

Headed For Kansas

Once again we lucked out as our small Morris Minor got to the West Coast about the same time from Hawaii that we did. And once again we were able to visit my sister Dorothy who lived, as I recall, in Oakland.

Its a dim memory, but I think I bought another, larger car, for now that David was almost 10 and Rebecca was 5 we needed more car space. And then we towed the Morris all the way to Denver, then on to Leavenworth, another 500 miles.

We then drove across country to, and through Denver to visit my mother at the Shirley Savoy hotel and Bette, my sister, and Jay her husband on Lincoln Street where they lived after coming from Houston, Texas where they met and married and he worked in the Oil business as a chemical engineer as I recall. And we visited Aunt Arleen in Colorado Springs.

Then we were off for Fort Leavenworth, where we were assigned family quarters, as were all the majors and handful of lieutenant colonels attending that C&GSC course.

And it was there when and where our third child, Edward Justin Hughes was born April 8th, 1963.

Doctrinaire Army and Pragmatic Me

The reason promising mid-level (rank) Army officers with about 12-15 years service - of all branches and either as Majors or some Lieutenant Colonels are ordered to take the Command and General Staff College Course of instruction, is to teach them the war time operational Doctrine for Army Divisions. So that they can be assigned and immediately function as Staff officers at the Division level immediately after being 'school trained.'

As soon as I started taking the Course with my 100 or so classmates, I was reminded - internally - that I don't fit the 'Doctrinal' method of operations very well. I suppose it is partly because I had to learn how to lead in combat, not by learning how from Army Field manual Doctrine - as much as 'OJT' - On the Job Training - because of my never have gone to the Infantry school first before a year of combat. And the other part - perhaps the major and decisive part - stems from my powerful native (Celtic?) imagination. Which urges me not to just follow old proven rules, but to conceive of the novel tactical or operational idea that would give me an 'edge' over the enemy or tactical problem I face.

Some wag said US Army tactics boils down to the rule "Two up and one back, and feed em a hot meal" - as the way to win. Very traditional. Which is ok so long as, in the end, we have a numerical superiority at either the point of attack, or defense, or at the theater or national level over our enemies. Or, as in the course of the US in WWII, we

had a large numerical superiority of hardware - weapons, tanks, ships, aircraft - because of our 'arsenal of democracy' industrial might. So tactics do not have to be brilliant to win.

Another way of looking at this business of Doctrine came from the 1954 book/play/movie the 'Caine Mutiny' by Herman Wouk. In the play Captain Queeg is being Court-Marshalled for bizarre behavior not befitting a US Naval Captain of a combat ship, when the defense attorney sums up the expectation of the US Military for a line officer - to just do his job. He says words to the effect "The Navy was conceived by geniuses to be executed by idiots"

That comment could have applied to our 8 million man WWII force in which every commander is expected to just do what the tactical rules (Doctrine and the Field Manuals) tell him what to do - not each commander to be a little Napoleon striving to operate with tactical brilliance. Now the original doctrine - Admiral Mahan's Navy, Billy Mitchell's Air Force, Pershing's Army - was 'conceived' by genius. While the doctrines for use assume an 'average' tactical application of superior (manpower and weapons) force. Generally only Army Special Forces are expected to innovate to win.

But all nations cannot afford the luxury of superiority of mass.

Among the few nations who have routinely had to substitute brilliance - of either leadership or tactical idea - Israel is one. They cannot - for survival of their nation - depend on everyone doing an average job fighting. They are always greatly outnumbered, whether Syrian tanks, or Egyptian large forces. Yet Israel consistently wins because they innovate on the battlefield. America did not have to do that in WWII - it was able to overwhelm by numbers of replacement weapons, aircraft, tanks more than its enemies. It may not have that luxury the next time.

So I strive to do more with less.

But I still learned a quite a bit that year about the structure of the Army and how much of it operates, but not a lot about how to use my imagination in guiding a Division in war.

In short, I realized I am very much a Pragmatist, not a slave of Doctrine. Which has been both a curse and a blessing. A curse because I don't tend to follow the doctrinaire rules every one else follows, but a blessing because I seem to be able to conceive of 'solutions' to problems that few others can think of, and then carry them out. I did that in Korea numerous times.

I have always been a military loner. A battlefield pragmatist, who uses more brain than brawn.

Fort Leavenworth Year (1)

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