

*The Army designated it Hill 296. A lot of buddies called it "Sleeping Bag Hill"
I have long thought of it as Blood Mountain ...*

Blood Mountain

by James C. Fine

February 6, 1951

Jim Fine — was a pfc rifleman with the 1st Platoon of "Love" Company, 21st Infantry the morning of February 6, 1951. A poorly prepared position could have been disastrous. Later that day he was wounded.

The night was black,
the air so cold.
The enemy hit
ever so bold.

Sergeant Sharp listens
with never a scold.
Then says, "We must fight,
We must hold!"

One I feel is cold,
smooth in my clutch.
I feel for the pin,
it responds to my touch.

He came unexpected,
Two were unprotected.
Watched for below,
but he hit up high.

Three recross the ridge;
Two in God we trust.
The third is death,
bear him we must.

"Damnable fool!"
on such a dark night,
white phosphorous
makes a hellish light.

Above on the right
hidden in the night.
If we fire he will
see us by the light.

If fight we must
then fight we will,
We'll choose a way
that keeps us still.

We turn to statues
move not a bone,
Beads of sweat,
bodies of stone

We contort in
our shallow cup,
We're still exposed
belt buckle up.

"We will wait
use only blades.
or rifles aside
use grenades."

In white hot anger,
oh it burns so.
At least we can see,
there's no one below.

Whispered council
in coldest fear,
Decision made
we beat for the rear.

"Maker of death,
pill of force,
do your work,
reveal no source."

Its life complete,
it's moment of fame.
It flickers, then dies,
and leaves no flame.

From death to life,
how short the bridge.
Scarce ten yards
we're over the ridge.

Once again we decided to quit this position. Firing and shouts above and to our right indicated the Chinese had advanced along the outcrop almost to the main crest. Herlindo Tabares and I slipped from the hole as quietly as possible and bounded for the safety of the back slope.

"Chinese hold high
the outcrop right.
We dare not fire,
for the flashes of light."

Once across the crest we were confronted by the sight of a 90mm recoilless rifle with a thermite grenade burning in its breach and chamber. The sergeant watching it burn

seemed apologetic as he explained that the South Korean crew was not there and he was burning it because he couldn't carry it alone. We nodded and slipped on down the slope a few yards where we were met again by Sergeant Sharp.

For the second time we explained why we couldn't fight from the hole on the forward slope. This time Sharp listened, sympathetically, and when we were through he informed us that the battalion on our right had broken and we were now waiting for orders to withdraw or counterattack. He then separated us and had us swing down the slope for several yards so that we could resist any advance by the Chinese along the main crest. I found a wash, maybe eighteen inches deep, and dropped in.

Waiting there in the dark the minutes dragged by as though they had suddenly become hours. The firing had almost ceased now and the Chinese were shouting and laughing over their victory. In the dark it seemed only a few scant yards to where they were celebrating. It probably was just yards to where they celebrated. I listened for what seemed an eternity — then a new fear squeezed me. ***“Suppose they're not all celebrating. Suppose even now they are slipping this way. Maybe part of them are shouting to fool us while the rest are already crawling our way.”*** Beads of sweat popped out on me as I felt for my one remaining grenade. It was a fragmentation grenade that I had set up to use on my rifle. I slipped the launching attachment off in the darkness and slipped the pin out.

I heaved the grenade as hard as I could aiming at the noise and laughter. It exploded. A few seconds later, two chinese potato mashers (concussion grenades) went off eight to ten feet behind me — if they were close enough to overthrow me it was time to leave. I panicked. I bolted and ran like a rabbit through the blackness. There was a lot of firing now and the sound of slugs clipping through the short scrub grass and brush around me added wings to my feet.



BLOOD MOUNTAIN — “Sleeping Bag Hill “ as it appeared November 28, 1992. The 296 meter peak is to the left out of this photo. Our fox-hole, Tabares and mine, was just beyond the saddle that is in the center of the left half of this picture. The old foxholes are still up there, although at least 90% filled in by the forty odd years of settling. In 1951, the growth was much more sparse than today. In much of the country, hills have been reforested but this growth appears to have naturally occurred. There was a village here in 1951 but only two or three houses.

With each terrorizing whine and snap I imagined the sledgehammer blow of a slug hitting the small of my back. I was no longer rational. I was no longer useful. Fear and desire to live had taken over and overpowered military discipline and reasoning power. I fled blindly in the pitch dark. This was the peak of the terror I had been nursing since being nicked at Kumchon¹ months before. In the first few seconds of my flight I lived that moment at Kumchon over and over again, feeling the neck jarring blow and hearing the maddening crash as the slug tore through my helmet. I remembered feeling for the split in my skull and there was only the thick mat of my uncut hair, I had felt for the gush of life's blood and there had been only a few small stains on my grimy hand, I remembered the throbbing headache that had followed. A thought crossed my mind — I had escaped death before by perhaps an inch and this time it might not be so. Survival became paramount as I slipped and slid over the hard frozen slope. I discarded my cartridge belt with canteen, bayonet scabbard and empty grenade pouch still attached, thinking that throwing away this little bit of weight might make the difference between escape or capture or death.

Running down the mountain in the blackness, the curious black blackness that always precedes the dawn and is especially black on moonless nights, I put my foot down and there was nothing there. I fell — five, six, seven feet — I don't know. Bluff I suppose. I sprawled among the rocks and scrub brush, lay there several minutes shaken, gasping for the breath that had been knocked from me and fighting to recover the reason that had also been "taken" from me. My cheek lay against the frozen pebbles and clay-like soil and the cold ground felt good; the air cooled my whole face and I listened. I could no longer hear any rifle fire or any firing at all for that matter; so I closed my eyes for a few moments, resting and listening. Momentarily, I got up and continued down the mountain, picking my way more carefully. It was then that I began to consider the consequences of my actions. Like a cold ocean wave washing over you the overwhelming thought hit me that I had deserted. That's the only way it could come out — I was guilty of desertion — me — me that used to dream of heroic acts. I had known ever since Kumchon that I certainly was no hero; but to desert! In a way I didn't much care. Now it was over, there was no longer a reason to stay, no reason to sit in a cramped foxhole waiting for those damnable bugles to blow, no reason to devise ways of self torture to, stay awake through the long freezing winter nights, no reason to sleep in a half-finished foxhole in water up to my chest during the rainy season. There was no turning back, not really. I could go back up, but for what? Better to live a coward than to commit suicide by going back up there. Go back up to be carried off on a litter and dumped somewhere, wherever it is they dump bodies to wait patiently for their unpainted box. The coast couldn't be over twenty or twenty-five miles to the west — there would be fishing boats there and escape, escape to somewhere, anywhere. I don't know how long it took me to make my way down the mountain. It had taken us a couple of hours to climb it; but we had only climbed half the time and we had been tired and it was the middle of the night when we had gone on the mountain.

¹ see Kumchon, page 2

When I reached the bottom it was breaking dawn and I was completely bewildered by the scene before me. There was the company, perhaps the whole battalion, strung out at the base of the mountain as if they were getting ready to police it for cigarette butts and candy wrappers. But how? If they had quit the mountain and come down in time to be here in formation like this they must have quit it before I did. But why? Why hadn't they called to me when they withdrew? Why hadn't Shertzer yelled for me or even whispered? I would have heard. Shertzer had been next to me in that last failing attempt at defense and I had been next to the Chinese. I looked among the milling GIs for Shertzer's boyish face, the square cut chin with the fuzz on it and that blond hair rising over the typical German head. I wanted to know why he hadn't passed on the order to move off the mountain. I found my squad; it was complete now, except for Shertzer. Someone slapped me on the back. Congratulations ... I remember it only through a haze.

A short time ago I had deserted, displayed cowardice in the face of the enemy but fate had intervened with characteristic abandon and now I was no longer a wretched coward. They had given me up, but now I was here — and no longer a deserter. Fate twitches a finger and a most unfortunate is transformed into a most fortunate without undergoing any actual change. I marveled.

I began to catch snatches of the murmuring around me. It seemed there might be no retreat. *"No retreat, hell. We had already retreated."*

We had to have the mountain. *"Why did we have to have that mountain?"*

The officers were gathered at the battalion control point now. *"Oh please God, don't make us go back up there."* Attacks were hell. Defense was much safer.

The prayers were silent, rumors abounded, fear lived in the frigid air, gripes and theories could be had for the loan of an ear — willing or unwilling. Deep down we all knew what was coming. The waiting was a nuisance — a brief intermission between the preliminary and main bout. We stomped aching feet against the frozen mud and waited.

The officers returned and a strange stillness settled over the formation. I prayed for the last minute reprieve — it didn't come.

"We've got to have the mountain. Division says we're to retake it — period."

That was it. The stillness prevailed. Scores of men were suddenly quiet. Talking was no use now, better to save your breath. The clouds of condensation still rose in seemingly continuous puffs, but the snap of a twig would have fallen on every ear. The mountain appeared defiant. A raised ridge ran from the crest to the base near where we stood. Gradually we spread out across this ridge and then we were climbing again.

I don't remember much of the climb; although I do remember sweating profusely despite the bitter cold of early morning. At the time I had on a large amount of clothing and there wasn't time to remove any of it. Starting at the skin I had on a summer undershirt, wool underwear, wool shirt, khaki shirt, sweater, fatigue jacket, pile liner, field jacket and last a parka. Several pairs of differing trousers, two pairs of wool socks and a pair of shoe pacs completed my defense against the Korean winter. I remember reaching the hump where the firing commenced. I found a small tree, bushy near the bottom, that afforded some concealment and sat down. I sat there for a few minutes breathing hard and sweating. Then finally I settled down and commenced to fire at likely bushes near the crest.

After a while we began to get artillery support. Shells whined overhead singing their deadly swan song – landed near the crest – then exhaled their one and only breath which was life and death both. Several Chinese jumped from the bushes and crossed the crest. Then the jets came from beyond the mountain and blasted the other side with high explosive and napalm. The Chinese came back on our side and we fired into the bushes where they had disappeared. Then the artillery ran them to the other side – the planes ran them back – we kept firing at them or where they had been for some time. I know now that the Chinese we saw were the ones who didn't have holes to take cover in; but at the time I figured that we almost had the mountain back and it hadn't been so bad after all.

By this time the sun was fairly high in the sky and someone called from behind the hump to say that there was ammo back there for anyone who needed it. I had only two bandoleers of ammo draped around my neck after discarding my cartridge belt and I had already used most of one. There was little firing on our side of the ridge and hadn't been for several minutes so I decided to get more ammo during the lull.

I walked around the hump to find everyone there stretched out behind a low rock ledge. Someone yelled at me, **“You'd better get down. A machine gun's got us pinned down.”**

My feet kicked from under me automatically and I stretched my arm to break my fall, too late – the sledgehammer hit me.

My arm was numb and I had been flipped completely over by the impact. I struggled for an eternity trying for that first breath of air. There was air all around me; why couldn't I get just a little of it into my tortured lungs. I gasped hard and the air finally sucked in. I looked at my numb arm, it wasn't there. The thought flashed across my mind that I been hit by mortar or artillery and that my arm had been torn off. It still felt as though it was at my side. *How could it still feel like it was there if it wasn't there?* John Shields and a medical company medic were right there and went to work on me immediately. They pulled my right arm from behind my head where it had been twisted

by the impact. Strange, it had felt as though it was still at my side. Inwardly I was momentarily overcome by joy and relief at regaining my lost limb.

John Shields was an infantry medic from my platoon, not an official medic. He had transferred in from some support unit, maybe quartermaster. It was learned he had been a medic in WWII. A medic's kit was arranged for and he became a medic again. John worked furiously now, cutting at my clothes with his scissors. I recall wondering how in God's name two medics could kneel there in the open where I had been hit only a moment before and survive, but they did.

Shields said, "Fine, I can't cut through all these clothes. We're going to have to take them off of you."

"I don't care," and I really didn't. A doctor would later tell me a drain hole in my side had saved my life. The clothes probably also contributed since the slug had to penetrate the layers three times before entering the body cavity. It had gone through my right upper arm, exited, then re-entered through the right rib cage shattering a couple of ribs in the process.

They raised my arms and peeled off the layers of clothing until I was bare to the waist.

Shields bandaged my arm while the other medic gave me a shot of morphine. Then Shields voice drifted through the fog, "Damn, here's another hole."

I burst out of the fog and Orville Musick's rough face was staring down at me. Good old Musick...California, I think...in a lot of trouble in Japan...damn sure proven himself here. I believe he would have led a patrol into hell itself with very little encouragement. When I was a kid I thought you always had to say something when you were lying wounded on the field...too many World War II movies I guess. I looked up at Musick and gasped out, "**Get that son-of-a-bitch for me, Musick.**" Musick grinned and then the fog closed in again... .

Shields was saying, "The goddamn gook litter bearers ran off and it'll be a little while before they can get them back up here with a litter to take you down the mountain." I don't know why, but I didn't try to answer Shields. I heard everything he said — I just didn't want to say anything.

And then, finally, I was lifted carefully onto a litter and the trek down the mountain began. I was stripped to the waist and the temperature was hovering near thirty and yet I sweated. I could feel the beads of perspiration form and yet I wasn't cold. I closed my eyes and felt very peaceful and secure. Morphine will do that for you. I heard the sergeant once, "Bali bali you sons-of-bitches, can't you see this man's dying." I recall

thinking how crazy he was. Hell, I wasn't going to die. I was going home. Once they dropped the litter, but I couldn't feel it and I didn't care.

At the bottom of the mountain they set me down behind a large rock. I could hear slugs whining close by and began to fear being hit again. A medical officer came over and worked with me for a while...I don't remember. The next thing I knew he was cursing the plasma because it was frozen and wouldn't flow. He ordered me placed in a litter jeep. The litter was strapped down and someone was placed alongside me in another litter and then we started for the rear, away from the mountain.

The jeep bounced along the frozen road for some distance; but the morphine stayed with me and it could have been a Sunday drive down main street back home for all I cared. We arrived someplace and once more I found myself on the ground. Again I could see the bottle of plasma above me; but this time it dripped...and it dripped... and it dripped... drip... drip... drip... drip... . At times the mysterious fog rolled in from out there somewhere and for a time it would hide the dripping; but I could feel it and then the fog would clear momentarily and there would be the bottle... dripping. ...drip ...drip ... drip ... drip.

I closed my eyes and there was a great feeling of peace, sweet and soft and warm and black. ...whispers ...talk..., "morphine...plasma...extent of injuries..., Division Medical... ."

Then the litter was moving again and I opened my eyes in time to see a cracker box ambulance with its mouth open wide. The doors swallowed me up. When the litter settled down the roof of the cracker box was inches above me. I closed my eyes and once more took up the deep enjoyment of the black peace that engulfed me.

The cracker box jogged along, slid into ruts and climbed jerkily from them — then something commenced to gnaw at my side. For the first time since the slug hit me, I began to feel pain. At first it was just a little stabbing pain and then the intervals between grew shorter and shorter until one pain merged with another and then the pain was continuous. I closed my eyes — the black peace was gone and everything was red ... all red. There was something...gnawing...I don't know...it was starving... it nibbled ... then bit harder and grew more persistent ... each nibble ... stronger ... huge ... green eyes ... no, ... red ... yellow ... flashing ... orange. I couldn't pin the colors down ... like some crazy kaleidoscope ... and gnashing, gnashing of teeth. The beast exploded and everywhere there were brilliant colors and pain ... pain everywhere. Everything was pain and pain was all there was. "Oh God." It seemed as though we were driving down a railroad track and I cursed the stupid bastard driving us at such a breakneck speed down a railroad track. "Oh God, help me." I screamed at the driver to slow down — I screamed at the top of my lungs; but he ignored me. *"Why won't he listen?"*

I took my good arm and beat at the roof with all my strength; the cracker box continued its breakneck pace. I cried and that seemed to help a little. The pain grew worse and then I couldn't cry anymore. "Oh God, God, God. Please slow this thing down."

Then a curious thing happened. I heard one of the guys below speak to the driver in a normal tone of voice explaining that ... seemed ... be hurting ... said something ... "slow down"... . And the driver slowed down. Curious. He couldn't hear me when I screamed at him – but heard the other boy who didn't even seem to raise his voice. I relaxed and the fog drifted in and out mysteriously. I closed my eyes and most of the colors were gone. I felt the sting of salt in my eyes and rivulets of sweat running off my body. A semblance of the former peace returned and the fog drifted in and out and presently we arrived at another place where once more my litter found its way to a resting place on the ground.

I saw the ambulance driver hand some papers to an officer and talk for a time. Then I got another shot of morphine. I began to think of home again and I wondered how long it would be before I got there. And the fog drifted in and out. I heard some officers and they were talking about me – I knew they were, but I couldn't make it out. I liked it where I was; it was so peaceful and nice and I didn't want to go anyplace else. "Fly this man and this man out." I didn't want to go but the damned litter got up and went anyway. I tried to open my eyes, but the fog. And the fog drifted in and out and finally it cleared and there was a helicopter. The next instant I was in one of the pods and a kindly looking sergeant with gray hair...or was it black...he was very hazy...tucking the blanket around me as if I were a little child being put to bed for the night. I wanted to thank him or tell him good night or something. Then a strap was snugged up around me or maybe it was two straps. I saw the clear plastic bubble come down and heard it being fastened. Then I could see the blades coming round and round and round, faster and faster until the fog drifted in. A feeling sort of like being in an elevator came over me only I was flat on my back. And the fog drifted out and the blades came round and round and round and the 'copter drummed on toward someplace – someplace far away from the mountain and I didn't really care. The blades hummed their peculiar out of balance song; I closed my eyes and the song was sweet background for the black peace. And the black peace was soft and warm like velvet. The sun warmed my face and I felt at peace with the whole world.

The beat slowed and the helicopter eased into a gradual descent. I chewed at an imaginary cud of gum to relieve the pressure on my ears. A slight jar, hardly noticeable, and we came to rest.

Up went the canopy and more strange smiling faces peered into my pod, I wanted to smile back. Straps were loosened and out floated the litter. I turned my head and caught sight of some sort of building or tent; but something was coming. I forced my eyes wider, but the black cloud rolled in from all sides and engulfed: ...everything.

I wandered in the darkness for a long time and then a pinpoint of light appeared. I fought to reach the light and when I reached it a strange mist clung to everything. There were a great many lights and I fought hard to drive the mist back and focus my eyes. At last I recognized the form of a woman. She came toward me with what appeared to be an oversize Chapstick. I thought *What the hell is she doing with that big chapstick?* and then she rubbed my arm with it and the black cloud returned to swallow up the lights.

Again I was in the dark; but not conscious of time. Time was not. Quite gradually I came on another light, very dim and so I was not particularly conscious of the suddenness; it crept upon me like old age without any fanfare or warning. There was a dark angular ceiling above me and I must have gazed on it for some time not seeing to where it went or really caring. It was not there and then it was there and when I was able to look around I was in a tent and all around the walls of the tent were other GIs resting on litters laid in neat rows on the dirt floor ... or was it wood... . In a little while a ward man came through and I asked for a cigarette I don't know, I really didn't particularly want one; but there was nothing else to do. My stomach was sore as was my side and my right arm hurt. When I had finished the cigarette a colored nurse came with a stand and a bottle of glucose and she stretched my left arm out and inserted the needle, adjusted the stand and went off. For a short while it was all right and I lay there and stared at the dripping; then my arm began to hurt, not the wounded arm, but the one with the needle in it. I realized that the bottle was so high that I was forced to hold my arm straight out; I couldn't lower it to the ground or pull it in to the litter. Sweat popped out and I cursed her for a stupid wench and then she returned to the tent.

"This stand is too high and my arm is hurting bad."

"Bettah not move yo ahm oah I has ta stick yo agin."

I was born in the South; but I had been raised in Kansas City and to that moment colored folk had always been Negroes to me; but this one was a nigger, a black nigger bitch.

"You'd better lower this goddamn stand or I'll... I'll..." what could I do. I lay there and cursed her under my breath and moaned a little, or a lot, out loud and she came presently, a few seconds perhaps a few minutes, it seemed hours. The stand came down, I lowered my arm to the ground, relaxed, gave thanks; not to her and went to sleep.

A few minutes, a few hours, a day, two days, three days I don't know; but it seemed only a short while and my litter was on it's way again along with others. We converged on a bus converted to haul litters and the people on litters. A short ride, then a C-47, then another bus and another hospital — Quonset huts this time and beds — real beds, hospital beds that cranked up and down — with sheets — clean white sheets.

This was the Fourth Field Hospital at Taegu, the only hospital in Korea at that time in Quonset huts instead of tents. The colonel who commanded it said Quonsets were as easy to put up as tents and by God he was going to have Quonsets. And ice cream, so help me; ice cream every day, made right there in the hospital.

And every meal the nurse would come around and ask me if I wanted to eat or take it in the vein. And I watched the bottles dripping away until finally the urge to taste something again or maybe it was that ice cream... anyway I told her I would try some soup and it was good and then they brought me some ice cream... peppermint ice cream.

Every six hours I got shots; one shot, then six hours, two shots and one and two and so on. The nurse would come around and help me over on my side and then down with the pajamas and in with the needle. I tried to keep my muscles from flinching; but I couldn't seem to control them and they got so good at it that they could flinch just as the needle went in. Once it hurt like hell — she pulled the needle out and clucked her tongue.

“Look here,” she said.

The needle had a large bow in it. After that she slapped the daylight out of my buttocks just before the needle was inserted and I quit flinching.

The doctors came in the mornings making rounds and they would take the dressings off and poke around and go, “Uh huh” and “Hm” and so on. Once one of the doctors asked me if I wanted to see my side or my arm; I didn't. A rubber tube came out of my side considerably below where the wound was and I wondered what it was there for. One of the doctors said it had slipped out a little one day, so he pushed it back. He went easy, but it hit something inside me that felt fairly solid and really hurt. I asked him what it was there for and he said it was to drain off the liver bile. It had saved my life he said and it was my turn to “Huh”. I didn't look at my arm; but I could see my belly and the long scar there with the wire stitches. It looked like a twelve inch angle worm stretched out and held down by the stitches. I asked the doctor if they had taken out everything except my liver and he laughed. He said it was just the scar from an exploratory operation and I said, “The doctor must have had awful big hands.” He laughed again. He told me I could get up for trips to the latrine and so forth if I wanted to. I didn't want to.

That evening they brought in an old boy, I'd say fifty or fifty-five at least, and took out his appendix. Bright and early the next morning he got out of bed and walked around to the latrine. I lay there a little while and then I got up and started for the latrine. It was just around the corner; but by the time I got back I felt as though I was just coming off a twenty-five mile forced march. After that it got easier.

Then it happened. I hadn't thought of the company or the mountain until I ran into that mortar man from the fourth platoon. I didn't recall his name at the time, nor can I remember it now; but at the time I was very glad to see him for I had a hundred questions to ask.

I eagerly inquired as to the outcome of the battle for the mountain and was very surprised at hearing that the fight was just beginning when I was hit. The company had suffered sixty percent casualties. He had a flesh wound in the shoulder. By the time it was over my squad leader, Sergeant Sharp, had been hit in the foot, though not seriously I believe; Francis Renzi, the "Ginny" had suffered powder burned eyes from a Chinese concussion grenade; Ellison had been hit hard in the arm, badbreak; (this later turned out to be false as did the sixty percent figure), no trace was found of Shertzler and hasn't to this day; Tabares and Moreno, the only two to come out of it unscathed from my squad.

"And Musick? What about Musick?"

"Dead."

"Dead?" That's when it hit me. Musick dead. I remembered coming out of the fog. I remembered asking Musick to get the machine gun, more damn theatrics than anything else. I remembered Musick grinning back and vanishing in the fog. And now he was dead. I tried to find out what he had been doing when he got it or where on the mountain when struck down ... machine gun ... machine gun . The mortar man didn't know except that he had been killed.

In the hospital in Japan at night, in the dead still quiet of night, I would burst from the fog and see Musick bending over me. I would gasp, "Get that son-of-a-bitch for me, Musick." Musick would grin and vanish in the fog and then the fog would blow away and there would be Musick bending over me. Again and again and again.

I looked in the airplanes and the hospitals all along the route home for someone from the old company, someone who would know and at night ... the dream ... the fog ... Musick grinning.

I didn't write; I could have written to the company commander and maybe found out. I didn't ... I don't know why — well, I couldn't write ... but I could have had someone write for me ... but I didn't ... and always the dream ... the fog ... Musick grinning ... Over and over. Again and again.

Months later, on convalescent leave from the Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, I ran into Sharp. Sharp had married a girl from home and was stationed at a nearby camp.

And finally the question was answered, as well as it can be. Musick was far to the right of the machine gun near the crest when the shrapnel had torn into his face and drained his life onto the frozen earth.

I never see him at night anymore, in the dead still quiet of night. Still, I wonder how the plea of a man you think is dying must affect you and I wonder ... ***Did I get Musick killed? Was he working toward the machine gun when the shrapnel got him?*** I'll be dead when the question is finally answered — it probably won't matter much by then.

I see the Mountain once in a while, not at night though. In the daytime in my imagination I see it and think of the ones who died there or just bled there as I did and the mountain takes on a blood red hue. In my imagination.

Epilogue

Gordon Shertzer died in captivity according to official records (Korean Conflict Casualty File). Was he still in position when I had the grenade exchange with the Chinese? Had he already been captured? Was the sound of the Chinese shouting and laughing the sound of them taunting Shertzer and is that the reason I didn't get the word to pull off the mountain?

For thirty-five years I figured I would one day locate **Herlindo Tabares**. I even hunted for him in the Brownsville Texas phone book once when I was in Harlingen Texas on business. He was a good soldier and I figured if anyone would survive, he would. In 1986 I went to my first reunion of Love Company, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. There I learned that Tabares had been killed April 7, 1951 when he stepped on a Bouncing Betty mine, just two months and a day after I had been hit. It had taken the top of his head off. At least he never knew he had been hit.

William Sharp returned to the states and retired after teaching ROTC in a Dallas suburb high school for many years end with a 4 year hitch in Ketchikan AK. Bill died July 10th 2002 following a heart attack.

In 1994 we located **Leroy Ellison** living in Louisiana.

1st Platoon Leader Lt. T L Epton died of a heart attack April 16, 1989 after serving for over twenty years as pastor of the Clinton Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, California.

1st Platoon Sergeant Powell Sale lives in Georgia.

John Shields died November 20, 1998 at his home in Florida.

Antonio Moreno and **Francis Renzi** have not been located ... yet.

jf