

One year in the history of a military intelligence organization.

SKIVVY NINE!

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1710.html?s=pdf>

Chapter One

IN THE BEGINNING.....

Wednesday, April 15th

There's a lot about this cattle drive they didn't tell me when I signed on. All I knew was I was about to become an Operations Superintendent. And not an Ops Supe at just any unit, but the Ops Supe of the 6903rd Electronic Security Group--the legendary SKIVVY NINE, the shit-hottest outfit in all of Electronic Security Command. It was a great job that any Chief Master Sergeant would want, and I got it. Well, I've been on the job a couple of weeks now, and I'm finding out it ain't all it's cracked up to be.

When I was a kid wearing one and two stripes, the Ops Supe was the old gray-haired guy that came around every Monday morning to make sure I had scrubbed and buffed the floors to his satisfaction. Sometimes he approved; sometimes he didn't. And when he didn't, I had to do it again. When I reached the point where I had people working for me, the Ops Supe was the fire breather I sent them to for a Major League ass chewing when they screwed up. When I entered the Senior NCO ranks, he was the ass-hole I had to push Airman Performance Reports (APR's) through to get them out of the unit.

I came here determined I would be more than that. I would be the *good* Ops Supe--dedicated to the mission, a role model for the enlisted force, champion of the underdog. But I'm finding there's a lot more to it than that, like covering my boss's ass.

His name is Major Kelly Weber. He's a good boss, but he's one of those "screw the paperwork--I've got a mission to run" type guys. That's all well and good, but when he's got 12 APR's and OER's

CMSgt T. Wyman Beal

(Officer Efficiency Reports) that are 30-60 days overdue, the Commander tends to get a little pissed. Since he's having a little trouble managing his time, I've decided that I'll go through his in-basket every day and pick out the things that *have* to be done, stack them in a neat little pile in the middle of his desk, and *make* him do those things. If I don't, the Commander is bound to have his ass sooner or later.

Thursday, April 16th

Major Weber's inattention to paperwork has caught up with him before I had a chance to implement my "in-basket plan." Every piece of correspondence that comes into the office comes across my desk for screening, including the things that are addressed to "The DO⁴." Today, there was a sealed envelope in my in-basket addressed to the DO, so I opened it to see what it was. It was a note from Colonel Dale Meade, the Group Commander, that said if the major didn't take care of those overdue APR/OERs, he (Col Meade) was going to write him (Maj Weber) a letter of reprimand. That's pretty serious stuff.

The Major was out of the office "directing the mission" (as usual), so I tracked him down and showed him the note. He didn't seem too concerned--just read it and said, "I've got to get to that."

I said, "Major Weber, we need to go back to the office and talk."

⁴ "DO" is an office symbol denoting "Director of Operations", more commonly referred to as the Ops Officer. Military people are creatures of jargon and routinely use office symbols in everyday conversation. It's also interesting to note that a person may be referred to by their office symbol. For example, a commander is often called "the CC", the executive officer is "the XO", and "the XP" is the plans and programs guy. You will see office symbols used throughout this memoir and a complete list of the ones used at SKIVVY NINE may be found in the Glossary of Terms.

SKIVVY NINE!

When we got behind closed doors, I laid down the facts of life. I told him the mission was important, but the paperwork was important too, and if he didn't stay on top of it, he was going to end up with his ass in a sling.

He said that as long as he's in the office, he keeps getting interrupted (phones ringing, people coming in to see him, taking care of crisis situations) and he just never seems to get around to writing those pesky APRs and OERs. What he said was true. So I convinced him that, starting Monday morning, his office is going to be his room in the Bachelor Officer's Quarters (BOQ). And he's going to stay there 'till those APRs/OERs are written! I'll take care of the ringing phones, the crisis situations, and the constant stream of people coming into and out of the office to see him.

I know all this makes the guy sound like a real jerk, but he's not. Really, he's a super guy, probably the *best* Ops Officer I've ever run across. He knows the mission like the back of his eyelids, everybody in the unit (except Col Meade) loves him, and he's extremely intelligent. What I've got to do is point him in the right direction, help him set his priorities, and then make sure he does the important jobs first.

Thursday, April 23rd

Last Tuesday was miserable! It was "kick off" day for the base's quarterly exercise. We had to be at work by 6:00 A.M., so it was out of the rack at 5:00 A.M. to get ready. One problem--no electricity. Fortunately, I had a portable radio, so I had noise. Even more fortunately, I had some candles, so I had light. Suffered through a cold shower (no electricity; no hot water) and headed out for work.

CMSgt T. Wyman Beal

It was raining--hard. It was cold--39 degrees. By the time I got to work, I was soaked from the knees down. A raincoat can only protect so much.

Once I got to work, I didn't come out 'till 6:00 o'clock that night. The building I work in is an underground bunker and is, supposedly, immune from chemical and conventional attack. So as long as I stayed inside, I didn't have to wear my "fear gear"--helmet, flak vest, web belt, canteen, gas mask, and other sundry protection from chemicals. But outside the bunker, the poor SOBs working on the flight line, Personnel Office, Finance, etc. have to wear that stuff from beginning to end of the exercise. If you get caught by an exercise monitor outside the bunker without your gear, or if you're wearing it improperly, you become a "casualty".

Becoming a casualty is not fun. The Security Police escort you to the gym and you spend the next 12 hours there, the first two wearing the gas mask. To make matters worse, there's no reading, no eating, no drinking, no smoking, no sleeping, no nothin'. So we're talking 12 *boring* hours.

Nineteen SKIVVY NINERs became casualties during the exercise. The reason I know the exact number is every time the SPs picked one up, they'd clear it through me before taking them to the gym. I had to make a determination if the casualties were *absolutely* mission essential. If they were, then the SPs would release them for work, but they had to return to the gym to finish out the sentence after duty hours. If they weren't, they went straight to jail. Under these conditions, you can understand why I stayed inside during the entire exercise. I wasn't about to become a "casualty".

SKIVVY NINE!

Friday, April 24th

The exercise ended today at 4:00 P.M. After four days of playing war, the whole base was in a party atmosphere. The 03rd had a hamburger/hot dog cookout by the SKIVVY NINE Lounge. It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon with temps in the high 60's (warm by Osan standards) and a good time was had by all.

Saturday, April 25th

Ventured into "the 'Ville" for the first time last night. Well, not exactly the first time. But the other times were during the day for the purpose of shopping or just getting oriented. Last night was for the singular purpose of carousing--running the bars; drinking whiskey; raisin' hell.

The community outside Osan Air Base is not Osan. It's Song Tan. Osan is a quaint little farming village almost 10 miles from the base. (So why don't they call it Song Tan Air Base? I don't know; maybe it's just an Air Force thing.)

Song Tan in daylight and Song Tan at night are two different places. During the day, it's a dirty, smelly, unpleasant place to be. But the night hides the dirt, an alcohol saturated brain dulls the sense of smell, and the neon lights and loud music pouring from open doorways of bars gives the place a festive, party time atmosphere.

The occasion for my nocturnal venture onto the wild side was a "bean run"⁵ Bean runs

⁵ A SKIVVY NINE tradition (God only knows why/how these things got started) that honors new arrivals to the unit and those who are about to leave. New arrivals are green beans--fresh, unsoiled, innocent--while those leaving after a year of sampling Oriental culture are brown beans--shriveled, gnarled, used-up people who will never be the same again.

CMStg T. Wyman Beal

are semi-organized affairs. A flier is circulated a few days before the run announcing the event and containing a list of honorees (green and brown) along with a schedule indicating which bars the run will hit and the time it will hit them. The schedule is especially helpful for those who choose to drop in and out of the run or poor unfortunates who sometimes get separated from the group during the transit from one bar to another. They simply check the schedule, find the next bar on the list, go there, and rejoin the run when it arrives.

Although the bars on the schedule vary widely from one bean run to the next, there's an unwritten rule that says all runs must begin at O.B. Up⁶ at 8:00 P.M. When I arrived at O.B. Up, not much was happening. A few guys and gals stood in a small wad by the bar, sipping on formaldehyde laced Korean beer and ignoring the bored looking Korean girl who gyrated aimlessly on the stage near-by. The rest of the joint was empty. They welcomed me with a "Yo Chief!," I purchased one of the rancid brews, and joined them in small talk and chit-chat.

So this was a bean run. Not much to it, so far as I could tell. At 8:25, there must have been some sort of signal, but damned if I know what it was. Talk stopped, bottles were drained, and everyone scurried out of O.B. Up and headed for Star Wars.

⁶ Up/Down Bars: Up/Down bars in Song Tan are common. There's O.B. Up, a huge cabaret style room with topless dancers and acid rock, super loud music. O.B. Down is a cozy little bar in the basement where you can kick back and chill out to some soft country sounds without being accosted by young ladies in tight fitting dresses and breath fowled by kimchee demanding you buy them a drink. The phenomenon is repeated at My House Up/Down, only reversed--hard rock in the basement, Country & Western upstairs. And then there's Miss Penny's Up/Down, Texas Bar Up/Down, and on and on. I don't know why--it's a Korea thing.

SKIVVY NINE!

At precisely 8:30, the bean run arrived at Star Wars and its number was doubled by runners waiting there. Beer was ordered all around, some dancing broke out, and frivolity began to take hold. This was starting to feel good. At 8:55, the O.B. Up routine was repeated, only this time on a larger scale. The mob filed out and headed for the Stereo Club.

The Stereo Club was jumping. The music fairly rattled the walls and the (count 'em) three dancers on the stage actually seemed to enjoy what they were doing. The dance floor was jammed with frenzied bodies, wriggling in the multicolored spotlights that illuminated them. I was hit up several times by working girls asking me to buy them a "juicy"⁷, but I graciously declined. They called me "Cheap Charley", but it didn't hurt much.

The bean run had reached full strength--about 50 people. Although some would be cut out of the herd by the expert manipulations of the working girls, our number would remain relatively constant the remainder of the evening. We might lose a few at the Stereo Club, but we'd pick up a few at the next place.

9:25--time to go! My House Down, Orient Express, the Silver Wings, the Club 88, and Ma Boogie's followed in quick succession. It was a party on the move. By the time we got to Ma Boogie's, the old gray haired Chief (that would be me) was pretty well shit-faced. But I wasn't alone. Everybody on the run was feeling no pain, but they weren't alone either. If you're a GI in Song Tan on Friday

⁷ Colored water with no alcoholic content in a pretty glass. There's two good reasons why there's no alcohol in a juicy; a hustling "hostess" could consume as many as 15 to 20 of these things in an evening and alcohol costs money. Naturally, management doesn't want their hostesses falling down, knee-walking, slobbering drunk, but more importantly, they want a large profit margin. A juicy can cost anywhere from three to five dollars (or whatever a hostess can wheedle out of a drunked-up GI), it's a hundred percent colored water and, therefore, a hundred percent profit.

CMSgt T. Wyman Beal

night at midnight, chances are you're so drunk you can't find your ass with RADAR. Last night was no exception.

There were two more bars on the bean run schedule after Ma Boogie's, but as the group left the place, I peeled off and began the long stumble back to the base. No one missed me; just another drop-out.

The main drag was packed with people just like me. They laughed, they cried, they whooped and hollered, they argued, they fought. Taxis and buses roared up and down the street, playing a deadly game of "dodge" with the revelers as they wandered from one side of the street to the other. I pressed forward against the crush, determined to get back to the base, back to my dorm, my room, and, most importantly, my bed.

I was making pretty good progress until I spotted Miss Lee's yaki-mandu stand. It is only one of many such contraptions parked along the curb of the main drag. They are stoves on wheels whose owners dispense all manners of grease permeated goodies to drunked-up GIs who roam the streets of Song Tan late at night. In the daylight, they disappear but, at night, they come out in droves.

Miss Lee's specialty is the soy burger. She bills them as hamburgers, but they are about 90 percent soy filler and 10 percent beef. I patiently waited my turn in front of the Golden Arches that decorated the canopy of her stand (Koreans have no compunction about breaking U.S. copyright laws), then placed my order and watched Miss Lee prepare the tasty morsel. Big globs of mayo and mustard on the bun; the "meat", a well done fried egg; shredded cabbage, sliced carrots, and radishes. Not exactly a Big Mac but, in my condition, it looked pretty darn good.

Miss Lee wrapped the fruits of her labor in aluminum foil and dropped it in a little plastic bag with handles. She handed me the

SKIVVY NINE!

bag, I gave her 1,000 Won, and resumed my trek toward the main gate of the base.

The taxi line started just inside the gate. It was long--real long--but it was three quarters of a mile to my dorm, and I wasn't about to walk (stumble) it. It would have been the old two steps forward, one step back routine, don't you know. It took 15 minutes to work my way to the front of the line and, while I waited, I swayed gently back and forth. But I didn't stand out; everybody swayed gently back and forth. A fella could probably get fairly sea sick just looking at that line.

Finally, I was next. The taxi swooped into the parking lot and screeched to a stop in front of me. I fumbled with the door handle but finally made it inside. When the driver asked me "where to", I was thankful my dorm number was 707--easy to remember. The driver floor-boarded the rickety old Buick Century, snapping my head back against the headrest and I clutched my Miss Lee Burger between my legs during the two minute ride to the dorm.

Inside, I snapped the cap on a Miller Lite (just what I needed), turned on the TV, sat down on the couch, and took the first bite of my midnight snack. The second bite never came. I woke up this morning with my face in the palm of my hand. It was kinda crowded in there because my face shared the space with the Miss Lee Burger. There was mustard, mayo, shredded cabbage, and congealed grease up my nostrils and in my eyebrows. My first night on the town--it was great!

One year in the history of a military intelligence organization.

SKIVVY NINE!

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1710.html?s=pdf>