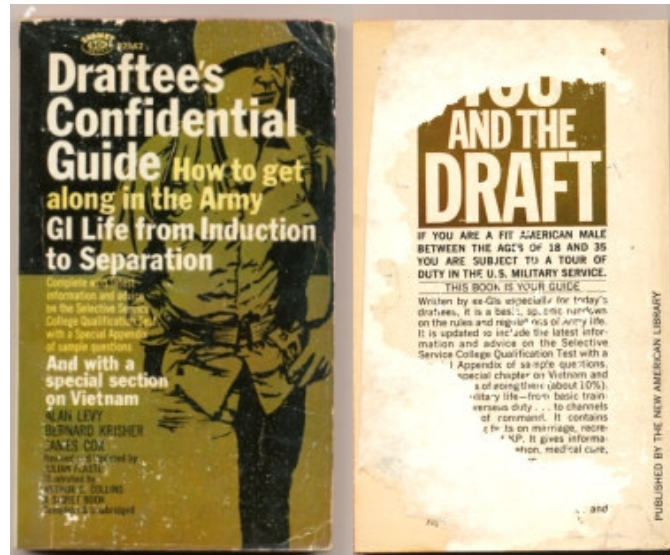




“Don’t worry. You’ll get along:” Quotes from *Draftee’s Confidential Guide*, 1966 edition



Here we want to share parts of a very precious gift we received from our friend and co-author of our bilingual book *transit nürnberg #4: USA!*, Mr. Herbert J. Jacobson, himself an Army veteran who served in Nuremberg with the 176th Signal Repair Company: a worn and torn copy of Alan Levy, Bernard Krisher, James Cox: *Draftee’s Confidential Guide. How to get along in the Army. Illustrated by Arthur C. Collins. 1966 Edition revised and updated by Richard Flaste. Signet Books, New York 1966.*

Then intended as a guide for young Americans who were drafted into the Armed Forces, today it is a well written introduction to a time far away, a world long gone and ways of thinking almost forgotten: How “Overseas” was seen from the U.S. perspective in the 1960s, including the situation in Vietnam, the terrors of “KP”, the inner life of the Army and how to deal with hierarchy and orders in an increasingly anti-authoritarian surrounding. Little wonder that the former owner obviously made frequent use of the book which gave him much needed advice, sometimes in a satirical tone.

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INTRODUCTION

Here's some good advice as you start your Army career. Don't worry. You'll get along; others have. If the going gets tough, look for the funny side Gripe all you want to, but keep your socks up. Now and then - who knows? - you might even get some fun out of the Army.



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OVERSEAS DUTY

THE UNITED STATES ARMY is a gigantic, far-flung operation with outposts all over the globe. All is not infantry and artillery and, after the first eight weeks of basic training, many soldiers never see the inside of a mess hall kitchen or, for that matter, the inside of a rifle again.

You could be an interpreter, a stenographer, a theater manager, a gamekeeper, an intelligence analyst, a musician, a full-time basketball player, a teletypist, a general's driver, a clerk in an Army-operated hotel, a skier, a sports writer for Stars and Stripes, a radio repairman, or an interrogator.

There are, in fact, some pretty good deals in the Army. Most of these are overseas. Some of the worst are overseas, too.

By and large, most veterans and regular Army men who have been around prefer European duty. Japan is a close second. Among draftees Vietnam ranks last (but not least. Therefore Chapter 8 is entirely devoted to Vietnam).

Once you receive overseas orders, you may be granted a leave before you report to the overseas replacement station. If you're a two-year man headed for Europe or Japan, you may later regret taking too much leave in the States. Save plenty of time for travel overseas, because this is likely to be your first and last trip to that part of the world. You don't have to take the stateside leave if you don't want it. You can report early to the overseas replacement station and you won't be charged with any leave time.

You'll receive orders to report to the overseas replacement station by a certain date. If you take a leave first, you are legally entitled to report any time before midnight of the day after the date indicated on your orders. For instance, if the orders read: "Reps 17 Jun 66" you can

stay way until midnight of June 18. If you want a place to sleep, it's usually a good idea to arrive at a post before 5 P.M.

An overseas replacement station is bedlam. At any time of the year you'll see soldiers dressed in fatigues and low quarters; khakis; winter dress uniforms; and patches representing every Army command in the United States. Because it's an Army version of Grand Central Station, you'll see very little discipline or saluting here. The same stations often serve also as separation centers and many of the men who have just returned from overseas just don't salute officers any more.

If you're going to Europe, Iceland, or Panama, you leave from Fort Dix, N.J.; if you're headed for the Far East or Alaska, you'll go from Oakland Army Base, Calif. You may remain at the replacement station from three days to two weeks. During this time you'll receive any shots you've missed, orientations on overseas duty, and a clothing check. If you don't have all your issued clothing you'll have to buy it. You'll learn what overseas unit you're headed for. You'll be assigned to a provisional company whose cadre, first sergeant, and company commander are going overseas with you. As soon as you arrive overseas, your company will disband and you'll travel to your assigned unit or to an overseas processing center for further assignment.

During your stay at the replacement station, you can count on pulling a few details such as KP or guard, but you'll also have much free time. If you have no details scheduled after five o'clock or on weekends, you can pick up your pass and take off. However, you must be back by 6 A.M. on every working day.

It's possible to exempt yourself from KP or guard duty at the replacement center if you have a job as a typist or clerk in an office. If you have such ambitions, see the Personnel officer and volunteer your services. To initiate such action you'll need a disposition form (DF) signed by the officer who requests you. You must take this slip to the sergeant in charge of the duty roster and you may have to fight it out with him.

A day or two before the scheduled sailing or flying date, you'll be notified that you're restricted to the post. Many soldiers are known to have disobeyed this "alert" without being caught or punished. As long as you're present for the will sailing, nothing much will happen. If you miss a troop movement, however, you're likely to be in a lot of non-oceanic hot water.

Most troops are now flying to Europe, while a few are still going by ship. Air priority is given those with critical military occupations and soldiers traveling with dependents.

If you're going by ship, you may find yourself in the advance party that boards early and usually performs the more arduous KP and guard chores. Almost everyone is given a job sooner or later. If you're left out, you may be more miserable worrying about the job you'll eventually get than those who already know their fates. There are some good shipboard jobs and it's advisable to start jockeying for one as soon as you board the vessel. The chaplain, who is in charge of the ship's newspaper and library, generally needs a half dozen typists, editors and librarians. The hospital needs medics.

Quarters on troop ships are very cramped. But the food is the best you'll eat in the Army. That's because many ships are run by the Navy, which always eats well.

You'll be at sea for 8 to 10 days enroute to Europe; 7 to Panama, 3 days to Alaska, 4 days to Hawaii, about 14 days to Okinawa and Japan, and 18 days to Korea and Vietnam.

But if you're flying, which is more likely, think in terms of hours. For instance, it's only 6 to 8 hours to Europe, about 18 hours to Vietnam. Besides Military Air Transport planes, in which the seats face the rear for safety's sake, the Army uses commercial planes - and that

can be downright pleasant. When you go commercial, you'll be treated the same as a nonmilitary passenger; they won't blindfold you during the in-flight movie.

Overseas, the Army tries to create a slice of America on every post. It's up to you to decide whether you want to stay in this transplanted America or whether you want to go out and see how the rest of the world lives.

Unless you go out of your way to meet the people of the country, explore your new surroundings, and travel, you're likely to find the Army much the same as it was in the States. Whether you're in Texas, France, or Okinawa, you have formations, inspections, the same chow, the same beds, the same service clubs and libraries and juke boxes, the same dirty details, lectures and re-up talks and everything else that's Army.

In most overseas posts, you can't wear civilian clothes off duty for at least one month after you've arrived. It's advisable, however, to wear "civvies" as soon after that as possible. Most foreigners aren't particularly fond of the American Army.

There is much anti-American feeling among certain segments of foreign populations, especially the intellectuals, but it's not always directed at you. The GI is regarded, as one Frenchman put it, as "a harmless, overpaid, spoiled but generous child." If you have an opportunity to meet some of the more tolerant people in the country where you're stationed, take the opportunity to visit their homes and invite them to American movies on the post or to the snack bar. You're likely to find the relationship a rewarding one.

Wherever you go, there will be girls. Not always the nice, clean wholesome American types you dream about - but girls. The nice girls are hard to meet, and many will have nothing to do with GI's. It's possible to see them at Amerika Houses, concerts, and opera houses and, if you're near a university town, at university functions. Many Army units overseas employ foreign girls as clerks, secretaries, and interpreters.

Money goes far in Germany and Japan. You can get fantastic bargains at the department-store sized PX's and at foreign stores. German cameras, about half the price you would pay for them in the U.S., are even cheaper at the PX's than in German stores. Other good buys are French perfumes, German porcelain (particularly Rosenthal), and Swiss watches. You can send these home duty-free. Favorite buy in Germany is the 300-day clock. At overseas Army snack bars, most sandwiches cost a dime to 20 cents and waitresses serve you. You can have 30 pieces of laundry washed at Quartermaster Pick Up points for a dollar and receive efficient three-day delivery service in some places. In Japan, some local laundries guarantee 24-hour laundry service.

Restaurants, bars, hotels, and cab drivers like to soak soldiers for everything they can get, so watch out. Your \$100 a month salary is equivalent to \$400 a month by German standards, and even more in Japan. Some foreign shopkeepers feel it's all right to swindle you once in a while.

You'll hear many orientations on Security. Don't talk about your Army activities, or maneuvers, or military sites when you're off the post. The Communists have agents in the most unlikely places.

In some countries, if you commit a crime on pass or leave you can be tried and convicted by a foreign civilian court. So watch out when you're drinking the potent European beers or Japanese sake. If you get in trouble while holding down a plum job at U.S. Army Europe headquarters, don't be surprised to find yourself "boondocked" speedily as a patrol guard along the sandy dunes of a Bordeaux beachhead. Military punishment overseas is stiff, too. If you're caught speeding or get into a brawl, you can get court-martialed and busted. Many master sergeants have been demoted to corporal while overseas. (Promotions are easier too; almost

every draftee returns a corporal or the equivalent specialist 4th class. You can even make sergeant.)

Best duty is usually at any headquarters. Top headquarters duty (such as U.S. Army Europe headquarters in Heidelberg, or Eighth Army headquarters in Seoul, Korea) is stable. You work a five-day week, pull no extra duty, and can take your allotted leave whenever you want it. You can really plan to see the world. Next to top headquarters, it's always pleasant to be stationed in or near a big city. Anything on brigade level or above isn't too bad.

Duty with the Infantry and Armored Divisions means more than half your time in the field, but if the weather is good, time passes quickly and some soldiers even prefer the outdoors to garrison duty.

Headquarters troops at corps level and logistical support units don't spend too much time in the field.

If you like privacy off duty you may be able to find an inexpensive room, apartment, or hut in town. In Germany, you can get a reasonably comfortable hideout for \$15 a month.

You don't carry a pass in your pocket overseas, unless you know the first sergeant or are buddy-buddy with the company clerk. You pick it up at the orderly room at night and return it next morning.

In many places, dirty details like KP are handled by local civilians; you may have to pay for the service.

Here's a bird's-eye view of what you can expect in the way of duty at major overseas posts. (The Army has learned of the statehood of Alaska and Hawaii but still considers them "overseas" because they are outside the continental limits.)

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EUROPE

If you're going to Europe, chances are you'll be assigned to Germany, where most of our troops (about 225,000) are stationed. The ship will land at Bremerhaven; the plane at Frankfurt or Paris.

Billets in Germany are the permanent type. You'll have large and roomy wall lockers, private latrines, and well-heated rooms in winter. In France, some soldiers live in tents or old French barracks (casernes).

Well-planned leaves in Europe can make your trips much more enjoyable. Remember that you can get free hops on Military Air Transport Service planes (MATS) between dozens of European and African cities (Berlin, Frankfurt, Rome, Athens, Tripoli, Munich, Paris, London, Madrid, Athens, Naples, Chateauroux, Casablanca, as well as flights to French Morocco, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Ireland, and Scotland).

If you buy a car in Europe you can drive on the Continent for considerably less than what Europeans would pay. The Army maintains a large number of Quartermaster gas station throughout Germany where you can get gas for half the American price, and arrangements with private Esso gas stations in Italy and France enable you to purchase gas for approximately the U.S. price. Gas coupons can be purchased at the PX.

Europe on \$5 a day, a book by Arthur Frommer, is available at Stars & Stripes newsstands or at major European airports. Frommer's success story would be an inspiration to would-be

writers in khaki. The whole \$5 a Day series, now -, world-wide institution, began a decade ago, when Frommer was a draftee in Germany. He wrote a small volume called *The GI's Guide to Traveling in Europe* and hired a printer in Oberammergau as his publisher. The Guide is now out of print, but its successor will prove invaluable to any GI embarking on a European leave.

In Europe, there are two types of passes: a pass good until midnight, and an overnight pass which gives you liberty until reveille. Only 50 percent of a unit can be gone at any time and, of these, only 15 percent can be gone overnight and/or on leave. This means that you can't always leave the post on weekends or holidays even though you may be off duty.

But you'll probably have more time than money to go gallivanting in strange territory, and the experiences you'll chalk up and photo albums you'll fill will be something to tell your grandchildren.

So, if you're lucky enough to get to Europe: Bon voyage are Bon retour.

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“KITCHEN POLICE”



AN 18-HOUR NIGHTMARE

KP BEGINS the moment you think about it. The dread you live in is about as debilitating as a persistent cold. Some soldiers measure time in terms of periods from one KP session to the next. But until you report to the mess hall early one morning, it is only psychological.

KP - short for “kitchen police” - is a misnomer. First of all, you're in a mess hall, not a kitchen. On the company level, a mess hall feeds 200 to 300 men. If you're unfortunate enough to be slaving in a “consolidated mess,” you'll find yourself serving as many as 1,000 men coming (on line, of course) in four different directions. Add greasy trays and the world's surliest people - Army cooks - plus such sturdy staples as sausage patties, beans, and dehydrated potatoes. You'll learn soon enough that this is no recipe for the great American image of a kitchen - a cozy nook with jam in a closet, cookies on a shelf, and Mom cheerily baking apple pie.

Secondly, the word “police” in the title of KP is an out-and-out error. The word implies authority. The KP has no authority; he has no soul; he is strictly a body. It's a feeling that's hard to forget and impossible to cherish.

At 4 or 4:30 in the morning (time specified by the duty roster), your sluggish body appears at the mess hall door. A disgruntled cook is there to greet you with such early morning cheer as: "Take that bucket and a shovel and get some coal in the furnace. If I'm cold, you'll be hurtin'."

When all the lucky bodies are assembled, the cook takes out a pad and pencil and, if he can write, makes a list. There are usually six KP's to a mess hall. The first two to arrive can expect to draw dining-room orderly (DRO) posts; the next two the clipper room; and the stragglers, pots-and-pans. These will be your assignments for the 15 to 18 hours that lie ahead.

In a larger, consolidated mess, there will probably (but not always) be a few more KP's to handle the many more mouths that must be fed. This will involve extra assignments. There might be an outside man (to administer the garbage cans, which are situated outdoors); a tray carrier (to stack the trays according to a peculiarly complicated system that is supposed to make them dysentery-proof); a couple of linemen (to keep the stainless steel serving line stainless); and, sometimes, a handyman (a jack-of-all-trades mastered by all cooks).

A day in the life of the usual six-man KP crew will probably continue in this pattern, however:

4:30 to 5 A.M. - Jobs assigned; mess hall heated.

5 to 5:30 - The DRO's fill the salt and pepper shakers for each table; plus sugar bowls; butter dishes; catsup; mustard; Tabasco sauce (the troops will use anything to kill the taste of chipped-beef-on-toast and other Army specialties); evaporated milk; peanut butter; and lemons. The clipper room men ready their equipment - soap, hot water, and a machine - for the influx of trays. The pots-and-pans men crack open eggs for a shaky cook.

5:45 - The head cook for this shift comes to work. He calls the KP's together for a friendly talk of the "This I Believe" variety. He tries to inspire you with such wisdom as "You play ball with me and I'll play ball with you," salted with wistful promises like: "And if you work hard and clean 'er up real good by 10, I'll let you take a 15-minute break before lunch."

5:50 - KP's eat. One real advantage of KP is that you'll eat well, if hurriedly.

5:55 - "Da-yum. Y'all gonna take all day eatin' yo' grits? Git over hyuh and unload the milk befo' we feed the troops." (Almost all cooks are Southerners; and those who aren't end up talking like rebels anyway.)

6 to 7 - KP's and cooks serve the troops. . . . One of the men in the clipper room says KP isn't as bad as everyone says it is, but his colleague reminds him that only half the men eat breakfast and, anyway, it's the least greasy meal of the day. . . . The head cook catches a DRO serving two pats of butter to a friend. The DRO is shifted to pots-and-pans in a straight player transaction. . . . The troops use up all the sugar. A KP accidentally fills one sugar bowl with Ajax. . . . One of the clipper-room men drops a cereal bowl. The mess sergeant makes him sign a statement of charges. . . . A last-minute rush of breakfasters tumble in at 6:59, just as the KP's start to disassemble the serving line.

7 to 9 - The clipper-room men wash all the cups, bowls, and trays despite an inevitable shortage of hot water. . . . The DRO's sponge off all the tables and benches; sweep and mop the floor; refill all the bowls, shakers, bottles, and cans-, and fire the furnaces. . . . The pots-and-pans men plod onward through greasy utensils that once held food for several hundred men.

9:05 - The CO drops in for a bite. He smiles at the DRO who is filling a sugar bowl and asks him how it's going. "Terrible, sir," the KP replies. "That's fine," the CO says cheerfully. . . . The mess sergeant rushes over and tells the KP to do his work standing up. "Next thing, you'll

be wanting to do KP flat on your back,” he predicts. . . . The first sergeant comes in looking for the CO, but stops to ask a KP why his fatigues aren’t clean.

9:15 - Everybody assembles “to GI” the place. Floors are swept again; then doused with hot soapy water; swept once more, and dry mopped. End result: they look the same as before. . . . One man is sent outside, where a crisis is brewing on the garbage rack. Someone has thrown a bone in the “Edible Garbage” can! The chosen reformer is assigned to remedy any discrepancies in the other cans, which are named: “Inedible Garbage,” “Bones,” “Paper,” “Trash,” and “Tin Cans.”

10 - On the dot of 10 a KP sidles up to the head cook and says: “About that break you promised us . . .” He gets no further, for the mess sergeant bursts in shouting: “There’s gonna be an inspection!” He takes a pail of dirty water and strews the contents over the newly cleaned floor. “Everybody grab a bucket,” he cries. “We gotta clean this place up for the inspection.” The head cook tells the DRO’s to take down all the screens and wash the windows. “If they can’t see out the window, they’ll believe all the complaints about the food,” he says. One KP has the audacity to ask the mess sergeant where he heard there was going to be an inspection. The sergeant replies by hurling flour to the floor and telling the man to stop asking questions when the place has to be cleaned. . . .

The inspection never materializes. . . . The KP’s set up the line for what must be the biggest, greasiest 10-course chicken lunch ever made.

11 A.M. - 12:15 P.M. - Lunch is the meal everybody shows up for. . . . The tray rack is empty by 11:45, but the clipper-room men haven’t caught up yet, so the line waits until they wash some used trays. . . . The first sergeant enters, goes to the head of the chow line and takes the name of one of the KP’s. “Your hat isn’t on your head,” he barks. The Army requires head-gear on all people working in mess halls as a sanitary measure; it isn’t that insistent on clean hands, however. . . . The chicken is used up, but that’s OK. After a 10-minute delay, the mess sergeant comes up with yesterday’s meat loaf.

12:15 - 12:30 - KP’s eat plenty - of what’s left.

12:30 - A new shift of cooks have taken over. This means another pep talk from the new head cook: “Well, I hear you had a pretty easy time of it this morning. Get this straight, men: times have changed. If you’re gonna get outs here sometime before 10, you’ll have to work for it. Now you just play ball, with me and . . .”

12:35 - One KP to another: “Well, we’re just about halfway through the day.” Four shoulders sag.

12:36 to 5 - The after-breakfast routine is repeated on a larger scale. More men ate lunch, so there’s more dirt and also (due to the nature of the meal) more grease. This makes life even drearier for the pots-and-pans men. . . . Only one session of “GI’ing” if you’re lucky, but still no break. Any spare time that might accrue will be used for unloading trucks that bring rations for future consumption. . . . The mess sergeant tells the cooks that supper will consist of hamburgers. “But we had them last night,” one cook argues. “No,” the sergeant replies, “those were lamb patties.” The same item is also known as vealburger, Salisbury steak, meat ball, rolled meat loaf, and Deutsche beefsteak.

From 5 to eternity - With the CO, first sergeant and other higher authority gone, most of the cooks bug out. This places the serving burden on the KP’s at supper. One or two cooks remain behind to see that the KP’s don’t bug out. Not everybody sticks around for supper, but it’s greasy as ever and the sight of buddies wearing civvies and talking about an evening in town does nothing for a KP’s morale. . . . By the end of supper, the mess hall has taken on an aroma all its own; one can sniff the drearier parts of the day’s three meals and the dampness of sev-

eral buckets of GI soap. . . . The good two hours or more of cleaning begins again, but a note of urgency is articulated by the one remaining cook, who acts as keynote speaker: “Take your time, men, but remember, you’re on your own time from here on in. I can wait as long as you’re gonna take to get this place shaped up.” . . . This last cook is a talkative RA with a wispy mustache, a nervous tic and a habit of addressing the KP’s as “chief” or “daddy-o.” He makes the pots-and-pans men do an entire pot over because he has detected grease on the handle. . . .

While everyone fidgets and tries to “look busy,” the cook selects the puniest KP and assigns him to the grease trap. The grease trap is the ultimate destination of all left-over grease, gravy, soap, and slime from the day’s activity. It’s sort of an indoor Okefenokee swamp - a plumbing fixture that keeps grease from clogging pipes by taking advantage of grease’s low specific gravity (.85) and catching it above the water in the trap. It is isolated from the comparatively fragrant kitchen by a trap door, which the KP must remove. Then, using a wholly inadequate dipper, he must drain the surface scum from the “pure” grease.

The kitchen is given at least one extra “GI” treatment, for one tile on the floor didn’t glow enough to satisfy the cook.... The furnace is banked and the fire lights have been turned on and the KP’s are donning their field jackets when the cook says softly: “Now all we have left is this 50-pound sack of potatoes. They gotta be peeled for tomorrow’s meal.” . . . Never before 7 P.M. and occasionally as late as midnight (in basic training companies), the KP’s are finally dismissed. . . . Their first destination is always the shower.

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SATURDAY MORNING INSPECTION



The most familiar - and possibly the most exasperating - type of inspection is the Saturday morning variety. As much a state of mind as an operation, it accounts for a good part of the low morale in the Army.

Wherever the Saturday morning inspection is a tradition, the “gig” is an institution. A gig is the Army’s one-syllable word for a demerit. Getting gigged may mean an hour’s extra duty in the mess hall, a weekend in the barracks, or nothing at all. But men, particularly those stationed near home, often spend their Army careers living in morbid fear of the gig.

On Monday night, the first rumor starts circulating that there will be an inspection on Saturday. On Tuesday, anxious faces search bulletin boards and interpret every cryptic expression that crosses the first sergeant's face. Speculation never ran so high on Wall Street.

The suspense sometimes continues until Wednesday, when the rumor is confirmed. Now that it is an ugly reality, a feeling of relief sets in for almost 24 hours. At least we know what to expect!

By Thursday night, however, a new stage is reached. This is the beginning of the end - shaping up. Thursday is the night when you see grown men staring hopelessly at disheveled wall lockers. Will 36 hours be enough time to turn this jungle of impressed clothing into the neat, immaculate, sparkling, olive-drab wardrobe of the truly combat-ready soldier? And what about the foot locker? And what if . . . ? And if I don't, what about that Saturday night date?

Friday night offers a preview of what the end of the world will be like - a mob scene of people splashing hot, soapy water around with reckless abandon; born leaders haranguing small crowds with inspirational words like "We've all gotta work together, fellas"; harried privates trying to recall the face of the girl back home and wondering if they'll ever see her again; self-styled barbers strewing their friends' hair about the floor; a virile aroma of shoe polish, brass polish, foaming cleanser, and indelible ink; and long, impassioned debates on crucial issues like "Does the CO want Pepsodent or Ipana displayed in the foot locker?"

Along about midnight, the barracks philosopher, in a moment of revelation inspired by extreme fatigue, will proclaim that the company commander's SOP for shaped-up foot lockers requires display of a shaving brush and brushless shaving cream. Just as he is about to draw some weighty moral from this, an elder statesman will declare: "Aaaaah, that's the Army for you!" Then some still rational person will mercifully switch off the lights.

A few hours later, the sun will rise on a scene suggestive of Eniwetok the morning before a big H-bomb test. Men will make their beds so tight that an officer's coin will bounce high in the air in case he tests the bed - as officers often do. The furthest corner of a wall locker top will be dusted (and sometimes washed) in case the inspecting officer jumps up and touches it with a white glove - as officers often do. Soles and heels of boots will be shined in case he looks - as officers often do. And heroes whose stomach can still entertain thought of breakfast will exit on air to avoid treading on the freshly waxed center aisle.



Mounting hysteria will reach its climax about five minutes before the inspecting officer is due. The quiet chap in the corner who is always shaped up will inexplicably begin to cry. An indecisive fellow will announce that he wants to go on sick call. Someone's bunk tag will be missing. Brass belt buckles will be given last-minute once-overs. And a nearsighted runt will run in and out of the squad room door stage-whispering: "I think I see him coming."

When the master of the soldiers' fates appears, a term squad leader will call: "Atten-hut!" but his voice will crack on the second syllable. The CO will gig him for it, and then proceed down the aisle dispensing casual wisdom and homely philosophy like:

"This man needs a haircut."

"Send both of them to the mess hall after dinner." Occasionally, he will engage in a little repartee:

Q: "What kind of a smile is that, soldier?"

A: "A silly smile, sir."

After endless minutes of standing at attention, furtive gig glen, sinister looks, and flashes of self-reproach, the door will slam and everyone will go skidding down the well-waxed center aisle to where the squad leader stands looking into the sunrise.

"What did he say?" "Did he gig you?" "Do you think he'll restrict all of us?" "Can we go now?" "Is there gonna be one next Saturday?"

This is the basic pattern of the week-long nightmare known as the Saturday morning inspection. It does raise the question: How much work do the men accomplish on their jobs on Thursday and Friday with thoughts of Saturday's doom on their minds?

You will survive it most happily if you stay doggedly optimistic and don't take it too seriously. Very often, the gig you're bound to get will involve no punishment - it will just stand as a reflection on your personal cleanliness or your inability to keep a brass buckle gleaming. If your officer's concept of maintaining discipline is that he must find something wrong, he's going to find it - and only fate will determine the identity of the victim.

You can sometimes keep fate away from your door by taking a few elementary precautions. Keep special brass and a spare belt buckle around for inspections only. That way, you'll be spared staying up late shining brass on Friday night. If you have a car, store excess clothing and, particularly civvies on the back seat. The sight of just one uniform and three gray flannel suits hanging in a wall locker may set the CO to thinking that you haven't yet been completely assimilated by the Army.



Best advice of all is to find some way, legal or semi-legal, to bug out on Friday night or early Saturday. If you're gone, they won't be able to find you until Monday morning. Since 48 hours exceeds the usual military memory span, you're probably home free, although it's best to have obtained some fairly official sanction or excuse.

But even the man who leaves on Friday night is not completely free of the mental agonies of the Saturday inspection. Half way home, a voice within will ask him: "Are you sure you locked your foot locker before you left?"

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