

## Time Flies

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Forty-nine years ago I rode the C117 in this photo to reach some of my Maryland assignments in Asia. At that time it had already served the Marines 40 years.

The DC3 (C47) had 1,100 hp engines but the super DC3 (C117) had 1,500 hp engines. Designed in the 1930's, it was able to use airfields with short runways that other transports could not use. These airplanes carried food and fuel to Berlin when other transports were blocked by the Soviets. The C46 and C117 served as transport in Europe and Asia. They could taxi up under the roof at the huge Tempelhof Airport building in Berlin, so it was only a short walk in and out of the airport. Some were gunships in Vietnam; a role shared with the C130. After being retired by the military they carried firefighters (smoke jumpers) and fire retardant to forest fires as late as 2015. In the 1930's a few had passenger sleeping berths.

In the late 70's C117s were stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni. The Marines had "S.H.I.T.S." embroidered on their hats. It stood for "Short Haul Interisland Transport Service," which operated scheduled flights between Iwakuni, Fatema Okinawa and Osan Air base in Korea.

Flying to Korea, the Marines knifed through the bureaucracy that the Air Force loves. They bypassed the Air Force terminal arriving and departing. Our instructions were "Don't go to or through the Air Force terminal building. You will see this airplane parked where it now is waiting to give you a ride back to Iwakuni". The Osan flight was

for marine R&R to the Osan area nightclubs as Iwakuni nightlife was in decline and limited.

An example of AirForce problems was Lecturer George Baker setting off the alarm in the Osan terminal as he was carrying keys. Embarrassed, he reentered and the alarm went off again and he removed some coins. As we watched he tried again but the alarm rang a third time, so he checked all of his pockets and removed a foil wrapped stick of chewing gum and the bell no longer rang. The marines avoided all such things.

When going through Air Force security at Osan we were handed a form that requested the name of someone to be notified if our airplane crashed killing us. I wrote down Ronald Regan, Whitehouse, Washington, DC. The airplane flew carefully as I hoped it would.

The Airforce planes were noisy, so the crew chiefs handed out pink wax/cotton to put in our ears. The Maryland people who were much less knowledgeable than the rest tried to eat their wax/cotton earplugs.

We were loaded onto an Osan C130 ready to depart but its engines would not start, and they could not fix it, so I suggested that the crew chief put this C130 behind a running C130 and make use of its propwash to spin start the engines of the ailing C130. And that is how we got to Japan.

Not all flights from Osan flew high, one night a low flying orange UFO was seen moving slowly near the Osan runway. The security cops watched afraid to check it out. Then it climbed a few feet and descended to its former altitude. One man, braver than the rest finally did investigate it. he returned saying it was just a Korean stealing a glowing tent heater.

In Korea, staying warm is essential. Koreans discovered that the roads Americans built could be burned in stoves so in the 1960's it was not uncommon to drive along and have a wheel fall into a hole where some asphalt was removed as fuel.

The Koreans were innovative in "repositioning" items. In the 1960's an old Ajima walked to the main gate exiting the base with a load of hay. She sat down but could not stand up again. The gate guard tried to assist her, but he could not lift the hay either. The reason was the hay contained a complete jeep engine and transmission.

Sometimes the thing which was "repositioned" was weightless. A Korean was assigned to throw an extension cord over the base fence to supply electricity to the market area near the main gate. Security cops were assigned to throw the extension cord back over the fence to the Korean side.

American servicemen fell prey to Korean women. One such woman convinced an airman working in the base hospital to steal an Xray machine. He went to jail and she soon found another man to do her bidding.

Away for 20 years, I returned to Korea to see old friends Gary Laugel, David Garretson and Frank Concilus. I'm glad I saw them in 2014 as David and Gary are now dead. Korea looked nicer than before and was much more expensive, but it was not greatly different. I remember that the rate of change in Korea was frantic. I saw roads

paved and had to be dug up only a few weeks later for pipelines to be placed under the road. I saw bulldozers in a rice paddy east of Song tan one spring. I chanced to drive there in early Fall and became completely lost in a city of 4 story masonry buildings that had not existed a few months earlier.

I preferred Korea as it was, I lived there in the good time when modernization had begun but prices had not yet shot upward. Our money used to go far but Korea is not a good place to live now.

The USA refusing to sell its best tanks to South Korea was not a bad thing as the Koreans designed and now build a tank said to be better than those of the USA. The Korean government rented soldiers to the USA in Vietnam. I remember clearly a tombstone in Seoul in which a wife's touching letter to her dead husband was inscribed. She said that their children were growing up and doing well in school, etc.

I dropped a thousand dollars on a street in Seoul at a stoplight and as I scrambled to retrieve it in the busy road, a Korean taxi driver and his passenger picked up the \$100 bills and gave them to me. It was living money for my wife in the Philippines. I will never forget their kindness in helping me.

The Marines have a dedication that I did not see often in other services. They needed to stay with the Marines as otherwise they continued their service career with the Army to get better housing. I could see that their duty was not easy as A leader of a platoon eating their lunch on an abandoned road in the bush confided in me saying "I'm never ever going camping after I get out." On the positive side, a good friend, Marine Lt. Colonel, unable to advance in rank chose to continue as a Marine gunnery sergeant. He was nuts so we got along great. One day he said, "Dennis, I have something great for you". It was a recording of B52 bombs exploding in Vietnam. Like Patton, he was a true warrior.

At least one warrior existed in the AirForce also. I shared a "hooch" (an officer's detached house) with the airfield commander. He claimed his greatest enjoyment was dropping napalm. One afternoon his F4 failed to take off and made a water landing in Cam Ran Bay with water up to his chin. I surmise that it just was carrying too much napalm to fly. He went on to command the most secure airfield in existence. I never did ask him about UFOs.

Flexibility was the keynote of the Marines. One morning I rode my "Benjo Bomber" (rental bicycle) to the departure area and asked if there were any outbound flights to Korea. "We have one ready to go, and we will help you onto it". You could not ask for more, so they held the C117 until I was on and sped up the boarding by driving me in a jeep from point to point getting the needed passport stamps etc. The flight was over Taegu when the crew chiefsaid, "We knew you were important sir when you got such special service boarding. But who are you?"