

Tom Paxton, The Willing Conscript

The Willing Conscript

Words and Music by Tom Paxton

Oh Sergeant I'm a draftee and I've just arrived in camp.
I've come to wear the uniform and join the martial tramp.
And I want to do my duty, but one thing I do implore
You must give me lessons, sergeant, for I've never killed before.

To do my job obediently is my only desire.
To learn my weapon thoroughly and how to aim and fire.
To learn to kill the enemy and then to slaughter more,
I'll need instruction, sergeant, for I've never killed before.

Now there are several lessons that I haven't mastered yet.
I haven't got the hang of how to use the bayonet.
If he doesn't die at once am I to stick him with it more?
Oh, I hope you will be patient, for I've never killed before.

Oh, there are rumors in the camp about our enemy.
They say that when you see him he looks just like you and me.
But you deny it, Sergeant, and you are a man of war,
So you must give me lessons, for I've never killed before.

The hand grenade is something that I just don't understand.
You've got to throw it quickly or you're apt to lose your hand.
Does it blow a man to pieces with it's wicked, muffled roar?
Oh, I've got so much to learn because I've never killed before.

Oh, I want to thank you, Sergeant, for the help you've been to me.
For you've taught me how to slaughter and to hate the enemy.
And I know that I'll be ready when they march me off to war,
And I know that it won't matter that I've never killed before.
And I know that it won't matter that I've never killed before.