

HISTORY ACCOUNTS – Steve Kelley

What a Surprise!

In early 1972, I was performing my first of two 90 day terms as Maintenance Material Supply Clerk, while with VMFA-251.

During that period, we were granted the honor of a surprise IG inspection. One day, a team of inspectors came into my section and amusingly proceeded to literally tear down my acoustical ceiling tiles. Imagine our 'shock and awe' surprise, when down came a pile of old F4-U Corsair parts!!!

And guess who was tasked with getting them back into the Supply system? Here I was trained to be a Hyd/Pneu Mech.! That earned me my first of several 'atta-boys!' while with '251, along with E-4, and another 90 days as MMC Clerk.

Who's the Boss?

Shortly before my first 90 days as MMC clerk ended, we received a new boot 2nd Lieutenant, straight out of Supply School. Which is why I was asked to do another 90 days; to train him.

Bummer! But I was the only person who knew the most about it.

Right off the assembly line, this young fellow started throwing his new shiny gold bar around as my OIC, trying to change the way I did things. I say 'young', actually he was about my same age. Just still wet.

I tried to patiently tolerate him. just do my 90 days. Till one day he went off on me about something, stepping on my last nerve.

I jumped up, got in his face like a drill instructor, and told him, " Now listen here Lieutenant, I'm Corporal Kelley, I'm the NCOIC of this shop, I run things around here, I'm the Boss! And if you don't like it, you can go tell the Major!"

Now, every one who remembers me, especially those who were officers, would also remember that I wasn't known to be very 'tactful'. Such a fine line. But, you guessed it, that's exactly what that Lieutenant did!

Went straight into the Major's office and, funny as all get out, stood there like old Barney Fife in front of Andy, just ranting and raving. telling the Major what I'd done and said.

Now the Major, who had heard the whole exchange, simply sat there, continuing to do some paper work, until the Lieutenant ran out of breath. Then he looked up and calmly said, "Is that what Corporal Kelley said?". "Yes Sir!". "Well then," said the Major, "you better listen to him, because I'm the one who put him there".

Oh, the jaw drop of disbelief! That Lieutenant came strutting out past me, face redder than a beet. And I rarely even saw him again.

A few minutes later, the Major called me into his office, and jokingly said "Kelley, when are you going to learn to use tact"? Now, I ain't saying that that's how I earned it, but at the end of that second 90 days as MMC clerk, I was awarded my second "atta-boy!"

And, I was offered E-5, IF, I would transfer over to HAMS, to work in what was then called CCU. I had to turn that one down, wanting to stay with '251 and work in the field I was trained for; which was Hydraulics/Pneumatics. And besides that, those less fortunate fellows were standing UD inspections every morning and running a PFT every week! Horrors!!

And Lieutenant, if you're still out there and reading this account, I sincerely apologize for treating you like a raw recruit. But I had a job to do, and you were. Like the rest of us, you just had to learn the hard way; " Forget what they taught you in school!"