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Memories of Basic Training Phase I at Ft. Benning, GA, 1987.

(updated 26 Sep 2024)

Enlisting – 29 Apr 1987, Officially

- Being I was 17, my Parents had to sign off on the paperwork.
- The Recruiter was supposed to get the Signatures.
- I was sent home with the Paperwork, my Parents signed it, and I returned it.

Reception

- I flew in on Thursday 2 July 1987
- It was 4th of July Weekend, and Travel was a Debacle. Last Leg by Bus instead of Plane.
- We arrived at Reception at Ft. Benning, GA, late in the day, and they were not expecting us.
- Ft. Benning was not expecting 1,000's of us to show starting Wednesday 1 July 1987.
- I do not remember what we did for five days.
- We watched the movie, Full Metal Jacket, and had to build Bunk Beds as everybody arrived.
- We were sent to Training from Reception on Tuesday 7 July 1987, first wave.

First Day

- Since they were not expecting us, nor so many of us, they re-opened Harmony Church.
- Harmony Church was the old WWII Barracks, no air conditioning, 100% "open" bathrooms, etc.
- Harmony Church was a good drive from the new Barracks at Sand Hill, very modern.
- We were driven out to Harmony Church in Cattle Trucks, literally.
- Cattle Trucks were our Transportation during Training.
- When we got off the Cattle Trucks, we got the usual Drill Sargent screaming.
- We emptied our personal bags and then repacked them and put them away for the duration.
- We then got "hosed down" from head-to-toe and forced to drink a canteen of water.
- We were told that we had to "run" every time we were outside going between buildings, etc.
- They "drilled" into us that we were "Property of the US Government", over and over again.
- We were told that they could kill us and that nobody would care, as we were Property.

Training

- Odd sayings... "Kill a Commie for Mommie!" and "Kill Them All! Let God Sort Them Out!"
- We had "zero" interaction with other Trainees on Base, as we were "separated" at Harmony Church.
- We rarely got more than a couple of minutes to eat, and less if transportation arrived early.
- From above, Showers were "open", and even the Toilet and Sink areas was wide open, no stalls.
- We got a lot of Vaccines over 2 days via Air Guns, both arms at a time sometimes.
- We were forced to eat something they called Salt Petre, brown fudge like chunk, to limit our Libido.
- Gas Chamber Training, aka Experience, utilized a "mild" form of "Sarin Gas", still legal in 1987.
- The Gas Chamber Experience varied by Trainee, as some were forced to stay inside longer.
- The Gas Chamber Experience required we take off the gas mask, sound off, and breath in the gas.
- Sarin is a Neurotoxin, banned in 1997, and destroys the nervous system, not the lungs, via Skin, etc.!
- We did all Training and 10-mile Rucksack march on very high "Heat Index" days. Georgia in Jul/Aug.
- During the 10-mile march, the guy next to me collapsed and I traveled to Medical Services with him.
- They finished the 10-mile march, then we went to Medical Services, in a deuce and a half.
- He was in a Coma 3-days, resulting in Brain Damage, and I was a Lecture for the Mass we had for him.

Other

- Ft. Benning was "Locked Down" that Summer. Why? I don't know...
- I heard of at least 3 Deaths that Summer, including a Ranger Trainee.
- Our Company, Charlie, over 200 Trainees, had a high "Drop Out Rate", like others. Lots of Psych issues.
- Since we were Split Option for the ARNG, we did not get DD 214's, as we were Active less 90 days!
- We got DD 220's, not recognized by VA for Benefits, NGB 22's when Released. (PACT Act Expansion?)