

THE ARMY SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM

The Army Specialized Training Program ("ASTP") was established by the United States Army in December 1942 to identify, train and educate academically-talented enlisted men as a specialized corps of Army officers during World War II. Utilizing major colleges and universities across the country, the Army provided a four-year college education combined with specialized Army technical training over a period of one and one-half years to those enlisted men who were accepted into the program. The men of the ASTP were distinguished by the octagon shoulder patch insignia of the program which was worn on their uniforms (shown below). It depicts the lamp of knowledge crossed with the sword of valor -- an allusion to both the mental and physical capabilities of these specialized officers-in-training.



ASTP soldiers were to serve as Army officers in both the successful prosecution of the war and the restoration of civilian governments in Nazi-occupied Europe after the war's end. But due to the impending invasion of Normandy and the need for additional manpower in its ground forces in Europe, the Army disbanded the program in early 1944. Most of the ASTP soldiers were then assigned to the infantry, where they fought in the European and Pacific Theaters of Operation.

PC PAYS TRIBUTE TO ITS ASTP MEN

On October 17, 1998, 60 members of the Army Specialized Training Program at Providence College gathered at the college's campus in Providence, Rhode Island to dedicate a memorial plaque in memory of their fallen comrades.

There were 380 members of the ASTP at Providence College in August of 1943. They were billeted in Aquinas and Guzman Halls, took their classes in Harkins Hall, drilled on the Hendricken Field, and exercised in the gym at Harkins Hall and on the campus' training field – where the Slavin Center would later be built.

When the program was disbanded in May of 1944, the ASTP men of Providence College were assigned to the 328th Infantry Regiment of the 26th Infantry Division (the "Yankee Division"). Their unit fought in the Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe Campaigns during World War II.

The ceremony – which was hosted by Lt. Col. Randy Golonka, Chairman of Providence College's Department of Military Science – began at noon when the ASTP men arrived at the Slavin Center accompanied by a police escort. The Reverend George Cochran, O.P., Associate Professor of Humanities, delivered the invocation, which was followed by a welcome address from the Reverend Philip Smith, O.P., President of Providence College. Father Smith's address was delivered by the Reverend Terence Keegan, O.P., Executive Vice President of the college.

The welcome address was followed by the presentation of the colors by the Providence College Color Guard, and the singing of the National Anthem by the 88th Army Band of the Rhode Island National Guard.

Event co-chairs George Fisher and Leo Wurtzel next took to the podium. Their remarks were followed by the keynote address, which was delivered by the Honorable Joseph Weisberger, Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

The memorial plaque was then unveiled, and Taps were sounded by the Providence College Alma Mater for the 37 men of the ASTP at PC who were killed in action/died of wounds received during the war. The ceremony concluded with a benediction.

The event was followed by a photo session for the ASTP men and college officials and a luncheon hosted by the school. A guided tour of the Phillips Memorial Library – and the ASTP exhibition that was on display there – rounded out the afternoon on campus. The ASTPers then left the college for an evening reunion in near-by Mansfield, Massachusetts.

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PC Memorial Plaque

On October 17, 1998, the men of the ASTP Unit at Providence College in Rhode Island dedicated a plaque to 37 men of their number who were killed in action during World War II. The men from this ASTP Unit were assigned to the 328th Infantry Regiment of the 26th Infantry Division when the program was disbanded in the Spring of 1944.



George Fisher and Leo Wurtzel with the ASTP/Providence College Memorial Plaque that was dedicated at the college on October 17, 1998.

(Photograph courtesy of George Fisher)

<http://www.astpww2.org/>

