

ASTP Memories

by Larry Weinberg, 399-C

Here's another ASTP memory, this one from Larry Weinberg, 399-C.

I enjoyed reading the brief account in the May E-News of the ASTP at the Citadel.

I was in the ASTP Reserve. Those of us who enlisted under 18, were subject to army discipline, received no monetary compensation, but were provided with room, board, and training.

As I remember, there were 300 or 400 of us at Cornell. My closest friend was Norman Wiedman, with whom I subsequently took 17 weeks of basic training at Camp Wheeler, Georgia. We both entered the 100th Division—Norman in Company F, 397th, and I in Company C, 399th. Sadly, Norman didn't make it. I would love to hear from anyone who might know what specifically happened to Norman.

Because we were in the reserve, we were given purple uniforms, and were referred to on campus as the "Purple Commandos." At that time there were about 10,000 male students at Cornell, and about 400 females. No self-respecting female would be seen going out with a Purple Commando, who by definition was under 18. That's where I learned to drink beer and sing college songs as I went out with the guys.

I do remember talking "two friends" into going AWOL with me over the Christmas weekend, to hitchhike to Pittsburgh where I had a girlfriend, and promised them the two wildest girls in America (a gross exaggeration). We got our come-uppance on our hitchhiking back to Cornell, when we ran into a massive snowstorm while we were riding in the back of a pickup truck. I was lucky that my two former "friends" did not kill me after that great experience.

When I arrived at the 100th Division, which was at Fort Bragg at the time, I met Roland Giduz and began a lifelong friendship with him, and later, with Helen, his wife. We could laugh together and talk about life's serious issues, and frequently congratulated each other on how much smarter we were than our wonderful wives . . . because look who we married, and look who they got stuck with. I miss Roland very much. He was one of my life's very special friends.

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