

BEVERLY A. TIFT

ODS Slideshow (1991)

Cement City, Dhahran: a sea of mud, false alarms/rumors, hoarding toilet paper, personalizing cardboard liners for the chemical toilets, hand-washing uniforms at a factory water outlet, meals in the largest tent in the world...bomb-clustered planes flying low, the same planes return with leaner silhouettes...night bang of SCUDS shot down by Patriot missiles, MOPP Level 4 alarms—possible chemical exposure—orders to take nerve gas pills, that maiden convoy into the unknown riding night-day-night across the desert in a school bus.

first day in-country
the pinch
of new combat boots

TAA Roosevelt: night patrol with live ammo, hoarfrost furring tents, everyday the generator kicks on at 0530, that first cup of instant coffee...sparse desert grass stretching out to the horizon, one lone flower protected by a ring of stones...long talks about everything—nothing, late night card games by candlelight...being cold, wet, hot in the same hour...the breathing sides of tents...sponge baths with one liter of water, finally a hot shower—still no place to be alone...lost equipment, found equipment...no trees to kick, no news from home, news from home, knowing the best in people and the worst.

sentry duty—
tents backlit
by the rising sun

Med-Center West, somewhere southeast of the neutral zone: night sounds, teamwork, arguments, pallets of MREs, care packages, bottled water, shrimp potato chips, rationing water...tents encrusted with windblown sand, equipment dry-rotting, scorpions, camels and flies and more flies...3-man wooden showers, 4-seater latrines with dizzy flies that drop dead over lead arsenate bait, burning-out crappers, one wringer washing machine for 140 troops...the heartache of no mail—the joy of distributing mail...no moon just stars, far-away tank thunder and bombs lighting the horizon, black days, black clouds, oil well fires.

bags and boxes
of 'any soldier' mail
again, the stars

332nd Medical Brigade compound: a unit clerk taps out the commander's regrets to inform you, weight of personal equipment...the makeshift memorial—flags droop then suddenly snap from wooden tent poles surrounded by plastic roses... winter seems to end overnight—110 and rising, a surprise shipment of bras, the Saudi mall trip, natives scrounging through our daily burn-pits...the Baskin & Robbins truck with Arabic writing, swimming in a canvas water tank under the stars—hurry, pack equipment and gear, then the long wait... home.

Westover Airport
pomp and pictures
our faces



Beverly A. Tift is an US Army Veteran, fiber artist and daydreamer, who lives in Connecticut surrounded by her family, friends, books and a large stash of yarn. Some of her work has appeared in *Heron's Nest*, *Daily Haiku*, *Moonset Literary Newspaper*; *The 2005 Red Moon Anthology of English Language*, *Contemporary Haibun*, *Haibun Today* and *WLA*.