

I've been told that in every basic training platoon there's at least one village idiot, one genius egghead, one gung-ho patriot, one pig pen and one psychopath. I don't know how the other platoons before me were constituted, but that statement was certainly confirmed with mine.

Some of the men I stood in the ranks with were the meanest, nastiest, dumbest and craziest people I ever knew. Many, I came to find out, had been given the choice of military service or prison, just like Albert Parker.

Some, unlike Albert, probably really deserved it.

Mixed in with them were freaking scared normal guys just like me. To say many of us were intimidated by some of the more hard-core members would be a major understatement.

I remember looking around at the bunch of them and recalling one of the droll sayings my grandfather had been particularly fond of...*Mixing the good with the bad was like mixing shit with ice cream – it doesn't help the shit any, but it sure screws up the ice cream.*