

The Rat

By Andy Gueck (2016)

One evening as I was returning to my billets from another part of the base, I walked past the A Company Alert Barracks. Suddenly I could hear a commotion inside, far beyond the normal roar. “Do I want to see what is going on? Should I call the 1SG, or just ignore it and go drink beer? Do I really need to get involved with this shit?”

I walked to the door, opened it, and stepped inside. The barracks held about 20 troops and all were at one end of the room, being held hostage by a rat. Now those of you who have never seen a S.E. Asian rat, they are about 6-8 inches tall at the shoulder and could walk through a building calling, “Here kitty, kitty.”

Upon seeing the mess inside, I asked, “Who is in charge?”

A young soldier responded from the scrum with, “I believe I am Sargent.”

“What the hell is going on in here.”

“Well SGT, PFC Holmes’ mother sent him a pellet gun from home, and he thought he could kill this rat that has invaded our billet.”

“What kind of stupid is occupying these quarters? A pellet gun is not going to do any more than just piss off your rat if you do hit and wound it, and now you all are facing the consequences.”

Now I was armed with my normal on base weapon, a M1911, .45 caliber pistol. A standard issue weapon for some members of the US Military. Much easier to carry than an M16 rifle. I moved so there was nothing beyond the rat but an empty wall, and removed my pistol from its holster and shot the rat. Now upon impact, there was bits and pieces of rat scattered over most of the billets. I holstered my weapon, turned and walked out of the billets and immediately entered the A Company Orderly Room (where the Commander and the 1ST had their offices). I told the young soldier on duty to contact the Staff Duty Officer, the 1SG, and the Commander to inform them that a weapon was discharged in the Company area. Then follow their instructions.

Within 10 minutes, the Orderly room and immediate area was inundated with people wanting to know what was going on. The Military Police even showed up to check on the report of a weapons discharge. Finally, the Commander, 1SG, Staff Duty Officer and I were in the Commander’s office, and I was explaining again what had happened and why I had discharged a weapon on base. I looked the CO directly in the eye and said, “Captain, if I had not done something, you probably

would have been missing part if not all of your reaction force due to wounds incurred from assault by rat.”

The 1SG was struggling to keep a straight face, and the CO just broke into laughter. He responded, “SGT Gueck, thank you for rescuing my troops, but next time please find a better means than shooting. They will be up all night cleaning the rat parts out of their barracks.”

“Yes Sir. I will do my best, Sir.”

At this point, the Staff Duty informed me that I was expected in his office at 0800 hours the next day do see the Post Commander. “Yes Sir, I will be there. Am I dismissed?”

The 1SG looked at me answering, “Gueck, get the hell out of here and drink a beer for me.”

“Will do, Top.”

The next morning, I was waiting for 0800 hours when my immediate Commander and the Post Commander arrived and after saluting them, was told to follow them into the Colonel’s office. The Command Sargent Major brought coffee for everyone, and we were all told to be seated. The Colonel looked at me, shaking his head. “Gueck, you do not look like a rat murderer, but according to my A Company Commander and my Staff Duty, you most certainly are. What do you have to say for yourself?”

“Sir, I was just trying to restore order and save the lives of those idiot troops.”

At that point, the entire office was overcome with laughter. The Colonel looked at my Commander and stated, “Major, he is one of yours; deal with him, but I think it was well done. Sgt Major, your opinion?”

“Sir, the look on those troops this AM was priceless. All night cleaning and hoping that they got it all, and the young man who formerly owned the pellet gun was being ignored by everyone. I think it is handled, Sir.”

“Gueck, get out of my office and try to restrain your urge to shoot rats in the future.”

“Yes, Sir.”

And as the saying goes, “No Good Deed Ever Goes Unpunished.”