

SGT George D. Libby (Engineer NCO and Medal of Honor Recipient)

By

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NCO History

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Briefing Outline

History of the NCO

SUBJECT: Sergeant George D. Libby (Engineer NCO and Medal of Honor Recipient)

I. Introduction

A. Greeting: *Welcome audience and recognize any guest (Good Morning class and guest. My name is MSG Paul)*

B. Type and Classification: *Tell what type of briefing, the approximate duration and its classification (My NCO History Brief is on Sergeant George D. Libby an Engineer NCO and a Medal of Honor recipient; 15 minutes; Unclassified).*

C. Purpose: *Give the purpose of the briefing and the references (The purpose of this briefing is to inform you of the past accomplishment and significant impact that Engineers has made on our Army and to recognize one particular NCO. My references stems from the Engineer Museum at Fort Leonard wood, MO to an extract from past in Review written by Dr. Fowle, a historian in the Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at Fort Belvoir, VA.).*

II. Body

A. Engineers' Role during the Korean War - *Explain the challenges associated with the terrain, demolition, defensive and construction projects, but also the manning the front lines (Defensive and offensive operations in mine warfare).*

B. Sergeant George D. Libby – *Give his life prior to his enlistment and his assigned unit during the War.*

C. The Attack – *Describe SGT Libby's task during the War and how he died.*

D. Medal of Honor – *Read an extract of his citation and its significance.*

E. Dedication – *list some of the Engineer projects that are dedicated in his name such as the Libby Bridge in Korea and the Libby NCOA at FLW, MO.*

III. Closing

A. Summary: *Restate the purpose of the briefing and the areas that were covered in the body (Engineers' Role during the War, SGT Libby's life and accomplishment, and extract from his citation and what is dedicated in his name today).*

B. Questions and Answers: *Ask if anyone has questions.*

C. Closing Statement: *Read an extract from the Engineer Hall of Heroes:*

For more than 200 years men and women, civilians and Soldiers, have served the Army Corps of Engineers. In Peace, whether the designer of our nation's Capital, a dredge boat pilot in 1875, a lock master in the 1950s or an environmental engineer today; whether an astronaut aboard the space shuttle or an engineer exploring the western frontier in the 1850s; Engineers have served. In war, whether it was the deserts of Saudi Arabia, the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Korea or the islands, forests and plains of two World Wars; whether it was on our soil throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, or in numerous conflicts in between, Engineers have served. The Army Corps of Engineers is made up of a diverse group of dedicated Americans, men and women, who, when called upon, have fought our wars. They are the visionaries who have built our nation. The history of the Engineers is nothing more than the history of individual Americans and nothing less than the history of America.

SGT George D. Libby an Engineer NCO

SGT Libby's service to this country is unexplainably significant. More so are his accomplishments as an engineer Noncommissioned Officer (NCO). A NCO whose actions on the battlefield during the Korean War, decades ago, are a direct representation of the Army values today. His story has been told in many ways in the Army engineering arena and remains a monument both abroad and at home.

This paper compiles an overview of SGT Libby's visibility in the history of the NCOs. It examines the role engineers play during the war, his brief background prior to enlistment, and how did he get involved in the war. SGT Libby's actions on the battlefield must be mentioned and the impact he made on the Engineer community as a monumental figure.

Engineers' Role during the Korean War

The rugged terrain of the Korean peninsula and the numerical superiority of enemy forces there made engineer construction and combat vital to the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Surprised by the North Korean attack across the 38th parallel, U.S. Army troops in Korea and the Republic of Korea's forces could at first do no more than delay the advance of the larger North Korean forces. U.S. Army engineers played a major role in this delaying action, mining roads and destroying key bridges. In this early fighting, engineers were frequently called upon to do tasks not traditionally theirs. Thus it was members of Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion that on July 20, 1950, made the first verifiable combat use near Taejon of the newly developed 3.5-inch rocket launcher, using it to destroy a tank that was threatening their division commander. Attempting to withdraw from Taejon that evening, U.S. forces were stopped for a time by enemy roadblocks. Engineer Sergeant George Libby placed wounded men on an artillery

tractor and used his body to shield its driver as it crashed through two enemy roadblocks before reaching American lines to the south. Libby, who died of his wounds, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

After U.S. Army engineers destroyed the bridges over the wide Naktong River in the southeastern corner of Korea on August 2-3, 1950, the outnumbered American forces maintained a long defensive perimeter around Pusan as a large body of U.S. troops prepare to land behind enemy lines at Inchon. Engineers were frequently committed to fight as infantry on the Pusan perimeter. An engineer soldier of the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion was awarded the Medal of Honor for bravely holding his position on a wall of the ancient fortress of Kusan during an enemy assault. After he had expended his ammunition, he used his entrenching tool to repel the armed attackers as they reached the top of the wall. In addition, in early 1951, as U.S. forces returned to the offensive in mountainous central Korea, engineer units blasted cliffsides to build new roads and built aerial tramways to carry supplies to the troops.

These were some of the engineer missions during the battle. As mentioned earlier, SGT Libby was one of the NCO who demonstrated the Army's values through his heroism. SGT Libby was an American who went in a draft contingent after a failing job. He became an Engineer Soldier and served in a unit abroad.

Sergeant George D. Libby

SGT Libby is the only Connecticut soldier killed in action in Korea to be given the Medal of Honor and other decorations. SGT Libby was born December 4, 1919 in Bridgton, Maine. He lived in Casco, Maine, before moving to Waterbury Connecticut, to work in the Mattatuck Manufacturing Company. He began working in the plant's receiving room September 17, 1941 and a year later, he left the job. He lived at 71 Phoenix Avenue in Waterbury. On September 18,

1942, he went in a draft contingent for Fort Devens, Massachusetts. After combat duty in the Pacific, he decided to make the Army his career and he attended an Engineer School course in 1946 in the Philippine Islands.

Sergeant George D. Libby, Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, 24th Infantry Division, was one of the first in the United States Army to earn the Medal of Honor during the Korean Conflict. Both Sergeant Libby and his commanding general, General William Dean, received the award for their actions on July 20, 1950. The day the Korean Conflict began, on June 25, 1950, Sergeant Libby was stationed in Japan. He was assigned to Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion. With the rest of his unit, Sergeant Libby was in Korea two weeks later, involved in a full-scale war.

Additional reversals and withdrawals of the 24th Infantry Division occurred on July 14 and 15. Then, on July 19, Company C relieved Company D in support of the 34th Regimental-Combat Team's withdrawal from Taejon. Engineer troops from Company C suffered heavy losses as they withdrew from the city but performed heroically. In one incident, a soldier lost his jeep to enemy mortar fire. Although wounded by a mortar fragment and 11 bullets, he killed five enemy soldiers and destroyed two machine guns. Engineers like SGT Libby, served as both engineers and infantry.

The Attack

On the evening of July 20, Sergeant Libby was commanding a combat patrol tasked to observe the North Koreans. He was to warn Company C in the event of an enemy approach. Sergeant Libby's instructions were to delay the North Koreans any way he could. The patrol moved forward and came under heavy enemy fire before running into an enemy road block. All members of the patrol except Libby were killed or wounded. Libby took cover in a nearby ditch,

waiting for the attackers to come within close range. He then began shooting, killing and wounding a number of them. Several times Sergeant Libby crossed the road to give first aid to his wounded men, exposing himself to enemy volleys. The North Koreans threw up a heavy fusillade trying to wipe out Libby and his men.

Finally, an M-5 U.S artillery tractor came along, and Libby helped load the wounded men aboard. Although under intense enemy fire, he placed himself between the driver and the enemy. Sergeant Libby was shot-in the arms and body as the tractor continued through a nearby town, stopping along the way to pickup more injured men. As they approached another North Korean road block, SGT Libby refused first aid and joined the battle. Although he received additional wounds, he continued to hold his position until he collapsed from loss of blood. He died later that day.

Medal of Honor

Citation: "Sgt. Libby distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action. While breaking through an enemy encirclement, the vehicle in which he was riding approached an enemy roadblock and encountered devastating fire which disabled the truck, killing or wounding all the passengers except Sgt. Libby. Taking cover in a ditch Sgt. Libby engaged the enemy and despite the heavy fire crossed the road twice to administer aid to his wounded comrades. He then hailed a passing M-5 artillery tractor and helped the wounded aboard. The enemy directed intense small-arms fire at the driver, and Sgt. Libby, realizing that no one else could operate the vehicle, placed himself between the driver and the enemy thereby shielding him while he returned the fire. During this action he received several wounds in the arms and body. Continuing through the town the tractor made frequent stops and Sgt. Libby helped more wounded aboard. Refusing first aid, he continued to shield the

driver and return the fire of the enemy when another roadblock was encountered. Sgt. Libby received additional wounds but held his position until he lost consciousness. Sgt. Libby's sustained, heroic actions enabled his comrades to reach friendly lines. His dauntless courage and gallant self-sacrifice reflect the highest credit upon himself and uphold the esteemed traditions of the U.S. Army." (Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient, 2005).

Dedication

The Libby Bridge: The Libby Bridge spans the Imjin River north of the Spoonbill region. The bridge is named after SGT George D. Libby, the first Medal of Honor recipient of the Korean War. Sergeant Libby's Medal of Honor citation is below. This view of the bridge is looking south with the village of Chang-Pari in the background. The first building on the left side of the road into Chang-Pari was the Last Chance Bar. The sign read "First Chance" on the way into the village and "Last Chance" on the way out of town. It was a convenient place to have your last drink as you waited for transportation back to your unit north of the Imjin. The bridge is the work of the 84th Engineer Battalion and is one of the largest troop construction projects on record in Korea. The 84th Engineer Battalion was awarded the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation for the project. Five 48 inch steel I-beams span the thousand feet length of the bridge.

The citation for the Battalion's work on the bridge reads in part: "In spite of the magnitude of the project, the work was adventurously begun by the enthusiastic and capable men in the Battalion. Extreme difficulties in setting steel-pilings and concrete columns failed to daunt the men; the project was carried forward with determination, courage and esprit de corp. Every phase of the task was marked by competent performance and steadfast devotion to duty of personnel assigned to the organization. Two men gave their lives during the six months the

Battalion devoted their best energies to accomplishing this worthy project. The bridge will serve as a main supply route for the western portion of the front, and will prove of international significance in contributing to the success of the United Nations campaign in Korea and to the reconstruction of our war-torn country. The meritorious accomplishment of the officers and the men of the 84th United States Engineer Construction Battalion are in keeping with the highest humanitarian and military traditions and reflect great glory upon the Battalion and the United Nations in the fight against Communist aggression in Korea." (Fowle, 1993).

Libby Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA): The NCOA at Fort Leonard wood, home of the Engineer Training Center, has been named in dedication of SGT George D. Libby, an Engineer NCO since its establishment.

Conclusion

For more than 200 years men and women, civilians and Soldiers, have served the Army Corps of Engineers. In Peace, whether the designer of our nation's Capital, a dredge boat pilot in 1875, a lock master in the 1950s or an environmental engineer today; whether an astronaut aboard the space shuttle or an engineer exploring the western frontier in the 1850s; Engineers have served. In war, whether it was the deserts of Saudi Arabia, the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Korea or the islands, forests and plains of two World Wars; whether it was on our soil throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, or in numerous conflicts in between, Engineers have served. The Army Corps of Engineers is made up of a diverse group of dedicated Americans, men and women, who, when called upon, have fought our wars. They are the visionaries who have built our nation. The history of the Engineers is nothing more than the history of individual Americans and nothing less than the history of America. SGT George D. Libby is one of many Engineer NCOs who have served and continue to serve heroically.

Reference

Dr. Barry W. Fowle. "November 1993: Past in Review." Sergeant George D., Engineer NCO and Medal of Honor Recipient. Engineer #56; Fort Belvoir VA

Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient. "2005: SGT George D. Libby."
<http://www.medalofhonor.com/MaineRecipients.htm>

Engineer History Korea. "Past in Review." SGT George D. Libby