

—NCO Corner—"Good old days"—

By R.K.A.Price

"Oh, hip-toe, hop-toe, wring out the mop-toe, left, o'right, o'le-eh-eft." Hey, remember the good old brown shoe army days? When no self respecting platoon in the army ever marched without rendering their own particular version of "Jody Cadence." "Oh, I had a girl in New Orleans, she had CENSORED in her jeans."

Army towns

When every town outside a major army post consisted of a bar, an Army-Navy store, a bar and so on. And the Courtesy Patrol all had billy clubs and used deuce and a half trucks to bring the over exuberant back to camp.

When it was easy to tell who had overdone it the night before by the smashed faces incurred by falling out of the back of the truck before it came to a complete stop in the company street.

Punishment

And remember who gave the punishment the next morning? Well, it wasn't little Lord Fauntleroy and it wasn't the company commander, either. It was the first-shirt, the top-kick, the first sergeant, who was also normally the meanest, toughest SOB in the outfit. He was the most mentally deviated when it came to devising the type of punishment to be administered.

"Alright, lads, each of you Saturday night heroes will report to the supply sergeant who will issue you long handled shovels. You will then repair to the second platoon barracks, and underneath the barracks, right in the middle, you will dig a hole six feet wide, both ways, and six feet deep." And anyone fool enough to mention to the first sergeant that there was only eighteen inches of clearance between the underside of the floor and the ground got to dig two days in a row. The mere mention of a six by six was enough to make strong men quake.



Then there was the ever popular scrubbing of the barracks stairs with a tooth brush until the wood took on a gleaming ivory hue. And the grease trap in the messhall that always needed cleaning.

If you were in Germany you had to apply through the chain of command for a pass every time you wanted to leave the Kaserne after duty hours, and you had to be back for midnight bedcheck.

On pass

An overnight pass was almost unheard of. They were reserved for guys who made Colonel's Orderly at Guard Mount a dozen consecutive times. And if you did, by some minor miracle, qualify for a pass of any kind, you didn't put on a pair of Levis and a sweat shirt, expecting the MP at the front gate to let you hit the strasse dressed like that, you put on a suit, white shirt and tie. Yes, even the privates, who only made seventy-four bucks a month.

Ah, the good old brown shoe days..hum, seventy-four bucks, bedcheck, six by six?...Hey, wait a minute, maybe things aren't so bad after all. (CSM Price is the Brigade Command Sergeant Major. He enlisted in the Army on January 23, 1953.)