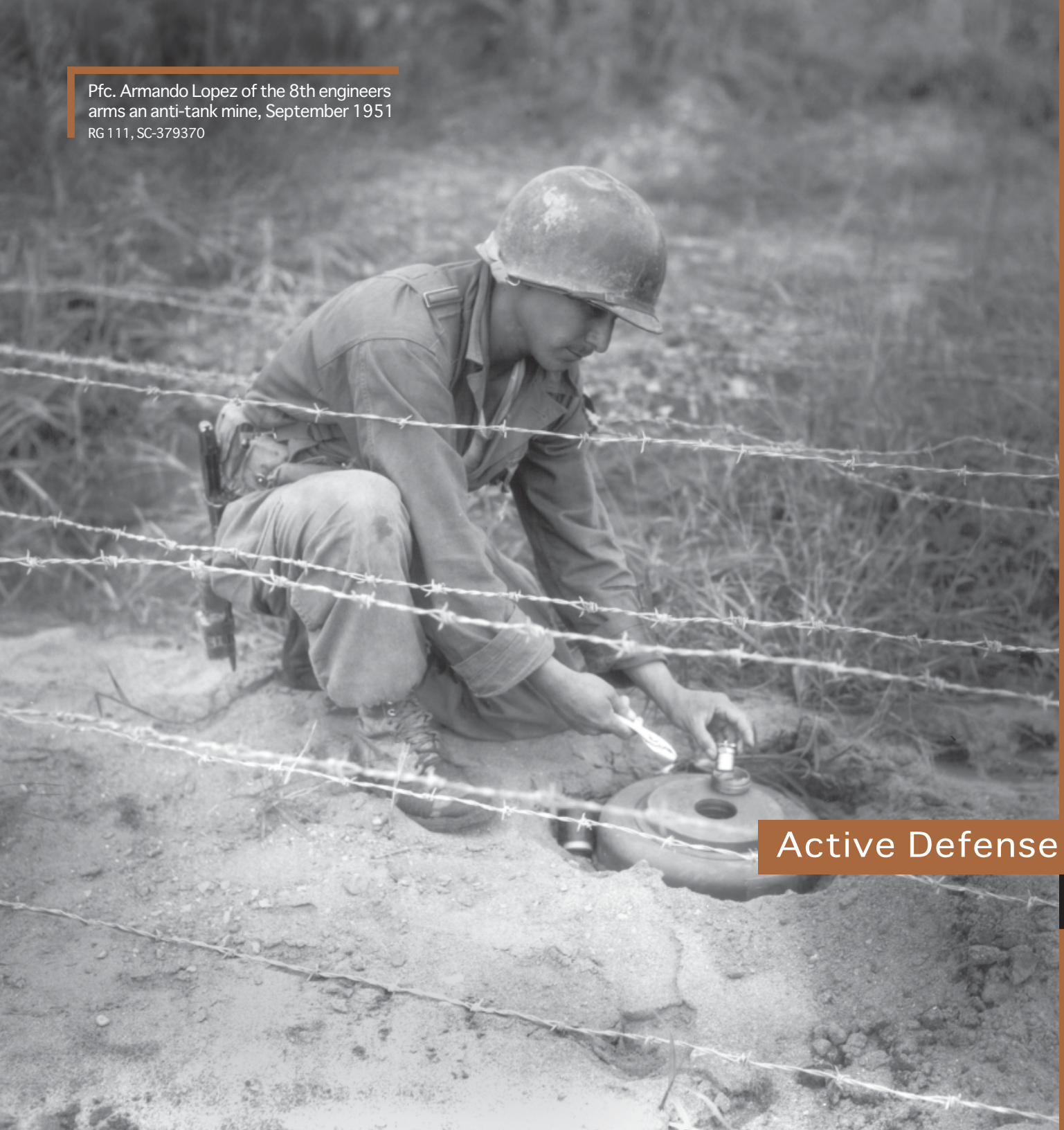
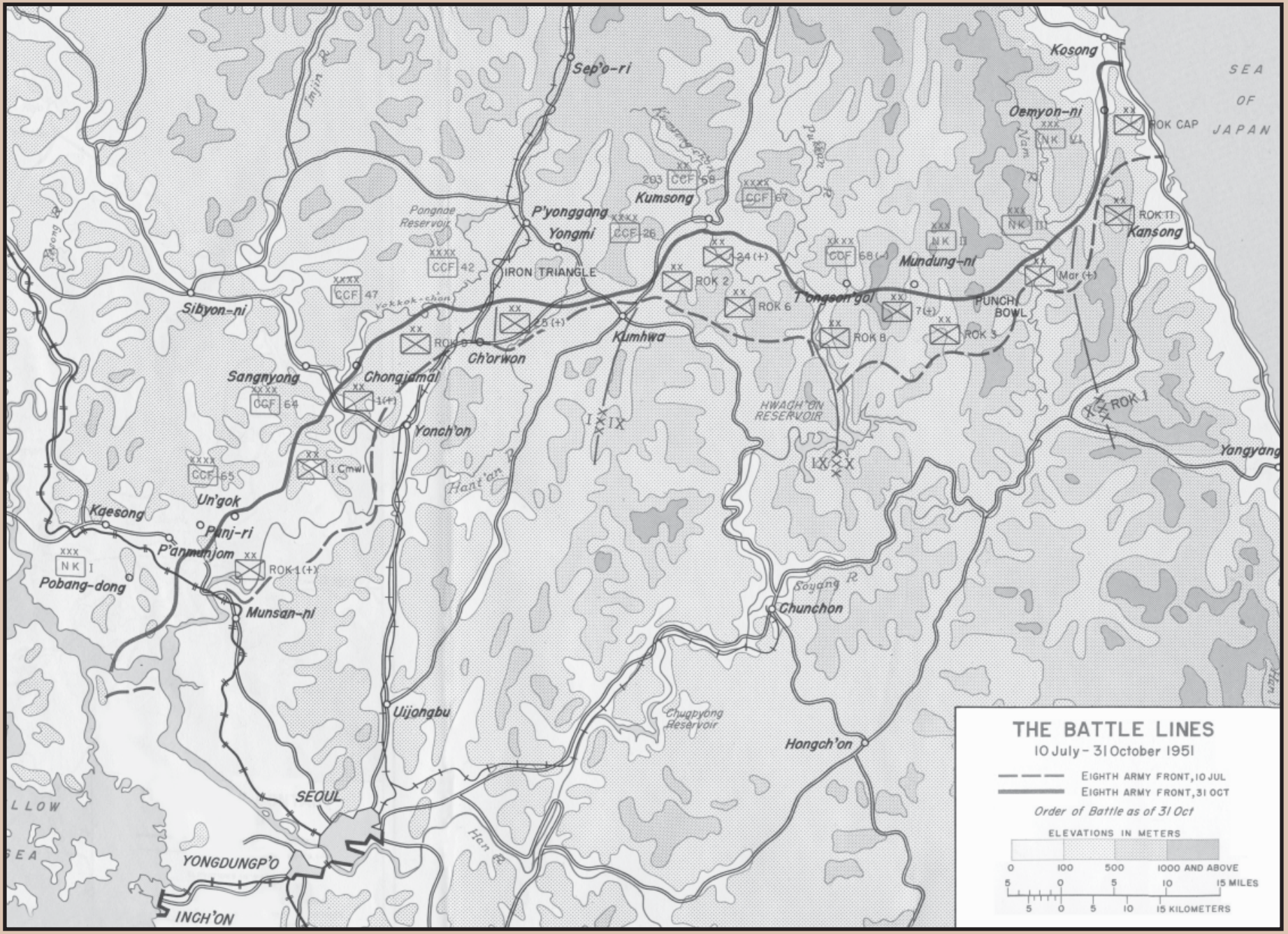


Pfc. Armando Lopez of the 8th engineers arms an anti-tank mine, September 1951
RG 111, SC-379370

Chapter 6

Active Defense

July 1951–July 1953


THE BATTLE LINES
10 July – 31 October 1951
EIGHTH ARMY FRONT, 10 JUL
EIGHTH ARMY FRONT, 31 OCT
Order of Battle as of 31 Oct
ELEVATIONS IN METERS
0 100 500 1000 AND ABOVE
5 0 5 10 15 MILES
5 0 5 10 15 KILOMETERS
SEA OF JAPAN
Kosong
Oemyon-ni
ROK CAP
Kansong
ROK II
Sep'o-ri
Kumsong
P'yonggang
Yongmi
Pangnae Reservoir
IRON TRIANGLE
Mundung-ni
T'ongson gol
PUNCH BOWL
Mar (+)
ROK 2
ROK 6
ROK 8
ROK 3
ROK 7 (+)
Kumhwa
Ch'orwon
Sibyon-ni
Sangnyong
Chongjamal
Yonch'on
HWACH'ON RESERVOIR
ROK I
Yangyang
Kaesong
Un'gok
Panmunjom
Pobang-dong
ROK 1 (+)
Munsan-ni
Chunchon
Soyang R.
Uijongbu
Chugpyong Reservoir
Hongch'on
SEOUL
YONGDUNGP'O
INCH'ON
Imjin R.
Han R.

Chapter 6

Introduction

On 23 June 1951 the Soviet delegate to the UN, Yakov Malik, proposed cease-fire discussions between the two sides in the Korean conflict. Shortly thereafter a Chinese communist broadcast on Peking radio indicated support for a truce. The ebb and flow of the fighting had convinced all parties to the conflict that stalemate was the likely outcome. Only Syngman Rhee, his goal of a unified Korea under his control unfulfilled, objected to an armistice.

President Harry Truman authorized General Matthew B. Ridgway to negotiate with the enemy generals. On 10 July, talks began at Kaesong, about three miles south of the 38th Parallel, between the opposing front lines. Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy was the chief delegate for the UN. Both sides agreed to continue hostilities until they achieved a truce, but neither started any large-scale offensives while the peace talks progressed. Artillery fire and air strikes characterized the action. Eighth Army regularly sent out combat patrols with offensive action consisting chiefly of limited regimental or battalion-sized attacks designed to seize more favorable terrain, capture prisoners, and keep the enemy from getting too close to UN lines. With the exception of the flare-up in the fall of 1951 following the August break-off of negotiations, this general pattern prevailed until just before the signing of the truce in 1953.

Throughout the summer of 1951, continuous local fighting occurred. These actions were designed to capture limited objectives. In general, the front lines remained stable. Two notable exceptions were the UN actions to disrupt communist communications and supply lines in the Iron Triangle, and to reduce another fortified enemy position in the Punchbowl. Late in August 1951, when the truce talks broke down, Gen. Van Fleet resumed the offensive, driving the enemy back and straightening and shortening the UN front. The successful advances of August-October gave the UN forces the high ground along the entire front, and possibly influenced the enemy to resume talks on 4 October.

As 1951 drew to a close, fighting tapered off into a monotonous routine of patrol clashes, raids, and bitter fighting for key outpost positions. By the end of the year, a lull settled over the battlefield with both sides deployed along defensive lines. Ground action was limited throughout the winter but, in May 1952, the enemy became bolder and activity increased in the Ch'orwan area. In June the 45th Division's *Operation*

Counter, seeking to establish 11 patrol bases across the division front, prompted the Chinese to counterattack. The Chinese lost some 5,000 men before breaking off the attack.

The deadlock continued into late June 1952 as the conflict went into its third year. July began with a series of small-scale attacks by both sides that continued into the fall. In October, Chinese and North Korean units, sometimes employing their notorious human-wave tactics, began a series of assaults against the Eighth Army's main line of resistance. More than 93,000 rounds of artillery fell on UN positions on 7 October as the enemy tried to crack the line. After one 10-day battle, UN forces counted more than 2,000 dead Chinese in front of one position. In November, with the coming of winter, enemy aggressiveness began to decline. Most of the front remained relatively quiet, although some enemy attacks took place throughout the rest of the year.

As 1953 began, activity along the entire front subsided. In February, Gen. Van Fleet retired and Lt. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor took over his command. In the spring, the enemy renewed its assaults upon the Eighth Army. Capt. Delbert M. Fowler describes his duties in the Operations Office, IX Corps Engineer, managing the floating bridges, roads, and aerial tramways. He also expresses his feelings about the American and Korean military personnel.

In the 1st Cavalry Division area, flooding destroyed bridges and roads, and Lt. Col. Harold R. Parfitt's 8th Engineer Combat Battalion was busy restoring crossings, fords, and bridging. Following the rains of summer, the battalion improved the road network by building pioneer roads during the fall of 1951.

First Lt. Kenneth E. McIntyre, 802d Aviation Engineer Battalion, arrived in Korea with the battalion in 1951 from Okinawa. The battalion's biggest problem was in a shortage of certain supplies and spare parts. Nails were in extremely short supply. He details how Korean nationals were used in the construction work of airfields.

Initially, 2d Lt. Richard M. Wells was with the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion, IX Corps, in 1952. A major project for his unit was putting the corps headquarters underground. The work consisted of drilling into several hills and developing big underground rooms in which the command post could move. Once the tunnel work was finished, Wells took over a company in the battalion and began work on a road project.

In August 1951, Lt. Col. Harry D. Hoskins, Jr., who in a few months was able to convert the battalion into an outstanding unit, relieved the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion commander. Hoskins then moved on to his original assignment with the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion.

In the next excerpt, Col. Hoskins describes his nine months in the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion, Febru-

ary-October 1952, working on the front lines putting in roads and bridges and supporting the division on line.

First Lt. Floyd D. Wright details some of the problems he faced with officer personnel when he first arrived at Company A, 62d Engineer Construction Battalion and also describes the work the company did as its mission in the 24th Engineer Construction Group. He further describes his assignment to the 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company, the last all-black Army unit in Korea, with orders to integrate the company as soon as possible. He notes some of the problems he encountered in the 573d, August 1952-March 1953, and tells how he addressed them.

Lt. Col. Harrington W. Cochran, Jr., was in the 808th and 809th Engineer Aviation Battalions, 1952-1953. He describes building and maintaining several types of airfields and discusses the problems involved with asphalt and pierced-steel plank runways. Later, when moved to another unit, he began work on a 10,000-foot concrete runway at K-8 (Kusan).

First Lt. George B. Gray, Jr., commanded the only engineer port construction company in Korea (50th Engineer Port Construction Company). Much of the work involved installing submarine pipelines. That entailed using cranes on barges, a very difficult procedure that could easily lead to capsizing the cranes and barges. If anything sunk in the area, the 50th was the only unit with divers to repair it. Few of the platoon leaders were qualified divers, so Gray required all platoon leaders, as well as unqualified enlisted replacements, to be qualified by master divers.

First Lt. Richard M. Wells spent his last six months in Korea as company commander, 72d Engineer Combat Company, 5th RCT. The 72d supported the 5th in infantry operations. One of the unit's biggest problems was obtaining engineer replacements. The support it provided to the 5th RCT was in emplacing minefields, building fortifications, and putting in roads to the front line.

Brig. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson discusses the personalities of general officers with whom he had contact during the Korean War. He closes his comments on personalities by listing the three things he believes that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur did wrong in Korea.

First Lt. Joseph K. Bratton describes his tour with the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion as Division Engineer Supply Officer. During the end of the fighting in the spring and summer of 1953, and during the defensive period of 1953 to 1954, he notes some of the real supply problems that engineers had in Korea. He describes how the engineers became "combat multipliers" in Korea.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Love | 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

Engineers worked their way up the gorge, but the road was the most heavily mined and cratered they had ever encountered. The battalion had mine detectors but they were inadequate. Many mines were deeply buried.

Colonel Love describes his tour as commanding officer, 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, September 1951-August 1952, with emphasis on the battalion's role in* Operation Touchdown. *He also discusses the crucial question of how engineers should be used in a division—scattered throughout the division's regiments or kept together as a distinct engineer battalion. The Korean War highlighted that particular issue but did not resolve it.

Lt. Col. Robert Love receives the Silver Star from Maj. Gen. Robert Young, commander of the 2d Infantry Division, 3 December 1951
RG 111, SC-390200

I left the States by ship from Fort Mason, San Francisco, California. We went to Japan where I was assigned to Korea and then to the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion in September 1951.

When I arrived at the battalion they were not on line. They were rebuilding and training. The unit was not in bad shape. The old battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ed Leavey, was still there but would leave in a day or two. I stayed with the battalion and visited division headquarters every day.

Since I was the engineer of the 2d Infantry division commander, Maj. Gen. Robert N. Young, I convinced him that I commanded the battalion. He could look to me to get the most out of the troops and to use them where they were needed. I didn't want them spread out. Often, one company was attached to each of the regiments and you had a fourth one that you could move around, but I didn't like that kind of operation.

I wanted to use the engineers' efforts where I thought they should go, rather than where an infantry regimental commander might want to use them. The assistant division commander was used to doing it the old way, but I talked Gen. Young into letting me do it my way. Although I was senior to the infantry regimental commanders, it took some effort to make that shift. I'm sure that Gen. Young was pleased with the way we operated.

When I got to the unit we were in the planning stages of *Operation Touchdown.* This was the last real offensive of the Korean War. The idea was to break through the enemy lines and score a touchdown—break through to the enemy rear and destroy him from the rear forward.

With the smoke of exploding artillery visible in the distance, infantry advance over a road cut by the 2d Engineers Love Collection

The 23d Infantry had the hardest job because Heartbreak Ridge was the 23d sector. The 9th was on the left, which wasn't as hard, and the 38th was in the center. Each regiment had a different nationality attached. The French battalion was with the 23d. The 38th had the Dutch battalion, and the 9th had the Thai battalion. The French were far and away the best.

At the CP of the 38th Infantry, a forward CP was set up to operate Companies A, C, and D. Company A, reinforced with mine detector and demolition crews from Company C, was to carry the burden of opening the MSR as far as the point opposite the junction of the Suip-ch'on and the So-ch'on Rivers. Company C was to put its primary effort into getting tanks in the valley running northwest from Saegonbae and, as Company A opened the MSR behind them, was to repair and improve the heavily-cratered section around Saegonbae and pioneer a road up the valley toward the northwest. Company D was to maintain and improve the MSR behind Company A until Saegonbae was taken, and then sweep, clear, and repair the road north toward Mundung-ni, and when it was possible for tanks, mount a platoon to move forward with the 72d Tank Battalion. Company B, working alone in the Satae-ri valley, was to provide direct support to the 23d Infantry. Mine detector repair facilities and a forward supply dump were to be established at Company A. Extra engineer effort available in the early stages of the operation were to be put on expanding and improving the forward ammunition supply point in

Operation Touchdown was by no means typical, even of the fighting in Korea. It does, however, offer a dramatic example of division teamwork and of the varied tasks engineers performed to overcome enemy obstacles….

the western valley and to pushing through the road over Pass 558.

At 2100 on 5 October 1951, all regiments moved out on *Operation Touchdown.* Engineers worked day and night in the western valley. Engineers worked their way up the gorge, but the road was the most heavily mined and cratered they had ever encountered. The battalion had mine detectors but they were inadequate. Many mines were deeply buried. Most were wooden box mines with plastic detonators. Widely spread shell fragments gave innumerable false alarms. Engineers used a substantial pattern of explosives to clear out enemy mines by induced detonation. The enemy had not followed any set pattern in the placement of mines, scattering them indiscriminately along all roads.

At dawn on 10 October, a tank dozer rounded the last corner and completed filling the last crater. The tank spearhead burst into the valley, along with a platoon of Company D, to overcome whatever obstacles might be encountered in the open valley. With the breaking loose of the 72d Tank Battalion, the most spectacular part of the engineer task in *Operation Touchdown* was completed. The work of the next six days, however, was just as important.

By 15 October, when the line was quiet, Companies A, C, and D had moved up into the valley north of Kong-dong. Work in this period included 120 mines removed or blown in place; 35 culverts installed; areas of the 23d and 9th Infantry Regiments swept and cleared; one cableway installed for the 23d and three laid out for the 38th position on Ridges 636, 905, and 974; the airstrip extended 450 feet; a water point established and operated; and wire and anti-personnel mines laid in the 2d Recon and 72d Tank Battalion areas.

Pfc. Gene Davidson, a member of the water purification section, 453d Engineer Construction Battalion, tests the chlorine level in the water supply RG 111, SC-371535

Shortly after the objectives were taken, the 7th Infantry Division relieved the 2d. The operation was the last all-out offensive before the resumption of truce talks in 1951.

Operation Touchdown was by no means typical,

even of the fighting in Korea. It does, however, offer a dramatic example of division teamwork and of the varied tasks the engineers performed to overcome enemy obstacles and to expedite the division's advance.

In this operation the engineers located and removed or destroyed enemy antitank and antipersonnel mines; reduced natural and man-made obstacles; constructed, repaired, maintained, and worked roads and trails; constructed fords, fixed bridges and culverts; constructed and assisted in the improvement of command posts, artillery positions, and other installations; repaired and maintained landing strips; provided engineer supply service; procured and distributed maps; collected and disseminated engineer intelligence; and prepared and executed the engineer plan for the operation.

With a demolished bridge in the back-ground, a tank fords a stream in the Piari Valley, October 1951 Love Collection

Prior planning is essential. Proper allocation and use of the engineer effort is needed for there is never an excess of engineer effort available. The leapfrogging of Companies A, C, and D as successive spearheads of the engineer effort boosted moral by providing fresh troops at the fore, and equalizing labor, sacrifice, and opportunity for achievement.

Liberal use of explosives in mine clearance was the only method that would permit so rapid an advance, and the expense was fully justified by the elimination of personnel and equipment casualties.

The attack was over when we reached our objective. We were relieved by the 7th Division and were allowed to drop back and consolidate for the rest of the time that I was there. I left Korea in August 1952 and went to the Japan Construction Agency for two years.

Serving in the Operations Office, IX Corps engineer, Captain Fowler developed a varied perspective. He discovered that an equipment maintenance system just "did not exist." He came to believe that individual reservists were treated unfairly by the call-up system used for the Korean War.

Rapidly Rising Rivers

I got the job of managing the floating bridges, and I learned some interesting things. The Koreans had stripped every mountain in Korea of vegetation and anything that would burn. Since there were no trees to speak of, except in rare locations, during a hard rain the delay between the rain on the top of a mountain and the river below would sometimes be 15 to 30 minutes. To most of us that was unbelievable since, in normal circumstances, when you have trees and vegetation, the delay can be hours. Therefore, we quickly learned that we had about 15 to 30 minutes to cut a floating bridge. It took us awhile to learn how to do that. We didn't know what to do about those high waters to begin with. I Corps lost a couple of bridges that floated out to the South China Sea. Although our bridges never got quite that far, they would go right on down the river and just break apart. We finally discovered that the solution had to be to designate one end of the bridge ahead of time to be cut loose, and we knew which one that was. We cut the anchor lines, coiled them, and actually floated that bridge to shore on the other side. The high water passed, and sometimes the water would pass in a couple of hours, and we would put that bridge back in place.

The main purpose of the aerial tramways was to get ammunition up to the top of some of these ridgelines and to bring back casualties and anything else that needed to come down.

We had a regiment come in and bivouac in a dry riverbed one late afternoon. When they woke up the next morning, everything was floating downstream. So, IX Corps issued an order that no unit would bivouac in a riverbed without first getting clearance from IX Corps command headquarters. One of the people in the engineer section usually had the job of checking the site and saying, "No you can't bivouac there," or "Yes, you can." Most people just didn't understand how fast the water could get to where they had pitched their tents.

Besides floating bridges, the engineer units also were involved with Bailey bridges. There was a pretty sizable pier placed under the bridge across the Pukhan River, which led to the Hwach'on Reservoir. The Hwach'on Reservoir turned out to be an exercise for engineer units, too. It was a very high dam and it had movable gates. For a long period of time, intelligence reported that the water was building up behind that dam. We surmised by this time that the Chinese, not the North Koreans, were going to let that water accumulate behind that dam and open those gates and float all of our floating bridges down to the South China Sea.

We set about trying to figure out what to do about that. We had aircraft attack the gates and try to blow

them out, but that didn't work very well. We didn't have laser-guided bombs in those days and the circular error probable of bombs and aircraft was pretty sizable. It was finally decided—while we possessed the area of the dam, we would either blow out the gates or remove them. That was done and then we could forget about that dam being the problem, as far as the water being released to destroy all of our downstream bridges [The dam gates were successfully attacked by air. See 1st Lt. James L. Trayers's account of this action].

Roads and Aerial Tramways

The real problem, initially, with the roads in Korea was that very few were paved. Maybe the road from Seoul to Pusan was paved, but I don't think any side roads were paved. If they were, the pavement quickly disintegrated. The trucks we had were World War II two-and-a-half-ton trucks, not those 5-ton or 10-ton monsters we have now. They did not operate on those back roads for more than 24 hours before all four springs were broken. If you have ever ridden in a two and one-half-ton truck with no springs, you know it is awfully rough. It is essentially like riding in a wagon. There weren't any springs available. The U.S. Army gave the Japanese a contract to manufacture springs. When we first started getting these springs they were very bad; they would only last a short while. Then they got better and better, and finally the trucks had springs on them.

The main reason the springs broke was because there were not enough units to maintain the roads. The roads were literally all full of holes because of rain and mud, and the pounding from incessant truck travel. The engineer units had a tough job going from one crisis to another on the MSR to try to keep the roads in some form of repair. We had no asphalt plants. All we had were some rock crushers, but not nearly enough. We managed to put together some supply of crushed rock. In other instances, soil and rock were used to try

A cable car built by the 3d Engineers
RG 111, SC-386824

Engineer units…had the unenviable task of trying to keep the MSRs open, the roads and floating bridges installed, and the wooden bridges, which they had installed, serviceable; building and maintaining aerial tramways; and…maintaining the water supply.

to keep the roads in passable condition. We adopted a standard for the roads—to be built wide enough that you could slope the shoulder so that rain would actually move *off* the road and into a ditch. That helped.

The engineer units also began to build aerial tramways. The first one was built over in the X Corps sector, since they had the toughest terrain at the time. By that time a front of troops stretched all of the way across Korea, which had not been the case in North Korea. In North Korea you had I Corps on the left, IX Corps in the middle. You had some Korean units, and way over on the right flank you had X Corps, but the two flanks were not connected. When we faced the Chinese this time around there was a front all of the way across.

The main purpose of the aerial tramways was to get ammunition up to the top of some of these ridgelines and to bring back casualties and anything else that needed to come down. Someone improvised one, drafted a set of plans, and wrote down the instructions. When I got that in IX Corps, we put together engineer circulars, or engineer lessons learned. It showed what other units had done and described how to do it. [During the Korean War, three of Capt. Fowler's articles on bridging appeared in *The Military Engineer:* "Bridging the Han River," 43, No. 296, Part I (Nov-Dec 51): 414-16; "Bailey Bridge Across the Pukhan," 44, No. 298 (Mar-Apr 52): 86-87; and "Expedient Aerial Tramways," 44, No. 299 (May-Jun 52): 198-201].

We did that in IX Corps, and in the other corps as well, to tell engineer units how to build an aerial tramway and how to run it with a three-quarter-ton truck engine or some other engine. They proved to be very successful because for a number of months in 1952, and later in 1953, the fighting was essentially static warfare. Until a peace agreement was signed, the front didn't move very often. When it did, it was just a small advance and a small withdrawal.

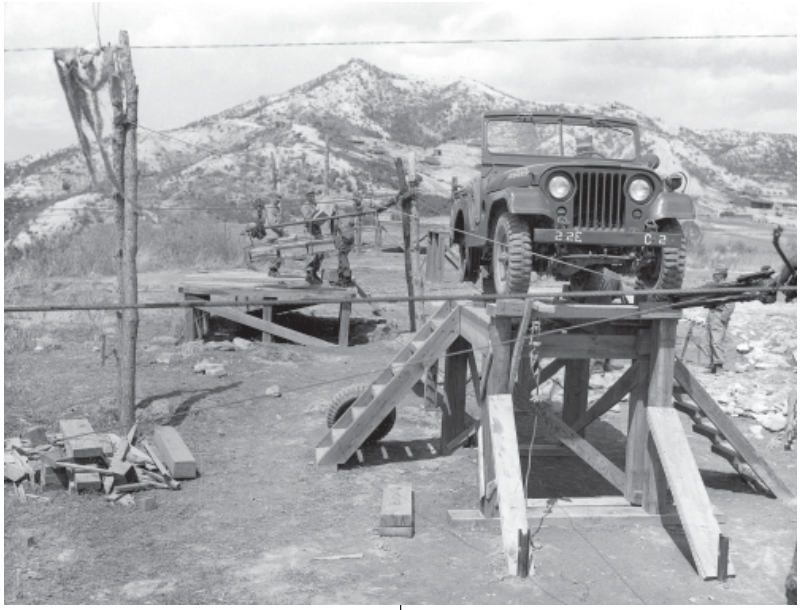
Engineer units did at least three things: (1) they had the unenviable task of trying to keep the MSRs open, the roads and floating bridges installed, and the wooden bridges, which they had installed, serviceable; (2) building and maintaining aerial tramways; and, (3) the old standby, maintaining the water supply.

I got out to the battalions and groups every few days, mostly at the work site though, rather than at the unit. My main job in the engineer section at IX Corps was to maintain a status map of the MSR and bridges. If a G-2 or G-3 wanted to know the status of any of those at any given time, they would come over and check. At the same time we went to the G-3 operation's tent periodically and brought them up to date on what, if anything, had happened to the MSR or the bridges.

The Missing Maintenance System?

In the beginning, maintenance was simply not being performed systematically. Every two and one-half-

A jeep powers a tramway built by the 2d Engineers
Engineer School, Korea 063



ton truck in the U.S. Army was running with broken springs. There just weren't any replacement springs. It was not just a question of having some parts in a warehouse someplace. You have got to have a system that gets the parts from the continental U.S. to Japan or Korea. Then, they have to be sent to a repair center somewhere in the rear, and from there to the unit.

That maintenance system in Korea just did not exist. Everybody had to do his own maintenance. Cannibalizing was normal. That was the only way you could get things running. Everybody knew the situation, so nobody complained about it much at the time.

Reflections on the Personnel

The worst inequity during the whole Korean War was the manner in which we treated reservists. When the war started, the Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC) didn't exist. Nobody had facilities to train replacements. So, what did the Army do to provide replacements? They called up individual reservists, most of whom, I think, were really inactive, not active, reservists. They called them up and shipped them over as individual replacements in combat units. That was not what they had signed up to do as reservists. We should have found a different solution. It was very inequitable.

As far as the quality of officers or noncommissioned officers was concerned, neither group did anything to leave a lasting impression. They seemed to be well qualified. They were as good as you could have expected at the time. Many of them were not as professional as the ones in the service today because we have an all-volunteer service and have had for 20 years. We still had the draft in those days. We had to rely on reserves recalled until the replacement stream started flowing. It was several months after the Korean War started that that happened.

Everybody was always short of people in the units. That was resolved by extending the year of service to 18 months. That really had an effect on morale. A year goes by pretty fast for most people, but somehow, anything more than a year seems like too long. I spent 19 months in Korea. I left in May 1952. I did not ask to be sent back.

That maintenance system in Korea just did not exist. Everybody had to do his own maintenance. Cannibalizing was normal. That was the only way you could get things running.

Lieutenant Colonel Harold R. Parfitt | 8th Engineer Combat Battalion

Colonel Parfitt describes his experiences as commander, 8th ECB, 1st Cavalry Division, as a hectic time. The battalion built and maintained roads, reinforced defensive positions, and in doing so made widespread use of Korean laborers and local materials.

When I joined the 8th Engineers on 2 April 1951 they were on the Hongchon River just southwest of Hongchon. The 1st Cavalry Division, together with the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade attached, was moving aggressively, attacking north along the Hongchon-Chunchon axis. Two bridges had just been completed and our troops poured across the Soyang River.

Soldiers from the 13th Engineers repair a road damaged by a landslide
RG 111, SC-362324

Shortly thereafter, despite considerable mortar and artillery fire, allied forces reached *Line Kansas.* At this point [10 April] the division was scheduled to go into EUSAK Reserve (Eighth United States Army in Korea) and, less one regiment, moved 60 miles to establish new bivouac areas near Ilbi-ri, seven miles northeast of Seoul. The 7th Cavalry remained behind in an attempt to capture the Hwachon Dam but was unsuccessful and two days later joined the division.

During this short period the engineers were fully engaged and performing the usual tasks: mine detecting and clearing teams accompanied the advancing soldiers, the MSR (Hongchon-Chunchon) was widened for two-way traffic, road surfaces were improved, and drainage ditches were cleared or constructed. Special attention was given to repair and maintenance of the Soyang River Bridge and approaches. Also, 100 Koreans were employed to fill and place nearly 5,000 sandbags at weak spots on highways.

The 1st Cavalry Division was moved back on line 23 April. The respite was all too short because the Chinese launched their spring offensive with great success. By the end of the month the 5th and 8th Regiments had taken up blocking positions on the outskirts of

Seoul on *Line Golden* and 7th Cavalry withdrew into Seoul.

At this point the engineers worked diligently to augment defenses on *Line Golden*. There was a race to clear fields of fire, erect barbed wire entanglements, and lay AP mines. Fortunately, the Chinese assault ground to a halt five miles north of Seoul. They seemed to be moving forces to the east.

Once again quiet reigned along the front as tank patrols of the 1st Cavalry pushed about two miles north of Uijongbu before being forced to halt by enemy fire. Also, the 7th Cavalry, with Co. B of the engineers, set up a patrol base two miles south of Uijongbu. Road nets to these positions were improved by ditching, grading, and spreading gravel.

On 17 May the Chinese opened a new offensive attack and 1st Cavalry withdrew to *Line Golden.* However, within several days the enemy reverted to the defensive and U.S. forces counterattacked all along the front. By 27 May 1st Cavalry troopers reached *Line Kansas,* just short of the 38th parallel.

During June, efforts were directed to improving an existing road net to all-weather, two-way standards. Ditches were widened, deepened, and shaped; culverts were emplaced to improve drainage; and rock was stockpiled on the soft shoulders to be readily available for emergency repair in the event of heavy rains. Once this was accomplished, attention was turned to establishing a network of lateral communication and supply routes. Much blasting and cutting with dozers, as well as ditching by a large force of Korean laborers, was necessary.

Though road construction dominated, many other projects were accomplished, such as mine detecting, clearing and mine laying, airstrip construction, and destruction of enemy positions within the 1st Cavalry sector. While the combat units were throwing up hasty fortifications on *Line Wyoming*, plans were made and initiated on a permanent defensive line south of the Hanton River following the trace of *Line Kansas.*

About this time, training of replacements became more and more important. Each incoming group was held for two days at H&S Company for a thorough indoctrination. Though short, this program proved to be invaluable.

One other item of interest was the fact that during this period the 28th British Brigade and the 25th Canadian Brigade were under the operations control of the 1st Cavalry Division. The 8th Engineers were responsible for the operations of the engineer units working with these brigades. Constant liaison was maintained and heavy equipment and other support were provided when necessary.

At the beginning of July, three patrol bases were established in front of *Line Wyoming.* Engineer work at the time mainly consisted of improving an already

…it had become obvious to me that our soldiers…had little or no experience with the Bailey bridge….the one officer who knew anything about Bailey bridges was my exec., who had been an instructor in Bailey bridging at the Engineer School during World War II. Thus, as soon as possible, some special training was given.

good road net. In addition, normal mine clearing missions were conducted. There was some indecision as to whether mines should be laid. Finally, G-3 authorized a limited number of anti-tank mines for the 16th Recon sector on *Line Wyoming.* During a three-day period the engineers emplaced these mines; however, they were removed a week later when the division moved back to *Line Kansas.*

As previously noted, early on a decision had been made to divert considerable effort to *Line Kansas*. A road net was constructed behind the line in the division sector and minefield sites were prepared. The roadwork was particularly challenging and involved blazing roads through virgin territory, scaling peaks up to 300 meters high, while never exceeding a 20 percent grade.

At this time other personnel were engaged in preparing minefield sites, to include everything but actual emplacement of mines. The "go ahead" was immediately given when the division returned to *Line Kansas* on 16 July.

Later in the month a second order was received requiring removal of all mines and concertina wire from *Line Golden.* Little trouble was experienced with AT (anti-tank) fields but anti-personnel mine removal was a nerve-wracking job.

During a seven-day period much work was accomplished although three men were wounded. The operation was called to a close on 31 July as the 1st Cavalry moved forward. Considerable effort was made to posting warning signs in Korean, Chinese, and English.

While the mine laying was in progress, work proceeded on the roads. A heavy rain midway through these operations caused a juggling of assignments. Numerous fords on the MSR became impassable—ditches and culverts were clogged. It took two days of concentrated effort to repair the damage. At the same time we were given the job of constructing a bridge across the Sinchon River. In view of heavy rains, a minimum span of 117 feet was required. We had on hand 72 feet of dry span M-2 bridge, and the remainder of the bridge was constructed with two pile bents, a rock, and native timber crib.

The division headquarters were isolated at one point because they were on the other side of a stream from their MSR. The division commander reacted by placing urgent demands on the engineers. He was cut off by a raging stream, but only for a short time because we used a small Bailey bridge to span the gap. Fortunately our mission was accomplished fast enough to satisfy him that we had done a good job. Since I had just been assigned as battalion commander this was good news to hear. Nevertheless, it had become obvious to me that our soldiers, particularly new fillers, had little or no experience with the Bailey bridge. In fact, we found that besides myself, the one officer who knew anything about Bailey bridges was my exec, who had been an instructor in Bailey bridging at the Engineer School

during World War II. Thus, as soon as possible, some special training was given.

Although the 1st Cavalry Division had been in reserve for 10 days, the engineers had worked extremely hard during this time. Plans to rest a little were aborted as the Chinese had moved uncomfortably close to *Line Wyoming* and the division was called upon to return to the front on the last day of July.

The move to *Line Wyoming* was completed in the first days of August with the 1st Cavalry Division relieving the 25th Infantry Division. At this time, mine removal had ended on *Line Golden.* The mines and tactical wire removed were then used to improve *Line Wyoming.* After some delay the order was given to fortify *Line Wyoming* with anti-tank and anti-personnel minefields.

Korean laborers use A-frame packs to carry stone for the construction of a revetment near Yonchon, July 1951 Engineer School, 93-66-6

Early in August, a limited attack was launched but the ground was too soft to support the armored vehicles. They were abandoned and later in the month a tank patrol, accompanied by a D-8 angle dozer, moved out, reached the bogged tanks, and succeeded in digging out the vehicles, enabling their recovery while covered by small arms fire and mortars.

In the meantime, engineer operations had started with a large backlog of work to be done due to the heavy rains in the latter part of July that washed out roads, bridges, rafts, and minefields. The Imjin River and its tributaries, the Hanton and Amichon rivers, had overflown their banks.

A second downpour of rain on 4 August caused even more damage. Work that had been accomplished now had to be redone. Much of the bridging as well as rafts used in the major crossings were damaged or beyond repair and had to be replaced. Also, small bridges on the MSR were washed out and needed prompt replacement. Throughout the month bridging of many types was under urgent construction. Assault boats and rafts were heavily used as other work was in progress.

Native timber was used as much as possible for the construction of large timber culverts and for revetments. In reconstructing fords, hand-placed rocks were the best solution.

During this period, maintenance of roads required almost 24-hour daily effort. In many cases the record rains of the month succeeded in piercing the hard road surface—this plus heavy traffic resulted in sub-grade collapse. Runoff from the hills soon resulted in loss of culverts and some bridges previously mentioned. Fords were rendered inoperative.

Native timber was used as much as possible for the construction of large timber culverts and for revetments. In reconstructing fords, hand-placed rocks were the best solution.

Fortunately, there wasn't heavy pressure along the line at the time. The Chinese probably were having the same kind of problems we were having, although they were not as road bound as we were. At that time, negotiations were in progress and there was a feeling that things were going to be settled at the negotiating table. While this was going on we had our own hands full just keeping the roads and crossings open in order to get the essentials up to the troops.

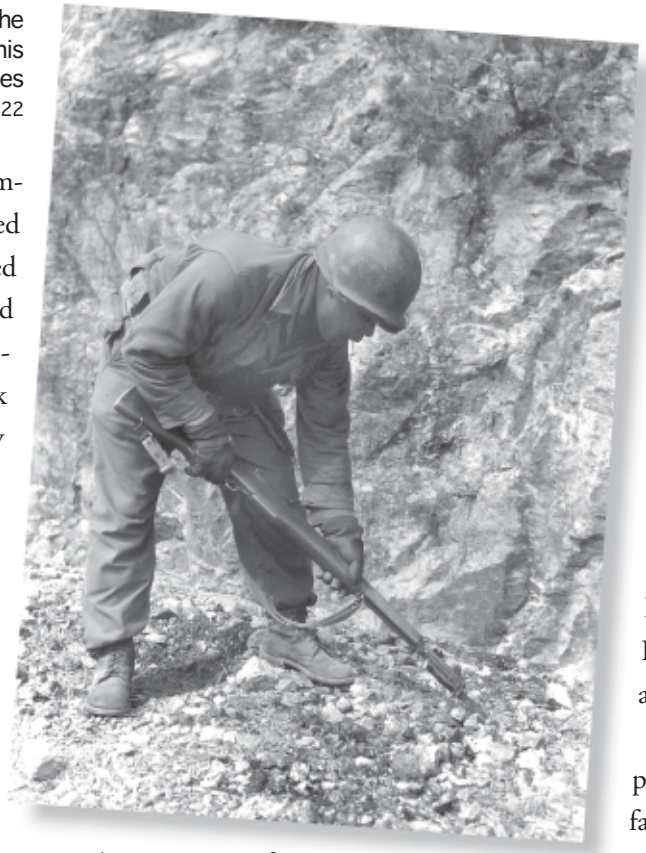
Fortunately, there wasn't heavy pressure along the line at the time. The Chinese probably were having the same kind of problems we were having, although they were not as road bound as we were.

Our efforts were fruitful as we followed the engineer adage "Get the rock on and the water off." The Koreans who were attached did all kinds of hard work. They were digging out the ditches, trying to drain the water, and hauling as much rock as they could get from streambeds. During what I call the survival period of August, we called upon more and more laborers from the Korean population because equipment wasn't all that much help.

In September we had a continuation of operations to restabilize and improve the road network, which, due to the rains of August, still required major repair. New roads connecting regimental MSRs to the division MSR were a challenge since they involved establishing roads above an elevation of 1,080 feet. The terrain was very rocky and there was extensive use of graders and scrapers as well as explosives.

Extension of operations to the west bank of the Imjin River also necessitated construction of a resupply road over high terrain. This was briefly held up until the infantry secured the predominant terrain feature. At that time 516 feet of footbridge was installed. This enabled the 5th Cavalry to put a screen in front of the proposed M-2 treadway bridge, which was to be constructed by Corps engineers. Upon completion, our engineers moved forward with dozers and other equipment and built a road to connect the bridge site and the North Ferry.

As the Infantry advanced, work proceeded on primary and secondary roads leading to various division positions. This involved the construction of three bridges on the southern portion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment MSR. An MSR from *Line Wyoming* to *Line Kansas* also was developed. By the end of the month, roads had been completed to the limit of the infantry advanced positions.



Pvt. Alfred Vaughan of the 13th Engineers uses his bayonet to probe for mines
RG 111, SC-363822

That month we also completed field fortifications started on *Line Wyoming*. This included not only minefield and barbed wire obstacles, but also such obstacles as an artificial lake, tank obstacles, and various booby traps. All minefields were enclosed with a barbed wire fence and large white rectangular signs with lettering, "DANGER, MINES," as well as "MINES," written in Korean and Chinese. Noteworthy, also, was that during this period an airstrip had been built for the division artillery in the vicinity of Yonchon. Furthermore, nearby work had commenced on building a 40-ton ordnance loading ramp and a ramp for ambulances to use at a medical clearing station.

Engineer operations for the month of October consisted primarily of supporting the 1st Cavalry Division in *Operation Commando* during the seizure of *Line Jamestown*. Prior to 3 October (D-day), I laid out a proposed road network based on information compiled from ground reconnaissance in this sector during previous operations, detailed map study, and personal air reconnaissance. Then, throughout the month the battalion built, maintained, and improved a large network of roads. Initially they pushed forward directly behind the attacking elements, and periodically, lateral connecting roads were installed between them. About this time I received the great news that I had been promoted to lieutenant colonel.

For one short period Company D was committed as infantry. They occupied a blocking position but did not become engaged and soon returned to battalion control.

Our road construction was mostly accomplished in very high terrain. Criteria concerning width of road and grade limitations were very demanding. The demands on heavy equipment were enormous since they were used day and night. Fortunately, we had an outstanding warrant officer who, together with a team of technicians, did an outstanding job on maintenance. Much of the work was accomplished in the field by maintenance teams and, in other worst cases, equipment was taken to base camp.

As *Operation Commando* progressed, we encountered many minefields laid by the enemy in front of their MLR. We had difficulty locating all the mines because the wooden box-type mines had been buried six or more inches below ground surface. Sweeping the roads with mine detectors did not locate them. Thus, on many occasions, the troops resorted to hand probing. Since the enemy also tended to camouflage their mines in rocky areas by laying large slabs of rocks over the mines, we decided to use pressure charges on all critical points [curves, defiles, dips, and cuts].

In addition to all the mines, stockpiles of explosives also were found and destroyed. They included TNT, composition C-3, anti-tank grenades, and bangalore torpedoes.

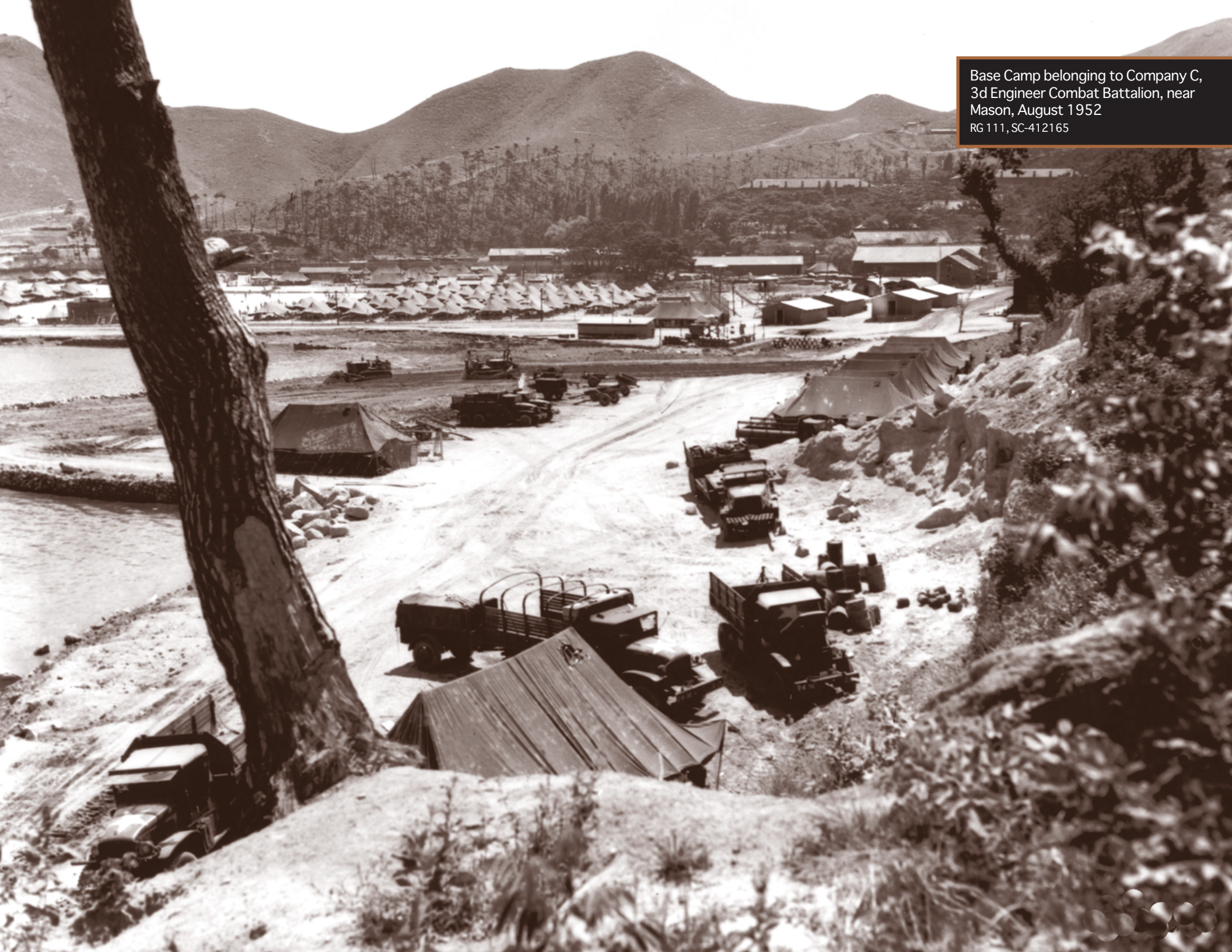
Defensive minefields for *Line Jamestown* were started on 13 October. Many anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were laid up until our troops were relieved on 20 November. This work was very dangerous and many times conducted under harassing enemy mortar and artillery fire.

Warning orders were issued to the 1st Cavalry Division on 5 November to anticipate a reserve status on or about 20 November. This required the establishment of close liaison with the relieving division to ensure all projects would be turned over to them. Our battalion mission continued until the 10th ECB relieved us on 10 November 1951. At that time complete records of all of our activities [minefields, roads, airfields, etc.,] were given to them.

Each unit commander made prior reconnaissance of the reserve area. The general area was located north and east of Uijongbu. The next several days were spent in its establishment. Furthermore, an intensive training program was ordered into effect on 26 November and continued until 16 December.

Within a day after being back in reserve I went to division headquarters and was informed that the 1st Cavalry was being withdrawn to Japan. We were going to be replaced by the 45th Division and the transfer was to be effected with a change of equipment. The 45th was going to leave its equipment in Camp Chitose, Japan, and we were to leave our equipment in Korea, except for personal items and, for some strange reason, the kitchen gear. Our dozers and heavy equipment had been worked pretty heavily so we made every effort to put them in first class condition for the 45th Division.

Transfer of personnel of the 8th Engineers to Camp Chitose, Hokkaido, began 5 December and was completed on 23 December. I flew back to Japan in the latter part of December and remained with the 1st Cavalry until returning to the U.S. in April 1952.



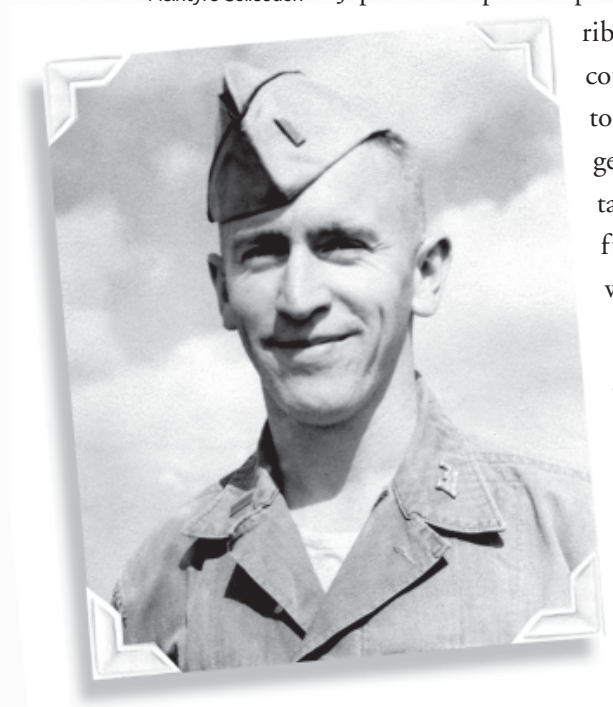
Base Camp belonging to Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, near Mason, August 1952
RG 111, SC-412165

First Lieutenant Kenneth E. McIntyre | 802d Aviation Engineer Battalion

Lieutenant McIntyre describes supply and support conditions during airfield construction in Korea, April 1951-January 1952. At times, his unit had to barter with other units for basic materials, especially nails.

I joined the 802d in the summer of 1950 on Okinawa. The whole battalion moved to Korea in April 1951. I had never been with a unit that had moved before, and I didn't get involved with moving the equipment. The personnel went from Okinawa to Korea on a Japanese hospital ship. The sleeping quarters were terrible. We were only on it for a couple of days. I remember going to the wardroom, which was gorgeous, sitting around very elegant tables with nice lights and nice furniture and being served warmed cans of C-rations.

First Lt. Kenneth McIntyre
McIntyre Collection

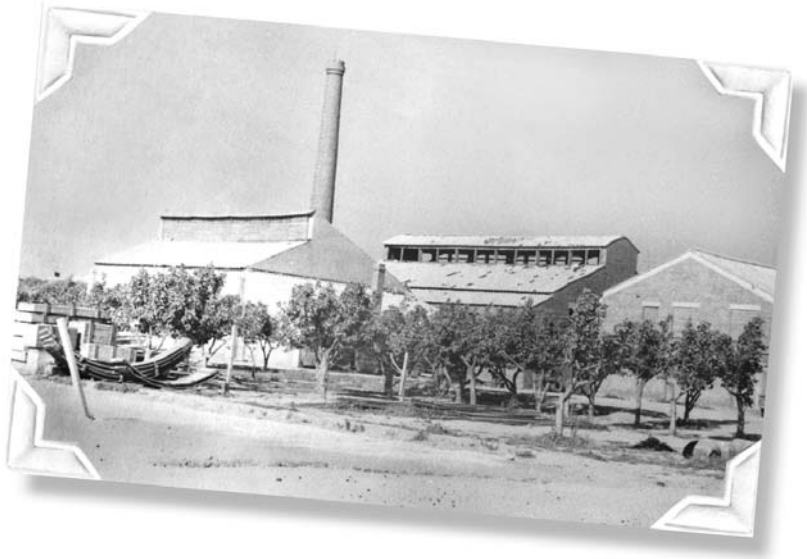


We had shortages of supplies and spare parts, but I wasn't as aware of them in Korea. I knew whether or not we had a grader available, but I didn't particularly focus on the supply problems. We were definitely short of some basic construction materials, such as nails. We just could not get enough nails or some kinds of lumber. We resorted to a barter system. I can remember loading up the goodies of one kind or another, including booze, going off to the other engineer units within 15/20 miles, and swapping what we had. A good item we often had was air mattresses. We were trading those for nails.

Later on, we really had the best of all trading material. The battalion was located in an old mill area. An ice cream plant was there. About this time the Army was making forced issues of the ingredients for ice cream. We found somebody in one of the units who knew something about this so we started producing ice cream. We had a certain amount of ingredients. Everybody else was getting ingredients too, but they had no way to use them. So we would trade, say, a gallon of ice cream for three gallons worth of ingredients. When we started building up a surplus, we started trading the ice cream for whatever else we couldn't get, like nails, and so on. It was really ironic, using ice cream as a means of buying supplies. I'm sure things got better, but I distinctly remember swapping ice cream for nails.

We were also short of plumbing supplies. We went up to Seoul and stripped an old locomotive factory of pipe to get that.

I suspect that some of the supply problems were the result of, as an Army unit with the Air Force, the Air Force had no high-level office looking out for these sorts



The mill where the 802d made ice cream
McIntyre Collection

of things. There was an engineer officer on the 5th Air Force staff, but he was more interested in how construction was going. I don't know whether the supplies were coming from Army depots or from Air Force facilities. The equipment was certainly Army equipment, and it came in Army-type colors.

We had a problem with the asphalt. We certainly did a lot of paving. All the asphalt came in 55-gallon drums, and we had no easy way of getting it out of there into the production machinery. It took forever to do that and it caused a bottleneck.

It was autumn and it was getting cold. They wanted to get this airfield finished for a number of reasons. They were thinking about a cease-fire in late 1951 and they were afraid that they wouldn't have as much construction completed as they'd wanted. Apparently, there was going to be some freeze on what you could do, so we were under great pressure to get the runways extended.

It was so cold there—we could cut these drums open with axes and the stuff would handle just in chunks. We'd throw them into the mixing machine, which had plenty of heat, so they would melt quickly. We paved on frozen ground, which is something you just don't do. We thought we could always go back and replace it. We had to have it on the ground in case of a cease-fire. I don't remember if the paving lasted. It should not have, in theory.

We were attacked. Light planes—*Bedcheck-Charlie* type of aircraft flew over and threw out mortar shells or small bombs. They could see us because we were working at night and we had lights. The platoon had two minor casualties. For the most part, however, it was more a nuisance than anything else.

We used a lot of Korean nationals. When we first arrived, we needed to get the rice paddies drained. We needed a very substantial ditch, maybe 12 feet deep and 50 feet wide—a big, big ditch, so somebody contracted with the foreman for this Korean group. We performed the construction inspection on it. In a month's time they dug this ditch about a mile long. I don't think we could have dug it that quickly with heavy machinery. This was in the middle of the war, and the Koreans were hungry for food and hadn't earned any money for weeks, so they worked hard. Men pulled scrapers. A couple of people would be pushing the scraper and some other guys on top would be pulling it up. They ran it with an iron fist, too. They were just as tough on control. I was impressed then, and I still am.

We paved on frozen ground, which is something you just don't do. We thought we could always go back and replace it. We had to have it on the ground in case of a cease-fire.

(Clockwise from upper left) Lunch at the officers mess, Suwan; McIntyre in a foxhole outside his quarters; posing for pictures, from left to right: Harry Griffith, Kenneth McIntyre, Ward Wheaton, and George Price; and McIntyre sits with the Korean boy who cleaned his quarters

McIntyre Collection

A continuous mix asphalt plant, similar to the one operated by the 802d Engineers at Suwon. McIntyre recalled that his unit assembled the plant without any instructions and was "pleasantly surprised" when it worked. It required a crew of 8–10 people to operate the plant
RG 111, SC-451583

Lieutenant Wells arrived in Korea eight months after graduating from the Military Academy. He describes the personalities of the officers in his battalion, the various failures in leadership, and the absolute necessity of maintaining a sense of humor.

I received my assignment in the spring of 1951. We first selected our branches, and then, within a day or two, we selected our assignments. Anyone who asked for Korea got it. Of course, a lot of people didn't ask for Korea, and they went elsewhere if they were high enough in the class to rate going somewhere else.

First Lt. Richard Wells
Wells Collection

Those going to Korea were assigned to the Basic Course, followed by an assignment where we were supposed to improve in leadership and other skills. For me, that was Fort Leonard Wood. I was there for about three months in a basic infantry training unit.

I headed over to Korea in February of 1952, without any knowledge of where I was going to be assigned. My good friend Anthony J. "Tony" Delano [USMA 1951] and I went to Seattle together. We had orders to catch a flight on a military plane. We flew as far as Shemya, Alaska. Because we were hitting headwinds, they unloaded the four junior officers—two MP captains, Tony, and me. Then the plane took off and left us. One large building contained everything on Shemya.

About once a year, it got clear enough to see Attu, and that was the big event on Shemya. We went out to look a couple of times, but it wasn't clear enough during our time there. The Aleutians in February are not a resort area. At the end of the four days, Tony and I were able to hitch a ride on a Canadian mail plane, which was barely heated. It was so bad on Shemya that it was better to be leaving.

We arrived in Tokyo and took a train across Japan to Sasebo. We were loaded on an old Japanese ship that apparently had been used to transport livestock. You

could sit on the straw-covered deck, and there was quite a bit of manure mixed in with the straw. That us from Sasebo over to Pusan.

In Pusan we were given our orders. I was ordered to the 378th Engineer Combat Battalion, which was a corps combat battalion. My friend, Tony, was ordered to the 2d Infantry Division. We got on a train heading up to Seoul. This train had rigid platforms that you slept on. It was well ventilated because the train had been machine gunned extensively and you could look right out through all the machine gun holes as you traveled north.

We got up to Seoul and split up. I went to my unit, which was over in IX Corps, pretty far up to the east. They had just had a final push against the Chinese and North Koreans and we were backing up that particular push. I joined the 378th Engineer Battalion, which was a National Guard unit from North Carolina. All of the officers in the battalion had a minimum rank of captain in World War II. They'd all joined the National Guard out of patriotism and were really a very sharp group. They were just as good an engineer unit as I'm sure you'd ever find. They were in the process of phasing out. The battalion commander, however, was weak, but he was surrounded by very talented people who ran a good battalion.

I was given a platoon that had been allowed to run down—they hadn't had a platoon leader for some time. It was a platoon with no one in it. I was given a buck sergeant, and, as the new trainees came in, we built our platoon. Finally, I got a sergeant who had a little bit more rank. When you talk about going to your first unit and leaning on the experienced NCOs, there wasn't anyone for me to lean on. My buck sergeant had been in just a few months and had been given the rank because they needed to have some sergeants.

We were sitting in a very muddy area right on the backside of the front lines. About the time that I got to the unit the Marines bombed us. They came over in a Corsair [F4U]. They machine gunned our company area and dropped a bomb, which knocked out a three-quarter-ton truck. We had one casualty in the company—a man standing in the urinal at the time dove into a foxhole without zipping up and scraped himself a bit.

I learned that while close-air support can be very devastating, it can also look worse than it is. I'm sure that Marine pilot thought he had really raised havoc, but he hadn't done anything but knock out one truck. Well, the other side of the hill was the front line and he just hadn't seen our panels. It was the kind of mistake that can happen. One should not hold it against the pilot.

Then, my battalion went back a ways in the corps' area. There was a need to develop protection for the IX Corps headquarters against an enemy air attack. I'm

We got on a train heading up to Seoul. This train had rigid platforms that you slept on. It was well ventilated because the train had been machine gunned extensively....

not sure where the enemy air was supposed to come from. They wanted to be sure that the protection was proof against atomic weapons. My platoon was given the job of getting the corps headquarters completely underground. The corps engineer was an outstanding officer, Gerald Galloway, who later became a major general.

His advice to me when I showed up, a 2d lieutenant with my inexperienced platoon, was, "The one thing you've got to remember to do is not lose your sense of humor." This was very good advice, but then he had to give me some follow-on advice. Many officers around that headquarters had a license plate on their jeep with an insignia—full colonel or a one or two star. When I got myself a license plate with a gold bar, Galloway said with amusement, "Well, that's carrying humor a little too far."

Soldiers of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion use a wagon drill in preparation for blasting a hillside
Engineer School, 71-11-23

Tunneling

Our job was to tunnel under some hills and to develop big underground rooms for the CP to go in. None of us had ever seen a tunnel. Fortunately, we had one enlisted man who had served as a worker in a little mine in West Virginia. He showed us how to go about shoring a tunnel and we got a manual that covered tunnel construction. So in we went. We excavated from two sides of the hill and the tunnels were supposed to link up in the middle. This made for a very exciting time until we lined up. It was a great job for building a platoon and an interesting experience to actually complete these tunnels.

One of the "workers" on one of my shifts was a Brig. Gen. Lawrence R. Dewey [USMA 1924]. He used to like to work a drill. He would come in at odd hours of the day and I'd find the general in there drilling. Dewey was the IX corps' chief of staff. Once I got a request from the corps commander, whose name was Weyand, a three star. He requested that we blast more *quietly* at night. I didn't really know how to blast more quietly! You just kind of ignore requests like those.

One experience tested my humor the most. When I came walking around the side of the hill, I found a big Swede in one of my squads strangling a captain. He had him by the throat and he was shaking him. I broke up this fight and I asked him, "What's going on here? Why are you doing this to the captain?"

The Swede said that this captain "called me some very bad names." Here I was as a 2d lieutenant trying to officiate this thing and to find out where the problem lay. I asked the captain, "Why did you call private so-and-so these bad names?" He said he was sitting in his tent in the Staff Judge Advocate section by his typewriter when a huge beam came in through the side of the tent. I think it was an eight-by-eight. This beam cleaned off his desk and then it went back out through the tent. As he was sitting there astounded, the eight-by-eight came in again from another angle and took down the whole tent; it fell on top of him, banging his head. He climbed out from under this destroyed tent and he found this private turning a truck around with these beams sticking out of the rear end. So, he called him a bad name and he got strangled in the process. I was able to break that up. Everyone apologized and we went back to work. That was the reason that you had to follow Col. Galloway's advice and keep your sense of humor.

It was a National Guard unit but it was mostly federalized. All the National Guard members left within the first two or three weeks after I arrived. The unit was made up of replacements, and most of the replacements were reservists. There was one regular in the battalion, Larry Crocker, in another company, who was a West Point classmate. One other regular there was from Norwich University. Everyone else was ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Course); graduates who were just in for their two years, or OCS types.

A Variety of Personalities

We got a battalion commander who was one of the worst officers I think I've ever seen. When he came out to a job site and stood there and glared you knew everything was perfect. If he found the slightest thing wrong he would explode. The battalion exec had personal problems, whom one of the enlisted men tried to kill later, unsuccessfully. The battalion staff essentially did nothing, as far as I could tell at that point. I never saw any of them. No one from the battalion ever tried to come and find out if my platoon knew anything about building tunnels, even though a three-star general was interested in the outcome of the whole thing. These were really rocky times, as you can imagine, but we completed the tunnels.

One close associate there was a friend of my family named Warren Webster, from the Class of '50. He was with the infantry company that was supposed to guard the corps headquarters. I saw quite a lot of him before he volunteered to go to the front. When he

One close associate.... was with the infantry company that was supposed to guard the corps headquarters.... When he got to the front his unit was overrun. They found his body with his hands tied up behind his back with barbed wire, shot through the head.

There was so much work to do that I found myself working over 20 hours a day. I could see I was really beginning to physically lose it. I'd heard from my father about general officers and others having nervous breakdowns in World War II and I decided, "Hey, you've got to pace yourself."

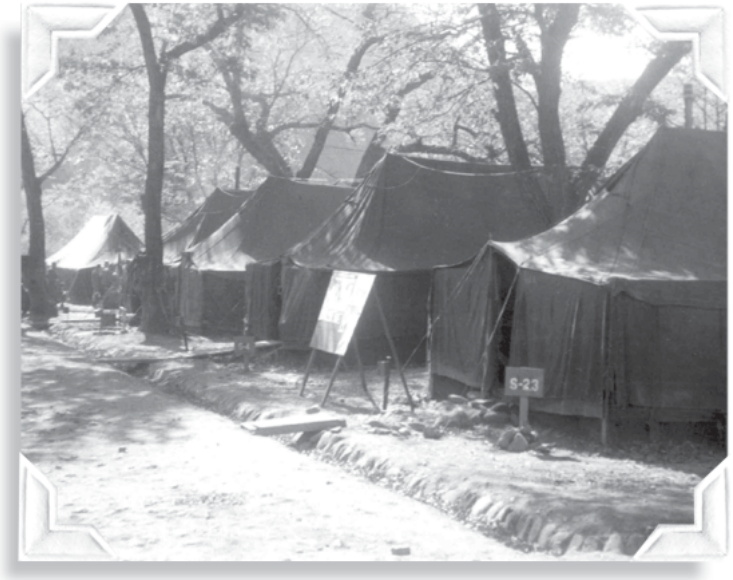
got to the front his unit was overrun. They found his body with his hands tied up behind his back with barbed wire, shot through the head. As I say, all in all, it was a learning experience.

There was so much work to do that I found myself working more than 20 hours a day. I could see I was really beginning to physically lose it. I'd heard from my father about general officers and others having nervous breakdowns in World War II and I decided, "Hey, you've got to pace yourself." So, I cut back to around 16 hours a day. I had absolutely no help. The NCOs were much less experienced. We were all learning on the job. However, we succeeded in building these great big rooms underneath the ground.

I was still learning tact, as I still am today. One day a major came around and went through the tunnels. He was a very officious sort. There was one little room off the commanding general's room and he asked me, "Who's that room for?" I said, "Oh, that's where they keep the house boys." He said, "What do you mean, the house boys?" and I said, "You know, the aides." Well, he turned out to be the senior aide! Every once in a while I think Col. Galloway probably heard about me.

I was in Company A. We started out with a captain with World War II experience, who was a very nice fellow, but who was just totally out of his depth. So, he just did nothing. I got together the platoon leaders, who were ROTC or OCS types, and we had a platoon

Staff and mess tents at the headquarters of the 2d Engineer Battalion, October 1951 Love Collection



leader meeting every night where we planned the next day's activities for the whole company. When the captain came in, we'd tell him what was going to happen and he'd say "Fine."

I was on my tunnel job and the other platoons were maintaining roads or doing things like that. I ran the company, directing these lieutenants based on a 15- or 20-minute-a-day meeting. They relieved that captain and they brought in an infantry captain who had become an engineer because he had joined an engineer unit someplace. He had been in the infantry in World War II as a rifle company commander in Europe and he had done very well.

The battalion commander was so bad that at the end of about a month's time, this former infantry commander developed the shakes because he was constantly being harassed. He was trying hard but there was absolutely no battalion leadership.

About the time I finished my tunnel job they had another company, Company B, which had had several company commanders in a short length of time, all relieved by the battalion commander. So, I was called in by Colonel Jenkins. He said, "I'm going to make you Company B commander. I know you're going to fail. Everyone else has, and I'm sure you will, but I want you to go and do what you can with that company."

I went to Company B and I found a relatively good group of people who had just been abused. I got the company together and told them exactly how things were going to run in the future and how I wanted the chain of command to work. People who did well were going to be rewarded and people who did poorly were going to get the stick.

We quickly shaped up Company B. We had some good platoon leaders in the company. We got in a first sergeant who was actually a tech sergeant, but he had had some NCO experience. Shortly after I arrived there, I was awarded a Bronze Star for my work on the tunnel. It didn't hurt any to see the new man had been recognized. Warren Webster, the fellow who later was killed, was there when I was awarded the medal.

We were on a road project for about a month when my classmate, Larry Crocker, took over Company C, shortly after I took over Company B. Larry's experience in the 378th was different from mine, but again, illustrative of the times. He had a separate platoon. He was off doing a job, and doing it well, I'm sure. Then, he was ordered to go to battalion headquarters to do a job. He found that all of the officers on the staff in battalion headquarters had prostitutes they kept in their tents with them. So, Larry refused to bring his platoon into the battalion area. He camped outside. He said, "There will be no prostitutes here." There was a lot of ranting and raving among the incompetent staff but nothing happened and

We had to build miles of road through the middle of a totally underdeveloped area. We learned to walk our bulldozers down the tops of ridgelines and to cable them down to platforms we had blasted.

Larry prevailed, which is the kind of thing you had to do then. You just couldn't take orders if they were wrong; you had to do what was right.

A fellow by the name of Harry Hoskins had been sent from the States to take over the 10th Engineer Battalion, 3d Division. The Pusan depot was in abysmal condition and Harry was pulled out of the pipeline and put in the Pusan depot where he spent several months straightening things up. Then, once again he was ready to head to the front, but the 378th Engineer Battalion was in such horrible shape that he was put in as our battalion commander.

He was a breath of fresh air. You won't find a better officer than he. When he came, everything immediately started to shape up. He did not tolerate anything bad. He came up through the amphibious engineers, and Gen. Art Trudeau, who has now passed away, and Harry had a little get together. Harry was one of the guys that he brought in. Super guy. So, we went from night to day as far as battalion headquarters went. He began to build up the battalion with very little help. I don't think he ever got any first-class staff officers there but he brought in some young officers. In those days, you didn't rely on someone with 10 years experience who knew his job. You had to get someone who had enough initiative to do what had to be done.

We weren't getting the things we needed through normal channels, but we were able to do a lot of trading. For example, I traded an extra .45-caliber I had for a two-and-a-half-ton truck.

Our job was to build a road to support a rear line that the UN forces could fall back to if they had to give up the front line. We were building a road along the rear side of the hill behind the defense line. Each company had a section of that road.

It was a very educational experience for me. We had to build miles of road through the middle of a totally underdeveloped area. We learned to walk our bulldozers down the tops of ridgelines and to cable them down to platforms we had blasted. We had blasting going on along the entire length of the road at the same time. The whole company was broken up into small teams that were blasting or doing something that had to do with building a road. Harry Hoskins used to compare that to the Ledo Road type of operation. It was a very exciting job, one where you could really develop a very professional organization.

One time, the group commander flew out and arrived unannounced at my company. I was out in the field so he just went out unescorted and looked. As he went along sections of the road, he talked to individual squad leaders and assistant squad leaders who were running various jobs. They all reported to him and told him exactly what they were doing.

I think that Hoskins had just arrived about that time. After the group commander had looked at my area he went back and told Hoskins it was the best company in the group. This was a long ways from our company's status about a month or so earlier. People had really

shaped up into a good organization. Of course, it was good for me to have a pat on the back shortly after the new battalion commander arrived.

I did one thing at the time that I didn't think was wrong. There was a depot back south that handled the construction battalions down south, but not my battalion. We were having a difficult time getting enough explosives to keep this road going, as you can imagine. Although we were supposed to get our explosives through battalion S-4, we weren't getting a lot that way. I'd just send convoys of trucks down south to that depot and we would load up explosives and come back. This gave us plenty of explosives. All the paperwork was correct and the depot people knew exactly what units they were supplying. They just didn't know they weren't supposed to supply us.

When I later told that to Harry in Washington he was a little shocked and said, "I never could figure out how you built that road so fast." I said, "Well one thing, of course, was the advantage of having all of those extra explosives."

We had the IG come to the company for an inspection once when I was company commander. He seriously injured his leg when he walked out behind the company area to take a picture of something. He fell into a foxhole, which was covered with branches, and he landed in the midst of all of our hidden spare parts. So he complained, "This is terrible. This company has twice as many parts as they're supposed to." But nothing ever happened.

A fixed-trestle bridge built by the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion across the Han River
Engineer School, Korea 084

We weren't getting the things we needed through normal channels, but we were able to do a lot of trading. For example, I traded an extra .45-caliber I had for a two-and-a-half-ton truck. I had a very good supply sergeant and a very good mess sergeant, but you had to be out there constantly scrounging, which was the word used then to make sure that you had what you needed. When I took over the company we were short all kinds of things. I think the outgoing company commander might have been stuck for them, but I vowed that wouldn't happen

to me. I made sure the company had an extra allotment of everything, which was the way we operated.

Because of the job, we were able to get augmented in dozers. We had a lot of Caterpillar D-7's with the angle blades, which were best for working on the sides of hills. Each dozer had a winch on the back. That was what we needed. At some times I had in my company as many as 10 dozers spread along the road. We had Cat-12 graders and we had some strange pieces of equipment. For example, I had a grade-all and a little hand-operated rock crusher. Koreans would throw rocks in the crusher and produce a little rock for the surface of some of our roads. Those were the major pieces of equipment. But the main items, our bread and butter, were the dozers. For companies that were involved in road building and road maintenance, of course, graders would be really important. Road maintenance was the job we least wanted to have. Luckily, we were able to stay away from it most of the time.

My company location moved farther east into a valley where they wanted to build a road up to the top of a mountain where there was an Air Force communications detachment. The detachment was being supplied then by airdrops. We spent a couple of months building this road up to the Air Force. This was building straight uphill in very mountainous terrain, through timber that you would hardly believe for Korea—36-inch diameter trees, a couple of hundred feet tall. It was an area where there just hadn't been any roads before.

About that time we switched battalion commanders. Harry Hoskins went on to the 10th Engineers; he finally made it. We got in a new fellow who looked every inch of a soldier, with a big barrel chest, a gruff voice, and very official appearing. Underneath all of that he was a total nonentity. I only saw him in my company area twice. Once he flew over to visit us in this valley, and later when we went to Ch'orwon he came out to my company. He was one of these people who had been in World War II. The battalion was good enough by then that it got along pretty well without him.

We finished that job and then went over to Ch'orwon to work on the road into Ch'orwon. This was just on the edge between IX Corps and I Corps. The river that runs through that area was crossed by a floating bridge and an old concrete arch bridge. Another engineer unit had replaced a blown span on the concrete arch bridge with tactical bridging. My company area was on one bank of that river. There had been a third bridge crossing the river that a classmate of mine, George Bicher, built. It was a Bailey bridge on Bailey piers. It had a life span of about a week because about a 30-foot wave of water came down the river from the north and just left a crumpled mess where that bridge had been.

While we were building roads across the Ch'orwon Valley I had a typical experience with the new battalion

commander. We had a very good group exec who was a lieutenant colonel. He came out to my company along with the battalion commander. We had just been in this area for a couple of weeks. When the group exec went to the mess tent and saw that we had a concrete floor he said, "Dick, I'm surprised that you are wasting concrete since you are only going to be here for a short time."

I said, "Yes, sir." My battalion commander who, back at battalion headquarters, had given me an order to put in the floor, stood there and said nothing. I was chewed out briefly and that was the end of that. But that was the mark of the man. He was good enough to give orders but not good enough to back them up.

At that time Harry Hoskins was up commanding the 10th Engineers in the 3d Division. Attached to the 3d Division was the 5th Regimental Combat Team. A separate company of the RCT was the 72d Engineers and they were about to lose their engineer company commander through normal rotation. Since they were attached to the 10th Engineers at that time, Harry got in touch with me and asked me if I would like to take over the company, which, of course, I was very eager to do.

They sent a message to group headquarters saying that my presence was requested at the 5th RCT. The group commander replied that I was not available since I was essential to the battalion. I got all this through a friend of mine, Homer Ambrose, who was on the group staff at that time. Homer was one of the regular officers from my Basic Course. Shortly thereafter the group got a telegram from Maxwell Taylor saying that I would move. He was then the Eighth Army commander. It was not that Maxwell Taylor knew me from Adam, but when the 5th RCT and the 3d Division wanted someone, they didn't wait around and wonder whether the group commander wanted to release him.

When I left the battalion we had accomplished a tremendous amount during the time I was there; however, I went from being the best company commander and a very valuable man to just being an average officer, as reflected in my efficiency report. They couldn't write a bad efficiency report. It never would have gotten through group. The report said, "This man did a very good job with his company." That was about it; one or two lines. They weren't saying anything derogatory; they just were not recognizing that anything really had been accomplished. Without any recognition at all I just left. That's not the way to get transferred. It was not good for me. Nevertheless my transfer to the 5th RCT, a prestige unit, to handle a separate company, was a real plum.

Lieutenant Colonel Harry D. Hoskins, Jr. 378th Engineer Combat Battalion

During the winter of 1951-52 Colonel Hoskins and the 378th ECB began carving a 55-mile lateral road through the mountains in IX Corps' area. The working conditions were brutal. One night, in the midst of a blizzard, he volunteered to guide a helicopter pilot to the top of a mountain to rescue one of his injured men. Chastised for damaging a helicopter during the rescue, Hoskins told his commanding officer "Colonel, every one of the men in that battalion was watching. If I wasn't willing to lay my life on the line to go and save that man, why the hell should they be going through what they are, day after day—just because I'm pushing them?"

I was supposed to get a division engineer assignment. When I got up to IX Corps I reported in to Col. Galloway, who knew me from the amphibious engineers. He said, "Oh, by the way, there's going to be a delay before you go to a division." I said, "What the hell do you mean a delay, colonel?" He said, "Well, there are no lateral roads over the IX Corps. We want to build a full defense line for all defending elements to drop back to in case there's a breakthrough in the present position the Corps is occupying now." I said, "That's 55 miles across from corps boundary to corps boundary." He said, "I'm going to give you a battalion and a light equipment company to get the job done. We need it last week."

When I arrived, it was raining like hell. I went to the battalion headquarters and checked in. The different floods they get in Korea are really bad, and they take out all of the bridging every time they get these torrential rains. I called around to the company commanders and asked, "I see in your company area of responsibility you've got these bridges. How are they built?" They'd describe how approaches were built out to where there was a bridge. It became evident that the bridging gaps were narrower than the span of the rivers.

So, I said, "What I want you to do is put some canister explosive back from cribbing." They built the crib up to support the pier on each end of the bridge. I said, "Back of the cribbing, I want you to blow out the approaching roadway. When the water gets up to where it starts putting any kind of pressure on the bridge, you open the gap behind the bridge and relieve the pressure on the bridge, because you create a wider gap for the water to go through. You don't lose the bridge. Before you do that, on each side of that bridge I want you to have dump trucks and a truck-mounted crane so that just as soon as that water drops to where it's safe, I want to fill those holes in and restore traffic. Do you understand?"

They thought that was terrible. They'd never done anything like that. I said, "By God, you're going to do it now. This is the way it's done down in Arizona, New Mexico, and some parts of Texas. You don't build a bridge

that's going to take all of the water. You put dips on each side of the road so the water can pass around the bridge. You put a marker in the dips to indicate how deep the water is and post the warning, 'you don't enter this dip until the water drops.'" I said, "You're going to use the same principle here. We're not going to lose all of these damn bridges. It takes too long to replace them."

Dick Wells, who commanded one of the companies and was a captain at that time, called in and almost in a whisper says, "Colonel, the water's up to the bridge." I replied, "Goddamn it! Do you understand English? What did I tell you to do about those bridges?" He answered, "Blow out the approach." I said, "If you lose the bridge, have your jeep packed because you're going down the river with the bridge. But let me know when you've blown them."

I got the report in that they had cut all of the roads and the water had dropped so there wasn't any pressure on the bridges. The cribbing was staying in place. These floods were flash floods. It wasn't something that lasted 24 hours. The high water may stay for 24 hours, but the crest was maybe for four to five hours.

I called the MP and told him what I had done. It hit the fan. He said only MPs change traffic patterns, no damn engineer has the authority to do it. I said, "I'm sorry. I did it. Do you want me to lose the bridges and then tell you I'll get the bridges rebuilt three weeks from now? Which would you rather have?" He didn't answer me. He hung up on me.

A section of the Spoonbill Bridge is covered by flood waters of the Imjin River, July 1953 Engineer School, 43-6-5

In about four to five hours, when the crest had passed, the water level started to drop in the rivers. We started filling in the roadway. About noon the next day I called the Provost Marshal and told him the traffic was free to move through the area. The other battalions let some of their bridges go.

"Why the hell should we give up the high ground when we own it now?" [the Col.] said, "You can't build roads up there." I said, "Don't tell me what I can do. Tell me how you want the defense area laid out."

Col. Galloway came over to see me and asked, "What the hell have you been doing, Hoskins?" I told him. "Haven't you ever been out in that part of the country and seen what happens? Why lose your bridges? These are not tactical bridges in this area. These are fixed bridges. The tactical bridges are farther up north." He said, "I hope to God they pulled those tactical bridges, because there's no way in the world you can hold them in this kind of water."

With the battalion moving to a new assignment, the responsibility for the road net was given to the other battalions in the group. We started to build the lateral road across the 55-mile area. I took a helicopter and a bunch of small flour sacks to mark the centerline of the road as I flew. I put an alidade in the helicopter so I could get my angles. With the helicopter hovering as I went along, I put the lateral road in first, marking where I wanted it to go with these flour sacks.

Then, I brought in some Koreans and cleared the centerline for the road. We put in three companies along the centerline. We went up streambeds to where I could get one in the middle and one on either end about halfway in from the middle company. We started cutting the roadway in two directions for each company so that we very quickly had the lateral two-lane road across the 55-mile stretch built. It was strictly a pioneer cut but I left one company behind to widen it out and make certain it was a double-lane road so we could get traffic across.

I'd been up to the 7th Division and the 3d Division. Every time someone raised his head he got it knocked off. An infantry full colonel was in charge of the new defense position project. The colonel wanted to build a reverse slope defense because he said the engineers could not build the road network to organize the high ground. I said, "Why the hell should we give up the high ground when we own it now?" He said, "You can't build roads up there." I said, "Don't tell me what I can do. Tell me how you want the defense area laid out." We ultimately met with Lt. Gen. Reuben E. Jenkins, the corps commander. He wanted the high ground and asked if I could get the job done. I told him to give me the requirements and let me figure out how to get it done. He approved the high-ground approach. I laid out the defense of that 55-mile area and planned how we would deploy the artillery, the infantry, and the tanks in the area.

The corps commander used to fly over this area regularly watching every move we made. He'd get in his helicopter and he'd hover, looking right down watching these dozer crews work. We pulled an air compressor on a two-and-a-half-ton truck up near the top. We'd use the winches on the equipment and reel that cable out. We'd put a "dead man" in and hook the cable to it. With a combination of the winch and the bulldozer put in re-

verse, we'd crawl up to where the "dead man" was. We'd have a pad cleared away so we could secure the compressor or tractor until we ran the next cable up to where we had a "dead man." Then we repeated the process until the equipment was where we wanted it.

That was how we got the tractors, bulldozers, and compressors up to the different points where we wanted them to work, so that we could connect that road up in a hurry. Otherwise, if we were punching out on one straight line in a linear fashion we would never get a damned thing done. So, we were working in 14 directions. We'd work in one direction until we had to do some demolition, and then we'd turn around and go the other direction and work on it until we ran into demolition. We'd work in two directions, simultaneously, for each one of those seven dozers that were up there. That was how the roads were built. That whole defense position was built using that approach.

It was necessary to build supply and evacuation roads from the lateral road up to each peak of high ground. On one particular hill mass I had seven D-7s working one above the other. I laid out the switchback roads with flour bags. Then we went in and grubbed the centerline the same way as we had the road going across the corps. We used the same principle all the way across the front for the supply and evacuation roads. Our men and equipment worked in two directions to speed up the construction.

A road built by the 8th Engineers shows the hairpin turns needed to climb many of Korea's steep hillsides
RG 111, SC-374167

Edward R. Morrow came to Korea to make a TV program for Christmas. Somebody told him that his crew ought to see all of these bulldozers stacked up on the side of the hill working. He came up there to see us. We had controls and signals so that the men wouldn't knock boulders and fill down on others as they were working. He and his camera crew crawled up to some of these work areas. One crew went all the way to the top.

The camera crews all wanted to get on the dozer blades. These angle dozers were sweeping off the rocks that we'd knocked loose. It was a rather precipitous drop. One cameraman got out his flask, took a couple of swigs,

Snow was falling at the time, and my men—these poor devils—were working up at these elevated positions. It was rough on these troops. I was pushing the living hell out of them anyway.

and got on that dozer blade. He took his pictures as he went out over the edge and came back to the States with an hour-long show of the work we were doing.

When he got back to Washington, however, and tried to clear some of the film to show it, it turned out that this was the area that was presently occupied by the American forces that were part of the Korean defense. When the fighting stopped, the U.S. troops withdrew from the position they had been occupying and dropped back five to six miles. They now were occupying the position that we built. The defensive position, of course, had been improved one hell of a lot since then. The Defense Department did not want him showing on TV what was being done to stop a breakthrough in the Ch'orwan Valley. We damn well got the high ground that time. We were not sitting there looking up, with the enemy firing down our tonsils.

Dramatic Rescue in a Blizzard

We had an incident one bitter-cold winter night. Snow was falling at the time, and my men—these poor devils—were working up at these elevated positions. It was rough on these troops. I was pushing the living hell out of them anyway.

As I walked up to the group headquarters for a meeting, Lt. Col. "Iron Mike" Miletich, the exec of the group, came running out and said, "Harry, you've got a very bad accident on the top of the hill." He said, "The MASH (Mobil Army Surgical Hospital) people will not fly up there because of the weather. They're begging for somebody to come in and get the injured man out. Your pilot says you know every foot of this area up there and he'll take you if you'll go. I knew that you would go, and he knew that you would go, so we've already got the engine gassed up and warmed up. All you need to do is get in the chopper sitting over there on the pad and he's ready to go." I said, "Okay. We'll get the man out and then I have to come back down here because I've got to see you about some other problems that I've got." He said, "Okay, we'll be around."

We took off and it was blinding snow and bitter, bitter cold. We got about halfway up and over a minefield. We approached the area where the men were working from the front of the range, in other words, from the enemy side not from our side. It was easier to get into the area coming from that side because we could go through a small saddle and turn around in the lee side of the mountain. Then, he could land the helicopter on an angle where I was told they were going to be. Well, the damned rotors froze up on us and we had to settle in the minefield. Mines were all over that area but it was so cold the damn mines didn't go off, or we didn't land on any.

The heat of the engine finally thawed out the ice on the rotors so that the pilot was able to get the pitch he needed. We took off, went back up through

the saddle, and came around the side of the hill. The wind was blowing so hard it almost flipped that helicopter over. We sat it down on an angle. The pilot had yet to change the batteries to get the weight right so he could strap the injured man on the runner of his landing gear.

A seriously wounded engineer is treated at the 121st Evacuation Hospital RG 111, C6620

We strapped the injured man on a litter on the runners of the helicopter. We had him in a sleeping bag because there was no litter rack on the helicopter that I had. I said, "Bob, for God sake, be damned careful taking off in this thing. I don't want to lose two of you. These air currents are very strong. I've flown enough so that I know the problem of fighting these air currents. Give yourself some latitude. Don't just crank it up and try to get out of here right away. Give yourself a little cushion." He said, "Okay, okay, colonel, we'll make it all right. I've got no problem." I told him, "You've got to get that engine cranked up pretty soon because it is so cold you won't be able to get it fired up."

The pilot said, "No problem." He finally got it going, revved it up a little bit, and they both lifted off. The air currents caught him and he dropped down into that valley. We couldn't see him with all of that snow blowing the way it was. We started out about 1530. It was getting around 1600-1630. I thought, "Oh, my God, I've lost two of them!" The pilot must have known I was worried. He came back up over where we were standing, blinking his navigation lights to let me know he was okay. Then he disappeared out through the saddle, went back to the MASH, and landed the helicopter.

They checked the helicopter after he had landed it and said, "Don't fly this helicopter again. You have racked this machine up to the point of destruction." He must have had the engine pulling maximum vacuum. It sounded like he was going to blow the heads off of that engine to get all of the power he could to control that chopper to get out of there. They left it at

We took off and it was blinding snow and bitter, bitter cold. We got about halfway up and over a minefield. Well, the damned rotors froze up on us and we had to settle in the minefield. Mines were all over that area but it was so cold the damn mines didn't go off.

the landing pad at the hospital and hauled it away by truck.

In order to get back, I had to walk back down through the hill mass. I'd arranged for my jeep to pick me up, and it was about 9 or 10 miles to where the jeep was going to meet me. We had a lot of line crossers in the area because the North Koreans would send these line crossers to act as guerrillas. There'd probably be about four or five, maybe a few more, well-armed individuals. They would harass our troops, plus they would go after the communication towers, carrier towers, and the towers that the Air Force used to guide their planes as they went north and returned. I ran into one bunch of line crossers. They opened fire on me and I went down that mountain through the snow and blowing mess faster than I've ever moved in my life. The only hope I had to get away from them was to disappear down into the snow mass, because visibility was so poor. It was getting dark, and the blowing snow made it possible for me to get away.

Fitted with a litter for carrying patients, a helicopter takes off on an evacuation mission
Engineer School, 21-72-8

I kept on walking. Finally I got to my jeep and went back to the hospital to see how my man was getting along. I couldn't get much information. The pilot had been picked up and gone home. They told me the helicopter was in sad shape and shouldn't be flown. So I went to group headquarters. I saw Mike and we went over the problems that I had and finally got some decisions. I did not see Col. Ferony. I left and went back to my own battalion CP.

The next day when Col. Ferony found out that helicopter had been racked up the way it had and needed major overhaul he was furious. He put in an Article 15 on me saying that I was guilty of wanton destruction of government property. It went over to corps headquarters. It didn't go to Col. Galloway. It went to Gen. Jenkins, who was the corps commanding general. The chief of staff at the corps had been at Fort McNair on the faculty when I was there. We used to refer to him as "old yellow legs." He sent for me. I walked in; he was as formal as hell. Gen. Jenkins was standing behind me while I was standing there at attention.

The chief of staff was telling me how I had damaged government property without regard to its

value, and its importance, and all of that baloney. He said, "What the hell were you doing up there flying that damned helicopter?" I said, "I wasn't flying it. I went in to save one of my men." I said, "Colonel, every one of the men in that battalion was watching. If I wasn't willing to lay my life on the line to go and save that man, why the hell should they be going through what they are, day after day—just because I'm pushing them? They knew I could go in and save his life."

I said, "You can't drive men. You have to lead them. Sure, there's a risk. I knew it was a risk. What worried me more was that it might cost the life of my pilot. For your information, I've already started drafting up the papers. I want him to get a Distinguished Flying Cross. That man did an incredible job. It took a tremendous amount of courage and skill to do what he did and I was there. The rest of you weren't." Gen. Jenkins kind of sauntered around. Finally, he looked at the chief of staff and said, "You know, this is the best damned recommendation for a promotion that I've run into." The chief of staff said, "General, do I tear this damned thing up or do I forward it?" First Gen. Jenkins said, "Tear it up." Then he said, "No, wait a minute. I'll put my endorsement on it and send it forward." I don't know whatever happened to the Article 15. I never heard anything more about it. I never heard any more from Col. Ferony, either.

In his nine months commanding the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion [February-October 1952], Colonel Hoskins supported the 3d Infantry Division during a period of static, or position, warfare. Rather than keeping the battalion together, Hoskins sent one company forward in direct support of each regiment. He describes how they served as infantry at night and as engineers during the day, as the units moved back and forth near the 38th Parallel like a yo-yo. "What we were trying to do was to survive—to kill as many of the enemy as we could and save as many of our own men. It wasn't a case of pursuing the enemy and destroying him…."

Better Food…and Champagne

I was able to get much better food for my men. Many would fight as infantry at night and work during the day as engineers. We were living on some pretty rough field rations there for a while. Everybody behind us was doing very well. One day I was sitting in the cold, picking my beans out of the cold grease and bitching about the food. My sergeant said, "Well, one way to heat those little cans up was to siphon some gas out of your jeep, put the gasoline in the sand, and use the sand as a wick to heat up your cold beans." I was sitting there saying, "This is a hell of a way to do it. The people behind us eat well."

The division commander came along about this time and said, "What are you bellyaching about now?" I said, "General, the people behind us have got the best food in the world. We're up here taking all of the hits. Why can't we get that same kind of food?" He said, "We can't get the better food up here because the reefers can't come up here and break it down. We don't have reefers."

I said, "General, if I solve that problem, can I make a deal with you?" He informed me, "Lieutenant colonels don't make deals with major generals." I said, "May I state it differently? If I can figure out a way to solve that problem, would you authorize me to feed my men four meals a day?"

I said, "General, the people behind us have got the best food in the world. We're up here taking all of the hits. Why can't we get that same kind of food?" I continued, "These men are working all day, and fighting at night. They need more in their bellies."

I continued, "These men are working all day, and fighting at night. They need more in their bellies. Another thing, too, I know you're going to get certain cuts of beef. I know that the regimental commanders and the division artillery commander are going to get their cut. I want to be damn sure that I get enough for my people and that they get to eat good food. The only way it's going to happen is if you tell the G-4 and he gets the quartermaster up here to carry out your instructions." He said, "You figure it out; you tell me how to get it done." I said, "The IGs have got to stay away from me." The General said, "What do you want?"

"I can take some of these lowboys that we move tractors on. There are enough of them around that are in bad shape. I'll fix them up to the point of where I can

The original DoD caption read, “COLD IN KOREA? Sure, but, so what, when you throw a mess of bacon and beans right on the hot top of a gasoline drum stove, make toast, and have a hot cup of coffee!”
RG 127, 127-A4617

build a reefer. We've got enough sawdust, and enough materials around here that I'll build the reefers. When the reefers come in from the rear, you don't have to hold the food more than a couple of days." The general wanted to know how we would provide the necessary refrigeration. I told him, "We don't have to worry about that until the summer time. It's so damned cold up here now. The food will freeze on sight."

He said, "Okay, I'll talk to the IG, and I'll talk to the G-4, and I'll be back in touch with you." I got my men together, and said, "Okay, we're going to get the job done. Probably we need four of these lowboys, and we'll build reefer boxes lined with sawdust. Take a dozer back there and cut some slots in the hills so that these reefers will have some protection. We'll put these lowboys in there and that's the way we'll get it done." In the American Army, a lot of men have a variety of skills. It's amazing what you can get done, particularly when you start talking about getting good food. The division commander came back to me and said, "Okay."

We built those things. The company that was doing odd jobs in the rear worked on them, and some of the maintenance people helped put these reefers together. They used log saw dust and any other available material. Sure enough, the division commander made good on his commitment. He gave us the food for my men.

At Christmastime some of the French officers I knew in Europe were not too far from us. They heard that I was with the 3d. A couple of them came over to look me up. It was getting close to Christmas and they were saying they would sure like some American food. I had them eat with me. At that time we were getting really good food. They said, "We wish we could eat like this." I don't remember who it was but one of the officers spoke up and said, "Well, maybe we could make a deal. I understand you've got a lot of champagne in your outfit." One French officer said, "Oh, we've got more damn champagne than we know what to do with but we don't have this kind of food."

I got my company commanders and my first sergeants together and told them, "Look, maybe I can make a deal so that we can take some of the turkeys we will get, because we're on a four-meal day, and I can swap them for champagne. If anybody opens their damn mouth about it I'm in deep trouble. We can get some champagne for everybody for Christmas." They said, "Oh, man, we'll take care of that. If anybody opens his mouth we'll practically decapitate him." I said, "No, I don't want to go that far, but just button their lips."

I got word to this French battalion commander, and I told him that I might be able to make a deal with him—turkey for champagne. At night, we swapped a bunch of turkeys for champagne. It was bitter cold, so we didn't have any trouble keeping the champagne iced. The champagne was passed around. I think

I got word to this French battalion commander, and I told him that I might be able to make a deal with him—turkey for champagne. At night, we swapped a bunch of turkeys for champagne.

each man in the battalion got maybe a third of a bottle, or something like that.

There's always some jackass that can't keep his mouth shut. Someone had to brag, "Man, we not only had Christmas turkey, but boy, we had champagne." So, word got out. The first thing I knew the division commander came up to me. He said, "Hoskins, I understand you've got champagne in your outfit." I said, "General, there's no champagne in this outfit." Of course, at that point in time there was none. He said, "Let me put it this way. It's a damn poor officer that doesn't recognize that if he's got champagne that at least he'd give his division commander a bottle." I said, "If I can find any champagne, I assure you, I'll get you a bottle." That was the end of it. I never brought the subject up again. It was strictly verboten. You were not supposed to have any alcoholic beverages up there. But you'd be surprised what it does for the morale of the men.

When the men started getting that new ration, better food, the morale went up 200 percent. Warm food in your belly, under those conditions, went a long way. They just didn't bring it forward far enough. The people in the rear areas were living high on the hog, while we were getting nothing. We were living on damned canned rations. That's one of the problems that happen in every war, though. But with a little imagination, you'd be surprised how you can solve those problems. I was very fortunate and had some good people. If you're not going to go out and break the law, but you want to get a job done, you get people like Dick Wells and others who start coming forth with ideas about what they want to do and how they want to improve the situation themselves. You don't have to have all of the ideas yourself.

Mines…Our Mines and Theirs

We made a whole series of firetraps to be used in the event the North Koreans got into the Ch'orwon Valley. That was a wide area, so we needed to have a lot of people or a lot of mines or something to stop them. You have to have a series of interlocking firetraps to stop that kind of an attack. At that time the North Koreans didn't have tanks. They were just waves, and waves, and waves of manpower. You had to have mines, especially antipersonnel mines, to stop the manpower and any heavy vehicles. Then all kinds of napalm were needed, so you could drop it in quickly. You couldn't be waiting around because once there was a breakthrough they'd pour in there in a hell of a hurry.

I never had any problems with the availability of mines. That was an ordnance responsibility. We had some experience; some of the NCOs had training with lifting and placing mines and antipersonnel mines, but it was something that you had to work on. You had to conduct training yourself to make sure that your own men weren't going to blow themselves up.

…areas that we were working in…had these Schu mines all around.…When we were constructing the new defense position, one lieutenant followed my footsteps.…He tried to put his feet exactly in my footprints, but he wound up stepping on a Schu mine that blew his leg off.…

The 3d Engineer Battalion combined drums of napalm and 81mm-mortar shells to create a potent anti-personnel mine that could be detonated electronically. The first image shows an engineer placing the napalm, the next shows a test of the new device

Engineer School, 112-11-7

Engineer School, Korea 052

The North Koreans had those damn Schu mines. It was like a little wooden box with a pressure detonator on it. They were very hard to detect. I don't know how much C-3 was in there, but it was enough so that it'd blow the better part of a leg off. They were everywhere. A lot of the areas that we were working in, clear back into the corps rear, had these Schu mines all around the place. When we were constructing the new defense position, one lieutenant followed my footsteps as I went through a particular area. He tried to put his feet exactly in my footprints, but he wound up stepping on a Schu mine that blew his leg off just above the knee. We had to go back in and get him out. Of course, we didn't know whether we would set off any more Schu mines or not.

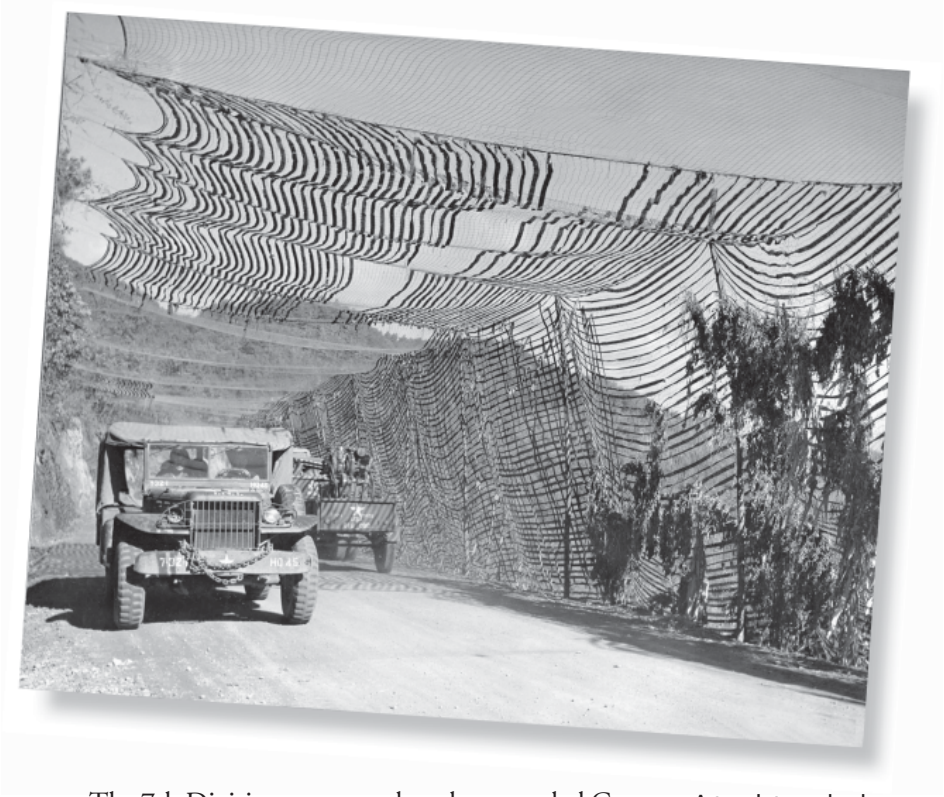
There was always a bunch of trash around so it was easy to hide a Schu mine. The metal detector wasn't worth a damn for these mines. The best detector was the dog. These scout dogs were originally used with somebody on patrol. If the soldiers were a little nervous, the dog would get noisy after a while. They'd make some noise that would give the patrol away. We used to get those dogs from the infantry and use them for checking out mined areas. The dog would dig up a lot of other trash, but he'd also locate the mines. As soon as a dog would see disturbed earth he'd check it out. I never saw a dog set off one of those things.

I'm sure what happened was the dog would press down on it and smell. Apparently, it required more

weight than the dog's paw would put on it. The dog would dig around and get it out. Of course, as soon as we saw the dog had uncovered a Schu mine, more people would go in, pick it up, and disarm it. Cleaning up minefields is really dangerous work. People lose their eyes and their hands and get other injuries. All kinds of accidents happen from clearing mines.

We were in a static position. Your whole situation is entirely different when you're in a static position than when you're moving. When you're moving you've got to have special equipment with you all of the time. If you go in, you've got to use it. We were concerned about mines in the area where we were and about line crossers who might put them in. You defended an area—particularly a large area like the Ch'orwon Valley—with patrols, fields of fire, and with strong points. A hell of a lot of open ground exists between those strong points. People can slip in and out at night through those areas.

You catch some line crossers, but you don't catch all of them. That was why we ran into them when I tried to get that soldier out. These line crossers had infiltrated between strong points and had gotten through. It was not like in World War I where you had a whole series of trenches and everybody was connected up. You had to tie all of the ground together with strong points and get a lot of people who you know all around you. If you go wandering around you're liable to get nailed by a few of those line crossers.



A truck travels along a main supply route camouflaged by the 13th Engineers. The netting was intended to keep the enemy from observing the volume of traffic, not to conceal the road
Engineer School, 51-14-22

The 7th Division commander who preceded General Trudeau was an absolute nut on camouflage. They brought tons and tons of camouflage up into that area. Everything was camouflaged. There was no air observation. He was not in a position where higher ground in front of him required all that camouflage.

Where we were in the 3d Division we had old "Papa-San." It was a good-sized mountain that looked right down our throats. Every time we moved the enemy would just sit with binoculars and check on us. Every-

Cleaning up minefields is really dangerous work. People lose their eyes and their hands and get other injuries. All kinds of accidents happen from clearing mines.

thing we did was observed across the whole division front. Just on the edge of the Ch'orwon Valley in that area over there in between the 7th Division and us was the division that Pak commanded, you know, Tiger-San. He was the one who later became president of Korea.

On the right side we had the Capitol Division, an ROK division, between I Corps and us. The road net and defense position I had to put in gave us the ability to tie together all the way over to the I Corps boundary from X Corps. It would have covered the Cap-ROK division's rear. When they had to pull back we had some of the positions ready.

A jeep and trailer move across a temporary earthen bridge that is being reinforced with sandbags Engineer School, 83-56-2

The Koreans, whom they gave uniforms and assigned to the various units in the divisions, were called KATUSAs. Some of them were assigned to me when we were building the defense position, and I had them in the 3d Division. These men were up against both a culture problem and an economic problem. The officer in charge of the Koreans assigned to me in the 3d Division had been a big national baseball hero. He had a lot of prestige and strutted around instead of getting down and taking care of his job. Finally, one night I called him in. I said, "Look, word has come back to me that the zone's supplies and food that we're providing for you and your men is getting back to Seoul and being sold. So help me God, if I ever get proof that what I'm hearing is correct about you, let me tell you, you'll wind up just like all of the Koreans do. I'm going to turn you back to the Korean Government. I'm not going to get involved with you. What they do is take you out and shoot you because you lost face for the government." "Now," I said, "This is exactly what I'm going to do. I'm not going to fool with it. You train your men. You make sure that they're well fed. We have given you the proper kind of clothing and equipment. I want

to be darn sure that they have it. The first chance I have in a few days I'm going to inspect your unit and make sure they have all of that equipment. If they haven't got it, you better have a damned good explanation where the hell it is."

He winced a little bit. When I did check on them, I don't know whether he'd gotten it from someplace else or not, but they had all of their equipment. There was no question that some of the food did go back to Seoul and get sold, but it stopped at that point. That was a real problem. They called it the "kimchi run." The kimchi run is going back to the rear and selling the stuff on the black market. It was a part of the reason that the black market existed.

If he was involved in it, I never had any more problems with him. I checked on him very closely. One night, when the two of us were in a bunker together, we were getting the usual shelling and workover from the North Koreans. I was reading the *Stars and Stripes* and the headlines were that a lieutenant governor, or somebody, was going to go to jail because of a political rip-off back in the States. This guy was a pretty well educated individual and could read English very well. He looked at me and he said, "You Americans are a bunch of hypocrites."

I said, "What the hell do you mean we're a bunch of hypocrites?" He said, "Look, in America you've got big kimchi run. We've only got little kimchi runs over here." Some of them read what the press had to say about the political scandals and rake offs that were going on back in the States. He couldn't see why I was bearing down on him the way I was. Every now and then that would really stick in his craw, the fact that he thought that I was working on two standards. That does happen in these countries and Americans have to recognize it.

First Lieutenant Floyd D. Wright

62d Engineer Construction Battalion and 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company

When recalled to active duty, Floyd Wright's boss offered him a way to avoid service in Korea and characterized him as a "damn fool" for not accepting it. In August 1952, Wright assumed command of the 573d Engineer Ponton Bridge Company, the Army's last segregated unit in Korea. The young lieutenant describes some of the challenges he faced after taking command, and soon after he supervised the integration of the unit.

Upon graduation from Clemson, I went to work with this construction company and was sent to Rutherford, North Carolina, to report to T.C. Reese, the superintendent, who had the job of building a five-story reinforced concrete hospital. I was supposed to be the engineer. The fellow who hired me told me that the last three engineers that were sent to him lasted one week before he ran them off of the job. That fact didn't send me off with too much enthusiasm, but as things turned out, T.C. Reese and I got along very well.

"If they will stop calling this thing a police action, declare war, and mobilize this country, I'll gladly lock up my business and go off to fight a war. If they'll call it a war, the United States will get behind it."

Recalled to Active Duty

I worked there for one full year. The painters were backing out of the doors and the owner of the company had come with a set of drawings for our new assignment—another hospital about like this. They had won the contract and I would be the superintendent for that job. At the same time I received orders from the War Department to report for a physical examination for a recall to active duty.

I called up the boss and told him. As it turned out he was a lieutenant colonel, Corps of Engineers, in World War II, and started his construction outfit when he got out. He had received the same type of orders, but he was on friendly terms with the senators and congressmen from the state. He could afford to do what he did and that was to throw the damn orders away and ignore them. He told me to do the same thing. He said, "I've got a job in a Marine barracks at Parris Island. I'll put you down there on defense work. You won't have to go." Somehow or another that just didn't sit right in my stomach.

I think his response to the situation exemplified the general attitude toward the Korean War. He said, "If they will stop calling this thing a police action, declare war, and mobilize this country, I'll gladly lock up my business and go off to fight a war. If they'll call it a war the United States will get behind it. As long as they're going to call it a police action and just call up a few people, I'm not about to throw away everything that I've built up over the last few years." Anyway, I told him, "I think I'll go with it." It was a recall for two years to go to Korea. He said, "Well, your job's waiting. I think you're a damn fool, but your job is here for you when you get back."

I reported to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on 13 July 1951 and was assigned to the 94th Engineer Battalion, a dem-

onstration unit of troops at Fort Belvoir. I was assigned to the S-3 section. This was an all-black battalion. The only white officers in it were the battalion commander and myself. All of the company officers, company commanders, and platoon leaders were black officers. They were demonstration troops and for me it was just a staging area before they shipped me to Korea.

I stayed there for about six months. I got a delay enroute, moved the family back to Asheville, North Carolina, and went to Seattle, Washington. I caught a ship and on 14 February 1952 I arrived in Pusan, Korea. They moved me by rail up to Seoul and I was assigned as a platoon leader to the 1st Platoon of Company A of the 62d ECB of the 24th ECG.

The 62d Engineer Battalion, with Company A, was given the primary job of maintaining the MSR, which I think was number 17 from Seoul up to Ch'unch'on. We had attached to us the 128th Korean Service Corps Regiment—KATUSAs. They were wounded Korean soldiers, or Korean men who were not fit for combat service. They'd put them into these Korean Service Corps. They were actually labor battalions. We had one of these battalions assigned to us to assist in our fieldwork.

After about six months, Company A was relieved of all of its work in Ch'unch'on. In fact, except for my platoon, the whole 62d was replaced by the 79th Engineers. My platoon was attached to an engineer aviation battalion that had moved into Ch'unch'on with a mission of extending the runway. It was a propeller-driven fighter plane runway. Jet fighters had just been introduced to the Korean War. Since they were coming over at that time, the runway had to be extended.

Engineers carry an aluminum ponton to the water's edge, November 1952 Engineer School, 44-6-7

We'd just finished this job when my platoon was ordered back to Seoul. Company A was given the job of building the first hemorrhagic fever hospital that was constructed in Korea. They didn't know what would cause that disease but a soldier would break out in a rash and run a temperature and the next day he would be dead. After much research they finally found out that it was a mite that they got from rats. Curiously, only soldiers in the field came down with this. The ones in the village,

which had as many rats as out in the field, didn't get hemorrhagic fever.

Integrating the Last Segregated Army Unit in Korea

Col. Eagle C. Klinke, the 24th Group commander, was a brain. In fact, he designed many of the high-level bridges that the group constructed in Korea, such as the Parker Bridge.

Col. Klinke called me over to group headquarters in August 1952 and told me that they had a ponton bridge company there that was the last all-black army unit in Korea. He had been given orders to integrate that company as quickly as possible. I don't know why he asked me this question but he said, "You're from North Carolina, aren't you Floyd?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I'm placing you in command of the 573d Ponton Bridge Company. The company commander is now under house arrest for selling government property to the Koreans. I'll release him to your custody to go over an inventory of the company property." He said, "The way it will work is that we will scatter out the black soldiers in the 573d within the white battalions within the group. Your company will end up with about 12-13 percent black troops, like all of the other units in Korea. The plan was to be implemented in one day by the arrival of a convoy of all white soldiers.

When the first convoy arrived it was only one truck with two white men in the back of it. It took me about three months to integrate that outfit. The group commander did tell me, "I'll let you interview every master sergeant that is assigned to the 24th Group and you can pick out your 1st sergeant to help you do this." In those days, master sergeants all held the same rank and drew the same pay. It didn't matter if you were the 1st sergeant of an infantry company or whether you were a master sergeant in a division headquarters, you drew the same pay and wore the same chevrons.

The worst job for a master sergeant is being the 1st sergeant of a company. I interviewed several master sergeants before I found one that said, "Yes, I'd like to be the 1st sergeant of this outfit." And that was my criterion. I didn't want a guy who didn't want the job. He would not have been any help at all. As it turned out, 1st Sgt. Rubinstein told me that he had been a sergeant major of three or four different battalions and he wanted to get back to troops. I said, "Sergeant Rubinstein, you've got the job." He came over as the 1st sergeant for the company, but I had been there for about three weeks before I got my own 1st sergeant.

The black 1st sergeant—who was there on the first day I reported in—noticed that I wasn't carrying a sidearm. He said, "Lieutenant, you're not going to be walking around the company area without a sidearm, are you?" I said, "What are you talking about, sergeant?" He said,

"Lieutenant, you're not going to be walking around the company area without a sidearm, are you?"…At that point he opened his field jacket where he had a .45-caliber in a shoulder holster. He said, "Well, in that case, sir, I won't let you out of my sight."

"Well, I think it would be advisable if you carried a weapon in the company area." I looked at him and I said, "Sergeant, I've been to a lot of outfits, and I'll be goddamned if I can run an outfit if I've got to carry a gun when I walk through the company area." At that point he opened his field jacket where he had a .45-caliber in a shoulder holster. He said, "Well, in that case, sir, I won't let you out of my sight."

I got this 1st sergeant, all the platoon sergeants, and the platoon leaders together in a group. I started talking about how I wanted to run things and what was going to happen. This company was in a building adjacent to group headquarters, which was about five miles outside of Seoul in a place called Sing Kongdak, where the engineering university of South Korea is located. The 62d headquarters was also at this location. Its companies were scattered around, but the group, the 62d, and the 573d Ponton Bridge Company, all were at this location.

Challenges and Successes

Up on the second floor of this building they had constructed a nightclub. It was equipped with bars where you could order any kind of a mixed drink you wanted. They had gambling tables where you could roll dice or play cards. At each one of these tables a sergeant sat there to keep law and order. Everybody would pile their money in the middle of the table and start to gamble. The sergeant would pull out five bucks and stick it in his pocket. That was his fee for keeping law and order. I asked the 1st Sergeant, "Is this open to every man in the company?" He answered, "Oh, no, sir. They have to pay a 10 dollar fee to join the club."

I didn't say a word that night. The next morning, I called the 1st sergeant in and looked him straight in the eye. I knew he was from the south some place from the way he talked. I said, "Sergeant, do you know what stove wood is?" He said, "Oh, yes, sir, I know what stove wood is. We used to chop it up and use it to cook all of our meals at home." I said, "Yes, I did the same thing when I was a kid. I always had to chop stove wood. That was one of my chores that had to be done before dark. You know that club that's upstairs?" "Yes, sir." "I want you to make stove wood out of it, sergeant." He looked at me. He said, "sir?" I looked at him and asked him again, "Sergeant, do you know what stove wood is?" And he said, "Yes, sir." And I said, "Well, by God, that's what I want. And I want it done today." I said, "That's all. Go get busy." He got a crew in there. He tore that damn thing down, lock, stock, and barrel. Then I said, "Now we're going to build a facility for the men in the company." I don't think that Col. Klinke knew about the club because I don't think he got out of the office very much.

In those days in Korea there wasn't a damn thing for the soldiers to do when they were not on duty

We hauled that bridge down to the Han River, which was frozen over. We'd put the pontons on the ice and scooted them out. We built a floating bridge on the ice over the Han River.

except to go to some house of ill repute in the village or find some illegal whiskey or something to drink some place. I told him, "We'll build a place and we'll have a bar in it." But I said, "There won't be any drugs or any fee to join. Every man in the company can go to it. It will be like a day room, but in that situation in Korea it would also be like a service club." We constructed a new club and opened it up to all the members of the company.

When the Korean War started, the 573d had been flown into Korea from Japan and landed in an Army field near Seoul on the Han River. The bridge material was also flown over and they constructed a bridge across the Han River. That was the only bridge that the outfit had ever constructed and that had been a couple of years ago.

The ponton bridge company was the outfit that had the bridge, the ponton, the balk, and the deck mounted on the bridge trucks. The company hauled it around and was supposed to install it with the help of engineer combat battalions. Only three people in that outfit had ever helped construct a bridge. Incidentally, in addition to bridge building, the 573d also had the mission of operating this Engineer Supply Point Number 5 in the same area where group headquarters was located.

My mission was to construct a bridge if Eighth Army ever needed one. We were the only ponton bridge company in Eighth Army reserve, and we wouldn't be able to build a bridge if called upon to perform our mission, so I immediately started a training program. In a draft army you can find all kinds of talent when you start looking. I had a fellow who had a hobby of making things out of wood. I had him construct a model of a ponton bridge that this company had and was supposed to be able to build.

I got a field manual that completely described this bridge in detail. I sat down with this model maker and had him construct a small-scale model of the bridge that would fit on the top of a table. After this was done, I gathered all of the NCOs and the officers and we had training sessions in the day room constructing this bridge using the model. Models also were made of the rigging and all of the knots that you'd need to construct the bridge—the square knots, the bowline, and the knots any engineer soldier should know. Very few of these people knew anything about this.

We went through an intensive training program. By this time fall had set in. To build a bridge I did the same thing that we did in Plattsburgh Barracks in 1942. We hauled that bridge down to the Han River, which was frozen over. We'd put the pontons on the ice and scooted them out. We built a floating bridge on the ice over the Han River. Then we took it down and hauled it back in. At least we had the outfit ready to

where they could construct that bridge if they were ever called on to do so.

At this time they were still talking in Panmunjom, trying to get an armistice signed, or a cease-fire, but none of that had happened. I commanded this company from August 1952 until I departed Korea on 9 March 1953. By that time we were completely integrated and were pretty much like other units.

Integration At Last

I don't recall having any problems between blacks and whites in the 573d when I was integrating the program. This plan that the group commander gave me—that the convoy would show up with white troops and load up some black troops and send them—actually took about three or four months to accomplish, not one day. For a couple of months my company was about 50 percent black and about 50 percent white.

By the time I left we were about 13 percent black soldiers and the rest were white. As I mentioned, I had constructed a company day room for everybody that was closely policed. We had a Korean band in there every Saturday night for a dance. In Korea at this time there were absolutely no recreational facilities available for the troops so anything that they had had to be provided by the company or the battalion commander. Both the blacks and the whites went to this club-room that I built for the 573d. I can't remember ever having any difficulties between the black troops and the white troops.

Wooden model of a ponton bridge built as a training aid by the 573d Ponton Bridge Company
Wright Collection

When I got new people in, I called them into the orderly room and explained to them what I expected from them. I told them that we were all soldiers in the United States Army and that was it. Period. There was no difference between men, regardless of skin color. Everybody was treated the same.

We didn't have any major problems, such as a riot, or a group of people trying to start fistfights. I was proud of that outfit by the time I left. From there I went to the Japan Construction Agency in Tokyo and my commanding officer was Col. E.E. Kirkpatrick and the deputy was Col. Robert Love.

I told them that we were all soldiers in the United States Army and that was it. Period. There was no difference between men, regardless of skin color. Everybody was treated the same.

Colonel Cochran describes the problems and frustrations of airbase construction in Korea, July 1952-July 1953. Faced with a shortage of LeTourneau dozers parts, he purchased parts from a commercial dealer back in the States only to discover later that the parts were stocked in Korea, but not on the inventory. He remembers one good lieutenant in his battalion, John Conyers, who later became a Michigan Congressman and head of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Ironically, I got ordered to Korea because I had originally requested assignment to an engineer aviation unit in England. In my entire career I had never been to Europe but I had spent three-and-a-half years in the Pacific. We wanted at least the chance to go see England or Europe. I got my choice of an engineer aviation unit but it was in Korea. I was assigned to Fifth Air Force, which was the Air Force command in Korea, and to the 809th Engineer Aviation Battalion.

Lt. Col. Harrington Cochran, Jr.
Cochran Collection

That was in Ch'unch'on at K-47 Airfield, where our battalion headquarters and one company were. It was a big, heavy battalion of about 1,100 men and all sorts of equipment. In the 809th I did not have concrete augmentation. I had an asphalt augmentation, an asphalt unit with 16 D-8 dozers. We had LeTourneau dozers; that was the trade name. We had about 24 five-ton dump trucks, rollers, scrapers, and compactors. We could do just about anything. I had one company at Anyang, south of Seoul. That was 100 miles away and that company was engaged in operating a huge quarry to produce rock. We were tunneling into the mountain there and going up the mountain to produce crushed rock for concrete construction materials. I had another company rebuilding the airstrip at Wonju.

I sent a company over to Kangnung, an airstrip over on the east coast. It was an all-pierced steel-plank runway used by the ROK Air Force, which had an F-51 group [WW II-era P-51 Mustangs, redesignated F-51s in Korea]. That runway had to be rebuilt and we were not allowed to interfere with their operations. I had to unbutton the strip surface at night, roll back

Engineers and Korean laborers repair a runway covered with pierced-steel planking Engineer School, 12-30-10

a section of it, rebuild, smooth out, and compact the base. Then we had to roll the landing mat back, weld it all back together, and have it operational by daylight the next morning.

We did that night after night. That was a very hairy operation. We frequently had problems with planes coming in. Something would go wrong and they would roll off the runway and into our construction equipment.

We had to transport the equipment over the most impossible roads. This mountain road was hanging from the side of a cliff. To get some of our big flatbed trailers with dozers and vans around those hairpin turns on that mountainside was one of the scariest experiences I have ever had. We had to hoist up the end of the trailer, tie it up in the rocks above, and swing the trailers to get them around corners. You can imagine how long it took us to get this convoy over there, but that was what we did.

I joined the 809th in July, and about November or December I got pulled out of the 809th and sent to be executive officer of the 931st Engineer Group, which was at Yongdungp'o. I was there for about four months.

A new mission was given to the engineers to build a 10,000-foot concrete runway, dispersal area, and bomb dump at Kunsan, which was on the west coast, south of Seoul. A river went up to the port of Kunsan and it was an area of coastal flats. There was at first PSP (pierced steel plank), and then an asphalt runway was built. It was K-8 and it was breaking up, so Fifth Air Force ordered an intersecting, 10,000-foot concrete runway right out over rice paddies. It was the worst place in the world to try and build airstrips, because there wasn't any bottom in there—it was all muck. They ordered the 808th Engineer Aviation Battalion to do the job, and I was sent down to take over command of the 808th about January

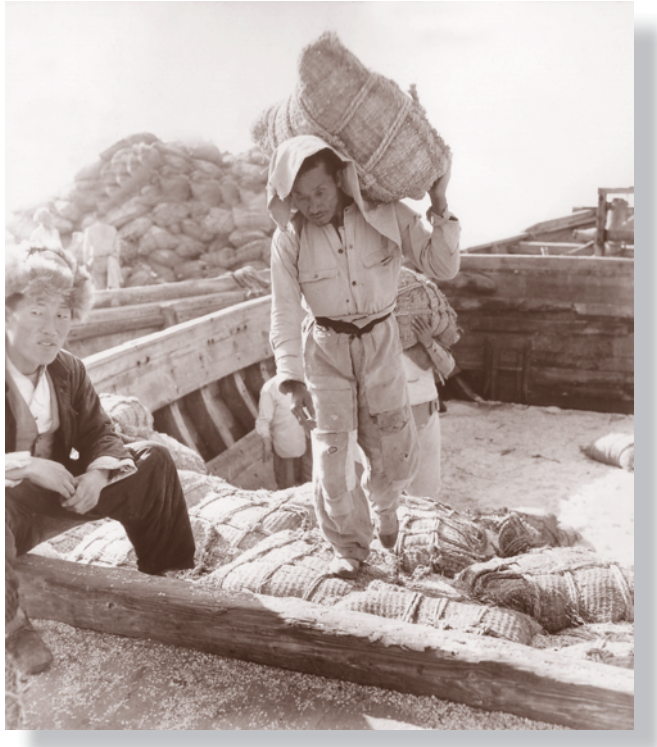
To get some of our big flatbed trailers with dozers and vans around those hairpin turns on that mountainside was one of the scariest experiences I have ever had. We had to hoist up the end of the trailer, tie it up in the rocks above, and swing the trailers to get them around corners.

1953. Meanwhile, the war up north was stagnated. At the time they were going through the prisoner exchange negotiations. Although battles were going on all the time along the front, there were no major movements, north or south.

Through contact with Gen. George Brown, and with the A-3 of Fifth Air Force, I had an opportunity to go up with Col. Ben LeBailly to Panmunjom. He was the base commander or wing commander at K-8, which was a B-26 base at Kunsan. They were the locomotive killers—train killers. We stopped off in Seoul, got a helicopter, and flew up to Panmunjom. Adm. Turner Joy greeted us and asked us what we wanted. We said we would like to go observe the negotiation area with a view to surveying it for a site for any future airfields in case a truce was reached. We wanted to be able to construct an airfield up there for our purposes on short notice. He said, "Sure," and gave us a car. We went up to the site at Panmunjom. We were ushered into the negotiating room and they sat us down at the table facing the North Koreans and Chinese advisers. The Chinese would whisper into the ears of the North Koreans and tell them what to say. This was the spring of 1953. I witnessed that operation for a day. It looked like the most frustrating thing in the world to try and negotiate anything with them.

The prisoner exchange negotiations were underway. We were building facilities up there for the receipt of the American prisoners, and the North Koreans were building facilities for their prisoners. Col. LeBailly and I got into this car and we drove north into the North Korean camp. Artillery barrages on either side were going off within hearing distance. We were driving into the North Korean zone to where they were building their camps, and we drove alongside marching companies of North Korean soldiers. I got the ice-cold feeling in the back of my neck that this was someplace

I wrote a check and bought some LeTourneau discs, and the lieutenant's father sent them to us via commercial shipping to Korea. We found out later there were LeTourneau discs in the engineer depot down in Pusan. That was the biggest problem we faced—getting the right parts at the right place and at the right time.



A Korean stevedore carries supplies ashore at Inch'on
RG 111, SC-354173

that maybe we shouldn't be. We got stares from them but that was about all. It was very interesting that we got to see what they were going to build. They were putting up a temporary encampment building to receive and process all their prisoners.

Back at Kunsan, we made all the preparations and began constructing the 10,000-foot concrete runway at K-8. It was very frustrating as an engineer, both because the Air Force ordered it to be built at absolute minimum specifications and because we knew it wasn't going to last very long. They ordered us to use absolute minimum pavement thickness. Most of the reinforcing steel—tempered steel, joint steel, whatever—had to be along the neutral axis, because you were required to have two inches of cover over the steel and they only wanted a four- or five-inch pavement. It seemed ridiculous since it was almost impossible to get good base material.

There just wasn't any good rock around and we had to produce all these fills across rice paddies. The Koreans were in a state because we totally ruined their rice growing area. The runway went right across all their drainage canals and it really ruined them. It was a struggle. Many thousands of tons of cement were being shipped to me. The cement was coming in sacks by ship. It had to be unloaded in Kunsan, manhandled, loaded on boxcars, and shipped by rail 25 miles from the port of Kunsan out to K-8. We built a very large warehouse to receive all this. We had to build a concrete mixing plant and manage all of the stuff to produce large quantities of concrete.

To handle all these bags of cement we needed thousands of pallets, because you don't stack bags very well, you have to palletize them. I could not get the lumber to build the pallets. We requisitioned, put in emergencies, and everything else to acquire the lumber to build the pallets. The cement started coming in before we could get the lumber for the pallets. When the cement starts coming you can't stop it. We began loading this by hand. We had to have every man in the battalion, cooks, whatever, out there handling bags of cement, and we hired to the limit.

We had Koreans, but they had put a limit on the number of Koreans that you could hire. We were just up to our necks in cement. There were a lot of broken bags, and the worst thing I ever went through in my life was trying to handle those thousands of bags of cement without proper pallets. When it got beyond our control in the warehouse, we had to build bins, scrape up all the broken bags, put them in bins, and handle the cement with bucket loaders. Then, we hastily threw up an aircraft hangar and stored cement in there. We had cement coming out of our ears.

That was the ugliest part of that job, but we also had problems getting parts for some of our equipment. Most all of our LeTourneau dozers began going down for brake discs and we couldn't get any

on requisition. They always were back-ordered, and on LeTourneau dozers we came almost to a 100-percent deadline. The father of one of my officers was a LeTourneau dealer in Texas. I wrote a check and bought some LeTourneau discs, and the lieutenant's father sent them to us via commercial shipping to Korea. We got some of our rigs off of deadline that way. We found out later there were LeTourneau discs in the engineer depot down in Pusan. Since they weren't on the record, they were no good to us. That was the biggest problem we faced—getting the right parts at the right place and at the right time.

Chinese POWs on Koje-do Island spent much of their time building elaborate religious icons out of cement and mud
Shotwell Collection

I completed my tour for the Air Force. We were assigned to the Air Force and it was a one-year tour. The Army was an 18-month tour, but we were under Air Force regulations. I had 1,200 men in the 808th. Fifty-four were lieutenants—half were Air Force and half were Army. Most of the Air Force officers were non-engineers. Out of 55 officers, I had a major, executive officer, a captain as S-3, and 51 first and second lieutenants. All companies were commanded by lieutenants, and in one case by a 2d lieutenant, because he was the best qualified. A good many of them were not engineers and had no engineer training.

Although I had no West Point graduates at the time, I had some splendid boys. They were all good people but some of them simply did not have engineer training, so we did the best we could. One of my officers was John Conyers, a young black lieutenant from Detroit, Michigan. He was the head of the Black Caucus for a long time and is very well known today as a senior Congressman—good man.

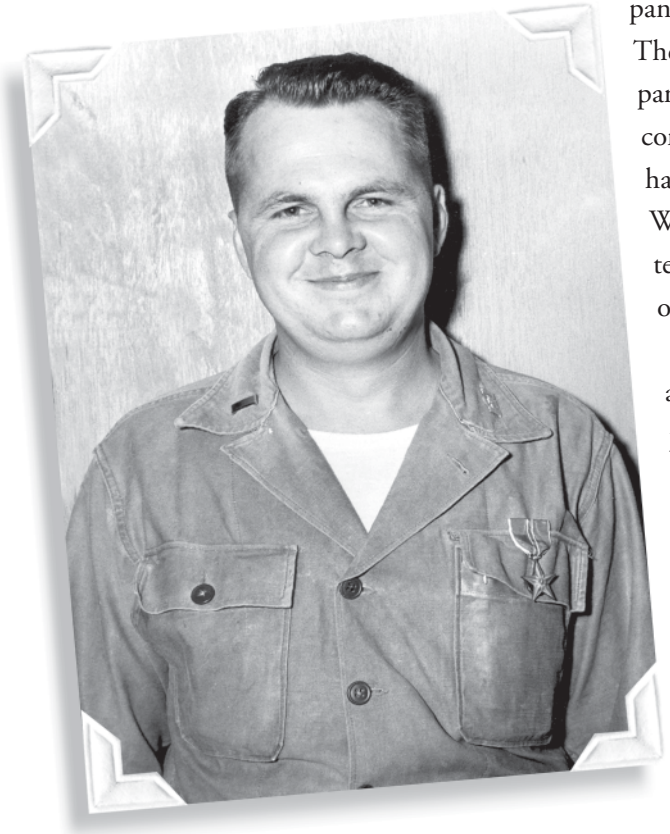
I started on the runway, completed some of the taxiways, and then I left long before it was completed. I was ordered to Fort Leavenworth to the Command and General Staff College.

Engineers performed a wide variety of specialized tasks during the Korean War. Here soldiers of the 467th Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon stand by their equipment on the quay in Pusan, April 1953 RG 111, SC-433610

First Lieutenant George B. Gray, Jr. 50th Engineer Port Construction Company

Lieutenant Gray was commander of the only Engineer port construction company in Korea. He describes how he had to train many of his own divers for laying underwater pipeline and how he enjoyed his experiences so much so that he extended his tour in Korea for an additional six months.

First Lt. George Gray
Gray Collection



I went to Korea in December 1952 and was sent directly to the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company commanded by Kurt Amende. The 50th Port Construction Company was the only port construction company in Korea and, as such, it had responsibility for all the ports. When I first joined it the headquarters was in Pusan and it was part of the 44th Engineer Group.

My first job was at Gazan, an ammunition port that had exploded and was totally destroyed. My job was to rebuild it—more than 2,500 linear feet. I had some very interesting pile-driving classes at Fort Belvoir, but these were non-interlocking timber piles and steel pile. The first step was to drive steel interlocking sheet pile. To this day, every time I see a sheet pile I have bad memories because we didn't have anybody in the platoon that knew anything about it. It took us a good three weeks before we could get any of them driven because they would all twist and bend. You would have friction on one side but not on the other. We tried everything—setting them all up, interlocking them, and driving them this way and that. We got the port built in about three or four months. Then the company commander was leaving and I became the company commander. After that I could assign sheet pile driving to a platoon leader!

At that stage in my life I was young and confident enough that I figured I could probably take over Eighth Army. If they only wanted to give me the 50th Port Construction Company, well, I felt I was prepared. Little did I know how little I knew until I got into some real problems.

The bulk of the 50th was offshore. All the POL came in by tankers and we had to put in offshore borings with submarine pipelines out to the borings. I'd never had experience with that either. One of the first things I did was to get qualified as a hard-hat diver. I had a diving section of about 20 people. About six or seven of them were master divers. For diving, you have second class, first class, and master. We worked all up and down the coasts, and in all of the places that we had to bring in POL. We put in the offshore anchorages and ran pipelines out to them. Once again we didn't have

anybody who had ever floated a pipeline out so we did it in numerous ways, but we succeeded.

I moved the company headquarters up to Inch'on because the bulk of our work was in the northern area. We even had work over on the other coast directly across at Sak-a-ri. Inch'on is a very interesting place because of the 30-plus-foot tides. There were the tidal basins that handled four small ships. All the rest of it had to be done by offshore anchorages and then the materials were unloaded from the ship onto the barges and were brought in. We had quite a bit of salvage work to do. If anything was sunk in our area we were the only people around with divers who did that work.

Lt. Gray preparing to dive on a sunken dredge
Gray Collection

At various times we had a pipeline company attached to the 50th. Once we had two pipeline companies, and occasionally we would get a dump truck company. The 388th Pipeline Company was attached to us for most of the time I was company commander. That was interesting because the company commander of that company was senior to me; before I left I was a lieutenant and he later became a captain.

We had the best food in Korea. If any of the ships coming in had any difficulties whatsoever, we were the only ones who had divers to look at and do the repair work, so all the ships kept in good graces with us and gave us free access to their food. A lot of people would come visit us to take advantage of our good food. One of those who showed up was an infantryman named Gus Baxter. He became a regular attendant at our meals. Finally, we let him move in with us—I don't remember why. I guess by this time we discovered he was dating my wife's cousin in Manny, Louisiana. He switched his branch to engineer, came up to the 388th and took over the pipeline company.

As for equipment and supplies, what we didn't have we were able to get. We didn't have any problems because the Eighth Army engineer considered us one of his assets.

At that stage in my life I was young and confident enough that I figured I could probably take over Eighth Army. If they only wanted to give me the 50th Port Construction Company, well, I felt I was prepared.

We had very heavy cranes and it was hairy loading those cranes on the barges in deep water and shipping them from barge to barge. We had floating cranes. We had J boats and LCMs and barges powered by sea mules, which are just very large diesel engines to drive the propellers. Moving the stuff around was impossible, except by barge. We got into a lot of places where it wasn't worth the effort to try to get a crane in. I wanted something to move it, so, the Eighth Army engineer got me two tank retrievers with trailers. We also had dump trucks assigned to us that weren't on the TO&E. The 50th was a very large company with almost 500 people. In addition, we were assigned Korean engineers. We were supposed to train them so they would become the port construction company when we left.

Mooring anchors waiting to be placed at the offshore fuel terminals Gray Collection

For most of the rest of us, our experience with water was limited to a rowboat or fishing boat. I am sure we made a lot of mistakes but we finished all of our projects.

Furthermore, we were always given authorizations to hire very large numbers of Korean laborers. We must have had 500 Korean laborers in Inch'on alone. When we moved into any port, such as Kunsan, where we put in more floating piers and pipelines, we hired several hundred Korean workers to work with our soldiers.

The first thing that was impressive about the Koreans was how hard they worked. They are small people, but a 55-gallon drum of fuel must weigh, what, 450 pounds? One little Korean, trotting along, would carry one on an A-frame and load it on a ship or barge. I don't recall ever having any disciplinary problems with the Koreans, either. I am sure the record is pretty complete on what the 50th did. Unless someone looked at the manpower available to the company, and the fact that they had those Koreans, you probably wouldn't believe the amount of work that was accomplished.

The port construction company had two construction platoons, but they were very different platoons. One had a marine section and a normal construction

section, and then there was a diving section and two others. They were more marine and mechanical than normal construction. Our work should stop at the shore.

The troops we got were just regular troops from any place, but we didn't have any real difficulties. We had very few courts martial and very little venereal disease. Any of the normal problems we just didn't have, but we had to work pretty hard. Most of the NCOs were from the Regular Army, but the troops themselves were mostly draftees.

The Army didn't teach some of the skills needed so we had to do some on-the-job training. The divers were taught at Fort Lee, so we had trained divers, but since we never got enough, we trained a lot of divers in the company ourselves. Master divers were authorized to qualify people. They qualified me, and I required that all the platoon leaders who supervised the divers also had to become qualified.

We did not have a significant number of black troops. We had a few, mostly truck drivers and equipment operators, but most of our carpenters and welders were white. I don't know if we just didn't get our share of blacks, but we simply took whomever they sent us.

None of the officers and very few enlisted people came with any experience in marine work. A few people came out of the company in California, at The Presidio, where we had a full construction company for many, many years. For most of the rest of us, our experience with water was limited to a rowboat or fishing boat. I am sure we made a lot of mistakes but we finished all of our projects.

We took our orders from both the 44th Group and from our customers. Eighth Army was not as vitally concerned with ports down in the southern part and most of the way up the coast as they were with some ammunition ports and Inch'on. We got our assignments and support from the 44th Construction Group for all these projects, and we had really good support from the Eighth Army engineer on all the projects up in the north. If we needed support in the south, he helped us there if he could. Roy Kelley was deputy to Col. Willard White, who was the group commander. He worked directly with the Eighth Army engineer on all the work we did up north. Between the Eighth Army engineer and Col. Kelley, we did get good support.

We had a pretty high priority because the ports had to function if a bottleneck in logistics was not going to develop. When we had a problem it was always a crash emergency. We always had some of these going on. It was very interesting for me, traveling all over Korea, trying to supervise all of it.

We had 22 officers in the company, of which four were warrant officers. In Vietnam, none of the port construction companies were near the size or structure of the 50th. Some skills obviously fall into the company properly, such as welding, carpentry, equipment

I used to think I could operate anything. I am sure that the real equipment operators in my companies were always very amused at my attempts to be an equipment operator. Probably the best lesson would have been, "Stay the hell off the equipment."

operation, and so forth. Oddly enough, we didn't get Transportation Corps people assigned to the 50th. We only got engineer troops, so I didn't have any boat operators.

An LCU is a pretty good-sized boat. We also used LCMs, which makes about 12 knots. That was a pretty tricky craft to operate. We trained our barge operators right there in the company. The barges were made of pontons welded together—a boat with panels. Navy cubes, they called them. They were developed in World War II. We could make them any size we wanted.

Operating a barge with those pontons—especially with a crane on board, and doing heavy lifting—was trickier than operating a boat. We had two or three 50-ton cranes we mounted on barges. We finally got a floating crane with a Japanese crew assigned to us from Japan, which was a big improvement. We also had a tugboat assigned to us not too long before I left.

MSgt. Melvin Alderman of the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company slowly climbs aboard the support barge after a dive
RG 111, SC-451590

Up until that time we were just putting a regular track crane on the barge, securing it to the barge, and using it as a marine crane, which wasn't the safest thing to do. If you tried to move it the barge began tilting and there was no stopping it—it was going to go. I never lost one, but I came awfully close a few times. I fancied myself as a crane operator in those days, but I never operated one on the barge.

I used to think I could operate anything. I am sure that the real equipment operators in my companies were always very amused at my attempts to be an equipment operator. I didn't try to do much. I just wanted to show them that I knew how to operate the equipment. Probably the best lesson would have been, "Stay the hell off the equipment." But how do you tell a second lieutenant that?

I was promoted to first lieutenant and extended for six months; I enjoyed my job that much. Surprisingly, my wife didn't divorce me. Here I was, a brand new first lieutenant, and I had that huge company with all of that lovely heavy equipment and floating equipment and all those Koreans and everybody. I just couldn't tear myself away from it, so I extended for six months to July 1954, and then I returned to the States.

Capt. Morrison Clay leads the 546th Engineer Fire Fighting Company to fight a fire in Pusan RG 111, SC-356242

Lieutenant Wells recalls his experiences as company commander, 72d Engineer Combat Company, 5th Regimental Combat Team, January-July 1953. Under the duress of war, the young first lieutenant remembered that he and his men learned quickly, for "there's nothing like practical experience....If you're willing to listen and learn, you can get to be pretty good, pretty fast."

The 5th RCT was a fascinating organization to join. Col. Lester L. Wheeler, the regimental commander, had been a tactical officer at West Point. He probably would have been a real comer in the Army except he got what they call "hemorrhagic fever" after he left the unit and nearly died. I think that pretty well finished him.

It was interesting to get into a different organization like this. The RCT had three infantry battalions, the triple nickel [555th] Artillery Battalion, and the 72d Engineers. Within the 72d Engineers I had very different kinds of people than I had experienced before. I had a first sergeant from the 82d Airborne who had about 30 years experience. At this point I'd already been a company commander for a year so it wasn't that I needed someone like that, but just having that kind of talent was great.

All my platoon sergeants were very strong people. I had one engineer officer, Max Howard, from the Class of '52, who was a real sharp officer. All the rest of my officers were infantry because they didn't get many engineers into the 5th RCT. I had some engineer enlisted people and I had a lot of infantry enlisted people. This was controlled by what was available when they were filling vacancies, but they were good people.

About midnight we had a time-on-target (TOT) on the company area that shredded all of our tents but not a single man was killed. After that they decided that maybe I wasn't as dumb as I looked.

My TO&E was in question. Should we come under the corps or divisional TO&E? We got out the TO&Es. We found that companies in divisional battalions were authorized four dozers, but companies in corps battalions were authorized an extra 30 or 40 people. So, we decided we were a divisional company for equipment and a corps company for people, an arrangement we were able to get away with.

I found I didn't have a single experienced dozer operator for our four dozers so I went to the regiment S-1. They went through their records and came up with 12 people who had at least two years of civilian experience operating dozers but were assigned to the infantry units. I then had experienced dozer operators coming out of my ears.

I had a very interesting experience when I first arrived in the company, which set the tone for things later. We were located on the forward edge of a hill where we could see the Chinese lines right from our area by just gazing out of our tents. Our tents were not dug in. We had foxholes for a few people, but not for very many. No one had ever shot at that hill so that was where we were.

The first day I was the commander I said that we

would dig in all these tents and that we also would dig foxholes for every man before we went to bed. That was greeted with great groans, as you can imagine—'this damn new lieutenant who was the company commander.' That day one artillery round went off down in the valley about a thousand meters away and another artillery round went off just opposite our company. Then there was nothing more. I thought to myself, maybe they're trying to range in on this company—who knows?

We dug in and went to bed around 2200. You've never heard such grumbling and mumbling. Even the platoon leaders were having a hard time containing themselves. About midnight we had a time-on-target (TOT) on the company area that shredded all of our tents but not a single man was killed. After that they decided that maybe I wasn't as dumb as I looked. We then moved behind a hill. The next night, with our shredded tents behind a hill, everything was fine.

The 5th RCT and the 3d Division manned a section of the front line and three outposts: Tom, Dick, and Harry. Our engineers were out there putting mines on the front of these outposts and building fortifications. We also were building roads to support the front line positions so that you could bring people up to the positions without being too much out in the open. I was able to use my road building experience to teach my people, who hadn't built many roads up to that time, how to do that. When the enemy was about to overrun Harry one night, we deployed as infantry and were prepared to counterattack the hill. Happily, the infantry was able to hold on so we didn't have to counterattack, but we were ready to go in position for that. We had a mix of the good combat engineer kinds of jobs.

The enemy then conducted an offensive over to the east in X Corps, where an ROK division was knocked out of the front line, so Eighth Army deployed the 5th RCT over there. As an illustration of the capabilities of the unit, we were given orders to deploy and an hour later my company was on the road moving. We passed the Turks going in the other direction. There were about

A bulldozer strips and does rough grading on a forward airstrip designed to accommodate reconnaissance, supply, and evacuation aircraft
Engineer School, 11-13-5

as many Turks in the ditch as there were on the road, but fortunately we didn't hit any of them. We got over to the X Corps and found this big offensive underway.

One of our first jobs as engineers was to build a road up the valley behind the front line positions. Since the ROKs had lost all the old positions that had a road network behind them, there was no road leading up the valley to our positions. When I first got there I met with the regimental commander and I also met with the battalion commander from a supporting corps engineer battalion. The regimental commander had asked the engineer battalion commander how long it would take to build a road up there and he said it could be done in a month's time.

I came in—a brash, young first lieutenant at that point. The regimental commander said, "How long will it take you to put a road in here so we can get trucks up?" I said, "Four days." I got the big horselaugh. I didn't know why since I didn't realize he had this other estimate. Four days later we had trucks going up there. We did this by running dozers up and dropping them down in position, blasting ahead of time and doing the whole road simultaneously instead of just working slowly from one end. If you had worked from one end it probably would have taken you a month.

I learned this on the job and immediately applied it. That's why you really can take a biology major and make him into a very fine combat engineer company commander—if he's got the initiative to do the job. It's just when he gets higher up that he begins to have problems.

At the time I felt—and I'm typical of my contemporaries—that if they wanted to make me a battalion commander, I was ready. I was cocky and had been able to show that I could do these things. It probably was very much like that during the war in Europe. If it had been the European Theater and all the commanders had been killed, one of my contemporaries or I would have taken over and done a credible job. We had as much experience as some of those battalion commanders had in Europe.

But it was a very narrow experience—combat engineering and support of an infantry division, doing all the different kinds of things you have to do. Later, when I was a battalion commander in Vietnam, I mentioned to one of my company commanders that as a company commander with 15 months in the Army under my belt, I felt that I could handle a battalion. He laughed and said, "There's no way you could do what you're doing here with 15 months under your belt." He might have been right, but with the very limited role that you had with a battalion, I was sure I could have handled it.

I'm sure a lot of other people would have done equally well with that kind of experience, but the initiative comes from being given jobs and being allowed to do them. You didn't have any of this silly zero defects

I think zero defects definitely went way overboard; it was a terrible idea. Zero defects means you never take a risk. You hide behind it; you're so safe that you can't do anything wrong.

Engineers clear a new supply route to the front lines, 1951
RG 111, SC-379090

thing. You made mistakes and learned from them. Then you didn't make the same mistakes again.

When I went to the 5th RCT we had an incident with Max Howard, one of my engineer platoon leaders. I sent him ahead with his platoon to do some blasting and I heard these very loud noises—obviously he wasn't tamping his charges enough. In a good blast you hardly hear anything but a rumble and all the rock moves. So, I went up there and I told him, "Hey, this is not the way to do it" and got him aside. He was really taken aback but he never did that again—all of his blasts in the future were quiet and effective.

Men of the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion repair a road damaged by an enemy mine near Changp'yong, June 1951
RG 111, SC-369972

Well, under the zero defects, if I went up there and said, "You're relieved, Max. You don't know how to blast" that would have been stupid. You learn these things quickly and you hopefully don't make the same mistakes too often. There's nothing like practical experience. And you can learn from people in your unit. A private, first class, who saw something in civilian life, might say, "Hey, why don't you try this?" If you're willing to listen and learn you can get to be pretty good, pretty fast. I think zero defects definitely went way overboard; it was a terrible idea. Zero defects means you never take a risk. You hide behind it; you're so safe that you can't do anything wrong. You might not accomplish anything but you're good and safe.

The 5th RCT was a very exciting experience for me being a part of the combined arms teams. I learned a lot in the other engineer battalion, but in the 5th RCT I was a little king. I was the regimental engineer as a first lieutenant. Later, I was amused in Vietnam when they had majors doing that job.

We just got along great with the infantry and they depended on us. One time in X Corps, when our people were taking out mines, I heard a bunch of infantry saying, "Thank God we're not engineers." You

were right there with them all the way. You really felt part of a team.

We moved back over to IX Corps again when the war ended. We were told that the war was going to end at midnight. The original instructions were, since it was going to end at midnight, there would be no more firing unless the other guy fired first. After a little bit someone fired, and then the fire was returned. Both sides apparently thought that they might as well use up all the ammunition. The place was just like the 4th of July with explosions going all over the place.

We were attached to the 45th Infantry Division [a federalized National Guard division]. Our mission after the cease-fire was to mark the southern limit of the demilitarized zone, which was several hundred meters wide. We would have Chinese over on the other side marking their limit. While all the firing was going on prior to the cease-fire, I got called over to see the engineer battalion commander of the 45th Division. He said, "All right, we've got this mission," which I already knew I had. "These are the sectors." My sector was about half as big as his battalion sector. He said, "Now, I want this done right so I want you to go out there and I don't want anyone to sleep." It was a three-day job. I told him, "That's not the way I planned to take on the job. My men will be allowed to get some rest and they will complete on time." He said, "You will do it the way I told you to do it." We did it our way and we completed it on time.

When the war ended, the 5th RCT moved back to a reserve position in the I Corps area. Since the war was over I asked to be released to return to the States. Max Howard took over command of the 72d. Even though I liked the people, I had been in Korea 19 months. I had extended twice and I was ready to go home.

During World War II, Lt. Gen. Walton Walker was in the Third Army under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. My strongest impression about Gen. Walker was that he tried to mimic Gen. Patton. He certainly did a superb job in Korea with what he had to do it with. Every day was a fire brigade, trying to put out a fire in a different place. He kept his finger on the pulse personally by his personal reconnaissance and his close contact with his field commanders. I thought he did a great job.

One day Gen. Walker was driving past a South Korean truck column. Some of the Koreans' trucks were British trucks with the right-hand drive. One of these trucks forced Gen. Walker's car off the road. When the truck stopped ahead of him, Walker's short-tempered aide jumped out, ran up, and opened the left-hand door. He grabbed a South Korean in the truck and socked him in the jaw—hit him off the seat for driving like he had—but, he was the *passenger*. The driver was on the other side. Walker's driver drove like hell. He'd get in that jeep and just go hell-bent-for-leather up the road. Walker was on his way back from our headquarters just before Christmas 1950 when he had that accident that killed him. He had just left the headquarters about a half-hour before.

Lev Allen was a good chief of staff. While Gen. Walker was out in the field so much he ran the show

Brig. Gen. Garrison H. Davidson
CEHO, Davidson File

from the office end. He was a well-experienced staff man and he ran a good shop.

I developed the greatest admiration for American youth in that operation. One criticism that I would have of General Douglas MacArthur's tour of Japan was that the training of his troops was insufficient. It was adequate, but not what it should have been. These young men certainly weren't in good physical shape. By that, I mean they were flabby. These youngsters, then, living near the fleshpots of Japan, were taken out of that atmosphere where they were living high on the hog. They came over to Korea and were introduced into combat without any

physical preparation. They stood up, first under that hot, humid summer, and then by winter, they were better conditioned. The way they stood up under that bitter winter of '50-'51 was fantastic.

After a while I had a van that I slept in. It had a little makeshift stove in it that depended on dripping oil for its source of heat. Of course during the night that stove would go out. Then the water in my canteen would freeze in the van—it was that *cold.* Fortunately, I had a sleeping bag that I slept in. When I'd go out to see the troops in the daytime I can remember occasions when I was on the top of a hill. That damn wind must have been coming right out of the North Pole. I'd had a good night's sleep in reasonably comfortable circumstances; then I'd visit the units on top of a hill. Here were these GIs, sitting on the edge of their slit trenches, wearing shirts in some cases, with heavy underwear under them, reading comic books. I'd go up there, turn my back to the wind, and try to stay there for a few minutes talking to their platoon sergeants or company commanders. I couldn't take it much longer. I had to get off that damn hill and get down behind protection. These youngsters had been up there all night for nights on end. They turned into very, very rugged individuals. I think the transition they made—the way they stood up under the conditions and the way they fought—was great.

The ROK army as a whole was terrible. We had the best commander with us, Maj. Gen. Paik Sun Yup, ROK 1st Division. He was a good commander, but the troops were certainly unreliable to the nth degree. On the other hand we had three ROK soldiers in the squad who intermingled with the Americans and they did fine. They trained with our troops, used our equipment, and ate in our messes. They were assimilated easily.

When we first got them, they'd never seen that volume of food as were in our messes. They'd get in the mess line and go through it two or three times, as often as they could. After they'd filled their bellies up they'd go out on the field and "toss their cookies." The food was too plentiful and rich for them. After a while they learned to tone it down a little bit. From what I saw, they turned out to be good soldiers and worked well with our troops.

My first combat experience with the division, except for P'ohangdong—which was a short operation, a skirmish really—was after the breakout from the Naktong perimeter. The North Koreans were on the run, so I didn't see too much of them from a combat point of view. I tried to talk to some of the prisoners, but I didn't see the North Korean army in operation. I certainly didn't see them in their hey-day as they came down, but they were more motivated than the South Koreans.

When we went north, hell-bent-for-leather, we sent out these patrols and got our nose bloodied each time. We didn't know what the hell was up there. We'd been pursuing these North Koreans as fast and as closely as

Here were these GIs, sitting on the edge of their slit trenches, wearing shirts with heavy underwear reading comic books. I'd go up there, turn my back to the wind, and try to stay there for a few minutes talking to their platoon sergeants or company commanders.

we could. They hadn't given us any opposition to speak of.

When we got back to the Ch'ongch'on River line I was left with a task force [*TASK FORCE DAVIDSON,* 4 November 1950] to hold a bridgehead north of the line in the event that the Eighth Army was sent north a second time. We had quite a fight there one night. The next morning I went out on the battlefield and rode over the terrain. That was the first time I saw a Chinese soldier. They made this attack and they'd gotten the hell beaten out of them. Our troops did a good job. The Chinese retreated just before dawn and pulled way back. We were not in contact because they left hurriedly and moved so fast. There were bodies around the battlefield. They were well clothed, with good quality, quilted clothing, and the men were obviously well fed. The dead bodies on the field gave the impression of a well-equipped, well-fed, and, probably an efficient army. When the real fighting later took place with the Chinese army, I was out of the division.

They [the Chinese] made this attack and they'd gotten the hell beaten out of them....There were bodies around the battlefield....The dead bodies on the field gave the impression of a well-equipped, well-fed, and, probably an efficient army.

After Walker's death, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway took over the Eighth Army and changed things greatly. He did a superb job. He had an advantage over Gen. Walker in that he came from Washington and knew the circumstances in Washington. He knew more about the availability of troops, the available supplies, and more about the general situation. He was able to get more, particularly heavy artillery units, over there with the necessary supplies. He turned the thing right around.

One day he came up to our headquarters right after he reported. He came unexpectedly and I was in my tent or van. When I came to the meeting in my shirt, but without a steel helmet, he sent me back to get my helmet. Like Gen. Patton in North Africa, he wanted to impress upon me the fact that it was a combat command and he was ready for combat on all occasions. So, I went back, got my helmet, and then joined the conference.

Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet was a fine man, well experienced, calm, and really a soldier's soldier. He was a superb combat commander [Eighth Army].

Maj. Gen. Frank W. Milburn was a great corps commander. He was a little guy but he was feisty. He was very capable and personable. They called him Shrimp Milburn because he was so small. Despite his size he had been a quarterback at West Point and later was a football coach, so we had a little extra community of interest between us.

I questioned what MacArthur did on three occasions. Number one, my proposed line for the Pusan defenses had been summarily turned down. I wasn't used to being turned down. Gen. Patton and Gen. Patch had pretty consistently approved what I had done in previous situations. I had been able to think this through. Whether Gen. Walker agreed with the line that General MacArthur outlined, or whether he did it just because

General MacArthur had given him an order or a quasi-order to construct along those lines, I don't know. I thought the decision with respect to that line couldn't be supported because it was too long and the terrain wasn't as good. The communications were not as good as they were in the line that I chose. If you're going to execute an interior defense with a small number of troops, you've got to depend on your internal lines of communication.

Number two, I thought it was foolish to hold us up when the Marines landed at Inch'on. They should have let us keep the pressure on the North Koreans, which he could have done either by sending the Marines north, or by letting us go through them, giving us their supplies. He had no control over stopping at the 38th Parallel.

The third thing, and the worst of all, was the organization after the X Corps came over from Japan. How a man with General MacArthur's intelligence, training, and background could have permitted that kind of an organization I could never understand. I do not understand it still to this day. Here you had three corps operating—counting the Koreans there were more. His chief of staff, Gen. Almond, commanded the easternmost corps, separated from the others by a mountain range. Although he was corps commander in Korea, he retained his position as chief of staff and was not put under Gen. Walker, or, later, Gen. Ridgway. So, he was reporting to himself from Korea back to Japan. The intelligence and the information we got were coming that roundabout way. Instead of having him under the Eighth Army in Korea, he was operating to a degree as an independent corps. How General MacArthur permitted Gen. Almond to set up that kind of organization I really don't understand. There wasn't the unity of command, the cohesion, or the interchange of information that there should have been.

Huddled against the cold, Chinese prisoners are guarded by the 7th Marines, December 1950
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A5377

First Lieutenant Joseph K. Bratton | 13th Engineer Combat Battalion

Lieutenant Bratton went to Korea with hopes of commanding a company, but was quickly appointed engineer supply officer. He recalls how he spent much of his time scrounging for badly needed heavy equipment and spare parts. Later his unit produced hundreds of pre-fabricated "kits" for tent platforms and bunkers to improve living conditions for troops in the field.

I was with the 70th Engineer Battalion in Austria and reassigned directly to Korea from Europe. I was assigned to the 9th Engineer Combat Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, along the way, and told to reapply for Korea. I did that shortly after arriving at Fort Lewis in August 1952. Some weeks later that was approved. I was given orders to report in January 1953. That was how long the procedure took. I signed out of the 9th Engineers around Christmas 1952, went home for a short leave, and reported back to Fort Lewis again before shipping to Korea.

I was glad to leave. Having volunteered for Korea and watched from the sidelines, I was concerned that it might play out completely before I'd get there. It was kind of a selfish feeling I guess, but it made me anxious to leave Fort Lewis and get on with getting to Korea, rather than staying longer in an outfit that, from my point of view, was not particularly beneficial from the standpoint of training or learning.

Having volunteered for Korea and watched from the sidelines, I was concerned that it might play out completely before I'd get there.

I believed Korea was important to my career. I probably thought so more then than I might in retrospect. I had missed all combat in World War II, and if I wound up missing all combat duty in the Korean War, I would be lacking something in my professional background that many of my contemporaries would have had. I felt that this would have been disadvantageous.

I also felt at the time—a bit altruistically—that we had been trained to go to war and here was a war going on. I'd already spent most of it sitting over in Europe. I certainly didn't want to spend the rest of it sitting in Fort Lewis, Washington. I was chomping at the bit. I remember several times calling the various offices and channels that my papers had gone through to see where on earth my transfer to Korea was. When it finally came through I was very relieved, anxious to get on the way.

While I was still in Austria, we used to get periodic reports describing the engineer activities in Korea. We even got film clips. Some of the clips were engineer specific. Some were just general film clips of combat action in Korea. They were very popular. They also were useful; many of them illustrated points that I recognized readily when I finally did get to Korea and was able to apply some of those so-called lessons learned.

The trip to Korea was difficult. My ship sailed from Seattle. I was assigned as the administrative officer on the ship in charge of all the troop records. There were about 2,000 troops on the ship. On our way to our port

Troops on the deck of an LST, Inch'on RG 111, SC-355475

When we went up to the 7th Division, I remember going up in a packet of 14 officers....Of the 14 officers, I was one of two who was not wounded or killed in the next few weeks.

of destination, Yokohama, Japan, an unfortunate thing happened just off Midway Island in the Pacific. The main reduction gear of the ship broke and we were dead in the water and helpless. It could not be repaired at sea and we had to be towed by a seagoing tug back to Pearl Harbor.

When we got back to Pearl Harbor they had diverted another ship. It was the *Patch,* a large troop ship, which was already loaded and on its way to Korea. They put all of us on the *Patch,* which meant double bunking and all the other inconveniences that one puts up with on a double-loaded ship. Twenty-four hours after we got back to Pearl Harbor in our disabled ship we sailed again on the *Patch* and went to Yokohama. We lost a number of days because the towing operation from somewhere near Midway Island back to Pearl was done at a speed of only about three knots.

Eventually we got to Yokohama. We went from there to Camp Drake, where we were given some initial training. We reloaded back onto another ship at Yokohama and sailed to Inch'on, where we disembarked. It was only after we got to Inch'on, incidentally, that we received orders to our units, in my case, the 13th Engineers, 7th Infantry Division. We stayed at Inch'on at a replacement depot for about three days and then went by train up to where the 7th Division was located.

I had no idea that I was going to the 7th. I had requested a divisional combat battalion and that was what I got, so I was happy. Part of our shipment went to the 2d Engineers in the 2d Division; the rest of us went to the 13th Engineers.

When we went up to the 7th Division, I remember going up in a packet of 14 officers. I was the senior one so I was the packet commander. I had 13 other lieutenants under my "command."

We arrived at a time when the 7th Division was engaged in heavy action. Most of the packet officers were infantry lieutenants and they were immediately placed into a combat situation. Several of them lost their lives and others were wounded. Of the 14 officers, I was one of two who was not wounded or killed in the next few weeks. There was only one other engineer in the packet of 14. He was assigned as a company commander in the 13th Engineers and was rather severely wounded only about a week after he arrived.

I stayed at division headquarters for two days for orientation and a series of briefings and then went directly to the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion. When I first arrived the battalion commander and the executive officer interviewed me. Then, I had a short briefing at each of the staff sections at battalion headquarters and it was arranged for me to visit each of the companies.

I had hoped that I was going to be assigned again as a company commander but that was not in the cards. I was assigned as assistant S-4 with the thought that I would be the battalion supply officer. The S-4 himself, a senior captain, later major, was the Division Engineer

Supply Officer. It didn't work out exactly like that. I eventually became the Division Engineer Supply Officer when the other officer went home.

Initially, I was disappointed because it was my only chance to command a company under combat conditions, but my request of the battalion commander was politely turned down. I did visit each of the companies in that orientation, which I guess took about two days, and developed an idea where the companies were and how they were operating. Our three companies, A, B, and C, were in direct support of the three infantry regiments. Our fourth line company—what we called the Dog Company, you'd call it Delta now—was in general support of the whole division and we had a large headquarters company.

The battalion commander was Earl Hickey, a senior lieutenant colonel. Later, I knew him after he'd been promoted to full colonel—a man, incidentally, for whom I had great respect in every way. He was a very strong leader and a strong commander. He ran a very good battalion. Our executive officer was Fred Proctor, who later had a successful career in the Corps of Engineers. I thought he was outstanding. Our battalion S-3, or operations officer, was Col. Joe Jansen, with whom I've maintained a friendship all through the years. He was another excellent officer.

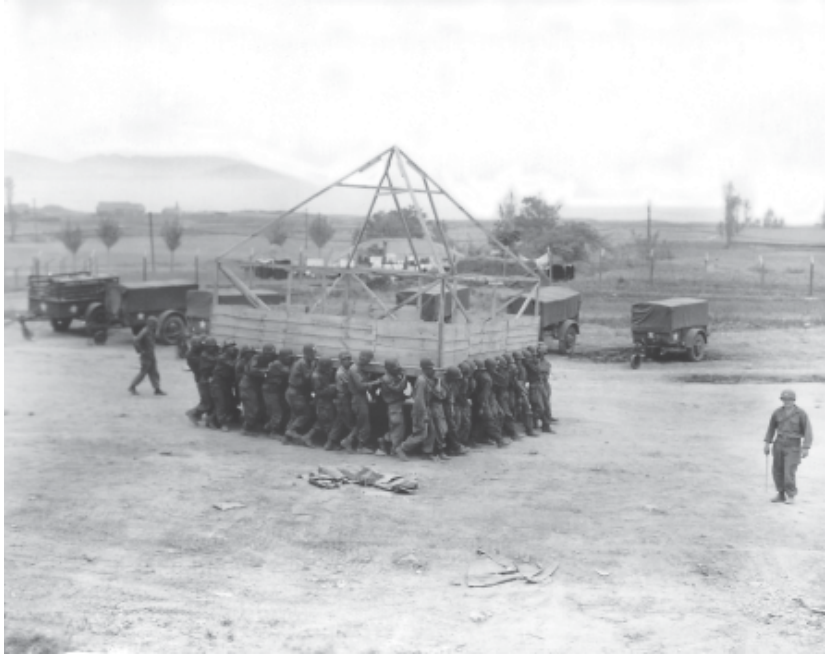
One of the officers in the battalion when I first got there, who had been wounded and left the battalion shortly after I arrived, was my good friend Bucky Harris, later Maj. Gen. Harris in the Corps of Engineers.

I had no experience with the DESO (Division Engineer Supply Officer) as a function of the battalion S-4; I'd never seen it function that way. The person assigned as S-4 of the engineer battalion was a supply officer for engineer equipment for the entire division. As such, I had a lot of responsibilities that transcended anything I'd learned earlier about being a battalion S-4. Each of the divisions over there operated in that fashion, and that was the way the TO&E was drawn up. Although I'd been in combat battalions in Europe and the States, and they were division combat battalions, there was no real division in which to apply the DESO concept.

I spent most of my time while I was in the 7th Division overseeing the requisitioning and the receipt and the distribution of engineer supplies. A lot of that was what we used to call Class IV material, fortification material, and timbers to build bunkers. Later, after the war ended, I was heavily involved with the effort to get the troops into some sort of shelter for that first postwar winter. We manufactured many tent kits. We sent all over the Pacific Theater to get Quonset huts and prefabricated buildings and so forth. It was a tremendous job. We were literally working at that seven days a week, 16 to 18 hours a day through that whole fall and winter of 1953.

Even at the end of my tour, we were still writing airmail letters to the manufacturer with money orders to get parts to keep our generators running. It was a problem when I got there in March 1953, and it was a problem when I left in May 1954.

This was different from anything I'd ever done. I learned by doing. We got a lot of support from the division G-4, and indeed, support from the division chief of staff. It became a very important thing for the division in that first postwar winter to get the troops out of the tents, bunkers, and holes they'd been living in back at the base camps. Ironically, I myself spent all that winter in a tent. Fortunately, it was well equipped with stoves.



Soldiers move a wooden tent frame into position at a camp outside of Pusan RG 111, SC-350636

For a while, it was difficult getting sufficient explosives. We were using lots of explosives of various kinds, and we went through a period where that was a crunch. Then, for a while we couldn't get enough bunker timber to build the bunkers that were being installed in such large numbers by the front-line troops.

There was a tremendous demand for sandbags. I used to requisition them by the tens of thousands at a time. Once or twice there was a shortage, and a great scream of anguish would come up from people who needed more sandbags and couldn't get them.

By and large, although I mentioned exceptions, normally I was able, by good planning and by going to a number of different depots around the Korean peninsula, to supply the division with everything it wanted. I don't think we ever suffered in any significant way operationally by a shortage of engineer materials.

We were always scrounging to get more equipment. We were trying to get more bulldozers, and we wound up with way more bulldozers than we were authorized. We needed them to cut roads out of the hills and mountains along the front.

We had a lot of problems with keeping cranes running. Since I never could get two cranes of the same make and model, getting spare parts for one crane didn't help

you when the other crane broke down. I became a great advocate of buying standardized makes and models to ease the maintenance problems over there. That applied to a number of other types of equipment as well, but the cranes gave us the biggest problem. We were using cranes heavily, especially in off loading at the railhead all of the timber and other supplies that would arrive. It was not uncommon for a while in the fall of '53 and the winter of '54 to receive a train car with 50 flat cars loaded with heavy material to be unloaded. You had to have cranes working around the clock to do that.

Generator Problems

One of the most annoying pieces of equipment that we were responsible for were the generators, which provided the electricity for lighting and other purposes through the division area. There was a terrible problem getting and maintaining enough generators. Here again, the make and model thing was a very annoying factor. You'd have parts on hand for one type of generator, but you'd receive a different kind of generator. Keeping the generators in good repair as far as providing parts and doing the mechanical work that had to be done on them was a major problem.

When one of the large generators, those providing light and power for division headquarters, went down for any reason, you had tremendous pressure placed on you to get that generator back up and running as quickly as possible. For several weeks after the war ended it seemed to me that the biggest problem we had in the 7th Division was generators. Someone should have realized that if you were shipping 5 kW generators to a particular division, you ought to ship all the same makes and models and get the right parts there to keep them running. A couple of models of small generators, 3 kW and 5 kWs, performed very poorly. You'd issue a brand new generator to a unit and a week later it would be inoperable with no parts to fix it.

The engineer battalion was responsible for all the generators in the division. It was the responsibility of the supply officer. Why our battalion maintenance officer didn't play more of a role, I'm not really sure. Although these difficulties with generators may sound petty to you now, it seemed to me that as far as generators were concerned, the burden of the world fell on my shoulders.

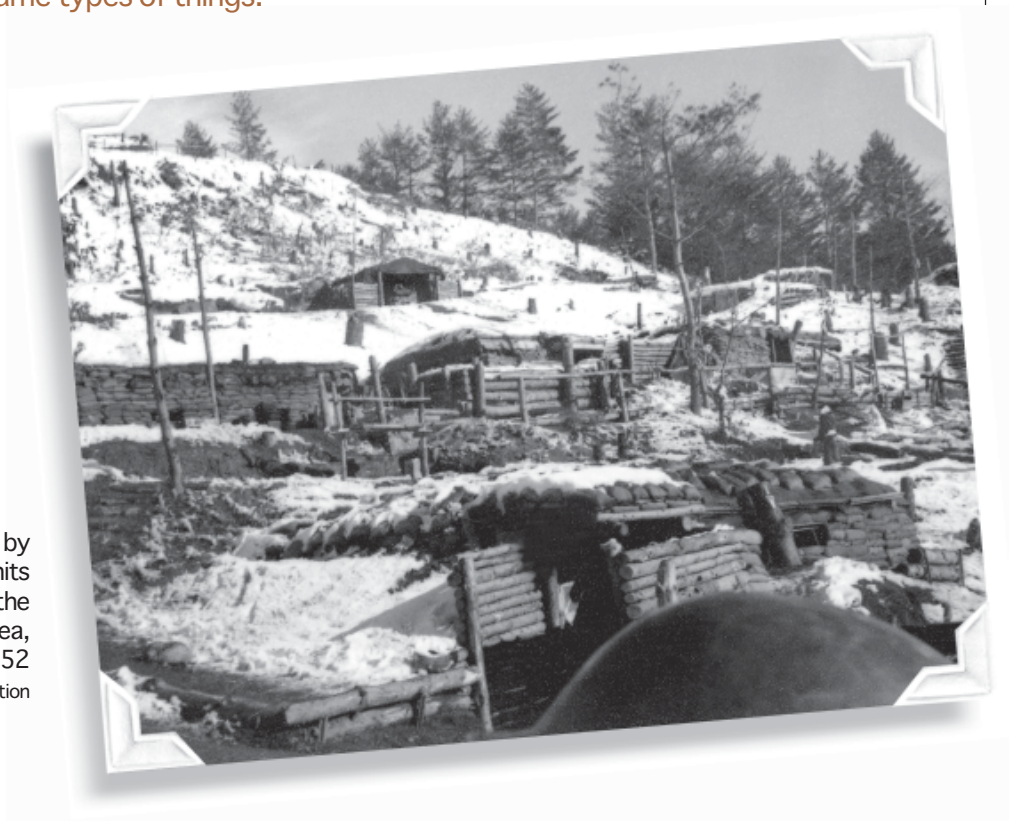
We improved by adopting certain procedures, and by a lot of effort down at the supply depots to get parts and to get generators that had some sort of a backup supply. But I'll tell you the truth—even at the end of my tour, we were still writing airmail letters to the manufacturer with money orders to get parts to keep our generators running. It was a problem when I got there in March 1953, and it was a problem when I left in May 1954.

That puts a tremendous burden on a front-line division. The only way you could run that job of divi-

...we were making tent kits. These had nothing to do with defensive positions on the line. It was an effort to get the troops out of the mud and the dirt....

One of my biggest jobs as Division Engineer Supply Officer was running all through Korea trying to find more equipment....One had to be very aggressive because everyone else was out scrounging around looking for the same types of things.

sion engineer supply officer well would be to literally work at it seven days and nights a week. Fortunately I had some superb people. I had two or three NCOs who were just absolutely marvelous. I always had an assistant who was a lieutenant. I managed to get some good young officers who'd served their time out in platoons, who weren't senior enough to command a company, so I'd bring them in for their last three or four months and make them assistant supply officers. They were frequently the ones who wound up with the jeep at 0200 going back to repair someone's generator.



Bunkers built by infantry units operating in the Punch Bowl area, December 1952
Cochran Collection

Prefabricated Kits

While the war was still going on, one of the most important aspects of the defensive positions in our division area was the construction of a refurbished set of trenches and bunkers for defensive purposes. The bunkers were of a variety of types. There were fighting bunkers, observation bunkers, communications bunkers, and observation post bunkers.

We came up with the standard design in our division, which was made out of large timbers that were cut to size and made into a kit. We called them bunker kits, and it consisted of a large package of timber, drift pins, and large nails to build the bunker when you got it out on site. It was all banded up with steel bands. Any outfit—not just an engineer unit—an infantry unit, or an artillery unit, could get one of these bunker kits, load it on a truck, drive it as close as they could to where they wanted to put it, unpack it and install it on site. We had a very ingenious set of plans, which we guaranteed that even an infantry squad would have no trouble understanding when assembling the bunker. By and large it worked that way. We issued hundreds of these things. We established a prefabrication yard back in our battalion CP area where these different types of bunker kits were turned out en masse using large sawmill type operations. It was very successful.

At the same time we were doing that we were making tent kits. These had nothing to do with defensive

positions on the line. It was an effort to get the troops out of the mud and the dirt, if not out of tents, by building what amounted to a floor and a framework for the squad and parametal tents we were using. We turned those out by the hundreds. Again, they would be issued to the units that needed them. They would come and pick them up, wrapped in bundles, with suitable little diagrams on how to assemble them. That saved engineer effort. A lot of non-engineers could take our simple plans and the materials we gave them, and with a few hammers and crowbars and things, they could erect the tent kit as well as we could have.

I think all of the divisions had some form of prefabricated kits because, at the time I was in Korea, the front line had stabilized. There was great emphasis on improving the defensive positions along that line, which roughly paralleled what the demilitarized zone is today. All the divisions came up with one plan or another, each one a little bit different. We kept constantly revising our kits as we got better ideas, and we'd get reports back from the people using the bunkers that said, "Why don't you have a port here? Why don't you make it one timber higher here?"

There was some site adaptation, too. One prefab kit would be purchased for each site, so there was some modification and digging involved. Our bunker kit program was one of the more successful things that we did. I don't mean to imply that we simply turned these out and gave them to the other units in the division to put up. We did a lot of the erecting ourselves. An engineer battalion in a division is always over stretched so it was very helpful to have something that the other units could assemble and use on their own.

Built to house 12 soldiers, this pre-fabricated bunker could be assembled in about an hour
Engineer School, 250-12-130

The Defensive Period

We rarely saw anyone from Eighth Army. We frequently had teams in the division area, and we had a lot of interchange with the staff of I Corps, which was

headquartered down in Seoul. I can only recall one time that a senior team from Eighth Army visited our battalion, or even our division. There may have been visits and contacts that I wasn't aware of at my relatively low level.

I Corps, on the other hand, worked with us frequently and we saw the corps commander and his staff often. In the case of our battalion, we did a lot of work with the corps' engineer, his staff, and the troop units that were part of the corps' engineer outfits.

Equipment stored at an Engineer Depot, September 1952 Engineer School, 170-11-128

The TO&E allotment for equipment to an organic engineer battalion in a division, such as the 13th Engineers, certainly was inadequate for what we were doing in Korea. What we were able to do was get special authorizations for additional heavy equipment and equipment of all kinds and sizes. Eventually, we had four or five times as many bulldozers as the TO&E authorized us, as well as a number of road graders, front loaders, and cranes.

When augmented with equipment, we had plenty of it. If we'd been limited strictly to the TO&E, we couldn't have done the job. One of my biggest jobs as Division Engineer Supply Officer was running all through Korea trying to find more equipment. If you discovered some available, it was a question of sending something down to pick it up. One had to be very aggressive because everyone else was out scrounging around looking for the same types of things.

I remember one day going back to one of the depots south of Seoul and finding eight brand new, unpacked D-8 angle dozers. Well, an angle dozer was worth its weight in gold if you were cutting the roads around the Korean hills. I was able to get four of those eight because I was the discoverer. I never did know how long they'd been there, perhaps a year or two. It was not a place where we normally went, or a place that normally serviced our requisitions. Once we discovered

them we sent lowboys down, picked them up, and had them working in the division in two or three days.

Although an Engineer Maintenance and Supply Group in the Seoul area tried to do a good job, they were swamped when it came to locating all of the available equipment. The war had been going on for three years and in that time a lot of the equipment and supplies had poured into Korea. Some of it was not well-tracked by paper, especially in the earlier days when the impetus was, "Get the stuff over there and we'll straighten it out later."

We had no property accountability, as such, when I first went over there. Very shortly after the hostilities ended in July '53, big efforts were made to establish proper supply accountability. It was much easier to operate when there was no property accountability. You got what you needed as best you could, even though you couldn't always get what you wanted. You got the job done quickly and asked questions later. That changed when the war ended. People were less apt to do you favors than they had been while the hostilities were still going on. Everybody became more conscious of control and cost economy.

Troop Morale

A constant concern of the soldiers in our line companies had to do with the system by which points were assigned to give you credit for your tour in Korea. The number of points accumulated governed when you could leave Korea. The system established different categories of work depending on your locality, the danger you faced, the amount of combat effort you put out, and so forth. It assigned you a certain number of points per month. In our divisional engineer battalion our soldiers received three points per month. When you reached a certain total of points you could rotate home.

The infantrymen with whom our frontline soldiers were working every day were getting four points a month. Our troops were always disgruntled if they were up there and felt they were facing the same dangers and hardships but were only getting three points. That remained a morale problem; it was never changed. On the other hand, some of the other outfits were only getting two points a month and, in some cases, they encountered similar dangers and difficulties. When a general rule is established to cover many thousands of people there are always some disparities.

I was always tremendously impressed with how well the soldiers performed in Korea and with the sacrifices they were willing to make under very difficult conditions—not just engineers, but all the soldiers over there.

There were gradations of living conditions. The infantrymen up on one of the outpost hills in our division lived a completely different life and saw a completely different Korea than the fellow back at division headquarters. He, in turn, lived a completely different life

The captain commanding one of our companies had to sell himself and his engineer capabilities to the regimental commander who was typically a senior infantry colonel. I was always amazed at how well our young guys did this.

and saw a completely different Korea than the fellow down in the rear areas of Korea, the southern parts of Korea and the depots and the supply systems.

It's always that way in any theater. The burden does not fall equally on all soldiers. It depends on where you are and what unit you're in. Our guys took a lot of satisfaction in feeling that they were up front doing the job, and they used to look, fairly or unfairly, down somewhat on the people who never heard a gun go off in Korea.

We were not augmented in personnel. The rear-area roadwork was picked up by the corps engineers. We could never have taken care of the entire division road net. As far as working with the infantry regiments and the other units of the division, we were adequately manned and staffed.

It placed a great burden on our young company commanders, because our Companies A, B, and C were assigned to support each one of the infantry regiments. Depending on how the regiment operated, and depending on the skill, personality, and leadership of the engineer company commander, that worked extremely well, or it had difficulties.

The captain commanding one of our companies had to sell himself and his engineer capabilities to the regimental commander who was typically a senior infantry colonel. I was always amazed at how well our young guys did this. I had hoped to be one of these company commanders myself when I went over there, but it didn't work out that way.

We were blessed with an excellent division engineer while the war was still going on, and another equally outstanding commander when the first one left after the cease-fire. These men had seniority and were qualified to explain engineer missions and the role of the engineers. Each of them became a valuable adjunct to the division staff and to the combat power of the division as well.

We never used the term "combat multiplier" then, but as I look back on it, I think a very good case could have been made for its use. In fact, both of our battalion commanders, near the end of their tours, became the chief of staff of the division, which is very unusual. It was recognition of the fact that the engineers had done a lot of good work in that division and identified themselves as very capable people. The wartime commander was Col. Earl Icke, and Col. Paul O'Neil succeeded him. Both were very outstanding people.

I joined the division during a very difficult time when they were actively involved in intense fighting on a hill called Old Baldy [March 1953]. In April of 1953 the division was heavily engaged in the first battle of Pork Chop Hill, which is the one in the movie, the one most people think of.

In the first week of July 1953 the division was heavily committed in a series of conflicts, the most promi-

It was alternating freezing and thawing, kind of miserable weather. I lived two Korean winters in a tent and I found it a terribly unpleasant way to live. You tended to be cold most of the time.

nent of which was the second battle of Pork Chop Hill. The division eventually was forced to withdraw from the hill. That was a very costly battle. Ironically, just three weeks later the cease-fire was signed.

Close to the time of the cease-fire, in about the third week of July 1953, there was another hard-fought battle on a hill called Westview [the next hill to the southeast of Old Baldy]. An outstanding regimental commander, Col. Dolman, was the officer in charge and did a magnificent job. The battle of Westview was the last big battle fought by the division in the war. It was only about a week or 10 days after that before the cease-fire came.

Our division took quite a beating during that last month of the war. Company A, commanded by Capt. Jim Brettell, was the direct support company for the 17th Infantry Regiment. It was a portion of the 17th Infantry that was on Pork Chop Hill when the very heavy onslaught around 1 July 1953 was made against the hill. The regiment took heavy casualties and our Company A took casualties. That was when we had our Medal of Honor winner, one of our Company A soldiers [Cpl. Dan D. Schoonover, Company A, 13th Engineers]. Jim Brettell, the A Company commander, was a hero in his own right. He was a man of towering strength and great leadership. The regiment's great confidence in him was well placed. He was a very valuable adjunct to them in their fight on that hill.

But, the division took heavy casualties. The 32d Infantry Regiment relieved the 17th Infantry, because the 17th had received so many casualties. The 32d fought well, but also took casualties. Finally, it was no longer profitable to continue defending the hill, so we withdrew.

A series of outposts along our line marked the MLR. Various units of the infantry regiments manned these outposts as sort of a first line of defense. Typically, they would take a lot of manpower, sometimes an entire rifle company, beefed up with heavier weapons.

Some of them were isolated forward of the main line. It was difficult to get to them, because you had to go through what amounted to a "no man's land." There was a pair of these called Arsenal and Erie, which the 17th Infantry manned. Brettell gave what engineer support was needed in these outposts, as well as providing support to the main line. To get out there you had to go along a trail—not a very safe thing to do, especially in daylight in an unarmored vehicle. One would choose to go in an armored personnel carrier or a tank if one had to make the effort.

This particular day, however, the battalion commander, who you would have characterized as rather "gung ho," decided that he wanted to go out to outpost Arsenal and he wanted the engineers to go with him. Well, as luck would have it, I happened to be up working with Company A that day. Brettell said, "Come on.

I felt like a clay pigeon going across a shooting gallery range, watching other clay pigeons being picked off and wondering when I was going to get it. I was scared to death but I was too proud to acknowledge it.

For one reason or another the Korean War tends to get forgotten. I guess it's because it was so much smaller than World War II, and then it was overshadowed later by Vietnam. But the engineers did play a key role in the Korean activity. It was something we can all be proud of and it should be recorded.

Get in your jeep and follow us." We took off with three jeeps through this no man's land.

Halfway out they began shooting at us using mortars, mostly. It was a mighty scary trip. I felt like a clay pigeon going across a shooting gallery range, watching other clay pigeons being picked off and wondering when I was going to get it. I was scared to death but I was too proud to acknowledge it. So, I wrapped my flak vest around me, pulled my helmet down, got in the jeep and said, "Let's go." None of us were touched. Maybe the fire wasn't as close to us as I thought it was, but I would say it was a rather foolhardy journey. The battalion commander got his kicks. He was a very outstanding man with a flare for leadership and he did a great job with that battalion. Brettell was going to go wherever that battalion commander went. Since I was with Brettell I didn't have a lot of choices. The terrible thought that ran through my mind after I made the trip out there was the realization that I had to come back again. We came back in the same jeeps. The jeep drivers thought we were crazy.

The armistice was signed, or the cease-fire as we called it, on 27 July 1953. The troops had suffered in the previous winters and the CG, Eighth Army, decided, properly so, that a major priority immediately after the cease-fire would be preparations for the next winter. One of the ways of doing this was to get prefabricated buildings up into the division areas and the other areas where

On 27 July 1953, General Mark Clark, UN Supreme Commander in the Far East, signed the armistice documents that became effective three days later
RG 306, 306-53-10815

we'd been living in tents the previous winter.

The prefab buildings we received came from all over the Pacific Theater. Most of them had been left over from World War II. The largest single shipment we got into the 7th Division came from Okinawa, by rail up from the port at Pusan. They were tropical, prefabricated

huts, designed for a tropical climate, and had been left in Okinawa at the end of World War II. Eight years later, in some condition of deterioration, they were picked up and shipped up to put officers and soldiers in for a Korean winter.

As you can imagine they needed considerable repair. They needed a lot of extra parts and they needed something done to winterize them. That was a big program for the division. We continued making tent kits for the troops who were still going to have to spend another winter in tents. At least we could get them off the ground onto a platform with A-frame tents with special provisions for heating stoves. Many eventually burned up, by the way.

Other types of buildings were being received steadily all through the late summer and fall of 1953. By the time the cold weather came in November '53, the division was semi-winterized, and the men were certainly in a more comfortable state than they'd been in the previous couple of years. It was a major effort that kept our entire battalion busy.

We set up a system again where the units using the prefab buildings would come to the engineer yards and pick up the pieces they needed. Here we ran into more trouble because the buildings were much more complicated than the bunker or tent kits. We had to give the infantry, artillery units, and other units, considerably more assistance. Theoretically, at least, our engineer soldiers knew more about setting up the buildings than the other people did. In many cases, however, an engineer soldier didn't know the first thing about putting up a tropical building and winterizing it.

I went all over Korea with the division G-4, Lt. Col. Jack Wright, who later became a lieutenant general and Comptroller of the Army. Col. Wright was a very inspirational man and we worked out a good program together. We'd get in a light aircraft and fly all over Korea trying to find the necessary parts and buildings. We succeeded fairly well in doing what we had to do but it was a big job.

The Korean winter where we were, north of Seoul along the DMZ (demilitarized zone), was a moderately severe winter, with a fair amount of snow and cold weather, but it was nothing like the Korean winter at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. We never got down to those temperatures or had that much snow on the ground. The climate was certainly a more severe climate than in Washington, D.C., and more like you'd find in central Pennsylvania or upstate New York. It was alternating freezing and thawing, kind of miserable weather. I lived two Korean winters in a tent and I found it a terribly unpleasant way to live. You tended to be cold most of the time.

A big problem was finding clean, dry areas to do maintenance on our trucks and our heavy engineer equipment. By the time I left we had established a

series of maintenance parks where we were able to do this under cover very well, with space heaters to heat the space so that the maintenance could be done a little more easily.

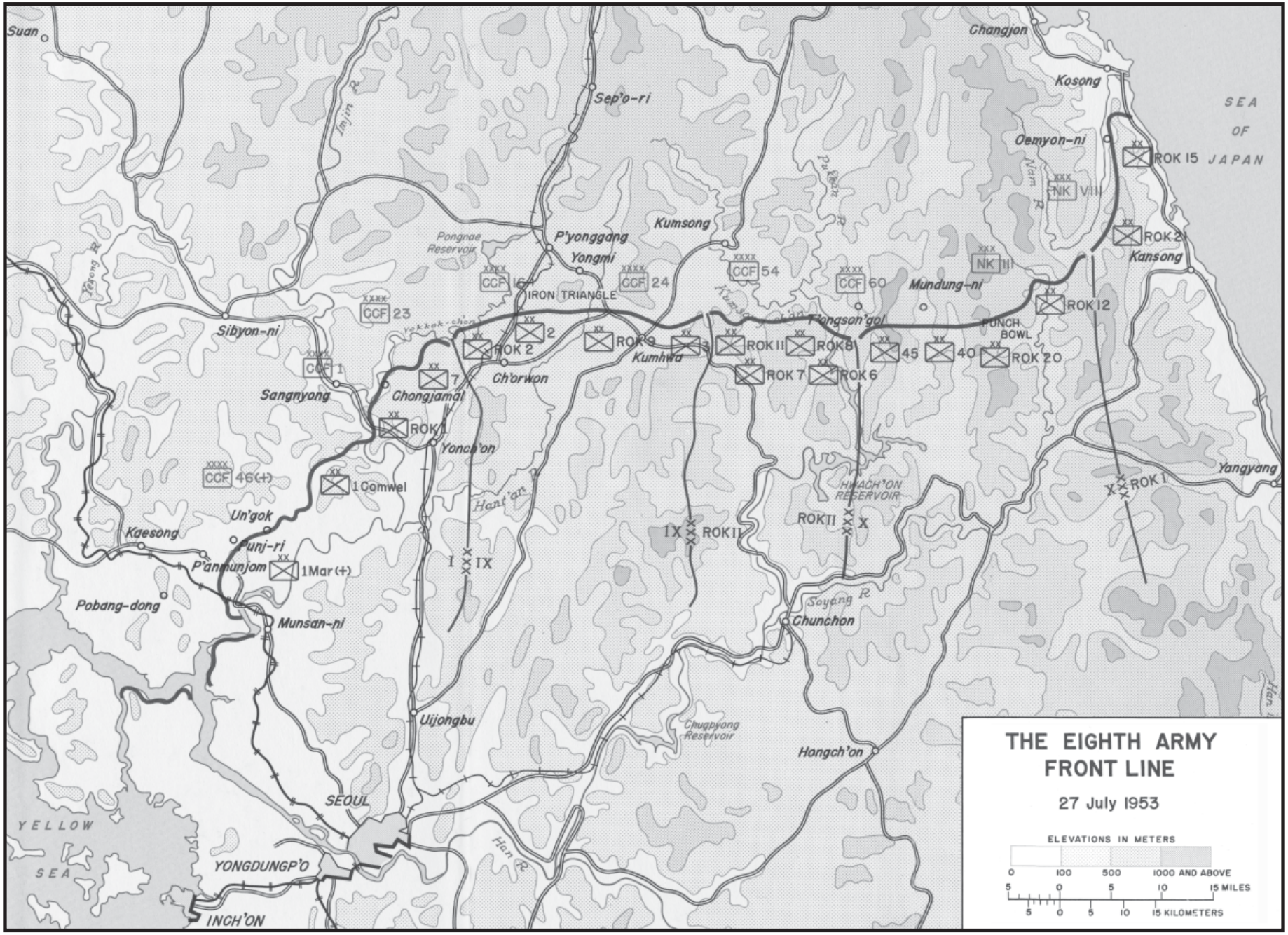
It was still quite primitive. How they'd gotten by the first couple of years of the war without any of those facilities was amazing. I'm sure maintenance suffered. It's hard to get a man who's cold, wet, and miserable, to go out in the mud and pull maintenance on a bulldozer. It's much easier if you've got a hard stand, a roof, and a space heater.

Engineer supplies stored on the pier at Inch'on
RG 111, SC-354721

Soldiers are remarkable people. They will improvise and carry on under considerable hardship and discomfort when they see the need for it. They really rise to the occasion. Of course, when hostilities ceased, people naturally began to think more about themselves and to expect creature comforts.

I was assistant division engineer only for the last 60 days or so of my stay. That was during a period when I was working with the division G-4 to find materials and buildings for the division. As assistant division engineer my efforts were heavily slanted towards logistics and supply. One of the big challenges was to get the materials we needed and to properly house them. I literally had two offices as assistant division engineer. I had a desk at the battalion headquarters where I spent about a third of the time, and I had a desk up in the division G-4 office where I spent the rest of the time, when I wasn't off hunting things.

It was a lot of fun being assistant division engineer because you got involved in virtually everything going on in the entire division. You got to know the key people in the division and I found it quite exhilarating. I enjoyed my last couple of months very much because it was such a challenge. You're going seven days and nights a week trying to accomplish a job that you know you're not going to finish, but at least you want to get off to a good start so the next guy can pick it up and carry it on. At the time I left the division in April 1954, people were


THE EIGHTH ARMY
FRONT LINE
27 July 1953
ELEVATIONS IN METERS
0 100 500 1000 AND ABOVE
5 0 5 10 15 MILES
5 0 5 10 15 KILOMETERS
SEA OF JAPAN
YELLOW SEA
Suan
Changjon
Kosong
Oemyon-ni
Sep'o-ri
Kumsong
P'yonggang
Yongmi
Pongnae Reservoir
IRON TRIANGLE
Mundung-ni
T'ongson'gol
PUNCH BOWL
Kansong
Sibyon-ni
Sangnyong
Chongjamal
Ch'orwon
Kumhwa
Yonch'on
Un'gok
Punj-ri
P'anmunjom
Kaesong
Pobang-dong
Munsan-ni
Uijongbu
SEOUL
YONGDUNGP'O
INCH'ON
Chunchon
Hongch'on
Chugpyong Reservoir
HWACH'ON RESERVOIR
Yangyang
Imjin R.
Yesong R.
Hant'an R.
Pukhan R.
Nam R.
Soyang R.
Han R.
CCF 23
CCF 1
CCF 46(+)
CCF 164
CCF 24
CCF 54
CCF 60
NK VIII
NK III
ROK 15
ROK 21
ROK 12
ROK 20
ROK 2
ROK 9
ROK 11
ROK 8
ROK 7
ROK 6
ROK 1
1 Comwel
1 Mar (+)
2
3
7
45
40
I
IX
X
XX

beginning to plan for the next winter, along with redeployment, and shifting of stocks and supplies.

Lessons Learned

There was quite a program to bring back lessons learned. We turned in a number of reports. I always sent reports to the I Corps Engineer and to the Eighth Army Engineer. General Lewis J. Rumaggi, the Eighth Army Engineer for part of the time, was an outstanding man. He was personally interested in unit histories and the lessons learned.

While I was the supply officer in the 7th Division, a team from OCE came over with a whole battery of questionnaires and investigators, because they were preparing a history of engineer operations. I never did see the end result of that but we spent a fair amount of time with them. We took them all over the division area, gave them an eyeful and an earful, and provided a lot of good material with which to write an engineer history of Korea.

If the regiment knew how to use the engineers, and if the engineers were not bashful in explaining their capabilities to the tactical unit commanders, they gained a great deal from the engineers' support.

The transition from war to peace was a busy, confusing, and disruptive time. People were rotating home. New people came in who'd not been there while the war was on so they didn't understand the history of things or why we were doing things the way we were. It was a good time to write lessons learned and a history. There's a very small window when you can capture a team of people who were on the spot and understand what happened. When the cease-fire came, people began leaving. The information that was available in the summer and fall of '53 was no longer available in one nice, contained package by the spring and summer of '54.

Both of our battalion commanders, Cols. Icke and O'Neal, were very conscious of this. They were well aware of a military history approach to things and they both kept extensive ledgers of their own.

We had a very close-knit battalion, in the sense that we gathered at least once a day, typically after the evening meal. Pretty thorough reports were given; briefings were given on everyone's activities for the day and plans were made for the next day.

Our adjutant, who kept an ongoing ledger of the battalion's activities, wrote down a lot of these things. I know they did the same thing in our S-3 shop. They had an operations book, which noted all the principal activities of the battalion from day to day.

For one reason or another the Korean War tends to get forgotten. I guess it's because it was so much smaller than World War II, and then it was overshadowed later by Vietnam. But the engineers did play a key role in the Korean activity. It was something we can all be proud of and it should be recorded.

When I went over to Korea in 1953, I had four-and-a-half years of service, three of which had been in Europe, and yet I don't recall reading a single thing that prepared me specifically for what I was

going to do in Korea. I did see some films of unit actions in the early days of Korea, but at no point was I ever given any piece of paper to read on the Korean conflict by any of my organizations, or by OCE, or by Headquarters DA, that would have prepared me. I was simply sent over.

What's available by way of lessons learned and history is never sufficiently available to the people at the time and place they need it. Of course it takes a tremendous organizational effort, as well as some expense, to bring the pertinent information to the right people early on.

If I'd been smarter when I was getting ready to go over to Korea and had called the right people or written for the right materials, I am sure I could have gotten some. But, in the rush to clear my company command in Fort Lewis, Washington, take a short leave, and get back to ship out to Korea, that fell through the cracks.

Much of what I did when I got to Korea I did not anticipate. I had no thought of being a division engineer supply officer, for example. Even if I had known the book solution on being the DESO, I never would have thought about tent kits, bunker kits, or all the other strange things we wound up doing.

The overwhelming positive lesson I learned was the great value of direct engineer support to the infantry regiments. If the regiment knew how to use the engineers, and if the engineers were not bashful in explaining their capabilities to the tactical unit commanders, they gained a great deal from the engineers' support. I was thrilled to see how well our companies worked with the regiments. That was happening when I arrived and it built up while the 7th Division stayed in Korea. That was a tremendous lesson that I think not only engineers learned, but everybody learned. Again, the word "combat multiplier" applies, although I don't ever remember that term being used at the time of the Korean War.

The engineers' supply and maintenance system did not operate as well as it should have, and there were a lot of lessons to be learned on getting the right mix and models of equipment to the right units. I'm

Soldiers of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion cross the Han River on an improvised ferry
RG 111, SC-359556

conscious of the problems with maintenance and supply because I was involved in it so much, but it was just a tough battle all the way through to get the right things to the right people at the right time.

I was always impressed with the type of combat leadership we had in the 7th Division, starting with the division commander, Maj. Gen. Arthur G. Trudeau, who was superb, right on down through the units. And, that applied across-the-board, regardless of the branch involved.

Engineers build a ponton bridge across the Imjim River, June 1951
Engineer School, 42-5-111

One disappointing lesson learned in Korea probably has been true of every combat operation in the history of warfare. The lives led by those doing the fighting differed greatly from the lives of those who were back in rear areas. It just didn't seem fair. I was disappointed that our leadership allowed such a disparity to exist.

Later, when I got to Vietnam, I found the same thing. If I'd been in combat in World War II, I might well have seen it there too. There's a pervasive psychology that tends to build up the amenities for the rear area troops, not necessarily at the expense of, but to a much greater degree than anything that's done for the forward area troops who are, after all, the cutting edge of the effort. This bothered me the whole time I was there. I always returned from a visit to the rear area feeling sort of uneasy and let down about this disparity.

One lesson that I learned was that the things that we'd been taught at the basic school at Fort Belvoir, and our basic military training, actually worked when applied properly in a field environment. There was no need to go off for a lot of ad hoc solutions to problems. The problems were all addressed in your training. If you just recalled the right training and placed it into the situation you encountered, things we had been taught worked. The methods of maintaining roads, building bridges, putting in field fortification, and using demolitions and explosives, all came right out of our basic background and training that the Army had given us.

I'm not sure whether this would apply universally, but the NCOs I encountered did a magnificent job. Our senior NCOs, with very few exceptions, were World War II people. About a third of the others were World War II veterans. Even those who weren't, I thought, did a fine job. The ones I worked with were excellent. They were capable of assuming considerable responsibility.

Another observation was the willingness of the troops to make great sacrifices and to work extremely hard, given decent leadership and guidance. All they had to know was what to do. When they were given guidance and a job to do, they did it very well.

It was a draftee Army. There were Regular Army people, but some of my finest soldiers were draftees who had absolutely no plan to make the Army a career. That would have been the farthest thing from their minds—yet, they were there to do a job and when the pressure was on those people rose to the occasion.

I was notified that I was going back to Fort Belvoir in the late winter of '53-'54. Although I went back to take the Advanced Course, I left the Advanced Course halfway through to revert to reserve status because of family business matters. I left active duty in February 1955 and returned to active duty in November 1955. Consequently, in 1957 I attended the Associate Advanced Course, which I probably would have enjoyed more if I hadn't been to Korea. Some of the things taught in the Advanced Course were very helpful, things that I had not learned in Korea. Other things were troublesome to those of us who were back from the Korean War, because they didn't jibe completely with our personal experiences.

Of course, you have to look upon this with an open mind. Your perspective depended on your experiences. The fellows who were in the division, as I was, had totally different experiences than some of the people who were back in the rear area engineer units, or on engineer staffs, e.g., Eighth Army headquarters.

There were always some cantankerous students in the Advanced Course who would try to shoot down the instructor because, "…I was in Korea and this is how it really was." That was never a fair thing to do because the Engineer School and the Army schools taught the general case. There were always exceptions where things were done differently or wouldn't have worked just that way. Some of the things I learned in the Advanced Course I wish I'd known before I went to Korea. But there was no substitute for being in the Korean War for learning how a combined arms team operates or how a division staff functions. I learned a great deal from my Korean experiences.