

War Story

By Forrest Brandt

I was activated for 4 months in 1989 and sent to the Logistics Center at Ft. Lee to put together the reserve part of study on officer training.

A week before the 4th, a young captain began seeking someone to take his place as post Officer of the Day on the evening of 3 July - from 1900 hours until 0700, 4 July. His family was coming in, he was going to take a week's leave and had a trip planned to Williamsburg and then Virginia Beach and Hatteras. He was offering up to \$150 to anyone willing to switch dates or take his duty.

I didn't need the money and Kathy and I had nothing special planned for the holiday so I took his place free of charge. It was a quiet evening. A big rain storm, a truck trying to make a delivery to the commissary got lost and was wandering around the family housing area, and a retired sergeant and his wife seeking quarters for the night were all I had to deal with.

Then came the phone call from the MPs, "Which flag do we put up?" This was in reference to the morning guard mount and the flag pole in front of post headquarters.

As all of you know (but I'm going to add anyway) there are three flags held ready at all major posts: The Garrison Flag, a good sized model, well proportioned for the pole. There's a Storm Flag, about 6' X 4', a bit bigger than the flag you'd mount on your house. It's small size holds up better than the Garrison flag in strong winds, though it looks like a postage stamp when hoisted on the post's flagpole. Finally comes the Holiday Flag, an immense beauty, regal when posted and lofting in the breeze.

I checked with the weatherman, strong winds and rain looked to be certain until early afternoon. "Put up the storm flag." I ordered.

At 0700 I briefed the captain relieving me, entered my final comments in the log and signed out. All went well I assumed.

That was Tuesday. When work resumed on Wednesday I walked in on a s**t storm. Tuesday's morning rain had stopped around 0800. The winds calmed shortly after that. The two-star post commander decided to drop into his office to do some work. It was a fair day, the sun was out and when he looked at HIS flagpole and saw the storm flag fluttering he went into a rage.

The log was immediately called for - why had the Duty Officer called for the storm flag? Who the hell was Major Brandt and why was a RESERVE officer the Officer of the Day? And why hadn't the duty officer who relieved Major Brandt called the MPs and gotten the holiday flag raised?

In the end I was exonerated, a memo went out to all subordinate commanders that a reserve officer was never to be placed as Officer of the Day, ever. But the poor captain I had replaced had to report to the two-star for an ass chewing.