

Army living tough yet priceless

BY JACK McLAUGHLIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Many people are delighted and proud to receive a letter from the President of the United States. I was not. I was 20, a graduate of Fordson High School when I received my letter. President Truman "invited" me into the Army and ordered me to report for processing on Oct. 28, 1952. I was 20, a graduate of Fordson High School when I received my letter. President Truman "invited" me into the Army and ordered me to report for processing on Oct. 28, 1952. I was 20, a graduate of Fordson High School when I received my letter. President Truman "invited" me into the Army and ordered me to report for processing on Oct. 28, 1952.

WWII had only been over for five years before the Korean Police Action got underway in 1950. Many of our young men, myself included, didn't want to participate in this Police Action because there wasn't a world-wide threat, such as Hitler or Hirohito in WWII. Additionally, there wasn't a national win attitude as there was in the war we had just won. It seemed like a holding action that took lives and maimed others. Many of us felt like if you weren't going to win, why go in the first place? However, my generation and the one that preceded mine did not question our government's authority. We were patriots. Our President called and we responded.

Many of my fellow Dearbornites were called to serve. As scheduled, we boarded buses destined to Fort Custer in western Michigan where we got to know the Army on a very personal basis. On our way, our rest stop was Jackson State Prison. That short visit made us all want to fulfill our obligation to

President Truman and to whatever other powers demanded it. When we arrived at our station, we were issued uniforms, bedding and assigned to barracks.

We left Fort Custer after a couple of weeks and took a troop train to Fort Bliss, Texas, our home for the next nine months.

Hurry up and wait, as you do in the Army, was way overdone on this trip as it took more than a week to get there. We didn't have anything to eat or drink during the last day because our keepers didn't have enough food on board.

Tough training

We disembarked at the fort's train station on a very hot and sunny Sunday afternoon and were immediately ordered into formation with shoulders back and stomach in, the latter being easy to do since we were running empty. Some of the recruits were not used to standing at attention for a long period of time and passed out. Our training cadre were careful to step over these "resting" recruits so their brief respite from reality wouldn't be disturbed. This was to be the only rest they would get for the next 12 weeks. Treatment such as this was part of our toughening training because we were at war and our cadre reminded us of this...with their added comforting comments that we were being trained to be soldiers...to be killed by our country's enemies! Now that is a rather discomfiting thought as one embarks on a new career path...hopefully not a short one.

Our cadre woke our "resting" recruits, marched us to the mess hall and fed us the usual Army fare - cold cuts. At that point road kill stew made from Texas' highways gleanings would have tasted like a gourmet meal. I



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Jack McLaughlin

Korean War era veteran

often wondered if that is what we were being served most of the time anyway.

Now hell weeks began with gusto. Our new home was not the usual Army barracks fare. We had something different. Five man huts with a stove in the hut's center. They were not as much huts as tar paper shacks slapped together during WWII to house German war prisoners on the base. They were torn down after most of us shipped out to Thule, Greenland in August 1953.

Our new homes did have some unique features. The stove did keep our hut toasty warm on the cold desert nights and the half inch gaps between boards of our walls provided adequate ventilation when our stove put out too much heat. Our area was also plagued with sandstorms and these gaps let in blowing sand that often covered our beds. Of course if nature called during the night, our latrine was only a hundred yards down the dusty path outside our door. All the comforts of home!

We only spent half our time in homey huts. The other half was spent sharing a two-man pup with a buddy as we bivouacked in the Texas and New Mexico deserts, honing our skills at shooting down aircraft with a variety of weapons. We had to share our tents with scorpion and other vermin. Our C rations were seasoned with blowing sand as we ate them while sitting on a sand dune in the middle of sand storms, which were almost a daily occurrence. But those experiences did toughen us into hard fighting soldiers. When we finally returned to our huts, we thought we were in heaven.

Even though I hated it I wouldn't have missed it for the world nor would I want to repeat it. I'll retire to the comfort of my rocking chair and dream of those 25 mile desert hikes laden with a full backpack and 10-pound rifle singing the soldier's cadence - yo left, yo left, yo left, right left!

Jack McLaughlin, a retired industry analyst and author with a Ph.D. in business administration, lives in California. Veterans are invited to share their stories during this 50th commemoration of the Korean War. Call Jack Curd at 478-4694.

ENGAGEMENTS



WRIGHT LAU

Peggy and Duane Wright of Farmington Hills announce the engagement of their daughter, Jill Kathleen to Sam Lau, son of Marie and Tom Lau of Orange County, California.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of Mercy High School and the University of Michigan. She is the Western Regional Marketing Manager of Siemens Energy and Automation. Her fiancé is the Regional Sales Director of InterMedia Communications.

A June wedding is planned at the Church of the Holy Family in Novi.

65TH ANNIVERSARY

TIWARI 65TH

Shubh Kanan Dass Tiwari and Leela Wati Bhasker Tiwari celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Feb. 24. The couple married in India and make their home in Farmington Hills.

Mr. Tiwari is a retired civil engineer and his wife is a homemaker. They enjoy singing, watching sports, and going to temple for prayer.

Their children are Kewal Tiwari, Urmil Shukla, Nirmal Prasher, Prem Krishan Tiwari and Promila Sharma. They have 10 grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Tiwari celebrated their anniversary with a party of family and friends and a prayer ceremony.



NEW ARRIVAL



BOWMAN BABY

Kris and Bill Bowman of Ann Arbor announce the birth of a son, MacLain William, Jan. 29, 2001. He weighed 8 pounds 11 ounces and was 21 inches long.

Grandparents are William Bowman of Farmington Hills; Barbara Bowman of Farmington Hills; and Sal and Justine Reale of Rochester.

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