

Email to **William Barrett**, former member, 1437th Engineer Co. (Float Bridge)

CONCISE HISTORY: 58th Engineers

"My name is Bill Redstreak. During the Korean War, I was a member of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co., re-designated the 58th Engineer Co. (Float Bridge) for a very short time; then re-designated the 58th Engineer Float Bridge Co. I served in the 58th during each of those sequential name changes. After being wounded at the Mallard Bridge site on the Imjin river, I served as acting sergeant-major of the 1169th Engineer Combat Group, I Corps, 8th US Army. Initially, the 58th was part of Major Gen. **Ned Almond's** X Corps. (In late fall or winter of 1950, Gen. **Douglas MacArthur** promoted Ned Almond to Lieutenant General.)

"I am also known by my Leni Lenape tribal name, *Stoneheart*, which is my literary signature for works of historical fiction. Re: Barnes&Noble website (www.bn.com). Recent titles: *Runner of the Woods*; and *Taste the Earth, A Collision of Cultures*.

"I received a copy of your chronological history of the 1437th Engineers from **Charles Collins**, another former Korean vet.

"As keeper of the flame for the 58th Engineers, I am responsible for a little newsletter (*Memories of the 58th*). Incidentally, today's 58th Engineers – now serving a 2nd or 3rd tour in Iraq as the 58th Engineer Combat Co. – was one of very few US Army units to earn the Presidential Unit Citation during the Korean War. My own personnel awards include a Bronze Star, Commendation Ribbon with Metal Pendant, Korean Service Medal with two battle stars, a belated medal from South Korea, some totally worthless UN medals, and miscellaneous other citations. I did *not* receive a Purple Heart because I was evacuated by 'copter to a Norwegian Mobile Surgical Hospital (NorMASH), instead of being treated in a US Army unit.

Sept. 18, 1950: "In the 2nd or 3rd wave of troops, The 58th Engineers came ashore behind enemy lines with X Corps at Inchon.



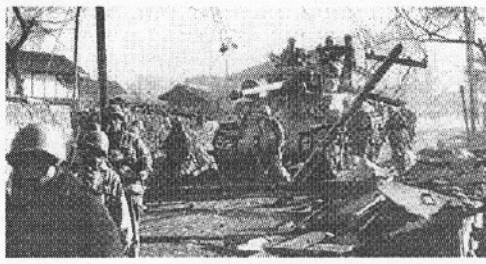
Subsequently, after racing all the way south thru battle lines below Seoul to retrieve old WW II Brockways and other specialized

equipment that had been put ashore down at Pusan (instead of up at Inchon), the 58th ended up on another LST to accompany X Corps' troops and ROK Army units – in another dangerous landing on the opposite coast of North Korea.

"After waiting around for timid



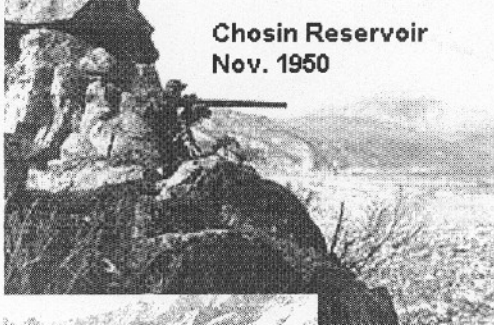
Marine Major General **Oliver Smith** to finally put his men ashore, members of the 58th then participated in the push north up thru the Funchilin Pass. The X Corps' troops reached Hyesan, on the Yalu river, while



Smith's 1st Marine Division was (finally) hunkered down near the Chosin Reservoir.

"X Corps' Army troops could not hold Hyesan after **Dean Acheson**, **Bob Lovett**, **Dean Rusk**, and others of their stripe-down-the-back ilk, convinced **Harry Truman** to order an immediate cease fire of all bombings within five miles of the Manchurian border; and, under no circumstances, to pursue enemy planes across the Yalu. Air superiority was thus handed over to Chinese MIG pilots; and the door was opened for one-million seasoned Chinese troops to pour across those unbombed bridges.

"Meanwhile, Gen. Smith's men were six- to eight-weeks behind Gen. MacArthur's schedule when they started to prepare vital airfields near the Chosin Reservoir.



**Chosin Reservoir
Nov. 1950**



"Despite Marine propaganda, it was British Royal Commandos, brave US Army troops of X Corps, carrier-based Navy pilots and their

bombardiers, and members of the 58th Engineers, who saved the 1st Marine Division from complete annihilation at Chosin, Hageru, Koto-ri and down through the treacherous Funchilin Pass in the winter of 1950.

"In an earlier email to **Frank Christ**, with a copy to you, I summarized the 58th's subsequent primary assignments during the 1951-'53 campaigns in Korea. If you would like to read a few copies of *Memories of the 58th*, stories written by men who served in an uncommon organization, please send me your snail mail address."

~ **Bill Redstreak**

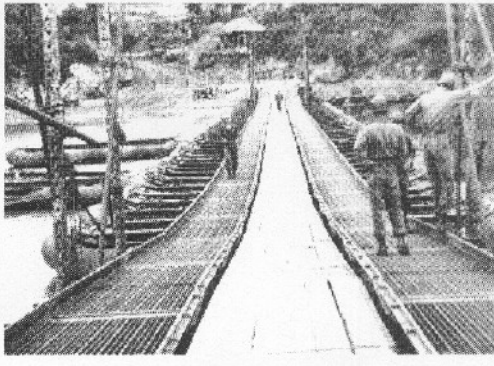
CONCISE HISTORY: 58th Engineers

Continued

1951-'54: "After the second recapture (freeing) of Seoul, as the war dragged on, the primary duties of the 58th were: constructing, repairing/maintaining and removing rubber pontoon M2 steel treadway float bridges and operating pontoon ferries, primarily on the treacherous Imjin river. Float bridges were installed and removed frequently for tactical reasons (offensives or counteroffensives by US/UN or Chinese forces) or in response to monsoon flood conditions.

"When tactical conditions dictated the rapid construction or removal of a bridge, members of the 58th often worked under enemy fire, sometimes at night with searchlights focused on a bridge site. Casualties were then sustained.

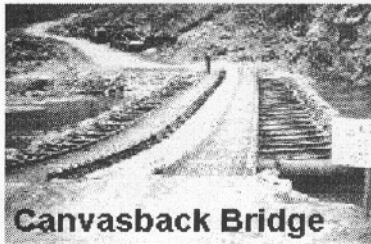
"A map of 11 of the 58th's pontoon float bridges across the Imjin in 1951-'53 appeared in earlier issues of this newsletter. From north to south, those bridges were: *Mallard*, *Whistler* (also a major ferry site), *Whitefront*, *Cpl. Wright*, *Pintail* (Parker), *Teal*, *Widgeon*, *Libby*, *Spoonbill*, *Honker* and *Freedom Gate*, also called the bridge at Munsan-ni or *Peace Bridge*.



The first bridge at Munsan-ni was constructed and removed five times in one month.

"In response to major thrusts by the Chinese Ninth Army, the 58th was kept very active along the upper Imjin. We also constructed at least two float bridges across the Hant'an, a tributary of the Imjin, near the juncture of those rivers, and maintained a pontoon ferry at or near that site during the monsoon seasons. (Float bridges on both eastern branches of the Hant'an and across other rivers on the eastern side of the Korean peninsula were handled by the 1437th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co.)

"Before the 58th departed from Korea to Japan in 1954, other bridges – not identified on the previously mentioned map – were constructed across the Imjin and other Korean rivers."



Canvasback Bridge



Waiting for evacuation at the Koto-ri chasm.

In the Hungnam area of North Korea:

"I was wearing every bit of clothing in my possession, and I was still freezing!"

~ Robert Eldon Edwards



When the First Marine Division and members of the 58th were encircled at Hagaru, Royal Marines pushed up from Koto-ri.

(Vol. 14)

"Some of the stories in *MEMORIES* bring back remembrances of my time with the 58th and old memories of the terrific guys I served with. At Fort Knox, Kentucky, I remember constructing Bailey bridges before we convoyed to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with all of our equipment. There, along tidal river tributaries of the Potomac, we constructed our first M2 widened steel treadway floating bridges.

"We traveled by train from Fort Belvoir to Chicago, Illinois, then on to Camp Stone-man, California. As several other guys have stated, all of our bridging, boats and other special equipment were sent to Seattle, Washington.

"From California, we were shipped over to Yokohama, Japan, where we became part of a newly created Tenth Army Corps (X Corps). Then, as I remember it, we boarded an old WW II freighter, which became part of a massive invasion fleet bound for Inchon on the western side of the Korean peninsula. At Inchon, during an ongoing naval bombardment, we were offloaded into a landing craft that took us through the mud flats to shore.

"In Vol. 9, **Jim Minshall** stated, *We came ashore at Inchon (behind enemy lines) three days after the initial landing which was Sept. 15, 1950.* Jim was then Company Clerk, our official record keeper. Before he left Korea, he was promoted to First Sergeant of the 58th.

"After Seoul was liberated, we picked up some rebuilt vehicles at ASCOM City and drove them down to Pusan to retrieve our bridging, boats and other specialized equipment. Following a muddy stay at Pusan, we were loaded on a large LST along with our equipment and shipped north up the eastern coast of Korea to Wonsan, a North Korean port city.

Re: Map, p.1.

"Wonsan was under heavy siege the afternoon we were scheduled to come ashore, so we were taken further north to Hungnam, another North Korean port city, about 50 miles north of Wonsan and almost 100 miles north of the 38th parallel, where we came ashore the next day. It was very cold and windy. We offloaded our equipment at Hungnam and stayed in a bombed out school house.

Matt Wood did a great job of describing our stay in that freezing school house in Vol. 17.

"Part of the 58th was sent north through Hamhung and Hagaru to a location near the Changjin River, approximately 50 miles north of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. That location, just south of the Manchurian border, was where X Corps planned to establish a Command Post. We all believed the war was all but over. Then, on Nov. 26, 1950,

several hundred thousand battle-hardened soldiers of the Chinese Ninth Army poured across the Yalu River and attacked X Corps and the 1st Marine Division.

"The retreat to Hungnam from the Chosin Reservoir and Hagaru down the icy Funchilin Pass has been adequately described in earlier issues of this little newsletter. Tens of thousands of desperate North Koreans also fled from their Communist aggressors to the port city of Hungnam. *There was no way to discover how many enemy infiltrators might be among those refugees!*

"I do remember in the confusion, aircraft were landing on the sand at Hungnam. I also recall, **1st Lt. Leonard Webber**, CO of the 58th, refused to take any refugees aboard the LSTs which had been summoned to evacuate us back to Pusan. There were serious concerns because women and children, fearing for their lives should they be captured by Communist soldiers, were concealing weapons and hand grenades. Nevertheless, after all U.S. Army and Marine units, British Royal Marines and Republic of Korea (ROK) troops were evacuated, more than 90,000 Korean refugees were safely transported to Pusan, near the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, by order of **Lt. Gen. Edward Almond**, CO of X Corps. Then, the port of Hungnam was blown up.

"We were back in Pusan just before Christmas of 1950. With China in the war, we ridiculed earlier promises that we would be home, or back in Japan, for Christmas.

"Then, in the turmoil at Pusan, we lost the 58th! Or they lost us! **Lionel Willis**, a bulldozer operator, and I were somehow left behind with a tractor and trailer when our unit pulled out. Leaving the tractor and trailer on a pier at Pusan, we set out to search for our missing comrades. Finally, we found someone who recognized the 58th and told us, they had headed north toward Seoul.

"With only a can of C-rations, we got on a train and rode all night up through Taegu and other parts of South Korea, desperate to find our outfit. Eventually, we found the 58th -- encamped in a riverbed at Kyungju near Yungdongpo. *It was a joyful reunion for us!*"

(While the 58th was encamped in that riverbed on Dec. 22-23, 1950, **1st Lt. Leonard Webber** was promoted to captain.)

"Not long after our reunion, the 58th constructed a foot bridge for the ROKs, whom we called *gooks*, to transport ammunition up to their front lines. **Capt. Arvin**, a very good officer who was well-liked by all of our guys, was I believe in charge of that bridge construction.

"Other popular officers were **Lt. Ward**, who

had been our 1st sergeant when we were at Fort. Belvoir, **Lt. Wood**, a young guy, who was in charge of the 1st bridge platoon, **Lt. Matthews** and **Lt. Hebert**, who served as 1st sergeant after Ward was commissioned. **Warrant Officer Niles**, our personnel officer, was also a great guy.

"Not as popular amongst most of us was Capt. Webber. I remember **Cpl. Griffen**, a crane operator, had a run-in with Webber. Shortly thereafter a grenade, with the pin removed, was discovered in Webber's tent. *It didn't go off!* Although there was no evidence to implement Griffen, he was transferred to another outfit.

"Matt Wood has written several terrific stories for this newsletter, including tales about our first permanent base camp at Uijongbu and the Peace Bridge at Munsan-ni, which was constructed five times in one month.

"The 58th was a great outfit. We were all young and quick to learn. In the spring of 1951 at Uijongbu, **Charlie Moore**, our medic, saved my life. I had a very high fever, which Charlie recognized as malaria. I was given medication, then tied to my bunk until my fever broke. Two other great guys who were my good friends in Korea were **Owen Brewer** and **Alvie Norton**.

"Before I retired as a Warrant Officer (CW3), I spent 21 years in the U.S. Army with most of that service in the Nuclear Weapons Field, but I still remember my worst experience: It was in the Hungnam area of North Korea. *I was wearing every bit of clothing in my possession, and I was still freezing!*"

~ Robert Eldon Edwards

A very bad time for a seizure



"Up at the Chosin Reservoir, **Tom Pelican** and **Nathan Burgess** were together down in a foxhole, back behind the front lines. *(The Marines didn't want us Army Engineer boys in their way, which was fine with us.)* When a fire-fight started, it triggered one of Tom's epileptic fits. He jumped up and started to run toward the enemy lines. Nathan ran after him, tackled him, and somehow held him down until his epileptic seizure ended.

"*I don't know how Nathan did it!* It always took six or seven men to control Tom when he had such an attack." ~ **Pete Zantene**

Vol 25, p. 2

Based on letters **Al Kisamore** sent to his mother, here is his chronological account of 58th activities in various parts of Korea. Al didn't write home about a lot of things because he knew his parents were worried about him.

We went wherever we were needed in North and South Korea

The 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co. left Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Tues. afternoon, Aug. 29, 1950, and arrived at Camp Stoneman, California on Sept. 1, 1950. We then left San Francisco on Sept. 8, onboard the US Naval Ship *General Howze*. We were the only Army personnel onboard with a shipload of Air Force guys.

Arrived in Yokohama, Sept. 21, 1950: Stayed at an engineer depot called Sagami Arsenal. Left Yokohama, Japan, Sept. 28.



Portion of a proof photo of the 58th Engineers, taken at Camp Sagami, Japan, Sept. 1950 (re: page 4, Vol. 22)

Arrived Inchon, Oct. 2, 1950. We got off a ship and boarded an LST and went in on high tide at night. We just got off the LST and stayed there on the beach. When daylight came, the LST was sitting on a mud flat about 1/2 to 3/4 miles out to the water because the tide had gone out. We were tired, but couldn't sleep because the big ships were out there shelling the port of Inchon.

Ascom City, Inchon, Oct. 6: Got word we are driving about 50 jeeps from another outfit to Pusan. Left Inchon, traveling the 340 miles of dirt road to Pusan arriving there Oct. 13. Most of the bridges were blown out and we had to drive thru the rivers and some places had to build bridges from sandbags. At one point on the journey, the two convoys ahead of us were ambushed and they lost several of their vehicles. We were fired at by snipers, but fortunately nobody got hit; we fired back and the enemy did not fire anymore. Warm here now and not too cold at night.

Pusan, Oct. 21: Rained for 3 days, very muddy. Unloaded our trucks off the ship and then reloaded our equipment on them. We got our pay in script with 5 cents being the lowest denomination; \$10 the highest.

Oct. 26: Watched the Bob Hope show yesterday with Marilyn Maxwell, Jimmy Wakely, The Tailor Maids, Les Brown Orchestra. Wakely sang the popular cowboy song *Cool Clear Water* and other songs too. The nights are now pretty cold. We have movies here at the company 4 nights a week — starting tonight we get beer. Korean smoking pipes are quite the thing. The older a man gets, the longer a pipe he smokes. The stem is bamboo and the tip and bowl are metal. The longest ones are about 3 ft. My friend **James Ellifritz** and I have *Hill-billy Fever* painted across the hood on our

truck, he being a native of West Virginia, where my people were from.

Oct. 29: Very warm today.

Pusan, Nov. 1: Two days of rain; very muddy again. Hauled some lumber to put floors in our tents. Have been sleeping in pup tents. Now attached to X (10th) Corps. Had my watch repaired by a Korean watch shop, cost me 1000 won (about 40 cents); it runs fine.



Nov. 7: Staying in squad tents now with wooden floors and stoves in them. We now have cots to sleep on. Snowed today.

Hungnam, North Korea, Nov. 16: Arrived here last night after staying in Wonson Harbor one day and night. Got a package from my mom, but the homemade bread was moldy as vinegar from a pickle jar leaked out and made the bread soggy; it moldied and a jar of jam was smashed. Real cold here at night. Some marines were shot just a short distance from our barracks which are blown out, deserted houses.

Nov. 17: Hauled lumber and doors today to board up the windows. Also have lights working now.

Nov. 21: Fourteen trucks hauled logs on a 45 mile haul yesterday; hauling gasoline and oil up today and tomorrow. Got more men in and more trucks. Not quite as cold now and a lot of the snow has melted on the mountains.

Nov. 25: Hauling gasoline, oil and diesel fuel every day now. Cold and snowing. Gen. MacArthur says the troops will be in the States or Japan for Christmas. Had a great Thanksgiving dinner, roast tom turkey and all the trimmings; 1st good meal since we left Japan. We are settled in pretty good now. Have some Korean carpenters replacing the windows. We have a stove but need an elbow for the stove pipe so we can run it out the window. I was down to Hamhung this morning and saw a jeep with a big red fox on the hood, *not painted* — a real fox. Sometimes, we have to get up at night and go unload boxcars or ships and some evenings we have to haul coal and also do guard duty.

Nov. 29: Two inches of new snow last night. 12 trucks took some prefab houses up to the front to set up as advance HQs for the 10th Corps. We now have Korean women for KP duty along with a Korean boy 5 years old that we picked up down in Pusan. His parents were killed and he was put in an orphanage; he and his two brothers ran

off but he was the only one that made it to our company. When the *Guks* (Koreans) came after him, our guys hid him and brought him up here with the last bunch of guys from Pusan. We call him *Number One*, which means the best. We also have a couple of Korean Interpreters.

Number One, the orphan boy adopted as a mascot by the 58th, could speak better English than Korean. He was eventually put in a home for boys in Seoul to get a proper Korean education.



Dec. 5: Zero weather and a foot of snow.

Dec. 12 or 14: Our trucks came back from Hagaru with bullet holes in them; the defense line is now Hamhung, 9 miles from here. The 185th is right across the hill from us.

Kyungju, Dec. 22 or 23 (somewhere near Taegu & Ulsan): We got here night before last. In the middle of a river bed staying in squad tents. Got a lot of new men in. We now have 206 men in the company, almost double what we had. Found out the name of this place, Kyungju. Our company commander **1st Lt. Leonard Webber** has been promoted to Captain.

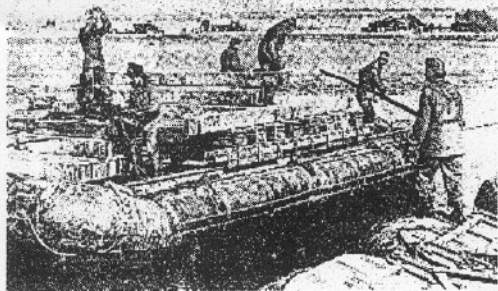
Christmas Eve, 1950: Going to have turkey tomorrow and the day off. One of the guys shot a small deer yesterday.

Dec. 26: Cold, but no snow. PX sold us each 3 cans of beer tonight. I have 11 cans saved for New Years. **Sgt. Blank** shot a good sized doe deer but the back was full of warbles so we had to discard it.

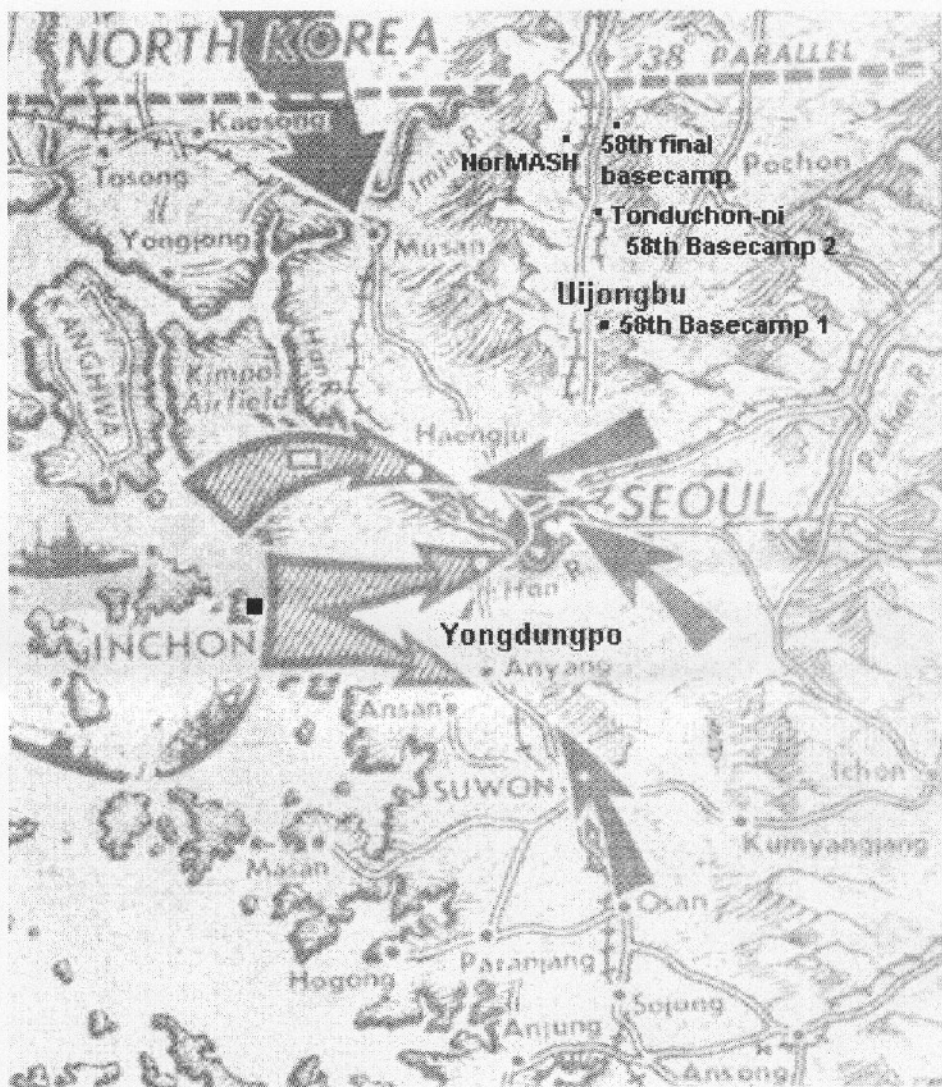
Jan. 2, 1951: Set up a portable shower: It sure felt good to be clean. It was set up inside one of the big tents. Days are fairly warm, nights are cold, windy and dusty. Trucks going to Pusan about 3 times a week to haul lumber back.

Jan. 9: Took 6 truckloads of gasoline 100 miles north of here to set up the 185th Engineers. Could not get all the way up there because of a guerrilla roadblock. Then, took 15 Brockways to Taegu; then to Mason; then Pusan; and then back here to Kyungju. The rest of the company are over around Mason (*not Mansan*) putting in a bridge. When we encountered that roadblock we stayed at the 79th Engineers.

Chingong-mi, Jan. 13: Near Masan, 58th has put in three bridges since we were here. Three days of rain and the roads are real bad. There is not room to pass an oncoming vehicle and sometimes you have to back up to a wide spot. Four or five of the trucks have gone off the road and overturned; fortunately no one was injured. Went to Kyongju with a tractor and trailer



58th Engineers constructed this floating bridge across the Tedong River in North Korea in the winter of 1950. Map (right) *The Battle for Seoul*



The Battle for Seoul (above) and ...

po and our platoon is here by ourselves.
Yongdungpo Mar. 21: We left 10th Corps sometime previous and were in 9th Corps and now we are in I (Eye) Corps. Getting about 25 gallons of Korean beer everyday now from a brewery in Inchon. *That came to a sudden halt after we were told there were some bodies floating in the brew.*
Mar. 26: I got promoted to Corporal.
Apr. 14: Heard that Gen. MacArthur has been relieved of duty and replaced by Gen. Matthew Ridgeway.
Apr. 30: The Chinese started their big spring offensive and the US/UN has really been pounding them the last three days.



May 12: Korean farmers are starting to irrigate their rice paddies; everything is turning green.
June 3: I just returned from R&R in Japan. *Had a great time!*
Uijongbu, June 6: We moved up here yesterday from Yongdungpo, a distance of about 18 or 20 miles. Re: p. 4, Vol. 20
June 14: The 1st guys of our company will leave for the States tomorrow.
Tokyo, Japan, June 17-Aug. 24: I was in

... the last three base camps of the 58th

Tokyo Army Hospital Annex with an accidental bullet wound from another soldier in our outfit. A very hot summer.
Uijongbu, Aug. 25: Back on duty. Tents with wooden floors and oil stoves and a Quonset hut for a mess hall. We are in the middle of a chestnut orchard and the trees are loaded. Also have a Quonset hut for a maintenance building.
Sept. 27: Twenty one men left here on the 24th for rotation. Getting replacements in. Tomorrow will be 1 year for us in Korea.
Oct. 21: The day I was waiting for. Tomorrow I go to Inchon for first phase of rotation.
Sasebo, Japan, Oct. 28: Left Korea the morning of the 24th and arrived here the 26th. *This was my first letter that I had to put a 6 cent air mail stamp on!*
Nov. 1: Waiting for a ship to take us home.
Nov. 4, 1951: Tomorrow we board ship for departure to *Trumans Island* — sailing on the *Sgt. Sylvester Antilock* and will dock at Seattle, Washington. **Then, flew across the US, and I was home the day before Thanksgiving 1951.**
 ~ Al Kismore

Big Al did not mention wide temperature ranges in Korea: Up to 115°F in summer and down to a super cold -60°F in winter at Chosin Reservoir & Hagaru. Re: the 58th at Koto-ri, Vol. 7, 9, 14 & 15.

and brought a bulldozer here — a 14 hour trip. Cold and windy here now. Coming back from the bridge last night, we encountered 5 deer in the road and field. Everyone was shooting at them. We got one — and our CO claimed it.

Jan. 16: *Big wages!* Got our income tax statements. I made \$1,156.14 and they withheld \$70.40. I figure I will get \$35.00 back.

Jan. 22: We are no longer with 10th Corps as of about a week ago we are now 8th US Army, part of 2nd Engineers Construction Group.

Jan. 25: I cleaned some wild ducks the guys shot; we will cook them in the tent tonight. A change from our C rations.

Jan. 28: Warm days, cold nights. We got some bread from the mess tent and fried eggs in our tent on a sheet metal skillet, used on top of our oil burning stove.

Susan-ni, Feb. 9: Working on a bridge across the Han River at Taejon. Shooting lots of pheasants and cooking them in the tent. Shooting them with a carbine with tracers.

North of Suwon, Feb. 19: Snowed today. *Number One*, our little mascot, got a pair of cowboy boots. He is very proud of them. Very busy putting springs in our GMC trucks. They are overloaded and the roads are very rough. Getting better chow now than we had been getting.

South of Seoul, Feb. 28: We put a bridge across the Han river and our platoon (*Echo Podge*) is running two ferries across the river. Keeps me busy keeping the outboard motors running. If they are not pulled up out of the water when not in use, they freeze and break. *We took an assault boat upriver, threw concussion grenades in the water, then picked up fish and took them back to where we were ferrying troops across the river. We gave those fish to some colored troops.*

Yuju, Mar. 1: Very cold last night and today. General Moore was at our bridge site about two hours before he died.

Yong-ni, Mar. 5-8: Spring-like weather today. Most of the company are up putting a bridge in. The enemy tried to blow it out at night but were unsuccessful. Pabst Blue Ribbon Brewing Co. donated the stationary I am using; they also donated beer at Christmas and New Year. The bridge platoons are putting in a bridge at Yongdung-

We learned how to swing our bridges to keep them from being destroyed

"After the Chinese advance was stopped in May of 1951, the 58th moved frequently to complete bridging and rafting missions.

There were so many projects I cannot sort them all out. However, without bragging, I will state: Our unit was very good in meeting any and all requirements. *We went wherever we were needed!*

"One incident, I can remember occurred when we were bridging the Han River south of Seoul to help US/UN forces prevent recapture of South Korea's capital city. There was a large sand bar at that bridge site with plenty of room for us to work. But things started out badly when one of our Brockways backed over a stacked wooden tank mine. Fortunately for the Corps of Engineers (and me!), several of us who were standing on the opposite side of the truck received only minor injuries, primarily some loss of hearing.

"After the bridge site was checked very, very carefully and no additional mines were discovered, an M2 steel treadway pontoon bridge was installed without further incident.

"Just upstream of our bridge was a destroyed M4T6 aluminum balk bridge, installed by the 55th Engineer Bridge Company, an outfit that had been deployed to Korea directly from Japan. That bridge had been blown to impede the southern advance of Chinese troops. It was the only bridge of the 55th I ever saw. The only other thing I can recall about the 55th is their abandoned vehicles, along the sides of roads. They became a vital source of repair and replacement parts for our resourceful maintenance team.

"Probably our most renowned crossing site was at Munsan-ni on the Imjin, which later became known as the *Peace Bridge*. A story at that time in the Pacific edition of Stars & Stripes quoted me as saying: *We installed the bridge at Munsan-ni five times in one month.*

"Several times that float bridge was removed then reinstalled to support tactical operations; other times it was removed because of floods. *Photos (on facing page) show the sequence of events from installation of this bridge to its destruction by raging flood waters.*

"When the river receded, we tried to salvage our bridge, but most components were unuseable. They were warped, bent or otherwise damaged. The extent of that damage forced us to look at other options to avoid or reduce loss of bridging in the future. It opened the door to a fresh concept: Swinging our float bridges when they were confronted with impending flood waters. The swinging of a subsequent bridge at Munsan-ni (then at other bridge sites) was the first time this bridge-saving technique was ever accomplished.

"With no prior experience, at least among

us, members of the 58th developed a simple plan and we implemented it time and time again.

Army Engineers Ignore Imjin Jinx

ON THE IMJIN RIVER (United Press)

■ Army engineers thumbed their noses at the jinx of the Imjin Thursday and began re-bridging the swollen river which cut Kaesong off from the advance camp Wednesday. Koreans watched the operation skeptically and reminded the engineers that the Munsan-ni crossing was jinxed and that no bridge would ever last.

TWO FACTORS make the job extremely difficult. The crossing is within tidal waters of the ocean and tidal flows create currents and whirlpools that tear away foundations and undermine structures.

THE STORY ENDED with a photo caption: US soldiers of the 58th Combat Engineers (sic) struggle with heavy equipment to erect a pontoon bridge across the swollen, muddy Hant'an river. ■ (That UP writer had his rivers mixed up. See 2nd paragraph, p. 4)

"After the 58th and other US/UN forces advanced north of Seoul, we supported tactical operations across much of the MLR (main line of resistance). As the front line began to stabilize somewhat in the general area of the 38th parallel, relocations of our bivouac area became less frequent, and a more permanent base camp was established at Uijongbu, which became the location of I Corps Headquarters.

"Although bridging requirements, primarily on the Imjin River, did not slow down, being located in one place gave us a chance to improve living conditions. As part of those improvements, we erected a structure to provide recognition of the loss of two of our comrades — **Cpl. Theodore L. Wright** on June 6, 1951 and **Pfc. Carl R. Gibbons** on Aug. 1, 1951 — and to record the bridges we had constructed.

"In a photo of this memorial structure, which appeared in several state-side news-



Lt Wood (on right) watched two other members of the 58th hanging bridge signs at the new Uijongbu base camp

papers, numbers in parentheses (not legible in this small photo) indicate the number of times some of those bridges were built.

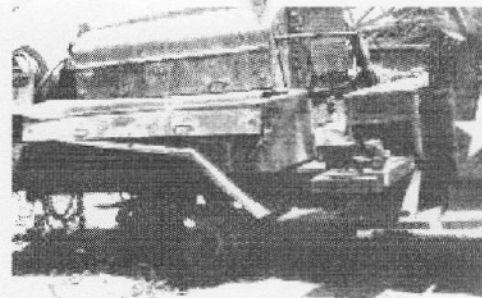
"At this point, to the extent of my knowledge and memory, I will try to recall the events which led to the deaths of Cpl. Wright and Pfc. Gibbons. First, Cpl. Wright: We had been given the mission of installing a bridge far upstream across the Imjin. After reconning the site, nothing appeared unusual, except the bridge assembly area

was small and would be congested.

"Shortly after we moved onto the site, several rounds of indirect fire came in close to us. Someone made the decision that we would move back offsite and return during the night to assemble our float bridge under blackout conditions. I do not recall who gave that order.

"We returned in the dark and within minutes there was a loud explosion in our assembly area. Because it was so close, I could not differentiate the explosion from an incoming round or a mine; I decided it was most probably an incoming round because we had received some earlier.

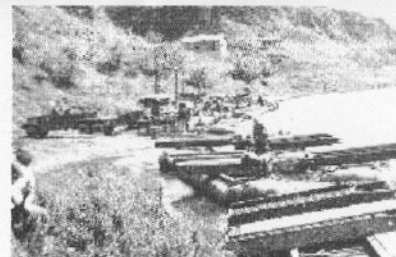
"Since we were working under total blackout conditions, and based on the assumption the explosion was from incoming fire, we began pulling back off the site. Then, it was determined our truck-mounted air compressor had hit a mine.



Air compressor damaged by a mine

"After we recovered Cpl. Wright and cleared the area, I encountered the I Corps Engineer and told him of the situation. Because of the potential danger of setting off other mines whilst working in the dark, I also recommended that we install the bridge the next day — *after we carefully checked the area for mines.* He agreed, and the bridge was installed the next day without incident.

Our bridge assembly site after sweeping for mines



"My recollection of events leading to the loss of Pfc. Gibbons is less specific. We were attempting to install a bridge under extreme river flooding conditions. During our construction operations, Pfc. Gibbons fell into the raging waters. From a distance, I saw him come to the surface once than go under. The current was very strong and there was no chance to save him."

~ Matt Wood

My Story of the 58th Engineers and the Chosin Reservoir

by **Pete Zantene**

"When we first arrived in Korea during the Inchon landings, we didn't have any ammunition because a second lieutenant of the 58th, a ROTC officer fresh out of college, forgot to requisition it. We had to borrow ammo from the Marines."



"I am sorry it took so long to send this to you.

"The first thing I have to say is this is just a few of the episodes that happened to me while I was with the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company. Other stories of the 58th will most probably go to my grave with me.

"There were many times when I wasn't with the 58th, and many times when some of our other men were also assigned to various units. For example, when I was up at the Chosin Reservoir, I was then on temporary duty with another US Army Engineer Company because I was a jack-of-all trades: company clerk, supply clerk, personnel clerk (I could type 70 words per minute); *I was also a damned good truck driver and a great bridge builder.* The company I was with at Chosin had lost all of its clerks, so I was sent up there to get the paperwork caught up. Luckily, that outfit wasn't too far north so I got out — instead of being trapped up there.

"I was never so cold before or after the winter of 1950-51. Truck batteries froze up and cracked. Our carbines were next to useless in that severe cold. We were always too busy to do any shooting, but we were under a lot of small arms and mortar attacks, and we had to rely on the air force, artillery and infantry to protect us."

"Before I begin my *Frozen Chosin* tale, I would like to set the record straight about a Korean we called Saipan. His real name was Jun Soo Am, and he was a terrific sign painter. He painted names (unit designations) and numbers on our vehicles and stayed with us in our supply tent. It was **Supply Sergeant Harris** and I who gave him the name Saipan.

"The 58th played an important role in *The Battle of the Chosin Reservoir*. There are seven different accounts of the critical bridge repair at Koto-ri, but I know the true story. Other stories about the bridge repair at Koto-ri range from far-fetched fairy tales like *'the Air Force dropping steel treadway sections into exact positions'* to Marine propaganda, *'The Epic of Chosin,'* by Benis Frank, which falsely states, *'(Marine) Lt. Col. Partridge arranged for the airdrop of treadway bridges, which he put in place ...'*

"It was the first time steel treadway bridging was ever dropped by parachute. And it was our guys and our Brockways who put that bridging in place over penstocks (very large water pipes) that supplied water to a hydroelectric plant very far south of the Chosin Reservoir. The bridge at Koto-ri was destroyed several times by the Chinese. It had been rebuilt earlier by one of the Engineer Construction Battalions, but the Chinese came in and blew it up again.

"By the time US and British troops were

pulling back and massing at Hagaru and Koto-ri, the bridge (actually located a few miles south of Koto-ri) was the only way to take any vehicles and wounded men out. Therefore, it was imperative that it be repaired as quickly as possible, or as the Army stated, *'at once.'*

"The facts I am recounting came from my buddies of the 58th and from a book, *'Escaping the Trap'* by Lt. Col. Roy Appleton. First, some people might wonder: What was a floating bridge company doing up in North Korea in the middle of a super cold winter? That is a question I cannot answer. Most probably, the 58th was needed to bridge chasms — caused by 'blown out' or 'washed out' sections of a treacherous single-lane roadway up through the Funchilin Pass. At that time, the Korean War was all but over; we couldn't find any remnants of the North Korean Army. *Tenth Corps, therefore, decided to set up a HQ within sight of the Yalu River* (the border between North Korea and Communist China). And since the 58th had a lot of big Brockways and 2½ ton trucks, X Corps turned the 58th into a 'trucking company' to haul Quonset huts up for proposed use as HQ buildings.

"Fourteen men of the 58th under command of **1st Lt. Floyd R. Ward** started up the Funchilin Pass toward the Yalu River. They got as far as Marine Col. 'Chesty' Puller's HQ at Koto-ri. ***When news that the critical bridge behind them had been blown out once again reached Koto-ri and Hagaru, Lt. Ward realized his boom-equipped Brocks could be used to repair the bridge — if steel treadway sections were parachuted down to the men of the 58th.***



"A first attempt failed because the planes were too high; all eight treadway sections drifted out over enemy lines. The next day, the US Air Force tried again. The planes came in lower and only two sections floated down into enemy hands. Two other sections were damaged, but four came down okay. With our Brocks, Lt. Ward's men retrieved those four sections (the minimum number needed) and with some help from Chinese prisoners, the men of the 58th repaired the bridge and enabled the First Marine Division, X Corps and the British Royal Commandos to pull back from the Chosin Reservoir, Hagaru and Koto-ri.

"**Cpl. Weldon Oakley**, another friend in the 58th, hauled Chinese prisoners down from the Chosin Reservoir and wound up with seven bullet holes in his gas tank!

"Now, that I have told my story about the bridge at Koto-ri, I would like to provide a few stories about some of the other men of the 58th, guys I served with for more than two years and knew well.

"I'll start with my good friend **Richard Perry**. He was a boat operator and when we were putting in our float bridges, he operated a ferry made up of two sections of bridge with his power boat in between. On one occasion, when we were putting in a bridge, the water was high and the fighting was fierce right across the river. *We had to get that bridge constructed in a hurry! So we rigged up a ferry and for 21 hours Richard Perry ran that ferry from shore to shore, hauling tanks, ambulances and emergency materials — without any rest and with nothing to eat! He was tired, hungry and freezing when he was finally relieved.*

"Sergeant Richard Perry received a Bronze Star for his above-the-call-of-duty actions at that particular time.

"Next, I will write about another good friend **Nathan Burgess** and a good man named **Thomas Pelican**. Both were members of the 58th. Tom was an ordinary soldier, but he had a problem with epilepsy. Back in 1949-'50, when a person had an epileptic attack, it was called a 'fit.' Twice, I recall witnessing Tom's fits; once in a mess hall and once in a rec hall. It took six or seven strong guys to hold him down so he wouldn't hurt himself.

"Up at the Chosin Reservoir, Tom and Nathan were together down in a fox hole, back behind the front lines. *(The Marines didn't want us Army Engineer boys in their way, which was fine with us.)* When a fire-fight started, it triggered one of Tom's fits. He jumped up and started to run toward the enemy lines. Nathan ran after him, tackled him, and somehow held him down until the epileptic seizure ended. *I don't know how Nathan did it!* It always took six or seven men to control Tom when he had such an attack.

"I had another good friend named **Red Morris**; he was from St. Louis. After the 58th was reassembled, Lt. Ward told me, *'Red wants to get into the actual fighting in the worst way.'* He also told me that Red had tried to talk the Marines into letting him fight

"Mortars always scared me because you could hear them coming in — but you didn't know where they would land."

alongside them. Later, he tried to transfer into the Infantry. That didn't work out, but Red did get himself transferred to the 70th Tank Battalion.

"What kind of man was Red? Here is my recollection. We were putting in a bridge in

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very mean weather. The water was swift and high with all kinds of debris floating downstream. Again, fierce fighting was taking place directly across that wide river. And again, a bridge was needed 'at once.' We had been working 40 hours and the bridge

Pete's Baptism of Fire: "A mortar hit right behind me and knocked me to the ground. When I came to a few minutes later, I had a small cut and a big bump on my head."

was about three quarters of the way across the river when one of our power boats was pulled back against the bridge.

"We couldn't get it loose. That's when one of our not-too-bright officers tried to use the other power boat to pull the tightly wedged vessel away from our partially constructed bridge. After the second boat stalled, it too was pulled back against the bridge, tipped up and filled with water. Both boats were then sucked under the bridge. They emerged, upside down, and finally came to rest on a mud bank about a quarter mile down river.

"We needed those boats desperately. Red looked at me and said, 'Let's go get 'em.' We went into the swift water, swam to the boats and brought them to our comrades on the near shore, where they were turned right side up. After the contaminated fuel was drained and the boats were refueled, we were back in business.

"No one ordered Red to jump into that raging river; it was something that had to be done and he was the man to do it.

"These are just a few of my true tales of some of the many good men of the 58th, guys I was proud to serve with. I am sorry I left out many, many other guys, but my memory isn't what it used to be. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share a few memories with other ex-members of the fabulous 58th." ■

Friendly Fire: "We were putting in a bridge, working around the clock, dog-tired, then standing guard when someone came running right at us. He wouldn't stop. Only after he was shot in the shoulder, did we find out he was a Canadian soldier."

Pete Zantene

AS PETE WROTE (opposite page) Tenth Corps decided to set up a HQ within sight of the Yalu River and since the 58th had trucks, X Corps turned the 58th into a trucking company to haul Quonset huts up.

Weldon Oakley and Nathan Burgess (both cited by Pete on the opposite page), drove deuce-and-a-half trucks, loaded with the Quonset huts for X Corps' forward headquarters, up from Hungnam to Hagaru. Those Quonsets were unloaded at Hagaru and taken to a bonfire of equipment deemed expendable by the withdrawing units. The freed-up truck space was needed to transport the wounded and the dead. ■



MEMORIES (Vol. 15)

Please send us some of your memories

If you have a story you would like to share with us in a future issue of 'Memories' send it to:

Frank Christ, 8020 St. Andrews Village Drive,
Louisville, KY 40241 tel. 502/425-2092
E-mail: frankandpat63@aol.com

Bill Redstreak, 1509 Gwynedd View Road.,
North Wales, PA 19454 tel. 215/699-2997
E-mail: redstreak1509@msn.com

CORRECTION: In Vol. 7 of Memories, we mis-identified 1st Lt. Floyd Ward as Charles Ward. **Floyd R. Ward**, a WW II veteran, was 1st Sgt. of the 58th before he became an officer.

58th REUNION Chattanooga, Tennessee

Sept. 12 to 16, 2005 (checkout Sept. 16)

OUR HOSTS: **Wes and Alta Stubert**

with assistance from

Jo Benson and Sue Stocks

LODGING: Chattanooga Choo Choo Holiday Inn
indoor pool, 3 restaurants, gift shops

AIRPORT: Chattanooga, free shuttle to Holiday Inn

My Memories of the 58th by Clarence W. Siefring

I was drafted into the Army on Nov. 30, 1950 after a three-day delay caused by a major snow storm in West Central Ohio, and I ended up in the infantry at Camp Breckenridge, KY. After basic training, I went on to Camp Stoneman, CA, then to Japan en route to Korea. In Japan, I was offered a chance to go to **Cook School** at Eta Jima, the former Japanese Naval Academy.

My trip from Japan to Pusan, Korea, was standing-room-only aboard an LST. It was followed by a ride north that took several days on the *Pusan Express*, a converted cattle car with straw mattresses. Along with my cook buddy **Orville Obery**, from Lafayette, IN, I ended up in the mess section of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company.

The 58th was then based at Uijongbu. **Sgt. Bash** was the Mess Sergeant. Most of the original guys were National Guard from the same part of the USA, which meant many knew relatives of others. Some of those guys appeared old to me because I was then a 22-year-old kid. My memory isn't too good, but I do remember **Ira Pigg** and a guy we called '**Susie**' were two of my messmates. **Chief Wellington** was the driver of the kitchen truck.

Being assigned to the headquarters platoon and the mess section, I had no connection with the actual construction of bridges. I do recall Ira and I being out on a bridge site,

where it rained and rained and rained all night. The bridge builders came to our kitchen tent for cups of hot coffee. Water was running right through the tent, about 3" deep. We had just about enough coffee; and we had to limit it at breakfast. Obviously, we didn't get much sleep, but it was our job to feed the guys and provide that hot coffee.

Rotation times for the original men kept coming up, but there were problems in securing qualified replacements. One day, the company commander called me to his tent for a talk. I had no idea what was up. He said he had a good offer for me. 'You can go to school (again) in Japan, but we need to act fast as the class will begin very shortly.'

I was then a private first class, and I would have to be a corporal to be admitted to the mess sergeant school at Eta Jima. 'I'll make you a corporal today,' the CO told me, 'and tomorrow you'll be on your way to Japan. You will be required to serve in the Far East for two years.' After I signed, I was off to where I had taken my cook & baker course. There were 12 members enrolled in the new specialist course (mess sergeant), and I ended up as number one.

Then, it was back to the 58th as a staff sergeant with a little more pay. Not long after I returned to the 58th, things began to disappear from the mess cupboard tent. There had been no need to lock things up because we were all 'family.'

With a little detective work, we figured the thefts were occurring whenever a weekly movie was shown in the mess hall — a burned out Quonset. I then received permission to sleep in the mess cupboard tent, where I wired the flap on the inside. Sure enough, shortly after the movie started, someone pulled on the door flap. I did nothing, so that someone left.

The next week, I had **Sgt. Langer** assist me. We both had our cots and carbines in the tent, and we left the door flap unlocked. The thief entered with his A frame and started to load it up by match light. *He beat us out of that tent but we soon caught him.*

There was a South Korean police station about 3/4 mile south through the rice paddies. When we escorted that thief to the police, we couldn't get him to tell us anything — even with threats. Two days later, those persuasive police came to us with a list of things he had stolen and 'an offer' to return everything from the 58th that was still in his possession.

Eventually, it was time for a trip south on the *Pusan Express*, 'a cruise' across the Pacific, two weeks in Camp Stoneman and 30 days in civilized Ohio. I got married and finished my army career (90 days) at Camp Carson, CO, without my wife. We have enjoyed 52 years of married life together. ■

Sign reads:
MESS
HALL
58th
Engineer
Bridge Co.
Sgt. C.W.
Siefring
Mess
Steward



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"I ALREADY WROTE about the saga of the *Glorious Glosters*. Here is an account of #41 Battalion, Royal Marine Commandos, who fought and died alongside their American cousins from Inchon through *Frozen Chosin* until the cease-fire in 1953, earning, like the Glosters, the US Distinguished Unit Citation.

ALTHOUGH THIS small unit could make but little impact on the operations at the Chosin Reservoir, the effect on the morale of hard pressed US Marines, who were beginning to think they were 'the only troops fighting this goddam war' was out of all proportion to the numbers involved." ~ Cheers, **Nick O'Dell**
former RAF navigator/bombardier



Royal Marine Commandos
in Funchilin Pass

WHEN 58th MEMBERS WERE ENCIRCLED AT HAGARU Royal Marines pushed up from Koto-ri

Forty One Independent Commando Royal Marines, commanded by Lt. Col. D.B. Drysdale, was formed on 16 Aug. 1950 at Bickleigh Camp in the United Kingdom. Initially, the unit comprised three separate groups; volunteers from UK establishments who were flown out by BOAC to Japan in plain clothes; volunteer sailors and marines from the British Pacific Fleet (already in training when the UK contingent arrived, formed a rifle section known as the Fleet Volunteers); and a reinforcement draft of younger Brits, diverted to Japan by air.

EARLY RAIDS: With a bold stroke of military genius, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, reversed the fortunes of the beleaguered UN forces by withdrawing the 1st Provisional USMC Brigade from the Pusan perimeter to form the 1st US Marine Division. Accompanied by two X Corps Regimental Combat Teams (or Brigade Groups), **including the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co.**, the Marines made amphibious landings at Inchon on 15-18 Sept. 1950 and went on to seize the South Korean capital of Seoul. Simultaneously, UN forces broke out of the Pusan perimeter. (*North Korean resistance started to collapse, and their forces began to withdraw north of the 38th parallel.*)

Following the Inchon landings, the 1st Marine Division was withdrawn and eventually made two amphibious landings on Korea's east coast at Wonsan and Hungnam. From there, the **Marines and men of the 58th** under command of X Corps (Lt. Gen. Edward Almond) advanced 78 miles into the mountains to the village of Yudamni on the western arm of the Chosin Reservoir. (MacArthur was infuriated by 'Operation Yo-Yo'— delayed Marine landings — which 'lost a month of warmer weather.')

In its 'Home by Christmas' euphoria, the UN Command chose to disregard ominous signs of Chinese intervention. Fierce attacks by Chinese Communist Forces were reported against over-extended UN units from late October, but those attacks ceased early in November as the Chinese reinforced and regrouped. Aerial reconnaissance showed massive troop movements across the Yalu River and China announced, she 'would not stand idly by and watch her Communist neighbor overrun.'

In the light of subsequent events, a

digression is relevant here to consider the attributes of the new enemy. The Chinese soldier crossed the Yalu armed initially with an assortment of Japanese, Russian and US (*Ex-Nationalist Chinese*) weapons and carrying some 80 rounds of ammunition and 4 days rations. Thereafter, he was independent of routine re-supply. He wore a thick reversible yellow-tan (or white) quilted cotton uniform and crepe-soled canvas shoes. Inured to hardship, indoctrinated with 'hate America' Communism and courageous to the point of being suicidal, he was a formidable adversary.

This peasant army hid by day and made long marches by night. Adept at infiltration, mass attacks— almost invariably at night — were conducted by 'pepper potting' (small scale fire and movement) and by exploiting every weakness and advantage. Coordination was achieved by bugles, whistles and flares.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED: A recalcitrant Maj. Gen. Oliver Smith, commanding the 1st Marine Division, claims he 'had misgivings over the X Corps plan to push him further out on a limb and into a winter campaign in the mountains.' Smith concentrated his division along the narrow single track road, which was to become his vital Main Supply Route (MSR). In his memoirs, Smith stated, he was thus 'in a better position to extricate his Division when the inevitable happened.'

After enjoying Thanksgiving Day at Hungnam, 41 Commando embarked in twenty-two 2½ ton trucks and one 30 cwt weapons carrier for the journey up the line. One jeep had been allocated for the CO.

Having driven up to a 4000-ft elevation in the Funchilin Pass, the British Commandos arrived at Koto-ri, where Col. 'Chesty' Puller's HQ was based. The Brits were greeted with the news that the Chinese had blocked the road to the north and they were given part of the perimeter to guard.

Early next morning, Drysdale's 922 men and their 141 vehicles were formed up to fight their way north to Hagaru at the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir. There was just time for the Heavy Weapons group to break out a section of 81mm mortars and A4 Brownings before 41 Commando led the advance from Koto-ri on 29 Nov. 1950. Within two miles, the Brits met serious re-

sistance. They were then reinforced with 17 tanks from the 1st USMC tank battalion. Slow progress was resumed until the column was halted four miles north of Koto-ri.

Drysdale asked Division HQ whether he should resume the advance. Because of an urgent need for reinforcements, Brig. Gen. Smith directed him 'to continue at all costs.' After a delay for the tanks to refuel, during which darkness fell, the advance resumed. The tanks declined to comply with Drysdale's request to spread in pairs throughout the convoy and pushed on to Hagaru, leaving the soft-skinned vehicles unprotected.

About halfway to Hagaru, the MSR entered a defile where the Chinese closed in and split the column, leaving one Heavy Weapons section, the Assault Engineers and elements of Commando HQ with most of B Coy and Div HQ, who fought throughout the night, strung out in a number of defensive perimeters. Subsequently the Heavy Weapons section, led by Cpl. E. Cruse, found its way to Hagaru, badly frostbitten; and 25 of the HQ personnel were led back to Koto-ri by the Assault Engineer Officer, Capt. P.J. Owens, after slipping out of the perimeter — whilst surrender terms were being negotiated in the early hours of 30 November.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the column 'forced on' under sporadic fire until less than a mile from Hagaru, it was stopped by concentrated mortar and small arms fire within sight of USMC Engineers working under floodlights to construct a 2900 ft runway out of the frozen earth. The MSR was blocked by an abandoned tank and several vehicles were set on fire. During this phase, Lt. Col. Drysdale was wounded; others were killed or wounded.

FORCE DRYSDALE sustained 321 casualties and lost 75 vehicles, but to quote from the official USMC history: 'To the slender garrison of Hagaru (including men of the 58th) was added a tank company and some 300 seasoned infantry.' Less than 100 of Drysdale's Independent Commandos got through; 61 became battle casualties. Those who arrived are indebted to Lt. Col. Beall, commanding the 1st Motor Transport Battalion, for taking them in and providing food and shelter from sub-zero temperatures, which at night fell to -24°F. ■

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Old Memories, Refreshed by 'the Bridge at Koto-ri'

by **James Minshall**, former First Sergeant of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co.

"Volume 7 of MEMORIES (*The 58th and the Bridge at Koto-ri*) brought back many old memories of my time with the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company. *Incidents in Vol. 7 are well-remembered, including seeing Bob Hope, Marilyn Maxwell and their USO group, and, of course, the infamous Chosin Reservoir encounters with the Ninth Chinese Army, bridging of a critical gap near Koto-ri, and the evacuation from Hungnam to Pusan.*

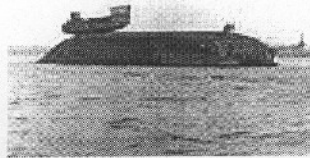
"I joined the army in July, 1949, and after basic training at Fort Knox, KY, I was assigned to the 58th. Many of the men who were in basic training with me were assigned to the 58th, where we were taught how to build pontoon bridges.

"In early 1950, the 58th was transferred to Fort Belvoir, VA (near Washington, D.C.). All men and equipment were moved from Fort Knox. We were only at Fort Belvoir a short time before the war in Korea which began on June 25, 1950, required three fast relocations. We were immediately sent to California, then to Japan, and then on to Korea.

"We came ashore at Inchon three days after the initial landing which was Sept. 15, 1950. Despite records in some U.S. Army documentation, our equipment *did not* follow us up through the Yellow Sea

Brits and Aussies. As Joe Cestone stated in Vol. 7, '*We went where we were needed.*' I remember we had to buy 'Ridgeway hats' (with protective ear flaps) from the black market in Pusan because they were not available as government issue. Those warm hats were 'essential gear' in Korea, especially up around the Funchilin Pass and *Frozen Chosin.*

Yellow Sea's 33 ft. tides put this LCM 20 ft. above water, atop the side of a sunken ship.



"I was with the original group from the 58th. Later, we received men who were called up from the reserves. Capt. Weber was our commanding officer when we landed at Inchon. Other officers were Lt. Ward, Lt. Wood, and our 1st Sgt. Hebert, who was subsequently commissioned a 2nd lieutenant. I was then promoted to first sergeant of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company. We also had a 'unit administrator' from Oklahoma, Warrant Officer Al Niles. Most of us in the 58th were about 20 or 21 years old with the exception of the officers and senior non-coms.

"I remember Theodore Wright lost his life while working to swing a bridge during a rain storm. The rivers were very violent and they did much damage to the steel treadway pontoon sections if they weren't swung away from the raging waters. Ted Wright, I believe, was the only guy 'lost' while I was with the 58th for 14 or 15 months in Korea before returning to the States." ■

A beacon to guide our ships into Inchon harbor

extract from *The blackbeard of Yonghung-do*

Accurate intelligence of Inchon and its tidal water approaches was vital to the success of '*Operation Chromite*' (a very dangerous landing behind enemy lines), and no one did more to provide that essential information than Navy Lieutenant Eugene F. Clark. While U.S./U.N. forces were fighting desperately to hold the Pusan Perimeter, South Korean naval forces occupied Yonghung-do, an island 14 miles from Inchon. There, Lt. Clark, an unidentified 'U.S. Army major' (who may have been a member of the C.I.A.), three enlisted men, and two South Korean interpreters, both of whom

had served as officers in the Japanese military during WW II, established a base of operations.

Clark's team confirmed the accuracy of Japanese-prepared tide tables; verified the fact that the mud flats would support no weight; and the harbor's sea walls were higher than estimated. He also reported that Wolmi-do (an island near Inchon) was heavily fortified and studded with Soviet-made artillery.

On Sept. 7, 1950, two days after several British ships bombarded Wolmi-do and Inchon, the North Koreans sent one motorized ship and two sailing sampans loaded with troops to flush Clark and his team from their hideaway. Undeterred by poor shooting from the motorized craft, the crew of Clark's 'flagship' (a sampan with .50 caliber machine gun) sank one of the enemy vessels and demolished another before the remaining enemy boat fled.

After that naval engagement was reported, the Hanson (a U.S. destroyer) showed up to take the intelligence team off Yonghung-do. But Clark's team wasn't going to leave until their mission was completed. He asked the skipper of the Hanson to pound Taebu-do, a nearby island, which was blasted with more than 200 five-inch rounds. Marine Corsairs flew over to cover the destroyer and bomb and strafe the North Koreans.

The team stayed on the island from which they scouted Palmi-do, an island centrally located to the approaches to Inchon, and reported that Canadian raiders had only damaged the lighthouse beacon. From General Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo, Clark's reconnaissance team received orders to relight the lamp on midnight of Sept. 15, 1950. Accordingly, on Sept. 14, the team left Yonghung-do for Palmi-do to repair the light.

That same night, the North Korean commander at Inchon sent a large contingent to wipe out the bothersome force on Yonghung-do. At dusk, the enemy troops crossed the mud flats from Taebu-do to Yonghung-do. They overwhelmed the island defenders and executed more than 50 men, women and children.

The U.S. reconnaissance team avenged those murders when they activated the lighthouse at midnight on Sept. 15. *With a beacon light to guide them, the ships of the U.S. Advance Attack Group safely threaded their way through the treacherous approach to Inchon.*

In recognition of his heroic work, the Navy awarded Lt. Clark the Silver Star and the Army presented him with the Legion of Merit. ■



Small craft (LCVPs) circle a large LST, in background, in the transport area off Inchon.

and come ashore with us at Inchon, *on the western side of the Korean peninsula.* It was, instead, down south in Pusan — far away from us on the eastern side of Korea — actually closer to Japan than to Inchon.

"With borrowed trucks and jeeps, we drove from Inchon down to Pusan during the night, not knowing what dangers might be awaiting us. It was scary because the Inchon landing had been through the mud flats fronting Inchon, behind enemy lines. Arriving safely at Pusan, we pitched pup tents and stayed a few days to round up our specialized bridge-building equipment, including our boom-equipped Brockway trucks. *It rained hard for several days and we were like pigs, slopping around in the mud!*

"After finally securing our equipment, we moved north on assignment. I can't remember where we went next because we moved around so much to help so many Army and Marine units, including

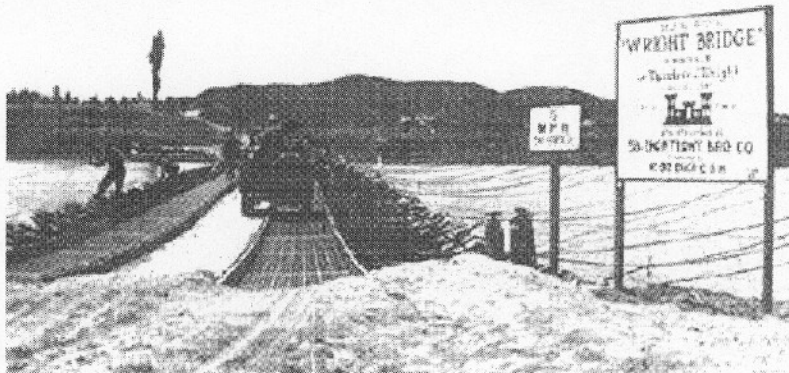
No! When truck hit mine. (Vol 19)

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The Corporal Wright Bridge

492-ft. long M-2 treadway pontoon bridge, constructed across the Imjin River on June 6, 1951 by the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, aided by elements of the 1092nd Engineer Combat Battalion—to support the British 28th Independent Brigade (attached to the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division).

This bridge was named in honor of **Corporal Theodore (Ted) Wright** of the 58th, who died of wounds received during its construction.



An Update: Bridges on the 'Water Dragon' 1951-1953

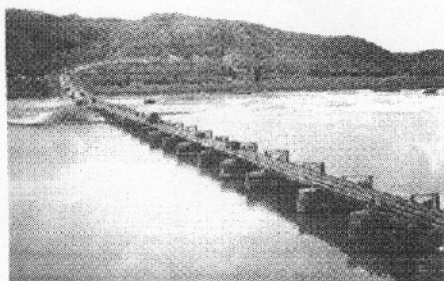
by **Bill Redstreak**, a former member of the 58th, then acting sergeant-major of the 1169th

After the major Chinese offensive of April 1951 was halted, the Imjin river (Korea's *Water Dragon*) became a critical fallback line for all U.S. and U.N. troops on the western side of the Korean peninsula. To minimize 'bad blood' conflicts between members of the 58th and Marines at Camp Casey, located just south of our group headquarters (the 1169th Engineer Combat Group at Tonduchon-ni), the home base of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co. was moved north, close to the 38th parallel, and in 1953, the 58th was re-designated: The 58th Engineer Float Bridge Co.

As **Randy Seidens** noted in Vol. 5, the 58th was called the 988th Engineer Treadway Co. when it was based at Camp Hood, Texas. On April 25, 1949, the unit moved to Fort Knox, where it was re-designated the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co. After another move (to Fort Belvoir, VA) then on to Japan, the 58th came ashore with X Corps at Inchon on Sept. 18, 1950*.

Between 1951 and 1953, there were 11 bridges across the Imjin River.

MALLARD: Approximately 10 miles above the 38th parallel, Mallard was the most northern M-2 treadway pontoon bridge. In late November of '51, the floating bridge at Mallard was replaced by a low-level, crib-pier bridge.



Spoonbill, a low-level, crib-pier bridge

*Not Oct. 4, 1950 — in official I Corps' records.

After the low-level Mallard was destroyed by flood waters in '52, the 58th installed a floating treadway bridge at that site for the second (of 3) times.

WHISTLER: Just downstream was Whistler, initially an M-2 floating treadway bridge (opposite page), then a ferry, then a footbridge, all constructed and operated by the 58th. Re: **Joe Val-lone's story** in Vol. 5 of *Memories*.

WHITEFRONT: Further downstream was Whitefront, originally a low level fixed bridge with rock-filled crib piers and an M-2 treadway deck, constructed by the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion with assistance from the 58th. (It was similar to Spoonbill, below at low tide on the Imjin.) Whitefront was washed out in the monsoon floods of '51 and rebuilt as a high-level bridge.

WRIGHT BRIDGE (above): Just below Whitefront was the Cpl. Wright bridge.

PINTAIL: After the Hant'an river adds its waters to the Imjin, the oft-turbulent *Water Dragon* turns west. Pintail (also called Parker bridge site) was the next bridge. After the 58th removed its M-2 treadway floating bridge at Pintail to make way for a high-level crossing, the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion discovered the rocky river bottom at that site prevented sinking of timber or steel piers for a trestle bridge.

TEAL: In immediate need of a secure crossing of the Imjin for the 1st Cavalry Division, 8th Army/I Corps then ordered the 84th to construct a high-level bridge at Teal (the former site of yet another one of the 58th's M-2 floating treadway bridges.) The new Teal Bridge was a one-way, 50-ton capacity timber-trestle bridge, 48 ft. high. *But it was short-lived. It could not withstand the Water Dragon's massive flood waters.*

WIDGEON: On Sept. 20, 1951, the 58th and the 1092nd Engineer Combat

Battalion built an M-2 pontoon treadway bridge across the Imjin at a site called Widgeon.

On April 13, '52, intense flooding of the Imjin wrecked two bridges, one of which was the low-level Mallard, upstream of Widgeon. The 58th jacked up the approaches to raise Widgeon 4 ft. and installed steel railroad rails upstream — to act as an 'upstream fender and anchor system.' *An even greater flood in July of 1952 wrecked many bridges across the Imjin and submerged Widgeon Bridge under 20 ft. of water. Miraculously, it reappeared on Aug. 3, intact — and only in need of minor repairs.*

The success of Widgeon Bridge impressed I Corps: 'This type of bridge has future potentialities.' That lesson was instrumental in reinstalling Teal, a 'submersible' M-2 treadway bridge. *A more massive flood roared down the Imjin near the end of August '52, raising the river more than 40 ft. and destroying Widgeon Bridge.*

LIBBY: After flowing northwest to Korangpo-ri, the Imjin again turns south. Here, it broadens at Libby (sometimes called 'X-Ray', which was not the 1,020 ft. *X-Ray floating bridge* constructed by the 58th across the Han River at Seoul.)

SPOONBILL, HONKER & FREEDOM GATE: Below Libby, a high trestle bridge, were Spoonbill, a rock-crib pier bridge, then Honker. The last bridge on the Imjin was Freedom Gate.

The 58th and elements of the 14th Engineer Combat Battalion installed an M-2 steel treadway floating bridge at Honker. Four days later, that bridge was removed and replaced by a ferry. Then, after the Communists proposed holding peace talks at Kaesong, Honker Bridge was rebuilt.

The Battle of the Imjin River

by **Bill Redstreak**, a former member of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Co. (renamed the 58th Engineer Float Bridge Co.), then acting sergeant major of the 1169th Engineer Combat Group — *with generous assistance from* **Nicholas O'Dell**, former navigator/bombardier in the Royal Air Force

DURING A MAJOR Chinese offensive in the spring of 1951, Munsan-ni (*located just south of Honker and Spoonbill bridge sites in the I Corps sector of Korea*) was defended by Turkish and British units. The Turks had pulled back for some rest and recuperation just before *the Battle of the Imjin River* began on Sun., Apr. 22, 1951.

The first attempts by the Chinese to cross the river were stopped by a platoon of C Company of The Gloucester Regiment (the '*Glorious Glosters*'). Four times those Brits stopped the Chinese, withdrawing only after their ammunition ran low. Unknown to the Glosters, the Chinese had used another crossing point near the future site of *Freedom Bridge*, and thousands of additional Chinese crossed to attack the British from all sides.

The first frenzied assault fell on the Glosters' A Company: The Chinese, 50,000 strong with their horns and bugles raucous on a clear cool night, came across the Imjin river in wide, massive waves. The first screaming wave washed into A Company, and swamped it. The company commander went down, with two of his officers. The battalion's Vickers guns pumped belt after belt of ammunition into screaming hordes of horn and bugle blowing Chinese until the cooling jackets of the guns boiled over and the Vickers seized up. Bren guns were fired until their barrels became red hot; and rifles were fired until they were too hot to hold.

Repeated attacks by overwhelming numbers of Chinese continued throughout the night. On the morning of April 23, the Glorious Glosters were still fighting. Half of A Company was dead or wounded, and the Chinese had occupied a height known as Castle Site, where they were setting up machine guns to spray fire down on the Brits.

Lt. Philip Curtis led a counterattack across open land against Castle Site. Within the first minute, three more Glosters were dead and four more wounded. Curtis ordered his remaining men to cover him and he charged forward alone. After he was severely wounded in the arm and side, his men tried to crawl out to drag him in, but he shook them off — and charged again, *all by himself!* Throwing grenades as

he ran, he knocked out a machine-gun position before he was killed by a burst of fire. (*Lt. Curtis was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.*)

On the afternoon of Apr. 24, a battalion of Filipinos led by American tanks was ordered toward the encircled Glosters. That column pressed forward to within two thousand yards of the British before the lead tank caught fire and blocked a defile. Lashed by unbearable fire, the relief column retreated. Later, accompanied by Belgian and Puerto Rican infantrymen, the Filipinos tried again. They ran into thousands of Chinese in the hills and gorges, and fell back. The American 3rd Division, abandoning its own probe toward Ch'orwon, tried to break through with tanks and infantry, but they were not even able to get close.

At dawn on the 25th, with the front holding solidly elsewhere, and supporting units behind them, it was senseless slaughter to keep the decimated British on line. Those Fusiliers and Ulsters who were on their feet came out in good order. Their wounded, two hundred of them, were loaded onto tanks. Whilst coming out, the tanks came under heavy enemy fire. Their decks and sponsons ran slick with blood, and the dead and dying lay so thickly across the tanks the gunners could not traverse their guns. But the injured and dying were brought out, and the 29th Brigade, two-thirds of it, fell back. *Miles deep in Chinese territory, the Glosters were on their own!*

Just before daylight, Chinese bugles made the rocky hills eerie with music, as the communist troops marshaled to charge again. There were 300 Glosters on the hill, including a bugler. The Brits' bugler put his own horn to mouth and blew long reveille. The sound of Chinese horns died away. Then, as the Chinese listened in amazement, the Gloster bugler sounded short reveille, half-hour dress, and cookhouse. When that brassy music died, in the still before the firing began again, the Glosters cheered.

At 0605, by radio, their brigadier told them they had his permission to leave Gloster Hill. Lieutenant Colonel Fred Carne, the Glosters' commanding officer, sent word back that they were surrounded and could not break out.

He asked for air support — and he got it! Dive bombers shrieked down upon the hill, blasting the ground only thirty-five yards beyond the Brits' holes. Individual Glosters tossed smoke grenades to mark the spots they wanted hit. It was close, desperate work, but it sent the Chinese reeling back.

At 0755, after fighting continuously for almost sixty hours, Col. Carne reported to brigade that his radio batteries were almost gone. He asked for the air and artillery to continue pounding in close. Then, sheltered by a fold of ground near his command post where five dozen wounded litter patients lay about, he told his officers the battalion was done. They had a choice of surrendering or trying to fight their way out in small groups. The commanders of Able, Baker, Charlie, and Dog companies said they would try to fight their way through.

There was no hope of taking out the seriously wounded. The British colonel, his regimental sergeant major, chaplain and doctor remained behind with the wounded.

During a brief respite in the savage attacks, the remnants of A, B, and C companies started off the hill. Atop the hill, Col. Carne and the leader of the fourth party, Capt. Michael Harvey of Dog Company, watched these dirty, hungry, unkempt, staggering, proud men fade away — *never to be heard from again.*

Harvey got his own party, about 100 men, ready to move out. He ordered his group not to follow the three other parties moving south toward friendly lines, but to do the unexpected — head due north for at least a mile then bear west and south toward the Americans. Amazingly, for several miles, moving north then west, they neither saw nor encountered Chinese. Harvey, knowing the enemy liked to run the ridges, crept cautiously down the deep gorges. When they turned to head south again, they bumped into a Chinese patrol; they killed those men, and kept on. Mile after mile the exhausted, stumbling Glosters crept along the rocky corridors.

At last they entered a valley, almost a canyon, with clifflike sides and a stony floor almost a quarter-mile wide. A stream flowed through the valley, and Harvey's men proceeded down-

We Are the Engineers

We are called upon to clear the way for the infantry.

We are called upon when tankers break through the bridge.

We are called upon when a road slides down a mountain.

We are called upon as infantry.

We are called upon when perimeter defense is necessary.

We are called upon to plant mine fields and to clear mine fields.

We build bridges, blow bridges, and sometimes we almost walk on water.

We are leaders; we are patriots; and we are riflemen.

We serve the flag; we salute the flag; and when killed in battle, our bodies are draped with the flag.

We are the Combat Engineers. ~ Lenoise Bowman



Honker Bridge on the Imjin.

PART 2:

We fought North Koreans, Chinese — and a raging Water Dragon

~ by **Bill Redstreak**, a former combat engineer with the 58th, then acting sergeant-major of the 1169th

Korea's 'water dragon', the Imjin river, begins its long journey in the Taebaek mountain range along North Korea's eastern coastline about 20 miles southwest of the North Korean port city of Wonsan. It flows south through the rugged Korean peninsula, gathering the waters of the Komit'an, Yokkok and Hant'an before it turns west on its approach to the Yellow Sea on South Korea's western coastline.

While the Imjin is just a sluggish stream during much of the year, the monsoon rains of July and August regularly transform it into a raging water dragon with flood tides in excess of 40 feet. (*Im-* means water; *Jin-* means dragon.)

The lower portion of the Imjin, stretching from the confluence of the Yokkok to the Han, gained considerable military significance during the last two years of the Korean War, when the western side of the main battle line between the U.S./U.N. and North Korean/Chinese forces started to 'stabilize' along hills and plains a few miles west and north of the Imjin.

From the first crossing of the lower Imjin by American-led U.N. forces in June of 1951 until the signing of an armistice on July 27, 1953, the vagaries of the Imjin's massive summer

floods, autumn calms, winter freezes and spring thaws posed continuous challenges for maintaining bridges, transportation rafts and passage boats to the men and officers of the 58th Engineer Float Bridge Company.

During late 1952 and early '53, two important bridges, Libby and Teal, spanned the Imjin. Both represented innovative approaches to problems caused by the Imjin. Libby was a high-level highway bridge supported on concrete piers and abutments. Teal was then considered a 'submersible' low-level bridge built on 16-inch steel piles. The construction of those bridges climaxed a preliminary 15-month 'contest' between combat engineers and the water dragon, during which I Corps' officers learned a lot about the devastating power of the Imjin. *Re: Vol. 3 of MEMORIES.*

58th's First Confrontation with the Water Dragon

The 58th's original confrontation with the Imjin began after the 1951 Communist spring offensive ground to a halt short of Seoul in May. Forces led by Major General Frank Milburn, commander of the 8th Army's I Corps, quickly resumed their advance, retaking Uijongbu on May 6 and reaching the Hant'an river on the 25th. Three

days later, the 58th bridged the Hant'an near where it flows into the Imjin with a 408-ft floating bridge.

On June 6, 1951, aided by elements of the 1092nd Engineer Combat Battalion, the 58th constructed a 492-ft M-2 floating treadway bridge across the Imjin to support a drive by the British 28th Independent Brigade, then attached to the 1st Cavalry Division. Construction was interrupted by mortar fire, and the bridge wasn't completed until the next afternoon. It was named the 'Corporal Wright Bridge' in honor of Cpl. Theodore Wright of the 58th, who died of wounds received during its construction. SOURCE: **Worldwide Web**

During June of 1951, U.S./U.N. forces relied upon the 58th's floating treadway bridges, 50-ton capacity ferries, and footbridges installed at three sites on the lower Imjin, including the first float bridges at the Whistler and Honker sites. The Honker bridge 'astride' the main road from Munsan-ni to Kaesong in North Korea enabled South Korean tank and infantry forces to stage a successful raid on Kaesong, Korea's medieval capital. But faced with a massive enemy offensive, the combat engineers of the 58th had to remove the first Honker bridge only four days after its installation. ■

THE 'WATER DRAGON' TOSSED TRUCKS, BOULDERS AND ENEMY BARGES ABOUT LIKE SMALL PIECES OF CORK

A Healthy Respect for the Imjin

"One memory I recall is when we had a squad of men out to keep debris away from a large timber trestle bridge up north. The river was at flood stage, and someone reported, a body of a G.I. was coming downstream so we would have to take a boat out to try to recover the floating corpse.

"Bill Thomas asked me, 'Are you going in the river?' I told him, 'No!'

He replied, 'They will take your stripes if you don't go in.' I told Bill that they could have my stripes, and his reply was that *he would not go in the raging water either*. It turned out that neither of us was asked to go in, but we wound up finding the body as it floated by. It wasn't a G.I.; it was a Korean, most likely an enemy soldier.

"Another thing I recall is once when we were on bridge patrol, a group of American soldiers came out to swim in the river. As you know, we guys from the 58th really respected those rivers because we knew what they could. Anyway those soldiers kept on swimming — and one of them drowned! We spent a lot of time trying to recover the body and finally did. It was a very sad time because that G.I. was a young kid. I'm thankful I was a veteran with experience on the Imjin and its tributaries; and I knew not to mess with those rivers."

~ Carl Welker

A Very Unpleasant Task

"At the 1169th, my job was 'Recon Sergeant', which gave me many opportunities to ride in a two-man helicopter to check bridges on the Imjin. The North Koreans and Chinese had control of the northern part of the river and they floated explosives downstream to destroy our bridges. We were able to knock out some; *but then they put dead American soldiers on the flotsam knowing we would try to recover the bodies.*" ~ Tony Kondysar

I Remember My Last Bridge

"I remember the last bridge we put in, a foot bridge for the infantry. We got it done about 8:30 in the evening and we were headed up over the hill in a convoy when I happened to look back in the rear view mirror. *They blew the darn bridge out right behind us! Nobody stopped. We just kept right on going back to the company area, and when we got there the mess hall opened ... with what they had.* We were starving. We never did go back and put that bridge in again because the truce was finally signed."

~ Ken Jewell

The 'Fine Art' of Scrounging

~ by Frank Christ

SCROUNGING IN KOREA was the answer to the Army's slow and inefficient supply system. Vehicle parts left the U.S. in quantities deemed adequate, but the number of stops they made on the way depleted the supply until the guys who really needed them got only a trickle — if at all. Cannibalization of 'dead-lined vehicles' could get you a Courts Martial, even though it was the sensible thing to do to keep equipment running.

Col. (later General) Free pulled in Capt. (later Major) Shakelford 'to grease the system' and find the needed parts for equipment vital to our operations. I didn't want to ever have the 58th called for a mission only to have critical vehicles, cranes, dozers or boats unusable because of back-ordered parts, which never seemed to arrive. A case in point was a special high-pressure hose for our new 5-ton wrecker. (It would blow whenever the wrong levers were pushed simultaneously.) We had been trained, and we had no trouble; but other units did have trouble and they were desperate to get hoses, which were, of course, back-ordered! I got a 'heads up' from a guy who came scrounging and took one of our Brockway hoses, which fit the wrecker. He returned with a brand-new Jeep motor still in a crate!

Our Friendly Neighbors

Scrounging was a sort of networking adapted to the military. I traded whatever the NORMASH (Norwegian Mobile Surgical Hospital) needed for white paint. The marines gave us flour and sugar in return for beef. All this was, of course, highly illegal, but it was conveniently overlooked by the higher-ups. The flour and sugar went into sweet rolls our Mess Sergeant Van Houten put out almost daily. *The Koreans also did lots of scrounging — mostly from theft. Aluminum posts which made up part of the trestles of a float bridge were fair game. Occasionally, one would turn up missing and in a few days some roadside shop, down below the farm line, would have aluminum wash basins for sale.*

The NORMASH was right across the valley from the 58th home base. I was over there scrounging one evening, when choppers started coming in with wounded within a half-hour of an artillery barrage. Looking thru a screen, I watched doctors amputating limbs: It looked like an assembly line, handling a large number of wounded. They saved a lot of lives. Looking back, from age and distance, one wonders how we survived as

well as we did!

One night, the 1169th showed the movie, 'The Greatest Show on Earth' which is about Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, and that night the projector and film disappeared from the mess hall. Korean Security Police 'lost face' — and two days later requested a truck. They returned within two hours with the movie, projector, etc.

Occasionally, Korean indigenous personnel would use a deuce and a half for a trip down to Seoul for whatever reason, returning with one of the rear dual tires missing! The tire they turned in, however, had holes in it because it had been a dock bumper at Inchon! I stopped that temporarily by issuing them a tandem deuce and a half. If they took a tire off it, they walked home.

Good Danish Beer

We traded our easily brought Japanese Asahi beer to the NORMASH for very excellent Tuborg beer from Denmark, which they procured from the *Jutlandia*, a Danish Hospital Ship.

Koreans needed food, and the 'house boys' would eat G.I., chow while working at the 58th and send their pay back to their families. When they went home on a pass, they would get sick from eating Kimchi (fermented cabbage) because their stomachs could no longer tolerate that vile, smelly stuff. They also had to dodge Korean Army 'Press Gangs' who would grab kids off the street and force them into the ROK Army. The fattest Koreans were the ones who rode garbage trucks; they could be seen picking through our garbage for food on the way to the dump.

American G.I.s are ingenious. We had a Shop Truck (stolen by some enterprising 58th member) that was run by Bob Draeger. Bob could manufacture a lot of stuff we needed, but we got caught because a crane went down for a small linkage piece (produced by Bob); and Col. Free found out about our Shop Truck and we had to turn it in! It was a Godsend while it lasted, and Draeger was an expert mechanic and machinist.

In the Civil War, They Were Foragers

In past wars, scroungers were called foragers. I am sure the armies of Babylon, Attila the Hun, the Roman Legions, Crusaders and Mongols all practiced scrounging in some form — usually by force. G.I.s are great adapters to their environment, and their ingenuity is unparalleled. *But over and above the ability of the men of the 58th to merely survive in a hostile environment was their loyalty to their duty: to build and maintain bridges in support of fellow G.I.s.* ■

stream for nearly a mile. Then, suddenly, the cliff sides swarmed with the black dots of Chinese, and automatic weapons ripped at them from right and left. Glosters fell, but the others leaped into a narrow ditch, that ran along the valley. Under heavy fire, leaving men behind, they crawled along the rocky, foot-deep ditch on bleeding hands and knees. The ditch disappeared in some places, and more men were hit running to new cover.

American planes came over them, recognized them, and poured fire into the surrounding cliffs, without much effect. Desperately, the Glosters crawled on, moving south. At last, more than five hundred yards ahead, Capt. Harvey saw tanks he recognized as American, spread across the valley, firing. Still under heavy fire, but joyous now, the Glosters crawled rapidly toward the American Sherman tanks, which were receiving fire from the Chinese. *The American lieutenant in command had no inkling that any friendly troops could be to the north.*

As the first of the Glosters rushed forward, he gave the order to open fire. Cannons and machine guns lashed the stumbling Glosters, and six of them fell. An American liaison plane, directing air support over the escapees, knowing they were British, went into 'aerial convulsions'. The pilot swooped low over the tanks, wagging his wings at them and waving. Puzzled, the American lieutenant continued to direct fire at the ragged men trying to close with his tanks.

Capt. Harvey, lying panting on the ground, found a stick. He tied his kerchief to this, stuck his cap on it, and crawled forward, waving it like a pitiful flag. The stragglers of his column, their ammunition gone, were screaming as Chinese slipped down from the ridges and bayoneted them. The liaison pilot, sensible now, flew low and dropped a frantic note. At once, the Shermans ceased fire!

The remnants of the Gloster Battalion crawled into the American lines and crouched behind the meager protection of the armored hulls. Together, then, with the tanks sweeping the hostile hills with fire and steel, they retreated down the valley until the protection of the ground allowed the British to climb up onto the tanks. The American tank crewmen were frantic at their error. Almost in tears, one of the tank crew took off his shoes and gave them to an English soldier who climbed up on an American tank with bleeding bare feet.

The American officer said over and



over again to Capt. Harvey, "My God, how many of your people did we hit?" None of the Glosters would say.

For more than three miles, still surrounded by Chinese on all sides, the tanks fought back, bringing the remnants of the Glosters through. The American tank lieutenant was hit, but they kept the swarming enemy off the Glosters' backs. They came out! *At the end, in the American lines, there were only thirty-eight men with Capt. Harvey; and his was the only party that made it back to friendly lines.*

Because of British hearts and British bayonets, the thrust at Seoul failed. At least 15,000 Chinese were killed along the Imjin; the best their offensive could achieve was a realignment of U.N. lines. More units were sent to reinforce the vital Seoul corridor. A new line was formed, still north of the parallel in the east, but running just above Inchon to south of Chunch'on in the west. *It was heavily fortified.*

Bridges on the 'Water Dragon' (1951-1953)

After the major Chinese offensive of April 1951 was halted, the Imjin River (Korea's *Water Dragon*) became a critical 'fallback line' for all U.S. and U.N. troops on the western side of the Korean peninsula. To minimize 'bad blood' conflicts between members of the 58th and marines at Camp Casey, located just south of our group headquarters (the 1169th Engineer Combat Group near *Tondonchon-ni*), the home base of the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company was moved north, closer to the 38th parallel, and in 1953, the 58th was re-designated: *The 58th Engineer Float Bridge Company.* The bad blood between the 58th and all marines came about because some of our guys (assigned to the marines) had been left behind earlier at Chosin Reservoir after one million Chinese troops poured across the Yalu River.

Honker Bridge on the Imjin River after the final cease fire negotiations

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Between 1951 and 1953, there were 11 bridges on the Imjin. **Mallard**, 10 miles north of the 38th parallel, was the most northern floating treadway bridge. Just downstream was **Whistler**, then **Whitefront**, then the **Corporal Wright** bridge. After the Hant'an river adds its waters to the Imjin, the oft-turbulent *Water Dragon* turns west. **Pintail** (also called **Parker**) was the next bridge, followed by **Teal**, then the Imjin turns south to **Widgeon**.

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MEMORIES of the 58th (Vol. 6)

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