

One Day in the Army

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*My draft number was called up soon after I reached 18.
I was to report to an induction center in Los Angeles.*

After telling my family good-bye, I took a bus from Altadena to Pasadena. In those days, from Pasadena to Los Angeles, one rode a big, red trolley car. It ended up in a huge, echoing car barn where you could transfer to other trolley cars. My draft letter informed me that the induction center was there.

Sure enough, I and others were directed to a building that was part of the trolley station. After going through an identification process, we were each given a wire basket and told to remove our clothes. We were then poked, punched, weighed, measured and questioned about various health issues—all this stark naked and carrying along our basket of clothes.

When they finished examining everyone, we were told to dress and go to another room. By now it was about 4:00 p.m. Those who passed the physicals were then sworn into the Army. I was now a soldier.

We were sent to another room to wait for further orders. It was full of backless benches. All this time from our arrival at the induction center, we had had nothing to eat nor the opportunity to go get something. We were hungry young men. Those who smoked (a majority at that time) got out their cigarettes.

Soon the air was blue with smoke. Not being a smoker, I tried to open the windows. Unfortunately, they were all stuck shut.

As the hours dragged by, the smoke level got lower and lower. You couldn't see the door or the men across the room. Everyone was coughing and having a hard time breathing.

At 11:00 p.m., the door finally opened. The officer who appeared quickly disappeared in the smoke. But we heard the word "Attention!" from out of the gloom.

Someone said, "What does that mean?"

"It means stand up and listen!" replied the vague figure in the doorway.

We all stood up. The officer then announced, "By order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States of America, President Harry

S. Truman, the draft has been declared null and void.”

Another person asked, “Who’s null and void?”

The officer ignored that and went on to tell us that we’d all be sent home. Our return tickets would be given to us. He then dismissed us.

I returned to Pasadena. It was too late for the buses to be running, so I called my dad to come get me. He was worried that I was already AWOL.

I explained what had happened, but he didn’t really believe me until he went to work the next morning. When he read the newspaper headlines, he knew I was telling it straight.

That was my World War II experience as a drafted soldier!