

Dear Major

Last year I got on the net to look for information on the 32nd division, lo and behold they have an annual reunion!

I get the where, the time and a brochure.

At the Appleton hotel in Wisconsin.

I got all excited, I thought wow I'll get to meet some of my old buddies from the troop!

Then I thought -- they're going to have the reunion In just one hotel?

good gravy how many of us are left? I got a phone number

talk to somebody? I asked him how many attended last year's reunion,

oh he said, I think there was a hundred or 110,

I ask if any from the 32nd Recon Troop, he didn't rightly remember, I asked

about line companies? he didn't rightly remember? -- it seems most of

those attendees was from the Berlin airlift in which I didn't know the

division was involved with?

I thought there goes any chance at this late date to make contact with an old trooper.

For some reason I was sitting at my desk, counting my toes,
and picking through some old files on my computer.

And the 32nd came up, I punched a line I hadn't seen before,

and out came a request by a Dr. Bryant Allen in Australia requesting

information bout the Captain, seems he doing a research paper

on the 32nd Recon Troop.

Then down a couple of spaces, was Lee Allen's request,

after talking with him on the phone, he sent me an e-mail with your name

and phone number, someone still breathing from the troop,

I nearly lost my dentures!

I'll ramble a little bit now! I'll tell you about myself and my experience with
the troop and the captain.

I would hope that the following might ring a bell, not really about me but
possibly star up a remembrance, low those many years ago!

I was among the first replacements after the Bunna campaign,

I was assigned to the 127 A company, this was also the captain's first
command assignment.

I believe it was the first Sergeant that ask for a volunteer to be the captain's
orderly, I had no Idea what was involved but you got a PFC stripe,

they told me I would set the table for the officers, clean up afterwards, and attend to the captain's tent.

Thinking back the captain was very tolerant of my ineptness, I had no idea of officer protocol, I do remember we had exchanged conversations, I told him I had a fiancé waiting for me and that we had been dating for three years and that I gave her the ring after my draft notice. I was supporting my mother and I ask the draft board to give me 30 or more days to work overtime to tide my mother over till the G.I. check arrived. In due time I enlisted and was sent to basic training at camp Robbers California, in my seventh or eighth week I was summoned to the orderly room and there were two suits their, two men in civilian clothes wanting to know why I wasn't drafted? Of course they knew I had enlisted, but I ask them if they would like to take me back to St. Lois to draft me I would be ready in about four minutes.

To this day I don't know why the captain was so cordial to me, Was I a little kid brother? Was I so inapt of military protocol?, I am a reasonably likable person, I'm rounding out 26 years as a volunteer Lay minister in a local nursing home, my aim is to get them laughing and scratching, I am not, nor ever have been serious.

Maybe that's what struck the Captain?

I think the Captain told me, or I heard it, he had a lady friend and they owned a sheep ranch together?

In one of our conversations I may have mentioned, that I liked Braunschweiger sausage.

The Captain knew a lot of people, one evening he went into Brisbane and had dinner with a Captain of a Liberty, He returned early in the morning, two, three o'clock?

He brought to my tent, I slept with the cooks, about a 2 inch piece of Braunschweiger sausage, said be quiet and enjoy.

So I covered my head with my blanket, had to, Braunschweiger sausage has a odor so much so it could of awakened everyone and how do you divide a 2 inch piece of sausage with six other guys?

To continue on with the Captains generosity to me, somehow I' merited a three-day pass, I had heard about Lismore Australia a friendly little town so a buddy and I decided to go there,

the Captain gave me a fifth of apricot brandy, and said Phil, you don't drink it, you sept it! when we got there in our hotel room using two big water glasses we septet it, and stumble are way down to dinner!

The captain was reassigned to the Recon Troop, and asked me if I'd like to go along, -- sure, what did I know? I didn't know what a reconnaissance unit was about, but I knew the captain, and looking back, what in this world he saw in me, maybe just a innocent kid ?

However-- back in Australia, at Camp Cable the company was out on a bivouac, as you know the Captain was a real Naturalist!
Some of the guys killed a huge snake, the Captain ripped us up one side and down the other saying those big snakes were rodent eater for the farmers.
We had a blast having our picture taken holding that monster!

I'm sure you remember training on those amphibious tanks ,
I rode with the Captain I was the gunner.

I'm equally sure you remember riding on one of those things as we traveled part way to our destination there In that valley.

I remember that evening when we left the tanks and the Captain met with some Filipino guerrilla people, possibly our scouts to our staging area? however that evening we were camped along that little stream or river, I don't know if the Filipinos were horsing us and said be careful, an alligator got one of their guys the other night??

Do you remember that stuff they called Tuba, it smelled like the South end of a horse, going north, they drank it, they liked it.

That was sad when we got to our base camp and the trooper was unloading his grenades.

I remember being with the artillery observer on that ridge,
you could actually see our shells coming In.

I remember a little Filipino boy, why I remember his name [Gregory] he gave me a note saying he had a Jap.Rifle Asking for some ammunition. However, he cooked some of the best rice in one of our steel helmets, he said the meat was chicken, one of the guys said it was monkey?

Someone saw through our telescope some Japs slaughtering a caribou, someone thought and I suppose the Captain agreed,
a nice roast are a stake would go pretty good!
so it was decided a patrol would investigate and intrude on their planned barbecue, this I remember real, real good, as we were on our way to make

that interception walking through tall Koni grass I was whistling, and the officer behind me said [maybe that was you, at that time Lt] "Chris" can it, or I'll shoot you!]

However -- we knew where they were, and to get their we had to cross this little stream, and it was full of Vines, it seem like seven or eight minutes to get across, we just get across and holy cow here they come, it seems like a whole company of them? As they were going by one kid had a watch. I poke my buddy and said he's mine, and just then all hell broke loose, I carried a Tommy gun I emptied my clip didn't stay to check our count, but made it back across that stream in less than 30 seconds?

That was eventful, the guys that stayed as rearguard fired a rifle grenade that landed in front of me but didn't go off.;

[for sure. I'm writing this trilogy]

[No beef tonight, enjoy another chocolate bar!]

you talk about training, in all that excitement, before reloading I put the empty clip back in the pouch.

Major:

in the balance of our days before that frightful night I have no recollection, but I do remember the morning of that day.

I guess I went behind something to take a dump, something broke loose and I began to bleed like a stuck pig! I went to the medic he saw my bloody leg, he said go see the captain, the captain said I needed to go in, we also had a trooper with appendicitis that needed attention, he too had to go in, the troupe that morning had captured two Japs, that were drunk off sak.so we traveled that day, three troopers a group of natives and two unhappy Japs sobering up!

My fiancé wrote me later and said the radio reported,

Captain Harman F. Boettcher was killed with two of his aides!

my bride-to-be a day later went to see my mother to see if she had received the telegram, knowing I was an aide to the Captain!

I'm writing this part with tears, I am a very sentimental person,

I am also a hugger, protocol, respect, that Is military respect

May not be proper but I would very much like to travel to Florida and give to you the best Hug I every gave, then I would step back and render to you my very best military Salute!

Your Silver Star for your devotion, monumental, magnificent action of sacrifice, had to be, and will always be forever in my heart and all the other troopers that loved and respected our Captain!!

Well back to basics, after my two weeks or so in the hospital I returned to the troop. --I have absolutely positively no recollection what transpired, I do remember, a Hollywood person came to interview people about the Captain, I told him my position and relationship with the Captain and offered to return with him to Hollywood and be a tech advisor! -- someone said, nice try Chris!

I believe, not for sure, he thought, this producer, that it might be a role for Gary Cooper!?, that would be well before the era of Clinton Eastwood, if anyone, he would be my choice to **just try, and portray the Captain.**

Now back to that blank space, pray tell, who was the new C.O.?

I have absolutely no recollection,

but whoever, I was assigned with two other troopers and a recon officer to accompany a artillery radioman and spotter.

We left early and went over hill and dale, and then over dale and Hill and found a great ridge, I suppose we were there half an hour or so, and in the valley below a staff car drove up, the spotter said that looked like a great target. I believe he called in a couple of smokes, and then fire at will!

Unfortunately -- the bad guys had flank people out, a good round bunch of them, more than the six of us could try to handle.

I don't know if they radioed in, are If it was the prudent thing to do, get the hell out of there -- we did -- up and down, down and up, threw a bamboo forest, got very late, we had to bed down, we found a old native hut spent the night on the outside, the next morning we dug up a part of an old garden and buried some landmines and a sack of grenades, isI really feel bad about burying that stuff in their garden, But I remember we dug deep, maybe six or 8 inches, sorry about that.

The reason for all this detail I have a King size question coming up?

We traveled all that day well into the evening, we saw our howitzers in the distance and as we got closer the gunners were waving to us,-- we were In a minefield -- well of course we danced our way through that, it was so late that evening we missed any possibility of eating with the gun Crew. it was dark you don't travel at night, we bedded down behind the guns, they fired alllll night long, no sleep! as soon as we could we get a ride we got back to the troop just in time to miss breakfast.

I'm coming to the big question?

When we did get back to the troop we were too late for breakfast
I don't remember if we had time to put our gear back in our tent, however
the C.O?. called the company out and said they had lost two troopers, I
suppose the day before, he said he wanted only volunteers to go and retrieve
the bodies, if you didn't want to volunteer, step out.

I have a blank here, I'm sure the four of us stepped up, we had no sleep, no
breakfast, and just returned from a three day outing.

This is my dilemma, and I'm going to Write it in bold lettering.

**If we still had the Captain, there is no way on this green earth he would
have left two men and returned to base!!**

I truly hope Major you have some recollection of that event?

However, I was reassigned to the 127 Antitank Company,
with the Captain gone, I could absolutely **care less.**!

[They assigned me there because of my vast knowledge of the 37 mm --
Ha.]

However, someone was truly looking out for me!

I remember my first day in my new company we went on patrol, four or five
of us in the back of a 6 x 6 truck.

They said keep a sharp eye ,one of their guys get killed the day before, little
wonder, you could hear the truck coming way back to St. Louis, Missouri.
well my lucky part, the squad I was in, we spent our time on a hill as a
listening outpost, we could see one cave where the Jap's would roll out a
howitzer, just above the Vile Devrddy trail,

I know I didn't spell that trail ride? --

You didn't say in our brief phone conversation but was that the trail where
you met up with those Jap's, and receive your horrific wound to the
shoulder, before you dispose of that [XZ@*#Jap?](#)

Well I suppose you're thinking what a waste of paper, all this rambling, but
I just can't possibly tell you how fantastic to touch base with a person from
the Troop, but far above all of that to try and express myself and my
gratitude for your magnificent valor in attending to the Captain and taking
command of the troop on that frightful night!

Your Silver Star and Purple Heart will truly shine in my memory!

Well you mentioned the big 9-0 coming up in a couple months,
I'd love to be there and watch you blow out those candles!

I may be whistling Dixie, are trying to get my head out of the clouds, I'd love to come down and spend an afternoon and asking you to fill in some of my blanks?

I live on a six-month timeframe, my oncology Dr. is due for a visit in mid-June, I am right at four years from my diagnosis, after two episodes of lung cancer and a removal of a part thereof, they say five years is a 5% survival rating?

So, if it wouldn't be an intrusion and the Medics say okay, I'd love to venture down and have that visit with you?

Why didn't we take more pictures?

Enclosed are a couple I truly hope there is some remembrance?

But after you're long and Distinguished Career those episodes may be in a different file..

As I said on the phone, you could not see me, but I was rendering the most Honorable Salute that I could present.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

***The Lord make His face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.***

***The Lord lift up the light of
His Countenance upon you
and give you Peace***

-Numbers 6:24-26-

Pfc.Philip E.Christ
17122078