

**Malvin L Shar**  
**Personal Account**

In October 1943, I arrived at Providence College in Providence, RI. -a Dominican Order school-via the STAR unit at CCNY and the Army Air Force base at Rome, NY. Father Chandler, the Dean, welcomed us with the statement that the Dominicans had been in the business of education for 700 years. The ASTP unit consisted of students enrolled for the first 3 semesters in Basic Engineering. While most of us were serious students from all over the country, a few had entered the program only to have fun in town after the classes.

Of all of our fine teachers, I best remember Father John, who taught chemistry and analytic geometry in a manner that made those subjects truly stimulating. He tried to prepare us for the unknown by relating his brother's real-life experience during the First World War. He described how his brother survived primitive living in the trenches and how the human body could withstand living conditions and life experiences far worse than anything that we might possibly imagine. Our physical education instructor tried, in our wrestling classes, to teach us things that might help us survive in combat. Of course, many trainees laughed it all off because they couldn't imagine themselves as combat soldiers.

Finally the least serious students, who just had a good time and flunked out the first semester, had the last laugh. For the most part, they were merely returned to their old non-combat units in the Air Force, the Signal Corps, and so forth.

When the Army abruptly terminated the Basic Engineering program (just before completion of the second semester in March of 1944) all the New England colleges' ASTP units -including Providence- were assigned to the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Yankee Division) on maneuvers in Tennessee. So from the comfortable life in a college dormitory, I suddenly found myself living as an infantryman in Company C of the 328<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. While assignment to the infantry disappointed most of us, I applied Father John's philosophy, and resigned myself to the situation with increasing eagerness, since I had never been a boy scout. I therefore looked forward to this new experience with interest, and with an expectation that somehow I could match up to the challenge.