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Bayonet Incident

At around 0730hrs on Saturday 30 May 1987, all the cadets at RMC attended a parade rehearsal for the upcoming Queen's Birthday Parade. The rehearsal involved drill with rifle and bayonet. The rehearsal finished at around 0930hrs and the cadets were marched off the college's main parade ground. As they were forming up into their respective companies to march back to their barracks, Lance-Corporal THORP angrily called me over to where he was standing on the road leading to the parade ground. The moment I arrived THORP began abusing me over the jeans incident the previous night. As THORP ranted at me he had his unsheathed bayonet levelled a couple of inches from my chest. He furiously told

me that I “must be a fucking idiot” for wearing jeans on local leave, and for not returning to the barracks when instructed to by Staff Cadet EVERINGHAM. When THORP had finished abusing me he quickly jabbed me in the chest with his bayonet. I reacted instantly by angrily pushing THORP’s arm away and striding off to form up with the rest of Kokoda Company. I ignored THORP’s furious commands to return to where he was standing.

Kokoda Company marched off in formation and just before we halted at the Kokoda Company barracks THORP, who was behind me, told me to remain behind after we were dismissed. Moments later the company halted and was dismissed on the road in front of the barracks. THORP immediately told me that he was going to charge me with insubordination for walking off on him. I queried this but THORP interjected by shouting “Stand to attention when you talk to me!” I responded, “You can get fucked. I’m sick of this shit.” Exasperated, I turned around and strode off. THORP yelled at my back, “Get back here, Knight!” He then added, “I’m going to charge you!” I shouted back over my shoulder, “Good! We’ll settle it at the charge hearing!” I then mounted the steps into the barracks and walked to my room.

I had only just entered my room and thrown my cap and rifle on my bed when I heard someone yell from the hallway, “Get out here, Knight!” I ventured out into the hallway and saw Staff Cadet Robert HAMBURGER (CSC No 4548), a 2nd Class cadet, striding down the hallway towards me and we met halfway down the hallway. As we came face-to-face, HAMBURGER started abusing me for walking off on Lance-Corporal THORP and told me, “You’re not going to push me around like you did little Thorp! I oughta’ punch you in the head!” He then told me that I was going to be charged with insubordination. Whenever I attempted to speak HAMBURGER lent forward and shouted, “Shut your mouth!” On my third attempt to speak, HAMBURGER furiously shouted, “Shut your fuckin’ mouth!” I then calmly replied, “If you’re not going to listen to me, I’m not going to talk to you.” As I turned to walk back to my room HAMBURGER grabbed me by the front of my shirt with both hands, then quickly pushed me backwards up against the wall and held me there.

By this stage, there were about ten 1st and 2nd Class cadets standing around me, including 15 Platoon's platoon sergeant, Sergeant Gary STONE and my section leader, Corporal Peter CRANE. The 3rd Class cadets in the area (Staff Cadets Craig SMITH, Stuart CROME and Adrian MANNERING) all remained in their rooms. HAMBURGER continued holding me up against the wall and kept repeating "I oughta' punch you in the head. I oughta' punch you in the fuckin' head." I believed that I was going to be attacked at any moment so I asked HAMBURGER to let go of me while gently trying to push his arms away. I noticed that the only 3rd Class cadet in the hallway, Staff Cadet Stuart "Sid" CROME (CSC No 5240), was standing a few metres away in the doorway of Staff Cadet Adrian MANNERING's room and was watching what was happening. I looked at him, raised my arms above my head and loudly asked CROME, "Are you watching this?" CROME stared back at me but remained silent as he walked into MANNERING's room out of sight. I was willing and able to fight the senior cadets in the hallway should I be attacked, but the fact that my classmates were not even prepared to bear witness to me being bashed, let alone come to my aid, was one of the most disheartening experiences I had at Duntroon.

As only senior cadets were huddled around me in the hallway, I feared that I was about to be bashed by them so I decided to strike first. I knocked HAMBURGER's arms away and angrily pushed him backwards. As I stepped forward to press home my attack a 2nd Class cadet, Staff Cadet Michael DUNKLEY, quickly stepped in between us and held us apart. At this point, Corporal Matthew THOMSON barged through the crowd on my right side and shouted at me, "I saw that! You're gone! You're getting charged with insubordination and assaulting a superior!" THOMSON concluded by confining me to my room and telling me to go there immediately. I glared back at THOMSON for a moment then turned and angrily strode back to my room. When I got there I turned and started talking to Sergeant STONE and Corporal CRANE in the doorway. STONE asked me what had caused the confrontation with HAMBURGER, and I was just starting to explain when Staff Cadet Nicholas EVERINGHAM ran up on my right side shouting abuse at me. EVERINGHAM was so enraged and he was yelling so hard that he was unintelligible. Sergeant STONE stepped forward and told EVERINGHAM to calm down, then he told me to step back into my room. When I walked back into my room, Corporal THOMSON walked in behind me. When I

turned around at the foot of my bed, THOMSON told me to take off my bayonet, which was still attached to my parade belt in a scabbard. I asked aggressively, "Why?" THOMSON, who was standing near the door, replied, "Just do it." I glared back at him for a few moments then, maintaining my stare at him, I unclipped my belt and tossed it onto the end of my bed. THOMSON watched the belt land on the bed then informed me, "You're going to be charged with insubordination and assaulting a superior." I snapped back, "Good! We'll settle it at the charge hearing." THOMSON stared back at me wide-eyed and then said, "You're a fool, Knight", as he backed out of the room. I flicked up my right hand as I angrily retorted, "Just get out! We'll settle it at the charge hearing."

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