

The President's Page

STUDENT UNREST

EVERY news release from Washington brings a new wave of uncertainty to the minds of America's young men.

The Right Honorable Alexander Q. McSwivel, director of the Bureau for Accumulation and Control of Widgets, announces that he sees no way out except to draft everybody from 16 to 45, completely regiment them to fight a global war to prevent regimentation.

Congressman Claude Cornassel insists the present Selective Service law is adequate. All they have to do is enforce its provisions upon the lame, halt and blind. The Armed Services will then get all the bodies they need for fighting no war at all.

Senator Sam Soaper, Chairman of the Committee on Simplification, insists there are too many of the dumb, lame, halt and blind in the Armed Services already. All that is needed is to cancel all educational deferments for the next 11 years, and fill up the Armed Services with college students and smart high school boys. Their "technical know-how" can be counted upon to save America.

To further complicate the picture, all of the censored, uncensored, alleged and bona fide war correspondents in Korea are trying to qualify as the journalistic heir apparent to the late Ernie Pyle. In dismally poor, imitative efforts they file increasingly long dispatches about nothing but foxholes, foxholes, cold weather, foxholes, frozen feet, foxholes, and more foxholes. About all they are achieving is to load up the minds of mothers, fathers and timid young men with a rising mental fever of foxhole phobia.

There is little wonder that America's younger citizens hardly know what to do, what to plan, or what to think. Some of these timid lads are currently meeting the situation by rushing to join the Navy—to fight a Communism that has no navy.

Many are obviously attracted by the absence of foxholes in a battleship, and some seem to think an unembattled battleship can offer a nice yachting cruise until the shooting is over. As one lad remarked to me: "No draft board can find me if I am on a destroyer."

Little harm is being done. It separates the men from the boys. And service in a good, ground force, military outfit is a man's job. As an old Navy man, what bothers me is how the Navy is going to get its job done when it is getting so heavily loaded with the current wave of chicken hearted recruits. The Navy also deserves some men.

Many, many recruits are in for a rude surprise. True, there are no foxholes on destroyers and battlewagons. But they have something much worse. They have boatswains and boatswain's mates. And just to show I know what I am talking about, the word is not pronounced as it is spelled. To pronounce it properly, one should precede it with several unprintable words. Without those words, "bosun" is reasonably close to the Navy pronunciation.

Except for a bosun's mate, a bosun is the lowest form of human life. Every ship and every Navy station is crawling with them. With pip-squeak whistles they work around the clock in three shifts; just going around annoying the rest of the crew. A soldier on a battlefield who gets bored with a foxhole can always breeze things up a bit by shooting at somebody. But for bosun's mates there is no cure. Oddly enough, it is against the Articles of War to kill one of them.

Another problem that still haunts me from my Navy days is what to do after duty hours. If you pick up a book to read, immediately a bosun's mate will come by with his pip-squeak whistle, yelling for all hands to lay forward to do something

(The President of the NGA, in this instance, having yielded his page to the President of Superior (Wisconsin) State College who, in a multiple capacity, is Major General Jim Dan Hill, Commanding General of the 32d Inf. Div., a member of the Civilian Components Policy Board, a member of the Army General Staff Committee on National Guard and Reserve policy, and a journalist.)

or other. If movies are scheduled for the quarter-deck, a bosun's mate will come along and say: "Sailor, you can't stand there." If you sit down by your ditty box to write a letter home, suddenly your pack of envelopes vanishes. You look for it and there is a bosun's mate with a leer, telling you he picked it up and put it into the lucky bag. You can pick it up at a ship's acution at a later date. "You can't litter up these decks, sailor."

Even in a harbor, swinging around the hook, day after day, one can't so much as put in a telephone call to see if his girl is out with that 4-F again. There is absolutely nothing to do except sit and contemplate the ugly faces of loathsome bosun's mates.

In recent months so many foxhole phobia afflicted university students have rushed off to join the Navy that, competing with one another, none of them will become officers. There are not that many commissioned jobs. They will all spend the rest of the war swabbing decks under the supervision of bosun's mates. A few may sink to the level of becoming bosun's mates themselves, but that is debatable. No college man could disgrace old alma mater to such an extent.

Telling a young man what not to do is a poor solution to his problem. But with rumors and counter-rumors from this bureau and that statesman mounting ever higher and higher, a negative suggestion is not out of order. A young man is seldom wrong if he waits until the dust settles before he makes a decision.

Were the Selective Service ages revised upward, downward and made effective tomorrow, most of next semester would be finished before any young man now in college or university would be likely to receive a call. It is my firm conviction, and that of many others, that in times like these a young man serves his country well by improving his education until such time as his country calls him by name or by organization, if he happens to be a National Guardsman.

The Guard offers an exceptionally good alternative for those who want to be more positive and definite in the planning of their future service.

Guardsmen are exempt from Selective Service until their unit, i.e., company, battery, battalion, regiment or division, is called as a group. Thus, the Guard is the only way that a young man today can fully and honorably absolve his responsibilities to his country and at the same time remain at home until America definitely needs his particular type of unit.

The planned order in which Guard units will be called is a military secret. The reasons are obvious. Some units are reporting for duty now. Others will not be called for perhaps another year or more. The Department of the Army is quite willing to leave many Guard units at home as a strategic reserve, for the simple reason that their training is progressing right at home while the men continue in their civilian jobs and studies.

Guardsmen also avoid all the chaos of recruit reception and classification centers. Throughout most, if not all of his service, the Guardsman is associated with men from his own and near-by towns.

You may retort: "If you're so keen for the Guard, why don't you join it yourself?" I have joined the Guard. I have been a Guardsman since 1924. It got me into some foxholes in 1944, but I am happy to report that along a foxhole front is the last place in the world you will ever see a bosun's mate. This is a factor in favor of foxholes that the drab-writing war correspondents in Korea have overlooked.

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APRIL, 1951

Dear Guardsmen;

Time inevitably brings changes, some good, some bad. On top of the inroads made in our staff by mobilization, we now are confronted with at least the temporary loss of one of our long-time favorite contributors.

Bob Richardson, whose "Phototoons"—photographs of cartoons modeled in clay—have ornamented "Pentagon Paragraphs" continuously from February 1948 through last month's issue, is on the deadline. Under the circumstances, it's rather difficult to churn-out comic characters and gags.

We hope that before long, Bob's sharp wit and deft fingers will be shaping once more his caricatures of GI types and situations.

Another Bob has appeared on the scene—Bob Hunter, the other half of the Editorial Staff. A Marine Corps combat correspondent during World War II, post war freelance newsmen specializing in Scandinavian nations. Bob subjected himself to a quick and intensive indoctrination and orientation into high National defense and National Guard policy matters by reporting for duty on the eve of the recent Adjutants General Conference.

When that was over, awaiting his ministrations, was a pile of news and picture offerings from the units, ARs, SRs, AFLs, NGB Circulars, and other poop from the Pentagon, high enough to discourage the most eager beaver. But, said Bob, there's no better way to learn, than by doing. So, the unnewsworthy got culled from the newsworthy; intelligible sentences emerged on snowy-white copy paper; the cream of the pictorial crop got screened for reproduction, and here we are, with another issue under our belts.

And an additional new adaptable member of the staff is the 260th AAA Gun Battalion's own Cpl. Walter Cooksey, "swing man" for all departments of the NGA Headquarters. He's mastering the intricacies of addressing, reproducing, and mailing equipment; trying to outguess the mailman's pick-up times; hanging the Council Room pictures just so; sorting masses of membership applications. And he has performed one minor miracle: he has brought order out of near-chaos in the Stock Room. Please, Uncle Sugar, lay-off the 260th for a while!

The Staff

ON THE COVER

Tracer bullets draw their flat trajectory lines, and ricochets their arcs across the night sky, as heavy machine gun fire converges against a backstop on a battle indoctrination course. It's under fire like this—carefully controlled so that it safely clears any GI who isn't foolish enough to stand up—that former Guardsmen now on active service are accustomed to the sights, the sounds, and the feel of combat. The scene depicted in this Army photograph, taken at Fort George G. Meade, Md., is being duplicated at revitalized Army posts throughout the United States.

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