



# Pro Patria Press

#53

January 2009

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

## Combat in Korea

*This is the 20th in our series on combat in Korea. In our previous edition, the regiment was back on line in South Korea. The saga continues...*



**31st Infantry preparing to attack May 1951**

courtesy of the National Archives

On January 31, 1951, the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team and the 6th ROK Division relieved the US 7th Division in the Tanyang area. Because hell was being unleashed against the ROK 8<sup>th</sup> Division around Wonju, the 187th was abruptly shifted westward to plug the gap, leaving the



6th ROK Division to hold the sector alone, a fact soon discovered by the Chinese. Because ROK troops were not as well armed and trained as those of other UN armies, the Chinese would regularly pile on wherever they found a ROK division occupying a critical point in the line. Because the Tanyang Pass was a natural corridor to the south, the Chinese wanted it badly. The 6th ROK Division was driven off the MLR in disarray, opening a wide gap in the line. The 31st

Infantry went right back into action, encountering stubborn resistance from Chinese troops who were unwilling to yield ground that had cost them dearly a few days before. Good weather and clear skies enabled the Air Force to dominate the fight, clearing the path for GIs by strafing, bombing, and napalming Chinese troops who had neither air cover nor anti-aircraft support.

In Mid-February, the 7th Division resumed the offensive, supporting the ROK 5th Division's attack to retake Hongchon as part of Operation Roundup. To accomplish its part of the mission, the 31st Infantry had to cross a wide valley in full view of the Chinese. Artillery, air strikes, heavy mortars, and a platoon of tanks focused their

attention on a steep hill dominating the enemy line, but to no avail. The Chinese responded with machineguns, mortars, and artillery of their own, forcing GIs to take cover among the rocks and whatever folds in the ground they could find. G Company was sent up the hill again as another round of artillery and napalm struck the Chinese dominating the upper slope. The attack went forward with fixed bayonets while artillery and mortars blasted the hill. As American infantrymen reached the enemy trenches, the fighting continued at close quarters, often with bayonets and rifle butts when weapons couldn't be reloaded fast enough to engage Chinese who would suddenly appear from behind wrecked bunkers and collapsed sections of trench. When platoon sergeants took the report from squad leaders to determine their losses, miraculously only one man had been killed and two wounded.

Thereafter the 7th Division took up positions supporting the ROK 3d and 5th Divisions in the Chechon and Tanyang areas and secured the pass between Chechon and Wonju to prepare for further offensive operations. When Operation Killer, a general UN counteroffensive, began on February 21, the 7th Division struck repeatedly along the Wonju-Kangnung Road, driving the Chinese all the way back to the Soyang River in central Korea by March 21. Patrols chased guerillas out of rear areas while engineers rebuilt bridges and roads that had been washed away by heavy spring rains. There was now a general counteroffensive underway and every private understood the tide of war had turned again. The 7th Division relieved the 1st Marine Division in the Hongchon-Inje area on April 4 and began its attack as part of Operation Rugged the next morning. Five days later, the division was across the 38th Parallel again, capturing the town of Yangge on April 16.

When a Chinese counterattack collapsed the ROK 5th Division, the 7th Division held off a series of Chinese counterattacks against its exposed flank near Inje. On May 1, the 7th Infantry Division was transferred to IX Corps control, taking up positions along Line No-Name just south of the Hongchon River. The UN counteroffensive resumed on May 20, recapturing Chunchon and Hwachon by the end of the month. Several thousand demoralized, half-starved Chinese troops surrendered to the division. It was becoming evident that the Chinese had outrun their supply lines.

## **The 4th BATTALION 1965-1971**

*Each edition has included an article on our regiment's history, beginning in the Philippines and continuing in chronological order to the article above on the Korean War. Because Vietnam veterans are also aging and want to see some of their story in print, subsequent editions will include sections on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Battalions in Vietnam. This is the first in the series on the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, addressing its activation and early training.*



The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry was formed under the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade (LIB) at Fort Devens, Massachusetts on September 10, 1965. Fort Devens (at left), near the town of Ayer, was just a little over 10,200 Acres on which generations of soldiers had trained since 1917 but it was not large enough to train a modern infantry brigade equipped with weapons that reached well beyond the post's boundaries. The 196<sup>th</sup>, commanded by Colonel Francis S. Conaty, Jr., was the first of four light infantry brigades formed to reconstitute the Army's strategic reserve after deployments to Vietnam began.

Cadre for the 4-31<sup>st</sup> began arriving in early September and the troops arrived from reception stations at Fort Dix and Fort Knox in mid-October. After undergoing basic training at Fort Devens, the Polar Bears began advanced individual training (AIT) in January 1966. Because of space limitations at their home station, the battalion moved to Camp Edwards on Cape Cod on January 29 for heavy weapons range firing and squad tactics. Although the cape is an idyllic vacation spot in the summer, its weather is miserable in January and gets worse in February.

Returning to Fort Devens in a snow storm in mid-February, the battalion next conducted a 21-mile road march to Leominster State Forest. In addition to its physical conditioning role, the event was intended to teach counterinsurgency tactics. With 9 inches of snow on the ground, the event was agony from start to finish. Whether any learning about counterinsurgency took place was doubtful. Ed Boss remembers that A Company's bivouac site was atop a frigid, windswept mountain. Of course chow was served down in the valley, about an hour round trip through the snow. Troops had to make their way down the mountain and back up each time chow was served. Real insurgents would have had a field day with ambushes and booby traps between the chow line and the bivouac site.

On March 31, the Polar Bears moved to Camp Drum (now Fort Drum and home of the 4th Battalion 31st Infantry since 1996), a 107,000 Acre reservation near Watertown, New York, that offered sufficient training land for



brigade-level maneuvers. Riot control training was added to the schedule in anticipation of the 196<sup>th</sup> LIB's first overseas mission. Colonel Conaty had been alerted that his brigade would deploy to the Dominican Republic in June. Combat operations by Marines and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division had averted a leftist takeover but the situation remained unstable. After Exercise REDCON READY in May, the brigade's Infantrymen were awarded the coveted blue shoulder cord signifying that they were fully-trained infantrymen. Returning to Ft Devens to prepare for overseas movement, troops packed,

performed maintenance on their equipment, and were given leave en masse from 16-30 June. Meanwhile, elections were held in the Dominican Republic on June 1, allowing the Inter-American Peacekeeping Force to be withdrawn. The "Chargers" would soon get a different mission.

## The 6th BATTALION 1967-1970

*This is the first in the series on the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, addressing its activation and early training.*



On November 1, 1967, the 31st Infantry Regiment added its sixth successor battalion. The 6th Battalion, whose lineage is derived from F Company of the old regiment, was activated at Fort Lewis, Washington. Assigned to the Sixth Army (shoulder patch at left) for its formative training, it was slated to join the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion as part of the 23rd Infantry Division in Vietnam's coastal highlands. Following a tradition begun by the regiment during the Korean War, the battalion called itself the "Bearcats."

When the 6th Battalion formed for the first time on the main parade ground at Ft Lewis, most of its members were draftees just out of Advanced Individual Training. Others were transferred from a holding detachment where they had been awaiting shipment to various schools. Prospective mechanics, musicians, clerks, intelligence specialists, and cooks became instant infantrymen whether they agreed or not. PFC Bill Singleton was awaiting orders to the Military Intelligence School and PFC Al Banfield was awaiting shipment to the Military Academy Preparatory School. Recruiters' promises and soldiers' test scores meant nothing. The draft generated some unusually well-educated riflemen, for this battalion perhaps more than most. For example, when C Company was formed, one member had a Doctorate, two had Masters Degrees, and about a third had at least a year of college.

The Bearcats' leaders were a mix of the seasoned and the green. Lieutenant Colonel Joe Schmalhorst, the battalion commander, had never seen combat and had little infantry experience. With a career spent mainly in staff and research and development assignments, he was an able manager, but not a tactician. Amiable humor and steadfast support of his company commanders were his strengths. Schmalhorst had good reason to support his company commanders. All had served a previous tour in Vietnam and were graduates of the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning. His lieutenants, on the other hand, were all fresh out of Officer Candidate School and had little more military experience than the troops they led.

Except for the first sergeants, surprisingly few of the battalion's NCOs had seen combat. Career NCOs in the line companies were first sergeants, mess sergeants, supply sergeants, and platoon sergeants, many of whom served one rank below the position they filled. While the Army had plenty of combat-seasoned Infantry NCOs,

their numbers were dissipated by the competing demands of filling advisory teams in Vietnam, expanding Special Forces, forming three new divisions, and providing cadres for an enlarged training establishment. By 1967,



soldiers who fought in World War II and remained in the Army afterward already had 22 or more years of service and could retire. Most infantry NCOs in the US worked 14 to 16-hour days as drill sergeants in an expanding number of basic training centers while others stayed in the field for nearly half of every year with

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battalions in Germany, Korea, Panama, or the dwindling number left in the US. Some were thanklessly doing work normally done by officers because there were few experienced officers left in units outside Vietnam. NCOs' wives and children saw too little of them, causing family strains that drove many good men to retire.

Training in Washington's cold, wet forests to prepare for combat in tropical jungles bordered on the ridiculous, especially when searching a mock-up Vietnamese village in 16 inches of snow. Bill McMullen, dropped from OCS at Ft Benning, remembers that surreal experience fondly because of the close friendships it fostered. While serving with the opposing force on one of C Company's field training exercises, McMullen, John "Mugs" Morgan, and Greg Russell captured the company headquarters, earning them the respect of their peers and the ire of their first sergeant. When Lieutenant Colonel Schmalhorst pitched his tent in the field, a luxury forbidden his troops, someone "accidentally" burned the tent down with a flare. That weekend, McMullen and his buddies went to Seattle, got a suite at the Sheraton where they filled the bathtub with ice and canned beer, and partied as hard as they trained. Because McMullen's mother insisted that he be baptized before shipping out, he, Greg Russell, and Platoon Sergeant Bob Bellemare, went to the post chapel for his baptism. Years later, he found the baptismal certificate among his Army records with their signatures witnessing the event. Just over a month after reaching Vietnam, two of them were wounded and the other was dead.

The Bearcats' field training stressed safety because units new to Vietnam were notorious for weapons accidents. Men were cross-trained on crew-served weapons and some were trained to function at least one level up from their assigned positions. In B Company, Captain Phil Eckman had his lieutenants call in simulated air strikes. His NCOs and the most capable privates were required to adjust fire from the company's 81mm mortars. Soldiers would have to perform those duties in an emergency if their leaders became casualties. Eckman, who had served in Vietnam's Mekong Delta as an advisor to a Vietnamese Ranger Battalion, was less than a year from promotion to major and his experience and field savvy showed.

### Reunions

Reunion 2009 is tentatively set for August 27-29 at Watertown, New York. Unless they are deployed to Afghanistan at the time, the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 31st Infantry will host the reunion and host proposed a "Day with the Polar Bears", including a live fire small unit air assault demonstration, followed by a picnic with the soldiers who participate in the demonstration.

## Officers of the Association

Elections for a new slate of officers will be held at our next reunion. Charlie Tapp heads the nomination committee. If you are interested in running for office, write him at 215 Waterford Dr, Inman, SC 29349-0705, call him at 864-473-1999, or email him at [charlietapp@alltel.net](mailto:charlietapp@alltel.net) or [charlie@cctrucking.com](mailto:charlie@cctrucking.com). Current serving officers are:

### Commander: Ron Corson

3620 Bridgewater Dr, Williamsburg VA 23188

### Vice Commander/Quartermaster: Vin Zike

21 Caskey Road, Glen Spey, NY 12737

### Senior Director/Historian: Karl Lowe

5101 Portsmouth Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032

### Treasurer: John Cornelson

3116 Chattahoochee Trace, Gainesville, GA 30506

### Membership Chairman: Jack Considine

144 S River Rd, Tolland, CT 06084

### Regional Directors:

#### Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY) Ed Bettis

3728 Highland Ave, Skaneateles, NY 13152

#### Mid-Atlantic (NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, VA, WV) Bill Owen

360 Glendobbin Rd, Winchester VA 22603

#### Southeast (NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, AR, LA, PR, VI) Noah Halfacre

2740 Oxford Hall Ave, Murfreesboro TN 37128-2856

#### Great Lakes (KY, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI) Dan Kelly

611 Seip Rd, Chillecothe, OH 45601

#### Midwest (MN, ND, SD, NE, IA, MO, KS, OK, TX, NM, CO) Jerry Carlson

3205 Stone Edge Rd, El Paso, TX 79904-2427

#### West (HI, AK, WA, OR, CA, NV, AZ, UT, ID, MT, WY) Houston Turner

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[lucky31st@juno.com](mailto:lucky31st@juno.com)

ph 818-347-5462

## New Members

We're pleased to welcome a new crop of members. Please check to see if we got your contact information and unit right and help us sign up others with whom you've been in contact.

**MAJ Robert F Griggs**, 609 Kennon St, Middletown, RI 02842, 814-644-5509,

[Robert.griggs@us.army.mil](mailto:Robert.griggs@us.army.mil), (HHC 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, Ft Drum & Iraq 2006-07)

**James I McClaine**, 249 Loganberry Rd, Dupont, GA 31630-3749, 912-487-2009, (B/6<sup>th</sup> Bn, Vietnam, 1968), SSG, 2<sup>nd</sup> Plt Sgt

**Thomas A Medford, Jr**, 4601 Holmhurst Way, Bowie, MD 20720, 301-805-5196,

[gotohelltommy@msn.com](mailto:gotohelltommy@msn.com) (A/4<sup>th</sup> Bn, Ft Drum) LT, Company XO

**Timothy J Schneider**, 9521 Rutland Ave, Whittier, CA 90605-2833, 562-696-6207,

[td.schneider@verizon.net](mailto:td.schneider@verizon.net), (3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, D/6<sup>th</sup> Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70), RTO

**James F Tierney**, 1484 Loretta Dr, Pittsburgh, PA 15235, 412-793-7214, [jtier64999@aol.com](mailto:jtier64999@aol.com) (A/6<sup>th</sup> Bn, Vietnam, 1969-70), SSG 1<sup>st</sup> Plt Sgt

**John T Boyt**, 7 El Portal, Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274, 310-833-8700, [jtboyt@theboytcompany.com](mailto:jtboyt@theboytcompany.com) (son of 2LT John E Boyt, Philippines 1938-40)



**Frank E Hicks, Jr**

**Jamal H Raines**

**Robert Earle Trego**

### Taps

1LT, Med Co, Korea-DMZ, 1954-55

SGT, HHC Commo Sec, Ft Drum, 2008

SSG, L Co (Wpns Plt), Korea 1951-52

Weaverville, CA

Watertown, NY

Fort Wayne, IN

## Searching

**John D. St. Onge** (company unknown) was killed in action 27 Oct 52 while serving with the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry.

I would like to find out more about his unit, location he was killed, and anything else I can find out. John is my wife's Uncle and the American Legion Post will soon name Post after him and 2 others. I want to know as much as I can prior to service. Thank you.

1SG Paul M. Wandrie, Sr. USA (Retired) [pwandrie@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pwandrie@sbcglobal.net)  
Post Commander  
American Legion Post 299  
Mackinac Island, MI

### Websites

Please check out our website and sign our guest book at [www.31stinfantry.org](http://www.31stinfantry.org)

Related sites include:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Bn 31<sup>st</sup> Inf: <http://www.drum.army.mil/sites/tenants/division/2BCT/4-31INF/>
- 6<sup>th</sup> Bn 31<sup>st</sup> Inf: [www.6thofthe31st.com](http://www.6thofthe31st.com) and [www.vietnam6bn31inf.com](http://www.vietnam6bn31inf.com)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division: [www.7th-inf-div-assn.com](http://www.7th-inf-div-assn.com).
- 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division: [www.9thinfdivsociety.org](http://www.9thinfdivsociety.org).
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry "Americal" Division: [www.americal.org](http://www.americal.org).
- 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade: [www.196th.org](http://www.196th.org).
- Karen Smith's tribute to the 31<sup>st</sup> Inf: <http://31rect.tripod.com/>

### Notes from the Quartermaster

Shipments for your orders were very slow after the Reunion. We shipped the items to California. After the reunion, we had them shipped back. Once they were received I had to inventory all of it. I found that we were out of a lot of items, so I had to reorder a lot. I apologize for the delays in getting your items to you.

Also, we changed the order form over a year ago. I am still receiving orders with the old order forms. Some of our costs have gone up, including postage. If I receive an older order form, I'll mail it back to you, with your check, and a new order form.

### NEWSLETTER

Every mailing, we get a number of newsletters returned as undeliverable. If you have different addresses for summer/winter, please either send me a letter or an email and let me know what dates you are at what addresses. Every returned email costs us not only the outgoing postage, but the incoming first class postage.

Mail or email any address corrections to: Vin Zike  
email: [quartermaster@31stinfantry.org](mailto:quartermaster@31stinfantry.org) 21 Caskey Road  
Glen Spey, NY 12737

Mary Doyan puts every newsletter on the association web site. You can go there and view past newsletters as well and the latest one, along with photos, history, and a lot of other good stuff.

**Web Site: <http://www.31stinfantry.org/>**

**31st REGIMENT ASSOCIATION QUARTERMASTER STORE ORDER FORM**  
*Please print clearly to avoid errors in your order*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (in case we need to contact you about your order)

ITEM	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
7th Div Order of the Bayonet Badge	\$ 8.00	X _____	= _____
Combat Infantry Badge (small)	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Combat Infantry Badge (reg size)	\$ 4.50	X _____	= _____
Ball Cap w/31st Infantry Regiment and Polar Bear Patch embroidered on front			
Royal Blue	\$12.00	X _____	= _____
Infantry Blue	\$12.00	X _____	= _____
31 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment Association Bumper Sticker w/campaigns	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Window decal CIB	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Window decal Korea Veteran & Proud	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Decal of Polar Bear crest	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Window decal Vietnam	\$ 2.50	X _____	= _____
Army Belt (Blue) & Buckle w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 7.50	X _____	= _____
Dog Tag Key Ring w/Regimental Crest	\$ 5.00	X _____	= _____
Money Clip w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.50	X _____	= _____
Polar Bear patch	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
7th Div shoulder patch	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Bronze Star	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Regimental Crest (facing set)	\$ 8.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Silver Star	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Shanghai Bowl cup	\$165.00	X _____	= _____
Tie clasp w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Lapel/Hat pin w/Purple Heart	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
Bola Tie w/Polar Bear Crest	\$ 9.00	X _____	= _____
Zippo Lighter w/Polar Bear Crest	\$14.00	X _____	= _____
Tee Shirt w/31st Infantry Regiment and Polar Bear Crest			
Size (circle one): S M L XL	Light Blue	\$12.00	X _____ = _____
	Navy Blue	\$12.00	X _____ = _____
Size: XXL	Light Blue	\$15.00	X _____ = _____
	Navy Blue	\$15.00	X _____ = _____
Polo/Golf shirt w/31st Infantry Regiment and Crest			
Size (circle one): S M L XL	White	\$ 26.00	X _____ = _____
	Navy Blue	\$ 26.00	X _____ = _____
Size: XXL	White	\$ 29.00	X _____ = _____
	Navy Blue	\$ 29.00	X _____ = _____

ORDER TOTALS - NUMBER OF ITEMS/ TOTAL COST: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SHIPPING CHARGES - add to your order total SHIPPING: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

under \$10.00 add \$ 2.50 over \$50.00 add \$ 8.00

orders \$10.00-\$25.00 add \$ 4.50

orders \$25.01-\$50.00 add \$ 6.00

**CHECK ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: **31st INF REGIMENT ASSOCIATION**

Mail Order form and check to: **Vin Zike**  
**21 Caskey Road**  
**Glen Spey, NY 12737**

Email questions to: [vzike@challengecoin.com](mailto:vzike@challengecoin.com)

Membership Application - 31st Infantry Regiment Association			
first name	nickname	middle initial	last name

