

Our Korean War Memoirs

(Excerpts from *Two Walk The Golden Road*)

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WILSON

On September 19, 1952, I boarded the USNS General Nelson M. Walker. Early that morning we had been roused out of our bunks at Camp Stoneman in Pittsburgh, California, and marched to the Sacramento river front where a ferry awaited our boarding. I had gone over the fence the previous evening, with a friend, and got drunk in Oakland. We'd been back and asleep for only an hour when the call came. In retrospect, I don't know how I could have carried a sixty-pound duffel through the tedium of a mass troop movement after so little sleep. We filed on board the ferry with box breakfasts in hand, stood for the three-hour trip down river and across the bay to the San Francisco Army docks, then filed off the ferry, across a pier and onto our troopship. We numbered over 6000 men representing Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force. We were stacked below decks in five-decker bunks. Most compartments had no portholes, the lights were dim, and it felt like a huge jail cell....

From Yokohama, we trooped on a train to southern Japan, Kyushu Island, Itazuki Air Base, near Fukuoka. On the way, we passed through Nagasaki. We could still see some A-bomb damage, though most had been cleaned up. I was still frustrated. My unit, 58th Air Police, was stationed in Korea, but had a detachment at Itazuki. I had to serve a term in Japan before going to Korea....

The duty was light at Itazuki. We were given charge of a group of Civilian Guards (CGs) and the task of securing the airbase. There were no combat missions being flown from here, but a few F-94 Starfighters and F-86 Sabers were deployed to escort C-47 Gooney Birds and C-52 transports to and from Korea. By then, the air over Korea was ours and enemy planes were rare. Most of the war had been fought already, and I still wasn't there. But I was having other adventures. I was discovering how it felt to be part of a conquering army....

The day came, in early December, when Scotty, Ed, and I were told to get our gear together and board a C-47 Gooney Bird that night, for a flight to Korea. We were being assigned to K-2, a major F-84 Fighter-Bomber base near Taegu.

It was a rough flight. We ran into a thunderstorm over the mountains approaching K-2, about fifteen minutes out. Suddenly, we were on an out-of-control elevator, lurching up, plunging down—and then hail hit us, which, with no insulation, made our plane a deafening drum. We couldn't hear ourselves shout. Then it was over and we were coming in. Only when we disembarked and looked back did we realize how close to death we'd been. The leading edges of the wings were battered until there were no curves left and, most disturbing of all, two cockpit windows were broken, showing large holes with jagged edges. How the pilots survived and brought us in safely is a credit that must be given to a power greater than any of us.

It was bitter cold in the wide river valley where the K-2 runway used up a full two miles of what should have been rice paddy. A constant wind blew from the north. We were assigned to old

Japanese barracks, made of wood and stucco. The stucco clung in ineffectual patches, inviting the wind to whistle through the cracks. Canvas cots lined the walls. At intervals, in the center aisle, oil stoves, set in sand boxes, glowed cherry red at night. They were inefficient, able to cast heat a few feet only. No matter which way we faced, half of us cooked, the other half froze....

We guarded the base from sabotage and guerrilla attack. My earliest posts were on the flight line, walking around parked airplanes, mostly F-84 fighter-bombers and F-80 Lightnings, the Air Force's earliest operational jet. The entire flight line was covered with what is known as PSP ramp material; punched steel panels that interlocked to form a flat, stable surface for aircraft to taxi, land, and take off on. Wonderfully effective system, but with a major drawback in cold weather; anyone walking on it in uninsulated boots could not keep their feet warm....

Our enemy was difficult to identify, but always there, close and well-camouflaged by the activities around our base. We were near Taegu, in the middle of a fertile river valley with barren, rugged mountains rising abruptly in the east. Small villages, dedicated to theft and prostitution, along with laundry and tailoring services, clustered on three sides.

The mountains were nested with guerrilla outposts from which nightly infiltrations and attacks were mounted. The men in the hills were a mixture of North Korean soldiers and South Korean bandits. But they weren't our only antagonists. The National Police, supposedly on our side, were a corrupt para-military force that cooperated with the guerrillas and let them invade for a cut of the spoils.

Sometimes our enemy was the little old lady who could carry a five-hundred-pound fuel drum on an A-Frame back-pack and disappear into a complex of rice paddies like a ghost. The enemy we couldn't see and the enemy we saw, but didn't know was our enemy, were the most dangerous.

Early in my tour, I met my first prisoners of war. The weather was blustery and cold, but not yet freezing. My sergeant told off three of us for posting to the river-bed sandbag detail. We were to relieve the guards watching a group of POWs. When we got there, the prisoners were on break. Fifteen weather-darkened men in stained, ragged, quilt uniforms hunkered on a sand-bank, smoking cigarettes. I looked them over closely. I probably stared. It was my first exposure to the enemy and I was curious. It shocked me when they returned my stare with glares so hateful the air seemed alive between us. My first reaction was dismay. It shook me to think that human beings hated me so palpably. It was not like the Pachucos, few of whom were lethal haters. These guys wanted to kill me! My defense became, I'm ashamed to say, hating back.

K-2 was a fighter-bomber base, flying daily ground-support sorties to the front. F-84s laden with two, 2000-pound bombs or a brace of rockets and napalm tanks took off, two-by-two, in groups of up to seventy-six aircraft at once. When that happened, everyone on the base watched from wherever they were with a joystick in their hands, pulling each over-loaded plane off the ground, barely clearing the low hills, then the higher hills beyond. They used every inch of the 10,000 foot runway and, in summertime, when heat reduced engine efficiency, they added JATO or Jet Assist Take Off rockets. Once in a while, a plane wouldn't make it and crashed. It usually meant death for the pilot. There was no means of ejection, he just had to ride it into the ground.

Occasionally, a pilot would survive because his plane made a relatively soft come-down in a feces-filled rice paddy. In winter, though, even the paddies were rock hard.

When planes returned, some would be shot up and unable to put down landing gear. They flopped on their bellies in the rice paddies to reduce the chance of explosion. Once, a young pilot, excited because he had managed to shoot down a MIG with his much slower, less-maneuverable fighter-bomber, made two passes over the field doing victory rolls. Then he swooped for a landing, forgetting to put down his gear. He skidded across the PSP, apparently realized what had happened, pulled back the stick and became airborne again. But his wheel panels were welded shut and he couldn't get the gear down. We all felt his acute embarrassment when he was forced to ditch in the shit.

There were many Korean civilians working on the base. They worked in the mess halls, did base maintenance chores, and hauled "night-soil" from the latrines in pony-drawn carts called "honey-buckets." A favorite ruse for getting stolen goods off-base was to hide them in false-bottomed honey-buckets. The Koreans mistakenly thought we would be too fastidious to examine a barrel of shit on wheels. They were wrong. Some of us actually enjoyed watching their faces harden impassively as we kicked the carts over, rupturing them open to reveal the loot while shit poured into the ditch. Of course we made them clean it up....

The corruption was terrific. The black market in Taegu and around the base at K-2, could provide anything you could think of for enough money, up to and including an entire F-84 made of parts salvaged from wrecks. Whenever a plane went down, the Koreans were there within minutes, salvaging everything in sight while the wreckage was still hot and smoking. We rarely got to the scene in time to salvage anything at all useful to us. Just the pilot's remains, if he didn't bail out.

Soon after arriving at K-2, I learned there was a K-9 or Guard Dog unit on the base, attached to our AP outfit. Ever since Ute, I have loved dogs. They were always my most reliable companions. I had to get into that unit. I went to my CO, Captain Marlatt, and asked to get reassigned. He told me there was little chance. It was a small, experimental unit, he said, newly-formed, with only so-many dogs. I didn't give up. I hung around the unit during my off-time, talked to the guys, and waited. I also reminded my CO, at every opportunity, of my desire to handle a dog....

Eventually, my opportunity came. One of the handlers became ill and shipped back to the states. At the same time, another ended his tour with a hardship discharge. The dogs stayed behind with the unit. The policy was that a dog, like its handler, had so many years to serve. Until those years were up, the dog stayed on duty. That meant breaking in new handlers from time-to-time; a dangerous and difficult task. When I got the news, I grabbed Scotty and we talked to Captain Marlatt. He assigned us both to the unit. The problem, now, was to get the dogs to accept us.

Our dogs were recruited in Japan and given basic training at Tachikawa. It was then up to the handlers in the field to train them as guard/attack dogs. Each dog had either one or two handlers, no more. The dogs were given "distrust" training, which consisted of staking them out on a twelve-foot chain and leaving them alone for hours. Finally, someone, not a handler, would

approach the dog and be friendly. Suddenly, that person would whip off his fatigue cap and slap the dog hard across the snout, then turn and run. The result of several iterations was to make the dog hostile toward strangers. It also built up the dog's courage, because, in every case, the attacker ran away when the dog lunged. In between attacks, his regular handler was there to soothe him and strengthen further the dog's reliance upon him alone for affection.

After a dog was suitably paranoid, the real training began. We used our animals two ways; to provide base security beyond the base perimeters and to flush out nests of guerrillas at night, when the dog's sense of smell and hearing gave us an advantage. It was all night work; very stealthy, very tense. We taught the dogs to be silent on post, to never bark and give a position away. They learned to "alert" in such a way as to indicate where the enemy was, which way he was going, and approximately how large a force. Naturally, a very strong bond of mutual dependence grew between handler and dog. To break that bond and reattach a dog to a new handler was a challenge to patience and faith.

When I first met Bodo, he was on a twelve-foot chain at the edge of the compound. When I approached, he lunged so forcefully he would have choked were his neck not a solid column of incredibly tough muscle. His bark was a grotesque rasp and his bared teeth snapped like castanets. He wanted to tear me apart. I had a bowl of food in my hand. I couldn't get it close enough for him to eat without losing a piece of me, so I used a stick to push it into his circle of effective security. Then, I stood by while he continued to rage. Finally, he tired and began eating. I stayed just out of reach, sitting on the ground, reading, looking over at him from time to time. We followed that routine for three days. Only at night did I leave him. I fed him. I watered him. I talked to him. Eventually, he began lying down near me.

One morning I felt the time had come to make my move. I was sitting in the sun, reading; Bodo lay close by, dozing. I split my mind between the sense of the book and my intent to touch Bodo. Without allowing myself any more conscious thought, I reached over and grasped his muzzle gently and massaged it with my fingers. He allowed it, so I moved my hand over his skull, feeling the ridges, sensing the nervous play of his jaw muscles. Then I withdrew my hand, but left it within reach. He pressed his wet nose into my palm and we became a team.

It was time for me to be trained by Bodo. We did it the only way it could be done; on the job. As soon as I demonstrated control over the dog, we went to work. It was always at night. At night, the dogs could "see" with their acute hearing and sensitive noses. The enemy was blind. The strategy was simple. Put a man and a dog beyond the perimeter of the base and give them a patrol area of between one-quarter and one-half a mile, depending upon terrain. Since there weren't enough teams to cover all the open area around the base, we selected posts randomly, immediately before going on duty. This kept the enemy guessing.

Man and dog patrolled silently. We moved sporadically, often taking a high vantage, when we could, and surveying large areas. We were practically undetectable, so long as we weren't moving. We practiced silence. Bodo never barked, I never gave an audible command. Every communication was through the leash or my hands. When Bodo detected something, he would "alert" by pulling against the leash in the direction of the disturbance. The strength with which he pulled and his general intensity told me how many and which way they were moving. I never

used Bodo to attack, though he was trained to do so. It was too dangerous to send a valuable dog up against a group of armed men. He could raise a lot of hell, but he could also get hurt in the melee.

Typically, when we detected a band of infiltrators, we would pick a point of cover ahead of them and challenge, if the group was small. They would generally turn back with protestations of innocence; “Hey! It’s okay. Friends! Just walking!” They knew I had a dog and Koreans, for some reason, appeared to be very afraid of our dogs. Very few had been chewed up, but I suspect there was some cultural reason I don’t know about. If the group was large, we could use a walkie talkie to summon help, or a field phone if one happened to be near by. Often, however, the walkie-talkie didn’t work and the only option was to fire shots of alarm. Three rounds in succession was the signal. If there was no response, I was in trouble.

The Rocket storage area, a series of sheds, lay behind a mountain honey-combed with caves in which we kept bombs. On that post, I had a mountain between me and the base. Walkie-talkies did not work at all. As usual, I was lightly armed, with a forty-five carried in a shoulder holster, because working the dogs required both hands be free. It was before dawn. Bodo and I were traversing a slope, with the mountain behind us and the rocket sheds below in a small valley, when Bodo stopped and alerted intensely in the direction of the opposite slope. We were in one of the few remaining peach groves in South Korea. I was thankful I had followed some good advice and was carrying many, many full clips of ammunition. I must have made a noise. The enemy knew we were somewhere in the grove and fired in our direction. To keep them pinned down and away from the sheds, I fired at their muzzle flashes, then moved quickly to a new position while they fired back. We kept a sort of low-intensity fire-fight going until dawn, when they disappeared into the mountains. It was a tough night.

There was one particular post none of us wanted. It was usually uneventful until the early morning hour when the sun was not yet up, but the light was enough for a sniper with an old .25 caliber Japanese long-range rifle, to fire at us. He once caught me walking the curb between two flooded rice paddies. I heard the “blup” of the slug hitting the water before I heard the faint crack of the rifle. I had no choice but to hit the shit. The paddy was liberally fertilized with night soil. Man and dog came off post covered with stink. They hosed out the six-by that carried us back to the unit as soon as we arrived. No one would come near us until we had washed thoroughly. I think it was then that I picked up a fungus that still bothers me today.

Complicating our lives were the National Police. They were totally corrupt and, for a cut of the spoils, would let infiltrators through their posts which were often adjacent to ours. They would even provide pin-down fire, to give their buddies a shot at getting through us. Ironically, we were tasked with posting them. We provided a driver and six-by truck every evening and carried them to their posts before putting out our own teams. We also provided liaison. One of us had to spend the night at NP headquarters just in case any of our GIs got tangled up with them.

After a while, I figured they were on our side against the North Koreans, but on their own side when it came to graft and corruption. The trouble arose in distinguishing between a North Korean guerrilla and a South Korean bandit. During my tour, Syngman Ree, South Korean President, for a reason I’ve never heard articulated, released 40,000 North Korean prisoners of

war into the South Korean countryside. They joined bandit groups and, just to survive, started an intense campaign of raids on military installations and civilian villages.

How tight the NPs were with these bands I do not know. I suspect the relationship was one of expediency and business. If there was no bribe, they could be very tough on captured infiltrators. I was present when a North Korean soldier was brought into our headquarters by the NPs and interrogated. The NP lieutenant, a dapper, well-groomed, thoroughly evil man who smiled too much, made the prisoner stand with his knees bent for a long time. Whenever he tried to straighten them, the lieutenant gave him a backhand with a gloved hand. The glove was a torture device, lined with lead weights and padded inside, so he could deliver a stunning blow without injuring himself. When the man's knees were shaking uncontrollably, the questions began.

He was stubborn. Though I didn't understand many words, it was clear he wasn't giving answers. For each refusal he received a brutal slap to the face, until the flesh over his cheekbones became so swollen it split of its own accord. He eventually passed out and was revived several times before they took him away, presumably for execution. To say we condoned that wouldn't be accurate. But my sense was that the NPs had, by agreement, total control over Korean prisoners and we were not to interfere.

Our interrogations were different—and more effective. When we took a prisoner, we also took advantage of the inexplicable Korean fear of dogs. First, we locked him in a narrow kennel for few hours and let him listen to chained dogs barking and growling in the compound around him. Then, a handler and dog with a Korean interrogator would enter the kennel. The dog would lunge, and snap, and bark, and growl in a rage to get at the man. The prisoners invariably melted with fear, babbling answers to every question.

In many ways, the NPs reflected the worst side of war, which, in my opinion, is the brutalization of individuals. I became an angry, violent person for a time. So did my dog, made paranoid by distrust training. But, at the time, shocks only thickened my skin. The most casual homicide I witnessed was when, as part of my liaison duty with the NPs, I accompanied the smiling lieutenant on his rounds. In the hills footing the eastern mountains, we came upon one of his men, asleep, leaning against a gravestone, a beat-up carbine resting on his open hands. The Lieutenant asked me to take the man's weapon. I did. The man didn't awaken. The Lieutenant drew his forty-five and shot him, without hesitation, in the head, then took the carbine from me and walked away. I was stunned. I could say nothing. It took days to absorb what had happened.

Where corruption abounded, I also found decency. One night, again on liaison with the NPs, I sat reading in their headquarters, a stuccoed single-story structure in a small grove of willows. The locale was pleasant -- a quiet, tree-shaded oasis. The activities spawned there were not. With me were the lieutenant, two of his men, an old papa-san with a black, box-like hat made of a stiffened, open-weave fabric, and a young boy who did errands. I had trouble concentrating on my book because the boy chewed his gum loudly with an open mouth. That was the way Koreans chewed everything, with open mouths and lots of noise -- denoting gusto, I suppose. I had gum with me, so I took out a stick, put it in my mouth and drew his attention to how I chewed, mouth closed and silent. He knew a little English, but only a little. Most of our

communication was by signs. He got it, though, and, to my surprise, tried to emulate my way of chewing. I was not conscious of my arrogance.

An old woman was brought in. She'd been caught stealing and not, evidently, had the sense or the resource to bribe her captors. I have mentioned the lieutenant several times and always in the context of violence and brutality. Yet, to me, the man was always very polite, even unctuous. As soon as the old lady was brought before him, he struck out viciously. She stumbled back and sat hard on the floor, too surprised to even yelp. I jumped up shouting, "Chungee," which meant halt in Korean. The NP officer looked surprised, but held his hand. I helped the woman up and told her to leave. She didn't understand, but the boy knew what I was trying to say. He translated and she ran out the door. The Lieutenant said nothing. I had insulted him before his men by overriding his authority, and he was pissed. But helpless. I thought about his situation and apologized for my hasty action, though not sorry at all. He told me "No sweat," but it was obvious it rankled him. Tough shit.

I went back to my book and the boy went into conference with the old man, who had been sitting quietly in the corner. The boy left the room. Some time later, he reappeared with a raw egg in his hand, a great treasure, and gave it to me with the words, "You are a gentleman." That's what the old man had told him; the English equivalent for a Korean gentleman.

I had to accept the egg even though I knew the sacrifice it represented. But I wanted to reciprocate. I had an idea. With the awl attachment to my jackknife, I carefully poked a hole in one end. Then, with very evident relish, I sucked its contents and swallowed. I used a ballpoint pen to draw a likeness of the boy on the unbroken surface of the egg and gave it back. He was delighted—and so was I. There was a precious happiness in that instance of exchanged goodness that has helped sustain my faith in people ever since.

That same boy made me aware of the finest example of quiet selflessness I was to encounter in that country, or anywhere else, for that matter. The property on the north side of the NP compound was a farm run by an old man and his wife. It consisted of two sheds, a farmhouse, and a separate cook house with huge kimchee jars (for fermenting cabbage) ranged around the entrance. The farmhouse basement was converted from a storage cellar to a bunkhouse for orphans. The old man and his wife, with practically no means, were taking in wandering groups of homeless children and putting them up as best they could. When I saw it, the bunkhouse floor was under three inches of water from the spring thaw. The kids had to wade to a wide bench along one wall which was their sleeping pallet. The boy, Kim, had been one of those rescued by the farmer and his wife. He'd found work and food with the NPs, but wanted to help the other children who had barely enough to eat and practically no clothing.

Early in my tour, in the dead of winter, I had come across two boys wrapped in each others' arms in a tiny scrap wood and cardboard shack, dead of cold and hunger. There were so many youngsters wandering around, stealing to live, that helping them seemed hopeless. Occasionally, we'd catch one and put him to work in the compound. We'd feed him hot meals and give him lumber to build a decent shelter. But none of them stuck around for long. They wandered off, looking for family or something that offered a little security. Lucky ones found the farmer.

I wrote a letter to my family in Berkeley, telling them of the orphans, the sacrifices made by the farmer and his wife, and asked specifically for clothing which all the children needed desperately. The letter was published in the Berkeley Gazette. David, my brother, had a part-time job as assistant manager for a local movie theater. He talked his boss into a Saturday afternoon matinee; the price of admission being clothing for the Korean orphans. It was a huge success in ways we could never have anticipated.

One afternoon, I was awakened from an uneasy sleep in the summer's heat and told to get on down to the base post office, a tiny building used for processing letters and the occasional package. When I got there, the guys in charge were stacking boxes in great piles outside the door. There was no more room inside. Every box was addressed to me. I went to my CO for help. He authorized me to requisition a jeep and a trailer. Then I got Scotty and the two of us loaded boxes until the jeep and the trailer were heaped. Scotty spread-eagled over the mound on the trailer to keep it from falling off and we set out for the farm.

It was the greatest feeling in the world to roll into that farmyard with heaps of unexpected treasure and see the amazed faces of the farm couple, then the kids, as they gathered to open the boxes. As soon as we started, we realized what a great treasure we had. We had expected children's clothing. But there was also a huge quantity of adult clothing, including precious shoes, furs, overcoats, fancy formal dresses, and more. All the stuff the kids couldn't use, we set aside. A plan was forming.

The black market thrived throughout Korea. One of the pressing needs of our ad-hoc orphanage was for a dormitory, to get the kids out of that wet basement. Looking at the unusable clothing, we realized we had something the black market would pay dearly for. Real, high-toned, high-quality, western clothes.

We stored our trade goods in a shed while we set about learning how to get it onto the black market. Kim helped me out there. He knew who to put me with. Again, I requisitioned a jeep and trailer and, with a young Korean who knew his way around Taegu and its sub-rosa enterprises, rolled into the big city to do business. He was a wonder. He knew every market in Taegu and guided me to areas few GIs ever saw. It was my first trip to Taegu and I enjoyed the energy of the whole venture tremendously. I especially admired my guide's enterprising spirit. I think he felt honored to be asked to put his survival skills to work helping other people.

We came back that evening with enough building materials, in hand and arranged for, to construct a real dormitory. Clothing kept arriving, we kept selling, and soon we had stores of rice and other staples, our dormitory, a playground with a wooden slide, and, thanks to additional help from the Special Services people, two first-class ping-pong tables and plenty of paddles and balls. We taught those kids to play and soon they were wiping our noses. Since then, perhaps just a little because of us, the Koreans have distinguished themselves as world champion ping-pong players.

Many people helped us once the word got out. Before I left, we were able to achieve some kind of official status and set up permanent funding through a church organization in the states.

I really needed that activity as a counterpoint to the deadly, exhausting routine of nightly patrols. Night work was nervous work, and I never felt fully confident that support would be there when I needed it. The fire-fight in the bomb dump had made me wary.

I suppose my experience of Korea was not unlike that of most other GIs. We knew something about what we were exposed to. Very few of us had access to the large picture, the political setting. They called our war a "police action." We chuckled over a cartoon showing blue-uniformed cops lined up on the battle front on motorcycles in the *Stars & Stripes*, a paper published by the armed services. Beyond that, we knew next to nothing of its genesis or the home politics that drove our armies to fight one another.

And we were several armies. I encountered British Tommies, East Indian Sikhs, Turks, Aussies, South Africans. I had two occasions to go on town patrol with the Army MPs in Taegu. A wild town, full of bistros, whorehouses, restaurants, and a volatile mix of soldiers and airmen. The Tommies were a tough bunch, ready to fight at the drop of a beret. The Turks had a reputation for fierceness in battle, as did the Sikhs. But then, everything said about combat in bars tended to be apocryphal; like the Turk who, when his arm was blown off, was said to have picked it up and clubbed the enemy to death with it. "I swear! I saw it!" Maybe so.

Most of what I saw on patrol was sad. Soldiers got blitzed, their money stolen, picked up diseases, went mad. One night we picked up a youngster who had drunk what was known as JP4 gin, a concoction derived from jet fuel. He was violently self-immolative. He wanted to rip his face off with his finger nails. I spent hours sitting on him, holding his hands, until we could locate a strait jacket. The best I could make of his ramblings was that he had deliberately drunk the stuff to kill himself. His buddy had left him alone to shack up with a whore in town. He couldn't handle it. I think his spirit had huddled against another's and couldn't face madness alone.

I saw iron-barred cages full of prostitutes picked up in a sweep. We knew they'd be back on the streets the next night. Nothing we did could influence the corruption all around us. It was driven by the instinct of survival. It was a way of making the best of a bad thing; war. Not all people reacted that way, but certainly those who gathered in cities and new villages clustered around military installations. The so-called laundries that sprouted around K-2 like weeds were laundries second, whorehouses first. Having one's laundry done and enjoying the body of a woman at the same time was normal drill for many. Gonorrhoea was rampant. I once saw a GI sitting on the edge of his bunk, reading a letter from home and soaking his perforated penis in a peanut-can of potassium permanganate solution.

Perhaps being an AP and having so much exposure to the after-effects of a good time, deterred me; but I saved my whoring for the certified prostitutes of Japan, when I could get there on R & R. That only happened once, but I had a great time in Fukuoka. I chose Fukuoka because I was familiar with the town and its offerings to GIs. I drank, but not much. I whored, every night....

Back in Korea: When summer came, so did heat and sleeplessness. Our work with the dogs was entirely at night, except for training. During the day, we pulled extra duty running bombs from a railhead to the bomb dump. In fact, the road to the bomb dump ran right by our K-9 compound.

Trucks running back and forth often disrupted training and we had to build a tall fence out of steel ramping material. One more use for the PSP. In fall and winter, we slept well during the few hours we could grab in our tents; but when summer came, the heat threatened to choke us on our cots. The base water line ran through our compound and one of the guys, a plumber in civilian life, found a way to tap directly into it and set up a sort of shower, using radiator hoses draped over a barbed wire fence. We sat on bomb-fin crates and dozed, slumped under streams of cool water. We all hurt for sleep and nerves were raw....

On July 27, 1953, the truce was signed at Pan Mun Jom and Scotty and Eddie and I boarded a C-124 that was to take us from the Korean battlefield to Tachikawa, Japan. I felt horrible. So did Scotty. We couldn't take our dogs. We'd tried everything, every possible appeal. Even Captain Marlatt was unable to help us. Both of us were crying. We were abandoning creatures who loved us, had protected us, had literally saved our lives over and over. We suffered. I still suffer when I think of leaving Bodo. I have since left another Bodo, under similar circumstances, when events pried us apart. It still hurts to think of them waiting for me. I will always hope they really can forget more easily than I.

MING-FU

Korea was a beautiful country, but the Korean battlefield the cruelest. In that small country, there were over five million troops on both sides. On March 18, 1951, at six PM, we Chinese infantry walked across the Yalu bridge between An Tang and a Korean city which had been destroyed by heavy bombs. We each carried 30-kilogram packs. We would spend over 1000 days and nights there that I would remember forever.

People would later say that those were the days of my glory. Sometimes, though, I thought that the situation was very tough. A man who had grown up in the old China like me, and had done many good deeds for the new China, was strongly idealistic. I was very patriotic.

We could sleep only in the daytime and marched all night. We carried heavy burdens on the long march to the 38th parallel. It was different, however, than the Long March of 1935. They didn't have danger every minute. We counted our lives in minutes, not days. The "Paper Tiger" seemed like an iron tiger or a steel tiger, when we saw all the bumps and hollows made by enemy bombs on the other side of the Yalu River bridge.

We walked no less than fifty kilometers a night. On the third night I was too tired to move. On the fourth night, I stayed up at first. We had crossed another river and been bombed and strafed all day and night and I was very tired. I fell behind. But I dared not stop -- Korea was strange and we had no food to eat.

The fifth morning found me alone with a Korean interpreter. We came to a hut where there was an old woman alone sitting in one corner. The interpreter talked with her. I took off my shoes and found my feet covered with blisters. The old woman said some kind words in her language about how bad my feet were. I gave her my wet shoes and socks and put on fresh ones from my military bag. I then said goodbye and left.

From the top of a hill, we saw a Korean spy using a colored cloth to signal enemy aircraft. We walked down the hill to a village. We were very hungry and went into a hut where our own troops were staying to find food. When we took food from their pot, they seized us as spies. We told them the truth, but the cooks didn't believe us until an officer came and the problem was solved. Very funny.

The aircraft were after us constantly as we walked the roads. We were easy to see by the pilots because they flew so low. We could see them very clearly. On the way to the front we saw old folks and children who had been shot by the planes. We hated the U.S. troops very much. After walking 100 kilometers, we caught up with the main force.

As soon as the political director saw me, he had the mule driver put me on the mule's back. The unit was about to start off. I knew the mule was for the commander's sleeping bag. I couldn't sit well on its back. The driver waked me now and then. Sometime during my ride, someone took my backpack. Later, the driver told me it had been thrown into a truck which carried food and medicine for headquarters. When we arrived at our camp, I looked for my bag. The bag and the truck had disappeared.

I was tired. Again I fell behind. I had to go with other stragglers in a collecting unit. There were intellectuals there, both male and female. All of them had joined in Chungking. We traveled in twos and threes, sleeping in ruined huts. It was enough to have a wall and piece of roof. We dared not disturb the Koreans. Sometimes we had food, sometimes we were hungry. We traveled through several villages ruined by bombs.

At the end of March, the trees began to turn green. Everywhere we could hear birds singing. The streams murmured when there were no aircraft passing overhead with sharp voices. How quiet and peaceful the Korean countryside could be. There were peasant women in white laboring in the fields. We worried about them being shot by enemy aircraft. We had no mind for beauty on the way to the front. I loved Korea very deeply. We considered the only correct thing for us to do was to fight the invaders under the holy banner of "Resist America and Aid Korea."

It took us twenty-four days to reach the front -- others only sixteen days. We finally arrived and met our friends. We had overcome that first difficult step.

It was hard preparing to fight. With the long distance to the rear, military supplies were slow. In the daytime, we dug aircraft shelters. At night, we carried supplies to a place ten kilometers away. Because I was an English teacher, my main job was to teach fighters how to use English on the battlefield. Frankly, teaching was hard. We used the open forest as a classroom. There were air raids close by. We taught such words as: stop, hands up, don't move, lay down your arms, we won't kill you, and we are kind to POWs.

More than ninety percent of our fighters came from rural areas. Many could not write their names. It was difficult for them to learn English. But they were diligent. They practiced over and over. Most could speak two sentences -- Hands up! Stop!

Being an English teacher, I was a favorite among the fighters. Although an intellectual, I wore the same uniform, ate the same food, and lived in the same places. I was easy to talk to. Because I accepted the communist teaching, I decided to do what Chairman Mao wanted and mingled with the workers and peasants.

I was a common youth from the Old China. I was one of the first university students of the new China. When the government wanted me, I threw away my pen and wore a uniform. Without any training, I went to the battlefield with other soldiers. I thought I had a patriotic heart and wanted to save our motherland in danger. I served in the army in Korea in a reconnoiter company. I lived with scouts. I loved the Korean people and talked with them about their lives whenever I could to promote good relations between our countries. Like other volunteers, I helped them with their work.

I wasn't lazy. I risked danger to teach people how to master battlefield expressions. I took care of documents. I put through telephone wire when it was destroyed by shells. I liked singing revolutionary songs. If there was a chance to act, I always enjoyed doing so with the fighters.

I could write, so a lot of fighters asked me to write letters to their families for them. I taught a commander math in more than six hundred hours. At last, a semi-literate person like him could get to the level of an elementary student. Later, he passed his examination for the military institute.

In May, 1951, I entered the enemy lines to "catch some tongues" who could give us information. I collected documents from enemy camps abandoned in retreat.

Not long after, we captured three black Americans. In a downpour, I hurried to the place they were kept. I met them in a tunnel. Being cold in the bad weather, they shrank themselves together near a fire made of sticks. One of them was holding a can of butter. They looked at me with dull eyes, then looked away, as if afraid to provoke me. I explained our POW policy and promised to find a truck to send them to the rear. I told them they had nothing to fear. One of them said they belonged to the 45th Infantry Division and their troops might be in retreat to Seoul.

One night, we found a western woman, dead. No doubt she served in the American army for she wore a uniform. We were very sorry for her. We buried her in a hurry, with humanism, and were after the enemy as fast as possible.

At the end of July, 1951, I was told about a pilot shot down and captured. He was five miles away. I went there to help understanding. He was sitting outside a Korean hut when I saw him. He'd been with our men several days on the way to the rear. He seemed to have no fear; instead he was proud of something. He had a watch and our cooks often asked him the time before cooking for the company. He thought our army a poor one because of that.

Our soldiers had never seen someone like him, so they crowded around and watched his actions. When I spoke to him in English, he complained. "I have two arms and two legs like them. I do not like them to do that." He drew a circle on the ground with a stick. I understood him and told him he was a POW and it was our policy not to kill or insult him. I asked him, "Why can't we

have a look at what we have captured? We are curious. Don't be so proud." He was finally convinced we wouldn't take away his personal property. Whenever he asked for steamed bread, the cook tried to give it to him.

He was eager to know whether he would be sent to Siberia for hard labor. I told him he was cheated by his superior for that nonsense. Then he saw a pencil in my pocket and asked for it to keep a diary. I gave it to him without hesitation. I didn't think it would give me trouble when I reported to my superior. I was criticized for helping him write military secrets to be sent out. I didn't understand that, since our policy was not to confiscate any prisoner's personal belongings, including pens or pencils. I also wondered why we should be afraid he would send something out.

It was hard to spend daybreak to deep night in Korea. The long fighting tired us out. There were floods and lives lost. The cruel war got on everyone's nerves. I had been a Christian and hated it. Once, I was at the front. It was a very cold night, in January of 1953. With some others, I ran out to fetch back wounded from in front of the enemy lines. The bullets flew over our heads. Shells exploded near us. The machine gun of an enemy tank made us a target. I wasn't afraid -- I was exhausted trying to pull a dead soldier across a frozen river covered with snow. Dead bodies were very heavy when frozen in winter.

One afternoon, we saw a fighter plane shot down and its pilot jump out. We found him quickly because volunteers were everywhere. We did what we could for him, but he didn't say a word. He seemed hopeless and waiting for death. We sent him to the rear without any hurt or insult.

It might have been a day in February. I can still remember when three American soldiers were sent to our headquarters. They were in a communication corps and told us they were captured while erecting wires. Of course, at first, they were afraid of being killed. We explained we were the People's Army-- that every captive who put down his arms would be treated well.

They liked to talk with me. One was only nineteen. He touched his jaw with his palm and told me with humor that our barber had given him a shave. I had never seen a man smile as heartily as he. I thought he was lucky to be our POW and worried that he might be shot by his own aircraft on the way to the rear. We gave them some candy, which was the first we'd had since coming to Korea. Our supply lines were often destroyed by the enemy air force. They were very grateful. They admired our soldiers with their high speed in fighting. They said they didn't know whether we were Korean or Chinese at first.

When they heard they would be sent to the rear, they were afraid they would be attacked by the Korean people. We comforted them and kept them company for miles. When I saw them off, I thought that war brought people a great deal of pain. I wondered for what reason should we fight each other? Only a few capitalists got the benefit from war. Most people died without knowing for what.

On July 27, 1953, it was a pleasing day for all peoples. Not only us, but the enemy. At ten in the night, the cease-fire would go into effect. I can still remember that moment. It was suddenly quiet. At that time, we were several kilometers behind the front. I laid on the ground, using

several raincoats as a tent -- just room enough for me. I looked up at the faint moon in the sky. Suddenly, there was a quiet place around me. It was so quiet, I felt the place where I was unfit for me. I had been in Korea 859 days. I would never forget them. They were days of no rest from the noise of rifles, bombs, and guns. I was a witness to those days that gave people much pain and sorrow.

Once, I picked up a photo of a baby from a dead American. What a lovely baby it was! Did he or she know its father was killed by a dreadful war?

Other bad news from the front: a lot of our wounded soldiers were “seized” by B-50 bombers. That meant many bombers flew over from Japan and dropped all their bombs in one narrow place. We called it “seizing in one way”. The dead comrades-in-arms had gone, leaving their parents, brothers and sisters. They could do nothing forever. No matter who they were, they were human beings. For what should we fight each other? Let’s stop all kinds of war. Let’s live in peace. Let’s be happy for those who survived. As soon as I thought of my comrade Chen Jao-xi, who had gone forever, I felt quite sorry.

The second day after cease-fire, our troops retreated. The day was fine and the sun shone on the earth brightly. We marched in large numbers on the highway. No noise of guns. None could enjoy such a precious, peaceful moment if he or she hadn’t been on the battlefield...

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