"REBEL" IN RHODESIA

Part 1: From Ballads to Battlefields— The Making Of A Soldier of Fortune

by Michael "Reb" Peirce

I'D been trying to make it as a musician for 10 years — 10 long years of traveling all over the country, sometimes making money, sometimes starving. I'd written dozens of songs, chick singers had broken my heart, hollow promises of slick producers had disillusioned me. Between bands I'd laid bricks, cut grass, worked in restaurants, factories and hospitals, picked fruit and swept the streets, always moving on. To this day I can't look at a freeway exit without getting a funny feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Once I planned to be a professor of military history, but the idea got lost in the shuffle. College bored me, but I never forgot my first ambition: I kept a copy of Guderien's *Panzer Leader* in my guitar case.

Finally I went to Los Angeles. Things began to look up. In L.A., a man with initiative can get ahead quick. I began to hustle as I never had before. On weekends I worked as a security guard on a movie lot, and during the week as a bouncer at an amusement arcade in Hollywood. Most importantly, my music sounded good and the right people began to listen. Thanks to my partner and good friend Dan Kopfman, I recorded my own songs in a major studio. At long last I was headed toward a solid career.

This was what I'd been working for, but astonishingly, I walked away from it or, more precisely, I put the whole thing on ice.

As a songwriter, I dealt in emotion and experience. I thought I was missing a very important experience by not having been a soldier. Once I'd tried to enlist in the U.S. Army, only to have my vision of myself as a para-

ABOVE: Maj. Darrell Winkler behind twin .30-caliber Browning machine guns mounted on 4x4. Photo: Robert K. Brown LEFT: Members of armored unit practice with Uzi and FN. The 4x4 mounts twin .30-caliber Brownings.

trooper dashed when they rejected me for medical reasons. But now it was 1978 and I'd been following the struggle of a hard-pressed little country called Rhodesia, and apparently the Rhodesians weren't too selective about who joined *their* army.

Then I saw an article in *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine about the "Black Devils," the Rhodesian Armored Corps (see SOF, January '79, p. 38), and the magical word *panzergrenidier* flashed in my mind like a bloody great neon sign. I dashed off a letter to the Rhodesian army recruiter. I received a polite reply saying that since I had no previous military experience and was nearly 30 years old, my services would not be needed at this time, thank you very much.

Well, in the music business I'd heard "no" so many times, it sounded like "yes" to me, so I decided to go to Rhodesia anyway and hope for the best. Like the man said, I was getting older, so I'd better squeeze in another adventure before I got too settled. I sold everything I owned, including my beloved bass guitar which I had affectionately named "Suzanne." Then it was time to break the news to my friends and family.

My partner knew me pretty well and was not surprised when I told him: "So you're going to Rhodesia to fight the commies, huh? Well, good luck, brother, the tapes will be waiting when you get back. By the way, where is Rhodesia?" Where indeed.

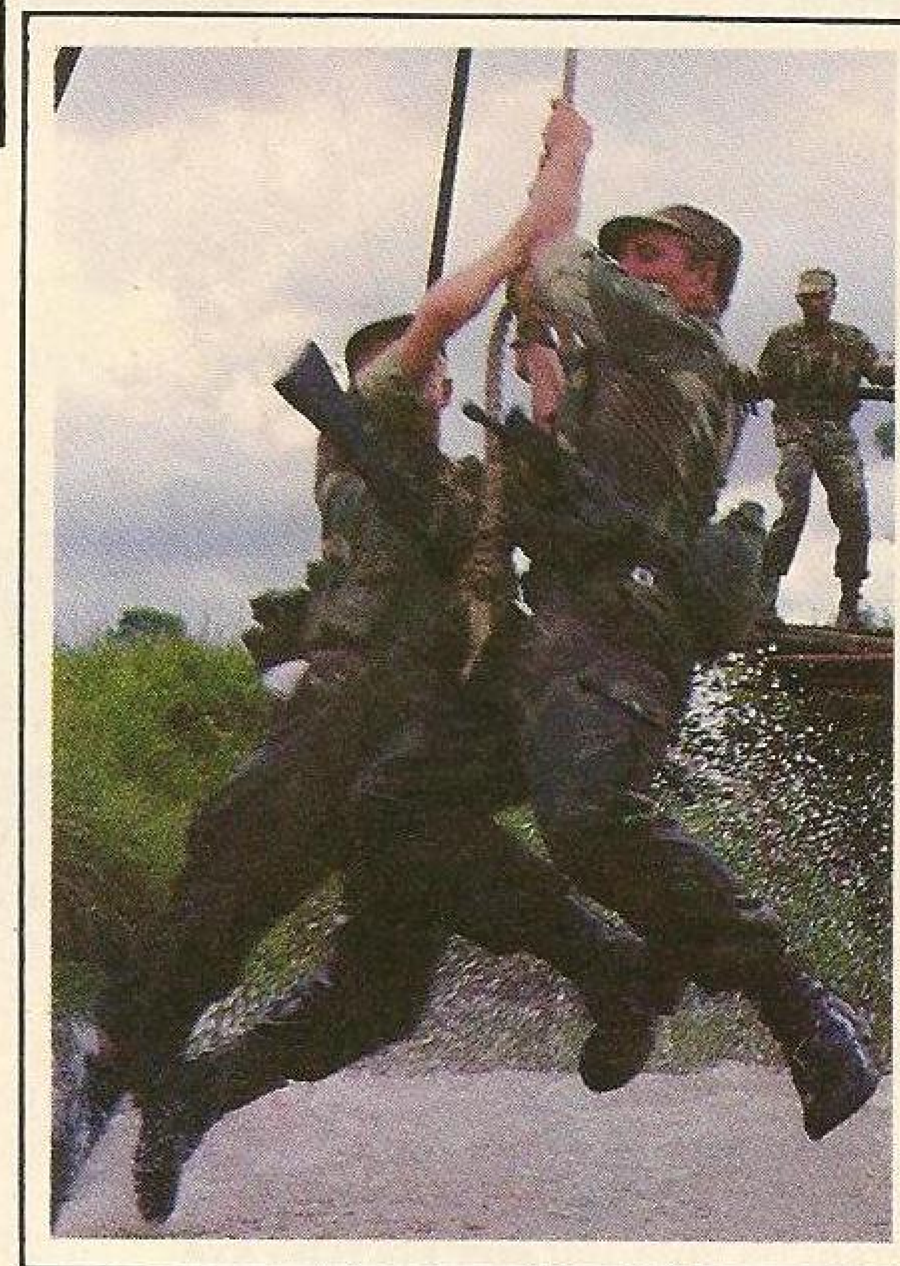
I phoned my brother and told him of my plan to go to war. He replied, "Christ, Michael, don't get involved in the war. With your luck the Japs will get you for sure." Patiently I explained we were no longer at war with the Japanese. Hardly mollified, brother Dan informed me that I was a ". . . asshole! And don't come crying to me when you get killed!" Rather than worry my parents, I manufactured a story for them about a job with an overseas security company. The fabrication worked for a while, until vanity overcame discretion and I sent them a newspaper photo of me and the boys standing on a pile of dead terrs. Deception never was my strong point.

Then it was time to say, "Hello, Africa" and "Goodbye, America" and, with my heart in my throat, I climbed aboard that big jet plane.

I arrived in London and discovered, to my disgust, that my travel agent had feathers for brains. It looked like I'd need some feathers myself if I expected to get to Rhodesia with any money in my pocket — the airfare to Salisbury was nearly twice what I expected. Lack of finances had never stopped me before, so a bored-looking South African Airlines clerk became the ungrateful recipient of the entire Peirce fortune. Several hours later I was winging my weary way to darkest Africa.

Traveling to a war-torn country 10,000 miles from home didn't concern me. I was too busy chain-smoking cigarettes and spending my last few pennies on double whiskies. The ironic thought occurred to me that while I was preparing to risk my life in combat, I had been reduced to a state of abject terror simply by boarding an airplane. I detest flying and I was afraid even to go to sleep for fear a

It's not all fun and games.



ABOVE: Ferret armored scout car. RIGHT: Troop training at RLI assault course. Photos: John Crawford

wing might fall off while I wasn't looking.

To my amazement, the plane landed safely in Salisbury and I hesitantly approached a uniformed customs official. My desire to fight wavered momentarily when I noticed his prosthetic arm.

"All the way from America, are we? Don't get too many visitors from America these days. Welcome to Rhodesia, sir. And how much currency do you have on you, sir?" What a question!

"Not quite a thousand dollars," I replied with a straight face.

"Could I see it, please."

I boldly produced my entire bankroll which consisted of one pound 50 pence. Fortunately, the plane had already departed, because they wanted to deport me right then and there. Then I started talking for my life. I showed the customs man my rejection letter from the army and explained that, to an American, rejection actually meant acceptance and couldn't he just phone the army recruiter and see if they'd take me.

Mumbling "Bloody Yanks" under his breath, he proceeded to make the call, and 15 minutes later I was face to face with a stern-looking recruiter and a cocky-looking officer in camouflage uniform who turned out to be Maj. Darrell Winkler of the Rhodesian Armored Car Regiment.

For once in my life I was speechless. The recruiter, Maj. Johnson, informed me that I was an idiot, but if Maj. Winkler would have me I was in. The American major gave me five minutes to convince him I was worth having and I must have said something right, because a few minutes later I was motoring toward Salisbury in an army staff car.

We pulled into Blakiston-Houston Barracks, part of the KG VI complex, and the home of the armored-car regiment. The major told me it would take a couple of days to get me processed, but I was to consider myself in the army and would spend the night in barracks. Then he pulled out his wallet and said, "You'll probably want to have a few beers tonight at the enlisted men's club." He handed me 10 dollars, remarking, "I'll expect it back when you get paid. Now let's get you organized."

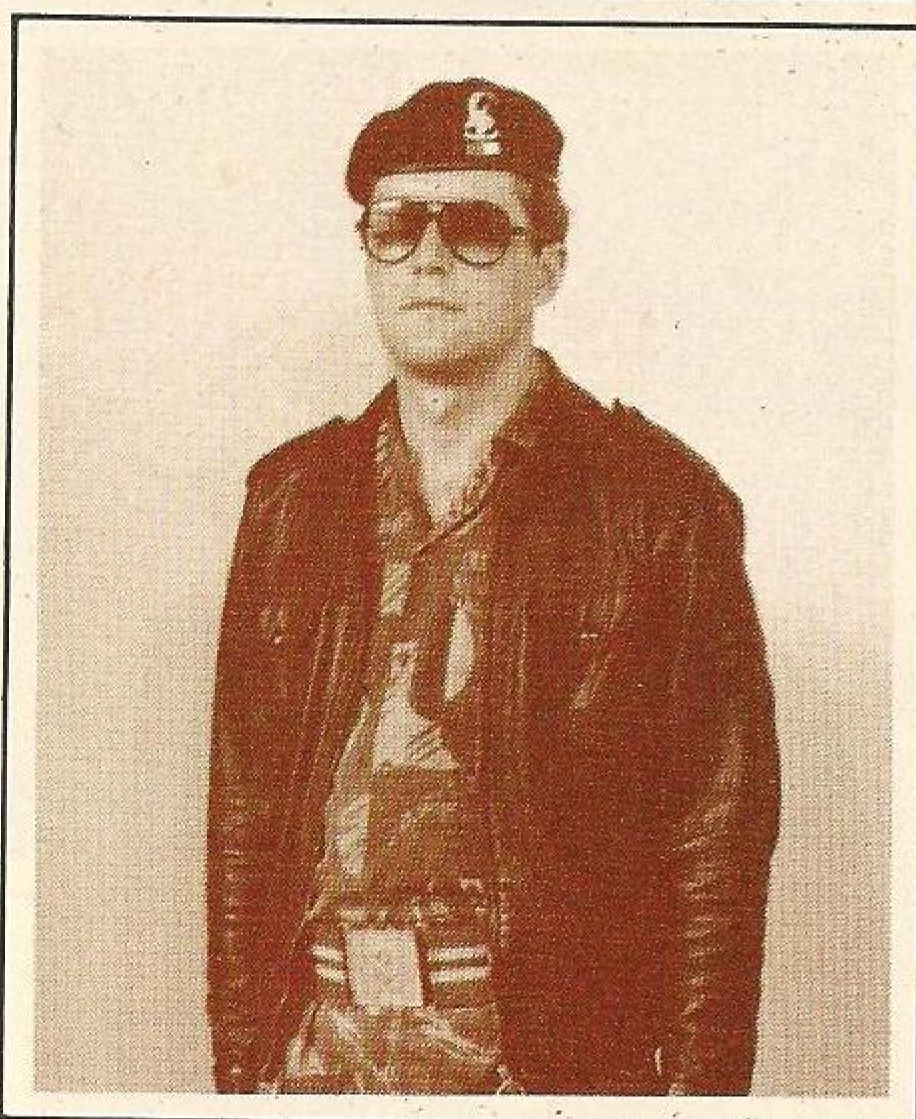
It was the beginning of a memorable relationship. Maj. Winkler looked after me that day and I never forgot it. He got me into the Rhodesian army and, 18 months later, he would get me out of it when we flew back to New York on the same plane.

Next I was shown around the depot by an eager-beaver lieutenant from Missouri named Randall Sumpter. I was very impressed with the Eland 90 armored cars and the unusual-looking, locally improvised personnel carriers. One vehicle in particular caught my eye: a 2½-ton Mercedes truck, bristling with radio antennas and sporting a 50-caliber Browning machine gun. "That's for me," I told the lieutenant, but he shook his head and told me that was the major's personal vehicle and that he used only the most experienced people as his crew. "We'll see," I thought.

I soon learned it wasn't all fun and games when I was delivered into the tender mercies of a sergeant who let me know straightaway that he felt nothing but contempt for recruits in general and Americans in particular. Then off to the quartermaster store where I was issued a bewildering array of uniforms that didn't fit and equipment that didn't work by a storeman who kept giving me pitying looks, as if I had entered prison voluntarily.

At the end of the working day I was shown where I'd be sleeping and eating and made the acquaintance of two Englishmen who had joined the regiment that same day. Both had been given the rank of full corporal on the basis of their previous experience. They took me under their wings and helped me figure out minor details like how to assemble my webbing and tailor my uniform. One of these guys later revealed himself to be useless baggage, but Allen Jones was a soldier's soldier and helped me over many of the pitfalls that await a green recruit. We became fast friends and developed that special rapport that means so much and is so difficult to find.

After sorting out our kit, it was off to the Corporals'-and-Privates' Mess for a meal and a beer. I was astounded by the excellent quality of the food



ABOVE: Eland light armored car crossing difficult terrain. (Eland is South African-manufactured copy of French Panhard AML.) Photo: John Crawford LEFT: Author, taken upon completion of training.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This first part of a three-part article is Michael "Rebel" Peirce's second contribution to the pages of SOF (see "Abandoned," SOF, November '81, p. 87). At age 29, he temporarily left behind a promising career as a musician to become a soldier in Rhodesia, achieving the rank of acting sergeant before his departure two years later.

Peirce is back to writing songs now — and stories — and is currently employed as a security agent. He is also a student of military history.

Peirce would like to thank his buddies John Ward, Dave Hughes and Jim Walker for some of the photos accompanying his three-part article, and has requested that certain individuals' eyes be blacked out in the pictures, as they are still involved in sensitive work.

—C.E.D. Kite

and the relaxed, club-like atmosphere of the mess. Here I met some of the people who would become faithful comrades for the duration of the war: Marty from England, a pookie (mine-detection vehicle) driver; Taffy from Wales, Assault Pioneers; Dave, the airborne medic from Australia; and Brian, the quiet, friendly Rhodesian signalman. People from all arms of the service congregated at the Corporals' Club, and my military education began as I listened wide-eyed to the stories told in that pub. Everybody seemed to have some advice for me and soon I had a long list of handy items for when I went for basic training.

The subsequent weeks were a dizzying blur as my sloppy civilian attitudes vanished and I began to adjust to the demanding military life. In contrast to its U.S.-Army counterpart, the Rhodesian army medical officer passed me with flying colors.

"Mr. Peirce, your left eye appears to be nearly useless but, after all, we use our right eye for shooting, don't we?" Yes, "we" do.

I was formally inducted and swore the special oath required of foreign volunteers, requiring only that I agree to obey the orders of my superiors and serve the three years specified in my contract.

Soon I was performing time-honored tasks like learning to salute and picking up cigarette butts. I tried to teach my American body the contortions of British army drill. "Straighten up that body, man, you look like a bloody bucket of shit!" Every spare moment I had, it was off to the armory to master the intricacies of the FN rifle, Uzi submachine gun and 9mm pistol. I was four days away from being posted to RLI for basic training when I heard an exciting rumor. The regiment was going operational.

Events at the depot verified the rumor. Ammunition was being issued, medical packs filled, radio batteries and rations distributed. Naturally I wanted to go; naturally I was told "no way." I begged everybody from the rank of lance corporal up to squeeze me in, but nobody wanted to take the responsibility. I swore to one particularly adamant sergeant that I would be an asset to his stick:

"You don't even know how to strip an FN, Yank."

"Yes I do, Sergeant, 30 seconds flat."

"Excellent, get to work cleaning all these."

So there I was, everybody going to war and I was stuck in the depot cleaning every rifle in the armory.

A taste of action in Winkler's stick.

At the last minute I heard a mad staff sergeant named Mike Kemish bellowing, "I'm short a man! I'm short a man, for Christ's sake! Where the hell are those rookies?" I waited expectantly until he poked his head in the door and said, "You! Whatever your name is. Can you shoot?"

Deciding upon a change of tactics, I replied, "Hell, no, Staff, never handled a rifle in my life."

"Perfect! Draw an FN and some grenades; you're going with me. And get somebody to show you how to use the damn thing."

I couldn't have been happier with the arrangement. Kemish was a former SAS man who now drove for Maj. Winkler, which meant I'd be in the major's stick.

We fell in next morning at 0300 in full battle gear, which was pretty uncomfortable for me because, being green, I was carrying the regulation kit and could hardly walk. Still, I was predictably excited at the prospect of my first action. I was also a little shocked by the circumstances: In the final briefing we found out that our objective was a group of 60 terrorists in the Chinamora Reserve near Dombashawa, only 40 kilometers from Salisbury. Remind me to lock the windows tonight, Mother; the hard cases are on the edge of town. (Later I discovered that they were actually in the city itself — it wasn't just the security forces who took their R&R in "Berg.")

We mounted up and moved out toward the objective. As the sun came up we took a break, and I got a good look at the whole column. It was beautiful: four Elands, two Ferrets, four personnel carriers, the major's two-five and nearly a hundred of the most bloodthirsty-looking men I'd even seen.

My first big fright came when I fell off the truck and landed on my kidney pouch, which was full of white-phosphorus grenades. I counted off four anxious seconds, realized I was still alive, and sheepishly climbed back aboard the vehicle. Not only did I feel like an ass, but I was left with a permanent dislike for the highly volatile grenades; I never again carried those wicked items.

All of a sudden it was happening. We debarked and split into our sticks. The big guns started pounding the *gomel* (hill) across the way. *Crash*-**BOOM!** I watched the 90mm rounds go in, followed by the 50s and the .30 Brownings. I knew that, in all probability, that stuff would be flying both ways shortly. I won't say I was scared, but L.A. seemed mighty good at that moment.

Two figures were coming toward us. Everybody took cover and the major raised his hand and yelled, "Take 'em!"

Deafened by the sudden noise, I watched my tracers burn their way to the target. Skirmish forward, down again. No return fire. We came abreast of our targets and I had to choke back an urge to vomit. The child had not been hit; the man had. High-powered rifles certainly make a mess out of a human being.

We kept moving, trudging another 20 klicks in pursuit of the enemy. I wasn't very fit at that point and the pace told on me. We stopped for a "tenner" and I shared an orange with the major.

"Look, sir, I appreciate you letting me come along for this scene."

"Yeah, I figured you'd enjoy a taste of it before you went off to basic."

The rest of the day was unproductive but nerve-wracking. On a sweep line you just never know. For all the talk about the Rhodesian army's superior counter-insurgency tactics, it always boiled down to basics: Extend your line formation and go. I had an African rifleman on each side of me. Every time we stopped they literally disappeared into the bush. I knew if they could do it, the enemy could. I was one alert white boy.

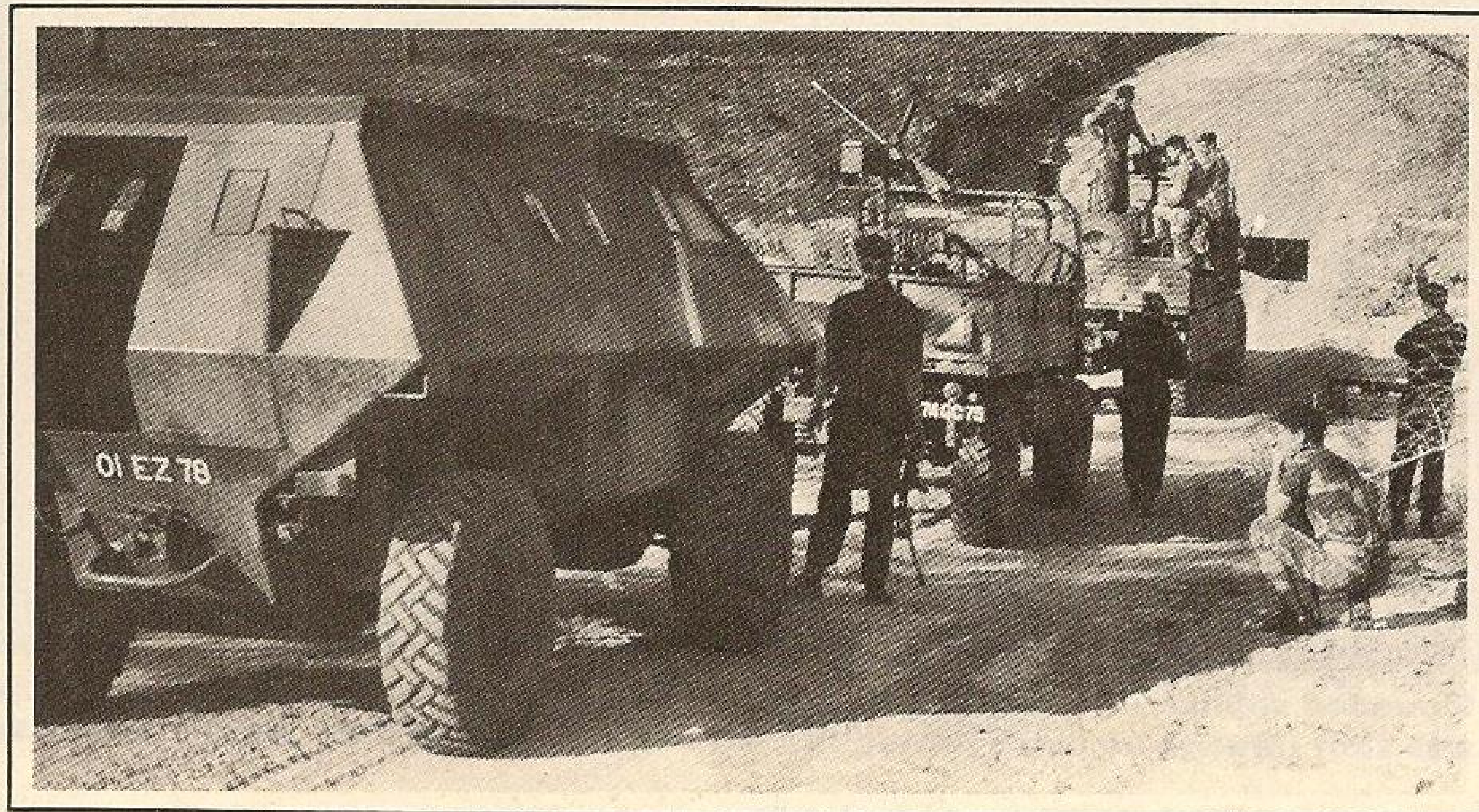
ABOVE: Mercedes Benz two-five mounted with twin 7.62 Brownings, usually used by HQ D Squadron. RIGHT: Rhodesian-manufactured "Bullet" trails two 4x4s on bush patrol. Middle vehicle mounts Browning aircraft model .50-caliber machine gun adapted for ground mount. LOWER RIGHT: Ferret scout car.

At day's end, the vehicles met us and we headed for the depot. A follow-up action later revealed that our initial fire had taken out three armed terrorists. But, for me, it was more than a minor action with a trifling body count. In the back of my mind I knew I'd shot at and probably hit a civilian. It didn't go down easy. He'd been feeding terrs the night before, but he wouldn't be feeding them anymore. I could accept that. What made it hard was the child, alive only by virtue of our MAG gunner's poor marksmanship. OK, so that's what war is all about. Yes, war is unpleasant but what can you do? It's hard to make value judgments at 150 meters.

The night after my first action I earned some chump-change working behind the bar in the senior NCOs' Mess. There was nobody there from my regiment, but naturally I had to create a scene. With 20-odd beers clouding my judgment, I called for silence and proposed a toast to "...the finest regiment in the Rhodesian army, Armored Cars!"

"Who is that idiot? Get him out of here!"

The following Monday I was told to report to the Admin. Officer, Lt. Virginia (my god, isn't she sweet) Grey. "Well, Peirce, you'll be leaving today for a bit of a crash course at RLI." Lt. Grey was a master of understatement.



Two nervous recruits from Armored Cars entered RLI Barracks at Cranbourne — the words, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here," crossed my mind as I passed through the gate. My companion was an unlikely character named Dino McIntosh, a Jewish Sicilian Scotsman from South Africa. My nerves were not exactly calmed when two American recruits with shaved heads approached me with dire warnings concerning the brutality of the training and the hatred of the instructors for all things American.

Being somewhat older and considerably more street-wise than these two boy-scout types, I laughed them off and told them, "Shit in your hats, boys, there is no such thing as Americans here. We're all the same in this mob." Nevertheless, bold talk doth not a bold man make. The anti-American prejudice was mostly teenage fantasy, but the brutality of the training was in no way exaggerated.

McIntosh and I soon learned the lay of the land, each in his own way. While I was getting acquainted with the other recruits, McIntosh was busily laying the groundwork for a lucrative black-market business in rations and kit. Soon he was providing an essential service to men facing severe penalties for being short so much as a button; even the instructors paid him the occasional midnight visit in search of some needed item.

At RLI Barracks, stealing was considered a legitimate method of obtaining kit. My second night there, I put everyone on notice that I would not be party to such shenanigans. It was my habit to sleep with a knife under my pillow — "better safe than sorry" is a rule I've always lived by. Late one night I discovered someone creeping around my bed and grabbed him by the hair, putting the blade to his throat.

"Look, you, it's dark and I don't know who you are. I don't want to know. But the next time I find anybody anywhere near my kit, I'll cut first and ask questions later! You understand me?"

"Yes! Yes! Sorry! Just let me go, man."

In the morning everyone in the barrack room was aware of what had happened and I was never bothered again.

The training was tough and uncompromising. If you fell out on a run, you were kicked back into line. If you couldn't walk, you crawled. My first taste of it involved running 10 kilo-

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meters with helmet, webbing, pack and rifle. It nearly killed me. My misery was not mitigated by any sympathy from the instructors, who saw my weakness as a challenge to be met with oaths and kicks. The pace never let up, and for a while I thought I was in hell. For a long time my main exercise had consisted of lifting a beer bottle. Cigarettes, alcohol and women had taken their toll. I had to become an athlete overnight. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life.

At RLI, we got up at 0330 and polished the barrack rooms until even the ceilings were immaculate. Then it was off for a run and the hated "pokie drill," in which one balanced a rifle at all sorts of improbable angles to strengthen the arm muscles. Back to the barracks for a quick shower, and fall in for breakfast. We would double-time to the mess hall and double-time back, rarely with enough time for more than a piece of toast and a cup of some evil-tasting liquid that was euphemistically called coffee. The same noxious stuff served as tea in the afternoon. Next, barrack-room inspection, when stern-faced corporals ruthlessly punished the slightest infraction. Then came four hours of drill in the hot, African sun, then physical training, weapons training and, finally, lunch. Often we were too exhausted even to eat, and collapsed in heaps on the floor of the barracks, careful not to disturb our kit layouts on the beds.

The afternoons brought more of the same, with classroom lectures following physical training. Staying awake in a crowded, hot, stuffy classroom was nearly impossible, but the corporals assisted us by bashing people across the head and shoulders with sticks and rifle butts.

After choking down the rice and cabbage that passed for dinner, we cleaned the whole training wing until it glistened; floors, doorknobs, light fixtures, offices, pathways, classrooms, everything. Then the corporals provided our evening's entertainment: shine- and change-parades.

Shine parades meant polishing the barracks until the Iron Duke himself would have been impressed, then submitting to verbal and physical abuse as the corporals ridiculed us and threw our kits around in a rage, usually allowing us 10 minutes to put the whole thing back together.

The change parades were a barrel of laughs, too. During these exercises, the army taught us the difference between drill order, p.t. order, battle order, etc.

We changed clothes fast enough to shame Superman, but it was never good enough for the instructors. "You idle punks! You'll never be soldiers. You're just a bunch of old ladies!" And off we'd go for a punishment run.

One night, after seven times around the circle in full NATO combat order, I fell out. Little Mario, veteran of the French and Spanish Foreign Legions, carried me on his shoulder for the final kilometer. I woke up in the shower, covered with vomit and mucus. Looking up, I saw Sgt. Trevor Hodgson, my chief instructor. He was smiling — a rare occurrence usually prompted by the sight of blood. I struggled to my feet in a rough approximation of attention. He said, "Well done. You lead the squad tomorrow." He turned on his heel, leaving me to the ministrations of my friends.

I feared that man more than I feared God or the devil. Sgt. Hodgson was a legend in the RLI. He wore the coveted Bronze Cross for Valor. Not only had he personally killed more terrs than any other man in the army, but he had suffered serious wounds saving a wounded comrade. He was obviously not a man to be trifled with. On his last two times on duty with Training Troops, he had been kicked out for brutality to recruits. I made his acquaintance early in my training. We were standing in formation on the

drill square when the loudest voice in the world shrieked, "Who is that four-eyed punk in the center rank?"

My heart sank down into my boots. He was behind me and I made a fatal mistake. I yelled, "Recruit Peirce, 729930, Corporal!"

"Corporal? I am a sergeant! If you ever dare to address me incorrectly again I'll kill you immediately! Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Sergeant!" I screamed, nearly collapsing in a paroxysm of fear. I owe Sgt. Hodgson more than I can ever repay. He taught me pride and discipline; he made me more than I had been before.

Several times when I was ready to fall out on road runs, he grabbed me by the shirt and literally pushed me onward. Ruthless as he was, he was always the first man to rush to help an injured recruit. He demanded maximum effort and he got it. Despite the punishment we took, we developed a tremendous *esprit de corps*. Once a new arrival shamed us in front of a corporal. He claimed to be a former British paratrooper, but when he was not complaining he bullied the younger recruits. Finally he went too far by insulting a corporal in front of our whole barrack room. This was too much. The 10 men in our barrack room had a special rule. Despite the fact that we hated the corporals and their discipline, we had decided to rise above it by being the toughest guys in the whole training troop, inflicting punishment on ourselves for infractions the corporals missed. Politely we asked the corporal to leave the room. Then we threw a blanket over the so-called tough guy and meted out a brutal punishment to the man who had let the squad down. The corporal returned with three other NCOs and they took our British friend away to the box for assaulting the squad.

"That bastard was nothing but filthy foreign scum! A disgrace to the Rhodesian army. What are we?"

Considering that we had seven nationalities in our barrack room, and that the corporal himself was a Zambian, our response might seem ludicrous: "We're Rhodesians, Corporal!" But that was the army. Morale returned and we went back to the endless task of spit-shining the barrack-room floor with renewed vigor.

Our squad worked harder than anybody else, existing on three hours' sleep a night. Sleep was precious. I learned to sleep while marching; in fact I actually learned to sleep while running! Once, another American cheated me out of an hour's sleep when he chose to hide instead of relieving me from a guard detail. Next morning, I knocked him over three

bunks and had to be restrained from beating him further.

As a former musician, I had to compose marching songs for our squad. I came up with several, but we sang the favorite to the tune of "Warm California Sun." One line in particular seemed to please Sgt. Hodgson. "Our NCOs are strong and mean. The nastiest bastards I've ever seen. It's all right! 'Cause they're out there havin' fun, in that warm Rhodesian sun."

After six weeks of intensive training we enjoyed a four-hour visit with family and friends, known in army slang as "pets parade." As we marched to the reception center, the sergeant demanded that we sing. The spectacle shocked the civilians: 40 recruits singing at the top of their lungs, "Civilization means nothing to me. I dig killing people with an MAG. Its all right. . ." The Rhodesian conscripts relaxed for a few hours in the bosoms of their families; the foreigners made for the pub and got blind drunk while the instructors looked the other way.

Our only other chance to drink legally came when the RLI celebrated regimental day. Naturally, many of us exceeded the official limit of two beers and, of course, we started trouble. We were "blue squad" and proud of it. As we sat on the lawn drinking our beer, "green squad" annoyed us by making loud comments about their supposed superiority. We found a garden hose and proceeded to drench the whole squad; then we tore into them with our fists. The sergeant in charge of "green squad" protested volubly, but Sgt. Hodgson told him politely to shut his mouth and mind his own business.

Our tactical training was a surprise. I had heard so many stories about the Rhodesian army being the "finest counter-insurgency force in the world" that I had expected some real innovations. Imagine my amazement when we purloined some instructional material and found it was all marked U.S. Army, Fort Benning.

The best friend I made at RLI was a demented Irishman named Tony. In his barrack room, the senior recruit awakened the others by rudely throwing them out of their bunks. All but Tony. In his case it was a polite, "Tony, it's time to get up." When times got hard and we frustrated alcoholics were dying of thirst, he could always locate a quart of beer. He was a hard dude, but it's a hard world and he was my pal.

Tony was in "yellow squad." The guys in that squad longed to tear me up because of an incident in which I came up behind them, pretending to be a corporal, and chastised them for poor military bearing. To Tony, it was good fun, but one evening I entered

his barrack room for a chat and the boys from "yellow squad" decided it was time for revenge. He stood up and said, "Rebel's a friend of mine. Do you guys understand what that means?"

Apparently they did. From then on I was persona grata with "yellow squad"!

The nickname "Rebel" arose from my RLI training. Having spent the greater part of my life in the South, I bristled when people addressed me as "Yank." Invariably, I replied, "That's Rebel to you." After a while the name stuck, and for the rest of my enlistment everyone called me Rebel.

Our first battle camp was a fiasco for me. We bivouacked near Lake McIlwaine. I was on roving guard. It was dark as a villain's heart and I got lost. While stumbling around in the dark, I blundered into my relief, an American named Dan Harrington. Like me, he had no idea where we were. We heard a rustling in the bush. Harrington suggested helpfully that it might be a wild boar. Unfortunately, he had underestimated the size of our antagonist. It was a rhinoceros! We each had one live magazine, but we couldn't risk firing since we had no idea where we were. The rhino charged through our battle camp like an outraged dinosaur, crushing several rifle pits.

Eventually we found our people, and I challenged a figure moving in the dark: "Halt! Identify yourself."

The corporal told me brusquely, "Shut up, Peirce. Save that Audie Murphy shit for the movies." Chastened, I returned to my foxhole.

A week before my return to Armored Cars, I ripped a muscle in my chest on the assault course. At the hospital, they injected me with a variety of drugs. Next morning, the training officer told me that I had the option of going to a non-combat outfit such as motor transport. Indignantly, I refused and, girding my loins (as they say in the Bible), I went to Sgt. Hodgson and demanded a combat assignment.

He listened with a weary smile. I told him in no uncertain terms that I had come to Rhodesia to fight and, if a minor injury could stop me, I would surely take the gap at the first chance. With the patience of long experience, he said, "Shut up. You'll be returning to your regiment tomorrow and you'll be taking the course on armored vehicles. You've got your combat assignment; now get out of my office — and good luck."

(To be continued)