

## Chigarid

In 1987 I was serving my first tour as a Drill Instructor. Being from the aviation side of the Marine Corps my only experience with field Marine life was in boot camp seven years earlier. I volunteered to take all the squads out on patrol playing Marine grunt, the other DI's who came from the ground MOS's were more than glad to let me do what they have spent their whole career doing. However, I was to learn about a pesky critter named "The Chigger". I had never heard of chiggers before but I would become intimately knowledgeable about them before the week was out.

It was the third night of field duty and my turn to spend the night with the recruits. We were all sleeping in two man tents. As I executed the evening BDR (Basic Daily Routine) I went through the rote commands and the recruits of course responded in their protocol. Having finished the command COUNT OFF to check for 100% weapons and recruits I gave them the command they have waited all night for ADJUST.

Upon the command ADJUST the recruits were finally permitted to relax and enter the small tent. They all quickly began scratching everywhere on their body. I smiled thinking how funny it looked to see 75 recruits behaving like dogs with fleas. As I began undressing to get in my own tent I began to feel movement on my skin. I brushed it off without much regard. About ten minutes into attempt to sleep I felt critters crawling all over me. I grabbed my flashlight and could not see anything where the sensations were. Just freckles, a lot of them and I would swear they were moving. It was a very long, restless night. I thought for sure it was the power of suggestion having seen the recruits scratch like crazy since I could not see any critters on my own skin. Little did I know I was covered in microscopic mites called chiggers.

A couple more miserable days of itching with welts at all friction points like the belt, boot tops, and a lot of red welts on my thighs and now my penis and scrotum. The only time the pain would go away is while scratching; little did I know I was spreading the infection to the family jewels.

Still ignorant of the cause of all this misery I asked my more experience fellow DI's. They used words like Chiggers, Red Bugs, No See-ums which all were foreign words to me. It was now 0500 Sunday morning and I left the house to visit Walgreens 24 hr. RX and sought the advice of the pharmacist.

He suggested a harmless looking bottle of Chigarid. The label said "Soothes bug and insect bites" sounds just like what I need, some soothing relief.

I purchased the little bottle and returned to the house. I sat down in the kitchen reading the instructions carefully. I was very concerned about my testicles being sensitive to the chemical so I tried it on my thighs first. I stripped down to my ankles and painted the large open sores on my thighs and waited. On a scale of 1-10 I would rate the pain a 3 and feeling better right away. So on to the family jewels. I painted my scrotum and penis real good since they were broken out bad enough to pass for stage IV STD's.

Anxiety gone, I feel cool relief. I set the bottle down and reached for my shorts and trousers sitting around my ankles when I felt pain on a scale of 10 out of 10. I would swear it was acid eating through my nut sack. I screamed a blood curdling F\_\_\_ and reached for the ice box and grabbed a hand full of ice and placed them on my nuts hoping the cool ice would take away the heat eating though my scrotum. Again I yell as the ice cubes burn the skin covering the testicles. Those ice cubes were just dry enough to stick and cling to the already inflamed scrotum only now I have pubic hair frozen to the ice. Now I had to pull off ice cubes that were sticking to the skin, ripping out hairs from my scrotum as I tossed them toward the sink with careless abandon.

Meanwhile my son, daughter and wife have all left the comfort of their bedrooms and ran to the kitchen to see what the commotion was all about. I yelled for them to stay back but being the concerned family they were they continued to the kitchen and saw me bent over pulling ice cubes off my nuts. We have never talked about this incident since, who wants to talk about seeing dad naked in the kitchen with ice cubes being flung toward the sink as he plays with himself. Some things kids just don't want to discuss.

Once I composed myself and I prepared myself for return to my platoon of recruits. Being the ever devoted, loving, caring, Drill Instructor I was, I felt this bottle of feel good should not be wasted. Off to Parris Island to share with the boy's.

**Location: Page Field, Parris Island, Sunday, 1030.**

I relieve the duty DI so he can go shower and get something to eat and I take over care of the platoon. Something to keep in perspective as you read the end of this story. Only the Senior Drill Instructor identified by the black

belt he wears around his waist would ever show concern for the welfare of the recruits. The other Drill Instructors assigned to the training of the platoon wear a green duty belt with large brass buckle and only present the image of a military machine bent on crushing the soul of the recruit, doing something kind is not in their DNA. I was one of the green belt Drill Instructors.

DI: **"SIT, KNEEL, BEND, STAND"**

Recruits: **"SIT, KNEEL, BEND, STAND, AYE, AYE, SIR"** The recruits drop to the appropriate positions and give me their undivided attention.

DI: **"ALRIGHT, WHO HERE HAS CHIGGERS"** About 80% of the hands are raised.

Recruits: **"THIS RECRUIT SIR"** they say in unison.

DI: With exaggerated drama I pull out a small .5 ounce green bottle of scrotum eating acid and examine it and then look back to the platoon.

**"WELL, I CERTAINLY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE. I DIDN'T REALIZE WE ALL HAD CHIGGERS. WE WILL START WITH THE MOST SERIOUS FIRST. WHO HERE HAS CHIGGERS ON THEIR CROTCH"**

Recruits: About ten hands are raised as they announce **"THIS RECRUIT SIR"**.

DI: **"GUIDE, TAKE THEM OVER THERE TO THE TREE LINE AND TREAT THEM. BE LIBERAL, I WILL BUY MORE IF I NEED TO. THEY NEED RELIEF"**. My guide was a Hospital Corpsman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class before joining the Marine Corps. He knew his business and certainly had the trust of the platoon as he had been illegally treating them for about nine weeks at my request.

About two minutes later they are in position about 50 yards away lined up in column near the brush. Soon I hear the first victim. What a yell, sounds just like mine from earlier that morning. The other recruits standing behind him turn around and begin running back to the platoon as they attempt to refasten their trousers on the run.

DI: **"STOP, GET THE HELL BACK. I DIDN'T TAKE TIME OUT OF MY DAY AND SPEND MY HARD EARNED MONEY ENSURING YOU GOT**

**RELIEF FROM THE CHIGGERS"**. A shaken and angry group of recruits slowly turned around and headed back to the Guide who was waiting. I could swear I saw the guide smile.

They all grunted, screamed or swore as I did. What a bonding experience.