

Cavete Kamburoff

Separation orders, oh boy! Well past my transition from Super-troop to All-Star Malcontent, the tour was dragging and we were all hoping for a merciful end to it. After Tet, Khe Sanh, the Scorpion, Air America, and my increasing distaste for the violence we were wreaking, I just wanted to go home.

Never a good sign, Major Strother approached me in the middle of the shop with a "request" for more drawings of the wing emblem, our patch designed by Heraldry expert Milton Caniff. The BatCat was ours, and after we were disbanded, condensed back into a small Special Operations Group, it was kept.

Every time we had one of our many visits from VIP's I had to make more of those damn drawings. The Major even went to the bother of corralling all the colored pencils on base so we could have the snazzy colors on our walls. I was sick of it. All of it, I'm afraid. This time, for some reason, I argued with him. Not a good thing to do in front of the entire shop, but I refused to back down on something or other, and he left me with direct orders to make him a drawing his way.

That was when the savvy tech sergeant sidled up to me and asked *sotto voce*, "Kamburoff, why don't you make one of those with the BatCat going the other way?"

Oh, my, . . . it was beautiful to the twisted mind of the malcontent, and dangerous, as well. I went to work on it on Midnight Shift. The result had a few subtle changes to the original: The BatCat now showed us the other end, with the lightning bolt entering under the upright tail. The sulfur sign was appropriately replaced with a purple screw, and the motto changed to *Cavete Rectum* - "Beware of the Commander".

It was almost 07:00 when I put it up on the Commander's bulletin board for all incoming Dayshift troops to see. I sat down in the shop and waited. I could hear the guffaws as they came to work, but I just left. It stayed up there for a few days, then disappeared, probably to an evidence file for my eventual punishment, but I only cared if it kept me from going home.

I waited and waited, but no Article 15 or worse seemed to be forthcoming. The Commander's aide, Ron Newland, our TWIC (Titless WAF in Charge), informed me instead that there was a citation on his desk for a Air Force Commendation Medal, probably for the work I did wiring the shop upon our arrival and saving the mission from a two-week shutdown. I never got either, and just gritted my teeth hoping to get home unscathed.

However, . . . on one hot and dusty day, on my last trip into town on the Suzuki, we were stopped in one of the dusty tangles of mass confusion and noise that passed for traffic, when I looked over to the side and saw, in glass cases by the hundreds and hundreds, small copies of my Cavete Rectum patch. It was not taken down by the Commander, but by someone who wanted one, and duplicated, . . . by the hundreds. Perhaps that was more important than wiring the shop: I could go home fulfilled.

Before I left the base, I saw folk with the squadron patch on the front of their hats and my Cavete patch on the back.

I never got one.