

A soldier's memories of 'forgotten' war

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with *The Ledger*, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

It was known by many names — The Wrong War — The Limited War — The Forgotten War — and The Korean Conflict. But to the veterans of many nations serving under the flag of the United Nations in Korea, it was a bitter struggle with objectives that seemed unclear to the common soldier.

UN troops suffered over 142,000 casualties between June 25, 1950, and July 27, 1953, but the Korean people suffered most of all, with over one million lost. It was here in the mountains of North Korea that our Army and Marines encountered a vastly superior force when Chinese Communist forces entered the fray in the brutal fall and winter of 1950.

Joe Feinberg was a platoon leader in the 7th Infantry Division who survived that ordeal.

Joseph G. Feinberg was born in Chicago, Ill., in 1928 and enlisted in the U.S. Army in November 1948. After basic training and duty as a sergeant in a training division, he was accepted at officer candidate school at Ft. Riley, Kan., and then anti-aircraft and guided missile school at Ft. Bliss, Texas. Upon graduation, he was assigned to an AAA gun battalion at Ft. Lewis, Wash., as part of the continental air defense system.

At the outbreak of hostilities in Ko-

rea, he requested assignment to a battalion preparing to ship out to Japan and Korea. His unit, D Battery, 15th AAA Automatic Weapons Battalion, was then assigned to the 7th Infantry Division. The 7th, known as the "Sight-Seeing" Division, had distinguished itself in WWII at Attu in the Aleutian Islands, Kwajalein, Leyte and Okinawa, and was now preparing for an amphibious landing at Inchon, Korea, to cut off the North Korean Peoples Army that had pushed Republic of Korea and UN forces into the Pusan Perimeter on the southern tip of Korea.

"The First Marine Division," Joe recalls, "along with the 7th Infantry made up the Tenth Corps and led the initial assault at Inchon. When my platoon landed, the city was secured and the 1st Cavalry Division were linking up with troops that were breaking out of the Pusan Perimeter. It was part of General MacArthur's strategy to send our 7th back to Pusan to prepare for a second landing at Wonsan above the 38th parallel on the east coast of Korea, cutting off large units of the North Korean Army. There had been a delay in clearing the harbor of mines, and our landing was redirected to Iwon, much farther to the north."

Following the landing at Iwon late



Lt. Joseph Feinberg sailing into Pusan harbor aboard a Norwegian cargo ship after evacuation of Hungnam, North Korea in December, 1950.

in October, Joe's battery moved inland to the town of Pukchong and then moved north toward the Chosin Reservoir and the Yalu River. His own platoon was diverted to provide perimeter defense of 7th Division artillery headquarters at Pukchong, as there were numbers of North Korean troops retreating northward.

"When the Chinese communist forces entered Korea," Joe continues, "our intelligence had very little information. They had crossed the frozen Yalu River at night and were deployed in the mountains. My battery experienced heavy casualties in that bitter cold, subzero weather as part of the task force at the Chosin Reservoir. I was ordered to take a section of my platoon and link up with a

field artillery battery returning from the Yalu River, and then re-enforce the task force. When we learned that the 1st Marine Division was cut off and isolated at the reservoir, we were ordered to reconnoiter for defensive positions in the mountains around Hamhung.

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around Hamhung. The 1st Marine Division was finally able to withdraw and fight its way to Hamhung along with other survivors of the task force by the middle of December. All the UN forces were preparing for evacuation for the port city of Hungnam, and we were ordered to load our mechanized equipment on the S/S Beljeanne, a Norwegian cargo ship, and left from Hungnam to Pusan."

In April, 1951, General MacArthur was relieved as UN commander in the Far East and replaced by General Matthew Ridgeway. MacArthur had openly criticized President Truman's strategy for fighting a limited war, and sought to strike out against the enemy in the sanctuary in Manchuria, which until that time had been a staging area for troops, supplies and airpower for the Chinese. There were fears that navy action in Manchuria would spark a war with China itself.

In the meantime, the fighting was still going on, and Joe participated in three more campaigns, always moving north and in direct support of infantry companies as part of a regimental combat team or as perimeter defense of field artillery. By this time replacements were arriving regularly and many were experienced WWII veterans recalled from the reserve forces. Casualties in those later campaigns tapered off, but equipment and mechanized vehicles were lost, mostly from land mines.

Joe had one of his many close calls in Korea while on an offensive operation in the vicinity of Yanggu near the Hwachon Reservoir. His unit was on a mountain road when the vehicle in front of him struck a land mine. No one was injured, and after the road was cleared, his own vehicle, a M-39 armored tracked vehicle, struck

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another mine and was demolished in the blast. The driver and assistant and three men in the rear of the open vehicle were blown out wounded. Joe suffered a concussion and bruises but was otherwise uninjured. His vehicle blocked the narrow road, and all the while the convoy was under sporadic fire from the enemy.

In August, 1951, Joe's tour of duty was completed and he was rotated back to the U.S. just as UN forces had once again pushed north of the 38th parallel. He was then assigned to the anti-aircraft command in the Boston and Detroit areas until his release from active duty in September, 1952. He returned to college and continued to be active in the Army Reserve, eventually retiring with the rank of captain in the New Jersey National Guard.

Joe and his wife Dorothy were married in Chicago in 1958 and moved to their present home at 11 Lumar Road in Lawrence in 1962. They have four children, Matthew, Valerie, Elizabeth and Jessica, all living elsewhere. Joe served as a member of the Planning Board, including one year as chairman, and the Growth Management Committee. He currently is a trustee of the Conservation Foundation. He also was involved in the planning and development of Eggerts Crossing Village.

In 1991 he retired from the state Department of Community Affairs after having served as both bureau chief and division director. When reflecting back on his service during the Korean War, Joe has no regrets and is proud to have served. Regrettably, members of the military were sometimes the object of resentment as a result of policies and decisions over which they had no control.

His researched accounts of the Korean War have borne out the fact that in spite of the beliefs that the Chinese army was inferior, they proved to be a formidable enemy skilled in the use of weapons, all of which he experienced in "a most personal way."

The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are encouraged to submit articles. All materials should be sent to the Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made to Mr. Loveless by calling 882-9108.



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