

# WAR VETERANS' REMINISCENCES



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## Foreword

June 25, Juche 39 (1950), saw the outbreak of an all-out war against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

It was no more than five years after Korea was liberated from Japanese military occupation and the country was at its burgeoning stage.

For the invasion of this young DPRK the United States and its vassal nations mobilized a huge amount of ground, naval and air forces.

In his radio address titled **Go All Out for Victory in the War**, Kim Il Sung called upon all the Korean people, including the service personnel of the Korean People's Army, to turn out in a sacred struggle to wipe out the invaders.

In answer to their leader's appeal the broad sections of people—workers, peasants, intellectuals, youth and students—took up arms and rushed to the front with a full determination to defend their beloved country.

Seoul, the enemy's stronghold, fell three days after the start of the war and the combatants of the KPA continued their push southwards.

In the operation to encircle Taejon the US 24<sup>th</sup> Division was annihilated and its commander Dean captured. A heavy cruiser of the US Navy was sunk by four torpedo boats of the KPA in the sea off Jumunjin, and American planes were shot down by its aircraft-hunting teams both at the front and in the rear.

The service personnel of the KPA, fully convinced that their ever-victorious, iron-willed Supreme Commander would lead the war to victory, surmounted trying ordeals during the strategic, temporary retreat and subsequently fought fierce battles on heights, causing the enemy heavy casualties.

Finally, the three-year-long war ended in a victory so glorious for the Korean people, shattering the myth of the US imperialists' "overwhelming might."

Upon signing the Korean Armistice Agreement, Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command Mark W. Clark admitted that he "gained the unenviable distinction of being the first United States Army Commander in history to sign an armistice agreement without victory."

Several decades have passed since a spectacular fireworks display lit up the sky over this land to celebrate the Korean people's victory.

The young soldiers, who raised loud cheers holding high the blood-stained flags of the DPRK, have now grown gray-haired.

They look back, with deep emotion, on the days when they waged do-or-die battles on the trenches amid a shower of bullets and bombs.

These war veterans' proud and honourable recollections illustrate what was the source of the confidence in the certainty of victory, mass heroism and indomitable willpower displayed by the KPA service personnel during the Korean war.



The US imperialists started the Korean war.

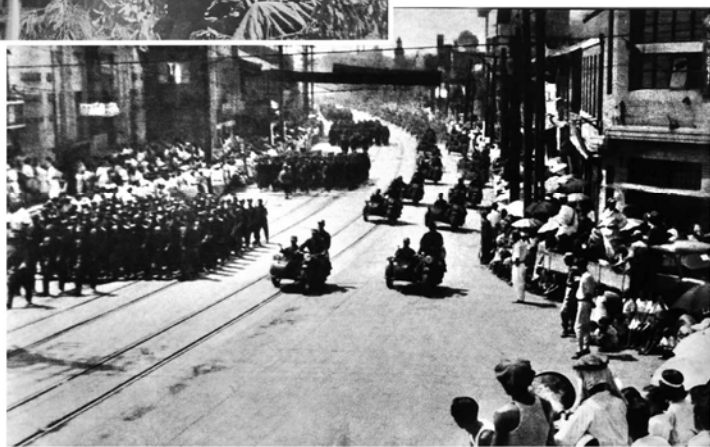


The KPA combatants switching over to an immediate counterattack





Seoul fell three days after  
the start of the war.





Advancing southwards  
to Taejon and Pusan



After seizing Taejon



A KPA soldier throwing himself in front of an enemy tank

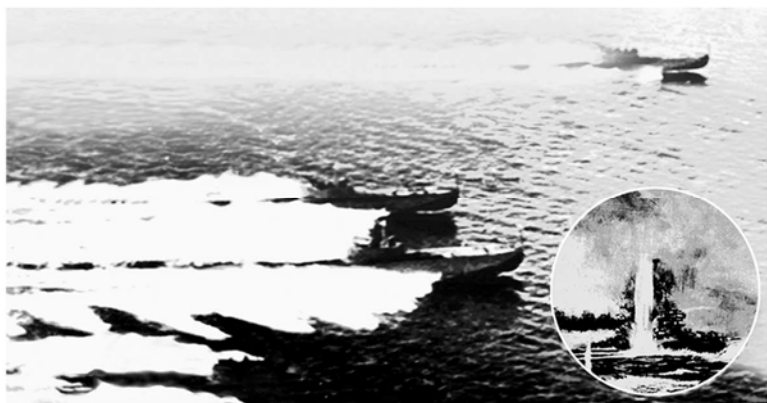


12 200 US planes were shot down or damaged during the war.





KPA artillerymen



Four torpedo boats of the KPA sank a heavy cruiser of the US Navy.



KPA planes waiting for take-off



Battle on Height 351



KPA combatants fighting  
to defend their positions



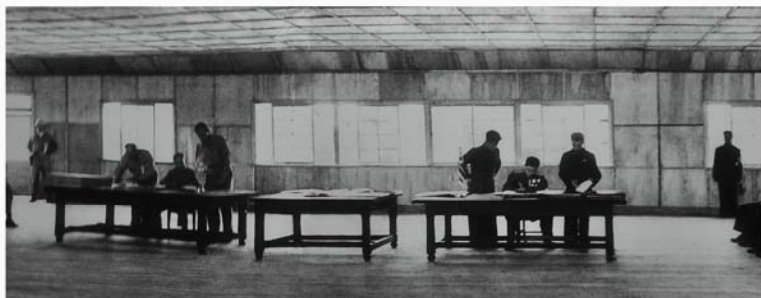


A recreational party on the frontline

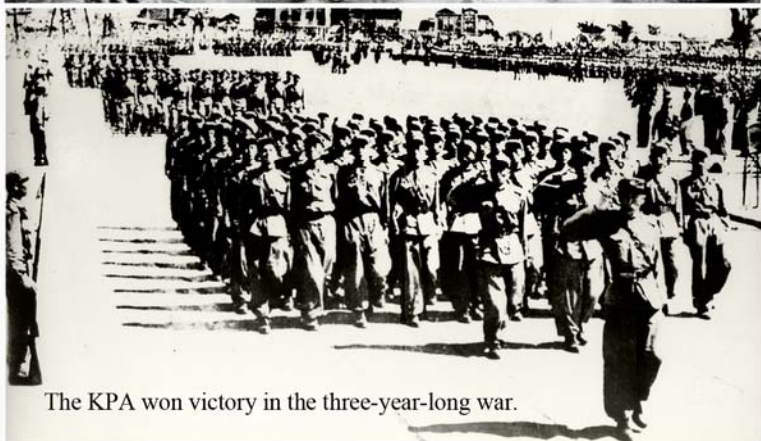


Aggressors doomed  
to a miserable fate





The ceremony of signing the armistice agreement



The KPA won victory in the three-year-long war.

## CONTENTS

Skirmishes before an All-Out War .....	1
My First Distinguished Military Service Medal .....	5
Thrilling Battle on the Osan Line .....	9
At the Crossroads of Life and Death .....	12
Soldiers' Belts Brought from the Raktong River Line .....	16
Mt Phalgong in Flames.....	20
Defending Mt Yaban Alone .....	24
Unforgettable Images .....	30
Combatants of the 105 <sup>th</sup> Tank Division .....	33
By Adroit Guerrilla Tactics .....	37
Maphalsan Injection .....	42
Telephone Wires.....	46
Crossing and Recrossing Chol Pass .....	49
Never Miss the Targets.....	54
“Iron Leg” .....	57
Blistering Counterattack .....	62
“Position” for Scouts .....	64
Lure Enemy Aircraft to My Machinegun Emplacement .....	66
Artillery Fire in Mt Kari .....	70
“Loudspeaker Gun” .....	73
My Musical Instruments on the Battlefield .....	76



## **Skirmishes before an All-Out War**

As is the case with all other wars in world history, the Fatherland Liberation War did not break out all of a sudden.

It was soon after Korea's liberation on August 15, 1945 that US troops set foot in south Korea. In a bid to occupy the whole of Korea the US imperialists stepped up preparations for war, forming a puppet army and equipping it with American weapons. Already in 1947, armed incursions occurred one after another along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

The incursions of 1947, totalling a few hundreds, involved squads, platoons and companies, and in 1949, when the plan for a "northward expedition" was being translated into action, regiment- or division-level forays, totalling more than 2 600, were made throughout the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

All such actions were planned and executed by William Roberts, head of the "US Military Advisory Group," and the American advisers to battalion and regimental headquarters of the south Korean puppet army.

As a company commander of a brigade defending the west coast in 1949, I could experience firsthand a spate of raids by GIs and south Korean soldiers.

The units of the Korean People's Army were successful in frustrating enemy attacks along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

The battle on Wollae Island was a good example.

At that time it was a virtually uninhabited island in the vicinity of the Ryongyon peninsula on the West Sea of Korea.

The enemy used this small island as an outpost for attacking our coastal areas.

By the close of 1949 my company received an order to take back this island and build defence positions.

The news was a great delight for my men, who witnessed the enemy's frequent assaults on the coastline. This was a good chance for them to take revenge on the abhorrent invaders.

One night, after making full preparations for the offensive, the combatants got aboard some wooden boats and set off for the island. To our surprise, everything was quiet when we arrived at the destination near dawn.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was an advance group and its soldiers discovered no signs of enemy movement. An old couple, the only residents on this island, said that enemy soldiers must have taken the hint and they retreated the night before.

I studied the layout of the island for a good while and issued an order to dig trenches and prepare for a defence against the enemy's possible assault.

As the company was provided with plenty of food and

other supplies, boxes of apples and pears were beside where my soldiers were working. Dripping with sweat, they ate the fruits instead of water. We added the finishing touches to the trenches, while at the same time intensifying training to repel the enemy's attack.

There were some small-scale clashes and anti-spying actions thereafter.

A decisive fight came after some months.

It was not long past lunchtime that two motor boats, a little bigger than fishing boats, appeared some distance away from the island. The enemy's boats circled around the island and returned.

I guessed that this scout mission was the prelude to an imminent assault.

Dusk fell some hours later, and the sight of large and small boats, numbering a few dozens, accelerating towards the island came into my binoculars. The above motor boats were leading the way and enemy soldiers on board were estimated at 100—a bit more than a company.

I ordered my men not to open fire without my signal. The enemy were superior in numbers but I was certain that we could annihilate them because we were relying on favourable defence positions.

It was a principle that, in a battle defending a coastal area or an island, the majority of enemy forces must be destroyed before

they got on shore. Conversely, I decided to wait for their landing.

As they came up, the enemy chopped the ropes connecting one boat with another. Almost simultaneously, they anchored their boats on a wide area.

Through my binoculars I saw enemy soldiers jumping off the boats; an officer was shouting at his men and some slipping on a mossy rock.

They promptly gathered in order of battle and climbed the hill where we were hiding ourselves. Their morale seemed to be soaring as they could see no signs at the hilltop. They must have been assuming that we retreated or we were very few in numbers.

I looked at my soldiers waiting anxiously for my order with bated breath. Among them there were some new recruits who had no experience in fighting. For these soldiers, I thought, this battle must be a success.

Enemy soldiers were seen creeping up some 30 metres away from our trenches.

Judging that they were within range of hand-grenades, I fired a shot at a slightly stooping officer standing in the middle of the battle array.

At this signal a volley of bullets and hand-grenades roared out, sending enemy soldiers scurrying for cover. Strangely enough, none of them turned tail. They sheltered behind huge rocks or trees, firing back.

I ordered my men to throw hand-grenades at them. There were few survivors, at whom I threw three hand-grenades in succession. Finally, they gave in and came out of a broad and flat rock.

The battle took about half an hour and the enemy's company was totally destroyed, except five captives.

This was a signal triumph that instilled confidence and courage in my company soldiers, and I was certain that it was also a heavy blow to the enemy hell-bent on igniting a war.

Thereafter, no south Korean soldiers ventured into this island.

Pak Myong Son

## **My First Distinguished Military Service Medal**

In July 1950 the combined units of the Korean People's Army, which were deployed in the middle of the front, fought fierce battles against the enemy defending the Sobaek Mountain Range. This region was favourable for defence but not for attack. Despite a tough resistance from the enemy the KPA units continued to push southwards.

It was around this time that I received an order from my



division—Build a crossing across the Han River for the passage of the personnel and munitions bound for the front.

I immediately set out for the river together with five of my soldiers. It was a long, arduous march, on which we could hear an incessant rumble of artillery fire. It sounded as if our comrades-in-arms were demanding more bullets and bombs.

Upon arriving at the destination, we were divided into two teams; the first team was charged with fixing the site of the crossing and the second one, with chopping trees for use in making rafts.

Rifles and bags were all what we had and there were only a few houses nearby. We borrowed an axe from the residents.

We fixed the site of the crossing on the upper reaches of the river. No sooner had we made rafts than a batch of trucks loaded with bombs arrived. Signalmen were as busy as bees, blowing their whistles.

It was when the last truck was entering the river that I saw a dozen remnants of the enemy lurking in the woods.

I, together with three soldiers, made a dash to where they were hiding themselves. Both sides opened fire. Hitting the targets behind trees was not easy. My men were firing their automatic rifles hastily.

I shouted at them, “Save bullets. Take aim with care.”

Shooting subsided, my men and I remaining on tenterhooks. After a while, I noticed a head rising from the

bushes and immediately fired at him.

It was a good shot. But he already threw a hand-grenade, which flew into the air and landed under a truck trailer.

“That hand-grenade...,” my hoarse voice tailed away. It was barely audible amid another deafening salvo.

I seemed to be hearing the sound of a terrible explosion. At this critical moment a young signalman rushed towards the truck and grasped the hand-grenade, which detonated in the blink of an eye.

I held in my arms the private, surnamed Kang, who was unconscious. I called him and he recovered his senses after a minute. Breathing his last, he requested to have the trucks pass without delay.

The private was as tall as a rifle. He would pester me to send him to the front, saying that when applying for admission to the army, he was two years younger than the accepted age limit and he became a soldier not to feed horses and play a messenger in the rear.

When he decided to rescue the truck from near explosion, he must have hoped that his comrades-in-arms would avenge the death of their fellow countrymen in place of him.

His heroic death made us become more keenly aware that our mission was fundamental to transporting materiel to the front.

From the following day onwards we faced greater

challenges because of an air raid. The crossing, shelters and rafts were the major targets of enemy aircraft.

Undaunted, we dredged the river to restore the crossing, repaired the shelters and made rafts.

One day, while working at the site of the crossing with my men, I discovered three duds.

We immediately buckled down to the removing of the bombs. I worked by the sweat of my brow as another batch of trucks was soon to arrive.

No sooner had I tied a rope around the tail of the last bomb than I heard a loud explosion within calling distance. There was another dud we failed to discover. I was thrown up into the air.

Regaining consciousness, I saw a teary-eyed private looking down at me. I asked him how the removing work was proceeding. He answered that they were digging up the last dud.

I struggled to get up on my feet but the soldier restrained me.

I protested, "Time is pressing. If we fail to make it, the trucks can't move on and our comrades-in-arms on the frontline will be dangerous."

I dragged my legs and walked into the river ...

It was only for a few days that we worked on the river, but the trucks that passed it to the front were countless.

Charged with another mission, we left the crossing for a place that was far away from the front. However, that mission, too, was highly risky like all others we received later.

Not long after we left the Han River, I had the honour of being admitted to the Workers' Party of Korea and awarded the Distinguished Military Service Medal.

Kim Ju Han

## **Thrilling Battle on the Osan Line**

The battle on the Osan line is quite familiar even to our children and students, as well as to the veterans of the Fatherland Liberation War.

It has been kept in the memory of our people as the battle in which a unit of the Korean People's Army crushed the advance contingent of the first US Infantry that was dispatched to the Korean front.

Following the fall of Seoul three days after the outbreak of the war, the enemy judged that they should take prompt steps for bringing US ground forces into the Korean front to frustrate the blistering counteroffensive by the KPA and turn the tide of the war.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the US 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was the first to land on Korean soil. Named after its commander, the “Smith’s special attack” unit was charged with advancing northwards along the Pusan-Seoul road while checking the KPA’s advance and creating conditions favourable for the deployment of the main force of the division.

This unit, together with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, built a defence position in Kumam-ri north of Osan, in order to check the southward advance by the KPA units.

At that time I was heading the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 8<sup>th</sup> Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Seoul Guards 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

After seizing Suwon, we were speeding up our march along the Suwon-Phyongthaek road. Tanks were leading the way ahead of our unit; they covered a certain distance and waited for us, before advancing again.

On the morning of July 5, we arrived at the then Kumam-ri, Osan Sub-county, Hwasong County. To our surprise, the tanks roared and leapt forward. The flat crack of the tank guns reverberating, the US 52<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion descended into chaos. Upon order of our company commander we raced forward across a flat plateau braving a barrage of machine-gun fire.

Our company managed to climb a hill on the left and the 7<sup>th</sup>



Company, the one opposite to us. The two companies got fully ready for battle. We looked down at the enemy soldiers lurking in the valley. Deep-set eyes and hair in strange colour were conspicuous evidence that they were American soldiers.

All eyes were blazing as the accursed enemy imperiled our happy family life and disturbed the peace of our country.

As they were climbing the hill, we poured bullets in a deadly volley.

They took shelter behind rocks or in the bushes.

Our company commander ordered a halt to firing.

After a while, a tall man jumped to his feet and shouted in a strange language, probably ordering others to charge.

When they came within range of hand-grenades, our company commander ordered fire again. Some enemy soldiers fleeing, he ordered charge. We ran down the hill, bayoneting and kicking the cowards.

During this fight Jo Hyon Gu, squad head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, killed 17, even bayoneting two at a time.

Our tanks and infantrymen arrived some minutes later. The enemy soldiers were encircled and virtually annihilated on Height 118.

Though it lasted only a few hours, the battle was significant in that we shattered the myth of the “mightiness” of the US army.

Later, we heard that these Americans had bragged Korean

soldiers would run away, frightened at the sight of the US army on the Korean front.

Contrary to their expectation, we triumphed in the first engagement with GIs true to Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung's instructions that we should demonstrate the mettle of Koreans to the US.

Over six decades have passed since the Korean people won victory in the war.

We, grey-haired veterans, feel very proud of ourselves as we recollect how bravely we fought against American invaders. They were cruel wolves to the weak but wimps to the strong-willed.

Ri Chun Gwon

## **At the Crossroads of Life and Death**

I was a company commander of a battalion directly under the Seoul Guards 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division that advanced to the Raktong River line in August 1950. The battalion was charged with setting up an underwater bridge at a crossing in cooperation with the engineering battalion of the division, while at the same time dispatching reinforcements to the unit on Mt Suam.

Taegu, the division's final target, was not far away from Mt Suam. To the division, the mountain was a gateway to its destination, whereas to the enemy, it was the last stronghold to defend Taegu. For its strategic significance the mountain, as well as the adjoining crossing, was a hot spot in which both sides engaged in fierce battles.

Song Hak Yong, a war correspondent, would recall what a ferocious fighting took place in those days, when the Korean People's Army was on a strategic, temporary retreat. He said that he managed to keep, among others, the data about the battles on Mt Suam, while going on the arduous march.

It reads in part:

“Recollecting the days of the war, I still remember the battles at the crossing in the Raktong River and on Mt Suam.

The MacArthur Command ordered all its aircraft to bombard our positions and protect its land forces. The bombing was the largest in scale since the Normandy Invasion during the Second World War.

The roar of our army corps' anti-aircraft firing filled the sky over the Raktong River. The regiment commanded by Han Chang Bong, which distinguished itself in the battle of Kumgang, was charged with the honourable yet heavy mission of seizing Mt Suam.

Aerial bombing raging on the river line every day, enemy planes destroyed all the houses in the nearby villages in a bid

to disallow our soldiers' access to cereals. Worse still, the apple and persimmon orchards became the targets of their machineguns and mine shells.

During the 17-day battle the American mercenaries launched 30-odd counteroffensives and a daily average of 3 000 bombs were dropped on our positions. However, their operation was a fiasco.”

As the battle on Mt Suam was so fierce, our work at the nearby crossing was perilous.

In fact, fighting on the Raktong River continued day and night. At night there was no air raid, enabling us to work at the crossing. We took shelter during the day but at dusk we dived into the river with our uniforms on.

Some carried sacks of sand to build pillars, while others brought telephone poles broken by enemy bombing to be placed on those pillars. Gun carriages and trucks with a full load of bombs ran across this makeshift bridge. Near dawn enemy planes appeared and attacked this underwater bridge.

Some days later, flare bombs lit up the sky and the crossing became the target of intensive artillery fire. In the daylight hours enemy bombers combed the riverside in search of our shelters. I myself narrowly escaped death several times.

The Raktong River literally tinged with blood, survival in the fighting was a miracle.

One day I was tasked with interrogating an American pilot,

who parachuted by the riverside after his plane was shot by a rifle.

The man was shuddering with fright as he took out his family photo from an inside pocket. He begged to be treated as a POW, saying that if he did not return home, his wife and children would starve to death. Suddenly, he took off his coat to show his arms that were swathed in watches.

Enraged, I pictured in my mind American marauders looting shops in the streets awash with the corpses of innocent civilians. We all gnashed our teeth, thinking of the enemy's indiscriminate bombing and heinous crimes.

We turned out with one accord in the final showdown against the GIs and the south Korean puppet army.

In April 1952, two years after that, Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung visited Paeksong-ri in which students of Kim Il Sung University, including me, were studying. Listening to his speech about the bright prospect of postwar rehabilitation, we were fully convinced of victory in the war.

Several decades have passed since then but the brilliant tradition of victory continues from one generation to the next.

Having clipped the feathers of the haughty US imperialists in the past war, the heroic Korean People's Army will sooner or later hold another grand parade of victory in the presence of Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un.

Pae Sun Jae



## **Soldiers' Belts Brought from the Raktong River Line**

The sky seemed obscured by clouds of smoke and the whine of bullets was deafening.

Enemy planes were flying low over the Raktong River, the sound of bombs and shells exploding was ear-splitting, soldiers were shouting and the wounded were groaning.

A cacophony of noises and voices was bubbling all around. Bombing raids raging on, the river turned blood red.

A stretcher platoon commander, I was lying down on the ground during the raids. My soldiers, otherwise called stretcher-girls, were around me.

After the bombing was over, I counted the number of survivors—ten or so girls and a few stretchers.

There were countless wounded soldiers around us and saving them all was not that easy. Tears of indignation were coursing down my dusty face.

I was in a quandary about what to do with so many men; the more we carried on stretchers, the greater the number of the wounded grew. It was heartbreaking that we had to pass the soldiers drawing their last breath.

We heard another flurry of machine-gun firing as enemy

planes were swooping down.

There I was, slightly out of breath from running. I nearly tumbled over but rose up again to search for the wounded soldiers on the battlefield.

Those with fatal injuries clung onto the legs of the stretcher-girls and pointed at their belts. The girls knew what this gesture meant. Wiping away tears, they unhooked the belts and strapped them around their waists. Seeing the running girls with their own belts on, the soldiers smiled and drew their last breath. The belts were fitted with tags indicating the owners' positions and home addresses. They represented the soldiers' conscience and last wishes for the good of their country and family.

Upon receiving the order for a strategic, temporary retreat on the Raktong River line, the surgeons who were attached to the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division gathered for an emergency meeting.

A stout officer suggested leaving the wounded behind. Others remained dumb for a minute, while I was stroking the belts on my waist. I jumped to my feet and protested against the proposal, stressing that we could not retreat without taking the soldiers with us.

All gave me a dubious look. I dug my heels in, saying that we must go with them even though revolutionary organizations were active in the region and our army could come back there.

I was so adamant that there was no further objection.

Subsequently, a 50-strong group including 10-odd stretcher-girls was organized for carrying the wounded soldiers, five being unable to walk and 30 or so with slight injuries. I was appointed head of this group. We all knew that arduous ordeals lay ahead.

The enemy's hot pursuit and air raid slowed down our march during the day.

Some sub-machineguns and rifles were all what we had and the wounded soldiers had so much difficulty climbing mountains.

Subsisting on several days' supply of food rations and attending to the seriously wounded during a break, we kept marching northwards. I was steadfast in my resolve to lead the entire group to where Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung was without leaving any one of them behind in the enemy-held area.

Having been shot through one leg while fighting on the Raktong River, I had difficulty walking. Worse still, after each bombing raid it took a few hours to bring all the soldiers together from all directions.

Officers and senior soldiers discussed what needed to be done and adopted a resolution on reorganizing the group and establishing rigid discipline within it. Among the stretcher-girls and the slightly wounded soldiers, those with rich

experience were selected as scouts. Also, a command and liaison system was set up in consideration of varying circumstances.

Near Taejon we procured some medicines but they were not so plentiful as we expected. Ri Chun Gwon, a senior soldier of the 8<sup>th</sup> Company of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and several other soldiers obtained new weapons at a railway station. Now there was no unarmed soldier in my group.

My biggest trouble was the shortage of medicines and cereals. Among the wounded, there were many who needed prompt medical treatment. Otherwise, they would die in agony.

In the teeth of bombing raids we searched around abandoned trucks for medicines. Sometimes, we went down to nearby villages to obtain cereals and medicines. In the course of this, there were some intense clashes with south Korean soldiers and members of the “peace maintenance corps.”

When marching northwards around a reservoir in Hwachon, we found one of the soldiers falling into a faint caused by excessive bleeding. We pitched tents in a hill for his treatment and I myself gave the patient transfusion.

Each time we encountered difficulties, I thought of the soldiers who had fallen and could not be saved on the Raktong River line. Those soldiers’ belts worn around our waists awakened us to the importance of our mission.

At long last, we arrived somewhere near Kosanjin. All were in ecstasy at the thought that we wrapped up the long march with credit. We felt as if we were brought again into the world and our yearning for those whom we could not save by the river grew stronger.

Long years have elapsed since the end of the war. Still vivid in my memory are the numerous soldiers who laid down their lives on the frontline. Whenever I think of these martyrs, I harden my resolve to work as strenuously as in the days of the arduous march.

Kang Yong Sun

## **Mt Phalgong in Flames**

As a squad head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 83<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, I fought on Mt Phalgong, a gateway to Jinhae and Pusan lying at the southern tip of the country. Whenever I recollect the hand-to-hand fighting and bloody battles on high and low hills in this region, the last requests of my comrades-in-arms come into my mind.

For its strategic location the mountain was turned into a fierce battlefield.

My battalion advanced more than eight kilometres

overnight and seized the lowest height of the mountain, to the left of which lay the railway line leading to Yongchon.

An intense bombing raid hindered our offensive. At early dawn enemy fighters appeared overhead, firing machineguns and dropping bombs. Then came a heavy artillery bombardment. Trees were severely peppered with shrapnel and incendiary bombs exploded here and there. I was lying down beside a small bristle-tooth oak, which was broken off in an instant. Leaves trembled in the young pine trees around me.

My squad was firing back at the enemy soldiers climbing the hill. I was choked by smoke amid the roaring artillery barrage. As we were running short of bullets, we fired one shot after another.

Suddenly, I heard a cry of pain from one of my men just a stone's throw away. I rolled over to where the 16-year-old soldier was lying unconscious. I struggled to take shrapnel out of his skull and bandaged his neck to stop bleeding from the carotid artery. I had no time to attend to the injured. The light machinegun beside my trench came to an abrupt halt. Shrapnel was run through the abdomen of my deputy who was handling the weapon, the pivot of the firepower of our platoon and my squad. When I crept up to the machinegun platform, the dying man urged me on. I could not afford time to close the eyes of my deputy. I replaced the magazine with a new one and opened fire.

A soldier shouted that the platoon leader lost his eyes, the man who had been appointed only a few days ago. To make matters worse, there was no more rattling of the sub-machinegun at the summit of the hill. I ran up and found the assistant platoon leader lying face down and bleeding profusely. No bullets remained in the magazine.

Following the death of our company commander, I took on his role. The enemy was tenacious in spite of heavy casualties. However, we defied death to carry out Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung's order.

Silence reigned for a while after fierce fighting. I ran to see the platoon leader. Before the outbreak of the war, he was in his final year at the then Chongjin College of Education. If the war had not broken out, he might have been my literature teacher.

Having his eyes bandaged, he refused to be carried back to hospital. He grasped his men's hands one by one and called me, gasping as he was in acute pain. He asked me to recite a poem. If only my poem could have restored the sight of the handsome man.

My teary poem sounded as resolute as my determination to sacrifice myself unhesitatingly for the good of the country. The blind man smiled as happily as he did when reading the poems I had written impromptu on my pocketbook and when urging me to send the poems to my parents and teachers. He thanked me and other soldiers for giving him a great

encouragement, and called upon us to fight bravely for our native land.

Among the 64 soldiers of the company there were only 22 remaining one hour after the start of the first battle. Now these survivors prepared for another battle, rummaging through the corpses of enemy soldiers for ammunitions and digging trenches deeper despite a series of low-level bombing raids.

The enemy launched one offensive after another under cover of massive bombardment. When we managed to repulse the last attack, I felt a sharp pain in my shoulders, the barrel of my rifle being as hot as molten iron. I counted how many hand-grenades were remaining and sat back in the trench. The sky looked serene, as if it had not been caring about the flames of war.

Enemy gunfire grew heavier with each passing day. No one of my soldiers was sure whether he would survive or not, and every one of them was resolved to wage a do-or-die fight so as to honour the fallen soldiers' exploits.

Some days later, informed of the enemy's landing operations in Inchon, we joined the ranks of the units on a strategic, temporary retreat. We were facing a large-scale encirclement by the enemy and it was so heartrending to leave the mountain that was captured at the cost of our soldiers' blood and sweat. It seemed as if the soldiers, buried in the valleys of the Kyongsang Mountain Range, were dissuading



me from going over the Sobaek Mountains.

I recited poems to myself, longing for my comrades-in-arms in their teens, who were formerly students brimming with hopes and ambitions, and now laid to rest in the southern tip of the country.

Departing from the unforgettable battlefield, I pledged to return and avenge their death without fail.

Choe Tu Su

## **Defending Mt Yaban Alone**

It was ten days after I was appointed leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> Company; I had been leading an anti-aircraft machinegun squad of the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

My company was ordered to take Mt Yaban. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the battle, I was blown away by a bomb explosion.

It was some hours ago that upon regaining consciousness, I was told about the heroic death of my platoon soldiers. Of the company's soldiers there were only seven survivors including the cook. All others fell during the offensive but the mission failed.

The battalion commander ordered me to take these men and launch another offensive. He had 17 soldiers of the battalion's reserve force included in the group.

The group was divided into two squads. I made a firm resolve to avenge the young soldiers as we left for the point of attack under cover of darkness. The path was now familiar to me.

Mt Yaban commanded a fine view of Kojé Island. It was the highest among the hills surrounding Jindong-ri. By taking advantage of this favourable terrain, the enemy built solid defence positions on the mountain.

The enemy deployed an "elite company" there in a bid to check the advance of our units to this region. Our regiment seized the mountain despite the enemy's tenacious resistance, but it retreated in the face of the US soldiers' massive counterattack under cover of a heavy artillery bombardment. Both sides moving back and forth, the enemy's casualty figure was rising. Our soldiers began to call the mountain Yaman, instead of its name Yaban. *Yaman* means barbarians in Korean. The mountain literally became a deathbed of American barbarians.

When I was leading the new squads to take back Mt Yaban, the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was reorganized into a reserve force to fill the dwindling ranks of combatants and equipment, and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Regiment on our flank retreated to the

rear after suffering serious casualties.

August 1950 drawing to a close, the enemy's tracer bullets were fired here and there, as if heralding the onset of another fierce battle.

We will defy death to carry out Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung's order and, after taking back Mt Yaban, we will never pull back from the mountain—this was the gist of the resolution we adopted before launching an offensive at night.

We managed to seize the mountain but it was much more difficult to defend it. Before dawn artillery fire and aerial raid began, followed by a US battalion's assault.

All my soldiers were fully resolved not to retreat even an inch and, after we repulsed one round of enemy attack, there was another torrent of artillery fire. The enemy was numerically superior and at around 8:00 a.m., when we frustrated their sixth attack, there were only three survivors on our side.

An incredulous silence ensued.

I ran towards the cook and grasped his hand. A senior soldier joined us. Pinching my cracked lips, I asked them how much water was left. They opened their dusty bottles.

My bottle was almost empty. I poured the remainder of water into the cooling chamber of my heavy machinegun. The two soldiers followed suit after rubbing the bottles against their cheeks.

The enemy's seventh attack began. The senior soldier with curly hair rose up and fired his light machinegun, shouting that he would avenge his mother's death.

I told him to lower himself and discharged my heavy machinegun.

The light machinegun stopped rattling. I turned my head, only to see the man hit by a bullet. I rushed towards him and held the bleeding man in my arms.

"Fire..." he trailed off, drawing his last breath.

After a minute I found myself remaining alone on the trench. My watch pointed to 9:00 a.m. When reinforcements would arrive was an uncertainty.

My heart was throbbing with bitter sorrow at the sight of my comrades-in-arms lying dead with their eyes open. I took rifles and hand-grenades off their hands, pledging to myself that I would defend the trench to the last. I prepared for another battle by myself, positioning three automatic rifles, two rifles and one light machinegun at the front, three automatic rifles on the right and two on the left, and then fully loading and unlocking all these rifles.

I fired one shot after another at the targets climbing up in the front row and then ran the full length of the trench designed for 24 soldiers, shooting the rifles on the left, then on the right and back at the front.

I issued the following order to myself: single-shot firing for

the targets 500 metres away, light machinegun firing for those 400 metres away, automatic rifle firing for those 200 metres away and hand-grenades for those coming nearer. I did not stop firing, running back and forth amid a hail of bullets. The sight of enemy soldiers falling down in succession inspired me with dauntless courage.

Fighting alone in the trench, dozens of metres long, was a real challenge. Suddenly, I felt short of breath and flushed. I was shot by a soldier some distance away, who, together with some others, made a detour around the trench.

Fortunately, it was not a fatal injury. I saw a puff of smoke rising up from the muzzle of his rifle. Upon seeing the soldier poised for another shot, I threw a hand-grenade with all my strength. It hit the soldier's helmet but did not detonate as I forgot to remove its safety cap. He was near dead with fright and turned tail with other soldiers.

I threw some more hand-grenades but, to my surprise, they did not go far enough. When trying to grab another hand-grenade, I felt something was wrong with my hand. I looked at it and found that one finger was missing. Suddenly, I felt severe pain on my left leg. Just a moment ago, a bullet passed through my earhole. Sensing that it was the last moment of my life, I rose to my feet with hand-grenades on both hands.

At this critical juncture I was greatly delighted to feel the left leg quite all right. I could still walk because it was merely

an injury to my heel, hit by shrapnel from a bomb. My watch said 3:00 p.m.

Though enemy offensive subsided, my nerves were on edge. Whistling of the wind, something like footsteps, blades of grass swaying—all seemed to be signs of enemy soldiers approaching.

While carefully surveying the battlefield, I noticed that some people in the uniforms of our soldiers were about 200 metres away. I suspected that they were south Korean soldiers, because it was only some minutes ago that those disguised as evacuees sneaked up.

I fired a bullet into the air as a warning. A voice shouted that they were Korean People's Army soldiers. They were waving their caps, on which the five-pointed stars were clearly visible. Sighing with relief, I sank to the ground. Tears running down my dusty cheeks, I took off my cap. To my surprise, there was a mass of hair inside the cap, in which I discovered nine bullet-holes.

Now I was ordered to go to the battalion headquarters. It pained me to think of leaving the mountain in which my comrades-in-arms fought bloody battles and were laid to rest.

When I arrived at the headquarters, the battalion commander gave me an affectionate hug. He called me Tiger on Mt Yaban, praising me for defending the mountain single-handed by repulsing 13 rounds of enemy offensives.

Standing at attention, I replied that I had thought my duty was to remain alive.

Jong Se U

## **Unforgettable Images**

At the beginning of the Fatherland Liberation War I was a chief nurse attached to the hospital under the Guards Kang Kon 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.

Each time I recollect the days of the war, my mind dwells on a shocking incident I experienced by the Raktong River, rather than any exploit I performed in battles.

It was at dawn in early September 1950 that our division crossed the river. About ten days later, when I was working at the divisional headquarters, I was ordered to fetch medicines from the hospital.

Because of heavy bombardment and aerial raid, it took me long hours to arrive where the hospital had been located. However, there was no trace of surgeons and nurses. Returning, I found the headquarters had already moved. Fear came over me at the thought of being left alone.

I paced up and down the river in search of the headquarters and the surgeons, my rifle hanging on the shoulder.

At daybreak the following day I came across a soldier, who knew the whereabouts of the surgeons. I stepped on it and met some staff of the hospital. They told me that a strategic, temporary retreat began and other members of the hospital had gone before.

While talking with them, I noticed their behaviour and mood were quite strange. I was told that the chief of the epidemic control department of the hospital, who appeared to be leading the group, ordered them not to move off without obtaining his approval. It turned out later that this man was planning to transfer the soldiers to the enemy.

We were in a quandary about what to do, when an officer showed up saying that we must not remain there. He urged us to leave for the Supreme Headquarters together with him. All agreed and followed him, except the above department chief.

The group travelled some distance altogether but dispersed by twos and threes, following an air raid. I was with a young girl, taking shelter under a pile of stones beside a burnt-out cottage. In front of it there was a persimmon tree laden with plump fruits. We were so hungry that we plucked persimmons from the tree and ate them when enemy planes were not diving. I still remember the sour taste of the unripe fruits that lingered all day long in my mouth.

Subsequently, I could not see the officer who ordered us to follow him. Perhaps he was killed during the bombing raid.



The girl and I walked along the shores of the river in search of a crossing. To our great delight, 30 or so soldiers of another unit were near a pillar of a broken bridge.

As dusk fell, they brought three logs for use in crossing the river. When we were swimming in midstream, enemy's artillery fire began. Flare bombs exploding, shells dropped all around us. We swam back to the shores and took shelter in the bushes, where we discussed how to cross the river.

Near dawn some soldiers of the division's engineering battalion came with a ferryboat. As we were clinging to their sleeves with a mixture of surprise and joy, they said that their commander Choe Hyon ordered them to take back the soldiers on the opposite side of the river.

Upon crossing the river safely, we were greeted at the riverside by Choe Hyon. The sight of the anti-Japanese war veteran drew tears from our eyes. We felt as if we were saved from the jaws of death.

Informed of what had happened to me, he said that I should be attached to the hospital of his division, stressing that I must never again be separated from the unit. At the top of my voice I replied I would.

Afterwards, I fought on the second front in the enemy-held areas and took part in the battle to defend Height 1211. And I attended the parade held in celebration of victory in the war.

Still vivid in my memory is the image of the officer who

ordered us to follow him on his way to the Supreme Headquarters, which forms a striking contrast with that of the chief of the epidemic control department. And inscribed on my mind is the image of the anti-Japanese war veteran who took pains to save all the soldiers in the enemy-held areas and take them back to the embrace of Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung.

The bloody battles on the Raktong River taught me how the true value of a revolutionary soldier's faith and obligation is tested.

Chae Pong Ryon

## **Combatants of the 105<sup>th</sup> Tank Division**

The following happened when the units of the Korean People's Army were making a strategic, temporary retreat from the Raktong River line.

At that time I was an assistant company commander in charge of cultural affairs. Ours was a security company charged with wiping out the remnants of enemy soldiers and reactionaries in Chonan County, South Chungchong Province, and helping the local people build Party organizations and

people's government organs.

When the retreat began, the company was ordered to be attached to the special reconnaissance battalion of the then 105<sup>th</sup> Tank Division and advance northwards with the division's main force.

The division, tasked with containing the enemy who were scheming to encircle our retreating units, was marching speedily towards the city of Suwon.

Two tanks were on a vanguard patrol, about two kilometres ahead of the division's main force.

Regrettably, we did not know that enemy troops had already arrived at Suwon after landing in Inchon. Upon entering the city, the above two tanks encountered them. The situation was very critical because of the enemy's numerical edge. They decided to advance forward, rather than turn back. After radioing a message to their following unit, they charged into enemy positions.

Facing this surprise attack, enemy soldiers scurried around. The tanks ran the length and breadth of the city, destroying their combat equipment and barracks. Flames rose up here and there, throwing the enemy into confusion.

At last the enemy switched over to a counteroffensive, which involved a huge number of GIs, south Korean soldiers and pro-American reactionaries, as well as tanks and artillery pieces.

When our tanks ran out of shells, enemy soldiers encircled them ring upon ring. The turrets turning round to keep the enemy off, the tanks rolled about. After a while, their tracks were broken and the fuel tanks got empty. When the enemy swooped on the tanks, the crew fired machineguns and, when the guns were out of bullets, there was a fierce fist fight. Corpses piling up around the tanks, the enemy ganged up on the injured tankmen. At the last moment of their life they shouted “Long live General Kim Il Sung!”

The story of these brave combatants’ heroic death spread throughout the subunits of the division.

My company soldiers made a firm resolve to revenge the deceased. We were ordered to build defence positions on a hill beside the wide road between Osan and Suwon. Our armaments were too inferior and it was obvious that American soldiers would advance along the road on fast-moving vehicles. Heavy machineguns were placed on both sides of the road.

Soon afterwards, some jeeps sped down the road, probably to scout for our defence positions. We decided to open fire on the targets on their way back.

As expected, we saw the cars turning back after a long while. Our heavy machineguns roared almost simultaneously, the jeeps set on fire and the enemy scouts falling to the ground.

The following day an airplane appeared overhead and the volleys of artillery fire, which targeted our defence positions, lasted for three hours. Then, preceded by two armoured vehicles, enemy soldiers approached towards our trenches.

Shouting “Avenge our tankmen’s death!” my company soldiers all opened fire, followed by the rattle of an anti-tank gun. The armoured vehicles blew up one after another. The thunder of our heavy machineguns and rifles filled the air. There were heavy casualties on the enemy’s side and the survivors escaped.

On the afternoon of the fifth day after the battle began, the orderly of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon came up, breathing fast and telling me that his platoon leader was in a critical state. I rushed out of the trench and ran through a thick haze of smoke. The man with a bullet wound near his heart was gasping for air. I held the injured in my arms and called his name. He barely opened his eyes, calling me in a faint voice. All cried out, deeply lamenting the death of the platoon leader.

I told the orderly to bring my blanket there. Then I took his blood-soaked Party membership card from his breast pocket and kept it with mine, before carefully wrapping his body with the blanket. I wrote on a roll of paper *Im Yong Hu, leader of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, security company in Chonan, special reconnaissance battalion of the 105<sup>th</sup> Tank Division, hailed from Jangjin Sub-county, Jangjin County, South Hamgyong Province.* This I put

into a water bottle and buried his body with it.

I marked his grave on the map, thinking that I would come back there after we achieved victory in the war and reunified the country.

My company held on in the ten-odd-day battle with the numerically superior enemy force. As we all knew that if we failed to defend the hill, the retreating units might be encircled, we fought literally with a do-or-die spirit.

As shown above, the flag of the Seoul Ryu Kyong Su Guards 105<sup>th</sup> Tank Division is associated with the exploits of the numerous combatants, both well-known and unsung, who fought heroically unto death in the flames of the war.

Ri Tok Bae

## **By Adroit Guerrilla Tactics**

Looking back on the days of the Fatherland Liberation War, I still remember the battles in which our regiment engaged on a long march at the third stage of the war.

The regiment, commanded by the anti-Japanese war veteran Kim Chol Man, was active in the enemy-held areas in Kangwon Province on the orders of Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung. Its mission was to secure control of the region

between Yanggu County and the city of Chunchon and cut off military supplies on the road leading to Seoul.

One day we discovered a battalion of the south Korean army marching along a mountain ridge on the flank of our regiment. When the enemy fired a shot at our unit, we made no response and sped up our march. Perhaps, they presumed that our regiment was a unit of their army.

When they descended from the ridge, our brilliant regiment commander issued the following order: the automatic rifle company attack at the front, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the right and left flanks, the 1<sup>st</sup> Company cut off the enemy's retreat and the reconnaissance platoon move with the regimental headquarters.

The enemy's battalion was armed with six heavy machineguns, ten-odd light machineguns, 10 or 15 60mm-calibre artillery pieces and many automatic rifles. We were in a higher position and a river flowed at the foot of the ridge where enemy soldiers were. They were not alert enough even though they were superior technically. Our regiment commander decided to launch an assault by taking advantage of the favourable topography.

At around 3:00 p.m., with the firing of a signal flare, we charged forward at the front and on the flanks. Frightened out of their wits, enemy soldiers did not dare to fire back, many diving into the river. Corpses were scattered over the riverside.

Not so long after the battle began, my rifle ran out of bullets. I captured three rifles and fired them in succession. It was thrilling to see enemy soldiers falling down 20 or 30 metres away.

Victory in the battle convinced us of how advantageous the Juche-oriented art of warfare created by our Supreme Commander was.

For over two months we were active in the enemy-held region between Yanggu County and the city of Chunchon. At the close of the year the main force of our army arrived and we were ordered to go deeper into the enemy-held areas by breaking through their defence positions.

One day, at about 9:00 p.m., we were passing the Phyongchang-Pukphyong line, when the scouts told the regiment commander that they discovered a big village of 200 to 300 households in the nearby sub-county seat, 20 or 30 south Korean soldiers sleeping at every house. It was the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the south Korean army that marched 60 kilometres from Seoul.

Our commander immediately gave orders to cut off telephone lines, block the road and launch a surprise raid at night.

At 11:00 p.m. he fired a signal shot. We attacked the enemy with hand-grenades and then fired sub-machineguns at those running out of the houses.



During this battle I used up two magazines of my machinegun and four hand-grenades, so I had to capture rifles and hand-grenades from enemy soldiers. The number of the soldiers I killed in this battle was the largest ever.

Three days after we defeated the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, a huge force of enemy soldiers laid siege to our regiment. A reconnaissance plane flying overhead, the enemy demanded our surrender over the loudspeaker. Encircled on all sides, our regiment was in a tight corner.

Facing imminent danger, our soldiers looked at the commander just as we had done in former days. The anti-Japanese war veteran was very calm and composed.

He ordered us to get ready for action and called a meeting of officers.

At the meeting he said: Now it is time to make a decisive fight. If the enemy does not attack us till dusk, we should hit their weak point and break through the encirclement. In 1937 our guerrilla unit was in a similar situation and we managed to smash through the Japanese soldiers' siege.

The commander's story about the guerrillas' ever-changing tactics instilled in the officers faith in the certainty of victory.

As he anticipated, the enemy did not move by nightfall. They must have calculated that we would not endure hunger and biting cold.

On the orders of our regiment commander the combatants

made full preparations, a reconnaissance officer disguising himself as a captain of the south Korean army and the reconnaissance platoon leader as its platoon chief.

We marched with heavy steps towards the enemy soldiers who were standing guard. When we were approaching, a voice shouted “Stop!” The sound of pulling the lock was clearly audible.

At this critical moment our regiment commander responded with composure, still walking towards the enemy. At a few steps’ distance he ordered them to stand up. Our reconnaissance officer urged them.

At this high-pitched order 30 or so soldiers rose up from the bushes on both sides of the road. The regiment commander lost no time and ordered them to come down. They obeyed meekly, with knapsacks and rifles on their shoulders.

The reconnaissance officer came up to see if there were any more in the bushes. Then he drew his pistol in the blink of an eye and shouted, “Hands up! Or I will shoot.” Stupefied, the enemy surrendered. We immediately disarmed them and pressed them to reveal the password. In this way we sneaked out of the trap without firing a single shot.

Still now I feel proud of myself, recollecting the days when we learned tactics and won battles under the command of the anti-Japanese war veteran.

Son Sang Jo

## **Maphalsan Injection**

Severe epidemics spread rapidly throughout the second front between late 1950 and early 1951, when the enemy used germ weapons against international law in a bid to exterminate our soldiers and civilians in the rear and break through the fixed frontline.

Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung took prompt steps for the immunization of his soldiers—obtaining Maphalsan ampoules and transporting them to the second front.

At that time, as an officer for the drug maintenance department of the Medical Bureau, I was tasked with transporting those ampoules by truck from Pyongyang to Hoengsong. It was a hundreds-of-kilometres-long drive through the enemy-held areas.

Except the driver, there was another soldier and our weapons were a pistol, a carbine and an automatic rifle.

Only 20 years old, I was not the kind of a battle-hardened officer; as a novice even at handling the pistol, I could hardly imagine what a perilous journey it would be. I never thought about death. Charged with such a crucial mission, I was fully determined to carry out the Supreme Commander's order.

It was late in January 1951 that we set out for the second

front. Before departure, my superior of the Medical Bureau handed a sealed invoice to me and gazed wordless for a minute.

Then he asked if I had any more request. I asked him for hand-grenades and explosives, which I said would be used at the last moment of our lives.

Now the group got everything necessary, the truck camouflaged up to the hilt.

After leaving Pyongyang, the truck sped off through Sangwon, Yonsan, Suan and Kimhwa.

Upon entering an enemy-held area, I was reminded of what my superior had instructed: Keep the secret about the transport of medicine; run at full speed towards the destination; guard against shooting and bombing by the enemy; prepare for the worst contingency.

I pondered on how to make a safe trip through the enemy-held areas: Three of us are not marching stealthily along a mountain ridge with knapsacks of medicines on our backs. As our truck is rumbling along the road, we may encounter enemy soldiers at any moment. If we are embroiled in a fight, our mission is doomed because we are small in numbers and poorly armed. In this enemy-held region where it is difficult to distinguish between friend and foe, we should avoid both sides if possible. The enemy is now resorting to despicable schemes in trying to decrease the combat efficiency of our army corps

here, so this is the only way to keep the secret, reduce time and ensure the safety of the mission.

The injections were more precious than our lives as they were associated with the Supreme Commander's affection and the health of our comrades-in-arms in the second front.

Early in February, when the truck arrived in Chunchon, we faced a harsher situation.

Our priorities so far had been keeping watch for air raid, standing guard and ensuring a good rest for the only driver. Now the pressing problem was how to pass the ridges and valleys safely.

When the truck arrived at the foot of a ridge, I had it take cover and rushed forward to see whether there were any signs of enemy movement at the valley in front. Then I ran all the way back and the truck moved onwards.

Ridge after ridge, valley after valley, I always ran ahead of the truck in the teeth of icy wind. The truck advanced as far as I did; it halted when I stopped running. The road was bumpy with many bomb craters and most of the bridges were blown up, so we often had to make a detour. Worse still, time-bombs were scattered here and there, barely visible.

During the exhausting journey, which continued day and night, my heart sometimes sank low at the sound of sporadic shooting.

The bigger problem was the difficulty of obtaining

materials with which to camouflage the vehicle when everything was buried deep in the snow. The chances of discovering corn straws and burnt trees were slender.

Sometimes we took shelter for long hours to avoid engagement with the enemy but it was really difficult to make up for the loss of time. Even in the dead of night the truck moved with no headlights on, guided by me waving a white cloth.

At long last we arrived at the destination, only to find that the medical department of the army corps in the second front had moved to another place with some soldiers remaining. Regrettably, we were late as our arduous trip lasted longer than we expected.

We confirmed the location of the medical department, before setting out on another 40-odd-km-long journey.

To my group, the trial was severe beyond description. The sole source of strength for us was the sense of responsibility for our important mission.

Still fresh in my memory are the cheers of jubilation raised by the officers and men of the medical department when they greeted us. The soldiers of the army corps were all in tears.

One of them said, “We have been anxiously waiting for you. I cannot find words to thank you for your heroic struggle. Please give our grateful regards to the Supreme Commander who had this huge amount of medicines sent to the enemy-

held areas for the sake of ordinary soldiers like us.”

The very moment the ampoules were transferred to the medical department, the three of us collapsed from the hunger and fatigue that lasted for several days. But we all smiled at our comrades-in-arms, thinking that the mission was a success.

An Song Gun

## **Telephone Wires**

From the summer of 1951 the units of the Korean People’s Army switched over to active positional defence warfare.

The prevailing situation demanded that we, telegraphists, ensure the absolute safety of wire communications. However, this was a great challenge for us because the enemy’s indiscriminate bombing continued around the clock.

Tolbawi Height in particular was the main target of bombardment, in which free movement of personnel was inhibited and telephone wires were cut off one after another. With a high sense of responsibility to ensure uninterrupted communications between the units, we braved flames and gunfire to discover the disconnected points of the wires and re-link them. When reserve wires ran out, some used rifle-wipers and even their bodies.

For us, wires were more precious than our lives. If provided with plenty of them, we would have nothing to be afraid of.

At this juncture the Supreme Headquarters issued an order to the effect that all efforts should be concentrated on exhausting the enemy. In response to the order, tank-hunting, sniping, enemy-rear harassment and various other forms of warfare got underway.

We came up with an idea of launching an assault to capture wires from the enemy.

From early 1952 my platoon, in close cooperation with scouts and engineers, sneaked into the depth of enemy positions several times with the aim of disrupting their communications and capturing wires. However, this was a do-or-die battle.

We made full preparations for the first assault, studying the topographical features of a precipice on Height 854.1 and Janghwa Height, and scouting for defence positions, communications system, command posts, ambush points and patrolling order. All soldiers of the platoon volunteered to join the assault team.

The team, divided into three groups, left far into the night.

Guided by engineers, we passed the mine field and barbed wire entanglements. With the help of scouts, we



could reconfirm the command posts, wire communications network, ambush points and other details.

Upon arriving at the designated points, the three groups worked together to cut off and reel wires as quickly as possible. Some winding them around their arms, some others binding coils with a rope and pulling them on the ground, all returned safely.

The moment we came back to our positions, the enemy was thrown into confusion. Flare bombs were fired here and there, but to no avail.

Now we set up a double and treble wire network to ensure uninterrupted communications for our regiment.

It was well past midnight, when the regiment was still defending Height 854.1, that Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung gave several calls to Ryu Kyong Su, commander of the army corps, who was at the command post of our division, and Jo Tong Chol, commander of its battalion, who was on the height. He said that he was very glad to hear the voice of the battalion commander who was defending Height 854.1, highly praising the battalion for repulsing 15 rounds of massive enemy attacks.

Learning the news, the combatants of the battalion raised loud cheers, singing the immortal revolutionary song *Song of General Kim Il Sung*. Listening to what the Supreme Commander said, the telegraphists shouted Long Live

General Kim Il Sung!

On several occasions the division and the army corps extended thanks to my platoon in appreciation of its devoted service.

Ji Hi Yak

## **Crossing and Recrossing Chol Pass**

The Singosan Plain and Chol Pass lay on the key section of the route to Height 1211 and the eastern front, making them major targets of enemy bombardment.

Our drivers had to transport shells, fuel and other supplies along this route from Pyongyang every two days.

Enemy planes chased after the trucks all day long, dropping bombs and firing machineguns by volleys. Even at night flare bombs lit up the sky, making it as bright as daytime. The road wound through a long stretch of flatland, in which there were no air-raid shelters, so it was the most dangerous section for the drivers.

In case a truck was set on fire or broke down during an air raid, dozens of other trucks following behind it halted. Immediately, the drivers got off and rushed towards the

truck, putting out the blaze or giving a helping hand in repairing. This had to be done quickly, otherwise all the trucks would be doomed because enemy planes were always on standby.

The rescue work on the plain was literally a do-or-die struggle, cartridge boxes exploding, flare bombs hovering overhead and flames flaring up in the wake of bombing and machinegun firing. Such struggle repeated several times a night, night after night. If they found it impossible to rescue the truck blocking the road, the drivers shoved it off into the ditches without delay. This was the sole way to save other trucks with a full load.

Among the soldiers who sacrificed themselves in the course of transporting war supplies to the frontline was Han Hyong Su, driver of truck No. 113. I was his assistant.

One day, when I was attending a short course as chairman of the company's primary organization of the Democratic Youth League, he left alone for the frontline as he was well aware that the transport of artillery shells was an urgent necessity. That night his truck was chased by an enemy plane on the above road. Hearing the shots from its machinegun, the driver realized that he was in danger. But it was too late as the trailer was in flames. Behind him there was a long queue of trucks with a full load of shells and fuel.

He was the sort of a man who would face death without

fear. He put the headlights on and drove the truck at full speed, turning in a different direction.

The enemy plane was flying low over his truck, the sound of machinegun fire filling the air.

After some minutes the truck creaked to a halt, blowing up. Thus the heroic driver saved dozens of trucks. Later, I was told that the low-flying plane made a nosedive into a mountain slope.

The man was lying dead, severely burnt all over the body. Found under his armpit was a case he had been keeping for a long time. He had probably intended to use it at the time of his admission to the Workers' Party of Korea. When burying the dead, we put the precious case on his chest and called him Party member in bitter tears.

The road running across the Singosan Plain led to the steep slopes of Chol Pass. At the foot of this pass drivers usually hummed merry tunes, including *Song of the Truck Driver* and *Ballad of Singosan*, as they covered the dangerous section of the road safely. The delicate aroma of acacias and other fragrant plants came in through the windows.

Each time, however, such pleasure did not last long. At night a dozen or so flare bombs were fired in the sky over Chol Pass and enemy bombers combed the mountain paths. Even the gleam of the windows and cigarette light revealed the movement of our trucks, inviting aerial bombing and a deadly

volley of machinegun fire. Mountains and valleys rocked under heavy bombardment. Undeterred, our trucks kept moving onwards and the drivers were steadfast in their resolve to transport the supplies to the eastern front even at the cost of their lives.

At first there was only one plane over Chol Pass and the American pilot was far from skilful in flying and firing at night. The plane circled round, dropping ten or so flare bombs and returning. It flew low in search of our trucks, which were already taking shelter in the shade of the mountains. They ran at full speed while the plane was away. It lost track of the trucks, dropping bombs and firing machineguns aimlessly.

As autumn began, two planes appeared every night. One dropped flare bombs first and then the other tailed closely behind it, taking aim at everything moving on the ground.

To cope with this tricky tactic, our trucks sped up around the bends when the flare bombs were lighting up the sky. Chol Pass is famous for its countless bends. By taking advantage of its topographical features, the drivers saved their trucks despite the enemy's persistent bombing raid. They dared all dangers and perils to carry out their duties.

It took a couple of days to drive back and forth between Pyongyang and Height 1211. Even when it was pitch-dark at night, the trucks ran with no headlights on but they came back in two days' time.

Choe Jun Myong, a model driver of the company, and his brother conducted a close study of enemy planes' flight and covered the dangerous section overnight. So we often called them "steamer trains."

Civilians, too, waged a heroic struggle.

One day, after finishing an all-night-long drive in Poptong County, Kangwon Province, we hid the trucks in a safe place and dropped in at a peasant's house for breakfast. A pitiful groan coming from inside the room, a faint voice said, "The entire family has fallen ill. You will see firewood, salt and soybean paste in the kitchen. We are sorry. Please prepare breakfast by yourselves."

In the wake of the enemy's germ warfare a plague was sweeping across the village at the foot of a valley.

While we were having breakfast, enemy bombers appeared and attacked the nearby bridge in a river, which a villager said they had repaired the day before.

At that time the enemy, as part of the so-called Strangulation Operation, launched large-scale air raids targeting major roads and bridges, in a bid to cut off the links between the front and the rear. Besides, floods fell upon various parts of the country, the worst in scores of years. Civilians, however, overcame all manner of difficulties to repair roads and bridges without delay.

That day, following the bombing raid, we went out in

search of a detour. On the way back we came across some villagers walking with spades and pickaxes in their hands. Smiling, a woman said to me, “We have set up an underwater bridge. American pilots will not find it.”

To my surprise, she was the daughter-in-law of the above family who had been seriously ill in the morning. I was worried that the sick woman skipped breakfast.

But she consoled me, “Skipping meals is not a big problem. We must ensure the safety of the route to the frontline. This road is not wide and the bridge is not long, but you know they are critical to the transport of supplies to the front.”

No force can bring this strong-willed people to their knees, I said to myself.

Long decades after the end of the war, the woman’s words are still kept in my mind.

Cha Yong Gu

## **Never Miss the Targets**

In October 1952 Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung ordered the separate A.A. artillery battalion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division to form a contingent with two 37mm-calibre A.A. artillery companies and a 12.7mm-calibre A.A. machinegun

platoon. Its mission was to protect major objects and harvesting peasants against aerial raids and shoot down enemy planes in a vast region encompassing Paechon, Yonan, Chongdan, Haeju and the Ongjin peninsula.

According to this order, our company immediately moved to a designated place in Chongdan. As instructed by the Supreme Commander, we marched under cover of night and set up positions for the guns. Before daybreak all the company soldiers finished meal and conducted air surveillance to confirm the key direction in which enemy planes would attack. At the time of their raid we allowed the planes to descend closer to our position, before directing a heavy barrage against them. Then we moved to another position in pursuit of other planes.

Sometimes we put up dummy objects in an area favourable for artillery firing in order to attract the attention of enemy pilots.

Our operation was always fraught with the dangers of death.

One of the 37mm-calibre A.A. artillery companies was positioned on a low hill flanked by a river flowing in the direction of Kanghwa Island from a reservoir in the north. Laid over the river was a bridge leading to Haeju. For its geographical importance the area was haunted by bombers.

One November day that year, dozens of aircraft made over



six raids in a wave formation. Several planes were shot down during this two-hour-long battle.

Generally, the fighting between planes and A.A. guns lasted 10 to 15 minutes. To make artillery fire continue non-stop for two hours was never easy. Enemy planes made a nosedive towards the artillery positions, dropping bombs and firing machineguns, but the officers and men of the company were dauntless.

Hwang Pyong Song, the acting company commander, was buried in the earth three times. Each time, however, he rose up and shouted at his soldiers, “Never miss the targets” or “Fire to avenge our fallen comrades-in-arms.” The assistant company commander in charge of cultural affairs, despite the injuries in his abdomen, ran back and forth between the artillery positions and encouraged the soldiers, shouting “The respected Supreme Commander is watching us” and “Let us destroy US imperialists to revenge our parents” to the last moment of his life.

A gunpointer, when seriously wounded in the legs, pressed the base plate of the gun with his hands until he drew his last breath. Even the cook helped the injured gunners, carrying shells and charging the gun with them. Suddenly, the artillery position was hit by a hail of bullets, a bomb explosion toppling the gun and its spare barrel rolling down into a paddy field at the foot of the hill. The fierce battle lasted until night fell.

In appreciation of their feats in this battle the officers and men of the company were awarded high official commendations: the title of Hero of the DPRK for Hwang Pyong Song; Order of the National Flag 1<sup>st</sup> Class and Order of Soldier's Honour 1<sup>st</sup> Class for some of them.

The battle cost the lives of the assistant company commander and two soldiers, who were laid to rest on the blood-soaked hill.

Still now the residents in Chongdan call it Hero Height and take good care of the martyrs' graves.

Yu Hyong Nam

## **“Iron Leg”**

Despite the steady rumble of enemy tanks I concentrated all my attention on the syringe, with which I was giving another transfusion of my own blood to an unconscious telegraphist.

It sounded as if the tanks were within hailing distance. I could not speed up the transfusion, much less pause.

The moment I was pulling the soldier up a slope after finishing the transfusion, I felt severe pain on my right leg, hit by shrapnel from a shell. I slipped into a coma.

One or two days later, when I recovered consciousness, I

felt half alive and half dead. Bleeding stopped naturally.

I said to myself, “Where are my dear comrades-in-arms? Is this my resting place? I am a 21-year-old girl. Should I die here on Height 1211?”

I wanted to revenge myself on the tankman who had fired at me.

The stronger my desire for life grew, the more I yearned to see the sky over Pyongyang. I took all the ampoules out of my bag and gave myself haemostatic and cardiotoxic injections. I pulled my wounded leg to have the lower-leg bones back into place, before tying seven rolls of bandages around it.

Then I began to crawl on my hands and left leg. It was at dusk that I arrived at where the telegraphist was lying dead. I came up to the young soldier, whom I had wanted to save even at the cost of my life. I carefully covered his body with my blanket and held his hand in mine, imagining that he would be awake if he felt the warmth of my hand.

I did not know his name and age. Looking steadily at the deceased, I was reminded of what Song Yong Ho said, the orderly who was now buried on the shores of the Raktong River. “When can I see my mother? I am longing for her.”

Countless sons and daughters of this country, who would be pillars shouldering its future, fell in action.

Memories of the men who were buried on a hill across the river, returned to me.

...

On the hill there were 11 combatants, who fought bravely to repulse the enemy's attacks. When they ran out of bullets, they rolled rocks down the slope.

At last there were only four survivors including me—a heavy machinegun company commander without an arm, a blind squad head and a 19-year-old soldier who could not walk because of a thighbone fracture.

I could not take them all alone, so I decided to remain with them for the last battle.

Seeing me pulling out my pistol, the company commander said, "You are a medical doctor. You are not yet wounded, so if you die here with us, it will give no benefit to the Party. You should do your best to save these two soldiers."

The squad head protested, saying that I must go with the young soldier. The company commander agreed and gave a flag of the DPRK to the latter, saying that he must carry the flag to Jeju Island.

Tears streamed from my eyes when I was climbing down the hill with the soldier. He was a man of great build. Besides, I was carrying two knapsacks, my medicine bag, two rifles and the pistol. I staggered under the heavy weight, climbing up a steep slope. Sometimes I hopped on both feet and crawled on my hands and knees, covering dozens of kilometres.

Upon realizing that I passed beyond the bounds of the

enemy-held areas, I collapsed.

When I was brought to my senses, Kim Kyong Ok was shaking me by the shoulders, the chief nurse who had joined the army with me.

I exclaimed, “Am I still alive?”

Then I got to my feet, saying, “I must go back now. Other soldiers must be remaining on the hill.”

I was rushing out of the hospital, when the nurse blocked my way.

Teary-eyed, she said, “They all blew themselves up.”

...

Now I felt as if the young martyrs, who laid down their lives unhesitatingly on an unknown hill, were watching me, saying that I must survive and kill the enemy.

I was thirsty. Even in my dream I craved for water as I ate nothing for four days.

The enemy was within hailing distance and my comrades-in-arms were far away.

Suddenly, I was reminded of the day when I encountered four American soldiers who had survived a battle. I shot two of them to death and bayoneted one. Then I ordered the fourth man to carry my stretcher on the four-odd-kilometre journey to the headquarters. At that time the story of my brave feat spread rapidly across the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment to which I belonged.

Thinking of this episode, I hardened my determination to go back and tell the soldiers how the telegraphist died. This was my moral obligation to the fallen soldier.

I unlocked my pistol and put it into the holster. Then I began crawling again. The small amount of wheat ran out some days ago. There was no trace of vegetation on the smoke-filled height. On the sixth day I fell into a coma.

It was the scouts of the regiment who discovered me on the way to enemy positions. One of them took my Party membership card from my inside pocket. He knew my name because, when at a hospital, I had taken charge of 184 wounded soldiers and recovered their health.

The soldiers who were tasked with taking me to hospital ran day and night. As I was carried on a makeshift stretcher, I felt severe pain whenever they laid it on the ground. They must have taken much trouble to carry me safely.

Afterwards, following the amputation of my right leg, I could walk with the aid of crutches. I took charge of a ward at a hospital for wounded soldiers.

One day, looking steadily at my artificial leg, the anti-Japanese war veteran Choe Hyon said indignantly, “What has become of your ‘iron leg’?”

The war ended and, seeing off the soldiers on their way to the venue of the military parade to celebrate victory, I felt proud of myself. The sense of responsibility for the lives of

my comrades-in-arms and selfless devotion to them were two buttresses that supported my “iron leg.”

Ri Hung Ryong

## **Blistering Counterattack**

The following happened in July 1951 when the Fatherland Liberation War was at its height. I took part in the operation for the defence of Height 1211 as leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of the heavy machinegun company attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps.

My platoon was seconded to help the 8<sup>th</sup> Company repulse enemy attacks on Mumyong Height and its ridge. It set its firing area as the summit of Height 1211.

Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung ordered the service personnel of the Korean People’s Army not to yield even an inch of land to the enemy. With full determination to carry out this order, we built positions for our heavy machineguns, set up entanglements and laid mines.

Indiscriminate artillery fire and bombardment continued for some days but we could see no trace of enemy soldiers.

One day the orderly, who was sent to draw water from the spring on the eastern slope of Height 1211, rushed towards

me. Gasping for breath, he said that enemy soldiers were shouting out “Surrender!” some distance away from the dugout for the 9<sup>th</sup> Company commander.

Upon arriving at the dugout, I was surprised to see dozens of enemy soldiers gathering in flocks.

I lost no time in informing the company commander of what happened. The latter said that communications with the battalion were cut off, ordering me to place two heavy machineguns on the ridge where the 9<sup>th</sup> Company was stationed so that they could be fired by volleys from a higher position. He also proposed launching a counterattack by an infantry platoon.

I had two heavy machineguns positioned with some distance in between for cross-firing. Scared by our soldiers’ foray, the enemy turned tail. As they swarmed into the mine field, a series of loud explosions shook the valley. At this moment the shells fired from the mortars behind our positions fell on the retreating enemy. After all, the tide of battle turned in favour of our company.

This counterattack awakened me to the importance of an officer’s correct judgement of circumstances, bold decision and careful arrangements.

That day we captured five soldiers, 71 rifles, three light machineguns and a large amount of ammunition and hand-grenades.



Through this battle, which was a prelude to the operation for the defence of Height 1211, we became fully convinced that we could repulse massive attacks by US and south Korean soldiers.

Sim Kyu Won

### **“Position” for Scouts**

Unlike infantrymen, scouts did not have their own position. This was probably because they should move in the enemy’s rear to carry out their missions. To them, the safest place was a frontline trench in which infantrymen engaged in a fierce exchange of fire.

In August 1950, after joining the army, I underwent training with other recruits at a regiment. When the regiment was attached to the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, I was assigned to the reconnaissance company directly under the division.

In autumn the following year enemy forces in the area under the charge of the division were redeployed and the reconnaissance company received an order on verifying the location of each unit.

The company commander judged that the best way was to

capture an officer. He selected ten or so soldiers, among whom I was a 19-year-old squad head.

We went down along the lower reaches of the Soyang River and found a suitable place for ambush near Rinje. The river flowed on one side of the road and a rocky cliff stood on the opposite side. If we laid an ambush on both sides of the road, we could capture anyone walking or driving on it, even if he would try to escape.

We immediately blocked the road with a heap of rocks and hid ourselves on both sides of it.

At dusk we heard something like the sound of an engine. Soon a jeep jerked to a halt in front of the rocks.

We rushed out and encircled the jeep, our English translator shouting "Hands up or we will shoot." The driver and an American officer on board did not dare to protest, both of whom were much taller than me.

Upon being disarmed, the officer took out a piece of frayed paper from his pocket and said something repeatedly in a miserable voice. On the paper was written a Korean sentence to the effect that he would do anything if he was not killed. He probably kept it inside the pocket in anticipation of being captured. My blood boiled at the thought that such base and servile men had been putting on airs.

We jumped on the jeep, which sped off towards the frontline. We safely returned, bringing two captives with us.

I was dispatched to enemy-held areas scores of times on similar missions. American captives were all cowards who, at gunpoint, turned white and trembled with their hands up.

Then why were American soldiers gripped by fear in their heavily-fortified positions and what made our scouts act so bravely there?

They were mercenaries on alien soil and we were defenders of our own land. For this reason the scouts of the Korean People's Army could feel self-assured wherever they might be.

Kim Tuk

## **Lure Enemy Aircraft to My Machinegun Emplacement**

At the time of the battle in the streets of Tanchon County, which was arranged in response to the counterattack by our army units, I was an assistant platoon leader of the South Hamgyong Provincial Guards Battalion of the Security Forces Bureau under the Ministry of the Interior. Soon after the battle ended, I was appointed head of one of the aircraft-hunting teams that were formed under Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung's operational plans.

My team was composed of 13 soldiers and armed with ten

rifles, two light machineguns and one heavy machinegun. It was tasked with protecting a bridge in Cho-ri, Pukchong County, against air raids. Prior to the first engagement with enemy planes I re-examined my soldiers' weapons.

We lay in ambush at the edge of the bridge, looking up anxiously at the sky.

It was around 5:00 a.m. when a peasant from the nearby village was driving an ox-cart across the bridge. A plane appeared from nowhere, swooping in low and firing its machinegun at the cart. We were enraged at the sight of the peasant and his ox lying dead by the road. The killing must have been in revenge for American pilots' defeat on the frontline.

My hands trembled with fury. I had fired my heavy machinegun at the low-flying plane but could not hit the target, because the pilot was so craven that he did not dare to come within range of the weapon. The same was the case with other shooters.

I said to myself: At the frontline or on a height fighting takes place on a limited area and we can choose between attack and defence according to circumstances. But incursions by enemy aircraft should be prevented on the ground, at sea and in the air. And it is difficult to set the time for anti-aircraft firing. I cannot shoot down any enemy planes if I merely wait for them in a camouflaged position. I must lure them to my machinegun emplacement.

Our first battle was never a mere waste of bullets. It brought conviction and courage, not fear, to us and helped each of us getting the knack of shooting down enemy planes single-handed.

From then on, the team's priority was to set up dummy objects that could attract the attention of enemy pilots. Broken telegraph poles and logs were painted black to look like A.A. guns, which were placed beside our machinegun emplacements. We were certain that we could hit the targets if we fired back at the nose-diving planes.

The following day we were full of confidence and courage when we set up the firing position again near the bridge. Fake A.A. guns and trucks were around us.

Silence reigned for a long while. Suddenly, we heard the sound of a plane engine. It came nearer and louder. At last a three-plane formation came into my vision. We decided to shoot down the lead plane first. It was certain that this would frighten away other cowardly American mercenaries.

When the lead plane nose-dived towards the dummy objects, I fired at its propeller. The plane lost balance and roved about in the air. When all the soldiers of my team concentrated fire on it, black smoke plumed from the plane. Before long, it fell down into a paddy field. Other planes began to turn tail. We continued to fire by volleys, bringing down another plane.

We salvaged four machineguns from the wreckage of the planes. Among my team was a soldier who had been a lathe operator at the Ryongsong Machine Plant in the prewar days. He went to the plant in order to adapt the machineguns for anti-aircraft firing. When he returned with the weapons, we put each of them on a wooden wheel to make it revolve.

Later, we were ordered to defend Riwon against bombing raids. We set up the firing position on a hill that commanded a view of a railway tunnel.

One day, six planes were chasing after a munitions train. When the first plane nose-dived dropping bombs, the train almost disappeared into the tunnel. Frustrated, the planes dropped bombs and fired machineguns at the mouth of the tunnel. The train giving a loud whistle, white smoke was being puffed out of the tunnel. The moment we saw the planes flying low again, we thought that we should promptly bring them down to ensure the safety of the train bound for the frontline.

I began firing my heavy machinegun at the target swooping down on the mouth of the tunnel. The plane was enveloped in flames, falling down into the nearby sea.

After a minute other planes circled above the tunnel in search of our firing positions. Now they changed their tactics, attacking by twos or threes. I moved my position quickly and fired again. Another plane burst into flames.

For ten days my team shot down three enemy planes.

I brought down six planes during the aircraft-hunting movement and, in appreciation of this feat, I was awarded the title of Hero of the DPRK.

This movement, which was initiated by the Supreme Commander and conducted on an extensive scale in the whole period of the war, was an embodiment of his original military ideas and theories. It was also a fruition of the spirit of mass heroism and selfless devotion displayed by the service personnel of the Korean People's Army who carried out his orders even at the cost of their lives.

Ri Yong Je

## **Artillery Fire in Mt Kari**

I was a platoon leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division of the Korean People's Army.

One day the assistant artillery regiment commander ordered me to lead a 120mm-calibre mortar platoon and advance to the Mt Kari line.

At that time enemy soldiers were planning to launch an offensive on our infantry unit at the ravine of the mountain.

Remnants of the enemy were flocking into the ravine. The mission of my platoon was to sneak into the area and frustrate

the enemy's plot for attack by means of artillery fire.

I informed my soldiers of the platoon's combat duty and said, "True to Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung's Juche-oriented military idea of using artillery pieces flexibly as suited to the characteristics of the country's mountainous territory, we have gained rich experience in the past battles. You should keep in mind that the regiment's victory depends on our platoon, and carry out its combat mission whatever the adversity."

After having a good rest during the day we set out on a long march at night. ...

A scout rushed towards me, saying that he discovered about two enemy companies bivouacking in a valley nearly 500 metres ahead of us.

I ordered a halt and unfolded my map. It was quite a long distance to our destination and my watch pointed to 3:00 a.m.

Now it was obvious that the platoon could not march through the valley. I looked at my soldiers, the barrels, base plates and carriages of the mortars gleaming in the moonlight. As if waiting for my order, the soldiers' eyes sparkled, those eyes that got teary when recollecting the sorrowful days of the past but blazed when staring at the enemy.

We began to follow the mountain path without slackening our marching speed. We trod on years-old leaves, the barrels and carriages caught between tree branches.



Seeing a private with a mortar's heavy base plate on his shoulder making a misstep, an old soldier said, "Let me carry the base plate."

Holding the young man's arm, he resumed, "Marching is a bigger challenge than battle. A saying goes that victory in a battle rests on the steps of soldiers. Cheer up. If we arrive at the foot of Mt Kari and launch a surprise attack on the enemy, it will be a sheer hell."

At long last a mountain ridge came in sight. We were sure it was our destination. Everything was silent around it.

I said to myself: This silence will soon be broken by our artillery fire. It will inspire our soldiers with confidence in victory, heralding an ignominious defeat for the enemy.

I ordered my deputy to speed up the march.

All the platoon soldiers were in high spirits, when a voice shouted "Stop. Hands up!"

We halted, wondering if we encountered the enemy.

In the blink of an eye my soldiers hid themselves behind rocks.

"Don't shoot," I ordered and then asked who he was.

A rather gentle voice said, "You are artillerymen from Yanggu, aren't you?"

"You are right," I replied standing up slowly.

A soldier in a one-person tent came up and raised his hand in salute, saying "I am here to guide you."

I ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> squads to set up the firing position and dugouts, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> squad to reassemble the mortars.

I was guided to the summit of the height. Upon hearing of the platoon's arrival, the soldiers, as well as the officers, were elated.

Using the periscope, I watched enemy movements—swarms of soldiers, artillery pieces scattered about and vehicles cluttering up the ravine.

At 6:00 a.m. I shouted, “Attention! Fire!”

The mortars opened fire, turning the enemy positions into a lake of fire. Belatedly, enemy planes buzzed the ravine but they could not find our mortars and soldiers that disappeared into the dugouts.

No sooner had the artillery fire ended than the infantrymen's charge began.

That day, in our mortar attack, the enemy suffered hundreds of casualties and loss of a large quantity of combat equipment. This was a great contribution to thwarting their offensive in the Mt Kari line.

Kim Tong San

## **“Loudspeaker Gun”**

During the Fatherland Liberation War I was not a soldier

charging in the front row of the attacking unit, but I take great pride in having fired the “loudspeaker gun” at enemy positions.

The following happened in September Juche 41 (1952) at the fourth stage of the war when I took part, at the age of 21, in an assault on Height 854.1. This was in a location of great tactical significance, bordered to the northeast by Height 351 and to the southwest by Height 1211, and flanked by a road leading to Kosong.

In anticipation of a new offensive the enemy built an iron-and-cement position on this height for more than a year and called it Iron Fortress. On the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> our units seized Height 811.7 on the right, drawing the enemy’s attention. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the units made preparations for an assault on Height 854.1.

The following day our loudspeaker was installed on a nearby hill, its cables extending long to the attacking position where I, together with the soldiers, waited impatiently for an order.

Usually, broadcasting for psychological warfare was done at dawn. Some officers were worried about the broadcasters’ health, advising them to sleep early in the evening. But they did not follow the advice, saying that their throats would tickle the following morning. The same was true of my throat; prior to the battles, I used to burn the midnight oil after supper.

I was keeping a tight hold of my microphone as the time for attack was drawing nearer.

The charge order was given at 1:00 a.m.

When our soldiers were making a dash at enemy positions, I began to speak at the microphone:

“The height has been encircled. Your resistance is doomed to fail.

Surrender, and you are assured of life.

Don’t risk your life as cannon fodder for America.”

The report of my “loudspeaker gun” reverberated loudly through the hills despite the fierce exchange of fire.

The height fell in a short time, the flags of the DPRK flying on its summit.

During the assault squad head Sin Ki Chol and private Pak Won Jin blocked the enemy’s gun muzzles with their chests. Our combatants killed or captured over 2 400 effectives, and destroyed or seized five tanks and a lot of other combat equipment.

Seeing our cheering soldiers, I felt very proud of myself.

Later, the loudspeaker was moved to the top of the height, through which I spoke about the dignified life of the people in the northern half of Korea and the decadence of the US imperialists and the reactionary ruling circles of the south Korean army.

An increasing number of south Korean soldiers defected.

Talking with them, I came to a fuller realization of what an important role I was performing. They said that listening to my words, they had made up their mind to come over. They added that their superiors had pressed them, almost every day, to blow up the loudspeaker and that they assured them a big reward. I was convinced that my microphone was a powerful weapon striking the enemy with fear and a bugle awakening the soldiers of the puppet army to the absurdity of the anti-DPRK propaganda.

Our just and passionate “loudspeaker gun” was a deadly blow to the enemy. One enemy unit after another was undermined from within. On the day when the US imperialists were brought to their knees, a company of the south Korean army defected to the DPRK.

I have taken different positions for several decades since the end of the war. However, I have never forgotten my “loudspeaker gun” even for a moment.

Song Am Jon

## **My Musical Instruments on the Battlefield**

My company’s recreational party on the Jiktong Pass started with singing and ended also with singing every night.

The soldiers' morale ran high as they fought the enemy in daytime and sang songs at night.

What we missed most were musical instruments, for we were not satisfied only with singing. But the company had none of them.

The only way was to make them by ourselves.

I went to the company command without any definite plan, and told my determination. At that time I had no experience in making a musical instrument nor had I any special skill. What I had were a large saw and axe for felling a tree.

*Anyhow, I'll try.* This thought never escaped my mind.

In my boyhood in Pusan I had fiddled with a mandolin which my elder brother got from somewhere, and when I had been working through a middle school, I had seen various stringed instruments, so I had a rough idea of how these instruments looked like. That was all what I knew about musical instruments.

With the whole company supporting me, I was obsessed with those instruments. Everything on the height never missed my eyes.

One day I saw an empty 45mm-calibre anti-tank gun shell. I held it, and thought a while; it could be processed into a soundbox of the *haegum*. I took it to the weapons repair shop in the company, and had it cut in an appropriate size. Then, I obtained a cleaning rod. I heated it on a fire and struck it with

a large stone. In this way I made a knife about 10cm long. I sharpened its blade by grinding it on a whetstone. The neck of the *haegum* was made with a black walnut branch, and the peg with an ash tree. I formed the rose with a heated iron rod, and the stick with an ash tree branch. I asked the horse keeper for the hair of horse to make the bow hair. I gathered resin from a pine tree, boiled it and filtered it before pouring it into cold water; the lump was something suitable for lubricating the horse hair. What remained were the strings.

Where can I get them?

After much thought, I obtained metal lines including telephone lines, and put four strings like the violin on the frame.

Then I applied the lump of resin on the hair and swept the strings with it. The instrument produced a sound.

“Wonderful! It’s a success.”

The problem was that the sound was very low, because the soundbox and soundboard were small in size.

I put the *haegum* on my shoulder, and swept the strings as if it were the violin. I could play simple melodies like *Arirang*, *Yangsando* and *The Nodul Riverside*.

It is needless to say that my comrades gave me thunderous applause after I played the musical instrument at the recreational party at night.

The *haegum*, made with an axe and self-made knife, was

unrefined and unshapely, but it was a great musical instrument for my company.

“A musical instrument out of debris...Your hands are magical.”

The political assistant regiment commander was beside himself with delight.

The *haegum* was brought to the table in the division commander's office room. The anti-Japanese war veteran, Kim Il, was also delighted after hearing a folk song played with the instrument.

A few days later, three carpenters came to me, as part of a measure for making musical instruments on a wide scale. A blacksmith's was set up, tools were obtained, and trees broken by bombing were cut in appropriate length and dried. Our goal was to make three stringed instruments—mandolin, violin and guitar.

In my mind, however, were only their forms, not their detailed structures and sizes. Another problem was the adhesive.

Soldiers were enlisted in the discussion; one of them said the Atlantic Pollack skin, if boiled hard, turns into glue. The boiled skin of the fish we obtained from various places was a good adhesive, but the amount was not enough. We boiled everything that could be boiled.

One day we found a cowhide buried in the roadside. We made a wonderful glue of it. Forty-five days passed in this



way. Self-reliance produced three violins, three mandolins and three guitars. We were elated.

The political assistant regiment commander organized a band. Enlisted in the band were 15 soldiers strictly selected from among battalions, including those who were good at singing and primary commanding personnel. We gathered in the regiment headquarters.

In the trenches on the Jiktong Pass, I taught them how to play the musical instruments. The band was reinforced with large and small drums and *phiri*. We could stage a performance after about 20 days of training.

At last the band, originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Kang Kon Guards 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, set out for a tour performance at battalions.

When a notice was given to a battalion, its soldiers made an impromptu stage in a forest immediately and waited for our arrival. When we appeared on the stage, hundreds of soldiers looked at us with keen interest; and when each item on the programme ended, they would clap their hands enthusiastically. Every performance lasted for about half an hour, but it left a lingering effect on their minds.

Later, frontline bands were organized in other regiments, divisions and corps.

In the latter half of 1952 my unit left the Jiktong Pass for Wonsan.

The band, following the advance team, beat drums and blew *phiri*, encouraging the marching column. When the column was crossing a mountain or hill, the band would climb to its summit first and play the music more loudly. We felt happiness, pride and honour when we heard the soldiers saying that they never felt tired or painful while crossing the mountain.

In the course of undertaking coastal defence in the Wonsan area, the band improved itself once again; the proactive support rendered by the political department of the corps proved a great encouragement, but the main propellant was the performance by an artistic group from Pyongyang and their unstinted assistance.

The artiste who captured our hearts with fantastic violin solo was the famous Paek Ko San, and the soloist who taught us *The 2 000-ri Amnok River* was O Mae Hun. Our delight was beyond description as we met in Wonsan the artistes of the Korean People's Army Song and Dance Ensemble whom we had seen on the Jiktong Pass.

On the pass they put on the stage *To a Decisive Battle*, a song that called on the combatants to take revenge upon the enemy, and *Song of the Truck Driver*, *Song of Coast Artillerymen* and *Song of the Scout*, songs that infused new feelings and emotion into the pass. It was the first time for us to hear those famous songs. That day Paek Ko San tried the

violin of our own making in the trench with the enemy's bombshells exploding intermittently. He said the sound was fairly good, and taught me the points I had to remember when making other violins.

In 1953 our band took part in the art festival of the service personnel.

Later we again took part in the performance held in celebration of victory in the war. The performance was arranged for the National Conference of Combat Heroes, which was attended by Supreme Commander Kim Il Sung. After the performance was over, the performers all went on the stage and sang the immortal revolutionary song *Song of General Kim Il Sung*, looking at the Supreme Commander in the auditorium. Tears were streaming down the cheeks of the performers and the participants in the national conference.

Kwon Yong Mok

## **WAR VETERANS' REMINISCENCES**

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E-mail: [flph@star-co.net.kp](mailto:flph@star-co.net.kp)

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