



Pro Patria Press

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*Newsletter of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association
Karl Lowe, Editor*

Another Polar Bear Killed in Iraq



PFC Brian A. Browning, 20, (left) of B Company, 4th Battalion 31st Infantry, was killed in action on February 6, 2007 in Iraq. He killed by small arms fire during security operations in Baghdad. Browning, from Astoria, Oregon, joined the Army in 2006 and was reassigned to the 4-31st Infantry in March 2006 and deployed to Iraq in August 2006. We extend his family our deepest condolences. PFC Browning is the seventh member of the 4-31st Infantry to die in Iraq. The others were CPL Bobby Callahan (19 Sep 2006), PFC Nathaniel A. Given (27 Dec 2006), PFC Satieon Greenlee (1 Oct 2006), 1LT Adam Malson (19 Feb 2005), SGT Christopher P. Messer (27 Dec 2006), and SPC Nicolas Rogers (22 Oct 2006).

Help for the 4th Battalion



In mid-March, the Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP), a division of the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) in Alexandria, Virginia, sent a shipment of soccer equipment to the 4-31st Infantry to pass out to children near its bases in Iraq. Dr. Amy Henninger, Lauren Burns, and Brian Williams collected enough money to completely outfit two soccer teams with cleats, socks, shorts, shirts (red and green), soccer balls, and field equipment. We hope to see some famous soccer stars coming out of Mahmudiyah, a predominantly Sunni Arab farming community southwest of Baghdad. Kids in Iraq have to grow up too soon so maybe this will brighten some young lives and encourage them to become soccer stars rather than insurgents. Last September, the JAWP helped the 4th Battalion get its aid to Iraqi schools project underway by sending them 400 pounds of school supplies. Two more shipments were sent in the following months and in December, the JAWP sent Christmas gifts to the battalion's troops. We will continue to help until the battalion returns to Ft Drum. The JAWP is led by former Polar Bear, Karl Lowe (D/6-31st Inf 1970).

Wounded Polar Bear Meets the President



During a March 30 visit to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, President Bush apologized for the neglect of wounded soldiers there. Among the men he met was 4-31st Infantry's 1LT Scott Quilty, shown shaking the president's hand with his prosthetic hand. Quilty also has a prosthetic leg but is doing PT and is determined not to let his injuries get in his way. The scandal at Walter Reed cost the Secretary of the Army, The Army Surgeon General, and the Commanding General of Walter Reed Army

Medical Center their jobs last month.

Former Polar Bear Commander Selected to Command a Brigade

Colonel John Spiszer, who commanded the 4th Battalion 31st Infantry for three years, taking it to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Djibouti in 2003-04 and then back to Iraq in 2004-05, has been selected to command the 3rd Brigade 1st Infantry Division. He takes command 16 April at Ft Hood. John previously served as the 3rd Brigade's executive officer at Vilseck, Germany. The brigade was inactivated at Ft Riley last year and is being reactivated under John's command at its temporary home in preparation for another overseas tour. Congratulations to you John and best wishes.

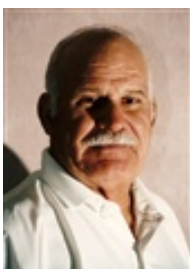
Korean War Polar Bear Receives Belated Purple Heart



Howard Rhoades received the Purple Heart 54 years after he was wounded by shrapnel while serving with C Company 31st Infantry during the bloody fighting for Triangle Hill on Oct 14, 1952. With a badly injured leg, Rhoades was evacuated to Japan where he underwent surgery and recuperative hospitalization. His family tried for over a decade to get Rhoades the medal he deserved and finally succeeded. In a ceremony at his church in Kaufman, TX,

Rhoades' brother-in-law, MAJ William M. Pate, Jr. (Ret), read the citation, while his grandson, Marine PFC Charles C Craddock, presented the medal.

Bataan-era Polar Bear Receives Schow-Donnelly Award



Joe Johnson, who served with D Company in Manila as a bugler and at Bataan as a company runner (messenger) at the age of 15, received the Schow-Donnelly Award from Southwest Airlines for exemplary service before self. He was awarded for his work with schools in Arizona and for his work with veterans in need. The award was given last year to Lee Ermey who plays the Gunny from the TV show "Mail Call" on the History Channel. Over 2000 people attended the ceremony and the West Point Choral Group was on hand to pay a musical tribute.



Reunion 2007



Our next reunion, celebrating our regiment's 91st Anniversary, will be held 23-26 Aug at the Clarion El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel (110 Lexington Ave, San Antonio, TX, phone 210-223-9461). Room rate is \$99 plus tax, is including continental breakfast. Check-in Thurs 23 Aug, tour Fort Sam Houston and the Alamo 24 Aug, memorial service and banquet 25 Aug, and check-out 26 Aug. Our coordinator is Chaplain Bill Burns (6-31st Infantry 1969-70). **Bill will need help in making this event the best ever, so if you live**

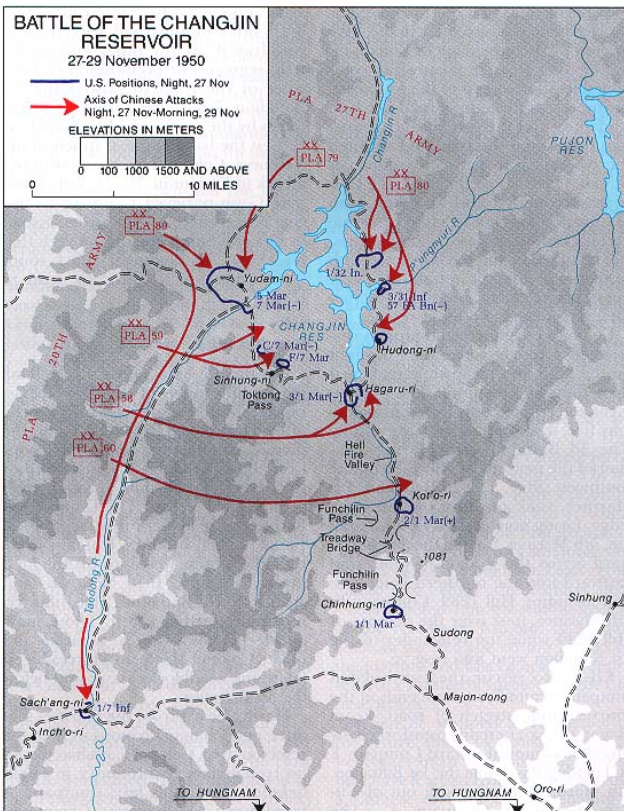
in or near San Antonio, please call him at 210-317-1924.

North Korea 1950

This is the thirteenth in our series on combat in Korea. In our previous edition, the 2nd Battalion 31st Infantry was ambushed south of Koto-ri, leaving no hope of breaking through to rescue the 31st RCT, trapped along the Chosin Reservoir's east side .

While the 2nd Battalion was ambushed near Koto-ri, things were growing steadily more desperate at the reservoir, 20 miles to the north. By then, there were over 600 wounded in the perimeter and no way to get them out except by truck past the gauntlet at Hill 1221 to Hudong-ni and then

on to Hagaru-ri. Unknown to Lieutenant Colonel Faith or anyone else trapped east of the Reservoir, there was no longer an American presence at Hudong-ni. The Tank Company, Headquarters Company, Service Company, and Service Battery 57th Field Artillery, totaling 345 men and 16 tanks, had been ordered by General Hodes to pull back to Marine lines at Hagaru-ri on the afternoon of November 30. Although Hodes was acting under orders from Major General Barr, Barr no longer had authority over the 31st RCT since all Army units from Koto-ri north had been placed under the 1st Marine Division's command.¹



At around 8 PM on November 30, the Chinese unleashed a 45-minute mortar barrage against the inlet while assault parties crawled close to the line. Attacks struck repeatedly all along the line, building to an intensity exceeding that of earlier nights, but they were poorly coordinated, giving the heavy weapons in

the perimeter's center an opportunity to concentrate on one attack at a time. K and L Companies

¹ Map of Marine and Army dispositions during the Chosin Reservoir campaign courtesy of Billy Mossman, Ebb and

of the 31st absorbed the heaviest blows but held on stubbornly. PFC Stanley E. Anderson of L Company distinguished himself by turning back one of the attacks almost single-handedly with his 3.5 inch rocket launcher, firing it repeatedly at clusters of Chinese. Around 3:00 AM on December 1, the line was penetrated. Faith sent a platoon-size counterattack force to retake the knob dominating the northeast portion of the perimeter, but to no avail.

When daylight came, the Chinese held the high ground. From the highest point on the ridge, they placed increasingly accurate mortar fire on heavy weapons at the inlet. With the perimeter broken, Lieutenant Colonel Faith, ordered preparations for a breakout. The 1st Battalion 32nd Infantry would lead, followed by the 57th Field Artillery with the D Battery 15th AAA and the heavy mortars attached. All heavy weapons except the AAA were ordered to expend their remaining ammunition and then destroy their tubes and fight as infantry. The wounded would be loaded onto trucks in the center of the column. The 3rd Battalion 31st Infantry would bring up the rear. Everything left behind was to be destroyed.

By 11AM on December 1, the convoy was loaded and ready to move, but it would have to await air cover to start. Chinese troops had begun moving down from the hills to take up positions along the only available withdrawal route. Others lobbed mortar shells into the perimeter, killing and wounding more men. Major Hugh Robbins was among them, hit in the arm and legs by fragmentation and knocked from his feet by the blast. Sergeant Major Lynch dragged him to a slit trench, bandaged his wounds, and loaded him onto a truck. The RCT's senior leadership was eroding more by the hour. Just before 1 PM, Marine F4U Corsairs arrived overhead from the USS Leyte. Captain Stamford, the Marine Air Liaison Officer, directed them to make a dummy run to identify American marker panels at the head of the column. That accomplished, the Corsairs came around to engage. At the head of the column, Chinese troops attacked, closing to within 50 yards of the convoy's lead element. As the lead Corsair neared the convoy, it prematurely released its napalm tank, hitting Americans and Chinese alike. Peering out between slats in a truck carrying the wounded, Hugh Robbins watched in horror as he saw Master Sergeant David B. Smith, the Regiment's Assistant Sergeant Major, enveloped in flames. Witnesses recall that five GIs and a KATUSA were killed outright and another eight or nine GIs were badly burned and loaded onto trucks. Still others continued walking and fighting despite severe burns. For the rest of the day, Corsairs returned in flights of four to six aircraft, strafing and bombing enemy positions along the escape route.

When the column started moving again, infantrymen from the 3rd Battalion streamed past the trucks to help push the Chinese out of the way, but in so doing, they abandoned the rear of the column. The few officers who remained unwounded had no radios to control subordinate units and therefore controlled only those men within the sound of their voices. Amid the constant chattering of weapons, punctuated by exploding grenades and volleys of mortar fire, no one's voice carried very far. Unit integrity evaporated as men took any cover they could, returned fire, and followed whoever seemed to be leading. Corporal Milton Margan recalls that he, Captain Auburn "Pop" Marr, and PFC Thomas J. Morris were at the tail of the column. Morris was firing a .30-caliber machinegun from the hip as they withdrew. He was captured when the Chinese pinned down and surrounded the trio. Captain Marr was killed while surrendering. Master Sergeant Ivan H. Long of the 3rd Battalion's S-2 Section was captured along with two other men as they tried in vain to fight off a Chinese company attacking the rear of the truck column. The rear guard was no more.

What remained of the RCT focused on protecting the long column of trucks laden with wounded, trying to reach Hagaru-ri, just a few more miles down the road. As trucks became disabled, the wounded were unloaded under fire or dragged to whatever cover could be found. The most seriously wounded were loaded onto other trucks, swelling the number of men on each to the

point that some died from the additional trauma. Disabled trucks were pushed off the road to allow others to pass. Somehow the convoy struggled on, but its pace was dreadfully slow, suffering ever more casualties.

As the head of the column reached a blown bridge just short of Hill 1221, the trucks had to negotiate a swampy by-pass. Major Robbins recalls: "...we came to a bridge that had been destroyed and our motor column turned off the road and into a wide riverbed to by-pass the obstacle. Great mounds of frozen earth covered with tough grass carpeted the riverbed over which we now bounced. For about 100 yards we bounced and crashed up and down over those hummocks with the wounded screaming in anguish as they were jostled and slammed into one another in the truck. I luckily still had on my steel helmet and thus was able to protect my head from banging against the front and sides of the truck bed which might have knocked me out otherwise. At that, I had a bruised head for days afterwards." Eventually, a half-track pulled Robbins' truck back onto the roadway and it continued south, but more trouble lay ahead. At the hairpin turn where the Medical Company had been ambushed four days earlier, the Chinese occupied positions that had been dug by the 5th Marines when they occupied the area until November 26. From there, they controlled the pass.

As trucks slowed, Chinese troops on the hills concentrated on killing drivers. Bullets whacked, slapped, and pinged from all directions as the trucks were hit repeatedly, killing some of the wounded inside and wounding others again and again. Some of the less seriously wounded or men who had taken refuge in nearby ditches risked all to take the wheel of trucks whose drivers were killed or too badly wounded to continue driving. On both flanks of the convoy, counterattacks were launched under the most adverse conditions, but succeeded in clearing segments of the roadway. Near the first saddle in the road, Major Harvey Storms, acting as the 3rd Battalion's commander, was severely wounded and loaded onto a truck with the other wounded. He perished on the truck. Around the same time, Major Crosby Miller, acting commander of the 1st Battalion 32nd Infantry, was also wounded near the head of the column. By that time, the senior man still walking in each of the infantry battalions was probably a captain who did not know everyone above him had been killed or was too badly wounded to command. With nearly all radios knocked out, some officers and NCOS led by example to try to overcome impossible odds while others assumed someone more senior would come along and tell them what to do. The latter would wait in vain because the chain of command was steadily being eroded by bullets. Lieutenant Colonel Faith was the only field grade officer still unwounded, but not for long.

New Members

Jimmie J Apel	SGT, A/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70	Sweetwater, TX
Floyd V Bennett	CSM, HHC/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1967-69	McClenny, FL
John L Burke	SFC, D/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1970	Salisbury, NC
Richard L Haworth	SSG, B/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70	Sebring, FL
Paul P Konyha, Jr	1LT, D/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1970	Mandeville, LA
James A Logue	SP4, A/4th Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70	Osteen, FL
David N Magaha	SGT, B/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1970	McAllen, TX
James J O'Brien	SGT, C/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1968-69	Belfield, ND
John C Ricker	CPT, B/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1969	Sparta, NJ
Michael G Schuchter	1LT, HHC & A/1st Bn, Korea, 1967-68	Sacramento, CA
William H Stafford III	SP4, A/4th Bn, Vietnam, 1968-69	East Hampton, NY

Taps

Charles L Brasfield	CPL, I Co, Japan and Korea, 1950-51	Lubbock, TX
Rex Cramer	31st Infantry, Korea 1951-52	Caro, MI
Harry J Holvick	CPL, I&R Plt, Korea 1950-51	Toms River, NJ
Todd K Severson	SGT, D/6th Bn, Vietnam, 1970	Minneapolis, MN

Treasurer's Report

John Cornelison, our Treasurer, reports the following:

Income

• Annual Dues	750.00
• CD Interest	2,066.50
• Discount on Purchase	301.83
• Interest-savings/short-term inv	368.16
• Miscellaneous revenue	23.15
• Interest - UCBI	33.24
• Life Membership	2,110.00
• QM Sales	4,572.10
• <u>Reunion 2006</u>	<u>15,010.00</u>
• Total Income	25,234.98

Expenses

• Insurance	327.23
• Member Search - 6/31	1,000.00
• Newsletter Printing	1,239.00
• Postage, shipping, delivery	1,406.03
• QM Stock Purchases	2,196.23
• Reunion 2006 Administration	80.00
• Reunion 2006 Banquet	5,219.13
• Reunion 2006 Hospitality Room	567.14
• <u>Reunion 2006 Tours</u>	<u>1,908.91</u>
• Total Expenses	14,943.67

Net Income **\$10,291.31**

Current Assets

• United Community Bank	5,039.51
• Morgan Keegan Cash Account	1,827.71
• Lehman Bros	9,981.68
• United Midwest Degraff	19,716.49
• Western Bank CD	30,000.00
• <u>Morgan Keegan - Other</u>	<u>301.83</u>

TOTAL ASSETS 66,867.22

Websites

Please check out our website and sign our guest book at www.31stinfantry.org

Related sites include:

- 6th Bn 31st Inf: www.6thofthe31st.zzn.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/>