

Hill 878 and My Coming of Professional Age

April 8th, I suppose, I could mark as my coming of Professional Age.

For on that date I led my 30 man platoon on a very complex and very dangerous mission around to the rear of a Chinese Battalion holding a dominant mountain peak blocking the advance of the 7th Cavalry. I attacked them successfully, inflicting great casualties, precipitating their later night retreat, and withdrew after suffering only one trooper killed and one wounded.

It was as close as I ever came in two wars to have carried off a perfect military combat operation. I was later asked to write up that operation for the Combat Forces Journal - then the primary professional Army Journal. It was published September, 1952.

By April 8th, having gone through the great 200 mile winter retreat, I then led my platoon in several early offensive operations, I did my junior officer combat apprenticeship under Captain Flynn. He was gone by now, promoted to Major and had become another Battalion's Operations - the 2d Bn of the 7th Cavalry. Lieutenant Ryan, previously the Executive Officer of Company K was the company commander during this Hill 878 operation.

I have attached this 4 page Journal article as a lengthy,

illustrated PDF file of that original article. It speaks for itself.

[Click Here for the Long Article PDF It is an Adobe Acrobat file. You need that software to read it.](#)

Read the pdf and you will get an insight into the tactical and leadership detail that goes into a successful operation against a numerically superior foe. And it perfectly demonstrated the lesson I learned from Captain Flynn during the Great Retreat - how and when to use "Marching Fire" instead of carefully and slowly Aimed Fire.

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The Soldiers in my platoon trusted me by now- vitally important in hill combat where my decisions affected their very lives. And I knew about them individually enough to get the most out of them. They were no longer the Jail Birds platoon. They were as good as any other Rifle Platoon in the 7th Cavalry or 3d Battalion.

Photo of only man killed on the Hill 878 operation - Hershel Davis, BAR man

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