

On the Corner – “So long, Sue (for now)”

by Bob Docter

Has it been 20 years? No! It can't be. And now you say your going to retire.

For someone who knew the Army only through the red pot and the white truck, you sure were a fast learner. Soon, you became totally immersed in this great organization with such remarkable potential and went to work telling its story.

We've both been at this for a long time and have become good friends and colleagues. We've occupied three different offices in three different buildings – even moved across town for the last trip.

The Army has been good to us and it's been a fun job. I never thought I'd still be here with you gone. It will definitely be different.

The work sure has changed over the years – from cut and paste with copy from typewriters to the digital age. You have facilitated that progress in a wonderful way. We've worked with a number of people in a very small staff over the almost 30 years this paper has been happening. Both the staff and the paper have grown a little, but still, everyone has to do everything. You have greatly aided the “focus maintenance” issue and kept us on track.

I've gotta tell you, when you moved to Bend a few years ago it was a real blow to my planning, but only for a week or so. I quickly saw that you still had your finger in every pie, helping mind the store, ready with your grease gun and oil can, working to make the place run smoothly. Even though working remotely, I never felt an absence of strong positive communication and regular check-ins. In news budget meetings you were always helpful – shared good ideas, explored procedural details, and your deft skills with the money budget will definitely be missed greatly. The telephone made you a voice from on high.

These last few years have provided us with great transition experience. During the times each month that your weekly visit brought us together, you helped train us in completing essential tasks, in organizational management, in examining details and in relating to the territorial leadership. If you hadn't managed our budget we'd have been in serious trouble.



You've been a magnificent traveler, and your handy credit card was perfect air transport if I wanted to send you somewhere in the world to examine the Army response to some natural or man-made disaster. You always wanted to go.

I've counted up all the countries you have visited. I think the total number is somewhere around 15 or so. You've done much to make us an international publication with a USA West slant. Your stories were remarkable, accurate, and helpful to all concerned. When I gave you the title of "editor at large" you validated the expertise such a label assumes. You really write well, and your reporting skills place you in rare company. You can dig out a story and report it quickly with a combination of lightning speed and writing excellence. I've lost track of the number of eight page inserts you've written. I know you've been to every division in the West several times. As our newly elected General, Shaw Clifton, was about to assume leadership of the Army you interviewed him in London. The product allowed him to make public to our readership his point of view on a number of important issues.

You always wanted to be at the center of action – enjoyed long plane rides, sitting around airports and even barely escaping from a riotous crowd in Haiti. In Bosnia you reported on the Army's effort to reconcile centuries of tribal hostility and help people in the process. From floating aloft at a New Mexico balloon festival to open air excitement in Cuba; from Tanzanian brothels to the Army's caring and compassionate work at ground zero, you have caught the essential aspects of every story, told it beautifully, and gave us pictures that made us feel we were there with you.

Thanks much – I'll miss you. A journalistic tradition holds that the number–30–signals an ending of a piece of copy. I'm not writing it here. I'll only write ...29!