

A Short Visit to a Korean Farm

I have never forgotten an incident that happened nearly fifty years ago to the day. I was a reluctant warrior, recalled to active duty during the Korean War, six months married and in my junior year at college. Our battalion CO had ordered a contingent to go on ahead to prepare a forward campsite for his headquarters.

The contingent consisted of a young 2nd Lieutenant in charge, the 1st Sergeant, myself as Company Clerk, and 15 or 20 foot soldiers. We set off across the rugged hills and soon came upon a farmhouse with a boy of seven or eight sitting on the small front porch. An old cow whose hide hung on it like an oversized coat stood in the yard staring vacantly at us.

A GI who fancied himself a joker, jumped up on the cow, pretending to be a rodeo rider. The cow stumbled a few yards and quickly broke a leg. The joker, feeling stupid now, performed what was supposed to be an act of mercy by shooting the cow. The whole scene displayed nothing but brutality.

We went into the farmhouse and in a back room came upon a pathetic scene. There on the floor sat a little baby of less than a year and behind her lay the body of her dead mother. In any place but a war zone, the child would have been offered succor, the mother buried, and the boy provided a home and life's necessities. No such thing occurred here.

Myself and a few others tried to persuade the Lieutenant to do something, at least bring the boy and baby with us, but he was adamant, saying there was no place for them in the forward camp. He cut off further discussion, obviously distraught, and ordered us to leave the boy C-Rations with an can opener it was doubtful he could operate. We straggled out of that farm, leaving it worse than we found it, loaded with a sense of guilt that none of us would be able to shake off.

There are many things in my life that I'm ashamed of but leaving that farm in that way ranks at the very top.

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