

The Apple Orchard

Taegu Korea

We next moved into an apple orchard east of the city of Taegu and just to the northwest of the Taegu airstrip. The Taegu airstrip was just getting setup as a base of operations for P-51 aircraft. These were able to linger over nearby target areas much longer and get to them quicker than the P-80s operating out of Japan. I walked down the dusty road and around to a PX I heard was there. It was in a ramshackle structure that looked for the world like an open air vegetable stand. I seem to remember that all they had were a few shaving items which I didn't need and perhaps toothcare items which I was not prone to use. I know I didn't buy anything so it is definite they had no candy.

Sandy and I snooped around the abandoned houses that were near. It should properly have been called looting and probably was even though we did not find anything worth taking. We were at the apple orchard twice and I believe it was here that we were told "You can't keep those kids with you." So Sandy and Charley were sent back home to the village near the Changn'yong-Chogye bridge on the Naktong.

In the apple orchard we had pup tents set up under the trees. There was to be a beer ration and a pit perhaps 3 feet deep and 4 feet square was dug in the soft orchard soil to cool the ration. Two or three of us decided to go into town. I did not drink and had no particular interest in the ration. We walked the 2 or 3 miles to the center of town then began to explore what stores were open for business. In a sparsely stocked jewelry I dickered for a small pearl set in a delicate gold ring. I understood the price was to be 5 dollars in the script money we were given rather than U.S. currency. Once the deal was made the price suddenly doubled and heated argument erupted. This drew in a city policeman who understood enough english to get the drift of the problem. A few harsh words from him and my purchase was handed over. I carried this ring wrapped in a GI handkerchief in my fatigue jacket pocket until I was wounded several months later.

On the way back we passed an open air native liquor market and a search of the stock found some bottles of "Taegu Apple Brandy." We each purchased a bottle. As I said I did not drink at the time and I'm not sure what I thought the apple brandy would be like, probably somewhat like homemade berry wines I had tasted. When we got back to the orchard we put the bottles in the iced pit with the beer to cool.

Sometime after sunset as it began to get dark we retrieved the bottles and I eagerly opened mine. One large swig was enough. It felt as if a large very course wood rasp had been run down my throat. Finally I read the label in detail. "Alcohol - 40% or better by volume." "Let's give it to the cooks - they'll drink anything." And that's what we did.