

## ***Judgement by the Military Chain of Command and by Very Experienced Veteran Commanders***

Quite apart from the public, popular press, and distant military commanders, the question was whether or not the Military Chain of Command from the troop level at Fort Carson, through its Commanding General, 5th Army Commander (Lt General Mock), Chief of Staff of the Army, the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of Defense, and the President as Commander in Chief would endorse all the changes so swiftly made.

Retired General Bruce Clarke, with 40 years service, who had commanded 7th Army in Germany with all its tank and tracked forces arrayed against the Soviet threat and was sent by General Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff to judge Carson's changes, heartily endorsed them, right down to permitting Company Commanders to train individual soldier skills in the Division.

Two final visitors to Fort Carson seemed to so endorse both the VOLAR - Volunteer Army pointed, and the form of Adventure Training I had implemented with Mechando - directly addressing the combat unit skills of those volunteers.

The first was the Secretary of the Army, James Froehlke who, on September 15th, 1972 visited and as quoted "minced no words as a news conference the day before when he strongly supported the use of civilian KPs, the Unit of Choice program, and the Army's goal of an all Volunteer force by July 1973."





Secretary of the Army, viewing Mechando. My at far right

The Unit of Choice Program was aimed at American Communities where a number of young men could volunteer for the Army but ALSO elect to all serve together in the same Army unit. We had launched that program when I was involved in going to Rheinlander, Wisconsin, where recruiting efforts were made to get as many volunteers as possible and let them go to serve in a unit at Fort Carson after they went through normal Basic Training. It worked, and 70 soldiers signed up, called

themselves the 'Hodag Platoon' after a mythical logger of the Wisconsin Woods.

And he drove an M113 of my 3d Brigade, strongly endorsing such training.

The second visitor gave me great Joy. For I would show him a new thing or two about tracked vehicles in war. He was Brigadier George Patton Jr - son of the great WWII Armor leader, George Patton. Jr was high up in the Army's Training and Operations staff in the Pentagon.

What was great fun, was that I got him into the open hatch with me on an M113 as a sergeant drove the track out to the Gauntlet training area. Behind us was another M113 full of Colorado Springs Press people wanting to interview the son of the famed commander.

Now there was a radio connection between the two tracks, so the Press could ask him questions over the radio as we travelled out there, and he could answer. But there was also an Intercom

between the driver and me in the open hatch. So whatever was said on it was only heard by the driver.

We drove up to and approached a VERY steep hill, and stopped. I - a straight leg INFANTRY - not Armored Corps as Patton was - Officer - took the driver's seat, and Patton and I put on our earphones.

He was bemused that me, an Infantryman was going to drive that track up that STEEP hill (which a 60 ton tank could not have traversed as well as that Mech Infantry M113)

And while he was smiling back at the Press and chatting with them over the radio, he was hollaring at me over the intercom, with words "Hughes, if you roll this track I'll break every bone in your body" (he was recovering from a broken ankle). I drove on.

He was SCARED!

So we eventually came down again and the 'demonstration' of the now-famed Gauntlet was

over.

Here is a picture of me driving the M113, Patton and some of the Press in the Hatch as we drove back to Carson

So I had the delight as a Infantryman, scaring the pants off the great George Pattom Jr in a tracked vehicle!

He pronounced the Gauntlet as 'good training.' I gave him a pair of Mechaneer Gauntlets. He got the point.

### ***The Iron Horse 100***

Now that training for all the soldiers was proceeding apace, it was time to be sure the Commanders could effectively command a Mech Battalion or larger. There was an M577 Command Post vehicle - modified on the chassis of an M113 - with a high armored box on top within which a Commander or Staff head could operate with multiple radios, map

displays, two or three other assistants, keep up with the M113 with their 12 man squads and command the unit from the 'Command Post vehicle

Below - me and my HQ Crew before the Iron Horse 100 before a M577

'Commanding' or operating as a Principal Staff officer - S-3 (operations) S-2 (intelligence), S-1 (personnel), S-4 (supply), and even S-5 (civil affairs) with their assistants, data, and with communications to all the units and the commanders, while on the move would take skill. So we created the Iron Horse 100 - a competition between a battalion or brigade commander and his 4 staff heads, each with their own M577s travelling 100 miles day and night over a prescribed route through check points while undertaking a series of requirements -from handling - coding and decoding classified messages (including the location of the next check point, communicating and receiving orders, navigating through

unfamiliar terrain including roadless portions, and not running out of gas and oil, or breaking down. And against time. Fastest time wins.

I started the first one, competing against my own staff heads, one of whom, the S-3 was an armor branch officer who knew tanks and always was kidding about we 'infantrymen' trying to master armored track vehicles. A separate team from any of us had to design the details of the test so none of us had prior knowledge of what we would have to do or where to go. And if their track broke down they had to finish all 16 stations anyway, even by jeep or truck.

It took almost 24 hours to complete, starting with a Le Mans - run from the briefing tent to the tracks - to start. And there was intentional not enough gas to get through, so they had to rendezvous with a POL tanket r enroute.

It was fun - and difficult - two had to finish in wheeled vehicles. The armor officer came in 2d

to me - who won the contest. It ended right at Fort Carson's headquarters where General Bennet greeted the winner - me. So I guess I was a master Mechaneer.

Thus by the time I left the Brigade, Fort Carson had proven to the Army, bottom to top, that it could not only attract Volunteers, and that over 50% of them would reenlist, while making their lives tolerable, even interesting, but also become trained for modern combat- and I judged - would be willing - and able - to fight.

As the rest of the Volunteer Army has proven out the last 38 years ever since the draft ceased in 1973