

## ***The 3d Battalion 'Edge'***

This is a good a place to tell why the 3d Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, in which I was to serve the rest of my year of combat in Korea, was a little different from the 'older' 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Battalions. And from a number of standpoints had an edge on the other two battalions.

Now Infantry Battalions, whether they were in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, or the 2d, 25th, or 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions that also served in Korea, are pretty much identical – in organization, manpower, equipment and weapons, and distribution of skills among the 1,000 officers and men. Each had three 200 man Rifle Companies, a Weapons Company, with Heavy, Watercooled 30 caliber Machine Guns, and 81mm Mortars, and a Headquarters Company. 5 Companies. Each, when they were available, headed by a Captain.

Infantry Regiments – such as the 7<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> Cavs are also usually similar – with 3 Infantry Battalions, a Heavy Weapons Company with larger 4.2 inch mortars, 75mm Recoilless Rifles, and heavy, water-cooled machine-gun sections, and usually supported by an Artillery Battalion with 105mm Canon to support the units of the Regiment.

But the conditions of training, equipment and leadership,

of those 'Regular Army' units that exist at the outset of a war can greatly influence their success or failures and reputation – at the top, and among soldiers.

### ***Post WWII War Deterioration***

When the Korean War broke out – as a huge surprise to Washington, as well as the American Public – on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1950, both the Truman Administration and the Congress had, from the end of the War with Japan, let the Army deteriorate. Equipment was not modernized, troop training – which costs money - was de-emphasized. And manpower was reduced. In the Occupation Forces in Japan by 1950, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, had their fighting strengths reduced by fully 1/3d.

Now the method the Army command used to meet the Administration reduction of strength ordered was to cut one 1,000 man Battalion out of all three 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Regiments. That reduced them, including the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry – which had the honor bestowed on it by Gen Douglas MacArthur – of leading the 1<sup>st</sup> parade in Tokyo after the surrender of the Japanese – to a two battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Cav Regiment. The 1st and 2d Battalions.

Now that is more than just a matter of 1,000 men less Regimental over all strength. Its screws up the 'triangular' tactical organization the Army was based on and had succeeded brilliantly through WWII. In turn that

is based upon the judgment that, while two squads per platoon, two platoons per company, two companies per battalion, two battalions per regiment, and two Regiments per Division fight up front, one third should be held in reserve until the critical action demands its intervention – such as the last push to victory over a more linear enemy. And a way to give soldiers in 1/3d of the command a break from heavy combat.

### ***The 3d Battalion to the Rescue***

So for manpower savings, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cav had only two Infantry Battalions in each Regiment when the war broke out. As it was ordered to get ready to intervene in South Korea where the North Korean Army had already overrun the South Korean Army and mauled the first US Units of the 24<sup>th</sup> Division that were thrown in, a Third Battalion was needed. To bring the 7<sup>th</sup> Cav up to full designed strength.

The Army ordered Fort Benning, Georgia, to organize a 3d Battalion, 7th Cavalry in manpower, equipment, leadership and prepare it for shipping. Because the pool of officers at Fort Benning was large, the Chief of Staff of the Army was able to handpick the Battalion Commander – Lt Colonel Jim Lynch, West Point Class of 1938, who had commanded a battalion in WWII. He was a proven leader.

Lynch in turn selected his staff officers and four company commanders, Captain Flynn, Class of 1944 among them – for Company K - who had been teaching Infantry operations to officers at Fort Benning, and was well ‘up’ on tactics and operations.

That 'new' Battalion got in a little badly needed unit training under experienced officers before it left for Korea.

So by July 23, 1950 the 3d Battalion arrived at Fort Stoneman, California, embarked with all its equipment, and sailed for Korea, arriving as a unit in Taegue, South Korea by the 26<sup>th</sup> of August to join the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry as an integral and badly needed, but untested, ‘3d’ Infantry battalion.

It even trained - took classes - on the troop ship that brought that Battalion to Taegue, South Korea. It never landed in Japan

### ***The Problems for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Battalions***

While the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2d Battalions, having been occupation troops in Japan, had a large number of their WWII experienced NCOs stripped from them to reinforce the battered 24<sup>th</sup> Division already in Korea. So their commanders and staff were just from those remaining in Japan. Their units had not been able to do any serious Infantry across-ground training in Japan for two reasons

## Korean War (3)

Category: Korean War

Published: Sunday, 24 July 2011 07:05

Written by dave

Hits: 4907

---

– they were not permitted to cross rice paddies badly needed to be planted for an national economy in shambles. And a severe set of storms had drowned much arable land. They were just 'occupation troops' forced into combat service in the southern portion of South Korea before they were really combat ready.

It was that combination of circumstances that led to the breakdown of control in the face of the swiftly advancing enemy, the retreating refugee civilians, mixed in with clandestine North Korean agents green US troops, all of which led to the Nationally publicized Incident at No Gun Ri, that 50 years later was branded a 'massacre' by the second-guessing US Press, which had most of its facts wrong, even though its reporter got a Pulitzer Prize, who was aided by a fraudulent, lying US Soldier whom the press - including NBC's Tom Brokaw - relied on, and who eventually went to jail for defrauding the US Government. It was the 2d Battalion, 7th Cav which became the fall guy. I never forgave Brokaw for never, on air, apologizing to the officers and men of the defamed 2d Battalion.

Suffice it to say that the newly formed 3d Battalion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cav retained an edge in operational success from the day it landed, until the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division were pulled out of Korea in December, 1951 once the Truce Talks stopped major military operations by either the US-UN or the Chinese.

## Korean War (3)

Category: Korean War

Published: Sunday, 24 July 2011 07:05

Written by dave

Hits: 4907

---

But all three battalions and the Regimental Headquarters, got their baptism of fire, and plenty of combat experience during the touch-and-go defense of the Pusan Perimeter from August to October.

So I was privileged to be part of the best Battalion of the 7th Cavalry during its most trying times to come - against the very large and not defeated - Chinese Army.

Next Korean War (4)