

California—before he made it to “G” Company—when, in his own words, from an oral history tape:

“One day we were doin’ calisthenics and I had taken my field jacket and I had taken chalk and I’d put a couple of bars on there—as a joke, you know—and I forgot I had ‘em on there. We’re out there takin’ PT, and the lieutenant stops and says, ‘Captain Gillin, will you come here a minute?’ Oh my god, ‘Captain’ Gillin. Yeah. So my punishment for impersonating an officer, he says, ‘Tonight you will dig, with a mess kit spoon, a six by six by six foot hole outside your latrine. And don’t ever impersonate an officer again.’ And I said, ‘Yes, sir.’

“I really believed him. So that night I got a spoon, after we got done, and I’m out there beside the barracks and I started to scratch down. I thought, there’s no way I can dig it six by six by six deep with a damn spoon. I can’t ever do that. So, when nobody’s lookin’, I go in and get the fire shovel next to the sand bucket. I went out and started digging with that. That wasn’t much help. So I dug around there, and I thought, I’ll outline six feet by six feet on the surface here, and scratch that up and hope he never comes by to see it. So I did that, and put the shovel up, and went to bed. He never came by and saw it.”

#### IV. ASTP

The ASTP was made up of college students, and potential students, who had joined the Army with the prospect of continuing or initiating their college studies for some undefined military benefit. Some of us had had a year or more of college and had been subjected to the usual 13 weeks (for some, 17 weeks) of basic training before being assigned to colleges for academic training. Others, younger, had no college experience and were trained for only a few weeks before being slated to be sent as well to various campuses. All of this came to an end in March of 1944, when the basic need for cannon fodder began to outweigh vague academic training goals, and the ASTP was deactivated.

I recall making an effort to apply for ASTP “area studies” so that I could study Russia back at Yale. This only succeeded in delaying my transfer, however, so when all my basic training classmates were shipped off to Auburn University—and coeds!—I was left behind for a time. Nevertheless, by the end of September I found myself in lovely, but sometimes strange, Charleston, South Carolina, a participant in the ASTP program at The Citadel, the “Military College of South Carolina,” an emphatically coed-less and very odd place to me.

I’d gotten a slight taste of the rural South of those days in Alabama; now I would have some experience with the urban South at Charleston. Many things were certainly different from my life in New England. In Alabama we’d seen, on marches and exercises off the Post, rural shacks in advanced states of dilapidation, full of people. Grass and

weeds grew high and lush in spots near the cabins, evidence, to me at least, of use of the open for toilet facilities. That stands out in my memory. In Charleston one of the sharpest, and most shocking, memories is of black people, speaking a strange dialect we were told was Gullah, stepping off the sidewalk into the gutter to let us walk by. The population of the city was swollen by thousands of servicemen, mostly from the nearby Navy Yard, many of who were Northerners; racial tension was high. Bus drivers were armed, ostensibly for their protection, and more than once during my stay there the newspapers reported a black serviceman shot by a bus driver, usually in the legs, for refusing to sit in the back of the bus.

Charleston is beautiful with its old homes and lush sub-tropical vegetation, but in those days it smelled badly most of the time. If the wind was right one could smell the fertilizer factories on the Ashley River north of the city. No wind was required to smell the sulfuric odor of the water in the storm sewers. Cockroaches were constant companions and a source of amazement. They were everywhere in great numbers, as much as two inches long, and with the ability to fly.

The Citadel looked something like a French Foreign Legion stage setting for *Beau Geste*. Our barracks were rooms off galleries surrounding an open square devoted to close order drill and other military activities. The galleries were on four or five levels of white stucco, and the whole place was very, very spit-and-polish. I loathed it on sight, and the very basic engineering studies, far too easy to be any sort of challenge at first, proved soon enough to be way beyond my limited capacity in that area. I did little academically. What I did get to do was to explore Charleston quite thoroughly, and to read Russian novels. I think I got through most of Dostoevsky that Winter. At the end of the term, around January 1, 1944, we also got furloughs and I got to go home for a week or so after just about six months away.

As the short South Carolina Winter began to turn to Spring, rumors flew that ASTP was to be deactivated. At about the time in the middle of February that our officers were vociferously denying the truth of this, it happened, and within a very few weeks we all had transfer orders. I'd have flunked out anyway, I thought, so I was not terribly upset by the development.