

**My Friend Emmett**  
**From Captain to Lieutenant General**  
**Emmett Paige, LTG, US Army (Ret.)**

**Mervin L. Norton**  
LTC (USA Ret)

### **First met in Japan**

During the latter two years of my tour in Japan (1956-1960), I was a Captain, serving as the Radio Officer, US Army Japan. During this period I was very much involved in conceiving, planning and selling the concept of a Japan Troposcatter System, but that is another story.

Sometime during 1959 a young Captain visited us from Korea to study the way we managed the telephone systems throughout Japan. The young officer was Capt. Emmett Paige who at that time was responsible for all of the telephone exchanges in Seoul and the Technical control serving 8th Army. All communications in and out of Korea were connected to his Technical Control.

During the 10-15 days he was with us he spent most of his time with Capt. James C. McCarthy, the Telephone Officer. My interface with Emmett was mostly social. I was impressed by his very friendly manner and his keen interest in learning all he could from us. After he left the consensus was that he had the makings of an outstanding officer.

### **Great assistance in the Philippines**

About five years latter (1963), I was now a Major and stationed in Washington. I was a Staff Officer in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Department of the Army responsible for communication projects in the Pacific Theater. I was sent on a special mission to the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. The mission was to find a solution to improve the two inoperable or marginal troposcatter systems. The first was the Page Engineers installed system from Camp O'Donald, near Clark Air Base, the Philippines to Kao-Hsiung, in southern Taiwan. The second was the Philco-Ford installed system from Bangkok to Saigon.

I knew that each of these troposcatter sites had to be reconfigured by shortening the paths or elevating the sites so as to lower the "take-off-angle". The Kao-Hsiung site could not be moved so the only alternative was to move the Camp O'Donald site to the mountainous area north of Clark AFB in the vicinity of Baguio. Prior to leaving Washington I made extensive map studies to determine possible sites. I had selected three possible locations.

When I arrived in the Philippines I immediately visited the DCA-SEA Headquarters and met with the commander, Navy Captain Marshal Ward, whom I knew. I knew that to do any site survey I would have to get permission from the US Embassy and the Philippine government. I solicited Capt. Ward's assistance and guidance. At a meeting with Capt. Ward, as I remember it, he had two or

three other officers present. One was Maj. Emmett Paige. Capt. Ward gave me very good guidance and assigned an army Captain to assist me in any way. I don't remember seeing that Captain again for Emmett was with me essentially all of the time. His assistance in making proper contacts in the US Embassy and with the Armed Forces of the Philippines resulted in a completely successful trip for me. As a result we were able to have the Armed Forces of the Philippines acquire the site we selected on Mt. St. Tomas, which we called Cabuyo. The US Army was then allowed to be a tenant on this site. This resulted in a program to improve this link and make improvements in the extension of this system through Taiwan and on to Okinawa. This was known as the Phil-Tai-OkI Troposcatter System. Page Engineers won the contract and they installed two 120-foot troposcatter dishes at Cabuyo.

After this very successful trip to the Philippines, I continued my travels to Okinawa, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. I eventually came back through the Philippines and then learned that Emmett's normal assignment was in the DCA Control Center from 12:00 midnight until 8:00 AM. He then did what ever need to be done during the normal duty day. In effect he worked 16-hour days. I was greatly impressed at his dedication to duty.

### **Briefings in Leesburg**

The next year, I attended briefings on a classified communications project at a contractor's facility in Leesburg, VA. Lt. Col. Hugh Foster (later Brigadier General), UNICOM/STARCOM Project Office at Fort Monmouth, N.J, was representing the procurement agency. Lt. Col. Foster sent his new assistant, Maj. Emmett Paige to one of these briefings. After these briefings, the contractor took all of us to lunch at the Hidden Creek Country Club. During this period it was common for military to accept free meals from contractors including social dinners in expensive restaurants. Emmett, as Col. Foster had done on his visits, insisted on paying for his lunch. I was greatly impressed by Emmett's strict code of professional conduct.

### **Two Major events**

During 1964 there were two major events that affected both of us.

### **STRATCOM**

The first was the elevation of the Army Strategic Communications Command (STRATCOM) to a major command level on March 1, 1964. This resulted in the Commanders position being elevated to that of Major General. During the next few weeks there were a lot of transfers into STRATCOM. I was one and I became the Radio Officer.

### **UNICOM/STARCOM**

The second was the involvement of the UNICOM/STARCOM Project Office at Fort Monmouth, N.J. Emmett became a part of this organization, which was responsible for procurement of major communications systems.

## **Frequent Contact**

My contact with Emmett began to be more frequent during mid-1965 time frame. I called Emmett many times at Fort Monmouth. I did not have to even give the operator a number. Emmett had made sure that the Fort Monmouth switchboard operator always knew where he was. When Emmett answered the phone he could be anywhere, in his office, at home or in Washington. No matter where he was he was always available by phone. You could always get in touch with Emmett. This was just another indication of his dedication to duty.

## **IWCS planning started**

On October 3, 1964, the Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) the initial plan for the Integrated Wideband Communications System (IWCS). Shortly thereafter STRATCOM was given the responsibility for the system engineering and I was designated the IWCS Project Officer. At the same time the UNICOM/STARCOM Project Management Office was given the procurement responsibility for the project. A project of this magnitude required several levels of approval under DoD Directive 4630.1. The following is a tabulation of these major events.

- October 1964 - CINCPAC proposed the IWCS
- February 1965 - JCS approved a DCA IWCS Plan
- April 1965 - OSD approved the plan and tasked the Army to prepare the Telecommunications Program Objective (TPO)
- August 1965 - OSD approved the STRATCOM prepared TPO
- September 1965 - Contracts awarded to Page Communications Engineers for Vietnam and Philco-Ford for Thailand

## **IWCS approved**

During this period, we in STRATCOM developed detailed system configurations and expanded the initial system based on additional CINCPAC requested requirements. Emmett was reassigned from the Philippines to UNICOM/STARCOM Project Management Office at Fort Monmouth at the special request of Col Hugh Foster in June 1965 to be the Deputy for the IWCS. Col Kenneth Gonseth had replaced Col Foster who was reassigned as Commander of a Signal unit in Korea. (Col Foster returned later after being promoted to Brigadier General and a reorganization that created a Joint USAMC/STRATCOM Command called the U.S. Army Communication Systems Agency). As soon as OSD approved the IWCS project Emmett worked closely with us at STRATCOM, then located in the Munitions building on Constitution Avenue, and spent a lot of time in Washington. Emmett had the responsibility of making several briefings to HQ's USAMC and to HQ's Department of the Army in the Pentagon. These briefings were necessary because Emmett and I had decided that with the urgency of the requirement it was essential to have sole source letter contracts. We outlined the justification to support the sole source course letter contract of action and prepared the briefings. I accompanied him on most of the briefings, as STRATCOM was responsible for the overall Statement

of Work and Technical Specifications. These briefings were professional and he always knew his subject and could answer all of the management related questions. It was during the period April-July 1965 that the involvement of U.S. combatants increased. The communications infrastructure in Vietnam and Thailand was not available. So it became urgent to get the IWCS built. The U.S. Military units did not exist and the commercial communications equipment was not immediately available to build the needed infrastructure.

## **IWCS Contracts**

In July and August we developed the final system plans. Emmett assisted us at STRATCOM in creating the final procurement technical specifications. Four individuals, STRATCOM civilian engineers Paul Dickey, Jr. and Spiros Halos, Emmett and me, completed this entire procurement technical specification in one long weekend. Emmett returned to Fort Monmouth and set what most people thought was an impossible task of awarding the two letter contracts in 30 days. Although the Procurement gurus said it could not be done, Emmett told them that it had to be done and would be done, and with the help of the Contracting Officer Howard Custis, and his staff, we awarded the Contracts in 28 days. Emmett quickly won the support of the senior Signal Leaders, Military and Civilian alike because of his reputation for calling the shots as he saw them, and making things happen.

Page Engineers was awarded the portion of the IWCS in Vietnam and Philco-Ford was awarded that portion of the IWCS in Thailand.

## **My transfer to Vietnam**

I went to Saigon in September 1965 as part of the initial contingent that established STRATCOM-SEA. I was assigned as the Operations Officer. Within a month or two Col. Bob Terry (later Brigadier General) arrived with the mandate to create the 1st Signal Brigade. He realized the need for people to manage the IWCS installation and within a few weeks he asked me to develop an IWCS Engineering Office. During the remaining months of my tour I had a need to frequently talk to Emmett at Fort Monmouth. Getting a call out of Vietnam was not easy, even for we communicators. Emmett had a solution; he would call me at about 3:00 AM, when circuits were not too busy. I had a phone (EE-8) installed in my off base quarters and from then on Emmett and I conducted business once or twice a week. I had no problem getting back to sleep after these calls.

Emmett made at least one trip to Saigon while I was there. I remember one evening several military and Page people were visiting one of the local establishments, all-drinking. Well not exactly true, Emmett was the only one drinking Coke and he paid for all of his Cokes. That strong character was again demonstrated.

## **Paige and Page**

During the first year or two of IWCS Emmett made frequent visits to Washington and held many meetings with Page personnel. Emmett was not content to just

meet with Page personnel and receive reports on the IWCS progress, but he needed to know all of the facts prior to the meeting, not just what Page employees told him. His habit was to arrive at Page about 7:00 AM, go through the IWCS Project offices and read all of the documents that were left out on the desk. When the meeting took place Emmett was well prepared. He frequently knew as much as the Project Managers and sometimes more. I am sure there were times when the Project Managers wondered how Emmett knew so many details of both the Page successes and of failures.

### **Emmett transferred to Vietnam**

Emmett was reassigned from Fort Monmouth to Long Binh Vietnam to the Communications Systems Engineering and Management Agency at the Request of Col Al Crawford.

I am told that one hot day during the summer of 1969 the 1st Signal Brigade Commander, Major General Thomas (Big Tom) Rienzi called Emmett to his office for a meeting. The purpose of that meeting was for General Rienzi to counsel Emmett on his future. General Rienzi proceeded to tell Emmett that the only thing that could prevent him from becoming a General Officer was that he did not have a degree, and was not a graduate of The Army Command & General Staff College. It is appropriate to note that most people thought that Emmett had an engineering degree although he did not. He had dropped out of high school and joined the Army at 16 years of age. His hobby is Amateur Radio. So communications was his profession as well as his hobby. He loved learning new things. General Rienzi suggested that Emmett should extend his tour in Vietnam and Command a Battalion to get C&GSC credit as a result of commanding a Battalion in a Combat Theater. Emmett agreed to do that. General Rienzi told him that when he finished the Battalion Command tour and returned to the U.S., he would be assigned to Washington, and his top priority was to get a bachelors degree, "even if it was in basket-weaving."

### **Emmett's promotions**

The rest is history. Emmett went to night classes at the University of Maryland, UMUC, for two and a half years five days a week, year round while assigned to Headquarters DCA. He worked for Major General Schulke who drew stars on his efficiency reports and provided frequent encouragement to Emmett, and the day that Emmett completed all of the requirements for a degree, General Schulke submitted a Special Efficiency Report with those hand-drawn stars. The senior service school selection board and the 0-6 Promotion board met the following month, and Emmett was selected for both.

I saw Emmett the day after he was promoted to Colonel. We were at Arlington Cemetery for the burial of a mutual friend. I have seen Emmett only one or two times since that day but I have followed his career. Not only did he retire as a Lt. General but he also served as President of OAO Corporation and as the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence.

As I completed the first draft of this article I made contact with Emmett. He has reviewed approved this article and he provided a few details that had been lost in my memory. We will be getting together for lunch soon to review our times of working together and to review the events in our lives during the past 30 years.

### **Tribute to my good friend**

Although Emmett was my junior when I retired, I am sure he would have been my senior very quickly. Had I stayed on active duty I would have been honored and privileged to have served under Emmett's command. Although he retired as a Lt. Gen., he is still my friend, Emmett.