

# Davis Hall

By Bunky

Located on the most Northeastern point on the UTA Campus, Davis Hall has withstood the test of time, and, by all rights, should be designated a Historical Landmark. Yes, the name has changed over the years, and other buildings on campus have taken the name Davis Hall, but the “real” Davis Hall lives on. As a matter of fact, it will always be there. It is indestructible, and can't be torn down. Lord knows, throughout time, many have tried and failed. Designated a Military Dorm for decades, Davis Hall was the temporary home for scores of cadets in the ROTC program. The footprint of the building actually forms a large 'L', made up of four cubes, or Ramps. The ramp forming the apex of the 'L' had no back door. The structure is steel. The walls are concrete. The floors are Granite. Added strength was gained through a honeycomb space between the ramps. Access between the ramps was only possible by leaving the building and entering the bottom floor of another ramp. Not so fast? Scott Leidolf! The steel medicine cabinets were easily removed, and a nimble cadet could scamper between the walls of the different ramps, but I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

Young folks are impressionable, and when I came to Arlington State College in the Spring Semester of 1961, I was no exception. I wanted to fit in. A room on C Ramp was assigned, and I met a guy who would become the first of my three roommates at Davis Hall. Mike Ellis was a tall skinny kid from Temple, Texas with big glasses lots of teeth and a head that resembled a Cantaloupe. Many of the ROTC types had the reputation of being geeks. Mike smiled and looked at me with an expression of, “What the Hell kind of card did I draw this time?” Many a plot, plan, and caper would be concocted in that tiny room in Davis Hall during the 60's. We would work together at 6 Flags as Confederate Soldiers, & Gunfighters, and later as Buyers at LTV plus various Christmas jobs. We become best of friends for over 40 years.

Within minutes of drawing out my uniforms, I ran into Ron Rendleman, my idol and mentor. Ron was a senior and a legend both in ROTC and Davis Hall. I had known Ron since I was 5 years old. I followed four years behind him my entire life—model airplanes, scouts, motorcycles, boats, hot rods and now, ROTC, Davis Hall, and the Jodies. Later, we would own an airplane together. Ron said, “ Suit-up and lets go!” I had no clue what was in store, but I knew if Ron were involved, it would be fun. Parked in back of Davis Hall was some type of armor military hardware. Rendleman had talked a military salvage company into “donating “ this vehicle to the ROTC with the condition that when it was returned, the motor would be overhauled, and the vehicle would be working properly. Lee B.Wilson,

chomping a green cigar, was perched on top of this tank-like vehicle. “Get the lead out, cadet!” Off we went down the streets of Arlington. Traffic yielded, red lights were run, pedestrians were impressed. I knew that life at Davis Hall was going to be good. After an hour or so taking out small trees in some field and seeing how far the vehicle could stay airborne, we returned the smoking armor to the parking lot. Wilson would become a Green Beret, and Rendleman would become a highly decorated Chopper pilot. I had yet to spend the first night at Davis Hall!

As with any military situation, there is a T.O. & E (table of organization and equipment). Davis Hall was no exception. There were ramp commanders and a dorm commander. These positions were filled by the upperclassmen who made good grades, did well in ROTC, followed orders and, above all, kissed ass. Cadets who had the best opportunity to excel in their military career were chosen. Our dorm commander was Norman—not “Stormin’ Norman,” but “Abnormal Norman”. He ruled with an iron hand. We were able to run Norman off after one semester, and he disappeared into obscurity. Mission accomplished.

The episodes surrounding Davis Hall shaped our young lives, and those that preceded and followed. These capers will be forever etched in those hallowed walls. Here are a few stories during my tenure. Because B ramp was the only ramp without a back door, it was chosen to fill the front porch and recessed doorway with packed snow after the first good snowfall. No one considered firetrap or any danger to be part of the equation. Seeing the cadets climb out the windows and scale down the walls to get to class was reason enough for the prank, and expression of our excitement with the fresh snowfall.

Sometime in about 1962 a young punk named Gus Rae showed up at the dorm. Brash and arrogant, Gus made the mistake of saying, “my name is Gus RAE-(spelling out R A E ), and don’t you forget it.” We didn’t! In those days, the Mennon after-shave folks came to the campus and distributed little sample bottles of their product. Naturally, we all filled up our medicine cabinets. That night, Scott Liedolf, my second roommate, volunteered to take care of Gus. By removing our medicine cabinet, he was able to climb between the walls to the adjoining ramp and duct tape an M80 to the back of Gus’s cabinet with a cigarette attached to the fuse. Within minutes of returning safely to our room, an explosion could be heard all the way across campus. The medicine cabinet ended up in the middle of the room and the entire ramp smelled like a French whore house. That’s R A E!

I have to leave the names out of this one because this caper is still open on the books with the FBI. Gus’s room was not the first to fall victim of an explosive device between the walls of Davis Hall. A few years prior, the same technique was used, but this time, the device was a 105 Simulator. You military types know this is a BIG explosion! Lucifer Smith was

shaving at 3 am when the explosion occurred. His instinct caused him to hit the deck as he heard the distinctive whistle just prior to the explosion. His medicine cabinet set sail—along with about half of the plaster from his wall. Most of the rooms of two adjoining ramps incurred the same damage. When the FBI arrived (the 105 is a military device), one cadet was still laying motionless in his bunk covered with dust and plaster. They thought he was a goner, but actually, he just went back to sleep. This little prank was clearly over the line. It took many years for me to realize that this stunt, along with taking out an airplane with a 2 x 4 through the propeller (reported in a prior issue) are examples of pranks that simply shouldn't have taken place.

In the old days, many of the Davis Hall residents were fresh off the farm. They came with some valuable 4H knowledge not often found in the Park Cities. For instance, I'll bet most folks don't know that you can get a full-grown cow to walk up to the fourth floor of D ramp with only a slight tug of the rope. Hell will freeze over before the cow will walk down those same stairs. There are two sure fire methods to get the cow down. One requires a butcher, and the other requires a harness and a crane. A collection was required to come up with the necessary funds for the crane.

Another frivolous, fun-filled fact found first and foremost around the farm, is that chickens will survive quite nicely throughout the two week Christmas Holiday in Dave (Possum) Murray's room if you leave them plenty of feed spread throughout the room. The random pattern of their droppings has kind of an artistic appeal after 14 days. Dave signed up for C ramp commander, and became fair game. Speaking of game, Ron Watson gets credit for bringing the road kill possum from Lake Arlington and hiding it in Murray's room for a few days. I was assigned the task of bringing the ripe Possum to the dumpster with a pair of pliers, but the stream of Jody young men who got to climb in the dumpster got the worse end of the deal.

The question of what to do with old issues of the Shorthorn (the college newspaper) comes to mind. The obvious solution seemed to be to wad up the paper, and see how many loads it would take to fill up the fourth floor of A ramp. Now, the burning question was of how to get rid of the paper. Eddie Osburn decided to do just that. The fire department was not very happy about that caper.

One may ask, how on Earth are all these pranks part of the college learning experience. What possible benefit could be achieved? I can answer that. For instance, if you place a stiff piece of cardboard on an angle towards Ray Jollisant and Terry Moore's dorm room and pour five gallons of used crankcase oil down the cardboard, at least 97% will run into the room. This is a law of physics. If the Granite floor is level, and

depending on the temperature and viscosity of the oil, a near perfect circle of approximately 12 feet can be achieved.

Joe Billy Swift and Henry Aerioga were roommates, and both were members of the Rifle Team. Joe Billy could shoot a group of 12 at 300 yards and cover it with a dime. The only guy who could do better was Lanny Basham who got a street named after him after he won the Gold at the Olympics. In association with their studies, Joe and Henry wanted to determine the penetrating power and deflection of an arrow through the solid doors of the crapper of two adjoining dorm rooms. In the interest of safety, a volunteer was picked to witness the arrow's flight through the doors from inside the crapper—out of the line of fire, of course. To further reduce the risk of an errant arrow, one of the bunk beds was placed vertical behind the second door with the government issued mattress safely duct taped into position. They couldn't use Rendleman's bed because it had a 35 horsepower Evinrude outboard motor attached to the bed frame. Yet another practical application to what may, at first, seem a little on the crazy side. Joe later served a few tours in Viet Nam—both as an Infantry officer and later as a helicopter pilot.

Possibly one of the most practical physics experiments in Davis Hall's history took place in the Spring of 1963. The plan incorporated all the elements of a military exercise and academic skills needed to train Army leaders. This caper required intense planning, a precise list of materials, training, coordination, and a worthy target, with minimal collateral damage. The goal was to determine how long it would take to fill a dorm room with 4 inches of water. (This was the height of the granite dam between the room and the crapper.) Adding to the challenge were several additional elements; the occupants of the room would need to be there but not know what was going on, it had to be done at night with no lights, and we didn't want to destroy any personal belongings. Picking the target was the easy part. Anyone who knew Carl Joe Weatherby would fully understand. His red hair alone was sufficient cause to make him a target, not to mention his attitude in general. Unfortunately, his roommate was Al Ellis-the Jody Commander, the Corps Commander, good student, mister clean, etc. Oh well, casualties of war happen. We entered the room at 02:15 hours by a pass key. (For those who went into the Air Force, that is 2:15 in the morning) While I caulked the pipes that penetrated the granite floors between the rooms below, Lamkin attached the hoses to the two lavatory faucets, and secured them with clamps. These hoses were cut to a length that allowed them to run across the floor for about a foot. The trash can was placed on the hoses to insure they would not flop around. The faucets were the type that had internal springs to insure that the water would not remain on. Pitz, Ellis, Leidolf and Herr silently started removing every piece of furniture as well as books and clothing. These were stacked in the hallway. Garrett sealed the space between the front door and the floor. With the room now empty except for a trash can, a

steel bunk bed, and two sleeping cadets, Watson installed the pre-cut wedges to insure the proper amount of water would flow. The patrol exited through the crapper and adjoining room on schedule at 02:22. The goal was to obtain the calculated 4 inch water level by 07:30 hours—the time the cadets would wake up to go to their 8 o'clock class. I accept full responsibility for the flawed plan. The alarm clock was in the hall with everything else. As the morning sun awoke Al at 08:15, he glanced at his watch. (Expletive deleted). They hit the floor with a splash and a splat. By now, the water had breached the 4" mark where the door was sealed and was headed down the stairway. As their good buddies, and fellow Jodies we all pitched in with brooms and mops and helped clean up the mess. Who would do such a thing?

*And the times, they are a changin'.* Today, these types of stunts would land you out of college and likely in jail, but I'm not so sure that these exploits and capers put such a negative spin on how our lives have turned out. We all graduated from college. Lamkin, Garrett, Rendleman, Swift, Al Ellis, Pitz, Moore, Jollisant, Osburn, Lucifer Smith, Lee Wilson and Murray were all commissioned officers. Most were decorated. Pitz went on to the FBI, Herr became a doctor, Al became the president of the Dallas Bar Association. Scott and Mike Ellis have been successful in business. Heck, I even went to Graduate School at Tulane, started a few businesses and retired at 50. I now spend my time volunteering for the leukemia society and supporting several other charities and writing crap like this. I take full responsibility for any errors, fabrications, and embellishments.

bunky5555@juno.com