

## The Knife

Camp Stoneman California — It was about August 1, 1950. I waited impatiently for the cab driver to return with the knife. I was green. That was the reason I wanted the knife. I didn't have any idea of what I was getting into, but I felt like the knife might help me.

He came back. He could have taken my money and forgot that he ever saw me, but he came back and presented me with the knife and a little change from the twenty. He charged me two dollars for going to town after it which was no more nor less than the regular price of a trip to town and back. I thanked him and started back to the barracks.

It was a pretty thing, my new switchblade knife with its red handle and nicked metal parts. I had never owned a good switchblade before and this was a good one. I squeezed the button and the blade obediently jumped out faster than the eye could follow. The spring was so strong that I underestimated it that first time and the knife snapped out of my hand and stuck in the barren ground. I picked it up and examined the blade. It was unhurt, not a scratch. I wiped it off carefully, replaced it in its sheath after locking the release and started once more for the barracks.

Duarte and Tamber had already shipped out. In the mornings they called a formation of all the troops here for embarkation to Korea and announced the names on the first group to ship that day. There was another formation immediately after noon chow every day, but I hadn't been on that one either and Tamber and Duarte had been called for this morning. I wished that I had gone with Tamber and Duarte. I had been in Leadership School with Duarte and was Cadre with Tamber in Company E, 86th Regiment — all at Camp Funston adjacent to Fort Riley Kansas. I wasn't really so anxious to go, not anymore, but I still wished that I could have been with some of the boys from my old post. Oddly, I ended up in the same Company with Duarte in Korea and Tamber was in the unit that relieved us on the Naktong about the 21st of August 1950.

I had been happy when I heard that I was on orders for Korea. I had tried everything to get off Camp Funston and Korea finally did it for me. I wasn't so happy now. It was that "old army" soldier I had met that made me doubt my good fortune. He had been in the army in the 1930s and in WWII. He convinced me this was not going to be some Hollywood movie plot.

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*Later near Camp Stoneman — we were traveling light and fast. We milled around the air terminal building with only the shirts on our back and a small ditty bag of shaving gear. Those of us who were green carried the dreams of heroes, but the combat veterans of World War II carried only the skill and knowledge or just luck it had taken to survive during that period. ... I lost the knife in the ditch between the tank and the rice paddy September 6, 1950, NW of Kyongju — the first attack I was in.*