

This, gentle souls, is the latest edition in a series of magazines for the SPECTATOR AMATEUR PRESS SOCIETY published by:

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GLURF!

(Formerly Down With...)

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CHALKER'S EXPERIENCES IN THE GREAT TEXAS WARS, or,

Sleep Well Tonight --

Your Air National Guard Does....

The prospect of the draft looms heavy over every young man's head, and I was certainly no exception. However, being deferred as a teacher I had less to worry about than others, shaky though that deferrment was. But, when in February my name came up on the Air National Guard waiting list (placed on there when I was a nervous college senior) and they offered me a position, I decided to take a military leave from the schools and march off to 134 days of the Wars.

The 135th Air Commando Group, MdANG is a special sort of group, even for the regular Air Force. It wears a funny hat, has special training, and has pne specialty that would curl John Boardman's hair --

SPECIAL FORCES -- COUNTERINSURGENCY

This should make it a tough, high-priority unit -- the kind to stay away from, since counterinsurgency work is being done in a hot Asian climate by Special Forces right now. In fact, it is a tough unit, but it is low priority. The U.S. Government discovered that so many of its officers were government scientists, defense industry executives, etc., and so many of its Airmen were sons of federal politicians, etc., that the economy would be impaired by activation. Thus, it will take a real hot war on the grand scale, or a huge turnover in unit personnel, to get us priority status.

As for Commando training -- yes, but not for me. I was assigned to the Information Office, which simply maintains unit relations with the press and exercises censorship over all unit communications. This required no Commandp training.

It was, really, too good to turn down on my shaky occupational deferrment. So, being given only 15 days to decide, I took the job.

The active duty time began with a plane ride in an old C-97 troop transport along with 50 other nervous recruits to Lackland AFB, Texas, just outside San Antonio. We landed that Saturday at Kelly Field about 7:30 P.M., and were picked up by AF bus and taken to this large assembly room at Lackland AFB. You sat at a regular school desk while a bunch of airmen and sergeants behind a large painted facade reading "AEROSPACE POWER BEGINS HERE!" prepared the papers for processing. Everyone was still rather nice, although quite businesslike. We signed several forms, then were led out and taken to BEMO, Base Supply that is, and issued flashlight batteries, physical conditioning T-Shirt and shorts, jock straps, towels, a razor, a "Gillette Gift Pack" containing everything from Right Guard to razor blades, etc. Then we went for our first taste of Air Force food.

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From there we were off to get some food -- the first food any of us had had since breakfast. We ate quite a lot, and were then told that, if we had any cigarettes, to smoke them there -- because we wouldn't get any more for quite some time. I had a last cigarette, then we departed.

One of the two sergeants making up the TI Team boarded the bus just outside. After all the horror stories we'd heard TSgt James Fogg seemed like a fairly nice fellow. He was loudly complaining to the driver of the bus that he'd had almost no sleep, hadn't seen his wife and children in three days, and had just shipped off a batch of new recruit/graduates not three hours earlier. The bus stopped at Barracks S-6359, our home for the next few weeks. The barracks were open bay -- two rows of ten beds with footlocker and wall rack on each of two stories, with a latrine on each floor. They were rather modern, although it was obvious that they were actually old buildings to which a great deal of tile and paint had been applied.

It would not do to dwell too long on our first meeting with TSgt Joyner, a giant, muscular Negro with a mean disposition and a loud voice who was our chief TI -- and Fogg's boss. Joyner, although (as we found out much later) a happily married man with three children and a sincere dedication to his job, was The Ogre, while Fogg played The Friend. It's a good system and it works. The system for all armed forces basic training is one that's the result of hundreds of years of practical experience. Air Force basic is, as later comparison with some Army men fresh out of basic at Ft. Jackson proved, as rough as Army basic (although there is less emphasis on weaponry), and includes an obstacle course built at a cost of millions and ranked tougher than the Marine course at Parris Island. I did not, incidentally, make it completely through the course -- I was half-drowned, then knocked cold on Obstacle #16 and woke up in an ambulance on its way to the hospital. I had managed to somehow run through 3/4ths of the course, however, and by some miracle was given credit for running the whole thing. It gave me a severe concussion, which, I guess, was enough for them. People do die on it -- many every year, although it's hushed up.

Because the Air Force isn't a fighting branch (except pilot and air crews) there is less emphasis on full combat training. This is compensated for by very strict discipline -- as strict as any could be, since the Airman's Basic was not designed by the Air Force or the Army, but, for some reason [according to the training master manual, which I saw] is a product of two Air Force Colonels using their own imagination and three Marine Corps generals. Thus, the discipline is rather rough.

But it's relative. For I was removed from training at the end of two weeks and placed in PC Flight, a group of overweight, flabby people who are made to run 8-12 miles daily, march 5 or more miles, and do exercises for rest. I managed to talk my way out of it after a week by finding a doctor with a passion for German literature and by an AF bronchial specialist who tested me and was astounded to see that I did, indeed, have bronchitis.

I could not, of course, be returned to squadron, so I was returned to a flight (as they call basic groups in the AF) nearest in training to when I'd left. The new flight was looser, but still rather strict, with the same Good Guy/Bad Guy routine. Discipline was already good, though, and so little had to be done in the way of extra pressure.

The group may best be characterized as The Confederate States' Air Force. They were virtually all from Alabama and Georgia. The worst problem I -- and three men from Detroit, the only other people speaking English -- experienced was translation. I am a Virginian, and pride myself on understanding dialects, but this is ridiculous.

Tech school was even weirder, since it blended the discipline of basic -- and all of its idiocy -- with the semi-freedom of real service life. Those of you who have been to Army tech schools -- which are rather comfortable affairs compared to basic -- will never understand why, on a day-to-day basis, an AF man will tell you that the strictness of the discipline and the idiocy of the System as applied to AF tech schools make it worse than basic training.

However, tech schools have one saving grace -- they are excellent as long as you look only at the classroom. I saw people who never could tell which end of a typewriter was up before they got there typing 30 words per minute in a matter of five or six weeks! People with fifth grade reading levels mastering complex AF manuals in about the same time. The educational methods are incredibly good, particularly in the area of programmed learning, a new concept in education first used in AF Course 70230 and now being given serious attention by public school officials all over the country.

Tech school had one other saving grace -- you did get the weekends off. During this time a friend and I, through the use of a rented air conditioned Chevrolet, toured through the magnificent Palo Duro Canyon, a geologist's dream -- and went up to D.H. Lawrence's retreat in Taos, New Mexico; to the Pueblo Indian reservations in northern New Mexico; to Santa Fe; to Albuquerque, with its Sandia Peak and remarkable skyride [I regret to say, though, that I was too much the tourist to remember that at least one fan lives in Albuquerque and to give him a call].

I found New Mexico a fantastic, delightful tourist spot which I recommend wholeheartedly -- particularly the area near Taos and Taos Ski Resort Area -- but much, much too desolate in the main to make me understand how people -- aside from hermits -- could possibly live in that terrain.

On a flat plain 2 miles above sea level I would like, in the almost 80 miles of visibility in all directions, to see at least one tree, house, windmill, or something. But -- not even a hill!

Even so, as a tourist I could easily spend a few summers [or winters, to catch Taos in season] in New Mexico and Arizona.

To most of you on the west coast that may sound like old stuff, but you must remember that the only other times I'd been over the area were in airplanes, and, for me, it was my first look at the entire region from a vantage point where I could see something.

My basic ended with a whimper, and so did my tech school. I flew back home via TWA, and found that I'd arrived back at the 135th Air Commando Group (Special Forces - ANG) just in time to go on summer camp with them, which I, not by choice, certainly did. Savannah is a city built of monuments, and stuffed with rather unexciting bars serving watered down drinks. It was a dirty, boring two weeks.

The only thing constructive that happened at Savannah was that I got to know my Guard unit, and started putting into practice a few Dirty Tricks of the Trade.

Although not everyone goes through Commando training, the entire Air Commando group has a reputation that makes combat marines step out of the way. This is a nice feeling -- and undeserved, of course. Only a few squadrons in the Group deserve this respect.

But it's my job to see that everyone continues to believe in Special Forces invincibility.

My job is writing propaganda and censoring press material. It's fun, too. Before Captain Gore and I were through, we had the Kentucky Air Guard, also in summer camp down there, thinking we [the ACs] were all a bunch of trained killers.

The uniform itself is imposing -- the usual fatigues of all services being embellished with AC patches, the large green cowboy hat that marks us as Special Forces, etc.

And this leads into my last discussion on the subject. Hopefully I've brought some nostalgia back to the veterans, and some laughter to those who may know some Air Commandos.

The last subject is activation.

Although Special Forces would naturally be the first to be activated, the 135th is the safest unit of the Air Guard in the country. It has a "Z" ANG priority, which means roughly this: all regulars go first, then all potential draftees, then the Air Force Reserve, and then, finally, the ANG starting with "A" priority units. Thus, if the 135th ACG is called up, there will be atomic war. About the only thing we could do that far down on the list would be to pick up the pieces or surrender. Reason: [1] There are several congressmen's sons in the 135th; [2] it has been estimated that, due to the number of persons in the unit involved in government work, including NSA and CIA work, as well as in defense industries, an activation of the unit would cripple certain vital government projects and sections.

I'm as safe as with a discharge.

This, naturally, frees me to do a lot of things with confidence -- including the action I took just last week: I went down and demanded a high school position in my own subject area from the school Board of Supervisors -- I had been teaching an unfamiliar field, English, in an unfamiliar setting -- Junior High.

I got the switch, and will open in September at Forest Park High School teaching World History Since 1789 and Economic Geography.

The Economic Geography assignment is what I most look forward to, since it is an experimental program without any rulebook -- within that broad framework I'm free to teach just about anything I would like to teach, in any way that I'd like to teach it.

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DOWN WITH...5

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Another question frequently asked me is: will Baltimore bid for 1970?

The answer is: "Yes!"

But the new bid is not in any way to be confused with the old one. The only things which have remained the same are the city and me. My committee includes the current President of the Washington SF Association, Jay Haldeman; our genial bartender at the Tricon party, Mike Hakulin; and a group of five selected Balto-DC area fans with whom I can work and expect work from.

For one thing, we have changed hotels. Our experience with The Emerson showed us mistaken in our faith (they treated us well but the Emerson itself was wrong) and we have switched to The Lord Baltimore, a 25-story affair with a ballroom seating 2000 if necessary. We will, of course, have the whole hotel. Same deal. Also, in preparation for several large cons that have been held in Baltimore recently -- including the Jaycees, who formally announced that Baltimore was the best, wildest con city they'd ever been in -- the Baltimore has spent thousands upon thousands in remodeling. It's 100% air conditioned, as large as a capital hotel should be, and it treats us nice, too.

Also, we've had some ideas kicking around. Try one for size and we'll see: how about a costume ball in the Grand Ballroom of the U.S.S. Port Welcome cruise ship as it sails slowly down the Chesapeake Bay and back? Complete with two on-board bars, of course.

Sound interesting? I told you this was a very different bidding committee. We also plan a great many standing exhibits, including some from space manufacturers like the Martin Company. We intend, too, to try out some new programming ideas. And we have the same Guest of Honor, which we shouldn't -- this Hugo-winner should have been a GoH first pick at every con for the past few years -- and the next few.

Which brings up another point that I'll talk about in a moment.

First, I'd like to mention the obvious: we are bidding against the Germans as it now stands (we do not consider Boston much of a threat). I am hoping to have word on a proposal I've made to the Germans very similar in tone and type to the LA-Tokyo Axis now bidding for next year. If it comes through, fine. If not, we will bid agin them purely on the grounds that we can give more people a really good time.

Since Heidelberg has already announced that, if it loses, it'll have a European National-International Convention anyway, I see no reason why the probably close to 1,000 North Americans who can not afford Heidelberg or who, like myself, would find it impossible for reasons of occupation to get there, of a large convention, too.

By the way -- I do like and support the Trans-Pacificon for next year. I've been to SF but never to Los Angeles, and this would give me a decent excuse if I can manage to get an extra day off.

And now on to The Serious Hour.

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DOWN WITH...6

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It was brought to my attention by many worried people not long ago that one bidder for the 1969 World Convention, a bidder which I'd previously supported, was acting highly unethically. I looked into the matter and, indeed, found such to be true.

Columbus, Ohio, has committed The Breach in a contest which has few rules and is seldom clean.

They have announced their Guest of Honor and made the 1968-9 race a popularity contest between authors.

This, of course, has placed that prospective GoH in a very bad position, and I know how he feels at this time.

The Worldcon Guest of Honor is an honor -- it should be someone chosen not to win votes, but solely because the GoH is a man fully deserving of the honor.

Columbus' GoH is indeed that, but, unfortunately, it now seems clear that the Columbus group did not choose him for those reasons, but rather in the mistaken notion that his name in the bidding would gain them votes owing to his great popularity.

I say "mistaken" because most experienced fans will find repugnant any attempt to cheapen the GoH slot in this manner or in any other manner. I am quite certain that the GoH regrets the position placed upon him more than anyone. How would you feel if you'd been offered a great honor, only to find out that it's not an honor at all, but that you've been chosen as a sales gimmick?

Balticon never allowed its GoH's identity to be known. There were a few educated guesses, but no correct ones. Even most of my present committee -- excepting only Haldeman and Zelazny -- are ignorant of the GoH's identity and shall remain so until we announce his name at the conclusion of, I hope, a victorious bid.

No, it's not Zelazny -- I'm planning to put him to work if he's still in the area -- and it's someone who, inexcusably for fandom, has never been picked before.

However, I believe that Columbus has a serious bid but that they are vastly inexperienced -- no con committee would do what they did to the GoH and the honor if they knew better. I think it's high time a number of people wrote Larry Smith and tell him to cease and desist -- I certainly am, as soon as I complete this issue. It is a much too important matter to let go.

Think of what the GoH should mean, and then what it will mean to future committees if this one goes unheeded or unchastized? How would you like your GoH to be not an honored guest at all, but merely another sales attraction. And think, too, of the poor man who's caught in the middle of the GoH hassle-- if he pulls out, he destroys the bid, makes a lot of enemies, and it becomes farcial. If he does not pull out, the Guest is there but without Honor.

Who's to act if not people like us?

JACK L. CHALKER
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