

"Cookie's funniest military paint job"

My adventures in airbrushing began in 1968 when I bought a Badger 250 spray gun for modeling. The first model I built with it was a Tamiya 1/25 scale Tiger I while waiting to go into the Army that fall. After basic training, I went to Fort Bliss, Texas, for Vietnamese language school.

While there I brought along all of my modeling tools to include the Badger 250. Finding a convenient model shop a short distance away in a mall and meeting up with IPMS member John Estes, I was able to stock up on Pactra paint (this is 1969, folks!) and Propel cans to run the spray gun back in the barracks.

One nice sunny day (of which there were a lot in El Paso) I got a phone call while in class that ordered me to report to the barracks. I did so and when I got to my room I found the company executive officer (an MP 1st Lieutenant), the First Sergeant, and two MPs standing in the room with the Badger 250 laid out on the top of a dresser. I was a bit puzzled, but even worse, the XO then read me my rights under Article 31 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice – the military version of Miranda rights.

Now a bit nervous, I asked what the problem was. The XO responded, “We found you are in possession of drug paraphernalia, to wit, a water pipe.” Dumbfounded, I responded, no, it was a spray gun for painting models. He firmly disagreed, and once again called it drug paraphernalia. I was starting to get a bit testy (not good when you are a private and he is an officer) and again strongly disagreed. This time, his response: “Prove it.”

I opened my locker and took out the Propel tank and hose fitting to connect the air supply. I assembled the feed jar to the bottom of the 250 and turned the air supply on. I went to demonstrate, “Sir, it works like this when you press the button...” While I THOUGHT I had cleaned the 250 out, a small amount of paint had remained in the feed tube and was still liquid. Sure enough, ZIP! Out came a nice line of Pactra Artillery Olive – right across the XO’s chest and his nicely pressed khaki uniform.

For a few seconds, nobody moved. I was now sure I would receive company punishment (Article 15 UCMJ) for ruining his uniform, but the two MPs and First Sergeant had turned around so the XO could not see them frantically trying not to laugh out loud. Finally, he looked down and could only muster an “Oh.” After a minute or so, he told me to put it away and get back to class. Never had any more problems about suspected drug paraphernalia though...

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