

## 1991 - TONIGHT I WILL BOND WITH THE BOY'S

Parris Island, PLT 1069

The Senior Drill Instructor (SDI) is responsible for the conduct of the assigned Drill Instructors (DI) who assists him in the training of the platoon and is ultimately responsible for the needs of his recruits being met.

Some SDIs will initiate this connection in the first days of recruit training; others will wait about 7 – 14 days to initiate this connection. Sadly some SDIs will never connect with their platoon and their performance will show it.

In the big picture the goal is to let the recruits know they can talk to someone who cares about them and will be their advocate. In reality, preventing allegations of misconduct against the team of Drill Instructors assisting the SDI in the training of the platoon is the unsanctioned goal. The Chain of Command calls it obstruction of justice, a violation of article 92 of the UCMJ. If the recruits end up speaking to the Lieutenants about their problems then the cat really will be out of the bag and the team will likely to be relieved, punished and held accountable; many careers ended. The goal of this unsanctioned practice is not to suppress serious physical abuse but to keep the little stupid shit from getting command attention. The SDI will inflict the necessary discipline on the errant DI to get him on the straight and narrow path of righteousness should a discovery be made.

For Platoon 1069 I had decided that I would create that bond on TD-10 (Training Day-10). I had told the three DIs assisting me that I would take the boys to evening chow alone and they were to go home and return after the morning meal the next day. My DIs were happy because they had been working 17 hour days for two weeks since picking up the platoon and were finally going to be home early and actually see their families instead of arriving and leaving while the family is in bed. Yes, the sacrifices of the DIs are rarely known or appreciated by anyone outside their small circle.

I had the platoon fall out for a motivating, improvised close order drill session on the way to the chow hall. The boys were in heaven, the pressure of my unrelenting DIs watching their every move were not present tonight and my cadence had a motivating tone to it. When we finally returned to the squadbay after evening chow and some more close order drill practice I held a school circle in the back of the squadbay and spoke to them like they were my young Marines in the fleet. My eyes and smile said it all; "I'm on your team, I am here for you, I will protect you when necessary and hold you accountable if needed, bring all of your concerns to me and me only if you have any."

In my two previous platoons as Senior Drill Instructor I had always left my office blinds fully raised so that everyone knew I could see the conduct of activities in the squadbay. I wanted to know what my team of DI's was doing and I also wanted the recruits to know that I condoned the aggressive behavior of my Drill Instructors.

After about 45 minutes of dialog and expectations from me to the platoon I began the execution of the BDR (Basic Daily Routine).

“WHEN I GIVE THE COMMAND, YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR PLACE ON LINE, DO IT NOW!”

“AYE, AYE, SIR” said the recruits and they scampered to their place on line at the foot of their racks standing at the position of attention.

SDI: “STARBOARD SIDE SHOWER UP, PORT SIDE SHINE’M UP”

Recruits: “STARBORAD SIDE SHOWER UP, PORT SIDE SHINE’M UP AYE, AYE, SIR”

SDI: “READY...MOVE”

The recruits all raised their left foot together and slammed them on the deck in a thunderous thud as they shouted with passion, “KILL.” Kill was a word I had them shout in unison whenever I gave them a command of execution to do something. I was trying to program a deep appreciation for aggression in everything they do. Hearing 75 motivated recruits do this instantaneously at the same moment has always been music to my ears.

Recruits on the port side immediately got out their shoeshine and brass shining kits and commenced shining brass belt tips, buckles and leather boots. The recruits on the starboard side quickly stripped down, removing all their clothes, wrapped a towel around their waist and with shower shoes on their feet and their shaving & shower kit in their left hand with forearm parallel to the deck as if at left shoulder arms resumed their place on line awaiting my next command.

SDI: “PREPARE TO MARCH TO THE HEAD”

Recruits: “PREPARE TO MARCH TO THE HEAD AYE, AYE, SIR”

SDI: “FORWARD...MARCH” The recruits took three steps forward, halted, did a left facing movement towards the quarterdeck and marched toward the quarterdeck and then a column left through the doors into the head. I called cadence the whole time, engraining into them my passion for close order drill and my expectation that they will always think about drill when marching anytime, anywhere.

With the recruits in the head I entered my office and began doing paperwork. At about the five minute mark one of the recruits still in the squadbay shining his brass and leather walked up to my office door and meekly attempted the process for requesting permission to speak.

The recruit pounds on the bulkhead outside the door with moderate force and in a nervous manner request permission to speak, “SIR, RECRUIT \_\_\_\_\_ REQUEST PERMISSION TO SPEAK TO SENIOR DRILL INSTRUCTOR GUNNERY SERGEANT CROUCH SIR”

“LOUDER BOY”

“SIR, RECRUIT \_\_\_\_\_ REQUEST PERMISSION TO SPEAK TO SENIOR DRILL INSTRUCTOR GUNNERY SERGEANT CROUCH SIR”

“What is it recruit”

The recruit was fumbling his words, looking away toward the quarterdeck outside my office and back again towards me and back again to the quarterdeck while pointing at something on the deck

My patience was running thin, very thin. I didn’t choose to bond with the boys so that they could act like nervous school girls. “WHAT THE HELL IS IT” I asked.

“SIR, SIR, AH, SIR, AH, AH, SIR”

“SPEAK ENGLISH YOU SON OF A BITCH, WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU WANT”

“SIR, SIR, AH, SIR, AH, AH, SIR” he continued to utter while gesturing at the quarterdeck with eyes wide open and finger pointing.

“WHAT THE FUCK IS IT RECRUIT!”

“SHIT SIR! THERE IS SHIT ON THE QUARTERDECK!”

At this moment time seemed to slow down so I could use all my senses to understand this bizarre situation that was quickly developing. I got up from my desk and walked toward the open door to see a huge steaming turd sitting on my quarterdeck, its owner having pooped it out while marching across the quarterdeck on his way to the showers. I knew it had to be one of the very last recruits to march past me because it had not been stepped in.

I was livid, so much for bonding with the boys. I was in the mood for torture.

“EYEBALLS!”

“SNAP SIR” said the recruits who were still in the squadbay shouted as they looked toward me.

“WHO SAW THIS TURD FALL ONTO MY QUARTERDECK?” Nothing was said, pure silence and I tell you; silence is not golden, I wanted answers. I told them to lock it up and wait online. I had the recruit near me stand guard around the turd should someone step in it when I flushed the recruits from the head.

I stormed into the head and commanded, “ZEROOOOO!”

“FREEZE RECRUIT FREEZE!” they shouted in reply and froze their body positions as required when hearing the command.

“WHEN I GIVE THE COMMAND YOU WILL LEAVE EVERYTHING YOU BROUGHT WITH YOU AND ONLY TAKE YOUR TOWEL. YOU WILL NOT ALLOW THAT TOWEL TO TOUCH YOUR BODY. YOU WILL HOLD IT ABOVE YOUR HEAD WITH BOTH HANDS AND RETURN TO YOUR POSITION ONLINE. SHAVING CREAME ON YOUR FACE AND WATER AND SOAP ON YOUR BODIES HAD BETTER STAY THAT WAY. YOU WILL NOT ALLOW THAT TOWEL TO TOUCH YOUR BODY.” The recruits did as instructed.

Once they were back online I said, “TAKE THAT TOWEL AND WITHOUT TOUCHING YOUR BODY HOLD THE SHORT END AND PUT IT INFRONT OF YOUSELF FOR INSPECTION. AFTER I LOOK AT THE FRONT OF THE TOWEL YOU WILL ROTATE IT SO I CAN SEE THE OTHERSIDE.”

I commenced my very slow inspection of the towels. I expected my culprit to be near the very end of the line. Sure enough, the second and third recruit from the end both had soaked towels in one spot the size of a bowling ball. I figured they wet their towels so that the guilty recruit would not have any visible skid marks on it. Recruit Patel was the one I suspected as my turd boy, I figured he got his bunkmate to wet his towel to create doubt of who the guilty party was.

I went into my tirade of emotions, threatened to play pass the turd so the owner could identify it. Finally I told the two pigs to go pick it up and clean my quarterdeck. I put them on fire watch for the next few hours and punished them with PT whenever convenient for the rest of training until graduation.

Several weeks later we had just finished qualification at the rifle range when recruit Patel knocked on my office hatch requesting to speak to me.

“WHAT DO YOU WANT PATEL”

“SIR, RECRUIT PATEL REQUEST PERMISSION TO ENTER AND SPEAK AT EASE”

“BULLSHIT, JUST BECAUSE YOU QUALIFIED ON THE RIFLE RANGE DOES NOT MAKE YOU A MARINE. YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE A RECRUIT”

“SIR, WHEN ARE THE BEATINGS GOING TO START”

Dumbfounded is an understatement to my emotions at this stupid request. Of all the recruits I wanted to beat, I wanted to beat him the most, I often fantasized about beating him because I truly believed he was the scared recruit who squeezed out a turd onto my quarterdeck several weeks ago as he marched to the showers. “WHAT KIND OF A STUPID QUESTION IS THAT, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THE DRILL INSTRUCTORS ARE GOING TO BEAT YOU”

“SIR, ALL THE WEAK ONES HAVE LEFT PLATOON 1069, THE PLATOON IS LOOSE AND NEEDS TIGHTENED UP; THEY NEED A BEATING SIR”

“PATEL, YOU’RE THE FIRST RECRUIT I WANT TO BEAT, GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY OFFICE BEFORE I DO IT”

Every time I meet someone named Patel, I inquire if he or she knows someone with the name Patel who had been in Marine boot camp back in 1991. I hope to meet the idiot someday and get a truthful answer out of him.

➤ John E. Crouch, First Sergeant, USMC, (Ret)