

CHIPYOUNG-YI

by

Lt. Robert Curtis

When the 23rd Regimental Combat Team pulled into the Chipyoung-ni perimeter I was a lieutenant serving on the 2nd Battalion staff of LTC. James Edwards. LTC. Edwards had figured that several lieutenants whom he had given battle field commissions had served their time on the front line and brought us back to the battalion staff for training. I was used as an assistant S-3 and S-2 helping out our experienced staff in any way that I could. LTC. Edwards also assigned missions to me.

On 13 and 14 February the entire 23rd RCT perimeter was surrounded and under heavy probing attacks by the Chinese. George Company in the 2nd battalion area had been particularly hard hit on the night of the 13th but had held. After this 10% of the battalion units were confident that they could hold until promised help could break the 23rd out of the Chipyoung-ni perimeter.

During the evening of 14 February all hell broke loose along the entire 23rd RCT perimeter. Again particularly hard against the George Company sector which was on the southern rim of the 23rd RCT perimeter. The French forces were on the right of George Company and Fox Company was on their left. Because of the extensive ground that had to be protected there was no tight physical tie in with either the French or Fox Company and gaps were covered by machine guns, mines, wire, mortar and artillery fires. As the evening and early morning hours wore on the Chinese kept constant pressure on the entire 2nd battalion sector and again constant determined probing attacks against George Company seeking weak spots and automatic weapons positions.

At about 0230 on 15 February, I was told to report to LTC. Edwards. I knew from radio and phone transmissions that all hell had broken loose in the George Company area and that the company had lost most of their perimeter positions. LTC. Edwards directed me to go down the main street through town and meet a ranger platoon, take them to the George Company commander, 1Lt. Heath, for use as part of a counterattack force to recover the lost George Company positions and then to return to the battalion CP as fast as I could.

As I walked down the road, I could hear enemy and friendly fire from all sides of the RCT perimeter and could see tracers criss crossing the night sky. Frequently the whole area was eerily illuminated by enemy or friendly flares. I could hear the platoon of rangers coming up the road long before I could see them and I could tell that they were extremely perturbed about something.

On joining the Rangers, I explained to their company commander, who had accompanied the platoon, my mission and that George Company had been over run and their mission was to attack as soon as possible with all forces available in the George Company area in order to retake the lost positions before the Chinese could reinforce them. After the attack they were to remain on position as part of the perimeter defense. The Rangers already knew about

the attack mission. There was more agitation on the part of the Ranger leaders. They explained to me that they could attack and retake the lost position but they were not equipped to defend for any length of time once the objective was taken. I explained to the Ranger Commander that there were no available reserve forces to relieve them on the objective but that he could work out a relief in the daylight hours with Colonel Freeman. This heated discussion continued all the way to the George Company command post. As we were approaching the George Company area heavy fire ceased on the southern perimeter and only occasional rifle came into the area.

On arriving at the CP, I found the situation was desperate. There had been extremely high casualties to include an entire squad from Fox Company that had been attached to George Company. Many of the key leaders were wounded and there was much confusion in the area. Lt. Heath was trying to complete a company reorganization and preparation for a counterattack. He briefed me on the situation and said he felt that some of the positions in the 2nd platoon area near Fox Company were still in place in the rice paddy and holding. A platoon, minus the lost squad had arrived from Fox Company and had been integrated into George Company. This was the last of the battalion reserve. After a discussion with Lt. Heath, it was decided that since we had a composite force in the area and we were having trouble with the Rangers, it would be better if I, as a staff officer, took charge of the attack and defense until George Company could be reorganized and then he would take over. He knew that I knew all of his non commissioned officers and that they would follow me. Lt. Heath offered to help in any way that he could to include leading the attack up the hill.

All of the George Company and Fox Company leaders and their men were ready and willing to attack. At that time, we had three 60 mm mortars, three tanks and light machine gun fires to support the attack, plus the possibility of a quad .50 caliber weapon that was sitting at an angle on a near by trail but was inoperable in that position. I couldn't find the 81 mm mortar observer and the company had lost contact with the 4.2 mortar fire direction center. The crew assigned to the quad 50 had left the area but I knew the tankers would know how to fire the weapon. I was told we had some artillery men forward of the CP but that they were guarding their howitzers and I did not count on their assistance in the attack because I didn't know how effective they would be as infantry, especially under the conditions that we were in.

I informed the Ranger Company Commander and his platoon leader that he would attack on the right flank guiding on the cut in the road and tying in to George Company on the left. During a heated discussion with the Ranger Company Commander the question of rank came up and when the Ranger Company Commander found out that both he and his platoon leader outranked me he said that he couldn't take orders from me. He again pointed out that he was attached directly to Colonel Freeman and that he would take no orders

except directly from Colonel Freeman. I informed him that since he was the senior commander on the ground he was welcome to take charge of all the forces in the area and lead the attack and that George Company and the platoon from Fox Company would follow his commands. I told him that I could put him in touch with Colonel Freeman but all it would get him was an ass chewing for delaying the attack. The Ranger company commander still insisted that he could attack and take his portion of the objective faster than the infantry but that he couldn't hold it with the weapons he had available to him. He said in no uncertain terms that his mission did not allow him to take charge of the counterattack.

Time was critical and the situation was growing desperate so I called Colonel Edwards and explained to him that the Rangers wanted a direct order from Colonel Freeman before they would attack and that they refused to attack under my command since he and his platoon leader outranked me. I told him I had taken command of the break through area and asked him to send a senior captain or a major to the area as soon as possible, either to take command, or to back up my orders. I coordinated with the commanders on the ground and explained that a senior staff officer was on his way and we would attack as soon as he got there.

I asked the commanders to continue the preparation for the attack. While the commanders were working with their men, I went to the area that a quad .50 caliber had slipped off a trail and was sitting at a bad angle to see if it could be used to support the attack and more importantly, the defense of the area. While checking the quad .50 over Captain John Ramsburg, the battalion S-2, came down the trail leading to the George Company CP. I said, "Christ John, am I ever glad to see you, I can't do a damn thing with the Ranger company commander." I explained the situation to him and asked him if I would lead the attack or if he would. He said that he would lead the attack but I should stay and assist him. I had worked with Captain Ramsberg in a similar situation on the Naktong River and we knew how the other was going to react in this situation. I determined that the quad .50 had only slid off the trail and was on an angle that made the weapon inoperable. I made a mental note to find a tank crew to pull the weapon into a better position and use it in the attack and defense.

Captain Ramsburg and I proceeded to the George Company CP where he called a commanders meeting and laid out his plan of attack. This still left the Rangers on the right flank of the attack. The Ranger company commander still didn't believe the defense of the area was a suitable mission for his men but Captain Ramsburg straightened him out with a few choice words that left little doubt of who was in command and what was going to take place. At no time did the Rangers object to the attack, only their defending the area with the weapons and personnel available to them and to the supporting fires we had available to help hold their positions.

Ramsburg directed me to coordinate with what fire support weapons I could find in the area and to see if I couldn't find more men for the attack. He also directed me to send back to the rear and get three radios, one for each of his commanders. The only weapons for support were the three tanks on the road, the George Company 60mm mortars and three light machine guns. Captain Ramsburg wanted the machine guns positioned to give overhead fire and the 60mm mortars moved forward so he could issue commands directly to the gunners. I couldn't find the observer for the 81mm mortars or the 4.2 mortars and we were not in contact with the 4.2 fire direction center. The 75mm and 57mm recoilless weapons and the 3.5 rocket launchers were never used at night because of the flashback that could be seen for miles plus no night firing devices were available to pick up enemy targets and these weapons were not in the area. All personnel in the area manning support weapons not being fired were to be used in the attack. Ammunition for all weapons was extremely low. The 60mm mortars claimed that they could provide only limited preparatory fires and then nothing for the defense.

When I was on my way back from the tanks to join Captain Ramsburg in the attack I could hear him giving direct commands to the mortars moving their rounds exactly where he wanted them. Just then enemy mortar fire fell into the area near the mortars. The Rangers thought that this enemy fire was coming from the George Company mortars and were screaming to halt the mortar fire. Several Rangers and personnel from Fox Company were wounded including the platoon leader. This confusion delayed the attack. The Ranger Company Commander was screaming so loudly that Captain Ramsburg thought he would demoralize the entire attack. He raced over to the Ranger Company Commander and asked him to gather up all of his wounded and evacuate them. He wanted to get rid of the Ranger Company Commander as fast as he could.

By the time I rejoined Captain Ramsburg the attack was well under way and he was half way up the objective hill. I could tell the Rangers were making an aggressive and rapid advance in their sector from the firing and shouting that was rapidly moving up the slope of the hill in their area. I realized that they were going to be on the objective well before the rest of the attacking forces just as the ranger company commander told me they would be.

As I reached Captain Ramsburg, all hell broke loose along the entire attack line. The Chinese had held most of their fire until the attacking forces had reached the crest of the hill. This probably was because they had occupied the original George Company positions. I could hear the Rangers shouting that they had taken their objective and needed litter bearers, medics and more ammunition. Shortly after the Rangers hollered that they needed help or they couldn't hold any longer. As I started to talk with Captain Ramsburg either friendly (French) or enemy machine gun fire raked the Ranger area. To me it appeared that it came from just forward of where I knew the French positions were located but to the Rangers it appeared the firing was coming

from the French lines. This firing consisted of several long bursts of greenish red tracer fire followed by short bursts of fire. The firing lasted only seconds but caused more casualties in the Ranger platoon and in addition caused more loss of morale because all of the Rangers were positive that this fire came from friendly guns. The machine gun firing that appeared to come from the French position caused the tanks on the road to think that the French were firing into Chinese on the hill and they opened fire into the Rangers thinking they were the enemy. Captain Ramsburg hollered at me to go back and stop the damn tanks from firing into the Rangers. I ran to the tanks as fast as I could, ordered them to cease firing and told them that we had taken the hill back and not to fire again unless given an order to fire. As I raced back to Captain Ramsburg, I passed many wounded men coming down the hill. The Rangers were still shouting that they had taken their objective and needed help now or they couldn't hold out any longer. Shouts for medics and stretchers could be heard all up and down the line. We had no medics and no men available to be stretcher bearers. Enemy and Friendly fire on the hill was still extremely heavy and at close, almost point blank range. It was still dark and I couldn't see what was happening on the objective but several of the walking wounded said they had been in hand to hand combat with the Chinese but that we had taken and held the hill.

When I reached Captain Ramsburg, he was sitting in the snow looking at his foot, only taking time to shout at riflemen coming down the hill to return to the fight. None could as they were all wounded. I asked Ramsburg if we had anyone left on the objective as I had seen so many wounded coming back down and he said that he thought we held the hill as he could hear the Rangers shouting on their objective. I asked Captain Ramsburg what had happened to his foot as I could see he was in great pain. He said that he had shot himself in the foot with his 45 caliber sub-machine gun. I looked at his weapon and it was on full automatic and I told Ramsburg that if he had fired at his foot with the weapon on automatic he would have blown his whole foot off. He recalled that just before he felt the pain in his foot there had been a flash in the snow just to his front and we concluded that he had been hit by grenade fragments. Captain Ramsburg said that Lieutenant Heath had come up the hill behind him, found him wounded and offered to go up the hill and take charge of the attack but seconds later someone had dragged him seriously wounded down the hill past him. I urged him to return to the CP area and try to restore order to the rear and see if we had enough men for another attack in case we lost the hill and I would go up and take charge.

I continued on up the hill and encountered only wounded men coming down, assisting more seriously wounded soldiers. As I continued almost to the top I suddenly realized that the shouting in the Ranger area no longer came from on top of the hill but from the bottom of the hill near where I could just make out the silhouettes of the 155 howitzers. Also little firing was occurring along the entire hill mass and I could hear only

Chinese commands and I realized that I might be the only American left in the objective area. Since I didn't carry a weapon or have any men to command I decided I better get my fanny out of their fast.

As I slid down the hill, I could hear and see enemy fire coming from the second platoon area which meant that we had lost that area too. This left our left flank in severe danger as the Chinese now could stop Fox Company from extending right to help us out. This area bordered on the right flank of Fox Company and I thought they would be under full scale attack next. Suddenly almost all firing ceased except for unaimed small arms firing and this caused no further casualties. As I reached the CP area all firing had stopped and the whole area fell silent except for Chinese digging on the reverse slope of the hill, evidently improving the old George Company positions.

At the command post Captain Ramsburg was attempting to restore order with the handful of men left in the area. This was extremely difficult as most of the men in the area were wounded and those not wounded were suffering from battle fatigue and were slow to respond to orders. Captain Ramsburg ordered me to take over the defense and form a line along a hump of ground that afforded some slight protection from the enemy small arms fire. I found a squad leader and five men, the only ones not wounded or killed from the Fox company platoon and about eight men from George Company.

I didn't attempt to coordinate with the Rangers as Captain Ramsburg was in a heated discussion with the Ranger Company Commander about whether or not we could defend in that area. He wanted to withdraw to the rear. I knew the squad leader from Fox Company (my former company) and all of his men and knew that this small force would remain in position and at that moment was all of the force in the area that I could depend on except for the tankers on the road. I searched the rear area again for men to include mortar men, radio operators, wire men and cooks, just anyone who could fight in the defense. I grabbed several slightly wounded and used them on the defense line that was forming in the snow along the ground behind what was no more than a hump running along the ground parallel to the Chinese.

After placing the defense into position, I felt that these couldn't be all of the unwounded men left in the area and that perhaps men were still up on the objective. We had started the attack with a least ninety men and I could account for only about twenty five counting the Rangers. I asked permission of Captain Ramsburg to take a radio operator up the hill and establish communications from the top of the hill if I could find a place that we were still holding. I also wanted to help or direct the wounded that might not have been able to get down the hill as there was no one left to do it.

There was a slight ridge leading into the left center of the George Company area. This ridge had deep snow on the far (east)

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T. Ryan

down the road into Chipyoung-ni. Captain Ramsburg was still in charge and was having a heated discussion with the Ranger Company Commander who had returned to the area after evacuating his wounded that had been hit early in the attack. This led to Captain Ramsburg directing the Ranger Company commander to take all of his men and leave the area. The Ranger didn't believe we could make a defense in that area and wanted to withdraw. Needless to say, I was disappointed as hell to see them go as they were extremely good combat men and we needed them for the defense.

While this was going on I thought I had better check the area where the Rangers had attacked to make sure that the Rangers took all of their men with them as I had found wounded men on the opposite flank. I was surprised on passing through the base of the hill to find able bodied artillerymen and officers still in place protecting their howitzers. They would defend them to the last man. I had been told that all of the artillerymen had fled the area when the counterattack failed. The senior officer explained that under no circumstances could they lose their howitzers. I briefly talked to the officers and asked them if they could help in the defense of the area and advised them to evacuate any wounded they had left in their positions. They told me that they had been fighting with George Company for the last three days on the hill and would do anything asked of them as long as we protected their howitzers. I asked them to reorganize into squads and I would be right back to place them in position in the ditch behind the tanks.

Still convinced that the Rangers could have men in the area I searched the lower slopes in the area the Rangers attacked working towards the cut in the road. I found no able bodied men or any wounded, only dead. On reaching the right flank where the three tanks were still in position, I coordinated with the tank commander and gave him a run down on the situation. He said that they would stay in position and would only withdraw on my order. I asked him if he could give me some men for the defense but he said that he couldn't spare a man. While at the tanks I checked the road bank again and decided that it gave the best protection for the soldiers in the area and would enable them to fire into the flanks of attacking Chinese. I would then have the quad 50 and the Fox Company squad for frontal fire into attacking Chinese. Not much of a defense against at least a Chinese rifle company. There would be no other support weapons as we were out of 60mm mortar ammunition plus I could not find the crews to fire the mortars. I could find neither the three light machine guns or their crews. We still had no contact with the 81mm mortars or the 4.2 mortar fire direction center.

From all of the digging on the hill, it was evident that the Chinese were not going to withdraw at dawn but were there to stay. I thought that they were long overdue on making probing efforts to their front. I kept asking myself why they didn't

continue the attack after they had knocked George Company off their hill. On returning to the George Company CP I found Captain Ramsburg in much pain from his wounded foot. As I was talking to him I was watching the skyline trying to detect Chinese activity. As I was watching a bugler sounded a series of calls and about a squad of Chinese came over the top of the hill almost in the center of the former George Company area, started down the hill and then disappeared below the sky line. At this time the only time you could clearly detect enemy activity or movement was when they were on the skyline. Our defense opened fire on the Chinese. Once they moved off the skyline they disappeared into the darkness. I pointed out the enemy to Captain Ramsburg and shouted to all of the wounded men lying on the ground around the small CP shack to get the hell out of there now or they would never make it out as there were not enough men left to protect them. All of the men, including Captain Ramsburg, left and headed down the road into Chipyoung-ni. A burst of enemy machine gun fire aided their evacuation as all of the wounded men took off on a run including Captain Ramsburg who a few seconds earlier could not bear to put weight on his shattered foot. These men went down the road towards Chipyoung-ni and I never saw or heard from them again that night. When Captain Ramsburg left he shouted "Come on everyone, we are going back to establish a new defensive position." On hearing that several of the unwounded men, to include wire and radio operators, ran after him down the road and I couldn't stop them. I raced to the road to prevent further loss of riflemen. I had not had time to tell Captain Ramsburg that I had decided to defend the ground we were on.

As I turned to face the task of forming a better defensive line, I found that I had only a handful of men left from George Company and the squad leader and his five men from Fox Company. I estimated that we had about fifteen men plus the artillerymen to defend the area. We still had the quad 50 which represented a hell of a lot of firepower. The enemy had not fired an anti-tank weapon of any kind all night. I reported this to LTC Edwards and he promised help and ammunition as soon as he could get it to us. There had been no question in my mind that we had to defend in place against further penetration and above all to protect the 155's from capture or destruction. I found the squad leader from Fox Company and asked him to move all of the infantrymen left in the area into the far side of the road ditch and to extend the men south down the road towards the tanks as far as they could go and that the artillerymen would tie in with them and they would extend towards the Chinese. He said that he already had placed some men in the ditch. He asked me that if we were not going to make it that he would like to go back to Fox Company and go down with them. I promised him that he could go back to Fox Company as soon as we got help.

I knew where the French were and where their battalion CP was located but couldn't take the time to go to the CP and explain our situation to them. Besides I knew that the French would hold and that we could shift to the right and tie into them if we had

to. There would be no way we could reach the Fox Company positions. I had no radio contact with the French, Fox Company or with Captain Ramsburg's new defensive line if one had been established. Captain Ramsburg had taken all the radio and wiremen with him and hadn't established communications with me. I had no idea where he would attempt to establish a new defensive position or where he would get men to man it. I did have communication with both the battalion and RCT command posts through the tankers radios. The Fox Company squad leader disposed his men and all of the other men in the area along the ditch. The men were divided into two squads and a leader placed in charge of each squad.

Having done what I could in the rear area, I went to find the artillery officers. I found the officers at the gun positions but they had already moved their men into the ditch and all of the wounded men had been evacuated. The officers again pointed out to me the importance to them to save the howitzers. The artillerymen seemed to be alert and willing to stay to protect their guns. Morale seemed to be high when the artillerymen found out that the infantry would not withdraw from their howitzers. The defense line now ran very close to the cut in the hill and that placed the forward positions of the artillerymen in an extremely dangerous position as the Chinese could shift left on the hill above them and fire into their positions. Having a defense established I again coordinated with the tank commander, a sergeant, who said that under no circumstance would he withdraw his tanks without an order, that they were there to stay. I found all of the leaders in the area and established a command post directly behind the last tank. This provided us with protection from Chinese rifle fire. From this point all of the men in the defense could see the CP and know that officers were there in charge which was important at this time. Morale was unusually high considering the impossible situation we were in. No effort was made to enforce noise discipline and the men talked back and forth. Everyone knew the Chinese could hear and possibly see them from their hill top which actually was only just a few short yards away. For some unknown reason, we did not draw enemy fire. I had expected anti-tank fire on the artillery pieces and on the tanks. It was strange to know that a large force of Chinese were so close and yet were not firing or patrolling forward from their positions. The sound of digging in the frozen ground continued, all on the reverse slope. I made arrangements with the tank commander to send a crew to the quad 50 and to protect him with the squad from Fox company. The Chinese still were not making any effort to advance under the cover of darkness and I knew that when they saw what opposed them they would attack if they had anti-tank weapons. We knew that if help didn't come we would play hell trying to defend our positions along the ditch line and the 155's. While talking to the tank commander and artillery officers they asked what more they could do to help out. Half kidding I asked the artillery officers if a crew could turn a howitzer around and fire point blank at the Chinese positions only about 400 yards away. Without hesitation he assembled a crew of volunteers and minutes

later the howitzer blasted and a split second later the round hit. Six or seven rounds were fired before enemy small arms fire forced the crew back into their defensive positions. The 155 rounds fired were white phosphorous which produced a flash of light and huge clouds of smoke that hung in the air and then drifted south over the Chinese positions. From where I was standing I knew that the rounds scared the hell out of the Chinese as they burst very close to their positions. Right after the artillery fire the lead tanker lowered his gun tube and bounced rounds down the valley towards the south, the rounds hit the frozen, icy road and reverberated down the valley. The echo off the surrounding hills made a terrifying sound. I thought the Chinese would think that we had brought up a new type weapon. After this demonstration of firepower the night grew silent.

The Chinese did not fire at our positions and since our ammunition was dangerously low, we could not fire without a definite target. The Chinese continued to dig and improve their positions, the original George Company positions. These were all on the reverse slope and out of sight from our location. Once in a while, shadows could be seen moving along the skyline, but this for only a fleeting moment. I thought the Chinese didn't know that they had penetrated our perimeter and thought they had pushed back our outpost line and their heaviest fighting was yet to come. Standing there I could think of a million reasons why they did not continue the attack.

At first light I saw a figure come over the hill to our rear directly behind the quad 50 and proceed to the weapon, mount it and commence firing at full automatic. I looked at the Chinese positions and could see no enemy activity and realized that our key weapon against any Chinese attack was being destroyed for no reason at all. I couldn't understand it. My first thought was to shoot the son of a bitch off the weapon. I jumped up on the closest tank and laid the machine gun on the quad 50 intending to scare the gunner off the weapon. I knew there was a chance I might kill or wound the gunner but I felt that gun would save the howitzers and many lives as well if the Chinese attacked. Just as I was about ready to fire, the gunner assigned to the weapon I was using pushed me aside and said that he could fire the weapon better than any officer and that if I would take full responsibility in case he hit the gunner, he would fire the gun. I agreed to this and while we were changing positions, I saw that by firing the quad 50 full automatic the barrels were red hot and were being burned out. They were glowing red in the darkness and seemed to be bending down. By the time the tanker laid the machine gun on the quad 50, the gunner jumped down and disappeared over the hill. At that time I did not know who the individual was and neither did the tankers or artillery officers. I found out later that the gunner was a Captain John Elledge, liaison officer from the 37th Field Artillery Battalion and he had played a very important role in the defense of the George Company area of the 13th and 14th. A sergeant and I raced back to the quad 50 to see if it was still operable but the NCO found that the barrels had been burned out. I had studied the objective

area all night and had seen no activity or weapons on the hill to warrant firing the quad 50. If they had anti tank weapons they would have fired on our tanks. I couldn't understand why the weapon was fired or why the gunner hadn't come to the CP to ask permission to fire it nor could I understand why the gunner ran back over the hill as he did not draw any fire. I found out later that Captain Ramsburg had given Captain Elledge permission to fire the weapon prior to his leaving the area. When I found out the condition of the weapon I was mad as hell, as I had just lost the most important weapon we had to use against a massed Chinese attack.

Back at the CP behind the tanks, all remained quiet and we drew no enemy fire. The Chinese made no effort to probe over the forward slope of the hill. It was eerie standing there in the darkness knowing that a large force of Chinese were just yards away from us. I kept expecting some type of enemy action at any minute and tension was getting high up and down the small defense line we had established. I thought maybe the Chinese were waiting for anti-tank weapons or even replacements before they would attack. When Captain Ramsburg left the area he had shouted to everyone to fall back to a new defense position and I kept expecting some communications from him, at least a wire line. LTC Edwards kept telling me to hold as help was on the way and would be there any minute. He didn't know if and where Ramsburg had established a new defensive position. He said he would check with the staff on this and get right back to me. I kept one eye on the road leading into Chipyoung-ni and one eye on the enemy on the hill. I know that we could form a better defense by dropping back to the higher hill to our rear but I also knew better than to ask permission to withdraw as I had been in two similar situations before and knew that neither Colonel Freeman or Edwards were going to allow me to give up any ground that would have to be retaken in daylight. Beside, we couldn't remove the howitzers and giving any ground to the Chinese might have allowed them to destroy or capture the guns. It was almost light and we braced for a Chinese assault but still nothing happened. It was almost like if you don't fire at me, I won't fire at you. I couldn't see any observation posts on our side of the hill and all digging had stopped. Now I could see down the road to the south and could see no enemy activity except Chinese moving northeast on Hill 397 way out to our left front. They did not appear to be moving directly into our area and it appeared to be only infantry. No tanks or anti-tank weapons were to be seen. The Chinese did not use the road and all movement was cross country. I couldn't see the French positions but I could see that no Chinese had dug in on the right of the road in the French area. I couldn't understand why they hadn't dug across the road as this would have given them flat fields of fire directly into the George Company rear area and our defensive positions. From what I could estimate the Chinese were heavily entrenched from the cut in the road east to in front of Fox Company. It was obvious that they were afraid of the tanks and had nothing to destroy them or the artillery with. All remained silent. I couldn't figure out what was happening and minutes seemed like

hours waiting for the Chinese to make their move.

Just as full light broke I could see a rifle company coming down the road, the help the LTC Edwards had promised. I was sure that this force would take over the defense of the area but when I contacted LTC Edwards for instructions he ordered to me direct the company commander of B company to attack at once, supported by whatever help we could give him. He said that he had been ordered to attack by Colonel Freeman. I explained the situation to the company commander. As we approached the flat land near the old George Company CP full daylight was available and looking up the hill one could see dead bodies, Chinese and American, laying across the objective area. The company commander questioned the feasibility of making a daylight frontal attack on an enemy dug in and without proper preparatory fires. In my own mind I know that the attack couldn't succeed. I checked again with LTC Edwards who stated in no uncertain terms that Freeman wanted that hill back and he wanted it now. He said attack as soon as possible. He suggested that maybe if I would lead the attack the company would follow. I talked it over with the company commander and it was decided that since I was a staff officer and since the second battalion had lost the ground I should lead the attack. I kept telling myself, you were lucky to make it though the night but your not going to make it up that damn hill. I knew damn well that there was no chance of our taking the objective against dug in positions. We would be sitting ducks to the defenders firing down on us.

We had just started our deployment of platoons when I looked down the road and saw a jeep coming down the road at top speed. I recognized LTC Edwards and stopped the attack and went back to see him intending to ask for artillery and mortar preparatory fires to soften up the objective. For some unknown reason, we still were not drawing enemy fire but you now could see enemy activity on the hill, soldiers running back and forth probably moving more men into the dug in positions. LTC Edwards told me that the attack was off until after the air force came in and bombed, strafed and napalmed the Chinese positions. He said that the remaining men from the Ranger Company were on their way to assist B Company in the attack and that he and the battalion forward CP would direct the attack.

He then gave me a new assignment which was to help Captain John Emerson, our S-1, get into a troubled rifle company which needed a new company commander. This company was on the exact opposite side of the perimeter and was in another battalions area. I left the George Company area and proceeded down the road into town and picked up Captain Emerson. He gave me a run down on the situation and said the company was in a precarious position. As we started up the hill mass towards the companies position all hell broke loose. We received Chinese small arms fire from extremely close range from our left flank and from directly above us. This meant that some Chinese had penetrated the perimeter. We slid to the right and tried to advance up the hill again only to be met by more small arms fire at close range. It didn't take

long to realize that if we didn't get our fannies out of there soon, we were going to be killed or captured. I had been captured once before and they beat the hell out of me before I escaped and I didn't want another douse of that. Captain Emerson was at least 6' 7" and it didn't seem that there was any cover or concealment that was good enough to hide his long frame. I felt sorry for him and was glad I was so small. We decided to try to get back to the battalion CP and report that the Chinese had infiltrated the perimeter and for them follow the trace of the RCT perimeter down to the company we were supposed to assist.

At the CP the S-3 checked with the battalion that needed officers and found out that the situation had been taken care of and that they would sweep their rear area and flush out the Chinese behind them. By this time, we could hear the air force pounding the Chinese positions in the George Company area. They came in so low over the CP you felt you could reach up and touch them. Tired to the point of exhaustion, I laid down for a nap as I knew LTC Edward would give me a new assignment when he came back to the CP.

About 1600 on the 15th, I was told to report to LTC Edwards. He told me that the George Company positions had been retaken by the Rangers and Company B after heavy bombing, napalming and strafing by the air force. He said the Chinese put up a hell of a fight but that a tank attack that got in their rear area demoralized them and broke their will to fight and they had withdrawn. He said our tanks had contacted the lead elements of Task Force Crombez and I was to take a jeep and go down the road south until I came in contact with the tank force and guide it back to a designated tank park until it could be decided if Task Force Crombez would go back that night or stay and reinforce our perimeter and return during daylight hours.

We had known about Task Force Crombez and knew they were on the way to break into us. I heard they were a tank column, at least two companies of infantry, some engineers, ammunition resupply vehicles, empty trucks to remove the wounded and about 20 ambulances for the more severely wounded men. We knew that the task force was having a hell of a hard fight trying to reach us. I went down the road south past the George Company positions until I met the task force. When I met them, I was surprised as there only appeared to be about 12 tanks and no resupply vehicles. I could only see about 20 rifle men on the tanks and most of them appeared to be wounded and in bad shape.

I talked to the lead tank commander and explained my mission to him and found out from him that the Chinese resistance was so heavy the they couldn't bring our ammunition and vehicles to evacuate the wounded. He said it had been pure hell all the way in. I received permission to ride on the lead tank because I had to guide them in to a tank park so they could reorganize. On the tank were two wounded men and a sergeant from Company L, 5th Calvary Regiment, the rifle company that had the rode the tanks. They were very upset and kept swearing at the tankers and, kept

saying that all of the tank officers should be shot or boiled in oil. I asked the sergeant where the rest of the riflemen from their company were and they claimed that they had left with their entire company but those I could see were all that were left and the rest were dead or captured or hiding in the hills. They kept swearing at the tankers and it was hard to get a story out of them.

The sergeant told me that his company of about 200 men was to ride the tanks and in case an enemy road block was encountered the riflemen were to dismount and eliminate the road block, remount and move on to the next road block. A group of engineers were to remove any land mines encountered. When the first road block was encountered the infantry dismounted as planned and attempted to eliminate the roadblock. There was heavy fighting. When the tankers saw that they could move ahead they took off at a high rate of speed and some of the infantry could not reach them or could not mount the fast moving tanks. At the second road block the same thing happened. The sergeant told me that his battalion commander was not supposed to go with the task force but as the task force was moving out, he changed his mind and mounted a tank. He wanted to go with his men. The last time the sergeant saw his battalion commander, he was in hand to hand combat with at least six Chinese soldiers. He claimed that all the way in it was like going through a shooting gallery with the Chinese shooting riflemen off the tanks. I had worked with our tanks in similar situations and knew that they would never leave infantrymen so it was hard to believe the sergeants story but the other men backed him up. They said that just before they got to us they came through an area with hills close to the road on both sides and that the fire came down on them like hail.

When we got into the Chipyoung-ni perimeter I took the tank column to the designated tank park. It was dark by the time all of the tanks moved into position. I was talking to a tank commander when instinct told me to hit the ground and I pushed the tanker down with me. Just as we hit the ground boxes of ammunition started bouncing off the tanks. If we hadn't hit the ground, we would have been hit by the boxes. We had parked the tanks on the edge of the perimeter drop zone and the drop planes were a little off their target in the darkness. As I walked back to the battalion CP it was dark, a few flakes of snow were falling even though you could see stars shining in the sky. All the way back I kept thinking, thank God this one is over and that I was damn glad that I was not a rifleman riding the tanks on Task Force Crombez. By the time I reached the CP it had started to snow and there was no firing going on anywhere on the entire 23 RCT perimeter. The silence was eerie after the noise of the last few days. Snow fell all night.

The next morning I went to the tank park to watch Task Force Crombez leave but Colonel Crombez wanted to wait a few hours to see if the weather would improve as it was still snowing and visibility was extremely limited. Father Frank, our battalion

chaplain, an Irish missionary who had a Catholic Church and school which was destroyed by the North Koreans, was with me and asked me to take him on a visit to all the front line troops. Escorting Father Frank was an assigned job of mine.

We were near the George Company positions and decided to start there. As we reached the top of the hill you could see that snow had covered the scarred hill where the hand to hand fighting had taken place but dead Chinese bodies, some burned to a crisp and charred black from the napalm, still lay exposed all across the forward and reverse slope of the hill. The Chinese had improved all of the George Company positions. Men in position told me that after they took back the hill they would find a dead Chinese in the hole and an American under him and then often would find another dead Chinese with an American soldier on the bottom of the position. Going down the battalion perimeter, on the left of Fox Company, we came to a machine gun position manned by Sergeant O'Shell, Company H (heavy weapons). He asked me to help him get a dead enemy body count as he couldn't get anyone to go forward of the line with him. Looking out from Sergeant O'Shell's position I saw that the forward slope of hill ran down into a draw that lead into his position and gave the enemy an excellent avenue of approach.

This draw had been mined and wired at a point where the draw was narrowest and was well within reach of friendly small arms fire. I could see at least fifteen dead Chinese lying in the snow from where I was standing. Walking out to the wire, I could see that there was a depression on the far side of the wire and from the wire down the draw there appeared to be at least a platoon of enemy dead. We made a quick count of at least thirty more dead Chinese. The enemy had discovered that the draw led into the perimeter and had stubbornly made repeated attacks in large numbers in the same area, the draw. Sergeant O'Shell's assistant gunner had been wounded early in the evening as well as the men occupying the positions on his left and right and had been evacuated. Sergeant O'Shell realized that the Chinese attacked in only one area and kept his machine gun laid on the draw all night in spite of extremely heavy enemy fire. It was a good thing that Colonel Edwards had ordered ammunition stockpiled on positions when the perimeter was established as there was no way to resupply him.

When I got back to the CP they told me that Colonel Crombez had just left with our wounded loaded in about seven 2 1/2 ton trucks and nineteen ambulances. The battle for Chipyoung-ni was over and for the first time in Korea the Chinese had been defeated by American soldiers.