

78th QM Base Depot

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I recently bought a large group of personal papers of an officer who served as a member of the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea circa 1947. The collection includes a lone issue of *XXIV Corps Korea Graphic*, an official weekly newspaper published by XXIV Corps TI&E Section to provide U.S. occupation troops in Korea with hometown and world news, as well as local news and current events of day-to-day interest to *Korea Graphic* readers. By a great stroke of luck, an article in this issue of *Korea Graphic* covered an obscure USAFIK support unit of particular interest to me: 78th Quartermaster Base Depot.

Several years ago, I acquired a Japanese made XXIV Corps SSI with integral "Korea" tab and bullion inscription "78th QM" and Quartermaster Corps insignia (Figure 1). This SSI obviously was Korea occupation vintage, however, not until I finally read about the unit in *Korea Graphic* did I discover exactly where it was located and what its missions were. It turns out that XXIV Corps "chair-borne" troopers were the grateful beneficiaries of the ingenuity and efforts of two highly skilled members of 78th QM Base Depot: T/Sgt James Pfeuffer and T3 Glenn Owens, who introduced USAFIK to the concept of mobile typewriter service and repair.

On November 2, 1947, the *Korea Graphic* featured a story titled "Mobile Typewriter Repair Unit Built and Operated by two EM." Both T-3 Owens and T/Sgt Pfeuffer presented to their C.O. the benefits of having a mobile repair facility which

brought their expertise (typewriter repair) to the field rather than having the machines sent to Inchon's Korea Base Command which was also home to the 78th QM Base Depot (Figure 2). The argument was convincing and received the blessing of the XXIV Corps HQ sometime during the summer of 1947. "It took only one week to pick up the old mobile unit truck. Scrounging and salvaging; repairing and painting kept both Owens and Pfeuffer busy for almost a month. In August the unit was ready to roll, complete with vises, grinders, a lathe, drill press, a pump and a new Ford 4 cylinder generator mounted in a trailer," writes T5 Byron Newman (author of the *Korea Graphic* article). Owens and Pfeuffer were no strangers to one another and had spent over two and a half years together in Wisconsin at Camp McCoy running the typewriter repair shop there prior to being assigned to the 78th QM Base Depot in Korea. These guys knew what they were doing, had a plan and used their skills to help them become mobile (as surely no others in their unit could had even dreamt of accomplishing) and gave them the unlimited ability to travel throughout U.S. Occupied Korea. This sure beats the drab confines of a static warehouse in the middle of the Korea Base Command.

"The men travel to all points where repair work is needed and turn out an average of 10 or more machines per day. They plan to cover the 6th Division area this winter to relieve the aching and aging typewriters down in the outfits. This removes the in-

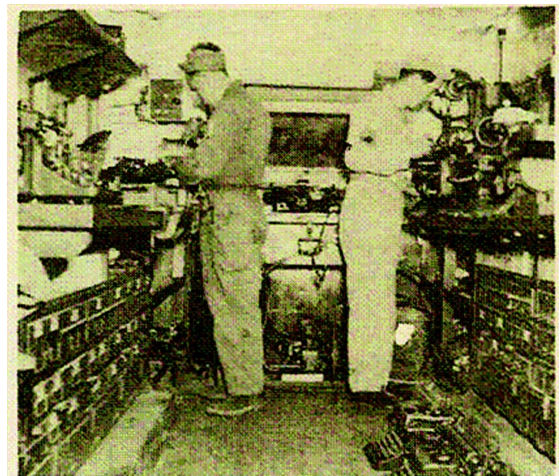
convenience of having them sent to Inchon for work and saves much wear and tear on the machines," continues T-5 Newman. Like in all aspects of life patience is a virtue and not all men were created equal, especially when it comes down to malfunctioning typewriters! Stuck keys, non-returning carriages, mis-striking keys, non-feeding ribbons, etc...did not have the sympathy of the end user and surely the fate was at the end of a hand held hammer. "The machines we have seen so far are pretty bad," T/Sgt Pfeuffer stated. "One of the more common mistakes made by personnel in Korea is trying to repair the machines without experience and then being unable to put them back together again. Owens and Pfeuffer have found several instances where the typewriter was presented to them in many pieces," finalizes T5 Newman.

T3 Owens and T/Sgt Pfeuffer remained in Korea saving the fate of many typewriters at the end of a hammer until the end of the USAFIK operations in 1949. It remained being one of a very few office machine repair units in Korea and was in great demand especially when office personnel learned that a mobile unit was hitting the trail. Efforts were being made to develop another "mobile typewriter repair unit" to help handle the work load that the two encountered at the time of the article but it is unknown if it had actually materialized. The order of the day as suggested by T/Sgt Pfeuffer, "Keep your typewriters in good working condition at all times, clean it every morning and oil it at least once a week." Ha! If that ever happened.



Figure 1. XXIV Corps SSI w/ 78th QM Base Depot insignia

XXIV Corps Korea Graphic newspaper photo showing the two GIs at work



Left to right, T/3 Glenn Owens and T/Sgt James J. Pfeuffer are at work in their mobile typewriter repair unit.