



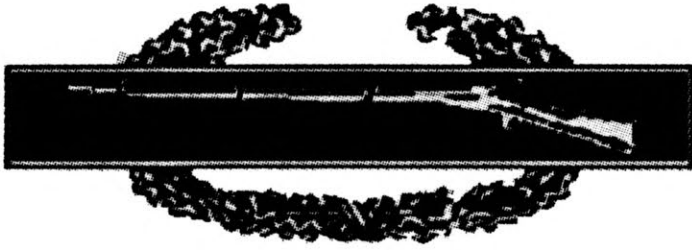
*Army Specialized
Training Program*

Commemorative Ceremony



AT PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

SATURDAY • OCTOBER 17, 1998



The rifleman fights without promise of either reward or relief. Behind every river there's another hill - and behind that hill, another river. After weeks or months in the line only a wound can offer him the comfort of safety, shelter, and a bed.

Those who are left to fight, fight on, evading death but knowing that with each day of evasion they have exhausted one more chance for survival. Sooner or later, unless victory comes this chase must end on the litter or in the grave.

-GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY

***History* of the Army Specialized Training Program at Providence College**

by Robert L. Deasy

Associate Professor of History

Thinking that the war might last from five to ten years, a problem arose as to what type of professionals, e.g. lawyers, doctors, dentists, etc., would be available when peace returned. With this in mind Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Military Chief of Staff General George Marshall with the approval of President Franklin D. Roosevelt envisioned the “best and the brightest” soldiers be given the opportunity to receive college-level training. On December 18, 1942 the Army Specialized Training Program was approved, and soldiers under the age of 22 (the draft had already been lowered to 18) were chosen to continue military training at various institutions of higher learning around the country. All told, over 122 colleges participated in this program--including Providence College.

In July 1943, Major Howard Smith was assigned to lead the contingent here on campus. With the cooperation of Rev. Bernard A. McLaughlin in New York, and Rev. John J. Dillon, O.P., President of the college--together with the cooperation of the Rhode Island Congressional delegation and Governor J. Howard McGrath (Class of '27), plans had already been laid and the first soldiers began appearing in August of that year.

Most of the soldiers were billeted in Aquinas Hall (five to a room), while others stayed in Guzman Hall. They took their classes in Harkins Hall, drilled on the Hendricken Field baseball/football field, and exercised either in the gym at Harkins or at the training field which is now Slavin Center and Alumni Hall.

The program was hugely successful as the faculty worked constantly to update the curriculum; the neighbors, and indeed, the whole city of Providence began a love affair with its “citizen soldiers.” The A.S.T.Pers themselves seemed to enjoy their new environment. The first class of 20 graduated on January 28, 1944 with all due pomp and ceremony, and the program appeared to be in full bloom. That was until a memo was issued by Brigadier General Thomas E. Troland, Commander Army Service Forces, which was sent from Boston, Massachusetts dated February 19, 1944. It read in part, “The time has come for the majority of you to be assigned to other active duty.” It went on to say, “Your intelligence, training, and high quality of leadership are expected to raise the combat efficiency of those units.”

The conclusion was obvious as the invasion of Europe was fast approaching and thousands of combat-trained soldiers were vitally necessary. The program was shut down, and after a going away party hosted by the college on March 19, 1944, the over 500 A.S.T.Pers would march downtown to the old Union Station. They shipped out to an uncertain future...and the rest is history.

Commemorative Program

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| <i>Master of Ceremonies</i> | Lt. Colonel Randy Golonka Chairman, Military Science Department |
| <i>Invocation</i> | Rev. George L. Cochran, O.P. Associate Professor of Humanities |
| <i>Greetings from the College</i> | Rev. Philip A. Smith, O.P. President of Providence College |
| <i>Presentation of Colors</i> | Providence College Color Guard |
| <i>National Anthem</i> | 88th Army Band of the Rhode Island National Guard |
| <i>Welcome</i> | George Fisher Co-chair, ASTP Commemorative Dedication Leo Wurtzel Co-chair, ASTP Commemorative Dedication |
| <i>Address</i> | The Honorable Joseph R. Weisberger Chief Justice, RI Supreme Court |
| <i>Unveiling of Commemorative Plaque</i> | |
| <i>Taps</i> <i>Providence College Alma Mater</i> | |
| <i>Benediction</i> | |

Lunch will be served following the conclusion of the program.

Following lunch, please join us for a guided tour to Phillips Memorial Library, where Professor Robert Deasy will provide details on the ASTP exhibition currently on display there.

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