

'Old Corps', that was yesterday!

Photo and Story by Cpl. Anne Prezell

OLD CORPS?

Not a chance!

With 28 years of experience, a Bronze Star on his chest and a sleeveful of rockers, Master Gunnery Sergeant L. Rivera-Cruz looks toward the future, not the past.

Rivera-Cruz, operations chief, Eighth Motor Transport Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group, has seen many changes since being able to buy beer for five cents.

A native Puerto Rican, Rivera-Cruz began his colorful career in 1951 amid the clamor of the Korean War. In Korea, he saw snow and felt cold for the first time in his life. More importantly, it was there he first felt the strong ties of "brotherhood" which bind all Marines.

...able to buy beer for five cents.

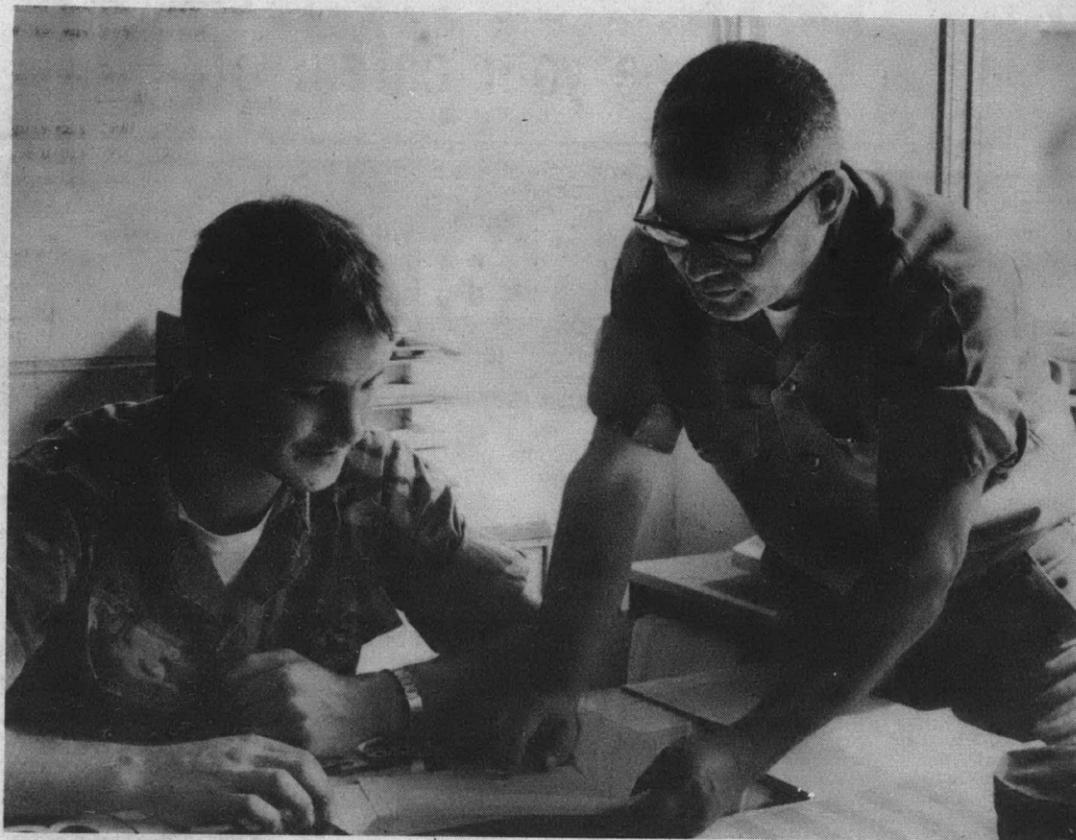
The Marines he was to later meet in Vietnam were to be no different than those he knew in Korea. "It was the nature of the war that was different; and the weather," he related.

Without hesitation this war veteran says the Marine Corps is his life. "Within it there is a cohesiveness and sense of purpose that is generally lacking on the 'outside,'" he acknowledges.

"In the civilian world, people will settle for mediocrity," he adds. Rivera-Cruz is not one to tolerate mediocrity. He gives his best and expects those working for him to do the same.

If a Marine has personal problems that interfere with his duties, Rivera-Cruz feels strongly that he must help, and maintains an "open-ear" policy, extending friendship as well as advice.

"Marines need to help each other," he claims. "It was easier before the days of semi-private rooms and so many early marriages. Men knew each other better when they lived together. Still



SHOW AND TELL — Master Gunnery Sergeant L. Rivera-Cruz explains what he requires of Lance Corporal M.O. Pannell, Headquarters and Service Company, Eighth Motor Transport Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group. As operations chief, Rivera-Cruz is not content to remain behind his desk. He moves among his men regularly, trouble-shooting problems of every description.

CONTINUED ↓

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
GLOBE
13 Sept 79

unit tightness is achievable." To that end Rivera-Cruz stresses organized athletics and unit projects which emphasize teamwork.

**...felt strong ties
of "brotherhood"
among Marines.**

During off-duty time, Rivera-Cruz is an inventor. With his customary "future-consciousness," he recognized long ago the need for energy saving devices and invented an electricity generating apparatus which uses freon, solar energy and water. He has a patent on this invention, but will make improvements before marketing it.

He has other inventions on the drawing board, but will not discuss them yet. He's busy ironing out the "bugs" and waiting for the right time to present them.

It is not only his inventions that set Rivera-Cruz apart from his contemporaries. He has forward-looking ideas as well... particularly with regard to woman Marines.

Mrs. Rivera-Cruz, incidentally, is a former woman Marine and has no doubt helped shape her husband's liberal attitudes in this area.

"I'm happy to see more women in the Corps," he said. "They have the brains and the talent to make important contributions. From what I've seen, a man's performance tends to improve when women are present."

Asked about women in combat, he said, "Having women on the battlefield might be emotionally distressing for men, but I think we are headed in that direction, and many of our hard-charging woman Marines are just as capable of packing the gear and getting the job done as their male counterparts."

Rivera-Cruz, who speaks with a zesty Spanish accent is a reminder of some of America's oldest ideals. He is ambitious, hard-working and firmly believes in each American's equality.