

Not many people remember the CMTC. It ended with the establishment of the draft just prior to World War II. It - the citizens Military Training Corps - had been formed to provide a pool of trained young men to augment the standing army.

That was not the reason my high school friends and I enlisted. We were seeking adventure and being a soldier for 30 days during the summer vacation seemed to us to be a good way to find it. That is the way we felt when we boarded the Big 4 train for our trip to Fort Benjamin Harrison. The one hundred mile ride was uneventful but I remember how slowly the train moved, how hot it was and how hungry I became. We were greeted at the fort by the U. S. Army Band and playing the hit, and my favorite, of the period, "Valencia". Before my thirty day stint was over I learned to hate that song. I swear that that was the only non military song the army band knew.

Immediately after Valencia, my hatred for army food was born. We were herded to a line of tables stacked high with food. Food? Slices of cheese and slices of bread, all of them dried and hardened by the hot sun. No mustard. No mayonnaise. No moistener of any kind.

As bad as that was, what followed was worse. Many trucks were parked nearby but they must have been out of gas because we were assigned to a sergeant and told to follow him. They did not tell us how far we would have to walk and carry our suit cases under that burning sun; but it turned out to be two miles. After that delightful experience I would have expected a rest period if I had not by this time learned that that is not the way the army operates. We were marched into a huge barn - and told to remove our clothes. This was the first time that I realized that the army had a sense of humor. It was a funny sight. Hundreds of naked young men - all sizes and all shapes. The medic came in and examined us and that exercise was not without humor. Then we were led, still naked, into an adjoining barn. Here they issued us GI clothes - one item at a time - none of which were in the correct sizes. We were funny when we were naked but you should have seen us after we donned those old World War One uniforms - wrapped leggings and all. It was not a picture that would have inspired any degree of confidence in our national defense.

Finally, we were issued empty mattresses which we filled from a nearby pile of straw. Then we were led to our tents which were to be our homes. It was pitch dark when I reached mine and it was after "lights out". My four tent mates were already in bed. I talked to them but had no idea of what they looked like. I struggled in the dark to make my bed but did a very poor job of it so got very cold before morning. Reasons to hate the army were accumulating.

(To be continued)

Arthur W. Grandpa