

Pro Patria Press

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January 2005

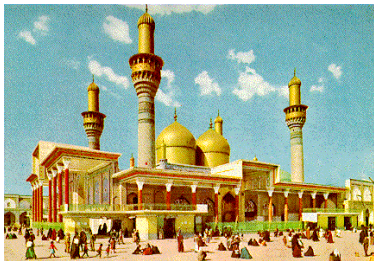
Newsletter of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association

Reunion 05

Columbus, Georgia will be the site of our 2005 Reunion. Dates are 26-29 August. LTG (ret) Sam Wetzel, our reunion coordinator, will provide additional information as it becomes available.

4th Battalion in Iraq

From LTC John Spiszer, Commander 4th Battalion 31st Infantry in Iraq. Wow, it's hard to believe we have been in the new camp for 6 weeks and that Thanksgiving is over and we are near to Christmas. Even better is that Ramadan and the fight for Fallujah are over and we are counting down to the Iraqi Elections on 30 January. Both those were/are watershed events for us here in Iraq. We were extremely busy during Ramadan and the Fallujah fight and we anticipate we will be busy again as the elections near.



Your Soldiers continue to do an outstanding job in executing a difficult and demanding mission. They conduct patrols and raids, check sewage pumps, and visit schools. The new area here continues to be complicated and complex, requiring us to stretch our skills to do everything we can to maintain a safe and secure environment. This is the mission statement I have given the Battalion: *Task Force 4-31 Infantry conducts operations in the Kadhamiya area to establish an environment allowing Iraqis to run their own affairs.* That means we do whatever is required from fighting, to building, to talking, to ensure terrorists can't impact the Iraqi government or security forces efforts in Kadhamiya (a picture of the nearby shrine above.) We are blessed because we can actually see the results of our efforts on a daily basis as things actually get better.

Thanksgiving was tremendous. Unlike most days we received the same rations that most of the rest of the camps get and our cooks outdid themselves. I think our Thanksgiving feast was better than any I've had in 21 years in the Army. They did a great job. We also got the banners that the Company FRGs made with messages and hand prints and they helped decorate our walls. A special thanks also to our NYC Volunteer sponsors who continue to go above and beyond the call for Soldiers in both A Company and HHC. All of you are outstanding and I hope that you get this and know how much your efforts are appreciated.

Over the past month, A Co, B/1-509 IN, and HHC held their combat patch awarding ceremonies and many more CIBs and CMBs were awarded. We promoted SGT Gilmore (Scouts) to SSG and CPL Boone (FSE)



to SGT. We promoted almost all of the 2LTs to 1LT and LT McCarthy to CPT. This past week we were visited by BG Terry and CSM Borja. BG Terry presented SPC Brown (C Co), SSG Eldred (A Co), SPC Duran (HHC), SPC Garcia (D/110 MI, attached to the Battalion), and SPC Stevko (HHC) with Purple Hearts. Fortunately all returned to duty soon after

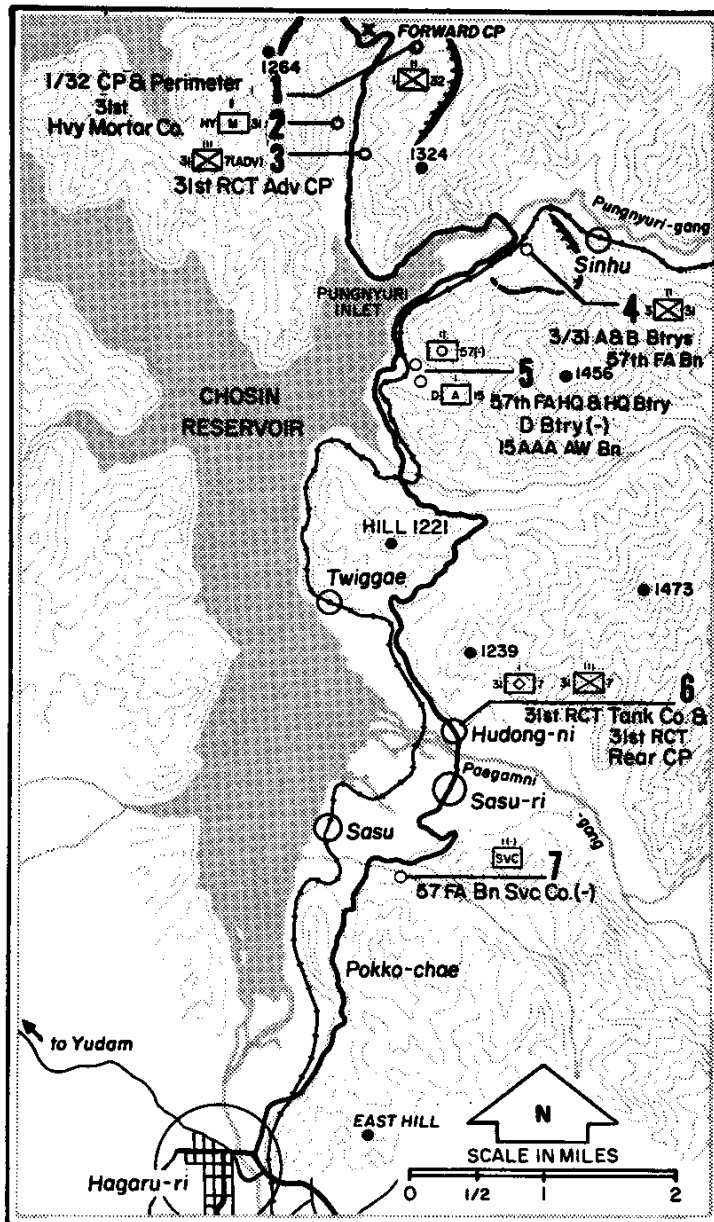


being wounded and are none the worse for wear. Pictures on previous page: BG Terry talks to C Co in the Green Zone and presents the Purple Heart to SSG Eldred here at Camp Justice. All the best, For Country, and Merry Christmas! LTC John M. Spiszer, Polar Bear 6

Write to them c/o Sergeant Major, HHC 4-31st Inf, 2nd BCT 10th Mtn Div, APO AE 09303.

Korea 1950

This is the fifth installment of our coverage of the Korean War. In our last issue, the regiment advanced deep into the mountains of northeastern Korea, only to be told to return to the coast for a bone-chilling 140 mile trip to the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir. We pick up the story again as the regiment arrives at the reservoir. The date is November 28, 1950.



As the 5th Marine Regiment's rear guard rounded the southern edge of the Chosin Reservoir headed west, the 31st RCT began moving north on a narrow, slippery dirt road paralleling the reservoir's east side. The 1st Battalion 32d Infantry had already relieved the 3d Battalion 5th Marines the previous afternoon, occupying high ground overlooking the reservoir's eastern mid-point. Across from them on the reservoir's western shore was the 7th Marine Regiment at Yudam-ni, soon to be joined by the 5th Marine Regiment and most of the 1st Marine Division's Artillery in preparation for a planned attack to the Yalu River—the Manchurian border of China.

Arriving in early afternoon, the 31st Infantry Regiment's Forward Command Post (CP) tucked itself in just south of the 1st Battalion 32d Infantry atop a high ridge. The location offered a good vantage point for overseeing the attack Colonel MacLean planned to launch the next day. Faithful to the last orders he received, he intended to continue as soon as his 2d Battalion reached the reservoir.

Settling in just behind his CP was the regiment's Heavy Mortar Company (less one platoon), positioned to support the attack's intended kick-off the next morning.

Three miles farther south, the RCT's main body halted for a "short break" on the delta of the Pungnyu-ri gang, a stream flowing into an inlet of the reservoir from the northeast. The area was deceptively empty as the 3rd Battalion 31st Infantry and Batteries A and B of the 57th Field Artillery dismounted trucks and jeeps and ambled around clumsily to regain their circulation. They had just completed a bone-chilling, mind-numbing 140-mile journey along roads that could barely justify the term. Although headquarters and support elements had their own vehicles, X Corps trucks that had brought the battalion's rifle companies from Hungnam to Koto-ri were diverted to haul artillery ammunition for the Marines. Consequently, most infantrymen had been walking for the past 2 days and a night. The last 11 miles from Hagaru-ri to the inlet were the worst. The temperature had fallen fast as a brisk Siberian wind swept in from the reservoir. Men fell asleep next to the road while their company commanders met with Lieutenant Colonel Reilly.

Reilly ordered Captain Kitz to move K Company along the ridges paralleling the inlet, while Captain Etchemendy's L Company continued along the road adjacent to the reservoir. Captain Marr's I Company would follow K Company. That was the plan but the men were in no condition to cooperate, particularly not if it meant slogging up and down steep ridges covered with ice and blowing snow. Impending darkness and falling temperatures would also make vehicular travel more difficult. After reflecting on the situation, Reilly cancelled his order a half hour later and ordered his companies to dig in for the night. They would take up positions corresponding to the movement plan Reilly had directed.

Wearily, I and K Companies trudged up the ridge, occupying positions abandoned by the Marines earlier that morning. Most of M (Heavy Weapons) Company joined them on the ridge. L Company occupied lower ground near a bridge over the inlet. Soon after arriving, L Company sent out a patrol of 18 men to the northeast. The patrol crested a hill overlooking the inlet and returned before nightfall, reporting "not a Chink in sight". They could not have gone far in the short time they were out and their report could not have been more wrong.

Behind L Company near the reservoir, the 3rd Battalion Headquarters and Batteries A and B of the 57th Field Artillery Battalion settled in for the night. Digging in was not a priority. After all, Colonel MacLean intended to resume moving north in the morning. Besides, the temperature was falling steadily. It would dip below -40° F. that night, causing water to freeze solid in aluminum canteens and the crystallized metal of entrenching tools would break on rock-hard ground. A few fire barrels were set up to allow men to warm themselves between tours of guard duty. Where there were positions previously prepared by the 5th Marines, they were occupied, as were some abandoned farm houses and outbuildings. Tents were set up for the battalion aid station and parts of the battalion staff but some men could only curl up in a sleeping bag outdoors, hoping to catch a little sleep before the march resumed in the morning. Many would be found there the next morning, killed where they slept.

About a mile to the south, the 57th Field Artillery's CP and D Battery, 15th Antiaircraft Artillery also stopped for the night, forming a hasty perimeter around a cluster of farm buildings. As the main body was settling in at the inlet, the 31st Infantry's Tank Company, Headquarters Company, and Service Company, and the 57th FA Battalion's Service Battery were just reaching the former village of Hudong-ni, about 3 miles south of the inlet. With night approaching, they stopped and formed a hasty perimeter. Brigadier General Henry I. Hodes, the 7th Division's Assistant Division Commander, was with them. Looking for a way to keep the division connected, he directed the 31st Infantry's jeep-mounted Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon to scout a dirt

trail across the mountains between the Pujon and Chosin Reservoirs. His order proved fateful. Soon after leaving Hudong-ni, the platoon was ambushed and most of its members were either killed or taken prisoner.

The last element on the road that day was the Medical Company, which passed through Hudong-ni near midnight in a column of jeeps, ambulances, and trucks. Soon afterward, the company came under intense fire from Hill 1221 and was all but wiped out at a hairpin turn just east of the village of Twiggae. Captain Harvey Galloway, the Regimental Surgeon was among the survivors to reach the inlet that night. He had a bullet in his brain but was still coherent, reporting he knew exactly where the bullet was lodged. Captain Hank Wamble, the Medical Company Executive Officer also reached the perimeter, but had been shot in the chest and was barely able to breathe. Before daylight, SFC George Chastain, who had escaped in the opposite direction, stumbled into the Tank Company's perimeter at Hudong-ni, alone and dazed. After his driver was killed and his jeep disabled in the ambush, he crawled all the way back in a ditch. The ambush meant Chinese troops had occupied terrain dominating the road between Hudong-ni and the inlet. The door was suddenly slammed shut behind the RCT's main body and it would not reopen.

At the time, the 31st Infantry's 2d Battalion was still securing the 7th Division's Rear CP at Pukchong. Inexplicably, Lieutenant Colonel Reidy, the 2nd Battalion commander, was just receiving orders to join the RCT at the Chosin Reservoir, about two day's motor march away. His battalion would never arrive and would endure its own saga in the attempt.

6th Battalion Casualties--Vietnam

Chuck McCammon placed a listing of 6th Battalion 31st Infantry casualties from 1968 to 1970 on the web. If you have a picture of one of those listed or remembrances of their life and how they died, please either contact Chuck McCammon at c-mccammon@cox.net or just post it at <http://members.cox.net/cmccammon3/KIA.htm>. We knew them in life as comrades, let's share our memories of them and the circumstances of their last hours of life with those who received only a telegram from the Department of the Army reporting their death but no cause or circumstances. Many were heroes, promoted posthumously and awarded a medal for valor. Please share what you know.

Websites

Please visit our regiment's website at <http://www.31stinfantry.org/>, send us your comments, and help us get networked with other websites. We're getting plenty of hits but not many participants in the interactive "chat room" portion of the site yet.



Robert Stewart operates an interactive web site for Vietnam-era veterans of the 6th Bn 31st Inf. See: www.6thofthe31st.zzn.com and stop in for a chat on Friday and Sunday nights. For those who served with us in the 9th Infantry Division in Vietnam, a well-done new website is up at www.9thininfantrydivision.com. Check it out and join the Octofoil Association. For those who served with the 4th Battalion in the Americal Division, that division's website is at www.americal.org. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade's website is at www.196th.org.

The Korean War era 7th Infantry Division has a website at www.7th-inf-div-assn.com. Another is Karen Smith's tribute to her Dad's service in the 31st Inf. Her pictures provide a look at a soldier's life in peacetime Japan in 1949 and wartime Korea in 1950 at <http://31rct.tripod.com>

New Members

Our association grows only through the effort of its members. Please do your part by helping to bring in those who served with you. We're very pleased to welcome the following new members to the Association.

• George K Allison III	HHC (LT, Korea, 1953)	Anderson, IN
• Gerard H Antes, Jr.	C/5 th Bn (SGT, Ft Benning, 1967-68)	Upper Black Eddy, PA
• Carson E Bunch	F Co (SGT, Korea, 1952-53)	Goodman, MD
• James R Callaghan	D Co (PFC, Korea 1950-51)	Newark, OH
• Alfred C Castro	C/1 st BG (PFC, Korea, 1958-60)	Michigan City, IN
• Larry Cogan	HHC 4 th Bn (LTC, Ft Sill, 1975-78)	Hinton, WV
• Pedro Cruz	C/6 th Bn (SFC, Vietnam, 1968-69)	Merizo, Guam
• Roman Cruz	E Co (1SG, Korea, 1952-53)	University Place, WA
• Gregory Gantz	(Winford Couch, D Co, Bataan)	Chesterfield, MO
• Robert E Getz	E/6 th Bn (SFC, Vietnam, 1968-69)	Buena Park, CA
• Thomas F Gimble	A/4 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1967-68)	Woodbridge, VA
• Lawrence R Hall	F Co (SGT, Korea 1956-57)	Port Charlotte, FL
• Franklin M Hughes	H Co (SGT, Korea 1952-53)	Carlisle, KY
• Peter J Kallos	D/6 th Bn (PFC, Vietnam, 1970)	Weirton, WV
• Ambrose N LeBeau	HHC (SSG, Japan & Korea 1948-51)	Jefferson City, MO
• John E Lock	B Co (SGT, Korea, 1950-51)	Tallasee, AL
• Robert F Marshall	B/6 th Bn (SSG, Vietnam 1969-70)	Port Angeles, WA
• Debbie Marshall	Associate (Robert F Marshall)	Port Angeles, CA
• James M McKee	21 st Avn Co (PFC, Ft Rucker 1963-64)	LaCoste, TX
• John W Morgan	E/6 th Bn (LT, Vietnam, 1969-70)	Brambleton, VA
• Collin A Niver	M Co (LT, Korea, 1950)	Orofino, ID
• Eric Potter	B/4 th Bn (Ft Drum 2004)	Ft Drum, NY
• William F Searles	E Co (PVT, Korea 1952-53)	Winthrop, NY
• Howard J Smock	Med Co (CPL, Korea, 1952-53)	Manchester, NJ
• Bevan H Tonieri	HHC (CPL, Korea 1952-53)	Marysville, WA
• Paul Voelke	A/4 th Bn (Ft Drum 2004)	Ft Drum, NY
• Harold Wells	HHC (CPL, Korea 1951)	Vermillion, OH

Taps



Robert G Blanchette (Winsted, CT)	B Co , Korea 1952
LTC Samuel A Bowman (Hayden, ID)	Svc Co , Korea 1950-51
Thomas P Burns (Mashpeth, NY)	4th Bn , Vietnam
David E Caraway, Jr. (Bellevue, WA)	D Co , Korea 1950-51
Edward G Dewald (Ocala, FL)	B/4th Bn , Vietnam 1968-69
Wesley W Fulton (Thornton, CO)	HHC , Korea 1950
Thomas C Hathaway Jr. (Portsmouth, VA)	Tk Co , Korea 1957
Don Howard (Tucson, AZ)	B/6th Bn , Vietnam 1968-69
COL Dallas M Patterson (Crofton, MD)	HHC 3rd Bn , Korea 1951-52
Gary C Quick (Collierville, TN)	B/4th Bn , Vietnam 1965-67
William Sorrentino (unk)	A/4th Bn , Vietnam 1970-71
William A Spikes (Browns Mills, NJ)	A/4th Bn , Vietnam 1965-67
William W Stewart (Beaver Falls, PA)	G Co , Korea 1951
Michael Thompson (Westerville, OH)	B/4th Bn , Vietnam 1968-69
Louis A Torres (Millsboro, DE)	E Co , Japan & Korea 1948-52
Robert Wagner (Kansas City, MO)	A/4th Bn , Vietnam 1965-67

Membership Application - 31st Infantry Regiment Association

first name nickname middle initial last name

street address city state zip code

phone number email address

31st Inf unit (Plt, Co, Bn) rank & duty position

rank when retired Highest award earned

Where did you serve with the 31st?	When?
Philippines _____	_____
Korea _____	_____
Japan _____	_____
Vietnam _____	_____
USA _____	_____

Membership desired:

life member -	age 49 & under	_____	\$60
	age 50-59	_____	\$45
	age 60 & over	_____	\$35
associate life member (family)		_____	\$25
annual member		_____	\$10
associate annual member (family)		_____	\$5
active duty member		_____	\$5



Make check to 31st Inf Regt Assn & mail to: Jack Considine, 144 S River Rd, Tolland, CT 06084