

Project Yellow Leaf, Pine Ridge & Tall Timber

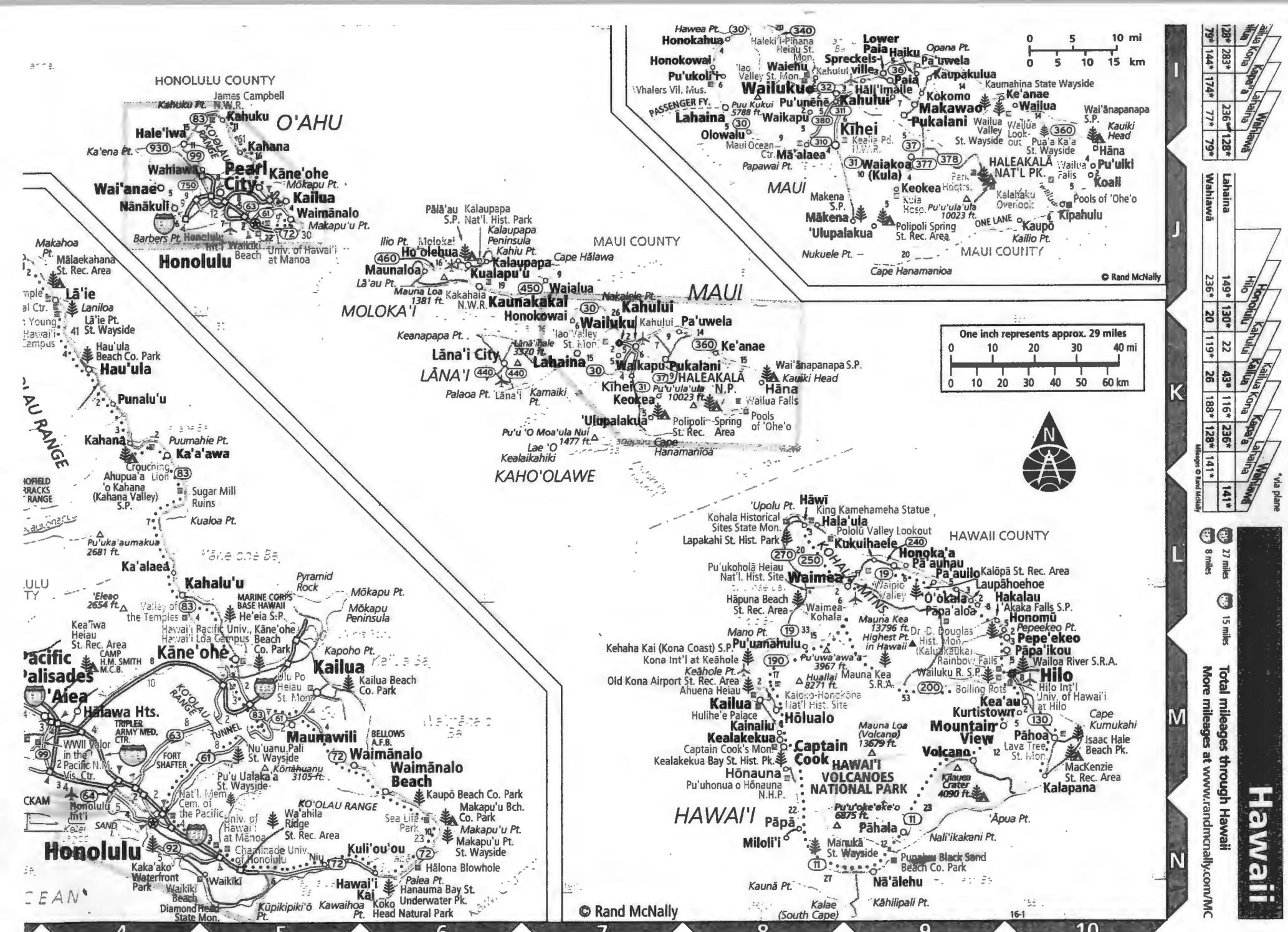
Getting back to New York in time for the shamrocks of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. I may have viewed it on TV or as customary sent out to film the event. Spring training was ongoing, thus Shea stadium wasn't open for baseball season as yet. I know in the 9 days, I took my girlfried to see at least one new Broadway Show. I'm also certain the 1st Sergeant made absolutely sure I didn't escape the duty roster this time. I had to pull an all night sheriff session. I also squeezed in time to scamper home to Pennsylvania over the weekend. Still it was a hurry up time to get ever thing accomplished in just 216 hours or less.

In retrospect, I saw one off-broadway show the U.S.O had opening night tickets for, I have no idea of the shows name. The theatre wasn't in the Times Square area where extravagant shows were housed. This was some little locale between China Town and Greenwich Village, around 14th St., in lower Manhattan. After intermission I saw quite a few patrons leaving. I busied myself addressing envelopes during the second act. Upon completion, outside a radio stations was asking for comments from the attendees? I said, " IF EVER THERE WAS A FLOOD, JUMP ON THE STAGE, IT'S THE DRIEST THING AROUND." For what it was worth, the show had final curtain during the 3rd performance. So I saw some flops as well as long running shows. The only other off broadway show I saw was the 10 year running SOUND OF SILENCE.

By the time I got my orders that read LOCATION (X), I had long known the destination. Major Ledbetter's proclamation of last August. The ESP, the premonition, the unheard of in military annals, what was speculative fruition, was as foreboding as General MacArthur's statement to the Philippine people during WWII when he proclaimed "I SHALL RETURN." It was happening to me.

Some sergeants told me to take warm clothing. I'd been to Hawaii at least 8 times in the last 44 months, and I knew the weather was tropical not temperate, little did I realize or pay attention to the warning. In the gamut of things, I wasn't totally congenial. This was the 2nd trip where I'd be a "JOHNNY COME LATE." Again the primary, film crew was on location, I'd be back up. However I couldn't eat my cake and have it too! It was also showing the power and authority of the test director to select who he wanted. Harry H. knew I would produce. The orders also stated in conjunction with Deseret Test Center's project YELLOW LEAF, PINE RIDGE and TALL TIMBER. Before departing I collected an advance per diem.

I just needed my personal clothing and a few work related incidentals. I was departing on the morning flight of March 20th, 1966. I took up residency in my usual R-5 rear lounge seat. Since I was flying at government rate, while the government controlled much of the airline industry, the (Category Y fare) of \$145.10 one way from JFK to HNL applied. Along the way we would have a stop over to reservice the plane and exchange some of the passengers in either SFO or LAX. Meanwhile I was facing nearly 10 hours of flying, not counting the stop over, and travel 1/5 around the globe or 5,400 miles. With lots of time to reminisce over much.



I thought back to remember the world of aviation was barely 60 years old and the strides, advances the quantum leaps achieved in just 6 decades can only be listed as astronomical achievements. Helped in this schedule of events were two world wars, that were the forefront of the flying evolution. We had gone from just 112 feet first flight to non-stop around the globe journeys. We had gone from hardly 30 miles an hour to MACH II (twice the speed of sound.) We had out done the reciprocating engine propeller driven flight to jet planes. As I sat in the R-5 rear lounge seat, I knew passenger jets in the U.S. were less than a decade old. From their ordination, the DC-9, the 707 and short haul 727 were deemed (fuel guzzlers) and the airlines charged a SURTAX to fly jets. The basic fuel was kerosene with some additives. It was quickly realized the jets were more economical to operate than the prop planes, and the SURTAX was phased out.

It too were the days when only United and Pan Am served Hawaii. The serene sedated tourist industry of the 50th state was in its glory days, when the Honolulu city counsel passed an ordinance limiting structures in Waikiki to no taller than the palm trees. Those hotels already built were grandfathered and allowed to stay.

I relished in some of those mom & pop establishments. However with Boeing having blueprints for the 490 passenger 747 jumbo jet, compared to the 120 seats on the DC-9 and 707 and 720's. The human transports were to make a vestige of a life style like "GONE WITH THE WIND." A concept to the tourist influx, and where to house the free spending short term guest. The tree top law was now a nuisance and soon forgotten. In its wake, in a few short years over one dozen domestic carriers, plus every country, including neighboring Canada on the Pacific rim ply the centralized tourist haven with stop overs.

My 6th grade school teacher had been an United Airlines pilot. It can be ascertained that he hadn't paid for commercial flight training, but like most pilots were WWII and Korean War veterans, that were surplus after the hostilities ended. But even there the airlines were picky on which pilots they chose. Transport and bomber pilots were top of the list. Fighter pilots with dog-fighter skills were unuseable. Why he, the teacher stopped flying is questionable. I myself flunked the 1st class flight physical when I was 18 years old, but as I pen this story, the VA hospital eye doctor told me I had 20/20 vision. Eyes that are good for everyday life are not adequate to haul paying passengers around. Depth perception is a major cause. When landing a plane the pilot has to know if the plane is 2 feet off the ground or still a 100 feet high till touchdown!

This long flight provided adequate duration for reflecting back. These were the days when honest to God silverware was used for inflight meals. It was a time when every passenger was granted 40 pounds of baggage, two checked bags and 1 carry on. Baggage claim fees were virtually an unheard of thing. It was an era when airline fares were regulated. If you missed a flight, just go rebook yourself at no cost. If you wanted to change carriers or destination no problem, just present your airline ticket to any competitor and book a different airline without cost.

The airline profitability was measured by the LOAD FACTOR. All public conveyances besides airlines, such as buses, trains, subways, trollys etc all use load factors. All other factors contribute to the load factor. They include all wages, fuel costs and whether the airline hedged fuel costs by buying commodity contracts or not. The ticket counter space and boarding gates. The bottom line was and still is that it will cost (X) number of dollars to fly a plane from point (A) to point (B). No matter if the plane is empty or every seat filled. The most efficient carriers would break even (pay the cost to fly a plane) with load factors around upper 50% range. The least productive airlines it took over 70% of the seats sold to break even for that flight. Most airlines break even factor was in the 60% area. Many cities curtain or halt mass transit at certain hours. Few communities provide 24 hour mass transit service.

By the time I finished getting my bags, the sun would be high in the sky and the time would be early in the afternoon local time. But my circadian rhythm, commonly called jet lag, would have Johnny Carson coming on TV along the East coast. This is where the body and mind play tricks on each other. You just arrived in PARADISE and you want to partake of the romantic splendors of the islands. Yet your body says sleep time in the middle of the afternoon. The conflict between mind and body can and will challenge common sense.

A seaman driver assigned to Deseret Test Center's PLO Pacific Liaison Office in Pearl Harbor met me at baggage claim and drove me to the nearby Hawaiian Airlines building, and handed me a ticket to Hilo. So LOCATION (X) was on the big island. Just a step closer.

Deplaning Lt. Pak and a cameraman/driver was at the airport to pick me up and take me to our lodging facility. At the airport parking lot was a military bus to pick-up or bring departing guest to the air terminal. I was told we were housed at a military rest and recuperation center inside the rim of the world's most active volcano. They told me it was cold up there in drizzle and fog 95% of the time. In aviation the normal temperature decreases at 3.5 degrees per each 1,000 feet elevation. These calculations would go out the door once on site. Driving along the bay I was told the work crew was staying in one of several motels/hotels clustered together along the shore. So we would not stay with the Dugway crew. That was a bad omen.

Aside from the obscuring city buildings, one could get a view of a pair of shield volcanos that will rival Mt. Everest. When one considered the ocean floor was 16,000 feet below the island. Mouna Kea at 13,796 feet and the larger shield dome of Mouna Loa at 13,679 feet. They would make the 2 tallest mountains in the world, by over 400 feet.

Around Mountain View I saw my 1st bamboo stalk growing in Hawaii. I had seen the stuff grow in Korea and Vietnam, but not on Hawaiian soil. It was only a few inches tall and grew right by the roadway. I would watch it grow sometimes a foot a day. The ground here, was about 2,000 feet, but the air had a distinct chill. Ahead it looked like a rain storm and we were headed directly toward it as we ascended the volcano road.

At an elevation as posted by a road sign of 4,032 feet we were in the fog and drizzle and the road crest to Kilauea Volcano. Pulling off the road down inside the rim, I could see an assortment of buildings. That was the military R&R center. We drove to the administration building so I could check in.

All branches of service were their, but no uniforms on staff nor guests. It was understood that the Army conducted the administrative duties of scheduling guests and assigning lodging. The Navy provided the meals and cooking activities. The Marines I presumed provided emergency services, that of police and fire should the need arise. The Air Force probably had transportation services. The Coast Guard may have been represented with some function.

I picked up a brochure at the check in desk, explaining each days trip and what the guest would see on that excursion. So beside a bus to meet arriving planes, there was another bus for taking tours. We were reminded that all ranks were present and mindful of military protocol.

I'm thinking it was costing each of us about \$12.00 a day for meals and maid service. The photo team was housed in a large stone building, nearly at the rear of the compound. It was sparcely furnished. Mostly it held our cots or a few beds to sleep on. The room had a good sized table for doing the pictorial paper work, write letters, play cards or other activities. Without any illusion, I unpacked my bags to find the warmest clothing I brought with me. I undoubtly grabbed a blanket and huddled by the heat vent to warm up. If I THINK, YOU THANK AND THEY THUNK its cold in paradise you're right. Yet here in pineapple land it was cold and I disregarded the warning! The temperature day or night was in the upper 40's to low 50's. The only living thing that thrived here was the Ohio trees (pronounced O-He-O) with pinkish white blossoms. Before I was ready and still cold it was supper time and ready for some good Navy groceries.

Standing in line awaiting the dining room doors to open, I had no idea whether the couple ahead of us was an admiral or general. Likewise the couple behind us photo team could likely be an airman, seaman or private. They were here from their work routines for rest and recuperation, a vacation, on leave. We were here TDY/TAD, on assignment, a work crew, not lounging around. The others had to pay out of pocket money to be here. We were conversely paid to be here. The only simularity was that we all carried a active duty military ID card. We were here on a classified mission, that these folks had no business to know about. So just shut up about our activity. We would stand out enough with our white coveralls and green and yellow boots would make us stand out like a sore thumb.

The next morning after a healthy breakfast, and much ado about nothing, the whole team was ready to travel to LOCATION (X). We headed back down the road toward Hilo, until around Mountain View. There the only turnoff in the entire road, took us deeper into the interior of the island. For a short time we were in sunshine and I could feel the warmer temperature. It felt good. It was short relief from the blasted cold, where the temperature and dew-point were identical or put simply a cloud laden with moisture on the ground as fog.

If I remember we rode on a blacktop road until it ended and continued on a dirt road, finally coming to a bulldozed clearing in the jungle. The fog drizzle had caught up with us again. An ambulance and bus sat in the clearing. The ambulance was not military. Outside of national guard and reserve units KMC was the only military on the island. I had no idea if either branch of service had a medical unit on the island? Likewise the bus was a commerical leased or rented bus not G.I. related. A few G.P. tents and 2 100KW generators were lined up against the triple canopy jungle. So this was LOCATION (X).

LT. Pak showed me into the Command Post tent to introduce me to the Test Director. He went up to Major Ledbetter and sort of interjected, "SIR I'd like to introduce you to Specialist Foulke. I had my hand up and mouth open to wave and say "HI HARRY." But with other people around it was inappropriate. So I saluted him. He turned to Lt. Pak and I quote" NOW THAT FOULKE'S HERE, MAYBE WE'LL get some film of this operation." That was the retribution and fortification of values that I longed to hear. For an field grade officer to tell an underling to do his job! The entire team went to the equipment tent. I was suited up in a hurry, and had to wait for what seemed forever for the rest to get ready. I thought they had been here a whole month and probably only went out into the grid once or twice.

I would learn that the project put out a news statement to quell the populist curiosuty and speculation as to why a bunch of HALIES (mainlanders) were poking around the island. Why hotels were booked not for days or weeks but for months. Why unusual movement of supplies and construction items were needed. The statement proclaimed something to the order that we were climatologists from the NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION in conjunction with the NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE to study the Hawaiian rain forest the rain fall, the soil conditions, the triple canopy jungle and plant life the rain forest supports.

The news released to the press covered the gamut of event and unusual things that would occur in and around Hilo, to squash the inquisitiveness of the local residents. It explained the weird supply movement of 2 monster 100KW generators. It covered the lumber supply trucks hauling enough timber to construct a large house. Why a bus was parked for months on end at a motel. Why these HALIES wore DTC dumb coveralls and stupid yellow and green boots. The statement covered an amalgamation of strange and unusual events that did or would occur.

Major Ledbetter was an ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps.) His military commission was obtained in conjunction with his collegiate chemical engineering degree. He had my respect and admiration. He was not a spit and polish hard nose West Point graduated officer. Conversely Lt Pak was an OCS (Officer Candidate School) graduate. Us enlisted used the term a 90 DAY WONDER. He was a graduate of UCLA Motion Picture Studies. Plus he attended OCS classes for 3 months to be an officer and gentlemen by ACT OF CONGRESS? YEAL PROVE IT!!!

The Dog-Patch team had been active at the grid for hours. Us "johnny come late" interlopers did little to bring any homogeneous conformity to the operation. While I had no qualms about suiting up, I was at a distinct disadvantage not living in Hilo with the rest of the DPG crew. I had to move when the rest of the team moved and their lethargy inert movements was a constant consternation on my part.

We came out of the supply/equipment tent onto a wooden boardwalk in the God damn jungle. I asked myself how long did this take to built this convenience. But then I knew damn well I was talking about West of the Continental Divide gang, that can do anything, even the impossible! This path in the jungle lasted about 75 feet.

From the wooden path we stepped into pure ass mud up to the tops of our knee boots. My feet sank into goo and the foot sank into a sucking motion that sheathed a holding grip on my boot. It was a trying effort to unclog one boot enough to make minimum forward foot step only inches or fall completely in the mud. Than work like mad to unattach the other boot from the quagmire of liquid mud. Each inch by inch step took a 100 times longer than normal and only inches of forward progress with each step. To say it was rough going would be an understatement, and physical draining. Who did the reconnaissance for these projects, a bird that could fly over the mud yet under the canopy?

Off in the distance of maybe a 100 feet I could see an aluminum tower, probably the same one used on Elk Hunt I to affix the hi-speed cameras to. This time I could hear the sound of compressed gas, a pneumatic cannon shooting objects into the muck. My vision was blocked by some of the vegetation that grew prolifically. I remembered crossing the Pali on Oahu I saw similar plants a ivy type plant having leaves a foot across. The nutrition value of the decaying, rotting and decomposing lava spurred exceptional growth to gamut of plant life in the rain forest was unbelievable.

After a gut wrenching fight through the muck to reach the center of action on the grid, it was a stedfast effort now to climb the tower. However first things first. Knock off several kilo of mud from the boots so climbing the tower won't as resourceful demanding. About half way up I filmed as a projectile went sailing out of the pneumatic cannon. Once at the top of the tower there were 2 cannons. One fired a projectile that resembled a 3 inch wide section of stove pipe. The other was shorter and stubbier than the stove pipe munition. Both munitions were called BLUEY or BLUIE. One was a 19 and the other was 20. So Bluie 19 and Bluie 20. Which was which I have no recollection. Nor do I have any memory of or even if the munition was armed. I can't confirm if any agent was in either weapon.

In front of the tower the group of Dugway guys were standing in the mud in a semicircle about 5 feet apart at a distance of about 75 feet away. Another group maybe 85 feet back from the tower. As the crew loaded the air cannon and fired the missile, the Dog-Patch team spotted where it landed with in their midst and probed with feet and hands in the muddy soup to find the the weapon. One such fired projectile defyed finding for several hours. They saw it land and sank into the mud. I would have given up on the munition, even if it was classified. No metal detector would find it. Plus as muddy as the grid rust would dispose of the weapon in short order. However after over 2 hours of searching the lost missile was retrieved. I saw some missiles being caught by hand in mid-flight.

I had bad worries about these 3 projects. First I had no idea which projects the BLUEY were assigned with. I had no knowledge if they were armed or not, nor what agent they might contain. Lt. Pak and the rest of the photo crew could care less. So even though Major Ledbetter stated it so eloquently by saying "MAYBE WE'LL GET SOME FILM OF THE PROJECTS". that was negated by reality. In retrospect, I believe the projects had at the C.P. a large tub of water for washing pounds of mud off the boots. That would allow some respectability when getting on the bus or clogging mud into the motel lobby and rooms with daily dose of muddy boots. The cost to have showers on the test site wouldn't be welcome by the residents of Hilo nor KMC staff. Paying a truck to deliver water; to drive round trip 75 to 80 miles, plus the cost of water would raise eye brows among any financial wizz in light that it constantly rains at the LOCATION (X). What a frivolous expense!

Ready to leave the command post, instead of turning right to head toward Mountain View, we headed deeper toward the island's interior. Only a few hundred feet beyond the grid we hit a junction of tracks. There were 2 tire tracks dirt trail, with a faded wooden sign proclaiming a trustee prison camp 11 miles ahead. These were our closest inhabitants. Several time in the ensuing weeks I saw Hawaiian State Penial Trucks passing our location. However I never saw a prison guard aboard. I guess, just let the jail bird roam free. We're on an island and no place to go!

The habitual indecisiveness to work or not by the Lt. produced ample leisure time to explore. The second day at KMC, I had the opportunity to go beyond the flagpole to the road that ran in front of the leisure time facility. At the road, I saw fissures in the ground with yellowish smoke drifting from the ground. Volcanic vents of sulfur were numerous now that I looked around. Some fissures were only a few inches long and wide. Others were over a foot long and several inches wide, each an element to the volcano's internal plumbing system. Around the vents or fissures the rocks, grass or weeds were stained from the constantly oozing emitting sulfur from several miles below the surface. The air stank with abundant odor of the yellow mineral.

Directly in front of the flagpole across the road was a well worn path between the Ohio trees and other indigenous plants. Not 200 feet onto this path the world of volcanism erupted before my eyes. Without a fence or restraining wall, I was looking straight into the living bowels of Halemaumau (pronounced Hal-Lee-Mau-Mau), the caldera, the main central vent of Kilauea Volcano. My heart started to turn over. Christ our lodge was only a few hundred feet away, if I sleep walked I could fall right into hades itself!

From my high school science class, I knew the granite crust of the earth only resided on the continents, not the oceans. I was looking beyond the skin of the earth, the crust and eyeballing the earth's massive mantle substance BASALTIC ROCK in its liquid and harden form. This opening to the core of the planet was a mile round and I guess 500 feet to the veneer of solidified magma now called lava at the surface. Looking toward the North end I could see a building and some small fountaining, probably only 2 or 3 feet high. The rest of the caldera floor was black the color of Basalt rock. Under only several inches of harden rock lay 1,800 to 2,500 degree liquid hot rock.

My heart thumped inside my rib cage. I was witnessing one of the wonders of the cosmos, not just a wonder of the world. I was seeing a spectrum of the universe that conforms to nature in all its grotesquely splendor. The primeval existence of volcanic action dates back to the formation of not just the earth, but every other planet within our solar system. That being 14.5 billion years ago. Sleeping inside the rim of a volcano was hair raising enough. Any closer and we'd get torched without the burner being lit. Luckily the magma chamber was dormant at the moment.

With an eyeful and my eyeballs fully focused after viewing Halemaumau for the first time, I headed back the short distance to KMC and the photo team's lodge. At the road I spied a family and several individuals on bicycles. It appeared an awful lot of folks with peddle power in one spot.. Asking at the check-in desk, I was informed I could rent a bike for 25¢ an hour, as well as golf clubs for the 9 hole golf course. In the 86 days I spent at KMC and Kilauea Volcano, I rode many bikes to every paved mile of road around the volcano.

My first bike ride took me to the building I had spotted upon seeing the fountaining of the volcano. It was a civilian hotel called of all things VOLCANO HOUSE. It sat right on the rim of Halemaumau caldera. Inside I saw an unoccupied restaurant and a gift shop containing an extensive literature and books concerning Hawaiian Volcanos. I eventually bought a good quantity of material. Decades later I donated a 30 poster size mineral charts and a hard bound book to Midland College and its affiliated Sol Ross State College. These items should be available at the school's geology deptartment website.

From Volcano House I saw a lonely building at the opposite end of the mile long hole in the ground called Halemaumau. Riding back past KMC I headed to this lonesome structure. It house the U.S. Geodecic Office. Inside my eyes ~ immediate saw a bank of seimographs. The recording needle was wiggling only slightly both to and fro from the center line. The seimographs were hearing the volcano snore if you will in its dormant state. It was saying the magma was sloshing around in the magma chamber about 5 miles below our feet. Even though I couldn't feel any harmonic tremors now, nor in the entire 86 day stay at KMC, I never felt an earthquake. I realized this was just a lowly breather in the ancient show of nature. When Halemaumau awoke from its rest and Pale (Hawaiian Goddess of fire) spoke, the siemographs needles would oscillate across the entire width of the recording paper at a rate of at least 2,500 diastrophisms, earth shaking, quakes a day, to announce a new eruption was imminent.

Right now the molten lava (magma) was sloshing around with just the volcano plumbing making noise. In my days at KMC, I would visit this building a multiple times. While I had a rudimentary knowledge compared to college geologist, I was cognizance of some of their discussion. I could discern of them forming logic of a fissure eruption along the flanks or some other non-summit type eruption. In the annals of Kileaua, as I pen this story, Kiluaea has been nearly non-stop erupting since 1983, adding new height and dimension to the island.

I was in a state of quandary, an still am as I pen this story I'm totally befuddled with some aspects. The major was fully qualified to lodge at KMC R&R Center, yet I never saw him there. There was only one dining room and one movie theater. In the nearly 3 months, I should have seen him frequently. That alone would have cured a myriad of problems. I could have hitched a ride with him to and from the command post and work grid. He must have gotten full per-diem and stay in the Hilo motel, with the Dugway team. I have no idea any of us got paid nor the Dog-Patch team got lunch. Not unless the motel kitchen prepared box lunches for the guys.

Another item of turbulence is that I only recall the one day out in the grid with the tower episode. We may have gone out to the tower 2 or 3 more times, but that would be less than a week's worth of time. Yet my diary of air travel that was administered as I travelled by air. It lists the date, the airline and from and to destination. I started keeping the log when I departed Korea in 1963 and continued until arriving home from Germany in 1980. The log doesn't lie. I can't phantom what we did for 30 days let alone 86 days at KMC. That includes 11 days in March, 30 April days, 31 calandar days in May plus 14 days in June. That equals 86 days.

The Lt. took the rest & recuperation syndrome to heart with mostly rest and nil recording the events of the project. I can only confirm that one day out in the grid with the 2 types of BLUEY or BLUIE weapons.

I think in hindsight that in his last August announcement, when Major Ledbetter requested everyone be here, it appeared that these projects were less extensive and complex than initially expected, requiring fewer manpower. It took me several days for me to reacquaint myself with the smaller Dog-Patch team. The delay was caused by not everyone living together and the DPG team already out in the grid when we arrived and didn't hang around until the trial was over. It was a grand day when we all got together again.

At the C.P. a bulldozer or some other excavating machinery had cut a swath of about 12 feet from the terrain rise. The twin 100KW generators sat against the recess while a family of mongooses had mined out of the rock a home in the cliff. One day I spotted the mammals and was in awe for the mongoose are supreme at killing cobras and other deadly snakes for lunch. Since Hawaii was snakeless, why were mongooses here? The mink sized mammals frolicked in a playful antics honing their prowess for evading death in the pray and predator life style that is intrinsic and internal instincts prevail upon these rodent like, but helpful comic animals were a preview to the life and death struggle with deadly snakes.

After being on site about a month, an unwelcome notice was forthcoming. For me to report to Schofield Barracks on Ohau, the largest U.S. Army post in the Pacific. For what inkling of reason I didn't know. Probably to dot an (i) or cross a (t) on some triplicate form. Or other superfluous, unimportant, punny test or obscured requirement like possible take an IQ Test I knew I had a 116 IQ, why retest? Maybe an overdue medical shot, any thing stupid. I'd have to return to reality of the Army hit the combat troop stuff, not the world of R&D, the combat service support roll as a cinematographer lived. I would fly again on Hawaiian Airlines back to Honolulu and somehow get transportation for the 35 to 45 minute trip into the heartland of Ohau Island.

As suspected the paperwork foul up had been rectified and this whole thing was a shame and inconvience. On the way to the airport, I may have stopped in at the Deseret Test Center's Pearl Harbor PLO Office on getting advice on getting back to Hilo, or just say hello. I was informed that neighboring Hickham AFB had flights to Hilo. Of all the hair-brained adventures I had, this misadventure still amuses me half a century later. The official title for this flight was "FLOWER RUN or FLOWER FLIGHT." Anyone lacking the 4 hrs flight time each month could catch this flight for that requirement on the FLOWER RUN. This minimum of priorities trip was to provide the base officer's club with fresh flowers several times a week.

Using a World War II Beechcraft twin engine propeller driven plane, that held about 8 passengers, plus 2 pilots and crew chief. The trip from Hickham AFB/Honolulu runways to Hilo took right at 2 hours in this slow flying outdated plane. As with saving the day in Long Beach on Project High/Low, I always carry a copy of my orders, in this case putting me on flight pay. Landing in Hilo, I was only half way to obtaining flight pay. I could stay with the plane and fly back to Honolulu for full flight pay or exit right now and hop the KMC bus when it arrived here. What shenanigans!

Nurseries from all over town brought enormous quantities of stems, bouquets, bunches of tropical flowers. The blooms of orchids, anthemions, bougainvillea, hibiscus and dozen of the island's traditional greeting symbol the flower. The plane soon filled with blooms all over the cabin. The plane filled with the sweet smells of the blossoms and fragrant aromas of the flowers. Equally impressing were the hues. The cyans, the magentas. The blending of tints. The greenery of leaves. The reds blending with whites. Some yellows and oranges interspersed giving a smorgasborg of opulent colors of varying shades.

Then the 2 hour flight back to Hickham Base Operation, and get a copy of the FLOWER RUN FLIGHT. I make my way to Honolulu Airport and the Hawaiian Airlines for the 30 minute trip back to Hilo.

Maybe I'd been around DTC too long, and things were starting to rub off. I thought back to Project Magic Sword and sexing mosquitoes on Baker Island. Instead of flying directly from Hono to Seattle and onto Fairbanks, I was given a week, 168 hours back in New York. Then equally odd and festering was coming out here. Again I could have been diverted from Seattle to Hono and the PLO Office, rather than a roundtrip to the Big Apple for 216 hours. I went thousands of miles in a round about way to get where I was supposed to go. So this island hopping was in effect a brief education that DTC has taught me. That's right things were rubbing off. This has been like a revolving door, and just which turn did I want to exit the plane? Now or later? This was sheer lunacy, that's why I still laugh 50 years later. What a cross country elongated venture? When both jobs are on the Pacific rim, why did I journey all across the country to the Atlantic Coast? Is that out of the way? Round about, circuitous or what? Yea, I'm learning the way DTC thinks!

KMC conducted island tours during the week days. With bountiful leisure time, I signed up for some, but not all the trips. Most were short duration headed toward Hilo area. Two headed South bound. One excursion went to the world renowned Black Sands Beach. Black sand derived from a lava flow reaching the cold ocean water and exploding into grit sized particles. This compares with the traditional sandy beach formed from coral. The other long trip was an entire day venture to the Kona Coast on the West side of the island. Here reclusive people had a hide-away from the public. It's also the only place in the U.S. where coffee is grown and revered around the world as Kona Coffee.

At one of the many floral nurseries in the Hilo area, the owner told us with at least 3 months advance notice he could produce any orchid flower in his inventory of plants. Continuing, he stated he had a plot up in the rain forest where conditions were ideal to induce the special flower to bloom. We spied on some of his cross breeding attempts to produce new species of orchids.

A tour to Hilo centered about a walking tour of the community. It was a rustic old town of the 1930's and 1940's era. The item of interest was the height of water that a recent tsunami that flooded the downtown area to shoulder high water. The loss of life and property took its toll. Preceding the tidal wave, the bay drained of water, an event few had ever seen. Thus many victims ran toward the bay rather than head toward much higher ground.

Another tour of Hilo's culture was a turn off the KMC road, but still inside the city limits. It was the Royal Hawaiian MacAdamia Nut Plantation. The tour guide instilled in the group that the trees were native to Australia, and when planted took 7 years to mature enough to produce the fruit

of nuts. The tour rode up and down the limited rows of mature trees and newly planted samplings. Then into the small scale processing plant. At this time the plantation was in its infancy. I viewed the crushing of the iron hard nut shells to extract the fruit. Then the roasting of the nut and bottling of the nuts. In 1966 the small output limited the size and distribution of the nuts. If I recall correctly, a smaller than 5oz. bottle sold for a buck an ounce, with only limited few Hawaiian stores that sold the item.

One day the major called the Lt. and myself aside and told us he had layed on a helicopter for aerials photos of the grid and see what devestation had been done to the rain forest, and if the damage was visible from the air. I don't recall if the helicopter was National Guard or Reserve unit's bird, stationed on the big island. The helo held 4 people. The pilot and co-pilot, a crew chief and one passenger (ME). So even tho the photo team brought me to the Hilo airport to catch the helo, they would have to wait on my ass this time.

I guided the helo to the C.P. and grid through the headphones and inter-com of the chopper. On location I had the helo decend to 200 feet and 60 knots speed. I guess I filmed a couple complete 360 degree turns. Then I let it be known that I was only flight orders. The helo crew's ear perked up. Not being active duty the crew rarely made mandatory 4 hour flight time. Their usual routine was a quick milk run. In an emergency they may fly out as med-evac and get the individual to medical care--20 to 30 minutes flight all month.

Here for the flight crew was an opportunity seldom seen, for the entire crew to get flight pay and work at their jobs. Additionally receive flight pay. The 2 pilots would get \$210.00. The crew chief would be rewarded with \$95.00 and I as non-crew member a \$55.00 bonus. The helo only held 2 hours of fuel, but the crew knew of alternate fuel pumps.

Continuing our aerial tour of the island, the helo headed Westward along the North shore but out to sea by several hundred yards and about 300 feet elevation. From this ideal vantage location I witnessed dozens of water falls, that cascaded off the island cliffs from 200 to 500 feet drops into the Pacific Ocean. The colors, the sunlit rainbows spawned by the midst of the falling water was exquisitely beautiful. Passengers of flights coming or going could get a glimpse of this spectacular sight, but not the close up personalized tour I was getting.

Then around the shield volcanos and onto grass lands and an ungodly number of lava flows on the Western side of the island. Over the intercom the pilot told me land speculators were selling acres of the lava flow, back on the mainland for \$500.00 an acre. The only problem, there were no roads to anyone's land. For anybody stuck buying this worthless property would have to hire a helicopter and survey crew to find your boundries. Then too, another eruption could cover your investment with more lava. All these problems were simple. The people that own the land by the roads haven't built any more roads.

Then toward the Kona Coast, I was told we were flying over the Parker Ranch. I was instructed on the mainland in Texas the King Ranch was the largest in the U.S. Here in Hawaii the Parker Ranch was the largest in the state and ranked in the top 5 ranches in the entire country. I have to admit, I saw very few steers from the air.

Back at the C.P. I briefed Major Ledbetter that I couldn't detect any rain forest damage from the air. Another project was to start and Major Ledbetter, Bruce Black and Ken Sly, the project 3 chieftons decided that only I was competant and qualified enough to undertake the job. The Lt. had no other choice but to have me at the C.P. on time daily for the trial and stay on site the entire duration of the trial, while I did my thing. To say the least I was in my glory. The rest of the yahoo's were gradified that they didn't have to go near any agent. That was their attitude, if you don't have to risk your life why do it? Anyway that was the best for all concerned. I did not have ears on the tent wall, while the Lt. got an ear full of his misbehavings. The chiche "TO THE VICTORS GOES THE SPOILS." The trio knew I was for the project, not myself. However it meant privileges to reward those that exert effort, such as the only photo guy to get flight pay.

I, with a camera on a tripod, I would be the single, sole, only witness to this series of trials. The Dugway team had nothing to do in these series of the project. The munition was new. The agent was different also. As aforementioned, I can't recall if the munition team of Martin and Ross was on this group of projects or not. The munition was an incendiary device, that was housed in a canister the size of a then popular 2 pound coffee can. Just an oversized smoke grenade would more aptly describe the big tin can. The agent was a non-lethal weapon called "BZ" a HALLUCINOGENIC AGENT."

Decades later the History Channel reported that during the 1960's The U.S. was toying with developing a LOVE AGENT. Once the enemy was exposed to the gas, they would rather hug their adversary, than fire bullets at them. The brief description was a hallucinogenic agent. If the agent could be perfectible then the allies would be overrun with prisoners of war instead of dead bodies. That was all I could recall of the TV tale of the government testing weird stuff. The BZ I was testing may have been the initial trials and experimentation into such a wild love potion.

I can only ascertain that the agent wasn't very potent. The munition was set up only yards behind the generators on high ground, lacking the prevalent 18 inches of gooey mud associated with the grid. The only protection I needed was a gas mask. The munition didn't have a ring to pull like any other grenade. It was electronically fired from the C.P. I believe some one came out of the C.P. to relay the count in seconds before the ignition. The camera was in a lock position (no moment) about 6 feet in front of the canister. I started the camera running on about a count of 5 seconds to go. All I heard was a hiss and whitish smoke oozed from the munition. No one in the C.P. about 50 feet away knew what was happening. Most didn't realize a trial was on going.

I would say probably about a minute into the trial, fire erupted from some of the canisters. Like a cigarette or a bunch of charcoal on a grill or a smoke grenade the burn was not a flame, but continuous combustion. I never conceived that I might be the 1st person to witness this munition in action. I just figured it was normal and a fact of nature for the canister to burst into flame. I guessed that this matter was well documented.

One day before a trial in casual conversation with some Dog-Patch guys, I mentioned that sometimes the canister burst forth into flame! Hell I thought Kilauea just erupted, the president was assassinated or some other diastrophism took place. This whole thing was cutting edge technology. I held the blade, but what was I cutting? It wasn't beef, veal, mutton, chicken nor pork that I was the center of interest? I was but a single increment, a lay person among an entire scientific community, that included scientist, engineers, researchers and other common government employees working on a prototype weapon in which every step of development needed critical analysis. I wasn't cognizance of the fact I was involved and 1st person to test this ordnance.

Major Ledbetter and Bruce Black wanted to know the instant that flame was visible. I was handed a walkie-talkie to instantly communicate with the bosses. Hell, that information was on film to the very second the flame was seen. But I guess it was so earth-shattering that Salt Lake City needed to know immediately at DTC Headquarters.

I figured if I got a snoot full of the BZ stuff I wouldn't die since BZ was not poison. It would be wiser if I tested my gas mask but since I was trained by professional, and had trusted my life so many times without testing the mask that now it seemed superfluous. I'd be in some sort of lull-lull land, but for how long or would the affliction or disability be permanent?

One day in the C.P. with there was a lull in activity, when few people were in the C.P. I BLARED A STUPID STATEMENT that I bet the major a steak dinner that I would get promoted before he got a promotion. It was stupid in the sense that he would never agree to such a maniac bet.

The news from the outside world was sketchy at best. The rooms, lodges, or cabins didn't have TV. I believe the Honolulu newspapers were sold at the dining room. For the photo team our news came mainly from the Dugway team that lived in a Hilo motel with TV in each room. However in the midst of our operations under the guise/ruse of climatologist researching the weather in the rain forest, word slipped out as to our true nature and purpose. From a new cast was heard that the Hawaiian Governor Burns had point blank asked the Pentagon, if the armed forces had ever used or tested chemical weapons in his state??? I never heard the Pentagon reply. I can only assume that some Dog-Patch member in a motel bar spilled the beans. This episode was only the 2nd mark against Deseret Test Center. The 1st was the killing of 6,000 Utah sheep last fall.

The 1st week of June, 1966 the 3 projects, Yellow Leaf, Tall Timber and Pine Ridge were concluded. On Flag Day, June 14th the team, after 86 days at KMC headed back to APC and the big city. I had an anxiety, excited, and a raring to go. It had been 11 months since I had reenlisted and the Pentagon wasn't about to let me have 3 more years of city life and travel the world. Vietnam was erupting voluminously. There was Korea, Europe, the Canal Zone and elsewhere to be assigned, beside APC in the middle of New York City. Where would I be sent? The Army had a term "HURRY UP AND WAIT." That was what I had to do, WAIT! While this torment was ongoing, I walked into Pic Center snack bar and was AGHAST!

There sat Major Ledbetter having coffee. I couldn't phantom of all the places to see him, why was he here? But he was. He looked misplaced even in his uniform finery. He appeared out of place and confused here in metroplis. I just grabbed a cup of coffee and sat down with him. He was glad to see a friendly face. He told me that he was here as a technical advisor on a film. The DTC producer and several top officers came to the table and were beside themselves to see me sitting with a field grade officer. The major reassured them that I knew the classified info and that I had worked on every one of his projects. The producer said I should be the major's escort that he would inform my superior sergeants of my new duty.

Up stairs in the editor's booth it was revealed in a pamphlet that the exact agent in each munition was determined by the number and thickness of the yellow bands around the weapon. This was a whole new avenue to me but limited to the weapons of mass destruction I experienced. Later while in Thailand watching F-105 heading for North Vietnam with all sorts of unconventional hardware, I searched and looked for yellow bands on the bombs but never detected any.

I figured he had never seen a Broadway show, nor would he ever again have the opportunity to see a legitimate theatre production and famous entertainers. Even though Las Vegas was in the next state, I'd say Harry H. Ledbetter was a family man who on vacation would entrust his family to a National Park than the vices of gambling and other high spirited recreation of sin city. I knew Sammy Davis Jr. was playing in GOLDEN BOY on Broadway. At lunch time I scampered to get us some tickets.

That evening I met the major at his hotel near Macy's at 34th St. We could have taken a cab, but it was early with plenty of time till curtain call. I decided to show him the city-slicker's mode of movement about town the subway system. When I suggested going underground, the major shown scorn and disbelief. Then too he felt he could trust me. He must have thought of Halloween or other grotesque, spooky, graveyard gross scenario. We caught the train under 8th Avenue, and headed North to the Port Authority Bus Terminal, a block from Times Square. He was in awe to see the subway was well lit. We heard music playing as we approached a record shop. There was a hair salon, Sees Candy Shoppe, flower shops, food vendors of all sorts and other goods and services, and entire community under the streets of New York. By now Mr. Ledbetter was relaxed and taking in the once in a life time event. Instead of a disparingly sad trip to New York, he'd have some fond memories of his TDY to the Big Apple.

In the theater the mood was solmn. After the show which ended past 11P.M. we took a cab back to the hotel. It would be an early start for both of us. After saying goodbye, I took the subway back across county lines to the Queens. The cab cost the major nearly \$10.00 to come from his hotel to APC. It cost me 15¢ for nearly the same service.

For the next 37 months with nearly 2 years in Vietnam, travelling up and down the country many time over on blanket travel orders. The orders had a acronym like "CIPIC" or something close to that. It was a Cartes Blanche to travel anywhere in the region, not just Vietnam, but the Philippines, Thailand etc. I had more trips to California, stationed in Hawaii for the 1st time, had trips to Ft. Knox and Ft Rucker, been to Aberdeen Proving Grounds and Picatinny Arsenal. In all my travels I never mentioned Major Ledbetter's name. I had no idea if he was alive or dead. He may have resigned his commission and now working at DuPont, 3M, or Mansanto or other chemical giant. For all I knew he fell off the face of the earth.

The year was the summer of 1969. The U.S. was in final preparations to fulfill President Kennedy's proclamation to land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. I was part of a photo team at Ft. Richardson, a suburb of Anchorage, working on a segment of the Army's BIG PICTURE TV show. Was it ESP, a 6th sense, a premonition or intution, but I quipped out has anyone ever heard of a Major Harry H. Ledbetter? Yea said the Sergeant Major of the Public Affairs Office, but he's now a Lieutenant Colonel. I was handed his office number and a phone.

His secretary answered. WOW for working the entire ELK HUNT I Project by himself. He has come up in the world to have a secretary and office. I was told he was in a briefing. She took down my information. That night after dinner the guest house phone rang, it was for me. In what man's Army does a a field grade officer call a sergeant after duty hours for an unofficial call to chit-chat? It don't happen! TALK OF FRATERNIZATION GOING AMUCK!!!

I knew I went overboard by showing him a day or so he spent in the country's largest city a decent time, and not just sit in the hotel room not seeing much. I didn't want him going home feeling forlorned, but to transmit to his wife and children and later grandkids the good time he had during his temporary duty to New York City.

Now on the phone he was rejecting his rank to say hi to a friend, Besides saying hello again how are you and what was I doing in Alaska? I reminded him that I lost the steak dinner bet and aimed to pay after several years. He asked if I liked fishing? It was set for us to meet Saturday and do some fishing, but only if I followed him about town later. He trusted me in New York. I had to trust him on his own territory.

Saturday morning he picked me up at the guest house and I think we headed Southeast to fish. Since the sun up North in the summer makes a complete circles in the sky, I wasn't sure which direction we were headed. We fished for several hours, latching onto one or two salmon, but never landed the up to 40 pound fish.

We both refreshed ourselves from the fishing ordeal and changed attire. Down town I saw no evidence of the upheaval, the 15 feet street craters, toppled buildings or other destructive remains from the earthquake that rocked this city fully 5 years earlier. Likewise its been a $\frac{1}{2}$ decade since I was introduced to the inexperienced and recently promoted Harry H. Ledbetter. He parked at the hotel with a roof top restaurant. The dinner was fine, and the conversation extolled each other exploits since our Hawaii mission. Before our final destination he stopped by the house to introduce his wife and two children to me. The whole family. I bet the vast majority of his office staff had never met the entire family. Then it was off to church, where I was totally aghast!!! In awe Harry H. Ledbetter was the minister!!!!

Live by the GOLDEN RULE. The vulgarity, the profanity of Sammy Davis Jr. in GOLDEN BOY on stage portraying a boxing champ down on his luck. I was appalled myself at the language on stage. I took him to the heathens and he was taking me to salvation! Why hadn't I taken him to see Patty Paige in her Broadway show.

If Harry H. Ledbetter had been a West Point Officer rather than a ROTC Grad. we both would be in jail. Talk about FRATERNIZATION GOING AMUCK!!! In civilian life, if a boss gets too friendly with employees, they may have to fire his subordinates. In the military fellowship between ranks is forbidden and a court marshal offense.

I had a movie to shoot. The Ltc had an office to oversee. We said our good-byes in Alaska, where we first met. We were in Anchorage as the astronauts 1st landed on the moon. For this event to be televised live in Anchorage, the network news and Pentagon worked together twisting electronic frequencies and satellites allowing the live broadcast in July, 1969.

Then to put the entire summer into proper perspective, when we were ready to fly home, the entire West Coast of the Pacific Rim was in a commerical airline strike. Nothing was flying except charter flights and the military. We got booked on an Air Force C-141 coming from Vietnam. The cargo 276 dead service men heading for Dover, Delaware, Not out of malice nor anger but our friend died and fell off the face of the earth in Anchorage. Our friend ship was a rigormortis as the stiffness in the body bags. We both knew we were out of bounds, but we got away with it.

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