"THE PROP BLAST"

The following is a brief history of the Parachutists' Prop Blast Ceremony and the Standard Operating Procedure for conducting the ceremony.

"HISTORY OF THE PROP BLAST"

In Mid-December of 1940, at Fort Benning, Georgia, fourteen (14) officers of the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion convened for the first Prop Blast Ceremony ever to be held. It is nearly impossible to determine who, exactly, was responsible for the thought behind this first meeting, but as a result of this historic meeting a ceremony which, through custom and usage, has become the oldest and most honored tradition of our airborne troops was established.

At a meeting prior to the actual ceremony, it was decided that the parachute officers should have a type of party all their own, and that a drink mixture, with a blast behind it, symbolizing the blast received by the propeller wash when jumping from a plane, be concocted and drunk by all the joining members. The base of this mixture was Vodka, for strength, and added to it was the sparkle of champagne, symbolizing the youth and energy of the young officers of the Army Parachute troops. A small bit of lemon juice amd sugar were added to round out the concoction. Thus was born the first Prop Blast mixture.

First Lieutenant Carl Buechner took the casing of a 75mm shell and after having the rip cord handles of the old S4, seat type reserve that was being used at the time, fastened to the sides of the casing, took the crudely fashioned drinking mug to Columbus, Georgia, where the names of the fourteen officers were engraved on the side. Thus was born the first of a long line of Prop Blast Mugs, namely the Miley Mug, named after their commanding Officer, Major William E. Miley.

The names that were engraved on the mug included such well known parachutists as:

Major William E. Miley	(later Major General Miley, CG, 17th Airborne Division).
Major George P. Howell	(later Brigadier General Howell, CG, 1st Parachute Group).
Captain Robert Sink	(later Major General Sink, CG, XVIII Airborne Corps).
Captain William Haugen	(later Colonel Haugen, CO, 503d PIR. Colonel Haugen was KIA in the South Pacific).

Captain Roy Lindquist	(later Major General Lindquist).
Captain William P. Yarborough	(later Colonel Yarborough).
Captain James W. Coutts	(later Brigadier General Coutts, onetime CO, 513th PIR, and C/S 82d Airborne Division).
Captain Roy Chase	(later Brigadier General Chase, onetime Deputy CG, 101st Abn Div).
1st Lt Benjamin H. Vandervoort	(later Colonel Vandervoort, CO, 2d Battalion, 505th PIR).
1st Lt John H. Michaelis	(later Major General Michaelis, onetime CO, 502d PIR).
1st Lt Carl Buechner	(later Colonel Buechner, w/the 1st Allied Airborne Army).
2nd Lt William Ryder	(later Colonel Ryder, Airborne advisor on General MacArthurs Staff).
2nd Lt Duke	(later Lieutenant Colonel Duke).
2nd Lt Bassett	(later Colonel Bassett).

This historic ceremony was a stag affair held at the Horse Show Cabin at Fort Benning, Georgia, and all members of the party were blasted at this time.

The Procedure followed in conducting this first "Prop Blast" was as follows:

As a member's turn came to take the Prop Blast, he would stand on a chair, jump off doing a tumble, take the Prop Blast Mug in hand and would drink of the concoction while the others gave him the count of, "one thousand, two thousand, three thousand". Then he would state the first thing that came to his mind as he jumped out of the plane. The first to go through this procedure was Major Miley, the Battalion Commander.

As a result of this first meeting, the Prop Blast Ceremony has traveled to all parachute units in the United States and to the four corners of the Earth. Through the years this ceremony has changed very little from the one held back at Fort Benning in 1940, and also the Prop Blast Mixture itself has stayed about the same.

Many Prop Blast Mugs have come and gone within the parachute units and among them were such notable as:

The "Miley Mug"	(in the 501st PIB, this was the original).
The "Howell Grail"	(in the 502d PIB).
The "Gavin Goblet"	(in the 505th PIR).
The "Bing Ekman's Bucket"	(in the 505th PIR).
The "Zipper Dipper"	(in the 507th PIR).
The "Lindquist Liberator"	(in the 508th PIR).
The "Haugen Bowl"	(in the 511th PIR).
The "Dickerson Grail"	(in the 513th PIR).
The "Menard Mug"	(in the 77th Special Forces Group, Abn).

World War II found U.S. Army Parachute Units traveling, training, jumping, and fighting all over the World and with them went the Prop Blast Ceremony. Prop Blasts were held in tents, quonset huts, chateaus, hotels, and in the open, and the mixture contained the liquids of the different countries that would carry on the blasting qualities of the original vodka and champagne combination. It has been all these things combined that have added to this parachutists' ceremony and made it a tradition of our Airborne Troops.

"STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING THE PROP BLAST"

The following briefly outlines the qualifications of prospective Prop Blastees and the regulations governing the conducting of a Prop Blast Ceremony:

a. Only those members who are joing a tactical organization for the first time after qualifying as a parachutist will be eligible for the Prop Blast Ceremony.

b. Prop Blast Ceremony will be conducted by units; for example, active Regiments, Division Artillery, Special Troops, Separate Battalions, and Reserve Airborne units in the same catagories.

c. Personnel eligible to be qualified will be fully qualified airborne troopers.

d. The ingredients of the Prop Blast Mixture will not be divulged to anyone who is not a qualified and blasted parachutist. It will be as follows:

75% champagne and 25% vodka, with fresh lemon juice and sugar for flavoring. It will be served very cold.

e. The novices will be required to pay all expenses incident to conducting the ceremony. This, under normal circumstances, will not exceed $25.00 per novice.

f. Novices will do all the work, provide all the labor, and supervise the staging for the Prop Blast Ceremony (i.e. building of a mock-up door, supplying incidentals, etc.)

g. Unit commanders will not require non-drinkers to imbibe of the Prop-Blast Mixture. A suitable substitute will be provided.

h. A suitable container known as a "Prop Blast Mug" of similar nomenclature acceptable to the members of the unit will be provided.

i. Units will maintain a register showing the name and date of Prop Blasting of all parachutists of the unit.

j. The Prop Blast ceremony shall be open to male personnel ONLY. Only veteran parachutists will be permitted to be present until, at the direction of the senior parachutist present, the time is considered appropriate and opportune to permit the novices to enter.

k. Novices will wear a proper uniform, and upon entering will report to the senior member (qualified) of the unit present. The entry will normally go through a mock door after the proper commands, similar to those given in an actual parachute jump, are given. A suitable tumble executed in acceptable fashion will follow their entry prior to reporting. At the direction of the senior parachutist present or an officer so designated by him, and with his approval, they will be permitted to partake of the Prop Blast Mixture, while the witnessing qualified parachutist gives the count of , "One thousand, two thousand, three thousand".

l. If the Blastee satisfies the senior member in his drinking, he will be considered blasted, but in case of faulty performance in his exit, tumble or drinking, the Blastee will have a malfunction called and go throught the stick again until he satisfactorily completes the blasting procedure.

m. At the discretion of the senior parachutist, the history of the ceremony may be given prior to the entry of the novices.

n. In the event a mixed party follows, the novices and newly joined veteran parachutists will be presented to the assembled crowd. It is considered appropriate that the Prop Blast Ceremony be explained at this time.

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