

Korean War

Websites:

Korean War Committee
<http://korea50.army.mil>

The History of the United States Navy in Korea
<http://www.history.navy.mil/books/field>

Books/CD-ROMs:

The Sea Services in the Korean War, CD-ROM guide prepared by the Korean War 50th Anniversary Committee. (Contact the Committee for a copy, on their website).

Baer, George W. One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The United States Navy 1890-1990

Wilson, Arthur W. and Strickbine, Norman L.: Faces of War: Korean War Vignettes

Fehrenbach, T.R.: This Kind of War : The Classic Korean War History

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The Korean War: An Introduction
Adm. James L. Holloway III, USN (Ret.)

Korea was a war America did not expect to fight and had no plans for fighting. But it was a war America had to fight.

In the following years it was known as the "forgotten war." Today, half a century later, viewed in a broader perspective, Korea has evolved as one of this nation's more important wars in terms of its long-term impact on American history.

The Korean War came at the beginning of a much larger and more desperate struggle that lasted for four decades. This was the Cold War, and during this epic struggle between the Western Democracies and the Communist Bloc, the very survival of the United States was at stake.

For more than thirty years, the United States as a nation and Americans as a people were threatened with annihilation by 12,000 Soviet nuclear weapons. The Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that in a strategic nuclear exchange with the USSR between 80 and 130 million Americans would die.

In the Cold War, the United States accepted the role of leadership for the entire free world against the Soviet Union and its client states. In spite of what may have been seen as a limited victory in Korea and a stalemate in Vietnam, the United States consistently prevailed throughout these 45 years of confrontation with the Communist Bloc. During that time there was no Soviet military aggression against the NATO partners or our Japanese allies. North Korea has not again attacked South Korea. In the end, the United States won the Cold War with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Korea was the first time in the Cold War that the United States committed American troops to combat in its armed confrontation with the Communists. Had the United States not elected to fight in Korea, and been able to conclude the war with a successful outcome by driving the North Koreans and Chinese back to the line of original demarcation, the Cold War could have had an entirely different outcome, most probably to the gravest disadvantage to our country.

The United States won the war in Korea. Just as in the case of the Cold War however, it was not a clear-cut victory such as we achieved in World War II with the unconditional surrenders of Germany and Japan. Nevertheless, peace was attained on conditions acceptable to us.

The Korean War began at 4:00 am on June 25, 1950 when seven crack divisions of North Korean troops stormed across the 38th parallel without warning, to invade South Korea. The non-Communist world was caught completely by surprise.

America was enjoying the rewards of a welcome peace earned by a hard fought victory in World War II, an all-out mobilization that reached every individual American. After World War II, without a military threat on the horizon, America had dismantled its massive armies and fleets that had gained the allied victory. Armament production had been halted, material and supplies abandoned overseas, military equipment scrapped, ships and aircraft mothballed, and the citizen soldier returned to their jobs, their families and to school. By 1950, force levels of ships, aircraft and divisions had been reduced to well below pre-war totals. Of special significance was the exodus of veterans from the active duty ranks. Americans were tired of war.

The U.S. Navy, which in World War II had more than fifty aircraft carriers in the operating forces, was programmed to reduce its active inventory of fleet carriers--those capable of operating jet fighters--to five. The U.S. Army troops in the Pacific Theater were untrained for combat. Recruited largely on the promise that in the Army they would learn a trade, the young and inexperienced soldiers were enjoying duty in Japan, which in 1950 still remained an occupied country under General MacArthur's command. The troops were equipped with obsolescent weapons with which they were only marginally proficient. Neither the troops nor American leadership expected they would be exposed to real battle. They were unprepared for combat.

In spite of the country's total lack of enthusiasm for a new war, its military unpreparedness, and the lack of any tangible threat to the American people by the North Koreans, President Truman did not hesitate in reacting. In quick succession after the invasion of 25 June, he committed U.S. naval and air forces to help stem the invasion of the South, then ordered American ground forces into the conflict. At the same time he brought the United Nations, still in its infancy, into the war against the North Koreans. This was the first occasion of any international world governing body organizing a military force and conducting warfare.

Truman had made the most difficult decision a president can make, to go to war. It was especially hard in this case, as Americans had not yet recovered from the hardships and trauma of World War II. The invaders were not threatening U.S. lives or property, nor had we any long standing ethnic or social quarrels with North Korea. President Truman saw the true foe as Communism. If a line were not drawn somewhere, the totalitarian regimes would threaten most of the free world. The U.S. had to act before so many democracies were overrun, that it would be too late for the Western powers to act collectively. President Truman and his advisors saw this as the time to react with force of arms, the sooner the better.

It was admittedly not the place the U.S. wanted to stage this first showdown with forces of Communism. Secretary Acheson expressed it well: "If the best minds in the world had set out to find us the worst possible location to fight a war, the unanimous choice would have to be Korea." But the United States and its allies were not offered a choice in the selection of the initial arena for this long-term struggle for the survival of the free world. The Communists had seized the initiative with their sudden and overpowering assault across the 38th parallel. Whether the United States liked it or not, the battleground would be the Korean peninsula. The United States and its allies had collided with the forces of the Soviet Union's surrogates, China and North Korea, while the whole world watched. Were the democracies willing to go to war for their principles of human rights? Would they fight at the risk of their citizens' lives? Could they hold their own in battle against the tough Communist troops, indoctrinated to shed their blood for their greater cause? At stake was the prestige of the United States and the survivability of free nations.

For the American leadership, the difficult decision to go to war was initially eased by a general underestimation of the enemy. On hearing of the invasion, the Commander of U.S. Forces in the Far East, Five Star General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur observed, "This is probably just a reconnaissance in force. If Washington will not hobble me, I can handle it with one arm tied behind my back." The troops themselves before their first encounter with the enemy, exhibited an "overconfidence bordering on arrogance" according to General Barth of the U.S. Army's 24th Division. The GI's thought the North Koreans would break and run when they first saw American uniforms. The troops were not to blame. Ripped out of their non-combatant occupation duties in Japan, they were rushed to the front by airlift in a matter of hours without any preparation for combat in Korea.

The first major event of the shooting war in Korea for the United States occurred on 3 July 1950 when carrier aircraft from the Valley Forge struck Pyongyang in North Korea destroying much of the small North Korean Air Force. Two days later on 5 July 1950, troops from the Army's 24th Infantry Division attempted to ambush the column of tanks and infantry leading the main invasion force at Osan, only 200 miles from the southernmost port of the Republic of Korea, Pusan. The small U.S. Army force, its 540 soldiers averaging only 20 years of age, without tanks and with a total of eight anti-tank artillery rounds, faced a column of thirty Russian T-34 tanks and 5000 veteran soldiers. The Americans were routed. As U.S. reinforcements were poured into the port of Pusan, they were rushed to the front piecemeal in an attempt to slow the advance of the North Koreans and keep the entire Korean peninsula from being overrun before enough UN troops and equipment could be landed to engage the enemy on at least equal terms of manpower and equipment. Through the next sixty days, the outnumbered and outgunned Americans fell back before the North Koreans, driven by their leaders without regard for casualties, to score a quick and total victory by pushing the Americans off the peninsula.

Exploiting the momentum of their attack and the fanaticism of the troops, the North Koreans enveloped

and broke through the UN lines whenever the Americans attempted to make a stand, forcing the U.S. and ROK forces into a constantly shrinking perimeter around Pusan. Air strikes by Navy and Marine Corps planes based on carriers offshore slowed enemy forces but could not stop them. By the end of August, the Americans and South Koreans had still not been able to stop the North Korean advance. The situation was so perilous that the 8th Army commander, General Walton Walker, asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff if he should plan for an evacuation of all U.S. forces to Japan, or should he still attempt to establish a secure perimeter around Pusan and depend upon continuing reinforcements to fight off the North Koreans and maintain his foothold in Korea. With President Truman's concurrence, the JCS instructed Walker to "stand and fight."

Then in the first week of September, the UN lines around Pusan held in spite of the human wave attacks. This was the turning point. It had been a close thing, but the U.S. was not going to be driven off the peninsula. They were in Korea to stay.

From this inauspicious beginning of a war we didn't plan to fight, in the wrong place, at a bad time, against a determined enemy which had seized the initiative of surprise to come perilously close to driving the Americans into the sea in a humiliating defeat, the Americans found a remarkable resiliency. With the courage and a fortitude to justify its qualification for the mantle of leadership for the Western world, the United States stormed back from the very edge of disaster to badly bloody North Korea and defeat its armed forces, and then to throw the Chinese communist armies out of South Korea, restore the original borders and to conclude the conflict on terms acceptable to our side. In this aspect alone, the Korean War must be viewed as an example to the world, ourselves, our enemies and our allies alike, of the great power and integrity of the United States.

From the military standpoint, the Korean War falls into five distinct phases.

The first campaign began in June 1950 when the North Koreans, without warning, crossed the thirty-eighth parallel to invade an unsuspecting South Korea, then in the sphere of the Western Powers. Against lightly armed forces of South Koreans (more of a police force than an army) the North Koreans--one third of them veterans of the Chinese Communist Peoples Liberation Army--quickly overran most of South Korea. The introduction of American troops from the U.S. Army of occupation in Japan, thrown into the battle without adequate preparation, could at first only slow the North Korean columns of armor supported infantry. In early September 1950, the UN lines stiffened and held, and the Americans poured reinforcements and supplies into the Pusan perimeter, while the North Koreans, battered and exhausted from their drive south, regrouped.

The second campaign began on 15 September 1950, when the 230-ship Joint Task Force-7 landed the 1st Marine Division at Inchon. The Marines then drove east across the peninsula to link up with the U.S. Army divisions breaking out of the Pusan perimeter from the south. This bold strategic strike caught the Communists by surprise, and the bulk of the North Korean army was caught in a massive trap, surrounded and cut off from their bases of ammunition and re-supply. Most were killed or captured and others, deserting their units and abandoning their weapons, infiltrated through the UN lines to flee to the North. As the North Korean Army disintegrated, the UN forces quickly retook Seoul, crossed the thirty-eighth parallel and pushed north. General MacArthur, the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command, intended to occupy all of North Korea up to the Yalu River, the border with China. There were international murmurings that this advance would be considered as a threat by China and could only result in an armed response. In Washington as well there was a growing concern to avoid any provocation for China to enter the conflict.

By mid November, with the communist forces in a complete rout, the Americans and ROKs were racing north and a U.S. Army column actually reached the Yalu River, at the town of Hysesenjin. As the American troops paused to regroup and enjoy a hot Thanksgiving dinner in the field, General MacArthur announced that North Korea had been defeated, its armies destroyed; and that South Korea had been liberated and its borders restored. The Americans would be out of Korea and on their way home by Christmas.

The third phase of the Korean War began on November 25, 1950, when Chinese Communist armies

entered the conflict with massive attacks in depth across the UN front. The Chinese offensive came as a surprise to General MacArthur and his field commanders, in spite of the fact that in Washington and other foreign capitals, there had been a sober apprehension that China would not stand idle if the UN forces advanced to the Yalu. China had been able to infiltrate more than 200,000 regular army troops, euphemistically referred to as "volunteers," into North Korea without detection by UN intelligence, and deployed them to cut off the over-extended UN columns pushing toward the Chinese border. The surprise and the ferocity of this Chinese offensive overran and destroyed the most exposed UN forces--the American and ROK divisions in the west and the U.S. Army task force at the Chosin Reservoir--and forced the entire UN front to fall back. For the Americans, the withdrawal back was rapid--twenty miles per day--but orderly. The retiring troops were able to break contact with the advancing Chinese, but had to abandon and destroy huge supply dumps of equipment and ammunition. Again the question arose: should the U.S. evacuate its forces from Korea, rather than 10,000 miles from home attempt to fight the armies of Communist China in their own backyard. In spite of popular polls in the U.S. that by 66% favored abandoning the war, President Truman said, "stay."

For the third time in five months the capital city of Seoul changed hands as the UN fell back to reform their lines at the narrow waist of Korea, where their available forces could fill the gaps left by the badly battered U.S. and ROK divisions and present a solid front to the advancing Chinese. In January of 1951, the UN armies reestablished and stabilized their front on a line just south of the 38th parallel and held against the Chinese advance.

Then, on 25 January, General Matthew Ridgeway, who was now in command of the UN forces in Korea following the death of General Walker in a jeep accident, kicked off the fourth campaign of the war with a full-scale offensive all along the front. The objective was to inflict heavy casualties on the Communists and drive them out of South Korea. Ridgeway's fresh leadership and the growing battle experience of the U.S. troops were paying off. There was a palpable upswing in morale to be on the offensive again after a month of retreating. U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force planes devastated enemy troop concentrations. Seoul was quickly retaken and at the end of March the UN troops were again north of the 38th parallel, in spite of determined opposition. China continued to rush fresh troops and equipment south to the front, and in late April mounted a major offensive of their own with the main weight of the counterattack down the historic Seoul invasion corridor. The UN lines held and the Chinese were stopped outside of Seoul. A second Chinese offensive in May was thrown back with heavy losses from U.S. air and artillery. By June the UN lines were again firmly reestablished along the 38th parallel. The key city of Chorwon in the central plains controlling the invasion route to Seoul was captured and held by American forces. By midsummer, the two opposing armies had stalled and were dug in all along their fronts, which generally followed the line of the original border.

On July 10, 1951, with the opposing armies facing each other in a stalemate, along a boundary heavily fortified on both sides, peace talks were initiated at Kaesong and later at a special compound in the village of Panmunjum in no-man's land between the UN and the Communist forces. This marked the beginning of the fifth phase of the Korean War. The original dividing line between North and South Korea had been decreed by the Allied Powers at Potsdam to lie drawn along the 38th parallel, an abstract geographical reference line. This was simply a matter of convenience, without any serious considerations of terrain or historical precedent. It was impractical as a defensible national border. The July 10th positions of the opposing forces followed the topography of defensible terrain close to, but not superimposed upon, the 38th parallel. The de facto line of demarcation between north and south was now more realistic for purposes of a natural national boundary. The final campaign, which lasted more than two years while the peacemakers bargained with threats and boycotts, saw some of the heaviest fighting of the war as the Chinese and newly reorganized North Korean divisions mounted attacks and limited offensives to frustrate the UN negotiators and seize more real estate. In these last two years, the Americans suffered more than 12,000 killed before the cease-fire took place on July 27, 1953. It was three

years, a month and two days after a carefully planned, well executed, unanticipated attack by a surprisingly well trained and equipped North Korean army of 22 divisions, crossed this same border--now restored as the DMZ--on their way south with the intention of conquering all of the Republic of South Korea and annexing the territory to the Communist nation of Korea.

Geographically the Korean War ended just as it began, along the 38th Parallel. The entire war in which more than 4 million men, women and children were killed on both sides, involved 22 nations and was fought entirely on the Korean Peninsula, a piece of land approximating the configuration of Florida but about 25% larger.

For each combatant the outcome of these three years of intense warfare was different.

For North Korea it was a clear defeat. Their objective of annexing South Korea was not attained. Their Army was defeated, their capital city, Pyongyang was largely destroyed, and more than 300,000 North Korean soldiers were killed or missing in action.

Communist China's end position can only be considered a draw. Flexing their muscles in a show to the world of their new military might, the Chinese entered the war to rescue a communist ally, North Korea, and to demonstrate that China would not tolerate any military threat near its borders. The result was that the Chinese Communists suffered losses of more than 420,000 killed and missing, and in the end, were unable to defeat the U.S. led United Nations forces, even though fighting adjacent to their own borders. In the end, China was forced to accept an armistice which simply reflected the status quo ante. The failure of 120,000 Chinese to defeat the 25,000 Marines of the First Marine Division surrounded at the Chosin Reservoir, was especially demoralizing to the Chinese leaders.

For the United States, it was a victory. To some a limited victory, but then it was a limited war. It was certainly not a defeat. The Americans did what they intended to do: prevent the armed seizure and annexation of South Korea by the Communists. In the process, the Americans threw the North Koreans out of South Korea, decimated their army, and then drove the Chinese Communist army out of South Korea to end the conflict on terms acceptable to us.

From the prospect of the United Nations, the war in Korea was a success of historic proportions. For the first time, an international peace keeping body had organized a multinational military force, exercised its command and then successfully reversed the territorial incursions of an aggressor state. Furthermore the results were lasting. South Korea has not since been attacked or invaded.

Historically, the Korean War has become a unique chapter in the annals of modern warfare, setting precedents and providing lessons which have served to guide the formulation of foreign policy and national strategy for the United States.

It defined limited war as conflicts to be fought by their own unique sets of rules.

--In Korea, America could not fight to win unconditionally. To do so would engulf the U.S. in a general war with the Chinese people on the Asian mainland.

--Nor could America lose the war. The honor, prestige and position of leadership if the free world was at stake.

--The war was limited to fighting the Asian Communists. During the entire conflict, NATO forces facing the USSR and its client states in Europe and the North Atlantic maintained posture of readiness and strength to deter a Soviet invasion into Western Europe. Considering that the Soviets had available more than 100 divisions of ground troops and were rapidly modernizing their navy, this was a formidable responsibility for the United States, in which the military might and political leadership of NATO reposed.

--Mobilization during Korea was limited; "guns *and* butter" was the policy. The American public was sensitive to casualties and the Congress concerned about the budget. Tactical operations had to be planned with careful consideration to hold down losses. This often eliminated major operations with a high potential for significant long-term military and political success. Budget pressures limited procurement of ammunition and

aviation fuel, resulting in rationing of rounds for artillery bombardments in support of the ground forces, and the marginal readiness of combat aviation units due to too few training flying hours.

--With the war limited to the Korean peninsula, the concept of politically defined sanctuaries was established. U.S. air operations north of the Chinese border were proscribed by the UN with the consent of the U.S. government. Although locked in combat with the Chinese Communist Army, UN air strikes on airfields, logistic bases and troop marshalling areas north of the Yalu were forbidden. Even the hot pursuit of communist aircraft returning to their Chinese bases after combat in Korea was forbidden beyond the Yalu. The U.S. also had its de facto sanctuaries, but these existed not by political denial, but were the result of the absolute air and naval superiority achieved by the U.S. in the theater of operations. Maritime forces operated with impunity off the coasts of Korea, launching air strikes, conducting shore bombardments, reinforcing troops and delivering combat logistics, all in support of the UN forces ashore. UN aircraft could fly virtually without concern for hostile fire at altitudes above 10,000 feet over the terrain. This was the upper limit for effective enemy AAA fire, and there were no surface-to-air missiles in North Korea.

--USAF F-86 fighters flying a barrier combat air patrol in the northwest corner of Korea, intercepted Chinese MIG-15s as they crossed the Yalu coming out of their sanctuary bases, to provide cover for the UN aircraft conducting air to ground interdiction operations to the south. The U.S. air superiority over all Korea was virtually absolute.

--Korea was the first conflict in which the U.S. had an operational inventory of nuclear weapons. The world, as well as the American people were waiting to see how the U.S. policy for the employment of these weapons of mass destruction would evolve.

In the late 1940s after World War II, the U.S. stockpile of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons rapidly grew in numbers and diversity from strategic megatonnage monsters to tactical nuclear weapons. Early during the policy formulation for the employment of nuclear weapons, they were viewed simply as an extension of conventional munitions, to be used where larger explosions were needed. Weaponizing decisions would be based on the most effective way of achieving the desired results.

--By the time of the Korean War, tactical nuclear weapons had reached yields greater than the Hiroshima bomb. The USSR by then also had the A-bomb. Concern for escalation and the resulting mutual destruction had rendered original policy for the normalization of nuclear weapons impractical. The U.S. policy on the use of "special weapons," as they were known, hardened, and although the inventory continued to grow in numbers and effectiveness, the requirement for presidential release made it clear that their application would be reserved for those extremis situations in which national survival would be at stake.

There were occasions when field commanders in desperate situations may have contemplated the use of tactical nuclear weapons as an equalizer to limit American casualties in the face of the seemingly inexhaustible numbers of Chinese infantry. But the employment of nuclear weapons in Korea was never seriously considered. In another sense during the Korean War, nuclear weapons played a key role in our national survival. With America engaged in a full-scale war in Korea, the USSR could see this preoccupation as a weakness in NATO and an invitation to launch an attack on Western Europe. It was only the realization of America's readiness for strategic warfare, constantly displayed by ongoing SAC operations, that served as a powerful deterrent to a Soviet temptation for an invasion across the East German plains.

--As the war in Korea crystallized our tactical nuclear weapons policy, it conversely drove home the lesson that in the future, the U.S. national defense planning must be as much concerned with conventional war fighting as with nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons did not deter the war in Korea, nor could they be employed tactically. American National Security Policy would, in the future, have to be prepared to fight and win conflicts by conventional arms reserving the nuclear arsenal to deter the escalation of limited wars by the introduction of Russian military forces.

The Communists may have assumed that the United States was not prepared to fight a conventional war in Asia in 1950, but they badly underestimated America's national will, the resourcefulness of its military planners and the resilience of the American character.

--At the end of World War II, America's first priority was the return of the civilian soldier to his home. Millions of tons of ammunition, supplies and equipment had to be abandoned overseas. However, the greatest capital investment in major weapons systems was in ships and aircraft, all of which were fortunately mobile. Great numbers of these modern assets were brought home and mothballed, the ships in fresh water estuaries and the aircraft on desert air bases. When the North Korean invasion caught the newly established Department of Defense at its nadir, the services turned to their mothballed equipment.

--The Navy carrier force grew to 19 fleet carriers, enough to maintain four off Korea as well as two constantly in the Mediterranean for the support of NATO. P-51 Mustangs, veterans of Eisenhower's campaigns through France and Germany, became the main ground attack aircraft for the USAF and our allies. F4U Corsairs which had fought Japanese Zeroes in the Pacific, again flew from Navy carriers and Marine shore bases in support of UN ground forces. It was this air support which achieved total air superiority over the Korean battlefield and formed the third leg of the UN's combined arms triad of infantry, artillery, and air. By the Chinese Army's admission, UN air power was the equalizer which offset the Communist's vast superiority in ground forces.

--Battleships, cruisers and destroyers came out of mothballs to provide seagoing artillery to protect the UN flanks. The evacuation of General Almond's X Corps with all of its combat vehicles out of Hungnam in December of 1950, would not have been possible without the ring of fire delivered from these major combatants, and the sea lift provided by the amphibious and cargo ships.

Korea, though called the forgotten war, nevertheless contributed two unforgettable military operations to brighten the legacy of U.S. arms: Inchon and Chosin.

At the west coast port of Inchon, just 15 miles Southwest of Seoul, the U.S. Navy, in an amphibious operation conducted under the most difficult conditions of terrain and tide imaginable, put ashore 50,000 troops led by 25,000 Marines on 15 September 1950, who then drove east to link up with the Eighth Army breaking out of the Pusan perimeter to complete a massive rout of the North Korean Army. The First Marine Division made the assault landing, secured Inchon in one day, reached Seoul on the 18th and liberated the capital of South Korea five days later. By the end of September, the Americans had routed the North Koreans and reached the 38th parallel. By means of the amphibious landing at Inchon, the United Nations in just three months had accomplished what it had set out to do, "repelled armed invasion and restored peace and stability in South Korea." In the long term, Inchon was more than a boldly conceived operation, a masterpiece of technical execution, and a pivotal victory. It was an essential lesson for our new Department of Defense, that advancing technology would not necessarily make obsolete the proven fundamentals of warfare. In 1949, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley had stated in congressional testimony that amphibious landings were a thing of the past. Never again in the future would it be feasible to assemble and concentrate the shipping required for such an operation since it provided too inviting a target for atomic bombs. Bradley implied that a U.S. Marine Corps was no longer needed as part of our Defense Establishment.

Chosin was a different sort of campaign. On 25 November, when the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army first entered the Korean conflict to catch the American intelligence and UN forces by surprise, the First Marine Division was deployed deep in North Korea, west of the Chosin Reservoir, at the end of a 78-mile two-lane dirt road winding through some of the most mountainous country of the Korean peninsula. Surrounded by 120,000 regular troops of the Chinese Communist Army, battling deep snow and temperatures down to thirty below zero, the 25,000 marines of the First Marine Division fought their way out of the trap, bringing their equipment, wounded, and dead with them, and defeating 7 Chinese divisions in the process. China was so determined to destroy the Marines--and equally sure they would be able to do so--that staggering losses

were accepted. Sixty percent of the 120,000 Chinese engaged became casualties, including 30,000 killed or missing in action. Marine losses were a thousand killed and missing, but the First Marine Division battled their way out and destroyed two Chinese armies in the fighting.

Korea became the forgotten war largely because Americans didn't *want* to remember. Coming so soon on the heels of World War II and with such an unsatisfying conclusion when compared to the unconditional surrenders of the Germans and Japanese in World War II, the country didn't want to think about it. Americans simply wanted to get on with their lives.

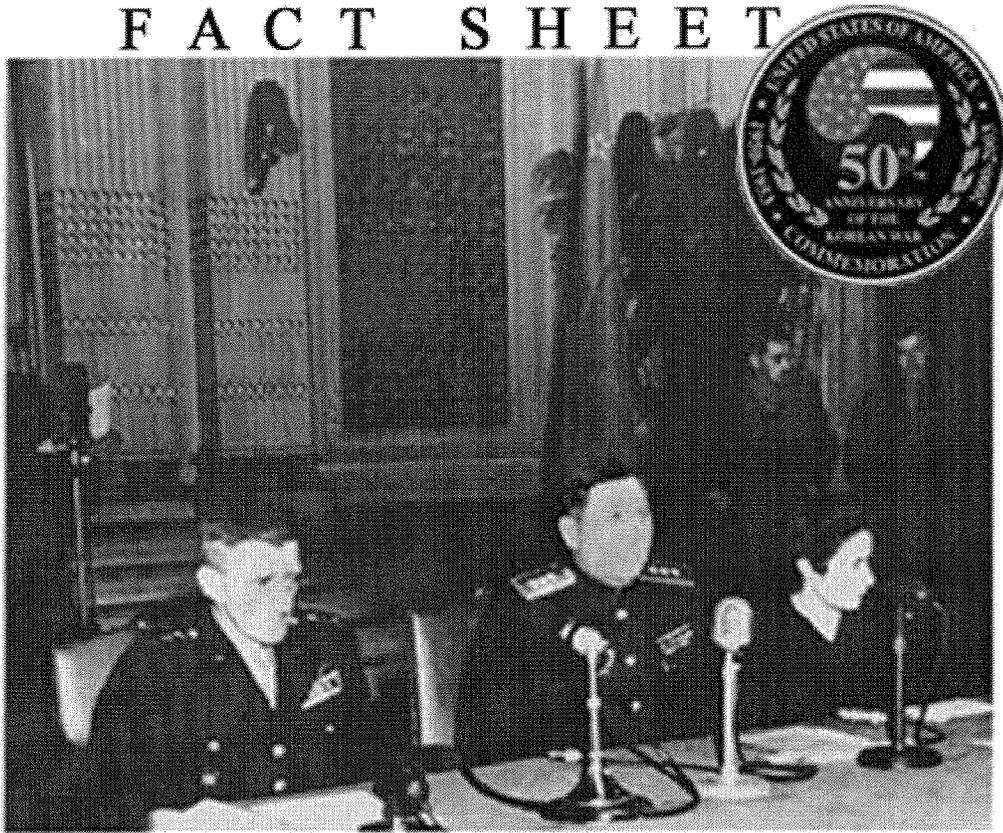
Now, fifty years of subsequent history has put Korea into its proper perspective: Korea was a victory, perhaps a limited victory but then it was a limited war. It was the first of a series of limited wars, which in the aggregate constituted the Cold War with the Communists. The U.S. won the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Korea was instrumental in our success in that larger conflict, because the commitment of American citizens to risk their lives in far off Asia in support of our promises and principles, gave a critical substance to American foreign policy: credibility.

Credibility was the watchword of the Cold War that held the Russians in check. Our threat to go to war to support our allies was believed because of Korea. So our threat to resort to nuclear weapons if necessary to protect our most vital national interests was carefully weighed by the Kremlin. This credibility, established by Korea, also prevented a Soviet misinterpretation of our intentions, a miscalculation that could have taken the U.S. and the USSR over the brink into a nuclear exchange with its resulting mutual assured destruction. That perhaps represents the ultimate contribution of the Korean War to our national security over the past half century.

--Adm. James L. Holloway III, USN (Ret.)

[Admiral Holloway was Chief of Naval Operations from 1974 to 1978. As a lieutenant commander he served in Korea from 1950 to the end of the war flying F9F Panthers from the carriers *Valley Forge* and *Boxer*. In 1953 when serving as executive officer of Fighter Squadron Fifty-Two, he took command of the squadron when his commanding officer was shot down by the Chinese over North Korea. Admiral Holloway is currently co-chairman of the U.S.-Korea 2000 Foundation, Inc. He became president of the Naval Historical Foundation in 1980 and now serves as chairman.]

F A C T S H E E T



The Korean War : Setting the Stage and Brief Overview

Photo Caption: First meeting of the Joint American-Soviet Commission in Seoul, Korea. The commission pledged cooperation to rehabilitate Korea economically and politically following Japanese rule of Korea which had ended in 1945. Jan. 16, 1946

The United States took its first real interest in Korea during World War II in the context of discussions over how to dismantle the Japanese Empire. At the Cairo Conference in November 1943, where the United States, Great Britain and China discussed wartime strategy and peace plans, the participants declared that ". . . in due course, Korea shall become free and independent." President Franklin D. Roosevelt favored a trusteeship in Korea; whereby the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union would temporarily govern the country until Korea could manage its own affairs. In February 1945, at the Yalta Conference, Roosevelt raised the issue of Korea again, proposing a trusteeship involving the United States, China and the Soviet Union, which could last twenty to thirty years. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin replied that the "shorter the period the better." With this general and vague agreement between Roosevelt and Stalin, discussion of the postwar future of Korea ended.

Roosevelt believed that a U.S.-Soviet trusteeship in Korea would provide the Soviet Union with an incentive for entering the war in the Pacific and encourage U.S.-Soviet cooperation. But after Roosevelt's death in April 1945, in the context of tension over the Soviet occupation

policies in Eastern Europe, the tone of American-Soviet relations declined dramatically. As a consequence, the American position towards Korea began to change under the leadership of President Harry S. Truman.

The unconditional Japanese surrender on Aug. 14, 1945, came shortly after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the sudden Japanese collapse came the threat that the Soviets, advancing into Manchuria and Korea, could quickly gain control of the entire Korean peninsula. In response, Army planners in the War Department and the State Department proposed a plan that would divide the peninsula in half, leaving the Soviets to occupy Korea north of the 38th parallel and an American occupation force south of the line. The Soviets agreed and moved quickly to occupy major cities north of the 38th parallel. The U.S. military arrived at Inchon on Sept. 8, and began occupying the southern half of the peninsula. The simultaneous establishment of two zones led to the division that remains to this day.

In 1946, Stalin pronounced that international peace was impossible "under the present capitalist development of the world economy." The next year, George F. Kennan, a former counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and Director of the Department of State's Policy Planning Staff, recommended that the proper response to the Soviet threat was "a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." To that end, Truman announced his approach to foreign policy saying, "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

At the Moscow Conference in December 1945, the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain proposed trusteeship of Korea and created the Joint Soviet-American Commission. This commission sought to establish a provisional Korean democratic government. When its cooperative endeavors for Korean independence failed, the United States made one final attempt to resolve the Korean question, but the Soviets rejected that proposal. The U.S. then presented the issue before the United Nations (U.N.) on Sept. 14, 1947.

Soon after, in the spring of 1948, the U.N. General Assembly resolved that the Korean people would elect one national assembly for the whole country. South Koreans participated in a U.N.-supervised election in May 1948 that selected members of the National Assembly. That assembly ratified the country's constitution July 17, 1948. The Republic of Korea (ROK) was formally established on Aug. 14, 1948. Dr. Syngman Rhee, an outspoken anti-communist and the State Department's choice to head an independent Korea, became the first president. Soviet authorities prohibited an election in the North and refused to permit the U.N. Election Commission to enter North Korea. The northern half of Korea held separate elections in the fall of 1948, establishing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and inaugurating Kim Il Sung as its new president.

With the creation of the Republic of Korea, the U.S. Military Government ended its control. The 50,000 American occupation troops completed a gradual withdrawal by June 1949. Only the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), numbering approximately 500 American officers and enlisted men, remained to continue training Korean security forces. The existence of a communist insurgency coupled with the desire to prevent President Rhee from attempting to unify the peninsula by force, led the United States to structure the ROK Army as a constabulary force, a lightly-armed force designed to maintain internal order. In contrast, the Soviet Union outfitted the North Korean Army with heavy tanks and long-range artillery.

Also in 1949, the Chinese communists won the civil war in China. This success emboldened Kim Il Sung to make several trips to Moscow to persuade Stalin to support reunification of Korea by force. Not until Kim convinced the Soviet dictator that a North Korean invasion would quickly subdue the South before the United States could intervene did Stalin give his approval. The Soviets provided essential logistical support and technical advisors for the invasion force. In the spring of 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson defined America's strategic defense perimeter in Asia, which excluded the Korean peninsula. This confirmed Stalin and Kim's assessments of the strategic situation.

In June 1950, the United States was not prepared to wage war. Public sentiment against a large standing military establishment and the desire to produce consumer goods forced the government to reduce defense expenditures after World War II. America's policy of containment of communism and its increasing dependence on the atomic bomb and strategic air power caused a significant reduction in the strength of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. As a result, there were few trained units available for immediate commitment in Korea when the North Koreans invaded.

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean Army attacked across the 38th parallel to unify the peninsula. That action caused President Truman to commit U.S. Forces, unprepared as they were, to the defense of South Korea. The United Nations Security Council simultaneously called upon member states to do likewise. For the first time, the United Nations authorized the establishment of a multinational force, flying the U.N. banner, to repel aggression.

When North Korean forces invaded the Republic of Korea, the United States, considering it an act of aggression, requested the United Nations take immediate action. On June 25, 1950 (New York time) the U.N. Security Council responded quickly by passing a resolution which called for immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of all North Korean forces to the 38th parallel. (The Soviet member was absent because of a boycott since January 1950, over the issue of seating communist China's representative in the United Nations). On June 27, after the Republic of Korea appealed to the United Nations for assistance, the Security Council passed another resolution recommending that United Nations members furnish assistance to South Korea as needed to "repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security to the area." Fifty-three member nations approved the Security Council's recommendations.

Under a resolution introduced by Great Britain on July 7, the United Nations asked the United States to lead the Unified Command to put down the North Korean aggression. The United States accepted the responsibility and Truman appointed General of the Army Douglas MacArthur as commanding general. Twenty other countries (19 members and Italy, a nonmember at the time) contributed to the war effort.

The initial North Korean offensive drove the defenders into the southeast corner of the peninsula. There the Pusan Perimeter was established and, reinforced by American divisions, held through bitter battles. That stout defense made possible a brilliantly-conceived amphibious assault at Inchon, which enveloped the overextended North Korean Army and recaptured the capital city of Seoul. United Nations forces then advanced north to the Yalu River on the border between Korea and China, to try to reunify Korea.

In November 1950, concluding that the U.N. forces posed a threat to China, Mao Tse-tung ordered the massive intervention of the Chinese communist forces, which profoundly altered

the nature of the war. Overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers and ill equipped for combat in sub-zero weather, U.N. forces withdrew to a line well south of Seoul, regrouped, and by March 1951, fought their way back to the 38th parallel. In April and May, the Chinese forces launched successive major offensives against U.N. troops.

In June 1951, with battle lines once again set along the pre-invasion boundary, Jacob Malik, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, suggested negotiations to terminate armed hostilities. During the two years of peace talks, opposing forces remained locked in bloody, inconclusive combat, at a tremendous loss of life. Finally, on July 27, 1953, representatives for the United States and North Korea (also representing China) signed the Military Armistice Agreement. The government of South Korea refused to sign because a permanently divided Korea was unacceptable. In the absence of a political settlement, that agreement continues to regulate the de facto boundary between the two Koreas. Today, there is still no official peace on the peninsula.



Photo Caption: Koreans (South) vote during the first democratic election held on May 10, 1948.



Photo Caption: Jacob A. Malik, the Soviet representative on the United Nations Security Council, raises his hand to cast the only dissenting vote to the resolution calling on the Chinese communists to withdraw troops from Korea. December 1950.

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F A C T S H E E T



Photo Caption: Sixteen-inch guns of the *USS Iowa* (BB-61) bombarding enemy installations in North Korea.

The U.S. Navy's primary role at the outset of the Korean War was to help the United Nations Command (UNC) avert a disaster in the Far East. The mobility of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the forward basing of its major combat element, the Seventh Fleet, allowed President Harry S. Truman to support his decision to oppose what he saw as a communist challenge in Asia. Soon after the North Korean invasion, he announced that the United States, as part of a U.N. coalition, would use military force to preserve the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea. Truman also made it clear that the use of Chinese communist forces, and by implication Soviet air and naval forces to broaden the war in Asia, would be challenged. During the first week of the war, Seventh Fleet aircraft carrier *USS Valley Forge* (CV-45), heavy cruiser *USS Rochester* (CA-124), eight destroyers and three submarines were especially busy. The fleet displayed its strength along the Chinese coast. *Valley Forge* air squadrons also bombed airfields and rail yards in Pyongyang, North Korea, then beyond the range of the U.S. Air Force planes in Japan. The North Korean capital was the nerve center of the enemy's military establishment.

With the recent release of documents from the archives in Moscow and Beijing, it is now clear that the Navy's rapid show of force deterred the Chinese communists from carrying out a long-

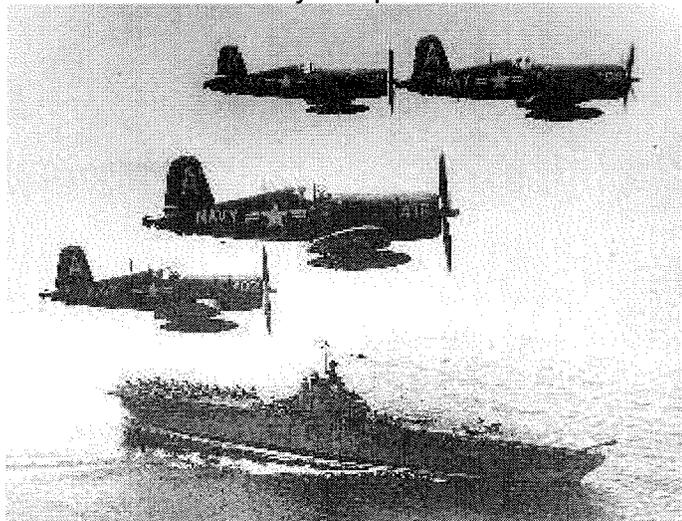
planned amphibious assault on the island of Taiwan, which was held by anti-communist Chinese Nationalist forces. An invasion of Taiwan would have widened the conflict in the Far East. Moreover, the quick deployment to the Far East of U.S. naval and land-based air forces influenced Soviet Premier Josef Stalin to withdraw an earlier pledge of Soviet air support for the North Korean attack.

Throughout the Korean War, U.S. Navy submarines and aircraft patrolled between the Soviet Union and the combat theater, not only to warn of surprise attacks, but to discourage such attacks. Other submarines and patrol planes, and periodically carrier task forces, operated off the long Chinese coast in a similar deterrence role.

Maintaining Sea Superiority

The object of the Navy's combat operations was to maintain superiority at sea and in Far Eastern skies. It was no coincidence that at no time during the war did the People's Republic of China or the Soviet Union use the sea or the air above it to support communist forces on the Korean Peninsula. The fleet's presence in the Western Pacific and its quick move to Korean waters also helped MacArthur's Far East Command to slow down the enemy's 1950 ground offensive, hold a precarious beachhead on the peninsula and build up forces ashore for a counteroffensive.

One of the allies' first actions was to destroy North Korean naval vessels. The North Korean navy operated only 45 small vessels, but they were pressed into the enemy's initial assault primarily to transport supplies to forces advancing along both coasts. In the early hours of the attack, the enemy also used naval vessels in a bold, strategic attempt to seize Pusan by landing 600 troops near the port. Pusan was one of South Korea's largest ports, and its location in southeastern Korea across from logistic support bases in Japan also made it vital to the allied cause. A North Korean victory there could have doomed the allied effort to retain a toehold in South Korea. But those 600 enemy troops never landed: Enemy ships were sunk by



American naval gunfire.

Photo Caption: F4U's (Corsairs) returning from a combat mission over North Korea circle the *USS Boxer* (CV-21) as they wait for planes in the next strike to be launched from her flight deck.

The Tide of Battle Turns at Inchon

The fleet's great mobility and control of the seas enabled General MacArthur and the U.N. Command to turn the tide of battle. In mid-September 1950, Commander Seventh Fleet and Commander Task Force 7 Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble led an armada of 230 amphibious and other ships in a surprise amphibious assault on the port of Inchon on Korea's west coast. Named Operation CHROMITE, the 1st and 5th Marine Regiments of the 1st Marine Division spearheaded the attack. Enemy and allied leaders alike had doubted that a major amphibious operation could be successful at Inchon, where the high tide ranged between 23 and 35 feet. At low tide, attacking ships faced the risk of being stuck in the mud. Furthermore, two fortified islands blocked access to the port of Inchon. Following days of bombardment by carrier planes and shelling by cruisers, destroyers and other naval gunfire support ships, elements of the 5th Marines, part of X Corps, initiated the assault at 6:33 a.m., Sept. 15. By the early morning hours of Sept. 16, their objectives had been secured.

MacArthur hoped for another Inchon-like landing on the eastern coast of North Korea. What slowed the amphibious operation was the fleet's discovery of between 2,000 and 4,000 Soviet-supplied magnetic and contact mines blocking the approaches to the port at Wonsan. Several U.S. Navy minesweepers were sunk before the troops could land. The setback at Wonsan resulted from the Navy's prewar reductions in the mine warfare force, failure to provide adequate equipment and general inattention to mine warfare. Despite the difficulties at Wonsan, the Task Force 95 minesweeping force registered some successes, such as the loss-free opening of the sea channel to Chinnampo, the port serving captured Pyongyang.

In November 1950, the Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army entered the war to assist the North Korean Army. The X Corps found itself outnumbered and dangerously overextended in the heart of North Korea. The allied command decided that X Corps, comprised of the 1st Marine Division and the Army's 3d and 7th Infantry Divisions, and three South Korean divisions of the I and II Corps would be evacuated by sea from the eastern ports of Hungnam and Wonsan.

Naval Support at Chosin

The withdrawal operation began on Dec. 10, 1950, when Task Force 90 embarked elements of the 1st Marine Division, which had just finished an arduous, masterful fighting withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir. Fleet carriers *Philippine Sea* (CV-47), *Valley Forge* (CV-45), *Princeton* (CV-37) and *Leyte Gulf* (CV-32) and three escort carriers had provided the American ground troops with crucial close-air support. Navy and Marine Corps aviators carried out more than 1,700 sorties during only one week of the operation. At the same time, the battleship *Missouri*, cruisers *St. Paul* (CA-73), and *Rochester* and a score of destroyers and rocket ships provided a ring of fire around the embarking allied troops. More than 23,000 16-inch, 8-inch, 5-inch and 3-inch rounds and rockets fell on Chinese and North Korean forces moving against the U.N. defensive perimeter. By Christmas Eve, when Navy explosive teams destroyed the port facilities at Hungnam, the Navy had withdrawn 105,000 troops, 91,000 civilian refugees, 350,000 tons of cargo and 17,500 military vehicles. Another 3,600 troops, 1,300 tons of cargo and 196 vehicles had been airlifted out by Air Force and Marine Corps aircraft. Clearly, the Navy's control of the sea enabled the X Corps to live to fight another day.

Blockading the Coastlines

The navies of the U.N. coalition also maintained a blockade of North Korea's coastlines. This prevented the enemy from using the sea and also allowed allied vessels to move about in relative freedom. This strategic advantage also enabled U.N. Command surface ships and submarines to land U.S. Navy underwater demolition teams (UDTs), U.S. Marines, British Royal Marine commandos, South Korean commandos and other special forces on both Korean coasts and on many coastal islands. The elite units destroyed enemy railways and railway tunnels, highway bridges and supply depots. U.N. naval forces also landed Korean guerrillas ashore for long operations behind enemy lines. In a major effort from Feb. 16, 1951, to the end of the Korean War, the fleet prevented the enemy from using the port of Wonsan by subjecting it to bombardment by air units, battleships, cruisers and destroyers of Task Force 95. One history of the war also credits this operation with diverting 80,000 North Korean troops from frontline duty.

Sea control was especially important during the last two years of the war, when the enemy launched numerous ground operations whose objectives were to force the U.N. to withdraw its troops from Korea — the best-case scenario — or to improve their negotiating position in the cease-fire talks held at Panmunjom. Sea power was a major factor in frustrating these communist goals and persuading the enemy to sign the Armistice agreement ending the Korean War on July 27, 1953.

Those Who Served

More than 265,000 Navy personnel served in Korea during the war — a sizeable proportion of the 5,720,000 other Americans who answered the call to duty. Four hundred seventy-five Navy personnel were killed in action; another 4,043 sailors died from disease or injury; and 1,576 were wounded in action during this first major conflict of the Cold War era.

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Naval Battles

As in all of the United States' modern wars, in Korea the U.S. Navy and Allied navies had to eliminate their enemy's presence at sea before concentrating on the conflict ashore. Soon after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korean) invasion of the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) on 25 June 1950, the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN)—composed of submarine chaser *Paektusan* (PC 701), one tank landing ship (LST), fifteen minesweepers and minelayers, and 7,000 men—sortied from port in search of the Korean People's Navy (KPN, North Korean navy). It did not take long for *Paektusan*, the crew of which had only recently brought its ship (formerly USS *Whitehead*) to South Korea from the United States, to locate prey. *Paektusan* discovered a KPN 1,000-ton steamer off the east coast in the vicinity of the South Korean port of Pusan. The ROKN combatant sank the KPN ship, perhaps preventing seizure of the one port that would become vital to the United Nations Command (UNC) forces fighting ashore.

In the meantime, UNC help was on the way. With the outbreak of war, Naval Forces Far East commander Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy dispatched his one light cruiser, four destroyers, four amphibious ships, one submarine, ten minesweepers, and an attached frigate of the Royal Australian Navy to Korean waters. Almost simultaneously, U.S. Pacific Fleet commander in chief Admiral Arthur W. Radford transferred his subordinate Seventh Fleet to Admiral Joy's operational control. That fighting fleet, under Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, steamed from its home port of Subic Bay, Philippines, on 27 June 1950, made a show of force off the coast of the People's Republic of China, and then headed for Korean waters. Struble's aircraft carrier *Valley Forge*, heavy cruiser *Rochester*, eight destroyers, three submarines, and a number of logistic support ships would be most welcome in the combat theater. The British Commonwealth soon complemented these U.S. naval forces with aircraft carrier *Triumph*, two light cruisers, three destroyers, and three frigates. In July the United States strengthened the ROKN with the provision of three decommissioned U.S. submarine chasers, more LSTs, and logistic ships and craft.

In the early hours of 2 July, as the allied fleets converged on Korea, U.S. cruiser *Juneau*, British cruiser *Jamaica*, and British frigate *Black Swan* discovered four torpedo boats and two motor gunboats of the KPN that had just finished escorting ten craft loaded with ammunition south along the coast in the Sea of Japan. The outgunned KPN torpedo boats turned and gamely pressed home a torpedo attack, but before they could launch their weapons, the Anglo-American flotilla ended the threat; only one torpedo boat survived U.S.-British naval gunfire to flee the scene. After this one-sided battle and for the remainder of the war, North Korean naval leaders decided against contesting control of the sea with the UN navies. Surviving KPN units eventually took refuge in Chinese and Soviet ports.

Freed early from the threat of attack by KPN combatants, major UN warships could

concentrate on the ground campaign. At this critical time for UN ground troops—then fighting to hold a precarious lodgment in South Korea—the fleet's carrier-based aircraft, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers poured bombs and shells on North Korean troops, tanks, and vehicles pushing down both coasts of South Korea.

The UN navies still had much to do to deny the KPN use of the sea, however. During July, August, and early September, UN combatants, especially ROKN ships, were needed to disrupt KPN seaborne attempts to resupply the fast-advancing North Korean ground forces. Early in July ROKN minesweeper *YMS 513* sank three Communist supply craft at Chulp'o on the southwestern coast; on the other side of the peninsula, *Juneau* located and destroyed the ammunition vessels that figured in the 2 July sea battle. On 22 July *YMS 513* sank another three supply vessels near Chulp'o. Five days later, submarine chasers *PC 702* and *PC 703*, newly provided by the United States, steamed up the west coast of Korea and, west of Inch'<1>n, sank twelve North Korean sampans loaded with ammunition. During the first week of August, *YMS 302* and other ROKN units destroyed another thirteen Communist logistic craft on the west coast. Between 13 and 20 August the ROKN engaged North Korean supply vessels five times. In one instance, *YMS 503* sank fifteen such vessels and captured thirty.

Combat action was especially heavy on the south coast during the last week of August 1950, when the North Korean command was desperate to reinforce and resupply its troops trying to penetrate the Pusan perimeter. Motor minesweepers *YMS 503*, *YMS 504*, *YMS 512*, and *YMS 514*, and *PC 702* sank numerous North Korean craft; many of the embarked troops drowned, while many others were captured.

At the end of the month, the ROKN frustrated a North Korean attempt to seize the port of P'ohang on the Pusan perimeter with troop-laden small boats. Finally, as the UN navies converged on Inch'<1>n for the amphibious assault that would turn the tide in the fall of 1950, *PC 703* sank a KPN minelaying craft and three other vessels in waters off the Yellow Sea port.

Having secured control of the sea off Korea, the UNC could proceed with exploitation of that strategic advantage. With little fear from North Korean counteraction at sea, UN naval forces under Admiral C. Turner Joy deployed U.S. Marine and army troops and South Korean soldiers ashore at Inch'<1>n on 15 September, landed other ground forces at W<1>nsan in northeastern Korea during October, and safely withdrew those forces from H<1>ngnam in December when China's entry into the war once again altered the strategic balance. While the fortunes of war on the ground changed a number of times before the 27 July 1953 Armistice, UN forces never lost control of the sea.

—Edward J. Marolda

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Naval Forces Far East (NAVFE)

At the beginning of the Korean War, Naval Forces Far East (NAVFE or NavFE), a command existing since 1947, was the principal naval organization directly subordinate to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's Far East Command (FEC) with its general headquarters in Tokyo. Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, commander of NAVFE from 26 August 1949, directed an organization broken into four principal components: Amphibious Force Far East (Task Force [TF] 90); Naval Forces, Philippines (Task Force 93); Naval Forces, Marianas (Task Force 94); and Naval Forces, Japan (Task Force 96).

In June 1950 these organizations lacked resources. For warships, Admiral Joy could count only one light cruiser (*Juneau*) and four destroyers at his immediate disposal in TF 96, a unit especially weak in minecraft. His amphibious force (TF 90) totaled five ships, including only one landing craft (*LST-611*). Moreover, joint training had been woefully inadequate. In June 1949 MacArthur had directed that the three services conduct amphibious exercises, but the first major landing was not scheduled until the fall of 1950.

After the shooting started in Korea, authorities in Washington acted quickly to bolster Joy's forces. On 27 June the Seventh Fleet, based in the Philippines and under the direct control of the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, was assigned to NAVFE. Its first warships—one carrier (*Valley Forge*), one heavy cruiser (*Rochester*), and eight destroyers—reached Japanese waters by 28 June and were soon in action. Designated as Task Force 77, this striking force was soon bolstered by other United Nations (UN) warships and supported by a replenishment unit dubbed Task Group (TG) 77.7 (soon redesignated Task Force 79). Henceforth the principal combatant component of the Seventh Fleet—and thus of NAVFE—was TF 77, built around its fast carrier forces.

Over the next three years four vice admirals commanded the Seventh Fleet: Arthur D. Struble (6 May 1950 to 28 March 1951), Harold M. Martin (28 March 1951 to 3 March 1952), Robert P. Briscoe (3 March to 20 May 1952), and J. J. Clark (20 May 1952 through the end of the war). During the war thirteen rear admirals rotated command of TF 77.

In a major reorganization on 12 September 1950, the naval operating commands were recast. Added to the Seventh Fleet organization was Task Force 72, which included the ships involved in the Formosa Patrol. For work closer to the Korea peninsula, the UN Blockading and Escort Force (Task Force 95) was established. Its principal elements included TG 95.1 (west coast group); TG 95.2 (east coast group); TG 95.6 (minesweeping group); and TG 95.7 (Republic of Korea Navy). During the conflict, NAVFE activated additional commands, including two large aviation units: Fleet Air Wing 6 (commissioned 4 August 1950) and Fleet Air Wing 14 (operational on 16 October 1952). Also created was the Logistic Support Force (Task Force 92) (on 3 April 1951).

As units rushed to the theater, NAVFE ballooned. In carriers, the force went from 1 in June to 8 British and U.S. by October 1950. The numbers of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers climbed from 18 to 64. During the same period, the total of warships at the disposal of NAVFE rose from 86 to 274. Such increases in materiel were reflected in personnel. In June 1950, 10,990 U.S. sailors were in the western Pacific; by the end of July 1951 comparable figures totaled 74,335.

In contrast to many of its components, NAVFE enjoyed remarkable command continuity. When C. Turner Joy stepped down on 4 June 1952, he was replaced by Vice Admiral R. P. Briscoe, who held his post until the end of the war.

—Malcolm Muir, Jr.

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Naval Gunfire Support

If, in the thinking of many defense analysts in the late 1940s, the aircraft carrier was obsolete in the nuclear age, the gunship seemed positively antediluvian. Yet during the Korean War the battleship, cruiser, and destroyer once again proved their utility, especially in the support of friendly troops ashore and in the interdiction of Communist forces' communications.

With the great drawdown of the fleet in the five years following V-J Day, the number of battleships on active duty in the U.S. Navy dropped from twenty-three to one and cruisers from ninety to twenty-three. Similar drastic cuts took place in destroyer strength. After all, the Soviet surface fleet was negligible, and the most sensitive targets in the Communist bloc were far removed from coastal areas.

When Korean People's Army (KPA, North Korean) forces crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea), the U.S. Navy had only 1 cruiser and 4 destroyers on duty in Japanese waters. But these were in action at Mukho within four days and, rapidly reinforced by gunships from the Seventh Fleet, they provided support to hard-pressed United Nations Command (UNC) troops retreating toward Pusan. From distant waters came the navy's only active battleship, the *Missouri*, and additional cruisers and destroyers. These U.S. ships were bolstered by gunships from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the Netherlands. Over the next three years, the U.S. Navy reactivated the remaining Iowa-class battleships (*Iowa*, *New Jersey*, and *Wisconsin*), five heavy cruisers, and 104 destroyers.

During the conflict naval gunfire provided strong support to important UN operations. For instance, two U.S. and two British cruisers plus six U.S. destroyers assisted the Marines landing at Inch'on on 15 September 1950. At Hngnam that December surface warships, including the *Missouri*, covered the withdrawal of ground troops with a large portion of their supplies; in the effort, two heavy cruisers, the *St. Paul* and *Rochester*, expended 3,000 8-inch shells. By the spring of 1951, Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews cited naval gunfire support as one of the key assets of the UN in the conflict.

In fact, shore bombardment had become the primary task of surface warships. Missions included firing in support of fixed positions at the front (in contrast to fluid targets encountered

in an amphibious assault); securing both flanks of the UNC battle line; and interdicting rail and road lines running along the northeast coast of Korea. In January 1952 this last effort was formally code-named DERAIL; its greatest success came the next month when shore bombardment halted railroad traffic into W¹nsan for weeks. But the navy simply did not have enough gunships to maintain this tempo of operations indefinitely.

The overall record is impressive. U.S. warships in one eleven-month period undertook 24,000 fire support missions, during which they expended 414,000 projectiles. Many ships did a great deal of shooting. For instance, one destroyer, the *Swenson*, in four months fired 5,709 rounds of 5-inch ammunition.

The big guns of the battleships turned in the most effective performance. Their 2,700-pound armor-piercing shells proved particularly devastating against hard targets such as railroad tunnels. One Marine Corps report concluded that the 16-inch guns were "pound for pound ... the most efficient rifles in the Korean War." Analysts calculated that a battleship could destroy a bridge in less than one half hour with sixty rounds of 16-inch ammunition. In comparison, at least twelve aircraft sorties were required to achieve a similar result with the attendant risk to aircraft and their crews. During the war the four battleships fired more than 20,000 16-inch projectiles—a much larger number than they had shot in World War II.

Between 25 June 1950 and 31 May 1953, U.S. Navy gunships fired 4,069,626 rounds. In the first two years of the war the warships claimed the destruction of 3,334 buildings, 824 vessels and small craft, 14 locomotives, 214 trucks, 15 tanks, 108 bridges, 93 supply dumps, and 28,566 troops.

These intensive operations revealed certain problems: early in the war, the army and navy possessed neither effective liaison nor a standard doctrine for fire control. Both omissions reflected the prewar sentiment that naval gunfire support was obsolete. Also missing in 1950 were dedicated spotting aircraft: the navy had removed its last float planes from battleships and cruisers two years earlier. Given the exigencies of combat, gunships began experimenting with their helicopters for this work.

With the high pace of operations a variety of problems surfaced, including bore erosion, accidents, and blast damage to ship structures. The cruiser *Helena* did so much shooting that her entire main battery had to be replaced. Her sister ship, *St. Paul*, suffered a serious turret fire in April 1952 that killed thirty men.

Communist forces also hit back. Surface warships were struck on eighty-five separate occasions, with the damage usually being superficial. However, on 7 May 1952 the destroyer *James C. Owens* took six hits that resulted in ten crew casualties. Even the battleships were not immune; both *New Jersey* and *Wisconsin* were slightly damaged by land-based gunfire. Mines presented a more severe threat to vessels operating close inshore: five destroyers were damaged by these underwater weapons.

Despite such drawbacks, UN soldiers attested to the effectiveness of naval gunfire support. Both army and Marine troops gave it high praise, often comparing it favorably with divisional artillery. Top commanders agreed with these favorable assessments. In December 1950, Douglas MacArthur noted that Communist forces frequently conducted their offensives well inland to avoid the effects of warship bombardment. After the trench stalemate developed, Lieutenant General Matthew Ridgway declared that naval gunfire relieved him of any concern

for his flanks. Some analysts noted tellingly that UN front lines near the coast were invariably forward of the battle line inland.

Despite this excellent performance, naval gunfire support suffered cuts during the post-Korean War defense realignment as "New Look" planners of the Eisenhower administration concluded that Korean conditions had been "artificial." Thus, all four battleships, most of the cruisers, and many of the destroyers were consigned to mothballs or the scrap heap. Ironically, the Vietnam War would once again prove the utility of the gunship to hard-pressed troops ashore.

—Malcolm Muir, Jr.

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KOREAN VIGNETTES A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Gerald | D. | Johnson | 366-21-97 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "Jerry" | Beachmaster | 12 Nov '29 | Radioman 3/c |
| Nickname | MOS | Birthdate | Grade/Rank |
| B'chmstr Unit 1USN | 15 Sep '50-Jan '51 | Plymouth, MN | Home Town |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | Medals & Awards | |
| Presidential Unit Citation | Korean Campaign Service Medal, 3 stars | | |
| United Nations Service Medal Navy Occupation Medal | | | |

NAVY BEACHMASTER AT THE INCHON LANDING

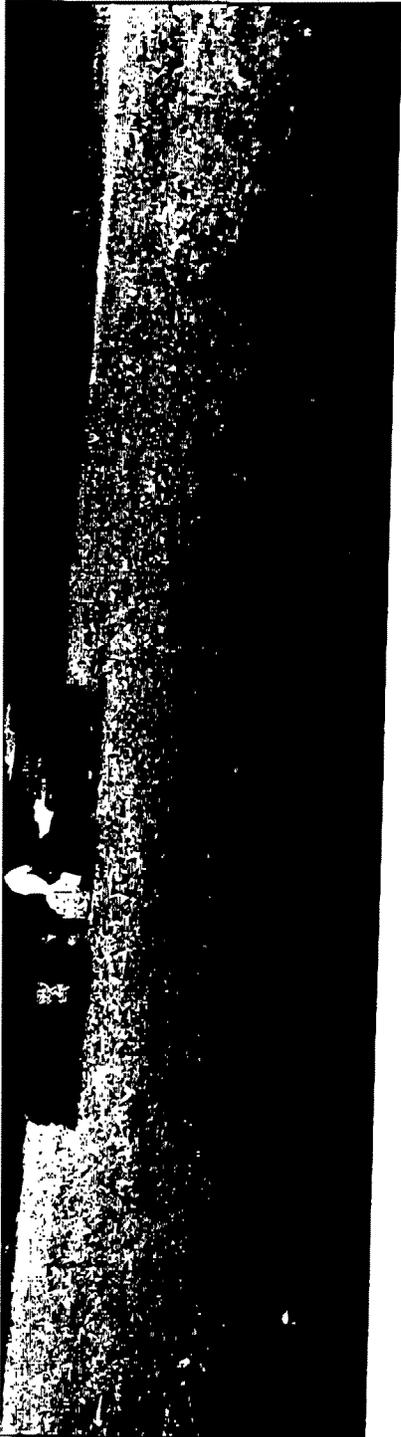
Our Beachmaster Group was trained at the Navy Amphibious Base at Coronado, CA. We were a small unit, individuals selected for various skills that WWII experience had shown to be useful in a beach landing. The unit was trained to provide various services to Marine assault troops. Through our ship to shore communications we could provide the services of a traffic cop on a crowded beach when called upon to do so. We were in an auxiliary position to assist in coordination of naval gun fire. Our primary mission was logistic. We communicated supply messages to support ships loaded with stores needed to support an amphibious assault. We were trained to defend ourselves. We wore the same green fatigues as did frogmen and seabees, and were armed with M-1 carbines. As a radioman, I was provided with voice radio to communicate from shore to Navy store and cargo ships in Inchon Harbor.

While awaiting our sailing orders for Korea, we were in the harbor at Kobe when Typhoon "Jane" struck Japan. Winds of 115 mph were recorded. It was some blow! We weathered it in trim Navy style with no real damage. After the typhoon, we sailed to Pusan on the eastern tip of the Korean Peninsula. We waited five days, then were transferred to the LSD "Fort Marlon", where we were attached to Third Battalion, Fifth Marines. We landed at Green Beach on Wolmi-do in the third wave at 0645 hours 15 September 1950. Fighting was still going on just a few yards away. Several North Korean bunkers were holding out. Machine gun fire from bunker embrasure slits was being directed at our marines.

While I had had the same boot training as other sailors, I really did not have a good picture of a Marine assault against an armed enemy. I learned there is a vast difference between a classroom description and the real thing. Had it not been so dangerous with all the lead flying around, I could probably have better enjoyed the lesson as it unfolded before my eyes. One North Korean bunker some 100 feet ahead had two machine guns firing from it. The rear of that bunker was being covered by machine gun fire from another bunker to its flank. I could see a gunnery sergeant off to my left flank. He pointed to his weapon, then at the bunker, and then at the squad leader of a squad of marines hunkered down on my near left flank. I couldn't hear what the squad leader said in all the noise, but I saw what took place.

A BAR man took position to aim at one of the embrasures. Four other marines aimed their M-1s at the other. Three men slung pack harness and started slithering toward the bunker. On signal from the squad leader, the BAR man and his assistant began a steady and continuous fire at one embrasure, the four rifemen at the other. Enemy fire from both embrasures slackened, then quit for a moment. In a few seconds before it resumed all three marines had made a mad dash for the bunker. One was hit, but the other two were up against the bunker, one at each embrasure. Lying flat on the ground, both marines pushed a grenade through an embrasure. There was a muffled explosion, actually two explosions a split second apart, a little smoke from one embrasure, and the North Korean machine guns were silenced. It took less time in the doing than in my telling. With some variation, a similar scene was repeated at the other bunker. The action then moved on ahead where it was lost to my sight.

While this was going on we had set up our radios. Representing the Navy ashore, the marines came to us. We would radio for supplies they needed to be put aboard LCPs or Amphibs and sent ashore. A causeway connected Wolmi-do to the mainland and the city of Inchon. After Wolmi-do was secured, a 32 foot tide left us stranded till evening when more landings were made. Other experiences followed but none like my first day of combat at Inchon. We were kept very busy, but the action had left us.



Norman Strickbine



KOREAN VIGNETTES
A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Russell | E. | Williams | 3403113 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "Russ" | Electronic Tech. | 25 Oct '31 | Petty Officer 2dC |
| Nickname | MOB | Birthdate | Grade/Rank |
| APA /30 & LST 914 | Sep '50- Apr '52 | | Branson, MO |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | | Home Town |
| Navy Good Conduct Medal KCSM NDSM UNSM | | | |
| Medals & Awards | | | |

LST, NAVY WORK HORSE

When I enlisted in Uncle Sams Navy as a wide eyed seventeen year old, I had a lot of illusions about serving on mighty battleships, trim fast cruisers or speedy destroyers. Perhaps even a majestic aircraft carrier might be my assignment. There was nothing in my script about an LST. When some old salt told me it meant Landing Ship, Tank it didn't mean much. Maybe I'd seen an LST in some old newsreel or John Wayne movie, but it hadn't registered. Impressed I was not when I first saw my ship assignment.

By springtime of 1950, following an extensive retrofit of earlier illusions, I was pretty well up to speed on Navy jargon. I understood what the old salts meant when they mentioned bow ramps, stern anchors and tank decks. And what it was to go to sea in an over sized Velveeta Cheese box! I had learned that an LST might not be thing of beauty, but it sure was one Navy workhorse. An LST may not look graceful, but it got a lot of work done in the Korean War. Its armament was two twin 40mm AA guns.

What it lacked in beauty and grace, an LST made it up in versatility. It could haul anything that could crawl, drive or walk up the extended bow ramp. It hauled tanks, trucks, weapon carriers, jeeps. Anything that had wheels in Uncle Sam's Army could be carried in an LST. That included the men who accompanied the vehicles. They would be fed, bedded and latrined, maybe not in Waldorf-Astoria style, but as one dogface told me, "a hell of a lot better than a cold muddy foxhole." The big disadvantage of an LST for Army troops was the constant roll and pitch if the seas kicked up. We old salts were used to that, but not those Army landlubbers. An LST needed a lot of swabbing down with soldiers aboard.

In our LST we hauled, rice, stovewood, horses, refugees and once, enough troops to start another war. Another time we hauled enough Chinese POWs to make up a Chinese regiment. We took on the POWs as a pay load shortly after the discovery that the prison camp on the little island of Koje-do had been undermined with tunnels. Safe from prying eyes of the guards, the prisoners had established their own system of communist justice including kangaroo courts. A very strict pecking order had been set up with abrupt terminations for those sons of Han who were communist non conformists.

They had to be gassed out of the tunnels and caverns they had dug. They came aboard wearing tear gas saturated clothing. The Army MPs of course, wore gas masks. They seemed amused at our discomfort. Then another time we had a Marine surgical team aboard: one doctor, one corpsman, and a pilot for the helicopter. The pilot was reassigned elsewhere after we lost the 'copter. We had to send a rescue crew ashore to retrieve what was left of the machine.

Speed was not a salient feature of an LST. It could make 9 knots at flank speed. If lightly loaded, the screws had a nasty habit of not staying submerged. If the conning tower folks weren't clever enough to head starboard or port dead downwind, the whole ship would be enshrouded in a stinking diesel cloud of its own making. As warships go, a "T" is not much of a threat. One night in the Yellow Sea, the British Cruiser, HMS Belfast, "scoped" us at night, challenged us by blinker light, using yesterday's coded challenge. We answered with today's code which resulted in a star shell across our bow. Once illuminated, she knew us to be a harmless USN LST and went on her way, wasting no more ordnance.

The climax of my LST duty was the trip home. Who can forget 30 days underway to reach San Diego?

CHAPLAIN PROVIDES A FIELD SERVICE



KOREAN VIGNETTES A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| William | J. | McGuinness | 785-91-72 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "Wild Bill" | radar spclst | 16 Jul '29 | Radarman 2/c |
| "Nickname | MOS | Birthday | Grade/Rank |
| USS Thompson DMS-38 | 1950 and 1951 | Ridgefield Park, NJ | |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | Home Town | |
| Navy Unit Commendation | Good Conduct Medal | KCSM w/3stars | |
| Medals & Awards | | | |
| UNSM NOSM ROK PUC | | | |

SEA DUTY

When the Korean War began on 25 June 1950, the USS Thompson DMS-38 was peacefully undergoing repairs and upgrade at Pearl Harbor. It was good duty. We worked tropical hours, 0600 to 1400 daily. Then it was liberty and swimming in beautiful Hawaii. There were only four destroyer mine sweepers (DMS) in the Pacific Fleet at that time. They were badly needed in Korea. Our overhaul was expedited. We sailed back to homeport in San Diego, took on supplies and received personnel to bring the ship up to fighting strength. We returned to Hawaii, took on ammunition and sailed for Sasebo, Japan, our new homeport. On all these trips we trained daily, conducting gun firing exercises and minesweeping drills to sharpen our fighting skills. We sailed to enemy waters in North Korea in the fall of 1950.

We operated on both the east and west coasts of North Korea. Winters in Korea are as cold as the Arctic. Deck force crewmen had to continually chop ice away from our 5" and 40mm guns. When we conducted a minesweep, all crew members not on watch below decks had to go topside so that if we struck a mine at least those on deck might have some chance at survival. We all knew that 8-10 minutes was the survival window in those cruel and icy waters. If not rescued and out of the water in that time a man was dead anyway. Operational minesweeps were frequent, that was our business; but it made it difficult to chow down. We would go inside to the galley to get our food, then go back outside to eat. It was so cold that we ate our soup and drank our coffee first before it started to freeze.

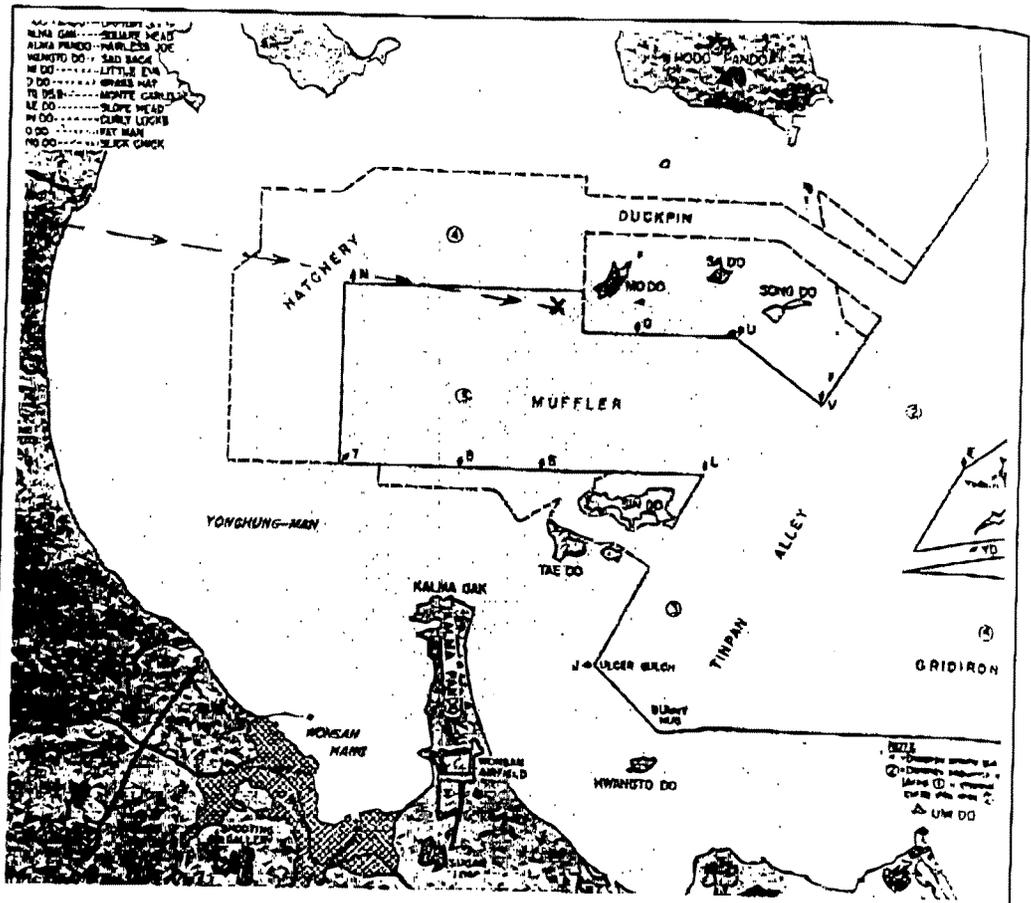
Our typical daily routine was to minesweep during the day and fire intermittent shore bombardment at night. Mines cut loose were destroyed by gunfire. Sometimes we got within 1000 yards of enemy beaches. I know the figure to be accurate. A radarman, I was required to keep the bridge informed of our range to the beach. This was dangerous because we never knew when shore batteries would open up. This typical routine would be interrupted from time to time by orders to escort a cruiser or battleship or act as plane guard for an aircraft carrier. We also fired on enemy patrol boats and minelaying junks. Mail, supplies and fuel came in by supply ship and tanker while we were at sea. The great highlight was mail from home. After several months at sea we would put in at Sasebo for two weeks of repairs, rest and recreation. Then it was back to the frigid waters of North Korea.

In shore bombardment we hit bridges, railroads, railroad tunnels, road intersections, highways, and anything that moved at night. We did everything possible to harass the enemy and restrict his night movement of troop convoys. On 14 June 1951 our ship was hit by shore batteries. The North Koreans fired about 100 rounds at us, scoring 14 hits. Three crew members were killed, and four wounded. The ship was damaged, but not put out of commission. About one year later the ship was hit again by shore batteries at Songjin, North Korea. That time, four were killed and several wounded. The ship survived. Being close together on a small ship for months at a time and serving together in a war makes a bond among crew members that can never be broken. Friendships are made that last a lifetime. You never forget your ship. The hostilities in Korea were referred to as a 'Police Action', but believe this old sailor when I tell you that it was a war. People were killed, people were wounded, POWs were murdered, and 8,177 Americans still remain missing in action, unaccounted for to this day. America still maintains 40,000 troops on the DMZ line in Korea, now, in 1996. But, looking back after all these years, I am proud to have served and would unhesitatingly do so again. America the beautiful is still a lamp of freedom to the world. It is our duty as Americans to see that the flame never flickers or dies.

WATERS OF NORTH KOREA

NAVAL ACTION IN THE FRIGID

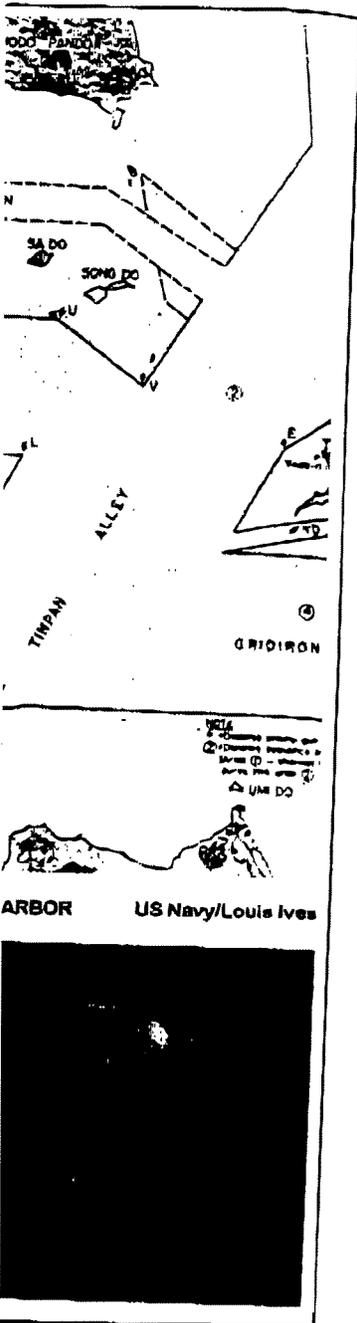




LT LOUIS IVES' FLIGHT PATH AND WATER LANDING SITE IN WONSAN HARBOR US Navy/Louis Ives



LT LOUIS IVES IN HIS LIFE RAFT BEFORE HIS PICKUP BY THE HAILEY DD-556. FEBRUARY 2 1953 Louia Ives



**KOREAN VIGNETTES
A FACE OF WAR**

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Burdett | Louis | Ives | 7368051 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | 496-290 USN |
| "Lou" | Navy Fighter pilot | 15 Mar '28 | Serial No |
| "Nickname | MOS | Birthdate | Lt, then Lt JG |
| VE-781 & CVG-102 | Apr -Nov '51 & Nov '52-May '53 | Alhambra, CA | Grade/Rank |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | Home Town | |
| Purple Heart | KCSM w/5stars | China (Formosa) Service | |
| Medals & Awards | | | |

NAVY FIGHTER PILOT

Entered the Navy V-5 program in WW II and by 1949 had my wings, was qualified in F4U's and TBMs, and had spent time with both Atlantic and Pacific fleets, and at bases in Florida, California, Seattle and Hawaii. Truman's budget axe cut the Navy back in 1949. I was one of those given \$300 and kicked out.

The Korean War began in 1950. I volunteered for recall to duty and was assigned to a fighter squadron; soon was cleared for flight status driving F4Us and the new F9E jets as a fighter pilot (LTJG) in Fighter Squadron 781 (VF-781), Reserve Air Group 102 (CVG-102). We on the USS Bon Homme Richard (CV-31) were a part of Task Force 77 which operated 40-60 miles off the eastern North Korean coast from May to December 1951. Our escort carriers (CVE's), and British carriers were similarly off the West Coast.

My first combat hop was a recco from Kojo-ri, following the railroad to Kumwha at the apex of the Iron Triangle. This mission, as in all subsequent flights was simple, observe and bring back information, and shoot up anything of a military nature. Mostly, TF-77 jet fighter squadrons flew deep reconnaissance missions in the eastern half of North Korea from the bombline to the Manchurian border. The USAF took care of the western half. Our reccos consisted of a two-aircraft mission flown at 200' to 900' above the terrain. Each plane was armed with six 5" rockets and 800 rounds of 20mm. We always expended all of our ordnance. On Veteran's Day, 11 November 1951, my machine was hit by flak over the road and rail junction at Yangdok in central North Korea. I was able to nurse the sick F9F to open water, and splashed down near Task Force 77. I was picked up by a helicopter from the Bon Homme, and with a bandaged hand, resumed flying in a few days.

My next Korean cruise was with VF-781 on the USS Oriskany (CV-34) from November 1952 to May 1953. It was the same routine: range out, shoot up the bad guys, bring back info on enemy activity and installations. Although I never spotted any NK or CCF aircraft, our squadron bagged a few MIGs. Score: us 7, them 0. Our guys were given credit for 2 only, since these MiG were operating from USSR bases, the moles' security was essential. Prop aircraft had been taking heavy losses on their attack missions; so the VF jets also engaged in flak suppression. The props losses decreased quite a bit. Not much fun for us, but vital for them.

1953-last recco. Over the same route as my first back in 1951. On Groundhog Day, 2 February 1953, I was on a recco west of Wonsan City. My machine was hit by 37mm fire. I ditched in a minefield in Wonsan Harbor. A whaleboat from the USS Hailey (DD556) picked me up—blue with cold—after 13 minutes in the 31° water. For several minutes after I was hauled out of that freezing water I couldn't talk—and didn't even bleed. I'll never forget the Hailey crew. I was hoping for some medicinal brandy, but found out they'd drunk it. All they had left to serve was hot soup.

As a sidelight. Hazardous duty pay was awarded to pilots who logged at least 4.0 hours of flight time each month. On 2 February I had logged only some 2.3 hours. I wasn't medically cleared to fly again until the next month. Therefore, I didn't qualify for hazardous duty pay in February.

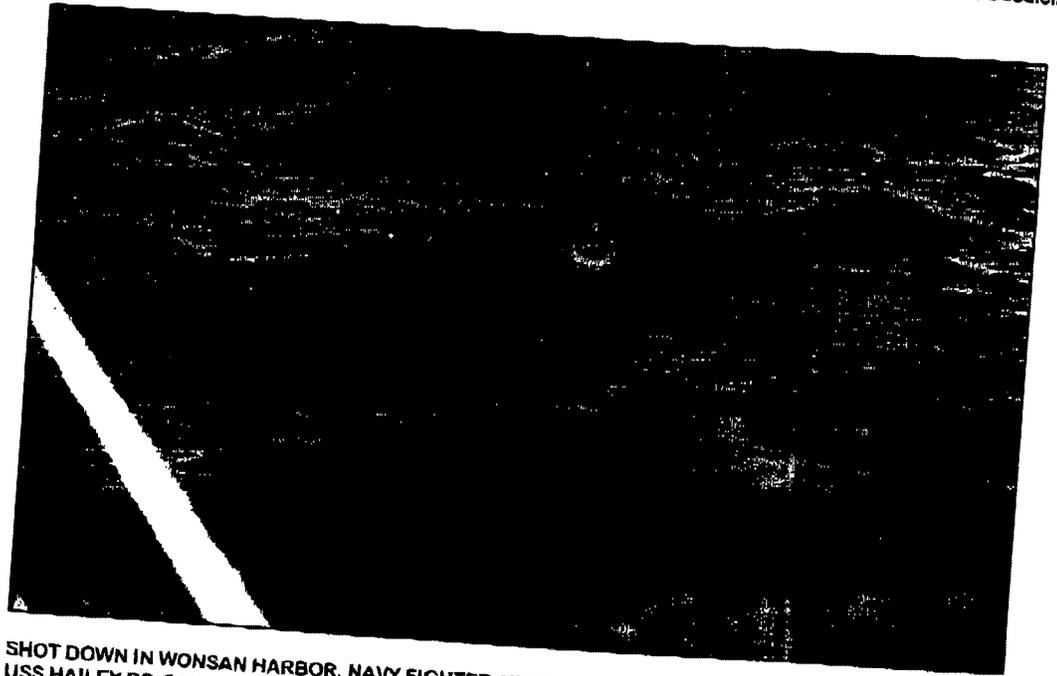
On my last Korean hop, we ferried our tired F9Fs to the Marines at Po'hang, K-3. After two tours over North Korea, I finally got to South Korea.

DD-556. FEBRUARY 2 1953
Louis Ives



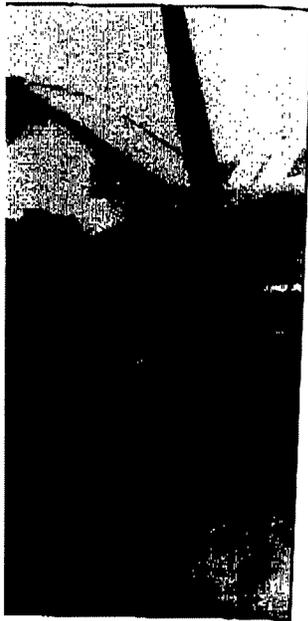
A PILOT FROM THE BON HOMME RICHARD PREPARES FOR TAKEOFF

Tom Cacciola

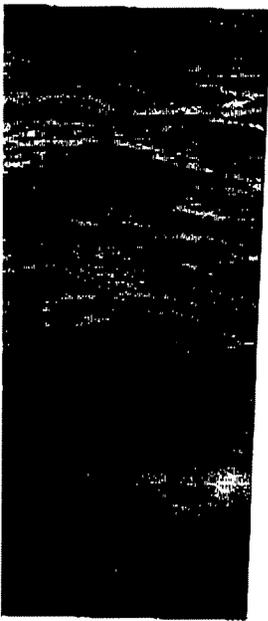


SHOT DOWN IN WONSAN HARBOR, NAVY FIGHTER PILOT IVES IS RECOVERED BY THE DESTROYER
USS HAILEY DD-556

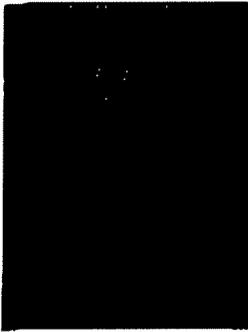
Louis Ives



JR TAKEOFF
Tom Cacciola



BY THE DESTROYER
Louis Ives



**KOREAN VIGNETTES
A FACE OF WAR**

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Raymond W. Bloomer | 439 17 06 USN |
| First Name MI | Last Name |
| "Ray" | 16 May '32 |
| Nickname MOS | Grade/Rank |
| USS HAILEY DD-556 | 1952-1953 |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea |
| Good Conduct Medal | Korean Service Medal |
| National Defense Medal | |
| Medals & Awards | |
| Navy Occupation Medal, European Clasp UNSM ROKPUC | |

DESTROYER DUTY IN KOREAN WATERS

Serving aboard a Fletcher Class destroyer was quite an experience for a 19 year old kid from Philadelphia who had never before been far from home. We did not know much what this war was about, but we enlisted in service to our country at war. When I left boot camp at Bainbridge, MD, I thought sure I would be assigned to a battleship or an aircraft carrier, at least. We arrived aboard the USS Hailey DD-556 at 2300 at night laden with seabags, tired from a long trip. We were told to sleep in the mess hall until morning when we would be assigned to our respective divisions and duty stations. I never felt so low, and wondered why I had joined the navy in the first place. We soon became acclimated to shipboard life however, and found it wasn't so bad after all. The ship was scheduled for Korean duty. Our sea passage to Korea began at Newport, RI, through the Panama Canal to Pearl Harbor, Midway, Japan and then the Korean coastline. Destroyers are known by many names to sailors, DD's, Tin Cans, Greyhounds of the Sea, and as the "Can Do" ships of the Navy. Earlier destroyers were primarily torpedo boats. By WW II, a number of different classes of destroyers had been developed in response to changing warfare at sea. The Fletcher Class was the ultimate destroyer of its time. Most were decommissioned after WW.II. Many were recommissioned to serve in Korea.

The destroyer was now an anti submarine vessel. It carried torpedoes, depth charges, and deck guns for antiaircraft defense. It was useful in shore bombardment and in plane guard detail, running with the fast aircraft carriers as escorts. Our duty in Korea was primarily bombardment and carrier escort duty. A 30 day tour would mean a lot of running through mine cleared lanes a few hundred yards off shore, taking located targets under fire. The North Koreans would lay the mines at night from small sampans. Mine sweeping by other Navy units was a routine operation that kept the sea lane open. The monotony of the regular mine sweep patrol was often broke by fire from a hidden shore battery.

The monotony was broken one sunny cold day when the ship suddenly increased speed. One of our carrier planes had been hit over Wonsan and was coming down near us, in range of enemy shore batteries. The pilot touched down and managed to get clear of his plane. He had just managed to get into his life raft after about 8 minutes in the icy water. A man does not live long in the frigid waters of a Korean winter. He was close to his limit. We lowered a boat and assisted him aboard. He was literally purple with cold. Before we got him back to his carrier, I think pilot Lt Lou Ives had shaken hands with every member of the Hailey's crew. That was 1952. We still hear from Lou Ives when we hold a ships reunion. He is an honorary crew member of the Hailey. This was the second pilot rescued by the Hailey. She had picked up another pilot from his downed plane in WW.I. One November night in 1952 while on plane guard detail, the usual routine was again broken. Our sonar made submarine contact. This was in the cold war era, not only in Korea. We had four carriers to guard. Any sub there knew it to be a war zone. It was either friend or foe, and we knew it not to be one of ours. We made numerous runs on the contact, fired many depth charges and contact hedgehog bombs. We may never know what we hit, but it wasn't friendly.

Completion of sea duty in Korea found us homeward bound. Our squadron of 8 destroyers are thought to be the largest group of ships to circumnavigate the globe since Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet in 1907, visiting 16 ports of call on the return voyage. Those ships were USS Hailey DD-556, USS Miller DD-535, USS The Sullivans DD-537, USS Rooks DD-804, USS Hickox DD-673, USS McGowan DD-678, USS McNair DD-679 and USS Lewis Hancock DD-675. The squadron was designated as Des-Ron 20.

BETWEEN INVADING ARMIES AND BATTLES IN HIS PADDY FIELD, THIS KOREAN PAPA-SAN AND HIS OXEN PREPARE THE SOIL FOR PLANTING. HE HAS HIS FINGERS CROSSED IN HOPE THAT MINES WERE NOT PLANTED IN HIS SMALL RICE PLOT BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. Norman Strickline



KOREAN VIGNETTES A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Kenneth | G. | Supko | 433-74-76 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "Super Sup" | Electrician | 4 Sep '31 | EM 2/c |
| Nickname | MOS | Birthday | Grade/Rank |
| USS McGowan | 20 Oct '52-15 Feb '53 | | Clifton, NJ |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | | Home Town |
| Good Conduct Medal Naval Reserve Medal National Defense Medal | | | |
| Medals & Awards | | | |
| Korean Campaign Service Medal/ 2 stars United Nations Service Medal | | | |

WONSAN PATROL

The USS McGowan, DD678, a Fletcher Class destroyer was the state of naval art when it was commissioned 14 November 1943. It displaced 2050 tons, was 376 feet six inches in length, with a beam of 39 feet 8 inches, speed of 37 knots and a crew complement of 319. Her armament consisted of five 5 inch guns, ten 40mm and 7 20mm AA Guns, ten 21 inch torpedo tubes, six depth charge projectors and 2 depth charge racks. She was a formidable warship named after a doughty old Rear Admiral of WWI. She had had a most distinguished career in the Pacific during WWII, but following that conflict had been consigned to rust and oblivion as part of the Pacific Reserve fleet in San Diego.

I knew nothing of the USS McGowan, its record or its armament when I was assigned to her crew on completion of Electricians School at the Washington Navy Yard. I had enlisted in the Naval Reserve Armistice day 1949, and at my request, went active 15 April 1950. Learning of my assignment, I was somewhat disappointed, having hoped for a bigger ship. Reporting aboard in April of '51, I was more disappointed. There she was, tied up cheek to jowl with other "Fletchers", all peeling paint, rust and red lead, part of the "mothball" fleet. Near her was the USS McNair and the USS The Sullivans. We were a little envious of her as she had had a movie made about her, of the five Sullivan brothers who had gone down with the cruiser USS Juneau off Guadalcanal in 1942. We did not then know who the McGowan was named after, and nobody bothered to tell us at that time, either.

Even though the McGowan appeared to be a rusty relic, we could tell she had a proud history. It was written along her bridge with rows of memorable ribbons and battle stars. She obviously needed a lot of work, and I wondered when the Navy would get her to a shipyard for the civilian contractors to work her into shape. Hah! A skeleton crew of officers, a bosun, gunners mates, boilermakers, machinists, and torpedomen had already come aboard. They couldn't wait to get their hands onto the seamen and seaman apprentices who had just been mustered aboard. We worked hard and steady, and by 1952 we had passed through the Panama Canal and were a part of the Atlantic Fleet. In May '52, we began training for Far Eastern deployment, arriving in Yokosuka, Japan, 20 October, ready for Korean duty.

By the time the McGowan reached Korea, the war had become one of sporadic small unit operations, which were quite often very deadly, producing a high rate of casualties. Our political objective, never transmitted to the men involved in the fighting, was to limit the war to Korea. There, our objective was to hold the strategic high ground on land, control the skies, and to continue control and patrol of the waters surrounding the Peninsula of Korea, unchallenged, until a political settlement of this "limited war" could be attained. We joined Task Force 77 operating out of Sasebo and Yokasuka, Japan. Our role would be shore bombardment, plane guard and radar picket duty, and escort of our mine sweeps in Wonsan harbor, North Korea. Task Force 77 consisted of the battleship USS Missouri, the carriers Essex CV9, Bonhomme Richard CV31, Kearsarge CV33, and Oriskany CV 34, cruisers Juneau CL119, Helena CA75, Toledo CA 133, and Los Angeles CA 135, plus 32 destroyers.

We were especially proud to be serving with the Missouri. We knew, of course, that the Japanese surrender had been signed aboard her. Just to be with her was to be a part of history. We first saw her anchored in Yokasuka harbor, looking like a very impressive squat old hen. Nothing could look so regal as she did when at sea. She was the queen. Those huge 16 inch guns would speak, and speak again on numerous occasions to North Koreans in their coastal mountain redoubts and shore installations.

Norman Strickbine



KOREAN VIGNETTES A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----|---|---------------------|
| Wille | G. | Haney | 348-43-28 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "Hook" | | 25 Apr '29 | Seaman 1/c |
| Nickname | MOS | Birthday | Grade/Rank |
| LSD-18 USS Colonial | | 25 Jun '50-27 Jul '53 | Mammoth Springs, AK |
| Unit(s) | | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | Home Town |
| Good Conduct Medal | | Korean Campaign Service Medal, 10 stars | |
| Medals & Awards | | Occupation Medal-Japan National Defense Service Medal | UNSM |

LANDING SHIP DOCK & MINESWEEPER

I served my time in Korea aboard the LSD-18, the USS Colonial. LSD means landing ship dock. This was a multi purpose ship which was utilized in many different missions. It could carry landing craft to the scene of an amphibious assault, flood the well decks, open the stern gates and as the ballast tanks filled, squat low in the water, hull half submerged, and launch its brood at the beach. The well deck could carry 27 LCVPs, 3 LCU's and 18 LCMs. It could even carry a LSM if need be. It is one big ship. She was commissioned on V-J Day 1945, too late to take part in WWII but made up for it by her Korean duty.

The ship participated in the landings at Iwon and Wonsan and in the redeployment of troops from Wonsan, Iwon and Hungnam. At Icheon it landed tanks of the 1st Marine Division on the beach 16 September 1950. The USS Colonial was an active ship, always involved in some naval situation. Her salvage crew was able to retrieve a sunken boat from under the very noses of the North Koreans, close in to shore. The ship and crew rescued a downed helicopter from an island in Wonsan harbor under the guns of shore batteries, and returned the helicopter to its ship. Then there was the occasion when we assisted in the rescue of five airmen. They were saved from a watery grave, for sure.

Most of the time we kept busy sweeping mines in Wonsan harbor. In 1951 and early 1952 we stayed in that harbor 72 days straight, finding 72 mines. If we found a new or different type of mine, we would bring it aboard and tear it apart to see how it was constructed and what made it work. We were chased from the harbor several times because of shore batteries firing at us from the beach.

One time we lost 5 men when their boat gear hung up and their M boat capsized. The water was so cold they lasted only a few minutes. When the bodies were recovered, they were placed in the ship's cooler until we got back to Japan. I picked up my nickname of "Hook" because I had broken my wrist and was in a cast for three months. A different kind of chore we performed was hauling Chinese and North Korean prisoners. We transferred two loads of them in the well deck from Koje-do to another island. Each trip took about 48 hours. This was just after the Chinese prisoners transferred elsewhere. That riot was broken up and the ringleaders and die hard Communists transferred elsewhere.

We had "man overboard" training every few days. I never thought much about it until my brother, Richard Lee Haney came aboard. Then when the alarm sounded, my first worry and thought was of him. One time when we were sailing back to Japan from Korea, radar picked up something that followed us all night. I was on the helm, and we kept a zigzag course all night. While we never knew for sure, we all figured it was a Russian submarine. It shook us all up. Another time we hit a bad storm and took a 48 degree roll. This dumped everything to the deck that was not lashed down, including all the food. We ate sandwiches for the next three days. Again, while mine sweeping in Wonsan harbor, the supply ship couldn't get to us. We ate stew for 10 days straight. We named our Commissary Chief, "Stew Burner." Lots of times while there in Wonsan harbor we stood watch, four hours on and four hours off. It sure got old in a hurry. Several times I caught myself dozing off, on watch.

I had one brother who was a POW in Korea. We didn't hear from him for over 2 years. He was a prisoner for 3 years. Turned out I was within 50 miles of him one time, but didn't know it. He died in 1993. The brother that was on board ship with me died in 1988. I served 39 months aboard the USS Colonial LSD-18. I had three brothers in service during the Korean War. We all served our country proudly.

IT WAS THEN NECESSARY TO BUILD MANY BRIDGES. MARCH 1951



A YOUNG KOREAN GIRL DRAWS WATER AT THE VILLAGE PUMP. CENTRAL SOUTH KOREA NEAR THE 38TH PARALLEL. NOTE THE GI COMMO WIRE REEL TO LEFT OF THE PUMP BEING USED AS A MAKESHIFT TABLE. NOTHING WAS WASTED IN KOREA.

Norman Strickbine



KOREAN VIGNETTES A FACE OF WAR

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| John | A. | Hirner | 392544 USNR |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Serial No |
| "The Hat" | 1105 | 9 Nov '29 | Lt Jg |
| Nickname | MOS | Birthday | Grade/Rank |
| USS Gregory DD-802 | 2/ winters of '51/'52 & '52/'53 | | Monroe City, MO |
| Unit(s) | Duty Tour(s) in Korea | | Home Town |
| Korean Campaign Service Medal, 3stars China Service Medal | | | |
| Medals & Awards | | | |
| NDSM UNSM | | | |

LIFE ABOARD A DESTROYER

In 1947 I enlisted in the Naval Reserve in high school, obtaining my commission through Reserve Officer Candidate School, a two summer program for Enlisted Reservists in college. On completion of my second ROC training program in August 1951, I received my commission as ensign in one hand and active duty orders to the USS Gregory, DD-802, a destroyer, in the other. I reported aboard, 5 Oct '51 in Yokosuka, Japan. The Senior Officer immediately gave me the in-port Officer of the Deck watch, and we got under way for Korea. I was assigned to the Engineering Department under the Damage Control Assistant and told to familiarize myself with all spaces of the ship and update the fittings (hatches and valves) and their corresponding signs. I came to know every piece of that ship and could get 'lost' if need be. Later, I became both Electrical and Electronics Officer as these officers left ship. In Korea the Gregory was either part of a Carrier Task Forces screen or on shore bombardment.

During shore bombardment, we were generally alone in Wonsan Harbor. The harbor was mined, but a ship's lane was generally kept clear. Our orders were to fire at random around the clock. Sleeping was difficult. During screening tours, the biggest hazard was in not noticing a direction change and having a carrier bear down on us at 30 knots, and we at 30 knots full ahead at the carrier. A few times it was a close call for we lost the carrier in our radar clutter. One of my collateral duties under way was Boat Officer. This involved taking personnel to other ships, doing guard mail runs, and going after downed pilots. I still remember a cold, overcast, windy, rainy day with choppy seas in the winter of '52. A downed pilot was in the water, not far from us. We immediately headed to assist. While we of the boat crew got into our gear, the ship's crew readied the whale boat. In the distance we could see a plane circling the area where the pilot was down. He was pretty close to shore. The area was mined from sea shelf to shore. The Gregory put the whaleboat into the water at the sea shelf. Wind and wave dumped water into the boat faster than the three of us, with the com'n steering, could bail. The propeller and the tiller were as much out of the water as in. After what seemed hours in the face of the wind we were still miles away. The Gregory asked us for status, then ordered us to return. We had to leave him. If he were alive when he hit that icy water he could not have lasted long. We just could not reach him in time.

The four ships in our division took turns patrolling the Formosa Straits between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan for a few weeks while visiting Hong Kong during each Far East tour. We were docked in Kaohsiung, Taiwan in late January '53 when the word was passed to return to the ship at once. The ships boilers were lit off and we got up steam to get under way. As we steamed out of the harbor, many crew members were trying to catch up in water taxis. We sailed with only a part of our crew, and were short officers as well. We learned that the Chinese earlier that day had shot down a US reconnaissance plane. The plane was able to land off shore, and the crew were in life rafts. A seaplane was dispatched to pick them up. It was destroyed by Chinese gunfire while taking off with its load of rescued airmen. We and other ships in the area had been dispatched to rescue anyone we could find. We found no living person, only wreckage. As I went into CIC to relieve the watch, I heard swishing sounds. The captain heard them too. He called down to CIC and said we were going to flank speed to get the hell out of here. Then we learned that the swishing sounds were incoming Chinese shells which had bracketed us. They had our range. Although we swung our 5" guns around in the direction of the Chinese, we did not return fire while leaving that area of seaborne wreckage. Later the action report was prepared, encoded, and radloed to our commands. We saw or heard nothing later, or ever ran across any reference to that incident. I left the ship 28 Aug '53 at the end of my second tour of Korean War duty.

Commander E. L. Yates was Orleck's skipper when our ship became known as "The Train Killer." As he later told the San Diego Tribune, "We were assigned to patrol 150 miles of North Korean coastline. At several points we noticed that the railroad approached close to the shoreline. We could see that the trains ran past our observation like those ducks and deer in a shooting gallery at the County Fair. All of us, skipper, officers and crewmen, got the same idea. What a chance to shoot up some trains." At the same time we would badly injure our North Korean and Chinese enemy. We chose a quarter mile spot where the train ran between tunnels. On a moonless night we drifted toward shore, the men silent and not smoking. It was pitch black. "On the bridge we spoke in whispers," recalled the Captain. Shortly after midnight the roar of a train and the red glow of its firebox could be plainly seen. The Orleck fired star shells lit up the train for the kill. The range had been predetermined. It proved accurate. The first shells stopped the train in its tracks. A moan was heard as if the train were trying to blow its whistle to summon aid. It was a dying gasp. Captain Yates said, "What a smash. There were a million sparklers like a kids dream of the best Fourth of July ever!" In daylight, on our next run past, the ruins of the train could be seen strung out over that quarter mile of track. Over the next week the debris had been cleaned up, so we doubled our vigilance at night as we scanned the railroad and shoreline on our coastal patrols.

Twelve nights later we got another train with the same spectacular results. After that, somehow, we never saw another train at night on our coastal patrols. Did they run by day risking total destruction by our air forces? On the other hand, we never spotted bomb wreckage debris on the tracks. Perhaps they figured out a way to detect us and hid out at night in tunnels as we passed by. Peace talks at Panmunjom put a stop to this type of activity before we solved the riddle.

The Orleck, a 2200 ton destroyer of the US Pacific fleet was serving her second tour of duty with United Nations Task Force 95. Late in 1952 I was assigned duty aboard the USS Orleck as a young radar operator on my first tour of duty in a battle zone. The Orleck was working as "plane guard" for the aircraft carrier Kearsarge, named after the Union warship, USS Kearsarge, that had cornered and sunk the Confederate commerce raider, CSS Alabama. That action had taken place during our Civil War off the French coast near Cherbourg Harbor. We had a darling and famous US naval name to guard and cherish. The Captain and crew of our ship, the USS Orleck, was determined that our actions would not detract from the illustrious name of the Kearsarge nor from the honored name borne by our ship.

Our duty station was to trail the Kearsarge and pick up the pilots of any planes that missed their landings and went into the drink. My duties as radar operator were to maintain a 30 second 'plot' with Kearsarge in regards to position. On my first tour, the Kearsarge came under attack from Chinese MIG aircraft. My station was about 20 feet from Battery No. 2. When those 5 inch 38's cut loose, it really jarred me, mentally and physically. Trying to maintain my plot with all the racket going on, and no idea of what was going on topside was a very traumatic experience for a young sailor. Then, suddenly, over the noise from my headset I could hear music. A quick glance revealed the source. Leaning back against the bulkhead was an old sailor by name of Moore. In a melodius baritone, he was giving out his version of "Orange Blossom Special". The effects of his relaxed performance had a very calming effect on me. That song still has a special place with me to this day.

TRAIN KILLER

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Thomas | H. | Risher | 438-95-60 USN |
| First Name | MI | Last Name | Sortal No |
| "Tom" | 16 Oct 1932 | Radarman, Second Class | Grade/Rank |
| "Nickname" | MO8 | 1952-53 | Thayer, MO |
| USS Orleck, DD886 | Birth Day | Duty Tour in Korea | Home Town |
| Six Ribbons | One Battle star | Medals & Award | |

KOREAN VIGNETTES
A FACE OF WAR

