W0UNDED WARRIOR EXPERIENCE

Invited Talk

by

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Indian Island, Penobscot Indian Nation

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AS A PENOBSCOT INDIAN ELDER FROM INDIAN ISLAND, MAINE, I THANK THE ORGANIZERS OF THIS CONFERENCE FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK TO YOU. IN MY PRESENTATION, I WILL BRIEFLY COMMENT ON MY EXPERIENCES WHILE SERVING WITH THE 16TH INF. REGT., 1ST INF. DIV. AS A COMBAT MEDIC ON OMAHA BEACH ON 6 JUNE 1944. I WILL THEN BRING MY PRESENTATION TO A CLOSE BY RELATING MY EXPERIENCES WITH THE 7TH INF. REGT., 3RD INF.

DIV., ALSO AS A COMBAT MEDIC, IN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA, 1950-1951.

I GREW UP ON A SMALL INDIAN RESERVATION, A SMALL ISLAND IN THE PENOBSCOT RIVER. WE CALLED OUR HOMELAND WABANAKIK OR LAND OF THE RISING SUN. EUROPEAN SETTLERS WHO ARRIVED IN NORTHEAST AMERICA OVER 400 HUNDRED YEARS AGO COLONIZED IT AND NAMED IT NEW ENGLAND. MY ANCESTORS FOUGHT MANY WARS IN DEFENCE OF OUR TRADITIONAL HUNTING AND FISHING TERRITORIES, BUT WERE OUTGUNNED AND OUTNUMBERED. BY THE TIME OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, THEY DESPERATELY HELD ON TO A SMALL BUT IMPORTANT PART OF OUR ONCE VAST WOODLAND DOMAINS. THIS BECAME OUR TRIBAL RESERVATION ABOUT TWO CENTURIES AGO. BY THEN MY NATION HAD BEEN REDUCED TO ABOUT 500 PEOPLE - MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND MANY THOUGHT WE WOULD BECOME EXTINCT. WHITE

PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT THE "VANISHING INDIAN". BUT WE ARE STILL HERE.

I WILL NOW GIVE A SHORT RESUME OF MY EXPERIENCES DURING WWII. I WAS DRAFTED, SOON AFTER GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL. ALTHOUGH MY PARENTS WERE AMERICAN PATRIOTS, THEY OBJECTED TO THEIR SONS BEING DRAFTED BY THE MILITARY BECAUSE INDIANS LIVING ON THE PENOBSCOT TRIBAL RESERVATION WERE NOT ALLOWED TO VOTE. BUT IT WAS WAR TIME, AND SO WE SERVED. AFTER COMPLETING BASIC TRAINING AT CAMP PICKETT AT BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA IN THE SUMMER OF 1943, I WAS SENT TO FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON FOR TRAINING AS A SURGICAL TECHNICIAN AND FINISHED THIS TRAINING BY EARLY FALL OF THE SAME YEAR. LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHER AMERICAN SOLDIERS, I SAILED ABOARD THE QUEEN ELIZABETH TO ENGLAND WHERE I JOINED THE 2ND MEDICAL

Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, famously known as the Big Red One.

As an 19 year old private, I served under Sgt. Ray Lambert, a brave combat medic, who had already participated in the North African and the Sicily campaigns. He became my mentor and in the past few years we have met again. I am proud to say that we have become friends. I think we are the only two medics left from our medical battalion.

After many months of training, we boarded troop transport ships that carried us across the English channel on the night of 5 June. Soon after midnight, we anchored about 12 miles of the Normandy coast. Before dawn, we climbed down the rope ladders into the small landing crafts. The sea was turbulent. At 05:00 am, the first wave of assault troops headed towards Omaha Beach. I served as

FIRST-AID MAN IN FOX COMPANY WHICH TOGETHER WITH EASY COMPANY, SPEARHEADED THE INVASION LAUNCHED BY THE BIG RED ONE. WE ENTERED HELL. MANY OF US HAD NEVER BEEN IN COMBAT AND THE SEA SOON TURNED INTO A BLOODBATH.

ONCE THE RAMPS WENT DOWN IT WAS EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF, ONE COULD NOT EXPECT HELP FROM ANYONE IN THIS SITUATION. LANDING IN WATER ALMOST UP TO OUR CHESTS WHEN LEAVING THE LANDING CRAFT, MANY MEN WERE INSTANTLY KILLED OR WOUNDED BECAUSE OF ENEMY MACHINE-GUN, SMALL ARMS AND MORTAR FIRE. I CANNOT REALLY DESCRIBE THE HORROR AND WORDS CANNOT DO JUSTICE TO THE SUFFERING, THE HEROISM, THE CHAOS ON THAT BEACH. SO MANY YOUNG MEN DIED A HORRIBLE DEATH, OR WERE SEVERELY WOUNDED. I SURVIVED, I BELIEVE, BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF MY MOTHER'S PRAYERS.

OUR REGIMENT, ESPECIALLY THE 2ND BATTALION, SUFFERED VERY HIGH CASUALTIES IN WOUNDED AND DEAD THAT DAY. ALL THE OFFICERS IN MY OWN

COMPANY WERE EITHER DEAD OR WOUNDED BY NOON. MOST OF THE SERGEANTS WERE ALSO WOUNDED OR KILLED. EFFECTIVELY , FOX COMPANY HAD CEASED TO EXIST AS A MILITARY UNIT. AS FOR ME, I JUST DID MY WORK AS A COMBAT MEDIC, TRYING TO RESCUE AS MANY WOUNDED MEN AS I COULD ON THAT BEACH. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY MEN I PULLED FROM THE RISING TIDE, HOW MANY I TREATED, HOW MANY I SAW DYING OR DEAD. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY FORMED A PART OF MY OWN DIVISION OR THE 29TH, WHICH WAS MIXED UP WITH OUR TROOPS. IT DID NOT MATTER. ALL THAT MATTERED WAS WHETHER THEY WOULD LIVE OR DIE.

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE STILL A FEW POCKETS OF STUBBORN RESISTANCE, A BEACHHEAD WAS SECURED BY EVENING. AMONG THE BRAVE SOLDIERS COMING ASHORE THAT DAY, ON THE SAME STRETCH OF BEACH WHERE I HAD LANDED, WAS ANOTHER PENOBSCOT, A DISTANT COUSIN OF MINE FROM INDIAN ISLAND, MELVIN NEPTUNE. HE WAS A SCOUT IN THE 26TH

REGIMENT, AND HAD ALREADY FOUGHT IN NORTH AFRICA AND SICILY. WE BRIEFLY MET IN ENGLAND, JUST BEFORE THE INVASION, BUT I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN DURING THE WAR.

MY COMPANY WAS REBUILT WITH REPLACEMENT TROOPS AND I CONTINUED AS A COMBAT MEDIC THROUGHOUT THE NORMANDY CAMPAIGN ALL THE WAY TO AACHEN, THEN THE HUERTGEN FOREST, ONWARDS TO THE ARDENNES WHERE THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE WAS WON. IN MARCH 1945, AFTER CROSSING THE RHINE RIVER NEAR THE REMAGEN BRIDGE, I WAS CAPTURED AND TAKEN TO A STALAG IN THE RUHR POCKET.

AFTER LIBERATION, I RETURNED HOME. THE WAR WAS OVER, BUT THERE WERE FEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. SO, LIKE MANY OTHERS, INCLUDING SEVERAL OTHER PENOBSCOTS FROM MY RESERVATION, I ENLISTED AGAIN. I BRIEFLY RETURNED TO GERMANY AND THEN JOINED A MILITARY POLICE BATTALION STATIONED IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, WHERE I FELL IN LOVE AND MARRIED A BEAUTIFUL AUSTRIAN

woman. By then, I had been promoted to Corporal. In the summer of 1950 soon after our wedding, the Korean War Broke Out.

I was reassigned to the medical detachment of the 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division then stationed at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. After a brief visit to family and friends on the Penobscot reservation, it was time to leave again.

By mid-September 1950, I had crossed the Pacific and landed at the Japanese island of Kyushu. We went into bivouac in the mountains of the island to prepare for our combat mission on the Korean peninsula. Soon after our arrival, I was promoted to assistant platoon sergeant and was put in charge of the litter brigade. Many of the litter bearers were young Korean men, few of whom spoke any English.

After two months we received orders to break camp and prepare to move out, destination unknown. Boarding troopships, our regiment crossed the Sea of Japan and came ashore at Wonsan, a recently captured port city in North Korea. It was mid-November and the weather was turning bitter cold. Our mission was to set up a perimeter to guard the expanding beach head from Wonsan to Hungnam, while the Marines were pushing into the North Korean highlands and march to the Chinese Boarder.

Meanwhile, south korean troops had already captured North Korea's capital city, Pyonyang. With their Communist allies quickly losing ground and being overrun, the chinese sent about 300,000 lightly-armed foot soldiers into North Korea. They secretly crossed the Yalu River by night and had quietly

MOVED DEEP INTO THE MOUNTAINOUS INTERIOR AND PREPARED TO DRIVE THE SOUTH KOREANS AND THEIR UN ALLIES BACK.

IN KOREA THE COMMUNIST ENEMY DID NOT FIGHT ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RULES OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. MEDICS WEARING RED CROSSES WERE TARGETED SO WE WERE ORDERED TO REMOVE ALL SIGNS OF THIS TYPE OF IDENTIFICATION. LIKE OTHER MEDICS I WAS ARMED WITH A CARBINE AND A SMALL MEDICAL KIT. OTHER MEDICS ALSO CARRIED A .45 PISTOL.

FEW OF THE PRIVATES IN OUR MEDICAL COMPANY HAD BEEN IN COMBAT BEFORE. SO, WE HAD TO TRAIN THEM, TELLING THEM: WHEN YOU HEAR A CALL FOR MEDIC!! MEDIC!!, FIRST CHECK WITH YOUR INFANTRY SQUAD LEADER OR PLATOON LEADER TO VERIFY WHERE THE WOUNDED GI IS LOCATED. IF NEEDED ASK FOR COVERING FIRE. KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW, AND IF NECESSARY, CRAWL LOW AND FAST. MAKE SURE YOUR COMRADES KNOW WHERE YOU ARE. NEVER

LEAVE YOUR CARBINE OR WHATEVER YOU CARRY BEHIND AND USE IT IF NECESSARY.

WE WARNED THEM: ANY WOUNDED GI LEFT BEHIND MAY BE CAPTURED, PERHAPS TORTURED FOR INFORMATION! THOSE TOO WEAK TO WALK FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES TO A DISTANT PRISON CAMP WILL BE SHOT ON THE SPOT AND STRIPPED OF SHOES AND CLOTHES. AND THE ENEMY WILL TREAT CAPTURED MEDICS EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS ANY COMBATANT!

LIKE OTHER MEDICS ON THE FRONTLINE, WE HAD TRAINED TO CARRY THE WOUNDED ON OUR BACKS IF NECESSARY AND TO CARRY THE MORE SERIOUS WOUNDED VICTIMS BY LITTER. ALMOST ALWAYS, STOPPING LOSS OF BLOOD WAS A CRUCIAL FACTOR TO KEEP THE WOUNDED GI ALIVE. SO , IT WAS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO GET THEM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO OUR BATTALION AID STATION. THAT WAS USUALLY A LARGE GREEN ARMY TENT PROTECTED BY SANDBAGS, BUT WE SOMETIMES USED AN ABANDONED KOREAN PEASANT HOUSE. WHATEVER IT WAS, THE STATION

WAS USUALLY LOCATED NOT FAR BEHIND OUR INFANTRY IN THEIR FOX HOLES.

AS MEDICS, WE OFTEN DID OUR WORK WHEN THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF HEAVY FIRING INTO OUR POSITIONS AND WE RAN A SERIOUS RISK OF BECOMING CASUALTIES OURSELVES. SOME MEDICS STUMBLED INTO OUR OWN BATTALION'S MACHINE GUN FIRING LANE. BECAUSE WE WERE NOT VISIBLY MARKED AS MEDICS, WE COULD EASILY BE HIT BY FRIENDLY FIRE IN THE FOG OF WAR.

BY LATE NOVEMBER AT LEAST FOUR MEDICS IN OUR REGIMENT HAD BEEN SEVERELY WOUNDED ON THE FRONT, FIVE WERE MISSING IN ACTION AND PRESUMED DEAD, AND ONE WAS CAPTURED. THIS WAS ALL WITHIN ONE WEEK, NOT INCLUDING AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF KOREAN LITTER BEARERS. THERE WOULD BE MANY MORE CASUALTIES.

WHEN THE MARINES, INCLUDING MY COUSIN, WERE ORDERED TO MARCH BEYOND THE CHOSIN

RESERVOIR, THE TROOPS RISKED ENCIRCLEMENT. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED IN LATE NOVEMBER, WHEN THE CHINESE ASSAULT BEGAN WITH NIGHT ATTACKS. AMONG THE CASUALTIES WERE QUITE A FEW AMERICAN INDIANS, INCLUDING SEVERAL PASSAMAQUODDY FROM MY HOME STATE. ONE OF THEM WAS CAPTURED AND ANOTHER KILLED.

OUR REGIMENT ALSO SOON CAME UNDER ATTACK. SNOW HAD FALLEN AND THE COLD FRONT FROM SIBERIA PLUNGED THE TEMPERATURES TO AS LOW AS -37 DEGREES CENTIGRADE. IN THE BITTER COLD, TRENCH FOOT BECAME A BIG PROBLEM WHEN MEN WERE NOT ABLE TO KEEP THEIR FEET WARM AND DRY. WE MEDICS ALWAYS HAD TO CHECK FEET FOR FROST BITE AND WOUNDS.

AFTER OUR FORCED WITHDRAWAL FROM NORTH KOREA, WITH MY BATTALION AMONG THE VERY LAST TO LEAVE HUNGNAM HARBOR, WE BOARDED A TROOP SHIP ON CHRISTMAS EVE AMIDST ENORMOUS EXPLOSIONS. WE HAD LOST MANY GOOD MEN.

THE CHINESE AND NORTH KOREAN COUNTER OFFENSIVE ACROSS THE 38TH PARALLEL AFTER CHRISTMAS HAD TRIGGERED A COLOSSAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TERRIFIED CIVILIANS WERE CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO ENORMOUS ARMIES ABOUT TO CRASH INTO EACH OTHER. EVACUATING THEIR ANCESTRAL TOWNS, VILLAGES AND FARMS IN FREEZING WEATHER, MASSES JAMMED THE SNOWY ROADS IN SEARCH OF FOOD, SHELTER AND CLOTHING ASSISTANCE. FLEEING SOUTH, A MISERABLE CROWD OF COLD AND HUNGRY REFUGEES TRIED TO REACH THE UN DEFENCE LINE. OUR MILITARY CONTINUED RECRUITING SOUTH KOREAN LABORERS, AND THERE WERE PLENTY OF THEM AMONG THE DISPLACED HUNGRY MASSES, TRAINING THEM AS BACKUP LITTER SQUADS.

WITH ENORMOUS ARTILLERY AND AIRSTRIKES, BOMBING AND DROPPING NAPALM ON THE ENEMY, "OPERATION WOLFHOUND" WAS LAUNCHED ON 25 JANUARY 1951. THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF THIS UN COUNTER-OFFENSIVE WAS SIMPLE: DESTROY OR

CAPTURE ALL COMMUNIST ENEMIES SOUTH OF THE HAN RIVER, THEN FIRMLY IN CHINESE HANDS. AMERICAN FIGHTER PLANES STRAFED, BOMBED AND DROPPED NAPALM ON WHAT APPEARED TO BE COLUMNS OF ENEMY TROOPS MOVING ALONG SNOW-COVERED ROADS DEEP BELOW, BUT ALSO CAUSED HORRENDOUS CARNAGE AMONG THE REFUGEES.

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, WE NO LONGER SAW ROTTING BODIES AND NO MORE LIVE REFUGEES. WE WERE BACK IN COMBAT. ONE KNOWS THAT WAR IS HELL WHEN DAWN COMES ON YOUR FRONT LINE POSITION AND ONE LOOKS OUT AND SEES HUNDREDS OF DEAD FROM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT ATTACK BY HUNDREDS OF SCREAMING, WILD CHINESE AND NORTH KOREANS WHO HAD NO REGARD FOR LIFE.

SOME OF OUR MEDICS BECAME TRAUMATIZED BY THE DEAFENING NOISE OF DEADLY EXPLOSIONS IN THE KILLING FIELDS. ONE SHELL-SHOCKED MEDIC IN MY REGIMENT, A LITTER SQUAD LEADER LIKE ME, BECAME SUCH AN EMOTIONAL WRECK THAT HE ENDED UP IN A

hospital in Japan for recovery. When I later heard about this case, I felt sympathetic, as this incident reminded me of my own brief emotional breakdown on the German frontline in the dreadful Huertgen Forest in late 1944.

Promoted to Platoon Sergeant, I was now the senior non-commissioned officer at our 2nd Battalion Aid Station. As the sergeant in charge of the two dozen litter bearers in our medical platoon, I was always in close touch with Captain Gilbert Campbell, a young medical doctor in charge of our battalion aid station. To kill time, usually between battles and when not on the move, we often played cards for fun.

It was bitter cold, with 40-mile-an-hour winds driving sheets of snow all over the place. Our infantry squads trooped up and down the hills through snow drifts and almost blinded by the storm. Fighting in mountainous terrain

JUST A FEW MILES SOUTH OF THE HAN RIVER, WE RAN INTO PROBLEMS EVACUATING OUR WOUNDED ALONG THE SLIPPERY SNOW AND ICE TRAILS DOWN TO THE LITTER JEEPS ON THE DIRT ROADS BELOW. IN THIS RUGGED AND OFTEN ICY TERRAIN, IT TOOK FOUR AND SOMETIMES SIX MEN PER LITTER.

DURING COMBAT, WE KEPT OUR TWO-WAY RADIO WITHIN REACH IN OR JUST OUTSIDE THE CAMOUFLAGED AND SAND-BAGGED TENT OR HUT SERVING AS OUR FIRST AID STATION. THIS ALLOWED US TO REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH COMMANDERS EQUIPPED WITH WALKIE-TALKIES WHEN THEY RADIOED IN FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. THAT IS HOW I RECEIVED ORDERS TO DIRECT MY LITTER TEAMS, STRONG YOUNG SOUTH KOREAN MEN FEW OF WHOM SPOKE ANY ENGLISH, TO WHEREVER THE SERIOUSLY MEN WERE WAITING FOR EVACUATION. OF COURSE WE ALL KNEW THAT A WOUNDED GI LEFT BEHIND WAS DOOMED TO DIE.

ON THE FRONT, EVERYONE IN THE MEDICAL PLATOON, DOCTOR AND LITTER CARRIER ALIKE, WAS VULNERABLE

TO DIRECT SMALL ARMS FIRE AND SHELLING BY 120 AND 82 MM MORTAR. OF COURSE, AS COMBAT MEDICS WE HAD TO RISK OUR OWN LIVES TO RESCUE WOUNDED FROM THE BATTLE FIELD. HOWEVER, NOT ALL OUR OWN TROOPS WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED BY ENEMY FIRE, AS FRIENDLY FIRE ACCIDENTS WERE AN ONGOING PROBLEM.

ON A FREEZING COLD DAY, 16 FEBRUARY, PLATOONS IN OUR BATTALION CHARGED A CHINESE STRONGHOLD ON A HIGH RIDGE NEAR CHONYON-NI AND THE ANCIENT WALLED CITY OF SANSONG-NI. FROM THIS LOCATION, MARKED AS HILL 287 ON UN MILITARY MAPS, THE ENEMY CONTROLLED AN IMPORTANT ROAD JUNCTURE.

IN THIS ATTACK, WE SUFFERED MANY CASUALTIES. AMONG THEM WAS A COMBAT MEDIC, A WWII VETERAN FROM A SMALL TOWN IN TEXAS, KILLED IN A BARRAGE OF MORTAR FIRE AFTER JUMPING FROM A FOXHOLE TO RESCUE A FALLEN SOLDIER CRYING OUT FOR HELP.

In this combat operation, I also sprang into action, directing my litter bearers to the terrible carnage under deafening fire trying to rescue as many wounded comrades as we could. This is where I was awarded a Bronze Star, the first of three I received in the Korean War.

In late April, the Chinese and their North Korean allies prepared for a huge counter-offensive. Their generals could tap into a seemingly endless reservoir of human resources-poor peasant soldiers. poorly fed. poorly dressed and poorly armed, they were just cannon fodder.

On the night of 22 April, after a two-hour artillery barrage, almost 350,000 Chinese and North Korean soldiers stormed towards the

UN MILITARY OUTPOSTS AND FORWARD POSITIONS BY MIDNIGHT AND UNDER FULL MOON. AS USUAL, THEY CAME IN WAVES, RUNNING, SHOOTING AND SCREAMING. SOON WE HAD OUR HANDS FULL WITH WOUNDED AND DYING. RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE SLOPES, OUR LITTER SQUADS STRUGGLED TO CARRY THEM AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD TO THE BATTALION AID STATIONS AND REGIMENTAL COLLECTING STATION.

AS ONE BATTALION SURGEON IN MY REGIMENT LATER RECALLED, THE INFLUX OF WOUNDED GIS WAS SO OVERWHELMING THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN TO TIE ON A TAG WITH NAME, RANK, DATE, TIME AND TYPE OF INJURY. THE CASUALTIES WERE UNLOADED ONTO A FIELD IN FRONT OF THE COLLECTING STATION BY THE SCORES. OUR EFFORTS AS MEDICS WITH SUCH A MASS OF CASUALTIES WAS TO TRIAGE FOR VISIBLE BLEEDING, CHECK THE PULSE AND BLOOD PRESSURE.

AFTER FIERCE CLOSE-IN FIGHTING UNTIL DAWN, OFTEN WITH BLOODIED BAYONET, OUR TROOPS PILED UP CHINESE CORPSES "LIKE CORDWOOD IN FRONT OF THEIR POSITIONS. ONE COULD LOOK DOWN THE HILLSIDE FOR MILES AND SEE NOTHING BUT CHINESE BODIES."

ON A MOUNTAIN SLOPE THE MORNING OF 25 APRIL, I HAD TWO FELLOW MEDICS FROM MY PLATOON CLIMBING UP AND DOWN HILL 289 IN SEARCH OF WOUNDED GIS. SUDDENLY AN EXCITED KOREAN PEASANT RAN UP TO US AND I QUICKLY TURNED TO ONE OF MY ENGLISH-SPEAKING KOREAN LITTER BEARERS FOR TRANSLATION. THAT IS HOW I FOUND OUT A SUSPICIOUS STRANGER WAS HIDING IN THE NEARBY VILLAGE.

ARMED WITH MY CARBINE, I FOUND A CHINESE SOLDIER, PROBABLY A SCARED DESERTER AND TOOK HIM AS CAPTIVE. I WAS LATER TOLD THAT THIS WAS

OUR DIVISION'S FIRST CAPTIVE IN THIS 3-DAY COUNTER OFFENSIVE.

IN EARLY JUNE, WE CROSSED THE HANTAN RIVER AND PREPARED FOR OUR FINAL ASSAULT, DRIVING THE COMMUNISTS BACK NORTH, ACROSS THE 38TH PARALLEL. OUR TASK WAS THE CAPTURE OF THE IRON TRIANGLE IN THE HEART OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA. WITHIN A WEEK, SUFFERING MANY CASUALTIES AGAIN, OUR REGIMENT HAD FOUGHT ITS WAY TO CHORWON, A RUINED TOWN IN THE IRON TRIANGLE.

OUR REGIMENT SUFFERED SERIOUS CASUALTIES, WITH WELL OVER 200 GIS WOUNDED AND MORE THAN 40 KILLED. AMONG OUR MEDICS AT LEAST FIVE WERE WOUNDED AND TWO KILLED, ONE BY SNIPER FIRE.

NUMBED BY THE SIGHT AND SMELL OF HUNDREDS OF DEAD, DYING AND MANGLED HUMANS, I WAS BECOMING DEPRESSED BY THE MISERY OF WAR.

On 14 June, our entire Medical Company, now headed by Major Jensen, assembled near the 7th Regiment's temporary headquarters. This is when I received a star on top of my Combat Medical Badge, signifying that it was my second wartime award. Ten days later I was promoted to Sergeant First Class.

With about one million enemy soldiers killed or wounded and the communist armies driven from South Korean territory, the war had now reached its first terrible anniversary. But with about four million young Chinese left for the meat grinder, the prospect of endless battles for hilltop positions was dreadful.

And so it was that the UN passed a resolution to end hostilities on 28 June, with negotiations for restoration of the pre-war political boundries beginning in early July. With diplomats now talking, soldiers

CONTINUED TO BLEED, KEEPING US MEDICS BUSY. MORE FIGHTING LAY AHEAD.

DURING THE BATTLE OF THE SOBANG HILLS IN THE CENTER OF THE IRON TRIANGLE, IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY, I LED OUR LITTER TEAMS UP AND DOWN THE SLOPES. EXPOSED TO DEADLY ENEMY SMALL ARMS, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND GRENADE BARRAGES, WE CARRIED THE CASUALTIES BACK TO THE AID STATION FOR TREATMENT AND EVACUATION.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF FIERCE COMBAT, I FOUND MYSELF PROMOTED TO MASTER SERGEANT ON THE SPOT. I TOOK THE POSITION OF JACK COBB, WHO HAD JUST BEEN AWARDED A BATTLEFIELD COMMISSION AS 2ND LIEUTENANT.

FIERCE FIGHTING ALONG THE SLOPES, PEAKS AND VALLEYS OF THIS STUBBORNLY DEFENDED HIGH GROUND CONTINUED FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS AND MANY HUNDREDS OF DEAD CHINESE WERE LEFT

BEHIND, THEIR BODIES DECOMPOSING QUICKLY IN THE SWELTERING HEAT. BECAUSE THE LITTER JEEPS DRIVING ACROSS THE ONLY ACCESSIBLE ROAD HAD COME UNDER ENEMY FIRE, AND HAD TO WAIT AT A DISTANCE, OUR LITTER SQUADS HAD TO WALK LONG DISTANCES ACROSS THIS ROUGH TERRAIN. FOR A FEW MOST CRITICAL WOUNDED SOLDIERS, OUR DIVISION'S BUBBLE CHOPPER WAS CALLED IN BY RADIO, TO BE RUSHED TO A MASH UNIT.

WHEN THE FOUR-DAY BATTLE FOR THE SOBANG HILLS WAS OVER, WE RETURNED TO OUR BIVOUAC. NO ONE WANTED TO BE REMINDED OF THE CARNAGE LEFT BEHIND, BUT 26 OF OUR COMRADES HAD BEEN KILLED AND ANOTHER 170 WOUNDED. AMONG THE CASUALTIES WERE SEVERAL MEDICS. IT DID NOT HELP THAT CHINESE LOSSES WERE MUCH HIGHER, WITH WELL OVER 1500 CALUALTIES, ABOUT HALF OF WHOM WERE KILLED.

Our 2nd Battalion was officially commended with a unit citation, noting that the troops displayed "extraordinary heroism of duty and extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy" at Hill 717. I myself was again personally recognized for what they call “heroic altruism,” administering "medical aid to the stricken soldiers" under deadly enemy fire. This time I was awarded a second oak leaf cluster to my bronze battle star.

With the Chinese driven from the Sobang Hills, most of the Iron Triangle was now under UN control and a stalemate had been reached along a new line of demarcation north of the "38th Parallel" which the UN referred to as the Main Line of Resistance (MLR).

BUT THE FIGHTING CONTINUED, WITH FREQUENT CLASHES OVER KEY MOUNTAINS, HILLS AND RIDGES ALL ALONG THE UNSTABLE FRONT.

BY NOW, I WAS EAGER TO LEAVE KOREA. MANY OF MY OLD COMRADES, WITH WHOM I HAD SHARED SO MUCH HARDSHIP, BOREDOM, PAIN AND LAUGHTER WITH SINCE LEAVING FORT DEVENS IN MASSACHUSETTS WERE NO LONGER IN OUR MEDICAL COMPANY --SOME HAD BEEN REASSIGNED, OTHERS HAD BEEN KILLED AND MANY WERE WOUNDED AND EVACUATED, NEVER TO BE HEARD FROM AGAIN.

ONE DAY, CAPTAIN CAMPBELL ALSO PACKED HIS DUFFEL BAG. I WAS HAPPY FOR THIS BRAVE YOUNG MEDICAL DOCTOR RETURNING HOME, ALIVE AND WELL, WITH SEVERAL MEDALS, INCLUDING THE PURPLE HEART.

MEANWHILE, THE HEAVY SUMMER RAINS CONTINUED, TURNING CLOTHES DAMP AND PATHS

INTO SLIPPERY MUD. I WAS COUNTING THE DAYS WHEN I COULD GO BACK TO INDIAN ISLAND. THAT DAY FINALLY CAME IN NOVEMBER 1951, AFTER A FULL YEAR IN KOREA. A FEW WEEKS LATER, JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, I WAS HOME, SAFE, BACK WITH MY FAMILY AND NEVER LOOKED BACK--UNTIL RECENTLY, WHEN PEOPLE BEGAN ASKING ME TO SHARE MY PERSONAL STORY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LISTENING TO MY STORY AND SAY "WOLIWON" A WORD IN MY OWN LANGUAGE, WHICH MEANS "FAREWELL."

CHARLES NORMAN SHAY