

TABLES

Hoss Erving (*I suddenly recalled an episode in the first meal during Beast after the M 80 demo one balmy evening in July of '71 . . . there I was . . . It was the evening meal, as I recall, and I was sitting quietly at the table with 7 classmates and 2 guidance counselors at the head of the table, enjoying the jocular banter amongst my comrades-in-arms, when it occurred to me that some of my fellow new recruits were desiring some of the sumptuous fare presented to us by the hard working chefs in Mitch's. Having arrived somewhat hurriedly at the table, I had somehow neglected to determine the senior cadet's national and ancient family heritage: this would shortly prove to have enormous consequences on my caloric consumption that night.*

Being a quick learner, I had determined the proper method of attracting attention to myself was to extend one's fist out over the table and wait for an enthusiastic response from either aforementioned guidance counselor at the head of the table. Soon, my turn to state my request was granted. I must interject at this point that I was raised in south Texas in the 60's -- not that Texas wasn't a great place to live and experience other cultures -- it's just that most of the other culture I had experienced up this point in my life involved jalapeno peppers, tortillas, garlic, onions, and shooting dove from the back of a pickup truck on your way home from football practice. As the senior cadet acknowledged my presence and solicited my question, I initially failed to realize that Cadet First Class James V. Ojala (pronounced "O-juh-luh") was not from a culture or family lineage associated with any of the above.

I quickly realized this oversight when most of the arteries in Cadet Ojala's forehead burst as I pronounced his name as I was accustomed, given my south Texas upbringing (the "j" in Spanish is pronounced as an "h"). I, well in tune with my Spanish lingo, addressed him as Cadet "Oh-halla". In the 3 nanoseconds it took me to realize that he was definitely NOT of Mexican heritage, I also realized he could very easily passed for Thor's stunt double, complete with bleach-blond hair, Norwegian blue eyes, steely jaw, and the hammer of thunder welded by lightning strike to his wrist, with which he promptly smote me mightily about the head and shoulders, thereby relieving all classmates at the table from further guidance counselor attention for the rest of the meal. Needless to say, I didn't get to sample much of Mitch's finest that night, but the episode did serve me well in starting down the path of cultural diversity appreciation.)