The Real Unprivileged

James Montgomery Alexander
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We, the People, an HSP's View

James Montgomery Alexander
This work is an autobiographical novel. Actual names of people and many street locations have been changed. Most incidents mentioned in this book did happen, but some information provided is the product of the author’s imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead is coincidental.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all current and former members of the United States Armed Services and all current and former First Responders. Thanks for signing those damn checks!

I also dedicate this book to anyone that has ever wanted something dedicated to them. This is for YOU!
Acknowledgements

I want to thank the Village of Romeo, Michigan. If I didn’t live there, I’d probably have to live somewhere else.

A thank you goes to Ted (I know Ted, too), Nicole & her clock, Frankie (Who?) and the wonderful staff of Thee Office Pub and Cookery. It is indeed, Romeo’s gathering place, with great food. Their restaurant came in handy while writing. One has to eat and they had chairs, too.

Thank you also to Kelly & Rob, Brittany and the staff of the Main Street Bar & Grill, located on Main Street. Just look for Main Street, as you’re driving into Romeo using Van Dyke (Main Street). It may seem confusing, but it’s not. Their fish dinners are unbeatable. They also had chairs.

Of course, my two favorite breakfast nooks: Marty, her family and the staff at Four Corners’ Diner, and Kola, Linda, Martin and their staff at Romeo Coney Island. Both were great places for me to get a jump start on the day. Both restaurants offer appetizing lunches and dinners and they both had chairs.

If it weren’t for my cat, Reno and her random walking across the keyboard, I would have missed many of my own typos, along with hers. I suppose I should mention that I have chairs, too.
SPECIAL THANK YOU

I am deeply indebted to the following folks. They are my official and unpaid editors and proof readers who jumped in to help me out.

- Nicole Rolfs

To get your name added to this list, just find a legitimate mistake in the book. This promotion ends 11:59, 4 July 2019.
## Contents

Preface ................................................................................................................................ 9
Prologue............................................................................................................................ 11
Chapter 1 – In the beginning ............................................................................................. 15
Chapter 2 – The few, the proud, the Martians ................................................................. 20
Chapter 3 – Sirens, kids and sonic booms ...................................................................... 23
Chapter 4 – Flying catfish ................................................................................................. 28
Chapter 5 – Clothespins in space ...................................................................................... 32
Chapter 6 – Planes, trains and free rides ......................................................................... 38
Chapter 7 – Kristi Noland ................................................................................................. 43
Chapter 8 – No secrets ...................................................................................................... 48
Chapter 9 – Big guns, little guns; they all kill ................................................................. 53
Chapter 10 – Diamond studded alley ............................................................................. 57
Chapter 11 – Beeker’s on Becker ..................................................................................... 62
Chapter 12 – The Jedi Knight and naked woman ........................................................... 67
Chapter 13 – Roller skating .............................................................................................. 73
Chapter 14 – Bar fights and waitstaff .............................................................................. 77
Chapter 15 – Rivers, kids, kites and bombs .................................................................... 84
Chapter 16 – Snipers, bikers and the blues; dress blues .............................................. 90
Chapter 17 – The projects, smiles, Marines, smiles & pain ......................................... 96
Chapter 18 – Liz and the Rolling Stones, live ................................................................. 100
Chapter 19 – Guts, guns & buffers ............................................................................... 106
Chapter 20 – Medics, cigarettes and marching .............................................................. 111
Chapter 21 – SOS for Marines ...................................................................................... 115
Chapter 22 – Don’t bring a Major to a gunfight, sir .................................................... 121
Chapter 23 – Invisible counter-snipers .......................................................................... 126
Chapter 24 – A bang-bang of a war .............................................................................. 131
Chapter 25 – Busses, bars and grunts .......................................................................... 137
Chapter 26 – The privileged, riots and fresh bread ....................................................... 142
Chapter 27 – For my next act ...................................................................................... 148
Chapter 28 – The $1.00 bid is not a drill ....................................................................... 154
Chapter 29 – The Mediterranean Sea ............................................................................ 160
Chapter 30 – Liberty Call: Rome, Athens & Auschwitz .............................................. 164
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 31 – Medals, ribbons, flowers and love</th>
<th>169</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 32 – Hueys and Cubans</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 33 – They stole my stolen car</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 34 – Too hot for cars and horses</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 35 – Happy Thanksgiving</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 36 – Detroit &amp; GTMO, hot towns</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 37 – In combat, at combat</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 38 – The dark side of life, broken airplanes</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 39 – Cuban corporal with a mission</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 40 – FBI, ice cream and R&amp;R</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 41 – Stateside duty sucks</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 42 – After Snowy Beach</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 43 – The real police</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 44 – The last head shaving</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 45 – Our last day, the bomb truck’s and mine</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 46 – Epilogue</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

Growing up, I was *programmed* to be patriotic. I became a combat trained Marine for three years. I followed what I thought was my path and joined the Detroit Police Department for 30 more. For twenty-three of those years, I was assigned as a tactical officer. Throw in the fact I’m both an Empath and INTP puts everything in a different light. Not all cops wore mirrored sunglasses.

Working the streets of Detroit had many citizens asking us if we were the real police. The city was exempt from the state shoulder patch rule for police departments. It was probably a financial thing. The city didn’t want to spend thousands of dollars to equip our uniforms with patches.

In this book, *privileged* is used three different ways. One is *Male Privilege*, another being *White Privilege*. I also included the third category which is a catch-all called the *privileged*. Well, there is also the *low privileged*, which is what I grew up with, but we won’t include it.

INTPs are logicians and analytical thinkers enjoy complex problems. According to the *MBTI*, I am an introverted thinker and left-brained. I had to force myself to change from introvert to extrovert for survival purposes.

Most of us are honest, but sometimes a bit too honest, as in brutal. I have been told when I speak, I don’t *pull punches* and *say it like it is*. I suppose my tact needs a little work. I’m a human, too. INTPs dislike *bullshitters* and politicians. INTPs exist, but are rare. We comprise about 2-4% of the world’s population.

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1. **Program** – It’s used as a form of *conditioning* of the mind by repeating actions and information to a person. They begin to respond to the ways they are taught. It’s the same as brainwashing. An example of programming was Pavlov and his experiments with dogs.

2. **Male privilege** – A trait similar to white privilege. The difference is, in this case, how women are treated as subservient to men. The saying, "a man’s world" holds true, due to male privilege.

3. **White Privilege** – To define it like a person of another race could be difficult for a white guy. To find out what it means, ask any person outside of the white race to explain it.

4. **Bullshit or BS** – A term describing the defecation of a male steer, in a crude way. It is used differently here. It is used to describe nonsense coming from a *BSers* having no idea what they are talking about. It also means the tom foolery nonsense instilled by the Green Wienie. It could also mean anything lacking in sense, as in common sense. It can also refer to lousy, useless equipment. The word is versatile and has multiple uses.
The 24 hour military time is used throughout the book since both of my working worlds utilized them. For those having no clue on how it works, I’ll explain it in brief. Numbers below 1300, reflect the am time. For numbers above 1300, subtract 1200 for the pm time. For example 0930 hours would be 9:30 am. 1730 hours would be 9:30 pm.

This book contains a few cuss\(^5\) words. They’re used only when necessary to accurately depict specific events in the story. The words have been italicized\(^6\) for your convenience.

Other words are italicized to show emphasis. An italicized word with a number next to it denotes a link to the explanation or a footnote.

Footnotes identify certain lingo used in this book. They are included with sincere apologies to George and Charles Merriam and to Noah Webster.

Many historic and scientific facts are used in this book and are as close to the truth as possible. The book is a novel, but based on actual experiences. No characters are able jump over tall building structures or run faster than the velocity of a bullet exiting the barrel of a gun.

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\(^5\) **Cuss** – To speak using naughty words. This is considered unacceptable language for most civilian people, but common everyday language for military personnel. The words are used, on occasion, to depict actual scenes and events.

\(^6\) **Italicized** – The word *Italicize* is italicized. I could put down the entire definition of the word, but why waste time?
Bigots, bullies, bikers and sexists are selfish individuals who infringe on the human rights of others. Most of my life was service orientated aimed to protect the human rights of others. The Constitution of the United States has always been a priority in the years I served the human race.

I mention bikers, but I’m not against motorcycles. I know that driving a motorcycle can be dangerous. I owned one. The biker’s attitude of today dictates you remove some or all of the baffling from the exhaust system. Why would this be done? Here’s the best, stupid answer out of all I compiled. I was told the louder the bike, the more likely a motorist would be to hear it.

Here’s why I say stupid answer: If a motorcycle is approaching your car from your rear, the sound is both behind you and the motorcycle. The biker can be in danger if in the car’s blind spot or the driver of the car is not paying attention. Once the bike passes, the sound is in front and past the danger zone.

The police world brainwashed me to believe everyone was against me and my fellow officers. We were taught to trust no one. It was the world vs. us attitude. It’s hateful, but necessary for survival. It’s what brainwashing and programming does to a human. Later in life, I found the information to be untrue. I like to think I advanced, but it took a few years to do it.

I grew up when the term black was used to describe an African-American. I’m old school, but not that old. People were either black or white, back in my day. I’m sure you heard those days by now. We had to walk to and from school, 20 miles uphill both ways, during a blizzard.

INTPs need to see visual evidence of things. The seeing is believing attitude is what many of us relate to. I suppose it was helpful in my police career. INTPs like to speak

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7 **Bikers** – The word denotes NOISY bikers. This book is not against motorcycles, but against those who drive with mufflers altered to cause excessive noise because of stupid beliefs.

8 **Brainwashed** – A form of mental conditioning by repeating actions and information until it becomes normal procedure for the person.

9 **African-American** – An American citizen with an African heritage. It is used to refer to a “black” person from Africa. In the politically correct world, it is any person with dark skin, a black person, which is bullshit.
their mind and hold little back. It was not good in the military or police worlds, where we were taught not to speak. It’s best to avoid deceiving an INTP or an Empath. It’s hard to gain their trust again.

The story encircles the 1950s through the present. I wanted some form of what I did made available, just in case someone was interested. It’s a living history lesson of my corner of the planet. There’s something about the statement I have always found odd. If the Earth is round, how can it have a corner?

It may seem like the story bounces back and forth, but there’s a method to this madness. The story revolves around growing up as an INTP and an Empath in the City of Detroit and spending three years in the Marine Corps as a combat troop. Some cop stuff was thrown in for fun and to break things up a bit.

Whether we were drafted or joined, the powers stated, “You’ll love it and we’ll pay you feeble wages, on top of all the other foolish nonsense we dish out. If we run low on time, we’ll deprive you of your much needed sleep. Sign here and you’ll be assigned to the air wing, as soon as there’s an opening.” We all wanted to be in the Air Wing, for some reason. Very few ever got it, though.

If it appears I am facetious or sarcastic, then you an earned extra point. The extra point will get you an observation award, but nothing else. You can pick up your award anywhere north of the Arctic Circle, but only in February. I am a little humorous, but it may be a bit dry for you.

To me, life is about the positive. Keeping the negative at bay is what is necessary for a happy life. I tried to remain as positive as possible, but sometimes events didn’t allow it. Now in my later years, it’s a priority of mine to see the positive in everything. I’ve already seen the negative.

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10 Just in case – A phrase used to cover you. You do things just in case other things fail to work out as planned. An example would be, “I punched him in the mouth, just in case he was about to say something bad about me.”

11 Draft – Military term – Used for the Department of Selective Service. When the Selective Service was able to grab any person (man) they wanted back in the 60s and 70s. The draft was active from 1940 until 1973. Don’t worry, if the U.S. wants it back for National Security reasons, they will reactivate it, no questions asked. The national sport teams use the word draft, but it’s a different story.

12 Powers – The powers, in this book is a term used to reference higher-ups, the know-it-alls and those who make the important decisions. Most people who fall under the powers umbrella have the thinking power of a rock. It would be nice if they had common sense, which comes in handy in this world.
Where are the protestors of the 1960s and 1970s? They evolved, but in a different direction. Many are now the same people in denial of climate change. Many of the protesters of my era have become the powers. Today’s younger people need to scream louder. As some of us get older, our hearing begins to fail.

As a champion of the younger generation, I feel terrible about what we’re leaving them. I’m science minded and can see my generation of baby boomers were greedy and did a fair job of trashing this planet. I have no solutions to this mess, but I have the utmost confidence in the young people. It is my hope they will not let this type of caretaking of the Earth continue.

While I’m writing, I thought I’d throw this in for the younger generations. This prologue was written in the month of May, near Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ day is in June.

I am proposing to the people of the western world to form a new holiday, called Childless Day. It’s a holiday for those people having no children. Childless Day should be celebrated on the third Saturday of August, every year. Those people without children, both married and single, should take this day and reflect on the peace and quiet they have. Food, snacks and beer need to be purchased for a barbecue or a picnic. Boating, swimming and sports are there for you enjoy. Have a Happy Childless Day. Not everyone is meant to be a parent.

One last thing before we jump into the story and it’s my Chocolate Pudding Recipe – I know the idea of a recipe in the book is not unique. Years ago, I saw a comedy movie which included a recipe for chocolate brownies in the credits. I thought it was funny and a grand idea. I am not trying to be funny, but I am trying to share a great recipe for chocolate pudding.

I encourage you to use real ingredients in the recipe. Pudding relies on fat and cornstarch to help jell it. This recipe has a lower amount of sugar. If you must use an artificial sweetener, go with Agave Nectar, but use slightly less. It’s sweeter.

I believe sugar is the worst item we can ingest. I think natural fats we consume, are safer. The reason it’s included is because sugar is delicious and it goes well with chocolate. This pudding isn’t super-sweet, but sweet enough for me.

The recipe makes five full-sized servings. You can add or subtract the amount of sugar for taste adjustment. We all have different sweet-tooth levels. The ingredient amounts can be halved for testing purposes.

Ingredients
• 3 cups real whole milk
• ¼ cup white sugar or the equivalent of sweetener of your choice.
• ¼ cup cocoa powder
• 3 level TBS. cornstarch
• 2 TBS real butter
• ¼ tsp. (sea) salt
• ½ tsp. vanilla extract

**Directions**

If you want this pudding to come out perfect, stir it from start to finish. A small whisk is the best device. A wooden spoon splashes it too much.

In a medium saucepan, combine all dry ingredients. Whisk carefully to blend.

Add liquids and blend them with the mixture.

Place pot over high heat until mixture begins to warm. Add the butter, but keep stirring, to prevent scalding. Turn the heat down when you feel the mixture thickening. Continue stirring until it starts to bubble. Remove the pot from the burner, while still mixing. Pour into individual serving bowls to cool. Cover the bowls and refrigerate.

If you prefer a *skinless* pudding, you’ll have to place plastic wrap immediately and directly on the pudding’s surface.

If there are children around, this is a nice time to have them use a spoon and scoop out the excess. It’s called licking the pot, but watch out for heat. If there are no children around, I found using the spoon myself, very rewarding. Try it, you might like it, but like I said, “Watch out for heat.”

If you’re in a *binge mode*, eat all 4 or 5 servings, but avoid doing it on a regular basis. It might add unwanted pounds to your waistline.
Chapter 1 – In the beginning

Once upon a time, this adventure began. It was during a previous era called the 20th Century and around 1400 hours, or as the Marine Drill Instructors used to say, “That would be 2:00 pm for you unorganized civilians.” They said worse, but there’s no point in repeating it.

On a sunny, mid-January day in 1975 Detroit, a police radio broke the silence with a general broadcast, “All units in the vicinity of Deerfield east of Dunkirk, shots were heard fired.”

A little later the radio came back alive with, “Radio calling all units, we have numerous callers reporting a man armed with a rifle is firing shots from a house with a possible address of 11396 Deerfield.”

After a couple of moments, a voice was heard over the air replying with, “Calling Radio, 21-3. We’ll head over there from Denmark and Bordeaux.” Another car stated, “Radio, 21-71, a one-man unit, is also on the way.”

21-71 was a lone supervisor. Working alone was a good preference for someone wanting silence or some alone time. A PO (Police Officer) sometimes had the opportunity to work a one-man car, which I always looked forward to.

The dispatcher returned saying, “21-3 and 21-71, I have you both busy and on the way.”

Normal police chatter continued. A few minutes later, the dispatcher broke in with, “All units in the vicinity of Deerfield east of Dunkirk, I have information we have an officer down. He may be shot. Use caution. EMS has been notified and is enroute.”

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13 General Broadcast – Police term – In Detroit, a general broadcast was a Police Run unassigned to a specific unit because the incident was minor or it was an untraceable situation. Any cop listening to a police radio who happened to be near the area broadcasted could, and should check it out. They would then report their observations or actions taken.

14 Radio – Police term – It was used in Detroit as an identifier for the police dispatcher. It was the dispatchers’ call sign, addressed as “Radio.”

15 Alone time – Treasured time an INTP needs. All people need a little alone time, once in a while.

16 EMS – An acronym for Emergency Medical Service. This was the name given to the fire department’s ambulances with trained paramedics on board.
Anytime a cop\textsuperscript{17} was shot, a general broadcast would go out on all radio channels to keep all officers informed of the status. It was done as a courtesy, but angered everyone and made many of the aggressive officers, even more aggressive.

I’m sure what was said over the police radio sounded similar to the way I described it. I should have been assigned to work scout\textsuperscript{21-3} for the day, but instead, I was assigned out\textsuperscript{18} to the Medical Section for my one year rookie\textsuperscript{19} confirmation physical.

When finished, I was told I could take the rest of the day off. It was around 1300 when I arrived home, changed clothes and decided to go to the donut shop to look at my one of my favorite subjects, and maybe buy a donut. The shop, located on Dunkirk and Pleasant Drive, was close to Detroit City Airport, one of my favorite childhood hangouts.

I was off-duty and frequented the shop because they gave cops free coffee. My interests were of something other than coffee or donuts. I was 23 years old and hot to trot.

In my younger years, I was slender, 6’0” tall and weighed around 160 pounds before putting on my traps\textsuperscript{20}. Add the weight of the gun, handcuffs and ammo, plus the blackjack and a flashlight, I was sure the wind wouldn’t blow me away.

While sipping my coffee, my attention was drawn outside the plate glass window. I saw three Detroit police cars speeding north on Dunkirk, advertising with lights and sirens. I then saw two EMS trucks go screaming by. When the Chief of Police’s car sped by, using a siren; I figured something serious was happening. The logician in me was working.

My original hot to trot plan was of advancing in life with the young lady, but my macho, Marine/police mind kicked into gear and I thought to myself, “No date tonight! It’s time to impress the world! Oo-Rah!”

\textsuperscript{17} Cop – copper – Police term – The term was used in Detroit as a term of endearment between coppers. The context was the issue. A copper or a cop is a police officer. Most Detroit Police Officers referred to each other as coppers, fellow-coppers or cops. Some of them disliked the cop word if a civilian used it. It never bothered me, as a cop.

\textsuperscript{18} Assigned out – Police term – When an officer is picked for a special detail or moved out of his or her normal assignment, they are considered assigned out. Many assigned out assignments were liked by the officers. They broke up the normal routine.

\textsuperscript{19} Rook or Rookie – Police term – A rook is a newbie, right out of the academy and during his or her first year on the job. If the rook is a guy, he’s the young person in a bar who likes to show off his badge to the ladies. I’m sure the younger women had their idiosyncrasies.

\textsuperscript{20} Traps – Police term – The term referred to the leather gun belt with accessories. It’s one of those words used in the Detroit PD in which no one seems to know the origin.
I paid for my donut, tipped the woman and decided to see what was going on in my home town. I let her know I had to leave to fight crime and/or evil. She was the love of my life, for the afternoon, but I had to give up any thoughts of her because a true crime fighter is on-duty 24/7. That’s what I believed. It gave the local taxpayers their money’s worth, but took a toll on me.

My testosterone was pumping like my adrenaline as I ran to my car. I imagined myself being the guy ducking into an alley or phone booth to change into my secret identity, SuperDude. My Walter Mitty came out.

Leaping into my Ford Galaxy with a 390 cubic inch Thunderbird engine, I started and revved it a couple of times because I thought the noise sounded cool. Taking off with smoking and squealing tires, I left the parking lot and headed in the direction of the cop cars, driving like a TV stuntman.

The old car had issues along with having the same gas mileage as an overloaded ocean freighter traveling against the wind and dragging an anchor. The gas mileage was around eight gallons per mile or something similar.

I owned this car for a few months one the winter and used to keep my eyes peeled for fallen snow, when stopping for a light. When the light changed to green, pushing a bit too fast on the accelerator caused a backfire, which would sometimes ignite the small gasoline leak I had over the intake manifold.

The Marine Corps taught me how to improvise. I’d open the hood and throw the precise amount of snow to put out the fire while preventing the engine from stalling. I could then close the hood and drive away. Nothing to see here, people! Move along.

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21 **Taxpayer** – All people living in the United States pay taxes (well maybe not the elite of the super-privileged). These taxes are used to fund the government, pay our elected officials and government employees. The money is also used for the various national security type things. They buy all the toys the young people in the U.S. military love to play with, like bombs, bullets and other fun explosives.

22 **SuperDude** – My secret identity. Shhhh!


24 **Cool** – It’s sometimes used as an adjective to describe something or someone enjoyable and liked. Someone labeled as cool was looked up to with envy and sometimes jealousy.

25 **Nothing to see here, people!** – Move along.
About a mile up Dunkirk, I spotted the empty cop cars with flashing lights blocking roadways, to help keep gawkers from driving into the line of fire.

I saw a cop I knew and asked, “What’s going on?” He said, “Four coppers shot. Agata and Griffin killed; McMillan and Martin were taken to the hospital.”

Ken Agata was the guy assigned to take my place with Ronny Martin on 21-3, while I was assigned out for my physical. My senior partner was now fighting for his life.

I had no hand in killing Ken, yet I had Survivor’s Guilt for a long time. The man was in his 20s and was dead forever. I was beginning to dislike my choice of careers.

I approached a uniformed supervisor and asked if I could help. Upon recognition, he assigned me to a traffic post. The neighbors were first to arrive and then the scanner fans showed up. This kind of stuff also brought the news media. I took out my badge, pinned it on my civilian jacket and directed traffic. It was a carnival atmosphere. If we sold popcorn and other treats, we could have made a fortune, on the side.

After the shooter was talked out and placed under arrest, I left the scene for my emotional ride to the hospital. The game score was Criminals = 4, Police = 0. There were a bunch of on-duty and off-duty cops in the ER (Emergency Room) lounge area.

Ronny was on a gurney, moaning in horrible pain. I suppose anyone with a bullet hole in their head would be in horrible pain.

There was nothing to do, but holler, “Hang in there, Ronny!” Unable to help, I decided to leave. The thought of beer, cigarettes and a little relaxation came to mind.

Ronny survived the shooting, but lost an eye. He also lost his dream of joining the Michigan State Police. He always spoke of being a State Trooper.

Ronny mentioned he was shot when he peeked from behind a tree. The bullet was fired at his head and hit the tree first, causing it to tumble. It then hit his eye, destroying it. It was fortunate the bullet failed to enter his skull and kill him.

He mentioned he had to get a prosthetic eyeball. He had asked the doctor if he could have a chrome one, similar to a pinball. I asked, “Why would want a pinball for an eye?”

Survivor’s Guilt – The guilty feeling a human survivor has when someone close to them dies a traumatic death. They felt helpless because they were unable to prevent the event from happening.
He said, “Do you know those intimidating assholes who stare into a person’s eyes to freak them out? When they pull it on me, I’ll just stare back and let them see their reflection. It’ll stop them in their tracks.” I had to agree with him.

With his police career over, I never saw Ronny again.

If you ever see a guy with a chrome eyeball, smile at him, say hi and wish him a pleasant day, but avoid staring him in the eye. The reflection may disturb you.

The Detroit Police Department received many calls for shots fired throughout the year. The information was read over the radio as a general broadcast. It was a common, urban sound.

Most metro-Detroiter would pop off a few rounds and then quit. Drawing attention to themselves might get someone to complain or to confront them.

No person in their right mind would confront a person who was shooting a gun. Right and mind are the keywords here. There were few people who enjoyed confronting armed people. They had small brains compared to most humans.

Some folks liked to make noise for celebration. Guns were noisy, just like fire crackers. They still are. See for yourself, but do me a favor. If you must shoot your gun, shoot at a target with a safe backstop, or into the soft ground. Please don’t ever fire a weapon into the air. What goes up must come down.

I don’t care if a projectile falls and hits the shooter in the head, but the odds of it happening are rare. Getting hit in the head by a half ounce of lead falling at terminal velocity may not kill you, but it will ruin your day.

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Ass – Asshole – A person’s buttocks or anus. Both can refer to an idiot or a fool. Take your pick. In this book, it refers to idiots, getting beat up. It’s sometimes paired with the word hole in order to describe a person as an asshole, to be accurate. See AH, Asshole or Butthead.
A group of us went to a local cop bar. We hooked up and began drinking our favorite beverages, managing to cop (*pun not intended*) a buzz.

Complaints about the thieves, crooks, lawlessness and other negativity were heard. No jokes were spoken to lighten the mood. The bar patrons’ moods, both cops and *groupies*, were somber. There was the usual reflection of past situations and events, but with anger.

We sat around telling embellished cop stories. Like military veterans, cops had war stories, too. They’re like fish stories. You know: *the one that got away?*

As a male in a male privileged world, I agreed with what the women wanted. I was always taught they were the fair sex. If they are, they should be treated fair by being given equality, in all areas of life. Then it’s fair!

The first women working the streets of Detroit as cops had to put up with a lot of *crap*, from their male counterparts. I was included, due to brainwashing. I was still a sympathizing individual. The males appeared to be pleasant to the women, on the outside, but many had inner resentments. I hope women have it better today, but I doubt it. I’m sure there are still *some* men with resentment and discrimination in their hearts and souls.

Women were held back as subservient people to men for centuries and at different extremes. Nationality, religion, race or their location dictated the extremes the males went through to keep women from advancing in life.

A woman not possessing the strength of a man is a poor excuse for denying her equality. Men possess brute strength, evolved from the previous centuries. It was needed to hunt and kill for survival. It allowed them to control anything they felt was beneath them, like women. Today, some men are civilized and have evolved for the better. Other men still use their brute strength to overpower those weaker. The Human Race still has a long way to go.

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*Groupies* – Like rock stars; cops, doctors, Marines, firefighters and pilots all have groupies. Other groups have them, too. These are people who either want to date someone in a particular group or they’re wannabees.
In the mid-20th Century, woman began breaking in to the traditional man-type jobs. Many men did everything in their power to make it rough on the women. Having to work with them was against their own personal being and traditions. This is how we were programmed in the male privilege world. Men retaliated by demanding the woman be as strong as them. Some men wished women would’ve stayed home, *barefoot and pregnant.*

I love women. Understanding them is a different story. The old saying of *you can’t live with them and you can’t live without them,* has some meaning. I think we’re supposed to be different. If only the entire world would accept and embrace the thought. More on this subject, later.

I was out looking for a new lawn mower when my eye spotted the one I wanted. Its green body color was attractive and it did everything I wanted, so I purchased it. Some assembly was required. When removed from the box, the body was covered in warning stickers, hiding the original color.

Every sticker on the machine was the result of a lawsuit filed by someone trying to extort money from the manufacturer. Thanks to those lawsuit-happy leeches, we all pay higher prices. The corporate world passes off its overhead onto the consumer.

One of the stickers gave warning you should avoid placing your hand in the chute, while the engine was running. What? Someone must have done it, and then sued the maker of the lawn mower. I would like to meet the person to shake his hand. Oh, wait! I can’t shake his hand. It shouldn’t have been said. I do have a statement for him, though. It is, “You should have put your head in the chute and saved us all a lot of money and aggravation.”

A memory of a news story or an urban legend comes to mind. The story is about two neighbors who decided to use their combined thinking power and come up with an ingenious way to trim the row of three foot hedge separating their properties.

They’re plan included the use of a motorized push-mower and a 12 pack of beer. The two men then lifted the running mower. I’m not sure of what happened next, but if I ever hear more about this story, I’ll let you know. I’m sure they had their fingers reattached, but it’s only an assumption and assuming is wrong.

A term appearing to upset a few white people is white privilege. Many white folks think the term is manufactured as an excuse. If someone doesn’t believe in the term, they are in denial, in my mind.
I think I have a good way of explaining what it is, even though I’m white. In a way, it’s like me trying to explain the pain of being shot, when I never experienced it. I heard and observed how painful it is, though.

Let’s say an African-American man was strolling down the sidewalk, minding his own business. If he’s in a white neighborhood and spotted by some alert busy-body, he may be investigated and questioned by the police. The questioning would be of suspicion like, “Why are you doing in this neighborhood?”

If it were the other way around, a white man in an African-American neighborhood, the white man would be questioned, but in a different way. It would be, “Sir, are you lost or do you need some assistance?” No one would call the cops on him, unless they thought he was in distress or lost.

A white person has a better chance in life because of white privilege. I found speaking about the subject it can cause quite a stir, by those in denial. Hatred seems to prevail on this planet.

An African-American person, or a person from any group of people, other than white, can give you a better example, but I think my point is clear, at least I hope it is.

I like to consider myself and my people as human beings. We are of one race, the human race. Black, white, brown, red, green, tall, short, thin or fat, we are all humans and we should be helping each other advance. Wait! I said green. Did you catch it? I think green people are Martians. Forget I said it. This book has nothing to do with the planet, Mars.

I am an Empath who absorbs other people’s feelings, both positive and negative. Most of us are introverts and are highly sensitive people. I have learned to block some people’s negative feelings, but it hurt me in the long run. I had to learn for my survival. Being a Marine and a cop were not the best choices in life for an Empath. I was young and dumb. Experience comes with mistakes. We learn from mistakes. I did.
I started out as a kid for my first few years and grew up in what was called Detroit’s near
eastside way back in the BC era (before cellphones). I remember bits and pieces prior to
eight years old, but nothing of significance. I’m sure I caused some sort of diaper havoc
in the beginning years. We all started out in diapers and many of us will depart this
planet, wearing them, but his story is not about diapers or Mars.

I lived on a street called Knudson, tunneling in American elms, until a disease killed every
one of them. A fire station, housing Engine-146, was down the street from my house. I
rode my bike to visit the firemen almost every day.

As a childhood fixture there, I was taught how slide down the emergency brass pole from
the second floor. Kids had to learn to hold on in the 1950s. You don’t see monkey bars in
a playground anymore. When we had those, you learned to hold on or you fell and hit
your head on the cement mounts. This was before helmets. When you saw enough blood
on others, you learned to avoid a slipup.

I followed the firemen’s rules and stayed away from the truck and equipment. I had the
unpaid, unofficial job of standing watch, when the firemen left the building on a fire run.
When they drove the truck out, I would sit at their main desk with a large alarm bell or
gong over it.

They had a ticker tape machine. If someone pulled a fire alarm anywhere in the city, the
information came over the ticker. An eight years old reading a ticker tape had to be a
hilarious sight in those days. I guarded the firehouse from unauthorized entry. Thieves in
the 1950s were few and far between or thought violating a firehouse was taboo. If a thief
walked in, what could I do at eight years old? But I was in charge.

Other days brought the truck past my house with siren blaring. Flashing lights and sirens
fascinated me and most kids. As we heard the wail, we’d all run out front to jump up and
down and wave. They’d wave back. I wanted to drive a fire truck and wave at people.
Maybe someday, I thought.

My pre-teen and teenage years were in the same era the Beatles evolved from unknowns
to world-famous. There were three different classes of teenagers, in my Midwestern
world; the beatnik, greaser and the frat or soche.
The beatniks were the precursor of the hippies. They seemed to prefer other neighborhoods and we saw few of them.

The greasers were guys with slicked back hair which formed a waterfall style, in the front. They used the hair dressings of the times which were quite oily, thus the name, greaser. They wore tight jeans and had a comb or a skinny brush with a long handle in their back pocket. They acted like tough guys.

Female greasers were kind of slutty looking. Many wore too much makeup and short skirts, very short. Most guys liked the looks of the greaser girls, including frats. I have a vivid recollection of dudes combing their greasy hair, while women were ducking into lavatories to trade secrets, shovel on some more makeup, pad bras, rat hair or do whatever young women did when they went to the restroom together.

Frats were more natural, except for the girls and their hair. I was a frat. I liked soft, greaseless hair on my head. I also liked the sky-blue colored jeans which were in style. Both guys and girls wore white, wool crew socks and penny loafers, without the penny. The girls dressed in a conservative manner, like schoolgirls. Greaser girls were a little different. Some dressed like hookers.

I lived close to Detroit City Airport and spent many hours watching planes. In the 1950s and 1960s, the jets from Selfridge AFB, which was about 15 miles from my home, would fly overhead. The flight rules back then were a little relaxed which gave them the privilege to break the sound barrier. The sonic booms were quite loud and scared the daylights out of everyone. It was like a thunderous explosion on a sunny day. For kids, it was exciting to spot a jet coming and waiting for the sonic boom. It was a cool way to damage your hearing.

The sonic booms caused the plaster on our bathroom ceiling to crack and drop some pieces. My mother was always on the phone to the base, complaining about the damage. Nowadays, jets must fly below the speed of sound over populated areas. I figured it was my mother’s harsh complaining which stopped the booms.

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29 Ratted – Teasing of the hair. It was a style in the 1950s and 1960s for some women.

30 Selfridge AFB – Military term – Selfridge Air Force Base. The base is located in Harrison Township, Michigan, near the City of Mt. Clemens. It is now called Selfridge Air National Guard Base. It’s used by all branches of military. The Air Force seemed to be cut from a lot of funding at the end of the cold war. Things change, over time. It’s called evolution.
A giant steel tank owned by the gas company, was visible from my tiny front porch. The tank was on the opposite side of the airport, but because of its size, appeared to be a couple of blocks from the house. On the tank were the neon words, “Gas is Best!”

In the first half of the 1950s, the tank was painted gray, but was later changed to the red and white airport color scheme. It was about 200 feet tall and 75 feet in diameter. It looked like a giant tin can. Even gray, it was quite visible.

A pilot unable to see it should not have been a pilot. I’m all for the handicapped and their rights, but when it comes to flying an airplane, my logic dictated a pilot should be required to have excellent vision. Is it the INTP in me, the perfectionist, or just plain common sense?

Close proximity to the airport increased my interest in aircraft and space flight. Sputnik 1 caught our attention. It was launched during a time prior to me learning the Russians were the evil empire.

My dad used to take me outside at night to watch a star (Sputnik 1) traveling across the dark sky about every 90 minutes or so.

The USA started to pump a lot of money into space exploration. I wrote letters to NASA, the National Aeronautical and Space Administration, requesting anything and everything. I became a lifelong fan because of how they treated me when I was an eight year old. They sent me a lot of free stuff.

During the summer months, like most kids, I got bored. At one time in Michigan, the law stated a kid had to be 15 to play a pinball machine, the ancient precursor to a video game. My reasoning told me by violating the law, I’d become evil. My flawed thinking would take a few more years to straighten out.

Some neighborhood friends and I decided to put together a spook house and earn some extra cash, for important things like candy and pop. We used my big, one and a half car garage.

Other kids were involved in this project. The customer would be pulled around the garage in a wagon. A lot of hanging strings were used to simulate spider webs. Some kids would jump out of dark corners and scare the customers.

We only had one problem. There were no kids left to pay for the spook house ride. The younger children had no cash. This venture was a disaster, but only in an adult sense. No
money was made, but the planning and building of it was fun. “I’m bored, let’s do something else.”

My mother was bi-polar. We were in the wrong class of people to have an accurate diagnosis. I was raised as white and male privileged, but I still had one point against me. I was low privilege, on the financial scale. My money boat hit an iceberg.

There were days mom needed some alone time and wanted me away from the house. Like me, she was someone who treasured her alone time. I wonder if my mom was an INTP. Naw, she would have been an ENTJ. She was an extroverted extrovert.

She was once on a bus and saw a thief steal another man’s wallet. She grabbed the thief by the shoulder and loudly said to give the man his wallet back. The commotion caused the driver to stop the bus and intervene. The man got his wallet back and the thief ran away. My mother should have been a cop.

I was still a kid and did the average kid things to upset a parent. She got angry with me during one of her moods and grabbed a couple shopping bags. She filled them with some of my clothes, handed them to me and sent me on my way.

It’s ironic to think she packed my bags, in a literal sense. I found it funny and not sad. My mom, putting my stuff into actual shopping bags with the carrying handles on them made me feel good. She gave me the best our money could afford. My logical brain treated me well during the learning process.

I enjoyed the privacy of my garage and wait for my dad to come home from work. Boredom failed to exist, in my world. The garage was my playroom with a roof and was my fortress for alone time. I was free to go anywhere I wanted, but I felt secure in the garage. It served as my outdoor playroom. Her alone time gave me my alone time. Everything worked out, for both of us.

I was an avid daydreamer. I found it was much easier without someone to distract me. Einstein was a daydreamer. I wished I possessed his intelligence. Daydreaming was our only similarity.

As I think back on the garage situation, an eight year old sitting in there with packed bags must have been a pitiful site for my father to see.

I looked forward to my mom sending me out there. I looked forward to her bad days. For me, it meant a reward, like ice cream or an airplane ride. I wonder if my dad ever knew I
enjoyed it when I was *thrown out* and sent on my way. I’m sure he did. Parents have a strange way of picking up on those things.

Being Bi-polar meant my mom would go into a manic state, occasionally. She took me everywhere. We went downtown, to the zoo\(^\text{31}\), Belle Isle Park, Tiger Stadium, Olympia Arena, Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park and other fun places. Except for the boat ride (*four hours of boredom for a kid*) to Bob-Lo, we always went by bus because she was *old school*. They were the best days for me.

We were a family of four and sometimes five, living in a 692 square foot house. It was small, but functional and I had it good.

We had it a little easier because of an unknown issue at the time, white privilege. This was a good thing for me, as it made advancement in my life a little easier.

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31 *Zoo* – It’s a prison for innocent animals to be viewed and exploited by humans. Zoos also rehabilitate and house animals who can’t be released in the wild. I’m for rescues, but not for their exploitation.
Chapter 4 – Flying catfish

My dad took me fishing on Lake St. Clair with a friend of his. I was standing on a dock and looking down and daydreaming when I lost my balance and fell head-first, between two pilings. I was a non-swimmer and underwater.

My eyes were open and I could see a blue/green blur. I was unsure if my head was up or down. My head must have pointed towards the sky because it was brighter above, but I had no directional sensation. I felt no pain or fear. In fact, I felt calm. Breathing issues were something I had no memory of. I’m sure I held my breath, but had no recollection of it.

All of a sudden, someone grabbed me by my hair and pulled me out. Once in the fresh air, I started gagging.

What I was told later was my dad’s friend, a non-swimmer, saw me fall in. It shocked him to the point of panic and was unable to speak. He tried to alert my dad by pointing at the water. My dad, an excellent swimmer, saw no sign of me until he saw the bubbles. He jumped in and pulled me out.

If I had nine lives, I just used one of them. No one wants to die, but because of the experience, I felt drowning might be a peaceful way to go. If I ever drown, I’ll let you know, but don’t waste your time waiting. I don’t plan on finding out the actual truth.

After the fishing trip, I was enrolled at the local YMCA for my new swimming lessons. The Y was a fun place back then. Besides a great swimming pool, they had a large equipped gymnasium. They had plenty of pool tables, but I never could play the game well. I got interested in track and field, as a member.

I was a natural runner. I ran hurdles, cross country and anything else they offered. I also dabbled in the parallel bars, the pommel horse, trampoline, gymnastic rings and tumbling.

I was quite fond of an older counsellor. His name was Mr. Andrews. He took a group of us on a sanctioned, one week YMCA campout. This was my first real overnighter and it was a week long. I wondered how I would be.

It rained and was miserable for the first few days. One evening it cleared up enough for us to have a bon-fire and listen to some spooky stories. Being away from home didn’t affect me.
I managed to get myself over to Detroit City Airport, one afternoon. I had to go there to do childlike things such as running around in the main terminal. No one ever chased me away because I obeyed the rules and kept the other kids in line. It made me feel important and responsible. Adults had a trust in me which was important.

A pilot for a, now non-existent, commuter service called Tag Airlines befriended me and took me for a few air rides. His name was Drew Lawson. He also sold airplane rides on Saturdays for one of the local flying services. The rides were $5.00 per person and the plane used was a four place Piper Tri-Pacer, called a flying milk stool. The air rides were about a 15 minutes long, which was a slow ride around the airport and didn’t take much fuel.

Every now and then, Drew would ask me if I’d mind going up because he needed me on the plane to balance the load. It sure made my day, when he did it. I imagined I had to go up to keep those people from being disappointed. I was needed on board as ballast for the plane to leave the ground.

It’s a heck of a feeling for a kid. I went up when a young couple wanted to go for a romantic flight. Since the plane was a four seater, the couple would want to sit together and which would be in the rear seat. I would then have to sit in the front with Drew. I always sat in the pilot’s seat. Drew told me he’d rather sit in the co-pilot seat, so he could control the only front door.

When on the ground and taxiing without passengers, Drew would let me stretch down to reach the rudder pedals, which were used to steer the plane. My height prevented me from seeing out the windscreen, but wow! I’m sure Drew kept his feet on his pedals, just in case I’d veer off the ramp or taxiway.

When we had passengers in the back for a flight, it was my job to reach under the seat and push the engine starter button. What a feeling of importance, power and control.

I got on my bike and went to the airport one afternoon and ran into Drew at the commuter desk. Around 1700 hours, Drew asked if I had some time. I told him, “Of course I did, but had to be home at 5:00 (pm) for dinner.” He said, “Good. I need a Captain to assist me as the First Officer on one of Tag’s planes.” “What, a Captain? You’re asking me?” I began to feel excited.

The airline was based in Cleveland and flew between there, Detroit, Cincinnati, Columbus, Akron and Pittsburg. Their staple aircraft was the twin engine de Havilland
Dove, which held around eight passengers. He told me he had to fly one of the planes to Cleveland for maintenance and return to Detroit with a different plane.

He was flying as the First Officer and needed a Captain to sit in the left seat. Drew put me aboard the plane and I climbed into the cockpit.

I put on the headset with a microphone, at Drew’s direction. This was used so we could speak to each other in flight. Airplane cockpit interiors were quite noisy. I could also hear the air traffic controller’s voice, while Drew spoke with them. Seeing through the windshield was impossible for me, but it was okay and unnecessary. I was on top of the world and we were still on the ground below the 45th parallel.

We flew to Cleveland’s John Hopkins International Airport and did the plane swap. I sat in the left seat for the return trip. This was one of my most memorable times and I couldn’t tell anyone about it. Today, people frown on a 10 year old boy leaving the state without his parent’s knowledge or permission. Things were different back then.

We landed back in Detroit around 1600. Drew sure made part of my young life special. I did tell my parents about the Cleveland trip, while home on leave from the Marine Corps. It was many years after the fact and they were skeptical of my story. Drew and I knew.

As I got older, I lost interest with hanging out at the airport. My honest guess would be my eyeballs, brain and hormones were causing a thinking shift. Girls were becoming more attractive than aircraft. Over time, I lost track of Drew. He was a big part of my young life. He was like a 2nd dad or a big brother to me. I don’t think Drew was ever married. He sure would have made a great father for some kid. He knew how to treat them. He proved to me by touching my life forever.

During the winter of 1965, there was a horrendous snow storm leaving feet instead of inches of snow in metro Detroit. I was in the eighth grade. It was fun for us younger folks. There were no snow days for schools like they factor in now. This storm was strong enough to force schools to close. The storm paralyzed the city.

The teachers were unable to get to work and kids were in heaven. I went to the school playground with a cute girl and fellow classmate. I had a crush on her, but this would be about the closest I would ever get. She had other priorities in life.

What I discovered was the deep snow was a great opportunity for me to show off. I had this wonderful idea to climb up on top of a baseball backstop. It had a roof of fencing over it. The backstop was about 15 feet tall.
Standing on the top, I let myself fall backwards. It was a soft landing because of the six feet of snow the wind piled up behind it. The girl with me climbed up and did the same. We both had fun, but like I said, it’s about the closest we ever got. At school she kept quiet about our little adventure. We had fun and I still have those great memories.

When the shift lieutenant read my name, he said, “Alexander?” I answered with, “Here, sir.” He assigned me to, “Donnor Beat 21.” This was a one-man walking beat at the south end of the precinct. It was in an area of our precinct we nicknamed the hole. I would like to tell you my beat was in a black privileged neighborhood, but it would be a fantasy. As far as I know, black privilege is a fantasy.

There was a large department store, employing a lot of females in my age group, on this beat. I had the privilege to go home every night to my peaceful, community niche. Many of the people in the store went home, but their neighborhoods were much different than mine. They were called ghettos.

32 Black Privilege – Give me a break. There is no such thing. Throwing in the cheap argument of Affirmative Action will just piss me off. Affirmative Action was nothing, but a big picture attempt by the White Privileged to appease a particular minority group of people or to shut them up, to be impolite.
Chapter 5 – Clothespins in space

I was standing on the corner, outside the department store when I saw a guy stumbling across Dunkirk. He was in the crosswalk, but he was erratic in his walking. I decided to stop and talk to him, since it appeared something may have been wrong. When he made it to the sidewalk, I noticed what caused his erratic walking. He was drunk. Actually, he was loaded to the gills.

He was an older man and I asked, “Sir, may I pat your waist for my safety?” The law gave me the right to pat him down, but I learned if you treated people with dignity and respect, they tended to cooperate with you. I used to like to ask permission, but I only did it in certain cases. I also made certain, I had the advantage. I was at the ready. Honest citizens appreciated those gestures. The people who said no were patted anyway.

I used my instincts when I’d do this, against what my peers would say. I must have done something right. I’m still alive and breathing. Many of them aren’t. They showed me, didn’t they? The old saying; you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, came to mind.

Since there was no conversation between me and this drunk, I proceeded to pat his waist. He backed up and moved his hand towards his waistband. I grabbed him and retrieved the handgun from his belt. My intuition was wrong.

I unloaded and shoved the gun into my rear pocket. I searched him for any other weapons and arrested him. I called the dispatcher and advised him I had a felony arrest and needed a unit for conveyance.

The drunk was wise not trying to hurt me. I was well trained on self-defense and disarming people. He was old and under the influence. He did make me look foolish for trusting him, though. I could have paid for the error in judgement with my life.

I’m sure he carried the gun for his own protection, since he was a senior living in a city with plenty of tough predators. In many cases a thug would take the gun and the victim’s money. Sometimes the thug would shoot the victim with their own weapon. My prisoner never found out, but he would have been released, with his gun, if he was sober. I would have kept the bullets, though.
I arrived at the station with my arrest. I was called into the DB, to speak with a dic, the nickname we used for detective sergeants, which is an actual rank. He asked me to describe what happened and I told him.

He said I would have to go to court in the morning for the warrant request. I told him I knew and was ready. He then proceeded to tell me what to say to the court. The way he put it was, “You arrested him for being drunk and disorderly and upon the custodial search of your prisoner and you found the gun.”

I said, “It happened another way, sir.” He said, “If you want a conviction it’s what you’re going to say.” This was my first experience with someone encouraging me to lie in court. “Wait, what?” I thought to myself, “You want me to lie in court to ensure my conviction? What did I get into?” Doubts about my career choice again, popped up.

I was proud when I went in front of a judge who was disliked by most police officers. He disliked coppers, too. I told the judge what happened; the exact truth.

I got the warrant signed and a conviction on the crime. I went back to the dic to let him know of the final disposition, which was not required. To me, it was similar to rubbing his nose in it. Now I know why they’re called dics. It was such a good feeling to do the right thing.

My family had a homemade Ping-Pong table in the garage, while I was growing up. The table top had green felt glued to the surface, similar to what’s on a pool table. I removed the Ping-Pong net and used plain white chalk to mark off lines for my pretend airport. I drew runway 7-25, which is what I was familiar with at City Airport.

I drew taxiways and parking areas for my planes. My problem was I had no planes. My mother solved the issue by giving me her bag of clothes pins. She put two of them together and handed them to me saying, “Here”. I now had airplanes. Imaginations are a wonderful thing.

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33 DB – Police term – Detective Bureau

34 Dic – Police term – Nickname for the rank of Detective Sergeant. A shortened (slang) term for a detective.
An Airplane

My mom once told me, during one of her manic days, she liked hanging out in her garage when she was young. She was about 13 when she burnt her dad’s garage down. This was an accident, of course. She told me she was experimenting with the bristles of a push broom and some matches, when things got out of hand.

I had no interest in playing with matches or brooms, but I had the firebug gene in me. I liked finding an occasional bullet and removing the gunpowder. A match was necessary to ignite it. The flame produced was impressive. The first time I did it, I used the powder from two 30.06 bullets. I burned my eyebrows and the front hairs on my head. I decided on caution to prevent an unnecessary garage fire or explosion. Gunpowder makes a flash-type, instantaneous flame, unlike burning paper.

During the days of big hair, we discovered a Bic lighter and a can of Aqua Net hairspray made a great blowtorch, with exciting visuals.

My parents wanted me to grow up safe on the streets of Detroit, but also wanted me to have some freedom. In the Detroit area, all kids had to be home when the streetlights came on. I think it was some sort of federal law for kids under 12. As I got older, I was able to roam in the dark. Once I had my two wheeled bike, my reins we were stretched much longer.
I rode my bike to city airport to hangout. I parked and locked it next to the main terminal doors. Inside, I’d visited the main desk, where they processed passengers wanting short, commuter fights. City Airport was home to many small commuter and air freight companies, flying schools and private plane owners.

I was treated nice by airport employees and made sure I did nothing to lose their trust. I was fortunate enough to have permission to enter the door posted with the sign saying “Keep out, employees only.” The doorway led to the Control Tower. There was a landing half way up the stairs. I was allowed to visit the landing, but going farther up the stairs was forbidden. The landing had a large window with a great view of the entire airport.

As I was staring out the window and daydreaming, a guy I knew came down from the tower to take a break or something. He asked how long, I would be there. I gave him the typical boy answer of, “I dunno,” while shrugging my shoulders.

He then said, “Wait here for a few minutes. I want to show you something.” I said, “Okay” continuing to stare out the window. I didn’t give it much thought. He came back, about 15 minutes later and said, “Come with me.” He continued up the stairs, with me right behind him. He opened the door to the control tower and said, come on in.

I’m going to try and explain how glorious this felt. You have to imagine the door opening. The only sight is a blinding, bright, white light with rays like the sun, protruding from it. In the background there’s the sound of a loud pipe organ playing the Hallelujah Chorus, from Handel’s Messiah while the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings it. I was in heaven and in my mind and this is how it was. If you don’t know the song or the singers mentioned, then disregard this paragraph. You could never know what I felt and I know of no other way to describe it.

I entered the hallowed control tower for the first time. They showed me the equipment and how they did things up there. The view of the entire airport was phenomenal. I behaved and touched nothing. I was not going to be responsible for causing a fatal crash. I was the coolest kid on the planet, at the moment.

When I walked down the control tower stairs, I had some serious bragging rights. I felt I had special powers over others kids. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only kid to ever enter the tower. It was a priority of mine to keep other kids from opening the restricted door. I’d protect that door with my life.

Some nights, I would remove my bedroom window screen to sneak outside. This was to hang out with my tough-guy friends. They thought they were a gang called the Ruffians.
In reality, they were wannabees. Ah, to be young and stupid again. As their gofer, I was a wannabe Ruffian.

Mail-order model rockets were beginning to gain popularity in the 1960s. The smallest of the rockets would go up the highest; about 2,000 feet. Some of the engines had a delay and a retro-fire, which was used to blow out a recovery parachute.

I lacked the patience to wait for the mail delivery and tried making my own rocket engines. I used an empty glass aspirin bottle and packed it with wooden match heads. I cut the heads off with wire cutters and discarded the extra wood. The matches were Ohio Blue Tips. You could strike them on anything and they would ignite.

I taped the bottle with plenty of Scotch (cellophane) tape and coated it with duct tape. This was my ingenious way of preventing the glass from flying around, should it break. The hobby store sold green wicks which were capable of burning underwater.

I made a little hole in the plastic cap and inserted the wick. I screwed the cap onto the bottle and made sure it was tight and added more tape. I set up my launch pad with a three foot guy post to guide the bottle straight up, like a rocket. The bottle had a straw for a guide mounted to it. I lit the wick and ran around the corner of the garage, but still peeked.

My experiment was both a failure and a success. When the wick burned down to the bottle, instead of flying successfully, it exploded in failure, like a bomb. The sound was deafening. I was proud of it. The explosion sent a small rock, about a ¼ inch in diameter, into my right elbow and imbedded itself into the skin. It destroyed my launch pad and made a small crater in the ground.

I kept the reminder of this adventure for over 40 years. When the pebble worked itself out, I threw it away, not thinking. I should have kept it as a memento. Oh well, live and learn, again. I discovered it was a lot better embedded in my elbow than embedding itself in my right eye.

My first reaction was to get out of the yard, before my mother came outside and caught me. The explosion was loud. My fight or flight response kicked in as flight and I flew, but without wings.

Denny was one of the local kids I grew up and hung out with. One summer vacation, Denny and I went to one of the local public school yards to launch a few rockets. We wanted to test our new payload container. The container could fit a small item or a
mouse. It mounted on one of our rockets. We were typical young guys. We got tired of sending up boring and legit payloads. Our mouse died in a horrible rocket mishap.

We experimented by filling the payload section with gasoline. We figured my fire gene came up with the idea, but Denny didn’t try to convince me to give it up. We loaded one of the retro-fire engines into the rocket, and then launched it towards the blank brick wall of the school. It hit the school and splattered raw gas. We just wanted to see some fireworks and had no intention of burning the school down.

We needed a longer path or a way to burn off the original flight time. We needed a retro-burn to ignite the gasoline. After we picked up the pieces, a police car pulled into the school yard to see what we were doing. They stopped and talked with us. The gasoline went unnoticed by the officers.

I explained we were working on a science project involving the model rockets. The officers let us go and were returning to their car. One officer turned towards us and said, “Be careful boys and let’s not launch those too close to the school, okay?” I thought to myself, “Sure, whatever you say, asshole.”
Chapter 6 – Planes, trains and free rides

Our crew received a police run\(^{35}\) to 18621 Plains St. It was to, “Meet the woman. She had a home invasion.” This was a low priority run was considered after the fact. We were dispatched to fill out the theft report, needed for crime stats and insurance companies.

When we arrived, we met with a distraught young woman in her mid-30s who lived alone. We entered her house and there was nothing in it. I mean nothing, at all. It looked like a new home before the tenants moved in. I asked her, “What’s going on?” She started crying and said, “They came in and ripped me off of everything I own. Everything!”

I stepped out to talk to the neighbors, while my partner talked to her. A neighbor said there were two gentlemen there who told them they were hired to help the tenant move to her new place. They had a rental truck in the driveway. A few neighbors were kind enough to help the young men move the property out of the house and into the truck.

The woman was not exaggerating when she said everything, she meant it. Everything included the woman’s clothes, dressers, the rugs, personal property, appliances, fridge, stove and her dirty laundry. Anything not bolted down or part of the structure was taken. All she possessed was what she was wearing, her car, her keys and her purse. She did have an empty house, but no proof she owned the home. She no longer had the paperwork for it, since it was also taken. She did have the house key, though.

This was one of the saddest events I witnessed and it didn’t involve the death of a human or an animal. There was nothing she could do, but start over again.

As a young boy, I liked to walk to the airport to absorb the world of my neighborhood. I’d head to the corner, turn north and walk three blocks to an industrial main street, Airport Drive. A factory yard would have to be traversed to reach a hole cut into the fence.

The owners of the factory cut the hole to make it easier for kids to access the railroad and the airport. I could be wrong, but it appeared to be this way, in my logical world.

\(^{35}\) Police Run or Radio Run – Police term – This was a call assigned to a scout car crew. The crew was placed into a busy mode or out of service on the run, which keeps them from being dispatched to something else.
Once through the fence, I was now on railroad property. These tracks ran about a mile alongside Detroit City Airport’s runway 7-25. Freight trains were common because of the many surrounding auto plants. Passenger trains never used these particular tracks.

The trains travelled at low speeds while in the populated areas. This would give kids a chance to jump on a rear freight car for a free ride. Only stupid kids would jump on a caboose, which carried railroad police and workers. Heading to the airport meant the train had to slow for a curve at Dunkirk, where I’d hop off.

If I wanted to go to the local shopping center, a mile up the track, I’d stay on. The shopping center was right next to an auto plant, which caused the train to slow down. Coming back was the same. I’d wait for another train heading in the opposite direction. It was great travelling around the city in those days. It was free. There were a lot of trains and if you couldn’t find one, hitchhiking was a great alternative, but risky.

If a railroad employee or cop saw any of us, there could be trouble. Most of us were at a prime age for running and could escape. I felt bad for allowing my skinny 130 pounds of weight to slow their 50 car train down. It’s why they tried to keep me off.

I went to the tracks with the tough guys, one day to hunt rabbits and pheasant. We had bows and arrows. We were the tough city boy hunters who fantasized of living in the woods.

One of our hunting expeditions provided us with a rabbit, shot with an arrow. The rabbit was hiding in a small pipe, stacked outside a factory.

One of my friends had to lie on the ground to aim his arrow into the pipe. It was impossible to miss the rabbit. I suppose it sounds crude, but we did eat it. It wasn’t a fun-kill, but a food-kill. It was also my first and last taste of rabbit. Even today, I only eat the chicken grown on trees.

I was hanging out (hanging on their coattails) with the Ruffians one afternoon on the railroad tracks. We found a hand-pump flat car sitting on a side track, where a train would pull over to let another train pass in the opposite direction. The pump handle on the flat car was like a see-saw. The flat car itself could hold about 8 people. It was a fun toy to play with it and it took up a better part of the afternoon for us.

We broke the lock on the track switching handle and transferred the pump car to the main track. We wanted to drive it across the nine lanes of Dunkirk Ave. We figured the pump car would trigger the gates to go down and the lights to flash, just as a train would cause
them to do. We weren’t quite sure what triggered the gates and warning lights to operate. Our thoughts were the gates and lights were automatic.

We jumped off the car as we approached Dunkirk’s sidewalk. The gates were still up and the signal lights to stop traffic were inoperable. The pump car was moving around 15-20 mph. The car weighed about four tons. There was no way we could have stopped it, using the foot brake. We jumped off and ran. What? Kids running away? I found it hard to believe while trying to catch my breath.

The inertia kept the car rolling across Dunkirk. Autos were slamming on their brakes to avoid the collision. Horns were blowing and tires screeching. The pump car made it across Dunkirk without being hit by a car. There were no collisions.

Of course, we tough guys missed most of this excitement. We were busy running through a cemetery to escape capture. We abandoned the pump car which was now on the main track. There was no news of a train being derailed around in the area, so I think all turned out well.

There were times I’d go to the tracks with a few of my friendlier, passive friends, just to see what was going on. Ronnie was one of them. He was an African-American kid around the same age as me. He had a sister, a couple of years older and she was mean. She was extra-mean. She’s not part of this story because she was too mean for it.

Ronnie and I liked to ride our bikes together and go to the island park of Belle Isle. The thugs would sometimes screw with us. African-American thugs would want to attack because we were a black and white team. I think they thought Ronnie was a traitor towards them or their race. It was the exact same thing when it was the other way around with white thugs.

Being a salt and pepper team was not considered healthy in the 1950s and 1960s. Ronnie knew he was black and I knew I was white. We got along great. Neither one of us was better than the other. Figuring out everyone else’s issue with us was something neither one of us could do.

You may have figured I love flying. Maybe it’s the freedom thing. Birds are free to go anywhere they want, unless held captive by a human being. Humans seem to disturb the natural order of things in this world. They treat the world as though everything is here for their personal use. Instead of protecting the Earth’s natural resources, they are draining them. Someday it will all come to an end. Won’t we be surprised? No. We won’t exist. Sustainability is an important word.
I wish I could be an eagle for a while. I would love to see the eagle’s view through my human eyes while soaring through the skies. I love the great state of Michigan, but it’s flat in the Lower Peninsula. I would need to soar to a place like Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula or any area containing mountains.

Like most people, I had an attraction for money. I was a junior entrepreneur and between the age of 8 and 12 years old. I made lot of pot holders and sold them to the neighborhood wives and moms at home, *barefoot and pregnant*. Who could resist a little kid selling items with nice colors, patterns and were functional, too?

While growing up, my parents thought I had a stubborn streak. Neither they nor I knew what an INTP was. I’m sure nobody knew what it was, during those days. My parents wanted to teach me to ride a two wheel bike, but I refused their help. I had the need to do it alone. There were a lot of crashes and bloody knees, but I learned.

I discovered many of my actions were typical of an INTP. I have always been an excellent speller, but I have to see many words written down or in print to tell if it’s spelled correct or not. I need to learn to visualize, but *you can’t teach an old dog new tricks*.

There were many things in my life I wanted no assistance with. I taught myself to roller skate. It was a necessity to do things for myself. I remember hearing adults describing me to other adults, saying things like, “The boy’s stubborn. You’ll be unable to teach or do anything for him. He’s in a world of his own.”

If logic dictated someone was trying to teach me something incorrect and I discovered it, I’d gain a deep distrust of the person. It was difficult for me to *forgive and forget*.

As a young kid, I did have one flaw or talent, depending how you looked at it. Some called it curiosity. I had this knack for wanting to take things apart to see how they worked. Radios and televisions were my favorites.

Being young and inexperienced, I was unable to put many of those items back together. I believe an INTP is good at taking things apart, but lose interest when it comes to reassembling them.

Here’s a word of advice. If you’re taking apart an older TV with a cathode ray tube, there is a transformer in the set. This transformer has the ability to store electricity. The TV can be unplugged and the transformer can still jolt you with an electrical shock.
The shock is similar to grabbing a low amperage, but high voltage line, like a spark plug wire on a running engine. I dismantled everything except TV transformers. As I got older, I learned how to put some things back together and get them working. Later in life, the newer talent came in handy.

Society was molding me into young citizen with negative programming. I went to a parochial school for my first 12 years of schooling. Society still ruled. Many of the teachers and nuns, seemed down to Earth, but they were also raised with societal programming.

The Vietnam War was underway, with many of my peers against it. Society now had a firm grip on me. I was patriotic. I was all for the war, but unsure why. The negative programming warped my way of thinking.

I was sitting a cop bar one night when I overheard another cop trying to impress some younger people about a cop war story he was involved in. As I was eavesdropping, I recognized some of what he was talking about. I was involved in the same story, but as the star of the show. Of course, he made himself to be the bigger star, while trying to impress the young folks. Fish stories are fun!
Chapter 7 – Kristi Noland

Women are unable to perform as a cop or a firefighter because they are not as strong as a man. Those words were programmed into me when I was young. I found it can take years to un-brainwash and deprogram yourself of negative thoughts. The first sentence in this paragraph is a negative thought.

I worked with a few of those first pioneering women on the streets of Detroit. I learned they were just as capable as me, when it came to doing the job. What’s the difference if five guys are forcing you into compliance or five women? Either way is uncomfortable and painful.

Women working in a traditional man’s role were upsetting some men. I found women used their brains at a different level. There different way of thinking was beneficial. I still realize most women are unable to bench press 280 pounds, but then again, neither can I. My belief was based on the negative, male privilege programming embedded in my brain. What a crock.

Working the 21st Precinct on Detroit’s north eastside was quite busy during the 1970s. The first women were assigned to work the streets in scout cars36. The rank of Patrolman was changed to Police Officer, as the much needed women entered our work force.

The acronym, PREP stands for Portable Radio Equipped Patrolman. I wonder what the thoughts of the women were as far as the word patrolman went. We’re Police Officers, now.

The name PREPs would have had to be changed to PREPOs, if the decision went across the board. I thought this useless bit of information was important enough to tell you. INTPs notice some strange things, on occasion.

I was assigned to work with a woman, one evening. It was her first day on the mean streets of Detroit. She had just graduated from the police academy. Not many cops wanted to work with anyone on their first day on the streets.

36 Scout Car – Police term – In Detroit all police cars were referred to as scout cars. The terms prowl, squad, cruisers, radio and patrol were used to describe police cars elsewhere.
For us seasoned officers, it was like babysitting. We were the older rookies who stood semi-erect with thumbs tucked into the belt/pants above the front pockets. Our fingers were folded in. It was the tough-guy look, similar to having your hands on your hips. After about five years on the job, most people’s attitudes mellowed out. I’ll say again, most people. There’s still the 10% factor.

In my world, 10% of the humans are unacceptable as social people. They’re selfish, useless and are do-nothings for humanity. The other 90% are hard-working and dedicated humans. It’s the same in all walks of life. Try to be one of the ninety percenters.

My partner for the evening was Kristine Noland. Breaking in a rookie was no big deal. You just helped them get the feel of the real world. It was a summer evening with gorgeous weather, warm temperatures and it was Friday the 13th. There was a full moon, which added to the superstitious thoughts.

Everything fell in line for a busy night for first responders, nurses, doctors and other emergency personnel. I have no superstitious fears of a full moon, but it always seemed to activate the strangest of the humans.

The evening was going smooth. We stopped a couple of cars for traffic violations. Rookie cops wanted to flex their muscles in a subtle way, which is to write traffic tickets. It introduced them to the feel of the authority they now possessed. Young cops always appeared to write a lot of tickets.

Tickets were used as a retaliatory measure by veteran Detroit street officers. If somebody opened there mouth and pissed off a copper, the ticket was used as a polite way of slapping the person. They were sometimes referred to as paper bullets.

There were traffic cops, whose main mission was to enforce traffic laws and write tickets, so drivers had a lot working against them. We didn’t always play nice or fair.

The sun had set when we spotted a car full of people speeding south on Greenstone. Kristi was the driver and I was the jumper. I scribbled the (license) plate number on my clipboard, as we pulled them over on the corner of Greenstone and Dunkirk.

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37 Full Moon – Most police, firefighters and medics, hospitals, etc. will tell you, “If a full moon fell on a Friday or Saturday, there always seemed to be difficult people to deal with.” Things like this are a little hard to believe, but I rule out nothing.
Kristi was talking to the driver and asked for his (driver’s) license. I stood at the right-rear to cover her, just in case. The occupants seemed weird. There were four young white males, in their 20s. All four were sitting with their hands on their thighs, which seemed odd to me. They were beginning to arouse my suspicion. I started thinking of having them all exit the car.

Our PREP radios blared out, “Radio calling 21-8 and all units in 21, we’re getting 13476 E. McManus Rd. at Greenstone, an RA in progress, at the bakery.” Being only a half mile away, we were close.

I answered the call, “21-8, on the way, Dunkirk and Greenstone.” Our location was given so the dispatcher had an idea where we were as it related to the crime scene. I called out to Kristi, who heard me talking to the dispatcher, “We gotta go!” She handed the driver his credentials and told him to slow down.

We both ran back to the scout car and jumped in. I told her where we were heading and she made the proverbial Adam-12 U-turn. We used the blue beacon on the roof to complete our U-turn and drove to our run with all lights out to minimize advertising our approach.

As we neared the bakery, we saw a couple of people out front, with floury aprons, waving us down. We knew, at this point the dangerous part was over.

We got out of our car to get the information on what occurred. They were frantic, like most people who had masked men pointing guns at their faces. We were told three white males came in the store with ski masks on. They all had hand guns and demanded the cash from the register. The employees of the bakery complied and gave it to them. When they got what they wanted, they ran out the front door to a waiting car.

Since I was the jumper, it was my job to handle the main communication and the reports. I would have done most of the talking anyway, since it was Kristi’s first day on the streets. Kristi was getting one of the baker’s descriptions of those involved with the holdup. I was getting the others. When the baker described the car’s license plate number, it hit me. It was the same car we let go to respond to this holdup run. I remembered

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38 RA – Police term – Robbery Armed.
39 In progress – Police term – Happening in real time or the present.

40 Adam-12 U-turn – Police term – This was a turn which consisted of turning a car or truck around, 180 degrees and going in the opposite direction at a high speed. Every time one of those TV police cars received a hot radio run, they were always headed in the wrong direction and had to make a U-turn.
scribbling down the license number on my clipboard. It was standard procedure, when a car was pulled over, just in case.

The idea behind it was if the officers pulled over a car and the driver managed to kill or incapacitate them, the investigators would have something to work with.

The police run came out at the exact moment we had the holdup men pulled over. I’m pleased we ran short of time and failed to order the four men out of the car. We knew for sure from talking to the victims, at least three of them had handguns.

They got away, this time. We drove to the station for our paperwork and for me to coach Kristi on what was involved.

Letting the holdup men go to take the report of the holdup was good fodder for laughter amongst the troops. Of course, I had to take the brunt of the laughing, since I was the senior officer, the trainer. We were victims of circumstances and timing. The great thing was we both ended up alive and uninjured.

We finished our paperwork and went back out on patrol. Our holdup run took up about three hours of our patrol time. Rookies dislike being in the station and out of service. They were excited and wanted to be out there and on patrol.

We were heading back to the station when we spotted a parked car which looked like the holdup car we let go earlier. All of the cars belonged to the patrons of a country bar, located across the street. The rest of Valley Ave. was vacant.

I made a U-turn and pulled up to the car. We kept our roof flasher off, as it drew undesirable crowds in some neighborhoods. The license number matched the holdup information. It was the same car. I got on the radio and called for backup. The dispatcher answered with, “21-8, I have no units to send until they clear the ramp.”

This meant shift change was in effect and all cars were out of service, to be re-shifted. Of course, Murphy’s Law had to interfere. The four holdup men exited the bar and were starting to cross Valley Avenue. Both Kristi and I drew our service revolvers and aimed them at the four guys. Kristi had her issued .38 caliber, pop gun and I had my S&W .357 Magnum. We had the advantage; we spotted them, before they spotted us. We had them with their hands in the air and us with our loaded guns pointed at them. I was scared. My next move had me questioning myself. What do I do now?
What a pleasant surprise. Ten cars from the Tactical Mobile Section showed up and bailed out of their cars with pistols, shot guns, hand grenades and maybe a missile or two and we were glad they did.

All of this took place at 2400 hours. The Tactical Mobile Section worked 1900 to 0300. They covered the shift change time period and were heading as a unit, past our location when we called for backup. They heard our call on the radio and responded as an entire unit. TMS was kind enough to convey our prisoners into the station for us.

Kristi and I had our four holdup men arrested. We recovered four handguns and three ski masks from the car. They were convicted of Robbery, Armed at the trial. No one was hurt or killed. Kristi, an intelligent woman moved up and on in her career and became a Commander in later years. I like to think her rising through the ranks was because I broke her in as a rookie. Criminals = 0, Police = 4, a good score.
Chapter 8 – No secrets

For most city coppers, the fear of getting shot during a general broadcast call was a moot point. Many shots fired calls emanated from the sound of firecrackers or automotive backfires. They were nuisance calls, but they gave us an idea where possible danger zones could be.

If a car received a legit Police Run in an area a general broadcast for shots fired was given earlier, the information is repeated. The responding officers would be advised shots may have been heard earlier, in the area.

The run tickets for shots fired calls were set aside to be re-broadcasted later and maybe again, later. The ticket was filled out by a 9-1-1 operator and transmitted to a police dispatcher. Most general broadcast calls were considered low on the crime scale.

The 9-1-1 system was called often. When Detroit first started using the 9-1-1 system, city employees were taught to say 9-1-1, as in nine-one-one. It was forbidden to say nine-eleven. This may seem ridiculous, until you see why they did it.

The city was looking at avoiding a future law suit based on a technicality. The powers thought someone may look for the eleven on a telephone dialer or keypad in panic.

My logic dictated if a phone had an eleven on the dialer and nine-eleven was dialed, you’d get the wrong number, anyway. INTPs are not known as lawsuit people. I am anti-lawsuit. The lawsuit game players went by different rules and were afraid someone would sue, using the eleven loophole. It all balanced out.

When someone called the cops and complained about a man with a gun; no cop broke their neck to get there. Many citizens figured out if they called the cops and stated a gun was involved, the police would be guaranteed to show up.

Some people just wanted to see a cop in a scout car in their neighborhood. It was a security thing for them, unless a moving target was their thought.

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41 9-1-1 – Police term – Pronounced nine-one-one. This is the emergency contact number for fire, police and medical emergencies. On your phone, you would dial nine, one, one. Not nine, eleven.

42 Eleven – The 11th natural number. It follows the number 10, but before the number 12. It’s complicated.
A noisy disturbance was a frequent general broadcast call in Detroit. It could be anything from a couple of friends on a street corner having an argument or a group of neighborhood children trying to have some fun. The older community residents seemed to be bothered with the normal noises of an urban neighborhood. Many disturbance calls were made with the hopes the cops would show up and spoil other people’s fun.

I loved calls about kids playing ball in the street. Most city cops let the kids play. If they weren’t playing in the street, they might be committing crimes. To tell them to play in a local park was like sending them into a minefield. At least they could see the broken glass in the street, but not in any of the park’s grass. Our primary mission was to protect life. It’s too bad letting children play in the street was the best way to protect them in the city.

Sometimes an idiot would call in a fake bomb threat. These types of calls disrupted a lot of people’s routines. In my entire career, no bombs were detonated after a threat was called in. It was the one good thing about them, at least in the Detroit area.

I liked to hear the bomb runs on the police radio. It was one of the few police runs given out by a secret code number; 8330. I think the secret code was used because of those educated people in the front office felt using it would confuse the scanner fans.

You know those front office people, sometimes called the powers. They sit in plush offices and come up with decisions fowling up the hard workers of the company. They lack the basic clues of what’s going on. It’s my personal belief most of them lack what is needed most in their corporate-type surroundings. It’s a simple little thing called common sense.

The powers would be shocked to know everyone monitoring Detroit Police calls knew what an 8330 was. In fact, while sipping a free coffee one day, I received a Police Run for an 8330 on my radio. As I got up to leave, a civilian customer overheard the call and said, “Be careful. I hope it’s a fake and thanks, officer.” The civilian knew what an 8330 was. The powers had everything going for them, but intelligence.

If a police run came out as an 8330 in 10, it meant the bomb was set to go off in 10 minutes. The usual police radio response was, “On the way, Radio, in about 15 minutes.” It was funny and a cheap form of nervous humor, but we always hurried. We knew what our job was and we did it.

43 8330 – Police term – The secret radio code for a bomb run in Detroit. Nobody is supposed to know what it means, but everybody did.
Only a few radio code numbers were used in Detroit. A 9300⁴⁴ was used to indicate an arrest and a 9330⁴⁵ or code 30⁴⁶ was lunch. I’m sure the scanner people had no clue to those code numbers.

I was enjoying myself working a one-man car, one afternoon. On slow days we would sometimes handle a few traffic violators. The more tickets we produced, the better we were treated by the bosses. It was a quota thing cops have. Oh, I forgot. Quotas have been banned. (Yeah, right! Just like Speed Traps.)

I was cruising up Dunkirk Avenue when I saw a guy bust a red light. It’s a cop term for disregarding a red traffic signal, which is a legal term for busting a red light. I had to perform an Adam-12 U-turn to catch up to him.

When I pulled the car over, my rookie, tough-guy attitude kicked into gear. I stepped from the scout car and approached his driver’s side, standing just to the rear of the door opening. We would do this just in case the driver wanted to knock me over with the door. It would also put the driver at a disadvantage if he wanted to shoot me.

I approached and saw the driver, who was alone. He was a large muscular man. I used my commanding and authoritative voice to ask for his driver’s license and vehicle registration. He said, “I ain’t got one. It’s suspended.”

I said, “Sir, you’ll have to step out of the car.” He put a smile in my face when he said, “If you want me out of this car, you’ll have to rip me out.” I walked back to my car, while calling for backup. “I’ll show this guy,” I thought, while grinning. The dispatcher replied with, “21-43, I have no units available to send.”

When there are no available units, a scout car crew overhearing a call may state, “Radio, were a few blocks from there and still busy, but we’ll slide by for a backup.” This time, it didn’t happen. I was alone. I was a cop, in uniform with authority. I had a blackjack, a loaded gun and a pair of handcuffs.

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⁴⁵ 9330 – Police term – Radio code for the most important event in a cop’s life, lunch – same as code 30. Stated as ninety-three thirty, a code or a code 30.

I walked back to the driver’s side of the vehicle. I pointed at the driver and said in a stern voice, “If I ever see you again, you’re going to jail.” I turned around and walked back to my car at a swift pace. I got in and drove away in the opposite direction.

I had proven to myself how intelligent I was by avoiding a terrible fight, which may have gotten me hurt or worse. This was the first and last time I ever saw this guy. The final score was Criminals = 1, Police = 0. I lost this game, sort of.

My third decade of life introduced me to fake heart attacks, a term I made up. Over 30 times I received severe chest pains, crippling me. I spent many hours in an ER, with negative results. My pains were later diagnosed as chest wall neuralgia, a nervous condition. My body was telling my mind to cause pain and shut down. The Empath and the INTP were trying to tell me to find a new career, but you can’t tell an INTP what to do.

Around the same time period, the department decided to send me to a shrink\(^47\). I threatened to kill a police sergeant who said something stupid to me. He was a jerk, but my battleship mouth overrode my rowboat ass. I was about to pay the price.

I confused the powers when I told them to take my guns away. I didn’t need one to kill an asshole. I was trained to be silent and deadly. My speaking must have triggered them to act in fear. None of my plans included killing any living thing, but it was unknown to them. They gave me a month off, with pay. I wished they gave me a year or more.

The professional term for the person they sent me to see was a psychologist. This doctor was down to Earth. After a couple of months, he decided the entire police department should be seeing him, instead of me. He thought I was acting pretty normal, considering my situation. He made me feel good and cleared me to return to work. I suppose it could have served as my proof of sanity.

I returned on restricted (limited) status and was assigned out to the medical section, so they could keep an eye on me. I enjoyed working there and got to see all of the sick, lame and lazy people, the terms used to describe the average customer. A few people assigned there became lifelong friends of mine. My heart attacks disappeared and I went back to the streets of Detroit, still brain damaged, but not aware of it.

\(^{47}\) Shrink – A shortened, slang nickname used to describe a psychiatrist or a psychologist. The full slang term is headshrinker.
When I first joined the police, I had the naïve idea I was going to help people. Most of us start out that way. Then we find out no cop, firefighter or medic helps anyone. We just go in with brooms and sweep up the mess. The privileged don’t want to see it.

I was part of the good ol’ boys network, but did my best to avoid becoming an actual good ol’ boy. To me the good ol’ boys’ network was made up of male and white privileged guys. My personality tried to keep me in check and it did, for the most part.

Military combat veterans have different attitudes than the general population. I’ve found over the years the more bragging one does about their military exploits and adventures, the less they did. Real combat veterans want nothing to do with trying to impress people with their military exploits. Those having been through it know there is nothing glorious about combat and death.

If and when you see cross paths with one of our veterans, please thank them, but be sincere about it. Handing them a line like telling them you were unable to join because you were busy picking your nose or introducing yourself to all the ladies left behind, is not the proper way to thank them. Military and veterans can insert their “Jody” thoughts here.

Once We, the people get what they want, they tend to forget how they got it. I carry little love for the government’s treatment of the military veterans who signed the check.

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48 Jody – Military term – A well-loved s-o-b who was weak and was unable to join any branch of military. He would stay behind and take care of our girlfriends and wives, while we were deployed. I wonder if there is a female version of Jody.
Chapter 9 – Big guns, little guns; they all kill

I ran into a guy in a local pub sipping a few beers, one Friday night. Look at all the stuff we already have in common.

He was an older guy, but younger than me. His name was Ron. We were talking and the military nonsense came up. He was an Army veteran who served during the Gulf War. Like me, he was a non-combat veteran, but signed the blank check.\textsuperscript{59} The word freedom should never be taken with a grain of salt.

Ron told me he was embarrassed by the term veteran because of his non-combat status. He had what’s referred to as Survivor’s Guilt. He had close friends who served and died doing what they were trained to do. I’ve been there. I’ve seen flagged draped coffins containing close friends. They were dead and I was alive. The guilt should not be there, but it is and never goes away.

I had a case of the Guilt more than once. I called off sick for police work one day. My partner, now being an extra person was assigned as the third man to another scout car crew. While I was off and comfortable in bed, his car was rammed broadside by a drunk driver travelling an estimated speed of 70 mph. The drunk ran the red light and T-boned\textsuperscript{50} the scout car.

My partner was thrown out the back window and landed about 80 feet away, dead. The two guys he was assigned to work with were both disabled and never worked again. The drunk driver had no injuries and spent three years in prison.

I knew how it felt. I reminded Ron about the check he signed. I hope it made him feel a little better. We both thanked each other for our service and went our separate ways.

I was trained by one of the best fighting organizations on the planet and I spent 22 of my 36 months with the Navy. The phrase, \textit{Cuss like a Sailor}\textsuperscript{51}, makes me smile every time I

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textbf{Blank Check} – Military term – This refers to the virtual/hypothetical check all veterans signed when they joined the military. The check was a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount up to and including their life. There is no expiration date. It’s the same as \textit{Damn Check}.
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textbf{T-boned} – Referring to a car collision. It’s another way of saying \textit{hit broadside}.
\item \textsuperscript{51} \textbf{Cuss like a Sailor} – All military personnel cuss like Sailors. Why does the Navy get credited with this unique recognition?
\end{itemize}
The Vietnam War took place over 40 years ago. It’s ancient history for many people. It was part of my life (sort of) and part of what direction I was destined to travel. **In-country**\(^{52}\) Vietnam was a place I avoided. I have my lone **Fire Watch**\(^{53}\) ribbon and medal to prove it.

When I was of military age, the U.S. draft board classified me 1-A, which meant, “Grab this sucker first.” The U.S. will draft again if needed, in the name of National Security. The next time the draft is needed young women will gain an equal place in line at the draft board. Equality has to start somewhere. They’ll draft the women, but at a lower pay rate than the men. Now I’m thinking like the government.

When the U.S. had a forced draft, a young man had the freedom of choice. He could either join the military, go to prison or leave the country forever. When someone thanks me for my service, I think to myself, “They’re thanking me for serving my sentence.”

I joined when I was 18 years old and invincible, as **SuperDude**. Dying was impossible, no matter how hard anyone tried to kill me. Testosterone, it’s a *helluva* drug!

I hear older adults complaining about the young people because of things like their hair styles and I chuckle to myself. My brain sees them from a different angle. I see a young person as an intelligent human being, our future. Sure, they make mistakes, but I attribute their mistakes to inexperience.

Look at the decisions I made when I was young. Today I call them poor decisions. I lacked life experience. I was still new and learning. Today’s young people have to gain experience. They will. I have faith in them.

When people in my age group bring up the good ol’ days, I like to ask if they’re referring to before or after flush toilets. What was good about the good ol’ days? *We, the people* had little money, little luxuries and little everything, including intelligence. Screw the

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52 **In-country** – Military term – The term is used in the military to indicate whether in the actual country or not. In the military, it referred to a war zone.

53 **Fire watch** – Military term – An important job, used to deprive a Marine of much needed sleep. In reality, a Marine would be up all night to make sure there are no fires. Note: It must work. When was the last barracks or tent fire? Many Marines are issued a Fire Watch ribbon and medal (*National Defense Medal*).
good ol’ days! There is a lot of hatred in the world today, but there was more during the
good ol’ days.

I was sitting in a crowded restaurant having some coffee and staring out the window,
daydreaming. The terms Empath or INTP were still a mystery to me. I felt alone on this
planet. What I was pondering was abnormal. I was trying to plan how to end it all without
making a messy scene. As a former first responder, I didn’t want some innocent person
discovering anything which would upset or horrify them.

In many departments around the world there is a phrase used to describe an officer killing
him/herself. It’s called eating your gun. Here’s what I was thinking. I was trying to figure
out how and where to do it, without causing stress on anyone, except for the first
responders. They’re used to this kind of stuff anyway. It’s what they get paid for and it’s
what they used to tell me. I wanted to handcuff my gun to my wrist and then use it. There
would only be one bullet in it.

I figured the average person would be unable to take the gun from my carcass and use it
to hurt someone else. A handcuff key is not a standard item on a citizen’s keychain. I also
figured it would be easy for the responding cops. They would be able to un-handcuff the
gun and put it on evidence.

I began to feel some pride in the way I was planning this. To me, it was an ingenious way
to prevent something bad from happening after my departure. It’s ironic. One of my
original reasons for becoming a cop was to help people. I was now going to do it, in an
odd sort of way.

My plan included locking my car in the parking lot of a large, wooded park in the
country. I’d leave a note on the front seat in an envelope marked Police, in large letters.
The note would be my final news and where to locate me, the suicide note. The INTP in
me would leave a detailed explanation for all my actions. Disclaimer: This information is
not to be used to kill yourself, nor was it used by me.

While I was daydreaming and gazing out the window, a woman approached and said,
“May I sit with you? It looks like you need a friend. I feel something is wrong.”

My first thought was, “How does she know anything about me?” The male in me invited
her to sit and she did. When I asked her name, she told me, “Phoebe Star.” I started

54 Evidence – Police term – It’s the collection of facts or tangible items to form a conclusion to a case or an assertion.
talking to her and she told me she was an Empath. She could absorb my energy and feel it herself.

She said she was getting powerful negative energy from me. She felt like I was seeking help. As she explained what her feelings were, I found many of mine, paralleled. I’ve been absorbing negative feelings from negative people for years and didn’t know it. I learned to block much out, during my life.

I thought my inner feelings were unique, until Phoebe spoke with me. I began to feel like I belonged to something. I realized other people are out there and they’re like me. I can now stop looking for the planet I was born on. It appeared I may be from good ol’ Earth. What a great feeling, being alive.

I was always against killing and I was about to do myself in. What was I thinking? I am so grateful I met Phoebe. She’s the second woman to save my life. This should give you an idea why I like women and why they deserve to be classified as equal, on all levels except where gender won’t allow, like the urinal section of the men’s restroom.
Chapter 10 – Diamond studded alley

I was assigned to walk Donnor Beat 10, a one-man foot patrol in a privileged area. The main reason for foot patrols was there were more coppers than cars to go around. Being a rookie with little seniority saw me walking often.

On this particular beat, there was a major department store with two buildings, separated by an alleyway. I was walking down the alleyway after closing and practicing my stick spin. I spent my time learning how to swing my night stick on its leather lanyard. It was pretty impressive when one got good at spinning it like a yoyo. It took many foot beat hours to master this waste of time. I was good at it, or so I thought until I took out the department store’s large plate glass window.

It was about 10 by 10 feet and ¼ inch thick. Do I have to explain what happened next? Okay, the damn window shattered and the audible burglar alarm went off. I jumped out of the way to avoid the falling glass. I caused a silent evening to be utter chaos in seconds. I amazed myself.

I grabbed my PREP radio and spoke into it, “Calling Radio, Donnor Beat-10, I just found a possible B&E in progress. I have a large window broken out on a retail business.” I gave the dispatcher my location and waited. The Marine Corps taught me how to make quick decisions under pressure. This was a piece of cake. I heard the sirens in the background. As the cars approached my location, their headlights reflected off the shattered glass on the alley pavement. It was like looking at an alley full of diamonds.

The investigation later found no burglars had entered or stolen anything. Go figure! The store was responsible for the boarding up of their windows.

One of the veteran officers came up to me, smiling and asked, “Did you break the window with your club?” “Oh, no,” was my response. He smiled, winked and walked away. I heard him mumble, “Sure. Whatever you say, just stick to it.”

My first arrest was while walking a foot beat on Dunkirk Avenue. A dark green taxi approached me, by driving over the curb and across the sidewalk. The building I was walking next to brought his cab to an abrupt stop. I was airborne trying to escape injury

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55 B&E – Police term – It was the old way of saying Home or business Invasion. It stood for breaking and entering.
and/or death. Many police incidents happen in nanoseconds, making human reaction time slow, but I was lucky. He missed me.

I got up, dusted myself off and climbed over the hood of his cab to get to the sidewalk. He crashed into the doorway’s entrance path, similar to an outdoor vestibule. I noticed the right knee of my trousers torn and I had scraped the skin on the knee cap. I had one of those serious scraped knee injuries and needed someone to spray Bactine® on it, but it wasn’t going to happen. I would have to stick this out, on my own.

I walked over to the driver’s side of the car with the intention of giving this guy a loud ass-chewing. To be honest, I wanted to rip him out of the driver’s seat and slap the daylights out of him.

The driver was drunk and unable to sit up in the seat of the car without holding on to something. His car, the building and he were smashed. He wasn’t trying to kill me. It just appeared like it. I think he was sleeping and dreaming nice things, when the taxi jumped the curb. I’m sure he had no malicious intent.

I took the keys out of the ignition and let him stay in the car. He was safer, sitting there without the motor running than stumbling around the sidewalk or street. Plus he had a steering wheel to hold onto for balance.

I called the police dispatcher to report what happened. All the time, I was thinking this guy must have had a real slow day or if he had passengers, they were oblivious because no one reported him being drunk.

The dispatcher sent a two man unit to assist me. When the conveying officers arrived, they laughed, both with me and at me. The first arrest is a big deal in the cop world.

One seasoned cop said, “I’m impressed, kid. You’re the first cop on foot to ever arrest a drunk driver.” I wondered if it was true.

After picking up a couple of months’ of ojt, I was milling around the police squad room one winter day. A loud voice barked, “Roll Call!” We formed a platoon

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56 OJT – On the job training.

57 Squad Room – Police term – Another term for a police ready room. The squad room in Detroit was where the officers conducted their on-duty and off-duty roll call. Most of those rooms were equipped with a pool table, ping-pong table, or both. I suppose they were supplied to keep the cops from going stir crazy.
formation, while the shift lieutenant stood at the podium, with the **pinch back**\(^{58}\) and **grease board**\(^{59}\).

Names and assignments were given and we went out to the ramp to load the scout cars. My partner and I stopped for a quick coffee at the donut shop and then went on patrol. It was snowing and the sun had set when my partner spotted a stolen car, cruising southbound on Donner. The vehicle’s license number was on the **hot sheet**\(^{60}\).

Heading towards the Parkside Freeway, the stolen car turned east just before, on Valley Ave. There was a lot of snow falling and the streets were empty of traffic, but slippery.

Valley is a topside main street which ran parallel to the **ditch**\(^{61}\) and both were straightaways. Most car thieves disliked straightaways. They liked to turn corners; with the hope the cops will lose sight of them.

Our thief decided he was going to turn down a side street to evade us. He turned the car north onto Stansbury St. I made a quick decision to semi-violate the rules. Okay, you either violate or obey the rules. There is no halfway mark. So, sue me.

As he veered into his turn, I turned and rammed his car broadside with mine. It wasn’t a hard collision, but in the snow, it made him lose control, causing his car to go into a spin. He came to a stop by hitting the curb and taking out a dark blue, U.S. Postal box.

I came to a stop in a field, but was stuck in the snow. I bailed out with my partner to chase the guy. We captured him a few moments later at the curb, but in the street. He was a younger and flexible. He was doing his best to avoid being arrested. He started to fight and was grabbing at my gun, while we were rolling on the ground. We broke through some ice covering about two inches of water.

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\(^{58}\) **Pinch back** – Police term – A binder-like device which held papers by pinching them together.

\(^{59}\) **Grease Board** – Police term – In Detroit a grease board was comprised of two pieces of Plexiglas bolted together to form a reusable car assignment board. You wrote on it with a grease pencil, which could be wiped clean. The cars were typed on paper which was inserted into the grease board.

\(^{60}\) **Hot Sheet** – Police term – A quick reference sheet officer used to mount on the dashboards of their scout cats. It was a list of stolen cars from the city of Detroit. It could have been recovered and returned to the owner. For this reason, all cars found on the hot sheet, had to be computer verified as stolen, by a dispatcher.

\(^{61}\) **Ditch** – Slang term referring to a Metro-Detroit freeway. The freeways were below street level in most cases, with grassy hills or a cement wall on each side.
We were wet and cold. It was hard for me to control the grip on my handgun. My partner, who was also trying to restrain him and call for help at the same time, dropped his radio in the water. Even when removed, radios seemed to fail working when wet.

My partner now had to try and get a hold of my radio, which was strapped to my hip, but still functioning. I was rolling around with the thug. I managed to pull out my flashlight with my left hand. My right hand was holding his hand while he had it wrapped around my pistol.

He wanted my gun and was determined to get it. I had a four cell flashlight made from aircraft aluminum. It’s what the salesman told me, when I bought it. The only area on him I could get a clear hit was his head. Hitting a human in the head with a weapon was an unnatural action for me, but now I’m in a life or death situation. We failed to have a conversation and his intentions were unknown to me, but my intuition was ringing all kinds of warning bells.

His goal in life was to stop us from stopping him. My partner, at some point managed to get my working PREP out of its carrier and call for help, “Radio Tac-4, Officer in Trouble, Stansbury and Valley!” Sirens could be heard in the distance.

I tapped the car thief once in the head with the flashlight. It was a light tap, as a test for me to see what would happen. The tap on the head seemed to go unnoticed. I hit him again. Harder, this time, but not enough to draw blood. He relaxed his grip on me and my gun. My partner knocked him off and we took control of him.

We did the normal police thing with our subject and read him his required constitutional rights. We then skipped hand-in-hand to the police station, to end this adventure. The yellow brick road was inexistent in this neighborhood.

With visible damage on the car, my boss said, “Did you ram the car? It has the same color of scratches on it as the stolen car.” I denied it. The stolen car was dark blue, the same color of the mail box.

I told him I hit the mail box while trying to avoid a collision with the stolen vehicle. Those skating lessons I took years earlier were paying off. I started to miss the Marine Corps, where I honed those skills.

John Stockton and I were on patrol on Detroit’s Westside on a dark night when we came across another stolen car listed on the hot sheet. Detroit seemed to have an abundance of stolen cars and gun toting individuals. We called dispatch and gave him the license number. He confirmed the car was still listed as stolen.
We turned on our flashers, as we followed the car. I think he was about to take off on us, when his car stalled. The driver bailed out to run. My partner jumped out of the car for the foot chase and caught him, in an instant, but the thief was a fighter and tried to get away. I jumped out of the car to assist my partner.

We both were trying to keep him under control while rolling on the ground right next to the scout car. The PREP radios failed to work in the area for some reason. We had a few dead zones\(^2\) in the city. The mobile radio was more powerful, but the engine had to be running for it to work.

When we thought the guy was under control, I started the car to use the mobile radio and call for assistance. The guy started to resist again, while Stockton was trying to search and handcuff him.

I jumped in on the fight to help my partner and I dropped the mic. It was lying in the street right next to the car, while we were rolling around with a guy trying his best to get away. I managed to grab the mic and call for help. The troops were on the way. We got the guy under control, as the first helpers arrived on the scene. This party was over.

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\(^2\) **Dead zone** – Police term – Detroit used this term to describe an area where portable radios (*PREPs*) failed to transmit or receive. The zone received interference from surrounding buildings or other landmarks.
There were times when I was a little gung-ho and would volunteer for the dangerous missions. I worked the steady afternoon shift for a year. This was the busiest time of day for police officers, medics and firefighters. As a younger person, I sometimes had an urge for danger and excitement. It was probably the brain damage I received from bad programming and brainwashing.

I was assigned to an extra car for a scout car territory with the call sign of 21-11-Adam. Anytime Detroit used a second scout car for a particular territory, Adam was added to the crew’s call sign. This was when the city could afford to hire extra people. Extra cars were used in high crime areas of the city.

We had a local gang in the area called the Errol Flynns. They were well dressed, gangsters who thrived on the heroin sales on Detroit’s eastside.

At one point, we were told by our supervisors they received word the Errol Flynn gang had a running contract on us for our elimination for interfering with their operations and sales. Their notification told them the last names of the officers manning those two cars were known. Of course, I was one of them. They had no knowledge of my secret identity, SuperDude! “Let them try,” I thought to myself. He told us to keep our eyes open and be careful.

The Errol Flynns faded out of existence in the 1980s, thanks to the wonderful, cheap and new drug called crack cocaine, which just about eradicated the heroin industry in Detroit in the 1980s. The Flynns were replaced by modern drug gangs. I wonder if their contract against us still exists and if it’s transferred to a new street gang. Do they ever expire?

We received our paychecks every two weeks on a Thursday night. One payday, Fred (Fred Lincoln), my partner and I were off-duty and picked up our checks. There was a bar nearby which would cash them for a nominal fee. We drank a lot of beers, but they had to be purchased.

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63 **Territory** – Police term – In the police world this was the area a scout car was assigned to. It was mapped out on a city map.

64 **Errol Flynns** – Police term – A 1970s era eastside Detroit street gang who sold heroin. The gang dissipated when crack cocaine came into the picture, knocking Detroit’s heroin business down.
Bars were fun places for cops and Marines. They’re fun places for a lot of people. This particular bar was called Beeker’s. It was located on West Becker Street. I wondered why a bar on Becker would be called Beeker’s.

We went in and my partner was the last person allowed to cash his check. The bar ran out of funds. I’d have to wait until the morning and use the bank.

We decided to have a few beers, since we had some cash between us. While sipping beer, a guy entered the bar and went into one of the bar’s built-in phone booths. No one paid attention to him. The other cops gradually left the bar, leaving Fred and I.

A well-dressed African-American man walked into the front door with a pump shotgun, similar to the ones we carried at work. When I first saw him, I thought he was a plain-clothes police officer responding to a false holdup run at the bar.

While looking at him, he pointed the shot gun in my general direction and screamed, “I said everybody get on the motherphucking floor. This is a goddamn holdup.” At the same time, the second guy came out of the phone booth to help his partner.

Fred was busy trying to stuff his cash into his pants, when bad man #2 fired a shot from a large caliber pistol. He was standing next to the phone booth. He fired one shot hitting the bar before ricocheting into Fred’s chest. I think the thug thought Fred was going for a gun.

The holdup men took the register cash and $75,000 in cashed checks, useless to them, but needed by the bar to recoup the value.

Fred told me later, he had no idea he was shot. He said he heard it, but felt nothing and thought the guy had missed. He said his chest felt a little warm and he placed his hand there, it was warm and wet. When he pulled his hand back, it was covered in blood. This sight triggered his pain receptors to register the impact and Fred fell backwards onto the floor.

We were caught with our proverbial pants down and ordered to lay face down. There was a younger woman next to me who started whimpering. I tried to console her and keep her

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65 Mother Phucker or Motherphucker – A crude, vulgar term which had nothing to do with anyone’s mother. See Phuck for further information. This term was used to describe an undesirable person, area, or thing. Jerks were sometimes described as motherphuckers.
relaxed so attention would not be drawn to us. Fred’s continual moaning in pain helped drown out her whimpering. She laid to the right of me while Fred laid to the left.

I heard the shotgunner say to the bartender, “We don’t want their money, just the bars. It was a relief to me. Leaving us alone meant they would not discover my badge and gun, a sure death sentence for me. Fred needed medical help and fast! After they got the money and the cashed checks, they ran out the front door.

I got up and ran to a phone booth. It was not to change into SuperDude, but to call the police and a meat wagon. I gave them as much info as I had. The ambulance arrived and transported Fred to the hospital. It was a trauma center about four blocks from the bar. I destroyed the scent for the K-9, since I used the same phone booth bad guy #2 sat in. The officers and the dog tried their best, but kept tracking to me.

The dog was taken outside to try. She picked up a scent and followed it around the corner. The dog then appeared to lose it. The handler said when the dog loses the scent and it appears abrupt, it’s an indication the bad guys may have jumped into a waiting car.

After going to homicide and telling them what I saw, they asked me for a description of the shotgunner. I said he was African-American and well dressed. I added the gun appeared to have a 10 foot wide barrel and I could see dust on top of the shell.

Two weeks later, Fred and I were in the same bar drinking a beer. Of course the bar was unable to cash checks and went out of business a few months later. Fred died of complications, later in life. The bullet he was shot with was lodged between his heart and spine, and was inoperable.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was less money available for us lower privileged. My dad had to moonlight two jobs to put food on the table. One was driving a taxi on the weekend nights.

His other moonlighting job was tending bar at a local neighborhood saloon, also on the weekends. The name of the place was C&T’s Bar.

This bar was located on a couple of residential side streets around the block from us. It was across the alley and through a neighbor’s yard. As long as you closed gates behind you, neighbors let you use their yards for shortcuts.

Meat wagon – A slang term for an ambulance.
It was also my dad’s favorite watering hole. One day, my mom sent me to the bar to tell my dad dinner would be ready soon. Picture a young boy walking into a bar to talk to dad. Some guy, who’s a little high on beer, wine or booze, would offer to buy me a pop (I’m a Michigander; you might know it as soda, but it’s pop to me).

Sometimes a bag of chips or nuts were purchased. What young person would say no to free treats? I used to like when the older guys would buy me Blind Robbin smoked herring. They did it thinking it was their idea of a joke. The men didn’t know I liked them, salt and all. Blind Robbin treats were better with a Coke to help wash the salt down.

It was a bit weird to have mom call the local bar and tell the bartender to, “Send my boys home.” I was 11 and already in trouble for spending too much time in a bar. I wanted to blame it on a Blind Robbin, but my mother would have none of it, including the Blind Robbin.

Occasionally, mother dear needed some time for herself, like most people. When it happened, she sent me to the bar to hang out with my dad. Hanging out in a bar as a preteen was a pretty good gig. During the day time, no one shot pool and the table was always vacant. My dad would give me the 20 cents needed for one game.

The pool table was up a couple of stairs on a mezzanine. I’d stuff newspaper in the pockets to prevent the balls from being swallowed, by the machine. A couple of us could play all day for 20 cents. The bar also contained a full length, hand shuffle board which was another fun toy. A kid could have a fun day on the mezzanine.

There was a guy who came in the bar often with the name of Larry. He didn’t have a car or a lot of cash. Once in a while my dad would buy him a couple of shots, give him $10 and the keys to his car. This was to take me to the airport for an airplane ride. This got dad out of keeping an eye on me for a while. It was not an issue with me. I was going flying with Larry and Drew! It was another great day in the neighborhood. Larry always seemed to enjoy his free air rides.

The excursions to the airport would sometimes gobble up an hour and a half of time. I have always wondered whatever happened to Larry. I hope a flying whiskey bottle didn’t hit him or something. He was a nice person.

Blind Robbin – A salty, smoked herring treat. Salty is the keyword.
My dad was working the bar one hot and sweltering Sunday. A customer came in asking for a shot and a beer. The bar’s Sunday liquor license only allowed beer or wine. My dad told the man and he ordered a beer and sipped it.

With his soft spot for fellow humans, dad felt sorry for the guy. He poured the man the drink he first asked for and gave it to him at no charge. The nice man pulled out a badge and police ID and showed it to my dad. There is no sense going into details, here. We all know the story. While the bar was closed for two weeks, the owners decided to do a little painting and remodeling. It all worked out.
Chapter 12 – The Jedi Knight and naked woman

Working the westside as a tactical crew, we responded to the shooting of an on-duty police officer. The officer was shot in the stomach at close range with a 12 gauge shotgun. He was already conveyed to a nearby hospital for life saving surgery.

The shooter was still in the house and barricaded. When I arrived, my partner and I were ordered to the rear of the house to keep the shooter from escaping out the back.

I was armed with my side arm and a .30 caliber carbine. My partner had his sidearm and a 12 gauge shotgun. The rear of the house was covered. If he did come out, somebody was sure to get shot. My hope was for the bad guy.

We spent the better part of the day sitting behind a garage, waiting for this guy to come out the back door with his guns blazing. A comic book would have come in handy. I made a mental note to myself, to put one in my briefcase, for such events.

The Special Response Team (Detroit’s version of SWAT) was called in. They arrived and assessed the situation. Once they came up with a viable plan, we were told over the radio to be alert. SRT was getting ready to enter the house. They tried to get the shooter confused by throwing a flash-bang\(^{68}\) grenade through a side window to cause a diversion.

The team entered, searched and found him cowering upstairs. There was no shootout. He was placed under arrest and into a city meat wagon for his complimentary ride to the psych ward.

Because he was a police prisoner, I was chosen to ride in the back of the EMS truck. He started telling me he was a Jedi Knight and should be treated with due respect. I realized no jurisdiction on Earth would prosecute a Jedi for any reason. Fortunately, the officer lived. Well, at least for a few more years.

Once we arrived at a secure city hospital, I spoke to a doctor and told him what the guy told me. I did this to let the doctor know this guy was a little off balance. I’m sure the hospital staff didn’t need my input and would have figured it out.

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\(^{68}\) **Flash-bang** – Police term – A grenade used by SWAT teams and assault teams to cause a diversion. It’s also called a **stun grenade**. There is a bright flash and loud sound, but the grenade is designed to cause a minimal amount of damage. It does burn down the structure, on occasion.
There are some humans held back from learning and advancing because they were believed to be inferior. It is my firm belief only a few key people keep this type of thinking ongoing and active. They are the elite of the white privileged. They have enough money to push millionaires around.

Most white privileged people are not racist, but don’t agree with the term, white privilege. It’s their opinion and it’s debatable. I’ve lived through it and I believe in it. All white racists are privileged, but not all white privileged are racists.

During the 1960s, when more people were beginning to experiment with inter-racial dating and marriages, I looked at it from my logical standpoint. It was my belief and hope African-Americans and whites would mix and bare children. We would have a race of gray people and no more racial divide. My heart was in the right place, but my thinking was flawed.

Most of this stuff is now stealth and not as blatant as it was in the 1950s through the 1990s. Although, I see evidence of racism every day in the community I’m in. It’s brought out into the open, as long as one of them (minority) is not around.

Television media plays an important role in getting the masses to accept various societal changes. Look at the sitcoms pushing the gay and racial agenda. People started coming around because they saw these types of things, daily. The media is helping with societal changes. They have been programming us, too. Companies still use subliminal messages in commercials. Some have admitted it. As sheeple, we are conditioned by the powers. Most of us follow along because that’s how we were programmed. It all works out, for the big bucks people.

Racism didn’t go away. It only took on a new form. What makes me sad is I have no solutions to any of these problems.

Many whites are anti-racist, but benefit from white privilege, whether they believe it or not. Some white folks seem to overlook white privilege gave them a major advantage. It’s like having one foot in the door at all times.

Have I alienated all the racists, yet? I will do my best to anger all bigots, bullies, bikers and sexists. Anyone who thinks they’re better than others can include themselves in the list. If you’re one of those who will step on another person’s human rights, you will have a problem with me. People who halt, crush or slow the rights of others have no business in a social society. Humans should be better, but aren’t.
The term African-American, is used to describe the average U.S. black person. I think this type of language is referred to as *politically correct*. I have a simple question. What if the person is from Jamaica? Would the person be an African-American or a Jamaican-American? I know an African-American guy who is white. He is of American decent, but born while his mom was working in Africa, giving him dual citizenship.

I bring this up for one reason. A boss I once had in the cop shop had the name of Ralph Nelson. He was a good boss and I liked him. He was a black man who disliked the term, African-American. He had no Jamaican blood, so I don’t know why the term angered him. I never asked.

We stopped in a local bank one day. Ralph had to turn in some kind of form. On the form was a box to indicate his race. He wrote a *B* in the box. The women at the desk corrected him, saying it should have been *AA* for African-American. I should mention she was an African-American. This is important because of what Ralph did next.

What she said must have *pressed one of his buttons*. Ralph started to *rant and rave* on how he had no clue to Africa’s location and he has never even been there. He continued to *rant* on how he was born in Alabama, which was located in America.

He told the woman she could call him a Black-American or an Alabama-American, but African-American was unacceptable. Thanks, Ralph. It was a beautiful look of shock on the bank clerk’s face. Ralph started to walk out. I gave her a smile and a wink as we left, which she returned. There was an unspoken understanding. She knew.

While my dad’s bar had been closed down for a couple of weeks by the cops, a customer with the name Blackie was hired to paint a mural.

All cool guys from the 1940s and 1950s went by the name of Blackie. Everything he wore was black, including his sunglasses. In fact everything about him was black, except for him. He was white. Blackie had jet-black, wavy hair and wore a half unbuttoned black shirt with puffy sleeves, tight black pants and pointy black shoes. He reminded me of a Flamenco dancer, dressed for a funeral, but I kept the thought to myself.

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| 69 | Rant & rant and rave – A personal opinion, stated with excitement, sometimes to the point of screaming. Used in this context: *Ranting and raving*! Nikita Khrushchev the former Cold War Soviet leader was good at *ranting and raving*. He’s used to take a shoe off and bang it on the table to make strong points during United Nations meetings. He was quite good at drawing attention to himself. The situation occurring is similar to what happens when old people get upset over nothing, like stepping on their lawn. |
On a blank wall in the bar, Blackie painted a mural of a cocktail glass with bubbles floating up and out from it. The glass appeared to be half full of a clear drink. Sitting in the glass was a naked, gorgeous woman, holding an olive on a toothpick, while smiling.

The drink and the olive were huge in size by comparison, to the woman in the painting. She appeared to be of actual size. Here I am, a boy approaching 12 or 13 and looking at a picture of a naked woman.

Blackie painted the nude woman’s image, strategically hiding her naughty (good) parts from view, much to my disappointment. I wanted to see the X-rated version, not the PG. Once C&T’s Bar was allowed to reopen, everything seemed normal. I liked the naked lady even though she had no interest in buying any of my potholders.

Like most kids, I was sent to the neighborhood market to run errands. My neighborhood contained a lot of Italian and Polish markets.

One of the markets had a full size barrel with a wooden lid. I remember the old guys coming in, lifting the lid and dipping their hand into the barrel for a pickle. They would eat it while conversing with the owner, who was behind the meat counter, butchering something.

To me this was a ceremony for the customer. They would come in and talk small talk with the owner, while stealing and eating his pickles. It was my belief the market owner made them just for the social gatherings around his meat counter. You could purchase some, but most people ate them for free. I ate a few, myself. No one ever paid for pickle, unless they took some home.

Many of the markets used sawdust on their floors. The logician in me always wondered what the reason was, but it made the store smell nice. It could have been the odor of spices making it smell so good. Maybe they used sawdust to hide the dirt. I don’t know, but I still liked it.

Bicycles were a big thing in the 1950s. Technology was still slow in catching up to us young folks. Most of our bicycles were homemade and consisted of a frame, handle bars, a seat and wheels. Horses, in urban cities went out of style, years before. The Sheeny man still used horses, but I think it was because of white privilege. They were poor folk.

Our bikes were assembled from any parts we could find or acquire. Most bikes had no fenders. Who needed fenders, except for the motor pretenders? Me! I was one of them. If you had a bike with fenders, then you could clip baseball cards to the braces with a wooden clothespin. Or better yet, balloons tied to the braces made an awesome sound,
when the wheels turned and the spokes hit the balloon. Even bikes without fenders could use the balloons for motors.

Real bikers (motorcyclists) in the 1950s were gang members. Money wasn’t as available so polite biker clubs haven’t formed, yet. The 1950s bikers looked like hoodlums, a description my mother used. Hoodlum was a word, often her favorite, for any teenager. I was still a pre-teen.

Our neighborhood had a biker club on Valley Avenue and Dewitt. They were called the Roadwaymen. They were a tough group of guys, but they were nice to the kids. We’d ride our bicycles to their clubhouse on Friday nights, when they had important meetings to plan robberies, murders, beatings, drug buys, and to party and drink beer.

They’d park their machines, side by side on Valley. It was an impressive sight when all the bikes were lined up. Many were customized with large handlebars and fancy chrome stuff. Some were choppers. None of these machines came from dealership, customized.

There was an ice house right behind the Roadwaymen Motorcycle Club. The ice house was cool place to visit. I should say no pun was intended, but in the summer, the ice house was quite popular for kids to visit.

Air conditioning was just coming into play. Theaters and bowling alleys were first to advertise their establishments as being air conditioned,\(^70\) in the Detroit area.

The ice house had a few workers who tolerated nosey kids. This came in handy during the hot days of summer. They would give us a chunk of ice to suck on while we watched the ice artists do their jobs. It was interesting, until the cold sunk in to your bones. Going outside into the hot sun, seemed to cure the problem. I think the ice sculptures were used for weddings and other such rich-people functions.

I got my first real job in the summer, peddling papers for an evening newspaper. The deliveries were after school. The route and my homework would leave little time for play. I was 11 years old and the minimum age to work at the paper was 12. I wanted the job to make some extra cash and I think my dad may have told them I was 12.

\(^70\) Air conditioned – Really? You had to look it up? I’ll explain it as I see it. Air conditioning is the artificial air produced by machinery to lower an enclosed area’s ambient temperature and remove excessive humidity. I believe it is also a good medium for spreading communicable diseases.
The manager’s name was Mr. Fishman. My tough-guy buddies would come by the paper station and yell for Mr. Fishman to hurry up and let me out. The bad thing was they referred to him as Ashcan instead of Mr. Fishman. The job lasted about 11 months. I was surprised it lasted so long.

Ashcan disliked the name calling and fired me. This was my first firing in life. I started drifting apart from my tough-guy buddies. It was because I was gaining enough intelligence to see they were losers and would amount to nothing. They just cost me a job. They were older and had cars, but I’ll have my own, one day. My fondness for Ashcan was also minimal. The firing was a good thing in my path of life.

There was a woman in the old neighborhood with the name of Queen Alice Jackson. She was a tall African-American woman with some sort of skin disease. She looked like she had splotches on her.

She dressed similar to a Catholic nun, but her habit (outfit) was white and bright purple. The Catholic nuns I knew (white nuns) seemed to favor dark colors for their habits, except for the Dominicans. They wore white and sky-blue. If any nuns utilized purple, it was the drab, dark purple. I call it death-purple. She was seen walking around the neighborhood often, always clutching her bible. Queen Alice was a pleasant lady who smiled a lot. It would be difficult for someone to dislike her. She liked kids a lot.

I lived about ¾ of a mile from the Better Made potato chip company, which made our neighborhood smell appetizing, when the winds blew our way.

The company had a large front window where a woman would sit on a stool and watch a conveyer belt move millions of potato chips. She would pick a burnt chip out and discard it, on occasion. I thought it was a total waste of time. It was probably some form of advertising to give a customer a sublimal message. Today, the company profits on burnt chips. Someone evolved.

The store gave kids a sample bag of chips, which we described as five cents worth, whereas a one serving bag sold for 10 cents. Our bad luck was the woman at the counter memorized our greedy faces. One bag per day was the rule. She had a brilliant memory.

Potato chips have never been my favorite snack, but I ate them because they were there and free!
Chapter 13 – Roller skating

My partner and I were cruising south on Van Levee, approaching Airport Drive. We heard another crew calling over the radio they were chasing a car for armed robbery. The car cracked up and the robber was on foot.

As we approached the street, we bailed out of our car. The robber was running towards us. Our hope was to intercept and capture him.

He turned and pointed a gun at his pursuing officers and popped off a couple of rounds. They pulled out their weapons and fired at the robber. What this caused was a situation where the pursuing officers’ bullets were whizzing past us.

Both my partner and I leaped into a field to avoid getting shot by friendly-fire. The bad guy got away and now our dark blue uniforms were covered in light beige mud, made from clay. It got lighter as it dried up.

I later crossed paths with a supervisor and asked him if we could go home to change clothes. The sergeant said, “No, we’re busy and have a large backlog of runs. You’ll have to stay here.” Most citizens in Detroit didn’t care what we looked like, anyway.

We called back in service and were dispatched to a city Councilman’s home. This was a four hour detail. He received some threats because of a business decision. Our job was to keep an eye on his home for any suspicious activity. We were told to knock and let him know we were there.

A woman answered our knock and smiled upon seeing us. When I tried to explain why we were dirty, she ignored the comment and invited us into the house to meet the Councilman. I tried to decline, but she insisted. So, both of our filthy selves went in.

We met the Councilman, his daughters, sons and a number of other relatives. The house was filled with people wearing suits, ties and evening gowns while we looked like we were wallowing in mud. Feeling out of place at an event filled with VIPs is rewarding.

When I turned 12 years old, I was hired by the morning newspaper. They were the competitors of the newspaper who fired me. I had taken over a troubled paper route, as a favor to the station manager. It was considered troubled because the customers were difficult and hard to collect money from. No problem, I was SuperDude! I was 12, rough and tough. I’d collect from them. This is where I learned a new word called challenging.
I had twice the number of deliveries than most of my peers, but made about the same money. One of my better customers, on the troubled route was a city transportation bus driver. The delivery of the paper was to his bus and not his house. Our two routes intersected at Van Levee Ave. and Atlanta Street. I was consistent enough to be able to meet up with him at a specific time every weekday. The bus driver was my best tipping customer.

I frequented a local White Tower restaurant (*greasy spoon*) on my paper route. The name is not to be confused with the White Castle name. It was a different chain. White Towers’ were open 24/7 and sold coffee, pop and burgers. They made a decent breakfast, too. I would stop there at about 0600 for my usual breakfast of a Coke, two burgers and an order of fries. Yep, I had to keep proving to myself I was still a teenager by eating the perfect, healthy breakfast.

I was collecting money on my paper route one Friday, when some kids approached me from the local high school. There were six of them, all around two years older. I had just left the bank, where I had converted loose change and bills into a $50 bill which I stuffed into my shirt pocket.

The guys jumped me and smacked me around. Even though they were African-American, it was a Detroit thing and not racially motivated. An African-American man jumped out of a city lighting truck and ran over to help me out. He chased the other kids away and asked me if I was okay.

I was crying, but grateful for the man’s presence. He said he would call the police for me. I told him, “Thanks, but I’m okay” and he went back to his truck. I knew I was fine when I saw the $50 bill still in my bloody shirt pocket. I wiped my cheeks and bleeding nose dry and continued home to change into some clean clothes and eat dinner. It was just another typical Detroit day.

In the morning, I would deliver my two paper routes and then go to school, to catch up on some much needed sleep. I was about 14 or 15 years old now and in beginning years of high school. The morning newspaper treated me much better and I stayed with them for a total of six years.

My *tough-guy friends* found it difficult to wake up in the morning to harass my boss. The drifting apart moved faster. I took on additional duties with the newspaper and became a jumper. Being around 15 years old, I thought it was a cool job. A jumper would ride on the running board of a pickup truck and put newspapers into distribution boxes, on the run.
I enjoyed my jumping job until I jumped off the side of the truck and ran smack into a parking meter. I broke it off its pole with my face. I lost my cool look in a quick sort of way. I should have kept the parking meter, but ending up like *Cool Hand Luke* was not in my plans.

Part of my route as a jumper covered a few of Detroit’s auto plants and supplier factories. A hot, 90 degree day found me delivering to a steel foundry with a temperature of 140 degrees on the inside. I went in with an armful of newspapers for the distribution box.

I looked around and saw workers wearing full coveralls with long sleeves to keep their arms protected from the sparks of splashing molten steel.

It was hot and I decided working in a steel mill was a bad life choice. I made a mental note to myself to finish school and try to improve. I wanted to work under better circumstances, but I bet those guys made a lot of money.

An interest I picked up was roller skating, using skates with side-by-side wheels. It was like having little Flintstone cars on each foot. There were plenty of roller rinks around the metropolitan area in the 1950s and 1960s.

Only amateurs used rental skates, so I had to had my own. I took a few skating dance lessons because the female teacher was attractive and a couple of years older than me. Learning to dance on roller skates meant her arms had to be around my waist and mine around hers many times. Roller skate dancing was smooth and romantic. I was 15 and discovered I liked dancing with a 17 year old, *older* woman. I was good at dancing, but only on wheels. It’s just like ice dancing except you fall on the floor instead of the ice.

I’d tie my skates together by the laces and hang them over my shoulder. This was the cool thing to do, if you were a guy. My skates had precision bearings and wheels, which were smoother and silent. They were great for dancing on wheels.

Girls would carry their skates in fancy hard cases with handles, similar to a suitcase. The hard sided case looked like something designed to hold an expensive piece of equipment, like a camera or microscope. The girls wore skating outfits, which included a short skirt/pant combination. They looked like they were wearing tennis outfits. Guys wore their usual tight pants.

When the trains weren’t traveling in the direction I needed, I did a lot of hitchhiking. It was cheaper than the bus. One day, while mooching a ride to go roller skating, a guy stopped to pick me up.
Most of us hitchhikers would have a light conversation with the driver to break the ice. The driver started asking me some strange questions about me giving or receiving oral sex with a man. This light conversation ended and I was now looking at my escape options.

I was 15, but felt in control. I wasn’t worried about a potential problem. As he slowed down for a red light, I grabbed my skates and leaped out and onto the street. I ran into an open drug store. I didn’t want to turn and peek, but I’m sure the car left in a hurry.

No police report was made. As far as I was concerned, nothing happened. I failed to mention it to anyone in the store. I did tell my buddies, though. I now owned the bragging rights to this adventure.

I walked around the store for a few minutes, gazing at stuff I would never buy and then left to continue my journey to the rink. I stuck out my thumb and hoped the next ride took me all the way to the rink without any hassle or stupid questions.

This was before I ever thought of being a Marine or a cop. All of what just happened was nothing more than an inconvenience, which was part of hitchhiking. It was a good night to go skating and I had fun.

The subject of gay people was taboo in the 1950s and through the 1970s. It still is, in some circles. This was another part of negative programming I received. Gay people were to be unliked as unnatural to the natural world. I have no idea why I brought that up, but to continue, I didn’t know if the driver of the car was gay or not.

None of that mattered. He crossed the line with me, though. Hey, I was a 15 year old kid. Anyone soliciting a kid was wrong, gay or straight.
Chapter 14 – Bar fights and waitstaff

“21-8, make\footnote{Make – Police term – In the cop world, to make something meant to head towards it.} 11701 Michelle on a child ped\footnote{Ped – Police term – Short for pedestrian.}. EMS is on the way.” The run was a vehicle accident involving a child pedestrian. It’s a run no one ever wanted to receive. As 21-8, we responded.

Upon arriving, I observed a young boy about eight, lying in the road, crying in severe pain. When a person is injured, we were taught to keep them as still as possible and not to move them. There is nothing we could do, but listen and wait for a responding EMS truck. It can seem like a lifetime.

The driver of the car was a young woman, a registered nurse. She was distraught, knowing there was nothing she could do, either. Even today, I still hear the child’s haunting voice. He was saying things like, “Oh my God!” This is horrible. Please help me! I want to die!”

He sounded unlike an eight year old child, but more like adult. I was sickened by his cries and even more sickened by the what the driver felt. I felt horrible for her and what she now had to live with.

EMS arrived at the scene and put the boy in the ambulance. We took the necessary information from the woman and tried to calm her. We offered her a ride home and told her we would also convey her car for her. She declined. We found the boy’s parents and drove them to the hospital.

I would have been subpoenaed if he had died and I never was. He has to be in his 40s now. The driver and the boy were two people I was thankful to never see or be involved with again.

I was once hit by a car while directing traffic in Downtown Detroit near the Windsor Tunnel. We were double lighting cars to clear up traffic after a rock concert. Double lighting meant when the light was green, we would wave traffic through. We would continue waving traffic through when the light made one change to red. We’d continue through the next green light. When the light again changed, we would stop the main traffic and let the cross traffic move, to help clear congestion.
The guy hit me because I held my hand up to keep him stopped, but the traffic light was green. He bumped me and knocked me down. In his feeble mind, the green light meant he could go. This guy figured a cop telling him to stop for the green light, was unacceptable. There was neither time nor resources allowing me to leave with an arrest. We had a primary traffic post to cover. It was our priority.

Since I wasn’t seriously injured, I got up and walked it off; the stupid thing to do. Out of frustration, I smashed out one of his headlights with my flashlight. I may have smacked the fender, too. I told the guy if I saw him again, I would ticket him for one headlight. I then said, “Get your ass out of my intersection!”

What I did was abusive. He had every right to file a complaint against me, but he didn’t. I’m sure he has long replaced his headlight, but I still suffer the pain of the injury he caused me. I hoped my whistle damaged his hearing, but the screaming kids in his car were much louder. I figured they did the job for me.

There was a lesson in all this. If you are ever advised by your mother to not play in the street, listen to her. I don’t care what age you are.

Later in the evening, we were moved into the 21st Precinct to assist them with a backlog of Police Runs. One of our police runs was to a bar on Dunkirk and McManus Rd. Someone was causing a disturbance. When we arrived, there was a man in his 30s. He was drunk and ornery and fighting up a storm.

Our occasional fights were an occupational hazard. Most of us were not looking for a fight. There was no extra pay for fighting. Our primary mission here was to restore order and keep the peace. Most of us liked to do it with minimum friction from the civilian world. This guy was strong and hard to control. We found out later he enjoyed the hobby of fighting. A radio call was given requesting backup units.

It took about six officers to do this, but we managed convince him to step outside. He complied and was politely handcuffed behind his back, while face down on the sidewalk and under control.

As luck would have it, he was placed in my car. It was my run and he was my prisoner, a fine southern gentleman.

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73 Ass - Asshole – A person’s buttocks or anus. Both can refer to an idiot or a fool. Take your pick. In this book, it refers to idiots, getting beat up. It’s sometimes paired with the word hole in order to describe a person as an asshole, as an accurate description. An ass is also another name for a donkey.
One thing has always bothered me. Listening to an officer refer to someone who was accused of killing three people and wounding five more, as a gentleman. I understand the reason for politeness and etiquette in court, but a gentleman?

The guy was calm and apologetic, once he was placed in my car. It was reassuring to me. He said he just wanted to get away from the cops. It always costed him financially, when he was involved with the police. He said he liked cops, but he was excited because of the fight. It was his hobby.

Because of his strength, I asked him if he worked out. He said he didn’t have time to. He told me he worked for a local appliance store, moving refrigerators onto trucks, by hand. He had no use for a dolly or hand truck.

He was a nice guy, with some strange hobbies, but the kind of guy you want on your side. I made it a point to ask him if his handcuffs were comfortable and not overtight for his wrists.

His reply was, “No sir, they’re just fine and I want to tell you again, how sorry I am for causing such a ruckus.” His sincerity forced me to like him.

Once at the station and everything was sorted out, the case was closed and the man was set free. The guy he started fighting with in the bar was a friend of his. There was no prosecution. A few tables were knocked over and some drinks were spilled. No one was hurt and the bar had no damage to any property. I was happy for the guy. He was set free. I wanted to drive him back to the bar, but he already caught the bus.

While in high school, a driver’s license was more important to me than studying. I wasn’t stupid or an underachiever, but I felt studying was for those who had a hard time remembering useless facts. When the time came to submit my driver’s license application, I did. I had a mental picture of the date in my head. It was not a useless fact.

My dad took me out often for training drives. The taste of freedom was tickling my interest. I think we did a lot of practice driving in the Gethsemane cemetery.

My logic told me we did my training in a cemetery because all the residents were dead and the chance of killing someone was slim. My dad was once the groundskeeper for this place and knew the roads, too.

On the day I turned 16 and received my official driver’s license, my dad let me drop him off at work and keep the car for the day. It was one of the greatest birthday celebrations I
ever had, which didn’t involve a party. I disliked parties, anyway. Most INTPs dislike crowds or being the center of attention.

After work, I picked my dad up. He seemed a little irritated about the 300 miles I added on his car’s odometer. I hadn’t learned how to disconnect the cable, yet. I told him I stayed in the metro area. It was the truth, but I spent 10 hours in the driver’s seat, doing it. I discovered I liked to drive.

I needed a better job, to help with the cost of keeping a clunker. There were parts to buy and the cost of gasoline and oil to consider. A high school friend, Fred Bianchi was working at his family’s new restaurant. He mentioned something about me working with him. His older brother, Sam ran the business.

Fred’s mom and dad, a great Italian couple, from the old country, named Rosa and Cosmo, worked there. They spoke English with heavy Italian accents. Cosmo was a thin man and in his senior years. He was also strong. He could carry a lot of weight. He told me he used to carry railroad ties for a living when he lived in Italy.

The younger males of the Bianchi family would tease me, at times. They were northern Italians. I’m Sicilian, which is considered a southern and we were looked at as undesirables. To me, it was a friendly rivalry between two areas. To some others, it was a hateful thing.

I held a number of positions while I worked at the restaurant. I washed dishes, pots and pans; I made pizza dough and sauce. I made Gnocchi and pasta, both from scratch. I also learned what it was like to clean a grease trap. It’s not considered a favorite. It’s hard to clean something that smells like puke. I’m glad the particular job was biannual and not weekly.

A job I always looked forward to when business was slow was cleaning the booths. Cosmo would approach me and order me to clean them. He’d tell me, in broken English to, “Cleana da boots.” I’m not making fun of his accent. I had a deep respect for this man.

Cosmo was a kind hearted person who would sometimes cook a steak or a veal parmesan dinner for me. These were not the normal foods working employees would be allowed to eat. Cosmo liked me, which got me special privileges from him. He didn’t realize it, but he could’ve gotten a lot more work out of me, if he wanted.
Every time he said *cleana da boots*, he would hand me a $20.00 bill and tell me to keep quiet about it. He did it often. Similar to Pavlov’s dogs, when I heard him speak those words, I knew there would be a financial reward and there was.

Today, if I heard Cosmo’s voice say in broken English, “*Cleana da boots,*” I’d look around and when I found him, I’d kneel down and clean the boots he was wearing with my shirt tails. This is what I thought of the man.

There were a few times the restaurant was short-handed on waitstaff. I would have to put on a clean shirt and wait on tables. I liked doing this because it was something different and I made more money in tips.

Italian restaurants are known for serving pasta dishes. Many of the orders consisted of pasta and a red tomato, meat sauce. I came out of the kitchen one day carrying a large oval serving tray with four meals and sides. I held the tray with one hand over my head. While walking across the dining room, a young boy came running out of the men’s room and ran into my legs.

I managed to keep from falling or dropping the tray, but the plates started to slide. I kept it balanced. Inertia helped some pasta with bright red meat sauce slide off one of the plates. What happened next horrified me. The large glop landed right on a customer’s lap. She was wearing a light colored skirt.

Sam heard the commotion and came running from the kitchen. Of course, he saw the effects of what happened and looked at me and said, “Get in the kitchen and punch out. You’re done!” Sam then spent the next few minutes getting the woman some cleaning supplies and taking care of the bill for her and her companion.

If I screwed up in front of a customer, Sam would fire me. This was a common routine of ours. When Sam came back into the kitchen the first thing he said was, “Stay in here until they (*the customers*) leave.”

He would then complain about having to cover their bill. This cost him around $30.00. He was angry, but I think more about having to pay for the food. Sam knew the business and the hazards. He was a fair man.

High school was somewhat normal. I was a clown, showoff and an insecure person. I took Typing and Home Economics classes to be surrounded by girls. I wasn’t gay and I wasn’t trying to *pick them up.* I felt more at ease around females. I think it had something to do with sensitivity. Both of those classes were a smart choice for me. I didn’t realize it until later in life.
1967 was terrible year in Detroit. It was the year many large cities were consumed by rioting because of the unfair treatment and targeting of certain classes of human beings. The 1960s and 1970s were turbulent years in the United States. They must be the *good ol’ days*. First the National Guard was called in for the Detroit riot, but as it spread, the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division deployed here. The *powers* wanted this riot stopped, but refused to call it a riot. They liked the word disturbance, better.

My normal hours for jumping from the newspaper truck were from 0300 to 0600. I would deliver my own paper route afterwards. Home delivery was halted during the week of the riots. This was due to a curfew set in place by the government.

Most mom and dads would want their young entrepreneurs to be safe and avoid walking the streets of Detroit during the riots, anyway. The morning newspaper was the Free Press and their trucks were all yellow. On Wednesday, another driver was shot at and the truck hit a few times. The driver used his intelligence and abandoned it. Yellow makes an easy target. I would have done the same.

The next day, my boss picked me up in a sedan. There was a shortage of trucks. I suppose they ran out of yellow tape to cover all the bullet holes. I rode in the sedan. Our trunk was open and over-filled with bundled newspapers.

While we’re driving through Detroit’s inner suburb of Hamtramck, which was near many of the auto plants, we were stopped by an *M-48 Patton Tank*. It must have appeared to them we were looters in a car with the goods in the open trunk. I’ve been stopped by the cops before, but this was a whole different ballgame. It just dawned on me I had some serious bragging rights now.

I was 16 years old and just got pulled over in a car by a military battle tank! How awesome! They pulled in front of us to block our route and stop our car. A Soldier came out of the turret and aimed a machine gun at us, making me a bit nervous. When the tank’s turret began turning towards our car, I started hoping it was to scare us and not fire the cannon.

We both got out with our hands raised high in the air. Once we exchanged pleasantries, everything was fine. I suspect our white privilege cut the red tape short. My boss and I gave them a couple of free newspapers and we were on our way. This show was over.

74 *M-48 Patton Tank* – Military term – This was the main battle tank of the Vietnam War era. A great guess would be it was named after *General George S. Patton*. Just because we ate crayons didn’t mean we were unintelligent. We ate the best, the Crayola™ brand.
But what a memory! I’ll never be as famous as the guy in Tiananmen Square who stopped a line of tanks in 1989, but who else can say they got pulled over by a frigging tank in the United States while in a car?

The Army command took over one of our public schools to use as a staging area and bivouac area. I had the opportunity to see Soldiers sleeping next to buildings in protective groups.

During the disturbance, my mother cooked up a bunch of fried chicken for the troops and it was my job to take it to the school for them.

I know for a fact my mom’s fried chicken was much better than the Army chow. I think she cooked up about 25 pieces. I’m sure it fed all of the 10,000 troops. Whoever got the food my mom cooked, appreciated it. I hope it was eaten by the guys I handed it to instead of some non-working, Commissioned Officers. Worse yet, a warrant officer could have eaten it. I didn’t know what a warrant officer was yet. After becoming a veteran, I still don’t know what a warrant officer is. It’s the way they want it.

After about a week, the city began returning to normal, for the privileged. The minorities caught up in the rioting and destruction went back to their normal lives, but it was different.

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75 Warrant Officer – Military term – Nobody seems to know what a warrant officer is or what they do. They are lower in rank than any other Commissioned Officer, but higher than any enlisted ranks. They are in all branches of service, I think. Some of them fly helicopters.
I was assigned to a two man Tactical unit when we received a run to assist other units looking for a lost boy. This was in the mid-1980s. Our power shift was 1900 to 0300, the busiest police hours of the day.

A dad and his five year old son were taking a night stroll along the Rosé River when he lost sight of the boy. It was around 2200 hours. After looking for a while with negative results, he called the police. We arrived to search about an hour after the boy went missing.

Optimistic feelings failed to exist among us. A few of us were searching the riverbank when the boy was discovered, face down in the water. He was entangled in some branches. CJ pulled him out. I leaned over and grabbed the boy from him and laid him on the bank. He was long dead with no chance for revival.

I sent one of our fellow crews up to the top of the hill make sure the father couldn’t witness any of this. It failed to work and the dad spotted us. His scream was loud and shrill. He almost sounded feminine. To tell you how emotional I became at his discovery would be difficult for me. I felt horrible and helpless, knowing there was nothing I could do. No parent should ever have to see their child, dead.

We called the Homicide Bureau and a detective came out to do whatever it is they do. At one point the dic was looking at the body. When he wanted to turn the boy’s body over, the dic used his foot.

His action upset me. I just saw the father of the boy discover his son had died. My emotions were running high. I said something to the dic about having some respect. In a typical, cynical response, the dic said to me, “What’s the problem? The kid’s dead anyway.” There’s the word, again; dic.

I was in my mid-30s and found myself playing with model rockets, planes and kites. Denny and I bought a premade model airplane with servos and a controller unit. The body of the plane was a thick Styrofoam-like material. The wing was a separate piece and made of the same material. We paid $150 for this setup. Pricewise, we spent $75 a minute to fly the model. It was above what we wanted to spend for amusement.
Model rockets were fun, but expensive to fly, so we decided a kite would be much cheaper. We bought wood and the some polyethylene sheeting. I wanted to build a 13 foot delta wing kite with a keel. Wing nuts and bolts were used to make it collapsible.

The three foot model was a very stable kite, so we figured enlarging it to 13 feet would be about the same and it was close.

Denny and I decided to test the kite using a homemade reel with 1,000 yards of 100 pound test monofilament fishing line. It was strong enough and we managed to get the kite airborne. The breeze carried the kite up, which was hard to see with its clear plastic wing. We brought it back down and placed a three by five foot American flag on the backside of it and flew it again.

The kite was at an altitude of around 1,000 feet and it was close to being invisible to the naked eye. It was a slow process to bring this monster back down to Earth, but we started to reel it in.

The wind changed and decided to make things challenging. The force of the wind on the kite caused it to drag us through a cornfield. The force was strong and the cornstalks we were dragged through were painful. We tried to wrap the line around a wooden fence post, but the line snapped. The kite started circling on a slow descent, moving with the prevailing winds.

Denny and I jumped into the car and started to drive in the direction of the circling kite. We continue in the same direction as it neared the horizon and out of site. While looking for it we crossed over the fishing line. We parked, got out and followed the line across a farm. We found the kite lying on top of a small apple tree, undamaged. We removed, folded and took it home. We abandoned the line out of pure laziness.

After the 1967 Detroit Riots Disturbance, I approached my parents with an issue I had discovered earlier. Something kept popping out of the side of my right knee cap. It would happen when I bent my knee. It was a bit of torn cartilage and nothing serious. It wasn’t painful, only annoying.

The doctor told me I had a common injury. I was playing baseball with some kids in a local school yard. At the inning change, I came trotting in from left field and tripped over third base, which may have been a large rock or something similar. We were in the poorer part of town, remember? We played using baseballs, long stripped of their leather covering and covered with black tape to keep the string from unraveling. When I fell, I
felt something odd in my knee. I realized I was still alive and I ignored it in typical teenage fashion.

When I brought it up to my mom, I found myself placed in a small community hospital, called Meat Carver’s General. They did a great job with the damage.

The surgeon was an older, nice man. Once he completed his job, he told me everything went fine. He said once healed, I’d be able to continue my reckless ways of life. I remember him stating the injury would give me trouble later in life.

It’s been many years since the surgery and for the most part, my physical life had been normal, regarding the knee. Now I’m a bit older, I realize my knee has been under-paid for years. It quits working on me at the most unexpected times. My knee appeared to be unionized.

He was a great doctor and told me the truth. I like it when I’m told truthful facts. Empaths and INTPs should never be deceived. They find it difficult to place trust in the deceiver again.

Today the same surgery is done on an outpatient basis, which gets a person up and running, within a day or two. When I had my knee surgery, I was on crutches for six weeks and limped for four more. What a joy for a 16 year old male. Technology and human evolution are wonderful things.

1968 was a good year for everyone, even some of the average Detroiter. The Detroit Tigers won the Worlds Series. The privileged were thrilled.

Some of the local skid row\(^76\) people were selling parking spaces on vacant lots. Detroit’s skid row was near the old Tiger Stadium. They had no ownership or control over the land on those lots. They just made some extra money telling people to leave their cars there. The property owners (many, suburbanite slum lords) stayed away during a World Series game, unless they had game tickets.

Later in life as a cop, I’d check to see if those selling parking spots possessed a vendor’s license. I went with my intuition when I found someone unlicensed. If they lacked

\(^{76}\) **Skid row** – This is an actual area of Los Angeles, CA which has one of the largest populations of homeless people in the USA. The word is used to depict where the poor and homeless people hang out together. Their locations are near a city’s downtown area.

86
criminal intention, I’d let them go. This was a hard decision to make at times. It took a skillful and watchful eye to see the scammers and con artists.

Many neighborhood folks, living around the ballpark were trying to capitalize and make an extra buck to put food on the table. These good and kind hearted people would keep an eye on your car and allow no one to disturb it. When someone had only thoughtfulness and kindness in their heart, I decided the right thing to do would be to look away.

1968 saw me enter my final year of high school. I was now top-dog, a senior. It was during my Junior year in the 11th grade, we placed our purchase orders for graduation class rings. My ring cost $50.00. There were three stones to choose from, dark red, dark blue and dark green.

The INTP in me had to be different, so I ordered it with my birthstone, an Aquamarine gem. There was no extra charge for it. I suspect it was glass anyway, but it sure was pretty. All the girls wanted to wear my high school ring, since it was different than everyone else’s.

It was my last free summer and I headed to Ontario, Canada to a friend’s cottage located on the north shore of Lake Eire. I wasn’t escaping the draft. I was going for the boating and swimming amusement. I was having a great time in the water until my class ring slipped off. I must have looked for it for hours. Actually, it was about a minute and I gave up the search. I was here to have fun in the sun and I did. The importance of the ring was minimal.

My last year of high school seemed typical. My parents let me order another graduation ring. It was the same as my previous ring, but now the price went up $15.00 to $65.00 because the price of gold fluctuates. It always seemed to fluctuate up, throughout entire life, never down. Why do they use the word fluctuate? The ring was the last physical item my parents ever bought for me and it’s now a special treasure.

I failed to submit the required term paper. A young nun with the name of Sister Lucy gave me a book to read. She said I had to complete a book report on it to graduate. The book was The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger. She was a nice nun and liked me.

I’m a little embarrassed to say, but it was the first real book I read, cover to cover. It was an awesome book. I read it to keep from failing. Reading was painful and hard on my brain. Headaches were there.
She was a fine person and if she stuck with the nunnery, or whatever it’s called, I know she was successful. She was a good teacher. I heard a rumor she left the convent and if it’s true, I hope she had a rewarding life, with lots of love and a few kids.

I had double vision throughout my grade school and high school years, causing me my reading problems. The brain adjusted for this, but it put extra strain on the eyes. It caused headaches and eye aches. Reading was out of the question.

A prism was used as a tool to help strengthen my eye muscle,. I was in the second grade. There was the discussion of surgery, in the future.

I used the prism for a while and quit. I told my mom it was wasting my time and wasn’t working. I didn’t want to tell her the truth. The prism put a strain on the controlling eye muscle and I was tired of using it. I was told the tool was to exercise the eye muscle and strengthen it. They didn’t know my eye was in the union.

She was grateful I was no longer going to cost her any money. Both she and I were grateful for me refusing eye surgery. The doctor said he would have to remove my right eye from the socket to work on the muscle. I would have to be awake during this procedure to follow certain instructions. As a youngster, I still had enough sense to know my left eyeball seeing my right eyeball without using a mirror, was not acceptable.

It was the Marine Corps where I explained to the Navy eye doctor what I’d been through with my eyes. They tried a different (cheaper?) approach. They introduced me to my new and ugly military glasses.

No more headaches, tired eyes, or blurry vision, thanks to a couple of glass lenses. The lenses were also prisms, but designed to relax my eyes instead of exercising them.

I’ve been wearing them day and night for about 50 years. They’re part of me and I like them. I even wore them to sleep a couple of times. Alcohol\(^\text{77}\) may have been involved and I recommend you refrain from sleeping with your glasses on. They always seem to be found under the bed and bent out of shape, in the morning.

In March of my senior year, I turned 18, but I still felt like a kid. I went down to the Marine Corps recruiting station and joined the USMC on the delayed entry program. I wanted to feel like a man. I was sworn in and attached to the USMC as a non-trained

\(^{77}\text{Alcohol} – A staple drink in the Marine Corps and the Police Department. I would imagine it is a staple of every stressful job and branch of the service.
reservist while still a high school student. Boot camp\textsuperscript{78} started in July of the same year. I hung out at the Marine recruiters often. I was a wannabee.

My high school graduation was rather unique considering I spent the entire ceremony in a nun’s bed. The sad part was my illness. I had some form of flu and it put me down hard, I was still happy to get my high school diploma.

With about a month of free time left before I began my three year tour\textsuperscript{79} of the Marine Corps, I decided to have some fun and got drunk for the first time. I thought it was fun, but the next day was awful. It was the last time I ever drank blackberry brandy.

In the 1960s, the military powers, made an enlistment sound like a fun and casual event. They even dubbed it a tour. “We’re going to take you on a tour, giving you the opportunity to watch your friend’s get killed with high quality and powerful military weapons.” The draft existed, but they still wanted us to feel like we were going on a sport fishing expedition.

July 9 rolled around and a couple of friends drove me to AFEES,\textsuperscript{80} located at Historic Fort Wayne in Detroit to begin my sentence tour of duty. My first military experience was standing in line for a physical exam in my underwear. The guy in front of me was wearing pink panties with lacy edges. It appeared he didn’t want to be in the military. My first day told me I was in for some interesting times and adventures.

\textsuperscript{78} Boot camp – Military term – Marine basic training. It’s where the United States Marine Corps brainwashed a person to be a combat ready, expendable human war machine, all in the name of National Security.

\textsuperscript{79} Tour – Military term – The name the government gave your sentence to make it sound more appealing.

\textsuperscript{80} AFEES - An acronym for Armed Forces Entrance and Examination Station.
The sun had set about an hour earlier on the eastside of Detroit. The District police radio broke the silence with a loud and excited voice, “Radio, 21-10 is under fire, McComb and Dunkirk, Officer in Trouble.” The dispatcher repeated all the information for clarity. Scout cars were responding, including my crew.

We arrived in the area and found cover. I heard rifle shots being fired. The shooter’s exact location was a mystery to us, but the shots were coming from the opposite side of Dunkirk. We were in a high crime area of the city.

At one point, I heard a barrage of gunfire open up behind me. After the barrage, all shooting stopped. The only thing behind me was a motorcycle clubhouse, a two story brick structure without windows. It was built with security in mind. The second story roof had concertina razor wire around the outer perimeter. They had an outside yard area for their club with a 12 foot tall fence around it and razor wire at the top.

Bikers were disliked by the average person in the 20th Century. These guys had their bad habits, but most of the local cops got along with them. You could say there was a good rapport between us. What I believed happened was, some of the bikers got on the roof of their own building and shot back at the thugs. It was my speculation, but an accurate one.

I went to the biker’s front, steel door and banged on it. The door had a little sliding eye port latch which opened from the inside. The eye port slid open, revealing a couple of eyeballs. I heard a voice say, “What do you want? You gotta a warrant?” I said, “No, I came to say thank you.” Nothing else was said and the sliding eye port door slammed shut.

“I tried.” I thought to myself. I turned and started to walk away when the eye port slid open. A voice on the other side said, “You’re welcome.” The port door slammed shut. It was another great day in the neighborhood and the mean streets of Detroit. I smiled, while walking away.

There is one thing I noticed all through my life. Even dressed in a police uniform and being the man, people appearing to be undesirable would approach and talk to me. The

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81 The Man – A term used to describe someone of authority and the authority. A cop was considered the man who worked for the man.
undesirables I’m talking about were the type of people you’d see on skid row. The cops I worked with taught me they were called bums, *Jakey Bums*. Why Jakey? I don’t know.

Fellow officers would ask me, “Why do all the Jakes come up and put their arms around your shoulder? You draw them to you, like a magnet.” My thoughts were, “Maybe they like me because I avoid pushing them around with authority, like you,” but instead, I said nothing.

Racism is a two-way street. I remember one summer, a little boy, about 4 or 5 years old was on the sidewalk, watching us, while we were cruising by on patrol. Kids liked waving to police cars and fire trucks. I still wasn’t licensed to drive a fire truck.

As we rode by, I waved at the kid, first. He waved back and said, while smiling, “*Phuck* you, white police!” Yes, the kid was an African-American, but a child coming up with such a statement is not normal. He had to be coached or brainwashed by a racist, older than him.

I attribute it to being similar, but opposite of white privilege. Consider a group of people who are lied to and held back, on a consistent basis. How can anyone in the group trust another group who did everything in their power to keep them down? The term Native Americans comes to mind.

Other parts of the world have the same issues, but between different races or cultures. It’s a weird habit humans have. I’m no expert. I only know my little corner of this round world.

Our white forefathers came to this country and conquered it. “If thou canst be like us, then thou shall be eliminated.” One other thought. Christopher Columbus was not a hero. He could be described better, as an *asshole*.

*We, the people* invaded the lands which became the United States of America and Canada. We eradicated (*nice way of saying murdered*) about 140 million indigenous natives, to achieve the goal of taking over this part of the world, to escape our persecutions, of the time.

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82 *Jakes or Jakey Bums* – A slang and degrading term identifying undesirable people. They are homeless and desolate people in many cases.

83 *Phuck* – Military, Police & Civilian term – This is the spelling used anywhere the term is needed for this book. I hope the spelling is a bit more acceptable than the actual word, but it is necessary in some areas of this book.
The native people were forced to conform to the white man standards (white privileged?). I’ve seen stupid movies in the past containing statements like, “Those damn savages.”84 Similar statements and others were directed towards Native Americans or Canadians. Unless you were white, you were a savage.

Many folks (non-natives) may dispute this. I’m sure none this information was put into any of the approved and authorized (privileged) history books in the U.S. or Canada. I have said it before.

I too, took advantage of what my ancestors stole from the Natives. I wouldn’t have a land to live in, if I had to leave. I have no country to claim as mine. I am of mixed nationalities. A technicality could have me deported to the sun. Again, I have no solutions to any of this. If I did, I’d be famous.

It was a quiet ride to Metro Airport for my flight to Los Angeles. I said goodbye to my buddies and checked in. I met a couple of other guys with the same destination. As young guys, going into the unknown, we stuck together. How exciting! The flight was five hours long and drinks were available.

I sipped on a rum and Coke while we flew towards the sunset. The long flight gave me a lot of time to stare out the window and daydream. The alcohol caused me to suffer a little homesickness, with my mind drifting to the girlfriend I left behind. I was sad for a little while, but soon new things would take the spotlight for me.

I was feeling pretty mellow thanks to a good flight and the drinks, which were paid for by either the airline or the flight crew. I would think the flight crew took care of the bills to give us our last hurrah.

We got off the plane at LA International and were standing around when someone noticed a Marine in a dress uniform. He was wearing what was called, modified dress blues, I later learned. The uniform was rather sharp looking. He wore a white barracks cover, a beige, open collar and short sleeve shirt. He had a lot of stripes on his sleeve. I would learn later he was a Gunnery Sergeant. He also had a few rows of battle ribbons.

84 Savages – A term the white man used to describe anyone unlike himself. Everyone else was uncivilized according to the privileged. Native Americans, Africans and any ingenious people were considered savages.

85 Cover – Military & Police term – A cap or hat in the Marine Corps is referred to as a cover. It’s used in the military and the police world to depict a safe area from immediate danger.
The Gunny wore the dress blues trousers with the red blood stripe. The beige web belt he had on was clean and the brass buckle looked like it was made of gold. He also had on the shiniest shoes I have ever seen made from leather. If part of their teaching is by example, then this guy was a good teacher, but intimidating.

One of the guys sharing the flight with me approached him and asked if we were to meet him. He came over to our group and asked if we were there to join the Marine Corps. One of the guys said, “Yeah, Sarge.”

It was like throwing a light switch. The gunny snapped to attention and started barking orders to line up and shut up. He also corrected the young man who addressed him as Sarge.

I remember him addressing the future recruit as a Beetle Bailey, motherphucker. We were in a public area of LA International, but it didn’t matter. Our lives were changing. “Ladies and Gentlemen, let the games begin,” was my thought.

Beetle Bailey was later redubbed Gomer and was now known and recognized by all Drill Instructors for the rest of boot camp. Learning this was my wakeup call to keep my mouth shut. I didn’t want to draw attention to myself, yet.

The Gunny had us march in single file. Our marching consisted of us following a Marine corporal, asshole to belly button. This was a common term in the Marine Corps for a group marching together in a tight formation. You were pretty much squashed. I imagine it was quite comical to watch.

A few Drill Instructors met us at 2300. The Drill Instructors boarded our bus, smiled, shook our hands and thanked us for showing up. They were friendly and welcomed us aboard sunny, MCRD, San Diego, California. I don’t know why. It’s dark at 2300. After a short question and answer period, the Drill Instructors requested we step outside and stand on the yellow foot prints.

The previous paragraph might be a little fuzzy in my memory. I told it the best way I remembered it.

Drill Instructors can scream and holler for what seem like hours and still have strong voices. I wondered if any of them sang as professionals. Sometimes, they were close enough to spray on your face, while screaming, but no complaints were ever filed.

They waved their arms around a lot, displaying knife hands. To form a knife hand, flatten your hand with your fingers close together, similar to a karate chop.
Bend your arm about 45 degrees at the elbow and wave the hand in front of someone. They knife hand is usually pointed at a face or chest and is meant to be an intimidating gesture. When a Drill Instructor poked us in the chest a couple of times with a knife hand, it was intimidating. It works!

There were a lot of older Italians in my neighborhood. They used the knife hand. If one of us rode our bicycle over their lawn or kicked one of their bocce balls during a game, it disturbed them. They’d chase us, displaying the knife hand and hollering in Italian. They were still old country. Us youngsters were becoming Americanized ornery city kids. It was impossible to catch us on our bikes which made me grateful.

After a while on the yellow foot prints, we were chased inside and forced to stand on a stairway, all night long. The purpose for standing there was to take up time and for us to memorize our 11 General Orders. I was beginning to resent the few drinks I had on the flight and for joining the Marine Corps. I wanted to sleep, but the preset program had a different agenda.

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^General Orders – Military term – Listed are the 11 General Orders of the United States Marine Corps. They describe the duties of a marine sentry (guard duty).

1. To take charge of this post and all government property in view.
2. To walk my post in a military manner, keeping always on the alert, and observing everything that takes place within sight or hearing.
3. To report all violations of orders I am instructed to enforce.
4. To repeat all calls from posts more distant from the guard house than my own.
5. To quit my post only when properly relieved.
6. To receive, obey and pass on to the sentry who relieves me, all orders from the Commanding Officer, Officer of the Day, Officers, and Non-Commissioned Officers of the guard only.
7. To talk to no one except in the line of duty.
8. To give the alarm in case of fire or disorder.
9. To call the Corporal of the Guard in any case not covered by instructions.
10. To salute all officers and all colors and standards not cased.
11. To be especially watchful at night, and, during the time for challenging, to challenge all persons on or near my post and to allow no one to pass without proper authority.
I think it was about four hours later when I had the General Orders memorized and we were ordered off the stairs. We were given our first Marine Corps haircuts. You know, “A little off the top, please.”

Shaving, while four Drill Instructors were screaming in my face was difficult. I failed to insert a blade in my razor, out of pure fear. My baby-face passed the first shaving inspection. Whew! It was good to be my age.

We were issued uniforms and herded into a room to pack our civilian possessions for shipping home. We were told to call and let our parents know we made it to MCRD.

This was done by reading from a wall placard. It dictated what to say. It was a few words and similar to this, “I have arrived safely at San Diego. Please do not send any food or bulky items. I will contact you in 7 to 10 days via postcard with my new mailing address. Thank you for your support. Goodbye for now.” We then had to hang up without additional comments. There was to be no small talk. It appeared my lifestyle was beginning to change.

One of the Drill Instructors told us that any contraband was to be disposed of it in a particular trash container. This included knives, guns, drugs and anything else deemed illegal. They didn’t care what you threw in there, but the warning was, “Don’t get caught with any pogey bait or illegal items in the future. A high price will be paid.

They let us get a little sleep as the sun began to rise. We slept for an hour or two, which was enough for a recharge. The awakening was rude and loud. Of course, the next three months would be nothing but rude and loud. The Navy Chaplain spoke with a mild tone. He was nice, but we only saw him once a week.
Chapter 17 – The projects, smiles, Marines, smiles & pain

We began an evening of routine patrol\textsuperscript{87} on the eastside when my partner, John Stockton spotted a stolen car near the Larkside Housing Projects. The projects were similar to apartment buildings, but for the poor. They had cement floors and walls. They looked more like prisons. I imagined those living there, felt like it.

During my young days, most of those poor around me were African-American. I wondered why many of them were poor. My logic stated it shouldn’t have been so, but it was. We were poor, but our future days seemed brighter than theirs. I couldn’t figure out why, until I learned what white privilege was. Then it became clear.

The projects appeared to be put together by a higher class of people to herd the poorer class into a specific neighborhood which was away from the privileged. In the 1950s and 1960s there were a few poor white people living in the projects, but it changed. The project residents changed to a minority community in the 1970s and beyond. Today, the projects appear to be much smaller and improved, but somehow, I doubt it. I’m sure they put the minorities in another poor community, away from their view.

The projects were a favorite place for thugs to get away from the police. Living there was not mandatory for an escape. The crook had no trouble finding someone to hide them from us, the man. It was almost like playing hide and seek.

Our stolen car turned into the project residential area. The driver bailed out to elude us. The thief’s job was to steal a car and then do whatever it is they were planning to do. Since I was jumping, I bailed out to chase him. A cop should know his exact location at all times for safety reasons.

I was running through the projects with no idea of where I was. There are no named streets in the project complex, just individual building numbers. The young guy I was chasing kept running. He did his job and I did mine. There was no one outside he could find to help hide him.

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\textsuperscript{87} Routine Patrol – Police term – It was the professional description of a police scout car patrolling the streets. It meant you were driving around, doing nothing and waiting for something to happen. It’s what it appeared to be like for the regular civilian population. In reality, officers were using their trained eyes and ears, watching and listening for anything unusual.
He ran out of breath and gave up. I grabbed him and called for backup. The dispatcher asked, “Your location, please?” My exact location was a mystery to me. All I knew was I was in the middle of the projects. I was near a main street and spotted about six officers on foot looking for me and my prisoner. I shined my flashlight towards them to get their attention. Once I had it, they all ran towards me in a flank-like line.

I wish I had the ability to film this in slow motion, but this was the BC era. As the officers were running towards us, they ran through some hedges which were about a foot high.

What the officers failed to see was the wire running through the hedges. To me, it was a hilarious site, seeing six police officers trip, falling face first, at the exact same time. It looked like something that should be in a *Keystone Cops* movie.

Both my prisoner and I started laughing. He was my felony arrest, but we became friends of humor. Handcuffing him would have ruined the moment.

For a car thief, he was a alright. He knew he was going with me and decided cooperation was the best option. I felt a trust between us. We both knew if he ran, I had a good running ability. My 15 comrades were just itching for something to happen.

I knew when and how to violate the rules without getting myself hurt or into trouble. As a professional, I knew how to *skate*.* This particular car thief was one of my favorite felons. The rest of the Detroit night was surrounded by positive energy.

We *boots* were introduced to the Marine Drill Instructors who would have the pleasure of training us for the next 12 weeks. The head Drill Instructor was a Gunnery Sergeant called the Platoon Commander. We also had two Staff Sergeants.

We were led to our new Quonset huts and issued our *racks*, towels, washcloths and laundry bags. They were either tied to or hung at the foot of the rack. Everyone’s rack had to look the same. The Marine Corps was *anal* about uniformity.

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*Keystone Cops* – These guys were from the old silent comedy movies about bungling, incompetent cops back in the teen years of the 20th Century.

*Skate* – Military term – In the Marine Corps, this was a term used for goofing off and hiding.

We were issued foot lockers to store any personal gear like shaving equipment, skivvies, letter writing material and rifle cleaning equipment, which is all the personal gear we were allowed to possess. Hiding the crackers I took from the mess hall and shoved into my pocket was a challenge.

If you ever wondered why it’s referred to as a mess hall, I discovered it was the perfect name, once I ate in one. Sometimes, the government used sense in naming things, but only sometimes.

The few Air Force bases I’ve had the opportunity to visit always had the best food. If the Airmen weren’t part of a flight crew (flyboys), they were gourmet chefs. It was common knowledge in the armed forces. I bet they still have great food today.

MCRD was next to San Diego’s noisy International Airport. When an airliner took off, they were loud. PSA was the airline flying a lot of jets out of San Diego. One of our grinders was alongside the airport. When a jet took off with a loud roar, it was a favorite time for Drill Instructors to holler out marching commands.

The sound of jet turbine engines would drown out the verbal commands of a Drill Instructor. We looked like a herd of cattle instead of a platoon of Marines.

“What was the point of this?” I thought to myself. “What did it teach and what could I learn?” I suppose this was to teach us what chaos would be like if there were loud noises like bombs and explosions around us. We’d be unable to hear any commands and would be scrambling around in panic. We needed to know this? Some things seemed to be senseless. It seems the common sense factor was missing in a few areas, where needed. It might have been helpful.

One guy in my boot camp platoon was from Saskatchewan, Canada. He was a Native Canadian (they’re called Indians, too). His name was Lawrence Bullfields. Many Canadians served in the U.S. Armed Forces, at the time. The political powers of Canada stayed clear of the Vietnam issue. Many Canadians enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces

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91 **Anal** – In actuality, this word refers to the anus. In this book it is used to refer to a person who is overly-focused on a particular issue.

92 **Mess** – Military term – A place to eat; a military kitchen facility.

93 **Grinder** – Military term – Hard surface parade deck used for marching and drill training. There must be a meaning for the word Grinder, but I don’t know it. No one else seems to know, either.
were either firm believers in the war or they were the few of those in the human race who liked to kill people for sport.

The Drill Instructors decided to pick on Bullfields because he was a tall and lanky Canadian. The first thing they did was change his name to Private Bullshit. “How clever,” I thought to myself. I think the poor guy was sorry he left Canada to join the American military.

Washing clothes and raking the grass were two Marine Corps jobs I thought were strange. In boot camp, there were no washing machines. We took our dirty utilities, underwear and socks outdoors to a row of cement sinks. I understood the necessity of this, having to go into the field and combat.

Soap and a scrub brush were used to wash our clothes. I think it was a hot enough climate, where wet clothes would dry outdoors after the rinse.

To press our utilities, we would lay them flat on the rack springs and then lay the mattress on top of them. Instead of nice creases, you had these little rectangles on your pants and shirt from the rack springs. Like this all mattered. We were going to roll in the dirt the next day in training and start the cleaning process all over again.

We learned to sew for emergency repairs. The first thing I did was cut off all buttons on my utility uniforms and sew them to my pocket flaps. Now I would never get caught with an unbuttoned pocket. The typical way to notify someone in the military their pocket was unbuttoned was to tear off the flap.

Raking of the grass was interesting. It was hilarious and senseless. Due to the Southern California climate, there was no grass growing around our Quonset huts. We used grass rakes to rake straight lines in plain dirt. What this looked like was a miniature plowed farm. The raked dirt was called grass. If we had those toy plastic Army Soldiers, our lawns were the perfect place for a miniature battlefield.

If a Drill Instructor spotted a footprint on the grass, get out of his way! It was like spitting on his chest. Anytime an individual messed up, 80 men had to be punished. Stepping on the grass in the Marine Corps was a mortal sin. Punishment was a large number of pushups, running or whatever. You learned to keep off the grass. In the Marine Corps, everyone had to stay off everyone’s lawns even though the grass was nonexistent. You now you know the significance and importance of Marine Corps grass.
Chapter 18 – Liz and the Rolling Stones, live

Sometimes low seniority cops are needed for special details, such as a rock concerts, ball games and special events in the downtown area. A special detail is the civilian world’s paramilitary term for a working party, but in many cases, the details were fun.

One night I was assigned to work a concert downtown at Cobo Hall. The Rolling Stones along with their opening acts were playing. I was excited to be assigned to this event until I learned my assignment placed me on a parapet encircling the outer arena. The Rolling Stones would have to wait, if they wanted me to watch their show as a fan.

While I was on my post, a crowd frenzy for free entry started. There were people pushing and shoving and the rowdiness started to get out of hand. People tend to get caught up in the excitement and end up doing things outside their normal actions. It’s a crowd syndrome, called mob psychology or crowd psychology. Animals do it, too. In the animal kingdom, it’s called a stampede.

The problem is if people start pushing towards the doors those closest will be crushed and maybe killed. I wasn’t close to the doors, but I was in the middle of this crowd. I got knocked down and some guy was guy sitting on my stomach while choking me. This was for real and I was scared. I was a rook and I had no partner nor was another cop nearby. There never was a cop around when you needed one.

I was trained as a Marine, but this guy had the jump on me. I had to remain conscious, but it was hard to breathe and the loss meant the one hand on my gun would release.

While this was going on, a small woman, wearing what looked like a dark green gas station attendant’s coveralls leaped at the man on top of me, knocking him off and causing him to release the choke hold. I got up and joined her to subdue the guy on the
ground. I was confused when she pulled out a pair of handcuffs and cuffed him. This tiny woman just saved my life.

I was still trying to ascertain the situation which just took seconds to happen. My fear was the crowd going crazy, but it dissipated instead, as other coppers showed up. The gas station lady took charge of the scene, while I took control of the prisoner, still in a confused state.

The gas station lady was African-American. The guy on my chest was white. It was an important observation for my young self. My privileged self was a little surprised by her actions. I was now questioning my past programming.

After we got to a police station, we advised the desk sergeant we were charging our arrest with attempted murder. I met my savior, Liz Richelle, for the first time. Liz told me she was a DPR. The letters stood for Detroit Police Reservist. Women were starting to get into the man’s world back then. This took place before the DPR was issued a more police-like uniform.

The DPRs were non-paid civilian volunteers who wanted to do their part in the world of crime. I was grateful for Liz. She just saved my life. After all of my paperwork was completed, I hugged all 98 pounds of her and we went our separate ways. I never saw her again and was sorry. Liz got me thinking in a different and positive direction.

There was a draftee who did not want to stay in boot camp. He instead found a stupid way of getting discharged. 97 When it was time to teach us the proper way to salute, most of us got a chuckle out of this idiot. On the heel saluting hand was a tattoo of a Nazi swastika.

The dumbass thought the Drill Instructors would notice the swastika and give him a discharge when it was time to teach us to salute. I do know the delay was minimal in the harassment towards him.

He was removed from our platoon. They may have executed him or maybe cut his hand off and then sent him home with an undesirable and medical discharge. His swastika tattoo sure got him the attention he deserved. It may have gotten him more than he wished for.

97 Discharge or EAS – Military term – End of Active Service. I suppose saying EAS was shorter than the one word we used called, discharged, even with its 10 letters.
It’s a good thing he wasn’t in the animal kingdom where there are no stupid animals. They were yesterday’s dinner for a smarter animal.

We were taught how to make a tight rack. A quarter was used to test it for tightness. Using a three inch thick mattress, there was a fine line between tight and too tight. The mattress could fold lengthwise with an overabundance of tension. I thought to myself, “This is an important skill which would be useful in a firefight\textsuperscript{98} with the Viet Cong\textsuperscript{99} or the NVA.\textsuperscript{100}"

Although I swore to myself I would avoid drawing attention to me, one of my Staff Sergeants spotted me wearing my high school ring. The aquamarine must have caught his eye. When we first arrived, we were discouraged from wearing jewelry during the rigorous training.

The \textit{powers in charge}, allowed the married guys to wear their wedding rings. I figured I could wear my high school ring. Drill Instructor Sanchez made me remove the ring and hand it to him. He then put it on his finger and wore it for our entire boot camp session. I suppose we were now going steady.

My original thought was the Drill Instructors were \textit{assholes}. I later learned their mission was to turn a bunch of civilians into an efficient fighting force of U.S. Marines. The Drill Instructors had a minimal amount of time to do this. I was surprised at the speed and how much I could learn, under extreme stress and pressure.

I still maintain a deep respect for those men and women of my U.S. Marine Corps and any other Armed Services branch who become hard working and honest Drill Instructors. There was no better breed. As a \textit{boot}, I hated them, though.

In the late 1960s, there were rumors of military training mistreatment. I never saw what I considered abuse. I was treated fair, although there were a couple of questionable events. The training was good for me and I’m still breathing, 50 years later.

A couple of guys may have gotten punched or slapped around, but it was for something they deserved. To be struck by a Drill Instructor meant you had to screw up in a royal

\textsuperscript{98} \textbf{Firefight} – Military term – A battle, using firearms between two enemy people or units.

\textsuperscript{99} \textbf{Viet Cong} – A political organization in South Vietnam also called the National Liberation Front.

\textsuperscript{100} \textbf{North Vietnamese Army} – Another name for the People’s Army of Vietnam.
manner. I am against all forms of brutality, but in rare cases a kick from a mule is necessity and appreciated by the general population of humans.

What I gleaned from the training was the Drill Instructors were dedicated to their positions. I believe they wanted us to learn all we could to help save our lives. Remember, this was the peak of the Vietnam War; 58,000 U.S. casualties. Many of the Drill Instructors were Vietnam combat veterans. They knew what it was all about.

After the shock of boot camp wore off, we started to get a little time to chit-chat amongst ourselves. The short amount of free time gave me the opportunity to feel homesick.

There was another boot\textsuperscript{101} in my platoon. He was a big and stocky African-American man. He was drafted and preferred to be somewhere else. He said they took guys like him, right out of the Army draft line, at the induction center. He was #5 in line. Every 5\textsuperscript{th} person in line was pulled and told to stand in the Marine line. How lucky for him.

His name was Johnson. We all referred to each other by our last names because they were visible on our uniforms. Using last names was pretty much status quo until we came up with clever nicknames for each other. Johnson was much older than most of us and had been \textit{around the block}. I think he was about 25, which is old when you’re 18.

He took me away from the rest of the guys and asked if it was my first time away from home. I told about camping for one week, but this was not the same. This guy took a liking to me and I’m glad he did. I needed him, at the moment. It was like having a big brother, away from home.

He was also my motivator. When Johnson struggled, I became his motivator. Johnson taught me the feelings of missing home were only temporary. He told me it was because I was having a real lousy time. We were all having a lousy time. My logic was Johnson was wise, because he was older.

Maybe he sensed something about me. I know he was a good person. After all of training was completed, the guys in for two years and the draftees were all sent to Vietnam. I was in for three years and sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Johnson was another good

\textsuperscript{101} \textbf{Boot} – An overshoe, to protect feet from water, snow or mud. It can also be used for footwear made for hiking or any type of covering to protects the foot and ankle. Combat boot comes to mind. It’s also a military term meaning a newbie, a recruit or a rookie. It’s also used to describe someone who calls cadence and marches like he is with a platoon of people, but is all alone. They also wear a lot of moto stuff. All Marines began as boots.
soul who vanished from my life. I could have seen him one last time, but I had no interest in looking at his flag draped coffin at Dover AFB\textsuperscript{102}.

Pugal stick training was painful and fun, if anything could be considered fun in the Corps. The Pugal stick was a device designed to simulate a hand to hand combat fight, using a rifle and bayonet as a weapon and not a firearm. The stick itself looked like a giant Q-Tip about five feet long. The protective gear we had was a football helmet with a cage around the face and a padded chest protector. There was some padding on the pugal stick ends and where you inserted your hands.

It was a man-on-man competition with everyone in the platoon standing in a circle, cheering for their favorites. It was quite exciting and helped with our \textit{kill, kill, kill} instilled attitude. It was needed for combat troops.

The event pumped us up. When it was my turn to try my hand at it, I donned the helmet and my pugal stick and was fired up and ready for war. Guys were cheering. When the starting whistle blew, I ran to the center, charging with my pugal stick. I managed to get the first hit in, but it had little effect. He then hit my chest, knocking me to my knees and \textit{knocking the wind out} of me. The whistle blew and my seven second match was over. The Corpsmen tried to get me breathing and off my knees. \textit{They} wanted the circle cleared for the next match. Marines played rough.

My pugal stick days were over. In all reality, it was fun, up and until the point I was unable to inhale for a few minutes. It’s a good wakeup call when you get clocked. You realize the business you’re in is dead serious.

There was a time I was assigned to something invented by the \textit{Green Wienie}.\textsuperscript{103} It was called a working party. To me those two words formed an oxymoron. Anyway, the working party I was assigned was at the MCRD NCO\textsuperscript{104} Club.\textsuperscript{105} This was a bar for Non Commissioned Officers; the Corporals and Sergeants. Most of the bar’s clientele were off-duty Drill Instructors.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textbf{Dover AFB} – Dover Air Force Base is home to the largest military mortuary in the Department of Defense. It has been used for processing military personnel killed in both war and peacetime.
\item \textbf{Green Wienie} – Military term – The unknown sneaky thing in the United States Marine Corps whose main job is to stick it to you. The Green Wienie brings bad news and hard work. I think the Green Wienie may exist in the Army and the Air Force, too. He gets around. I suppose the Navy has the Blue Wienie.
\item \textbf{NCO} – Military term – A non-commissioned officer, such as a Corporal or a Sergeant.
\item \textbf{NCO club} – Military term – A non-commissioned officer’s club for hanging out. It was a bar which served alcohol, food and sometimes had entertainment.
\end{itemize}
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I was given a bunch of tomatoes to slice for sandwiches and burgers. It was a menial job, but enjoyable because it was relaxing. There were no Drill Instructors around. The place was closed during the day. I learned I didn’t want to cross paths with a Drill Instructor who’s had a few. This working party job lasted for one day. I was hoping the working party would last for two weeks.

Attending a church service was something I avoided, often. I didn’t have the religious gene in me. I found out if I went to church during boot camp, I could sit there and gain some much needed rest. Those of us taking the non-church route had to polish boots, clean rifles or do something difficult while everyone else was resting. Needless to say, I became real holy in boot camp.

San Diego is hot. We were in boot camp all of July, August and September. Hot, hot and hot. We drank a lot of water. Being outdoors every day meant many of us had sunburnt ear tops.

The Drill Instructors avoided the problem because their covers (Smokey the Bear hats) shaded their ears. Our utility covers were similar to a baseball cap leaving the ears exposed to the sun. After a couple of months in sunny San Diego, you got these crusty scabs on the tops of your ears. We should have done what our mother taught us about picking at the scabs, but we didn’t. It was an amusing adventure and something to do. What do you expect out of teenagers?
“21-11-Adam, your run is to 11505 Cobbler, at the pool hall, on a shooting. EMS is on the way.” I grabbed the mic and stated, “On the way, Radio, 21-11-Adam.” The dispatcher replied with, “21-11-Adam, I have you on the way and busy.” I also heard, “Radio, 21-4 is available and will head there.” The dispatcher answered them with, “21-4, I also have you busy.” Another car broke in with, “Radio, 21-11 will back them up.” The dispatcher replied with, “21-11, I have you on the way, but in service. Let me know if you’re going to be busy.”

It’s a relief to know I had all of this backup on my first official shooting run. At the scene, there was a guy on the sidewalk screaming he wanted to die. He had been shot in the lower abdomen with a 12 gauge, sawed off shotgun. His entire small intestine was hanging out with no visible blood. It was surreal.

The shooter had already escaped and we were unable to get information from the victim. We interviewed some witnesses to see what information we could retrieve.

Being cynical was still far from my mind. The ambulance had just arrived, somewhat relieving some of my mental pressure. As the guy was rolling around between the sidewalk and the curb, he kept crying he wanted to die.

An EMS medical technician looked at his watch and said, “I’ll give you about 15 minutes.” What bothered me was he died about 15 minutes after the medic opened his big mouth. It was always a nightmare of mine to be shot and see the same medic working on me.

The Marine Corps moved us to Edson Range located within Camp Pendleton, near Los Angeles. We were transported by luxurious cattle car and moved into squad bays. Coming from Quonset huts, this was a step up. We were moving into a real building, a barracks, although it was before they started building separate cells rooms for us.

Catching my attention were the floor and the trash receptacles. The floors were cement, but polished to the point of appearing as though it had a layer of glass on top of it. The trash cans were galvanized steel, but looked like they had been plated with chromium.

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106 **Cattle Car** – Military term – A semi-trailer used for transporting as many human personnel as they can fit into one, standing room only, like cattle.
The truth was there were many coats of wax on the floor and it was buffed to a high shine by Marine recruits. The galvanized trash cans were polished with metal polish, also by Marine recruits. I started to think, “When are they going to have time to teach us to shoot, if we’re busy polishing everything?” I heard this saying many times in my life, “You don’t get paid to think.” I’d be rich if they ever did, I thought to myself and many things would be a lot different.

While at Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps received a telegram addressed to me. They opened it and read it. I was a prisoner of the U.S. government, where there are no freedoms. It stated, “Jim, mom died. Love, Belinda.” They sent a corporal in a military pickup to get me and return me to MCRD to be processed for emergency leave.

I had no knowledge of the telegram or its contents. I kept referring to the corporal as sir. The corporal was relaxed person. He told me to address him as Bob while we headed back to MCRD. The Drill Instructor was the only enlisted person we were forced to address as, sir. It’s all we knew at the time.

Once we arrived, I was led to an office. I was called inside where there was a USMC Major sitting at a desk. I was a bit nervous, since he was such a high rank. He was the highest ranking officer I ever met. He stood up and said, “Please have a seat, son.”

His comment increased my nervousness. I figured something was wrong. I have been screamed at by everyone of authority for the last few weeks. Now, I have a Marine Major calling me, son. He then spoke in a mild tone and told me my mother had passed away, as he handed me the telegram.

I read it and noticed the signature. Belinda was my girlfriend, not my sister. Her mother was ill with some issues due to a disease she had acquired. I stood up and said to the Major, “Sir, this may be my girlfriend’s mother.” The Major then asked if I wanted to call home to verify. I said yes. I called home and there was no answer. I then called Belinda’s home and she answered the phone.

She was upset and said her mother had died. Belinda wanted me to come home. I told her I was unable to travel home and I had to get off the phone fast. We hung up and I advised the Major of the mix-up. The Major was still polite to me, but said I would have to return to Edson Range. I stood at attention and the Major said, “At ease and you’re dismissed.” I did an about face movement and began to walk out. I heard him say, “Good luck, son.” He would never know how much I appreciated his final comment.
The corporal who drove me to MCRD was assigned to return me to Edson Range. We discussed the events which just took place. Bob said, “Boy, I’d hate to be in your shoes right now. They’ll kick your ass once you get back.” I agreed with him. I leaned back and enjoyed my ride back to the rifle range with Bob.

Once I returned, I was forced to explain to four screaming Drill Instructors and a Marine lieutenant my mother was alive, but my girlfriend’s mom died. I thought their normal screaming was bad, but this new level of sound was above and beyond normal.

The five of them were all in my face, saying things like, “You just tried to get out of boot camp and run home to your girlfriend because her mommy died? She’s got Jody phucking her right now and you think you’re needed? Why would you want to see the slut?”

For the first time, I started to get angry. I kept it inside of me because it would have been a fight which was impossible to win. I have always wanted to be the smartest guy in the world, but the goal was out of reach. Being one of the stupidest was also out of my reach. Things seemed to work out when there was a balance.

I thought to myself, “All of this bullshit could have been avoided, if they had given me the telegram to read and interpret.”

The Drill Instructors and lieutenant were striking some of my sensitive nerves, but backed off screaming at me. It was my feeling, just like children, they got bored with what they were doing and decided to move on to something more exciting. They were now screaming at the other recruits. INTPs, Empaths and Marine boots dislike being the center of attention. Negative attention was considered negative energy to Empaths and INTPs. No one wanted to be the center of attention in boot camp. No one!

While half of us were learning to shoot, the other half worked the target area, called the pits. After two weeks, the positions were swapped.

The targets were moved into position for firing or repairs by us recruits. Everything was done in unison, by command of the Drill Instructor running the pits. He’d be on the loudspeaker, barking the commands to us. The targets were heavy, but the rail/pulley system worked well. They were easy to handle.
We were still training with the M-14 rifle. If you were one of the fortunate enough to be assigned to WESTPAC\textsuperscript{107} (Vietnam), they would issue you the first M-16s. These matched your new jungle utilities and boots.

The initial M-16-A1s were described as a piece of junk. In a panic situation, a loaded magazine could be shoved into the weapon, backwards by accident, causing it to jam into place. Removing it was almost impossible. The weapon could be used as a club, but a fire fight was out of the question. The issue was fixed early.

I enjoyed the shooting part of my training. I found it fun and challenging, learning to shoot at 1,000 yards using a 	extit{peep and a post}, or the rifle’s hard sights.

One of our training phases was called a \textit{fam-fire}, which stood for the Familiarization Firing of weapons. For an 18 year old, this was the tops. We learned to assemble, load and fire various weapons. This was more fun than getting pulled over by a battle tank.

Firing the .50 caliber machine gun mounted on the turret of a moving five ton truck was awesome. .30 caliber machine guns were just as much fun. I supposed the rounds for the .30 caliber were cheaper than the .50s. A disliked thing about most .30 caliber machine guns was they were hand carried. I never saw one mounted to a \textit{Rat Patrol (in color)} type of jeep.

Incendiary grenades were enjoyable. They had enough heat to melt through a vehicle’s engine block. The Marine Corps was just like being a kid behind my garage and experimenting with rockets, flames and things.

Now I was able to play with the big and expensive toys the U.S. taxpayers bought me and my new friends. At this point in time, I started to like the choice of my path in life. \textit{Claymore mines}\textsuperscript{108} were one of my favorites. There’s a big difference between playing with this stuff and having to use it for survival or killing. I was fortunate to spend my military career, playing with it.

One night, we were about to retire for the evening. Drill Instructor Sanchez came into the squad bay. He hollered across the room he didn’t want to hear a peep out of any of us, when he turned out the lights.

\textsuperscript{107} \textbf{WESTPAC} – Military term – The military designation for the western Pacific area of the world. In the 1960s and 1970s, it referred to Vietnam.

\textsuperscript{108} \textbf{Claymore mines} – Military term – A directional mine, when fired, shoots about 700 steel balls towards the enemy. They travel about 100 meters from the mine in a 60 degree arc.
I was on the opposite side and figured I could say something in a soft voice without him hearing it. I said, “Sir, the Private talks in his sleep, Sir!” I did this to lighten the atmosphere a little bit, with a few of my peers. Instead, I lightened the atmosphere for entire company of 80 men. The next thing I heard was the Drill Instructor scream from across the squad bay, “Alexander, get your ass over here, now!”

Oh, oh! All I could think about was what happened a week earlier. We were herded into a shower area. The sprayers were turned on hot and liquid bleach or something was poured onto the floor. The smell was unbearable (and dangerous). Okay, there was a little abuse, but not much.

I ran to Drill Instructor Sanchez and I stood in front of him, at the position of attention. I was nervous and quite sure he was going to terminate my existence.

He tapped me in the chest a couple of times with his knife hand and said, “It goes for you too, maggot. Now get back to your rack.” I replied, “Sir, Yes, Sir!” and I ran back fast. I think I may have broken an Olympic speed record, in doing so.

It was a good feeling, knowing I somehow avoided a severe ass kicking. I think he may have liked me a little. Then it dawned on me. We were still going steady. He wore my high school ring.

I enjoyed my time at the range in between the torturing. Polishing trash cans was okay for busy work. Waxing and buffing the concrete floor was where the fun came in. To get a nice shine, we found the extra weight of a smaller guy, sitting on the buffer would cause the polishing disk to have additional friction, giving the floor a brighter shine.

The guy sitting on the buffer for the extra weight had fun unless the guy running the buffer was unsure how to control it. I was tall, but weighed about 150 pounds, so I got to ride the buffer, often. My weight made a nice shine, but the motors burned out quicker.

I would like to thank all the taxpayers of the United States of America for buying new buffers, when needed. If we fried one, there was always a working replacement available. A shortage of ammo? Yes. A shortage of blank ammo? Yes. A shortage of buffers? Never!
I pulled up in the scout car as a backup unit for another crew’s shooting run on Paris Road. Upon arrival, I found the shooter was already in custody and removed from the scene. He killed two people in the house. There was an EMS truck out front and a couple of parked scout cars.

My partner was busy talking to another officer and I decided to go into the EMS rig and see what was going on. When I entered I saw a young African-American woman, in her teens. The medics had her on a gurney, but were ignoring her even though she had a gunshot wound in the chest and was flailing her arms as if to grab something. Her eyes were open and seemed to be staring in the distance.

I asked the medic what was going on. He said she was dead. He then placed his hand on her forehead and said to her, “Everything is okay. Relax.” He did this in a soft voice. Her arms went down and she laid still, like the dead people I was used to seeing.

He told me when people are killed their body’s nervous system will sometimes react in a similar fashion. He continued with, “…or it may be her spirit was confused and needed a little direction.”

He described her vitals as showing zero point oh on the Richter scale. It was his way of saying she was dead. He then told me, “Whenever I touch them and speak with similar words, the patients seem to relax. I like to think I am helping them in some way.”

This event took place in the 1970s. I was convinced he told me this stuff because of the quality of human he was. I found it to be rare amongst the police officers and firefighters.

He was one of the good guys. My partner and I were driving to the island of Belle Isle for our car’s radio repair. While driving across the bridge, we saw an older guy on the opposite side of the railing. In the police world, we called them jumpers. We stopped

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109 Richter scale – A numerical scale measuring the magnitude of earthquakes based on their seismograph oscillations.

110 Jumper – Police term – The jumper was the passenger of a two person scout car crew. The jumper was responsible for handing all paperwork, the mobile radio, the mobile computer, the shot gun and the glove box, which would pop open every time we hit a pothole. He or she’s job was to bail out and chase a lone person of foot. The jumper and driver swapped positions four hours into their eight hour shift. A jumper was also used to describe a person who was distraught. They either threatened to or jumped from a building or bridge. Of course, I was a civilian jumper on a newspaper truck, but I won’t include it here.
the car and got out to talk to the man. We both ended up grabbing him and pulling him back over the railing and onto the sidewalk. We then placed him in the car for a ride to the hospital.

He told us he was 80 years old and his wife of 60 years accused him of infidelity. He was faithful to her and was distraught at hearing her accuse him of it. I felt horrible for the guy. The partner I had pulled out his pistol and pointed it towards the sky and said to him, “Next time, do us all a favor and use one of these. It’s too hard to find a body of a person that jumped in a flowing river. The gun is quicker.” The old man had a look of shock on his face. I suppose I did, too.

Humans can sometimes give inanimate objects bad reputations by their misuse. I’m speaking of guns, but cars kill people, too. Misuse can be defined as either reckless\footnote{Reckless use of firearms – Police term – A criminal charge in the city of Detroit. It was used for someone who would fire a gun into the air or at a car. As long as no one was hit, it was reckless use. It was of those catch 22 crimes. We gotcha!} use by humans or criminal use, by humans.

I need to set this wooden box down and stand on it. It’s called a soapbox.\footnote{Soapbox – I use soapbox to describe areas of the book where I give personal opinions on a few subjects. It’s a reference to the old political days, when a person (politician?) would stand on a soapbox to be higher than others in order to give their speech. An orange or a lemon crate would serve the same purpose, but soapbox has a name which demands attention, for some reason.} All unstable people and psychopaths can carry guns thanks to specific national organizations which have excellent big buck lobbyists in Washington D.C. I was once a stooped member of such an organization until I found out its true mission. I am human and subject to mistakes. I just admitted one, but I corrected my error.

Guns are pretty easy to obtain. All you need is some cash, ammo and bang! You’re good to go. You can buy them online. Have fun! Oh, you might need a permit to purchase a handgun in some states, but I believe the law covering long guns is national or federal. There are minimal requirements for long gun ownership in the United States.

When your kid turns 18 you can say, “Happy birthday, (insert son or daughter’s name here)! Here’s your new firearm and a box of ammo. This instruction book will show you how to load it. I hope this gift will get you to come out of your depressive state.”

I am an American who joined the U.S. Marine Corps and the Detroit Police Department. I am 100% for the gun rights of all good citizens of the U.S. There is a strong emphasis on the word good, again.
The thinkers are busy scrambling to find ways to stop the school and other mass shootings. They have to work within the law which gives the unstable people the right to own lethal weapons. I have a solution, but the overpaid lobbyists have total control and *I don’t get paid to think.*

Most legal American gun owners are responsible citizens. Punishing responsible citizens for observing the law is wrong.

Suicides are something else. A suicide is the ultimate end of the line. I have no answers or cures for them. They’re horrible for the victim and for the survivors and there’s no changing of the mind. It’s permanent.

The banning of guns is one of the most ridiculous ideas I’ve heard to prevent to prevent crimes and suicides. I’ve learned this all through my life; bad guys don’t follow the rules and if someone wants to die bad enough, they will.

I’ll climb off this soapbox. It’s better to be able climb down than be taken down. A lot of people carry guns.

After we qualified to fire our rifles, we were conveyed back to MCRD in cattle cars to complete our training.

Our close order drill was showing signs of precision. It was fun, to march as a platoon, since we figured out how to remain in step. The feeling of pride and teamwork was now instilled in all of us. The programming and brainwashing did well. Our young bodies were in pretty good shape.

_Private Bullshit_ was our guide. All the harassment he put up with paid off. A proud Native Canadian leading us and holding the guidon, with pride. Platoon 3131 was on the road! We were getting better and better. We wanted to do it right and it was a great feeling.

One of few luxuries we had was the smoking lamp. I was a non-smoker when I first joined, but I learned if you were a non-smoker, then you worked harder. It was just like church. The smokers went out and stood on the road because the smoking lamp was lit. When the smoking lamp was lit, the guys who smoked got to stand outside in formation and choke down a cigarette in about 1 minute.

I took up smoking at a time in my life when I would need my lungs operating at full capacity. For the extra rest time it provided, I became a holy smoker. Holy smokes!
Feeding time in boot camp was a community event. The usual harassment was to make us sit and get up about three times. The next command, “Ready, Eat!” was always stated once. It never needed repeating.

I’m sure they had everything down to the precise science for our health protection. It seemed to us there was always a shortage of food for a bunch of hungry teenage guys in training. We were being trained as the backbone ground forces for the United States. An occasional chocolate bar would have been nice. We were still teenagers. Candy bars were unauthorized until we graduated. Pogey bait!

The Drill Instructors wanted us finished eating in about 30 seconds. It wasn’t hard to do. We were starving and craved fuel. Upon finishing, we went outside and stood on the road, smoking cigarettes and waiting for the entire platoon. The faster you ate, the more you could smoke.

The road in this case, meant any area paved and outside of any building. When on the road, we read from our little Marine Corps red handbook to both learn and not waste time. I always thought they meant, learn to waste time. My logistical mind was confused.

There are a couple of facts about the smoking lamp which confused me. Marines who smoke were taught to field strip their cigarette butts, by tearing them open to let the tobacco and paper spread with the wind. Filters were placed in the pocket to be disposed of later.

I spent much of my tour policing the area. This was a fancy way of saying picking up small pieces of trash and cigarette butts. I always wondered where the butts came from if we were ordered to field strip our cigarettes.

I suppose it will remain one of life’s mysteries.
Chapter 21 – SOS for Marines

The Marine Corps training made us quite hungry. For breakfast, there was one staple I found to be nauseous looking. It was called chipped beef on toast. They had a slang name for it called shit on a shingle or to put it a little cleaner, SOS. It was an appropriate term for me. Most people loved the stuff. Not me. I was different.

I would take some, but it was to give it to another recruit. I gave it away whether I got something in return or not.

We were hungry, due to our rigorous training. It was rare someone would give up food in a trade. I would make a recruit happy by giving him the SOS. I’m still unaware what it tastes like. I’m sure it has a good flavor, but my mind refuses to let me taste it.

The Marine Corps and Navy got me used to eating runny eggs. Scrambled or over-easy, they were always cooked light. Nowadays, I have to have them cooked similar because it’s what the Marine Corps and Navy conditioned me to.

The Marine Corps and Navy had something I never saw anywhere else, green scrambled eggs. I always wondered how and why military scrambled eggs were green. Yellow scrambled eggs looked delicious. Green scrambled eggs looked disgusting. Green eggs, the Green Wienie… Could it be?

As we approached graduation day, we were taken to the base theater to relax for a while and see a movie. The movie was called, The Green Slime. “How fitting,” I thought. It was still enjoyable to watch. When we were seated, a platoon of recruit Woman Marines entered the theater.

The recruits were all standing at attention when I heard a female Drill Instructor holler (why did they always holler?), “When I say seat, I want to hear 80 pussies sucking air at the same time. Ready, seat!” They all sat in unison, but the Drill Instructor hollered, “Get back, get back! You’re too slow! They had to do this about three times before this little bit of harassment stopped. It was psychological and it seemed three times was the magic number for Drill Instructor harassment episodes.

They were relieved. I wanted to chuckle because I thought the crude remark sounded funny. There was no smiling or chuckling. It was the first time I saw a woman Marine. It was also my first experience with the Green Wienie. I thought to myself, “I wanted to see the movie and I better keep my thoughts to myself.” It was at this point, I learned the Green Wienie screwed with all Marines, not just the males.
During my time in boot camp, our obstacle course was in the process of being rebuilt. The Corps goal was to make it more difficult. We made up for the lack of it by doing a lot of running, rope climbing, running, bend and motherfuckers, running, pushups, running, etc. We also ran a lot.

The Marine Corps seemed to overdo it with the running, but it was better than close order drill on one of the grinders. I was a runner and I enjoyed it. When we ran as a platoon, it was harder. I had to run at a slower pace, so we all remained together.

Just before graduation there was a training mission which lasted a couple of days. It was like having a campout, with a few joyous moments of torture thrown in for fun. We learned how sleep deprivation could be exciting, if treated with respect. We called it a Bivouac. Since 1996 the Marine Corps’ final recruit test is called the crucible, which is the modern version of bivouac torture. I was always under the impression bivouac meant sleep. I was wrong!

Boot camp graduation day came in September when I earned my EGA. I became a United States Marine. The Corps was now mine. How proud I was to march in a platoon with my fellow Marines. We marched out onto the parade grounds while the Marine Band played John Philip Sousa’s Semper Fidelis. Many family and friends were present. We were marching as a platoon with precision and pride. We were just like they wanted us to be, robots.

Marching in front of civilians seemed to force us to be more precise and want to look good. Our Platoon Guide, Private First Class Bullfields (Private Bullshit) carried our guidon. The red and gold flag with the number 3131 looked wonderful to us as it flowed with the breeze. It was a little ironic the best man in our platoon was a Native Canadian. He was the only guy to be issued his set of Dress Blues, free. Oh, Canada!

What made this day better was the surprise visit from both my mom and dad. I was a brand new and proud U.S. Marine. My mom and dad came here to see me graduate. It was one of the greatest days of my life. To me it was better than high school graduation and this time I wasn’t in a nun’s bed.

113 Bend and motherfuckers – Military term – Squat thrust exercises. One of the most hated exercises while I was in the Marine Corps. I imagine they do a body quite well. They must have, they hurt like a mother…

114 Semper Fidelis – The motto of the United States Marine Corps. It’s Latin for Always Faithful. It’s also a marching band song written by John Philip Sousa.
I hoped my parents thought differently, but after raising my own kids, I’m sure they didn’t. They may have had thoughts. I’m sure they were worried about me getting killed in combat. It was a reality. Dying was the last thing on my mind, though. I was 18 and invincible. I was SuperDude!

After family day was over, my parents flew back home. We received our first liberty call. What? Did they say, “Freedom?” I went into the nearby town of Oceanside, California with some boot friends. We all wore our new and pretty, tropical uniforms. The Marine uniform at the time was a beige cover, beige shirt, beige trousers and beige belt. We had no stripes on our sleeves. None of us were promoted to PFC, yet. Our uniforms were plain.

I broke away to be on my own and do some exploring. I wanted to see the Pacific Ocean and other sights, like young women, but I didn’t want to be around a bunch of overly-macho boot Marines. They seemed to scare away the women I wanted to talk to. In Oceanside, I noticed something strange. There were women around, but it appeared every man I saw was a Marine. Some were in uniform, some not. It was a small, military town.

I rented a Boogie Board and attempted to surf the Pacific Ocean. I was a miserable failure, but I did try. I managed to get the start of a large wave. I was at near the top with no time to attempt to stand when the ocean poured millions of gallons of water over me, wiping me out. I had to hold my breath about 60 seconds, which is a long time when you have no orientation and are surrounded by foamy saltwater bubbles. The guy I rented the board from said, “Dude, you started looking good, until you wiped out and the wave ate you.”

A week later, I was transferred to the Infantry Training Regiment (ITR), ending the week of rest. We packed up and were getting ready to board cattle cars for the ride to Camp Pendleton.

One of my Drill Instructors, Staff Sgt. Sanchez showed up looking for me. He looked odd because instead of wearing a Drill Instructor’s cover, he was wearing a piss cutter. The cover worn by a Marine wearing a class A uniform. Its actual name was Garrison Cover. It had the basic shape of a knife blade and was a softer, more casual cover. The barracks cover was rigid. The dress blues uniform utilized the barracks cover.

The Army had a name more crude for the same type of cover. Their descriptive term rhymed with grunt cap.
Army also had an obscene name for this type of head gear. It rhymed with grunt\textsuperscript{116} cap. I thought it was something you needed to know. The military stressed using foul language. It was part of our training.

I ran up to the Staff Sgt. and addressed him as sir. The first thing out of his mouth was, “Did you just call me sir? Don’t call me sir. I work for a damn living. You’re a Marine now.” He then smiled and put his arm around my shoulder and said, “I’m here to return something to you.”

He took off my high school ring and handed it to me. He shook my hand and wished me the best of luck. I suppose this action meant we broke up and were no longer going steady. I know he and his peers did their best, as far as training us, but I was happy to be out of there. I now regret it, but I never saw Staff Sgt. Sanchez again.

We arrived and moved into our new homes, GP tents\textsuperscript{117} laid over wooden frames. The floors of the tent were made of plywood. We slept on folding combat cots and over the next few weeks I learned what every Marine learned as a basic rifleman, the art of infantry.

We learned Mount Motherfucker was named correct. The bad thing was we were forced to march up the hill more than once. Many things in the Marine Corps were named motherfucker, which told a person it was both difficult and unliked.

I hooked up with a guy who had some computer training. He was geekish with an easy going personality. He was quite likable. His future schools battalion assignment was infantry man; a grunt; a ground pounder. The government screwed up when they assigned him his MOS.

His name was John Wolverton. The trainers called him, Wolf-is-Stuffed, because he was a large man. It appeared name calling was in style in the Marine Corps, as long as the name was clever, in a grammar school, second-grader, sort of way.

Wolverton was a draftee. He was in for two years and was my first example of the bureaucracy making a bad decision. Wolverton was killed in action, in Vietnam a few months later. Rest in peace, brother.

\textsuperscript{116} Grunt – Military term – The nickname given to anyone in the Marine or Army Infantry. They are sometimes referred to as ground pounders.

\textsuperscript{117} GP tent – General Purpose tent. It’s labeled, Tent, general purpose, one each.
Near the end of ITR, we were all promoted to PFC. Wow, one whole stripe on the sleeve. We were given our orders for the next phase of training; the Schools Battalion. I was to be assigned to wire school and trained as a pole climber. It was an MOS\textsuperscript{118} called 2511 - Wireman. I was a phone guy.

I learned the proper way to get slivers sliding down a wooden telephone pole. All you had to do was clutch the pole with your arms and legs while sliding down with the help of gravity. It was a simple process. All slivers worked themselves out of the body, but it took three years after my discharge to notice they were all gone.

I thought I would climb up on my soapbox and present my views on some motorcycle bullshit. I am all for safe, motorcycling. I owned a bike in my younger days. Bike Nights draw money to the local towns hosting them. It also brings in the bikers. They aren’t the same as those from the 1950s and 1960s.

Many of today’s bikers are old guys who drive the slowest American made motorcycles built. American made is important to them even though most of their clothes and boots were manufactured in China, Vietnam or Thailand. None of their clothes were made in the USA.

Today’s bikers wear their costumes. They’re made of leather and they like to wear patches and pins. They dub themselves with foolish names like, Bad-ass,\textsuperscript{119} Foghorn, Blockhead or whatever. It’s just like the old CB handles of the 1970s, eh\textsuperscript{120} good buddy?

Once the baby boomers die off, the market will be flooded with slow motorcycles, many of them with training wheels (the three wheelers). The stock in the companies making those bikes will go down. In fact, I see it ruining the economy. So we baby boomers are going to leave a trashed planet, in economic turmoil, with a bunch of cheap and slow motorcycles. What we are leaving our young is bullshit.

There are some women who are part of this biker thing. It gives some of the older ones a chance to dress like 18 year old sluts. Many of the women have their own bikes. Those who don’t, ride with their ol’ man. Everybody is having fun.

\textsuperscript{118} MOS – Military term – Military Occupational Specialty, your job.

\textsuperscript{119} Bad-ass – A cool person who is perceived as someone who will take no crap from anyone. Real bad-asses are Extroverts.

\textsuperscript{120} Eh – eh? I have no knowledge as to what it means. Canadians and Yoopers say it, eh?
I was sitting in a bar one evening and thinking about writing a book when, I heard a customer say, “Aw crap, here come the bikers.” Since, I’m old school, all I could picture were these tough guys coming in, tipping over tables and raising all kinds of hell, like the 1950s outlaw biker movie *The Wild One* with Marlon Brando.

In came some old, gray haired bikers. A number of them were using walkers and canes. One guy came in a wheel chair with his ol’ lady pushing him. Another had his ol’ lady escorting him in, arm in arm, for balance. All were wearing their leather, pins and patches. It looked like the neighborhood nursing home had a biker club.

I didn’t want to look outside. I was afraid the bikes would all have training wheels on them. This scene was scary, so I left… out the back door.
Tactical officers were called in to assist the 22nd Precinct in northwest Detroit. A propane company developed a leak and the concern was of an explosion. We were ordered to go door to door to advise the neighbors of the danger and to have them evacuate for their safety. It was not a forced evacuation.

Granted, the authorities sometimes went overboard in the name of security and safety. If someone came to my door and told me to evacuate because a giant propane tank could explode, I would go. Leaving the hood for a while was a good thing which only the sensible people did. The rest of the herd just stayed in their living rooms and on their couches to watch the news item of the leak and see their house on live TV.

There was no explosion and the leak was repaired. The herd was safe, this time. We went back on the road and left the area to, once again, fight crime and/or evil elsewhere in the great City of Detroit.

A police officer must qualify with his sidearm once a year. I was assigned to work with another guy also due for qualification. Rosé Range was our destination. It was on the westside of the city and our office was near the downtown area. We grabbed a marked scout car and drove down to the Hudson Freeway for the ride to the range.

While my partner and I were talking, I looked up and saw a sign saying, Welcome to Ohio. Another sign said, Toledo, Next Five Exits.

When I pointed it out, we exited and performed an Adam-12 U-turn. We also decided to keep this secret to ourselves. I’m sure our peers would have made fun of us, forever. Crossing a state line was an absolute no-no unless you had special permission. Oops!

When we showed up at the range and signed in. My service pistol was my own .357 Magnum revolver. It was approved to be carried on-duty, but I had to buy my own ammo for qualification. The city’s free .38 caliber ammo fits and works in a .357 Magnum, but it was required we used the maximum load for qualification. I think it was an unwritten form of punishment because of using a personal weapon. They wanted us to spend the extra money for ammo.

I felt safer carrying my .357 Magnum on the streets of Detroit than the city’s standard issue .38 caliber service revolver. We nicknamed it a pop gun. We were later issued Glock .40 caliber semi-automatic weapons, which would penetrate some softer elements
the .38 would not. Elements the Glock would penetrate were overcoats and car windshields.

The first phase of fire was the closest to the target and involved six rounds of ammo. It was a rapid, hip-fire shoot. The range officer would press a button causing the targets to turn and face us. Upon facing us, I pulled my weapon and fired one shot. Upon trying to fire the second shot, the gun failed to function. I raised my hand to alert the range crew of a problem.

The range officer came up, took my weapon and cleared it. He told me to take it to the armorer. I handed the weapon to him and he said, “This gun was recalled last year. Didn’t you turn it in?” I said, “A recall notification was never sent to me.” This was odd, as I bought the gun, new from a professional gun shop. The armorer told me the recall was ordered to replace a faulty part. He had the part and repaired it.

At this point, I asked the armorer, “Do you mean to tell me I’ve been carrying a weapon on the mean streets of Detroit which would fire only once? His reply made me think of spending some time in a bar, after work. The answer was, “Yep! Maybe you should practice more, so you never miss.”

It’s not quite a soapbox event, but I thought this story should be included. It’s about the spoiled brat. The Detroit area had a large number of corporate auto executives. On the eastside, they lived in the rich suburbs of the Grosse Pointes.

It was fun pulling over a 16 year old teenage spoiled brat in his speeding Corvette convertible. I normally avoided minor traffic violations, but one kid was driving 80 mph on a 30 mph surface street. The Corvette was 16 years old and looked like it came off the assembly line. When I asked the kid about it, he said, “My dad bought this car for me when I was born. He then stored it in his heated garage for 16 years and gave it to me as a gift, when I got my driver’s license, last week.” I thought, “It must be nice to be rich.”

There were times when we would ask the spoiled brat, driver for a license and vehicle registration. The response would be, “Do you know who my father is?”

I decided I needed a clever answer for those types of questions. I came up with, “No sir. I’m sorry. Your father is unknown to me. I do know who mine is, though. He’s been in prison for the last 15 years for murder.”

The usual look on a young driver’s face was dumbfounded. I would continue with, “My dad’s successes or failures have no bearing on my life. Your dad has no bearing on your
life. Now, may I see your driver’s license and vehicle registration?” The smug little spoiled brat smile would vanish with after the remark.

Of course, if I wrote the spoiled brat a ticket, he would appear in traffic court with a team of high paid lawyers and get away with whatever it was he did. My best weapon was detaining this kid for the full 15 minutes allowed by the law, just to waste his time and slow him down. He still got a ticket, though. He may have gotten away with it in court, but it cost daddy a few bucks. It also cost the kid a day of his own time.

In the 1990s, I had a friend named Pete, who was a field repairman for a major electronics firm. One day, he and his partner went to the Renaissance Center (Ren Cen) to do a job.

The first few floors had local elevators. My friend and his partner were on one, when the door opened, a couple of women were standing there, waiting. One of the women was holding a pizza box.

Pete, being the nice guy he was, grabbed the pizza out of the woman’s hands and said, “Thank you,” while smiling at her. She had a look of total disbelief when the door closed, with Pete holding the pizza.

The elevator went up one floor. He rode it back down and handed the pizza back to the woman, still standing there. They all had a good laugh, but a free pizza lunch for Pete failed to happen.

As we graduated from the Marine Corps ITR, we went to our new assignments. My school had a classroom. Outdoors was a pole farm. There were about 20 poles. They were quite chewed up from all the training.

I learned how to climb poles, using gafs or climbers, those little spikes on the side of a lineman’s boot. Only about ¼ inch of metal digs into the wood. Weather cracks and splits in the wood could prove hazardous.

Splicing wires and wiring telephones were part of my training. We learned to climb mushy, chewed up poles having seen too much use. Once we mastered those, all others were a piece of cake.

We were trained to climb, using our hands and not a climbing belt. The reason for it was if our hands were free and someone started shooting, we could just jump 30 feet instead of bouncing down.
I was a bit skeptical thinking about a 30 foot jump. One trainer said, “What would you rather do? Jump or get shot and have your head blown off?” Now I understood. I forgot we might have to play for real, soon. Wire school was six weeks long.

One evening, we were sitting on the front porch of the barracks waiting for the sunset. We were sipping a few cans of beer. Our school barracks faced the Pacific Ocean. We remained on the porch while the sky got darker and we got mellower.

Once dark, we saw a bright light over the sea. It hovered for a moment then moved out of site, at a high rate of speed. Those of us witnessing this event, all figured on the same thing.

We saw a UFO, but no Marine would go to another Marine to report it. I could just imagine how it would go, “Hey, Staff Sergeant! I just saw a UFO over the Pacific.” I wanted out, like everyone, but I wanted an honorable discharge without the section 8.

Since we were on a military base, I figured it could have been some form of test aircraft or they were testing a flying weapon of some type. I never did find out what we saw. Maybe it was a UFO. If it was, I missed my free ride out of there.

My time off found me exploring surrounding areas. There was an unusual, but fresh and pleasant smell in the morning California air. I called it the valley smell. Smog was different. It stunk.

Nowadays, I catch a whiff of the same smell on occasional and my brain takes me back to California. I’ve heard it referred to as Deja vu. The particular odor always puts a smile on my face, but I don’t catch it often. I need to move to California.

During my wireman schooling, I was put on Guard Duty for a week. The Green Wienie decided all Marines, no matter what rank, should be on some kind of working party, on occasion.

I reported to the Corporal of the Guard for my shift. I was assigned an armory building to walk around. I was given orders to keep everyone from entering the armory. If a person would advance on me, I was to take the necessary action. They gave me live ammo for my rifle. I had to walk around this darn building for two, four hour shifts. It was the typical Marine Corps evening of duty.

A few hours into my first four hour shift, someone approached me. I pulled the rifle slung over my shoulder and went to the port arms position. The person stopped. He looked like a USMC Major.
Being a boot, I followed procedure to the letter. I hollered in a professional, but stern voice, “Sir, advanced to be recognized!” The Major took a couple of steps forward. I then ordered him to stop. I said, “Sir, remove your ID card and lay face down on the ground, with your arms spread out. Hold the card in your right hand.”

While waiting for this to happen, I began to think about the outcome of the event. I was nervous. I figured he was a real Major, but I had to follow my procedures or I would go to jail. The Marine Corps used the word jail as a threat for everything. The Major started to go into Officer mode. I racked a round into the chamber of my M-14.

It seemed to get his attention. The Major, in full Tropical dress uniform did as instructed. I approached him and took the ID card out of his hand, which showed he was indeed a Major in the U.S. Marine Corps.

I stood at the position of attention. I unracked my rifle and held it in salute mode. I said, “Sir, you may stand. I am sorry, sir. I had to do what I was instructed.

The major got up and wiped some of the debris off his uniform. He returned my salute and I shouldered my rifle. He then said, what’s your name and who are you with, Marine? I gave him the requested information. He then said, “I’m going to call your CO (Commanding Officer) in the morning. I’m going to tell him what a fine Marine you are. I disliked like lying on the ground, but you’re the first sentry ever to make me do it. I was impressed.”

He then reached out his hand and shook mine. Wow. I unshouldered my rifle and gave him a sharp rifle salute. He returned it and said, “You’re the kind of Marine we want in this Corps.” He walked away and later did what he said he was going to do.

It was one of the best pats on the back I ever received. A promotion would have been better, but this was a start. What a feeling a pat in the back can give a person. Hey bosses, around the world, read my previous few sentences. It’s free advice which will do a world of good for a fellow human. The cost is minimal and takes a moment of your time. Happy workers are good workers.

I think I was still making $110.00 a month as a PFC. It seemed to me the military pay scales were just like the minimum wage. They may go up about every 20 years. It’s a pretty weak paycheck for a man or a woman to sign their life away. Like a kid’s world, nothing’s fair, in the adult world, either.
Chapter 23 – Invisible counter-snipers

I learned volunteering for anything in the Marine Corps was bad. The Police Department was a different story. If you knew what you were volunteering for, it could be beneficial. I decided I wanted to be a counter-sniper like my partner, John Stockton. The lone benefit was the prestige of having the designation, *Counter-sniper*. There was a lot of work involved for the prestige.

Depending on who was assigned as a sniper for the day, the partner was assigned as the spotter. He or she carried a .30 caliber carbine. Our counter-sniper weapon was a 30.06 rifle with a scope. A counter-sniper’s rifle stayed with the officer, for the entire time he or she was assigned to a counter-sniper team. You had the scope adjusted for your individual self.

Counter-Sniper training involved learning about the Remington 30.06 rifle. We also had to learn how to sight it in and adjust the scope to our needs. Rosé Range was a beautiful outdoor shooting range. It was located in a valley in the middle of a city park. The grass was green and it was surrounded by tall trees.

One species was the huge black walnut. The fruits were about 2 or 2.5 inches in diameter, smaller than an apple. Inside was a black walnut seed, about the size of the brown nuts we eat. The black ones were quite nutritious, but the shells were harder and the meat smaller. These fruits were notorious for getting the dark walnut dye on you. It stained everything with a nice walnut color. It was difficult to wash it off.

The Detroit Police Department ran on a budget chosen by the city officials were sometimes tight with money. They had to be tight to keep their pockets lined. The range officers used the black walnuts for counter-sniper training. They did this to save on paper targets. They would hang a black walnut in front of a target, using a string and a paperclip.

We were set back 100 feet, where we would practice shooting the walnut. Once you experienced getting some of the black walnut dye on your skin, you took great pleasure blowing one to smithereens with a high powered rifle.

It was during the winter when we were dispatched to a barricaded gunman in the north central area of the city. I was the counter-sniper and my partner was the spotter for the day.
The counter-sniper’s job was to find a good vantage point and also remain hidden from the shooter. There was a public school, next to the gunman’s house. The school was closed for winter break. Not having to evacuate a school in the middle of winter was a good thing. My partner and I climbed out onto the roof and set up our little nest.

The best weapon in our arsenal was time. Our job was to stop people from breaking the law and to protect the citizens. A barricaded gunman is a human being who has an obvious problem. During better times, he might have been productive. Something went wrong, on his mental side and he was pleading for attention of some type.

Since time is a weapon, we decided to use it. The problem was it was snowing and cold. I called a supervisor on my radio and told him if we were going to be sitting on the roof for a few hours, then we needed some better protection from the cold.

Our fancy little police uniform jackets were made of cheap polyester with open collar. They were called Ike Jackets. They were similar to the Eisenhower jackets worn by the military, years ago. The jacket zipped up, but only to the mid-chest area. We also wore a shirt and tie, which was visible. It was the worst Michigan winter coat a person could wear, but it was uniform. We had no choice.

We also had a larger and heavier coat which was worn when you were on an outdoor detail. If you put one on, you walked around like a overly-bundled up child or a robot. We found it to be as non-functional as the Ike Jacket.

About an hour later a crew showed up with two snowmobile suits. They were hunter-orange in color, but were warm.

I called the supervisor on the radio and asked him, “Are we supposed to wear these things?” His answer was, “It’s up to you guys. If you want to be warm, it’s the best I could do.” We were cold and now quite visible. We had reflective stripes on the suits and could glow in the dark, too. We made lousy counter-snipers, but I was sure we wouldn’t be hit by a car or a passing airplane.

A command officer stated over the radio, “Tac-4, you have the green light, which was the go ahead to fire, when ready. Apparently those in charge of city tax dollars decided we need to end this by ending a human life.

It was something I hoped never to hear. Now, I had to pretend I wanted to kill somebody to please the good ol’ boy’s network. Anyway, I aimed in for accuracy when a police commander stepped into my line of fire. He was going to attempt talk the guy out. He stayed there for quite a while.
There is no way a counter-sniper will fire if there is a slight chance of an officer being injured by it. After the commander got out of the way, the gunman was no longer in view. The commander should have been given a medal for saving the man’s life.

The gunman later gave up to some cop willing to jump in front of a news camera for attention. We lacked a shortage of heroes. There was always a hero to jump in front of the news camera.

This looks like a good time to sneak up to my soapbox. I think all this patriotic nonsense through the media is to entice young people to join the military. Since they ended the draft in 1973, it has become an all-volunteer Army, Navy and Marine Corps. A draft-free service? This is a fact: Nothing is free. Somebody has to pay the bill.

As all young men know, you must register for the Selective Service, at age 18. If something serious should happen, the government would reinstate the draft and there’d be no delay. It would be in the name of National Security.

Being in combat with a person who’s filled with fear, would be fatal for both the person and the team with him/her. Conscientious objectors are not the people I want in my foxhole. I have nothing against them, but why put certain people in situations which would be useless or fatal to all involved?

Organizations like the Peace Corps are there for the people who want to do something positive and non-combative in this world. Most people want to help the human race. Some have good ways of going about it and some have the bad.

When the giant American flag is hauled out and onto a sports field, it gives me the shivers, but not in a good way. All I visualize is the flag covering 58,000 coffins, each with a government stamp reading, “Body, American, one each.” The coffins are hidden by the flag. Only what’s visible, exists. Out of sight, out of mind.

Another of my pet peeves is major league baseball players wearing a bunch of patriotic stuff during any holiday having a patriotic theme. They’ll wear two different color socks; a blue one with white stars and a red and white one with stripes. Their protective, padded items also contain a stars and stripes pattern.

I should look at it as being patriotic, but a bunch of millionaires dressed like they should be in a cartoon or in a 1980s Punky Brewster sitcom looks stupid to me.

Another dislike of mine is watching some Soldier, Sailor or Marine get reunited with their family, as a surprise during some feel good show. One lucky military person gets the
honor of surprising the family. It’s wonderful and heartwarming to watch, but an INTP sees it on a much different scale. We see the big picture. We see the other 1,300,000 active duty personnel who signed the damn check. Their homecoming preparation was a crappy haircut, a free pair of work boots and a safety brief. They also got a free ride to the airport, if they had the cash.

Oh, crap! I slipped and fell off the box. I may have been pushed.

After wire school, I received my orders for my first actual duty station, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. I learned later, most guys dubbed the state, “North Cacalacky (pronounced Cack-ah-lacky).” It was a beautiful state to be in, except it housed a Marine Corps Base containing an excessive amount of training.

Before moving to Camp Lejeune, I obtained my first two week leave. I flew to Detroit and was picked up and driven home for my first Thanksgiving, as a Marine. I did what all adults expected of me. I called every adult male sir and every adult female, Ma’am. I called my friends the usual teenage things and hung out with them. I found myself on the way back to base before I knew it.

I flew to North Carolina for my new duty station with orders placing me in the 1st battalion, 10th Marine Regiment. I was assigned to Alpha Battery. A company and battery were about the same size in population. A company could be 80 -100 men, depending on their mission. Batteries manned the guns, whereas companies consisted of ground troops and other supportive units. There were about 40 men in our battery. With artillery, the tools of our trade were towed with 2 ¼ and 5 ton trucks. No walking for us. Things were looking up, a little.

I was now looking at myself as a real Marine, but as a battery newbie, I was assigned to fire watch. This is where I earned my fire watch medal and ribbon. I was well trained. I pulled fire watch in boot camp. They awakened me up in the middle of the night. I had to put on a full utility uniform, a cartridge belt and the proverbial red helmet liner. My mission was to watch for and report any fires in the barracks, during the night, while all were sleeping.

It was an honor to stay up for four hours in the middle of the night and report for a full day’s work the next morning. Sleep deprivation, the Marine Corps’ answer to the time shortage. I did my first out-of-boot camp fire watch job and it was successful. The barracks failed to burn down.
The neighboring town was a small one called Jacksonville. Camp Lejeune was one of the few bases to issue 96 hour passes. This was to give Marines extra time for travelling to one of the distant, larger cities or fun areas. They had to issue those passes to keep everyone from running away during the 1960s and 1970s.

On MCB (Marine Corps Base) Camp Lejeune, there was an area called a swoop circle. Those without cars would go there with a cardboard sign to let drivers know our destination. It was rare for a Marine to own a car.

Most destinations were home, but some were for fun. At the time, I lived in a suburb of Detroit. It was easy finding someone going to the Detroit area.

The riders (swoopers) chipped in and paid for the gas. The drivers (car owners) paid nothing. We travelled around 90 mph to save time. We didn’t stop to eat. If someone wanted food, they picked a burger to go from the freeway service centers. The highway cops seemed to appreciate Marines and we were ticketed only in rare cases.

Once we arrived in Detroit, we were dropped off at a recognizable landmark. This is the same place you had to be when the driver came back for the return trip. I was lucky to be dropped off within walking distance to my home. It made for a nice surprise. I liked surprising other people. They seemed to enjoy surprises. I dislike them if they’re meant for me.
Assigned to an *arty*\textsuperscript{121} battery meant we were in store for a lot of training, but I don’t think it mattered what you were assigned to. Like all military organizations, when you’re not in an actual combat situation, there’s more time for training. There is no relaxation. Lance Corporals knew how to relax, but had to wear skates to do it right.

The rumors were war zones had relaxed rules. Of course you also had firefights and the death of a close friend or yourself. If, by chance you were to get killed, your grateful government will give your parents some money to hush them up and help ease their pain. They will also give them your medals and a folded American flag and say nice things about you.

Some training required the use of rifles equipped with a BFA (*Blank Firing Adapter*). These were fun devices giving you the false feeling of firing a machine gun at your opponent. It turned your rifle into a real toy, but these caps were a lot louder. They were great to play with if the Corps didn’t always run out of blank ammo.

Here’s what I found to be amusing during training. When the Marine Corps ran out of blanks, we were ordered to yell, “Bang, bang” at our opponent.

On a training exercise for a beach landing, we were using *Mike* and Higgins landing craft launched from an Amphibious Assault ship. We didn’t have any blank ammo. When the boats assaulted the beach and dropped their ramps, we had to run off hollering, “Bang, bang,” while aiming our rifles ahead and pretending to shoot the enemy. It was like playing war with the neighborhood kids again, except I didn’t want to play anymore. I just wanted and go home.

I was notified to meet with a lieutenant in our admin office for my interview for a possible appointment to be reassigned to HMX-1, the Nighthawks. This was a job as a helicopter guard for the President of the United States.

I thought this would be the ultimate job for a Marine. Plus, I think they supplied the Dress Blues instead of making me purchase them. I suppose it was for some bragging rights. When I went in for my interview, the first question he asked after my name was,

\textsuperscript{121} *Arty* – Military term – A shortened term for an artillery unit.
“Have you ever received a parking ticket from any municipality or police department?” My answer was, “Of course I have, sir.”

The lieutenant stood up, smiled at me, put his hand out and thanked me for showing up for the interview, which was now over. Wow! Talk about being perfect. This warped my idea of a presidential guard. Every time I see the image of a Marine outside of Marine One, saluting the President, I now see a person who has never received a parking ticket. When he was younger, he never took a chance. He may have three rows of battle ribbons, but a parking ticket is something he or she failed to receive. Country folk have an advantage in this area. I am not a bad person, but I paid hundreds of dollars in parking fines over the years.

Fire watch was hated by all. We had another boring job. It was called Armory Guard. This required a lone Marine to walk around building with an M-14 rifle, slung over the shoulder. It doesn’t sound like much but an M-14 weighs about 10 pounds. We had to carry it slung over our shoulder with the sling. We were allowed to switch shoulders, in a military manner, but four hours of this caused pain. We only have two shoulders. It wasn’t as easy as it sounds. Don’t try to get by a Marine sentry. He’s already in pain and crabby.

The assigned guard had five live rounds of ammunition, just in case. We would walk around the building on a four hour shift. After we were relieved of our duty, we could then go back to the barracks and sleep.

It was a boring job and to occupy my mind, I counted the bricks of the building. It had 37,704 of them. I wondered if I was correct. I was excited when I found another Marine who had the exact same count as I. After performing Armory Guard a few times, I had the distinct feeling live ammo was unnecessary and my shoulders were sore.

There was one thing I noticed all through my three year Marine Corps career. When a group of Marines walked together they’d keep in step. I’ve seen guys do the foot skip to get into step. They would do this off base and in civilian attire. I also noticed the boot Marines would turn corners by pivoting or making a column left or right movement.

Many boots would also call cadence, while strutting. It seemed they were pretending to be Drill Instructors. “Er idel-left, idel-left, rye, left! Column right, Hoo!” was the yodel heard coming from some boot’s mouth. Once you had a little time under your belt, those little habits dissipated. We all did it. It was part of the Marine Corps experience. I think it may have been required.
The Marine Corps had a training thing they called a force march. Force is such a positive word. Most force marches took us through the mud with more weight on our backs than should be carried by a pickup truck. The Army and the Marine Corps shared this kind of torture. I can’t speak for the other branches, but my guess is they didn’t have it easy, either. It may have been a little different, but it wasn’t easy in any branch of the Armed Services.

Alpha 1/10 was housed on H or Hotel Street. We lived on the second floor of our barracks building. A preppy lieutenant named Lt. Chad Wadsworth drove a 1970 dark blue Triumph TR6 convertible.

It was a sharp, sporty car. He was a commissioned lieutenant, but reminded me of a warrant officer. He spoke to very few people and kept to himself. I think his actual job required him to drive around base in his sports car, equipped with an Officers’ sticker on the windshield and receive as many salutes as he could muster.

His daddy must have been a general or an admiral or something, to do what he did all day, which was nothing. He disappeared and melded into the woodwork. I wondered what happened to him and his car. I’m sure some other lieutenant or a warrant officer took possession of it. It was a nice car.

I was standing on our outdoor stairway because there was supposed to be an eclipse of the sun around 13 or 1400 hours. It started around the same moment Lt. Wadsworth pulled up in his TR6, wearing his shades (sunglasses).

He was getting out of car when the eclipse started and it began getting dark. We were on the fringes of the actual shadow of the moon hitting the Earth, but it still got dark. You could see shadows on the ground, but it was a strange kind of dark. The shadows looked similar to moon shadows.

It was over in a few minutes, but it was a historical event in my life. In my mind, I will always have the image of darkness along with Lt. Wadsworth getting out of his car and removing his shades, while blinking his eyes and looking shocked and confused.

Swamp Lejeune. I’m sorry; I meant Camp Lejeune was a wonderful place for hiking and for large gun training. I bet it still is. We were blessed one day with a shooting mission of howitzers. I think they made us do the shoots, to give us something to do. When you fire a few hundred rounds of howitzer ammo, you get a nice buildup of burned carbon in the barrel. Somebody has to clean those guns. It’s what PFCs and Lance Corporals are for.
In an arty battery, my wires ran across the ground, but I kept most of them out of the higher foot traffic areas. I’d bury them about an inch to keep people from tripping and disconnecting a wire, only if the soil was soft. I was a Lance Corporal. Additional work was to be avoided. I worked hard at staying out of work. If someone pulled a wire lose from the junction box, all I had to do was find it and fix it.

Of course, all branches of the military had men and women my age who wanted to be *that age*. We learned as part of skating to carry a clipboard when we walked anywhere. This prevented us from being *chosen* for a random working party. It was challenging to remain out of sight. We were kids, but because of the situation we were in, along with Marine Corps training, we learned the art of improvising, fast.

Most Marines left veteran Privates with *hash marks*\(^{122}\) alone. The only privates in the Marine Corps were either boots or people busted down in rank. The lower the rank, the lower the pay. It was pretty hard to get anything out of a person busted down to Private or as I like to say, “Minimum wage.” I always wondered how someone could screw up so bad until I learned the *powers* would sometimes *railroad* people, in their haste. The word *scapegoat* comes to mind.

There was a guy in the battalion who had three rows of battle ribbons and four hash marks on his sleeve. He had no rank insignia and was an older guy, meaning he was busted down in rank and pay to a *Private*. Out of respect, most enlisted Marines called him, *Gunny*. A few Officers also referred to him as *Gunny*.

No one assigned him to do anything, out of respect. How humiliating. He retired, a short time later, with his Gunnery Sergeant pension. In my world, the Marine Corps (*bureaucracy*) threw away a good person with their outdated and unfair acts of punishment. If *they* hadn’t *railroaded* him, *they* might have gotten 10 more useful years of work, but *they* blew it. Minimum rank and pay, gave you minimum work. The U.S. government was unable to see it.

One consolation was if the guy or gal had chosen the USMC as a permanent career, at least the person’s pension was paid at the highest rank, attained.

\(^{122}\) **Hash mark** – Military and Police term – Called a Service Stripe. In the Army, Navy and Coast Guard, each stripe on the left sleeve denotes the member has four years of service. The Army has their service strip also on the left sleeve. Each stripe denotes three years of service. In the Detroit Police Department, gold stars were used in place of stripes. They were called Service Stars. Each star depicted five years of police service.
Going on shoots and using our trucks to tow the guns made our young lives easier. Other Marines always seemed to be *humping* somewhere, unless they were with the air wing.

If the Marine leadership decided we should drop in by helicopter, then it was a real *pain in the ass*. *They* would bring in our equipment the same way. The Marine Corps always made us jump out the back of choppers with a full load of gear on our backs. Hueys always slammed into the ground. You didn’t want to be in a Huey if the pilot was in Nam. Those guys would really come in fast and hit the ground hard. They were *crazy* warrant officers.

The big choppers liked to hover a few feet above tall grass. Unable to see the solid ground when it came my time to *disembark*, I hesitated jumping for a moment when I was pushed out.

I heard guys from the Army’s 101st claim to have *disembarked* from aircraft the same way. It must be universal. I lived at sea for over a year and I was terrified every time I heard the term, *disembark*. I didn’t want to be pushed overboard and have to swim a thousand miles.

We were lucky enough to be told of an upcoming training mission or fun in the sun. It was also fun in the rain, snow and sleet. What a privilege to have one such event on a North Cacalacky foot trail. It was just like a nature walk in the woods with a little torture added in for fun. They dubbed these fun events with cute names, like Operation *Dorknuts* or something similar. It was now a military operation, paid for by the United States taxpayers.

There was about a foot of mud on our projected trail. I did find drinking beer in the *EM club* was a lot more enjoyable than a 20 mile force march in the mud. My peers seemed to agree. One foot of mud sounds bad, but it was a lot better than three feet of snow. Commissioned officers remained quiet, as usual.

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123 *Hump* – Military term – A slang word for force marching with equipment piled high on your back. My experience with humping included mud, hills, weight and pain.

124 *Pain in the ass* – This indicates a person or thing which is considered a nuisance. It’s sometimes shortened to “pain” to keep in the clean side.

125 *EM club* – Military term – Also called the Enlisted man’s club, it’s a bar serving alcohol to the enlisted ranks. Like most of the clubs, they had pinball machines and other devices to take your money. Today, they have videos games do the same thing. They still serve 3.2% *crappy* beer.
This event taught me why commissioned officers get paid more. I’m sure they disliked the event as much as we peons\(^\text{126}\) (they’re human, too). They also had a ton of weight on their backs. While we’re all complaining and grumbling about this, the officers were moving forward and silent.

If I’m right, the officers earned their extra pay. It was part of the enlisted man’s job to grumble and complain about everything. The pay was low enough to prevent anyone from shutting up. Complaining was one of the enlisted man’s hobbies.

While we’re out in this mud, the powers decided we should play some war games. They’re called war games because it’s just what they are, games. War games meant we were off the muddy trail.

North Carolina had some beautiful long leaf pines. The pine cones were huge. They averaged eight to 10 inches long and looked like giant, imaginary hand grenades. Oh, boy, time to play war games. Bang, bang!

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\(^{126}\) Peon – Military & Police term – A lower ranking person, someone starting at the bottom. It’s pronounced pee-on for a reason.
Chapter 25 – Busses, bars and grunts

We heard a vehicular chase being broadcasted over the police radio. We started heading in the direction of the chase. We were southbound on Woodland, when we saw a city transportation bus drive up on a sidewalk and come to a stop against a building. The interior lights were off, which normally indicates the bus is out of service.

The chase interfered with the bus and caused the driver to lose control. As we approached it, we could see the driver trying to close the side windows. We could also see people trying to climb aboard the crashed bus, through the windows still open. We stayed with the bus, since there was a primary chase car. We wanted to make sure no one was injured.

In Detroit, it was common knowledge if you were on a bus which was involved in an accident, all you had to do was find a cheap (enough) lawyer and sue. The city would offer any passengers $10,000 if they would sign off and avoid litigation. I know the words cheap and lawyer used together is an oxymoron, but I know of no other way of saying it.

The bus driver, also a city employee, told me he was out of service and heading back to the terminal. The chase went by, cutting him off and running him over the sidewalk. The bus had its interior lights off and no passengers. All the windows were open because the bus lacked air conditioning and it was a hot summer night. After he struck the building, people started boarding. My partner and I saw about 10 people on the bus. They were moaning about the injuries they received in the crash and were demanding EMS and first aid.

We did what was expected of us, as professional police officers. We threw everybody off the bus and helped the driver close all the windows and lock them. We took the driver’s information and filled out a crash report. We cleared the bus driver of any wrongdoing. He was a victim of circumstances. There were at least ten passengers who were disappointed. Their $10,000.00 scam failed. They would have to spend another day looking for their free money.

Our war games had some M-48 Patton battle tanks involved. Having to hump, we picked up the giant pine cones and used them as imaginary hand grenades.

It gave us the opportunity to bop fellow Marines from another unit, in the helmet, face or torso. As Marines, it was difficult to play nice. We were competitive. The military programmed or brainwashed aggressiveness into our minds for war and survival.
purposes. At 18, most of us just wanted to have fun. We didn’t pay a lot of attention for the reasons why. “Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die!”

When a tank would rumble by, we’d throw plenty of giant pinecones at the visible crew and the driver. They had helmets, but were bombarded with 25 or 30 giant pinecones at a time. It was distracting and a pain in the ass or the helmet, depending on how you want to look at it. There may have been some jealousy involved, since they had vehicles and we were humping. I had images in my mind of movies with stock footage of troops riding on the outside of tanks. We weren’t allowed to climb on one.

If the tankers could have figured out a way to load their cannons with pinecones, they would have shot back at us. We were short on play bullets, but we had plenty of pinecones. The whole thing revolved around one thing, in my logical world. The crayons they gave us to eat were tainted.

As a kid, getting muddy and dirty was part of my job. I loved it, but lost interest around 12 or 13. Mud dries your hands up. I disliked the feeling.

Before our deployment, I was promoted to Lance Corporal. The rank is much the same as a PFC except Lance Corporals acquired the new art of skating. How this happens is a mystery. The rank also raised my pay a few bucks.

The promotion made me eligible for more working parties, but I already knew how to skate. I had lessons, prior to my Marine Corps enlistment. It was good to be a Lance Corporal. The rank was the backbone of the Corps. My one stripe now had crossed rifles below it. To me, it was the sign of a Marine, a proud, expendable Marine.

When I first looked over the different military branches, I felt it was fitting to join the branch famous for being founded in a bar. One thing I learned in the Corps was my dislike for steel bars, but I have no issue with wooden ones.

The Marine Corps was formed by an act of Continental Congress on 10 November, 1775 at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

This has nothing to do with the story, but on 10 November 1975, the freighter, SS Edmund Fitzgerald sank with 29 souls in Lake Gitche Gumee (Superior). I thought you might want to know that little piece of history.

The Navy was established 13 October, 1775. It was just under a month and Continental Congress had to form the Marine Corps to keep the Navy guys ship-shape.
The Marines held their first recruitment drive at the tavern. Good thinking. Grab ‘em while they’re drunk. They’ll love waking up with the Green Wienie.

Many notables spent time at Tun Tavern, including George Washington, Ben Franklin, The Green Wienie and Thomas Jefferson. Taverns and Inns were the community meeting places in the 1700s. They still are. Most of the community liked to drink, except for the alcohol purists.

I can picture all these colonial guys, bellied up to the bar having a beer. I picture the guys smoking fine cigars and eating the tavern’s free peanuts. I wonder what they talked about, back then…

“…Good day, sir, ‘Tis a fine, crisp day. Excuse me, while I use the necessary house.”\(^{127}\) or “I’ll have another pint of Rattle-Skull,\(^{128}\) innkeeper.” or “What scoundrel ate all the damn peanuts?” If I were present, my thought would be, “It was the Green Wienie, since he’s nowhere to be found.”

I have a lot to be grateful for. Tun Tavern was where bread pudding\(^{129}\) and the Marine Corps came together. It’s one of my favorite Marine Corps staples.

The USMC was the best time in my life. Of course, I avoided the Vietnam conflict. I’m sure going into combat would have changed my perspective. The Marine Corps instilled (pounded) discipline in to me. I needed discipline. I was a Detroit teenager.

The next few months were for preparing for a deployment. We were heading to the Mediterranean with BLT\(^{130}\) 1/8 on what was called a Med Cruise.

The 1/8 stood for First Battalion, Eighth Marines. I thought I was getting 1/8\(^{th}\) of a Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato sandwich, which didn’t sound like much. I was confused, at a young age.

\(^{127}\) **Necessary house** – The term used in the 1700s to describe the head, latrine, lavatory, toilet or bathroom. It was necessary!

\(^{128}\) **Rattle-Skull** – An alcoholic beverage of the 1700s.

\(^{129}\) **Bread pudding** – A dessert common in the Marine Corps. **Bread pudding** was served at Tun Tavern and became a Marine Corps favorite.

\(^{130}\) **BLT** – Military term – Battalion Landing Team. It’s also known as a Bacon, Lettuce & Tomato in the civilian world. It’s popular, if you like bacon. I ate a BLT while assigned to a Marine BLT, another unique incident in my life.
The Eighth Marines were an Infantry (grunt) Battalion. Other names were used for them, but there is no need to get into those.

My MOS was adjusted from Wireman to Radio Operator by the powers so I could be assigned as on a Forward Observer Team. Questioning an order was unacceptable. You did what you were told. “Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die!” Now I’m an expendable radio operator. I was told the enemy looked for radio antennas. It was like waving a bright colored flag saying, “Shoot me first!”

The ship we were on was a troop carrier, the USS Chilton, LPA-38. It had the nickname, Chilly Willie and was an amphibious attack transport. It was an older ship which earned a Battle Star in WWII, but I liked it. It was my home for the next year.

I carried a 25 pound radio on my back along with my own gear and two additional radio batteries, weighing about three pounds each. I love modern technology.

The mission of our Forward Observer Team was to hump with the grunts and radio in fire missions. They could adjust their guns for range and elevation and then fire.

I lived with the grunts aboard ship. Grunts have a different attitude than POGs. I learned to leave the grunt alone, Whether Marine or Army, grunts were bad-ass.

I was a POG, but when it was spelled Pogue, back in my day. I got along with the grunts, since I had to live with them. Many of the grunts could see I not only had to carry my own gear, but the additional weight of the radio with extra batteries. They didn’t sympathize, but I wasn’t looking for sympathy. I know of no Marine who would ever look for it. The grunts understood me and which was a big deal to me.

A grunt machine gunner had it much worse. They had to carry their own gear and some heavy machine gun equipment. This adventure made me appreciate the grunt. They still picked on and made fun of me. I did learn if a grunt befriended you, there was no better friend to have. General Mad Dog Mattis’ recent phrase of no better friend, or no worse enemy was meant to describe the entire Marine Corps. I felt it applied to the grunts I

131 LPA – Military term – Navy designation for a ship called, Landing Platform Assault.

132 Fire Mission – Military term – A communication which directs an artillery unit where to shoot their cannons.

133 POG or Pogue – Military term – An acronym for Person Other than Grunt in modern days. In the Vietnam era, it meant upper echelon personnel who were non-combatants. Grunts saw pogues of any type as inferior do-nothings.
served with. I have a deep respect for any military grunt. There was no better friend, or no worse enemy.
One fine day in Detroit, the white bar owner of Rob Fulton’s Bar in an African-American neighborhood, observed some young men in the parking lot, tampering with his car. The neighborhood was Belmont and Dingell.

The man pulled out a gun and murdered one of the young men. There may have been more to this, but I don’t possess the exact facts in this case because I wasn’t at the scene and I didn’t sit through any of the court proceedings.

The owner thought the youth trying to steal his car deserved the death sentence. How does anyone deserve to die over an inanimate object? Anger is a terrible thing.

The shooting started a disturbance which we dubbed the Belmont Riot. The powers didn’t like the word riot, but it’s a hard line of thought to change, when people see the devastation happening around them.

Humans go out of their way to help fellow humans in any type of catastrophe, whether they know them or not. They also react with anger and sometimes overreact when an event is perceived as wrong.

Capital punishment does not exist in Michigan. To kill a human for the theft of an inanimate object is deplorable. In the movies, most humans come back to life, but they have to be members of the Actors’ Guild.

Once you execute a human being for any crime, it’s over, whether the person committed the crime or not. To reverse the mistake is impossible.

A few of us younger coppers were assigned to Detroit’s westside on a temporary detail. Our mission was to quell the riot disturbance spreading because of the killing. The mayor of Detroit, at the time was at one end of Belmont with a number of clergymen, trying to get people to stop the disturbance.

Our gung-ho Inspector was at the other end yelling things like, “Charge!” He was a man who appeared to be privileged, but he was an African-American. He was his own man and conformed to his own ways. To tussle with this guy would be an error on the part of the person wanting to tussle. He was military oriented. His name was Inspector Gerald Hansen and was quite the opposite of our mayor.
We were assigned to the area for about a week on 12 hours shifts. The main actions of revolt were over in about two days. A group of people used a car to ram Fulton’s bar. They ransacked and destroyed the place. The bar was out of business. The kid was judged and executed, for attempting to steal a car. After the disturbance was over, everything went back to normal. The kid was still dead, though.

Once I was aboard ship, it dawned on me I should have joined the Navy instead of the Marine Corps. It appeared the Navy had it better in many areas. The food was better, too.

At first, because of boredom, I read every book in the ship’s library, which contained a total of 13. I then discovered dolphin watching, as a relaxing hobby.

The dolphins sometimes showed up to play with our ship, while we were sailing. I’d lie on the bow’s deck and look down at the water. Many hours were spent watching them swim a few feet ahead, as though they were racing us. This was one of my favorite visual activities.

On occasion, there were would be four to eight of dolphins breaking the water line in unison. It amazed me how wild animals could look as if they were trained to put on a show for humans by dancing in the water. I then came back to reality and realized humans, for their own amusement, capture and imprison them for the same purpose.

After a gruesome, Spanish ground operation with the 8th Marines, the powers assigned me to mess duty. Nobody wanted it because it was like a working party and was two weeks long. It was a crappy detail. I was assigned to work in the Bake Shop with an E-4 ranking Sailor whose name was John Foxx. I was a Lance Corporal, the backbone of working parties; an E-3. As a mess cook, I had the opportunity to wash all the pots and pans in the bake shop. I was Foxx’s personal working party. How exciting!

Over time, Foxx and I became close friends. He asked if I wanted to become a baker. The comment caught my attention. If the Marine Corps could change my status at will, then I would see if I could, too.

I got the job, but with the assistance of a Naval Captain and an Admiral. The job consisted of long hours and hard work, but agreeing would get me out of the rest of the grunt humping operations. It wasn’t quite skating, but it was a form of it. I avoided a lot

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Mess Duty – Military term – Temporary assignment to kitchen duties. It’s similar to KP in the Army.
of bullshit. John must have interpreted my subtle hints (*constant complaining*) about humping with the grunts.

He told me he was the lone baker on the ship, but the job called for a minimum of two. I asked him, “Who’ll wash all the pots and pans?” He said, “We’ll get another *jarhead*¹³⁵ in here to do those things for us.” I smiled and we shook hands. I was now a Marine baker working for the Navy.

As an ol’ *salt*,¹³⁶ coffee drinker from my morning paper deliveries, I wanted to take over the care of the galley’s coffee urn. In any branch of the military, no one would ever say, “No” to someone wanting to volunteer to do anything. I liked clean and shiny. I wanted to see what I was about to pour into my cup and drink. The urn was made of stainless steel and had one of those glass tubes in the front to let a person see how much coffee was left.

When I first took over the coffee duties, the glass tube had a thick residue on its surface. It appeared to have been painted black. The inside of the urn looked as though someone painted the surface black. By the time I was done with it, the urn looked brand new and the coffee tasted better. The glass tube was now clear and you could see how much was left in the urn.

I took pride in this urn. Around 0300 every morning, I would fill the urn with water and coffee grounds, then brew it. When the first Navy cooks arrived to start their breakfast shift, they were grateful having a fresh pot of good tasting coffee. It was hot and ready for them.

It made for a nice start of the day. All they had to do was stop by the bake shop and pick up a couple of Danish or doughnuts. Happy cooks were good cooks. I just made that up, but it was true. I was always happy when I had enough food in me and I wasn’t even a cook.

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¹³⁵ *Jarhead* – Military term – A slang nickname of a Marine. Marines would sometimes use jarhead amongst each other, which was acceptable. It was unliked when another branch or worse yet, a civilian, used the word. The term came from the fact Marines have close cropped hair. With the Dress Blues cover or any barracks cover, it appeared the Marine had screwed the cover on. There are other theories on how the term came about, but this was my favorite, of the time. It made sense.

¹³⁶ *Salt or salty* – Military term – In the maritime services, salty or an old salt referred to someone who’s been in the service or at sea for a long time. Salty also meant old or worn. Salty gears had wear marks from age on them. Salty (Marine) collar chevrons meant some of the black paint chipped off, showing the brass underneath.
Working in the bake shop had its benefits. One of them was we possessed the keys to the officers’ reefer. The reefers were below deck. In the civilian world, it means they were downstairs. The Navy and Marine Corps called their walk-in refrigerators reefers.

Growing up, reefer meant something else to me. While working with Foxx, we decided to sneak into the officers’ reefer to see what they had to offer our fine Naval and Marine officers. We wanted to make sure they were getting their officers’ worth. They had everything stored in their reefer, but reefer.

While Foxx and I were busy inventorying, we found some frozen lobster tails. We risked our lives for the good of the officers. We grabbed four tails for testing. This was to ensure they were safe for them to eat.

Each of our middle of the night lunches consisted of two large lobster tails, with clarified butter for dipping. We had baked potatoes and a veggie may have been involved, but I doubt it.

Veggies were low priority for young military men. Chocolate was high priority and has nothing to do with this little story.

For the moment, all I cared about was lobster. It was a good lunch to have around 0300, giving us time to relax and digest a bit before the breakfast rush.

Once again, I’d like to thank the taxpayers of the United States for the great food they paid for and provided us with. It was rare when we ate like kings, but it was appreciated.

Movie night on the ship was a joke no one laughed at. In most cases, the two hour movie would be two, one hour television episodes of either Star Trek or Mission Impossible. Both were popular TV shows of the 1960s. Most of us saw every episode three or four times some, before joining the military.

It was quite amusing when a movie was three reels long and the particular projectionist played them out of sequence. Since he couldn’t count to three, I imagine he’s a legal accountant today. Maybe he has a government job.

Foxx and I befriended the guys working in the engine room. Their area was like walking into a furnace. It was hot, dirty, oily, dirty and hot. I learned bringing these Sailors a tray of donuts or sweet rolls would get us invited to one of their engine room meetings, heat and all. There meetings were more like a party.
At one of those meetings, I met another Sailor who was the one of the ship’s projectionists, but not the one unable to count to three. He had a projector setup in the engine room and some films. The Sailors hung a white sheet on the bulkhead. Someone opened a fifth of some kind of liquor, stolen from Officer’s Country.

The movies were porn. It’s just what 18-19 year old males needed, while drinking on a unisex ship. We were primed for liberty, though. *Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die.*

While out at sea, we came alongside another ship. I asked a Sailor what the ship was for. He said it was a *gedunk*\(^\text{137}\) boat. He told me the two ships will be tied together while underway. We could then board the gedunk boat and spend our money.

After I spread the word to my fellow bunk mates, we formed a line outside to be first to get on the boat. I noticed right away, only Marines were lining up. No Sailors were there. The horrid truth came out. The ship next to us was a refueler, not a gedunk boat. There were no candy bars or comic books, only diesel fuel.

The Navy personnel were busy laughing their *asses* off. Different military branches like to tease each other on occasion. I think it was required under federal law. The competition was fun, but sometimes could be annoying. Beware, if the *shit hits the fan*. We may have been on different teams, but we were all on the same league and played well together, when necessary.

As our task force was getting ready to assault the beach, the announcement came over the ship’s *IMC*\(^\text{138}\) stating, “All Marines, on deck. Prepare to man your boats and standby for *debarkation.*” I thought, “Are they going to push us overboard?” I hated the word *dismembark or debark.* The only bark I was interested in was a dog’s.

None of us wanted to be on any of the first boats for the beach assault. We could be on one of these horrible craft for a number of hours. They were flat bottomed boats which are uncomfortable in choppy waters. They were called Mike and Higgins boats. To be one of the first troops to board a landing craft was something to be avoided. All Marines and weaponry had to be loaded onto the boats, prior to the beach landing. The boats

\(^{137}\) **Gedunk** – Military term – Pronounced (GHEE-dunk) referred to the junk food store on a naval ship. In the civilian world it was called a candy store or a sweet shop.

\(^{138}\) **IMC** – Military term – It stands for 1 Main Circuit, the PA system aboard a Navy ship.
would drive in circles near the ship, while waiting. Once all boats were loaded and in the water, they would head to the beach as a landing force, together.
Chapter 27 – For my next act…

Like the Marine Corps, the Police Department had working parties. In the civilian, para-
military world of police, they called it a special detail. There were plenty of details and
most were good. I was assigned many times to Olympia Stadium, Joe Louis Arena and
Tiger Stadium.

At all venues, we were assigned an incoming and outgoing traffic post. During the event,
we would go assigned inside the arena or stadium for our inside post. This gave us the
opportunity to watch most of the game or event. While the event was going on, we just
stood around and looked pretty.

One sunny, Sunday afternoon at Tiger Stadium I was assigned to work with the bleacher
creatures, as the customers were referred to. It was a great day for a ballgame. The
Detroit Tigers were playing somebody else. The team names were unimportant to me.

The bleachers had the most colorful fans and I enjoyed working there. Of course, my job
sometimes consisted of ruining other people’s fun. Maintaining order was my job, was
what they said.

I was standing in the upper deck when someone in the stands inflated a three foot beach
ball. The fans started to volley it around. Things like this would occur when the game on
the field was slow and boring. My job was to catch the ball, deflate it and take it behind
the stands for disposal. After a few minutes the ball came towards me and I volleyed it.
The ball bounced off my fingertips as I tried to retrieve it.

The powers now had photographic evidence of me on national television. I heard my
supervisor, Lt. Stacy hollering for me over my PREP radio to meet with him behind
home plate right away. He was on the opposite side of the stadium when he saw what
appeared to be me volleying the ball.

I’m in trouble now, I thought. As I walked down the steps, everyone stood and started
cheering and applauding me. I received a standing ovation by the entire upper deck of the
Tiger Stadium bleachers.

I also noticed the fans were standing and cheering in the general admission section on
both sides of the bleachers. The cheering was spreading throughout my half of the
stadium. Mob psychology was real. “How awesome,” I thought. It was my 15 minutes of
fame, even though it only lasted about one minute. I was smiling and waved to my fans, as I left to meet with my boss.

When I hooked up with him, he began by saying, “What the hell were you thinking?” I explained to him I tried to grab the ball, but it was large. It hit my fingers and bounced off. It was my story and I stuck to it. I still do. All he said was “do it again and you can find another quality detail to work.” He sent me back to my post.

Not many can claim they received a standing ovation at Tiger Stadium without doing something spectacular or being a rock star? I can.

Another time, while working at the stadium, I was assigned inside the park for the entire game. Before the start of the game the players had batting practice. A well-known player for Detroit had the name of Kyle Gilbert He was good at hitting and smacked a lot of balls over the fence.

During batting practice, I would hang out in the empty left field stands to retrieve about four of his practice, homerun balls. I wanted more, but I had to maintain a proper uniform look. I shoved one into each front pocket of my trousers and held onto the other two.

I’d look for a kid who looked like he could use a pick-me-up and give him one of the balls. I’d do this until I got rid of them. Kids at the ballpark were poor back then. Nowadays going to a ballpark, you have to be well to do, but it will make you poor.

One afternoon, a kid was near the dugout and had a ball in his hand. He was about 10 years old and with his dad. This kid saw the famous Tiger slugger, Kyle Gilbert, near the dugout and asked him to sign his ball. What I heard shocked me. The famous slugger said, “They need to pay me more, if they want me to sign autographs.” This was the exact moment I renamed him Jerk instead of Kyle.

Jerk walked away. The look of disappointment on the kids face was unbearable for me. I have always been the champion of the younger people and decided I had to step in and do something. I walked up to the duo and asked the dad if I could see the ball for a minute because I knew one of the Tigers and would get it signed for his son. We were still behind the dugout.

The dad told his son it was okay to hand me the ball. I called to my friend on the field. He came over and I handed it to him. I asked if he would sign it for the kid. He looked over at the kid, whose eyes were welled up and red. He smiled and said sure. He took the ball into the dugout and returned after a few minutes.
He handed it back to me and asked, “Is this good enough?” The ball had signatures on it from Lance Parrish, Alan Trammel, Lou Whittaker, Chet Lemon, Darrell Evans, Sparky Anderson and Jack Morris. I inspected it and Jerk Gilbert’s name was omitted. “Good,” I thought to myself.

I handed it to the man’s son and said, “How’s this?” Wow! You should have seen this kid’s face light up. Thanks Jerk. You made a young man see his hero for what he truly was, a jerk! Some people, who became rich because of their fans, seem to have forgotten who paid their salaries.

While living a fun life aboard a Navy ship, my baking shift consisted of 24 hours of on-duty time, then 24 hours off. Foxx had the same shift, but on opposite days. This type of schedule was bad on your sleep pattern, but good for the powers in charge.

Cooks and bakers had a special fringe benefit of unlimited liberty, meaning we could leave the ship any day, during liberty hours. Most ships used port/starboard liberty.\(^\text{139}\)

A military uniform had to be worn to disembark (be pushed off the boat). Returning, we could come aboard in civvies. I figured they were happy just getting us to return, no matter what we looked like. Due to the difficulty of walking upon our return to the ship, crawling up the gangplank was the usual procedure.

When in port, our baking consisted of opening ten #10 cans\(^\text{140}\) of fruit cocktail. This was faster than preparing a baked dessert for lunch and dinner. We still had to come up with 400 loaves of bread a day, used for toast, dinner and sandwiches. We were both young and did everything in our power to get off and away from our ship. We took advantage of our unlimited liberty status when we could. We baked the bare minimum. Less work meant more play. Is anyone interested in a bowl of fruit cocktail?

One of our jobs was to make sure we made enough Danishes and sweet rolls for the privileged, the Captain of the ship and the Admiral. As the flagship we had all the VIPs on board. I kept them full of donuts and sweets. It seemed to please and keep them out of our hair.

\(^\text{139}\) Port/Starboard Liberty – Military term – Liberty from a ship required half the personnel to stay aboard to maintain the ship’s normal operations. One day those who slept on Port (left) side received liberty, the next day would be the starboard side.

\(^\text{140}\) #10 can – Military term – A can of kitchen product containing multiple servings. The size of the can is about 109 ounces, about seven inches tall and 6 ¼ inches in diameter.
One day, some shitbird Marines screwed up enough to get all of us restricted to the ship. Marines screwing up was something I found hard to believe. Although assigned out to the Navy’s bake shop while aboard ship, I was still a Marine and restricted, thanks to my fellow boneheads Jarheads.

My partner Foxx was leaving for liberty one afternoon and said, “Since you’re done with the baking for the day, let’s go out together.” I reminded him I was a Marine and restricted to the ship. His answer was he knew, but had a great idea.

He managed to get a hold of a Navy dress white uniform with the seaman rank on the sleeve. How fitting, I was an E-3 and so was the Navy seaman, who loaned me the uniform. Foxx helped me with the uniform and said, “Whatever you do, salute the Officer of the Deck like a Sailor.

Bend your hand a little at the wrist and smile. If you act like a Marine and they’ll discover you in a second. The Officer of the Deck was a Navy commissioned officer who worked the gang plank of a ship, while in port. As you were leaving or coming aboard the ship, you had to salute the OOD and the Ensign (American flag).

Petty Officer 3rd Class Foxx and Seaman Alexander left the ship together. Oo-Rah! Coming back aboard was much easier, thanks to beer. I stumbled up the gang plank in my Navy uniform, gave the OOD a crooked salute and a smile and found my way back to my quarters and rack for some much needed sleep.

Some grunts watched me return in my Navy uniform while a bit trashed. I remember one grunt Lance Corporal, smiling when he said, “Out skating tonight, Sailor? I changed back into a Marine Uniform and returned the sailor uniform to Foxx. It was a good night. I was a Sailor for about 10 hours and neither one of us got caught.

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Shitbird – Military term – Is a Marine who is a total undesirable or screw-up. He was a jerk or just a plain asshole. He’s still a Marine, but was looked down on by his peers because a shitbird caused additional work or duty for a hardworking and dedicated Marine.

OOD – Military term – Either Officer of the Deck, in the Navy or the Officer or the Day in the Marine Corps. It was an extra detail similar to the Enlisted Man’s Guard Duty.

Ensign – Refers to the flag of the United States of America. It is also the lowest commissioned officer rank in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. The term butter bar may come to mind.
Drinking beer and wearing those crackerjack pants with 13 buttons was annoying. *Head*\(^{144}\) calls were a problem. Maybe the Marine Corps wasn’t so bad, after all. We had a lot of outdated equipment, but we had zippers.

The grunts were a strange group of people and I liked them, except when they tried to teach me how the game of poker. I was interested in learning, but I learned from the beginning, giving fellow Marines cash was not in anyone’s best interest.

Every time they offered to teach me how to play, their first question was, “How much money do you have?” There was my lesson. To this day, the only card game I have extensive knowledge of is *52 pickup*.

While underway, I enjoyed my relaxing hobby of laying down at the ship’s bow and looking over the edge. The bow, slicing through the water as the ship floated forward always had interesting sights.

The water was crystal clear and had the deepest blue color I have ever seen. As our ship knifed its way through and churned up the water a bit, it caused what appeared to be light blueish-white foam. It wasn’t scummy, but salt water always seemed to stir up the air bubbles. With the deep blue color and the white of the air bubbles, it was very pleasing on the eyes. Dolphins, my favorite sight, were a bonus.

One day we sailed into a large storm, causing our ship to roll to the point of frightening the senior Officers. *They* were worried about capsizing. I was eighteen and invincible. I had no worries. I was *SuperDude*!

During severe weather, even a veteran of the seas could become seasick. Some guys found if you wanted to feel the least movement, you could go to the center of the ship at the center deck.

I liked movement and adventure. Even sleeping, I loved the rocking of the ship. It was comforting. Not so much in storms, though.

I found the laundry room at the rear of the ship and below the *fantail*.\(^{145}\) They had giant laundry bags filled with dirty clothes. They were large enough to fit a small truck into

\(^{144}\) *Head* – Military term – A naval term for the bathroom or latrine. The name came from the old naval days where the sailors would relieve themselves. On board ship, it was forward, at the *head* (*bow*) and on each side of the bowsprit.

\(^{145}\) *Fantail* – Military term – the rear of the ship; the stern, opposite of the bow.
one. I wondered what the washing machines looked like. Or did they use scrub brushes and do it by hand? I never found out the truth.

The filled laundry bags were fun to sit on. As the ship rode down a wave, the fantail would rise up many feet and then drop. This would cause a person to become weightless for a moment and then come smashing down on the dirty laundry bag. Painless fun was difficult to find.

It was like a giant trampoline and it took the mind off of seasickness. Some intelligent Navy officer made us stop having fun. It was the commissioned officers’ primary purpose in the military.
Chapter 28 – The $1.00 bid is not a drill

I was assigned out to Police Headquarters to work the public auction. It was a good detail, but required manual labor from me. A police auction was held to sell off unclaimed, recovered stolen property. Tires, batteries and bicycles topped the item list.

Most of the attendees at an auction were professional bidders looking for a deal for their stores. They liked to buy in bulk and save money any way they could. My instinct told me these guys would cut each other’s throat to make a buck. In my mind, I referred to them as vultures.

This particular day a lone 12 year old boy showed up. This kid was going to compete with these high bidding, vultures. He was quiet and sat throughout most of the auction. When it was time to auction off a nice looking bike with the Schwinn brand name, the 12 year old boy spoke up and bid 50 cents.

Most opening bids for a bicycle started around $10.00. It was a low bid. This bike was equipped with all the bells and whistles. Most bikes sold for about 50 to 100 dollars and higher. One of the pros bid 75 cents. The sergeant said, “I have 75 cents. Can I get a dollar?” Everyone was quiet. The boy bid $1.00.

The grumpy old sergeant, running the auction, stated, “I have a one dollar bid on this fine bike, can I get $1.50?” The vultures were silent. I couldn’t believe this was happening. The look of excitement on this boy’s face tore at me. The gymnasium was quiet. You could hear the mice scampering around behind the walls.

The sergeant broke the silence with, “$1.00 going once, going twice…” There was a short pause. The sergeant banged the gavel on the podium and pointed at the boy, saying, “Sold, for $1.00, to the young man in the plaid shirt!” He was dramatic and loud, to make the point.

The dealers at the auction stood and applauded the young man who took possession of his new $1.00 investment. What a reward to see the look on the boy’s face. The bike was worth about $400.00. It was great to feel good about being at work and to witness a genuine smile. The grumpy old sergeant felt so, too. His smile was bigger than the kid’s. I was sorry for thinking of those bidders as vultures. We were all kids at one time.

In police work, it was rare to see a genuine smile on a child’s face. When the opportunity was there, it was fantastic and the multiplication factor was about 100 times. For a first
responder, children can be a terrible source of pain. It was another good day in the City of Detroit.

One mild October evening and we were patrolling the westside. My partner was driving down some of the local side streets, when I asked him to slow down. I wanted to talk to a kid, out walking at 2300 hours.

The youngster was around 14 or 15 years old and I called for him to step over to the scout car. He took off running and I jumped out to chase him. He jumped over two fences and slipped and fell, giving me the chance to capture him. He would have gotten away, if he hadn’t fallen. Kids are fast.

I grabbed him, while rolling on the ground. I didn’t hit him, but I managed to get him under control. I asked, “Why did you run?” His answer hit me hard, like a punch in the face. It was, “Because you chased me and I thought you were going to beat me up.” He told me his name was Carlos and he was walking around because he was bored.

Since he was a juvenile and I took a liking to him, I drove him home. I can never forgive myself for playing by the rules. The truth came out and I learned the family he lived with had taken him in as a runaway. He ran away because of abuse in his family. My intuition said to leave him with this loving, unselfish woman and mother.

Instead, of following my intuition, I followed procedure and took him to the Youth Bureau. It was my job. He was a ward of the court. I asked the youth officers to treat him well. He committed no crime. They treated him like any other criminal going through the system.

I never saw the kid again, but I swore I would always follow my intuition, in the future. To hell, with the rule book! I went home while trying to juggle in my head how to go about adopting this boy at 15, while raising a daughter around the same age and a son who was about eight. The feelings I had for him were unbearable. I never saw him again. I realized it was my job to be a prick, but I still think of the boy. Why is it I question my choices in life?

I had the opportunity to violate a similar procedure, in the future. I was assigned to the westside on an execution of a search warrant. It was a drug raid performed by the FBI. They needed us there as a uniformed police presence. When we raided the house, we found children inside, wearing soiled, wet diapers. The kids were filthy and there were human and dog feces on the floor. I mentioned to the FBI the conditions for the children
were horrible. I was told to ignore it, as the mother of the kids was a drug dealer, but a
good informant, too.

After we left the FBI, we drove to lunch. I went into a phone booth and called the Social
Services Department and reported what I saw, but as an anonymous caller. Today, they’re
known as Child Protective Services. They assured me they would visit and take the
necessary action for protect the children.

I followed up with Social Services a few days later and learned they had pulled the
children from their nasty environment and placed them in a foster home, together. My
heart hurt for them. It was no way for a child to grow up. I was not about to let another
helpless kid suffer due to bureaucracy failure. I hope my actions did those children well,
in the long run.

It was about 0200 and the ship was in rolling waters. I was at work, baking the usual 400
loaves of bread for the day. The ovens were like the old style pizza ovens with a pull
down door.

A fuse blew, knocking one out. I opened the oven’s control panel and used the hook of a
metal spatula to pull out the dead fuse.

As the ship rolled, the spatula slipped out of my hand and fell into the open access panel.
It must have crossed something because there were sparks. I was unable to stop it. *Crap*,
it was an electrical short. I knew enough about electricity, not to play with it. I saw a
Sailor walking by, on watch. I called for him to see if he could call an electrician or do
something to help out. He saw the sparks and *pulled an alarm.*

Most of the people aboard the Navy ship at 0200 are sleeping. All of a sudden the 1MC
started blasting the *General Quarters* alarm. A voice called out, “All hands, general
quarters, this is not a drill. Man your stations! Fire, fire, fire in the galley! Deck four,
frame 54. Fire, fire, fire in the galley. Deck four, frame 54. This is not a drill! This is not
a drill!”

The alarm awakened all hands. People were running everywhere. I caused a *helluva* stir
which made me realize the power I had. I was able to cause a large scale disturbance with
a spatula and wake up an entire ship of 3,000 men. It’s a powerful statement and spatula.

Everything was back to normal about two hours later. I asked Foxx, the next day, “What
was the big deal?” My thoughts were the ship was made of steel and couldn’t burn down?
Foxx said, “We have insulation everywhere, which is flammable. We also have a lot of ammunition and fuel. Stepping out onto the porch for a breath of fresh air was impossible on a ship. Suffocation is an uncomfortable event. There are two things Sailors dislike to play with.” I had to ask, “What are they, John?” Foxx said, “Fire and water. You don’t play with those two things. You learn and respect them.”

While living aboard ship, my mother had written. She told me a letter arrived addressed to me from the United States Selective Service. I wrote her back and told her to throw it away. She later received another letter addressed to me from them and forwarded it to me.

I opened and read it. I discovered I had been drafted and was ordered to report for induction. The government came up with the lottery to help repair their flawed draft system. My number (35) was chosen. The government stated they were going to issue a warrant for my arrest for failing to report.

I wrote the Selective Service on the ship’s Marine Corps stationery and told them I would be happy to report, when I got off their damn Navy vessel. I signed it, James Montgomery Alexander, Lance Corporal, USMC. I was a little upset when the Selective Service failed to write me back to thank me for updating their new and flawed lottery system.

A day or two later, I organized a ceremony on the ship’s fantail. A group of Marines and Sailors joined me for the draft card burning ceremony. Draft card burning was a popular protest during the Vietnam War. I was in, but against the draft. Even today, I avoid drafts.

We lit our cards and let them fly overboard, into the sea. There were six of us standing there laughing, while enjoying another fun day in the military. They called the draft a lottery and I was one of the first winners. I’m still waiting for my payoff. I won and never got the check. I signed theirs, though.

I returned to ship from liberty call while intoxicated, one evening. I had a bunch of pent up anger in me and decided to sink the ship. I thought I could do it. My brain couldn’t comprehend the fact the ship was five blocks long and made of quality steel. I tore mattresses, sheets and pillows from the racks and threw them on the deck. “This will cause it to sink,” I reasoned.

Lt. Murphy came in to try and control me. He grabbed me like someone would grab another’s lapels and lift them off the deck. Lt. Murphy picked me up, but I had no shirt or jacket on. I think he just grabbed me by my skin and lifted me off the ground.
He had every right to do this because I was acting like a fool. He was a commissioned Marine officer. I was surprised Lt. Murphy spared my life.

He restrained me with the help of some others. The Navy corpsman gave me an injection of chlorpromazine which rendered me useless. I spent the next three days in the ship’s hospital. Everybody was happy, including me.

The drug they injected into me also gave me some pretty things to see. I liked it when the gray tiled floor appeared to have water-like waves in it. The doctors think I may have been drugged while on liberty because of the hallucinations. The drug they used was designed only to calm a person. It’s what they told me, anyway.

Once they released me from the hospital, I was placed in the brig to serve my three days of bread and water (a Ninja Punch). Here’s where my Sailor friend came in handy. Three days bread and water can be boring.

We were allowed as much bread and water as we wanted (take all you want, but eat all you take!). It may sound good, but after the first day, you want something else to eat. Humans prefer nutrition and variety. This type of tasteless torture was used while 200 miles out at sea from any land, foreign or domestic.

Foxx possessed a wonderful talent of hollowing out a loaf of bread from the end. He’d then stuff in some peanut butter and preserves. He would then plug the hole up with the piece of bread he cut out. The food was good for my three days of bread and water. CPO3 John Foxx did his job well, while shorthanded and he worked less, too. Everybody ate a lot of fruit cocktail while I was eating peanut butter and jelly for three days. I thought it was a shame he couldn’t have slipped me some Kool-Aid. You can’t have everything, while in jail.

I imagine the Captain of the ship was happy once I was released from the brig. His morning Danish would be served again. I received three days bread and water which forced the Captain and Admiral to three days of coffee without the Danish. Look at the suffering caused by placing me in a cell for three days. I felt bad for being responsible for causing everyone’s dessert habits to change. I made it a point, to try and avoid jail, in the future. It would hurt too many people, including me. Nobody made the coffee for three days. The pot got dirty quick.

An announcement came over the 1MC for the garbage detail to man their stations. A bunch of guys were assigned to pull garbage and trash and place it on the fantail of the ship. It looked like a small mountain and took up much of the fantail. The fantail also
served as a landing pad for a large helicopter, which should give you an idea of the size of the area.

I asked a Sailor, “What are they going to do with all the trash?” He said, “Push it overboard.” I was assuming he was just having typical inter-service fun with me. I was appalled when I saw a frontend loader start pushing it over the rear and into the ocean.

What happened next was just as shocking to me, but fun to the guys who were doing it. Some Sailors came out with rifles and were shooting seagulls. The gulls were going after the floating garbage. The shooting was for target practice, but on live animals. I thought it was to control the birds, for some odd reason.

It did sharpen their shooting skills. I suppose it was a good military training thing. Later, some Marines got involved. All of this was done under the watchful eyes of some higher ranking people. Marines and Sailors sometime play rough together.

I’m grateful I wasn’t forced into any of these events. My reasoning for this activity was the dead gulls would feed some fish.
While on routine patrol, we received a police run to Hill and Tanner on a shooting. The shooting run was on my old, hard to collect paper route. It was around 2200. We approached and saw a crowd of people in the street, waving in panic.

There was a man lying on his back who appeared shot in the chest. A woman was on her knees next to him crying and calling for Jesus to save him. Instead of trying to stop the bleeding, she was punching him in the chest. It must have been some sort of TV thing, in the back of her head, telling her to do this.

EMS pulled up and the medics exited their rig to give this guy some much needed help. The lady who was crying for Jesus was still over the guy and hindering any effort to work on him.

Jesús Rodriquez, the EMS technician, tried to help, but he was blocked because of the hysterical woman’s theatrics. A couple of coppers had to pull her away from the victim, giving Jesús a chance to work on him, but it was too late. The man died.

There was an ironic point. The Jesus lady, screaming the loudest and hindering the medics, was later arrested and charged as the shooter. She was convicted of murder. No wonder she wanted the victim to live. The final punishment for attempted murder is much less than it is for murder.

If Jesus had helped her, he could have been implicated as a coconspirator. I wondered if Jesus would have let Jesús save the man’s life if the lady who shot him, stayed out of the way. I was confused.

After a couple of weeks at sea, we hit our first liberty port, Malaga, Spain. We were given a warning. Prostitution was illegal in the city. We were advised not to harass the women. The news upset a lot of the younger jarheads and squid. Not me, seeing the world was in my plan. Being in foreign lands was not like being at home. I wanted to absorb as much of the real world as I could. Of course if a gorgeous woman around my age needed someone to walk with her, I was available.

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146 Squid – Military term – A derogatory nickname that the Marines used to describe a Sailor.
Malaga was a beautiful town on the Spanish coast. I did the usual touristy stuff. It was a good feeling being off the ship, but it was just like taking off roller skates. I had sea legs. Weeks of rocking and rolling on a ship, forced you to walk funny.

Our next liberty port was on an island off of Spain called Palma de Mallorca. To me, this was a party island. All I saw were nightclubs, party venues, bars and not much else. This island was the perfect place for a jet setter, a new term for young, rich folk who travel around the globe. The jet aircraft just came into existence.

While in Europe, I went with a friend with the intention of getting a tattoo. I wanted a simple USMC on my upper right arm. My friend went before me and when he came out he showed me his tattoo. It said, “Vietnam 1967-1968”. It looked nice, but my eye caught the spelling. The artist misspelled the word Vietnam.

I had a sudden fear of receiving a USMC tattoo spelled Music, MUSC or something else. To this day, I have no tattoo. They were too permanent for my liking.

Nice, France, a city right next to Cannes was our next liberty port of call. I had my first casino experience and gambled. I used $5.00 to purchase Francs and cashed in my slot machine winnings for $15.00. In 1970 it was a good amount of spending money and I was a teenager on my own.

When guys stayed aboard ship in liberty ports, I’d ask them why and the general answer was to save money for their future wedding or some other lame excuse. I’d ask them, “Where are you going on your honeymoon, Europe?”

I loved those guys. I borrowed money from them all the time. I wanted to see Europe and I assumed this was my one chance. I saw, I enjoyed and I haven’t been back. I’m glad I borrowed the money. I wonder if any of those guys ever saw Europe. I hope so, but unless they were rich, they didn’t. I hope their marriages worked out for them.

Our next stop was Villefranche-sur-Mer. We were to be anchored there for about a week. What an impressive place. I had just spent a week in the ship’s hospital with strep throat and this was to be my first liberty since healing. I couldn’t drink, due to antibiotics. I was susceptible to the strep thing during my young years and it wasn’t one of my favorite illnesses.

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147 Sea-legs – Living aboard a ship, there was always movement. You learned to walk with the ships rocking and rolling. When you disembarked and were on dry land, you found it difficult to walk and maintain balance for a short while.
All American military personnel would have been shocked to see this sight in the 1970s. U.S. military personnel were unpopular and unliked around the world.

What we saw next was surreal. The ship had to anchor away from the port due to the water depth. We were ferried to land using our landing craft and when our boats arrived at their docks, hundreds of French people, waving both French and American flags, welcomed us with cheering.

I later found we were one of the first U.S. ships to visit this town in many years. Some guy named Charles, in charge or something kept Americans from coming around for a while. Maybe no one told the citizens we were in Vietnam. Wait! France fought the North Vietnamese. Whatever the reason, this was one of our best liberty ports. It was my favorite. I think their enthusiasm was a left over love from their liberation by the allies during World War II.

What a wonderful place. I was invited to dinner on four different days by different families. I was introduced to girls (daughters/cousins, etc.) around my age and invited to sit next to them at their family dinner tables. I still couldn’t speak French and many of them couldn’t speak English, but it didn’t matter.

Before the visit to this town, my whole time in the military seemed to be consumed with the feeling of being unappreciated by my fellow Americans. Coming here was one of my most happy events. I’m saddened to know those who took me in, fed me and treated me with respect are now gone from this planet. I will forever be unable to thank them for the warm and fond memories I have of them. It’s something I will always regret.

The last day in this town found me on the beach, in the late afternoon. I had just arrived ashore after preparing the lunch dessert for the crew and escaping the ship. I spotted a drunken Marine I knew. He was on his way back to the ship. As a typical young Marine, he was trying to score with this French woman in her 20s, wearing a bikini and sitting on the sand. He was annoying her. I intervened and got him away. I made sure he was on a Mike boat for the ride back to the ship. I went back to the girl, still sitting on the beach.

She spoke no English and I spoke no French, but we walked around, holding hands while she showed me her home town. I enjoyed my time with her. It was the first time I was

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148 Mike boat – Military term – A ramped landing craft with a couple of large diesel engines. They are a larger version of the WWII Higgins boats. In theory, these flat bottomed boats were supposed to reach the shore and drop the ramp.
ever with someone I was unable to speak to, but there was plenty of communication. I
had a small gold ring my girlfriend (the snake) gave me before I began my tour.

The French girl liked the ring and I gave it to her. She gave me the ring she was wearing.
It was a Norwegian coin and converted into a ring. I had a great day with her, but like all
good things, it had to end and we went our separate ways.

The ring she gave me was later stolen, while I was in the ship’s shower. At the same
time, the thief also stole my underwear, towel and shaving kit. I later told the snake her
ring was stolen, while I was in the shower. Case closed.
Chapter 30 – Liberty Call: Rome, Athens & Auschwitz

I’ve been missing all of the Marine Amphibious Operations, while with the Navy, baking cookies. This is not a complaint. I thought there would be no sense in telling you about the operations I wasn’t on. I didn’t see anything. They were gruesome and uncomfortable, at the same time. Trust me; I’m sure I’m accurate.

Our next liberty port was Genoa, Italy. This was town for adult, world travelers and the rich. There were so many fashionable things to buy. Most of the rich people seemed snobby to me. It’s like they had the privileged attitude about them. I still liked getting off the ship, though. Freedom of movement was a wonderful thing.

We later sailed to Naples, Italy. It was during a national election between 13 different political parties. I decided to get some exercise by doing a little bar hopping. After a few drinks, the false courage set in. I spotted a red flag flying from the front of a building. It was the flag of one of the parties running for election. I thought this flag would make a wonderful souvenir. In the corner of the flag was a gold hammer and sickle. I sensed some serious bragging rights here. The flag was mounted on a small pole, at the entrance of the building.

I went up the steps, grabbed it and ran, but someone saw me and a chase began. I was good at running, but those guys were right behind me. I decided to drop the flag, causing the guys to stop and pick it up. They just wanted their flag back. It would have been a great souvenir, if I had gotten away with it, but to die for it? Forget it. I didn’t want to die for the U.S. flag. Dying for a Communist flag was out of the question.

While we were in the Naples, the powers offered a three day bus tour to Rome. My first thought was, “I can stay out past midnight?”

I volunteered for the tour and I’m glad. It was Easter weekend. We were allowed to get off the bus anywhere we wanted as long as we could find our way back to the hotel or bus prior to returning to the ship. I jumped off near the Vatican.

To be in the Vatican around Easter is quite an event. I managed to make it inside the Basilica on Easter Sunday. What seemed odd to me was there were no pews.

I hooked up with a Catholic priest from New York City. I had a camera, but no flash cubes. We were indoors and figured we could coordinate our timing to utilize his flash with my camera. With the priest in front pushing through, I followed. He had to be a
linebacker in the seminary. We managed to push our way until we were stopped by Swiss Guard. They were in procession with the Pope.

We were within 10 feet of Pope Pius VI and tried taking some pictures. After the main festivities, we went our separate ways. I hope his photos came out. If mine had, I would’ve sent them home for safekeeping.

I found the tour bus, but jumped off again at the Coliseum, where we sat in the stands. Our tour guide, speaking perfect Midwestern U.S. English, told the story and pointed out certain sites in the structure. The story she told was about how certain people were put into the arena and hungry lions released to eat them. This was entertainment. People like to see someone else’s blood. This is the why cage fighting is becoming popular, today.

In the modern world, we have Major League Baseball. Their brawls cause 30 or 40 guys to bail out of their dugouts and get involved. These high paid players come out brawling (slapping?) each other. Is this to give the fans a show? Seeing a bloody nose or a black eye after a baseball brawl is rare.

Could it be about the money? I saw a fight between a few National Football League players. They were punching each other while they were wearing helmets and pads. Ow! I bet it hurt (their gloved hands). The richer you are, the less you bleed, except for hockey and cage-fighting.

I saw a European professional Lacrosse match on TV once. They got into a fight, but didn’t drop their sticks. They used them as weapons. I wonder if they still do. Hockey should pick up on it. They will as soon as they can balance the basics, the union agreement, the rules and how much money it will generate.

Living in a temporary position and out of a sea bag is difficult. I decided to send everything home except what was needed for everyday use. It didn’t quite go as planned and the house burned down.

When it happens, you lose everything. I had an old photo, which was a close-up of President John F. Kennedy. It was taken by me when I was 11 and the President was sitting on the top of the back seat of his white Lincoln convertible with Jackie.

The photo was a nice profile shot of the president, smiling and waving. It was the same with Jackie. It was a great black and white photo of the President and First Lady. They were entering Detroit City Airport, when I snapped the photo about 15 feet of the president’s car.
My original photo wasn’t as famous as *Abraham Zapruder’s* film of the president getting shot on 22 November 1963, in Dallas, TX, but it was an original and it was mine. I now possess no photos from my past.

Our next military operation was with the Greek Navy on the Isle of Crete. Although I was on loan to the U.S. Navy, I was assigned off the ship to assist my fellow Marines with their mess tent operations. It still was better than humping with the grunts. I remember one Marine, a cook who was mixing a giant vat of pancake batter. The cook used a device which looked like an oar to stir the batter. While stirring, a tiny toad jumped in and disappeared into depths. The Marine kept stirring, like nothing happened.

I spoke to the cook, saying, "A toad just jumped in the batter." He said, “Yeah, I saw it. Do you want to jump in and look for it? No? Then shut your face. If you think I’m going to throw away enough food to feed a battalion of troops because a tiny toad jumped in, you’re crazy. The little guy was under an inch long and probably high in protein.”

He continued with, “Look on the bright side. If you grab a pancake with a big lump, eat around it unless you want the extra protein.” It made sense, but when it was my turn to eat, I declined the pancakes and the shit on a shingle. INTPs are good at disliking something forever, if it didn’t seem right, the first time. It’s the reason I never eat pancakes. I believe I already stated my views of SOS.

It was during this operation I wished I had stayed aboard the ship. At night, we were all cuddled up in our floorless tents hoping the pouring rain would not start flowing in, when a tornado ripped through the compound. It tore up the field kitchen and a number of GP tents. It also dumped a lot of rain on us. We were all soaking wet. It sucked. I wondered if we’d still get our two free beers.

No one was killed. The taxpayers bought us new tents and replaced the damaged equipment. I was thankful for them. They came through for us again. I was even more thankful when I found no floor buffers were damaged.

Our next liberty call was in Athens, Greece, an impressive place, if you’re a student of history. I became one when I traveled to some of the ancient cities around the world. The ruins won me over. I had the opportunity to sit on the steps of the Parthenon and consume a can of beer. It was my way to honor the Marine Corps.

What we found in Athens was a go-cart course my buddies and I were interested in. Unable to speak Greek, we managed to communicate our wish to ride them. The universal language around the world is cash! The track wasn’t a boring oval track, like
most U.S. tracks, at the time. It had numerous twists and turns. The carts seemed to move faster than their U.S. counterparts. Those lawn mower engines were *kickass*!

Young Marines always took things to another level. We began playing chicken with each other and caused a few go-cart collisions. The owners got angry and we were asked to leave, I think. There was a language barrier, but the loud Greek words and numerous knife hands, managed to convey their feelings to us. It was fun while it lasted. I wonder if the ancients had go-carts in the Acropolis.

Before boredom set in, we all decided to back up and regroup. We found ourselves meeting in a bar. Marines and a bar? No trouble there. I decided to slip away with a friend. We both wanted a less noisy atmosphere.

We stepped into a small, but quaint pub. I ordered a rum and cola. It was a rum and Coke, but I am trying to avoid giving Coca Cola a free plug. I think my bud had a beer, but it wasn’t a Bud.

The person working the bar was an old, frail woman who spoke a little English. This was helpful since our knowledge of the Greek language was minimal. I imagined she was the owner of the place. After a few drinks and something to eat, we started feeling what most 19 year old males would feel. It was time for us to go and find a venue with younger people, as in young women. We asked the old woman for our bill.

She indicated there was no charge. Even as low paid Marines and teenage cheapskates, we were baffled and tried to force her to take some money. Why would this old, frail woman want to give a couple of foreign teenagers free booze and food?

What she did next shocked us. She pulled up the left sleeve of her sweater and showed us the tattoo on her forearm. She said, “I’m a Jew.” The tattoo was six numbers long.

She was liberated from the Auschwitz death camp by American Allies (*Russian troops*) near the end of WWII. She appreciated us. We could say nothing else. The woman got a warm and loving hug from both of us. The tip we left her was much larger than our dinner tab would have ever been.

We were now broke and we stumbled back to the ship. The sun was still shining. I’m sure it was shining brighter for the old woman. It was my hope. I was touched deep, meeting this old woman. It was better than being in the Vatican, and sharing a six pack of beer, with the pope.
There’s one image which will never disappear from my mind and it’s the image of the Auschwitz death camp tattoo on her arm. I wasn’t born yet, but I knew the seriousness of the name.
Chapter 31 – Medals, ribbons, flowers and love

On Veterans’ Day, police officers in Detroit were allowed to wear the military ribbons and medals. A guy came to work one Veteran’s Day wearing military ribbons on his cop uniform. He wore four cop ribbons on a daily basis.

This day, he wore four rows of ribbons, which included a Navy Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star and a couple of Purple Hearts. Police uniform regulations stated police ribbons are worn in rows of two. This would have been impossible for him. He wore his military ribbons in rows of three. He was wearing 12 military and four police ribbons.

The guy was a legitimate war hero. When I asked him about all the ribbons and how impressive they were, he shocked me with what he said. His response was, “If I take all these ribbons and go into a coffee shop and lay them on the counter, along with $2.00, do you know what I’ll get?” I said, “No, what?”

He said, “They’ll give me a cup of coffee, but the two bucks better be there. It’s what these damn things are worth.” I asked, “Why’d you wear them, then?” His answer was typical and a classical response, “Because I can.” I shook his hand and thanked him for signing the damn check, but I’m sure it didn’t impress him.

We were patrolling the neighborhood one Christmas Day. It was a rather slow day of the year, until people got drunk and into arguments. It always seemed holidays brought out the worst of the human race. The privileged enjoyed the holidays, though.

While cruising along, waiting for some evil thing to happen, the radio silence was broken with, “Radio, Alpha-1 is in a chase.” The dispatcher responded with, “All units stand-by. Unit in a chase, repeat your information.” The chase sounded strange, as there was no siren sound in the background; just the operator’s shaky voice.

The shaky voice came across again as, “Radio, Alpha-1 is chasing with a large man in a sleigh being pulled through the air by a bunch of animals. They look like reindeer. The man is a white male and large; possible about 250 pounds. He has gray hair, a beard and is wearing a red and white coat and pants. He’s also wearing knee high black leather boots. He has a large, bulging sack which may contain stolen goods.”

Alpha-1 was the radio call sign for a police helicopter. After a few moments of fun, the chopper broke in with, “Radio, Alpha-1, we lost sight of him.” At this point, the chase and our fun for the year were over.
Helicopters would respond to vehicular chases because they could keep up with a car which kept turning corners to elude the coppers chasing them. If the car thief had the knowledge, he could’ve driven in a straight line. The older helicopters would fail to keep up with a car traveling 100, plus miles per hour. The crooks were unaware of this.

Aviation units in police departments should be passé. Drones are much cheaper to own, operate and they’re safer. I suspect many larger departments are run by politicians surrounded by corruption and greed. They still use and need helicopters for their personal taxis, to impress people and waste more tax money. A helicopter can cost around a half million dollars or more. The crew of two officers adds an additional $100,000 or more per year, but I don’t get paid to think.

Once our Med Cruise was over, we headed back to Morehead City, North Carolina. This is where the Marines would disembark (be pushed off the ship, onto the hard dock) and we would then convoy back to Camp Lejeune.

People were protesting everything, during this era. For this reason our unit was chosen for Civil Disturbance Training. This training was typical, meaning we hated it.

It was form of crowd control. We’d form a line, side by side. We carried rifles with sheathed bayonets and marched with a stomp-step, hunched over with our rifles pointing at the crowd.

With 40 guys doing this at the same time, it was effective for moving a crowd of people. The stomp sound and discipline of the troops was supposed to have a psychological effect on people. It did.

If someone in the crowd threw something at us, like the burning tear gas grenade we tossed at them, we’d pick it up by the rim and throw it back.

Our unit was activated for a mission in Washington D.C. as enforcers and protectors of the government; the man. We were to be positioned around some government entity with bayonets on our rifles which were sheathed.

There were a few flower children sticking daisies in our rifle barrels. A young female, flower child placed one in the barrel of my rifle. I think the INTP in me came out. I asked her if I could have another one.

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Convoy – Military term – A line of military vehicles which travel together to reach a particular destination. It’s also a way for the U. S. government to screw up every day civilian life. The police word meaning the same thing is motorcade.
The flower child smiled and stuck a second daisy in my rifle. All I could do was smile back and wink. The troops with me were upset. They got one flower and it was from a guy. They were jealous. No ones’ rights were violated on the day, making me feel good.

After the incident was over, the Marine Corps decided I should be NBC Warfare trained. NBC was the military acronym for Nuclear, Biological and Chemical. To me this type of training was useless. If it came down to any of those three things happening, we’d all be finished, anyway.

I’ve learned a Marine or anyone serving in any branch of the military was expendable. During a war, it’s cheaper for our government, if you’re killed rather than hospitalized.

Medical costs are high. The military had a tight budget. If a serviceman or woman was killed, there was a one-time payoff for the family. The unit could then replace the dead person with a lower ranking new person. A job with any form of government labels you as expendable, except for politicians. They are VIP, although in my opinion, self-appointed.

One part of the training I disliked had to deal with chemical agents, such as nerve gas. Some kind of epi-pen was issued to protect us from the nerve agents (gas) which can kill in a matter of minutes.

For training purposes, the injection into our upper leg contained a safe, sugar or sodium solution. It’s what we were told by the U.S. Government. What I found laughable was the nerve agents were invisible, tasteless and odorless. They could cause cardiac arrest within minutes of inhaling the gas, but we were ready. We had epi-pens and as soon as people started to drop dead around us, we could inject ourselves. “Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die!”

Yep, it’s as safe as staring into a nuclear blast in the 1950s. I remember when DDT, asbestos and mercury were safe. During Vietnam, Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant was used. The chemical was safe. It’s what we were told. Artificial pesticides are safe, too. The EPA just stated a particular pesticide (poison) was now safe.

After a few months of fun with Alpha Battery, I put in a transfer to Bravo, 1/10. They were deployed to GTMO (Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, sometimes incorrectly spelled as GITMO). This was a six month tour, making it a temporary additional duty station and giving us extra TAD pay. When I left North Carolina in November, it was cold.
I had long, insulated underwear on when I landed in Cuba on a sunny and hot day. The air facility was on the Leeward side and the main base on the Windward side of the bay. We had to stand on the tarmac for about an hour while waiting for the Military Police dogs to check gear for incoming drugs. No matter where you go in the military, some dog will sniff your stuff; all of your stuff. Apparently, most smugglers hid drugs in their crotches and butts. The dogs seemed to do a lot of sniffing there. It was tough to stand at attention without smiling, while the dogs did their job.

When we got a break and I ran into the terminal to use the head. I took off the insulated underwear and disposed of it in a trash can before I passed out from heat exhaustion. Once I cooled down, I put my utilities back on. The stateside uniform consisted of a starched & pressed olive drab long sleeve shirt and trousers.

Some Cuban days saw the temperature reaching 110 degrees, in certain areas. GTMO had a different uniform of the day. We wore white t-shirts with long olive drab, unstarched utility trousers, bloused at the boots. This was a comfortable uniform for the climate. Short pants would have been better, but “Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die!”

Of course, we still wore the standard utility covers when outdoors. This relaxed uniform made life a bearable for us. Today, most American guys like to wear baseball caps, but not me. I never liked wearing a hat unless it was necessary to keep my head warm or to shade my eyes. In sunny Cuba, the covers we wore were functional and beneficial. We didn’t get sunburnt ears because we were allowed to seek out shade. We weren’t boots any longer.

We were issued two wall lockers. Our racks were battleship gray. It was refreshing having something not olive drab in color. One wall locker was used for our personal gear, which was a total mess. Mine was, anyway.

The other was used for inspections. We kept a complete inspection uniform, including spit-shined boots and all the other non-important things you need to present to some colonel or other high ranking officer. My theory was the powers needed to check and see if we remembered how to be a Marine.

Generals in the Marine Corps were my favorite people. The made it to the top. They no longer had to be mean. Most generals spoke to us like a grandfather would talk to his grandchildren. I liked generals, but there weren’t enough of them.
The reason for a General’s inspection was to see what shape our unit and equipment was in; to see if any items needed to be serviced or repaired and to gain information for the state of the Marine Corps.

Our regular leadership would hide broken and unserviceable items and present the good stuff for inspection, making themselves, as leaders, look good. We were peons. What could we say? We knew the real reason we always had junk to work with. Why does the word corruption come to mind?

As Marines fighting for the rights of others, there was one thing none of us had. None of us had the first amendment right to free speech. It’s strange how it worked. We passed our General Inspections and still had our inferior equipment, except for buffers. What a surprise.

There were plenty of good buffers in the Marine Corps. No officer ever asked to inspect our buffers. They were always hidden and were quality made machines which did not need to be inspected. My thought was they may have lasted longer with stronger motors. Once again, I don’t get paid to think.
When the Detroit Police Department had an Aviation section, they had a few of the old Bell-47 helicopters, the clear bubble covered helicopters similar to the craft used on the M.A.S.H. TV show of the 1970s and 1980s. They were fun to go flying in.

DPD later acquired three Bell UH-1 Iroquois (Huey) helicopters from military surplus. One was used for flight and the other two were for spare parts because helicopter parts were expensive.

One of the DPD pilots, Officer Ken Simmons said he flew one of the Hueys in Vietnam, when he was with the Army’s Air Cavalry. No one believed him until he spoke the serial number of the aircraft from memory, out loud.

The serial number matched. He also said he was shot at, while in the air over some Vietnamese village. The bullet hit the underside of the chopper. He pointed it out. The damage was repaired and patched over. The bullet missed everything vital for flight and also missed the machine gunner on board, at the time. This bird had an interesting history.

Ken’s helicopter was the one used for DPD flight. One day, Ken asked me if I’d like to go up in his Huey. He always referred to it as his helicopter. I suppose he earned the right claim it as his. It took a bullet while he was the pilot. Ken survived for 13 months in a country where we lost 58,000 Americans. I told him I would love to go up with him.

A couple of things made me nervous. One was the thought of disembarking. I wondered if I was going to be pushed off while hovering. The other was Ken was a warrant officer in the Army.

Once he got the Huey airborne, he went up to about 3,000 feet and said, “Do you want to see what this baby can do?” Ken failed to wait for an answer. He was going to show me, no matter what. He simulated a few attack movements. He’d swoop down on another aircraft from the rear, as though he was firing a missile at it. He also simulated shooting rockets at ground targets.

I think he was having a flashback. He flew the helicopter like it was part of his being. He was good at it.
A helicopter has an emergency procedure called an auto-rotation. Pilots practice this when they’re alone, as a rule. It simulates the engine failing. When a pilot auto-rotates, the helicopter drops like a rock. The angle of the rotor blade is adjusted to allow it to spin from the resulting wind during the drop.

As the chopper nears the ground, the pilot reverses the rotor blade angle. This slows the decent down and the helicopter settles to the ground, in theory. Ken demonstrated the art of auto-rotation.

Flying with Ken reminded me of the Marine Corps. Was I having a flashback? I’m a non-combat veteran. How could I have a flashback? I’m thankful Ken was kind enough to land instead of making me disembark, while hovering. He had the decency to put the machine on the ground, but gently. After I managed to force my stomach down to where it belonged, I thanked Ken for the flight and adventure.

While on the subject of helicopters, there was a bar in the vicinity of the airport the Police Aviation Section adopted. The bar would cash copper’s paychecks.

On the mirrored wall, behind the bar was a computer cartoon drawing of a helicopter. Below the picture of the chopper were the words, “First we drink, then we fly.” I thought it was funny, but if any pilot was drinking, I’ll be damned if I’ll fly with him. What goes up can fall back down. I know the exact saying is different, but my way worked for me.

Once we were released from GTMO’s leeward side, we hopped on a boat bringing us across the bay. At first we lived with the Marines from Marine Barracks, but in our own separate building.

As combat Marines, we were jealous of those Marines assigned to a Marine Barracks. They wore fancy, dress blues issued to them. They walked around looking rigid and sharp. They never had the fun opportunity to hump 20 miles through the mud with over 100 pounds of gear on their backs. They did it in training, but that ended when they were assigned to Marine Barracks. These guys were stationed at embassies and other places around the world. To us, their basic job was security and to look pretty.

I was deployed with a combat unit whose mission was to support the Marines of Marine Barracks and hold the base from the enemy Cubans, should they decide to overrun us.

It would take about 90 minutes for the mainland’s military to respond and retaliate. The Cubans could overrun our base in a matter of 15 minutes. This was an encouraging thought. It seemed I was safe, unless the Cubans wanted their base back.
When I lived in GTMO, there were about 200 civilian Cubans entering the base every day. These people worked here and have been doing so long before the Cuban Revolution or the Bay of Pigs. They were housekeepers and other service personnel serving the naval privileged.

It was my understanding the U.S. Government paid the Cubans their meager wages in cash. The Cubans would go back to their government who would then convert the American cash into pesos, making the money usable to them. Cuban officials liked U.S. funds. Their government would tax our workers 90% of their U.S. wages during the conversion. The Navy also hired a lot of Jamaicans to do service work for the privileged.

It was right around the time of Cuban Revolution, when our friend, Fidel shut the water off. The Navy sent down a desalinization ship, which could turn sea water into drinkable fresh water.

They later built a desalinization plant on the base. The Cuban government shut off our water and in retaliation, we shut off the electricity we used to send them. It was a two way street. The whole thing was like two kids arguing with each other. “Keep your water, but you can’t have any of my electricity, so there!”

Guantanamo Bay NS was a good base to be on if you had to be on one. There were plenty of activities to keep a teen busy. They had the U.S. military staple of alcohol, too.

GTMO had a television and radio station, along with one Cuban station. Whenever Fidel was on the TV, there were plenty of people around who could translate for us. Fidel appeared to like us troops and offered the U.S. military off-base liberty in Guantanamo City. Of course, the U.S. would never agree. The Cuban government just wanted the U.S. money.

Our own TV station, AFN had some weird programming besides safety briefs. When there was free time and the TV was turned on, we would be forced to watch 10 consecutive episodes of Queen for a Day. This was a real corny game show where a housewife would tell the audience her hard-luck story.

The show had an applause meter at the end. The winner was the woman who had the biggest sob-story and drew the most applause. The show would give her some token prize like a vacuum cleaner, a washing machine or car tire. It was lame.

After those 10 episodes, there would be 25 consecutive episodes of the old Dick Tracy cartoons. There was nothing of value on the TV in Cuba except for Fidel Castro, but he was unpopular with most Americans.
Once in a while, I would dress up and go to town. Many Marines kept a spare utility uniform starched and a pair of spit shined *boots* in their *Inspection* wall lockers.

Going into town meant going to the main, commercial area of the windward side of the base. The shops and stores were located in this general area. It was like the downtown area of a village. Base dependents lived around here. I wanted to look good just in case I ran into some young ladies, or even older ones. While living in and enjoying GTMO, I learned there was one woman for every 200 men. The weather was nice, though.

I noticed one thing while cruising around in my *sleep* jeep. When on an open road between two small, steep hills, I saw square metal plates (*manholes?*) on the road. After a while, I got a little inquisitive and asked what they were. I found out explosives were planted in the roadway.

They would be set off, if the Cubans tried to overrun the base fence line. Tanks and troops would be unable to advance. I asked my informant, “Couldn’t they just come through the hills instead of taking the roads?” I was told there were tank traps and mine fields everywhere but the roads.

During field training missions, we had these little flying insects about the size of a gnat. They came out in swarms and bit everyone between 1700 and 1800. We nicknamed them, *Teeth,* 150 These flies would bite the daylights out of us and then they’d disappear within an hour.

When needed, we were assigned to fence line duty. This was similar to guard duty, but in a combat zone. We would sit in an elevated watch tower (*target*) for four hours and watch. The Cubans on the other side did the same thing. They watched us.

We were armed with an M-14 rifle and five live rounds. We also had a metal case of 7.62 mm ammo. The case held around 200 additional rounds and was sealed. Our orders were to keep it sealed unless there were numerous bullet holes in the tower or the Cuban troops were coming through the fence.

A month or two later, all of our M-14s were swapped out for a new piece of *crap,* called the M-16-A1, a 5.56 mm automatic rifle.

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150 *Teeth* – In this book, they refer to the little flying gnats in GTMO which would come out every evening around 1700 hours for less than an hour. They’d show up out in the unpopulated areas of the base, the boonies. They were plenty of them and they bit you on your exposed skin. They were annoying, but seemed harmless. The numerous red splotches on your skin were about ¼ inch in diameter and would disappear within an hour. They weren’t itchy, but made everyone look like they had measles. 15 minutes later, it was all cleared up.
Entertainment, while on fence line duty would be an occasional stray bullet fired across by some bored Cuban troop. They just fired into the dirt, not at our towers. Sometimes one of the wild cattle would step on a landmine, making instant hamburger. This broke up our boredom and the tiny, wild critters had a high protein meal waiting for them when the dust settled.

On one assignment, I had the opportunity to meet the enemy, face to face, right through the fence. When I met a guy who could speak English, I wanted to know what was going on. The Cuban troops knew about as much as us; nothing! The Cuban troops were friendly and were peons like us.

What I found is they loved my Pall Mall cigarettes. Later, we would trade through the fence. I gave them cigarettes for genuine Havanas (*hand rolled cigars*). I would then sell the cigars to Navy and Marine Corps officers.

The people who liked the cigars placed no pressure on me for additional information on how and where I got them.

I tried a Havana once and got pretty ill. At first I thought I was getting high, but then I got sick. It was the worst thing I ever put in my mouth. We all have different tastes. One man’s garbage is another’s treasure, I suppose.

My fence line travels were nice because they were different. Going out to the fence line meant I had to drive by the main gate. The main gate looked typical of a military installation except for the concertina razor wire and cement vehicle barricades.

There were Marine sentries assigned to the gate. They lived in the small hut near it. The main gate was used for the crossing of the civilian employees. The sentries were assigned from Marine Barracks.

In front of the hooch, at the main gate was a giant Marine Corps emblem. At the time, it was the largest in the world. It’s painted on a 20 foot diameter cement circle.

When the Revolution started, Cuba cut off the water to the base. We became enemies. The Cuban troops would shine a giant spotlight at the duty hooch, as a form of harassment.
The Marines built a curtain wall, which hid the area. They then constructed a 20 foot cement circle with a Marine Corps **EGA** in it. One night, the spotlight came on and the Marines opened the curtain, displaying the giant EGA. The Cubans’ spotlight was turned off, never to be turned on, again. I had a picture of the emblem, but I sent it home for safekeeping.

The CO of the base was a rear admiral. The deck gun on the USS Monongahela which was used at the battle of Cuzco Wells in the Spanish-American War was placed in front of the main administration building.

The admiral had a sense of humor. The cannon’s name was Old Droopy. The barrel of it drooped from excessive heat. It didn’t melt in battle from over-firing, it melted when the ship it was mounted on caught fire and sank at the start of the 1900s.

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**EGA** – Military term – The Eagle, Globe and Anchor. The USMC symbol and logo.
Chapter 33 – They stole my stolen car

Working a one-man scout car was what I preferred. “21-43, make 14260 Daverston on a recovered car.” I went to the location and recovered an abandoned, stolen car. Many cars were stolen for joy riding or to perform a quick holdup. The cars were abandoned because the thief was either finished using it or it ran out of gas.

In those days, a one-man car would go to the run to verify the car was there and disable it, by disconnecting the coil wire. We would then call the Auto Squad, who would notify the owner and tell them where the car was and about the coil wire being disconnected.

What happened next was bazaar. The owner went to the scene to pick it up, but had trouble locating it. I went to meet the woman. Her car was no longer there. It was re-stolen. The new car thief saw the punched ignition, looked under the hood and discovered the coil wire pulled, reconnected it and re-stole the car.

A few hours later, I was dispatched to different location to recover another stolen car. When I got there, I discovered it was the same car re-stolen from the woman. This time, I removed the coil wire and put it in my pocket. I then called the auto squad. I reported I recovered the car again, but I wanted the complainant’s home phone number. They gave it to me and I called her.

I told her the location of the car and I would meet her there. I was one minute away and still carried in the busy status by the dispatcher. She wanted to meet at the police station because her nerves were frazzled by this time.

I complied and met her there. A friend dropped her off at the station to wait for me. She had her daughter with her who was about five years old. I had the woman sit in the front seat of the scout car, with the girl in the center. There was limited room, but she fit.

The car was equipped with a Plexiglas shield between the front and rear seat. This car was used as a two man unit and the shield was to keep the officers safe from a violent prisoner. To me, placing her in the back seat was like placing her in a filthy jail cell. The backseat had the odor of a gymnasium locker room. It was disgusting.

The scout cars were equipped with radios and other junk in the front, but at least the smell was tolerable. Kids like to look at all the stuff on the dash and around them in a police car, anyway. It was different than their everyday world. Since one-man cars were
supposed to disregard *hot runs*, there was no shotgun in the mount, giving the child some additional room.

While driving up Donner, I set up a few buttons and waited until I was alongside City Airport. With no other cars around, I pointed to a button on the control panel and asked the child to press it. When she did, the siren, mounted on the roof, blasted a long wail.

She was startled and released it right away. The wail of the siren decreased over a short period of time. It spooked both her and her mother, but at the same time it amused them.

“They’ve been through enough nonsense already,” I thought to myself. They needed a reason to smile and it took none of my personal time to do it. I looked at it as my way of serving the taxpayer. They helped put food on my table and paid for those good buffers while I was a Marine.

Once we arrived at the woman’s car, I decided to show the girl our high technology of the time. I called the radio channel we used to check people’s names and license numbers. I gave them the license number to verify the status of the car. The dispatcher responded with, “21-43, you have a stolen vehicle registered to…” He announced the woman’s name, address and vehicle description.

The little girl and her mother were impressed. I made sure the car would run. I showed the woman how to use a screw driver instead of a key to start the engine. I also made sure she had enough gas to get out of the neighborhood. The thieves were always nice enough to leave tools behind to restart the cars. I suspect the tools were stolen, too. She was the new owner of those.

This run was over, but a month later, I got a *pat on the back* letter from the Chief of Police, with a couple of other letters attached. One note of encouragement was from the Mayor of the City of Detroit. The other was from the woman with the stolen car. She was a vice president for a huge Detroit based corporate entity. A *pat on the back* is nice. It should be done often. There’s a suggestion which doesn’t cost a cent, but does a world of good for the worker.

Women were rare at GTMO, but I still enjoyed intermingling with them. The male privileged called them the *fairest sex*. It was one thing *they* got right. Most women are fair. It’s too bad the *man’s* world isn’t fair to them. Women were just nice to communicate with and I felt a need to be around real humans, the ones with compassion. I felt they were always above the men on the human scale.
I decided to go to the Marine BX (Base Exchange – a department-type store). I went into my inspection locker pulled out my inspection ready, utility trousers and spit-shined combat boots. I made sure I was clean and shaved. I wanted to look as good as I could in my crappy uniform.

I put on a clean web belt and the whitest t-shirt I owned. I made sure my brass looked like gold. For some odd reason, I felt like marching to the area and pivoting on my turns, while yodeling, “Er idel-left, idel-left, rye, left! Column right, hoo!” I looked good, but I avoided the dreadful marching, verbal thing. If any of my peers had seen me doing it, one of them would have pushed me into the swimming pool, while hollering, “Shut up, you boot asshole!”

For me, it was good to go into a BX to buy anything just to have a short and intimate conversation with the female cashier. The conversation was her telling me the amount of my purchase and me saying, “Okay,” or something similar. If I had the money, she would give me a nice, warm smile and tell me to have a nice day. Money talks, eh? It was her job to be nice, but I put it out of my mind. I took her friendliness as being personal.

The smile, whether real or required, was worth it. I looked sharp in my fancy outfit, but she’s already seen over a 100 other guys, earlier in the day. We all looked good wearing olive drab or Navy blue.

I wonder what those women thought of us low ranking, low paid Marines and Sailors. These women were the wives and daughters of higher ranking (and high paid) naval officers, the privileged, the dependents. We Marines and Sailors were just large group of horny, young guys with little money. The civilian pronunciation of enlisted man is, “horny guy.”

Even the Corps had their ten percenters. They were called shitbirds. They proved it to be true by being one to their fellow Marines. Many of the guys we worked and lived with were combat veterans from Vietnam. Some of these guys were in actual combat just a couple of months earlier.

Some of our non-combat fellow troops (shitbirds) thought it was funny to scream, “Incoming!” in the middle of the night. “Incoming” yelled in a combat zone meant rockets, artillery or bombs were about to hit the area. When the incoming warning was

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182 Horny – Having a sexual need and urge, as in 18 year olds.
given, it is a natural reaction for humans to scramble and take cover, no matter how futile.

Combat veterans would leap out of their racks and hit the deck made of concrete. I’d say it was post-traumatic stress disorder, but PTSD didn’t exist, yet. Many combat vets demanded the lower bunk to sleep. They got it, too.

When it came to someone hollering *Incoming*, I did my best to shame the offender. I’d *squeal* on them in a second. The Empath in me couldn’t handle the feelings of those combat vets and what some of these *shitbirds* put them through, as a joke. I found it deplorable, but wasn’t quite sure why. There wasn’t much I could do. It was entertaining to watch the offender get his *ass* kicked by a combat vet, on occasion. It was helpful in relieving the pressure of those uncalled for moments.

While living in the Marine Barracks area, we were fortunate enough to have an Olympic size swimming pool. We also had a weird dog. He was an evil looking, black German shepherd named Killer, who was on a permanent bad trip.

A year earlier, the dog was given some LSD, a popular and illegal hallucinogen available in the 1960s and 1970s. Ever since, he was on a permanent bad trip. It might have been a good trip. He’s never told us. Killer never complained and was quite playful in a violent sort of way. His main home was our 105 mm *gun park*\(^\text{153}\), but sometimes he would visit our barracks, Killer seemed to enjoy the swimming pool.

Here’s where the dog’s strange actions came out in the open. Killer liked to jump off the high diving board, which was 10 feet from the water’s surface. He found the low diving board, about three feet above the surface wasn’t quite his forte. Although he could climb up on the low dive, he needed someone to carry him up the ladder for the high dive. If he had someone to carry him up the ladder all day, he would have spent it at the pool.

Killer had another strange habit. If anyone threw a machete across the compound, Killer would run and retrieve it. He would then perform the typical dog ceremony of *grrring*\(^\text{154}\) it. Grrring was a thing dogs did with sticks, socks or whatever was thrown for retrieval. They would chomp down on it, start shaking it back and forth violently, while growling. We called this grrring.

\(^{153}\) *Gun Park* – A place where big guns (*cannons*) are placed, ready to fire.

\(^{154}\) *Grrring or grrr* – A dog’s celebratory act of carrying an item it retrieved and growling while shaking it back and forth.
Killer would do it with anything thrown. His favorite seemed to be a machete. His tongue had a lot of old cuts and battle scars in it from his past retrievals. He also did the same thing if you threw a sandbag half filled with rocks. He would knock himself silly, grrring it. Killer was a great dog who liked to grrr things. The dog did have a form of brain damage and was considered to be mental and not all there.

Killer had one other flaw, although the word flaw can be disputed. He was an alcoholic and hung out at a lot of clubs. His favorite was a Rum and Coke. I think Killer went into any bar willing to serve him.

Killer ignored the difference and frequented the Enlisted Man’s, the NCO’s, Staff NCO’s and Officers’ clubs. I think he begged and drank anywhere he could. He was a nice dog, but if you didn’t buy him a drink, he’d tear your arm off and grrr it.

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155 **Staff NCO** – Is a staff non-commissioned officer in the military. Their ranks included staff sergeant, gunnery sergeant, first sergeant and sergeant major.
Chapter 34 – Too hot for cars and horses

There were water spots from the misty rain on the scout car windshield. It was approximately 2200 hours in the D. Anytime there was rain, many thugs stayed home and got into arguments with their loved ones. Nobody wanted to get wet. A rainy day in the ghetto was just like a holiday. Everybody had to be cooped up and there were no presents to be opened.

We were driving slowly in the western direction of E. Bakersfield approaching Winston. It was quiet when shots rang out; two of them hitting the hood of our car, on my side. The issue was neither I nor my partner had a clue where the shots were coming from, other than the north.

There was no conversation between us, but we agreed this would be a good time to find a decent parking spot. We stepped bailed out of the car. It continued rolling until a tree parked it for us.

I was later written up for abandoning the scout car and causing damage. I mentioned to the boss a proper parking spot was unavailable. I’m grateful the city failed to charge me for the bullet holes in the hood. Those were placed there by our sniper. He was never caught, so they couldn’t pin the price of repairing the bullet holes on him. If they tried to charge me, I would have protested. I let the car hit the tree, but I didn’t shoot it twice.

The boss was more concerned about the damage to the car than us being fired upon. Just like being in the Marine Corps, I was expendable, as many of my adult jobs labeled me.

After the 1967 Riots, Detroit wanted to project a better image. They started community oriented projects, like joining citizens and police together, as a team. This was great for the honest people, but the criminals were still the same \textit{assholes}. They don’t play by the rules.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the city decided to hide offensive equipment on our cop uniforms to help project the better image. The \textit{powers} changed our shirt color from Navy blue to sky-blue. They believed sky-blue was a calmer color and the dark shirts were sinister. \textit{They} got rid of the Sam Browne cross strap because of the military, Gestapo look. I did like the strap as it took a lot of weight off my hips. It was functional.

This was done so \textit{they} could show the African-American people the white privileged were nice and to be trusted. \textit{They} felt the inferior should behave and stay in their place.
They were worried about another riot starting and costing them money and votes. They didn’t want another one which could spread to their expensive neighborhoods.

“The police now had the citizens’ cooperation,” said in a facetious manner. Many citizens failed to trust the police. We were still the man, working for the man.

It was another hot day in GTMO and I was off-duty. I decided to go horseback riding. I paid for my rental (hack horse) horse. The Jamaican guy led the horse out of the barn and I got on to ride him. I’ve been riding before and could control a horse pretty well, but this horse had a different idea. He wasn’t going to move and I wasn’t about to strike the horse.

After about 5 minutes, I climbed down and pulled its reins to walk him back into the barn. When the horse turned around and saw the barn, he ran for it. How amusing. I asked the guy for a refund.

The answer I got in his native accent was he was sorry and there were no refunds. “He could have told me before I paid,” I thought. It was hot. Horsing around was something the horse wanted to avoid. I gave up on the thought of horseback riding for the rest of my tour in GTMO. No horses rode me, either.

Marines loved their Corpsmen. A Navy hospital corpsman assigned to the Marine Corps wore the Marine uniform with his Navy rank insignia. They are virtual Marines, but assigned out from the Navy. The Corpsmen I knew were proud of their Marine uniforms. We all loved Doc!

My personality demanded a lot of alone time. As a Marine, alone time was hard to come by until I found the fun hobby of snorkel diving. Hiking in the mountains was another way of having alone time. Going on hikes was out of the question for most Marines, since it was done as training. They called it a forced march.

It rained heavy after a few months of living in GTMO. It fell on a day in May from 0900 until 0915. Twenty minutes later everything was dry. I remember seeing a dark cloud the day it rained. The skies turned to a beautiful bright blue with puffy white and happy clouds, after the rain.

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156 Happy clouds – A fine artist, named Bob Ross had a TV show which taught people how to paint a complete scenic picture in less than a half hour. His persona was of a kind and gentle man. He always stated there were no mistakes in painting and referred to happy little birds, trees and clouds. He was a former Air Force Master Sergeant. He was the tough and mean guy, in charge. One of the greatest things about this man was what he said when he retired from the Air Force. Ross decided if he ever left the military, he would never yell or raise his voice again.
Snorkel diving in the surrounding pristine Cuban waters was something I looked forward to. The tropical ocean had an abundance of wildlife. The INTP in me loves nature. Under the sea was the ultimate in nature.

We had protected beaches with artificial reefs built around them. This was to keep the larger fish away. There were also unprotected beaches, which had more of the wildlife. Both types of beaches had these little black, underwater animals called Sea Urchins. They were quite passive, but touching one was not recommended.

Sea Urchins were little black balls about an inch in diameter with thin glass like black spines with microscopic barbs. The spines were about four inches long and were for the animals’ protection. They looked like black golf ball porcupines.

If you were inquisitive enough to touch one, the barb would break and embed it in you. The barbs were similar to thin glass rods. I can tell you it takes about two years for your body to reject the barb. It’s what I was told, anyway.

Much of the island was about 50 feet above the water level. This was great for cliff diving. There were a number of areas with a good 30 or 40 feet of depth of water, making it ideal. Diving head-first wasn’t done, due to the height. The average Joe, like me, either cannonballed or went in feet first.

If we went feet-first, we learned to place our hands over our crotches, unless we wanted parts of our selves traveling up to our mouth through the inside of our body. It was worse if we were in the natural.

I don’t know what the ladies did, in the same situation. I would suspect they were more refined and avoided some of the (beer infused) stunts the guys performed.

Outside of our 155 mm gun park was an unprotected beach. I used to snorkel dive to the east of the gun park and explore the caves along the coast. My imagination ran wild as I searched for pirate treasures, among the rusty beer cans.157

Ocean wildlife can be dangerous at times. Snorkelers carried loaded spear guns for protection and for an occasional dinner. Shooting your dinner meant you had to get out of the water. The blood scent would draw shark to the area. The Cuban waters were loaded with shark and barracuda.

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157 Rusty beer cans – In the 1960s and 1970s, beer cans were made of steel instead of aluminum. They had to be opened with a tool. A can opener was dubbed a church key, but a pair of lineman’s pliers worked, too. Things were tougher back then and this was after the invention of flush toilets.
One afternoon, I saw an interesting rock formation about 20 feet under water. I made sure I had a lung full of air and swam down to have a look. Out of a dark crevice popped a moray eel with his mouth open baring about 1,000 teeth. I think this dark gray monster just wanted to scare me and he did a good job of it. He slithered right back into his hole. If one bit you, they clamped on, like a vice and would not let go until killed. This one was large enough to clamp around my thigh.

In my panic, I swallowed a large amount of saltwater and knew I had to surface fast. I needed air. I stayed away from those rocks on all future dives. The eel made it a point to stay out of my neighborhood and I stayed out of his, which worked out great for both of us.

I recently used a map service (Google Maps) and found many of my snorkeling and swimming adventures were in Communist Cuba.

A military person in civilian clothes (bathing suit?) caught in enemy territory can be shot as a spy. I was on the Communist side of the line. I was a spy armed with a loaded spear gun. I’m sure the Cuban troops would have seen my spear gun as a defense weapon against predator fish (a facetious remark). I wanted to write Fidel and apologize for my mistake, but I heard he died. I’m sure Fidel would have a limited recollection of me. I’m sorry, Raúl. No evil was intended. I am not a spy, but I won’t visit your country. Maybe I’ll visit North Korea.
Chapter 35 – Happy Thanksgiving

At times, a tactical officer was just like being a Marine on a working party. I was assigned out to an undercover job. The reason was because it was a job nobody wanted. First off, the unit name was Bluebird. The radio call signs were preceded by the word, Bluebird.

Yep, I was now an undercover bluebird. What a cute little name. There weren’t a lot of over-dosed, testosterone pumped up guys with guns, jumping in line for the job. The women officers avoided it, too.

I was a little excited about my first undercover gig. The basic mission of the Bluebird unit was to protect any citizens riding on the city owned transit system of busses. I wonder where they got the name Bluebird from.

We enforced serious laws, like stopping old people from eating nuts or cookies. Our actual mission was to stop rowdiness caused by young riders, which was prevalent at the time.

“Alexander?” I answered, “Here, sir.” “Bluebird-2” He then read the other three names assigned to be my partners. My partners were African-American guys. I was assigned to a coal car.

Bluebird-2 was assigned a bus line in an African-American neighborhood. Being a white guy, I figured I would stick out visually, like a sore thumb. I mentioned it to the boss. I felt I would fit in better on a bus line some white people rode. To me, being undercover meant being undetected. It was apparent my common sense wasn’t on the same level as theirs.

He said, “You don’t get paid to think. You got your assignment; now get on your damn post.” What a stupid, common senseless, non-military, asshole sergeant. Yet, this guy was paid at a higher rate. I almost forgot I don’t get paid to think.

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158 **Undercover** – Police term – an undercover officer was disguised. They did not wear a police uniform as part of the disguise. It could also mean you are in bed and under the covers because you’re cold.

159 **Coal car** – Police term – A racial slur describing an African-American scout car crew in Detroit. The DPD was just like the Federal government. They had their own clever, in-house names.
Each crew consisted of three undercover officers and a uniformed driver. The car we used was an unmarked police car called a Generally Assigned (GA) vehicle. Most undercover GA cars were easy for the public to pick out. In my era, it was a plain four-door Plymouth without chrome or nice wheel covers.

We started off with the three undercover guys boarding one bus, from a normal city bus stop. I got on my bus with my two African-American partners. I blew their cover. What would everyone think? These two African-American guys boarded the bus along with a white guy wearing a trimmed mustache, at the exact same time. Nothing to see here, people! Move along!

I think I was the first white guy to board the particular bus route in 20 years. For the three of us, it was so obvious it was like boarding, wearing military dress uniforms and having The President’s Own playing, National Emblem by Edwin Eugene Bagley.

I was embarrassed to be getting paid for this waste of time and resources. All I could see was the uselessness of it. I could also see the regular riders of the transit system being disturbed by the man’s presence, while they go about their business of doing nothing wrong or worse yet, eating nuts or cookies, a serious crime. The good citizens were disturbed by our presence. I couldn’t blame them. I wouldn’t want to feel like I’m being observed by the man. The rabble-rousers hated it.

I felt a little self-conscious because everyone on the bus was staring at me. I did what I figured might work and sat behind the bus driver. I wanted to look like I was nervous. I did it to protect my cover.

A blind man boarded the bus one afternoon. He was wearing sunglasses so his eyes weren’t visible to the public. I was behind the driver and the man sat across and facing me. He held his white cane between his knees.

While the bus was rolling, nothing significant was happening. There were only a few good citizen passengers and they weren’t eating nuts and cookies.

Being young and bored, I decided to make funny faces at the blind guy. My intention was to see if he would react. After a few minutes, he began to smile and started laughing. I knew right away he was one of those scam artists who used a fake disability to somehow rip people off.

I flipped my tin on him (showed him my badge) and escorted him off the bus. The 4th member of my crew, the uniformed officer in the unmarked car pulled up and we performed the necessary procedures on our keen eyed blind man.
Another time I was the last officer on the bus. I watched a guy do something which shocked me. He picked a rider’s pocket. To keep from blowing my cover, I followed the crook off the bus, at the next stop.

Once the bus left, I pulled out my .357 magnum and pointed it at him. He raised his arms as I said, “Police!” I patted him down and found the wallet he stole and pocketed it.

I failed to pull out my badge because my hands were full. I figured the gun pointed at his face told him I was being truthful. I’m a white guy with a mustache and a gun in an African-American neighborhood. I must be the man.

A uniformed scout car crew from a local precinct, pulled up to me before my undercover driver. The crew was comprised of two officers who were African-American. I recognized neither one. I was in an African-American neighborhood with a revolver, pointed at an African-American man’s head. This didn’t look good.

The uniformed officers jumped out of their car, one of them with a shot gun pointed at me. One officer gave the order, “Drop your weapon!” I kept my weapon pointed at my prisoner and hollered, “I’m a cop.” I heard the shot gun being racked and a commanding voice state, “I said drop the gun, asshole.”

I had to drop my .357 magnum on the cement, damaging it. The gun failed to discharge from the fall, but while all this was going on, my prisoner ran away. Once the officers saw my official ID, they were apologetic. How nice, my undercover partner showed up, but it was too late to catch my prisoner. The owner of the wallet was happy, when we returned it to him with all the contents and money.

The precinct officers assisted us in looking for my felon. He managed to escape, this time for a score of Criminals = 1, Police = 0. You can give the taxpayers one point. They guy got his wallet back.

It was a long time ago, but the marks which damaged my weapon when I dropped it on the cement are still visible. I have a permanent reminder, but I don’t ever want to handle any weapon again. Some things get old and are no longer needed.

I remember one of the precinct guys telling me he hesitated shooting because I was a white guy. I wondered if my white privilege status helped me in this situation.

I may have lost my prisoner, but I was still breathing. I won this particular game, even though the score showed I didn’t.
The next day, I put a transfer in to go back to my uniformed tactical job. At least the good guys will know who I am, but so will the bad guys, thanks to the uniform and marked police car.

I have never been one to celebrate a holiday. Due to my career choices in life, most holidays had me visiting death and/or destruction and despair. The fun and excitement were missing. I saw the worst of many poor families.

When the winter fell upon Detroit, it brought us Thanksgiving and Christmas. There were no fine dining room tables full of food and multiple toys around Christmas trees in many of the homes I visited. It’s not because they had other beliefs. It was because they were poor. In many homes, I don’t believe they even knew what a holiday was. The word despair was fitting.

There was an older, homeless guy named Harry who hung around the tactical officers’ station and would perform odd jobs for pocket change. Most coppers helped him out. In his younger days, he got hooked on cheap booze and occasional drugs. Those events had negative effects on him.

Harry was a business owner of an accounting firm, prior to going down the tubes. He now drank cheap wine and lived on the streets. Harry did have a good heart. All we had to do is make sure he did what said he was going to do before anyone gave him any money. If you handed him a couple of bucks before he worked, he disappeared. Harry was interesting to talk to and had a mind full of wonderful stories.

He walked around pushing an old shopping cart which held his personal belongings. One Thanksgiving, my house had a lot of visitors for the holiday. We had plenty of food and it was quite festive for the normal person.

For an Empath who is also an INTP, it was overwhelming. I had to get away from the crowd. I put together a big plate, enough for four people and used another plate to cover it. I took some silverware and told everyone I had to deliver the food.

I drove downtown and found Harry near the police station. He was sitting over a manhole at the curb, getting warm from the steam. The city steam system ran pipes under the sidewalks and streets to heat city buildings in the downtown area. There were many access manholes and many leaks. Sitting over a manhole could keep a person quite warm. This came in handy for someone outdoors 24/7. Some people didn’t have access to a manhole with a steam leak. We sometimes found them frozen to death on a bus stop bench or in a crevice of a building.
Harry used a wooden box for a table and had a couple of milk crates for a stool. He was wrapped in a blanket and hovering over the escaping steam. He stood up, when he recognized me and had his usual smile. I said, “Harry, I brought us some food.” Harry looked a bit puzzled at me until he saw the plates. He cleared the box and offered me a milk crate to sit on. I took it and we sat over the steam to share a lukewarm Thanksgiving meal. He ate enough for three people and I was glad. Harry said he was full. He was too full to eat the pumpkin pie slices I brought him, which was a good thing.

It felt good being with Harry. So good, I did it again the next year, but I invited Harry into the police station to sit and get warm. I wanted him to be more comfortable. We had a small kitchenette with coffee, a microwave and the other usual kitchenette stuff. Harry lived on the streets, day and night and smelled like the streets. The evil looks of resentment from my peers were very entertaining for me. Harry enjoyed his hot dinner and the pumpkin pie.

The tradition failed to continue. I always wondered if Harry received a funeral and proper burial. Those two Thanksgivings were the best two I can ever remember. They had serious meaning for me. It was enjoyable to see a few of the privileged looking at me with resentment, unable to say anything.
Chapter 36 – Detroit & GTMO, hot towns

The 21st Precinct shared a major street with the 19th, which was Van Levee. We were working the 21st one night, which is on a different radio channel than the bordering 19th. My partner and I spotted a car go through a red light on Van Levee and Airport Drive.

We turned on our overheads to pull the guy over. We also turned on a bright spot light which lit up the inside of his car. A blind person would be able to tell we were behind them, but what is a blind person doing driving, anyway? In Detroit, nothing surprised me.

They guy just ignored us. We blasted the siren once, to get his attention, but he continued traveling as though we didn’t exist. He wasn’t running away, but he refused to stop. He drove into the 19th Precinct’s territory, with us behind him. We alerted our dispatcher we were switching radio channels to communicate with the 19th Precinct dispatcher. When the car we were trying to pull over arrived at the main entrance to the Tubor Foundry, he stopped. His timing was perfect. The foundry was letting workers out for lunch. Well, since Detroit was a divided community and we were the white man, this presented a problem for most of the African-American employees of the plant. The guy we pulled over was an African-American. This stirred the pot.

There is no sense going into detail here, but to simplify this story, we called the police dispatcher, with the usual frantic screaming. The guy got away with the help of the Tubor Foundry employees. They managed to move him into the plant for his protection, knowing we wouldn’t enter for a petty crime.

We managed to get out of the mess in one piece and move on with our lives. We lost the battle and the driver escaped from his red light ticket. And the final score was: Criminals = 1, Police = 0. The phrase, “You can’t win them all,” came to mind, but I was still breathing, which was my secret win.

Our battery Top Sergeant160 rotated back to the states, giving us a new guy. Our new top transferred in from a Marine Force Recon161 Unit. These guys were similar to Navy SEALS, Delta Force and Army Special Forces. These special units had their different

160 Top sergeant – Military term – A nickname for a Marine master sergeant or a master gunnery sergeant.

161 Recon – Military term – The units Force Reconnaissance, SOC or Special Operations Capable are part of the U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command, MARSOC. They are a deep reconnaissance unit. They’re similar to Navy SEALS, Green Beret, and Air Force Combat Controller Teams. They do sneaky secret things. If I told you more, I’ll have to eliminate you.
missions. A Marine Recon unit consisted of Marines who would infiltrate enemy compounds and do whatever it is they do. Most of us considered them crazy and they were avoided. Most regular Marines secretly wanted to be one. It had to be a bragging rights thing.

What does a Recon Top Sergeant do in an arty battery? Anything he wants. It was my suspicion he was an undercover Green Wienie. The good Sergeant had us running, as a battery, every morning around 0600. It was prior to work and cooler. Our short jog was a 10 mile platoon run. We hated his dumb ass, but we were the healthiest and strongest cannon cockers\textsuperscript{162} the Marine Corps ever had.

We ran all the way to the main gate and back on the black flag days, which was just about every day. A black flag day in the Marine Corps was any day over 90 degrees. Black flag days meant, “No running or vigorous exercise.” We were lazy-ass Marines, with a gung-ho Recon Top Sergeant. The no running warning was an unavailable option.

Our 155 mm gun park was a good duty spot. Besides the great swimming and snorkeling, it had a nice little mountain which could also be described as a large hill. I climbed it once with a reel of communications wire. I setup a makeshift antenna and ran the wire down to my duty hooch.

I hooked it up to a cheap transistor radio I had and picked up a couple of U.S. Radio stations at night. I remember receiving WLS in Chicago and WABC in New York. CKLW, the Big 8, in Detroit was my favorite. Canadian call letters were used because the station was located in Windsor, Ontario, when the laws were different. Windsor was across the river from Detroit.

All of this backfired on me. I became homesick again. I wished Johnson was still around to talk to. I think most of my AM radio pickups were due to a phenomenon called skip talking. Every 11 years or so, the sun becomes active with spots or solar storms.

When these solar flares bombard the Earth, they cause havoc with satellite communications, radio, television, GPS systems, etc. These solar storms also give us the Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis. They are the beautiful Northern and Southern Lights. I mentioned this because of the fondness I have for the lights.

\textsuperscript{162} Cannon Cockers – Military term – Artillery men and women.
Just a fraction of the world’s population will ever get to see them. If you ever have the chance, go see the lights. I’m sure you’ll be satisfied with this natural phenomenon. In the northern hemisphere, the farther north you go, the better. If you live in the southern hemisphere, then I want to know why you’re reading this book and how it got so far from home. Anyway, the farther south you go, the better for those, down under.

A couple of Marines were talking about renting a Navy barrel boat. It was the name we gave the homemade pontoon boats the *Seabees* built. They said they were going fishing. I asked what they were going to fish for. One of them said, “Seagulls.” This was a sport type event was popular with some of the guys.

What these guys would do is buy a bunch of herring as bait. They would put a small herring on a hook and cast it up and out when gulls were flying over.

Sometimes a gull would grab the herring, midflight. If the bird got the fish, the *fisherman* would stop the line and the bird’s flight. I think what happened was the bird’s neck was broken for an instant kill. I declined their invitation to go with them. Those *cavemen* seemed to enjoy killing those birds. My preference was to watch them fly. There was something about freedom I liked. My thoughts were animals should have the same rights.

Our outdoor movie theater was called a lyceum. It wasn’t a drive in. People sat on benches and watched the movie. It was my logic which told me the military didn’t want to fund a building for entertainment purposes. Being outdoors meant movies had to be watched after dark. If you wanted to watch a movie, you had to stay up pretty late.

Our 105 mm gun park had some phone lines which had to be replaced. This was one of the few spots I had to go up a pole. This particular pole had some severe weather cracks in it and had an electrical conduit pipe running up the high side, forcing me to climb the low side.

Climbing the low side of a pole is like leaning an extension ladder against a house and trying to climb up the back side of it. You’re working against gravity, plus.

I made it to the top and gaffed my way around to the high side. EE-8s and TA-312s were the field telephones used during the era. To ring a switchboard or other phones, you had to turn the crank handle. The guys discovered if they cranked the handle at the right

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163 *Seabees* – U.S. Navy Construction Battalion (*Can Do!*)
moment, it would send an electrical shock to me. It was a low-amperage, but a high-voltage shock. They saw me go up the pole and waited until I started to work on the wires.

When you’re belted 25 to 30 feet above the ground and receive an electrical shock, it can be shocking. Looking down towards the compound, I’d see my friends laughing. It’s all fun and games until someone falls off a pole.

Since our gun parks were restricted areas of the base. Dependents, civilians and visitors were not allowed to enter. The 155 mm gun park had its own unprotected beach and it was quite hot. We’d wear swim suits, but they were optional.

One day, I decided it was hot enough to swim in the natural. The white side of me received severe sunburn. I went to sick bay and was told to stay off work for three days. They told me to avoid sitting, which was an unnecessary comment.

I was later written up for destruction of government property. They acted as though I did it on purpose to get out of work. If I was going to malinger, I would have found a less painful and more restful way to do it.

I received what was called a Captain’s Mast and a Ninja Punch. The official name was Non-Judicial Punishment or NJP, thus the Ninja Punch slang term. The Marine goes in front of the Commanding Officer, who dictates the punishment. It was better than a Court Marshall and you could still get a Good Conduct medal. Big deal! The good conduct medal will put food on the table, won’t it?

We rented a barrel boat for a swim and beer party. An occasional visitor to our bay was a fish we called Mr. Charles. His actual name was Victor Charlie (V.C.) and was a fifteen foot Great White shark.

I had just crawled out of the water and onto boat when Mr. Charles swam by. Mr. Charles was as long as the boat. I think Mr. Charles could have swallowed me whole.

After the incident, I went into salt water only in protected areas. A popular movie came out a few years later about a Great White Shark called Jaws. After seeing the film, I

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**Captain’s Mast** – A form of investigating a minor offense or an infraction to determine if there should be a Non-Judicial Punishment. An NJP was nicknamed a Ninja Punch. A Court Marshall is the next step up and is a formal court of military law. A mast was like getting a speeding ticket and going in front of a magistrate. He could slap and hurt you. He could not sentence you to prison for hard time. You can picture the old cartoon images of prisoners breaking rocks in prison. This was real in a Marine Corps red line brig.
avoided going into salt water anywhere in the world, ever again. I love the Great Lakes. There is nothing in them finding me delicious or nutritious. Yet!
Chapter 37 – In combat, at combat

Darkness fell on the lower side of the 21st Precinct. We manned scout 21-11-Adam and were patrolling the area of Valley and Johns (pronounced “Jones”) streets. It was cold with a mix of rain and snow, a perfect night not to be working.

To make sure business windows were still intact, we’d shine a spotlight at them and observe anything out of the ordinary. The silence was broken by the car’s radio saying, “Radio calling 21-11-Adam?” My partner, Fred was driving. I grabbed the mic and replied, “21-11-Adam, Radio.”

The dispatcher said, “21-11-Adam, make 3216 Hopi Street on ‘Neighbor Trouble’. Be advised: a couple of units were there earlier.” I spoke into the mic, “On the way, Scout 21-11-Adam.” The dispatcher advised us they had a couple of units there earlier, which told us this was an on-going feud.

We made an Adam-12 U-turn and headed back to Ward Street, which crossed the Freeway. When we arrived within a couple houses of the address, we pulled over and parked. Standing in front of a house or apartment door or pulling up in front of a target address, was discouraged. Both situations could be dangerous.

While crossing in front of the house, shots were fired through their picture window at us. I was hit with flying glass, but no lead. I ran and leaped over a car’s roof and crawled to and under the scout car. I could still hear shooting. I hollered for Fred, “Are you okay?” He hollered back, “Yeah!” I said, “Call for help!” He said, “I can’t, I’m stuck under this car and my PREP is on my belt.” Fred had a few extra pounds on him. I managed to pull out my PREP and alert the dispatcher of our problem, “Radio, 21-11-Adam, shots fired! We’re under fire!”

I still heard shooting, but also heard sirens in the background. I thought to myself, “Oh good, the cavalry is coming.” For me, those sirens were a life saver. The first arriving units showed up about two weeks later. It may have been a few seconds, but it felt like two weeks.

The arriving units surrounded the house and we got everyone to come out. It was odd because 35 people came out of the house, with their hands up. We arrested all of them.

We took numerous hand guns and three shot guns out of the house. They were feuding with neighbors down the street and figured we were there to arrest them because their
hated neighbors called the cops on them. Their way of scaring us away was to shoot in our direction.

After this incident was over, I noticed the rubber galoshes I had were now missing. I wondered if I was afraid enough to jump out of my boots.

In GTMO, there was a competition between our 105 mm cannons and 106 mm recoilless rifles. The object of the contest was to sink a group of orange 55 gallon barrels in the sea. They were welded together as groups of three for targets.

My excitement was aroused when Staff Sergeant Rockford assigned me to a Navy Tug Boat to sink any targets missed. He told me to report to the armory. The armory checked me out with one grease gun, which was a machine gun which tanker personnel carried. It looked similar to one in a service station. Grease didn’t come from it, but a lot of .45 caliber rounds did. It was a greaseless, grease gun. They also issued me an M-14 equipped with a selector. I had full machine gun power and plenty of ammo.

While out at sea and a safe distance from the impact area, we observed a Cuban fishing boat. He was trolling and coming into our impact area. Our mission just changed. The Navy officer on the tug decided to warn the fishing boat stay clear of the area.

We pulled up near them and one of the Sailors on our tug spoke to them in Spanish, using a bullhorn. They were warned about being in U.S. waters and an impact area.

The fishing boat ignored the suggestion to turn around and continued into our impact area. It was at this point, the Navy Commander said to me, “Marine, I want you to fire a barrage of shots in front of the bow of their boat.” I was in shock and I think he noticed it. He repeated his order and added, “I just gave you an order, Marine!”

I fired two bursts from my M-14 on automatic, at the water in front of their bow. The boat continued into our impact area. I fired again, then reloaded and emptied and entire magazine. It was a long burst of 20 rounds.

We were taught to fire short bursts. Long bursts could cause the barrel of the rifle to overheat. It’s hard to explain, but the feeling of emptying an entire magazine of ammo because you have a machine gun, is one of the most awesome feelings you could ever have. They noticed us, at that point and they decided to turn and head towards Cuban waters. Thinking about this incident later, I thought, “I was shooting at a boat to get its attention to help it avoid getting shot at.”
The shoot competition continued. The winner of the competition was no one. None of the barrels were sunk, which meant I would have a lot of fun, sinking the entire group. I used all of the ammo I was issued to sink the barrels because I’m sure it’s what the taxpayers would have wanted me to do. It was a good day and I just fired warning shots in front of an enemy boat. I had some new bragging rights!

The armory had a question upon returning the weapons. The armorer wanted to know where the M-14’s flash suppressor was. I told the armorer the truth. I was under orders to fire on a Cuban vessel. The vibration of firing it loosened the flash suppressor and it fell into the sea.

After 3 months in GTMO, I was granted a one week R&R. I chose San Juan, Puerto Rico. Our other choices were Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Past experiences by other Marines and Sailors dictated Puerto Rico was the best option.

An Air Force base near San Juan was available where I could sleep. I needed my money for drinks and women. I found out later the air force racks had skinny, 3 inch thick mattresses without sheets, blankets or pillows. It didn’t matter. It was a place to crash (sleep) and it was free.

I had a pretty good time while I was in San Juan. I found a little pub which had a gorgeous woman about my age working. Once again, I was in love.

I talked her into having a photo taken with me. This gave me the opportunity to put my arms around her. We all had a good time.

There was a guy sitting at the bar who looked American. He was drunk and nodding out. I asked the bartender who he was and she said, “He’s a pilot for an airline company. He flies down here once a week and spends his time off at the bar. He’s off work for a couple of days.” My thought at the moment was he flew the same airline I use to fly home with.” Once again, I had something serious to think about.

R&R was over before I knew it and I was flown back to GTMO. It was good to be home. A closed base has plenty of entertaining things to do. This is to keep the troops from going stir crazy.

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R&R – Military term – Rest and Relaxation. This is a break from a tough duty station or a combat zone.

Stir crazy – A term used to describe a prisoner suffering from total boredom, while in the stir (prison). Military folks suffer from the same issue, when stuck in a restricted area for too long.
GTMO was in a great climate and surrounded by the Caribbean Sea. For our entertainment, they had a bowling alley and a number of bars and clubs. They had plenty of sport fishing, snorkeling, cliff diving and scuba diving. They also had horseback riding, for everyone, but me. Climbing on an animal’s back when the temperature is HOT is not recommended.

During my first tour down there, the powers in charge moved our unit from the Marine Barracks area to our new compound which looked like a prison camp. There were plenty of aluminum huts. Quonset huts had rounded roofs. Our new huts had peaked roofs. What this meant was… nothing. It’s a waste of ink.

All hooches had four high speed fans mounted up in the corners. They had floor vents which could be cranked open or closed. It was a bit warm in the hooch during the daylight hours, but the nights in Cuba were quite comfortable and cool, near the sea. We always had a pleasant breeze.

Killer, our pet moved with us. We had a number of dogs living in our camp. Killer was the only dog having human-induced mental problems due to drugs. He was also the Alpha male. Killer was in charge of the other dogs. They were fun to play with, both in and out of the water. Killer spent a lot time at the 105 mm gun park. Since alcohol wasn’t allowed there and Killer was a drinker, I wonder what his love of the gun park was. It was the sandbags half filled with rocks, was my guess.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Marine Corps consisted of people who were just biding their time and waiting to get out. If I’m correct, it’s what they do now, too. They had two groups of people. They were classified juicers or heads. A juicer was a person who drank a lot of alcohol as a means of mental escape. A head was a person who used drugs for the same purpose.

The government’s stance on weed (grass, ganja, marijuana, etc.) was to consider it dangerous and it still is, unlike some cancer causing, chemical weed killers. Can you say elected?

Juicers were violent and fought a lot, amongst each other. Heads were peaceful, never fought, but always played loud music. I wasn’t a head and I did sip a few drinks or beers, but I didn’t consider myself a juicer.

Our compound was separated from the main area. The Navy and Marine Barracks wanted our combat unit on the island for their protection, but they wanted us to stay away from
them and out of sight. They needed us, but didn’t want to see us. It’s why they built projects for us away from the main populated area of the base.

A musical band came to the White Hat Saloon one Friday night, for our entertainment. The problem was the band played a lot of anti-war music which was popular amongst civilians, but not Marines and Sailors.

A few servicemen went ballistic. An injured Marine threw one of his crutches like a javelin. It went through a giant speaker, knocking it over, along with a bunch of band equipment. The sparks and other visual effects were fantastic. This was a classic example of the herd mentality I would learn about later in life.

Saturday morning, a battalion formation was formed so our colonel could address us. He was the picture perfect, lifer Marine. He looked like he was the brother of the Marine Corps bulldog. I’m sure he signed up at Tun Tavern after drinking a few. He was short and bulky and filled with muscles. I think his biggest muscle was above his neck. Wait! He didn’t have a neck. He spoke about all the damage we caused at the Navy EM club.

Here’s how I remember the speech, “Yoose guys phucked up the Navy’s EM club last night. If you don’t like the assholes performing, then kick their ass, but don’t phuck up the bar. Now it’s closed and they have to fix everything. Yoose guys aren’t representing the Corps the way it should be. A real Marine would never phuck up a bar.” This speech bothered me. I hope yoose guys understand this.

Once the bar’s damage was repaired it reopened for business (filling enlisted men with alcohol). The bar had a new band playing, but with more peaceful and relaxing music. After spending some time listening to them, I decided to head back to my hooch. I had a good buzz going.

I wanted to catch the last bus back to my compound. It would have saved a lot of walking, but I missed it. It was time to put my Marine Corps skills to work. I now had to walk three miles. The buzz wore off, but I was still unstable.

I took the shortest route I knew across a field. As I approached my compound, I started running and fell in an open manhole. While in severe pain, my thought was, “What was a manhole doing in the middle of a field?”

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167 Yoose – A word some people used, pronounced yōōs, which rhymes with loose. It’s a slurred, plural and warped form of saying you guys. Many people speaking this way appeared to be related to a bulldog.
The momentum of my running kept me from falling deep into the hole. My right thigh hit the steel edge. It’s a good thing I had enough alcohol in me because it was the most excruciating pain I ever felt. I crawled out and lay on the ground, hoping the pain would subside. My buzz was gone and my thinking blurred from the pain.

Scorpions and tarantulas make me nervous. Cuba had plenty of both. The tarantulas weren’t deadly, but the scorpions could kill a human. Both are nocturnal animals. When my thigh pain became bearable, I decided to get off the ground and finish my journey, with a limp.

It was a slow trek, but I made it back and crawled into my rack, grateful I had no upcoming duty. It was Friday night and I could sleep late on Saturday morning. I had two full days to recuperate.

It was at this point in my life I learned to step clear of open manholes or sewers. I would recommend everyone follow this little tidbit of advice. The event took place over 45 years ago and I still have a dent in the muscle where my thigh struck the frame edge of the hole.
Before Detroit City Airport expanded their runways, McManus Road still ran east and west at the north end of runway 15-33. One day a Lear jet landed and overshot the runway.

It tore through the airport fence and crossed McManus Road. The landing gear collapsed and it broke through a cemetery’s wrought iron fence on the other side. The plane came to a stop on top of a grave. No cars or people on the ground were struck, injured or killed.

While guarding the scene, the wife of the person buried under the plane showed up to put flowers on the grave. She told me she wanted the plane moved. She was furious because of where the jet came to a rest. The area was taped off with yellow police line ribbon.

Our official police job was to guard the crash scene, by order of the United States Government and let no one near it, for any reason. The exception was for legitimate rescue personnel or firefighters. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) wanted nothing touched. It was the federal government’s jurisdiction.

I understood the fact her husband had passed away, but “She was selfish,” I thought. She had no concern for the pilot’s well-being or any other people even though the plane crossed four lanes of traffic. Her concern was her dead husband and removing the plane from his grave.

It was my belief her husband was glad he was dead and didn’t care about a jet being on his grave. She had to wait 17 hours before the plane was released and was lifted with a crane.

What was ironic was the grave was still there. Its flat, in-ground (cheap) headstone was scratch free. Her husband was still dead and had no complaints.

Another time working the airport area in a one-man scout car on the eastside, a run came out on a possible plane down on Pinefield Street. I responded because, like all humans, I’m curious and I wanted to gawk. No one was going to stop a marked scout car and say something like, “You can’t go there.”

A small, private plane crash-landed on the street, but there was no evidence of a fire and no pilot around. It just happened and didn’t make a lot of noise. There were a few neighbors milling around, looking at the downed plane.
It was approaching runway 25, but failed to reach it. It was resting on somebody’s front lawn, with one of its wings lying over the roof of a parked car. The landing gear had collapsed on impact, but the plane was intact, with some structural damage.

The first thing I did was open up the gas tank located on the top of the wing. I shined my flashlight in the opening and saw nothing in the tank. I chuckled to myself, thinking, “What a dumbass! He ran out of gas.” I think the pilot walked away, out of embarrassment. I left the scene without finding out what happened, since it wasn’t my run. I was just gawking, but in an official status.

I had the opportunity to see the airport’s dark side while working a two man unit one afternoon. Our car received a Radio Run for a plane crash in the same general area of the one which ran out of gas. This time, the results were a little different.

This plane had engine trouble and was trying to make it back to the airport. As it was attempting to land, low on its approach, it hit some power lines, causing an explosion. The plane fell in an alley behind the homes. No one on the ground was hurt, but the two passengers in the plane were killed in an instant.

In the still smoldering debris, I picked it up a black purse with a young woman’s driver’s license in it. She was a local. No one needs a description of what I saw. The purse put everything into perspective; the human perspective.

There were other signs humans were on the plane, but no actual bodies. Everything in the alley, where the plane came to its final resting place was burnt beyond recognition.

People like looking at catastrophic events. It’s human nature, but bad for your mental health, if done on a regular basis.

It was a hot summer weekend and I was off-duty. I had organized a block party for this particular day. The street was closed off at both ends and I managed to get a fire hydrant street sprayer and wrench from the city’s Recreation Department. One of our favorite toys at a block party was a tank full of helium and some balloons. Both adults and kids loved the helium and balloons.

A neighbor and I got a little bored with the regular balloons and started filling garbage bags. An 80 pound tank of helium goes a long way. We were doing silly things, like covering the bags with aluminum foil. Our thought was throwing the radar off kilter at Metro airport. I doubt the helium balloons could be seen on radar. They were small, compared to the size of a plane.
Later in the evening, there was an odor of burning plastic. Someone saw a news blurb about a plane crash at Metro Airport. *Northwest flight 255* crashed. The prevailing winds brought the smell of the crash over our party.

We were wondered if our balloons caused the plane to crash. The prevailing winds took our balloons in the opposite direction of the airport, though.

Later in the evening, I was recalled to work. I was on restricted duty and assigned to work inside the station as the base radio operator.

We had our own frequency for car to car use and car to base. We could mobilize and move anywhere in the city, at a moment’s notice. We were tactical officers assigned to the crash scene.

A four year old little girl survived the crash and is living her dream today. This was one time I was glad to miss the visual events of what happened. I was curious, but grateful to have manned the base radio. I have no visual memories of this event to haunt me. The haunted looks on the men and women’s faces who were assigned to the crash scene were there for me.

We were on this mission for a couple of days. Some of the guys at the scene came back with the *1,000 yard stare* in their eyes. One guy told me he picked up a child’s shoe which still had a foot in it. Being at the scene of the crash had to be horrible and I’m grateful for not having to have been there. Many of peers went to therapy because of this event.

It was around April when my first six month military tour of GTMO was over. I was transferred back to Camp Lejeune and assigned to HQ Battery. This was a little different, since this battery had no guns.

The battery’s main purpose was for the administrative and support work. I wanted my stay with HQ Battery to be a short one. I went home on leave for 30 days to relax and impress my friends.

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168 *Northwest flight 255* – Northwest Airlines flight 255 crashed and burned on takeoff from Metro Airport on the evening of August 16, 1987. One passenger, a four year old little girl, survived the crash, which took the lives of the 155 people aboard and two people on the ground.

169 *1,000 yard stare* – Military term – A phrase used to describe a combatants’ unfocused gaze after witnessing traumatic or catastrophic events. They’re minds are detached. It’s a form of *Shell Shock* or *PTSD*. 
Returning to Camp Lejeune, I requested another transfer to GTMO. Within a week, I was back to where I belonged. I was lucky this time. It was summer and off-season for insulated underwear. Upon landing, I found it to be cooler or maybe I was getting used to the warm, tropical air.
Chapter 39 – Cuban corporal with a mission

When we landed the MPs\textsuperscript{170} were already waiting with their dogs. Before I knew it, my crotch and butt were sniffed and I was heading to the Windward side and back to my hooch with the boys in Bravo Battery. I was back with the boys of company B, but we had no bugler. (\textit{I know, it was bad})

A few weeks later, I was ordered to appear in front of the Battery Captain. He interviewed me for a possible promotion to corporal. I passed the interview and was told I would be promoted and it would be meritorious.

Because it was, most of my peers saw it as though I brown-nosed my way to my way to it. They rode me hard until I paid for their drinks with my new, future paycheck. Now, I was their buddy.

In the Marine Corps, every time an enlisted person was promoted, they had their new stripes pinned on by the guys in their battalion of equal or higher rank. This is an enlisted tradition for Sergeants and below. Once promoted to Staff Sergeant, you couldn’t play our fun games anymore. I’m sure they had other games to play.

For us new NCOs, the guys would line up, facing each other. The promoted guy would have to WALK through the line, while each sergeant and corporal in the battalion \textit{pinned} the stripes on his arm. This was done by punching the promoted guy, as he walked the walk. Anyone who gets promoted walks the walk, but they tend to walk fast. Running was forbidden. If you ran at all, then you had to go through the line again. You learned to walk fast, without running (\textit{discipline or common sense}?).

A new corporal also earned the blood stripe, seen on the trousers of the Dress Blues uniform. The pinning of the blood stripe was done by ramming a knee into the new corporal’s thigh, while punching the stripe on his arm.

A corporal was a non-commissioned officer, an NCO. Marines play rough. I will say the bruises on my arms, thighs and hips stayed for several weeks. It was all in fun. I found most fun to be quite painful in the Marine Corps.

\textsuperscript{170} MP – Military term – Military Police.
I read an article about a parent was upset when she found out her son had his jump (blood) wings pinned on his chest. The Marines utilized the Army’s 101st Airborne training section for jump school for budgetary reasons.

After your first five training jumps, you were awarded your first set of wings, a silver Jump Wings badge, issued by the Army. They were pinned above your left breast pocket. Do I need to explain the ceremony involving the pinning? It did leave marks and drew blood. There were dubbed, blood wings. Of course, this is no longer performed (?) thanks to a bunch of whining complainers who have no idea what being in the military is about.

I saw a news video showing the CMC saying the Marine Corps does not recognize hazing. It was not condoned. He was serious when he made the statement.

What I found hilarious about it was the CMC was wearing a set of gold jump wings (showing he did ten jumps instead of five) on his uniform. Oo-Rah! He earned his jump wings without having them pinned on. I wonder how he did it.

One day, I walked into the Marine NCO club and sat at the bar, sipping the various brands of crappy military beer. Three Sailors walked in wearing their dress white uniforms, including the famed Dixie cup hats. Two were PO2s (Petty Officers, Second Class) and one was a PO1. Most Sailors avoided the Marine clubs.

When something like this would happen, some Marines would get upset and begin pounding on their chests and snorting. It reminded me of a congress of gorillas reacting to another male entering their realm. A few would grumble, “Why would these squids come in to our club?”

I took a peek at the Sailors and saw the tridents on their uniforms. At this point in time, I knew I was sitting in entertainmentville and was now looking forward to the upcoming show.

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171 Blood wings – These were the wings earned for various Marine operations involving flight. Marines who were parachutists, pilots, air crew members, etc. earned blood wings. The reason for the name was this: Most sets of wings were a badge which was worn above the left breast. When you earned them, the badge was placed over your chest and slammed in. This drew blood and I’m sure was frowned upon by the modern Marine Corps. As this information became more public, it later lost its place in unwritten Marine Corps tradition. Most civilians don’t understand military tradition.

172 CMC – The Commandant of the Marine Corps.
The other Marines failed to see the emblems or were ignorant on what they stood for. I said nothing and waited. A couple of Marines challenged the Sailors. Needless to say, a fight started. Who would have guessed? After the MPs and SPs showed up, six Marines were conveyed to the base hospital.

The Sailors were busy straightening their uniforms out and dusting themselves off. I offered to buy them a drink, but the bartender told me they had to leave. As they were leaving, I smiled and said goodbye, holding my drink in the air as though I was offering a toast. One Sailor winked, smiled and saluted me. The Marines conveyed to the hospital now have knowledge of the Navy’s trident symbol. They learned the hard way.

The Sailors who wear the trident are called SEALs. These commandos make normal Soldiers, Sailors or Marines look like cub scouts. Yoose Marines were funny and I thank you for the great entertainment you provided.

My promotion changed my job description to Wire Chief. I was now a Corporal of Marines. I was the HMFIC.

The Navy did things right. They built a new barracks which looked like a modern day apartment building. They had a dining hall on the first floor. Dining hall? In the Marine Corps, they were called mess halls.

Marines were forbidden from utilizing this dining hall, unless working in the area. My first planned operation was to figure out how to get into the new Dining Hall, on a regular basis.

The Dining Hall had a pop machine, labeled Pepsi. For 25 cents, you could purchase a Coke, Pepsi, Budweiser, Michelob, Schlitz or Miller. Refreshing drinks at great prices! Nothing beats a burger, fries and a beer on a hot Cuban summer day?

As a Wire Chief, I decided to re-lay the communication wires between our two gun parks and the Command Center. The hot Cuban sun would deteriorate the wire’s plastic insulation in about two years.

It was time for new wire to be laid. My future successor was happy when I showed him my map, pictured below. My system was flawed, but not in my sense of the word. There are mountains and other terrain in between everything, but the wire map didn’t have to be

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173 SP – Military term – An acronym for shore patrol.

174 HMFIC – Head motherfucker in charge

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detailed. When he took over, the wires had been in use for about six months. He could do two tours and not have to relay them, which is a lot of beer.

Placing the junction box next to the Navy Dining Hall was the most practical and functional route, for me. I found a way to put a wire into the junction box and secure it so it would later fall out. A break in the lines meant I would have to troubleshoot and find it. Humping through the cactus laden area and brush was hectic. It could take all day. My bosses all knew it.

When it happened, I went right to the box and see if the wire fell out. I'd verify the location of the break and leave it disconnected. I'd then go into the Navy Dining Room for lunch and my much enjoyed cold beer.

After lunch and acquiring a nice buzz, I’d go out, connect the wire and call all parties to make sure the lines were working again. Everybody was happy, including me. In the Marine Corps, this was called skating. I was good at skating and thankful for those lessons I received at 15 years old.

Our command decided to have a picnic which was supposed to help our morale. We were going to play some different sports and have other competitions. Playing rugby in beach sand was quite challenging. We barbecued and after 1600 hours the free beer was flowing.
This was a good time to thank the taxpayers. Without their help, our free beer costs may have been deducted from our paychecks. They paid those, too. The checks were appreciated, as feeble as they were.

We had two large utility poles in the middle of the compound about 60 feet tall. They appeared to be planted about 10 feet apart, next to each other for no reason. The average height a wireman climbs is about 30 feet.

The diameter at the base of the each pole was about five feet. I would have loved to see the trees these poles came from. They had to be monsters, but in my mind, they would have looked much better with branches and green leaves. My lieutenant came up to me prior to our picnic and asked if I would climb each pole to hang a giant banner with our Battery name on it. I liked the fact he said, “To order you would be wrong, but I would appreciate it if you’d do it.”

I lacked a fear of heights, but I did have a fear of falling. We were taught to climb without using the belt, but I taught myself how to use it. I knew both ways and found using a belt for climbing was a slower process.

The bases of the poles were wide enough to prevent the belt or my arms from being used. I wanted to do the lieutenant a favor because I respected the way he asked me. I would have needed a 30 foot ladder just to reach the point on the pole where I could get my arms around it. I would also have to carry the large and heavy banner straight up.

To do this was a challenge. To keep it safe, the idea was abandoned. We ate, drank beer, had fun and ended it all by throwing our superiors into the sea. It was good day in sunny Cuba.

One day, I was driving my jeep through a pass to check some lines routed over a large hill. Being a hot-shot 19 year old, I was exceeding the speed limit a bit and driving down a mountain pass where two cars would be unable to pass. At one curve, I slid off the road. A tree surrounded by cactus plants stopped the jeep from continuing to the bottom. The tree was about 10 feet from the road above. It was about 100 rocky feet to get to the bottom of the hill.

I asked a Navy Seabee friend who drove a bulldozer, if he’d take a look and see what he could do. He drove his dozer to my jeep and hooked chains to it. He pulled me up and onto the road. I owed this guy a few beers.

Upon my inspection of the jeep, I could see no damage. I had to explain why it took a lot of time to get back. I wanted to tell them the truth, which was, “My skates were hard to
locate and needed oiling.” I was now an NCO. I was too embarrassed to tell them I didn’t get the chance to oil my skates. I didn’t use them as much, since my promotion.

We had a company of tankers with the same mission as ours. They had a nice collection of M-48 Patton Tanks. One of the tank platoon’s corporals approached me and asked if I could wire some phones for them. I told them they needed a commanding officer’s order for the work. My friend said, “We’ll let you drive one of the tanks.”

I said, “Are you guys supplying the wire?” He said, “No, I was hoping you would, but we have phones. We just need you to wire them up.” I said, “No problem, where’s my tank?”

They had four field telephones which had to be wired between their buildings. None of the wiring required pole climbing. It took about an hour and they were in business. My friend told me to come back on Saturday morning about 0800. I was there at 0700, just in case.

After a few lessons on the operation of the vehicle, I was ready to go. A tank steers with two levers to control the speed and direction of each track. My friend said the tank was indestructible unless I rolled or sunk it.

He was a little concerned with me crushing a jeep, truck, person, building or something else of value. There was a mention of an act of war if I drove it through the fence and into Communist Cuba. A 49 ton battle tank would be hard to explain to the enemy. I started to think he was trying to scare me out of wanting to drive it. Once we made it out to the trails, we swapped seats.

I drove with the hatch open. The view was easier for driving. The alternative was using mirror-like periscope, which was a bit difficult. I mentioned earlier about the awesome feeling of firing machine guns. This was a million times better! As I got comfortable, I picked up speed. Driving a 49 ton tank at 30 miles per hour on a rolling, dirt trail was a super awesome feeling.

I was twenty years old and I have already been pulled over in traffic by a military tank and now I drove one, on a Communist border. How many people in the world can say they did any of those things? Me! (my hand is virtually raised.)
Chapter 40 – FBI, ice cream and R&R

My scout car partner and I just walked out of the local ice cream store with a double dipped, high quality ice cream cone. We were enjoying the cones on a hot summer day, while in our non-air conditioned hotbox car. The dispatcher hailed us, “21-7, make Dunkirk and Beechwood, at the bank on an RA in progress.” The dispatcher repeated the run information, while we were heading there; eating our ice creams.

Since we were close, we were unable to finish our cones. They had pointy bottoms, making it impossible to set them down, anywhere. We approached the bank without our lights and siren. I unlocked the shotgun rack and pulled out the gun with my one hand, while holding my ice cream with the other.

My partner did the same with his pistol and ice cream. To rack the gun, I had to press a release button. This would allow the pump handle to operate. I handled the shotgun many times. If the gun was older and used often over the years, the mechanism were little loose from wear. This made it easy to rack it with one hand, although it could be risky. I was fortunate enough to have a loose one.

My partner peeked in the window and saw people moving about. We both entered the bank with caution. An employee hollered, “He got the money and ran out the door, to the right!” The first thing I did is ask a teller if she would hold my ice cream. I informed the dispatcher the holdup was a good one, but it was over. I also gave him the direction of the thug’s getaway.

The teller held my ice cream until I finished my conversation with the dispatcher. I also unloaded the shotgun for safety. Another teller asked if we wanted the holdup man’s wallet. In his nervousness, he left it on the table while pretending to fill out a bank slip. I opened the wallet. The photo of him on his driver’s license was identified by a bank employee, as the holdup man. The address on the license was the first house across the alley and behind the bank. We got a quick clothing description on him and broadcasted it over the air.

Once the FBI showed up, they took over the scene. It was almost as though they pushed us aside. They failed to ask me if I had any evidence. I’m sure both my partner and I impressed them with our ice cream cones. When we finished them, we decided it was time to get down to business.
I called for a backup unit to make the bank robber’s house. Two scout car crews showed up. We headed to and surrounded it. I took a peek in the side window and I saw the guy sitting at the dining room table, counting money.

One of the coppers knocked on the door and the fool answered it. In the long run, the bank got all their money back and the FBI was displeased with us because they received no glory. “Sorry about your luck,” I thought.

I had an enjoyable ride to work in my own car and in uniform, one day. I was nailed in the side of the face with a snowball. The incident gave a 10-13 year old boy some serious bragging rights. It was a sunny spring afternoon and the snow was melting (good packing). I had my driver’s window rolled half way down and was stopped for a traffic light. The kid was in an alley and threw a snowball, hitting me on the side of the face. I looked towards the kid standing in the middle of the alley, staring at me.

I jumped out of the car and faced him, with my hands on my hips. The look of shock on his face when saw the uniform, was worth its weight in gold. I stood there, amused and smiling, while he ran about 200 miles per hour, down the alley until out of site. I thought it would be shameful if he couldn’t get any of his friends to believe him. He had some serious bragging rights, but no witnesses or evidence.

The powers in charge opened up the USA for R&R, which I chose for my next vacation. My flight, from GTMO to New River Air Station near Camp Lejeune, was free. The government then offered free bus rides to Washington D.C. Once there, I paid for and caught a flight to Detroit.

I must have looked great in Michigan’s April weather, where people were breaking away from winter. My white friends were all pale, while I was a deep golden brown from the warm Cuban sun. Time always seems to go faster, when you’re having fun and I soon found myself on the way back to Cuba.

Once back, it was like I never left. I went back to my job to do some line maintenance. One pole I had to climb was next to a giant radar unit which wasn’t operating. Being a communicator, I knew military radio antennas and radar units produced radiation while operating. Some produced enough to burn a person. This fence had plenty warning signs. Most of them had the word Danger in large letters on them. I felt it was unnecessary to read the small print and avoided the entire place, except when necessary.
While up on the pole, I was just finishing up my maintenance, when the radar unit turned on and began scanning. I decided to get off the pole at a high rate of speed. I collected some souvenirs while sliding down.

I went to sickbay. The corpsman said, it was nothing to worry about. The worst thing to happen is I’d be unable to have kids and my balls could fall off. He then gave me two aspirin, a salt tablet and told me to wear dry socks or something. I’m grateful he didn’t want to take my temperature. The Navy didn’t believe in oral thermometers.

I wasn’t concerned with radiation damage could affect my future. My main concern was the present and the pain of the splinters.

Assigned to duty at the 155 mm gun park for a week, I decided to do some snorkeling during my non-working hours. While swimming around and taking in the underwater sights, I came face to face to two barracuda.

We were taught to swim towards them. Their poor eyesight would cause them then swim away, thinking the swimmer was a large predator. Swimming away could cause the barracuda to think a school of small fish trying to escape. The barracuda can burst 0 to 27 mph in an instant. They’re fast, ferocious fish with large sharp teeth. They have no problem biting and ripping apart a human. Trying to hit one with a spear gun was futile and almost too silly to think about. It would be similar to throwing a javelin and hitting a quarter on the ground 300 feet away.

In total panic and disregarding all safety information, I swam away fast. Those fish could have killed me or at least caused me some severe damage. They ignored me making me think they just had lunch and weren’t hungry anymore. I avoided all watersports for about a month, after the incident.

Our battery was short a few artillerymen which left us with a crewless 105 howitzer. A few of us communicators got together and asked the Top if we could man empty gun. We became gun crew eight. I performed two different jobs. One was the A-gunner (assistant gunner); the other was the Gunner (cannoneer).

A good friend and fellow radio operator would switch back and forth with me. The A-gunner rammed the shells in and locked the breach. On command, the Gunner would then pull the lanyard to fire. The A-gunner would unlock, open the breach and remove the empty shell prior to the barrel sliding back into position.
We were taught how to clean and maintain the gun, along with how to use the aiming stakes. A senior arty NCO had the job to inspect the stakes for accuracy. Chances and mistakes were to be avoided, when it came to high explosives.

During a gun competition, we were tested on speed of setup, loading and cleaning of the gun. The regular arty guys were a little jealous at us communicators manning gun #8 because we won.

During my last few weeks on the Cuban base, I went to the 196th Marine Corps Ball, held 10 November. There was a nice club on the island called the Copa Cabana. “I would have named it Copa Cubana,” I thought to myself.

Since my personal set of dress blues failed to exist, I had to wear the tropical dress uniform. I made sure all my bosses at the Ball saw me. I was quiet when I slipped out. I put on my clothes and went to one of the base clubs to be in a relaxed environment.

A U.S. Coast Guard cutter docked and the guys were given base liberty. The Coast Guard Sailors showed up at one of our clubs to have a few drinks. This was one of the few times the Marines and Navy played nice together. The Coast Guard Sailors were bragging to us how their boot camp was difficult and worse than the Marine Corps’ or the Navy’s. The Navy boys joined in on this brawl. If anyone was keeping score at this unofficial event, it was Marines & Navy = 1. Coast Guard = 0. I should have stayed at the Ball.

The next few weeks were used to train my successor. I showed him the ropes and shortcuts of my job. He knew where most of the phone lines were and how they were laid. He had been down here for about three months when he was appointed to be my successor. He already had knowledge of my wire map and the reason for the junction box behind the Navy Dining Room, he was grateful. I gave him an excuse to spend a couple of tours of GTMO, which I’m sure he did.

With access to live ammo in our gun parks, we found a fun way to waste vast amounts of tax dollars. We would take our M-16s and toss 25 cent coins into the air and hip shoot them. It took a little practice, but once you had the feel of it and hit one, the rest became easy. Once again, I would like to thank the taxpayers of the United States for buying us all the extra ammo. The quarters were mine, but we know who paid us. Thank you.

Since my tour was close to ending, I was getting myself ready for my trip back to the states. My buddy, Phil Witherspoon was in the process of being shipped to Vietnam. I put in a transfer request to go with him.
The demand for my MOS was minimal. I was told the *powers* would deny my request, based on this information. Wait a minute! During training, *they* changed my MOS at will, to suit *their* purposes, but since I wanted to be with my buddy, *they* were going to deny it, even if it’s a combat zone? I wanted to argue, which would have been useless.

I was glad *they* denied my request. I was young, stupid and inexperienced. My understanding of the ramifications of war was different when I was young. Phil vanished from my life forever. The end of my Cuban tour made me sad to think about having to leave the gorgeous climate, swimming, bars and lack of women. Huh? Wait!
Chapter 41 – Stateside duty sucks

The sun had already gone down while we aimed our scout car southeast on Grand Lake Road. Another car received a police run on an off-duty officer being shot. Since we were close by, we decided to head over to the location given as Peters and Littlebell. I’m sure a number of cops were heading there with the hope of finding it to be a false run.

As we approached the intersection, two other police cars were pulling up. There was an older guy lying on the grass between the sidewalk and the curb. It was the off-duty copper. When he got out of his car to go into his house, he was approached by two young men, armed with handguns. They robbed him and one shot him in the chest.

Someone called for an EMS truck over their radio and was told there were no EMS units available. Since he was a cop, a decision was made to move and transport him to a hospital, quick. It was a good decision. There was no funeral.

I rotated back to Camp Lejeune and was assigned to HQ Battery again. I went home on a short leave, but was doomed to spend another miserable cold winter in North Cacalackey.

I found a new job, or it found me. It was called Corporal of the Guard. It was guard duty for corporals. I still owned a pair of skates, though. The wheels rotated, but were slowing down. I was chosen to represent the U.S. Marine Corps as Corporal of the Guard.

A person promoted to sergeant, could be appointed to the position of Sergeant of the Guard. Officers had their form of duty. It was referred to as OOD, standing for Officer of the Day or Officer of the Deck. Nobody escaped the Green Wienie.

1972 saw me as an old salt. As a veteran Marine in my third and final year of my tour, I was no longer on a gun crew. I was back in my stateside comm shack doing my regular, boring job of dusting radios and other communications equipment. They sat on shelves and out of use, collecting dust. I think it’s called busy work.

I learned we would soon deploy on a cold weather exercise called Operation Snowy Beach. It was coming up in January and would be held at Acadia National Park, in the State of Maine. I began to miss the warm climate of Cuba and considered putting in a request to go back for a third time.
I was told I had to deploy on cold weather training prior to redeploying to GTMO. I would then have to extend my tour time in the Marine Corps, which was unacceptable. I would be eligible for Vietnam. Being a short timer had its pitfalls.

I decided to head into the local town of Jacksonville for some action. Being a young person, I had to be careful of the around civilian police and the USMC military police. They didn’t cotton to us younger guys.

Many of the bars were titty-bars, where they overcharge for drinks and used female dancers who exploited themselves for money. Some would sit and chit-chat with you, but it required a purchase of an expensive drink for them, which was either plain orange juice or Kool-Aid.

North Carolina had a pastie law in the 1970s. Women could be exploited, but exposing their nipples was illegal. This should explain what a pastie is. Men were allowed to expose their nipples. I’m sure this was all in the name of equal rights. As a Michigander, it’s important to know a pastie should not be confused with a pasty.

Jacksonville was filled with stores which sold military surplus junk. Everything was about the money. I decided to go to town one day, wearing civilian clothes. A young guy with short hair in 1970s Jacksonville meant he was in the military.

Some members of a band were unloading equipment from their van and carrying it inside of the back door of a bar. The door had an auto closer on it. I walked over and offered to hold it open for them. While holding the door, with a lit cigarette in my hand, I was approached by a uniformed MP.

He said, “Put out your cigarette.” I said, “What for? I’m not doing anything wrong?” This is one of the few times a person of authority abused his power over me. He struck my wrist with a wooden nightstick (billy club). The pain made me release the door and the cigarette. Holding my arm with my opposite hand, I said, “Why’d you hit me?” It was the last of the evening’s memories.

*175 Titty-bar – These were bars or strip clubs where dancers would bare their breasts and sometimes perform lap dances. Every state had different laws. If a person went in one, they would pay a lot of money for drinks. Both, young and stupid horny guys seemed to frequent them.*

*176 Pastie – An item, pronounced pace-tee, worn by strippers which cover the nipple, as in nipple camouflage.*

*177 Pasty – A food also called a Cornish pasty, pronounced pass-tee. In northern Michigan, the pasty is a staple food. It was traditional beef and veggie pie carried by miners for lunch. There are many variations, based on locality and recipes.*
When I came to, I was in a Camp Lejeune brig, with some serious pain. I was released to an officer from my unit; went back to my barracks and I tried to fall asleep. The horrible hangover-like pain I acquired during my alcohol-less adventure was keeping me awake.

In the morning, I had a Captain’s Mast to explain why I got beat up and arrested by the Ps. I explained to my captain how it happened. He then released me saying, “Dismissed. This is all I need. You can go back to work, Marine and consider this bullshit over.” My superiors liked me. I still didn’t do anything wrong.

I had less than a year in my enlistment. I learned the Marine Corps offered flight lessons on a small civilian aircraft. The out-of-pocket cost was military priced so a Lance Corporal could afford them.

Since this has been a dream of mine, I decided to look into it and went to the New River Air Station to get some information. I met a corporal like me and I talked to him about what I was looking for. He said, “To sign up with flight lessons, I would have to extend my tour of duty for six months. I said, “I’d extend, to save money.”

He then asked, “Have you ever been to Nam?” I said, “No.” He said, “If you extended for six months, you’d have 13 months left in the Corps and they’d send you to Vietnam with no flight lessons.”

“Political thinking,” I thought. I was denied when I requested to be with my friend Phil. Now the same Corps would send me there to prevent me from gaining anything personal? Why did they do these things? If they had given me what I wanted, the Marine Corps would have gotten a helluva lot more out of me.

Prior to our deployment for Snowy Beach, I was sitting with a few friends. One was my boss, Staff Sergeant Kingsford, a former Drill Instructor. I found it hard to believe because he was such a nice Staff Sergeant. I became pretty close to the guy and told him there was no way I could believe he was a Drill Instructor.

He told me some of his tricks and they were hilarious, but would have made me throw up if they had happened to me in boot camp. He had the torturous atmosphere about him. How could such a nice guy come from those torturous and vicious people, the Drill Instructors? It must be the training.

We were sitting in the Comm shack and discussing a recent high jacking of an airliner. It was the DB Cooper case where the guy managed to get the money and then parachute from a Boeing 727. Good ol’ DB disappeared and was presumed dead by many, but it’s always been questionable. Although the case is still open, it is no longer active.
A warrant officer (whatever that is) overheard us, discussing the case. He interrupted us with his speech on how he could have us arrested for conspiracy to highjack an airliner. Have you ever had the urge to slap anyone? I did at the moment.

January came, and we convoyed to Moorhead City. We were to board the U.S.S. Austin, \textit{LPD-7} \textsuperscript{178} for Operation Snowy Beach. On top of our normal field gear, we now had extra outer covering which was white in color (snow camouflage?) to carry and snowshoes which were never needed. I’m glad because the white stuff and snow shoes would have clashed with my tropical tan.

The Austin was a seven year old ship, making it new. It was a lot nicer than the Chilly Willie, which was \textit{laid down} \textsuperscript{179} in the 1930s. It was modern and had plenty of room. I also found it had places I could hide and be alone. For an INTP, this can be a wonderful thing.

The bow gave me the opportunity to watch the dolphins racing the ship, again. There are more species of them in the warmer climates, but the colder waters had a few. They were always willing to put on a show. Inside and below the fantail was a large boat well, where an \textit{LCU} \textsuperscript{180} was stored.

I loved the way the federal government would label their items bass-ackwards. An example is, “\textit{Bombs, explosive, one each}” or “\textit{Marine, dead body, one each}”. Our ship’s boat well contained an LCU, which stood for \textit{Landing Craft, Utility}. I would call it a \textit{Utility Landing Craft}, a ULC, but I don’t get paid to think. And they thought I came up with some useless and unnecessary information.

As long as our government officials (politicians?) can afford and buy their red or blue, silk ties and wear their American flag pin on their lapels, I’m sure they’ll do everything in their power to make the troops uncomfortable. The troops are mere weapons of war and are expendable.

During my tour, C-rations were the main field food. Most of us had our favorites and great ideas on how to prepare them. Today the modern versions of C-rats are called \textit{MREs}, \textsuperscript{181} which stands for meals, rarely edible.

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{LPD} – Military term – Navy designation for a ship called a Landing Platform, Dock.

\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Laid down} – Military term – The formal commencement of the construction of a ship. It’s also what every service person does at every available opportunity.

\textsuperscript{180} \textit{LCU} – Military term – Navy ship designation for a Landing Craft, Utility.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{MRE} – Military term – Acronym for Meals, Ready to Eat. These are the lighter weight foods which still taste like crap. They’re light because they don’t use cans anymore.
These meals were used to keep our killing machines nourished, while on a mission. Just a note here, I’ve had a few MRE’s. C-rats and MREs were both *crappy* meals, but the MREs were lighter to carry. You already know the lighter weight meant the *powers* would pile more *shit* on your back, none of it being food.

I’m sure the C in C-rations stood for *crap*. The cases were imprinted with, “*C-Rations, individual, one each*”. It could been more truthful and said, “*Crap for troops, individual, one each.*”

Getting back to the LCU, it could hold around three or four 5 ton trucks, pulling guns or about three battle tanks. It was quite large. The Navy would flood the boat well. As it was flooding, they’d lower the stern gate. This was the flat, back door of the ship, like a giant garage door which went down instead of up. When the gate was lowered, all you could see was the sea. The LCU was then deployed.

The Navy would close the stern gate and pump out the water. We now had a large area where we would conduct short jeep races. We could also play a game of baseball or touch football. Nobody wanted to be tackled on a ribbed, steel floor.

We sailed to Maine’s beautiful Acadia National Park for our cold weather training or what I called, “More playing Army in the mud.” The air was damp and temperatures were cool, but mild.

Sleeping in an unheated tent for a week causes the dampness to *penetrate to the bones*. I’m sure it made the Green Wienie happy to know we would be miserable, no matter what the temperature was.

This was another place we hollered bang, bang. It was for both noise pollution and the local people were afraid there would be brass shell casings littering the grounds. The citizens had no clue on how well we policed an area.

Thinking back on this event, I could have stayed home and played Army. I could have pretended a long stick was a rifle, while hollering, bang, bang. When I was finished playing, I could have went into the house for a hot meal and a warm bed.

It was on this mission we saw something entertaining. We were all watching the helicopters ferry our equipment in. A CH-53 Sea Stallion (*Jolly Green Giant*) was carrying a loaded five ton truck. As it was flying towards the shore, the cable holding the truck snapped. The truck fell into the ocean. All of us applauded and cheered as we watched a lot of tax dollars fall into the ocean and sink. What a glorious splash a fully loaded five ton truck makes.
I’m sure the military used the truck as a training exercise for Force Recon or the SEALs and recovered it all. It’s all about the money, right? After dropping the truck, the helicopter flew straight up for a moment and then returned to the ship it came from. What I’m grateful for is none my gear was on the truck.

The locals made it quite clear the Marines landing in their national park was unacceptable. I think their fear was we would blow the place up and then destroy anything left. It’s what we’re trained to do, but this mission was different. It was just for us to suffer in the cold and damp air and spend hours picking up cigarette butts and little bits of trash.

I later saw a report on the TV news which said the local people were pleased after we left. They reported the park was cleaner than it ever has been. The citizens loved it. I’m sure it was clean of cigarette butts and trash. Of course, there was no brass on the ground from the blanks. Bang, bang!
I was assigned out for the weekend of the first Detroit Grand Prix race held downtown. The race venue was changed a few years later to the island park of Belle Isle. I thought this was a pretty good detail, as I enjoyed being downtown. It was nice to be away from the general criminal element I dealt with on a day to day basis. The first couple of days were for the time trials and the official race was to be held on the Sunday.

I enjoyed working there the first year. Prior to the start of the race, a police supervisor asked me if I had a clean car. I said, “Yes, I just got it washed.” He said, “Good, I need you to drive around the track one time, to make sure it is clear of people and vehicles so they can start of the race.”

I was excited to be able to drive around the world famous Grand Prix track with my 318 cubic inch, four-door Plymouth scout car. I turned on the flashing beacons and started my journey. The entire world had their eyes on me. While cruising around, I imagined myself driving a Formula One car instead of a Plymouth. I did my best to keep from making a fool of myself on national television, by striking a wall or a stack of tires.

Once I did my circuit, I was escorted off the track. I parked the car and was assigned to a foot post between the river and a track straightaway. There were police boats in the water. My main job was to make sure no one tried to enter the track from the shore. The boats were there just in case a race car ended up in the river.

It was a great detail to be assigned to since no one tried to kill me. The worst thing I saw was a Grand Prix car losing it during a turn and hit a bunch of stacked tires with no serious damage to anything.

On the evening after the race, there were thousands of people in the downtown area. A couple of suburban, privileged type ladies had the need to use the bathroom. There wasn’t one in the immediate area, so they squatted between two parked cars, where they relieved themselves. They cussed at me for looking (it’s my job), like it was my fault. Classy people have always impressed me. I was pleased to see this detail end.

In 1984, the Detroit Tigers won the World Series of baseball. My regular scout car was in the shop for repairs. The bosses assigned me and my two partners to a different car for the day. The car was brand new and had about 200 miles on it. It became famous on a global scale.
All tactical units were assigned to work Tiger Stadium the day the Series was clinched. All baseball fans wanted to be at the ballpark. Being a tactical officer, our main mission above keeping the peace was crowd control. We worked alongside the Mounted Division. We were behind them to pick up \textit{(not what the horses dropped)} and detain anyone who broke through the line. It was a celebratory atmosphere.

Trying to control the crowd was a challenge; 200 cops against 100,000 fans drinking in celebration. Sure, we had guns, but shooting people for a celebration? Picture the headlines, “Cops fire live ammunition into a crowd of citizens and kill 50.” Thankfully, for many fools, most cops used common sense and intelligence. It’s not always an easy job.

A tour bus of senior citizens from Ohio was heading for the Renaissance Center, downtown. It was attempting to pass our location, when the celebration erupted. As far as I was concerned it was a full scale riot. The bus was trapped by an over-abundance of pedestrian traffic. I decided to board and try to instill some light-hearted humor into these panicked people. I wanted to get their minds off the events happening around us. I called the dispatcher who sent a couple of units to clear a path for the bus to exit the area. They were on their way. A number of cops surrounded the bus to protect it. I boarded and found it filled with horrified seniors. I stood at the front, next to the driver in my riot helmet and other riot gear.

I lifted my riot shield and spoke loudly, “Can I have your attention? Please!” I continued with, “On behalf of the City of Detroit, I would like to welcome you to the heart of our great city. We are going to bring in the scoops and clear a path for the bus to continue to its Ren Cen destination. Our citizens are so happy about your visiting our fair city. They came out to celebrate. Detroiter’s do get a bit rambunctious and sometimes overreact. Please enjoy the rest of your stay and we’ll soon have you moving out of here.”

I exited the bus with the hope I calmed them a little and put a smile on at least one face. The scout cars arrived and escorted the tour bus out of the stadium neighborhood.

In the middle of the celebration, a group of young men decided to break into our scout car to steal our souvenirs. A part of the herd then rolled it over and torched it.

There was a photo taken of a guy holding a Tiger banner and standing in front of our burning, upside down car. He had his gut hanging out over his belt and looked a bit trashed. He stated something to the news media about smoking a couple of dubes and drinking a fifth of Jack, while celebrating.
I later tried to get a copy of the photo. To prevent me from capitalizing on it, the news service told me it would be 10 years before they would allow the photo to become available for purchase. The guy with the banner was there to have a good time and maybe for the photo op.

After Operation Snowy Beach, we sailed south to the Caribbean Sea for a beach landing exercise somewhere in Puerto Rico. We went from being cold and damp to heated and over-heated. Another exercise meant another liberty call, which was in Vieques, Puerto Rico.

This was the poorest, third world-type of community I had ever visited. The local pub had a dirt floor. They also had beer and ladies. This was the first time I went dancing with a girl on a dirt floor. She was barefoot and I wore combat boots. One had to be careful. A young man does not want to step on a woman’s bare foot with a combat boot, while dancing.

The entire community was poor and the prices reflected it. This was the perfect bar for young and cheap Marines. Once liberty call was over, many guys had their venereal diseases cured and we sailed on to our beach landing destination. It was sunny and hot with nice turquoise waters. This was a nice resort-like atmosphere to make a World War II type of beach landing.

One thing in the military enjoyed by the troops was the free beer in the field. We received two beers a day, paid for by the taxpayers. I think they gave us just enough beer to cloud our vision, so we were never quite sure what was going on.

We’re in the tropics and the good ol’ Navy delivered our pallet of beer to shore. They used a front loader to place the pallet on the beach, in the direct afternoon sun. No sergeants had enough sense to cover it from the rays of the tropical sun.

About five hours later, we were handed our two free hot beers. They were still good. I wish the taxpayers had purchased portable refrigerators, to keep our taxpayer purchased beer cold. We found the CO₂ fire extinguishers were fast at chilling beer, but getting them a refilled in bulk, caused a lot of questions to be asked.

We sailed around the Caribbean for a few weeks, chasing dolphins. We never could catch up to them, but it was fun watching. We were on our last voyage to Miami/Fort Lauderdale for liberty call. This was during spring break when Fort Lauderdale was a hot spot. On the eve before my 21st birthday, I was refused entry into a bar at 2300 hours.
Being 20 years, 364 days and 23 hours old was not enough for a military person to have a beer. I had to wait the hour before the bouncer would let me in.

There were all kinds of young people in the bar. Some had real long hair (college kids) and some had real short hair (Sailors and Marines). Someone said something and the next thing I observed was a fight between college guys and Marines & Sailors. Testosterone and adrenaline were flowing in all directions.

It was when someone grabbed me by my shoulders from the rear my Marine Corps training kicked into gear. They taught me well. I turned and decked the asshole who grabbed me. The split second I hit him, I saw his police cover fly off his head. There still was a lot of commotion and I had my first ride in a civilian police car, with hand cuffs on. It was good I was somewhat drunk. Pain failed to register. The police showed me how they stick together when one of them takes a hit. Good team work, just like Marines.

I was apologetic. They believed me and failed to charge me with a crime. They took me to the jail to sit and wait for the Shore Patrol. The civilian cops gave me a break, but were clueless to what the SPs were going to do. They drove me back to the ship, after smacking the daylights out of me, for hitting a fellow-cop. I always felt if I didn’t end up in the hospital, it was a good day.

Upon leaving the beautiful Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, we sailed for Moorhead City, NC, our home port. Our deployment ended and we were glad to return to our stateside barracks. After getting settled in, Sgt. Kingsford asked me if I would stand up for his upcoming wedding. He said I would have to wear dress blues. Sergeant Boston broke in and said, “I’ll loan you mine.” Sgt. Boston answered the question for me.

Sgt. Boston was a foot shorter and bulkier than me. He was also a different rank. I borrowed the blues and had the cleaners remove his sergeant chevrons and replace them with corporal chevrons. I also had to have the blouse trousers tailored to fit.

He had the same waist size, thank goodness. I had to have everything altered back to his specifications after the wedding. This adventure hurt my income for the month, but I made up for it in fun.

A fellow Marine, Larry Glossman, stood up with me. We were the same rank. We lived in Cuba together. We were both from the metro Detroit area, but we went our separate ways as civilians. Larry owned his own blues, so he didn’t have to dish out money.
The wedding was held in a private back yard and was quite nice. Glossman and I got a hold of some water color paints and we decorated Kingsford’s car with the usual wedding bullshit.

On base, I was crossing a parade ground one afternoon and heading to the NCO club for a few beers. A butter bar182 was putting #10 can lids down in the grass with a nail through the center of it to keep it in place. This was how they set up standing spots for platoon leaders in a parade presentation. The lids were painted green and would be unnoticeable to the crowd.

I was within three feet and behind the good lieutenant. He was stooped down, placing the lids in place. At this point I stopped, snapped to attention, and in a loud voice, I said, “Good afternoon, Sir!” This was all with the perfect Marine Corps hand salute.

I startled him. It was a difficult thing to avoid laughing in his face. When he flew to attention to return the salute, the #10 can lids he was holding flew up in the air and scattered over the parade field. It was quite comical.

I continued on my journey. I thought about offering to help pick up the lids, but I figured with the money he made, additional help was unneeded. He could have ordered me to help him, but I think he was embarrassed by the incident. Darn boot lieutenants.

It was a great story to tell at the club. After a few games of pinball and a few 3.2% military beers, I decided to head back to the barracks. I called my skating service.

I found if you laid down on the front lawn of the club, the MPs would stop. As long as you were polite and humble, they would put you in the back of their truck and drive you back to your barracks. I found this to be much better than their usual routine of clubbing (beating).

182 Butter Bar – Military term – A Marine 2nd lieutenant or Navy ensign. They were the boots of the officer world. Their rank insignia was a gold bar on their collar, hence the name butter bar. Cops never used the term. It took years to become a police sergeant and lieutenant.
Chapter 43 – The real police

“Radio, 21-10 in a chase!” is what I told the dispatcher. It was about 0300 and I was sinking my fingernails into the foam padded dashboard with one hand, while holding the radio mic with the other. We were moving at about 80 mph down a deserted city street. It’s a lot harder on the passenger. The partner is driving at high speeds and has the steering wheel to hold onto, giving him the sense of having some control.

Mel and I took the theft report on this same car earlier in the afternoon. It was stolen from a neighborhood near the airport. When we spotted and tried to pull it over, the driver decided to run. Why would the car thief want to pull over for the police?

0300 is a good time for a vehicular chase. Traffic was lighter and the chances of an innocent civilian or we getting hit or killed were much slimmer. It was still dangerous.

None of this is like television, with slow motion replays and stunt people. This is at a high rate of speed and it’s real, plus we weren’t allowed to have stunt doubles. We still weren’t members of the Screen Actors’ Guild.

As the jumper, I was broadcasting the chase on the radio. My partner put 100% of his attention into driving the scout car. We were determined to catch the s-o-b. I tried to speak in a normal voice for the benefit of my fellow officers and dispatcher. A clear voice in a police chase was helpful.

What was heard on the radio many times was an officer’s hysterical screaming. We’re human and some people get rather excited. I found most cops got excited did so when something out of the ordinary happened.

These thieves wanted to escape. They kept zigzagging through the neighborhood streets in their attempt to lose us. Our chase went on for over 10 minutes, which is a long time, in an urban environment.

“Radio, 21-10, we’re west on Knudson approaching Van Levee.” “21-10 we’re now south on Van Levee.” The thieves attempted to make a high speed Adam-12 U-turn, which failed. My next radio transmission was, “He’s now going north on Van Levee!”

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*S-o-b or SOB* – It is an acronym for Son of a *bitch*. A term used to describe someone who may be undesirable or an outright *asshole*. It’s unused figuratively and not literally.
The driver lost control and hit the building on the corner. It was a bar which used to be a newspaper route customer of mine and it brought the bad guys’ car to an abrupt stop. The dispatcher was a little confused on our direction. My final radio transmission of the chase was, “Radio, he just cracked up, whoopee!” It wasn’t a serious crash, but the chase and dangerous part was over.

We ended up with a 16 year old male driver with his two frightened girlfriends. I should say ex-girlfriends, if they had any sense.

An officer from the 19th Precinct told me his dispatcher was attempting to contact me. I called him, “Radio, 21-10. Are trying to reach me?”

He replied, “21-10, I was just inquiring about your wellbeing and if everything was under control.” I replied with, “Yes sir, we’re fine and we have three in custody. Everything is under control. Thank you.”

Our Inspector, Gerald Hansen, was military-minded and sometimes got a little carried away with things. We were the SWAT team, but we needed an actual SWAT team-like name. SWAT was an acronym for Special Weapons and Tactics. Detroit saw the word as negative and sinister. They asked line troops for suggestions. I supposed they wanted a SWAT team wearing pink and sky-blue uniforms.

I contacted Insp. Hanson and offered my suggestion. Gerald liked it. I suggested the Tactical Weapons Assault Team. He said it sounded impressive. I agreed and said we could have tees made up to say, “I’m a Detroit TWAT.” Gerald said, “Are you for real?” I assured him I was the real police.

It was then, when he decided to reject my idea. The acronym, TWAT bothered him. I found out two negative things in my life. One was I could never be a Presidential Helicopter Guard and my choice of the name TWAT was not acceptable as our tactical police unit’s new name.

One night, Gerald must have been bored and decided to have all units meet at the rear of Cobo Hall, on the riverfront. Ten of our cars were working the northeast side and the other ten cars were working the northwest side of Detroit.

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TWAT – A derogatory term for a person who was a coward. It’s a crude slang word depicting a female or her sexual organs. If someone referred to you as a twat, they insulted you.
The eastern cars had about five mile ride to get there. The westsiders had a farther
distance to travel. When Gerald gave a command, he expected immediate response. Some
of us were amused by his antics. We all drove downtown with lights and sirens blaring
because it’s the way Gerald wanted it. We were mobilized! Precinct cars would watch us
pass, wondering what we were up to.

When we arrived at our destination we lined up in a procession and parked. He had all
crews open their trunks for inspection. When Gerald got to our car, he saw our open gun
box containing two shotguns, but no carbine rifle. We were standing at parade rest when
Gerald said, “Where’s your carbine, officer?” Since Gerald liked the military crap, I
decided to snap to attention when I said, in a military manner, “Not qualified, sir!” I
returned to the parade rest position and stared straight ahead.

The Inspector liked the military tom-foolery I just gave him. I think I made his day. He
looked down; put his hand over his mouth while trying to hide his smile, while slowly
shaking his head no. Two days later, I was assigned to the range to qualify with the .30
caliber carbine. What amazed me was I didn’t request it.

I liked Gerald. He was a good boss, but was unliked by the political powers of Detroit.
He quit the Detroit job and left for better ground. He took a job as the Chief of Police of
a large city in the southern United States.

They must have liked the job he did. After his death, the city built a new police
headquarters and named the building after him. Thanks, Detroit for running out another
good soul.

During my Marine Corps tour, we called the MPs the Ps or pigs. There was a guy from
Texas with the name of Zac Duffer. He had a great sense of humor and worked with me
in Cuba. He also possessed the great talent of squealing, like a pig. He would do this
every time we’d see an MP vehicle go by. If those MPs heard it, you could see the image
of those little bayonets coming out of their eyes. The squeal bothered them, but they left
us alone unless they knew they could get away with something.

I’ve flown in numerous Marine Corps helicopters, such as Hueys, Sea Stallions and the
twin rotor Sea Knights, dubbed the Phrog. The Phrog was similar, but smaller than the
Army’s Chinook helicopter. My love of flying had me looking forward to flights; most of
them, anyway.

I was on a training mission one day requiring me to fly in a Phrog, my favorite chopper.
We were equipped with full packs and equipment, including our rifles. Instead of the
heavy M-14, we now carried the M-16, which was a lot lighter in weight and had a handle to carry it with.

Most military personnel find they are nothing but pack-mules. Look at photos of the troops today. It looks they’re carrying enough gear for a five year deployment. I imagine the shipping label for a government troop today would say, “Pack-mule, human, one each.”

As we approached the LZ, the chopper hovered and dropped the back ramp, part way. We were told to go to the end of the ramp and jump. The problem was we hovered over tall grass, blowing in the rotor wash. The solid ground was somewhere down there, but invisible to the eye. Wait! I have no wings pinned on. Why should I jump?

While looking to see how bad my jump (disembarkation) would be, I was again pushed out. I hit the ground and rolled. It was painful, but my bones were intact, meaning I had to continue with the stupid training mission. A broken bone would have meant a comfortable stay in a Navy hospital with nurses. Nurses were my favorite officers.

It was the end of March when I became a two digit midget.

Thursday nights were field day nights. It may sound good to a civilian, but for a Marine, a field day was a total cleaning of your living area and bathrooms and every square inch of the barracks. Can you say white glove?

I was the NCO, I decided to use my superior intelligence to make the cleaning of the head easier and faster. I thought of an ingenious plan to clean the bulkheads, using the built-in firehose. Since it was my idea, I held the hose, while another Marine turned on the water.

What happened next was funny to everyone except me. The pressure from the hose started removing the ceramic tiles. Once one goes, it’s like the Domino effect. You should have seen the damage. Everyone, but me was laughing.

I figured the Marine Corps would send me the bill for the repairs. I could pay it off in about 100 years, or so. Once again, I would like to thank the taxpayers for the beautiful job they did repairing the head I had washed down the drain. They seemed to come

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185 **LZ** – Military term – Landing Zone. The LZ was where a helicopter had enough clearance to land, without hitting something. A hot LZ meant there was shooting nearby which could affect the helicopter’s flight and the boarding by ground troops.

186 **Two digit midget** – Military term – A slang phrase meaning you have 99 or fewer days left of your tour in the military.
through for me often when my young mind made a poor decision. Taxpayers were my favorite people.

For the average Marine down to 99 days, most bosses cut some slack, knowing you’re leaving anyway. It was difficult to get some guys to do anything near the end. I took care of business. I liked my senior NCOs and the officers in my battery. They treated me right. I worked pretty hard my last days. I showed those in the need the knowledge I had obtained and instructed them to never use a firehose for cleaning a bulkhead.

My last day official day in the Marine Corps fell on a Sunday. I was freed on the Friday before, two days prior to my actual discharge date. Whoopee! While running around doing the last minute paperwork I crossed paths with one of my favorite officers, Lt. Clarke. He was a fair man and well respected man, a trait which was sometimes hard to find in the Marine Corps.

As I approached him, I stopped in my tracks. At the position of attention I gave him the sharpest hand salute I could muster. I then wiggled my outer three fingers in some sort of crude wave. What surprised me was his smile and returning my salute with the same wave. In our Marine Corps world or any military world, what we did was unacceptable and inappropriate. I had a deep respect for Lt. Clarke. He was a Marine officer of the highest caliber.

Here’s what getting out of the Corps two days early will get you. You must spend three full years in the Corps without a Court Marshall to earn the Good Conduct Medal. I spent two years and 363 days without one, but was discharged two days early, making me ineligible for the good conduct medal.
Chapter 44 – The last head shaving

I had let my hair grow out, since I knew I would be leaving the Corps soon. It was within regulation. The Corps was against hair. I bet the Green Wienie was shaved in 1775, while everyone else had their picture taken for the different denominations of American money, wearing long, wavy, gray hair. Well, maybe *Colonel Bulldog in Cuba* had short hair, too.

I strolled over to my battery office to pick up my official orders, showing my separation from active duty. One of the *asshole* gunnery sergeants said I had to get a haircut before my release. In the Marine Corps, a Marine got a haircut on the average of once a week. Marines all had short hair. I argued a bit, saying I had gotten one two days earlier. The *prick* still made me pay for another haircut.

I went to the barber shop for my last official Marine Corps haircut, as ordered. I figured the gunny called the barber and told him to give me the *works*. This guy chopped my hair. It appeared like a three year child cut it. I went back to the battery and got my official orders to get out of there before *they* decided to cut something else off, using a weed whacker. I was part of one of the most respected fighting teams in the world, but the *chicken-shitness* of it all was not my idea of being a professional. I wanted out! What *dumbasses*. *They* lost another good one when they lost me.

Staff Sergeant Kingsford gave me a ride to the Raleigh airport. It may sound nice and all, but I had to give him my 12 inch black and white TV for the ride. It was worth it.

My trip home consisted of 13 puddle jumping airports, then Washington’s, National Airport (*Now called Ronald Reagan National- DCX*). All Marine’s had to wear their uniforms when leaving the base, on discharge day and when flying with a military discount. My puddle jumping days were now behind me. The flight to Detroit was direct from D.C.

In the main terminal of Washington National, I was waiting for my flight. A woman about my age came up to me and spit on my chest. I think she tried for my face, but missed. She stared me in the eyes with total hatred saying, “You, baby killer!” I looked into to her eyes and said, “I’m sorry, but I killed no one. A baby would be the last person I would consider killing, but you, ma’am, are a different story.” I should have said

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187 *Chicken-shitness* – A word I made up to denote pettiness.
nothing, but I broke my own rule. I wanted to slap her around a bit in retaliation, but the urge to go home was greater.

A stewardess (flight attendant) came up to me, pulled out a tissue from her bag and cleaned my uniform off. She then said, “When we board, you are going to sit with us, sir.”

The final flight of my trip was outstanding. Before the flight, I excused myself for a few minutes and went into the men’s room. I took off my military uniform and put it in the trash container. I then put on some jeans and a t-shirt for the rest of my ride home, sitting with the Flight Attendants.

I wish I could remember the particular Flight Attendant’s name. She was a wonderful soul. The airline rule was, if you were to fly military stand-by (cheaper rate), you had to be in a military uniform, but the Flight Attendants waved the rule for me.

I thought to myself, “I hope the pilot I saw sleeping in the San Juan bar is not the pilot of my final flight home.” INTPs think of the strangest things, at times. We’re thinkers.

I have to say this now because it’s on my mind. Maybe 30 years later, I read something about spitting on Soldiers, Marines and Sailors. What I read it was a myth because there are no official reports filed. Of course no reports were filed. A menial misdemeanor police report would gain nothing and was silly to think about. To fly back to Washington D.C. for a trial which could get the offender a $25 fine and a slap on the wrist seemed ludicrous. Well, it happened to me and to others, too. You wipe it off and move on. It was simple enough.

When I landed in Detroit, I went into an airport barbershop and asked if he could fix my Marine Corps haircut. He said he could, but because there was so little to work with and it would be much shorter. He also asked who cut it because when he first saw it, he thought I did.

He cut what little I had, but it was at least even. Instead of paying 50 cents for my haircut, I paid the airport price of $15.00 for my shaved head. I called home for my final leg of the trip. My Marine Corps career was over. I will miss the Cuban and Caribbean climates, but not so much the Corps and the Green Wienie.

I was unemployed upon discharge. The Marine Corps gave me the savings bonds I was forced to buy during my tour. It was a small amount, but nice spending money. It gave me some time to goof off before entering the rat race. I cashed all my bonds for a lesser amount and had fun with the money.
Military veterans had the G.I. Bill, which would pay for college. I had 10 years to use the benefits. Upon discharge, I went to Wayne State University, our local college, to apply.

I should have stuck it out, but my sensitive observations clouded my mental vision. The Marine in me was turned off. They had long hair and I had short. Were they against me? Once my mind was made up, it was made up. After a few days, I dropped all my classes. I felt out of place, being there. Was I damaged by the previous three years of forced compliance?

I bought a 1967 Volkswagen beetle with a sun roof. It was red and fun to drive. It had great gas mileage. I lived in my parent’s house which was about 10 miles from my friends and our hangout areas. I bought a 10 speed racing bike and a bike rack for the car. I wasn’t a health nut. The bike was for emergency use, like a spare tire.

The beetle was known for having a terrible heater and Michigan known for its intense winters. The heater fan used the engine speed. To get the fan to go faster, you had to downshift for higher rpms. Anyone driving my car had a forceful blast of heat come out of the left foot vent. It was either too hot or off. There was no in-between. The left foot was overheated, while the right foot would get numb from the cold. The passenger would have the same problem, but on the opposite feet.

It was a good idea to keep a window squeegee in your hand during the winter months. The windshield was about two feet in front of your face. Breathing caused it to fog up and the defroster never seemed to be sufficient enough to clear it. The squeegee came in handy.

Once I was forced to get down to business (ran out of money), I applied for a job with the phone company. I also saw an ad looking for cops. Their slogan was, Being a Cop is more than just a Gig, so I applied to be a police officer. I submitted plenty of applications for jobs. First come, first serve,” was my thought. I wasn’t searching or looking for a career.

The phone company called first and offered me a mail truck job paying $90 a week. They said I would remain in the mailroom for at least a year before I got my foot in the door. I declined and was now waiting for the police department or another high paying job to call. As a Detroiter, I applied to all the high paying car companies, but they never called.

Because my savings bond money was running low, I took a couple of odd jobs. One was for a small, pop bottling plant called Village Thirst. This was a local brand serving the
metro-Detroit area. I worked hard for them and received minimum wage, around $2.00 per hour.

Leaving the plant for a delivery run was like skating in the Marine Corps. I enjoyed my restful and do-nothing rides in the truck. Once we arrived at a store, we used dollies and stacked the cases.

The driver of our truck was Don. He was around 40 years old. The other guy was like me, a minimum wage and overworked young adult. We were the peons.

His name was Ralph. My hair was still quite short and Ralph looked like the typical dope smoking, hippie of the time. Ralph was a funny guy. He knew I had just gotten out of the Corps and was waiting to get on the cop job, but his sense of humor was unaffected by any of it.

We were on the truck one day when we passed a popular diner. There were about four police cars parked in the lot. The first thing Ralph said was, “Hey look! They’re slopping the hogs.” Back in those days, most police officers were referred to as pigs. I think I mentioned this earlier, but in a military way. The cops ran with the term. PIG later became an acronym for Pride, Integrity & Guts. A lot of cops wore those pig tiepins. I was one of them, but I liked the miniature handcuffs better.

When Ralph spit out those words, I was thankful the truck had a door. It kept me from rolling out onto the street while laughing. It was a million years ago and I still smile when I think of Ralph saying those words. He was another guy I liked and lost track of, over the years.

While waiting for the call to join the police academy, I got tired of working at the bottling plant. I quit and got another job giving me a lot of alone time, working for a veterans’ post of some kind.

This post did some alleged charity work and solicited a lot of funds. I went to various businesses, restaurants and bars to collect the funds. I was encouraged to have the donors give cash instead of a check. When I did bring in cash, the bosses gave me a nice tip.

Here’s the issue I had with them. The post was called the Detroit Police Post. They encouraged me to get the donors to pay in cash instead of check. When I gave my employers cash, they slipped me a few extra bucks, as a tip. The Empath in me always felt negative energy around them, but the INTP in me had no reason to distrust them.
Most of the donor businesses were African-American owned. I was a young, skinny white guy stepping into an African-American bar. On the race scale, Detroit was known as a divided city. If I went into an African-American establishment, everyone would stop talking and look at me. I’d talk to the bartender and say, “I’m here to pick up your donation for the Detroit Police Post.” Those words got everyone’s attention.

Once I left the job, I looked into their organization and could find no information. Here I was, waiting for the police department to call me and I was working with a group of people scamming money in the name of the police department. See what the lack of experience can do? It’s the INTP. Some things just go over my head.

I received a phone call from the Detroit Police Department. I was told to report for my physical. I had been hired. I was to start the Academy within a week. Oh boy, this is where the fun began.
Chapter 45 – Our last day, the bomb truck’s and mine

My last day as a cop in the City of Detroit, had me assigned to an inside job as the timekeeper. I also handled a few emergency vehicles, which included the bomb disposal truck and an escort car for our Special Response Team’s tank.

One of the fun vehicles was the bucket truck. It had to be taken to some scenes as an emergency vehicle. I loved driving this thing. It had a top speed of 35 mph because of its weight. Anytime we were activated to go to a scene, we had to use the emergency flashing lights and the siren. Flashing lights and siren activated while traffic is going around us because of our slow speed, was extremely comical.

I was in charge of the maintenance on the Mobile Command Post, which was a rebuilt motorhome. I think the reason I was assigned as the maintenance officer was because I owned one and knew what types of maintenance they needed. In other words, I knew how to clean the toilet system.

Our station possessed its own vending machines. There was a cashew dispenser, snack, cigarette and pop machines. When it was discovered I had a knack for taking apart the coin mechanisms and tinkering with them, they ran with it.

The nut machine was interesting. It was situated near the front door. The City of Detroit was cheap and could care less about their employees and their comfort. This was during their turbulent times of corruption. Only the VIPs were rewarded with such luxuries, such as office cleaning. They made sure their personal lives were taken care of for life. There were a few exceptions, ending in prison terms, but it was later. Our building was an old school without air conditioning. We would sometimes prop the front doors open for ventilation down the hallways.

When someone bought a handful of nuts, a couple of broken pieces or crumbs would fall to the floor, drawing in the pigeons (rats with wings) like they owned the place.

One may think the pigeons did us a favor by cleaning up the floor. Let me give you a simple image to ponder. Picture a small city park with a bronze statue. Also picture some person feeding pigeons around the statue every day. The final thought for this image is,

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188 **Could care less or Couldn’t care less** – A phrase meaning, you don’t care. Is one of the phrases wrong? I couldn’t care less.
“What color is the top of the statues head and shoulders?” We declined using pigeons for cleanup help.

Another of my inside duties consisted of keeping the pop machines stocked. One day a salesman came in and tried to convince me to spend additional funds to buy the pop from his distributorship. His company would provide a new machine and the higher prices. We told him we wanted to maintain our own equipment. It was the cheaper route to go with.

The salesman noticed we were selling his brand of pop in a machine marked with the competitor’s name (we owned the machine), He said it couldn’t be done. I said we could and he would and we did. When he began to argue with me, I brought up the point, “All of the people using our machine carry loaded guns and do you want to meet them?” Case closed. We sell all brands.

Here’s a useless piece of information I learned. If you want to vend ice cream, avoid it, unless you have a backup generator for electrical outages.

My last day was my checkout day. What took two days of running around, I completed in four hours. Timekeepers knew where to go.

I was just about ready to walk out the door when my lieutenant came up to me and asked if I would do him a favor. He needed someone to drive the bomb disposal truck. I liked the lieutenant and I agreed. I drove the unit to the address given to me. It was a westside school.

When I arrived at the scene, the bomb techs advised me they had a crystalized chemical which had turned volatile. The techs also said they had some white phosphorous. I said I would have to make two trips, since there was an explosive and a dangerous chemical, together.

I wanted to avoid an explosion which could form a cloud of hot, burning smoke (gas). The location where items could be detonated was the southern tip of an island park of Belle Isle, located in the Detroit River, which flows east of the city, which was about 10 miles from my current location.

The bomb tech supervisor advised me there would be no overtime pay. This meant I had to convey both materials at the same time. I was also told to avoid all potholes or anything else which could jar the payload. I was to drive at 10-15 mph. I knew the dangers of white phosphorous from my Marine Corps days.
Wait, drive 10 miles through a poor city like Detroit and avoid all potholes? What? Anyone who lives in the north knows most paved roads are subject to pot holes due to freezing/thawing temperatures.

A tech told me the chemicals were volatile and gave me this quaint little piece of advice, “If you hear an explosion, bail out of the truck. Run in the opposite direction of the white cloud.”

Under state law, a bomb truck containing a live bomb or explosives cannot drive on a freeway, under an overpass or through an area which is contained (between two buildings). I made it all the way to the island without an explosion. The detonation area at the time was, on the southwestern tip of the island.

The site had no access road. I had to drive the truck slow and pull a 5 ton trailer over an eight inch curb. The truck was a stick shift which added to the challenge.

Knowing what I had in the containment unit caused me a little nervousness. I went over the curb as slow as possible. I made it without causing an explosion. The feeling of relief on my last day was overwhelming. No one wants to get killed on their last day of work.

The techs felt the chemicals I carried were unstable enough to warrant their destruction inside the containment unit. I thought to myself, “Yeah, but they weren’t unstable enough to keep me from driving here in a crappy truck and down some bumpy roads. The techs used det-cord (detonation cord), but they must have used a little too much. The explosion was enormous. The white cloud went up and the breeze sent it across the Detroit River, towards Canada. I’m sure it dissipated over the water on its way across. Canada failed to counter our attack. We were safe, for the moment.

The explosion destroyed the containment unit, the red flashing emergency lights and the trailer hitch. It also blew out the rear windows and tires of the truck used to pull it. The hitch broke causing the containment unit to smash into the ground. It had to sit where it was.

Another shift would be dispatched to have it towed in for repairs, without paying anyone overtime. I hitched a ride back with the bomb squad. Their office was upstairs from ours. I checked in with the boss and told him I was leaving forever. I also told him the bomb truck and containment unit were destroyed, under my watch. He smiled and wished me well. As I was walking out the door, I took off my police hat and threw it in the trash can, while saying, “I won’t need this anymore. I’m outa here. This ballgame is over.”
I do want to do some old fashioned complaining and moaning. It’s the Marine Corps way. I came home from the Marine Corps alive and well. Marines learn how to overcome impossible missions. INTPs see things set in stone. This caused a lot of mental conflict. I was an introvert who chose two extroverted careers. For survival purposes, I had to be extroverted.

When I joined the Detroit Police, I did it with the thought of making the world a better place. All I did was get involved in shootouts, fist fights, stabbings and robberies. I watched close friends die. During my career, I went to over 40 funerals of my peers. None of them died of old age. Some were suicides. I know there are other jobs which can also make those claims. No job should push a person to think of ending their life.

I’ve been hanging out in bars since I was eight years old. Once discharged, guess where I went after saying hello to family?

Bars were fun to hangout in. Where else can you hear the experts on everything, BS themselves silly? They’re the wannabees, the clowns, those talking loud enough to disturb everyone sitting around them. I dubbed it the “Hey everybody, look at me!” syndrome. It must be a hobby of mine to go into places and listen to phonies. I just smile and listen in silence.

Many seem convinced they have to convey their silly thoughts onto the rest the world. Most have no clue what the real world is like. Their buddies know because they’ve done everything. Just ask one.

They memorize the stories they hear and embellish on them to impress those stupid enough to listen. They always seem to have an audience. Some people seem to be drawn to bullshitters. It makes their lives interesting, I suppose.

Sure, I carried a gun, but I had to be careful with it. Carrying a gun is a serious responsibility. Shooting an innocent civilian cannot be taken back. Restraint was an important word in my working world. Think about restraining yourself when you might have a nanosecond to respond to protect your life.

In the Marine Corps, if someone shot at you, you fired back, no matter what. A cop has to restrain himself. What was on the other side of the target was important. The target was also important. Our mission was to keep the peace and preserve life whenever possible. Enough of this whining, I’m done.
I adopted an alley cat a few years ago. Adoption of animals is the way to go as they seem to be forever grateful. They are survivors. They have lived on the streets and had to rely on their primitive instincts to survive.

People who have their cats declawed are selfish and just want the pet for their own gratification. What a pleasant word, declawed. It sounds neat and clean. My adopted cat has all of her claws. Here’s the reason why. Like birds needing to fly, cats need to hunt.

They need to be able protect themselves and to hunt. It’s the nature of a cat. When a person has one declawed, the toes are amputated at the first knuckle. AMPUTATED! I believe amputated means, cut off. It’s torture, all in the name of convenience. The more I learn what humans do for convenience, the more I can relate to animals. They seem more civilized.

I have a severe dislike for people who alter their pet dogs. They do all kinds of strange things, like clipping the ears and tails to change their appearance. They have their dog debarked. They don’t push the dog overboard, but they use a surgical procedure to remove tissue This is supposed to muffle the barking. It’s inhumane. To me, they are torturing the animal, for their own personal pleasure. I have a deep respect for the animals I have rescued. They too, seem to have a deep respect for me. At least the one I feed every day, does.

*They* say cats have nine lives. Throughout my life, I was near-death numerous times. I think my lucky number was 16. In fact, here are a couple of times I forgot about. I have been struck by lightning twice, which changes my total near death experiences to 18.

My house or property in Detroit was struck five times by lightning. A friend, who was also a Catholic priest, once joked with me about my strikes. He said, “Stay out of my church. You’ll cause it to burn down and I’ll never get another parish.” He then made it a point to tell me he was kidding. I thought it was funny *as hell (no offense or pun intended.)* He felt guilty saying what he said, though.

There was an electrical pole in my yard which was struck two separate occasions. The pole was on the old alley easement. The alley was closed for homeowners’ personal use, years earlier. A couple of electrical lines were knocked down and dancing on the ground. The Fire Department arrived to put the fire out.
A lightning strike surprised me one afternoon. Prior to Detroit being wired for cable TV, we were still using roof antennas. I was holding the fast-forward button on a metal VCR when lightning struck the outdoor antenna. It fried the electronics in the VCR, two TVs, a stereo system, radio and the antenna rotor. Some of the antenna wiring melted or burned.

All I remember seeing was the port where the tape was inserted and hearing a loud explosion. It emitted a bright blue light. The next memory I had was sitting on the floor in the other room with my back against the wall. I was tingling and my hair was standing straight out. My son, a toddler back then said, “Wow dad, can you do it again?” As I returned to normal, I answered, “What did I do?” His reply was, “You flew!”

The one thing I learned about lightning strikes is they’re fast. If you’re ever struck, dead or alive, it will be over before you know it. I would think it would be a quick way to go. I found drowning was peaceful and lightning was fast. My guess would be sitting on an explosive would be just as fast and painless. I’m not obsessed with dying. I just want it to be painless. No one gets out of here alive, right?

There was another time where it started to rain hard. We ran around the house closing windows. The storm was coming. I went to our back sunporch which had the old style louvered or jalousie windows. As I was cranking one shut, lightning struck something close. The explosion was deafening and instantaneous. I was thrown against the brick wall of the house, where I came to an abrupt stop. This drew a little blood at the back of the head. Ouch! I was tingling again with my hair standing out.

Needless to say, after two indirect strikes, I hid in the basement during electrical storms. I’m not superstitious, but like I learned in baseball, three strikes and you’re out.

The fifth and final property strike (before I moved out) was witnessed by a neighbor. He was across the street and watching the heavy rainfall. Lightning struck the center of my driveway with a loud, explosive sound. The neighbor said the bolt looked about half the width the car park beyond the strike. We both looked at the ground where it hit and saw nothing. There was no sign of burning or of anything touching there. My thought was a question, “How can something so powerful, be so delicate?”

I saw an ad one day for the state lottery which said the odds of winning were better than those of being struck by lightning. I called the lottery office and told them I had been struck twice and I wanted both of my lottery payoffs. They declined on some sort of technicality, but I don’t see the ad anymore.
I sympathize with coppers who are surrounded by corruption in both the command and the rank and file of the police department. Those people who used their badge of office to abuse the rights of other human beings are traitors of the human race. I once heard a good cop describe an asshole cop by saying, “He wouldn’t make a pimple on a real cop’s ass.” Those words were impressive to me. I remember every quote I ever heard, as long as there is a cuss word in it. I wonder why.

In my world, 10% of the cops are assholes. 90% are honest and hard-working people. They have my deepest respect. The few selfish individuals can ruin the image for the majority who are dedicated. Even with the dangers, the hardest part was to maintain a professional and honest image.

One of my favorite quotes (with a cuss word) from the police academy was from one of our Tac Officers (instructors). It was, “If you want to be a big and bad tough cop, carry a bucket of lard with you.” When someone asked, “Why a bucket of lard”? The Tac Officer replied with, “When you flip out your big, bad badge and gun, and the guy you’re doing it to is someone who’s a lot bigger and badder, it will be a little easier when he shoves the gun and badge up your ass.” “A good quote,” I thought.

Evolution is a good thing. I like young people. As a baby boomer, it’s my hope the young people will fix all the mistakes my generation made. We made a few and I’m sorry for them. The young folks are inheriting a planet we humans wiped out many of the species, in the name of progress. We will continue to trash our beautiful planet until we humans disappear or destroy it. I call it human selfishness.

If the young generation of humans improves things, then we raised a generation better than us. I believe it was our ultimate goal for them. The problem is we are leaving the younger generation a mess of a planet. My generation was greedy and exploited our resources. The word sustainability was unknown. As humans, we’re learning.

Many people of my generation do not look into the future. We look at what can benefit us in the present. We need to realize the needs of our younger generation, the animal kingdom and the planet. The greed many of us possess will be the human race’s downfall. Unless a meteor hits us first, then you can forget the above.

There is one good thing about this. Earth will still be here. It just might take a few million years for this blue marble to clean and replenish itself.

As an Empath, I absorb feelings of those around me, but I am unable to read minds. Some people claim to be able to do such things. I think they go by the title of Psychic. I’m an
INTP and an Empath. Being a psychic would be a nice option to have, but I’m a nonbeliever when it comes to mind readers.

INTPs are thinkers and logicians. Many times, we need visual proof. We are the seeing is believing type. Being a Marine, a cop or a public servant was an incorrect path for me. I have learned from my experiences. Doing it again would be a mistake. The past is in the past and refuses to be changed. I’m glad I know about me now. It’s something new and exciting to work with.

Let’s see. Have I learned anything from this experience? Yes! I learned the white man rules. Everyone else is subservient to him. I have also learned women of all races are subservient to men of all races. All of this is unfair. I know nothing in life is fair, but there is some evolving we need to do, as a whole.

I also learned being a first responder can cause irreparable brain damage. I remember years ago and as a teen telling my girlfriend, Belinda’s father, I was going to be a cop, which seemed to impress him. He was some sort of big shot with the Fire Department.

He told me, “It’s a good job. You’ll never be laid off and you’ll never get rich, but you will be paid enough and your pension will be good.” Those were nice words to hear. He’s long gone, now and things worked out different. I got laid off and I retired from the bankrupt City of Detroit. He was incorrect about the financial prediction. I’m glad I took other precautions to protect my future.

Is it my turn to have fun, yet? No. I’ll be the old guy who sees the plea for help in someone’s eyes. I’ll be the old guy bailing out of my car to stop someone from abusing the rights or taking the property of another. I’m a little slower now and I’m no longer paid. I suppose after all these years, I’ll finally get to help someone, but they’ll have to help me, afterwards.

My bad memories will always be there, but I am alive and have a purpose in life. I always try to be as docile as ever, but it is important to know I was trained to be silent and deadly. I dislike being crossed.

If you’re ever out and about and hear someone holler, “Get off my lawn!” you’re welcome to play on mine, but please leave the dandelions alone. They’re there for the bees. I want them to live happily ever after.