

Newsweek

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First Days in Camp



First review: these draft volunteers at Fort MacArthur, Calif. show off the result of a week's training.

What it's like joining the Army:

FIRST DAY (for 114 New Jersey and New York trainees, mostly volunteers, inducted on Nov. 25): Wearing oldest civilian clothes and carrying suitcases, arrived at 5:09 p.m. by special train at Fort Dix, N.J., former AEF base, now the home of the 44th Division of the Federalized National Guard. Already dark. Biting cold. Welcoming band struck up "In the Good Old Summer Time" (followed by "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here"). In double column, marched off to reservation. On the way, off-duty Guards yelled: "Hurray for the Army!" (also "Hello, Suckers!").

After "processing" preliminaries in the reception hall, including day's second physical examination, moved under quarantine into blocks of wooden-sided tents (six men to a tent)—known to Guards as "Skunk Row," "Leper Colony," etc. All tents warm and cozy, Guards already having fired coal-burning stoves. Filed into mess hall, washed mess kits, had first Army "chow"—beef hash, stewed tomatoes, escalloped potatoes, string beans, bread and butter, apple cake, applesauce, and coffee. Rewashed kits. Received "barrack bags" containing four blankets, three towels, canteen, toilet set, first-aid pouch, comforter. Returned to tents. Learned bedmaking. "Taps" (most men already asleep) at 11.

SECOND DAY: Up by bugle at 5:45 in subfreezing temperature. Breakfast—boiled oatmeal, French toast and syrup, toast, jam, coffee. At 7:30 began "psychological test" for mental alertness (typical question: An orange is a broom, bat, flower, or fruit?). Received complete uniforms. Try-on period after lunch resulted in many misfits, much swapping, and revival of old crack about there being only two sizes in the Army—too big and too small. Uniform inspection. Short lectures on basic training. Rest of day free.

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THIRD DAY: Morning—three hours of lectures, including how to salute, address officers, take orders. Rest of day free—but thirteen weeks of strenuous basic training (after assignment to units) in prospect, plus nine months' advanced work.

¶ To fill the first quota of 19,670, "processing" was in full swing last week from coast to coast—in all nine Corps Areas except the Fourth (Atlanta), where inductions take place Dec. 3 to 13. Giving a "Christmas present" to the next batch of draftees, originally due to be called during the holiday period, the War Department said none would be called between Dec. 15 and Jan. 3.

¶ Sentenced in New York on Nov. 20 to eighteen months in jail for failing to register, Angelo Mongiore, 23-year-old conscientious objector, finally registered in prison on Nov. 28. Next day he was released.

¶ Military authorities predicted before last week's drafting that only about 2 per cent of the men called would be disqualified on physical grounds. Actually, the rejection rate so far has run about 15 per cent, with deficiencies in eyesight and teeth among the main causes.