

4th USA Missile Command 1st battalion. 42nd (Honest John) FA. Jan.1972-Feb. 1973

I received Orders for Ft Lewis overseas replacement Station in Washington. I thought for sure I was going to Vietnam and would never see home again. But to my surprise I was sent to Korea instead.

Upon arriving In ASCOM Korea I was told I would be going to the Army's best kept secret??? After a long bus ride in a Northeastern direction I arrived at the 38th Parallel Camp Page on the edge of the city of Chun Chon. I was assigned to the 1st Battalion 42nd(Honest John) Field Artillery of the 4th United States Army Missile Command. I was in a Honest John Rocket Battalion with 2 Atomic warheads stored in a lead building on Camp Page. They called it the metal room. It was guarded heavily from the outside and from within. Codebooks were kept in a separate room inside the metal room with 2 armed MP's. I was scared shitless. The warheads were removed on two occasions during Emergency Field Maneuvers. IE Once in the summer of 1972 a MIG Jet did a donut over our base and raced north. We immediately went to the field and headed straight north with our prescribed warheads. These warheads when removed from the lead shielding of the building emanated Gamma and X radiation.

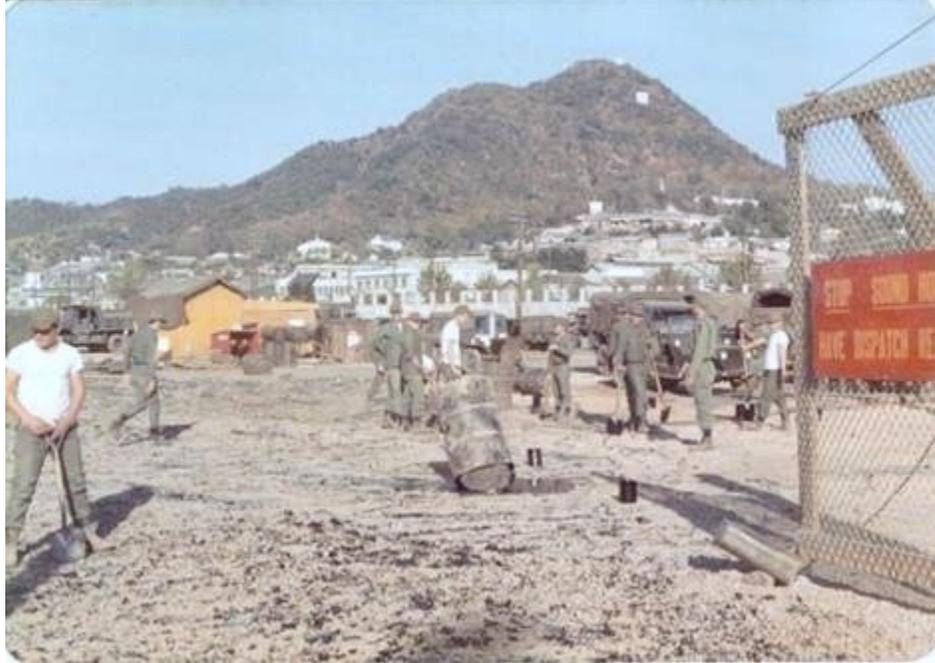
The main people who controlled the launchers and warheads in the firing batteries were FBI, Military Police and CIA. I was a wheel vehicle mechanic in HHB and worked for a SSG Foster and enjoyed my job. Working on ¾ ton trucks and jeeps and the 5 ton launcher vehicles was an experience I'll never forget and kept my mind occupied.

While with HHB I was detailed to clean out and spray a trench on Camp Page with Viet Nam Era herbicide. Right after this detail I became very sick. Cough and sore throat for 2 weeks.

I met CW3 Walter Evans the Battalion Maintenance Tech. and Sgt Rodriguez the shop foreman from the Battalion Maintenance section and requested a transfer to Battalion Maintenance. It was approved and I became the Battalion Dispatcher/Mechanic.

Behind our Motor Pool on Camp Page was a Blue Diamond Rio 2 1/2 truck with a rusty tank on the back and a sprayer. In the spring the truck was used to spray the perimeter fence and small airfield of Camp Page with Viet Nam Era herbicide. This truck was parked behind our motor pool next to a larger elevated tank that was used to store the herbicide. The truck was operated by local Korean men who would come on base early before curfew ended. They had to have special passes to be out after curfew and get on Camp Page early in the morning. They would fill the truck and commence spraying the perimeter fence before most people woke up. This was done many times in the spring to keep plants clear of our perimeter fence.

This is the tour I was exposed to Viet Nam Era Herbicide and I believe is the primary cause of my CLL. Below you will see an activity at Camp Page in my motor pool 1972-1973 like no other. PSP (Perforated Steel Plating) was removed from our motor pool parking area for this event. It was replaced afterward.



SPREADING HERBICIDE BY HAND DIPPING COFFEE CANS



DUMPING BATTERY ACID INTO THE GROUND

Here you can see my buddies (1972-1973 tour) making pollution. Digging weeds and spreading Viet Nam Era Herbicide by hand with the help of coffee cans was a high tech operation and the disappearing battery acid trick was great. The orange Acid barrel had no bottom and was full of rocks. Mark the guy in the Picture has real bad lungs.

The green barrel in the upper picture was kept under the elevated herbicide tank where the Blue truck was parked that I spoke of earlier. Sludge would build up in the bottom of the elevated tank and could not be used by the Spray truck. The hose coming from the tank was cleared and drained into 55 gallon drums kept under the elevated tank. As you can see it didn't go to waste.

We all know Viet Nam Era herbicides have a half life in soil of a very long time. The jury is still out on that but its at least twelve years in soil My personal Doctor Jeff Burns from Ennis ontana who was a US Marine tells me its getting closer to 100 years. He wrote a letter for me stating that fact. For Gods sake stop making dying men fill out so many papers. Its totally ridicules. Its causing much mental stress on us compiled on top of an already stressful situation. I was active duty for 9 years from 1970 to 1979. I went to the VA with a kidney stone in 2003, I didn't know it at the time but all my blood test were bad and the VA never told me for 2 years. I had at least 10 blood tests that show HIGH White blood cell count, HIGH Lymphocyte # and %. I was given another blood test in Jan. of 2005 and a smear was sent to the Mayo Clinic , the doctor read my blood test and told me I had Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, The VA doctor Jeff Gorden then asked me if I was ever exposed to Agent Orange or Radiation. I didn't ask him. I repeat , I didn't ask him but he asked me. So, I did research and yes I was exposed to Agent Orange and possibly Radiation and many other lethal chemicals that today come with Material Safety Data Sheets. We were not afforded the opportunity to know what we were handling as soldiers are today.

At this time in 2007 Camp Page has still not been handed over to the Korean Government due to massive amounts of pollution in the soil and water.

This isnt funny anymore. The VA and the DOD must come clean on this one. More pictures are available.

I reenlisted with the 101st and again went back to Korea in June of 1978. I was assigned to the 5th Preventive Medicine Unit (PMU) LC Detachment in Yongsan, Seoul Korea as the Motor Sgt. I had some strange assignments while in the military and this was one of them. As a Wheel Vehicle Mechanic (63B40) I was afforded the opportunity to serve in many different types of Army units. But this one changed my life forever.

This Unit consisted of about 50 people and had many missions within the Republic of Korea. Disease Vector Control being the main mission. We tried to control the Rat Populations, Mesquitoes, Mites, Crabs and all other creepy crawlers that could spread disease to our Soldiers.

My Vehicles mostly ¼ ton Jeep M151A2 ,s had Vynal tanks mounted in the back seat area with a spray unit that were full of Herbicide. A Pesticide/Fungicide/Insecticide mixture (Deathicide) was applied using battery operated back pack spray units inside Mess Facilities, Billet and latrine areas. The medics would travel TDY and inspect US Mess Facilities ,Water Purification Systems, and Billet areas at all US Camps in the Republic of Korea. These Application's of "Cides" treated these areas of pests, insects, fungus and weed problems.

While the Medics traveled the country they also were tasked with collecting samples of Air, Water, Soil, Foodstuffs(meat, fish and poultry) , Milk, local drinks, candy, ice cream, animals ect.ect. from the local market places around the Camps. We operated a Laboratory in Yongsan that was staffed with US, Katusa, and Korean Scientists to test the collected samples for contamination.

We published a list of all the Items found to be contaminated and placed them off limits to all US personnel. Even towns were placed off limits. Certain sections of cities were also placed off limits.

After many nights in the barracks listening to the Techs and Medics I realized I poisoned on my first tour in Korea. I've had chronic kidney stones and liver problems since the mid 70's. What they tested was contaminated with either human and rat fecal matter, urine, or chemicals of some sort. The popular OB Beer was contaminated with Human fecal matter. Some of the local brews were also made with Formaldehyde instead of standard alcohol. Ice machines in the Village bars were the worst.

Anyway, all the Items found to be contaminated were published on a list and sent out to all commands for distribution and posting. The list didn't say why the Items were off limits only that they were. Fecal matter was found in the local water supplies. All local water in Korea was placed off limits to US troops.

The mission of pest control was all new to me. After much thought I think I as the motor Sgt should have been licensed or trained to handle the equipment but I was not. We had pumps and sprayers of different types. Some were back pack type others were large truck mounting spraying devices. The medics would always spray our barracks heavily. One of my trucks (5ton M54a1) would drive around and leave a big fog of pesticide spray were ever it went. It drove around the main compound often and also came to the Motor pool and barracks area where we stayed. Back then who knew! We would stand around in the fog until it dissipated . I think our barracks was sprayed more than any other because that's were the medics lived so they had the opportunity to spray ours whenever they wanted. There was also lindane in my bunk on a few occasions. I know I was exposed to mant "CIDES" in this unit and should have been trained in its proper handling. I hope that this shortcoming of local engineering has been corrected to protect mechanics in these types of units. I was exposed to a lot of pesticide on this tour.

One of the strangest missions that I knew of was the collecting of Mites, Midges and Mosquitoes. While my vehicles were out on missions I was required to work for the Entomologist / Epidemiologist at the Laboratory Cpts Hunt and Fliecher. Next to the Laboratory there was a building with a whole section of cages for animals. Mostly mite infested rats and birds. The rats were periodically brought into another room with a large pool of water with screened cages above the water. The rats were placed over the water in the screened cages. The room was air conditioned with temperature controls. The temperature would be changed in the room in such a drastic fashion that the mites would fall off of the rats and land in the pool of water below. The mites would float on top of the water. After a while the whole top of the water would be covered with mites. The rats would be removed and the mites would be skimmed off the top of the water.

They would then be counted. Separated and ground up into a mash. They would be placed in small packages . This is where I come into this picture. I would deliver these small packages to locations around the city of Seoul. I delivered the packages to laboratories at a The Seoul University and two different Seoul Hospital laboratories. These were typical labs with masked people with microscopes and Bunsen burners. They were all Korean Scientists. Not US soldiers.

Our Orderly room was like a bug zoo. There were Jars on shelves full of different bugs that grew out of the local food samples collected by the medics from the local market place. Eggs that were on the local products would hatch in these jars. It was totally disgusting. I can remember being on CQ all alone in the office with all the buzzing and snapping of the bugs. It gave me the (Hebejeebees) for lose of a better word. Never the less you would never ever think about coping some zzz's while on CQ in that office. No way.

Another couple missions of this Unit was Graves registration , Crater analysis , and mosquito light trapping. I'll leave it up to your own imagination to determine what was buried in some of the bomb craters. There was always a current list of GI's that died on duty for one reason or another hanging on the wall in the office. And another of graves that were being discovered. The Unit was a constant reminder of death.

The Unit was also requested to supply Medics and Techs for the Tunnel Teams that were being formed to study the newly found North Korean Tunnel. Air, Soil, water and rock samples were brought back to the lab. When they were done with the testing they could tell you how old the tunnel was ,what tools were used in its making . These folks were very thorough in their testing.

In finishing with the fifth I would like to add that this Unit was in Korea in the Early 60's thru out the 70's and beyond. I know this units capabilities and its testing procedures. I Know this unit tested every Camp in Korea. I know this unit tested everything. I know this Unit was on the DMZ many times in the late 60's and early 70's testing. So if you are looking for answers to decades old problems this Unit along with its Korean counterparts hold answers.

A large amount of AO was discovered buried in Korea by the 5th PMU in 1979.

I was a Vehicle Mechanic for 9 Active duty years from 1970 to 1979.