

Part 2: Before G.I. Joe

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

1936 Dragonsky - future member of the October Guard -- is born in Russia. "Triple Play" (YB 2). Dragonsky says he fought Guderian's Panzers at age five. Nazi general Guderian invaded Russia in 1941.

1940s

A plantation owner and anti-Japanese guerilla in French Indochina (Vietnam) spares the life of a young Japanese officer who is also the son of the grand master of the Koga Ninjas. Eventually, the Viet-Minh turn on the guerilla and murder him. His son is adopted by the ninjas. He will eventually become a master of the Koga ninja style and become a mercenary using the name Firefly.

"Firefly!" (GI 126). Firefly tells the Ninja Force his history.

1940

August 20th. Leon Trotsky, political rival of Joseph Stalin, is murdered in Mexico City after being exiled from the Soviet Union years before. The killer is a follower of Stalin.

Historical accounts. Mentioned by Beach Head in "Best Defense" (GI 50).

1941

July. The German 2nd Panzer Army is led by General Guderian during the Nazi's invasion of Russia. Dragonsky (later a member of the October Guard), age 5, throws Molotov cocktails at the Panzers.

Historical accounts. Dragonsky's involvement mentioned in "Triple Play" (YB 2).

1942

September. The Battle of Stalingrad. German forces fail to defeat the Russian army at Stalingrad.

Dragonsky, age 6, is present, as is the father of Brekhov (as a soldier), future commander of the October Guard.

Historical accounts; "Triple Play" (YB 2). Brekhov says Dragonsky was made a hero at Stalingrad. Brekhov's father established in "To Fail is to Conquer...To Succeed is to Die!" (GI 6).

1944

Two German bombers headed for America take off from Nazi-occupied Spitzbergen. One is carrying nerve toxin to bomb the United States. Another is filled with gold to bring to Argentina to fund a "New Reich." The pilot of the bomber filled with gas, Otto Totenschadel, lands the plane on a glacier in Greenland, pretending it has hydraulics trouble. Once the other plane lands, Otto kills the other crewmen. He then takes the plane filled with gold to Argentina, where he hides out for over forty years. He will eventually lie about what happened.

"Words of Honor" (SM 2). Otto's "true" story was found out by Alpine when the Joes find the downed plane's log book.

1950

Conrad S. Hauser (aka Duke) is born in St. Louis, MO.

Duke's filecard. Assumes Duke was 17 when he enlisted in 1967.

1953

Anastasia Cisarovna (aka the Baroness) is born somewhere in Europe.

According to "The Snake-Eyes Trilogy, Part 1: Warrior Reborn!" (GI 94), the Baroness was 15 years old in 1968. Her full name was mentioned as well. Her true last name from Devil's Due Publishing's America's Elite series.

1955

Blaine L. Parker (aka Mainframe) is born in Phoenix, Arizona.

Mainframe's filecard. It says that Mainframe enlisted at 17 before being sent to Vietnam in 1972. (see "1972" below)

1963

November. A U.S. Army Special Forces team under the command of Lt. Joseph R. Colton is overrun by North Vietnamese troops in the central highlands of Vietnam. All team members except for Colton, 1st Sergeant "Top" Wenzel and Specialist Angel Vasquez are killed. Vasquez dies on the extraction chopper en route to Tonsunhut.

President John F. Kennedy forms the original G.I. Joe team. Lt. Colton is placed in command (Colton is unofficially code-named G.I. Joe).

"...Just Fade Away" (GI 152). The original G.I. Joe was given a name and background in honor of the 30th anniversary of Hasbro's original G.I. Joe dolls.

1964

The member of the Arashikage family known as Jinx is born.

"Transit" (GI 62). In 1987, the Blind Master shows Billy a photograph of Storm Shadow's ninja family, saying it was taken "15 years ago." Jinx said she was eight years old when the photo was taken.

1967

Conrad "Duke" Hauser enlists in the U.S. Army.
Duke's filecard.

Vance and Shary Wingfield's son, Tyler, is born.
Front Line #14.

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #1 - Page 1 to 5

1968

January 31:

The Tet offensive. North Vietnamese forces stage an attack on various South Vietnamese and U.S. military targets in South Vietnam. While not a military victory, the offensive changed the American people's perception of the war, which the government had claimed was nearly won.

Soldiers Lonzo "Stalker" Wilkinson, Thomas "Storm Shadow" Arashikage and "Snake-Eyes" are attacked on arrival at a military briefing in Saigon by two VietCong agents. A U.S. Army driver, Corky Barnett is killed. Snake-Eyes follows the agents to their meeting with humanitarian Baron Eugen DeCobray. Snake-Eyes sees the agents kill DeCobray and then kills the agents. DeCobray's 15-year-old sister arrives and believes Snake-Eyes killed all three men (eventually, disturbed by the death of her brother, Anastasia begins a career in international terrorism as the Baroness). Weapons dealer James McCullen Destro XXIII later arrives and proves Snake-Eyes innocent of DeCobray's murder. Destro is accompanied by his son, James McCullen Destro XXIV.

Historical accounts; "The Snake-Eyes Trilogy, Part 3: No Surrender!" (GI 96). The story prominently mentions the Tet offensive, which took place in 1968. There seem to be some continuity problems with this story. In issue #26, Stalker says that he knew Snake-Eyes and Storm Shadow only six months before their mission in the jungle, which I have set in 1971. The 1971 date seems accurate since Stalker says the mission happened over ten years ago. It would be "thirteen years ago" if in 1971. This 1968 date is over fifteen years ago as of issue #26. That seems too far for Stalker to round the number to ten. Also, Stalker calls Storm Shadow "Stormy." The problem is that in #26, Stalker said he called him "Tommy" and seemed to imply that he didn't go by Storm Shadow in Vietnam. Though, that scene was part of Snake-Eyes' dream, which could be inaccurate.

1969

Conrad "Duke" Hauser joins U.S. Army Special Forces and works with tribesman in South Vietnam.
Duke's filecard.

The future G.I. Joe team member known as "Mangler" is born.
"Washout" (SM 13). Mangler himself says he is nineteen years old at the time of the issue, which is set in 1988.

Joseph "G.I. Joe" Colton retires from active duty and becomes an adventurer and explorer.

"Playing with the Big Boys!" (GI 127). The original G.I. Joe mentions that he was an adventurer for a while when the army was "out of vogue." This refers to the era in which Hasbro started their G.I. Joe Adventure Team line of toys.

1970

G.I. Joe Colton joins the civilian group known as the Adventure Team, a group of explorers, adventurers and rescuers that sometimes worked for the U.S. government. Joe spends much of the next decade with the team.

Referring to Hasbro's non-military G.I. Joe Adventure Team line of toys.

August. In Vietnam, Snake-Eyes and Storm Shadow join the Long Range Recon Patrol unit led by Stalker. (They have not seen Stalker since the Tet Offensive.)

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin" (GI 26) . Snake-Eyes and Storm Shadow served with Stalker for six months before an injury sends Snake-Eyes home. That injury happens in February, according to the cover of Snake-Eyes: Declassified #2.

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #1 - Page 5 to 13

1971

February:

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #1 - Page 14 to 19 Stalker, Storm Shadow, Snake-Eyes, Wade Collins, Ramon Escobedo and Dick Saperstein fight North Vietnamese soldiers. Escobedo and Saperstein are killed and Collins is seriously injured. Believing Collins is dead, Wilkinson, Arashikage and Snake-Eyes retreat and head to a landing zone for rescue. Collins is captured by the North Vietnamese and held in prison for the next two years.

On the way to the helicopter, North Vietnamese troops fire on the landing zone, wounding Snake-Eyes. Despite

Stalker's orders to leave him, Storm Shadow runs out in the field where Snake-Eyes is lying wounded. The helicopter's pilot and gunner give him cover fire. Storm Shadow somehow evades enemy fire and rescues Snake-Eyes.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin" (GI 26); "Crossroads" (GI 43). The first story about Vietnam in the series is the second paragraph above. Stalker does mention in #26 that their patrol had six members originally. We don't actually see the other men until #43. Collins will reappear later on in the series, and the Vietnam scenes will be referred to often. We see the scene from issue #43 again in issue #155. The date comes from Collins' mention that he was a POW for two years. His release seems to be when the U.S. pulls out of Vietnam, which happened in 1973. Much of the timeline depends on this. The gravestone seen on the cover to Snake-Eyes: Declassified #2 indicates Snake-Eyes' family were killed on February 26, though it does not show the year. Snake-Eyes was sent home shortly after the incident above.

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #1 - Page 20

February 26:

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #1 - Page 21 to End

Snake-Eyes returns home from Vietnam.

Snake-Eyes' parents and twin sister Terri are killed in a head-on car collision while on their way to meet him at the airport. U.S. Army officer Clayton M. Abernathy (aka Hawk) travels to the airport and informs Snake-Eyes of the accident. The driver of the other vehicle, an unstable Vietnam veteran and the brother of the future Cobra Commander, is also killed in the collision.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin" (GI 26); "Converging Destinies" (GI 84). The death of Snake-Eyes' family and Hawk's involvement comes from #26. Cobra Commander's brother is established in #84. Snake-Eyes' sister's name is mentioned by her former fiancée, George Strawhacker in "I Lift My Lamp" (GI 106). Snake-Eyes apparently returns home after he is injured in Vietnam since his face is bandaged; that is consistent with his injuries seen in #26. The date comes from the gravestone seen on the cover to Snake-Eyes: Declassified #2.

"Duke" Hauser turns down a U.S. Army officer's commission.
Duke's filecard.

1972

U.S. Marine Blaine L. Parker (aka Mainframe) begins a tour of duty in Vietnam.

Mainframe's filecard. It says that Mainframe got to Southeast Asia in time for the last year of conflict there.

Cullen Esterhazy, a C.I.A. agent sent to help the peasants of Chomo-Lungma fight the communist Chinese, makes his last contact with his superiors for almost twenty years. Esterhazy's mission ended after President Richard Nixon opened U.S. relations with China. Esterhazy is presumed dead, but actually joins and leads the Chomo Lungman resistance until his death in 1988.

"In From the Cold" (SM 14); "...And Into the Fire!" (SM 15). According to these issues, Esterhazy "disappeared" when his mission was cancelled "twenty years ago" because he believed in the resistance fighters' cause. This date is actually 16 years before the issue, but Nixon went to China in 1972.

August - December:

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #2 - Page 8 to End

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #3 - Page 1 to 7

Snake-Eyes travels to Japan to live and study with Storm Shadow's family and ninja clan.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin" (GI 26), Snake-Eyes: Declassified #2.

1973

January 23. The United States, South Vietnam and North Vietnam sign the Paris Peace Accords, ending America's combat role in the war.

Future members of the G.I. Joe team involved in the conflict included: Snake-Eyes, Stalker, Storm Shadow, Claymore, Duke, "G.I. Joe" Colton, Leatherneck, Mainframe, Payload, Spirit and Wild Bill. Historical accounts.

February 12-27. Many American POWs are released by the Vietnamese and begin to come home. Wade Collins is among them.

Historical accounts. Collins established in "Crossroads" (GI 43).

Upon Wade Collins' return home, his wife's lawyer meets him at the airport and serves him with divorce papers. Collins, unable to find a steady job, travels around the country. He will eventually join Cobra Command.

"Crossroads" (GI 43).

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #3 - Page 8 to End

The future Cobra Commander, blaming his brother Dan's death on Snake-Eyes, hires Firefly to kill Snake-Eyes. Using his status as a ninja master, Firefly becomes apprentice to Onihashi, the swordsmith of the Arashikage ninja clan.

"Converging Destinies" (GI 84); "Firefly!" (GI 126). In #84, it seems that Zartan was first hired by Cobra Commander, but in #126, Firefly says he was hired and then referred Cobra Commander to Zartan. This is a little contradictory to the flashback scenes in issue #84. In "Transit" (GI 62), we learn of the "faceless master" who is Onihashi's assistant. We assume this is Zartan. In #126, Hama finally revealed that Firefly was Onihashi's assistant before Zartan.

1974

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #4

While watching a practice session between Snake-Eyes and Storm Shadow, Firefly realizes he is no match for Snake-Eyes and refers Cobra Commander to Zartan. Cobra Commander hires Zartan to kill Snake-Eyes. Zartan becomes apprentice to Onihashi.

"Firefly!" (GI 126); "Converging Destinies" (GI 84). Zartan's story in #84 makes no mention of Firefly, and Cobra Commander approaches him personally. It is possible, however, that Firefly only mentioned Zartan to Cobra Commander and then met with Zartan afterward.

Billy, son of the future Cobra Commander, is born.

This is based on speculation. In "Converging Destinies" (GI 84), Billy's mother says that she found out about her husband hiring Zartan after Billy was born. Also based on the assumption that Billy is in his late teens in #84.

1975

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #5 - Page 1 to 12

Stealing one of Storm Shadow's arrows, Zartan kills Storm Shadow's uncle, the Hard Master, believing he is Snake-Eyes. He escapes in a helicopter piloted by Firefly. Storm Shadow is blamed for the murder and leaves home. He will eventually join Cobra to learn the identity of the assassin.

Onihashi commits suicide after learning of Zartan's actions.

Snake-Eyes leaves Japan and moves to a cabin on Iron Knife Ridge in the High Sierra mountains, where he lives in seclusion.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin, Parts 1 and 2" (GI 26 & 27); "Converging Destinies" (GI 84); "Firefly!" (GI 126). Storm Shadow mentions that a Cobra helicopter left the scene of the murder, but that is inconsistent with the idea that Cobra was not founded until after the Hard Master was killed. Snake-Eyes spent three years in Japan after returning home from Vietnam.

April 30. Two years after the United States pulls its troops out of Vietnam, North Vietnamese forces defeat the South Vietnamese and unify the country under communism.

Historical accounts.

1976 Snake-Eyes: Declassified #5 - Page 13

Cobra Commander leaves his wife, taking his son Billy with him. He will eventually form Cobra Command, headquartered secretly in Springfield. Years later, Billy will leave his father but stay in the Springfield Anti-Cobra underground.

"Converging Destinies" (GI 84); "A Nice Little Town Like Ours..." (GI 10); "Celebration" (GI 33); "Judgments" (GI 38). Cobra Commander's leaving and taking Billy is mentioned in #84. In issue #10, Billy is not named and we don't know he is the commander's son. That fact is revealed in #33. Despite the mention of a Cobra helicopter at the Hard Master's murder scene in #27, #84 establishes that Cobra was not yet founded.

1977

The honorary member of the Arashikage clan later known as the Blind Master loses his sight.

"Transit" (GI 62). The fifteen year old picture the Blind Master shows Billy was taken five years before he lost his sight.

Sean, the son of the future Fred Broca (and later stepson of Wade Collins) is born.

"A Letter From Snake-Eyes" (GI 155). He's nearly seventeen years old in the story, set in 1994.

1978

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #5 - Page 18 to End

Brigadier General Lawrence J. Flagg re-establishes the G.I. Joe team, officially named Special Counter-terrorist Group Delta. Flagg places "Hawk" Abernathy, now a colonel, in command of the new team. Together with Specialist "Stalker"

Wilkinson, Hawk recruits Snake-Eyes as a member of the team. The remaining team members are chosen over the next few months by Flagg and Hawk, with help from Alex "Sparks" Verdi.

"Operation: Lady Doomsday" (GI 1); "Snake-Eyes: The Origin, Part 2" (GI 27); G.I. Joe Declassified. Issue #1 is the only place where the Joe team's official name (Special Counter-terrorist Group Delta) is used. Snake-Eyes' recruitment is mentioned in issue #27, which mentions he spent three years in the High Sierras before being recruited. General Flagg's full name comes from the 1991 G.I. Joe Trading Card set. Sparks' involvement from G.I. Joe Declassified.

A branch of the Mossad (Israeli intelligence) led by Ibraham tracks Nazi war criminal Otto Totenschadel to Buenos Aires. Totenschadel learns they have found him and flees. Ibraham will track Totenschadel for eight more years before finding him in Brazil.

"Words of Honor" (SM 2).

1979

The final roster of the new G.I. Joe team is completed: Specialist James "Grand Slam" Barney, Cpl. Eric "Short-Fuze" Freistadt, Cpl. Anthony "Flash" Gambello, Specialist Robert "Grunt" Graves, Pfc. Alvin "Breaker" Kibbey, Cpl. Craig "Rock & Roll" McConnel, Cpl. Rafael "Zap" Melendez, Sgt. Shana "Scarlett" O'Hara, Sgt. Ralph "Steeler" Pulaski and Cpl. Lance "Clutch" Steinberg.

All the Joes' names come from their filecards. Breaker's rank is Corporal (E-4) on his filecard, but in his file in issue #1, his rank is Private First Class. Since Larry Hama wrote the original filecards, I took this to mean Breaker started out on the team as Pfc. Steeler's rank in Order of Battle is Sergeant (E-5), but his filecard says he's a Lieutenant.

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #6 - Page 1 to 8

The Joes are trained in hand-to-hand combat by Scarlett, who surprises them with her fighting skills. Snake-Eyes allows her to beat him, though she recognizes he's better than he lets on. Intrigued, she begins spending time with him while off-duty.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin, Part 2" (GI 27).

1980

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #6 - Page 9 to 20

Grunt, Rock & Roll, Scarlett and Snake-Eyes travel to the Middle East to rescue George Strawhacker, a U.S. federal agent (and former fiancé of Snake-Eyes' sister Terri), who is being held hostage by agents of Cobra Command. En route, an Army helicopter loses control and collides with the team's helicopter. Grunt and Rock & Roll bail out while Snake-Eyes stays behind to rescue Scarlett who is trapped inside. The first helicopter explodes, causing a window in the team's chopper to shatter, spraying glass into Snake-Eyes' face. The helicopter crashes and Snake-Eyes carries an unconscious Scarlett out of the wreckage. Snake-Eyes suffers third degree burns to his head and vocal chord damage. Snake-Eyes convinces Hawk to allow him to continue the mission and the team (except the still unconscious Scarlett) meets with Stalker and completes the rescue mission. Snake-Eyes is hospitalized shortly afterward.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin, Part 2" (GI 27); "Snake-Eyes: The Tale Untold!" (GI 144). Issue #27 just barely covers what happened to Snake-Eyes. The whole story is not known until #144. There are certain continuity problems with #144. Wild Bill and Doc are shown, but they didn't appear in the comic until #11. A smaller problem is the use of new Cobra Viper uniforms when they should be wearing the original uniforms. Issue #144 establishes that the Joes have faced Cobra before their mission in issue #1.

1981

Snake-Eyes: Declassified #6 - Page 21 to End

Snake-Eyes returns to active duty after spending six months hospitalized for his injuries sustained in the Middle East.

"Snake-Eyes: The Origin, Part 2" (GI 27).