

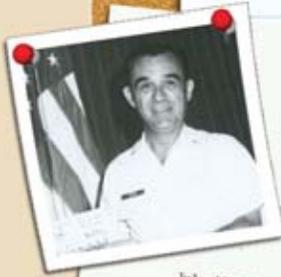
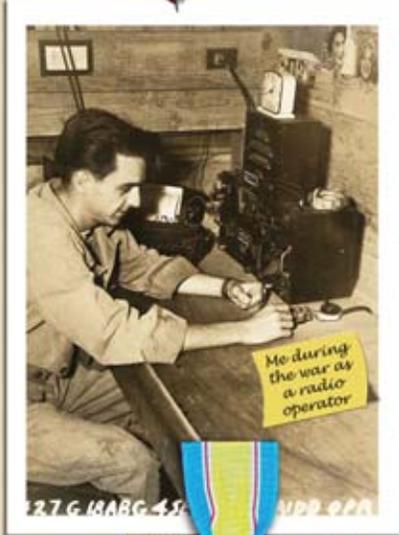
- Memoir of a Korean War communicator -
By retired Lt. Col. Richard Frye

A narrow escape at K-24

In 1951, a well documented book chronicled the activities of the 18th Fighter Bomber Wing from the inception of the Korean War through late 1951, however, some of the occurrences were only given cursory comment due to space constraints. One quote from its pages stated, "Remember the time Livermore and five airmen turned infantrymen and practically played hide and seek with some guerillas for almost two weeks on that airstrip? And the time we bugged out a matter of hours before the commie avalanche from the north poured over one of our sites." (Ross Livermore was a captain at the time and later became a lieutenant colonel.)

Due to the unusual circumstances of the item concerning evacuation prior to the Chinese onslaught [of which I was part of], a detailed account of that encounter follows. We were a detachment assigned to K-24, an airstrip located approximately 50 miles northeast of Pyongyang and about 100 miles from Choson on the Yalu River. We were a forward operating base for the 18th Fighter Group. Our base was parallel to a wide river. The terrain was flat and barren, and it was cold! On Nov. 26, 1951, 200,000 Chinese launched an attack on U.N. forces and North Korean guerillas were active to our south. We were ordered to evacuate our position in early December and most of the support people left immediately. Sixteen communications troops remained to destroy sensitive communications equipment. All other unclassified equipment was evacuated on a train headed south. We were to be picked up by C-47 that afternoon and taken to our new operating location in South Korea. The aircraft never showed up. It was later determined that an erroneous report of our complete evacuation had been sent to 5th AF Headquarters. Our wing commander,

Col. Low, and our squadron commander, Maj. Steele, were the only officers with us at the time, and they calmed us and issued instructions to dig in and an aircraft would certainly come for us the next day. We had, by this time, no communications capability at all. At dawn the next morning we looked across the river and saw a small contingent of Chinese troops who were estimated to be 3 to 4 miles distant. At the time, we didn't believe they were aware of our presence. Major Steele had our wire chief go to the cable head where there were some cable stubs sticking out of the ground and an EE-8 field telephone was used to ring down on pairs of wires. After several attempts, an operator at K-23 in Pyongyang answered and our commander was patched in to 5th AF HQ and connected to Gen. Partridge. We were assured that help was on the way. Less than an hour later, we saw an aircraft approaching from the east. It was a C-119 which was being ferried from Japan to Seoul and was diverted over the Sea of Japan to our location. The enemy population across the river was growing and as the aircraft approached over the river, he began to receive small arms fire from the ground troops across the river. (We had no way of warning him). The pilot, a second lieutenant with a Thai cadet co-pilot, landed, and, with the engines running, had us tumble into the aircraft from the rear. About two hours later, we landed safely at Suwon airstrip just south of Seoul. Later reports indicated that the Chinese occupied K-24 late that same day. It was a memorable and harrowing experience.



July 12, 1971

Commander
Telephone & Teletype
Horton Air Force Base
San Bernardino, California 92409

Dear Sir:

Many thanks for all of the assistance you and your staff gave us when I made my 20th Anniversary USO Christmas Tour. Our telephone service has never been better, and I am informed it was because of the helpfulness of your telephone operators.

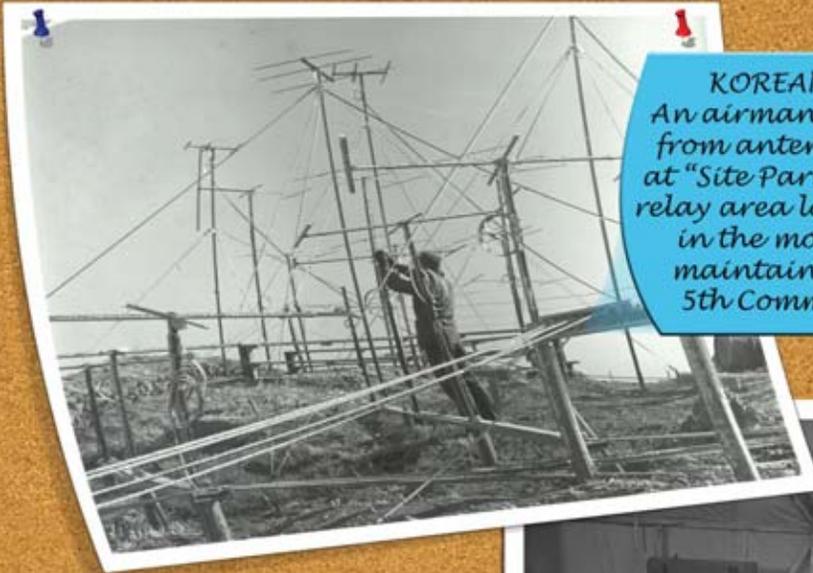
Under separate cover, I am sending you a memento of the Tour, with my best wishes.

Sincerely,
Bob Hope
Bob Hope
M:go

BOB HOPE

I'm proud of this note from Bob Hope that was sent to me in 1971. He came to K-9, Pusan, Korea, in October 1950 when things were really hot!

COMMUNICATIONS DURING WAR



KOREAN WAR:
An airman cleans ice from antenna cables at "Site Paris," a radio relay area located high in the mountains, maintained by the 5th Comm Group.



WWII:
Tuskegee airmen train at the flying school in Alabama.



A Vietnam War radio operator.



Desert Storm comm.

Designed by Master Sgt. Karen Petitt
Historical photos compiled by
Patrick Johnson/AFCA HO