

The following article, originally run in the New York Times, December 11, 1950, and edited with additional remarks, was contributed by Ed Miller, who served with Eddie Doyal in the Marine Corps.

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*Ed Miller's comments regarding the article:*

*(Minor spelling and other corrections have been made to this article by Marines Roy Cannon {Connecticut} and Bob Talmadge {Hawaii by way of Connecticut}. It must be remembered that this article was written up the day the Marine Division completed its epic withdrawal, and the Times reporter could not have known all of the complex details involved in the withdrawal. Hence the bridge being rebuilt, when it was in fact repaired with four two thousand- two hundred pound bridge sections that had to be delivered by parachute drop at Koto-ri - courtesy of the United States Air Force).*

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Aloha all,

Passing on this timely, brief article from a [December 11, 1950](#) issue of the

New York times, about the fighting withdrawal (attack in a different

direction) of the 1st Marine Division consisting of 15,000 men, including

attached units of the Army's 7th Infantry Division and a company of Royal Marine Commando against a Chinese Field Army of 120,000 men in twelve

divisions, 8 to 1 odds.

Our commanding general, Major General Oliver P. Smith, summed it up in

after thought.... "The Chinese Army never did stand a chance!".

Semper Fidelis.....Bob Talmadge

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New York Times

December 11, 1950

## MARINES RETURN FULL OF FIGHT AFTER A NIGHTMARE OF DEATH

WITH THE U. S. MARINES, Korea, Dec. 10 - United States Marines walked out of almost a fortnight of freezing hell today (December 10, 1950), full of fight after a nightmare of death in Korea's icy mountains. The United States First Marine Division was rolling slowly into the northeastern Korea plains of Hamhung. The men's eyes and bearded faces, their tattered parkas and the strangely, careless way they carried their rifles showed the strain.

*These thousands of Leathernecks did it on guts.*

They turned their encirclement into one of the fightingest retreats in military history. It was the longest pullback in Marine records..... the Marine struck right back. When orders were given to pull back, the Leathernecks responded with an offensive. For almost a week they matched guts and wits against Chinese mass tactics. Neither was enough to win. They had to pull out.

Five days after leaving Yudam-ni the Marines (5th & 7th Marine Regiments)

reached Hagaru-ri, at the south end of the reservoir. There they joined

another small group that was encircled by strong enemy forces.

Elements of a third Marine regiment (1st Marines) were under attack at Koto-ri,

ten road miles to the south. At daybreak, December 7th, the Hagaru-ri Marines started southward toward Koto-ri. For twenty-four hours they fought one of

the bloodiest battles of the Korea War.

When they reach Koto-ri it was a gruesome sight - wounded men with their

blood frozen to their skins, their clothes stiff with ice, grotesque dead men

lying across trailers and stretchers, live men stumbling along, grimacing from frostbite, using their rifles as crutches. (Over 5,000 wounded were evacuated

by air - added by Roy Cannon)

Four thousand wounded were evacuated by air from Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri

up to two days ago. More have been flown out since. Most of these were

Marines, the others were remnants of two battalions of the Army's Seventh

Infantry Division, which was cut off and sliced up on the east side of the

reservoir at the same time the Leathernecks were catching hell on the west.

The count of the dead is high. Two days ago nearly 200 bodies were nosed

into a single grave by the bulldozer. There was no time for more elaborate arrangements.

The United States First Marine Division, one of the country's finest, has

suffered heavily. The Communist enemy knows this. The Leathernecks

inflicted casualties on the enemy many times those they suffered. The

weather also took a heavy toll of Chinese.

Tension greeted the order for all the Marines to break from Koto-ri. One

senior officer wept. A grizzled Marine blurted: "These kids are too damn

**good to have this happen to them."**

Saturday at sunrise, patrols struck out from Koto-ri toward Hamhung.

**Intelligence reports had said the enemy was in this area in strength. There**

**were fears that another bloodbath was in store similar to that on the Hagaru-ri/Koto-ri road earlier. But the patrols reached their objectives on schedule.**

**One suffered moderate casualties; the other made it almost without incident.**

**Immediately after these groups had left, the vehicular columns began to move. Equipment considered more of a burden than its actual value was destroyed.**

**By noon the column was stretched about two miles south of Koto-ri.**

Dismal little Koto-ri lies on a plateau 3,300 feet above sea level. for two miles

**south, the narrow road if anything, goes up. Then it twists down a narrow gorge twelve miles to the valley. Saturday and today it was covered with ice.**

**The temperature was 25 degrees below zero.**

**For four hours the column stood motionless. A bridge a few miles below the**

**crest had been blown by the Reds. Before the Marine and Army engineers**

**could work on it, a company of Marines had to drive off a pocket of Chinese guarding it. This was done. Fifteen Chinese were killed and fifty captured.**

**Others fled. A new bridge was built.**

(Bridge was actually repaired, not rebuilt - added by *Bob Talmadge*).

**Then the column started to roll, but road conditions made progress slow.**

**By nightfall Saturday some 200 vehicles had moved across the new bridge.**

**About 9 p.m. artillery dropped several rounds in the vicinity of the bridge.**

**One shell hit a truck. As the enemy had not used artillery in this area before,**

and the fire apparently was coming from the bottom of a hill where a friendly battery was known to be in position, observers concluded it was friendly fire.

Throughout the night there was sniping from the hills overlooking the winding road. Shortly after midnight the column came to a halt. It did not move appreciably for four hours. Two miles south of the bridge, at a hairpin turn, two trucks had skidded and blocked the road. About 100 husky Marines shoved them out of the way.

The column, stretching bumper to bumper all the way up the road, moved in fits and starts. Just before daylight the mountain grade became less severe and the turns less harrowing. The troops were nearing the bottom.

One of the Marines on a truck had a Korean dog. It had been whining most of the night. As the full light of day appeared the dog got up, stretched a bit and wagged its tail. It was 7:30 A.M. The dog's cheerfulness appeared to have been caught from its Leatherneck companions, for whom nearly two weeks of concentrated hell had just ended. The Marines rubbed their sleepless red eyes and grinned.

The first contact between the Marines and a rescue force was by a Marine battalion led by Maj. Webb D. Sawyer of Toledo, Ohio (CO, 2nd Bn/7th Marines) and patrols of an Army task force led by Brig. Gen. Armistead D. Meade, (AsstDivCmdr,3rdDiv/USA) of Huntington, West VA.

There was no formal link-up with the Third (Army) Division forces that had thrust up from the south. The Marine column had proceeded in total

**darkness past individual members of the southern force without stopping.**

**After daylight, leading elements of the Marines continued southward from**

**the juncture point in the vicinity of Chinhung-ni, too weary to care about  
any formalities.**

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