

The older reentry was sort of looking at me as an object to race against as well. He had his bragging rights and thought he was tough but the camp in general had an attitude of letting him have easier jobs etc because of prior service. When we took off in the final stampede, I felt that the old dude had actually pushed me a little, but I was just not in the mind to lose my stride in the final race. After that first lap incident. I kept my footing in the melee and settled down behind the reentry. On about the third lap, we were going sixteen, I went by him on a turn and said "What's amatter old man," i had been training. He looked blown out already, and I was starting to warm up. A couple of laps later I had gained ground on my imagined competitor and as I looked back to note his progress I saw him move toward one of the barf buckets around the track for a flying hocker, and he lost his feet and went down. The next lap He was limping around holding a knee. The real track stars were starting to pass me by the eighth lap or so and I watched the clock to see I was on time. I was hitting a wall of pain about this time and my side was absolutely splitting. The mucus was running from my nose quite freely and it gave me something to think about. I wallowed for the next four laps or so finding it hard to keep my mind on my stride and completion goal with a P.O. yelling out the time and laps to go. My lungs felt out of capacity and were dry. By the twelfth lap I sensed I had it made and the pain lessened, but the time was going to be short. I rounded the last turn and did it, lacking maybe fifty feet, I went a mile and a half in twelve minutes. That was it. The light out side had a metallic feel to it if it was possible, the sky looked unreal. My heart was pumping for a good hour later and the foot pain and side pain was real, but strangely could be forgotten as my real obstacle was realized. I had made my run for the fence.

There were a lot more bogus rank and file activities and a couple of more classes and the proverbial blunt needle and six ounces of pennicillin in the ass. I thought after I failed at calculus my life would hold no more challenges but the boot camp proved me wrong I was stretched to the ends of my endurance and I made it. The first seven weeks were nearly total confinement and there was a little break here and there. I didn't really want to go back to Milwaukee, the place of my dismal failures of the past so I hung around Chicago when I got time off. I was lucky the traveling tour of Alexander the Greats art was in town and got in free with my iniform a requirement, off the base anyhow. But as luck had it I was to return to my hometown and rather soon at that. Half of the graduation classes in our wave of new sailors were going to Milwaukee to be in a pageant for some darn reason or another. So when the time came in June or so we were all dressed in our whites and bused up to Milwaukee to graduate in front of the folks who wanted to see, whoever they were. We were paraded around downtown and stood at attention and parade rest for close to two hours. A bunch of ceremonial hoopla occurred which I don't remember and certain successful military men jawed on and on. We were expecting a certain amount of fallout, that is the men, and were instructed how to faint gracefully. The day was fairly warm and the inevitable occurred. Two sailors in our group went down.