



Pro Patria Press

#42

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Newsletter of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association

The newsletter was a bit too large last quarter and many were destroyed by the post office automated system. If you missed the newsletter, you can find it on line at the Association web site: <http://www.31stinfantry.org/>

Reunion 2006

Our regiment's 90th Anniversary Reunion will be held 3-5 August 2006 at the Genesee Grande Hotel in Syracuse, NY, bringing us back to the 4th Battalion's neighborhood so we can share our celebration with today's Polar Bears. Make your reservations by calling (1-800-365-4663) or online at www.geneseegrande.com for the Genesee Grande, or www.theparkviewhotel.com for the ParkView Hotel. These hotels are close together in the heart of Syracuse with shuttle service between them. They also provide shuttle service to and from the airport. Remember to tell them you're with the 31st Infantry Regiment Reunion.

Follow-on reunions are planned for San Antonio (Coordinator: Bill Burns) in 2007 and Memphis (Coordinator: Clark Washington) in 2008. They will need help in making those events as outstanding as Columbus was this year, so if you live near one of those towns, please send Vin Zike your contact information by e-mailing him at vzike@challengecoin.com. Or by mail to: Vin Zike, 21 Caskey Rd., Glen Spey, NY

North Korea 1950

This is the ninth in our series on combat in Korea. In our previous edition, the Chinese had overrun the 3rd Battalion's CP and penetrated to the artillery at the Chosin Reservoir.

After daybreak, the 57th FA Battalion's Command Post and D Battery 15th AAA moved hurriedly to the inlet to join the main body. They left their dead behind, along with a destroyed half-track. The artillery repositioned to avoid offering the same target as the night before, but the Chinese were watching from the hills, paying particular attention to the heavy weapons' dispositions. By late afternoon, K Company regained its original positions atop the ridgeline, aided by air strikes and reinforcements from L Company. The wounded were collected at a makeshift aid station in one of the mess tents at the inlet.

That afternoon, Master Sergeant John Watlington, a recalled reservist from Tennessee who served as the 3rd Battalion's Operations Sergeant, came into the communications shack seeking a medic. From a considerable distance away, a burst of automatic weapons fire stitched through the hut's thin wall, killing Watlington as he stood in the doorway. Daylight had not brought safety anywhere in the perimeter.

Farther north, another consolidation was taking place. Colonel MacLean's forward CP, with about 60 vehicles, moved into the 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry's perimeter about 4 miles north of the inlet. McLean had no idea of how bad the situation was at the inlet, did not know where his 2nd Battalion or Tank Company was, did not know that his Medical Company had been destroyed, and did not know that his Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon had been sent by General Hodes on a scouting mission from which it would never return.

That morning, Lieutenant Colonel Richard R. Reidy's 2nd Battalion began moving by open rail car from Pukchong along the coast to Hamhung. The battalion's trucks, following by road, reached Hamhung late that night. They were still 72 miles from the RCT's perimeter at the Pungyuri inlet, a full day's motor march on an icy, single track road along which ambush sites were established by the Chinese. At Hamhung, Reidy was instructed by X Corps' G-3, that he should move by road and rail to Majon-dong the next morning and that X Corps trucks would take his troops the rest of the way to the reservoir. Unaware of the delay, Colonel MacLean expected to hear that the 2nd Battalion had reached the inlet during the night. Operating in a communication void would prove fatal.

From Hudong-ni, the Tank Company, accompanied by General Hodes, attempted to break through to the inlet early on November 28. SFC George Chastain accompanied them to point out positions from which the Chinese had ambushed his company the night before. When they reached the hairpin curve, Chastain asked Captain Drake to stop his jeep. Standing beside the road with General Hodes and Captain Drake, he was pointing at a path up the side of Hill 1221 when a bullet struck his head, killing him instantly and spraying the officers with his blood. Hodes and Drake scurried to safety behind their vehicles.

As the two lead tanks approached knocked out Medical Company vehicles blocking the road, a Chinese soldier armed with an American antitank weapon hit the lead tank, knocking it out. The second tank slid off the road and threw a track when it tried to by-pass the disabled lead tank. Both were abandoned by their crews who barely escaped with their lives as Chinese troops swarmed over the site. Two more tanks tried to negotiate the narrow, icy path up Hill 1221 but one slipped over a steep embankment and the other threw a track. Two more became stuck as they tried to parallel the road along a marshy stream. Chinese troops swarmed over them, trying to throw hand grenades into their hatches and engine compartments. Tanks farther back dusted the Chinese off with machinegun fire. Both of the bogged tanks managed to extricate themselves and withdraw to Hudong-ni. After another unsuccessful try in the early afternoon, Captain Drake called off the attack and pulled what remained of his company back to Hudong-ni. He would need infantry and air support to breach the enemy roadblock and he had neither.

Before nightfall on November 28, the Chinese resumed their attack, striking almost exactly where they had the night before. Again, the porous infantry line was penetrated, despite being reinforced by two rifle platoons and most heavy weapons of Captain William W. Etchemendy's L Company. Chinese troops again got as far as the artillery positions. Unlike the night before, however, the rifle companies stood their ground, even when penetrated. For a time, a large group of Chinese halted at K Company's overrun mess tent to enjoy what would be the last meal for most. They were caught in a blistering crossfire after regrouping near the bridge spanning the inlet. The 57th Field Artillery, reinforced by the 15th AAA's twin 40mm Dusters and Quad .50s, took a horrendous toll on their tormentors.

There was an ominous new development in the fight. One body of enemy troops approached from the south near dawn, taking control of the road and rail line between the reservoir and the perimeter. They were probably from the same unit that ambushed the Medical Company the night before. Unlike the light brown quilted uniforms of the troops who attacked from the north and northeast, these troops wore a heavy dark green uniform, were armed with large numbers of American .45 caliber sub-machineguns, and had plenty of ammunition. The attacks from the northeast were no less intense, but some enemy soldiers on that end of the line were armed with only hand grenades. Strangely, the two attacks were uncoordinated, neither starting nor ending at the same time. There was ample evidence that the 31st RCT was being attacked by two Chinese divisions, but no one was putting the story together yet, leaving Colonel MacLean and his superiors with an incomplete picture of what the 31st RCT was up against.

Note from our Commander

It takes a significant effort on the part of a dedicated group of members to keep the Association active and thriving. We all see the newsletter, and it's very clear that Karl Lowe puts a great deal of time into researching and writing this fine document. Some association officers are less noticed, but their contributions are huge. I would like to recognize two of them as they leave their posts. I just received the latest financial statement, marking the end of Robert Christman's six years as our Treasurer. Robert kept the books and managed the Association's money commendably. As he passes this task to John Cornelson, I would like to thank him, on behalf of us all, for his diligence. You have done us all a great service, Robert, and have set a standard for excellence and integrity that we will all try to live up to.

The second hero is Dalton Render who reproduced, folded, enveloped, and stamped every newsletter this association has mailed since 1997. That comes to an average of around 1000 newsletters, four times a year for 8 years. What dedication and patience! Thank you! This organization runs on the energy and devotion of a few and you have contributed mightily. Gratefully, Vin Zike, Commander

New Members

Our association grows through the efforts 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:

New Members

Terry G Barrix	A/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1970)	Wyoming, MI
John Bezuyen	A/4 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1967-68)	Campbell Hall, NY
David C Bookout	A/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1968-69)	High Oaks, NC
Brandon Burke	HHC 4 th Bn (SPC Medic, Iraq 2003-05)	Ft Sam Houston, TX
George P Brown	21 st Avn Co/2 nd BG (1LT, Ft Rucker, 1960-63)	Tampa, FL
John M. Fraser	(Vietnam 1968-69)	Lake Forest, CA
Robert J Frenyea	D/6 th Bn (SP4, Vietnam 1969-70)	West Chazy, NY
Robert Hams	A/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1969-70)	Pleasant Hill, MO
Andrew Hansbrough	D/1 st Bn (CPT, Korea 1962-63)	Yorktown, VA
Stuard M Hartman	B Co (SFC, Korea 1952-53)	Camarillo, CA
Robert M. Hill	D & E /6 th Bn (LT, Vietnam 1967-68)	Arlington, TX
Duey M Holm	A/4 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1970-71)	Shoreview, MN
Deborah Howdeshelt	(wife of John Howdeshelt)	Kettering, OH
John H. Howdeshelt	D/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1969)	Kettering, OH
J. Wesley Reagan	Nephew of SSG Knowlton Reagan, KIA Bataan	Moore, OK
Gerald E. Lawrence	I Co (LT, Korea 1951)	Winfield, KS
Jonathan C Lewis	D/4 th Bn (PFC, Ft Devens & Vietnam 1965-67)	Nokomis, FL
Stephen D Mills	C/6 th Bn (SGT, Ft Lewis & Vietnam 1967-68)	Macon, GA
Gerard E Olson	D/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1969-70)	New Braunfels, TX
Charles E. Rideout	D/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1969-70)	South Portland, ME
Mark G Salbeck	HHC & D/6 th Bn (SP4, Vietnam 1969-70)	Chicago, IL
Michael E Sapara	A/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam, 1969-70)	Bayonne, NJ
Jerry E Smith	G Co (SFC, Korea 1952)	Kokomo, IN
P E Toston, Sr	D/6 th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1969-70)	Shreveport, LA
James G Ward	D/6 th Bn (SSG, Ft Lewis & Vietnam, 1967-69)	Lyndhurst, OH
Forest A. Wells, Jr	HHC/6 th Bn (1968-69)	Owensboro KY
Charles A Wetter III	(SP4, Vietnam 1969-70)	McDonough, GA
Lee R Wolfe	(SFC, Korea, 1953-54)	Falls Church, VA
Ruben V Zavala	B/6 th Bn (SFC, Vietnam 1970)	Victoria, TX
Ernest R. Zike	D/6 th Bn (SP6, Medic, Vietnam 1969)	West Hartford, CT

Taps



In our last issue, we reported that Young Oak Kim (bottom left), was being awarded Korea's highest award for his actions in the Kumhwa-Iron Triangle Area in 1951. Sadly, Young did not live long enough to receive the award. He died shortly after our newsletter was mailed. His lifelong friend, Bill McCaffrey (bottom right), followed him by only a month. Bill selected Young to command the 1st Battalion in Korea in 1951 when Bill became the Regimental Commander.



Bill, formerly our Senior Director, was among the association's strongest supporters, charging those of who were younger to make the association a living reminder of the price of unpreparedness that cost so many of our nation's soldiers their lives at Bataan and during the Korean War's first year. Bill graduated from the Military Academy in 1939 and



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served at Ft Devens and in Panama before being assigned to the 92nd Infantry Division in 1942. The 92nd, which fought in Italy, had white officers and black enlisted men, one of three such divisions to serve in World War II. Its commander was MG Ned Almond, who would bring Bill onto the X Corps staff with him in Korea and later send him to command the 31st Infantry. Bill died at his home in Arlington, VA on February 13. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

We're sad to report the following comrades' deaths:

CSM Jose Figueroa de Casas	HQ/6th Bn (CSM, Vietnam 1969-70)	El Paso, TX
John Crittenden	A Co (PFC, Philippines 1936-40)	National City, CA
MSG Joe Culp	A Co (CPL, Korea 1951-52)	Mesa, AZ
CSM Virgil A Dale	B/6th Bn (1SG, Vietnam 1968)	Florence, CO
COL Frank Fife	HQ (CPT, Japan and Korea 1950-51)	Clemson, SC
SFC Robert E Heath	A Co (PFC, Japan and Korea 1950-51)	Bradley, IL
COL Young Oak Kim	HQ 1st Bn (LTC, Korea 1951-52)	Los Angeles, CA
William S Koperski	F Co (CPL, Japan and Korea 1950)	Omaha, NE
Charles Luntsford	D/6th Bn (SP4, Vietnam, 1968-69)	Omak, WA
COL Edward L Magill	57th FA (1LT, Japan and Korea 1949-51)	Melbourne, FL
MAJ Fred Martin	D/4th Bn (SGT, Vietnam 1968-69)	Omaha, NE
LTG William J McCaffrey	HQ (LTC, Regt'l Cdr, Korea 1951)	Arlington, VA
Louis C Poitras	E Co (CPL, Japan and Korea 1949-50)	Windsor Locks, CT
Raymond Primm	G Co (CPL, Korea 1950-51)	Russellville, AR
William Snieszko	G Co (PFC, Philippines 1940-42)	Orange, CA
Buddy W Vandiver	B Co (PFC, Korea 1953-54)	Tulsa, OK

Websites

- 31st Inf Regt Assn: www.31stinfantry.org
- 6th Bn 31st Inf: www.6thofthe31st.com and www.vietnam6bn31inf.com
- 7th Infantry Division: www.7th-inf-div-assn.com.
- 9th Infantry Division: www.9thinfdivsociety.org.
- 23rd Infantry "Americal" Division: www.americal.org.
- 196th Light Infantry Brigade: www.196th.org.
- Karen Smith's tribute to the 31st Inf: <http://31rct.tripod.com/>



These sites have been checked and are all currently working. The first three sites (first two bullets) have been checked and are clear of pop-ups or spam links.

New Book

For all those who served with the 6th Battalion during the second Battle for Saigon in May 1968, *House to House*, a new book about the battle by Keith Nolan has just been released. Keith is a prolific writer who has written two other books in which the 31st Infantry is featured. *Death Valley* describes the 4th Battalion's action in the Que Son Valley in 1969 and *Into Cambodia* describes the 6th Battalion's actions in Cambodia in 1970. Keith became interested in Vietnam as a student at the University of Missouri while studying under Dr. John Bayer (formerly LT John Bayer, FO with D/6-31st Inf, 1970) and has written eight other books on Vietnam, including *Operation Buffalo*, *The Magnificent Bastards*, *Battle for Saigon*, *Battle for Hue*, *Into Laos*, *Hundred Miles of Bad Road*, *Ripcord*, and *Sappers in the Wire*.

Searching

The Macoupin County Historical Society located in Carlinville, Illinois, seeks information on Captain Robert Ray who was a member of the 31st Inf Regt. The museum recently received a uniform donated by a local resident. The crossed rifle collar brass has the #31 and the 31st crest is on the epaulettes. The ribbon bars indicated that he served in WWII and Korea and earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart. The inside pocket has the name Robert Ray written in it. The person that donated the jacket had no information regarding Capt Ray, so I'm contacting you hoping that the association might have some information. I was hoping to write up a brief history of this mans service. Any information would be greatly appreciated. Contact: Jon Cerar **Cerar@frontiernet.net**

Additional Reunion information

If you are interested in participating in one of the informal trips such as a Finger Lakes motorcycle tour, golf outing, outlet shopping, or the Turning Stone Casino (which has gambling and golf) on Thursday, August 3rd, please let Vin or his wife, Jackie, know. You can put that information on your registration form, or email Jackie at **jimhayes@aol.com**. We need to know this information well ahead of time.

Also, arrangements have been made with a day spa which is located right in between the two hotels. There are several discounted treatments available for our group! It is the SpaZend day spa, located at 719 East Genesee Street, Syracuse. Their number is 315-424-3772 and their website is **www.spazend.com**. The special discounted treatments are the following:

Basic Massage 50 minutes:	\$63
One World Massage	\$81
The Zend Extreme Massage	\$63
Japanese Clay & Cedar Wrap	\$78
Special Reunion Package (30 minute basic massage, SpaZend facial, Manicure & Pedicure)	\$158

If you would like any of these treatments please call the above number to make an appointment. You may also go to their website to see their whole spa menu.

The latest information on the reunion can be found on the Association Web Site at **www.31stinfantry.org**. Just go to the site and click on the "Reunion 2006" item (link) in the navigation bar at the top.

Many people have already registered for rooms, so we expect this reunion to be "sold out" The rooms have been reserved, but less than half of those making room reservations have registered for the reunion itself. Please send in your registration form early. This will be a great event.

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