

## KyongJu

*September 6, 1950*

The company went on a low hill early in the morning. I don't remember how we got there, but probably by truck. In my mind I still see the hilltop where we were issued 'C' rations for breakfast. Before we could open and begin to eat we were ordered to drop our rations and ponchos in a pile. We were to go to the bottom of the hill and begin an attack on the next low hill. Rations and poncho's would catch up with us in a short while.

At the bottom of the hill we boarded tanks and shortly they moved out on the road around the hill towards the next hill. The road skirted the two hills running straight between them. I was on the second tank. There was a small terrace of rice paddies climbing a narrowing draw to the left of the road. Some of our boys were running one of the small dikes separating the paddies about fifty yards off the road. The reason I noticed them was the sudden explosion of incoming rounds around them. I think the rounds were mortar and may even have been short. Then the guy directly across the turret from me was hit by rifle fire. We jumped from the tank into the ditch at the side of the road. I slid down into the water until the water was around my chest. I looked to my right out into the rice paddy and there was a rock building some fifty yards out in the paddy with a rock wall around the yard. It seemed unusual because of the construction. We didn't see many masonry buildings in the countryside. The tank was concerned about the building because the 90mm was swinging around to target the building. The muzzle was directly over my head and I was scared of the muzzle blast so I began to crawfish back down the ditch as fast as I could to get away from the gun. While doing this I passed a G.I. sitting on the edge of the road in the cover of the tank holding the man wounded earlier. The wounded man's helmet was off and blood thick as differential lube seeped from a small hole in his temple. This was probably Glennon Boyer as I learned later Leslie VanPouke was on the first tank with Al Sebring. These were the two men from "L" who were killed that day. The tank fired one or two rounds at the wall and building and receiving no fire back, returned attention to the hill in front of us.

After the fire fight we moved onto the hill. There were many shallow foxholes around with tree and brush foliage stuck in the loose dirt for camouflage. Someone spotted something white moving across the valley. Many of us shot towards the white movement. Months later in the Brooke General Hospital I found out the movement was a goat. One of 'K' company's guys had taken canteens down to fill at a well and had to take cover when the firing commenced. He had been wounded sometime after that episode by a very small shell fragment and was recuperating from neuro surgery.

We moved on off the hill and headed northwest on the road. We entered a village and kicked open a door. An old man lay wounded in the chest with several of his family around him. We yelled for a medic and moved on.

Around sunset we stopped around the skirt of a hill and began to dig in. The soil was hard as a brick and after a long time I had only beginning of a prone shelter instead of a foxhole. Rations finally caught up

with us just before dark. We divided a days 'C' rations for one between three of us. I drew a can of peaches. I had just gotten the can open and set it at edge of the hole while I got my spoon out and wiped it off. Suddenly there was incoming. I dived for the hole. It hit close. When I raised up I was ok, but the peaches were full of soot.

The next day we began moving up into the mountains northwest of Kyongju. It was the first time we had tanks with us. I remember watching a tank try again and again to break across a high dike separating two fields. The dike had heavy brush growth down the top. The word hedgerow came to mind from the many WWII newsreels I had seen.

I did not see the event but it was told while advancing up the narrow road the point came under fire from a sniper. He was spotted in a tree and a G.I. on the tank was about to fire when the tank commander said "We'll get him," as the 90mm swung around and the whole top of the tree disappeared in the explosion. Probably not a prudent use of ammunition but one could scarcely disagree with its effectiveness.

We gained some high ground and Tabares and I were ordered to dig in on a saddle connecting two mountains. The earth was again extremely hard and after a lot of work we had a prone shelter big enough for both of us but only three or four inches deep. I believe Herlindo Tabares was the only one who had not thrown down his poncho the morning before. As night fell it began to rain. It was wet, cold and miserable and we shared the poncho as well as possible. All through the night there a great deal of wiggling and squirming as buddies attempted to join us under the poncho. After an

## Buddy

*Kyongju Korea*

He sat there in the mud by the tank and his feet dangled in the putrid water of the ditch between the road and the rice paddy. A buddy held him as you might a loved one or a small child. Between the piercing crashes of the 90mms and the staccato rifle fire the buddy who supported him so tenderly cried softly with slight sobs shaking his frame. But he just sat there held in the arms of his friend, saying nothing, seeing nothing as though in a peaceful sleep. There was a small hole above the ear, and from this hole no bigger than a dime oozed his life's blood. The buddy screamed for the medics but the medics were pinned down on the far side of the road. I believe this was Glennon J. Boyer as Leslie A. VanPoucke was on the first tank. 09/06/50

extremely long night it began to break day. There were ten bodies under the poncho, some with only an arm or part of a leg covered. It rained continuously.

It continued to rain. We moved up higher on the side of the mountain. We climbed past some GIs trying to huddle under an air panel. It was foggy and misty. We decided no-one could see us and built a fire. A short time later an officer came up the mountain and ordered us to put out the fire. We were cold and miserable.

The following day it was clear for a change. I decided to go back to the supply truck and see if I could find the ponchos. At the company area a Captain was darting about and I heard him say "Where's my helmet. I'm going to the front lines." Somehow that conveyed some fear to me on the part of this officer and I lost at least a measure of respect for this man. Lt Chandler had been injured in a jeep accident several weeks before. I wanted Chandler back in the worst way.

The 10th of September we moved back into a reserve position. I think this was the area we called the pine woods for a long time. The pine woods was a park of some sort. A thin forest of tall trees on flat land with interlaced straight roads. At the edge of the woods we had a tank with us.

This is the place where I drew a new rifle just to get the trigger housing group. I remembered stories of filing the sear off the old M1 carbine and ending up with a full automatic weapon. I figured if it would work on a carbine it should work on an M1 Garand. I would file on it and then walk to a firing range nearby and try it. Finally after several attempts the damn thing fired three rounds without stopping — almost tore my shoulder off. I threw the modified trigger group away and abandoned the idea. Later I would come to regret wasting a new rifle.

One night as we strained to see out into the darkness, one of the tankers saw a light moving out in the field in front of us. The light moved back and forth slowly at times disappearing only to reappear shortly. Finally the tanker could stand it no more and cut down on the light with a grease gun. We sheepishly realized from the movements of the light that it was a firefly that had been fired on.

During the day a group across the road sat around playing poker. Along in the afternoon as I glanced over there the group suddenly seemed to explode. They left in all directions except for two guys, one of whom was waving a 45 automatic at the other. I eased down behind the tank amazed that even while in a rest area violence continued to dog us.