

2000

## Recipe for Victory: The Fight for Hill 677 during the Battle of the Kap' Yong River, 24-25 April 1951

Brent Watson  
*University of Calgary*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh>



Part of the [Military History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Watson, Brent "Recipe for Victory: The Fight for Hill 677 during the Battle of the Kap' Yong River, 24-25 April 1951." *Canadian Military History* 9, 2 (2000)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Canadian Military History* by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

# Recipe for Victory

## The Fight for Hill 677 During the Battle of the Kap'yong River, 24-25 April 1951

**Brent Watson**

During the night of 24-25 April 1951, the Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry fought what became the most famous Canadian battle of the Korean War. Outnumbered and isolated, the Princess Pats repulsed wave after wave of attacking Chinese infantry from their positions atop Hill 677 overlooking the Kap'yong River Valley. Although a comparatively minor episode in the broader context of the Korean War, Canadian retention of Hill 677 made an important contribution to the Commonwealth victory at Kap'yong. More significantly, the fight for Hill 677 was clearly the most successful set-piece engagement fought by the Canadians in Korea.<sup>1</sup> In recognition of their achievement, the Princess Pats were awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation – the only Canadian unit ever to earn this distinction.

Although clearly an important event for the Canadians, the fight for Hill 677 has received little scholarly attention in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth historians, in contrast, have been busy. Examining the action from the perspective of the New Zealand gunners who supported the Canadians, Ian MacGibbon suggested that artillery fire was the key to victory, and saved the beleaguered Patricias from certain defeat.<sup>3</sup> Although supporting fire, including that from the Canadians themselves, *was* the single most important factor in the successful defence of Hill 677, it was by no means the only one. An operational analysis of the battle reveals that the Second World War experiences of the Patricias' senior officers, the specialized nature of the battalion's pre-battle training program, high morale, and the failure of the enemy to co-

ordinate and press his attack also helped to make the Canadian stand possible.

\* \* \* \* \*

Canada played a leading role in the creation of the United Nations in June 1945. Only five years later Canadians learned that membership in the international organization did not come without a price. When the Security Council passed a resolution requesting member states to provide military forces for the defence of South Korea, the Canadian government responded in the affirmative.

Though the politicians were ready to go to war in Korea, the Canadian Army was not. Post-war defence cuts had reduced the infantry component of the Army Active Force to only three under strength battalions. Tasked with the defence of the entire Canadian land mass, this skeleton of an army could spare precious few of its soldiers to meet Canada's Korean commitment. Caught on the horns of an increasingly embarrassing dilemma, the government decided to quickly recruit, from the streets, an all-volunteer special force "for use in carrying out Canada's obligations under the United Nations Charter."<sup>4</sup>

The formation of the Canadian Army Special Force (subsequently renamed the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group) was authorized on 7 August 1950. The following day a full-page recruiting ad in the nation's major newspapers announced: "The Canadian Army Wants Men Now...to meet aggression in accordance with the

Photo by Bill Olsen, NAC PA 142233



*Lieutenant-Colonel J.R. Stone, commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Stone had a distinguished record in the Second World War rising from the rank of private to commanding officer of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in 1944. His skill as a commander continued in Korea*

United Nations Charter." Preference would be given to veterans of the Second World War, and the term of enlistment was for eighteen months. The core of the 25th Brigade would consist of second battalions of the three Active Force infantry regiments – the Royal 22e Regiment, the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2 PPCLI).

Mobilizing second battalions of these renowned regiments served a dual purpose. First, the units of the 25th Brigade could "latch on to their parent formations thereby expediting training and organization."<sup>5</sup> Second, the Active Force units would quickly instill the requisite regimental ethos in their respective second additions – an important consideration, given the fact that it can take a newly formed unit years to develop the *esprit de corps* necessary for the maintenance of high morale under adverse battlefield conditions. Initial strength of the 25th Brigade was set at 4960 all ranks, plus a reinforcement pool of 2105.<sup>6</sup> Despite initial concerns that the high level of employment would lead to a shortage of recruits, "there was no difficulty at all" in finding men to fill the ranks of the 25th Brigade.<sup>7</sup>

Thus 2 PPCLI came into being. In the days following the Canadian government's call to arms, a cadre from the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (1 PPCLI) commenced drafting and setting up a training program for the 2nd Battalion at the Currie Barracks,

southwest of Calgary, Alberta. As the enlisted men of 2 PPCLI completed basic military training, their officers, all of whom were either veterans of the Second World War or serving members of the Canadian Army, were undergoing a refresher course at Calgary.<sup>8</sup> Command of the battalion was given to Lieutenant-Colonel James R. Stone, DSO, MC, one of the most capable fighting soldiers in Canadian military history. Born in England in 1909, Stone immigrated to Canada at the age of 18. Most of his pre-military life was spent in Alberta's Peace River country where he worked as a farmer and forest ranger. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Stone enlisted as a private in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; by 1944, then a Lieutenant-Colonel, he was in command of the unit.

As a junior infantry officer in the Sicilian campaign, Stone participated in the bloody fighting down the Agira and Simeto valleys. It was here that he learned the tactics of hilltop defence from the masters themselves, the German Army. More importantly, perhaps, Stone's combat experiences in Sicily and, later, Italy, imbued him with an eye for vital ground – a tactical skill that is essential to the successful planning and conduct of operations in mountainous terrain.<sup>9</sup> Stone's ability to identify vital ground would figure prominently in the Patricia's' successful stand at Kap'ong.

By the beginning of October, 1383 other ranks were undergoing training with 2 PPCLI.<sup>10</sup>

While most of the battalion was made up of men who specifically enlisted for service in Korea, the majority of warrant officers and sergeants were from 1 PPCLI. Nearly 75 percent of the enlisted men had some prior military experience. Approximately half of this figure had served with the Canadian Army in the Second World War; the other half had either cadet or militia experience.<sup>11</sup> The average age of the Second World War veterans was 26, while that for the rest of the battalion's enlisted men was 20.<sup>12</sup>

For the next month training was carried out on a seven day, three night per week basis. However, as the Patricias prepared for battle it appeared as if they might not be needed in Korea after all. On 15 September 1950, after two months of bitter fighting along the Pusan perimeter, United Nations forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur captured the strategic port city of Inchon and began a rapid advance up the Korean peninsula. With the North Korean People's Army on the brink of defeat, there was talk that the war would be over by Christmas. Consequently, the Canadian government reduced its planned contribution of a brigade group, and decided to send only one battalion of infantry to "show the flag" and assist with any UN occupation duties.<sup>13</sup> The battalion was 2 PPCLI.<sup>14</sup>

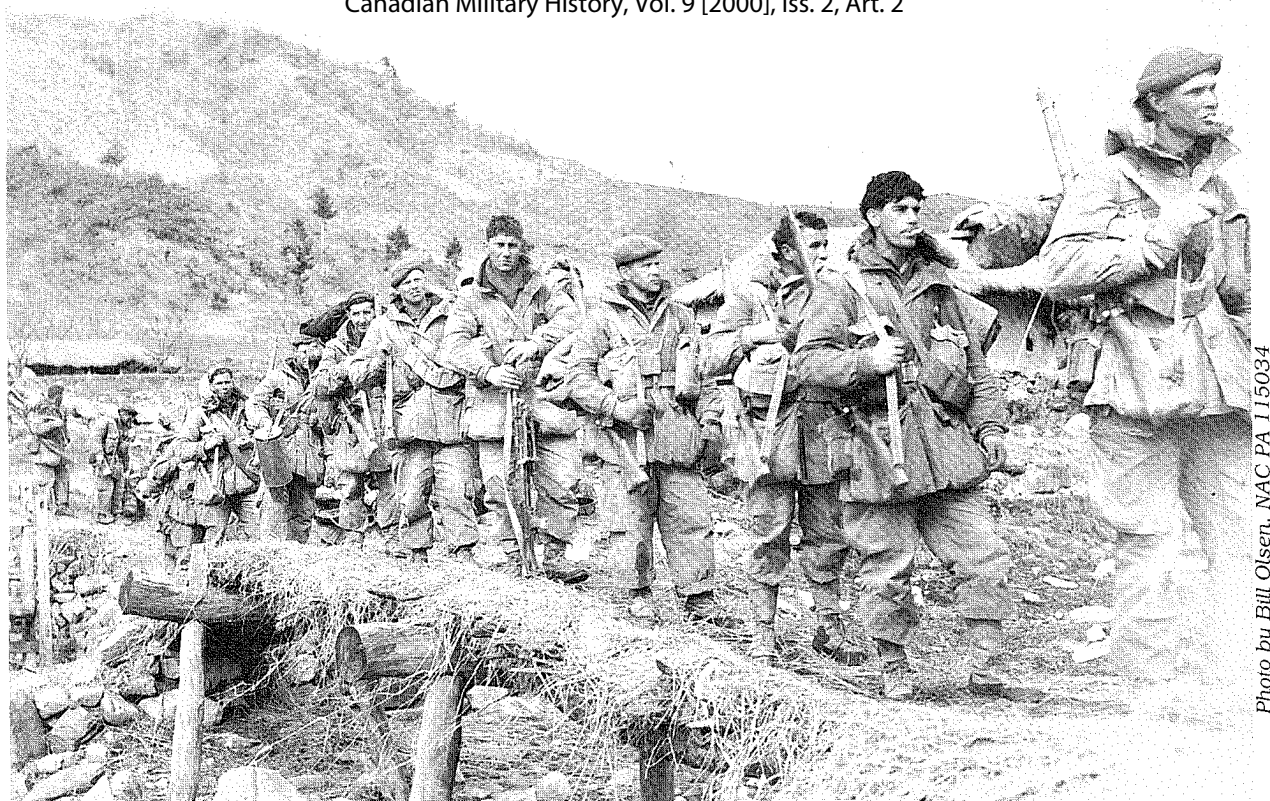
When the Patricias boarded their troop transport for Korea in late November, they had yet to undergo collective infantry training.<sup>15</sup> In other words, 2 PPCLI was untrained as a fighting unit. In fact, at the time of embarkation the rifle companies – Able, Baker, Charlie, and Dog companies – had not even started their respective collective training programs. Initially, few were troubled by 2 PPCLI's training deficiencies; there would be time to complete collective training once the battalion arrived in Korea. However, as the Canadians crossed the international date line, the war in Korea was changing for the worse. On 24 November, MacArthur launched a general offensive across the UN front. As his troops moved northward, they encountered stiff resistance from Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) who had crossed into Korea in mid-October. Although they had appeared on the battlefield in considerable numbers shortly after this, the UN Command was slow to recognize Chinese involvement.<sup>16</sup>

This time, however, it was different. On 26 November, the Chinese launched a massive counter-offensive in the West, followed two days later by an equally large attack in the East. Division after division of UN and Republic of Korea (ROK) forces was either destroyed or forced to make a hasty retreat in the face of the

*Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry exercising aboard the USNS Joe P. Martinez en route to Korea, November 1950.*



Photo by Bill Olsen, NAC PA 128821



*Troops of "B" Company, 2 PPCLI crossing a log bridge, February 1951.*

advancing CCF juggernaut. Suddenly, the occupation duties assigned to the half-trained Patricias ceased to exist. The battalion would see combat, after all.

Within this context, 2 PPCLI's training deficiencies assumed a new significance. However, as much as the officers fretted over the future operational employment of the battalion, little could be done to rectify the situation until the unit reached Korea.

On 18 December the Patricias' troop ship docked at Pusan Harbour, and the 918 men of the battalion proceeded, by US Army transport, to their staging camp on Yong-Do Island. Lieutenant-Colonel Stone, meanwhile, reported to 8th Army headquarters where he received instructions to move his battalion to a "training area" at Suwon, only 50 miles south of the fluid battleline.<sup>17</sup> From Suwon, the Patricias would move forward and join the 29th British Infantry Brigade (29th BIB), which was occupying a reserve position behind the Imjin River defences north of Seoul.<sup>18</sup> Apparently, the Americans were attempting to use 2 PPCLI as part of the 8th Army's reserve, before it completed collective training. Stone "queried the advisability" of moving within earshot "of an unstable front with green troops, particularly as the general idea was for [the Patricias] to patrol against guerilla forces

in the area."<sup>19</sup> Despite Stone's caveats, the 8th Army G-3 (operations) officer refused to grant 2 PPCLI the eight weeks' training time Stone considered necessary.

Stone, however, still had an ace up his sleeve. Before 2 PPCLI left for Korea, the Canadian government had issued him with command instructions designed to eschew potential American intransigence. Incensed by the G-3 officer's unwillingness to appreciate his position, Stone flew to Seoul to confront Lieutenant-General (Bulldog) Walker, commander of the 8th Army.

Judging from his dealings with the G-3 officer, Stone expected his meeting with Walker to be somewhat less than congenial. To Stone's surprise, Bulldog Walker "was very gracious," and listened sympathetically as the Canadian outlined the state of 2 PPCLI's training.<sup>20</sup> Walker, however, refused to grant Stone his eight weeks' training, correctly arguing that 2 PPCLI was as well trained as the American units currently holding the line against the Chinese advance. It soon became clear to Stone that Walker and his staff were unaware of his command instructions.<sup>21</sup> When Stone produced a copy of his orders, Walker was disappointed that the unit was not ready for immediate operational employment, and agreed to give them eight weeks to prepare for battle.<sup>22</sup>



Photo by Bill Olsen, NAC PA 179973



Soldiers from 2 PPCLI fire their mortar during training at Miryang, Korea, February 1951.

While Stone was in Seoul, the men of 2 PPCLI were busy drawing winter kit and uncrating their equipment. At this time, 2 PPCLI, now on US Army scale, was issued with its new American-pattern support weapons and vehicles. Prior to Korea, the Canadian infantry had been outfitted almost exclusively with equipment of British design or manufacture. However, as the 25th Brigade prepared for battle it became obvious that some of the infantry's British-pattern equipment would have to be replaced immediately, lest the brigade's operational capabilities be compromised. Situation reports from the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade (27th BCIB), the first Commonwealth formation to see action in Korea, regularly described engagements during which enemy mortars outranged the 27th Brigade's 3-inch mortars by as much as 2,000 yards.<sup>23</sup> In view of the 27th BCIB's operational experience, the Department of National Defence decided to replace most of the Canadian infantry's British-pattern support weapons with the very latest in American military hardware. Thus, with the exception of the venerable Vickers Medium Machine-Gun (MMG), for which the Americans possessed no superior alternative, all of the infantry support weapons to see service with the Canadians in Korea were of American origin. The most significant of these new American arms and equipment were the 81 mm and 60 mm

mortars, and the M3A1 half-track.<sup>24</sup> The 81 mm mortar was a battalion support weapon; its primary purpose was to kill enemy personnel.<sup>25</sup> Due to their substantial weight (107 pounds each, not including ammunition), 2 PPCLI's six 81 mm mortars were mounted for travelling on twelve M3A1 half-tracks. Each half-track mounted one .50 and one .30 calibre Browning machine-gun which could be dismounted to provide protection for the mortar and its crew during a fire task.

The 60 mm mortar was essentially a smaller version of the 81 mm mortar. "An integral weapon invariably going into position with the rifle company," the 60 mm mortar provided the company commander with immediate indirect fire support.<sup>26</sup> The weapon could fire a high explosive bomb to a maximum range of 1939 yards<sup>27</sup> – nearly five times further than the weapon it supplanted in Canadian service. The 60 mm mortar's maximum range would be used with devastating effect on Hill 677.

By the beginning of January, the Patricia rifle companies were finally able to begin collective training. In the words of the 1950 Canadian Army Manual of Training, *Training for War*, "collective training means exercises and manoeuvres, the keynote to both being realism."<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the immediate objective of the Patricias' collective program was to inure the men against the

physical hardships of the Korean battlefield. Reports from the front continually emphasized the need for troops to "be conditioned for hill climbing, man pack carrying, and living under adverse climatic conditions."<sup>29</sup> To this end, the Patricias moved to a training camp astride the Miryang River, fifty miles north of Pusan. In the rugged mountains above Miryang, the soldiers of 2 PPCLI received their first real taste of the difficult, and at times unforgiving, Korean battlescape.

In addition to raising the level of physical fitness in the battalion, the hill climbing and cross country movement exercises above Miryang taught the men the tactical necessity of dominating the high ground overlooking the valley floors. Moreover, these exercises incorporated the tactical lessons learned by the 29th BIB during the previous month's fighting. Lieutenant-Colonel Stone had first met Brigadier Brodie, commander of the 29th BIB, during his December visit to 8th Army headquarters in Seoul. Brodie and Stone discussed in detail the action fought by the Northumberland Fusiliers at Sibyon-Ni. Just before dawn on 30 November, the Chinese had attacked the Northumberlands, who were dug in, on the high ground, in mutually supporting company "islands" of defence. The Northumberlands had been forced to deploy in this manner because the mountainous terrain precluded a tight battalion position. In the ensuing battle, they beat back the numerically superior Chinese force with the loss of only 14 British casualties.<sup>30</sup> Commenting on his meeting with Brigadier Brodie, Stone wrote:

It seems apparent that resolute men, dug in, in proper islands of defence can kill at will, the hordes that rush the positions....Infiltration between [company islands] must be expected, but with all areas defended such infiltration is not serious. The Chinese...rely on massed movement of infantry...to overrun opposition. Such should be a defender's paradise provided troops are all trained marksmen and realize that if they run, they will certainly die....It is my intention to commence [collective] training with particular emphasis on defence....<sup>31</sup>

For the next six weeks, the Patricia rifle companies scrambled to master the tactics of mountain fighting in Korea. A typical training exercise during this period saw the rifle companies advance into the mountains in the morning, and occupy hilltop defensive positions

for the night. During these exercises the "enemy" (Sniper and Intelligence sections) made extensive use of TNT charges, live tracer rounds, and paraflares in an attempt to familiarize the defending riflemen with the audio and visual characteristics of the battlefield. Following the detonation of randomly placed TNT charges, the Sniper and Intelligence sections directed live fire on to a feature immediately next to the company areas. After several minutes of firing, live rounds were exchanged for blanks, and the "enemy" launched harassing and probing attacks against the company positions. As it turned out, the Sniper and Intelligence sections were seldom able to infiltrate the company areas in strength. In an interview with a Canadian war correspondent the morning after the successful "defence" of his company's position, a Dog company soldier boldly commented, "If the nights area as black as that one, I defy any Chinese to get me out of my hole. You'd just sit tight and knock them out as they go by."<sup>32</sup>

Recalling that the "enemy" during these sham battles were, alas, armed only with blanks, and that the erstwhile opposing forces often conducted joint debriefings over quart-sized bottles of beer, the Dog company soldier's buoyant optimism is not surprising. Nevertheless, the importance of the training exercises in the mountains above Miryang should not be discounted. For it was during these exercises that the soldiers of 2 PPCLI mastered the tactics that were to figure so prominently in their successful stand at Kap'yong.

Ironically, after devoting a disproportionate amount of training time to the tactics of hilltop defence, it was the tactical offence that dominated the Canadians' first encounters with the enemy. On 17 February the Patricias, having completed their collective training, came under the operational command of the 27th BCIB. When 2 PPCLI joined the 27th Brigade it consisted of two British battalions – the 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, and the 1st Battalion, Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders – and the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR).<sup>33</sup> The 16th New Zealand Field Regiment (16 NZFR) and the 60th Indian (Parachute) Field Ambulance provided artillery and medical support.

The next two months saw the 27th Brigade inch its way slowly northward as part of the 9th

**Right:** Two soldiers from 2 PPCLI survey the terrain, 17 April 1951.

**Below:** A section from 2 PPCLI leaves a regrouping point for an enemy-held position, 24 February 1951. The mountainous nature of Korea is evident in this photo.

US Corps' advance to the 38th parallel. During this period the Patricias launched a series of company-sized attacks against Chinese rear guard positions with decidedly mixed results. After an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge expertly camouflaged Chinese troops from their positions atop Hill 532, Dog company suffered 34 casualties in only nine hours of fighting.<sup>34</sup>

When not dodging Chinese bullets, or, in one instance, a misdirected napalm strike,<sup>35</sup> the men of 2 PPCLI had to contend with blizzards, ice-covered hillsides, perpetually wet clothing, monotonous food, unpotable water (and the diarrhea that often accompanies it), blisters, biting pack straps, and the innumerable other discomforts that comprise the infantryman's lot. But no matter how arduous their stint at the front became, they could take solace in knowing that their regular rotation out of the line would be punctuated by hot meals, warm baths, and cold beer. It was during one of these respites from the fighting that 2 PPCLI received orders to establish defensive positions astride the Kap'ong River.

\* \* \* \* \*



NAC PA 163404



Photo by Bill Olsen. NAC PA 155531



During the 8th Army's general advance to the 38th parallel evidence accrued "of a formidable enemy build-up" opposite the 1st and 9th US Corps' fronts.<sup>36</sup> By 20 April it was apparent that the enemy was preparing for a renewed offensive, as fresh formations from the 2nd and 3rd CCF Field Armies occupied the line facing UN forces. Just before midnight on 22 April, the Chinese launched a full-scale offensive across the width of the UN front. In the 9th Corps sector, the weight of the attack fell on the 6th ROK Division. Unable to hold the line against the advancing Chinese juggernaut and in danger of being cut off, the South Koreans fell back through the Kap'young River valley.

In the early morning of 23 April, the 27th BCIB was ordered to take up blocking positions above the Kap'young.<sup>37</sup> The 2 PPCLI were to occupy defensive positions in the vicinity of Hill 677 (referred to simply as "Six-Seven-Seven"), covering the approaches from the north and north east of the height.<sup>38</sup>

At 0800 hours on 23 April, Lieutenant-Colonel Stone and the battalion Intelligence Officer (IO) left for 27th Brigade headquarters for a preliminary Orders ("O") Group. On their return, a battalion "O" group was held, and the CO, IO, company commanders, MMG officer, Mortar officer, Signals Officer and Artillery Officer departed for a reconnaissance of Hill 677.<sup>39</sup> After starting out in the wrong direction, the Patricia reconnaissance group reached the northern approaches to Hill 677, where they were afforded a clear view of the position the battalion was to occupy across the valley. Stone recalled:

...we went to the enemy side of the hill and looked at the hill from the enemy's point of view. I kept thinking that if I was the one trying to take the hill, I would move in such and such direction, and so on....I then decided which way the attack would come and deployed the battalion accordingly.<sup>40</sup>

Following another "O" Group, the company commanders proceeded to reconnoitre the areas assigned to them. At the same time, the IO conducted a reconnaissance of the approaches leading to the battalion position from the south-east of Hill 677. The IO discovered a tactical road, constructed by the Americans, which led to the position chosen for Battalion Tactical Headquarters (Bn Tac HQ). From Tac HQ, trails

following the ridge lines of Hill 677 led to the company areas.<sup>41</sup>

At 1800 hours Stone called a final "O" Group, and the battalion was ordered to prepare for the move to Hill 677. The rifle companies went forward in vehicles to the village of Tungmudae, approximately one mile south of Hill 677. The move to Tungmudae was completed without incident, although the sight of panic-stricken ROK soldiers fleeing past the Patricia column did not inspire confidence. A soldier in Able company recollected:

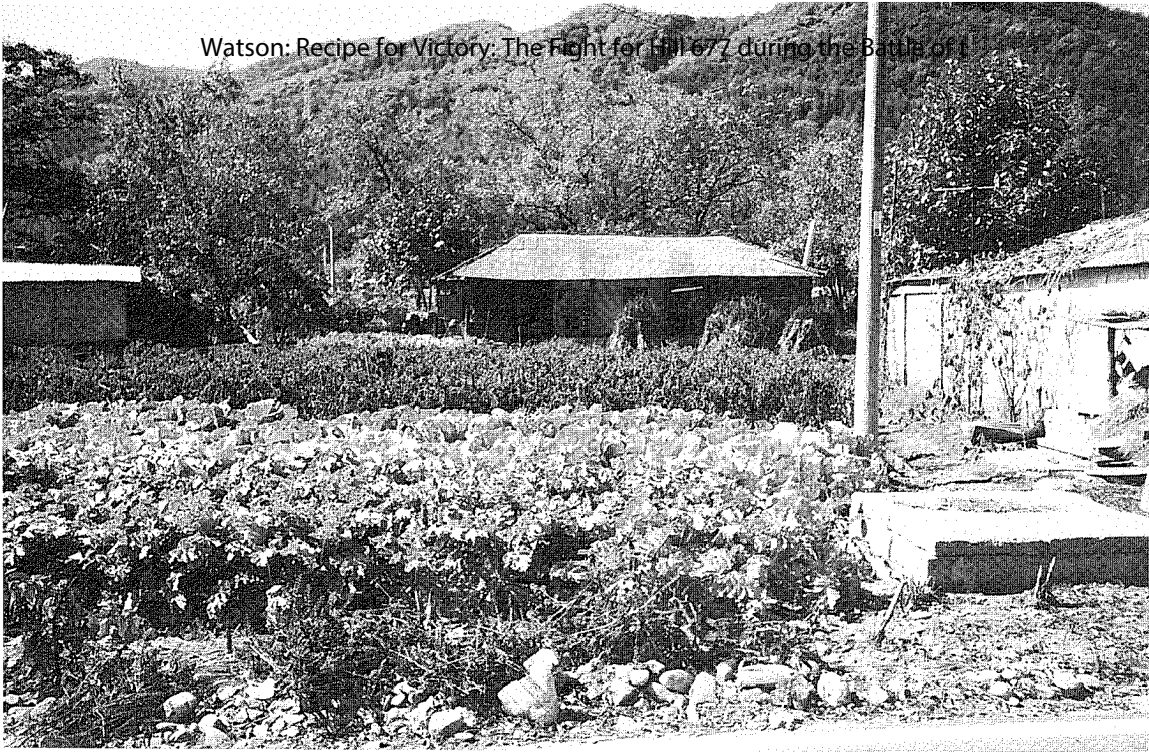
There was just a stream of Koreans heading south and we were heading north.... These guys were coming out as if they were piling out of a bank building....I've never seen fear and disorganization like those guys going down the road. It was on for hours and it wasn't all that encouraging.<sup>42</sup>

From Tungmudae, the rifle companies moved to their positions on foot. With each man packing his personal weapon, several hundred rounds of ammunition, grenades, an entrenching tool, a full water bottle, and a 24 hour field ration pack – in addition to his personal kit – the soldiers in the Patricia rifle companies reached their positions utterly exhausted. To make matters worse, many in the battalion were nursing wicked hangovers, as the evening of 22 April had been spent clustered around bon fires imbibing bottles of Labatt's lager.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, by 2200 hours the rifle companies were digging in on the north face of Hill 677.

On Hill 677, the Patricia rifle companies were deployed as follows: Able company on the right flank, covering the approaches leading north and east from the battalion position; Charlie company along the ridge line of Hill 677, in the centre of the battalion area; Dog company on the left flank, covering the approaches leading west from the battalion position; and Baker company on the ridge line to the north of Dog company, covering the approaches immediately north of the battalion position. Able, Baker, and Dog companies were allotted one section of MMGs each, at two Vickers guns per section.

Nearly a mile and a half wide, gullied and wooded, Hill 677 was practically "impossible to defend in the classic manner of deploying companies to support each other."<sup>44</sup>

Photo taken by author



*Small Korean village at the eastern base of Hill 677.*

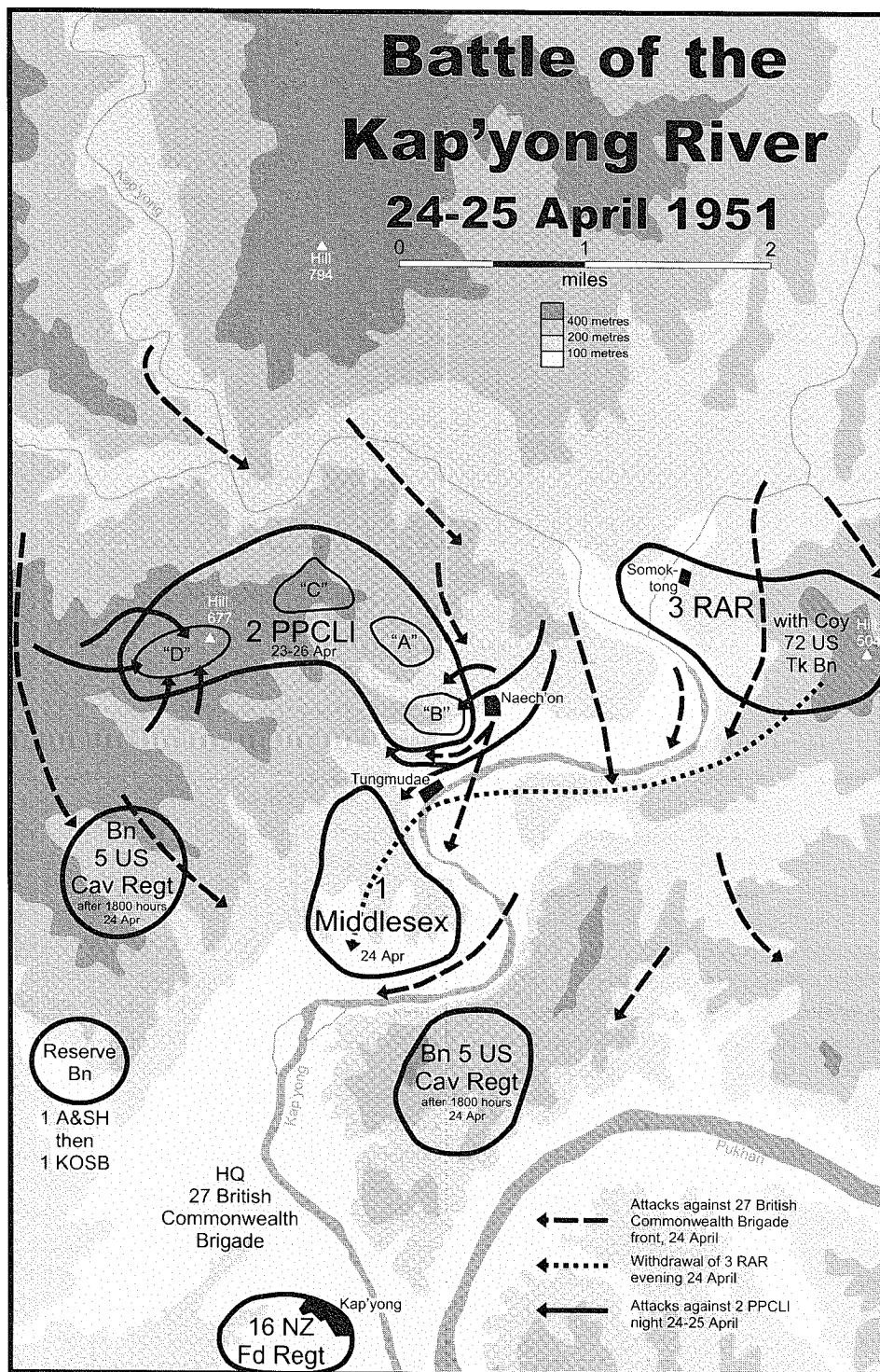
Consequently, each rifle company was responsible for its own defended locality, with platoons deployed to be mutually supporting. Gaps between the “company islands” were covered by defensive fire (DF) tasks of the MMG sections, the battalion mortars, and the field guns of supporting artillery units which included not only the 16 NZFR, but also several American 9th Corps artillery formations.<sup>45</sup> Owing to the steepness of the terrain, it was extremely difficult to co-ordinate all of the Patricias’ supporting weapons into a coherent battalion fire plan.<sup>46</sup> The gradient of Hill 677 is so steep in some places that one must crawl on hands and knees, as this author discovered firsthand during a recent research sojourn to the battle site. This steepness restricted MMG, mortar and artillery DF tasks to the main ridge line approaches to the Canadians’ positions. Approaches leading to the company and platoon positions between the main ridge lines had to be covered by small arms fire and hand grenades.

Meanwhile, Bn Tac HQ, the Mortar platoon and the Pioneer platoon, proceeded via the tactical road to their positions on the rear slope of Hill 677 overlooking the village of Tungmudae.<sup>47</sup> The move began at 2130 hours, but was delayed due to the inability of the Mortar platoon’s half-tracks to negotiate the narrow corners of the tactical road. The Pioneer platoon widened the track with a series of well-placed 808 plastic explosive charges, but the move was

further delayed when one of the half-tracks experienced a mechanical break down.

By 0300 hours on 24 April, Mortar platoon was base-plated and ready for action; an hour later Bn Tac HQ was operational.<sup>48</sup> Thanks to the Pioneer platoon and a Patricia motor mechanic, all of the Mortar platoon’s half-tracks completed the move to the base plate position, bringing 2100 rounds of mortar ammunition forward at one time.<sup>49</sup> Now in position, the Patricias prepared their defences. The twenty-four .30 and .50 calibre Browning machine guns carried on the Mortar platoon’s twelve half-tracks were dismounted and deployed to cover the approaches leading into the rear of the Bn Tac HQ area and battalion positions from the village of Tungmudae. As a further precaution, all Support company personnel were assigned defensive positions and a “girdle of No.36 grenades set with tripwires” was laid along the Bn Tac HQ perimeter.<sup>50</sup>

For the rest of the night, the men of 2 PPCLI scrambled to prepare for the expected Chinese onslaught. Defensive positions were hurriedly constructed, trip flares were strung, weapons and equipment were checked, communications wire was laid and DF tasks were arranged and registered. Meanwhile, 3 RAR took up defensive positions across the Kap’yong River valley on Hill 504, on the right of the 27th Brigade front. By 2200 hours on 23 April, the Australians were



being heavily engaged by the leading elements of the 118th CCF Division.<sup>51</sup> Wave after wave of CCF grenadiers and “burp-gunners” supported by mortar fire, rushed the Australian positions. From their higher vantage point across the valley, the Patricias could only watch and wait. For some, this was the most trying time of the impending battle. Mouths became dry with anticipation, hearts began to beat wildly, and more than a few men were gripped by a sudden urge to urinate.<sup>52</sup> According to Lieutenant Brian Munro, an Able company platoon commander, “Panic spread like an electrical current, bouncing from slit trench to slit trench. The men began to change positions amongst themselves, wanting to fight and die with a buddy.”<sup>53</sup> However, a series of expletive-laced shouts of encouragement from Sergeant Tommy Prince<sup>54</sup> and the other company NCOs, gradually helped the men to regain their composure.<sup>55</sup>

By 0200 hours on 24 April, the lateral communication line between 2 PPCLI and 3 RAR was cut. Henceforth only wireless communication between the Australians and Canadians was possible. At one point, the Chinese severed the direct communications link between 3 RAR and 27th Brigade HQ, and messages had to be relayed through 2 PPCLI via the battalions’ wireless sets.<sup>56</sup>

Fearing that his right flank would be left open to attack if the Australians failed to hold their positions on Hill 504, Stone redeployed Baker company. He ordered Major Vince Lilley and his men to move from their position north of Dog company, “which was partly dug in, and dig in several hundred yards to the right where they could overlook the valley of the Kap’yong.”<sup>57</sup> The redeployment was executed just in time. However, during the move a company of American tanks from the US 72 Tank Battalion who were supporting the 3 RAR mistook Baker company for the Chinese and opened fire. Fortunately, only one man was slightly wounded.

By 0900 hours, after nearly eleven hours of intense fighting, the 3 RAR was in disarray. In hindsight, it is clear that the odds were stacked against 3 RAR’s successful defence of Hill 504. The feature was lower, and hence much easier to attack, than Hill 677, and during the battle several regiments from the 6th ROK Division conducted a disorderly withdrawal through the Australian positions. As the Chinese stepped up

their attacks against 3 RAR’s flanks, the Australian rifle platoons were forced to withdraw into tight groups in the centre of their respective company areas.<sup>58</sup> This move precluded any further attempts to restore the positions that had been overrun.<sup>59</sup> With his companies now completely isolated, and his communications disrupted and command posts over-run, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson, CO of 3 RAR, could no longer control the battle nor co-ordinate the battalion’s fire support. Fearing that the 3 RAR could not withstand another night of Chinese attacks, Ferguson relinquished command and instructed his company commanders – on orders from the Brigade Commander himself – to execute a fighting withdrawal.<sup>60</sup> That the 3 RAR rifle companies were able to execute this manoeuvre while continuing to inflict heavy losses on the enemy testifies to the courage and determination of the Australian soldier at Kap’yong.

By 1100 hours 2 PPCLI’s Baker company was in position. There was little activity along the Patricias’ front during the remaining daylight hours of 24 April, save for the occasional Chinese reconnaissance party.<sup>61</sup> As darkness began to descend, Brigadier Burke, commander of the 27th Brigade, flew over the Patricia positions in a loudspeaker-equipped Douglas Dakota. Burke wished the men well, and told them that they were going to have to fight the impending battle on their own. According to Lieutenant Brian Munro, Burke’s aerial broadcast ended with some generic “stiff-upper-lip” words of encouragement.<sup>62</sup> Not surprisingly, Brigadier Burke’s brief appearance high over the battlefield attracted the scorn of the soldiers in the firing line.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it is highly unlikely that Burke’s fly-by did much to steel the nerves of the men on the ground, and his well-meaning words of encouragement probably only served to reinforce their apprehension about the coming battle.

At 2130 hours, Baker company came under light mortar and MMG fire; minutes later a concentration of approximately 400 Chinese was observed forming up for an attack below the company’s forward platoon position.<sup>64</sup> Major Lilley immediately called for mortar and artillery support. However, mortar and artillery fire could not stop the impending Chinese attack. By 2200 hours the forward platoon was under attack; thirty minutes later, Lieutenant H. Ross, the



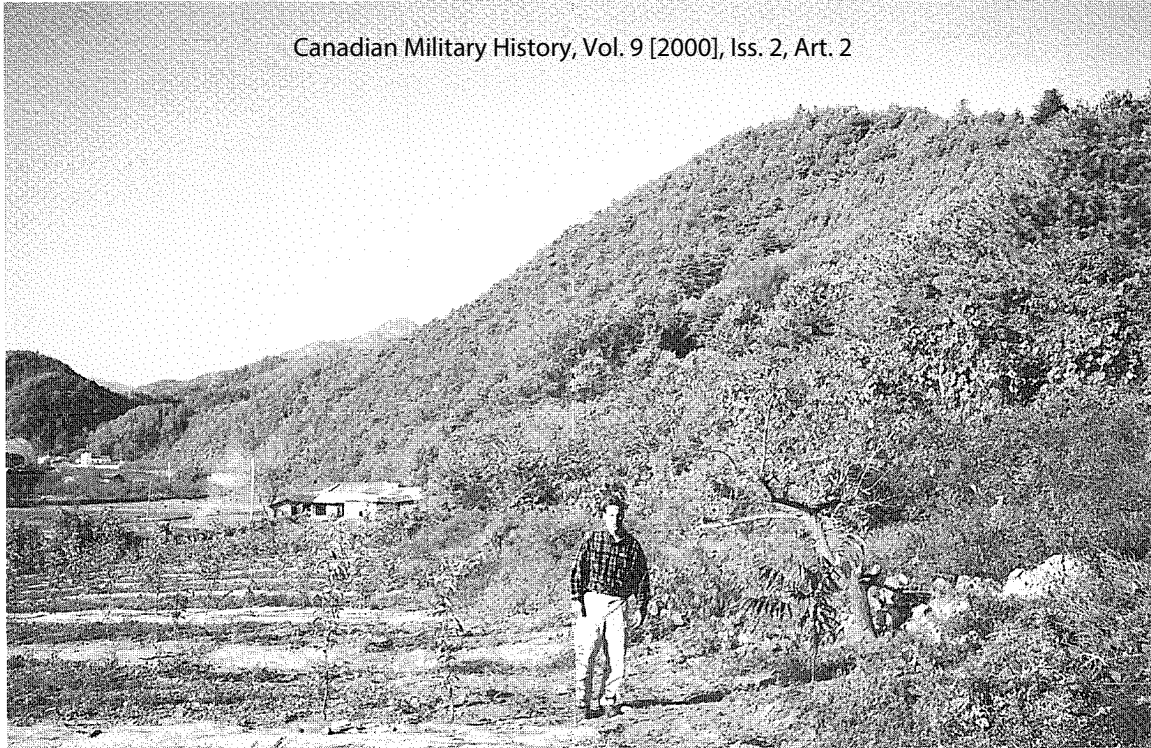


Photo supplied by author

*The author in front of the Baker company position. Battalion Tactical Headquarters was located just behind the ridgeline to the author's right.*

platoon commander, reported that his position was partially over-run. Fearing the platoon would be completely over-run and cut off, Major Lilley ordered Ross and his men to fix bayonets and fall back into the main company position.

Most of Lieutenant Ross' platoon reached the main company defence perimeter unscathed. Others were not so lucky. A Patricia from Baker company recounted:

[Lieutenant] Ross gave us the order to move out. Just as we jumped up Ross added that anyone with ammo left should cover the retreat of the wounded. I had three shells left so I dropped back down and fired them off. Just as I jumped up again I fell over a Chinaman who was running up the side of the hill. He let fly and got me in the neck then ran into the end of my bayonet.<sup>65</sup>

While a fierce fire fight raged between Baker company and the attacking Chinese, a body of enemy troops attempted to infiltrate the battalion area behind Lieutenant-Colonel Stone's Tac HQ.<sup>66</sup> The Mortar platoon's .30 and .50 calibre Browning machine-guns were promptly called into action to meet the threat. Stone recollected:

Ammunition belts for [the .30 and .50 calibre Browning machine-guns] were loaded with one tracer bullet to four ball, or ordinary bullets. Fire was held until the Chinese had broken through the trees about two hundred meters away. Twenty-four machine guns cut loose together. Only those who have experienced being

under the fire of a heavy concentration of tracer bullets can appreciate the terror induced by that kind and volume of fire. With the crack of the machine guns, and the 81 mm mortars firing at their shortest range, the enemy never had a chance.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, when the Able company rear platoon began firing what Stone considered to be unnecessarily long bursts of light machine-gun (LMG) fire in support of Bn Tac HQ, the CO radioed the company second-in-command and rejoined, "stop your firing, you bloody fool! We can take care of ourselves. Save your ammunition; you're going to need it!"<sup>68</sup> Having successfully staved off the attack against Bn Tac HQ, the Mortar Platoon's .50 calibre heavy machine-guns were turned on a large body of Chinese troops fording the Kap'young River. Silhouetted by the bright moonlight, the Chinese were mowed down in swaths by the powerful guns at a range of approximately 800 metres.<sup>69</sup> Seventy-one Chinese dead were counted on the banks of the Kap'young River the next morning.<sup>70</sup>

At this point, it is instructive to outline the assault tactics the Chinese employed against 2 PPCLI at Kap'young. Save for a light preliminary mortar bombardment and MMG fire, the Chinese attacks against Hill 677 were executed without fire support. Consequently, the Chinese were forced to move as close to the Canadian positions as possible, using the cover of darkness to maximum advantage, where they waited for the

signal to initiate the attack. Lacking battlefield wireless communications, the Chinese assault troops were directed against their objectives with bugles and tracer rounds. Armed with "burp" guns and concussion grenades, the Chinese attempted to overrun the Canadian positions quickly by sheer weight of numbers, and working around the flanks.

At 0030 hours on 25 April, Dog company reported enemy movement to the west and north of 10 platoon, the company's westernmost platoon.<sup>71</sup> Several probing attacks were launched against 10 platoon, but they were driven off by MMG, mortar and artillery fire. An hour later, a cacophony of Chinese bugles was heard and the scarlet rods of tracer bullets lit up the sky, signalling the start of an all-out Chinese attack against Lieutenant M.G. Levy's 10 platoon.

By 0230 hours, "every weapon in the battalion was firing" on the estimated 200 Chinese converging on 10 platoon from three sides.<sup>72</sup> According to the Canadian official history, the attack on 10 platoon was carried out with such speed and momentum that the Chinese were able to over-run the MMG section from 12 platoon supporting 10 platoon.<sup>73</sup> Oral sources, however, cast doubt on at least part of this interpretation. A veteran of 11 platoon recently reported that his section was firing in the vicinity of the No. 1 gun during the attack, and that its crew may have been hit by "friendly" Bren gun fire.<sup>74</sup> In any event, the two Patricias manning the No. 1 gun were killed at their post, and both MMGs were temporarily lost to the enemy.

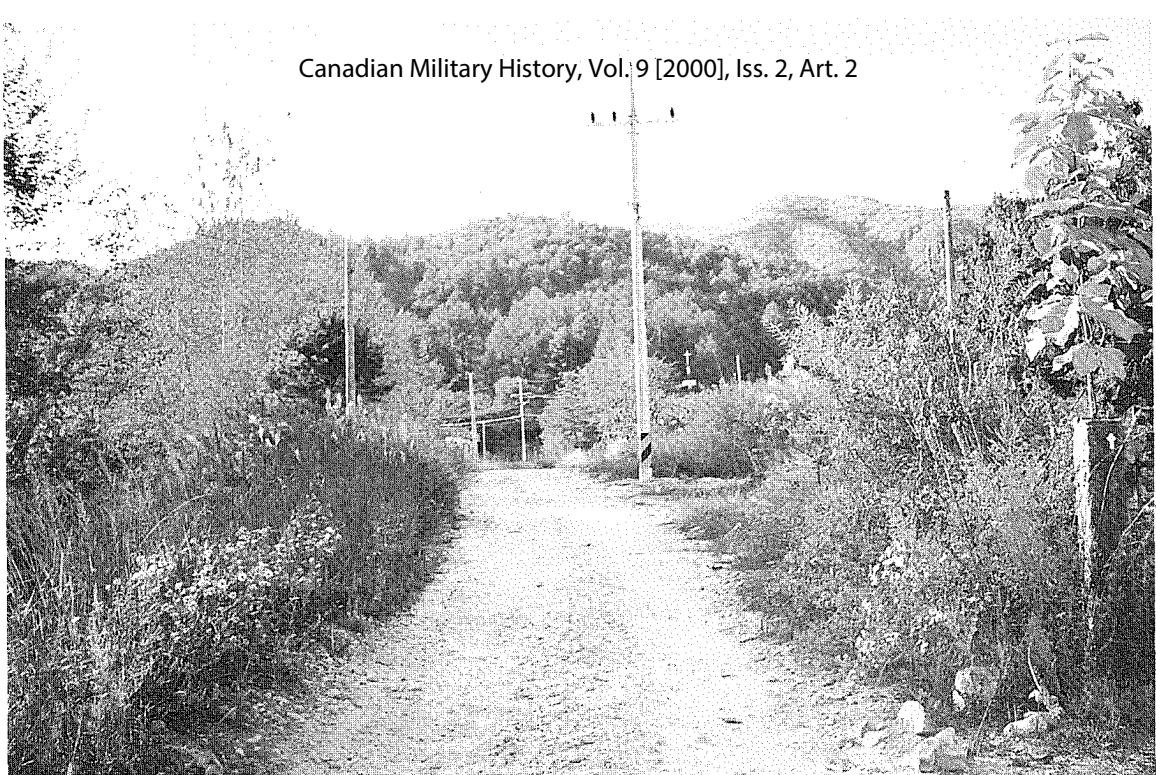
Unable to overrun the 10 platoon positions, the enemy pressed his attack against 12 platoon, situated in a saddle between 10 and 11 platoons.<sup>75</sup> At this time, the 16 NZFR was engaging a DF task in front of the Dog company positions "continuously at the slow rate of fire (two rounds per gun per minute) instead of simply firing a designated number of rounds."<sup>76</sup> As the Australian official historian observed, at this rate of fire, "twenty-four rounds exploded every thirty seconds in a target area some 150-200 metres across."<sup>77</sup> With the New Zealanders running low on 25 pounder ammunition, the Patricias' supporting fire was soon reduced to the "very slow" rate (one round per gun per minute). The Chinese, however, continued to press their attack against 12 platoon, forcing the

Patricias to request a return to the "slow" rate of fire.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the sterling service rendered by the gunners, 10 platoon was cut-off; 12 platoon was overrun, and forced to withdraw to Dog company HQ. In view of the increasingly grave situation, the acting commander of Dog company, Captain Wally Mills, called for artillery fire on his own position.<sup>79</sup> After assuring the CO that his men were well dug in below ground level, Mills was granted his request. For approximately twenty minutes, artillery pounded the Dog company positions. The shrapnel shells, packed with steel balls, were fused to burst several metres above the ground. The fire had the desired effect, sending thousands of steel balls and white-hot shell fragments whistling through the inky blackness, decimating the Chinese ranks. Having driven the attackers from the Dog company locality, the gunners turned their attention to the approaches leading to the company positions.

Forty minutes had passed since the first shrapnel shells rained down on the Dog company positions. In total, the action required "some 2300 rounds" from the 16 NZFR's 25 pounder field guns,<sup>80</sup> "and many thousands of Canadian mortar and small arms rounds."<sup>81</sup> The Chinese, however, continued to attempt an infiltration of the battalion area through Dog company for the rest of the night. Each time they were driven back by artillery and mortar fire.<sup>82</sup> By first light, the Chinese had withdrawn, and 12 platoon reclaimed its former position. At this time, the two Vickers MMGs that had been lost hours earlier were successfully recovered. Interestingly, the Chinese had made no attempt to disable or use the No. 1 gun. Not only was it undamaged, but over 100 unexpended rounds remained in the belt,<sup>83</sup> suggesting that the Patricia gunners were indeed hit by "friendly fire." Meanwhile, Baker company reoccupied its forward platoon position.

While the men of Dog company were fighting for their lives on the battalion's left flank, the Chinese infiltrated the Kap'yong River valley, severing the supply route leading to Hill 677. Cut off from the rest of the 27th Brigade, and running dangerously low on mortar and small arms ammunition, medical supplies, food and water, Lieutenant-Colonel Stone requested an airdrop



*Road leading to the northeast face of Hill 677. Able and Charlie companies were located here. The position held by Doy company was on the highground to the right.*

of critical supplies at 0430 hours. Six hours later, four C-119 "flying boxcars" from an USAF base in Japan appeared over the battlefield. The drop was an unqualified success, with only four parachutes missing their targets.<sup>84</sup> The Patricia rifle companies immediately sent parties out to collect the supplies and prepared for the enemy attack expected that night. At the same time, a number of seriously wounded Patricias were medevaced by two US Army helicopters.<sup>85</sup>

Fortunately for the exhausted Canadians, no further enemy attacks materialized on 25 April. The Chinese continued to harass 10 platoon with automatic weapons fire for another twenty-four hours, but "for the rest of the offensive the enemy sought elsewhere for tactical gains."<sup>86</sup> By 1400 hours, the road at the base of Hill 677 was reported open and clear of the enemy, and Stone requested that additional supplies and reinforcements be brought forward by vehicle. At this time, the remaining Patricia dead and wounded were evacuated.

\* \* \* \* \*

**T**he Battle of Kap'yong cost the Patricias 10 killed and 23 wounded – a mercifully low number of casualties given the intensity of the engagement.<sup>87</sup> Not included in the official Canadian casualty return were an untold number of soldiers who, although not visibly wounded,

suffered the equally debilitating symptoms of post-traumatic stress. A Patricia recounted:

[After the air drop] we were issued with two rations per man. [Corporal] Bishop sat down on the edge of his trench and ate two C rations. There were three meals in each one. Then he went around seeing if anyone had any old ham and lima beans they didn't need.<sup>88</sup>

Bishop's voracious appetite was, in part, symptomatic of post-traumatic stress.<sup>89</sup> For most, the physiological effects of post-traumatic stress disappeared shortly after the battle. Some, however, are haunted by the images of Kap'yong to this day. Others have subconsciously blocked out the horrific events of 23 to 26 April, and have little, or no memory of their role in the battle. Indeed, one Patricia from Support Company who participated in the defence of Bn Tac HQ has no recollection, save for the air drop, of his two days and nights on Hill 677.<sup>90</sup>

On 26 April, 2 PPCLI turned its positions on Hill 677 over to elements of the American 1st Cavalry Division. During the relief, Lieutenant-Colonel Stone was given command of the rear guard force, aptly known as the "Stone force," that covered the withdrawal of the rest of the 28th Brigade (the 27th Brigade became the 28th Brigade on 25 April).<sup>91</sup> The withdrawal was executed without incident, and on 28 April the entire 28th Brigade, including 2 PPCLI, moved into a reserve area thirty miles east of Seoul.

So concluded the Battle of Kap'yong. In recognition of the battalion's part in stemming the Chinese offensive in central Korea, the 2 PPCLI, along with the 3 RAR and the American Tank Company, was awarded the US Presidential citation. Without a doubt, the Canadians had earned their citation. The 2 PPCLI had held its ground against a numerically superior Chinese force, and then conducted an orderly withdrawal.<sup>92</sup> As Stone pointed out, "we were surrounded by the enemy. We could have run, panicked or surrendered. We stayed, fought and withdrew on orders in a soldierly fashion. This, in itself, was unique in Korea where bug-outs were the accepted manner of withdrawing."<sup>93</sup>

In hindsight, Kap'yong was probably the limit of the Chinese offensive in the area. Had their objective been further to the south, there can be no question that the 2 PPCLI would have been wiped out. This does not change the fact that the fight for Hill 677 was "a good battle, well planned and well fought."<sup>94</sup> The Patricias performed magnificently, and their successful retention of the height made an important contribution to the Commonwealth victory at Kap'yong. When compared to subsequent Canadian battlefield performance in Korea, the 2 PPCLI's achievement at Kap'yong is even more remarkable. The question, however, remains: What made the Patricias' stand possible?

There were five primary ingredients in the recipe for victory on Hill 677. The first, and most important, was the tremendous amount of supporting fire available to the 2 PPCLI. It is estimated that the New Zealanders alone fired approximately 10,000 rounds in support of the Canadians during the night of 24-25 April.<sup>95</sup> The exact number of rounds fired by the Americans, on the other hand, is less certain. Ian McGibbon claimed that A Company of the 2 American Chemical Mortar Battalion "fired 1960 [120mm] rounds in support of the Canadians during the night."<sup>96</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Stone, however, was adamant that "when the battle got hot on the Australian front the FOO from the US mortars on my front walked out and never a pop did we get from his company."<sup>97</sup> In any event, the supporting fire available to the Patricia rifle companies was not confined to New Zealand and American sources. The Canadians also relied heavily on their own Support Company, which fired an untold number of 81 mm and 60 mm

mortar rounds, and thousands of .50, .303., and .30 calibre machine-gun rounds during the night. By covering the gaps between the company "islands" of defence and the ridge line approaches to Hill 677 with accurate, pre-registered artillery, mortar and MMG DF tasks, the Patricia rifle companies were able to call in a tremendous amount of fire power on a relatively small area as the tactical situation dictated.

Despite the pre-eminent role of supporting fire on Hill 677, there were other factors that ultimately helped to make the Canadian stand possible. One was the Second World War experiences of the 2 PPCLI's senior officers. By carrying out a thorough daylight reconnaissance of Hill 677, Stone and his subordinate officers were able to detect where the Chinese attacks would most likely be directed, and deploy the battalion and allocate supporting arms accordingly. Similarly, Lieutenant-Colonel Stone's redeployment of Baker company to cover the vital ground on the battalion's right flank probably saved the Patricias from disaster. Had Baker company not been redeployed, it is likely that Bn Tac HQ, the Mortar platoon and the Pioneer platoon would have been overrun by the first Chinese attack. This would have denied the rifle companies the support of the 81 mm mortars, and severed 2 PPCLI's communications "with the balance of the brigade."<sup>98</sup> The ability to identify ground that is vital to the defence of a position is a skill that can only be acquired through operational experience – experience that Stone and many of his officers acquired during two years of fighting with the 1st Canadian Division in the mountains of Sicily and Italy.<sup>99</sup>

Also contributing to 2 PPCLI's success was the incorporation of the tactical lessons learned by the 29th Brigade into its training program at Miryang. As already noted, the battalion arrived in Korea an independent, yet untrained, unit. With "no rear headquarters closer than Seattle," Stone was able to conduct the collective training of his battalion as he saw fit.<sup>100</sup> This was a luxury enjoyed by no other Canadian battalion commander in Korea. By emphasising the tactical concepts of company "islands" and all round defence in Korea's mountainous terrain, Stone prepared his battalion for precisely the type of engagement it fought on Hill 677. Moreover, the CO's emphasis on occupying night-time defensive positions under simulated battlefield conditions



at Miryang helped inoculate the Patricias against the fear and panic of being surrounded.

Given the above, it is not surprising that 2 PPCLI's morale remained high throughout the fight for Hill 677. Despite the apprehension and jockeying for position that characterized the final hours before the Chinese attack, the soldiers of 2 PPCLI held their ground and "kept their weapons firing."<sup>101</sup> Throughout their terrible ordeal the soldiers in the line of fire retained their faith in their officers and NCOs, their training, and their equipment. As Lieutenant-Colonel Stone reminisced, "Kap'yong demonstrated that morale, spirit of the troops, or call it what you will, is probably the most important factor in battle, and all the logistical support, the finest plan and the many other factors that are considered as requirements to fight a battle, are subsidiary to it."<sup>102</sup> Further buttressing the men's morale was the knowledge that if seriously wounded, they were only minutes away from advanced medical treatment.<sup>103</sup> The medevac helicopter was still in its infancy at Kap'yong, but its positive impact on morale (not to mention the number of fatal casualties) was already apparent.

Finally, the failure of the enemy to co-ordinate and press his attacks must not be overlooked. By telegraphing where they were going to attack with bugles and tracer bullets, the Patricia company and platoon commanders had plenty of time to call in DF tasks.<sup>104</sup> In their tight assault formations, the attacking Chinese troops were literally pulverized when defensive fire was brought to bear. Additionally, the enemy's own lack of supporting arms ensured that Patricia defensive positions were still intact when the enemy crossed his start line for the attack. In light of these serious tactical shortcomings, one can only respect the fortitude and courage of the Chinese soldiers who did battle with the Canadians on that anonymous Korean height known as Hill 677.

### Notes

1. Canadian military historians are beginning to question their Army's battlefield performance in Korea, especially during the static phase of the war. See Brent Watson, "Far Eastern Tour: The Experiences of the Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-53" (University of Victoria: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1999), and David Bercuson's, *Blood On the Hills: The Canadian Army in Korea, 1950-1953* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
2. The standard account of the Canadian experience on Hill 677 remains H.F. Wood's *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966). While generally sound, Wood's narrative lacked critical analysis. Nor did he situate the fight for Hill 677 in the broader context of the Patricias' preparation for battle.
3. See Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II, Combat Operations* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.133-135, 137.
4. Statement by Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, 7 August 1950. Reprinted in External Affairs Document, *Canada and the Korean Crisis* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), pp.31-35.
5. Brigadier-General J.M. Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," National Archives of Canada [NAC], Manuscript Group [MG] 31 G12., Ottawa, p.7. Rockingham commanded the 25th CIB from 8 August 1950 to 27 April 1952.
6. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.27.
7. War Diary, Vice Chief of the General Staff, NAC RG 24, Volume 18,220, 25 August to 31 October 1950, Appendix 5; Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Volume II, 1948-1957*, eds., John Munro and Alex Inglis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p.136.
8. Of 2 PPCLI's 38 officers, 26 had seen action in the Second World War, and two were members of 1 PPCLI.
9. Colonel James R. Stone (retired), interview, Victoria, British Columbia, 8 November 1994.
10. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, NAC RG 24, Volume 18,317, 1 October 1950. This figure includes the 412 men who were taken on strength as first-line reinforcements.
11. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 1 October 1950; Stone, interview, p.8 November 1994; Dick Goodwin, "PPCLI Expect Fighting In Korea," *Calgary Herald*, 20 November 1950, pp.1-2.
12. Goodwin, "PPCLI Expect Fighting In Korea," p.2.
13. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.
14. A number of factors influenced the decision to send the Patricias instead of 2 RCR or 2 R22eR. First, 2 PPCLI had started its training program before the other battalions because it had been least affected by the railway strike that paralysed the nation from 22 August to 9 September 1950. Second, the Patricias were the closest to Seattle, the port of embarkation. Third, and perhaps most important, Stone was the most experienced of the three battalion commanders, and, arguably, the most capable of commanding an independent unit far from Canada, and at representing Canadian interests vis-a- vis the American dominated UN Command. The remainder of the 25th Brigade did not reach Korea until May 1951.
15. Collective infantry training is analogous to formation training at the section, platoon, company, and battalion levels.
16. Bruce Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.734-737.

17. On arrival in Korea, 2 PPCLI came under the operational command of the 8th US Army.
18. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.54.
19. 2PP-5-0, "Sitreps by the 25th CIB, January 1951 – April 1952," Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa [DHH], File 419FE.009(D4).
20. 2PP-5-0, "Sitreps by the 25th CIB," DHH, File 419FE.009(D4).
21. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, pp.54-55.
22. In retrospect, the 8th Army's attempt to commit the Patricias to battle on their arrival in Korea underscores the dangers of sending Canadian troops overseas before they are fully trained. Had Stone not confronted Walker, Canadian lives most certainly would have been lost. For on 3 January 1951, the Chinese launched a massive attack against UN forces occupying positions along the Imjin. In the ensuing battle, the 29th BIB suffered over 200 casualties. One can only surmise what might have befallen the half-trained Patricias.
23. Appendix "A" to HQS 3201-151/25 (Trg 5), "British Information From Korea," Training, General, 25th CIB, Volume I, DHH, File 111.41(D22), p.4.
24. Canadian casualty returns suggest that the mortar was "the commanding weapon" in the Korean War. See "Preliminary Report on Battle casualties of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group, 5 December 1951," Sitreps of DAA and QMG, 31 January 1953, DHH, File 410B25.059(D1), p.3.
25. S.L.A. Marshall, *The River and the Gauntlet: The Defeat of the Eighth Army by the Chinese Communist Forces, November 1950, In the Battle of the Chongchon River, Korea* (New York: William Morrow, 1953), p.370.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Denis H.R. Archer, ed., *Jane's Infantry Weapons, 1976* (London: Jane's Yearbooks, Paulton House, 1976), p.527.
28. Canadian Army Manual of Training, *Training for War* (1950), PPCLI Archives, Currie Barracks, Calgary, Alberta (hereafter PPCLI Archives), uncatalogued file, p.34.
29. HQS 3201-151/25 (TRG 5A), 18 September 1950, "Notes On Fighting In Korea," Training, General, 25th CIB, Volume I, DHH, File 111.41(D22), p.1.
30. C.N. Barclay, *The First Commonwealth Division: The Story of the British Commonwealth Land Forces in Korea, 1950-1953* (London: Gale & Polden, 1954), p.35; 2PP-5-0, "Sitreps By 25th CIB," DHH, File 419FE.009(D4), p.2.
31. 2PP-5-0, "Sitreps By 25th CIB," DHH, File 419FE.009(D4), p.2.
32. Bill Boss, "Canadian Unit Patrols Road Behind Line," *Calgary Herald*, 10 January 1951, p.3.
33. When 2 PPCLI entered the firing line, the 27th BCIB came under the operational command of 9th US Corps. The Brigade's area of operations lay between the Han and Pukhan rivers on the right of the Corps' front.
34. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 7 March 1951.
35. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.63.
36. *Ibid.*, p.72.
37. Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II: An Honourable Discharge* (London: HMSO, 1995), p.141.
38. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area – 23 to 26 April 1951," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5). Hills 677 and 504 (3 RAR's position) dominated the corridor running down the Kap'young River Valley.
39. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 23 April 1951.
40. Captain Michael McKeown, "Kap'young Remembered," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 20; Stone, quoted in John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1983), pp.73-74.
41. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5).
42. Anonymous soldier in Able Company quoted in Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*, p.73.
43. Corporal George Cook (retired), interview, Kelowna, British Columbia, 24 June 1994.
44. "Kap'young – A Speech by Col. J.R. Stone, DSO, MC, to the Officers of 3 PPCLI on 18 December 1973," PPCLI Archives, Box 130(6)-1, p.188.
45. These included the 213 American Field Artillery Battalion, the 61 Field Artillery Battalion, a battery from the 17 Field Artillery Battalion, and a Company from the 2 Chemical Mortar Battalion. See McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II, Combat Operations*, pp.132-135.
46. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.17.
47. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.76.
48. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 24 April 1951.
49. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), pp.7, 21.
50. G.R. Stevens, *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, 1919-1957* (Montreal: Southam, 1958), p.300.
51. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 23 April 1951.
52. As Richard Holmes reminds us, the sight of men frantically urinating before battle is as old as war itself. See Holmes, *Firing Line* (London: Penguin, 1985).
53. Lieutenant Brian Munro, quoted in Robert Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon: The Canadian Army in Korea, 1950-1953* (Edmonton: Four Winds Publishing, 1995), p.93.
54. Sergeant Tommy Prince, a Canadian Indian, served with the elite Devil's Brigade during the Second World War.
55. Munro, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, p.93.
56. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), pp.24, 26.
57. "Kap'young – A Speech by Col. J.R. Stone," PPCLI Archives, Box 130-1 to 134-3, File 130(6)-1, p.188.
58. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), pp.23-24.
59. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.23.
60. War Diary, 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, 24 April 1951, DHH, File 79/691; Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II*, p.146.
61. "Kap'young – A Speech by Col. J.R. Stone," PPCLI Archives, Box 130-1 to 134-3, File 130(6)-1, p.188.
62. Munro, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, p.92.
63. Anonymous soldier, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.
64. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 24 April 1951.
65. McKeown, "Kap'young Remembered," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, p.24.
66. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 24 April 1951.
67. Colonel James R. Stone and Jacques Castonguay, *Korea 1951: Two Canadian Battles* (Ottawa: The Canadian War Museum, 1988), p.21.
68. Lieutenant-Colonel O.R. Brown, "Kap'young! What Is It?" PPCLI Archives, Box 130-1 to 134-3, File 130(6), p.4.
69. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 24 April 1951.

70. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.77.
71. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.12.
72. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 77; War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 25 April 1951.
73. See Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 77.
74. Anonymous soldier, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, p.94.
75. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.12.
76. Robert O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-53, Volume II: Combat Operations* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1985), p.159.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*, pp.159-160.
79. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 25 April 1951.
80. McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War, Volume II: Combat Operations*, p.134.
81. O'Neill, *Australia In the Korean War*, 160.
82. War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 25 April 1951.
83. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHist, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.18.
84. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 78.
85. War Diary, 27th BCIB, 25 April 1951.
86. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.78.
87. Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.78.
88. McKeown, "Kap'young Remembered," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, p.28.
89. Rapid increase of the metabolic rate is one physiological effect of extreme stress. Thus, it is not uncommon for soldiers to be far "hungrier and thirstier" after battle "than they normally are." See Holmes, *Firing Line*, p.129.
90. Cook, interview, 24 June 1994.
91. The "Stone Force" consisted of 2 PPCLI and the remnants of 3 RAR.
92. Intelligence officers at 8th Army HQ later estimated that the 27th Brigade had held off an entire Chinese division during the fighting at Kap'young. See "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), pp.26-27.
93. Stone and Castonguay, *Two Canadian Battles*, p.78.
94. "Kapyong - A Speech by Colonel J.R. Stone," p.189.
95. O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953, Volume II: Combat Operations*, p.159.
96. McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II, Combat Operations*, p.439, fn 98.
97. "Kapyong - A Speech by Colonel J.R. Stone," p.188.
98. "2 PPCLI Action Kap'young Area," DHH, File 145.2P7013(D5), p.40.
99. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.
100. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.
101. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.
102. "Kapyong - A Speech by Colonel J.R. Stone," p.185.
103. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994; Major Rod Middleton (retired), interview, Calgary, Alberta, 17 October 1994.
104. Major Vince Lilley, quoted in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p.79.

Brent Watson is finishing up a DND Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary. He is currently completing a manuscript on the Canadians in Korea. His next research project will be a social study of Canadian soldiers in the Congo serving with UNEF 1.

## CMH Mailbox

continued from page 6.

using automatic pistols (.45 cal M1911A1s) and the cadillac of Stens (9 mm Mk.V); where as the line infantry were being issued revolvers (.38 Smith and Wesson, Enfields) and 9 mm Mk.II and Mk.III Stens. Looking at only elite formations, which was pretty much the case concerning the German units who fought at Amhem and the uniforms that Mr. Anderson looked at, can give you a slanted opinion of what the other guy is using; you have to look at the whole picture.

As an Airborne soldier, Mr. Anderson talks about the Denison Smock and he states, "Our normal "Dennison" Smock was an excellent cover for parachuting, it had 10 pockets to carry gear, including a sleeve for ampules of morphine and first aid. The smock was made of heavy denim, un-lined, camouflage and ideal for fighting in moderate weather, but totally inadequate in

winter." Let us sort things out correctly. The Denison

Smock was produced with four exterior pockets that closed by snap fasteners, and there was no sleeve for ampules of morphine and first aid, these features were added by the users. It was only designed for fighting in the moderate European weather not the winter; the Allies employed the layering principal for fighting in the winter so other items of clothing were suppose to be worn under and over the Denison Smock in winter.

The Allies tried to rationalize their uniform production by attempting to produce uniforms that could be used for a wide range of applications thus saving materials, manpower and shipping space when supplying their armies overseas. The woolen battledress uniform was to be the standard building block of the Canadian and British uniforms and both over and under this could be added specific items when needed such as long underwear, string vests,

sweaters, white camouflage smocks and this is known as the layer principal. The Germans wasted their resources producing over a dozen patterns of camouflage for three different arms of service as well as numerous specialty items as new units were formed. This stuff is all "trendy" even by today's standards, but it is certainly not proof of superior workmanship. Battledress (BD) was a very popular design in the 1940s and German U-Boat crews used British BD from captured BEF stocks on their boats and the German Army even copied the design calling it their M44 Uniform. By the way, Canadian industry has the reputation of having produced the best quality BD during WWII.

The Allies did have a problem getting the appropriate uniforms to the right place on time and getting winter uniforms to the front in 1944 was problem. Mind you this was a problem that the Germans had been wrestling with on the Eastern Front

**continued on p.88**