

Sasebo  
26 June 1952

D.

Wrote you a letter a few days ago dealing mostly with stuff. Next day received your letter dated 7 June in which you made the mistake of requesting information on the action of 7 May. I sat down immediately to the typewriter, hoping to get off a quick reply because I expected orders for Korea momentarily.

I never finished that letter.

I found it very difficult to think back to that night. As I wrote. I noted at once small departures from the unadorned fact, departures stemming no less from a reluctance to remember than an inability to do so. I had to force myself to think through some aspects of that night, D. I was surprised to discover that, surprised and a little dismayed to find that merely ruminating on that lost enterprise caused me to develop a cold hard feeling in the bottom of my gut, and a tremor in the fingers that struck out our story across the page. Those bitter moments on that hill lie clouded in noise, confusion, frustration, elation, pain, and a hundred other emotional storms within the tight confines of my inner memory. If ever I am to look on combat objectively, and such a viewpoint is essential to my profession, then I must disperse those storms. Call the following a mint catharsis, call the following what you will.

Hemingway sneered at the propensity of the man new to combat to write of his experiences, yet if each man new to combat wrote down the record of his first experience therein, and referred to that narrative when the blood and pain and screams and silent forms on the stained litters no longer seemed an outrage to reason, then perhaps combat would never become old to anyone. In a way, I had to write it down, D; you can just fold this up and send it back if it palls, for this is not so much for you as it is for me.

I have learned here a great deal about military history, at least that history which concerns itself with the actions of individuals and small units in battle, more by far in the few hours I have spent here than in all the hundreds of hours I have spent pouring over accounts of other men's fights. Now I understand fully how it is possible for two men who fought an action shoulder to shoulder to write conflicting reports. In almost everyone memory is like a hall mirror when one looks into it, one sees only what he wants to see. Man in battle is man at his best and his worst. It is easy to remember the best, easy to dwell on the fact that you did turn back into the grenades, and it is hard to remember that you went forward when you should have went back, that you pulled out your pistol just so that you could say that it had been fired in anger, that you regretted not getting a chance to use your knife on a Chink ( they used it to cut your clothes away and his clothes away), that you did close your eyes on that bloody form with no foot and an arm hanging by shreds. Those matters you instinctively

avoid because they initiate that series of thoughts that inevitably lead to the WHY and all those questions that you can't answer, don't want to answer, don't want to hear.

So I shall begin at the end; I shall answer that last question first, that question I, not you, ask, and the answer I give is not mine, not yours, but the answer of a hundred sententious fools which I seem to hear in the voice and intonation of (our teachers) Col. C. and Col. L.:

"I am a professional soldier. I have killed my first American soldier. I will kill many more before my career is through. It is my job, and this killing and its anguish are the price of soldiering. A doctor makes a mistake and people die, and the doctor learns so that in the same circumstances many more people will not die. A soldier...."

Hear the voice, D. calm, suave, almost convincing.....

The sky was copper gray, and the air hung hot, heavy, and nearly still over the Valley separating us from the Chinese outposts. I had climbed up to the OP atop the Hill to check on some unusually heavy firing, and had been informed by a highly excited FO the Joe was hitting the 2d Battalion with more artillery than he had thrown all winter. Something was in the wind, he said, and I replied sure, something was in the wind. Then I went outside and stood on the skyline like a colonel or some other damn fool and watched the bright blossoms over on the left. Then I remembered reading about a Salem brig that was hoodooed, and finally devoured one night in the Indian Ocean by a mighty waterspout shaped like a king cobra, a night that must have looked and felt very much like that night over the Hill. I thought to myself that the night was evil, and I found myself looking toward the ominous heights on the other side of the Valley, half expecting to see some dreadful shape against the lowering sky. I laughed at myself, and tried to shake off the thought, like you always shake off nonsense like that, but this one wouldn't shake. Not the part about the cobra, but the feeling that it was all going to go wrong.

I told myself that it was natural to think like that, and while I was walking back to the CP, I tried to think of all the times I had sat beside the door of a plane on the way out to a jump, watching the night and the country rush past with the same sense of foreboding, the same tightness in the lower part of my chest. But on a jump I expected it, expected it at take off, and knew that it would go when I stood up in the door. This was different. All along, for the last three days that we had been working on this patrol, I had felt, had known that this was going to be all right. I couldn't explain the sudden change of heart, couldn't find a reason for it in a hot night and a red sky, or a few rounds of Chinese artillery. It bothered me, it bothered me bad.

So far everything had gone almost perfectly. I hadn't been able to get the infra red signaling devices I had asked for, but Sgt C. had rigged a flashlight with a hood made out of a rifle grenade carton, and it would do just as well. Every other piece of equipment I had asked for I had received. We all had boxing shoes with soft leather soles from Special Service. We had Chinese burp guns and ample ammo, so that if we to do any shooting the Chinese wouldn't be able to spot us from our firing. Extra field glasses, ropes, gags, phones, radios, whistles,

flares —everything had come thru. I had even been able to get a flight over the Chink position, and we knew what they had up there almost as well as they did. We had reconnoitered it for three nights, working in close enough to be able to tell the individual sentries from one another. We dug an exact replica of Joe's trench back of battalion, and we had rehearsed the grab in the day and in the dark until the men knew it forwards and backwards. Actually the rehearsals had gone off better than I had expected them to, and the men were in good spirits, as confident as I. Nothing could possibly go wrong.

I went into the CP and went to bed. Captain F. was making tea and rambling about Germantown, Pennsylvania, and after a while I got to worrying about the rat that lived in the rafters right over my face, and then I fell asleep....

The Captain woke me up muttering something about how he was never able to sleep before a patrol in Italy. and how I must be crazy. I looked at my watch. 2230. I asked why he woke me up before eleven, and he told me they were bringing the aerial photo I had asked for up to the OP, and Captain R. wanted me to come up there. I said sure, in a minute, and lay back in the sack.

That was when I knew I was going to be hit.

I had started to feel good about the aerial photo because I hadn't counted on getting one in time. An aerial photo would show us for sure where the bunker openings were, but more important, it would give everyone who would have to go up there a good look at what Joe had on that hill. And then it came to me, disconnected, out of nowhere, unreasonable, unexpected.

I was going to be hit. Maybe for good. Tonight.

I rolled out of the sack, and while I put on the boxing shoes, I joked with the Captain about how he would have to split my stuff with the platoon leaders, but I wanted him to have my boots and my pile jacket because he had already broken them in well, all the while pushing the thought away, but it was no good\* When I walked outside and stopped on the parapet to let my eyes get used to the dark, It caught up with me good, and I stood there a long time, thinking and shivering.

I thought about a lot of things standing there. About P. and M. and distance and how it all didn't really make a hell of a lot of difference and how I ought to give my gold watch to the Captain and have him tell mom I've been a good boy, and then I felt like something out of Stephen Crane and the whole idea of my dying was completely ridiculous. I was shivering, so I ran all the way up to the OP.

The aerial photo was of the wrong hill, and even if it had been the right hill it was taken from so damn far up that we couldn't have gotten any good out of it anyways. It didn't matter.

I drank some C ration coffee with Captains R. and B., and we went over the fire support again. They had gotten another platoon of 4.2 mortars, and that was good. We went over the light signals again. Flashes from the craters: in position. Steady beam: going in. Swinging beams: drop protective fires. Cpt. R. to roger all flashes by showing a light through the aperture of Able OP. Radios had been calibrated and the net checked. BC scope was laid on the craters. We checked watches again, and then I said I had to get outside to let my eyes get used to the dark, and I said goodbye.

When I got outside I wondered why I said goodbye.

When I got down to the CP the men were starting to assemble outside the door. As soon as I saw them, everything was all right again. They were quiet, but no more than usual, and they were calm. I checked their face blackening and equipment by the light of the door, and then I went inside to get on my own gear.

I couldn't find my mirror to blacken my face by, and while I fumed around the place pulling stuff out of corners, the Old Man started in on Italy again. Finally he got me his mirror, and I stood there smearing soot from our diesel stove onto my puss, listening to him voice his impatience with all this commando stuff. Never did anything like that in Italy, he said. Why didn't we take more BARs and maybe an LMG or two? He was one who liked plenty of company when the stuff was going to be flying, and he never went anyplace near the Krauts without at least a platoon along. He didn't like this thing anyways, he as said, he had a bad feeling about it. It was all wrong.

I asked him what he meant.

He said he didn't know, just didn't feel right about it. I laughed at him, and the laugh wasn't forced. Everything was going to be OK, and his fears were as groundless as mine. Irish gloomers, the two of us. I was still laughing when I went outside again.

Sgt. F reported the patrol all present, but I spot checked equipment anyways. Then I went over the whole operation from start to finish, gave a complete order as though they hadn't heard the thing at least four times through, and actually gone through the motions at least four times. By then it was 2340. I called into the OP and asked for a clearance of the line, then moved the patrol up to the front outpost.

On the way I met Capt. B. and he wished us luck and reminded me that the Colonel had said something about six Silver Stars out of this operation (and I thought maybe a promotion for you) and to be sure to let us know how it came out as soon as we got back to the phone. All I

had to say was SNATCH over the phone, and he would know that we had the Chink in good shape, and he could immediately tell the Colonel who would be at Able OP so that the Colonel could call the Regimental CO to inform him that the old First Bat had come through with the prisoner first and invite him over to breakfast. Maybe he would even have breakfast with everyone on the patrol. And maybe we could have the Chink there too, sort of like a decoration.

Fine, I thought, just fine. SNATCH.

I went out to the outpost. The men were milling around picking up their formation. I called the CO on the SP, and he gave me an all clear on the line. I gave the order to check equipment, lock pieces, and load. I went over my own gear: grenades, three in the grenade pouch on my right hip, one in each trousers pocket, one in each lower field jacket pockets Binoculars slung over neck and tucked into my jacket under wool muffler; knife between holster and grenade pouches; .45, safety on, loaded; flashlight slung over left shoulder.

Everyone ready. I told the OP to notify CO that the patrol was moving out through the wire.

So we went, down the narrow beaten path winding through the barbed wire maze, between the mine fields and the trip flares, through the litter of tin cans and cardboard which marked the MLR for the enemy nearly as well as the line of spoil along the ridge line.

If ever I will have the light of battle in my eyes again, it will never burn as bright as it must have that night. I was walking through danger toward danger and I was exultant, dedicated.

I was leading, because I knew the route best, and because it is easier to control a night patrol by leading the column unless you have a scout you can trust implicitly. More than anything else, I was leading because this one had to be right.

We got outside the wire in good shape, picked up the reels of wire that had been placed there in the daylight because it is too risky to lay wire through a mine field in the dark, hooked in our SP phone, and notified Able OP that the patrol was outside the wire and was proceeding according to plan. Then we started down the long nose that led from the Hill to the Valley, slowly, painstakingly. A long, silent file of men: myself, two AR's, the assault group, the scouts, the base.

Walk ten yards, stop, listen: wind, leaves, bird. Walk two yards, stop, reach down, lift brambles off path. Walk another yard, step around pebbles on path, walk ten yards, stop, listen, look. Wire reel beside that bush. Walk two steps, wires on path. Insulation crackles underfoot. Try off path. Noisy, grass dry, twigs, dangerous mines. Try to move wires. No go. Chance it. Listen. Walk. Stop. Go ahead. Stop. OK. Walk, listen, listen, look, listen.

This is habit now. Every move, however slow and deliberate, was habit. Behind that bush,

over that rise might be slant-eyed death; under those leaves might be a maiming explosion. Yet I moved by habit, automatically repeating the actions of countless nights on that dark path. And then the thoughts began to come.

I have to be careful on patrol, not against making too much noise, for habit guards me from that folly, but careful not to give free reign to those thoughts, lest in the split second it takes to interpret a moving shadow my mind be elsewhere. The only real advantage our Chinese friends enjoy in night patrolling lies in the fact that, being by nature disciplined in their thought, they are free from the boredom, impatience, and imagination that spells the doom of many American soldiers.

The first thing that occurred to me was that this was just like one of those crazy problems I used to dream up and execute when I was training my platoons in the States, and I had much the same sense of playing the heavy handed movie-type soldier-hero as I had prowling around Benning with a piece of chalk in my hand trying to mark one of the "enemy" before he detected my presence.

Then I noticed that it was too damn quiet. As we moved further down into the Valley, the slight wind that had been stirring across the higher ground died down, and the night became still with the awesome still of a church. The moon, that had been behind heavy clouds before, emerged partially to shed a baleful light down the long finger. The air took on the oppressiveness I had noted at sundown. Each step became a major project; each blade of grass broke beneath my tread with a terrifying report. We had to move exasperatingly slowly, and though I had allowed for just such an occurrence, I began to be concerned over our pace.

I had a lot of inexperienced people with me. My Bangers were good. I could almost tell where they were in the column from the lack of noise in that quarter, but some of the others were pretty bad. I got to thinking about what made some men good at night and others not as good as they had to be. It all seemed to center around a man's control over himself. Training takes you just so far. You learn the motions, the precautions, the methods, but when you have seen blood flow once or twice, and the thought that yours could flow just as easily assumes some immediacy, emotion ultimately overcomes the best of training unless the man is strong enough to hold his emotions in check. It seemed to me that the best source of that strength lay in faith, faith in anything: fate, God, anything that enabled a man to place his dependence on something outside himself in that moment when fear eats away his resolve. The man who measures his life by carnal criteria inevitably assigns life a higher value than the man who recognizes spiritual value, and ironically, that higher evaluation usually induces the fear that distracts and kills. It was more than a coincidence that all the volunteers for this patrol were Catholic. A scared man or a tired man is no good at night.

Then the AR men started coughing.

They were right behind me, and all along I had noticed that their breathing was too heavy. Sometimes when we stopped they would be breathing so hard I had to move out ahead to listen, and I was getting peeved at them even before the coughing. The first time one of them coughed I stepped and froze for five minutes by the watch, listening. Not a sound. I turned and looked at him for a long time, and then we moved on. Twenty yards further he coughed again\* Infuriated, I swung around and offered to ram his front teeth down his throat with my .45 if he didn't stop it. He looked scared in the moonlight, and I guess he believed me because he stopped coughing, for a while anyways.

Coughing is deadly. There is no sound quite so human in the night as a cough. A whisper is lost in the rustlings of the trees and the grass. A whistle could be a bird. Movement in the brush might be any of a score of animals that roam no man's land (I used to hunt deer there in the day time). But a cough is a man no matter how stifled or disguised, and you come all alert at the sound. A man doesn't have to cough. The best way to keep from coughing is to watch your conditioning and your smoking, and to keep on the safe side of the wire when you have a bad cold. But even poor condition and a dry throat cannot force a man to cough if he doesn't want to. Here again is the matter of self-control. A man can hold a cough for a long time if he wills it, but if he gets scared or tired, well, the will has other functions to govern at times like those, and a cough comes easy. Mainly it is a\* matter of training, and getting used to not coughing when you want to, so that that too is a matter of habit, and you can put your mind and will to other tasks. But these were new men, these AR men, and I shouldn't condemn them too bitterly.

Nothing stirred during that wait except my soldiers, who were beginning to get impatient. Then the other AR man began coughing, and the first, encouraged, started anew. I decided that it would be best, considering the light now available, and the noise they were making, to move off the trail.

I cut down the right side of the finger into the Valley, across the Valley in a cornfield, and up a draw on the other side, almost at a trot. The draw fed into the ridge that we were to have followed up, and it was an excellent spot for an ambush. Much to my amazement, no one was waiting for us, and we reaches the Graves, a great scarred area on the side of the ridge, without incident, and thanks to the accelerated crossing of the Valley, right on schedule.

The two hackers were coughing miserably. They were part of the three-man group that was to have accompanied me and the Rangers forward to the Chink position. Their job was to have been to remain in cover, protecting our right flank, and blocking the enemy from reinforcing at the point we were to hit. They had been rehearsed and briefed thoroughly, but they weren't essential to the plan. I decided not to take them any further. At the same time I decided not to replace them with any of the other personnel of the patrol because the others hadn't rehearsed their functions. Theirs was a ticklish job, and a man who hadn't seen just where everyone on his side was going to be in the dark up there might pour a magazine or

two right into our backs. The third man in that cover party was carrying a specially zeroed sniper's rifle which he was to have trained on the sentry while we were stalking him, with instructions to fire at the first offensive move he made. Between this bit of insurance and the cover an AR would give that unknown right flank, I chose the latter, and had the man exchange his sniper's rifle for one of the AR's. There was a heated but whispered debate. The AR men didn't want to be left behind. I got mad again. This time I meant what I told them, and they shut up.

The entire patrol consisted of seventeen men. Nine of these were to have been in the group that moved forward is for the work at hand, six men to go into the trench after the sentry we had in mind, three to cover the flank. Of the remainder of the patrol, one group of six remained at the Graves, and a pair of scouts were sent out to the left flank. The group at the Graves consisted of a senior sergeant on the phone to the Able OP, a commo man who carried the radio and supervised the operation of the wire commo, two AR men for protection, and two medics, both carrying litters. We called this sort of group a patrol base, and a base it was, with its direct wire commo with the MLR, its medics, and its emplaced automatic weapons to which a patrol under attack could fall back. Barrages could be placed around the proposed site of the patrol base a day before the patrol was to go out, and in case of heavy pursuit the patrol leader could present his playmates nearly as warm a reception as the MLR. In our case, the base served also as another pair of eyes for Able OP, the nerve center of the operation high on the hill, behind us. With glasses the men in the base could skyline the Chink position at exactly the spot we were going in, and were in a good position to observe and to report on any light signals I might want to send. Their wire was into a net with Able OP, and with Charlie OP, the patrol from Charlie Company that was working in conjunction with us, and our scouts out to the left front. These two scouts gave the OP ears close to the Chink position, as well as a different angle of observation. The AR men I had left behind made the base stronger by one AR and a rifle, but in all other respects the dispositions were as planned.

In the confusion of hooking than the scout's reel of wire into our own, the telephone went out of operation. The shift in the weapons (ARs and sniper rifle) took a long time, what with their arguing and my fuming, and we were getting as much as ten minutes behind schedule\*. The phone was still out, but I decided that I had better push if I expected to hit the Chinks anytime before daybreak. I found the old sergeant I was leaving in charge of the base, told him that I was behind schedule, that I would probably lose more time because of the quiet unless we got some sort of noise to cover our movement, and directed him to call the OP as soon as the wires were in to inform them of my predicament, and to request fire from Baker Company on our right flank onto Hill 528. Baker had given me many a bad turn on patrol with that fire, and I figured it was time to use it to advantage.

Then we moved out. The last part of the route I knew like I owned it. I had been over it so much that for the life of me I can't remember much at all about that specific trip. I do remember feeling in the dark —the moon was setting by then and the shadows were

black— for a tin can I had kicked in the dark two nights before, remember feeling smug at finding it exactly where I had thought it would be, then standing up and accidentally kicking it again. Hubris. Damn.

That clumsiness cost us fifteen minutes of breathless silence. Nothing. Dead still. Then Baker opened up with a .50 cal on Hill 528, and I breathed a sigh of relief. The breaks were starting to come our way. Under the cover of good sporadic fire we progressed very rapidly. I can remember only two delays, both occasioned by false alarms about noises to our left flank. When we were about a hundred yards short of the Chink position. Baker inexplicably stopped firing. It turned out later that the gun had overheated, and it never occurred to them to fire a heavy .30 HMG, or anything else. They just stopped and waited for the gun to cool.

We were in a tough one. We had to move by the inch, quite literally, on our hands and knees, sweeping the trail ahead of us to keep from making noise. It was five minutes to three, and we were supposed to be at the Korean grave by three according to schedule. The moon set at 0300, and that left us just one hour of darkness to get across the remaining fifty yards and back\* I was sweating profusely, and the old sinking feeling was beginning to creep into me when the plane went over. It was a fine big, throaty, masculine plane, and it covered us fine while we worked into the Korean grave. 0305.

I got out my glasses to look for our quarry, thinking while I did so that if I ever ran another of these things I would ask for a plane to come over just, to make noise at the critical time. I had put two pieces of white tape on all the glasses at the place they focused for each man's eyes, so that they could be adjusted in the dark by lining up the white tapes. When I got mine to my eyes I couldn't see anything up in the trench. I checked the focus. It was OK. I wiped the lenses with my scarf, and I was shaking.

The sentry wasn't there. Goddamn! The one thing I hadn't planned on. What do I do now? Then I started to laugh in that real quiet mirthless laugh you laugh when you are up close to the monkeys. The guy had stepped over the hill to answer a call of nature, and in so doing he had saved his life, or his liberty. Most unappreciated human act, I thought. Then I saw him.

He was off to the far right of his beat, over to our left, and he was looking intently down hill toward the white rocks where the two scouts were. Perfect. Absolutely perfect. I pulled the flashlight over my shoulder from where I had it slung, put the wire loop around my neck to leave my hands free for action, and sent three quick flickers to Able OP. No reply. I started to crawl, and the others, now spread out on line with me to the right and left, began to inch forward, keeping abreast of me as planned. I heard the AR man crawl up on the Korean grave behind me, and then we were at the Craters.

I flicked again, and this time I got an answer, a flash of light up in Able OP as though someone had lit a cigarette. I checked the Chink. He hadn't moved. I felt warm, and I was

getting excited. We had him. We had him. Then I checked myself, and we began moving forward again\*

Those 54.4 yards — measured by mil angle in the BO scope using mean mortar range, sir— were a masterpiece of crawling. We made it across the flat piece to the upgrade perfectly. The snag, about ten feet to the right of where the sentinel usually stood loomed big above us. About thirty yards short of the trench, I stopped and checked once more with the glasses.

There was another Chink there, standing beside the first, but I couldn't tell which way he was facing.

I crawled slowly over to where Sgt. C. was.

We had made the crawl in the formation we were going to hit the trench. I was roughly in the center. The line was to guide on me going in and out. To my immediate right was a fellow I'll call Less, because Less is dead now. Less and I were to cover the bunker we figured to be just about ten feet left of the snag, opening into the trench. Less had an SMG, and I carried grenades. Beyond Less there was W. He was to cut the trench on the right, near the snag, and he had orders to open up on anyone who came down the trench toward us with the Chinese burp gun he carried. He was a Ranger, and he was good, and I wasn't much worried about the sentry fifty yards down that trench to the right.

Sgt. C. was to my immediate left, and beyond him was Sgt. F. Both were SFCs, both husky Rangers, both ideal NCOs. They were to go into the trench after the Chink, and the best way I can express my opinion of them is to say that while I was making the crawl I actually worried for fear the two of them wouldn't leave enough of that Chinaman to interrogate, and the whole show would go for naught. Their left flank was covered by a young kid named P. He was carrying some sort of auto weapon, I think maybe an M-2 carbine or a burp gun. P. and Less had come into the company about two weeks before we went up on the MLR from. They were from the same block in Jersey City, and they had gone through basic together. When I put out a call for volunteers for the patrol, P. had been the only one who really wanted to besides the Rangers. I hadn't wanted to take him, mostly because he was green, but Sgt. C. said to take him, and we needed a couple of men to give us cover. Then Less came to me and said that if P. was going, he had to go too, and we had quite a melodramatic scene before I agreed to take him. So far though, both of them had been damn good.

I got to Sgt. C and told him about the Chink's buddy. I told him that I would shoot the one on the right, and he nodded and went over to tell Sgt. F. I waited a bit more, watching the two Chinks in the trench. The two scouts had been instructed to work up to the White Rocks. When the light signal went back to the OP, they were to make a slight noise intended to draw the sentry over toward them. Apparently the scheme had worked better than we had planned, because not only had the sentry get interested in them, but he had called out a

buddy to listen with him. Later I learned that the scouts had reported someone walking towards them from the trench at 0310, and had pulled out. They may actually have heard the sentry move over toward them, but knowing the somewhat erratic courage of the sergeant leading that detail, I have my doubts. However, they had accomplished their mission, because our two friends were still apparently absorbed in something off to our left.

I started forward again.

Elbows out. Lift. Rock forward on toes. Lower. Feel ahead, move twigs. Elbows out. Lift.....

The round heads were visible without the glasses now. Curious round heads. It was getting light. Must be later than we planned. Crater. Ground perfect for crawling. Cratered and pulverized by carefully placed 4.2 mortars two days before. Crater ground, leave trench alone. Don't want them working on trench. God it's light. Can they see us? Can they see us? No movement up there. Only those curious round heads, like the heads of those old wooden clothespins I used for soldiers behind the sand walls of the fort I built under the back porch. Going good. Going good. Bit more and I beam Op for Charlie to hit the back of the hill. God hope they are ready. Should draw their attention to the rear entirely. Then the last few yards. Then we go in.

Elbows out. Lift. Rock. Lower.....

LESS COUGHED! DAMN he coughed! Less coughed. Moment of indecision. Go back? Too late, shoot us up anyways. Freeze? Foolish, probably more on the way right now. Getting late. Can't delay. Grenade range. Can't delay. Do something. GO IN!

I waved them in, and I turned on the beam at the OP. We all stood up into a crouch and started forward, moving quickly and quietly. Where is Charlie Company? Where is Charlie?

Shout. Chinese. Keep going. Noiseless automatons. No control now. Move in, in. Tight fist around you pushing. There's Charlie. The round heads are frozen ahead of me, and then the burp gun opened up on the right. Snap of grenades.

I pulled at the ring of the grenade and it was frozen and grenades were going off underfoot and there is dust everywhere. Ring is off. I throw, and Less hollers GRENADE and I throw another one, and the trench is full of smoke and every now and then a burp gun winks in the dust and then it stops and then only grenades. I try to get out another grenade and I can't. Something the matter with my right hand.

Fingers gone I thought and I was relieved. Wounded, fingers gone.

I hollered PULL OUT and there was no one around me to hear it, and I went back down the hill through the smoke that smelled like the Fourth of July, and I saw Warren to my right

trying to shoot but his gun was jammed, and then I heard Less.

He screamed I am hit, o Christ I am hit had. He was somewhere back up the slope, back in the smoke and the dust.

Then I knew this was the moment I had been looking for, the moment I had come to Korea to find, the moment that would decide whether I was dutyhonorcountrycatholicintelligent...

I was.

I went back up there after him, and I found him right where he was when he coughed, and he answered me when I called. Here sir, he said, and that was the last he said. I grabbed his arm with my left hand, and his arm tore off, and I grabbed the back of his jacket feeling for his belt but he didn't have one on and I thought next time I'll have him wear a belt and somehow I got him up and he ran about twenty yards down the hill and that wasn't easy because he left his foot in the hole where I found him. I stumbled down to him shouting sergeant sergeant sergeant. Something hit me in the eye and there was an explosion and my leg went numb like my hand and it was hard to see but I was still standing and there was a big hole in my leg just like the hole on one of those colored first aid training posters.

W. came, and then F. and then C. C. thought I had gotten a Chink and he said let's go, and F. pulled out the grenades in my canteen pouch and threw them, and I said get Less and W. was trying to lift him. They put him on F.'s back and C. fired at the trench while I tried to get out the pistol.

It was my own pistol, a lightweight Colt, and I wanted to fire it in anger. I called for P. to help Less, but he was already there crying, and C. pulled me, and jerked the flashlight away from me, and I started walking. I called to an AR man to cover us, and he was standing up shooting from the hip and he said he was out of ammo, and I said walk in the open.

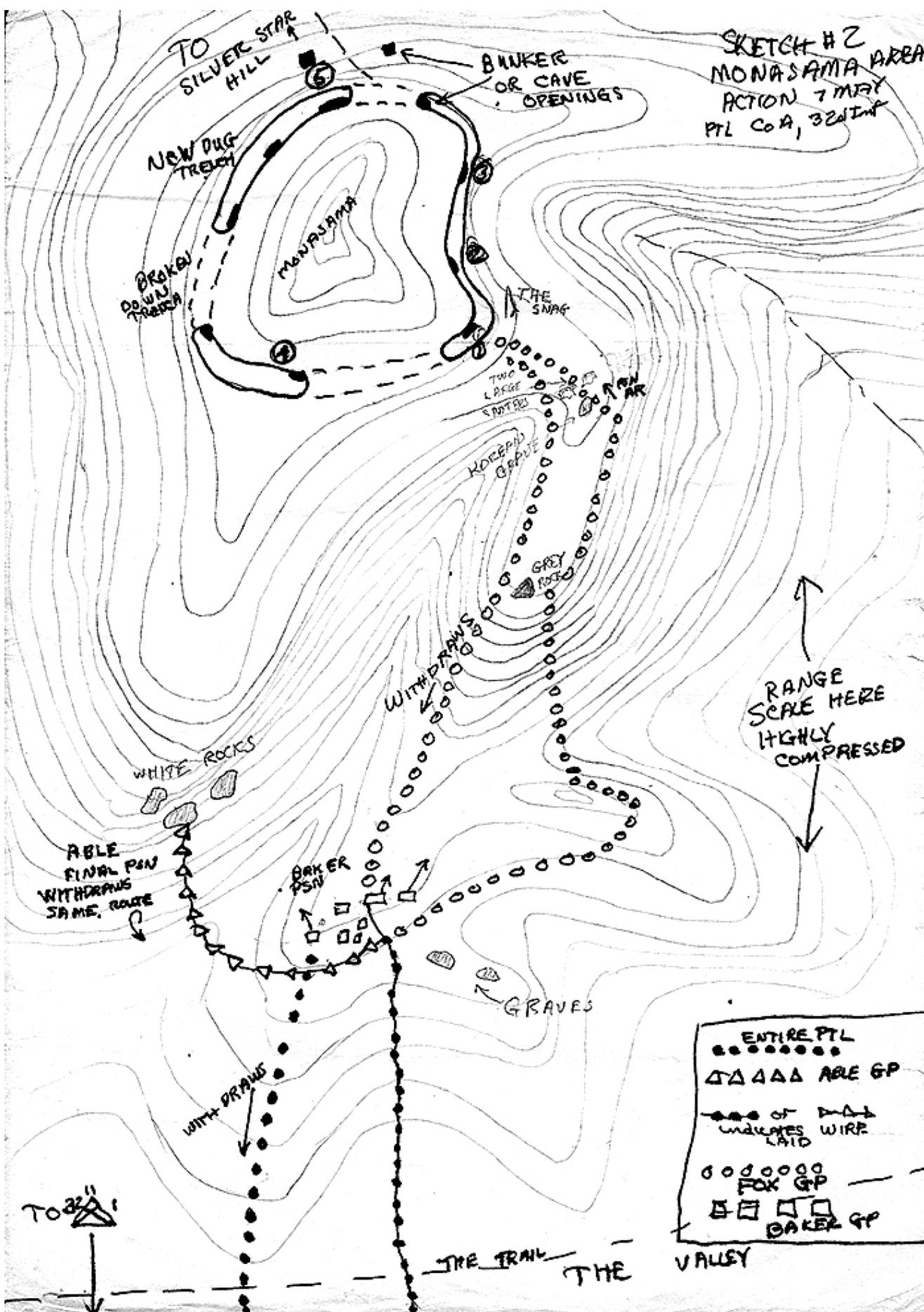
Then we were walking past the Grey Rock and I was saying not yet, don't call in those mortars yet and we were half way down the slope and I said call in the mortars. I walked down the hill and the sun was shining and I was leaning on W. and someone took my .45 and started to shoot it, and then we were in the draw in the Valley, and I was drinking water and I was very tired.

I wanted to vomit badly.





SKETCH # 2  
 MONASAMA AREA  
 ACTION 7 MAY  
 PTL Co A, 32d Inf



RANGE  
 SCALE HERE  
 HIGHLY  
 COMPRESSED

●●●●●●●●	ENTIRE PTL
△△△△△△	ABLE GP
—●—●—●—●—●—●—	INDICATES WIRE LAID
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	FOX GP
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	BAKER GP

TO 32d  
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THE TRAIL — THE VALLEY