

I wanted to get into the engineering trade so I could get lined up for a steady job that didn't entail the professional business image at all times throughout the day. The strain of sales and clerical work was too much for a man like myself with a superior attitude and rather unpolished manners. The door for the recruiter was right across the street from where I worked. I was down one day looking at my total lack of success since I left the university, and I walked in to see what sort of hands on training I could get in the boiler business. The recruiter was delighted to hear about my dilemma and set in on writing me up for the military. I checked out on the processing just fine and a few days past gaining police records and all and I was ready to go. I had been carrying a burden of guilt in all such applications since eight years prior, however. At that time I had a psychotic interlude and was hospitalized for about a month with one hell of a doozy of a nervous breakdown. As far as getting a job goes this sort of information is approximately the kiss of death to an employer. Once you crack it is felt that you could go any old time. That was not the truth in my case, but one such incident is seen by society in general as a true disability much like retardation or paraplegia. I lied as usual this time to the military, whether they know to this date I don't know. The real problem was eight years old and never resurfaced, and never has again, even under extreme pressures. I imagine the information is well buried and also well known in some circles. I never thought it was a big deal, but then again I am certifiably crazy in many minds, and to most that makes you something of an untouchable. It definitely keeps one in a caste of the less than usable in any position of responsibility, no matter how you might be able to prove how sharp or stable you are.

I went on through with it and left a note saying in fact that I was tired of failing in this community and felt trapped and thought that the Navy boiler program might be able to give me the expertise needed to make me into a skilled and valuable member of society. I was tired of failing in my home town, and seeing the sort of success that other enjoyed. I was dealt a cruel fate, I needed an escape, or my psychology was going to go down the drain even worse than it was. I saw the whole upcoming experience to be one in which I could prove that I was a man. I signed the title to my car, gave whatever possessions to my brother, who was my landlord at the time, and before I knew it was in the NAVY.

I was inducted in March. I didn't consider the circumstances, and arrived a Great Lakes in some truly rotten weather. The first days of haircuts and issue are unforgettable. I'll never forget getting the seabag. There was a little Filipino petty officer up on a podium above hundreds of freshly skinned boots. He howled nearly unintelligible orders through a busted microphone. About all I could hear was "I no wanna momma boys in my Navy". He demonstrated how to get a fitting for the tops by spastically throwing his arms in the air and touching his fingertips together "Like this! Like this!" Most of the guys were really low physically due to lack of sleep, a good personnel control tool, and needless to say psychologically. Especially the coconut hair cuts.