

Drill Instructor School

Sowing the seeds

My first speculations of becoming a Marine Corps Drill Instructor began when I was about ten years old. I was a big fan of Gomer Pyle and loved the role of Sergeant Carter played by Frank Sutton. Then there were the stories my father would tell of his Drill Instructors from 1956 coupled with some great movies I stumbled across in my teens such as The DI, Tribes, and The Boy's In Company C. As a recruit I was in awe of the Drill Instructors, I wanted to be like them. Later in my career I was selected to be on the drill platoon for an upcoming Commanding General Inspection. The drill platoon was run by GYSGT Thomas Dawson; he was fresh of the drill field and really knew how to motivate Marines. After those two months of daily interaction with him I was hooked, I solicited orders for the drill field.

I went and got my haircut even though I had not received a confirmation of my request for orders to DI school. I went from carrying a comb to a flat top. My wife knew nothing of my desire to be a DI and was not impressed with the haircut; she looked at me like I was a stranger. When I told her I had solicited orders to DI school support from her was not something I got in return. Unfortunately HQMC would not grant me my request until I served one more year in my new MOS. I had attended a school for F/A-18 engine rebuilding the year prior and I was told to wait another year. I spent the next year preparing for the physical challenges that I knew would be present at DI school. It seems regardless of the preparation time available it is never enough. DI school was like a kick in the nuts every day.

Finally I get my orders

A year later I got my wish and I was slated for Drill Instructor Class 1-87 which would start on October 13th, 1986. The day before school I was full of apprehensions and thought I would seek out some good advice from my neighbor who lived two houses down across the street. In fact, on my block there were four Drill Instructors but I had never spoken to any of them. They were rarely at home but today I noticed the one who lived closest to me in his driveway washing his car. I began my trek to introduce myself and seek advice. As I reached the halfway point I felt this strong intuition to turn around and go back to the house, something just did not seem right plus I did not want to feel like an insecure wimp.

My orders instructed me to report to DI school at 0700. Knowing the Marine Corps doctrine of always be fifteen minutes early I decided to be twenty minutes early. As I neared the steps I heard complete chaos from the school instructors. They were chewing some butt on some of my

fellow students who thought they would be super early too. I halted in my steps and skedaddled to the shadows of a nearby tree until it was about 13 minutes before start time.

There were ten Drill Instructors at the school and students by the droves were marching in. I was fortunate to get through and into the large classroom without being noticed. Those who waited until the five minute mark to show up got their ass reamed real good. You could hear several Instructors ripping them apart for being so damn lazy showing up at the last minute. Then there were the Marines who showed up with hair long enough to require a comb and worse yet were the few idiots who wore a mustache. Although there were no regulations prohibiting long hair or mustaches it was common knowledge that Parris Island Drill Instructors had clean shaven faces and sported either a flat top or a high and tight.

In all there would be 120 students of which only a few of us were volunteers. A clipboard was passed around and we were to indicate to the side of our name in the correct column whether or not we were volunteers. I recall one of the instructors later that morning calling out six names of which mine was one and said how pathetic it was that only six Marines had volunteered for orders. At that time in the Marine Corps you had more to lose than gain by going to the drill field. Incredibly long hours at work, sleeping in the office every 3rd or 4th day, no family life, high divorce rates, and being punished via the UCMJ for small infractions resulting in ruined or stagnated careers seemed common knowledge to all Marines attending.

Marines understood one thing on the first day; life would no longer be the same as a Marine. Any student who failed any test twice was dropped and sent back to their command with an adverse evaluation affecting retention and or promotion. All events required an 80% to pass. You could also be dropped from the school for attitude or having lost too many points on personnel inspections at any time throughout the school. The only safe way to squirm out of the hardship duty was to be found psychologically unfit or to be injured. Of course to ensure that you did not scam the system they would not give you the psychological evaluation until a week before graduation. We were asked questions about our childhood, were we physically abused, our own boot camp experience (we train the way we were trained concept) and our own fist fighting experiences. Then he would ask you hypothetical scenario based questions “If a recruit were to cuss you out and spit on you, what would you do” or “What would you do if a recruit punched you” and other leading questions as such. Of course we lied; we wanted the doctor to think we had complete control of our emotions. Even those who hated the concept of being assigned DI duty involuntarily wanted to graduate at this point after all the hell they had been through.

Realizing how close I came to screwing up

After the first hour of administrative issues were conducted by the S-1 Administration Chief the school staff was introduced to us. The Director of Drill Instructor School, First Sergeant, Chief

Drill Instructor and the ten Squad Instructors. Each Marine could have walked off any Marine Recruiting poster. Their military bearing, fitness and intensity seemed legendary. Then my heart sank. The Drill Master was SSGT Eldon Brisbin, I recognized him as living on my block about four houses down, I passed his house every day although we never spoke to one another. Then GYSGT Stanley Wiggins was introduced, he was the Marine who lived across the street from my house and to whom I was going to seek advice. What a close call. Seems the good Lord is always looking out for me, kept me from making an embarrassing error in judgment.

Meeting my Squad Instructor

We were broken up into ten squads and assigned a Squad Instructor. I was assigned to 3rd squad, GYSGT Kelly. We were all told that after the next break to line up outside our Squad Instructor office and report in for initial counseling. When I reported into GYSGT Kelly he stood up from his desk and said “Sergeant Crouch, welcome to Drill Instructor school ...” and he continued to rattle on for about three minutes about what I can expect from him, this school and I answered questions he had about my career experience to date. At the end of this initial meeting he really pissed me off, he gestured to shake my hand and met me half way and then pulled his hand back and said “On second thought, I will shake your hand if you graduate”. What a pompous ass I thought. From that point forward I had little respect for the man. I was an outstanding Marine who had an exemplary record, one of only six volunteers and he wants to act as though Drill Instructors are too good to shake the hand of common Marines? Fuck him was my thoughts.

In that first week he broke his leg and really became useless. They should have divided us up and given us to the other Squad Instructors but they didn't. He was never present, other classes were getting great guidance from their Squad Instructors and our class was left in the dark. Finally after three weeks a couple of the other Squad Instructors realized our plight and began sharing information with us.

Sergeant Crouch is Naïve

Thursday's throughout the Marine Corps are when field day's (cleanup of barracks and work places) were conducted. My squad was assigned outdoor cleanup. It was about 20 minutes before dusk when my body ached all over from the PT program and lack of sleep. I had been vigorously raking leaves for an hour in the hot, humid South Carolina weather when I decided to take a momentary break. I stood for a period of ten seconds with one hand on hip and the other supporting my body as I leaned on the rake when I heard the window crank open from one of the Squad Instructor offices.

GYSGT Wiggins: “SERGEANT CROUCH, COME HERE”

SGT Crouch: I ran over to the window about 25 yards away and halted and reported “SERGEANT CROUCH REPORTING AS ORDERED GUNNY, I MEAN GUNNERY SERGEANT WIGGINS” I was still having a hard adjustment to this regimented Marine Corps approach to protocol as I had spent seven years in the laid back aviation community.

GYSGT Wiggins: “Do you know why I called you over here Sergeant Crouch”

SGT Crouch: “WHY YES GUNNERY SERGEANT, WE’RE NEIGHBORS. I LIVE ACROSS THE STREET FROM YOU AND YOU WANTED TO GET TO KNOW ME”

GYSGT Wiggins: With a look of total astonishment (I realized at this moment before he replied I screwed up again) “NO SERGEANT CROUCH, THAT IS NOT WHY I CALLED YOU OVER HERE. YOU HAD YOUR HAND ON YOUR HIP. YOU COME SEE ME AFTER PT TOMORROW MISTER “I WANT TO GET TO KNOW THE DRILL INSTRUCTOR””.

The following day after another grueling 2 ½ hour PT session we were told we had 30 minutes to be in the Charlie uniform for inspection. I reported directly to GYSGT Wiggins office as instructed. After executing the office entry procedure I was standing six inches and centered from his desk:

SGT Crouch: “Sergeant Crouch reporting to Gunnery Sergeant Wiggins as instructed Gunnery Sergeant”

GYSGT Wiggins: “What is the uniform of the day Sergeant Crouch”

SGT Crouch: “Gunnery Sergeant, the training event that just ended is the PT uniform and is the yellow PT shirt, green shorts, white crew length socks and running shoes. The uniform of the day for the next event is the Charlie uniform with ribbons and no badges”.

GYSGT Wiggins: “Is PT over Sergeant Crouch”

SGT Crouch: “Yes Gunnery Sergeant”

GYSGT Wiggins: “Then come see me in the uniform of the day before the scheduled inspection”

SGT Crouch: “Aye Aye Gunnery Sergeant”. I executed my office exit procedure and ran as fast as I could to the barracks across the street, showered and threw my uniform on and got back to his office just before time was up.

SGT Crouch: “Sergeant Crouch reporting to Squad Instructor Gunnery Sergeant Wiggins as Instructed”

GYSGT Wiggins: “BEGIN”

SGT Crouch: I was dumbfounded, what the hell was he asking me to begin. “Begin what Gunnery Sergeant”

GYSGT Wiggins: “I SAID BEGIN GODDAM IT NOW YOU FUCKING BEGIN”

SGT Crouch: I was still as clueless as I was ten seconds ago “Gunnery Sergeant Wiggins, this Marine does not know what he is to begin, would you please explain so I can begin”

GYSGT Wiggins: He chuckled and looked at his partner in crime who shared the office GYSGT Marshall and then looked back at me and said “PUSHUP’S YOU IDIOT”

SGT Crouch: I looked at GYSGT Marshall in disbelief and he instantly replied “HE SAID PUSHUPS NOW YOU GET ON YOUR FACE AND PUSH”. I thought about it for a brief two seconds thinking I had never known a Marine to have to do punishment PT after graduating boot camp but obviously things were different outside of the comforts of the air wing. I dropped to the deck and started pushing. Of course my failure to count out the repetitions only added to the scrutiny I was receiving. After about one minute I was told to get up, I thought to myself “This wasn’t so bad, I am not even tired”

GYSGT Wiggins: “Shut the door and resume pushups, I don’t want you distracting students”. I would know the meaning of tired after this office visit and I also thought students doing punishment PT was not a sanctioned event but who was I to challenge right from wrong, I wanted to be a Drill Instructor and would do just about anything to earn the coveted title.

PT tags

We were told prior to the first PT session that we were to always keep one of our ID tags safety pinned to our PT shorts on the right hip. The purpose was so the Squad Instructors who ran beside the platoon, often backwards and were looking for any screw-up on our part to punish us upon identifying any discrepancy of cover, alignment, instep, or volume of cadence singing would shout “GIVE ME YOUR PT TAG MARINE”. At the end of the 2 ½ hour PT session all students who had surrendered a PT tag had to go to the Squad Instructor who had possession of it and earn it back by doing wind sprints and other exercises to add another 20 minutes of misery to our day. I only had to surrender my tag once, I was singing cadence in formation on a run when I inhaled a bug, in the brief couple steps it took to clear my throat I had failed to sing loudly and therefore was accused of lacking motivation and endurance. Trying to explain yourself was only seen as belligerence or being argumentative and would serve no purpose other than to highlight yourself to the Squad Instructors.

Inspections

DI school during this era was eight weeks long. A couple years later it would be extended to 12 weeks. We were told there would be 20 personnel inspections of which 8 inspections would be scheduled and the remainder would be unscheduled. Inspections would be conducted at the beginning of the first class in the morning and at the first class after lunch. Which days and which part of the day was the big secret for those 12 unscheduled inspections.

The standards were high; you had to have several uniforms ready at all times because you never knew what the uniform of the day was going to be. Frequently the uniform of the day on the schedule was marked TBD (To be determined). Using the dry cleaners was not good enough; you had to press out the uniform to the standard set by the Squad Instructors. School started daily at 0430 for roll call by our Squad Leaders and PT kicking off at 0515. School ended daily at 1800. Then it was several hours of uniform preparations and memorization of the drill manual and many other manuals that were being tested that week. Most students hit the rack around midnight or 0100. Since I lived in the local area I was not allowed to sleep in the open squadbay barracks directly across the street from DI school. Brown baggers as we were called were told we had to sleep at our house but we did have a wall locker in the recreation room that we had to use for storage of our uniforms. This was an added burden as it took 15 minutes to drive home and once at home there were the constant distractions of raising a family and being a spouse. In later years the student barracks would be changed to a nice three man room barracks about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away and all the students were required to sleep in the barracks regardless of where they came from. During those eight weeks I lived on about 2.5 – 4.5 hours of sleep daily. Most nights I was fortunate to be in bed between 2300 & 2400, my goal of in the rack by 0100 often times was not met as I would sometimes be up till 0200. Saturday and Sunday were our only days of rest and we would spend virtually all of it preparing for the next week.

Bonus points were given to those Marines who wore polished brass and spit shined shoes. Being a nostalgic Marine and wanting to set the example I opted for the bonus points, after all I had been wearing polished brass and leather shoes for seven years. However each inspection I was getting dinged for my shoes and brass. Not once did they ever ask if the brass was polished, I felt it was likely they had never seen such excellent brass and assumed it was gold anodized. I volunteered the information at the next inspection and I was chewed out for lack of military bearing and lost points for bearing and brass. Then I was told that a special board would be convened to see if I had any potential to finish the school as my poor performance on personnel inspections indicated I would likely fail the course before the end of the eight weeks.

I felt it was unfair, very few of us Marines had the courage to try wearing polished brass and by the 5th inspection only I and maybe two other Marines were still attempting the lofty goal of wearing leather and brass.

Having given up on my worthless Squad Instructor who was never available I went to GYSGT Wiggins and asked for advice. His first reply was why I was not taking this up with my Squad Instructor and I told him he is never here. He looked at my brass and shoes and did not believe the brass was polished and had me remove my belt for closer inspection. He thought for certain it was gold anodized and as much said so. He was very impressed with the brass but said my shoes could use some work. He told me to take my shoes off and both he and GYSGT Marshall began polishing them.

GYSGT Wiggins: “You just stand there and watch, there are several methods to get a quality spit shine, you have to find out what works for you, we will show you our own techniques”

What an important lesson I learned that day, be firm but fair. The same Marines who harassed me in the beginning were helping me. It was a lesson I never forgot; firm but fair. From that point forward I never lost points for brass and leather and graduated DI school.

SSGT Slomko

Of the ten Squad Instructors at DI School, there would always be one female since Parris Island was also home to 4th Battalion where the females trained. SSGT Slomko was class 1-87's female Squad Instructor. She was about 5' 10, had deep blue eyes and built like Superwoman. To say that I had lust in my heart was an understatement.

Near the very end of the course in early December we were conducting platoon movements. We had to demonstrate the ability to execute a drill card as unit leader with a full platoon of Marines. We had been outside for about two hours; the temperature was about 35 degrees F. with a strong wind. I was the last student to be graded by her and upon halting the platoon, dismissing them and then returning sword I marched over to her and stood opposing her clipboard at parade rest as she went through the process of adding up my score. I noticed that snot was dripping from her nose onto my grade sheet. Being a chivalrous Marine I reached into my pocket and extracted a clean, unused, neatly folded length of toilet paper that I had kept in my pocket for my own runny nose.

SGT Crouch: “SSGT Slomko, would you like some clean tissue paper for your nose” I said as I extended my hand to offer her the tissue.

SSGT Slomko: Her reply was of a sound quality I never would have expected from a woman, especially a beautiful woman. It was deep and raspy as though she herself was possessed by the devil “NO THANKS DEVIL DOG, I’LL JUST LET IT DRIP”

SGT Crouch: At that moment any lust I felt in my heart for her vaporized. I no longer looked at her with lust in my heart. Her voice quality with her indifference to the snot dripping off her nose was one of the grossest things I had ever witnessed a female do.

Becoming a team player

I started off with the goal of wanting to graduate number one. I had a pretty good chance at it but around week four we had our first of two speech demonstrations called a TMI (Techniques of Military Instruction). I had tremendous confidence in my ability to do an excellent job so I short changed myself in preparation time. I had never given the speech aloud when rehearsing. I also did very little practice time on it. Instead I spent a lot of time working with three of my squad members who were not very good at conduct of close order drill. I was helping them master the art of drill. In doing so I failed my TMI by speaking too long. I was asked at the end by the instructor what the hell happened, how is it that I could have spoken too long. I told him I spent all my time helping my squad mates practice their close order drill and during my few TMI practice speeches I did not speak aloud. I retested the TMI the following day and got a perfect score. However, my grade point average was in the gutter. I would finish the school with about a 94.6 GPA and that was at the lower half of the class standings.

It was also near the very end of week four that I reflected on my fatigue, marital stress and constant stress from the school that I contemplated quitting and taking the adverse fitness report. However two things happened, in conversations I learned two other Marines were having the same thoughts and all this time I thought it was only me who was burnt out and two, I just could not face the embarrassment of telling my father I could not hack it. Although he was only a Marine for two years, he was my father and still a very proud Marine and that would have been just too difficult to handle, letting him down in his frequent praise for what I had done in the Marines was too big of a hurdle to get over. I got over my self-pity and graduated on December 18th, 1986.

Major Clifford L. Stanley

Two weeks before graduation the Depot Inspector LTCOL Clifford L. Stanley spoke to the class. His job was to ensure the SOP for recruit training was followed to the letter. His inspectors we were told would travel in teams of two and were required to visit every training platoon at least twice during their shift and he had two shifts.

Furthermore he said that sufficient statistics had been gathered to establish benchmarks of performance. If a Depot Inspector at the end of their shift were to report significantly less than the established norm of SOP violations only two things could be derived; one that he/she was incompetent in identifying violations of the SOP or that they were complicit in the intentional failure to report observations due to misplaced loyalties. They were to be observers reporting what they saw and to let the Depot Inspector himself determine if a violation had occurred.

The intensity of which he spoke, his forcefulness and conviction of punishing errant Drill Instructors was emphasized by his wrist watch band breaking when he pounded his fist into his open palm to emphasize a point. The most important words he said were his last words "This is my last week as Depot Inspector; I am being assigned to 3rd Battalion as Commanding Officer".

My heart pounded, I had just earlier that morning filled out my dream sheet of which battalion I hoped to be assigned and had requested 3rd battalion. At the ten minute break I rushed to the office and requested permission to change my choice. When asked why I told them the truth "Major Stanley is going to be the C.O. and I will certainly receive a court martial if I end up in his battalion". I was allowed to change my request and it was granted, 1st Battalion is where I would serve my time as a Drill Instructor.

Later that week we were sent to our future battalions to work Friday, Saturday and Sunday to get on the job experience. On Saturday morning the platoon whom I was getting experience with received a visit from none other Major Clifford L. Stanley. We had just exited the chow hall and were marching back to the barracks. I was about 20 yards behind the formation when the Major himself put his finger to his lips suggesting silence and pretended to be a recruit as he marched at the end of the formation. It was still very dark as the time was about 0515. When we got to the barracks I rushed to the front of the formation and gave the visual signal of a finger pointed to my eyeball which was the signal the team had taught me the previous day when I joined them to notify each other of "Someone is watching". The SDI SGT Knipple seemed to not get the hint when I again mentioned in a discrete whisper "Major Stanley is in here". About 30 seconds later the Major made his presence known. He made a very clear message to the SDI about the SOP and what he perceived as walking a very dangerous line. This would not be the last I would see of Major Stanley, I was assigned to 1st Battalion as I had requested thinking I was avoiding the man. However for some reason he was the new Commanding Officer and recently promoted to LTCOL. It also was not the end of his sneaky visits; I would experience more of them from him. He was notorious for sneaking into the squadbay and hiding in the shadows before reveille and busting Drill Instructors for very slight infractions of profanity or other minor infractions. To say we were glad to see him transfer about nine months later was an understatement.

Mess Night

We had a mess night the night before graduation. I was a fantastic time. When the kangaroo court was opened for fines Mr. Vice stood and called my name:

Vice: “Sergeant Crouch”

Me: “Sergeant Crouch, third squad Mr. Vice”

Vice: “Sergeant Crouch, the entire class, class 1-87 and all of the Squad Instructors have requested that you be fined for suffering from a condition known as spring butt. It has been told to me that every Friday afternoon at 1600 when students were about to be dismissed for the weekend you took up valuable time asking stupid questions delaying their departure, some visiting their families in North Carolina. Do you have anything to say for yourself?”

Me: There was no denying this, I did have a spring butt, seems that in every class or opportunity to interact with the staff I would stand and announce Sergeant Crouch, third squad, my question is... “Mr. Vice my only fault is having the courage to ask questions that many others had but they lacked the self-confidence to ask”.

Mr. Vice: “I award you a fine of ten coins to the realm” this meant that I had to give up ten dollars to the cash being collected. It was one of the few times I ever saw the Drill Master, SSGT Brisbin smile.

Earning Respect

During our very last personnel inspection three days before graduation two of the Squad Instructors GYSGT Marshall and SSGT Trudell told me that I was going to graduate but did not feel I should be a Drill Instructor. They said I had a soft, weak demeanor and unsuitable for the temperament of training recruits. My reply was “If you are judging my potential to train recruits based upon how I treat my fellow Marines I can understand this. I don’t treat Marines like recruits; they have already earned the title”. During our last two weeks it seems that the other students could not wait to play the DI role and were chewing out each other and any other Marine they saw for the slightest reason. I was too mature to get into that mindset.

About six months later I crossed paths with GYSGT Marshall and he said “Sergeant Crouch, I was wrong about you. I have heard what a fine Drill Instructor you have become. I heard you are really good”. That compliment meant the world to me.

I still don’t know squat

Of all the schools I had attended I noticed one commonality, I was still in need of OJT upon graduation. However this time when I graduated DI school I felt so confident of myself I actually thought “Finally I have attended a school which prepared me to do the job I was trained

for without the need for OJT”. I would learn in the first week on the job how foolish I was to think that.

What they don't teach you at Drill Instructor School

I had expected to learn the secrets of how to get inside the mind of a recruit and manipulate them. What I would soon learn is the psychology of human behavior would be learned in the trenches training recruits by observation of your more experienced fellow Drill Instructors and through your own discovery of understanding what makes people tick.

Returning to DI School

After my two years as a Drill Instructor I went back to the fleet and worked on airplanes again. However after six months I began the process of requesting a second tour as a Drill Instructor. I finally got my wish and in October 1990 I was assigned to class 1-91. During the first day I was asked “Sergeant Crouch, are you going to be a course challenger or attend the entire three month course”. I opted for the course challenger approach. Since I had already proven myself as a Drill Instructor I would be afforded full privileges as a fellow Drill Instructor and not have to do anything but scheduled PT with the class. I would be fast tracked and out of the school in two weeks. Each day I would be taking one or two tests with the understanding that if I failed any event there would not be a retest, I would be rolled into the course as a fulltime student and have to endure the whole three months. What motivation to excel, I certainly did not want to do three months in DI school.

There were two other Marines with me as course challengers, a SSGT and a GYSGT. About the third day the three of us were in our Charlie uniform walking instep and when we were about 50 yards from the front of the school steps an Instructor stepped outside:

Instructor: “STOP DEVIL DOGS, HOW ABOUT UNSCREWING YOURSELVES”

Us: We looked at our uniforms, at each other and talked quietly about not seeing anything wrong when the Instructor barked “HOW ABOUT GETTING IN ORDER BY SENIORITY OF RANK”. We looked like the Three Stooges as we changed places and resumed marching towards the school. I kept thinking “Damn these Instructors are assholes”.

Setting the example

The second day of my return to DI school started off at 0515 for PT. We formed up next to the school; it was still about ten minutes before dawn. One thing I could expect was to be

scrutinized by both the students and the Instructors regarding my every move. I am supposed to be the stellar example of what a Drill Instructor student should behave. As I stood at parade rest awaiting the command to fall out and fall in around the PT table I smelled the strong stench of crap. The odor seemed to intensify as I stood there. I wanted so much to look down at my shoes or change locations in formation but I did not want to bring any negative attention to myself. Finally the command to fall out and fall in on the PT table was given.

As I broke ranks I scuffed and wiped my shoes of any poop I might have stepped in. Once at the table I was about three ranks back from the front and as we exercised the odor got worse as if I could have foreseen that being possible. We were about five minutes into the table PT workout and on our backs doing leg lifts when I heard an instructor shout “WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO YOURSELF MARINE”.

It sounded for certain he was directing his speech to me when I heard another Instructor shout “WHAT THE FUCK... WHY DID YOU SHIT ON YOURSELF, GET UP NOW”. The Marine behind me who managed to stay on my heels the entire time from location to location had explosive diarrhea, the entire backside of his legs were brown with shit. Only one thing made it worse, he was my roommate. Let’s talk more about idiot stick.

When I checked into my room on Saturday I spent the entire day organizing my wall locker and suggested he do the same. Sgt Dixon’s reply was not what I expected, “I’m not worried; they can’t do anything to me until they give me the uniform preparation class” he said.

“Look Sergeant Dixon, I am here for my second tour; I know what the fuck I am talking about” I said with veteran authority. It fell upon deaf ears.

On Monday, check-in day at DI school he had the audacity to park his vehicle with U-Haul trailer attached in the First Sergeant parking spot at DI school. Everyone was told to walk to school, leave your vehicles at the barracks but for some idiotic reason my roommate was off in his own world making up his own set of instructions. The School First Sergeant walked on stage and shouted “WHO THE FUCK PARKED THEIR VEHICLE WITH U-HAUL TRAILER ATTACHED OUTSIDE IN MY PARKING PLACE”.

Sergeant Dixon meekly stood up and replied “I did First Sergeant”. The First Sergeant called him outside the classroom and the sound of Sergeant Dixon’s ass getting chewed off by an angry First Sergeant had a surreal feeling to it. I would learn later in training that he was caught cheating on the SOP exam and believe it or not they told him he had two choices, leave with an adverse fitness report or get dropped and begin with the next class. He chose the latter and in reality spent six months as a DI school student.

I missed a Question on the exam

Near the end of my two weeks of daily testing I took the weapons written exam. I passed the test scoring in the mid 90's but when reviewing the few questions that I did miss I disagreed with the answer I should have chosen regarding grenades. GYSGT Scott Booth who was not only my neighbor across the street but also a friend from my first tour as a DI but now working as a Squad Instructor at DI school said "Who cares, you passed".

"Your test answer sheet is incorrect Gunny, and I can prove it" I said.

"Look Gunny, I missed the same damn question a year ago when I was a course challenger and I chose the same answer as you. I too challenged the question but lost. You missed the question" said GYSGT Booth.

I took my time and spent maybe five minutes looking for the answer and I found it. I waited for him to return to the break room where I had taken the exam so I could show him. When he arrived I said "Here it is" as I pointed to the weapons manual.

After about ten seconds of studying what I showed him he lost it "FUCK...GODDAMMIT" and threw the book across the room. I was taken aback because I did not see what the big deal was so I asked "Scott, what the fuck is wrong with you".

"I failed the weapons exam when I was a course challenger last year and this one question I knew I had answered correct but I could not find the proof. If I had found it I would have passed the test and would not have been recycled into the regular class for three months"

I laughed my ass off, that was some funny shit but Scott was not seeing the least bit of humor in it.