

ASTP Memories

by Richard Welke, 399-G

A story in the May 2010 edition of the E-News asked readers if they had ASTP memories to share. This one came in from Richard Welke, 399-G. It was a little too long for the E-News, so we share it with you here.

From Camp Wheeler, GA, where I took my basic training, I was sent to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. From what I have heard from others it was nothing like the Citadel. The sorority girls were delighted to have us join the fun.

We lived in a small group of buildings behind the main campus dormitories. Our quarters, of which I think there were four, were one story buildings. Each building had fifteen or six sixteen bedrooms, each of which had a bunk bed and small desk and was occupied by two men. At the end of the building was a large room for study, etc., and a latrine.

During peacetime the buildings were occupied by students who had to earn pay for their tuition and who went to special classes. One man worked for a week while the other attended classes and then they switched places with one at work and the other in class.

Our physical education instructors, officers in the army, were all ex football players who at the time at least avoided real military service. Our company commander, Millard Hayes, went to the U. of A. and was not accepted in ROTC because he wore eyeglasses . . . you know where he went while the ROTC football players stayed at home.

One last story. Each day one man remained in the barracks to tend the small coke burning stove that provided the latrine with hot water. One overanxious man had such a roaring fire in the water heater that the water boiled and turned into steam. No explosion, but, the steam pressure pushed the water back into the main line and when a man in another unit went to flush steam came out of the commode.

Note: That is where Charles Guggenheim was in the ASTP, and lived in the same building as I did. He went on to become a very highly respected, Oscar-winning documentary film producer and director.

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