



Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog

A Full English translation is available.

狗臉的歲月記 1629 梯

Author: Hung-Ching Lee **Illustrator:** Hung-Ching Lee **Publisher:** Dyna Books

Date: 12/2019

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200 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 1 (Four-books series.)

BFT2.0 Translator: Jenna Tang & Michelle Kuo

A-Feng is 20 years old when his draft notice arrives. *Welcome to Guantian Military Base in Tainan—Class 1629.*

Push-ups, squat jumps, frogman drills, paratrooper training—military service in Taiwan is both a rite of passage and a wellspring of shared memory. From barracks banter to the small absurdities of daily drills, these experiences have long fueled the island's beloved military comics.

Comic book creator Hung-Ching Lee captures this world with humor and grit. A-Feng, together with A-Pao—the mischievous troublemaker from Nanmen Market—and A-Wei, the quiet bookworm, stumbles through the sweat, tears, and unexpected laughter of rookie life. Along the way, Lee interweaves lively depictions of everyday figures—street vendors, neighborhood toughs—creating a portrait of Taiwanese society in all its richness.

First published in 1996 and reissued in 2019, *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as a Dog* stands apart from lighter takes on army life, preserving the raw atmosphere of the 1990s with authenticity, camaraderie, and heart.



Author **Hung-Ching Lee**

Hung-Ching Lee, a comic artist from Chiayi, Taiwan, is known for his detailed, realistic drawing style infused with raw local energy. His cinematic paneling emphasizes camera movement, while his works often highlight delicate human emotions set against meticulously crafted backgrounds.

A Cross-Generational Collective Memory Review of *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog*

by Chih-Liang Wu
(originally published on Creative Comic Collection)

For many, military service is among life's hardest and most uncomfortable experiences. Yet in Taiwan, comics on this theme are almost always comedic.

Unlike works such as France's *La Guerre D'Alan*, which delve into the realities of war, Taiwan's military comics are shaped by the conscription system. These stories typically focus on conscripts adjusting to military life, with clear beginnings and ends. Since martial law was lifted, such comics have continually appeared—from Joe Tseng's *Comics Army* (1990), to *Rookie Recruit* (1999), *Mom, I Want to Be a Slack Soldier* (2012), and more.

These works turn stifling memories into humor. In recent years, the genre

has evolved. Tsung-cheng Wei's *Taiwan National Army Act Corporation* (2013) pushed boundaries with outrageous jokes, even depicting a bored soldier pleasuring a dog. Tung Lin Hsieh and MixFlavor's *Attention! Magical Girls* (2019) cleverly flipped gender norms by replacing male soldiers with magical girls, offering a fresh take that resonated with female readers.

A classic in this genre is Hung-Ching Lee's *Military Memoir of Class 1629: My Life as A Dog* (1996), which chronicles protagonist A-Feng's army life. Re-released in 2019 by Dyna Books, its realism stands apart from newer, more entertaining titles, preserving the atmosphere of Taiwan's 1990s military.

Though the story is set decades

ago, many details remain relatable across generations. Whether it's wasting time at arcades (now internet cafes), riding trains or scooters, or chatting about military life during leave, these are timeless experiences. Weapons may evolve from T57 rifles to T91s, but the feel of carrying them doesn't change. I recall a fellow soldier asked his platoon sergeant if he really had to sprint with so much gear. The reply: "Hundreds of thousands have done it before you." Indeed, these shared experiences span generations of Taiwanese men.

The comic also illustrates class and regional diversity. In one scene, soldiers from all walks of life—tattooed or shy, speaking Mandarin or Taiwanese—bathe together. Yet once their heads are shaved, backgrounds fade under the uniform. Wealth, education, or past mistakes are all leveled in the barracks.

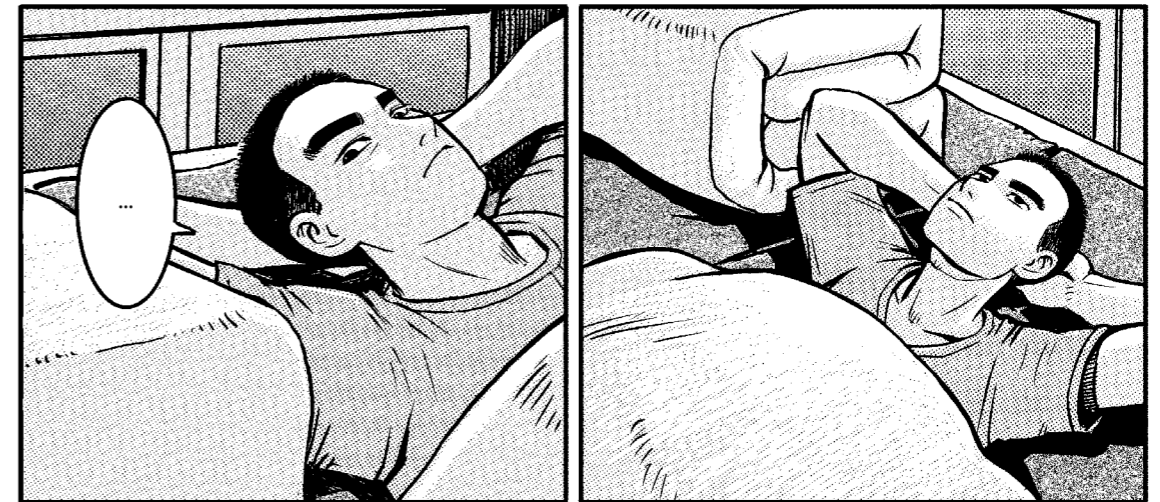
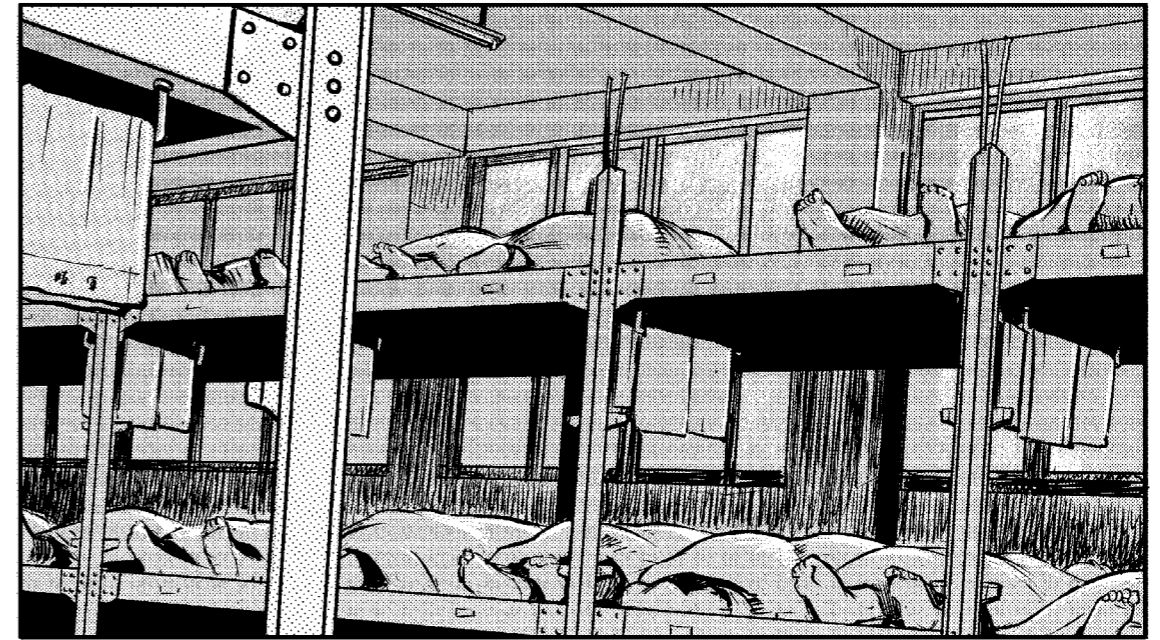
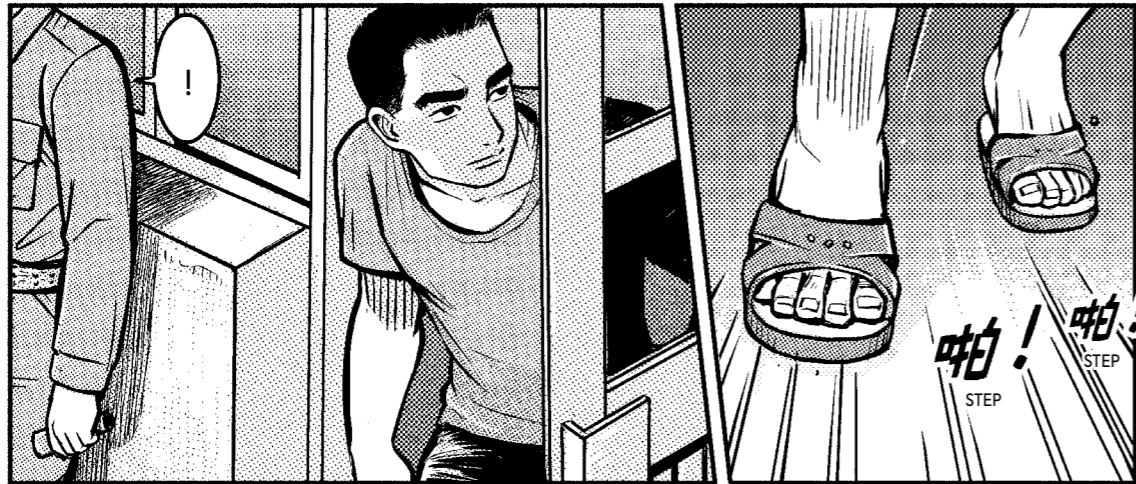
Military comics reveal Taiwan's grassroots identity. Their appeal lies in shared memory, making them inherently local. From soldiers joking, scavenging missing gear, or even burying stolen Hummers during inspections, the absurdity is distinctively Taiwanese. *My Life as a Dog* also highlights local figures—aggressive market vendors, street thugs—vividly portraying society in all its texture.

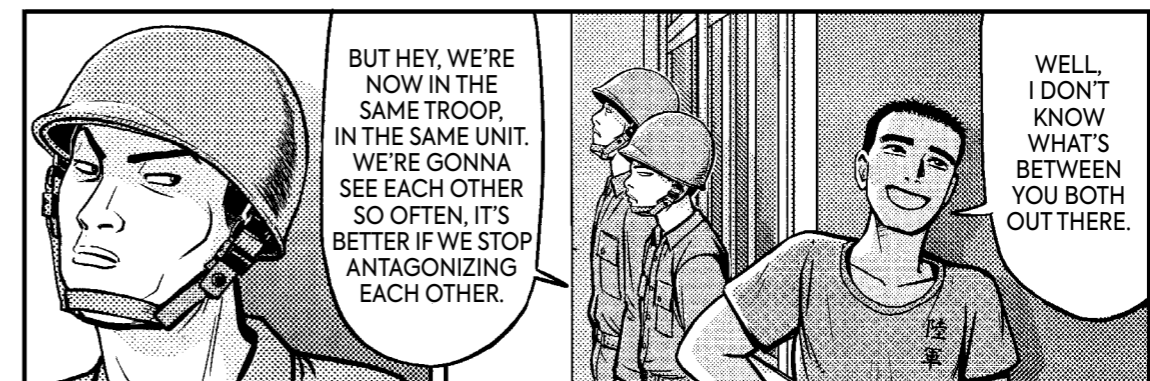
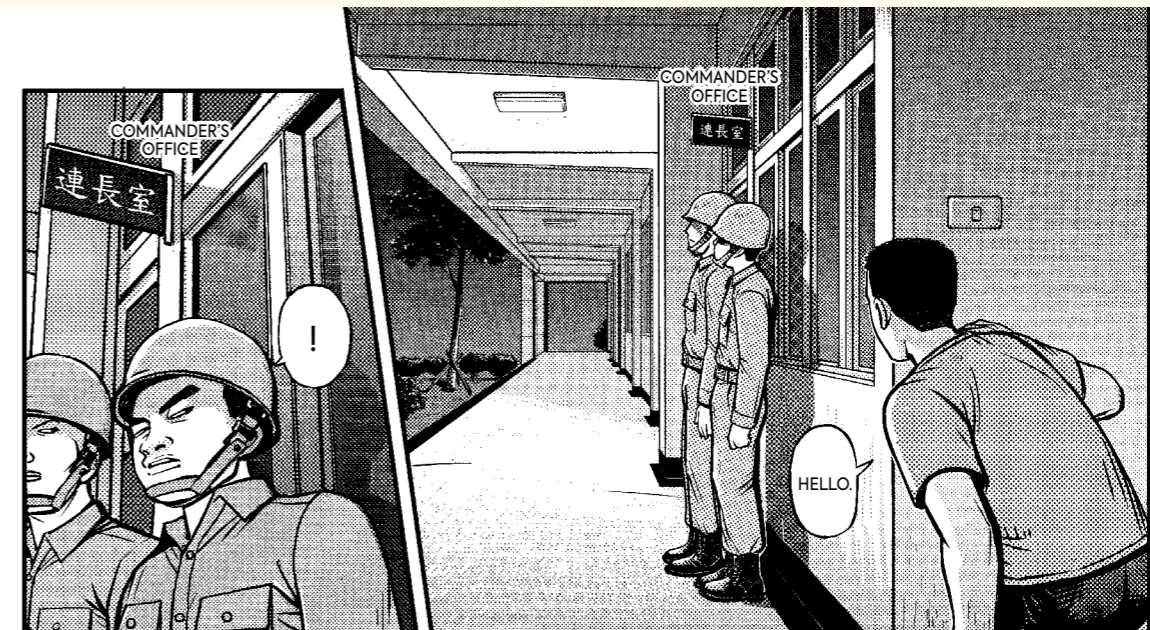
Even after 20 years, its raw depiction of bullying remains rare in comics. Such stories were mostly hidden until 23-year-old Hung Chung-chiu in 2013, who died three days from completing his military service. His death sparked a mass movement. I served at the same base in Yangmei; during the incident, I was in Pingtung for joint drills. That summer, a nearby officer deserted, and my platoon leader broke down under pressure, often hiding in the woods.

Ultimately, the realism of *My Life as A Dog* captures a deeply complex, bittersweet chapter of Taiwanese male experience. Its reissue is not just nostalgic—it remains a powerful and authentic testimony.

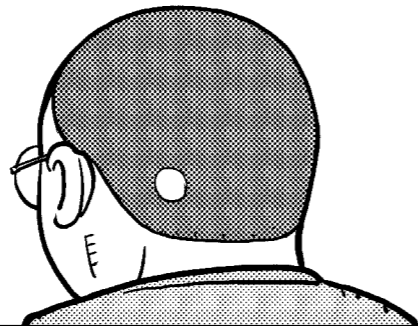
This essay has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

Chih-Liang Wu holds an MA in Chinese Literature from National Chi Nan University and is co-author of The Rural Armed Youth and His Friends. He previously worked as a contributing editor at China Times Publishing and Red Table Cultural Studio. He is now editor-in-chief of Openbook, where he oversees the comics section and the Reading on the Go podcast.





■ HOW OUR LIVES CHANGED IN THE ARMY.



WHATEVER TIME WE GOT, WE USED THEM TO WRITE LETTERS.

OI, IT'S TOO BRIGHT!

WE WROTE THEM DURING THE DAY AND NIGHT.



WE STARTED WRITING MORE LETTERS.



IT'S KIND OF STRANGE THAT MANY OF OUR HABITS CHANGED AFTER WE SHAVED OUR HEADS AND ENTERED THE MILITARY SITES. THE FIRST CHANGE WAS ABOUT LETTERS.

TAKING NOTES.

WHAT A QUOTE!

IT'S BETTER TO BE SHAMELESS THAN TO BE FORGOTTEN.

ACTUALLY BEFORE I ENLISTED, I WAS TOO LAZY TO EVEN SEND OUT CHRISTMAS CARDS.

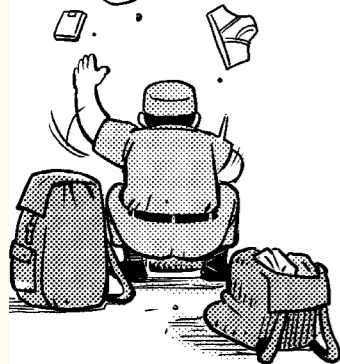
MY FRIEND DA-YU WAS RIGHT.

EVEN AFTER SO MANY YEARS, I STILL REMEMBER YOUR SMILE.

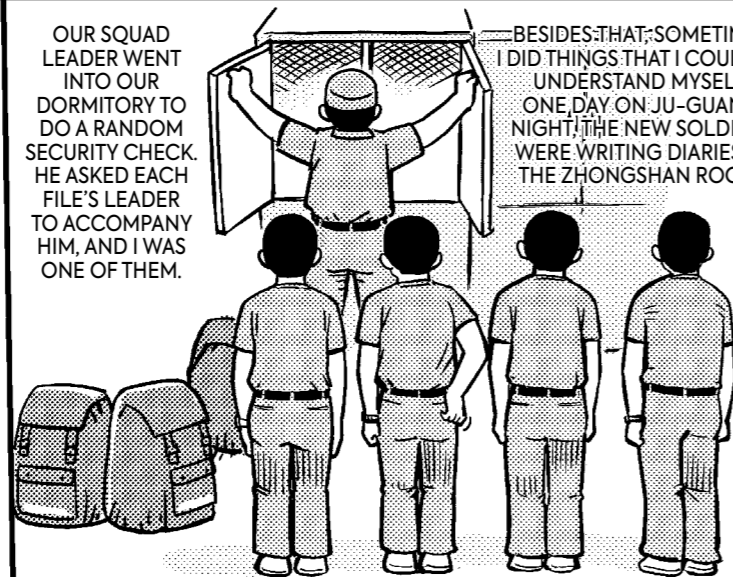
IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW MUCH WE KNEW SOMEONE. WE EVEN WROTE TO THIS RANDOM GIRL SITTING NEXT TO US IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.



AT THE TIME, THE STANDARD OF SECURITY CHECK FROM THE TRAINING CENTER WAS STRICTER; WHATEVER WASN'T ALLOWED AT THE MOMENT WAS CONFISCATED RIGHT AWAY.



OUR SQUAD LEADER WENT INTO OUR DORMITORY TO DO A RANDOM SECURITY CHECK. HE ASKED EACH FILE'S LEADER TO ACCOMPANY HIM, AND I WAS ONE OF THEM.



BESIDES THAT, SOMETIMES I DID THINGS THAT I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND MYSELF. ONE DAY ON JU-GUANG NIGHT, THE NEW SOLDIERS WERE WRITING DIARIES IN THE ZHONGSHAN ROOM.



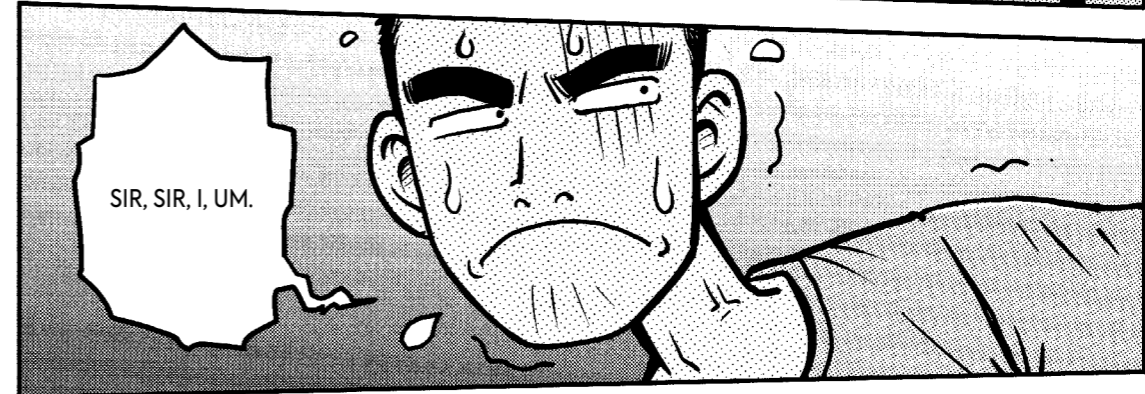
SO YOU CAN'T FALL ASLEEP?

YOU GOT NOTHING TO DO.



WHOA!

YOUR FRIENDSHIP IS SO TOUCHING.



SIR, SIR, I, UM.



FUCK, WHAT YOU DO THAT FOR?