

More Snapshots of life with Maryland

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MAC Flights-----

acronyms:

I had no exposure to military acronyms so on my very first flight to Asia, in what was called a "Mac" terminal (it sounded like a deathly hamburger), I was asked if I was PCS or TDY.

Not knowing what either of those terms meant I played it safe assuming I must be one of them and replied "Yes"

Julian, standing next to me explained that I was PCS to Japan.

George, gum and the metal detector: (Osan 1970's)

The alarm went off as fellow lecturer George entered the boarding area.

After removing his keys, he went back through the detector and the alarm sounded.

He removed his watch and it was back through the detector which rang again.

He took out some coins and went back through the detector. It rang again.

Sweating and exasperated he removed a foil-wrapped stick of gum and proceeded through the silent detector and smiled.

Duffle bag carry on:

The marines had a box made to the exact volume of allowed carry-on baggage.

I fitted the contents of my bag neatly in the box along with my folded duffel bag.

The burly cigar chomping crew chief saw me boarding with my duffel bag and said a duffel bag was too big to be allowed. The Marine came to my rescue and explained that it all fitted into the box.

Shaking his head in disbelief, the crew chief said "Ain't no way a duffel bag is carry on" but he let me board with the bag.

Who are you, sir?

I rode my "benjo bomber" bicycle to the Iwakuni terminal to see if flights to Korea would be scheduled in the next few days.

"We have one leaving this morning in a few minutes and there is space for you, and we will help you get on it."

"Can you deliver my benjo bomber to the rental store?" It was only a few hundred feet away "sure" they said and they even

drove me back and forth in a jeep getting my passport stamps and put me on the plane. Over Taegu a half hour later, the crew chief came to me and said " We knew you were someone important from the special help you had in boarding, but Who are you sir?" I explained that I was unimportant, but it was an act of kindness by the Marines that I was able to make this flight.

Would you like a window seat?

Who would not want a window seat? A C141 had one window which was directly under the air conditioner. The air conditioner dripped water on the window seat passenger, but who cares? You can see out.

For noise suppression, earplugs are handed out. In the 1970's pink wax/cotton earplugs were used and it was reported that a Korea area director and lecturer, thinking the earplugs were in-flight food, tried to eat them.

Icy landing:

On a Taegu to Kunsan flight the plane overflew Kunsan, as my close friend the airfield commander, said he could not even stand up on the runway.

The crew chief announced that it was probable that we would be landing at Yokota which was inconvenient for teaching my next class at Kunsan. .

I piped up "I don't have my passport with me." It may not have made a difference, but we landed at Osan, and I took the bus to Kunsan.

.A little green Frog

I could not find a Michelin man doll for the front of Fred like German truck drivers had. Instead, I bought a frog shaped soap bottle, put a light inside and wired it atop Fred's hood. Following the frog 65,000km, I was attached to it and brought Froggy back to the USA.

The frog attracted attention, especially when glowing green.

I saw one mother accuse her little boy of putting Froggy on Fred.

A night duty gate MP demanded to know what the green light on the front of my car was. I replied, "it's a frog light." His jaw dropped and I drove in.

After seeing a young hitch hiker, I turned back to give her a ride. She had disappeared, perhaps hiding deep in a ditch, fearing the appearance of Fred.

A mature Italian hitch hiker flagged me down. On stopping, I motioned that my car had no passenger seats. He looked in and seeing my rolled down sleeping bag he said, "Ah Bambino". and graciously waved me on not wanting to disturb the "baby".

Italy was a remarkably good place, but that did not apply to my cute apartment on Avenue of the Bells. It had a cunningly constructed fireplace which let all of the heat go up the chimney leaving most of the smoke in my room.

The only place for my bed was under the electrical meters for our building. The meter for the lecturer living above me made a loud scratching sound which disturbed my sleep. To quiet the noise, I gave her my electric heater as it drew less power than hers. She missed the point and ran both heaters completely preventing my sleep. So, I turned off her electricity, all became quiet and, I slept undisturbed, waking to the sound of several loud collisions upstairs. She was banging into things in the darkness provided by wooden shutters. I told the women in the ed center of this. They loved it and of course told my upstairs neighbor, who finally got the point and reduced her own nighttime electrical use so I could sleep.

Going to Berlin 1985-----

We had to have special orders to travel to Berlin. My personnel folder was lost thus my orders were not requested. Lacking orders, I had to wait a week for them to be "cut". Joe was understandably quite unhappy that I was not in Berlin teaching and asked me for a written apology.

Knowing that the Area Director would take considerable heat for this, to save him, I wrote an apology "for not requesting orders that I did not know existed and that I had never been informed of needing".

The above problem could not happen if there had been the flexibility to think of commercial air travel.

I had rolled up 50,000 km driving Fred one a year, driving became habitual. One can accept that our administration was also habit driven, but that does not excuse the absence of an alternative plan to get lecturers to Berlin if things go wrong.

Driving across east Germany to Berlin, I saw a happy German cop who had 20 West German cars stopped for speeding. His speed trap was a sequence of signs, like Burma Shave signs, reading 65kph, 50 kph, 40 kph, 25 kph, 10 kph and last stood the cop. West Germans rigidly ignored what did not fit their view of what was reasonable and were thus easy pickings.

Biology class dissections , Korea-----

My biology students dissected clams, squid and a bottom fish called the Angler Which went into a feeding frenzy when netted .

The idea was to compare the anatomy of two related mollusks (clam and squid) to see how their bodies adapted to the different environmental demands. The fish markets provided excellent specimens for class at reasonable cost. The first time I bought fifteen squid, the seller ripped off the squid heads before I could stop her. As the squid were useless for dissection, I

ate a lot of squid that week. I went back, bought another fifteen squid and stopped her from destroying them but she shook her head grumbling why strange foreigners would ever want to eat squid organs.

One fall the Osan biology class was held in the base commander's conference room where we dissected squid Friday night. At class end I asked a student to dispose of the cut up squid. Next Monday ESO Ed Romery called me in to say the base commander was quite unhappy with the squid smell in his headquarters building. The student had dumped the squid in the men's restroom to make odor for two days. Romery thought the whole thing was quite funny, but I made sure dissection material was disposed, without fail, well outside of any building.

Wrong time to knock, Guam early 80's-----

Area director Ralph lived in the same building I did on Nimitz Hill. Not planning well one evening, he left a note on my door to come down right now. I immediately went downstairs, knocked on his door and waited. Presently, pretty Barbra came to the door wearing only a bath towel. She laughed that Ralph was hiding behind a washcloth in their bathroom. Whatever the urgent matter was, it was forgotten.

Ed Center Parking Problem solved-----

One afternoon I needed to park behind the ed center during an exercise. As I parked my van a one-stripe black airman from the photo lab said, "You can't park there. I'll blow you away with my simulated M16". I replied in kind, "I'm driving a simulated tank so I can park anywhere I like with no concern from a piddling m-16. Besides, my sidearm is a simulated Bazooka, so you must treat me with courtesy."

Border crossings-----

My passport was so fat with multiple added sections that border agents would give up instead of trying to look at each page. Europe was good as one simply held your passport out where it could be seen and they waved you through. Asians took it upon themselves to inspect every stamp.

Notable friends-----

I returned to Korea in 2014 to visit three amazing men I am proud to call friends, David garretson, Frank Concilus and Gary Laugel.

When I returned to Asia (1985), David offered to share his room until I could find a room in Billeting. I opened his door and was confronted by a sea of books. There were so many that there was not an empty square foot on the floor. There were 745 books. They were not just being stored. Not only was he was reading all of them, he remembered so much of what he read that I was dazzled. David was a State Department officer at the Changmai embassy. He

traveled extensively and had enough frequent flier miles to go around the world on them. I saw him in the Philippines on that trip.

He was at the Berlin wall watching when it came down. Immensely erudite, he lived international affairs and could explain them vividly in down to earth terms that anyone could understand. He was a superb teacher.

Now the rest of how I managed to get rest in David's room. The only book-free spot was his bed, so not wanting to disturb his books, I went to sleep there, but David came in at 4AM needing to sleep. He pushed books aside and put out a foam pad for me.

I soon found billeting at Suwon and liked it there so much that I stayed two years.

David Garretson and I went to Songtan one 1976 January evening and my life was reoriented. It was so effective that when I returned to Asia from a trip to the USA, I felt that Asia was my true home. That I was both an American and an Asian came to me when I saw that Asians appeared normal and many Americans looked odd.

David has since died but Frank and Gary are still going strong after 40 to 50-year teaching careers with Maryland and the adventures it offers.