

Ranger Lew Villa

SUMMER 1944

Red McConnell, my high school friend called today and said, "Spang's Steel Mill was hiring school kids to work this summer." I told him that I wasn't 16. He said, "your big enough, God you have been shaving since you were 10" So I called Spang's and they said to report to work in the morning. I was off to work with no idea of what I got myself into, scared as hell, but I was going to do my best. The work was hard, hot and dirty. At the end of my first 2 weeks, it was payday. 80 hours of work at 55 cents an hour came to 44 dollars minus 4 dollars for assorted items. I felt great, a 15 year old kid with 40 dollars in my pocket. I got home as fast as I could, to show my Mom the money and gave her 20 dollars. Life was great, I had a job, money that I earned and was doing something for the war effort.

God, life was good!

MARCH 1945

On the 17th of March, Saint Patrick's Day, I celebrated my 16th birthday. Right after school I hurried down to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation was given a physical and was told to report for work after school tomorrow the 18th. The J.L. Steel Corporation was started in Aliquippa in 1907 and poured its first steel ingot in 1909. In 1945 when I started, the mill ran for 7 miles along the Ohio River and had more than 14,000 employees; it was the third largest steel company in the United States. The first job given to me by the foreman (John Huffine) was to paint the water fountains. He gave me a can of green paint, a paintbrush and I was off. I did exactly what he told me to do; I painted not only the outside but all the chrome parts too. Four hours later, I had two coats of oil base paint on five of those suckers Crazy John if he had given me a superior recommendation as he ran after me trying to put his foot up my ass.

The Seamless was the dirtiest place I had ever seen. The clatter was so loud that if you had something to say, you used sign language or screamed in the person's ear you were trying to communicate with. You had no lunch break. You ate on the run. I reported to my new foreman, Steve Walko. The men that worked for him called him (Bull-Neck). There is no need to describe what he looked like. He put his 4 foot long arm around my shoulder and said in Ape talk grunting "if you work hard, keep your my nose to the grind stone and stay out of beer joints, in 25 or 30 years you could be standing in this very spot, Telling some young man this very same story." I grunted "thank you." It forever amazed me how in that very short time Bull-Neck recognized my leadership ability. My new line of work was called a hooker. Sometime later, when I found out what a hooker did for a living, I felt we both had something in common, making a living the hard way. Work description of a Hooker: take a one and a half inch steel cable, throw it around a stack of 14 inch (diameter) pipe that was 20 feet long, hook the cables to an overhead crane and follow the lift to a stacking area that was 20 feet high. Then you would go back and do the same thing over and over. Sometimes you went to where the pipe was stacked and took a lift off and then you take it to a Cut-Off machine where the pipe was cut in 30 inch pieces that were used as part of an aerial bomb. The job had one great thing going for it, 30 young lady inspectors in slacks and half of them 18 or 19 years old. They didn't know I was alive, nevertheless I sure knew they were. It's a miracle I did not lose my eyesight. I was being paid 68 cents an hour now, 5 dollars and 44 cents a day.

God, life was good!

MAY 6, 1945

The war in Europe was over. I have never seen so many people so cheerful at one moment in time. A foreman said, let's leave and out of the mill we walked. Up Franklin Avenue (the main street in Aliquippa) marched hundreds led by someone carrying an American flag, a good day to be alive. It was back to work the next day, still a hooker and still manufacturing bombs. I worked all summer full time, then it was back to school in September and then part time, three days during the week and all day Saturday and Sunday.

God, life was good!

AUGUST 14, 1945

World War 2 was over, Japan surrendered and J&L was a totally different place to work, no more making parts for bombs. All of its energy went into the building of civilian products, just as it had in the making of those damn bombs, hour after hour, week after week and month after month, year after year. I have no idea how many parts of bombs the Seamless Tube produced but it had to be in the hundreds of thousands. The girls were gone too and I went back to school and back to just working week ends.

1946 BASEBALL and the WAR

April started spring training for the high school baseball team. In 1945 the team finished number two in the state. I said to myself, "go for it." and so I did. I was always a half decent hitter. During an inter team game, a sailor home on furlough who pitched in the

minor leagues before going into Navy was pitching against us. Damn didn't the first time I came to bat I hit a double off him! I made the team and what a team it turned out to be. We won the Western Pennsylvania championship; one of our players was picked to play for the U.S. All Stars. The game was to be play at Polo Grounds, the home of the New York Giants.

The businessmen in Aliquippa decided that the whole team should go to New York; they paid for the transportation, hotel rooms, and meals and gave us spending money. A seventeen-year-old kid in New York, could life be any better? We went on to play for the State Championship at Scheib Park, the home of the Philadelphia Athletics. It was a 3 game series, we won the first, they won the second and third. It was still a great summer, one that I'll never forget. I only worked the weekends but that still put money in my pocket. It was time to go back to school, and working 3 nights a week as a hooker and pushing a broom on the week ends. God, life was good!

1947

The men from the military started to come back to work and I was cut back to working just the weekends. There were over 50 of the high school guys, plus the G.I.'S that were attending college who also worked the weekends. What an enjoyable time to be alive. One of the ex Sergeants would give us close order drill. We used our brooms and shovels as if they were rifles. The ex Sergeant would shout out "right shoulder arms, left shoulder arms, present arms" and on and on. Then it was time to learn to march. There wasn't enough money in the world to see the laughter and entertainment we had on those weekends. The best part was the Sergeant was serious. He was going to whip us worthless dumb ass school kids into the best broom and shovel marching unit in J&L. I think he was certifiable insane but I treasured his friendship.

June came at last and I was out of school forever. I began to work 5 days a week at one dollar an hour. However it was back to being a hooker, (I despised that word), working three shifts, one week of 8 AM till 4 PM, a week of 4 PM till 12 PM and a week of 12AM till 8 AM. This turn was a killer. I had never stayed up all night in my life. I did all right till about 6 AM and then it was a continuous struggle to keep from falling a sleep. In November I spoke to Joe Allen, (my brother Marv worked for him at one time), or I should say pleaded, cried and begged to get me off this job. I told him "being called a hooker the rest of my life was more of a burden than I could manage." Mr. Allen was the head of all the clerks in the Seamless and the Welded Tube Mills. Talk about fate he said, "I have a 74 year old man who was finally going to retire and the job pays one dollar and twenty five cents a hour, 10 dollars a day! Lord I thought I died and went to heaven.

I went to Bull Neck and, in Ape talk, I grunted, "I won't be able to take the supervisor's job that you felt I was going to acquire in 25 or 30 years." The new job was wonderful. I had a stand up desk, a pencil, a piece of paper and a scale that could weigh 10,000 pounds and a bench made of wood that I sat on to eat my lunch. All I had to do was weigh every 10th pipe and then write the weight on the piece of paper.

God, life was good!

AUGUST 1948

Things were going great till one night when I was working the 12 to 8 shift, about 2 am in the morning, I started to think about how many more years I had to work before I would be eligible to retire. With my trusted genuine # 2 brown in color J&L pencil I wrote the figure 65 down (the youngest age you could retire) and under that, the figure 19, (my age at that time), subtracted both numbers and came up with the 46. This number plus the 3 years I had previously worked, and the number 49 was staring at me. After I picked my ass up off the floor I said to myself "Lewis get your ass out of here and into the Army.

At 9 am I was standing in front of the Recruiting Station. I signed the required papers, the recruiter checked my height and then my weight 127 pounds, 3 pounds too light. I asked, "What can I do?" His answer was "go home and eat bananas." I bought 10 pounds and stuffed myself. An additional benefit was not moving my bowels for two days. That was on Friday I went back on Monday, got on the scale. It registered 131 pounds. I never went back to tell Joe Allen I resigned or say farewell to my buddies or even clean out my locker. That oversight would never happen again.

AUGUST 15th 1948

I got on a train in Pittsburgh to Fort Breckinridge, Kentucky to start basic training. I arrived very late at night. As I got off the train and lined up to be marched to the Mess Hall, I felt something touching my face it was so dark I had to hold out my hand to see what it was, it felt like shrubbery. I assumed the engineer must have stopped the train in the wrong place. We marched to the Mess Hall and went in one at a time, picked up a metal tray, knife, fork and a coffee mug. I noticed a very large pot, actually the largest pot I had ever seen, with lots of steam coming out of it. I slid my tray down the line and a man dressed in white stuck a huge fork into this large pot. He pulled out 2 very white boiled, not broiled, pork chops. I said to the man in the white suit, "No thank you, I'm not hungry." He looked in pain at my refusal to accept his disgusting white pork chops. Actually, I was starved. Later in my Army career, I found these men in white suits had many names, none good, but the one I thought was a mark of distinction was Belly Robbers!

The next 3 weeks did not get any better. The camp closed down just before WW 2 ended. The things that were touching my face the night before, turned out to be grass that had not been cut in 3 years. There had to be 1,000 men in that Camp and only 1 Mess Hall. I thought things couldn't get any worst, they did. No uniforms! That meant the clothes that I was wearing the extra pair

of socks, and under shorts was all I had to wear for 2 weeks. We finely received our clothing, but another problem came up, no hangers! But our sergeant solved this problem by selling us hangers for 5 cents each. Great guy when you consider he could have charged 10 cents for each one.

At that time and place the Army decided we only needed 6 weeks of basic training. That was only enough time to be trained to march, fire a rifle and make a bed the Army way. I never fired another weapon or saw one fired. Basic was over in early October. It was time to see the Sergeant Major and find out what school I was going to attend. I went into his office with another man who happened to be from my hometown. The Sergeant said, "I have 2 openings for Meat Inspector's School, that is a 6 months course in Chicago." Fred, the man who was with me, took it. I told the Sergeant "No thank you, I want to go to parachute school." He looked at me in disbelief. In hindsight, I should have gone to school with Fred. He spent 25 years in the Army and the heaviest thing he had to pick up was a stamp that said, "PASSED, U.S. GOVERNMENT INSPECTED". When Fred retired from the Army, he went to work for the Armor Meat Packing Company. That was the first of 3 huge mistakes I was to make in my life.

EARLY OCTOBER 1948

While waiting to go to jump school, I was given the privilege of keeping the stoves fired in a number of Mess Halls. This job proved to be great; by the time I left to go to school I weighted 160 pounds. I was living in a barracks with 5 screwballs that were getting out of the Army as Section 8's. (mentally unsuitable for service.) The place was a mad house. It had no heat, no water, and we slept with everything the Army issued plus 2 mattresses on top of us. To give an example of the people I was living with, one day after firing the stoves, I came into the barracks to find one of the nuts with his ear against the wall. After 30 minutes of watching, I went to get the First Sergeant and told him about the mad man with his ear against the wall. He came back with me and asked the nut, "Just what the hell are you doing?" The man replied, "listening," and gestured for the Sergeant to put his ear against the wall. The Sergeant did after a full minute; the sergeant said, "I don't hear a damn thing." The nut replied, "I know, it's been like that all day." The Sergeant and I both laughed so hard we damn near fell on the floor. This is a true story.

It was now late October and, with orders in hand, I was off to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia.

PARACHUTE SCHOOL

I got off the train, on a bus and got off at the Parachute School Office. I walked into the office, up to the desk and gave my name, rank and serial number to the best dressed soldier I seen in the short time that I've been in the Army. The Sergeant assigned me to a barracks. As I walked out of the office door, another Sergeant took one look at me. He decided he didn't like what he saw and said, "Leg get down and give me 10." (Leg is any non-jumper and 10 were push-ups). As I was going through school someone was always screaming, "Leg give me 10." By the time I graduated, I had figured the reason it was always 10 was that neither the Officers nor the Sergeants who ran the school were able to count past 10!

At the time I went to Jump School it was 6 weeks long. The 1st week was glider training learning, how to lash down all kind of Army equipment from jeeps, ammunition, 75 MM pack howitzers and everything else that could be squeezed into that glider (CG 4A). It was also used to carry 15 men. On Friday of the first week, I took my first glider ride I was to have two more during my Army career. I won't try to describe what the ride was like but the front of my pants were wet but I still blame the man sitting next to me.

The next 5 weeks was running, push-ups and more physical training. It was much more then you would ever need, unless your plans were to someday run around the planet. Next was jumping from a 34-foot tower that was built to resemble the back-end of an airplane (C-47). You were strapped into a parachute harness, which was attached to a 15-foot rope (static line) that, in turn was hooked to a cable and pulley. You then jumped, falling 15 feet. At the end of the fall I thought I lost my manhood. You did this over and over, too many times to count, I was told more men dropped out of parachute training because of the 34 foot tower than any other part of the 6 weeks of training. Next was the 250-foot tower. Up till that time that had to be one of the great excitements in my life, pure fun! Next was learning to pack parachutes, 5 of them. Were talking some very, very serious business, no horse playing around because the chute you were packing just maybe the one you jump with. Your had to sign the log book that was stored in it's own pocket on the chute. If the chute failed to open, kiss your tail end good-bye of course you still did more push-ups, running and an abundance of physical training.

The last day of the week before you made your 5 jumps to qualify for your wings was out and out torture. You had a physical training test that separated the men from the boys. It consisted of 21 pull-ups, 50 push-ups, and 60 sit-ups 75 squats jumps and then run mile in a matter of a few minutes. You did all this in full combat gear with out a brake or a drink of water.

We jumped on Monday from a plane (C-82) doing 100+ MPH. You jumped and fell at least a hundred feet and with good luck, your chute opens, (this approaches tearing you head off.) but once the chute opens you're in for the ride of your life. Tuesday is jump number 2. Wednesday jump number 3. Thursday jump numbers 4 and 5. School was done; the despicable Sergeants turn into enjoyable great guys. The very first thing you did was to go to the Post Exchange and purchase a pair of genuine Corcoran jump boots (airborne troops still buy them).

Saturday afternoon, in a uniform stiff as a board from the amount of starch put in them, boots shined to a high gloss, the Army band playing and the General trooping the line, the school's 1st Sergeant behind him put Glider Wings in your left pocket and platinum Wings on your chest. The pride you have at that time, knowing that your about to become a member of one of the highest trained men in the world, could only be described as magnificent. There was a beer bust that night. You said goodbye to your

friends Sunday morning and to your fellow troopers, the ones who finished the course. Often the course had a 30% drop out. I was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

God, life was good!

DECEMBER 1948

I got off the train in Fayetteville, got on a bus for Fort Bragg, only 5 miles down the road. As the bus entered the Fort, there was a very large sign painted Red, White and Blue, which said, "Fort Bragg home of the 82nd Airborne Division, America's Guard of Honor". During WW 2, the 82ND was a very highly decorated division that made 3 combat jumps, Sicily, France the night before D-Day and Holland. With a lot of hard work and a lot of luck I was going to be a member of this very proud division. The bus took me to the 82nd Replacement Center and, after a series of questions; I was assigned to "C" Battery of the 456 Airborne Field Artillery Battalion. I got on a truck that left me off at Orderly Room of Charley Battery. I walked in and saw a very tall thin man dressed in a starched uniform, (I soon learned everyone wore starched everything, and that included under wear for inspection), that fit him as if it was sewn to his body. He stuck his hand out and said, "my name is Benny G. Turner, I'm the 1st Sergeant of Charley Battery and glad to have you join us." what a change from every Sergeant that I met up to that time. I found out later that Benny G had been a schoolteacher before WW 2 and, when the war started, he enlisted. When it ended, he decided to stay in the Army. In the same room was a man sitting at a typewriter. I introduced myself and he said his name was "Earl Ray Baker". He spoke in some strange dialect of the English Language from some were in Virginia. From that moment, (after getting a interrupter), Baker was to become as close to me as my two brothers. Benny G sent me to the 1st Platoon. I obtained a bunk and proceeded to hang up my clothes. The Platoon Sergeant, Ray Riggins, came by to say hello and to welcome me to the 1st Platoon. I don't think Riggins ever got over WW 2. As long as I was in C- Battery, every weekend he would lock himself in his room and drink. He didn't even come out to eat, but come Monday he was a very inspiring soldier and knew his job. It was now time for me to be given a job. So the Battery Commander, Captain Buck Davis, who you could write a book about and was absolutely worthless, sent me to Survey School that was on the Main Post. I lasted 4 days. That's when the school started to teach geometry. The teacher of the class suggested I maybe better suited for the Motor Pool, not as a vehicle driver but to wash them.

It was back to the Battery with my tail between my legs. Sergeant Thomas G. Clark came to my rescue. He took me under his wing and tutored me in the use and operation of the Army Radio SCR-619 that could be mounted in a Jeep or carried on your back. Its weight was 33 pounds and had a range of 5 miles. You needed to be up high enough like Mt Everest for it to reach 5 miles. This radio was to be my second great mistake.

It was my first pay day since coming back from jump school, and the practice was for you to lined up in front of the Day Room, walked up to the desk were the Pay Officer counts out your money. Then you sign for it. I told him he made a mistake and gave me 50 dollars too much. The Officer looked at me and must have thought where do these guys come from and why me? He said "Son that extra 50 dollars is your jump pay." I saluted, turned and walked outside when every man in and outside of that office started laughing. I said to myself, "You mean I get paid to jump". Hell I would jump for the fun of it. In January I have been in the Army for 7 months. It was time to go home.

God, life was good!

JANUARY 1949

I got a train out of Fayetteville to Washington D.C., then a plane, a DC-3 (Army version C-47) to Pittsburgh, (cost \$16.00). It was terrific seeing my Mom and Dad again, eating good home cooking and going out with old friends. I think I spent half of my furlough at my brother Milt's home watching a new appliance called television. At that time very few homes had them and you only received one channel (Dumont). I didn't care, the cartoons were great and they weren't too much for my brain to comprehend. All too soon my 10 days were up and it was time to get back to Fort Bragg.

The 82nd was drastically under manned at that time. In C- battery we had 76 men, a little more then half the men the unit called for. There were no promotions. Jobs that called for Sergeants, Corporal's were doing, Privates were doing Corporal's jobs and it didn't get any better. routines were, to lash ropes to the Pack 75 MM Howitzers and run all over camp pulling the damn things, guard duty and helping in the kitchen (KP). There were Division Parades for every politician including President Truman and assorted Dignitaries from all over the World with the 82nd Band playing a song written for the Division by none other then the late great Irving Berlin. The chorus went like this " we're all Americans and ---proud to be -----we are the soldiers of liberty-----some ride the gliders to the enemy----others are sky paratroopers and on and on. I was singing that song in my sleep. Hell I was singing it when I was awake, and I'm still singing it! In you spare time, if you had any, it was spit and polish; your work clothes were sent to the cleaners and came back with so much starch in them that, before you could put them on you had to run your hand down inside the legs and arms. You would never see a trooper with a wrinkle in his work uniform. You don't need too much of an imagination to see what our dress uniforms looked like. Another example was to take your trucks and Jeeps to an area where special ramps were built. You would put a front and back wheel on the ramp, drive up till the truck was tilted and proceed to wash the bottom with a mixture of gasoline and oil to make it shine. And it worked. As I reflect back, all this served a purpose. It was to give you self-esteem in yourself and the Division.

In the summer of 1949 the Division joined in the largest maneuvers since WW 2. We were using the new C-119'S (Flying Box Cars). In this airplane you no longer had to use the 75 MM'S. We could put our much larger 105MM Howitzers on wooden

platforms and then put them in inside the plane along with the entire gun crew. It was dropped out of the backend of the C-119 attached to 3 massive parachutes. This was a brand new procedure. I jumped with about 40 pounds of equipment and 35 pounds of parachute. The 105's and I landed and neither the guns nor I received a scratch. In my 33 jumps I never came close to having an accident. The only thing worth mentioning about the two weeks in the woods of North Carolina was that it was hot. No it was very hot. Charley Battery fired Artillery support for the 3rd Battalion (all Black Paratroopers) The Army at this time was still segregated. Our four-man team jumped with them, sleep with them but best of all, we ate with them. I swear they had the greatest cooks in the Army and for sure the best of 505th Airborne Infantry Regiment. One day I had my radio set up close to a road. A Jeep came speeding down the road with a cloud of dust flying behind it. As it approached me, I gestured for the driver to slow down. He not only slowed down but also stopped and put the Jeep in reverse he stopped in front of me. An officer got out, I saluted and he asked, "How long have you been in the Division?" I told him and he said, "Then you should know better then have your jacket outside of your trousers." (There will be another time 3 _ years later where a part of my uniform decided my Army career.) with that, he was back in his Jeep, again speeding down the road. The man I was with Corporal Golden, who was in charge of our 4-man team, asked "Do you know who that officer was?" I shook my head no. He said, "That was the Regimental Commander of the 505th, Colonel Westmoreland." The same William Westmoreland who was in charge of all the forces in Vietnam. Later the Chief of staff of the United States Army. No wonder we lost the war in Vietnam. I'm playing war in North Carolina and this jerk is worried about my uniform. The advantage of the end of maneuvers was that in groups of 500 men, the Division would send you to Myrtle Beach for 3 days. In 1949 Myrtle Beach had one hotdog stand and one house owed by the writer Mickey Spillane. Our 3 days were up and it was back to Fort Bragg.

My friend Earl Ray Baker lived in Norfolk, Virginia, just a few hours from Bragg. On a number of occasions, he asked me to come and spend the weekend at his home. Not only was his Mom a gracious Southern Lady, but an incredible cook. Earl Baker's and my life were so similar it was astonishing. Some examples. We were both born on March 17th, both had two children and both were about the same height and weight. Neither of us drank, both were picked to go to Ranger School, put in the same squad, both wounded twice and on the same days. We both worked for the Post Office and, the best was, without knowing it, both bought Green Ford Pintos. We were both put in jail in his hometown, and on and on. Hell he wasn't my brother he was my twin.

We had a number of characters in Charley Battery. One was Thomas Patterson from New York City. He came from a family of wealth. He was a medical school drop out and ate Army food only when he had too. he preferred to eat dinner in the base cafeteria and never alone. He would ask me and if I was not available, he would take someone else. He was also one of the few men that did not needed to do very much to a uniform to look great. He was also picked to go to Ranger School.

Sergeant Mc Nelly could be put in this group but for a very different reason. He was a terrific guy and loved by every one. He was a short man and probably didn't weigh more then 135 pounds. Two stories I like to tell about Mc Nelly. The day after Pearl Harbor, Mac was sent to the meat market by his wife for a pound of pork chops, four years later he came he came in the front door of his home with a pound of pork chops as if it was just a few minutes since he left. I think that's a wonderful story. Mac spent the entire war (WW 2) in Charley Battery and was still in it.

The other story about Mac includes me and is very thought provoking. I was getting off Guard Duty and the Sergeant of the Guard asked me to turn in his gun belt to the our Supply Room. It was too early in the morning for Supply to open so I went up to Mac's room sat on his bed and waited till he came up from the latrine were he was showering. While waiting for him, I pulled the 45-caliber pistol from its holster. I was looking at it and, just as he walked into the room, I pointed the gun at the outside wall and pulled the trigger. The damn thing was loaded. Out came the bullet, through the wall, hit the chimney and back into the room it slid across the floor and stopped at Mac's feet. I'm about to dirty my underwear and all he said was, "I hope you learned something from this." Needless to say, I certainly did. On no account ever assume a weapon is empty. Mac was also picked for the Rangers and served as my Platoon Sergeant in Korea. I was delighted to have a leader who was excellent under fire. (Especially fire from me!) God, life was good!

SEPTEMBER 1949

The 2nd Battalion of the 505th Airborne Infantry, along with 'B' Battery of the 456th Airborne Field Artillery, was selected to go to Eglin Air Force Base in Florida for 9 weeks. This was for something called Air Indoctrination Course II for ranking members of the Army, Navy, Marines and the Air Force. Additionally we were joined by 150 West Point cadets and 300 R.O.T.C students a week, and, of course, Slim Jim Gavin the ex Division Commander of the 82nd during WW 2 (and for a few months after I joined the Division). Slim Jim Gavin, made two combat jumps during the war, always carried a rifle and was always upfront with his boys. This was the 3rd time I had been close by to this larger then life man. I can bring to mind that one time before a jump, he walked down the line of plans and called many of the old timers from the WW 2 by their first names. That impressed me. He and George Custer of the Civil War fame were the two youngest men in this nation's history to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier General at age 37.

We lived in tents and sand was in our boots, beds and even our underwear! There were 660 men from the 505th and 100 from "B" Battery. I was filler from Charley Battery because "B" was short of men. We were jumping at least twice a week, dropping from 800 to 900 feet. The 660 men from the 505th used 22 C-119'S and were out of those 22 aircraft in exactly 100 seconds. Baker Battery jumped in 6 C-82's with 4 Pack 75 MM Howitzers, ammunition and men. We were out of the planes in 45 seconds (you had to be out of the aircraft rapidly since they are speeding along at 125 MPH. If you did not get out immediately, you would be miles

from the Drop Zone. Lastly came 8 heavy gliders. After WW 2 all the Glider Pilots we either discharged or became Fixed Wing Pilots. Subsequently, regular Air Force pilots who thought flying these canvas-covered oddities with no motors was groovy, and a challenge, to fly the Gliders. I made 18 parachute jumps plus two Glider rides while I was at Eglin. One of the Gliders was a snatch pick up (I will describe it as another time I wet and dirtied my underwear!) A Glider is parked under two poles with a rope hung loosely between them. A Troop Carrier (C-47) would fly in at 100 feet off the ground with a hook hanging from its back end. The hook seized the rope and, that in turn, seized the Glider. In 11 seconds you went from 0 to 100 miles an hour. I never again made another GLIDER SNATCH!

One of the benefits at Eglin Air Force Base was, on weekends you could put your name on a manifest for a flight. Planes were flying out of there every 20 minutes for all parts of the country. They also had a Jet with two seats in it that you could sign on for a ride. After my experience with the Glider Snatch I passed on the Jet ride.

I and 12 other jumpers got a (B-17-Flying Fortress) to New York City, the B-17 was very cold and had nothing to sit on other than our parachutes. It took 10 hours to get to the city. The plane landed at Mc Guire Air Force Base in New Jersey, just across the river from New York City. The pilot told us to be back at 1300 Sunday. Billy Williams and I got in a taxi with the pilot and co-pilot two nice guys; they even picked up the cab fare. I asked the pilot where he thought we should go. He replied, "Try Greenwich Village." With that they got out of the cab and we headed for a bar in the Village. We found a Bar with so many good-looking women that I said to Billy, "Quick, see if I'm still breathing." I saw this stunning blond sitting with her girl friend. Williams and I walked over and asked if we could buy them a drink. When they said yes, again I almost wet myself. After a few drinks it was dance time and when I put my arms around this gorgeous, dazzling, female, I said to myself, "O' LORD thank you." She was tall and probably about 125 pounds. After a few more drinks and more dancing the girls had to go to the Lady's Room. The bartender came over to us, killing himself laughing and asked, "You two young Paratroopers like those two beauties?" With our tongues hanging out and some very heavy breathing, we answered in unison, "Yes, Yes" He said, "That's too bad, they're both men." Williams didn't care he wanted to get married anyway. I would have loved to taken them back to Fort Bragg, just to watch the troops kill themselves trying to get a date with one them.

It was back to the plane and back to Eglin Field. I made Williams take an oath that he would never tell anyone about what happened in the Village, and of course, as soon as I got back, I told one and all. That weekend was hilarious and I still chuckle about it to this day.

God, life was good!

DECEMBER 1949

I got back from Florida the first week of December and it was terrific being among friends again. I went home with Baker the first weekend and, again Mrs. Baker treated me as one of her own. Back at Bragg it was the same schedule. K.P. for one week then one week of Guard Duty and then duplicate it week after week. I received a 10-day Christmas furlough and it was wonderful to be home for the holidays for the first time since I left home. My two brothers, their wife's and children, my Mom and Dad, what could surpass a day like this?

I was invited to a New Years Eve party; little did I realize that night that two of my friends who were there would die in the coming year in a country that neither they nor I ever heard of. Nor did I think of the sanity of dying for no reason other than old men deciding that Korea was the place to stop Communism. Hell, I didn't even know what the word meant, but they would start this war like every other war, but neither they nor any of their family would be sent to fight and die in it. This was a very ferocious war but if you think about it all wars is. Someone just wrote a book called "THE LAST GOOD WAR." This man needs his head examined. He is talking about WW 2, where close to 500,000 Americans died. He calls that a good war, SHIT! If that war was a good war I sure would hate to be in a bad one. This would be the last Christmas I would gather around people whom I loved and would prove to be especially valuable to me in the next four years.

JANUARY 1950

This was the start of a period that would change my entire way of life, not only mentally, the way I thought about life, the way I choose the people I wanted to be with and those I did not, the things I thought that were priceless in my life and found that they didn't mean a damn. I was to learn that to exist, you needed very little but when the time came you better have that very little.

I got back to Bragg the 5th of January 1950 and read the notices on the bulletin board there was an opening for Battery/Battalion mail carrier. I applied for the job and got it. Life was good again! This was the job description. The Mail Room was in the Day Room, in the office I had a bunk, desk, chair, sorting case and two keys. One of the keys was for the office door and the other to open the mail sacks. I took an oath to guard the mail with my life if required and when I went to the post office at Division, I had to go to the supply room and strap on a 45-caliber pistol. I got up in the morning after everyone else, so I had the whole shower room to myself. Then I went to the Mess Hall where I again had breakfast by myself, then to the Motor Pool to a get a Jeep. Then I drove to Division Mail Room, picked up the Mail for the 456th and dropped off the mail for A, B, and D (Battalion S4 Supply). Then it was back to Charley Battery where I sorted the mail and delivered it. It did not take me long to find out I was the most popular man in the Battery; hell everyone loved the mailman. At 10:00 hours I was done with my job. Now, for the best part of this job. We had a Coke and three pinball machines in the Day Room. For filling the Coke machine, the Coke man gave me 6 dollars a week and the pinball machine owner 4 dollars a week to keep the guys from pounding the machines to death with anything they could find useful. I was

supplementing my pay by 40 dollars a month, which were only 10 dollars a month less than my jump pay. Up till this time, oh hell, it was the best job I was to ever have. You know how some guys always have all the luck, not this time; you could call me 'Lucky Lewie', no more K.P. or Guard Duty. I was a man of wealth, a man who demanded respect, a man with a title, 'Letter Carrier'.

The winter and spring went very quickly. On Sunday the 24th of June, in a country called Korea, the North invaded the South. In 1947 Korea held an election to unite the north and the south. In the U.N. supervised the election, the south lost, but backed out of uniting the country. Three years later, 36,000 Americans, 500,000 North and South Koreans and 1,000,000 Chinese would die because of politicians. Korea is a peninsula (600 miles long and 135 wide). The South was much weaker militarily and, in my opinion, led by a dictator who had not been in Korea for 30 years, The North was communist and had a strength of character to fight, not so the South. The North crossed the soon to be famous 38th parallel, and in one week it took the capital of South Korea, Seoul. On July 1st the U.S. sent in the first unit of 406 men, it was decimated. It will be followed by many hundreds of thousands in the next three years.

By the end of July, I could scarcely recognize old Charley Battery. We had less than 40 men to a Barracks in May. We now had stacked bunk beds and more than 80 men in each of the two Barracks. Things were not good, too many men in too close quarters. These extra men were draftees and sent to Bragg till there was room at other camps to start basic training. There were arguments, fights and thievery. It was difficult living like this; I had to get out of Bragg. Fate again was to step into my life. On the 15th September, the request went out for volunteers for a new unit being formed and to be called Airborne Rangers, to be trained at Fort Benning, Georgia. According to the camp newspaper, an estimated 5000 men were interviewed for a little over 400 openings, to this day, I cannot figure out what the qualifications were that they were looking for. I can remember I went to the post theater where three Colonels sat at a table. When your name was called you went before the three officers. You were asked three questions. They said that's all, you will be notified if you are chosen. Five days later, I along with Earl Ray Baker, (I still wonder about the credentials needed.) I was a mailman and Baker a clerk/typist. We are on a truck, headed to the train station in Fayetteville and on to Fort Benning. Before I got on the truck a fellow, who joined the Army with me from my hometown came to say good-bye. He too was interviewed for the Rangers but was not accepted. After he got out of the Army, he went to collage and became an Engineer and went to work for General Electric Corporation. It wasn't hard to figure, intelligence was not a quantification to be a Ranger.

OCTOBER 2nd 1950

Training started today, none of the immature things like screaming in your face or the silly push-ups; I could never understand how that bullshit made you a better soldier. It was much better to be treated like a man. Baker and I were assigned to the 1st Company, 1st Platoon, and 1st Squad. A Ranger Company at that time had 5 Officers and 107 enlisted men; by comparison a regular line Infantry Company had 6 Officers and 180 men. A Ranger Company had 3 Platoons of 33 men each. The Platoon was further divided into 3 Squads of 10 men. Each Squad had 2 Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) 4 M-1 Rifles and 4 M-2 Carbines. The Company had 36 Submachine Guns. Crew served weapons included nine 3.5 Rocket Launchers, nine 60 MM Mortars, three 57 MM Recoilless Rifles and three 30 Caliber Air Cooled Machine Guns. Every Squad had 5 Sergeants 4 Corporals and 1 Private. What a difference in training. The Officers, Sergeants, Corporals and Privates, all training together and all being treated the same, that's the way an Army should function. The training was to take 6 weeks; a few of those weeks were up to 60 hours long. The courses taught were sabotage, hand to hand combat, communications, how to use U.S. and foreign weapons, land navigation and, my favorite, demolitions. The training was long and challenging. One of the Rangers was asked by a newspaper reporter, "What is a Airborne Ranger?" His response was "tired". There are two stories that stand out in my mind about the Ranger School. One night we were taken to a lake and told to swim to the other side We had a water course earlier on how to take 2 ponchos strapped together, then put all your equipment in the middle, plus your rifles and ammo. Hell we're talking about over 125 pounds and 2 men holding on to the sides. Needless to say we made it, barely. The other man holding on was friend Baker. The temperature of the water could not have been much over 50 degrees, remember it was November. The punch line to this story was neither Baker nor I could swim a stroke! Talk about two dummies. The other story concerns land navigation. The squad was taken out at night by truck, given a map, a compass and sent out to find different areas in the woods of Georgia. It didn't take too long to find out that our leader Sergeant Mike Moriarity, who served in the 11th Airborne in the Pacific during WW 2. Rumor was that he was a Recruiting Sergeant till he joined the Rangers. Baker and I were killing ourselves being amused on all of these night maneuvers, watching this man who was going to lead us, making all these mistakes. On one of these maneuvers, Baker and I, again laughing at our leader, made a very grievous mistake; he was standing behind us while all this merrymaking was going on. Baker and I were to pay dearly for this, not his stupidly, but ours.

On November 13th training was over. Two days later, the 15th, with boots shined, uniforms pressed, standing proud and ramrod straight, the band playing, we were presented our 1st Company Guidon featuring the parachute and the word Ranger. Each of us was awarded Ranger shoulder insignia. At the end of the ceremonies a train was parked just a few yards away, we go on board and left Fort Benning for San Francisco Port of Embarkation. The 72nd Army Band was playing the song "Now is the hour" as the train departed. God, life was good!

GEORGIA TO CALIFORNIA

The train was first-class; we slept in Pullman Cars and our meals were served in the diner, white tablecloths, and waiters in white jackets and aprons. The ride was magnificent; you can appreciate the vastness of the country when you travel by rail. One of the most inspiring things that happened on the ride West was when the train pulled in to the Kansas City station. The Company was to get off the train to have dinner in the station dining room. We disembarked the train, lined up in a column of two's. The 1st Sergeant called us to attention, right face, forward march; all 107 Rangers stepped off in unison. A group of over a hundred people was observing all of this. They were watching our every move; they applauded all the way into the dining room. The people who were eating stood up and applauded. I was swollen with pride, first in my country, second in the people that lived in it, third in the 1st Ranger Company.

We arrived at Camp Stoneman, California on November the 18th. We were issued new fatigues with out any kind of markings. Our Company Commander, Captain John Striegel (Black Jack) gave 72- hour passes to all of us but warned us to stay out of trouble. The first night in San Francisco was very nearly our last. About 15 of us went into an enormous bar and dance hall where the entire place was nothing but men from the Air Force. Within an hour, all hell broke out and I contributed what I can do best, I jumped on the stage, grabbed the microphone and cheered my Ranger brothers on with the Ranger fight song "I want to be a Airborne Ranger- ---I want to live a life of danger, Airborne ---Ranger. Within minutes a Military Police Major gave us 10 minutes to get off the streets. I found out military police of San Francisco do not tolerate hooligans.

The next night Henry Mansfield, another buddy from Charley Battery and I went out together. We went to a bar, had dinner and a few drinks. We started a conversation with an older man who told us he was a make-up artist in Hollywood and invited the two of us to his apartment. It was just a short walk. His apartment was beautiful. He brought out his Scotch and soda and two very large photo albums, he was not lying, he had photo after photo of himself and every movie star I could think of. After a few more drinks, he brought cheese, grapes and apples. He was a real gentleman who appreciated the men in uniform. He asked Mansfield to come into a room where he developed new cosmetics. Fifteen minutes later, the largest, ugliest woman I have ever saw was standing in front of me. I took another look, and with tears rolling down my face, I was laughing so hard I had to hold on to the chair to keep from falling down. He was standing there in a blond wig, high heels, lovely flowered dress and a purse to match. You can create in your mind this 6-foot, 200-pound burly, mean looking man looking man (actually if his knuckles didn't drag along the ground he didn't look too bad.) He threatened me with death if I ever told about him in a dress. I swore an oath that lasted till we got back to camp. I told everyone but not one person believed me, not even Mansfield.
God, life was good

NOVEMBER 25th 1950

We boarded the troopship General C.G. Morton at 1630 hours, passed under the Golden Gate Bridge, and waved goodbye to California. I noticed a lot of the men on board were older than we were. They were wearing rows of ribbons, all veterans of WW 2. All of these vets surprised me. Actually there were many more of these poor guys than regular Army troops on the ship. My curiosity was so great that I started talking to a few of them and was told that they signed up, before being discharged after WW 2, into the inactive reserve, with the assurances that women and children would go before they would. The Korean War started and the Secretary of War activated them before the active reserve. With only two weeks of a refresher course, they were on their way to war again. The ship had well over 2000 men on board but fate again saved me. The 1st Squad was assigned to the ships laundry. The ship belonged to the Navy but was manned by the Merchant Marine. The man that who ran the laundry was the original ancient mariner, and he took an instant fondness to the 1st Squad. The food on board was just edible but not for us. For the 14 days that the ship took to cross the Pacific the old man brought the 10 of us breakfast, lunch and dinner. When we crossed the International Date Line (180th Meridian), the old man gave each a card stating that we now belonged to The Domain Of The Golden Dragon, (I still have mine). On December 9th the Morton docked in Yokohama. Before the 1st Squad disembarked, we made a special visit to say goodbye to the man who made our trip so enjoyable. We each in turn, shook his hand, gave him a hug and he wished us well. We all had a tear in our eye. For me it was like saying goodbye to my father.

The Company boarded a train to the southern end of Japan to Camp Zama there we completed processing, received cold weather equipment and went to a firing range to check our weapons. At 1700 hours on December 16th we departed Japan, traveling the 150 miles to the port of Pusan, Korea by ferry. We arrived in Korea at 0700 hours December 17th. The Company spent the night in a warehouse. In the morning the 1st Platoon was flown to Kimpo Airport to help destroy anything that couldn't fly or walk. Hell, I'm in the war! The Chinese were just a few miles up the road and there was nothing between them and us. With gasoline, bombs and a few hundred feet of primer cord I was about to see a performance of what I had learned early. We boarded trucks, lit the fuses and got out of there as fast as the trucks could travel. What a site, it was just short of an atomic mushroom cloud. My first smell of war was when our trucks entered a city called Young-Dong-Fo; the burning houses and the smell of death is something that will never go away. The 2nd and 3rd platoons took a train from Pusan to the central front and attached to the 2nd Infantry Division. We were assigned that first night to guard Division Headquarters and Division Commander General Robert Mc Clure. To assist us was the ferocious and highly trained 2nd Division Band. The poor souls haven't had a rifle in their hands since they were in Basic Training. We spent about an hour showing them how to load their carbines, but I believe if the Chinese got that close they were better off throwing their horns and drums at them. Providence was on our side; that night, the General, his staff, the band and the Rangers all survived the night. The next few nights we patrolled beyond the front lines without contacting the

Chinese. We were billeted in a schoolhouse on an incredibly cold Christmas Day 1950. We had a warm dinner, the last we would have in a very long time. By the end of December the 2nd Division was back in action, assigned to the Wonju-Hohengson area. Wonju was the center of the American line, an important rail and road center with five important supply routes. The Rangers were working in front of the 23rd and 38th Regiments. The Rangers began a period of daylight patrols; a 30-man platoon normally went on these patrols with two men about 50 yards to the front. These two men were called scouts. If contact was made with the enemy, they were more often than not the first to be shot at. When Baker and I were in map/compass training and found out our Squad Leader Mike Moriarity could not read a map, he heard and saw us laughing at him. I also found that he had no sense of humor; it was now Moriarity's revenge. "Baker, Villa scouts out." He finally went over the edge and was out to get the both of us killed. Either the Chinese or Mad Mike was going to send the two of us home in a body bag. On a patrol one day I had just started to heat a can of C-Rations when Mad Mike told me to stop what I was doing and get my ass out of that hole and back to scouting. I never looked up and continued to heat my C-Rations until I heard him slide the barrel of his 45-caliber pistol back. That weapon was now loaded and pointed at my head. Now he had my attention. I looked at his eyes and knew Mrs. Villa was about to get a telegram saying that her baby son Lewis was killed in action while heating a can of beans. I heard Mad Mike say, "I'm giving you a direct order" I really never heard the word order because I was out the hole and 20 feet up the road by the time he got order out of his mouth. (At a reunion 35 years later he told Baker and I that in his 25 years in the Army he never encountered two finer soldiers! That statement conformed that Mike was insane.

On New Years Day 1951, a four man patrol made up of Sergeants King and Grim and Lublinski (a Polish National) and PFC. Spence were trapped and captured by the Chinese. None of these men would be seen again. The Russians took Lublinski and the other three will die in a Prison camp. On January 2nd patrols from our Ranger Company went six miles west along a railroad line from Young-Dong Station, then north to ambush a Chinese outpost near a bridge. Sgt. O'Leary was killed while on a rail-line patrol. On January 7th three Chinese divisions attacked the 2nd Division positions around the communications center of Wonju. Fighting a delaying action, the Rangers were doing my favorite thing, blowing up bridges and rail lines. At 0945 hours on January 9th the 1st platoon, lead by Lieutenant Heath, was on patrol just south of Chungchon. We encountered an enemy force and engaged it. Five minutes into the skirmish we realized that our 30-man platoon ran into an estimated 200 Chinese. We radioed Lieutenant Herman (West Point class of 46), acting company commander, to come running. He did with the 2nd and 3rd platoons. The shooting continued into late afternoon when both sides broke contact and withdrew. A number of the Chinese were seen to fall but the 1st platoon also had two Rangers wounded so badly that they were air lifted stateside. We said goodbye to Sgt. Heedt and Nick Delfine, who made three combat jumps in Europe and never got so much as a scratch. His luck ended in Korea in a little less than a month.

On January 11th, while on patrol, we entered a mountain village, Bud Harding approached a women squatting in front of a hut and he said, "Hello mama-san". The women fired a pistol into Harding's chest, killing him instantly. The village paid retribution immediately. On January 16th while on ambush about one mile into the front of the 38th Regiment, we received orders to advance to the Wonju-Chenchon road until we made contact with the Chinese. A battery of artillery was moved forward to support the mission. Early in the operation we were to investigate a report of 40 Chinese in the town of Kirichi. After entering the town, we radioed back, "No Chinese communist forces, only 40 women, will remain over night." We continued on our assignment and returned on the 19th. Starting January 20th to the 31st we continued the deep patrols by day and night in the vicinity of Sillim-ni. We decided no more carrying every thing we had on our backs. We were not authorized any vehicles, so the company commander sent four of our Rangers back to Pusan to relieve the Army of four Jeeps. As the Jeeps were being unloaded from a ship our four Rangers mounted the motor vehicles and drove to the closest truck repair station and had a 30 Caliber Machine Gun mounted on each Jeep. On January 28th we passed through the deserted town of Wonju 'again', but this time we noticed a destroyed bank with only its vault intact. The temptation was too great. With the use of a 3.5 Rocket Launcher the door swung open and we each shared a very large amount of Korean money. On the way back, one of the Jeeps was ambushed, Yates was wounded and Waters captured (he would die in a prison camp).

On the last day of January, along with a unit of the famed French Foreign Legion, We patrolled an area East of Chipyeong-ni known as the Twin Tunnels. The ground around these railroad tunnels was fiercely contested; patrolling those long dark passageways was to say the least a very freighting experience. On the 3rd of February we were back in action in the front of the 38th Regiment. A search patrol made no contact, so we employed one platoon as a decoy while the other two platoons remained in hiding. The Chinese took the bait. A short, sharp firefight started. While in pursuit of the Chinese force, several streams had to be crossed; our feet began to ice up in the intense cold. It was necessary to break off the contact and return to friendly lines. On the night of February 4th, we moved into an assembly area near Hong-song. The move was made to facilitate another operation; a raid on a North Korea Regimental Headquarters located nine miles behind enemy lines at a town named Chang-mal. The planning for the raid was jointly planned by G-3 from the 2nd Division, the 38th Regiment and by our company commander, Lieutenant Herman. The general plan was that the Rangers would leave around noon and arrive at Chang-mal well after dark; after the mission was completed we would return under cover of night by a different route, hiding out in daylight if necessary.

Communication would be with a fixed wing liaison plane equipped with an SCR-300 Radio. The plan was that the plane would pass over our route of march at 1700 hours on the 6th and 0900 hours on the 7th. We gave specific instructions that the plane not circle overhead as this could reveal our position. Flights overhead were to be on a straight pass and on the second pass contact would be made.

MISSION TO CHANG-MAL

At 1352 hours, on the 6th of February 1951, the 1st Ranger Company and our leaders were informed of the known enemy position; we crossed the line of departure. Moving with only the use of a compass and map over difficult territory, our officers did an outstanding piece of work of land navigation. We traveled light; the greater part of the weight was ammunition. The riflemen carried cartridge belts and two bandoleers, plus three to six hand grenades. All the ammunition was tracer. Near the village Song-bau, we left two squads to cover the company from the ridgeline while the rest moved along the valley floor. On the ridgeline, the covering force came under attack. While pinning down the enemy, the remainder of the company moved to the flank of the enemy and annihilated them. The movement North continued. It was a long and exhausting march in the cold and deep snow. There were several crossings of ice-cold streams and the fatigue was beginning to show among the men. As dark closed in, we heard enemy forces movement but we continued on the mission. A source of constant anxiety was the barking dogs. As we were nearing Chang-mal, one platoon went forward, circling as it went to attack from the flank. The remainder of the Rangers was positioned on a line to serve as a center of fire. A number of lights were seen in the houses. We were close enough to hear their conversations and also the beating of my heart. Our interpreter identified them as North Korean. From a range, at some places as close as fifteen feet, we opened fire. The boom of the grenades and the roar of small arms fire was not only frightening to the Koreans but to me along with them. They were completely taken by surprise and they panicked. We saw them coming out of windows and doors and running in all directions. The firefight lasted a little over ten minutes. The raid was completed but fire was coming from the Koreans on the flanking ridges. This fire was soon suppressed. The official report stated that five machine guns, three burp guns, twenty rifles and three prisoners were taken in the raid. The prisoners said their battalion was headquartered in the village and they were members of the 12th Infantry Division.

Using the alternate route that at times took us deeper into enemy territory; we began our long and risky march home. We had three men wounded, two from my 1st squad. Joe Simmons was shot in the arm and Wayne Sharp was hit twice in the leg. With such a long distance to go and moving cross-country hampered by the wounded, LT. Herman decided to leave the 1st squad with the wounded men near Su-Don. Meanwhile, the rest of the company made it's way back to friendly lines. An attempt would be made to come back by helicopter after the most seriously wounded man. We, (1st Company), had no radio communications with friendly forces; the plan to communicate with the liaison had gone amiss when the pilot could not locate the Rangers. The company got back to friendly lines evading North Korean search forces. Spotting enemy observation posts overlooking the town of Hong-song, we cut enemy wire lines in passing and returned to the 38th Infantry positions on February 7th at 1530 hours. The helicopter to be used to pick up our wounded came forward to the 38th Infantry positions but developed engine problems and could not continue.

The stay behind squad consisted of 10 men of the 1st squad 1st platoon. They were squad leader Sergeant Moriarity, George Early, Harry Schroeder, Earl Dansbary, Jim Clopton, Glen Hall, Earl Baker, Lew Villa and the two wounded men, Joe Simmons and Wayne Sharp. In later combat, four of these men would be killed in action and all but Moriarity were wounded. Sharp, Baker and Villa were to be wounded twice. The squad continued to lie low hidden in a Korean hut that had a family of three men and two women living in it. An outpost was set up on a hill overlooking the road and the hut. Hall (a American Indian) was to take the first watch. He was told to observe and report enemy movement and to take no action that would disclose our position. Baker and I were keeping watch from the hut; an hour later we were all shocked to hear a single shot ring out from Hall's location. Moving cautiously up the hill we were relieved to find Hall still in position with a smile only an Indian could have. On the road below him laid a dead North Korean messenger with the wheels of his bicycle lying beside him. Hall apologized stating it was a target he could not pass up. We quickly hid the evidence and returned to our positions, again cautioning Hall to only observe and take no action. A short time later Hall's rifle spoke again. Another messenger joined his ancestors; if I was not so damned frightened I would have found this very amusing. In a later action Hall was awarded the Distinguish Service Cross. It was time to get Hall off the hill before he had the whole Korean Army marching down that road. Again a short time later, Sergeant Moriarity was standing on the road and noticed another Korean soldier walking towards him. He stepped behind a tree as the Korean passed. He felt the Sergeant's 45 pistol in the back of his head. Not a bad days work, two dead Koreans and one POW. With both the helicopter and the relief force a no show, it was time for the squad to take action on it's own.

We made a litter for Sharp and would use the two civilian Korean men, along with the prisoner and one of our men, to carry him. The prisoner refused, it was his mistake. The other wounded man Simmons, pulled his 45 pistol, placed it right between the prisoner's eyes, knowing Simmons we all thought another Korean was about to meet his dead relatives. The Korean had a change of heart.

At that moment a welcome sight appeared. It was 1st Sergeant Castonguay, "Custer" as we in the 1st affectionately called him, because of his being in the horse cavalry before World War 2. He joined the Army in 1935 at age 18. When World War 2 started he volunteered for jump school and was later assigned to the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He jumped in France and fought in four major campaigns.

When the war ended he came home and was a 1st Sergeant in the 505th Airborne Regiment at Fort Bragg till he again volunteered for the Rangers in 1950. He will also be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He was only 5'6" tall and 140 pounds but the man had no fear, no fear that would later cost him his life. Not happy with the efforts to assist the 1st squad and it's wounded, Sergeant Castonguay came through enemy lines on his own. Under his leadership the march back to friendly lines began. In a straight line the distance to return was about six miles, but nothing in Korea was in a straight line. It took a great amount of

physical exertion to get our wounded through enemy territory that included eight ridge lines each of which represented a considerable problem.

The raid at Chang-mal was head lined in the Stars and Strips (an Army newspaper). The Associated Press wrote that this raid ranks in history with the Roger's Rangers raid on the Saint Frances Indians and the WW 2 Rangers raid on the Italian Bersagleri at Sened Station in North Africa. Each involved a long and difficult march through enemy territory, a winning surprise attack and a rapid withdrawal.

God, life was good

CHIP-YONG-NI ROAD TO DISASTER

February 1951 and the Chinese were on the move South again. The 23rd Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Division with an attached French Battalion, were assigned a threefold mission: defend the Chipyeong-ni area, the left flank of the 2nd Division and deny the enemy the use of the important road network in the vicinity of the town. Chipyeong-ni is a crossroads town in central Korea, located about 25 Northwest of Wŏnju: the town is circled by eight hills that reach as high as 500 feet. A single railroad ran through town. Colonel Paul Freeman, commanding officer of the 23rd, recognized that using the high ground was an ideal defensive positions, Freeman's only problem was his 4,000 men were too few to cover the great distance around the town. Freeman dug his forces in a circle perimeter on the hills around the town. It was hard digging in the frozen ground and it was covered with snow. Freeman had more than enough ammunition for the 37th Field Artillery but it was a different story for "B" Battery of the 503rd with their huge 155 MM guns. They needed a lot more ammunition.

On the 9th of February, the 1st Rangers moved by truck to Chipyeong-ni and attached to the 23rd. Infantry Regiment. We notice on arrival that the guns of the artillery pointed East, West, North and South. It did not take a military genius to know we were about to be surrounded. At 1900 hours on February 11th the company left the Chipyeong-ni perimeter on a combat patrol. The mission was to enter the town of Miryong-ni and then the high ground to the northwest to find the location of the enemy. We cleared Miryong at 2150 hours and found the enemy entrenched on a ridge to the west. A Chinese sentry challenged us; none of us spoke Chinese so the only answerer we could give him was at the end of a rifle. The firefight lasted about an hour. The enemy was using heavy machine guns and mortars. We fought our way into the Chinese positions and seized two prisoners before withdrawing. Corporal Jim Dance was killed, Sergeants Meanly and Coffee wounded. We returned to friendly lines at 0140 hours on the 12th of February.

Another casualty of the patrol was French correspondent Jean M. de Premanville of the Agency Press; he was hit by machine gun fire. We tore a door off a school and, with this improvised stretcher, Baker, two others, and I carried him back to our lines. His life ebbing from his wounds, de Premanville's last words were, "I came for a story and got it."

On our return from the patrol we, along with Engineers from 'B' Company 2nd Battalion, formed the Regimental reserve. The reserve positions were under frequent 82 MM AND 120 MM mortar fire. Our squad was inside a hut making oatmeal for breakfast when a mortar round exploded outside the door of our hut. George Early was sitting with his back against the doorway, shrapnel from the exploding round hit him in the head killing him instantly. He was the first from our squad to die; he will not be the last.

In a clock like fashion the perimeter was arranged with the 1st Battalion at 12 o'clock, the 3rd Battalion at 3 o'clock, the 2nd Battalion at 7 o'clock and the French from 7 to 11 o'clock. As we prepared ourselves, all the signs pointed to an increased enemy build up (little did we realize how large a build up) in preparation for an attack. On the night of the 13th the Chinese struck. As usual, Baker and I were on an outpost just above the company area and as usual, Baker was asleep. First came the sound of bugles. This was the first time we heard them. Then voices singing from all points of the compass, then the sound of cymbals followed by flairs that lit the sky as bright as daylight. In a different situation I would have applauded. Just before midnight a strong artillery and mortar attack began to pound our positions. One landed not far from Baker and I, this was a bit too close and as I leaped on top of my buddy Baker, he asked, "What the hell are you doing?" I responded, "If it's my turn to die your going with me", and I met it. (Years later I changed the tale saying I was on top of him to take the bullet so he could go home and marry his girl friend Mert.) This was followed by a powerful assault on the 1st Battalion. The attack quickly spread around the perimeter. Heavy fighting lasted throughout the night, and, just before daylight, the Chinese withdrew to escape being exposed to air and artillery fire. Two full Chinese divisions, 20,000 men were attacking from every direction.

Early on the night of the 14th, the Chinese resumed their assault striking heavily at the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The Chinese were losing a lot of men yet these brave soldiers keep coming on.

At several points the perimeter had been penetrated. Hour after hour Colonel Freeman stayed at his radio asking for air strikes, but no aircraft appeared. He was not told there were units that were in far more difficulty then his was, so they got the fighter aircraft. Air supply for our surrounded town however, began to arrive. The Ranger's were asked to direct the cargo planes (C-119). Soon the planes rumbled overhead, dropping tons of supplies by parachutes. But these were not the type of supplies that Colonel Freeman needed. A great quantity of artillery ammunition was dropped. However, the 23rd had more of this then it could use. We badly needed mortar rounds, rifle and machine-gun ammunition; none of these were among the items that were dropped. I sensed the Chinese supply system was much more advanced then ours; they never give me the impression that they were low on ammunition.

Helicopters did fly in and take out some of the most badly wounded men. One of the helicopters dropped straight down behind regimental headquarters. The man who stepped out wore a pile cap with three silver stars and a set of jump wings. The solders could hardly believe their eyes. There stood General Matt Ridgeway, the man who parachuted into France on D-Day at the head of

the 82nd Airborne Division. The two commanders sat down to talk. The story was for Freeman to hold out for one more night and help would be on the way.

The Chinese had to be saying, you Americans haven't seen nothing yet wait till we send in our best troops.

At 03:15 hours on the 14th a single-minded Chinese assault shattered G company defenses. A hastily organized group made up of the 1st Ranger platoon (30 men) and 28 men from F Company under the leadership of Captain John Ramsburg from the 2nd Battalion staff. I will never figure out how command thought that 58 men could take back what 180 men could not hold. We formed up behind a fold of ground; I looked to my left and my good buddy Baker was there. On my right, to my surprise was old Sergeant Casonguay; I thought to myself what the hell is that old man doing here, but I was glad to have them both with me, it stiffened my spine. Some one said go, 06:15 hours and we charged up the hill shouting at the top of our lungs, Baker went a few steps and was hit in the shoulder, I was hit in the hip and leg. The Chinese positioned their machine-guns well, interlocking fire raked the men as they charged up the hill. Rangers Halcomb, Canon, Lutz and Moseley were hit. Captain Ramsburg was hit in the chest. My platoon leader Lieutenant Heath was killed. Sergeant Casonguay made it to the top of the hill and captured a machine-gun nest and killed the four men in it. He continued to man the nest till he was carried to the aid station. His luck had run out after two wars. He was fatally wounded, a portion of his face was shot away; he was awarded the Distinguish Service Cross for his actions. Glen Hall, the American Indian was another of the few to reach the top of the hill. Under heavy fire he moved to the flank where the platoon was expected to be. The Chinese occupied the position. Hall killed five of the enemy in a trench and occupied it. Though wounded Hall kept up a deadly fire on the enemy keeping them from attacking the small Ranger force on the hill. Without additional support the handful of Rangers were doomed. Chinese pressure forced the Rangers from the hill. Later when the hill was retaken, a body count of Chinese around the trench Hall had used lay 11 dead plus the 5 he killed early. He was awarded the Distinguish Service Cross. He would lose his life in a later action. Only a handful of Rangers remained, F Company's platoon suffered equally. Freeman had to make a crucial decision. He released what remained of his reserve.

At 08:00 hours the 2nd and 3rd Ranger platoons along with the engineers from B Company were ordered to attack and regain the lost G Company position. The Chinese on the hill were being prevented from following up their success. An artillery officer put a quad 50 halftrack back into action. When assured only the enemy and American dead remained on the hill, he occupied the gunner's seat and placed heavy fire on the hilltop. Three tanks added the fire of their guns. But it was not the rifles of the infantrymen that held the Chinese out of Chipyong-ni; it was the terrible fire of the big 155 MM cannons emplaced behind the foot soldiers. The gunners were shooting shells containing white phosphorus that burned as long as it was exposed to air. Lowering the howitzer tube almost to the level, they fired six rounds only the length of a football field, I was in a position to watch the Chinese running to get over the crest of the hill, it was almost funny, I would have laughed but I was hurting to badly.

It was now afternoon. By three o'clock it was accepted that infantry alone would not be able to dislodge the Chinese. The short winter day was fading fast. The order given, four tanks were to circle around behind the Chinese position and attack from the rear. The tanks moved out, but they ran into a minefield. The mines had to be dug up one by one and this took time. Every hour, every minute, was precious. If the strength of the Chinese was not broken before dusk, we the men at Chipyong-ni would face a third night of hell-without aid, with little ammunition and with little hope.

True to General Ridgeway's word, the cavalry came to the rescue. Colonel Crombez of the 1st Cavalry and 21 tanks from the 6th Tank Battalion (new M-46 Patton's with 90 MM guns) fought their way seven bloody miles, losing two tanks. On their charge to Chipyong-ni, to meet them was Colonel Freeman. He shouted above the roaring engines of Crombez's tank "God, but we are glad to see you!" Crombez's answered "God but we're glad to be in here."

Later I was to meet a tanker of the 6th Tank, Tom Lyke. This was not to be the first time he came to rescue Rangers, or the last time. The 6th Tank would lose more tanks in aiding the Rangers. Tom Lyke was to become a life long friend. In later years he was, and is, the only non-Ranger to be a regular remember of the Ranger Origination. Crombez's cavalry arrived at 17:50, hours- only a few minutes before sundown-they had saved the day.

Then a strange thing occurred all around the perimeter. The Chinese began to leave their positions and move northwest. A light snow began to fall, covering thousands of this brave Chinese Infantry. On G Company's hills alone lay 1600 intermingled American and Chinese dead.

The siege of Chipyong- Ni, one of the greatest defensive battles ever fought, was over. To this day the tactics used are taught at West Point.

The 1st Rangers with their patrol action opened the battle. Their performance at G Company hill helped stop the enemy penetration of the perimeter. This was the first defeat of the Chinese forces since they entered the war in November. The 1st Ranger Infantry Company was awarded It's first of two Presidential Unit Citations. The Rangers who were killed at Chipyong -ni were:

1st Lieutenant Mayo Heath-----	1st Sergeant Romeo Castonguay	
Richard Geer	Robert Grubb	Harold Rinard
Robert Byerly	John Knigge	George Early
Edmund Mekhitarian	William Graddy	John Lutz

The Rangers Wounded at Chipyoung-ni

Earl Dansberry	Jim Galey	Bill Wisnieski
Glen Hall	Carl Halcumb	Earl Cannon

Tony Lukasik	Cecil Mosley	Al Nichols
Bob Geer	Mark Goyen	John Miesse
Cletus Colbert	Vince Troche	Bob Laydon
Tom Simpson	Eugene Meyer	Ed Meyers
Earl Baker	Lewis Villa	Dick Cole

On the 16th a truck convoy took out the wounded. Before we left Old sergeant Castonquary was on a stretcher between Ranger Tony Lukasik and me, his last words were "Boys, that was one good fight."

I was taken by truck to a M.A.S.H. unit not too far from the front lines, I wasn't there too long before being put on a Hospital Train for the trip South. I had a lot of pain coming from my left foot. I asked the nurse if she would do something to stop the pain. She took my boot off, looked at my foot, found nothing and turned the boot upside down and a piece of shrapnel rolled out. The shrapnel hit my wallet that had a silver dollar in it. The shrapnel rolled down my leg and into my boot, which in turn was cutting my foot and causing all the pain.

THE HOSPITAL AND STRAWBERRIES

The train stopped at the harbor in Pusan. I was put on the Hospital Ship USS Consolation. For the first time since I left the states I had clean white sheets, a white blanket, three great hot meals a day with room service. The Navy even washed my clothes. I can't remember but I think I had those same cloths on since December; come to think of it I only shaved twice in all that time. The stay on the good ship Consolation was not to last. After five days I was put off the ship at Sasebo, Japan, onto another hospital train that took me to the 141st General Hospital in a very large city named Fukuoka in Southern Japan.

At this particular time, with the all wounded coming from Korea, the operations were done on an assembly line basis. The room I was in had 40 beds, all occupied and all waiting for everything from amputations, brain surgery or guys like me that needed some Chinese shrapnel taken out. To illustrate the mass production; the medic that gave the penicillin shots used one very large hypodermic tube. All he would do was change the needle, (if he remembered to or forgot who was the last man to get a shot. If he did, you were lucky and got two.) soon it was my turn for the operating room. Fifteen minutes before, a nurse gave me a mixture of something that put me in a dream world with little blue birds, fluffy white bunnies and beautiful young ladies. I've spent a lifetime trying to duplicate that mix, again with no luck. I was put on a gurney, wheeled into the operating room and given a spinal. The surgeons started to repair my left leg. The whole time I was on the table I was entertained with the story of the great time they had the night before.

I was not healing well but was given a pass once a week. To be out of that very over crowded ward was marvelous. On my first pass I walked by a fruit stand with the largest red strawberries I had ever seen. They were beautiful. I put up six fingers to the little Japanese man, and he put six of these gems in a bag. I found a park bench nearby, sat down and bit into them. I let the juice run down my chin and found these strawberries to be the sweetest things I had eaten in my whole life. When I got back to the ward I told the guys about my magnificent find. A nurse overheard my conversation. She asked if I knew what the Japanese used to grow those large sweet strawberries. No was my answer and, with that, she thanked me for giving her the best laugh she had in weeks. She proceeded to tell me about the Japanese men that go out at night with a pole on their shoulder and a large wooden bucket on each end. They would go from outhouse to outhouse cleaning them out, take it home, mix it with water and pour it on their crops. The name the GI's gave them was Honey Dippers. On my next pass I went back to the same shop and asked for six more. I figured he had monopoly on the best out houses in town.

On the 17th of March I celebrated my 22nd birthday with a pass. I had dinner, (don't know what I ate and was afraid to ask), had a few Japanese beers that I found I liked, (didn't ask what they used to make it.), but it was great.

I still was not healing and the damn wound became infected and had to be drained every two days. On the 25th of March 1951 I was in the sunroom and heard the murmur of aircraft engines coming from the North. They flew over the hospital and I counted 102 C-119's, C-82's and C-47's. These are used to drop paratroopers and I'm in a hospital. All my training and I will not get to make a combat jump, (this was to be the last mass combat jump in Airborne history.) The next day the paratroopers of the 187th RCT and the Rangers jumped a few miles north of the 38th parallel.

All of April passed and I was still not healing. The 10th of May the head surgeon called me into his office and said, "I think your going to loose your leg." I never said a word. The very next morning I packed my bag, got on a train and headed for Korea. The thing I noticed about military police was as long as you were headed back to war that they never asked for your papers. It was only when you were headed away from war with no papers that they got very angry and wanted to practice beating your head with those very long wooden clubs they carried. I got a train to Sasabo, then a boat to Pusan and a train to the 2nd Division Replace Company. There I found Sergeants Mike Moriarity (my squad leader Mad Mike) and Mc Neely, the man I almost shot back at Fort Bragg), sitting on a box in that warm spring sunshine waiting to be shipped home. They told me, I would not be in the company a week before I would be rotated back to the states. They would be wrong by 2 _ years and I was about to make the second of my three great mistakes.

HILL 710

It was late afternoon on the 16th of May when the truck carrying me from the replacement center stopped at a tent that was the 1st Ranger headquarters, or what left of it, the new 1st Sergeant, Allen Lang, asked for my orders. I replied, "Have none." With that he accused me of leaving the company and going A.W.O.L. A very serious charge during wartime, (in hindsight I should have let him put me in jail.) He kept up these ear-piercing threats of what he had in store for me. I was in no mood for more of this weak, paper pushing, never firing a weapon in combat piece of dung. I looked at him with the thought, "Mister one more word and your going to meet your maker." but I said, "You wouldn't make a pimple on Sergeant Castonguay ass." The discussion was over; I was told to report to the new company commander Captain Charles Carrier. I got in a jeep and the company clerk drove me to the front lines. The clerk told me I was right about the first sergeant that he never made a visit to the front because half the guys there threaten his life. His tent was at least one mile back from the line.

The first man to meet me was my foxhole buddy Baker; we hugged each other with the love of brothers. I asked about all the old guys, was told that not many were left, but we had a lot of new men. The second man to greet me was Captain Carrier; he asked if I was a replacement? I answered, "No, I'm just back from the hospital." He told to stay with the mortars and not to scale the hill.

A major enemy attack was developing, (here we go again), and that the Chinese designed to drive the UN forces into the sea. The 3rd Chinese Army Group, consisting of 12 divisions, (120,000) men, would first break through the 5th and 7th ROK divisions. These Chinese forces would then turn west, striking the 2nd US Division. Designed to destroy the division's communications and thus cut off its forward forces.

The 1st Ranger Company was ordered to move forward by trucks to regain positions originally occupied by the withdrawing Dutch Battalion. It was past midnight when we moved forward into the gap, as we climbed the dark slopes we met Dutch soldiers pulling back. Their words were encouraging "If you go up that hill, you won't be coming back." We continued to climb the hill. On the trail up to the vacated positions we came under heavy fire, Robertson was killed. We dropped our packs and move steadily upward and attacked. We accomplished our mission of retaking hill 710. Throughout the remaining hours of darkness, there was a steady stream of Chinese counterattacks, some of them even were getting in to our trenches. I could hear to my left the Rangers and Chinese in hand-to-hand combat; Clopton from my squad was killed. The Chinese were beaten off. Clinging to our positions, we helped provide time for the 2nd division to adjust its forces for the continued onslaught. The Chinese were paying a terrible price for there successes, so were we.

In the first 24 hours of their attack the 2nd Division Artillery fired 30,149 rounds of ammunition, causing an estimated 5000 enemy casualties. During daylight of the 18th, the Chinese did not attack us. We watched long columns of Chinese on higher ground to our left bypassing us. They were using a double envelopment to finish the remnants of the 1st Battalion 38th Infantry. (I was to learn later that the Chinese were three miles behind us.) Our misfortunes were getting worst; the enemy was not the only ones to engage us. Two US Marine Corsairs swooped down and machine-gunned our position. To my left on higher ground, a Chinese sniper's fire killed at least seven Rangers, including Lieutenant Herman (West Point 1946) I witnessed one of the bravest acts I had ever seen in saving a man's life instead and taking them. PFC Robert Mastin repeatedly risked his life to help the wounded the sniper was shooting. Time after time he was struck by enemy fire, yet he continued to bring wounded men under shelter and attend to their injuries. His severe wounds finally stopped his courageous heart. Posthumously Mastin was recommended for the Medal of Honor.

Sometime during the night our radioman and our SCR-300 were lost. Captain Carrier was in a bunker with a radio SCR-619 that must have been use by a Dutch artillery observer; it was left in the bunker when they left. Captain Carrier asked if anyone could operate it, I hollered, "I know how," and ran to the bunker. Chatter was coming in all day from the 2nd Division. At 1700 hours word came over the radio that I thought only happened in the movies, "Get off the hill and back to the 38th Infantry the best way you can." I was behind Captain Carrier, he asked if I destroyed the radio, my answer was no. He said, "Go back and destroy it." I ran back to the bunker, took my 45 and shot it dead. By this time it began to rain, shells were coming in from everywhere, it was getting dark and I was by myself and scared to death till I found two other Rangers. The three of us were going to get off of hill 710 together. It was not to be, I was in the lead and it wasn't long before I was hit, the other two men were dead and I was alone again. At this point in time I didn't care anymore. I had an infected left leg and a small wound in my right leg. I need a drink of water and crawled to the streambed. While getting my drink I looked up and saw a man carrying a soldier on this back. Not wanting to be alone again, I yelled that I'd give him help carrying the man. He had a terrible wound to his leg, not much was left of it. We went a short distant and had to rest. We hid in a thicket of bushes. It was now dark, I was exhausted and so was the man I was helping, we soon fallen a sleep. Sometime later loud talking awaked us. It was the Chinese who were all around us. When daylight came we checked our wounded man, he was dead. The man that was first carrying him was Ed Dubreuil a Ranger replacement. It wasn't long before the Chinese, I mean a lot of Chinese, found us, and their leader was a very tall man with a hair-lip. They searched us and, the only thing they took was my camera. They offered us a drink of water, we both accepted.

The battle that we were in was called the MAY MASSACRE. For many years I thought it was called that because of the number of men from the 2nd Division and the Rangers who were killed and wounded. It was called that because of the Chinese killed.

These were the Ranger losses.

Rangers that were killed in the May Massacre
Officers

Lieutenants A. Herman***R. Fuller***A. Vismor

Enlisted Men

L. Oluich	P.Lotti
H.Robertson	H.Tompson
J. Clopton	C.Vesy
R. Evans	C. Baily
J.Pointeck	C. Bunch
G. Smith	H. Adkinson

H. Fraser	G. Hall
R. Kittlewell	E. Dansberry
G. Lewis	R. Laydon
R. Mastin	H. Bagnell

Rangers wounded

LT.Cosman

R. Gilland	R. Meeks	H. Mansfield
J. Girolmo	J. Phillips	J. Reddy
H. Kloke	D. Olson	W. Sharp
L. Thibodeaux	R. Morgan	J. Lisi
A. Dobson	V. Ruiz	F. Nickels
J. Wilson	R. Bayne	E. Meyer
B. Warne	J. Anglin	V. Bac
J. Cujdik	R. Pittman	L. Villa
G. Dahl	G. Voss	E. Baker
W. Cole	J. Evans	R. Gilland
A. Adams	E. Schroader	C. Hayden
E. Meyers	A. Bukary	

On August 1st the remaining men of the 1st Ranger Company were released from their assignment and reassigned to the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. On that date the 1st Ranger Infantry Company (airborne) was inactivated. They were awarded their second Presidential Unit Citation.

It was early morning and I found out what it was like to be on the receiving end of the firepower of the U S Army and Air Force. The Air Force was dropping bombs, and then they circled and come in firing their 50 caliber machine-guns. All this time the Army artillery was firing everything from 105 mm to 155mm and 8-inch howitzers. It had a profound impact on me, I started to shake and knew it was just a matter of minutes before my time had come to pay for what evil thing I did in my life that was so terrible that the bill had come due and my life was the only way to for pay it.

A PRISONER OF WAR

The Chinese had about 15 other POWs and they put us in a large bunker with 10 other Americans. This was not a pleasant place to be. A 21-year old a red haired lieutenant started hollering, " It won't be long now, their going to shoot all of us." I began to think I was better off outside than in here with this lunatic, (I was to find a few more like him later).

When it got dark, the Chinese started to walk us away from the front lines. I met a few more Rangers, Earl Dansberry my assistant squad leader, William (RIP) Rhatigan and Alex Ramatowski. These Rangers I didn't know. They joined the company while I was in the hospital. With Dubreuil and I there were five of us. The further we got from the guns the more muffled they became; but the sky was lit up like the 4th of July. About half way up the mountain road, I was passing something that you could use to gauge the number of casualties the Chinese were expecting. Hour after hour passing me going to the front were stretchers mounted on bicycle tires, one man in front and one in the rear, (very clever these Chinese) Shortly before sunrise, we were back in the war again; a B-26 a medium bomber started dropping bombs. One hit very close to our Ranger group, shrapnel struck Dansberry in the chest, killing him instantly. The Chinese would not let us bury him. The first word I learned in Chinese was tola, (move), and it was emphasized with the end of a bayonet. When daylight came they put, (stuffed us in houses), with so many men in each room it was all you could do to find enough room to sit. You could forget about stretching out on the floor. My stomach was telling me "Boy you haven't had a thing to eat in almost three days and only one drink of water. This was lesson number one: fear has a way of making you forget food, water and your open wounds. In the morning we had our first gourmet Chinese meal, Millet, (Webster's= a cereal grass, a small grain that is used as food in Asia) it's the same yellow seed that is fed to canaries in the states. The next

problem was trying to find something to put this soupy mix into so it could be eaten. I don't remember one man having a spoon or a mess kit. If you were lucky enough to find a can, few did, you used your hat and not having a hat you used your hands. Hunger has a way of dulling your brain to make any food look like prime-rib.

As soon as it got dark we were on the march again. When daylight came it was back in a hut. It was to be the same routine for almost two weeks. In that time frame we were bombed and strafed three more times. More than 150 American POWs joined our group. We finally got to a rest area that the POWs called the Pines. We stayed at the Pines till June 25 th. Sometime during this time we were introduced to a new Chinese food called sorghum. It was cereal ground to a fine powder put in a cloth sack that was then put around your neck. and it was eaten dry. We called it bug dust. Ranger Sergeant Tony Lukasik joins us there and we were back to five Rangers again. Ranger Rhatigan a New York City Irishman decided one night it was time to leave the Pines and go back to the American lines. He didn't get far. When the guards brought him back he had a few lumps on that hard Irish head. They put him in a cage with no food or water. At this time the Chinese formed work parties of 15 to 20 POWs to walk to a main supply center about 7 miles away. There we got sacks of sorghum. On our way back we went by the cage that Rhatigan was in and I give him a small sack of sorghum and some water. I noticed he was gaining weight and could not figure out how. When he was released, " I asked, how did you manage to put some meat on your skinny ass? He told me two others were doing the same thing I was doing. Ranger ingenuity I guess.

It was during my stay at the Pines that I found out how intelligent some of my fellow POWs were. One day on a trip to the BAN-JO (outhouse) I felt something near the old wound in my left leg, the one with the infection. I looked, and, if I had any food in my stomach I'd have thrown-up. The wound was full of maggots; I ran back to my buddies and pleaded for them to please get these damn things out of my leg. Someone nearby said, "Don't touch them, their only eating the infected flesh." He was right. In a short time the leg that the doctor in Japan said should come off was healed. We left for the Mining Camp. (The government would not tell us the name of this town for over 45 years, top secret) Suan is on the western side of North Korea and about 60 miles north of the 38th Parallel. It was a small village that at one time had mining as it's main industry. It was soon to have a new industry, DEATH. We arrived in Suan July 2, 1951.

I was captured near the small village of Kumgol about 8 miles south of the 38 parallel in central South Korea. To get to Suan we had to walk well over 120 miles.

THE MINING CAMP

I really don't know how to describe this soon to become living hell. I'll start by telling you how the town was laid out. As you walked North into the town, to the right was a small creek and to the right of that was a group of huts that housed American officer POWs. On the left of the creek, up on the hill, stood a Korean schoolhouse. This was to be my home for the next 78 days. By the time we arrived at the mining camp, very few of us were not suffering from Dysentery (Webster's=a painful intestinal disease characterized by inflammation and diarrhea with bloody, mucous feces.) What Webster fails to tell you are that it will take your life in a very short time if not treated. Medicine was not to be had. This, along with a lack of food and shelter these things, started to take its toll. Adding to our misery, we soon developed two others diseases, Beriberi, (Webster's=caused by lack of vitamin B-1 in the diet: it is characterized by extreme weakness, paralysis, and anemia) Webster's fails to tell you that with wet Beriberi your legs swell to three times their normal size and in some cases a man's testicles swell to five times their normal size. Also we got scurvy (Webster's=disease resulting from a deficiency of vitamin C in the body, characterized by weakness, anemia, spongy gums and bleeding from the mucous membranes. If you had a gunshot wound or a broken bone added to all the diseases, you were in a whole lot of trouble.

A couple of days after I arrived at the mining camp, a buddy of mine said there were two Rangers in the last room in the schoolhouse. The school had five rooms that were 20X20 feet with a latrine. You had to pass through the latrine to get to room five. I use the word latrine loosely because it was like the bottom of an outhouse. On the floor were fesses that had blood mixed with puss from the men who could not hold their stool long enough to get to the trench to relieve themselves. Crawling on the floor were big black bugs and rats fighting for the stool on the floor. In my entire life I have never seen anything as nauseating as this. I know of no words to describe this hell on earth. I went to room five and found Rangers Spence and Grimm in an appalling condition.

They were part of the five men in the jeep with the money that was taken from the Bank of Wonju in January. King, Waters, and Lutz, all had died early from cold, starvation and dysentery. We tried to clean them up but hell we could not clean ourselves up. A few days later Grimm died, Rhatigan, Lukasik and I carried his body further up the hill behind the school to the burial ground. We dug a shallow hole with the only tools we had, our hands, just deep enough to cover his body. We had no paper or pencil to write the date of his death, he deserved better. I soon got dysentery and beriberi and then lice that literally sucked the blood out of my body. I had them early after capture but I was still strong enough to kill the eggs that collected in the seams of my clothes. You took the eggs of the lice and crack them with your thumbnails; you had to do this at the very least twice a day. There was nothing you could do about the Beriberi but for the dysentery, again a G.I. told us to eat charcoal. This wasn't a cure but it sure helped. The Chinese gave us eating bowls sometime after the peace talks started (July 2, 1951) too bad they didn't give us something to put in those bowls. While we were at the mining camp for those 78 days at least one or two men died every day. Sometime in August the last of the five Rangers from the Bank of Wonjo died. At last Spence's sick body stopped hurting and he had friends with him when his heart stopped, more than most had. I carried a piece of wood with his name on it for many months after we got to Camp#1.

My Dysentery stopped. How wonderful it was to stop moving my bowels 6 to 8 times a day and running to that damn latrine. Sometimes making it, but most of the time not. The food must have gotten slightly better because my beriberi went away. After the peace talks started things changed. The Chinese announced that we were going to get a bath, the ones that could walk that is. We walked up to the north end of town and, in a long hut there was a concrete tub where 15 men at a time could get into the water, I can't remember how many used that water. Try to imagine these filthy men, some covered with feces and none having a haircut or a shave for almost four months. I don't know how many before me used this tub; I do know it was the first time since I was captured that I didn't feel like an animal. When we were done we put our old dirty cloths back on.

A man by the name of James Lewis Emerson escaped one night, but in doing so he killed a guard. He was going to pay a very severe price for the few hours of freedom he had. The Chinese warned us, "You're not in Germany were you look like Germans. How far do you think you can go with your big noses and blue eyes?" Emerson was captured a very short distance from the mining camp and was put on trial. We all had to attend. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was taken somewhere and shot; we heard that a number of the POWs were made to watch the Chinese firing squad carry out the sentence. The very next night Ranger Alex Ramatowski took off, he too was caught. Alex was a very strange person; he was to do more things like this during his time as a POW. Alex was 6' 3" much too tall for an oriental but in his mind he was 5' 3". He was given hard labor. I think he enjoyed it.

We left the mining camp on September 20th 1951, heading north and always at night to keep the American planes from bombing us. At times the Korean people were permitted to get close to us. Anyone having something that was strange to them, like a tattoo or a hairy body, and, if you let them touch it, they would give you an apple. In a lot of towns going north I got that apple because I was hairy. I often wondered what I would have been worth if I had false teeth? The weather was terrible; it rained almost every day. This again added to the filthy, hungry, wet life that we had to endure to get to the main camp on the Yalu River on the Manchuria border. One night we were put in boats on the River Taedong just on the outskirts of Pyongyang. The air force was really giving the city a hammering. We walked a few miles, and then the Chinese stopped and made us climb down an opening inside a mine. There were so many of us in there that after awhile, it was getting hard to get a mouthful of air and the men were beginning to panic, Me along with them. An officer called out to settle down, and get as close to the shallow stream of water that ran through the mine. We did what he said but the panic didn't stop till they let us out some hours later. I was never as frightened of losing my life, as I was that night.

WHITE FACED CHINESE

We continued north while sleeping in the daytime and walking all night. On the outskirts of Sinuiju, a large rail center, just before daylight, a motorcycle passed us. The man riding the cycle had a Russian uniform on; he was blond with a very fair complexion. We asked the English speaking guard what kind of Chinese soldier was riding the motorcycle, he replied "A white faced Chinese." We all had a good laugh, including the Chinaman. We walked another hour up a steep road and, out of nowhere 50 to 60 of these white faced Chinese gathered around us. According to Ranger Lukasik who spoke and understood Polish, they were Russians (both are Slavic languages.) I looked up to my right in the direction the Russians came from and saw very large anti-aircraft guns that were radar controlled. I learned two things that day, 1- there were Russians in Korea and, 2 they weren't bad guys. After I got to Camp #1, I found out that the Chinese had taken the sick that could not walk, put them in horse drawn carts. When they got to the area where the white faced Chinese who manned the anti-aircraft guns were they had given the sick POWs bread, cheese and a few cigarettes.

CAMP #1 CHANG-SONG

I arrived at Camp #1 in the middle of October 1951 sometime in the afternoon. It took 19 days to get here. If you figured only 10 miles a day, that would make it a 190-mile march. I can't recall how many American GI'S were there, I don't think too many. I do remember a lot of Englishmen. It was a very cold day. The Chinese, kept us standing around for a very long time waiting to be assigned to one of the huts in the compound and to be given some food. It was a wonderful feeling going to sleep that night; there would be no long march tomorrow. I was assigned to the 4th company and then, into 10 man squads. Our sleeping area was an 8'x8' room in a mud hut with mud floors covered with rattan mats. Four of these huts were attached to each other with a kitchen on one end. Heating ducts underground from the kitchen to the chimney on the opposite end of the building all heated the mud floors. Very efficient these Korean as long as you had a fire going at 30 below zero.

There were 7 companies in camp# 1. Companies 1-2-3-4 were Americans. And 5-6-7- English; from October 1951 to August 1953 there were approximately 900 Americans and 500 UK POWs here. In August 1952, when Camp #1 was reorganized, all sergeants except Sergeant Rook (he never told the Chinese he was a sergeant,) were transferred to Camp#4. When the armistice was signed Camp#1 held more POWs then other POW camp.

It's been at least 170 days since I had a haircut, a shave or washed with soap. I was wearing the same clothes for the entire length of time. You would think the stench of your body would be more then you or your fellow POWs could stand, not true. From the lack of a proper diet, something happens to your sense of smell. I can never remember smelling myself or anyone else. I believe it was the next day that our captors took us down to the river, gave us a bar of soap and a towel and it was in to the water. The temperature had to be near freezing but I didn't care, just to get 5 _ months of filth off was worth the cold. I swear the dirt was in layers. I believe a few days later we were issued cotton padded uniforms, our old uniforms were tossed in a pile. I'm not lying, I

would take a oath I saw those lice infected filthy uniforms get up, get in a column of fours and march off to the camp dump and that's the truth, I think.

At some point that winter we were given haircuts and a shave, they shaved everything including your eyebrows. Sometime during these first few days our B-26's bombed the camp, hitting the officer's huts and killing a small number and wounding several. The Chinese made us view the bodies we told them to mark the camp as a POW center and, for the first time, the term Fellow Students was used and not POW. It would not belong before I found out what a fellow student meant.

The winter of 1951 was long and bitterly cold. The food consisted of barley and millet, brought to us in a bucket twice a day. The morning meal was usually millet soup, and, on special occasions, a bowl of white rice. The first bowl of rice I had in camp tasted like sugar, it was the best food I ate in 6 months. The squad leader had the responsibility to make sure each man in the squad got his fair share. Food was an obsession in our life the whole 28 months I was a POW. You talked about it every day, you made menus of food that other POWs talked about. Hell I saw two men fight over ketchup. One liked it on eggs and the other one didn't and, of course the eggs and ketchup were all in their minds. Near the end of 1951 the officers were moved to Camp #2.

THE AMERICAN WAR MONGERS

During the winter of 1951-1952 the Chinese held classes to teach us about the warmongers Dupont, Morgan, Ford, Vanderbilt and the Rockefellers, and how they were using us as cannon fodder. Then we spent time learning how great Joe Stalin and Chairman MaoTse-tung were and how they won WW-2. These classes would go on every day for hours. The Chinese noticed that a lot of the men were falling a sleep so they would kick, push and holler "boo-ha-dee" (no good.) The Chinese soon put a stop to the dozing off. Everyone was issued a one legged stool. When you dozed off sitting on that thing your ass hit the ground and, they in turn, kicked your ass. Very clever these Chinese. These classes were compulsory. The only way you got out of them 1-you were in jail 2-you were so damn sick you could not walk. This went on till May of 1952. We were not good students. It surprised me how much they knew about our country and how little I knew about theirs. This was the first war that POWs were used for propaganda. The war was to go on for two more years in disagreement as to what to do with the POWs. During those two years there were 63,000 Americans casualties alone, 12,300 will be killed before the peace talks ended.

MAIL CALL

During the spring of 1952 we were permitted to write one letter home a month. Some of the POWs began to get mail in June 1952; I believe I got my first letter in late July or early August. I think the toughest thing in my stay as a POW of course was staying alive, but going to mail call and not getting a letter would tear the heart out of me. I guarantee if I could get one letter every month I could have survived that miserable camp for 10 more years. I could never comprehend the thinking of the Chinese when it came to us receiving mail, POWs got a lot of Dear John's type letters or notices of illness, death in the family. I even remember a guy getting divorce papers he had to sign. Walter Dixon's wife remarried while he was in prison camp, his wife received a letter from the government that he was killed in action on May 18th 1951. It seemed any letter with bad news the Chinese always sent through. Anyway I received 8 letters in the 23 months I spent at Chang-song. The letters you sent home better contain, "I'm in good health, being well treated and wish the war was over." If those words weren't included your letter was sure to get shit canned. My family received 13 letters. I was thankful that my mom and dad received them. I can imagine what I put them through with the 3 telegrams they received from the Government. One was for being wounded, one was for missing in action and seven months later the notice that I was a POW. The sergeants were taken away in May and sent to Camp #4; I said my good-bys to Ranger Lukasik and Ranger Dubreuil and, a short time later the blacks were sent to Camp # 5.

WOOD DETAIL

The only supply of energy available for cooking and heating was wood. As soon as the weather permitted, we were forced to go into the hills around camp to cut and haul wood back to camp, which was in many cases a matter of miles. The Chinese called their measure of weight a caddie or, if you put it in pounds, it came to 2.2 pounds. Each man was required to bring in 500 caddies of wood each year. You also had to fell the tree, cut it into pieces and haul it back to camp. There it was put on a scale and they would write the weight of your logs in a book beside your name. You did this every day until you got your 500 caddies. This was a difficult assignment because all of the POWs lost so much of their body weight; strength was a premium none of us had. As if this job was not unpleasant enough, we had to carry the wood for our guards too.

CAMP RULES

This is the exact copy of the camp rules as written by the Chinese. Kinds of punishment set for the violations of discipline and system 1-Hard Labor (at least 7 days) 2-Lock-Up (at least 10 days) 3-Imprisonment and Hard Labor to reform himself (at least 90 days) 4- Life Imprisonment 5-Capital Punishment

Students, committing the follow misbehavior, will be violators of discipline:

- 1-reactionary elements (imperialist elements) that adopt a hostile attitude toward the Chinese people's volunteers.
- 2-disobey orders and resists the leadership of the C.P.V., swear at the Chinese personnel, refuse to go for detail work and be stubborn after being questioned.
- 3-damage any houses (this includes the damage of doors, windows and mats)*****this rule got me in trouble.
- 4-organize and take command of escape, and cross the wire at random (the other deserters will be treated the same.)
- 5- those who defecate in pants and get lice on them.
- 6-expose any object during air raid.

To give you an indication of the fear that they could put into you and what your life meant to them, one day on wood detail, a truck hit an old Korean woman. I ran up to help her and a guard pushed me back with his bayonet. The Chinese driver got out of the truck, looked to see if it was damaged, got back in and drove off. This hard behavior toward the Koreans is an example of the idea of "one less mouth to feed."

It was not difficult to get in trouble in Camp #1. I think everyone was called to headquarters at least once. The first time I was asked to visit Major Wu was after an air raid. The Chinese were trying a new method of using the POWs, by getting them to sign a petition and then sending it to the United Nations. I and about 20 other men were discussing the signing of this petition. I opened my big mouth and said, "you sign this thing and when you get back to the states your Uncle Sam will be waiting to throw you skinny ass in jail." I didn't know that our interrupter was standing in a door listening to me. I heard him say We-La (the Chinese have trouble with the letter V) LA-LA (come, come.) He took me to meet for the first time Major WU who had had a good understanding of English. In a paternal voice he said "Have a chair," gave me a cigarette, and cup of tea. What a nice man I thought to myself. All the stories about how evil this man were had to be an imaginary tale. Not so, he took a book out of his pocket, wrote my name in it, looked at me with a stare that would make you dirty your pants and, said, "I don't want to every have to put your name in my book again." More petitions would be passed around but for some strange reason I was never asked to sign one. Maybe they thought I was too dimwitted to write my name. Sometime latter the 10 good men in my hut elected me squad leader; things went well the summer of 1952 under my fair but firm leadership, (like they were going to listen to me.) We had to pretend to read the Chinese party line newspaper that was passed out once a week, 10 men 10 papers. After a couple of hours the guard would come by and pick up the papers. In the Chinese effort to "enlighten" us, the guards gave each hut ten copies of "THE SHANGHAI NEWS." At the end of the day they had to collect ten copies, "ten men ten copies." The guard got his 10 newspapers until it got cold and we stuffed one of the newspapers in a hole in the door to block the cold air that was coming in our room. Every week it was 10 men 10 papers but not this week, the guard received nine papers; he counted them a couple of times and still nine papers. He ran off to get our nasty ass interpreter. He was outside shouting insults at me and it was off to see Major Wu again. The same thing again, chair, cigarette, cup of tea and the book. He found my name, looked at me and said "You have made a serious error by destroying the Chinese peoples property." I tried to explain to him about the cold air coming into the room. He was raising his voice, standing over top of me and said, "You see my book? "The next time I put your name in it I'm going to hang you!" That got my attention; my mind went back to the old Korean lady who was hit by the truck. Life doesn't mean shit to these people. Again "one less mouth to feed."

FLY CONTROL

In the summer of 1952 the Chinese told us that in order to control the population of flies, each POW would be required to kill and collect 20 every day. Each squad leader would be held responsible for their squad's flies. After a few weeks of this the squad leaders got together and told the Chinese that the biggest problem concerning the flies was from coming from an open ditch being used as a latrine, and if they would furnish the materials the POWs would build a latrine. In the spring of 1953 the construction got under way. The men in the company worked under the guidance of Sergeant Richard Rook. I'm sure you all know the man who invented the commode was John Crapper. In Camp # 1, Rook was our John Crapper. He built a 24 holer that was a work of art, tight lids and a urinal to accommodate at the very least 10 men. We were all very proud of this gifted man; even the Chinese were happy, no more flies. They even gave him lime to control the odors. I have no doubt that someone put a sign on that masterpiece with Sergeant Richard Rook's name on it and after the war; I'm convinced the Korean people use it as a memorial to this great man. Within weeks Rook would fall out of the good graces of the Chinese and sent to a hard labor camp. It would be 30 years later till I saw Rook again, but I got a phone call every New Years Eve for those 30 years and still do.

NIGHT BLINDNESS

Because of a lack of vitamins, about half the camp began to loose their capability to see at night. If a man had to go to the ban-jo at night, he had to get a buddy to take him. Sometime the man who could see would have 4 or 5 of these sightless men in tow. The prison guards were even sufferers of this ailment. A committee of POWs went to see the camp commander to ask if he could acquire some vegetables so we could cure this blindness. Within a few days there were a 100 Chinamen with picks and shovels digging a 25x25 hole in the ground 6 feet deep and covered with logs and dirt (a cooler). A few days' later trucks of turnips were dumped and put in the cooler. We ate those damn turnips for 37 days, fried, boiled and any other way that you can think of. Our

committee of POWs went back to ask if he could change to some other vegetable? A few days' latter trucks of carrots came into camp and it was carrots fried, boiled, and raw for the next 30 days. Shortly after that, there was no more night blindness.

GERM WARFARE

The subject of bacteriological warfare was not new in the Korean War. In late 1952, early 1953, the Chinese give it a new development, charging the US with waging germ warfare. They claimed that flies, flea's ticks, mosquitoes, and spiders were being spread by the US Air Force to broadcast infectious diseases over North Korea. The Chinese said they had testimony that our capitalist Air Force dropped germ bombs laden with nauseous insects. They made the claim they are capitalist insects. "We know this for a fact and we have proof!" This went on and on for a couple of months. They would show us letters written by Air Force officers stating that they indeed spread germs in North Korea. A bolt out of the blue was dropped in late summer of 1952 when the whole camp was called to headquarters. Standing on the podium was the camp commander and Marine Colonel Frank Schwable. The Colonel stepped to the microphone and, in a short speech, admitted to dropping germs. Not a word came from the POWs; I think all of us were upset that he would go that far, making propaganda speeches for the Chinese and, a Marine Colonel at that. He was not alone. General Dean and Air Force Colonel James Evens authored propaganda while POWs, (not one man from the Air Force or Marines were ever charged with wrongful activities.) The US Government felt that someone should be held responsible, so the Army who had the lowest percentage of men charged with incorrect behavior, would take the dishonor for all the military in Korea. I feel it's important to be known that 56 men from the Army were decorated for actions against the enemy while POWs, 42 more were shared by the Air Force and Marines, This was the first war that POWs were awarded for bravery while in enemy hands and the last!

HAPPY DAYS

You could always tell how the peace talks were going by the way the Chinese were treating you, especially the quality and quantity of food. The talks must have been going magnificently. We were getting rice every day and bean curd. Then the Chinese built a basketball and volley court. God, life was good.

It's been over two and a half years since I said that. In April of 1953 the sick and wounded were exchanged in Operation Little Switch. Among the allied personnel were 149 Americans, two of the men to be released that I knew from our 4th company were James Coogan and David Ludlum, (when David got home he wrote a letter my family from a Army Hospital in Colorado, I still have it!) Joe Nickols, Cue Miller and Bob Draper formed a singing group and called themselves The Laughing Trio. They had home made painted neckties with a woman's face on them and they were great. It was now time for me to entertain the boys of 4th company. I think it was Gill Eveland who suggested that we, (Eveland, Villa and BillyJ.Niebrand,) get a talent show together. I was to be the master of ceremonies. The show was called B-J Productions. We had a table, chairs and a painted sign. I had a belt, suspenders and a cap with many colors, (I have no idea were any of these items came from) we had a few Englishmen join in; these guys are all born actors. I think we put on a good show, to this day some of the POWs still make fun of me about not having any talent but I know better. I would tell these same POWs stories that were fabricated and they believed them and to this day the stories I told were so good I believe them.

Things continued to improve, more food, a little canned meat and a new summer uniform. We even started to receive Chinese factory made cigarettes. Two of the guys that put a lot of sunshine in my life while I was a POW were Ranger Rip Rhatigan and Jack Chapman. Chapman had in his mind a dog. He took his dog for a walk every day till his imaginary dog bit a POW. The POW told the Chinese that Chapman's dog bit him. So the Chinese took the dog's rope from Chapman and took the dog away. Sometimes I think I was the only sane man in that camp! I was proud of Ranger Rhatigan when he won the company ping-pong championship the men played for three days before Rhatigan was declared the champ. The Chinese even came to see the last game. The only problem was there were no table, no paddles, and no ping-pong balls. **NOW AFTER THE PING-PONG CHAMPIONSHIP WITH THE CHINESE ATTENDING I KNEW I WAS THE ONLY SANE MAN IN THAT CAMP!**

Sometime in the middle of July a few men from 4th company came running, shouting something about American cigarettes. As they got closer you could hear the words. "Red Cross truck at camp headquarters." I could not believe my ears. From starvation, diseased ridden bodies, and far too many deaths, after all these months it all came down to a truck changing the world I have lived in for the last 27 months. I went to headquarters and it was true, a Swedish Red Cross truck was passing out cigarettes, but I can't remember anything else, I'm convinced they gave us other items.

JULY 27th 1953

The whole camp was assembled and the camp commander read a speech in Chinese that started with the words to-la-men (fellow students.) After he was finished the interrupter read it in English. The only words I really heard were, At Panmunjan a armistice was signed at 10 am this morning and at 10pm tonight the war in Korea will be over. I remember that the POWs said not a word; too shocked I guess hearing the word peace. We all returned to our huts and then the pandemonium started. Some even

cried knowing that we soon would be going home. We were allowed to visit other compounds and see old friends that we had not see since we arrived at Camp # 1 way back in October of 1951.

I met Lou Pachelie a man who lived 10 miles from my hometown and for 2 years in camp we were just a few hundred yards apart. What good conversations we could have had if the Chinese opened the camp so we could move among the other POW companies. It was not to be. What a magnificent day this was, so much joy. God, life was good.

OPERATION BIG SWITCH

On or about August 3rd 1953, the first of the men from Camp# 1 began to leave for the trip to Panmunjom and Freedom Village. Day after day I would go up to where the POWs would get on the trucks and I give the ones I knew a hug and said good-by. Every day that my name was not called seemed like a eternity, then around the 18th of August I was told to get my personal effects an get up to the trucks. I made it a point to say good-by to Chow-sun-lee (top enlisted man) of 4th Company and Lo-Lin (who had a tear in his eye) neither of these men ever gave any of the POWs a bad time. I got on a truck with two men that I still remember, Gerald W. Glasser, (lived 30 miles North of my home town) and John Rhoten. Before the truck pulled away a JEEP stopped behind our truck and a Chinese officer told Glasser to get off. To this day nothing has ever been heard of what ever happened to him. He is listed along with 360 other POWs who were seen alive in the last month before the exchange started. The truck pulled away and I took my last look at a place in Korea called Chang-Song that was my home for two years. My thoughts were not of the bad times there but of the many faithful friends that I found and only in a place like that where friendship meant everything, because you had nothing else to give. I feel came away from there a RICH MAN.

The trucks drove to a city called Antung a large railroad center. We were put in boxcars. The train would stop every few hours so we could stretch our legs and go to the Band-Jo. I can remember pulling in to PYONGYANG (capital of North Korea.) I don't think a building was left standing. I do remember hundreds of Chinese solders and tons of military equipment heading north. Somewhere North of Panmunjom the train stopped and we were again put on trucks and driven to a camp just a short way from Freedom Village. I was at this camp till the morning of August 26th 1953, again put on a Chinese truck and crossed the Freedom Bridge. At the end of the bridge the truck made a circle and stopped. Two American military policemen were waiting to help us get down from the truck. We were taken into a large dining room, a Major General welcomed us back and then told us we can have anything we wanted to eat from a beefsteak to ice cream. I took the ice cream and the thing I missed most, a large glass of cold milk. The best part of the dining room were the waiters, they were all officers! Next we were sprayed with a disinfectant, then in this order had a medical check, talked to a Chaplin, talked to the press if you wanted to, got comfort items from the Red Cross, a hot shower and a clothing issue.

We then were put on helicopters (some of us never heard of one and never even saw one) and flown the 40 miles to INCHON. This was the port of embarkation to the United States. We were put in a small area that had good food, hot showers and they gave us some money from our back pay so we could buy things from the PX (post exchange) I bought a suit case, a good camera and two new pair of jump-boots, (I planned to stay in the army). I found this compound that the POWs were kept in STRANGE. It was completely surrounded by barbed wire. In a few short days I would find out why. I stayed at this compound for 3 days I was joined a few days later by my good friend (let's escape) Ranger Bill Rhatigan. On the 29th of August 1953 we were put on buses and taken to the dock, were we boarded the ship U.S.S. Marine Phoenix; I was on my way HOME.

As the ship pulled away from the port at INCH'ON the POWs were assigned cabins on the top deck, we had are own dining room (the food was great and all you could eat) on the second day at sea each of us was interrogated for the next 13 days, for at least 4 hours a day. I had no idea why and I didn't care. I just wanted to get home. We were warned to have no contact with any of the returning G.I. from Korea on board. In 1987, 34 years after I was discharged, I received a letter from the Army Intelligence and Security Command that the DCII check disclosed an Army intelligence investigative dossier concerning me was found, and under the Freedom of Information Act that they would send me a copy. Three weeks later I received a package from the Army, I opened it and found 136 pages of almost everything that happened to me while I was a POW. My mind went back to the early 1950's and a U.S. Senator named Joe McCarthy (tail gunner Joe) had this whole country scared to death that Joe was going to name you a COMMUNIST. He said that there were Commies in every department of the U.S. Government and especially the Army. This man NEVER found one Communist but he ruined a lot of good peoples names. A few years latter Joe died a drunk and a recluse. He should have died in childbirth. The man that gave the POWs from Korea a bad name was Major John Myers. (An Army psychologist) He was giving lectures all over the U.S. saying that the POWs had all been BRAIN WASHED. This was a year before the first POW was released and he never did talk to a POW. He too should have died in childbirth. Hell, the only thing the Chinese Brain Washed us with were the want of something to eat.

On September 11th 1953 our ship docked in San Francisco and to Rip and my surprise, ex- Ranger John Reedy was there to greet us. He insisted that we come to his home in San Francisco, have dinner, stay the night and he would drive us to the airport in the morning. We took his offer. In the morning just before leaving, he gave me an Army jacket that was lined with parachute silk that he had made by a Japanese tailor. I kept that jacket till John Reedy died in 1992 and then donated it in his name to the War Collage in Carlisle, Pennsylvanian. We set off to the airport. Rip had a different plane then I did, we said our goodbyes and I thanked him for being a good friend and boarded my plane for a city I left 3 years earlier.

The plane took off at 07:00 and, after a very long and slow 8-hour trip, we landed at the brand new Greater Pittsburgh Airport at 15:00 hours. There had to be well over 30 people waiting for me, led by John and Margaret Villa (my dad and mother) my two brothers (Milt and Marv and their wives) . There were tears, smiles, hugs, and a thousand questions. When we arrived home there

were more people in the front yard. We fed them all but I was very uncomfortable with all the people there. About 8 pm I took my dad aside and told him I wasn't feeling very well and I needed to be alone for a while. He told me to take his car and go for a drive. I did. I drove till daylight the next morning. I slept for a few hours then showered, shaved and shampooed, and got dressed (in my civilian cloths that were 3 sizes too big.) I looked like hell and needed about 25 pounds to fill the seat of my pants. I walked the 3 blocks to Miller and Sons Chevrolet and, in less then 60 minutes I drove home in my brand new \$2600 ivory and gold Bel Air hard top. Those 10 days at home were very hard on me both physically and mentally. The anxiety was getting the best of me and I had sharp pains in my stomach and chest. I would take the car out at night and find a very high hill, park it and sit there till the sun came up in the morning, and I did this every night till I left for Valley Forge Army Hospital, just 20 miles north west of Philadelphia. The anxiety was so bad I didn't have the courage to drive so I took a plane.

VALLEY FORGE ARMY HOSPITAL

I can't say enough about how exceptional this hospital was. The POWs were kept together; we had our own dining room that I think had to rank as one best in the Army. The food was fantastic, two different kind of meat or fish at lunch and supper, all the milk you can drink and a pastry rack that was at least 8 feet long and 2 and half feet high.

Every day we saw doctors of every kind. The weekends were unsurpassed. The good people of Philadelphia would put us on buses and take us to football games. While I was in the hospital I got to see the University of Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Eagles with the great Charlie Choo-Choo Justice and a 1953 Army game. This was beyond compare; to see those cadets march onto the field before the game is something I will never forget.

The question of whether to continue my Army career was answered on a Thursday afternoon in late October. I was in line to get a weekend pass. When I got to the desk a corporal sitting behind it said "I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A PASS." This little man didn't realize I was in no mood for jokes but he wasn't joking, nor did he know how close he came to a violent death. I controlled myself long enough to hear his reason for not giving me a pass. He asked how long I've been in the Army and why the top button of my pajamas was open. I didn't take the trouble to answer; I just look at him with revulsion. I got the pass and I also learned I had better get out of the Army or they would be sending me to Fort Leavenworth, the Army's prison for deserters and men who commit murder.

My mother called a few days later and said the Post Master wanted to know if I was interested in a job, and if I was, I had to let him know in a few days. I told her yes but I didn't know how long the Army wanted to keep me. The following Tuesday I was called down to the Paymasters Office and asked, "How do you know the Adjutant General of Pennsylvania?" I answered, "I don't know him" He said, "He sure knows you, you're being discharged today!" I picked up my papers, got a bus to the airport and a plane home.

On Thursday the 30th day of October 1953, (2 days after I was discharged,) I went to work in the Post Office and liked so much I stayed for next 38 years. In February of 1956 I married Helena (BABE) after 16 months of chasing, I finally got her to say yes and of course I found her on my mail route, not only was she a fine looking lady she had a bank account.

On January 11th 1958 we had a little girl and named her Carla Marie, 4 years later John Michael was born on June the 11th 1962. The kids turned out great and always come to Lewis for advice because he is well informed and has worldly knowledge. Of course they never use this reliable resource. And we all lived happily ever after.
July 2003

THE END