

Spoon



It is a spoon. Not just any spoon. It's my spoon. I have had it for 35 years - part of the kit It was issued on 22 Jan 85. That's a long time for a spoon and it's all I have now to remind me of those early years. Its friends - the knife and the fork - are long gone, the holy trinity of cutlery now only one.

The spoon lived in my army webbing those 32 years, webbing worn comfortable with time, travelling the world with its mate, the Cup Canteen. Everything one needs to concoct the gourmet delights of ration packs Type A, B, C, D, and E: cheese in a can, Corned Beef Hash, Instant Potato with Onion, and biscuits, always smashed; cuisine that would put Heston to shame.

My spoon. Essential to life in the dirt, a "must have to deploy," we are told. Endless kit checks making sure that we have our spoon. If we didn't, we obviously weren't fit to deploy.

My spoon went to Timor, a veteran it now is. Nine months of enforcing the peace. Dining each night, smashed lamb, fish as chewy as armoured vehicle track pad, and Sara Lee butter cake our desert.

"Can we get some cheese cake?" Murray hopefully scrawls in the mess suggestion book each night.

Eventually, a response: "Of course."

We look forward with anticipation as another week passes. Then one night, the menu announces "Cheesecake!" much to our delight. And there it is, in the bain marie at 70 degrees: Sara Lee Butter Cake sprinkled with cheese and placed under the grill. Lucky I had my spoon for so sumptuous a feast.

Now, retired from adventuring with no more stories to make, the telling getting louder and larger, more distant and vague. But one thing still with me, after 35 years: "Stay low, move fast, don't eat anything bigger than your head ... and always carry a spoon!"