

John Upshur Dennis Page, Lieutenant Colonel

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Born

February 8, 1904; Malahi Island, Luzon, Philippine Islands

Entered Service

St. Paul, MN; 1926

U.S. Army X Corps Artillery while attached to 52d Transportation Truck Battalion.

Korean Conflict

Chosen Reservoir, Korea (North) Dates: November 29, 1950-December 10, 1950

Killed in Action

December 10, 1950

Buried December 14, 1954 in Arlington National Cemetery: Section 4 Lot # 2743-B

Presentation Date

April 25, 1957

Also Awarded Navy Cross, 1952

Citation

Lt. Col. Page, a member of X Corps Artillery, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty in a series of exploits. On 29 November, Lt. Col. Page left X Corps Headquarters at Hamhung with the mission of establishing traffic control on the main supply route to 1st Marine Division positions and those of some Army elements on the Chosin Reservoir plateau. Having completed his mission Lt. Col. Page was free to return to the safety of Hamhung but chose to remain on the plateau to aid an isolated signal station, thus being cut off with elements of the marine division. After rescuing his jeep driver by breaking up an ambush near a destroyed bridge Lt. Col. Page reached the lines of a surrounded marine garrison at Koto-ri. He then voluntarily developed and trained a reserve force of assorted army troops trapped with the marines. By exemplary leadership and tireless devotion, he made an effective tactical unit available. In order that casualties might be evacuated, an airstrip was improvised on frozen ground partly outside of the Koto-ri defense perimeter which was continually under enemy attack. During 2 such attacks, Lt. Col. Page exposed himself on the airstrip to direct fire on the enemy, and twice mounted the rear deck of a tank, manning the machine gun on the turret to drive the enemy back into a no man's land. On 3 December while being flown low over enemy lines in a light observation plane, Lt. Col. Page dropped hand grenades on Chinese positions and sprayed foxholes with automatic fire from his carbine. After 10 days of constant fighting the marine and army units in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir had succeeded in gathering at the edge of the plateau and Lt. Col. Page was flown to Hamhung to arrange for artillery support of the beleaguered troops attempting to break out. Again Lt. Col. Page refused an opportunity to remain in safety and returned to give every assistance to his comrades. As the column slowly moved south Lt. Col. Page joined the rear guard. When it neared the entrance to a narrow pass it came under frequent attacks on both flanks. Mounting an abandoned tank Lt. Col. Page manned the machine gun, braved heavy return fire, and covered the passing vehicles until the danger diminished. Later when another attack threatened his section of the convoy, then in the middle of the pass, Lt. Col. Page took a machine gun to the hillside and delivered effective counter fire, remaining exposed while men and vehicles passed through the ambushade. On the night of 10 December the convoy reached the bottom of the pass but was halted by a strong enemy force at the front and on both flanks. Deadly small-arms fire poured into the column. Realizing the danger to the column as it lay motionless, Lt. Col. Page fought his way to the head of the column and plunged forward into the heart of the hostile position. His intrepid action so surprised the enemy that their ranks became disordered and suffered heavy casualties. Heedless of his safety, as he had been throughout the preceding 10 days, Lt. Col. Page remained forward, fiercely engaging the enemy single-handed until mortally wounded. By his valiant and aggressive spirit Lt. Col. Page enabled friendly forces to stand off

the enemy. His outstanding courage, unswerving devotion to duty, and supreme self-sacrifice reflect great credit upon Lt. Col. Page and are in the highest tradition of the military service.

Congressional Medal of Honor Society

Early life

John U.D. Page was born in the Philippines and studied engineering at [Princeton University](#). Princeton was Page's second choice, when his dream of attending [West Point](#) was thwarted by weak eyesight. He graduated from Princeton in 1926 with a varsity letter in pistol and an [Reserve Officers' Training Corps](#) (ROTC) commission, and was called to duty in World War II as a reservist.^[1]

World War II Service

Trained in artillery, Page was considered an expert teacher, and he spent much of World War II training troops at [Fort Sill, Okla.](#), much to his chagrin. He finally got to command an artillery battery in Germany, and remained in the military after World War II. Assigned to the prestigious [Command and General Staff College](#) at Fort Leavenworth, Kans., he pulled strings to go to Korea rather than to the classroom.^[2]

Korean War Service

During the long withdrawal of US and [UN](#) forces out of the [Chosin Reservoir](#) area as they marched to the [port of Hungnam](#) for [evacuation](#), in the early morning hours of December 11, 1950, Chinese troops ambushed a part of the [1st Marine Regimental](#) Train (logistical support caravan) as it entered the village of [Sudong](#). Chinese assault groups suddenly burst from behind huts near the road, firing [burp guns](#) and throwing grenades into the vehicular train of the Marine regiment that was then passing southward through the village. This quick attack killed several truck drivers and set several vehicles ablaze. The flickering and shadowy light from the burning trucks only partially lighted the scene as the column halted. A confused fight erupted. There was no UN infantry present. The transportation and service troops of the train column had to fight their own battle.

At first there was no American leadership to organize and guide the fight. But at some point soon after the battle erupted, U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Upshur Dennis Page, an [artillery](#) officer, emerged to assume leadership. He and two Marines who followed him charged from someplace back up the road to the front, where the column had halted and several vehicles were burning on the road in the village. One of the Marines stopped to fire at some enemy. The other man, [Pfc. Marvin L. Wasson](#), stayed with Page. They ran past burning vehicles and tripped over bodies in the road but reached the head of the stalled column, where enemy soldiers held the road. Page put his carbine on automatic and charged straight at a group of about 30 Chinese, firing into them as he ran forward. Most of this group, astounded at what was happening to them, broke and ran for the shadows. One of them threw a grenade as the others took off. Fragments from it knocked Wasson down with wounds on his head and arm. Page ordered him to go back and said he would

cover him. Wasson obeyed and staggered back to the column, turning once to see Page charging on after the running Chinese. Page did not return. The two-man assault broke the spell, disrupted the Chinese assault, which had demoralized the column and was spreading death and destruction, and gave those back of the leading vehicles time to get their courage in hand and to organize a [counterattack](#).

Another army officer took over leadership at Sudong and organized a Marine and Army service troop counterattack which gradually drove the Chinese off. It was daylight of December 11, before the road was cleared so that traffic resumed. This ambush at Sudong killed eight men and wounded 21, and destroyed nine trucks.

When the column started on and passed through Sudong, just beyond the village the point came upon the body of Lt. Col. John Page in the road. There was a scattered collection of Chinese bodies—16 of them—near him.

Page had been in the war only 12 days when he was killed. He had always wanted combat assignments, but his reputation for being able to get units in shape for combat had kept him at [Fort Sill, Oklahoma](#) during [World War II](#). He was assigned to [X Corps Artillery](#) upon his arrival in [Korea](#) and was then attached to the [52nd Transportation Truck Battalion](#).

Page's performance at Sudong the night of 10–11 December, was no fluke. He had been doing the same kind of thing for 11 days in the defense of Koto-ri and in the descent from there through [Funchilin Pass](#). Page had led a special mission north from [Hamhung](#) to establish communication points on the dangerous road toward the Chosin Reservoir. He and his jeep driver, Cpl. David Klepsig, got into Koto-ri the night of November 29, only after fighting their way past a Chinese machine-gun crew at a blown bridge site. As darkness fell over snowy roads, Page's jeep was attacked. Page ordered Klepsig to stay with the jeep, shouting, "I'll cover you!". Klepsig was astounded at what he saw: Page was standing in the middle of the road, completely exposed, spraying the Chinese positions with carbine fire. The enemy was so startled no return fire came. Klepsig was so eager to leave that once Page returned to the jeep, he slammed his foot on the accelerator. "Slow down, corporal," Page shouted, "do you want to get us killed?"

Upon reaching Koto-ri, [Colonel Lewis "Chesty" Puller](#), the [1st Marine Regimental](#) commander there, gave Page responsibility for extending the airstrip 1,000 yards beyond his perimeter into no man's land, an area covered by Chinese [snipers](#). Page got the job done, but often he had to mount a tank and personally operate the topline [.50 caliber machine gun](#) and direct the tank's crew in direct attacks on Chinese forces firing on the workers from nearby hills. At one point, the tank he was riding on charged a shack containing a sniper; the tank locked its brakes but kept sliding forward, flattening the shack and the enemy inside. The Marines at Koto-ri marveled at his courage and audacity. On one occasion, while being flown low over enemy lines in a light observation plane, Lt. Col. Page ordered the pilot to fly lower while he dropped hand grenades on Chinese positions and sprayed foxholes with his carbine. Page could have returned to the safety of Hamhung, but chose to stay with the garrison at Koto-ri, which was totally surrounded.

When the withdrawal column started down from Koto-ri, Page was in it. Twice in descending through Funchilin Pass, Page was responsible for getting his part of the column moving when

enemy fire stopped it. During one stoppage, he grabbed a machine gun in his arms and scrambled up an incline to a point from which he brought the enemy position under fire and silenced it. On another occasion, he manned a tank as he had at Koto-ri, and braving heavy fire, covered the column with its machine gun until the threat diminished. He was on foot, looking for his jeep in the column, when the Chinese ambush at Sudong stopped the column again. He was close enough to the front that he was able to rush forward, as already described, and break up the enemy group on the road at the head of the column.

No one who saw Page in action those 12 days of late November and early December 1950 ever had any doubt that the lieutenant colonel fresh from the States was truly a combat soldier. For his actions in the nighttime firefight at Sudong the Marine Corps gave Page its second highest award—the [Navy Cross](#). His story was not widely known or publicized immediately, and he was not an early recipient of the [Medal of Honor](#). When the facts of his short but momentous combat career became known in 1957, an act of Congress was necessary, because of the lapse of time, to grant him that honor posthumously.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_U._D._Page

<http://www.findagrave.com>

