

I entered the Army at 31 !!



Finding myself divorced for the first time and discovering most of the people I hung out with were not really what you could call friends and no ties to anything at the time, I talked to an Army recruiter. He told me what a great deal it was and that if I went into Armor (tanks) I did not have to go thru basic like you saw on TV and that I would not have to walk any further than from the armory then to the motor pool. Well, I would have to run 2 miles for the physical training but that was about it. Also, I would \$6000 as I graduated from basic. This all sounded good and I did a delayed enlistment, so I would not report until after Thanksgiving. This gave me all summer for more fun around town, a chance to visit my folks and the kids in Arkansas and off I would go. It seemed like a good plan at the time.

It was funny though, I had a recruiter in Arkansas try to get me signed up. He wanted me to ride a bus to Little Rock and spend the night. Then go into recruitment center the next day. We I was

Terry McPherson

30 and not wanting to ride a bus with a bunch of 18 years going into the Military. I told them that I would drive my Trans Am to the hotel. So I drove down and with nothing to do for the evening, I went out dancing. Found a great club and was dancing with a cute gal. When the club closed, we decided to go to breakfast. After I had taken her home, about 3-4 am I headed back to hotel. I woke up about 8am and went out to ask about bus to recruitment center, but it had gone at 7am. They said they had knocked on my door, but I did not answer. I figured great, I did not really want to sign up anyway. So I went home to Yellville. In the afternoon, the recruiter called all worried, he thought someone had kidnapped me in Little Rock. He tried to reschedule me, but I declined.

This time they were having me go to Kansas City to the recruiting center there. I took Trans Am and got a speeding ticket on the way. I checked into the hotel and decided to eat dinner and go to bed this time. About 11pm some of the idiot kids that were to be recruited the next day had been running around. I opened door and told them to get to bed. I laid back down and then I found they were firing a fire extinguisher under my door. I went out looking to kill someone. I found they had also broken some glass in the ice machine and no telling what else. In the morning we all checked out by 7am and took bus to Recruiting Center. I had passed all my tests and was getting ready to sign a

Terry McPherson

contract when I was asked if I had any outstanding warrants or issues. I said I had a speeding ticket!! They said they could not sign me up. I had to get a money order and put it and ticket into registered mail with the price of the ticket and then come back. I tried to decide if I was going to or not, but then I figured might as well. So I was signed up for a delayed enlistment. I heard too that it was a good thing everyone had checked out of the hotel. They were mad and said there was over \$2000 in damages and the military had to pay that and they would never allow recruits in the hotel again.

Arriving at Ft Knox for training on Nov 29th 1982, I was not sure why the hell I did this. I had a cold, it was raining and cold outside and I was put in a large open barracks with a bunch of 18-20 year olds that were crazy. They had me shave and get a pretty close haircut. They had us going thru various supply units to get uniforms and more to fill our duffle bags. Then finally about a week later, we were formed up in the parking lot and split into 5 platoons to form our training company of about 120 recruits. Marched over to another barracks and started getting room assignments. Fortunately, they put 4 of us older recruits together in a 4 man room that had two bunk beds. The others were in 8 man rooms, with two rooms for each platoon. Since I was one of the oldest recruits, I was given platoon leader status of 2nd Platoon. We were designated a package platoon to go the

Terry McPherson

Ft Riley, KS. I was disappointed for a couple reasons about being in a package platoon. First since going to Ft Riley, I should not have listened to the recruiter as he told me to sell Trans Am as I would most likely go to Germany or Korea for first assignment. Second, I had thought I would try to take the Officer Candidate School test after basic to try to get a commission. I had to take the test before my 32nd birthday to qualify. Recruits that were trying to do that usually stayed at Ft Knox and studied and help with next cycle of trainees. I was not allowed to do that. And at Ft Riley, my First Sgt had put me on the Lt's tank and there was no time to study.

But back to basic. Sgt Garvey was our Drill Sargent and he was my age. Since we were in temporary barracks waiting for training to actually start on Jan 3rd, each day we would be taken over to another barracks that needed painting inside and cleaned up for us to move into before Jan. Being older than most the older recruits, I was usually put in charge to keep the "kids" focused and get the work done. The only thing for "Basic Training" being done was to have us do sit-ups, pushups and run 2 miles. Having just come from the farm and doing a lot of physical work, this was not much an issue for me. I actually found that once I got starting running and long legs, I could do 2 miles and more. So, I was not being abused. If you could not do those things then you had trouble with your Drill Sgt. We only

Terry McPherson

had one recruit in my platoon that was an issue since he was overweight, a bunch. As it got closer to Christmas, the recruits, if they wanted could take Christmas Leave and go home for two weeks. I do not understand why if you just came into the Army beginning in December that you wanted to go home again in just a couple weeks. But about half of the company took Christmas leave.

The Drill Sgt's felt that since half were gone for Christmas leave, that those remaining should not have to work all day. So, the company was split into two shifts. Morning from 8-12 and afternoon from 12-4pm. Our physical training was done at 6am before breakfast. Of course, we had duty assignments, we had to have CQ, Charge Of Quarters, on both barracks 24/7. One man on the front desk of barracks. The First Sgt decided it would be good if one person knew all that was getting done where we were working, so he made me the lead and I worked both shifts and reported to him progress each shift and evening. The after 4pm the recruits were allowed to go the shopping center that had a movie house, fast food, recreation center with bowling and more. But each platoon had to be marched there by the Platoon Guides. That is what they called us recruit platoon leaders. We had a E7 Sgts pin on our uniform to ID us so other solders and Drill Sgts could ID us. I would call cadence for the marching but the guys never liked my songs, so sometimes I let one of them call it from

Terry McPherson

the ranks. We were all identified as Phase One recruits by the helmet liner we wore and combat belt with the shoulder harness.

As Christmas got close the ones of us remaining got to be assigned to a volunteer families in Louisville, KY to visit them for three days to include Christmas. The family I was assigned had asked for 2 recruits so Chip and I went to stay with them. Chip was what we called David Spencer, he had little chubby cheeks, like a chipmunk. The Drill Sgts gave him a hard time about his chubby tummy too. They would poke him in tummy and he had to say "Hehehe" like the Phillisberry dough boy. You old enough to remember that commercial?? But us recruits just called him Chip. He is still a friend and I seem to call him Chip most the time still. Well the family was really nice and twin teenage daughters, which was perfect for Chip, he was 19. Their Grandmother lived next door and had a piano and I went over there sometimes to play piano a bit. Their older daughter had to use a wheelchair to get around but that did not stop her from driving a specially modified Nissan sports car. We were leaning against it as we came out of church on Christmas Eve when the car started up and no one was in the car. In the 80's that was not something you saw much. Surprised us, but there she was rolling her wheel chair down the sidewalk and expertly managed to get into car and then reach out and swing the folded up wheel chair behind her seat.

Terry McPherson

Chip and I had a great time with the family and they invited us back for New Years.

I was the only one the Drill Sgt approved for off post pass for New Years. It was really fun. I had found a nice country western club to dance and went there for Christmas and enjoyed New Years there as well.

All of our recruits had returned and we moved into the new barracks on Jan 2, 1983 and we started training on the 3rd.

I was assigned a 2 man room and shared with the Platoon Guide for 3rd Platoon. I had to 2 rooms for 2 man each with bunk beds for my squad leaders and then the others were in two open rooms of 8 each. We were on the second floor of the barracks. Third Platoon was on this floor as well. And there was an office for the two Drill Sgts. I quickly found it easy to keep my side of the room good for inspection, but the other Platoon Guide was a mess. I complained to Sgt Garvey and he agreed the other one was not up to our standards and we booted him to one of the rooms he had his squad leaders in for the rest of the time. So, I had my own room and never got another gig on inspection.

We each had wall lockers that we had combination locks on to secure. Each morning the rooms all had to be ready for inspection and we all had to be in the parking lot in formation for 7am inspection. Most the Drill Sgts were much like you see

Terry McPherson

on tv in the rooms of their platoons and barking orders and such. After the first couple weeks, Sgt Garvey quit coming in until time for formation. He was stand by us in formation and ask every good “Mac” and I would give him an affirmative. I was harder on the platoon than he was. They were all kids and a mess as far as I was concerned.

One morning though, after the First Sgt had been thru barracks for inspection, he came down and asked me to go get my mud boots for his inspection. I was halfway up the stairs when I realized I did not have my keys and I stopped and just when down got back in formation and said sorry First Sgt I had not secured my locker. He handed me my keys and the Drill Sgt Garvey said, “That will be 1000 pushups Mac” The First Squad Leader, Godbold, would be in charge of collecting them. Any time Sgt Garvey was unhappy with you, he would tell you that you owed him “Pushups” and most the time, you paid on the spot, but he rarely wanted more than 50-100 at a time. So, my Squad leader for 1st platoon and I started. His name was Godbold and we were really good friends. We started each evening with doing the pushups. As I recall after the first day or two, as he counted, he would count 1 as I went down and 2 when I came up. Then he started 2-4-6-8. I had my 1000 done in about a week. He reported daily to the Drill Sgt on progress.

Terry McPherson

Our basic training was to be from Jan 3rd to early April. After the first 4 weeks we were out of phase one and did not wear all the belts and stuff. Also for being in phase one, when we went to the mess hall we had to use the buffet line, not the hamburger and order line. When we came in mess hall it was buffet to the right and hamburgers to the left. I did not actually stand in line but being the Platoon Guide, I was expected to stand to side and see all my platoon was fed, then I just cut in at that point and got mine.

Most of our training was on tank driving, weapons and tactics. I found when they came to ask for someone to get licensed for jeep or truck or anything else most guys did not volunteer. You know the saying, "Never Volunteer". But I did, so I was licensed for almost everything in the motor pool. When it was time to load the company on trucks to go the range or other training, myself and a couple others went to get duce n half trucks. Then all the company was loaded in the back. It was winter in Kentucky. I was driving and had a heater. They we stuck in back freezing. "Volunteering" paid off for me.

The only real bad thing we had for our "Basic" was going to the gas chamber. When we were supposed to do the confidence course it was freezing and we did not go. And the only 20 mile march we were to do with rucksacks, it started snowing really bad and we had not even gone 5 miles when the Drill Sgts

Terry McPherson

decided lets go back.

The gas chamber was no fun. We went in with gas masks so they could prove to us they worked and that we would have confidence in them. But then while standing in formation inside the gas chamber, we were ordered to remove masks and then stand there. We had to stand a minute or so, no one could hold their breath that long. Then we were dismissed and we all ran outside. It was horrible, eyes burning but you could not rub them, your hands were contaminated. Your nose running like a faucet and you were coughing and trying to throw up. Your throat was raw and you could hardly speak. They had one garden hose and we all took turns flushing our eyes and cleaning snot off us. It was still burning and bit later even back at the barracks. Most of us did not really recover until after very long n hot showers.

In January, I had a court appearance in Arkansas for a hearing on child support. We had all our civilian clothes taken away from us when we came into Ft Knox and had not been allowed to have them back yet. I flew home in my greens and then got into civilian clothes for the few days I was there. When I returned to Ft Knox, I stopped by a used car lot and made a deal with the manager. I bought a Chevrolet pickup and gave him \$1000 down and on graduation I would pay the other \$3000. I would insure it but it would remain on the car lot. I could pick it up anytime I

Terry McPherson

wanted to use around town. I stowed all my civies in it and then in my greens returned to the barracks.

The Army had what they thought were the only height and weight charts to be used and I did not match into them. They said for 6' 2" I was only supposed to be 195 lbs. However, I was 210 lbs. They were going to put me on the fat boy's program. I told them I did not think so. I had the second highest physical training score in the company of 120 kids and I was over 30. When more than a dozen of them could get higher scores than me, then we could talk about it. There never was.

We spent most our days learning about weapons and such. I never saw an M16, the 45 pistol was our personal weapon in a shoulder holster. We went to various ranges for training as well and one time when we were training with the 50 cal, I managed to liberate a short belt of live rounds. Smuggled them back to the barracks. But as inspection was coming up the following week, I decided to dump them in trash. Our Drill Sgt was the main instruction on tank weapons to include the 50 cal. One day we were in a class with 1st Platoon with Sgt Garvey teaching us. Our Platoon Sgt was a good friend of 1st Platoon Sgt and as class was ending 1st Platoon challenged us to a knowledge test on the 50 cal. Sgt Garvey said sure, our platoon could handle that. Well unfortunately, we did not win the challenge. Sgt Garvey was gracious and paid off his bet and dismissed us to get our lunch.

Terry McPherson

The platoon was out in the parking lot and I was about to march them to lunch, but I was livid. How could they let our Drill Sgt down like that. They were all so stupid and for that, I was going to restrict them to buffet side of mess hall. No burgers. The cried I could not do that. When I dismissed them at the mess hall, I reminded them that they were not allowed to have hamburgers and the again they complained. So, as we went in the mess hall several went to the left to the burger line. I walked over to the burger line and stood there looking at them. All but 3 returned to the buffet side of the line. I took down names of the three that did not.

That evening as Sgt Garvey was getting ready to leave the barracks, he asks how are things Mac? told him that three of the Platoon disobeyed me at the mess hall. He said ok, go round them up and have them knock on office door. They knocked on door and walked to stand in front of Sgt Garvey's desk and he was doing some writing. Then he looked up, and pushed his desk towards them pinning them to the wall. He said, " You disobeyed my Platoon Guide. When he gives you an order, it is me giving you an order." He asked me what punishment I thought they should have, so I said I wanted them back in the Phase One gear, therefore restricting their mess mall options and showing the rest of the company they were in trouble. The three recruits said for how long. Sgt Garvey told them until Mac decides you don't

Terry McPherson

have to. They marched out. He never even asked me what they had done to disobey me!!

Since we were all mostly out of Phase One, and we were all off on weekends if no CQ duty or something else, we could get passes. There was a Brigade Pass which meant we stayed in area and only a small convenience store and gym available. There was a Post Pass which allowed you to go to shopping center, movies and bowling. Then there was Off Post Pass. The CQ desk, Charge of Quarters, had the pass list at desk and let you know what you had. It got to where Sgt Garvey would tell me to fill out pass list. So, I gave appropriate passes to everyone. I had my name on the bottom of the pass list and gave myself Off Post Pass for weekend. Then I folded paper over so most would not see I was doing it. Then I would take a taxi into Louisville and get my truck and change clothes. I would head out dancing and have a great time. I usually found someone that would put me up for the weekend and then on Sunday I would go back to post after returning my truck. One Sunday morning my host and I made chocolate chip cookies for me to take to the Platoon. I got back to the barracks and the two squad rooms were a mess. I got mad and went thru telling each how bad their area was and I flipped over a couple bunks and then stormed back to my own room and ate all the cookies myself. The whole Platoon were telling me I could not do that. They would tell Sgt Garvey and I told them go

Terry McPherson

ahead. But they never did. But I did find that I had to go to my room after inspecting the squad rooms and everyone out of building, to find my bunk flipped and I had to quickly fix it all again for inspection.

Another time, the Drill Sgt had said we could all go to the shopping center but since it was middle of the week, I had to march them there. As we marched back I was calling cadence and they were making fun of me and not marching right. I got mad and stopped the formation. Turned them all to face me and told them all to drop for 40 pushups. They all said hah, no way, only a Drill Sgt can order us to do pushups. I told them get down and do them or when we got back to barracks, I would have Sgt Garvey have them do it. Grudgingly they all got down and did pushups. As you might think, I was not popular with any of the platoon but the squad leaders and I all got on great.

One evening as we were coming back from the mess hall, at night we did not march. Godbold and I were walking past some dumpsters and we saw "Chip" coming down the street. We always liked to mess with him, so as he got to us, we jumped out and started turning him upside down and shaking things out of his pockets. Unfortunately, about this time a Drill Sgt we did not know saw us. Called us all to attention and asked what was going on. Then he saw my pin showing I was a Platoon Guide and Godbold's pin showing he was a Squad Leader and he was livid.

Terry McPherson

Wanted our names and who our Drill Sgt was. We told him and he said he would speak to him and that we could expect repercussions in the morning. We never heard anything about it. I am sure Sgt Garvey just laughed when he heard it.



Godbold, Chip and I - we were visiting Chips family in KC as we went to Ft Riley.

Terry McPherson



The last few days of training, we were mostly turning in stuff and taking life easy. We had been told we could go to the shopping center and get some beer if we wanted. Well, I did not drink beer but all the Platoon did, so we decided to go get beer. I told them to hang on a minute. I went into the recreation room where the Drill Sgts were all playing pool. I came to attention by Sgt Garvey and waited for him to address me. What you need Mac? Well Drill Sgt, we were going to get beer but it is a long way to the shopping center and beer was heavy, could I borrow his car. My truck by then was actually on post but I could not let anyone know. He looked at me and laughed. He asked if I was crazy. I said no Drill Sgt. He completed another shot on the table and

Terry McPherson

then he put his car keys on the edge of pool table and I scooped them up and left.

Graduation was fun... I was Second Trainee of the cycle and on the stage, but did not have to give a speech. First Trainee had to give a speech. I was also Second place in the PT scores. During our last PT session somehow, I sprained my ankle but would not tell anyone because I did not want held over at Fort Knox. The family I had met at Christmas had a flower shop. I stopped by to tell them I was on the way out. They asked if I wanted any flowers for some friend at home. I said well, how about few bunches of 6 yellow roses. I headed out of Ft Knox in my truck and headed to Ft Riley, Kansas for my first duty post.

On the way I stopped in Springfield. I went into one of the clubs I spent the most time in and everyone just oh HI... Like they did not even notice I was gone for 4 months. They did laugh at me though, I was limping pretty bad because of my ankle. But I still asked gals to dance. I would hit the floor and dance like crazy and then as I walked off, limped my way to the bar. I came up behind the blonde girlfriend I used to have at the bar, kissed her on the back of the neck and she turned around about to slap the heck out of me. But when she saw me and she gave me a hug. I gave her some yellow roses!! My kids and family in Arkansas were glad to see me and I promised to bring kids to Ft Riley during the summer. I gave mom some yellow roses too. Then I

Terry McPherson

stopped in Kansas City to dance on Thursday night in Kansas City, I saw a gal I knew from Springfield who was visiting there. It was fun and I danced with her a bit and gave her some roses. Then later in evening I met a nice lady I liked better and gave her some yellow roses and when her and other gal noticed they had the same bunch of yellow roses they were not so impressed. But anyway the second gal still danced with me and we had fun. I told her I would be back to see her soon. However, I did not want to drive on over to Ft Riley that late, so I was going done by the river and sleep in back of the truck. I had put a camper shell on the pickup and built a bed in the back of truck. It was pretty comfortable and about 30 minutes after I got there, I had a knocking on the back window. She had found me...

I reported for duty on Friday at Ft Riley and was told I was off till Monday. I headed back to Kansas City for the weekend. Ft Riley was a fun duty station. Our motor pool was concrete and we had a gate to let us go to the open areas for training. We had some great times. I was on the Lt's tank and unfortunately our gunner was the 1st Sgt office boy, so Shaw and I were responsible for taking care of our tank.

I had spent some time while in basic helping other recruits with map reading. So when the Lt started to teach us a map reading class and he incorrectly identified mountains and ridges I pointed it out. Problem with that was, he started having me

Terry McPherson

teach the class.

We had two incidents worth mentioning. During the winter we were in the north area and when returning to the motor pool there was a steep hill and with the snow and ice all over it and it was a challenge to get a 50 ton tank from top to bottom. Of course, we also have the whole company going down the same hill. We got into a pattern where one tank would start off down the hill, it was a road but iced over. After getting pointed downhill the tank became a 50 ton bobsled. When they got to the bottom, they would radio the next tank and it would slide down. I happened to be driving that time and when the tank in front of me said he was down, I edged over the hill. The problem was that it was steep and you could not see the bottom until you were actually going down the hill. As my "50 ton Bobsled" got going down I noticed the tank at the bottom had not started moving on. So, I got on the radio and told him he was about to have a gun tube up his rear grill doors if he did not get moving... He barely got away as I got to the bottom of the hill.

The other time we were out there in the north training area, I was driving and we were going cross country at full speed. It was like being in a boat cruising across a lake. My Lt was in the cupula and said, Mac when we get to the road lets head back. So, I was just cruising along when all of a sudden, the tank drops down. We did not know the road was not field level. It was about

Terry McPherson

6-10 feet below. As we hit the bottom, the cupula hatch hit the Lt in the back and as we hit other side of road and back up into the field it tossed the Lt forward which put the 50 cal handles in his stomach. He was not happy. As we got back to the motor pool, we also noticed that we had apparently broken a torsion bar and a wheel not riding right. And as I said, for the most part it was just Shaw and I doing the maintenance, so we learned how to change a torsion bar. Took us a day and half. I might have had others helping in the platoon, but since most of them had either 3-4 crew working to keep tank, I had many times declined to help them, since only two of us were taking care of our tank. Crews were very independent and very protective of their tanks. A lot of the time I had given other crews a hard time. My tank was best maintained and I had spare parts. I had everything working on my tank and spare parts for things like our heater and more. So when we were in the field and it was cold and other tanks heaters went out, it was not my problem. I had taken care of things while in motor pool, I did not wait until I was in field and something to break.

My tank at both Ft Riley and in Germany had the distinction of being only one of 2-3 tanks in the battalion that had rolled out and rolled back on every exercise we embarked on. Never towed home, came home late, or any such thing. I even had carpets in my tank. Every day we were in the motor pool to work on tanks

Terry McPherson

and that is what I did. I was not smoking and telling stories and BS-ing around while having a nice concrete place to work on my tank.

When I first got to Ft Riley, I was living in the barracks with all those kids!! I did not like it. I told 1st Sgt I had my kids coming for the summer so he let me move off post. I rented a room with one of the guys I had met out dancing all the time. It took me about 2 months to get the 1st Sgt to let me actually clear the barracks. When I had moved out, he did not clear me from barracks, so I had to be there to clean and take care of things and be on CQ some days. Pain in the butt, but once he let me clear barracks, then no more.

The kids came to visit for the summer and Larry had another room, so we all stayed in the mobile home. The mobile home park had a pool so the kids really enjoyed that and when my girlfriend came over she brought her dog Rouchess and the kids really liked him.

We went on two deployments while at Ft Riley. The first one we went to Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes and 50 billion mosquitoes!! They put us on buses and we had to carry our personal weapons with us. For me that was not bad, I had a 45 piston in a shoulder holster. But others had M16s and other rifles. When we stopped for lunch, we went into a buffet type restaurant and we could not leave out weapons on the bus, so

Terry McPherson

here we were walking from and parking lot a block away, down the street and into buffet carrying all these weapons. We got some strange stares. When we got to the base, they issued us M48 tanks. We were training with a National Guard unit and that is what they had. Not a lot different than our M60A1's we had at Ft Riley. The first thing we were told was that we were not to damage any birch trees!! The training area was heavily wooded with them. We were training with an Infantry Battalion and our company of tanks had pretty much decided we were just going to drive down the roads. The Infantry Battalion Commander did not like that. He came up and ordered our Lt to get off the road, so we headed over towards the trees about 100 yards away. Note - Because birch are shallow-rooted, they prefer a location where the soil remains cool and MOIST. Our five tanks headed off road. I was on the Lt's tank and we were leading the platoon over to the tree line. We got to about 10 yards of the trees when I noticed our back track looked like a small river. About then the tank sunk to its belly in the MOIST ground. The other 4 tanks stopped and also sunk into the ground. Now we could go nowhere. We called for a M88 maintenance tank to come pull us out. About an hour later the M88 shows up and had two crew man on it. They looked at situation and said Ok, they would turn sideways on road but were not getting off the road. Then they said that we had to drag the heavy cable to a tank and they would winch it back to road. So the whole platoon grabs this heavy cable and pulls to the

Terry McPherson

closest tank. Attached and got it pulled back to the road. About then the Commander called on radio and wanted my Lt to bring whatever tanks he had up to a location. The Lt got on that first tank and they left. So now we only had the crews for 4 tanks. We drug the cable again to the next tank and as soon as it was on the road it was ordered to follow the Lt. You can see where this is going. By time we had my tank to get recovered, there was only our crew of three guys to pull the cable the furthest and the field was just a mud hole by then. When I finally got on the road, I did not check in. We just sat there and the M88 left and when we heard the exercise was over, we rolled back to base. Another day, they took us out to the firing range and instead of having all the tanks there, they took my tank and put it on the firing line. My gunner and I got to fire it. It is so much fun pulling the trigger on the 105 main gun. Then they told us to get out and brought in another crew. Since it was our tank, we decided we were not leaving, we would just hang out on the back deck. Unfortunately, when the main gun fired again, must have been a million mosquitos came up out of brush and trees and swarmed over us. We decided we would wait back in the motor pool.

The second deployment was to Ft Erwin in California desert. The took the company to the airport and put us on a 747 for the trip. That was the best transportation the military ever gave us. We got to Ft Erwin and they issued us M60A1 tanks like ours at Ft

Terry McPherson

Riley. We started running around the desert playing war games. The tanks all had straps with sensors that we had attached to front, side and back of tanks. Each tank had a laser and when we fired, if we hit a sensor on the tank we fired at, there was a yellow light mounted and it flashed to show it had been hit. If it was not a good hit, then it flashed and went off. We had the control panel inside between the cupula seat and loaders seat. I was loader at that time. Since we used the same devices for war games at Ft Riley, I had a key for panel I had appropriated. So, when we got a hit, I would turn key off and on and they would think it was only a near hit. Then later in the week, one of the straps of sensors quit working. We used it for the front of the tank. When opposition tanks starting complaining that my tank did not had good straps and they could not kill us. One of the observers that were scoring events would come by our tank and accuse us of not having our straps working. I would point him to the side strap and tell him to fire gun his test gun at it. He did and the light lit up and showed we were dead. He never tested one across front of tank. He inspected our control box and my key was in my pocket. I told him we were just good at hiding and off he went. My Lt did send me a couple times to maintenance to get a new strap, but they did not have any. But when he had to go in his jeep to meet with command, he would tell me to go check again. So I would go sit on the hill just outside of maintenance and we all got a nice nap. The desert heat never bothered us. The

Terry McPherson

huge fan that was used to exhaust the fumes from the rounds we fired was big and would pull air thru the whole tank, giving a nice breeze. Sitting in the shade inside the tank and fan running was comfortable.

Andy was with us and he was the Company Commanders jeep driver. But mostly the CO was on his tank so Andy just hung out in a ravine or somewhere out the way. Some afternoons when not playing war games, we had desert cleanup. A M116 would come by and pick up a couple of us and we would drive it around and look for trash. One afternoon, I saw Andy in his jeep, so we pulled up next to him and figured he would turn around and chat with us. He did not! He was asleep and did not even hear or notice we drove right next to jeep in the M116. I reached down and picked up his M16 and we left. They had told us that if we lost any weapon issued, that the company would have to stay looking for it till found. It was a big deal. So of course, Andy comes up to my tank and he is panicking, he had "Lost" his M16. We laughed and let him worry a bit and then pulled M16 out of the tank and told him what we did. As tank crews, we only had 45's and when they came around for resupply, they had no blanks for a 45. The M16's got lots of blanks to play with. We decided that was not fair. We would get a few M16 rounds and take duct tape and wrap it around the shell casing until it was fat enough to go into our 45. Of course, it did not fit the clips but we

Terry McPherson

could open up and load one shell. With the tape around shell, it fit and the firing pin of the 45 would work on it. When we had a chance, we would, "Shoot" someone and they would jump and think they were shot. Everyone knew there were no blank rounds for a 45 so it must be a live round. We had a great time. The most fun was when we had our final exercise. We lined up in what was called "The Valley of Death". We had live target rounds and the whole Battalion of tanks and vehicles in pretty much a straight line across the valley. Then we started and were firing down range at targets and having a great time. Right up to when the choppers showed up and were right above us firing as well. All their brass was raining down on us and they were hot if they hit you or got in your collar or something. It was a good thing we could not elevate the gun tube high enough to shoot them down. Well, our two weeks were up and we had to turn in our tanks. But they would not except them if there was anything wrong with them!! They wanted us to fix things that really had been wrong when we got it. So anyway, they gave me a hard time, they did not like a couple of the wheels on my tank. I went up the maintenance to get two wheels and they said they were out but would have some more in the morning. I wanted to get done this evening, cooler working at dusk or dark. When most of the crews had given up for the day, I took my crew up to a tank that was in another company. That tank had all the wheels off and stacked one side of the tank. We liberated two wheels and took them to

Terry McPherson

my tank and mounted them and finished work ready to turn in tank first thing in the morning. The next morning, before I turned my tank in, I went up to supply and got two wheels and took them to the tank we had liberated wheels from. The Lt of the Platoon was livid. Accused me of stealing and wanted me to be court martialed. My Lt got into it and pointed out I had got them replacements that were better than what we had liberated. The wheels were not delaying anything with his tank, as it was not going to be finished before we went home. He would go back to his duty station without having turned it in. They would except it, as it was, with wheels stacked in desert. The Lt cooled down. I could not believe he was such a jerk. It was all Army green. How could it be stealing?? A day later we got back on the 747 and flew back to Ft Riley. A great trip and fun in the desert.

The next summer I got orders for Germany and had a direct assignment to our sister unit. My buddy Andy had the same orders. It was amazing that he was doing so well. While on TDY one time he was in a car wreck that broke his pelvis. He blamed me for that. I had loaned him a belt with a big buckle and in the accident it pushed into his pelvis. Right after the accident he felt he should have been medically retired but they did not do that. He finally got back onto shape and was able to complete all the pushups and sit ups but was a little slow on the 2 mile run. But 1st Sgt had encouraged him and he decided to stay in the Army.

Terry McPherson

We made plans since we were going at the same time. He would ship his truck and I would sell my truck. Then we would share.

This sharing had started pretty much as soon as we got to Ft Riley. We both had Chev trucks but his was 4 wheel drive. But when he had gotten home to pick up his truck it was not running. But he had a second truck but had no license of registration for it. But both Chev's about the same year. He brought the blue one with no registration but had the plates on it from his other truck.

One weekend, my truck not working right and I decided to take his to Kansas City for the weekend. So I am zipping along and of course I get pulled over by the Highway Patrol. They look at registration and after a few minutes come back and ask me, if this was my truck. I told them I had borrowed it. They were not happy, they said it was not registered, that the registration belonged to another truck. After a chat and concerned about registration, he forgot to give me speeding ticket and said to make sure owner gets it straightened out. The solution we had was we took the front plate off my truck on put on back of his truck. We made sure not to have them in same parking lot at any one time. We got away with that for a couple months until he finally got it registered right. He decided to pull his engine and rebuild it and used my truck a lot. He had the engine in the barracks and when inspection time came around, he had it cleaned nicely, covered and the pistons and parts neatly stacked

Terry McPherson

in wall locker. Godbold, the Squad leader I had at Ft Knox, used my truck a lot too. It was not too big an issue but sometimes I would go to the parking lot and no truck. But I had a motorcycle too. One time, Godbold had been out near one of the firing ranges and he found the remains of a large device he had in back of the truck!! I told him to get rid of it fast.

We did have a habit of bringing in stuff from training on the range we were not supposed to have. Someone had an artillery simulator that they brought back and tossed it down stairwell in barracks and it blew the window into the parking lot. However, I found one time that we had not gotten all the 105 main gun round off the tank. In the motor pool, we were really worried about getting caught with it. I clamped the projectile in the breach of the main tube inside tank and pushing casing back and forth got it out of the shell. Then poured all the powder into a bucket. We distributed the powder around the back fence and put projectile in the trash can. It was ok to have empty shell casing in the tank. I had a duffle full of stuff from the ranges. I left it with dad at the farm when I went to Germany. I got back from Germany and dad had disposed of it all!!

Anyway, we were both going thru out processing, turning in gear and clearing medical. We went together to clear medical and when Andy handed the Dr his medical records and x-rays of his hip and pelvic, the doctor asked where is this guy. That obviously

Terry McPherson

he could not walk. Andy just told him no one had said he could not walk, so he did. The doctor was not happy and pulled Andy's orders and he ended up discharged at 19 with 100% disability and full retirement pay and benefits. It was really funny, the Army puts him out but he has no real issues. Rebuilds truck engines, works as a AC tech around houses and in attics and goes dancing.

So, I arrive in Germany and go to 21st Replacement in Frankfurt, the processing center for Germany. I handed them my direct orders and he just tore them up and trashed them. Now he says let's see where you are needed. I ended up assigned to 1/37 Armor in Katterbach near Nuremburg and I was so happy. Our motor pool was concrete and barracks right by it. If I had gone to the sister unit 3/37 I would have had a dirt/mud motor pool and barracks down the street. However, I had shipped all my stuff to sister unit and it took 2 months for it to get to me.

I arrived in mid August and was doing the orientation to learn a little German and things we needed to know and rules and regulations for being there and got a drivers license for soldiers in Europe. I was told when I got there that our Company had a trip planned for Sept to Spain, Llorete De'mar. I thought that would be great so I signed up. So my 1st Sgt gave me a hard time, just in country and already going on vacations.

Terry McPherson

It was a great trip, I could not believe the buses and drivers. I thought we were going to hit everything. Streets so narrow and buss's so big with those rabbit ear mirrors. I enjoyed the beach and did some shopping. I had changed dollars to Spanish Peseta's and the exchange rate was crazy, like 150 or more to the dollar. I thought things would be expensive, but they were not. Coke was 6 peseta's and a rum n coke 10. So I had about 15,000 peseta's??

Down at the end of the beach was an old castle with a fence and said Keep Out. I love castles and so one afternoon, I got over fence and was touring the castle when I ran into a cute little gal doing the same thing. We laughed about it and continued to look around. After our tour, we got out over fence, we went to dinner. I could not believe how cheap everything was. I was trying to buy souvenirs to spend it all. I went out to clubs each night. When I was walking around town, they had stands for things on a stick to eat. I would buy a couple at one stand for 8-10 pesetas and then eat them before I got the next stand. Then I would buy more. We were there a week and on the last day, the bus was not picking us up until 1pm but we had to checkout of rooms by 10am. So I was looking around and found the hotel had a sun deck on the roof. Don't know how I missed that earlier in the week. So, I went up to read my book and relax. I was pretty surprised when I got up there, it was a nude sun deck. I did not

Terry McPherson

get much reading done!!

So finally, back in the barracks and starting to work on tanks. I was assigned to my platoon Sgts tank. So again, my crew was just 3 of us since Platoon Sgt never came to motor pool unless we were having inspection or rolling out for training. By then I was an E4. I had been fortunate because having 2 years of college, that let me start in basic as an E3 and the summer in Ft Riley I was promoted to E4, Specialist. But since I was in charge of tank, I was changed to hard stripe, Corporal E4 to be in command of others. It was a half-step above Specialist.

I started by getting my tank in the best shape of the company. A tank was supposed to have aluminum wheels with steel inserts to rub on track. But they wore out and had to be replaced every few months of operation. You had to take the wheel off to replace the steel inserts. Too much trouble. The recovery vehicles, tanks as well, but for maintenance, all had steel wheels. I watched and every time I saw steel wheels in the area for incoming supplies, I had my crew stay late and we liberated the steel wheels and put our aluminum wheels back in the supplies area. After a couple months of watching, I managed to get all of our wheels upgraded to steel. I also watched for everything that was supposed to be in our tool boxes. Each tool box had a diagram and we had stenciled names of each item where it belonged. I did not take me long to have all tools and markings for both of my tool boxes. One of the

Terry McPherson

maintenance guys was my buddy. Bill Ball was my best friend there even though he was in the Maintenance Company and I was in tank company. We would go touring Germany together and had a great time. We discovered that if we told the 1st Sgt we wanted go across a border to another country to visit, we had to have an official pass. My 1st Sgt had a policy that if you just came back from Pass, you were on top of duty roster!! So one trip to Munich and Bill and I went to the US Embassy and got our American Passports. Then we did not need a pass and I did not get extra duty. But if anything had happened or got in trouble outside of country, I was also in trouble for not having a pass.

Then I first got to Katterbach, there was an Enlisted Club across the street. The Katterbach installation was straddling the road, so we would go out our gate, cross street and go in the gate there. Anyway, after going to the Enlisted Club a couple times, the manager, Skip, came up to me and we starting chatting and became friends. Shortly he asked me if I would apply and be the Night Manager. I did and I starting coming over every evening after getting of duty across the street. Running the club was so much fun and Skip was great to work for. He was a bit of a drunk though. He would hang out at club, since he was not working then he could drink. His wife, Eddy, was in the states and had not come with him on assignment. He was in the military as a club manager and it was his only job. But the military was going away

Terry McPherson

from having soldiers running clubs to civilians running them. The manager over the club system in Ansbach and Katterbach got to know me too. The only problem I ever had in that club was a guy looking for a necklace he had lost. I was trying to help him, but he was drunk and wanted to turn on lights in club to see better and have band stop playing. I said no and he pushed me into the bar. I went to get him away from the band stand and grabbed him, it was a problem and I ended up dragging him into the office as my assistant, Bobby, opened the door for me. I sat him in a chair and then he came up swinging again so I put him in a choke hold, but then noticed the office had window to the club and his friends were not amused and they were banging on the window. We pushed him into the back office. Bobby being a large, 6ft 4" and 250lbs, he pushed guy up the wall holding him with one hand under his chin and told him to settle down. Bobby knew the guy and he finally settled down. Bobby convinced me not to call the MP's but to call his Company and ask for a couple soldiers to come down and take him to barracks. They came and as we were walking him out to the street, he started up again, knocks the 2 guys from Company down and it turned out MP's happened to be driving by so they took him anyway.

Running the club was fun and usually as we closed up about 1am. On weekends, someone would suggest a place off post to go for some more fun. I started keeping stuff in my trunk of BMW for

Terry McPherson

setting up bar. I had ordered two cases of Coors glasses from the beer distributor and I had glasses in their boxes and booze as we had left over from parties, I took all the left overs to keep for next one. Each time people brought bottles of alcohol and gave to me to be bartender. One night at a house off post, we had a party and I was making drinks but someone had brought some blue colored something that was terrible. I would make a drink with it and no one would drink it. I could not waste booze so I drank it. Of course then I became "Over Served". As the party wound down, I stepped outside to throw up and the walked off the porch and down the street for some reason. It was winter and 6-8 inches of snow. I did not have a coat either. I ended up sitting in a bus stop and falling asleep. When I woke up, I managed to find my way back to house and when I went inside everyone wanted to know where was I. They had gone out looking and driving around and could not find me. Then it hit me, I was cold, so cold.... A couple I knew, took me home with them and put me under blankets and a space heater blowing on me. I finally was getting warm again about noon and realized I was supposed to be at work at the club. They took me to my car and I finally got to work. Fortunately, Bobby had been there and opened the club. I was warm, but still drunk a bit.

Skip liked to go out drinking after closing as well and we would take his car and I would drive. He had found many biker bars to

Terry McPherson

go to since he was a biker. I never did drink when he and I went out. At times his mouth would get him in trouble because he was drunk and we would end up backing of the bar. When Skip got orders to go back to the states, he sold Bill his Toyota. Bill and I one weekend, decided we were going to a car show in Geneva, Switzerland. It was strange, it was not far to cross the border but then we found it took all day to get to Geneva. Of course, some of the delay was that we got off for gas Zurick and we could not find the entrance to get back on the autobahn. We did find a store that was an American Western store. I still have the Texas Ranger badge that I bought there. We finally got in the Geneva and it was hard to find a hotel room, we had not booked anything and with car show everything was full. We finally found a hotel had one room with just a single, double bed. We took it. It cost almost all the cash we had. We did have enough left get into the car show the next day but could not stay all day as we had to get back to Katterbach to be at work the next day. The little Toyota would run all day at 240-260 km. Fun fun....

Neither Bill or I knew how to ski, but we found the ski club was mostly women, so we joined and signed up for a ski trip to Austria for a weekend. We got on bus and let them know we did not know how to ski but they said they would teach us. We got there in the evening and they had us on our skies and just learning around the parking lot to stand up and balance. Then in

Terry McPherson

the morning, they said we should come up lift and they would help us. However, it was very cold the night before and everything was frozen. We got off lift and they helped me get started going downhill and learning to turn. I got turning kind of figured out but not stopping. I ended up going side to side and crashing into the snow banks and then getting turned around and ago again. Bill was not getting it, so he had to put his skies between the skis of a gal in front of him and hold on to her all the way down. It was pretty funny but we survived.

Next, we found the company was having a trip the Garmisch for a week to ski. We had ski lessons included in cost of the trip. The first day Bill and I were in our class of about 10 learning to ski. Most of them were not getting it but Bill and I finally were getting it. We could start, turn and stop. The others were spending most their time falling down and complaining. Day two we skipped class and took the lift to the top. The nice thing about skiing is that no hill is any steeper that you want to make it. You just ski side to side at the rate that was comfortable to you. Bill and I getting pretty good and had a great time all week. The only bad spot was we ended up on a top of a ridge and the trail only 4-5 wide so there was no back and forth, it was mostly just straight down, but not so steep we got killed. I had a flask I filled with rum each morning and maybe that helped us make it thru the day.

Terry McPherson

Running the club was fun but then Skip went back state side and the new manager did not like me. He accused me of being inappropriate with one of the bartenders. He terminated me and I was not happy. When I showed up at my friend's house, they could tell I was upset, I was drinking tequila from the bottle and it was half gone. They took my bottle, fed me some dinner and then took me home.

I had a BMW 325i and I had to rebuild it once and was having trouble all the time with it. One of the soldiers in our company was going back to states and had not sold his Mazda 626, so he asked me to keep it and sell it for him and send him the money. I had the Mazda until I left Germany a year later and sent him the \$200 then. I had one 90 minute country western tape that was all I played for over a year. Guys riding with me would ask to change it and told them they could walk!! Then I started having trouble with the passenger seat back. It would not stay up. I filled a duffle bag and put it behind the seat to hold it up. Then it was pretty much a two passenger car. But it always ran fine.

The next summer the kids were coming to visit so I got permission to move out of barracks and found a nice apartment in a German farm house. It was funny, they had parking in beside the farm house. I actually only had a bathroom, bedroom and living room on second floor. However, the bathroom was only a bathtub, sink and oil water heater. No toilet, I had to go

Terry McPherson

down the hall to toilet in a something like a closet. On the hallway that my door was off, was a second door to a bedroom. The owners, 17-year-old daughter slept in that room. In the over year I had the place I think I saw her a couple times. My heater in the living room and bathroom was oil and I had an oil tank in basement that I had to take a bucket to and fill the oil heaters. To take a bath I had to fill oil water heater, lite it and then come back in an hour to take a bath. I rarely used the living room heater unless I was home for day or evening. With working the club and Army I was hardly there. I would be in for PT at Katterbach at 6am, then go to breakfast, then work formation and then after work, to the club. Close up club about 1am and do books and get home about 2:30, so I just went to bed and pulled up covers. In the morning jumped up, brushed teeth and got into PT by 6am. Lucky to get 3 hours sleep a night. I started to get the reputation during training, that if they let me sit down I fell asleep. Sometimes after PT and breakfast I would try to catch and nap before 8am work formation. But if I over napped, I would go down behind the barracks and get into the motor pool. When they came down and asked why I missed formation, I just said I had things to do on the tank.

In the spring, I got a call from the manager for the Ansbach and Katterbach club system. He asked if I would take a night manager position at the NCO club in Ansbach. I said yes and

Terry McPherson

started working again each night. The manager of club system knew the EM club manager was just trying to get rid of me and I had not been inappropriate with anyone. In fact, my bartenders and waitress's all knew that and preferred to work for me instead of others. When they fired me at then EM Club two of them quit because they were soldier's wives and were not allowed to work for some of the managers who were drunks and inappropriate all the time. So shortly after starting at the NCO Club we had a job fair for all the clubs. Each club had a table in the large room at the club. People would come in and go to the table where they wanted to apply. I started out by going out and walking down the line and picking out those I wanted in the NCO Club and had them come straight to my table and not others. I had many of them tell me that they could only work for me according to their husbands.

I remember one afternoon as we were running the bar, we were watching TV for the space shuttle launch when it blew up!! Another time I was letting bartender run to the bathroom. Someone ordered a rum and coke and as I was putting the rum bottle back, it slipped from my hand. I caught it on the toe of my boot and I was thinking what a great catch. Then as it slipped off toe to the floor, it cracked the bottom out of it. I had guys at the bar wanting a straw so they could suck up the rum off floor!! Drunks are so much fun.

Terry McPherson

Well sometimes drunks are not that much fun. We were having disco night and the dance hall was full. I had my assistant manager really watching and taking care of things since he was black and most the crowd was. One table had two ladies that started fighting and falling into tables and breaking glasses and such. I looked around for the assistant manager to step in and did not see him. I waded in and was getting the two gals separated and to do this I one held around the waist and the other pushed back with my hand on her chest. I heard this voice behind me, "Heh that is my girlfriend". I looked over my shoulder and was only seeing the chest of a big guy, so I looked up into his face and said "Back off buddy or you are going out too". He backed off. I drug and pushed on the girls till I got them out the front door of club. If they wanted to kill each other they could do that in the parking lot. About then the MP's showed up and took the girls into custody, my assistant manager showed up on my elbow saying "I called the MPs." Thanks, that was a lot of help!!

That summer the kids came to visit me and I had organized and Company trip to Spain and I got to have two free tickets for that so I had the kids going with me. They got their own room and I had one of the other club managers, Gary going with us in my room. The morning we were getting ready to get on bus, we all needed to change money from dollars to peseta's. I had talked to

Terry McPherson

bank and they asked that I have everyone put money in an envelope and then one person come to bank and make exchange. I was about 1/3 the way exchanging dollars when the bank had a phone call and it was for me. On the phone the tour operator said we could not go to Spain today!! Spain was closed!! The Spanish Minister of Tourism had over booked the coast of Lloret De Mar by several thousand and people were sleeping on beaches and in buses. However, he could offer us to go to Nice, France and we could still leave today. I said that would be great. I started exchanging money back and then to Francs. But.... Dollars to Pesetas was like 150 pesetas to the dollar. Francs were only 8 to the dollar. Fortunately, my 1 Sgt got into the negotiation's and knowing the French Riviera was expensive, made the tour operator include dinner. We already had breakfast included so with dinner, you did not have to worry too much about eating. That's what I thought.

When we got to Nice, they said that hotel that we had rooms in and would give us dinner did not have enough rooms for everyone, so three rooms would be at another hotel. So, I had them give me and the kids and someone else the rooms at another hotel. It was on the beach front, about 6-8 blocks from another hotel on a back street. It was great from our balcony we could watch the traffic and the beach was across the street. Well they called it a beach, it was actually mostly small rounded rocks.

Terry McPherson

The kids and I were amazed at French customs. Someone would walk down to the "Beach" and spread out their blanket. Then they would strip down naked and put on their swim suit. And some ladies did not bother with the tops. TJ was small enough and I carried him on my shoulders because the rocks hurt his feet. He kept pointing out the topless ladies and kept telling him don't do that. I finally started holding his hands down. He then would grab side of my head and be turning it to look!! We were having a great time. It was a good thing our 1st Sgt had taken care of us for meals, most of us had only changed \$100 to Francs. A coke was 6 Francs and a rum and coke was 12 francs. I did not drink much. During the day we would go to a grocery store and buy bottle of water and some bread and something to make sandwich with for lunches. The first day we were walking to the other hotel for our dinner, the kids found an ice cream cart and a pretty French gal running it. The kids had run ahead and by time I got there they each had an ice cream and I owed the pretty lady 8 Francs. Then we got up the hotel for dinner and they had tables setup in a conference room with tables for 8. The waitress came in and laid down the first bottles of water and everyone jumped on them and they were empty before she got back with more. Most the guys I guess had not drunk anything all day. Then they came around and took orders for drinks and the guys had beer and more. We had a nice dinner and then the waitress came around and started handing out tickets for alcohol each had

Terry McPherson

requested and drank. When they saw they were being charged for drinks, some of the guys bugged out before the waitress got to them. The next night the manager told me that all drinks would be cash first. They had a bill for over 300 Francs not paid the night before. Not much they could do but I they charged the tour company that had setup everything. The routine got to be the waitress would collect cash before they got beer and they had a hard time keeping the water bottle full and the bread baskets full. I also had to make sure I had my 8 Francs before heading to dinner because every time the cute gal on ice cream cart saw the kids, she gave them ice cream!!

We had a great time and being on the main boulevard we saw some great cars. One thing I could not figure out was that at one club, a couple blocks down from our hotel, people would pull up and just get out of car and go into the club. There seemed to be a fleet of tow trucks loading these cars and taking them away. I don't know if that is just how valet worked there or what, but they towed almost everything, Ferrari's, Mercedes and big BMW's every night.

At my 2 year anniversary of being in the Army, I was promoted to E5 Sgt. This required me to go the NCO academy. It was in a barracks just across the street, but we were required to move in and stay there confined for 2 weeks of training. We also were required to bring an M16. I had never had one but the armory for

Terry McPherson

my company checked one out to me and I carried it across the street. Turned it into the armory there. I was put in a 4 man room, 2 sets of bunk beds, I got a bottom. We also had a wall locker each. We were required to have inspection every morning and all of our socks and shirts and everything had to be just right for the wall locker. I had been told we could have one duffle bag under our bed that would not be inspected. I had brought almost two of everything. My wall locker was never touched, so it stayed inspection ready. All my cloths and equipment I was using I kept in the duffle bag under bed. The first day our room got some gigs and we got in trouble. The other guys in my room were Airborne guys from Italy and I told them that they were all to be out of the room and stay out once they went to breakfast. Then I cleaned the whole room and went to breakfast. In return for this, I would go to bed and the Airborne fairy would shine my boots to a high shine. They were good at that. Another one of them would help me with M16 and clean it and turn it back in for me each time we had them out to fire blanks at some games we played each day. I hated being locked in for the weekends, nothing to do but read and eat. I would look across at my motor pool and wish I was there. My room never got a gig after that first day. I also had heard before I came, that they were really picky about how our rank was pinned on our uniform, but if we had sewed on rank and they did not like it, they only giggered us the first day and then it was excepted. So I had all my rank and stuff sewed on my

Terry McPherson

uniform before going to the NCO Academy. Finally, my two weeks were up and I carried the M16 back across the street.

That afternoon, I go to the motor pool and walk up to where my tank was supposed to sit but it was not there. Well, the bumper number was right but it was not my tank. The new company commander had decided he liked my tank and he took it and changed the bumper numbers. The one he gave me was a piece of junk. I also had a message that they were planning a big “Change of Command” to welcome General Saint to our Division. They were to have one of each type of vehicle in Division on the parade field. My tank had been requested by bumper number!! This was on Friday and the change of command was going to be on Monday. I told me crew to stay when everyone else left Friday night. We spent weekend cleaning and the painting, kind of “POD”, paint over dirt. The tank looked pretty and since we were on side of parade field 100 ft from anyone, it looked great. My tank was always so nice and I had carpet inside. It was requested to be the one tank used for “Family Days” to give rides to the kids.

Then the first time we went thru vehicle inspection, they coded out my track pads. Track pads are rubber pads that are bolted on each track block. Each track block had two track pads. The only way to get track pads off was that you used a socket and breaker bar with 3 ft unauthorized cheater on it. You just had to tighten

Terry McPherson

nut till it snapped the 1 inch diameter bolt. It was something I was NOT going to do for the whole tank. I got notified that my track pads had come in and were sitting in the supply area and I was pick them up for doing the job. I went over to take a look and there setting is the supply area was a full set of complete track, with new pads, ready to be assembled and put on a tank. They came in sections with several on each pallet. I told my guys to go eat dinner and return to motor pool. That night and next day we drug the pallets of track over to center of area in front of our company of tanks. We assembled them all and then lined up our tank to the row of track. Disconnected tanks tracks and then connected to new sections and rolled up and onto them. When we had rolled all the new track on our tank, we disconnected old track. Then we broke old track into sections to fit on the pallets and used tank to drag then back over to supply. I did get a call about why I did not pick up my track pads and I told them I don't need them. Never heard anything else. Of course, then I started playing the game of getting all steel wheels again. It could not stealing, it was all Army green and never left the motor pool.

While I was at Ft Riley, I had a Texas flag I would put on the tank radio antenna sometimes. On the first time we go out for exercises Grafenwohr, I had it on my tank. We were 3rd Platoon but seemed our Lt always volunteered us to lead the company. The CO came by one afternoon and told me to take it down. It

Terry McPherson

was not subdued. So, I wrote mom and letter and asked her to sew me a Texas flag that was subdued, browns and greens. I got it and the next time we were out for exercises I again had it on our radio mast. The CO came by and said He had told me to take it down. My Lt told him that he had said it was not subdued, but now it was subdued and he felt it should remain, and it did. Even during one battle the CO had told the company to follow the tank with the pennant!!

Some of the times when we went to field exercises, we were allowed to drive tanks on the highways and autobahns. Other times we were loaded on rail cars. Depending on where we loaded sometimes, we drove on from the last rail car and had to drive up and across one to the another until you got to the one you were to be tied to. The tanks barely fit the rail cars. When we drove on them, we had half of each track off the edge, so we had to keep just one pad on it. It was not easy to do but it was easier than when we had to side load. We would drive up a ramp that would put us same height of rail car. Then drive on and pivot to straighten out. The German train master had a gauge he used to measure how much of track was sticking out. If it was too much, then you had to see saw to get it right. It was amazing that in two years we only dropped one tank off the rail car loading sideways. German trains in the 80's were not too exciting. The bathroom you had a seat like an outhouse and you flushed and it dropped

Terry McPherson

onto the tracks.

Every time we were going out for a field exercise, we would be prepping to go for a couple days. We were told that we were NOT to take any "Poggy Bait". That is what they called snacks and stuff we would buy. We were only supposed to be eating what the Army gave us. To help them discover if anyone had "Poggy Bait" they used clear trash bags and if they found soda cans or candy wrappers or anything not issued to us, we were in trouble. We would crush the soda cans and put them inside the little milk cartons they gave us. Other stuff we would put the trash in the empty MRE bags. The MRE's were usually what we were issued for lunch each day. They would come by in morning with a hot meal for breakfast and give us a bagged MRE and they would bring hot dinner for supper. When everyone was fed and the cooks were cleaning up and putting everything back into the trucks to take back and most likely throw away, I would keep an eye out and lift tarp on side of truck and liberate the remaining cakes or other sweet things to eat. Take them back to my tank and our platoon always enjoyed leftovers. Also, I always had peanut butter and jelly but hard to keep bread so I would try to liberate a loaf or so when I found some. It was funny, we had always been told not to take any "Poggy Bait", but in Germany every couple days when out on field exercises, the 1st Sgt would come by my tank and toss me a loaf of bread and tell me to make

Terry McPherson

him PBJ. I would hand him down one or two and then keep the load of bread. Another time my tank commander saw I was making PBJ's for the crew and handing them out around the tank. He asked for one so I started to make him one but he said no, he did not want me to make it, he would do it himself. Did not want me touching his food. We also shared our Oreo's with him. So not sure why they made such a big deal about us supplying ourselves with things we liked. We did have an issue with having enough sodas so it was pretty much required to share. So, I would open a soda, drink some and pass it around. Everyone would drink and bit. But not the tank commander, he wanted his own. I did not have enough for anyone to just have their own. So, we just poured some in his tin cup before anyone drank from can.

As Jan of 1986 came around, our unit was to transition to M1 tanks. I did not like M1s, they were smaller inside and lower headroom. I could easily stand up in a M60A1 but could not in an M1. Also I had been telling my 1st Sgt I was not re-enlisting to extend past my Nov end of service date. I had been working for the NCO clubs and the manager of the club system had me apply to be manager for the Officers club. They currently did not have a manager and it would be a civilian position, so I had to apply to Heidelberg, the head of NAF, that managed the clubs and other services. I applied and the lists he kept getting for selection, did

Terry McPherson

not have my name on them.

The 1st Sgt really liked me and had been good to me, he wanted to send me to the E6 board and he promised to promote me as soon as I hit the required time of service for E6 which was just over 4 years. So basically, promising to promote me in 1987 and I would become a Tank Commander as an E6. But I was convinced I was going to run a club. So instead of having me go thru the M1 transition training, he released from my military duties and I ran the Officers Club until I shipped out in November.

Running the Officers club was great, I was in civilian clothes and working hours I wanted to work. I put on a "Dining In" for General Saint that had 100 officers and a lot of protocol to be observed. It was a great event. As November came along the different companies on base were reserving dates for their Christmas parties. I was told that it was first come first serve. One day an officers wife came in to make a reservation for a Friday night, but it was already taken. She was not happy and tried to coerce me with the fact she was Colonel someone's wife and I was to give her that date. I declined. It was funny, in the military, the wives all think they were the Colonel or General or Captain.... Being late November I had started clearing and turning in my military things. To do this I had to be in uniform. I was never in uniform in the club before. But on this day, I was in uniform and sitting at my desk, minding my own business. A

Terry McPherson

colonel walked in and came up to me desk, he saw I was a lowly E5. He started off with Sgt get on your feet. Like I was in his command. I went ahead and stood up, but did not salute. He said that he was mad because his wife told him I would not let her have the date she wanted for the company Christmas party. I confirmed he was right, that date was taken. He asked who it was that had that date. I told him it was an Accounting Company and reservation made by Captain, someone. He asked to use the phone. He called the Captain and said "He was Colonel and wanted to know what alternate date the Captain wanted for his company Christmas party." The poor Captain did not have a choice, so he changed his party to another date so the Colonel got to have the date he wanted.

I found it funny when I went out dancing to the German places. The bands sang all the songs I knew in English, but you would go up to chat with them and they did NOT speak any English. I found lots of gals to dance with and I had one gal that I danced with a lot and she kept telling me about this Ferrari she had but did not have it licensed so I never saw it. When I got my orders to ship out to the states, she said she would get it out for me to see. She came over and picked me up and let me drive it to go into town for lunch. I hardly had room for my size 13 feet in the floor board and not be stepping on two pedals at once. I was doing almost 200 km and still had two gears to go!!!

Terry McPherson

The club manager kept sending back lists for the O'Club Manager, hoping next one would have my name on it. But never got a selection list with my name on it for the manager of the club. A couple weeks later I shipped out to Ft Riley and was out processed from my military service. It was a learning experience and I actually had enjoyed most of it and should stayed in, but that is water under the bridge.