

Way Back When, Far, Far Away...

The wife and I married in early January of the infamous year. The year had an in creditable mix of ‘The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly’.

I was lucky as far as the Selective Service up until this year. I was not a ‘Draft Dodger’ but was aware of my Draft Lottery Number, 161 and played the odds well. Looking back I would have been even more confident of avoiding the draft if I would have known that they only got to lottery number 195 by the end of the year.

I jumped into college and carried ‘full time statuses with my 12 units, grabbed onto a wife and tried as best I could to have her bring another dependent into the mix.

I started to receive a lot of mail from the ‘Selective Service’ branch of the nation I loved. As a rule I didn’t want to open it but was forced to with great anticipation. The letter that started my real concern was one that told me that I needed to go in to Los Angeles to have a ‘classification physical examination’ for draft status assignment.

In the two weeks or so from the time I received their request and the time I would have to show up at the ‘Red Cross’ office for transportation to Los Angeles. I was looking for absolutely

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anything that would make sure I didn't have to go into the army. I wrote all of these things down so I could pull them out like a gun. I put them in my wallet so as not to forget to take them. As I look back now I was really grasping at straws. Things like ‘when I was four I hit my head on the soap dish and had to go to the hospital’ or ‘I have a wife and she needs me to provide for her’ or ‘I believe the Commandment about not killing’ just seemed empty.

My wife of two months dropped me off at the ‘Red Cross’ parking lot that morning because we only had one car and she had to go to work a little later.

The ride to Los Angeles seemed to go by so slowly and the bus was so crowded with other young men that none of us thought it would ever end. We nervously talked among ourselves and pretended to one another that none of this bothered us.

Suddenly we pulled up to and in front of a gigantic old building in downtown Los Angeles. Time seemed to change the speed it had been going. It seemed like I had just left the ‘Red Cross’ building and now things started to really drag.

I, probably all of us, had a realization that our bus was crowded but our crowded bus was one of many crowded buses. We must have thought that this was just the day our town would be examined. I don't know how many buses were there but it seemed like hundreds.

We were brought into the ‘reception’ area and had to listen to a man telling us that we had to do everything we were told in order to have this day successfully completed. We would all have to do it at the same time.

They gave us all manila envelopes with our paper work and identification in it and told to go in another room. I expected that we would have to get into a line and wait there to go see a doctor. The doctor would put us on a scale, see how tall we were, check our blood pressure and sit down and talk to us about any unseen ailments or situations. He would then write down his finding and suggestions and send us back to our bus for the ride home.

Arriving at the ‘another room’ I found things were going south. We were all standing in front of lockers and wondering why. We heard a deep voice over the speakers strategically placed around the room tell us to open the locker in front of us and not to forget the number on it. I would have no trouble remembering it because it was the same lucky number that was my lottery number a few months earlier. The reason that they needed speakers now was because it wasn’t just our bus anymore. There were a lot of bus loads of men in this ‘another room’.

The same voice that told us about the locker told everyone to take off their shoes and socks and place them in the locker. He then told everyone to take off their coats, ties, jackets, shirts, and

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T-shirts. Every one of us was starting to become nervous about what that voice was going to say next. Once that voice was sure every piece of ‘above the waist’ apparel was in the locker he said what we knew he was going to say, hoping he wouldn’t say, ‘take off your trousers, pants, shorts, and your underwear’.

The voice told us all to close the door to the locker and face forward. We were told to walk single file through the blue door into the examination room. I and surely every man standing there was in shock and were wishing they were anywhere but there.

As we entered the room beyond the blue door we found another unwelcomed surprise. This room was a lot bigger and several rooms of several bus loads of men were all in it. I didn’t know that there were that many naked men in the entire world. We were told to follow the ‘blue’ line from station to station. When we were finished with the various stations we would follow the ‘blue’ line into ‘that’ room to change? The word ‘change’ would indicate take something off then put something on.

The first thing the ‘blue’ line did was a urine test. This involved a tiny test tube with a yellow cap. Once we turned in the contents we were allowed to go into the restroom to finish what that tiny test tube with the yellow cap started. I did see at least one man ask another man to fill his bottle up because he couldn’t go.

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We continued to walk around a building the size of the ‘pentagon’ from station to station giving blood to vampires in white coats, being weighed, measured, picked and prodded on for what seemed hours.

Finally I was at the last station, the station where they spoke to you and you were allowed to speak back. As I waited there in single file I remembered my ‘list’ of things that would get me out of this place was in my wallet, the wallet that was in my pants, the pants that were in locker, the locker that was in that room on the other side of this station.

I tried to wing it and tell my side of things to the doctor/evaluator when it was my turn. He listened understandably and shook his head and said, ‘you know something, I bumped my head on a soap dish when I was four too, what a coincidence!’ I heard him say ‘you’ll be notified of our findings in the U.S. Mail, Next’.

The ride home was very quite and though most of our eyes were closed-nobody slept.