

MILITARY

Trying to become an Engineer Officer in three months is a large contract for a civilian. The Civilian (you see I now write from the detached view-point of an army-man) is more or less his own master, but from the minute he strikes the enrolling officer, he is assumed to know all of the many Army Regulations and to be governed accordingly.

After going through considerable trouble in being examined physically due principally to having my first examination papers lost, I reported to the proper officer at Fort Sheridan and was assigned to the Illinois Engineer Company, but after about a week's stay here I was transferred to the Wisconsin-Michigan Company, where I found about 15 Armour Men, among others Earl Smith, S. Miller and later at Fort Leavenworth I ran across Prof. Gilbert in the Signal Corps.

We were at Fort Sheridan for five weeks training as Infantry, as it seems that the Engineer Troops are considered to be able to do anything from the repair of roads, bridges etc., in an advance, to the destruction of all that will give aid to the enemy in the case of a retirement, and, when there is nothing else to do, why go right into the trenches and help out the Infantry. It was, from these many duties and from the talks of our officers, that we soon became known as the Suicide Club. Right at the start those of us who had been out of college for some time began having our troubles. Unaccustomed to regular study and to regular hours, we started in on a regular routine beginning at 5:15 A.M. and lasting up to 10:00 P.M. Most of what we had was hard to understand, and, try as we would it was impossible to read all of it even once, and the meaning only began to become even partially clear to most of us weeks after we were supposed to be masters of the Military Art.

The work was good for us, tho unaccustomed to the marching drills, and conferences as we usually turned our study period into a series of combinations such as Earl Smith and I formed, whereby each was to see that the other was awake when the check of the barracks during study hour was made. The regular work was good for all of us and we throve amazingly. The most remarkable fact was the regularity with which we would appear on the steps of the mess hall at meals. It might be hard to get to formations on time, but meals never.

Five weeks after entering Fort Sheridan we left for Fort Leavenworth to gain our Engineer experience. This trip was long and uncomfortable as we left Chicago a cool country and struck Kansas with its temperature of 100 degrees.

At Fort Leavenworth we absorbed Kansas dust, heat and Military Engineering. We learned to dig trenches, repair and destroy bridges, make military topographical maps, solve tactical problems and in fact try to learn all the many special engineering problems as they applied to the needs of an army.

After eight weeks of Kansas summer, the Training Camp came to an end and Commissions and assignments were handed out. Many (about 25%) of the original Company had been dropped for various reasons but the Armour men all stuck to the last. About one-third of the company were ordered to Camp Custer to be with the Engineer Regiment of the National Army Division at that camp, and the balance of us were variously assigned to Regular Army Regiments