

Dan said that about 95% of the time you would be completely bored, and never know when fighting may start. There were duties to attend to but mostly just waiting around.

Flak jackets had to be worn almost all of the time, even if you were behind a hill in a resting area. The Chinese were constantly lobbing artillery over the hills and you never knew when or where. These attacks would maybe only last an hour but you never knew when.

After living under constant attack or possible attack Dan said he and others became nonchalant at times when no action would occur for a week or so. Sometimes Dan would sit on a hill in a white T-shirt and khaki pants and could see the Chinese and they could see him.



Hot meal behind the front lines

The Company Sergeant Duncan from Kansas City is facing the camera - A good friend of Dan during the war.

Most of these pictures were given to Dan from other men in his company. The color slides were taken by Dan when Lois sent him a camera.

Back in the rear they got hot meals. At the Outpost were C rations.

At the MLR depending on where they were, if there was a road close, about every two days they would bring in hot food. They would always carry their spoon. They would bend the handle so it would hook over their belt. The spoon was licked off but they never had a way to clean it unless they were back in the rear.

Dan doesn't remember anyone ever getting sick from these spoons.



Note the flappers under the helmet that protected the ears and cheeks.



Firing bunkers on top of the hill that provided protection on the MLR.

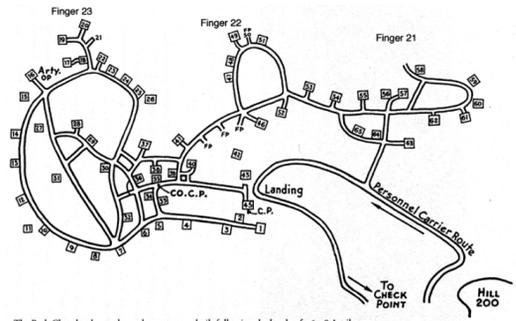


Mortar tripods

One of Dan's jobs was manning the mortars the last four months in Korea. They would clean them in the rear and then site them back on the front lines. They were relatively maintenance free and were very precise weapons.

The mortar tube sat on a one-inch steel plate which handled the recoil and the front two legs were used to stabilize the unit. When they performed a test fire and would hit a target location, they would put a stake and mark it in the sights. Then if they had to change the target to another area, they could still come back to the original location by using that original marker location.

In the Fourth platoon there were three sections of 60 mm mortars and three sections of 57 mm recoilless rifles (similar to a bazooka).



The Pork Chop bunker and trench system as rebuilt following the battle of 16-18 April 1953.

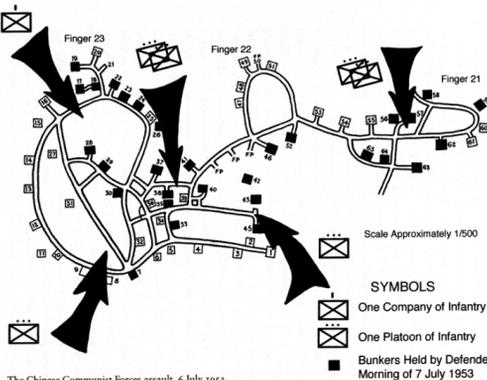
Pork Chop Hill As told by Dan Peters during an interview on August 15, 2016

Dan Peters served with the Fourth Platoon, Company C (Charlie).

On the map is a road - personnel carrier route. This was one of the few outposts that had a road leading directly to it.

There was a main landing or drop-off point about a half mile from where Dan was positioned. Transport trucks were used to bring groups of men to this drop off point...and as Dan stated "those trucks got the hell out of there in a hurry" after dropping off the soldiers because the Chinese could reach that point with their artillery.

Armored personnel carriers with tracks were then used to transport eight to ten men at a time up to the bunkers. Regular trucks or jeeps were never used - too dangerous.



The Chinese Communist Forces assault, 6 July 1953.

Pork chop hill was attacked in the evening during a rain storm on July 6, 1953.

Chinese captured part of the east finger and some other small areas of the over-all bunker system in the outpost.

The black bunkers on the map during the morning of July 7 were still held by the Americans. The white boxes were newly capture by the Chinese.

Several bunkers held by the Americans were isolated such as 46 & 52 and 28, 29, & 30...they had no place to go and were probably killed during the day by grenade attacks and gunfire.

The arrows show the directions that the Chinese came from. The rectangular box symbols represent a company or platoon of infantry of Chinese attackers during their counter-offensive. A company would be roughly 200 enemy fighters and a platoon would be roughly 50 enemy fighters.

At first the Americans held the bunkers but then the Chinese overran some of them. The Americans either escaped out of those trenches or were killed.

By the morning of July 7 the Chinese had a foot-hold and that is when the human slaughter on both sides started.

Over the next five days one company after another from the US counter-attacked and tried to retake those Chinese foot-holds.

Remember that when you try to retake a trench or bunker, you had to fight going up the steep hill while the enemy is shooting down at you. They would also lob grenades at you.

This is where most of the casualties occurred on both sides during the battles on Pork Chop Hill.

If you tried to help a fellow wounded soldier or remove a dead soldier, you jeopardized your own life in doing so. A lot of the dead did not get removed from the hills. There were a lot of MIA Americans who were killed in the trenches and on the slopes because unless the US retook that trench or hill, the dead US soldiers' bodies could not be retrieved.

You could ONLY retrieve the dead and wounded if you retook that trench/bunker area, otherwise they ended up being MIA...the facts and horror of trench warfare.

The US tried to attack from various positions, hoping that this area would give them the advantage to remove the Chinese. One time the US would gain some ground but never a total retake of the Chinese areas.

So day after day men from the various companies were killed and injured.

On July 9, Dan's company C moved in.

Dan entered Pork Chop hill in the trench area where bunkers 63 & 64 were located.

About four APCs with ten men would make the drop off and then go back down the loop of the road to get more men. This route took about 30 minutes to make a return trip. It was basically a single path road.

Dan spent most of the day in the trench just above 63 & 64. Then later that night Dan was lying in a shell hole which was somewhere in the area of bunkers 56 & 57.

"When my company attacked on July 9th we retook and held, along various remnants of other companies, the east finger of the Pork Chop bunker system."

"I wasn't at the forefront, but our company continued to attack the bunkers in the middle part of Pork Chop on over to the western finger."

It was at this western finger where most of the casualties of Dan's company occurred.

Dan, along with eight or nine other men in their company continued hauling supplies and ammunition to their comrades fighting on the western finger of Pork Chop.

Charlie company was able to take back part of the outpost (the East finger) that the Chinese were on.

Dan didn't recall exactly all of the areas that were retaken from the Chinese..."To a point, 90% of the guys didn't know where the hell they were during the battles."

Dan explained that the double-lined areas of trenches were the ridges or high points of the hills. From those trenches the land sloped downward steeply.

The numbered squares were bunkers that looked down the hillside.

There were firing bunkers and the sleeping bunkers were on the inside of the outpost trench system. The company command post is identified on the map in the middle of the complex.

Dan's personal experience

"This is in the evening. Shells are exploding everywhere."

"I came up here and I went up this trench to somewhere in here and dropped off my load of ammunition to resupply the men in this position (near bunker 65)."

"As I was coming up the hill, I was trying to keep my rifle clean and carrying my carbine on one shoulder and dragging a box of rifle ammunition behind me. That was my assignment...this box weighed about 100 pounds. I was having a hell of a time dragging it, while staying down low in the trench because of all the shelling, which made me 'pretty damned scared.'"

"Even though the trench was 7 feet deep, at first I was crawling some of the time but as I think back I could have just as well stood up to carry the box. After about an hour of being attacked by shelling I was standing up and got use to the explosions around me."

After trying to carry both his rifle and the box, Dan decided to set his rifle against the trench wall and finished carrying the box to the destination. "When I returned for my rifle, it was gone. Somebody stole it...I never did find it but I found another rifle."

"I tried shooting it but it was full of dirt. It would not fire in automatic - I didn't have any cleaning tools." But it would fire in single shots, and this is the weapon Dan had during the night on lookout.

"There were guys coming and going in this trench. Wounded were being carried down."

"One of my vivid memories is they were bringing this guy down on a stretcher...a black man. He was lying on this stretcher, smoking a cigarette with his right hand and what was left of his left arm was dangling over the other side of the stretcher. They had probably given him morphine because he was acting like nothing had happened."

This was when Dan was still crawling on his knees in fear and dragging the ammunition box. Dan said the guy on the stretcher gave him a strange look - like what are you doing down there crawling...

For the rest of the evening they stayed in that area of the trenches, because the counterattack was over and Company C was able to hold its position.

They remained in a defensive position because they didn't have enough men to continue on with that battle.

The Chinese continued to lob in artillery all night.

There were a whole bunch of guys in bunker 64.

"I was young and naive...I was out here in the trench...just sitting in the trench, trying to stay out of the open and getting hit by incoming artillery. Darkness came and for another hour or so I was still sitting there, wondering what should I be doing besides sitting here in this trench. So I worked my way up to bunker 64. There must have been 20 guys crammed into this bunker."

There was no room for Dan. His platoon commander, a Lieutenant, was also inside. Dan asked him "What are we supposed to be doing here during the night? The lieutenant told me to go further up the trench and get out on the ridge and watch the valley in case we get counter attacked...and so I did."

Dan doesn't remember exactly where he positioned himself - if it was near bunker 57 or even further out. He said he doesn't remember those bunkers, probably because they were flattened from the artillery fire.

"I was laying out flat in a shell hole, but I could see out into this valley here (Dan points to it on the map). So I laid there, out in the open with this shallow shell hole...it wasn't very deep...and with my rifle pointed out over the valley."

"And the other thing that doesn't get talked about much is the fact that this valley was like daylight all night long because of artillery and mortars and MLR shooting flares out there. And so all night long it was, Bang, Bang, with new flares firing up there to light up the valley. There was a reason for the flares, so the US soldiers could see if the Chinese were going to counterattack. And so that valley was lit up...I was pretty much in the dark so I could see the whole valley and never saw any movement by the Chinese."

"I just laid there all night with my single shot rifle."

"Somewhere along the line I got hit in the wrist by shrapnel...my hand was exposed outside of the hole while holding my rifle. Several mortars landed pretty close to me but they went over me, except for that piece of shrapnel."

"The mortar fire continued all night, but I survived it. Then about daybreak I got up and went back down the trench to the bunker because the Chinese generally didn't attack in the day time - they attacked in the dark."

"I was there for a while and about 10:00 a.m. the word came in that Charlie Company was being pulled off that area and picked up by APCs, and taken back down the hill."

I asked Dan a dumb question: "What were you going to do if a Chinese counterattack occurred." Dan replied: "I sure hope I wasn't dumb enough to try to kill a hundred Chinese attacking me...actually I would have pulled back and returned to the bunker where the 20 guys were at to let them know they better fight for their lives."

Dan commented that hiding in that bunker wasn't really safe, because all a Chinese attacker had to do was throw a grenade into the bunker and killed all of them.

The portable hand radios back then were not very reliable. They didn't always work and the batteries would drain down quickly, so even if they wanted to call for help their radio probably wouldn't have worked anyway.

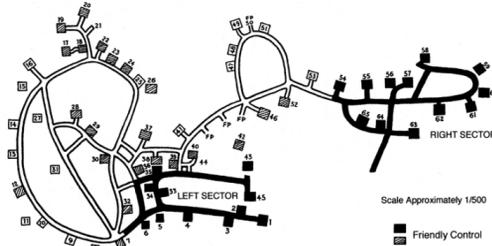
There was hard-wired communications to the outpost but the mortars and artillery would usually cut the lines during attacks.

After Company C returned to base camp, the fighting still continued for two more days at the outpost.

"I, L, and K Company, of I think the 32nd regiment, moved up to replace Company C and counterattacked again...this is now the 10th of the month."

"They continued into the afternoon to no avail and on the 11th the US officials decided it wasn't worth it anymore, so they vacated the hill and pulled everybody off."

"On the latter part of the 11th and into the 12th the US blew that outpost to smithereens with aircraft and artillery."



The black and slashed boxes were areas held at the start of the withdrawal at 5:30 p.m. on July 11, 1953.

Keep in mind that any dead bodies of US soldiers that were still in the trenches or on the hillsides were still there when the US destroyed the outpost...including all living or dead Chinese/North Koreans.

While in Seoul, in October, about two months after the cease-fire, Dan was selected along with twenty other US soldiers and taken up to the check point (on the map) at Pork Chop Hill where a delegation of Chinese officials met them. Dan doesn't know why he was selected - probably randomly.

"We were disarmed (the Chinese were armed) and loaded onto a couple of trucks and taken as far as the truck could maneuver." From there they walked into the hills where the Chinese had found about fifteen dead US soldiers and marked them with flags...some intact and others only with part of their bodies. Keep in mind this was two months later with the natural decay that would have occurred.

The US group divided up into two-man teams with body bags. They put the bodies in bags and hauled them back down to the trucks. They also tried to find the dog tags for identification.

One of the bodies Dan retrieved had a bullet hole in the dog tag, and he commented "You know how he died - with a bullet into the chest."

Dan recognized the name on the dog tag - he was from another company but Dan remembers meeting him previously at one time or another.

Dan said the Chinese were gracious about it and did not mistreat him or the other US soldiers retrieving the bodies.

He said at first they were very concerned what might happen once the Chinese had them up on the outpost.

Dan recalls that the Armistice required both sides to move back 2000 yards from the area they last occupied. The demilitarized zone varies in width depending on the terrain and it is not a straight line on a map.

Today, there is a chain link fence on both sides of the DMZ that runs all away across Korea. Vegetation and trees are kept clear of this fence, at least on the South Korean side, so it can be checked for anyone cutting it and moving through it.

When Dan visited Korea during the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the armistice, he visited three established public sites that overlook the DMZ.

Pork Chop Hill has now naturally become overgrown with trees and vegetation, so it would not be recognizable anymore...at least from a distance.