

WOLFHOUND REFLECTIONS I

Please share these memories with me. They are written for Wolfhounds, particularly new Wolfhounds, to acquaint them with the people who have made this regiment.

But others are welcome to spend some time here, too -- to get to know and understand these unusual men. These men whose laughter and tears, whose undemanding sacrifice, whose love of America stand between us and those who would destroy us.

Here are tales of heroism beyond the ordinary; of warriors whose love and compassion have become legendary; whose deeds have been so heroic that others have claimed to have accomplished them.

As you read, there will begin to stir in your consciousness the realization that truly this is no ordinary collection of men, no common unit. Somehow, in some way, Wolfhounds become imbued with a spirit which makes them different; sets them apart.

It empowers them to blaze trails, to go beyond the deeds and thoughts of others. And this intangible something feeds upon itself; it grows and grows...

Fanciful?

Read what follows, then tell me so.

Hugh F. O'Reilly
Honorary Sgt. Major

WOLFHOUND MEDALS OF HONOR

PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION

1LT Charles G. Bickman
1LT George G. Shaw

WORLD WAR II

CPT Charles W. Davis
SSG Raymond H. Cooley

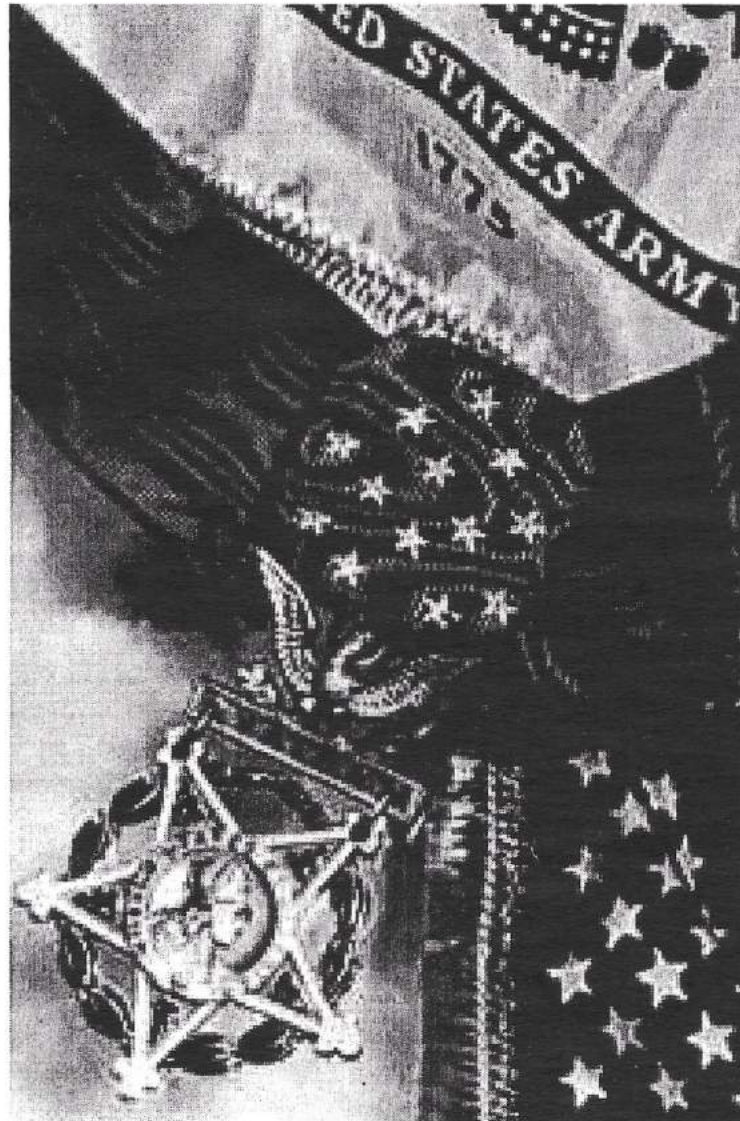
KOREAN WAR

* CPL John W. Collier
* CPT Reginald B. Desiderio
CPT Lewis L. Millett
* 2LT Jerome A. Sudut
* CPL Benito Martinez

VIETNAM WAR

SGT John F. Baker, Jr.
CPT Robert F. Foley
* SGT Charles C. Fleek
* CPT Riley L. Pitts
SSG Paul R. Lambers

* POSTHUMOUS AWARD



MEDAL OF HONOR

ABOVE -- AND FAR BEYOND

Bravery is not an uncommon virtue among Wolfhounds, nor is it confined to men of specific ranks.

Think for a moment about PFC John Baker and Captain Robert Foley.

Two men who on one day, at one place, each won our country's highest award for deeds which also earned them the lasting respect of their Company and their Regiment.

The date: 5 November. The place: Quan Dau Tieng, Viet Nam. The unit: A Company, Second Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. The award: the Medal of Honor.

Details of their truly unbelievable actions, embodying determination to destroy a relentless foe and willingness to sacrifice their lives to protect fellow Wolfhounds, may be found in their citations.

It's enough here to note that Foley, among other deeds, wounded severely and thrown off his feet by an enemy grenade still single-handedly destroyed a three enemy machine gun emplacements and then threw himself on an enemy grenade to protect the lives of his comrades.

And Baker? While destroying several enemy bunkers, evacuating at least six wounded fellow Wolfhounds and leading charge after charge against the Viet Cong, he too was thrown from his feet by an enemy grenade but continued the fight..

Those who wear the Wolfhound crest today stand in spirit beside Foley and Baker, and cannot help but swell with pride. The legend lives on.

WORD TO THE WISE

"The morale and esprit of soldiers are mirrors of confidence in their leaders."

-- General of Armies Omar Bradley
Commander of the Wolfhound 1st Battalion, 1925

WRONG NUMBER

When the Wolfhounds embarked for Korea in the first week of July, 1950, many young Osaka civilians tried to join them. One who succeeded (probably with Wolfhound help!) was a Korean handyman who worked at 27th Infantry Headquarters.

During the first few weeks, he was invaluable to the Regiment as an interpreter, but his greatest contribution to the initial success in Korea of the Wolfhounds came about almost by accident.

One afternoon he idly picked up a telephone outside a schoolhouse the Wolfhounds were using as a CP. To his surprise he found himself listening to a North Korean army officer relaying orders to a subordinate command!

Like all communist armies, the North Koreans were sadly lacking communications equipment, so this particular unit was using the public telephone system. It cost them many casualties...

LOVE STORY

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a little girl at the Holy Family Home in Osaka named Keiko. She was a shy, sweet child.

When the Wolfhounds visited the orphanage, the children would flock around them -- all but Keiko. She'd slip away quietly, or just hide her face in a corner.

So Keiko never got to enjoy bubble gum or any of the other exotic things the other children enjoyed -- things of which the Wolfhounds seemed to have an endless supply.

She didn't want to be hurt again. You see, several times grown-ups had pointedly avoided her, not able to hide the disgust they felt.

Keiko had been born with a social disease, and because things like penicillin were not available in that devastated country, the ravages were all too visible on her little face.

But one day a Wolfhound spied her slipping away. He picked her up in his arms, hugged her to his chest and kissed her.

Frightened, bursting with joy, her little body quivering, Keiko smiled and hugged him back.

If the Lord smiles on the Wolfhounds, it is because of men like this.

GUADALCANAL STORY

Fighting his way through Japanese troops surrounding units of the Second Battalion on Guadalcanal, Captain Charles Davis, Executive Officer of the Battalion, was immediately involved in the fire fight which continued through the night. The following morning he volunteered to lead an assault on the enemy position dominating the terrain which was blocking a marine advance.

Leaping to his feet, he charged forward, but on his first effort his rifle jammed. Drawing his pistol, Davis shouted, "Follow me!" to the Wolfhounds and dashed toward the foe.

Electrified by his daring, they did follow and seized the hill after frenzied hand-to-hand combat. The capture of this position weakened the overall Japanese resistance and enabled the marine unit to advance and seize its objective.

CARRY ON...

Retired Major General Guy S. Meloy III, a Wolfhound legend himself, was selected to be the first Honorary Commander of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Bragg.

He accepted the honor, for in his words, "I couldn't deny that it was also a first rate outfit," but he goes on to say "my affinity for the 27th is stronger, even though I did spend so many years with airborne units."

As a major, he commanded the First Battalion in Viet Nam, a story about which we'll tell you on another page. Interestingly enough, his father served in the Wolfhound First Battalion in the 1930s.

'NUFF SAID

Wild days, learning days, deadly days.

Dick Cole was the Commander of A Company, First Battalion, and he was busy. Directing his platoon leaders, directing the artillery, receiving directions from the Battalion Commander, Major Guy Meloy. And half the time flat on his belly shooting VC's out of the trees, which he should not have been doing.

An AK-17 round slammed into the dirt just below his elbow, knocking it out from under him, throwing his face into the dirt.

First Sergeant "Pop" Whitus, battle-hardened, laconic, saw it all. And without saying a word, the looks he threw at Cole did the job.

First, "Oh shit -- we lost the old man." A moment later, "Ah, thank God! We still have a company commander."

Finally, "Look, kid -- this company needs you. Stop screwing around with that M-16."

CHEWED OUT

When Wolfhound Commander J. H. "Mike" Michaelis was promoted to Brigadier General and assigned as Assistant Division Commander in the first year of the Korean War, the officers of the Regiment gave him a going away party. During the festivities the S-2, Major Willard Hawke, told him: "General, I lost forty pounds serving under you -- and I hope you enjoyed every bite of it!"

BIG PURPLE HEART

"Gunner" Cloninger is well remembered by the Wolfhounds of WWII and Korea as one of the great mortar men of those conflicts. Some claimed he could drop a shell cleanly into a chimney without touching the sides. The Gunner won battlefield commissions with the Wolfhounds in both wars and received an unbelievable number of Purple Hearts -- eight! He also won the Silver Star and several Bronze stars. His bellowing, "Wolfhound!" was a roar that could often be heard above the din of battle and yet this fearsome warrior was also a zealous supporter of the Wolfhound Orphanage.

The men of his company, inspired by this great soldier, often made the orphanage their first stop in Japan when on R&R from Korea. Once, another company boasted that its men had tossed over \$900 into the helmet for the orphans. They made the mistake of boasting where the Gunner could hear them. That month, his platoon chipped in \$1,100!

A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME

Although complete details of his heroic action are not available, 1st Lt. Charles Bickham not only earned our nation's highest honor, he paved the way, laid the groundwork for the many brave Wolfhound warriors who have followed in his footsteps.

It is a story, however brief, that must be told.

It was shortly after the turn of the century, in the infancy of the 27th, that the Regiment fought in its first major battle at Lake Lanao in the Philippine Islands. Here in this baptism of fire, Bickham twice crossed a wide fire-swept field to save the lives of wounded fellow Wolfhounds.

Similar feats by other Wolfhounds were to follow over the years, inspired perhaps by Bickham's heroism. Certainly his actions laid the groundwork of self-sacrifice and professionalism, the mark of Wolfhound warriors.

ONE PUNCH HARDING

Colonel Edwin F. Harding, who commanded the Wolfhounds in the early 1930's, was not an imposing figure. Although ramrod straight, his slender body and less than impressive height made him difficult to find in a crowd.

But he was a Wolfhound. That short, tough body housed an indomitable heart, and a never-say-die spirit. It also housed a degree of courage which had the potential for inviting trouble in extra-large portions.

One fall day at Schofield Barracks that courage, that spirit, earned him a reputation for physical power which, while untrue, he accepted gleefully.

It seems that the Wolfhounds and their arch-enemies in athletics, the 35th Infantry "Cacti", got into a massive brawl over the result of a football game. Hundreds of men from each regiment threw themselves wildly into the fray.

The good colonel was on the spot. Because of his position, he had no choice -- he must make a move to stop the brawl.

Into the midst of the surging crowd of inflamed soldiers, he strode bravely, arm raised, palm facing outward. Almost at once, a huge soldier, eyes red with fury, charged him like a raging bull. From one side, another colossus of a man swung a ham-like fist which landed flush on the chin of the maddened brawler, felling him like an ox.

His savior disappeared into the crowd, leaving the colonel standing over "his" victim in the middle of an awe-struck circle.

No one had seen the punch, but everyone could see the result, and the colonel, the triumphant gladiator, standing over his defeated foe.

The brawl ended instantly. Colonel Harding and his lethal punch became another Wolfhound legend.

WARRIOR

Lumboy, Luzon, 1945. The final year of World War II and the battle still raged in the Philippines.

Staff Sergeant Raymond Cooley of B Company was to demonstrate there the kind of premeditated heroism that has distinguished so many Wolfhounds. His was an action accepting certain injury and possible loss of life purposely taken to protect his fellow Wolfhounds.

Having already destroyed an enemy machine gun and crew and blasting several foes out of their holes with grenades, he armed one more missile. Wolfhounds and enemy rushed toward each other so quickly that he knew that his comrades were truly in harm's way from his grenade.

Cooley covered the explosive with his own body. Deliberately, carefully.

Greater love hath no man than he who lays down his life for his friends. Where are the words which can truly describe men like these?

THE BOWLING ALLEY

About ten miles north of Taegu, a provincial capital in Korea, a dusty, nameless road ran between the hamlets of Cho'one'yong and Tabu Dong. Nameless in 1950, it is now known by the nickname "the Bowling Alley".

It's where General Walton Walker, Commander of the 8th Army, sent his "Fire Brigade." It was here that the Reds planned to split the UN forces in two, and drive through to Pusan to end the war.

Shrewd, battle-hardened General Kim Mu Chung, former leader of the famed Chinese 8th Route Army, commanded the North Korean II Corps which was chosen to do the job. Many of his troops, the backbone of his corps, had fought the Japanese during World War II -- wily, ruthless, dedicated.

There was only one flaw in their plans. They had never met the Wolfhounds.

Time after time their Russian T-34 tanks came charging down the road at the Wolfhounds, their guns belching fire and smoke. After four fruitless assaults, the road littered with shattered tanks, Kim withdrew his battered corps. Next, he assaulted the Wolfhound's flank and rear with the remnants of his corps.

In the nick of time, seven B-26s appeared, searching for an alternate target.

The Wolfhounds gave them one. More than twenty tons of bombs rained down on the hapless enemy, and General Chung decided to leave for more pleasant surroundings.

WOLFHOUND WARRIOR

The line of Wolfhounds who have earned the Medal of Honor seems endless and yet each of these men is an overpowering beacon, lighting the way for other Wolfhounds to be all -- and more -- than they can be.

Paul Lambers, sergeant in A Company, Second Battalion, was such a warrior. When his platoon was assaulted by a full battalion of Viet Cong in Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam, Lambers rose to heights of bravery equaled by few men in the history of warfare.

His platoon leader wounded and out of action, Lambers took over with a rocketing flare of gallantry that defies description. He was everywhere at once -- repairing a recoilless rifle, detonating claymore mines, hurling grenades, moving from position to position, urging on his fellow Wolfhounds.

For five hours he was everywhere at once, directing artillery and helicopter fire, repeatedly exposing himself under a hail of enemy weaponry.

His foe died or melted away; but the tale of Lambers' gallantry has joined those of other Wolfhound heroes.

WOLFHOUND LEADERSHIP

There are so many stories around about the Wolfhounds, individually and as a unit; so many tales that would be laughed out of existence if they were products of a novelist's pen. On these pages the reader can find accounts of extraordinary heroism, so extraordinary that "above and beyond" has a hollow ring when used to describe them. Not the least of these records of Wolfhound courage concerns Captain Reginald Desiderio.

But there were other lesser known acts by "Rusty" Desiderio. One such act came to light just hours before he led his men to glory and he himself made the ultimate sacrifice. He was to earn the Medal of Honor that day, but that story will be told on another page. Rusty, as he was known to his family, didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk.

Early in the morning of that cold day in November, one of the men in E Company received a letter from his mother, a letter that truly startled him. "Tell Captain Desiderio," she said, "that I am truly grateful. The \$50 arrived just in time." Somehow, perhaps in an overheard conversation, Desiderio had heard that she'd been having a bad time financially. The next morning, he sent the money without a word to anyone.

What a man! What a Wolfhound!

BLOOD OF A HERO

How does one single out one man above all others when it comes to assessing their heroic deeds? Take Corporal Benito Martinez for example, an A Company Wolfhound, and the actions which earned him the Medal of Honor at Satae-ri, Korea.

Martinez was manning a listening post when it was attacked by a reinforced company. In bitter fighting, it was soon obvious that his position would be encircled. He stood his ground, raking the enemy with machine gun fire, inflicting many casualties.

Responding to several sound power phone calls, he insisted that it would be too costly to rescue him. Frenzied enemy troops rushed the emplacement in the darkness, forcing him into a limited withdrawal with only an automatic rifle and a pistol.

For six more hours he frustrated the attempted enemy advance, littering the ground with the bodies of his foe before succumbing to incredibly overwhelming numbers.

His magnificent stand enabled his Wolfhound company to reorganize, attack, and regain the key terrain.

LITTLE SHAVERS

In any discussion of the Wolfhound tradition of adopting the children of the Holy Family Home, two civilians can never be forgotten. One Japanese, one American.

The efforts of the Japanese steel manufacturer, Akio Aoyama, are described on other pages.

The other man, "Jack" Smith was a Red Cross director assigned for duty with the 27th. In the fifties, it was not uncommon to see such an assignment, especially if the Regiment was in a separate location.

At any rate, Jack Smith actually found the Holy Family Home before the Wolfhounds did. It is not known how Smith discovered the Home, but find it he did.

He began a bit of "requisitioning" of his own. Besides the food he bought out of his own pocket, he felt certain his supplies could be better used than by taking up space in his supply room.

So the kids had no soap? Well, it might have looked strange to see them lathering up with Burma Shave, but it got them clean!

THE FIRST PAGE

The Wolfhound's baptism of fire, the Regiment's first major victory, was earned at Lake Lanao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands.

It was here that First Lieutenant George Shaw's courage played a large part in writing the first page in the never-ending saga of Wolfhound courage. Heading an assault on a strongly held enemy redoubt, he saw that all of the men around him were wounded or killed in the attack.

Undaunted, he fought off counterattack after counterattack, keeping his foothold until the capture of the redoubt was certain.

His blazing courage was an exciting and inspiring forerunner of Wolfhound daring in the years to come.

President Theodore Roosevelt himself cabled his personal congratulations to the Wolfhounds on their victory at Lake Lanao.

WISE MEN ?

During the 1950s, it was customary to have a Division-wide competition for the best Yuletide display by a company.

Although every Wolfhound unit competed, none had ever won the coveted first prize. First Sergeant George Dizon decided this time would be different.

And it was!

For his company's Nativity scene, he assembled live animals -- a goat, a cow, a jackass

Tastefully arranged lights illuminated the manger and all the other lights in the company were extinguished. Christmas hymns played softly in the background and the wise men, plus Joseph and Mary were garbed in Government Issue sheets.

The judges finally arrived and were delighted with what they saw; so much that they announced that with only one battalion to go, 1SG Dizon's display looked like the winner. However, one company in that final battalion had such an interesting display that the judges returned for a second look at the Wolfhounds.

Disaster!!

Two "wise men" were galloping around on the jackass, the other was chasing the goat, the cow left her calling card in front of the manger and the stereo was belting out rock and roll.

The Wolfhounds didn't win that year either.

LESSON LEARNED

One cold November evening in 1949, my thoughts turned to the orphanage, which I had seen for the first time only a couple of weeks before. I decided to pay the kids a visit -- more or less to see what they did with their spare time.

This was before they moved into the new buildings. They were living in abandoned, temporary Japanese Army barracks -- long, low, dirt floored shacks with raised wooden platforms on each side. The platforms, I learned later, served as supports for the children's bedrolls.

That evening it was cold -- and there was only one large hibachi (charcoal pot) for heat. Most of the glass panes had disappeared from the windows, replaced by newspaper stiffened with rice paste. What a dreary scene!

But just as I entered, a little girl of about ten got up on the platform and began to sing and dance, accompanied by the singing and hand-clapping of the other children.

Bright little almond eyes flashing, their childish voices were piping out a happy tune. They seemed impervious to their cold and gloomy surroundings.

Those little tikes taught me a lesson I shall never forget. All of my petty inconveniences, the annoyance of being ordered to do things I didn't want to do, a dozen other minor grievances -- my griping about all of them seemed so shameful. I felt pitifully small in the presence of all those little ones.

I couldn't help but thank God for the chance He gave me to know and learn from them...

ATTLEBORO

It is an interesting fact of our culture that most Americans are completely unaware of the deeds, or even the names, of those whose courage has protected and ensured their way of life.

Such a man was Captain Riley Pitts, who commanded C Company of the Second Battalion, 27th Infantry Wolfhounds. But in whatever Valhalla our country's heroes rest, Riley Pitts must surely hold a place of honor.

Fighting furiously while leading his company through dense jungle in Ap Dong, Viet Nam, Pitts time and time again disregarded his own safety. Despite a rain of enemy fire from three directions, he pinpointed hostile positions one after another, destroying the enemy as he moved.

Pitts died in that jungle, creating a legacy for his fellow Americans which cannot die.

Remember Riley Pitts...

FIRE IN THE HOLE

Battle-hardened veterans of the Chinese Eighth Route Army used every trick in the book, military and psychological, to demoralize and defeat their enemies. In Korean combat, their screaming charges were usually accompanied by shrill bugle blasts echoing through the hills, designed to strike terror in the hearts of their enemies.

They met their match in Captain Lewis Millett's Wolfhound E Company.

That indomitable Wolfhound not only taught his men to shout "Kill!" in Chinese when they attacked, but they frightened the wits out of the Reds with a hand-held fire siren!
