



How Battery prepares to fire, just south of Hagaru. Sgt. Robert L. Reisner—who personally blasted three Chinese with one shell—holds the telephone.

U. S. MARINE CORPS

# Our Guns Never Got Cold

By *CAPT. BENJAMIN S. READ, USMC,*

*As Told to HUGH MORROW*

The author commanded a Marine artillery battery through the horror of the Chinese onslaught this winter. This is his shot-by-shot account of how we made the Reds buy a victory with thousands of their dead.



Captain Read.

**T**HIS is an account of fifteen days in North Korea and the best and bravest men I have ever known. The men made up Battery H, a Marine Corps field-artillery outfit. We were a unit of the 3rd Battalion, 11th Regiment, 1st Marine Division. Our lives centered on our 105-mm. howitzers, and our mission was to support the infantry. It was my privilege to command "How" Battery in the Inchon-Kimpo-Seoul and Wonsan-Hamhung-Changjin Reservoir campaigns. Many of the men are still fighting in Korea today. Others are dead—or, like myself, in dry dock recovering from wounds. This narrative is one marine's remembrances of the terrible, yet triumphant days when we were surrounded at Hagaru, at the foot of Changjin Reservoir in Northeastern Korea, and then fought our

way out southward through the Chinese communist hordes.

How Battery was well dug in just outside the northeastern outskirts of the Hagaru defense perimeter when November twenty-fifth dawned clear and cold. T/Sgt. William H. Gallagher, of Brooklyn, stamped into the command post, knocking the snow from his boots and swinging his arms to shake off the ten-degrees-below-zero chill. He caught me staring hungrily at twelve of the most magnificent roast turkeys I had ever seen. Sergeant Gallagher, a gray-haired, balding, forty-four-year-old bachelor with a conspicuous waistline which would identify him anywhere as a cook, had been up all night preparing a Thanksgiving feast for the battery. He gave me one glance, and obviously read my mind.

"Sergeant Deese," he said, ignoring me to address his assistant in the galley at the other end of the small mud building which served us as both headquarters and kitchen, "I don't want a damn soul to touch these birds until we're ready to serve dinner. You understand?"

Sgt. Jack Deese, of Whiteford, Maryland, replied that he understood—and so did I. Bill Gallagher, the king of the galley, "the best cook they had on Guadalcanal," had spoken.

By 1:45 o'clock that afternoon, most of the 130-odd members of the How Battery family were assembled at the chow line just outside the command-post building. Things were quiet, and Battalion had given me permission to bring in some of my forward observers and liaison personnel from the cold hills.



Sergeant Gallagher called for quiet in the chow line, so I could say a word about Thanksgiving.

I choked up as I stood there before that silent group. We were celebrating the occasion two days late—the frozen turkeys were a little slow arriving—but that didn't matter. We had so many, many things to be thankful for that it was difficult to know where to start. I recalled a few to the men, such as the day two weeks earlier when we were shelled by 120-mm. mortars—when forty rounds of the big stuff came so close that virtually every fox-hole had an enemy fragment for a souvenir and a trifling change in the direction of those mortars would have wiped us out.

As I spoke, I could see in their eyes that the men were saying to themselves that this was not just an ordinary day, not just another meal, but Thanksgiving, and a Thanksgiving that had a significance now as never before in their lives.

Then I stepped back and let the first man start his "chow run." It seemed to me that no marine in the field had ever had such a feast before. Turkey, green peas, fresh mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, macaroni, olives, pumpkin pie, fruit cake, nuts, fruit and coffee. I was silently thankful that the men could have this celebration.

But I had no sooner filled my tray and sat down with my officers than the phone buzzed. It was Maj. Francis F. Parry, of Haverford, Pennsylvania, the battalion commanding officer.

"I am moving the battalion out immediately," he said. "The push is on to take Yudam-ni (fifteen miles to the northwest). You will remain in position to support Fox Company (an infantry outfit) and to help protect the Hagaru airfield. I anticipate moving How Battery forward tomorrow or the following day."

There was nothing unusual about this fragmentary order. I certainly didn't realize then the far-reaching events this short conversation foretold.

Operation Thanksgiving was executed with dispatch, and the battery settled down contentedly for another cold, uneventful night.

At 1:30 a.m., November 26th, T/Sgt. Elmer E. Walling woke me to stand watch. Walling, the How Battery gunnery sergeant, is part American Indian, with a slow drawl and a sense of humor that kept the morale of the firing battery at its height throughout our stay in Korea. He used to say that his chief ambition was to return to his home town of Sapulpa, Oklahoma, buy a lot in the center of town, and do nothing but dig foxholes.

Walling suggested that, during my watch, I listen in on the telephones which linked the crews of the guns with the exec pit, a bombproof concrete shelter from which fire commands were relayed to the gunners. The gun crews, Walling explained, had started a new How Battery "radio" program on the telephones, sponsored by the Red Herndon Tennessee Twist Chewing Tobacco Company. The latter was a reference to 1st Lt. Wilber N. Herndon, the battery's red-haired executive officer, a wiry, thirty-three-year-old Tennessean who won the Silver Star for gallantry as an enlisted man at Iwo Jima.

I picked up the gun phone in time to hear Pfc. Stanley G. Lockowitz, of Chicago, come in with his spiel.

"This is Radio Station HOW," he said, "deep in the northern wilds of cold Korea. The Mystery Voice program is on the air, sponsored by Herndon's Tennessee Twist Chewing Tobacco, the tobacco with a kick that all Korea is chewing about. Now, gentlemen, before we hear the Mystery Voice, Private First Class Bergman will sing a Christmas carol."

#### High Morale at Quick-Freeze Temperatures

SIERT W. BERGMAN, a twenty-year-old Swede from Grand Rapids, Michigan, waited for the polite applause from the other gun sections to subside, then broke into Silent Night. As soon as he had finished, Lockowitz quickly changed the mood.

"It's not a fit night out for man nor beast!" he boomed. This was the Mystery Voice. Now the game was for the men in the other gun sections to figure out whose voice Lockowitz was imitating.

"I can tell you who it is not," No. 2 section reported. "It is not the gunnery sergeant."

"You are absolutely right; it is not the gunnery sergeant," Lockowitz replied.

"It is not Harry Truman," No. 3 section ventured.

"You are absolutely right," said Lockowitz; "it is not the chief of police. I will give you another hint, 'You will all be home for Christmas.'"

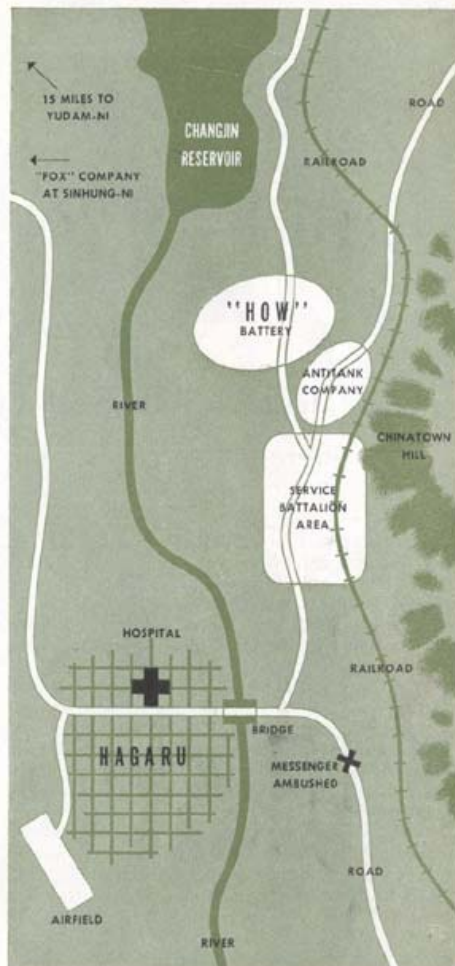
No. 5 section came in fast on that one, "It is General Douglas (Dugout) MacArthur."

"You are absolutely, positively correct," Lockowitz replied, "and that man wins a hundred-and-five-millimeter howitzer with two rounds of white phosphorus complete with seven full charges."

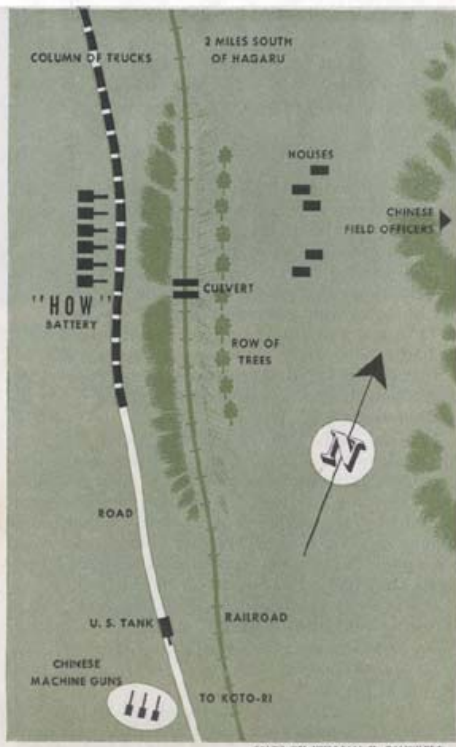
I recite this episode to show how high morale can be even at two a.m. with the temperature at seventeen degrees below zero. At sunrise I witnessed another example. Sgt. Vincent E. (Moose) Mosco, of Baltimore, Maryland, one of the gun-section leaders, emerged from "Moose's Hotel"—a hole in the ground with ammunition crates piled up around it, canvas stretched over the top of the crates for a roof, and a stovepipe protruding from one end. He carried a South Korean flag, and with all the reverence he would accord our own national emblem Moose went through the ceremony of Colors. The entire battery stood at attention while he raised the ROK flag on a pole in front of his "hotel." It was a daily gag with Moose, performed every morning and evening. And, as always, he concluded the ceremony with a brisk command.

"Carry on," he snapped. The battery relaxed.

A few hours later I left the battery and shoved off on an icy, drift-blocked road which wound through the mountains to Yudam-ni, our next objective, to select the spot to which I expected to move the battery later. Pfc. Murray E. Gentry, of Houston, Texas, drove my jeep, which towed a trailer carrying all my personal belongings. I held my gloved hands over my face to (Continued on Page 145)



This was the position of How Battery and other U.S. elements on the morning of November 25.



The fight of the morning of December seventh was fought at a range of about seventy-five yards.

## OUR GUNS NEVER GOT COLD

(Continued from Page 33)

keep my cheeks from freezing as we climbed the mountain. Changjin Reservoir, far below, was a beautiful sight, frozen over completely, except for a patch in the center which shone a brilliant turquoise blue in the morning sunlight.

The trip seemed uneventful. Major Parry and I found a spot for the battery, and I left my trailer load of personal belongings with a service battery nearby, intending to reclaim it when I brought How Battery over from Hagaru. I didn't know then that this was the last I was to see of that trailer.

Nor did I realize, as I talked with a lieutenant from another battery during a pause in the trip back to Hagaru from Yudam-ni, that Gentry and I were to be the last Americans to see him. The lieutenant was worried about some missing supply trucks; he said he would follow me in half an hour to look for them. I didn't learn until later that his smashed jeep and rifled dispatch case—silent evidence that he was captured—were found along the road over which we traveled unmolested just thirty minutes ahead of him. But when I got back to the battery, I learned that the trouble was coming fast.

"I've had nothing but Chinamen on my radio net all day," Pfc. Ralph E. Newman, Jr., of Eugene, Oregon, exclaimed. Newman, a twenty-one-year-old radio operator, reported that one of the Chinese, who spoke English, said he could see many trucks on the road, and asked, "What we do now?" This may have been an enemy report on the nineteen-truck convoy which battalion sent over that afternoon from Yudam-ni to Hagaru, ahead of my returning jeep, to help move How Battery. The trucks were already loaded with our ammunition for the return trip to Yudam-ni. I ordered the thirty-eight men who had come with the trucks to join our security force, thus virtually doubling the number of riflemen, machine gunners and bazooka men strung around the battery to ward off infantry assault on the big guns.

In the meantime, 1st Lt. Donald H. Campbell, of Aptos, California, my forward observer with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, reported that infantry outfit had reached a point halfway between Hagaru and Yudam-ni, at a place on the map called Sohung-ni. Over the radio we worked out our firing arrangements with him, so we could drop our 105-mm. shells at any point around Fox Company's area, in case of enemy attack, according to the numbers Campbell called off on the radio. But later Campbell reported that his radio battery was getting weak, adding that he would therefore come on the air only in an emergency. He asked us to fire a box around the company once every twenty minutes during the night.

North Korean civilians and captured Chinese had told us previously that many Chinese were in the area. By eight o'clock on the night of November twenty-sixth, heavy artillery firing broke out to the north, where the Army had one artillery and two infantry battalions, and to the northwest, where we had the 5th and 7th Marine infantry regiments at Yudam-ni. Thousands of rounds of .50-caliber tracers filled the air in the distance.

"Reminds me of the last war when a big enemy strike was coming," Red Herndon, my battery exec, remarked.

We rearranged three of our guns for direct fire on a hill 500 yards east of the battery, expecting an infantry attack down the two gullies in the hillside which led directly to the area occupied by a marine service battalion. This meant that the shells from No. 6 gun would clear the command post by about one foot. Very noisy.

An officer from 11th Regiment headquarters arrived at 1:30 A.M., November twenty-seventh, inquiring about a messenger with a priority dispatch from Major Parry at Yudam-ni. We had seen no sign of him.

Ten hours later, the dispatch got through. The messenger had taken a wrong turn, was ambushed by the Chinese and killed. His jeep driver, however, was able to escape, though wounded. The message was to send the ammunition. I dispatched the nineteen-truck convoy, but a Chinese roadblock stopped it only half a mile out of Hagaru and the trucks came back to the battery.

Now we knew that the Chinese had us completely surrounded at Hagaru. Gentry and I evidently had made the last unmolested trip into Hagaru when we returned from Yudam-ni the previous evening.

Had the messenger arrived as scheduled, the convoy would have set out in the night and been ambushed itself; thus, the messenger's fatal mistake, in taking a wrong turn, saved thirty-eight men and nineteen truckloads of precious ammunition. And it was precious. For, though we had 4000 rounds on hand, all avenues of land supply were cut, and our only hope of a new supply was by air drop.

Needless to say, the old finger was clamped down and rationing of shells began. It broke my heart. Don Campbell would call in from Fox Company, asking for six rounds from the battery to break up a Chinese attack. I'd have to cut the order in half—and as a forward observer with the infantry in the last war, I knew exactly how much artillery support meant to a trapped infantry company. I couldn't afford to explain to Don on the radio why we were being stingy, for fear the enemy would hear it. Finally, I had the radio operator relay what I hoped would be a message understandable to Don, but cryptic to the enemy.

"Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition," I said. "About all we can do now, Don, is praise the Lord."

By this time, How Battery was out of touch with its parent battalion, encircled at Yudam-ni with the 5th and 7th Marines, because our radios weren't strong enough to reach Yudam-ni.

I reported to Col. James H. Brower, of Rochester, New York, commanding officer of the 11th Marine Artillery Regiment, who had moved regimental headquarters into Hagaru three days earlier. He left it to me to decide whether I should move How Battery inside the Hagaru defense perimeter or leave it in its exposed position. Where we were, we had Fox Company's area zeroed in perfectly. So when I learned that Fox Company was surrounded, unable to move, I elected to stay where we were. The only reason for the artillery's existence is to support the infantry, regardless of the battery's personal safety.

I checked over the battery's local defenses at five P.M. and when I walked into the command post, Don Campbell had just called in that Fox Company was under terrific attack, and his radio was fading out rapidly. I had to find some way to continue our fire for Fox Company after Campbell's radio died, and Private First Class Newman, my radio operator, came up with the solution.

At Newman's suggestion, Campbell relayed his fire commands over Fox Company's radio to our liaison officer at infantry-battalion headquarters, and the liaison officer, in turn, passed them on to the battery by telephone. In this roundabout fashion, Campbell called our fire in to within fifty yards of Fox Company. At a range of 7000 yards, this is very ticklish business.

Yet we never had a short round, to my knowledge, and Campbell was to direct a complete box of fire around Fox Company for six days and nights. I talked to Lieutenant Campbell after the company was freed from encirclement, and he said that at one point the enemy was so close he had all the men get down in their foxholes while he brought down fire on their position.

"You American marines surrender!" the Chinks would yell periodically.

"We treat you good! We treat you very good, American sons of bitches!"

And now the battery's time came too. I was awakened at 11:30 o'clock on the night of November twenty-seventh, after a very brief nap. Two thousand yards to our southwest, a battle was under way across the Hagaru airstrip. Five hundred yards to our east, 400 Chinese were attacking thirty marines from the service battalion on the top of the twin-gullied elevation which we soon dubbed "Chinatown Hill." And 7000 yards to the northwest, Fox Company continued to call for our shells.

The service-battalion marines retired from Chinatown Hill with their wounded after a brief fire fight. In the moonlight, against the snow, we could see the Chinks organizing for a banzai attack down the hill into our positions. Lt. Col. Charles L. (Gus) Banks, of Newark, New Jersey, commander of the service battalion, and Maj. Walter T. Warren, of Jackson, Tennessee, whose antitank company, like Banks' battalion, was bivouacked near the foot of the hill, volunteered to act as our forward observers. We rigged telephones directly from them to the gun pits, and worked out a simple set of fire commands—right gully, left gully, upper half, lower half, center.

The Chinks were yelling, making wild gestures and blowing bugles and whistles as they massed for the attack.

We trained three howitzers on the lower quarter of the hill and waited. We wanted to get the bulk of the enemy troops so far down the hill that they couldn't get back to the protection of the hilltop when we cut loose. Soon they started down, hopped up on dope and screaming at the top of their lungs. They were firing American Tommy guns (captured from the Chinese Nationalists, we discovered later), Russian burp guns, mortars and at least one 76-mm. artillery piece. Bullets and shell fragments zipped around our gun pits—and still we waited. It was fifteen degrees below zero, but sweat ran down our faces. And then . . .

"Fire!"

Red flames flashed simultaneously from the three thundering howitzers and died in quick white puffs of smoke. Seconds later, the sharp cracks of our projectiles striking home, and a hail of stones from their explosions, overshadowed the gun reports. Each howitzer had a separate section of the hill as its target, and each one hit the target dead center. From then on, for the next hour and a half, it was a simple matter of up and down, right and left, load, fire, load, fire, while the dope-craved Chinamen fed themselves into the meat grinder until there weren't any more except a few snipers and the mortar-men behind the crest of bloody Chinatown Hill. The few who reached the bottom of the hill alive were picked off by the rifles of the antitank company or the service battalion's quartermasters, laundrymen and post-exchange clerks, all of whom displayed the true value of basic marine training which makes every man a combat soldier regardless of his assigned job.

How Battery's men were magnificent. Their tenseness vanished with the first volley, and they yelled and cheered as their projectiles flew through the air with precision speed and struck home. Red Herndon and I operated from the gun pits throughout the battle. At one point, after the enemy was reduced to sporadic mortar fire, I was sitting in the snow between the trails of No. 6 gun. I decided to move over to No. 5, and had just done so when a lucky mortar shot



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landed right in the depression in the snow back of No. 6, which marked the spot in which I had been sitting. I heard the inevitable call for corpsmen, and ran over to No. 6. Two of the crewmen were badly wounded, but the four others had just been knocked down and dazed. As the wounded were removed I pointed out to the remaining crewmen that the size of the hole indicated we had been hit by a 60-mm. mortar, and the pattern of the burst also pointed out the direction from which it had come.

"This is your chance to fight back," I said. "A sixty-millimeter mortar has a maximum range of eighteen hundred yards. Fire in the direction indicated, at ranges of a thousand to eighteen hundred yards, and you'll get them."

The four crewmen, forgetting they were in a state of shock, sprang back to their gun and started firing like madmen. We never did learn for certain whether they wiped out the mortar which had wounded their buddies, but that particular mortar was not heard from again that night.

Now came the problem of getting the two wounded men into the hospital at Hagaru. To get there, a truck had to pass within 150 yards of Chinatown Hill and cross a bridge which wasn't positively in friendly hands. I called for two volunteers, and instantly got four—Pfc. Gentry, my jeep driver; Hospitalman George G. Gray, of Escondido, California; Pfc. Joseph P. Caruso, of St. Louis, Missouri, and Pfc. William H. Epple, of Rochester, New York. I told the volunteers that if they reached the hospital, they should take it easy there the rest of the night. Yet two hours later I saw the truck coming back into the battery area at full speed in the darkness, with sniper bullets whizzing all around it.

"We delivered them, Skip, and they're going to be okay," Gentry reported. "Thought we'd be needed more back here."

It was impossible to be stern about a disobeyed order under the circumstances, and when I thanked Gentry in the morning, his only comment was, "If I had been hit, any one of those boys would have done the same for me." I knew that what he said was true.

While suffering those two casualties we slaughtered several hundred of the enemy on Chinatown Hill that night. And yet, incredibly, the Chinks sent new waves of hopped-up troops down the same two gullies into the same murderous fire for the next two nights—those of November 28-29, and 29-30. The three howitzers we could spare for Chinatown Hill killed at least 1000 of Mao's "volunteers" before we were done with them.

While they saved their big attacks for the night, the Chinese wandered around the hill in daylight as though they owned the place. I ordered my gunners to fire on no group smaller than eight men—we couldn't waste shells even though the Air Force began a series of highly successful ammunition drops on the twenty-eighth. I waived this rule on one occasion, however, when I found Sgt. Robert L. Reisner, of Albany, New York, staring at the hill as though entranced.

"Three of the little rats up there are sticking their heads up and sniping at me, Skip," Reisner explained. "How about letting me have just one round of time fire to finish them?"

I decided that a guy at least has the right to fight back. Reisner made his preparations with care. He elevated his gun, traversed it over to the right just a hair, picked up his shell, turned the

time setting to the correct place, and rammed her home. Just as he was about to pull the lanyard, all three Chinks ducked down in their hole. Reisner stood there patiently for several minutes with the lanyard in his hand. Finally, all three of the Chinese popped up again, blazing away with their rifles. Reisner yanked the lanyard and saw the shell land right on target two seconds later.

"Three clean haircuts," the sergeant remarked.

Although we were naturally preoccupied with Chinatown Hill, How Battery actually, at times, was firing to the four winds. Our multiple missions—supporting Fox Company in the mountains, headquarters troops which set out from Hagaru in a gallant but unsuccessful effort to break the roadblock on the road to Yudam-ni, and the marines who finally drove the Chinks off the Hagaru airstrip to bayonet point—kept our command post as busy as the New York Stock Exchange. And then we had a new mission—that of protecting the remnants of the Army battalions, cut to pieces to the north, as they came straggling into our area over the Changjin Reservoir ice.

Even Hollywood would have trouble depicting these soldiers' torn, bloody, exhausted appearance. In the first group of about 160 Army survivors, who arrived on the twenty-ninth, there was hardly a helmet with less than two bullet or shell-fragment holes in it. The first officer I found in this group told me he thought the 160 were the only ones left of the three battalions, and told how it had been necessary to abandon twenty-three truckloads of wounded. Quite a few other survivors reached our area, however, in groups of eight or ten men, during the next three days and nights, and later a task force of marines and Army tanks rescued 183 of the wounded who had been left behind.

"Thank God for the United States Marines"—if I heard this once, I heard it a dozen times as the soldiers passed through our position en route to hospitalization and air evacuation from Hagaru. One of the survivors of the disaster turned out to be a marine. He was Capt. Edward P. Stamford, of Pleasanton, California; who had been with the soldiers to direct marine aviation working in close support of the Army troops. The Chinese captured him and ordered his execution, but the first round of his would-be executioner's rifle missed fire. Just then an argument broke out among his captors, and while the executioner was distracted by the

dispute and his efforts to reload, Captain Stamford leaped over a cliff and escaped. He walked six miles with a sprained ankle over some of the roughest hills in North Korea to reach our command post.

Several hundred North Korean civilians also reached our area—a pitiful group of old men, women and young children, some of them barefooted in the snow. Nominally enemies, they actually welcomed us as liberators from the Chinese communists, who had stolen their food, killed off their men and raped their women. We took no chances, however, searching them all for weapons before sending them into Hagaru. As I looked at these unfortunate humans I thought of how little Americans at home could know of war.

Now the 5th and 7th Marines were fighting their way back to Hagaru from Yudam-ni. This was the first move in the historic "advance in another direction" which Marguerite Higgins described in *THE BLOODY TRAIL BACK* (The Saturday Evening Post, January twenty-seventh). Captured Chinese told us they had orders to destroy the 1st Marine Division, so the American public would demand that United States forces quit Korea altogether. The story of how the marines, instead, cut up six of communist China's best divisions in the process of withdrawing from Northeastern Korea before overwhelming numbers has been told elsewhere. I shall always be proud of How Battery's small but effective part in this operation.

By December first the idiots on Chinatown Hill had stopped giving us much trouble, so nature stepped in. The temperature dropped to twenty-one degrees below zero and a gale blew up. We were wearing seven layers of clothing, but in that kind of weather you're cold and you stay cold, and if the enemy pins you down with rifle fire, or immobilizes you by wounding you, or steals your boots and abandons you after capture—as the Chinese frequently did—you'll have frostbite no matter what you wear. It was so cold that the humidity froze—tiny slivers of ice, floating in the air, were visible in the sunlight.

Early on the morning of December second, we started firing in support of the 7th Marines, fighting their way in from Yudam-ni. Our worst problem was a hill which commanded the approaches to Hagaru, and as our troops approached it, we laid down everything we had on the enemy, with gratifying success. "Effect, excellent; effect, ex-



"I, nor any of her girl friends even knew he existed until we got the wedding invitations!"

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cellent," came in from our observers by radio, time and again. One observer said he was pinned down and could not see the shellbursts.

"I can hear them, though, and I can hear the Chinks screaming," he said. "Keep 'em coming."

I shall never forget the 7th's arrival in Hagaru the night of December third. They brought their dead and their wounded and their equipment with them, and the survivors of Fox Company, which they rescued on the way. Those of us at Hagaru cheered ourselves hoarse—and sang the Marine Hymn. The 5th Marines followed the 7th, likewise badly hurt, but also in completely good order. I sat by the radio at one point and listened to the officers of my own parent battalion as they reported in to Hagaru, prefacing their messages with the old familiar call letters—Witch Six (Major Parry), Witch Five (Major Miller), Witch Three (Major Callender), and so on.

Major Parry told me upon arrival that How Battery would remain in position to fire the 7th Marines out of Hagaru again, this time southward toward evacuation by sea. Then he told me what had happened to the trailer I left at Yudam-ni.

"Hope you don't mind," he said, "but we didn't have anything to tow it with, so we had to burn it along with all your personal effects—everything, that is, except two fifths of brandy and a wrist watch. We opened one fifth and passed it around for the road."

I was too glad to see my friends again to worry about personal items of gear. I gave them the remaining fifth—they needed it worse than I—and I was pleased to get back the watch, a present from a Swiss major I had known at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

December fourth and fifth were spent in resting, reorganizing, re-equipping, and destroying anything we didn't need for the fight southward from Hagaru. The 7th jumped off at three A.M. on December sixth, and ran into a fight 100 yards out of town. First Lt. Lawrence T. (Killer) Kane, of Worcester, Massachusetts, my observer with the second battalion of the 7th, had his radio jeep shot out from under him before he even reached the outskirts of Hagaru. While we were firing on the Chinks attacking the 7th, we were also loading up to join the convoy.

Sergeant Gallagher was having a wonderful time in the command post, chopping up surplus cans of beef and gravy, sticking a long knife into a ten-gallon can of lard and flicking the stuff all over the room—"make 'er burn better," he said—and piling up old, damaged ammunition. By 5:30 P.M., we had orders to fall into the column. We pulled the battery out on the main road and waited there for Gallagher and a couple of assistants to finish dumping powder bags and cans of gasoline inside the command post. I looked over the hills to our rear, loaded with enemy troops, and out over Changjin Reservoir, and I thought of the way my men reacted when they learned we were leaving Hagaru.

"Why are we leaving, captain?" they asked. "Why? We can hold here until hell freezes over." One marine added, "And if hell's as cold as Hagaru, it's already frozen over, but we can hold here anyway."

Bill Gallagher struck a match and lit the fire. Our command post went up with a big bang, and the men of How Battery fell into the southbound convoy without a word.

The column moved slowly. In two hours we had covered 1000 yards when

the Chinks struck at our rear. Three marine tanks opened up behind us with their machine guns and 90-mm. rifles and I deployed my machine gunners on high ground to both sides of the road. It was there that we received our first casualty of the fight to the south. A percussion grenade landed in front of our operations sergeant, Elwood S. Crews, Jr., twenty years old, of Fort Thomas, Kentucky, who had worked so ably in the battery's fire-direction center. From all outward appearances, he was not badly hurt except for shock, but he died before morning of internal injuries.

We were held up here for two hours, and then the column started up again, about 9:30 P.M. But after we had gone another 1000 yards, we were stopped cold. Two and a half miles ahead of us a fierce fight raged. The sky was filled with tracers. Red Herndon and I finally went forward to see what was up, and near the firing we found Lt. Col. Olin L. Beall, of McQueeney, Texas, a motor-transport-battalion commander, who told us three Chinese machine guns and a group of riflemen were holding up the works.

"We are trying to get them now with bazookas, but with little success," he said.

Colonel Beall readily agreed when Red and I suggested we go back and bring up one of the tanks, followed by How Battery, to knock out the roadblock. When we reached the tank commander, however, he seemed dubious, and called Division for permission.

"Two characters here think they can break the roadblock if they have a tank," he said on his radio. Red and I didn't appreciate his description of us, but we were grateful when an affirmative reply came through.

I stayed with the battery and Red Herndon and Sgt. Herbert E. Blizzard, of Camden, New Jersey, set out on foot to lead the tank through the stalled column of vehicles. They had a terrific job on their hands. Rifle and machine-gun fire from enemy snipers zipped around them, and often they had to make detours across fields, gullies and ravines to by-pass vehicles on the road which could not be moved out of the way.

How Battery, in the meantime, moved forward through the halted column at a much slower pace. We knew we had to shake loose before daybreak, because then the enemy would really open up with mortars and artillery.

Red Herndon and Sergeant Blizzard, having delivered the tank to within firing range of the roadblock, returned to the battery as we reached a spot where the railroad paralleled the highway, seventy-five yards to our left. There we came to a halt—temporarily, we thought—and, as usual, sent out machine gunners to our flanks.

Dawn was breaking. Sgt. Russell R. Rune, of Chicago, and his platoon had just set up their machine gun on the railroad tracks when Rune looked down the far side of the railroad embankment. There were hundreds of Chinese troops, who had slipped up on our flanks in the darkness and were ready to attack.

"Here they are!" Rune yelled.

The gunners swung the machine gun's muzzle down as far as it would go, but the Chinks were so close, down the bank, that they couldn't hit them. So two of the men picked up the machine gun, tripod and all, stood there on the railroad tracks with bullets hailing around them and let the Chinks have it. I've seen things like that in the mov-

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# Clipper

## BELT LACING EQUIPMENT

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ies, but never expected to see it in real life.

I yelled to Rune to get his platoon back to us on the double, and ordered our howitzers aimed at the railroad. By the time the machine gunners were out of the way—they were scattered and Rune was sure for quite a while that some of his men were killed—our guns were in firing position, with their muzzles between the trucks, but it was far from a normal firing position. We didn't have time to dig in the trails—the extensions to the rear of the guns which, set in the ground, keep the guns from jumping backward every time they are fired.

Instead, the gun crews braced the howitzers with their bodies.

Every available man was throwing ammunition off the trucks. There was no time to sort shells as to types. Using Charge 1, the lowest-powered available, we fired everything as it came off the trucks—white phosphorus, high explosive, antitank or whatever came. With each shot, the guns rolled backward three feet, pushing the crews with them.

After every fourth or fifth round, the gunners pushed their pieces forward again and resumed firing.

At one point, No. 6 gun accidentally fired a Charge 7—the full charge. The gun leaped back twenty feet and ran over the entire crew. "Return to your gun!" I yelled. Dazed, shaken and badly beat up, those marines jumped back on the job almost as though nothing had happened.

The Chinks were pouring everything they had on us—rifle fire, machine-gun fire, artillery, mortars, and grenades in such quantities that they looked like a flock of starlings. A five-gallon can of gasoline strapped to the side of an ammunition truck caught fire. Red Herndon and 1st. Lt. Edward V. (Hap) Easter, of Mendota, Illinois, smothered the flames with sleeping bags just before the fire had a chance to touch off the ammo and blow us all to kingdom come.

Textbooks and artillery schools will tell you that it's impossible to fire 105-mm. howitzers at a seventy-five-yard

range and not kill the crews with your own shell fragments, but we did it. Those Chinks never got across the railroad tracks. One gun crew made a perfect shot into a culvert and wiped out a machine-gun nest.

Red and I were running back and forth from gun to gun, pointing out targets. By now the road was strewn with the wounded, which our brave corpsmen were coolly treating under fire, and we had to jump over them. We fired on a row of trees beyond the railroad, giving us perfect airbursts to hit the Chinks behind the embankment. We fired on houses and fences 1500 to 1800 yards away which concealed enemy mortars. Three thousand yards away, on top of a mountain, I spotted a group of Chinese field officers, watching the battle with field glasses. Good old Moose Mosco took a bead on them with his 105, and after four rounds we couldn't see any more Chinese field officers.

Halfway through the battle, a grenade exploded between me and Sergeant Blizard. I was hit in the left knee, but it didn't hurt too much and I was still able to hobble around. Blizard, however, was wounded painfully in the groin, and I leaned over to help him.

"I guess How Battery will teach those bastards to fool with us," he said. I found myself praying for him and for all the courageous men fighting at our sides.

In less than an hour the battle was over. Now, finally, I had time to go among the wounded, who were lying all along the road. My sight was blurred with tears. Many of the men were smiling. "Well, Skip, this is it," they'd say, and all I could reply was, "Everything is going to be okay, son; everything is going to be okay."

Private First Class Newman, my radio operator, was in great pain with a shattered leg. The grenade which wounded him had killed a sergeant from another outfit. "It hurts, Skip; it hurts awful bad," he wept. "It keeps coming up my leg."

Sergeant Rune ran up and slapped me on the back. He was cheering.

For while Cpl. Francis H. Minter, of Houston, Texas, and Pfc. Carl E. Ward, of Huntington, West Virginia, two of the men who went out to the railroad tracks with Rune, were wounded, a checkup showed that none of Rune's platoon was killed.

With the battle over and the road-block eliminated, the twenty-mile-long column of trucks moved again. Behind us, we left 800 dead Chinese on the battlefield. How Battery's score for those two weeks was now well over 2000 of the enemy killed.

We made Koto-ri, where there was an airstrip, without further difficulty. On the trip, however, my wounded leg stiffened so I couldn't walk. All the next day—December eighth—we stayed at Koto-ri. It snowed all day, and fighting was going on around the defense perimeter, but I was snug in a hospital tent with a hand warmer strapped to my injured leg.

That hand warmer, which looks like an oversized cigarette lighter and operates on lighter fluid, was a gift from my friend, Capt. Jack Quinn, USMC, of the University of Missouri, and his wife Ginny. It had arrived in the last air mail to reach Hagaru, and its warmth may well have saved me from losing my leg.

And now, on the morning of December ninth, I faced my hardest task in the war—I had to say good-bye to my battery. I wanted to stay with my men until we reached the sea, but was ordered evacuated by air on the ground that I would be a liability if the convoy was attacked again below Koto-ri.

They carried me out of the tent on a stretcher, en route to the Koto-ri airstrip. The battery gathered around. I couldn't sit up; I could see the faces of some of the men, and the sky above. I started to talk, and then stopped to fight back the tears. Then I started again.

I had always told them that they were the best damn battery in the Marine Corps. I told them that again. I don't remember what else I said. I didn't say much more. It was one of those times you couldn't say very much.