

Instead of returning to the barracks after one of my dental appointments I slink away to see an adjutant at the 11th Brigade administration company. The Lieutenant is a Vietnam returnee like me who walks with a limp. I explain to him that I want out of the infantry and into clerical work, and he agrees to give me a typing test. His clerks need to type 45 words per minute with only three typos. I sit at an unfamiliar typewriter, practice for a few minutes, and then tell him I am all set. By trying to gain speed, my fingers lose contact with the f and j keys causing me to type a line of gibberish before I realize it. My test only scores 30 words per minute because of all the goof-ups. Lieutenant Limp is not patronizing though, and he tells me when I get my words up to 45 words per minutes to come back and see him for another try. Limp asks which unit I am with; he grimaces a bit then says, "Colonel Beers will never approve the transfer, he never does." I thank him a lot and walk back to the quad kicking myself in the ass for screwing up so badly.

Weeks later, I return to see Limp, but this time he is indifferent about the matter and promises to, "Check with higher-ups," and that I should get back with him later. I take that as a, "don't call me, I will call you," kind of answer and forget about the matter.

Ironically, on my way back to the quad, I run into Slater who dresses in slept-in Khakis that make him look worn-out. He just left the airport after returning from 30-day leave. Somehow, he manages to convince Colonel Beers to sign off on his 1049 transfer to Vietnam. He jokes about his parting trysts with his beloved girlfriend, "I told her I wouldn't, but I just couldn't help myself and dropped my load; she was pissed! Still is, but I'm going to Vietnam in three days." I am amused at his fatalism and can only wish him the best of luck. Transferring out of the 20th Infantry is his desire.

Morgan, one of the AIT trainees we get in third platoon, makes up his mind not to play infantryman anymore. He refuses to get up one morning until Sergeant Ruffin flips his bunk over with him still in it. I feel sorry for the ding-dong sitting on the floor while others chortle at his dishonor. He does not appear to be too bright either. Captain Shelton has no other alternative but to court martial him for disobeying an order to play the game. Sergeant Yamabiashi assigns me to escort him to his trial. "Look at you," he imparts on me before we start out for his court martial, "you already went to Vietnam, and you are still doing this stupid shit."

"I understand what you are saying, Morgan. I hate this dumb shit too, but you cannot just stop because you don't like this stuff. You have to do it until you ETS. Shit, man, Morgan, now you are in shit so deep you cannot even hope to climb out of it." Naturally, the officers find him guilty, and the court martial board sentences him to 30 days in the hoosegow. After his sentencing, I shepherd him back to the barracks for his personal property. On the way, we encounter one of the sentencing officers at a street corner, and I snap a right smart salute. "You don't salute while guarding a prisoner," he lectures me, something I did not know.

The court gives me a list of things a prisoner must bring to the stockade. They allow him only a few fatigue uniforms, some underwear, toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving soap, and a pair of boots. I try to tell Morgan he cannot take his shoetrees with him, but he persists on taking them anyway. He will not listen to me, so what the heck, who cares, and we walk over to the stockade. Believing I will just drop him off to a duty sergeant, I try to leave, but no, I have to wait while an MP processes him and goes over the list of items they want him to possess in the stockade. The MP makes Morgan stand in front of a wall bathed in bright white light with his toes touching a line on the floor. He then proceeds to make him strip bare-ass naked, lift his arms; show the MP his armpits, open his mouth, roll his tongue around, and for the final infamy,

Morgan must turn around, bend over, and spread his cheeks in front of those watching. During this intake, prisoners come and go, and when a second lieutenant walks in, all of the other inmates snap to attention and push themselves up against the nearest wall. Just to intimidate Morgan, the lieutenant walks up to the newest prisoner standing stiff at attention, butt-naked with his pecker hanging out, gives him the once over but never says a word then disappears into the commanding officer's office. The other prisoners automatically stand at ease but do not move away from their wall. Nobody is very nice here. The MP is bossy to me and gives me back the list of items Morgan still needs. "I'll be calling your captain for these remaining items. Tell him he needs to have them over here by tonight," he orders. I am astounded at his cock-sure demeanor. I leave the jail and turn over the list to First Sergeant Lee, and I am finished. The whole event is scarcely a Jack Nicholson, *The Last Detail*, kind of affair, but it impresses upon me the futility of doing anything foolish enough to get into the stockade.

At the end of his enlistment, Morgan must do 30 more days of bad time. Months later, I bump into him in the PX snack bar sitting with a friend. Brigade reassigns him to the 3rd of the 1st Infantry, and already Morgan wears a PFC stripe. He does better things in his new unit too.

I am walking my guard post around the bank. The MPs were already here earlier in the day when a silent alarm goes off. They come quickly and surround the bank, and I hurry to load my M16 and follow one MP to see what set off the alarm. Even before that, a bank officer entered the building without telling me he was in there. Some guy from another building trots over to tell me somebody entered the bank, and we both two-step it over to the window to see whom. I tap the glass with the muzzle of my M16, and the interloper walks over and shows me his ID card; smiling as if he were the Cheshire Cat. His name appears on a list of people authorized entry, and that is the end of the matter.

Of course I am grouchy, it is almost 0200 hours and raining slightly. My feet yearn for my relief to show up, so when the guard truck does not arrive on time my doggies begin to fret. Finally, at 0210 I call the Sergeant of the Guard, who is Moran, one of my contenders at one time for temporary sergeant. The call wakes up the truck driver who sheepishly admits it was Moran's turn to stay awake, and they will be right out. About ten minutes later, the guard truck comes to a screeching halt in front of me. I give my live ammo magazine to my relief, climb into the back of the ¾-ton truck, and ride a long circuitous route back to the guardhouse as the rain increases. Eventually, I get some shut-eye.

Later that morning, Moran sits at a mess table drinking coffee. I fetch myself a cup of coffee and join him as the only other person in the dining room. It is not like me to rant and rave about his mea culpa last night, but I just offhandedly say, "Ah, gee Moran, do you think the next time you are Sergeant of the Guard, you could stay awake to relieve the guards on time." His retort is fast and ugly.

"You think just because you were in Vietnam I should stay awake all night for you!"

"I didn't say you had to stay awake all night, Moran, I just think if you wear those stripes you ought to be responsible enough to relieve the guards on time like you are supposed to, that's all. What does Vietnam got to do with anything, anyway?"

"Fuck you, Lupton!" He snaps even more venomously. I restrain my craving to throw my cup of coffee in this little prick's face and bang a few knots on his head with my cup. Knowing damn well, it will be me in the shit storm with Captain Shelton who will not dither an instant to throw my ass into the stockade for striking his NCO, temporary rank that he may be. Then the jailers will make me sniff the ass of that doofus officer when he strolls through the door.

“Go fuck yourself, Moran, you asshole. You wanted those stripes, so you behave like you deserve them.” We part ways exchanging stink-eye never to be civil again.

I return to the barracks room to assemble my pistol belt, canteen, and poncho then join the company in formation. This morning is Monday, PT morning, and the platoon sergeants march the company over to the PT field. As the formation spreads out to begin exercising, Sergeant Harper comes up from the rear shoving Garcia in front of him, all the time shrieking at the top of his lungs at the smaller private. He shoves the disheveled Garcia up in front of us, berates him for not marching correctly, slapping him upside his head several times, and making him stand at attention, humiliated, his rumpled fatigue shirt hangs half out of his belt. I think he is fighting back tears. The much bigger Harper fumes red-faced with rage at the slacker’s conduct and promises to bust his ass in front of Captain Shelton. Finally, he regains his temper and concludes his flare-up by leading Garcia back to the company commander’s office. We watch as Garcia slings his M79 and runs to follow Harper. Nobody has ever seen a platoon sergeant behave this badly before, even though I have seen Harper drag Miller down the steps by his ear like a little child, the fact that he slaps the smaller man several times is a sin. After returning to the barracks, we learn Sergeant Harper is in the hospital with a skull fracture having been stupid enough to turn his back on Garcia. Nothing ever happens to Garcia, presumably, because the sergeant struck the enlisted soldier in front of plenty of witnesses and has more to lose than the private has.

When B Company gets their own mess hall, cooks transfer from C Company where we get this cook, Sutton, who happens to be black, with great huge lips, who never manages to keep them shut. He cooks like shit too. Some numbskull way up the chain of command decides it would be nice for the enlisted men to have the genteel experience of eating from “real china” plates, a distinguished experience only allotted to officers. One day the mess hall exchanges our prehistoric aluminum trays for cheap cafeteria china. The KPs hate them because instead of washing one aluminum tray now they have to wash numerous plates, saucers, and cups. Inevitably, a plate slides off a tray and the shattering dish triggers a Pavlovian response in Sutton. Breaking porcelain is his cue to action, and he dashes over to the offending soldier standing in the serving line, badgering the offender to sign a payment voucher for the broken dish. After several broken dishes, Sutton is the demon to hate, and while he gets away with it in the beginning, he pushes his luck just a little bit too far when newly promoted Sergeant Rambus lets slip a precious plate. Rambus endured plenty of KP under this asshole Sutton for over a year, but he will no longer take shit from this nitwit. A loud argument ensues with threats of a flattened nose if Sutton does not get out of his face. Sutton retreats behind the serving line still carping about making Rambus pay for the dish. Applause erupts in the dining room, a few whistles for the newly minted sergeant ensue, Rambus becomes a clown to the dining room crowd, smiling broadly, his teeth contrasting brilliantly from his black face, and he becomes a hero to the enlisted crowd. When he turns to taunt the flap-jawed cook, Sutton draws back further into the kitchen, humbled but not beaten. After eating chow, the mess sergeant quietly convinces Rambus to sign for the broken china.

I do not know what I did to be stuck on KP for three days when the company trains in the field. Normally, you pull field KP for one day then rotate with somebody else, but not this time. We load up the mess hall’s duce-and-a-half after breakfast and drive in a convoy out to the Kahokas where the company goes off in one direction while we unload the truck, set up the mess tent, and prepare the emersion heaters for the noon meal. All during this process, Sutton never shuts his mouth, not even once!

Several of us KPs steal some time to construct a poncho tent in the weeds a few meters away from the mess tent for the night to ward off the dew that permeates everything. We manage to stay mostly dry during the dewy night and wake feeling rested.

The next day the company eats c-rations, so there is little to do, and Sutton keeps flapping his jaws until he finally jerks my chain one time too many. I do not care anymore and come for him. The mess sergeant valiantly steps between us to keep me from punching this asshole in his big fat lips. Denied my triumph, I taunt Sutton about eating pussy. We found he gets sick to his stomach thinking about cunnilingus, and we have used this ruse before to get him off our backs. It works again too as other KPs join in the goad; he turns nauseous as we implant the vision in his mind of rolling his tongue around a nice stinky pussy. Exasperated, the mess sergeant orders me to take my rifle, go sit amongst the trees, and pretend to guard the mess area. If Major Bell comes around again, he will not see the KPs lounging around idly. This cools me down somewhat, and gives me the chance to nod off during the rest of the afternoon.

Later in the day, Major Bell does come by, discovers our makeshift shelter, and proceeds to have a shit fit about it. The Mess Sergeant catches the flak, orders us to tear down our refuge, and now everybody is in an even shittier mood. This night we must roll up in our ponchos to stay dry. The next morning everybody awakes damp and irritable because of the heavy dew.

For evening chow, we load up the duce-and-a-half with c-rations, a large jug of iced cool-aid and drive to meet the company out in the field. They have been running around the mountains all day and one by one the platoons straggle in too pooped to piss where the mess sergeant passes out their evening meal. Those on separate rations, meaning married enlisted men and officers, must pay for each meal. The going rate is 35-cents for breakfast, 45-cents for a lunch and 65-cents for dinner. These are c-rations mind you, and Sergeant Coleman squawks passionately about paying 65-cents for the same stupid c-ration meal that costs him 35-cents this morning for breakfast. I sit in the back of the truck watching this heated exchange when hearing a dissolute whisper enter my ear, "Lupton," I look below to see Lieutenant Fuck Up entreating me to toss him a case of c-rations ostensibly for his platoon, but actually because they are free to him. It is always something with this guy as he stands looking Rambo-stupid wearing only a camouflage helmet cover on his head tied on with an OD handkerchief because he forgot his steel pot and the Colonel has all ready reamed his ass for wearing his baseball cap out in the field. I decide to strike a deal with him as the price for a whole case of c-rations. Quietly I mouth the words, "Super-numer-ary," tapping my chest, "next time, on guard, and you got your Cees."

"Okay, Lupton, okay, not a problem," he eagerly replies. I steal a furtive look at the mess sergeant still railing on with Coleman about Army separate ration schemes and quickly let slip a case of c-rations over the side. "Thanks Lupton, next time, no problem, you make supernumerary," and he scampers away into the dark to divvy up his rations. Nothing ever comes of my deal making though because Fuck Up is never again the Officer of the Day when I walk guard.

When we return to Schofield the next afternoon to prepare the evening meal for the company, I tell First Sergeant Lee never again, "Never again will I pull KP three days in a row out in the field with that asshole Sutton. Court martial me Top, I swear to god I will never pull three days in a row of KP with that asshole ever again, I don't care." First Sergeant Lee nods his acquiescence and does not put me on KP for over a month. Presumably, he understands my dilemma, I guess.

Our next training travail is preparing for an amphibious landing exercise on Molokai called Coral Sands II. We wear all of our field gear and do not carry anything that weighs us down, except our rifles. The entire battalion marches to Schofield Barrack's Olympic sized swimming pool where we must jump into the deep end wearing our helmets and slung rifles, tread water for five minutes, swim to the pool's edge, and drag ourselves out. Sergeants Harper and Diaz staff the long aluminum pole to rescue the weak swimmers, but they fail to see Johnson who desperately doggie paddles to keep his nose above water. I shove him toward the side of the pool several times, swimming clumsily while wearing combat boots. "Thanks, Lupton," he expounds appreciatively as he hugs the side of the pool for dear life with his mouth agape, his tongue hangs out of his mouth as if a dog panting.

Next, we don life preservers to step off the one-meter diving board simulating a man overboard. This is pretty much a piece of cake. Walking off the 10-meter diving board is discretionary for those strong swimmers wishing to experience an authentic abandon ship drill, and I opt to try it. The diving board does not appear very high until you get up there and look down. Lieutenant Holmes cheers me on to jump. I cannot climb back down now. Off I step. My life preserver's crotch straps damn near turns me into a eunuch and at the same time knocks the wind out of me, but the life vest buoys me right back to the surface.

We feel like rats spared a drowning as we march as a battalion back to the barracks. Sergeant Harper starts yelling at one soldier from A Company, "You, you write me a 10-page paper on how to march, not walk in formation. I want that done by evening chow," he bellows like the stupid bull he is.

The next day we attend classes on exiting a landing craft. Simple as this may appear, there are good ways and bad ways of unassing a landing boat rather than just running off the end of the ramp. "Because there may be heavy surf," this skinny A Company sergeant tells us, "if you are on the right side of the landing craft, step off the edge leading with your right foot, not your left. If you are on the left side of the boat, exit with your left foot first because the boat might lurch forward in the surf and the ramp will crunch your foot." Okay, I never thought of that before. We get into a mockup of a landing boat and run off it making sure we step off with our outward foot first. Short screws up and the bonehead sergeant makes him do twenty pushups, so he will pay attention next time. Sergeant Skinny makes Short run off the boat several more times just to drive the lesson home before allowing him to join the next class, climbing down rope netting. We all get a chance to climb down the rigging on mockup netting paying particular attention to the dangers of falling between the ship and the bobbing boat. They demonstrate how to rig the crew-served weapons using a series of half hitches to lower them over the side of the ship into the landing craft. Nobody knows when we will use this training, but it turns out to be soon.

Lieutenant Fuck Up always comes around to the mess hall every Sunday to purloin his breakfast of eggs, bacon, and bread. As Prince rounds up the officer's meal, he tells me Lieutenant Limp mentioned me to him. "He thinks you wrote the Pentagon about transferring to Brigade." Fuck Up tells me.

"No, I don't know where he got that idea from. I just approached him about getting into clerking that is all. Maybe that is why he was cool on helping me the second time I saw him. Why, do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him well. I'll talk to him next time I get a chance."

"I read in the *Army Times* that if I go to school to change my MOS, I can go to Vietnam with that new MOS. That might be a way of getting out of the infantry, ya think?"

“I don’t know, Lupton, I’ll talk to him for you.” I am encouraged; the lieutenant goes home to eat, and nothing ever comes of Lieutenant Limp.

On August 1, we sail from Pearl Harbor for five days of amphibious training. A sailor next to me remarks how bucolic Honolulu appears from the water with the enormous pink Tripler Army Hospital prominently built on a hillside. I have to agree with him it is a romantic landscape.

Unlike the USNS Gordon, which is a merchant marine vessel, this is a regular Navy troopship used specifically for transporting invasion soldiers. After boarding, we clamor down the stairwell where Sergeant Yamabiashi shows us where to bunk. The quarters are just as cramped as the Gordon’s were. I pick a second tier bunk, so I will not have to climb up to get into my rack. We attach our web gear and rifles to the bunk above us, and I loiter below so the first sergeant will not put me on some shit detail. Aside from doing PT on the deck next morning, there is not much to do while underway except read cock books and gamble. It is amazing how literate everybody turns as most of us sit reading dirty novels obtained from the ship’s library.

On our second morning out, I sit along the railing watching this diminutive black sailor scrubbing a brass porthole using a wire brush. I look up from my cock book several times to see him working on that same porthole all morning long. After noon chow, I return to the comfort of my repose only to see the same seaman working diligently on the exact same porthole once more. It makes me wonder how much crud can accrue on a piece of brass anyway. If I thought the infantry is boring, then navy life appears tediously mind numbing at best.

Our next morning begins with the loading of the LCM (3) assault boat. Our schedule calls for a quickie beach landing then back into our boats and go back to the ship. Our net training pays off because there is real danger of death or maiming if caught between the ship and the bobbing landing craft. The seas are not overly rough when we descent, but the smaller boat heaves mightily against the side of the mother ship during the loading process. Even though we wear our life preservers when climbing down, falling from the netting is a sure death sentence. The highlight of the exercise comes when Captain Shelton loses his breakfast on the men holding the netting for him. His tolerance for motion sickness became infamous when he loses his cookies all over the inside of a Cessna while flying ahead of the company to the Big Island last April. Now this incident cements his repute as the original Captain Queasy.

It is roomy in our LCM, which holds only fifteen of us, about half of the third platoon. It seems like an eternity to conclude the offloading as the landing crafts jostle and jockey each other for position against the ship then the smaller vessels circle interminably until every boat is ready to assault the beach. All of us turn sick to our stomachs as the attack force assembles. I stand against the bulkhead amidships thinking it to be the more stable place to be. Others turn ashen fighting their urge to purge. The only place we can peer over the coaming is toward the bow, but the bow keeps flapping and slapping the water making balance even more unstable.

Finally, the coxswain guns the motor yelling, “Okay, we are on our way.” The heaving boat turns about for the run to the beach forcing us to steady ourselves against the bulkhead patiently waiting for the warning that we are about to land. With the engine running full bore, our boat runs aground on an unseen sandbar well short of the beach. The men in front of me tumble onto the deck in a big pile while I manage to grip the bulkhead tightly, barely staying on my feet. When the coxswain revs the engine into reverse, oily diesel fumes envelope us causing the sickest men to scurry back to the stern to empty their stomachs into the bilge grate. More jerking and jostling frees the craft, but now it is too late to make the beach landing. Our boat is

the first to return to the troop ship. We gratefully climb up the netting onto the more stable vessel where our guts revisit normalcy just in time to eat noon chow. No line, no waiting, the Navy enjoys first-rate chow with second helpings galore.

For the rest of the afternoon, the sailors retrieve their landing boats and get underway to a target island for a live airstrike exhibition. The next morning we climb over our ship's railing again to circle evermore while Air Force and Navy phantoms make live bombing runs on an abandoned island. Again, we are too nauseated to give a shit what it looks like. Besides, I have seen plenty of airstrikes before; show no interest in watching another one. I stand backed against the bulkhead preserving my equilibrium for what seems like eternity. Getting back to the ship before regurgitating breakfast is my only concern at this point. A few of the AIT trainees venture up the slightly elevated bow to watch the show for a while until they become too queasy to give a crap any more. Finally, Sergeant Coleman cannot keep it down any longer and surrenders his stomach contents to the bilge. At first, he leans against the bulkhead drooling until I recommend he squat down. For sure, it will sicken me to watch him splash vomit all over the place then have to smell it for the rest of the demo. He barfs up this morning's chow, the gusher resembling the Krakatau volcano, only upside down; he stands depleted, his eyes tearing, ashen, even for a black man, and blows puke out of his nose.

The Navy ships transport us back to Molokai that night and this morning we disembark the ship for the real amphibious landing. Most of us have our sea legs by now and nobody on our LCM loses their breakfasts as we circle waiting to go. The coxswain yells at us to brace for landing and this time we do so without any hitches. The ramp splashes into the surf revealing a beach master yelling at us to get off the boat, as if we need any further instruction. I follow the line of men onto the shore and in the process bowl over some dippy cameraman filming our egress. Looking down the shoreline, I see many other boats disgorging their troops in a perfectly choreographed line of infantrymen charging up the beach. "Now this is the stuff of movies," I think to myself. The beach master points us to our intended place in line. We hold up and ditch our life jackets while the landing crafts depart and move inland with B Company making an orderly march into the interior of the island for about five miles where we halt on a treeless hill overlooking the pineapple fields. The battalion remains on the hilltop for the remainder of the afternoon becoming sun burned and wind burned, and with chapped lips, I settle against a large lava rock to read my cock book. At nightfall, Captain Shelton repositions the company in tall grass where he expects us to keep a vigil, but we are too pooped to do that. During the night, another unit passes right in front of where we sleep. I wake to see them silhouetted against the night sky but reckon if they have not seen us by now why upset them by starting a firefight. They pass us quietly, and I return to my slumbers.

The next day, our battalion marches five more miles to another grassy, treeless hill where we hold up and watch Air Force Phantoms make dry runs on make-believe enemies to our front. After the real thing, these bombing runs are tiresome as hell, and by now, my nose is peeling. Around 1300 I finally finish my cock book then a couple of men organize a small raiding party to harvest pineapples. The fine is fifty dollars per pineapple if caught, but we are trained infantrymen, and the raiders return later with ten prime, ripe pineapples. We commence cutting them up and passing them around. They make a sweet break from the insipid ship's water we have drunk for the past three days. Before leaving the hill, we bury the pineapple refuse to hide our crime.

At 1600, they terminate the operation. We begin a forced march to the sea shortly thereafter and tramp down a dirt road in a tight company formation until well into the night

through a cloud of choking red dust. At the beach, there are lights to show us to our LCMs. Back at the ship, the sailors stare bewildered at the shades climbing over the railing covered with rusty red Hawaiian dirt. Everybody is filthy and unwashed after three days in the field. The first thing I do is head for the troop compartment, ditch my web gear, strip down to my skivvies, and shower under a tiny dribble of fresh water before everybody else gets to the bunkroom. Our compartment fills with filthy men all vying for their turn in the inadequate showers. I make my way to the mess deck and fill up on ham and baked beans, gulp down several glasses of milk, and only afterwards do I begin cleaning my weapon and field gear. I lie sacked out before everybody else settles in for the night. The next morning, we continue cleaning our gear as the convoy sails back to Honolulu where the pink Tripler Hospital never looked so good before.

The next day we spend our efforts Gling the red dirt out of all our equipment. Later on, I sneak off to the barbershop in the quad for a haircut. I like going for my haircut each week. There are three barbers most times, two men and one woman, all locals. The female has hands of an angel: so soft and downy. The two men are okay too except their hands feel masculine, but I yearn for the silky soft feel of a woman's touch. Today I walk in to find four soldiers ahead me, three enlisted men and a bird colonel. I sit patiently feigning interest in a magazine each time a customer rotates in and out of the chairs, and deduce I will get the honey pie with the supple angel like hands caressing the back of my neck. The male barber finishes with the last enlisted man; only two of us remain, Full Bird and I, and he is next. The commissioned cur, he unexpectedly offers up his place in line to me. "Oh, that's okay, sir, you're next, you go ahead." He is pissing on my erotic scheme, my only reason to stay clipped in the first place.

"No, no, go ahead," offers Colonel Full Bird, "I can wait," he offers me smiling, subtly pulling rank veiled as benevolence to little old enlisted me. Thanks loads you dick weed, pretending to be gracious, you want her soft, gentle caresses too. I ruefully slouch in the male barber's chair and glower at this egocentric officer as he settles smugly into the desirable woman's barber chair. This officer is as much a pervert as I am.

"Up, up, everybody get up! Open your lockers and stand by your bunk." It is 0400 the next morning. The company officers and platoon sergeants waltz in like gangbusters, turning on the lights to rouse every swinging dick out of his bunk for a shakedown. Everybody rolls out of his rack fishing around for keys in their pants pockets to open their lockers. Almost everybody has a piss-hard on the first thing in the morning and most of us try to hide it by remaining seated. The lifers act as if nothing is abnormal about rummaging around our wall and footlockers looking for contraband. This invasion of privacy is more offending than anything else I ever endure in the Army. Once before, Captain Shelton inspected our forearms for scratches because some girl reported a rape by a GI. Allegedly, the girl clawed her attacker and the scrapes are a de facto presumption of guilt. After three days in the Kahokas, everybody sports a scratch or two on their forearms.

Unknown to us at this time, some asshole named Outlaw in the 3rd of the 1st Infantry in the next quad over walked into his orderly room and shot dead his first sergeant, shot his company commander eight times, and paralyzed a second lieutenant for the rest of his life. The captain may not survive the attack. This morning's search is for ammunition, probably a prudent act, but offending to us nevertheless.

Days later, the 11th Brigade reorganizes into a Light Infantry Brigade composed of four companies instead of three, actually five companies, but E Company is merely a four-duce mortar platoon plus a recon unit. Light Infantry is an oxymoron ya know because there is nothing I ever carry in the infantry that is not heavy to me. Each of the three companies gives up

one of their platoons to create D Company with the moniker Delta Dragons. B Company gives up third platoon, and we spend the day humping our foot and wall lockers diagonally across the quad, we even take our bunks and bedding.

Our company commander is Captain Jones, who was formally the general's aide-de-camp. He needs his six months command time to further his career, so he volunteers to command D Company.

Lieutenant Sawyer is our executive officer who comes from S3, operations. He wants to live as a genuine old-time army officer, rough, tough, excessively vain, and ambitious. His father is a retired sergeant major. He spends six years as an enlisted man before applying for OCS. Before that, he graduated from airborne and ranger training routines. He is a real super lifer.

Sergeant Azzalino is a platoon sergeant in A Company who has more time and grade than anyone else has and becomes the acting First Sergeant. Sergeant Yamabiashi and Lieutenant Swenson come along with third platoon from B Company. Sergeant Sorenson transfers from A or C company, I cannot remember which, as a platoon sergeant.

Sanger, a clerk who helped Sillen in B Company before coming to D Company scores the coveted company clerk's job, which assures him that he stays out of the field.

I should have looked upon this change of events as a chance for advancement to buck sergeant, which would have exempted me from KP and walking guard, but I have my sights set a tad bit higher. With no more Captain Shelton to stand in my way, I want to put in for clerk typist school. I desire to change my MOS very badly and that is the only way I can see it happening. To begin with, though, Sergeant Yamabiashi makes me a team leader without stripes, and we stand together watching everybody else work some shitty supply room detail. I feel self-conscious standing idly as others labor.

While Captain Jones busies himself with training the company, Lieutenant Sawyer takes care of the administrative duties of the new company. Nobody in this orderly room has ever performed the duties they fill in the new company so there is a certain amount of groping around to figure everything out. An opportunity arises for me to help do some mundane typing for Sanger. An extra desk and typewriter is available for my use, and for the first time, I feel as if I accomplish useful work in the Army. Sanger is a little bit quirky though and for some strange reason, he, Taylor, and this red headed clerk in battalion possess a pass for weekday leaves to an off-base apartment they share Wahiawa. Normally, it is impossible to get an off-base pass on a weekday unless you live with your family off post, are a senior NCO, or an officer, none of which any of these clowns are. Sanger and Taylor both came from B Company. I know Taylor from 2nd platoon, but Sanger is one of the AIT trainees newly arrived from the mainland.

From the beginning, Lieutenant Sawyer displays a short temper, is abrupt and rude toward Sanger because the rumor is he (Sanger), Taylor, and Red Clerk allegedly are on film in downtown Honolulu supporting antiwar rallies. Lieutenant Sawyer *hates* the antiwar crowd; he *hates* them with, "every fiber of his being." There is constant tension in the orderly room. Every minor typo and correction is a cue for Lieutenant Sawyer to razz Sanger. Sanger tries his best but without success. Sawyer even poisons him to Captain Jones, and both of them are constantly on his ass about one subject or the other no matter how trivial. I feel somewhat sorry for him, but he can be a haughty little dick himself. Sanger's father is an embassy diplomat once stationed in Saigon where Sanger lived with him all through 1964. During the Buddhist riots, the White Mice using tear gas and truncheons herd him along with the rest of the crowd into a blind alley where they charge the protesters. "We had to crawl under this army truck to escape the

police,” he tells me; “they were beating and tear-gassing anybody they could get a hold of just before they started shooting live ammunition.” He witnesses the immolation of the Buddhist monk who, “barbequed himself with foreign gasoline,” as Madame Nu cares to phrase it. He returns home where the draft catches up with him. Sanger is much worldlier than anybody else is and this annoys the Executive Officer.

The second anniversary of the 11th Infantry Brigade approaches and Lieutenant Sawyer volunteers to bring patriotic marching music from the library to a social event attended by every general known to USARPAC. He plans to perform a soliloquy at the picnic celebrations for the brigade officers in the vein of, “I am the 11th Brigade, I am the infantry, Queen of Battle, hardened by training, ready to die for liberty...blah, blah, blah,” something in that direction. He assigns Sanger to make appropriate record selections, which Sanger eagerly sets out to do. He returns with several Sousa marching band assortments, but one particular record holds his attention, the *Russian National Anthem*. “You can’t be serious,” I ask him.

“Why not,” he retorts as he turns up the volume.

“Because it is the *Russian National Anthem*, Sanger, you didn’t even include the *American National Anthem*. Jesus H Christ! All these people at this picnic are officers in the United States Army. You gotta be shitting me.” I am incredulous. “You better think about that one pal. Then shit can it and go get the American National Anthem to play for this picnic.” His feelings look hurt. He quietly puts his idiot record back into the jacket and returns to his work without saying a word to me. I never know if he actually gave the record to Sawyer, but I cannot see how it would endear him to any brownie points for a job well done.

One of the first things Captain Jones does is call all of the Vietnam returnees into his office and asks us if we would consider waiving to go back to Vietnam. “How about you, Lupton, will you sign this waiver to go back?” He is naively earnest with his question.

“No, sir, I wouldn’t be interested in that.”

“Why,” he wants to know.

“Because I think Colonel Beers will do something stupid,” I reply. It is hard to relay to others that my prior two battalion commanders were relieved for screwing up when with the Wolfhounds. They just would not understand it.

“Oh, I don’t think so, Lupton. Colonel Beers is a fine commander.” He believes this too, and maybe on his level, he is a good battalion commander, but not in my opinion.

“That’s okay, sir. I think I will have to pass on this one.”

“Okay, Lupton that is your decision then.” I salute and leave getting no inkling there are hard feelings for turning him down.

The only time I ever heard of Colonel Beers using discretion is when one of the AIT trainees goes down to Honolulu, gets drunk out of his mind, and whips out his dick in front of some broad and says, “How about some pussy, baby?” The cops arrest him for lewd and lascivious behavior, and he winds up in front of Beers. Normally, he would go in front of his company commander, but his time it is the Colonel. Amazingly, Beers does not do much of anything to him except make him pull extra duty. If I had not seen the report myself, I would never believe it.

In the mail, I receive a copy of *The BOND – The Servicemen’s Newspaper*, dated September 15, 1967. This is a trite antiwar newspaper published in Berkley and sent to everybody in B Company. There is much discussion as to how *The BOND* got a hold of everybody’s name for the mass mailing. Scuttlebutt has it Captain Shelton tries to confiscate everyone’s publication, but the JAG will not hear of it. Because Sanger has access to the B

Company personnel roster, he and his roommate Taylor get the blame. For some reason unknown to me, Jones puts Taylor in the stockade. He is in there for a week before reappearing in the orderly room joking how Outlaw occupied the cell next to his. Anyway, Taylor disappears from the company. A few weeks later, he sits in front of my desk in a haughty mood angry about something. I suspect he thinks I am part of the plot against his friend Sanger then he disappears forever.

Azzalino comes to work hung over every morning. I can smell his beer breath every time he speaks, even from across the orderly room. Ball goes over to Azzalino's house one night to help him move furniture around, and the next morning relays to me his drinking habits. "He chugs them down one after the other as fast as he can then eats dinner, all the time bickering with his wife. By the time we got around to shoving his stupid furniture around, he is soused." I can believe it too. Instead of eating in the mess hall, Azzalino takes his noon repast at the NCO club and comes back smelling like a stale brewery. There is hardly a time when he is not yelling at somebody, Sanger in particular, me when he is bored with Sanger, and anybody else hapless enough to come into the orderly room.

He taunts Sanger about the off base pass one afternoon. "You know, Sanger, even bachelor lieutenants cannot get weekday passes for overnight, do you?" Sanger merely acquiesces to this taunt. He knows he will not get it if he opens his mouth. Azzalino suspects the three roommates are nothing but queers. "What do you do in that apartment anyway, Sanger?"

"We bake bread." Sanger answers sheepishly.

"Is that all?" Azzalino drills him. He is waiting for Sanger to make just one slight suggestion they all suck each other's dicks.

"We listen to music too." Sanger defends.

"What, the Russian National Anthem?" Obviously, Azzalino heard about Sanger's indiscretion.

"No, we listen to classical music, Sarge."

"I bet you do. I bet you listen to that fag music too." The sarcastic drunk goads him.

"Sergeant Azzalino," Sanger persists, "can I have that pass now?" Azzalino harrumphs, waits a few seconds to stretch out the agony, and then flips the pass in Sanger's direction where it falls on the floor. Sanger retrieves it quickly and leaves before somebody changes his mind. "What do you think of that, Lieutenant?" Sawyer has been listening from his office. I turn to look at him rocking back in his chair deep in thought.

"I think Sanger needs to be living in the barracks just like everybody else, First Sergeant. I'll talk to Captain Jones when he comes in tomorrow morning. You tell Sanger to store all of his shit in his wall lockers then inspect him to make sure."

"Right, Sir." Azzalino sits down for a while rocking in his chair with nothing particular to do then leaves for the NCO Club to recharge his batteries. Lieutenant Sawyer walks out without saying a word to anybody.

The next day, I find myself standing with Captain Jones and Azzalino below the battalion offices near the barbershop. Azzalino tells the Captain that Sanger is screwing up the paperwork. "Are you interested, Lupton? Can you do the job of company clerk?"

"I guess so, sir. I mean, I am interested in the job if you want to give it to me." Jones nods to Azzalino his approval and the next day, Sanger gets his walking papers to one of the platoons.

After dwelling on my circumstances for the night, I come up with a slew of rationale for waivering. I could be stuck on this rock doing the exact same shit for the next 20 months. I will be a REMF stationed way, way behind the lines. The 27th Infantry clerk never went out to the field, ever. The war is winding down, the newspapers say so, Westmoreland says so, and President Johnson says so. If I get that promotion to E5, I can change my MOS permanently and the pay will come with it. There will be another 65 bucks a month in combat pay in the deal to boot, and I will not be in combat either, gooks will burn my shit. Do I really miss the excitement of Vietnam? Besides, this barracks life is boring, boring as hell, and in Vietnam, there is never a dull moment, besides, I will be in the rear with the beer, I will even get another R&R out of the deal, and I smell pussy. I smile smugly as if enacting a coup d'état. Call me Mister Quixotic, I decide to go for it; the next morning, I walk into Jones's office and tell him I will sign the waiver. "I have to be the company clerk though, Captain. It is the only way."

"All right, Lupton," he assures me, "you can be the company clerk."

"Okay, sir, that's a deal, where do you want me to sign?" I take the captain at his word, even shaking his hand before I salute him and leave his office. It never occurs to me anything could go wrong.

The captain decides that Cantrell, a clerk in battalion, will work with me for a week or so to see if I can handle the job or not. He joins me the next morning to explain the morning report to me.

The morning report is a key document tracking the number of people assigned, attached to, or in transit to or from the company. There can be only three corrections within its cryptic entries and the number of personnel must equal the number on the company roster. The report is the first thing typed each morning at 0600, signed by the company commander, and then taken up to Sergeant Davis at battalion where he peruses it for accuracy. After he approves it, I can do other things, but if not, I have to make the corrections right away. The preassembled form has three carbon copies and each copy needs to be correct before Sergeant Davis will accept it, which means I have to disassemble the document to make the corrections to the second and third pages, a time consuming endeavor. Sometimes, it takes half the morning to get it right. When Davis finishes with it, he sends it up to Brigade where they review it. There is a little box on the upper right hand corner used to track the number of troops coming and going and in-transit. This is the most difficult task for me to get correct and most of the discrepancies occur here.

Sergeant Davis is the battalion S1 administrative sergeant. Everything goes through him before the battalion adjutant, Lieutenant Lipsett, reviews it. Lieutenant Lipsett deals with the matter, and the paperwork normally ends with him, or if not, he passes it along to Colonel Beers for his signature. Sergeant Davis is an experienced administrative NCO who is normally easy to work with, and in the beginning, he offers to help me whenever he can. "Just give me a call Lupton if you have any questions. I'll help you whenever I can," he congenially tells me.

"Thanks, Sarge, I will." I get a warm welcome to his realm; I feel confident in my success in my new job. I feel like the Radar O'Riley of D Company, competent, resourceful, and indispensable.

On my very first day as company clerk, Lieutenant Sawyer writes a four-sentence missive, placing it in my in-box without further direction. I type it out in the form of a letter to the company, which can be correct. I put the letter on Sawyer's desk for his signature and resume my work. When Sawyer returns, he hands the letter and his handwritten copy back to me, "This is not a letter, Lupton," he states flatly, "it should be typed on form 1049, can't you

see that?" I look at his copy realizing he wrote it abstractly in the format of a 1049 form, not a letter.

"Oh, I see that now, sir, I'll retype it..." Lieutenant Sawyer snatches it out of my hand and stomps back into his office.

"Don't bother, Lupton," he comments from his seat. Cantrell and I look at one another; he shakes his head.

"Good luck, Lupton," he tells me just above a whisper. I shake my head too and return to my task. This ominous beginning is a portent of the calamity to ensue. I never feel my waivering to become the company clerk was ever in the executive officer's plan. To be candid, I feel Sawyer wants Cantrell to be the company clerk even though Cantrell wants nothing to do with D Company where he considers it a step down for him. He confides in me that Lieutenant Sawyer had him type out a 1049 request for him to transfer to some ranger outfit in Vietnam and did not want anybody else to get wind about it. Nevertheless, I soldier on as before.

Sergeant Norris transfers over from A Company where he initiated an application for OCS just before the reorganization. The paperwork is only half-complete when I get it. We need numerous statements from his former captain, plus Captain Jones's recommendation, and other forms to complete before the application is sufficient to submit to brigade. The big problem is having this paperwork submitted before Sergeant Norris turns 35 years old, only a week or so away. "I don't want you messing around with this, Lupton, get it done and done right." Sergeant Davis chastises me as if I am the one who kicked the dog with this paper work months ago, when in fact, I only got it the day before. I tell Captain Jones what I need from him, walk over to A Company to confer with the clerk over there to get Captain Caravello to write out his commendation for Norris, and after several attempts to get the forms filled out correctly I complete the job. I have questions for Sergeant Davis who helps me okay but seems prickly after my second visit to him. A few days later, the A Company clerk arrives with Caravello's statement, Jones writes his portion of the job, and I type it up for signature. The time consumed on this job is astronomical, but it goes through okay and Sergeant Norris departs D Company a few weeks later on his way to a holding company to await his OCS class at Fort Benning. You are welcome, Sergeant.

My next travail comes when I learn there are two special allocations for buck sergeant. The only problem is the paperwork has to be in by this afternoon. After a lengthy discussion, Lieutenant Sheppard writes up his recommendation for Watson and Roberts to get the promotions. All I need to do is get the paperwork out to Captain Jones on the noon mess truck. I am frantic to complete this work under a barrage of tasks from Lieutenant Sawyer. For reasons known only to him, he wants a jug of coffee brought to him this morning, and only I can get it for him, nobody else. I sometimes think he is testing my resolve. I inquire of the mess sergeant, "Don't you have one of those aluminum quart cans from the kitchen you can give me, anything?"

"Nope, they have to stay in the mess hall," responds the mess sergeant adamantly.

I walk to the supply room to ask Rankin the supply clerk, "No," he has nothing he can part with.

"I can't find a jug, sir, I will be happy to get you a cup of coffee though," I offer him in compromise.

"No, Lupton, I want a *jug* of coffee this morning. Now go find one." This has to be a goddamn scavenger hunt. I go back to the mess hall only to have the mess sergeant say no again.

At 0800 hours, "I can't find a jug, sir. There just isn't one available," I beseech him. Here is a cup of coffee with cream and some sugars if you want them." I am exasperated with his game. I have never seen Sawyer drink a cup of coffee before anyway.

"You're sure," demands Sawyer indignantly.

"Yes, sir, I cannot find anything." He looks at me as if I failed his experiment and waves me away with the flick of his hand. He does not even drink the stupid cup of coffee I brought him, tossing it out the door onto the company street later that morning.

I am behind now, and I fret about losing those special allocations. If Jones does not sign them, they are lost to some other unit. Cantrell recommends I forget it, the hassle is not worth it, but I disagree, bust my balls, and get the job done. Harried, I type like a demon to finish, running to stop the mess truck as it pulls out of the quad. The truck returns that afternoon with Jones's signature, and I run it up to Sergeant Davis just in time before Red Clerk goes to brigade with the day's work. Roberts and Watson become aware of their promotions only after receiving E5 pay the next month. They come to me wondering what the reason is they receive such a nice pay increase. For whatever reason, their orders arrive only after I make an inquiry to battalion where they overlooked the paperwork. Gratitude is a bit lacking from either new sergeant for busting my ass to get them promoted, neither Azzalino, nor Sawyer, nor Captain Jones.

Short walks guard around the bank not remembering he loaded his M16, and when the guard truck come to relieve him, he takes out the magazine from his weapon then pulls the trigger firing into the air the forgotten chambered round. Termed a minor incident, the 11th Brigade general still wants to know who fired a shot on his post. The General wants that report on his desk by 0900. Lieutenant Sawyer has Short come into the orderly room and instructs him to write out a statement about how he manages to fire off a round. "Here, Lupton I want you to type up his statement, *exactly as he writes it*, and give it to me," Sawyer orders me, "The General wants it ASAP."

"Yes, sir," I answer and bang out the statement including all of Short's grammatical and spelling errors *just as Lieutenant Sawyer instructed me*. Short takes it into Sawyers office for him to review and, after a brief pause, the situation deteriorates from there.

"Lupton, get in here."

"Yes, sir,"

"There are all kinds of spelling errors here, Lupton. I can't give this to the general."

"I typed it just as you said to Lieutenant. Why, do we need to make some corrections?"

"Of course it needs corrections, Lupton, goddamn it," he swears at me as he scribbles the changes. Get on it we do not have much time left."

"Right, Sir." and dash over to my typewriter, yank out some more blank paper, load the carbons between the copies, and commence retyping Short's account, typing methodically so as not to make any typos. After finishing, I take the answer back to Sawyer where we discover I put the carbons in backwards; the copies come out in reverse on the back of the original. Flummoxed is hardly an eloquent word to describe the Lieutenant's demeanor after this, he turns livid. I scurry back to my typewriter, making sure the carbons are in correctly this time, and commence typing Short's statement for the third time. As I do so, Sawyer comes out of his office and looks over my shoulder. Perturbed with my unhurried typing speed, he commences to throw his baseball cap on the floor and begins jumping up and down beside my desk, his face turning crimson, shrieking at me, "I told the General I would have this statement on his desk at nine o'clock, *Lupton!*" Provoked by this ugly scene, I power type 100-words per minute, and blessedly, make not one lousy typo. Sawyer snatches the papers out of my typewriter just as I

finish Short's signature block, "Get in here, Short," Sawyer demands of the pudgy little private, "sign *here*," he commands. With a trembling hand, Short scribbles his name in double time. Sawyer stomps out his office with long, harried strides only a short man or a duck takes without breaking into a run then he slams the screen door in a huff; leaving everybody flabbergasted. Later, we learn the General is never even in his office this morning and Sawyer must leave the statement with his adjutant, all that exasperation for nothing.

Sawyer is not my only problem. Sergeant Azzalino recruits Banfield from one of the platoons to work in the orderly room typing small stuff as I did for Sanger. This jerk is not a very good typist either, and I give him corrections to make only to receive a ration of shit each time. He wants to fight me. With all the work I have to do, I have to engage in combat with this jerk off. The Marines tossed Lee Harvey Oswald out of the Corps for fighting, could this happen to me for knocking Banfield upside his head with a two-by-heavy. Complaining to Azzalino is futile, most mornings he is hung over and all he does is holler bloody murder at everybody. I catch most of the yelling just because I am there and within reach. After one such tirade, I defiantly raise my voice in response to him. As others watch, "Come out here, Lupton," he orders, leading the way out the door. I follow him, pissed at his audacity. He walks out into the quad so nobody can hear us. "What are you giving me a bunch of shit for, Lupton?"

"I am not giving you a ration of shit, Sergeant, I am saying, okay." This takes him aback.

"I want you to help me run this company, not sass me back."

"Okay, yeah, sure, not a problem, Sarge." His eyebrows draw up as if I was going to start getting huffy with him.

"Well, okay then," concludes Azzalino.

"Well why are you always yelling at me? You see me trying to get all this work done, aren't I?"

"Yeah, well..."

"Come on Sarge, let's stop pissing and moaning, and get some work done." That defuses him right there. We walk back into the orderly room as if best friends where others are expecting me to take an ass whooping, but that is not the case. He settles down for several weeks and things are not too bad, except for Lieutenant Sawyer.

In the afternoons, I walk over to the adult education buildings and attend a clerk typing class. I thought they would teach us how to fill out the forms we use, but all we do is practice touch-typing right from the beginning - nothing more. I find the whole thing tedious, but the class gets me out of the orderly room for the afternoon. The bad part of my plan is I become further and further behind in my regular work, which causes more tensions with late-night labor.

A foregone conclusion is the 11th Brigade is heading for Vietnam any time now. The brigade receives brand new M16s and everybody gets a chance to fire them at the rifle range. The old ones worked fine except after a while, we find the steel pins loosen up and drift out of their aluminum casings causing the trigger mechanisms to fall apart unexpectedly. The new rifle is a third generation weapon that is more reliable than the first ones we used in the 25th Division. The bolts are made of steel instead of aluminum causing the rate of fire to slow down a bit, so now I can fire one shot at a time when on full automatic. The bores are nickel plated, as are the chambers, which helps retard rusting. Everybody has to zero their weapon and qualify with the new M16s. I do not do as well in scoring as I did with the M14. It is because my attitude is bad, and personally, I do not give a shit one way or another about anything infantry. In my mind, I am out of the infantry for good too.

Sergeant Azzalino tells me I am to report to Brigade for a meeting. He does not elaborate, so I find myself walking up to brigade HQ with Command Sergeant Major Lee to a powwow with other Vietnam returnees from all the other units. This is a bit unusual because I am only a schmucky enlisted man never consulted for my experience. A dozen of us sit at a large conference table waiting for Captain Henderson, who served with the 1st Division in 1965 where he won the Medal of Honor for calling in napalm on his own troops to forestall the Viet Cong from overrunning his company. CSMG Lee bellows attention when the Captain enters as suavely as any general, tells us at ease, to be seated, and begins the meeting without fanfare.

The General wants to tap our knowledge about what preparations the 11th Brigade could make before shipping out to Vietnam. The brigade CSMG blabs incessantly about training, pointing out how General Lipscomb wants each trooper to carry two sandbags out to the field to fill each night, hoping the training appears more realistic. Grandstanding, he jokes about enlightening the General as to how silly his policy is, maintaining the troops will get their fill of sandbags when they get to Vietnam. We all shake our heads on that statement. Captain Henderson moves the discussion by going around the table for each man's contribution, and when it comes to me, I suggest each company should bring extra hammers and large shovels with them. Both SMGs chuckle at my involvement as if bemused by my answer, but take my word for it, all anybody wanted were hammers and large shovels in when I went to Cu Chi with the 25th Division. Apparently, the brigade CMSG never dug his own foxhole when he was in Vietnam.

Sergeant Major Lee tells me to write down whatever I think useful and give him a list of things. He promises to bring it to somebody's attention, but I doubt if he will, so I forget about it. The brigade continues their small unit training as before.