

Alright Private Figowitz, on your knees¹!

It was May of 1970, and the war in Vietnam was still a marvelous way of getting yourself killed. In the Marine Corps we were taking some draftees, but only reluctantly. None the less, they were a fact of life and almost to a man these gents were attempting to find ways to avoid service in the rice paddies half way across the world. We had at least one individual who had chosen to shoot himself in the hand while involved in a familiarization course on the M16. This rocket scientist had placed his hand over the muzzle (with the butt resting on the deck) while in the kneeling position and quite “accidentally” pulling the trigger with his other hand. He knew full well that the rifle had a round in the chamber as he had placed it there himself. While on the table in the sickbay, he was complaining to the Doctor that it hurt worse than anything he had ever had happen to him. The Doctor, a combat veteran, was not amused! Exactly what did you *THINK* it was going to feel like you idiot? Shut up and hold still while I pour some more antiseptic in the wound.

“Hey Doctor, don’t you have something to kill the pain?” the clown complained.

“Somewhere around here, but for the life of me, I can’t seem to find it,” the Doc said, grinning slightly. “At any rate lad, this should be an excellent object lesson to keep your head down when you get to Vietnam!”

“Doc, you mean that this isn’t going to keep me from going to Vietnam?”

“Nope, I can virtually guarantee you that I can fix it up like new!”

“Gawd Doc, can’t you give me something to keep it from hurting so much?”

“Not until I can find my pain medication, and as busy as I am, it may be several hours,” said the Doctor smiling to himself!

As the war was winding down in Southeast Asia, the young draftees² were looking for virtually any excuse to stay out of harm’s way. Quite another approach was one that a Doctor couldn’t fix... Homosexuality! In 1970, being a sexual deviate was an iron clad guarantee to avoid service in the Marine Corps; they simply didn’t put up with such behavior! Normally the shame of admitting a predilection to doing unnatural things to a fellow Marines’ allegorical male sexual appendage, or being a “fudge packer”³ was so shameful that no normal human being would willing to admit to such deviant conduct... All but a few that is!

In the Spring of 1970 I was the Operations Officer of the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Infantry Training Regiment, at that time located at Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, not too far from the Base Rifle Range facility. Our Battalion Commander was an old time Mustang Lieutenant Colonel named Vic Deschutyner who had come up the hard way... Vic had been a machine gunner in China following WWII, but had taken enough time off to garner a college degree along the way. He had always been known as a hard charger, and if you didn’t want to do some serious soldiering, you’d better find a different outfit. Vic had stepped on a land mine in Vietnam causing the loss of a foot. They tried to retire him, but he strenuously resisted and the Corps relented and allowed him to stay on active duty. They had put him back together, assigned him as the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion of 1st ITR. Every noon time, the Colonel and his dog, Tripoli went for a 3-mile run,

peg leg and all. Vic Deschutyner was one tough hombre. Needless to say, he was not overly sympatric to those attempting to avoid duty in a combat zone.

For about a two week period, both the Colonel and the XO were on TAD⁴, leaving “watash”⁵ to run the Battalion. We were blessed with good NCOs and it was not exactly an onerous task, and except for a few instances, the Battalion simply ran itself as long as someone was handy to sign papers and make a few decisions that weren’t exactly earth shaking. My S-3 Shop was running well, and each company was running independently according to the training schedule. I was enjoying myself greatly.

One morning the Battalion Sergeant Major stuck his head in the door and said, “Hey Major, I think we have a problem!” A problem? Interesting, wonder what could need the attention of an acting CO this early in the morning?

“No problem Sergeant Major, what ‘ya got that needs solving?” I asked jokingly.

“Sir Private Figowitz has decided that he is a homosexual!”

“Oh really? He’s just *NOW* figuring this out? Wonder what took him so long?”

“Well sir, I don’t know for sure, but I’d say that it’s a definite case of Vietnam’itis!”

“Hummm... well, go get the lad and bring him into the Colonel’s office, I can fix this in no time!”

“Major, what in the heck do you have in mind?” He asked somewhat suspiciously.

“Don’t worry, I have this one figured,” I said confidently.

A worried look came across the Sergeant Major’s face, but he went to fetch Figowitz.

A somewhat apprehensive Figowitz came to attention in front of the Colonel’s desk.

“Well Figowitz, you’ve come to the conclusion that you are a homosexual, is that right?”

“Yes sir, I’ve been considering this for a long time and I’ve decided that I just have to face it!”

“I can see how that would be a hard decision to make alright, just who is your homosexual partner?”

“Partner sir?”

“Yes Figowitz, unless you are some sort of contortionist, I don’t see how you could do this on an individual basis! You simply have to have a homosexual partner, now who is it?”

Figowitz hung his head and admitted that Private Schmaltz was the object of his affection.

“Sergeant Major, go get Private Schmaltz and bring him in here!”

A look of understanding was starting to cross the Sergeant Major’s face.

“Aye, aye sir, I’ll have Private Schmaltz in here shortly!”

Schmaltz entered the office with a definite look of apprehension on his face, but it was pretty clear from the glances that were exchanged between Figowitz and Schmaltz that this was something that they had been rehearsing.

“Schmaltz, is this your homosexual lover?” I asked with an innocent look on my face.

Schmaltz was obviously nervous and was mentally dragging his toe in the dirt.

“Ah, yes sir, I think I’m in love with Private Figowitz!”

“Ah Huh! Well never being one to interfere with true love, I won’t be the one to stand in your way! OK you guys, which one of you does which, with what and to who?” I asked.

“Sir?” Figowitz said, “what do you mean?”

“I mean Figowitz, who is the *‘blower’* and who is the *‘blowee’*?”

“Sir, I don’t believe I know what you mean,” said Figowitz (obviously the ‘mouthpiece of the two – no pun intended of course).

“You know exactly what I mean Figowitz, don’t play stupid on me here!”

“Well sir, sometimes it’s one, and sometimes the other,” said Figowitz exhibiting definite signs of regret for having gotten involved in the whole situation.

“Oh, so it doesn’t make any difference?” I said.

“Ah, no sir, not really,” said Figowitz.

“Ok, let’s get with it – on your knees Figowitz!”

“Sir?” said an unbelieving Figowitz with a look of absolute horror coming across his face.

“And you Schmaltz, unzip your fly!”

“Unzip my fly?” said Schmaltz with an unbelieving look!

“Alright you two, let’s get with it, I don’t have all day!”

The Sergeant Major is looking at me as if I had taken leave of my senses, and a slight bead of sweat seemed to be forming on his brow. He was attempting to convey a “oh Jesus Christ, we can’t do this Major” attitude. I smiled at the Sergeant Major and continued the discussion with the two miscreants.

“Alright Figowitz, what’s the holdup? I thought you were an expert on this drill?”

Figowitz appeared to be about to give birth to a litter of kittens. He was visibly sweating, and was looking for a way out of his ill considered scam. These two idiots were anything but homosexuals, but it had seemed to be an excellent method of avoiding hazardous duty with no one being the wiser. After all, you could always laugh and tell the folks back home how you had trick-f++ked the Marines into discharging you and not have to go war. Putting on a demonstration was not something either Figowitz or Schmaltz had figured on. I was giving them no slack and the Sergeant Major was beginning to relax and it was obvious than neither of these roaring @\$holes was about to visually demonstrate their declared perversion.

“Schmaltz, perhaps you’d rather get on *YOUR* knees and allow Figowitz to wrap HIS soup-coolers around your schwantz⁶? If that’s the case, by all means, be my guest, I really don’t give a damn who is the ‘blowee’ and who is the ‘blower’! Either way, it’ll get you two out of the Marines like a flash of light! ...But if you two think I’m gonna’ take your word for being corksockers⁷, you are sadly mistaken! Now either assume the relative positions or come to attention and admit you are some lying sacks of \$hi+! What’ll it be?”

Two obviously greatly relieved Marines came to attention, and I could detect a definite look of relief on the Sergeant Major’s countenance. He had envisioned a long term in Portsmouth⁸ contemplating his idiocy for bringing this problem up to an obviously deranged Major of Marines. Whew...

Figowitz was the first to speak.

“Major, you’re right, we’re not homosexuals. I do have one question however, how’d you know we wouldn’t perform here in the office?”

“Call it an educated hunch Figowitz, and if you had, I’d have had you two clowns on your way home before the story got out! The Colonel would have thought it was hilarious, and all the witnesses would be taken care of. I sure as hell wouldn’t tell, nor I suspect would the Sergeant Major, and you two would be long gone! It was a win-win situation. If this story gets back to the troops, I’ll bet BIG bucks that we don’t have any repeat performances!”

Two very relieved “pseudo sexual deviates” departed the Colonel’s office post haste. I headed back to my office and I suspect if the Sergeant Major had access to a bottle of hooch, he went back to his office and took a very long swig! Who’d have thought he had a certified maniac as the acting Battalion Commander. Me? I sat back in the chair, and smiled. Sometimes life is good!

Semper Fi,

End Notes:

¹ This was written before being a practicing homosexual was acceptable to the American public. Barney Frank (D-Ma) had not come out of the closet, and Sharon Stone was not yet bemoaning not being allowed to plant a Lesbian Kiss on the Cat Woman. Massachusetts was not permitting same-sex marriages, and referring to an individual’s deviant sexual predilection in a derogatory manner was not yet considered a hate crime! Disney Land was not holding “Gay Pride Day” and there was no Ellen ‘Degenerate’ Show on TV, nor A Queer Eye for the Straight Guys! Dear Allah what are we coming to?

² In all fairness, some of our draftees turned out to be excellent Marines, but if you were going to bet...? Who wants to be the last man killed in a war we were not being allowed to win, most especially when you weren’t a volunteer! The old time professionals simply took it in stride, because as the old saying goes, “it was the only war we had!”

³ “Fudge Packer” is an alternative version of male homosexual perversion that has nothing to do with the use of the mouth. Common decency prevents me from giving a more graphic description.

⁴ TAD is the Marine Corps term for “Temporary Additional Duty” The Army and Air Force calls this TDY.

⁵ Watash is a term taken from service in the Far East indicating an individual. Watash when used in a sentence means “I” or “me”.

⁶ Schwantz is a German term for an item of the male anatomy.

⁷ Corksocker is an obvious misspelling for the sake of decency.

⁸ Portsmouth was the old Naval Prison then located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was eventually closed and all military prisoners are now sent to the military (not Federal) prison located in Leavenworth, Kansas. Individuals garnering long prison terms however, are often transferred to the Federal Prison system. Portsmouth was not noted for its country club atmosphere.