

Russell Gugeler. *Combat Actions in Korea*. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1970.

## Chapter 8

### Chipyong-ni

It appears that it is as necessary to provide soldiers with defensive arms of every kind as to instruct them in the use of offensive ones. For it is certain a man will fight with greater courage and confidence when he finds himself properly armed for defense.

*Vegetius, Military Institutions of The Romans*

Chipyong-ni was defended because the commanding general of Eighth Army (Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway) decided to make a stand there against the Chinese Communists. In the chronology of Korean battles, the fighting for Chipyong-ni followed the withdrawal from northern Korea at the end of 1950, a brief Eighth Army offensive that began on 5 February 1951, and a full-scale Chinese counteroffensive that struck a week later.

The 23d Regimental Combat Team made the decisive defense of Chipyong-ni on 13 and 14 February 1951. This action followed the patrol ambush and the subsequent battle for the Twin Tunnels area some high ground three miles southeast of Chipyong-ni. After the Twin Tunnels operation, the 23d Infantry Regiment (2d Infantry Division) proceeded on the afternoon of 3 February to the town of Chipyong-ni and set up a perimeter defense. Chipyong-ni was a small crossroads town half a mile long and several blocks wide, situated on a single-track railroad. Besides the railway station there were several other brick or frame buildings in the center of the town, but most of the buildings were constructed of the usual mud, sticks, and straw. At least half of the buildings were already reduced to rubble as the result of previous fighting in the town.

Encircling Chipyong-ni were eight prominent hills that rose to an average height of 850 feet above the rice paddies and buildings in the valley. These hills provided excellent defensive positions, but to have occupied them would have

stretched the front-line defensive positions along 12 miles of ridgelines and formed a perimeter with a 3- to 4-mile diameter. Instead,

the regimental commander (Col. Paul L. Freeman) stationed his infantrymen on lower ground around a tight perimeter about a mile in diameter. On three sides of the town the line followed small hills; on the northwest section the infantrymen dug their holes across a half-mile strip of rice paddies.

During the ten days after going into position at Chipyeong-ni, Colonel Freeman's regiment dug in and strengthened its positions. The 37th Field Artillery Battalion (attached to the regiment) arrived on 5 February. Battery B, 82d Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, joined the regiment, adding six M16 and four M19 flak wagons to the defense of the town. Several days later Battery B, 503d Field Artillery Battalion (a 155-mm howitzer unit), was attached to reinforce the fires of the 37th Field Artillery Battalion.<sup>1</sup>

The infantry companies dug in their machine guns, registered their mortars, sowed antipersonnel mines, and operated daily patrols to the encompassing high ground. The regimental Heavy-Mortar Company divided the fires of its platoons and sections among the sectors of the perimeter, the artillery registered on all probable avenues of enemy approach, and all units established good communications lines. There was time to coordinate the infantry, artillery, and air support into an effective combat team.<sup>2</sup>

This narrative describes the fighting for Chipyeong-ni that occurred in that sector of the 2d Battalion's perimeter defended by Company G, 23d Infantry. As it happened, the howitzers of Battery B, 503d Field Artillery Battalion, were in position at the bottom of Company G's hill so that the artillerymen were drawn into the same battle. The commander of the 2d Battalion (Lt.Col. James W. Edwards) placed all three of his rifle companies on the front line to cover the sector assigned to his battalion. This was the south rim of the perimeter. Within the companies, two company commanders committed their three rifle platoons. The other company (F), to which Colonel Edwards assigned the center and smallest sector, manned its part of the line with only two platoons, leaving its support platoon as the battalion reserve.<sup>3</sup>

The narrow supply road leading southwest from Chipyeong-ni went under the railroad on the south edge of the town and then, within a third of a mile, passed two embankments of red clay where the road cut through the two ends of a U-

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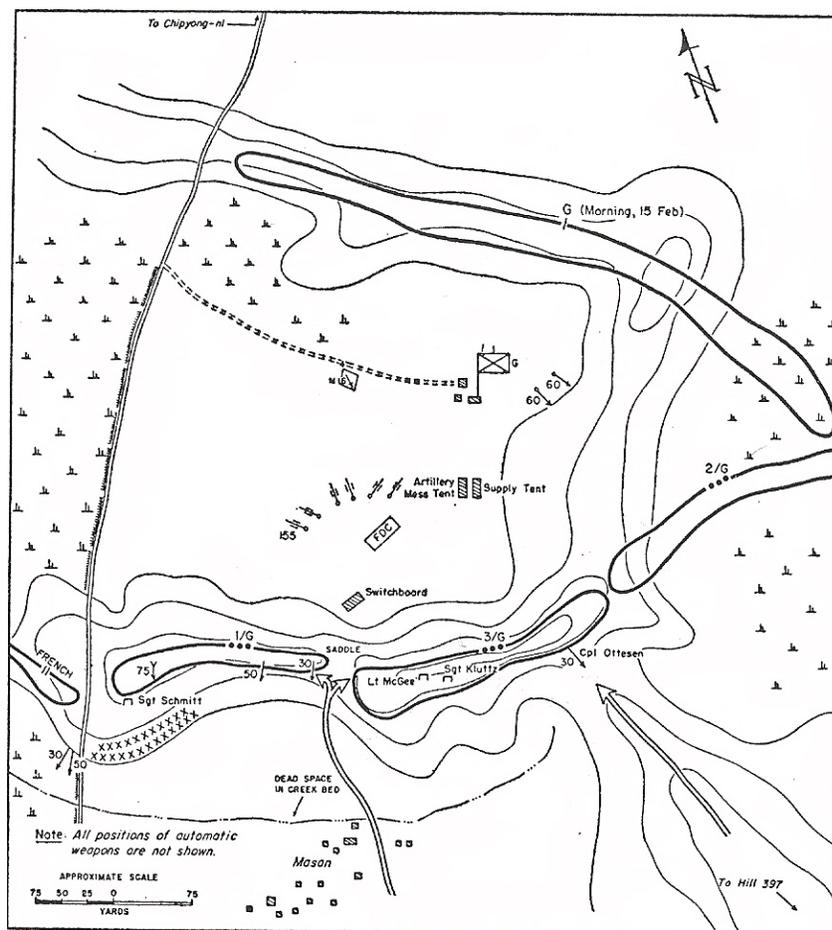
<sup>1</sup> 2d Division Artillery: S-3 journal, entry J6, 110910, February 1951.

<sup>2</sup> 2d Division, command report: 23d Infantry Regiment, February 1951, appendix 1, section D.

<sup>3</sup> Lt.Col. James W. Edwards, "The Siege of Chipyeong-ni" (unpublished manuscript on file in OCMH), p. 1.

shaped hill. Company G started at the second of these two road cuts and extended left (east) along the southern side of the U. It was not much of a hill only a couple of contour lines on the map. Infantrymen could climb the smooth hump of earth in a few minutes. The 1st Platoon of Company G held the right end of the hill next to the road cut. The 3d Platoon had the center position (the highest part of the hill) and extended its line left to the bend of the U. The 2d Platoon was down in the rice paddies between the 3d Platoon and Company F.<sup>4</sup>

Men from the two platoons on the hill dug their holes just over the top of the forward slope. The positions restricted the fields of fire somewhat but provided good observation, especially for the 3d Platoon, which could see all areas to the south except for a dead spot in a dry creek bed just in front of its right flank.



<sup>4</sup> Edwards, op. Cit. (Sketch maps of these positions prepared by Colonel Edwards, battalion commander at the time of the action, on file in OCMH). Unless otherwise noted, that part of this account describing the actions of Company G, 23d Infantry, is based upon a manuscript by Major Edward C. Williamson ("Chipyong-ni: Defense of South Sector of 23d Regimental Combat Team Perimeter by Company G, 13-15 February 1951"), prepared in Korea from interviews with personnel of the battalion. That part describing the activities of Battery B, 503d FA Battalion, is based upon interviews by the author with key personnel of the battery, and upon several with Capt. John A. Elledge, 37th FA Battalion.

There were two other significant features near the 3d Platoon's area. At the foot of the hill and just beyond the dry creek bed was a cluster of 15 or 20 buildings that made up the village of Masan. The second feature was a narrow spur of ground that formed a link between the 3d Platoon's hill and a large hill mass to the south. The 2d Platoon in the rice paddies lacked satisfactory observation but had good fields of fire across the flat land to its immediate front.

In addition to its own Weapons Platoon, Company G's supporting weapons included a section of 75-mm recoilless rifles, a section of heavy machine guns from Company H, and a platoon of 88-mm mortars which was dug in near the edge of the town and had a forward observer stationed with Company G. There were also forward observers from the regimental Heavy-Mortar Company and from the 37th Field Artillery Battalion with Company G. During the daytime men from the 75-mm recoilless rifle section manned their weapons, but at night they replaced them with two caliber .50 machine guns to prevent having their positions disclosed at night by the back-blasts of the recoilless rifles.<sup>5</sup>

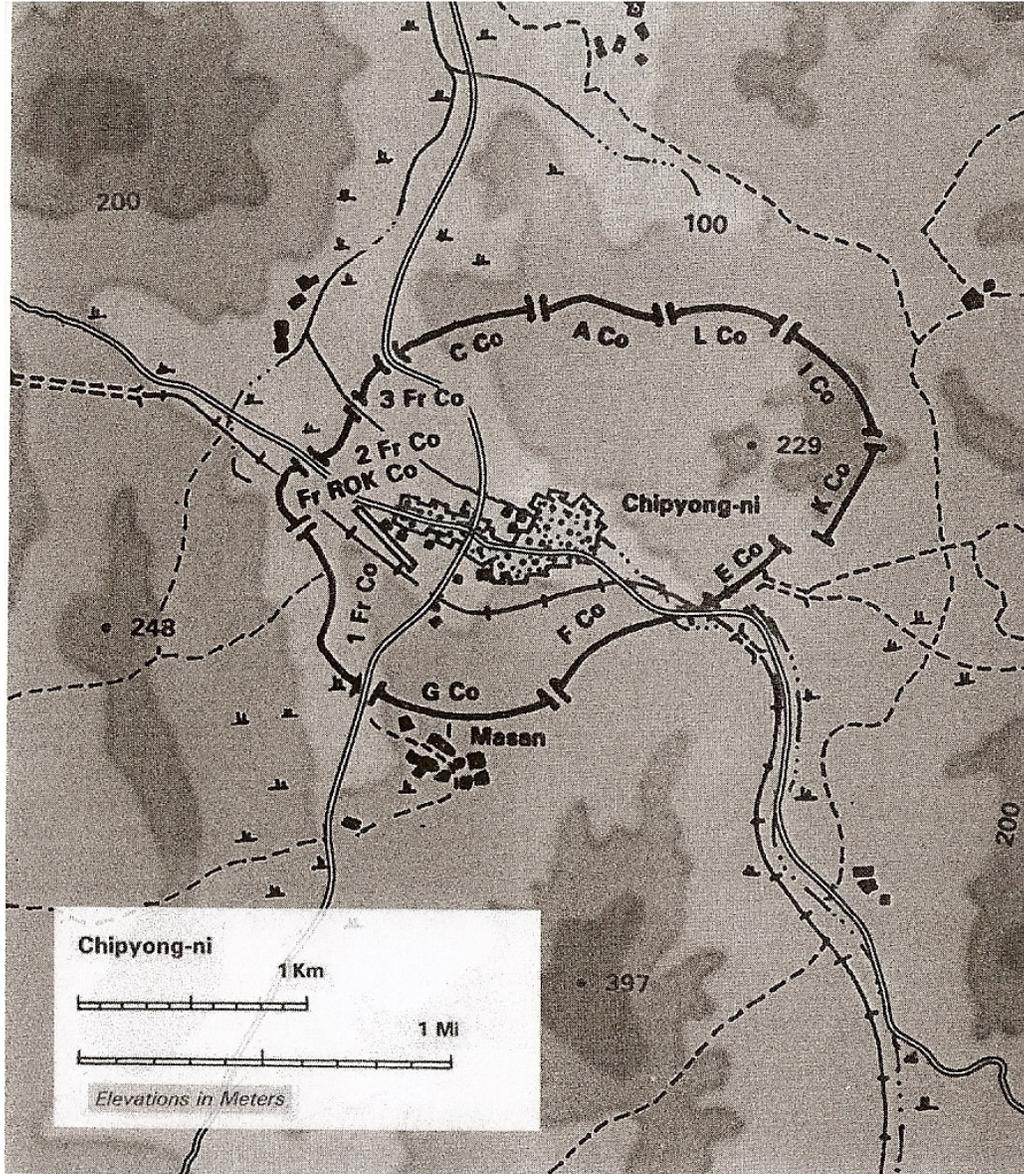
The Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon set up two fougasses (drums of napalm), the first on the road just south of the road cut, and the second in the rice paddies in front of the 2d Platoon. The 1st Platoon, which was next to the road, also strung barbed-wire entanglements across the road and in front of its position. There was not enough wire available to reach across the company front.<sup>6</sup> Colonel Edwards supervised the siting of all weapons, and the digging of the holes which he insisted be of the standing type and deep enough for good cover.

When Battery B, 503d Field Artillery Battalion, arrived, its 155-mm howitzers went into position in the small bowl formed by the U-shaped ridge of which Company G occupied one side. The howitzers were laid by platoon to support the east, north, and west sectors of the regimental perimeter. To the rear of the howitzers, the artillerymen set up a tent for the fire direction center (FDC) personnel. Behind that, near the bottom of Company G's hill, were several other tents for the mess and supply sections. A liaison officer from the 37th Field Artillery Battalion to Battery B (Capt. John A. Elledge), and the commander of Company G (Lt. Thomas Heath) worked out a plan for joint defense of the sector. This plan provided for the use of the artillery's machine guns on the front line and, if necessary, the use of some artillerymen as riflemen while skeleton crews manned the howitzers. The two officers also set up an infantry-artillery machine-gun post in the road cut with a six-man crew to operate two machine guns one caliber .50 and one caliber .30. This road cut was also the dividing line between Colonel Edwards's 2d Battalion sector and that of the French Battalion (a regular battalion of the 23d Infantry).

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<sup>5</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards, *loc. cit.*



In the meantime, while the 23d RCT built up its defenses, an Eighth Army general offensive got under way on 5 February with X Corps, in the center of the line, attacking to make a double envelopment of the town of Hongchon, an important enemy build-up area. The attack moved slowly until the night of 11 February, when the Chinese launched a full-scale counteroffensive with two columns driving south aimed at the towns of Hoengsong and Wonju in X Corps' sector.<sup>7</sup> The vigorous enemy attack drove through two ROK divisions and turned the United Nations' attack into a withdrawal that rolled the front lines south

<sup>7</sup> X Corps: command report, February 1951 (narrative section). See also map z in that report.

between 5 and 20 miles.<sup>8</sup> Before the Chinese attack, the front lines of X Corps were well ahead of Colonel Freeman's Chipyeong-ni perimeter, but as the units went south, sometimes fighting through enemy roadblocks, Chipyeong-ni became a conspicuous bulge on the left of the corps' line.

At the 23d Infantry's perimeter, the usual patrols for the daylight hours of 13 February reported increased enemy activity crowding close to Chipyeong-ni on three sides north, east, and west. The Air Force observation plane operating with the RCT reported enemy groups moving toward the perimeter from the north and east. Observers called for artillery fire against those enemy columns within reach, while the tactical air control party directed forty flights of aircraft against other enemy groups beyond artillery range.<sup>9</sup>

Another indication of enemy strength and dispositions came from the 2d Division's Reconnaissance Company. Reinforced by a rifle company, it was ordered on the morning of 13 February to patrol the road from Iho-ri straight north to Chipyeong-ni a distance of 15 to 18 miles. Even on this road there were Chinese in sufficient strength to halt this force and turn it back.<sup>10</sup>

Faced with this growing threat of encirclement, Colonel Freeman wanted to give up his positions and go back to Yoju, fifteen miles south. The commander of X Corps (Maj.Gen. Edward M. Almond) flew into Chipyeong-ni by helicopter at noon on 13 February and discussed with Colonel Freeman the advisability of such a withdrawal a move that had the approval of the corps and division commanders. At noon Colonel Freeman recommended that his regiment go south on the following morning (14 February). However, within an hour and a half after General Almond returned to his command post to relay this recommendation to General Ridgway, Colonel Freeman changed his mind and his recommendation. The report from the 2d Division's Reconnaissance Company describing enemy opposition to movement on the main supply road south convinced Freeman that it would be better to leave as soon as possible, and he presented his request to division headquarters. In the meantime, however, General Almond had submitted the original recommendation and request to leave Chipyeong-ni on the following morning to General Ridgway. General Ridgway adamantly refused permission to abandon Chipyeong-ni.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. See also map 4 in that report.

<sup>9</sup> 2d Division, command report: 23d Infantry Regiment, February 1951.

<sup>10</sup> X Corps: command report, February 1951 (Enclosure 1, "Battle of Chipyeong-ni"); hereafter cited as X Corps: Chipyeong-ni.

<sup>11</sup> For details on the question of holding Chipyeong-ni, see X Corps: Chipyeong-ni; 2d Division: G3 journal, entry J79, 131422 February, entry J80, 131428 February, and entry J56, 131055 February 1951.

Colonel Freeman immediately started to strengthen his position. He asked for air strikes and airdrops for the next day, set up a secondary perimeter to be manned at night by a company of engineers, positioned his tanks near the outer perimeter, and ordered all gaps mined or blocked by lanes of machine-gun fire.<sup>12</sup> During the early part of the evening of 13 February, Colonel Freeman called his unit commanders together to warn them that the movement of enemy troops probably meant that they would soon be surrounded and attacked by the Chinese.

"We'll stay here and fight it out," he said.<sup>13</sup>

The early part of the evening was quiet. At Battery B's position Lt. Robert L. Peters was sitting in a tent writing a letter. The battery executive (Lt. Randolph McKinney) went to bed after having decided to remove his shoes but to sleep in his clothes in case trouble started. Most of the men of Battery B were inexperienced replacements who had joined the battery after the action at Kunuri, where more than half of the men and all equipment had been lost. Before Lieutenant Peters finished his letter he heard a burst of fire from what seemed like several thousand yards away. He stepped outside to look. To the southwest he could see what appeared to be six torches along a trail leading from a large hill. In a short time the machine gunners in the road cut opened fire at figures they could distinguish moving across the rice paddies to the south. Peters called back to Lieutenant McKinney: "Get up, McKinney; this is it!"

On the east end of Company G's sector, PFC Donald E. Nelson and Pvt. Jack Ward (members of the 2d Platoon) were sitting in their foxhole in the rice paddy arguing over which one of them had to stay awake during the first part of the night. The company was required to be on a fifty percent alert at all times, which meant that one man in each foxhole had to be awake while the other slept. Suddenly they heard the sound of digging. It sounded as if it were several hundred yards away.

Soon after this, two squads of Chinese soldiers attacked the center of Company G's line, hitting its 3d Platoon (Lt. Paul J. McGee). One of these enemy squads crawled along the spur of ground that led to the center of the 3d Platoon's position. The enemy threw three grenades at a machine gun manned by Cpl. Eugene L. Ottesen, and then opened with rifles. Corporal Ottesen began firing his machine gun. The other enemy squad, two hundred yards to the west, taking advantage of the dead spot in the dry creek bed, climbed the hill and attacked the 3d Platoon at the point where it joined the 1st Platoon. It was about 2200 when the first firing broke out.

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<sup>12</sup> X Corps: Chipyong-ni.

<sup>13</sup> Statement by Capt. John A. Elledge.

Hearing the firing, PFC Herbert G. Ziebell awakened his foxhole buddy (PFC Roy F. Benoit) and said: "There's some firing going on. Get up and get ready."

Ziebell did not fire immediately because he could see nothing to shoot, and he was afraid the flash of his rifle would draw enemy fire. Along the line other men heard the firing and sat in the darkness waiting for the attack.

When Lieutenant McGee heard Corporal Ottesen's machine gun open fire he immediately telephoned his company commander (Lieutenant Heath). He then called his squad leaders by sound-powered telephone and informed them of the attack. In order to conserve ammunition, he ordered his men to fire only when they could see the enemy. Apparently making only a probing attack, the enemy withdrew after a few minutes. Except for some firing by the 2d Platoon, there was a lull for about an hour.

Around 2300 a Chinese squad worked up close to the center of the 3d Platoon. An enemy tossed a grenade in the hole of one of Lieutenant McGee's squad leaders (Cpl. James C. Mougeat), wounding him.

Corporal Mougeat crawled out of his hole and, shouting, "Lieutenant McGee, I'm hit!" started west along the hilltop toward the platoon's command post, twenty yards away.

The enemy threw several grenades at him, one of which knocked his rifle from his hand and tore off the stock. Fortunately for Mougeat, two men from his squad shot the Chinese. Recovering his damaged rifle, Corporal Mougeat ran on to the command post. There Lieutenant McGee calmed him down, and Mougeat decided to return to his squad.

"I'm not hit bad," he said.

Lieutenant McGee was watching several men about twenty yards below the platoon's position. One of them called his name.

"Who is that?" he asked a BAR man beside him.

"It's a Chink," the BAR man said.

McGee tossed a grenade down the hill. The explosion apparently wounded the enemy soldier who rolled down the slope. Lieutenant McGee borrowed the BAR and killed him.

Main activity near Battery B's position centered around the machine guns at the road cut. As soon as these began firing, one of the artillery officers (Lt. John E. Travis) and his machine-gun sergeant (Cpl. William H. Pope) grabbed several boxes of ammunition and went to the road cut. The rice paddies in front of these

machine guns were completely covered with snow. On previous nights when Travis had gone there to check the position, that area had been smooth and white, but now there were lines of dark forms moving across the fields. They were barely visible in the dark but appeared plainly when illuminating flares hung over the area.

Lieutenant Travis and Corporal Pope had been at the outpost position only a short time when a mortar shell exploded in the cut, killing the two men closest to them, and wounding six, including Travis and Pope. Travis headed for the fire direction center tent and began yelling for some men to help-six to man the machine guns and another six to carry back the wounded.

Captain Elledge (the liaison officer) gathered up ten men and told them to follow. Enemy mortar shells were also falling in the battery's area at this time so that the artillerymen, most of whom were in action for the first time, were reluctant to leave their holes. Five of the men followed Captain Elledge; the others dropped off on the way and went back to their foxholes. When they reached the outpost position, the caliber .50 machine gun was jamming, so Captain Elledge and PFC Leslie Alston returned for another gun, carrying one of the wounded men back as they went. They then made several trips between the battery's position and the outpost, carrying ammunition out and wounded men back.

These two machine guns fired steadily for several hours, although no close action developed until about 0200 on 14 February when a platoon sized group of Chinese made an attack against the French Battalion just to the right of the machine-gun outpost. The enemy soldiers formed one hundred or two hundred yards in front of the small hill which the French occupied then launched their attack, blowing whistles and bugles, and running with bayonets fixed. When this noise started, the French soldiers began cranking a hand siren they had, and one squad started running toward the Chinese, yelling and throwing grenades far to the front and to the side. When the two forces were within twenty yards of each other the Chinese suddenly turned and ran in the opposite direction. It was all over within a minute. After this incident it was relatively quiet in the rice paddies near the road cut.

The firing battery, meanwhile, kept up a normal volume of harassing and interdiction fire, and also fired an illuminating round every five minutes for the sector on the opposite side of the regimental perimeter. The gun sections had L-shaped trenches near their howitzers where the men stayed until Lieutenant Peters or Lieutenant McKinney called out a fire mission.

During the night the enemy, signaling with whistles and horns, launched four separate attacks against Lieutenant Heath's company. Most of the action fell against the 3d Platoon. Toward morning the artillery battery commander (Lt. Arthur Rochnowski) sent twenty men up to help on Company G's line.

At first light on the morning of 14 February, there were Chinese near the front line in front of the 3d and the 1st Platoons, although only three enemy soldiers actually reached it. One of these was killed and the other two captured soon afterward. Five or six Chinese remained near the road cut machine-gun outpost until daylight, then tried to crawl back across the rice paddies. At the limiting point between the 1st and the 3d Platoons, which had been under enemy pressure for several hours, a small group withdrew, leaving 12 or 15 bodies on the south slope of the hill. The platoon sergeant of the 3d Platoon (Sgt. Bill C. Klutz), in a foxhole next to the one occupied by Lieutenant McGee, spotted several Chinese in the creek bed just in front. He fired several times at them. Suspecting the presence of other Chinese, Lieutenant McGee ordered him to have the rocket launcher fired into the creek bed. Sergeant Klutz fired the launcher himself. The rocket hit a tree, making an air burst over the creek bed. About forty Chinese came out of the creek bed and began running across the rice paddies in front of the 1st Platoon, which opened fire on them. By the time it was completely light, all enemy activity had stopped.

During the day of 14 February, the artillerymen and infantrymen rebuilt their defenses in preparation for another attack. At 0900 Lieutenant McGee took out a patrol which captured 5 Chinese hiding in a culvert and 17 others who were wounded and lying in the rice paddies south of the company's position. McGee counted 18 enemy bodies. Near Masan, he walked up to a small haystack. Near it was an abandoned enemy machine gun. As a wounded Chinese raised up in the haystack to shoot the platoon leader, Sergeant Klutz shot and killed the enemy soldier. Another Chinese, although handicapped by a badly wounded leg, was still trying to operate a Soviet burp gun when Cpl. Boleslaw M. Sander killed him.

Captain Elledge and several other artillerymen set out to examine the area around the battery's position. Eight hundred yards west of the machine guns in the road cut, there was a house that Captain Elledge decided should be destroyed before the Chinese could occupy it if they attacked that night.

Since the house was visible from the howitzer position, the 5th Section (Sgt. James Webb) took it under direct fire, using white phosphorus shells.

After the third round the house began burning, and about fifteen enemy soldiers ran from it across the flat ground. The two machine-gunners and men from the French Battalion killed eight of them; the other Chinese escaped.

During the day the artillerymen dug new and deeper holes and personnel trenches around the howitzers, since they found many of the holes they had dug unsatisfactory during the first night's attack. The battery commander also relaid his howitzers so that, instead of the usual two platoons of three howitzers each, they were laid in pairs. The two howitzers on the left were laid on an azimuth of 5,600 mils, the center laid on 6,400 mils, and those on the right were laid on 800

mils. The normal volume of harassing fires was scheduled for the night of 14 February, about 250 rounds for the battery.

During the afternoon the commander of Company G (Lieutenant Heath) went over to Battery B's fire direction tent to work out plans with Lieutenant Rochnowski and Captain Elledge for the defense of the company and battery position. After the experience of the night before, all were confident of being able to hold if the enemy renewed his attacks. They decided the Chinese were most apt to attack the center of the company's front the highest part of the perimeter where Lieutenant McGee's 3d Platoon was situated and to reinforce that area as much as possible. Lieutenant Rochnowski agreed to set up three outpost positions and two BAR teams on the 3d Platoon's right flank near the saddle directly behind his battery. This was in addition to the two machine guns the artillerymen manned on the front line. If it became necessary, he offered to send some of his artillerymen up to fight with Heath's men. Rochnowski planned to send half of the men from one platoon up on the hill first; if more were needed he would then split up the other platoon and thereby contribute a total of about forty men. Skeleton crews would continue to fire the howitzers.

During the day the 23d RCT received twenty-four airdrops of ammunition. There were also several air strikes, including three south of the Chipyong-ni perimeter where there appeared to be increased enemy activity. Inside the perimeter enemy mortar rounds fell intermittently.

Company G had a quiet day. Hot meals were served. Some of the men thought that perhaps the Chinese had withdrawn. That hope disappeared soon after dark. First, flares appeared in the southern sky; then followed the sound of bugles. After about half an hour or longer, while the men of Company G waited tensely in their holes, a small enemy group opened fire on the machine gun in the center of Lieutenant McGee's platoon, wounding the gunner. The previous night the enemy had opened the fighting by firing on the machine gun. A squad-sized group of Chinese was trying to reach Corporal Ottesen's gun by working along the spur connecting the 3d Platoon's hill with the enemy-held Hill 397 to the south. An enemy machine gun fired overhead cover for the small force. Enemy flares popped in front of the company, and the firing built up rapidly into a furious and noisy fight with the strongest enemy thrusts apparently aimed at the center of the 3d Platoon and at the saddle between it and the 1st Platoon. Tracers arched over the artillery's gun position.

Down at Company G's kitchen tent members of the mess crew heard the firing. They had neglected to dig foxholes and now the closest and best protection was the garbage pit. Eight men crowded into it. None of them made any funny remarks about the odor. An artilleryman with no protection of his own set out looking for any unoccupied foxhole. He finally found one with a man stretched out in the bottom, and jumped in.

"There ain't no room in this hole," the first man said; "not for nobody."

"No room hell!" said the second man. "We'll make room!"

Up on the hill two squads succeeded in penetrating the front line at the left end of the 1st Platoon, occupying several foxholes next to the saddle.

The line was further weakened when these Chinese, having gained a foothold on the hill, planted pole charges in two of the 1st Platoon's holes; the resulting explosions killed four men. The enemy, now in control of the left side of the 1st Platoon's sector, set up a machine gun and started firing across the area of Lieutenant McGee's 3d Platoon. The leader of the 1st Platoon had his command post in a hut a short distance from another hut being used by the company commander. Without informing Lieutenant Heath, the leader of the 1st Platoon remained in his hut after the fighting started and did not join his platoon on the hill. He did maintain wire communication with his platoon sergeant (Sgt. Donald R. Schmitt) on the hill.

Because of the fire coming from the 1st Platoon's area, Lieutenant McGee began to suspect that platoon had lost some foxholes in its sector. He called the company commander on the telephone.

"Heath," he asked, "is the 1st Platoon still in position?"

Heath at once called the leader of the 1st Platoon, who in turn called Sergeant Schmitt on the hill. Schmitt was on the right end of the 1st Platoon's position, next to the road cut, still holding and unaware that the enemy had taken the opposite end of the platoon position. He claimed the line was still solid. Lieutenant Heath relayed the information to McGee.

Lieutenant McGee, however, still had his doubts. He and his platoon sergeant (Sergeant Kluttz) shouted over to the 1st Platoon area, "Anyone from the 1st Platoon?"

There was no answer.

Activities in his own area now took up Lieutenant McGee's interest as enemy soldiers overran one of his own foxholes. On the right flank of his platoon's sector, next to the saddle, he could see four Chinese soldiers with shovels strapped on their backs crawling on their hands and knees. They were about fifteen feet above and behind a hole occupied by the squad leader on the platoon's right flank.

By this time the sound-powered telephone line to the squad leader was out, so McGee shouted across to him: "There are four of them at the rear of your hole. Toss a grenade up and over."

A burst from a machine gun in the 1st Platoon's area one now manned by the enemy prevented the squad leader from standing up to lob the grenade. Lieutenant McGee and the other occupant of his foxhole (Pvt. Cletis Inmon, a runner), firing a BAR and rifle, respectively, killed the four enemy soldiers. The time was now about 2200.

The right-flank squad leader's troubles were not yet over. Lieutenant McGee looked down the slope and saw a group of Chinese crawl out of the dry creek bed and start up the hill toward the squad leader's hole.

McGee called to him, "About fifteen or twenty of them are coming up to your right front."

With the enemy-manned machine gun firing frequent short bursts over his hole, the squad leader did not want to stand up high enough to see and fire at the enemy. Although Lieutenant McGee and Inmon kept firing at the Chinese, they could not stop them, and the enemy continued to crawl up toward the squad leader's hole, which was on the 3d Platoon's right flank next to the saddle. The Chinese began throwing potato-masher grenades toward the hole, which the squad leader shared with two other men. The squad leader and one of the other men a sergeant climbed out, ran to McGee's hole, and jumped in on top of him and Inmon. The sergeant was hit on the way over. The enemy then threw a satchel charge into the hole they had just left and killed the man who had remained there.

With these men on top of him, Lieutenant McGee could neither see nor fire. "Get the hell out of here, and get back with your squad!" he yelled.

The squad leader did not budge, and McGee repeated the order. The squad leader then jumped out and was immediately shot through the shoulder. Lieutenant McGee called for a litter team, and the two men-the sergeant and the squad leader were evacuated under fire.

By this time other enemy soldiers had started crawling up the slope toward Lieutenant McGee's position. One of them threw three grenades at McGee before the lieutenant killed the Chinese with a BAR he had taken from one of his men who had just been hit. The BAR was jamming on every tenth round. Lieutenant McGee used his pocket knife to extract the case. Finally he dropped the knife and was unable to find it in the dark. Quickly, he abandoned the automatic rifle and tried to fire his carbine at a Chinese who had crawled up to within ten feet of his hole. As the enemy soldier raised up on his knees, McGee pulled back the bolt to load the carbine, but at this critical moment the cold oil on the mechanism stopped the bolt from going home, and the weapon would not fire. McGee grabbed the operating handle and slammed the bolt in, fired four rounds

at the Chinese, killing him. Men in nearby holes killed three other enemy soldiers who got close to Company G's front line.

It was now close to 2300. Lieutenant McGee needed help. Since wire communications were out, he ordered his platoon runner (PFC John N. Martin) to return to the company's command post and inform Lieutenant Heath that the platoon urgently needed men, ammunition, and litter teams.

After receiving this request, Lieutenant Heath stepped outside and shouted over to the artillery fire direction center asking Lieutenant Rochnowski for help up on the hill. The battery commander, in turn, called to his sections. In a few minutes fifteen artillerymen assembled. The runner (Martin) led them up toward the 3d Platoon's hill. As they crossed the crest of the hill the enemy opened fire on them. Lieutenant McGee watched with a sinking sensation as a mortar round killed one and wounded another, and the rest of the reinforcing group turned and ran back down the hill. Martin then returned to the rear area to guide the company's wire team, which was carrying ammunition up to the platoon.

Lieutenant Heath stopped the artillerymen at the bottom of the hill, reformed them, and led them back up the hill himself. By this time, fighting on the hill had erupted into a frenzy of firing, with the enemy in full possession of that sector of Company G's line near the saddle. Near the top of the hill Lieutenant Heath's group fell apart again, the men running hard toward the bottom. With his men all gone, Heath started back after them. He was angry, and was yelling so loudly the men in the fire direction center tent could hear him. Halfway down the hill he stopped and stood there. Yelling for more help, ordering the men to return and re-form their line. When they didn't, he ran on to the bottom.

Heath grabbed a couple of the men by their clothing, yelling: "Goddammit, get back up on that hill! You'll die down here anyway. You might as well go up on the hill and die there."

Tracers from the enemy machine gun stretched along the hilltop like red beads. Flares popped overhead. The area was alternately dimly lighted, and dark as if someone were turning street lights on and off. When the artillerymen tried to find cover, Lieutenant Heath ran back and forth yelling and pulling at the men to persuade them to stand up and move. It was now between midnight and 0100 on 15 February.

Captain Elledge heard Lieutenant Heath calling for help. He went out in the gun park and yelled for men to help fight. The inexperienced artillerymen responded slowly. Captain Elledge went around the howitzers, pulled several men from their holes and, with a force of about ten men, set out for the left flank of the area still held by the 1st Platoon. Reaching the forward slope of the hill he found the caliber .30 machine gun there was silent; its three-man crew had been killed. Elledge stationed three men in the machine-gun pit and spread the others along

the hill, then examined the machine gun. It was binding, apparently having been hit. There was no ammunition. Captain Elledge put the machine gun on his shoulders and ran down the hill with it, after telling his men there that he would bring another one back immediately. He exchanged the damaged gun for an extra caliber .50 machine gun of Battery B. With it and a box of ammunition, he returned to the hill. He set up the weapon, turned it over to the three men, and then continued along the ridge, moving to the right toward the road cut. He wanted to see what the situation was.

Positions still manned by the 1st Platoon were a few yards down the forward slope of the hill, below Captain Elledge. Toward the west end of the hill he heard some odd noises, and stopped beside a three-foot-high grave mound near the top of the hill. Nearby were several men whom he suspected were Chinese. He could not see them, but he could hear them making low whistling sounds, like an owl, probably as a signal to other enemy soldiers. He waited there on his hands and knees, listening. In a few moments he could hear someone crawling over the crusted snow. Raising to look over the mound, he came face to face with an enemy soldier who was also peering over the mound. Captain Elledge was holding his carbine in his right hand. It was set to operate on automatic and was pointed in the general direction of the Chinese. He pulled the trigger and hit the man in the chest. Right behind this Chinese was another whom Captain Elledge shot through the head. A third enemy soldier threw a small "ink bottle" grenade which exploded and hit Elledge in the shoulder. With his arm numb, and figuring he was badly hit, Elledge slid on down the hill and went back to the battery's mess tent.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after 2200, Lieutenant Heath's main line of resistance began to break up when the enemy seized and held part of the 1st Platoon's sector. The three hours that followed were filled with fighting as intense and as frantic as any in which the infantrymen had participated. Although the entire regimental perimeter was under attack, it appeared then that the main effort was directed against Company G. And within that company, the 1st and 3d Platoons were standing athwart the two routes by which the enemy tried to reach the top of Company G's hill. One of these routes followed the spur that led from Hill 397 into the center of the 3d Platoon; the other route ran from the dead space in the creek bed to the saddle at the boundary between the 3d and 1st Platoons. Loss of this saddle early in the night seriously weakened the company's defenses, especially when the leader of the 1st Platoon, not knowing that the enemy had wrested these foxholes from his men, claimed to be in possession of the area for an hour or two after the enemy had been firing the American machine gun from there. This gave the enemy ample time to organize the saddle before the Americans counterattacked.

Lieutenant Heath used all the supporting fire he could get. He had mortar fire from his own light mortars, the 81-mm weapons from Company H, and some

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<sup>14</sup> Capt. John A. Elledge, in an interview by the author upon which this account is based.

help from the regimental Heavy-Mortar Company. The explosions from these shells, most of which fell in the area immediately south of Company G, sounded almost humdrum. The 37th Field Artillery Battalion shelled the slope of Hill 397 1,500 yards south of Company G. Enemy mortar shells fell on the north side of the hill, among Battery B's 155-mm howitzers, and on the French Battalion across the road. At frequent intervals illuminating flares appeared in the sky, and one time a plane dropped three large parachute flares which hovered in the sky above Battery B. They burned for thirty seconds or longer, turning the natural bowl from which the battery was firing into a large room flooded with bluish light. By this time the Chinese had a machine gun operating in the saddle and swung it toward the howitzers, raking the area.

Up on the hill the main weapons were small arms, grenades and explosive charges. The Chinese were fighting for each foxhole, receiving heavy casualties, but also taking some of the holes on Lieutenant Heath's front line and killing and wounding men from Company G and Battery B. The walking wounded slid down the hill and gathered at the building used as the company's command post or at one of the tents set up by the artillerymen, or walked toward the medical clearing station in Chipyong-ni.

Lieutenant Heath, realizing that the enemy now held the saddle and the flank of both the 1st and the 3d Platoons, tried unsuccessfully to form a counterattack force from the artillerymen. Several groups of artillerymen were fighting determinedly, including a caliber .50 machine-gun crew and individuals along the line. But those men Heath tried to build into a counter-attacking force were the artillerymen who had been on the front line and left when heavy fighting commenced, or others who had avoided getting into combat in the first place.

After the first three attempts to reach the top of the hill failed, Lieutenant Heath went to the artillery commander for more men, and then organized his line for another counterattack.

"We're going up that goddam hill or bust," he wept yelling.

While Heath struggled to hold his men together and counterattack, McGee's 3d Platoon gradually lost more men and foxholes. The enemy machine gun, firing from a position in the former sector of the 1st Platoon, sent a bullet through the left eye of Private Inmon (the platoon runner in McGee's foxhole). He started shouting: "I'm hit in the face! I'm hit in the face! Get me back off this hill!"

Blood spurted from his eye as the platoon leader tried to calm him down. Lieutenant McGee told him to lie down. "I can't take you out now," he said. He shouted across to his platoon sergeant for the medic. "Inmon's been hit."

Within a few minutes the aid man came over and bandaged Inmon's head. Lieutenant McGee wanted Inmon to keep on firing his rifle but the wounded man

said he could not see well enough, so McGee asked him to load clips for his carbine while he fired.

The 3d Platoon's strongest weapon was Corporal Ottesen's machine gun located in the center of its sector. It fired along the spur over which the enemy crawled toward Company G's line, and enemy soldiers had tried repeatedly to silence it. Some time after midnight two enemy soldiers managed to flank Ottesen's hole and tossed in two grenades, knocking out the gun. Corporal Ottesen became missing in action.

No longer hearing the machine gun, Lieutenant McGee called to his platoon sergeant (Sergeant Kluttz) who was between him and the gun.

"What's happened to the machine gun?" he asked. "It's quit firing."

Sergeant Kluttz told him the position had been overrun and that Chinese were coming through between Corporal Ottesen's squad and Cpl. Raymond Bennett's squad. Bennett's squad, holding the left flank of the platoon, had not been attacked. McGee called him on the sound-powered telephone and ordered him to shift several men over to fill the gap left by the knocked-out machine gun. He also sent his other runner (PFC John Martin) to find Lieutenant Heath and ask for ammunition and for replacements to fill the empty holes along his defensive line. Heath, in turn, called Colonel Edwards, who immediately sent a squad from Company F's uncommitted platoon to bolster Company G's line.<sup>15</sup>

While this squad was on the way, Corporal Bennett succeeded in closing the gap where Corporal Ottesen's machine gun had been. A group of Chinese was still trying hard to seize that part of the hill. There was a bugler in the group whom Bennett shot as he tooted his second note. In the melee, however, Corporal Bennett was hit by a hand grenade which blew off part of his hand. Then a bullet hit him in the shoulder, and shortly thereafter a shell fragment struck him in the head. The sound powered telephone went out, and Lieutenant McGee lost contact with Bennett's squad.

It was nearly 0200 when Sgt. Kenneth G. Kelly arrived with a squad from Company F's support platoon. This squad had the mission of recovering the part of Company G's line that had fallen to the enemy, especially the saddle between the two platoons. Sergeant Kluttz guided the men west toward the enemy-occupied foxholes and immediately started a fire fight that wounded or killed the entire squad from Company F within ten minutes.<sup>16</sup> After killing two Chinese who fired burp guns at him but missed, Sergeant Kluttz returned to tell Lieutenant McGee what had happened.

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<sup>15</sup> Edwards, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Edwards, loc. cit.

"Lieutenant," he said, "we've got to stop them!"

The enemy attack continued without let-up. It was not one calculated to overrun the entire hill but a persistent, gnawing assault that progressed from one hole to the next. The Chinese held most of the holes on that part of the hill between the road cut and the saddle, and those on the right flank of the weakened 3d Platoon. Then, between 0200 and 0300, the 2d Platoon, which was not under heavy fire, pulled back its right flank from its position in the rice paddies, thus breaking contact with Lieutenant McGee's platoon and taking away a machine gun that had been supporting the 3d Platoon. Only a few men from the 3d Platoon were left.

Lieutenant McGee shouted over to Sergeant Kluttz to ask how Corporal Bennett's squad was making out.

"I think three or four of them are still left," the Sergeant answered.

McGee's platoon was low on ammunition and Sergeant Kluttz was having trouble with the machine gun he was firing.

Growing discouraged, Lieutenant McGee called to his platoon sergeant, "It looks like they've got us, Kluttz."

"Well," Sergeant Kluttz called back, "let's kill as many of these sons of bitches as we can before they get us."

Once in possession of part of Company G's hill, the Chinese fired into the bowl-shaped area among the artillery and mortarmen, causing several casualties. The leader of the 4th Platoon (Lt. Carl F. Haberman) moved his mortars to a ditch a hundred yards or more to the rear. He then set out to find men to help retake the hill and eliminate the enemy fire. He walked into a squad tent filled with artillerymen.

"Hell," he said, "a squad tent won't stop bullets."

Haberman persuaded five or six men to accompany him. They went outside with him but none would climb the hill.

Some time between 0230 and 0300 Company G lost the rest of its hill. Sergeant Schmitt and the remainder of the 1st Platoon came down from the west end of the company's sector. In the center of the company's front, Sergeant Kluttz's machine gun jammed. He and Lieutenant McGee decided to try to get out. They called to the other men, threw what grenades they had left, and climbed over the crest of the hill. Lieutenant McGee and five other men, all who were left from the 3d Platoon, walked on down the hill.

Lieutenant Heath called his battalion commander (Colonel Edwards) to report the loss of his company's position. Since a break occurring anywhere around the small regimental perimeter was serious, Colonel Edwards ordered a counterattack and promised to send help. His battalion reserve now consisted of the support platoon of Company F less the squad that had been lost while attacking the saddle. After ordering this platoon to move to Company G's area, Edwards appealed to Colonel Freeman (CO, 23d Infantry) for more help. Colonel Freeman was fixed no better for reserve strength. An attached Ranger company constituted his reserve, but because of another severe enemy thrust at his 3d Battalion, Colonel Freeman was reluctant to commit his entire reserve in Company G's area. He agreed to furnish one platoon from the Ranger company and a tank.<sup>17</sup>

Since so few of Company G's men were left, Colonel Edwards decided to put one of his battalion staff officers (Lt. Robert Curtis) in command of the two platoons. Curtis set out to meet the Ranger platoon and guide it into position.

While these two platoons were on the way, Lieutenant Heath attempted to form a defensive line along a four- or five-foot rib of ground that crossed the center of the bowl-shaped area just behind the artillery position. At the fire direction center several artillerymen were firing an illuminating mission when they heard Heath's voice outside. Heath was now speaking in a normal voice as he stationed one of his men on the new defensive line.

"We'll form our line right along here," he explained to the man, "just back of this tent."

The artillerymen looked at one another for a few seconds.

"I guess it's time to get out of here," one of them said.

They pulled a blanket over two wounded men who lay on the ground, and prepared to leave. Just then the telephone rang. It was the S-3 of the 37th Field Artillery Battalion inquiring about the illuminating mission he had requested.

"Where the hell are my flares?" he asked.

"Excuse me, sir," answered the artilleryman, "but our position is being overrun."

He dropped the telephone, followed the others outside, and crossed to the opposite side of the road in front of the howitzers. A three-foot high embankment there afforded good protection. Other artillerymen were already behind it. The

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<sup>17</sup> Edwards, op. cit., p. 30.

artillerymen did not abandon their howitzers; they could still cover the battery's position by fire.

Lieutenant Curtis, with the platoon from Company F and the Ranger platoon, reached Company G about 0330.<sup>18</sup> Lieutenant Curtis took command of the two platoons but immediately encountered trouble from the commander of the Ranger company. The latter officer had come with the platoon from his company. He claimed that the platoon, being a part of regimental reserve, was to take orders only from the regimental commander. Curtis immediately called his battalion headquarters to explain the situation to Colonel Edwards, who solved the problem by putting another staff officer this time a captain in command of the composite force.

It was between 0345 and 0400, 15 February, when Capt. John H. Ramsburg left the long, tin-roofed building that housed the battalion's command post and set out for Company G's area. Except for Company G's sector where there was brisk firing, the regimental perimeter was relatively quiet at the time. A quarter of a mile beyond the railroad tracks Ramsburg turned left, following a trail that led from the road to the house where Lieutenant Heath had established his command post.

Along the trail there was a quad caliber .50 halftrack. An hour or two before the crew with the vehicle had accidentally run into a ditch, nearly tipping the halftrack over. Unable to get it into firing position, the crew had abandoned the weapon and vehicle. Lieutenant Curtis was standing near the halftrack. There was enough light in the area for Captain Ramsburg to recognize him at a distance of ten or fifteen feet.

"Christ, John," Lieutenant Curtis said, "but I'm glad to see you here! Can't do anything with these Rangers."

He went on to explain that the commander of the Ranger company objected to having a platoon from his company attached to another unit, to having it participate in a counterattack, and that he refused to take orders from anyone but the regimental commander.

Captain Ramsburg went first to Lieutenant Heath's command post where he called Colonel Edwards in order to report that he and both platoons were at the position. He then talked with the commander of the Ranger company to establish his position as commander of the infantry units in that sector.

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<sup>18</sup> Capt. John H. Ramsburg, in an interview by the author. Unless otherwise noted, the account of the second counterattack to retake Company G's sector is based upon that interview. For more details on the difficulties created by the commander of the Ranger Company, see Edwards, *op. cit.*, and Lt Robert Curtis, letter to the author, 22 July 1952.

At the time the few men left from Company G and those from the platoons from Company F and the Ranger Company were all mixed together just a line of bodies on the ground firing against the hill to discourage the enemy from attempting a further advance. Captain Ramsburg had the platoon leaders separate their units and sort out the artillerymen whom he sent across the road where most men from the battery had assembled. Since none of Company G's communications facilities was working at the time, Captain Ramsburg asked Lieutenant Curtis to send men to Chipyong-ni for more radios. He then asked Lieutenant McGee to have the mortars moved closer to the line of departure so that he could call out orders to the crew.

In the meantime, the two platoon leaders re-formed their men. There were 36 men in the platoon from the Ranger Company, 28 in the platoon from Company F. In addition, there were 6 or 7 mortar men, 2 machinegun crews, and 4 or 5 men left from Company G. To the two platoon leaders he outlined his plan: following a short mortar concentration, the two machine guns would commence firing at the top of the ridge and over the heads of the attacking men who were to move on Captain Ramsburg's signal. The Ranger platoon, on the right, was to attack the hill formerly held by the 1st Platoon of Company G, while the platoon from Company F was to assault Lieutenant McGee's former position.

It was still dark when a man returned with three SCR-536 radios one each for Captain Ramsburg and his two platoon leaders. The enemy was fairly quiet at the time and had not interfered with organizing the attack. After testing the radios and getting all men in position on the line of departure, Captain Ramsburg called for mortar fire. The first round, fired from a range of not more than 150 yards, landed squarely on the crest of the ridge.

"That where you want 'em?" one of the mortarmen asked.

"That's exactly right," Captain Ramsburg yelled back. "Now go ahead and sweep the hill in both directions."

He asked for a five-minute concentration. The mortar men doubted that their ammunition would last that long. After two or three minutes, Captain Ramsburg signaled for machine-gun fire. The two guns went into action, but after a few bursts enemy mortar rounds landed nearby, and both the friendly mortars and the machine guns had to cease firing. Eight or ten rounds landed between the line of departure and the mortar crews about twenty yards behind it. The explosions wounded at least six men, including the leader of the platoon from Company F.

The commander of the Ranger Company, thinking that friendly rounds were falling short, called for the mortar crews to cease firing. The shouting interfered with efforts to get the attack under way. Captain Ramsburg became angry. He

ordered the Ranger commander to gather up and evacuate his wounded men, hoping thereby to get rid of the commander as well as the wounded men.

The platoon sergeant took command of the platoon from Company F, the machine guns opened fire again, and Captain Ramsburg signaled for the jump-off.

"OK, let's go!" he shouted.

The men stood up, commenced firing, and walked forward through crusted snow which, in the low ground in front of the hill, was knee-deep in places. In a minute or two the advancing line, with Captain Ramsburg moving in the center, started up the hillside, the Rangers in the lead since men from that platoon, all yelling loudly, pushed their attack fast.

Several enemy mortar rounds and a few grenades exploded on the slope of the hill. In the middle of the attack, two guns located near the French Battalion's hill fired into the Ranger platoon. The guns appeared to be either automatic rifles or light machine guns, but Captain Ramsburg could not tell if the French were firing by mistake, or if Chinese soldiers had set up guns in that area. Nor did he later learn who was firing. The first burst was a long, steady one a solid string of light from the gun to the Ranger platoon. After that there were short bursts for a minute or longer while Captain Ramsburg and several other men, believing this to be friendly fire, screamed to have it stopped. Several Rangers were wounded by this fire.

Just before the attack jumped off, Lieutenant Curtis had gone to each of the three tanks in that area to tell the tankers of the counterattack plans, and to warn them not to fire without orders. He had just returned when the machine gun fired into the Ranger platoon. One of the tank crews, having apparently decided the machine gun firing from the French Battalion's hill was friendly and the Rangers were enemy, disregarded orders and also opened fire, aiming the tank's caliber .50 machine gun at the Ranger platoon. While Captain Ramsburg yelled at the tankers, Lieutenant Curtis raced back and halted the machine gun, which had fired for 20 or 30 seconds, only long enough to sweep across the hill once. Besides creating more confusion, this caused additional casualties among the Rangers, the remaining ones of whom, by this time, were near the top of their hill still yelling among themselves.

Another gun this one definitely manned by the Chinese had meanwhile opened fire into the left flank of the platoon from Company F, causing serious damage in that area. The gun was in the rice paddies near the place where the 2d Platoon of Company G had been, and gave the attacking force its first indication that friendly troops had vacated that position. The commander of Company F spotted the tracers from this enemy gun and directed mortar fire at it but was unable to

knock it out. As he afterward learned, the Chinese crew had been there long enough to dig in and provide overhead protection for the gun.

Captain Ramsburg, occupied with the machine-gun fire hitting the right flank of his line, did not know of the trouble the platoon from Company F was experiencing on the opposite end. Lieutenant Curtis succeeded in silencing the tank's fire. Several men from the Ranger platoon were already on top of their objective shouting for help.

"We're on top!" they yelled. "Come on up! Get some men up here!"

Other members of that platoon were still climbing the hill, but a third or more were casualties by this time, the result of either friendly or enemy fire.

A grenade exploded beside Captain Ramsburg just as the tank's fire ended and he turned to go on up the hill. A fragment struck him in the foot. At the moment he was holding a caliber .45 submachine gun in his right hand and at first he thought that, in his anger and excitement over the machine-gun fire from his own tanks, he had squeezed too hard on the trigger and shot himself through the foot. He wondered how he would explain the accident to Colonel Edwards. He then realized his gun was on full automatic and, had he pulled the trigger, it would have fired several times. He also recalled seeing a flash and decided he had been hit by a grenade fragment. He removed his glove and sat down to examine his foot. The two machine-gun crews came by on their way to the top of the hill where they were to relocate their guns. A little later Lieutenant Heath came up the hill and stopped where Ramsburg was sitting.

"What happened to you?" Heath asked. He was supposed to stay at the bottom of the hill and collect any stragglers who might congregate in that area. He was to go up on the hill later, after it was secured.

Captain Ramsburg explained that he was not seriously wounded, that he had only one or two broken bones in his ankle. Lieutenant Heath offered to take charge of the attack for the time being. Slings Ramsburg's radio over his shoulder, Heath proceeded up the hill.

After resting for several minutes, Captain Ramsburg started on up the hill. He had hobbled a few yards when a soldier came down, dragging another man by a leg. Captain Ramsburg stopped the soldier because he did not want an able-bodied man to evacuate a wounded man, thereby losing two men because of one casualty. The soldier explained that he was wounded also and to prove it, turned around to show one arm which was badly shot up and appeared to be hanging only by a piece of flesh. Captain Ramsburg waved him on.

"Who's the man you're dragging?" he asked as the soldier moved on. "It's the Lieutenant," the soldier answered; "Lieutenant Heath. He got it in the chest."

After talking with Captain Ramsburg, Heath had gone on to the crest of the hill and had come face-to-face with a Chinese soldier. Heath reached for the carbine slung on his shoulder but it was entangled in the strap on the radio which he had just taken from Captain Ramsburg. Before he could get his carbine, the enemy soldier had shot him through the chest, causing a serious, but not fatal, wound. About the same time the Ranger platoon leader was killed.

The American counterattack did not force the enemy from the top of the ridge, but instead, for a brief time the opposing forces occupied the same ground, fighting in the darkness. Casualties were heavy. Several other wounded men slid down the hill. Within a few seconds, four or five more appeared and when Captain Ramsburg stopped them, they explained the Chinese had recaptured the hill, that no soldiers from Company F or the Rangers were left there, and that they could hold out no longer. Ramsburg followed them to the foot of the hill. The counterattack was ended.

At the mortar position, Captain Ramsburg met Lieutenant Curtis. "Get as many men as you can possibly gather up," he told Lieutenant Curtis, "and get them on this hump to hold off the damned Chinese if they come over the hill."

Of the 28 men in the platoon from Company F, 22 were wounded during the brief attack; 1 became missing in action; only 5 were unhurt.<sup>19</sup> The Ranger platoon suffered casualties equally as heavy. Many of the walking wounded had already gone down the road into Chipyong-ni; there were 18 or 20 wounded men congregated near the farm house used as the command post and others at the artillery supply tent. There were few effective men left, but Lieutenant Curtis stationed those he could find near the command post to guard it.

Although men from both platoons claimed no friendly troops remained on the hill, Lieutenant Curtis decided to make a search for survivors and with another man started up the slope, heading toward an area where he heard the sound of men digging. It was still dark, although the sky there was the first indication of approaching daylight. As the two men reached the top of the ridge, an enemy soldier suddenly jumped in front of them and sounded a bugle call. A dozen or more enemy soldiers ran toward the bugler. Lieutenant Curtis and his companion thought the Chinese had heard them, but no firing followed the alarm. They backed away. On the way down they came across three wounded soldiers who said they were the last men on the hill from the platoon from Company F. Nevertheless, after helping them back to the command post shacks, Lieutenant Curtis returned – this time alone – to search the remainder of the area where the attacking platoons had been. He found only Chinese.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lt. Donald O. Miller, letter to Major Roy E. Appleman, 18 October 1951.

<sup>20</sup> Curtis, *op. cit.*

When Curtis got back to the cluster of command post buildings, he discovered that what was left of the friendly defensive organization in that area was falling apart. The commander of the Ranger Company, having returned from evacuating the men wounded at the outset of the counterattack, kept yelling, "We can't hold here; let's get out of here!"

Captain Ramsburg had reported the failure of the counterattack to Lieutenant Colonel Edwards who had, meanwhile, secured the remainder of the Ranger Company to help regain the lost section of the perimeter. He told Captain Ramsburg to hang on, that help was on the way.<sup>21</sup> However, by this time no able-bodied riflemen were left. Even the men Lieutenant Curtis had left to guard the command post had gone. Up on the hill, Chinese began firing rifles into the bowl-shaped area. With only wounded men left, Captain Ramsburg finally gave the order for everyone to move back to the hill that formed the other end of the horseshoe, to a ridge just south of the railroad tracks.<sup>22</sup>

While these events were taking place, the artillery liaison officer (Captain Elledge) had undertaken to get the quad .50 halftrack back in operation. Abandoned earlier in the night by its crew, it was in a ditch near the trail leading from the road to the command post. About the same time that Captain Ramsburg's counterattack got underway, Captain Elledge had persuaded a tank crew to help pull the halftrack onto the road again. In the first place, Elledge wanted to get the halftrack turned around so that he could fire the machineguns; in addition,, it blocked the trail leading to the command post buildings and thereby interfered with the evacuation of some of the wounded men. Half an hour later – after Captain Ramsburg's counterattack had fallen back – Elledge had the halftrack operating under its own power and had tested the small engine that drove the traversing mechanism for the quadruple-mounted machine-guns. He went off to get permission to fire from the infantrymen. At the command post, Captain Ramsburg had just given the order to pull out.

"Go ahead and fire," he told Captain Elledge. "No one's left up there."<sup>23</sup>

Captain Elledge returned to the quad .50 and swept the length of the enemy-held hill. The tank commander (MSgt. Andrew Reyna) appeared at that time to ask for help in recovering sixteen wounded men artillerymen and infantrymen who had been left at Battery B's supply tent near the foot of the hill and directly under the enemy's guns. While Captain Elledge kept pounding the enemy hilltop with fire from his four machine guns, Sergeant Reyna and his crew drove the tank under

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<sup>21</sup> Ramsburg, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ramsburg, op. cit., Elledge, op. cit. 24. Ibid.

the fire to the base of the hill, carried the wounded men from the tent, piled them on the tank, and returned.

Captain Elledge had been firing so steadily that, in the first gray light of the morning, artillerymen across the road could see heat waves shimmering above the four guns. [24] Elledge scanned the area, looking for targets. He noticed several enemy soldiers standing on the hill between the saddle and the road cut, and suddenly realized they were preparing to fire a 75-mm recoilless rifle that the 1st Platoon of Company G had left there. It was aimed directly at him. Captain Elledge could see daylight through the tube. He watched as the Chinese shoved a round into the breech, then he quickly turned his machine guns in that direction and destroyed the enemy crew.<sup>24</sup>

Two wounded men had been left under a blanket in the fire direction center tent. While one tank, firing from the road, covered the rescue, PFC Thomas S. Allison and PFC Isaiah W. Williams (both members of the artillery wire section) drove a 3/4-ton truck to the tent, loaded the two wounded men onto it, and backed out again.

Lieutenant Curtis urged the remaining wounded men to start walking toward Chipyeong-ni, then ran to the road to tell the artillerymen that the infantrymen were pulling back.

"You're the front line now," he told them.

The artillerymen, concerned about the safety of their howitzers, decided to stay behind the road embankment where, by fire, they could keep the Chinese out of their battery's position. Two tanks on the road separating the artillerymen from their howitzers regularly fired short machine-gun bursts into the blackened, chewed-up top of the hill.

At the command post only nine wounded men were left not counting Captain Ramsburg, who stayed behind to supervise the withdrawal. All nine were seriously wounded and waiting for litters and a vehicle to carry them to the battalion's aid station. They were lying on the ground near the straw-roofed buildings. As Lieutenant Curtis returned to the command post, a bugle sounded and he saw 10 or 12 Chinese soldiers coming down the highest hill the one originally defended by Lieutenant McGee's platoon. Curtis pointed out the enemy to the wounded men.

"If you fellows don't leave now," he told them, "you'll never leave. There aren't enough men left to protect you."

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<sup>24</sup> Elledge, op. cit.

All nine men left, somehow or other moving with only the help they could give one another or get from Lieutenant Curtis, who followed them, heading back to the new defensive position.<sup>25</sup>

Only two men both sergeants remained at the command post with Captain Ramsburg. The sergeants pulled out the telephones and the three men started toward Chipyong-ni, moving across the frozen rice paddies. Before they had gone far, however, an enemy machine-gunner fired at them. They broke into a run. Captain Ramsburg, disregarding his broken ankle which was now stiff and sore, sprinted the entire distance to the new hilltop.

The quad .50 still manned by Captain Elledge and the three tanks pounded the enemy hill with machine-gun fire. One of the artillery officers yelled for a gun crew to man a howitzer, and half a dozen men scrambled over the road embankment and dashed to one of the 155-mm howitzers. Turning it around, they fired six white phosphorus shells that blossomed into white streamers of smoke and fire along the hillside. At such close range, the sound of the propelling charge and the sound of the shell burst were barely separated.<sup>26</sup>

At the new position, Captain Ramsburg joined the survivors of the ten hour enemy attack, as well as the remaining two platoons of the Ranger Company attached to Colonel Edwards's battalion. All of the men experienced a feeling of relief when daylight came on 15 February, because the enemy soldiers usually withdrew then. This time, however, the Chinese did not withdraw. They conducted a determined defense against an attack made by the Ranger company and Company B, supported by air strikes, artillery, and tanks, and directed by Colonel Edwards. It was evening before the enemy was defeated and withdrew.

Several inches of snow fell during the night of 15-16 February, covering several hundred Chinese bodies on the hill originally defended by Lieutenant Heath's Company G. At Chipyong-ni the Chinese suffered their first defeat since entering the Korean War.

## DISCUSSION

If the commander of an attacking force disregards casualties, he will usually be able to attain at least local successes. The commander of defending troops faced with such an opponent must be prepared to limit any such successes. He holds the shoulders of any penetration. He uses supporting fires and positions in depth to blunt, slow down, and finally to stop the spearhead of the attack. Once the

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<sup>25</sup> Curtis, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Ramsburg, op. cit.

penetration has been contained, the defending commander then counterattacks to eliminate it.

A counterattack plan is based on the answers to these questions: When? Where? How many? Prematurely launched counterattacks meet the enemy head on, before the enemy attack has lost its impetus, and before the enemy has been softened by fire. Tardy counterattacks meet the enemy entrenched and reinforced. Thus, ill-timed counterattacks no matter how gallantly executed often fail. Terrain and the disposition of the enemy within the penetration probably will dictate where the counterattack should strike. But a knowledge of all the many factors that go to make up both the enemy and friendly situation is necessary to determine the strength of the counter-attack. The entire reserve should not be committed to action unless necessary. Nor should "a boy be sent to do a man's job."

Some highlights of the action at Chipyong-ni bear emphasizing by repetition.

Note that Company G was first alerted to an attack by the sound of digging. Note also the use of the machine gun to replace the recoilless rifle at night a move that not only kept the rifle blast from disclosing the position but also used the available personnel to the maximum with a weapon much better suited to the requirements of close-in night fighting.

The reprehensible actions of some of the men of Battery B, 503d Field Artillery Battalion, cannot be attributed to inexperience alone. Few men will perform well when they are formed into an impromptu group of individuals to do an unfamiliar job. The infantry squad needs teamwork and interdependence within itself attributes that must reach the maximum in assault combat. An infantry squad will fight its best only when each member has confidence in all other members and in the commanders and leaders over it. Twenty artillery men who have not demonstrated to one another their individual abilities as infantrymen and who are placed under the leadership of a stranger cannot be expected to behave with distinction. Captain Elledge, who obviously enjoyed the fight, is of a type that occurs not very often. If artillerymen are to be used as infantry, they must be so trained and so organized.