

Fuzzy Wuzzy

Had No Hair

-By Roy Mark, 6 February 2013



In January of 1965 I was in California serving in the Marine Corps with the Communications Platoon of First Anti-Tank Battalion's Headquarters and Service Company on Camp Pendleton. First A-T's was located in the interior hills of Pendleton in an area designated as Camp Horno, far from the coastal towns of Oceanside and San Clemente, California.

The Marine Corps scheduled a massive training exercise that year to be conducted from 12 February to 9 March. The exercise, dubbed Operation Silver Lance would be the largest war game to be conducted since World War II and would bring together 25,000 Marines from Hawaii and the West Coast along with 20,000 sailors. Over fifty Navy ships would converge off the coast of Camp Pendleton and conduct an amphibious landing by a force of 20,000 Marines and their equipment including over fifty tanks and First A-T's tracked anti-tank vehicles called "Ontos" which is a Greek word meaning "Thing".



*An Ontos hitting the beach
Ontos were powered by two Chrysler V-8 engines
and were equipped with six 106mm Recoilless Rifles*

A few days before we were to deploy, our Comm Platoon Commanding Officer received orders to detach one Corporal and three Privates First Class and assign

them temporarily to a unit forming elsewhere on Pendleton. The written orders designated the unit only as "C.I.B." Scuttlebutt (Marine slang for rumor) quickly spread around Comm Platoon and speculation began as to the meaning and mission of C.I.B. Everyone agreed it had all the markings of a "shit detail".

I had been on two previous field exercises with First A-T's and wasn't particularly looking forward to another; conditions were never ideal in the field, what with C-rations every day, bathing out of your helmet and sleeping on inflatable mattresses we called "rubber ladies". Even so, everyone agreed that the devil we knew was preferable to going to some unit called "C.I.B." –whatever that was– and spending two weeks with Marines we did not know doing no telling what.

The Marine Corps and I'm sure other branches as well had a saying, "Shit Rolls Downhill" which in this case meant that the junior corporal and PFC's were destined for this dreaded assignment. As fate would have it, I was a newly minted corporal at that time so sure enough the C.I.B. detail was mine. Three PFC basic radiomen that had recently joined First A-T's were assigned along with me to report to the Commanding Officer, C.I.B., Camp Del Mar on the Pacific Coast near Oceanside, California.

After arriving at Del Mar, we were billeted and instructed to attend an orientation in the camp theater later that day. As we entered the theater I realized we weren't in Kansas (or Horno) anymore. Looking around I saw gold and silver bars and oak leaves on the collars of most attendees and but a scattering of enlisted Marines and Sailors.

At the briefing, we learned that C.I.B. stood for Command Information Bureau and the mission was to liaison with the civilian and military press corps during the exercise. My job, I learned was to be in charge of one shift working the radio room. As it turned out, we were so overstaffed that my crew was to work an eight-hour shift once every forty-eight hours. When not on duty in the radio room we were completely free. We didn't even have to concern ourselves with keeping the quarters clean since some of the Sailors I had seen at the orientation were assigned to clean the barracks; a luxury not experienced before or after my stint with C.I.B. and one that must have galled the Sailors.

The assignment I had dreaded turned out to be duty any Marine would envy. While my Comm Platoon comrades in First A-T's ate cold C-Rations, I ate three hot squares a day; while they slept on rubber ladies out in the cold I slept in a warm rack (Jarhead jargon for bunk); while they bathed and shaved with cold water from their helmets I took long hot showers; while they endured endless days of boredom I enjoyed choice liberty in Oceanside. My only negative was having more liberty-time than money.

Once I settled into my quarters, I began meeting other Comm Marines that had come from other units. One PFC stood out physically because he had not a hair on his head which was unusual enough for an 18 year-old Marine, but in addition to his bald head he had neither eyebrows nor eyelashes; truly an unusual sight. I was prepared to ignore his strange appearance but I was not prepared to ignore the taunts of other Marines calling the poor hairless Marine, "Harry". In my best

“Corporal demeanor”, I talked to a couple of the offenders and explained that they should not make fun of our hairless comrade by calling him, “Harry”. They in turned explained that I was off base because hairless Harry’s name was actually Harry.

Eventually I talked with Harry and he explained that he had a disease called Alopecia, which caused every hair on his body to fall off. Of course the not so tactful question I had to ask was, “every hair, *everywhere* on your body?” Harry responded, as any Marine radioman would with, “That’s affirmative Corporal”. Not a single hair did Harry have anywhere on his body. What irony, name a kid Harry to have him grow up to be hairless. Otherwise Harry was fit for duty and seemed to be a “squared away” Marine.

The two weeks I spent with C.I.B. was uneventful other than a flurry of activity when a helicopter crashed on Pendleton. When I returned to Camp Horno and First A-T’s everyone wanted to know about that "shit-detail" I had been stuck with. Of course I played up all the good points and as for the bad points, well there weren’t any to downplay. I told them about the great chow, the limited duty and the more than ample liberty. The part that really turned them green with envy was telling them about having “Swabbies” clean our barracks each day. I even told them the Sailors made our bunks each morning but now after 48 years I must confess that was creative bullshit on my part. In the end, everyone got a kick out hearing about Harry the hairless Marine.



**If Harry Had No Hair,
Harry Wasn't Harry,
Was He?**

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