

My Second Year At Benning

Its hard for me to believe, but I only spent two full years at Fort Benning.

The first year - from May, 1952 through June of 1953 was taken up by my teaching Infantry Tactics to junior Infantry Officers or OCS Officer Candidates, ROTC graduates who were newly commissioned, or West Point graduates who had chosen Infantry branch of service. And courting Patsy Simpson.

Well, we got married June 21st, 1953, had a month's leave and honeymoon, during which we visited the Department of English at West Point, and Professor Colonel Alspach, who had spotted my writing talent while I was still a cadet, took steps to get me sent to Graduate School, and then do a full 3 year tour teaching English at West Point. That sequence would start in the fall of 1954.

So I had the second year at Benning, starting with our moving into married Officers Quarters in August, 1953. Ironically we became eligible to move into the same quarters John and Nancy Flynn had occupied since 1952, while he was ordered to report to an assignment at West Point, where I would run into him again.

I was then ordered to take the Advanced Infantry Course right there at Benning in the fall and spring of 1954. Since

that was a 'TDY' - temporary duty assignment - from my regular assignment to the Infantry School as an Instructor, that was no big change.

The Army staff, in its infinite wisdom, wants every officer to march through a series of progressive - branch specific - schools and courses - Basic/Advanced Infantry, Command and then the more general General Staff College - and if one is promising enough, on to the Army War College. I was starting on the bottom rung of that ladder, even though I had had a year in combat and been a commander. But the Army machine marches on regardless.

So, while I first taught at 'The Infantry School' the first year, and Patsy and I socialized with that 'faculty' of mid grade officers and their wives, while I was courting her, the second year, as a 'student' after we were married we socialized with Infantry lieutenants and captains, some of whom had already served in combat in the Korean War as I had - and others would be on the way there soon.

I began to get acquainted with the first of my fellow Infantry officers of about my age with whom I might serve and encounter the rest of my career. That included a number of Foreign Army officers, from various other countries, such as Pakistan, Thailand, Britain, Phillipines, and South and Central American countries. They came to learn 'how' the American Army worked at its combat unit

level. Those who were sent to the US to go to one of its 'military' schools often were destined to rise to high positions in their own military or governments. They most often 'modelled' their Army after our WWII successful one. And they also took courses at Benning in order to learn about and shoot all our US Army Infantry weapons, which their countries either bought or we provided as part of Military Foreign Aid, as the Cold War was starting up and they might be fighting with them.

Ironically, one officer was in the Defense Forces of Japan, and had been affected by radiation from the 1945 Nagasaki atomic bomb we dropped.

Since Patsy got pregnant in the fall of 1953, much of her socializing was with her family - mother Mary, and sisters whom we had visited and her brother Bailey Jr who had gone into the Airborne at Benning.

The one major 'social' - you might call it - activity that the 40 or so classmates of mine in the course engaged in was golf. Every afternoon when classes let out, scores of my classmates (and those in other like-courses at sprawling, large Fort Benning), headed for the Fort Benning Golf Range.

I had never really taken up golf, but as the 'cultural myth' held that every successful business man or military officer 'should' know and play golf, I decided to give it a

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go. There was not a lot of other activities I could get into with pregnant Patsy, and we had no kids - yet. We had had a little golf instruction at West Point as cadets. And since Major Bailey Simpson, Patsy's father had time off, sometimes I would play with him, and at others with my classmates.



I was never a hot shot at that frustrating game. I always shot in the 80s or worse. But I enjoyed playing, bought clubs, and chatted away for 9 or 18 holes repeatedly.

New Orders and Move

In the spring of 1954 came my new orders, which specified I was to be entered into a Master of Arts Degree program at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall. And I was authorized to make what is called a 'PCS' (permanent change of station) move with all our household goods to someplace near the University.

David R Hughes, III was born May 3d, 1954, and family life started in earnest.

So Patsy and I underwent our first Military Move in June or July 1954, with child. The moving van arrived, and everything including the very nice furniture we had bought on our Honeymoon and was shipped to Fort Benning was packed and on the way.

Taking our leave of Patsy's mother and father - he was about to retire to a small house on Ticknor Drive just outside Benning, in Columbus - we took our time driving up the coast where we visited Patsy's sister Arleigh and her husband and daughter.

From some of the advice we got from other West Point instructors who had gone to the same University of Pennsylvania, we chose not to live in costly Philly, or even in Camden, New Jersey, right across the river. We chose an apartment complex in Haddonfield, New

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Jersey, within a tolerable daily drive for me to the University Campus.

So we got there, signed up for the apartment, and moved in.

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