

## Old Dogs, New Tricks

*By Dennis Knight*

Master Sergeant Daryl “Pappy” Kreutzer, was in his twenty-seventh year in the Infantry, but was only forty-seven. If the Pappy moniker was premature, so was the graying of his buzzed head and the creased leather of his face. Just about every outfit in the Army has one pappy. It’s a term of respect.

Sergeant Kreutzer was busted twice in his first, hell bent decade in the Army, but his advancement since then had been slow, steady and solid. He had seen more than his share of combat and now he was back to his favorite duty, drilling raw recruits. This time he was the ranking enlisted man and had eight subordinate instructors barking at anything that moved.

Like all drill sergeants before him, he used the strongest language to exorcise the namby and the pamby from his young troops. The words were common, to be sure, but with Pappy Kreutzer in charge, the soldiers experienced them in the most creative combinations imaginable.

In every outfit, besides a guy like Pappy, who actually earns the name, there is what they call “the Old Man”, the commanding officer. The Old Man in this company was maybe twenty-eight, and it was his first command. The young captain’s career since ROTC was a desk job in Washington, and now he was at Fort Carson to get some field experience. At least that’s what Pappy surmised, but it wasn’t his job to check the man’s credentials.

Picture the scene the morning Kreutzer called his sergeants in for a parlay, and the pulsing anger in his face as he un-wadded a single sheet of paper. “Men, you ain’t gonna like this but we got ourselves a new order. What the Old Man says is, starting today, we gotta clean up our language. We gotta address the troops without half the damned words in our damned vocabulary. In fact, I already screwed up and disobeyed this damned order three damned times. Make that four.”

Pappy took a chair and continued, “Alright, men, what we gotta do now is think up some new cuss words. Now the beauty of the words we been using is they is versatile. They fit in every kind of situation and there ain’t nobody nowhere that don’t know what they mean. That’s the kinda words we gotta get. Now you boys got any ideas?”

Kreutzer’s review left the other eight bereft of vocabularies and tongue tied. They were the old dogs of the outfit now in the predicament of having to create and learn entirely new tricks of their trade, or run the risk of sending soldiers off to battle without proper oral burnishing. It was a damned mess; no, make that a crying mess.

Sergeant Kreutzer sent the company clerk to instruct the men to spend the morning in the barracks tightening, shining, scrubbing, polishing, and then doing it again. He called the mess hall for a fresh pot of coffee and spent hours with his team creating a list of new cuss words, to wit: “dangt, florg, azule, balt, zummit, bushdob, quosk, moskag, noffle and jakfick.” They could all be matched with prefixes and suffixes to expand their usefulness and could be randomly combined for even greater effect.

Ten glorious new words to berate the troops, and they wouldn't need to define one bushdob one. That would all be taken care of in context. No soldier would need or dare request clarification when ordered, "Zummit, Jones, get yo' haid out of yo' florg!"

Sergeant Pappy Kreutzer, having led his team through the rough battle of inventing words to supersede a thousand years of perfectly good cursing, wrapped up the meeting instructing his sergeants to take the troops out on a florging five mile march to limber up their florging noffles.

"All right men, back to work. Right now I'm gonna sign off on this bushdob order, take it back to the Old Man and jakfick it right up his inbox."