

GEEIA Life Guards

by

Roger Wyatt

When "Heavy Duty" Roberts and I graduated from Tech School at Keesler AFB, we were given a "dream sheet" form to fill out with three choices for our permanent duty station assignment.

We were aware that many of our friends from the classes before ours had requested England, Germany and Spain, and they had all been sent to either Tule, Greenland, Kwajalein Island in the Pacific or Tripoli, Libya.

We talked about that and decided if we were going to go to one of those places, at least we should be realistic and choose the least offensive one as our first choice on that "dream sheet." I can't stand the cold (that's why I now live in Florida), and "Heavy Duty" was claustrophobic and could not imagine living on an Island, so the number one choice on our "Dream Sheet" was Tripoli, Libya. We thought at least we might get a little R&R time in Europe while we were stationed in Libya.

We arrived at Wheelus AFB, Libya on a Thursday, the first of February 1960. On Friday, we were sent out to dig post holes in the Sahara Desert. On Saturday, we were walking around our new base and talking about how we could get out of digging more post holes in that miserable desert. We walked by the Base Special Services Office and decided to go in and check on services available at Wheelus. It was a really nice base, with a beach, swimming pool, bowling alley, and its own television station.

We could not have had better luck at Wheelus. Special Services discovered that I was a Red Cross Water Safety Instructor and the only one on the base at the time. They requested GEEIA put me on temporary assignment to Special Services to run the base beach and pool programs and allowed me to hire "Heavy Duty" as a Life Guard!

From February to June of 1960, "Heavy Duty" and I Life Guarded the Wheelus dependents at the beach and pool.

In June 1960, the squadron at Wheelus was broken up and relocated, half of us went to Madrid and half to Greece. I was in the group for Madrid, mostly because I had taken high school Spanish and could manage a few words in the language. I think Harry Poteet knew a little Spanish as well, since we were the first two GEEIA members to go (via Rome) to Madrid.

"Heavy Duty" came in July and in September 1960, bought a black Volkswagen from someone who was rotating back to the CONUS. The two of us went to the Salvador Auto Agency near the Hotel Balboa in Madrid to buy insurance for the Volkswagen. That's where I met my wife, and we were married two years later. We returned to the states in July of 1963 where I was discharged, so I could go back to college and work on my Electronic Engineering degree.