

John:

Thanks for the update on Gunny Smith. I also believed he had passed away many years ago. I ran into the Gunny many times over the years in DC.

My first time was after a golf tournament at the old Washingtonian CC. My foursome had finished early and I walked into the dining room, which was set up for the luncheon. I remember checking out the chow line and started to grab a seat when a voice boomed out "touch my place settings and you're in trouble Cpl." I immediately recognized the voice but could not believe it was Gunny Smith. When I turned around there he stood with his arms folded across his chest and a big smile. We had a big laugh.

Saw him over the years at Chamber events then he disappeared.

Gunny Smith was also with our Platoon when we made the goodwill trip to South America onboard CVA-61, USS Ranger. A great trip with lots of laughs. Our last stop was Lima, Peru. We got liberty and after making the rounds of the local establishments headed back to the hotel. When we got there the Gunny, a bit on the tipsy side, had lined up the kitchen staff and was holding an inspection. Poor people didn't know if he was serious or dangerous so they went along.

Finally, when we crossed the Equator on the Ranger we were initiated into Neptune's Realm by the swabbies. One of the things they did was to cut their version of a quatrefoil onto our heads. Our next port was Rio de Janeiro and the Gunny appointed me the Barber to fix us up before we went on liberty in Rio. I told him I had never cut hair before and he calmly said "learn". After we got back to the Barracks from the trip coincidentally the Post barber had an accident and the Gunny volunteered me to fill in for him and I was assigned to the Barbershop for several months as the barber. That lasted until someone figured that I was getting tips and had become one of the best paid PFC's in the Corps - - - and the Gunny ended that.

Many fond memories of him and I pray for his soul and hope he will rest in Peace. Well done Marine and Semper Fi!

Joe Westner