

The Passing of a Legend and a Tradition

By way of an explanation:

For all of you newcomers to the Corps, the old cry, "it's Brown Side Out" no longer elicits curses from an entire barracks full of troops. The practice and legend came from the early days of WWII when the M1941 Marine Corps Pack was normally carried with a blanket roll in the shape of a horseshoe that covered each side of and the top of the pack. The roll was tightly rolled (if you wanted to avoid the wrath of the Gunny) and fastened to the pack with straps provided for such a purpose attached to the pack itself. The tighter and neater your blanket roll, the more squared away it was. The roll was made by laying out your "shelter half" (a half a pup tent), laying your blanket on top of it and putting the folded tent pole at one end and the tent stakes at the other along with the guy line. Because the Marines were heading for the South Pacific, the Marine Corps obligingly made one side in a green camouflage pattern and the other side in a brown one. The helmet covers were also made so that they had matching camouflage on either side, one brown and the other green.

The idea was that in the summer you would use the green side of the shelter half, and the brown in winter. For most of the year, this worked fine. It didn't become a problem except during the transition periods between winter and summer. It seems that nobody could make up their minds when the actual transition should take place. Needless to say a properly set up blanket roll was to reflect the season. But no two units could seem to get their stuff together on the exact changeover day!

An Infantry Battalion normally had four rifle companies, but even within a Battalion, it wasn't unusual for the word to get garbled. I've seen two companies fall out using "Brown Side Out" and the other two using "Green Side Out!" Entire Platoons would be seen racing for the barracks to change the color of their blanket rolls! Inside the barracks, you could see shelter halves flying, and cursing troops re-rolling their rolls. Companies would spy on one another in the evening to see what "side" the other was using... It seemed to be a matter of honor not to get together and put out a "unified word" that would have solved the problem. The Company Commander might well put out the word to roll the packs with "Green Side Out" only to find that the word had changed by 0700 the next morning. Tempers would often flare but somehow things always worked themselves out without bloodshed. The old double sided shelter halves were phased out in the late 1960s with a single sided dark green shelter half, and a legend and a tradition died in the Corps.

...But somehow I can still hear some clown yelling into the passageway, "Hey, the word's been changed, it's Brown Side Out!" and the old adage "It came with a scream, it came with a shout, the words been changed, it's Brown Side Out!" still echo like the strains of a fading bugle of a bygone day in my mind.

Semper Fi,

Dick Culver

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Now I'm not a wheel as you can see,
I'm just a private in the Infantry.
I've never fought the Japs or Krauts,
But I've fought the battle of "Green Side Out".
So pull up a seabag my clean Marine,
And I'll tell you the story of Brown versus Green.

It started one morning at reveille,
When the Duty came in so merrily.
He was only a boot, a kid still growing,
He took out his whistle and started blowing.

"OK, you guys, get out of the sack,
Swab the decks and make up your packs."
I could tell by the grin on his sloppy pan,
That the stuff was about to hit the fan.
His adam's apple wobbled, from his throat came a shout,
"The word's been changed, it's Brown Side Out!"

"Brown side out?" cried a pi\$\$ed off Marine,
"You said last night it was gonna' be Green!"
Alright, knock off the bitchin' and rearrange,
You know the word is subject to change!
So you'd better get hot you Gawd Damn Clowns
And change that roll so the outside's brown!

"Hey you with the ears like fenders,
Where the hell are your belt suspenders?"
"I washed 'em last night and they're still drying,
Look in the head if you think I'm lying!"
"Roll it tight and play it cool,
And don't forget your entrenching tool!"

Well, I rolled my roll all nice and neat,
I was sweating blood from head to feet.
When just about then the Gunny came in
And said, "sorry men, it's Green again!"

"Green again?" cried a voice from the rear,
"If we roll it much more, we'll wear out our gear!"
"Knock off that bitchin' and do what you're told,
Get your @\$@ hot and make up that roll!"

Now my hair's falling out and I'm getting old,
And all on account of that \$#@& roll!
Now this ends my story, but without a doubt,
There'll never be an end to "Green Side Out"!

– **Unknown** –