



1ST PLATOON WAG TALES

(WE'LL ALWAYS BE GRUNTS)

"THREE DAYS...FIVE STATES...FOUR BROTHERS"

IT WAS A FEW MINUTES BEFORE MIDNIGHT FRIDAY SEPT. 21ST WHEN MY FLIGHT LANDED AT THE KNOXVILLE AIRPORT... I WAS TIRED FROM THE DAYS TRAVEL BUT STILL HAD SOME DRIVING MILES AHEAD OF ME. OUR PAL IN GRAY, TENNESSEE MIKE MOORE, KNOWN TO US ALL AS "BIG TENNESSEE OR BIG T", A FEW WEEKS EARLIER HAD MAPPED OUT A "ROAD TRIP" WHICH WOULD TAKE US FROM HIS HOME IN THE TRI-CITIES AREA OUT OF TENNESSEE AND INTO FOUR OTHER STATES. OUR PLAN: TO MEET UP WITH FOUR BIG BAD BRAVO BROTHERS.. TWO OF THESE OLD FIRST PLATOON GRUNTS WE HAD PREVIOUSLY SEEN IN ST. CHARLES AND GATLENBURG DURING THE REUNIONS. THE OTHER TWO NEITHER OF US HAD SEEN IN THE 38 YRS SINCE WE WERE ALL ASSIGNED TO BRAVO COMPANY (FIRST PLATOON) IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

MIKE HAD GIVEN ME DETAILED DIRECTIONS FOR THE LESS THAN 100 MILE TRIP FROM KNOXVILLE TO HIS PLACE AND I WAS WELL ON MY WAY INTO THE EARLY HOURS OF SAT. UNTIL I SAW THE FAIRFIELD INN SIGN AND WAS HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING MY EYES OPEN..... SO I STOPPED FOR THE NITE PLACED A WAKEUP CALL FOR 5AM AND CRASHED. THE WAKE UP CAME FROM MIKE HIMSELF TO MY CELL CHECKING ON ME JUST AFTER 6AM AND I WAS BACK ON THE ROAD. THIS LEG OF THE TRIP WAS SHORT BUT TIME WAS AN ISSUE SO MIKE AND HIS WIFE MELBA MET ME AT THE OFFRAMP, JUST HAD TIME TO HUG MELBA, SHE THREW MIKES BAG IN MY RENTAL CAR AND OFF WE WENT. I WAS EQUIPPED WITH A ROAD ATLAS THE BIG "T" WAS EQUIPPED WITH "PEGGY"--- YES PEGGY BEING HIS GPS SYSTEM VOICE THAT WOULD BE OUR DETAILED GUIDE FOR THE TRIP. AND I MIGHT ADD WITH A DISTINCTIVE BRITISH ACCENT.

OUR FIRST STOP WOULD BE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, A LITTLE TOWN OF PAINTSVILLE AND THE HOME OF GREG (DUM-DUM) AND LINDA HAMILTON.. PEGGY TOOK US RIGHT UP IN FRONT OF THE HAMILTON (IN TOWN) RESIDENCE AND GREG N' LINDA WERE ON THE FRONT PORCH WAITING. HUGS, COLD SWEETENED ICE TEA, A SHORT VISIT AND WALK THRU THEIR BEAUTIFUL HOME COMPLETE WITH DANCE STUDIO IN THE BACK AND WE WERE OFF TO A YUMMIE HOME MADE LUNCH AT WILLMA'S IN TOWN. MEAT LOAF, POTATOES, AND GRAVY... HATED TO LEAVE BUT TIME WAS BURNING AND WE WANTED TO VISIT THE "FARM" WHICH TOOK US OUT OF PAINTSVILLE ABOUT 18 MILES TO THE FAMILY FARM ON 50 BEAUTIFUL ACRES HEAVILY WOODED WITH A FISH /SWIM POND AND SEVERAL OUT BUILDINGS TO INCLUDE A 100+ YEAR OLD LOG CABIN AND SITE OF THE WEDDING OF GREG AND LINDA LAST YEAR.. THE UNIQUE PART OF ALL THIS IS THE HISTORY HAVING BEEN IN THE HAMILTON FAMILY FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS. THE NOT SO UNIQUE WAS THE SITE OF A FAIRLY NEW JOHN DEERE TRACTOR..

HAD TO WAVE GOODBYE AND OFF WE WERE AGAIN HEADIN NORTH OUT OF PAINTSVILLE TO THE VERY TIP OF KENTUCKY AND INTO THE TOWN OF FLORENCE.. ONCE AGAIN, "PEGGY" TOOK US RIGHT TO THE FRONT DOOR OF DON AND ANNE SCHULTZ. SCHULTZEEE THE MACHEEN-GUNNER WAS HIS NICKNAME WITHIN THE FIRST PLATOON.. DON AND ANNE WERE BOTH IN ATTENDANCE IN ST. CHARLES AND GATLENBURG AND IT WAS GREAT TO VISIT WITH THEM RIGHT THERE IN THEIR HOME TOWN. WE ALSO WERE ABLE TO MEET THEIR SON AND GRANDSON, TOOK SEVERAL PHOTO'S, HAD SOME COLD DRINKS AND BACK

ON THE HWY HEADED SOUTH AGAIN.. WE WERE SOMEWHAT CONCERNED ABOUT FINDING TONY FLYNN, TONY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT TO EITHER OF THE TWO OTHER REUNIONS BUT HAD PROMISED TO "MEET UP" WITH US SOMEWHERE ALONG OUR ROUTE TO OR FROM SCHULTZEE'S HOME. TONY WAS ONE OF THE UNFORTUNATE BBB BROTHERS THAT WAS NOT ONLY HIT ONCE BUT TWICE DURING HIS TOUR AND A THIRD TRIP TO THE REAR WAS TO TRY AND CLEAR UP A FUNGUS THAT HAD DEVELOPED ON BOTH HIS HANDS.. TO SHOW WHAT A SPORT THE OLD GRUNT FROM KENTUCKY WAS HE LAUGHED OFF THE NICKNAME SOME OF THE REMFS GAVE HIM OF "FUNGUS FINGERS FLYNN"... I HAD LEFT TWO VOICE MESSAGES FOR TONY ON OUR WAY NORTH SO MIKE AND I WERE A LITTLE CONCERNED WHEN WE HAD NOT HAD A CALL-BACK, BUT JUST ABOUT THE TIME THE SUN WAS GOING DOWN WE GOT THE CALL AND HEADED FOR THE NEAREST "WAFFLE HOUSE" TO MEET UP... WHAT A REAL SURPRIZE THIS WAS. TONY LOOKED GREAT AND WHEN HE WALKED UP I COULD TELL THAT SMILE FROM 50 YARDS AWAY... WE HAD SOME DINNER, COFFEE, TRIED TO CATCH UP AND GOT A FIRM COMMITMENT FROM TONY THAT HE WOULD BE THERE IN ST. CHARLES NEXT APRIL... BACK ON THE ROAD, WE HEADED BUT NOT FAR, BOTH MIKE AND I WERE TIRED AND THE SIGHT OF A HOLIDAY EXPRESS LOOKED GREAT... I GUESS IT IS THE AGE BUT NEITHER MIKE NOR I SLEPT MUCH AFTER 6AM, WE STOPPED FOR SOME BREAKFAST, SET MISS PEGGY FOR OUR NEXT STOP IN ATHENS, WEST VIRGINA AND OFF WE WENT. TODAY WOULD PROVE TO BE OUR LONGEST DISTANCE AND DRIVE BUT THE DAY WAS BEAUTIFUL AND THE MILES WENT BY QUICKLY. MIKE HAD A REAL KNOWLEDGE OF MOST EVERYWHERE WE HAD BEEN ALONG THE HWY'S... HE BECAME AN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR AFTER RETURNING FROM NAM AND HIS BUSINESS TOOK HIM IN ALL THE STATES SURROUNDING HIS HOME STATE OF TENNESSEE. HE REALLY HAD SOME INTERESTING STORIES ABOUT THE "COAL" INDUSTRY IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD HAVING SPECIALIZED IN WORKING FOR THE COAL MINES AND PROCESSING COMPANIES..

EDGAR TERRY JUSTICE AND I WERE TWO OF NINE GUYS THAT WERE FLOWN TO BRAVO COMPANY ON THE SAME DAY AND IT WAS ONLY ONE WEEK TO THE DAY WHEN HE AND I WERE FLOWN ON A MEDIVAC HELICOPTER ALONG WITH AT LEAST TWELVE OTHERS BECAUSE OF WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE "ANDINO GRENADE INCIDENT". MY INJURIES WERE VERY MINOR; EDGAR WAS LITERALLY TORN TO SHREDS BY SHRAPNEL AND ROCKS. HE WAS SENT FROM VIETNAM TO JAPAN AND THEN ON TO WALTER REED HOSPITAL WHERE HE SPENT "ONE" ENTIRE YEAR IN RECOVERY. THE DOCTORS TOLD HIM HE WOULD NEVER WALK AGAIN OR HAVE USE OF HIS ARMS. IN LATE AUG 69' I GOT A LETTER FROM EDGAR (WRITTEN BY HIS MOTHER) HE WAS ASKING WHAT HAPPENED , HE HAD NOT BEEN TOLD NOR HAD ANY OF HIS FAMILY EXACTLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED THAT HORRIBLE DAY ON TOP OF THAT HILL RIGHT OFF OF HWY ONE. JUST ABOUT THE TIME MISS PEGGY WAS ANNOUNCING THE LOCATION AND ADDRESS OF THE JUSTICE RESIDENCE WHICH WAS WAY BACK DOWN AN OLD COUNTRY ROAD IN A LITTLE TOWN OF ATHENS, MIKE POINTED

TO A BIG BIG SIGN NAILED ON A POST ALONG THE LEFT SIDE OF THE ROAD. IT WAS A WELCOME SIGN AND HAD MY NAME ON IT.. I CANNOT EXPLAIN HOW I FELT AS I TURNED INTO THE PROPERTY, AFTER ALL IT HAD BEEN 38 YEARS. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL HOME, ALL BRICK AND LOCATED RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF 15 ACRES OF WEST VIRGINA WOODED LAND. EDGAR AND HIS WIFE BEATRICE WERE ON THE FRONT PORCH WAITING FOR US AND IT WAS AN EMOTIONAL MEETING TO SAY THE LEAST. THE FOUR OF US SAT AND TALKED FOR SOME TIME.. BEATRICE TOLD ME IN PRIVATE THAT "TERRY" WHICH IS WHAT HE LIKES TO BE CALLED, HAD NEVER EVER UNTIL THIS MEETING, TALKED ABOUT ANY OF THE THINGS HE HAD WITH US. SHE ACTUALLY HAD TO LEAVE THE ROOM AND GO OUTSIDE. WE DECIDED TO TAKE A DRIVE DOWN BY ONE OF THE LOCAL LAKES SO THE MIKE, TERRY, AND I TOOK A DRIVE AND WALKED DOWN BY THE LAKE FOR AN HOUR OR SO. IT WAS HARD TO LEAVE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE FRIENDS WE HAD HOOKED UP WITH AND EVERY SINGLE ONE PLEADED WITH MIKE AND I TO STAY THE NITE WITH THEM. OUR TIME WOULD JUST NOT ALLOW AND SO WITH TERRY AND HIS WIFE WE SAID OUR GOODBYES BUT

ONLY AFTER GETTING THEIR PROMISE TO BE IN ST. LOUIS COME NEXT APRIL---- THE LIGHT SIDE OF THE VISIT WAS THE SITE OF ANOTHER JOHN DEERE TRACTOR STORED NEATLY IN HIS BIG FOUR-CAR GARAGE???

BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN, THIS SHORT STRETCH TOOK US BACK THRU A PART OF "VIRGINIA" AND WITHOUT THE HELP OF MISS PEGGY, THE DRIVE WAS A STRAIGHT SHOT BACK OVER INTO EASTERN TENNESSEE. A HWY VERY FAMILIAR TO MIKE AND I WAS PRETTY EXCITED TO SEE SIGNS SAYING "BRISTOL MOTOR SPEEDWAY". NOT THAT I AM A BIG NASCAR FAN BUT I WOULD TELL ALL MY FRIENDS BACK IN CALIFORNIA I HAD BEEN THERE, WELL CLOSE ANYWAY!!

WE HAD PLANNED ONE NITE BACK AT MIKE'S, MELBA HAD MADE RESERVATIONS AT THE "OUTBACK" AND THE THREE OF US WERE JOINED BY THEIR DAUGHTER CHERRI AND HER HUSBAND.. I WAS PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO PROPOSE A TOAST IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST MOORE GRANDBABY, WHICH IS "ON THE WAY". THINK WE ALL KNOW JUST HOW EXCITING THIS IS FOR THE SOON TO BE GRAMMA AND GRANPA!! TIRED FROM ALL THE MANY ROAD MILES WE CRASHED FAIRLY EARLY BUT BACK UP TO THE SMELL OF A GOOD OLD TENNESSEE BREAKFAST.. CHAD THEIR SON AND COME OVER EARLY AND MISS MELBA HAD LAID OUT A BREAKFAST THAT WAS WONDERFUL.. THIS WAS SUCH A GREAT VISIT AND COMPLETED MY MEETING OF THE ENTIRE MOORE FAMILY--- THAT IS EXCEPT FOR MIKE'S DAD. I COULD CERTAINLY SEE THE BIG "T" CHARACTERISTICS IN THEIR SON FOR SURE... GREAT KIDS!!

OUR ROAD TRIP HAD ONE FINAL DESTINATION AND THIS ONE NOT RELATED TO ANY OF THE BRAVO BROTHERS. ONE OF THE COMPANIES I PURCHASE EQUIPMENT FROM IS LOCATED OVER IN LENOIR, NORTH CAROLINA, SO WE SET MISS PEGGY WITH A QUICK STOP OFF IN BOONE, THE HOME OF THE APPALACHIAN STATE COLLEGE. COULD NOT GO

THRU WITHOUT PAYING RESPECTS TO THE "LITTE MAJOR" SCHOOL THAT HAD JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO "PUT IT TO" MICHIGAN IN THE BIG HOUSE...

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON WHEN WE ARRIVED BACK TO MIKE'S AND I WANTED TO MAKE THE DRIVE BACK TO KNOXVILLE FOR MY FLIGHT BACK TO SACRAMENTO.. WE ALL SAID GOODBYE, EXCHANGED SOME HUGS AND ENDED WHAT WAS A QUICK BUT MOST REWARDING THREE DAYS ... THANK YOU TO BIG 'T' WITHOUT HIS PLANNING AND COMPANY (AND MISS PEGGY) I WOULD STILL BE WANDERING AROUND SOMEWHERE, WHO KNOWS WHERE???

IN CLOSING, I HAVE TO SAY I HAVE NOT SEEN SO MANY "JOHN DEERE" TRACTORS IN A LONG LONG TIME....

RON ADAMS

