

AUGUST REVOLUTION, 1968

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August 23 is one of my significant dates. It was the day I went in, the day I got out, and between those two, it was the day I reported for duty at Headquarters Co, 2nd Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, Ft. Carson, Colorado.

This is where they sent Vietnam returnees who usually had about six months left to serve. Since my time in Vietnam had been so short, I had a full year left, and one extra day.

August, 1968, was also the time of Chicago's infamous Democratic National Convention. Headquarters Company and 2nd Battalion were among those elected to go.

Unaware of the Convention's place in history and of how much fun it was going to be, I of course did not want to go. Even in play, infantry was not what I wanted to be doing, so I used the facts of having just come off convalescent leave and my limited-duty profile to finagle, I thought, a few days of on-base R&R.

Late in the morning or early afternoon of the day the battalion left by plane for Chicago, I was lying on my bunk enjoying the day and my good fortune. Probably, I was reading a book, probably "The Morning of the Magicians." I might have also been listening to In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida, when some officer or person of many stripes poked his head into the nearly empty barracks and ordered me in his command voice to training. My orders were to exchange my uniform for civies, then go out and skirmish, riot, be a hippie, go places I was not allowed to go and do things I was not allowed to do.

So that's what I did. I traded my dog tags for the love beads hanging in my locker, talisman from another time, and I went outside to riot.

A few other "hippies" wandered about the company area, not quite sure what they were doing. As we collected together, we grew braver and our voices grew louder. We began stomped into the company day room and then the supply room, ran through the CQ, scraping a chair across the polished floor here and there, even tipping one over. Emboldened, we expanded into the adjacent company area, territory I did not belong in and where I had never been, where still uniformed soldiers were all in on the game, but still outranked us and did not like us. So they cursed and swore back at us and called us all the forms of asshole and told us to get out, and of course we did.

A half-dozen or so of the scattered revolutionaries collected on the road to the motor pool, safely outside the company areas. We were wandering in circles and harmlessly shouting, "Hell No, We Won't Go!", when the authorities finally arrived in the form of one open-air jeep, driver, lieutenant, two grunts with rifles in back, with a red, I think,

unit pennant at the back flapping above it all on a thin pole.

Attempting to maintain the civil order, the lieutenant ordered us to break it up, so we shouted at them and they yelled back at us. Myself, adrenalin rising, I snuck up to the back of the slowly moving jeep, close enough the uniforms with the rifles might easily turn around and grab me. I unstrapped the empty jerry can above the bumper. Obviously outnumbered and now under attack, the jeep with driver, lieutenant and grunts, sped off minus their spare gas can.

Pleased at my own bravado, I picked up a fist-sized rock with which to beat my olive-drab drum, which as always was freshly-painted and inspection ready. The clamor of my rock on the hollow can resounded in the quite air and quickly drew a rioting cluster. Soon, we were a band of maybe ten or fifteen.

Belligerence blooming, we prepared for re-infiltration of the enemy when, of course, the army returned, two jeeps aiming down the road, much faster this time.

The revolution instantly saw it was doomed and quickly scattered.

I dropped my paint-chipped drum and fled. I ran in unfamiliar territory, the company area next to my own, looking for escape. Rounding the corner of a barracks, I glanced back. I still retain the image of the jeep rounding the corner behind me, left-front tire turned toward me and hanging low in the wheel well, pennant flag bent to the rear. And though I was not alone in the stampede, every face in the jeep was turned toward me.

In instant later, the jeep braked alongside and suddenly I was pinned up against the wall with rifle stocks and bodies, and I was making no attempt to move.

All after that is anti-climax. They did not beat me up. No arrest. I did not even get to ride in the jeep.

In a fatigued tone that seemed to say, "I'm glad this is over," the officer ordered us all to report back to our companies.

The August Revolution was over.