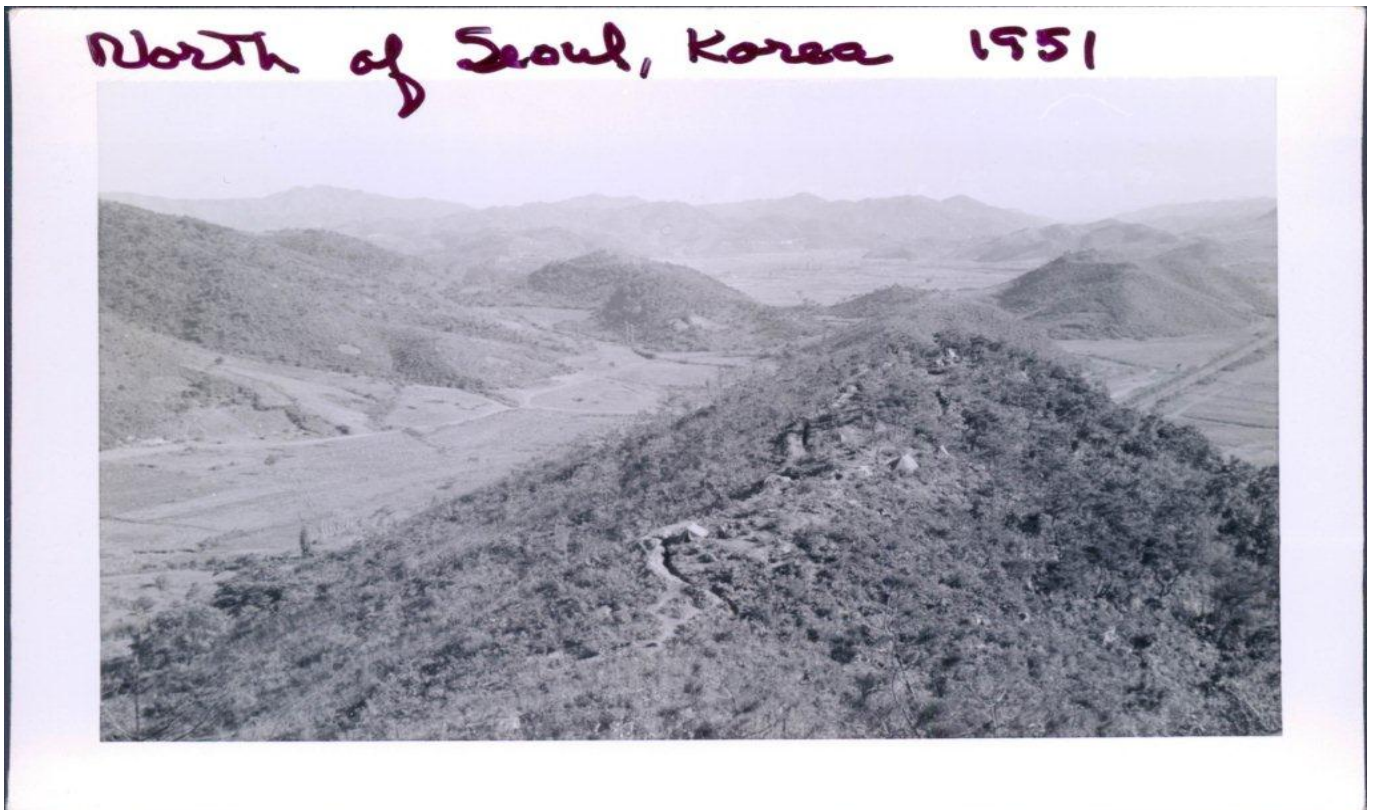


## ***My First Real Combat Leadership Test***

Gen Ridgway started his offensive efforts by a series of limited objective probes of the Chinese defenses North of the Han.



Company K, as part of the 3d Battalion was given the mission on the 10th of February to climb to a series of ridges "in their zone" and press on toward the Chinese lines to determine their strength and defenses. The 1st Platoon led all the way to the closest small summit without being fired on or gaining any other contact, Captain Flynn ordered me to pass through the 1st

Platoon's position, and continue advancing along the knife-like ridge which appeared to be punctuated by a series of small peaks, the next one being a little higher than the one he was on.

Flynn. with his radio operator, and two forward observers, one for Company K's 60mm mortar section, and the other for Company M's 81mm mortars further back at Battalion stayed on the small summit and could watch my platoon's progress. He told me they could not see any enemy positions or movement, even with binoculars. I was to move along the ridge and report back if I spotted any enemy positions. That if I went 1000 yards with no contact, the 3d Platoon would pass through me. With a typical Flynn Irish grin he wished me good luck.

Well I was immediately faced with the classic Korean 'narrow ridge line' conundrum. If I had my platoon go single file along the ridge, which was no more than one-man wide, and we were fired on, my point men would take the brunt of the punishment before I could get following units into position to fire back. If I tried to move too far down off the ridge their travelling would be very difficult and slow.

So I punted. I told the 1st squad and 2d Squad behind them to continue to move up the ridge line toward the next low peak about 150 yards ahead. I told the third squad, with the weapons squad behind them, to walk

parallel to and abreast of the 1st squad but down on the side hill only about 5 yards. That I would be behind the 2d squad to coordinate the four squads and report back to Flynn.

We got about 100 yards when all hell broke loose with at least one automatic weapon from the very top of that first peak. At least two Chinese were there, hidden with branches and twigs making them look like part of the hill, firing right down the ridge. Everybody dived for cover, and several returned fire. Within 10 seconds, I could see one of the Chinese soldiers jump up with the light machine gun and fall back down over the peak and go out of sight. The other one didn't move that I could see. Firing stopped from the enemy. Nobody was hit in my platoon.

There was certainly 'contact' – the ridge had enemy on it, but where? I went forward to our point man who was flat against the earth, his weapon pointed at the peak. Nobody shot at me while I moved forward in a crouch I was pretty sure both Chinese had bugged out. I got two men and we carefully approached the peak. Both Chinese soldiers, who had been there, had indeed fallen back along the ridge.

Right then a burst of machine gun fired ripped past me, somewhat exposed. It came from the next peak, high point. I called out to the third squad to go around those

firing and lay down a base of fire while the 1<sup>st</sup> squad rushes the peak where the firing was coming from. I then called Flynn and told him the situation but that unless we drove the Chinese off that second peak that they could fire down on our men trying to withdraw. He agreed.

So I motioned, yelled and ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> squad to assault the top of the hill when they hear the firing from the other side of the hill.

Neither squad seemed eager to move. I got down to the right where the 2d squad was and told them to open up on the peak. Only two or three men started firing.'

I should have moved to the left down to the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad and went with them to the top. But I didn't. And they weren't moving, just staying under cover.

I was frustrated. I didn't know how to get the Jail Bird platoon to move. I felt like I was pushing wet spaghetti. And any minute the Chinese could get aggressive and rain fire down on both sides.

I stood up, told the 3d squad to cover me, and I charged up to the top of the peak, alone, firing at it with my carbine as I went. Suddenly I was on top of their parapet and I fired down at all three there before they had time to swing their machine gun around towards me. They were still aimed down at the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad's location. I either killed or badly wounded all three for they just lay there. And I

started firing at several others now running away toward the next ridge a long way away.

Sgt Ingram who had my radio came along the ridge forward and yelled that Capt Flynn wanted me to pull my platoon back, that the mission was accomplished.

I yelled down to both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3d squads and told them to get back to the Company OP, that I would cover them.

The Chinese did not follow up, they just fell back toward their further units, nor did they open up on me.

When I got back to Flynn's position, he noted I had a gouge out of my helmet where a round struck it, probably from that first machine gun burst.

Both he and his First Sergeant seemed changed in their attitude toward me. I was still hot with my inability to get my Jail House Platoon to attack. I had a lot to learn. I was the last man back off that hill.

I soon found out what had changed. Battle hardened Capt Flynn put me in for a Silver Star for my solo charge. occupation of the machine gun nest, and killing everyone there - which he watched through his binoculars.

I for one had mixed motives. While it was encouraging that I was recognized for getting the job done, I was angry that I couldn't get my platoon to do it. I had to do it myself.

My platoon seemed to take me more seriously after that February incident.

I had passed the test as to whether I was willing and able to do anything I ordered my soldiers to do, while under fire.

(See First Silver Star under this link'

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