

from Gary Erwin 1970

ALERT

During my off time, I usually wore Boots and hat (cowboy style for you non Texans), jeans, shirt and a belt with a (big of course) Texas buckle. At the time, I just figured the officers didn't know me.

One day, the NCOs decided we needed to requalify with our rifles. We did so much complaining, they decided to bet a case of beer they could out shoot us. They lost of course. As I was standing around after my turn, I saw one Sgt. firing a revolver. Never one to miss an opportunity, I asked permission to fire it.

Six shoots plinked the can to the other end of the range. Turning to ask for more ammo, I saw the NCOs with their mouths open. Then, somewhat briskly, I was told I didn't need any more practice.

I thought that was the end of it until one night later on when we had an alert. I was off duty wearing my "Texas Uniform" and some of us were visiting in the guard tower when the warning went off.

Having to rush back to the hut to change and get my gear, I headed down the ladder. Just as we got to the bottom, the OD arrived. Turns out, he was 199th, though I don't remember now which one. He asked where we were going so we explained how we needed to get back and change.

He let the others go but asked me to get in the jeep with him, stating that I could make the rounds with him. I asked about my uniform and rifle. I didn't need it, he said. I was with him so I would not get in trouble wearing civvies. Still in need of a weapon, he handed me his revolver and belt, which I buckled on.

We spent the rest of the alert checking guard stations, and after it cleared, he took me back to my hut. As I was getting out of the jeep, he laughed and said, "that was the safest I have felt since I got here". I asked why and he said that with a Texas gunslinger for a bodyguard, there was no way he could get hurt.

Made me feel sorta like Patton down in Mexico when he was with Pershing, (I believe it was), and beat one of Poncho Villa's men to the draw. Patton was also a Texan.

“ITTIE BITTIE” Cans of Chocolate milk

Wayne Edwards and I shared a room. We had it fixed up with silk curtains and other nice things, including our food cabinet. Crip shared in the food expenses and ate with us. If you look in the photo section, you can see our cabinet with one shelf loaded with “ittie bittie” (our name for them) cans of chocolate milk. This milk was very important to us, and to this story.

Wayne ran the aircraft supply room with Crip and I under him. Sometimes at night, we sorta dran.... celebrated...uh...somewhat. The milk was our morning after cure.

One morning, Capt. Gobel saw us heading to the supply room using a zigzag approach. Of course, by the time he got the maint. Office running and could get to us to discuss our method of approach, we had each emptied a couple cans of the milk. I tell you, that stuff worked wonders!

He walked in chewing on us for not being in top form. We asked him what he was talking about and he said he allowed no one to be at work in “that” condition. Well, we just told him that condition did not carry over into working hours.

After threatening us all with dire punishments if we did not divulge our secret, we made him promise not to tell anyone else the secret. Wayne grabbed an empty can and showed it to him.

Now, a few days earlier when we had bought some of the milk, there was a lot in stock and it didn't really move all that fast. But, you know, that night after work when we went to the PX to restock, they were sold plumb out. Not wanting to point fingers, we never said much about it, but really Capt., you could have left us a few. He he he

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHES

One time Capt. Gobel, Wayne, Crip and I all got into a contest to see who could grow the best handlebar mustache. Everything was going great till Top us three to trim or shave them off. They had to meet Army regs. He would listen to no amount of how if we trimmed ours, the captain would win.

I was elected to tell Capt. Gobel the bad news. When I told him I was just going to cut mine off, he said we would be doing every nasty thing in the platoon if any of us did. We were to trim them and wear them and hold our heads high.

The next day, I walked into Capt. Gobel's office, snapped to attention and saluted. He looked up and nearly fell out of his chair laughing when he saw my new "Hitler" mustache.

Top didn't think it was quite so funny.

By the way Capt., if you read this, you may notice I didn't turn it all blue while trying to type it.

Sorry I can't remember everyone's names but, we used lots of nicknames so I have trouble remembering real names. Of course, the guys that served at the same time should remember the nicknames and maybe even the real ones.

Are these the kind of tales you are looking for? I prefer remembering the better times.

Gary Erwin

The Vanishing Man

One night three of us were hanging around. I can't remember who the third one was but, The other was Hub. Hub was feisty, though smaller than us. Hub had a friend over in the CAV so we headed over to visit.

On the way back, it was so dark, have the time we had trouble staying on the road. We were walking three abreast and talking. Hub was in the middle. One of us asked Hub a question but got no response. The other guy and I started calling Hub's name and walking back the other direction. Then we heard this very faint yell, "help".

Turns out, holes had been drilled beside the road for telephone poles. We weren't quite in the center of the road like we thought. I walked past one side of the hole, the other guy walked past the other side. Hub went down the hole.

Note: I believe this was about the time Jim Strye was rebuilding the VL phone system-RJ