

THE CHENA RIDGE REBELLION or KOPONEN AT THE RIDGE

Spring 1956 - Summer 1958

By: Kegler, Koponen, Hawman, Dickinson, Zeller, Irving.

In the spirit of the poem "Horatius at the Bridge"

Now Koponen of Chena Ridge
By Seward's Folly swore,
That homesteaders and Ridgerunners
Should suffer wrong no more;
By Seward's folly he swore it
Proclaimed secession day
And bade his good wife Joan ride, forth,
To East and West and South and North,
To see what the neighbors would say,

To East and West and South and North
Joan Koponen rides fast;
And house and hut and hovel
Decide to throw a blast;
Shame to the false ridge runner
Who lingers in his bed;
At Koponen's on Chena Ridge
The wine is flowing red.

The neighbors came to Niilo's;
They made a milling throng;
The first arrived at breakfast tide,
And they kept coming all day long
And fifty gallons of homebrew
From Kegler's brewery
Were broached, to celebrate the fact
That Chena Ridge was free.

Niilo leaped onto the table
At nine o'clock that night,
While hordes of drunken Ridgerunners

Made quite a stirring sight;
And to the cheering multitude
He yelled this battle cry:
"While homes are dear, while beer is clear"
We'll keep the Ridge or die!"

The news went out on K-FAR,
And in the Pentagon
A secret conference was held
To see what should be done;
And Ike addressed the nation
From a golf club in the sticks,
Saying: "No matter what betide,
"I'll run in 'Fifty-six."

One general blamed the Russians;
Another, the Chinese;
An Admiral spoke for seven hours
On "Freedom of the Seas;"
The Chief-of-Staff said Canada
Must be behind the plot,
And fifty thousand Army men
Were drafted, on the spot!

The DAR was uproarious
Declaring "This means war!"
And Alien invaders
Shall never reach our shore!
So finally, under pressure,
Congress was forced to say
That three airborne divisions should
Emplane without delay.

The men were dropped on Creamer's Fie1d,
Ten thousand feet below,
While kids looked on with many a yawn
And said, "What a lousy show!"
One thousand troopers broke their necks
Two thousand sank from view,
While another six hundred and seventy-three
Fell gracefully into the slough.

The commanding General's whirlybird
Flew round and round and round:
Trying to spot the doggies
Bogged down upon the ground;
Eight colonels snagged the only jeep
That still was able to go,
And headed for the College Cafe.
To grab a cup of joe.

Nine company cooks were commandeered
By some majors in distress,
And just behind the College Inn
Set up the Officers' Mess;
While, searching for a billet,
Ten captains and their men
Found a crock of Doc Rolfe's beer
And never were heard of again.

While thirty-nine lieutenants
Their carbines promptly sold
And, grabbing up entrenching tools,
Went off to dig for gold;
Three AP correspondents,
While looking for the fight,
Hiked all the way out Airport Road
And took off on the Kotzebue flight.

We will not bore this noble group
With all the different sort

Of sergeants, which the Army
Creates for indoor sport;
Since trying to find a suitable rhyme
For "Sergeant First Class"
Not only is a waste of time;
He's a blasted pain in the ass

Since Ernie and Mrs. Patty
Were vacationing in Parea'
The University Command
Devolved on Mrs. Magee;
She finally gave one order,
After making up her mind:
"With all these soldiers running loose,
"The girls must be confined!"

While officers went AWOL
The corporals rallied round,
And through the wildest freak of luck
Arrived on solid ground:
With none to tell them what to do,
They picked a likely road,
And marched along with measured tread
Toward Koponen's abode.

The privates saw them coming,
With the stripes upon their sleeve,
And straightway gave up previous plans
Of going on French leave;
It needed but a frenzied shout
To form them into ranks,
And scores of doggies joined the march,
While others followed in tanks.
While up on Niilo's homestead
Were tumult and affright:
The Ridgerunners were terrified.
And most of them were tight.
They cussed and screamed and ran around

Till Niilo's firm command
Bade all his soused Militiamen
To organize and stand.

'Mid much chaotic shouting
The Militia was arrayed
With rifle, axe and pitchfork
Though all were sore afraid;
In order to review his troop
Koponen climbed a tree,
Crying: "Who will stand on my right hand
"And keep the Ridge with me?"

Then up spake Dr. J.C. Cain
Amid the loud debates,
Saying: "You stay here .and keep the Ridge
"While I go to the States,
"For I am bound for America
"And shall return no more!"
We didn't call him coward--
We called him "Six-point--four."..

Then up spake Joan Koponen,
Our Colonel of Cavalry's
She shouted from the saddle:
"Niilo, get out of that tree!"
Then up spake Fertile Phyllis,
The wife of David Brown:
"You think you've got troubles, without
"But I can shout till my lungs give out
"And as long as my mother is lurking in town
"Dear David will never come down!"
So scouts were sent to Gilbert's
Which overlooks the Farm,
To climb the tallest cottonwood
And sound the first alarm;
When Kegler saw them coming,
He blew the bridge and fled:

For forty days and forty nights
It rained iron on Niilo's head.

The Borchards weren't available:
In the general hubbub,
Lisa was entertaining
The College Women's Club;
We felt that it was madness
To disturb the Kaffee Klatch,
And Heinz, when asked what he would do,
Said: "I will set a watch."

The tanks rolled down the Pump Road,
And toward the river sped:
A dozen bogged in Hollists' swamp,
But the rest went straight ahead;
They rolled right into the Tanana
Before the error was found,
But the infantry got lost in the dust
And headed for higher ground.

The advance guard of the Army
Came floundering up the hill:
The scouts took one good look and ran,
To hide beneath the still;
Dave Brown came down and deftly dug
A fox-hole forty feet deep:
He did not fear the enemy's shells--
He just wanted a cool place to sleep.

Niilo remained in the treetop
Where he could survey the field,
And swore by the beer he held so dear
That the Ridge would never yield;
And as the enemy advanced
As far as the eye could see,
He cried: "Who'll perch in the nearest birch
"And keep the Ridge with me?"

Then up spoke Galen Hansen;
He let out a fearful yelp:
"Now, you stay here and keep the Ridge
"While I go back for help!"
Then up spoke bold Ben Zeller,
And drunk as a skunk was he:
"I say, there, L.T. Kegler,
"Will you open a beer for me?"

But Louis Theodore Kegler
Had embarked for the airport
For the Aero Club's Tri-Pacer,
To fly close ground support;
So Kegler flew around and round
For an hour, or maybe more:
On each 'pass over the enemy
He strafed with his forty-four.
Now, Labe he grabbed a rifle,
And shot off his little toe,
And Niilo cried, when the dust had died,
"Where'd everybody go?
'I would have gone before them -
"Loud noises scare me blue
"But I seem to be stuck in this bloody tree,
"And the bloody tree is sticking to me,
"No matter what I do!"
Then Niilo from his lofty bough,
Did call upon his men
To all come out of hiding
And rally round again;
He bellowed: "Boys our beer's at stake!
"Come, show your bravery!
"Now, who will stand on my left hand
"And keep the Ridge with me?"

With cursing and carousing
The Militia forward stormed,
While Niilo stayed in the treetop

To keep the troops informed;
Then up spoke Dave McNary
In accents loud and clear:
"You stay here and keep the Ridge "While I go
back for beer!"

Now, Junius Jewett, Jr.,
With his musket at his side,
Stands ready to defend the Ridge,
No matter what betides;
And through his trusty transit
Most bravely does he peer,
Crying: "When I spy the white of their eye,
"I'm getting out of here!"

Then up spake Jerry Hawman,
Colonel of Artillery:
"I have covered every foot of Ridge
With my fifty-seventy;
The effect of my trusty cannon is very plain to
see
But if it doesn't stop 'em soon
I'll climb up Niilo's tree!!

Dave Dittman heard the tumult
Of battle from afar:
He grabbed his wife and bottle,
And headed for the car;
And while he gave instructions,
Bea cranked the Model-A:
"It must be a hell of a party, "Said Dave,
"If we hear it from this far away!"

As the Dittmans got to Niilo's.
The brake-shoes started to burn
And, brakeless, they roared down the grade
Past the point of no return:
Right through the U.S. Army

The Model-A did veer,
As bullets rained around like hail,
And doggies perished by the bale,
Till from below came a mournful wail:
"They broke my Goddam' beer!"

We heard the wails of Dittman
About his broken beer.
And over this atrocity
The troops shed many a tear;
So, bent on righteous vengeance
Joan led a cavalry charge:
She tried to muster up a force,
But since she had the only horse,
And no one could ride the cow, of course,
The charge was not so large.

Amid the violent action
The food was running low:
A foraging party was called for,
But the troops were too drunk to go;
So Colonel M.A. Kegler
Of the Quartermaster Corps,
Set bravely off in Niilo's Dodge
To bring back half the store.
Up on the hairpin corner
The Dodge's boiler blew,
Slaughtering forty soldiers
Who were gazing at the view;
The explosion blew Pete Kegler
Two hundred feet in the air:
He landed hard, in Niilo's yard,
And all he could do was swear.

Frank Dewey was returning
From town, in his six-by-six,
When he found the U.S. Army
Advancing into the sticks;

Through blood be-spattered bodies
The six-by did carreen
As he yelled "We've been through this before
If you guys want to fight a Goddamn War
Don't come near Chena Ridge anymore,
And don't mess with an ex-Marine."

Meanwhile, bold Niilo from his tree
Was calling, loud and clear
For his men to make a final stand
When the enemy should appear;
"This is no place for cowards!"
We'll die for anarchy!
"Now, who will stand on either hand
"And keep the Ridge with me?"
Then up spake C.K. Lewis
From under a yellow car:
"I will stand on your right hand
"As long as you stand the bar!"
Then up spake T.S. Dickinson,
In accents blurred by beer:
"I will stand on your left hand,
"As long as the booze is here!"

How now cried noble Niilo,
I hope I heard alright!
They had to get drunk to show any spunk
But now they'll stand and fight,
Just then a volley of shots rang out
And Tom and Chas. last seen,
Going at a terrific pace,
Were heading for the Keglers place
To hide in Don's latrine.

Meanwhile, the invading army,
Having found the road too grim
(Since cars kept coursing through, without
Regard for life or limb).

Took cover in the underbrush -
And to deploy did start;
For bugs devoured them, driving them mad,
And they all began drifting apart.

"The enemy is deploying!"
Cried Irving, in weary haste;
"If they should ever bomb the beer -
"Think what a dreadful waste-":
"The only way to stop them,"
Cried Connie, in a rush,
"Is to arm the kids with tinker-toys-
"Little ones, big ones, girls and boys-
"And tell them not to make any noise,
"And turn them loose in the brush;"

The Koponen kids and Charley
And the Brown kids in a batch
Went charging off into the weeds
To see what they could catch
The Griffith kids went on a patrol,
Which Sandy Griffith led:
We don't know where the hell they went,
But they brought back a shrunken head.

Somewhere in all the chaos,
The poor defeated Yanks
Got turned about completely,
And wound up down at Krank's
Before they knew it, they were sunk
In mud right up to the chin,
And as soon as one man surfaced his head,
It would get stepped on and submerged,
instead,
By another man falling in.

A gang of signal corpsmen,
Festooned with coils of wire,

Tripped over a log on the edge of the bog;
And slipped into the mire;
Some medics tried to rescue them,
But they reached too far, too soon:
And field phones, rifles, wire supply
And eighty G.I.'s were gobbled by
The thing from the Black Lagoon.

The Commanding General, from his bird,
Sat watching all that passed,
Until his pilot told him
They's run out of gas at last;
They came to light on Niilo's barn,
Right next to Niilo's tree,
And Niilo cried, as he saw them land,
Not knowing he spoke to the wrong
command:
'Ha! Here's a man who's come to stand
"And keep the Ridge with me!"

The General and his pilot
Stepped out upon the roof:
The pilot looked astonished, but
The General remained aloof;
Then Niilo noticed the scramble eggs,
And, realizing, roared.
Then, climbing out upon a limb,
And waving an empty bottle at him,
He demanded the General's sword.

The General found it difficult
To maintain his haughty pose,
While leafy boughs and the odor of cows
Wafted beneath his nose;
But, through a sneeze, he faced the trees
And, turning a venomous blue,
Inquired of the nearest quivering branch:
"And just who the hell, sir, are you?"

Niilo clutched his bottle,
And dung to the trembling tree,
And impressively he cried: "Sir, I
"Am our glorious S.B.!
Unconditional surrender
Is what we're waiting for!"
The general gave a terrible yell,
And, "Never!" cried he, "I'll see you in hell!"
But the branch gave out, and Niilo fell
On the General, ending the war.

Then Niilo hailed our victory,
Atop the General's paunch;
His words rang out triumphantly,
His attitude was staunch,
"Good Ridgerunners," he shouted
"Unhide yourselves straightway!
By heavy drinkin' and lousy shootin',
"By the Bog the Yanks are now pollutin',
"By the Grace of God and Sir Isaac Newton,
"We've kept the Ridge this day!"

Questions were asked in Congress
During the Statehood Session,
But funds to renew the action

Were used to fight Depression;
So the State Department winked an eye.
At the Army's indiscretion,
And nothin' more was ever heard
Of the Chena Ridge Secession.

We gave Koponen back his land
That we'd captured in the fight:
As much as one small Oliver
Could plow, from morn till night;
So fifteen acres of Birch Creek Schist
And five good acres of mud
Now belong to Niilo and
The descendants of his blood.

Lest all our children should forget
The blood we didn't shed,
There stands now, on the Chena Crock,
A statue painted red,
Of Niilo, with a bottle,
Holding a general at bay
Most of its made of plaster,
But the feet are made of clay.