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THE FIRST TEAM

GEN MEYER, GEN MOORE, LADIES, HONORED GUESTS, PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS OF THE SECOND OLDEST PROFESSION.

I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO SHARE IN THIS PROGRAM WITH YOU. LIKE ALL OF YOU, I HAVE A WARM SPOT IN MY HEART FOR THE ARMY, ESPECIALLY FOR THE 1ST CAVALRY, AND EVEN MORE SO FOR THE FIRST TEAM IN VIETNAM.

X-RAY WAS THE EPITOME OF ALL A SOLDIER COULD ASK FOR. FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, IT WAS A MASTERPIECE. IT SURPASSES ANYTHING THAT ANYONE COULD IMAGINE FOR DRAMA, HEROICS, SKILL, DETERMINATION, AND PERSONAL SACRIFICE, AND WITH THE "GOOD GUYS" COMING OUT A CLEAR WINNER. THE REAL STORY OF X-RAY CAN ONLY BE TOLD BY OLD "YELLOW HAIR" AND PERHAPS BY SOME OF YOU WHO STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HIM ON THE GROUND AT X-RAY.

THE BEST WRITTEN RECORD OF THAT HISTORIC EVENT IS IN J. D. COLEMAN'S BOOK, PLEIKU. IF YOU HAVEN'T READ IT, READ IT. IN FACT, READ IT TWICE, ONCE TO REFRESH YOUR MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED, TO RECALL YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND THE SUPERB PERFORMANCES OF MOORE, MARM, SAVAGE, AND MANY OTHERS TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION. THE BOOK WILL BRING BACK THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS, THE DUST AND DIRT, AND EVEN THE STENCH OF THE BATTLEFIELD. IT CERTAINLY CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THE ACTION AT LZ X-RAY IN A MANNER THAT IS SELDOM ACHIEVED ON PAPER. THEN GO BACK AND READ IT A SECOND TIME TO GRASP THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DECISIONS THAT LEAD TO THE BATTLE OF IA DRANG AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WINNING THAT BATTLE FOR THE US ARMY AND OUR COUNTRY.

WHAT HISTORIANS NEED, BEFORE IT IS LOST, IS A WRITTEN ACCOUNT OF X-RAY BY GEN MOORE WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF HIS SURVIVING WARRIORS FROM THE 1ST OF THE 7TH AND ATTACHED PERSONNEL.

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WITH THAT AS BACKGROUND, I AM GOING TO SHIFT GEARS. I AM GOING TO SHARE SOME MEMORIES OF THE FIRST TEAM AND A FEW OF THE CHARACTERS THAT MADE IT GREAT. I WILL START BACK AT FORT BENNING. IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER WE HAD FINISHED AIR ASSAULT II IN THE CAROLINAS AND A FEW FIELD EXERCISES IN GEORGIA. IT WAS ABOUT CHRISTMAS TIME, 1964.

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT CONCERNED US WAS THAT WE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE REST OF THE ARMY WAS AS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE AIRMOBILITY CONCEPT AS WE WERE. WE STILL HAD A SELLING JOB TO COMPLETE. ABOUT THAT TIME WE RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT HAROLD K. JOHNSON, THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, WAS GOING TO PAY US A VISIT. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS GOING TO PERSONALLY EVALUATE OUR PERFORMANCE SO THAT HE COULD MAKE UP HIS MIND AS TO THE VALUE OF AIRMOBILITY AND DECIDE WHAT TO RECOMMEND TO HIGHER AUTHORITY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR AIR ASSAULT DIVISION.

AFTER CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION IT WAS DECIDED TO HAVE EACH KEY COMMANDER, WHO HAD PERFORMED SO WELL DURING THE TESTING OF THE DIVISION, JUST STAND UP AND TELL THE CHIEF WHAT THEY DID, HOW THEY DID IT, AND WHY IT WAS BETTER THAN THE TRADITIONAL WAYS OF DOING THINGS ON THE BATTLEFIELD. AFTER SEVERAL REHEARSALS WE WERE READY FOR THE SCRUTINY OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF.

THE BRIEFING WENT WELL. THE CHIEF'S PROBING QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED WITH CONVICTION. THE CLIMAX WAS LT COL HAL MOORE'S BRIEFING ON THE OPERATIONS OF HIS BATTALION. COL MOORE GAVE HIS USUAL COMPLETE BUT CONCISE, INTENSE BUT VERY SINCERE PITCH. WHEN HE RELATED HOW HE MANAGED TO SHUTTLE HIS BATTALION ACROSS AN OBSTACLE WITH A SINGLE HUEY THAT WAS AVAILABLE TO DEFEAT AN AGGRESSOR FORCE, WE ALL FELT WE HAD A WINNER.

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WE HAD SHOWN THE CHIEF OF STAFF HOW WE HAD LIVED UP TO GEN KINNARD'S OFTEN STATED BELIEF THAT "AIRMObILITY IS A STATE OF MIND"; AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR SAVING FRIENDLY LIVES AND ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION ON THE BATTLEFIELD IN A TIMELY, COST EFFECTIVE MANNER IS TRULY UNLIMITED. I AM SURE GEN JOHNSON PLAYED A MAJOR ROLL IN THE ULTIMATE DECISION FOR THE ARMY TO INCLUDE AN AIR MOBILE DIVISION IN ITS FORCE STRUCTURE AND TO SEND THE 1ST CAV TO VIETNAM.

ALMOST A YEAR LATER, AT CAMP RADCLIFF IN AN KHE, VIETNAM, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE McMAMARA; GEN WHEELER, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS; GEN WESTMORELAND; AND THE OTHERS GATHERED TO HEAR AN AFTER-ACTION REPORT ON THE IA DRANG CAMPAIGN. WE USED THE SAME TECHNIQUE WE HAD USED THE YEAR BEFORE. EACH COMMANDER TOLD ABOUT THE ROLE OF HIS UNIT IN THE BATTLE. WHEN COL MOORE BRIEFED ON THE ACTIONS OF THE 1ST OF THE 7TH IN THE VICINITY OF LZ X-RAY IT WAS NOT ONLY A DRAMATIC MOMENT, IT WAS ALSO A HIGHLY CHARGED EMOTIONAL SCENE. AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND THE AIRMOBILE CONCEPT HAD BEEN PUT TO THE TEST IN COMBAT AND HAD WON A DECISIVE VICTORY.

WHEN HAL MOORE FINISHED, THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUMPED UP, HUGGED HIM, SHOOK HIS HAND, AND SAID, "COLONEL, THAT IS THE MOST COURAGEOUS AND HEROIC ACTION OF ANY MILITARY UNIT THAT I HAVE EVER HEARD". THERE WERE MANY OTHER COMPLIMENTARY COMMENTS. ADDING TO THE EXCITEMENT WERE A FEW 8 INCH HOWITZER ROUNDS, OUTGOING RIGHT OVER THE BRIEFING TENT, THAT JARRED MOST OF THE VISITORS. BILL BECKER, THE DIVARTY COMMANDER, HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO CONDUCT THE NORMAL H & I FIRES; BUT I SUSPECT HE THREW IN A COUPLE OF EXTRA ROUNDS IN A SALUTE TO THE 1ST OF THE 7TH.

WE HAD A LOT OF VISITORS, BOTH IN THE STATES AND IN VIETNAM. COMMENTING ON THIS GEN KINNARD PARAPHRASED CHURCHILL BY SAYING, "NEVER HAVE SO FEW BEEN OBSERVED SO OFTEN BY SO MANY." I REMEMBER GEN LEMAY, WHO HAD ONCE BEEN IN HORSE DRAWN ARTILLERY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, AFTER WATCHING OUR

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"SKINNY BATTERY" DEMONSTRATION IN WHICH WE LIFTED A 105 HOWITZER BATTERY INTO FIRING POSITION WITH HUEYS EQUIPPED WITH 48 FOOT MAIN ROTOR BLADES, PULLED HIS CIGAR OUT OF HIS MOUTH AND SAID, "DICK, THAT BEATS THE HELL OUT OF HORSES." THE BOOK, PLEIKU, USED A DIFFERENT WORD THAN "HELL", PROBABLY BECAUSE THE NIGHT J. D. COLEMAN AND I DISCUSSED THE STORY I HAD HAD A COUPLE OF MARTINIS.

GEN PAUL ADAMS, ON A VISIT TO ONE OF OUR UNITS IN THE CAROLINAS, ASKED ONE OF OUR 1ST SERGEANTS, "HOW DO THE MEN LIKE THE AIR ASSAULT IDEA?" THE TALL, RAW BONED SERGEANT FROM KENTUCKY REPLIED, "FORTY PER CENT ARE CRAZY ABOUT IT, THIRTY PER CENT REALLY LIKE IT, AND TWENTY PER CENT ACCEPT IT." AFTER A FEW SECONDS THE GENERAL ASKED, "WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER TEN PER CENT?" THE REPLY WAS, "HELL, GENERAL, THEY DON'T LIKE ANYTHING!"

I COULD SPEND AN HOUR OR TWO TALKING ABOUT THE MEN AND OFFICERS WHO CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE FIRST TEAM AND HOW THEY WERE TRAINED. BUT, IN THE INTEREST OF TIME, LET ME JUST FOCUS ON A CHARACTER THAT MANY OF YOU WILL REMEMBER BACK AT FORT BENNING, IN THE CAROLINAS, AND IN THE EARLY DAYS OF VIETNAM. COL JOHN STOCKTON, CALLED BY MANY "THE MAD GENIUS" OR THE "YUL BRENNER OF THE 1ST CAV", WAS A COLORFUL AND HUMOROUS CHARACTER, TO PUT IT MILDLY, BUT WAS ALSO AN IMAGINATIVE INNOVATOR AND A SUPERB TRAINER. HE COMMANDED THE 3RD SQUAD OF THE 17 CAV AND LATER THE 1ST SQUAD OF THE 9TH CAV.

WE HAD SENT HIS UNIT DOWN TO FLORIDA TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE IN JUNGLE TRAINING, AND WHILE HE WAS DOWN THERE HE PICKED UP AN ORANGUTAN AND BROUGHT IT BACK TO FORT BENNING. HE USED TO WALK AROUND AND GO TO BRIEFINGS WITH THIS ORANGUTAN HAND IN HAND. HE SHOWED UP ONE TIME IN THE 1ST BRIGADE CP AREA, GEORGE BEATY'S BRIGADE. AS HE WAS WALKING UP TO THE CP ONE SOLDIER SAID, "HERE COMES STOCKTON WITH HIS ORANGUTAN." ANOTHER SOLDIER SAID,

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"WHICH ONE IS STOCKTON?" ANYWAY, THEY WENT INSIDE THE CP; AND BIG JOHN HENESSY WAS THERE. HE HAD HAD A RUN-IN WITH THE ORANGUTAN EARLIER, AND HE WASN'T TOO FOND OF IT. HE JUMPED UP AND TOLD STOCKTON IN FRONT OF THE STAFF AND COMMANDERS, "STOCKTON, YOU GET THAT DAMN ORANGUTAN OUT OF HERE, OR I'LL THROW YOU BOTH THROUGH THE WALL!" AND HE COULD HAVE DONE IT.

AT ABOUT THAT TIME STOCKTON SENT AN OFFICER TO PHILADELPHIA TO THE QUARTERMASTER DEPOT AND BOUGHT UP A BUNCH OF OLD CAMPAIGN HATS. HE BROUGHT THEM BACK, AND THEY HAD THEM DIED BLACK. ADDITIONALLY, STOCKTON HAD HIS OFFICERS RAISE MUSTACHES AND BEARDS. WITH THOSE HATS AND THOSE BEARDS THEY LOOKED LIKE GENERAL SHERMAN'S STAFF AS THEY MARCHED THROUGH GEORGIA. A PICTURE OF STOCKTON'S UNIT WITH BLACK HATS SHOWED UP IN THE ARMY TIMES. GEN HAROLD K. JOHNSON SAW IT AND LET GEN KINNARD KNOW THAT HE TOOK A DIM VIEW OF UNAUTHORIZED UNIFORMS. SINCE WE WERE WEARING AN UNAUTHORIZED AIR ASSAULT BADGE THAT WAS IN JEOPARDY, GEN KINNARD FELT IT WAS ONLY PRUDENT TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE BLACK HATS; SO HE GAVE ME SOME CLEAR CUT INSTRUCTIONS. I CALLED STOCKTON UP AND TOLD HIM TO TAKE THOSE "COTTON-PICKIN'" HATS OFF AND PUT THEM AWAY.

WELL, STOCKTON ALWAYS ACCEPTED A CHALLENGE; AND ANY ORDER, NO MATTER HOW CLEAR IT WAS NOR HOW TIGHT IT WAS, HE SOUGHT A WAY TO FINAGLE OUT OF IT. HE ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE THIS TIME TOO. HE SAID, "GENERAL, HOW ABOUT SPECIAL OCCASIONS?" WELL, RECOGNIZING THE IMPACT ON MORALE, AND HE REALLY HAD A UNIT WITH HIGH "ESPRIT DE CORP", I SAID, "OK, ON VERY SPECIAL OCCASIONS BUT ONLY AFTER YOU GET MY PERSONAL PERMISSION."

IT WASN'T TOO LONG AFTER THAT THAT WE SENT STOCKTON AND HIS UNIT UP TO FORT KNOX TO PARTICIPATE IN MANEUVERS WITH SOME ARMORED UNITS. WHEN HE CAME BACK HE CAME UP TO SEE ME IN MY OFFICE, AND HE STARTED OUT WITH HIS PITCH. "GENERAL, I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS." HE LIKED TO BUILD UP THE STORY, STARTING AT SQUARE ONE.

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I FINALLY GOT IT OUT OF HIM THAT HE HAD HAD WHAT HE CALLED A "SPECIAL OCCASION", AND SINCE HE COULD NOT REACH ME HE HAD MADE A COMMAND DECISION AND LET HIS MEN WEAR THOSE BLACK HATS IN A PARADE. LOW AND BEHOLD, SOMEONE TOOK A PICTURE; AND IT WAS PUBLISHED IN THE ARMY TIMES. WE BRACED FOR A BLAST FROM THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, BUT IT NEVER CAME. I GUESS THE CHIEF DIDN'T SEE IT, OR MAYBE SOMEONE INTERVENED ON OUR BEHALF.

ANOTHER THING JOHN DID, IN ADDITION TO PUTTING HIS PEOPLE IN BLACK HATS, HE ORDERED HIS UNIT TO ACTUALLY FLY A GARRISON FLAG. OF COURSE, THAT IS AGAINST REGULATIONS. YOU CAN FLY ONE GARRISON FLAG AT A POST. I GOT A CALL FROM THE FORT BENNING CHIEF OF STAFF WHO TOLD ME THAT HE TOOK A DIM VIEW OF THE SITUATION. I GOT IT STRAIGHTENED OUT.

JOHN STOCKTON HAD INSTRUCTED ALL HIS OFFICERS AND ALL THE ATTACHED PEOPLE THAT THEY HAD TO WEAR CROSSED SABERS. WELL, HE HAD A MEDICAL OFFICER WITH HIM WHO REFUSED TO TAKE OFF HIS AUTHORIZED INSIGNIA. SO WHEN JOHN FILLED OUT HIS EFFICIENCY REPORT HE GAVE HIM A RATING OF 0.00. WELL, I TALKED TO HIM, I COUNSELED HIM AS AN ENDORSOR SHOULD; AND, IN ORDER TO MAKE IT AIR-TIGHT, I SENT HIM A LETTER. IN ESSENCE, I STATED THAT NO OFFICER COULD BE 0.00. HE MUST HAVE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF LOYALTY OR SOMETHING THAT THE RATING OFFICER COULD COMMENT ON FAVORABLY. HE REPLIED BY ENDORSEMENT, AND HE REDID THE EFFICIENCY REPORT. THE TOTAL CHANGE THAT HE GAVE THIS OFFICER WAS 0.01. I SENT THAT INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WITH A COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THIS WAS A BETTER INDICATION OF THE CALIBER OF THE RATING OFFICER THAN THE OFFICER WHO WAS BEING RATED, AND I THREW IT INTO THE HOPPER AND NEVER HEARD ANOTHER WORD.

MY FAVORITE STORY ABOUT JOHN STOCKTON - ALL THE OLD TIMERS WHO WERE THERE AT FORT BENNING WILL REMEMBER THIS - HE LIKED TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR THE OFFICERS, ESPECIALLY SENIOR OFFICERS, ON THEIR BIRTHDAY. FOR INSTANCE, THE

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NIGHT OF COL PHIP SENEFF'S BIRTHDAY STOCKTON SHOWED UP IN HIS COMMAND CHOPPER, LANDED ON THE GOLF COURSE ACROSS THE STREET FROM SENEFF'S HOUSE, AND WITH ONE OF HIS FIRE TEAMS WENT IN AND BROKE UP THE PARTY. THEY GRABBED PHIP SENEFF, PUT A SACK OVER HIS HEAD, TOOK HIM OUT AND DROPPED HIM IN A SWAMP. OF COURSE SENEFF WAS PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE; SINCE, AS AN OLD FRIEND OF STOCKTON, HE HELPED GET HIM INTO THE DIVISION.

I GOT WIND THAT STOCKTON HAD PLANNED SOME SORT OF EVENT FOR ME, A SURPRISE ABOUT 4 O'CLOCK EARLY ON THE MORNING OF MY BIRTHDAY. ELVY ROBERTS, THE DIVISION CHIEF OF STAFF, FOUND OUT ABOUT IT, TIPPED ME OFF, AND WANTED TO KNOW IF I WANTED A BIRTHDAY PARTY. OF COURSE I SAID, "HELL, NO!" AND ELVY ROBERTS SAVED ME FROM WHATEVER STOCKTON HAD IN MIND.

WITH ALL THOSE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS STOCKTON INITIATED, WHEN IT CAME TIME FOR HIS BIRTHDAY WE WERE OUT IN THE CAROLINAS. HIS OFFICERS WANTED TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL; SO THEY WENT OUT AND FOUND A FARMER WHO HAD AN OLD BEAT-UP GRAY MULE - AND, BOY, I MEAN BEAT-UP. THEY BROUGHT THAT MULE BACK IN A TRUCK AND PRESENTED IT TO STOCKTON AS A BIRTHDAY PRESENT. WELL, THEY HAD BORROWED THIS MULE AND FULLY EXPECTED STOCKTON TO LAUGH, AND EVERYBODY GET A CHARGE OUT OF THE EVENT; AND THEN THE NEXT DAY THEY PLANNED TO RETURN THE MULE. BUT STOCKTON FOOLED THEM. HE SAID, "THANK YOU VERY MUCH", AND HE NAMED THE MULE "MAGGIE" AFTER HIS WIFE, WHICH WAS A NICE TOUCH. HE GAVE HIS OFFICERS A DIRECT ORDER TO SEE THAT THAT MULE GOT BACK TO FORT BENNING SAFE AND SOUND. HE MADE IT THE UNIT'S MASCOT. WELL, THE OFFICERS INVOLVED HAD TO GO OUT AND PAY OFF THE FARMER; AND THEY DID GET THE MULE BACK TO FORT BENNING WITHOUT INCIDENT.

AFTER WE HAD ORDERS TO GO TO VIETNAM, GEN KINNARD ISSUED AN ORDER IN WRITING THAT NO PETS WOULD GO TO VIETNAM. I COULD JUST SEE THE WRITING BETWEEN THE LINES. TO ME IT READ, "DICK KNOWLES, DON'T YOU DARE LET STOCKTON TAKE THAT MULE TO VIETNAM." WELL, AS SOON AS MY AIDE BROUGHT IN THIS LETTER, I GOT A HOLD OF STOCKTON'S SERGEANT MAJOR AND SAID, "SERGEANT, DO YOU HAVE THIS LETTER

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THAT GEN KINNARD HAS PUT OUT ON PETS?" HE SAID THAT HE DID. AND I SAID, "WELL, TAKE A COPY OF IT, GIVE IT TO COL STOCKTON, AND HAVE HIM READ IT. I'LL HOLD ON THE PHONE HERE, AND MY AIDE IS LISTENING IN, SO I'VE GOT A WITNESS. AFTER HE HAS READ IT YOU PUT HIM ON THE PHONE. TELL HIM I AM WAITING TO HEAR HIS RESPONSE." WELL, THE SERGEANT MAJOR COMPLIED, AND FINALLY STOCKTON CAME ON THE LINE. I SAID, "STOCKTON, HAVE YOU READ THIS DIRECTIVE FROM THE DIVISION COMMANDER? DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS?" HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD READ IT AND HE UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANT AND WOULD COMPLY.

I THOUGHT THAT THAT WAS FINE; BUT A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER HE BEAT A PATH INTO MY OFFICE; AND HE SAID, "GENERAL, I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS." I SAID, "OK, GET TO THE BOTTOM LINE." WE GOT TO IT VERY QUICKLY. HE SAID, "GENERAL, YOU KNOW I SENT CAPT STEIN TO PHILADELPHIA TO HELP LOAD THOSE HELICOPTERS." (ACTUALLY, WE HAD A FEW PEOPLE IN AN ADVANCE PARTY WHO WERE NOT ONLY GOING TO LOAD THE HELICOPTERS BUT WERE GOING TO ACCOMPANY THEM ALL THE WAY TO VIETNAM. AT THAT POINT IN TIME THIS ACTIVITY WAS CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.) AND HE SAID, "AN UNFORTUNATE THING HAPPENED. " I SAID, "JUST GET TO THE BOTTOM LINE, STOCKTON." HE SAID, "WELL, CAPT STEIN TOOK THE SKIPPER OF THAT SMALL AIRCRAFT CARRIER OUT FOR DINNER AND BOUGHT HIM A FEW DRINKS; AND WHEN THEY GOT BACK TO THE SHIPSIDE AND WERE READY TO GO ON BOARD, SOME REPORTER GOT A HOLD OF THE SKIPPER. THE SKIPPER, FEELING NO PAIN AT THIS POINT IN TIME, WHEN ASKED, 'WHAT'S YOUR MISSION?' RESPONDED, 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL MY MISSION IS. ALL I KNOW IS I'M TAKING THE 1ST CAV'S MULE TO VIETNAM '", THAT STORY MADE THE HEADLINES IN THE PHILADELPHIA NEWSPAPER.

WELL, I BEAT A PATH OVER TO SEE GEN KINNARD; AND I HAD MY FIRST LINE READY. "GENERAL, I'VE GOT SOME BAD NEWS." WE KICKED THE PROBLEM AROUND AND DISCUSSED SOME ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS. WE COULD LET IT GO, WE COULD HAVE THE MULE TAKEN OFF AS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER WENT THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL. THEN, AS I RECALL

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THE INCIDENT, I SUGGESTED TO THE GENERAL TO MAKE JUST ONE EXCEPTION AND DESIGNATE "MAGGIE THE MULE" AS A DIVISION MASCOT. THE MEN WOULD GET A KICK OUT OF IT. IN ANY EVENT, THAT IS WHAT THE GENERAL DID. I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END OF THE STORY, BUT IT WAS NOT.

CAPT STEIN TOLD THE SKIPPER THAT IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO "MAGGIE" ON THE WAY TO VIETNAM THAT STOCKTON WOULD HANG HIM (CAPT STEIN) TO THE HIGHEST TREE. SO THE SKIPPER PUT OUT AN ORDER THAT NO HARM WOULD COME TO THAT MULE. YOU KNOW, IT'S A LONG WAY ACROSS THE PACIFIC; AND A COUPLE OF ENSIGNS JUST COULD NOT STAND IT. SO, ONE NIGHT WITH A COUPLE OF SEAMEN THEY WENT DOWN; AND THEY BRANDED THE MULE "BEAT ARMY". IN THE BOOK J.D. COLEMAN SAID THEY BRANDED HIM "U.S. NAVY", BUT I AM PRETTY SURE IT WAS "BEAT ARMY." ANYWAY, THE SKIPPER FOUND OUT ABOUT IT; AND HE THREW THOSE TWO ENSIGNS IN THE BRIG.

WHEN WE WERE UNLOADING ON THE COAST OF VIETNAM I HEARD ABOUT IT, AND I WENT TO KINNARD AND SUGGESTED HE FLY OUT TO THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER AND PLEAD WITH THE SKIPPER TO LET THOSE TWO ENSIGNS OUT OF THE BRIG. WE NEEDED THE SUPPORT OF THE NAVY, AND WE WANTED TO BE IN GOOD GRACES WITH THEM BECAUSE IT WAS GOING TO BE A LONG HARD WAR, AND WE DIDN'T WANT ANY BAD BLOOD WITH THE NAVY. GEN KINNARD AGREED THAT HE WOULD FLY OUT THERE AND MAKE A PLEA FOR THEIR CASE. AND I SAID, "ALSO, WHEN YOU ARE OUT THERE PLEASE BRING BACK ALL THE ICE YOU CAN CARRY." WELL, HE DID. HE GOT THE ENSIGNS OUT OF THE BRIG, AND ALL WAS FORGIVEN. I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END OF THE STORY, BUT IT WAS NOT.

WE WERE ON THE BEACH THERE OFF-LOADING OUR EQUIPMENT; AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, JUST LIKE A LIGHT, I GOT A FLASH! HOW WAS STOCKTON GOING TO GET THAT MULE UP TO AN KHE? OVER HIGHWAY 19? NO, THAT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE STOCKTON'S WAY. I GOT MY AIDE, PETE BOSTWICK; AND I SAID, "GET A HOLD OF STOCKTON AND GET HIM DOWN HERE. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM ON THE BEACH." SO STOCKTON REPORTED IN, AND I SAID, "STOCKTON, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GET THAT DAMN MULE UP TO AN KHE?" HE STARTED OUT,

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"SIR, I'VE ALREADY TALKED TO BEN SILVER, AND IT'S ALL SET." AND I STOPPED HIM RIGHT THERE. I SAID, "STOCKTON, I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU AN ORDER HERE AND NOW IN THE PRESENCE OF WITNESSES. YOU WILL NOT TAKE THAT MULE UP TO AN KHE IN A CHINOOK!" I COULD JUST SEE "MAGGIE" UP THERE INSIDE A CHINOOK, GETTING EXCITED AND KICKING OUT THE SIDE. THE LOSS OF AN AIRCRAFT AND CREW UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HAVE MADE A TERRIBLE HEADLINE! SO I MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR TO HIM. NO! IN NO WAY WOULD THAT MULE GO UP TO AN KHE IN A CHINOOK! I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END OF THE STORY, BUT IT WAS NOT.

ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES LATER I HEARD A CHOPPER FLYING OVER MY LITTLE CP ON THE BEACH (AND I AM SURE STOCKTON DID IT DELIBERATELY). I LOOKED UP, AND THERE SLUNG UNDER STOCKTON'S COMMAND SHIP WAS "MAGGIE THE MULE" -- NOT IN THE CHINOOK. HE WAS NOT VIOLATING MY ORDER. AND HE TOOK THAT DAMN MULE UP TO AN KHE UNDERNEATH HIS COMMAND SHIP. I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE END OF THE STORY, BUT IT WAS NOT.

STOCKTON'S OUTFIT, THE 1ST OF THE 9TH, WAS LOCATED NEXT TO AN AIRBORNE UNIT. ONE NIGHT "MAGGIE THE MULE" GOT LOOSE AND STUMBLED INTO THE AIRBORNE PERIMETER, WAS CHALLENGED AND, NOT KNOWING THE PASSWORD, WAS SHOT. SOME TROOPER SHOT AND KILLED "MAGGIE THE MULE." AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE END OF THE STORY, BUT IT WAS NOT. A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER THE LOCAL VIETNAMESE, HAVING HEARD THAT WE HAD LOST OUR DIVISION MASCOT, PRESENTED GEN KINNARD WITH A BEAT-UP OLD HORSE TO REPLACE "MAGGIE THE MULE".

BACK TO THE SERIOUS SIDE OF THIS PRESENTATION, I WANT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO GEN KINNARD. NO FINER, MORE INSPIRATIONAL COMMANDER EVER LIVED. HE WAS A COMMUNICATOR. HE HAD A FINE SENSE OF HUMOR. HE WAS A GOOD LISTENER. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE WAS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU THOUGHT AND IN WHAT YOU HAD TO SAY. HE MADE YOU FEEL NEEDED AND IMPORTANT. CONSEQUENTLY, WE ALL GAVE HIM EVERYTHING WE HAD AND A LITTLE BIT MORE; AND WE DID IT NATURALLY.

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HE HAD A LOT OF PET IDEAS, BUT THEY ALWAYS HAD A PURPOSE -- LIKE "AIR MOBILITY IS A STATE OF MIND". HE LIKED THE WORD "IMAGENUITY" A COMBINATION OF IMAGINATION AND INGENUITY. HE BELIEVED THAT WITHIN A DIVISION SIZE UNIT THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE SOLDIER WHO HAD A SOLUTION TO ANY PROBLEM THAT MIGHT COME UP, EITHER ON OR OFF THE BATTLEFIELD. THE TRICK, OF COURSE, WAS TO FIND THAT TALENT AND TO BRING IT TO BEAR ON THE PROBLEM IN A TIMELY MANNER.

TO INSTILL THE IDEA OF BEING READY FOR ANYTHING AT ANY TIME HE ORDERED EVERYONE IN THE DIVISION TO ALWAYS PARK THEIR CAR FACING OUTWARD FOR A FAST GET-AWAY, BOTH ON AND OFF THE POST, BOTH ON AND OFF DUTY. AND I STILL, TO THIS DAY, PRACTICE THAT HABIT -- AT LEAST PART OF THE TIME. BUT EVERYTIME I PARK MY CAR I THINK ABOUT GEN KINNARD AND THE FIRST TEAM. WHAT A GUY!

NOW FOR GEN MOORE. I AM TREMENDOUSLY PROUD TO KNOW HIM, TO CALL HIM A FRIEND, TO HAVE SERVED WITH HIM IN COMBAT, AND TO HAVE SEEN HIM IN ACTION IN THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR. NO FINER BATTALION COMMANDER EVER LEAD A BETTER UNIT IN A MORE CHALLENGING AND HEROIC STRUGGLE AGAINST A TOUGHER OR MORE TENACIOUS ENEMY IN THE HISTORY OF WARFARE AND EMERGED SUCH A CLEAR CUT WINNER. HE WAS THE BEST.

"OK", YOU MIGHT ASK, "WHAT ARE THIS GUY'S QUALIFICATIONS OR CREDENTIALS FOR MAKING SUCH A STATEMENT?" PERMIT ME TO RELATE A FEW PERSONAL EXPERIENCES -- JUST TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION. AS ASSISTANT DIVISION COMMANDER FOR OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM I KNEW EVERY FIGHTING BATTALION IN THE FIRST CAV, AND I KNEW THEM WELL. LATER I COMMANDED THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE WITH AN INFANTRY PATTALION FROM THE 1ST DIVISION, SAM WALKER'S BATTALION AS A MATTER OF FACT, AND A MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION ATTACHED DURING AN EXCITING CAMPAIGN NORTHEAST OF SAIGON.

I COMMANDED THE 196TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE WITH TWO MECHANIZED BATTALIONS FROM THE 25TH DIVISION ATTACHED FROM TIME TO TIME AS I ROAMED AROUND WAR ZONE C. LATER I WAS GIVEN COMMAND OF TASK FORCE OREGON WHICH INCLUDED THE 196TH BRIGADE, THE 1ST BRIGADE OF THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, AND THE 3RD BRIGADE OF THE

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OF THE 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION — ALL EXPERIENCED BRIGADES. I SAW A LOT OF BATTALIONS IN ACTION IN VIETNAM; AND BELIEVE ME, HAL MOORE WAS THE BEST BATTALION COMMANDER THAT I EVER SAW.

RAPPORT. RAPPORT IS A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN ANY COMBAT ACTION, AND IT DID PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLL IN THE X-RAY CAMPAIGN. THE RAPPORT THAT EXISTED BETWEEN SWEDE LARSON, GEN KINNARD, MYSELF, AND COL MOORE WAS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT. WE UNDERSTOOD ONE ANOTHER. WE TALKED THE SAME LANGUAGE, AND WE HAD THE SAME CONCERN FOR OUR TROOPS. WE HAD BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER IN PREVIOUS CONFLICTS. I WILL STAKE MY LIFE THAT HAL MOORE KNEW THAT, REPRESENTING GEN KINNARD, I WOULD GO TO BAT FOR HIM, THAT I WOULD GET HIM ANYTHING HE WANTED WITHOUT QUESTION.

THE BASIC PROBLEM HAL WAS FACED WITH WAS TO GET ALONG WITH THE ASSETS HE HAD IN AND NEAR LZ X-RAY. EVERYTHING HAD TO BE FLOWN INTO AND OUT OF A VERY SMALL LZ. IF YOU HAVE NOT SEEN THE PICTURES OF LZ X-RAY GO UP INTO ROOM 603 AND TAKE A LOOK AT THEM. WE HAD PLENTY OF POWER TO SPARE, BUT THE TRICK WAS TO BRING IT INTO THE ACTION THROUGH A SMALL KEYHOLE, LZ X-RAY.

TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE HAL GOT EVERYTHING HE ASKED FOR — AND WHEN HE WANTED IT. AND HE GOT A HELL OF A LOT OF FIREPOWER ALL AROUND HIS POSITION IN ORDER TO ISOLATE HIS BATTLEFIELD. THAT INCLUDED REINFORCED DIVISION ARTILLERY, AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY, GUNSHIPS, CLOSE AIR SUPPORT, AND B-52 STRIKES.

THE 1ST OF THE 7TH HAD CENTER STAGE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE NVA IN THE IA DRANG VALLEY. YOU WON THAT FIGHT. YOU BEAT THE HELL OUT OF THE NVA. AND — THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT — YOU CAME OUT WITH ALL OF YOUR WOUNDED AND ALL OF YOUR DEAD. YOU POLICED YOUR BATTLEFIELD. AND, AFTER A TOUGH FIGHT, THAT IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE.

THE ENTIRE DIVISION BASKED IN THE GLORY OF YOUR PERFORMANCE. WE RECEIVED LETTERS AND MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE ENTIRE CHAIN OF COMMAND AND

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MANY OTHERS. ULTIMATELY, WE WERE THE ONLY DIVISION TO RECEIVE A PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION FOR ACTION IN VIETNAM.

THAT CITATION READS IN PART: "...FULLY UTILIZING AIRMOBILITY IN APPLYING THEIR COMBAT POWER IN A SERIES OF OFFENSIVE BLOWS, THE MEN OF THE DIVISION COMPLETELY DEFEATED THE NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR ENEMY."

USING A PHRASE FROM THE KOREAN WAR, LET ME JUST SAY, "THE MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS" AT LZ X-RAY WERE THE KEY TO VICTORY. EVERY SOLDIER IN THE WORLD SALUTES YOU.

^G
~~B~~ARRY OWEN!

RICHARD T. KNOWLES
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, USA (RET)