

conflict. Both also insisted that the senior theater Air Force officer should have operational control of all aviation units with combat capability, including the carrier air groups of Task Force 77 and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Ridgway's coolness to any amphibious operation and his warmth toward the Weyland-Everest interdiction campaign, Operation Strangle, would have critical effect on both the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing for the rest of the war.

For the 1st Marine Division the high-level discussions on the relative weight of the ground and air wars on bringing the Communists to terms had no immediate effect since X Corps' mission remained unchanged: seize the Kansas Line. Nevertheless, the Marines needed at least a brief pause, which Almond would not grant the division on 31 May. He ordered the attacks to the north to continue, and on 1 June the 5th and 7th Marines dutifully pushed on—and went nowhere. With the 11th Marines short of artillery shells, air

arrangements uncertain, and the 7th Marines in need of a break, Thomas did not push Hayward and Nickerson until they all had a chance to think about the new attacks.

The terrain alone appeared formidable. A long, high ridge of the Taebaek Mountain chain dominated the 1st Marine Division's zone of action. The ridge was known as Taeu-san and Taeam-san for its two highest peaks, 1,179 meters for the northern most Taeu-san and 1,316 meters for the southern Taeam-san. Taeu-san/Taeam-san were bordered on the west by the Sochon River, which ran into the Hwachon Reservoir just past Yanggu. The Marines also inherited the southern part of another parallel ridge to the west, but dominated by the Taeu-san/Taeam-san hill mass to the east, which meant that any force attacking directly north of Yanggu would receive fire from its right flank. The terrain situation to the east was even more daunting. The division's eastern boundary ran generally along the Soyang; the distance between the two rivers was 15 miles, more or less, and the entire zone stretched another four miles to the west. The Taeu-san/Taeam-san ridge, however, did not uniformly run northwards. The whole ridge complex had once been a volcano, and the crater created a depression in the mountain, the "Punchbowl," open at its eastern edge where the Soyang River had eroded a hole in the crater wall. The southern lip of the crater, remained, however, as a formidable extension at a right angle east of the main ridgeline, which provided a transverse position for fire directly along all the lower ridges to the south. In a sense the whole Taeu-san/Taeam-san complex looked like a giant leaf with its thin tip to the south and its thicker (higher) base to the

*A rifle platoon of the 5th Marines does some "ridge-running" as it moves to an assault position in the broken terrain south of the Punchbowl.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8868



north; many veins (ridges) ran west and east from the central spine, some creating separate compartments to cross, others echeloned southwest or southeast and running uphill to the central stem, dominated by a series of separate peaks. The terrain is a defensive commander's dream.

The 1st Division attack on the Taeu-san/Taeam-san massif and the ridge adjoining it to the west began on 2 June and ended almost three weeks later with all four infantry regiments very bloodied, but unbowed and with three of them on or beyond the original Kansas Line. The advance uphill for about eight miles took the measure of the entire division as had no fight since the Chosin Reservoir campaign. For the 1st Marines, its losses exceeded those of December 1950, and the entire division suffered 183 dead and 1,973 wounded. Both Generals Van Fleet and Almond questioned General Thomas about his division's losses. Especially aggravated about the poor quality of his close air support and the Eighth Army's timorous treatment of the Fifth Air Force, Thomas felt no need to apologize to Van Fleet for completing his mission. "Well, General, you told us to take the Kansas Line, and we took it for you. I'm sure we paid for what we got, but we got what we paid for." Thomas wrote his family that his Marines were the best he had ever seen, and "Big Foot" Brown told his friends that the feats of his regiment had to be seen to be believed. Thomas fully appreciated the North Koreans' tenacity: "They fight like Japs!"

The battle began in earnest on 2 June with the 1st Marines and 5th Marines attacking abreast, each with two battalions, with the 7th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment in reserve. The 1st Marines took one

intermediate objective (a small hill called X-Ray) and entered the lower ridges of the hill mass north of the Hwachon Reservoir and west of the Sochon River. The fight was an uphill slog all the way. General Thomas learned that the press identified the engaged Americans as "GIs." He wrote home: "That is us, and we are not GIs." Expert at the coordination of supporting arms, Colonel Brown used artillery to the limit of its effectiveness, but each objective ultimately had to be taken by Marine infantry, savaged with grenades and mortar shells as they literally crawled uphill. Brown had to pay special attention to his left flank, his boundary with the 7th ROK Division, and he often had to deploy one battalion against flanking attacks while the other two continued their forward crawl. As Brown recalled: "it was the toughest fighting I have ever seen."

Over the same period (2-10 June), the 5th Marines faced an even greater ordeal, especially its 1st Battalion, whose zone included seven ascending peaks before it could reach the crest at Hill 1316 (Taeam-san). The 2d Battalion's zone was somewhat less demanding, and Lieutenant Colonel Glen E. Martin more deft in paving the way with air strikes and artillery, and the weight of the North Korean defense faced the 1st Battalion anyway. It took two long days for the 1st Battalion to capture Hills 610, 680, and 692, a distance of about 2,000 yards. In addition to the stubborn defense by the North Koreans, the three rifle companies survived one "friendly" artillery barrage and one errant air strike as well as tank fire from the valley below to the west that, while welcome in bunker-busting, did not seem especially concerned about the position of friendly troops. At one point an inexperi-



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A9304  
*The look on the Marine's face tells the whole story. Having just engaged in a savage firefight with enemy forces, these Marines continue their grueling upward climb.*

enced company commander allowed his men to be trapped in a North Korean mortar barrage, and another company, run off its objective by Corsair-dropped napalm, found itself the target of Communist artillery. McCloskey's platoon in Company C started the two-day ordeal with sergeants as squad leaders and ended it with a corporal and two private first classes in command; almost every platoon commander suffered at least minor wounds. In the meantime, the 2d Battalion had advanced almost 5,000 yards along the eastern edge of the ridge, but its movement did not put it on terrain that menaced the North Koreans on Taeam-san.

At this point, General Thomas decided he needed to bring his two uncommitted regiments into the battle since the burden of close combat in May-June 1951 had fallen disproportionately upon the 5th Marines. (Nine members of the

regiment received Navy Crosses for heroism, the 7th Marines four, and the 1st Marine two.) The 7th Marines, after all of two days rest, went into the attack on the right of the 1st Marines, which allowed Brown to slide left to guard his

loose connection with the 7th ROK Division. Nickerson's regiment also inherited the highest and most heavily defended ridgelines that ran eastwards to Taeu-san (Hill 1179) and the western rim of the Punchbowl. Thomas put the 1st

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## Private First Class Jack Davis: Combat Marine

**A**fter a short stop at Kobe, Japan, the Marines of the 6th Replacement Draft joined the 1st Marine Division in late January 1951. In the process of retraining and reorganizing, the division was conducting counter-guerrilla operations around Pohang, an east coast port within the Republic of Korea. Jack Davis (pictured on the left in the first row) was assigned to Company G, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, somewhere near Andung, northwest of Pohang. Known within the regiment as "Bloody George" Company, Jack's new comrades were little more experienced than he was with the exception of a handful of officers, noncommissioned officers, and privates. The original Company G had landed across Blue Beach at Inchon and fought in the liberation of Yongdung-po and Seoul. It earned its nickname during the Chosin Reservoir campaign. The company first met the Chinese at Majon-ni and lost nine dead and 15 wounded (including attachments) when its

truck convoy was ambushed. Filled with wide-eyed reservists from the 1st and 2d Replacement Drafts, the company started north toward the Yalu with a full complement of seven officers and 224 enlisted men. It also had a new company commander, Captain Carl L. Sitter, a World War II combat veteran. He had replaced the first company commander, quietly sent home after breaking down in combat in Seoul.

In just about one month, the second Company G practically disappeared, lost to battlefield deaths, wounds, and frostbite. The company fought its way into Hagaru-ri on 29 November as the spearhead of Task Force Drysdale, taking 48 casualties from the gauntlet of fire the Chinese created for the convoy of tanks and vehicles. At Hagaru-ri the company tried to retake East Hill, but faced too many Chinese with too few Marines. The dwindling ranks of Company G, nevertheless, held the shortened perimeter and took 60 more casualties.



Captain Sitter received the Medal of Honor, and 10 other company Marines were awarded decorations for valor, including a Silver Star for the first sergeant, Master Sergeant Rocco A. Zullo. Within 10 days of battle, the company lost all but 87 officers and men, and fully a third of these "originals" had been wounded and returned to duty. Jack Davis had not yet experienced the physical and emotional ravages of combat when he joined Company G, but he could appreciate having even a handful of veterans around to stiffen the third Company G.

Assigned to the 3d Platoon as a BAR-man, Jack soon learned that Sergeant Robert W. "Blackie" Jones, new to the company but a World War II veteran, had strong opinions about weapons. Sergeant Jones liked the Browning Automatic Rifle, and he had a way of finding additional BARs for his squad. Sometime in February, between Operations Ripper and Killer, as the Eighth Army ground its way back toward the 38th Parallel, Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller inspected Company G. Puller found Jones' squad armed in an unusual manner. "How many BARs are there in a Marine rifle squad?" he asked the squad sergeant. "Three, sir!" Jones smartly responded. "How many BARs do you have in your first squad, sergeant?" Puller continued. "Six, sir!" Puller then asked: "How did you get these weapons?" Jones responded with even more snap in his voice: "We liberated them from the Army, sir!" Puller grunted his approval and went on without further comment. Jack, standing next to Johnson in the ranks, almost laughed at the spirited exchange.

Sergeant Jones also demonstrated quick thinking under fire. Sitting on a rice paddy dike somewhere between Wonju and Hoengsong in late February, Jack's squad watched spouts of cold, muddy water rise from the paddy less than a foot beyond their outstretched boots. "Blackie" did a back-gainer off the dike to a lower-level paddy and screamed at his men to take cover. The Chinese burp-gunner faded into the woods without molestation. Jack also learned the value of water from Sergeant Jones and soon carried two canteens, the only man in the squad to do so. He checked his water sources carefully, especially after he found a rotting horse upstream in one clear, bubbling brook, and used halazone tablets liberally. His health remained good despite his constant fatigue and unrelenting diet of C-rations. Nevertheless, he lost weight and seemed to shrink within his parka and field equipment.

The new Company G received another opportunity to add to its "bloody" reputation in the first days of the Chinese Fifth Offensive, April 1951. Upon the collapse of the 6th ROK Division on the division's left flank, Major General Oliver P. Smith sent the 1st Marines west of the Pukhan River to seize the critical hills that dominated the river valley and the only road by which he

could extract the 5th and 7th Marines from the Hwachon Reservoir sector to the north. Hill 902, a 3,000-foot tower, became the 3d Battalion's objective; the hill dominated a road into the Pukhan River valley and a critical bridge on the road south to Chunchon and the No Name Line where the division was to establish a new defensible position. The battalion beat the Chinese to the peak (aided by Marine trucks) and moved down three parallel western ridges where Lieutenant Colonel Virgil W. Banning, the battalion commander, expected to meet the Chinese on their belated climb toward the peak of Hill 902. Banning placed one rifle company on each of the three entrant ridges and arranged his supporting arms into the evening of 23 April. Around 2000 the Chinese attacked, first striking Company G, the most advanced (by plan) and defender of the center ridgeline.

Huddled behind barriers of rocks—no foxholes could be dug here—Company G threw back a Chinese regiment with the assistance of Companies H and I, which fired across its flanks and sent reinforcements. Marine and Army howitzers and mortars showered the attackers with shellfire. Rallied by Technical Sergeant Harold E. Wilson, an Alabama reservist, the center platoon of Company G barely held. Jack Davis' platoon held its hillside position along the southern slope of George Ridge; the platoon suffered two or three killed and several more wounded, popping up to spray the Chinese in between the artillery barrages. Jack made it through the night unscathed, but the next morning, as the battalion backed away from the Chinese under an umbrella of close air support strikes, Jack fell victim to some unfriendly "friendly fire." As he and some other Marines struggled down the steep eastern slope of Hill 902 with stretchers loaded with dead and wounded Marines, two Marine F4U Corsairs strafed the column, showered the cowering infantrymen with ricocheting bullets and rock fragments. Although he took no life-threatening hits, Jack found himself a bleeding, lacerated, and thoroughly enraged member of the "Society of Walking Wounded" and headed for the battalion aid station for treatment. Rested, fed, and patched up, he returned to the company on the No Name Line.

Although he avoided telling his parents about his combat experience, Jack wrote his brother Vince that he should forget about leaving Vanderbilt and joining the Marine Corps to fight in Korea. If Vince became an officer, his chances of surviving would not be as good as an enlisted man's since the Marines expected all officers to lead from the front. Artillery officers—to which Vince aspired—had no greater chances of survival since they all had to serve as forward observers with rifle companies before assigned to the comparative safety of a firing battery. "Stick to the Navy for my sake as well as the folks. I'll do both our shares of the dodging." Jack's war had just begun.



KMC Regiment into the 5th Marines hard-earned foothold below Hills 1122, 1216, and 1316 (Taeam-san). Hayward's regiment (with the exhausted 1st Battalion in reserve) moved into an expanded sector east of the Taeu-san/Taeam-san massif and started to work its way north toward the southern lip of the Punchbowl. Thomas did not pressure Hayward to move aggressively since such an advance would have put the 5th Marines in a salient below an L-shaped hill mass still occupied by much of the *12th NKPA Division*. Before the 5th Marines could press forward to its share of the Kansas Line, the South Korean Marines would have to take Taeam-san.



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A155066

*The natural beauty of this quiet scene in North Korea means little to these Marines as they rest during a lull in the struggle for the Punchbowl. In the wide, calm valley before them, each green field may hide a Communist gun position, each tree an enemy sniper.*

For five days (5-10 June), the 1st KMC Regiment repeatedly assaulted the Hill 1122-1218-1316 complex but, despite maneuvering to the right and left of the peaks, the Korean Marines made no progress and lost over 500 men without taking even one objective. Anytime the Marines gained a foothold, a North Korean counterattack threw the Marines back. Neither side took prisoners; one South Korean assault discovered 10 bound ROK Marines executed with neat headshots. In desperation, Colonel Kim Suk Bum, the Korean Marine regimental commander, decided to abandon the American way-of-war and ordered a three-battalion unsupported night attack on Hill 1122, the most exposed North Korean position. Advancing by slow infiltration, the South Korean Marines fell on the Communists at 0200 with complete surprise and ran the defenders off to Hill 1216. With a solid hold on at least a part of the crest, the Korean Marine regiment held its ground while its American advisers called in artillery and air strikes on Hills 1216 and 1316. The North Koreans soon fell back to the north to

Taeu-san to avoid being cut off by the American Marines now advancing steadily on both their flanks.

Service with the 1st KMC Regiment came as a surprise to some Marine officers. Assigned against his wishes to the 1st Shore Party Battalion, Second Lieutenant David J. Hytrek, a former private first class in the 5th Marines in 1950, wanted an infantry assignment to avenge the deaths of his comrades who had already fallen in Korea. Instead a crusty master sergeant serving as a personnel officer assigned many of the former enlisted men of the 7th Basic Class to combat service support battalions. "Let the college boys get killed in this war," he growled. Hytrek, however, had barely arrived at his new unit when he received orders to report to the Korean Marines as a liaison officer. General Thomas wanted experienced lieutenants sent to assist the Koreans, so David Hytrek found plenty of war in the battles fought

by the Korean Marines around the Punchbowl.

To the west the 1st and 7th Marines fought from one hill to the next hill with consistent but costly success. The 1st Marines reached a line of hills identified as the Brown Line, a more defensible position than the original Kansas Line, which ran through the Sochon River valley to the regiment's rear. The 1st Marines started the regimental advance on 6 June and completed its mission on 14 June. The experience of the 2d Battalion represents the regimental ordeal. After two days of modest advances, the battalion, with the 1st Battalion on its left flank, ran into a very stubborn and skilled North Korean force on Hill 676. The attack stalled, in part because a heavy mortar concentration fell short and inflicted 40 casualties, including the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert K. McClelland. On 10 June, the battalion sent two companies against the eastern face of the hill since it

could then take advantage of supporting tank fire from the valley below. Many of the North Korean bunkers, however, were sited to protect them from tank guns, 75mm recoilless rifles, and 3.5-inch rocket launchers. Air strikes would have eliminated them, but repeated requests for close air support went unanswered until 2000 when one four-plane strike broke the North Korean defense. All day long, Marine squads inched upwards through the bunker complex, eventually destroying the bunkers with grenades and satchel charges. In one case a lone Marine jumped into a bunker, killed three Koreans with his rifle and strangled the fourth with his bare hands. Throughout the day “chiggy

bearers” struggled forward through constant shelling with ammunition and water and stumbled backwards with loaded stretchers. In two days the battalion took more than 300 casualties and lost more than 200 members of its loyal force of Korean porters. The Marines found more than 100 North Korean bodies in the bunkers, including the NKPA battalion commander. The battalion went into reserve on 12 June when the 3d Battalion replaced it.

Wedged into a narrow but difficult sector between the 1st Marines and the 1st KMC Regiment, the 7th Marines fought for 10 days (9-19 June) to establish the regiment (two battalions abreast) along the critical hill complex to the west

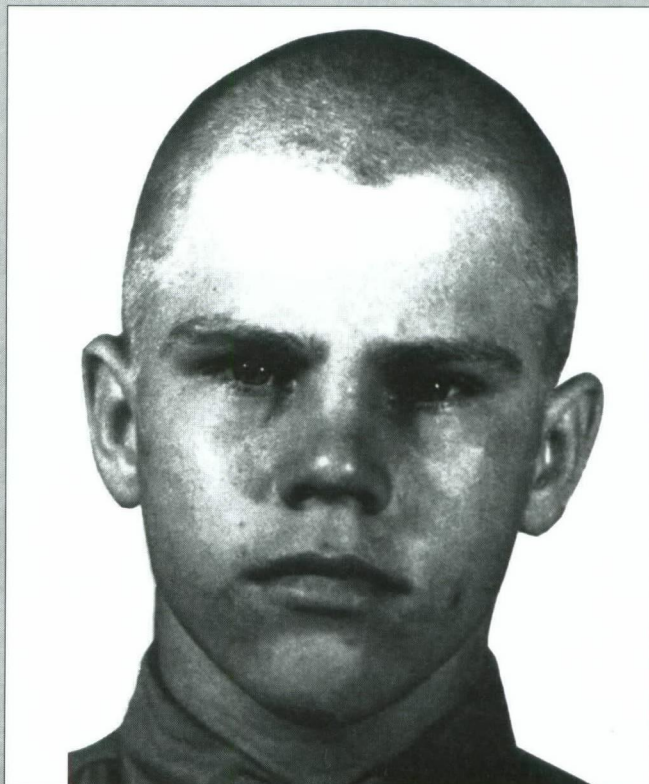
and the Taeu-san/Taeam-san peaks to the east above the Punchbowl. Colonel Nickerson used his supporting tank company to good effect, but Communist mines in the Sochon River valley put more than half of the company (10 of 17 tanks) eventually out of action despite heroic and costly efforts by Marine engineers to sweep the ground. Nickerson’s use of supporting arms mirrored Brown’s—long on artillery and short of crucial close air support. If the 7th Marines rifle companies took their assigned hills with slightly less cost than the 1st Marines, they had to defend them against even more stubborn night-ly counterattacks. The NKPA battalion commander in this sector

## Corporal Charles G. Abrell

**B**orn in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1931, he attended public schools in Las Vegas, Nevada, before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1948 at the age of 17. Following recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina, and a short assignment on board the USS *Noble*, he was sent to Korea in 1950 where he took part in five successive operations: Inchon, Seoul, Chosin, and two against the Chinese Communists. For his bold actions on 7 November 1950, he was awarded the Commendation ribbon with Combat “V.”

As a fireteam-leader with Company E, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, he gave his life on 10 June 1951 at Hill 676 near Hangnyong. His Medal of Honor citation reads, in part:

While advancing with his platoon in an attack against well-concealed and heavily-fortified enemy hill positions, Corporal Abrell voluntarily rushed forward through the assaulting squad which was pinned down by a hail of intense and accurate automatic-weapons fire from a hostile bunker situated on commanding ground. Although previously wounded by enemy hand-grenade fragments, he proceeded to carry out a bold, single-handed attack against the bunker, exhorting his comrades to follow him. Sustaining two additional wounds as he stormed toward the emplacement, he resolutely pulled the pin from a grenade clutched in his hand and hurled himself bodily into the bunker with the live missile still in his grasp. [He was]



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A46965

fatally wounded in the resulting explosion which killed the entire enemy gun crew within the stronghold.—Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

employed reverse slope defenses, which swept each topographical crest with fire and put the North Korean soldiers close enough for sudden assaults. One 7th Marines company had to throw back five such attacks in one night before it could call its hill secure.

On the eastern side of Taeusan/Taeam-san ridge, the 5th Marines advanced through the ridges that ran down to the Soyang River valley. Alternating in the attack, Hayward's three battalions had to cross five different east-west transverse spur ridges before they reached the last (and highest) ridgeline above the Punchbowl, some 8,000 yards from the regiment's original line of departure on 6 June. As the regiment pushed north, the North Korean defenders took their toll, although somewhat less than the regiments to the west. Again, supporting arms and close air strikes that arrived broke the defensive positions until the regiment, lead by the 1st Battalion, reached the last objective, the Hill 907-Hill 920 ridgeline. No longer able to fall back to another defensive position, the remaining soldiers of the defending North Korean regiment went into their bunkers with no intention of conceding Hill 907 to the oncoming Marines.

The final assault on Hill 907, the regimental objective of the 5th Marines, caught the desperate character of the mountain war in Korea in June 1951. The long, narrow ridge that led to Hill 907 allowed no more than a reinforced platoon to deploy against the line of North Korean bunkers that stretched to the peak. So the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, had the objective, which it assigned to Company B, which passed the mission (at Lieutenant Colonel John L. Hopkins' direction) to Second Lieutenant Charles G. Cooper's 3d



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A8745

*Crewmen of Battery C, 1st 4.5 Inch Rocket Battalion, reload their multiple-rocket launcher for another devastating ripple against North Korean troops. The battery of six launchers could fire 144 rounds on target in less than a minute.*

Platoon. As the Marines worked methodically through the bunker system, supported by mortar and machine gun fire, their casualties mounted. Cooper called in more artillery and air strikes, but enemy fire from his front and from two flanking ridgelines cut his ranks down to squad size. He lost two radio operators and then had the disconcerting experience of listening to Hopkins, who had turned ferocious on the eve of his change of command, screaming obscene challenges to the North Koreans over the battalion tactical net, presumably to confuse the listening enemy. Cooper managed to arrange for one more air strike, Air Force jets armed with napalm. Marking the target with white smoke, Cooper ordered an advance through the swirling mess, only to find the North Koreans attacking him. Knocked down by a ricocheting bullet in the back, Cooper lost his carbine to another bullet and ended the fight

with a Ka-Bar and a hole in his left side that filled with blood and a damaged kidney. Just as the surviving Koreans reached the "Last Stand of the 3d Platoon," the Air Force jets—which had flown one dummy run to get the route right—returned and dumped their napalm tanks in the middle of the melee, only 30 yards from Cooper's position. The Marines almost suffocated, and most of them suffered burns, but the North Koreans disappeared, incinerated in the flames. The Marine attack ended 100 yards short of the summit, but the next day the 3d Battalion occupied Hill 907, abandoned by the North Koreans after the division headquarters they were protecting had displaced.

On 18 and 20 June, General Almond and General Thomas visited the high ground now held by the 1st Marine Division, and the X Corps commander agreed that patrols in the mountains ahead would be all the offensive action



required of the Marines. In the meantime, the defensive positions of the Kansas Line should be developed into complexes of trench lines, barbed wire, bunkers, and minefields, and before the summer monsoon made the supply effort even more difficult than it already was. Thomas could tell that major changes in the war might be underway since he had to entertain an endless stream of visiting military officers of all the Services, most of whom simply wanted to see the Punchbowl from the 5th Marines' observation post. Only admirals bearing gifts of good bourbon were truly welcome. General Thomas knew his division needed rebuilding with replacements and some rest. In the meantime, he had some unfinished business with Eighth Army over the issue of close air support.

### A Summer of Discontent

When the 1st Marine Division settled down to a life of night

*Marines wait for an air strike by Marine aircraft before moving on an enemy position.*

patrols and the daytime construction of trenches and bunkers, two different changes of climate enveloped the men spread along the mountain ridges of the Kansas Line. The changes started a summer of discontent, a season of discomfort and uncertainty that did not reach the level of demoralization, but nevertheless took its toll on the morale of the Marines. The first change in the weather was predictable, the arrival of the summer monsoon, which advances northward from the island of Cheju-do until it reaches central Korea in late June and blankets the hills with daily showers and occasional downpours that seem to wash half of Korea into the west sea. The summer rains of 1950 had been light, a welcome blessing for American airmen. Even though it arrived weeks behind schedule, the next monsoon reversed the trend. The rains of 1951 gave Korea its normal ration of water. Twenty-six inches fell in July, and August brought about 20 inches

more rainfall before the deluge stopped in September. The omnipresent mud and cascading streams made the patrols and construction an ordeal, even without an active enemy.

The other atmospheric change began with the preliminary truce negotiations on 7 July between the military delegations of China and North Korea on one side and a group of American officers on the other. When the negotiators at Kaesong—a neutral enclave within Communist lines—finally came to an incomplete agreement on an agenda, the one that most affected the Marines was the question of a ceasefire boundary between the two armies. The Communists wanted a return to the 38th Parallel. The United Nations demanded a line based on the forward edge of the battlefield if and when an armistice went into effect. Presumably the two forces would fall back by some agreed distance, and the intervening No Man's Land would become a demilitarized zone. To those with no sense of military geography, one hill seemed no different from another, but the relationship of dominant peaks, road networks, river valleys, and intersecting corridors in the mountains made the control of terrain an important issue, not just a matter of "face." From the front-line foxholes, however, the gloomy mountains all looked alike and simply reinforced the sense that no disputed peak could be worth dying for. Conditioned by World War II to think of victory in terms of geographic advances, the combat troops of the Eighth Army felt their martial ardor wash away with the rain.

No stranger to the challenges of command created by poor weather and endless action—Guadalcanal had provided both—Gerald C. Thomas pressed his regimental

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A9308







National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-432028

*United Nations delegates to the Kaesong ceasefire talks pose with Gen Matthew B. Ridgway at Munsan-ni. Pictured from left are RAdm Arleigh A. Burke, USN, MajGen Laurence C.*

*Craigie, USAF, MajGen Paik Sun Yup, ROKA, VAdm C. Turner Joy, USN, Gen Ridgway, and MajGen Henry I. Hodes, USA.*

*Pictured from left are Chinese and North Korean negotiators, MajGen Hsieh Fang and LtGen Teng Hua of the Chinese People's Army, and Gen Nam Il, MajGen Lee Sang*

*Cho, and Gen Chang Pyong San of the North Korean People's Army.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-431929





National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC378978

*Riflemen of the 5th Marines are issued a portion of the initial 40 armored vests developed by the Naval Medical Field Research Laboratory, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for field-testing in Korea. The new vest weighed eight-and-one-half pounds and combined curved, overlapping doron plates with flexible pads of basket-weave nylon. The garment was said to stop a .45-caliber pistol or Thompson submachine gun bullet, all fragments of a hand grenade at three feet, 75 percent of 81mm mortar fragments at 10 feet, and the full thrust of an American bayonet.*

commanders to do the digging and patrolling Almond ordered. Sporadic shelling by the Communists provided extra incentives, and the Marines still took casualties, 39 in the last week of June. Thomas fought a successful rearguard action against Eighth Army and X Corps to hold pointless casualties down. On 22 June, Almond ordered Thomas to execute an Eighth Army plan to push forces northwards to the Badger Line, between a mile-and-a-half to two-and-a-half miles in front of the Kansas Line defenses. (Later in the war the Badger Line would be called the Combat Outpost Line.) Each frontline regiment was supposed to occupy a combat outpost of battalion strength; Thomas got Almond on 26 June to agree that one outpost was sufficient for the entire 1st Marine Division front, given the nature of the terrain. The 1st Marines sent its 3d Battalion

forward to Hill 761 and received a 7th Marines battalion to plug the gap. Like Thomas, "Big Foot" Brown thought the patrol base concept dangerous and pointless; both sides had maintained very close contact with shelling and patrols and needed no additional action. The North Koreans immediately shelled the patrol base with such enthusiasm that Thomas and Brown withdrew the battalion and then told Almond that they would meet X Corps reconnaissance requirements in other ways.

Aware that Almond would soon leave command of X Corps, Thomas had one overriding reason to remain on friendly terms with his difficult corps commander: the close air support controversy. With a pause in the action, Almond marshaled an array of studies for Eighth Army that demonstrated that the Fifth Air Force's close control of each day's quota of close air

support sorties limited the ground advances and caused avoidable casualties. Thomas consistently raised the issue with high-ranking military visitors to his headquarters, including Van Fleet, who dropped in on 8 July to give Thomas, Nickerson, Hayward, and five other Marines the Distinguished Service Cross. Thomas persuaded Major General Frank F. Everest to approve the movement of Marine Aircraft Group 12, the premier close air support group of Marine Corsairs, from Hoengsong to the east sea fishing town of Kangnung. The move to Airfield K-18 put the Marine fighter-bombers closer to their supply sources and only 40 miles from the front. Sheer proximity offered new opportunities to circumvent the Joint Operations Center request system, including Everest's promise to allocate 40 sorties a day for offensive operations. Closer division-wing relations seemed at least temporarily acceptable to Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force because Van Fleet had his planners hard at work on another version of Operation Overwhelming, the amphibious landing up the east coast that would involve the 1st Marine Division.

General Almond, however, did not relent in his demands for more fighting of dubious value. His aggressiveness brought General Thomas' only embarrassment as a division commander, the Taeu-san Affair, an abortive operation that remained unnoticed because the victims were the valiant men of the Korean Marine Corps' 1st Regiment. Almond had convinced himself that the North Koreans (despite the Hill 761 experience) would not fight for the lines they currently held. Therefore, Almond ordered the 1st Marine Division to capture the peak of Taeu-san (Hill 1179) and develop it into a regi-

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## Private First Class Jack Davis: Seasoned Infantryman

With a chastened Jack Davis back in its ranks, the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, held its part of the No Name Line and watched the last Chinese offensive of May 1951 slide past the 7th Marines to its front and fall upon the left flank of the 2d Infantry Division. With the 1st Marines on the corps and division left flank, the Marines went on the attack on 23 May and a week later reached the high ground overlooking the reservoir. Squeezed out of the advance, the 1st Marines reverted to division reserve.

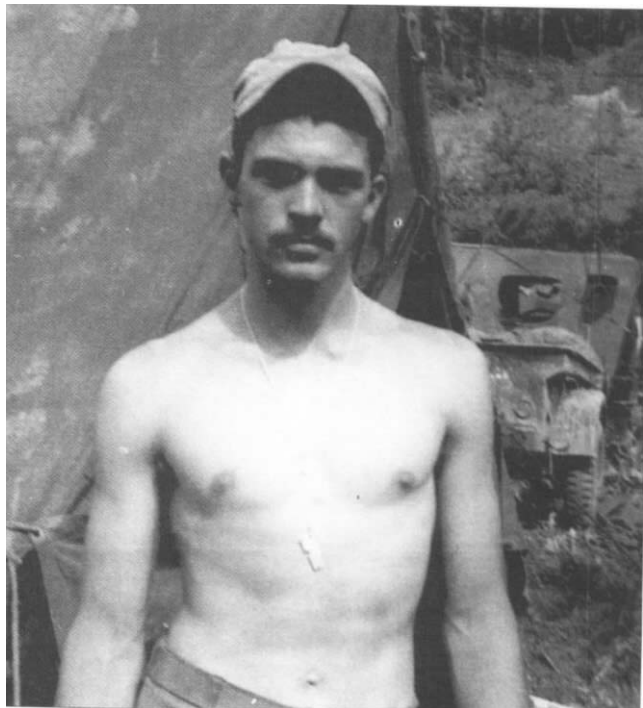
With the 5th and 7th Marines struggling to penetrate the Communist hilltop positions north of Yanggu, the 1st Marines soon joined the slugfest. Somewhere in the barren ridges Jack Davis' platoon found itself in a grenade-throwing match with the stubborn—and uphill—Chinese defenders. Chinese mortar shells fell among the attacking Marines and took their toll, mostly in wounded. Jack saw five Marines from his squad go down in one shower of grenade and mortar fragments. Amazed by his own apparent invulnerability, Jack attacked a Chinese position with his rifle and grenades after crawling to a protected firing position. His attack and a flank assault by his buddy Frank Brown (carrying a BAR) wiped out the Chinese bunker and spider-traps. More American grenades completed the task. Jack thought he might have killed three Chinese, his only victims of the war.

During the fight, Jack received his second wound of the war, a grenade fragment that tore open his upper left arm and made him a one-armed Marine. While a corpsman bandaged Jack, his platoon commander asked him if he would take charge of three other walking wounded and lead them down the mountain to the battalion collecting and clearing station. Jack agreed, and off he went—slowly—trailed by his more seriously wounded comrades, one of whom had both eyes bandaged. As night fell, Jack's forlorn band had reached the foot of the mountain, but had strayed through a "no man's line" into the lines of the 5th Marines. Jack had no idea what the challenge and password was, so he simply screamed: "Wounded Marines! Wounded Marines!" Persuaded that no Chinese could scream with a Tennessee accent, the Marines brought in the wounded and sent them off to safety by jeep. Jack had a second Purple Heart, but his second wound was not severe enough for the Navy doctors to invoke a welcome Marine Corps policy: two wounds serious enough to require hospitalization bought a Marine a trip home.

Jack's arm healed more rapidly than his spirit. After almost six months in a rifle company with no real escape from the most primitive and exhausting field living conditions as well as combat, Jack Davis felt himself

weakening in the psychological sense. He wrote Vince that he was not sure whether he could take the constant mortar and artillery fire. "You can't imagine what it does to a man's insides to see a big, six-foot man crying and shaking with fear, just because his mind has had all the killing and bloodshed it can take. When this happens to man, it also [is] because he is scared to death and wants to run but his loyalty won't let [him] and that if he did run, there's no place to go. Sometime they get evacuated and sometimes they don't . . . if they do come back in a couple of weeks . . . as soon as the first mortar or artillery shell comes screaming over and explodes nearby they are worse than ever." Jack was proud that he had not yet broken down, but he had some doubts about his ability to carry on. "I was a dope fiend about the last month I was in the hills." He took a quarter grain of Phenobarbital, dispensed by a corpsman, so that he would quit shaking from cold and fear while he stood watch at night. He could not eat or sleep without drugs. Unfortunately, the barbiturates gave him a "don't give a shit attitude" that worried him.

Upon his return to Company G, Jack requested an interview with the new company commander, Captain Varge G. Frisbie, and asked if he could get some credit for his two Purple Hearts and be transferred somewhere out of the battalion. Frisbie promised to take the matter up with the battalion personnel officer, and within days Private First Class Jack Davis had orders to report to the Service Battery, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, for retraining as an artilleryman—and a survivor.





mental patrol base on which to anchor the Badger Line. Thomas objected to the mission, pointing out that all the evidence suggested that Taeu-san anchored the main defensive position of the entire North Korean *V Corps*. Unmoved, Almond ordered the attack to be made, and Thomas assigned the mission to the 1st KMC Regiment, whose lines were closest to Taeu-san and who had shown some aptitude for mountain warfare. One suspects that Thomas saw no reason to squander one of his own Marine regiments on a forlorn hope. Colonel Kim Dae Sik accepted his assignment without a murmur, and the 1st Marine Division provided all the fire support it could possibly mount on behalf of the 1st KMC Regiment. *Han Pon Haepyong Un Yongwon Han Haepyong!* (Once a Marine, Always a Marine!)

For five days (8-12 July), the Korean Marines—one battalion at a time—tried to take and hold Taeu-san but managed only to hang on to Hill 1001, a hillock only halfway to Taeu-san. Successive assaults on Hill 1100 produced dead Korean Marines, but no permanent foothold on the Taeu-san main ridge. All combinations of shelling, air strikes, and infantry attacks did not break the North Korean defenses. Colonel Gould P. Groves, senior adviser to the 1st KMC Regiment, demanded that the fruitless attacks cease before the regiment became permanently ruined by the loss of its key leaders; one KMC battalion lost all its company grade officers and all but five of its sergeants. Thomas insisted to X Corps that Taeu-san would take an entire American regiment to capture (as indeed it later did) and that the security mission could be performed without the Badger Line. Almond insisted, however, that the Koreans hold on to the



National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC382938

*MajGen Gerald C. Thomas joins MajGen Clovis E. Byers, left, Gen Edward M. Almond's replacement as commander of X Corps, on board a helicopter at Kwandae-ri, the Corps' airstrip. Thomas and Byers developed a strong working relationship that profited the 1st Marine Division.*

outpost on Hill 1001 even if the 1st KMC Regiment returned to the Kansas Line, which it did on 12 July. Of the 77 Marines killed or missing and 360 wounded in July, 55 of the dead or missing and 202 of the wounded were South Koreans.

At the 1st Division headquarters the bad taste of the Taeu-san Affair

faded with two bits of welcome news: Almond was finally leaving X Corps for a new posting in the United States and the division had been ordered to turn over its sector to the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and withdraw to corps reserve. Almond flew off to Seoul after giving Thomas a Distinguished Service Medal. He left X Corps in

the capable hands of Major General Clovis E. Byers, a 52-year-old Ohioan and Military Academy graduate (class of 1920) with an impeccable professional reputation and companionable personality. Thomas, who knew Byers, could not have been happier. In World War II, Byers had served with distinction in the Southwest Pacific theater as commanding general, 32d Infantry Division, chief of staff of I Corps, and chief of staff of Eighth Army. He had then commanded the 82d Airborne Division, the Army's only combat-ready contingency force, before becoming the G-1 (Personnel) of the Army Staff. Byers, however, had one glaring weakness. In a faction-ridden Army, he was a protégé of Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger, just retired, and not a member of the European clique of Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Collins, Ridgway, and Van Fleet.

After the various elements of the 1st Marine Division reached their reserve areas, Thomas ordered a demanding training program of live-fire exercises, designed by his new chief of staff, Colonel Victor H. Krulak, and the G-3, Colonel Richard W. Hayward, former commander of the 5th Marines. Thomas prowled the regimental training areas by helicopter and jeep: the 5th Marines near Inje, the 7th Marines near Yanggu, and the 1st Marines near Hongchon. The pattern of deployment (with the battalions of the 11th Marines positioned to either fire for the 2d Infantry Division or train with the Marine infantry regiments) reflected Byers' concern about a sudden attack on the 2d Infantry Division or the 5th ROK Division. Byers also felt some anxiety about his eastern flank with the South Korean I Corps. Eighth Army's nervousness exceeded Byers', and Van Fleet

ordered X Corps to form a task force built around the 1st Marines (Task Force Able) to be prepared to move east for a preemptive offensive. Thomas liked none of this business and said so to Byers, who supported Thomas' insistence that Army ad hocery would give way to Marine command if a real crisis arose. There was none, but Thomas and Byers cemented their sound working relationship. As Byers wrote another Army general: "the 1st Marine Division under the command of Major General Thomas, with Brigadier General Whaling as Assistant Division Commander and Col. Krulak as Chief of Staff, has become a vastly different outfit from that which it was under its former commander. They cooperate with the other divisions of the Corps smoothly and willingly."

Byers showed his appreciation in tangible ways. His staff ensured that the equipment rehabilitation of the division went forward without friction. X Corps engineers and artillery helped the Marines turn swamps into muddy camps with a few amenities like shower and mess tents with floors and drainage. Army and Marine technical experts worked together to train novice personnel and put everything from ordnance, tanks, radios, watches, motor vehicles, to engineering equipment in working order. The military policemen of both Services cooperated in trying to control the flood of Koreans sweeping toward the Marine tent camps to sell carnal and alcoholic pleasures. In turn, Thomas ordered 12 special Marine training teams from his infantry regiments to work with the 1st KMC Regiment to improve the regiment's use of supporting arms. All units conducted at least a third of their training at night. Night patrols went to work with rounds in the chamber and

*Combat-ready division replacements disembark from a U.S. Navy landing ship. In the movement of Marines the Corps functioned as a single great unit, even though an ocean separated the vanguard in Korea from rear echelons in the United States.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A157123



engaged guerrillas along the rear area roads. Marines worked with Korean security forces and laborers constructing additional defensive positions to protect both I Corps flanks.

Although only Thomas and his immediate staff knew about the continuing exchanges between Ridgway and Van Fleet over future operations, the focus and pace of the 1st Marine Division training program suggested that the division might provide the spearhead of a new Eighth Army offensive. Van Fleet urged Operation Overwhelming upon Ridgway, but only if Eighth Army received American reinforcements. The new Ridgway, a paragon of caution, did not embrace the plan. Thomas and Krulak anticipated a landing until they received a clear signal that there would be no Inchon in their future when Van Fleet on 3 August ruled that the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion and 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion would not be returned to the division's operational control.

The disappointment did not change the urgency of bringing the 1st Marine Division to a new peak of strength in numbers and effectiveness. Two new replacement drafts (the 11th and 12th) would arrive in August and early September with more than 4,000 officers and men, more than replacing casualties and a small rotation draft. By mid-August the division had the responsibility of caring for 32,000 American and Korean personnel, making the division almost a small Army corps. The division's combat power—enhanced by its ability to use close air support as available—made it difficult for Van Fleet to move it from the eastern part of the front where the only other American division was the hard-used 2d Infantry Division.

From General Byers' perspective X Corps and the neighboring ROK I Corps occupied a vulnerable part of the Kansas Line, more vulnerable than the western sectors and the "Iron Triangle" where U.S. I and IX Corps faced the bulk of the recovering Chinese expeditionary force. Byers' G-2 made a special study of the activities of the North Korean *III Corps* (three divisions of 8,500 each) and concluded that the North Koreans had the capability to mount a serious offensive on any X Corps division sector along the Kansas Line. Well ahead of the Chinese rearmament programs, *III Corps* had accepted a full set of new Soviet weapons and showed every intention of using them again in the attack. Over the latter part of August the intelligence analysts saw the usual omens of an attack: increased patrolling and counter-patrolling ambushes, increased desertions, a reduced flow of refugees, tank sightings, the mass distribution of ammunition and rations, a decline in vehicle movement, and the imposition of radio silence. In the meantime, at Van Fleet's insistence, Byers had ordered the 2d Infantry Division into action west of the Punchbowl, and the division had exhausted itself again fighting the North Koreans and the rain over terrain only too familiar to the Marines. Only the names of the hills ("Bloody Ridge" and "J Ridge") and the Service of the bodies changed. To the west Major General Paik Sun Yup's ROK I Corps made no significant progress against three NKPA divisions, all entrenched and very combative in the hills east of the Punchbowl. The campaign wrecked the North Korean *II Corps*, but *III Corps* remained ready to enter the fray, perhaps in a major counteroffensive. The only fresh force in the eastern sector was the 1st Marine Division.

## Once More into the Breach

With neither a ceasefire nor great offensive in prospect, General Van Fleet ordered his corps commanders to plan operations that would improve their control of the critical terrain in their sectors. They should prepare either for some later offensive (should the truce talks remain in recess) or to defend South Korea for the indefinite future. With the defenses of the Kansas Line largely completed, Van Fleet on 30 July decided to convert the combat outpost line (the Wyoming Line) into an advanced main line of resistance where the terrain allowed. The distance between Kansas Line and the Wyoming Line varied between two miles and 10 miles. In X Corps' sector Van Fleet thought that the trace of the front in July did not allow Byers to dominate the Punchbowl and the Sochon and Soyang River valleys. Van Fleet wanted X Corps to shift the focus of its attacks to the high ground (including Taeu-san) west of the Punchbowl, but the heavy rains of early August made it impossible for Byers to begin the attacks of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division and the 7th ROK Division (Brigadier General Kim Yong Bae). The 8th ROK Division (Brigadier General Choi Yong Hee) would attack the dominant hills east of the Punchbowl.

Having designated an intermediate phase line (Hays) between the Kansas and Wyoming Lines, Byers quickly learned that the terrain, the weather, and the North Koreans would prevent any easy victories. The battles west of the Punchbowl produced such disappointing results and bad blood between the American and Korean commanders that Byers narrowed the division sectors and committed the 5th ROK Division (Brigadier General



Min Ki Shik) west of the 2d Infantry Division, which meant that X Corps had three committed divisions west of the Punchbowl and only the 8th ROK Division in the Soyang River valley and the dominant hills on either side of the valley. On 23 August, Byers warned Van Fleet that he might have to relieve the 2d Infantry Division with the 1st Marine Division, which was "very anxious to take action," but Van Fleet still had an amphibious role in mind for the Marines, and he vetoed the idea. Van Fleet thus spared the 1st Marine Division the mission of capturing "Heartbreak Ridge." Only the 8th ROK Division had done better than anticipated, capturing some of the high ground east of the Punchbowl, but the

South Korean divisions on its eastern flank had not kept pace, thus giving Byers some concern about his corps boundary.

Meeting on both 25 and 26 August, Van Fleet and Byers concluded that they could no longer hold the 1st Marine Division in reserve since all the rest of X Corps divisions had bogged down, and the corps could not change the tactical balance with artillery and close air support alone. Ammunition shortages, caused principally by transportation problems, had already affected operations. Troop movements, for example, on 28-30 August prevented the stockpiling of 1,800 tons of munitions. The Fifth Air Force, anticipating a break in the weather that would allow a surge in the interdiction bombing

campaign, announced on the 23d that the Eighth Army would have to manage with less close air support through the end of the month. On 26 August, Byers called General Thomas and told him to move at least part of his division to the front east of the Punchbowl where the Marines would take up the missions of the 8th ROK Division. Thomas had four days warning since Byers alerted him to a possible move on 23 August. With the plans already in place, Thomas ordered the 7th Marines to start for the front that night, followed by the 1st KMC Regiment. The 5th Marines would move last, and the 1st Marines not at all since the regiment would be the only corps reserve.

Thomas knew that the division

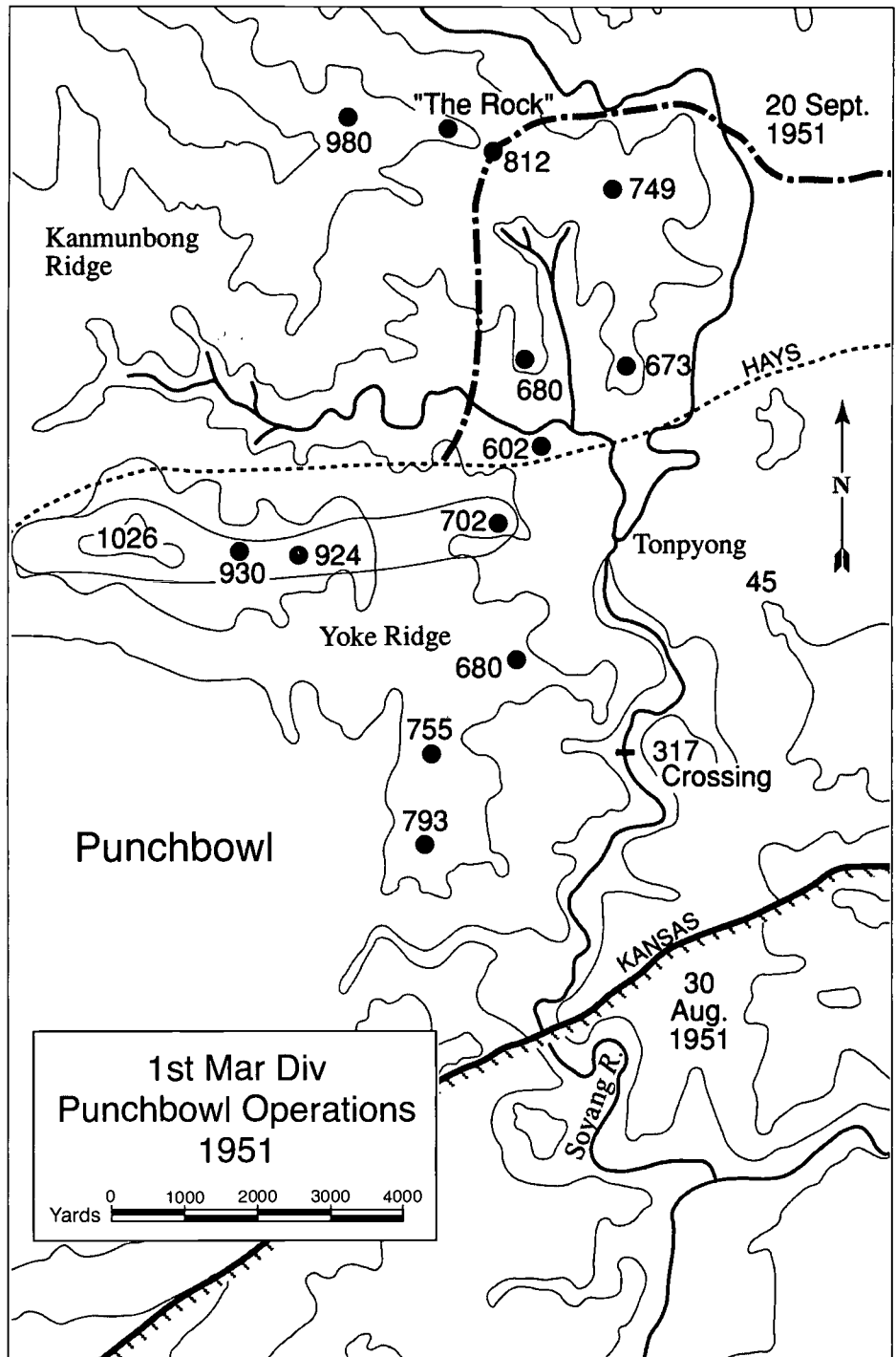
*Rain and mud fail to halt the mortarmen of the 5th Marines' 4.2 Inch Mortar Company as they fire their heavy mortars at enemy-held positions.*

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC380808



would receive an offensive mission: capture a ridgeline, an eastern extension of the hill mass that formed the northern rim of the Punchbowl. A corps objective designated Yoke, the ridge had four dominant west-to-east peaks (Hills 930, 1026, 924, and 702) and another north-south extension that began at Hill 702 and ran south through Hills 680, 755, and 793, thus forming a large L just west of the Soyang River. The river itself curled westwards, bounding Yoke Ridge on the north. Since the North Koreans showed no sign of reduced morale and fighting tenacity—they, in fact, had mounted many aggressive counterattacks west of the Punchbowl—the assignment had nothing easy about it. The rains and planning changes made 27-31 August some of the most discouraging days Thomas and his Marines had faced together.

From the division commander's perspective, the mudslides and floods that slowed his truck convoys were bad enough, but the operational confusion within X Corps, fed by tactical errors and bad blood between the 2d Infantry Division and 8th ROK Division, made the changes of orders reach epidemic proportions. Before it could displace, the 5th Marines detached a battalion to the operational control of the 2d Infantry Division to defend the Kansas Line while the 23d Infantry slipped to the west. The 1st KMC Regiment also picked up part of the Kansas Line defense, which meant that only the 7th Marines, struggling to cross the swollen Soyang River by wading or by a shuttle of DUKWs (amphibian trucks) could man the sketchy positions on the edge of Yoke Ridge held by dispirited soldiers of the 8th ROK Division. Confusion reigned, and the rain fell. Warning orders flooded the



Courtesy of the Naval Institute Press

airwaves, and commanders and staff officers scurried by helicopter and jeep from headquarters to headquarters. General Byers, for example, made 12 commands calls in one week (25-31 August) and received General Van Fleet three times. General Thomas and his staff made the best of a bad situation, pushing the 7th Marines and 1st KMC Regiment into their forward

positions. He tried to prevent the diversion of the 5th Marines to the 2d Infantry Division and kept the 1st Marines ready for such time, as Byers would release the regiment from corps control. In the meantime, the 11th Marines fired missions all along the corps front, scattered about the valleys in a desperate attempt to stay close to its ammunition supply and to

avoid having its fires masked by the hills to its front.

During a Van Fleet-Byers conference on 29 August, the army and corps commanders agreed that they could not wait for more success west of the Punchbowl before ordering the 1st Marine Division into action. Byers passed the news

to Thomas the next day: attack Yoke Ridge on 31 August. Two factors related to the enemy situation helped shape Thomas' plan. Patrols by the division's Reconnaissance Company and the 5th Marines discovered enemy patrols active on either side of the Kansas Line, but no more than a nuisance.

On the other hand, North Korean prisoners taken by the 8th ROK Division and the Marines reported large troop movements to the north and much talk about another Communist offensive while the weather limited United Nations Command air support. Visual sightings and other intelligence sources

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## Corporal Jack Davis: Truck Driver and Short Timer

Jack Davis, an old man at 19, found a new home in Service Battery, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines. His principal responsibility was driving a dump truck and working as a laborer on the battalion's gun positions and other construction projects. As the weather cooled in the fall of 1951, the 1st Marine Division resumed its attacks on the high ridges northeast of the Punchbowl. Its opponents were troops of the re-born Korean People's Army *2d Division*. Another enemy was a monsoon season that lasted through the entire month of August, washing away roads and bridges and making life generally miserable for all hands. Jack Davis found his dump truck in high demand. In addition to the usual construction mate-

rials, Jack hauled cut wood for the battalion's stoves. He became an expert at fitting out bunkers with furniture made from used shell boxes and other handy materials; he and his fellow engineers used layers of sandbags, logs, and loose dirt to build sleeping bunkers that could withstand a direct shell hit. Jack estimated that they made seven-foot thick ceilings to provide overhead protection.

Even if the pace of the combat froze along with the weather and Panmunjom peace talks, danger still waited for the unwary and unlucky. Employing their new Russian field artillery, the Chinese and North Koreans started to fire short counterbattery barrages late every





second or third afternoon. Even the bunkers to which the Marines fled to avoid the shelling could be death traps of their own; weakened by the rains and shellings and too heavy for their supporting walls, bunker roofs habitually collapsed. One such roof fell on top of Jack, bruising his body and pride and burning parts of his body when a stove overturned and ignited the bunker's interior. Jack took his third trip to sickbay with cracked ribs.

There were few diversions north of the Soyang River. Jack grew his third mustache, not as long and menacing as his "infantry mustache" of the summer. One day he received a call to report to battery headquarters, only to learn that the battery commander and first sergeant had arranged a little ceremony to award Jack his first and second Purple Hearts (a medal with gold star affixed). Jack had no idea what to do with the medal and presentation box until the first sergeant suggested he send it home. The final package featured paper torn from boxes in the mess tent, secured with communications wire. The Davis family received the box and properly concluded that Jack had not been entirely honest in his summer letters.

Although his anxiety about dying eased some, Jack's fears about living grew as his tour in Korea shortened. Under the rotation policy adopted in 1951, he could expect to rotate home sometime in early 1952, and the Marine Corps, having little need for short-timer reservists at the end of a two-year contract, promised to release him go to college short of his two-year obligation. Jack thought about getting his personal life in some order. He wrote a "Dear Jane" letter to a girl friend whose religiosity and immaturity now struck Jack as intolerable.

He warned Vince that no one in Tennessee should discuss his love life. Jack also continued to send money home for his college savings account. His sense of duty received a jump-start with his promotion to corporal in November. His greatest leadership accomplishment to date was organizing the theft of an Army jeep that the battery sorely needed. He did his work, and he stayed out of trouble as he watched veterans of earlier replacement drafts turn in their equipment and head for processing for a flight or transport berth back to California.

By Thanksgiving the 3d Battalion had endured two snowfalls, general freezing, and the news that it was not on the itinerary for Bob Hope's Christmas show. Jack bought a contraband bottle of Canadian Club to hoard until Christmas. He liked the brand new thermal boots issued to the battalion—until he had to change his sweat-soaked socks in the cold. After a muted celebration of Christmas, Jack started watching the organization of each rotation group. He wrote Vince that he now stood 29th on the list and that 37 men had started home in December. Jack reported that he was "kinda nervous about coming home. I'm still not doing much work per usual." He worried about his future relations with his parents, whom he remembered as full of sermons about all the things he should not do and think. "If they start a bunch of harping and bullshit, I ship into the regular Marines because I really like this outfit." He admitted to Vince, however, that he would really have to be aggravated with civilian life to re-up for a second tour. He certainly was not going to miss his ride back to the United States. On 18 February 1952, Jack Davis left Korea for home.

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confirmed that fresh enemy troops were going into position on Yoke Ridge. The 1st Marine Division attack of 31 August was designed to squeeze out the Koreans on the eastern part of Yoke Ridge and to prevent the objective area from being reinforced from the north while the battle raged. Two Korean Marine battalions advancing in column from their position on Hill 755 would attack north to take Hills 1026 and 924 while two battalions on the 7th Marines would attack westwards from the Soyang River valley with two battalions abreast. They would seize the ground east and north through Hill 702 to Hill 602, another lower ridge that ended at the river as it changed its direction from east-west to north-south. Catching the

North Korean *2d Division* in the process of moving into the bunkers of the North Korean *1st Division* on the morning of 31 August, the initial Korean Marine and 7th Marines attacks still faced extensive minefields and mortar barrages as the troops worked their way uphill. Marine artillery fire damped some of the enemy fire. The two 7th Marines battalions took their objectives, but the 1st KMC Regiment advanced no farther than the base of Hill 924, the most heavily-defended position encountered on eastern Yoke Ridge. Almost all the division's casualties for August (three killed and 57 wounded) fell on the first day of the Battle for Yoke Ridge.

Second Lieutenant Frederick F. Brower moved into his first big

fight at the head of the 1st Platoon, Company H, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines. Occupying Hill 680 on 30 August, the company had endured a heavy mortar barrage and learned that North Korean regulars had replaced the scattered Chinese the company had chased north of the Punchbowl. The next day the company attacked Hill 702, Yoke Ridge, against "light resistance." Brower had commanded his platoon for three months, but he and his Marines had not yet closed with the enemy since they always seemed to be patrolling the division's western-most flank, keeping an eye on the neighboring South Korean division. As the skirmish line approached Hill 702, the North Koreans greeted it with a barrage of mortar fire. Only min-

utes into the battle, Brower crumpled with multiple wounds in his left leg, and he looked with dismay at his bloody and misshapen left knee. Pistol marksman, model Marine platoon commander, dedicated to a career in the Marine Corps, Brower ended his first battle on a stretcher carried by nervous Korean "chiggy bearers." Although he eventually served his full Korean tour as a semi-cripple, his career in a rifle company ended on 31 August 1951, and his damaged knee forced him into disability retirement in 1955. It had been a short but final war for Second Lieutenant Brower.

The fight gave few hints of the ordeals ahead. On 1 September, General Shepherd visited General Thomas and found no cause for alarm. Thomas felt confident that the attacks that day would take care of the Yoke Ridge problem. After seeing Byers, they agreed that X Corps had problems west of the Punchbowl where the 2d Infantry Division still had not secured all of "Bloody Ridge" despite the loss of 2,772 American and attached Korean soldiers since 18 August. For the Marines, however, the attacks of 2 September took only Hill 924 (but not Hill 1026) and consolidated the 7th Marines defenses on Hill 602. Throughout the day and the next, the North Koreans bombarded Yoke Ridge and mounted counterattacks of up to battalion-size. The 1st Marine Division's modest successes came in no small part from the artillery fire from two 11th Marines battalions and three Army corps artillery battalions, which fired 8,400 rounds on 1-2 September, an amount of fire that exceeded the "Van Fleet Day of Fire" for the five battalions (6,000 rounds). The battle drew in the remaining battalions of the 1st KMC Regiment and the 7th

Marines. With American Marines holding the northern edge of Yoke Ridge, the South Korean Marines finally took Hills 924 and 1026, which completed the mission. It did not end enemy counterattacks and shelling, but the two regiments held the objective. The 7th Marines suffered five dead and 75 wounded, the Korean Marines 70 dead and missing and 274 wounded. The North Koreans left behind almost 600 bodies to be counted and 40 prisoners. None of the allies thought the victory had been easy.

The capture of Yoke Ridge might have been less costly if the Marines had received more effective close air support. General Shepherd made it one of the highest priority issues when he visited the war zone from 27 August to 12

September. The Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (and likely Commandant) met with the Major General Christian F. Schilt, commander, and Brigadier General William O. Brice, deputy commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. "A discussion of the close air support problem revealed that unsatisfactory conditions still prevail in regard to close air support for the 1st Marine Division." Shepherd then complained about the poor air support to Van Fleet and Everest even before he consulted with Byers and Thomas on 1 September. Shepherd recruited Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, to join a coalition of senior officers who would force the issue with Ridgway.

*During his Korean inspection trip, LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, left, discussed not only close air support, but also the performance of the Sikorsky HRS-1 helicopter. Pictured to his left are MajGen Christian F. Schilt, Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, LtCol George W. Herring, commander officer of Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161, and newly-promoted MajGen William O. Brice, the wing's deputy commander.*

Department of Defense (Photo) A131870



The battle of Yoke Ridge provided ample evidence that the Fifth Air Force would not modify the request system and that the real purpose of the Joint Operations Center was to prevent the diversion of fighter-bombers from Operation Strangle, the campaign against the Communist lines of communication. The 1st Marine Division had requested 26 aircraft to support the attack of 1 September. Despite the fact that the requests had been made 40 hours before the mission, only 12 aircraft were assigned. Requests made by the forward and other air controllers in the heat of combat took more than an hour to produce aircraft on station. One 7th Marines request for air strikes against a heavy North Korean counterattack had been canceled by X Corps' G-2 because he did not believe the counterattack was real. Despite the mounting evidence—and much of it came from the 2d Infantry Division's ordeals to the west—the Fifth Air Force made no concessions. The 1st

Marine Division's fire support coordinator made the point in his briefing for Shepherd: "Close air support furnished by the Fifth Air Force JOC was inadequate and often not opportune."

Shell shortages, complex planning by both Eighth Army and X Corps headquarters, and the determination of the North Koreans brought a pause of six days to 1st Marine Division operations. The likely artillery shell expenditures of any future offensive—combined with road conditions between Hongchon and the front—would make an immediate offensive beyond Yoke Ridge difficult. The division goal was to stockpile 10 days of fire in artillery shells ("Van Fleet days") at ammunition supply post-60B, the ammunition dump and distribution point run by X Corps and division ordnance men located 48 miles from Hongchon and five miles from the gun line. Until the roads dried and engineers repaired the washouts and strengthened the roadbed, the round trip to ASP-60B took 25

hours. Some trucks still had to be diverted to lift troops to and from the front. In fact, the estimates for shells fell short of the actual expenditures, 24,000 tons (874,000 rounds) for X Corps in September 1951.

Intelligence officers believed that X Corps would need every shell it could find. The combat around the Punchbowl revealed a system of defensive fortifications that had been built before 1951 and strengthened since April. Much of the NKPA *I Corps* had been withdrawn, but its replacement—the NKPA *III Corps*—was one of the largest (30,000 soldiers) and best-trained in the North Korean army. Unlike the Chinese, the North Koreans had plenty of artillery, too, out-numbering Marine artillery pieces in the Punchbowl sector. In the Marine division's zone of action the NKPA *1st Division* appeared to be assigned the bunker defense role while the NKPA *45th Division* mounted counterattacks.

General Van Fleet did not win approval of his amphibious hook north to Tongchon, but his planners produced some more modest variants that might have put all or part of the 1st Marine Division within the ROK I Corps area and closer to the air and naval gunfire support that Task Force 77 could provide. An offensive westward from the coast might bring the Marines and the ROK I Corps in behind the fortified belt so well-manned by the North Koreans. For almost 10 days, Van Fleet and Byers examined their contingency plans and ruled them out as too risky and subject at any moment to another Ridgway veto. The result of the operational paralysis was that General Thomas learned on 8-9 September that he would repossess the 1st Marines from corps reserve, which would release the

*The body of a Communist soldier lies atop a bunker captured by elements of the 7th Marines during the assault against Hill 673.*

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC380918





## The “Chiggy Bearers”

They could be found trudging along after every Marine rifle company in Korea’s mountains in the summer of 1951. Small men, powered by muscular but thin legs, bent under the loads of their A-frames or *chigae*, struggling along with ammunition, rations, and water, they were the “chiggy bearers.” The 1st Marine Division depended upon them to close the gap between the supply points served by trucks and the Marine companies engaged in battle. The “chiggy bearers” made it possible for the Marines to search out and destroy the enemy.

Organized by the U. S. Eighth Army in 1950 and originally called the Civil Transportation Corps, this army of Korean laborers provided the United Nations forces with construction workers and pack bearers. For carrying supplies, the Koreans relied upon their traditional wooden A-frame packboard or *chigae*. Although renamed the Korean Service Corps (KSC) in 1951, the bearer corps remained the *chigaebudae* (A-Frame Army) or “chiggy bearers” to the Marines.

The “chiggy bearers” had either been drafted into their country’s service or had volunteered. Members of the KSC had to be medically unfit for duty in the South Korean army or be over age 38. Marines often characterized the “chiggy bearers” as “elderly,” but, in fact, the KSC included men and boys who had convinced someone that they were unfit for frontline service in the South Korean army. The South Korean government had almost absolute power to commandeer people and things for the war effort, but in reality the KSC competed with other American-financed Korean service agencies for personnel and could count only on unskilled workers (often displaced farmers and farm laborers) for the bulk of its manpower.

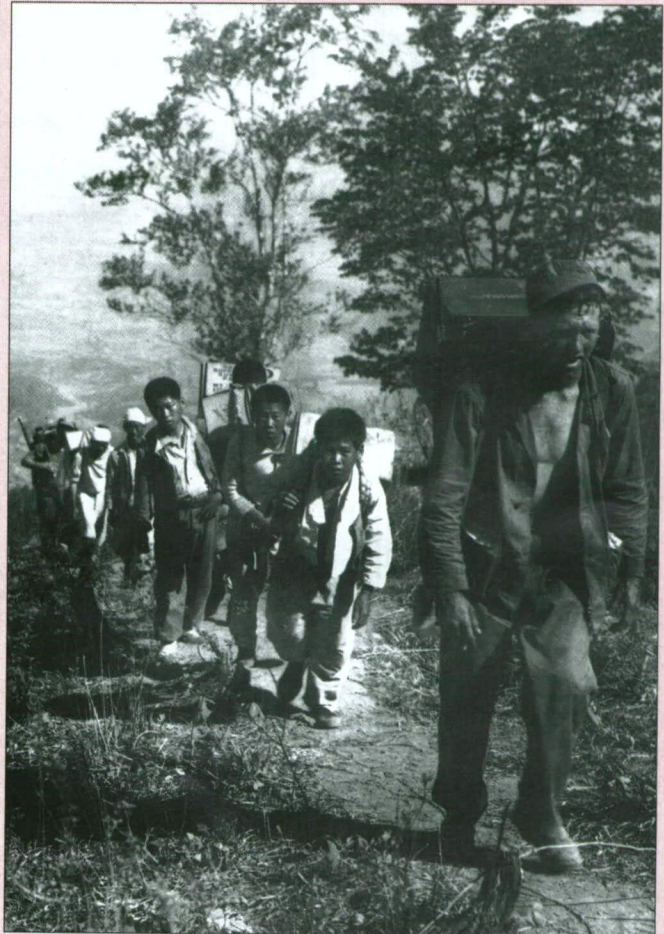
In many ways the lot of the average “chiggy bearer” was not a happy one, however essential. His contract said that he would carry up to a 50-pound load for as many as 10 miles each day, but the bearers often carried heavier loads for longer distances, especially if measured from valley floor to hilltop. The lines of bearers, shepherded by Korean soldiers assigned as KSC cadremen, often came under artillery and mortar fire. American divisions did not keep track of KSC casualties. Any man could be pressed into service as a bearer for six months, and the living and medical conditions for the bearers were no better than most refugee camps.

At the end of the war an estimated 300,000 Koreans had served a tour as a “chiggy bear,” and at the height of the fluid war of 1951 the South Korean government impressed an average of 3,000 men and boys a week into the KSC. A postwar accounting of KSC personnel listed 2,064 porters killed in action, 2,448 missing in action, and 4,282 wounded in action.

If a KSC “regiment”—with one assigned to each American division—had efficient and honest officers, the KSC bearer did not fare badly—provided he lived to collect his pay. Clothing and food were not a problem, which could not be said for his countrymen; the “chiggy bearer” ration was supposed to provide 3,500 calories a day and included a ration of 10 cigarettes. After some strident protests in 1951, KSC pay scales moved from those set for the South Korean army toward those paid other Koreans working as civilians for the United Nations Command.

One American army logistician calculated that an American infantry company required just about as many bearers as its own strength, around 150-200. If so, the 1st Marine Division had a “chiggy bearer” shortage since it had only 1,922 KSC members in support in May 1951. The bearer “gap,” however, applied to all of United Nations Command. By war’s end the KSC had a paper strength of 133,000, but its “A-frame strength” was about 100,000 or roughly one bearer for every six American and allied soldiers in Korea. Like everyone else on the United Nations side of the war, the “chiggy bearers” carried more than their prescribed load.

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5th Marines from the Kansas Line for additional offensive operations east of the Punchbowl. Except for the 8th ROK Division on Thomas' right flank, the rest of X Corps would seize another hill mass soon called "Heartbreak Ridge." Byers expected the Marines to resume the attack on 11 September.

With only 48 hours to mount an attack, Thomas had little alternative but to look again to the 7th Marines to lead the advance on Kanmubong Ridge, the hill mass directly north of Yoke Ridge and the division's next objective. The concept of the operation envisioned a two-phase operation that would begin with the 7th Marines seizing the two most dominant peaks at the eastern edge of the ridge, Hills 673 and 749. To eliminate a transverse ridge spur (Hill 680), a secondary attack would strike directly north from the Hays Line on Yoke Ridge. This mission went to 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bernard T. Kelly, with the main attack to 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel James G. Kelly, relatively untouched by the fight for Yoke Ridge. When the 7th Marines had secured the Hill 673-Hill 749 area, the 1st Marines would come forward and continue the attack up Kanmubong's long axis, "ridge-running," to capture a series of peaks designated (east to west) Hills 812, 980, 1052, and 1030. The scheme of maneuver would allow tanks to fire across the front of the advancing troops and artillery fire (even naval gunfire) to converge in concentrations from the firing positions to the south and southeast. The advances had to be supported by hundreds of "chiggy bearers" since there were no roads of any kind to bring the ammunition, food, and water forward in any other way.

Fighting from cleverly-con-

cealed and strongly-built bunkers and trench systems, the North Koreans made the 7th Marines (all three battalions) pay dearly in three days of fighting, 34 dead and 321 wounded. The assault companies that crossed the line of departure in the morning fog of 11 September did not expect a walk-over. Despite the hour of intense artillery preparation, the North Korean defenders fought with unflagging tenacity until killed. Each bunker system came ringed with mines and booby-traps, and Korean mortar shells and grenades showered crippling fragments across every contested position. Long-range heavy machine gun fire from higher up Kanmubong Ridge took its toll among the Marine assault units that struggled forward with flamethrowers and satchel charges.

Once again dark memories of Iwo Jima and Okinawa came to the veterans. More heirs of the Japanese military tradition than the Soviet, the North Koreans showed no hesitation in launching counterattacks large and small and at unexpected times and from unexpected directions. Although the enemy did not overrun any Marine positions, only quick shooting and quick thinking broke the backs of the attacks with bullets and artillery shells. Although the 3d Battalion took its objective with no assistance, Colonel Nickerson had to commit his 2d Battalion to aid the 1st Battalion on 12 September. Only a converging two-battalion attack—the companies in column—finally seized Hill 673, and the subsequent 2d Battalion attack on Hill 749 fought itself out far short of the crest. In all the fighting tank fire proved decisive when the bunkers could be identified and fired upon, line-of-sight. Many bunkers, however, could have been reached by close air support,

conspicuously absent. The key ground maneuver came from a company of the 1st Battalion that made an undetected night march to reach a poorly-defended entrant to Hill 673, then assaulting through a breach in the North Korean defenses. Nevertheless, the 2d Battalion's attack on Hill 749 stalled with the three rifle companies reduced, scattered, and battling back small counterattacks in the dark before a battalion of the 1st Marines replaced them on 13 September. So hard-pressed and scattered were the Marines of 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, that the battalion misreported its location and gave Nickerson the impression that his regiment had taken Hill 749, which it had not. Moreover, the approaches to the hill were still held by some very combative North Koreans. Assuming operational control of the 2d Battalion, the 1st Marines, under Colonel Thomas A. Wornham, picked up the responsibility for occupying Hill 749. Only a helicopter reconnaissance proved that Hill 749 would have to be taken first.

The logistical burden of supporting five committed infantry battalions (the situation on 13 September) proved too much for the "chiggy bearers" of the Korean Service Corps 103d Division, but the Marines now had an alternative for the emergency resupply of ammunition and medical goods and the evacuation of the seriously-wounded: the Marine Corps helicopter. Although the light helicopters of Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6) had been a fixture in operations since August 1950, the battle for Kanmubong Ridge opened a new era in Marine Corps history, the combat employment of helicopters as an integral part of Marine air-ground operations. General Thomas and Colonel Krulak had both played

key roles in developing the concept of vertical envelopment and fighting for funds to procure and test helicopters in HMX-1, the experimental helicopter squadron created at Marine Corps Air Station, Quantico, Virginia. HMX-1 gave birth in January 1951 to Marine Transport Helicopter Squadron 161 (HMR-161), commanded by a helicopter pioneer, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Herring. Herring brought HMR-161 to Korea in August 1951 ready to make its combat debut under the sharp eye of Krulak, who had made vertical envelopment his latest magnificent obsession. Herring's squadron of

300 Marines and 15 Sikorsky HRS-1 transport helicopters arrived at the airstrip (X-83) near the division command post at Sohwa-ri and moved in with VMO-6. Anticipating some employment in the weeks ahead, Krulak and Herring prepared the squadron for operations in combat landing zones and declared it ready for commitment on 12 September. Thomas told HMR-161 to carry supplies to the embattled Marines near Hill 793.

Operation Windmill I on 13 September lasted only about three hours, but its impact stretched into the future by years. In the short term it made sure that 2d Battalion,

1st Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Franklin B. Nihart, faced another day's battle with plenty of ammunition, water, and rations and without the burden of casualties. The first lift brought in a helicopter support team from the 2d Battalion to run the landing zone, and the remaining 27 flights delivered nine tons of cargo and evacuated 74 casualties. Not one helicopter was lost to ground fire or accident. A similar resupply mission would have required almost 400 Korean bearers and a full day to accomplish. Unlike an earlier parachute resupply mission to the Korean Marines,

## Second Lieutenant George H. Ramer

**B**orn in 1927 at Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, he enlisted in the Navy in 1944. After the war, he entered Bucknell University, from which he graduated in 1950 with a degree in Political Science and History. While attending Bucknell, he enrolled in the Marine Corps Reserve Platoon Leader's program and was commissioned in the Marine Corps Reserve. He taught high school civics and history in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, before being called to active duty in January 1951 at his own request.

As a platoon leader with Company I, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, in Korea, his bravery in covering the withdrawal of his platoon on Kanmubong Ridge on 12 September 1951 was recognized by the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor. His citation reads, in part:

Second Lieutenant Ramer fearlessly led his men up the steep slopes and, although he and the majority of his unit were wounded during the ascent, boldly continued to spearhead the assault. . . . he staunchly carried the attack to the top, personally annihilated one enemy bunker with grenade and carbine fire and captured the objective with his remaining eight men.

Unable to hold the position against an immediate, overwhelming hostile counterattack, he ordered his group to withdraw and single-handedly fought the enemy to furnish cover for his men and for the evacuation of three fatally wounded Marines. Severely wounded a second time, Second Lieutenant Ramer . . . courageously manned his post until the hostile troops overran his position and he fell mortally wounded.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A48025

In 1963, a facility for physical conditioning at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, was named in his memory.—Captain John C. Chapin, USMCR (Ret)

## Whirlybirds

When Marine Transport Helicopter Squadron (HMR) 161 deployed to Korea, the squadron took with it an aircraft that pushed the technical state-of-the-art in helicopter design into a new frontier. Designated the HRS-1, the Sikorsky-designed and built helicopter had endured the inevitable ups and downs that characterized the introduction of any pioneering aircraft. Without government contracts, the Sikorsky Aircraft Division of the Vought-Sikorsky Corporation, Stratford, Connecticut, produced an aircraft designated the S-55, first flown in 1949. Initially marketing the aircraft as a commercial utility helicopter, Igor Sikorsky hoped the S-55 could compete with the Piasecki H-21 (or PD-22), which had been adopted by the U.S. Air Force for its air rescue service. The Navy, however, was in the hunt for a general-purpose helicopter that could be adopted for shipboard use. Naval aviators liked the S-55 because of its economical design, modest size, and serviceability.

Redesignated the HO4S-1 in its naval model, the S-55 represented at least two major engineering advances: the addition of a tail rotor for greater stability in flight and a front-mounted Pratt & Whitney R-1340-57 engine that could generate a respectable 600 horsepower. The engine placement helped solve a nagging problem of weight-distribution and flight characteristics. Prior helicopter models placed the engine directly under the rotor-blades, a design that gravely limited any so-designed helicopter to

very light loads and insured flight instability. The front-mounted engine dramatically increased the helicopter's carrying capacity and simplified maintenance since the HRS-1 had clam-shaped nose doors that provided easy access to the engine for the ground crew mechanics. The new design also improved vertical flight stability.

In the earliest stage of evaluation, 1948-1949, Navy and Marine Corps officers, encouraged by Sikorsky, saw capabilities the helicopter did not yet have, even under optimum weather and altitude conditions. The original requirement the naval aviators placed on the helicopter was a 10-man load (225 pounds per Marine) to be carried 150 miles. The requirements shrank, as it became more and more obvious that the HRS-1 was not going to be a two-ton-plus lifter. All the helicopter's other characteristics, however, made it the aircraft of choice for the Bureau of Aeronautics, and the Marine Corps joined the program in August 1950, with an initial order of 40 aircraft.

The HRS-1s that went to Korea came into service with a gross weight rating (7,000 pounds at sea level) about 1,000 pounds sligher than originally designed with a payload reduced to 1,420 pounds under optimal flight conditions. Its troop load dropped from 10 to four to six. The helicopter's maximum speed remained at 90 knots, but its range had dropped by half to 70-mile round trips. Nevertheless, the HRS-1 was not a "whirlybird" of disappointment, but promise.

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-433347





none of the cargo drifted off to places and users unknown. The use of externally-slung, quick-release loads in cargo nets made easy. For the corpsmen and wounded Marines, helicopter evacuation meant that a hard-hit casualty could be transported to a medical clearing station ("battalion med") in 30 minutes, not doomed to a day-long stretcher ride. Even without accumulated statistics, medical personnel could already tell that medical evacuation helicopters would save lives and boost morale.

The plan for the 1st Marines to attack up Kanmubong Ridge continued to unravel despite the helicopter resupply and the commitment of two battalions, the 2d Battalion to take Hill 749 and the

3d Battalion to seize the ridgeline across the Soyang on Nihart's right flank. Nihart's battalion finally cleared Hill 749 after sharp fighting one company at a time with only a platoon in battle by the evening of 14 September. Before Nihart could mount another attack the next day, the North Koreans deluged his Marines with heavy artillery and mortar fire, pinning them to their Hill 749 positions. The North Korean regiment with accompanying artillery tried to throw the 2d Battalion off Hill 749 for four hours during the night of 15-16 September and left almost 200 bodies and many blood trails behind when it withdrew, but the battle cost the 2d Battalion almost 200 casualties and limited it as an offensive threat. Two Korean

deserters reported that their regiment had 1,200 casualties.

Wornham now had to commit his reserve 1st Battalion to ensure that the complete Hill 673-Hill 749 complex was secure, leaving Thomas only one unbloodied regiment (the 5th Marines) to assault the heights of Kanmubong Ridge. At the cost of more than 800 casualties in the 7th and 1st Marines, the 1st Marine Division had only seized the ground identified five days before as the departure point for the more demanding advance up the spine of the ridge. Now it was the turn of Colonel Richard G. Weede's 5th Marines to continue the attack.

The battle of Kanmubong Ridge continued for four more days (16-20 September) and ended with the 5th Marines reduced by some 250 casualties and only Hill 812 securely under Marine control. The commanders of Weede's two assault battalions believed they could also have taken Hill 980, but it would have been difficult to hold with the peak (Hill 1052) still under North Korean control. The problems of Communist enfilade fire from the north simply got worse as the Marines worked their way to the west along the ridge. The Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Kennedy's 3d Battalion in the left zone of action had its flank protected by Yoke Ridge and by tank fire, but the 2d Battalion working along the opposite slope enjoyed no advantages in cover and friendly fire, except close air support—which did not arrive. Staggered by its mounting casualties, the 2d Battalion stormed Hill 812 on the evening of 17 September. Without physical contact, the two battalions went into perimeter defenses, expecting North Korean counterattacks from the heights to their front or, in the case of the 2d Battalion, from the broken ground to the

*A wounded squad leader of the 5th Marines ensures that a North Korean emplacement no longer threatens the advance along Kanmubong Ridge. The September attacks into the ridge mass north of the Punchbowl produced the most intense combat since the Chinese Fifth Offensive of April and May.*

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