

BATTLE OF KOREA The Boys Come Home

Monday, May 11, 1953,

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,935313,00.html#ixzz1WYC BqDGB>

Corporal Wendell H. Treffery of Terryville, Conn., a medic of the 7th Division, got it Nov. 30, 1950 south of Changjin Reservoir—first a wound in the chest, then the onrush of screaming Chinese.

The march north to the P.W. camp at Kanggye lasted 18 days. Treffery woke up one morning to find his feet frozen. Within minutes the Chinese had him marching again. The Chinese turned the prisoners over to the North Koreans. "The Koreans were worse than the Chinese," found Treffery. "They have no feeling for human beings. They'd stick our men with bayonets and laugh and joke about it." Eighty of 120 made it to Kanggye.

"All the meat came off the bottoms of my feet, and all the meat came off my toes and the bones were sticking out." One day in February, a North Korean nurse entered his room with what looked like garden shears. She snipped off eight of his fleshless toe bones, leaving only the two great toes. "I broke them off later with my fingers," said Treffery.

Sergeant James F. Daniel of Alameda, Calif., also a medic, kept records of the deaths he verified in two camps during 20 months of capture. The Chinese took the records away from him, but "I remembered the figures." Exactly 2,538. mostly American. "It was just starvation and disease," said he. "We could always feel the lice crawling over us." Care got better and fewer men died after the Korean truce talks began.

Penknife Surgery.

Pfc. Tully Cox of Altoona, Ala. was only 17 years old when the Reds shot him in both legs, then captured him, one day late in 1950. He was one of 20 men guarding a 40-truck convoy carrying some 800 U.S. wounded toward Hamhung. "The Chinese climbed up on the trucks," he said, "and sprayed burp guns into the wounded. Then they bayoneted them. The wounded were screaming. They couldn't do anything." Pfc. Cox assumed that most of them died. There were no

medics at the first P.W. camp he went to, so two buddies amputated his useless, festering feet with a penknife. A year later, the Chinese operated on him and neatly stitched the stumps.

"Cheesed Off."

For every wan and tired U.S. soldier who walked or hobbled or was stretcher-borne along the quick road home last week, there were stories to tell, though few had lived through what Treffery, Daniel and Cox had. Some of the exaggerated Pentagon talk about brainwashed, Communist-indoctrinated G.I.s began to boil away in the screening process. At one hospital 67 were examined, and 34 were immediately cleared to be interviewed by the press. At the second hospital, all of the 106 processed were cleared.

In a batch of 22 exchanged Britons, several sounded off against the Korean war and the U.S. last week after landing in England. Trooper Arthur Surridge of the 8th Hussars said the U.S. had started the war "to make a profit." The War Office was convinced that "the return to normal surroundings will give them a more balanced view."

In the stories that poured from the P.W.s, there were signs of brainwashing's effect on some Americans. "We called them 'rats' or 'progressive boys,'" said Pfc. James R. Dunn, a Negro of Anderson, S.C. "We would write to the progressive boys, signed KKK, telling them to straighten out. If they didn't, they usually got thrown into the latrine."

Sometimes G.I.s would sign a peace petition, or write propaganda into letters home, not out of conviction, but in order to get extra food and cigarettes, or to avoid discipline. At his camp in the Yalu River valley, said Corporal Charles E. Dick of Spann, Ky., the Communists maintained cages 3 or 3½ feet high. "You could only lie down or stoop in the cages. Guys were put in the cages for giving their opinions in [indoctrination] class."

Snafu at Valley Forge.

In a succession of distance-gulping flights last week, Air Force C-475 and C-545 flew almost all the U.S. G.I.s back home. At a stopover in Hawaii, one P.W. notified two Hawaiian couples that their sons were alive in North Korean camps.

He had memorized the names and addresses of 50 men listed as dead or missing, but whom he knew to be alive in P.W. camps. Another, Pfc. Joseph Picerno, pulled out a dog-eared memo book as soon as he got back home in New York, and began delivering messages to the families of 63 G.I.s he had left behind in North Korea.

For most of the returned men, the trip ended with the laughter and tears, warm embraces and the proud neighborhood revelry of homecoming. But for one group (20 men), there was only a secret stop in California, then a landing near Philadelphia, where they were rushed to the Army's Valley Forge Hospital.

In muddleheaded concert, the Pentagon, and Air Force and Army "spokesmen" along the way gave the impression that the men were severe victims of Communist brainwashing, and that they would somehow be rewashed at Valley Forge. When the men themselves heard what was being said about them, they exploded—"got mad as hell," as an officer at the hospital put it. "A dirty deal!" cried one of the soldiers. "I'm here for medical treatment, not psychiatric treatment," snapped another. "I didn't spend 29 months in prison camp to come back here to get that kind of publicity." It was, indeed, a peculiar welcome home.

Read more:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,935313,00.html#ixzz1WY9yN2fm>