



# the reactor

by Paul Azevedo

Heaven knows, the Army does its best. When the sergeant gave us our orientation at the start of basic training, he interrupted a string of profanity to tell us that the Army did not want us to swear.

The Army frowns on drunkenness, though alcoholism is the hobby of tens of thousands of soldiers. The Army's feeble efforts to stop fornication by soldiers culminated in the VD posters tastefully displayed in the mess halls during World War II. That practice was not stopped by any revolted brass, but by San Francisco restaurant man George Mardikian, who had volunteered as a consultant.

The Army hasn't been able to stop the epidemic of drugs which began with the Vietnamese war.

THE ARMY HAS been unable to stop soldiers, then, from thinking immoral thoughts, being immoral persons, or doing immoral actions.

But, by heaven, the Army has found a place where it can crack down and stop something it doesn't like.

It doesn't like enlisted men, of either sex, marrying officers of either sex. When Pacifican Mike Jelinsky, by

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the grace of God and passing grades at West Point, a captain; and Sue Ann Pierce, an enlisted man (sorry, enlisted person) had the godawful bad judgement to fall in love, and the far worse judgement to marry, they had sealed their doom, careerwise.

THE ARMY WOULD have slapped Captain Jelinsky on the wrist, lightly, for getting drunk in public. It would not have bothered him at all if he had consorted with a prostitute, provided he had avoided disease and not done it in the streets where it would scare the horses. But the good captain, who was an officer, one of the American nobility, had the nerve to marry a plebeian, a second class citizen, a person not of the officer corps.

At all costs, the army must keep its class distinctions. Officers are officers, and enlisted creatures are enlisted, and never the twain, etc. It isn't that enlisted persons are inferior (well, they are a little) but if they get the idea they are the equal of officers, and can do things like marrying officers, where will it all end?

Soldiers mingling on equal terms with officers is as bad...as bad...as a princess marrying a (ugh) commoner.

AND THINK of the problems that would have occurred if Captain Jelinsky had been allowed to stay married both to Sue Ann (excuse me, Staff Sergeant Pierce) and the Army at the same time.

The sky would fall, or the Army might even be forced into the 20th century.

I used to think things had improved since the days, half a century ago, when my wife's father got booted out of the Marines because he married my wife's mother without asking permission of his commanding officer. Of course she wasn't a fellow Marine.