in the trenches. Every trench and fighting hole on Outpost Harry, I ordered, would have timber and sandbag roofs, so that my soldiers would be protected from mortar barrages and could still fire their weapons as the enemy advanced.

While George Company improved the outpost, I made sure the other companies were dug in well. Our emphasis on night tactics now paid off. Each company dispatched listening posts and ambush patrols well forward of its trench lines. When the Chinese probed the slopes of our positions, they encountered GIs hidden in the shadows. To build the men's confidence in night fighting, I devised a system to help them find their way in the dark, and also locate enemy patrols in the no-man's-land between the lines. We had a twin-barreled 40mm anti-aircraft gun dug in on the right corner of our position. The gun could fire a single glowing tracer, due north up the shallow valley that was the main Chinese attack route. On a dark night the shimmering red glare from that tracer round gave just enough light to detect moving troops. Our patrols would call for this illumination by simply clicking the "transmit" button of their walkie-talkie on a prearranged Morse letter. Because the 40mm gun fired due north, the system also gave my patrols instant orientation. They quickly grew to depend on this illumination to ambush enemy patrols or to call in artillery on the advancing enemy. Gone were the days of waving flashlights and squads bungling into each other in the darkness. The night no longer belonged to the Chinese. Now it was their turn to fear the darkness.

There were a series of short, savage encounters between our ambush teams and their probing patrols. Obviously, they got the message that this section of the line was well defended, because they switched from ground probes to massed artillery within a few days of our taking over the sector.[5]

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One afternoon in early February, I was coming back from having lunch with the men at Outpost Harry when I heard enemy shelling falling behind the MLR ridge line into the battalion rear. There were two roads up from regimental headquarters, which, unfortunately, could be seen by Chinese artillery observers hidden in the highland to the north. They didn't usually fire during the day unless there was a tempting target because this could

provoke an air attack on their own artillery. When I got back down the hill, I discovered the Chinese 85mm barrage had disabled one of our three-quarter-ton trucks, hauling a precious cargo, a water trailer. The vehicle was stalled about 300 yards down the road, in a shallow, bowl-shaped valley. My Korean porters were due to climb the back slope to the companies in a few hours, carrying a hot meal in insulated marmite cans as well as the next day's water supply. I needed that trailer.

The sergeant driver was not overly eager to go back out in that exposed position to see if he could start the truck engine. In a situation like this, the officer-in-charge had to show a little leadership.

"Let's go, Sergeant," I said. "The troops can't eat snow."

He looked dubiously at my cane and the muddy cast on my leg, but he led the way.

When we got to the truck, I saw immediately that shell fragments had pierced the hood and punctured the radiator. Hopefully, all we'd have to do was fill it with water and she'd crank over. But we didn't get a chance to test my theory. The sergeant and I were standing near the hood when we both heard the unmistakable ripping canvas sound of incoming artillery.

I debated for a second whether to dive under the truck and risk getting burned from the exploding gas tank or to take shelter beside the vehicle. The first 85mm round exploded thirty yards in front of us. The second round was about twenty yards behind us. The third, fourth, and fifth rounds were less than ten yards away. By this time we had taken cover in the slight depression beside the road. I had my right arm tight across my helmet, protecting my face when the next round struck. The shrapnel pierced my forearm and ricocheted off the lip of my helmet with a frightening clang. My arm felt numb for a moment, then began to burn as if someone had jabbed me with a glowing poker. Blood flowed warm and heavy through the torn sleeve of my field jacket.

Two more rounds exploded in the snow nearby. Shrapnel and frozen clods showered over us. By this time I could see that the truck had received a lot more shrapnel hits and would be unlikely to start regardless of what we did at this time.

"Sergeant," I said, rising to an unsteady crouch, "I think we better get the hell out of here."

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ARRIVING at the corps MASH this time, I was strapped down under a blanket to a stretcher. The surgeon in charge of the triage tent bent down to examine my wound tag. He'd obviously seen a lot of seriously hit men and could tell at once from my coloration and alertness that I was in no grave danger.

"SFW," he mumbled, noting I had a shell fragment wound in the right forearm. "We'll get this wound debrided, Major . . ." He glanced at the name tag on my field jacket. "Singlaub . . ." Recognition dawned. He gazed the length of the blanket and saw the bulge on my right leg. In a flash he had the blanket back and was stroking the cast. "Get the Colonel," he shouted to an orderly. "Tell him we got that Major Singlaub again."

I can attest that the colonel in charge of the real-life MASH was not as amicable as the various actors who played him on television. He had not been amused the month before when a field-grade officer went AWOL and got away with it. He was even less amused when this officer returned with a wounded arm to match the injured leg. The Colonel scrutinized my records and was pleased to discover I had enough time in Korea to merit rotation to the States. After my arm was treated, he ordered me dispatched to the 121st Evacuation Hospital south of the Han River, near Seoul. And he made sure I got there by shipping me to the railhead in one of his own ambulances, guarded by two husky orderlies.

As we drove away from the muddy MASH, I heard artillery thumping in the ridges to the north. My outfit might well be under attack and here I was being evacuated for a serious but nonthreatening flesh wound. I had other plans.

After the orderlies returned to the MASH, I managed to get hold of my old JACK pilot, Air Force Captain Bill Ford, who flew his L-19 up and landed at the railhead medevac strip. Bill delivered me back to Seoul where I took a room at JACK headquarters in the Traymore Hotel. From there I telephoned my old Jedburgh buddy Mac Austin, who was serving with CCRAK. "Mac," I said, "find Doug Lindsey and tell him I need his help."

Colonel Doug Lindsey was Eighth Army surgeon, the head medical honcho in Korea. Mac and I had gotten to know him the year before during a medical emergency when CCRAK had tragically dropped some ROK agents undergoing parachute training into the Han River. Mac and I had happened to be driving by and saw Doug Lindsey, buck naked, dragging drowning Koreans from the swirling waters. We'd helped him as best we could and a friendship developed from that sad incident.

When Lindsey called I explained my predicament and swore the wound was superficial. Lindsey somehow arranged to have my evacuation orders canceled. But he insisted I check into the Evacuation Hospital for treatment. I hated to do this because I knew the medics were itching to take away my uniform and get me into hospital pajamas. I never have been much on hospitals. When I was stationed in Manchuria, I had come down with jaundice and was hospitalized by the Navy at Tientsin. When their medics started clucking their tongues at my fever, I'd simply checked myself out and flown

to Mukden in the back of an L-5. Now I planned the same type of escape.

I met Captain John Laurer, a medical officer from a supporting artillery battalion who'd broken his ankle playing Ping-Pong. John had a medical school buddy in the 121st Evac; within a day, I was free to go.

Once more I called Bill Ford. "Bill," I said, "I have a new mission for you."

Ford flew me back to the regimental airstrip in his L-19. As soon as I landed I hitched a ride to Dick Stilwell's headquarters to tell him I was back. He took one look at me and shook his head. I'm sure I appeared an unlikely combat leader with my right arm in a sling, and the muddy old cast still on my right leg.

"Well," he said, "at least you got here before the corps commander called to report you AWOL again." He picked up his field telephone. "This way I get to call him, instead."

The ground rules Dick worked out were better than I'd hoped for. I was allowed to keep my command as long as I stayed in the regimental area until the medics removed the drain from my wound and made sure it wasn't infected.

When I got back to the outfit five days later, I noticed men who had no proper business at the command post finding excuses to come by to get a look at their CO. I'm sure this time they realized I was serious.

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WHILE I'd been gone, the Chinese had stepped up the artillery assault of our lines. During one twenty-four-hour period over 500 shells had hit our trenches. But the newly fortified positions held up well to this barrage and casualties were relatively light.[6]

The Korean winter slowly thawed to a muddy spring. And with the warmer weather enemy pressure increased. The truce negotiations had resumed again in Panmunjom, and this time it appeared the Communists would compromise on the prisoner repatriation issue. But intelligence indicated they planned to follow Mao's well-known "Fight-Talk, Talk-Fight" strategy. They needed to gain face on the battlefield before compromising on the diplomatic front. To do this, they planned to capture exposed American positions and hold them until a cease-fire was effected. As military historian Walter G. Hermes described the situation: "If they could conclude the fighting with a successful assault upon the UNC lines, the general impression of a Communist military victory in the war might, in the eyes of the Asian community, be sustained."[7]

What this situation meant to us was continued enemy pressure, especially against Outpost Harry.

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ONE of the first places I went after returning from the hospital was the artillery observation post, a bunker at the crest of a conical mountain on my battalion right. The young lieutenant from corps artillery commanding the OP was a little surprised to see an infantry major with two casts hobble up there, but he soon understood the purpose of my visit. From this position we had good line-of-sight observation of the enemy hills. The Chinese artillery fire that had wounded me had to have been spotted from an enemy OP bunker hidden somewhere out there on those serrated ridges. I planned to have my engineers blast a narrow zigzag road up the reverse slope of this mountain to accommodate an M-26 tank. The tank had a flat-firing 90mm rifled gun that could put a shell straight out there several miles, hopefully right down the throats of those bastards in the Chinese OP. The lieutenant liked my plan.

Within a week we had the tank dug in. The Chinese made their mistake on a late afternoon a couple of days later. The setting sun glinted off their powerful artillery glasses, just long enough to give us a good fix on their OP. The tank began firing. Six rounds later, the enemy artillery spotter bunker was a smoking ruin. We kept up this pressure. They would build a new OP and we would shell it. Maybe this was a futile exercise, but it sure made me feel good.[8]

I also made a point of visiting Outpost Harry to make sure the reinforcing of the positions had continued unabated while I'd been gone. Lieutenant Dan Foldberg of Easy Company was helping with this important task. As I toured the trenches, noting the timber-and-sandbag roofs of the fighting positions, Foldberg walked behind me. He had obviously been startled to see me trudging up the communications trench to the outpost, my arm in a sling and my leg cast squelching in the mud. But he was too much the correct young West Point lieutenant to comment.

Years later, however, I discovered Foldberg employed an ingenious trick that day to test my sangfroid. One of his sergeants crept along the trench twenty yards behind us, tossing out hand grenades, which rolled down the slope to explode under the barbed-wire entanglement.

"Incoming mortars, sir," Foldberg had shouted when the grenades exploded.

The blast did sound like Chinese 60mm mortars, but the explosions didn't seem all that close. I carried on inspecting the new bunkers. There were more explosions. "You'd better get under cover, Lieutenant," I said. "It's too dangerous following me around. Wherever I go, the Chinese shoot at me."

Foldberg had apparently judged the purpose of my visit to Outpost Harry was serious business, not grandstanding. We continued the inspection with no further "mortars."[9]

☆ ☆

UNFORTUNATELY, Colonel Richard Stilwell was transferred in the middle of March. He'd done a fine job with the regiment, but his talents were needed farther east where ROK divisions held the line and had come under increased Chinese pressure. Stilwell had served as a division operations officer under General Van Fleet in Europe during the war and was a master at rebuilding battered units. He had his work cut out for him in the ROK 1st Corps on the east coast. His replacement as regimental commander was a different kind of officer altogether.

Colonel Russell F. Akers, Jr., had several undesirable attributes. The worst was his drinking. Although it's not generally known by the public, there's always been a lot of alcohol on America's battlefields. Some men use liquor to dull their fear in combat. Akers, I believe, drank to reduce the anxiety of command. Whatever his reasons, Akers drank a lot. Every day, as a matter of fact, beginning in early afternoon and extending well into the night. On many occasions I'd arrive back at regimental headquarters before sunset for a briefing on the night's operations and encounter Colonel Akers, red-faced and sweating in his command tent, the alcohol sweet and cloying on his breath.

What a man drank in the civilian world didn't matter that much. But in a combat zone a drunken commander—or drunken troops, for that matter—could be disastrous. For that reason, I had instituted a rule in the battalion that there'd be absolutely no drinking by any officer or man while we were in the line. I had the supply officer, Captain Guzzardo, stockpile our daily beer ration, to be consumed when we rotated back to reserve. The men grumbled about this, but eventually saw the logic of my order. Many of the young soldiers in the line were in their teens, unaccustomed to alcohol. Even a few beers made them sleepy. A sleepy soldier was dangerous to his buddies.

I ran afoul of Colonel Akers almost immediately because of this rule. When I attended his first dinner meeting for the regiment's battalion commanders, he was serving martinis he mixed himself in a well-loved sterling cocktail service. I asked for a cup of coffee instead, explaining it would be unfair to return to the MLR with liquor on my breath, when my troops were up there, denied their beer ration.

Akers refused to accept my explanation. "By God," he said harshly, thrusting a glass into my hand, "when I drink, everybody drinks."

"Sir," I protested.

"Drink, damn it," he snapped. "That's an order."

I was dumbfounded. If he insisted on his booze, why didn't he drink at lunchtime and sleep it off? I liked a beer or drink before dinner as much as anyone, but we weren't back at Fort Benning, enjoying happy hour. Everyone knew the hours of darkness were the critical period along the MLR. If the Communists were going to attack, they always came after midnight. By that time, Akers had probably gone through an entire bottle of gin. History tells us that General Ulysses S. Grant made some of his better decisions after a bottle or two of whiskey. That might have been the case with Grant. I don't think Akers was cut from the same cloth.

I tried to avoid his dinners, and when I couldn't, I always had a thermos of hot coffee in my jeep to drink on the way back to the line.

☆ ☆

On March 30, Chinese foreign minister Chou En-lai indicated his country would accept an Indian-sponsored compromise on the prisoner repatriation issue, by which individual POWs would be questioned by neutral observers as to their preference for release. The truce talks at Panmunjom, which had been suspended yet again, resumed once more with considerable fanfare. While the world press heralded this "statesmanship," we on the battle line prepared for a fresh assault on our positions.

Our regiment had two other outposts besides Harry: Outpost Dick in the center, and Tom on our left. But these two positions were less of a threat to the enemy, and also easier for us to defend than Harry. When the CCF began extending their line of trenches and shelter bunkers from a spur of high ground we called Star Hill directly toward Outpost Harry, it was clear that this outpost would receive the brunt of the expected enemy attack.

I conferred with the unit on our right, a reinforced battalion of the Greek Expeditionary Force, an outfit made up of tough professional veterans of the Greek civil war who had volunteered for duty in Korea. They were commanded by a jaunty little colonel named Stergos Kaumanakous. The Greeks had fought this kind of battle against Communists on their Albanian border, and they were quite capable of defending their line. They were also in a good position to rake Star Hill with heavy machine-gun fire to help spoil a Chinese attack on Harry.

But Harry's best defense would be precise, massive artillery protective fires, up to and including the last desperate use of variable-time (VT) shrapnel airbursts directly above the outpost itself. I'd planned on this tactic when I'd ordered Lieutenant Atkinson and the engineers to completely overhaul Harry's bunkers and trenches. They had greatly improved the defenses, concentrating on building mortar-proof cover on all fighting positions.

With an enemy attack pending, I was glad I had George Company still defending Harry. They were damn good troops, and they accepted this hazardous duty without complaint. I made sure they had plenty of small arms and automatic weapons ammunition, as well as extra barrels for their machine guns. I also made sure their field telephone lines to the MLR were doubled off and shielded against mortar fire. But I knew the lines would not last through a concerted enemy attack, so I issued extra radios and batteries to the outpost. Finally, I had a long conference with Atkinson, his executive officer and first sergeant, and the battalion artillery coordinator. We plotted the protective fires for Harry in great detail and rehearsed a system of emergency procedures with a signal lamp. If he was being overrun, Atkinson could use either his radio or the lamp to call in VT on his own position—if all other means of communication were knocked out. As a final precaution, I got together with the regimental air support officer and arranged to have a C-47 flare plane standing by on alert should we need really strong illumination over the outpost. Our supporting artillery, of course, had plenty of flares and star shells, but I knew the smoke and dust raised by an intense enemy barrage might be so thick that we'd need the dazzling, one-million-candlepower aerial flares to pierce the aptly named "fog of battle."

☆ ☆

THE enemy assault on Harry began with some minor harassing mortar fire a few hours after dark on the night of April 2, 1953. These were sporadic 60mm rounds that did little damage. But by ten that night the mortar fire was dropping on Harry in regular rolling barrages, and the 60s had been augmented by 82mm and 120mm. I left my executive officer, Major Frank Hewitt, in charge of the artillery coordination at the command post and I climbed the slope to the trenches of our MLR. There was no word yet of an enemy ground attack, but I instinctively felt one coming. It was a clear, cool night with no moon, and the temperature was just above freezing. Good conditions for an attack. I talked to Atkinson by field telephone, offering to dispatch his regular rotating relief platoon early if he wanted them. This would give him a chance to have some fresh men, and, of course, to send back anyone he felt might not do well in an assault.

"Yes, sir," he said, sounding quite calm. "I think that's a good idea."

I briefed the platoon leader, and went through the trench at the men's jump-off position, making sure each soldier carried plenty of ammunition, grenades, and water.

No sooner had Atkinson acknowledged that the relief platoon had reached the outpost than we heard the distinctive thunderclaps and rumble of Chi-

nese heavy artillery. I watched through binoculars as enemy 85mm and 105mm howitzer rounds began to walk across the outpost, but lost count after fifty. The orange shock waves and churning dust now completely obscured Harry. But our own artillery flares were still bright enough to give us good observation. In the chalky flare light, we could clearly see small groups of enemy soldiers moving down the slopes of Star Hill toward Harry. I called in a fire mission on their approach route, and requested the Greeks sweep the area with their heavy machine guns.

From our right, the Greek tracers soared and looped in gaudy red streams. American light and medium artillery was bursting all along the enemy approaches to Outpost Harry, churning up more smoke and dust. The enemy artillery barrage intensified now and they began heavy shelling of the units along our MLR to keep their heads down.

I called for the activation of the improvised battalion reserve. It consisted of G Company's relief platoon plus the Pioneer and Ammo platoon and another platoon made up of cooks and clerks from Headquarters Company. This composite company was under command of the HQ company commander, Lieutenant Lischak, who had rehearsed the assembly and movement of his reserve force only a few days earlier. Lieutenant Lischak was a damn good commander, but his improvised company lacked the strength, training, and firepower of a line company. While these men assembled in the vicinity of the battalion headquarters, the artillery barrage up front intensified to a level I had never seen before. The enemy rounds were falling without interruption on the outpost, which now resembled a smoking, molten volcano. When I tried to reach Atkinson on the field telephone, I discovered both lines had been severed.

Now we saw enemy flares, first a single white rocket. Then a double red and a green star cluster. I assumed that that was their attack signal. I got on the radio with Atkinson and warned him of the impending assault.

"I know, sir," he said through the crackling static. "They're right outside our wire now. We're getting grenades already." Atkinson then requested final protective fires. I relayed his order and all of the battalion mortars and division artillery behind us cut loose, laying down a carpet of carefully plotted barrages that struck all around Harry's trench line and wire. Now the volcano was hidden by its own smoke. I called for the Air Force flare ship. Within twenty minutes the droning C-47 was out there releasing the brilliant parachute flares. The shadowy night was replaced by a garish imitation daylight that somehow reminded me of an overexposed newsreel.

I told Lieutenant Lischak to move his reserve force into an assembly area near the F Company command post and await further orders.

Atkinson was back on the radio. "They're in the trenches," he shouted. "Request VT on position; repeat, VT on position. Acknowledge."

He sounded young and scared now. It was definitely his voice. There had been several Chinese attempts to trick us with English speakers on the radio in the past few weeks. But I knew the Lieutenant's voice too well to disregard his call. He had reached the critical point in the battle. As we had arranged, he would now pull his men under the covered fighting positions and into their reinforced bunkers. They would try to keep the Chinese exposed outside on the hilltop while the American artillery burst overhead. If the tactic worked, the enemy would be caught in the open and be either massacred or forced to withdraw. But if American soldiers were caught outside, they too would be slaughtered by the storm of shrapnel. It was a terrible risk. But losing the outpost and having to recapture it was an unacceptable alternative.

Lieutenant Colonel John Roddy, the artillery battalion commander supporting our regiment, answered my request personally. "VT right on them, Jack?" He wanted to be sure that was my intention.

"VT on Outpost Harry," I repeated. "Keep firing until George Company requests normal protective fires. I take full responsibility."

No sooner had I jammed the field telephone back in its case when the familiar freight-car rumble of outgoing howitzer rounds passed close overhead. It was as if a Fourth of July fireworks' crescendo from several small towns went off simultaneously out ahead of us. The barrages were constant now. The sky over Harry pulsed with red explosions and white-hot shrapnel. Even at this distance, the shock waves pounded our faces and throats.

It was time to move out the reserve force. I called Lischak at the Fox Company command post and told him, "Execute Counterattack Plan Baker." As the counterattacking force moved along the road in front of Fox Company's positions, the radio reports from Harry became more frantic. Most radios could not be heard because their antennas had been blown away by the intense artillery fire. The bunker closest to the MLR reported "many friendly KIA," and enemy troops between his position and the command post. I decided I had better go with the counterattacking force. As I passed through the MLR, I borrowed an M-1 rifle and a bandoleer of ammunition. I placed two frag grenades in the pockets of my field jacket.

"Let's go," I told the men. "Move out." As we passed through the wire and filtered into the zigzag communication trench, I saw that the VT barrage on Harry was lifting, to be shifted back to the protective fires once again. We moved down the trench line to the bottom of our slope and started across the exposed flat.

So far the men had kept up a good pace, but here the trench had been battered by enemy mortars and the going was slow. Just as they began to bunch up and falter, I heard the shriek and snort of incoming artillery. Suddenly the ground around us erupted with 105mm bursts and heavy mor-

tars. The enemy had this trench zeroed in, and they'd been waiting for this counterattack force to appear. I shouldered my way through the men, pushing them ahead, shouting to move out, to escape this trap. But either they couldn't hear me through the explosions, or they were immobilized by fear. It's almost impossible to convince men to leave the illusory shelter of a trench and strike across exposed ground.

There was only one way to get them out of there. I clambered out of the trench and ran along the edge, trying to keep low, but still be seen by the men beneath me.

"Come on, you sons of bitches," I shouted, breaking my cardinal rule never to swear at my troops. "They *need* us up there."

I've always said that if an officer has to swear at his men he isn't much of a leader, but I had to shock them out of their immobilizing fear.

They hesitated a moment, then rushed forward along the trench. I continued to trot beside them on the edge, shouting encouragement.

When we left the trench and stumbled up the muddy, blasted slopes of Outpost Harry, I ordered the men to halt and take cover in the shell holes. The final rounds of friendly protective fire were still striking above us around the remnants of Harry's barbed wire. I was amazed at the consistent accuracy of our fire control. The artillerymen behind the battalion lines were firing blind over two ridges, following the orders of a distant forward observer. But they had their howitzer tubes so well sighted in that they could place a round anywhere they wanted on Harry with absolute precision.

The barrage finally lifted and I led the men up the hill. We shouldered a narrow spur and there was sudden movement to our left. Less than thirty yards away several squads of Chinese soldiers in their distinctive tan quilted uniforms struggled to retrieve their dead, wounded, and weapons. I opened fire with the rifle and the men around me cut loose with carbines, rifles, and BARs. The enemy troops fell in the garish light of the flares. We struggled on up the hill. Near the crest we encountered another pocket of Chinese in the shattered trenches. Again, my men repelled them.

I shouted through the smoke and dust, trying to alert the men in the outpost that their relief had arrived. A distant voice shouted back. The scene on the hilltop was terrible. Dead enemy soldiers lay sprawled all around us, many sliced apart by the VT shrapnel. The shell holes overlapped in crazy patterns like a moonscape. The air hung with dust, cordite fumes, and the stench of burnt, mangled flesh. As I dropped into a trench, I encountered a horrible sight that I have never forgotten. A dead American soldier was hunched forward on the sandbags, his face inches from me in the flare light. A mortar round had struck close behind him, and the explosion had somehow burst his head, swelling his features grotesquely. But I recognized the man. He had been a cheerful young corporal from G Company's relief platoon

who had joked with me only a few hours before in the MLR trenches. Now he had become this grotesque distortion.

The company first sergeant worked his way toward me through the broken sandbags and shattered timbers, probing dead Chinese soldiers with his bayonet. "Sir," he said, his voice breaking, "we're sure glad to see you." He pointed his rifle toward the shell-ripped bunker roofs behind him. "We bitched when you made us dig in so deep. But that cover saved our lives tonight."

We collected over fifty dead Chinese soldiers around the outpost. Our observation post on the MLR had seen the enemy withdraw, dragging maybe another fifty. Two of the fallen Chinese in Harry's trenches were still alive and we evacuated them with our own wounded. All told, the defense of Outpost Harry had cost Company G nine men killed and twenty-one wounded out of the 120 defenders.

When the last of the wounded had been evacuated and I was finally able to return to my command post after dawn, Frank Hewitt informed me that the battle for Outpost Harry had set a division record for artillery expended. Over 100 American mortar and howitzer tubes had supported us during the night, firing a total of almost 20,000 rounds. Enemy artillery fire had totaled over 8,000 shells.[10] This was fire on a scale far beyond anything American forces had ever encountered in Korea.

But our tactics had succeeded. Maybe, I thought, peeling off my bloody, mud-crusted flak jacket, the enemy will think twice before they try again.

☆ ☆

Two days later, Lieutenant Atkinson, sixteen of his officers, NCOs, and troops assembled with me in the regimental rear. Major General George Smythe, the division commander, presented us with decorations for valor. When it was my turn, General Smythe personally read from the citation, noting that I had taken command of the counterattack and deliberately exposed myself to enemy fire. For this "outstanding gallantry, initiative, and devotion to duty" I, too, was awarded the Silver Star. Naturally I was proud. But I couldn't help remembering that dead soldier's face.

Atkinson received the Silver Star, as did his first sergeant and several of his men. The others received the Bronze Star.

Late that night I was back in the line, checking the repairs to my companies' positions. Through the fine spring rain we heard the Chinese loudspeakers blaring their tinny music toward us. Then the familiar voice of their propaganda man sent greetings to the troops of the 2nd Battalion. "You are being punished for your aggression in Korea," he told us. "Korea is a hell of a place to die."

The grizzled first sergeant beside me in the trench shifted his cud of

chewing tobacco and spat into the mud. "No shit, Dick Tracy," he said. "What else is new?"

There was more singsong Chinese music. Then the speaker resumed, again addressing the men of my battalion. "This war in Korea has been going on a long time," he informed us. "But now the fighting is really going to start."

The music echoed through the mist. After a while, American 155mm Long Tom rounds screeched through the clouds overhead and thumped into the unseen mountains to the north. The music stopped.

☆ ☆

THE Chinese pressure shifted west. For the next two weeks they assaulted Porkchop Hill, an exposed outpost similar to Harry on the 7th Division's front. The battle there was one of the most heroic of the Korean War. By the time the assault was over, the U.S. Army had held its position and the Chinese had wasted hundreds of their best troops.

The pressure moved back east again. On the night of April 24, Outpost Harry was suddenly hit with a devastating Time-on-Target heavy artillery barrage that totaled almost a thousand rounds. I had Fox Company on the outpost, and had briefed their commanding officer, platoon leaders, and first sergeant that afternoon to prepare for an assault.

This attack developed along the same pattern as the assault on Harry three weeks earlier. But now the enemy artillery barrages were even heavier. From the Chinese flare patterns it became obvious that the ground assault would be in several waves, involving almost a battalion of troops. Once more our artillery was accurate and devastating. The volcano of Outpost Harry erupted again. Just before midnight the company commander radioed his request: "VT on position. They're in my trenches." I was again leading the counterattack force of Fox Company's reserve platoon and a composite group of clerks, drivers, and engineers out of the MLR when my radio operator reported Fox Company's fire-support request. It took me a while to convince regimental artillery to fire the VT mission on our own position.

But Fox Company had other means to protect themselves. After the attack on April 3, Lieutenant Dan Foldberg of Easy Company and his West Point classmate Lieutenant Alan Lichtenberg, the commander of my battalion's engineer platoon, had booby-trapped the outpost's slopes with a crude, brutally effective weapon: "Fougasse." These were buried 55-gallon drums filled with a mixture of thickened gasoline and diesel fuel—homemade napalm, fused with a phosphorus grenade, that could be triggered from the outpost command bunker. When Fox Company lit off their Fougasse, the approach trenches swarming with Chinese troops were flooded with cascading liquid fire. The enemy survivors were then hit by the incoming VT.

But they kept coming. By the time I reached the outpost, several bunkers

had been overrun, but Fox Company had rallied to repel the Chinese. The scene was worse than after the first attack. Enemy dead and wounded lay everywhere.

But our losses in the hand-to-hand fighting were severe. Nineteen Americans had been killed and almost fifty wounded. And a medic reported seeing one wounded GI being dragged away screaming when the enemy finally retreated.

The next night, the Chinese propaganda echoed again across the still-smoldering hills. Our soldiers were encouraged to lay down their weapons and come across to the Chinese lines where they would be "welcomed with arms wide open."

☆ ☆

THE first of the summer heat came in early May. Now the muddy roads behind the MLR were choked with dust from trucks and tanks. The enemy began to alternate battalion-size attacks on Eighth Army outposts with periods of absolute calm, during which their propaganda speakers worked overtime. I used the opportunity to improve the defenses of Outpost Harry. I knew the Chinese would be coming again, but I didn't know how large the attack would be. If they were willing to squander several hundred men in a multiple-battalion assault, they would undoubtedly capture Harry. My plan was to repulse every one of their probes so savagely that they would shift their attention elsewhere.

I was in my command bunker the warm starlit night of May 10, when I heard the familiar rumble of an enemy barrage smacking Harry. The field telephone whirred beside me and Frank Hewitt reported another Time-on-Target had just hit the outpost. I grabbed my helmet and flak jacket and dashed to the fire-control bunker beside my command post.

If a major ground assault against Harry was coming, I wanted to break it up as best I could with long-range fire missions against the enemy approach route. I took my time with the battalion artillery coordinator, carefully plotting the exact sequences of barrages I wanted laid down. We worked as calmly as we could plotting the azimuths and sequences of high-explosive, white-phosphorus, and VT rounds needed. But we were both aware of the mounting thunder of the enemy barrage. Obviously, the noise of the Chinese artillery was heard back at regiment. Frank Hewitt answered the field phone and called me across the bunker.

"It's Colonel Akers, Jack," Frank said. "He wants to know what the hell's going on." Frank was not paraphrasing the Colonel. That's the way Akers talked. "He wants to speak to you, personally."

But I was too busy with the artillery fire-support coordinator to explain my plans. At any rate, I had given Akers a detailed briefing on my latest

outpost defense tactics only that morning. But this was late at night and I didn't know how much gin he'd swallowed.

"You brief him, Frank," I said. "Tell him I can't talk to him right now."

When I was certain the artillery officer understood my orders, I left Frank Hewitt in charge of the command post and dashed up the hill to the MLR with my radio operator. I had no sooner settled into the observation trench to spot the first barrages when the nearby field telephone rang.

The sergeant who answered yelled over the noise of the outgoing artillery. "Major Hewitt wants to talk to you, sir. He said it's absolutely urgent."

I was annoyed. Frank knew I'd be busier than a one-armed paper hanger up here, trying to get the counterattack force organized while simultaneously observing the supporting fires. As any infantry officer knew, the decision of when and how you commit your reserve was the critical one in the conduct of the battle. And this decision must not be delegated to a subordinate.

I impatiently grabbed the phone. "Major," Frank began, addressing me formally. "I hate to tell you this, but Colonel Akers called back . . ." I wondered what the hell was causing Frank Hewitt to talk this way. Then he told me. "Major," he continued, "Colonel Akers told me to inform you that you are relieved of your command as of right now. You are to leave the area immediately. He's bringing Major Fred Thomas from 1st Battalion to take over the command."

Frank might as well have hit me in the guts with a rifle butt. Being relieved of a command under fire was probably the worst thing that could happen to any combat officer. I was speechless. Finally, I found some words. "What on earth happened, Frank?" I asked. "Didn't you tell him I was up here trying to get things organized?"

"Jack," Frank said, "Akers is drunk. He wouldn't listen to anything I said. But he did make it clear you are relieved of command. He insisted I note it in the commo log."

That was the end of that. I told the company commander in the trench beside me to take over. An hour later, I was back at regiment. Akers refused to see me. I slept that night fitfully, listening to the distant slap and rumble of the artillery battle raging around Harry. Fortunately, the outpost again survived the enemy attack.

☆ ☆

WHEN I came out through division en route to Seoul, Colonel Ed Burba, the division Chief of Staff, took me aside. "Jack," he explained, "we don't want you worrying about this. General Smythe sent an officer up there to investigate the circumstances. He knows you were unfairly relieved, but he's got to uphold his regimental commanders."

I nodded grimly. That was the Army way.

But Burba saw I wasn't convinced. "By the way," he added, "Dick Stilwell was on the horn as soon as he heard. He let it be known that if anything disparaging went into your record there'd be hell to pay."

That *was* encouraging.

Stilwell's warning must have worked. Within a day, Akers had sobered up enough to sign a Meritorious Bronze Star medal citation, which cited my "aggressiveness and inspirational leadership" while molding my battalion into an extremely effective combat team. When I picked up my 201 personnel file from the division clerks, there was no indication I had been relieved of duty, only that I'd been temporarily reassigned to division headquarters. And my new permanent-change-of-station assignment as a student at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, remained unchanged.

I got to Seoul the next day and headed for CCRAK to stay with Mac Austin until I got a flight to the States. When Mac picked me up, he had a big smile on his wind-burned face. I had just made the promotion list to lieutenant colonel, a good six months ahead of schedule. That was all the assurance I needed that Akers's drunken outburst had not affected my record. And I could rest easy that the battalion was in good hands because Fred Thomas and I shared the same command philosophy.

But Mac had some bad news as well. In the debriefing of the first sick and wounded American POWs to be exchanged, CCRAK had learned the fate of my friend Major Homer Hinckley. Apparently Homer had made the mistake of swearing at his captors in Chinese. He was singled out for special scrutiny. Then it was discovered he had served in Peking in a questionable capacity. The Chinese took Homer and a number of other American prisoners to a secret military jail near Peking. They tortured Homer daily for information, but he had none to give. Finally, they chained him naked in a cage like an animal and tortured him in front of the other assembled prisoners. Even a giant of a man like Homer could not survive such treatment. He died, a tormented, frozen skeleton at the end of that terrible winter.

I caught a plane from Kimpo field the next afternoon. I was leaving the blood-soaked shores of Asia. But part of me would always remain there.

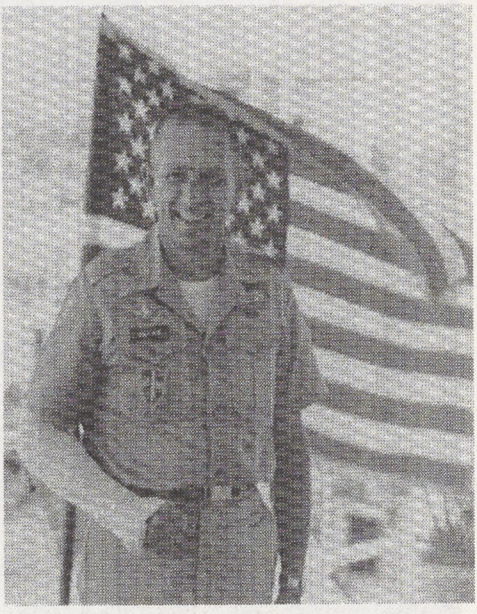
Lt. Col. Singlaub on maneuvers with 101st Airborne Division, 1958.

15

Lt. Col. Singlaub with Gen. William Westmoreland, Commander of the 101st Airborne Division.

Germany, 1961. Col. Singlaub leads the staff of the 16th Infantry on a regimental visit to Luxembourg.

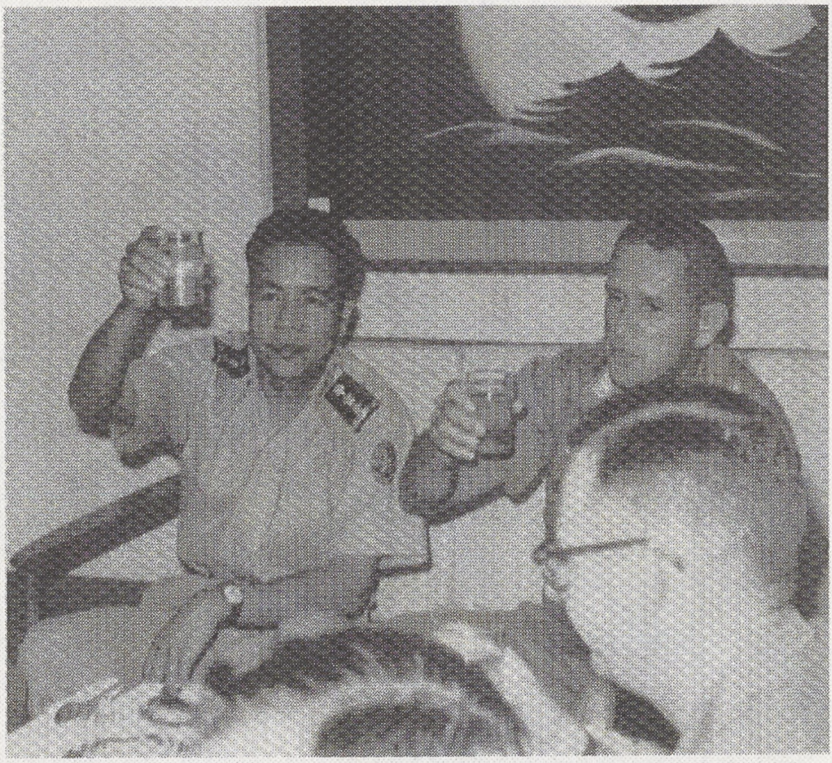
16



Vietnam, 1968. Singlaub recuperating from another injury.

Long Thanh, Vietnam, 1967. Col. Jack Singlaub is the first person in Southeast Asia to be lifted by the Fulton Recovery Rig.

19



Vietnam, 1968. Col. Singlaub with Col. Tran Van Ho, his Vietnamese counterpart.

Project MASSTER, 1970. Lt. Gen. William Depuy (center) and Brig. Gen. Singlaub (to Depuy's left), inspect new Army sensors.

20

21

1970. Brig. Gen. Singlaub learns to fly the UH-1 Huey and qualifies as an Army helicopter pilot.

22

Singlaub parachutes with the U.S. Army Parachute Team.

Singlaub, left, with U.S. Army Parachute Team.