

## DASPO Produces 13th COSCOM Orientation Movie

After being promoted to E-7, Sergeant First Class, in 1974, the Army did some sole searching, and I was expected to elevate myself to operate an Army photo lab, not just film motion picture events or projects. Things would not be copasetic. It would mean a whole new job designation and responsibilities as well. Depending on the next assignment, it could require platoon sergeant capabilities too, operating color and black & white photo labs, assigning still and motion picture assignments also. Instead of a four or five man team, it could be as many as 40 troops.

The Ft. Shafter photo lab was across the parking lot from the DASPO Office. I was attached there for several months for "On the Job Training" (OJT). I was there just enough time to be awarded the 84G title. The entire time I spent in the photo lab, I was assigned color slide processing. I had developed slides before entering the Army, using Ektachrome E-2 and E-4 kits, along with Anscochrome slides. Where I was an ignoramus, was in color printing, I had only worked that side of color once or twice, as a helper. Color printing was the most tricky and costly, to obtain proper exposure and correct color. At \$1.00 a sheet for 8X10 paper, we wasted six or eight sheets, to get one good print. I felt cheated, with this lack of training.

With the POWs home, the Vietnam War at an end, the Army had excess personnel. The Pentagon uncovered, that the Army photo was authorized 1,000 personnel worldwide, but in fact had 1,400 on duty. Clearly 400 photo related photographers and photo lab personnel would have to go, either through attrition, with bars to re-enlistment or elective to other job skills, where shortages existed. It was a time of tumultuous upheaval, and I was caught in this transitional manifest.

The closest related work was also in a phase transition, from being called the PIO to PAO. Public Information Office to Public Affairs Office. Their main claim to fame, was publishing the unit's newspaper. Other tasks were public affairs and community relations work, and in some cases be the unit's historian. As photographers, it was our job to let the PIO know, we were in their area of purview. Nearly always seeking their aid in achieving our mission. Some PAO/PIO's had a closet set up as their dark room. Others used the local photo facility to develop and print the black and white still pictures.

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There were problems, big problems. I lacked the basics. I was a lousy speller. English composition was slightly better. I'd leave dangling participles, use clauses or phrases, instead of sentences. Punctuation was gross, using semi-colons where comas were needed. All these adversities, and I was supposed to edit stories subordinates submitted? I felt more than uncomfortable. Yet as photographers, we had to write a summary of what the captions contained. The summary included all the elements of journalist data, containing the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW and WHY. All the criteria of a news story.

During Operation Cedar Falls, I might have written the following. On 8 Jan. 1967, the 22nd Infantry (Mechanized) of the 25th Inf. Div, based at Cu Chi, 20 miles Northwest of Saigon, began a blocking and search and destroy operation called "Cedar Falls." The unit was helped by the 196th Light Inf. Brigade, as the operation swept along the Saigon River, from the Boi Loi Woods to the Iron Triangle. The action was to deny the enemy, this area as an infiltration route. Other elements of the 25th Inf Div and the 7th ARVN Regiment, also took part in the several week operation. (Stories of Opn Cedar Falls are at this web-site.)

The above contained the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW and WHY, needed in a news story. Most summaries were only one or two paragraphs. The longest summary, I ever wrote ran 22 pages. In that case, I met the film editor, before filming began, and learned he knew nothing of tropical birds. He didn't know the sizes, a goose or sparrow. Nor the plumage differences between sexes of the same species. He couldn't identify immature birds from nestlings, nor number of eggs each species layed, nor the egg colors. He had no idea where the birds built their nest, underground, on the ground or trees. This data helped the script writer, as well as the editor.

By Aug. 1974, my three year tour of duty with DASPO was up. I was sent to Indianapolis, for Defense Information Courses (DINFOS) at Ft. Ben-Harrison. With further reassignment orders to the 13th COSCOM at Ft. Hood, TX., upon completion of schooling. The first two weeks, of the 10 week course, were devoted to radio and TV news writing. While valueable, I felt that time could have better utilization teaching short-hand writing. I'd been in press corp briefing, especially during the Manila Conference. I'd have to scribble and abbreviate at break neck speed, and only get part of the sentence. Other press, sitting next to me made a few marks in their notebooks and rested. Interviews were a diaster, asking people to stop in the middle of a sentence, so you could jot down all the facts.

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Reporting into the 13th COSCOM PAO, I was surprised and disillusioned at the same time. I had a desk and a phone. The office had no camera, but two artist. Any story needing photos, the office asked the Ft. Hood photo lab for support, or just had the artist draw a sketch illustrating the event. We had a captain as the PAO, a clerk typist and two reporters. Our main job was to write news stories about the command for the Ft. Hood newspaper, and put out a monthly 13th COSCOM Newsletter. Behind the PAO, was Operation graphic arts section. We also used their equipment to make headlines for our own paper.

I had been in the office a half hour, when the lady captain asked about my previous assignment? Telling her, it was with the Dept. Of The Army Special Photo Office as a motion picture photographer. Her immediate reaction was, "We need an orientaion film about the command"! My instincts said "BARF", I hadn't been on Ft. Hood but a few hours, living out of a suitcase in a motel, until I could get post housing, along with lots of in-processing to be achieved. Here she was handing me an assignment requiring intracate knowledge of the command, when all I knew was it's an Army unit.

A few weeks later, all new arrivals were called to attend the monthly new arrival orientation. Some major spoke to the assemble audience, for nearly an hour. Explaining the 13th COSCOM's mission to support the 3rd Corp troops. He told the group of permanent and tenant units. The major stated the command fulfills its mission, with a Headquarters Battalion. An area signal and communication battalion, a transportation battalion. The command also has a "DS" and "GS" maintenance battalions. Some of the briefing was comprehensible, while other elements was so twisted in acronyms, jargon and gobble-de-gook, left officers and NCO's departing the briefing, wondering what did the man say? For the junior enlisted the orientaion was a total waste of time. For these troops the major was speaking in a foreign language.

Within a fortnight, the orientation film topic was in conversation, more than once. The 13th COSCOM PAO was a well oiled machine. The reporters, submitted their stories directly to the captain for editing. She handed the corrected copy to the clerk/typist, for final typing. I honestly didn't have a job. While loathing the orientaion, I gotten, I felt I was still to new at the job to decipher the jargon and acronyms used in the briefing. To add insult to injury, another SFC was sent to our office. He was a radio and TV announcer.

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Jobless, the concept of an orientation project became less detestable, but what kind. A slide show, with narration on audio tape? A film or video tape end product? The captain had no idea of the complexity nor gravity of what she was asking me to do. An orientation film is dated, and becomes obsolete quickly. Every couple of months one of the battalion commander left. Even the 13th COSCOM commander was due to leave shortly. Should I delete, having the COSCOM commander even giving an opening statement? Or should I try to edit around leaving ample space to erase the old commander's statement and insert the new commander's opening notes.. Editing film to do this would be hard. If I skipped the commander's opening statement, would add longevity to the orientation project. The slide show concept, would be the least costly and readily maintainable. This would add survivability to the project. With just commanders changing and minor mission adjustments, I guessed, the slide show concept might last half a decade. Film or video tape would have a shorter life span. I certainly didn't want to re-do the orientation every year or so.

The first step was to learn all about the 13th COSCOM, Totally by passing operations prepared orientation, I called upon each battalion commander, to obtain up to the minute status of the unit's mission and resources. This in itself became a formidable mission. Most ly the battalion commander, were under the impression, that I was there to ask one or two question, not learn the entire battalion's life story. Often a crisis arose, and I was told to make an appointment a day or two in the offing. Another mind-boggling task was to unravel the difference between "DS" and "GS" maintenance units, since the 13th COSCOM had both battalions.

To decipher the double talk and jargon being thrown at me, I had to put the overall view into civilian terms. The Army had five levels, called echelons of maintenance. The user/operator checks tire pressure, gas up, checks oil and antifreeze levels. Basically the same for any car owner. The motor pool, changed oil and lubed the vehicles, changed batteries and tires. This was much the same as a full service gas station could perform. Broken motor mounts, starters, break jobs or transmission work was done by the DIRECT SUPPOT Maintenance unit. In the civilian world the driver would go to Midas muffler, transmission shop etc for these repairs. For more extensive work, such as a car wreck, the vehicle would go to a collision repair shop, equal to the GENERAL SUP-PORT Maintenance. Finally was depot level, where vehicles were totally re-built. This would equate to the auto dealership, where the parts dept could built a car from parts on hand.

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Both divisions, the 1st Cav Air Mobile and the 13th COSCOM, under the 3rd Corp, all had Direct Support Maintenance units, but only the 13th COSCOM had a General Support maintenance Bn to serve the entire post, with its 40,000 plus manpower.

The Headquarters Battalion had even more bazaar things going on. It had laundry and bath units for use during field maneuvers. I never knew these things existed, and never saw them in Vietnam. It was also forming the (MMC) Material Management Center. I was told the Army had a paralysis, a void, a gap, that needed mending. The MMC would cover that missing link. I was told, right now the military made out requisitions for supplies. The requests were handed over to the Ft. Hood (DACs) Dept of The Army Civilian for filling or forward to depot for filling. If war broke out, and the units shipped off to war, the civilians wouldn't be there to fill or forward the supply request. The Army had to learn to do it themselves.

This was a shocking revelation, since the civilians weren't in Vietnam. I was puzzled as to what happened to that organization? How in less than two years could the logistical support be that dismantled? But, here I was having field grade officers, tell me, without the DACs, nothing can get done! The operation of the MMC was so complicated and evolving daily, that the Headquarters Battalion Commander, suggested that I contact another LTC, that was assimilating the project

The LTC in charge of the MMC, told me the concept was to consolidate a supply and service unit, with a maintenance unit and expand the entire operation. He mentioned that the MMC would control the "FLOAT". A reserve of strategical important vehicles and equipment, such as tank retrievers and dragon wagons. When a division's piece of equipment was dead-lined for repairs, they could borrow from the "FLOAT". Eventually, the MMC would have a cannibalation point. Just like civilian auto junk yards, where mechanics, auto body repairmen etc, come to get useable parts off scrapped car. The cannibalation point would do the exact same thing. With these junker parts, re-entering the supply system, would reduce the need to contract for new parts. To maintain accurate inventory, the MMC would require a data processing unit. When totally incorporated, the MMC would be the heart and brains of the 13th COSCOM.

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At the office things weren't copasetic, they were unravelling fast. The CPT was on orders to Europe. The primary reporter was also on orders. The second reporter was pregnant, spending more time on sick call and at the hospital, than at the office. The best artist was getting out of the Army. The CPT was quickly replaced, with a helicopter pilot (CPT), that majored in English, but got all messed up in Vietnam. If I recount, he required three different braces, just to stand up. In constant pain, he spent more time in the hospital, than at the office. The Ft Hood hospital flatly told him, he was beyond their care. In the following months, the CPT spent entire weeks at Brooks Army Hospital, at FT. Sam Houston in San Antonio.

In the absence of an officer, I was expected to attend the daily staff meeting, at the Head-shed. Many days, I became the senior "CUB" reporter on post. Getting news stories at the staff meeting. With a work load, I had to shelf the notebook of orientation material, to write news and feature stories about the command. Mostly I would do interviews and jot down facts. Then at home actually write the story, with my wife's help.

The PAO, finance and several offices were set up in WWII barracks, with window unit air conditioning. The four building sat about 1½ miles apart from the main Headquarters. The P.X. snack bar's "ROACH COACH" visited our site twice daily, but the summer heat of Texas, that was inadequate. The PAO office had a refrigerator for film, but no camera. I set up an illicit snack bar of our own. Buying cases of cokes and Little Debbie snacks at the commissary. In short order, I bought a PX camera, ordered a special tape recorder, from the AAFES catalog, and bought a "HALF TONE SCREEN", to put the dots on prints for newspaper reproduction before the snack bar was shut down by the post brass.

With the office deprived of personnel, I had to interview and take pictures, during the day, and at night write the story or work in the dark room. It wasn't unusual to be still working at 11 P.M. After writing the story it was my wife's turn to correct spelling errors and tell me to re-write other segments that she couldn't understand. That was a big help also, I had to write for the masses, not just that (MOS) Military Occupation Speciality, that I was writing about.

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The most hectic week, I finished six news stories, two in one day. The CPT was only in the office one or two hours a week, between trips to the hospital. It was then, that he edit and proof read the stories. Frequently by the time he was finished with one of my four page stories, it would be only three pages. He told me, you always give me 110 to 150 per-cent of what's needed. He never had to ask for more information. I relished that fact, reflecting back to the film days, where we shot film allowing the editor to edit.

So the year 1975 passed. Some officers began questioning what ever happened to the new orientation? Many officers, First Sergeants and platoon sergeants, were putting in 16 to 18 hour days. So was I, and they wanted more! With a junior PFC reporter at the office, I had to be extra diligent in assigning him stories to cover. I often had to help him in writing the lead paragraph, or the entire story. At minimum give him an outline of the way the story should take form. With my background, who was I to correct other people's English, but rank has its privilages. With the other reporter off maternity leave, I could get some production from the staff, and dust off the orientation notebook.

The news media was in a transition, virtually abandoning film, for video tape and remote broadcast techniques. That of live news casts from the site of the news event. Gone were the days of sending a crew out to film the story. Drive the film back to a lab for processing. Then drive back to the studio for editing, before broadcast. My way of life as a motion picture photographer was evaporating, and I left lost in the new trends. Especially with a major project to be done like the orientation movie.

Knowing some of the people had transferred from the Pacific Det to the CONUS Det. of DASPO, at Ft. Bragg, N.C. In desperation for some answers, concerning the orientation, I sought their advice. During the phone conversation, I was told that DASPO, regularly came to Ft. Hood. Especially in the fall to cover the "REFORGER OPERATIONS", During the "Cold War" massive quantities of troops and equipment were sent to Europe for war games. I was told, that while covering "REFORGER", the team could film our orientation. What an adrenalin explosion.

What a delicious dilemma. Here it was late spring, I had a film crew, but no script. At least the dichotomy was broken. The slide show was forgotten. While in Hawaii, I had edited "Operation Pacific Bond" (Story at this web-site) to inter-lock status. That is to say sound and film in sync, but separate. I had never gone the full distance, of sound on film, the final product. Breaking out the orientation notebook, from a year earlier, the script starting taking form. From the daily staff meetings, I was aware of mission changes, within the battalions. The MMC was a different story. The MMC was still being formulated. Anything I scripted now, would most likely be wrong at time of filming.

The military had three classes of phone service, ranging from Class "A" or full service, to very limited communications. Of course, the 13th COSCOM, had the worst service, Class "C", we were restricted to on-post calls, in coming calls and local off post dialing to 10 or 15 mile radius of post. I don't believe we had AUTOVON access. (AUTOVON satellite telephonic service to all military installations world-wide.) To notify Austin and Waco press of a change of command, the 13th COSCOM had to use the postal service. Accordingly, most of the orientation film related long distance calls were done from my post housing, which had Class "A" service, for a price.

The PAO didn't discriminate against any battalion, under our command. We treated each and every unit as equals, showing no favoritism. Granted some units produced more news worthy stories than others. Some internally, others externally, but news was when ever or where ever it happened. Our Transportation Battalion was called upon many times, to haul trailer loads of water to near by communities, when the town's wells ran dry or water pumps failed. Press within 60 miles radius, including Austin covered these events. For Ft Hood and the 13th COSCOM, these events were community relations, as well as newstories about the command. If a maintenance battalion had record out put, that was news, but if the finance office had record productivity, everyone just yawned. Some jobs were just more numdane than others. The largest pat on the back, I every received, was when I did a story on how to read your pay-slip. It took a month to finalize, but when finished, I had Bird Colonels say, "I never knew what box 32A meant." until I read your story. Officers of all ranks stated, it was the best thing they seen in years; or their career. I didn't want to induce the concept of favoritism, to any battalion, by starting the orientation film, depicting one battalion over another, nor end the film with any least favorite unit. They were all equal in my eyes. Another thing, I couldn't give one battalion two minutes of screen time and another 10 minutes, this too would show favoritism and discrimination. If I opened the film showing the engineer battalion, the other battalions would feel belittled, scorned. No matter what unit, I put first, the rest would be snubbed. To defuse any animosity, it was best to start without the battalions first.



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Alleviating any discord, the opening shot would be at the 13th COSCOM helo-pad. This was a raised 20 feet circle in the head-shed parking lot. The helo-pad was painted with the 13th COSCOM patch. I envisioned a crane or cherry picker up high, shooting directly onto the patch. Having the radio announcer walk onto the patch, the crane would descend to a tight close up of the narrator talking. From the days of "Victory At Sea", I was heartened by Alexander Scarsby's slow, meticulous, enunciation of each syllable, approach to narrative. I wanted the same slow speech, allowing each syllable to sink into the brain for the opening sentence.

A soldier that I doubted had a job, for he milled around the PAO Office from one to two hours at a time, several days a week. When he was alerted to the fact, that I was preparing a movie script for a new orientation film, he volunteered to write a song, about the 13th COSCOM. I knew nothing of his credentials, as a composer, nor how much or how little he knew of the command for lyric. I would have to hear his composition, before consider using it in the movie, if he ever completed his work.

Somewhere in June, 1976, I had the script written. Mailing a copy to DASPO, at Ft. Bragg, and taking a copy to the 13th COSCOM Chief of Staff. I asked the Chief of Staff to review it for accuracy, additions or corrections, Not hearing anything; several weeks later, I went back to see the Chief. The script sat in his in-box. He said, he hadn't had time to check over the script. By August, I heard nothing about the script from the head-shed. This serenio was played out several more times until September. Reforg-er preparations were in full swing at Ft. Hood. With six days, until the DASPO Team was coming to Ft. Hood, things changed quickly

At the head-shed, I spotted the 13th COSCOM commander leaving his office, heading to operations. In the hallway, I told the Commander of my plight. Telling him the film crew was coming in six day, but I hadn't gotten clearence from the chief. The commander, immediately said, "Bring them on." I also requested that he prepare a one or two minute opening statement to be filmed. He assured me he would. I had gotten more accomplished in two minute with the commander, than in months working with the chief of staff. I have reservations, that the chief of staff could deduce the script. A script doesn't read like a report or book, and it was just too complicated for him to read.

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It was going to be a hectic few weeks for me. It had been months, since I interviewed each battalion commander, for the script. A few had departed, with new officers in control. Besides, I'd have to write the most technical or complicated news stories. One morning, I made a statement, during the daily staff briefing, that we had a film crew coming to do an orientation film. The 13th COSCOM Commander, interjected, saying he wanted every one to cooperate fully, with the sergeant.

Preparatory actions for filming included; having a good reunion with the DASPO Team, at their Killeen Motel. DASPO had a double team there. One team would board the last planes, leaving for Europe. The other team would do our project. I knew, and had worked with about half the combined DASPO Team. I would have major and minor coordination to be accomplished, such as, contacting post engineers for use of a cherry picker, and get use of a helo for aerials of the post, motor pools, repair shops etc. Borrow the radio announcer, to narrate the film. At the mere mention of working on the film, he jumped at the chance, saying he hoped the project would last weeks. He'd do anything closely job related, rather than sit at his desk, doing nothing.

The young soldier had finished his musical composition. The lyrics, were a lot better than I had forseen. I had no idea if or where I could use the sound track in the film, but we would record the tune. One day, while departing the staff meeting, I mentioned, that I wanted to use the helo-pad in the movie, but the paint was peeling badly. Within days, the patch on the helo-pad was repainted.

With the last Reforger planes departing the Ft. Hood airport, it was our long awaited turn. For most battalions, the final coordination was easy, contact the battalion commander, asking permission to film in his area, the next day. Other battalions required major rescheduling of their activities. The engineer Bn. occassionally, operated a quarry. To film this aspect, took major schedule changes. The signal battalion, worked during field maneuvers, but with Reforger, that battalion stood down, in the main contonment area. It would take half a day to set up the antennas and have a signal van operating in the field, for us to film. With Ft. Hood, being over 300 square miles, where on the post would they set up?

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The first day of filming, the very first shot, the opening shot for the film, went horrible. The cherry picker's hydraulics were so bad, that during the descend, it jerked and bumped so badly, that the cameraman and camera, were nearly dumped from the bucket. I thought to myself, if we can't get the very first shot, on the first day right, what's the rest of the movie going to be like? We finally substituted parts of the scene. The only other headquarters scene was the 13th COSCOM's Commanders opening statement. In his office, things went far better. I hadn't seen the context of his talk, so to me, it was extemporaneous, but it was short and to the point.

From then on, things went as planned, filming a battalion a day. Usually spending no more than four or five hours shooting. I acted as technical advisor, assist director, DASPO escort and liaison between the units and the DASPO Photo Team. A weekend, and one or two down days, because of inclement weather, or miscoordination, the filming was completed under two weeks. The other noticeable problem occurred, when somebody wanted a line of dialog changed. Using the Ft. Hood studio mic, rather than the DASPO microphone, the announcer's tone and resonance is totally different, than the rest of the movie.

Several weeks passed, when two boxes arrived. One contained the 16mm film. The other had the converted  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch sound track to 16mm size. What a predicament I was in; Now I had the film, but absolutely no way to edit or complete the project. The Ft. Hood PAO, suggested several Dallas based film rental and supply houses, that they had dealt with in the past. They also suggested editing the film at Ft. Sam Houston. Telling me they had a major audio/visual shop, at the Health Sciences Department. I reminded them, that our officer, was a messed up helo pilot, that was virtually living at Ft. Sam Houston. As acting PAO, I couldn't take off several weeks, to go down there to edit the film. They agreed.

I was getting options, choices, bits and pieces and out of the question solutions. Contacting the A/V Department at Ft. Sam Houston, they assured me, they could fully edit the film, but the master had to be 2 inch video tape. Calling the Dallas supply houses, only one retailed and rented goods. I got quotes for a splicer, splicing tape, split reels, a four gang synchronizer and 16mm blank leader, plus video tape. Somewhere, somehow, the Ft. Hood photo lab pulled a dusty 16mm Moviola, out of a back closet, and delivered it to our office. Having a GBL (Government Bill of Lading), I was off to Dallas rental house.

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On a rare appearance at the office, the CPT told me the doctors, told him, they had every reason in the world to give him a medical discharge. They had to look for a reason to keep him on active duty. He also gave me the best directions to get to Ft. Sam Houston. With the equipment, I had, I could edit the film to inter-lock status. Working from 6 A.M., until the staff meeting, evenings and weekends, the editing was done within a month. Asking the 13th COSCOM commander, to view the orientation project, before going to Ft. Sam Houston, he informed me, he was busy all day, but at 7:30 P.M. he was free. How perfect! the three inch Movieola screen was best seen in dim light.

As the commander arrived, my heart was pounding. He had given permission to bring the DASPO Photo Team, but no one at the headshed had cleared the script's contents. I could easily have a dozen mistakes. Some might not be correctable, without bring the photo team back from Ft. Bragg, NC. If we had to bring back the film crew, it wouldn't be at no charge. As the commander sat at the Movieola, to view the 35 minute film, I stood with pen and notebook, ready to write down any changes.

Finishing the film, he had three changes. The biggest one, he told me, that the COSCOM was loosing the signal battalion at the first of the month. It was being transferred to III Corps. The other changes were minor. All three changes could be done in less than a hour. Informally, the commander stated, that a COSCOM could expand or contract, like an accordion, going from 5,000 to 50,000 troops, by adding or subtracting battalions. Besides signal, the COSCOM could take on medical, helicopter repair and ordnance units. The commander also stated, he was surprised, and had no idea of the talent within the command. A song writer, radio personality and movie producer. He asked how much the project cost?

I told him, by Army standards, movies cost \$1,000.00 a screen minute. Without the signal battalion, we would have a 30 minute movie. But, I figured the total cost to be \$500.00. That would include several days TDY at Ft. Sam Houston. The commander seemed impressed. Another point raised, for some reason, was that each piece of paper work generated, cost the Army \$20.00 to process. This item of info was long standing, but would come to bare in the future.

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I had spent close to 18 months on the project. I was tired, and as if all the stress, tension and pressure was off of me, I just wanted to go home and sleep. These few bits of editing could wait a few more hours. In the meantime, I had to dismantle the editing room, by my desk. Return the rental equipment to Dallas. Return the Movieola to the photo lab. Remembering the commander's statement, of \$20.00 to process each piece of paper work, at 7¢ a mile, plus a missed meal, it had taken nearly a week to collect less than \$25.00, when I rented the equipment, doing it by official channels. It behooved me, to just take off and accomplish the things, I needed to get done, without orders or authorization. If I had an accident, I'd be charged with AWOL and Failure To Repair. But, since I rented these items on official duty, returning the items could hardly constitute being AWOL.

A day or two later, I was in personnel, requesting a set of TDY Orders to Ft. Sam Houston. Since every raw recruit, knew what functions finance and personnel perform, these elements were deleted from the film. Nobody there knew me, but within hours, I had my orders. Calling Ft. Sam Houston A/V Department, I told them I would drive down after work the next day, and meet them in the morning. The sergeant told me, he **would** get me a room at the guest house. Interstate #35 ran right past Ft. Hood, straight to San Antonio, 150 miles away.

I was entering new territory. I had no idea how long it would take to transfer everything to video tape and finalize everything. It could take hours or days, I didn't know. It was critical moments. Any goof-up now, in the final product, any mistake or misunderstanding, and months of work, could be down the drain. Everything had to be perfect and exact.

The next morning, I met the A/V commander, and was turned over to the SFC, that was assigned to work on our project. The SFC stated, he was looking forward to this job. He was sick and tired of tint differences, and hue discoloration of organ tissue, blood samples and diseased skin. This was a challenge, and something, he wanted to do, but he could only work on our project in his spare time.

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We passed a 16mm projector. It was about the only thing that I reconized. The NCO took me into the control room. Stating this was the "CADALLAC" of two inch video tape master controls. It certainly was impressive. Taking the case of two inch tapes, he installed one on the machine. Back at the 16mm projector, we put the picture reel on the projector . I showed the NCO, the (X) sync mark about 10 feet ahead of the first frame of film. The sergeant, tells me that this is a special projector. The motor is set to run at 32 frames a second for video speed, not the standard 24 frames a second for motion picture.

Pressing a button on a remote control, both the VTR and projector started simultaneously. With the faster speed, the 30 minute film was transferred to video tape in 22 minutes. During the taping, the SFC reinterated, he would have to do our project in his spare time, He figured it would take a week. Also that he was looking forward , to doing something different, for once. I don't know if he put an electronic sync mark on the video tape or not.

With the picture portion of the film on video tape, I'm uncertain, what the NCO did next. I stood by the projector innociously while he went into the control room. I believe he re-wound the tape, and put the second reel of two inch tape on the VTR. Rewinding the picture reel on the projector, we then threaded up the 16mm sound part of the film. Having the (X) sync mark about in the same position as the film version.. We never counted sprocket holes from the sync mark to the projector. Gosh, how I wished I had inserted one of the many clap-stick slates, that were edited out. Have the clapstick picture and sound at the begining, would have facilitated things.. However as aforementioned, this side of the operation was totally new ground for me,, with hind sight enlightening the prespective.

The sergeant pressed the button again, starting both machines. With that the NCO, tells me, I've done all I could do there. The rest was up to him, when ever he had spare time. Adding, he stated, I should call in about a week, to check on how things were going. However I was disrupting his regular duties. By mid-morning, I was leaving Ft. Sam Houston, really desponent, close to paranoia setting in. We hadn't had time to screen the transferred orientation project. I had absolutely no faith, that the picture and sound maintained synchronous qualities during the transfer. I feared, the advance sound speed would ruin the sound portion. A person speaking at anything, other than correct sound speed, is highly distorted. I imagioned the 13th COSCOM commander's lips moving, but his voice being heard seconds later. I had to rely on a stranger to finish the task, which was very unreassuring.

## DASPO Produces The 13th COSCOM Orientation Movie

Driving back to Ft. Hood, I felt cheated, the 13th COSCOM got cheated and also the American tax payer. I had driven down to Ft. Sam Houston, on the pretext of having a good nights rest, and being ready for a full productive day ahead. Instead, I could have left Ft. Hood at lunch, arrived at Ft. Sam Houston's audio/visual department by 3 P.M. and had the little accomplished, by the close of business. Then driven back to Ft. Hood, yet that evening. At the most critical point in the production, I was told to leave, I felt solicitous. Feeling very dishearten. I departed the A/V department, with more uncertainty, than answered questions.

A week later, I was on the phone to the A/V Dept. Only to be informed, the sergeant was nearly finished, but wanted several more days. He suggested three days at most. I knew I had the right strategy, of editing the film myself. Granted the audio/visual dept. could do it all, but in what time frame, months or a year? I speculated, the entire job could have been accomplished in three hours one evening. At the 10th day, I called again, to learn the NCO was busy with official work, and hadn't gotten to our project. I wanted to cry, but couldn't, like DASPO, the A/V dept, was doing our orientation for nothing. I couldn't spill tears over unpaid labor, talent, nor equipment useage.

Somewhere close to two weeks, the NCO at Brooks Hospital A/V, said he was finished. He asked if he should mail the stuff to me; or was I coming to get it. It was my project, my ego, pride conviction and reputation. Again, saying nuts to paperwork and legitimacy matters, I told the staff meeting, I was headed for Ft. Sam Houston, right after the meeting. Arriving at the A/V Dept., I interrupted the SFC in his blood, gut and gore routine. He had me look into a microscope, to view some diseased tissue samples, telling me, that was what he did all day long. It was a real moral booster to do our orientation film. He hoped he'd get more real Army projects to work on. Handing me, the pair of two inch masters, and several  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch cassettes. He told me he tighten up a few scenes, but overall, I done all the editing needed, his job was real easy. Shaking hands and thanking him for his work, I departed. Getting back to Ft. Hood at end of the business day, I headed straight home.

Realizing only a handful of people on Ft. Hood, had a firm understanding of the orientation work, I was doing, and no body, not even my wife, had full comprehension of the project. Absolutely nobody, on Ft. Hood, would have the faintest idea of what to do with a two inch master video tape, I left one at home. Taking the cassettes and one master to operations, since they were formally charged with orientations.

## DASPO Produces The 13th COSCOM Orientation Movie

Within a week, while at home writing a news story, the TV was tuned to the Ft. Hood station. About 10 A.M., on came the 13th COSCOM orientation. I stayed glued to the TV set. The sergeant at Brooks Hospital audio/visual, said he tightened up the engineer sequence. It's mandatory to yell "Fire in the hole" three times before setting off an explosion. The NCO had cut that to one "Fire in the hole". He had edited the video tape, by less than three seconds. The other two shortened scenes were, less than three seconds time. But, the most important thing was sound and film were in sync. Not 20, nor 12, or even two frames out, but in glorious, spectacular synchronous sound on video tape. I gazed at the TV set, watching my work come alive. In the coming weeks, the orientation video, was played on the Ft. Hood TV several times a day. It was as if the TV station was starving for something new and different, besides showing slides of P.X. hours of operation, and wanted to show off, their new toy.

During editing, I deliberately and intentionally programed certain sanctions. In other regions, I edited with optical special effects prestidigitation desired. I wanted fade outs and fade-ins, wipes, a lap dissolve or two and the title put on the tape. I was adamant, in leaving a blank space at the end of the COSCOM commander's statement, serving dual functions. (A) allowing the lower enlisted and junior officers brains to extrapolate the commander's message, before proceeding, and (B) cognizance, no two people speak at the same pace, any new 13th COSCOM commander's new message could be inserted with grace, eliminating extensive editing, of the video tape inherited editing precautionary measures were deleted. We received no optical trickery, not even the title.

The 13th COSCOM orientation, debuted on Ft. Hood TV during the Thanksgiving/Christmas, 1976 time frame. Call it spite, envious, humiliation, jealousy, malevolent or whatever, a few fortnights later, it was highly rumored, that the 2nd Armored Div. was filming, and III Corps, the supreme command on Ft. Hood, was scripting their own orientations. However, the vanguard new troop greeting was prudentially and frugally consummated by an underling unit, the 13th Corp Support Command, that set the standard, with filming and editing skills, I learned at DASPO other native talents, devotion to duty, and yes perseverance, that set the trend. As I write this, the 13th COSCOM is in Iraq.

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