

## HOW BEING EDITOR OF THE *ARGUS* PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE

When I first went to Korea I led an infantry platoon in a combat zone. One night I led a patrol into no man's land between the Chinese lines and our lines. It was the new moon, so bright we cast shadows.

We set up our ambush on a well traveled path. After three hours in that position with zero traffic on the path, we began the return to our lines. Walking along the dike in the middle of long abandoned rice paddies, my platoon sergeant suddenly came up behind me, and grabbed my shoulder. Leaning forward he hissed, "Stop, lieutenant!" Then he pointed some three feet ahead. There, sticking up from the ground were quite visible land mines. Our patrol route had taken us into an uncharted mine field.

I immediately gave the signal for the patrol to turn around. When we found another path leading to our position, we took it.

In the debriefing session with the battalion operations officer, I said that we had encountered a mine field and I changed the patrol route to avoid it. The operations officer was incensed. "You were given a patrol route and you should have taken it," he said.

I countered, "Sir, the patrol route took us into a mine field."

Looking at his map, the Ops officer said, "There's no mine field."

"I saw the mines, sir. They were sticking out of the ground."

"You were supposed to follow the route."

"Not into a mine field"

This exchange went on for some minutes and was getting nowhere.. Finally, I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but if you want to give field orders, you should go out in to the field." With that, I got up and left.

A few hours later, around 0700, the field phone in my bunker rang. My platoon sergeant answered it. Grimacing and rolling his eyes upward he said, "It's regiment for you."

"Oh no," I thought. "That Ops officer has bucked this up to regiment. Now what?"

"Lieutenant Allison here, sir," I said.

"Captain Phipps, regimental adjutant here. (Pause) Allison, I have your file open in front of me."

"Great," I thought "What's he going to do, send me to the front? I'm already there." Instead, I simply said, "Yes sir."

“I see you were editor of your college paper.”

Totally surprised, I managed to respond “Yes, sir, I was.”

“I see you wrote for the Associated Press.”

“Yes, sir, I did sports assignment for the AP after I graduated.”

“And, I see you have a teachers certificate.”

“Yes, sir, I have an Illinois teachers certificate.”

“Allison, get your gear and get to the bottom of the hill. My jeep will pick you up in twenty minutes. I’ve cleared this with your company commander and you’re now a member of regimental staff.”

Turning to my platoon sergeant, who thought I was being court-martialed, I said simply, “See ya’ around, Harry.” With that, I gathered up my gear and went to the bottom of the hill.

And thus, I was out of the firing line and into a much safer rear position, all because I edited my college newspaper and understood press releases.

What I didn’t know was that the incumbent regimental public relations officer had authored a monumental screw-up and was fired. So, the regiment was looking for a replacement PIO. I also didn’t know two other things: (1) There is no authorized public information officer at the regimental level, it is an additional duty of the troop information and education officer, (the teachers certificate simply made it look legitimate) and (2) The authorized grade is that of major.

Well, I didn’t get the promotion to major but, thanks to the *Argus*, I lived through the rest of the war in relative comfort and safety.