



The Ranger Creed and what it means to me



by retired COL Ralph Puckett
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It was 25 November 1950. The day was cold, brisk, bright, beautiful. We (the Eighth Army Ranger Company) were in North Korea about 40 miles south of the

Yalu. We were one of two assault elements for Task Force Dolvin, the 89th Tank Battalion. The Task Force was the lead element of the 25th Infantry Division. The 'end the war - have the boys home by Christmas' that General MacArthur had promised the President at their meeting on Wake Island early in October had commenced 24 November, Thanksgiving Day.

The company consisting of three officers and 74 enlisted men was activated 25 August 1950 exactly two months after the Korean War began. Although I was only a second lieutenant having just graduated from the basic course and jump school without a single day of troop duty, I was selected to be the company commander. The other two officers were classmates and as inexperienced as I. The enlisted soldiers were service troops. Good soldiers but not Infantry. There were two sergeants, 22 corporals, and the rest privates. Obviously no experienced leadership. If there was ever a group of soldiers who looked as if they were slated to become a failure, we were it. Within the next three months this small band of soldiers would live the Ranger Creed ... **although it would not be written until more than 20 years later.** That Creed tells Rangers of today what they are and what is expected of them. They led the way.

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession ...

Each prospective volunteer was informed that he was being asked if he wanted to "volunteer for an extremely dangerous mission behind enemy lines."

Acknowledging that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle ...my country expects me to move further, faster and fight harder than any other soldier. The training program began with a vision of what the company would become. This vision was expressed by four training objectives. These were 1. Each Ranger would be physically fit; he would be in the best physical condition of his life. 2. Each Ranger would be trained until he was highly qualified in the tactics and techniques of the individual soldier (TTIS.) 3. Each subordinate team and the company as a whole would be trained until it became a highly competent combat fighting team. 4. Each Ranger would have the confidence in himself that caused him to believe that he, his leaders, and his company as a whole was the best combat unit that America could produce.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be one-hundred-percent and then some. The fast-paced sometimes-hazardous training required the Ranger to keep his mind focused on what he and his comrades were doing. The daily PT regimen led by the officers who set the example pushed the Ranger to his limit. Moral lapses were not tolerated. To accomplish his individual requirement and that of his team extracted from the Ranger all the capability he had – and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world ... No need for the Ranger to brag. His performance spoke louder than any words. He was the quintessential "quiet professional."

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle because I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor. The fifth and sixth paragraphs of the Ranger Creed synthesize what being a Ranger is all about. My Rangers made me proud. They never quit. They fought on until overcome by vastly superior forces. Of the 51 who had begun the battle for Hill 205, there were only 21 Rangers present for duty when the battle was over. I had been rescued under fire and dragged to safety by Rangers PFC Billy G. Walls and PFC David L. Pollock. Other Rangers owed their survival to comrades who risked their own safety for their fellow Rangers. I had failed to train my Rangers sufficiently that they would be able to rescue or recover all who were unable to save themselves. I am responsible.

In the subsequent 63 years since the Battle for Hill 205, I have gone over the details time and time again, always asking the same questions. What should I have done? What training could we have crammed into the six weeks program that would have prepared us better? How can I do better the next time? I never have arrived at specific, satisfactory answers. I was never satisfied during the training. Though I praised my Rangers profusely, I always felt that we could do better.

Another question that keeps returning? Why me? Why did I survive and others did not? There have been other times both in combat and in peace when I would ask myself ... "Why me?"

I can never justify my good fortune. I can only be thankful and try to live in such a way to deserve what I have received.

Being a Ranger is my most important accomplishment. It colors and affects everything I do. There is a never ending something inside of me that says, "I am a U.S. Army Ranger. I must never give up. I can always do better."