

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Back in the late Thirties, before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, an exciting event took place right here in Eureka. Well, it was exciting to the young boys including me. The U.S. Army sent a convoy of trucks loaded with troops from the San Francisco Bay area to Fort Lewis, Washington. The route included Highway 101. I don't remember the year nor do I know how many troops passed through Eureka but there were many. Some of us chose a vantage point on a bluff overlooking the 101 just West of Fairfield Street near Buhne. In the years gone by, that bluff has been cut back almost to Fairfield but in those days you could sit on the edge with Broadway just below you. That convoy wasn't a few miles long they passed by for a number of days. Military convoys (then and now) travel at very low speeds so there were many bivouacs (overnight stays) within in the great distance between the San Francisco Bay area and Ft. Lewis. Late in the afternoon, the Military Police, mounted on motorcycles equipped with side cars, would station themselves at Harris and Broadway and Harris and Fairfield to direct the convoy east on Harris Street to the then vacant area across from Sequoia Park. The area now contains the Washington Elementary School, the Armory and the City Water reservoir. My Dad drove me out one evening to witness the encampment. The area was a massive city of two men 'Pup' Tents and the parked convoy vehicles. The next morning, the convoy was reformed and continued north on 101. Jeeps were a still fairly new addition to military transportation and were of great interest to the civilian. There were many Jeeps throughout the convoy and a good portion of them were towing the small 37 MM. anti-tank guns. The majority of the trucks were the large dual wheeled 'six by sixes', the work horses of the units. I felt sorry for the "GIs" sitting in the back on the long wooden benches hour after hour. Many of the trucks also towed various sizes of utility trailers. I am pretty sure that this convoy was part of an infantry division. In later years, while stationed in Japan as a member of the Occupation Forces, I rode in two different convoys sitting on those wooden benches but each trip was only twenty miles long. Later, while driving a jeep on a solo assignment just outside Tokyo, I became entangled in a convoy on a very busy two lane road. With convoys headed in both directions at a maximum speed of twenty miles per hour there was no chance to pass and I happened to be right behind a Japanese horse-drawn cart that was loaded with human waste contained in large wooden buckets with no covers. We referred to them as "Honey Buckets". I was trapped for miles until the wagon finally turned off.

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