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CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE

Memoirs: A Collection of Short Stories

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR FARRELL

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

JEFFREY KANG

FOR

SENIOR THESIS

FALL 2011

28 NOVEMBER 2011

Memoirs:
A Collection of Short Stories

X-X: delineates the Wing-Deck of a given location in **Bancroft Hall**. The Deck is the floor level. There are 8 wings and most wings have 4 decks. The first deck is the "0" deck, so a wing with 4 decks actually has 5 floors.

The starboard side is odd (0-7) wings and the port side is even (2-8) wings. This is a "ship" that cannot set sail.

RESTRICTION: is to be restricted; restricted to the U.S. Naval Academy grounds. A Midshipman (Mid) on restriction must be present for five musters a day: 0630, 1015, 1530, 2000, 2230. On weekends, there is also a "Surprise Muster". The musters are to insure that a Mid is on the Yard; the "Surprise Muster"

is called to fuck mids over. The uniform is specified over the **1-MC** and said uniform must be in immaculate condition. Roll is taken at the Restriction Muster by means of yellow Restriction Cards. These restriction cards are initialed by either the **OOW** or **MOOW** (whichever is present for the muster). Whoever is present to administer the muster inspects each restrictees uniform and then some words are addressed to the restrictees. Restriction is complicated and a strange sort of prison heirarchy is in force. The longer one's restriction, the more one's clout with the other restrictees. Mr. Kang spent roughly two-hundred days on restriction; his longest stint was in the ballpark-figure of 120 days; he may have set some kind of record, but is not proud of this fact at all.

IT was winter in Annapolis and I had probably been on **restriction** for over two months now because I remember seeing the Fall leaves when I began restriction and now there was snow on the ground.

I had been doing this for a so long and yet here I was, in my warm sleeping bag, the sleeping bag on my **blue magnet**, the blue magnet that was tightly wrapped over my **rack**, the rack that was bunked above my desk, the desk in my room in Bancroft Hall 3-0.

It was dark outside and when I reached my hand out to touch my window, my warm hand stuck for a moment to the frozen glass. And there I was in my warm sleeping bag and I had been doing this for months and I knew that what I was doing was all wrong. The moment was all wrong because I had been doing this for so long and unless my cheap, issued alarm clock was wrong in telling me that it was 0630, I was all wrong.

That I was now **hosed** would be an apropos way of describing my situation.

BLUE MAGNET: is a ridged, blue bed sheet. each midshipman is issued two blue magnets, but in the madness of the laundry system a midshipman may end up with more than two. the blue magnet is so called because it attracts mids to itself, primarily for naps.

RACK: not the medieval torture device as much as that might have made sense. In this case, a rack is a midshipman's bunked bed.

MOOW [as in "now"]: Midshipman Officer of the Watch

OOW [as in "o...o...w"]: Officer of the Watch

HOSED:

to be

STRIBLING WALK: This walkway is the main walkway from Bancroft Hall to the majority of the academic buildings. There are two brick lanes that cut across the campus. Stribling Walk begins at the Virgin Cannons is interrupted by the Naval Academy Seal, the statue of Tecumseh, the Mexican War Memorial, and ends at the Macedonian Monument. Between class periods, one may see the sea of mids pouring out from classes all over the Yard to continue on to their various preoccupations. The walk is rather pleasant, but in three years, I stopped no more than four times to look around and take it all in. I am certain that this lack of awareness for beauty had nothing to do with my inability to appreciate or my being busy—it had everything to do with the fact that stopping and looking around had no place in my life as an officer candidate in the United States Navy.

I could tell myself that I had a choice, but I would know that I did not have a choice. I knew I didn't have a choice and yet, for a few more seconds, I would continue to hose myself.

You see, I had somewhere to be. I should have been at this place fifteen minutes ago. I had been at this place every morning since the falling of the leaves along **Stribling Walk** – without fail. And, now, this morning, when snow was on the ground, I was not at this place where I should have been sixteen minutes ago.

The following takes place over the eternal, methodical, practiced, psychotic span of three minutes:

Jumping out of my rack onto my desk chair. Black dress socks, underwear, and crew-neck undershirt are what I have been sleeping in for months. **SDB** shirt with shirt-stays draped over my desk chair is now buttoned onto me (soft shoulderboards on the shirt). Stays go over my feet and now, the trousers (also draped on my desk chair), now on me. Belt buckled (my **asshole** is not showing). My black oxfords are underneath my desk chair and I slip into

ASSHOLE: not the sphincter-type and not the personality-type. The asshole can be found on all military buckle belts. When the buckle is properly fastened, a small hole on the backside of the buckle (asshole) is covered. The asshole must not be shown in public; this would be indecent.

SDB:

SERVICE DRESS BLUES

BASIC UNIFORM

COMPONENTS:

**Coat, Service Dress Blue
Shirt, White**

**Dress Trousers, Blue
Dress Cap, Combination, White
Shoes, Dress, Black**

Socks, Black

Undershirt, White

Undershorts

Belt, Black, w/Gold Clip

**Necktie, Black, Four-in-Hand
Buckle, Gold**

Ribbons

PRESCRIBABLE ITEMS:

All-Weather Coat, Blue

Gloves, Black/White

Overcoat, Blue

OPTIONAL ITEMS:

Cap, Garrison, Blue

Cuff Links, Gold

Earmuffs (w/outergarment only)

Jacket, Black

Overshoes

Reefer

Scarf (w/outergarment only)

Sweater, Cardigan, Blue

Sweater, V-Neck, Black

Tie Clasp/Tack

Vest, Shirt w/o Epaulets

Umbrella, Black

Name/Identification Tag

OCCASIONS FOR WEAR:

MAY BE PRESCRIBED FOR WEAR YEAR-ROUND TO ALL OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS WHEN FORMAL DRESS, DINNER DRESS OR FULL DRESS UNIFORMS ARE NOT PRESCRIBED AND CIVILIAN EQUIVALENT DRESS IS COAT AND TIE.

SECOND CLASS DOORS: Second Class (Juniors) and Firsties (Seniors) rate (are allowed) to use these doors. There are two such doors that lead into Bancroft Hall and they are clearly marked in gold lettering. Please visit Annapolis one day and after watching Noon Meal Formation in T-Court (Tecumseh Court) look to your right and left as you walk up to the Rotunda. These two narrow doors are those doors which are allowed only to the upperclassmen. There are also two other doors which are de facto "special doors". These are the doors that lead into 1-0 and 2-0. All underclassmen must use the

breezeway doors between

1-0/3-0 and

2-0/4-0.

Confused?

You musn't

be.

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them and tie them up. I walk over to my closet and unroll my tie and knot it around my neck (I flip the collar up, slip the tie around my neck, flip the collar down, and then knot the tie): half-Windsor with a sorchetta. My regulation tie bar is clasped to my soft shoulderboard and I move it from there to where it should be between the second and third button (my preference is to have it closer to the second than the third). I grab my cover from its hook and flip it onto my head and square it up as I look at myself in the mirror. I grab my SDB jacket from its hanger and am flying out of my room. Right turn. Before I make it to the **Second-Class Doors** of the **Starboard** side of Bancroft Hall, I have my right arm in its sleeve. As I pummel through the double doors, I get my left arm in as well. I pommel over the corner of the granite balustrade and feel the burning crush of snow underhand. I almost slip on the walkway, but manage to button up my double-breasted jacket as I sprint to the starboard doors to the Rotunda. It's so early and it's winter, so I have to heave open the massive bronze storm doors and slip into the vestibule through the inner doors of which I can see my fellow restrictees breaking from restriction muster.

BANCROFT HALL: is the largest dormitory in the world; it houses all 4,000 midshipmen and has more than 1,700 rooms, 5 miles of p-ways (passage-ways), and 33 acres of floorspace. All the basic facilities that midshipmen need for daily living are found in the hall.[6] It is affectionately referred to as "Mother B" or "The Hall" by Midshipmen.

Bancroft Hall was designed by Beaux-Arts architect Ernest Flagg and its central rotunda and first two wings were built in 1901–06. Over the inter-

vening years it has been expanded to encompass eight wings of five stories ("decks") each numbered 0-4. In addition to the midshipmen rooms, Bancroft Hall houses offices for the Commandant of Midshipmen, six battalion officers, six battalion chaplains, thirty company officers and their senior enlisted leaders, a barbershop, bank, travel office, a small restaurant known as "Steerage," textbook store, **general store ("The Midshipmen Store")**, laundromat, uniform store, cobbler shop, the USNA Band, the USNA branch of the United States Postal Service, a gymnasium, spaces for extracurricular activities, and full medical & dental clinics as well as small optometry and ortho-

pedics clinics. The Hall has its own ZIP code (21412).

The building also contains King Hall (named after Fleet Admiral Ernest King), where all midshipmen are fed simultaneously three times daily, and Memorial Hall (see below). Memorial Hall and the Rotunda of Bancroft Hall are open to the general public, but access to the rest of the building is normally limited to assigned Naval personnel. There are rooms in Bancroft dedicated to each Academy graduate Medal of Honor winner in the Navy or Marine Corps. THE ROTUNDA: Central to the Hall is the Rotunda, with wings on either side. Over the Rotunda is a large mural of the USS South Dakota (BB-57), during the Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II. Memorial Hall opens off the Rotunda. This hall contains the honor roll of all Academy graduates who have died in military operations. It includes scrolls and plaques that commemorate alumni and naval personnel lost in battle. Below Memorial Hall is Smoke Hall whose walls honor those who lost their lives while still Midshipmen.

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It's over. I'm so late it's over. Fuck.

Compose yourself.

I compose myself and heave open the inner storm doors (too narrow and too heavy). Why are the all the doors so damned heavy around here? I compose myself.

The Officer of the Watch is...
God knows how this is going to go. Oh shit.

I walk up to him: "Sir, I've been on restriction forever and this should not be the case because I've been on restriction for so long, but I slept through my alarm and now I've missed your muster and I really have no excuse but I really can't afford to get **fried** for this because I've been on for so long and I can't take being on for more days or getting fried again."

He just smiled at me... "Mr. Kang..." Oh shit, he knows me by name? "...what are you going to do for me?"

FIVE BASIC RESPONSES

"Yes, Sir"

"No, Sir"

This has certainly not happened before. This is not supposed to be happening. A deal? Okay.

"Sir, I'll do anything. How about I **drop** for you? How about I about I drop fifty for you?"

And so, in SDBs, with my cover on, in the Rotunda near the starboard doors, with some of my fellow restrictees, the MOOW and OOW watching, Mr. Kang pumped out fifty pushups at 0638 on a winter's day.

Flushed from embarrassment and exertion and the rush of it all, I got up. The OOW was pleased; he marked my card, present! The MOOW was shocked; he was an asshole (do not see note). My fellow restrictees were shocked as well. I was pleased.

He didn't even look at me as he started to walk away: "Please don't miss any more musters today, Mr. Kang."

"Aye aye , sir."

"No excuse, Sir"

FRIED:

"I'll find out, Sir"

"Aye Aye, Sir"

MORNING QUARTERS FORMATION:

0700: the first company formation of the day. Everyone is sleepy. Everyone is bored.

1205: Noon Meal Formation. For Battalions 1-4, Noon Meal Formation usually goes outside in T-Court (Tecumseh Court) in the uniform of the day. This is quite an event on the Yard for visitors. When you visit Annapolis, make sure to watch this spectacle. All four battalions are in formation, a quick inspection is held, (in booming strident voices) all squad

leaders report to their respective platoon commanders, all platoon commanders to their company commanders, all company commanders to their battalion commanders, all battalion commanders to the Brigade Adjutant, then the Adjutant reports to the Brigade Commander, who finally gives the order to march into Bancroft Hall. Each formation turns towards the nearest entrance and the entire Brigade marches in for lunch in King Hall. All midshipman officers are under arms during this event and the drawing, flourishing, saluting, and sheathing of shiny dulled swords is quite a rousing thing to watch.

1830: Evening Meal Formation. Everyone is fatigued.

SLEEPING BAG: I don't really like camping and I was not in the habit of camping in my room, but there is a reason why I am in a sleeping bag; a sleeping bag on top of my sheets. most upperclass mids sleep in a sleeping bag. the rack must be made according to rather strict regulations and it's kind of a hassle to be making one's bed everyday, so most mids find it easier to just roll out a sleeping bag and sleep in it onto of the perfectly made bed. some go further and tie down the perfect bed with elastic cables on the underside of the mattress;

this pulls the sheets with the blue magnet(see above) taut.

I walked back to my room accompanied by some of my fellow restrictees who lived on 3-0. They couldn't believe it and I couldn't believe it. I had been let off the hook.

Morning Quarters Formation (mandatory for all hands) is at 0700, so I never went back to bed after the first Restriction Muster of the day.

After getting my gloves, my earmuffs, and my **O-Coat**, I went outside for a stroll on **Red Beach** and had a cigarette as the sun came up; this had been happening for months because I remember coming out for cigarettes after muster when the leaves were falling off the trees in the **MidStore** parking lot and now there was snow clinging to the barren branches.

RED BEACH: the terrace overlooking the MidStore parking lot is covered in red pavers. Midshipmen marching **tours** can be found on the Red Beach between Wing 2 and Wing 4 at 0530 most days of the week. Midshipmen are not allowed to tan on Red Beach. See: MIDREGS 823u1902u.

TOURS:

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0 s	0 s	0 N	0 e	0 e	0 s	0 t
0 t	0 W	0 I	0 n	0 n	0 t	0 D
W	a	G	o	o	D	o
0 a	0 t	0 W	1 n	1 n	1 g	2 g
0 t	4 h	8 A	2 W	6 W	8 W	0 W
0 c	0	0 T	0 a	0 a	0 a	0 a
0 h	0	0 C	0 t	0 t	0 t	0 t
0	0	0 H	0 c	0 c	0 c	0 c
			h	h	h	h

USS *Juneau* (LPD 10): Austin-class amphibious transport dock: a troop transport with a landing platform for helicopters and a well-deck that houses amphibious troop carriers below. "The Mighty J" was launched on 12 February 1966. Vietnam War...Exxon Valdez oil spill... Operation Desert Storm... Cyclone Nargis. She was decommissioned on 30 October 2008. This was XX days after I bade farewell to her in Okinawa. As all other naval vessels that I had the pleasure of experiencing, she smelled like grey paint and gunmetal; the haze grey so difficult to spot on the open sea has become the grey that instantly reminds me of the Navy; no where else have I smelt the pecu-

liar scent onboard U.S. Navy vessels: baked potatoes, Brasso, hot sauce, paint, aluminum, steel, brass, rubber, air-conditioning, grease, salty sailors. One night (or was it morning), I woke up to a clear yellow liquid oozing out of a pipe that had been covered when I went to bed. The opening of the pipe was eight inches away from my pillow. My rack was the lowest of three racks in a cul-de-sac of the spaces for the Deck Department. It was a cozy little neighborhood populated by gunner's mates (GMs). These GMs made up a subdivision of the Deck Department. I woke up to the smell of the probably carcinogenic sludge dripping onto the corner of my pillow. In my sleepy delirium, I made a face at the smell, stuffed the corner of the pillow into the open pipe, clawed near my feet where my towel was hanging, rolled the towel into a neck roll, and went back to sleep. In the morning I woke up with a headache. I didn't tell anyone about the leak.

THIS had been and was going to be a long morning. I was standing the **Morning Watch**. The night before, I ate dinner, saw the sunset, took a nap, woke up at 0400—got a large mug of coffee, smoke a cigarette, and stand down the mid on watch before me.

I was on watch for the final leg of the journey and so the watch was going to be longer than it was supposed to be. Making the final approach, picking up the pilot, maneuvering into the harbor, and tying up; all that would extend the watch.

For hours there was nothing but the darkness. As the sun rose, I could make out the horizon through the haze. And now there was some **debris**—no, lots of debris (a storm had passed the night before and here were the remains of its fury). It was a welcome sight, though; the clumps of vegetation and the large pieces of wood and the other refuse strewn across the sea that had been so clear for the duration of our journey. Civilization was ahead.

The *Juneau* plowed through all the shit and the sun rose higher.

Flotsam: floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo.

Jetsam: part of a ship, its equipment, or its cargo that is purposefully cast overboard or jettisoned to lighten the load in time of distress and that sinks or is washed ashore.

Lagan: cargo that is lying on the bottom of the ocean, sometimes marked by a buoy, which can be reclaimed.

Derelict: cargo that is also on the bottom of the ocean, but which no one has any hope of reclaiming.

RADIO DETECTION AND RANGING

Ships were appearing on the **radar**. For weeks we had been trailing the *Tortuga* and the *Essex*. The *Blue Ridge*, the *Compens*, the *George Washington*, the *Mustin*, the *John Paul Jones*, the *Bonhomme Richard*, and some submarines were all over the Pacific, all vessels making their way North from Australia to Japan. These vessels were all marked on the radar, but we never saw them with the naked eye. Now, the radar was packed with little colored squares. We no longer had the open sea.

A majority of these squares followed a course up the coast of Okinawa: fishing trawlers hurrying back from a hard nights work, whalers, freighters stacked high...

The *Juneau* was on course to cross this line of civilian vessels. This U.S. Navy Vessel.

As we neared the imaginary line in the sea, I, even, could tell that one of the civilian vessels was on speed and course to collide with us.

“Get someone who speaks Japanese.”

USS Essex (LHD 2): Wasp-class amphibious assault ship (1987)—USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53): Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer (2001)—USS Tortuga (LSD 46): Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship (1987)—USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19): Command ship 7th Fleet—USS Cowpens (CG 63): Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser (1987)—USS George Washington (CVN 73): Nimitz-class supercarrier (1986)—USS Mustin (DDG 89): Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer (1990)—USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6): Wasp-class amphibious assault ship (1995)

MESS:

MESS: All this was a fantastic mess to behold: I was a XX year old playing a big boy on the bridge of a U.S. Navy vessel of war and these were “real” sailors and officers all around me during this confrontation. And here I was in uniform playing a grown man watching other grown men (no women were on watch at the moment) make asses of themselves and the situation was remarkably tense and I had no place in the unfolding drama. Think of a substitute in a play: all made-up, in costume (not quite the right costume), standing right next to the actor you paid to see; the lights go on,

One of the junior officers (plump, pale, and uncertain) was brought up from the **Mess**.

“Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us... Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us.”

No response.

“Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us. Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us.”

“[Japanese translation].” x2

Three or four terse Japanese words came crackling over the radio. These words came out of the mouth of an oily-bearded, sleep-deprived, chain-smoking, salty fisherman. Who knows what he said. The junior officer did not repeat what was said. There was a moment of silence. The trawler was not making any course or speed changes.

the real actor begins speaking and I stand there—trying not to get in the way—and the lights shine down on all of us on stage. Awkward.

“Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us. Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel. Change course and speed to pass behind us.”

No response. No changes. No nothing.

The Japanese captain was probably grinning, probably smoking his eighth cigarette of the day, and probably straining black sludgy coffee through his greasy beard. He was going home to sell some fish. He was not going to change anything.

Our plump, pasty, and uncertain junior officer continued being plump, pasty, and uncertain. He was unnecessary, ineffectual, and inadequate—he was returned to his cold breakfast.

Well...

The **Officer of the Deck** slowed our engines and the fishing trawler passed before us. It was a four-way intersection moment on the largest body of water on the planet. Somewhere off the coast of Okinawa, a fishing boat and a U.S. Navy Vessel had

approached the same intersection at the same time
and the vessel of war had given way (begrudgingly).
Impotence, politeness, winning hearts and minds,
call it what you will.

Japanese Fishing Vessel, this is U.S. Navy Vessel.
Have a nice day.

WEAPONS ABOARD: USS Juneau (LPD10) "Landing Platform Dock": 8 × .50 caliber M2HB machine guns, 2 × 25 mm cannons, 2 × close-in weapon system (CIWS) mounts. Aircraft: Up to six CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters.

USS Tortuga (LSD 46) "Dock Landing Ship": 2 × 25 mm Mark 38 cannons, 2 × 20 mm Phalanx close-in weapon system (CIWS) mounts, 2 × Rolling Airframe Missile systems, 6 × .50 caliber M2HB machine guns. USS Essex (LHD 2) "Landing Helicopter Dock": Rolling Airframe Missile systems, NATO Sea Sparrow, Mark 15 CIWS, .50-caliber M2HB machine gun. Aircraft: up to 36, including: UH-1N Huey, AH-1W Cobra, CH-53 Super Stallion, CH-46 Sea Knight, MH-60 Seahawk, AV-8B Harrier Ground-Attack vertical/short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) aircraft.

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) "amphibious command ship": 2 × 20 mm Phalanx close-in weapon system (CIWS) mounts, 4 × 25 mm Bushmaster cannons, 8 × .50 caliber M2HB machine guns, Mark 36 Super Rapid Blooming Offboard Chaff (SRBOC) rockets. Aircraft: 2 × Sikorsky SH-60 Seahawk helicopter. USS Cowpens (CG 63) "Guided Missile Cruiser": 2 × 61 cell Mark 41

× Mix of RIM-66M-5 Standard SM-2ER Block IV, Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile Standard Extended Range BGM-109 Tomahawk, or RGM-84 Harpoon missiles, 2 lightweight gun, 2 × 25 mm cal M2HB machine guns, 2 weapon system (CIWS) in (324 mm) triple torpedo does. Aircraft: 2 × Sikorsky hawk LAMPS III helicopters. (CVN 73) "Carrier Vessel Nuclear and decoys: SLQ-32A(V)4 25A Nixie torpedo counter-Mark 57 Mod3 Sea Sparrow, frame Missile systems, 3 × 20 weapon system (CIWS) Aircraft: 90 fixed wing air-Mustin (DDG 89) "Guided cell, 1 × 64 cell Mark 41 Vertical Launch Systems-ASROC gun, 2 × 25 mm guns, 4 × triple torpedo tubes. Aircraft:

USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) "Guided Missile Destroyer": Electronic warfare and decoys: AN/SLQ-32(V)2 Electronic Warfare System, AN/SLQ-25 Nixie Torpedo Countermeasures, Mark 36 MOD 12 Decoy Launching System, AN/SLQ-39 CHAFF Buoys "Rubber Ducky". Armament: 1 × 29 cell, 1 × 61 cell Mark 41 Vertical Launch Systems with 90 × RIM-156 SM-2, BGM-109 Tomahawk or RUM-139 Vertical Launch Systems-ASROC missiles, 1 × 5"/54 caliber Mark 45 lightweight gun, 2 × 25 mm chain gun, 4 × .50 caliber M2HB machine guns, 2 × 20 mm Phalanx close-in weapon system (CIWS) mounts, 2 × Mark 32 triple torpedo tubes. Aircraft: 1 × SH-60 Seahawk helicopter.

USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) "Landing Helicopter Dock": 2 × NATO Sea Sparrow systems, 2 × Rolling Airframe Missile systems, 2 × 20 mm Phalanx close-in weapon system (CIWS) mounts, 3 × 25 mm Mark 38 cannons, 4 × .50-cal M2HB machine guns. Aircraft: Assault: 42 × CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters; Sea Control: 5 × AV-8B Harrier Ground-Attack vertical/short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) aircraft, 6 × Anti-Submarine Warfare helicopters.

SUBPAC

41

SSBN (fleet ballistic missile submarine) Armaments: 24 Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBMs). 8 subs = 192 nuclear warheads

SSGN (cruise missile submarine) Armaments: 154 Tomahawk cruise missiles with either conventional or nuclear warheads. 2 subs = 308 cruise missiles

SSN (submarine) three sub-classes: *Los Angeles* (37 × Mark48 torpedoes, Tomahawk Land-Attack missiles, Harpoon Anti-Ship missiles, Mark 67 mobile or Mark 60 Captor mines); *Seawolf* (50 × cruise missiles, Harpoons, or Mark 48 torpedoes); *Virginia* (38 × torpedoes or missiles). 31 subs = ?...

!

vertical launch systems, 122 standard SM-2MR Block IIIB, RIM-161 SM-3, RIM-162A (ESSM), RIM-174A, RIM-174 Active Missile (ERAM), RUM-139A VL-ASROC, 8 × × 5"/54 caliber Mark 45 Mark 38 cannons, 2-4 × .50- × 20 mm Phalanx close-in mounts, 2 × Mark 32 12.75 tubes for lightweight torpe-SH-60B or MH-60R Sea- USS George Washington clear": Electronic warfare Countermeasures suite, SLQ-measures. Armament: 2 × 2 × RIM-116 Rolling Air-mm Phalanx close-in mounts. Armor: Classified. craft and helicopters. USS Missile Destroyer": 1 × 32 tical Launch Systems, 96 × Tomahawk or RUM-139 Ver-missiles, 1 × 5"/62 caliber 12.7 mm guns, 2 × Mark 46 2 × SH-60 Seahawk helicop-

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I was in Northern Carolina at Camp Lejeune to be exact for PROTRAMID (Professional Training Midshipmen). I had been in Virginia for the Surface Warfare (boats), Aviation (planes), and Submarine Warfare (underwater boats) portion of PROTRAMID and I thought it was so much more fun than Northern Carolina. Northern Carolina, in the summer is a terrible place because of how hot it is. I am from the “desert”; California is hot; Maryland can be hot; Northern Carolina is degradingly and soul-stealingly hot. Regardless, I was in Northern Carolina for the United States Marine Corp. portion of PROTRAMID. Here, I was going to learn the niceties of what it means to be a Marine. Already, I had learnt that Marines do not mind the heat. I had also learnt that Marines engage in a select number of activities: they get tattoos, they wash their clothes, and they drink. I could tell this from the succession of establishments on the road to Camp Lejeune. We passed a tattoo parlor, then we passed a laundry, and then we passed a bar; for about four or five miles this is what I saw out the window; laundry, bar, parlor, bar, bar, laundry, parlor, etc... Then, we passed under and through the gates of Lejeune.

There was something written on the gate, but I do not remember what it was at this moment. Either it had something to do with killing humans or establishing the power of testosterone or proclaiming eternal honor. Either way, it was impressive at the moment, but not impressive enough for me to remember it now.

Many places around the “camp” had things written on them. All of these things are written, or rather, stenciled in that unaesthetic military font. The only thing this font imparts on the viewer is that whoever chose the font is disinterested in beautiful things and the person that chose the font is dead serious about his message. The dining hall had something written on it, the laundry had something written on it, the roads had things written on them, and the barracks had something written on them. None of these things was memorable; none of these things is eternal, to me. There was, however, something written on a building within the camp that I have not forgotten:

“Even the brave cry here.”

I could see this sign out the window of the bus that had brought us to this place. There were pine trees all alongside the dirt road and the building stood in a little clearing a couple hundred yards from where the bus had parked. The shack was actually two distinct structures. Both parts were constructed of cinderblocks, but the right side of the building differed from the left in that it had large dirty windows. There were doors leading into both parts of the building. It was on the right part of the building close to the roof that I read the sign. The words had been stenciled in the same ubiquitous military font in yellow on a grey warped piece of wood.

“Even men cry here.” Okay. I cry infrequently, but I assumed that I would be crying here especially because I could feel the sweat roll down the crack of my ass and pool momentarily right behind my balls to fall softly on my athletic shorts which I always wear when wearing battle dress uniform. To say that I was sweating would have been a gross understatement; I was sweating from my feet, my knees, my balls, my ass, my lower back, my chest, my armpits, my neck, and my head; I was sweating

and I didn't mind in the least—I was a man.

A large black Gunnery Sergeant (gunny) made the bus slouch forward and to the right as he mounted the bus to give us a talk. Everywhere we went, a large black gunny would mount our bus to give us a welcome to whatever place we were at. He was lied to by some recruiter when he enlisted. Nowhere in the gunny's plans for the future did we factor in; how could he have ever known that one day he was going to be the welcoming party to a bunch of young, inexperienced, pussy, Academy Midshipmen at Camp Lejeune. I can imagine he would have much rather been barking orders to a bunch of young, inexperience, pussy, Marines in a desert somewhere over the deafening roar of gunfire. Either way, he was in the bus and he was asking us a question:

“Who here wants to participate in the Iron Man Challenge?”

The sign was nailed above the Gas Chamber. This was the building on the right; the one with the large window. We would all go through the front door and exit through the back door.

In an amphitheatre on the outskirts of the woods, we all received a briefing on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense in the field. Everyone tried not to sleep – “the field” was at least two years away. After the briefing we were introduced to the suits that would keep us safe in the case of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attack in the field. MOPP Suits (Mission Oriented Protective Posture Suits)—layers of rough rubber, charcoal, and other things packaged underneath the ubiquitous woodland camouflage instantly recognizable as something of the American military. Unfortunately, unless there are woodlands in Iraq, the camouflage would be worthless or, in some instances, deadly because a blob of green, brown, and black on the backdrop of a washed out desert is just out of place.

So, we scrambled to get this gear and we scrambled to get it all on and then we waited. That’s one thing I learned from the military: waiting. I can wait forever. I have infinite patience when it comes to waiting. Waiting in line for a bank teller, waiting to board an airplane, waiting to eat lunch with friends, waiting for customer service, or just plain waiting

for nothing. In most situations, we waited for nothing.

And the thing that I learned simultaneously was promptness or sense of urgency or being on time; “if you’re early, you’re on time; if you’re on time, you’re late; and if you’re late, you’re fucked.” And so it is one in the same that I would learn promptness and then, by default, learn how to wait. I was always early and I would always have to wait.

I tried to unlearn being early because civilians have emotions and feel bad when they see someone waiting for them, but I’ve been late to a few things and the results are... “fucked”. So, I show up early and I am certainly not on time, but I am never late and I don’t like being fucked.

But in cultivating waiting, I also learned how to smoke. In the uncomfortable, interminable, and selfless time of waiting there are few things to do. Retreating into the mind to think is acceptable, but then one becomes less aware of one’s surroundings and can be hurt or can lose one’s place, or can be thought of as strange; I retreat into my mind in private. One can strike up conversation, but then one

might be seen as uncouth, or overbearing, or senseless of social boundaries; I generally speak to only those I know. Or, one can smoke. I don't know of the days before nation-wide smoking bans, but I can imagine that they were fantastic.

When I wait, I usually smoke. I cannot smoke inside, but I find myself waiting outside more so than inside.

“Mission Oriented Protective Posture gear”
chlorobenzal malononitrile

I, along with three others, win the Iron Man Challenge.

The Major had to pull us out because we had been in there for long enough. Someone next to me vomits within 10 seconds. I open my eyes a bit and regret it instantly, but at the same time I get to see my friends and enemies crowded against the window.

I could have gone on forever.

We're taken out, I stumble around for a bit, I get my eyes washed out and know what it means to be blind, people freak out about a frog being at the eyewash station, my neck is burning, my eyes are fine, I can breathe freely, my friends come to congratulate me, I love it all!

Days later at the Rappelling Station, the Major marvels at my intrepidity as I freefallen from the rappel tower and comes over to me in congratulations. He then realizes that I'm one of the three from the day before and it is the most memorable Marine smile I have ever seen.

This Marine was not smiling because he had just killed someone. This Marine was not smiling because he was drunk. This Marine was not smiling because of some personal achievement. This Marine was smiling because he had faith in the fact that intrepid, fearless, and brave young men still existed, those young men were in training, and he would be alive to see them follow in his footsteps. I will never forget that smile and, for the rest of the trip, hearing that Marines all over the Camp had been talking about the "fuckin' mids" that did the Iron Man Challenge.

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We were not popular.

The group before us had fucked up bad. They had been demanding salutes, they had been slacking off, they had been being stupid.

We were there to pay for their mistakes. Actually, the mistakes of one specific midshipman.

Explanation of the rank Midshipman would be good here. Also the short story of the Warrant Officer that I saw at Graduation 2007 and my fumbling and final salute. Right thing to do. Salute if you don't know what to do.

So, we were extremely unpopular and everyone could feel it. The looks, the snickers, the condescension, the disinterest.

One day, I notice a working party taking food from the hold and moving it up to the galley. Sacks of potatoes, onions, and flour; boxes of tomatoes, condiments, and bread. I hurried to the berthing area to get some friends to come and help the men. We had nothing better to do. I only managed to get four. We asked to join the supply chain and spent

a couple hours grabbing a sack or bag from one sailor and passing it to another down the line. Each of us got to know two sailors really well; the one on the right and the one on the left. When the work was all done we were sweaty and tired, but doing something is better than doing nothing, so everyone felt good about himself.

After that, things began to change. We could actually find seats in the mess hall. We were greeted in the p-ways (passage ways). The men became interested in us; they were so transparently different. Even the Marines stuck out their callused hands in friendship. A group of them even took my friends and I down into the well deck to show us their AAVs (Assault Amphibious Vehicle) and their own berthing areas. Then, the news slowly began its way up the chain-of-command.

Shit travels downhill and praise takes it sweet ass time going upwards.

The Marine commanders asked if we wanted to do some shooting off the flight deck.

The junior officers were too busy and too removed to care.

The XO and CO congratulated us for “showing initiative” by lending a helping hand to the men. But, the best part was when the real masters of the ship, the Chiefs, Senior Chiefs, and Master Chief allowed us to join them in their mess room. That was coolest moment of the entire cruise. In two groups we dined in the Chiefs’ Mess and knew we had done something right.

The first couple days were tough, but the entire cruise changed because of simple exchange of goodwill. We got to ride in the LCAC (Landing Cushioned-Air Craft), we got to fire the Ma Deuce into the ocean, we participated in the Shellback Ceremony as we crossed the Equator, and I got to do something extraordinary:

The entire night we were confined to a square in the ocean: xx.x longitude by yy.y latitude. I was made the conning officer halfway through my watch. Easy peasey nice and easy. What could go wrong in the middle of the night, in the middle of the Pacific? Nothing. Except of course that the Captain showed up. WTF? The captain was in the bridge at 0200? And now he was asking me if I knew what I was about to do.

I hate it when adults ask me if I know what I'm about to do. Of course I don't know what I'm about to do because I have yet to do it and in all probability I'm about to do something the adult asks me to do. Therefore, to ask me if I know what I'm about to do is to ask me either to read the adult's mind or resignedly say "no".

That's how I felt in that moment as the eagles on the man's collars stared at the anchor on my collar and laughed. To feel helpless is one thing, but to know deep down inside that one is actually utterly useless is another.

The gaze of the eagles turned to a junior officer and I was saved. The eagles began asking questions: "Why does Mr. Kang not know what he is about to do?", "Why hasn't anyone briefed Mr. Kang on what he is about to do?", "Why are your shirt sleeves rolled up? Is it really that hot in here? Roll them down."

Then the eagles quieted down and everything in the bridge went quiet as well. The captain looked at me. I walked over to him.

He put his arm around my shoulder; I suppressed the urge to cringe and tried to stand taller. A then, in the most avuncular and, therefore, unexpected tone he began to explain what it was I was about to do.

Turns in the ocean. Intro to WEPO. Radio checks. Radar checks. Everything checked. Weapons charged. Weapons ready. Lookouts ready. Everything ready.

Turn the boat around. Calculate by eye Mr. Kang. The book tells you to turn here, but I know better and you should hold off a little more and turn... now. Overshoot a little bit and then overcompensate a little bit and then to bring us about overcompensate for a little more and then right us up. That puts us on course. You're doing really well Mr. Kang. Thrown the flares overboard. Are they firing off? Silence...Are they firing off? If they don't fire off we need to do this all over again. YES! They fired off. Okay. Last turn. Count with me to 12. We're going xx knots, we're turning xx degrees, so if we count to 12 it should work and we don't have to use stupid wheels, compasses, or straightedges.

123456789101112. Turn. Overshoot, overcompensate, come around and send the command. Nice and loud Mr. Kang. You're doing well. Now it's all you. We're a couple hundred yards out. Steer the boat between those two flares. You've got this.

"Sir, we're between the flares"

Radio communications. I look at the WEPO, the WEPO looks at the GLO, the GLO looks at the Captain. "Destroy targets". My world explodes. 8 double-barreled .50-cal. Machine guns are throwing lead at two helpless flares in the middle of the pacific. I can't hear myself think. The helmet is heavy, the flak is heavy, and I'm the proud. I stand taller. It's red in the bridge and the yellow flashes outside are rending the thick pacific air. The tracers explode from the delicate muzzles of the machine guns and extinguish on contact with the ocean.

All is quiet. The air is thicker with the smell of solvent and powder. My ears are ringing. The helmsman pulls earplugs out of his ears and smirks at me. The GLO closes his folder and steps out. The

WEPO speaks the captain and steps out. The navigator pulls marks something on the charts. The captain smiles at me and walks outside. This is not an invitation to stroll. He goes to bed.

I have four more hours on watch, but that's nothing, especially after a night like tonight.

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The doldrums are the death of a sailor. Morale?

No wind, no activity, no movement, nothing doing, nada. Time to kill and killing time and time that kills and time to—time to—time to wait it out: hunker down, twiddle one's thumbs, carve a bone, pick a fight, eat, shine one's shoes, smoke a cigarette, fidget, "1,000 yard stare", talk.

What to talk about?

Women. Lack of women. I love women. What if I don't like women? We got women?

Sex. Lack of sex. I love sex. Does anyone not like sex? Sex?

2.35.1 RELATIONSHIPS AND CONDUCT BETWEEN MIDSHIPMEN

a. Sexual misconduct is defined as sexual acts at the Naval Academy or other designated places under military control (i.e. ships or aircraft), as well as acts committed under circumstances that are service discrediting or prejudicial to good order and discipline in the Brigade of Midshipmen.

b. Sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to, any actions of a sexual nature that would reasonably excite or satisfy the sexual desires of the actor. Examples include kissing, touching, sexual intercourse, sexually motivated nudity, and indecent sexual acts including indecent exposure and homosexual acts.

2.35.2.b

Midshipmen shall not:

(3) Exchange backrubs at USNA or while in uniform.

(4) Sit or lay on the same bed at USNA.

COMDTMIDNINST 5400.6L 22 Aug 08

Gays. Too many gays. I hate gays. Who's a gay? You a gay?

Me too. Give me a backrub while we're both in uniform. Get in my bed; let's have sex.