

Interview - 17th Infantry in Korea: Sgt. Louis Eve

Conducted by Judge Stuart Namm (Retired)
During the 2006 17th Infantry Reunion

Produced by Legal Eagle Productions
(www.legaleagleproductions.com)

My name is Louie Eve. I was born in New Albany, Indiana in 1928 and I grew up there until I was sixteen years old and moved to the country in the same area. I got drafted when I went to high school and I got a deferment. I went into the Army on August 15, 1950. I took my basic training in Breckinridge, Kentucky. In April of 1951, I went to Seattle to be shipped overseas. We left Seattle in April, about the third, and it was fourteen days going to Tokyo, Japan. We stayed there about a week. They took us to zero our rifles in and they put us on a train and went to Saijo, Japan. They put us on another ship, I guess, overnight to Pusan. We arrived in Pusan in late April and they assigned me to the 7th Division, 17th Infantry Regiment. We were put on [a] train overnight about a hundred and fifty miles North and I went into the I&R Platoon.

We arrived in regimental headquarters. I was assigned to the headquarters company I&R and our duties there were if the line troopers couldn't find the enemy, we had to go out. We walked out and got on the OP and stayed overnight and then we went out farther, as far as we could, just to touch the enemy, got some fire, and find out how many there were and return. I arrived as a Private and my duty was radioman with the I&R Platoon. We went out on patrols either by jeep or walking. I didn't like the jeep patrols too well, but they usually [went] pretty fast.

Our platoon sergeant was Sergeant Biggs. He was a nineteen-year-old Master Sergeant, a very good man. He was very strict when we went on the line. He knew exactly what to do every time we got into trouble. I say he brought us through. He saved our lives. He led all the patrols we went with. If any one of the squads went out, he was leading them. He was a very good man. I was a 300 radio operator. It was a thirty-pound pack that most squads used. You could get ten or twelve miles on it. It was a very reliable radio.

Some of the men in my platoon were Guy Hamrick, Bill Snyder, Helton, Albritton, and Bowden. In May of 51 we went on our first ski patrol. We went out about seven or eight miles out in front of the line. We got fired upon. The sergeant told me to get down behind this pile of rocks. We had 50 caliber machine guns on the jeeps. As long as the 50s were shooting the gooks didn't shoot back. We stayed there for about fifteen or twenty minutes shooting and carrying on. We left there and come back to regimental headquarters and reported. Two days later we went back to the same spot, and the sergeant said "do you remember this spot?" I said yeah, but I don't see that pile of gravel I got behind. He said that it's that right there. It was only about six inches high. Then I got kind of scared. But you could see the gooks shooting at you. You'd see little puffs of white smoke. We found out one thing. We had five 50 caliber machine guns. We kept one of them going all the time. While it was going, there was no other fire coming back at you.

We went on one night patrol. There was a squad of us and we went out in front of the OPs about a mile and a half or two miles. We were sent out to get a prisoner. We had two guys from California who were pretty rough and they said "we'll get the prisoner for you" and you just stay back here. They roamed up in there. They jumped in a hole with three gooks. They killed one and brought two back without shooting any of them. When they come back they said "get out of here". It was like 4th of July. I've never seen so much shooting in my life and

everyone got back out of there. But it was one scary thing. I don't want to [do] that again. Nobody got hit, and I can't understand why because there was so much shooting going on you'd think it would've hit something. Well, when we broke contact, the Sergeant said now when I tell you to run, you run. And we run like we could. Don't tell me you're tired or your horse is busted, he said. Because I know the communications, and they think we are hundred yards short and we just kept on going.

We didn't really have any problem at nighttime that I can think of. It was no mortars or anything like that. It was all machine guns, burp guns, and stuff like that shooting at us. We could look back [at] the trail - we were on a day trail - and you could look back and could see them ripping a hundred yards behind us because they thought we were there, instead of farther up the road. That was a good sign of a sergeant doing a good job.

Most of the patrols was up and down hills. That's all they had over there. They had little valleys and tall hills. We just roamed around out there. Sometimes we would walk five or six miles out there trying to make contact with the enemy. Once we made contact, that was all we had to do, figure how many people they had and get out of there.

In the wintertime, we were just left of the "Punchbowl" and it turned bad. Our platoon went up on the hill. The lieutenant told me to stay back and get a new radio and get a pair of boots. Well, that next morning I went up on the hill and half of my platoon came off of there either shot by sniper or frozen feet. We stayed up on that hill. When you would go up the hill in the real early morning it was froze and when you came back down in the evening it would be muddy. That went on for about a week in that area. We were sent up on the hill to replace a platoon at a time so they could go down and get washed up. We did that one time for six weeks straight. The lieutenant thought we needed a bath. Well, after the first week you were just so dirty it would just scale off. So it didn't make any difference after that.

We come back to our tents and we were there about a week. They had a hard time getting me up, so they threw me out into the snow. About three hours after they had done that they said we were going to move. We had to chop the tent out of the ground because it was froze to the ground. We moved over towards the Hwachon area. In Hwachon, we had little pup-like tents there. We were down there on the river sand.

We got a mission to go out and pick up eighteen dead service men of our own. They called that the valley that laid along the Hwachon Reservoir. There was supposed to be ten thousand dead in there. They sent us out to pick up these Americans and I have never seen so many dead people in my life. There was one truck there that had thirty-four guys that never got out. There was all kind of wildlife shot and limping around. Anyhow, we [went] all the way up there and picked up seventeen of these guys. We couldn't find the eighteenth one. This gook come riding down the road and the sergeant pulled him off his bicycle he was riding. This gook, by an interpreter, said there was an American up there in that little hut but that had been shot five times with a 50 caliber machine gun but he was alive. The sergeant was a little suspicious of that. We had one guy in our outfit that he had to have a piece of equipment all the time, like he had to have a 60 millimeter mortar, and he had to have a bazooka. With his 50 caliber he had one box that was all tracers. So he told this gook to go up there and lay down flat in that building. We set it afire with the tracers out of the 50 caliber and rush it. This guy was up there and we pulled him out of there. He was shot five times. We had nothing but a stretcher to put him on. The first thing the guy wanted was a cigarette. He didn't talk much but he was conscious. We hauled him about seventeen miles on the front of a jeep back to regimental headquarters. We took him to the aid station and this

lieutenant said where's his tag. The sergeant looked up and said the gooks don't tag 'em. That was kind of a real bad trip all day.

When we entered this valley along the Hwachon Reservoir first there was this truck that had run off the road. It was about a deuce and a half and was filled full of gooks where a bomb hit them and just burned them up. It was only one guy who made it off of that and as we went down through there, there were so many dead bodies. You couldn't hardly look out and not see several hundred dead bodies at one time. The animals were shot up. I'd say a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards of width where there was just dead every place for about eight or ten miles. They said the *Missouri* fired these big rounds and caused an avalanche. They said the Air Corp came in there and just lit it up and just machine-gun[ned] everything in there. They claim it was shoulder deep trying to get out of there. It just killed everything. There were no buildings. Everything was just shot up, just chopped up.

Somewhere North of Seoul, we went in there to relieve some platoons in there. During the night some of our own artillery shelled us. I got on the phone and I called the lieutenant down there and said "say shut that stuff off". I said that is our stuff coming up here. He started querying me and saying "oh how long you been over here" and all that. I said I'll tell you I've been over here long enough to shoot holes in your tent so you better get it stopped. Well the next morning he came up and wanted to know who the guy was that talked to him. I said that was me. He said well you know I'm going to court martial. I said well that is your luck, but it'll be awful lucky for you to get down over that hill too. It's a long way down. He just walked off and nothing ever happened with that. We had orders that next day that we had to dig latrines. They got dug alright, but with shell holes. We didn't lose any men there.

I got a little R&R you might say for a couple of days. That was about it. We rotated out in April 1952. I was still a radio operator and I was a Staff Sergeant. Another little bit of information. I got three R&R's in Japan and was probably the only that ever done that. I enjoyed Army life only in the United States. I never enjoyed it in Korea whatsoever. We rotated out and went to Saijo, Japan. We stayed there and they tried to get us to re-up because man anything you want to eat or drink they had there. We stayed there a week and I had all my clothes tailored to fit, got all the black heads out while I was there, massages and all that. Then they put us on a ship and it was fourteen days coming back. We got into Seattle. They took us to this Army cafeteria. The guys had big ol' white hats on that come around and wanted to know how you wanted your steak and how many you could eat and all that. They fixed it exactly the way you wanted it. Then they put us on a regular diesel train and went to Chicago. In Chicago they put us on a big ole steam locomotive.

As we were coming down these guys were raising hell because we fought in Korea and they put us in an old locomotive to come down to Atterbury. The colored conductor said "well how fast do you think you're going?" The conductor said we were doing 114 miles per hour coming down the track. Well they got us to Camp Atterbury. Had a big meal again. Then I rotated out of there. They gave us a month off.

Then is when I almost lost my life. They had this thing out in front of the road there where you could get in. Guys would come along and pick you up (hitch hike) and take you wherever you wanted to go. Well I got on that thing. A guy had a Hudson Hornet and man he just laid that thing on the floor. We had about hundred miles to go. When we got to where I thought I could get home I got out of that thing because he was going to kill me, right there on the spot. I arrived home. You felt very [relieved] when you made it to the coast, "man you made it". I was a very lucky person.

I finished out my Army in Fort Riley, Kansas. I was an Athletic Director and Recreation NCO. I had a very good lieutenant. Every other weekend, I got a three-day pass.

There was a little thing that happened there that was kind of funny. When I got hurt in Korea, which wasn't by enemy action, they had to operate on me. They put us in this ward and they had to circumcise me. This regiment wouldn't let you be in unless you were circumcised. So here was a ward of fifty guys and it was real funny way to leave the Army.

About the association, I really enjoy it. We shoot the wars over and we meet the guys fifty years back. They all seem like they get along good together. It's just good to be around people you served a year with. That is the part I really like about it. It seems like we shoot the war over every year. I hope I live long enough to see a hundred reunions. It's just a good thing to belong to the association.