



This seems like a good point to digress and comment on the fact that I was living in both a micro-world and a macro-world. The micro part was all about me and what I was doing; going to school; getting a date; working part time, while the macro part was being aware of what was going on with WWII and how all the reverberations from that were impacting my world. I could write a story about what it was like to be in your teens during a war but this is supposed to be about Pathfinders.

It must be borne in mind that the post WWII years was a time of great turmoil for the military as well as a time of severe budget cuts. The first Secretary of Defense committed suicide and second one, Louis Johnson was considered pretty worthless. As soon as Japan surrendered every momma screamed. "Bring my boy home". There wasn't a Congressman who could stand up to that cry and consequently, the greatest military machine the world had ever seen was dismantled within a year. The forces in both Germany and Japan were turned into garrison troops and lost their fighting edge. I don't believe there was a division in the Army that was near up to strength. In addition, separating the Air Force from the Army created strains and confusion, but that was mostly at the command level. There is a lot to discuss about the culture and the times of post WWII but let's get on with me and then the Pathfinders.

It was December of '45 when I watched the 82<sup>nd</sup> A/B Division parade up Fifth Avenue. What a sight for a seventeen year old. In the spring of forty-six I read a newspaper article that the 82<sup>nd</sup> was looking for volunteers and that there was some regulation available to enable one to enlist directly into the division. I asked my mother about what time of the day I had been born and she told me that it was about 10:30 in the morning. On June 23, 1946 at 14:30 positive that I was eighteen, I walked into the recruiting office in Hartford, CT with the newspaper in my hand and told the Sergeant I wanted to enlist in the 82<sup>nd</sup>. He was surprised and called the Captain. The Captain made a few phone calls and told the sergeant, "Sign him up as RA". He also gave me a piece of paper and told me to show it to anyone who said I couldn't enlist into the 82<sup>nd</sup>. I think it was some throw back to a regulation from the Civil War. Anyway, on August 6, 1946 I was sworn in as RA11147956. Sure enough at Fort Dix they tried to talk me into going into the Signal Corp because of my background with radio. I also think my AGCT score of 157 had something to do with it. I kept showing them the paper I got from the recruiting Captain and they would say. "You dumb shit, you're going to live in the mud and carry a ton of equipment and not have a good enlistment." Don't ask me why but I stuck with it and I did have a good enlistment.

I went to Fort Knox for basic (Armored Infantry) because I think they were getting even with me. However, my brother was a corporal in base personnel and I would borrow his shirt and id, go to Louisville every weekend while the rest of the guys were stuck on base. From Knox I went right to Headquarters Company Third Battalion, 504PIR at Bragg. Did pre A training (what a bitch) until I went to jump school, class B-17. I still have the class folder with everyone's photo if any wants to check out if they were there.

It was during this period that the coal miners threatened a strike and Truman said that if they did strike the government would take over the mines. As a result we had a period of riot training with fixed bayonets. Happily we didn't have to go into the mine fields and were able to go back to Pre-A. The rumor was that all Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia GIs would be sent to the west coast so they wouldn't have to do riot duty against family or friends.

Pre-A consisted mostly of physical training, door exit training from a C-82 mock up, thirty-four foot tower jumps and PLF practice from the ten foot platform. Every morning, it as up at 0530, make the bunk, clean up, then gym shorts and boots for the run out Manchester Road. Half an hour out and half an hour back. Take a break: blow out the matches, break's over. Then an hour of PT and Tuesday and Thursday we did PT with the rifle. After chow the morning was PLFs, door practice, PLFs and the tower. We also practiced with chutes and the wind machine learning how to get rid of the chute as we were dragged across the field. Afternoons was class lectures and recreation which was some form of heavy duty sports. To illustrate the frame of mind some of us were in, a few nights a week a buddy of mine, Richard Greely (I think), and I would practice the run out Manchester Road to be sure we were in shape. The main reason for that was that if you dropped

out of the morning run you had to spend a week positioned one pace to the rear of the platoon which was a most embarrassing situation to be in.

Because of the cold weather when we went out for the day's training, one guy was left behind as barracks orderly. His job was primarily to keep the coal fired stove going for hot water and incidental heat in the barracks. Well, there was one guy in the platoon who was real goof off and I never could figure out why he volunteered for the airborne. I guess he thought the fifty bucks a month was guaranteed with no work required. Anyway, one day he decided that he would rather sleep than tend the stove and in order to do so he placed a brick on top of the boiler safety valve, stoked the stove full of coal and went to sleep. Of course the boiler over heated but fortunately it didn't explode however it did generate steam which was discovered when a couple of guys sat on the commode and being only half finished reached behind and shoved the flushing lever which released not water but a blast of steam against their ass. You may now imagine the attitude that developed towards our barrack's orderly. He was gone before the week was out.

During pre-A training there was one sergeant in charge of the pre-A platoon and over time I generated an intense hatred for him. Whatever he had us do he would do better, e.g. he was up on the platform where we could all see him and after doing fifty pushups with us he would say, "you SOB's think you're good; watch this." And then he would do fifty more. Incidentally, during Pre-training we would play tackle football in the sawdust pit wearing combat boots and gym shorts in December and you couldn't take it easy or the sergeant would have your ass. He also preferred running plays to passes.

I determined that when I got back from jump school I was going to clean his clock, but when I got back, dumped the duffle bag outside the Orderly Room and started up the walk to sign in, the door flew open and there he was with his hand extended saying, "Glad to see you, Jack.. I knew you'd make it." . So much for cleaning his clock. He later became sort of a mentor. Actually, it was thanks to him that I found jump school a piece of cake.

I was assigned to the Commo Platoon and after only two weeks was sent to Pathfinder School in Fort Benning. I believe one of the reasons I was picked was my AGCT score and I had also done some ham radio work. If I remember correctly, the class was about twenty. I think I was the only one from the 504. There were three guys from the 505, Jim 'Shorty' Farrant, Jim Martin, and a guy whose last name was also Prior, but I don't remember his first name. There was a Captain Lewllyn from Divarty, the 456 FA Battalion. He was a really good officer. There were three Canadian A/B; SGT/Major Harry Reid, and two privates, a Ted Little and Boyd Ross. Ted Little was later killed in a glider accident in Britain. Boyd Ross was an ex American who hated the US. I think it had to do with something that happened to his parents during the Depression; lost the farm or something like that. Harry Reid and I got along very well when he found out I could play Cribbage and knew that Canada was not upper US. He was a story in itself. He was a survivor of Dieppe, the capture of the bridge outside Caen, the bridge at Arnhem plus the rest of WWII. He was able to enlist in the Canadian Army at age fourteen as there was a regulation that since he was an orphan the army would take him as an orderly. I asked him about Dieppe and all he would say was, "It was hell." He would talk about the other operations but not about Dieppe.

There was also a Captain from the Peruvian Army whose English left a lot to be desired. We found out that he wasn't jump qualified when we geared up for our first tactical jump and Harry Reid and I noticed that he was trying to put the chute on upside down. The instructor told the Peruvian that he didn't have to jump but after a lot of sign language and his few English words, he made it clear that it was a matter of honor that he do what the course required. For the first jump Harry and I took him out the door between us. At graduation he got his Pathfinder certificate and his jump wings.

Harry Reid took no crap from anyone. One night we were at the 250 foot towers practicing landings with equipment. Not being part of jump school we were loafing at the base of the tower when a colonel from the jump school came by and in a loud voice demanded. "Why aren't these men at parade rest?" Lying next to me, Harry leaned on his elbow and shouted "Ah blow it out your ass!" This of course made the Colonel apoplectic and he said, "Who said that?". Harry stood up and

said to the colonel, “ I did. Do want to take it up with the Canadian Consulate?” Well after a while it was straightened out and we were allowed to continue loafing at the base of the tower. Another time we had been to Phoenix City and were returning to Benning in a cab when the MPs stopped us at the gate and noticed that Harry had a fifth of whiskey held between his legs. They told him he couldn’t take it onto the base and he told them he damn well could. Well after awhile he relented so we could get back and get to bed, but he made them give him a receipt.

The next day during noon break he said, “Come on with me and I’ll show you something.” We went to the Provost Marshall’s Office and Harry strode right past the top kick’s desk, hob-nailed boots banging on the floor, and pushed open the major’s door, stood in front of the desk and said, “I want my whiskey!”

During this time, I was trying to make myself as inconspicuous as possible staying in the outer office.

The major simply reached into the lower right hand drawer of his desk, pulled out the bottle of whiskey, handed it to Harry and said, “Enjoy it Sergeant Major.”

Harry said, “Thank you, sir.” Took the bottle and walked out.

Let me tell you, those hob-nailed boots hit the floor with positive authoritative thunder.

All this time the first sergeant sat there with his mouth open.

At this late date (July 2006), I remember Phoenix City activity with a lot more clarity than I do Pathfinder class work. For anyone who reads this and would like to know about our social life send me an e-mail for that’s a story in itself.

The Pathfinder course to me was relatively easy for the following reasons:

- A). I wasn’t even a year out of high school.
- B). I really enjoyed going to class.
- C). After Pre A and jump school I was in excellent physical shape.  
At that time I was two-hundred twelve pounds on a six foot one inch frame.
- D). I didn’t know any better and simply did what I was told to do.

As I remember, we had radio classes, Eureka/Rebecca classes and believe it or not, classes on how to display panels. There were also classes on packing and stowing equipment for the drop; how to merge your personal gear with the pathfinder gear. What was missing was actually going to a drop zone and talking to the aircraft as they practiced drops and we practiced talking them in. The Air Force probably didn’t have that in their budget.

The classes I liked best were the ones where we went into the boonies and picked likely landing strips for the L5 liaison planes. This involved actual surveying with transits and all that other good stuff that I no longer remember. We also flew in a C-46 over the reservation to identify good landing sites from the air. Due to budget problems we were then trucked to the site instead of dropping in. I definitely didn’t like the way the skin on the C-46 wing wrinkled when we banked but the pilot said that was normal. Oh Yeah!! Why they would want L5s brought in near the front lines was more than I could fathom. At that time the best cargo plane the Air Force had was the C-82 and they sure weren’t going to land that thing on any unpaved strip. There were absolutely no discussions about securing the drop/landing zone and what to do if we got shot at. I guess they thought instinct would take over.

We also had anemometers which I found very interesting, since I couldn’t believe the Normandy drop would have been called off because it was too windy. Back at Bragg we did call off drops when the ground wind got over fifteen knots. We would tell the pilots wind velocity and direction and he would fly the course we recommended, either right side, left side or center of DZ Ray. At that time the AF was very cooperative. Incidentally the crew who flew us was really top notch and we knew them on a personal basis and they were not at all like some of them we had to deal with latter. You also must remember that according to today’s standard all of this was very primitive.

At school we made two day drops and one night drop. The night drop was not really at night because even at 2200 hours the Georgia/Alabama countryside was well lit. You could stand in the

door and identify all the little hamlets that you remembered from the map, once you oriented yourself to Lawson Field. Naturally the panels were useless at night but we had Aldis lamps to replace them. I'm not sure about the name Aldis because I believe that lamp was actually patented in 1955. Whatever; we had signal lamps. The school was from late March '47 till late May '47 and I am proud to announce that I graduated first in class.

Here's a picture of me at Pathfinder School. I wasn't completely set up for the jump yet. That's a case of smoke grenades. My personal gear plus ammo and a weapon will be added.

Late in May 1947 I returned to the Commo Platoon in Headquarters Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 504PIR.

The training schedule had risen to the level of company and we were getting ready for Battalion level training. In the Commo platoon in addition to being a radio man I also cross trained in wire. During one of the battalion exercises I was laying wire into I Company's CP when General Gavin came strutting by and said to Capt Huey the CO,

"You know your company flank is over by that pine tree."

And without looking up Capt. Huey replied,

"General, I guess I know a fuckin' pine tree when I see one."

I found out later that Huey and Gavin had known one another for quite a while and that type of remark was usual with them. I must admit that as a young GI it did startle me.

The next item of note was in June '47 for the full battalion exercise when one of the S/SGTs from battalion headquarters (I can't remember his name, but he was a skinny little guy) got a hold of me and said that we were going to be Pathfinders for the battalion drop. It also turned out that we would be using a C-47 instead of a C-82. The C-82s were being used for all drops and the C-47 was a surprise. It may have been that the Air Force didn't want to fly ten guys in a plane that held forty-four. Who knows? Anyway it is my belief that that was the last time a C-47 was used for actual training. It was used later for sky diving but not for real troop use.

Training, training, training, that's all we did and in July and August at Bragg that can be a real bummer. Run around the woods all day and go to Fayetteville at night until the money ran out. Also during this time we were the troops that were used by National Guard officers on their two week summer training. Every NG officer was assigned to one of our officers, from company and battalion levels. The NG officers issued all the orders for carrying out the practice problem. Most of the time the NG officers did pretty well. The summer of forty-seven was drought time and occasionally we had to go into the field to fight brush fires. As soon as we learned that if we fought the fire until after midnight we had the rest of the day off, you can guess how many fires were cleaned up by 2359 hours.

One thing we did know was that if you screwed up real bad you got sent to Korea. We had a Lt. Peter Burns who was a real case. As first in the stick he dropped us in the woods twice after over flying DZ Ray which I think was about two minutes long at normal C-82 drop speed (110 IAS). Another time, during a night compass problem he brought us behind the rifle range at dawn when the firing commenced. That was a fun time. He was the classic case of Korea bound. I guess with a name like Peter Burns it was tough to be normal. Lt. Fuzz in Beetle Bailey reminds me of him. At this time I received my first promotion; Cpl. When I made NCO the first sergeant sat me down and said the following.

"There are a lot of guys in this outfit who are older than you and who have combat experience.



Here's how you handle it.

First; never tell anyone that the "the captain wants it done. You want it done. If you say the captain wants it, you have told them that you have no authority.

Second; if anyone should tell you that you can't make them do something, here's what you say: "You're absolutely correct, I can't make you do it, but I can make you wish to fuck you had." That advice has stayed with me through the years.

Now that memory is kicking in, I also always liked the sign over our orderly room door.

"A good reputation is to be lived up to, not on."

During this time our regimental commander was Westmoreland. We didn't think much of him because we thought he was a 'ticket puncher'. For Pete's sake, he couldn't even blouse his boots properly. His performance in Vietnam simply reinforced my opinion of him. We had some characters in HQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn 504PIR let me tell you. Our Bn Commander was Ltc. Fargo who was about 5' 5" and we swore he'd slip out of the chute harness on opening. He rode a big Harley to work and parked it outside Bn HQ. Capt. Garretson was the battalion exec officer (6' 4" 260lbs division heavy weight boxing champ) and he rode a big Arabian horse to work. One day we heard the Col. yelling and when we went into HQ he was pointing out the window and screaming, "He's pissing on my bike!!". And sure enough that's exactly what Garretson's horse was doing. To this day I don't know how they resolved that one.

On field exercises Garretson would often carry the packs of guys who were having a tough time. I've seen him with his own pack, plus two others. He once offered to carry mine since I was porting the radio, but I was too stupid and proud to let him do it. The story about Garretson was that he was wealthy, that his father worked on Wall Street and that while Garretson was in the CBI he didn't get paid for two years due to a record screw up and his father sent him a monthly pay. According to the story when he got back to the states he was paid all back pay due him and he took the money and threw a big party. I wasn't invited but that was the rumor.

In October '47 I was called into the orderly room and the CO, Capt. Ted Fuller asked me if I would like to be transferred to the Pathfinder Platoon in Division Headquarters Company. I almost shouted, "Yes Sir!!!!!!" I reported to HQ orderly room and was shown the barracks that was to house the Pathfinders. Guess What???. There was nobody there but me. As I understand it there never was a Pathfinder Platoon until this time in 1947. The WWII teams were made up from members of the 505PIR and then were assigned to the various regiments. I think the 101 did the same thing. Pathfinders were a catch as catch can outfit. The Pathfinder history for Africa, Sicily and Salerno is very varied and sometimes contradictory although a member of the 509 did write about the Pathfinders. As to the pathfinders being in the 505RCT you must remember that Gavin, the Division CG, was formerly the Regimental Commander of the 505. I have no knowledge of what the pathfinders did between combat operations but I do know that until 1947 there was no official unit for pathfinders in the Airborne. I also have no knowledge of what the other A/B divisions did for pathfinders. I can't believe they used pathfinders for the Corregidor drop because any C-47 pilot could find an island in Manila Bay.

I was the only one in the platoon for several days and then Lt. Shrable D. Williams arrived, He was the platoon commander. I knew he had been a WWII Pathfinder, but I just found out (12/22/2006) that he was in the 506PIR of the 101<sup>st</sup> A/B. At that time I found out what the TO was to be and it sounded very cushy. There was to be four teams each headed by a Captain. Each team was to have a Tech. Sgt. (later SFC), four S/SGTs and six SGTs. The Division had three Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs) so there was one Pathfinder team per RCT and one in reserve. By the end of November enough GIs had moved in and the Platoon was taking shape. By the way, even though some had been a Pathfinder in WWII they had to go to the Pathfinder Course in Benning before they could be in the platoon. If a GI came to the platoon without having gone to school he was sent to Benning and if he failed the course, we never saw him again.

Of course it was back to training, but a fun kind of training, doing stuff that I liked. Also as part of our training, every time 'Pay' jumps were scheduled for part of the Division we did a Pathfinder team drop. Consequently we acquired more silk (really nylon) time than most of the division people. When we finished our Pathfinder part of the 'Pay' drop we were then allowed to sign up for 'Hollywood' jumps for the rest of the day. One day a couple of the guys and I made eleven jumps. We'd land, get on the truck, go back to the marshalling area, sign the manifest and make another jump this took about ten hours. During my time I made a total of 35 jumps.

I had two interesting things happen to me on jumps and I don't remember exactly when they occurred but I do remember that they were about a year apart. The first one was when I landed on another chute and did exactly what we had been told to do; grab the lines, pull tight, run to the edge and jump off. It was like running in about a foot of water. Naturally the guy whose chute you landed on was not too happy. You could tell by the names he called you.

The other incident was a little scary. After I got the opening I noticed that everybody else was 'going up'. Checking the chute I saw that I had several blown panels. Again, doing what the instructions called for, I held the reserve shut while I pulled the rip cord and fed the reserve out until it filled. The landing was rough because a reserve and a partial are not as effective as either one alone and I didn't have enough time to pull the main down. Mine wasn't the only incidence of blown panels. I have to mention that after WWII there were probably over a hundred thousand chutes in storage and each one was supposed to be opened, shaken out, and repacked. I don't know how long it took to do each chute but I'm sure the riggers were the most over worked people in the division and some of them changed the first letter of their job title to an 'n'. It turned out that due to a shortage of riggers, all the chutes had not been opened and shaken out as they should have been and that is what caused deterioration in the material. The last time some of these chutes had been packed was in Europe.

During this time a really bum event occurred. I was out on DZ Ray with the PF team covering pay drops. We noticed that some time had passed since the last C-82 had appeared and then we saw a large plume of black smoke in the direction of Pope Field. We soon got word that a C-82 had gone down during take-off and the rest of the pilots did not want to take off over the crash site so the drops for the day were cancelled. We later found out that as the C-82 lifted off the runway a huge flock of black birds flew up into its flight path and shut down both engines. The pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer were killed in the crash but they held the plane aloft long enough for forty-two jumpers to get out. I understood that the last man out had a broken back because his chute did not fully deploy.

Around the same time myself and two others(I forget who) were going to Pope Field to scrounge crystals for our TRC/7s (ground to air) and we saw a C-47 banking left to land at Pope and when the plane got to its maximum bank it just fell in from about two-hundred feet. It blew up as soon as it hit the ground and we had no hope of getting the crew out. I never did find out what caused the C-47 to go in like that.

While on the subject of accidents I should mention a strange but serious one that happened to one of our members named Rogers. We had scrounged a personnel carrier (I don't know the designation) and one morning while carrying a five gallon can of gas he grabbed the open edge of the troop area and swung the can over the edge and as he pulled himself up and over he set the can down on the battery, connecting both terminals. The can was only partially full and without the cap; the spark from the battery caused the can to blow and the explosion hit Rodgers from the waist up. When I got discharged about several months later, he was still in the burn unit. I'm relating this incident not from personnel knowledge because at the time I was on TDY training basic recruits.

I'm trying to keep this account in chronological order but the passage of years has made some items merge with others. See the quote from Regan at the beginning.

I think it was in 1948 that Congress passed the Universal Military Training (UMT) act. Under this act, one could enlist for eighteen months and then spend time in the reserve and avoid being drafted for a term of two or three years. As a result the influx of recruits was more than the normal basic bases could handle and the basic training area of Fort Bragg was opened. I had just made sergeant and it was decided (not by me) that training recruits would be good for my career so I was detached and sent over to do training. I had absolutely no knowledge as to how to do this except for what I remembered from my basic.

I did remember certain things that were done that I would never do. However, what I did was to get the field manual for basic training and each night memorize the requirements for the next day. Unfortunately this made me an ogre to the cadre who couldn't or wouldn't memorize. I think the basic was shortened to six weeks. The highlight of this time was when we went to the rifle range. They were taught the carbine only because it was believed the M1 was too much for them. I was a weapons expert so I was selected to give a demo before the practice began. What we did was put cadre in the pits and I deliberately fired high over the targets and the guys in the pits plugged in a bulls eyes for every shot, including automatic fire. The recruits looked on in awe. This training stint did help my career because two months after this gig I was promoted to S/SGT. Now back to Pathfinder stuff.

Here's a photo of the platoon in March 1948. Notice how under strength we were. I'm the second from the right in the front row. I'll try to name all those I can remember.



Standing left to right:

Murphy, unk, unk, Demaris, Donovan, Whitbeck, Rowe, Henderson, Smith, unk, unk, Felipe, Young, Lopez, unk, Reyes, unk, Worsham, Green, Cook, Tait

Kneeling left to right:

Kopelochek, unk, Trew, unk, unk, Jones, Williams, Rogers, Sheffield, Irvin, Prior, French

As you can see, by March the Platoon began to fill out. I don't think we ever got to full strength and I do know that by the time I left Lt. Williams had not gotten his captaincy. About this time we began training for the big maneuvers that were coming up in May '48. As I remember, there was an Air Force crew assigned to us for this mission. They were the Pathfinders for the Air Force. The pilot's name was Smith, the co-pilot's name was Brown and the navigator's name was Jones. They were referred to as the 'anonymous crew'. This crew flew us on all the 'pathfinder' drops we made.

About this time we also began getting involved in weird sort of stuff since no one in division really knew what to do with us and they didn't think we were busy enough, plus we were the only ones they could think of when a strange task came up. The obvious disadvantage of being barracked right behind division headquarters made us the prime suspects but was offset by the fact that we didn't pull guard duty or CQ. One of the really strange things that happened was there was a lieutenant from Wright-Patterson Field who had developed a new type of chute called a 'ribbon chute'. It was supposed to be for high speed exits. Well anyway, he came to Bragg to get people to test it. I wasn't involved in this but T/SGT Rowe told me about it. It seems that five from the



platoon volunteered and went to Pope Air Base to see about it. When they got there Rowe noticed that there were only five chutes and he asked the lieutenant, "Where's your chute, sir?" The lieutenant replied, "Oh, I'm not jumping."

At that Rowe said, "Neither are we."

The five returned to the platoon and I never did hear any more about the 'ribbon chute' until years later when it was tried for jet pilots who had to eject. That was before they made the pilots compartment an 'eject capsule'.

This is a practice drop before the May '48 maneuvers. You'll notice no weapons. I'm the third from the right. I suppose I should try to jazz up the picture but that's a job for later.



The names from left to right are:

Lt. Williams, Worsham, Sheffield, Smith, Felipe, Whitbeck, Martin, North, Young, Donovan, Lopez, Reyes, Kopalchek, Trew, Irvin, Canon, Tait, Prior, Henderson, Cook

By this time we were about 60 percent up to TO and we had five lieutenants, Williams (CO), Jones, Tolar and two others whose names I can't recall. Tolar was a good officer and there's a story about him that I'll relate when we get to the maneuvers of May 1949. One of the unnamed lieutenants (a West Point grad) had just returned from Japan and he had an Akita which was one beautiful dog.

Along came May 1948 and the first big maneuvers since WWII were planned. I don't remember which RCT we dropped into Camp Campbell but I think it was the 505RCT. I was on the Pathfinder team that led them in. It was then that I discovered the biggest hazards of being a Pathfinder and on the ground when the troops and their equipment came in. Have you ever seen a 155 Howitzer come down when its chute failed? Also at least one jeep and one 6X6 crashed. One discovers that not only can you be killed by the enemy, but you can be flattened by a truck. I wonder if they give medals for that. How would they write up the citation? Would they tell your survivors that you were squashed by a truck?

I have several other photos from the New York Daily News Sunday supplement that I'll put in a separate attachment. This Photo is a 155 that bounced in. Obviously the jeep made it.

After we left the DZ we bivouacked next to the air field and the following day a team played Pathfinders and brought the re-supply planes in. They pilots of course were able to find Camp Campbell without our help. While we were doing this A. B. (no name just initials) Cannon drove up in 6X6 that he had requisitioned from one of the supply



Major and Minor Injuries

The jeep came down in fine shape, but not the howitzer in the foreground (\*). Most of its 6,000 lbs are buried, because the chutes failed to open. [▼] Pfc. Jerry Worsham, one of the 56 injured, gets aid from a medic. The men behind them are rolling up the canvas panel that marked the Drop

aircraft. This truck was loaded with ten in one rations which beat the hell out of K or C rations. We unloaded what the platoon would need for the month and Abie returned the truck. A note about Cannon. There's a picture of him in the addenda that was taken in Europe, he being a WWII Pathfinder. He had no first name and no middle name, just A. B. If you dropped AB in the middle of the Sahara desert, within four hours he would turn up with a case of beer and some rations.

Most of the '48 maneuvers were spent in bivouac and we were engaged in a lot of antics that troops get into when there is not much to do. Again, those stories are available on request. When the maneuvers were over we flew back to Bragg through the Smokies and at times I could look up at the hills while standing in the door. As regards that flight; the C-82 was rated for a cargo of 10,800 pounds and we took off from Campbell with a load of a little over 12,500 pounds. When you see the three quarter mark on the runway go by it's time for a tight sphincter. Our pilot, Captain Smith, was one hot shot of a plane jockey. He had gotten into the Air Force in 1937 and flew throughout WWII with out getting a scratch on his plane. He made Normandy, Market/Garden and the Rhine.

A side note about me and heights. I had always thought that I was afraid of heights but I was never afraid to fly. I took my first flight as a birthday gift on my 10<sup>th</sup>. I had my little brownie camera and I took pictures over Hartford, CT. I thought that was great. Later in the service, I could sit in the door of the aircraft, look down and it never bothered me. Later I found out that the fear was not of heights but of 'edges'. For example, if I go into a tall office building and it is one of those modern ones with the windows to the floor, when I enter one of the offices, I stand with my back against the inner office wall. On the observation deck of the Empire State building I stand with my back against the building. I have been up there numerous times and I have never been to the railing where the telescopes are. However, I do like to fly and I have jumped from altitudes less than that of the Empire State.

During the late forties there was a concerted effort by the top brass to eliminate 'elite' forces. The Marines tried to have Marine Rangers in WWII but the top brass thought that that would be redundant since the entire Marine Corp was considered an elite force and there was no way the entire Corp could be eliminated. Instead, using the budget they cut the Marines to the bone. Also too many ships were mothballed. The Cape Fear River in North Carolina was clogged with mothballed ships.

One of the ways to indicate that we were elite troops we wore the PF Insignia on the lower left sleeve below the gold bar for overseas wartime service (six months each bar) which were below the diagonal; length of service stripes (three years each stripe). For old timers with overseas service the sleeve could get crowded but some of our old timers had one service stripe and three bars. Most of us were first time enlistments. We occasionally got questioned by MPs but most of them were also new and didn't know up from down and I think the majority of them were told, "Don't mess with Airborne".

Anyway, orders were issued that we could no longer wear our peaked 'overseas caps' which we called 'piss cutters'. Ike jackets were outlawed and we would have to wear the standard army blouse and most important of all we would have to wear the visored uniform hat which we called 'commode lids'. Our opinion of that was that we would like to have two of them, 'one to shit in and the other to cover it up'. On top of that, they took away the 'Airborne' tab (in the first picture where most are wearing Class "A"s it tough the see but there is no 'Airborne' tab over the division patch). What was really too much was they were going to outlaw the wearing of jump boots. Let me tell you every one in the 82<sup>nd</sup> was unhappy, pissed and downright furious. Then to really stick it to us, in their infinite wisdom they decided that we had to pay income tax. After all we were getting those fabulous pays. As a S/Sgt I was getting \$115.00 a month plus \$50.00 jump pay. They talked about taking away the jump pay but if they had, there would have been no more 82<sup>nd</sup> A/B Division.

When the Russians blockaded Berlin there was talk about us being flown into Berlin and in conjunction with the forces in West Germany, force open the corridor. Amazingly, the high brass suddenly figured there might be a need for elite troops and all the uniform restrictions were lifted. As you can guess we were happy as pigs in the mud when the airlift started. Most people don't know it but one of the main reasons for the airlift was that at this time the military was in no shape to engage in a fire fight. As I mentioned earlier the services had been 'budgeted' away to almost

nothing. I think this fact was also an encouragement for the North Koreans to invade the south in 1950. You know we were in rotten shape when you read the history of the first few months in Korea.

Also about now Truman issued the desegregation order for the military. There was a lot of grumbling about the mixing the troops but I don't remember any real fuss. As I mentioned before, I sort of wandered around in my own little world. The 555PIB was broken up and merged into the 505PIR.

When Gavin was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, General Canham took over. Somebody told me that Canham was fifty-four and when transferred to the 82<sup>nd</sup> he went to Benning and qualified as a jumper. He had a distinguished WWII record and had been the military governor of Trieste. I had a very positive dealing with General Canham. One of our modes of recreation was 'no rules' volley ball. The poles were anchored in concrete and the net was suspended from a one inch diameter cable that was also anchored in concrete and adapted to one of those ratchet devices we used to hold down cargo in order to keep it properly tensioned. This allowed the center to hold onto the cable and pull himself as high as he could to spike the ball. One day, the officers of Division Headquarters Company challenged us to a game using our rules. Well, during the game I came opposite General Canham and I pulled up using the cable and spiked the ball with a vengeance. Much to my horror it caromed right off Canham's forehead. "Oh shit", I thought, Korea, here I come. But the general kind of shook his head, I think he was dazed, and said "Nice shot", and we the rotated positions. I may be the only GI who has bounced a volley ball off the forehead of a general.

At this point I have decided against trying to keep things in chronological order and will relate incidents I remember as interesting, as I recall them.

As you may recall, I mentioned Lt. Tolar earlier about an incident involving him. We were getting ready for the '49 maneuvers and my team was on the DZ practicing with the Eureka/Rebecca and voice communication with the aircraft. Well, Lt. Tolar needed a pay jump so he went to Pope AFB and signed on. We on the DZ had no knowledge of what he had done. For pay jumps the C-82s flew over the DZ in single file and we communicated to each aircraft in order for the air crews to practice talking to us. As we watched the jumpers come out of one plane we saw that a jumper had gotten his legs tangled in the lines and was hanging upside down. Because pay jumps were usually from twelve-hundred feet three of us had time to get underneath this jumper and cradle him so his head did not hit first. Well, I'll be damned if it wasn't Lt. Tolar. He had gone for the jump wearing combat boots instead of jump boots and the buckle of one of his boots caught his legs in the lines. We never mentioned the fact that he must have had a pretty crappy exit if his feet were above his head. After all, RHIP. Obviously the drinks were on him.

There were two fatalities during my time and I witnessed both of them. The first was a young GI and I don't remember what unit he was with but here's how it happened. To carry the M1 we had a 'rifle bag' that held the M1 in two parts to reduce the length; the receiver group and the stock part. When you hooked the bag to your harness there was a twenty-five (?) foot line that was used to lower the bag beneath you so it hit the ground before you did and thus took the weight off your landing. (This explanation is for those who haven't jumped) The bag was supposed to be hooked to your harness with the stowed line inside against you. However, this jumper hooked it up with the stowed line on the outside and nobody caught the mistake. He went out the left(portside) door of the C-82 and as soon as he hit the slipstream the blast blew the stowed line out in front of him and when the chute was pulled out it flowed into the loop caused by the line. The loop tightened and prevented the main chute from opening. He never pulled the reserve. I don't remember what the investigation concluded.

The second fatality was actually a suicide. Again I don't remember the unit but this officer simply stepped out the door without hooking up and didn't pull the reserve. We watched him all the way in and he bounced about a foot when he hit. The later report was that his wife was running around on

him and he decided that he'd show her. Oh Yeah!! I don't think suicide was a reason for canceling GI insurance.

In the summer of '48 the reserve and the NG were again in camp for their two weeks of training but we didn't have anything to do with them, instead we had a group of West Point cadets who were supposed to learn something about airborne. We took them through a mini Pre-A and the 34 foot tower and then had them sit in a C-82 watching us dump bundles and short sticks (5 jumpers each side) going out the door. When the show and tell was over the pilots made another pass over the DZ and the two instructors (me and another Pathfinder) made a 'Hollywood jump'. Doing this we immediately discovered a problem since we were wearing only T shirts with our name & rank on them, and when the opening occurred there wasn't much padding on our shoulders and we ended up slightly black and blue.

In March of '49 we made a drop at Camp Mackall and I was carrying an AN/GRC-9 radio. It was early in the morning and really cold for North Carolina in March. I have no idea how it happened but when I went out the door (port side) the radio was torn away and I watched it go down all the way like Wily Coyote in the cartoon when he falls into the canyon. I was sure I was going to be hit with a 'statement of charges' because you are not supposed to lose equipment. I was positive that I had hooked it on properly but obviously I hadn't. However, no charges were issued, for which I was grateful.

About this time we (us young ones) heard a story about Vernon French and one of the captains in headquarters company. It was told that at Nimegen this captain ordered a movement along the top of a dike or levee where earlier several jumpers had been shot. The men refused to go and when he pointed his forty-five at them to enforce the order, Vernon shot him. The captain was taken to the aid station and nothing further was said about the incident. The next day Vernon was one of the men who paddled across the Waal canal and took the bridge. I can verify that this captain had an exit wound just below his left shoulder blade which I saw the day we played volleyball against the headquarters officers.

In May we held maneuvers at Camp Mackall during which we did practically nothing except play pinochle all day. There was an incident where some captain took two of our sergeants and had them dig a garbage pit. A complaint about making NCOs do private's work was made to the Inspector General and after talking to us he said that a letter of reprimand would be placed in the captain's file and headquarters personnel would be ordered to find privates for privates work. Sometimes the military works in wondrous ways.

It is now the end of a page and I've run out of memories for the time being.