

## **Initiative at the 1962 Summer Camp**

I first learned about the concept of “Initiative” and its relationship to leadership at the first California Cadet Corps Leadership School that I attended. It was held at La Sierra High School – we bivouacked in the gyms, ate in the Cafeteria, and used the classroom facilities. I was only a sophomore at the time, but this Leadership School and the idea of using my initiative made a big impression on me. I immediately began using the concepts that I had learned in the Cadets as well as in my other classes. I quickly discovered that initiative often paid big dividends and favorably impressed my all teachers. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I had bad experiences the first few times I used it. But for me, fortunately that was not the case.

I must admit that on occasion my use of initiative created significant challenges for others and me around me to overcome. I am going to tell you about one of my early initiative experiences that although successful for me created some of these challenges. It all started at the California Cadet Corps Summer Camp held at Camp Arcade (Now named Camp Winthers) in June 1962. This true story will also shows the level of responsibilities that were given to Cadet Officers in the 1960’s.

In April 1962 I was assigned as the summer camp’s S-3 Officer (Training and Operations) at one of the many early planning sessions. But, a few weeks before the camp was to start, I was asked if I would also perform the duties of the Special Services Officer as an extra assignment. I agreed to do this because one of the responsibilities that came with the position was running the Camp’s PX. The extra work would be worth having 24-hour access to the candy and soda being sold. After accepting the assignment, I spoke to the previous year’s Special Services Officer to get some insight about the job. He told me that it wouldn’t take much of my time, as the school district would take care of getting the candy and soda. The biggest problem was that there had been a number of requests for items like insect repellant, flashlights, flashlight batteries, bulbs, sterno, candles, etc. which the school district did not provide.

Using my initiative and my small bank account, I headed for the Metropolitan Army Navy store at the corner of Fair Oaks Blvd and Marconi Ave in Carmichael. The store was located in an old wooden building that was dimly lit and cluttered with all kinds of military treasures that I loved to look through and sometimes purchase. I located a number items that I thought would sell, but I didn’t have enough money to purchase all of them in the quantities that I though I needed. I asked the clerk at the cash register if I could get a quantity discount. She said that I would have to see “Burny” about that. I found him in the back of the store and talked him into some really good case lot prices after telling him what I was going to do with the stuff. I think that he liked working with kids; because he told me that if I didn’t sell it all, I could always bring it back for a refund. That sale started a long-term relationship between us and I never again paid “retail” for anything that I ever bought at the Metropolitan Army Navy Store. Burny always gave me a special price.

To my pleasant surprise all of my Metropolitan Army Navy items were sold during the advance party and first day of the Summer Camp. I was a capitalist at heart and had tripled my investment. It is easy to get a high price when you have a captive audience and there is no competition! I decided to split my profit 50/50 with the camp.

All of the school district Candy and Shasta Soda was located in the “A Frame” building, which was the only permanent camp structure. It had been built on the other side of the camp from where all of the Cadets were staying. Not only was it inconvenient for me to go to the A Frame to make sales (it was only supposed to be open in the evening), it was also very inconvenient for the Cadets to make purchases. So, I used my initiative again and moved a large supply of Candy and soda to the large staff tent where I was staying. I also quickly concluded that the supply of Shasta Soda was not large enough to last for the entire camp so I issued ration cards to each cadet so that distribution would be as fair as possible.

Even with the rationing system, by the second day of the summer camp much of the candy and most of the soda had been sold. I had a pocket full of money and tried several times to turn it in to Major Armstrong (the teacher and Commandant from El Camino High School) who was in charge of the entire summer camp. He kept telling me to hold on to the money. I don't think that he realized how much money I had collected from the sales and I followed orders. But, it was more money than I had ever seen on one place before – over \$400 and that was a lot of money in the summer of 1962.

On the second day of the camp, I also met Col. Carter C. Speed, California Cadet Corps Coordinator from the Office of the Adjutant General. Before camp I had spoken with him on the telephone and had gotten him to intercede on my behalf – I had joined the National Guard and was supposed to go to Basic Training at Fort Ord, California on the same day that the Summer Camp started. He arranged things so that my Basic Training could be delayed until July.

That's when I learned that he was going to make a quick trip to Sacramento and back the next day. I used my initiative again by asking if I could ride down and back with him to restock our PX. He agreed to take me along if I cleared it with the Battle Group Commander, C/LTC Hudson. I found Colonel Hudson and he gave me his approval as long as I was back in time to assist with the night problem. This trip would solve all my problems. I could get rid of all the money I was carrying around by purchasing additional candy and Shasta Soda. My worries about the rationing and disappointed buyers would be a thing of the past. It was fun making decisions and solving problems like this! I was having a grand time and I really loved the responsibility!

Col. Speed and I left before sunrise the next morning. As I recall Col. Speed talked one of the cooks into giving each of us a scrambled egg sandwich to eat as we departed for Sacramento. When we got to the Office of the Adjutant General (OTAG) the located on Marconi Avenue, Col. Speed gave the keys to his truck and told me to be back to pick him up in two hours. I found the address of the Shasta distributor in the phone book and had the address of the candy wholesale company from some of the receipts I had found at

camp. I drove to the Shasta distributor in North Sacramento and told them that I was there to buy Shasta for the San Juan Unified School District summer camp. I paid in cash with no questions asked. Then I was off to the candy supplier. They seemed concerned that I did not have any paper work until I told them that I would pay in cash. In about fifteen minutes I had my order and it was all loaded in the truck. I made it back to OTAG in plenty of time to pick up Col. Speed. He even had me drive him back to Camp Arcade. We talked a lot about leadership, the National Guard, and me going to OCS sometime in the future. I was in hog heaven. I no longer had a “cash” problem; I had plenty of candy and Shasta to sell; and I got to drive the truck all the way back to Camp Arcade!

Things went smoothly when we got back to camp. I eliminated the rationing system and made a lot of sales. However, not unexpectedly, the “Cash Problem” raised its ugly head again. I asked Major Armstrong what he wanted me to do with the money I was collecting and as before he said to “just hold onto it”. What I really needed was a safe place to store the money! I considered putting it in the A Frame, but decided that it would be safer if I held on to it. By the end of Camp three of my four pants pockets were full of bills and I had a lot of small change in the padlocked footlocker that I used to store the candy in when the PX was not open.

I had another small problem in the morning of the last day of camp when I turned in the leftover candy and Shasta to the teacher who was going to be responsible for selling it at the next regular school district camp that followed ours. She seemed to have a problem reconciling the candy that I had returned as there were several kinds that did not appear on any of the school district shipping documents. (I had bought the kinds of candy that I knew the Cadets at Camp would like.) I started to explain, but she interrupted me by saying that everything was OK and that the paperwork was probably back in Sacramento. Then she complained that running the camp store was more trouble than it was worth, which really surprised me. I had made a lot of money! She gave me a receipt for what I had turned in and I went back to my work closing down the camp and packing my possessions for my return trip home. Finally, I got Major Armstrong to take the money that I had been holding. During the camp I had sold just over \$700 worth of Shasta and candy. He seemed a little surprised that the sales had been so good. I do not think that he knew about my re-supply trip to Sacramento. I felt very good about my experiences at the camp, performing as the S-3, doing so well with the PX sales, and no longer having to worry about losing all that money.

I did not know it, but there were additional problems on the horizon. I had volunteered to help Major Armstrong return all of the borrowed equipment used at the camp on the following Monday. One of our stops was at the San Juan Unified School District Office to turn in the camp attendance rosters and the money for the PX sales. I waited in the truck while he took care of this. Shortly thereafter, I saw Major Armstrong coming out of the district office shaking his head. When he got to the truck, he told me that there was a problem with the money I had turned in for the PX. Also, the receipt I had been given for the candy and Shasta that had been left at camp. He had been told that there was just “too much money” and that even if I had sold everything we could not possibly have had receipts of over seven hundred dollars. That is when explained how I had made the PX

more convenient for cadet purchases and all about my re-supply trip to Sacramento with Col. Speed. He took me back into the district office so that I could explain what I had done and help them account for the extra money and candy.

When I told the financial manager about what I had done her eyes got big and I could tell by her questions that she was upset and did not really know what to do. She asked how I had paid for the additional candy and soda and how I had handled the sales taxes. I told her I had used my proceeds up to that point and did not know anything about paying taxes. She said that I should not have done that! I told her that I did do it and that it was easy. Somehow my answer seemed to make matters even worse for her. At that point I was really confused because I did not understand anything about school finance. She kept saying that nothing like this had ever happened before and that she did not know what to do about it. How could she deposit more money than was possible? I asked her how anyone could question having more money – not having enough money was usually the problem because it had been pilfered.

Finally, she gave Major Armstrong a receipt for the money and said that she would have to take it up with her supervisor when he got back to the office. With that problem solved we went on our way returning borrowed equipment to the State warehouse and other places throughout Sacramento.

Later in the week I got a telephone call at home from an administrator at the district office who asked a lot of questions - and I explained again what had taken place. When he understood, he commended me for doing a good job and being honest about turning in the “extra” money. He said that he would take care of everything.

I never told him or anyone else about the Metropolitan Army Navy stuff that I sold and the profit I had shared with the school district – it would have been just too hard to explain. I have also often wondered how they handled the overage that my successor would have from selling the “extra” candy and Shasta that I had left at camp. It must have driven the financial manager nuts, as no one would be able to explain where the extra money came from.

I learned a lot more at that California Cadet Corps summer camp than was in the official camp curriculum. But that was typical of the “real world” learning that took place in the California Cadet Corps and the many associated extra-curricular activities that took place. As an educator today, I know that this learning could never be measured on a test or assessment and would never be found on any state’s Standards of Learning (SOL) program. Still this learning was extremely important. It became the foundation for my leadership, management, and decision-making skills that I used throughout my professional life. I still use them today. That week and a half in the Sierras was a significant learning experience that made a difference in my life as well as in the lives of many other Cadets who were there! It has continuously paid me dividends that greatly exceeded the attendance fee and school district costs for running the camp. I was and remain grateful for those experiences and must thank Colonel Carter C. Speed, Major Thomas Armstrong, and Captain Alan F. Long for the opportunity, trust, and responsibility that I had been given.