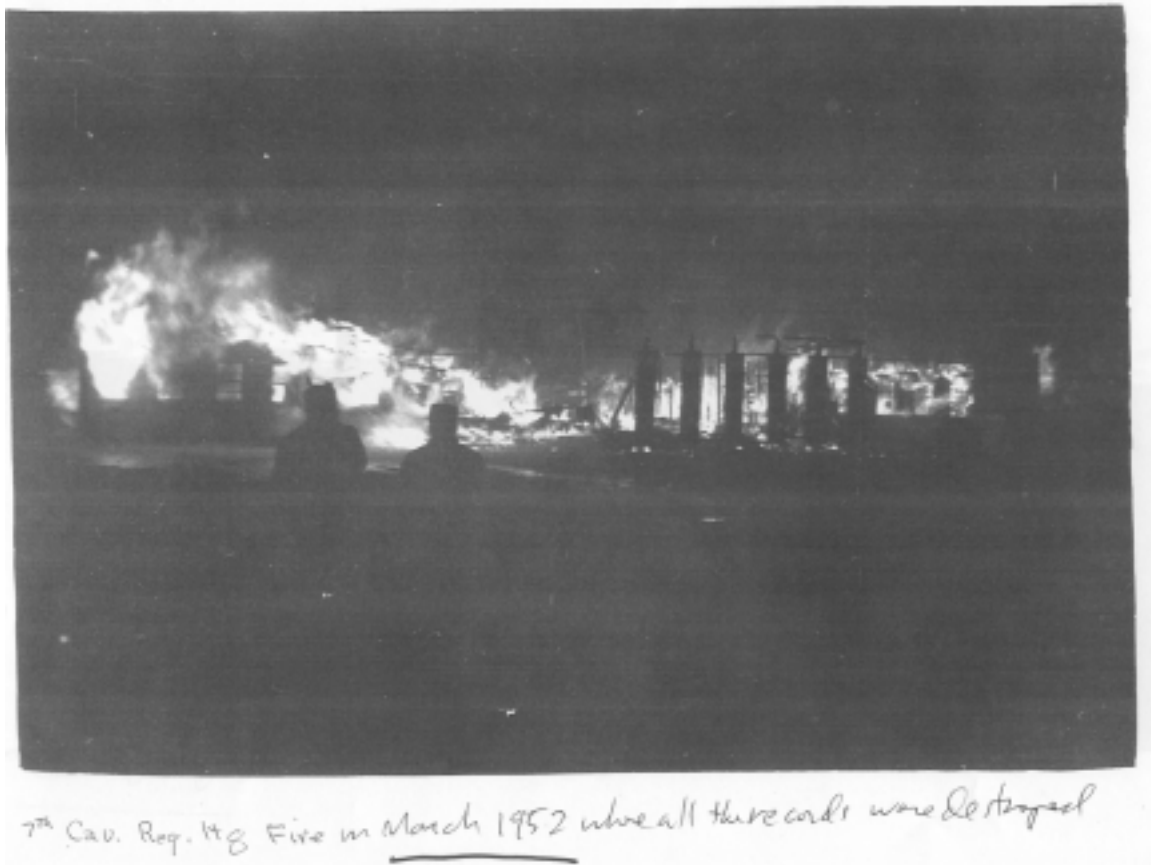


## *The Fickle Gods of War*



The Burning Headquarters of the 7th Cavalry in Hokkaido, Japan, March 1952, which destroyed all 22 of my recommendations for combat awards for Company K defending Hill 339 and taking Hill 347.

This picture was taken by an M Company soldier who had fought in support of Company K during the toughest fighting, then was assigned to Japan, while I was back in the US. He did not find me to give me the above photo

until 2005.

**September 5th, 1999**

### **THE FICKLE GODS OF WAR**

Very recently I encountered a piece of my long lost past that filled me with pride, and pain. For several months my daughter helped me organize and file my 80 years of books, papers, orations, photographs, tapes, certificates, awards, and all the panoply of things a West Pointer produces or collects over a lifetime.

There, utterly forgotten by me for 47 years, were 22 tissue-thin paper copies of sworn statements I made in Korea clear back in 1951, supporting recommendations for awards or commendations for 21 of my men and 1 officer from the severe fighting by our Company K, 7th United States Cavalry went through in September and October of that year two years before the Truce began. Because the Headquarters of the 7th Cavalry burned down, a fact I did not learn about until years later, most of the recommendations themselves were lost forever before being acted upon. I had sent tissue paper copies of my sworn statements when I did them, home to my mother in a letter December, 1951. I found them in her papers after she died. Which is why I have them still.

But The Fickle Gods of War denied these men their much deserved recognition for their bravery and sacrifices in that Forgotten War even though I strove to get them what

they deserved. Only one citation caught up with me several years later.

It was for a Corporal Frank Hagen, who died on October 5th doing incredible, brave things in the most horrific day of our campaign to capture Hill 347. In my letter home to his parents, as his company commander who saw him die, (I always wrote to next of kin after any of my soldiers were killed in action) I mentioned that I was recommending him for the Distinguished Service Cross - the nation's second highest decoration. When years passed and they had heard nothing, while I was back in the States on a new assignment, they communicated that to the Pentagon Army Hq in Washington, who tracked me down at Fort Benning and said they had learned that his recommendation was lost in the fire, would I submit it again? I did, and a letter came back in 1956 telling me he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously, with a ceremony in Washington DC, where the father of this Corporal was given the medal personally by the Secretary of the Army, William Brucker.

At least Corporal Hagen got what he, and his family deserved. But as I read through the 21 others, and the events I described, and names I named, the whole scene came flooding back to me. I was reduced to tears as I read on... (I still have those citations. They will be digitized and added full text to this data base)

..•• I searched the bunkers and found Cpl. Frank Hagen Jr dead in his bunker clutching his own bayonet, fourteen empty rifle clips in the bottom of his bunker, his empty rifle discolored from the heat of fire. In the immediate vicinity of the: hole were eighteen dead enemy.

•• Pvt Edward Escalante after the officer platoon leader was killed ... without orders personally led the platoon up the hill until the enemy guns were silenced

...•• Sgt Malloy was knocked down by a bullet through his shoulder. Without hesitation and without medical attention he manned the machine gun himself ... the rest of the night he would not leave the hill until the enemy had withdrawn ...••

...•• Cpl Hall without further orders ran down the slope fully exposed to the enemy small arms fire and the intense mortar barrage ... past a group of enemy in the dark, bluffing them ... reached the gun post, and gave my order to withdraw ... covering them as they shot their way to the hill top ...

•• ... Cpl. Jamison was awaiting transfer at the company rear after 14 months of combat when he heard of the great number of casualties in his outfit volunteered to go back up, and acted as a rifleman for three days was then severely wounded by six bullets across his torso in the last attack as two other men were hit near him. still

conscious but unable to speak Cpl. Jamison shook his head when a man attempted to pull him back and turned his eyes toward one of his fallen comrades ... three times he resisted evacuation until others were saved, and he had passed out ... "

... Pfc Citino manned the last defensive weapon Company K had on Hill 339, a water cooled .30 caliber heavy machine gun he had never fired before as the Chinese swarmed over our company. He stopped the final assault of the 600 man battalion even though all his water cans were shot through with holes

... " Pfc Collins, machine gunner, knowing the only way to relieve his platoon from the deadly enemy fire was to stand and cradle the barrel in his arm and assault ... in spite of severe burns to his arm and grenade wounds to his face ... he drove the enemy off so the platoon could withdraw ... he had to be evacuated for the severe burns on his arm ... " ...

....Only after being wounded three times over 6 hours ... and after the hill was secure did Master Sergeant McKenzie allow himself to be helped off the hill ... "

... "I sent Sgt. Petrik with a group of Katusa [Koreans attached to American units] ... with ammunition ... he saw a large group of enemy clambering over a hill to flank one of our beleaguered platoons ... he turned his group

instead of hiding, began to attack the enemy from their flank . he pressed the attack with five men against a much larger force

... " the enemy overran the right and left flank of our company ... got within 40 yards of our 60mm mortars when Pfc. Dennis Mostad remained fully exposed in the flare light ... jumped up on the parapet to see the action and shout commands directly back to the guns ... called in fire to a scant 15 yards in front of our positions... and in twenty furious minutes placed 150 rounds on the lead enemy troops without a single error in judgment ... while the tubes were sinking deeper into the ground"

... MSgt Oliver Carraway ... platoon sergeant ... the fire was so intense that half his platoon became casualties in less than five minutes, including his officer platoon leader ... he rallied three men and led a vicious charge up the hill ... the enemy withdrew into bunkers and threw out grenades ... he ordered the other two to pull the wounded back down while he, alone, kept the Communist Chinese forces inside the bunkers, until the wounded were out of danger, and then made a fighting withdrawal ...until being wounded in the head and had to be evacuated unconscious ...having saved the lives of the greater portion of his platoon ... "

Then there were Pfc. John Aprile, Sgt Joseph Matta, Sgt. John Bolen, Sgt. Clarence Brown, Lt. Charles Radcliffe, Sgt. Arthur Schuld, Cpl. James Blick, Sgt. Albert Capps, Cpl. Leslie Horne, Pfc. Louis Stefanik ... each with their own acts of courage and sacrifice that were brought to my attention, or I witnessed myself, not to speak of those dead and wounded men whose stories of courage I never knew. For out of a total of 7 American officers and 197 men, I lost all my officers and all but 15 enlisted men during those 16 violent days and nights, while we fought and beat 1,200 Chinese soldiers over 16 days, capturing 192 prisoners, accomplishing all our missions including finally pushing the last communist force back over the 38th Parallel on Hill 347, that started by the determination by gutty President Truman that the 1950 invasion by North Korea would not stand.

As a military historian I can say that very, very few American Army Rifle Companies EVER in any of our Wars went through as much hell as Company K and its men did over 16 days in 1951, AND YET WON all their major battles against 1,200 Chinese Communist soldiers, on Hills 339 and 347.

There were few surviving witnesses - besides me - to how young Americans in that war conducted themselves. Several survivors, and my higher level commanders, recommended me for recognition, made sworn statements of what they witnessed, and I was duly

honored with a Silver Star and Distinguished Service Cross during impressive ceremonies back in the US.

But the buddies of the men who went through the same hell and were not recognized, or I who commanded them and recommended them for awards, got them what they deserved. Yet these were American draftees of the Korean War, in standard, not elite, rifle, ranger, or special forces companies in an Army which had been pared to the bone after World War II and was unready for this one ...As Americans they all rose to the occasion when their country called.

On top of the stack was a citation for very young (17, volunteered to enlist concealing his age) Pfc. Mike Verlarde, who, at 66 later helped the 1,000 living vets of the 7th Cavalry get the most out of their reunions.

Since I knew him and where he was, and the fact that his son in law was an Army officer, I was able to write another recommendation for Bronze Star w/V device for Valor and the son-in-law helped get it processed, and Verlarde received the award.

## Korean War (27)

Category: Korean War

Published: Sunday, 07 August 2011 00:48

Written by dave

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Mike Verlarde in his 60's

**Fortunately, two other of my recommendation for Silver Stars for Master Sergeant McKenzie, and PFC Julius Citino had been processed all the way to the 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters BEFORE the 7th Cav Headquarters burned down and all the other award records were burned up and lost. So those two, shown below, got the awards and they were presented to them, still in Japan on active duty, by the Division Commander.**

## Master Sergeant Monroe MacKenzie, Company K, 7th Cav and MG Thomas Harrold, Commanding General 1st Cav Division



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# Msgt Monroe McKenzie just before Hill 347

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## PFC Julius Citino and MG Harrold who autographed the photo



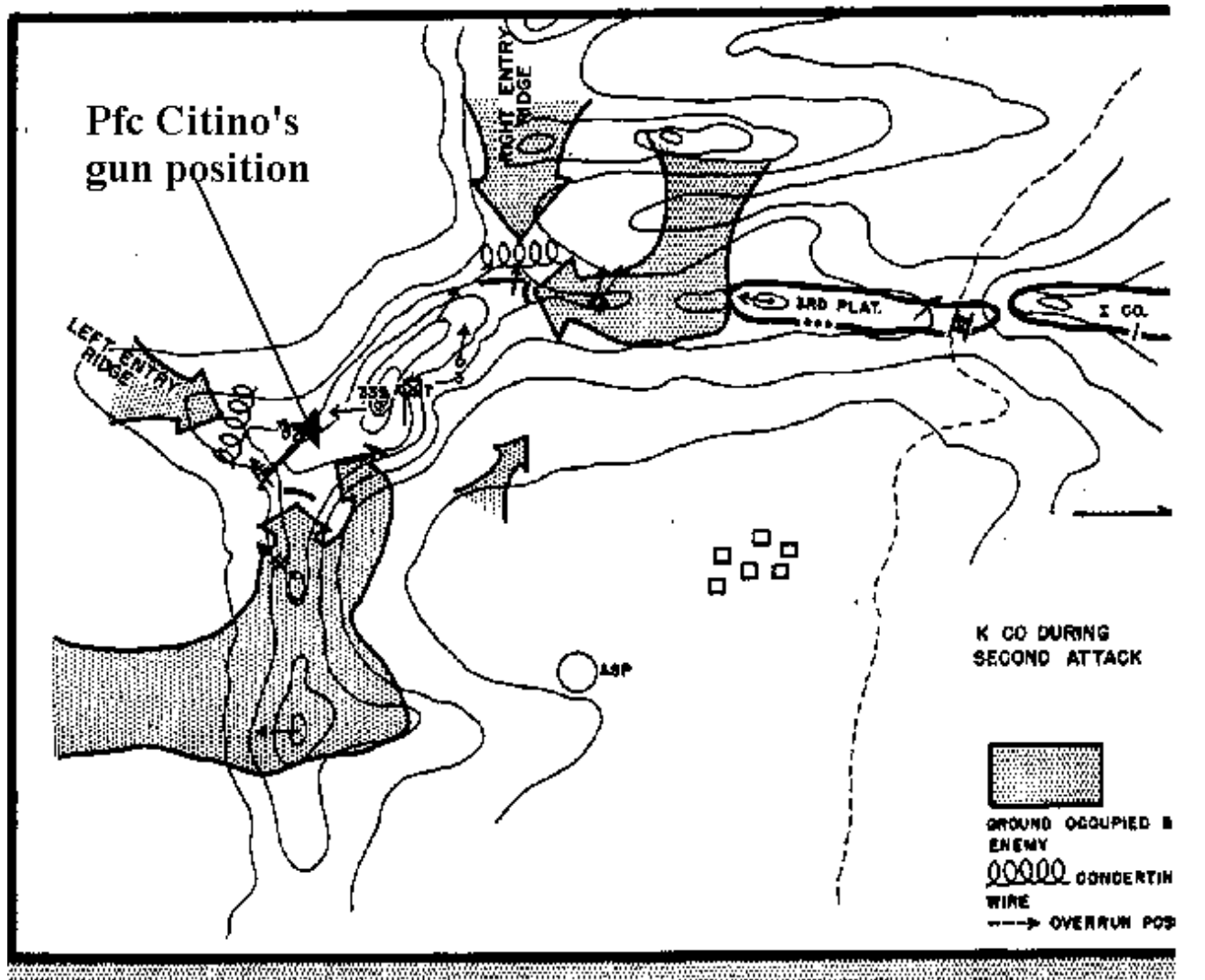


Figure 3. K Company during second attack.

-- Cpl Jack Herk

**Company K of the 7th Cav suffered 67 men Killed in Action, 247 Wounded and 1 man Captured, during the war from August 1950 through November 1951.**

**There is more information on my old web site.**

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<http://intothefire.oldcolo.com/>

# **PFC Julius Citino's Last Stand Machine Gun defense of Hill 339**