

4 August, '50

It is a month today that I shoved off on two LST's with my battalion for Korea. We did this on 24 hours notice. You will recall taking bag and baggage, equipment and vehicles with us.

Our weapons such as machine guns, 81mm. mortars and 60 mm. mortars were generally in an unsatisfactory condition and had been so every since I took over the battalion shortly after New Year's this year. Our communications equipment was especially sorry in the radio line.

Our state of training was good; but we had not progressed to the readiness for combat stage. The troops were young and green. This is also true for all units of the 24th division. My own battalion was supposed to be one of the best and had been so rated in the spring tests.

We arrived in Pusan on the evening of 4th July at about 7:00 P.M. The LST's were Japanese manned and had been given to them by our Navy after the war to bring back Jap's from outlying places such as the Philippines, Pacific Isles, China, etc.

At Pusan we selected our own landing place and went ashore. Only a small detachment of Americans were at Pusan and we were on our own.

That nite we bivouaced outside of town in what had been a small American compound during our troop occupation of Korea. Pusan is a large port and now our main supply base and of course we are fighting to hold it. You will note how steadily we have been pushed back from the North and East during the past 30 days.

We spent two nites in Pusan. On the second nite our camp was washed out by a flash flood and a monsoon rain and we took shelter in what ever building in the area that we could get into. Some of the warehouses and houses and our troops were not completely respectful of the property.

The next morning at dawn our vehicles took off in a large convoy for Taegu. The troops are moved to the same place by rail. So disorganized was the rail system that my battalion was taken. Beyond Taegu to Taejon and was lost for about 12 hours in the screwed up rail net. Eventually, we assembled at Taegu as a regiment. We are only a two battalion regiment and were to pay for that later.

Meantime, the only troops fighting were elements of the 21st Inf. and the 34th Inf., which are the other two regiments of the 4th Division.

As I recall, it took our motor column all day to reach Taegu



and we spent that nite in a Southern Korea compound. I am now used to the filth, stench, bugs and lack of sanitation but I was not at that time. I have not seen a toilet, shower, or a bath since my arrival. We bathe in rivers, use slit trenches, and wash out of our helmets. We wash our clothes in whatever we can find and not very often.

So far our only food has been canned. We have been either fighting or moving so much that our supplies never seem to get to us at the right time. I know the rear elements, which now are many, fare in a much better fashion.

This brings us up to the seventh of July which we spent in Taegu. The next nite I moved my battalion by motor from Taegu to Pohang Dong, a seaport on the East coast of Korea. Our mission was to secure and hold a large airstrip out of that town.

The motor march took all nite and was made in a driving rain, as we rode in open jeeps and trucks. We were soaked to the skin. We arrived at the airbase the next morning at daybreak. It was not in use. I set up a perimeter defense of it and then took my jeep and drove north directly up the East coast road some 52 miles to contact the South Korean force, which in turn was holding in check the North Korean forces in that area. Most of this road is now in enemy hands. My trip was without incident except one of our F-51's chased me out of my jeep near the front and generally scared hell out of me. At that time, they were shooting at almost everything including our own forces. Even now, our coordination is not too good, and a navy plane dropped one near my C.P. a few days ago.

Next day was the 9th or 10th. At any rate we spent one nite there and were then relieved by another battalion fresh from Japan and returned by motor and rail to Taejon. This brings me up to about 11th of July. I believe that the regiment spent only one night in Taejon and then were sent north to organize the defense of a sector of the Kum river. This was the first of our fight as a regiment and so far to the East. (or so far the last)

The sector we were given to defend was large enough for over a division front. For example, I had one of my companies spread out on high ground behind the river for 11,000 yards. There were huge gaps in our lines and all in all a hopeless situation though I heard no one admit it, and personally I didn't know enough to think we couldn't hold.

Initially I was to organize the main defense with my battalion but at the last minute it was given to Otho Winstead's battalion as he had not been moving around quite so much. My Hqs. Co, two rifle companies, and half my heavy weapons company were organized into his defense as well. Of course, Colonel Meloy and regimental staff were in over all charge.



To show more graphically the area we were defending, I can say that I walked half the sector and it took me from 8:30 in the morning to 5:30 in the afternoon. It was very mountainous and so rough that at times I thought I would never make it. I had no business trying; but had no idea of this terrain at that time. It is also a good way to get shot. As there was only my S3 and myself making the walk.

The balance of that week was spent in digging in and preparing our defenses, blowing bridges. Late in the week we came under artillery fire, which increased in tempo until the morning of the 16 when the attack was across the river and broke thru. I was not there for the attack, as the day before I had taken what was not already on line of my battalion way around to our extreme west flank to block some crossings being made in that sector.

I was ordered back the next day to help break a road block, which was behind our main force. Because of a series of misinformation, I never got there with my main strength. I did get through with two tanks and four light armored vehicles to exactly the end of the block, and where Col. Meloy had been shot that morning. My half track was knocked out at that point and almost every one aboard, except myself, were killed or wounded. We had passed through a hail of machine gun rapid fire and some anti-tank fire for several hundred yards before we were completely stopped. I found cover in a rice paddy and a hut which some others had found, and stayed there for about 3 hours before crawling out. I came out alone and not far down the road found an abandoned jeep which had been hit, but not knocked out. I drove that into Taejon with no trouble except a sniper shot now and then.

The 1st battalion was decimated. Otho, Macomber, his S-3, are missing as are many others. My companies lost most of their equipment but escaped heavy losses in personnel. I did lose three of staff, two cracked up mentally and one was shot in the leg. My Hqs. co. suffered heavy casualties in men and equipment as they were thrown in to stem the tide.

At Taejon, I assumed command of the regiment which was shot completely. We moved to a place further east called Yongdong to reorganize. We were never given a chance to do so as in a day or two my battalion was sent back to Taejon. Meantime Col. Meloy's replacement arrived, so I took my battalion to Taejon where we were to be attached to the 34th Inf. and go into reserve. The 34th had relieved us, the 19th, with the mission of defending Taejon.

I took my battalion to Taejon by train on the 19th, the vehicles, supplies, and heavy weapons went overland. The train to Taejon was delayed somewhat, as the track had been bombed out that morning. This is the first evidence I had seen of enemy air so far. If they had it, we would have been out of here long ago as complete losers.

We arrived at Taejon about noon. The enemy was already pressing north of the city with artillery fire.



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I received orders to go into the assembly area west of the city on the main road from that direction. In a few minutes I received word that the enemy was attacking down that road. I organized the battalion, walked out of town and in one hour we were fighting them with small arms and no artillery, air or mortar support. The fight went on all day and nite. Next morning at dawn the 34th caved in on my right flank and streamed across me, in back of my front line rifle companies, turning my right flank, cutting me off at the rear behind my G.P., and in two hours my battalion was in a hopeless position. Our withdrawal from that area was pretty orderly, but later everything to the south of the city was cut off ~~was~~ and again I lost what I had previously saved. Every vehicle, every heavy weapon, every piece of communication --- and heavy casualties. I spent 2 days and 3 nites getting out, and walked about 50 miles. Most of the time we stuck to the ridges and peaks. We made our way back to Yongdong. Here what was left was loaded on a train and we were sent to a quiet sector centralized near the town of Chinju where two battalions fresh from Guam were attached to us. These battalions were the 29th Inf. Reg't. fully equipped, up to strength, but untrained and green. These battalions were to protect the west flank and us while we reorganized. We arrived there on 26 of July, which was last Wednesday. Today is the 4 of August, Friday. One battalion of the 24th went west to defend Chinju and one north.

All of this is beginning to blur on me at this point. At any rate, neither of these units could hold, and we went back in the line again in a couple of days. I selected the best high ground I could for my defense, astride the road west of the city. We held for a couple of days. Then my left company folded on a dawn attack and we dropped back several ridges for another stand. We got behind a small river. At 1:00 in the morning, I was returning from my front line company to my G.P. which was about 400 yards away. My reserve company in that area was then being overrun by a howling mob of gooks with automatic weapons. They simply tore it to pieces. My men were too tired to fight, and some never even woke up in this world. My G. P. was too hot to get into so I stayed on the road trying to re-organize my men who broke for the rear along the road. It was hopeless again. We withdrew finally by dawn into the city and out to the northeast. Another battalion passed thru us into the mountains to defend for us but again we had to go to their aid. Last nite we were relieved by a fresh regiment.

Today as I write we are again in a quiet sector and in reserve. A study of the map show me that we are also again on an open flank with no protection. My battalion is broken, demoralized sick and beaten. We have gained that time we badly wanted. Now we must have time or go under completely. That open flank tells me that we won't get it. 50% of my men and officers have been killed, wounded or missing. My equipment has been lost twice over. I wonder what the dispatches have to say?