

Characters I met in the Air Force

Here are a few stories about some of the characters I met in my Air Force years. One of the most memorable was a young man from Mississippi who was in our language school. Although very smart, he lacked common sense. His mother, for instance, didn't allow him to ride his bicycle across the street at home. So, he was really excited to be able to ride anywhere he wanted in Bloomington, IN. As a matter of fact, he rode directly into a building one time. Another student at Indiana had a strange love for trains. He memorized the local train schedule and would be out of bed about 2:00 so he could go watch the train go through Bloomington. He washed out of advanced language training when he went nuts claiming that our instructor was trying to strangle him. Another young man from a very wealthy family in Texas decided that he wanted some Indiana rocks, so instead of putting his clothes to be shipped home, he sent a bag of rocks. Another friend of mine was almost blind, how he got into the Air Force is beyond me. When walking on a sidewalk and someone was coming, he could not see well enough to know if it was an officer to whom he had to salute. He got chewed out several times for not saluting. He was the top of the class in language school. Of course, the Air Force later determined he was not fit for service and got a medical discharge.

Once I got to Japan I found more interesting people. One career enlisted man once saw a train on the tracks near Tokyo and got in and drove it to the next town. Of course, he was court-martialed and demoted. I don't know of anyone else who 'stole a train'. He was also the best Russian intercept person we had. He could hear Russian through any amount of static. He was the only person able to listen during one of our sun spot days. Some of us turned on the speaker on his radio receiver and we could not hear what he did. Perhaps the most dangerous event that happened during one my work shifts. Whenever we copied intel where the Russians said that they had their radar locked onto a target aircraft, we had to immediately contact the aircraft. This was all done with coded messages. He apparently used the wrong code and told an aircraft still on the runway near Tokyo that a Russian MIG was about to shoot him down. It took a Colonel to solve the crisis. Finally, a couple of my friends and I were driving up a mountain when the left rear wheel fell off. The main nut holding the wheel to the axle came off. Of course, we did the only thing we could. We finger tightened the nut and continue over the mountain. The wheel only fell off one more time before we returned to the base. We all survived.