

SECOND WORLD WAR CADENCE - SOUND OFF

By Michael Stucke

An old Army legend is told... in May, 1944, an fatigued marching column, returning to barracks at Ft. Slocum, New York, picked up the step with a chant heard in the ranks. Others repeated it and the "Duckworth Chant" or "Sound Off" was born. Pvt. Willie Duckworth, an African American soldier created the chant that we know today.

"Sound Off"

(CHORUS) SOUND OFF (By individual)

1 - 2 (By troops)

SOUND OFF (By individual)

3 - 4 (By troop)

CADENCE COUNT (By individual)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4, 1 - 2 --- 3 - 4 (By troops)

VERSE 1 The heads are up and the chests are out

The arms are swinging in cadence count.

Repeat - Chorus after every verse

VERSE 2 Head and eyes are off the ground,

Forty inches, Cover down.

VERSE 3 It won't get by if it ain't GI,

It won't get by if it ain't GI,

VERSE 4 I don't mind taking a hike

If I can take along a bike.

VERSE 5 I don't care if I get dirty

As long as the Brow gets Gravel Gertie.

VERSE 6 The Wacs and Waves will win the War

So tell us what we're fighting for.

VERSE 7 They send us out in the middle of the night

To shoot an azimuth without a light.

VERSE 8 There are lots plums upon the tree

For everyone exceptin' me.

VERSE 9 The first platoon, it is the best.

They always pass the Colonel's tests.

JODY CALLS - Who is Jody? Jodie (Jody) is a mysterious, often sinister character that stays home and indulges in the good life as a civilian. This person can be a male or a female depending on the spin of the verses and is ready to comfort or take away your wife, girlfriend, sister or possessions while you are soldiering. Jody may be synonymous with G.I. Joe, a variation of John Doe. The verses are never-ending and are often made up for a particular person, place, unit or situation.

Here's a sample: You had a good home when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

You had a good home when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Jodie was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Jodie was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

(CHORUS) SOUND OFF (By individual)

1 - 2 (By troops)

SOUND OFF (By individual)

3 - 4 (By troop)

CADENCE COUNT (By individual)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4, 1 - 2 --- 3 - 4 (By troops)

You had a good home when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Jodie was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Her mamma was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Her papa was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

(CHORUS)

You had a good home when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

Your baby was there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

The police were there when you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)

And that's why you left (By individual)

You're right (By troops)
(CHORUS)

The Captain rides in a jeep,
You're right (By troops)
The Sergeant rides in a truck,
You're right (By troops)
The General rides in a limousine
You're right (By troops)
But your just out a luck.
You're right (By troops)
(CHORUS)

Occasionally, one hears a cadence or "Jody" in films or records. These may not be exactly authentic but most capture the feeling of the period and the spirit of the cadence. "Battleground" has scenes of this call that is closer than most.

Though units did perform double-time for some physical training during WWII, marching was much more common as a teamwork and discipline building unit exercise for the infantry. The cadence was primarily used for marching till physical training changed emphases several years after the War when running became more common.

During the early 1960's, most cadences began to be used in physical training and double-time, less so for marching. Most Vietnam era veterans (and later) remember chants during the unit jogging 2 - 4 miles around the post or a running track.

Clear your voice and sing!