

Pathfinder

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New Life for Old Camps



Recruits. *For the youngsters, the same old grind of orders and gripes and . . .*

Across the nation workmen hammered, sawed, repaired leaks, laid pipe, tested transformers. Their job: fixing up buildings which a few years ago had been left to the slow destruction of time and the elements.

The buildings were the widely scattered U.S. Army Replacement Training Centers—camps and forts where the new draftee is hardened into a soldier in a few gruelling weeks. Soon after World War II they were almost deserted. Last week all 13 were open—a possibility Washington didn't dream of five years ago.

Among the pine trees and moss-covered oaks of Camp Stewart, near Savannah, Ga., an elderly carpenter looked up from his sawhorse, grinned and said, "I helped put up this place and I helped lock it up and darn if I ain't opening her up again. Guess it might stay put now."



. . . for fledgling swabbies, an introduction to "squaring away."

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Camp Stewart will probably stay put for some time. A key training center, it already resounds to the marching steps of the newly uniformed soldiers. Some Savannah residents had misgivings, recalling the crowding caused by the influx of thousands to their community during the war. As in other training-center towns, busses, cafes and restaurants were jammed, the streets noisy at night. But most citizens welcomed the boom. Said Mayor Olin F. Fulmer: "We tried for a long time to get Washington to open up the camp, but it took Korea to do it. We want the boys here. We like 'em and we think they are good for the city."

Welcome to Columbia. At Columbia, S.C., Mayor J. Macfie Anderson agreed. The reopening of Fort Jackson (25,000 trainees) has loaded lumber, hardware and building supply companies with extra work. Downtown shops and eating places are sprucing up, hotels full and reservations hard to get. But Columbia, said its mayor, "can take all this in its stride. We are used to it."

It was the same story in cities and towns near Camp Chaffee, Ark., Camp Breckinridge, Ky., Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and other camps. And at the camps themselves it seemed like 1941 all over again. The same tough sergeants eyed new draftees with the cynical distaste of tough sergeants from time immemorial. Griping—the citizen-soldier's prime prerogative—was louder and bitterer, particularly among men who had fought in one war and never expected to wear a uniform again. One veteran at Fort Leonard Wood moaned: "I joined the reserve because I just couldn't believe anything would happen so soon. I've got a wife and a little boy and an auto agency. What am I going to do? I've just got squared away, and it starts all over."

For the young non-veterans, it was a new experience, a new adventure: waiting patiently in line, being poked in the arm (and elsewhere) with needles, trying on wool clothing and G.I. shoes, making new friends, obeying innumerable orders. The U.S. was once again making civilians into soldiers on a big scale. Since the Korean war began 210,000 draftees have been called, and if the military gets all the men it wants, an additional 100,000 will be inducted by next spring—bringing total U.S. military personnel to approximately 2 million. The process would have a profound effect on the men, the communities and the nation.