

Surrounded by men of his company Lieutenent Henderson holds a Chinese Shepherd's horn while Lieutenant Chandler in the foreground examines a captured tommy gun.

COMPANY L'S FOUR DAYS

FROM THE JOURNAL OF COMPANY L, 21st INFANTRY

Lieutenant Lindsey P. Henderson, Jr.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUTHOR

Saturday, **4** November 1950. Company in defensive position, 6 miles northeast of Anju, south of Chongchongang River: 8 officers, 170 enlisted men, with 11 attached. At 2300 hours left position for battalion assembly area for attack on enemy northeast of Anju.

Sunday, 5 November 1950. 2 enlisted men returnees: Swift and Schramm.

Company advanced in battalion attack 0800 hours to objective 8 miles northeast of Anju. Objective secured 1100 hours. Heavy resistance. Killed in action, 5: Cottrell, White, Duarte, Gosvener, Bogenschild. Wounded, 12: forward observer party, B Battery, 52d Field Artillery, Sgt. Heiser, Cpl. Dossett. In L Company: Sgt. Hayworth, Tompkins, Warren, Lts. Dreisonstok, Chandler, Henderson, Pfcs. Allen, Noble, ROKs Lee Pok U, Lee Han Tok. 1 non-battle casualty.

Monday, 6 November 1950. Company in attack on enemy position 8 ¹/₂ miles northeast Anju at 1400 hours. Light enemy resistance. Company reverted to battalion re-

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serve seven miles northeast of Anju: 8 officers, 160 enlisted men, with 10 attached. Wounded, 7: Franks, Wall, Allen, Gordon, Wilson, Yakowski, Lt. Chandler.

Tuesday, 7 November 1950.Company left reserve position at 1530 hours. Arrived bivouac area 8 miles east Anju 1730 hours.



The 3d Battalion's commander, Lieutenant Colonel John A. McConnell, and staff brief the battalion's company commanders before the attack.

THAT is what the first sergeant wrote in the little black notebook which is L Company's journal. Simple, concise, no excess words. Paper shortage, no space for extras.

But what about this operation? Who did what? And why and how? I will tell you the story as I saw it happen.

In the last of October, Task Force Stephens (21st Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Richard Stephens) is striking north, hard and fast. Enemy strong points are being cut to pieces. Sanchon falls. The 21st pushes hard. "Never let 'em rest, never let 'em get set" is Colonel Stephens's repeated order. "Slug hard, keep 'em off balance, push 'em back, grind 'em under."

Now we are thirteen miles from the Yalu and the war is almost over.

"Mac's Marauders"—the 3d Battalion is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John A. McConnell. We are to pass through the 2d Battalion for the drive on the final objective, Sinuiju and the Yalu River. Company L will point with tank and artillery support. The Air Force is working the objective over. The jumpoff is scheduled for dawn, 1 November. When the objective is secured, the 21st Infantry will be relieved and return to Camp Wood, Japan. The "Gimlets" nightmare will be over.

Few of those who were "First in Korea" that day in July, when a composite battalion of the 21st faced the North Korean hordes, are still here. I am a replacement officer myself. But I saw the old battleground when we won it back again. I heard the survivors talk about it.

Flashes of the beginning:

"They'll stop when they see Americans here."

... This is a police action, the United Nations is with us. They wouldn't dare."

But one battalion, one regiment, couldn't stop divisions.

"No flanks we're murdering them on the front . . . We haven't got any flanks . . . Stop them on the front a slaughterhouse . . . wave after wave . . . no flanks . . . burnedout barrels . . . no more ammo . . . screaming, stinking Reds all around . . . bugles, bloody bugles sounding taps . . . red flares, green flares on the flanks . . . behind us . . . fall back . . . bugout . . . to where . . . tanks . . . Russian T34s . . . gimme a bazooka . . . my God, this won't stop 'em, it bounces off . . . fall back to new positions . . . fight back to new positions"

Osan, 4 July. "Bugout "

Chochiwon, 10-11 July. "Bugout. Bugout . . . we're Americans; they can't do this to us."

20 July Taejon. "Oh no! General Dean's not dead, not him. He got some tanks, by himself What in hell is a general doing leading assaults? Hell, the cooks are fighting . . . everybody's fighting . . . I thought this was a police action where's my badge? . . . Where is the U. N. army? . Brother, you're it!"

"The Naktong line . . . the Pusan perimeter . . . no more bugout . . . no place to bugout to. It's a long swim to Japan . . . wish I were there now . . . Pohang-dong, Kigge, Taegu, Masan . . . the Naktong River again . . . The Marines and the 7th Division have taken Inchon from the sea. Engineers bring up assault boats . . . have you ever crossed a river under fire? No, you Yo-Yo, I don't mean on a bugout, I mean in attack."

We assault the Naktong line. The British anchor the far left. The 19th Infantry crosses on our left flank as we hit the center. The 5th RCT is on our right. They came up and took Waegwan and Hill 303. It's good to have outfits like the 19th and the 5th with you. No sweat about the flanks now.

HE long hard push north . . .Namgye-dong. headquarters of the crack Red tank division, Kumchon, Taejon again, on through Seoul . . . Yonan and the discovery of the bodies of the civilians who refused to accept communism . . . a thousand of them—hands tied behind their backs, murdered like so many thousands of others. We cross the 38th It doesn't look any different—same rice paddies, same high

rugged hills and mountains. . . . Communism didn't do much for these people . . . a crazy woman running in circles . . . burned out tanks . . . the war on the ground just got here . . . Sinwon-ni, Pyong-yang, Anju, Chongju, Sonchon, Yang Si.

And tomorrow Sinuiju and the end of the war. No more filth . . . clean clothes again.

1 November . . . We're waiting for orders. Lieutenant W. W. (Hap) Chandler, Love Company CO, is completing coordination with the commander of the 21st's Tank Company and Lieutenant O. M. (Short Round) Hardy, our forward observers

has been with us for months. Besides being a dammed good forward observer who drops 'em in close, he is a first-rate infantryman. The kind who goes on our combat and recon patrols to locate and pinpoint enemy positions for more accurate artillery support. His two assistants, Sergeant Heiser and Corporal Dossett, are experts also. The important thing is that they are an integral part of this company. They live, eat, breathe and think like the Infantry. They know our job and our mission as well as their own.

The Old Man doesn't have to pinpoint it for them. We want fire. Short Round and his crew lay it on for us.

Their other outfit, the 52d Field Artillery (the first FA in Korea) is accurate, fastshooting. We have faith in them from longtime mutual aid. Familiarity breeds security.

Waiting for orders. . . . Colonel Mac sent for Hap. Rumors . . . please God, no more bugout! Let's get the war over and go home. Patrols covering the assembly area bring in wounded Chinese they shot. Are the Chinese in now? Why don't we move out? . . . Big Six (Colonel Stephens) is back trying to find out what's going on. Morale high . . . Remember, we're winning! Going home in a few days . . .

Hap is back. Look at him. Something wrong. The officers and senior noncoms assemble.

"There has been a breakthrough in the center. We don't know yet how bad it is." The ROKs have been split and the Cavalry's in trouble. We move back to Chongju and anchor the line. Maybe we will find out more there.

Chongju. We're still OK . . . no pressure on us. We hit 'em too hard in our sector for them to re-form yet.

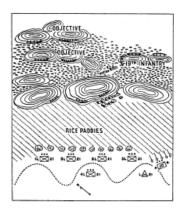
More poop now. . . . The enemy's driving to the Chongchon River. If they take Anju our bugout route is cut and we'll have to swim for it. . . . in this weather? Hell, we won't last two minutes in that ice water. Here we go again . . . CSBO. (close station, bugout). Gasoline sabotaged. Water in the tanks, but maintenance crews from battalion keep 'em rolling. Tanks pulling tanks and trucks. Reassemble at old battalion assembly area east of Anju. Cross the river . . . Colonel Stephens has a good regiment . . . Colonel Mac has a good battalion. Hap has a good company. The orderly withdrawal doesn't look orderly. But squads, platoons and equipment make it to the assembly area, and reorganize and establish a defense line in the hills overlooking our sector of the river. The 19th Infantry is holding the road junction across the river. Dig in for the winter, we'll hold 'em here. God, it's cold!

Saturday, 4 November. Rumors . . . a battalion of the 19th has been cut off across the river. At 2230 hours Hap sends for platoon leaders. It's true. We're going across the river and get 'em out. At 2300 hours we move out for battalion assembly area, We cross the river . . . long, dismal march. . . . , God, it's cold . . . stop near village . . . platoon assigned areas . . . security out . . . Hap goes for orders . . . men burrow in cornstalk and rice stacks to keep warm. Lucky ones flakeout in native shacks.

0200 hours, 5 November. Hap sends for company officers and senior noncoms. Reporting . . . 1st Platoon, Lieutenant T L Epton; 2d Platoon, Lieutenant "Toady" Dreisonstok; 3d Platoon, Lieutenant Volney Warner; 4th Platoon, Lieutenant Hugh Brown; 5th Platoon, the "Gimlets," made up of ROKs with American noncoms used for patrols, points and special missions, Lieutenant "Dixie" Henderson; Lieutenant Carl Bernard, exec., and Lieutenant Joe Griffith, supply officer (expert weapons man who free lances), and of course, Lieutenant Short Round Hardy and his section chief.

AP laid it on the line. Somewhere out there is a battalion of the 19th and it's in trouble. We're going to get them out. King Company is pulling security, Love will point the attack. Item will secure our left flank. The river's on our right and the ground is open. If we can, we are to drive the Reds back. At any rate we've got to cut a hole through to the 19th. Last report was that they're holding their own. Our trouble, we don't know where they end and the Reds begin. So. a daylight attack. Rough, But we'll have tanks. We'll look over the ground at dawn and make the final plans Grab what shut eye you can. It may he a couple of days before you get any more.

Dawn, we move out and up those saw-toothed ridges again. Point to remember: always secure the high ground, front and flanks. Too many men died to learn that. But ridges or not, morale is high. Funny how it goes up when we move forward to attack again. Hate to lay there and get shot at . . . like to fight back . . . Joe Griffith has already



covered the area so he moves us to position. Hap meets us at the OP with the final word from Mac. He points out the objective and issues orders. We have certain SOPs so he doesn't take too much time with details. We've been at this game a long time.

"The Reds are in those hills overlooking that village. (See sketch) We still don't know where the 19th is so we won't use the artillery, yet. We'll have a platoon of tanks for direct fire on it. We don't want to shoot up our own people. Our intermediate objective is that ridge line above the

village. We will attack with four platoons on line. If they know our book, they will think it's two companies Epton's 1st platoon on the left; Dixie, move your Gimlets on line with Ep and tie in with Toady's 2d; Little Fellow [Warner] will put the 3d on the right. I'll be between Dixie and Toady. Brownie will bring up his mortars and will go into action when suitable targets or on orders. Joe has spotted likely enemy weapons positions and has gone to bring up the tanks. They'll give us direct over head fire. Joe will man the caliber .50 on the lead tank. He has a can of tracers and will spot the targets and direct the fire. He has a 300 radio for direct commo with me, and lift the fire when we mask on my order. Keep your 536s open and hope they work."

"We've got about 1800 yards of rice paddies to cross. I suggest platoon columns until we get fired on. Make more time . . . then follow your SOP. Gibb's Item Company will be in support (not reserve). That line of trees is the line of departure, and the assault position as you hit the village and the base of the ridge. From there on your SOPS. Assault fire moving up, reorganize on the ridge, prep to continue the attack, then platoon leaders report to me on that high point. Hardy, you stick with me. I don't think we'll have any trouble the tanks can't handle until we get that ridge and see where the 19th is.

"H hour is 0800 . . . synchronize your watches: the time is now 0729 hours. Any questions? Oh yes! Brownie, give a 57 rifle to the 1st, 3d and 5th Platoons. We've got FOs for a 75 rifle and 81mm mortars from Mike Company attached for direct support. Litter bearers will follow closely, litter jeep will move to that village when we take it. Any questions? OK. Move out, and God bless you."

ach platoon has its own SOP for attacks. I use a modified platoon column until fired on or hit the assault position. Then the platoon V. I like the modified column I worked out. First is the point squad, then me followed by my weapons, closely followed by Sergeant Studebaker, my platoon sergeant, and my two other rifle squads. Sergeant Wilson, assistant platoon sergeant brings up the rear. If we run into

trouble I can put my LMG into action immediately. My 57 recoilless rifle is handy if it's an appropriate target—saves time—also the bazooka if I need it fast.

Meantime, if my heavy fire power can't take care of it, the two rifle squads have moved out, right or left on signal, for an enveloping movement. The platoon sergeant takes over the base of fire and I join the maneuvering element for attack. It may not be the solution, but it works. Further, it speeds up the operation. But back to the story.

Joe brought up the tanks from around the bend, just as we hit the line of departure, and they went into action. It's a good feeling to have five 90mms working over the ground in front of you, particularly when it's direct fire. Those 1800 yards of rice paddies would be hell to negotiate and if it got hot, well, we didn't like to think about bellying up in those half-frozen, ice-covered cesspools.

We were lucky. The tanks made them keep their heads down. Hardly a shot fired at us as we struggled up the slope. Most of the gooks had bugged out. The high ground was ours.

We reorganized to continue the attack. Hap got Mac on the 300. "Intermediate objective secure . . . no casualties, can see part of Doughboy on ridge to our right front.

Lieutenant Henderson sporting his Luxenberg cap and Confederate battle flag, poses with his Gimlets.



Their air panels point west and north. West toward adjoining ridge on our immediate front. We're set . . . how about the artillery? OK, I'll put Hardy right on it . . . yes, sir."

"You get that Hardy?" Yes, sir, I've got Captain Burns on the line (battalion artillery liaison) and can get right on it. OK, give me a quick concentration on that ridge. Lift on my signal."

Hardy laid it in there while we got set for the jumpoff. The Reds were running and we didn't care if they never stopped. We moved out under overhead fire and ran into some snipers and some wounded Reds who had been abandoned. Some were on litters and some lay where they had fallen unable to reach the dubious safety of their next position. We killed the snipers and made prisoners of the wounded. The attack hardly slowed down. The artillery fire was lifted as we hit the objective and we took it with marching fire and fixed bayonets.

The slopes seem to get steeper . . . this one is almost impossible . . . over two miles from where we started this morning . . . most of us pooped, but not for more than a second. From prepared positions on the next ridge, which actually angled out of ours, the Reds poured on a murderous fire. Lieutenant Dreisonstok was clipped on the head and was out cold. Hap pulled him out of the line of fire just as Sergeant Tompkins caught a burst. Hardy, who was directing artillery fire, pulled him out and went back to that exposed position to direct fire. Pretty soon Sergeant Warren, Toady's assistant platoon sergeant, was hit while directing that same 2d Platoon. Corporal Farr, the light machine gunner, kept it in action. How he wasn't hit is a miracle. He was in a hot spot and doing considerable damage to the Reds. Toady came too, groggy, but refusing to be evacuated. Plenty of spirit in that June '50 class of West Point. They were on my right flank

and I could see the litter bearers struggling down the steep slope with the wounded. Warner, also class of '50, was holding the right OK and had made contact with the 19th. On my left, Epton's platoon was digging in and holding. My Gimlets were doing the same. A mortar round hit in my platoon CP about 20 yards from the crest and wounded my medic, Noble; my ROK adjutant, Lee Pok U; and 3d Squad leader Lee Han Tok. They were littered out by hand to the litter jeep which was working overtime today. All the wounded were taken to the battalion aid station and the seriously wounded by helicopter to the hospital across the river at Anju. That "egg beater" is a wonderful thing.



Corporal Farr digs in on the first day's objective.

The 4th Platoon, which was giving us close support with its 60mm mortars, received some counter fire which killed five and wounded two men. The counterattack was broken up before it could get started and the ridge was secure. Contact had been made with the 19th . . . Mission accomplished . . . The Colonel called in a "well done."

The Chinese Reds settled down to sniping at us and we sniped back. They quieted down completely when the 19th got an air strike on the ridge to their right front. It was a beautiful sight to see but hell to be in the middle of. Machine-gun fire and rockets are bad enough, but napalm . . . that's something out of this world. Talk about your atomic bombs . . . well, one napalm bomb covers an area about 80 yards wide and 250 yards long. It cremates everything in that area. If there is a covered position the fire doesn't reach, the flame sucks out. the oxygen and suffocates anyone in it.

Well, we got our well done and as usual were ordered to stand pat and await further orders. The flyboys were overhead most of the afternoon and really raked the Reds over the coals. Short Round and his crew, both slightly wounded registered on likely approaches. We got hot coffee in five gallon containers the kitchen sent up, also our resupply of ammo, C rations and –God bless the APO–mail. The thousand and one little things that can be so big were done SOP. Wire laid, radios checked, weapons and positions checked and improved, ammo rechecked, and so on. Outposts went out at dusk and we settled in for a night of frigid watching and waiting.

During the night we could hear their bugles and whistles and their rooster (shepherd) horns, and the sound of distant firing to our left rear. The Reds in front of us were licking their wounds; they left us alone all night. And our mortars and artillery discouraged them with night-long harassing fire, and we watched and waited. As tired as we

were, few men slept. Love Company learned a long time ago to catch what sleep is necessary in the daytime when on line. In some positions where three men are dug in, one is allowed to sleep. When a man is bayoneted in his foxhole at night, it's because he's asleep and can't hear. We just don't let that happen to us.

Then the dawn and with it hot coffee up from the rear.

While awaiting orders for the attack, the Gimlets got a breather near an ancient thatched shack.



Word that a company of Reds infiltrated on the extreme left flank and hit Chet's King Company during the night accounted for the noise we heard. King beat them off OK, but had a few casualties.

It was a beautiful sunny day, if any day in Korea can be beautiful, and with the help of the coffee we thawed out quickly. Lieutenant McLean, attached to us yesterday with the 75s from Mike Company, was giving them a work-



On the first objective, the platoon gets a short breather, while preparing for the next day's attack Carl Jackson, Benny Nelson and Mac Mrad

out, and most of our people were sniping. Sniping can be dangerous. I was creased across the nose, hands and shoulder, Allen had a permanent wrinkle placed on his forehead and Hap was clipped. Nothing serious. Now it was Monday, 6 November, We waited for orders. They came.

Time of attack: later. L Company's objective: the ridge to our immediate front. Hap asked for an air strike on the objective. Without an air observer it took a few extra minutes to put them on the target. But with the help of the liaison plane from regiment who relayed to the Mosquito, who in turn directed the strike, the F-80s gave us some real close tactical support. When you get a strike fifty to seventy-five yards in front of your position, which is generally where you need it, brother, you've got close air support. We used our 300 to the liaison plane. That pilot of the 21st's L-5 is really a dream and made it all possible. Bless him.

Of course we took the precaution of pulling all our men onto the reverse slope of our ridge and our air panels were plainly visible while the strike was on. Also we assisted the air by designating the forward target area with white phosphorus from our 57 recoilless rifles. Sometimes the enemy have our panels and throw the WP back at us. This time they didn't. The strike was perfect.

Then the word at 1330: H-hour 1400, same plan of attack as the day before.

ARDY laid in a twenty-minute barrage. That boy brings 'em in close. Item Company covered our left flank and 75s in position there fired into the objective. The 19th covered our right. Platoon LMGs and 57s were left in position to cover each platoon's sector. As soon as the fire was masked they would displace forward and rejoin their platoons. The 60 mortars as usual were in company support. Watches synchronized we waited for the whistle to attack.

I guess it was my close shave of the day before that made me do it, but I took the cap ornament off of my Luxenberg just before H-hour. I've worn that cap on all patrols, and in every action since my footlocker arrived at the front. Somebody in Japan made a mistake and shipped everything I owned to Korea. Now it's all I've got left. Anyway, that dress cap, my Confederate battle flag that I had in New Guinea in '42, and the Rebel yell I taught my boys got me the name "Dixie." While I'm at it I might add that my people shine and polish their bayonets. Let 'em see it and maybe they'll run before they feel it. It's both psychological and debatable. But I believe in sharp, shiny steel and so do my men. The "Yankee" gooks *banzai* and *manzai*; but my ROKs were mighty fierce with their gleaming steel and Rebel yells. No one in my outfit wore steel pots anymore. After the middle of October those that were left were used to wash, shave or soak tired feet, Just fatigue caps or liners. With some it was contempt of personal armor, but the steel hats give me a real headache. You can move faster without 'em, and speed and mobility were what we needed most, next to fire power. I heard that in some outfits they court martialed men if they removed their helmets. Thank God I was in an outfit where the CO's passed out jobs and let their subordinates do the best they could. We knew they trusted us or we wouldn't hold the position long.

If we needed anything and it was humanly possible to get it, we got it.

In the 24th Division, General John Church wasn't a regimental commander, Colonel Stephens wasn't a battalion commander and Lieutenant Colonel McConnell wasn't a company commander. But they all had been. That's why the unit was so effective. Our people did the jobs they were supposed to do, and did them well. I've strayed again.

THE time: 1400 hours; the place: another hill eight and a half miles northeast of Anju. The whistle blew . . . this is it . . . a quick prayer . . . over the top in platoon V formation . . . out of the trees at the base and into a clearing . . . five or six pillboxes on our left front . . the attack slows down. Sergeant Todd, my assistant platoon sergeant, moves out in front . . . right through MG fire to knock out another MG emplacement. How he wasn't hit I'll never know. I took out two MGs with hand grenades and carbine fire, Sergeant Wilson got one on the right . . . Running, falling, stumbling, crawling, bayonets gleaming in the sun . . . Rebel yells . . . "At 'em, Gimlets!" . . . the line moves

forward . . . the supporting fires lift . . . just assault fire and grenades now . . . flashing steel, screaming men out banzaiing the Reds . . . the hill is ours . . . the time 1430 hours . . . six enlisted men, one officer slightly wounded in action . . . Lieutenant Carl Bernard sitting just over the forward slope with his grease gun working over the retreating Reds . . . the hill is secure Sergeant Pickens takes a patrol out to check the area for snipers.

Another "well done" for the company and Gibb moved in to take over our position. We revert to battalion reserve.

Battalion reserve .. . In this country I think I'd rather be on line. At least you know

where the gooks are all the time. We passed through King Company's old area ... noted a few dead enemy waiting for the shovel detail and some bloody splotches of ground where GIs had been killed the night before. We've got to make up our minds that the enemy is everywhere. It means being constantly on the alert, always digging in for



As the Gimlets arrived on the second day's objective they came onto the bodies of these dead Chinese.

all-around security. Hell, we learned that in New Guinea . . . at least some of us did!

Carl Bernard had the map and the coordinates of the area we were to cover. Although we were in reserve, we were actually to be on a line covering the left flank of the battalion. We were to tie in with King on the right and Baker Company of the 19th on our left. As usual we had a hell of an area to cover. The limits were between two hills. . . peak to peak with a wide valley in between . . the same valley the gooks came up last night. In Korea a company occupies the ground the book says a battalion can cover. But we cover it . . . we have to. Well, we stretched and made contact with King on the right, but we couldn't find the 19th. We were one platoon short because we had to leave Epton and his platoon up on the last objective to reinforce Gibb. Where in hell is the 19th? We sent out a patrol, we rechecked our coordinates, we called Mac. But no "Doughboy." Hap requested a platoon of tanks to reinforce us and we got 'em. It made up for our lack of depth, in a sense. We didn't have any activity before the tanks arrived, but we were a little on edge until Joe Griffith brought them in and put them in position. Brownie was active all night and had a short fire fight with a Red patrol. Its strength was unknown, as it pulled out when it hit all our fire power. A young Korean girl was wounded, but the medics patched her up OK. It's the civilian who suffers the most. Damn war anyway . . . morning again and hot coffee. And doughnuts!

Orders again. . . go back across the river . . . the 19th swept around our flank and regained control of the whole area. We still don't know where they were last night. . .but we are going back to rest. Thank you Lord and powers that be!

Tuesday, 7 November, the journal says: "Company departed from battalion reserve for reserve position (regimental) 7 miles north of Anju 1530 hours. Arrived bivouac area 8 miles east of Anju 1730 hours."

THAT was it. In the past four days we had covered a lot of ground . . . kicked hell out of the Reds and relieved the pressure on a brother regiment. . . We learned a lot, but we had twenty-five casualties, five of whom were dead. Cottrell had four kids . . . damn all wars! We killed scores of Reds . . . scores . . . but what of Cottrell's kids? If we can stop Communism it may have been worthwhile . . . at least his wife and kids won't be refugees . . . won't live in constant fear . . .We did something else, we proved a point. Teamwork wins battles! We jumped off with an infantry—tank team in the attack. We continued with the infantry—artillery—armor team in the attack, and finally we had the infantry—artillery—armor—air team in the attack. Coordination, teamwork, mutual aid and understanding did it. Without the support of our tanks, artillery and air we mudsloggers would have had a much tougher job. Yes, we proved a point.