

## *My Voice is Heard Again*

After Hill 578 we had a break long enough for us to recover, replace broken or lost equipment, and take stock of where we are, individually.

I wrote a long letter, as much to myself as to my Mother. Here is that April letter.

Lt. David R. Hughes  
Mrs. Helen Hughes  
Shirley-Savoy Hotel  
Denver, Colorado

Korea

Dear Mom:

I was cold, wet, miserable, tired, hungry and discouraged a few minutes ago, when I saw some sturdy soul come trudging up the mountainside with mail, Now, I am only cold, wet, tired and hungry.

Your letter gave me a great lift in the midst of all this chaos

and confusion.

I am now well down in a foxhole on the top of the highest - I swear - mountain in all Korea, except, of course, for the one we were over yesterday, and the day before, and, the day before that. We gallant cavaliers of the First Cavalry are trying to break the backs of the Chinese right now, and upon the reflection of the last week. I do not see how the bodies and minds of men keep going so long without losing their elements of control and composure.

I do not kick too much for myself, for all I must carry is weapon, ammunition and rations - but these men of my platoon. who must stagger up the slopes with 40 pounds of machine-gun ammunition - and the machine guns - and the rockets only to be shouted at, shot at, and cajoled into running the last fifty yards through machine-gun bullets, grenades, mortar fire - are men of the highest discipline. And

## discipline for what?

To be carried off the hill by four other men, and suffer smashed heads and broken bodies, thinking they are the unluckiest men in all the world until they see the dribble of others into the Aid Station with their heads smashed in a little deeper, and their bodies broken a little more? I don't know. It's hard to see the forest for the trees here.

And it is a question greater than all questions, when I look over that hill and watch the placid face of the Chinaman, with the flap-eared cap on his head and the quilted coat, and wonder what he is thinking, and - what is more important •• why he is thinking it.

In an hour or so I will be there where he is, and he will be dead, with a hole in his head much larger than you would expect from my little .30 caliber rifle. That he will be dead, I am very sure, because I have confidence in my men and in myself.

As I have been writing here, six men (two from my own platoon) have passed my foxhole, hit by a mortar shrapnel. They are on their way down to the Aid Station ... and rest - some for weeks, and some for months.

I wonder sometimes how much luck there is to the game, Or is it luck? And is it a game? Back on Big Hill 578 we got pinned down close to a strong position, and they grenaded us. I was lying in the open when they yelled 'Grenade so I rolled over and felt something against my leg - looked down just in time to, see the handle of a potato masher grenade against me. Blam! The handle of the thing gave me a real Charlie Horse and a bum eye for awhile. But not a puncture in me any-where The man next to me was killed by it.

What is the answer? Luck? Prayer? I won't even hazard a guess.

**SOMETHING** is making it possible to live. And yet I would rather be here than anywhere in Korea now.

It is life in its rawest form. It reduces sham to NOTHINGNESS, and here men are themselves. Here the values of life are returned to us; the simple act of making a cup of coffee is a worthwhile accomplishment. As a leader of 40 men I have the good feeling of responsibility, and aside from the close-in fighting, it is for me to provide many of their needs; minister to their hopes and fears; raise their morale; deal with their misbehavior; listen to their feelings as they express them; and try to direct their lives so that they will function with a will and a purpose.

There is no democracy on a hilltop; but as a platoon leader, there is no troop leading quite as intimate or as thorough; and it is a responsibility. There is no officer below to pass the buck to. What more could one ask in the way of service to those of lesser rank? The only guide I must religiously keep, is the principle of humility; decide with confidence; lead without fear; listen with compassion; and remain humble.

It is a far greater, more rewarding life on this hill,

Mom, than all  
the successes of what we call 'Civilization'.  
Mahatama Ghandi said once, about this business of  
leading, and very accurately. "There go my people -  
I must hurry and catch them, for I am their leader."

Korea is tough, but what worthwhile reward is  
gained without some price? Perhaps now you can  
see why I chose West Point. If not, someday I will  
explain. Since I have discovered an important truth,  
I suffer much less. That is, that fear is only the  
emotion of ignorance. If I keep informed, fill the  
gaps of knowledge with educated guesses, fear  
disappears - and I can do my job as coolly as tho I  
were in Denver.

And that's all from Korea today.

Love,

Dave

She gave it to the Denver Post, which reproduced it, full  
text.

## Korean War (14)

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Written by dave

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It got picked up many places. The Rocky Mountain News - competitor to the Denver Post, picked it up also and printed it full text.

The Chicago 'Rush Limbaugh of its Day' Alex Drier read it aloud over his nationally syndicated talk show.

Acme Steel News - a national Steel Industry Newsletter reprinted it in its slick publication.

The Valley Forge Foundation, gave me an award for it and cited it for its 'contributing a better understanding of the "American Way of Life"

Finally, on August 9th, Senator Eugene Millikin of Colorado, who had appointed me to West Point, read it aloud on the floor of the Senate - in, according to the Rocky Mountain News - a 'voice choked with emotion'.

It was then entered into the Congressional Record.