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TITLE

Night Retrograde Movements  
in Mountainous Terrain

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Roster Nr 132

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PREFACE

24 January 1956

Without the aid of Captain Arthur H. Lindeman, a member of Advanced Class #2, this monograph could not have been written. Captain Lindeman, who was a platoon leader throughout the action discussed, was invaluable to the author in clarifying and verifying actions of the company.

The author, who was also a platoon leader with the company, qualifies himself as an expert on the actions covered.

In reading this monograph it is suggested Annexes C and D (sketches of tactical situation) be opened out and referred to constantly.

The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author -- not necessarily that of The Infantry School or the Department of the Army.

  
Signature

## INTRODUCTION

A retrograde movement is defined as: 'a movement to the rear or away from the enemy. It may be forced by the enemy, or it may be made voluntarily. Retrograde movements include withdrawals from action, retirements, and delaying actions.' (2:324)

This monograph is a discussion of two successive night withdrawals by a company size unit. The first withdrawal was more-or-less made under ideal circumstances while the second was made under very trying conditions. There were principles strictly adhered to and many of necessity violated.

The action involving Company G, 7th Cavalry Regiment on the 5, 6, and 7 September 1950 is what we shall analyze. The purpose is twofold; to develop the incidents and circumstances surrounding a night withdrawal in mountainous terrain and to correct some of the major errors in the story published in the book 'Combat Actions in Korea' by Captain Russell A. Gugeler. (4) To endeavor to correct all of the discrepancies would lose the first purpose completely.

Since the story 'Attack to the Rear' was first published in the book by Captain Gugeler, it has been a source of much chagrin to the author of this monograph. Why were none of the platoon leaders interviewed or consulted on the facts? All four were with the company after the action, are alive, and are still in the army. The four platoon leaders, who were second lieutenants at the time, were Captain Richard E. Tobin 059329 1st platoon, Captain Arthur H. Lindeman 059177 2d platoon, Captain Harold R. Anderegg 059281 4th platoon, and the author Captain Lawrence J. Ogden 059372 3rd platoon.

Captain Gugeler interviewed only two sergeants and the company commander; and even though he had obvious access to official documents (4:46),

many important points are incorrect. Only a few will be elaborated upon in this monograph.

Due to the aggressive nature of the American soldier and the effect upon morale of a withdrawal or retrograde movement, there are few documents available on such actions. This is quite understandable as no one is proud to retreat or withdraw. Due to our limited man power, it is almost certain that such actions will be a necessity in the event of another conflict; particularly, in the beginning of such a war.

With the hope that such a necessity never arises, this monograph is written as an aid to any small unit commander who may be forced to make a night withdrawal under trying conditions.

## DISCUSSION

In analyzing any type action a thorough knowledge of the unit involved is a necessity. How is the unit's morale, what is their background, who are their leaders, what is their experience---all of these questions should be answered.

Company G was commanded by Captain Herman L. West, who had taken the company from Japan to Korea. Prior to September 1950, West had already established himself as probably the finest company commander in the regiment through the roughest fighting. He had the complete confidence of his officers and men.

The platoon leaders, all second lieutenants and replacement officers fresh from the basic class at Fort Benning, had been with the company from periods ranging from one month to two weeks. All four platoon leaders were classmates, and close personal friends before arriving in Korea. Prior to this action the men of Company G had seen them under pressure, and the platoon leaders had won their confidence.

The enlisted men of Company G cannot be spoken of too highly. The large majority had arrived with the division, and had been through much bitter fighting. Generally, they were young in age and not what would be considered 'an old soldier' in length of service, however, a few of the older non-coms remained with the company in spite of the extremely rugged terrain of Korea. The men had been separated from the boys by September 1950, and there were no children in Company G at the time involved. The esprit was excellent in spite of the continuous pressure of the Pusan Perimeter and Company G, though greatly understrength, was a well disciplined, well led, battle wise outfit throughout the action.

How important are these factors in a retrograde movement? Why are esprit, confidence, experience, and knowledge necessary? Too often from our

experience in the Korean conflict the word 'bug-out' appeared. Who was to blame.....many times the officer's were held solely responsible, and, in isolated cases this probably was correct; however, the author firmly believes that all of the above mentioned factors are equally important, and the lack of one could possibly, under trying circumstances, cause panic or that infamous word 'bug-out'.

In the early days of September 1950 the North Koreans, still flush with numerous victories, were applying heavy pressure on the United Nations forces in an all out effort to reach Pusan. It was about this time that the late General Walker issued the now famous order of 'stand or die' to all units.

At this time Company G was occupying Hill 300, just north of Waegwan in the central sector of Korea. (Annex C) The mission of Company G was to hold Hill 300 and support the 1st battalion by fire on their attack on Hill 519. Although not under any direct pressure, the company was in a precarious position. Company F had previously occupied Hill 300 and there, had been overrun. They were replaced by Company G. There were many dead of both sides on the hill when Company G moved up to occupy it, and the hill was covered with all types of equipment and filth imaginable. All of this indicated to the men the type of fighting which had taken place. To make matters worse, as Company G was consolidating its position late in the afternoon, a violent thunderstorm started. This prevented the removal of American dead for another day.

Company G continued to occupy Hill 300 until 5 September 1950. The company was under intermittent fire, but had received no direct attacks since relieving the remnants of Company F. The 1st battalion had been unsuccessful in their attempt to secure Hill 519 and the 3rd battalion, which was newly arrived, was committed; they were unsuccessful too. Early

in the afternoon of 5 September the company commander informed the platoon leaders that the company would withdraw that night. Captain West did not know the exact time, but the circumstances were ideal.

The platoon leaders had plenty of time and opportunity to inform all men of the company of the withdrawal and the plan. All equipment which could not be carried was to be destroyed, this naturally included the enemy equipment on the hill. Also the company was not under any direct pressure from the enemy.

With such conditions existing the men did a thorough job. They went to work immediately preparing to leave and by dark the company was ready. The exact time was still not known, so normal night activities took place. Listening posts, an ambush at the bottom of the hill, and a 100% alert was maintained. Everyone was thoroughly oriented, had accomplished their job, and was waiting. Communications were perfect.

At 0300 hours on 6 September the call came from Captain West to start moving out. Due to the prior plans and ideal circumstances, the platoons withdrew from the hill without incident. The withdrawal was as if executed in a training problem by experienced school troops.

When the platoons of Company G reached their assembly areas at the bottom of Hill 300, Captain West informed the platoon leaders that the company's mission was to attack Hill 465 to their rear and clear it of enemy. All of the men were aware enemy occupied this hill; and even though it was to their rear, it was a case of live and let live until the morning of 6 September.

Company G started up Hill 465 in a column of platoons in column with the first platoon leading, followed by the second platoon, weapons platoon, and the third platoon in that order. As the first and second platoons

approached the top of Hill 465, they came under intense enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire. The platoons immediately returned the fire and a heavy fire fight ensued. This action started at approximately 1000 hours and continued throughout the day. The first and second platoons continued to advance and engage the enemy as the remainder of the company moved up Hill 465. (4:41) Due to the excellent enemy selection of positions, it was impossible to get close enough to make a frontal assault. There were only two approaches to the enemy positions and both of these were very narrow, limiting their use to one platoon. These two approaches were covered by such accurate fire that an assault from the positions of the first and second platoons locations would have been nothing but sheer folly. The mortar (Company G had only one 60mm mortar) was brought forward, and as the forward observer was attempting to adjust fire, he was quickly wounded. The third and fourth platoons could not be employed to help the first and second platoons because of the limited approaches.

In 'Combat Actions in Korea' Captain Gugeler states '... , Captain West directed the 2nd Platoon (Lt. Larry Ogden) to circle south and attack the high ground under the 1st Platoon's covering fire. Ogden's platoon advanced to within fifty yards of the peak before it was stopped by enemy fire.'(4:41) Later in his discussion Gugeler continues; 'Ordinarily, an infantry platoon or company that advances almost unresisted to within fifty yards of its objective, becomes pinned down and then, when the volume of supporting fire is increased, withdraws without casualties, can justifiably be censured for a lack of aggressiveness. Why didn't Lieutenant Ogden's platoon attack instead of withdraw? On 6 September 1950, Eighth Army, after successive withdrawals, was trying to stop, reorganize, and hold a defensive position. It is not an easy thing to change overnight the attitude and the thinking

of an army that has become imbued with the spirit of withdrawing. The officers and men of Company G, along with many others in Eighth Army at this time, were perhaps not psychologically prepared to vigorously assail a hostile position--even one to their rear.' (4:45)

Captain Gugeler has the author erroneously placed as the 2nd Platoon leader. The 2nd Platoon leader was Captain Arthur H. Lindeman. (Annex A) Gugeler's discussion intimates the lack of aggressiveness of the 2nd Platoon leader and definitely implies that the officers and men of Company G were psychologically deficient for their failure to assault Hill 465.

As to the reference to the 2nd Platoon leader, please see Annex B; no further discussion will be necessary.

The intimation that an assault was warranted could come only from someone without the slightest idea of the terrain and situation. Gugeler's comment on the psychological being of the officers and men of Company G is not worthy of discussion here.

During the remainder of the day the first and second platoons continued to attempt to secure Hill 465 while the third and fourth platoons started to dig in. All platoons of Company G were under extremely accurate sniper fire during the entire day. (Annex D)

At approximately 1500, Captain West received word from battalion that the company was to break contact at dark, move around the enemy, and fifteen hundred yards to the rear. (4:42) At this point Company G would meet the remaining elements of the battalion and set up a new line. This information was received by way of a SCR 300 radio and was the last communication from battalion, for shortly thereafter West's radio went dead.

After receiving the message, Captain West informed the third platoon leader of the company mission and instructed him to go on a reconnaissance and select the route. The third platoon would lead the company that night.

West then sent messengers to the first and second platoon leaders informing them of the new mission, and that they were to continue to engage the enemy until dusk. They were to then slowly break contact and withdraw, rejoining the remainder of the company. All members of the third and fourth platoons were informed of the mission but were instructed to continue to dig in. Some men of the third and fourth platoons were told to start working on make-shift litters. There were seriously wounded and they would have to be carried.

It was a much relieved company when the order was disseminated. Every man in Company G was well aware that to remain in the present position that night would have almost certainly been fatal.

Now for the second time in two days Company G was to make a night withdrawal; however, circumstances were completely different. From Hill 300, as was discussed earlier, it was almost routine. In this case from Hill 465 the company's position was extremely critical. The company was surrounded by enemy. The enemy held the commanding terrain. The men were tired and hungry. There was no chance of any type of resupply. There were seriously wounded who had to be evacuated, and communications had gone out.

In spite of the circumstances word was given to all men of the impending move. This essential part of any retrograde movement was carried by 'word of mouth'. (1:2) Few men knew the complete details due to the situation; however, the mere fact that a withdrawal was to take place had to be sufficient in this case. Also the fact that the men of the third and fourth platoons continued to dig in probably aided in deceiving the enemy. Due to the accurate sniper fire which was coming at the men of the third and fourth platoons, they did not have to be encouraged very much to continue to dig. There was no natural protection where they were situated, and two men had already been killed from the third platoon alone by this sniper fire.

At dusk the second platoon started to withdraw from their positions near the top of Hill 465 to rejoin the remainder of the company. They were covered while breaking contact by the first platoon. As the second platoon cleared contact with the enemy, the first platoon started to withdraw. The firefight had reached a lull and the enemy was not aware of what was taking place.

As the second platoon rejoined the third and fourth platoons, the third platoon immediately started to move out. It was followed by the second, fourth, and first platoons in that order. The wounded men in the company were with the fourth platoon. Due to the darkness of the night, the extremely rough terrain, and the peculiar situation, no guides were posted to lead the platoons, it was simply a case of follow the leader.

Captain Gugeler states, 'Weapons Platoon, the advance guard at the time' (4:42) and later makes criticism of this fact. Gugeler is completely wrong again; the order of withdrawal from Hill 465 was as stated in the preceding paragraph, third, second, fourth (weapons), and first platoon.

Here we can observe that Company G violated some of the basic principles in a night withdrawal. No squad or platoon assembly areas were designated. The coordination as to breaking contact and rejoining the third and fourth platoons was left solely to the first and second platoons leaders, and no detachments were left in contact. (1:3) No flank security was posted from the time of withdrawal throughout the complete retirement of the company. (3:25)

Why were such basic principles, used in execution of the withdrawal only twenty-four hours before, ignored? A look at the situation will divulge the reasons.

Had Captain West attempted to go into the minute details of squad and platoon assembly areas what would have taken place? It is obvious much

more movement would have had to take place under the enemy's watchful eye. This would have resulted in some noise even from a well disciplined unit, and may possibly have alerted the enemy to Company G's intentions. Instead of chancing this possible loss of secrecy, Captain West depended upon excellent coordination amongst the platoons. In this he was correct.

Of necessity Captain West had to allow the breaking of contact up to the platoon leaders of the first and second platoons. West had no wire or radio communications to them. He had complete confidence in their ability and leadership, and to try to tell them the complete details through messenger probably would have confused the issue.

Why wasn't flank security posted? This was not accomplished throughout the entire withdrawal or retirement. Company G was completely behind enemy lines without communications. The terrain was extremely rough and steep, and very few men of the company knew the complete mission. All the majority of the men knew was that the company was to withdraw. Captain West had undoubtedly considered these factors and decided that speed and secrecy were the primary considerations in getting off Hill 465, in this analysis he was again proven correct.

Company G continued to move off Hill 465, and absolute silence was maintained. It was a very dark night and that, plus the nature of the terrain, necessitated very slow movement with hand to hand contact. The hill at the place the company was descending was extremely rough with a sharp angle of descent.

The company had been moving for a couple hours and was nowhere near the bottom of Hill 465 when mortar fire began to land in their old positions. This was followed by automatic weapons and other small arms fire, and it was possible to hear the North Koreans all over the positions which Company G had just vacated. The Koreans next fired flares in an effort to locate the

company, however, they fired them to the wrong side of the hill, and the company was not illuminated. A few North Koreans fired burp guns in the direction of Company G. Undoubtedly this was with the hope that someone would answer their fire, but no one did.

While this was taking place, the men of Company G froze. It was impossible for the platoon leaders, squad leaders, or anyone to move among the men and tell them that no matter what happens, do not return the fire. The word was passed softly by mouth, however, had not the entire company been battlewise and alert to the situation, someone may have panicked. Had this occurred under these circumstances, it is almost certain that no member of Company G would have survived.

Shortly thereafter activity on Hill 465 subsided and the company continued its slow tedious movement to the bottom of the hill. As the company was reaching the bottom of the hill, suddenly it was hit with volleys of our own artillery. (4:42) Again the men hit the ground and silence prevailed. In this instance the rough, rocky, uneven terrain was a blessing as it afforded natural protection from the artillery. The first sergeant was the only man killed.

The company again started to move and was now crossing an intermittent stream. As they cleared the immediate area vicinity of Hill 465, the second and third platoons stopped to take a rest while the leaders checked their men. Captain West was with the second and third platoons. While the platoon leaders were checking their men, it was discovered that the first and fourth platoons were missing. A further check revealed that a member of the fourth platoon had broken contact with the last man in the second platoon.

A patrol was sent back in an attempt to locate the missing platoons, but it returned without success. When informed of this Captain West moved with

the second and third platoons down the path a few hundred more yards. At this location though still far short of friendly lines, it was decided to stop and wait for daylight. The factors influencing this decision were many. First and most important was the concern of the first and fourth platoons, they had to be close by; secondly, the wearied condition of the men who had no sleep for two days, very little food, and were exhausted; and thirdly, it was approximately 0440 hours of 7 September and daylight would be coming shortly.

The second and third platoons formed a tight perimeter in a small gully on the side of a hill and waited for dawn. Immediately almost everyone was asleep. At daybreak the second and third platoons became engaged with some North Koreans to their right front. The enemy quickly withdrew and only one casualty was received.

Shortly after this slight engagement, and as Captain West was again trying to raise battalion on his radio, some figures appeared on the skyline to the right of the second and third platoons. These people appeared to be American soldiers. By yelling up to them it was established that they were members of the first platoon who were looking for us.

As this was transpiring, another yell, this time from the hill to the left of the second and third platoons, was heard. (Annex D) It turned out to be Captain (then 2d Lt) William Marslander 059389, from Company A, 7th Cavalry Regiment. He had approximately five men with him and came down to join the second and third platoons. He briefed Captain West and the second and third platoon leaders with what he knew of the situation. Marslander had been shot in the hand by the North Koreans that the second and third platoons were engaged with at dawn.

After receiving this information from Marslander, Captain West ordered the second and third platoons, along with Marslander to move out to friendly

lines. Captain West left to join the first and fourth platoons.

The second and third platoons moved along a path known then as 'Bull Dozer Road' for a distance of approximately a mile before reaching the first battalion aid station. Although during this march the men were under long range small arms fire, they just kept proper interval and no further casualties were received.

The first and fourth platoons had headed for high ground when contact had been broken with the remainder of the company. Upon reaching the high ground, they waited until dawn and at this time discovered the hill was occupied by North Koreans. Due to the Koreans's failure to have any security and the fact that they were all asleep, it was a simple matter for the first and fourth platoons to clear the hill. The platoons accomplished this without suffering any casualties.

This hill turned out to be a North Korean Regimental Command Post and much valuable information was brought in by the first and fourth platoons. Captain West joined them shortly after this incident, and they proceeded to friendly lines without further difficulty.

The second and third platoons remained at the aid station of the first battalion awaiting orders. The aid station had been overrun by the North Koreans the night before and the platoons aided in evacuating the wounded of the first battalion. Later in the day word came for the second and third platoons to rejoin the second battalion which was now reorganizing in the rear. The platoons walked a couple more miles to transportation and entrucked. At approximately 1700 hours 7 September Company G with all of its wounded safely evacuated had rejoined the battalion which had given them up as lost less than twenty-four hours before.

## CONCLUSION

The successful commander in any withdrawal must have every man well oriented whenever possible. It is never good practice to violate principles yet sometimes circumstances necessitate such action.

The successive night withdrawals by Company G were under completely different circumstances. In the first example the company had ideal conditions and the commander stayed straight by the book. In the second case with a precarious situation the commander openly violated many of the principles in the doctrine of a night withdrawal. These he did of necessity and after much thought. The result has proven him correct.

The too often used phrase 'the book was thrown away' is never really correct. Modifications and omissions must often be made, but only after careful consideration and evaluation.

Every commander should know the basic principles of a withdrawal--- secrecy, security, covering forces, deception, flank protection, assembly areas---and with this knowledge available he will be able to evaluate his unit's situation and make a sound, logical, timely decision should the occasion arise.

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5. Lindeman, Arthur H., Capt, Inf, interviewed at Fort Benning, 29 December 1955, summary attached as Annex A.

S T A T E M E N T

24 January 1956

I was the second platoon leader of Company G, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during the period 20 August to 17 September 1950. As such I participated in the actions of Company G centered around Hill 300 and Hill 465 discussed by Captain Ogden. I have discussed on numerous occasions the actions of Company G on the period 5-7 September 1950 with Captain Ogden, and have read his completed monograph.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the author's discussion is correct as pretains to Company G on the period 5-7 September 1950.

*Arthur H. Lindeman Jr.*  
ARTHUR H LINDEMAN JR.  
Captain                      Inf  
059177

HEADQUARTERS 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION  
APO 201

GENERAL ORDERS )

18 March 1951

NO . . . . . 55)

E X T R A C T

Section III  
**BRONZE STAR MEDAL**

\*\*\*\*\*

First Lieutenant ARTHUR H LINDEMAN JR, (then Second Lieutenant),  
059177, Infantry, United States Army, Company G, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st  
Cavalry Division, for heroism in action against the enemy on 6 September  
1950 near Pyong-po, Korea. While withdrawing his platoon to a covered  
position, Lieutenant LINDEMAN noticed that one of his men had been wounded  
and was unable to walk. He immediately returned along the route of with-  
drawal, fearlessly ignoring the intense and accurate hail of enemy machine  
gun and small arms fire, and made his way to the fallen man. Finding that  
the soldier was dead, he fearlessly braved the enemy fire once again and  
made his way back to his unit. His selfless act enabled the fallen man's  
death and identity to be established and inspired his comrades deeply.  
Lieutenant LINDEMAN's heroism reflects great credit on himself and the  
military service. Entered federal service from Kentucky.

\*\*\*\*\*

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL PALMER:

OFFICIAL:

LOUIS T HEATH  
Colonel GSC  
Chief of Staff

/s/ J A POGONIS  
/t/ J A POGONIS  
Lt Col AGC  
Adjutant General

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