**RICHARD KLAYMAN**

Brick Location: A8

It was during the winter of 1954 when Sgts. Stone and Zampell came to me and gave me the good news. They were two battle-tested veterans of the Korean War who participated in the invasion of Inchon and chased the North Korean Army up to the Yalu River on the border of China. Both were wounded and sent back to the states for rehabilitation and then assigned to train newly inducted draftees like me. They experienced the raw cold damp winters of Korea and now were in the perfect place to train future infantrymen at Ft. Dix, New Jersey. The good news they brought me was that I was chosen to take advanced training…in cold weather survival.

“Klayman, we have great news for you. You have been awarded the rifleman medal for marksmanship, the good conduct medal and have been chosen to be a platoon leader and your specialty will be to carry the B.A.R. machine gun. You will learn to keep you weapon clean, be able to assemble and disassemble it blindfolded, and be able to do this at below zero temperatures.” With that statement they smiled, I saluted saying thank you sir and they walked out of the barracks.

The next day, with full field gear, we marched eight miles into the woods and set up camp at a clearing. For eight weeks we were taught how to survive in the cold, using the elements to help us get by. Upon graduation from advanced infantry training, we were issued a weekend pass to say goodbye to our family. The weekend went by very quickly. Meanwhile back at Ft. Dix, my orders came to transfer to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, to wait for a troop ship to take us to Korea. After two weeks waiting around with boredom setting in, we were given the go ahead to meet the ship at a New York pier.

There were 5,800 cold-weather trained soldiers who boarded the ship that day in late March of 1955. The first two days on board were uneventful. Then a storm off Cape Hatteras made the boat feel like a rubber ducky in the bathtub. After that, we stopped in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for some R&R. Back on the ship the weather was beautiful, 80 degrees with a soft breeze that made sunning on the deck a feeling of exuberance.

That evening we were told that we were one day from the Panama Canal and the Pacific Ocean, the last leg of our trip.

Reveille the next morning was at 5:00 am. What was our hurry to get up? What are those strange marks on my bunkmates faces? Measles! An epidemic…3,800 of us quarantined! I was one of the lucky ones. Being lucky meant K.P. and swabbing the deck. Now the ship stopped, not for a day or two, but for ten days.

Finally, when the ship started moving we noticed the sun was in front of us. We were going back to the states. There were rumors galore, but no answers. At this time there was a ceasefire in Korea and both sides were talking at Panmunjom. It was a very slow trip back to the states, or so we thought. Six weeks to be exact. Two weeks anchored a few miles from shore. It didn’t look like New York. Where were we? The ship started to move toward land. In the distance we could make out a fort. We can’t believe it…El Morro Castle, San Juan, Puerto Rico. It took us two days to disembark. Most all of the soldiers had a clean bill of health. We were bused to an airfield, standing for hours waiting to be addressed by the commanding officer. Welcome fellow soldiers, he said. You are the elite of the infantry. You are here to train for a special mission. We think the next challenge for the United States will be the jungles of South East Asia. You will be trained for warm weather fighting. We have the perfect terrain for that here in Puerto Rico. From the icy cold of New Jersey winter to the jungles of Puerto Rico. What a journey!

P.S. After having been warned not to volunteer, I was told of an opening in the Finance Corps. After showing Capt. Genry my credentials and degree in mathematics and statistics from Boston University, I was transferred out of the infantry. The reason for the opening was an audit showed that the division had the highest error rate of the whole army.

My discharge years later came with a commendation for passing the Inspector General’s audit of our office. Capt. Gentry got a promotion and I received my stripes on discharge from the Army.

Submitted by:

Richard Klayman

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