

## CALLS MADE AND NOT RETURNED

In early 1978, I relieved Sam Linder as Superintendent, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. After the change of command ceremony, Bettye returned to our former home in Pensacola, and soon began shuttling between Pensacola and Washington to prepare for Debi and Brian's wedding to be held in Washington in May.

Following a suggestion by Sam Linder, I used some of the time before Bettye's return to get acquainted with government officials and other leaders in the community of Monterey. One such official was the Commanding General at Ft. Ord, located about 10 miles north of Monterey. Although I was senior to the general, I decided to get our relationship started off on the right foot, and to call on him first. On our way to the fort in a Navy staff car, my aide and Flag Lieutenant, Susan Stephenson, briefed me on the several local boards and committees that I would be serving on with the general.

About half way to the fort, along a fairly desolate stretch of road, smoke began pouring from under the hood of the staff car. We stopped and raised the hood, hoping to find a quick and easy solution, since we had little time to spare. There was no fire, but there was a great deal of smoke and steam, so we had to assume a radiator problem. This was before the days of cell phones, so calling for a replacement vehicle was not an option. About that time, an old pick up truck with a camper shell on the back stopped behind us, and a fellow sporting a beard and cut off jeans walked our way and said "Can I help you" I responded with thanks, and added that we were trying to figure out just what the problem was. He then said "It looks like a radiator hose problem to me. Now, that can either be good news or bad news. Let me go get a jug of water" He then went back to his truck, and returned with a five gallon container of water and said "Now if we pour this in the radiator and it doesn't all run out on the ground, the problem is with your upper radiator hose, and you're in luck. – You can drive it for a while. But if the water runs out on the ground, it's your lower hose, and you can't drive the car until you replace the lower hose." When he then filled the radiator, the

water promptly went on the ground, so he said “You’re not going anywhere with this car”

The next question from our Good Samaritan was “Where are you going?” and I responded that I was headed for Fort Ord. His reply was “Well, I’m going that way, hop in” After I told my aide that I would get help on the way as soon as I reached a phone, and to pick me up at Ft. Ord as we had planned, we set off for the fort. My new driver then asked “Where are you going on the fort?” I hadn’t been on Fort Ord for many years, so I replied “Well, let’s just look for a flagpole” We soon spotted a flagpole, along with a sign reading “Headquarters U.S. Army, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division”, and just beyond that, a small welcoming party in dress uniforms, along with an Army captain at the ready.

I asked my new driver if he could pull up to where the welcoming party was standing, and said “Thanks so much for your help today, and don’t pay any attention to what I say when I get out of your truck” After he stopped and I got out, the aide was barking commands and rendering honors, and just before I slammed the rickety door of the truck, I called out “Thanks, driver. Pick me up in about 20 minutes.” I then returned the salutes of the captain and his honors detail and headed for the general’s office.

My call on the general was very pleasant, and nothing was said about my transportation problem. He asked no questions about my unusual arrival, and I offered no explanations. We talked about our mutual roles in the local community, and I extended an invitation to lunch at the Postgraduate School the following week in honor of Admiral Jim Stockdale. After about 20 minutes, the Army captain stuck his head in the door and said “Admiral, your aide and car are here” . When I heard him say “aide”, I knew that everything was OK, so I said my good bys and took my leave.

I again saluted the captain and the honors detail, and departed in my navy staff car, all without any explanation. As we drove away, I had the thought that the Army aide and the members of his honors detail would probably recount their experiences with the Navy admiral at many a “happy hour” for years to come.