

Christmas Every Month on Smoke Bomb Hill



COL Charles H. Karlstad
& 3rd Army SSI.



COL Aaron Bank &
Airborne Command SSI

Colonel (COL) Charles H. Karlstad, a combat infantryman in WWI and WWII, was an ‘Old Army’ soldier who firmly believed that close order drill and ceremonies instilled pride and discipline in military formations. It was an integral part of the Infantry School curricula at Fort Benning, GA, where as the Chief of Staff he was selected by Brigadier General (BG) Robert A. McClure, the Army Chief of Psychological Warfare (Psywar), to be the first Commandant of the newly established Psywar Center at Fort Bragg, NC. Its [Special Forces (SF) and Psywar] units had different shoulder sleeve insignia (SSI)/patches. However, lacking distinctive unit insignia (DUI)/crests, COL Karlstad directed that colored scarves, a long time decorative accoutrement, be worn at the monthly reviews.¹

COL Aaron Bank, Chief, Special Forces (SF) Branch and Executive Officer at the Psywar Center; and the Commander, 10th SFG, chose burgundy scarves/ascots for his SF soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Lester L. Holmes, commander, 6th Radio Broadcasting & Leaflet (RB&L) Group, and LTC John O. Weaver, Chief, Psywar Branch at the Psywar Center, selected green for their scarves/ascots. The Headquarters Detachment of the Psywar Center also wore green scarves. Unit fund-purchased scarves for enlisted soldiers became “company fund property” to be turned in when transferred, “or paid for at the cost price.”² It was the Psywar soldiers of the 6th RB&L Group who labeled COL Karlstad’s monthly reviews on Smoke Bomb Hill as the ‘Christmas Parades’ based on the colors of the scarves worn by the two elements—themselves and the SF soldiers.

“Once a month the 8th Mobile Radio Broadcast Company, 6th Radio Broadcast and Leaflet Group (RB&L) marched in the ‘Christmas Parades’ with the Special Forces. COL Karlstad, the Psywar Center Commandant, was the reviewing officer. In the parades we wore green ascots and bloused combat boots. The SF did not like that we bloused our boots for the ‘Christmas Parades.’ We wore Third Army shoulder patches, but had no unit crest. They wore WWII Airborne Command patches and hissed ‘Legs’ at us when marching by. The 6th RB&L soldiers, surrounded and outnumbered by the SF on Smoke Bomb Hill, avoided their unit areas and favorite service clubs,” recalled former Corporal (CPL) Hans R. Ulander, a Swedish immigrant Army radio broadcaster who received his citizenship at Fort Bragg, NC, in August 1952.³

“Those monthly ‘Red & Green Parades’ gave us something to do. We marched better than the Special Forces did and our basketball team, the ‘Psychos,’ always beat theirs. We won the Fort Bragg championship in 1953,” remembered former Private First Class (PFC) Martin J. ‘Marty’ Paul, a pressman in the 6th RB&L.⁴

The ‘Christmas Parades’ were one of the rare times when the Psywar and Special Forces soldiers did something together. A few years later, COL Edson D. Raff was relieved as the Psywar Center Commandant by Major General (MG) Paul D. Adams, the XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg commander, for permitting the 77th SFG to parade in green berets after being told that SF would not wear them on post.⁵ MG Adams had been the Executive Officer of the airborne First Special Service Force (FSSF) during WWII, the official lineage unit for Special Forces.⁶ Interestingly, SF and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) were both assigned a shade of green as their branch color by the Department of Defense Institute of Heraldry: Forest Green for SF and Bottle Green for PSYOP. **▲ CHB**

Endnotes

- 1 Headquarters (HQ), The Psychological Warfare Center, Ft Bragg, NC, “Memorandum Number 15: WEARING of SCARVES,” dated 17 November 1952; Michael E. Krivdo, “Right Man for the Job: Colonel Charles H. Karlstad, Veritas, Vol. 8, No. 1, 82-83.
- 2 HQ, The Psychological Warfare Center, Ft Bragg, NC. Memorandum Number 15: WEARING of SCARVES dated 17 November 1952; 6th Radio Broadcast & Leaflet Group, *The Psyn Post*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Friday, 12 September 1952, Henry Bast, 8th Mobile Radio Broadcast Company, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 26 May 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 3 Former CPL Hans R. Ulander, 8th Mobile Radio Broadcast Company, 6th Radio Broadcast and Leaflet Group, interview by Briscoe, 21 October 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 4 Former PFC Martin J. Paul, 6th RB&L Group, interview by Briscoe, 23 November 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 “7th Special Forces Group (A) History 1942-2013,” 5.
- 6 U.S. Army. Field Manual (FM) 3-18: Special Forces Operations (28 May 2014), 1-7.

HEADQUARTERS
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE CENTER
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

MEMORANDUM
NUMBER 15

17 November 1952

WEARING OF SCARVES

1. The wearing on ceremonial occasions, when prescribed by this headquarters or by unit commanders, of burgundy colored scarves by personnel of the 10th Special Forces Group (Abn), and the wearing of green scarves by the personnel of the 6th RB&L Group and its attached units, and of Headquarters Detachment The Psychological Warfare Center, is hereby authorized as an additional item of the uniform.

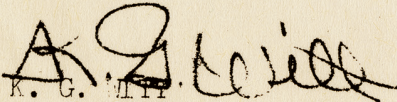
2. Unit commanders will authorize the purchase of scarves for enlisted personnel of their units from available unit funds. Scarves so purchased will become company fund property and, when issued, will be turned in by individuals at such time as they are transferred from the unit, or paid for at the cost price.

3. To insure uniformity of scarves within units, major unit commanders will direct the procurement of scarves of appropriate color for their units. It is suggested that the necessary sewing involved in the making of the scarves be done by hire, using a simple form of competitive bidding.

BY ORDER OF COLONEL KARLSTAD:

OFFICIAL:

R. W. BEYER
Lt Col, Arty
Adjutant


K. G. MILLER
Capt, AGC
Asst Adjutant

DISTRIBUTION:
"A"

Memorandum Number 15

The original letter from LTC R. W. Beyer, of the Psychological Warfare Center, outlines the wearing of scarves as directed by COL Charles H. Karlstad.

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17 Nov 52
WHL