

## **EOD INCIDENT # ?**

**In the summer of 1971, the 50<sup>th</sup>. EOD at Granite City Army Depot, IL. had one of those “out of the ordinary” incidents. Bud Englehardt was our control officer, in direct charge of all EOD units in 5<sup>th</sup> Army. This covered everything from the Canadian border to the southern border of Missouri, and from Indiana to Colorado. His unit was at Fort Leonard Wood, about 148 miles away. Besides being the best boss I ever had, he taught me more about managing people than those highly degreed lecturers at business school could ever imagine. On this particular day, I had just walked through the front door after lunch, and heard my First Sergeant, SFC Bill Lukasiewicz saying into a telephone, “lady, you’ve got to be s----- me”! After taking a breath, I told him, “Sergeant Luke, I hope you’re not talking to a civilian like that.” He pulled his cigar out from between his teeth and said “Capt’n, pick up your phone” – this accompanied with a gesture toward my office. Back then, there were only 10 persons to a unit, they lived like a family, and many formalities of rank were not always observed. After getting on the phone and introducing myself, we heard a lady in a Northern suburb of St. Louis reiterate her assertion that she had a 1,000 LB. bomb in her back yard, and would like it removed. At this point, most everyone reading this who has been in EOD can understand that feeling of looking up at the ceiling and asking “why do we get all the nuts?” We thanked the lady on the phone and told her we would take care of it for her. Then we called the local police department and explained the situation. We expected to hear no more about the call. Shortly, the police department was on the phone saying that there was indeed a whacking great bomb in the back yard of the address given by the lady on the phone. We told them we’d be there ASAP, and I went out the door with the SP4 Beher. We took our window van and the usual tools, convinced that what had been described by at least 2 people could not be. When we arrived, we were treated to the sight of a 1,000 LB GP bomb of WWII vintage, with period correct fuzing installed. The lady of the house was again on the phone to SGT Luke. She handed me the phone and the SGT. told me that 5<sup>th</sup> Army HQ, not our**

control unit, nor the 5<sup>th</sup> Army EOD Liaison had called in about this incident, and wanted to know what was going on. I told him that we had only observed the item, it was as described, and we would get back to him when we had more information. Privately, I wished the call had come at 2AM, so nobody else could ask questions. In the course of inspecting the bomb, my OCS class ring [from Artillery OCS - before I got religion and joined EOD] dragged along the bomb case. This caused a distinct but quiet, ringing sound. Could it be empty? A couple of mild raps with the ring were followed with a few licks with a screwdriver and a couple of good solid hits with a pipe wrench, all producing a beautiful melodic ringing sound. The case was empty; all we had to deal with was the fuze. I sprinted back into the house to get on the phone – this is before portable phones. When Sgt. Luke was told the bomb was empty, he asked “how do you know”? So, I told him that we had beat on it with a pipe wrench. His reply was “Capt’n are you nuts? [did I mention that the formalities of rank were sometimes not observed?] I can’t tell 5<sup>th</sup> Army that, they’ll think we’re crazy.” Reflecting that they think we’re crazy anyway for doing this job, but that Bud might also raise an eyebrow at that one, I told him “tell them that we discovered the bomb was empty through a technical examination of the item.” Also, we asked for 2 more people, the correct tools for the fuze, and something to haul the item back to our base. These were dispatched immediately. In less than an hour, SSG Bill Maasch showed up with SP5 Leroy Andrews, a Jeep and trailer, and the tools. About a half an hour later, we loaded up the bomb and the now separated fuze, and left for home. While going down the “ON” ramp to the freeway, we saw a TV news crew going down the “OFF” ramp to cover the story. Whatever they taped never ran, all the picture worthy stuff was in the Jeep trailer. This incident was good for a lot of laughs and head shaking in the ensuing months. For those of you who served with him, Bill Maasch passed away in 2004. I’m still looking for the rest of these guys.

Terry Fitzgerald