

720th Military Police

Company B



Army Life Fun & Games in the Early Sixties

By Dave Beranis

FORWARD

It was the early sixties, over 50 years ago, I was enjoying my life as a young police officer on the Racine Police Department in Wisconsin. I received a letter from then President John F Kennedy. He needed me to protect the country and told me I just got drafted.

I took the letter to the Chief of Police. He read it and said “don’t worry I’ll take care of this”. A few days later he called me into his office, he was brief and to the point, “Dave your drafted” .

I’ve been retired for over 25 years from the Racine Police Department and decided to write a few books about unusual and humorous happenings during my police career.

While writing my police books I started to get a lot of ideas for a similar book about my two years protecting my country. I want to share some of my memories with the soldiers that have been a part of the 720th Military Police Battalion history.

There is a lot of heroic and grim history that a lot of us have gone through while serving in the units, but all of us certainly remember the good times that were also part of army life.

I hope you find my recollection of my military career enjoyable .

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CHAPTER ONE -THE PHYSICAL

I reported to be inducted in Milwaukee Wisconsin. There were about 40 of us in the group. Some of them were friends of mine and some were classmates from high school. All in all, we were a pretty motley crew.

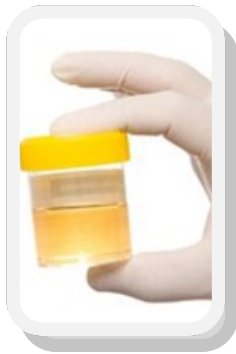
My First Impression



We were marched single file into a room and were spaced evenly around three walls of the room facing the wall. The order was to drop our drawers, bend over, grab your behind with both hands, and spread your cheeks.

I was among the first to get my oil checked. I pulled up my pants, turned around, and first realized I was being inducted with 39 other “assholes”.

Saving Time



Of course there was the time in the exam where you were handed a little bottle with your name on it. Off to the men’s room for a sample.

There are always a few men that seem to have a problem with depositing the sample into the bottle in front of a group.

One inductee with the embarrassing problem was helped by having his bottle filled by another inductee. One way or the other they would pass the test or both be rejected.

Everyone will Take The Oath



The final step at the induction center was for us to take the Army Oath. We were all lined up with our backs against a wall. The oath was given and by taking a step forward you would be the property of the U.S. Army.

Since the only thing you could do was step forward we all accepted our fate.

CHAPTER TWO : RANK HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Quickly Rising to the Top

During basic training I was offered the opportunity to go to Officer Candidate School. After thinking about it a minute or two I decided to decline.

After I graduated from basic training the whole company was being handed their orders from our commander telling us where the Army needs us. A few of us were sent to Fort Gordon for military police training. The Lt called my name and I was going to the 720th Military Police Battalion, Company B, Fort Hood Texas. The lieutenant stated he didn't know that there was a military police school there. (there wasn't) I arrived at the unit with four other police officers that missed Fort Gordon training and were directly assigned to the 720th, from basic training.

What Have I Gotten Myself Into?

When I got there I was issued jungle gear, arctic gear, more class A uniforms, etc. Would you believe I was even issued the brown wool long sleeved shirts and pants uniforms that were in fashion during the Korean war.

I was told by the First Sergeant I was now in a US Army S.T.R.A.C. unit.

S. = Skilled

T. = Tough

R. = Ready

A. = Around

C. = (the) Clock

In the barracks the men seemed to have another definition of S.T.R.A.C.

S. = Shit

T. = The

R. = Russians

A. = Are

C. = Coming

I don't know how long the STRAC classification was used in the Army, but while I was in it we were STRAC. We were ready to go anywhere at a moments notice. We had the ability to go via, convoy, air, or railroad. We could be deployed by squad, company or battalion.

There was an Special Forces group with an officer we called "Captain Bob". His unit worked with our Battalion on several assignments. He thought he had a great idea. It was making the 720th a special forces outfit.

Luckily for us, he never talked his powers that be, that it was a good idea.

Home Is Where The Garbage Is

Anyway I was in the outfit and before I had the time to unpack and adjust to my new home, the unit was immediately shipped out to police an Army “Swift Strike” Maneuver in Georgia.



While in Georgia I managed to get to Fort Gordon and the military police training area. I showed up in my military police jeep, surprising some friends from basic who were still enduring military police training.

Do You Think Anyone Will Notice?

At that time the 720th was short on anyone with rank and time in grade so a lot of adjustments were made to meet obligations put out by command.

I was a slick sleeve private waiting to get my PFC stipe .



As soon as I got the stripe the First Shirt sent me to take a Spec 4 proficiency test. The only reason I was sent was they didn't have anyone else to send. The test was for Spec 4 and above. The battalion was short on Spec 4 and up. When I passed the test I was denied the pro-pay because it couldn't be given to a PFC.

The next thing the company needed was someone who could instruct accident reporting and investigation. Since I was a policeman in civilian life I drew the short straw. I volunteered to investigate traffic accidents on post but teaching the subject wasn't enough rank to let me do the job.



My time as a PFC was brief I got promoted to Spec 4. The day after I got my uniforms back from getting the Spec 4 patches on them I was promoted to Corporal. I had to re-patch my uniforms but the bright side was I could go to the NCO Club. As a bonus I got out of KP duty.



When I asked about re-taking the pro-pay test The request fell on deaf ears



My next chance for promotion was to sergeant if I wanted to re-up for a few years of my life. I figured something was up when the first shirt suggested we go to the mess hall and take a coffee break. Despite a emotional and patriotic speech by my sergeant, I turned down the offer.

CHAPTER 3: IG INSPECTION IS COMING, SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

As usual the IG inspection is suppose to be a surprise inspection, but there always seems to be a bit of lead time for the units to be inspected to make them think we are more prepared than we are.

Nice Rocks

A decorative touch between the company area and the road was a line of about a dozen and a half bowling ball sized rocks. The paint on them was pretty much worn away. The First Shirt handed a PFC a gallon of paint and told him to put a fresh coat of paint on them for the upcoming IG Inspection.



The PFC started his project but ran out of paint, so he went to the supply sergeant and got a fresh gallon. After a few trips for more gallons of paint the supply sergeant went outside to see what was being painted. There was the PFC pouring the paint over the rocks. His explanation was simple he wasn't issued a paint brush along with the paint to do the job, the only way to finish it was to pour paint over each rock until all the rocks were nicely covered.

The Pistol Clearing Station Needs a Face Lift



The pistol clearing chamber was a weather worn yellow. The powers that be decided it should be spruced up for the IG Inspection. The discharge chamber was given a fresh coat of yellow paint and the back of the clearing area now boasted a 720th Military Police emblem at the rear of it. It was beautiful to behold.

Would you believe until that time no M.P. had every accidentally fired a round into the safety chamber. You guessed it. The next day a M.P. getting off duty accidentally chambered a round and blew the emblem away.

Work Overtime for IG Inspection? No Tanks!



A few of the jeep drivers were assigned officers from the Pentagon (**Army, Navy, Marine**) to help them play "Hide and Seek With Tanks" The game consisted of driving around Fort Hood trying to find hidden tanks. It was something to do with "on ground" inspections during the cold war.

When the Pentagon Officers got wind of the jeep drivers have additional cleaning duties for the upcoming IG inspections in addition to Pentagon duties They figured out a solution to keep the jeep drivers bright eyed and bushy tailed for the Pentagon Project.

A "Temporary Duty Station" order came out to ship the drivers and jeeps across the post until further notice. The drivers considered the order a little bit of all right. The drivers left their lockers available for fellow soldiers, to stuff non-military items in them, until after the IG.

CHAPTER FOUR: WONDER WHY IT IS CALLED A MESS HALL?

Tube Steaks



On rare occasions the menu at the Mess Hall listed steak as the main course. You might get a steak if you happened to be at the head of the chow line. If you were at the end of the regular line or coming off patrol duty at a later time you definitely were out of luck.

For some reason the mess sergeant claimed he must have miscounted when he ordered steaks. The men didn't have to worry the mess sergeant (**He was a Prince of a guy**) always had enough Tube Steaks (hot dogs) on hand so the men in the unit didn't have to go hungry.

New Blood



A new cook came into the company and really started to make a difference with the menu. In addition to the usual food fare, he would bake sweet rolls for breakfast, hot rolls for dinner, etc. The men loved it, but the mess sergeant didn't, he had him transferred out as soon as he could. It wasn't a good idea to "out mess" the mess sergeant.

Bug Control



I was on KP duty when the Army version of the Orkin Man came into the kitchen carrying only a hammer in his hand. He told the cook he was here to inspect for bugs and walked up to the service counter. Gave the wall above the counter a few whacks with the hammer, disturbing a few cockroaches that left their hiding place and scurried about on the counter. The bug inspector then stated "You got cockroaches" and walked out the door.

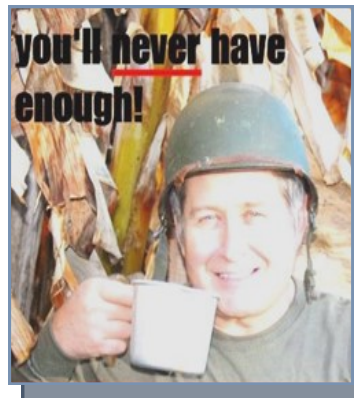
Struck by “White” lightning

Somehow the troops always find ways to grab a drink or two, much to the dismay of the officers trying to figure out how it’s done.

While in the field in the south during a “Swift Strike “ the happy hour for the troops was an ongoing problem. Try as they might the officers couldn’t find the source.



The officers and the troops ate at the same field mess. The cooks made a deal with some of the local moonshiners for the white lightning. There was always two tubs of orange juice on the chow line. When the officers wanted orange juice the server scooped it out of one tub. When the enlisted men wanted orange juice it was scooped out of the other tub. Enlisted men sure did go through a lot of orange juice every day.



How about a nightcap



The battalion was the way to another Swift Strike, spending the night at a small Army base. The base commander invited the whole battalion to use the officers club facilities if any of us cared to have a few beers.

He didn’t expect the entire battalion was in a relaxing mood. Everyone had a great time as we drank the club dry. It was the best day the club ever had.

When the battalion stopped at the same base on the way back to Fort Hood. The base commander decided that the officers club couldn’t handle the expected rush. They set up a temporary bar for us in a warehouse and had another very profitable night.

CHAPTER 5: WHERE ARE WE & WHERE ARE WE GOING

At that time the 720th was sent on all sorts of assignments. It guarded a student at Oxford, Mississippi. Policed the Selma March. We were part of several Swift Strikes, drew the short straw for policing “Desert Strike”, and escorted many Army actions.

The powers that be also had the unit as garrison police and do town patrol in Temple, Texas just to keep us out of trouble.

There does seem to be a few times when orders were issued but evidently the last few pages of them were lost.

Going Nowhere Fast



When I first arrived a squad or two was sent to Vietnam. It was in the early part of the Viet Nam war. Nobody knew what happened to them until they showed up back at Fort Hood after a month or so.

They arrived in Thailand and nobody knew why they were there or what they were supposed to do. They spent their time in a downtown Bangkok hotel until somebody sent them back to Fort Hood. A good time was had by all

Breezing By the Gate



When I got out of the Army and returned to my job as a police officer in Racine Wisconsin I was talking with another police officer who was in the garrison military police when the 720th came to Fort Leonard Wood for a field problem.

The units reputation proceeded its arrival. He saw the convoy approaching the gate. The lead vehicle didn't even slow down. The unit flew by the gate at about fifty miles an hour, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake.

Before he could tell base that the 720th was there, they had already arrived.

Crowd Control



While at Fort Leonard Wood my partner and I stopped to pick up something at the small PX and beer hall that was across the street from my basic training barracks. Evidently the soldiers there had never seen an MP in field gear. We were wearing the brown wool field uniform, 720th helmet liner, MP arm band, and our 45's on our hips. The beer hall was completely silent until we left.

Flip a Coin Killeen, Texas or Temple, Texas



If you wanted to find some action to fill your spare time hours, Killeen, Texas right outside the gate wasn't the place you would wind up. It was so dull that the Army didn't even assign a town patrol to keep the soldiers in line.



Temple, Texas was the city about a half an hour down the highway that drew the troops. It wasn't because there was a lot of action, but it kept the riff raff out of Killeen.

A Hangover In a Bottle



Two of the local beers were popular because they were cheap. They were "Pearl" and "Lone Star". I found out the hard way that I could be guaranteed a hangover headache if I drank as little as one bottle.



A Jail With a View

The Temple Police Department had such a brisk business that they decided to remodel the jail. They decided to keep the jail open for business during the construction. The construction company removed a wall the other side of the jail cells, exposing the inmates to view to passerby's on the street.



Showing concern for the inmates the thoughtful jailer did issue each prisoner one blanket, to protect them from the cold, rain, snow, and wind. I seem to remember that each cell had its own bucket for disposing of body waste.

Men's Rooms In a Class By Themselves.

Evidently the city didn't have any health inspectors for the bars as the men's room left something to be desired. Latrines weren't in vogue at that time. One men's room had the men urinate on a wall that drained into a groove that flowed into a drain at the end of it.



Another classic design was a rusty rain gutter that was mounted across one wall. The urine flowed down the gutter and then out the back wall. I never asked where it went from there.



If you had more serious business to do, one restroom sported just the toilet drain in the floor. The entire toilet was missing, and never replaced.

Partying on New Years Eve



A buddy and myself decided to spend New Years Eve at a Temple Bar. We arrived about 11:45 pm, got our drinks and the clock struck 12. The celebrating lasted about 5 minutes. The owners announced that the bar is closed because of local laws. Everyone out. He was good hearted enough to let us celebrate that extra five minutes. It was time to drive back to base.

CHAPTER SIX: THE COMMAND

I imagine that all Army Units have nick names for their commanding officers. During my tour we had names for ours.

HIGH POCKETS - Our Sergeant Major was about 6 foot five tall.

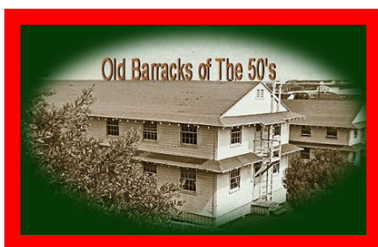
LOW POCKETS - A Major that was very short naturally got that name

The Dynamic Duo

High and Low Pockets would do walk through inspections of the battalion areas. Both of them side by side was something to behold. The names fit.

The Sergeant Major High Pockets was an alright person, but Major Low Pockets had some shortcomings. When someone had a chance to mess with him they did.

Doing The Limbo



At that time our barracks and buildings were set on posts about a foot above ground. When our first shirt decided it was time to police the area he would shout out, “Low Pockets did a Limbo under the barracks today and reported cigarette butts there.”

Speechless



There was a semi-circle of bleachers with a podium in the center that Low Pockets would talk from trying to inspire the troops. One morning the troops filled the bleachers ready to hear Low Pockets' words of inspiration.



Low Pockets stepped to the podium and when he placed his notes on the podium it collapsed into about half a dozen pieces. It appeared that someone had made some unauthorized adjustments to the podium.

A Place of Honor



Low Pockets had a Goblet that was awarded to him for some unknown reason. He treasured that goblet and had it in a place of honor on the table in front of him when he ate in the mess hall.

One day the goblet disappeared. Low Pockets was quite upset and had the entire company area searched inch by inch, over and over. He never found the goblet.

Several months later a soldier was being discharged the next morning and was selling some of his extra Military Police gear. He held up the "GOBLET" and inquired if anyone cared to buy it. No one wanted to buy it, but they wanted to know where he hid it. He wouldn't tell us where it was hid, and no one knows what happened to it after that evening.

I'm Afraid To Ask



I had a personal experience with Low Pockets when curiosity got the best of him. For my two years in the Army I had a small non-military black leather pouch with brass buttons always on my gun belt. The pouch was an ammo holder, from my police days, that held six, 38 special rounds. It was part of my police gear before I got drafted. I went through guard mount after guard mount with the officer of the day looking at it but not asking anything

about it.

At almost the end of my military career Low Pockets ordered me to report to him after guard mount. He asked me what the black leather pouch was on my gun belt.

I unsnapped the pouch and whipped out my Zippo lighter, with a 720th crest on it (nice touch).

I told Low Pockets that he was the only officer, in my entire military career, who ever was curious about what it was. Low Pockets seemed pretty smug about being the only officer who knew what was on my belt and dismissed me even though it wasn't a military item he didn't order me to remove it from my gear, so I continued to wear it.

When I left the service I gave the Zippo holder to a friend who never had any officer question what it was during his tours of duty.

GERONIMO -



This Lieutenant had a last name that sort of sounded like the Indian chief's name.

You Should Look For a New Tailor

My first encounter with Geronimo was when he reported to the unit after hours and I had the orderly room for the night. He was very skinny and had a terrible fitting uniform. He looked like a scarecrow in a military get up. I mistook him for a slick sleeved private that had purchased some lieutenant bars at a pawn shop in Killeen, and was trying to impress some local honey, and forgot to take them off.



I warned him about he might get in trouble for displaying the Lieutenant bars and advised him to get rid of them fast.

To my dismay I looked at his orders and discovered he was an officer.

ZORRO



He got his nick name because of his completely Latin American first and last name.

I was his jeep driver and had a few incidents that I think are worth mentioning.

In A Family Way



We were in the field for about a week before we came back to our unit. I pulled up in front of the orderly room and saw Zorro's very pregnant wife standing in front of the orderly room waiting to greet him back from the field. Zorro got out of the jeep and walked quickly towards the Orderly Room. I thought he was anxious to greet his wife. At the same fast pace he walked past his wife mumbled "Hi how are you" and entered the orderly room. He never saw the painful expression he put on his wife's' face.

Picture This



A picture was taken of a General, the General's dog, and Zorro. The General sent a 8 by 10 glossy print to Zorro. Zorro showed the picture to me and asked me what I thought. Zorro always had his hair cut so short he almost looked bald. I said "I think you need a haircut, sir" as a joke. He didn't see the humor in my comment and had me immediately drive him to the barber.

Just Sign On The Dotted Line



An officer approached Zorro and gave him some paperwork to sign. Zorro signed the paperwork and the officer left. Zorro didn't quite understand what the paperwork was about so he let me smoke it over. As far as I could see he just signed for about 2 dozen 3/4 ton trucks parked in the field across the street. Our unit was stuck guarding them until the first shirt decided who was really supposed to get them.

In A Class By Itself Ass Chewing

I only mention this incident as it is the only memory of a Captain (Officer of Day) that is forever etched in my Army memories.



It started when a first lieutenant demanded to speak to the Officer of the day about his being mistreated by a M.P. The O.D. listened to the Lt. and then stood up and started chewing Lt's ass up one side and down the other. How dare he complain about one of his M.P.s. The verbal barrage that the Captain released on the Lt made him stand at attention, bring tears to his eyes, and shiver in his boots. I marveled at the intensity of the Captain's words as he verbally cut the Lt into pieces.

The Captain then told the Lt to get the hell out of the P.M.O. before he gets angry. I would hate to see this Captain angry.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL PROBLEMS

Sometimes Generals take advantage of their rank and seem to make us really wonder about their antics.

The Caddy



One of our soldiers family knew a General quite well. When the General was assigned to Fort Hood he ordered the unit to assign his friends son to the position of the General's caddy. He had a duty assignment of being the Generals caddy when ever the General decided to play a round of golf. That was the soldiers only duty. He had a jeep assigned to him and wasn't obligated with any other duty.



A Fine Collection of Military Vehicles.

When one of the Generals at Fort Hood had to go some where he as able to go in style. Here is a list of vehicles assigned to him.

- * **Jeep**
- * **Jeep with Caddy (Generals transportation when golfing)**
- * **Limousine**
- * **Deuce and a half camper**
- * **Semi-Trailer camper**
- * **Helicopter**
- * **Patrol Fishing Boat**
- * **Scout airplane**

I Might Decide to Go Fishing



The Range patrol had two patrol boats one of them wasn't in the best of shape but they had it. The General while on inspection decided that maybe he might want to go fishing, someday, so he decided that the decent patrol boat would now be christened his fishing boat. That was the end of patrol boats for the range patrol.

A Piece of History



Fort Hood headquarters had an antique cannon that was used daily for flag ceremonies. When a new commanding General arrived at Fort Hood he decided that the cannon would look wonderful in front of his residence.

The cannon was immediately moved and a temporary cannon was put in place for flag ceremonies. The temporary cannon was a track mounted Howitzer, that no Military Policeman had any training on. That's another story.

Someone Parked a Mounted Howitzer on the Cannon?

The post General had the antique cannon used for flag ceremonies removed from headquarters and moved to the front of his home. A track mounted Howitzer was the temporary cannon for the afternoon flag ceremony.



Of the four MP's at the ceremony none of us had ever even seen the inside of one of these beasts or had any idea how to fire the cannon. Being a corporal and the other three MPs were PFC's, I again drew the short straw. Drawing on my expertise I had acquired from watching John Wayne war movies as a kid, I climbed in the Howitzer. I selected a shell, hoping it wasn't a live round and slid it into the breech. I looked around and saw a "RED" button figuring that might fire the cannon. Luckily I wasn't standing behind the cannon when it went off, there was a nice kickback just missing me. The report left me deaf for quite a few minutes after it went off. I still think my hearing loss in my left ear was from that report. Later in my life the V.A. hospital in Milwaukee had a different opinion of the cause, turning down my hearing aid request.

My bother who spent his Army career in a noisy headquarters office constantly putting up with the noise of his typewriter got his hearing aids through the V.A. hospital in Florida. There is no justice at V.A. hospitals.

The Blizzard of 1963



Being from Wisconsin I grew up dealing with snow. Snow falling at Fort Hood tended to be a major disaster.

It was a chilly winter morning and a dusting (my opinion) of snow fell on Fort Hood. There was barely enough snow to make the roads slippery. The Forts commanding general evidently hadn't ever seen a snow accumulation. He ordered that an MP be stationed at every intersection to do traffic for the safety of the soldiers.

By the time the MP's got to their corners the sun was melting the snow fall. The general was pleased with his action. The MP's were not in a happy mood as they had all their uniforms splattered by mud as the cars whizzed by them .

CHAPTER EIGHT: Fun In The Barracks

Shaking The Dew Off The Lilly

The first bunk in one of the barracks was always open to whoever got assigned to the unit. When they arrived they would be told to grab whatever vacant bunk they want in the barracks. They always picked the lower first bunk by the door nearest to the day room.

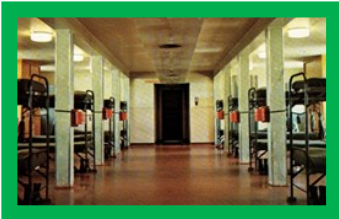


A cook named “Big Daddy” made a habit of getting smashed on Thunderbird wine and in his state of drunkenness would always forget which end of the barracks the head was at.

Big Daddy would whip out his dolly-whacker and give a warm shower to the unfortunate soldier that had chosen that bunk.

A Honeymoon to remember (Heartbreak Hotel)

The barracks just isn't the right place for a soldier to spend his wedding night. One soldier wound up spending his wedding night in his barracks, but he wasn't alone, his bride was with him.



Did they sleep together in one bunk? Was he in the top bunk and her in the bottom bunk?

Was the marriage consummated in front of a lot of witnesses?

Maybe a NCO took pity on them and let them use his room.

Such a Hand

Playing poker was always part of Pay Day activities. It was usually always the same people in the game and one soldier always seemed to win. I stood and watched the game one day, it became very obvious to me why the one soldier always won. **He cheated.**



He would call his hand and throw his cards on the table and collect the pot. I noticed that when he did this he might have 4 spades and a club and state flush and collect the money. When he had a straight it might have a card out of order but he would call a straight and collect everyone's money.

When we were alone I talked to him about his cheating, he stated “He'll keep on cheating as long as he gets away with it” As long as I was in the Army he never got caught.

Spit Shine Isn't the Word For it.

GIs are always trying to think up whys to make everyday tasks simpler, faster, and less time consuming. After thinking carefully about how to save time keeping a permanent spit shine on his duty boots, a corporal came up with this brilliant idea.



He purchased a can of high gloss black spray paint. Placed his boots on some newspaper and sprayed them, laces and all. The next morning the paint was dry. The boots were sparkling in the morning sun, or were they.

The laces were stuck to the tongues. The paint peeled where the leather was flexed. The wax base on the toes smeared. It was time to buy new boots.

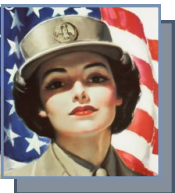
The corporal had developed a **SHIT SHINE.**

Getting Bush WACKed



In the mid-sixties the WAC barracks were right across the street from the NCO Club. Post patrol responded to a report of a person in the bushes next to the WAC barracks. When the officers arrived the drunk male in the bushes had definitely been assaulted.

Possible reasons for the assault could have been getting in an argument with someone in the NCO club. The assault occurred as he left. He could have been robbed and assaulted on this way home from the club.



The investigation reveals a slightly different scenario. He was drinking pretty heavily at the Club. He reasoned the WACs in the barracks are sex starved. All he needed to do was go there announce his desire to provide sexual servicing for them. He was “opportunity” walking in the door.

Well “opportunity” forgot to knock before entering the barracks. A number of WACs responded by pounding lumps on him and threw him into the bushes. Yes, even the best laid plans sometimes go asunder.

CHAPTER NINE: FIVE FINGER DISCOUNT

Bridge Too Far



The unit was packing up after a field problem ready to convoy back to Fort Hood. The barracks that we were temporally assigned to, had a very nice triangular concrete sign, mounted on poles, and a huge stone base. The First Shirt looked at the sign and mentioned loudly that he thought a sign like that would look good in front of our orderly room.

The men always want to keep the First Shirt happy. An empty deuce and a half pulled up, wrenched the sign out of the ground and sent it on its way to Fort Hood.

Before the First Shirt could get the sign planted in front of the Orderly Room he got wind of an investigation reference a missing sign from Fort Leonard Wood. The first Shirt hated to do it, but he had no choice but to trade the wonderful sign off to the stockade in exchange for a bridge.

Keep on Trucking



There was a rumor before I came into the unit that after one of the many field problems the unit went through, somehow the motor pool (after taking an accurate inventory) had an extra deuce and a half truck. That truck spent time in the field during IG inspections along with other excess NON- inventoried items packed in the back.

Protecting the Payroll

Fort Hood had a very large chunk of cash to be doling out for pay day activities. I got assigned the protection detail for pay day. My partner and I had our 45's and an M1 rifle with a clip in each.



We got into Army school bus style vehicle, with two officers and a bus driver. The training for our mission was brief. I was told to sit in the back of the bus my partner was to sit in the front of the bus and protect the money. I didn't know if I was protecting the entire Post payroll or part of it.

The officers went into a building, dragged out some money bags to the bus. We dove around and dropped the bags off at various locations and that was that.

I wasn't happy when the only thing between the money and me was a thin sheet of metal that wouldn't even stand up to a 22 caliber round.

End of An Era



The unit received new replacement rifles the M-14. My training was brief on the weapon. The company had to move out for somewhere. I had a brief stop at the firing range. I was handed an M-14 and a clip and told to try and hit a rock down range. Having fired the M-14, I merely had to decide what I wanted as my expertise on the weapon. Marksman, Sharpshooter, or Expert.

I don't think anyone ever had a chance to fire the M-14 on full automatic at the time. The automatic switches were stored securely in the company safe. If for any reason you would like to have an automatic switch, you didn't have to be a safe cracker to get one. If you were a stockade prisoner guard working the warehouses you could grab a few out of the open bins as you passed. No one I know took any but they were there for the taking.

What Do You Mean It's Lost

During Swift Strike problems the 720th was the policing unit for the whole exercise. One assignment I was on involved looking for an item that was dropped from a transport plane and landed in an area that it wasn't supposed to. This was pre-GPS era and the pilot had no idea where it dropped.



What was unusual about the item was the size. It was a large black Bladder holding hundreds of gallons of gasoline. It missed the intended target zone and we had to find it.

We never did find it. I imagine some local land owner was happy to get a gift of gasoline for his use for the next few years.

Cancel The Tow Truck

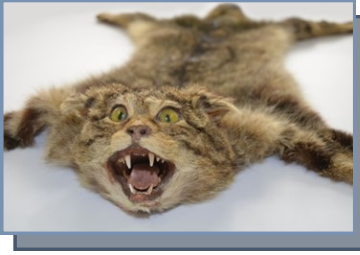


During Swift Strike exercises the 720 did a lot of contact with paratrooper operations. One of our duties was to keep drop zones clear of on lookers when air drops of equipment occurs. I watched a duce and a half come out of the transport plane. The chute didn't open. The duce and a half hit the ground with a thud, bounced up, and flew apart in mid air. It seemed like slow motion as the truck tore itself apart in the air.

I agreed with the plan to keep the on lookers away from drop zones.

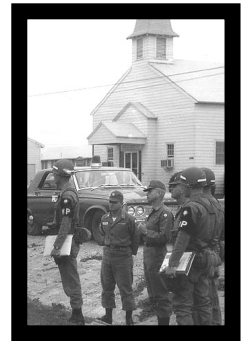
CHAPTER NINE: FUN AT THE FORT

Would you call it a CAT-a pult ?

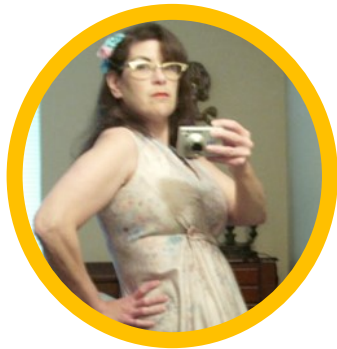


On occasion an animal or two get hit by a passing vehicle and remains until a military police man is assigned to dispose of it. Not much was happening while patrolling the post on a midnight shift when a patrol came upon a dead cat. Not knowing exactly where to put the cat after taking it out of the roadway, they decided that the antique cannon used during flag ceremonies was just the place. It was stuffed down the barrel.

It was the morning flag ceremony at headquarters. The flag went up. The cannon went off, the cat went into the wild blue yonder, plastering itself onto the steeple of the post church. One dead cat got to cat heaven in an unusual way.



I Think The Record Is Stuck



Responding to a sexual assault isn't the usual dull call for service when your patrolling the Fort on the midnight shift. My first call went like this. I arrived at the address of the victim. A wife of a soldier answered the door in a nightgown with a tear in the area of her breasts Using an Army term of the time she was far from being considered a "Hot Piece of Meat". She acted upset.

Her husband was away on a field problem. She was sleeping and heard a noise outside. A man broke into her house, entered her bedroom and grabbed her by the breasts attempting to rape her. She fought him off as he fondled her breasts. At this time she displayed her scratched breasts for the officers. She screamed and the offender ran out the door. It was dark and she didn't have any description of the offender. In my opinion if it wasn't dark the suspect wouldn't have picked her as a target.

So much for the first call. A second call came in a few weeks later. The whole story was the same. Husband in field, same torn nightgown, exposed the freshly scratched breasts, etc. I remembered it was the same song and dance from the last time I was there.

The Engineers Have a Plan



Every once and a while the Army decides to do a project for the benefit of soldiers and their families' when they are off duty. One project was a park along what I think was the headwaters of Belton Dam (not sure of the water source). The park had a nice beach, rest rooms, parking lot, and other nice features for families.



The only glitch with building the park was it was built on a flood plane. A few weeks after the general dedicated the park, a good old Texas rain put the entire park area under several feet of water, ending a dry spell at Fort Hood.

Too Late To Stop The Press



One soldier that was a commercial artist before President Kennedy needed his service was assigned to Headquarters Company. One project his talent was directed at was to produce the cover of the History of the 720th Military Police Battalion Book. The cover was just a full size unit crest and the words "History Of the 720th Military Police Battalion."

The book was printed and sent to everyone of importance that the command could think of. Only then did someone point out that the Gauntlet on the cover wasn't holding the black imp. It was holding a black "Dolly Wacker".

More Hidden Talent Revealed



The history book caper was enough to make command decide not to use his artistic talent again. He did do a safety poster that was displayed about the base.

The poster had a Military Policeman directing traffic on it. The MP was standing in front of a Chevrolet.

Command never noticed the letters **FTA** reflected on the hood area of the car.

He probably left his mark in many more ways than I am aware of.

I've Got a Secret, I Don't Have a Secret Clearance.

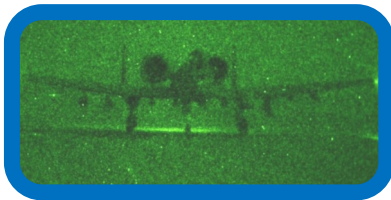


I was approached by my first shirt to get a secret clearance. Among other shortages in the company, a lack of secret security clearances was one of them. I thought about it but decided that my nick name in high school was “The Grand Dragon”. My nick name had nothing to do with the KKK but I imagine that it would send a red flag up the flag pole when checking my background. The Grand Dragon was just the name that a group of high school jokers, pranksters, and misfits called their leader.

My imaginary secret clearance started with me making a delivery to a base post near Fort Hood. When my partner asked me about my secret security clearance he got quite excited. He got me off the base as quickly as he could, when I dropped the dime on him and told him I didn't have one.



My next secret duty was standing guard outside a command post tent with a bunch of generals in it. I don't think that there was anything secret about the outside of the command tent. The generals left and I was relieved of my assignment. I didn't find out till later that the guard was supposed to have a secret clearance.



My final secret assignment was guarding an airplane that was nothing but a blurry shape parked almost completely out of my view. When I got back to the company area my company commander mentioned that I was the only MP with a secret clearance in the company. I hated to tell him if I had a secret clearance it was news to me.

The Great Escape

The PMO had a small holding cell for detaining soldiers who were being held for their units after they were picked up on base for drunk or disorderly acts, etc. It was a small one man cell having a cot in it with several mattresses piled on it.



This night there were 10 soldiers in the cell. When a unit came in to pick up a prisoner. The prisoner couldn't be found and the cell count was at 9. The officer of the day was very upset, he now had a very big problem on his hands.

The PMO went into panic mode until the OD driver noticed some fingers sticking out between the stacked mattresses. There the escapee was sleeping (**actually passed out drunk**) under a pile of mattresses that other inmates were sitting on.

It was a good thing the missing cell mate didn't suffocate.

Good Morning Viet Nam, Almost!



B company was enjoying spending the night in a pup tent in the field in the Fort Hood outback. It was after sunset and the unit was done with the fun and games of the day.

The silence was broken by the sound of a couple of semi trucks with stake sided trailers (cattle trucks) idling. The order was grab your gear get in the trailers and leave your tents and other equipment in the field.



As we pulled into the company area it was being guarded by some other outfit. The medic's trucks were there and we were escorted into them to get all sorts of shots. The drivers were taken to the fort motor pool to get new vehicles. We were given a list of equipment to pack. If we didn't have everything on the list or if yours was damaged it was replaced. We'll be eating at another units mess hall. All of us were confined to the company area.

The unit was being deployed to an unknown location. Unknown my ass. It had to be Viet Nam. For the next several days were spent , sitting on our foot lockers or cots, waiting for the inevitable order to move out.

No one could leave the area All there was to do was sit and think about what is about to happen to us. Thoughts about our inadequate training for real war raced through our minds. It was a real reality check for everyone.

The powers that be changed their minds on using us and in a flash we were back to the old Army game we were used to playing.

War Is Hell, But I Want To Be A Part Of It

Going to Viet Nam wasn't on my Top Ten list of places I wanted to go. Bucket lists weren't even thought about fifty years ago, but if there were bucket lists visits to Viet Nam wouldn't be on mine.

Most of us draftees weren't actually keen on being shipped off to Viet Nam. There were a few lifers that wanted to go. They tried time after time to go.



**One Spec 4 finally got his orders to go. He was looking forward to the war it seemed like a new adventure to him
After I left the Army I always wondered what happened to him.**

I was looking at the names on the Viet Nam War Memorial. His was there. His adventure ended.

