



PEDOMIC MOBILTY

If you don't need it, why carry it?

by CAPT EDWARD L. ZUVER

Captain Fred Stilwell watched his company make their assault on the hill. From the valley floor to the top of the hill was only about a two hundred meter climb. Some ten minutes later he was on top of the hill, reporting to group, moving his weapons forward, consolidating . . . and taking a good look at his company. The men were plainly tired; some were slumped against trees, some flat on their backs, and even a few were bent over, vomiting. One thing was certain: they were in no condition to repel a counterattack, nor to continue the attack, at least not for a while. He was tired, too. Maybe just a short rest. . . .

Fred wondered about this for quite some time. Has American youth gone soft to the extent he's read about? Anyway, he's had a PT period scheduled at least three times a week, and it was very seldom cancelled. It's the weight of the equipment, that's what it is. Why don't they make it lighter? *Lighter equipment, Fred? Why did*

you have your men wearing a combat pack, with sleeping bag attached?

Who — ?

Never mind who I am, Fred. Just answer the question.

Well, what do you think they issue it for — appearances? They need everything that's in that pack, and they damn sure need the sleeping bag!

I agree, Fred. But do they need it in the assault?

Well, no. Say, who did you say you were?

I didn't. OK, so if they don't need it in the assault, why did you have them carry it?

Well, they're going to stop some time and they'll need the stuff then. Besides, I learned it in basic course . . . or maybe it was in the movies. Say, I've got an idea. I'll have the men drop their packs at the line of departure and then send a detail back after them when we consolidate. Just like in World War II.

I wouldn't do this unless I had to

carry the packs, Fred. It would take a lot of men and a lot of policing.

Had to carry? You mean you wouldn't have your men carry packs at all?

That's right—except in case of certain type task operations. Do you know what Sergeant Bacach is saying to your first sergeant right now?

No . . .

Well, listen!

"Hell, Top, what's the old man have us carry all this stuff for? I'm 42 years old, and this is about to beat me! Why, in Korea we all agreed that we didn't need all this stuff—only our clothes, helmet, weapon, poncho, first aid packet, intrenching tool, canteen and sleeping bag. They can junk the rest of it until I get to a rest area."

What does that sound like, Fred?

Like the usual griping!

No, no; now be serious.

How can I be serious? I hear voices!

You mean me?

Yeah, I mean you.

I'll be gone shortly. Now—do you think what Sergeant Bacach said has merit?

Yes, I do, but there are certain other things that the men must have. And besides, he included the sleeping bag, remember?

Right. I intend to see that the bag is available.

I get it. You'll have one or two sleeping bags brought up for each squad at night. Squad rolls, isn't that what they call it?

That's what they call it, Fred, but forget it. The squad roll is unacceptable. It's not only unsanitary; you'll find more than half your men will refuse to sleep in a common bed.

You mean they'd go cold?

Exactly!

What's so important about the sleeping bag, anyway?

Well, Fred, I think it's the fact that the day doesn't seem quite as cold; that no matter how cold he gets the soldier can go on, if he can look forward to a warm place to sleep. In fact, in extremes, the sleeping bag could be a life saver.

Well, that makes sense. You've eliminated the pack but you still have the sleeping bag, plus other essentials. How are you going to work it?

Relax a minute, Fred, and I'll tell you. First we'll dress the soldier according to the season. Then we'll attach his combat pack suspenders to his pistol belt and have him put that on. Next we'll attach the intrenching tool, canteen, cup and cover, first aid pouch and packet, bayonet and the poncho.

You think the poncho is really essential?

You bet! Don't forget, in the atomic age the poncho serves another purpose besides keeping the rain off your back. So, to go on, we'll add the helmet, gas mask, weapon, and bandoleers of ammo, and that's it.

What about the sleeping bag?

We're going to make a bed roll for each soldier. And we're going to add a little more than might be absolutely essential, just to allow for flexibility. We'll use the shelter half as an

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envelope.

OK, let's have it.

First, lay a shelter half out flat and fold the triangle ends in. Fold a blanket in half along its long axis and place it in the center along the long axis of the shelter half. Lay the air mattress on top of the blanket, and the sleeping bag on top of the air mattress. Inclose one or two changes of socks and underwear, a towel, and the toilet articles. If it's a seasonal transition period, add the field jacket liner and trouser liner.

Wait—if these liners are in this bed roll, what do you do if it turns cold and the soldier needs them, and the bed roll isn't available?

I intend to deliver the bed rolls at times when the soldier has stopped long enough to be able to use them. After all, if he's moving, he'll stay warm. It's when he stops that he adds layers of clothing. For this same reason, I can even squeeze in the "Mickey Mouse" boots. So what have we got—a fast-moving soldier, lightly dressed; a soldier consolidating on the objective for the night, adding liners to his clothing and putting on his Miceys. May I continue?

Be my guest.

Next, I'm going to add the tent pole and pins to the bed roll—

Aw, now, let's hold it right there. We're getting too fancy now. You going to form for shelter tents to the left of the FEBA?

No—but suppose we were in a forward assembly area. We'd have shelter.

You'd also have your duffel bags. You could get your shelter halves out of them.

You might, but it would mean a lot of unloading, searching and re-

loading. I'm trying to eliminate going into the duffel bag except on rare occasions. I've got a good reason and I'll explain later. Besides, these few extra items don't increase the size appreciably, and weight won't matter because we don't intend for the soldier to carry the bed roll.

OK, what next?

That's all. Now we roll it by folding in the long sides to the width of two tent pole sections, and rolling the roll along its long axis. Then secure the roll with the GP strap or the tent rope; it should be just over one foot in diameter. If it needs waterproofing, place it inside the waterproof bag and tie it as a roll.

I just thought of something. What about the mess kit?

Put it in the duffel bag, Fred.

You going to feed the troops C rations all the time?

Nope—I'll use trays. Yeah, I know, it's not exactly kosher, but no one ever holds you to mess kits. They're too awkward and too bulky to carry back and forth from the kitchen to the line. Besides, in peacetime the soldier wants his own mess kit back. In combat, if you can't get trays, well, then you'll have to use mess kits. But what did the troops use in Korea? From what I saw, all units had trays.

Fine. Now, let's go back to the bed roll and duffel bag. How do we load and use the equipment?

Fred, it will take one deuce and a half with trailer to carry it all. All duffel bags will fit on the truck. If personnel who ride in company organic vehicles load their bed rolls on these vehicles, then the rest of the bed rolls will fit on the ton and a half trailer. Now, as to how we use them



Forgotten anything?

... In the attack, bed rolls would be brought up whenever consolidation took place, and there was sufficient time for troops to clean up and sleep. They would be picked up prior to continuation of the attack. In the defense, they would be delivered and left on position until a move were made.

Looks like you don't gain a thing using the bed roll system in defense.

You don't, Fred. A combat pack with horseshoe roll would be almost as good. It's in attack and retrograde actions, actions where you'll have to move fast, that you gain. If you plan on moving back, it's a simple matter to pick up the bed rolls ahead of time and get them to the rear. If you have to move off position rapidly, you can carry the bed rolls off. If your rear were overrun, all you would lose would be your duffel bags. You would at least have the essentials until a resupply could be made.

It's just a little difficult for me to picture a soldier pulling off a position with a bed roll under his arm, Cuz. Mind elaborating a little?

Well, first, if you had, say, half an hour's warning, you could roll the bed

roll a little differently and carry it off.

How's that?

Roll it along the short axis. Make a big horse shoe out of it and tie the open ends. Throw it over your shoulder.

Why, you'll look like a soldier fresh out of the Spanish-American War. They'll laugh you off the line. And the battle group commander will probably have something to say about it, too.

It's been done; they've been laughed at, and there's not too much the battle group commander can do. Remember, Fred, there's no policy on how to load or carry clothing and equipment. You're the guy who decides. Any arbitrary SOP higher than yours, if one exists, relieves you of explanations.

But suppose you didn't have as long a warning? Suppose it were rolled as you stated earlier.

In this case, just place your hands inside the roll as though it were a muff, and pull the edges of the shelter half out. Tie each end with the rope or the GP strap and sling it over your shoulder. It would look something like you were carrying a mail bag.

Well, I guess we've about eliminated the need for going into the duffel bag very often, haven't we?

Yes, we have. And for good reason. Since the company has to rely on getting a baggage truck from an outside source, there may come that time when the outside source won't produce. Now, if the duffel bags are well to the rear, there's no sweat. If you move into a position where you can enjoy a few days rest, you won't have to wait for the duffel bags to be brought up. You've got your immediate needs, including tents.

Looks like we've covered everything except getting the bed rolls to the platoons.

Not too difficult, Fred. You could make delivery at the same time a meal were being fed, using one company $\frac{3}{4}$ ton vehicle per platoon. Pickup would be the same. By proper scheduling of ammo runs, this wouldn't be difficult. When the company baggage is on the ground in the trains area, the $\frac{3}{4}$ tons could combine an ammo run with a bed roll pickup or delivery. If the situation allowed, and the company baggage were on a vehicle, the vehicle could be kept at the company distribution point where the $\frac{3}{4}$ tons could make pickup or delivery.

Boy, I'll bet the weapons platoon leader won't like all this extra use of his vehicles.

Of course he won't. But he'll have to live with it. Once those vehicles dump the mortars and crews, they don't do anyone any good parked. They're on the move for chow, ammo, what have you, and it takes good coordination to use them effectively.

Yes, it does . . .

Wait a minute—I've got you figured out. I've just been talking to my—

Sure. But it's time for another attack now. Do it the easy way this time.

I will, I will.

Hey, Top! Get all the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants over here. We're going to take this hill again—my way. That's right—my way.